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*Garrick V. Allen, Usama Gad, Kelsie G. Rodenbiker,  
Anthony P. Royle, and Jill Unkel (Eds.)*

# THE CHESTER BEATTY BIBLICAL PAPYRI AT NINETY

LITERATURE, PAPYROLOGY, ETHICS

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## The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri at Ninety

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Martin Wallraff and Patrick Andrist

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# **The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri at Ninety**

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Literature, Papyrology, Ethics

Edited by

Garrick Vernon Allen, Usama Ali Mohamed Gad, Kelsie Gayle Rodenbiker,  
Anthony Philip Royle, and Jill Unkel

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Garrick V. Allen

## Alfred Chester Beatty and his Biblical (and other) Papyri at Ninety

الفريد تشيستر بيتي وبردياته في القرن التاسع عشر، جارريك ألين

In the introductory volume to the first edition of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, a project funded by Beatty himself, Sir Frederic G. Kenyon concludes with a lengthy note of gratitude to his patron:

Biblical students will not be slow to congratulate Mr. Chester Beatty on his extraordinary good fortune in acquiring this unique group of manuscripts, and to thank him for making them so fully available for their study. As editor, I can only express my gratitude to him for placing material of such fascinating interest in my hands just at the moment when I was free to undertake it, and my regret for the imperfections of execution which more competent scholars will no doubt discover.<sup>1</sup>

Although this statement is a stereotypical acknowledgement of funding and humility, it reflects a larger perspective that the guild owes collectors a debt of gratitude. This view that Beatty and the other large-scale collectors of that generation are ultimately responsible for the discovery, acquisition, and publication of the papyri remains largely intact in the popular imagination. Beatty is, after all, the one who purchased the material with his own funds, transported them to Europe, had Hugo Ibscher mount them in glass, brought them to London to be studied by Kenyon, paid for their publication, and eventually brought them to Dublin (along with the rest of his astounding collection) after the Second World War, finally leaving them upon trust for the use and enjoyment of the public to be housed in a museum that bears his name to this day. This is surely no insignificant series of events and, insofar as Beatty could have discharged his fortune in any way he saw fit, we might indeed be thankful that he spent his money on items that are so relevant to our field.

The portrait of Beatty as a lone actor and generous benefactor to Biblical Studies and Papyrology, not to mention the other disciplines and the broader public that

continue to profit from access to his sprawling collection,<sup>2</sup> is a persistent narrative. By all accounts Beatty was deeply generous, philanthropic, and a patron for research on this collection, a portrait promulgated most notably by his aristocratic friends<sup>3</sup> and a biography penned by the press officer of his mining company in 1985 that has influenced “official” narratives of Beatty’s centrality to the collection for nearly thirty years.<sup>4</sup> Ninety years after the announcement of the acquisition of the Biblical Papyri in *The Times* by Kenyon on 19 November 1931, the goal of this book is to take stock of the scholarship on the papyri and the narrative that stands behind the collection in an effort to explore new avenues of research, to emphasise the collaborative nature of Beatty’s enterprise and the scholarship that it has enabled, and to point to the many agents, ancient and modern, who made it possible for us to saunter through the glass doors of the Chester Beatty to engage with some of the earliest copies of the New Testament and other works. We do this by combining close study of the papyri in the Beatty collection, especially by scholars who offer new approaches to the material, with an exploration of the popular narrative around Beatty himself that accrues importance and cultural value to these manuscripts. This approach is not to deny the critical value and cultural importance of the manuscripts that Beatty acquired, nor is it to deny the important text-critical value that these manuscripts have for reconstructing “original” or “initial” texts,<sup>5</sup> but to contextualise the material as it now stands in the broader discourse on Papyrology, to reflect upon the period in which great personal collections like Beatty’s were assembled, and to situate our scholarship within the larger historical narratives that dominate the ways we

<sup>1</sup> Kenyon 1933, 18.

**Note:** Research for this publication received support from the “Titles of the New Testament: A New Approach to Manuscripts and the History of Interpretation” (TiNT) project, funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement No. 847428).

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<sup>2</sup> See Cathcart 1989; Unkel 2019 for general information on the biblical collection, and see Allen 2021; Allen / Royle 2020 for research on other biblical manuscripts in the collection.

<sup>3</sup> Powerscourt 1974, 217–44.

<sup>4</sup> Wilson 1985. See also Kennedy 1988; Horton 2003; Horton 2004.

<sup>5</sup> There is absolutely no doubt that the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, not to mention the other aspects of the papyrological collection and copies of biblical works preserved in multiple languages on multiple writing supports in the museum, are of great critical value for scholars interested in textual history, palaeography, scribal practices, and social history. See Horton 2004 and Malik 2017, 2–5 for recent takes on the importance of the Biblical Papyri. On the textual value of the Biblical Papyri see Aland 2004.



write and think about our work. The careful philological work and the larger stories we tell ourselves about the people and institutions that made these artefacts available to us for study are undoubtedly connected. Philology and ethics are two sides of the same coin.

Exploring the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, the Beatty narrative, and the larger papyrological collection side by side is an important undertaking because Beatty's activities and the stories around his collection are far from unique among his contemporaries. They have ongoing relevance for those who work with manuscripts in institutional contexts of many kinds. For example, consider the narrative surrounding another American art enthusiast whose collection is also housed in a museum bearing his name, Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919).<sup>6</sup> Kent Clarke's 2006 biographical sketch of Freer describes him, in idealistic language, as an industrialist who was a "self-made millionaire," and as one who eschewed the "self-interested pursuit of wealth," instead putting his riches to good use to "encourage a sensitivity of 'the beautiful' that would arrest the materialism of the Industrialist Age."<sup>7</sup> Freer had broad artistic tastes, including a focus on material from the Far East, worked diligently to institutionalise his collection before his death, and cultivated a deep bench of agents in Egypt and elsewhere to seek out purchases on his behalf.<sup>8</sup> He even worked with Maurice Nahman, a Cairo dealer known also to Beatty.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Freer, like Beatty, paid a reputable scholar handsomely for the publication of his manuscripts<sup>10</sup> and he later took on the role of patron to scholars and art collectors, all the while overcoming the spectre of a genetic illness.<sup>11</sup> Freer's story as a self-made, generous, persevering American who pulled himself up by his bootstraps to create a world-renowned collection of manuscripts and *objets d'art* has striking parallels to Beatty's narrative as described by Wilson and previous generations of curators.<sup>12</sup> Beatty's collection is indeed unique and enduringly relevant to biblical and other kinds of scholarship, but he is part of a larger tradition of wealthy American industrialists and capitalists who emerged from the Gilded Age with for-

tunes to build, money to spend, an aversion for taxes and meddlesome bureaucracy, and a taste for manuscripts and beautiful things. The larger issues that contributors explore in this book, whether they explore the fine textual details of Manichaeian psalms, histories of acquisition, or the stories we accept about "great men," are relevant for many (if not all) institutional collections that preserve the most primary sources of our disciplines.

Inextricably bound up in the narratives surrounding Beatty and his collection are the manuscripts themselves, artefacts that, when taken together, offer us chance glimpses at the many cultures, individuals, and communities that produced, used, and transmitted these works. In addition to larger critical questions, the essays that follow work to connect the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri to the other ancient works preserved on papyrus in the collection and to trends in the broader discipline of Papyrology. For example, Brian McGing walks us through the emerging trends of Papyrology in its second century, highlighting the monumental nature of the editorial task that still remains from the material uncovered over a century ago, pointing to the work involved in the indebtedness of Papyrology to colonialism, and unpacking the historical narratives that remain to be crafted from the documentary material.

Similarly, Usama Gad examines the embeddedness of colonialism and Eurocentrism in Papyrology, arguing that this trend is not something unique to the earliest generations of papyrologists; it is something that continues today when Egypt's glorious past is emphasised to the detriment or ignorance of modern Egypt and its agency in the antiquities trade. We can begin to "decolonize" the archive through detailed historical research that seriously considers the good, the bad, and the ugly of the history of the discipline. Exploring the collection and its materials from this angle highlights the often-invisible role of Egyptians in producing, using, and working to discover the papyri that have become almost entirely the domain of European and North American scholars. This volume works to address this issue by including Arabic titles and author names at the start of each article and an Arabic summary at the end of each piece, prepared by Gad. We also address issues of access by making the book open access, thanks to funding from the Irish Research Council and European Research Council.

Next, the detective work of Daniel B. Sharp and Brent Nongbri complements the broader strokes of McGing and Gad by taking up the call for detailed work in the archives, showcasing the complexity that the ad hoc and unprovoked collecting of the early twentieth century has wrought on the discipline. Looking at the Bodmer Papyri and Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri in particular, we see that the story of the manuscripts we work with are entangled

<sup>6</sup> The Freer Collection is part of the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. For its relevance to biblical studies and Beatty manuscripts, see Hurtado 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Clarke 2006, 19, 21.

<sup>8</sup> Clarke 2006, 22–3, 32.

<sup>9</sup> Clarke 2006, 32. Freer also used US consular and diplomatic services to transport his purchases out of Egypt (p. 34–5). See Jill Unkel's article in this volume for more on Nahman.

<sup>10</sup> Sanders 1910; Sanders 1912; Sanders 1917; Sanders 1918; Sanders / Schmidt 1927.

<sup>11</sup> Clarke 2006, 39–41. Beatty famously struggled with silicosis.

<sup>12</sup> Wilson 1985; Horton 2003; Horton 2004, 149–53.

with the realities of divided collections and opaque, or even intentionally constructed, origin stories. More work in the archives of various collecting institutions is required if we are to better understand the manuscripts and their texts.

Jill Unkel, the Curator of the Western Collection at the Chester Beatty, gets more specific than Sharp and Nongbri, focusing on the acquisition of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri in particular. The details of the acquisition remain vague, but Unkel emphasises the collaborative and international endeavour that stands behind the collection of the material, a reality that demonstrates the complex and variegated social ties that lead to a collection like the one we have in Dublin. The collection bears Beatty's name but it is not the fruit of his labour alone. Unkel concludes by arguing for renewed attention to museum archaeology, or "mining the archive," as one route forward for better understanding the origins and contexts of the manuscript we continue to engage.

Getting more specific still, Yii-Jan Lin focuses not on acquisition history, but on Beatty himself, the popular narrative that supported his collecting activities, and the reception of the narrative by later generations. She takes direct aim at the narrative propagated by Wilson (1985) and others, pointing out the deeply one-sided portrayal and its obvious factual inaccuracies about Beatty's family and wealth. For Lin, collections like Beatty's are built upon generational exploitative practices and enabled by colonial regimes, a stark contrast to the stories we tell about the collections as exquisite things acquired on a great adventure. She decentres Beatty as a figure and turns our attention to those who had no role in the popular narrative and whose labour enriched Beatty and his family before him, including those who worked in his mines and those who were enslaved by Beatty's ancestors in the Caribbean. These anonymous people too played a role in bringing us the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, and her paper begins to give them a voice in our scholarship on these materials. When we read across archives – historical, scholarly, economic, and popular – we can begin to gain a view of the larger story that stands behind the enduring, simplified narratives.

In a similar vein Jennifer Knust's essay explores Papyrology not as the philanthropic result of wealthy men seeking the purity of beauty and antiquity (like Clarke 2006 describes Freer's activities), but as an "art of destruction." By this she means that the papyri are the souvenirs of destructive practices and attitudes supported by colonialism and capitalism. Just as mining destroys the landscape to extract precious minerals, so too does text collecting leave collateral damage, both in the process of amassing enough wealth to collect manuscripts in the first place (as

Lin argues) and also in the communities from which these items are extracted, especially in the political context of the "great powers diplomacy" of the early twentieth century (as Gad points out). Her work, in concert with Gad's perspective, makes us attentive to the ongoing illicit trade of antiquities and helps us to remember that at the other end of a smuggled papyrus there's often an Egyptian child crawling through a narrow mineshaft.

Turning from direct questions around the ethics and complexities of collecting, the remaining articles explore more specifically critical questions relevant to particular literary traditions represented by the Beatty collection. These essays are not disconnected from the metacritical issues that open the volume but are more attuned to larger issues classically relevant to Papyrology. Kelsie Rodenbiker, for example, uses the papyri as a way to analyse scholarly language around faithfulness, fidelity, scripture, and scribal activity, especially as it relates to the New Testament. For her, language pertaining to scribal fidelity in the process of copying is used as a cipher for the canonical and textual imaginaries that undergird perceptions of the scriptural in New Testament studies. We ought to view manuscripts like the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri as unique instances of reception, and as a space where scribes and communities co-mingle to create the New Testament anew.

Taking a more material approach, Kristine Rose-Beers engages the Chester Beatty's papyrological collection to explore the evolution of the book, moving from scroll to single-quire codex to multi-quire codex, with a special focus on binding procedures. When we explore the papyri from this perspective, we gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between text and material and of the actual reading experiences that these manuscripts would have engendered when they were first made and used.

Tommy Wasserman also pays attention to the scribal aspects of early New Testament papyri and what they reveal about channels of tradition and cultural transfer in the ancient Roman world, particularly the relationship between Jewish and Christian scribal cultures that both used the Greek language. For Wasserman, shared Jewish and Christian scribal practices suggest perhaps an earlier date for some of the more substantial New Testament papyri, pushing back against recent challenges to the early dating of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri and other collections.<sup>13</sup>

The New Testament is not the only ancient literary collection preserved on papyri. The Septuagint – the Greek translations of Jewish scriptures, or the Old Testament – are

<sup>13</sup> See Nongbri 2018.

also preserved among the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri. Kristin De Troyer's essay examines the complicated textual history of the book of Esther, focusing on the variations internal to its Greek traditions. Her careful textual analysis illustrates the text-critical importance of the papyri as early witnesses to these traditions. And although the Biblical Papyri have been privileged for their text critical value, over and against other possible uses, De Troyer shows us that there is still much to uncover and recategorize when it comes to the ancient texts of scriptural works.

The final two articles in the book turn to an area that has until quite recently been overlooked when it comes to thinking about Christian writings preserved on papyrus: Coptic literature. Hugo Lundhaug examines the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, one manuscript of which is part of the Beatty collection, concluding that, although interest in the work appears to have died off in late antiquity, themes preserved in it appear in much later Coptic apocrypha. Nonetheless, it is an ideal example of what we owe to the papyrological material uncovered in Egypt around the turn of the twentieth century; without the papyri, much early Jewish and Christian literature would be lost. Kimberley A. Fowler's essay also addresses a Coptic tradition, this time focusing on the Manichaean psalms, their presentation of women, and interpretation of female figures in the New Testament Gospels and other ancient Christian literature. Fowler argues that when we coordinate the literary evidence with the documentary papyri from a location like Kellis, where we know an active Manichaean community existed, we can gain a deeper understanding of the role of women in the community and in early Christianity more broadly. The Coptic papyri should not be overlooked because they can shed important light on genuine instantiations of early Christian literature and practices.

Overall, this book is designed to reassess the critical value of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri in relationship to Papyrology more broadly and the stories about this collection ninety years after its existence was made public. The articles that follow do this by acknowledging the

inherent connection between acquisition and exhibition and between the consequence for real, mostly anonymous people who enabled the acquisition and our own scholarship by rethinking the critical emphases that have dominated scholarship on the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri since the 1930s. It is my hope that this publication supports the institutional goals of the Chester Beatty in caring for, researching, sharing, and promoting its collection and in fostering understanding, engagement, and curiosity. The substance of this book shows that there remains much to be curious about and that there is much more to be said about the papyri, not to mention the rest of the collection that extends from cuneiform tablets to Dürer prints to deluxe Byzantine gospel manuscripts to snuff boxes and beyond. The Beatty collection and its archives remain fertile ground for researchers from many traditions and disciplines, and I hope that this book encourages new research and interest in the collection.

And while we might decide not to follow Kenyon in thanking Chester Beatty himself, especially since he is no longer our personal patron, we can certainly extend our gratitude to the staff at the museum that bears his name, along with the taxpayers of Ireland and others who fund it, for continuing to conserve, display, and make accessible some of the most remarkable papyrological materials in existence. I am grateful to the Chester Beatty for hosting a conference where these papers were first read in October 2021, especially to Jill Unkel for her logistical work, but also to the technical team, Head of Collections Sinéad McCartan, and Director Fionnuala Croke for their support, participation, and conversation. The conference and part of the funding that enabled this book to be fully open access were graciously provided by the Irish Research Council's New Foundations Scheme 2019 under the auspices of a project entitled *Greek Papyri and the Earliest Copies of the New Testament at the Chester Beatty*. The open access costs were also supported by the European Research Council as part of the *Titles of the New Testament* (TiNT) project.

في هذه المقدمة يعرض المحرر الرئيسي للكتاب موضوع هذا المجلد وهو برديات تشستر بيتي بعد تسعين عاماً من اقتنائها على يد جامع التحف الشهير هذا. حيث يقدم جارك، بعد عرض قصير عن الصورة المثالية التي رسمها تشيستر بيتي عن نفسه لمنهج المجلد في تفكيك هذه السردية فيقول: "لا يهدف هذا النهج إذن إلى إنكار القيمة الأدبية أو الأهمية الثقافية للمخطوطات التي جمعها بيتي، ولا يهدف إلى إنكار القيمة العلمية الهامة للنصوص التي تتمتع بها هذه المخطوطات في مسألة تحديد النصوص "الأصلية" أو "الأولية" للكتاب المقدس، ولكنه منهي يهدف بالأساس إلى وضع هذه المادة العلمية في سياق الجدل العلمي الدائر الآن في مجال علم البردي وذلك لتحليل الفترة التي تم فيها تجميع مثل هذا المجموعات الكبيرة من قبل الأفراد مثل مجموعة تشستر بيتي، وكذا لتحديد وضع الدراسات البردية ضمن الروايات التاريخية الأكبر التي تهيم على وتؤثر في الطرق التي نكتب ونفكر بها في عملنا الأكاديمي. فلا يمكن أن ينكر أحد الارتباط الوثيق بين البحث اللغوي الدقيق وبين القصص والروايات الأبعد من ذلك والتي نقصها أثناء بحثنا الدقيق عن الأشخاص والمؤسسات التي أتاحت لنا هذه المكتشفات الأثرية للدراسة. فقه اللغة والأخلاقيات المهنية وجهان لعملة واحدة". وفي نهاية المقال يقدم المؤلف مختصرات باللغة الإنجليزية للمقالات التي يحتويها هذا الكتاب بالإضافة إلى قائمة مراجع. المقال مفيد لمن يريد أن يستعرض هذا المجلد بشكل سريع للتعرف على أهم الموضوعات التي يتناولها المؤلفون وقائمة المراجع في نهاية المقال مفيدة لمن يريد أن يتعمق أكثر في موضوع السردية التي نسجها تشيستر بيتي عن نفسه كجامع مخطوطات هدفه البر والتقوى.

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Brian McGing

## Papyrology in its Second Century, and the Chester Beatty

علم البرديات بعد مائة عام من بدايته ومجموعة برديات شيستر، بيتي بريان ماجين

From time to time, papyrologists like to look both over their shoulder at where the discipline has come from, and straight ahead into its future. In a period when the study of classics is under close scrutiny, it is perhaps no harm to repeat the exercise, even at the risk of raising some of the same points emphasised by distinguished colleagues.<sup>1</sup>

A good starting point is the frequent reference made to the prediction of both Ludwig Mitteis and Theodor Mommsen that the twentieth century would be the century of papyrology, just as the nineteenth had been the century of epigraphy.<sup>2</sup> Were they right? Answers will vary, but on the whole I do not believe their confidence was justified or at least not fully justified. It depends on what category of texts is under consideration, those that preserve works of literature or the far greater number of those that record everyday documents. The literary texts revealed by the late nineteenth and early twentieth century discovery of papyri from Egypt undoubtedly provided a major new element in classical scholarship, a whole new world of literary evidence. Initial excitement at the possibility of finding new works of Greek literature seemed to be justified, with the speedy publication of Aristotle's *Athenaion Politeia*, the mimes of Herondas, the speeches of the orator Hypereides, or poems of Bacchylides. Works of literature have continued to appear since then. We have seen recently, for instance, new poems of Sappho, if in controversial circumstances.<sup>3</sup> And no doubt we will continue to get new fragments of literature, although papyrus collections have been carefully searched for extensive literary texts and it is unlikely that we will see large discoveries in the existing collections. There is, however, always the possibility of something emerging from cartonnage, new excavations (as there have been at Bacchias, since the image in Figure 1 was taken), and new technology applied to old

papyri. There is almost no field of Greek literature (and some Latin) to which papyri have not contributed new works.<sup>4</sup> As van Minnen has said: "It would be unthinkable nowadays to study the lyric poetry of archaic Greece, to write a history of hellenistic poetry, or to reconstruct the nature of early Christian gnosticism without the material base provided by the new texts preserved on papyrus."<sup>5</sup>

The Bible's connections with Egypt were a prominent part of early investigations – the Egypt Exploration Society, founded in 1882, undertook "to conduct excavations especially on sites of biblical and classical interest" – and the first text published in the Oxyrhynchus series was from the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>6</sup> It was not, of course, until the 1930s that the Chester Beatty biblical texts burst onto an excited world.<sup>7</sup>

The excitement in this case was caused not so much by new works, as by the way in which papyrus offered us the earliest texts of the New Testament (see Figure 2), bringing us closer to the beginnings of Christianity, and providing evidence of how and when the New Testament was put together. The textual contribution of these important New (and Old) Testament documents is symptomatic of what is often seen as the main value of literary papyri, which is not that they have added large quantities to the canon of Greek literature. Yes, we have some exciting additions – and papyri offer us just about the only way of expanding the corpus of literature – but it is particularly in textual studies that papyri have established themselves as a normal and integral part of classical scholarship. Pick up an Oxford Text of Homer or Euripides, or a standard edition of the New Testament, and the apparatus criticus will bear witness to the important role played by papyri in the establishment of the text. If textual criticism has in the past been the main beneficiary of papyrological investigation, it is also important to emphasise the growing appreciation of the physical properties of papyri and what this tells us about the social context of their production

1 On the history of the discipline, Keenan 2009 is a most attractive summary. Peter van Minnen has written three important treatments of its future: van Minnen 1993, 2007, 2009. See also Maehler 2012.

2 Martin 2000, 1–2; Gonis 2006, 195–96.

3 Obbink 2014. For the statement of the Egypt Exploration Society concerning the wrongful sale of its manuscripts, see <https://www.ees.ac.uk/News/professor-obbink-and-missing-ees-papyri> [accessed 18 January 2022].

4 See an excellent summary in Renner 2009, 284–90.

5 van Minnen 1993, 6.

6 The social and historical context of late-nineteenth century interest in Egypt is nicely set out in Parsons 2007, 3–11.

7 Their discovery was announced by Sir Frederic Kenyon on 19 November 1931. He described them as "the most remarkable addition to the textual material of the Greek Bible that has been made for many a long day."

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**Figure 1:** Bacchias, Kom el-Atl, photo by the author.

and use as texts.<sup>8</sup> There is every reason to believe that both approaches will continue. Just on the sheer numbers of literary papyri, as van Minnen notes, “there are more unpublished Homeric papyri in Oxford than there are published Homeric papyri *tout court*.”<sup>9</sup> Papyrology has unquestionably established itself as an indispensable part of literary and Biblical Studies and will continue to bring new life to the study of ancient texts, their authors, and their social contexts.

The standing of documentary Papyrology, on the other hand, has always been more ambiguous.<sup>10</sup> It became clear early on in the story of their discovery that the vast majority of texts emerging from Egypt were not works of literature, but the documentation of everyday life, both official and private. This was generally considered a disappointment, and classicists largely lost interest in the subject, although two of the greatest scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Mommsen and Wilamowitz, were much more positive about the value of documentary texts than many of

their contemporaries and successors.<sup>11</sup> Even more enthusiastic was the great New Testament scholar, Adolf Deissmann, who revolutionised understanding of the New Testament and Septuagint through his reading of the documentary papyri from Egypt (and other non-literary Greek sources from the Near East). Paradoxical as it may seem, he claimed, the non-literary papyri have greater value for serious historical research than the literary.<sup>12</sup> Among most classicists in much of the last hundred years, however, the idea that the only good papyrus is a literary papyrus, and that the rest are largely peripheral, would not have met with widespread opposition. How did this come about? If literary papyri or biblical texts were absorbed easily enough into their respective fields, why were documentary papyri not absorbed into the study of ancient history? Part of the answer must be that there were far fewer literary texts. Another part must be that study of the masterworks of Greek literature ranked more highly in the hierarchy of classical scholarship than social and economic history, for which documentary papyri were so informative. And it was in this field that works like Claire Préaux’s *L’économie royale des Lagides* (1939), Rostovtse-

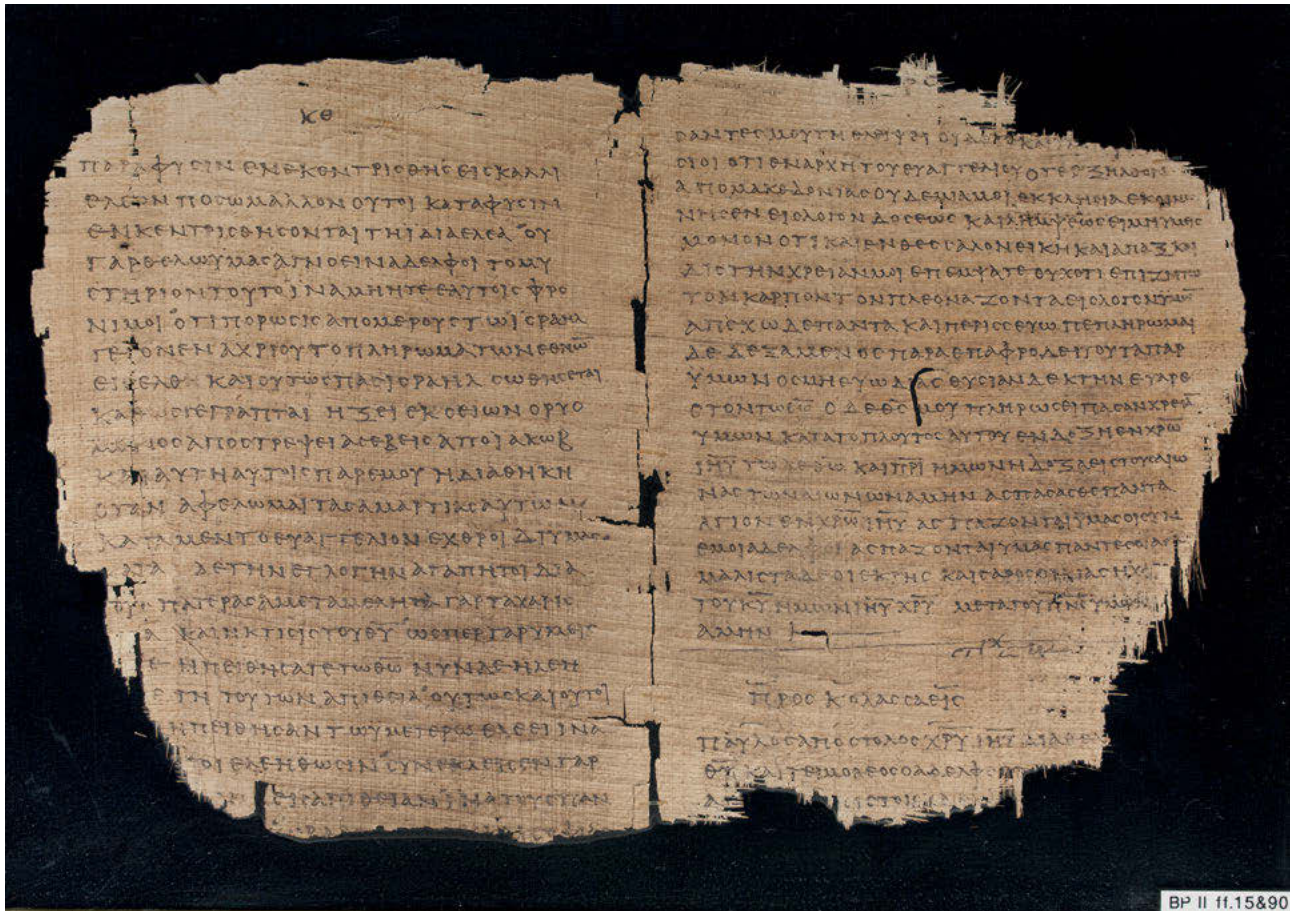
<sup>8</sup> For an impressive study along these lines of the Chester Beatty’s copy of the Book of Revelation, see Malik 2016, esp. 21–71 (on codicology, palaeography and scribal practices). For the same sort of concerns applied to ostraca, see Caputo / Lougovaya 2021. The dangers of ignoring the materiality of papyri is explored by Mazza 2021.

<sup>9</sup> van Minnen 2007, 706.

<sup>10</sup> McGing 2019, 565–67.

<sup>11</sup> van Minnen 1993, 7.

<sup>12</sup> See Deissman 1908, 19; and for his extensive analysis of papyri and ostraca, p. 13–34. Even as papyri were first emerging in large numbers from Egypt, he recognised their importance for understanding the language and social world of the Greek Bible; see Deissmann 1895, 55–170.



BP II ff.15&amp;90

Figure 2: End of Epistle to the Philippians, beginning of Colossians, Dublin, CBL BP II f. 90.

ff's *A Large Estate in Egypt in the 3rd Century BC* (1922) and, most of all, his *Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (1941) confirmed, if confirmation were needed, the credentials of papyri as a vital new source of historical information. As a rule, however, ancient historians tended to take ship somewhere around Caesarea on the coast of Palestine and head for Cyrene or Roman North Africa, making sure to give Egypt a wide berth. The main reason for side-lining it was the notion of Egypt's specificity: it was simply so different from everywhere else that it was not needed to explain better the history of the rest of the ancient world.<sup>13</sup>

It is instructive to look at what happened at the beginning in the modern study of papyri, in the 1890s and early 1900s, because it set the pattern for the scholarly discipline, both for the academic directions it took and for its entirely western appropriation. Academic disciplines such as Classics, History, or English are being subjected at the moment to a deservedly stern examination of their complicity

in the establishment, or at least acceptance, of modern empire, slavery, and racism. The fact that in 1900 the only people interested in, and capable of, studying Greek papyri were western scholars, was already a product of imperial attitudes. The British Empire (and other European empires) had little interest in sharing its elite control of classical education – indeed it had virtually no interest in the education of most of its subjects, except as a means of imperial control.<sup>14</sup> Disciplinary divisions of scholarship and the artificial but convenient periodization of Egypt's history neatly assigned the Pharaonic period and Egyptian language to Egyptologists, the Greek and Roman periods and the Greek language to classicists, and the Islamic period and Arabic language to Islamic scholars. The dominance of classical

<sup>13</sup> For the unfortunate results of the identification of Egypt as a "special place" by the great German scholar, Ulrich Wilcken, see Keenan 2009, 64–5. See also McGing 2019, Speidel 2019.

<sup>14</sup> As Macaulay's famous, and influential, *Minute on education* (1835) makes clear, at least in the case of India: "it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect." For a scathing assessment of the shortcomings of the British Raj's treatment of education in India, see Tharoor 2016, 183–92.



scholars, who on the whole did not know the ancient Egyptian language, in the study of Egypt in the Greek and Roman period (roughly 300 BCE to 700 CE) not only channelled modern Egyptians into a greater interest in their Islamic and Pharaonic past, but also to some extent concealed the fact that the Egyptian people continued to live, work, worship their own gods and speak their own language throughout the entire millennium in which Greek remained the language of the administration. The multi-lingual and multi-cultural character of the papyri has been more fully appreciated in recent decades.<sup>15</sup> The importance of Demotic in understanding Ptolemaic history, for instance, is more widely appreciated now and will only grow as Demoticists publish more of the large body of unpublished Demotic material.<sup>16</sup> The same with Arabic at the end of the Byzantine period. And Egyptian scholars have been reclaiming a role in the history of their country during the Greek millennium. A recognition of the Egyptian character of that millennium may also be enhanced in the consciousness of the Egyptian people through archaeological routes. I think, for instance, of the spectacular Valley of the Golden Mummies in the Bahariya oasis excavated by Zahi Hawass, which is an important example of Egyptian culture, but dates to the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.<sup>17</sup> Discoveries like this have the capacity to help change preconceived attitudes about Egypt's past and who owns it.

I return to the matter of academic directions, and the manner in which papyri came to light. The antiquities market provided the first impetus. Where did the dealers get their material? As Brent Nongbri has shown, dealers often hid their sources, themselves often illegal diggers, and the provenance of the texts they were selling.<sup>18</sup> That means it is almost impossible, in many cases, to restore their archaeological context. The same goes for early excavations and texts preserved in mummy wrapping (cartonnage). In the search for papyri, early excavations, certainly up until the exemplary University of Michigan dig at Karanis in the later

1920s and 1930s, were mostly unsystematic, with no proper archaeological method applied (see Figure 3).<sup>19</sup>

And the papyri recovered from cartonnage were also separated from their original context. Van Minnen may lament that “even most papyrologists today have fallen for the temptation to regard papyri as dead objects without a context,” but that is because many are without a context, and without any reasonable hope of retrieving one.<sup>20</sup> There has been a growing awareness of this shortcoming in recent years, and new possibilities for the integrated study of sites have been developing, particularly in the Dakhla Oasis in the western desert, and in the eastern desert too.<sup>21</sup> And we can do more with existing collections, through the medium of “museum archaeology,” attempting to trace in the archives the biography of individual texts.<sup>22</sup> Take this image from a document in the Chester Beatty as an example (Figure 4). A transcription of the text quickly reveals that it deals with a subject very similar to a Berlin papyrus, *BGU 20 2869*, published in 2014. From the content alone, it becomes clear that it is in fact the left-hand portion of that Berlin text. It now yields a fuller story of five donkey owners from Narmouthis communicating about the transport of tax grain with the nomarch, Tiberius Julius Philoxenos, confirming in many instances the excellent proposals of the editor of the Berlin piece, and adding new information. This procedure has been going on since the beginnings of papyrology. Rubbish dumps, where many papyri originate, were already, to some extent, random gatherings of documents, and texts then got broken up in the digging process, or by dealers, and scattered among different modern collections. Scholars have been piecing them together ever since. The improvement with online imaging, however, has made the process much quicker. But the advantage is not just putting the texts together. We know nothing of the biography of the Chester Beatty fragment, but we do know that the Berlin half was acquired from the collection of the well-known papyrus conservator, Hugo Ibscher. And Ibscher had close connections with Chester Beatty. If we can track down the sources of Ibscher's acquisitions, this might lead us to further information not just about this document, but about the other Narmouthis texts in the Chester Beatty (to which I will come). There is at least a lead to follow.

Other characteristics of the early collection and study of papyri have affected where the subject is now and

<sup>15</sup> For specific studies, see, for instance, Vandorpe 2002, Vandorpe and Schwaebens 2010; and for useful summaries, Thompson 2009, Fournet 2009.

<sup>16</sup> This is all in sharp contrast to earlier attitudes. In one of his letters to Gilbert Smyly (dated 12 March 1902), Bernard Grenfell writes about digging at Khamsin and the large number of crocodile mummies wrapped in papyrus cartonnage: “Fortune however dealt us a nasty blow by causing demotic to preponderate greatly. Still there are some rather nice Greek documents.” See Hickey 2017, 230.

<sup>17</sup> Hawass 2006, Official Website at <https://www.guardians.net/hawass/mummy-main.htm>

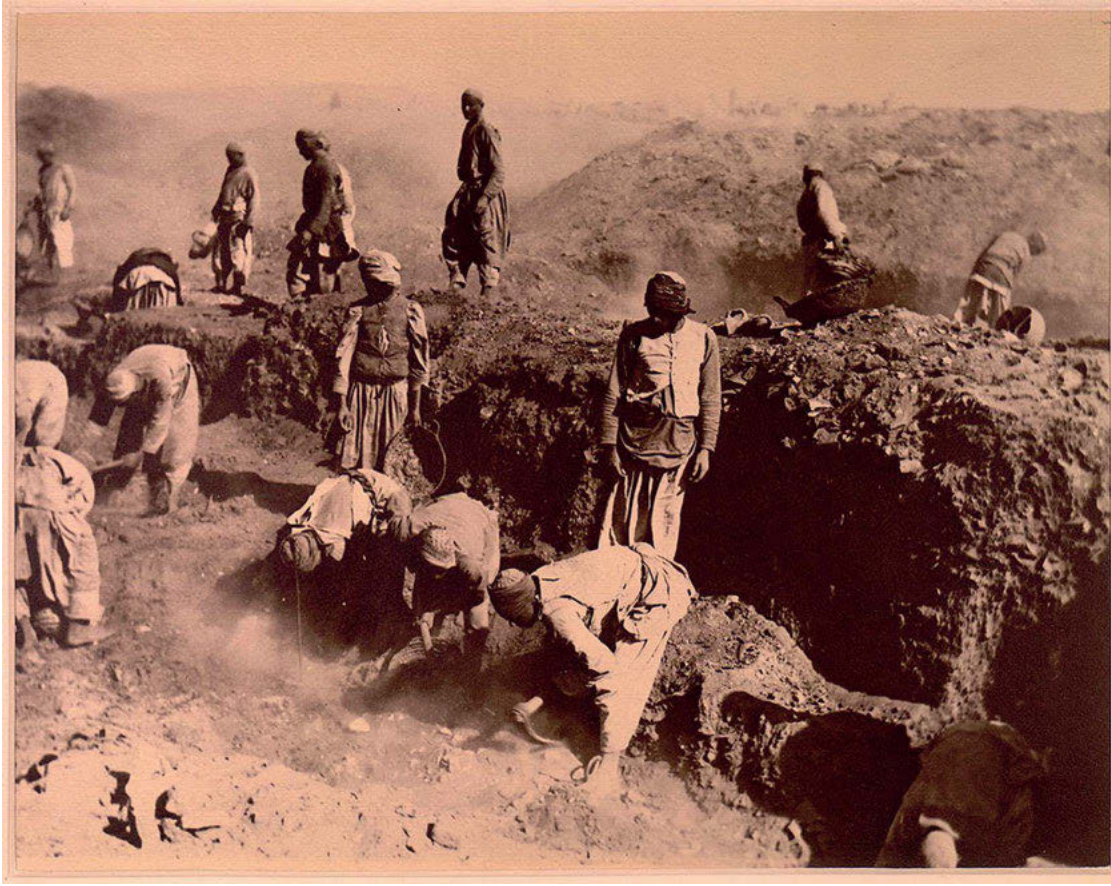
<sup>18</sup> See Nongbri 2018, 122–30, for example, on the difficulty of tracing the provenance of the Chester Beatty Biblical papyri, some of the most famous texts to have emerged from Egypt.

<sup>19</sup> The story and results of the Karanis excavations are well set out in Gazda 2004; Wilfong and Ferrara 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Van Minnen 1993, 12.

<sup>21</sup> Helpful early summaries in Bagnall and Rathbone 2004, chapters 9 and 10. More recently, Bagnall and Tallet 2019 demonstrate the exciting results of the application of modern methods.

<sup>22</sup> The term was coined by Vandorpe 1994.



**Figure 3:** An early dig at Oxyrhynchus ([www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk](http://www.papyrology.ox.ac.uk)). Public domain.

where it might go. I have referred to the way in which papyrus finds were scattered among modern collections. With a few exceptions this haphazard formation process has resulted in a tendency to publish haphazard collections of papyri. Occasionally archives are to be found in one place, although they are often scattered among different collections, but normally, or in many modern papyrus collections, there are to be found texts of different periods from different places concerning different subjects and different people. And the norm, understandably, has been to publish volumes of papyri that reflect this randomness. The Merton Papyri in the Chester Beatty provide a good example. They are extremely well-preserved papyri, and handsomely published with excellent illustrations, but they come from different locations and span the entire period of papyri written in Greek.<sup>23</sup> This situation has not made it easy for scholars from other fields. They are often faced with a confusing blizzard of texts that in the past have mostly not been pulled together into manage-

able sets of data. One of the ways forward is to develop the practice of publishing corpora of the same sort of document. The study of the Jewish presence in Egypt, for example, was advanced immeasurably by Tcherikover's three-volume collection of texts concerning Jews and Judaism, the *Corpus Papyrorum Judaicarum* (1957–1964, recently supplemented by volume 4 in 2020, with two more volumes in preparation). These volumes make the subject available for study to non-papyrologists. It is interesting that historians of ancient Judaism have not had problems fully incorporating in their investigations the evidence of the papyri from Egypt, without necessarily becoming expert papyrologists themselves. The value of this approach is also well illustrated by Masciadri and Montevecchi's volume of wet nurse contracts from 1984, or Roger Bagnall and Bruce Frier's collection of the census returns of Roman Egypt (1994); Bagnall and Cribiore's *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt* (2006); and the more recent tax lists of Dorothy Thompson and Willy Clarysse in *Counting the People*, which collects and edits the documentation in volume 1 and analyses it in considerable depth in volume 2. This is a model of how to make sense

<sup>23</sup> See Bell / Roberts 1948; Rees (et al.) 1959; Thomas 1967. Available online at <https://chesterbeatty.ie/collections/highlights/papyrus-manuscripts/> [accessed 20 January 2022].

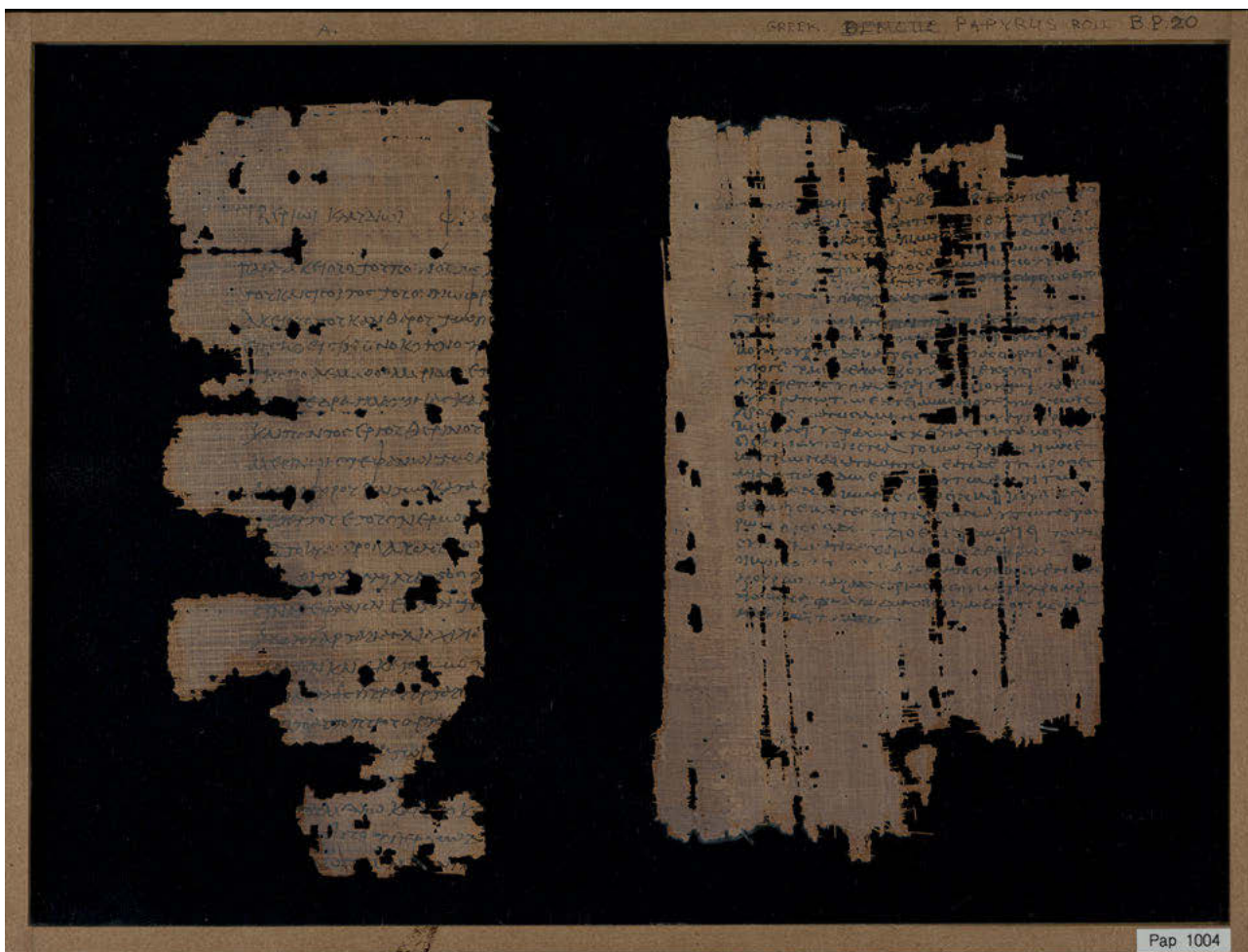


Figure 4: CBL Pap 1004.

of the scattered publication of papyri for a wider scholarly audience, and, it is to be hoped, will be one of the future directions of documentary papyrology.

More of these studies are needed because, until recently at least, there was massively more editorial work done on papyri than analysis. For a long time, Papyrology was largely about the editing of texts, a subject only for experts, and difficult to access for non-experts. Even forty years ago, for a scholar interested in Papyrology it was no easy task to read oneself into the subject. Almost from the beginning, the subject was extremely well organised internally,<sup>24</sup> and there was an excellent technical introduction by Turner (1968) and a more extensive one in Italian by Montevicchi (1973), but almost no general studies. H. I. Bell's *Egypt from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest* (1948) was the standard history and two lively studies of Naphtali Lewis showed how interesting the stories were that papyri could

tell (Lewis 1983, 1986). It was largely a closed shop for specialists. This was perhaps more by accident than conscious design, reflecting a time before the study of classics was opened to wider audiences, in the English-speaking world, by the introduction of university courses in Classical Civilisation (i.e., study of the ancient world through translation). For a long time Papyrology showed little intention of reaching out beyond its own confines. And although the editorial norm was, and remains, to publish a translation along with every text, there was an absence of collections of translated documents – apart from three excellent Loeb volumes<sup>25</sup> – so the subject could not easily be taught to students with no Greek, even though the documentation from Egypt is more detailed than anything else we have from the ancient world, and highly attractive. More recently, good sourcebooks have appeared.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Hunt / Edgar 1932; Hunt / Edgar 1934; Page 1941.

<sup>26</sup> See Rowlandson 1998, on women; Keenan (et al.) 2014 on law. On Hellenistic history, Bagnall and Derow 1981 uses Egyptian evidence extensively.

<sup>24</sup> Particularly as a result of the projects initiated by Friedrich Preisigke: see Keenan 2009, 65.

It was not until Alan Bowman's *Egypt after the Pharaohs* (1986) that an attractive modern survey of Graeco-Roman Egypt appeared. More recently we have had something of an explosion, keenly needed, of synthetic works. Roger Bagnall's *Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History* (1995) is still the clearest statement of the potential of papyri in the field of ancient history. And there has been an impressive response. Handbooks and companions have been, I suspect in all disciplines, as in classical studies, a publishing goldrush – to such an extent that there is now wasteful overlap on some classical authors. They were, however, badly needed in Graeco-Roman Egypt. The handbooks edited by, for instance, Bagnall in 2005 and 2009, and Katelijjn Vandorpe's Wiley Companion of 2019, and a host of others, are one of the most important recent developments in the study of Greek and Roman Egypt.<sup>27</sup> They do not just open the subject to non-experts, they also help to normalise Egypt and answer that point that I referred to earlier about its specific character. It has become abundantly clear that although the volume and nature of the papyrological evidence from Egypt is unlike anything else we have from the ancient world, Egypt itself was not, for instance, a Hellenistic kingdom unlike any of the others, or a Roman province so uniquely different that it constituted a rule unto itself.<sup>28</sup> Of course it had its own particularities, not least a riverine economy based on an exceptionally fertile agricultural zone (similar to that of the Euphrates valley), but evidence from elsewhere in the wider Greek and Roman world suggests far more commonalities than differences.

Along with companions, there has also been an increase in the number of detailed analytical works, that is, works of ancient history using, largely, papyrological evidence. This strand of papyrological research has always existed, but historical works such as Dorothy Thompson's study of the village of Kerkeosiris (1971) or of the city of Memphis (1988) were at the time heavily outnumbered by editorial studies. But the balance has been changing. Just to take some examples in the last twenty years, examinations of land tenure, transport, petitions, and village life both show the attraction of this sort of history and help to make Egypt more accessible.<sup>29</sup> This trend will certainly be a continuing and growing part of the future. There is still far

more raw data than considered analysis, and plenty of room for works of ancient history using papyrological sources. It has never been necessary for an ancient historian to be an expert epigrapher to use inscriptions as a source. It should not be necessary to be an expert papyrologist to use papyri as a source.

But this is more to do with a change of emphasis than with an expansion of the field. Van Minnen worries that there is not a sufficient number of papyrological editors to publish the texts we have.<sup>30</sup> It is a legitimate point, but there are two factors that continue to set a limit to the number of scholars who can be trained, and work as practitioners, in the editing of papyrological texts, or more generally in the study of Egypt in the Greek and Roman periods.

First, libraries. There is only a small group of libraries around the world that have what we might call a full papyrological collection, that is, all the published volumes of papyri, the technical support works and the relevant journals and books. Scholars who do not have the luxury of working in one of this small number of libraries, or being within reasonably close distance of one (there is none on the island of Ireland), have to be able to travel and spend time in a full library in order to bring work up to publication-ready standard; and that can be expensive and difficult to manage, with family and university commitments. So in many parts of the university world it is difficult for those who want to carry out papyrological research to do so. But just as important, it is equally difficult to train students in the field. Research students simply cannot be accepted into a subject that is not properly represented in the library holdings of that institution. With more scholarship going online, gaps are being filled, but not yet sufficiently to make a vital difference. This has in the past and will in the future continue to place a restriction on the number of people who can be trained as papyrologists or historians of Greek and Roman Egypt.

The second limitation I refer to is the job market. In the Anglophone university world I do not think it is inaccurate to say that when it comes to employing junior scholars to a first job, applicants whose main work is papyrological editing have long been regarded with suspicion by university appointment boards: they are thought to be too narrowly focused. That old attitude still comes into play: Egypt is a rule unto itself and the study of it is too specialised for most classics departments, which are relatively small and need scholars with broad, "mainline" expertise. As we get more analytical and synthetic work in papyrology, demonstrating that Egypt is not some scholarly cul-de-sac disconnected from the rest of the ancient

<sup>27</sup> See also Lloyd 2010, Riggs 2012, Shaw and Bloxam 2020 (more generally on Egyptology), Depauw 1997 on Demotic.

<sup>28</sup> Rathbone's 1991 study of the Appianus estate in third century Egypt clearly has applications well beyond the confines of Egypt, as does Kehoe 1992.

<sup>29</sup> Manning 2003 on land tenure, Adams 2007 on land transport; Kelly 2011 on petitions; Langelotti and Rathbone 2020 and Langelotti 2020 on village life (see also Blouin 2014).

<sup>30</sup> Van Minnen 2009, 645–46.

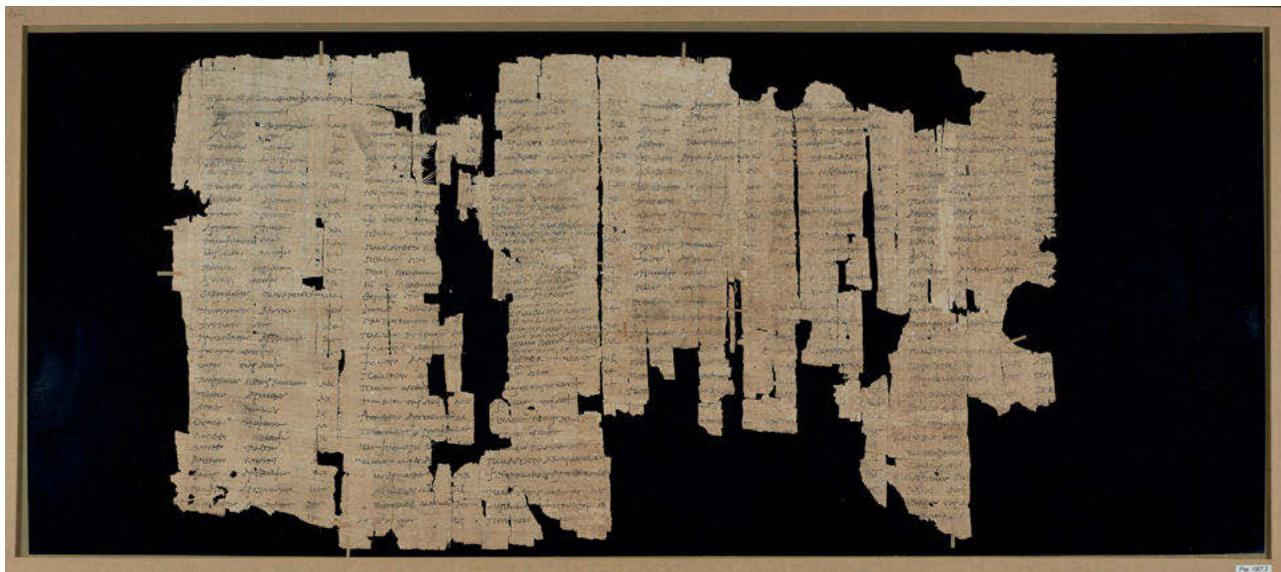


Figure 5: CBL Pap 1007 2.

world, this attitude should change; but it is still a limiting factor.

Returning to the Chester Beatty, the main papyrological strength of the collection is its biblical holdings, which constitute one of the most important written records of early Christianity. But it also has important unpublished documentary texts, for which I am in the course of devising a publication and study plan. So far, no provenance history for them can be found in the archives: we do not know from whom, where, or when Beatty acquired them. Like many documentary papyri, however, a number of them specify their place of origin, or it can be deduced. I give below just a flavour of this rich and extensive material.

The first example is a number of frames containing extensive remains of one roll (or more) of what are presumably tax lists: they list only name, father's name, and age. Only males aged 14 to 62, those eligible for poll tax, and other capitation taxes are included. The short section below illustrates the list (Figure 5).

Ἄρτβῶς	Ὀρίωνος	νη
Παμψενῆσις	ὁ υἱὸς	κη
Ὀρίωνος	ὁ ἀδελφός	κε
Πεταῦς	Ὀρίωνος	νγ
Ἄρκινις	ὁ ἀδελφός	λδ
Ἐσκεσῶθης	Παμπατωῦτος	μα
Hartbos	son of Horion	58
Pampsensis	his son	28
Horion (of Horion?)	his brother	25
Petaus	son of Horion	53
Harkinis	his brother	34
Eskesothēs	son of Pampatoous	41

Judging from the names, the document must come from Upper Egypt, probably Apollonopolis. There is no date easily legible, but the script is probably from the second century CE. There are further official tax documents on the back.

Most of the rest of the unpublished material comes from Narmouthis (Medinet Madi) and its environs in the Arsinoite nome. To what extent it all belongs together as an archive or dossier remains to be established.<sup>31</sup> The dated texts span about twenty years from Nero's principate into that of Vespasian. There are, for instance, eight frames that make up an administrative roll (*tomos sunkollesimos*) written on front and back (Figure 6). On the front are documents of various kinds, such as the petition below (dated 6 March 75 CE) addressed to Herakleides, Komogrammateus of Narmouthis, from the twenty-one elders of the public farmers of the lake shore at Phermouthis, complaining about the shutting off of a sluice gate which is preventing their land from being watered.

On the back is a long-running list of the scribal fees paid to the record office (*grapheion*) at Narmouthis for the various documents drawn up there.

Other possible areas of exploration of the Chester Beatty documentary collection include:

- Seven columns of another administrative roll. Columns 3 and 4 are copies of the lease of a palm grove (dated 26 September 77 CE) near the village of Ibion Eikosipentaron by Orseus son of Peneus from Berenikis Thesmorphou. On the back are seven columns of various lists and accounts.

<sup>31</sup> For a detailed typology of dossiers and archives, see Vandorpe 2009.

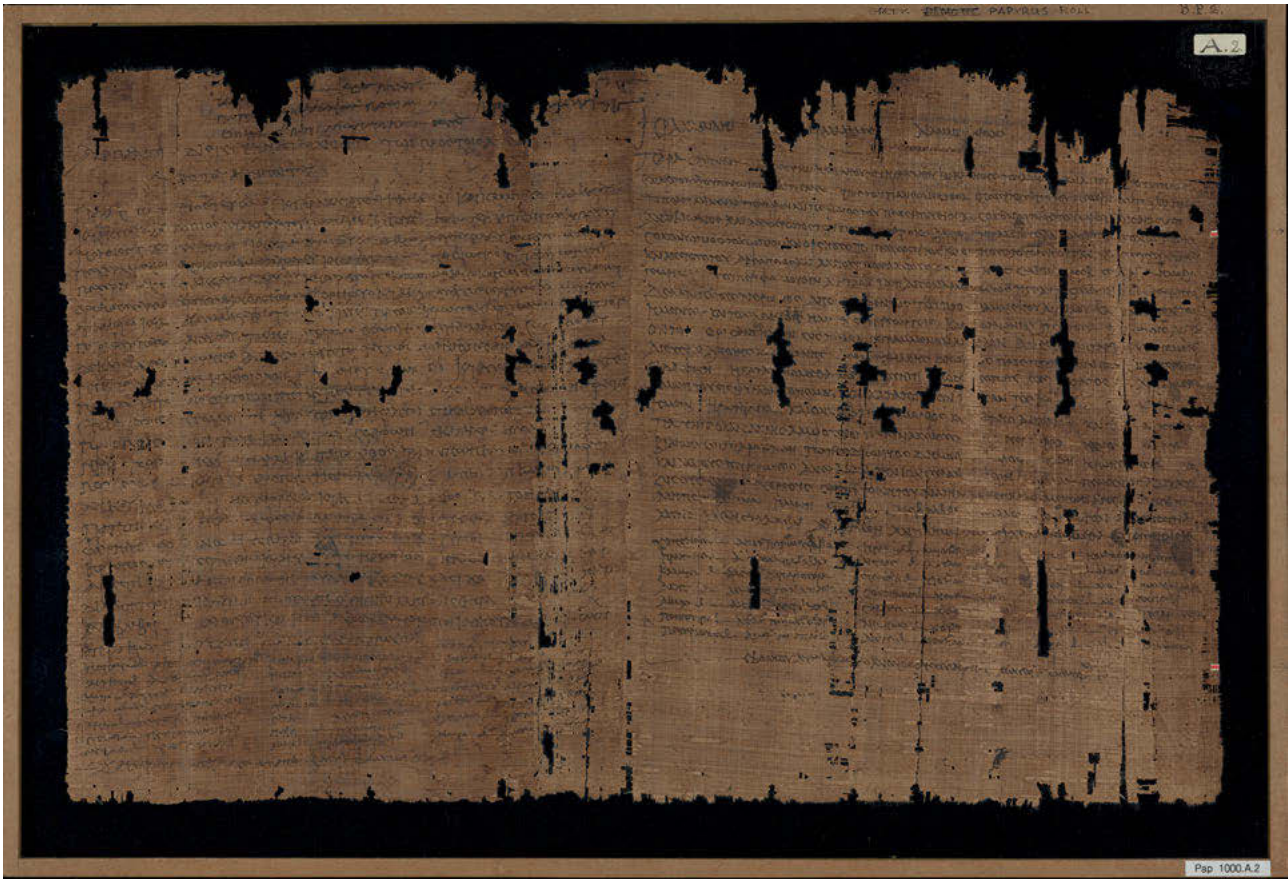


Figure 6: CBL Pap 1000 A.2.

- Six columns listing the name, father's names, age and physical distinguishing characteristics of farmers, on whose behalf their secretary, Tryphon son of Tryphon swears that he has measured out 2,700 aratbas of seed grain. 164 names survive but there is at least one column missing to the left and the total number of farmers must be about 200. The date is 11 November 68 CE, when Galba was emperor.
- Five columns of a similar oath, in which Tryphon, secretary of a group of 140 farmers (presumably the same Tryphon as the previous document), signs off on an oath sworn to the inspectors of sowing (κατασπορευσι) concerning 2,900 aratbas of seed grain (Figure 7). The

farmers are again all listed, with name, father's name, age, and distinguishing characteristics. The column illustrated opens with a strange name, Patonakes, who has a scar under his left calf. The document is dated 15 November 74 CE.

These are just some examples of this large administrative record of life in a country town in first century Egypt CE. Much of it deals with the same people from the same place in the same period. This situation offers unusually rich opportunities for study, but also poses challenges about the best way of publishing and analysing the texts, tasks that will take a number of years.



Figure 7: CBL Pap 1006.

القديم واللاهوت وتاريخ البحر المتوسط في العصور القديمة ولطلاب الدراسات العليا في هذه المجالات. تلقى هذه المقالة الضوء على تاريخ علم البرديات ومستقبله في المائة العام القادمة من وجهة نظر المؤلف. يعطى الباحث نظرة عامة على تاريخ علم البرديات اليونانية ومساهماته في مجال الدراسات اليونانية والرومانية والتاريخ القديم ودراسات علم الكتاب المقدس قبل أن يقدم لأهم الكتب التي توفر مدخل لغير المتخصصين في علم البرديات لكي يستفيدوا من الكم الهائل من المعلومات التي يحتويها هذا المجال الدراسي. ثم يعرض المؤلف المعوقات التي جعلت من هذا التخصص مجال شبه مغلق على أهله ولكنه في نفس الوقت يقدم بعض النماذج التي فتحت المجال أمام غير المتخصصين في نشر البرديات للاستفادة من المعلومات التي تقدمها هذه الوثائق كل على حسب مجال تخصصه. في نهاية المطاف يقدم الباحث نشر لوثيقتين إداريتين مع تحليل صلات هاتين الوثيقتين مع مثيلاتها من الوثائق في المجموعات المحفوظة في بعض الدول الغربية بالإضافة إلى الإطار التاريخي لهذه الوثائق. المقال مهم للمتخصصين في تاريخ العلوم الغربية والمتخصصين في علم البردي والتاريخ

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# Decolonizing the Troubled Archive(s) of Papyri and Papyrology

تفكيك الأفكار الاستعمارية في الأرشيفات المضطربة للبرديات وعلم البردي، أسامة جاد

I have elsewhere argued that “the need to decolonize the troubled archive[s] of Eurocentrism in Papyrology and Classics has never been more pressing.”<sup>1</sup> My arguments concerning Classics has now been published.<sup>2</sup> In this paper I will turn my attention to the theory and practise of Papyrology at the turn of the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> This is not my first try to decolonize what I called the “troubled archive(s)” of papyrus collections, nor my first go at analysing the postcolonial discourse in the academic field built upon it – Papyrology. Sometimes alone and sometimes in cooperation with other colleagues, I have on many occasions argued, in English and Arabic, for the benefits of this exercise not only for me on the personal level, but also for the worldwide community of papyrologists.<sup>4</sup> The present publication about Chester Beatty’s papyri and archival legacy, which celebrates one of the most important collections of biblical papyri in the world, deserves a revisit, hopefully with some fresh perspectives on such a crucial topic. Let us now start by introducing the reader to my idea of papyri and Papyrology in the long nineteenth century and beyond.<sup>5</sup>

1 Gad 2019.

2 Gad 2021.

3 The other two issues of globality and digitality that stood once in the draft’s title of this paper, are not new to the field and needs not be treated extensively in this short essay. See my recent comment about the digital divide here, <https://talkinghumanities.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2022/04/04/the-digital-divide-and-how-to-challenge-the-eurocentric-exclusion-zone/> (accessed 5 April 2022), our paper on the transparency of digital editions, Filosa / Gad / Bodard 2022; and also Reggiani 2017 and 2018. On the globality in the field see, e.g., the very first words of Gallo 1986, 1, where he stresses the globality of antiquity and how papyrology contributes to this global view of the ancient world. “Papyrology is one of the many disciplines that have come to be included in the study of antiquity. Like other historical disciplines, it contributes to a global view of the ancient world, and of Greek and Roman antiquity in particular, and is no mere sideline. Although one of the latest disciplines to be established, it has developed furthest and offers the greatest prospects.”

4 See e.g. Gad 2016, 2019 and most recently 2021.

5 The long nineteenth century (1780–1919) and the short twentieth century (1914–1991) are two terms coined by Hobsbawm 1962, 1975, 1987, and 1994.

## 1 Introduction

On a practical level, the colonial practices of the early generation of papyrologists have been dismissed as typical of this period. In reality, though, recent events have showed us not only that coloniality continues unabated, but that it is also justifiable in the eyes of many in the field. Indifference to the extremely serious issue of the interconnectedness of illicit trade in and trafficking of antiquities to wealthy persons and institutions in the global North, as well as the looting and subsequent destruction of archaeological sites, connected to crime networks of money laundry, weapons, drug, and human trafficking in source countries in the global South, is wide spread. In contrast to these realities on the ground, access to and publication of new materials remains *the* top mainstream priority in the field. In light of similar events concerning the Sappho fragment, including “the extensive buying of papyri from dubious sources and with minimal transparency by the Green family for their Museum of the Bible, and the controversy over the so-called Gospel of Jesus’ Wife and the fragment of the Gospel of John apparently fabricated by a man in Florida,” Roger Bagnall in his second edition of *Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History* states that

the discipline is not close to a consensus, I believe, as an *older generation* accustomed to buying and exporting antiquities freely, *even if in violation of Egyptian law (and increasingly of western willingness to enforce Egyptian claims)*, confronts *some younger scholars* with an unbending stance in favor of keeping papyri in Egypt and against all collecting. If the debate sometimes yields more heat than light, we may hope that out of it will come more thoughtful approaches to the problems offered to the historian by the lack of provenance for a large part of the papyri. (emphasis mine)<sup>6</sup>

The two related issues of unprovenanced material and the western response to its ethical ramifications, were, according to Bagnall, “barely in view a quarter-century ago.”<sup>7</sup> Both issues arose due to the “generally rather unreflective climate of papyrology. . .in which the usability and uses

6 Bagnall 2019, x.

7 Bagnall 2019, ix.

of the evidence of the documents are taken for granted.”<sup>8</sup> In a passing note about how the scholarly climate has (positively) changed, he further states that his phrase concerning the conservative climate of Papyrology is “the most quoted part of” the first edition of his *Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History*.<sup>9</sup> In the recording of Bagnall’s 2018 M. V. Taylor Lecture at the Roman Society in London, in which he read parts of the preface of his second edition, he revealed the identity of those who quoted this infamous phrase about the climate in Papyrology. They are “slightly indignant papyrologists.”<sup>10</sup>

On a theoretical level, I understand that ideas like “troubled archive(s),” “Eurocentrism,” “modern Egypt,” and “decoloniality” are novel in the context of a highly specialized field of study like Papyrology.<sup>11</sup> Editing Greek and Latin papyri, in the widest possible sense, is after all what constitutes Papyrology in its narrowest possible meaning. Publishing texts and editing papyri is no doubt an overwhelming and time-consuming activity and therefore “papyrologists,” write Keenan, have generally been too busy “‘doing papyrology’ to reflect upon their own disciplinary past.”<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, over the past hundred years of “doing Papyrology,” papyrologists have been able to publish only 10% (roughly 80,000 papyrus texts) of the approximately one million Egyptian documents that have been uncovered.<sup>13</sup> The fact that this large quantity of inscribed objects has been, like other *externalized* Egyptian artefacts, widely dispersed in museums, collections, and university libraries of the global North during the high days of western imperialism and colonialism, troubles only a few in the field.<sup>14</sup> The most pressing scholarly issue to the classically-minded papyrologist since the birth of the field was, and remains today, how to edit these materials, piecemeal or thematically, in order to make them accessible, and most importantly relevant, to the wider academic audience of antiquity-related disciplines. The main dichotomy in the field between documentary and literary texts reflects the interests of two primary group of scholars: ancient historians and classicists. In both

circles, the source material from Egypt is deemed at best unique and peripheral, and at worst fragmentary and accidental.<sup>15</sup>

In internal professional terms, this issue is discussed under the German catchphrase “Ägyptens Sonderstellung” or Egypt’s specificity.<sup>16</sup> The process of how these inscribed objects have been externalized from their archaeological and, most importantly to this paper, their sociocultural, legal, institutional, and economical *modern* Egyptian contexts has never been a matter of concern to papyrologists of western Europe,<sup>17</sup> even if “the failure to address the provenance issue not only costs us important contextual information but implies ‘the perpetuation of colonial sentiments, of paternalism, and the notion that the West is the true heir to the ancient Mediterranean world.’”<sup>18</sup> In this vein, the tone of Eurocentric Papyrology continues to be celebratory of its own perceived achievements. The costs of externalizing these materials from the Middle East and North Africa are absent from the scholarly discussion. And until very recently the provenance and ethical questions entered the discourse only reluctantly, mostly used in apologetic tone to belittle Egypt’s efforts in safeguarding its cultural heritage. Take for example the recommendations of the Brussels-based *Association Internationale de Papyrologues* (AIP) on the commerce of papyri.<sup>19</sup> The working group of the AIP perceives the situation regarding papyri and Papyrology in Egypt as a situation that almost entirely reflects the failures of Egyptians. According to this group, Papyrology suffers as discipline in Egypt, while in Europe it is problem free. Therefore, Papyrology in Egypt requires direct support from the international body of scholars who know more and who care more for the cultural heritage of this country. Egyptian scholarship needs a complete revision, according to the members of the working group who formulated sixteen recommendations without any consultation with any Egyptian scholar or official in a serious matter. The preamble to the sixteen

<sup>8</sup> Bagnall 2019, ix.

<sup>9</sup> Bagnall 2019, ix.

<sup>10</sup> The video, which is about an hour long (57:38), is available here <https://www.romansociety.org/Events/Past-Events/Professor-Roger-Bagnall-Papyrology-and-Ancient-History-a-changing-relationship> (accessed 5 April 2022). The phrase is in minute 8:22–24.

<sup>11</sup> See Gad 2016, and see Davoli 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Keenan 2009, 74

<sup>13</sup> For the estimation, see van Minnen 2007.

<sup>14</sup> For the complexities of the externalization issue, see Stevenson 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. e.g. Finely 1999, 200. For a general view of the “uses” and “usability” of not only papyri, but also inscriptions and coins in economic history, see now von Reden 2019, 357–79.

<sup>16</sup> About Egypt’s specificity see Brian McGing’s paper in this volume.

<sup>17</sup> Concerning how “planning” the past has shaped Egypt’s modern realities, see Carruthers 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Bagnall 2019, ix–x, quoting Hickey, 2009. On how this failure to address the provenance question affects credibility and usability of the evidence see, e.g., Nongbri 2018 and von Reden 2019, 358.

<sup>19</sup> Available here <https://aip.ulb.be/recomcommerce.html> (accessed 10 April 2022).

recommendations formulated by members of the working party reads:

The Working Party's terms of reference from the Comité International de Papyrologie, as approved by the Assemblée Générale of 4 August 2007, are "to study the complex legal, ethical and scholarly questions connected with the commerce in papyri and to make recommendations. . . on measures that may appropriately serve the purposes of scholarship, support the development of papyrological studies in Egypt and further the preservation of the documentary heritage of Egypt and other countries."

No Egyptian is recorded among the members, a reality that resonates with the general attitude toward Egypt in almost all antiquity-related disciplines. This fact has recently been demonstrated by Katherine Blouin in one of her blogposts about the Eurocentric composition of international associations studying antiquity and by Oscar Moro-Abadía's paper on archaeology as a "colonial discourse," promoting an idealized image of archaeological practice in colonized places and justifying the appropriation of material culture from these regions.<sup>20</sup> The theoretical justification of the AIP goes hand in hand with disregard of Egypt's role since 1835 in safeguarding its cultural heritage through legislation, enforcement, education (including archaeological, and more recently papyrological programmes), documentation, and international cooperation. UNESCO's convention of 1970 and Egypt's law no. 117 of 1983 (amended by law no. 3 of 2010) are not the start, but the end of long history of Egyptian efforts to legally safeguard its heritage.<sup>21</sup> While the question of legal and ethical consequences of working on unprovenanced material is important, more critical is the question of unprovenanced items in the collections of almost every museum, library, and university in the West. Were these materials legally acquired? Were they exported out of Egypt with the explicit permission of the antiquities service, in the form of a concession of excavation or the red seal of the Egyptian Museum or any other form that does not violate Egyptian regulations? Was the scholar who initially worked on these materials aware of such violations? What about the owner or holding institution? Do they know of any such violation? How much information can they offer scholars about the acquisition of a particular piece and/or pieces? These questions and many others are not impossible to answer if we are able to decolonize the troubled archives of celebrated papyrus hunters, like Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875–1968), Sir Ernest Alfred Thompson Wallis Budge

(1857–1934), and Niels Iversen Schow (1754–1830), whose photo is displayed in the online pantheon of papyrologists at the website of the AIP. Chester Beatty's library is extensively researched from many perspectives in this volume, and readers will find these contributions very helpful in navigating his large archive.<sup>22</sup> In this same vein, I will dedicate the coming pages to various readings through the archives of Budge and Schow in particular, in order to illustrate the benefits of decolonizing the archives.

Let's start with Budge, who unscrupulously hunted Egypt for ancient objects, outmanoeuvred Egyptian authorities, and eventually, with a great sense of pride, smuggled many artefacts, including multiple famous papyrus fragments, out of the country.<sup>23</sup> He reports that in 1899 he went to Upper Egypt in search of the missing fragments of Aristotle's *Constitution of the Athenians*, giving a detailed account of the illegal purchase of the piece and how he circumvented the regulations to get it to the British Museum.<sup>24</sup> "I left," he wrote,

for Upper Egypt on the morning of the 7th, and began making enquiries among the natives who busied themselves with antiquities for the missing columns of the Aristotle papyrus. After many fruitless visits to villages on both sides of the Nile, I gained the information I sought at Beni Suwef, and finally found the piece of papyrus itself in the hands of a gentleman at Asyut. I had no difficulty at all in arranging the matter with him, and I took the fragment with me to Luxor. The next question was how to get it to London. It was quite hopeless to expect that the Service of Antiquities would allow it to leave the country, and I did not want to take it with me to Mesopotamia. At length I bought a set of Signor Beato's wonderful Egyptian photographs, which could be used for exhibition in the Egyptian Galleries of the British Museum, and having cut the papyrus into sections, I placed these at intervals between the photographs, tied them up in some of Madame Beato's gaudy paper wrappers, and sent the parcel to London by registered book-post. Before I left Egypt a telegram told me that the parcel had arrived safely, and that its contents were exactly what had been hoped for.<sup>25</sup>

While he boasted about his violation of Egyptian regulations, he insisted on breaking no official rule of the British Museum. "The fact that I had taken possession of it," he writes,

<sup>22</sup> See the table of content for more details on this.

<sup>23</sup> Budge 1920, 153–254.

<sup>24</sup> The story that follows is absent from the British Museum's catalogue of this piece, available here [http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Papyrus\\_131](http://www.bl.uk/manuscripts/FullDisplay.aspx?ref=Papyrus_131). It is regrettable also that I was not able to include either the image of the fragment which Budge speaks about in this section or an image of his portrait in office, due to the copyright of the British Museum.

<sup>25</sup> Budge 1920, 154.

<sup>20</sup> Blouin 2018 and Moro-Abadía 2006.

<sup>21</sup> More in this below.

leaked out immediately, as such things always do in the East, and silly rumours got about as to the price which it was alleged that I had paid for it. The officials of the Service of Antiquities asked me to give it up to them, with the name of the native from whom I had obtained it, and I refused. The British Consul-General sent me a note telling me to give up the papyrus, saying that, if I did not, he would ask my employers, the Trustees of the British Museum, to order me to do so, and again I refused. I knew that the threat was no idle one, so, to avoid all complications and the possible loss of the papyrus, I determined to buy it for myself and to pay for it out of the sum of money with which, in view of such a contingency, I had provided myself in London. The Trustees' regulations do not permit any of their servants to make a private collection of any class of antiquities with which his department deals, but as Greek papyri went to the Department of Manuscripts and not to the Department of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities, I broke no official rule in buying the papyrus for myself. The counter-move which the officials of the Service of Antiquities made was to warn the Customs authorities at Port Sa'id and Alexandria to keep a sharp look-out for anticas in passengers' luggage, and the Postal authorities at these places were ordered to examine carefully all postal packets for England.<sup>26</sup>

Budge's account is full of details that lay bare the inner workings of the exportation procedure, including its effects upon and relations with the antiquities market, the local authorities, the Egyptian Museum, the British Museum, the occupying British army, the prices of papyri, and more.<sup>27</sup>

Papyrology has been slow in both theory and practice, at least in my view, to move away from realities reflected in Budge's approach outlined here. These examples are sufficient to introduce the problems that this paper explores, which argues for the pressing need to decolonize the troubled archive(s) of sophisticated scholarship about the Graeco-Roman legacy in Egypt.<sup>28</sup> In what follows, I revisit the topic of decoloniality, working to clarify the focal points of troubled archive(s), "Eurocentrism," "modern Egypt," and "decoloniality," and to elaborate the main issues of this scholarly debate. This analysis begins to answer questions such as, why is the history of modern Egypt is relevant? What is the troubled archive of Eurocentrism in Papyrology and how can decoloniality of teaching and research agendas enrich the field and the scholarly community worldwide?

<sup>26</sup> Budge 1920, 351.

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. Budge 1920, 147–55 and, for the larger context of antiquities trade in Egypt from 1880–1930, see also Hagen / Ryholt 2016.

<sup>28</sup> See, e.g., the critical study of one of the important archives in the history of Egyptian antiquities, the photographic archive of Tutankhamun, in Riggs 2019.

## 2 The relevance of modern Egypt's history for (de)constructing Eurocentrism in Papyrology

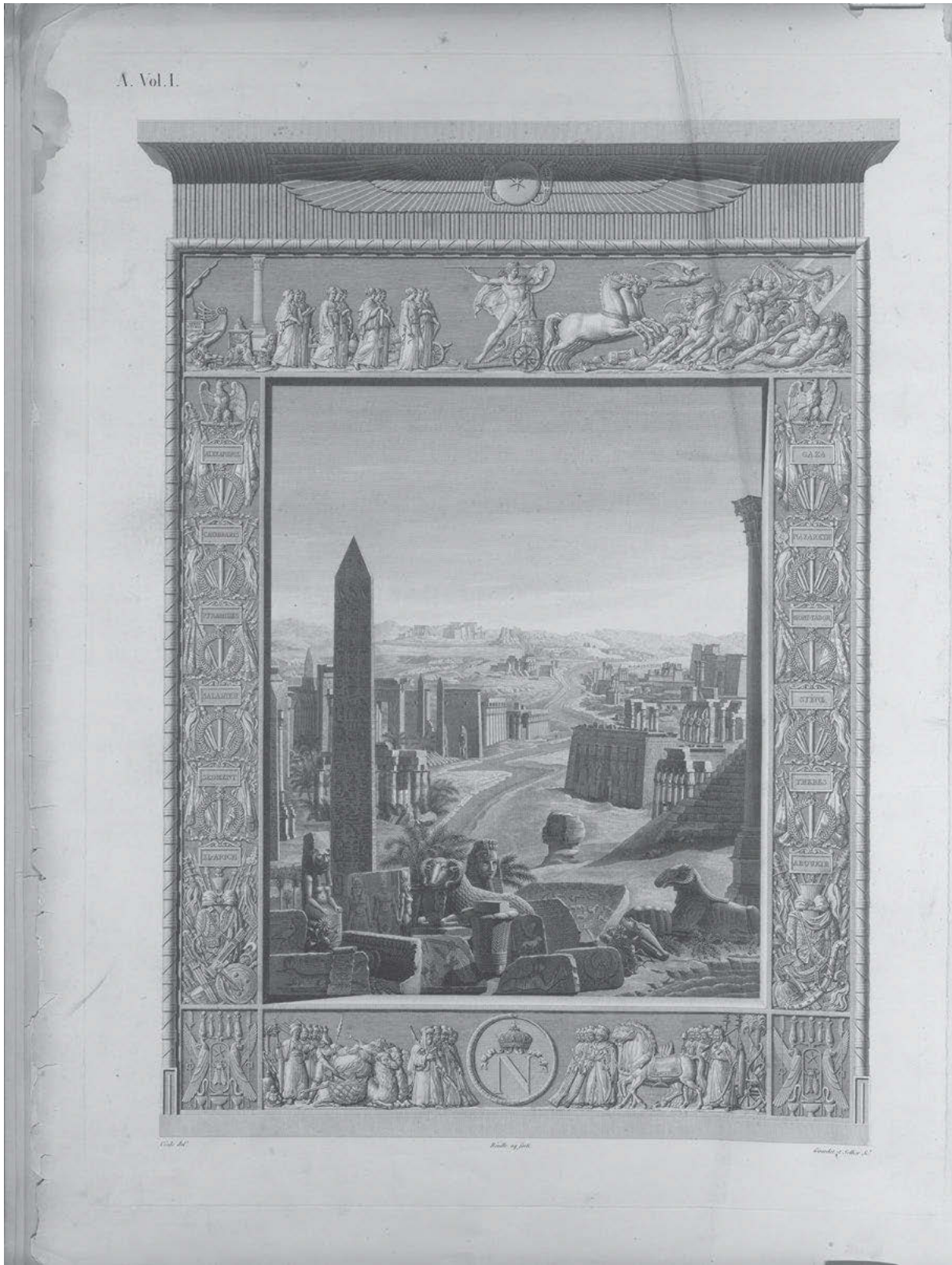
Modern Egypt is a *terra incognita* for almost every papyrologist, and this reality is the first concept that is in need of decolonization in this conversation. Egypt today is a land full of people, of human beings, not just antiquities to be looted, accumulated in museums and libraries, and/or studied from a distance. It is a society with its own merits and shortcomings, a society whose deeds, good or evil, were worthy to be recorded in two of the most sacred books of humankind, the Bible and the Qur'an.<sup>29</sup> Modern Egypt is a society that cannot be easily separated from history and which, at the same time, cannot be essentially subsumed under its (tyrannical, Orientalistic, despotic) Pharaonic period. It is a modern society, with cultural and linguistic diversity, that remains to a large degree overshadowed in the academy and in wider public spheres by its past.

From the very moment that Europeans began to encroach on the land, there was always an attempt to represent the place as a *terra nullius*, a land without people, to justify colonization and the subsequent externalization of its resources, including ancient objects. The frontispiece of *Description de l'Égypte* (Figure 1),<sup>30</sup> as analysed by Donald Malcom Reid, is a gateway to understanding western alienating and externalizing concepts about the land, its people, history, and antiquities. "In the frontispiece," writes Reid,

a richly decorated frame invites the viewer into a nostalgic Nile landscape stretching from Alexandria to Aswan. This is an antique land, abounding in pharaonic ruins. There is no sign of Islamic monuments, Cairo, or modern inhabitants. Atop the frame, a nude Bonaparte in the guise of Apollo or Alexander brandishes a spear from his chariot as Mamluks go down before

<sup>29</sup> The references are numerous in the Bible, whereas the Quran has only four direct references. See here for a full list of the attestations, with translations <https://corpus.quran.com/search.jsp?q=con%3Aegypt> (accessed 5 April 2022). From the many references in the Bible, I think that the most relevant to my discussion here is Deut. 23:7: "You shall not detest an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not detest an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land. The sons of the third generation who are born to them may enter the assembly of the Lord." But compare this to the statement of a senior papyrologist and a long-time field archaeologist, who has worked in Egypt for more than forty years (story 5): "I've been working in Egypt for over 40 years, and I know the Egyptians very well. I deeply detest this country and hate its people" (Blouin 2022), <https://everydayorientalism.wordpress.com/2022/03/07/ancient-texts-and-conference-cocktail-party-some-uncomfortable-truths-and-personal-thoughts/> (accessed 9 May 2022).

<sup>30</sup> Jomard / Fourier 1809–1828.



**Figure 1:** The frontispiece of *La Description de l'Égypte*. Public domain "From The New York Public Library," Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library. "Frontispiece, vol. 1." The New York Public Library Digital Collections, 1809.



**Figure 2:** The Rosetta Stone in the British Museum. Photo by author on 21 July 2019. The British Museum offers digital tours, including a 3D model of the stone, here <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/egypt/explore-rosetta-stone> (accessed 15 April 2022).

him. Twelve Muses in the hero's train return the arts to Egypt, their legendary land of origin.<sup>31</sup>

Changing one's perspective from this romantic western view is hard work because the search for new frames requires us to exert significant effort to break from what we are accustomed to, moving past our unthinking comfort zones and the viewpoints that we have been taught in schools and cultural institutions in whatever national educational system. We have been told that the perspective of the frontispiece of *Description de l'Égypte* reflects the realities of Egypt writ large, even though this is certainly not so. Aleida Assmann states correctly that "the literary canonization of the classics was historically connected to the emergence of national cultures. The nations of Europe entered into cultural competition with one another by reinventing their historical origins and producing national classics which become the symbols of their national identity."<sup>32</sup> The most iconic object that

illustrates this contrast, after the frontispiece of *the Description de l'Égypte*, is of course the Rosetta Stone (Figure 2).<sup>33</sup>

If you go to the British Museum in London, you will see how modern Egypt is overshadowed by its past. Figures 2 and 3, taken by the author, illustrate the point. Here the Rosetta Stone sits in the centre of the hall, while the modern Egypt displays are at the back, neglected by nearly all visitors. Note also how this relationship corresponds to the layout of editions of papyri, where the text is in the centre and any information on provenance is usually relegated to the margins and treated as largely superfluous.<sup>34</sup> Some provenance research is now extending to the introduction of editions, but the overall layout of the edition

<sup>31</sup> Reid 2002, 3.

<sup>32</sup> Assman 2012, 70.

<sup>33</sup> On the repatriation calls of this iconic artefact, specifically to its local community at Rashid, see Volante 2018.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. e.g. BGU I 1, which represent the basic structure of a papyrus edition. The most recent addition in the series of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri was adding an English translation. Provenance and/or findspots remain in the top margins as usual.



**Figure 3:** Modern Egypt collection in the British Museum. Photo by author, taken on 21 July 2019.

that prioritises the text, print or digital, remains intact.<sup>35</sup> Egypt's place in constructing Anglo-American national identities has been recently examined by Peter Gran, and the layout of the displays at the British Museum reflect this larger relationship. Gran relates the story of the persistence of Orientalism, focusing on how the history of Egypt is perceived in Anglo-American academia and in government policies toward Egypt. Gran's concern was of course contemporary Egypt, which I argue is also important in Papyrology, but he has also touched upon ancient Egypt. His point is that Egypt's past and antiquities have not only shaped modern realities and identities in Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the West in general, but also in modern Egypt Gran 2020.

Shaping the past has been, and remains, part and parcel of the social, cultural, and legislative history of modern Egypt, both internally and in forging its relations with colonial and postcolonial western powers.<sup>36</sup> The two images

above (Figures 2 and 3) illustrate that the Eurocentric, Orientalistic, and colonial practices persist. Modern Egypt in the imagined world of the West is obscured or, better, marginalized by its ancient counterpart. Why ancient Egypt is relevant, while modern and contemporary Egypt is not, is clearly obvious: ancient Egypt fulfils a purpose for the development of European national identity, as Donald Malcolm Reid has amply illustrated by his two volumes about Egyptian antiquities.<sup>37</sup> According to this narrative, European nations are heirs to the great ancient Egyptian civilization, and Egypt ceases to be Egypt, from this vantage point, when it ceases to be ancient. This perspective is similar to the idea that ancient Greece was invented to serve the cause of Europe, whereas modern Greece does not. The same could be also true of Rome. Reid, in the very beginning of his landmark work, states that "Egyptology is a European science which has rediscovered the greatness of ancient Egypt, a forerunner of western civilization. Modern Egyptians are unworthy

<sup>35</sup> See our forthcoming publication about how it is important to go, at least digitally, beyond this traditional paradigm, Filosa / Gad / Bodard forthcoming.

<sup>36</sup> See Carruthers 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Reid 2003 and 2015.



heirs of ancient ones and incapable of either national greatness or serious Egyptology.”<sup>38</sup>

Additionally, Gran demonstrates that Orientalism is baked-in to western Anglophone academia, and also to western governmental policies toward Egypt.<sup>39</sup> The modern Egypt project at the British Museum in London (Figure 3) is an attempt to bring the other side of the coin of this perspective into view. Launched in 2016, the modern Egypt project aimed to bring some of the contemporary realities of Egyptians into play, alongside the exhibited relics of their ancestors. Every piece in the collection was carefully chosen to tell a story about the entanglements of Egypt’s past with its present everyday realities of writing (the typewriter, see Figure 3), literacy (the radio with its literacy campaign and the magazines), and modern identity (the portrait of the Efendi and Nefertiti’s cover of *Al-Musawwar*; Figure 4). “The Museum’s modern Egypt project,” says Mohamed Elshahed, the project curator, “is helping to recover such stories and histories which otherwise would be neglected and remain untold, particularly within the context of museums.”<sup>40</sup> Despite its efforts, it seems that this project did not bring one of the most iconic museum in the world up to the ethical standard that would let Ahdaf Soueif, a prominent Egyptian novelist, to continue to serve as one of its trustees. According to Soueif, her “resignation was not in protest at a single issue but was a response to cumulative concerns regarding the museum’s immovability on issues of critical concern to the people who should be its core constituency: the young and the less privileged.” She wrote in her statement on the matter in 2019 that “I was sad to resign. . . sad to believe that it is the most useful thing I could do.”<sup>41</sup> The museum as a public cultural institution which, according to Soueif, has

not only a professional [responsibility] towards their work, but a moral [responsibility] in the way they position themselves in relation to ethical and political questions. The world is caught up in battles over climate change, vicious and widening inequality, the residual heritage of colonialism, questions of democracy, citizenship and human rights. On all these issues the museum needs to take a clear ethical position.<sup>42</sup>

The staff of the British Museum issued a statement in support of Soueif’s resignation. According to the Guardian

<sup>38</sup> Reid 2003, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Gran 2020.

<sup>40</sup> See the BM’s blogpost here <https://blog.britishmuseum.org/collecting-modern-egypt/>

<sup>41</sup> Soueif 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Soueif 2019.



**Figure 4:** From the Modern Egypt collection in the British Museum: Modern Egyptian identification with their appropriated cultural heritage. An Egyptian woman as Nefertiti with Arabic on the right reading “Nefertiti speaks”. Photo by the author taken on 21 July 2019.

the staff, who are members of the Public and Commercial Services union, said Soueif’s resignation highlighted “the troubling nature of the relationship between BP and the arts,” adding that the sponsorship of cultural institutions by the oil company allowed BP “to propagate the myth” that without it, “we would not have access to the collections of our publicly funded museums and galleries.” The group – part of the Art Not Oil coalition that seeks to end oil sponsorship of the arts – claims the “collection is being used to greenwash the activities of a company whose actions threaten lives the world over, both now and in the future.” It said the museum needed to address the debate around the return of looted colonial-era artefacts. “The divisions in our country as a whole are rooted, in part, with an inability to reconcile with our colonial past,” the statement read. “The museum as an institution is in a unique position (and given its own history has a unique obligation) to lead these difficult discussions. We echo Ms Soueif’s call for the museum to take a clear position as an ally of coming generations.”<sup>43</sup>

This contemporary reality means, at least to me, that decolonization and repatriation matter more than the ceremony of subjective technical skill necessary to produce an edition of a papyrus text without getting into the details of acquisition

<sup>43</sup> See <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2019/jul/23/british-museum-staff-support-ahdaf-soueif-trustee-resigned> (accessed 15 April 2022).

and provenance and more impactful than the Eurocentric historical narratives celebrated in many western academic publications in Classics, Papyrology, Biblical Studies, and Ancient History. Decolonizing these practices of western cultural institutions and repatriation are therefore two key concepts in this intellectual process and they are, for me, two ethical obligations in research and teaching.<sup>44</sup>

### 3 Eurocentrism in Papyrology

These larger realities in our disciplines are what I mean by Eurocentrism. Applied to Papyrology, Eurocentrism is “the bigger picture, the theoretical framework, and the historical narrative that justified two hundred years of European dominance over Egypt’s space, time, and objects.”<sup>45</sup> This framework denies “the contribution of non-western societies to the collective achievements of humankind” by teaching that “the history of Europe covers the essential history of civilization.”<sup>46</sup> According to Demir and Kaboub,<sup>47</sup> based on Wallerstein,<sup>48</sup> there are five interrelated ways in which the Social Sciences, Papyrology included, express this Eurocentric bias:

- (i) a historiography that claims European scientific superiority over other cultures; (ii) the parochialism of its universalism, claiming that made-in-Europe science has discovered the “laws of motion” of both nature and society, and that such laws are valid across time and space; (iii) its assumption that the “West” is uniquely and especially “civilized”; (iv) its Orientalism (as defined in the works of Anouar Abdel-Malek and Edward Said);<sup>49</sup> and (v) its attempts to impose the theory of progress.<sup>50</sup>

Eurocentrism in Papyrology reflects the larger realities of modernity. But Eurocentrism seems too political to be discussed within a highly sophisticated and technical sub-field of Classics like Papyrology. It might be too political to be of importance to scholars in the western tradition of textual criticism, especially those tradition(s) that originated from German scholarship of the nineteenth century, like Biblical Studies. While I have myself been trained in Heidelberg, and might claim some affiliation to this tradition, I cannot help myself of thinking of Classics and Papy-

rology from other perspectives like cultural studies and the political modernity of the modern nation state with its celebratory civilization discourse. On this point Mahmood Mamdani’s recent book is highly relevant to the issue of borderlines between civilized and uncivilized nation states.<sup>51</sup> He argues that the foundational moment of the modern nation state is 1492, when the Castilian monarchy successfully created a nation state for an ethnic majority by persecuting religious minorities in the Iberian Peninsula, thus unleashing unprecedented violence, which required the Westphalian accord in 1648 to establish a secular peace. Eurocentric ideals are the guarantee of this secular peace and, therefore, they have to be imposed, forcibly if needed, upon nations deemed uncivilized, if they are to enjoy this peace and/or tolerance. According to Mamdani, this secular peace represents

political modernity in Europe. In the colonies overseas, and in the settler colonies where there is no clear spatial divide between nation and nonnation, political modernity and its liberalism meant something else. It meant conquest. As a Eurocentric ideology and political discourse, modernity did not require tolerance abroad. Only people deemed civilized had to be tolerated. Others – marked by their cultural differences from Christian Europeans – had to be made civilized before earning the right to be tolerated. The light of civilization could shine wherever populations conformed to Eurocentric ideals. Thus did Europeans turn to the colonies and seek to build there the avatar of modernity: the nation-state, as it existed in Europe. The French called this the “mission civilisatrice,” which was anglicized as the “civilizing mission.” Had the civilizing mission succeeded, colonial political modernity might have looked a great deal like its European counterpart, with European-style nation-states the world over practicing Christianity and Westphalian tolerance. But the civilizing mission failed, resulting in a colonial modernity that veered sharply from the course taken by European modernity. While liberal tolerance took hold in the European nation-state, liberal conquest inflamed the colonies. By the mid-nineteenth century, the colonizer’s forcible imposition of its laws, customs, educational practices, language, and community life provoked fierce resistance among the natives – the word that was used to describe those deemed uncivilized. In response, the British put aside the torch of civilization in order to maintain order.<sup>52</sup>

The point is that every scholar who works with unprovenanced artefacts aids war mongers and criminals in the Middle East and North Africa. The Eurocentric ideological double-standard is clear. This same scholar would not engage in such unethical practices and atrocities on western soil, for example in Ukraine. The worst part of this double standard is that it is a widespread phenomenon in the cultural heritage sectors of western nation states.

<sup>44</sup> On the ethical obligations in the field in general see Mazza 2015, 2019, 2021.

<sup>45</sup> Gad 2019; see also Gad 2016.

<sup>46</sup> Demir / Kaboub 2009, 79 citing Du Bois 1946, 148.

<sup>47</sup> Demir / Kaboub 2009, 79.

<sup>48</sup> Wallerstein 1997, 22.

<sup>49</sup> Abdel-Malek 1981 and Said 1978.

<sup>50</sup> Demir / Kaboub 2009, 79.

<sup>51</sup> Mamdani 2020.

<sup>52</sup> Mamdani 2020, 2.

The dichotomy between civilized and uncivilized nations are crystal-clear in the mind of western decision-makers to the degree that both the objects and also the lives of their people matter less than their western counterparts. Nothing illustrates this better than the history of western scholarship on and trade in papyri from Egypt.

The birth of Papyrology, according to the traditional discourse of the field, is set in 1788, exactly ten years before Napoleon Bonaparte's *expédition militaire en Égypte* in 1798. The narrative goes that the Turks, after unsuccessful attempts to sell papyrus rolls to Europeans, burned the unsold artefacts, delighting in the resulting aroma. This final detail is a coda, an addition to a basic structure of the grand Eurocentric narrative in Papyrology about the uncivilized nature of non-Europeans.<sup>53</sup> Turner, in his introduction to Greek papyri, cast doubt on the birth narrative, telling instead a slightly different story.

A Dane, Nicholas Schow, wrote the story of its discovery ten years later. An unknown merchant (negotiator quidam) was offered at a low price a bundle of forty or fifty papyrus rolls. They were said to have been found underground (in loco quodam subterraneo) in the "town" of Giza, hidden in a container of sycamore wood. The traveller bought one only: the rest were torn up by the Turks (Turcae), who enjoyed their aromatic odour. Schow implies that they set fire to them. The details of the story have been suspected by critics: they seem to resemble the story of Sibylline books, and it is said that other eighteenth-century travellers told similar tales. Whether papyrus when burned has an aromatic odour is a question answered with a definite "no" and an equally definite "yes" by those who claim to have tried it. The former answer was given by Grenfell and Hunt in 1900: the latter by N. Lewis in 1934 (who also points to the Roman custom of burning papyrus material on the funeral pyre in support of his claim).<sup>54</sup>

Turner eloquently sketched the uncertainties concerning the founding myth of Papyrology, highlighting the fact that editing this first papyrus bestowed an honour upon Schow (Figure 5). But Turner failed to mention what kind of benefits Schow gained from his work. Through the website of the Carlsberg Foundation we know that "Schow was later elected member of the Royal Academy of Sciences and Letters, and subsequently became professor of archaeology and classical philology at the University of Copenhagen. But Schow never edited another papyrus – perhaps because there were no papyri in Denmark at the time."<sup>55</sup> I do not know for sure how much of his career was linked to his one-off achievement of publishing the first

papyrus, but the first edition of a documentary papyrus secured him prestigious positions, but apparently not the respect of his fellows in the Royal Academy nor the respect of his students.<sup>56</sup>

From the moment Schow published his papyrus, the established narrative of western Papyrology consistently contrasted Egyptians and Europeans, portraying modern Egyptians in a stereotyped way. We face the same Orientalistic theme in an early publication of *Urkunden der Ptolemäerzeit*, published by Ulrich Wilcken in 1927.<sup>57</sup> In this fundamental work, Wilcken states that

Die memphitischen Texte unseres Bandes sowie die thebanischen des II. Bandes waren die ersten griechischen Papyri, die seit dem Erwerb der Charta Borgiana (1778) für die Wissenschaft gerettet wurden. Bedenkt man, wie viele Papyri früher durch den Unverstand der Eingeborenen vernichtet worden waren, so muß man den Männern sehr dankbar sein, die nun, nachdem das Land durch Bonapartes Expedition für die Wissenschaft wieder erweckt war, die Altertümer und so auch die Papyri von den Eingeborenen aufkauften, um sie an die europäischen Sammlungen weiterzuverkaufen. Für die Papyri unseres Bandes kommen namentlich drei Männer als Vermittler in Betracht: Henry Salt, der als englischer Generalkonsul 1816 ins Land kam und bis zu seinem Tode (1827) dort wirkte, Bernardino Drovetti, der unter dem Empire bis 1814 und dann von 1820–1829 französischer Generalkonsul in Ägypten war, und Johann d'Anastasy, der anfangs als Vizekonsul, von 1829–1858 als Generalkonsul Schwedens in Alexandrien lebte. Diese Männer betrieben das Sammeln und Verhandeln von Antiquitäten im größten Maßstabe. Sie bildeten oft Jahre hindurch, auch mit Hilfe eigener Grabungen, große Sammlungen des verschiedensten Inhalts, die sie dann als Ganzes an eine europäische Macht verkauften, und zwar nicht immer an die Macht, die sie als Generalkonsul vertraten.<sup>58</sup>

We must, according to Wilcken, be grateful for these three European diplomats who, by their colonial collecting practices, saved these treasures from the foolishness of the natives (*Unverstand der Eingeborenen*).<sup>59</sup> In a recent blogpost examining the main theme of the tales narrated by European travellers to Egypt, Michael Press deconstructs another Orientalistic myth about the ignorant ruler of Egypt, Mohamed Ali Pasha, who wanted to demolish

<sup>53</sup> Kennan 2009, 59.

<sup>54</sup> Turner 1968, 18–9.

<sup>55</sup> See Capasso 2007, 26.

<sup>56</sup> [https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/N.I.\\_Schow](https://da.wikipedia.org/wiki/N.I._Schow) (accessed 5 April 2022).

<sup>57</sup> More commonly known as UPZ. Ulrich Wilcken republished 229 texts which were previously published in the nineteenth century in two volumes; one for texts from Lower Egypt (1927) and another for Upper Egypt (1935–1957).

<sup>58</sup> Wilcken 1927, 3.

<sup>59</sup> Wilcken failed to identify those natives but the archives of those diplomats certainly do. For a list of antiquities dealers in Egypt from 1899–1930, based on Lange's archival papers, see Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 183–274, and especially the bibliography in the footnotes of p. 183 regarding more "hidden" Egyptians in these archives.



**Figure 5:** Niels Iversen Schow (1754–1830). Public domain. Wikipedia commons.

the pyramids. The title that Press chose for his exploration is telling: “The Colonialist Myth of the Frenchman Who ‘Saved’ the Pyramids.” The first sentence of the post states that this narrative is a “troubling story [that] fits a tired orientalist theme: Europeans and Americans know more, and care more, about the culture and heritage of West Asia and North Africa than their own inhabitants.”<sup>60</sup> It is an interesting piece of work and enjoyable story, whose protagonist is not a papyrologist, but a civil engineer. However, its resemblance to the story of the collecting papyri from colonial and postcolonial Egypt is remarkable. It is through western action that papyri were saved, cared for, studied, and published. If it were up to the Egyptians, they would have burnt them all out of ignorance. To me, as an Egyptian, this narrative is a commonplace derogation that has spared no Egyptian regardless of status. We are continually confronted with the western papyrological story that demarcates Egyptians from Europeans and that portrays Egyptians in a stereotyped colonial and Orientalistic way, to the degree that we cannot escape these portrayals regardless of context.

<sup>60</sup> Press 2018.

## 4 The troubled archive(s) of Papyrology

The marginalization of modern Egypt has significant ramifications on Papyrology. The nineteenth-century hunt for papyri in every corner of Egypt by rival European scholars caused us to lose important contextual information and many historical facts about these documents. Moreover, the deliberate silence of most papyrologist on this issue today means that they continue to participate in “the perpetuation of colonial sentiments, of paternalism, and the notion that the West is the true heir to the ancient Mediterranean World.”<sup>61</sup> Hickey, after citing Pharize Vasunia’s recommendation for teaching the classical literature in the present historical moment, speaks about how it is important to open up papyrology’s archive for research and teaching, by asking

how can one expect critical engagement with present practice if the past remains unexamined? When it has been written, the history of papyrology itself has verged on hagiography: These are the giants upon whose shoulders we stand. While the achievements of pioneers like Grenfell and Hunt remain remarkable and certainly merit acknowledgment, there seems ample room for the “rest of the story”: for criticisms of method, to be sure, but also for the contextualization (or, if one prefers, deconstruction) of scholarship, which should include readings of politics and even private lives. Some may cry foul or call it gossip, but where does one draw the line between public and private, and who is charged with holding the pen? Much more energy needs to be devoted to the creation and dissemination of disciplinary archives, and the purging of “objectionable” material from such assemblages (by those other than the principals) should be viewed in the harshest light. “Archivization produces as much as it records the event” – something of which those who work with archives of papyri should already be acutely aware.<sup>62</sup>

This systematic marginalization is also the reason that Papyrology makes headlines in major western newspapers like *The Guardian* and *New York Times*, not for its scholarly achievements but for the infamous collecting practices that continue to exist.<sup>63</sup> Ironically enough, contemporary Egypt regularly appears in these headlines.<sup>64</sup> Egyptian scholars and

<sup>61</sup> Bagnall 2019, ix–x citing Hickey 2009, 498.

<sup>62</sup> Hickey 2009, 498.

<sup>63</sup> The news of an arrest on suspicion about papyrus theft is here <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2020/apr/16/oxford-professor-arrested-ancient-papyrus-bible-theft-dirk-obbinck> (accessed 15 April 2022).

<sup>64</sup> The news of repatriating thousands of manuscripts are to be found here e.g. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/29/arts/design/bible-museum-egypt.html> (accessed 15 April 2022).

officials are, contrary to the western celebratory academic narratives, active in both retrieval efforts and as agents who articulate the injustices of such a troubled archive. Recently, for example, we read that the Museum of the Bible, another anachronistic heterotopia, has returned 5,000 artefacts with “insufficient” provenance to Egypt. The subtitle of the article runs “The US Department of Homeland Security returned the artefacts to Cairo yesterday, concluding Egypt’s efforts to retrieve the items since 2016.”<sup>65</sup> In an interview commenting on the repatriation, Shaaban Abdel-Gawad, the General Supervisor of the Retrieved Antiquities Department, stated that the artefacts most likely came out of clandestine excavations, smuggled out of the country and illicitly acquired since the manuscripts are “not anywhere registered in the ministry of antiquities registry books.”<sup>66</sup> Commenting on the situation, Roberta Mazza lays out our ethical obligations as a learned community:

illicit excavations and a black market for undocumented antiquities make preservation all the more urgent. . . This is where provenance research comes in. . . [looting and illicit excavations in Egypt] not only destroy the archaeological landscape forever, but have also caused deaths and injuries to Egyptians, including children, employed to dig in narrow shafts. . . Academics should exercise an active role in educating collectors and keeping an eye on the market. Would you knowingly buy a stolen bike? Why would you buy – or publish – a stolen manuscript?<sup>67</sup>

Erin L. Thompson, a professor of art crime at John Jay College, noted that her decades long career of working on cases of art crime around the globe was “a big waste of time,” simply because one “could have learned nearly everything about heritage crime by looking at what the Museum of the Bible has been caught doing in the past few years.”<sup>68</sup> The Museum of the Bible case is a complete archive that illustrates almost every point which could be discussed, in research and teaching, about illicit cultural heritage appropriation.

I am consciously using the term “archive” to decolonize the papyrological appropriation of such a term out of its space and time. Archives, and the related French term

*dossier*, refer in the context of Papyrology to the collection of texts in ancient pasts.<sup>69</sup> While this could be true, museums and collections of papyri are also heterotopias based on troubled archives in the Foucauldian sense because the term clarifies how these collections are part of our modernity. “Generally speaking,” Foucault explains,

in a society like ours heterotopias and heterochronias are organized and arranged in a relatively complex way. First, there are heterotopias of time that accumulates indefinitely – for example, museums and libraries. Museums and libraries are heterotopias in which time never ceases to pile up and perch on its own summit, whereas in the seventeenth century, and up to the end of the seventeenth century still, museums and libraries were the expression of an individual choice.<sup>70</sup>

Chester Beaty’s collection is, more or less, a perfect example of this expression of personal taste, but it is conceptually a kind of archive too. Foucault elaborated on this idea further, maintaining that

the idea of accumulating everything, the idea of constituting a sort of *general archive*, the desire to contain all times, all ages, all forms, all tastes in one place, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside time and protected from its erosion, the project of thus organizing a kind of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in a place that will not move, well, in fact, all of this belongs to our modernity. The museum and the library are heterotopias that are *characteristic of western culture in the nineteenth century*.<sup>71</sup>

What Foucault describes as “characteristic of Western culture in the nineteenth century” is to me a Eurocentric project of classification and stratifications of places, times, objects, and spaces. His critical analysis of this “general archive” of knowledge and power, i.e., the museum and library, draws on a long line of critique of many western institutions in postcolonial studies.<sup>72</sup> In an earlier publication, commenting on the papyrus theft in 2019, I argued that this critique, in the case of papyrology, is not “a *carte blanche* for anyone, including myself, but [should be] an expression of a personal commitment to the theoretical and practical search for solutions to the current dilemma.”<sup>73</sup> The predicament of Eurocentrism in Papyrology remains, not only because Papyrology was a discipline born in Europe, but also because Papyrology still largely thinks of itself as problem free and, most importantly, because many western papyrus collections and holding

<sup>65</sup> <https://hyperallergic.com/617929/museum-of-bible-returns-5000-artifacts-with-insufficient-provenance-to-egypt/> (accessed 23 March 2022).

<sup>66</sup> The interview was aired on the Egyptian national television on the daily news show “Good Morning Egypt,” and then uploaded in YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6E8U-hngjE> (accessed 23 March 2022).

<sup>67</sup> <https://hyperallergic.com/617929/museum-of-bible-returns-5000-artifacts-with-insufficient-provenance-to-egypt/> (accessed 23 March 2022).

<sup>68</sup> <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2021/10/museum-of-the-bible-looted-art-track-record.html> (accessed 23 March 2022).

<sup>69</sup> See Jördens 1997.

<sup>70</sup> Foucault 1998, 182.

<sup>71</sup> Foucault 1998, 182.

<sup>72</sup> For an overview of these studies applied to archaeology, see Moro-Abadía 2006, 4–8.

<sup>73</sup> Gad 2019.

institutions are reluctant to revise their acquisition histories, access policies, and governing regulations unless they are faced with a scandal. The reasons behind this persistence are numerous.

1. There is no antiquities market in Egypt. Rather, “trade, sale or commerce in antiquities, including all antiquities held as private property, [is] prohibited.”<sup>74</sup>
2. Egypt is, and will continue to be, a source of antiquities.
3. Egyptian papyri and manuscripts are one of the main cultural objects at risk.<sup>75</sup>
4. The European/western market requires a continuous flow of original artefacts.
5. The antiquities trade encompasses a global (bi-directional) network of interests.
6. European expertise in antiquities is not transcendent.<sup>76</sup> It is one of the main historical products of imperial Europe. Its coloniality is undeniable.<sup>77</sup>
7. Egyptians came to, or more precisely have been allowed to enter, the field (Classics, Archaeology, and Papyrology) at a very late stage, when rules and standards were already fixed and the classical tradition established. The western canon is “authoritative.”<sup>78</sup>
8. Working international archaeological projects in Egypt and research centres exercise a great deal of authority and power. The legal rights they possess on archaeological sites and the topics they study are complex.<sup>79</sup>
9. Decolonization is both financially and morally costly.
10. Two centuries of colonization cannot be undone in a few years.

What I want to say is that the theory and practice of Papyrology cannot be studied out of its historical context. Whether you decide to place its birth in 1752,<sup>80</sup> 1788,<sup>81</sup>

<sup>74</sup> This is Article no. 10 of the Egyptian law no. 117 of 1983 as amended by law no. 3 of 2010 promulgating the antiquities protection law, available at the website of the ministry of antiquities <http://www.antiquities.gov.eg/DefaultEn/Documents/LAW/LAW%20ENGLISH6.pdf> (accessed 7 April 2022).

<sup>75</sup> ICOM’s red list, available here [https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/120521\\_ERLE\\_EN-Pages.pdf](https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/120521_ERLE_EN-Pages.pdf) (accessed 7 April 2022).

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Mitchell 1988.

<sup>77</sup> See Anibal 2000 for the case of the history of Latin America, which bears many affinities with Egypt’s history. And see also Paulo 2019 about resistance and data activism.

<sup>78</sup> See Quirke 2014, Reid 2015, and Assmann 2012.

<sup>79</sup> See, e.g., the various contributions in Carruthers 2014.

<sup>80</sup> The year of the discovery of Herculaneum papyri in Italy. For more details about this find see Sider 2009.

<sup>81</sup> The date of publication of Charta Borgiana (abbreviated as P. Schow according to the checklist of edition at [papyri.info](http://papyri.info), available here <https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>; accessed 15 April 2022).

1891,<sup>82</sup> or 1930,<sup>83</sup> Papyrology’s historical entanglement with the West and its internal rivalry over domination of the rest is undeniable. How much it contributed to this colonial discourse and, most importantly, how much it will contribute to the postcolonial, decolonizing discourse is something that the current generation of papyrologists must grapple with.

## 5 Decoloniality in Papyrology (not a conclusion)

With these facts in mind, I want now to turn to some examples of how to decolonize what I referred to as the biased, troubled, but still important, archive of Papyrology. This article is of course not the place to enumerate a complete list of courageous, and sometimes risky, initiatives from young members of this learned community, but a few examples might encourage others to join the debate without any fear of backlash. My aim has always been to understand the complexities of this archive and how it is historically rooted in the past two centuries, not to point the finger at any particular person or institution. I have argued elsewhere that only through careful analysis can we make informed choices that could positively alter the shape of our teaching and research agendas for the coming decades, if not the next century of Papyrology.<sup>84</sup> This is about the future.

Papyrology in its second century should, in my view, pursue a holistic approach to its archival materials, using both print and digital tools, in their widest possible meaning; for example, by examining correspondences of holding institutions with the antiquities service in Egypt or publishing the papers and correspondences of late professors. Teaching, research, and curation agendas should not be confined only to textual criticism but should also take larger contextual and historical frameworks into consideration. Some examples of research along these lines published over the past decade show us the fruit-

<sup>82</sup> The date of the publication of *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen (later Staatlichen) Museen zu Berlin* (abbreviated as BGU according to the checklist of edition at [papyri.info](http://papyri.info), available here <https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>; accessed 15 April 2022).

<sup>83</sup> The true birth of the field could also be tied to 1930 when less than ten papyrologists gathered after the royal Egyptian Society of Papyrology (*Société Royale de Papyrologie*) was established in Egypt by Jouguet. See Choat 2013.

<sup>84</sup> See Brian McGing’s article in this volume for more details on Papyrology in its second century.

fulness of such approaches.<sup>85</sup> One of the most significant advancements to our knowledge about how complex these archives are is what Brendan Haug has done with the archives in Ann Arbor.<sup>86</sup> The collection at the University of Michigan houses more than 2,000 fragments of papyri and are comprised of mostly, but not exclusively, papyri from the university's legal excavations in Kom Ushim (Karanis) between 1924 and 1935. The papyri, unlike other artefacts, were not subject to immediate *partage*, a French expression for division; they were loaned to the University of Michigan on the understanding that they would be divided after publication. Starting from 1930s, the Egyptian antiquities authority began to urge Michigan to speed up its publication process so that the papyri could return to Egypt. In 1950s, after the decolonization and complete Egyptianizing of the *Service des antiquités de l'Égypte*, the Egyptians reneged on the promised of *partage* and asked for the complete repatriation of the papyri. Some of the papyri were returned to Cairo, where they are kept now in the Egyptian Museum in Tahrir Square, but most of the papyri remain in Ann Arbor where their ownership status is uncertain. At the end of his landmark paper, which explores the active role of Egypt in containing Ann Arbor's illicit trade in papyri from the Fayum, informing its publication policy, and eventually repatriating a substantial number of papyri to the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, Haug writes:

Most significantly, then, this examination of the correspondence contributes to our appreciation of Egyptian agency in the establishment and early development of papyrology at one western institution. While much contemporary work on the history of Egyptology rightly stresses the role of western agents in the evolution of Egyptological collections, institutions, and scholarly agendas, Michigan's archives reveal the importance of Egyptian interventions. Although these Egyptian voices are obscured in an archive dominated by European and American documentation, Michigan's record still makes clear that Egyptian activism helped restrain the university's purchasing activities, informed its scholarly publishing, and eventually compelled the return to Egypt of large numbers of unpublished documents. These Egyptians deserve a place in the larger history of papyrology at the University of Michigan and beyond.<sup>87</sup>

One can extend Haug's exploration of the Michigan archive to other evidence-based archival research of many, if not all, western collections of inscribed and non-inscribed objects. Take for example the Schøyen collection, one of

the most important private collections of manuscripts in the West, where "the cozy Cabal of Academics, Dealers and Collectors" has been recently decolonized by Prescott and Rasmussen as well as Mazza.<sup>88</sup> Prescott and Rasmussen do not agree with the traditional idea that access and publication of privately held inscribed objects take precedence over the ethical and legal obligations of scholars. They state that

Looting and trade in antiquities has long been known to lead to the destruction of archaeological sites and sources of knowledge, it deprives regions and countries of their heritage and is part and parcel of crime networks involved with arms, drugs, and human trafficking. Still, the receiving end, the art markets and collecting institutions, have historically enjoyed a high degree of cultural legitimacy. This destruction is concealed behind the cultivated image of wealthy collectors. The whole trade is dependent on experts and institutions. For us, it is obvious that academic involvement in illicit trade corrupts the fundamental ethos of the humanities. It is therefore untenable that researchers and institution remain indifferent to these issues and maintain that access to and publishing of research materials eclipses all other concerns.<sup>89</sup>

This approach stands in stark contrast to hagiographic publications of traditional papyrology. Rosario Pintaudi dedicates the book that publishes the Greek material from this collection to Martin Schøyen (P.Schøyen I), whom he thanks for "liberality in opening his collection to scholars, and for the friendship and patience in waiting many years for his publication."<sup>90</sup> Recent events concerning this particular collection have illustrated how the statements of publishing houses on unprovenanced materials are mere ink on paper. The academic publisher Brill has recently published a new edition of Aramaic bowl spells from the Schøyen Collection,<sup>91</sup> despite the seizure of 100 antiquities from the collection by the Norwegian police. The confiscation is a response to the Iraqi authorities' tireless efforts to retrieve 762 objects, including the 654 Aramaic bowls, that antiquities authorities in Iraq believe they were trafficked from the country through Jordan.<sup>92</sup>

This kind of provenance and evidence-based research is the way forward to decolonize these troubled archives, opening them up to researchers even in the face of uncomfortable truths. We must understand the complexities of our present moment, whether it is public or academic, in order to act with courage to do what is right. Decolonizing

<sup>85</sup> Here the study of Hagen / Ryholt 2016 is exemplary. Based on Lange's archival material, they showed us more or less complete picture of the antiquities trade from 1880 until 1930.

<sup>86</sup> Haug 2021.

<sup>87</sup> Haug 2021, 162.

<sup>88</sup> See Prescott and Rasmussen 2020 and Mazza 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Prescott and Rasmussen 2020, 89.

<sup>90</sup> See Pintaudi 2005, the English preface without page number.

<sup>91</sup> Shaked / Ford / Bhayro 2022.

<sup>92</sup> For more details see Albertson 2021.

is more than replacing the out-dated museum labels, providing translations into Arabic while retaining their biased content, or inviting Egyptians or scholars of colour to fill in the “diversity” gap in a department as a mere decoration. To decolonize is to use this kind of evidence-based research in the colonial and imperial archives, whatever and wherever they are, to de-Eurocentrize the concepts and content behind these labels, to tell the story of Papyrology anew from another perspective.

Digital tools also play an important role in decolonization. This idea that we can begin to overcome centuries-old Eurocentrism by way of new digital tools has now been included in first comprehensive introduction to Digital Papyrology by Nicola Reggiani.<sup>93</sup> His relevant statements appear in the section about good and bad practices, subtitled “overcoming cultural boundaries and purchasing papyri online.” After stating that my idea about Eurocentrism of Papyrology is connected directly to the “overall historical tradition of classical studies,” he then rightly explains that my proposal

exploit[s] the interconnection power of the new technologies – in terms of resource lining, metadata cataloguing, translating, etc. – to address new types of audience. Such new perspectives would not harm what has been built so far, yet would substantially widen the scope of Digital Papyrology in promising development prospects, and goes in the very same direction as projects like *Ancient lives*.<sup>94</sup>

Reggiani is right about what I have said, but anyone familiar with the Ancient Lives project knows now the direction that its director took and how it ended up.<sup>95</sup>

I conclude with a summary of what I discussed in this paper plus some advice for those who are interested in the issue of decoloniality.

1. Made-in-Europe Papyrology is not problem-free. Its tone is celebratory, hagiographic, and apologetic. While it has produced valuable knowledge about Egypt in the Graeco-Roman period, its colonial discourse helped in idealizing European scholarship and justified the appropriation of Egypt’s most important patrimony, its papyri.
2. The pace of publication of papyrus texts is extremely slow. Ninety percent of the material we have awaits publication. The situation is further complicated if we add archival material like papyrus export licenses, agreements, correspondences, scholars’ diaries, negatives and positives of images, and other relevant archival materials.
3. Research revolves around the same topics and questions of western (Graeco-Roman) civilization and nation-building. Our research questions are consistent with and reflect to some degree European, British, and American foreign policy toward the Middle East and North Africa.
4. The current composition of international learned societies are mostly exclusionary when it comes to Egyptians and Middle Eastern scholars.
5. Up-to-date teaching materials are absent. Available materials tend to be repetitive, copying the pasting from the same celebratory, apologetic, Eurocentric, Orientalistic, colonial discourses of the past.
6. We are in dire need of policy-oriented research, publication rights, and rules regulated by clear guidelines, not by personal choice. Involvement with modern and contemporary questions of governance, access, digitization, standardization are lacking.
7. Publishers’ standards of publication of unprovenanced source materials are, in many cases, just statements to clear and/or deny liability.
8. The statements of international learned societies concerning ethical obligations of their members are reactionary. The ad hoc recommendations have many grey areas with no clear red lines or consequences if the ethical codes are violated.
9. International conferences are too ceremonial to allow for a critical discussion of the current predicament of the field.
10. The digital landscape reflects the print culture of the field with its enormous shortcuts. Texts are represented as out-of-context archaeological artefacts, while digitization means in most cases image-processing.

<sup>93</sup> Reggiani 2017.

<sup>94</sup> Reggiani 2017, 172.

<sup>95</sup> Dirk Obbink has been recently removed from his post at Oxford and is facing significant legal difficulties. His case is long, complicated, and still unfolding. For an overview of these events, see Nongbri’s blog posts here, <https://brentnongbri.com/category/antiquities-dealers-and-collectors/dirk-obbink/> (accessed 10 April 2022).



يحاول المؤلف في هذا المقال أن يحدّث مجموعة من الأفكار الغربية الاستعمارية عن البرديات المصرية وعن نشأة علم البردي وذلك من خلال أربع موضوعات متصلة. الموضوع الأول يتعلّق بنشأة علم البردي في القرن التاسع عشر وهو القرن الذي شهد ازدهار الإمبريالية الغربية وحركة الاستعمار الغربي حتى أنه لم يعد هناك شبر في المعمورة إلا وتحتله دولة أوروبية ما. وبعد عرض مبسط لمجموعة من الممارسات والأفكار الغربية لمجموعة من المتخصصين في المجال، والتي لا ترقى إلى مستوى أخلاقيات المهنة وكيف أن تفسير هذه الممارسات وتلك الأفكار يستوجب علينا النظر في تاريخ التخصص، ينتقل المؤلف إلى عرض فكرته عن "المركزية الأوروبية" في علم البردي بتفصيلاتها المتعددة ثم ينتقل إلى تعريف فكرة "الأرشيفات المضطربة"، وهي الفكرة التي يحاول فيها الباحث استخدام منهج دراسات ما بعد الاستعمار في تحليل فكرة جمع البرديات والمتحف، كما تظهر عند الفيلسوف الفرنسي ميشيل فوكو على سبيل المثال، ومن بعدها ينتقل إلى عرض أهم الملامح الرئيسية لمحاولات جمهورية مصر العربية للحفاظ على تراثها الحضاري من الآثار والبرديات قبل أن ينتقل إلى عرض كيفية تفاعل المتخصصين الغربيين مع هذه القوانين سواء كانوا أفراداً أو مؤسسات. وفي نهاية المقال يقدم الباحث مجموعة من الأفكار التي قد تمكن علم البردي والمشتغلين به من الخروج من النفق المظلم الذي سببه انتهاك مجموعة من المنتسبين للتخصص لأخلاقيات المهنة والضرر الذي لحق بصورة التخصص في المخيلة العامة الأوروبية والمصرية. ويختتم الباحث بالتأكيد على أن مسألة أخلاقيات المهنة ومسألة استعادة البرديات التي خرجت من مصر بشكل غير قانوني من ضمن أولوياته البحثية والتدريبية ويقدم مجموعة من النصائح والإرشادات لكل من يريد أن يتعامل مع تراث مصر المسطر على أوراق البردي بما يتوافق مع الوضع القانوني الحالي في مصر ودول الإتحاد الأوروبي وأمريكا الذي ينص على تجريم التعامل مع الآثار المهربة أو تبرير التدمير الممنهج للمواقع الأثرية في مصر بحجة "المسئولية التاريخية والعلمية" للباحثين الغربيين. المقال مهم لكل من يريد أن يتعرف على الأطر التاريخية العامة لنشأة التخصص وارتباطه بالفكر الاستعماري الغربي وفكرة المسئولية التاريخية الغربية في الحفاظ على تراث الشعوب المتخلفة وجلب الحضارة لهم سواء بالقوة أو من خلال تعريفهم بالماضي الأوربي-الغربي العريق وتثقيفهم وتعليمهم حتى يتمكنوا من اللحاق بالركب الغربي الأوربي المتقدم.

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# The Bodmer Papyri and the Chester Beatty

برديات بودمير ومجموعة تيشستر بيتي ، دانييل شارب و برنت ننجبري

## 1 Introduction

The early Christian manuscripts most closely associated with Chester Beatty are of course the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri acquired in the early 1930s. The Beatty collection does, however, also contain many other papyrus and parchment manuscripts from Egypt, both Christian and non-Christian. Among these are a few pieces associated with another important cache of early Christian manuscripts that appeared on the Egyptian antiquities market in the 1950s, a group of papyrus and parchment books best known by the name of another collector, Martin Bodmer (1899–1971). The presence of some of these “Bodmer Papyri” in the Chester Beatty has been the cause of considerable confusion for decades, even among specialists. The chapter attempts to clarify which items in the Chester Beatty can be confidently associated with the material in the Bodmer collection.

As portable antiquities began to be discovered in Egypt with great frequency in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wealthy European and American collectors stimulated a thriving trade in ancient manuscripts.<sup>1</sup> Manuscripts passed from finders to various intermediaries and eventually to more well-known dealers in Cairo and other large cities, who then sold them to eager buyers abroad.<sup>2</sup> At each of these stages, manuscripts were often divided up, that is to say, collections of items found together were dispersed, and even books themselves could be disassembled in order to raise profits by increasing the number of individual sales.<sup>3</sup> Thus, even if an ancient book or collection miraculously survived from antiquity to the twentieth century intact, the market encouraged their mutilation upon discovery. Thus, any given modern collection of ancient papyrus and parchment manuscripts from Egypt will likely include pieces from many distinct ancient finds. At the same time, almost all collections of ancient manuscripts that were discovered in Egypt in the nineteenth and early twentieth cen-

turies were broken up and sold separately to multiple different modern collectors. Thus, one of the great challenges of trying to understand these manuscripts in their ancient contexts is identifying and trying to reassemble these ancient collections now dispersed across numerous modern repositories. It is as a part of this larger effort, sometimes termed “museum archaeology,” that we explore the relationship of the Bodmer Papyri and the collection of Chester Beatty.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Terminology

At the outset, it is necessary to define some terms. The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri are generally thought to represent a single ancient collection of codices, books with pages as opposed to scrolls. They were found in Egypt, perhaps in the neighbourhood of the Fayum or across the Nile near Aphroditopolis, in about the year 1930. Chester Beatty bought the majority of this ancient collection, but other institutions also purchased parts of it.<sup>5</sup> The collection consists of the remains of eleven distinct papyrus codices, but they are associated with twelve Roman numerals. This oddity is due to the fact that the editor of the papyri, Sir Frederic Kenyon (1863–1952), did not at first notice that manuscripts IX and X were a part of the same codex. The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri are thus designated as follows, with the unique identification number in the Trismegistos Database (TM) of Ancient Books given in parentheses:<sup>6</sup>

Codex I. Four Gospels and Acts (TM 61826)

Codex II. Pauline letters (TM 61855)

Codex III. Revelation (TM 61628)

Codex IV. Genesis (TM 62001)

Codex V. Genesis (TM 61952)

Codex VI. Numbers and Deuteronomy (TM 61934)

Codex VII. Isaiah (TM 61951)

Codex VIII. Jeremiah (TM 61927)

<sup>1</sup> See Nongbri 2018, 83–115.

<sup>2</sup> See Hagen and Ryholt 2016.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the contemporary account of the discovery of the Hamuli Coptic books by David Askren (1875–1939) reproduced in Nongbri 2018, 86–91.

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<sup>4</sup> On museum archaeology, see Vandorpe 1994.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the evidence for the findspot of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri and the institutions that purchased them, see Nongbri 2018, 116–31. For more detailed accounts of the acquisitions, see Horton 2004 and Nongbri 2014.

<sup>6</sup> On the Trismegistos database, see Depauw / Gheldof 2014.

Codex IX + X. Ezekiel, Daniel, Susanna, and Esther (TM 61933)

Codex XI. Ecclesiasticus (TM 62002)

Codex XII. Letter of Enoch, Melito's *On Passover*, and the Apocryphon of Ezekiel (TM 61462)

Some confusion ensued when other “biblical” material from Egypt in the Chester Beatty began to be published in the late 1970s. The decision was made to simply continue the numbering system established in the 1930s. Thus, for example, two fragmentary copies of the Psalms in Greek were published as “Pap. Beatty XIII and XIV.” Yet, no information in the original edition of these fragments suggested any particular connection with the eleven codices that Beatty bought in the early 1930s.<sup>7</sup> Nor do any of the subsequent publications of “Beatty” papyri, which now runs up to XVIII, have any obvious link to the purchases of the early 1930s.<sup>8</sup> In the remainder of this chapter, then, the name “Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri” will be used to refer only to the collection of eleven codices described above.

The designation “Bodmer Papyri” is even more ambiguous. It generally refers to a collection of papyrus and parchment manuscripts presumed to come from a single discovery in Upper Egypt, perhaps near the city of Dishna, in the early 1950s.<sup>9</sup> Martin Bodmer purchased the largest portion of these books, but Bodmer's collection of papyrus and parchment materials from ancient Egypt clearly contains material that was not part of the find in Upper Egypt in the early 1950s. A catalogue of Bodmer's collection published in 1947, for example, already included several papyrus manuscripts.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, parts of the 1950s find were also purchased by other institutions. In addition, the Bodmer collection has also gifted and sold material presumed to come from this ancient collection. The result is that “Bodmer Papyri” can now be found in Germany, Ireland, Norway, Spain, the United States, and Vatican City. There is no scholarly consensus on the exact extent of the ancient collection now known as the Bodmer Papyri, but most scholars would agree that at least the following items that are presently or

formerly in the Bodmer collection are part of the ancient collection:<sup>11</sup>

P.Bodmer 2: Papyrus codex, John in Greek (TM 61627)

P.Bodmer 3: Papyrus codex, John and Genesis 1–6 in Coptic (TM 107758)

P.Bodmer M: Papyrus codex, Menander (P.Bodmer 25, 4, and 26; TM 61594)

P.Bodmer C: Papyrus codex, mixed Christian texts (P.Bodmer 5, 10, 11, 7, 13, 12, and 8; TM 61420)

P.Bodmer 6: Parchment codex, Proverbs in Coptic (TM 107761)

P.Bodmer 14–15: Papyrus codex, Luke and John in Greek (TM 61743)

P.Bodmer 16: Parchment codex, Exodus in Coptic (TM 108535)

P.Bodmer 18: Papyrus codex, Deuteronomy in Coptic (TM 108536)

P.Bodmer 19: Parchment codex, Matthew and Romans in Coptic (TM 107759)

P.Bodmer P: Papyrus codex, Apology of Phileas and Psalms (P.Bodmer 20 and 9; TM 220465)

P.Bodmer 21: Papyrus codex, Joshua in Coptic (TM 108537)

P.Bodmer 22: Parchment codex, Jeremiah and related literature in Coptic (TM 108176)

P.Bodmer 23: Papyrus codex, Isaiah in Coptic (TM 108542)

P.Bodmer 24: Papyrus codex, Psalms in Greek (TM 61941)

P.Bodmer T: Papyrus codex, Susanna, Daniel, and Thucydides in Greek (P.Bodmer 45, 46, 47, and 27; TM 62928)

P.Bodmer D: Papyrus codex, the “Codex of Visions” (P.Bodmer 38, 29–37; TM 59994)

P.Bodmer 40: Parchment codex, Song of Songs in Coptic (TM 108548)

P.Bodmer 41: Papyrus codex, Acts of Paul in Coptic (TM 108121)<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Pietersma 1978, 1: “The provenance of P.Chester Beatty XIII and XIV is unknown according to the records of the Chester Beatty Library...Apparently...the two manuscripts in question were not part of the same acquisition as the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri from Aphroditopolis edited by F.G. Kenyon.”

<sup>8</sup> See Pietersma 1987.

<sup>9</sup> The most recent and thorough discussion can be found in Nongbri 2018, 157–215, but ongoing research that we hope to publish in due course has uncovered some new data that undermines or at least complicates a few of Nongbri's conclusions.

<sup>10</sup> Bodmer 1947, 141.

<sup>11</sup> Another confusing aspect of the Bodmer Papyri is the independent numbering of some (but not all) individual texts, which obscures the number of actual physical books in the collection. Here, we follow the naming conventions of the online catalogue of the Bodmer Papyri established by the Bodmer Lab project (<https://bodmerlab.unige.ch/fr/constellations/papyri>, accessed 25 May 2022).

<sup>12</sup> Two other books are generally agreed to be part of this find, although Martin Bodmer's collection only ever contained a few fragments of these books. One is a papyrus codex containing materials in Greek and Latin, the so-called Montserrat Codex Miscellaneus (TM 59453). The other is a papyrus codex containing Christian material in Coptic most often referred to as the Crosby-Schøyen codex (more properly Schøyen MS. 193, TM 107771).

In addition to these codices, there are other “P.Bodmer” items that are related to the ancient collection, though not exactly a part of the working “library,” if we may cautiously use that term. In the 1970s, one side of the leather cover of P.Bodmer 23 was taken apart, and among the papyrus sheets glued together to stiffen the cover, several inscribed pieces were found. These have been published and numbered as follows:

- P.Bodmer 51, fragment of a papyrus roll with an educational exercise, reverse used for a medical or ethnographic treatise (TM 64053 + 699689)
- P.Bodmer 52, a leaf from a Greek papyrus codex of Isocrates, *Ad Nicoclem* (TM 61364)
- P.Bodmer 53, blank papyrus with traces of ink on one side (see TM 108542)
- P.Bodmer 54, leaf of a papyrus codex containing a land register (TM 699686)
- P.Bodmer 55, leaf of a papyrus codex containing a tax register (TM 699687)
- P.Bodmer 56, leaf of a papyrus codex containing a tax register (TM 699688)

The documentary (non-literary) material, P.Bodmer 54–56, provides helpful information about the date and possible provenance of P.Bodmer 23, and (perhaps) by extension, the other books. The financial information in the documents indicates that they were written in the first half of the fourth century, which in turn means the cover of P.Bodmer 23 was constructed at some point after that. Furthermore, one of the documents mentions a man with a relatively rare name who is elsewhere identified as being “from Tentyra,” a city just east of Dishna.<sup>13</sup> Again, for the purposes of this chapter, the term “Bodmer Papyri” will refer to the presumed ancient collection that includes some (but not all) of the P.Bodmer series as well as material from other institutions, including the Chester Beatty.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> For the publication of these documents, see Fournet 2015. For further discussion, see Nongbri 2018, 167–68.

<sup>14</sup> We should note that Sharp (and to a lesser extent Nongbri) have begun to doubt whether even this more limited corpus of Bodmer Papyri all come from a single discovery representing a single ancient collection.

### 3 Recognition of the connections between the Chester Beatty and the Bodmer Papyri

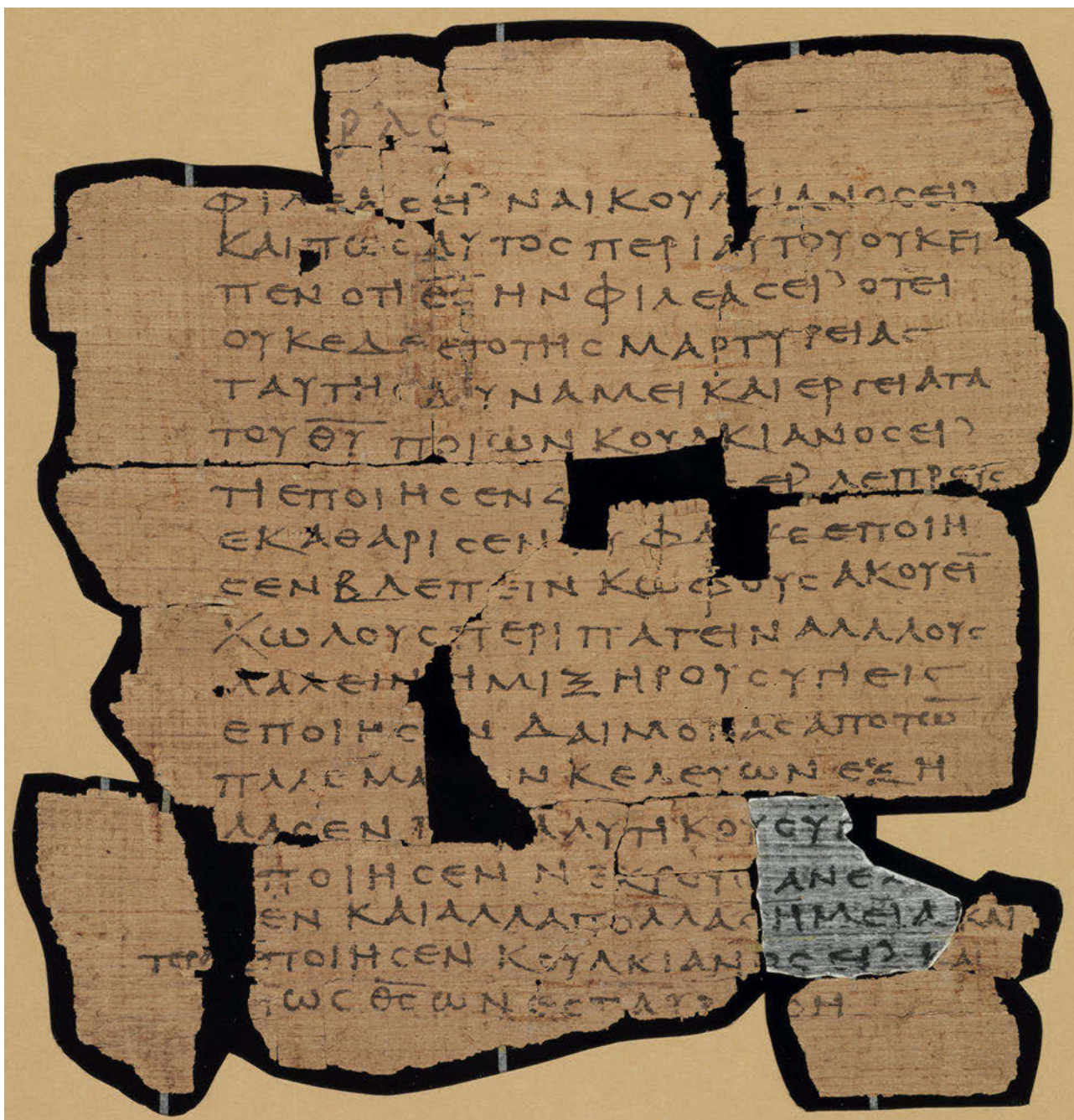
When the extensive “biblical” Bodmer Papyri, such as P.Bodmer 2, began to be published in the 1950s, comparisons with the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri that had been published two decades earlier were inevitable. Moreover, it was already clear in the 1950s and the 1960s that parts of three of the “Bodmer” books had also been acquired by Chester Beatty among the pieces that he had been buying in the 1950s. The most substantial item of these three pieces is Beatty Ac. 1389 (CBL Cpt 2019 and Cpt 2020), a large portion of a papyrus codex containing the book of Joshua in Coptic that is completed by P.Bodmer 21. The other two items are much less impressive. The papyrus and parchment fragments collectively known as Beatty Ac. 2555 (CBL BP XIX and BP X001) include a fragment of P.Bodmer 2 and a fragment of P.Bodmer 20. Each of these can be fitted into their proper place in the more complete leaves held at the Fondation Martin Bodmer (see Figure 1).

Subsequently, more overlapping material between the two collections has been discovered. For instance, it is generally agreed that the Coptic codex now known as Schøyen MS 193 (TM 107771) was also a part of the “Bodmer” find.<sup>15</sup> And in fact, Martin Bodmer at one time also did possess fragments of this book, though they later left his collection under somewhat dubious circumstances.<sup>16</sup> In 2011, additional fragments of this codex were identified in the Chester Beatty as well.<sup>17</sup> Other material common to both collections remains unpublished. In 2017, we identified fragments of Beatty Ac. 1494 (CBL Cpt 1494) (a papyrus roll containing Horsiesios letter 3) and Beatty Ac. 1495 (CBL Cpt 1495) (a papyrus roll containing Horsiesios letter 4) in the Fondation Martin Bodmer. And in 2020, we

<sup>15</sup> On this codex, see Goehring 1990.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Bodmer seems to have loaned fragments of this codex in his collection to William H. Willis of the University of Mississippi in 1962 (at the time, the University of Mississippi owned the bulk of the codex). Willis, however, appears to have subsequently assumed ownership of the fragments and donated them to Duke University in 1988. In 1990, Duke traded the fragments to the Norwegian collector Martin Schøyen. In 2017, however, we identified a handful of additional small fragments of this codex among unsorted fragments at the Fondation Martin Bodmer. Sharp is currently engaged in an archival project that promises to clarify the somewhat obscure history of the University of Mississippi’s papyrus collection and William Willis’s involvement with it.

<sup>17</sup> Pietersma and Comstock 2011.



**Figure 1:** A leaf of P. Bodmer 20 with a black and white photograph of Beatty Ac. 2555 (CBL BP X001) inserted in place. Image appears courtesy of the Fondation Martin Bodmer, Creative commons CC-BY-NC, 4.0.

noticed that among the small unidentified papyrus fragments at the Chester Beatty Library framed collectively under the title “CBL Pap 1991.20” there is another fragment that almost certainly belongs to P. Bodmer 20 (see Figure 2). Unfortunately, nothing is known concerning the circumstances or date of the acquisition of the fragments in this frame. Finally, as recently as 2022, a portion of a papyrus roll containing Athanasius’ letter to Dracontius (TM 749338) has been identified among the Chester Beatty

holdings. We have also identified fragments of this roll in the Bodmer collection (Torallas Tovar 2018).<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Personal communication from Sofia Torallas Tovar; the identification is credited to Alin Suciu.



Figure 2: An additional fragment of P.Bodmer 20 (circled in white) in the Chester Beatty Library framed as CBL Pap 1991.20.



## 4 James Robinson's expansion of the connections

Given these overlapping materials, it is understandable that some scholars entertained the idea that the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri and the Bodmer Papyri formed part of a single ancient collection.<sup>19</sup> This hypothesis has, however, fallen out of favour largely due to research carried out by James M. Robinson in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>20</sup> Robinson was able to show – without knowledge of the contents of the papyri extracted from the cover of P.Bodmer 23 – that it is likely that the “Bodmer” books were found as the result of illicit excavations in Upper Egypt in the vicinity of Dishna in 1952.<sup>21</sup> His research in the Chester Beatty archives helped Robinson to confirm this conclusion. While looking into Beatty's acquisition of Ac. 1389 and the Beatty fragment of P.Bodmer 2, Robinson was led to what he referred to as the Registry of Accessions for the Chester Beatty, a listing of the printed books and manuscripts that Chester Beatty had bought over the years. The “Ac.” numbers mentioned above refer to entries in this Register. In the second volume of the Register, next to the entry for Ac. 1390 (CBP BP XXI) (a papyrus codex containing mathematical exercises in Greek and a portion of the Gospel According to John in Coptic) there is a type-written note with the following information (Figure 3):

Small Village DESHNA just after NAGHI HAMADI about 2 hours before LUXOR by train. Probably from a Library of a Monastery. Found in a jar in a cemetery.

As mentioned earlier, Robinson had concluded on other grounds that Dishna was the source of many of the Bodmer pieces, and he saw this note as confirmation that Ac. 1390 stemmed from the same find.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, the handwritten notes for Ac. 1390 in the Accessions Register state

<sup>19</sup> See, for instance, Turner 1980, 52: “Within the thirty-year period 1930 to 1960 a considerable number of intact or nearly intact papyrus books were acquired, some by M. Bodmer, some by Sir Chester Beatty...It is an economical hypothesis that all these papyri, whether works of Greek literature, documents, or Christian texts, are from one source and constitute a unitary find.”

<sup>20</sup> Robinson's research on this topic has been published in many different outlets and forms over the years. His most detailed treatment can be found in Robinson 2011. The book is full of helpful data, but it is plagued by confusing repetition and internal inconsistencies. For specific details relating to the material at the Chester Beatty, Robinson's most reliable account is found in his introduction to the publication of Ac. 1390: Robinson 1990, 15–29.

<sup>21</sup> On the Beatty Biblical Papyri as a distinct find, see also Nongbri 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Robinson's use of the note is somewhat selective. He nowhere addresses the claim that the book came from a cemetery.

that Ac. 1390 was purchased together with “2 boxes of loose leaves” and Ac. 1389 (=P.Bodmer 21) in the summer of 1956 from Phocion Tano, who sold Martin Bodmer most of his Egyptian materials.<sup>23</sup> A letter from Chester Beatty to Wilfred Merton dated 5 April 1956 provides further details about material bought from Tano in 1956 (ACB to Merton, 5 April 1956, CBP/B/05/32).<sup>24</sup> Beatty explicitly mentions three items. First, he describes “two books with the original binding.” As Robinson correctly noted, these are most likely Ac. 1389 and Ac. 1499 (CBL BP XXI).<sup>25</sup> Both came into Beatty's possession with their leather covers intact, and Ac. 1499 happens to include many blank pages, hence Beatty's assessment that it was “never finished.” Then he describes a third item: “It was evidently a scroll which was cut in pieces to make it appear like a book.” The individual pages that make up the book had been “stuck together,” but they “separate naturally.” As Robinson points out, this is a fitting description of the Panopolis tax codex (Ac. 2554, CBL PapPan I and CBL PapPan II).<sup>26</sup> And the tax codex is mentioned along with Ac. 1499 in a report prepared for Beatty by Theodore Skeat dated 4 June 1956 (CBP/B/05/48).<sup>27</sup> This same report also mentions “two small folders of papyrus fragments” (to be identified as the “2 boxes of loose leaves” mentioned in the Accessions Register?). In one of these folders Skeat identified the fragment of P.Bodmer 2. Within this cluster of materials, then, there were several connections to material that was certainly part of the Bodmer find.

From this point, Robinson began to identify other items that Beatty had acquired that may belong to the same find. Over the years, Robinson published many different versions of these arguments and speculated with varying degrees of confidence that numerous different pieces in the Chester Beatty might belong to the Dishna find along with the Bodmer Papyri. The following list contains, as far as we know, all the material in the Chester Beatty that Robinson has, at one time or another, associated with the Bodmer find.

CBL Cpt 2019 and Cpt 2020 (Ac. 1389): Part of P.Bodmer 21 (TM 108537)

CBL Cpt 2021 (Ac. 1390): Papyrus codex, math exercises and a part of John in Coptic (TM 61614)

<sup>23</sup> On Tano, see Hagen and Ryholt 2016, 266–67.

<sup>24</sup> Wilfred Merton (1888–1957) was Beatty's friend and a fellow collector of manuscripts.

<sup>25</sup> In fact, these are the only papyrus books in the collection with leather covers preserved intact, as Jill Unkel informs us.

<sup>26</sup> In the 1950s the tax codex had not yet been assigned an accession number. It, along with the fragments of P.Bodmer 2 and P.Bodmer 20 (Ac. 2555), seems to have first received accession numbers in the 1980s, if the purchase dates of other numbers in that range are indicative.

<sup>27</sup> See the Appendix to this chapter for the full text of Skeat's report.

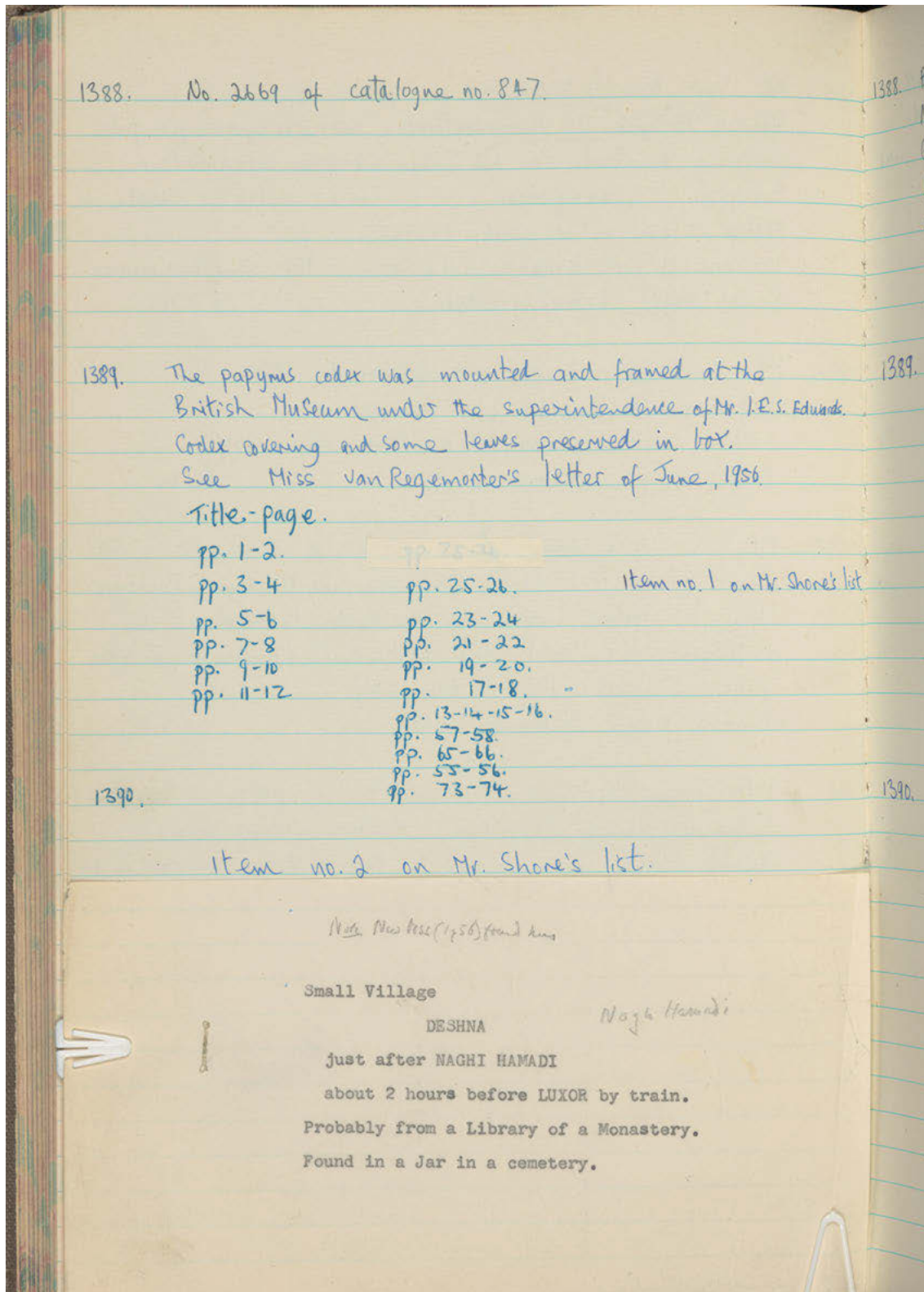


Figure 3: Chester Beatty Register of Accessions 1390, acquisitions from April 1956, CBP/B/01/2.

- CBL Cpt 2013 (Ac. 1486): a parchment roll, letter 2 of Theodore in Coptic (TM 108130)
- CBL Cpt 2018 (Ac. 1493): a papyrus codex, the Apocalypse of Elijah in Coptic (TM 108402)
- CBL Cpt 1494 (Ac. 1494): papyrus roll, letter 3 of Horsiesios in Coptic (TM 108131)
- CBL Cpt 1495 (Ac. 1495): papyrus roll, letter 4 of Horsiesios in Coptic (TM 108132)
- CBL BP XXI (Ac. 1499): a papyrus codex, Greek grammar and lexicon (TM 61873)
- CBL BP XIII and BP XIV (Ac. 1501): parts of two papyrus codices containing Psalms in Greek (TM 61999 and 62000)
- CBL PapPan I and PapPan II (Ac. 2554): the Panopolis tax codex (TM 16164)
- CBL X001 (Ac. 2555b and c): fragments of P.Bodmer 2 and P.Bodmer 20 (TM 61627 and 220465)
- CBL Cpt 54 (Ac. 2556): Papyrus codex, Pachomian letters in Coptic (TM 108078)
- CBL BP XV: Papyrus codex, the Apology of Phileas and Psalms in Greek (TM 62365)
- CBL BP XVI: Papyrus codex, Jannes and Jambres in Coptic (TM 64400)
- CBL W 129 (Ac. 2557): Pachomian letters in Greek (TM 62348)<sup>28</sup>
- CBL Pap 1008: Papyrus codex containing school exercises (TM 64288)

## 5 Complicating the picture

Robinson took a capacious approach to identifying pieces in the Beatty collection that may have been connected to the Bodmer find, but to his credit, he was usually careful to observe the tentative nature of these identifications.<sup>29</sup> Yet, Robinson's inclusive list of Beatty material that was supposedly part of the Bodmer collection has come to take on the status of fact in wider discussions of the Bodmer Papyri.<sup>30</sup> A review of the evidence will be helpful.

<sup>28</sup> This item was published as "W. 145" (Quecke 1975) and is sometimes described as "WMS 145" (for instance, in Ryan et al. 2001). The source of this designation is unknown, as W 145 refers to a different object. Thanks to Jill Unkel for the clarification.

<sup>29</sup> Thus, in his most reliable treatment of the Beatty collection, Robinson notes that his inventory includes items "listed with hesitation," and his discussion is peppered with phrases like "one may conjecture" (Robinson 1990).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Gamble 1995, 172–74. An exception is Nongbri 2018, 186–90, who cast doubt on the inclusion of several of Robinson's suggested additions to the list of Bodmer Papyri.

When Robinson attempted to expand the list of potential "Bodmer Papyri" in the Chester Beatty beyond the cluster of items documented as having been purchased in 1956, he proceeded by searching through the Accessions Register in the range of numbers near Ac. 1389 and Ac. 1499 (Figure 4). He sought to identify any papyrus or parchment pieces of Egyptian origin. Unless he was able to exclude such pieces for some obvious reason, he labelled them as potential Bodmer items. He eventually came to include items up to Ac. 1501.<sup>31</sup> Robinson was well aware that this method was not entirely reliable. As Skeat warned Robinson in a letter written in 1985: "The basic difficulty is that Beatty did not keep any proper register of his acquisitions, and this vitiated any attempt to base conclusions on the sequence of accession numbers."<sup>32</sup> Nevertheless, Robinson's conclusions about which Beatty items belong to the Bodmer find remain very influential.

It is, however, very important to be cautious about building too much upon Robinson's conclusions. The problem can be illustrated with a closer look at Ac. 1501. Robinson included Ac. 1501, portions of two papyrus codices containing Psalms in Greek, as a potential part of the Bodmer find for two reasons. First, as already mentioned, their accession number is in close proximity to one of the pieces bought in 1956 that he believed to be part of the Bodmer discovery (Ac. 1499). Second, a note in the Accessions Register that accompanies Ac. 1501 states that these pieces were "found in a box of miscellaneous fragments of papyri, summer, 1957. Mounted at B.M. [the British Museum] and returned to library August, 1958" (CBP/B/01/2). Based on this note, Robinson hypothesised that Ac. 1501 was part of a batch of material that had been sent to the British Museum for conservation at the end of 1956, a batch which Robinson assumed included material *purchased* in 1956.<sup>33</sup> But at least some parts of this chain of reasoning now seem suspect in light of newly discovered archival material at the Chester Beatty that was apparently unknown to Robinson.

The papyrus leaves collected as Ac. 1501 were published in 1978 as P.Chester Beatty XIII and XIV.<sup>34</sup> P.Chester Beatty XIII consists of eight damaged but relatively intact papyrus leaves, and P.Chester Beatty XIV consists of two

<sup>31</sup> Robinson 1990, 4 and Robinson 2011, 63. As noted in footnote 25, some items purchased in the 1950s seem not to have received accession numbers until the 1980s. This is the case for Ac. 2554, Ac. 2555, and Ac. 2556.

<sup>32</sup> Letter from Theodore C. Skeat to James M. Robinson 3 May 1985 (Dr James Robinson Papers, folder titled Chester Beatty Letters, Special Collections, The Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California).

<sup>33</sup> Robinson 2011, 67.

<sup>34</sup> Pietersma 1978.

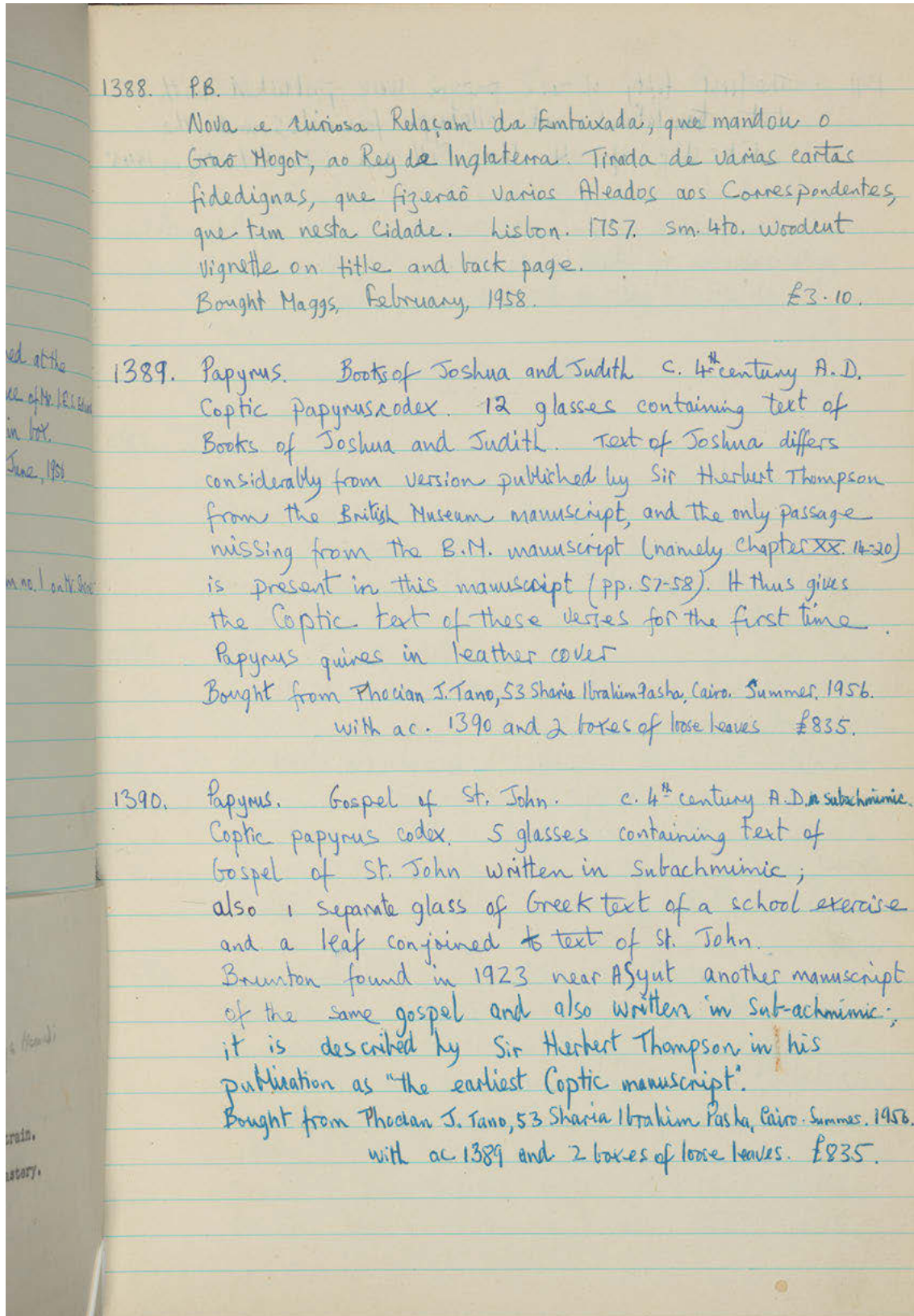


Figure 4: One of the Chester Beatty Accession Registers, opening that shows Ac. 1389 and 1390.

small fragments of a single leaf copied in a different hand from that of P.Chester Beatty XIII. While it is true that Ac. 1501 was likely entered into the Accessions Register late in 1958, around the same time as some material that may come from the Bodmer discovery, this fact does not necessarily indicate that the materials were purchased at that time. A ring binder in the Beatty Library with notes about various purchases contains an entry for the year 1938 that runs as follows:

1938 Sent by Mr. Beatty from Cairo with Mr. Mansor<sup>35</sup> Received Feb. 16.  
 –Large parcel containing Coptic fragments. GOSPELS, etc. 4th–5th cent.  
 –Small parcel. 8 folios of PSALMS (3rd cent.); fragments of PSALMS. + other fragments (larger script) (CBP/B/02/2/18)<sup>36</sup>

The 1938 entry for the Psalms seems to match the description of Ac. 1501 quite well. If these leaves of the Psalms were in fact bought in the late 1930s, it is most unlikely that they should be associated with the Bodmer discovery, which, again, is generally believed to have taken place around 1952.<sup>37</sup>

A second reason for caution with Robinson's conclusions involves the possibility that Beatty was buying from more than one of the multiple different finds of Egyptian papyri that were on the market in 1956. Consider the example of the Beatty tax codex (Ac. 2554) mentioned in Beatty's letter to Merton and in Skeat's report. This codex, which records a family's tax receipts for the years 339–345 CE, forms a part of a relatively coherent collection, the so-called "archive of the descendants of Alopex." This archive consists of over thirty documents from various members of this family that have ended up in different modern collections.<sup>38</sup> If the tax codex really is a part of the Bodmer Papyri, then the other documents in this archive should also be included in the find. However, a recently published piece from this archive is said to have been acquired already in 1953, suggesting that this material was on the market at least two years before Martin

Bodmer made his first purchases of "Bodmer Papyri" in 1955.<sup>39</sup> It may well be the case, then, that Beatty happened to acquire material from more than one Egyptian find in the 1950s.<sup>40</sup>

## Conclusions

To conclude, then, we offer a set of suggestions for working with the Accession Registers at the Chester Beatty:

1. The Registers preserve institutional memory, and while not infallible, ought to be considered as accurate unless there are compelling contemporary sources that suggest otherwise.
2. Items are not entered into the Register until after they are purchased.
3. An item may be entered into the Register years (or even decades) after it was purchased. The date an item was entered into the Register provides only a terminus ante quem for acquisition.
4. Proximity of accession numbers in the Register only means that items were entered into the Register around the same time and does not necessarily confirm that items were purchased around the same time.
5. It must also be remembered that (ancient) items purchased at about the same time may not necessarily have originated from the same (ancient) collection.

With these cautions in mind, we approach Robinson's hypotheses about which materials in the Chester Beatty should be regarded as part of the "Bodmer Papyri" find with some scepticism. We acknowledge that scholars of early Christian manuscripts owe a great deal to James Robinson's tireless and industrious work on the knotty problem of the Bodmer Papyri. Yet, it seems to us that at times, his enthusiasm got the better of him and led him to draw conclusions unwarranted by the ambiguous evi-

<sup>35</sup> This is perhaps a reference to Mansur Abd el-Sayyid Mansour (1881–1968), a Cairo antiquities dealer, on whom see Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 237–38.

<sup>36</sup> We are grateful to Jill Unkel for drawing this entry to our attention. Pietersma made no mention of this record in his edition of P.Chester Beatty XIII and XIV (Pietersma 1978).

<sup>37</sup> A date of purchase in or before 1938 does, however, reopen the question of whether these leaves might have some association with the materials that Beatty was purchasing earlier in the 1930s, namely the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri. That Beatty and Kenyon made no such connection perhaps suggests they had reasons to suspect a different origin for these leaves.

<sup>38</sup> For an overview of this archive, see Geens 2007.

<sup>39</sup> See Hickey 2017, 105.

<sup>40</sup> In fact, a third relatively coherent group of manuscripts also seems to have been circulating on the market at the same time. One of Beatty's other purchases of 1956, Ac. 1486, is a parchment roll containing a letter of Theodore, a Pachomian monk. Several letters associated with Pachomius and his followers came to light in the 1950s and were purchased by different collections, many of them the same institutions that hold undisputed Bodmer Papyri. Robinson has argued that this Pachomian material was a part of the Bodmer Papyri find, but scholars are divided on the question (see Robinson 2011, 130–84; for reservations and further bibliography, see Fournet 2015, 12 and Nongbri 2018, 190–91). In any event, we must face the possibility that Beatty (and other buyers of Bodmer Papyri in the 1950s) were purchasing materials from multiple distinct ancient finds.

dence that is actually available. Robinson's various lists of Beatty manuscripts that were part of the same find as the bulk of the Bodmer Papyri are without doubt overly inclusive. It is our hope that further archival work on the acquisition of the pieces in question might further clarify which pieces in the Chester Beatty may actually belong to the find.<sup>41</sup> It is clear that some of the manuscripts that Beatty purchased in the 1950s that are physically connected to material currently or formerly at the Bodmer can be considered as part of the "Bodmer Papyri" find (at least, to the degree that we can be confident these books themselves constitute a unitary find):<sup>42</sup>

Ac. 1389: A substantial portion of P.Bodmer 21

Ac. 2555: Fragments of P.Bodmer 2 and P.Bodmer 20

CBL Cpt 2026: Leaves of Schøyen MS 193

In addition, the fact that Ac. 1390 was purchased together with Ac. 1389 *and* contains a note connecting it to Dishna likely means that this piece should be added to this list. Ac. 1499, although apparently purchased at the same time as these books, lacks any explicit connection with Dishna.<sup>43</sup> Ac. 1494 and 1495 are now connected to the recently discovered fragments in the Bodmer collection, but the question of whether these Pachomian materials belong with the undisputed Bodmer Papyri in the first place continues to divide scholars, including the authors of this chapter: Sharp would include Ac. 1494 and Ac. 1495 as a part of the Bodmer Papyri find, but Nongbri remains hesitant. While

it is possible that other material at the Chester Beatty *may* be connected to the "Bodmer" find, there is, to our knowledge, no positive *archival* evidence in favour of connecting any other pieces in the library to the Bodmer find.

There is, of course, more work to be done. Untangling the intertwined acquisition histories of modern collections forms an important component of establishing the profiles of these ancient collections. It can be easy to assume that modern collections correspond in a simple or direct way with ancient collections. Disciplinary practices like informal naming conventions ("Beatty Papyri," "Bodmer Papyri") can encourage the idea that the collections represent coherent groupings of ancient manuscripts. Collectors can, in a way, become identified with the materials in their collections.<sup>44</sup> By closely examining archival records, the approach of museum archaeology helps to strip away any veneer of uniformity about collections and to more clearly show the variegated and sometimes haphazard way that acquisitions happened. The operations of the antiquities market rarely worked to preserve the coherence of ancient collections of manuscripts. If we wish to study these ancient materials responsibly, we must first do the sometimes tedious work making sure we have reconstructed the ancient collections as accurately as possible.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>41</sup> An untapped resource in this investigation is the archival documentation at the Fondation Martin Bodmer in Cologne. We are aware of correspondence there pertaining to these purchases (including the correspondence of both Martin Bodmer and his secretary Odlie Bongard), but we have not been able to access this material, which could potentially answer a number of lingering questions about these manuscripts.

<sup>42</sup> As noted above, there are also fragments of Beatty Ac. 1494 and 1495, papyrus copies of letters of Horsiesios, at the Fondation Martin Bodmer. As far as we are aware, however, nothing is known about the date or circumstances when these pieces were acquired.

<sup>43</sup> It seems clear from Beatty's letter to Merton and Skeat's report that Ac. 1499 was also purchased in 1956. Next to its entry in the Accessions Register, however, is a note written in pencil: "1953 Greek-Latin Dictionary." We are uncertain who entered this note, when they entered the note, and what the significance of the date is. Earlier scholars have also mentioned this note (Wouters 1988, xi and Robinson 2011, 58), but nobody has attempted to explain its presence or meaning.

<sup>44</sup> It is perhaps noteworthy in this connection that the editors of this volume have changed all our references to "the Chester Beatty Library" to simply the "Chester Beatty."

<sup>45</sup> We are grateful to Jill Unkel and Hyder Abbas for their collegiality and willingness to share their extensive knowledge of the Beatty archives. Nongbri's research was conducted as a part of the EthiCodex project funded by the Research Council of Norway (project number 314240).

## Appendix: Theodore Skeat's 1956 Report

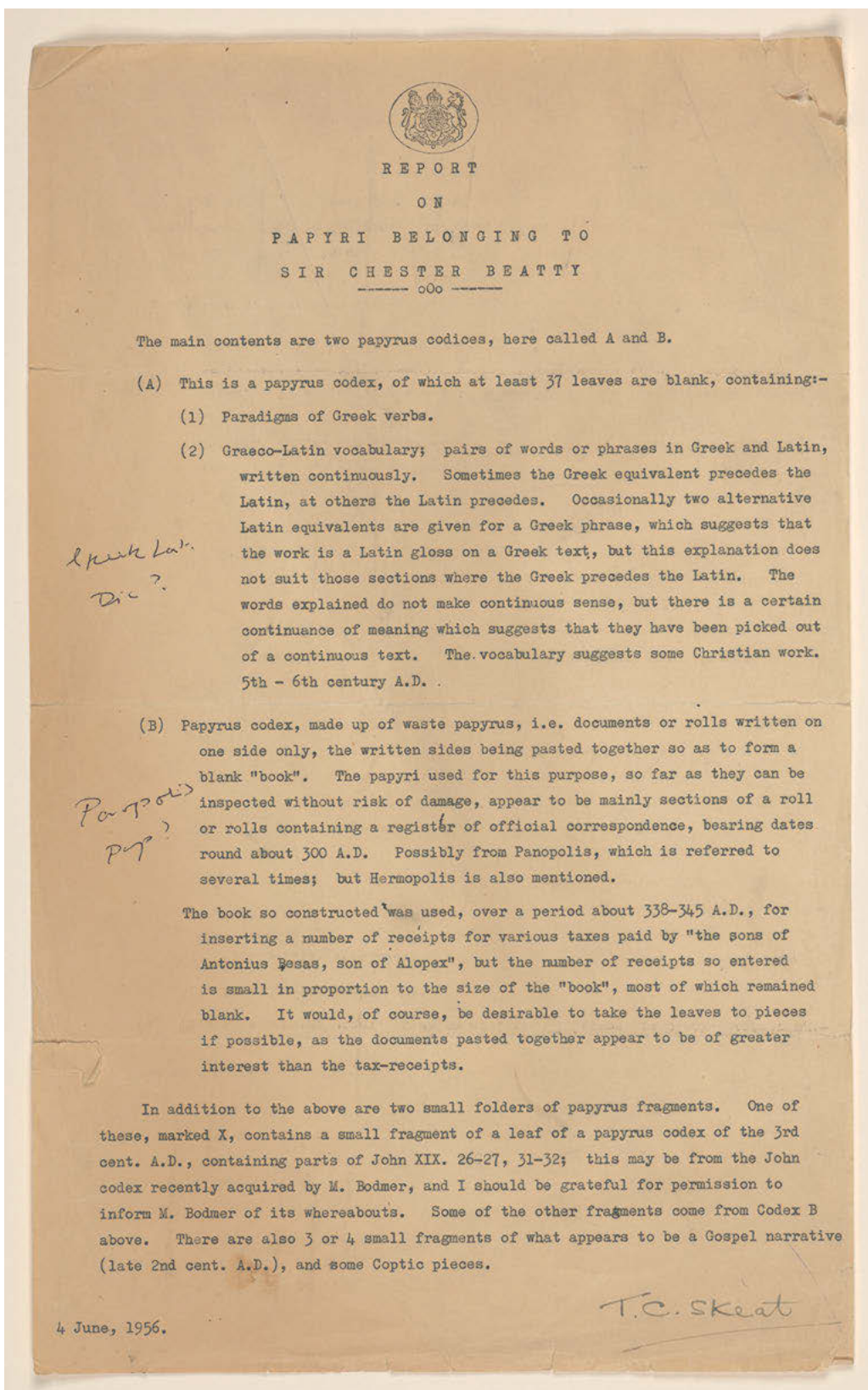


Figure 5: Report on papyri by T. C. Skeat.

## REPORT ON PYPYRI BELONGING TO SIR CHESTER BEATTY

The main contents are two papyrus codices, here called A and B.

(A) This is a papyrus codex, of which at least 37 leaves are blank, containing:-

- (1) Paradigms of Greek verbs.
- (2) Graeco-Latin vocabulary; pairs of words or phrases in Greek and Latin, written continuously. Sometimes the Greek equivalent precedes the Latin, at others the Latin precedes. Occasionally two alternative Latin equivalents are given for a Greek phrase, which suggests that the work is a Latin gloss on a Greek text, but this explanation does not suit those sections where the Greek precedes the Latin. The words explained do not make continuous sense, but there is a certain continuance of meaning which suggests that they have been picked out of a continuous text. The vocabulary suggests some Christian work.  
5th–6th century A.D.

(B) Papyrus codex, made up of waste papyrus, i.e. documents of rolls written on one side only, the written sides being pasted together so as to form a blank "book". The papyri used for this purpose, so far as

they can be inspected without risk of damage, appear to be mainly sections of a roll or rolls containing a register of official correspondence, bearing dates round about 300 A.D. Possibly from Panopolis, which is referred to several times; but Hermopolis is also mentioned.

The book so constructed was used, over a period about 338–345 A.D., for inserting a number of receipts for various taxes paid by "the sons of Antonius Besas, so of Alpex", but the number of receipts so entered is small in proportion to the size of the "book", most of which remained blank. It would, of course, be desirable to take the leaves to pieces if possible, as the documents pasted together appear to be of greater interest than the tax-receipts.

In addition to the above are two small folders of papyrus fragments. One of these, marked X, contains a small fragment of a leaf of a papyrus codex of the 3rd cent. A.D., containing parts of John XIX. 26–27, 31–32; this may be from the John codex recently acquired by M. Bodmer, and I should be grateful for permission to inform M. Bodmer of its whereabouts. Some of the other fragments come from Codex B above. There are also 3 or 4 small fragments of what appears to be a Gospel narrative (late 2nd cent. A.D.), and some Coptic pieces.

4 June 1956

[Signed] T.C. Skeat

يلتقط المؤلفان في هذا المقال الخطوط العريضة لتاريخ علم البردي وللحبكة المركزية الغربية في علم البردي ، وهي الحبكة التي فسرها المؤلفان السابقان، ويعرضوا لنا في هذا المقال العديد من التفاصيل الدقيقة حول النتائج السنية للغاية التي خلفها شراء البرديات مجهولة المصدر (مكان العثور عليها) من تجار الآثار المصريين في بدايات ومنتصف القرن العشرين ومن ثم تقسيمها بين المتاحف الغربية وغيرها من المؤسسات المولعة بالتراث المصري وبين الكثير من الأفراد المولعين بتجميع أنواع معينة من هذا التراث مثل مارتن بودمر وتشيستر بيتي. فمثلاً يعرض المؤلفان لحقيقة تقسيم الكتب القديمة المكتوبة على أوراق البردي إلى أوراق متفرقة من أجل مضاعفة سعر البيع أو من أجل توزيع الحصيد على من عثر أو من سرق هذا الكتاب أو هذه البرديات، وعلى هذا فإن سوق البرديات قد ساعد بشكل أو بآخر أولاً في تدمير العديد من المكتشفات الأثرية وثانياً في تشكيل أجندة البحث العلمي حتى وقتنا الحاضر. ومن خلال استخدام المنهج الذي يطلق عليه البعض اسم "حفریات المتاحف" يعرض المؤلفان هذه الحقيقة من خلال الغوص في أرشيفات واحدة من أهم المجموعات التي تحتوي على برديات إنجيلية وهي برديات بودمير وثيقة الصلة بمجموعة تشيستر بيتي ، ويوضحان كيف أن قصص العثور على هذه البرديات أخفت، أحياناً بقصد وأحياناً بدون قصد، مجموعة مهمة من الحقائق حول أماكن العثور على هذه البرديات ومن ثم السياق التاريخي والأثري لهذه الوثائق. يقدم الباحثان في بداية مقالهم محاولة لضبط المصطلحات وذلك من خلال عرض عام لمجموعة الكودكس البردية (أي أوراق البردي المجمعة على هيئة كتاب خلاف لأوراق البردي المجمعة على هيئة لفة (رول) من الأوراق الملتصقة ببعضها البعض) والملابسات المزعومة للعثور على هذه المخطوطات وهي المجموعة تضافى على المجموعة محل الدراسة أهميتها العلمية والثقافية ثم يعرضان بعد ذلك لمجموعة الكودكس في برديات بودمير قبل أن يشرعا في الربط بين المجموعتين من خلال بحثهم العلمي الذي يشبه أسلوب المحققين الصحفيين في تتبعهم لخيوط القصص والإنتباه الجيد للتفاصيل الدقيقة . المقال يكاد يكون دعوة صريحة لكل المتخصصين من أجل المزيد من العمل على كشف ملامسات اكتشاف هذه البرديات من خلال البحث في أرشيفات المجموعات المختلفة وعدم الاكتفاء فقط بذكر أسماء المدن أو القرى التي يقال أنها مصدر هذه البرديات. مثل هذه الأبحاث مهمة ليس فقط لكشف الأماكن الدقيقة للعثور على هذه البرديات بل لكشف الملامسات التاريخية الحديثة والدوافع المختلفة لمن قاموا بتجميع هذه البرديات. المقال مهم لكل من يريد أن يعرف على وجه الدقة برديات تشيستر بيتي التي لها علاقة واضحة وصريحة مع برديات مارتن بودمير.

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Jill Unkel

# An Old Story Retold: The Acquisition of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri

إعادة سرد قصة قديمة: كيف إستطاع تشيستر بيتي الحصول على برديات الكتاب المقدس ، جيل أونكل

In 1931, British palaeographer, Frederic Kenyon (1863–1952), published an article in *The Times* about a new group of Greek biblical papyri, “acquired by Mr. A. Chester Beatty, the well-known collector of illuminated manuscripts” (Figure 1).<sup>1</sup>

Beatty’s acquisition included important early versions of the Septuagint as well as some of the earliest surviving fragments of New Testament texts. The plethora of press coverage which followed was collected, collated, and kept for posterity in a scrap book by Beatty’s staff.<sup>2</sup> Now familiar to papyrologists as an old story many times retold, this paper aims to dig a little deeper, to detail a more accurate account of that acquisition.

Beatty’s art collecting is often presented in apt parallel with his mining activities, and he has been celebrated as a successful speculator in both areas. The mining engineer turned financier became a major collector of artefacts unearthed by diggers, supplied by dealers, organised by librarians, and evaluated and classified by advisors. Beatty’s processes of examination, classification, and evaluation were readily transferred from his mining activities. He devised a personal system for assessing and grading the quality of objects which governed his acquisitions.

Those around him both nurtured and lauded his discernment. In 1930, British papyrologist, H. Idris Bell (1879–1967) wrote, “you really do cultivate a habit of

hitting the bull’s eye.”<sup>3</sup> Bell was one of many British Museum staff employed as a private advisor by Beatty. In later life, Beatty reflected upon his timely investments in art in the same vein as his financial successes with his mining company Selection Trust, which he noted were “built up on buying mines that other people did not want.”<sup>4</sup> Referring to the focus of his collecting, he noted: “There were no unknown Western manuscripts waiting to be discovered. . . Besides civilisation came from the East.”<sup>5</sup>

Well before the official press release announced the acquisition of the biblical papyri in 1931, Bell praised the acquisition to Beatty as “a most valuable purchase.”<sup>6</sup> The acquisition of what promptly became known as the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri<sup>7</sup> (hereafter CBBP) secured Beatty’s status as a collector of repute and, according to some contemporary articles, as an Egyptologist.<sup>8</sup>

## 1 Beatty’s first visit to Egypt

Artefacts excavated in Egypt were admired and indeed exported to Europe, and then on to America, for centuries

1 Kenyon 1931. For details on Beatty’s earlier collecting, see Cleaver 2017.

2 *Biblical Papyri. . . and other misc. articles, 1931–[1966]*, Chester Beatty Archive, Chester Beatty Papers (hereafter CBP), CBP/A/06/04. “I wish you would get Miss Kingsford to collect all the clippings and remarks about my Papyrii [sic] and mount them neatly in a book – not a clipping book. Be sure and have her collect all the clippings.” Extract from ACB to Corbel, in Corbel to Joan Kingsford-Wood, 28 March 1934, CBP/B/06/2.

**Acknowledgements:** Without the vital work of my colleagues in reorganising the Chester Beatty Archive, this paper and other research on collection provenance and object histories would not be possible. I would like to thank my colleague Hyder Abbas in particular for his endless archival knowledge and continued research support.

Jill Unkel, The Chester Beatty

3 Referring to Coptic binding covers, H. Idris Bell to ACB, 12 May 1930, CBP/B/05/10.

4 ACB to Wilkinson, 20 November 1953, CBP/B/06/3/01.

5 *Irish Times*, 19 September 1953, CBP/A/06/05.

6 Harold Idris Bell to ACB, 11 April 1930, CBP/B/05/10.

7 “. . . it occurs to me that it may be misleading to call these papyri CHESTER BEATTY PAPYRI I, II III, etc. Dr Gardiner has already called the Hieratic Papyrus which he edited CHESTER BEATTY PAPYRI NO.I, and I understand the remaining Hieratic Papyri are to follow on in the same numeration. What do you think had better be done – would BEATTY BIBLICAL PAPYRI I be possible, or BEATTY GREEK PAPYRI I, or BEATTY PAPYRI GREEK I?” (Merton to Kenyon, 13 January 1933). Kenyon replied, “As to the lettering, will it not be sufficient to have on the plates simple ‘Papyrus I, II,’ etc.? You have the full title “Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri” on the title-page, and that is sufficient” (Kenyon to Merton, 16 January 1933, CBP/B/05/02/009).

8 “Older Bible, Before Codex Sinaiticus: Found in Jar,” *Star*, 9 November 1934; “Bible Fragments Found: Older than the Codex Sinaiticus,” *Bradford Daily Telegraph*, 9 November 1934; “Older than Codex, Fragments of Bible found in Water Jar,” *Glasgow Evening News*, 9 and 10 November 1934, CBP/A/06/04.

TIMES. NOV. 19. 1931.

## THE TEXT OF THE BIBLE

### A NEW DISCOVERY

#### MORE PAPYRI FROM EGYPT

By Sir Frederic Kenyon

The last 90 years have been punctuated by discoveries of manuscripts of prime interest for Biblical students. The ball opened in 1842 with the arrival in the British Museum of the Curetonian manuscript of the Old Syriac version of the Gospels. In 1844 came the discovery by Tischendorf of part of the Old Testament portion of the Codex Sinaiticus. In 1859 the same scholar acquired more of the Old Testament and the whole of the New in the same manuscript. In 1892 Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson discovered the Sinaitic manuscript of the Old Syriac version; and in the same year were published the extracts from the Gospel and Revelation of Peter and the Book of Enoch, discovered six years earlier by French excavators at Akhmim. In 1897 Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt found at Oxyrhynchus the papyrus fragment of the Sayings of Jesus, to which a second fragment was added in 1904. In 1906 Mr. C. L. Freer acquired a remarkable group of vellum manuscripts in Egypt, of which the most important is the fifth-century copy of the Gospels, now known as W, which contains an apocryphal addition in the last chapter of Mark. I have now, after an interval of 25 years, the privilege of making known a discovery of Biblical manuscripts which rivals any of these in interest and surpasses them all in antiquity.

The discovery consists of a group of Greek Biblical papyri, acquired by Mr. A. Chester Beatty, the well-known collector of illuminated manuscripts of both Eastern and Western art. A few leaves have become separated from the main collection and have come to light at Michigan University and in private hands; and the incomplete and non-continuous character of most of the manuscripts makes it possible that other portions of the find are still in existence elsewhere. The source of the find has not been disclosed, but it is evident that it must come from the library of a Christian Church or monastery in Egypt. Whether further portions of it exist or not, the collection secured by Mr. Chester Beatty is the most remarkable addition to the textual material of the Greek Bible that has been made for many a long day, and with his permission a first summary account of it is here given.

#### 190 LEAVES

First as to the extent of the find. Nineteen books of the Bible are represented: Genesis, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Esther, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Ecclesiasticus, all four Gospels, Acts, Romans, Philippians, Colossians, I. Thessalonians, and Revelation; and in addition there is a substantial portion of the lost Greek text of the apocryphal Book of Enoch. The amount preserved of each book varies from 44 double-columned leaves of one

manuscript of Genesis to a portion of a single leaf in the case of Jeremiah. In all there are some 190 leaves (some small additions may still have to be made to the tally, and there are a number of unplaced fragments of one manuscript); and though very few of these have escaped mutilation, the total amount of text is very considerable.

Next as to their age. Among them are the earliest manuscripts of the Greek Bible yet known. The exact dating of literary hands on papyrus is seldom possible, but approximate datings may be given, often with considerable security. The earliest of these manuscripts can be assigned with confidence to the second century of our era, and not to a very late period in it. Most of them appear to belong to the third century, and one substantial one to the fourth. The Enoch is probably of the late fourth or early fifth century.

All of them are codices—i.e., they are written in quires, like modern books, not on rolls, which were the usual format of literary works until about the fourth century. It has been known for some time that the codex form was used by the Christians at a time when pagans still normally adhered to the roll; but this find carries back the use of the codex to an earlier date than has previously been known. Merely from the bibliographical point of view, therefore, the find is of considerable interest; but the intrinsic value of the manuscripts is much higher. This will be apparent from a summary description of the several volumes.

#### AN ECLECTIC TEXT

Genesis is represented by two manuscripts, both of considerable extent. The largest, of 44 leaves, with two columns to a page, in a square, heavy hand, which appears to be of the fourth century, contains chapters ix.-xli. of the book, though with mutilations, greater or less, of each leaf. The character of the text is interesting, for it tends to agree with the type found in the Cottonian and Bodleian manuscripts, rather than with the Codex Alexandrinus, which has hitherto held the first place in critical estimation. The second Genesis manuscript consists of 22 leaves, in generally good preservation, ranging from chapters xxiv. to xlv., written in a hand which is documentary rather than literary, and which appears to belong to the latter part of the third century. The text appears, on a cursory examination, to be rather more eclectic than the other, but to agree less with the Alexandrinus than with other manuscripts.

The two other books of the Pentateuch, Numbers and Deuteronomy, form part of a single codex, which is at once the earliest and the best written of the whole collection. Portions of 25 leaves are preserved, the original measurements of which must have been about 11 in. by 7 in., with double columns, tall and narrow and with ample margins, written in a fine hand, which can hardly be later than the middle of the second century. Twelve leaves contain Numbers v. 12 to viii. 19, and portions of xxii. 11-xxiv. 8, while 13 contain Deuteronomy i. 20 to vii. 18, and xxviii. 43-60. There are also many detached fragments, a few of which are at Michigan. The text appears to be of good quality, with a tendency to agree with the Alexandrinus and Ambrosianus against the Vaticanus.

Of the four Major Prophets, Isaiah and Jeremiah are scantily represented. There are portions of 12 leaves and some detached fragments of Isaiah and one of Jeremiah, but only a small part of each leaf is preserved. The Isaiah must have been a handsome volume, written in a bold, rather widely-spaced hand, which I should assign somewhat doubtfully to the first half of the third century.

Ezekiel forms part of a very curious volume.

P.T.O.

Figure 1: Kenyon, *The Text of the Bible, A New Discovery, More Papyri from Egypt*, in *The Times*, 19 November 1931, CBP/B/06/04.

before Chester Beatty (1875–1968) first docked in Alexandria.<sup>9</sup> Visiting in 1914 in part to treat his asthma and silicosis, Beatty began his own expedition into the antiquities market.<sup>10</sup> That retreat to Egypt would profoundly impact the direction of his collecting.

The party of six – which included his second wife, Edith (1886–1952), his two children, “little” Ninette (1901–1962) and Chet Jr (1907–1983), a maid and Chet’s nurse – departed New York on the *SS Caronia* on 31 January, with chairs reserved on “the sunny side of the Promenade Deck.”<sup>11</sup> The ship docked in Alexandria seventeen days later (17 February) and the group travelled on to Cairo by train (see Figures 2 and 3).

In Cairo they stayed in the Shepherd’s Hotel, well-situated for the many antiquities dealers marketing to wealthy travellers (Figure 2).<sup>12</sup> The group then departed on a three-week cruise up the Nile on the steamer *PS Arabia* (Figure 3).<sup>13</sup> Their trip concluded on 18 March when they departed Alexandria for London, via Paris.<sup>14</sup> Looking back on that first visit, Beatty related to his friend Sheila Powerscourt (1906–1992) that “this is how I began collecting. When my wife and I took a trip to Egypt. . . I spent a lot of time in the souks and bought a few papyri that turned out to be important.”<sup>15</sup>

While Beatty was unable to return to Egypt during the First World War, by the mid-1920s he had become an annual winter resident.<sup>16</sup> Beatty found Egypt not only a “tonic for his tired lungs” but also a “collector’s paradise.”<sup>17</sup> He and Edith usually arrived at Christmas and stayed until March, working remotely, socialising, and col-

lecting.<sup>18</sup> Around 1930, they had a villa built near the Pyramids of Giza. It was designed by Gaston Rossi (1887–1972) in an “orientalist style” complete with a central courtyard and small mosque in the garden for his staff. The estate was known as Bayt al-Azrak (Blue House).<sup>19</sup>

## 2 The Egyptian antiquities market

Egypt was one of the first countries to establish and protect its antiquities through regulation and legislation. Its first law was enacted in 1835. The ordinance prohibited the use of monuments as a source for building materials and restricted unauthorised archaeological excavations, sales, and transportation of antiquities.<sup>20</sup> Further decrees were issued in 1881, 1883, 1891, and 1897, the last of which set forth penalties for illegal excavations. In 1912, Law no. 14 (supported by several ministerial orders) further strengthened and updated regulations, formalising procedures for excavation, trade and export, and extending punishments to those involved in illegal trade.<sup>21</sup>

Both the Egyptian Museum and the Antiquities Service (*Service des antiquités de l’Égypte*) were officially established in 1858 by French Egyptologist Auguste Mariette (1821–1881) who served as the first Director of the Antiquities Service (*Maslahat al-Athar*).<sup>22</sup> The Museum was founded to house a growing national collection of Pharaonic antiquities, while the Service issued licenses to sell or excavate, inspected objects, and provided export papers.<sup>23</sup> Excavation permits required additional authorisation from the

<sup>9</sup> For an examination of the Egyptian antiquities trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Jasanoff 2005.

<sup>10</sup> A list of manuscripts purchased by Beatty in Cairo in 1914 is preserved in the Archive, CBP/B/04/1/06.

<sup>11</sup> ACB to Cunard Steamship Company, 18 November 1913; ACB to Cunard Steamship Company, 9 January 1914, CBP/A/02/01.

<sup>12</sup> The party stayed at the Shepherd’s Hotel from 17 to 24 February. The suite included a sitting room, three double bedrooms and two baths at the back of the hotel overlooking the garden, plus accommodation for the maid (Martha Manceau). Chet Jr’s nurse was Beatrice McDonagh. ACB to E. H. Hellfeld, 2 December 1913; Thos. Cook & Son to ACB, 15 December 1913, CBP/A/02/01.

<sup>13</sup> Thos. Cook & Son to ACB, 3 November, 5 November and 13 November 1913, CBP/A/02/01.

<sup>14</sup> Paris was an important centre for the book and antiquities trade.

<sup>15</sup> Powerscourt 1974, 230.

<sup>16</sup> In 1917, Chester, Edith and Ninette travelled to China and Japan, another trip that influenced Beatty’s collecting interests, see Redfern 2020.

<sup>17</sup> Wilson 1985, 137. “My wife and I are planning to go [sic] Egypt again next winter as the climate agrees with us both so well.” ACB to Nahman, 14 May 1928, CBP/B/03/151.

<sup>18</sup> Wilson 1985, 221.

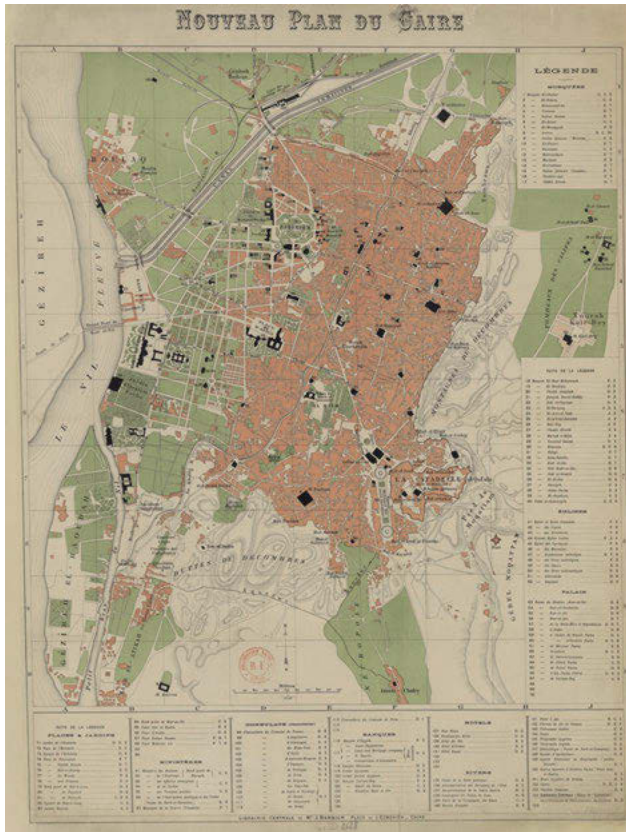
<sup>19</sup> Bait-el-Azrak, Mena, Cairo, ACB to Eric Millar, 29 December 1930, CBP/B/05/35. The villa was organised around a central patio of marble mosaic featuring a fountain, Volait 2005, 364. Winston Churchill (1874–1965) stayed in the villa during the Teheran Conference (November–December 1943), according to Wilson 1985, 251. Of interest also is that the exterior of Beatty’s London home, 24 Kensington Palace Gardens (Baroda House), was designed by Owen Jones in a “Moresque style” (Sheppard 1973). The sale was agreed on 19 August 1912, with ownership transferred to Beatty by 14 October. Transcribed correspondence between ACB, his brother W. Gedney Beatty (1869–1941), his decorator G. F. Marshall, and his housekeeper Mrs Mason, Chester Beatty Archive, Chester Beatty Trust, CBT/temp. file no.1016.

<sup>20</sup> Colla 2007, 116–17.

<sup>21</sup> For translations of select Egyptian Antiquities Laws (1881–1912) see Fricke 2006, 175–92.

<sup>22</sup> Mariette was supported by both Said Pasha (r. 1854–1863) and Isma’il Pasha (r. 1863–1879), Colla 2007, 127. An earlier attempt to establish the Service and Museum was made in 1835 by Egyptian Egyptologist Riffaa al-Tahtawi (1801–1873), supported by a decree from Muhammad Ali Pasha (r. 1805–1848), Reid 2002, 93.

<sup>23</sup> Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 45.



**Figure 2:** Nouveau Plan du Cairo, J. Barbier (Le Caire), 1886, Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Minister for Public Works, once approved by the Antiquities Service.

However, as Colla has noted, “the actual application of such laws in the field often deviated substantially from their language.”<sup>24</sup> Antiquities uncovered at legal archaeological sites often found their way into antiquities shops, and those sales served to further encourage illicit digging. Dealers were sometimes granted permits to excavate, but they were also involved in illegal excavations both directly with the use of fake permits and indirectly by selling items illegally excavated by others or taken by workmen at legal archaeological sites.<sup>25</sup> According to German Coptologist Carl Schmidt (1868–1938), the Medinet el-Faiyum-based dealer, Mohammed Khalil (active 1907–1931), “had sold on to the major antiquities dealers Maurice Nahman and [Phocion] Jean Tano in Cairo the majority of those papyri from the

<sup>24</sup> Colla 2007, 202. In theory the Egyptian Museum claimed half of all legally excavated objects “as well as any object of unique value or interest.” In practice, the museum did not oversee excavations. Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 123.

<sup>25</sup> For examples see, Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 122–30. Thefts from the official excavations at Deir el-Medina will be mentioned below.

Tebtunis temple library that were found during the illicit excavations in 1930.”<sup>26</sup> As Usama Gad notes in his article in this volume, illegal excavations continue to this day.

Even those with official responsibility for protecting Egyptian antiquities were sometimes involved in their exploitation. The Antiquities Service was largely in the hands of the French until 1952,<sup>27</sup> and a number of its directors helped foreign museums establish Egyptian collections. The Egyptian Museum itself was partially supported by the legal trade and export system.<sup>28</sup> A sales room (*Salle de vente*) was opened in the museum in 1892 (Giza Palace), and reopened in its Tahrir Square home in 1902.<sup>29</sup> Sales were supplied by legal excavations, as well as seizure from dealers, tourists, construction projects, and *sebakh* (fertiliser) diggers.<sup>30</sup> Emil Brugsch (1842–1930) acted as both director of the museum and dealer, helping wealthy visitors acquire antiquities.<sup>31</sup> Some senior officials advised collectors to avoid the legal system altogether. For example, Gaston Maspero (1846–1916), Director of the Antiquities Service and architect of Law no. 14, warned English Egyptologist Flinders Petrie (1853–1942) “not to bring finds to the museum where Brugsch would seize them,” suggesting instead he “smuggle small items past customs in his pockets.”<sup>32</sup> Of Maspero, English Egyptologist Ernest Budge (1857–1934) wrote, “I learned at first hand that the Director of the Service of Antiquities had bought and disposed of antiquities, and exported them, which the British authorities in Cairo declared to be contrary to the law of the land.”<sup>33</sup>

There are numerous examples of private collectors and those collecting for public museums disregarding Egypt’s legal processes, whether through diplomatic channels, bribes to bureaucrats, or in collaboration with dealers.

<sup>26</sup> Schmidt to Lange, 14 March 1932 (Royal Library, Copenhagen), in Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 244–45. For other examples see Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 124–27, 131–35.

<sup>27</sup> Directors of the Antiquities Service: Auguste Mariette (1858–1881), Gaston Maspero (1881–1886), Eugène Grébaut (1886–1892), Jacques de Morgan (1892–1897), Victor Loret (1897–1899), Gaston Maspero (1899–1914), Pierre Lacau (1914–1936) and Étienne Drioton (1936–1952). Reid 2002, 294, 305 (table 12).

<sup>28</sup> Sales supported excavations, protection and preservation, and the establishment of a research library. One of the first sales was stocked with the seizure of goods by Eugène Grébaut (1846–1915), Director of the Antiquities Service, Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 47–8.

<sup>29</sup> Sales continued into the 1960s, Piacentini 2017, 75–87.

<sup>30</sup> The term *sebakh* describes decomposed organic material used for fertiliser and fuel, often referring to decomposed mudbricks from ancient structures.

<sup>31</sup> Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 51.

<sup>32</sup> Reid 2002, 177.

<sup>33</sup> Maspero acquired antiquities on behalf of the Louvre, Budge 1920, 1.135.



**Figure 3:** Photo: Ninette Beatty, Chester Beatty Jr and an unidentified guide, Giza Pyramids, c. 1914, CBT.

The collecting practices of Budge for the British Museum are described in his personal memoir, *By Nile and Tigris*. When agents of the Antiquities Service sequestered a Luxor storeroom housing tins of papyrus and other antiquities, Budge sought the assistance of local dealers and the hotel manager to tunnel through the garden wall of the Luxor Hotel to steal the treasures inside.<sup>34</sup> He then smuggled the antiquities out of Egypt with the assistance of “sympathetic Britons in the army, police and a shipping company.”<sup>35</sup> On another occasion, expecting the Antiquities Service to refuse export papers for papyrus acquired in Beni Suef, Budge decided on the following course of action. “I

bought a set of Signor Beato’s wonderful Egyptian photographs. . .and having cut the papyrus into sections, I placed these at intervals between the photographs, tied them up in some of Madame Beato’s gaudy paper wrappers, and sent the parcel to London by registered book-post.”<sup>36</sup>

Even those who used legal channels were not always consistent, choosing to avoid the authorities if they felt an export decision would not go their way. In 1930, Pierre Lacau (1873–1963), then Director of the Antiquities Service, examined and approved for export biblical papyri purchased by a representative of the University of Michigan.<sup>37</sup> Two years later, however, Arthur E. R. Boak (1888–1962), Professor of History at the University

<sup>34</sup> The objects he took included the Papyrus of Ani (BM EA10470,3). Budge, 1920, 1.136–49.

<sup>35</sup> Reid 2002, 182. A number of British officers helped Budge carry the boxes from the train station into Cairo, unchallenged by passing local officers who assumed the goods were the property of the British Government. Budge wrote, “as indeed they were!” Budge, 1920, 1.146–47. For additional examples see Budge 1920, 1.130–31, 241, 334, 2.152, in Reid 2002, 343 n.27. See also the description of Charles Lang Freer’s use of the US diplomatic services for export of antiquities in Garrick Allen’s introduction to this book.

<sup>36</sup> Budge 1920, 2.154.

<sup>37</sup> Enoch E. Peterson (1891–1975) wrote, “I was undecided as to whether I should show them [P.Mich inv. 5552, 5553] to Lacau or not. Finally I decided to try and push them through with his approval. . .The few days stretched into a week and the week into two weeks. . .Finally I was told that we could have them, since they were only parts of a “sermo” as Lacau said. You can be sure I had them sealed at once and hopped into a taxi to take them to the Legation [the American embassy].” Peterson to Boak, 17 June 1930, Box 5, Folder 7, Institute for

of Michigan wrote to his colleague and Director of the Institute of Archaeological Research, Campbell Bonner (1876–1954): “It is quite clear that the [Egyptian] Museum will not approve our pages [P.Mich inv. 6238] for export, so we are keeping the purchase quiet and shall have to devise ways and means of getting them through.”<sup>38</sup>

Both dealers and collectors complained about the Egyptian Antiquities Service interfering with their activities. In a letter to Danish Egyptologist H. O. Lang (1863–1943), Phocion Tano (1898–1972) wrote, “The [Egyptian] Museum can appear on the scene and confiscate any object which one of its staff members has seen previously in its place of origin, or which a dealer has bought from a farmer who has stolen it. Objects which are sold to overseas buyers can be withheld by the Museum, or the export license can be delayed for months.”<sup>39</sup> Fellow dealer, Maurice Nahman (1868–1948) also noted his frustration with the Antiquities Service. “The question is now the laws are very hard for us and we are not able to show all the things discovered because the Museum has the preference.”<sup>40</sup> Those with official licence to sell were not above skirting the law. As Emma B. Andrews (1837–1922) observed, dealers avoided official notice by never keeping their best things on open display in their showrooms.<sup>41</sup>

While the laws set out in 1912 recognised only two types of official antiquities dealer – merchants with antiquities shops and stall-keepers whose objects could not exceed the value of 5 Egyptian pounds – there were

many who acted as unofficial dealers and middle men.<sup>42</sup> For example, consuls also collected antiquities and would often sell and indeed export objects relying on their diplomatic immunity status.<sup>43</sup> Even with objects accessioned to Egyptian national collections, individual actors could occasionally attempt to export antiquities for political motivation. In 1910, Coptic politician Qalini Fahmi (b. 1860) suggested the Coptic Museum gift their most precious manuscript to former US President Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919). The founding director, Marcus Simaika (1864–1944), blocked this suggestion.<sup>44</sup>

The trade in Egyptian antiquities was complex, with objects entering the market and being exported from Egypt through diverse channels both legal and otherwise. Budge summarised the activities of his fellow collectors in this way: “I therefore did what every collector for a European Museum did in Egypt. I took to Bulak [Egyptian Museum], coffins and other large objects, which I knew the authorities could not possibly want, and dispensed with their permission to take out of the country the smaller and more precious objects.”<sup>45</sup> The histories of individual antiquities are therefore difficult to disentangle, especially from their accepted narratives.

### 3 The acquisition of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri

This difficulty is particularly relevant to the acquisition of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri. During their many winter stays in Cairo, Chester and Edith Beatty acquired antiquities by exploring the sales rooms of, and establishing relationships with, professional antiquities dealers.<sup>46</sup> Archival records document purchases from Maurice Nahman, the Kalebldjian Frères (active 1905–1930), Aslan

Archaeological Research Papers Bently Historical Library, University of Michigan [hereafter IAR Papers], in Haug 2021, 148–49.

<sup>38</sup> Boak to Bonner, 4 January 1931 [1932], Box 1, Folder 8, IAR Papers, in Nongbri 2014, 100. Beatty assisted by arranging for Captain Ernest Tanner (1860?–1936?) to deliver the parcel of Michigan’s papyri to London. Boak wrote, “I have just arrived in London and am very anxious to know if the papyrus MS has come through safely.” Boak to ACB, 12 May 1932; Beatty replied, “ARRANGED FOR YOU TO MEET CAPTAIN TANNER LLOYDS BANK NEWMARKET ELEVEN OCLOCK TOMORROW WEDNESDAY MORNING BEATTY.” Telegram, ACB to Boak, 19 May 1932; Beatty wrote to Tanner, “I am enclosing a copy of letter of introduction I have sent to Mr. A. E. R. Boak whom you have kindly arranged to meet at Lloyds Bank, Newmarket, at 11. 0 [sic] a.m. to-morrow, Wednesday, the 18th instant. He is authorised to accept on my behalf the parcel you have taken care of for me.” ACB to Tanner, ACB/B/03/206.

<sup>39</sup> Hagan / Ryholt 2015, 140.

<sup>40</sup> Nahman to ACB, 12 February 1925, CBP/B/03/151.

<sup>41</sup> “They keep them in safe hiding either in or out of the house.” Cited in Reeves 2013, 32 n.77. Emma Andrews accompanied American millionaire turned archaeologist/collector Theodore M. Davis (1837–1915) to Egypt between 1889 and 1913, keeping a detailed journal of her travels and the Davis-led excavations in Luxor’s Valley of the Kings. For further information visit, emmabandrews.org (accessed 27 February 2022).

<sup>42</sup> Semi-professional dealers included foreigners who worked the market as a side-business, as well as private collectors. Western academics acted as agents for their home institutions, often earning a commission. Hagan / Ryholt 2016, 33.

<sup>43</sup> Budge wrote, “Some natives had been astute enough to get themselves made Consuls or Agents for European Powers, and they excavated tombs, and bought and sold their contents without let or hindrance; and it was reported that some of these Consular Agents had expelled from their premises certain officials of the Service of Antiquities who attempted to control their business, and thus they were able to make the law as to the possession of and dealing in antiquities a dead letter.” Budge 1920, 1.111–12, in Hagan / Ryholt 2016, 35.

<sup>44</sup> Reid 2002, 277.

<sup>45</sup> Budge 1920, 1.333.

<sup>46</sup> “If the next winter you like to go to Helouan, I can with my acquaintances find a villa or a good apartment in the Best Hotel, I am at

Sarkissian (d.1949), Phocion Tano and others.<sup>47</sup> Many of these dealers are today well known for their contributions to the holdings of major European and American collections, public and private.

Both Edith and Chester's names appear in Nahman's visitor book, now at the Brooklyn Museum.<sup>48</sup> Edith made several purchases from Nahman in 1925, including "one small Coptic lamp of 9th century in bronze."<sup>49</sup> An invoice from January of the same year records Chester's acquisition of "two Coptic manuscripts [Cpt 813 and Cpt 814] found near the ancient monastery of. . .near Sakkara [sic] behind the third pyramid and one manuscript Syriac from Mesopotamia [unidentified]" (Figure 4).<sup>50</sup> In fact, Beatty's earliest recorded purchase of papyri also came from Nahman, and on several occasions it is apparent that Nahman gave Beatty the option of first refusal on manuscripts he had secured.<sup>51</sup>

Like many private collectors, Beatty did not keep meticulous records of every transaction. The precise purchasing history of the CBBP is not easy to reconstruct. While previous accounts of the CBBP acquisition present a straightforward story,<sup>52</sup> the elucidation of all the different purchases is almost as difficult as separating precious metals from a complex ore. Beatty's acquisitions were made over a period of several years (1930–1934) and sourced from least two antiquities dealers, as well as from the University of Michigan (see Table 1).

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your disposal in any way and will be very pleased if I can be useful to you." Nahman to ACB, 15 May 1925, CBP/B/03/151.

47 Beatty also made purchases from Fargallah Zakiy, E. Hatoun, Ismail Hakki, Bernard Grdseloff, B. K. Ispenian and Mahmoud Fahmy. The 1913 edition of the Baedeker guide book to Egypt listed both Nahman and Tano. For further information on Maurice Nahman, see Abdulfattah 2020, 105–23.

48 Maurice Nahman visitor book (1918–1977), Brooklyn Museum, N362 N14, Beatty: 5–6 (1926, c/o Selection Trust, London) and 49–50 (1935, El Azrak. . .Pyramids, Cairo).

49 Invoice, Nahman to Edith Beatty, 15 March 1925, CBP/B/03/151.

50 Invoice, Nahman to ACB, 26 January 1925, CBP/B/03/151.

51 This included one hieratic papyrus, Nahman to ACB, 14 March 1925, CBP/B/03/135. Nahman offered Beatty a number of Coptic Manichaean manuscripts (1929–1931), of which Beatty acquired several but passed on others. For an account of the acquisition of the Manichaean manuscripts, see Robinson 2013. Nahman wrote to Beatty in 1925, saying that "all what I buy I reserve till your return." Nahman to ACB, 24 February 1925, CBP/B/03/151.

52 In his 2004 article, Charles Horton (at the time Curator of Western Collections) focused on the importance of the acquisition and its subsequent publication for biblical scholarship, noting how the acquisition earned Beatty honours from the British Academy and a special papal blessing. He did not, however, explore the acquisition process (Horton 2004, 149–62).

What we know about the acquisition of these materials derives primarily from the Chester Beatty Archive (hereafter Archive), which houses notebooks written by Beatty's librarians and written communications with various staff and advisors, some of whom were sent samples of papyrus pages to inspect. Information is sometimes found within correspondence primarily about other subjects, and communications often involve numerous actors whose letters are kept in separate files. Letters that are preserved in the Archive allude to others (and photographs) that, rather frustratingly, are not. In addition, particulars delivered in person or over the telephone are now lost. Lastly, receipts, letters, and other notes often lack the detail required to link a casual reference (made by and to someone in the know) to a specific object, an unfortunate consequence of the passing of time.

A notebook entitled *Western Manuscripts. . .Recent Acquisitions*, briefly records a number of significant purchases made in early 1930 (Figure 5).<sup>53</sup>

1930. Jan. Mar. Cairo.

Brought by Mr. Beatty.

–Papyrus. 3 tins.

–Greek Ms. 1 parcel containing 112 leaves & odd fragments.

–Parcel of fragments (by Charles).

Sent to B. Museum direct.

It is highly possible that those 3 tins of papyrus and/or those 112 leaves included pages of the CBBP, but whether this is the case or which ones we may never know.

### 3.1 Daniel (CBL BP X) & Genesis (CBP BP IV)

The earliest undeniable, and best-known, record of the acquisition of a portion of the CBBP is a letter written to John A. Wooderson (1908–1980), secretary to Beatty at Selection Trust. Therein, Eric Millar (1887–1966) of the British Museum explained the codes used in a telegram sent to Beatty in January 1930 (Figure 6).

Silver Mine = Ms 1 – (13 leaves, in single columns)

Gold Mine = Ms. 2 – (21 leaves, double columns)

Rich = old

has 1 shaft = is of 1st century

The telegram was transcribed as follows:

SILVER MINE IS VERY RICH HAS 3 SHAFTS (STOP); GOLD MINE RICH HAS FOUR SHAFTS (STOP); SHOULD BUY BOTH WITHOUT FAIL ESPECIALLY THE SILVER MINE.

---

53 CBP/B/02/2/13.



TÉL. 45-99

MAISON FONDÉE EN 1890

**MONNAIES & MÉDAILLES**

GRECQUES, PTOLEMAIQUES, ROMAINES & ARABES

**ANTIQUITÉS - CURIOSITÉS**

EGYPTIENNES, GRECQUES, ROMAINES, BYZANTINES & ARABES

**BIJOUX ANCIENS, PIERRES GRAVÉES**

SCARABÉES

VERRES IRISÉS, FAIENCES, PORCELAINES

**EXPERTISES**

Catalogue pour Ventes Publiques

ACHAT DE COLLECTIONS

**Maurice Nahman**

ANTIQUAIRE

27, Rue El-Madabegh, 27

*Le Caire, le 26 January 1925*

*Mr A. Chester Beatty*

*Semiramis Hotel Doit*

*Cairo. E.P.*

<p><i>Two coptic manuscripts found near the ancient monastery of Constatous near Sakkara behind the third pyramid And one manuscript Syriac. from Mesopotamia</i></p>	<p><i>E. Pounds.</i></p>
<p><i>for the sum of</i></p>	<p><i>1200 -</i></p>
<p><i>Received 1000 dollars for the sum of</i></p>	<p><i>2015.00</i></p>
<p><i>Balano Leg</i></p>	<p><i>998.500</i></p>
<p><i>Maurice Nahman</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>23.50</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>5</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>11.5</i></p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>998</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>9750.</i></p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><i>20</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>235</i></p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><i>998.5</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>9750</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>23.5</i></p>

Figure 4: Invoice from Maurice Nahman, 26 January 1925, CBP/B/03/151.

**Table 1:** Summary of CBBP manuscripts.

CBL collection	Manuscript title	Gregory-Aland (NT) or Rahlf's (LXX)	Number of plates (not folios)	LDAB/diktyon
CBL BP I	Gospels & Acts	P45	24 (incl. 7 bifolios)	diktyon 75880 LDAB 2980
CBL BP II	Pauline Epistles	P46	52 (incl. 4 bifolios) & 1 fragment (CBL BP 190)	LDAB 3011
CBL BP III	Revelation	P47	10	LDAB 2778
CBL BP IV	Genesis	P961	51 & 1 plate of fragments	LDAB 3160
CBL BP V	Genesis	P962	27 & 4 plates of fragments	LDAB 3109
CBL BP VI	Numbers & Deuteronomy	P963	52 & 12 plates of fragments	LDAB 3091
CBL BP VII	Isaiah	P965	25 (incl. 9 bifolios) & 2 plates of fragments	LDAB 3108
CBL BP VIII	Jeremiah	P966	2	LDAB 3084
CBL BP IX	Esther & Ezekiel	P967	8 (all bifolios)	LDAB 3090
CBL BP X	Daniel	P968	13	LDAB 3090
CBL BP XI	Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)	P964	2	LDAB 3161
CBL BP XIII	Enoch & Melito	N/A	8 & 1 plate of fragments	LDAB 2608

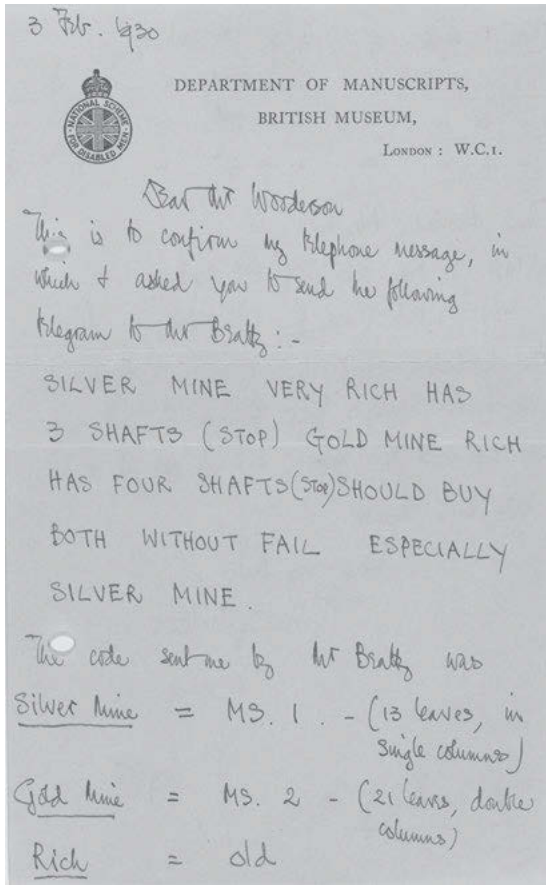
1930 Jan. Mar. Cairo.  
 Brought by Mr Beatty.

- Papyrus. 3 tins.
- Greek ms. 1 parcel containing 112 leaves & odd fragments.
- Parcel of fragments (by Charles)
- 1 half cover. <sup>small</sup> whole cover. wooden with inlay.

Sent to B-Museum direct.

also 1 tin on approval  
 " 1 tin on approval (Māni) Mr Nahman

**Figure 5:** JKW, *Western Manuscripts*. . .Recent Acquisitions, notebook, January and March 1930, CBP/B/02/2/13.



**Figure 6:** Eric Millar to John A. Wooderson, 3 February 1930, CBP/B/03/029.

The decoded telegraph can thus be read, “MS. 1 very old is of 3rd century. Ms. 2 old, is of 4th century . . . etc.”<sup>54</sup>

The use of telegraphic codes was transferred from Beatty’s business activities.<sup>55</sup> Such codes were not only used as a cost-saving measure, but to ensure privacy while employing an indiscrete means of communication. A supplemental mining edition to the *Bentley Code* (a system of code words for use in telegrams) was available from at least 1907.<sup>56</sup> In his mining-related telegrams, Beatty

avoided mining terminology. Such terms appear instead in telegrams associated with his collecting. This is documented for purchases of Qur’ans from at least 1928.<sup>57</sup> In March of 1930, Beatty wrote to his secretary John Corble (d. 1934) with instructions for Millar to use the following code with regard to other material Nahman was sending his way: “Copper mine for Coptic Ms., Silver for Papyrus, and if the palimpsest [sic] is rare and valuable can described it as Gold Mine.”<sup>58</sup>

There are no receipts or invoices preserved in the Archive for the purchase of the two manuscripts mentioned above (nor indeed for any of the CBBP). However, a letter Millar wrote to Beatty on 2 February 1930 confirmed that the two aforementioned sets of leaves were acquired from Nahman. “I know that you have arrived in Egypt, because I received two papyri from Nahman a day or two ago. . . Bell and Kenyon have got them in hand, and you should close the bargain if you haven’t done so already, as you have got a couple of winners! Both are Biblical, and one is of very great textual importance” (Figure 7).<sup>59</sup> Millar later confirmed the identity of the manuscripts as Daniel (CBL BP X) and Genesis (CBL BP IV), an authentication he said fellow British Museum employee, Edward Edwards (1870–1944), had already delivered in person.<sup>60</sup> We can therefore conclude that the folios mentioned in the telegram were purchased from Nahman and, based on Nahman’s documented *modus operandi*, the dealer probably delivered the folios to the British Museum personally.

Letters preserved in the archives at the University of Michigan also confirm Nahman as one of Beatty’s sources for the CBBP manuscripts. An unnamed dealer from Beni Suef told the American physician Dr David Askren (1875–1939)<sup>61</sup> that “through Nahman he had sold Beatty 17 pages at L.E. 100 each, and directly 22 pages at L.E. 80 apiece. . . the man in question [the unnamed dealer] controls the bulk

<sup>54</sup> Millar to Wooderson, 3 February 1930, CBP/B/03/029.

<sup>55</sup> Examples preserved in the Archive are related to *A. Chester Beatty v. Guggenheim Exploration Company*, CBP/B/03/1/05.

<sup>56</sup> Bentley 1907. In a note to Beatty, Capt. J. Stuart Hay (active in the British Ministry of Information in 1918) suggested a modification to the ordinary *Bentley Code*, with the following examples: AZTUL = [blanket] manuscript; LEHUG = [6] 6th century with numerals for the centuries; NUZOD = [owners stipulate] followed by price (Sterling); FAWKA = [engine] enamels on gold; IRCAH = [iron] ivories; FEVRO = [entry] enamels on copper; ICMEV = [illustration(s)] full page illuminations; ICLUX = [illustrated] head pieces and initial letters; ICOWJ = [imbedded] marginal illustrations; NYJNY = [parcel] icon. Hay to ACB, [undated], CBP/B/03/096.

<sup>57</sup> Code key agreed between ACB and Abraham S. Yahuda (1877–1951) “at Station in Cairo,” undated [March/April 1928], CBP/B/03/216/2, in Carey 2021.

<sup>58</sup> The material included a Greek papyrus book and two Mogul Coptic palimpsest manuscripts. ACB to Corble, 5 March 1930, CBP/B/03/151.

<sup>59</sup> Millar to ACB, 3 February 1930, CBP/B/05/35.

<sup>60</sup> “‘Silver Mine’. . . contains the text of Daniel. . . ‘Gold Mine’. . . containing the text of Genesis. . . We asked Edwards to convey the above information to you verbally.” Millar to ACB, 10 February 1930, CBP/B/03/029. JKW confirms Edwards would speak to Beatty directly in Egypt, JKW to Corble, 11 Feb 1930, CBP/B/06/2/01.

<sup>61</sup> David Leslie Askren was an American gynaecologist who worked in the United Presbyterian Hospital in Asyut before moving to Medinet el-Faiyum, Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 198.

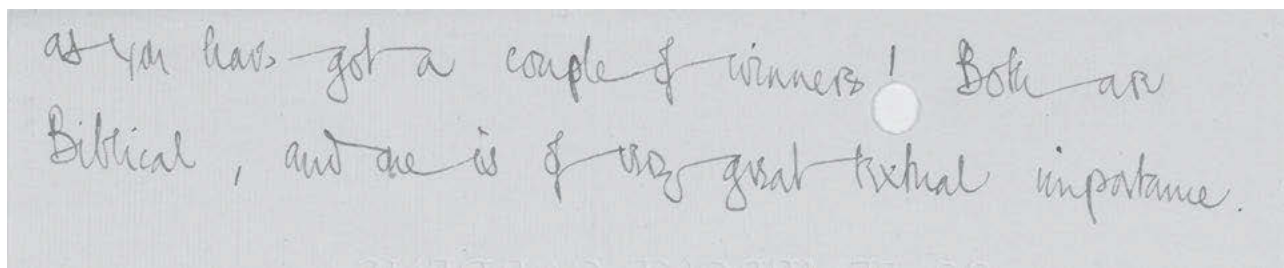


Figure 7: Eric Millar to ACB, 2 February 1930, CBP/B/05/035.

of the supply.”<sup>62</sup> It is very likely that this unnamed dealer was the Beni Suef-based Shaker Farag (active 1929–1936).<sup>63</sup> Farag acted as Beatty’s source in a 1934 memorandum concerning the discovery of the papyri. The memorandum, partially transcribed below, unfortunately omits important details (marked below as [Blank]). It is possible Farag chose not to tell Beatty the find location in order to retain exclusive access as the dealer, but equally he may not have known.

The papyrus in question were found in three earthenware jars about 1928–1930 by some Arabs digging near the monastery of [Blank] in Egypt about [Blank] miles south of Cairo on the [Blank] bank of the Nile. . . The jars in which the papyrus were found were found a few feet below the surface of the sand. They were on top of a wooden coffin . . . They were placed upright in the jars. They were shoved in rather loosely and there were no bindings. The leaves however were held together in some cases by binding cord the holes of which are shown in the margins of many of the papyri leaves.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Of the various sources Boak noted, “It is obvious that some [of the pages] were marketed by other channels since Peterson bought our first six from someone else.” Boak to Bonner, 4 January 1931 [1932?], Box 1, Folder 8, IAR Papers, in Nongbri 2014, 100. The unnamed Beni Suef dealer was one of Michigan’s sources, through Askren. “When Winter was here in the Fayoum [sic] there was a certain dealer, whom Dr. Askren knows, who came to [the] Doctor’s home with some fragments. Among the fragments were some that at first glance seemed to be Biblical. He told us that a dealer in Beni Suef had six complete sheets, that is pages, with writing on both sides and that these fragments were from the same lot.” Peterson to Boak, 9 March 1930, Box 5, Folder 7, IAR Papers, in Nongbri 2014, 95. In December 1931, Askren showed Boak “six leaves of a Biblical codex which had been sent to him by the man from whom we secured our Biblical fragments two years ago and who supplied the Beatty collection.” Boak to Frank E. Robbins (1884–1963), 26 December 1931, Box 1, Folder 8, IAR Papers, in Nongbri 2014, 99.

<sup>63</sup> Farag offered a group of “interesting” papyri to Friedrich Zucker (1881–1973) in 1930 for a price Zucker described as “insane” (*den unsinnigen Preis*). Zucker passed on the offer. Zucker to C. Høeg, 2 October 1930, in Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 262.

<sup>64</sup> *Memorandum re Discovery of Early Biblical Papyrus based on conference with SHAKER FARAG on March 17th and 18th 1934*, CBP/B/03/031. For a discussion of the materiality of the codices and bindings, see Rose-Beers in this volume.

While the CBBP have been anecdotally linked elsewhere to Lycropolis (Asyut), Aphroditopolis (Atfih), and broadly the Fayum, Beatty’s memorandum sheds no clear light on the provenance.<sup>65</sup> The results of Schmidt’s own investigations were published in the 1930s but also relied on anecdotal evidence.<sup>66</sup> A further description of the particulars of the find is given in a letter preserved at the University of Michigan: “a tomb where they were found along with a corpse.”<sup>67</sup> While the provenance and find circumstances remain somewhat nebulous, it was not uncommon to unearth jars containing ancient manuscripts.<sup>68</sup>

## 4 Esther / Ezekiel (CBL BP IX) and Colossians (CBP BP II)

Of the 13 leaves of Daniel and 21 folios of Genesis (CBL BP IV) delivered to the British Museum in January 1930, only the Daniel folios would number as first reported in Millar’s coded message.<sup>69</sup> The Daniel folios are now

<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of the provenance, see Nongbri 2014, 103–11 and Nongbri 2018, 122–30.

<sup>66</sup> Schmidt 1931, 292–93 and Schmidt 1933, 225–26.

<sup>67</sup> Boak to Bonner, 4 January 1931 [1932?], Box 1, Folder 8, IAR Papers, in Nongbri 2014, 100.

<sup>68</sup> Manuscripts were found in jars at Qumran (Dead Sea Scrolls) and Nag Hammadi. Several ancient sources (including Bishop Epiphanius of Salamis, Origin and Eusebius) refer to Septuagint texts found in earthenware jars near Jericho in the third century.

<sup>69</sup> A further reference to Daniel: “With reference to the covers I took to the [British] Museum, Mr Bell is very much in favour of your buying them. They are very remarkable and he has never seen anything like them before, and, granted that the price is reasonable, he would urge you to get them. One of them is very similar to the pages of the Book of Daniel which you have just bought and might belong to the same period.” Memorandum, Kingsford-Wood to ACB, 12 May 1930, CBP/B/06/2/01.

understood to have come from the same codex as the 8 bifolios of Esther and Ezekiel (CBL BP IX). According to Kenyon's first summary of the CBBP, written in September 1930, he had no knowledge of those 8 bifolios (see Table 2).

Those leaves, together with pages of Colossians, were acquired from Nahman in July 1930, as recorded in the aforementioned *Recent Acquisitions* notebook (Figure 8).<sup>70</sup> A letter from Beatty to Nahman on 16 July 1930 confirmed the purchase of "leaves of the Greek Papyri and the bindings."<sup>71</sup> It is highly possible that those "Greek Papyri" pages were the Esther and Colossians leaves, especially as they were specifically noted the day before by Joan Kingsford-Wood (1883–1974), Beatty's librarian at Baroda House.

22 leaves – Greek papyrus. (Nahman). Part of them – the Book of Ester [sic]. Part of them – Colossians. Probably 2nd century. Most important. Mr Bell does not know of any text so early, of those books. He urges you to freeze on to them most decidedly (Figure 9).<sup>72</sup>

## 5 Other purchases

While Kingsford-Wood's records make it clear when the Esther leaves were acquired, the purchase of other pages is far less explicit. Leaves from Numbers were certainly in Beatty's possession in London by May 1930. At that time Bell informed Beatty that pages from that same manuscript had been secured by Bonner for the University of Michigan.<sup>73</sup> Just a month earlier, in April

1930, Bell had written to Beatty, noting that "Millar has handed over the papyri you brought back and asked me to examine them" (Figure 10).<sup>74</sup> These, he noted, were all biblical or religious and dated them to between the second and fourth centuries. While no books are specifically mentioned it seems reasonable to conclude that Bell's description refers to a portion of the CBBP, but we cannot be sure.

The matching of vague descriptions to exact manuscripts is complicated by the fact that Beatty acquired other papyri from Nahman during the same period, including two Coptic Manichaean papyrus manuscripts.<sup>75</sup> Nahman wrote to Beatty in March 1930, "I send you with bearer the two packages you left."<sup>76</sup> Although he does not expand on their contents, the correspondence that followed suggests that the packages held the aforementioned Manichaean codices. Furthermore, some material offered to Beatty was ultimately declined, or no record of a decision either way survives.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>70</sup> "1930 July. Maurice Nahman. 22 Pages. Papyrus. 1) Esther 2) Colossians. Mounted at BM." JKW, *Western Manuscripts*. . . *Recent Acquisitions*, CBP/B/02/2/13. It is interesting that Dr Askren wrote that 22 folios were sold to Beatty by the unnamed Beni Suef dealer "at L.E. 80 apiece" but that these 22 were purchased directly from Nahman. Boak to Bonner, 4 January 1931 [1932?], Box 1, Folder 8, IAR Papers, in Nongbri 2014, 100.

<sup>71</sup> Beatty also purchased a damaged Coptic manuscript and Arabic papyri. Two magical Coptic documents on parchment were left for further study. ACB to Nahman, 16 July 1930, CBP/B/03/151.

<sup>72</sup> JKW to ACB, 15 July 1930, CBP/C/07/1/090.

<sup>73</sup> "I have just heard from Prof. Bonner of Michigan that the extra leaves of a papyrus of Deuteronomy about which I spoke to you have been secured. . . I did not mention your name or give any details of your lot beyond the fact that one codex, containing Numbers, seemed to answer very well to what he told me of the Michigan leaves & might conceivably belong to a codex containing the two books." Bell to ACB, 12 May 1930, CBP/B/05/010. "What you report about the Beatty Ms. of Numbers and Deuteronomy is very interesting. It seems that this Ms. must be much more extensive than our fragments." Extract of letter, Bonner to Bell, 14 June 1930, CBP/C/07/1/090.

<sup>74</sup> Bell to ACB, 11 April 1930, CBP/B/05/010; Beatty was in London in March 1930. "Mr. Chester Beatty [Jr] will be in town on Wednesday evening he [Beatty] will dine with him and postpone dining with you." Corble to Millar, 28 March 1930, CBP/B/05/35.

<sup>75</sup> Papyrus was delivered by Nahman to Millar at the British Museum in March 1930, Eric Millar to ACB, 16 March 1930, ACB/B/05/35. Millar refers to Coptic manuscripts of great importance, Eric Millar, 27 May 1930, ACB/B/05/35.

<sup>76</sup> Nahman to ACB, 26 March 1930, ACB/B/03/151.

<sup>77</sup> "I have asked Miss Kingsford to get in touch with you [Nahman] and return the book of accounts and the other books which she took from you and left at the British Museum." ACB to Nahman, 16 July 1930, CBP/B/03/151.

**Table 2:** Chronological record of the number of leaves of each manuscript.

Mss & CB nos.	JKW BP plate nos. <sup>78</sup>	Kenyon Sept. 1930	Kenyon Dec. 1931	Kenyon June 1932	Additional purchases	Kenyon text facsimiles
Gospels & Acts CBL BP I	BP 42, 42A, 43, 45A, 45B, 46, 47, 47A, 47B, 48–62	VIII. fragments of Luke & John IX. small portion of 1 quire of Acts	(4) Gospels & Acts, 28 leaves	2. Gospels & Acts, 28 leaves <sup>79</sup>	Additional fragments acquired from Michigan, 1932 <sup>80</sup>	Facs. 2 (1933), 30 leaves
Pauline Epistles CBL BP II	BP 45, 101, 174–177, 188–233, BP 190	X. 1 leaf of Romans	(5) Epistles & Revelation, 19 leaves (incl. BP III)	3. Epistles & Revelation, 19 leaves <sup>81</sup> (caveat of possible Beatty/Michigan exchange)	46 additional leaves, 1934	Facs. 3 (1934) 10 leaves (4 bifolios) Fasc. 3, Supplement (1936), 86 leaves (56 at CB/30 at UMich)
Revelation CBL BP III	BP 103–111, 165	XI. 9 leaves	(5) Epistles & Revelation, 19 leaves (incl. BP II)	3. Epistles & Revelation, 19 leaves		Facs. 3 (1934), 10 leaves
Genesis CBL BP IV	BP 22–30, 63–98, 184	I. 45 leaves	(1) 2 Genesis mss, 66 leaves	4. 2 Genesis mss, 66 leaves	New fragments (?), 1933 <sup>82</sup>	Facs. 4 (1934), 50 leaves <sup>83</sup>
Genesis CBL BP V	BP 31–41, 156–164 <sup>84</sup>	II. 12 leaves	(1) 2 Genesis mss, 66 leaves	4. 2 Genesis mss, 66 leaves		Facs. 4 (1934), 27 leaves
Numbers & Deuteronomy CBL BP VI	BP 99, 125–141, 234–270 <sup>85</sup>	III. 16 leaves	(2) Numbers, Deuteronomy, Esther & Ezekiel, 33 leaves (incl. BP IX)	5. Numbers, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, 30 leaves	Additional fragments acquired from Michigan, 1932	Facs. 5 (1935), 50 leaves
Isaiah CBL BP VII	BP 150–155, 178–183, 271–284	IV. fragments	(3) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel & Ecclesiasticus, 26 leaves (incl. BP VIII, BP X, BP XI)	5. Numbers, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, 30 leaves	Additional fragments acquired from Michigan, 1932	Facs. 6 (1937), 33 leaves

**78** “I may probably buy some more sheets and I am anxious to know how many I now have. Please when you write next time tell me exactly how many sheets (pages) that I have.” Extract of letter ACB to Corbel, in Corbel to JKW, 26 March 1934. JKW’s reply: Gospels & Acts – 30 leaves (all more or less mutilated in some cases only a few words), Pauline Epistles – 10 (2–5 missing at bottom at 4 [?]), Revelation – 10 (1–4 lines missing at top of each), Genesis – 44 (all mutilated at bottom), Genesis – 22 (not extensive mutilations), Numbers & Deut. – 33 (substantial portions of leaves), 22 (smaller portions of leaves, large number of small fragments), Isaiah – 27 (portions of leaves with part of 3–4 lines to 15 lines + tattered & small fragments), Jeremiah – 1 leaf (imperfect), Ezekiel & Esther – 16 (half of Esther pages & 5/8 of Ezekiel pages), Daniel – 13 (2/5 missing at bottom), Ecclesiasticus – 1 ½ leaves, Enoch & a Christian homily – 8 leaves & 2 fragments. = 237 ½ + 2 frags (many other fragments).” JKW to Corbel, 26 March 1934, CBP/B/06/2.

**79** Kenyon defined his proposal for the publication of the first two volumes in April 1932, “(i) a short General introduction. . .and (ii) the Gospels and Acts Ms. with full text, collation and introduction.” Kenyon to Merton, 26 April 1932, CBP/B/05/02/009.

**80** “I have now placed the fragments of Gospels to the best of my ability (not equal to Ibscher’s) and the photographs can be taken as soon as you please, and the sooner the better.” Kenyon to Merton, 27 April 1933, CBP/B/05/02/009.

**81** “. . .but of the Epistles there are some fragments which cannot be placed until Beatty comes to life.” Kenyon to Merton, 17 March 1933, CBP/B/05/02/009.

**82** “The new fragments will add two or three (I am not yet sure exactly how many) to the number of leaves, and will have to be mounted in their proper order before they are ready for photography.” Kenyon to Merton, 27 September 1933, CBP/C/05/2/009. B.P.184 = 6 fragments now ff.46–50 and BP VI i. These must be the uncounted leaves in Kenyon’s 1930 and JKW’s 1934 totals.

**83** “I will have the nine leaves of the larger Genesis papyrus [BP.22–30 (?)] which had become separated from the rest photographed as soon as I have an operator available.” Merton to Kenyon, 6 November 1933. “In all, I think there will be 50 leaves of I and 27 or 28 of II.” Kenyon to Merton, 9 December 1933, CBP/C/05/2/009.

**84** B.P.36 (?) = ff.1, 6, 7, 8, 16, 20: “Some of the frags. of 1 of the Gen. Ms. in 18 folders received from Dr. Ibscher Oct 21/31 & taken to Museum.” JKW, CBP/B/02/2/18.

**85** “Ibscher is coming over this week, and I have sent the remainder of the Genesis II and Numb-Deut. to Gardiner’s house for him to mount. They will then be ready for you to photograph.” Kenyon to Merton, 24 May 1935, CBP/C/05/2/009.

Table 2 (continued)

Mss & CB nos.	JKW BP plate nos.	Kenyon Sept. 1930	Kenyon Dec. 1931	Kenyon June 1932	Additional purchases	Kenyon text facsimiles
Jeremiah CBL BP VIII	BP 166A, 166B	V. fragments	(3) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel & Ecclesiasticus, 26 leaves (incl. BP VII, BP X, BP XI)	5. Numbers, Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah, <sup>86</sup> 30 leaves		Facs. 6 (1937), 2 leaves
Esther & Ezekiel CBL BP IX	BP 142–149	Not mentioned	(2) Numbers, Deuteronomy, Esther & Ezekiel, 33 (incl. BP VI)	6. Ezekiel, Esther, Daniel, 27 leaves		Facs. 7 (1937), 8 conjoined leaves
Daniel CBL BP X	BP 112–124	VI. 13 leaves	(3) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel & Ecclesiasticus, 26 leaves (incl. BP VII, BP VIII, BP XI)	6. Ezekiel, Esther, Daniel, 27 leaves		Facs. 7 (1937), 13 leaves
Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) CBL BP XI	BP 102	VII. 1 leaf	(2) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel & Ecclesiasticus, 26 leaves (incl. BP VII, BP VIII, BP X)	Not mentioned		Facs. 6 (1937), 2 leaves
Enoch & Melito CBL BP XII “Dublin, CBL, BP XII [LDAB 2608]”	BP 100, 167–173, 185, 190	XII. 1 leaf (“Homily”)	(6) Enoch & homilies, 8 leaves	7. Enoch & Melito, 8 leaves		Facs. 8 (1941), 14 leaves (8 at CB/6 at UMich), fragments mentioned in footnote
Apocryphon of Elias CBL BP 186 CBL BP 187	BP 186–187	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned		

## 6 Kenyon’s documentation and final purchases

Documentation prepared by Frederic Kenyon aids in clarifying matters but only to a limited degree (see Table 2).<sup>87</sup> His initial list of the CBBP, written in September 1930, is missing a significant proportion of the collection.<sup>88</sup> He recorded 45 leaves from Genesis (CBL BP IV), 12 from the second copy of Genesis (CBL BP V), 16 from Numbers and Deuteronomy (CBL BP VI), fragments of Isaiah (CBL BP VII), a few small fragments of Jeremiah (BP VIII), 13 leaves of Daniel (CBL BP X), 1 leaf of Ecclesiasticus (CBL BP XI), fragments of Luke and John and a small portion of one quire of Acts (CBL BP I), 1 leaf of Romans (CBL BP II), 9 leaves of Revelation

(BP III) and 1 leaf from an unidentified Homily (CBL BP XII). Indeed, there is no direct reference to that all-important first undeniable four-gospel codex.<sup>89</sup> But it is clear his list did not capture the full extent of Beatty’s collection to date. As Kenyon noted in his accompanying letter, a good portion of fragments were with German papyrus conservator Hugo Ibscher (1873–1943) for mounting.<sup>90</sup> Kenyon added, “You

<sup>86</sup> “Jeremiah. . . is only a small fragment.” Kenyon to Merton, 7 July 1932, CBP/B/05/02/009.

<sup>87</sup> Kenyon was appointed Director and Principle Librarian of the British Museum in 1909, remaining in post until retirement in 1931.

<sup>88</sup> Kenyon to ACB, 3 September 1930, CBP/B/05/027.

<sup>89</sup> “All the leaves of Matthew and Acts (which are in separate packets marked as ready to be photographed) can be taken; also all of Mark that are in a packet similarly marked. Of Luke and John (which are together in another packet) the pages which I have marked with a X can be photographed on both sides, the others must wait until I have Chester Beatty’s leave to place the fragments.” Kenyon to Merton, 5 January 1933, CBP/B/05/02/009.

<sup>90</sup> Invoice “for the preservation and placing under glass of papyri. . . 36 page Bible text and 1 Greek history, £60.” Ibscher to ACB, 19 May 1931. “I have handed the rest of the Bible-text to your Secretary, so that I no longer have any of it.” Ibscher to ACB, 14 May 1932. Invoice “for the finishing work on the Bible-text and glazing several conjoined leaves, £25.” Ibscher to ACB, [May] 1932, CBP/C/02/08. Most of the correspondence with Ibscher relates to his work on the

1930 . July .      Naurie Nahman  
 22 Pages - Papyrus.      Safe B.  
 1) Esther  
 2) Colossians.  
 (~~Heater~~ 1930. mounted. at B.M.

Figure 8: Joan Kingsford-Wood, *Western Manuscripts. . .Recent Acquisitions*, notebook, July 1930, CBP/B/02/2/13.

July 15      The Papyrus is in cupboard VIII  
 22 leaves - Greek papyrus. (Nahman)  
 Part of them - the Book of Esther  
 Part of them - Colossians.  
 Probably 2nd cent. Most important.  
 Mr Bell does not know of any  
 text so early, of these books.  
 He urges you to freeze on to them  
most decidedly.

Figure 9: Joan Kingsford-Wood to ACB, 15 July 1930, CBP/C/07/1/090.





DEPARTMENT OF MANUSCRIPTS,  
BRITISH MUSEUM,

LONDON: W.C.1.

April 11, 1930

Dear Mr. Beatty,

Millar has handed over the papyri you brought back and asked me to examine them. I only returned from vacation yesterday & have been so busy that I had time for no more than a very cursory examination, but I can assure you, even on the strength of what I have seen, that you have made a most valuable purchase. The literary papyri are all biblical or religious, which personally I regret, as I should have liked texts of Greek literature, but their early date gives them a quite special interest & value. They go back as far as the second century and do not come lower than the fourth; & the

Figure 10: H. Idris Bell to ACB, 11 April 1930, CBP/B/05/010.

DEPARTMENT OF MANUSCRIPTS  
BRITISH MUSEUM  
LONDON W.C.1

find must certainly rank with the most important ever made.

As regards the non-literary documents, they are so brittle that I have not ventured to handle them much before they are damped out, but they too are good papyri. One roll contains copies of two first century documents (Titus & Vespasian). If these should prove to be part of the same find as the Christian texts, it might be very interesting.

I should be glad if on your return you could call & see me here. We could then discuss what is the best thing to be done with the new papyri. One or two will require quite exceptional care & skill in preserving.

Yours sincerely  
H. J. Bell

Figure 10 (continued)

are very much to be congratulated for your discovery” (Figure 11).<sup>91</sup>

In December 1931, Kenyon outlined his initial plan for the publication of the CBBP (see Table 2). Here we come closer to the full extent of the collection. Arranged in 6 parts, he listed two Genesis manuscripts (66 leaves), Numbers, Deuteronomy, Esther and Ezekiel (33 leaves and fragments), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ecclesiasticus (26 leaves), Gospels and Acts (28 leaves), Pauline Epistles and Revelation (19 leaves), and Enoch and Homilies (8 leaves) (Figure 12).<sup>92</sup> However, the totals do not match those known today. For example, when published in 1935, 50 leaves of Numbers and Deuteronomy (CBL BP VI) were reproduced. There is, therefore, a clear gap between Kenyon’s 1931 count and the final 1935 published total.<sup>93</sup>

Some fragments are missing from Kenyon’s 1931 list due to their purchase after the fact, namely the 1932 Michigan purchase and the 1934 purchase of folios from the Pauline Epistles (both noted below). Discrepancies in numeration may lie with the following scholarly variants and points of confusion: different definitions of leaves versus fragments, different states of mounted versus unmounted

papyrus, and objects stored in different locations.<sup>94</sup> For example, a note written by Kingsford-Wood reads: “The following fragments are now arranged in separate glasses.”<sup>95</sup> Perhaps those leaves of “Genesis Papyrus V” had yet to be counted individually. Most critically, we simply do not know when each folio (or bifolio) was acquired or transported to London.

As mentioned above, a further purchase of papyri was made by Beatty in 1932 when a number of fragments of Numbers and Deuteronomy, Isaiah, and the Gospels, all of which were stored in London, were bought from Michigan at cost.<sup>96</sup>

Beatty’s final purchase of leaves from the CBBP was a second group of 46 Pauline Epistle folios in March 1934.<sup>97</sup> Those folios can be identified because they were not included in the initial 1934 publication, *Fasciculus III: Pauline Epistles and Revelation*. Their purchase is recorded in a private letter by Beatty to his friend, fellow collector, and co-publisher, Wilfred Merton (1888–1957) (Figure 13).<sup>98</sup> At that time, Beatty was still hoping to acquire one of the original find jars but he was ultimately unable to do this. Instead, only the folios were purchased via Askren from an unnamed “native source.”<sup>99</sup> Even though Nahman had been named in the earlier correspondence with Askren, he was not involved with this transaction. At the end of the letter, Beatty expressed concern to Merton that Nahman might resent the exclusion. Beatty’s letter also noted, “I also have all the details of the discovery,” suggesting that the dealer in this instance was Shakar Farag (Beatty’s source in the 1934 memorandum).

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Manichaean manuscripts. JKW’s notes related to Ibscher’s work mention folders and not folios. May 1931, “27 folders of fragments [Deut. Num. etc.] with Dr Ibscher.” 21 October 1931, “18 folders from Dr Ibscher. . . Nearly all belong to the Numbers-Deuteronomy Ms. A few to one of the Genesis Ms. A few to Isaiah – perhaps. Ecclesiasticus.” *Papyrus: Biblical, Manichaean, Egyptian Hieratic, Greek*, CBP/B/02/2/18.

**91** Kenyon to ACB, 3 September 1931, CBP/B/05/027.

**92** Kenyon to ACB, 5 December 1931, CBP/B/05/027. By June 1932 Kenyon had landed on more or less the contents of the published volumes, starting with (1) the General Introduction and (2) Gospels and Acts (28 leaves). “The composition of the other parts is a little uncertain, since it depends on what exchanges (if any) Mr Beatty makes with Michigan. My original idea was something like this: Part III. Pauline Epistles and Revelation: 19 leaves. But this may be upset if Mr. Beatty allows Michigan (which has got 30 more leaves of the Epistles) to acquire his leaves. In that case, Revelations [sic] might be combined with Enoch. Part IV. Genesis (two MSS): 66 leaves. Part V. Numbers – Deuteronomy, Isaiah, Jeremiah: 30 leaves (probably with additional fragments still to be included), Part VI. Ezekiel – Esther, and Daniel: 27 leaves. Part VII. Enoch and Homily: 8 leaves, but some arrangement should be made for joint publication with Michigan, which has 6 more leaves; and the introductory matter will probably be disproportionately large.” Kenyon to Merton, 18 June 1932, CBP/B/05/02/009.

**93** A further example: portions of 33 leaves of Isaiah were published in 1937 with the two leaves each of Jeremiah and Sirach. While a “considerable number of smaller pieces” were purchased from Michigan in 1932, it seems unlikely that at least 22 folios were described by Kenyon as “larger but badly damaged fragments. . . of little value.” Kenyon to ACB, 22 June 1932, and others, CBP/B/03/206.

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**94** Examples of the movement of papyrus: 1931, 23 April, “To Dr Gardiner for Dr Ibscher,” 17 leaves. Greek [Enoch] R[eturned]. April and 27 sheets of various fragments [some Deut. & Num.]; 4 May, “To Sir Frederic Kenyon at B.B.” 44 glasses, 11 Gen, 9 Gen, 18 Mark & Acts, 1 frag. Matth. 4 Luke. 1 John. JKW, *Memorandum Book*, CBP/B/02/1/03. See also notes amended to Table 2.

**95** Fol. Nos. 1 (1 fragment), 6 (2 fragments), 7 (2 fragments), 8 (3 fragments), 16 (2 fragments), 20 (1 whole folios of 18 lines). JKW, *Biblical Papyrus. Typed List*, CBP/B/02/2/30.

**96** The arrangement also included a copy of Beatty’s *Western Manuscripts* catalogue (valued at £36), Kenyon to ACB, 22 June 1932, and others, CBP/B/03/206.

**97** Beatty’s letter to Merton specified 36 pages from the Pauline Epistles. ACB to Merton, 18 March 1934, CBP/B/03/030. However, the number of additional leaves is noted as 46 in a letter from Kenyon, Kenyon to ACB, 18 November 1934, CBP/B/05/27, and in JKW’s notes, “1934. April 19. Cairo. Brought by Mr Beatty – 46 folios of Biblical Papyrus.” *Notes, etc. Western Manuscripts . . . Recent Acquisitions*, CBP/B/02/2/13.

**98** ACB to Merton, 18 March 1934, CBP/B/03/030.

**99** Arthur Jeffrey to Kenyon, 9 March 1934 and Kenyon to ACB, 23 March 1934, CBP/B/03/030.

Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri

- I. Genesis IX.1 - XLII.2, 45 leaves, all somewhat mutilated, two tenths of 4/5 for the greater part remain. Two columns to a page, large, rather heavy hand, ? 4<sup>th</sup> cent. Partly transcribed.
- II. Genesis, 12 leaves, in ~~the~~ non-literary hand, 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. Not examined.
- III. Numeri and Deuteronomy, 16 leaves, containing Num. VI.6 - VIII.19, Deut. I.20 - VII.3. Two columns to a page, well written, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. Transcribed.
- IV. Isaiah, fragments, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. Not examined.
- V. Jeremiah, a few small fragments, in rather large hand, 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. Not examined.
- VI. Daniel, Septuagint version, 13 <sup>leaves</sup> ~~pages~~, containing Dan. III.72 - VI.18, imperfect, one full column to a page, of which nearly half is lost. Uppercase square hand, 2<sup>nd</sup> cent. Transcribed.
- VII. Ecclesiasticus, 1 leaf, 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. Not examined.
- VIII. Luke, considerable fragments of 7 <sup>leaves</sup> ~~pages~~, with two fragments of John in same hand. 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. Only slightly examined.
- IX. Acts, small portion of one quire, much frayed at edges, 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. Not examined.
- X. Romans, 1 <sup>leaf</sup> ~~page~~, ? 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. Not examined.
- XI. Revelations, 9 leaves, ~~the~~ containing X.2 - XVII.2, a few lines lost at the top of each leaf. Rough hand, ? 4<sup>th</sup> cent. Transcribed.
- XII. Homily, unidentified, 1 leaf, ? 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. Not examined.

Figure 11: Frederic Kenyon to ACB, 3 September 1930 (page 3), CBP/B/05/027.

Hirkstead  
 Gortstone  
 Surrey.  
 Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> 1931.

Dear Mr. Chester Beatty,

You will no doubt have seen my article in the Times on your papyri, and I hope you are satisfied with it. It has brought on me a number of inquiries as to when the papyri themselves are likely to be published; and this of course depends entirely on your wishes.

First of all, I have no right to assume that you wish me to edit them; <sup>and</sup> ~~that~~ <sup>before</sup> I do more work on them I should like to know your wishes in this respect.

As to the method of publication, I am inclined to suggest that they should be issued in a series of parts. Not everyone will want all of them; some will want the Old Testament, some the New; the Gospels and Acts MSS. will no doubt be in greatest demand. It would be possible, for example, to make a series of 6 parts: (1) the two Genesis MSS., amounting to 66 leaves of papyrus; (2) Numbers, Deuteronomy, and Esther & Nehemiah (33 leaves and a number of misplaced fragments); (3) Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ecclesiastes (26 leaves); the

Figure 12: Frederic Kenyon to ACB, December 5, 1931, CBP/B/05/27.

COPY.STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

Dear Merton,

Just a line to let you know that I have been in luck. I have just bought 36 (Thirty-six) pages of the New Testament from the same find - St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, etc. Very good condition on the whole. I also have all the details of the discovery. I really believe this clears up the find with the exception of some pages from the Old Testament. (These are the ones he asks such a foul price for). I have seen 15 of these leaves and there are some more, but I do not know the exact number. They are from the Prophets, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. I have been working on this business for the last three months as I started soon after I arrived; it has been a long job but I am glad it came out all right.

I have a few photos of the Old Testament pages and have the matter in hand so possibly I may buy the balance this summer. There were three jars and I am trying to get one of the original jars, which, of course, is of no value particularly but interesting. I will tell you all about it when I see you about the middle of April. Please tell Sir Frederic about it but do not let anyone else know, also ask him to tell no one. Nahman, if he knows, might block things so that I will lose all chance to get the balance.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

Very sincerely yours,

March 18th/34.

A.CHESTER BEATTY.

P.S. I purchased 36 leaves, i.e., 72 pages of text. The pages are numbered so they seem to be in sequence. The Greek Bishop said they were 100 years older than the Codex Sinaiticus. A.C.B.

Figure 13: ACB to Wilfred Merton, 18 March 1934, CBP/B/03/030.

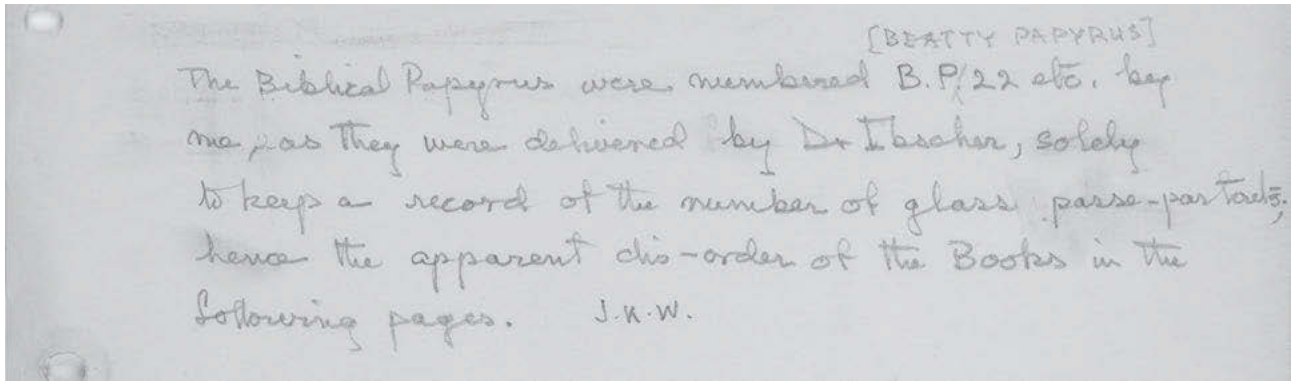


Figure 14: Joan Kingsford-Wood, *Papyrus*, notebook, 1930–1959, CBP/B/02/2/18.

Lastly, in the winters of 1934 and 1935 (and perhaps the next winter as well) Beatty attempted to negotiate the purchase of additional folios from Ezekiel, seemingly from the same “unnamed” dealer.<sup>100</sup> However, those negotiations failed as they were unable to find a price agreeable to both parties.<sup>101</sup> The folios concerned were ultimately acquired by fellow collector John H. Scheide (1875–1942) and are now in the collection of the Scheide Library at Princeton University.<sup>102</sup>

## 7 Joan Kingsford-Wood’s inventories

That details of Beatty’s purchases are recorded at all is primarily down to Joan Kingsford-Wood. She kept records of Beatty’s growing collection in ring binders organised by material and/or language. Three different papyri catalogues are preserved in the Archive, although they shed no clearer a light on the various purchases.<sup>103</sup> B.P. numbers

<sup>100</sup> Beatty described them as “. . . pages of the Old Testament. (These are the ones he asks such a foul price for.) I have seen 15 of these leaves and there are some more, but I do not have the exact number. They are from Prophets, Jeremiah, and Isaiah.” ACB to Merton, 18 March 1934, CBP/B/03/030. Kenyon later identified the leaves from photographs as Ezekiel “which you already have some portions. . . the new leaves are not continuous, the pages preserved being numbered 52, 54, 61, 62, 64, 68, 70, 72, 82, 86, 87 and 88.” Kenyon to ACB, 15 June 1934, CBP/B/05/27. Kenyon wrote the following year about the publication, “for Daniel, Ezekiel and Esther [I am waiting] for the additional leaves which C-B failed to get last year. It seems a pity to publish while there is a chance of getting these.” Kenyon to Merton, 25 June 1935, CBP/C/05/2/009.

<sup>101</sup> The dealer asked about £120 per leaf. Beatty hoped to acquire them for a lower price in 1936. ACB to Kenyon, 30 April 1935, CBP/B/05/27.

<sup>102</sup> Scheide Ms 97 (LDAB 3090).

<sup>103</sup> CBP/B/02/2/18, CBP/B/02/2/30, and CBP/C/07/1/127.

were added to each individual plate by Kingsford-Wood as they were delivered by Ibscher, “solely to keep a record of the number of glass” plates (Figure 14).<sup>104</sup> These are not to be confused with the museum’s manuscript numbers, BP I to BP XII (see Table 1 above).<sup>105</sup> The papyrus folios may have in part been mounted in accession or purchase order, but this system is not consistent. The Daniel folios, acquired in early 1930 and therefore one of the first set of leaves to reach London, were numbered B.P. 112–124. While Kingsford-Wood’s headings record only two purchases, as has been established above, there were several more and her notes may allude to others.<sup>106</sup> However, it is clear that her inventories were created to keep track of the movement of plates and not as accession registers with detailed acquisition information.

## 8 Records of export

The means by which these manuscripts were exported from Egypt also remains unclear. As noted above, Nahman appears to have brought some leaves to London in early February 1930. Another package was delivered to the British Museum in early April 1930, when Bell wrote to Beatty stating, “Millar has handed over the papyri you brought back and asked me to examine them.”<sup>107</sup> In May 1932, Captain Ernest Tanner delivered a parcel of Michigan’s portion of the biblical papyri to London.<sup>108</sup> That package likely included some of the papyrus Beatty later acquired

<sup>104</sup> CBP/B/02/2/18.

<sup>105</sup> Each plate of papyrus is now identified by a manuscript number and a unique folio or sub-number, for example CBL BP II f.11.

<sup>106</sup> For example, “Brought by Mr Beatty April 1931. Papyrus. B.P. 142–171,” CBP/B/02/2/18.

<sup>107</sup> Bell to ACB, 11 April 1930, CBP/B/05/010.

<sup>108</sup> ACB to Tanner, 17 May 1932, and others, CBP/B/03/206.

from Michigan, as the fragments he purchased were in London when negotiations commenced that June.<sup>109</sup>

While records of export licences for the CBBP are not preserved, Beatty is understood to have procured licenses for at least some of his purchases from Egypt. Director of the Tate Gallery, James Bolivar Manson (1879–1945), wrote to Kingsford-Wood in 1938 about a suitcase of papyri and a cigarette box containing some jewellery (Figure 15).<sup>110</sup> The suitcase contained two packages of papyri “properly sealed by the Egyptian Museum,” in other words they had passed for export.<sup>111</sup> The papyri within included what is now CBL BP XIII: 8 folios (4 bifolios) of the Psalms which Beatty’s advisor and British Museum employee T. C. Skeat (1907–2003) suggested had come from the same source as Beatty’s other biblical papyri.<sup>112</sup>

## 9 Publication and reception

While the announcement of the “discovery” of the CBBP in *The Times* in 1931 was received with great excitement among biblical scholars, some local reaction to Beatty’s acquisition of Egyptian papyrus was less enthusiastic. In 1935, the Arabic language newspaper *El Ahrām* questioned the apparent failure of the Antiquities Service to block the export of papyrus in Beatty’s collection (Figure 16).<sup>113</sup> Interest arose following the publication of Alan H. Gardiner’s (1879–1963) *Description of a hieratic papyrus with a mythological story, love-songs and other miscellaneous texts: the Chester Beatty papyri, No. 1* (1931). The newspaper article focused primarily on the Theban hieratic scrolls which Chester and Edith Beatty had, with one exception (CBP Pap 1), gifted to the British Museum in 1930. By 1935, it had become apparent that those texts had been stolen from the French archaeological site at Deir el-Medina and for this the French Archaeological Institute received a considerable amount of criticism in the press. Gardiner wrote to Pierre Lacau of the Antiquities Service on 12 July 1935.

I had been working upon Mr. Chester Beatty’s hieratic fragments for a very considerable time before any grounds arose for thinking that they came from the French excavations at Der el-Medineh [sic]. I had a suspicion that they came from Thebes, but

since excavations had been in progress there for many years, and since clandestine digging is a factor always to be reckoned with, there seemed no particular reason for locating the source at Der el-Medineh [sic].<sup>114</sup>

Beatty’s co-publisher Wilfred Merton was also sensitive to public opinion and the context of the CBBP acquisitions. The Archive includes a series of 12 folders of correspondence from Emery Walker Ltd related to the publication of Kenyon’s facsimiles. These papers were transferred to Chester Beatty after Merton’s death in 1957. Two letters written by Merton on 28 November 1932 respond to proofs for Kenyon’s *General Introduction*. The first was sent to John Johnson (1882–1956) at Oxford University Press and requested two amendments to the text: a more elegant initial ‘T’ and a slight amendment to the wording of the opening sentence. The second letter was written to Kenyon and elaborated on the latter point (Figure 17):<sup>115</sup>

There is one thing that I must mention. I am rather afraid we must not admit that Chester Beatty bought the papyri in Egypt. They were smuggled out of the country by a native dealer and Mr. Beatty was specially careful to buy them in Paris – that is, took delivery and paid for them there. He did this because no official sanction had been given for their export and he was afraid that it would cause him trouble as he owns a house in Egypt and goes there every winter. I think he had an idea that he might at some time have to do time for conniving, or shall we say encouraging, the dealer in his sad practices.<sup>116</sup>

Kenyon suggested the following amendment, “‘twelve manuscripts from Egypt, acquired by Mr. A. C. B. about three years ago.’ I think that will cover up his traces sufficiently.”<sup>117</sup> No other documents in the Archive link the CBBP with Paris, and so it is unclear to what portion of the acquisition Merton might refer. But, within the complex context of the Egyptian antiquities market, Merton’s concern is clear.

Even with this amendment, the publication of Kenyon’s first few volumes of *The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri* (1933) facsimiles piqued interest from the Egyptian press. A series of articles appeared in the French language paper *La Bourse égyptienne* (Figure 18). Those articles were critical not just of the Antiquities Service but also of Beat-

<sup>109</sup> ACB to Boak, 24 June 1932, Campbell Bonner to ACB, 24 July 1932, and others, CBP/B/03/206.

<sup>110</sup> Manson to JKW, 16 February 1938, CBP/B/06/2/01.

<sup>111</sup> ACB to JKW, 16 February 1938, CBP/B/06/2/01.

<sup>112</sup> JKW to ACB, 16 February 1938, CBP/B/06/2/01. CBL BP XIII is not currently considered part of the CBBP. See Nongbri / Sharp in this volume.

<sup>113</sup> 10 May 1935, “A Most Serious Affair,” *El Ahrām*, CBP/B/03/159.

<sup>114</sup> Gardiner to Lacau, 12 July 1935, Griffith Institute, University of Oxford, AHG/39/50.6.

<sup>115</sup> Merton to John Johnson, 28 November 1932, CBP/C/05/02/009.

<sup>116</sup> Merton to Kenyon, 28 November 1932, CBP/C/05/02/009.

<sup>117</sup> Kenyon to Merton, 29 November 1932, CBP/C/05/02/009. This is as it appears in the *General Introduction*. The text of the prospectus proofs read: “twelve manuscripts containing different books of the Greek Bible, discovered in Egypt, and acquired by Mr. A. Chester Beatty about three years ago,” CBP/C/05/02/009.





? if? suitcase belongs to

TATE GALLERY, Mr. Newman.

MILLBANK, S.W.1.

16 Feb 1938

Dear Mr Wood

Herewith I send a  
suitcase containing the  
papers which has not  
been opened since it was  
packed by Mr. Beatty.

The keys are attached.

Also a cigarette box  
containing some  
articles of jewellery.

The box can be opened  
by pressing on the spot  
white paper

The letter from Mr.  
Beatty (also enclosed)

Figure 15: J. B. Manson to JKW, 16 February 1938, CBP/B/06/2/01.



Figure 16: El Ahrām, 10 May 1935, CBP/B/03/159.

28 November 2

Dear Sir Frederic Kenyon,

I have just received proofs of the General Introduction from Johnson and I think he has set it up very well. The only comment I have made to him is that the initial T at the beginning is too heavy for the page and I have asked him to select a more 'elegant' letter.

There is one thing that I must mention. I am rather afraid we must not admit that Chester Beatty bought the papyri in Egypt. They were smuggled out of the country by a native dealer and Mr. Beatty was specially careful to buy them in Paris - that is, took delivery and paid for them there. He did this because no official sanction had been given for their export and he was afraid that it would cause him trouble as he owns a house in Egypt and goes there every winter. I think he had an idea that he might at some time have to do time for conniving, or shall we say encouraging, the dealer in his sad practices.

Yours sincerely,

Figure 17: Wilfred Merton to Frederic Kenyon, 28 November 1932, CBP/C/05/02/009.

"La Bourse Egyptienne"  
2nd July, 1935

## EXODE DES MANUSCRITS

# Les plus précieux documents de la pensée chrétienne sont à Londres...

... Trouvés au Fayoum, ils ont  
clandestinement quitté l'Egypte

Il y a quatre ans, M. Chester-Beatty, riche collectionneur anglais, bien connu en Egypte, se rendait acquéreur d'un lot de douze manuscrits grecs. On n'a jamais su le nom du vendeur, non plus que l'endroit de la trouvaille et le nom de l'heureux lécol. Ce que l'on sait parfaitement, c'est que ces manuscrits sont les plus précieux que nous ait eus l'antiquité chrétienne et qu'ils viennent du Fayoum.

Ils furent trouvés par des fouilleurs clandestins dans les ruines d'un monastère ou d'une église.

Quelque soit le prix auquel ils ont été payés, ils constituaient une excellente affaire. La vallée du Nil n'a rien livré d'aussi précieux; le fameux «Sinaiticus», qui quitta l'Egypte lui aussi dans des circonstances

trouvantes et encore obscures et qu'une souscription nationale offre au British Museum, pâli à été des manuscrits «Chester Beatty».

Ce sont des feuillets détachés qui n'ont pas la forme ordinaire des rouleaux de papyrus, ils étaient reliés comme nos livres modernes. Pour employer le mot savant, ils faisaient partie d'un codex. Au simple point de vue de l'histoire du livre, ils constituent donc un vénérable document. Ils prouvent qu'avant de faire des livres en parchemin, les anciens avaient fait des livres en papyrus, même à une époque où le rouleau était la forme courante.

G. D.

(Lire la suite en page 4.)

## LES PLUS PRÉCIEUX DOCUMENTS DE LA PENSÉE CHRÉTIENNE SONT À LONDRES...

(Suite de la page 1)

Mais il y a plus, les papyrus Chester Beatty sont la plus ancienne des versions que nous possédions des livres saints de la chrétienté.

Les textes de l'Ancien et du Nouveau Testament utilisés par les chrétiens reposent surtout sur les manuscrits appelés «Vaticanus», «Sinaiticus» et sur une recension plus tardive: la «Vulgate».

Or, ils datent du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle de l'ère chrétienne et pour l'histoire plus ancienne du texte, on ne pouvait se servir que des citations trouvées dans les écrits des Pères de l'Eglise.

Les manuscrits Chester Beatty font connaître un texte du III<sup>e</sup> et même du second siècle, on y trouve 30 feuillets des évangiles, 10 feuillets des Epîtres de Saint Paul, 10 feuillets de l'Apocalypse. Pour l'Ancien Testament, entre bien d'autres: 44 feuillets de la Genèse, du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle, et 22 autres du III<sup>e</sup> siècle; 55 feuillets des Nombres, du Deutéronome, datés du II<sup>e</sup> siècle; 27 feuillets d'Isaïe, 16 d'Ezéchiel et d'Esther; 13 de Daniel, etc., etc.

Restaurés par le plus habile médecin des papyrus, le célèbre Ischer de Berlin, les papyrus Chester Beatty ont été et sont encore l'objet de savantes études.

Ils confirment entièrement la valeur de la tradition chrétienne, apportent de nouvelles lumières sur des passages obscurs et des versions contestées.

Pour une grande partie de l'humanité, ils valent plus que tous les trésors d'art. Leur valeur est réellement inestimable...

Ils appartiennent à l'Egypte.

Sans doute, ils seront conservés avec la piété et les soins qui conviennent par leur actuel propriétaire; sans doute, il était difficile d'effectuer les travaux de conservation et les études de déchiffrement en Egypte, mais l'Egypte n'est plus un pays incapable d'assurer la conservation de ses propres antiquités et en tout cas, l'Egypte ne peut pas consentir à se voir dépourvoir, sans son aveu, de ses trésors archéologiques.

Après les papyrus manichéens, les papyrus Chester Beatty — et tant d'autres objets dont tous les initiés connaissent la trop longue liste...

L'Egypte doit-elle perdre tout espoir de recouvrer ses trésors ou tout au moins de préserver ceux qui lui restent? Nous ne le croyons pas et la S.d.N. ne le croit pas plus que nous, qui a préparé une convention spéciale contre ce genre de vol.

Elle s'appelle: «Convention internationale pour le rapatriement des objets d'intérêt archéologique, historique ou artistique, perdus ou volés ou ayant donné lieu à une aliénation ou exportation illicite».

Un peu long, mais très complet. Nous y reviendrons puisqu'au Caire, elle semble ignorée.

(à suivre).

G. D.

Figure 18: La Bourse égyptienne, 2 July 1935, CBP/B/03/159.

Translation  
A.N.

DEPARTMENT OF ANTIQUITIES,

Cairo,

22nd June, 1935.

REGISTERED.

(Received 11th July under  
cover of Mohd. Amin's letter  
of 4th July.)

A. Chester Beatty, Esq.,

Dear Sir,

We have ascertained, during recent years, that a number of very important documents (papyri) have left Egypt without our knowledge. The law, however, provides that no antiquity may leave the country without previous permission, so it is only, then, by clandestine methods that these documents have reached the hands of those who have published them.

Several years ago you acquired two lots of papyri of quite exceptional importance:-

1. The Hieratic Papyrus, published by Dr. Gardiner in 1931 and 1934
2. Greek Papyri of the Gospels and of the Bible, published by Sir F. Kenyon, 1933-4

The Antiquities Department is entrusted with the care of the archeological interests of Egypt, and would be obliged if you would help to elucidate the facts explaining why we were not able to exercise our control over the documents before they left Egypt.

Public opinion having been greatly excited by the

Figure 19: Pierre Lacau to ACB, 22 June 1935, CBP/B/03/15.

W/L

2nd August, 1935.  
(Signed and dispatched 7.8.35)

Monsieur P. Lacau,  
Director General,  
Department of Antiquities,  
Cairo.

My dear Sir,

I thank you for your letter of the 22nd June last, which, by the way, did not reach me until 11th July.

I should naturally be only too happy to afford any assistance I could to your Department in safeguarding Egypt in her historic inheritance. In this case, to my regret, I am unable to give you the information for which you ask. You will appreciate that a great many of the most famous works of art are sold by people who do not wish to have the fact made public that they are disposing of their treasures. In a recent case of a purchase from the former ruler of an Eastern country who is now living in Egypt, you may well imagine that he would not wish added to the pain of losing his treasure the odious publicity which would result from the making public of the sale.

In the numerous purchases of works of art

P. S. O.

Figure 20: ACB to Pierre Lacau, 2 August 1935, CBP/B/03/159.

ty's involvement.<sup>118</sup> Concerned about public opinion and press interest, Lacau sent Beatty an official letter which asked him to "elucidate the facts explaining why we were not able to exercise our control over the documents before they left Egypt" (Figure 19).<sup>119</sup> In the letter Lacau asks for, (1) the date and place of the acquisitions, (2) the name, profession and rank of the vendor, (3) the circumstances of the purchase(s), and (4) information regarding date and place of discovery, finder and from whom the vendor obtained the papyri.

Beatty offered little in response, stating that "in this case, to my regret, I am unable to give you the information for which you ask." He concluded to Lacau, "you can rest assured that in each case I go to great pains to satisfy myself that the vendor has the right to dispose of them" (Figure 20).<sup>120</sup> With Lacau's retirement the following year the matter seems to have been dropped.<sup>121</sup>

## 10 Conclusion

The CBBP was an important discovery for biblical scholarship, and Beatty used considerable resources to conserve and publish these important manuscripts. Meanwhile, his international reputation as a major art collector and patron of research was set.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, his name will forever be linked to these manuscripts in academia.

Like many private collectors, Beatty did not keep meticulous records of every transaction. The CBBP were acquired

from several sources, presumably exported by varying means, and secured over a number of years. The extant documentation as known gives us no clear chronology of the purchase and export of each page. Even with rigorous analysis, the story remains unfinished. What is certain is the complexity of the history of the CBBP, particularly once situated within the context of the Egyptian antiquities market. In addition, the network of actors involved was considerable: Askren, Beatty, Bell, Bonner, Campbell, Corble, Kenyon, Kingsford-Wood, Lacau, Merton, Millar, Nahman, Shakar Farag, Skeat, Tanner, and Wooderson. And this list does not include everyone involved in the purchases made on behalf of the University of Michigan, not to mention the fragments now in Florence, Vienna, Cologne, Madrid, Montserrat, and Princeton.

Nonetheless, as we continue to mine the archives, both within and beyond the institution, more of this story (and related stories) should unfold. Our understanding of the histories of objects within the context of international antiquities markets continues to develop. Collaborations remain an essential part of furthering this understanding as we share our provenance research. It is my hope that this paper has provided a more detailed, nuanced, and transparent account of the acquisition history of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri.

**118** The article also noted (rough translation), "Egypt is no longer unable to ensure the preservation of its own antiquities and at least, Egypt cannot agree to be stripped, without consent, of its archaeological treasures." "Exode des Manuscrits," *La Bourse égyptienne*, 2 July 1935, CBP/B/03/159.

**119** Lacau to ACB, 22 June 1935, CBP/B/03/159.

**120** ACB to Lacau, 2 August 1935, CBP/B/03/159.

**121** Étienne Drioton took over as Director of the Antiquities Service in 1936, following Lacau's retirement. Drioton's friendship with King Faruq appears to have been what kept him in post until 1952. He was in France when the Egyptian Revolution began and never returned to Egypt. After 94 years of French directors, Mustafa Amer (1953–1956) was the first Egyptian appointed as Director of the Service. Reid 1985, 244.

**122** Merton and Beatty split the cost and profits of the publication. Beatty offset his half of the production costs by transferring ownership to Merton of papyri he had bought through the Museum Syndicate for £160, ACB to Merton, 14 October 1932, and others, CBP/C/05/02/009. "I am enclosing a list of the papyri which I bought through the Museum Syndicate, and I would appreciate it if you would kindly turn these over to Mr. Wilfred Merton." ACB to Bell, 19 October 1932, CBP/B/05/010. For further details on purchases made by the Syndicate see Zelyck 2019, 21–6.

تحاول الباحثة في هذا المقال الإجابة عن سؤال يهم كل المتخصصين في علم البردي وغيرها من التخصصات التاريخية والأدبية ودراسات الكتاب المقدس وهو كيف تمكن تشيستر بيتي الحصول على مثل هذه المجموعة الفريدة من برديات الكتاب المقدس؟ تجيب الباحثة على هذا السؤال بالبحث في أرشيف مراسلات تشيستر بيتي مع العديد من المتخصصين في المجال وعلى رأسهم بالطبع فريدريك كينون وهاورد إدريس بل وغيرهم من التجار مثل موريس ناخمان. وتقسّم مقالها إلى مجموعة من الأجزاء كل جزء يركز على موضوع محدد، فبدأً مثلاً بزيارة بيتي الأولى إلى مصر ثم تنتقل بعد ذلك إلى وصف سوق البرديات والمخطوطات قبل أن تصل إلى صلب الموضوع وهو كيفية شراء هذه البرديات حيث تعرض هنا لملاحظات شراء هذه البرديات بشيء من التفصيل. وفي هذا الجزء تقدم الباحثة قائمة بعمليات شراء البرديات بالإضافة إلى عرض مبسط لبعض أكواد التلغرافات السرية بين تشيستر بيتي وبين وكيله أو وكيله في مصر والتي استطاع من خلالها أن يتمكن من شراء هذه البرديات قبل غيره من المنافسين. ثم لا تلبس أن تقدم قائمة مفصلة بعمليات الشراء مرتبة ترتيباً زمنياً تحتوي أيضاً على العديد من المعلومات عن الكثير من الصحف المفردة (codex) التي تحتوي على يحوي أسفار الكتاب المقدس بنسخة الأربعة المشهورة. وتحت هذه القائمة يوجد العديد من التفاصيل المهمة المتعلقة بغيرها من الأسفار التي حصل عليها بيتي سواء من العهد القديم أو من النصوص غير المعتمدة مثل النصوص المانية. بعد ذلك تختتم الكاتبة مقالها بالإشارة إلى بعض رخص الاستيراد التي تمكن بيتي من الحصول عليها من السلطات المختصة في مصر مثل المتحف المصري مثلاً حتى يتمكن من شراء هذه البرديات، قبل أن تنتقل لخطوة نشر هذه البرديات وكيفية استقبال المجتمع الأكاديمي والعامّة لهذه الاكتشافات الهامة. المقال مهم لكل من يريد أن يتعرف على العديد من التفاصيل المهمة حول مصادر هذه البرديات الفريدة وكيف وصلت إلى يد تشيستر بيتي.

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# Reading across the Archives: Mining the Beatty Narrative

قر في الأرشيفات: التنقيب في سردية "بيتي"، يي-جان لين

## 1 Introduction

A piece of cheese can save a life. In fact, we may owe the existence of the Chester Beatty and Beatty's collection of biblical papyri, and the collector himself, to a hard block of cheese almost four hundred years ago. Sir Alfred Chester Beatty's great-great-great-great-great grandfather on his mother's side was Captain Thomas Bull, Sr., who sailed to New England in 1635, and became a founding member of the city of Hartford, Connecticut.<sup>1</sup> It was in the great Pequot War of 1637 that a valiant block of cheese in Bull's shirt pocket took the point of an arrow and saved his life. As his commander, John Mason, recorded: "Lieutenant Bull had an Arrow Shot into a hard piece of Cheese, having no other Defence: Which may verify the old Saying, *A little Armour would serve if a Man knew where to place it.*"<sup>2</sup> Perhaps we should all carry a block of cheese in our shirt pocket – for defense, and also a gourmet garnish when needed, although it would have to be a sturdy cheese, perhaps Pecorino-Romano or Gruyère.

At any rate, the young Chester Beatty loved to hear this story told by his mother, Hetty, who had plenty of tales to tell about their Puritan ancestors – tales of ambushes and daring rescues, full of adventure, at least according to A. J. Wilson's biography.<sup>3</sup> Beatty's father, John Cuming Beatty, had stories to share from his side of the family, as well. According to Wilson, Beatty's great-grandfather Robert Beatty

emigrated to the then Danish island of St. Thomas, in the Virgin group of the West Indies, and became the owner of a big plantation, worked by Negro slaves. Robert became appalled by the inhumanities of the slave-labour which made him prosperous, and in 1835 he freed his workforce, abandoned his estate and moved to the United States, where the fight for abolition was well advanced.<sup>4</sup>

Wilson's narrative of righteous action and the self-sacrificing freeing of those enslaved and "abandonment" of an entire estate is moving and admirable – except that all of its particulars are false.<sup>5</sup> In the first place, Robert Beatty's estate and lands were in St. Croix, not St. Thomas, according to records published in St. Croix in 1859, titled *Statistics regarding landed properties in the Island of St. Croix from 1816 to 1857* (Figures 1 and 2).<sup>6</sup>

Records show that Robert Beatty did not abandon his estate in 1835 and leave for the United States. In fact, his son (and Chester Beatty's father) John Cuming Beatty was born in St. Croix in 1838 (Figure 3).<sup>7</sup>

And Robert Beatty did not sell everything off in 1835; instead, he bought property at auction.<sup>8</sup> He also sold his Bonne Esperance Estate in 1843, not 1835, for the then considerable amount of \$22,650.85 (around \$850,000 today). Moreover, he did not sell the estate just to any stranger but to Thomas Armstrong, his father-in-law (Figure 4).<sup>9</sup> Neither is there any evidence in these records that Robert Beatty freed his slaves in 1835. In fact, a marriage register of May 1846 – two years before the rebellion of enslaved peoples on St. Croix, which led to their emancipation –

1 Beatty's maternal genealogy traces back to Bull as follows: his mother, Hetty Bull (1846–1906) was daughter of William G. Bull (1781–1859), son of Joseph Bull (1735/6–1797), son of Daniel John Bull (1709–1776), son of Daniel Bull (1677–1721), son of Joseph Bull (1651–1712), son of Thomas Bull, Sr. (1605–1684). Records (birth and death records, wills, census registers, and gravestone images) available on *Ancestry.com* database; see, in particular, "Hetty Beatty Bull." See also Todd 1981–1985, vol. 2. On Bull as a founding member of Hartford, see Jacobs 2022, citing Todd 1981–1985 as his source.

2 Mason 1736, 22.

3 Wilson 1985, 5: "Hetty was as good a story-teller as her husband, and legends surrounding her family's exploits in the Indian wars were the sort of bedtime stories that young Chester loved to hear." Mason 1736, 8, tells of Thomas Bull rescuing one wounded Arthur Smith from a burning fort.

4 Wilson 1985, 4.

5 This story from Wilson 1985, 4, cites no sources, so we are left to presume that he heard the tale from one of the sources he describes in the preface (ii–iii) – all of whom were close to Beatty – possibly from Alfred Chester Beatty, Jr., unpublished recorded interviews of Beatty from the 1960s, Joan O'Neill (Beatty's secretary in Ireland), Edith Bruhl (his secretary in the south of France), and/or Sir Ronald Prain, Beatty's close friend.

6 See Anonymous 1859, 17, 22, 33–4, 52–3.

7 U.S. Passport Application for A. Chester Beatty 1917.

8 Anonymous 1859, 33.

9 Anonymous 1859, 33–4. See Lutheran Churches Marriage Records 1831. See also Poole 1954 (?), 127–30; cf. online transcription at <http://www.antonymaitland.com/hptext/hp0024.txt> (accessed 19 October 2021).

Contentment, in Company's Quarter No. 10 c and 1 e, Christiansteds Police District and Jurisdiction, belongs to Philip Roche;  $49\frac{7}{8}$  acres, stock estate. 1847, no slaves; 1828, June 27, 39 acres of Richmond's land sold by R. Beatty to C. Kjerulff, for Ps. 1,500; 1849, June 21, sold by C. Bithorn [no recorded titled deed] to P. L. Blom for \$1000, with buildings—25 acres from Goldenrock,  $24\frac{1}{2}$  from Richmond; 1850, Sep. 21, sold by P. L. Blom to P. E. Murphy and Arabella Murphy, for \$2,100, with the exception of about 8,000 square feet. From this period to 1856 small portions of this property have been sold out; 1858, July 30, sold by P. E. and Arabella Murphy to Philip Roche for \$1918.

Figure 1: Record of Robert Beatty sale of land in St. Croix dated 1828.

Fountain, in Northside Quarter A. No. 11, Princes Quarter No. 4 and Northside B. No. 17, Centre Police District, Frederiksteds Jurisdiction, belongs to Wm. Cuming, Robert Cuming and John Cuming; 1816, 277 acres in canes, 73 acres in other cultivation, total 350; 1857, 187 acres in canes,  $257\frac{1}{2}$  acres in other cultivation, total  $444\frac{1}{2}$ ; 1816, 150 slaves, 1847, 150; steam mill of 10 horse power; wind mill also. 1817, August 25, No. 22 b in Northside Quarter sold at auction by W. McBean to Josiah and John Cuming for Ps. 400—the half of No. 22 b attached to this estate; 1835, By will of John Cuming an annuity of Ps. 600 from the half of this estate was bequeathed to Mary Cuming and after her death to Anne Wittrog—this annuity is now cancelled; 1837, May 18, the half of this estate sold by R. Beatty to Josias Cuming, for \$50,000; 1850, Dec. 17, by will of J. Cuming this estate and Parasole were bequeathed to Wm. Cuming, Hugh Cuming, Robert Cuming and Edward Cuming, thus, the revenues of these properties to go to Wm. Cuming for his lifetime and after his death an annuity of £100 to Cathrine Cuming and £100 to Ann Cuming; by Frederiksteds Town Court's Judgment of 15th March 1855, Robert John Cuming and Edward William Cuming are acknowledged heirs to Hugh Cuming's portion in this property and Parasole.

Figure 2: Record of Robert Beatty sale of land in St. Croix dated 1837.

The application must be duplicate and accompanied by three unmounted photographs of the applicant, not larger than three inches in size, one of which is to be affixed to the passport by the Department; the other two must be attached to this application and its duplicate, respectively. The photographs must be on this paper and should have a light background. The one not attached to the application should be signed by the applicant across the top, so as not to obscure the features.

(Name of applicant)  
 (Name of spouse)  
 (Name of child)

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

STATE of New York  
 COUNTY of New York

I, Alfred Chester Beatty, a NATIVE AND LOYAL CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES, hereby apply to the Department of State, at Washington, for a passport.

I solemnly swear that I was born at New York City in the State of New York on or about the 27th day of February 1875 - that my father John Cuming Beatty was born in Island of St. Croix, D. W. I. that he emigrated to the United States from the port of St. Croix in 1842 at the age of 4. on or about July 1842; that he resided 75 years, uninterruptedly, in the United States, from 1842 to 1917 at Brooklyn, New York; that he was married as a citizen of the United States through by the naturalization of him as his father in the XX years 1845 or 1846 as shown by the accompanying Certificate of Naturalization; that I am domiciled in the United States, my permanent residence being at 16 East 73rd Street, N. Y. in the State of New York where I follow the occupation of Consulting Engineer that I am about to go abroad temporarily and I intend to return to the United States within three months with the purpose of reading and performing the duties of citizenship therein; and that I desire a passport for use in visiting the countries hereinafter named for the following purpose:

England To open a hospital for wounded officers

(Name of country)  
 (Date of return)  
 (Date of visit)

I intend to leave the United States from the port of New York sailing on board the S. S. Adriatic on about Sept. 6th, 1917

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.**  
 Further, I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion: So help me God.

Sworn to before me this 30 day  
 of August, 1917.  
 (Name of Clerk)  
 (Signature of Clerk)  
 Clerk of the Court of Sessions  
 (Name of Court)

\*A person born in the United States in a place where he or she resided until a birth certificate with his application, if the applicant's birth was here in this country, must attach a birth certificate with his application.

Figure 3: U.S. Passport Application for A. Chester Beatty 1917.

shows one John Petros marrying a woman named Charlotte. Petros is recorded as an enslaved worker “belonging to Robert Beatty,” while Charlotte is listed as “belonging to” a Joseph Cuming, after whom we might guess that Beatty’s father, John Cuming Beatty, is named (Figure 5).<sup>10</sup>

Wilson, the biographer who shares the tale of Beatty’s grandfather freeing his slaves – the biographer who goes so far as to imply that Robert Beatty somehow worked toward abolition in the United States – does hint how smoothed down, polished, and touched-up these stories might be. He notes that Beatty’s father, John Beatty, “was a self-confessed romantic and was first to admit that the family’s early genealogical threads were loosely woven.”<sup>11</sup> Of course, the story of Robert Beatty freeing his slaves is not only romanticized but also entirely inaccurate. Likewise, the tale of Captain Thomas Bull and the block of cheese may seem simply a humorous tale of battle

bravery, until we consider the hundreds of Pequot indigenous people slaughtered – hundreds of whom English colonials burned alive in the Mystic Massacre, in which Bull took part, according to John Mason:

The *Captain* also said, WE MUST BURN THEM; and immediately stepping into the *Wigwam* where he had been before, brought out a Fire-Brand, and putting it into the Matts with which they were covered, set the *Wigwams* on Fire. Lieutenant *Thomas Bull* and *Nicholas Omsted* beholding, came up; and when it was thoroughly kindled, the *Indians* ran as Men most dreadfully Amazed. . . God was above them, who laughed his Enemies and the Enemies of his People to Scorn, making them as a fiery Oven. . . And thus in *little more than one Hour’s space* was their impregnable *Fort* with themselves utterly Destroyed, to the Number of *six or seven Hundred*, as some of themselves confessed. There were only *seven* taken *Captive* & about *seven* escaped.<sup>12</sup>

Sir Alfred Chester Beatty did not himself enslave and kill as his ancestors did. Yet these stories in Wilson’s biography are examples of romanticized narratives that exclude inconvenient facts and normalise brutal histories. Of course, Wilson had a vested interest in portraying Beat-

<sup>10</sup> Danish West Indies 1846, 798.

<sup>11</sup> Wilson 1985, 4. Wilson states this to qualify John Cuming Beatty’s description of his family’s history before the eighteenth century, but it is here proven relevant for Wilson’s (and his sources’) recounting of Beatty’s family history in general.

<sup>12</sup> See Mason 1736, 8–10, capitalization and italics original.

Libanonhill, in Kings Quarter No. 1 and 2, Centre Police District, Christiansteds Jurisdiction, belongs to A. M. Dam; 1816, 200 acres in canes, 100 acres in other cultivation, total 300; 1857, 91 acres in canes, 239 in other cultivation, total 330; 1816, 113 slaves, 1847, 80. Wind mill. 1839, Feb. 14, sold at auction to Robert Beatty—Bonne Esperance, stock estate, included—for Ps. 25,000—and an annuity of \$384 to Mary Cuming, John Cuming and Anne Wittrog, which annuity was cancelled in 1856; 1843, Feb. 4. sold by Robert Beatty to Thomas Armstrong—stock estate Bonne Esperance included—for \$22,650 85 and an annuity of \$384; 1856, April 30, sold by Thomas Armstrong to A. M. Dam—Bonne Esperance included—for \$25,000.

**Figure 4:** Record of Robert Beatty purchase of land, Bonne Esperance “stock estate included,” dated 1839; and sale of Bonne Esperance by Beatty to Thomas Armstrong dated 1843.

**Figure 5:** Detail from St. Croix parish report on marriages in 1846, showing the record of “John Petros (alias Peter) belonging to Robert Beatty of Danish Lutheran Church, age 67, to Charlotte, belonging to Jos. Cuming of English Church, age 64.”

ty’s background and career in as positive a light as possible because he worked for Beatty’s Roan Selection Trust copper mining group as its public relations officer and then its vice-president for public affairs.<sup>13</sup> But virtually all published narratives of Beatty’s life, not just Wilson’s,

<sup>13</sup> Wilson 1985, book cover recto about the author: “In 1951, he joined the RST copper mining companies in Central Africa, developed on the initiative of Chester Beatty, becoming public relations officer and later vice-president of public affairs.” The Rhodesian Selection Trust was one of the early building blocks of Beatty’s giant finance house, Selection Trust. Rhodesian Selection Trust was renamed Roan Selection Trust in 1964, which is the name retained by the archive housing the papers of the trust since the 1920s, later added to the Zambia Consolidated Copper Mines Archives.

avoid investigating his family history and his own mining career. Even the mining historian John Phillips, who notes that Wilson’s biography “falls short of accepted standards for historical criticism,” ignores aspects of Beatty’s career, claiming that Beatty “brought a rare sense of humanity and compassion for the miner to his business practices.”<sup>14</sup>

The primary elements of Beatty’s hagiography, which appear in virtually every publication on the man’s life are these: Beatty amassed his wealth through business acumen in mining. He bequeathed his library and collection to Ireland and therefore made it available to scholars

<sup>14</sup> Phillips 2009, 216–17. Phillips makes this statement despite noting that Beatty likely covered up the existence of silicosis – a miner’s disease – in his Rhodesian mines (see 232, discussed below).

for study and to the public for exhibition. He donated to the British Museum and Chester Beatty Research Institute (now the Institute for Cancer Research) in London. Much further beyond these facts no one has yet dared to go. Reporters, biographers, curators, and scholars have glossed over the unsavoury facts of Beatty's life or have chosen to accept the narrative without further investigation. But it takes only a little digging to tap into the vein of the overlooked and ugly elements of Beatty's life and history that were essential in the acquisition of the Chester Beatty collection. This paper focuses on that unlovely ore as I mine the archives to see how Beatty mined his fortune, which made possible the archive now named after him.

To be clear, the following investigation, while focusing on Beatty, bears larger implications for all collections and archives, especially those with similar histories – and there are many, particularly among the magnates of Beatty's time and milieu who built collections from their wealth as a point of prestige.<sup>15</sup> The discussion below covers the specific myth of Beatty and deconstructs it through a reading *together* of heretofore separated histories of family, collecting, colonisation, and amassing of wealth – but this could and should be done for all collections of riches and knowledge. I present the following examination as a step toward this larger work.

## 2 The rugged individual

In nearly every account of Beatty's life appears the story of his time as a "mucker" in the Kekionga mine of Boulder, Colorado at the age of twenty-three. A mucker's main job is to clear rock and dirt from the tunnels, and to be on-call for any other lowly duty. Written accounts of Beatty's mucker life consistently marvel that this eventual mining magnate started out by making two dollars a day – or twenty-five cents an hour – at the very bottom of the ladder.<sup>16</sup> Oftentimes biographers also note that he had merely twenty dollars to his name at the time, being determined to strike out on his own and make a name for himself, by himself.<sup>17</sup> The focus on his rate of pay in Colo-

rado and the evocation of the "Wild West" and setting out to win one's fortune presents us with the romantic figure of the rugged individual, a man of the American frontier, braving dangers and unafraid of hard work.<sup>18</sup>

This characterization also focuses on Beatty's willingness to relate to miners in humble settings, fully adapting to the rough-and-tumble of the mines, with no hint of snobbery. One scholar includes just about every finishing touch needed to complete this portraiture of a scruffy but compassionate self-made man:

Never one for aloofness, Beatty dined regularly with his men and shared their zest for miners' milk – beer – over wine. He also led by example, willingly dirtying his hands underground if the job required it, and engaged easily in the profane and rugged lifestyle of the mines. Wearing a broad-brimmed hat and pistol in his boot, he spoke in the expletive-laced dialect familiar to his men and stood up to physical provocation when necessary. In sum, the stout, powerfully built Beatty exuded the ethos of the miner, and by this and his treatment of miners as human beings and equals was able to gain their respect and loyalty.<sup>19</sup>

This is quite a wonderful description of American masculinity. But, of course, this portrait is too perfect to be accurate. Beatty's early circumstances belie the myth of his independent struggle. In terms of the family situation, he was born into what biographical accounts generally describe as a "middle-class"<sup>20</sup> family, a conveniently nebulous term.

But the facts are these: his ancestors, as described above, were people of substantial means, and his father was a banker and stockbroker.<sup>21</sup> There were weekend trips to New York City to visit his maternal grandmother, and,

<sup>15</sup> For example, see Charles Lang Freer's life in Garrick Allen's article in this book.

<sup>16</sup> See Chester Beatty 2021b; Kennedy 1988, 22; Phillips 2009, 217; Horton 2003, 9; Wilson 1985, 26–7. News stories almost always include this detail or a rags-to-riches story in connection with events at the museum, commemorations, etc., for example Dave Kenney, "From Miner Major to Art Millionaire," *Irish Daily Mail*, 7 February 2020; Tim O'Brien, "Exhibition Offers a Snapshot into the Three Worlds of Chester Beatty," *The Irish Times*, 10 July 2014.

<sup>17</sup> For example, Phillips 2009, 217; Wilson 1985, 26.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Chester Beatty 2021a, beginning at 1:38: "He graduated first in his class from Columbia and began his illustrious career by heading out from New York to the Wild West." Also Barrow 1987, 134: "He worked very hard. . . He did much travelling in the roughest and toughest conditions." Romantic language around Beatty's mining days in Colorado occurs even in the presentation of a bill to allow the Irish Office of Public Works to incur expense to maintain the housing of the collection: see Bulbulia 1985: "I think the quality and the calibre of the man comes through right from the earliest days and of course we all know that in those days and indeed now mining life was rough and dangerous but hard work and courage paid off handsomely. Property was won by staking one's claim and profit was seen as just reward for enterprise. . . Beatty often travelled on horseback or by Wells Fargo stagecoach and always carried six-guns at his side and a Colt revolver tucked into his boot."

<sup>19</sup> Phillips 2009, 218.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Chester Beatty 2021b: "Chester Beatty was born in New York into a middle-class family, the youngest of three sons." Also Phillips 2009, 217.

<sup>21</sup> Wilson 1985, 5.

when Beatty was in his teens, there were visits with a neighbour, John C. Randolph, a prospector for the London Exploration Company, which was a leading mining and development corporation.<sup>22</sup> Beatty immediately took to Randolph and spent hours talking with him, oftentimes in the Midday Club in New York City or in Randolph's nearby Wall Street office.<sup>23</sup>

Flourishing in this context, Beatty did well in his school exams, which opened the doors of university life and further training for a mining career.<sup>24</sup> He studied and excelled and gained entry within a comfortable, well-connected life, which begat more connections when he took a year to study civil engineering at Princeton before he began studies in mining at Columbia. When Beatty graduated with an M.A. from Columbia, he set off for Colorado. He refused an allowance from his father, although he let him pay for his train ticket.<sup>25</sup>

What, then, can we say about Beatty's actual circumstances when his personal savings were down to twenty dollars and he was earning two dollars a day as a mucker? We can say that he had the security of a well-off family, powerful connections, and an Ivy-league education. These luxuries enabled him to take his chances as a mucker, a job which, as it turns out, he only had two months, at which point a mine superintendent left and his job was given to Beatty, probably with the recommendation of T. A. Rickard, a connection he had made in Colorado, who also happened to have been a colleague of one Herbert Hoover.<sup>26</sup> It is clear that privilege enabled Beatty's early life and career success, and that the vaunted story of his quick rise from mucker to millionaire is, at the very least, incomplete.

As for mingling with his employees, eating and drinking and even working alongside them, this does show a friendly warmth, admirable in an employer. It does not, however, mean that Beatty ever faced the same realities as his miners or that they were ever on equal footing, no matter how often Beatty worked in the mines or drank beer with them. From 1902 to 1904, when faced with miner unrest and the threat of unionization in Colorado, Beatty hired spies from the Pinkerton Detective Agency and met violence with violence:

Pinkerton strike-breakers brought in by [Beatty] intimidated miners with weapons, picked fights with malcontents, beat up union sympathizers, and successfully underscored the point

that Beatty would brook no interference with production, which won him plaudits from his employers.<sup>27</sup>

In working with Pinkerton, Beatty consulted a good friend of his at the agency, James McParland.<sup>28</sup> McParland was the same agent who had famously infiltrated communities of Irish immigrant miners in Pennsylvania, linked to the secret society, the Molly Maguires. McParland destroyed the Irish miners' attempts to unionize with stratagems that eventually led to the hanging of ten Irish-Catholic miners on "Black Thursday," 21 June 1877.<sup>29</sup> While this complicated history involved brutality on many sides,<sup>30</sup> what is clear is that by bringing in McParland, Beatty did not let his camaraderie with the miners get in the way of his company's bottom line, even if violence was on the table.

It is also important to note that the miners Beatty consorted with were white men at work in the Cripple Creek mines of Colorado, toward the beginning of Beatty's career in 1900. This was before he worked for the Guggenheims, before he formed the Selection Trust in 1914, and before he acquired holdings in Africa, which he formed as subsidiary trusts in the 1920s and 1930s.

The miners he hung around with were never the black West African workers at his diamond mines in Sierra Leone or the black Central African workers at his copper mines in Northern Rhodesia. Beatty never visited his mines or workers in Africa.<sup>31</sup> It is furthermore doubtful that he viewed black African workers as having the same humanity as himself. As one biographer admits, "Beatty's attitude towards labour on the mines fell in line with that voiced by Roan's Compound Manager [in Northern Rhodesia]: 'He is

<sup>27</sup> Phillips 2009, 219. See also Wilson 1985, 61–72.

<sup>28</sup> See Wilson 1985, 64–5.

<sup>29</sup> See Kenny 1998, especially "Black Thursday," 245–76.

<sup>30</sup> Kenny 1998, 286, acknowledges the complexity of the history but also notes: "As the case of the Irish [workers in Pennsylvania] unequivocally demonstrated, the social advancement of some was predicated in large part on the social degradation of others. . . In an effort to resolve the dilemma, or at least to explain it away, the term *Molly Maguires* was expanded from a shorthand term for Irish laziness, violence, and depravity, to a general label covering all forms of labor activism. The demonization of the Irish that had begun in the early 1850s was extended over the next two decades to a demonization of organized labor in general, as the trade union movement and the alleged secret society were identified as one and the same. None of this is meant to deny that the Molly Maguires existed as a group of Irish immigrants who assassinated their enemies. It is simply to point out that their existence was put to all sorts of ideological uses. . . The principal parties to this debate were small mine owners, corporate capitalists, anti-Irish nativists, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Workingmen's Benevolent Association, and the Molly Maguires."

<sup>31</sup> Wilson 1985, 207.

<sup>22</sup> Wilson 1985, 7.

<sup>23</sup> Wilson 1985, 7.

<sup>24</sup> Wilson 1985, 8; also Chester Beatty 2021a, 1:29–1:45.

<sup>25</sup> Wilson 1985, 19.

<sup>26</sup> See Wilson 1985, 24–6 and 28.

an integral part of the *machinery* and needs just as much thought and care as the most valuable *parts of our machinery* in the plant.”<sup>32</sup>

But what of the man who made two dollars a day in ten-hour shifts in 1898 at the start of his career? Even if he did not exactly pull himself up by the bootstraps, did not that experience make him a more sympathetic character and generous employer? Let the numbers help us make that judgment. Beatty made two dollars per ten-hour shift in 1898. Accounting for inflation, this comes to making the equivalent of \$6.60 an hour today in the United States.<sup>33</sup> The black Central African miner at Beatty’s Roan Antelope Mine in Northern Rhodesia made on average one shilling per eight-hour shift in 1932.<sup>34</sup> Accounting for inflation, this comes to making the equivalent of \$0.62 an hour today in the United States – less than a tenth of what Beatty made as a mucker.<sup>35</sup> So although Beatty worked a menial job for much less money than he was accustomed to earning for two months at the start of his career, during that time he still made ten times the average wage he later paid his African miners.

### 3 The white saviour

But should comparisons be made between the wages of a menial miner in the United States and that in Central Africa? Surely the wages at the Roan Antelope Mine were appropriate in its context? In the narrative commonly told by Beatty’s biographers, because of his enterprising spirit, business acumen, and benevolence, he not only offered his African miners fair wages, excellent health care, and good housing, but he also respected their persons and their nations. Beatty is quoted as saying this to his agent in West Africa:

Always remember this country belongs to the black man. . .the rights of their chiefs must be scrupulously respected. . .the

<sup>32</sup> Phillips 2009, 232. The quotation comes from Spearpoint 1937, 3 (my emphasis).

<sup>33</sup> Calculated using Webster 2021b.

<sup>34</sup> Robinson 1933, 170.

<sup>35</sup> In 1932, Northern Rhodesia used the Southern Rhodesian pound, which was at par with British pound sterling, with 20 shillings per pound. Accounting for inflation, earning 1 shilling per 8 hours would be today’s equivalent of £3.58, around \$4.95 per shift or \$.62 an hour. Inflation calculated using Webster 2021a. Currency exchange rate calculated using Google website search, “3.58 GBP to USD,” Google Finance data based on data from Morningstar for Currency, accessed 20 October 2021. On the Southern Rhodesian pound used in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland, see Krause 2010.

people whom we employ must be given fair wages, good working conditions and the best housing and medical facilities that are reasonably possible for us to supply.<sup>36</sup>

Other descriptions, especially those of Wilson, raise Beatty to the level of a saviour, rescuing African peoples from themselves, as he “provided good living and opportunities for advancement for thousands of indigenous people who, but for his enterprise and foresight, would have remained scratching the earth for bare existence.”<sup>37</sup> These were people understood to be

among the most primitive. . .in the world. For centuries they had scraped a bare existence from the poor unyielding soil. . .most of them were even unfamiliar with the principle of the wheel. They were quick to recognize that working for the white man could lead to a better life and greater security for themselves and their families.<sup>38</sup>

Putting aside Wilson’s crass colonialist language, we should examine the claims that Beatty provided good wages, social benefits, excellent housing and medical care, as reported by the vast majority of the narratives surrounding this man. The Chester Beatty museum’s video, “Introducing Chester Beatty,” claims the following:

His international reputation grew as both a businessman and as an employer who was concerned for the well-being of his workers. In the Roan Antelope Copper Mines in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia), he introduced a radical malarial control programme. Moreover, he insisted that African workers be given fair wages, good quality conditions and the best housing and medical facilities.<sup>39</sup>

Mining historian John Phillips also notes that Beatty provided “positive rewards for workers” which included

decent housing and encouraging African workers’ families to reside near the mines. They included the provision of free garden plots for growing food and the provision of free health care. . .Extremely unusual for the age of colonialism in Africa, lines of communication between workers and supervisory and management staff were established in order to decrease racism in the mines and give the African a “voice” in his affairs. These policies had the desired affect [sic]. For by the time Roan entered production its African component was twice as efficient and received many fewer complaints about unfair or oppressive methods than its rival on the Copperbelt, Anglo American’s Nkana mine.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Chester Beatty to George Nicolaus in 1924, quoted in Wilson 1985, 154.

<sup>37</sup> Wilson 1985, preface (ii).

<sup>38</sup> Wilson 1985, 214.

<sup>39</sup> Chester Beatty 2021a, at 6:10.

<sup>40</sup> Phillips 2009, 231.



However, scrutiny of Phillips's sources for these statements, especially that "lines of communication. . . were established in order to decrease racism. . . and give the African a 'voice'" shows that Phillips provides rather thin evidence for this claim. In the footnote to this statement he merely writes, "For *varied interpretation* of Roan's African labour initiatives. . ." and then lists a few sources, one of which – given without any specific page numbers – is an entire volume on the complicated history of black mineworkers in Central Africa, and another (discussed below) directly contradicts the notion that the miners benefited from garden plots and family accompaniment.<sup>41</sup> One source Phillips lists, the report of F. Spearpoint, Beatty's Roan Compound Manager, does comment on communication lines between European managers and African workers, but the account tells us about *racism* at the mines, not an effort to decrease it. Spearpoint writes:

The general attitude of the native towards the European is of a child looking to a teacher to impart to him all the necessary knowledge essential to his progress. Every European who has under him one or more natives is unknowingly functioning as an educator, and the degree of good or bad knowledge absorbed by the pupil or pupils depends entirely on just how good or poor an educator the European might be. . . Generally speaking, the European treats the native with a friendly and personal tolerance, which at times develops into a real interest for the native. Great strides have been made towards bringing about a good understanding between Europeans and natives. In the early days the first reaction of a European to an erring native was apt to be one of annoyance, which might change to a feeling of personal affront, unfortunately influencing any further action by the European.<sup>42</sup>

In other words, Spearpoint, as compound manager, saw that a beneficent, paternalistic attitude on the part of European managers would be best for mine productivity and stability. Spearpoint states that he indeed tried to address complaints between "Europeans and natives," claiming that disputes were investigated with "provision being made for a proper and impartial finding to be arrived at one way or the other."<sup>43</sup> But his account of the benefits of these procedures is telling:

In this way the [European] ganger now is confident of having a disobedient or intractable native suitably dealt with by the Compound Management for minor offences, as for this purpose we have the monetary bonus [for good behaviour] which has already been mentioned. On the other hand, the native is also assured of a fair hearing to any grievance which he wishes to make, and the necessary steps taken to have matters put right.<sup>44</sup>

His words show that lines of communication were not created to "decrease racism" but primarily to ensure the "disobedient or intractable native" could be "suitably dealt with." As for "native" complaints, there is no mention of Europeans or their problematic actions, and the consequences and redress are a very vague "necessary steps." In fact, throughout the entire document, Spearpoint only ever uses the words "discipline," "punishment," and "penalty" in connection to "natives."<sup>45</sup>

In terms of wages, as stated above, the Roan Antelope mine in Northern Rhodesia paid a black African miner, on average, one shilling per shift in 1932. This was significantly less than the 2.25 shillings paid to workers at the gold mine in Witwatersrand, South Africa and slightly less than the 11 francs paid at the Belgian Union Minière copper mines in the Congo.<sup>46</sup> Even when accounting for the cost of providing social services and amenities for each worker, Beatty's Rhodesian mines provided unremarkable total compensation – that is, it was comparable to other mining operations at the time.<sup>47</sup> His European workers were paid far, far higher wages and, though they made up only a quarter of the workforce, they enjoyed amenities and benefits worth five times more than African workers received in total.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Phillips 2009, 231, n.66. The history of mineworkers is Perrings 1979, which makes no statement regarding the Roan Antelope Mines and its handling of race relations but is instead analyses the "principal factors in the proletarianization of one labour force in one corner of the Third World;" the source directly contradicting the notion that incentives such as family accompaniment and garden plots were provided to "decrease racism" or give African workers a "voice," is Chauncey 1981 – see the discussion below.

<sup>42</sup> Spearpoint 1937, 16–7.

<sup>43</sup> Spearpoint 1937, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Spearpoint 1937, 17. Spearpoint indeed set up a council of tribal elders, elected by African mine workers, to handle complaints. They reported, however, to white managers and in essence were a way to delegate management headaches while employing others to act as surveillance. See Spearpoint 1937, 19–21.

<sup>45</sup> Spearpoint 1937, 2, 18, 19, 39, 40, 45 ("discipline"); 20, 22 ("punish"); 22 ("penalty").

<sup>46</sup> Robinson 1933, 170.

<sup>47</sup> Robinson 1933, 170; contra, Phillips 2009, 231, who implies that although Beatty paid lower wages, he provided greater amenities: "Beatty believed that skimping on wages, benefits, and facilities might succeed in holding down costs initially, but was not conducive to 'growing' a more productive workforce. This is not to imply that Beatty paid his African labourers more than his competitors, because he did not. *Instead*, he relied on a series of initiatives that combined low costs with positive rewards" (my emphasis).

<sup>48</sup> Selection Trust Archives, G1/12-1, Roan Antelope Annual Reports 1931 and 1932, cited in Phillips 2009, 231. No specific numbers are given for European workers' wages, and I have not yet been able to physically access the archives where these numbers can be found.

Beatty did encourage African miners to bring their families to reside with them at the mining compounds, and he provided families with small garden plots in which to grow food.<sup>49</sup> These provisions for married men made sound business sense because they attracted employees during a time when competing mines were also looking for workers.<sup>50</sup> The motivation for hiring married men could also be stated in a much more exploitative way, as communicated by a compound manager at the Roan mine in Mufulira:

A married man is a more valuable asset purely on account of his fear of losing his job, due to the fact that he has a wife and family. For this reason he is a more tractable type of labourer and endeavours to improve his position. . . The married man is only more efficient because he is a more docile employee.<sup>51</sup>

Still, if business sense coincided with employee benefits, so much the better. But upon closer inspection, workers at Beatty's Rhodesian mines did not necessarily benefit from these "amenities." Oftentimes, the housing provided for families was highly inadequate:

As the number of married workers [at the Roan mines] rapidly grew, however, many were forced to share accommodation with other families before new housing became available; in one instance in 1941, a man claimed he had five married couples living with him. One woman, who arrived at Mufulira in about 1946, remembered staying with her husband in the kitchen of another married worker's house for two years before they were allocated their own home. Couples with children faced particular problems because the first married housing consisted of only one room, and it was considered highly improper for children to sleep in their parents' bedroom or with children of the other sex. Many children thus had to sleep in the lean-to kitchens attached to the houses, or with children of the same sex of other nearby families. Only in the 1940s did the companies begin constructing two- and three-bedroom houses for their married senior

workers, though even this provided little relief to the majority of families.<sup>52</sup>

While Beatty's mining companies provided housing for families, its inadequacy demonstrates greater concern for the financial bottom line than care for the miners.

Similarly, garden plots were indeed provided for growing vegetables, but what is not broadcast quite so loudly is that the rations provided to the miners and their families, unlike those provided to single men, were uncooked and therefore cheaper,<sup>53</sup> with wives receiving only a seventh to a quarter of their husband's portion.<sup>54</sup> Mining companies thus expected unpaid women to shore up rations, and the companies benefited additionally through the produce women grew since they could be bought at far cheaper prices than the produce grown by European farmers, which otherwise would have to be purchased for rations.<sup>55</sup> In the words of one historian, "Women's labour [at Beatty's Roan Antelope mines] thus reduced the companies' wage costs not only indirectly, by serving as an inducement for men to work at low wages. . . Women provided employees with a variety of services for which the mines would otherwise have had to pay."<sup>56</sup> Or, as Roan compound manager Spearpoint put it, "In general, women give a fair amount of trouble, but this is offset by the care they take of their husbands."<sup>57</sup>

The miners and the women living and working at the mines did not meekly accept inadequate housing and meagre rations. In 1935, African miners across the Rhodesian Copperbelt coordinated a strike after an exorbitant tax hike,<sup>58</sup> which turned violent at the Roan Antelope mine when, upon the command of mine managers, eighty civil police entered the compound to control the strikers. The

<sup>49</sup> See Chauncey 1981. Also Phillips 2009, 231.

<sup>50</sup> Chauncey 1981, 137: "It was in the context of this overriding concern about the competition for labour that the copper mining companies initially decided to allow women and children into their compounds. It would have been 'practically impossible to attract labour to the mine' during the earlier days if women had not also been admitted to the compounds, on manager later recalled, and the decision to permit their presence was made almost immediately. The companies quite explicitly saw the sexual, domestic and other services women provided men in their compounds as non-monetary inducements for men to work in the Copperbelt despite low wages obtaining there." The source of quotation is Roan Consolidated Mines (RCM)/Central Services Division (CSD)/WMA 65: Memo, Compound Manager to General Manager, "Women and Children in Mine Compounds," Roan Antelope Consolidated Mines, 16 November 1938.

<sup>51</sup> RCM/KMA 20, H. H. Field compound manager to general manager, Mufulira, 29 June 1943, quoted in Parpart 1986, 46.

<sup>52</sup> Chauncey 1981, 138, citing RCM/CSD/KMA 5: Minutes, Meeting of the Tribal Representatives, 23 October 1941; and Mrs. L. N., interviewed in Cimambwe at Kasunga Village, Mbala District, 11 July 1978.

<sup>53</sup> Chauncey 1981, 140, citing Spearpoint 1937, 38: "[Women's] ration of mealies are issued in the form of mealies, and not as ground meal, so that they have to pound up their meal in the normal native fashion, and by doing so some of their time is taken up."

<sup>54</sup> Chauncey 1981, 137 n.11: "The male employee's monthly ration at the Roan in 1939 was worth 10s. 8d., while his wife's only 2s. 5d (RCM/CSD/WMA 141: Memo, 'Comparison of Cost of Married and Single Native Employees at RACM, Ltd.', 9 January 1939)."

<sup>55</sup> Chauncey 1981, 138–39. See also Spearpoint 1937, 38: "We purchase the bulk of our vegetable requirements from our own natives, and these are in turn issued to them as their vegetable ration."

<sup>56</sup> Chauncey 1981, 139.

<sup>57</sup> Spearpoint, 1937, 38.

<sup>58</sup> See Perrings 1977, 32: "the tax payable by all Africans in the compounds was increased by an average of 50 per cent to 15s," citing RCM/CSD/WHB 9: D. B. Hall, District Officer to Compound Manager, Roan Antelope Consolidated Mines (RACM), 17 May 1935.

police attacked with batons, which resulted in fighting that ended when the police shot and killed six miners and injured twenty-two.<sup>59</sup> The strike failed, since the mining companies did not concede to workers' demands – and the miners' and women's complaints are telling, as they speak of penurious living conditions:

Miners, especially married miners, complained bitterly to the strike commission about inadequate food. Married workers insisted they could not pay the new tax and still feed and clothe their families on their small salaries. Witnesses also complained about housing, especially for families, and health care for dependents. Thus, many miners' complaints related to the inferior conditions experienced by both men and women in the daily reproduction of labour.<sup>60</sup>

The one change the mining companies made to policy was to permit missionary involvement in the compounds, which allowed the United Missions in the Copperbelt (UMCB) to set up programmes for English language learning and other classes.<sup>61</sup> This move effected negligible changes to wages and living conditions, however: the workers struck again in 1940,<sup>62</sup> which resulted in a minor wage increase.<sup>63</sup> This increase made little difference for miners, however, as one UMCB missionary calculated in 1942 that a permanent, above-entry-level miner's salary would still be half the amount needed to cover a household's minimum needs.<sup>64</sup>

But what of Beatty's care for his workers' health through an innovative malaria control programme? Beatty did employ Malcolm Watson, of the Ross Institute of Trop-

ical Hygiene in London, to address the problem of malaria in his mines in Northern Rhodesia in the late 1920s.<sup>65</sup> Watson implemented the drainage of still water and diverting of streams, which reduced malarial deaths of African workers by 48% and European deaths by 66%.<sup>66</sup> But focus on Watson's innovations and the decrease of malarial deaths in the mines ignores the fact that the farms created to supply the mines and – to a far greater degree – the construction waste of the mines themselves were the cause of the malaria crisis in the first place.<sup>67</sup>

Beatty's successful dealing with malaria serves as the centrepiece of the *apologia* for his mining in Africa, but it is not nearly the whole story. Science historian Lyn Schumaker observes:

This rhetoric of water for the well-being of workers. . . required a focus on malaria as the chief cause of ill-health and a focus on *dambos* [native wetlands used for resources and farming], in turn, as the chief generators of malaria vectors. This was a strategic choice of focus, turning attention away from the more catastrophic and persistent causes of ill-health. Water-borne diseases had a serious impact on African health until the 1950s, while malnutrition affected miners' children until well after independence. Moreover, pneumonia rather than malaria had been the chief killer of African miners during the initial mortality crisis at Roan. . . Thus the tales of "death-dealing" *dambos* and their "vast output" of malarial mosquitos represented a European-focused moral construction of the early mortality crisis. . . it indicates a moral economy of disease skewed towards European interests, *and* one that targeted for action a problem with a technical fix. . . The Ross Institute's drainage and oiling scheme was not inexpensive but it could be accomplished using a technical approach to the environment that did not require raising African standards of pay, housing and sanitation to the levels enjoyed by European workers, which would have resulted in unwelcome attention to the racial politics of the mine.<sup>68</sup>

Beatty's mining managers also engaged in a cover-up of a lung disease that afflicted their miners: they agreed "never [to] have a meeting or publish or say anything which in any way admits that any of our workmen are subjected to silicosis."<sup>69</sup> When asked for rock samples to determine the risk of silicosis in the Roan Antelope mine, the general manager Frank Ayer made sure to send "principally shale" so that it would be "doubtful if government will find

<sup>59</sup> See Perrings 1977, especially 33–4, citing RCM/CSD/WHB 9: F. Ayer to Roan Antelope Consolidated Mines, London, 30 May 1935 and 31 May 1935; also H. H. Field, Compound Assistant at RACM, Diary of events from 27 May 1935 to 31 May 1935 (Private Papers).

<sup>60</sup> Parpart 1986, 41, citing *The Commission appointed to enquire into the Disturbances in the Copperbelt, Northern Rhodesia* (Lusaka 1935), lists evidence regarding inadequate food: Manyoni Mutwalo, clerk, 772, Kabuyu, Roan, 340, Samson Chilazia, underground boss boy, 801; and evidence regarding inferior conditions: Ernest Muwamba, clerk, 873, Eliti Tuli Phili, clerk, 758.

<sup>61</sup> Parpart 1986, 42.

<sup>62</sup> See Parpart 1986, 42–3.

<sup>63</sup> Parpart 1986, 44.

<sup>64</sup> Moore 1942, 145, who accounts for clothing and general household goods such as crockery and soap, etc. Moore notes: "Omissions from this list will be obvious. No provision is made for furniture, nails, hinges, etc., required in improving the house or erecting a kitchen. The items given are not exhaustive, but a minimum. Clothes £6 14 6 Sundries £8 2 6 = £14 17 0 per annum, or £1 4s. 9d. per month without food, making the total, including "poso," [an extra allowance for food] £1 14s 9d. The minimum therefore for this class of worker would appear to be 35s. per month, well over double the present actual minimum."

<sup>65</sup> See Schumaker 2008, 826.

<sup>66</sup> See Schumaker 2008, 827.

<sup>67</sup> Schumaker 2008, 832.

<sup>68</sup> Schumaker 2008, 835–36.

<sup>69</sup> *Zambian Consolidated Copper Mines Archive (ZCCM) 10/8/2B LTR*, 27 December 1933; Frank Ayer to Secretary, Roan Antelope, quoted in Phillips 2009, 232.

anything alarming as far as Roan is concerned.”<sup>70</sup> Since Ayer’s strategy to evade investigation was approved by the head office of the Rhodesian Selection Trust in London, where Beatty conducted mining business in the 1930s, it is difficult to imagine that he did not know of these stratagems, given his close monitoring of his mines.<sup>71</sup> None of this makes its way into popular (or scholarly) accounts of Beatty, which is ironic given that Beatty himself suffered from silicosis, a fact often reported in tragic tones.<sup>72</sup>

These details and histories of Beatty’s mining companies – the violent strikes, the low wages, inadequate housing, paltry rations, and negligent medical care – are not difficult to find if one looks through scholarship on *mining* history. Indeed, the archives of Beatty’s personal business correspondence, housed in the London School of Economics, along with the letters and papers of the Roan Selection Trust and the Zambian Consolidated Copper Mines Archive present some of the most extensive and well-organized records of mining history.<sup>73</sup>

But it is a much different story outside of histories dedicated to mining and histories of Central Africa. In virtually all popular and academic portrayals focused on the person of Beatty and the Beatty collection, we find only hagiography – and hagiography of the worst kind, which erases or ignores others’ lives and their suffering and exploitation to the benefit of Beatty’s memory. For example, the director of a 2018 documentary, *Chester Beatty: The Honorary Irishman*, which aired on RTÉ to mark the fiftieth anniversary of Beatty’s death,<sup>74</sup> claims that

Nobody has anything bad to say about Chester Beatty, which is quite unusual for historical characters. . . He was really good with people, which maybe came from the way he worked from the bottom and dragged himself up. . . We kind of think of people in the Victorian and Edwardian era as. . . abiding to class structures – with the person at the top and minions underneath – but Beatty wasn’t like that.<sup>75</sup>

Why is it that we have cared so much about history and historical accuracy when examining the *objets* of the Beatty collection but care so little about historical accuracy when it comes to the wealth that made this collection possible? By all intimate accounts, Chester Beatty was very generous, charming, and entertaining in person. But this has no bearing on whether he acted justly or humanely in his acquisition of the wealth that enabled his collecting. Neither does the bequeathing of his collection and his support of cancer research in London change the treatment of his employees in the African mines. While he may be lauded for his generosity in donating his collection, the lives of those who made that collection possible through their labour did not likewise benefit from such generosity. This is a core injustice at the heart of such collections, which remains unaddressed when there is no full account of the lives and businesses of collectors like Beatty.

But beyond correcting the historical record of Beatty’s acquisition of wealth there is a broader change necessary in how we understand histories and fields of knowledge. So far this paper has focused on Beatty’s reputation as a mining magnate and a philanthropist. I have offered unpalatable truths about Beatty and the source of his wealth and shown how dominant narratives have normalised histories of settler colonialism, slavery, and the acquisition of wealth by white Americans and Europeans. Beyond serving as a corrective to Beatty’s hagiography, this study also demonstrates how fields of knowledge and different histories are kept separate from each other – the story of the Chester Beatty collection is not told alongside the history of Beatty’s mining in detail, which is not told in connection to European colonization, which is not tied to the capture and exportation of humans and the culling

<sup>70</sup> ZCCM 10/8/2B: Frank Ayer to H. J. Munroe, Consulting Engineer, Rhokana Corporation Ltd., Johannesburg, 25 December 1933, quoted and cited in Kalusa 1993, 71.

<sup>71</sup> For the London office endorsement of Ayer’s evading investigation of silicosis in the Roan mine, see ZCCM 10/8/2B: Secretary, London to Frank Ayer, 9 January 1934, cited in Kalusa 1993, 71. On Beatty’s careful watch of mining business and probability of knowing of these stratagems, see Phillips 2009, 232.

<sup>72</sup> For example, Chester Beatty, 2021a, at 3:17; Phillips 2009, 232; Barrow 1987, 134; Fahey 2018; Wilson 1985, 124.

<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Perrings 1979, 276: “[The archives of the RST in Africa] are more extensive and better organized than any other private collection consulted. . . The material covers every aspect of mining operations in Northern Rhodesia from the late 1920s.” Also Phillips 2009, 216 n.7: “These repositories of business and private papers are held in three locations. The first is the Library of the London School of Economics and Political Sciences, which holds the personal business papers. . . as well as the files of the Selection Trust Limited. . . The second is the Beatty Library in Dublin, Ireland. . . And third, the largest amount of material related to his mining operations is to be found in the well-run Zambian Consolidated Copper Mines Archives. . . in Ndola, Zambia.”

<sup>74</sup> The RTÉ press description of the documentary, <https://presspack.rte.ie/2018/12/28/chester-beatty-the-honorary-irishman/>, accessed 7

February 2022, states: “2018 marks the 50th anniversary of the death of Chester Beatty who was responsible for amassing what has been called the finest private collection of manuscripts and books of the 20th century. As a result of his gift to the nation Beatty became the first person to receive honorary citizenship of Ireland and upon his death, the first private citizen in Irish history ever to receive a state funeral. This fascinating documentary offers us a unique insight into the man, his amazing collection and the work that goes into preserving it.”

<sup>75</sup> Director Ruth O’Looney quoted in Fitzpatrick 2018.

of wealth in the West Indies and America. These are the intertwining histories spanning four continents that we must consider when handling, presenting, and studying the collection.

The details of Beatty's ancestry and life exist in various, siloed archives, and this consistent organization of data, Lisa Lowe argues, results in

scarce attention to the *relationships between* the matters classified within distinct stores; the organization of archives discourages links between settler colonialism in North America and the West Indies and the African slave trade; or attention to the conjunction of the abolition of slavery and the importing of Chinese and South Asia indentured labour; or a correlation of the East Indies and China trades and the rise of bourgeois Europe. In order to nuance these connections and interdependencies, one must read *across* the separate repositories organized by office, task, and function, and by period and area, precisely implicating one set of preoccupations in and with another.<sup>76</sup>

Beatty's full biography and family history show exactly the interweaving of all these elements, from the slaughter of indigenous peoples in colonial America to the enslaved workers of the sugar mills of St. Croix to British-controlled Sierra Leone and Northern Rhodesia – all the way to the amassing of fantastic snuff bottles, paintings, illuminations, and biblical papyri. But the records of slave marriages in St. Croix or of mining wages in Northern Rhodesia are not housed with museum files of papyri acquisitions or netsuke.<sup>77</sup> This reality has enabled Beatty's papyrus collection to be understood in isolation from the history of the wealth that led to its acquisition. Thus, the papyri can simply be construed as part of a gathering of "lovely things" acquired on "a great adventure."<sup>78</sup> The history is far more complex and problematic, and it is the responsibility of all collection directors, curators, and boards to ponder how to be accountable to the history of their archives.

But this hagiographical narrative of philanthropy and a quest for knowledge does not end with a trip through the galleries. The narrative continues with us as scholars who study the archive, not just at the Chester Beatty but at museums and repositories of antiquities and art, housed for the most part in Europe and America.<sup>79</sup> Scholars, pur-

portedly continuing the "progress" of humanity, flock to these holdings of knowledge, concentrated in locales far away from the origins of the collection and from the human lives that made the archive possible. When we understand our work and our access to these archives without seeing the larger, global narrative of colonialism, slavery, and exploitation, we ignore the torturous "intimacies of four continents."<sup>80</sup> We advance a universalizing liberal understanding of human progress, which was used to justify slavery and colonisation in the first place and which has ironically amassed the archive we now use for further "progress."<sup>81</sup>

In recent years, scholars have scrutinized the ethics of the acquisition of antiquities, the underlying ideologies of the display and description of those antiquities by museums, and the elision of the enslaved labour used in the ancient production of papyri and *objet*.<sup>82</sup> Scholars have also explored the origins and social development of archives in Europe.<sup>83</sup> What must be added to these studies is a critique of the museum-archive-academia complex and its production of knowledge, which takes for granted the centrality of white Europe and America while ignoring the imperialism and colonialism at its foundation.

This essay focuses its critique on the popular narrative of Chester Beatty and the founding myth to his collection to help begin this work, which must read *across* separated histories to name the connections between slavery, genocide, imperialism, colonialism, wealth and antiquities amassment, white-centric scholarship, and western liberalism.<sup>84</sup> This work must further resist becoming another academic or administrative category used to bolster the cosmetic diversity/equity "initiatives" of various institutions, for example a superficial "task force" or subfield that does nothing to change larger systems of power, wealth, and access. The work at hand is not only to complicate histories and undermine *mythoi* but also to insist on the decentring of white western knowledge and power – in the holdings of the archives and in our use of them.

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as well, with a few exceptions. As for the collections themselves – how they are displayed and what is displayed – and what discourse they present on "civilization" and non-white peoples, see for example Cuéllar 2019.

<sup>80</sup> From the title of Lowe 2015.

<sup>81</sup> See Lowe 2015, 1–41.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, respectively: Mazza 2019; Cuéllar 2019; and Moss 2021.

<sup>83</sup> See Friedrich 2018; and Walsham (ed.) 2016.

<sup>84</sup> See Lowe 2015, 6: "the practice of reading across archives unsettles the discretely bounded objects methods, and temporal frameworks canonized by national history invested in isolated origins and independent progressive development."

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<sup>76</sup> Lowe 2015, 5.

<sup>77</sup> The acquisition of antiquities is, of course, problematic enough in their own right. See Nongbri and Sharp, Unkel, and Knust in this same volume.

<sup>78</sup> See Fitzpatrick 2018 and Horton 2000, 37–42.

<sup>79</sup> I write here from the perspective of a biblical scholar, considering the holdings of antiquities from around the Mediterranean and the Near East. But this could be said of antiquities and art more broadly

Museums, archives, and scholars have many possibilities for just and equitable practices to implement so that they acknowledge and help to repair the injustices of the past and present, and to decentre knowledge and power.

One vital step is to read across the archives to connect histories and catalogues that have been kept safely isolated. I have attempted to do this with the Chester Beatty collection with hope that its future does not forget its past.

تقدم لنا الباحثة في هذا المقال تصحيح لسردية تسيستر بيتي عن نفسه وعن أسلافه وذلك من خلال "تتقيبها"، كما نقول، في أرشيفات أسرة بيتي. ويستطيع المرء أن يتعرف في هذا المقال على كل من السردية التي رسمها بيتي عن نفسه، وذلك من خلال السيرة التي كتبها "Wilson" عنه، بالإضافة إلى التصويبات التي استطاعت هذه الباحثة أن تقوم بها بناءً على وثائق ومعلومات موثقة من خلال أوراق عائلة بيتي. وتبدأ الباحثة مقالها بسرد القصة التي روجها بيتي عن نفسه وأسلافه في البداية ثم تقوم بعد ذلك بتحضر هذه القصة من خلال عرض شهادات الميلاد وجوزات السفر وغيرها من الأوراق المهمة التي عثرت عليها من خلال بحثها ثم في نهاية المطاف تستخلص مجموعة من الخيوط المشتركة التي تربط بين بيتي وبين غيره من أصحاب المال الذين إتخذوا من جمع البرديات والعاديات هواية لهم. وهي تصرح أكثر من مرة أن الأمر هنا ليس فردياً أو شخصياً بمعنى أنه لا يتعلق فقط بتصحيح المعلومات التي أوردتها بيتي عن نفسه بل يتعلق أكثر بمسألة تفكيك السردية المشتركة بين أغلب جامعي العاديات وذلك من خلال الإعتماد على معلومات موثقة عن حياتهم وعدم الإكتفاء فقط بما يردونه هم عن أنفسهم أو يردده غيرهم عنهم. كل المعلومات التي توردها الباحثة في هذا المقال تؤدي في نهاية المطاف إلى توضيح معلومة مهمة وهي أن الثروة التي جمعها أسرة بيتي وورثها هذا الرجل هي التي مكنته من شراء هذه العاديات والبرديات من مصر ومن جميع الدول التي عرضت فيها هذه الآثار. وهذه الحقيقة التاريخية لا يمكن لأحد أن ينظر إليها في معزل عن الظروف التي مكنت مثل هؤلاء الأفراد من جمع هذه الثروة وهي ظروف الإمبريالية الغربية والاستعمار واستعباد الملايين من أصحاب البشرة السمراء. المقال مفيد لكل من يريد أن يتعرف على كيفية قراءة ما بين سطور السرديات التي يرسمها أصحاب المجموعات الأثرية حول أنفسهم وعائلاتهم وأنشطتهم الخيرية والعلمية للوصول إلى الحقائق بناء على معلومات موثقة من خلال الأرشيفات الشخصية.

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## Papyrology as an Art of Destruction

علم البردي فن للتدمير المنهج ، جينيفر رايت نوست

Papyrology is a complex scientific discipline and a remarkable tool for obtaining valuable historical information that would otherwise be lost. It can also be a handy justification for competitive, extractive coloniality,<sup>1</sup> as the first occurrence of the term “papyrology” in the London *Athenaeum* illustrates (1898).<sup>2</sup> Announcing the publication of volume two of the *Greek Papyri in the British Museum* (Kenyon 1898), the *Athenaeum*’s editors exclaimed, “in the department of papyrology, if we may use such a word,” England “reigns supreme,” even above the German classical academy.<sup>3</sup> This stately volume, edited by Frederic G. Kenyon with a portfolio of accompanying facsimiles, adds to “the splendid endeavour of our national Museum to give a careful and scholarly account of each and every one of the multitudinous papyri accumulated among its treasures.” “Guaranteed by the name of Mr. Kenyon,” the transcriptions are further certified by a “still more impeccable witness, the sun”; that is, by the technologically advanced collotype process that made the facsimiles possible.<sup>4</sup> “We cannot but feel proud of the vast superiority of the new publications,” they continued, especially in comparison to the mere lithographs in the Paris and Leyden publications and the slow pace of the Louvre, which had not published an edition of its treasures since 1862.

This announcement, with its early use of the term “papyrology,” named national rivals, and celebration of technological as well as philological advancement, illustrates an enduring feature of the field as it emerged in the nineteenth century: Papyrology is adept at bolstering and

legitimizing the “natural” supremacy of “the West.”<sup>5</sup> As a subfield within the newly professionalized disciplines of Medieval and Classical Studies,<sup>6</sup> papyri presented an especially challenging and therefore invigorating set of problems. Buried within waste dumps, forgotten caches, and mummy cartonnage, only western science and technology could restore what “the natives” had neglected or destroyed. “For good or for evil,” B. P. Grenfell explained in 1906 in a lecture to The Queen’s College, Oxford, “the British occupation [of Egypt] has set up a memorial far more lasting” than the “material benefits” conferred to the “fellahin” (i.e., the Egyptian peasants): the rescue of treasures which would otherwise have gone the way of “those tens of thousands of papyrus roles which native diggers have destroyed.”<sup>7</sup> Beckoning like the purportedly uncultivated lands of the Americas, Egyptian papyri eagerly awaited European ingenuity’s extraction, cultivation, commodification, and improvement. With the assistance of North American capital, the hunt was on.<sup>8</sup>

When announcing the find in the London *Times*, Sir Frederic Kenyon placed the discovery of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri within this broader history. “After an interval of twenty-five years,” he enthused, this newly found cache of biblical papyri, “rivals any of these [former discoveries] in interest and surpasses them all in antiquity.”<sup>9</sup> The gap, however, was punctuated not only by a lull in papyrological achievement but also by the “war to end all wars” and shifting colonial and national arrangements.<sup>10</sup> What was left unsaid both in the *Times* announcement and in the pages of Kenyon’s *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri* volumes is therefore as important as what was: the overweening fiction of western predominance had been decisively called into question, including among those who benefitted most from it. Expertise at unearthing, reassembling, deciphering, conserving, interpreting, and dis-

1 I borrow this term from Mignolo 2012.

2 See “papyrology, n.” OED Online. March 2022. Oxford University Press. <https://www-oed-com.proxy.lib.duke.edu/view/Entry/237121?redirectedFrom=papyrology> (accessed 18 March 2022). This is the earliest occurrence of the term listed in the OED.

3 *The Athenaeum* N° 3713, Dec. 24, 1898, 887. In his analysis of the Egyptology practiced by William Flinders Petrie, Stephen Quirke 2010, 3–5 has documented the role of print media in generating “a ‘public sphere’ of informed readers, positing them(elves) as active, as the agents of history” that in turn demanded a “pathological amnesia” sustained by violence and its disavowal across “the Western tradition.”

4 Collotype involves exposing dichromate-sensitized gelatine to ultraviolet light. See Stulik / Kaplan 2013, 4–30, esp. 4–6.

5 I use the term “the West” to signal its history as an Orientalist fantasy, not to affirm either its empirical existence or its lasting value. For further discussion, see, for example, Said 1978; Ahmed 2006; and (on race as a similarly fictive real) Fields / Fields 2012.

6 Dinshaw 2012.

7 Montserrat 2007, 39.

8 On North American involvement in helping to fund the Oxyrhynchus publications, see Johnson 2012.

9 Kenyon 1931.

10 Reid 2015, 81–108.

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seminating the truth about the Bible, the first Christians, and classical antiquity from scraps of tattered papyri had failed to prevent disaster, including in Europe. Indeed, Kenyon was not only an accomplished, highly skilled papyrologist, classicist, and biblical scholar, he was also a designer of graveyards.<sup>11</sup> By 1927, more than five hundred permanent cemeteries and 400,000 headstones had been installed according to his design principles in France, Belgium, Italy, Turkey, Macedonia, and elsewhere.<sup>12</sup>

After the war, instead of reassessing the role of Papyrology in upholding the racially constituted geopolitical configuration that had contributed to their current circumstances,<sup>13</sup> leading papyrologists simply reinvigorated their loosely Christian, monumental classicism and buried ruination under a refurbished version of the western status quo.<sup>14</sup> In 1923, Kenyon reiterated the familiar myth of the West in a speech delivered at the University of Chicago: the “channels of our Western culture. . . have their origin in the valleys of the Tigris and the Nile,” through which “the great main streams of Hebrew, Greek and Roman literature” flowed, directly on to England and North America.<sup>15</sup> Thanks to the dogged efforts of men like Flinders Petrie, a eugenicist with a “singular flair for a discovery,”<sup>16</sup> B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt, who worked in Oxyrhynchus “season after season, constantly adding to the stores which they carried back to Oxford to study,” and M. Gustave Lefebvre, responsible for the “notable” recovery of a codex of Menander,<sup>17</sup> the men of Oxford, Cambridge, London, and Paris had relentlessly recovered and restored “the fountain heads of our intellectual life today.”<sup>18</sup> In the 1930s, Kenyon added Berlin to this list, rehabilitating that city’s tarnished reputation and bringing Germany back into the papyrological fold.<sup>19</sup> Beatty’s fragile biblical papyri, he noted, required the expert intervention of “Dr. Ibscher of Berlin, whose exceptional skill in handling and mounting papyri is well known.”<sup>20</sup>

**11** Appointed as Artistic Director by the Imperial War Graves Commission in 1917, he prepared the principles for the laying out of war cemeteries in France and Belgium and, in 1918, presented his report, “War Graves: How the Cemeteries Abroad Will Be Designed.”

**12** <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/their-name-liveth-for-evermore> (accessed 15 February 2022). Also see Yilmaz 2014, 328–46.

**13** Mignolo 2011.

**14** Carden-Coyne 2009, 110–59.

**15** Kenyon 1927.

**16** Köhler 2020, 17–58; Challis 2016.

**17** Lefebvre 1907.

**18** Kenyon 1927, 2, 46–52.

**19** On the post-war national and international politics behind this rehabilitation, see Reid 2015, 81–107. By 1930, the Germans had again been granted permission to begin archaeological excavations in Egypt.

**20** Kenyon 1933, 5. Compare Kenyon 1931, in the *Times*: “The papyrus is thin and much frayed; only the skill of Herr Ibscher, the Berlin

Reunited by their shared commitment to western scholarship and philanthropy, Germany, France, England, and the United States embraced the “white man’s burden”<sup>21</sup> once again, taking up the yoke of European knowledge and Anglo-American ingenuity.<sup>22</sup>

Notably, Egyptians remained external to this project of redeeming civilization. In his introduction to the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, Kenyon accuses them of conspiring to “forget” find spots, dismembering manuscripts, dividing spoils, and hoarding them for some future sale.<sup>23</sup> Yet, as the extraction, export, and distribution of these biblical papyri also illustrate, Europeans and North Americans were in fact quite skilled at dividing manuscripts, distributing spoils, destroying evidence, and hoarding items for future sale. The publication of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri was not only a great achievement for biblical and historical studies but also an expression of “colonial aphasia.” Not to be confused with the debilitating medical condition, this aphasia involves an inability to generate appropriate words and concepts for the objects, infrastructures, and epistemologies upon which coloniality depends.<sup>24</sup> Ann Laura Stoler offers Pierre Bourdieu’s landmark study *Distinction* as one striking case of the gaps such aphasia invites: “How much concerted or unconscious work,” she asks, “did it take to steer a collective research project and write a six-hundred-page book on the social origins and cultural practices of the French middle class. . . without mentioning, even once, the colonial sites and racialized dispositions to which they responded and in which they were forged?”<sup>25</sup> In France and elsewhere, “colonial aphasia” describes the “*irretrievability* of a vocabulary, a limited access to it, a simultaneous presence of a thing and its absence, a pres-

expert, has been able to separate the leaves and mount them in their present legible condition.”

**21** A phrase coined by fellow gravestone designer Rudyard Kipling in 1898. The poem “The White Man’s Burden” was originally published in *McClure’s Magazine* (1898) and reprinted in Kipling 1914, 79–81. For discussion, see Durand 1914, 186–87 and Brantlinger 2007, 173–79. On Kipling’s contributions to the graveyards of World War I, see Carden-Coyne 2009, 129–30.

**22** Mignolo 2009, 160: “As we know: the first world has knowledge, the third world has culture; Native Americans have wisdom, Anglo Americans have science.”

**23** For example, Kenyon 1933, 1.5: “Their place of origin is unknown since they reached him through the hands of natives and dealers, whose statements as to *provenance* are not always reliable. . . Some portions did not reach Mr. Chester Beatty, which seems to point to a division of the spoil among different finders. . . It is, of course, very possible, in view of the fragmentary condition of all the MSS., that further portions still remain in the hands of the original finders, who will produce them as and when they think fit.”

**24** Stoler 2016, 128.

**25** Stoler 2016, 137.

ence and the misrecognition of it” (emphasis in the original).<sup>26</sup> In such a state, speakers remain locked within a chronic – albeit unconscious or unacknowledged – cone of silence that knows and yet fails to know the structures upon which their knowledge depends.<sup>27</sup>

## 1 Destroying the evidence

In Charles Horton’s estimation, Kenyon’s “vague description of the discovery” of Chester Beatty’s remarkable papyri was entirely understandable: Beatty had no choice but to leave out certain details if he was going to evade “ruthless” Egyptians who care “not one jot for scientific interests,” avoid paying astronomical prices to “shady Egyptian dealers,” and keep his competitors in the dark.<sup>28</sup> Writing in 2004, Horton was trading on the well-worn stereotype of the devious, oblivious colonial subject. Ostensibly incapable of displaying either the honour or the intelligence of their European and Euro-American counterparts, Egyptians are said to be ignorant of the true value of what they possess.<sup>29</sup> Shadiness and ignorance, however, are in the eye of the beholder. As Brent Nongbri and Brendan Haug have now amply demonstrated, the British and North American parties to this transaction were knowingly flouting the Egyptian Antiquities Law of 1912.<sup>30</sup> Their honour is only defensible from within the blinkered viewpoint of British and American imperialism. Moreover, the tactics of the Egyptian dealer from whom Beatty purchased these papyri, Maurice Nahman, paralleled those of Beatty himself: both men employed minimally compensated workers to extract valuable resources which they then sold at a favourable rate

to an eager foreign clientele.<sup>31</sup> Presumably, Nahman made a handsome profit on the sale, despite attempts by Beatty and the British Museum to hide the true value of the papyri from him.<sup>32</sup> Beatty was also well positioned to profit, as he anticipated in a letter to the office of Emery Walker, the renowned engraver responsible for the plates that accompanied the first volume.<sup>33</sup> As he wrote, “Your statement that we are to share the cost of the production and the profits equally between us is quite correct, and this applies also to any subsequent editions we may consider it desirable to print.”<sup>34</sup> In this same letter, Beatty credits “the Museum Syndicate” with assisting him in the purchase, a reference to a consortium of magnates, British Museum experts, and North American universities devoted to obtaining papyrological specimens for their collections.<sup>35</sup> The obfuscation of provenance may have been equally advantageous to Beatty, Kenyon, and Nahman, especially if they wanted to avoid the watchful eye of the Egyptian Antiquities Service.<sup>36</sup>

Already in 1912, Egyptian Antiquities Law specified that “every antiquity found on, or in the soil, throughout the territory of Egypt, shall belong to the Public Domain of the State.”<sup>37</sup> Following promulgation, the Antiquities Service

<sup>31</sup> On Nahman, see Williams 2014, 251–72. As she states: “Beyond his prestigious social connections, Nahman’s success was also due in large part to his connoisseurial talents. His own tastes and expertise were wide-ranging and his definition of ‘Egyptian antiquities’ broad” (260). Also see Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 37–41, 253–56.

<sup>32</sup> See Nongbri 2014, 100.

<sup>33</sup> Among other famous books and illustrations, Walker and his partner Bruce Rogers published T. E. Lawrence (“Lawrence of Arabia”)’s translation of *The Odyssey of Homer* in 1932 (introduction to Rogers 1971, xiii; Lawrence 1932).

<sup>34</sup> Letter from A. Chester Beatty to Wilfred Merton, Esq., Emery Walker Limited, 14 October 1932, CBP/C/5/02/009, the Chester Beatty Library. On Walker, see Potter 1938, 400–14. On Walker, Merton, and their work as engravers and printers for private presses, see Hartsiotis 2021, 7–38.

<sup>35</sup> In his letter to Merton, Beatty stated: “I also beg to confirm that you are to accept the papyri, of which you enclosed a list with your letter, which I originally bought through the instrumentality of the Museum Syndicate for £160., in part payment of my share of the cost of printing the text and plates of the Introduction and of Part I.” (CBP/C/5/02/009). For further discussion of the “Syndicate,” see Zelyck 2019, 20.

<sup>36</sup> Founded in 1858 to advantage French Egyptologists, by 1927 the Service was increasingly “Egyptianized” and, in 1929, Egyptian Prime Minister Muhammad Mahmud transferred to the Service to the Ministry of Education, perhaps signalling that antiquities “were no longer engineering problems to be managed but precious national heritage” (Reid 2015, 66, 121–23, here 123). For contemporary examples of this mingling of legitimate and illegitimate trade, see Mackenzie (et al.) 2020 and Prescott / Rasmussen 2020, 68–97.

<sup>37</sup> “Sous réserve des dispositions de la présente loi, toute antiquité se trouvant sur, ou dans le sol, dans toute l’étendue du territoire égyptien, appartiendra au Domaine Public de l’Etat.” The law is announced and printed in French and Arabic in Rughdi (et al.) 1913, 245–80 (here 246).

<sup>26</sup> Stoler 2016, 157.

<sup>27</sup> Also see Schwab 2010, 41–66. Schwab uses the language of “cryptotrophy” to describe a similar phenomenon: information remains “emotionally disconnected, displaced, or disavowed,” leaving “a gap or a crypt” in language that “eclipsed or sealed the secret inside” (57).

<sup>28</sup> Horton 2004, 152–56. This argument accepts and repeats Kenyon’s view, as expressed in 1932: Egyptians cannot be trusted (Kenyon 1932, 1.5; cited in Horton 2004, 158).

<sup>29</sup> Charles Freer, for example, complained that “honor in business affairs is unknown [in Egypt] and many other traits of mankind [sic] which we in America are taught to admire, here are entirely unseen.” Cited and discussed in Horton 2004, 150. In 1912, archaeologist Flinders Petrie defended his customs of maintaining strict discipline among his Egyptian employees and denying them literacy in a letter to W. E. B. DuBois: “As soon as a native thinks that you have any kindness or consideration for him, he at once tries to turn it into solid benefits” and thus “you must be hammer or anvil.” See further, Mitchell 1991; Mitchell 2002; Colla 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Nongbri 2014, 93–116; Haug 2021, 143–63. An English translation of the law, with introduction and discussion, is available in Fricke 2016.

made provisions for continued excavation and export, but by permit only and exclusively by licensed dealers like Nahman, with licit excavators remunerated either with half of the objects they discovered or half of their value and dealers required to seek authorization prior to export.<sup>38</sup> In practice, however, the law neither stemmed the tide of illicit antiquities nor ended clandestine excavation; licensed dealers and their clients often mingled licit and illicit goods, in some cases pursuing proper export licenses and in other cases colluding to smuggle items out of the country.<sup>39</sup> After World War I, calls for a more vigorous enforcement of the law led Flinders Petrie to relocate his excavations to Mandate Palestine.<sup>40</sup> Still, papyri smuggling continued apace. In 1935, the Cairo-based French periodical *La bourse égyptienne* called attention to the problem, complaining that lax oversight had enabled the newly announced Egerton Gospel to leave the country.<sup>41</sup> This unhappy event was, from the editors' perspective, just the most recent example of an absconded item. Other valuable manuscripts lost to Egyptian patrimony included:

The Gospel of John in Achmimic Coptic, unearthed by Flinders Petrie and published by Sir Herbert Thompson in 1924.<sup>42</sup>

The "Papyrus Leopold II," reunited with its other half, "Papyrus Amherst VII" by Jean Canart and Alan Gardiner.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> "Quiconque, ayant découvert une antiquité mobilière, autrement qu'au cours d'une fouille illicite, se sera conformé aux prescriptions de l'article précédent, recevra, à titre de prime, la moitié des objets trouvés ou de leur valeur. A défaut d'entente sur un partage amiable, le Service des Antiquités prélèvera les objets qu'il entend garder. Pour les autres objets, le partage en deux lots d'égale valeur sera fait par le Service, et l'inventeur aura le droit de choisir entre les deux lots" Rughdi (et al.) 1913, 248.

<sup>39</sup> Hagen / Ryholt 2016, 40–1, 142–46. As they state: "It is clear that much material made its way out of Egypt illegally in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, but it is equally clear that the ways of effecting such unofficial exports were not usually committed to paper, so the details are often unknowable today" (146). Also see Haug 2021, 143–63. E. E. Peterson was quite concerned to protect the University of Michigan's "unique reputation for absolutely honest dealing" and therefore sought extra protection when purchasing items (152).

<sup>40</sup> *New York Times* 1926, 15. There, as Haug 2021, 146 puts it, he sought a place where a "more thoroughgoing colonial control granted Western archaeologists a freer hand."

<sup>41</sup> Bell 1935, 13. In a letter dated 6 March 1935, Bell stated to C. Bonner of the University of Michigan: "I very strongly suspect that the Beatty papyri were smuggled out of Egypt, not passed through the Service inspection"; cited and discussed by Zelyck 2019, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Thompson 1924.

<sup>43</sup> Since the *editio princeps* was published in 1936, the editors must be responding to an early announcement of the "find." See Capart (et al.) 1936, 169–93.

The Manichaean manuscripts restored by Hugo Ibscher after being "rescued" by Carl Schmidt and Chester Beatty.<sup>44</sup>

"It would be desirable," they concluded, if Egypt would "guard her archaeological treasures more carefully."<sup>45</sup>

This editorial sent a chill among some papyrologists, as Lorne Zelyck has recounted. Writing from Egypt, E. E. Peterson of the University of Michigan asked a colleague to notify Bell about the situation and to do so in veiled terms so as not to further alert the Egyptian authorities. Bell, however, was relatively unconcerned, pointing out that it was customary for major papyrological discoveries to be publicly announced, whatever their provenance. After all, he added, the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri were also celebrated in public, even though "(between ourselves) I very strongly suspect that [these] papyri were smuggled out of Egypt, not passed through the Service inspection."<sup>46</sup> It is therefore not at all surprising that Kenyon equivocated when describing the papyri's provenance.<sup>47</sup> Obtained by a "Syndicate" practiced at the art of extracting manuscripts by any means necessary and then divvying them up among participants,<sup>48</sup> the painstaking work required to reassemble the contents of the find was a product not only of Egyptian dealers and maligned "fellahin," but also

<sup>44</sup> Chester Beatty is not specifically mentioned. Perhaps the reference is to *Manichäische Homilien*, see Polotsky / Ibscher 1934. These Manichaean manuscripts were divided and purchased from Maurice Nahman by Carl Schmidt and Chester Beatty. "Revealing the Mystery of Mani," the Chester Beatty Blog, 16 May 2019; <https://chesterbeatty.ie/conservation/revealing-the-mystery-of-mani/> (accessed 15 February 2022).

<sup>45</sup> "Ce très ancien témoignage du christianisme en Égypte valait dès lors d'être couvert d'or. Pour quelques livres, il quitta l'Égypte. . . Il serait pourtant désirable qu'elle gardât ses trésors archéologiques avec un peu plus de soin." In an anonymous piece entitled, "Un Précieux Manuscrit Voyage: De la boutique d'un antiquaire au British Museum," *La bourse égyptienne* (Édition du Caire), Tuesday 5 February 1935, I.9; cited and discussed by Zelyck 2019, 16–8.

<sup>46</sup> Zelyck 2019, 20.

<sup>47</sup> This equivocation has had lasting results, as Nongbri 2018, 122–30 has shown (and see Nongbri 2014, 110–12).

<sup>48</sup> As Bell explained, the British Museum retained the "plums" and the Americans financed the operation (Zelyck 2019, 22 n.25). The first mission of the Syndicate was carried out by Ernest Budge, keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities at the British Museum and an experienced smuggler with a flair for cutting up manuscripts. During pre-war visits to Egypt, he snipped papyri into sections and slipped them between photographs destined for the Egyptian galleries; he also invented a ruse involving a crate of oranges to get other papyri onto a Suez steamer bound for London. Budge 1920, 154, 351–55. The orange-crate ruse procured the *Odes of Bacchylides*, also edited by Frederic Kenyon; see Kenyon 1897, published together with a separate autotype facsimile.

of papyrologists and their patrons.<sup>49</sup> European and North American dealers, collectors, and scholars made a habit of dividing and dispersing the manuscripts upon which they focused so much energy, whether or not they were formal members of Bell's Syndicate. In the process, manuscripts were sometimes misplaced or even totally lost.<sup>50</sup>

An example drawn from the Kenneth Clark Papers at the David M. Rubenstein Library, Duke University, provides another case in point. In 1929, while still a doctoral student at the University of Chicago, Kenneth Clark was encouraged by Edgar J. Goodspeed to prepare a survey of extant New Testament manuscripts located in North America.<sup>51</sup> This was a daunting task: no such catalogue had yet been produced and, as his correspondence with various libraries and private collectors indicates, in a number of cases known manuscripts had simply disappeared.<sup>52</sup> By 1937, when the *Descriptive Catalogue of Greek New Testament Manuscripts in America* was published, Clark was an Assistant Professor at Duke University, responsible not only for the regular duties of teaching and research but also for assisting the university in locating and purchasing appropriate manuscripts for its growing collection.<sup>53</sup> In 1938, in the process of identifying manuscripts called to his attention after the catalogue had already been printed, he reached out to Dr F. C. Benson, Jr., a radiologist at the Hahnemann Medical College and Hospital of Philadelphia, seeking permission to view a sixth-century fragment of the Epistle to the Romans he had acquired.<sup>54</sup> Dr Benson agreed

<sup>49</sup> Nongbri 2018, 130–32 includes a masterful reappraisal both of the collection and the content of individual codices. I borrow the term “shady dealers” from Horton 2004.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Allison 1975, 27–32. Of the twenty-one published papyri Allison lists, 5 (24%) are given no shelf mark since their “present location [is] unknown.”

<sup>51</sup> Clark 1937, xiii.

<sup>52</sup> For example, a fragment of 1 Petr. 5,5 from the fourth century formerly assigned to the Bonebrake Theological Seminary (later the United Theological Seminary) of Dayton Ohio by the Egypt Exploration Fund as part of their subscription programme but lost in the 1930s (see Clark 1937, 13). This papyrus was found again and sold to Dirk Obbink in 2009, then on to the Green Collection in 2010. It is now MS.000284 in the Museum of the Bible's collection (see <https://collections.museumofthebible.org/artifacts/9371-1-peter-fragment-poxy-1353-uncial-02062&tab=provenance#/>). On the distribution of the Oxyrhynchus papyri to various institutions across the United States, see Johnson 2012, 209–22.

<sup>53</sup> Sharpe 1999, 3–5.

<sup>54</sup> Letter from Kenneth S. Clark to H. R. Willoughby, 13 December 1938: “You will be further interested to know that I have made arrangements to examine a sixth century fragment of Romans in the possession of Dr. Benson in Philadelphia. He secured this broken leaf from Rumball-Petrie of New York, in whose Catalogue Number 17 (1937) it appeared as Item Number 2.” I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the staff of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book

and, just before Christmas, Clark visited Philadelphia and borrowed the fragment for the winter.<sup>55</sup> During their meeting Benson informed Clark that, prior to his purchase of the folio, the manuscript had resided for some twenty years with Erik von Scherling, a well-known antiquarian bookseller in the Netherlands. Clark wrote to von Scherling to verify this report and received the following reply:

In regard to the fragment of Greek vellum leaf saec. VI, I am enclosing a cutting from the catalogue (Winter 1936/37) where the fragment was offered by me. This fragment has been purchased by me, together with two Homeric fragments, and with a piece of cartonnage. . . from an Arab dealer at Cairo, during my stay there Spring 1936. Nothing [more] could be said [about] where these fragments have been found. I sold the Greek vellum palimpsest-leaf to Mr. Rumball-Petre in 1937.<sup>56</sup>

Clark shared this information with Benson, who retracted his earlier statement, clarifying that “a correspondent in London” had informed him that the fragment had been for sale for some time.<sup>57</sup> As was customary, von Scherling blamed lingering uncertainty about provenance on Egyptians, adding, “Arab dealers never give information from where they got their papyri and if they give, their information is mostly false.”<sup>58</sup>

When it comes to the provenance of Dr Benson's vellum fragment, however, perhaps all the available information invites a healthy dose of scepticism. In his catalogue, von Scherling described the object as a palimpsest of “four fragments on parchment belonging to one leaf” with seventh-century Arabic written over sixth-century Greek” and mounted under glass.<sup>59</sup> Upon analysis, however, Clark concluded that the pasted labels on the glass were reversed, with the label on the recto indicating the text on the verso and vice versa.<sup>60</sup> As for Mr Rumball-Petre, the dealer from whom Dr Benson purchased the fragment, it seems that he was in the habit of swindling unwary amateur collectors. In an account of his brief career in the employ of Rumball-Petre, the writer E. M. Halliday recalls the enjoyable year he spent fabricating tales of glorious journeys to Europe he never actually took while his boss ran an (empty) antiquar-

and Manuscript Library for making it possible for me to view these items, especially during a pandemic.

<sup>55</sup> Letter from F. C. Benson, Jr., to Kenneth W. Clark: “Answering your letter of the 9<sup>th</sup> inst. The fragmentary leaf of Greek ms mentioned will be brought here for your inspection Thursday, December 22nd., as suggested.”

<sup>56</sup> Letter from Erik von Scherling to Kenneth W. Clark, 28 January 1939.

<sup>57</sup> Letter of F. C. Benson, Jr. to Kenneth W. Clark, 17 February 1939.

<sup>58</sup> Von Scherling to Clark, 28 January 1939.

<sup>59</sup> Scherling 1936/37, item 106 (clip included with Letter of von Scherling to Clark, 28 January 1939).

<sup>60</sup> Letter of Kenneth W. Clark to F. C. Benson, Jr., 28 February 1939.

ian book shop from this same office. Halliday explained Rumball-Petre's procedure: listing items combed from the catalogues of more reputable sellers, whenever he got a bite from a buyer, he would "dash off a cable to the bookseller," arrange for shipment of the item, and assure his customers that the purchase was on the way. Once received, he would quickly repackage the book, "together with an invoice for approximately five times what he had paid the bookstore." "I twitted him once or twice on this practice," Halliday reports, "but he showed no unease." Why? "It's for their own good," Rumball-Petre replied. "Most of these rich Americans are dismally ignorant and a rare old Bible can only improve their education and their morals."<sup>61</sup> As for the fragment of Romans owned by Dr Benson, it appears to be lost.<sup>62</sup> If anyone knows of an Arabic-Greek palimpsest manuscript in four fragments containing Rom. 14,2–4 and 15,11–13, I would be very glad to hear about it.

In comparison to the Papyrus/Museum Syndicate and dealers like Nahman or collectors like Beatty, Benson, Rumball-Petre, and even Clark were bit players in a globalized network of dealers and smugglers, excavators and scholars, collectors and publishers extending from Cairo to Leiden, Berlin to London, and Chicago to New York. Benson had transformed his expertise in radiology, an emerging science at the time, into a highly successful career that enabled him to purchase a few manuscripts of his own.<sup>63</sup> Rumball-Petre was a man of letters who saw an opportunity to capitalize on the latest fashion among the American nouveaux riche: owning their own rare Bible. Clark was a younger scholar with an unmatched talent for deciphering Greek handwriting from every era (his transcriptions are truly remarkable) and a determination to build Duke into a university with an international reputation in Biblical and Historical Studies.<sup>64</sup> Yet as this episode also demonstrates, preserving provenance data was never a pressing goal. The drive to extract and transport papyri out of Egypt and into the hands of Europeans and Euro-Americans overrode concerns for context – historical, archaeological, and material – and even for the integrity of the object

<sup>61</sup> Halliday 1987, 143–44.

<sup>62</sup> Dr Benson died in 1941; I have not yet been able to locate any of his heirs; and, as far as I can tell, the manuscript is not present in the *Kurzfasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments*. Searchable through the Virtual Manuscript Room of the Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung: <http://ntvmr.uni-muenster.de/liste> (accessed 15 February 2022).

<sup>63</sup> In a letter of 7 March 1939 to Kenneth W. Clark, Dr Benson reports being in possession of other biblical codices "in Latin, Armenian, etc." Dr Benson published an article in radiology while a student: Butts (et al.), 1927, 44–66. On the history of the radiology in the United States, see Brecher / Brecher 1969.

<sup>64</sup> Sharpe 1999, 3–5.

itself.<sup>65</sup> The *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri* volumes lived up to Kenyon's promise, generating a wealth of valuable information for "students of the Bible text." The contribution of these finds and Kenyon's editions to textual criticism, early Christian history, and biblical scholarship is undeniable. Nevertheless, the dismemberment, division, and dispersal of these priceless codices was internal, not external, to the workings of the papyrological pact.<sup>66</sup>

## 2 Colonial aphasia

The right to destroy, Ariella Aisha Azoulay has argued, is exercised not only when an actor is actively engaged in demolition "but also when an actor relates to what is being destroyed as a *fait accompli*."<sup>67</sup> From the outset, the papyrological enterprise was both a recovery of a long-lost past and an experiment in destruction. An account of the first dig at Oxyrhynchus by B. P. Grenfell offers an example of this attitude, as expressed in an earlier age:

I am afraid some tender-hearted persons would have thought me a very brutal task-master, if they could have seen some of these [Egyptian] children lifting and carrying away heavy baskets of rubbish all day, clothed perhaps, if the weather was hot, in nothing but a cap on their heads and a piece of string round their waists. But I think the same persons would have retracted their opinion, if they could, at the end of the day's work, have seen the said infants racing each other over the sand dunes, while I plowed my way painfully in the rear.<sup>68</sup>

In 2007, Dominic Montserrat styled these words as a tender example of the "sense of humour and compassion" that Grenfell clearly possessed but "rarely allowed to appear in his scholarly writing."<sup>69</sup> This entertaining, out of character narration was likely designed, Montserrat suggests, to raise the profile of the expedition among American audiences and thereby attract much needed funds.<sup>70</sup> If one

<sup>65</sup> Fragmentation generates a higher total profit for an item, as dealers like von Scherling, Nahman, and Otto Ege knew well. Dismembering an object and then painstakingly putting it back together was undertaken not only by dealers looking to enhance their bottom line but also by persons like Budge.

<sup>66</sup> Nongbri 2018, 132–35 has helpfully reassembled these codices and indicated their current locations.

<sup>67</sup> Azoulay 2021, 44.

<sup>68</sup> Grenfell 1897, 1029–30, cited and discussed by Montserrat 2007, 31–2. For contemporary examples, see Potter / Lupilya 2016, 1013–28. Of course, child labour was also employed in Great Britain and North America at this time. On child miners nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Canada, see McIntosh 2000.

<sup>69</sup> Montserrat 2007, 31.

<sup>70</sup> Montserrat 2007, 32.

shifts the angle of vision, however, another view comes into focus. Grenfell's self-deprecating comparison of his own physical infirmity to the vigour of the "infants racing each other over the sand dunes" is not only an amusing bid for sympathy, but also an expression of a breath taking sense of entitlement which, Grenfell assumed, would be shared by his American audience. For the amusement to carry, the audience needed to imagine that they were entitled to (1) the bodily exertion of Egyptian children, (2) the spoils these children unearthed, and (3) the enjoyable view of the scantily clad labourers, playing in the sand.<sup>71</sup> Grenfell's anecdote therefore displays not only the softer side of a great founder but also colonial aphasia. Grenfell and Hunt, Bell and Kenyon were leading participants in a noble mission of rescuing and preserving the detritus of a desired past. Their salvage operations, however, depended upon a racialized system of objectification that regarded persons and territories as expendable.<sup>72</sup> Destruction was always an option, either by means of the slow violence of exploitation or by more immediate, military means.<sup>73</sup>

The western episteme has too often regarded persons, territories, and things as possessions designated for those with the technology to "save" them, yet it has also all too often failed to protect not only persons but also desired objects. Papyrology rescued what was once lost but it also coordinated a globalized network of smugglers, swindlers, and thieves, further fragmented the artefacts it sought to describe, and employed scientific achievement as an alibi for resource extraction, commodification, and money-laundering schemes.<sup>74</sup> When placed within developments like

ethnographic experiments in documenting (rather than interrupting) extinction projects and the further globalization of enhanced mining techniques (such techniques both enriched Beatty and contributed the necessary minerals for publishing the *Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri's* photographic plates),<sup>75</sup> papyrology emerges as yet another instantiation of the presumed right to destroy, whether as an action-in-progress or as an orientation toward destruction-as-a-fait-accomplis. More recent examples like the Hobby Lobby's "crime spree" and the "cozy cabal" of academics, dealers, and collectors responsible for the Schøyen collection re-enact these earlier misadventures.<sup>76</sup>

Paradoxically perhaps, the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri push back against the colonial aphasia that brought them into view. In 1937, Kenyon published his edition of "what must once have been a very fine copy of Isaiah," that is, the Chester Beatty Papyrus VII.<sup>77</sup> Extant margins of the manuscript preserve a plethora of marginal glosses, introduced and transcribed by Coptologist Walter E. Crum.<sup>78</sup> According to Crum, the glosses were "the work of a Coptic-speaking owner of the papyrus" who inserted them, misleadingly, "for his private edification."<sup>79</sup> As Nicholas Wagner has shown, however, Crum's analysis must be thoroughly revised.<sup>80</sup> The marginalia were prepared by six hands, not one, and the glosses reveal not the haphazard insertions of a single, ill-informed translator but the shared contributions of an erudite group of biliterate readers interested in advanced ancient scholarship.<sup>81</sup> The Beatty Papyrus VII therefore preserves both an important early copy of the Septuagint translation of Isaiah and a record of the scholarly interests of Christians well-situated to read and comment upon scriptures in their Egyptian vernacular. Crum missed the sophistication of those who once possessed this book because he assumed that anyone who employed Coptic was unlikely to have contributed much to

<sup>71</sup> Compare Stephen Quirke's study of Flinders Petrie's papers. As Quirke shows, Petrie assumed that his workers are archaeologically illiterate, suitable only for manual labour, and incapable of inhabiting a properly scientific attitude; Quirke 2010, 27–34.

<sup>72</sup> Quirke 2010, 1–2. Also see the analysis of Katherine Blouin, "Papyri, Classics and what-not: Topics, tongues and occluded histories at the International Congresses of Papyrology," <https://everydayorientalism.wordpress.com/2019/03/04/papyri-what-not/> (accessed 15 February 2022).

<sup>73</sup> I borrow the term "slow violence" from Nixon 2011, 2: Slow violence is "a violence that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all." This form of violence is "neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales," resulting in "long dyings" of "staggered and staggeringly discounted casualties."

<sup>74</sup> Compare Sebald 1998, 194: During a discussion of the investment strategies of wealthy Dutch and English families, the narrator remarks: "many important museums. . . were originally endowed by the sugar dynasties or were in some other way connected with the sugar trade. The capital amassed. . . through various forms of slave economy is still in circulation. . . still bearing interest, increasing many

times over and continually burgeoning anew. One of the most tried and tested ways of legitimizing this kind of money has always been patronage of the arts, the purchase and exhibiting of paintings and sculptures." To this summary could be added "the purchase, publication, and exhibition of manuscripts."

<sup>75</sup> Qureshi 2013, 267–86.

<sup>76</sup> On Hobby Lobby, see Thompson 2021. On the Schøyen collection see Prescott / Rasmussen 2020, 68–97.

<sup>77</sup> Kenyon 1937, v.

<sup>78</sup> On Crum, see Gunn / Bell 1948, 281–91.

<sup>79</sup> Crum 1937, ix–x.

<sup>80</sup> Wagner 2021, 399–499.

<sup>81</sup> Wagner 2021, 424: These glosses are the "shared efforts of a group of advanced biliterates" that explain "unclear, obscure, or ambiguous passages of interest by reference and comparison with other physical media including one or perhaps less likely multiple Fayumic texts of Isaiah." Also see Choat 2017, 515–26 and Camplani 2018, 101–44.

scholarship. Kenyon missed a valuable source for the manuscript's initial context because he valued the text above all and largely ignored features like marginalia and other evidence of sustained use. As Wagner puts it, such outdated forms of scholarship perpetuate misleading assumptions "about the socio-cultural settings of ancient Jewish and Christian readers," silence "language traditions historically perceived as non-elite," and conceal Egyptian contributions "to the early interpretation and transmission of the Greek scriptural tradition."<sup>82</sup> Colonial aphasia is destructive not only to objects, landscapes, and persons but also to interpretation.

As scholars who work on manuscripts and tell stories about the past, we are responsible not only to *the* past, as if the past could ever be fully described and understood, but also to the uses of that past. As the Chester Beatty has

admirably acknowledged, it is high time for collectors, scholars, and holding institutions to re-examine not only the data they seek but also the practices that brought this data to "the West."<sup>83</sup> It is no longer acceptable to reside within a coloniality that locks participants inside a racialized, circulating silence that neglects to grant full humanity to all but a select few. Scraps of papyri embody and carry multiple, diverse perspectives. They are not evidence of "western superiority" but sites of alterity that invite a more challenging reckoning with human difference, historical distance, and accidental survival.<sup>84</sup> The stories that are told about how these objects were made, who made them, and why they matter must, finally, be revised. Papyrology will then live more fully into its potential as a discipline capable of forging enduring human connections across complex, shared, and overlapping worlds.

تقدم الباحثة في هذا المقال تعريفاً جريئاً لعلم البردي وهو أنه "فن للتدوير الممنهج". لطالما اختلف المتخصصين فيما بينهم على تعريف علم البردي، إلا أن الباحثة، بعد أن تعترف بأن علم البردي تخصص أكاديمي يسعى لاستخلاص الكثير من المعلومات التاريخية والأدبية من نصوص أوراق البردي وهي المعلومات التي لا نستطيع أن نحصل عليها من أي وعاء آخر، تؤكد في بداية مقالها أن نشأة هذا التخصص وثيقة الصلة بالتدوير الممنهج الذي أحدثه الاستعمار الغربي وخاصة الإنجليزي في حياة الناس المادية والأخلاقية سواء في مصر أو غيرها من الدول مدعوماً بالتفوق الحربي والتكنولوجي، وفي نفس الوقت داعماً له وربما أيضاً محلاً للغزو الغربي للبلاد والعباد. هذا الغزو الذي لم يؤثر فقط على البلاد المستعمرة بل أيضاً على البلاد المستعمرة عندما أطلق بينهم شرارة التنافس التي أدت في نهاية المطاف إلى اندلاع نار الحربين الغربية (العالمية) الأولى والثانية. وتعرض الباحثة لحقيقة أن معظم الرواد في علم البردي كانوا في طليعة حرب البروباجندا القائلة بالتفوق الغربي ومن أشرس المدافعين عنه هذه الفكرة بل إن بعضهم لم يخجلوا من هذه الادعاءات التي أثبتت زيفها بانديلاخ هذه المذابح العالمية. ففريدريك كينون الذي نشر برديات بيتي، على سبيل المثال، لم يكن فقط عالم بردي محنك بل مصمم مقابر محترف حيث وصل إنتاجه من شواهد القبور إلى أربعة آلاف شاهد عام 1927 في المدن الكبرى في فرنسا وبلجيكا وإيطاليا وتركيا وغيرها من الدول. بعد هذه المقدمة عن السياق العام لنشأة علم البردي تستعرض الباحثة الجزء الأول من الورقة، التي أطلقت عليها "تدمير الأدلة"، عمليات الإخفاء المتعمدة لمصادر البرديات التي خرجت من مصر، سواء كانت تشيستر بيتي أو غيرها من الاكتشافات المهمة الأخرى، وتؤكد في النهاية أن عملية الإخفاء والتدمير المتعمد للأدلة عملية منظمة ليست كما يدعى أغلب المتخصصين من فعل الفلاحين المصريين بل بتخطيط وعلم كل من شارك في عملية شراء هذه البرديات بداية من تاجر الآثار في مصر إنتهاءً بالمسؤول عن جمع وتوزيع هذه الحصيلة من الآثار على الجامعات والمراكز البحثية الغربية في لندن أو برلين أو غيرها من العواصم الأوروبية. في الجزء الثاني من مقالها المعنون "اضطراب الاستعمار اللغوي" تشرح باستفاضة الفكرة التي تقول بأن المشاركين في هذه العملية، وهي شبكة لا حصر لها من التجار والمهريين والمشتريين والمهتمين بالبرديات في الغرب، قد أصيبوا باضطراب لغوي، وهو اضطراب ناجم عن تلف في الدماغ تستخدمه المؤلفة هنا كـمجاز عن حالة الصمت التي أصابت هؤلاء جميعاً فأصبحوا في نفس الوقت وأعين لما يقومون به من تدمير لهذه الآثار لكن في نفس الوقت فاقدين للقدرة على التعبير عن مثل هذه الجرائم العلمية والأخلاقية التي ارتكبوها بنساء على "واجبهم الأخلاقي" كجزء من منظومة العناية الغربية التي تبرر لنفسها الاستغلال والقتل من أجل فعل الخير ونشر المعرفة.

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<sup>83</sup> See the article by Jill Unkel in this volume.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Chin 2017.

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Kelsie G. Rodenbiker

## Scribal “Faithfulness” and the Text-Critical Imaginary

أمانة النقل و نقد النص التخيلي، كيلسي رودنبيكير

In the summer of 2016 during a trip to Dublin, I wandered into the Chester Beatty for the first time. I walked up the stairs and, at the top, turned into the cool, dim light of a manuscript exhibit. I turned left, and left again, unexpectedly finding myself face to face with a page from Philippians 2 – the first papyrus of a New Testament text I ever saw in person. The kind man who was working in the exhibit noticed my awe and offered to bring me a stool. That page is part of Chester Beatty Biblical Papyrus II, also known as P<sup>46</sup> – a second- or third-century codex of Pauline epistles.

Less awed by the text of P<sup>46</sup> was Günther Zuntz, who claimed in *The Text of the Epistles* that,

as so often before, we must here be careful to distinguish between the very poor work of the scribe who penned it and the basic text, which he so poorly rendered. P<sup>46</sup> abounds with scribal blunders, omissions, and also additions. In some of them the scribe anticipated the errors of later copyists; in some other instances he shares an older error; but the vast majority are his own uncontested property. Once they have been discarded, there remains a text of outstanding (though not absolute) purity.<sup>1</sup>

Zuntz’s statement presents two contrasting claims: first, that P<sup>46</sup> is an incredibly flawed manuscript betraying a high level of scribal carelessness; second, that it is *representative* of a text of outstanding and nearly “pure” quality.<sup>2</sup> Extant manuscripts often serve as witnesses not to their unique renderings of textual transmission and reception but rather in the creation of a scholarly construct of “the original text” – hence Zuntz’s claim that the actual preserved text can essentially be “discarded” in favour of the

“outstanding” text that underlies it. This tension between the text on the page and the text as it is constructed is a significant force propelling New Testament textual criticism. The text as it is constructed – whether an “original,” “archetype,” or “exemplar” – is not an extant artefact. But the manuscripts *do* exist as material representations of textual tradition.

In connection with the notion that an original text underlies the manuscript tradition, the rhetoric of “scribal faithfulness” is sometimes evoked as a criterion of textual quality. But the rhetoric of “faithfulness” is unclear with regard to what, precisely, is meant by the term. For one thing, the notion of “faithfulness” is value-laden, suggestive of a devotion to the text distinct from the professional duties of a scribe. As we will see, when referring to a scribe’s “faithfulness,” some scholars mean precision in copying from an exemplar, others mean accuracy in getting across the sense of the text, even if grammatical changes are made, and still others mean the scribe’s devotion to an historical original. Moreover, the rhetoric of faithfulness is fraught with theological notions inherited from the early roots of modern textual criticism of the New Testament, which was resolutely invested in reclaiming access to some kind of pure, authentic, original text.<sup>3</sup> “The” original also presupposes a static canonical collection of only the most authentic and authoritative texts. The rhetoric of textual faithfulness is thus intertwined with the quest for the original and its reconstruction, and as a result it is also entangled with notions of canonical inevitability. These two scholarly constructs – the text-critical and the canonical – continue to be reflected in current scholarship on manuscripts such as P<sup>72</sup> (the texts of Jude and 1 and 2 Peter, which were bound with the Bodmer Composite Codex; Jude: Geneva, BB, Pap. Bodmer VII [diktyon 74135]; 1–2 Peter: Vaticano, BAV, Pap. Bodmer VIII [diktyon 74133]) and the stichometric list copied into Codex Claromontanus (Paris, BnF, grec 0107 [diktyon 49673; GA 06]), among many others. As the discourse surrounding these manuscripts tends to show, extant artefacts are sometimes misrepresented in favour of a teleological history of the New Testament that would seem to suggest its inevitable and definitive form. However, rather than con-

1 Zuntz 1953, 212–13.

2 Citing this passage with full approval in 2004, Barbara Aland uses Zuntz’s statement to argue in favour of the quality of the text that supposedly underlies that of the beautiful but flawed P<sup>46</sup>. Aland 2004, 116.

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3 See Lin 2016 and Peirano Garrison 2020, 86–109. On the problematic notion of a singular original, see Epp 1999, 245–81.

firming the stability and inevitability of the original text of the New Testament and its canonical authority, these manuscripts arguably attest to precisely the opposite: its persistent flexibility. Rather than undermining the New Testament collection, the fluidity exhibited by the manuscript tradition speaks to its ongoing use and adjustment. Textual vitality is an essential aspect of material tradition and transmission.

## 1 Scribal “faithfulness” in P<sup>45</sup> and P<sup>46</sup>

P<sup>45</sup> (Dublin, CBL, BP I [diktyon 75880]) and P<sup>46</sup> (Dublin, CBL, BP II [LDAB 3011]) are two manuscripts commonly maligned as crude or unreliable representations of their exemplars, especially in comparison to other early manuscripts such as P<sup>75</sup> (Geneva, BB, Pap. Bodmer XIV–XV [diktyon 74139]), which closely resembles the later text of Codex Vaticanus and for this reason has been deemed by some a “strict” and “reliable” copy.<sup>4</sup> This evaluation of the quality of the texts found in manuscripts such as P<sup>45</sup> and P<sup>46</sup> relative to other early papyri that resemble later, more complete manuscripts has tended to emphasise scribal faithfulness as a major factor in the reliable transmission of New Testament texts. However, it is one thing to lament the presence of grammatical errors or to note divergence from other manuscripts that preserve a different version of a text; it is another thing to attribute such variations to scribal figures using the language of “faithfulness.”

The methodology of Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland’s comparative work with the papyri, for example, is based on the question of fidelity, characterizing manuscripts as “free,” “normal,” “strict,” or “paraphrastic” in terms of their faithfulness to or deviation from a supposed “original text.”<sup>5</sup> In *The Text of the New Testament* (1989) they assert that, “P<sup>45</sup>, P<sup>46</sup>, P<sup>66</sup>, and a whole group of other manuscripts offer a ‘free’ text, i.e., a text dealing with the original text in a relatively free manner with no suggestion of a program of standardization.” They later clarified that,

the ‘free’ text represents only one of the varieties of the period. Beside it there is a substantial number of manuscripts representing a ‘normal,’ i.e., a relatively faithful tradition which departs from its exemplar only occasionally. . . and an equally substantial number of manuscripts representing a ‘strict’ text, which transmit the text of an exemplar with meticulous care (e.g., P<sup>75</sup>) and depart from it only rarely.<sup>6</sup>

Citing Aland, Chapa pronounces P<sup>45</sup> to be “undisciplined,” with the scribe “favouring concision and brevity, preoccupied in communicating the significance of the text over and against an exact fidelity to the exemplar being copied.”<sup>7</sup> Tichý claims that some of the more theological variation found in P<sup>46</sup> (or possibly its exemplar) “betrays a lack of understanding for the immense significance and personal importance Christ had for Paul” and exhibits “insufficient attention to the sequence of thought of the apostle Paul.”<sup>8</sup> While Tichý does not here use the word “faithful,” the implication is that the scribe lacked sufficient devotion to the Pauline text and therefore a proper understanding of its theological weight. While Tichý considers P<sup>46</sup> to be “the authoritative, scriptural text,” and “respect to authority was expressed in the effort to make its pronouncements more accessible,” the “relatively free dealing with the text” by the scribe shows that this was done “unfortunately, by someone whose insight into the meaning of the text was rather limited.”<sup>9</sup> A scribe who lacks textual “faithfulness,” for some, equates to a lack of theological devotion.

For Barbara Aland, errors are telling because they indicate what exemplars a copyist used, as well as how scribes “understood their responsibility.”<sup>10</sup> Variation is thus not necessarily a result of incompetence, but the use of the term “error” still rings with a negative connotation. Aland notes, for example, that P<sup>45</sup> exhibits a “great number” of singular readings that “almost always make sense,” that is, the scribe made intentional (and perhaps unintentional) changes in favour of textual coherence. But this is not necessarily a good thing. Aland concludes that,

P<sup>45</sup> represents that kind of manuscript one might expect from an experienced transcriber of documents. On the whole a reliable copy has been produced. The conspicuous omissions and transpositions are not the work of a scholar carefully comparing exemplars, nor are they the result of intervention by a stylistic

<sup>4</sup> See Aland / Aland 1989, 14, 57; but see also Nongbri 2016, 405–37.

<sup>5</sup> Aland / Aland 1989a, 59, 64, 93–5. See also Epp 1995, 26 n.64. It should be acknowledged that the specific language of “faithfulness” occurs in the English translation of the Aland / Aland’s original *Der Text des Neuen Testaments*, also from 1989, and therefore this may also be an issue of translation. Still, there remains present a language of “care” and devotion with regard to the notion of an original text in danger of corruption at the hands of faulty and incompetent scribes. The original German reads that some manuscripts are representative of “einer relativ getreuen Überlieferung,” Aland / Aland 1989b, 69.

<sup>6</sup> Aland / Aland 1989a, 59, 64; see also 69, referring to the “many-faceted” and “peculiar” nature of the early manuscripts in contrast to the “strict” text of P<sup>75</sup> or the “normal” text of P<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Chapa 2012, 140–56, 150.

<sup>8</sup> Tichý 2016, 241–51, 246–47.

<sup>9</sup> Tichý 2016, 250.

<sup>10</sup> Aland 2004, 109.

editor polishing the text. They are due rather to the standards of regularity and clarity imposed on scribes by their profession.<sup>11</sup>

According to Aland, the error in P<sup>45</sup> is not haste or carelessness, but variation supposedly introduced into the text as a result of the “professional standards” of the scribe. In other words, changes or corrections made by copyists that result in a more intelligible text are not representative of scribal faithfulness, because faithfulness is not characterized by the transcription of the most coherent or grammatically correct text, but by a manuscript’s consistency with the “original text,” which is constructed on the basis of later, more complete manuscripts.<sup>12</sup>

P<sup>46</sup> does not, according to Aland, exhibit the same scribal standards as P<sup>45</sup>. She states, “the quality of the copy is not comparable with the beautiful hand. The picture is marred by numerous errors – errors not only of orthography and badly written nomina sacra, but also numerous omissions due to a wandering eye (parablepsis) if not to pure carelessness. At times the writer did not understand the exemplar, and he produced a great number of nonsense readings.”<sup>13</sup> Quoting in full agreement the same passage from Zuntz quoted above, she concludes that P<sup>46</sup> “represents a rough and inadequate copy of a good exemplar. What we have here is doubtless a copy, even though an inaccurate one, and not a text intentionally altered by the scribe. The scribe was not capable of it nor was it his task.”<sup>14</sup> The figures below show pages from P<sup>45</sup> and P<sup>46</sup>. The “beautiful hand” of P<sup>46</sup> can be compared to the blockier, slightly slanted handwriting of P<sup>45</sup> (Figures 1 and 2).

Aland distinguishes between a “copy” and an “intentionally altered” text, presumably because the latter indicates active interpretation and engagement with the text. It is this interpretive function that she does not consider the scribe to have been capable of, and hence claims that the scribe produced an unintentionally bad copy, rather than an intentionally altered (that is, interpreted) text.<sup>15</sup> In a later essay, Aland again compares the quality of the texts of P<sup>45</sup> and P<sup>46</sup>, this time over the question of whether the scribes, as readers and interpreters, intentionally altered their texts. She concludes that both were constrained by the standards of their profession to a narrow scope of creative freedom, but again affirms that the text of P<sup>45</sup> is “intelligent and generous,” while that of P<sup>46</sup> is

“littered with oversights, errors, carelessness.”<sup>16</sup> It is too presumptuous to claim that the scribe of P<sup>46</sup> “wanted to make a careful copy, but was unable to cope with his text in terms of spelling or, what is more serious, the meaning of what he was copying,” concerning himself instead with calligraphic beauty, in contrast to the capable but more spartan handwriting of the scribe of P<sup>45</sup>.<sup>17</sup> While Aland does not use the language of faithfulness here, the underlying goal of accessing a text *other* than the one preserved remains, and so too does the accusation of scribal interference in this goal.

The view of scribal error held by Aland and Zuntz can be set in contrast to Metzger’s claim that scribes were perfectly capable of reproducing errors on purpose in order to remain in line with their exemplar. Regarding variants introduced into the manuscript tradition through scribal intention, Metzger comments that, “scribes who thought were more dangerous than those who wished merely to be faithful in copying what lay before them.” He offers the example of the scribe of P<sup>46</sup> who painstakingly copied exactly from their exemplar, for example in refraining from correcting a nonsensical reading in Gal. 2,12 that, according to Metzger “can scarcely be the form intended by the author.”<sup>18</sup> This is an interesting divergence from claims of scribal faithfulness that suggest it represents fidelity to the idea of a perfect original, making use of the very

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**16** Aland 2019, 119: “Die Kopiermethode in P45 ist intelligent und großzügig: intelligent, weil der Schreiber den Sinn des zu Kopierenden schnell erfasst und trotz aller Omissionen, Transpositionen und Harmonisierungen im wesentlichen genau wiedergeben will, und großzügig, weil überflüssige Worte und umständliche Wendungen des Textes vereinfacht oder fallengelassen werden. Dieses Letztere könnte auf den bewussten Wunsch des Schreibers zurückgeführt werden, der Gemeinde, die ihn beauftragt hat, eine zuverlässige, aber auch verständliche, lesbare Kopie zur Verfügung zu stellen. . . Ganz anders verhält es sich mit P46, der anderen frühen Handschrift, die wie P66 in die Zeit um 200 datiert werden kann. Dieser früheste Pauluscodex, den wir besitzen, ist mit Versehen, Irrtümern, Sorglosigkeiten übersät, aber—und das ist zunächst das Entscheidende—der Text, der der Handschrift zugrunde liegt, ist gut. Das haben verschiedene Untersuchungen festgestellt; auch ein Blick in den Apparat einer modernen kritischen Ausgabe bestätigt es. Es ist also möglich, P46 trotz seiner vielen Fehler als guten Zeugen bei der Suche nach dem zu konstituierenden Text einzusetzen.”

**17** “. . . steht eine Fülle von Fehlern, die zeigen, dass der Schreiber zwar eine sorgfältige Kopie herstellen wollte, aber seinem Text weder in der Orthographie gewachsen war, noch, was schwerwiegender ist, den Sinn dessen, was er kopierte, angemessen erfassen konnte. Ganz im Unterschied zum Kopisten von P45, der den Text seiner Vorlage rasch und eigenständig erfasste, ist dieser Schreiber offensichtlich mehr auf die kalligraphische Schönheit seiner Abschrift konzentriert—sie ist beträchtlich—als auf die Präzision des Geschriebenen.” Aland 2019, 121.

**18** Metzger 2005, 195, 206.

**11** Aland 2004, 112.

**12** On the problematic circularity of reconstruction, see Ehrman 1989, 377–88; Petersen 2002, 33–65.

**13** Aland 2004, 115.

**14** Aland 2004, 116.

**15** On singular readings and the question of scribal interpretation and the use of tradition, see Allen 2016, 859–80.

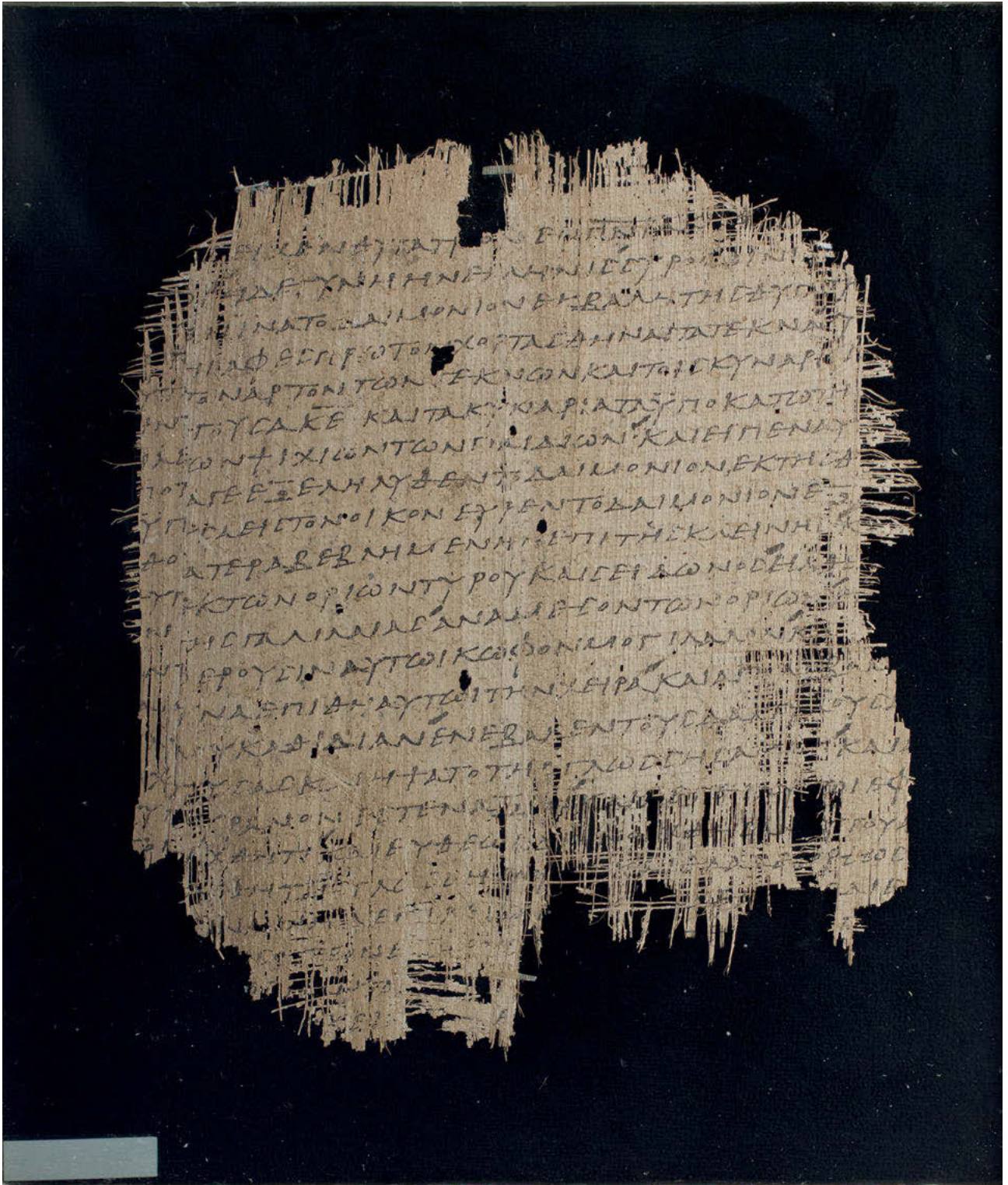


Figure 1: P45, BP I f. 6r (Mark 7:25–8:1).

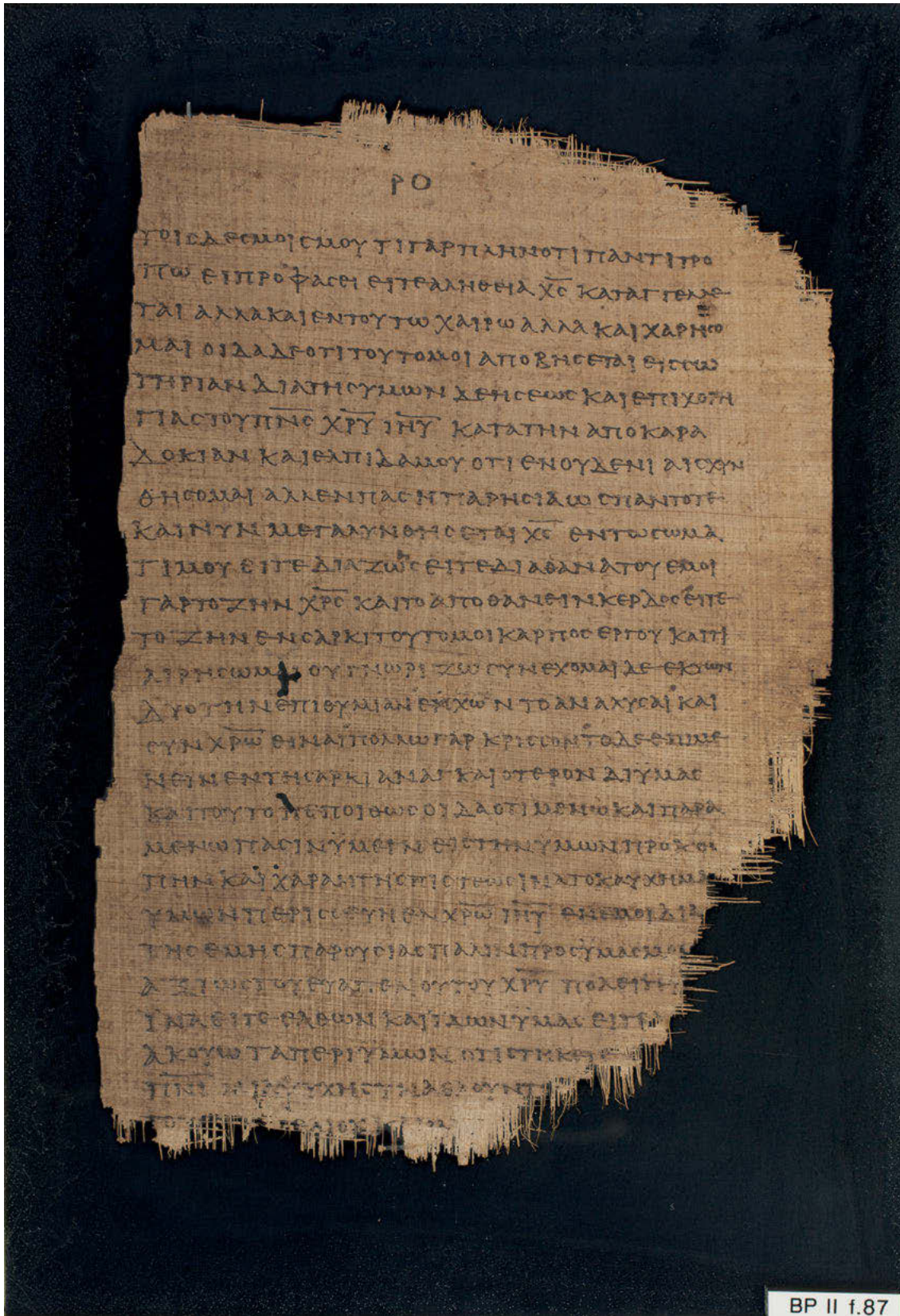


Figure 2: P45, BP II f. 87r (Phil 1:17–28)

same manuscript that others used to characterize a *lack* of scribal faithfulness. The manuscript to which Metzger appeals for his example, P<sup>46</sup>, is the very same one used by Aland and Zuntz to argue that the scribe was careless and distracted by calligraphic beauty.

Another distinct approach to scribal “faithfulness” is provided by Larry Hurtado, who characterizes P<sup>45</sup> and Codex W as manuscripts that “show the efforts of scribes whose high regard for the biblical text was thoroughly compatible with a freedom to amend it in the interests of readability and religious edification.” He also describes the scribe of P<sup>75</sup> as “less careful than the scribe of P<sup>45</sup>,” who was “more given to accidental errors but also far less given to intentional changes.”<sup>19</sup> That is, for Hurtado a scribe’s high regard for the scriptures they copied does not inevitably equate to the exactness of their transcription. He characterizes scribal *freedom* to amend the text in favour of its more edifying reception as a form of faithfulness to scripture.

There are also examples of textual critics, going back to late antiquity, who do *not* use the language of faithfulness to describe scribal accuracy as pious devotion. In his *Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei*, Origen acknowledges the variation present between different copies of the text, reasoning that these variants arose “either from the laziness of certain scribes or from the daring of some mistaken [scribes], or from the neglect of the correction of the scriptures, or from those who, in correcting in accordance with their own opinions, added or subtracted things” (*Comm. Matt.* 15.14). Origen is not pleased that scribes have introduced variation, but even the “perverse audacity,” as another translation renders it, of scribes who would do so intentionally appears to be an accusation more related to the function of a scribe than about their devotion to the scriptural text.<sup>20</sup> Origen goes on to explain that in cataloguing variants between a variety of Greek and Hebrew copies of the Old Testament in the Hexapla, he preserved the variation along with diacritic markers, using an obelus for passages that do not occur in the Hebrew version(s) and an asterisk for those that do not appear in the Greek version(s). Rather than harmonizing the copies according to the oldest one or to a presumed “original” text, Origen created a document that reflected the variability of its history of transmission.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Hurtado 2004, 147.

<sup>20</sup> See Metzger 1963, 78–95.

<sup>21</sup> For other examples of early church writers who discussed scribal variation, see Andrew of Caesarea on those who would dare to change the text of Revelation in Constantinou 2011, 241 n.14. Jerome also complains of Lucinus’s incompetent scribes, who wrote “not what they found but what they understood,” in *Ep.* 71.5, and see Williams 2006, 217–18.

Like Origen, the former director of the British Museum, Frederic Kenyon, in his introductions to the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri in the 1930s, preserves a sense of the plurality of the manuscript tradition. He writes that the text of P<sup>45</sup> is “very correct, and though without calligraphic pretensions, is the work of a competent scribe,” while the text of P<sup>46</sup> is, “in marked contrast to that of the Gospels and Acts MS. . . far more calligraphic in character, a rather large, free, and flowing hand with some pretensions to style and elegance.”<sup>22</sup> Kenyon does not comment on the quality of the scribal hand in P<sup>46</sup> as it relates to the content, only claiming that the “character of the text may be gathered” from the tables of data he includes which detail its agreements and disagreements with “the principal MSS,” which are determined from Tischendorf’s apparatus.<sup>23</sup> He leaves it up to the reader to determine the text’s character, rather than making a judgment about the quality or ability of the scribe.

A more recent approach to scribal activity in these papyri is that of James Royse, who does not use the language of faithfulness with regard to either P<sup>45</sup> or P<sup>46</sup>. He notes rather the “clear and careful” writing of P<sup>45</sup>, even given its relatively high rate of singular readings reflective of what he considers to be intentional changes by the scribe.<sup>24</sup> Writing on the process of copying early Christian texts, Alan Mugridge describes varying levels of scribal competence more generally. He notes that the regularity of a scribe’s handwriting often distinguishes professional from non-professional hands, using the irregularity and unevenness of P<sup>47</sup>, another Chester Beatty Biblical Papyrus, and P<sup>72</sup>, which I will discuss below, as examples of non-professional scribal effort.<sup>25</sup> Distinguishing trained, professional scribes from non-professional ones according to skilled versus unskilled hands, he concludes that “the vast majority of the Christian papyri were copied by trained scribes.”<sup>26</sup> But, while calligraphic regularity might suggest a certain level of scribal professionalism, it cannot determine scribal intention in the introduction of

<sup>22</sup> As many have pointed out, the good hand does not correspond to a more coherent text, which has many spelling and grammar errors, nonsense readings, and apparent omissions; Kenyon 1933, ix; Kenyon 1934, ix.

<sup>23</sup> Kenyon 1934, ix–x.

<sup>24</sup> Royse 2007, 106, 358.

<sup>25</sup> Mugridge 2016, 20.

<sup>26</sup> Mugridge 2016, 147. He further notes that scribes may have been confused by the content and style of Christian texts and adjusted them to fit their conception of “literary” vs. “documentary” papyri, an uncertainty that would have cleared around the third century when more exemplars were circulating and more scribes were Christian. Again, though, this does not solve the question of “faithfulness.”

variation. Some scribes may have adhered closely to their exemplars and copied even misspellings and grammatical errors, while others altered them in favour of readability and style; both approaches are within the scope of scribal labour. The use, or not, of the rhetoric of fidelity to describe the quality of scribal activity is as variable as the texts it describes.

So, what *is* scribal faithfulness? Or, rather, what do text critics *mean* by “scribal faithfulness?” Aland and Aland assume that the corruption and correction of the text through the branching and growth of the manuscript tradition are both forms of scribal *unfaithfulness*, though in her later work Barbara Aland is also interested in the possibility of minimal alteration due to scribal professional standards; Zuntz believes it is possible to clear away all the blundering errors of the scribe of P<sup>46</sup> to reclaim the “outstanding” and nearly pure text underneath, by which he means its relation to an historical original; Metzger suggests that scribes could be “faithful” in the sense that they copied precisely from their exemplar without letting their own thoughts get in the way, while Hurtado does *not* equate accuracy with faithfulness. When we talk about scribal faithfulness, are we talking about adherence to professional scribal standards of basic grammatical, syntactical, and stylistic effectiveness that coherent texts should exhibit? Or the precision with which a scribe copies from an exemplar? Or the pious devotion to the idea of a flawless, unadulterated original text representing the intended words of an historical author? That an underlying text can, in fact, be accessed in a straightforward way cannot be taken for granted, as the variation in claims of scribal faithfulness regarding the same two manuscripts has shown. For some, P<sup>46</sup> attests to the scribal *unfaithfulness* of the high-quality text supposedly underlying this flawed copy; for others, this same manuscript provides evidence that scribes could be so “faithful” in their copying that they preserved even obvious errors.

## 2 *Fides* and scribal faithfulness

The rhetoric of *fides* is not a novelty of modern New Testament textual criticism. Another way to construe the language of scribal “faithfulness” is to consider it as an inheritance, like so many other aspects of New Testament criticism, of nineteenth-century scholarship. Faithfulness to the text and its transcription was conflated with faithfulness to scripture and its divine authority. A scribe’s precision in copying from their exemplar was thus not simply a matter of accuracy but one of piety when the original is

considered a divinely influenced work. “*Fides*,” says Irene Peirano Garrison in an essay on the shared roots of philology and theology,

is liberally deployed of the reliability of witnesses, the conscientiousness of scribes, and a scholar’s trust in a given family of texts, to name a few. Yet the construct of *Christiana Fides* inevitably colours these nineteenth-century usages, as the accuracy of the scribe easily fades into (and is therefore read as) a devotional act, and one’s ability to rely on a printed text acts as a catalyser of Faith.<sup>27</sup>

The idea that the scribe would be devoted to the text and its *theological content* in their effort to transmit the best possible version assumes that such scribes are Christian. This is another aspect of scribal identity that cannot be taken for granted. Mugridge points, for example, to the claim that because many Christian texts contain *nomina sacra*, only Christians could have written them. But, “copyists would need only to copy the manuscript before them,” and thus it is not necessary to assume that the use of *nomina sacra* indicates that a scribe was a Christian.<sup>28</sup>

A further snag in the question of scribal devotion is offered by Candida Moss, who has recently argued that ancient scribes and secretaries were often servile workers – even Mark, who is traditionally said to have penned the gospel attributed to him according to the teaching of Peter.<sup>29</sup> The “unpolished” quality to Mark’s gospel – one of the works included in P<sup>45</sup> – serves for Papias as evidence of its accuracy, rather than its corruption. Papias claims that Mark “did nothing wrong” in writing down things as he remembered them, though he did so with a lack of τῶς ἰσχυρῶς, or proper rhetorical, and possibly chronological, order.<sup>30</sup> “Mark’s literary deficiencies,” says Moss, “are leveraged by Papias and others as evidence for his accuracy in preserving Petrine oral teaching.”<sup>31</sup> That Mark’s “deficiencies” were for Papias evidence of its historical accuracy complicates the question of scribal precision as a function of “faithfulness” to the text of scripture, making apparent another tension when it comes to ancient scribal labour: scribes can be credited with writing and preserving historical works attributed to higher-status apostolic figures *or*

<sup>27</sup> Peirano Garrison 2020, 95.

<sup>28</sup> Mugridge 2016, 151. It may be the case that more scribes were Christian after Constantine, particularly given the rise of monasticism and the sacred task of preserving and copying scripture, but Mugridge notes that even this would need to be taken into consideration for individual manuscripts.

<sup>29</sup> Moss 2021, 181–204; Moss forthcoming. See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 2.15.1–2 (citing Clement and Papias), 3.39.15 (citing Papias), 6.14.6–7 (citing Clement), 6.25.5 (citing Origen); cf. I Petr. 5,13.

<sup>30</sup> Papias via Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.15, trans. Lake 1926, 297.

<sup>31</sup> Moss 2021, 185–86, 196–98, 202.



blamed for their corruption through variation introduced either intentionally or unintentionally. Scribes who participated in the early production of Christian literature are often used to validate the (pseudonymous) authority of texts such as James, 1 Peter, or the Pastoral Epistles, a claim that relies on active scribal participation, not only their technical skill in taking dictation, since changes in tone or style are attributed to the scribe, rather than to the apostolic author.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, as we have seen, textual critics blame scribes for introducing variation into the text of the New Testament, whether intentionally or not.<sup>33</sup> What is scribal faithfulness when scribes may have participated in the initial production of the historical text, or when a text's literary roughness was considered to be a mark of historical accuracy?

The rhetoric of scribal faithfulness also finds its roots in the quest for the original text. Peirano Garrison further asserts that “philology’s quest for the original is perhaps the most transparent and notorious instance of overlap between the theological and the philological,” as seen in stemmatic methods of comparing and grouping manuscripts according to a presumed canon that transcends individual extant manuscripts.<sup>34</sup> The concern over variation as a corruption of an “original” is reflected in the tradition of attributing variant readings to accident,

<sup>32</sup> See also Origen’s note of the differing style of Pauline texts, especially Hebrews, in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.11–14. There are various ways of accounting for this in modern scholarship, including the participation of a secretarial hand, as in the case of 1 Peter, and a two-stage process in which the “authentic” words of an apostle are seen to be reflected in the later writing of a text attributed to them but written by another, as in the case of James. See Painter 2007, 75–98; Foster 2014, 24; Selwyn 1947, 9–17; Davids 1990, 6; Davids 2006, 128. See Moss forthcoming, n.27 and Ehrman 2013, 660–66 for examples from the Pauline corpus. See also the distinction between copyists and stenographers in Williams 2006, 218–19.

<sup>33</sup> As Moss puts it, “it is fair to say that academic conversation about secretaries and the New Testament has been potted and opportunistic,” not least in the use of secretaries to legitimize apostolic works as authentic, “only to dismiss them from their interpretation of the text,” forthcoming, 9–10.

<sup>34</sup> Peirano Garrison 2020, 94–5. Stemmatic or other genealogical methods might seek a true original—the words of Jesus or the words of the Apostles—or they may be after the archetype or initial text of a textual family that, while lost, is nevertheless considered to be more in reach through the comparison of shared errors and omissions. In either case, these methods are employed in the development of an exemplar based on the discerning efforts of scholarship; that is, the goal is a necessarily composite, and hypothetical, textual construct. For an overview of evaluating textual relationships since the birth of text types and the development of the CBGM, see Wasserman 2019, 333–61. And see Lin 2016, particularly 150–71, including her proposals for metaphors alternative to genealogical and arborescent ones (here p. 168–71).

grammatical or palaeographic error, problems with sight or hearing, and other passive forms of creating variance. “What a variant could not be,” asserts David Parker, “was theologically motivated.”<sup>35</sup> According to Parker, an emphasis on the Bible as a source of divine revelation without considering its material preservation leads to the assumption that the received text has a singular source – the historical evangelists and apostles – at the expense of the prolific manuscript tradition.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the rhetoric of scribal faithfulness, determined by comparing extant manuscripts to a text-critical hypothetical exemplar constructed primarily from later and more complete manuscripts, can also be reflective, as Peirano Garrison points out, of underlying theological assumptions about the nature of the text. What Parker critiques as an overly linear sense of the development of orthodoxy finds expression in the text-critical investment in scribal faithfulness to a reconstructed original text. The notion of variation as corruption also contributes to the link between “scribal faithfulness” and the idea of a singular uncorrupted original. But editions and reconstructed texts are necessarily amalgamations. They are composite products and representations of existing manuscripts. This is the textual “imaginary” of New Testament text criticism – the construct of an original text against which all supposed copies can somehow be compared. And even this means different things according to different scholars.<sup>37</sup> The fluidity of the manuscript tradition means that the definition of what constitutes scripture and canon is always to some extent a moving target.

### 3 The canonical imaginary construct

The textual and canonical flexibility evident in the manuscript tradition can be contrasted with what Jennifer Knust has called the “Christian canonical imaginary,” a phenomenon in which textual collections are assumed to reflect a much later notion of a “canonical” collection than their material preservation and transmission actually suggest.<sup>38</sup> Knust analyses manuscripts found among the Dishna papers in Egypt that contain apparently mis-

<sup>35</sup> Parker 2009, 329.

<sup>36</sup> Parker 2009, 325.

<sup>37</sup> See e.g. the “Slight Shift in Goal” section of Wasserman and Gurry 2017, 11–3. On the relationship between the “initial text” and the “living text,” see Parker 2011, 13–21.

<sup>38</sup> Knust 2017, 99–118.

cellaneous, though often thematic, groupings of now-canonical and noncanonical literature, emphasizing that the Dishna miscellanies and their porous sense of “canonical” authority are not anomalous, but are characteristic of early Christian reading practices.<sup>39</sup>

More than analogous, the text-critical and canonical imaginaries sustain one another. Like the text-critical imaginary, the canonical imaginary is a later construct that is then compared to earlier evidence. One of the Dishna miscellanies is the Bodmer Composite Codex, which contained the texts of 1 and 2 Peter and Jude that make up the so-called “P<sup>72</sup>” (Jude: Geneva, BB, Pap. Bodmer VII [diktyon 74135]; 1–2 Peter: Vaticano, BAV, Pap. Bodmer VIII [diktyon 74133]).<sup>40</sup> Aland and Aland emphasise the importance of the Bodmer papyri, noting the “startling fact” that P<sup>72</sup> is a “single collection of writings.”<sup>41</sup> However, P<sup>72</sup> is not a single collection of now-canonical writings. While it is the only “cluster” of Catholic Epistles prior to the pandects and some interesting elements are shared in common between 1 and 2 Peter and Jude,<sup>42</sup> these three texts are not consecutive, the Petrine Epistles represent a separate layer of production,<sup>43</sup> and all three were bound to the Bodmer Composite Codex along with other texts like *3 Corinthians*, the oldest extant copy of the *Protevangeli-um of James*, and the 11<sup>th</sup> *Ode of Solomon*.<sup>44</sup> The same scribe likely copied 1 and 2 Peter and Jude, but also *3 Corinthians* and the 11<sup>th</sup> *Ode of Solomon*.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, the

<sup>39</sup> Knust 2017, 102, 114.

<sup>40</sup> The texts of 1 and 2 Peter from P<sup>72</sup> can be viewed at [https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS\\_Pap.Bodmer.VIII](https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Pap.Bodmer.VIII); the text of Jude from P<sup>72</sup> can be viewed at [https://manuscripts.csnm.org/manuscript/Group/GA\\_P72](https://manuscripts.csnm.org/manuscript/Group/GA_P72).

<sup>41</sup> Aland and Aland 1989, 57: “Until their discovery it was thought on the basis of P<sup>45</sup> and P<sup>46</sup> that the second/third century text was generally characterized by considerable irregularity.” They add this footnote: “no one had ever thought it possible, for example, that a complete text of the letter of Jude and the two letters of Peter would be found preserved in a papyrus of the third or fourth century,” n.9; 87, 93. Michael Dormandy 2018, 19 likewise argues that it “regards a work which is in modern terms canonical as the heart of the collection [of the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex].”

<sup>42</sup> See Wasserman 2005, 137–54, esp. 147–48.

<sup>43</sup> Nongbri 2016, 394–410; Nongbri 2015, 171–72.

<sup>44</sup> The full contents of the codex are, in order: the *Nativity of Mary* (the oldest extant manuscript of the *Protevangeli-um of James*), *3 Corinthians*, the 11<sup>th</sup> *Ode of Solomon*, Jude, *Peri Pascha* (an Easter sermon of Melito of Sardis), a fragmented hymn, the *Apology of Phileas*, *Psalm 33* and *34* (LXX), and 1 and 2 Peter. Curiously, the Crosby-Schøyen Codex MS 193 also contains Melito’s *Peri Pascha*, along with II Mac. 5,27–741, the earliest known manuscript of 1 Peter (in Coptic), Jonah, and one unidentified text. See Knust 2017, 105–109; Jones 2011, 9–20; Horrell 2009, 502–22.

<sup>45</sup> Wasserman 2005, 140–44. Wasserman considers the likelihood that a single scribe copied P<sup>72</sup> to be “the most significant connection” between the various production layers of the Bodmer Codex, a sig-

codex is better described as a “composite” rather than a miscellany, and there are multiple suggestions for a theme binding the texts together, including Easter, the body, and suffering.<sup>46</sup> Discourse on this manuscript shows that New Testament scholarship tends to neglect of the rest of the codex, a trend that isolates “P<sup>72</sup>” while neglecting the material form and historical context of the Bodmer Composite Codex.<sup>47</sup>

Part of the dismantled history of the Bodmer Composite Codex is that it was found among the Dishna Papers, which likely share a monastic provenance with the Nag Hammadi Codices.<sup>48</sup> In addition to presenting the most complete texts of Jude and the Petrine Epistles prior to the major uncials, the Bodmer Composite (or Miscellaneous) Codex offers evidence of the third- or fourth-century combination of texts that were both now-canonical and noncanonical. P<sup>72</sup> is not indicative of an early and clear sub-collection of New Testament literature—it is part of a much broader ancient context and can only be perceived as “proto-canonical” in light of the canonical imaginary construct.<sup>49</sup>

Another example of the imposition of the canonical imaginary can be found in literature on the stichometric list inserted into the sixth-century Codex Claromontanus (Paris, BnF, grec 0107 [diktyon 49673; GA 06]), a Greek and Latin bilingual manuscript containing Pauline letters.<sup>50</sup> The common understanding, originating with Tischendorf’s transcription of the codex in the nineteenth century, has been that the stichometry *should* list the familiar 27 works of the New Testament, but that scribal error is to blame for the accidental omission of Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Hebrews, and that a scribe clearly marked four now-noncanonical works (*Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Acts of Paul*, and the *Revelation of Peter*) as of secondary status through the use of obeli.<sup>51</sup>

nificance that is only apparent when one is working backwards from the knowledge of a later New Testament collection that includes Jude and 1 and 2 Peter (154). See also Royse 2007, 545–46.

<sup>46</sup> See Jones 2011, 9–20; Haines-Eitzen 2000, 103–104; Horrell 2009, 502–22, esp. 516–17. Contra Strickland 2017, 781–91, esp. 785; Strickland also argues for the proto-orthodox allure of P<sup>72</sup>, concluding that 1–2 Peter and Jude affirmed “the boundaries of orthodoxy within the NT’s Petrine tradition” for a supposed proto-orthodox community (p. 791).

<sup>47</sup> Wasserman 2005, 137–38.

<sup>48</sup> See Lundhaug 2018, 329–86; Lundhaug and Jennot 2015, 78–84.

<sup>49</sup> Knust 2017, 108, 102.

<sup>50</sup> For more on this stichometry and its history of interpretation, see Rodenbiker 2021, 240–53.

<sup>51</sup> Robbins 1986, 233 claims that the stichometry, “given its careless omissions, apparently intends to set forth a 27-book ‘New Testament.’” Hahneman 1992, 141 claims that the scribe of the Claromontanus stichometry “drew a line before the last four entries,

Such an explanation of the list is an act of taming: this explanation tones down the canonical flexibility represented by the stichometry and reinforces the idea of the familiar canonical list, *even though this list is in fact quite different from that familiar list*.

But there is more. The obeli were added by a later hand than the one that transcribed the list, and Tischendorf acknowledges this in part in a small footnote, stating, “by these four line-enumerations for epist. Barnabas, Shepherd, Acts of Paul and Revelation of Peter obeli have been placed by a fairly recent hand.”<sup>52</sup> He did not mention, however, that there are two other obeli, one alongside the more widely accepted works of *Judith* and “*ad petrum prima*” – another curious element, though the title likely refers to 1 Peter (see the end of the list in Figure 3).

Given that the list does not include four of the Pauline epistles and *does* include four other now-noncanonical works, the Claromontanus stichometry presents a 27-work list, but not the familiar canonical collection. The codex itself does contain the four Pauline letters that are missing from the list, so this might be considered a genuine error either by the scribe or his exemplar, but the four noncanonical texts are original to the list, where the obeli marking their secondary status are not. The traditional view has been that the original scribe is to blame for the errors in transcription, while this same or a different scribe is credited for marking (only) the noncanonical works as spurious, leading to the assumption that the list *intended* something other than what it presents. But the original list did not contain all the Pauline letters and *did* include *Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Acts of Paul*, and the *Revelation of Peter*. Many factors must be taken for granted in order to arrive at the conclusion that

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namely *Barnabas*, the *Shepherd*, the *Acts of Paul*, and the *Revelation of Peter*,” without mention of the marks alongside 1 Peter (*ad Petrum prima*) or *Judith*. He is also incorrect about the final four texts: the Johannine Apocalypse and the Acts of the Apostles separate *Barnabas* from the other three noncanonical works. Metzger 1987, 230, 310 n.9 explains the mark alongside 1 Peter as a paragraphus, intended to signify the start of a new section and so to distinguish between the Pauline epistles and the titles that follow, while the other four marks are said to “identify works of doubtful or disputed canonicity.” See also Gallagher and Meade 2018, 184–86 and n.62; Porter and Pitts 2015, 26.

52 “His quattuor versibus de epist. Barnabae, pastore, actibus Pauli, revelatione Petri manu satis recenti praepositi sunt obeli,” Tischendorf 1852, 468–69, 589. The footnote numerals 6, 9, 10, and 11 correspond to the lines of the stichometry on which the four texts whose obelus Tischendorf acknowledges are transcribed. Meade 2019, 257 n.14 includes a note, credited to Hixson, acknowledging the secondary nature of the obeli, but does not mention that the same mark occurs alongside *Judith* and 1 Peter in the stichometry.

the stichometry actually *meant to* list the 27 books of the now-canonical New Testament, including scribal error and a break in convention with the rest of the stichometry in the marking of only the noncanonical works. The canonical imaginary looms large.

## 4 Conclusion: imagination and preservation

In a recent introduction to the *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism*, Stanley Porter and Andrew Pitts define “traditional” textual criticism as a “concern to recover the original form of the text by means of applying rigorous text-critical methodology to the available manuscript tradition,” referring to other studies of textual transmission under the umbrella of a “sociohistorical model” of textual criticism and thus centring the traditional model as the norm.<sup>53</sup> They acknowledge that the “sociohistorical” model, exemplified by David Parker, has become valid for many, but the authors affirm that the central aim of text criticism must remain seeking access to “the original text of the NT documents.”<sup>54</sup> They include a chapter titled “Canon: The Domain of New Testament Textual Criticism,” which argues in favour of an early (second-century) canonical collection of Christian writings, emphasising the deep connection between the constructs of the canonical imaginary and the text-critical imaginary. One confirms the other.<sup>55</sup>

As the variable uses of the language of scribal “faithfulness” in relation to a hypothetical original text and the canonical imaginaries of P<sup>72</sup> and the Claromontanus stichometry illustrate, though, the matter is not so simple. It cannot be taken for granted that the Petrine letters and Jude, which make up “P<sup>72</sup>,” are a proto-canonical cluster; rather, they are non-consecutive works bound in the same codex, which originated in an ancient monastic context. Likewise with the Claromontanus stichometry, whose history of interpretation has tended to obscure the ways in which this list highlights the flexibility of the New Testament canon beyond the fourth century, the canonical construct is read into ancient evidence.

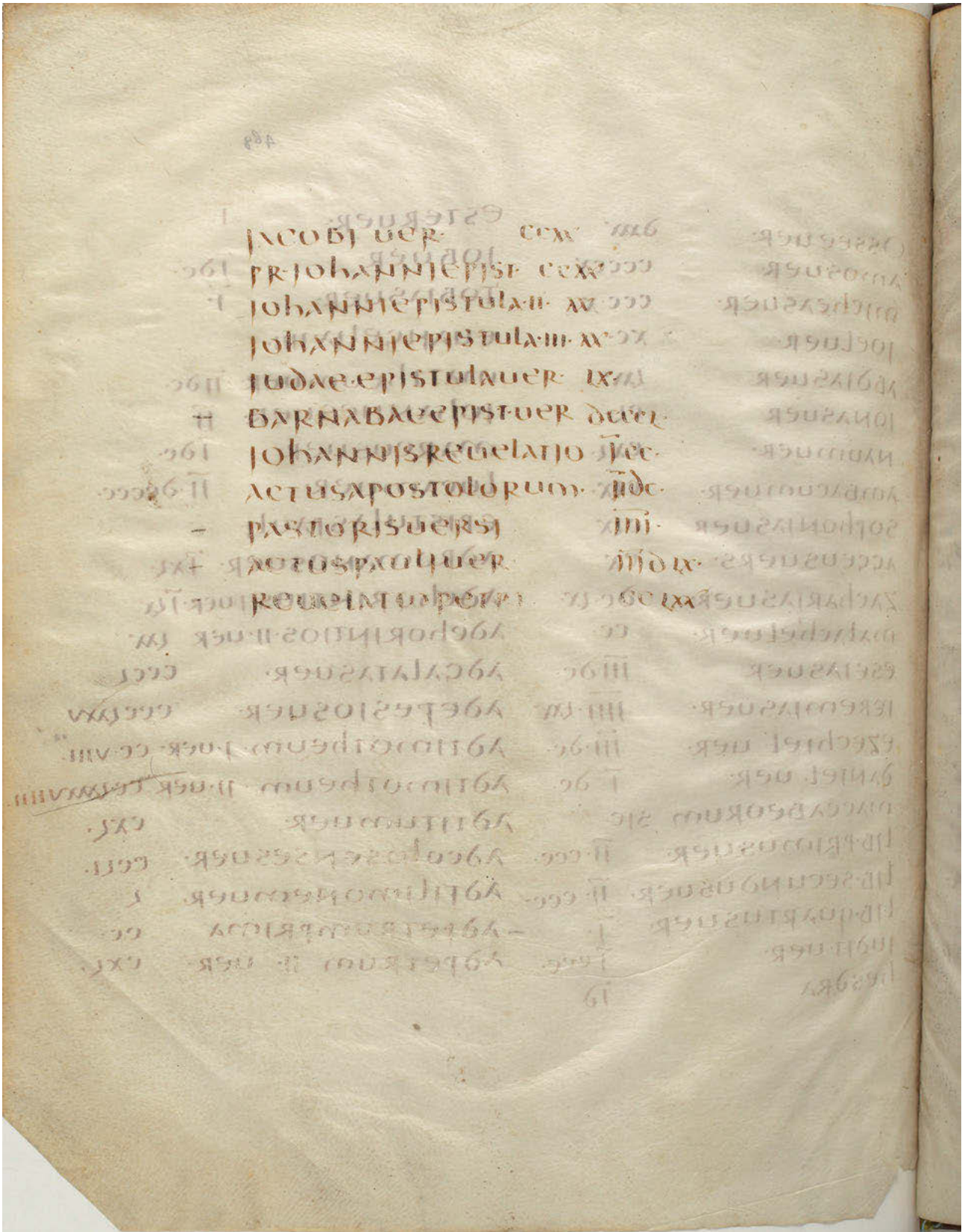
The neat arc of the production of texts, their corruption and variation through copying, and their eventual recovery and rehabilitation by discerning modern critics relies on the assumption that this process can and does move from coherence to chaos and back again to coherence. In this model,

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53 Porter and Pitts 2015, 1.

54 Porter and Pitts, 2015, 6.

55 Porter and Pitts, 2015, 17–20.



**Figure 3:** The Claromontanus stichometry spans GA 06, BnF Grec 107 f. 467v–468v; this is folio 468v, containing, in order, the titles and stichometric numbering for James, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude, *Barnabas*, the *Revelation of John*, Acts, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Acts of Paul*, and the *Revelation of Peter*.

the “free” or “living” texts represented by the early papyri that are not consistent with “strict” or later, more complete witnesses of the fourth and fifth centuries are weeded out or neglected in favour of a linear trajectory of textual development, represented by both the text-critical imaginary and the canonical imaginary. But reconstructed texts like Nestle-Aland editions, for example, are an omnibus of hundreds of extant manuscripts, and will always be *representations* of the tradition, not the tradition itself. Editions are valuable tools for navigating a complex manuscript tradition, and hypotheses are a necessary part of the process of studying history and historical artefacts. But the usefulness of critical editions is limited to the research questions that stand behind their production. Instead of standing in for (or being perceived as) *the* authoritative version of a text – the text-critical imaginary construct – critical editions point readers to the complex and dynamic material history of the extant sources used to create them.<sup>56</sup> To determine a text’s level of scribal “faithfulness” or corruption based on a particular edition of the Nestle-Aland text or Tischendorf’s transcriptions or the *Textus Receptus* or otherwise is to do a disservice to the profound particularity and inherent fluidity of the manuscript tradition.

Textual variation cannot be taken for granted as a function of incompetence, carelessness, a lack of piety, or even as an act of piety (Hurtado). It can also be reflective of knowledge, proficiency, and tradition. The rhetoric of “faithfulness,” tied as it is to the hypothetical constructs of the text-critical and canonical imaginaries, is too murky to be useful and incongruous with material evidence. More neutral terms like “precision” or “accuracy” can be used in cases where this is what is meant with regard to the comparison between a scribe’s copy and their (often hypothetical) exemplar. Fluidity and fluctuation furthermore need not be considered major detractors from the “faithfulness” of manuscripts and their scribes, but can rather be acknowledged as part and parcel of the tradition of textual transmission.<sup>57</sup> The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri P<sup>45</sup> and P<sup>46</sup> are not fundamentally flawed, but rather represent unique instances of reception and reflect the fluidity endemic to manuscript traditions. Their peculiarities are therefore key to their analysis as unique documents, rather than a departure from some early Christian norm of supposedly more faithful scribal practice.

في هذه المقالة تستخدم الباحثة أوراق البردي من مجموعة تشيستر بيتي كطريقة لتحليل الكتابات العلمية المتخصصة واللغة المستخدمة فيها فيما يتعلق بمسألة أمانة الكتابة والنقل للنصوص الإنجيلية ومهمة الكتابة والنسخ في هذا المجال وخاصة فيما يتعلق بعملية نسخ العهد الجديد. تقول الباحثة أن المصطلحات التي تشير إلى مسألة “أمانة النقل” أو بالإنجليزية “scribal faithfulness” ما هي إلا وسيلة تخيلية الهدف منها الابتعاد عن الواقع الذي تشير إليه العديد من النصوص المحفوظة على أوراق البردية وهي الفكرة السائدة في معظم دراسات العهد الجديد. ولذلك تدعو الباحثة إلى النظر إلى مثل هذه المخطوطات، مثل مخطوطات برديات تشيستر بيتي، بعيداً عن إطار النص الأصلي أو استعادة نص النسخة الأصلية من الإنجيل وذلك على أساس أن مثل هذه النصوص تعطينا نظرة فريدة على عملية نقل ونسخ نصوص الكتاب المقدس بكل ما يتعلق بعملية النقل هذه من مهام يشترك فيها الكتابة أويقومون بها نيابة عن مجتمع المتدينين وذلك من أجل صياغة للعهد الجديد تناسب الظروف التاريخي الذي تشير إليه هذه البرديات.

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<sup>56</sup> See Cerquiglini, 1999.

<sup>57</sup> Lundhaug 2017, 20–54; Lundhaug / Lied 2017, 29.

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Kristine Rose-Beers

# The Threads that Bind: Evidence of the Early Codex Structure in Chester Beatty's Papyri

الخيوط التي تربط: بنية الكتاب الكودكس من خلال برديات تشيستر بيتي،  
كريستين روز بيرز

## 1 Introduction

Chester Beatty manuscript CBL BP XXI (Ac. 1499) preserves crucial physical evidence of a fourth century multi-quire papyrus codex. This paper considers the materiality of this manuscript and its relationship to other early binding structures, particularly the Nag Hammadi codices (NHC I–XIII) and Chester Beatty's Biblical Papyri (CBL BP I, CBL BP II, and CBL BP IX).

## 2 Background

The early codex (CBL BP XXI), as represented among the Chester Beatty papyri manuscripts, is a fascinating object. As Belgian bookbinder and historian of the book Berthe Van Regemorter (1879–1964) said in her 1958 monograph, “I discovered that among the treasures of the Chester Beatty Library there was evidence of the origin of book-binding which gives us a better knowledge of its slow evolution.”<sup>1</sup>

Within the Chester Beatty collections it is possible to trace the evolution of the codex form from a simple papyrus roll to a single-quire codex, and subsequently to a multi-quire codex sewn and bound in cartonnage boards.<sup>2</sup> The extant physical evidence suggests that this evolution that took place over the space of just a few hundred years. From a multi-quire papyrus codex it was a relatively small technological, chronological, and material jump to parchment quires bound in wooden boards, a predominant feature of the early multi-quire codex. Wooden boards are a feature of several of the first extant multi-quire bindings, including Chester Beatty manuscripts CBL Cpt 813 and CBL Cpt 814 (both from Egypt, ca. 600 CE).

Papyrus in a scroll format was the predominant substrate available to early scribes and binders. The Chester Beatty Panopolis papyri (CBL PanPap I–V, official correspondence of the Strategus of Panopolis on the recto, tax receipts on the verso) provide evidence of a reused papyrus roll, folded, and then cut into bifolia to produce a codex form.<sup>3</sup> The text written on the scroll dates the manuscript to 298 CE. It was converted to a book to just a few decades later, its receipts dated to between 339 and 345 CE, although very little physical evidence remains of this early codex.

Whether the quire was ever secured with anything more than a single fold, for example by adhesive or a discreet single tacketing stitch, we may never know, although thanks to T. C. Skeat's 1964 publication we have images of a single large quire. Skeat states only that “the codex consisted of a number of sheets of papyrus, doubled over to form a single unwieldy quire. The leaves, unsecured by any form of sewing, were extremely thick, and examination quickly revealed that they were formed from two thicknesses of papyrus gummed together.”<sup>4</sup>

At the time of the Panopolis papyri discovery in the early twentieth century, it is fair to say that it was most valued for its text. As was common practice at the time, the manuscript was disassembled and stored between glass. Glass enclosures remain the standard preservation technique for delicate papyri today, allowing scholars to access the precious texts these folios contain without compromising their physical stability. However, glazing does little to conserve any three-dimensionality or codicological evidence the manuscript may once have held. As such, we are reliant upon rare photographic evidence by scholars such as Skeat or written reports made by witnesses before the manuscripts were dismembered (Figure 1). The work of Hugo Ibscher (1874–1943) in Germany and Stanley Baker (1919–2007) at the British Museum is recorded in correspondence between collectors and museums, as well as a handful of articles published by early twentieth

<sup>1</sup> Van Regemorter 1958.

<sup>2</sup> I am grateful to Ana Beny for the conversations over the past decade that have led me to explore this topic, and particularly the Chester Beatty codices, in more detail. See Beny / Rose-Beers 2016.

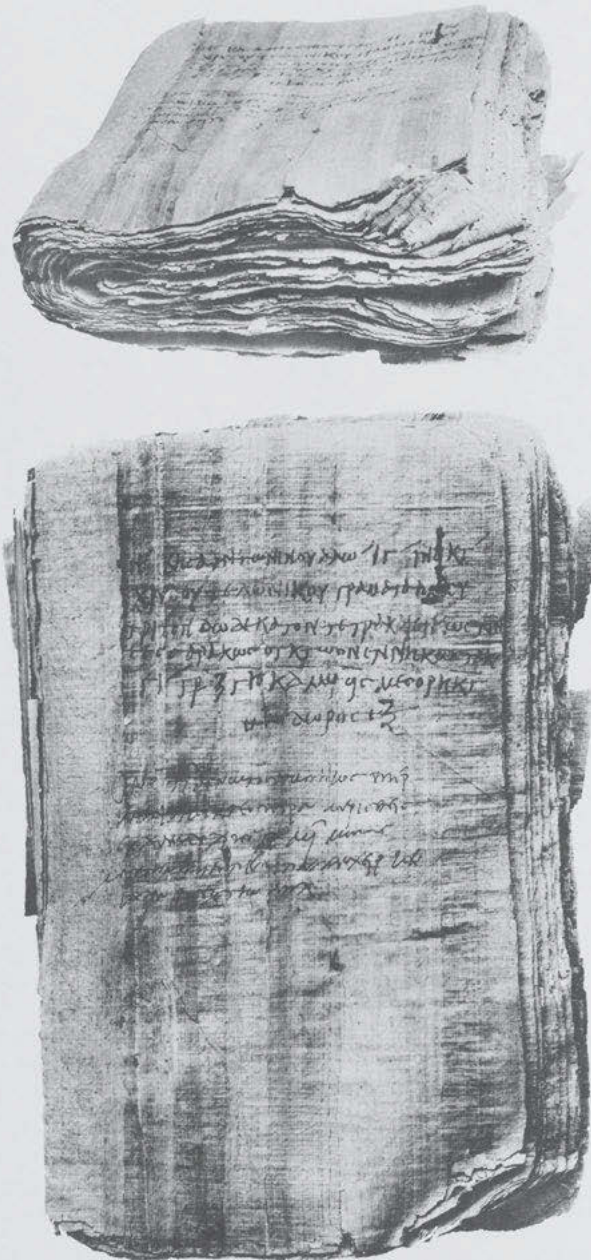
<sup>3</sup> Skeat 1964.

<sup>4</sup> Skeat 1964, vii.

Kristine Rose-Beers, The Chester Beatty



PLATE I



THE PAPYRUS CODEX BEFORE TREATMENT  
Approximately one-half original size

**Figure 1:** CBL PapPan I–V. Panopolis quire before glazing. Taken from T. C. Skeat, *Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library*, Dublin: Hodges and Figgis, 1964.

century conservators.<sup>5</sup> Often these accounts give us only a tantalising suggestion of the codex which is now flat in glass before us.

## 2.1 Biblical papyri at the Chester Beatty

A brief document written by Sir Alfred Chester Beatty and preserved in the Chester Beatty Archives, the “MEMORANDUM re Discovery of Early Biblical Papyri, based on conference with Shaker Farag on March 17th & 18th, 1934” is one such record of a three-dimensional manuscript now preserved between glass.<sup>6</sup> This memorandum was likely written by Beatty in an effort to document his acquisition.<sup>7</sup> The papyrus was discovered in three jars described as between 14 to 15 inches tall and around 8 to 10 inches wide between 1928 and 1930. Their contents were described as follows:

One of the jars contained the Papyri in more or less dust. . . The other two jars contained papyri in fairly good condition. They were placed upright in the jars. They were shoved in rather loosely and there were no bindings. The leaves, however, were held together in some cases by the binding cord the holes of which are shown in the margins of many of the papyri leaves.

In the second jar

there are a series of pages from the New Testament that seem to have had originally about 16 lines and they were in pretty good condition the bottom margin and a few of the lines being missing. These apparently were found in one of the jars. . . The other [third] jar contained a portion of the Old Testament on very long sheets of papyri. These had been bent double and put in the jar bent double (CBP/B/03/031).

These descriptions present a conundrum: were there ever any bindings for these folia? If so, were they purposefully removed before the books were placed in the jars? Second, did physical evidence of the binding cord mentioned in the first jar survive? If so, what was it made from, and which of the leaves were held together?

In the glazed folios of CBL BP I (P<sup>45</sup>) and CBL BP II (P<sup>46</sup>), the memorandum's binding cords and holes become something more tangible. The evidence provided from the combination of the surviving bifolia and pagination suggests that CBL BP II, the Pauline Epistles, was constructed from a single quire of fifty-two sheets of papyrus folded in the middle to form a total of 104 folios (208 pages).

However, we can see that there is no evidence of consistent piercing through the folia which would indicate a single sewing scheme, although a few folios do seem to have regular lacunae (Figure 2). Current dimensions suggest considerable losses, but 26 lines is consistent with the memorandum's description of the manuscript found in jar two.

Although not an Old Testament text, CBL BP I fits the physical description of the contents of the third jar with evidence of damage and loss through the centre of the pages, suggesting this manuscript was once folded in half. Regularly positioned piercings in the inner margin are consistent with previous sewing and approximately match the location of the sewing holes marked on the diagram on the final page of the memorandum, but not the overall dimensions (Figure 3).

From here the details become muddled. First, the diagram at the end of the memorandum gives rather tall and strangely narrow dimensions for the manuscript – around 355 x 125mm, as opposed to the 242 x 472mm witnessed by the glazed folios of CBL BP I (Figure 4). Second, the text direction in the first image from the memorandum appears to indicate the pages were folded *with* the manuscript text – horizontally across the page – whilst the physical evidence of CBL BP I shows damage concurrent with a vertical fold traversing the lines of text. The physical evidence in the small numbers of folios from CBL BP VII and CBL BP VIII, texts from the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah identified by a Bishop of the Greek Church in the memorandum, does not neatly align with the diagram either.

There are other inconsistencies between the glazed folia and the memorandum. In the memorandum, Beatty says he has seen 15 leaves and knows of more, but it is believed that CBL BP I contained 56 bifolia.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, CBL BP I contains the Four Gospels and Acts, not the Old Testament as described. As Nongbri has discussed, CBL BP IX and CBL BP X, the Ezekiel-Daniel-Esther codex (P<sup>967</sup>) shared with Cologne and Princeton, fit the physical description in the memorandum much more accurately.<sup>9</sup> The number of folios in the Cologne manuscript, an estimated 236 pages or 118 folios, is a long way from the memorandum's 15 leaves,<sup>10</sup> but the damage at the centre of these folia is reminiscent of the damage seen in CBL BP I, including the direction of the fold in relation to the text. Given these inconsistencies it is only fair to say that precisely which pages of biblical papyri were contained

<sup>5</sup> Ibscher 1938.

<sup>6</sup> Chester Beatty Archive, Chester Beatty Papers [CBP], CBP/B/03/031; see also, Nongbri 2014, 93–116.

<sup>7</sup> See Jill Unkel's article in this volume.

<sup>8</sup> For discussion regarding the questionable reliability of the memorandum, see Unkel in this volume.

<sup>9</sup> Nongbri 2014, 108.

<sup>10</sup> See Unkel in this volume.

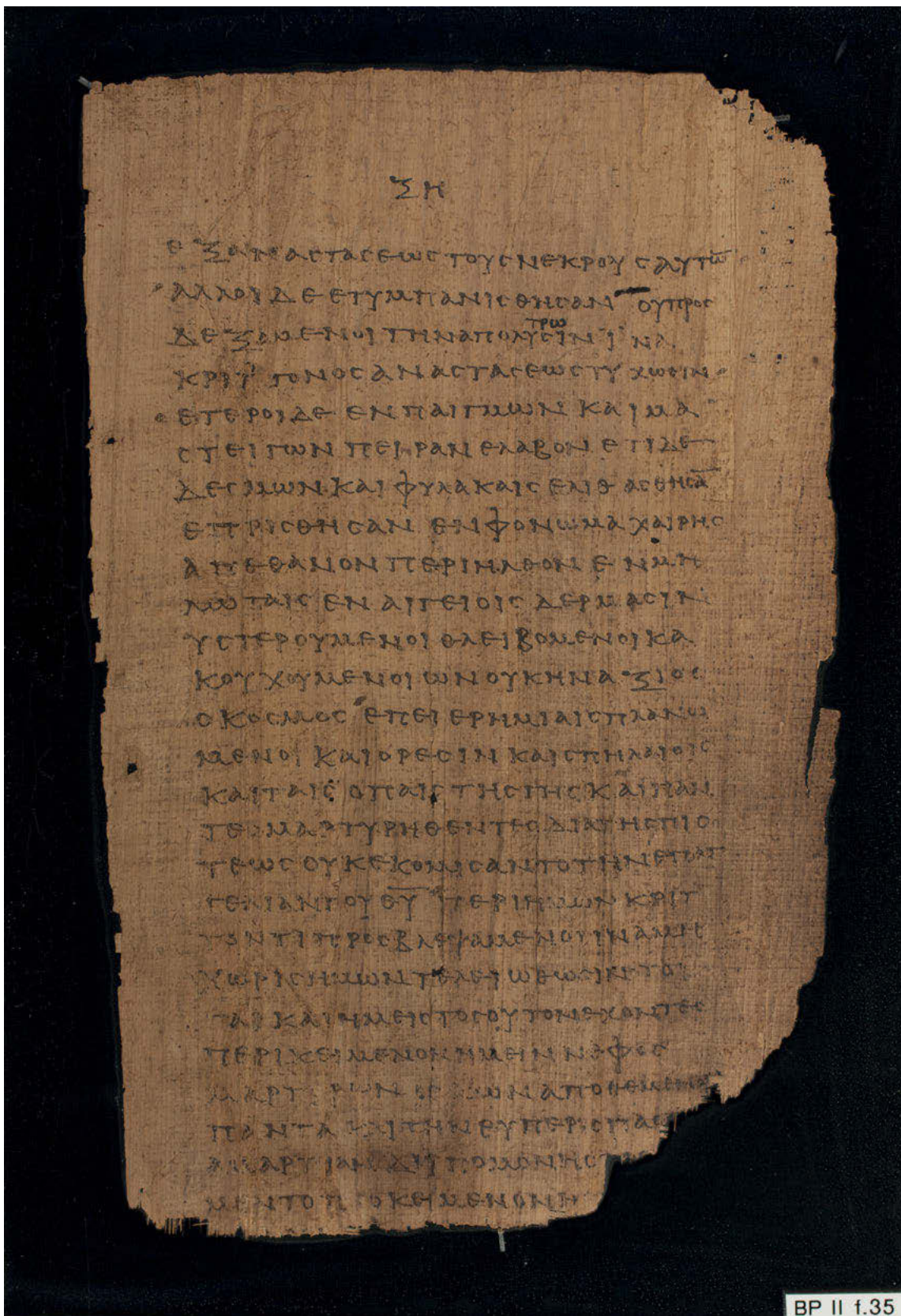


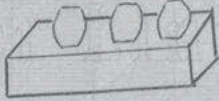
Figure 2: CBL BP II f. 35, Hebr. 11,35–12,1; 12,2–11, Regular lacunae parallel to the spine edge of the folio may be indicative of a previous sewing.

MEMORANDUM re Discovery of Early Biblical Papyri.  
Based on conference with Shaker Farag on March 17th & 18th, 1934.

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The Papyri in question were found in three earthenware jars about 1928-1930 by some Arabs that were digging near the Monastery of \_\_\_\_\_ in Egypt about \_\_\_\_\_ miles south of Cairo on the \_\_\_\_\_ bank of the Nile (Some brief notes in reference to the Monastery will be found attached to this memo).

The jars in which the Papyri were found, were found a few feet below the surface in the sand. They were on top of a wooden coffin. \* From the description they were in approximately the position shown in the sketch below:



\* Very often Mas were actually buried in the coffin. There are cases where a copy of the Gospels was buried with an Archbishop, the Mas being placed in his hands.

- 2 -

The jars were about 14" to 15" high and about 8"-10" inches wide (The figures may be very inaccurate as the Arabs are not noted for their accuracy. I am, however, trying to get one of the original jars or failing that to get a photograph and also get the measurements of the jar. In the meantime the dimensions given above must be considered as subject to subsequent revision). One of these jars contained the Papyri in more or less dust. I understand that a few fragments were picked out but broadly speaking this jar yielded practically nothing. (They used the expression that the contents were "burned", not meaning that they were burned with fire but that dampness and other agents had practically destroyed them).

The other two jars contained papyri in fairly good condition. They were placed upright in the jars. They were shoved in rather loosely and there were no bindings. The leaves, however, were held together in some cases by the binding cord the holes of which are shown in the margins of many of the papyri leaves.


There are a series of pages from the New Testament that seem to have had originally about 26 lines and they were in pretty good condition the bottom margin and a few of the lines being missing. These apparently were found in one of the jars.

The other jar contained a portion of the Old Testament on very long sheets of papyri. These had been bent double and put

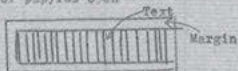
- 3 -

in the jar bent double like the illustration

Pages bent to go in jar:



Sheet of papyrus open



Detailed dimensions given on a later page.

These were taken out of jar and placed in moist (Barseem) which made the papyri moist enough to straighten out. This was done. These pages are still in the hands of the Egyptian. A few have been photographed and before photographing they were shown to a Bishop of the Greek Church who pronounced them Third Century and stated that they were portions of the Prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah. I have seen fifteen leaves and I understand he has a number more but he will not state how many. They are in fine condition (outside of being slightly damaged in the centre where they were bent.)

Note: The coffin on which the three jars were found was of wood and broken, and close to the coffin a glass lamp was found. Plain glass (not coloured) with date of glass on the outside of the lamp.

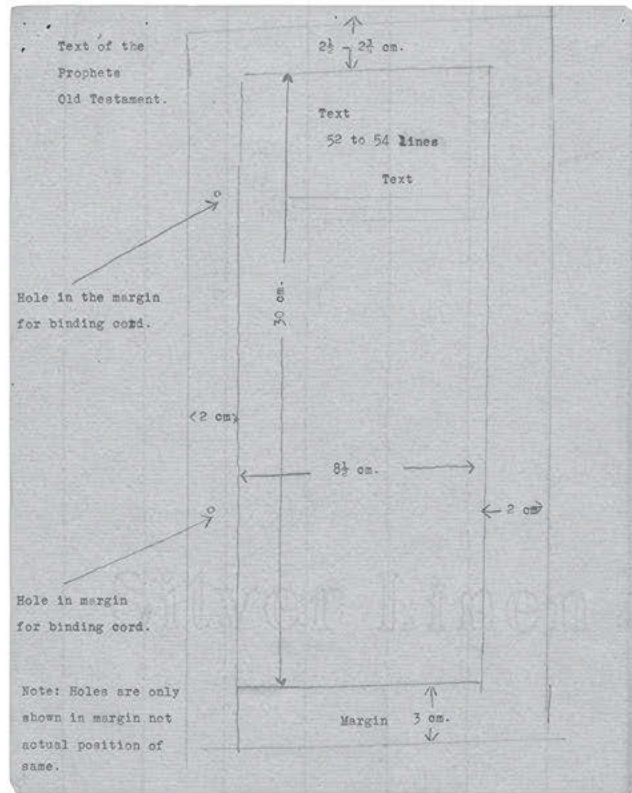
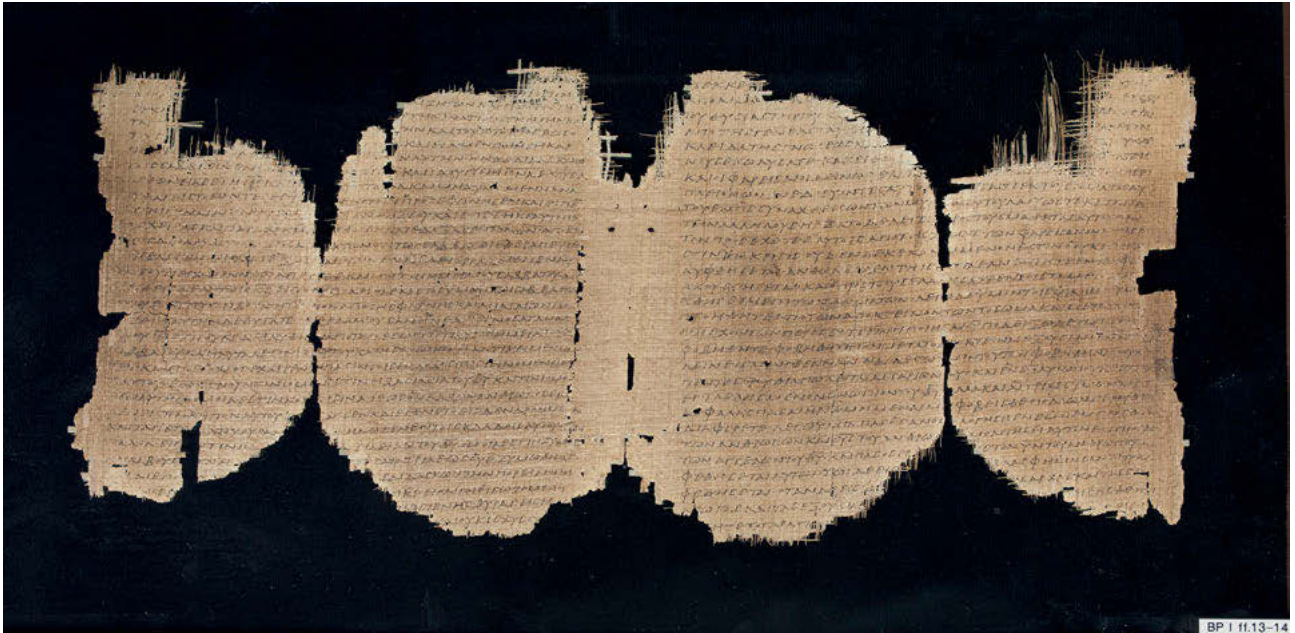


Figure 3: CBP/B/03/031. MEMORANDUM re Discovery of Early Biblical Papyri, based on conference with Shaker Farag on 17 and 18 March 1934.



**Figure 4:** CBL BP I ff. 13–14, Luc. 11,50–12,12; 12,18–37; 12,42–13,1; 13,6–24. This glazed folio preserves evidence of the books format and overall dimensions, as well a vertical line of damage running through the centre of the folia.

in the third jar remains unclear. None of the surviving books retain physical evidence of “binding cords.”

## 2.2 Reconstructions as a means of understanding

Decoding historic memoranda and linking them with manuscript objects is not always neat, but by making reconstructions using the information garnered from fragmentary physical evidence, the conservator can contribute to our understanding of the materiality of these objects. Rather than reading the text of the manuscript, the conservator reads the materials. Model making is a common tool in conservation education, and one which continues to be directly relevant to the understanding of historic manuscript materials and items undergoing treatment.

In the case of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri, and CBL BP II in particular, reconstructions offer us a Panopolis-like quire, unsecured and unwieldy (Figure 1). For ease of use, I added a loop of cord to hold the springy block in place, but there is no physical evidence to suggest the manuscripts were ever held in this way (Figure 5). An equally inelegant but loosely secured textblock model was produced by stab stitching a model of the textblock for CBL BP I and the Ezekiel-Daniel-Esther folios. To ensure the folios were still accessible, they were sewn in small individual groups, not as a single cumbersome textblock (Figure 6). This approach corresponds with the location of

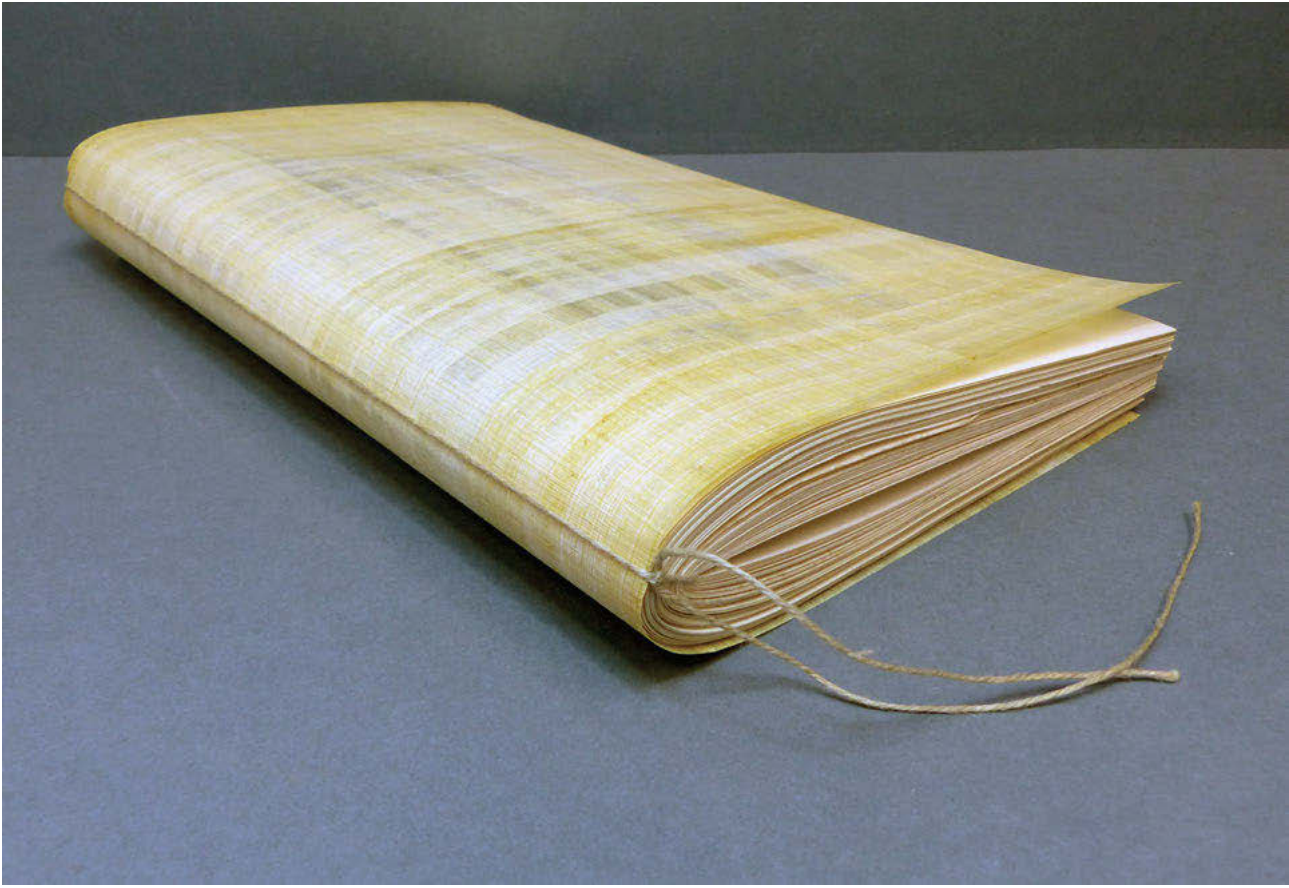
the holes in the folios, which are not consistently placed, and may indicate the use of multi-quire stab sewing to form a prototype multi-quire codex, although this cannot be proved due to the small number of bifolia that survive.<sup>11</sup> None of these structures are particularly easy to use, even with paper in lieu of papyrus. They illustrate that a preliminary codex form was in use, but that it had yet to be codified with the structural innovations necessary to create a fully functioning book. The overall impression is of an emergent technology, not yet ergonomically designed.

## 2.3 Nag Hammadi

Although the bindings of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri are lost, or more probably were never much more than a fold or a pair of threads, other extant manuscripts offer us a snapshot of a bound single-quire codex from around the same period and geographic context. The earliest known reasonably *intact* codices date to the third or fourth century CE. Thirteen papyri codices were discovered in Nag Hammadi in Egypt in 1949. They contain texts written in the Coptic language, and their pamphlet-like bindings have been described in detail by Julia Miller and Pamela Spitzmueller in their essay, “A Gift from the Desert: A Report on the Nag Hammadi Codices.”<sup>12</sup> The Nag Hammadi books have simple but elegant structures. Working

<sup>11</sup> Boudalis 2018, 61–3.

<sup>12</sup> Miller / Spitzmueller 2018, 420–589.



**Figure 5:** Binding model. A model of CBL BP II secured with a loop of cord. Image by author.

from direct observation of the manuscripts and their bindings in the Coptic Museum in Cairo (NHC I–XIII), as well as previous published documentary evidence,<sup>13</sup> Miller and Spitzmueller further classify the bindings with close analysis of their individual characteristics. Notably, they suggest the work of two individual binders in the corpus, identifiable from the way they work, rather than any kind of written signature.<sup>14</sup> Eleven of the manuscripts were bound in limp leather bindings. Codex XII disappeared shortly after its discovery, and there is no evidence that manuscript XIII was ever bound in any way. Codex I is comprised of three quires, but the attachment to the cover is unclear and, since the quires are not joined to one another, it cannot be seen as a true multi-quire textblock, a subject we will come back to.

The structure of the Nag Hammadi codices presents different physical evidence to that preserved in the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri. Perhaps most obviously, the piercings for joining the papyrus to its covers are in the centre of the spine fold, rather than the holes parallel to the spine

edge indicative of stab stitching that can be seen in CBL BP I (see Figure 4). As Van Regemorter notes in her 1955 essay “Le Moyen Age,”<sup>15</sup> the structure of the Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri manuscripts seems to have rather more in common with the joining system seen in wax tablets, or indeed the light and simple stab bindings which were evolving independently in East Asia, than the Nag Hammadi codices.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.4 The multi-quire codex

Just as the transition from roll to codex happened gradually, it took time for the book to grow from a single to multi-quire structure. A true multi-quire textblock is one in which each quire is joined to the next to form a single entity. The textblock, however many quires it contains, acts as one component of the book. This technological leap is explored by book conservator Georgios Boudalis in his publication, *The Codex & Crafts in Late Antiquity*.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> In particular, the extensive studies of James Robinson; for example, Robinson 1975, 189–90.

<sup>14</sup> Miller / Spitzmueller 2018, 465.

<sup>15</sup> Van Regemorter 1992, 107–31.

<sup>16</sup> Zhizhong 1989, 104–19.

<sup>17</sup> Boudalis 2018.



**Figure 6:** Binding model. A model of CBL BP I, which may have been joined as small individual groups of folios to create a prototype multi-quire codex. Image by author.

Boudalis presents his hypothesis that the innovation of the multi-quire codex was facilitated by the adoption of other craft techniques from late antiquity. Specifically, that the network of sewn loops which allows a series of quires to be joined, is a direct transfer from the technique of cross-knit looping textiles, such as socks (Figure 7).<sup>18</sup>

The first papyrus multi-quire textblocks are sewn with an unsupported link, or loop-stitch, forming a chevron or herringbone pattern across the spine of the book. A strong thin linen thread works between each gathering to form a network of loops which links them together (Figure 8). The parity between this stitch and the textiles of late antiquity is explored in detail by Boudalis, his main argument being that it was a simple step to move from cross-knit looping textile to a loop-based link stitch.<sup>19</sup>

The link stitch is also the first time that we observe a chevron in the early book structure. It is a functional pattern.

<sup>18</sup> Cross-knit looping is a type of nåbinding which predates both knitting and crochet. A length of thread is passed through a series of loops to form a textile without knots.

<sup>19</sup> Boudalis 2018, 58.

Formed firstly when sewing threads unite the quires of a textblock with an unsupported link stitch, but it is later found in the first endbands of Coptic bindings described by Petersen in the finds from Hammouli now in the Morgan Library.<sup>20</sup> It is the Fibonacci sequence of book structure – a perfect series of shapes, which occurs organically and is repeated infinitely throughout the history of bookbinding.

## 2.5 CBL BP XXI

The chevron patterned link stitch brings us to perhaps the first multi-quire codex at the Chester Beatty: CBL BP XXI, a book containing a Greek grammar and a Graeco-Latin lexicon on the Pauline Epistles.<sup>21</sup> The manuscript is now disassembled, lying partly flat between glass, and partly

<sup>20</sup> Petersen 2021.

<sup>21</sup> The Chester Beatty holds two papyrus codices with detached leather covered cartonnage bindings. The other, the Book of Joshua (CBL Cpt 2019 and CBL Cpt 2020) is a Coptic manuscript and was also studied by Van Regemorter.



**Figure 7:** A textile preserving the technique of cross-knit looping, a form of nålbinding. NMI 1914: 205 © National Museum of Ireland.

unmounted in groups of blank folia in folders. It has recently been the subject of conservation treatment to stabilise the loose quires in advance of rehousing digitisation and display for the special exhibition, *First Fragments: Biblical Papyrus from Roman Egypt*, which opened in October 2022.<sup>22</sup>

The folia were certainly once nested together as quires and sewn together to form a true multi-quire codex. The intact structure is described by Berthe van Regemorter in her essay, “The Stationer-Bookseller in Egypt,” albeit with an uncharacteristic lack of diagrams and specific details.<sup>23</sup> Van Regemorter is normally a prolific note taker and not one to skimp on detail, so the rather brief description given in this essay is strange. From letters in the Chester Beatty Archive, we can discern that this is one of the manuscripts she first saw, at Beatty’s request, at the British Museum in London in June 1956.<sup>24</sup> It seems that Beatty’s

Librarian, J. V. S. Wilkinson (1885–1957), was reluctant for Van Regemorter to publicise her observations when the manuscript was first acquired. In a letter from Wilkinson to Van Regemorter on 11 June 1956 just prior to her viewing he says, “Important: Please be very careful not to speak about the new codices to anyone as the matter is still confidential” (CBP/B/05/42). This reticence was probably due to a pending sale and may explain the scarcity of detail in Van Regemorter’s notes and 1958 publication.<sup>25</sup> Shortly after her visit to London in mid-June 1956, Van Regemorter sent a letter with her informal “Notes on the Papyri I have seen in the British Museum” to Wilkinson (25 June 1956, CBP/B/05/42). She comments on a copy of Joshua (CBL Cpt 2019 and CBL Cpt 2020, Acc. 1389, 300–350 CE), and “The large blank papyri,” (CBL PapPan I–V) as well as a manuscript which must be CBL BP XXI. She writes, “No. 2 Dictionary (5<sup>th</sup> Century) There are 4 quires intact. There are small strips of parchment as well outside than inside the quires. The sewing has been done with two independent threads. Some very special details in the way the mss has been covered” (25 June 1956, CBP/B/05/42) (Figure 9).

<sup>22</sup> See also the preliminary online exhibition *Fragments: The Chester Beatty Biblical Papyri in Context*, <https://chesterbeatty.ie/exhibitions/fragments/> (accessed 25 May 2022).

<sup>23</sup> Van Regemorter 1992, 203–206.

<sup>24</sup> J. V. S. Wilkinson to Berthe van Regemorter, 11 June 1956, CBP/B/05/42; Skeat report, 4 June 1966, CBP/B/05/48.

<sup>25</sup> Van Regemorter 1958.



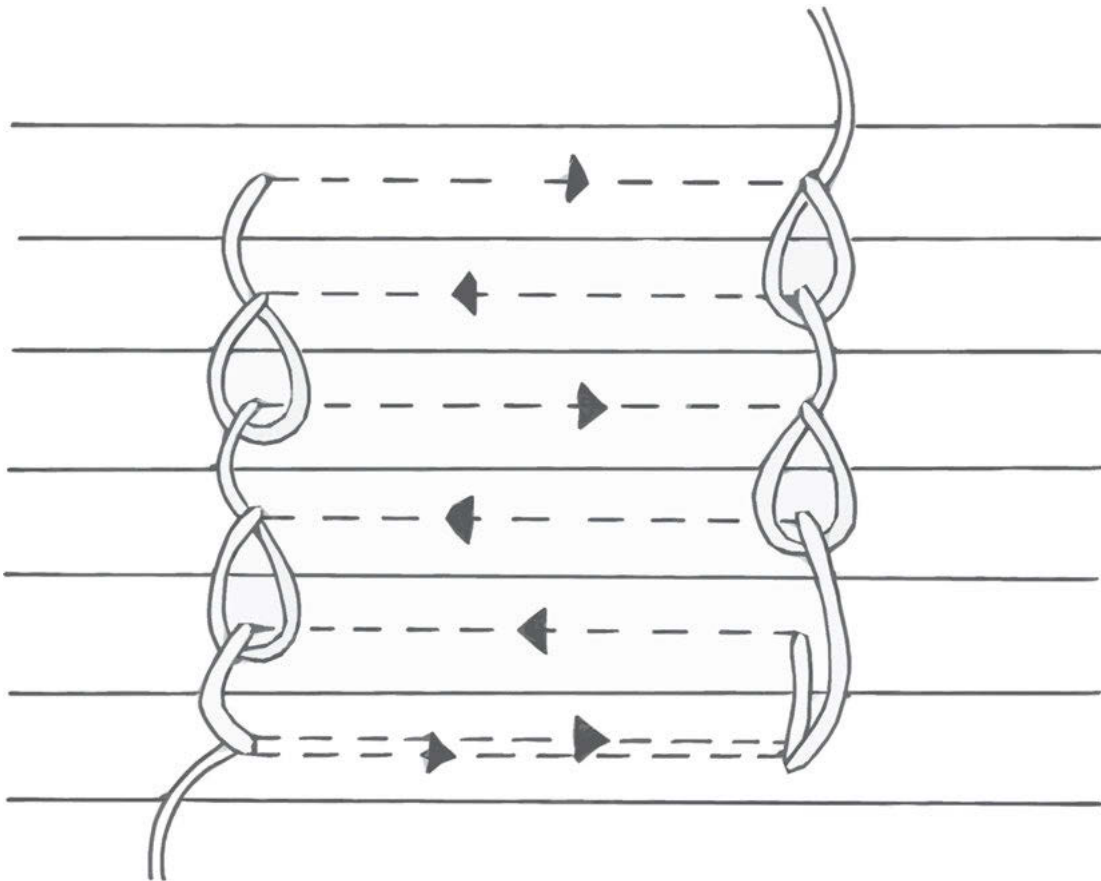


Figure 8: Diagram of a link stitch. Diagram by author.

## 2.6 Wouters's collation

A detailed reconstruction of the original form and text of CBL BP XXI was published by Alfons Wouters in 1988.<sup>26</sup> Wouters goes so far as to reconstruct the quires in diagrams, but in terms of binding construction he refers to Van Regemorter. He reaches the conclusion that there were six or perhaps seven quires and puts them in a tentative order, again using evidence from Van Regemorter, coupled with his own analysis of the text and the direction of the papyrus fibres. Wouters does not refer to Van Regemorter's initial observations from 1956, where she noted four quires.

Additionally, Wouters's terminology is confusing. The use of pagination, foliation, lettering, and numbering can be hard to follow, and defies conventional collation mapping. Between them, both publications offer almost enough information to make sense of the surviving material, but problems remain. In particular, the original order of the folios, the composition of the quires, *the number of quires*, and the attachment between cover and textblock.

For this reason, creating a physical reconstruction was a logical investigative tool, and one which might inform the conservation treatment of the manuscript.

## 2.7 Collation queries

In order to construct a model of the textblock, it was first essential to confirm the collation of the manuscript (Figure 10). Wouters's reconstruction supposes there were six quires, which contradicts Van Regemorter's note stating that she saw a manuscript with four quires in 1956. Wouters's study of the text and folios was considered in-depth, but Van Regemorter had a practical hand and a discerning eye. When studying the manuscript today, both the loose quires and the folia in glass, it is clear that there were only four central sets of parchment stays. These narrow strips of folded material were used to reinforce the sewing in the centre and along the spine of the quire. If there had been more, and thus more quires, where are they?

<sup>26</sup> Wouters 1988.

Notes on the papyri I have seen in the  
British Museum.

Nr I Books of Josuah and Judith. not later than 4th century.

interesting for the way the quires were attached to the leather covering, some parchment strips being glued(?) or pasted to the board. The two intact quires have no traces of glue whatever nor have they outside strips of parchment.

As I did not dare to open those two intact quires, I could not see exactly how they had been sewn. However, I saw a little knot of thread outside one of the quires which reminded me of what I had seen in Bâle and I conclude that the sewing was done with two independant threads and that very likely there is a small strip of parchment inside the quire which prevents the thread to cut through the papyrus too quickly, this is the case in the Gospel of St John of Mr Rodmer.

The outside pages of this manuscript being too much detriorated to keep them as they are, it is natural that they will be put under glass but I consider that it would be a pity to cut the remaining quires into leaves. Even if they are put under glass, they should be kept without cutting them. If course the middle leaves are the only ones which will appear as they should and for the others it must be understood that the text does not follow in the proper order, but as there are only two quires I do not think this will be a very great disadvantage. If they are put under glass in the way I say, it would be very interesting to just remove a very little the inside strip of parchment (which must be kept with the inside leave) but if removed a little, it will allow to see the holes of the sewing.

If I insist on these holes and this sewing with two independant threads, it is because it is one of the peculiarities of the Egyptian sewing of the first centuries, and which has been transmitted to the Western Scriptoria: Stonyhurst Gospel, Fulda mss in the Bale University, it shows the "rayonnement" of the Egyptian culture. I shall tell more about that when in Dublin.

No 2 Dictionary (5th century)

There are 4 quires intact. There are small strips of parchment as well outside than inside the quires. The sewing has been done with two independant threads. Some very special details in the way the mss has been covered.

No 3

The large blank papyri is the type Roberts speaks about in his article: the Codex. Very likely the text we can not see may be interesting for some student of the economic and administrative life in Egypt.

*Borthwick Regent*

Figure 9: CBP/B/05/42. Notes on the Papyri I have seen in the British Museum, 25 June 1956.

## 2.8 Collation

Van Regemorter's description of a four-quire codex is further substantiated by Chester Beatty's accession records, "Greek-Latin Dictionary. Papyrus Codex. 5<sup>th</sup> century 4 quires intact, mounted between glass. Binding and papyrus quires in brown box. 1953."<sup>27</sup> Although the register gives an accession date of 1953, closer examination suggests that this date was an inaccurate later addition.<sup>28</sup> A letter from Wilkinson inviting Van Regemorter to examine, "two papyri codices which have just been acquired by Sir Chester," as well as Van Regemorter's own notes from later that month and again on 30 July 1956,<sup>29</sup> suggest the manuscript was acquired closer to this time in the summer of 1956 rather than the given date of 1953.<sup>30</sup> This disparity in dating is significant as it substantiates Van Regemorter's description in 1956 as the earliest observation of the manuscript's materiality.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, it underlines Wilkinson's request for discretion around Beatty's pending purchase and explains why the manuscript is not mentioned in Van Regemorter's 1958 publication beyond a single line which must certainly be referring to the manuscripts she saw at the British Museum: "Some other codices of a very early date in the Chester Beatty Library, yet unpublished and which I was able to examine."<sup>32</sup>

Using transmitted light to examine the folios, including those between glass, it has been possible to tentatively establish the makeup and order of the four quires. Furthermore, there is clear evidence that the folios were cut from more than one scroll.

Considering Wouters's work closely alongside the physical evidence, it remains likely that Quire A was first. It is now formed of five bifolia, but the inconsistent papyrus fibre direction (vertical facing horizontal, rather than vertical facing vertical) suggests pages are missing between bifolia II and III. These are probably among the glazed folia and contrast to Wouters's statement that this quire is "practically undamaged."<sup>33</sup> Thick adhesive accretions at the spine edge of page one suggests it was once adhered to the inside of the cover.

<sup>27</sup> Chester Beatty Library acquisitions from April 1956, CBP/B/01/2.

<sup>28</sup> I am grateful to Hyder Abbas and Jill Unkel for this important observation. It is also noted by Wouters 1988, xi.

<sup>29</sup> Wilkinson to Van Regemorter, 11 June 1956, and Van Regemorter to Wilkinson, 30 July 1956, CBP/B/05/42.

<sup>30</sup> Another report on the same manuscript, as well as Panopolis material (CBL PapPan I–V) was written by Skeat and is dated 4 June 1956, CBP/B/05/48.

<sup>31</sup> Skeat's report of a few weeks earlier only briefly notes, "This is a papyrus codex, of which at least 37 leaves are blank," 4 June 1956, CBP/B/05/48.

<sup>32</sup> Van Regemorter 1958, 25.

<sup>33</sup> Wouters 1988, 21.

Quire A was followed by Quire B. This is evident from the fragmentary parchment stay that can be seen adhered to the *intact* stay at the tail of Quire A. It is likely that Quire B was also formed of at least five bifolia. Wouters's bifolia IV is in fact not conjoint and can be paired with one of the two separate leaves he recorded as "*e. Two separate leaves*" (Figure 11).<sup>34</sup>

The second half of this bifolio from Quire B can be paired with the outermost folio of the original third quire—Wouters's Quire D—which is now a quaternion. Most significantly, this quire is formed from a scroll folded back and forth on itself with an uncut edge—now fractured—between Wouters's folia II and III.<sup>35</sup> This was first noted by Van Regemorter in 1960, although the four-year delay between her initial observations in 1956 and the publication of her essay four-years later led to a significant error: she states that "this notebook is made up of several gatherings of which most have four bifolios or sixteen pages."<sup>36</sup> This directly contradicts her 1956 notes and the extant physical evidence that records four quires.

Van Regemorter also hypothesises that the extant join on the foredge of the third quire indicates a large sheet of papyrus folded in eight—like an octavo paper fold—rather than the concertina fold of a papyrus scroll which is evident and confirmed by Wouters.<sup>37</sup> However, she was correct to assert that there is a relationship between the papyrus of the folia running both horizontally and vertically. Fibre continuations have been confirmed between the head edges of "e" + kollesis and A16; A17-3 and D12-5; as well as the tail edges of B8-9 and C8-9. This is indicative of the use of two half scrolls folded to form quires.

Furthermore, glazed bifolia 1–2, 4, 6 and 7 have a distinctive dark band at the bottom of the sheet. Together with their thin and fibrous texture, these are characteristics they share with the unglazed third quire (Quire D). Assessment of the folia with transmitted light suggests that these glazed bifolia are indeed a contiguous sheet of papyrus. However, no contiguous fibres have yet been confirmed between these folios and Quire D.

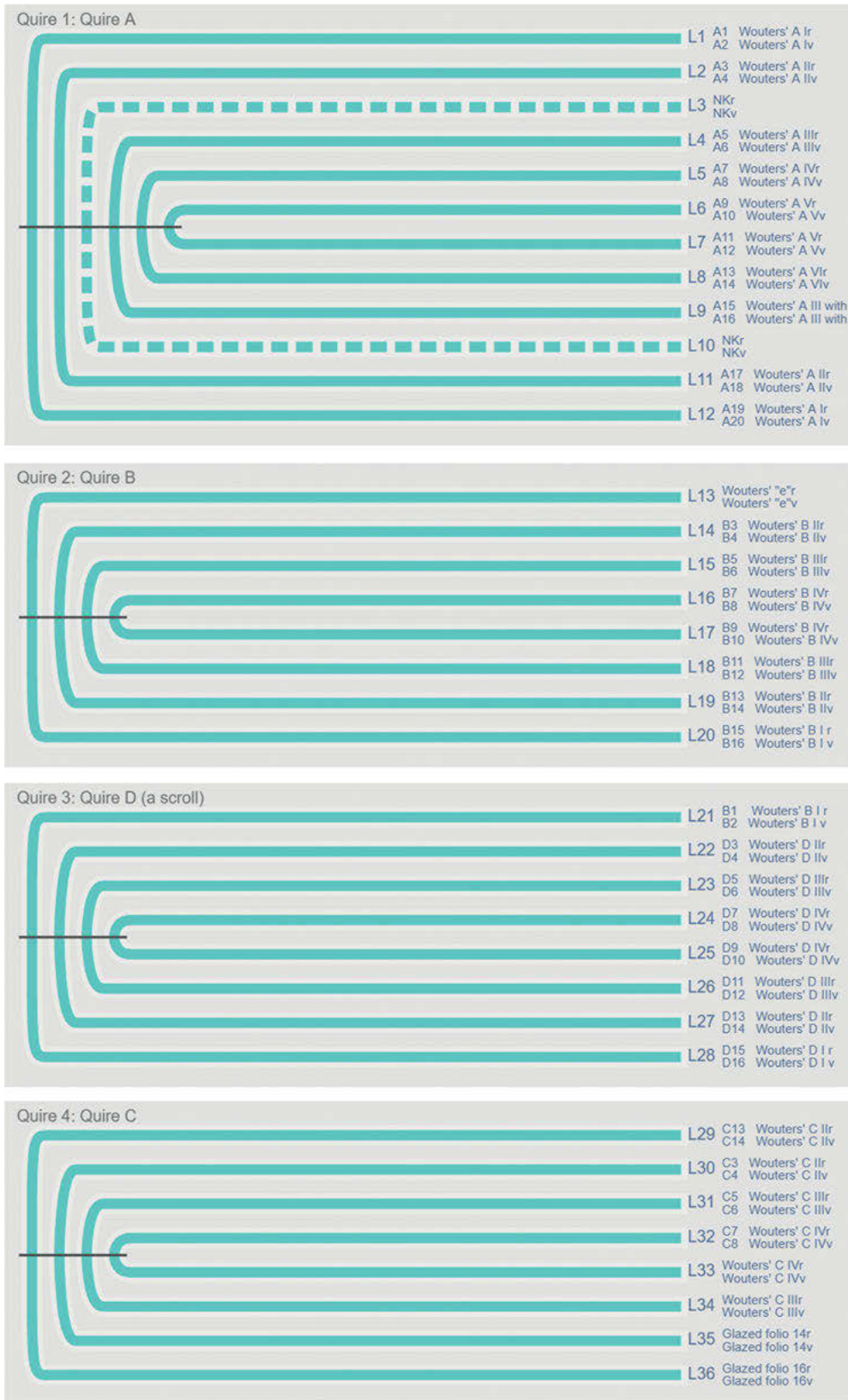
The fourth and final quire was labelled as Quire C by Wouters. It consists of two bifolia and two single folia (singletons), although it is likely that Quire C was originally considerably larger, and two matches with glazed folia have been made so far. Glazed folio 14v can be paired with the first singleton (pages 3–4). The quire finished

<sup>34</sup> Wouters 1988, 8.

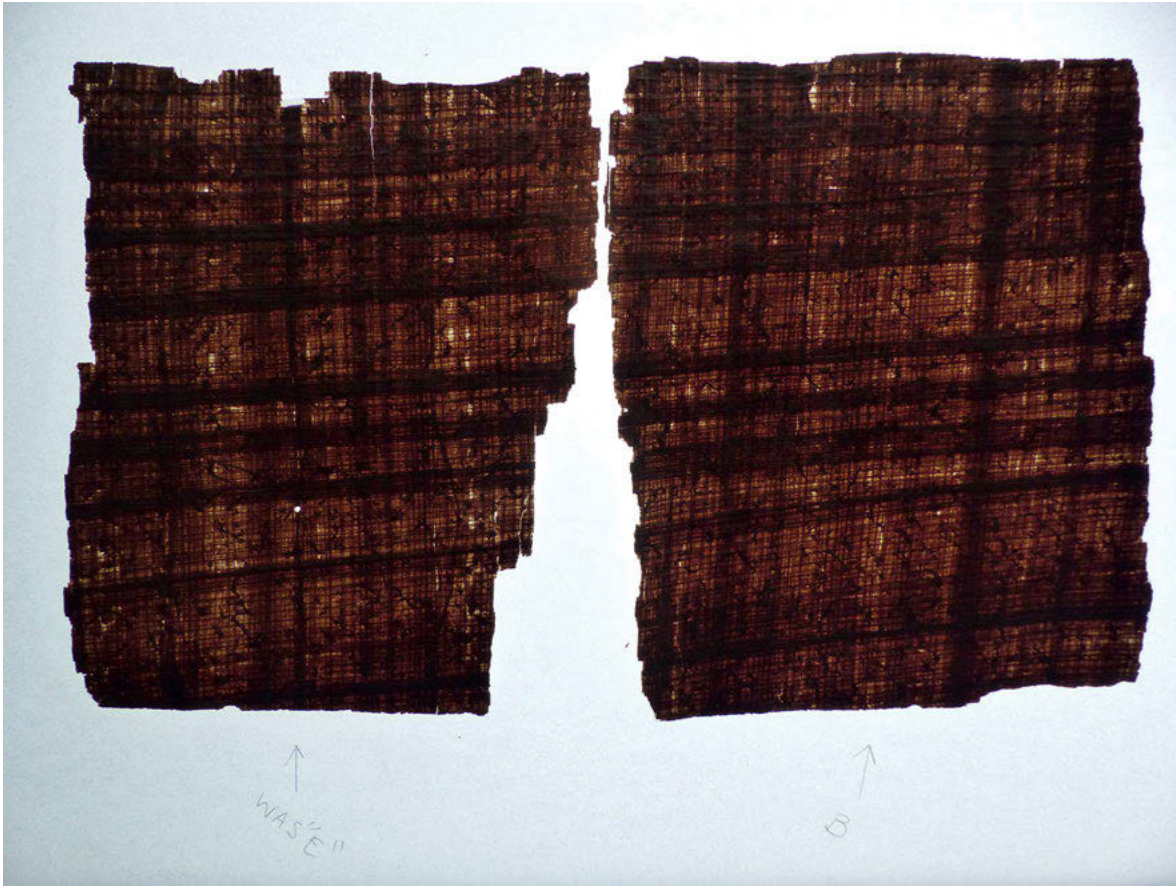
<sup>35</sup> This uncut edge is no longer intact, but the continuation of fibres remains clearly visible with transmitted light. Wouters 1988, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Van Regemorter 1992, 204.

<sup>37</sup> Wouters 1988, 19.



**Figure 10:** Proposed partial collation map for CBL BP XXI. The glazed folia 1–2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 11, 12, and 15, as well as unglazed folia “e” with kollesis and Wouters’ DI pages 1 and 2, are not yet included. This visualization was created using VCEditor on 29 August 2022.



**Figure 11:** CBL BP XXI. Wouters’s folios B 16 and the left half of E could be matched as conjoint when studied using transmitted light.

with the Roman alphabet (glazed folio 16), as noted by Van Regemorter.<sup>38</sup> Glazed folio 16 can be matched to folio II of Quire C (pages 13–14), confirming the final bifolia of the codex. The verso of this last folio also seems to bare adhesive residues, which may suggest it was adhered to the inside of the cover as a pastedown (Figure 12). Notably, this folio also preserves a ghostly shadow of the external parchment stay, confirming its placement on the outside of the quire. Whilst no conclusive match has yet been possible, the papyrus of glazed folia 12, 15, and 16 are close in texture, fibre distribution, and orientation to the rest of this quire.

Discerning the distribution of the glazed folia within this collation map of four rather than six quires has been challenging. Whilst it would be logical for the 50 extant folia to be divided evenly into four quire groups, this does not seem to be the case. Without removing the glazed folios from their enclosures, it is almost impossible to be certain about their placement within the codex. However, a small number of matches have been established, as seen in Quire C. In addition to these matches, glazed folio 10

appears to be conjoint with the separated folio “e” with kollesis. However, where precisely this bifolia belongs in the codex remains to be established.

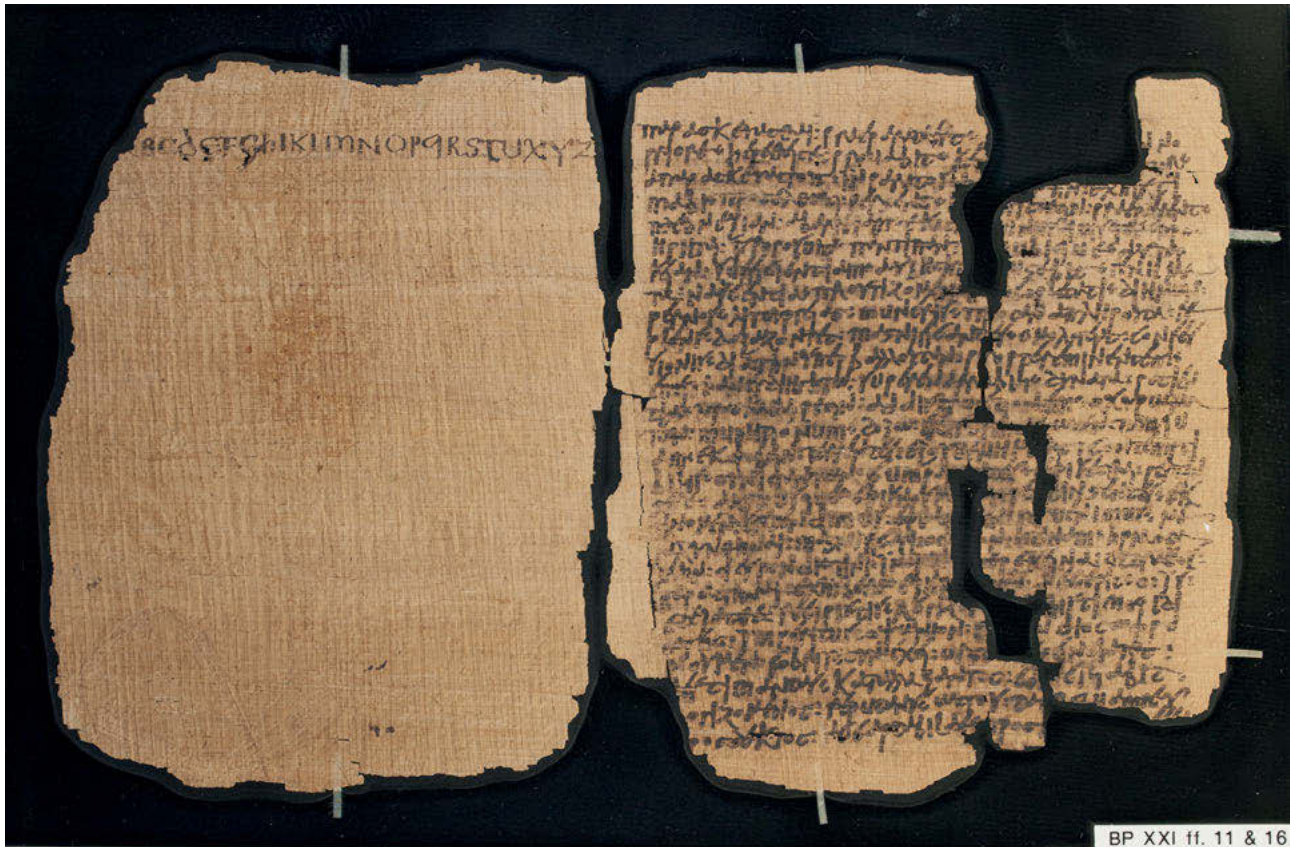
In spite of these challenges, a collation map based on four quires makes sense of the remaining physical evidence, as well as the sparse notes made by Van Regemorter. It has also facilitated the construction of a model.

## 2.9 Sewing

Although all but one of the central parchment stays of CBL BP XXI survive, it is likely that the quires also had external parchment stays. Only fragmentary evidence of these external stays survives around quires A and B. Crucially, the stays at the tail of quire A retain intact sewing threads. These include two threads in the centre of the quire and a knot with twisted tail, as well as a length of thread on the exterior of the spine with short remnants of a link stitch at either end (Figure 13).

The existence of a link stitch sewing is supported by P.Bodmer 23 (fourth century, LDAB 108542), the spine of

<sup>38</sup> Van Regemorter 1992, 204.



**Figure 12:** BP XXI ff.11 and 16. The line of a Roman alphabet was noted by Berthe van Regemorter as the last folio in the bound codex.

which remains intact.<sup>39</sup> The Chester Beatty Book of Joshua (CBL Cpt 2019) retains central parchment stays in its glazed enclosures (Figure 14), but the separate and well-preserved binding (CBL Cpt 2020) has adhered parchment strips with threads extending from the edge, providing evidence of sewn board attachment. This is most likely indicative of a sewn board binding, based on the first and last quires of the textblock forming the cover (Figure 15).<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, both CBL Cpt 2019 and CBL BP XXI share the same glazing format and brown linen buckram sealing tapes, illustrating the consistent working methods of Stanley Baker, Senior Museum Assistant in the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the British Museum, who disassembled and glazed both manuscripts around the time of their acquisition in 1956.<sup>41</sup>

When sewing the textblock model for CBL BP XXI using four needles and two pairs of sewing stations as described by Van Regemorter, parchment stays proved vital. Working together, the two parchment stays lock the bast fibre thread in place and stop the bouncy papyrus from spring-

ing away, whilst also preventing the thread from biting into the pages. The surviving threads preserved in the pages of CBL BP XXI do not provide a full picture of the sewing path the binder followed (Figure 16). However, the model shows that the sewn textblock is robust and compact with four lines of chevrons on the spine (Figure 17). There is no evidence of endbands.

## 2.10 Boards

The binding of CBL BP XXI was made from cartonnage, which Van Regemorter says must have been damp when it was formed around the textblock. The extant physical evidence confirms Van Regemorter's supposition where creases along the spine of the now-fractured binding clearly indicate that one continuous piece of cartonnage was used to form the entire cover. It seems to have been made from around five layers of papyrus, mirroring the thickness of the quires in the textblock. The damp cartonnage retained a malleability which allowed the thickness of papyrus to be moulded to the shape of the codex without incurring damage.

<sup>39</sup> Barcode :: bodmerlab (unige.ch) (accessed 3 February 2022).

<sup>40</sup> Frost 2004, 33.

<sup>41</sup> 5 July 1956, Eiddon Edwards to Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, CBP/B/05/020.



**Figure 13:** CBL BP XXI. The exterior of Quire A preserves a line of sewing thread, with fragmentary links extant. Image by author.

## 2.11 Covering and attachment

The precise process of covering the binding with brown goatskin leather is unclear. However, the physical evidence preserved in the binding today offers some clues. The formation of the boards whilst damp suggests that covering was most probably carried out as one process. Although the break along the spine of the original cover conceals any evidence of cuts or notching, review of the Nag Hammadi bindings suggests this was not uncommon. Furthermore, during the process of covering the model, small pleats formed in the leather at the head and tail of the spine, just as can be seen in the cartonnage of the surviving binding.

The turn-ins are uneven, with two separate strips of leather at the head and tail of the upper board, perhaps indicating the presence of extensions or edge flaps, now missing (Figure 18). The corners are simply lapped, with the fore-edge turned in first on the lower board and last on the upper board. This suggests a quick and perfunctory process

which again has much in common with the Nag Hammadi bindings.

Cover attachment was probably in part a simple process of adhering the spine and outermost leaves of the textblock to the inside of the prepared cover, much like a modern case binding. Thick glue accretions are present on the inside of the binding, and there are slight accretions extant on the leather turn-ins. There is no evidence of a spine lining strip, which is a feature the binding of CBL BP XXI shares with Nag Hammadi Codex II.<sup>42</sup>

Three fragments of fibrous sewing thread pierce the cartonnage along the spine edge of the upper board (Figure 19). A fourth thread is probably present but could not be seen clearly. It is not clear how these threads were related or attached to the textblock, but the cartonnage appears to “pinch” in around them, suggesting the former presence of an attached textblock. The threads’ location along the spine

<sup>42</sup> Miller / Spitzmueller 2018, 487–500.



**Figure 14:** CBL Cpt 2019.8. The central bifolio of the glazed papyri codex preserves an original parchment stay and cellulosic tacking threads.



**Figure 15:** CBL Cpt 2020. The cartonnage boards preserve evidence of a sewn board attachment. Fibrous threads can be seen piercing the board edges, suggesting the outermost quires of the textblock were covered with leather to form the boards after sewing.

edge (61, 84, 126 and 152mm from the head) does not correlate directly with the sewing stations within the quires (24, 47, 113 and 139mm from the head), suggesting this was a secondary sewing used to hold the independently sewn textblock to the binding. The threads in the cartonnage do not pierce the covering leather, although this leather is fragmentary and riddled with insect lacunae, so it is difficult to be entirely certain. The absence of separate upper and lower cartonnage boards refutes the sewn board attachment seen in CBL Cpt 2020, but the threads piercing the single piece of cartonnage may be indicative of a prototype sewn cover-to-textblock attachment (Figure 20). This may be part of the “very

special details in the way the mss has been covered” that Van Regemorter referred to (25 June 1956, CBP/B/05/42).

## 2.12 Closures

Seven closures are evident from the piercings and extant toggles in the bindings turn-ins. Once again, these are formed in the same way as those seen in Nag Hammadi Codex II using a simple self-locking mechanism (Figure 21). Although the leather straps are no longer extant, it is likely these closures extended to wrap around the codex and hold it closed (Figure 22). The scarcity of accretions on



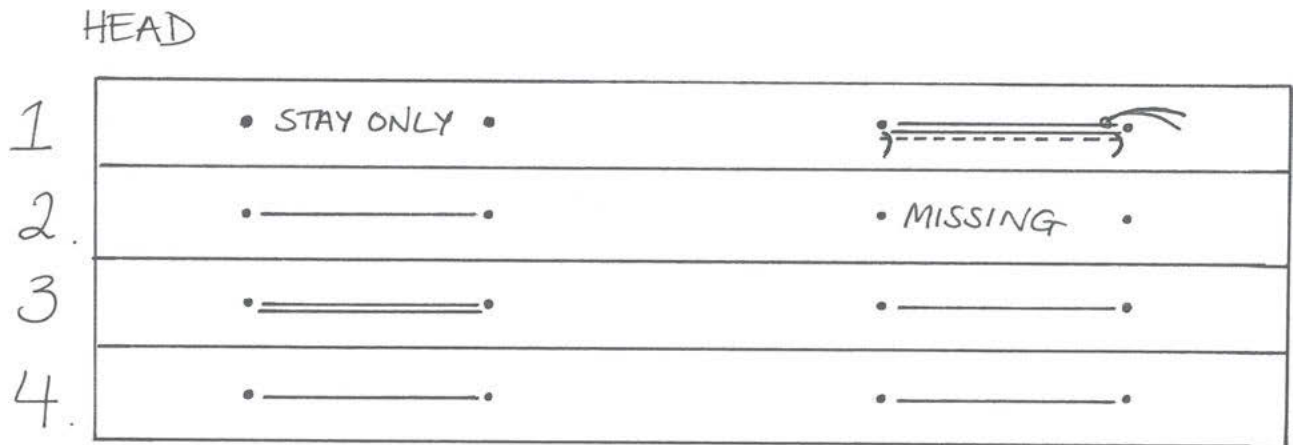


Figure 16: Diagram of CBL BP XXI sewing path. Diagram by author.

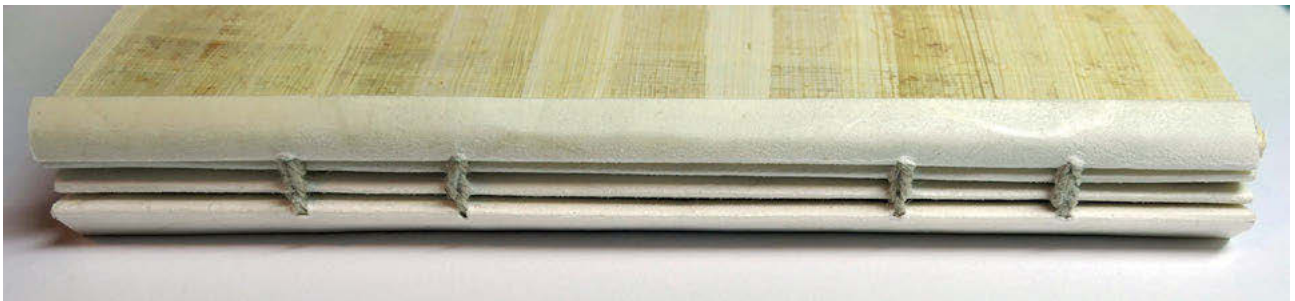


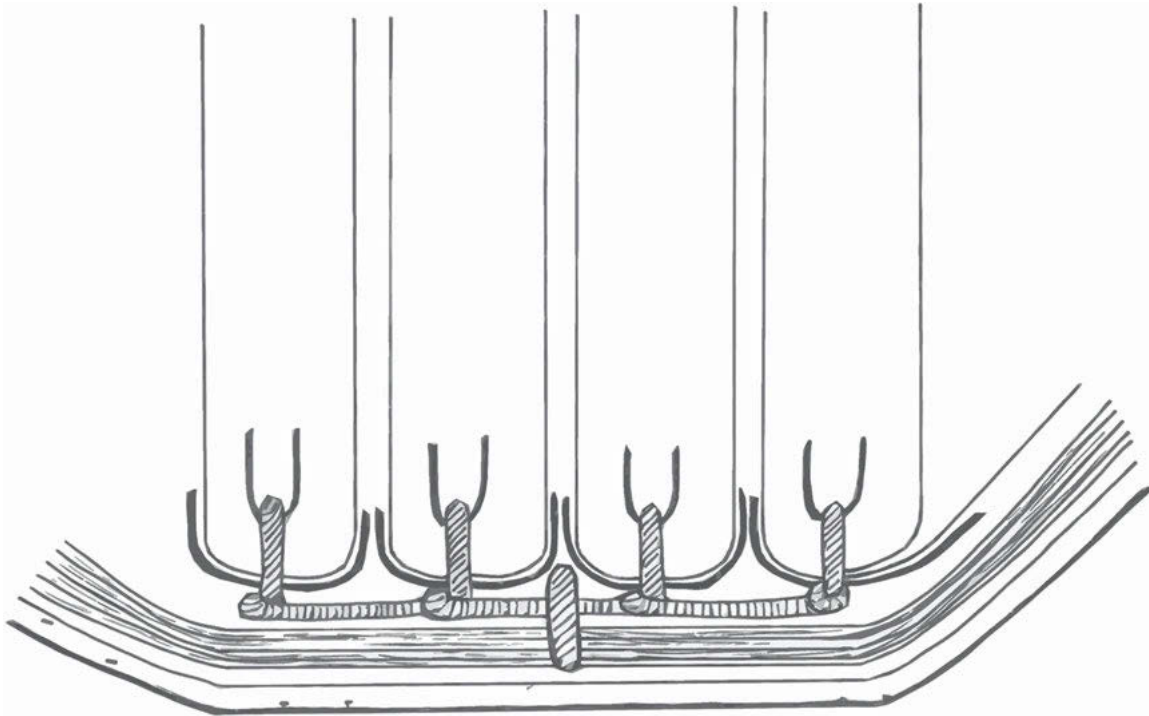
Figure 17: Binding model, CBL BP XXI. Once sewn, four lines of chevrons are formed on the spine by the link stitch. Image by author.



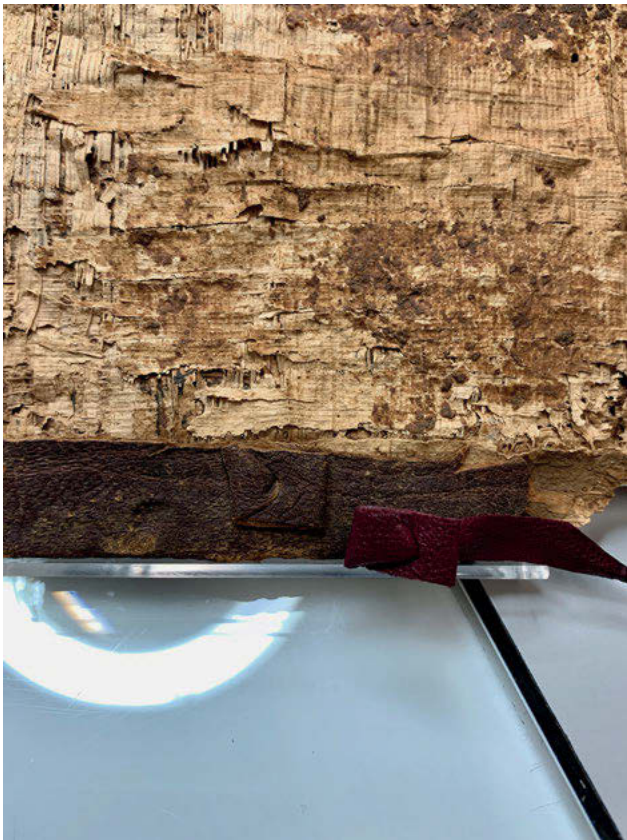
Figure 18: CBL BP XXIa. Interior of the binding from a Greek Grammar and Graeco-Latin Lexicon. Two separate strips of leather are visible at the head and tail edge of the upper (left) board.



**Figure 19:** CBL BP XXI. Detail of inside lower board showing fragments of sewing thread piercing the cartonnage along the right (spine) edge.



**Figure 20:** Cross-section view of a possible prototype sewn cover-to-textblock attachment based on CBL BP XXI. Diagram by author.



**Figure 21:** CBL BP XXI. Reproduction toggle made with a simple self-locking mechanism next to an original on the binding. Photo by author.

the little toggles suggests they were added after the cover was attached to the textblock.

### 3 Conclusions

Although most of the Chester Beatty papyri are now stored flat between glass, these delicate manuscripts still hold valuable material evidence of the early codex form, of which CBL BP XXI represents a significant stage in the development of the book. It illustrates the emergence of a sewn multi-quire codex, and quite possibly an emergent sewn board attachment, whilst retaining evidence of the papyrus scroll tradition in its pages. From this point in the fourth century CE, it was perhaps just another hundred or so years until parchment codices bound in wooden boards became the prevalent bookbinding form in Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean.

The documentation of early bindings and their study today is reliant upon the work of our forebears. Berthe van Regemorter traced the development of the codex from papyrus roll to parchment multi-quire codex through her life's work. Her approach, that of the book archaeologist and conservator, is one that we have only begun to fully appreciate and build upon in recent years. Van Regemorter's contribution to the history of the book and our understanding of the codex form cannot be overestimated. Her



**Figure 22:** CBL BP XXI. Finished binding model shown closed and secured with the wrapping bands. Photo by author.

in-depth knowledge of the craft of bookbinding offered a unique perspective on the finds that were made in her lifetime, and which she was privileged enough to see in the middle of the twentieth century. Through careful observation and reconstructions, collaboration between

historians and conservators, the mechanical innovation that these objects represent can be revived, bringing new life to the study of the book, and hopefully new ways of understanding the earliest written artefacts.

تحاول الباحثة في هذا المقال التركيز على موضوع مهم ليس فقط في علم البردي اليوناني بل أيضاً في الكثير من التخصصات البيئية التي تبحث في أصول شكل وعملية تجميع وبنية الكتاب الكودكس (codex) وتطوره التاريخي وعبر الثقافات المختلفة سواء المصرية أو اليونانية أو العربية وغيرها من الثقافات والحقب التاريخية. وتركز الباحثة على برديات تشيستري بيتي لكي تقوم بتتبع المراحل التاريخية المختلفة لتطور الكتاب بداية من الملفوفة (scroll) وهو الشكل الرئيسي للكتب في العصور القديمة مروراً بالملزمة الواحدة من خلال طي مجموعة من الصفحات مع بعضها البعض إلى الملزمة الرباعية التي تحتوي على ثمانية صفحات وإنهاءً بفحص بنية الكتاب نفسه و كيفية ربطه ببعضه البعض ومن ثم تجليده. ثم تعرض الباحثة لمجموعة من العوامل التي تجعل من مجموعة تشيستري بيتي مناسبة لمثل هذا البحث. حيث أن العينة التي توفرها مجموعة تشيستري بيتي عينة فريدة من نوعها سواء من حيث ظروف إستكشافها أو من حيث الدليل المادي الذي تقدمه هذه المجموعة. المقال مهم ومفيد لكل من يريد أن يتعرف على تفصيلات الكودكس في هذه المجموعة وذلك للمقارنة بينها وبين غيرها من المخطوطات في مجموعات أخرى من نفس الفترة الزمنية أو من فترات زمنية لاحقة عليها.

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Tommy Wasserman

# Beyond Palaeography: Text, Paratext and Dating of Early Christian Papyri

فيما وراء علم الباليوغرافيا: النص و السياق و مسألة تأريخ برديات الكتاب المقدس المبكرة،  
تومي فاسرمان

## 1 Introduction: The battle over the papyri

In the end of the nineteenth century, when the two Cambridge professors B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort developed their ideas about the textual history of the New Testament in their ground-breaking edition of *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (1881), they largely took over a tripartite scheme of textual groupings developed by J. A. Bengel, and refined by J. S. Semler and J. J. Griesbach in the previous century.<sup>1</sup> These scholars had connected the groupings, or text types, to geographical locales where the text might have been revised at some point (apart from the normal copying): Alexandrian (derived from Origen), Western (Latin versions and fathers), and Eastern (used by Antiochian and Constantinopolitan churches). However, Westcott and Hort preferred to label the earliest stage of the Alexandrian text type a “Neutral text,” that is unchanged, which successively became more corrupt and thus labelled “Alexandrian text.” The “Neutral text,” chiefly represented by the fourth-century codices Vaticanus (B 03) and Sinaiticus (Ⲙ 01), formed the basis of their new edition which dealt the deathblow to the Textus Receptus, now considered to represent a later stage of the text.

However, new papyrus discoveries from the 1930s onward caused many scholars to question whether the “Neutral” text really represented a pure line of transmission from the earliest time, as Westcott and Hort had assumed. Some papyri did not align clearly with any of the established text types and, thus, reflected a more diverse and fluid state of transmission than expected. Therefore, Frederic G. Kenyon suggested that the “Neutral text” of Codex Vaticanus must

be the product of a scholarly recension that probably took place in Alexandria in the fourth century.<sup>2</sup>

With the discovery and publication of P<sup>75</sup> in 1961, the question of an Alexandrian recension came into a new perspective. The first editors, Victor Martin and Rodolphe Kasser, assigned it a date between 175 and 225 based on a palaeographic assessment.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent studies of P<sup>75</sup> in Luke by Carlo M. Martini and in John by Calvin L. Porter demonstrated that the text of P<sup>75</sup> was almost identical to the text of Codex Vaticanus.<sup>4</sup> If these dates for P<sup>75</sup> and Vaticanus were correct, their close relationship demonstrated the stability of the B-text during at least a century and a half in an era of textual transmission that was presumably uncontrolled. Thus, the central question whether this type of text is the result of a recension or of a strict transmission was pushed back into the second century.<sup>5</sup> As Eldon J. Epp explains, “the long-standing conviction of a fourth-century recension of what had been called the B-text was freely given up – no struggle, no strife.”<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, the battle was far from over. Thus, Epp prophesied about the “approaching battle over the papyri” concerning “the [relative] *worth* of the papyri as textual witnesses” and “how *representative* of the earliest history of the text these early papyri are.”<sup>7</sup>

## 2 The battle over palaeography (and dating)

Recently Brent Nongbri has attempted to re-open the case of a fourth-century recension by challenging the accepted dating of P<sup>75</sup> and several other early New Testa-

1 Westcott / Hort 1881. For an extensive survey and discussion of the text types, see Epp 2013.

**Note:** I would like to thank Juan Chapa, Charles Hill, Michael W. Holmes, Thomas J. Kraus, and Gregg Schwendner who offered feedback on my oral presentation of this material or drafts of this chapter.

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2 Kenyon 1940, 250. Cf. Metzger 1964, 215–16.

3 Martin / Kasser 1961a; and Martin / Kasser 1961b.

4 Porter 1961; Porter 1962; Martini 1966.

5 Epp 1974, 393.

6 Epp 1989, 103.

7 Epp 1989, 103.

ment papyri.<sup>8</sup> In a chapter in his recent monograph *God's Library* titled "The Dating Game," Nongbri describes two distinct group of palaeographers: One "highly influential group of scholars," who believe they "can trace with great chronological precision the rise, perfection, and decline of a particular type of writing," and another group of scholars, including Nongbri, who "are highly suspicious of such developmental constructs and tightly restricted date ranges" because of the limits of palaeography.<sup>9</sup>

Hence, Nongbri places P<sup>75</sup> (and indeed the bulk of the Bodmer Papyri) in the fourth century, although 175–225 CE still represents a possibility but "not the most probable possibility."<sup>10</sup> Significantly, one of the reasons for this late date, apart from palaeographical considerations, is the textual proximity of P<sup>75</sup> to Codex Vaticanus.<sup>11</sup> Consequently, he suggests that "textual critics of the New Testament may need once again to entertain the idea that the 'B Text' is indeed the result of some sort of recensional activity in the fourth century."<sup>12</sup> But is it warranted to date the B-text to the fourth century because Codex Vaticanus and possibly P<sup>75</sup> belong in that century? We will return to this question below.

Significantly, Nongbri has also redated three other important papyri, P<sup>4</sup> (Luke) and P<sup>64+67</sup> (Matthew), most likely copied by the same scribe.<sup>13</sup> These papyri, which also have a text akin to Codex Vaticanus, have been dated by several (but not all) authorities to around 200 CE.<sup>14</sup> For example, the two influential palaeographers Pasquale Orsini and Willy Clarysse have assigned P<sup>4+64+67</sup> to the initial phase of the biblical majuscule script, dating them to 175–200 CE.<sup>15</sup> This is an extremely narrow date range.

<sup>8</sup> Nongbri 2016; Nongbri 2018. For a balanced review of Nongbri 2016, see Malik 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Nongbri 2018, 63–4; Barker 2011. For classical (and influential) standard works in Greek palaeography, see Schubart 1925; Cavallo 1967; Cavallo / Maehler 1987; Harrauer 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Nongbri 2016, 407. For an extensive discussion of the Bodmer papyri, see Nongbri 2018, 157–215.

<sup>11</sup> Nongbri 2016, 434–37.

<sup>12</sup> Nongbri 2016, 437.

<sup>13</sup> Nongbri 2018, 247–68 ("Fabricating a Second-Century Codex of the Four Gospels [P<sup>4+64+67</sup>]").

<sup>14</sup> Nongbri 2018, 263–68. For the textual affinities, see Wasserman 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Orsini / Clarysse, 2012, 470. In their case study, which in general has become highly influential for the dating of early New Testament manuscripts, they state, "P<sup>64+67+4</sup> is written in a biblical majuscule belonging to the early phase of the canon. The writing angle is still uncertain, so that sometimes no shading is visible. This writing is similar to that of P.Vindob. G 29768 (late II–early III; LDAB 2761), as noted by Skeat, and may be attributed, therefore, to a period between the second and third centuries" (p. 461). See also Orsini 2005, 85–6, where P.Vindob. G 29784 is offered as an additional comparison (end of sec-

Nongbri, on the other hand, suggests that they may be as late as the fourth century. In his discussion he points to a sign of a later date "beyond palaeography":

Is there any way to narrow this range of possible dates [for P<sup>4+64+67</sup>]? Perhaps, but we need to move beyond paleography. One feature common to both the fragments of Matthew and those of Luke is a pattern of textual division by means of *ekthesis* (the opposite of indentation). Is it possible to determine anything about the date of the fragments on the basis of this type of textual division? . . . Similar techniques of division of the text are known to occur in manuscripts generally assigned to the fourth and fifth centuries, like Codex Sinaiticus (LDAB 3478), Codex Bezae (LDAB 2929), and the Freer codex of the gospels (LDAB 2985). Now, for Roberts, the presence of such textual division in the Matthew fragments proved that this kind of textual division went all the way back to the second century. But because paleographic dating is so uncertain, the inference should probably work in the opposite direction: the presence of developed textual divisions should, if anything, make us lean toward a rather later date for these fragments, although not much stress can be placed on this kind of argumentation.<sup>16</sup>

I would like to question whether it is necessary to regard the presence of this feature – "developed textual divisions" – as indicative of a later date. Is this another but different type of developmental construct that needs to be problematized? It is true that these paratextual markers of division occurs in Christian manuscripts of the fourth and fifth centuries, but there is another significant body of evidence that must be taken into account – Jewish biblical manuscripts, in particular the earliest manuscripts of the Greek Septuagint.

When this evidence is brought into the picture, the presence of textual division by means of *ekthesis* (letters projecting into the left margin) and *paragraphos* (a horizontal stroke above the outset characters) in Christian manuscripts is not necessarily indicative of a late date. On the contrary, I would argue that Christians inherited this and other practices from Greek-speaking Jews at a very early stage.<sup>17</sup> In fact, I think these particular reading aids point to a continuous liturgical usage of these texts

ond century). Orsini further refers to the datable witness P.Ryl. I 16, with a *terminus ante quem* 253 or 256 CE (because of a dated letter on the reverse side) arguing persuasively that the script of P<sup>4+64+67</sup> is earlier.  
<sup>16</sup> Nongbri 2018, 267.

<sup>17</sup> Here I am referring to the use of these various features (*ekthesis* with or without a first enlarged letter, space with or without a *dicolon* in conjunction with *paragraphos*) specifically in biblical texts. It will be noted that such means of textual division begin to appear in Greek papyri from as early as the fourth century BCE, e.g., mostly to mark new entries in documents, commentaries, medical recipes and various lists, but also to mark a longer metrical unit among shorter verses or a change of speaker in dramatic texts. See Turner / Parsons 1987, 8–9; Germain 1984, 389–99; Savignago 2008.

in Jewish and Christian gatherings and therefore we must avoid the notion of an evolutionary development of these features in Christian manuscripts.

### 3 The Jewish roots of Christian reading and scribal practices

In the earliest phase of Christian gatherings, the Old Testament scriptures were read aloud in the community (I Tim. 4,13), as we can see in particular passages that emphasised fulfilled prophecy (cf. Luc. 4,16–20; 24,25–27; Act. 8,26–40). Several scholars have suggested that the public reading in early Christian meetings can be traced back to the Jewish practice of reading from the scriptures in synagogues.<sup>18</sup> Beyond doubt, a regular reading from Torah on the Sabbath was already in place, and, very likely, passages from the prophets were read, too, as is implied by the glimpse Luke gives into synagogue services in Nazareth (Luc. 4,16–20) and in Antioch (Act. 13,14–15).<sup>19</sup>

In my opinion, the continuity between Greek Jewish and Christian reading and scribal practices is still an underestimated factor in the discussion about the origin of early Christian liturgy, in spite of the fact that the regular reading of scripture, first introduced in Judaism and then in Christianity, was a unique innovation without known counterpart in other traditions in antiquity.<sup>20</sup> Jews and Christians shared much of the same literature (LXX/Old Greek).<sup>21</sup> Thus, early Christian scribes must have used exemplars copied by Jewish scribes at various points so that some continuity is expected which also affects how

these texts were read or chanted in liturgy.<sup>22</sup> Some features of these manuscripts certainly affected the transmission of the New Testament manuscripts.

Robert A. Kraft, a scholar who has argued persistently for the continuity of Jewish and Christian scribal practice, has challenged the appeal to a number of presumed markers of Christian identity when it comes to LXX/OG papyri, including the codex format, the presence of *nomina sacra*, abbreviations of certain divine names or titles, textual division by *paragraphos/ekthesis*, and the use of Greek language (instead of Hebrew).<sup>23</sup> Kraft has even suggested that the style known as biblical majuscule may be of Jewish origin. Thus, he says, concerning P.Oxy 9.1166 (third century, Genesis 16):

This is an especially important text for the discussion of Jewish or Christian scribal practice. [C. H.] Roberts sees the evidence as ambiguous, finally concluding that “It is perhaps more likely to be Christian than Jewish” . . . [Kurt] Treu is less sure. If this text is Jewish in origin, it suggests that the “biblical majuscule” style may have come into Christianity from Judaism, and that the use of *nomina sacra* was no less Jewish than Christian in this early period!<sup>24</sup>

In the same vein, Jonas Leipziger has presented further evidence that the codex format and the presence of *nomina sacra* are not exclusive Christian markers of a manuscript’s identity.<sup>25</sup> His research confirms Kraft’s position pointing to shared traditions and reading practices in ancient Jewish and early Christian communities in terms of reading practices, literatures (Greek Bible), and material aspects.

The great majority of surviving biblical manuscripts on papyri originate from Egypt, where we can indeed expect such shared traditions. In fact, Roberts’s ground-breaking study of early Christianity in Egypt points to Jerusalem as its source. In a later study of the emergence of Christian-

<sup>18</sup> Baumstark 1923, 15–7; Duchesne 1925, 48–9; Lietzmann 1926, 211; Dix 1946, 36–7; Jungmann 1952, 1:25–6; Perrot 1988, 137–59; Young 2004, 91–104; Meeks 2006, 167.

<sup>19</sup> For the reading of “Torah” in the synagogue during the first century CE, see Philo, *Prob.* 81–82; *Somn.* 2.127; *Hyp.* in Eusebius, *praep. ev.* 8.7.12–13; Josephus, *Ap.* 2.175 and *Ant.* 16.44; and Act. 15,21. The Theodotus inscription (Jerusalem, prior to 70 CE) confirms that Theodotus built the assembly hall (συναγωγή) “for the reading of the Law and for the teaching of the commandments,” trans. Kloppenborg 2000, 244. Kloppenborg confirms the dating of the inscription prior to 70 CE. For further evidence, see Grüll 2018, 139–52.

<sup>20</sup> For an introduction to the issues under debate concerning the relationship between Jewish and early Christian liturgical reading practices, see Rouwhorst 2002, 305–31. On the general continuity between the two traditions, see Keith 2020, 199–200 and esp. 201–32.

<sup>21</sup> On shared traditions and reading practices in terms of literatures (Greek Bible), and material aspects, see Kraft 2003, 51–72 and Leipziger 2020, 149–76. Leipziger presents fresh evidence that gives cause to question the codex format and *nomina sacra* as distinct Christian identity markers.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Mugridge 2016, 80: “Indeed, the Christians may simply have been following a Jewish layout for Greek OT poetic texts, as in the Jewish psalm papyrus 531 [P.Oxy. 77.5101], which uses a dicolon for a new half-verse in the middle of the line.” This same manuscript includes Psalm titles which are also very common in Christian papyri. These titles ultimately derive from the Hebrew textual tradition (Mugridge 2016, 76). In regard to continuity in the way the Psalms were chanted in Jewish and Christian tradition, see Mitchell 2012, 355–78, esp. 371–76.

<sup>23</sup> Kraft 2003, 51–72; cf. Nongbri 2018, 342 n.42: “Texts of the Septuagint present the most difficulties in this regard. . . . Given our changing ideas about Jewish and Christian identities, I have some doubts about the traditional ways of distinguishing Jewish and Christian copies of the Septuagint (that is to say, some codices might be Jewish, some rolls might be Christian, the use of *nomina sacra* might not be strictly Christian after the fourth century).”

<sup>24</sup> Kraft 2003, 62.

<sup>25</sup> Leipziger 2020.



ity in Egypt, Birger A. Pearson specifically points to “the Jewish community of Alexandria as the locus of earliest Christianity in Egypt.”<sup>26</sup> It follows then, that this same Jewish community could also be regarded as the locus of the earliest Christian manuscripts in Egypt. The colophon to the Old Greek text of Esther as attested in Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus illustrates my point:

In the fourth year of the reign of Ptolemy and Cleopatra, Dositheus, who said he was a priest and a Levite, and his son Ptolemy brought the above book of Purim [i.e., the Greek version], which they said was authentic and had been translated by Lysimachus son of Ptolemy, a member of the Jerusalem community.<sup>27</sup>

This is the only colophon added to any biblical book and, as Elias J. Bickerman has demonstrated, it dates to 78/77 BCE when it was added to the archetype, most likely by an Alexandrian librarian, as a “bibliographical record settling the provenance [Jerusalem] of a new acquisition” when the manuscript was deposited in Alexandria.<sup>28</sup>

In light of the early shared scribal traditions in Egypt, it is naturally very difficult to distinguish between “Jewish” and “Christian” manuscripts of the Jewish Greek Bible in the earliest stages.<sup>29</sup> Thus, from his recent study of the “Jewish” LXX papyri from Oxyrhynchus, Juan Chapa concludes:

It would not be unconceivable that in the milieu in which these texts were produced the distinction between Judaism and Christianity was not yet as clear or well defined as has been commonly assumed. Some of the “mixed” elements present in some of the LXX fragments could be better interpreted if we portray a situation in which Jewish and Christian communities interrelated in a more or less fluent way.<sup>30</sup>

Chapa further points to the fact that Clement of Alexandria and Origen, at the end of the second and first half of the third century, evidently had “knowledge of Jewish practices and kept contacts, apparently on good terms, with some rabbis” and that it “seems conceivable that Christians could have borrowed, bought or taken the manuscript copied by Jews.”<sup>31</sup>

In a previous survey of Oxyrhynchus literary papyri, Mieron M. Piotrkowski draws a similar conclusion: “The

fact that Christians had access to them [works of Jewish-Hellenistic literature] suggests cordial relations with the local Jewish population.”<sup>32</sup> Piotrkowski considers eleven biblical papyri from Oxyrhynchus to be Jewish. These manuscripts have been dated from the first to the sixth centuries CE. However, in light of the fact that there is documentary evidence for a Jewish presence in Oxyrhynchus from the second century BCE, Piotrkowski suggests that the dating may be wrong – “texts that are palaeographically dated to a late period, may actually belong to a much earlier period” – and assumes that the Greek Bible was “already copied at Oxyrhynchus by the second or first century BCE.”<sup>33</sup> One may wonder, if Piotrkowski is correct in his observation that some Jewish manuscripts should perhaps be dated earlier, how this affects the current “palaeographic battle” over Christian papyri, most of which come from Oxyrhynchus.

## 4 Textual divisions by means of *ekthesis* and *paragraphos* in biblical manuscripts

As we have seen, the presence of textual division by means of *ekthesis* and *paragraphos* in P<sup>4+64+67</sup> led C. H. Roberts to suggest that the system was already in place in the late second century.<sup>34</sup> Nongbri, on the other hand, drew the opposite conclusion; these features “should, if anything, make us lean toward a rather later date for these fragments, although not much stress can be placed on this kind of argumentation.”<sup>35</sup> At the time when Roberts wrote his article, few other examples of these markers of textual division were known to scholars.<sup>36</sup> Now, however, mainly thanks to the work of Emanuel Tov, we have a slightly larger body of evidence found in early Jewish Greek manuscripts.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Piotrkowski 2018, 167.

<sup>33</sup> Piotrkowski 2018, 150.

<sup>34</sup> Roberts 1953, 234.

<sup>35</sup> Nongbri 2018, 267.

<sup>36</sup> C. H. Roberts does discuss this practice citing a few examples in his later monograph, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (1977, 16–8).

<sup>37</sup> Tov 2004, 151. The following four manuscripts display both *paragraphos* and *ekthesis* (see table in appendix 5, 288–94): 8ḤevXII gr (end of first century BCE); P.Oxy. 65.4443 of Esther Add E and ch. 9 (late first or early second century CE); P.Chester Beatty V (962) of Genesis (second half of third century CE); P.Oxy. 11.1351 of Leviticus 27 (fourth century CE).

<sup>26</sup> Pearson 1986, 135. According to Pearson, the first hint of a Christian community in Egypt around the mid-first century is offered by the story about Paul’s co-worker Apollos in Act. 18,24–28, “if historically accurate” (136).

<sup>27</sup> English translation in Moore 1973, 382.

<sup>28</sup> Bickerman 1944, 339–62, esp. 345.

<sup>29</sup> For this very reason, Epp excludes a large number of manuscripts of the Jewish Greek Bible from his study of the Jewish community in Oxyrhynchus (Epp 2006, 15 n.8).

<sup>30</sup> Chapa 2021, 227.

<sup>31</sup> Chapa 2021, 228.

The earliest example of the feature in Jewish manuscripts is found in the Naḥal Ḥever Greek Minor Prophet scroll which features both *paragraphos* and *ekthesis* (and vacant spaces on the preceding line) to mark textual divisions, which reflect Jewish reading practices.<sup>38</sup> The scroll was dated by the first editor Dominique Barthélemy to the first century CE, but in a later edition, Peter J. Parsons redated it to the first century BCE, which is now the generally accepted date in scholarship.<sup>39</sup>

The existence of these markers of division led Parsons to suggest that Christian scribes inherited the practice from Greek-speaking Jews:

The use of enlarged initials at line-beginning (hands A and B) and phrase-beginning (hand A) and (set out in the margin) to mark a new section (hand A) gives this manuscript a documentary look. . . The fact is itself remarkable. Early Christian books show the same characteristic; copies of the Greek classics do not. It has therefore been tempting to argue that the texts of the Early Church stood closer to the world of business than to that of literature, and to draw conclusions about the social milieu in which the texts circulated or the esteem in which they were held. Now we see the same thing in a Jewish manuscript of pre-Christian date. This may suggest that the Christians inherited the practice, rather than inventing it; the problem remains, why Greek-speaking Jews should have adopted it in the first place.<sup>40</sup>

The same feature is found in P.Oxy. 65.4443, an Esther scroll from the first or early second century CE which is likely Jewish.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, two manuscript in the Chester Beatty also exhibit the feature, although these are likely Christian codices: P.Chester Beatty IX–X (Rahlfs 967; Ezekiel, Daniel, Esther), 175–250 CE (Figure 1), and more sporadically in P.Chester Beatty V (Rahlfs 962; Genesis), second half of the third century (Figure 2).

In a brief note on P<sup>967</sup> from 1976, E. J. Revell examined these textual divisions more closely in Ezekiel (P.Chester Beatty IX and P.Scheide 3) remarking that the various editors had either neglected the feature or showed a lack of “curiosity as to the scribe’s motivation for the division.”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Roberts 1977, 18; and Tov / Kraft / Parsons 1990, 23–4.

<sup>39</sup> *Ed. pr.* in Barthélemy 1963; cf. Barthélemy 1950, 18–29 (on the discovery). The manuscript has been re-edited by Tov / Kraft / Parsons 1990. Parsons (p. 19–26) dated the scroll tentatively to the first century BCE since he had only seen photographs of the manuscript and referred to other scholars who proposed later dates (e.g., Dominique Barthélemy: end of first century CE; C. H. Roberts: 50 BCE–50 CE; Paul Schubert: around the reign of Augustus, i.e., 63 BCE–14 CE).

<sup>40</sup> Tov / Kraft / Parsons, 23–4.

<sup>41</sup> Nongbri elsewhere accepts that this manuscript is likely pre-Christian, because of its “early date and the roll format” (Nongbri 2018, 342 n.42). We may add here that the papyrus attests to the uncontracted  $\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma$  (col. 1, l.12).

<sup>42</sup> Revell 1976, 131.

Up till then, scholars had thought that paragraphing of Septuagint texts reflected the work of individual scribes, “unfettered by any tradition.” But Revell now demonstrated that the paragraphing of this particular papyrus was clearly related but not identical to the *petuḥot* and the *setumot*, i.e., the open and closed divisions of the Masoretic textual tradition.<sup>43</sup>

In subsequent and more extensive studies of P<sup>967</sup> in Ezekiel, including the Cologne portion of the manuscript, John W. Olley has confirmed Revell’s conclusion.<sup>44</sup> Olley identifies 87 paragraphs marked by *ekthesis* and either *paragraphos* or two dots.<sup>45</sup> His collation of these divisions against both Masoretic (Aleppo, Cairensis, Leningradensis, and Reuchlinianus) and Greek codices (Alexandrinus [A], Vaticanus [B], and Marchalianus [Q]) shows that there are many more divisions in the later witnesses, both in Hebrew codices (135) as well as the Greek codices (ca. 180 in B; 273 in A; and at least 340 in Q), reflecting growth over time, but, he concludes, there is clearly “a common core of paragraphing, both Hebrew and Greek, to which P<sup>967</sup> is closest.”<sup>46</sup>

In his recent monograph on the numbered chapter divisions in Codex Vaticanus (*Capitulatio Vaticana*), Charles E. Hill offers a fresh comparison of paratextual markers in P<sup>967</sup> and Codex Vaticanus in Ezekiel.<sup>47</sup> In contrast to Olley, he gives particular attention to the numbered division in Vaticanus, which, as I think he argues persuasively, belong to the original production and reflect a different system than the *ekthetic* breaks in the same codex. Hill observes that of the 46 places where Vaticanus has the small numerals in the margin, “41 of the numbers match one of the *ekthetic* break[s] in P<sup>967</sup>.”<sup>48</sup> He concludes that this system in Vaticanus derives from an earlier template that reflects an even older stage of division than P<sup>967</sup>.<sup>49</sup>

Additionally, Hill compares these numbered divisions with divisions in other early manuscript witnesses in various biblical books. His comparison in Deuteronomy with the textual divisions marked by space plus *paragraphos* in Rahlfs 848 (P.Fouad 266b) is of particular interest, since the latter is a papyrus roll dated to the middle

<sup>43</sup> Revell 1976, 134.

<sup>44</sup> P<sup>967</sup> is divided between a number of collections in Dublin (P.Chester Beatty IX–X), Madrid (P.Matr. Bibl. 1); Montserrat (P.Monts./II); Cologne (P.Colon. Theol. 3–40); and Princeton (P.Scheide 3). For a description, see Kreuzer 2015, 255–56.

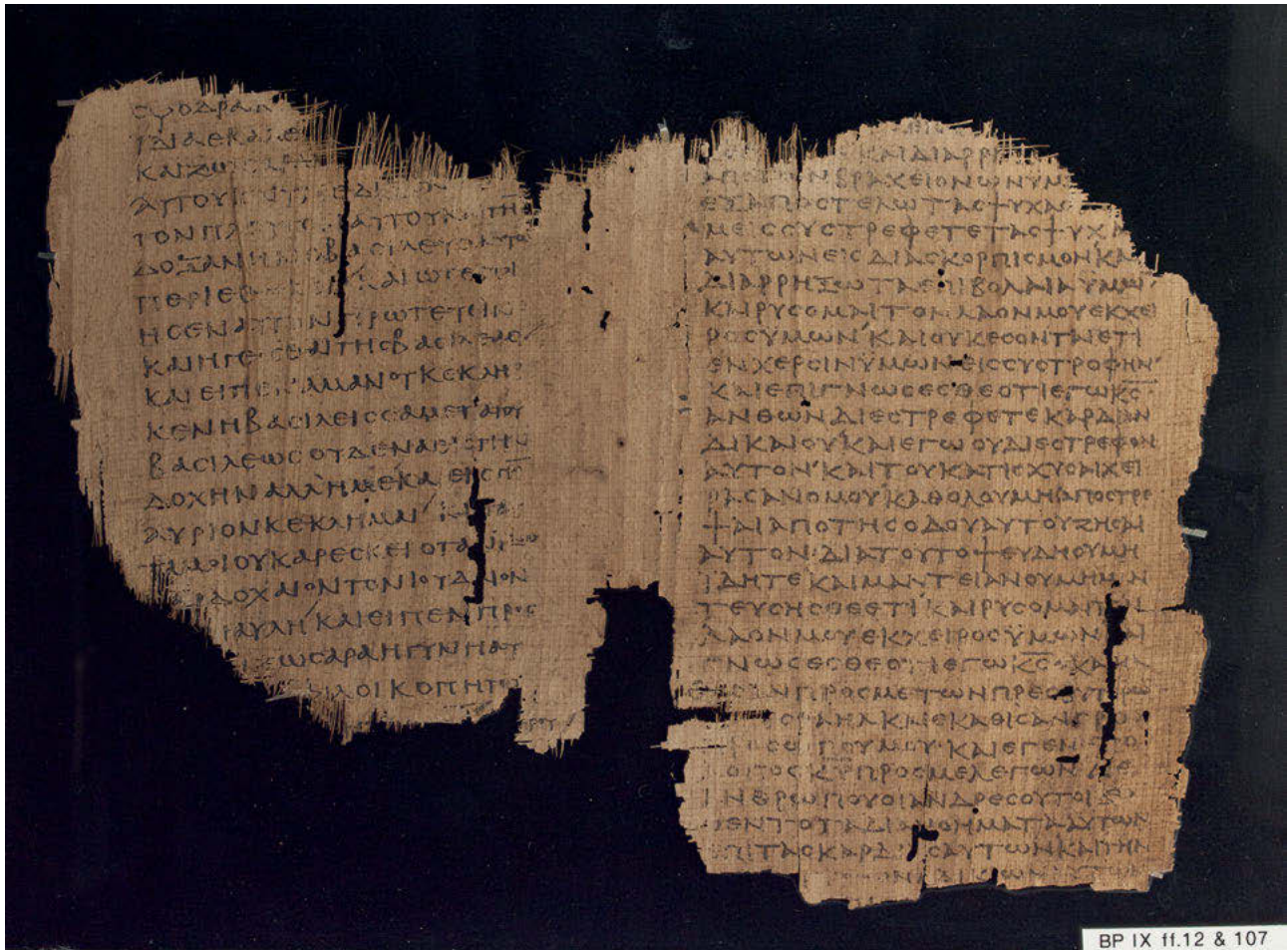
<sup>45</sup> Olley 2002; Olley 2003; Olley 2009, 39–60 (here he counts 87 paragraphs).

<sup>46</sup> Olley 2009, 44.

<sup>47</sup> Hill 2022, 211–47.

<sup>48</sup> Hill 2022, 222.

<sup>49</sup> Hill 2022, 311.



**Figure 1:** P. Chester Beatty IX (Rahlfs 967), folio 12v (Ez. 13,20–14,3): On l. 21 a space and diagonal *dicolon* marks the end of a section (after modern Ez. 13,23) followed by a new section (from Ez. 14,1) marked by *ekthesis* on the next line where *theta* (ἥθρον) projects into the left margin.

of the first century BCE.<sup>50</sup> Hill observes that “from the colophon at the end of Deuteronomy 20, through the final remains of the roll in Deuteronomy 33, the correspondence with the *CapVat* numbers is nearly perfect. . . the two systems match 16 times (94 per cent), and the one miss is still present as an *ekthetic* break in B.”<sup>51</sup> For our purposes, this comparison again attests to a close contact between Greek Jewish and Christian scribal culture.

In regard to the particular system of textual division in P<sup>4+64+67</sup> by means of *dicolon*, space, *paragraphos*, and *ekthesis*, Hill further points out that it has more in common with manuscripts from the first and second centuries than with the fourth- and fifth-century codices that Nongbri mentions as comparanda (see above).<sup>52</sup> In this connection, Hill considers not only early Jewish biblical

manuscripts, but also two non-biblical manuscripts – a medical papyrus, P. Mich. Inv. 3, dated to before 193 CE (*terminus ante quem*), and a horoscope, P. Lond. 130, dated to 31 March 81 CE; the latter combines *dicolon*, with space, *paragraphos* and *ekthesis* just as in P<sup>4+64+67</sup>.<sup>53</sup> As for the placement of the divisions in the text (Matthew and Luke), Hill observes a common pattern between P<sup>4+64+67</sup> and the chapter divisions in Vaticanus (*Capitulatio Vaticana*) and P<sup>75</sup>, which suggests that they descend from an earlier common template.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Hill 2022, 196–211.

<sup>51</sup> Hill 2022, 208.

<sup>52</sup> Hill 2022, 415–18.

<sup>53</sup> Hill 2022, 416–17. The combination of *paragraphos* and *ekthesis* to mark out a new medical recipe is attested as early as the third or second century in P. Ryl. III 531. See Prada 2016, 629.

<sup>54</sup> Hill 2022, 418.

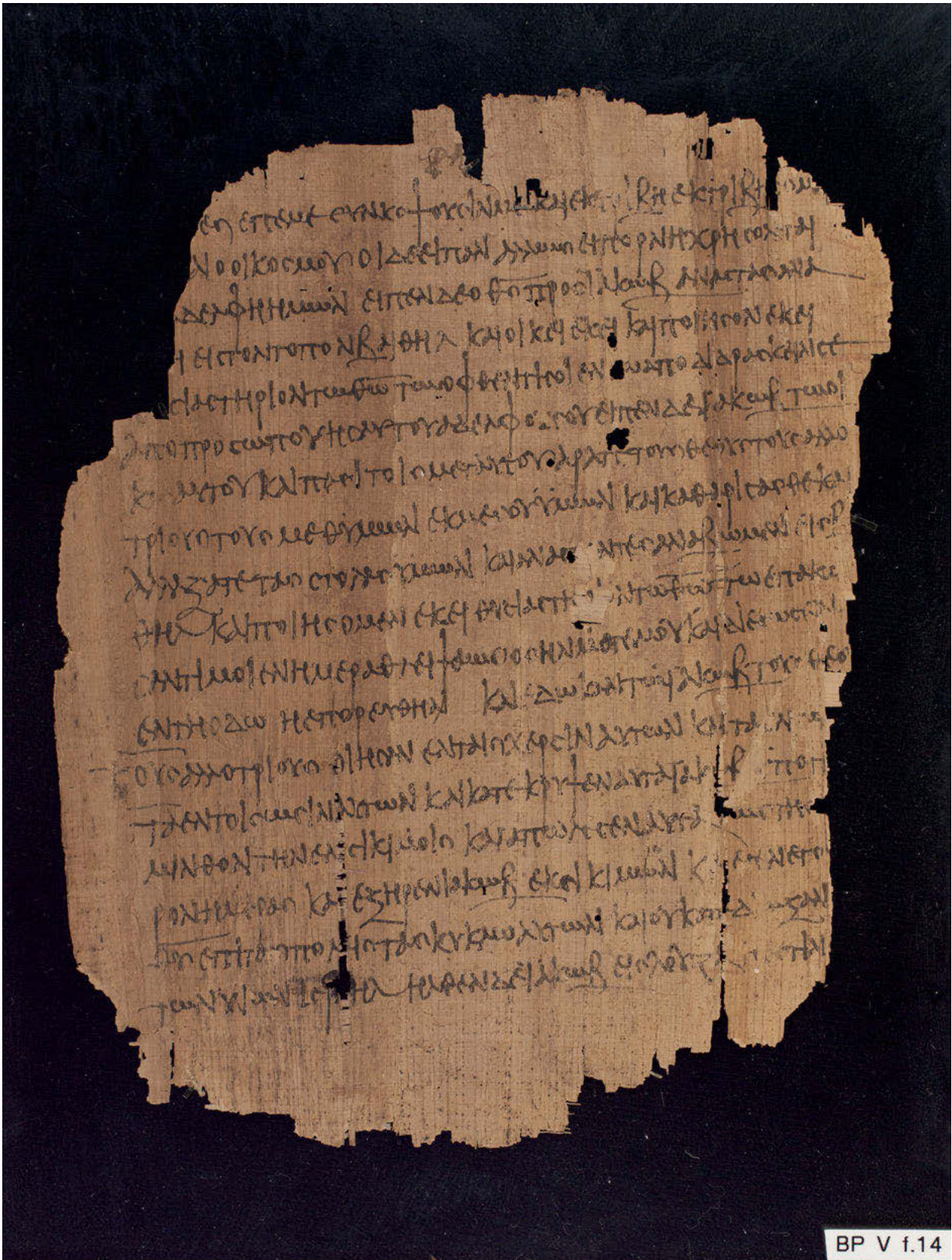


Figure 2: P. Chester Beatty V (Rahlfs 962), folio 14v (Gen. 34,30–35,6): On l. 12 a space marks the end of a section (after modern Gen. 35,3) followed by a new section (from Gen. 35,4) marked by an *ekthesis* where the *tau* (τούς) projects into the left margin.

## 5 The date and character of the B-text of Codex Vaticanus

As we have noted, one of the reasons for Nongbri to redate P<sup>75</sup> to the fourth century, beyond palaeography with all its limitations, is the textual proximity of the papyrus to Codex Vaticanus. However, the text of a manuscript, unless it is an autograph, is by necessity older than the manuscript itself in so far as it was copied from an exemplar, albeit with textual changes introduced by the scribe(s).

It has been suggested that Origen, because of his evident philological skills, was in fact the mind behind the production of an Alexandrian recension (=B-text) of the New Testament. However, Gordon Fee has pointed to several factors demonstrating that Origen could not have created the text.<sup>55</sup> First, the B-text of John in Codex Vaticanus (and P<sup>75</sup>) was already available to Origen for his *Commentary on John* and he most likely carried one or several such manuscripts with him when he moved to Caesarea in 231 CE, since his citations are of the same textual character throughout the commentary (the majority of the 32 volumes were written after his move to Caesarea).<sup>56</sup>

In contrast to his citations from John, Origen did not use the B-text for all his citations of Mark that appear in the *Commentary on John*. There is a clear shift away from the B-text precisely at Book 10 where he started instead to use a manuscript akin to Codex Koridethi (Θ 038). Thus, Origen apparently did not care whether the text was “pure” or not.<sup>57</sup> Further, as Bruce Metzger has pointed out, it is evident from a study of Origen’s specific comments on variant readings, or places where he offers multiple textual variants, that “he combines a remarkable indifference to what are now regarded as important aspects of textual criticism with a quite uncritical method of dealing with them.”<sup>58</sup> In conclusion, a text closely related to Codex Vaticanus evidently existed in Alexandria already before Origen.

In this connection, I think it is also relevant to consider the textual character of the Greek Old Testament text (LXX) in Codex Vaticanus. In his introduction to the Old Testament in Greek, Henry B. Swete suggested that the B-text of Codex Vaticanus was more or less the “original” Septuagint text as used by Origen.<sup>59</sup> Subsequent research

based on new discoveries, however, has shown that many of the textual variants in Vaticanus, albeit in agreement with Jewish sources, do not represent the earliest Old Greek (OG) translation.

When the Greek Minor Prophet Scroll (8HevXIIgr) was discovered in Naḥal Ḥever not far from Qumran in 1952, its first editor, Dominique Barthélemy, concluded that its text reflected a Jewish revision of the Septuagint (OG), later termed *kaige*, to bring it closer to the contemporary Hebrew text.<sup>60</sup> Further fragments came to light when the cave was located in 1961, and in the subsequent DJD edition, as we have noted, the scroll was dated tentatively by Peter J. Parsons to the first century BCE. Most recently, some twenty new fragments have been found during new excavations in between 2019 and 2020.<sup>61</sup>

In her recent work on the Greek text of the Books of Samuel, Anneli Aejmelaeus has discovered that the early revisional features of *kaige* are present in Codex Vaticanus and the B-text to a larger degree than was previously thought.<sup>62</sup> Further, she states that “the text type represented by Vaticanus, a manuscript of the fourth century, must be older than the hexaplaric recension. Origen must have already known a manuscript like this around 200 CE.”<sup>63</sup> Such a Christian manuscript, she suggests, represents the result of “the first Christian recension of the biblical text,” where “editors of the ‘B text’ made use of Jewish manuscripts [in Greek], and excerpted readings from manuscripts with the so-called *kaige* revision in particular.”<sup>64</sup>

An alternative to the notion of a single recension by scholars in Alexandria resulting in a Christian edition of the text is that the readings from the *kaige* revision were introduced more gradually: (1) by a process of correction of the Old Greek text (OG) against available *kaige* manuscripts; and (2) by Origen himself, who for his Septuagint column in the Hexapla consulted several Christian manuscripts with more or less mixed text. He likely preferred those textual variants that were in agreement with the Jewish sources,

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whole carries us back to the third century text known to Origen, and possibly to one much earlier. In other words, not only is the Vatican MS. our oldest MS. of the Greek Bible, but it contains, speaking quite generally, the oldest text;” cf. Rahlfs 1965, 101.

<sup>60</sup> *Ed. pr.* in Barthélemy 1963. The term *kaige* derives from the consistent use of the Greek particle *καίγε* to render  $\text{גם}$  or  $\text{וְגַם}$  (Aitken 2015, 21–40).

<sup>61</sup> See press release from the Israel Antiquities Authority published by the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 16 March 2021, online: <https://mfa.gov.il/mfa/israelexperience/history/pages/new-scroll-fragments-uncovered-in-the-judean-desert-nature-reserve-16-march-2021.aspx>. The new fragments have not yet been edited.

<sup>62</sup> Aejmelaeus 2020.

<sup>63</sup> Aejmelaeus 2020, 16.

<sup>64</sup> Aejmelaeus 2020, 20.

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<sup>55</sup> Fee 1993, 256–57.

<sup>56</sup> Fee 1993, 256.

<sup>57</sup> Fee 1993, 257. Here Fee appeals to Lake / Blake 1928, 207–404, esp. 261–68.

<sup>58</sup> Metzger 1968, 102; cf. Pack 1948, 346–47; Fee 1993, 257; Holmes 1996, 146–47.

<sup>59</sup> Swete / Ottley / Thackeray 1914, 487: “If we accept Dr Hort’s view, which at present holds the field, the Vatican MS. in the O. T. as a

thus giving preference to *kaige* readings that had been introduced here and there in his manuscripts.<sup>65</sup>

Regardless of the exact nature of the process leading to the shift from Jewish to Christian transmission of the Septuagint, a process that reflects points of contacts between scribes and their manuscripts beginning in a time when “Jewish” and “Christian” identities cannot be separated neatly, the most important take away for our purposes is that the Old Testament text of Codex Vaticanus is based on Christian manuscripts earlier than Origen, which on occasions reflect influence from Greek Jewish *kaige* manuscripts, textually and paratextually.<sup>66</sup> In sum, the scribes who copied Codex Vaticanus had access to significantly older manuscript exemplars of both Old and New Testament books from before the time of Origen’s activities as editor and commentator. Thus, the textual proximity of P<sup>75</sup> to Codex Vaticanus is not (contra Nongbri) a reason to date it to the fourth century.<sup>67</sup>

## 6 Conclusions

In this brief study I have attempted to describe the current “battle” over Christian papyri, in particular regarding the date of some of the most important witnesses to the New Testament text, P<sup>4+64+67</sup> (Matthew and Luke) and P<sup>75</sup> (Luke and John). In view of the limitations of palaeography, Nongbri has recently appealed to both textual and paratextual features beyond palaeography in order to argue for a late date in the fourth century as “the most probable possibility.”

In my view, however, the continuity between Greek Jewish and Christian manuscript cultures, for which contacts in Alexandria seemed to have played a key role, has not adequately been taken into account in the debate

about dating. Thus, in light of the shared Jewish and Christian scribal traditions we should clearly avoid the notion of an evolutionary development of the system of textual division in Christian manuscripts, by means of *ekthesis*, *paragraphos*, and spaces to mark textual divisions in P<sup>4+64+67</sup>.

On the contrary, this particular system seems to have more in common with earlier Greek Jewish biblical manuscripts from the first and second centuries than the later Christian uncials of the fourth and fifth centuries and it is also attested in non-biblical manuscripts from the first and second centuries of the common era. Even the placement of these divisions in the early Christian papyri allows for an early date. My brief survey, however, is only a first step toward a more detailed typology of the system of textual division in Jewish and Christian manuscripts across centuries, a desideratum for the future that will require far more research.

Further, I have attempted to demonstrate how the B-Text of Codex Vaticanus is older than the fourth century and was available to Origen in Alexandria. The notion of a fourth-century recension of the New Testament in Alexandria is thus untenable. Moreover, the B-Text of the Old Testament (LXX) as reflected in Codex Vaticanus is older than the hexaplaric recension of Origen and on occasion Vaticanus reflects influence from Greek Jewish *kaige* manuscripts, textually and paratextually, another sign of close contact between Christian and Jewish manuscript cultures. In fact, Christian authors, early scribes, and church fathers alike clearly used Jewish Greek manuscripts of the Old Testament.

Leaving palaeographic considerations aside, perhaps the appeal to textual and paratextual features in the dating of P<sup>4+64+67</sup> and P<sup>75</sup> speaks in favour of a date around 200 CE as the most probable possibility after all.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Aejmelaeus 2020, 16–8, who emphasises that Origen distinguished between “the sacred text of the Church and the Jewish scriptures” so that “manuscripts that he used as the basis for his Septuagint column were Christian copies of the Septuagint. . . He did not mix readings from Jewish sources with his Septuagint text, other than complementing minuses of the Septuagint under the sign of an asterisk” (p. 18).

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Wevers 1990, who describes such occasional activity as reflected in early papyri and uncials. Another striking example of direct contact with *kaige* manuscript(s) is Justin Martyr (c. 100–165 CE) as reflected in his Old Testament citations in general, and his long citation of Mich. 4,1–7 in particular (*Dial.* 109,2–3). As Barthélemy 1963, 205, points out, it is “substantially identical” to the text of 8ḤevXIIgr reflecting the *kaige* revision. For a recent analysis, see Barker 2018, 127–52, esp. 130–33.

<sup>67</sup> The same is of course true of P<sup>4+64+67</sup> which has a related text. Waserman 2010, 1–27.

يحاول البحث في هذا المقال أن يأخذ في الاعتبار مجموعة من العوامل التي أهملها غيره من الباحثين في مسألة تأريخ برديات الكتاب المقدس المبكرة وذلك من أجل إثبات أن بعض هذه البرديات ترجع إلى القرن الثاني الميلادي. وكما يظهر من العنوان فإن الأمر بالنسبة للباحث لا يجب أن يتعلق فقط بتأريخ مثل هذه البرديات اعتماداً على شكل الخطوط بل يجب أن يُوضع في الاعتبار أيضاً الظروف التاريخية لنشأة مثل هذه النصوص ألا وهي الأصول اليهودية للديانة والنصوص المسيحية. وبناءً عليه ينطلق الباحث من هذه النقطة ويرى في استمرار بعض أساليب تقسيم النصوص والأسفار المقدسة اليهودية (مثل الخط الفاصل *paragraphos*) دليل على أن نساخ الكتاب المقدس قد تأثروا بأقرانهم من اليهود والذين أخذوا عنهم بعض من هذه الأساليب والتقنيات. وهو هنا يريد أن يرفض فكرة التطور الداخلي لمثل هذه التقنيات ويسعى للقول بأن مثل هذه الممارسات متوارثة من كتبة التوراة في الإسكندرية والتي يسعى لإعطائها مكانة أكبر في عمليات النسخ هذه بحيث أنه يرى أن البرديات المبكرة للكتاب المقدس يجب أن تُورخ ليس بالقرن الرابع الميلادي كما أشار بعض الباحثين مؤخراً بل بالقرن الثاني الميلادي مما يجعلها أكثر قرباً من مجتمع الإسكندرية والجالية اليهودية ونساخ التوراة السبعينية. المقال مهم لكل المتخصصين في الترجمة السبعينية للتوراة ومجتمع الإسكندرية والصلوات بين الجاليات المسيحية واليهودية في هذه المدينة بالإضافة إلى أهميته بالنسبة لربط النص بالسباق التاريخي والديني والثقافي الذي ظهر فيه وعدم الاعتماد فقط على الدلائل الداخلية التي يمكن استخلاصها من النصوص ودعوة للنظر أبعد من الأطر الضيقة للنصوص وأخذ علاقات التأثير والتأثر في الاعتبار.

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# The Papyri and the Septuagint: Chester Beatty Papyrus 967 and the Greek Texts of the Book of Esther

البرديات و الترجمة السبعينية: بردية تشيستر بيتي رقم 967 والنصوص اليونانية لسفر إستر،  
كريستين دي تروير

## 1 Introduction

Working in Biblical Studies, one turns almost immediately to the study of the Hebrew text of the Hebrew Bible – in Christian circles this is often called the Old Testament.<sup>1</sup> The critical edition of the Hebrew Bible is mostly based on the oldest complete Hebrew manuscript, called the Leningrad Codex, which is dated to circa 1008 CE. In the past seventy years, the witnesses of the Dead Sea Scrolls, which date from the third century BCE to the first century CE, have also offered old evidence for the Hebrew text.

After the Greeks had taken over the east, the Hebrew text was, however, also translated into Greek to serve Greek speaking, Hellenistic-Jewish communities. The critical edition of the Old Greek text-project, as undertaken by the Septuaginta Unternehmen in Göttingen, collects all the readings from all available witnesses and establishes the Old Greek text, as it emerged from the translators. Of great importance are the codices of the fourth and fifth centuries CE, such as Codex Vaticanus (fourth century), Codex Alexandrinus (fifth century), and Codex Sinaiticus (fourth century) which contain almost all biblical books in Greek.

In the third century CE, however, one person, Origen, left an incredible mark on the text of the Greek Old Testament. He was responsible for what could be called the first critical synopsis of the Bible: the Hexapla, a Bible in six columns. In the fifth column of this work, he offered a Greek revised text, that is a text that was aligned with a version that was closer to the Hebrew text than was the Old Greek. This revised text influenced many a biblical text afterwards and this influence is not always easy to trace in the textual witnesses.

Reconstructing the Old Greek text as it left the hands of the original translators is thus not that easy, and this project must harken back to a stage before Origen and,

in terms of witnesses, harken back to the time before the three main codices.

It is precisely for this reason that the eldest papyrus play an important role, especially those that date to a time before Origen and his hexaplaric work or seem not to have been influenced by the Hexapla. It is in this context, that, for the book of Esther, one has to pay careful attention to the text of the Chester Beatty papyrus P<sup>967</sup>, which is dated to the third century CE. The question always is, how can P<sup>967</sup> help to reconstruct the Old Greek text of the Book of Esther?

In this contribution, the following texts will be used: the Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT),<sup>2</sup> the Old Greek (OG),<sup>3</sup> the second Greek text, also (so-)called Lucianic or Alpha text (AT),<sup>4</sup> the Vetus Latina (VL),<sup>5</sup> and the second Georgian text (GeoII).<sup>6</sup> In a contribution like this, there is most often significant attention given to the readings of the early Jewish revisors Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion. There are, however, only two readings which are directly linked to Aquila, none of which has a direct bearing on the variants and readings discussed below.

In the critical edition of the Greek texts of the books of Esther by Robert Hanhart,<sup>7</sup> he reports that the actual pages of the Chester Beatty papyrus P<sup>967</sup> in which the book of Esther is preserved can be found in two locations: the Institut für Altertumskunde of the University of Cologne and the Chester Beatty in Dublin. The latter part was critically edited by Frederic G. Kenyon and the collation of the variants of the British Museum section was done based on this edition.<sup>8</sup>

The text of P<sup>967</sup> clearly stands in the tradition of the Old Greek. Hanhart reports that it has some typical omissions, which are mostly due to homeoteleuton, or smaller

<sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Dionisio Candido (Thyssen Foundation Project Az.10.17.2.033TR), Natia Mirotdadze (FWF Project P 31695), and Tyler Smith (FWF Project P 31695) for their input. I also thank the Thyssen Foundation and the FWF for supporting the projects.

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<sup>2</sup> Saebo 2004.

<sup>3</sup> Hanhart 1983.

<sup>4</sup> Hanhart 1983.

<sup>5</sup> Haelewyck 2003–2008.

<sup>6</sup> The data of the second Georgian text were collected by Natia Mirotdadze (see footnote 1).

<sup>7</sup> Hanhart 1983, 12–4.

<sup>8</sup> Kenyon 1937; Kenyon 1938.

adaptations.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, there are (only) three cases of additions, and a couple cases in which an expression was replaced by another. Next, there are changes in declension, which are mostly due to error. Once an article is repeated. Other variants are mostly smaller errors.

Aside from standing firmly in the line of the OG, there is yet another layer in P<sup>967</sup>. Hanhart points to the importance of P<sup>967</sup> for the Hebrew text and for the second Greek text. He writes, “von großer Bedeutung ist das Verhältnis von 967 zu M und L, da diese Hs. als der älteste Zeuge den sichersten terminus ante quem für die Entstehung rezensioneller Bearbeitungen nach diesen beiden Texten vermittelt.”<sup>10</sup> With this remark, Hanhart also positions the text of P<sup>967</sup> in relation to the earliest recensions toward other texts, in this case toward M and L. Hanhart notes some alignments of P<sup>967</sup> with the Hebrew text, which points to the fact that there were already, before Origen, activities trying to align a Greek text with a Hebrew text. However, as these alignments are also in the hexaplaric witnesses, and as there are no variant readings that point to a “Sondertradition rezensioneller Bearbeitung nach M” a separate or an independent recensional layer cannot be established. In all but one case, a variant is also attested in the hexaplaric tradition. Similarly, because of the paucity of the variants and because of them being not relevant variants, one cannot point to an alignment of P<sup>967</sup> to L.<sup>11</sup>

With these remarks, it becomes clear that Hanhart is searching for evidence of a pre-hexaplaric round of recensional activity in P<sup>967</sup> in the text of Esther. Indeed, Hanhart devotes a section to “das Verhältnis der hexaplarischen Zeugen zu vorhexaplarischer Überlieferung.”<sup>12</sup> This search is most likely inspired by Joseph Ziegler, who already between 1945 and 1948, more than fifteen years before Barthélemy and his *Les devanciers d’Aquila*, studied the Ezekiel text of P<sup>967</sup> and pointed to pre-hexaplaric readings in P<sup>967</sup> in the Ezekiel section.

Whereas Hanhart was rather cautious in his description of the textual character of P<sup>967</sup>, he used the coinciding of the variants readings in P<sup>967</sup> and S<sup>(\*)</sup> and the variants in the hexaplaric tradition to more strongly emphasise an alignment with M (and L).<sup>13</sup> As S stems from hexaplaric times, and P<sup>967</sup> from pre-hexaplaric times, these witnesses are very important, but especially P<sup>967</sup>, as the latter seems not to have been influenced by Origen’s work.

Hanhart then pointed to the Greek Esther traditions that do not coincide with either the Old Greek text or the L text, namely the Greek text which the translator of the Vetus Latina and/or Josephus had as their basis or, more precisely, had as a partial basis, and in which there are variant readings that touch on the hexaplaric tradition. Hanhart notes that “diese Textformen gehören teilweise einer Tradition an, die sich mit der der hexaplarischen Rezension berührte, teilweise, dort wo sie selbständig Gut überliefern, einer Tradition, die andere Wege ging.”<sup>14</sup>

In my opinion, with that last note, Hanhart may be pointing to the possible existence of another hexaplaric sort of recensional activity. As this activity can be found in the Vetus Latina and/or Josephus, he may be suggesting further pre-hexaplaric activity.

Our research team in Salzburg, working with the different older versions of the book of Esther, especially the Vetus Latina and the Georgian versions, is focused on this level of early recensions or reworkings as it may define the nature of the AT, Esther’s second Greek text.

## 2 The contribution of P<sup>967</sup> to the textual history of the Book of Esther: some examples

With a couple examples, I will now try to explain the textual history of the books of Esther in further detail.

In Esth. 2,21–23 of the Hebrew, Masoretic text, it is reported that Mordecai, sitting at the king’s gate, comes across an assassination plot against the king. He warns Esther, who in turn tells the king. The affair is investigated, and two men (Bigthan and Teresh) are charged and hanged upon the gallows. The event is recorded in the book of the annals.

The Old Greek translates this section in OG 2,21–23, with a couple changes, the most obvious ones I will now mention. The main villains, the eunuchs, are further identified as the chief bodyguards,<sup>15</sup> but their names have vanished from the translation. The OG also explains the reasons for the eunuchs becoming angry, an element which was absent from the MT. They are upset “because of Mordecai’s advancement” (OG Esth. 2,21). Finally, the recording of the event becomes a “memorandum to be

<sup>9</sup> Hanhart 1983, 58–60.

<sup>10</sup> Hanhart 1983, 59.

<sup>11</sup> Hanhart 1983, 60.

<sup>12</sup> Hanhart 1983, 67–9.

<sup>13</sup> Hanhart 1983, 68.

<sup>14</sup> Hanhart 1983, 69.

<sup>15</sup> When sentenced, they are again eunuchs, see OG Esth. 2,21 and 2,23a.

deposited in the royal library in praise of the goodwill shown by Mordecai” (OG Esth. 2,23b).

It is the advancement of Mordecai mentioned in OG Esth. 2,21 that causes scholars to pause. In the MT Mordecai only is rewarded later in the story, and after the promotion of Haman, and the unravelling of the story. In the OG, however, the promotion of Mordecai is mentioned right at the beginning of the story.

In the second section of Addition A (from here onward A,12–17), an addition that is found in the OG text before the text of chapter 1, Mordecai is resting in the courtyard, together with two eunuchs. Their names are Gabatha and Tharra and they plot to assassinate the king. Mordecai informs the king directly; there is no reference to Esther here, as she has not yet entered the scene. The king investigates, the two confess, and they are taken away for execution. The king makes a permanent record of the event, as does Mordecai. The king then “ordered Mordecai to serve in the court” (OG Esth. A,16). I also note that in this case, Haman seeks to injure Mordecai and his people, “because of the two eunuchs of the king” (OG Esth. A,17).

There are thus in the OG two reports on how Mordecai discovered an assassination plot: one at the end of chapter 2 (OG Esth. 2,21–23) and one in Addition A, right at the beginning of the story (OG Est A,12–17). P<sup>967</sup>, although fragmentary, offers the text of OG Esth. A,12–17, and thus offers the full assassination plot story of Addition A. Similarly, P<sup>967</sup> gives the full text of the version in OG Esth. 2,21–23.

The AT has the text in Addition A (AT A,11b–18) but does not have a parallel to the MT-OG Esth. 2,21–23. In the AT, in A, the eunuchs have different names (Αστας and Θεδευτος with the former name being recorded in the margin of ms 392). As in the OG, Mordecai reports the plot directly to the king, which is logical as Esther has not yet been introduced to the story. As in the OG, Mordecai is given the order to serve in the king’s court and watch out for similar events. In the AT, and only in the AT, an element is added to the story: instead of receiving gifts as in the OG, Mordecai receives Haman. Next, it is reported in the AT that Haman seeks to injure Mordecai and his people. The AT, then reverts back to the OG and gives the same reason as given in the OG: because Mordecai had spoken about the eunuchs to the king. Similarly, GeoII has the assassination plot in A,12–17 but does not have it in 2,21–23 (which is a very remarkable, and for GeoII, a unique and large omission). In contrast, the VL does not have the text of the assassination plot in the Addition (OG A,12–17 or AT A,11b–18) but does have a parallel to 2,21–23.<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, the VL does have

a parallel to the beginning of A,1–11. To summarise these complex textual relationships, see Table 1.

**Table 1:** Textual History of Assassination Plots.

	Assassination in Addition	Assassination in chapter 2	
MT	–	x	
OG	x	x	= P <sup>967</sup>
AT	x	–	
Geoll	x	–	
VL	–	x	

Another path to explore the textual history of Esther is to take a closer look at variants in 2,21–23. I record the following variants in the text of P<sup>967</sup> as they relate to OG Esth. A,12–17 and OG Esth. 2,21–23:

- A,13: χειρας ] + αυτων 967 α
- A,14: απηχθησαν ] εξηχθησαν S\* A 967 58
- A,16: τουτων B S\* 967 O<sup>-58</sup> 46<sup>c</sup> 392 = L
- 2,20: Μαρδοχαιος ] pr o A 967 583: cf 21
- 2,21: προσηχθη 967 46

I will now analyse these variants, not in the sequence as offered above, but in such a way as to demonstrate the textual development of the Greek tradition. First, consider this reading in A,16, which indicates that P<sup>967</sup> is a witness to the OG, along with Codices B and S\*:

A,16: τουτων B S\* 967 O<sup>-58</sup> 46<sup>c</sup> 392 = L

P<sup>967</sup> is here a witness to the OG, together with Codices B and S\*. The hexaplaric text follows the OG here; this is to be expected as the hexaplaric recension had no recourse at a Hebrew text in this addition. Ms 392, the mixed manuscript, offers for A,16, more precisely from the second phrase of A,16 to A,17 the Old Greek text – the text of ms 392 goes back and forth between the text of the OG and that of the AT.<sup>17</sup>

What is remarkable is that this reading is also found in the AT. In other words, this reading, the reading that was put in the lemma text, is found in the oldest witnesses of the OG, including P<sup>967</sup>, and was taken over in the AT. Whether P<sup>967</sup> conserved the reading of the OG, or whether it took it over from the AT cannot be decided, but most likely P<sup>967</sup> kept the OG reading.

P<sup>967</sup> also at times preserves hexaplaric readings, like in Esth. 2,20:

2,20: Μαρδοχαιος ] pr o A 967 583: cf 21

<sup>16</sup> Haelewyck 2003–2008, 77.

<sup>17</sup> Hanhart 1983, 15–6.

In this hexaplaric correction, the article is added before the name of Mordecai. This is a precise rendering of the Hebrew *status constructus* in which the second part is a personal name: מֶרְדֵּכַי מִמְּאֵר מִבִּגְתָּן. Proper names are by definition defined – a hexaplaric correction which adds the article thus brings the OG closer in alignment with the MT. This hexaplaric correction can be found in Codex A. Codex A is a good witness to the OG, but it also has variant readings which bring the OG a bit closer to the MT. For instance, it has a “hebraisierende Artikelgebrauch.”<sup>18</sup> This corrective reading can also be found in ms 583 which is a hexaplaric manuscript.

Hanhart’s reference to verse 21 is important, as in 2,21, in A’ (that is Codex A’ and ms 311), the article is correctively added to the personal name of Mordecai. A’ is a witness of the hexaplaric tradition. Important for this contribution, is that this reading also occurs in P<sup>967</sup>, and thus dates to pre-hexaplaric times or textual layers.

There are other hexaplaric readings where P<sup>967</sup> does not join hexaplaric witnesses:

2,20: ην ] + εν τω τιθηνεισθαι αυτην O = M

In all the witnesses of the hexaplaric recension, hence O (that is, 58 93 583), after ην the witnesses add εν τω τιθηνεισθαι αυτην, “during her upbringing.” This plus reflects the MT מִבִּגְתָּן. The hexaplaric witnesses thus have added a reading which clearly reflects the MT text, an alignment missing from the OG. I note that with the reading *eam parvulam nutriebat*, the Vg also has this element. More importantly for our discussion today is that P<sup>967</sup> does not have this clear hexaplaric correction. The correction in the hexaplaric text witnesses is thus truly a hexaplaric correction and a hexaplaric correction only; it did not yet enter the line of transmission before the work of Origen. Proof of this comes in the absence of this reading in P<sup>967</sup>.

Another such example concerns the names of the two eunuchs:

2,21: οι δυο ευν. ] pr γαββαταν και θαρας O-S<sup>c</sup> 249’ = M

Whereas in the MT the eunuchs were named Bigthan and Teresh, the OG in the parallel text of 2,21 does not record their names. The hexaplaric tradition, in this case S<sup>c</sup>, and

the mixed manuscripts 249 and 670, however, align the OG text with the MT and thus add the names of the eunuchs: γαββαταν και θαρας. I note here that the manuscript tradition, as usual in the case of proper names, has many variants of the spelling of the names.

The text of Codex S<sup>c</sup> is close in text to P<sup>967</sup> in this case. Hanhart tends to see in S a light level of recensional activity toward MT and L.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the corrector of S (S<sup>c</sup>) is clearly a hexaplaric corrector.<sup>20</sup> In the hexaplaric witnesses, and in the mixed manuscripts, the names γαββαταν και θαρας reflect the MT שִׁרְהָן וְתִרְשָׁן, with the Hebrew Bigtan through metathesis transformed in γαββαταν. It is remarkable here again that P<sup>967</sup> does not correct its text to reflect the MT. In this case, P<sup>967</sup> is a good witness to the OG which does not read the proper names in its text.

Making this case even more interesting, especially as it relates to Hexapla text issues, is that the reading of the names of the eunuchs as recorded in Addition A (OG Esth. A,12), Γαβαθα καὶ Θαρρα, align precisely with the reading of the names of the eunuchs in the hexaplaric correction of OG Esth. 2,21 (with variants in 93 and S<sup>c</sup>). Did the hexaplaric correctors, when working on 2,21–23, turn back to OG Esth. A,12 in order to align their text in 2,21?

P<sup>967</sup> also preserves an inner Greek correction:

A,13: χειρας ] + αυτων 967 α

The case of the variant reading in OG A,13 is very interesting. P<sup>967</sup> and recension group α have added the possessive pronoun αυτων, “the eunuchs were preparing to lay *their* hands on King Artaxerxes” (OG Esth. A,13). This case can easily be explained as an inner Greek correction. As this case comes from an Addition, alignment with a Hebrew text is not to be expected. Similarly, recension group α also does not help here, as this reading is found in the Addition, where, by definition, there is no Hebrew text to correct to, and also because “ein consequent durchgeführtes Rezensionssprinzip sich in α nicht erkennen läßt” (with metathesis of verb).<sup>21</sup>

P<sup>967</sup> also offers an example which may point to an editorial change:

A,14: απηχθησαν ] εξηχθησαν S\* A 967 58

<sup>18</sup> Hanhart 1983, 56.

<sup>19</sup> Hanhart 1983, 52–3.

<sup>20</sup> Hanhart 1983, 64–5.

<sup>21</sup> Hanhart 1983, 81.

The replacement of ἀπάγω with ἐξάγω is found in Codex S, as an original reading, Codex A, P<sup>967</sup> and the hexaplaric ms 58. The latter verb, ἐξάγω, is used 213 times in the OG, often in the sense of the leading out of Egypt, out of the door, out of Ur, out of misery, etc. The former verb, ἀπάγω, is used only 43 times, but often in the sense of lead away as a prisoner (see for instance, Gen. 31,26; 40,3), to mislead (Iud. 4,7), to take away (I Regn. 6,7), to lead into exile (IV Regn. 24,15), albeit also to lead toward something (III Regn. 1,38), or toward a man (IV. Regn. 6,19). The verb ἀπάγω in OG Esther fits maybe better than the verb ἐξάγω as found in S\* A 967 58. In this case, I honestly cannot say what the more original reading is in A,14. Was ἐξάγω the more original reading and did B, and in its trace, V and the rest of the mss, correct toward ἀπάγω? Or was ἀπάγω the more original reading, but was there an early pre-hexaplaric correction toward ἐξάγω which was preserved in S\* 967 and also preserved in the hexaplaric Codex A and ms 58? I tend to go with the latter, as I cannot explain the appearance of the other reading in multiple independent manuscripts and traditions. But I must also acknowledge that I have no linguistic or semantic reason to explain the usage of ἐξάγω.

This case is however even more complicated. The verb ἀπάγω is used three times in the AT. First, in A,14, where the eunuchs are taken away (which is the parallel to OG A,14); second, in AT 7,11, where the king orders Haman to be taken away (ἀπαχθήτης Ἄμαν καὶ μὴ ζήτω); and finally in AT 7,12, where the command is carried out (καὶ οὕτως ἀπήγετο). There is thus in the AT a direct parallel between the taking away of the eunuchs to be sentenced and Haman being taken away to be executed. This parallel is entirely absent from the OG story and text. The usage of ἀπάγω is clearly intensified in the AT. One could even say it is a characteristic of the AT to describe Haman's being taken away to be sentenced in a similar way as that of the eunuchs. On the other hand, there is in the AT also the use of ἐξάγω: in AT 6,19, Haman, following up on a command given by the king, leads a horse outside (καὶ ἐξήγαγεν Ἄμαν τὸν ἵππον ἔξω). None of these readings, however, helps to explain why in S\* A 967 58 an alternative reading was selected.

Our final variant, however, may help to solve the puzzle:

2,21: προσηχθη 967 46

The promotion of Mordecai, which causes the chief bodyguards of the king to become angry, is described with this verb προσάγω. This verb is nowhere used in the OG of Esther, but again, it is found in the AT: in AT 6,19 there is a double movement reported:

Καὶ ἐξήγαγεν Ἄμαν τὸν ἵππον ἔξω  
Καὶ προσήγαγεν . . . αὐτὸν

Haman is leading the horse outside  
And he is leading it forward.

The AT compliments ἐξάγω with προσάγω. It is however the horse, with Mordecai on top of it, that is taken forward. The AT does use the verb προσάγω twice with Mordecai as the beneficiary: first Mordecai is being taken forward (that is, promoted, which causes the anger of the bodyguards) and then Mordecai is on the horse that is being taken forward (by the associate of the eunuchs, Haman, who is still angry at what happened with the eunuchs, see AT A,18). There is thus clearly at the level of the AT a redactor at work, who may have wanted to create parallels: one between the eunuchs and Haman, and one between the promotion of Mordecai and the leading forward of the horse with Mordecai on it.

Now, turning to P<sup>967</sup>, I note that the reading here may have taken from the AT one or some of the verbs. Below I have first printed the appropriate verbs, and then in a second survey the persons and contrasts involved.

	MT	OG	P <sup>967</sup>	AT
A,14	–	ἀπήχθησαν	ἐξήθησαν	ἀπήχθησαν
2,21	–	προήχθη	προσήχθη	–
6,19a	–	–	–	ἐξήγαγεν
6,19b	–	–	–	προσήγαγεν
7,11	– <sup>22</sup>	–	–	ἀπαχθήτω
7,12	–	–	–	ἀπήγετο

	MT	OG	P <sup>967</sup>	AT
A,14	–	ἀπάγω	ἐξάγω	ἀπάγω eunuchs
2,21	–	προάγω	προσάγω	– Mordecai
6,19a	–	–	–	ἐξάγω horse
6,19b	–	–	–	προσάγω horse & Mordecai
7,11	–	–	–	ἀπάγω Haman
7,12	–	–	–	ἀπάγω Haman

In my opinion, we might be seeing a small alignment of P<sup>967</sup> toward AT: just like the horses are taken out (AT 6,19a and P<sup>967</sup> A,14), so too are the eunuchs; and both times Mordecai is in a better position. Just as the horse is taken out with Mordecai on top, so too is Mordecai promoted (AT 6,19b and P<sup>967</sup> 2,21). But this presupposes attention to

<sup>22</sup> In MT 7,9b–10, the MT has a text and verb here, but it reads יהנה ענה על מלכותו ויהנה עליו: ויהנה, which is translated in the OG as: σταυρωθήτης ἐπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκρεμάσθη Ἄμαν ἐπὶ τοῦ ξύλου.

the story line of a text, which I am not sure is attested in P<sup>967</sup>. This small editorial interest however, may explain the correction in P<sup>967</sup> in A,14 which is remarkable, as it does not point to an alignment of P<sup>967</sup> with the Hebrew text, but with the AT. But I acknowledge that it is a bit farfetched.

	MT	OG	P <sup>967</sup>	AT	
A,14	–	ἀπάγω	ἐξάγω	ἀπάγω	eunuchs
2,21	–	προάγω	προσάγω	–	Mordecai
6,19a	–	–	–	ἐξάγω	horse
6,19b	–	–	–	προσάγω	horse & Mordecai
7,11	–	–	–	ἀπάγω	Haman
7,12	–	–	–	ἀπάγω	Haman

The study of the variants of P<sup>967</sup> is interesting, demonstrating the importance of the papyri for our understanding of the Old Greek and its further history, and the versions and transmission of Jewish scripture more broadly.

From just studying these readings in the different texts of the book of Esther, one can already see that the text history of this book is not easily reconstructed. Moreover, it is clear that in order to reconstruct the text and the history, one needs to study all the witnesses. Next, the study of the papyri, especially the pre-hexaplaric papyri

or papyri that were not influenced by the work of Origen, is important to not only reconstruct the earliest layer of the Old Greek, but also start to sketch the earliest historical development of the text. When studying all the variants of the earliest witnesses, one also starts to see that texts were from a very early time being corrected or brought more in line with a then current Hebrew text.

Just by exploring the text of the Book of Esther according to P<sup>967</sup> and its relationship to the versions, we gain significant new insight into Esther's complex textual history.<sup>23</sup>

- P<sup>967</sup> is a manuscript with a basic text aligned with the OG text.
- P<sup>967</sup> also seems to align its text with a Hebrew text, at least that is what happens in the book of Ezekiel. In the book of Esther, I also noted, confirming Hanhart's view, that indeed on occasion P<sup>967</sup> is a witness to the hexaplaric tradition. As P<sup>967</sup> predates the hexaplaric enterprise, it is a possible witness to an earlier phase of a recensional activity.
- P<sup>967</sup> however on occasion does not offer the hexaplaric reading, and thus, offers a glimpse at the pre-hexaplaric level of the OG text.
- P<sup>967</sup> does not shy away from improving the Greek in some instances.
- P<sup>967</sup> may, maybe, on a very seldom occasions have aligned its text with the AT.

تقدم الكاتبة في هذه المقالة شرح مفصل للتاريخ المتشعب لنص سفر إستر وترجمته من العبرانية إلى اليونانية، مع التركيز على الاختلافات الداخلية في النقل اليوناني والمعروف بالترجمة السبعينية. ويوضح هذا التحليل المفصل للنص الدقيق الأهمية الكبرى التي تتمتع بها النصوص التي وصلت إلينا على أوراق البردي وذلك باعتبارها شواهد مبكرة لعملية النقل هذه قبل مسالة التقنين التي حدثت بعد ذلك من خلال الجماعات الدينية المختلفة. وعلى الرغم من أن نصوص برديات المقدس هذه قد حظيت منذ البداية باهتمام الباحثين نظراً لقيمتها العلمية بالنسبة لتطور النصوص المقدسة، بالإضافة إلى الاستخدامات الأخرى المحتملة لمثل هذا الدليل المادي، إلا أن الكاتبة تشير إلى أنه لا يزال هناك الكثير للكشف عنه وإعادة تحليله وتصنيفه عندما يتعلق الأمر بنصوص الكتاب المقدس وعملية نقلها وتقنينها عبر العصور.

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<sup>23</sup> The conclusions as formulated are conclusions for the Book of Esther only. Another contribution, comparing the results of a similar study on the text of the book of Ezekiel and Daniel, is on my to-do-list.

Hugo Lundhaug

# The Apocalypse of Elijah in the Context of Coptic Apocrypha

نص سفر "الرؤية لايليا" في سياق النصوص القبطية غير المعتمدة،  
هوغو لوندوغ

“After these events, Elijah and Enoch come down. They lay aside the flesh of this world and receive a spiritual flesh. They pursue the Son of Lawlessness and kill him, without him being able to speak. On that day he will melt before them like ice melting from fire.”<sup>1</sup> Thus concludes the reign of the Antichrist in the last days according to the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, an early Christian apocryphon attested in four early Coptic manuscripts, including one held in the papyrus collection of the Chester Beatty in Dublin.

The *Apocalypse of Elijah* begins with the prophet’s reception of the word of God, and exhortations to avoid attachment to the material world through fasting and prayer. References to the coming of Christ to save the righteous from captivity, and of the punishment of sinners, are also part of the beginning of the text. We are then given detailed information about the events leading up to and including the end times.<sup>2</sup> Most importantly,

we are told about the arrival of the Antichrist, called “the Son of Lawlessness,” and most of the second half of the text deals with his deeds and the actions and fate of those who oppose him, including Enoch and Elijah, the woman Tabitha, and sixty righteous men, before the second coming of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

As with most early Christian writings, scholarship on this intriguing work has for the most part been directed toward its hypothetical original composition, with questions of place, date, context, and background of its authorship and redaction taking centre stage. The work’s original religious identity, Jewish or Christian, has also been up for debate, with several scholars arguing that the text, as it has come down to us, is a Christian reworking of an original Jewish writing.<sup>4</sup> While such discussions have a certain merit, the perspective of the present contribution will be different, focusing more on extant evidence and less on hypothetical texts. Turning the spotlight in the opposite direction and taking the extant manuscripts of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* as my point of departure, I will ask how the *Apocalypse of Elijah* fits into the broader picture of the production, transmission, and use of apocryphal literature in Coptic.<sup>5</sup>

## 1 The manuscripts

The material basis for our knowledge of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* consists of four Coptic manuscripts, three in the Sahidic dialect and one in Achmimic.<sup>6</sup> In addition, there is a tiny Greek fragment that has also been identi-

1 *Apoc. Elijah*, Ach 42.10–43.2. Translation based on the Coptic text in Steindorff 1899, 104:  $\mu\eta\iota\sigma\epsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\ \varphi\eta\iota\eta\iota\ \alpha\pi\alpha\rho\eta\iota\ \beta\epsilon\tau\eta\lambda\epsilon\iota\alpha\varsigma\ \mu\eta\eta\epsilon\omega\chi\ \sigma\epsilon\kappa\omicron\upsilon\ \alpha\pi\alpha\rho\eta\iota\ \eta\tau\varsigma\alpha\rho\zeta\ \mu\eta\mu\kappa\omicron\sigma\mu\omicron\varsigma\ \sigma\epsilon\chi\iota\ \eta\eta\omicron\upsilon\varsigma\alpha\rho\zeta\ \mu\eta\mu\eta\alpha\ \sigma\epsilon\pi\omega\tau\ \sigma\epsilon\pi\omega\eta\pi\epsilon\ \eta\tau\alpha\eta\omicron\mu\iota\alpha\ \sigma\epsilon\tau\omega\tau\beta\epsilon\ \eta\mu\alpha\varphi\ \epsilon\mu\alpha\varphi\epsilon\omega\epsilon\ \epsilon\tau\eta\phi\omicron\omicron\upsilon\epsilon\ \epsilon\tau\eta\mu\omicron\ \varphi\eta\alpha\beta\omega\lambda\ \alpha\beta\alpha\lambda\ \eta\pi\omicron\upsilon\eta\tau\omicron\ \alpha\beta\alpha\lambda\ \eta\tau\epsilon\ \eta\text{[}\omicron\gamma\text{]}\kappa\upsilon\sigma\tau\alpha\lambda\lambda\omicron\varsigma\ \epsilon\alpha\varphi\omega\lambda\ \alpha\beta\alpha\lambda\ \epsilon\tau\eta\omicron\upsilon\kappa\omega\epsilon\tau$ . All translations from Coptic are my own. I refer to the *Apocalypse of Elijah* using manuscript page and line numbers. For the manuscripts I use the abbreviations Ach, Sa<sup>1</sup>, Sa<sup>2</sup>, Sa<sup>3</sup> (see Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 1). On these four Coptic manuscripts, see below. This part of the work is only attested in Achmimic. In the CMCL database of Coptic literature, the *Apocalypse of Elijah* is designated as *clavis coptica* (cc) 0028. In the APOCRYPHA project’s database of Coptic apocrypha, it is work no. 6.

2 We are told, for instance, that there will appear in the north an unrighteous “king of Assyria” who will ravage Egypt. He will, however, be killed by a “king of peace” arising in the west, who will also bring destruction upon Egypt. One of his sons will kill him and bring even more destruction and oppression. Thereafter, three kings will arise in Persia, who will fight the kings of Assyria. Then yet another king, this time from “the city of the sun,” will arise and kill the Assyrian kings. Then follows the reign of the Antichrist, the final judgment and the second coming of Christ.

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3 For a brief overview of the text, see Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 7–11.

4 See, e.g., Schrage 1980, 204; Rosensthiel 1982; Wintermute 1983, 721–22; Bumazhnov 2017, 15; Bauckham 1976. For a convincing argument against such theories of redaction in favour of Christian authorship, see Miroshnikov / Somov 2020.

5 By apocryphal literature I mean works that elaborate or expand upon characters or events of the biblical storyworld. This definition, which focuses on process and creativity rather than canonicity, is the working definition used by the APOCRYPHA research project.

6 I follow Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981 in using the following sigla for these manuscripts: Sa<sup>1</sup>: BnF Copte 135.26–33; Sa<sup>2</sup>: BL Or. 7594; Sa<sup>3</sup>: Chester Beatty Ac. 1493; Ach: BnF Copte 135.12–25 + P.Berol. 1862.1–8.

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fied as a witness to this work. None of the manuscripts contains all of the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, but together they cover the work more or less. It is a highly intriguing, and diverse, group of manuscripts. They have in common that they are all papyrus manuscripts, which may be dated relatively early, and there is no doubt that they were produced and used by Christians. But in other respects they are noticeably different from each other.

### 1.1 P.Chester Beatty 2018 = Ac. 1493 (Sa<sup>3</sup>)

Beginning with the Dublin based manuscript, Chester Beatty Ac. 1493 is a papyrus codex that was dated by A. F. Shore in 1958 to the end of the fourth or beginning of the fifth century on palaeographical grounds,<sup>7</sup> and edited by Pietersma, Comstock, and Attridge in 1981 (Figure 1).<sup>8</sup> It contains ten folios of continuous text belonging to a single quire. Although all folios are damaged, the manuscript covers a large portion of the text of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* already known from other witnesses, while filling in significant gaps at various points. From a material point of view, the manuscript is unique in several respects. Its system of punctuation, for example, finds no parallel in any other known Coptic manuscript, and the palaeography can only be described as idiosyncratic.<sup>9</sup> The text is unevenly copied, with inconsistent letter forms, variable distance between the lines, a variable number of lines per page (19–24) and letters per line. There are also multiple mistakes and corrections throughout. Whether the scribe was inexperienced, or just sloppy or in a hurry, we do not know, but it is also worth noting the poor quality of the papyrus used.<sup>10</sup> We also do not know who produced and used the manuscript. It has been linked to the so-called Dishna Papers, discovered at the Jabal Abu Mana in 1952. If it was part of this discovery there is a high probability that it derives from one of the nearby Pachomian monasteries.<sup>11</sup> But this provenance is tenuous for Ac. 1493, as it is

<sup>7</sup> Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 6. The dating was written on a note accompanying the manuscript (p. 1). Pietersma, Comstock, and Attridge hold this dating to be corroborated by the then most recent work on Coptic palaeography, namely Cramer 1964, but considering the more recent heavy criticism of the latter as a dating tool (Layton 1985, 152, even characterizes it as “useless for any purpose whatsoever”), this supposed corroboration should not carry much weight. On the problematic nature of dating Coptic manuscripts by means of palaeography, see Layton 1985 and Askeland 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981.

<sup>9</sup> See Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 2–5.

<sup>10</sup> Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 4 (citing again the opinion of A. F. Shore).

<sup>11</sup> See Robinson 2011; Lundhaug 2018.

among the most uncertain of those manuscripts that have been linked to this discovery.

### 1.2 BnF Copte 135.12–25 + P.Berol. 1862.1–8 (Ach); BnF Copte 135.26–33 (Sa<sup>1</sup>)

In addition to the Chester Beatty manuscript, the two most significant manuscripts in terms of textual volume is a Sahidic one kept at the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (Sa<sup>1</sup>),<sup>12</sup> and an Achmimic manuscript dispersed between the Bibliotheque Nationale and the Papyrus collection in Berlin (Ach).<sup>13</sup> The Paris leaves were first published by Urbain Bouriant in 1885,<sup>14</sup> and later republished together with the Berlin leaves by Georg Steindorff in 1899.<sup>15</sup> They can be assigned with reasonable confidence to the fourth or fifth centuries on palaeographical and codicological grounds,<sup>16</sup> but I would hesitate to be more specific.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike the Chester Beatty manuscript (Sa<sup>3</sup>), which only contains the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, both the Sahidic (Sa<sup>1</sup>) and Achmimic (Ach) manuscripts also contain the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, which in both cases precedes the *Apocalypse of Elijah*. There are no titles or other paratextual markers preserved that indicate the end of the former and the beginning of the latter, so there is nothing in these manuscripts to indicate that these were regarded as separate texts. Both manuscripts also contain text that

<sup>12</sup> BnF Copte 135.26–33.

<sup>13</sup> BnF Copte 135.12–25 + P.Berol. 1862.1–8.

<sup>14</sup> Bouriant 1885.

<sup>15</sup> Steindorff 1899. On the construction of these codices, see now Carlig 2020, as well as Nongbri 2020 on Ach in particular.

<sup>16</sup> Sa<sup>1</sup> has been dated to the fourth, fourth/fifth, or fifth centuries, while Ach has been dated to the third/fourth (Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 6). Steindorff 1899, 6, suggests that Sa<sup>1</sup> is slightly younger than Ach, but no later than the early fifth century. Considering the fact that no Coptic manuscript has been securely dated to before the fourth century, I would be hesitant to date Ach to the third. Turner 1977, 137–38, dates Sa<sup>1</sup> tentatively to the fifth, and Ach to the fourth or fifth centuries. A broad dating to the fourth or fifth centuries for both manuscripts seems safest in light of the available evidence. On the fundamental uncertainty of palaeography as a dating tool for Coptic manuscripts, see n.7 above.

<sup>17</sup> Carlig 2020, 129 suggests the first half of the fourth century based on similarities with a group of manuscripts regarded as “standard Panopolite” manuscripts dated by Gascou 1989, 83, to between the end of the third and the middle of the fourth century. It is unclear, however, why the similarities between these two highly diverse codices (which differ from each other in dimensions, format, palaeography, quire structure, and dialect) and the so-called “standard Panopolite” manuscripts, should outweigh their differences and warrant such confidence regarding a close association of time and place of production as Carlig suggests.

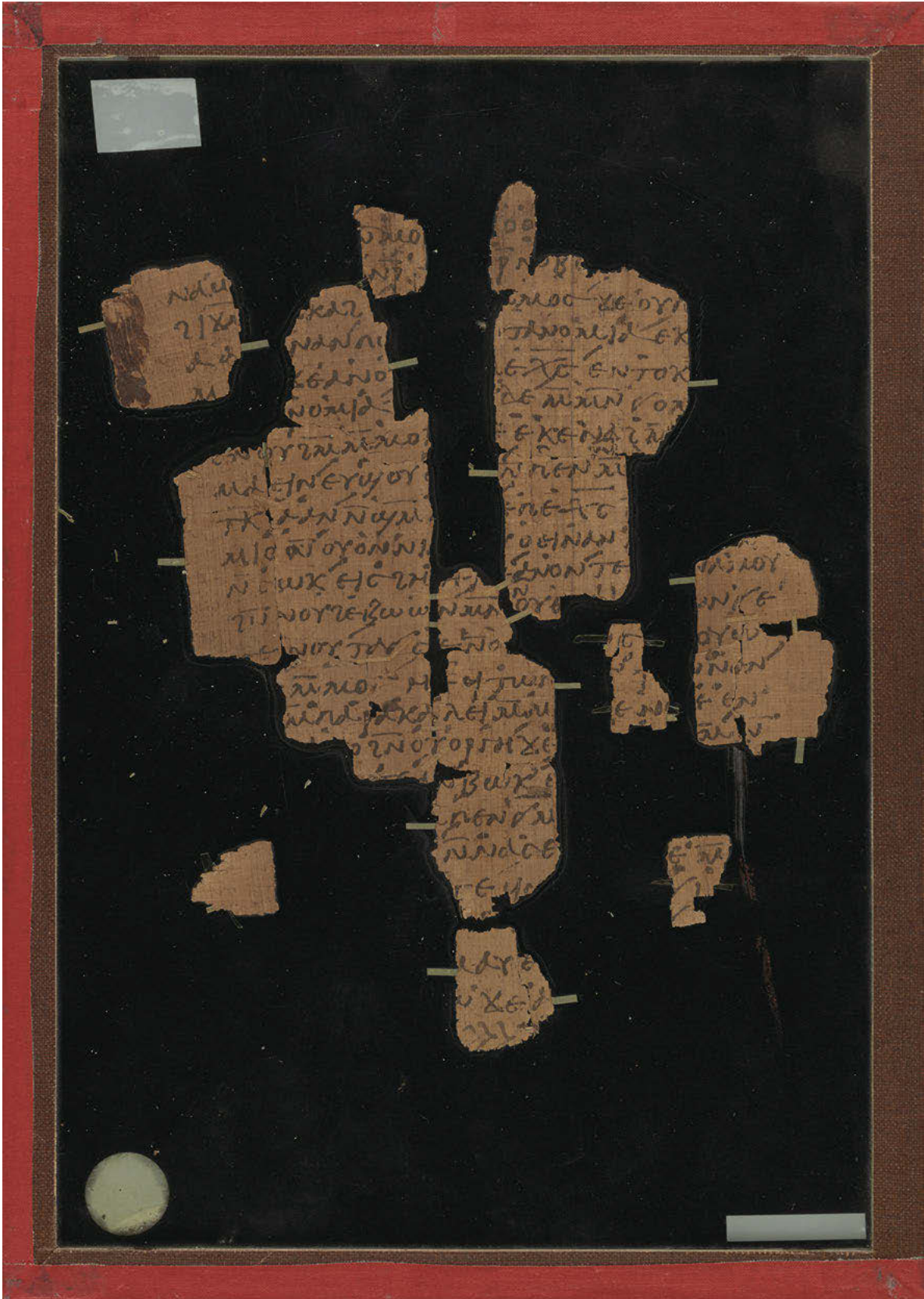


Figure 1: folio Ac. 1493 = CBL Cpt 2018 1r.

goes further than the Chester Beatty manuscript, although it is only Ach which includes the very end of the text.

According to some early reports, both manuscripts Sa<sup>1</sup> and Ach derive from the White Monastery near Atripe, the monastery of the famous archimandrite Shenoute,<sup>18</sup> but although this provenance has also found support in some later scholarship,<sup>19</sup> there is in fact no concrete evidence to connect these two manuscripts to the White Monastery,<sup>20</sup> and the connection in the early reports seem to be ultimately based on a confusion between the acquisition of a large group of leaves and fragments of much later parchment codices from the White Monastery by Gaston Maspero in 1883<sup>21</sup> and a group of early Achmimic manuscripts, allegedly discovered by Maspero in an excavation of a cemetery in Achmim (Panopolis) around the same time.<sup>22</sup>

In any case, if the dating of the manuscripts is correct, it would correspond to, or be very close to, the period when Shenoute was head of the White Monastery federation (from 385 to at least ca. 450 CE). Shenoute's opposition to the reading of apocrypha is well-known, and one would have to assume that if these manuscripts were present at the White Monastery during his reign, that would have had to have been without his knowledge, not to mention approval.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, it seems clear from Shenoute's polemics against the use of apocrypha in *I Am Amazed*,<sup>24</sup> and the existence of a strict censorship regime for writings entering the White Monastery,<sup>25</sup> that

the circulation of such literature in his monasteries was regarded as a very real problem.<sup>26</sup>

### 1.3 BL Or. 7594 (Sa2)

The final Coptic witness, British Library Or. 7594, commonly referred to as “Budge's Deuteronomy Codex,” is a highly interesting codex in which the *Apocalypse of Elijah* is found alongside the three canonical biblical texts Deuteronomy, Jonah, and the Acts of the Apostles, but appears to have been treated in a noticeably different way. The *Apocalypse of Elijah* is the last of the four texts in the codex, and in contrast to the other three texts, it has been copied in a cursive hand, and it breaks off after only two-and-a-half pages. On account of its short length and placement in the codex, as well as its appearance, the cursive text may at first sight have the appearance of a colophon. It was erroneously labelled as such by Budge, but properly identified by Carl Schmidt as the beginning of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* only a few years later.<sup>27</sup> The use of this kind of cursive script for a literary text in Coptic is nevertheless uncommon, and it is curious that such a script was used for the last text in a codex where the other three (canonical biblical) texts preceding it were copied in a more common literary hand. It was, however, the cursive script that was the basis for Kenyon's dating of the manuscript to around the middle of the fourth century, a conclusion he reached through palaeographical comparison with Greek documentary hands.<sup>28</sup>

As mentioned above, only the beginning of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* has been preserved in this manuscript, and David Frankfurter has used this as a basis for his claim that the text did not only circulate in its entirety, but also as excerpts. That would indeed be the case if the final preserved page of Or. 7594 was also originally the last page of the codex. However, since we cannot exclude the possibility that the manuscript originally contained one or more additional quires,<sup>29</sup> it remains unclear whether the codex originally contained the entire *Apocalypse of Elijah*, or just its beginning.<sup>30</sup>

18 E.g., Schmidt 1895, 705; Steindorff 1899, 1; Schmidt 1908, 9; Schmidt 1919, 4.

19 See, e.g., Orlandi 1983, 59; Orlandi 1997, 65; but with far more caution in Orlandi 2002, 221–23.

20 See Boud'hors 2012, 240 n.39. Cf. Miroshnikov / Somov 2020, 200, who argue on the basis of the dialect of Sa<sup>1</sup> (Sahidic with Achmimic influences) and Ach (Achmimic) that they were probably produced in “the Theban region.”

21 Maspero 1892, 1.

22 Bouriant 1885, 243 (Bouriant speaks of “les fouilles récentes d'Akhmim” and lists the leaves of six separate manuscripts); Carlig 2020, 115; cf. Schmidt 1908, 9. On the uncertainty and confusion surrounding the provenance of several Achmimic manuscripts discovered around this time, see Watson 2020, 18–22. Maspero, 1893, 214–19 briefly describes the Achmim excavation, but does not mention the discovery of Coptic codices.

23 On Shenoute's opposition to apocrypha, see Lundhaug 2012; Lundhaug / Jenott 2015, 170–75. His polemics against apocrypha is most prominently on display in the writing known as *I Am Amazed*. The best edition of this text is currently Cristea 2011.

24 Lundhaug 2012; Lundhaug / Jenott 2015, 170–75.

25 Shenoute, *You, God the Eternal*, XS 336; cf. Lundhaug / Jenott 2015, 174–75.

26 Lundhaug 2012; Lundhaug / Jenott 2015, 170–75.

27 Schmidt 1925. While a number of scholars have continued to refer to the *Apocalypse of Elijah* in this manuscript as a colophon text, e.g., Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981; Frankfurter 1993, this is certainly incorrect, as has been firmly pointed out by Emmel 2003, 83 n.1: “this text is *not* a colophon” (his emphasis).

28 See Budge 1912, lxiii. Cf. Turner 1977, 137, who dates the codex to 330–350 CE.

29 See Emmel 2003, 89 n.18.

30 Hebbelynck once suggested that BL Or. 7594 could be the result

With regard to the question of provenance, however, we have more information on this codex than on the ones discussed above. According to Budge, it was discovered in a tomb near the modern city of el-Ashmunein (ancient Hermopolis Magna, Coptic Shmoun), wrapped in linen and located between the feet of a corpse, also wrapped in linen, in a wooden coffin. Budge states that it was found in 1911 by local Egyptians whom he had personally asked to open nearby graves in search of manuscripts.<sup>31</sup> Budge states that he later visited the tomb in person, coming to the conclusion that the corpse, in whose coffin the book was found, must have been its owner, sometime in the late fourth or early fifth century. He also concluded that the owner, whom he speculated had been a revered anchorite, had probably copied the book “with his own hands,” and observed that the “writing and style of the page were different from anything of the kind” he had ever seen before.<sup>32</sup> While the latter may well have been the case, the manuscript was certainly not simply the work of the monk with whom it was buried, as it seems to have been the work of at least three scribes. Moreover, while Budge may not have seen anything similar at the time, we can now observe that the manuscript is in several respects similar to other known Coptic manuscripts, such as the Nag Hammadi Codices, and in particular Nag Hammadi Codex II, a codex that may also be dated to the late fourth or early fifth century.

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of a combination of two originally distinct codices (Hebbelynck / Thompson 1921, 73), but was convinced by Thompson that this was not the case (p. 80). More recently, Nagel 1994 has argued that the codex as it has been preserved is most likely the result of an extension of an originally smaller codex, but this has later been decisively refuted by Emmel 2003.

**31** Budge 1920, 2.372–74. Budge states that “In 1909 and again in 1911 I revisited the sites from which I obtained the papyrus Psalter and the other Biblical texts, and urged the natives to search for more unopened graves in ancient Coptic cemeteries, and to try and find me more texts. In January, 1911, one of them discovered near Ashmūnēn a group of tombs which had escaped his notice in former years” (p. 372). The manuscript was supposedly found “At one end of the group of graves” in “a two-chambered tomb, part of which had been hewn in the lower slope of the hill” (p. 372). The Psalter Budge refers to is the British Library codex that is now known as BL Or. 5000. The connection with Hermopolis Magna is strengthened by several references to the city in Greek documents found reused as cartonnage in the book’s cover, dated by Bell 1912, xv–xvii to no later than 320 CE. Bell 1912, xvii also identified a Coptic fragment in the cartonnage with “literary uncials,” that he estimated to be from the fifth century.

**32** Budge 1920, 2.373–74.

## 1.4 The Greek fragment

There is also a Greek fragment, but only a tiny one, measuring roughly 6x6 cm. It was identified as a witness to the *Apocalypse of Elijah* by Pistelli in 1912 on the basis of the fact that the text on the verso of the Greek fragment parallels a passage near the end of the Achmimic version of the *Apocalypse of Elijah*.<sup>33</sup> However, the text on the recto of the fragment does not correspond to the Coptic text at all, despite the fact that one would expect it to parallel either Ach or Sa<sup>1</sup>. The mere existence of this Greek fragment has nevertheless been taken by scholars as proof of a Greek *original* for the *Apocalypse of Elijah*.<sup>34</sup> This conclusion is in large part based on the default assumption that most Coptic texts preserved in manuscripts of the fourth and fifth centuries are translations from Greek, and that the Greek text could not possibly be a translation from Coptic. It is important to note, however, that these are among those scholarly assumptions that do not rest on much secure evidence. Moreover, the problem of the missing parallel to the text on the recto of the Greek fragment certainly throws in doubt the extent of its similarity with the *Apocalypse of Elijah* as known from the Coptic manuscripts.<sup>35</sup> In any case, we must conclude that while the Greek fragment is an important witness to what seems to be a version of (at least part of) this work, it does *not* provide sufficient evidence to firmly conclude that the *Apocalypse of Elijah* must have been originally composed in Greek.<sup>36</sup>

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**33** Pistelli 1912, 16–7.

**34** Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 91; cf. Kuhn 1982, 314; Buzmazhnov 2017, 15.

**35** Miroshnikov / Somov 2020, 199, following Pistelli 1912, 17, argue that the recto was probably preceded by the verso and most likely preserve a different text.

**36** It is interesting to note in this connection that there are several features that connect the *Apocalypse of Elijah* specifically to Egypt. First of all, Egypt is the setting for a significant part of the prophecy that takes place *before* the coming of the Antichrist and the shift in focus to Jerusalem. Egypt is the land that is alternately ruled by just and unjust kings and whose people suffer hardship as a consequence. Moreover, a part of the narrative dealing with Egypt seems to borrow from the Egyptian *Oracle of the Potter* (Wintermute 1983, 723–24), and, as David Frankfurter 1990 has argued, the part concerning the martyrdom of Tabitha can plausibly be connected to ancient Egyptian tradition as well (Frankfurter 1990 connects Tabitha to the Egyptian scorpion goddess Tabithet, and also argues for possible influence from the goddess Isis). Such direct connections to Egypt, which we also frequently find in other Coptic apocrypha, are certainly clues to the interests and context of those who copied and read these texts in Coptic. In later Coptic apocrypha we also frequently find that Egypt plays a crucial role. It may be the location for a pseudepigraphal sermon containing apocryphal materials, sometimes even embedded apostolic books, or Egyptian could be the language that such an embedded apostolic work is said to be written in, such as in the *Life of Mary Magdalene*, or texts



## 2 State of preservation and textual fluidity

While a complete text can be reconstructed from a combination of the surviving Coptic manuscripts, the *Apocalypse of Elijah* is not preserved in its entirety in any single manuscript.<sup>37</sup> Although the Coptic fragments show a reasonably stable text, for this type of work, across the four Coptic witnesses, there is a large number of minor variants, some of which may have the potential to produce, or be the product of, different interpretations.<sup>38</sup> For instance, when the narrator is addressed by “the Word of God” (ⲡⲠⲗⲁⲉ ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲟⲓⲥ) in the opening lines of the text, which has been preserved in three of the manuscripts (Ach, Sa<sup>2</sup>, and Sa<sup>3</sup>),<sup>39</sup> only in the Achmimic is he identified as “the Son of Man” (ⲡⲠⲛⲣⲉ ⲉⲓⲡⲣⲟⲙⲉ),<sup>40</sup> while the other two do not specify his identity.<sup>41</sup> The differences are also of such a nature that it is impossible to say which one of the surviving witnesses preserves a text that is closest to the original.

While there are numerous minor variants across the manuscripts, what may be regarded as possibly the most significant textual variant is constituted by what seems to be the premature ending of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* in the Chester Beatty manuscript (Sa<sup>3</sup>). Both Sa<sup>1</sup> and especially Ach, which is the only manuscript to preserve the end of the work, extend the narrative significantly beyond the point where Sa<sup>3</sup> ends. This situation could perhaps be because the Chester Beatty codex may originally have contained more pages. What we have preserved of the codex seems to be a complete quire of five bifolios, which may either have been the full extent of the original codex or just a part of a codex containing additional quires. Yet, while the possibility that the codex may originally have

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could even mention specifically Egyptian concerns, such as the inundation of the Nile, which is mentioned in the *Mysteries of John* and pseudo-Timothy *On the Feast of the Archangel Michael*. None of this is particularly surprising, as the works we are talking about have been copied in Coptic and used in Egypt. Such features should, however, cause us to rethink our default-hypothesis of a Greek original for most Coptic texts, even when we are talking about early texts.

<sup>37</sup> For an overview of which parts of the work are preserved in which manuscript, see the table in Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Bryant’s definition of a fluid text as “any written work that exists in multiple material versions due to revisions (authorial, editorial, cultural) upon which we may construct an interpretation” (2007, 17).

<sup>39</sup> *Apoc. Elijah* Ach 19.1 (Steindorff 1899, 66); Sa<sup>2</sup> 262.1 (Schmidt 1925, 313); Sa<sup>3</sup> 1.1 (Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 20).

<sup>40</sup> *Apoc. Elijah* Ach 19.2 (Steindorff 1899, 66). This identification of the narrator, who may here be Elijah, as “Son of Man” may be based on an interpretation of Ioh. 3,13.

<sup>41</sup> *Apoc. Elijah* Sa<sup>2</sup> 262.2 (Schmidt 1925, 313); Sa<sup>3</sup> 1.2 (Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 20).

consisted of one or more quires in addition to the one preserved, the presence of traces of decoration, below the last line of preserved text, of a type that is often used at the end of texts, indicates that it may originally have ended here in this manuscript (Figure 2).

But if this was the case, it begs the question why. The situation may be explained in at least two ways. (1) The exemplar used by the scribe may also have ended at this point, as Pietersma, Comstock, and Attridge suggest,<sup>42</sup> but it could also be (2) because nobody bothered to add additional pages, or another quire, to the manuscript when the scribe reached the end of the existing quire. The relatively sloppy copying of the text in this manuscript seems to indicate that the scribe was inexperienced, which again heightens the likelihood that he may have miscalculated the number of pages needed to copy the whole text, and that he simply stopped copying when he ran out of pages, rather than add additional pages and continue copying until the end of the work.

## 3 Title and genre

The title by which we the work is known, the *Apocalypse of Elijah* (ⲧⲁⲡⲠⲠⲗⲁⲗⲏⲧⲓⲥ ⲛⲉⲓⲛⲁⲟⲓⲥ), is found only at the end of the Achmimic manuscript, which is also the only manuscript that preserves the end of the work. The other manuscripts either lack the final pages (Sa<sup>1</sup>), or simply end earlier, as we have seen may have been the case with both the Chester Beatty manuscript (Sa<sup>3</sup>) and possibly also the short text at the end of BL Or. 7594, (Sa<sup>2</sup>). What is somewhat curious about the title is that although the narrator at the beginning of the text, who describes his reception of the Word of God in the first person singular, may plausibly be identified with Elijah,<sup>43</sup> such an identification is complicated by the fact that Elijah is referred to and discussed at length in the third person later in the text, together with Enoch.

As for the genre of the work, it has been noted that despite its title, “apocalypse” is perhaps not the most fitting genre designation. Orval Wintermute, for instance, comments that it is “a somewhat inadequate description,”<sup>44</sup> and wonders “why it is called an apocalypse”

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<sup>42</sup> Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 3.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ioh. 3,13.

<sup>44</sup> Because, according to Wintermute, an apocalypse “usually contains the account of a secret revelation conveyed to a seer by an angelic messenger who directs that the revelation be written down for the benefit of those who will remain faithful in the last days” (Wintermute 1983, 721).

when “the document is not written in apocalyptic form.”<sup>45</sup> While Wintermute concludes that this discrepancy may be due to what he regards as the “composite nature” of the text,<sup>46</sup> it must be pointed out that the *Apocalypse of Elijah* is in good company among early Coptic texts designated as apocalypses in their manuscripts in not conforming well to modern scholarly notions of what an apocalypse *should* be.<sup>47</sup> The Nag Hammadi Codices, for instance, contain several texts titled as apocalypses in the manuscripts,<sup>48</sup> while scholars have debated whether or not they actually fit the genre-designation “apocalypse.”<sup>49</sup> So in this respect the *Apocalypse of Elijah* is not alone. Indeed, one may reasonably suggest that when ancient usage of the term “apocalypse” does not correspond to the modern scholarly category, the problem lies with the latter rather than the former. In any case, the *Apocalypse of Elijah* contains a prophecy of what will happen in Egypt and Jerusalem in the final years leading up to and including the conflict with the Antichrist and the second coming of Christ.

## 4 Content elements of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* in relation to other Coptic literature

The *Apocalypse of Elijah* tells a story of a sequence of righteous and wicked rulers of Egypt which culminates in the advent, rule, and destruction of the Antichrist, followed by the final judgment. Alongside this, the work focuses on asceticism, martyrdom, and a general call to escape from the material world.

The main antagonist in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, to whom the lengthy narrative of kings and conflict leads, is a character who is referred to as “the Son of Lawlessness” (ⲡⲠⲏⲣⲉ ⲏⲦⲀⲚⲠⲠⲠⲁ), “the Son of Perdition” (ⲡⲠⲏⲣⲉ ⲛⲦⲀⲚⲔⲀⲔⲠⲠⲟ),

or “the Shameless One” (ⲛⲁⲣⲟⲩⲛⲉ).<sup>50</sup> He is a character that, just like Christ, performs many “signs and wonders,”<sup>51</sup> but unlike Christ he is recognizable by his ugly appearance,<sup>52</sup> and can also be clearly distinguished from the real Christ by his inability to raise the dead, as he lacks the power to give life.<sup>53</sup> This character is the Antichrist, an identification that is made explicit when the sinners address him, once they realize that they have been led astray, saying: “[What have you] done to us, Son of Lawlessness? You [say]: ‘I [am] Christ,’ while being [the Son of] Law[less]ness.”<sup>54</sup> The Antichrist is not only opposed by Enoch and Elijah, but also by a woman named Tabitha and sixty righteous men.<sup>55</sup> The conflict involves martyrdom, resurrection, and the final defeat of the Antichrist.

It is only in the part describing the conflict with the Antichrist that Elijah himself plays a role in the apocalypse bearing his name, and here he does not appear alone, but always together with Enoch. We hear how the two prophets descend from heaven to confront the Antichrist, whereupon they die as martyrs. Their corpses are left in the market square for several days, before they eventually come back to life and ascend back into heaven – only to descend a second time, when they finally kill the Antichrist. While this double descent of Elijah and Enoch is found in no other Coptic apocrypha,<sup>56</sup> the idea that they would one day have to descend in order to die a bodily death is attested elsewhere. Since both Elijah and Enoch were believed to have been taken up to heaven in the body, it is to be expected that some would argue that they would someday have to die like every other human being, especially since there were other biblical characters of even higher standing who were not admitted into heaven without dying. In the *Death of Joseph the Carpenter*,<sup>57</sup> for example, a Coptic apocryphon of much later date than the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, Christ tackles this topic after he has told his apostles about the life and especially death

<sup>45</sup> Wintermute 1983, 721.

<sup>46</sup> Wintermute 1983, 721.

<sup>47</sup> The classic modern definition is that of Collins 1979, 9: “Apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.” But cf. now Collins 2014 and Collins 2016, where a less rigid approach is advocated.

<sup>48</sup> Nag Hammadi Codex V contains five texts, four of which are titled apocalypses: the *Apocalypse of Paul*, two different texts entitled the *Apocalypse of James*, and the *Apocalypse of Adam*. Codex VII includes a text entitled the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

<sup>49</sup> See, e.g., Hartenstein 2000, 189.

<sup>50</sup> The antichrist is not mentioned in the short Sa<sup>2</sup>, which only contains the very beginning of the work.

<sup>51</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 12.21–13.16; Sa<sup>1</sup> 5.5–20; Ach 32.11–33.10.

<sup>52</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 13.20–14.9.

<sup>53</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 18.8–10; Sa<sup>1</sup> 10.5–9; Ach 38.2–4.

<sup>54</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 20.3–6 (Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 58): οὐ π[ε]ταξ[α]λλ[α] [q] ν[α]ν π[ω] [η]ρε] ἡ̅τ[α]ν[ο]μ[ι]α εκ[χ]ω ἡ̅ [oc] δε̅α̅νο̅ξ [πε] π[ε]χ̅ε̅ εν̅το̅κ [π[ω] [η]ρε] ἡ̅τ[α]ν[ο]μ[ι]α; cf. Sa<sup>1</sup> 12.22–26.

<sup>55</sup> On Tabitha, see Frankfurter 1990.

<sup>56</sup> For a thorough analysis of the theme of the double descent of Enoch and Elijah, see Miroshnikov / Somov 2020.

<sup>57</sup> This work (cc37; CANT 60) is most commonly known as the *Life of Joseph the Carpenter*, or *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, but since the title used in the Coptic manuscript tradition is the *Death of Joseph the Carpenter*, I refer to it by that name.

of Joseph, his father “according to the flesh” (κατὰ σαρκά).<sup>58</sup> The apostles wonder why a man of Joseph’s standing had to suffer the anguish of dying, when both Enoch and Elijah were taken up to heaven in their material fleshly bodies without having to die. Christ then answers that everyone must die eventually, and that Enoch and Elijah actually wished that they had already died, since they will one day have to return and die in battle against the Antichrist, just like we see it described in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*.<sup>59</sup>

While the figure of the Antichrist is relatively rare in Coptic apocrypha, he makes an appearance in later apocalypses, such as the *Apocalypse of Athanasius*,<sup>60</sup> and in several others which are preserved in Arabic, rather than Coptic,<sup>61</sup> such as the *Apocalypse of Shenoute*, a part of an Arabic version of the *Life of Shenoute* that in fact seems to be dependent on the *Apocalypse of Elijah*,<sup>62</sup> having the Antichrist being killed by Elijah and Enoch, just as described in the latter work.<sup>63</sup> While the Antichrist is not particularly prominent in early Coptic apocrypha, he does make an appearance there as well. In a work that does not show any dependence on the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, the *Concept of Our Great Power*, attested in Nag Hammadi Codex VI, we hear about a ruler arising in the west, “who will instruct men in his wickedness,” and who wants to destroy proper teaching. He functions as a forerunner of the Antichrist. Just like the Antichrist in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, he is described as having an ugly appearance, although the focus here is on his dirty garments rather than on his body.<sup>64</sup> But there is also another Antichrist figure who appears later in the *Concept of Our Great*

*Power*, performing signs and wonders and leading people astray.<sup>65</sup>

When Elijah and Enoch return to earth for the second time in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, after having died as martyrs fighting the Antichrist, we read that “they lay aside the flesh of this world and receive a spiritual flesh.”<sup>66</sup> It is equipped with this spiritual flesh that they are able to hunt down and kill the Antichrist, who perishes before them like ice melting in the presence of fire.<sup>67</sup> Their substitution of spiritual for carnal flesh is foreshadowed earlier, when they tell the Antichrist, during their first return, that they will later “lay down the flesh [of] this [body] and [kill] you.”<sup>68</sup> The exchange of the material bodily nature pertaining to this world for the spiritual nature of the heavenly body is crucial, and directly connected with the work’s general emphasis on rejecting this material world. Already at the beginning of the text, we hear that the purpose of Christ’s incarnation was to save humanity from material existence, and that God “will send his Son to the world in order to save [us] from captivity.”<sup>69</sup> This captivity is further specified as the material flesh: “he changed [himself] into the likeness of a human being, [coming to us] so that he might save us [from the] flesh.”<sup>70</sup>

While the concept of a “spiritual flesh,” may appear somewhat counter-intuitive, references to such immaterial flesh is also found elsewhere in early Christian literature, and based to a large extent on an interpretation of Paul, especially I Cor. 15.<sup>71</sup> We see this reflected also in early

<sup>58</sup> *Death of Joseph the Carpenter*, MACA.DE 36.

<sup>59</sup> *Death of Joseph the Carpenter*, MACA.DE 36; *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 15.8–16.5 = Sa<sup>1</sup> 7.4–32. Enoch and Elijah’s bodily assumption into heaven is an idea that also plays a role in pseudo-Chrysostom’s *On the Four Bodiless Living Creatures*, where Enoch, the “scribe of righteousness,” who works as a heavenly scribe writing down the sins of men, is placed next to the bodiless living creature with a human face, because he has a material body, being thus well-placed to intercede on behalf of humanity. We are told that this is why Enoch was chosen to replace the former heavenly scribe, an angel named Mefriel, because the latter was “bodiless” (pseudo-Chrysostom, *On the Four Bodiless Living Creatures*, MICH.AT f. 10r; Wansink 1991, 34).

<sup>60</sup> cc56, most recently edited by Witte 2002. Note that this text is not the same as the similarly titled cc442 (on which, see Lucchesi 1997).

<sup>61</sup> Lent 1998, esp. 184.

<sup>62</sup> Lent 2009, 182–83; Bauckham 1985, 69–76; Wintermute 1983, 13 n.31.

<sup>63</sup> Wintermute 1983, 13.

<sup>64</sup> *Great Pow.*, 44.13–31 (Williams 2001, 14–5). Williams 2001, 150–57, argues that the description of this figure may be intended as an allusion to Julian the apostate.

<sup>65</sup> *Great Pow.*, 44.31–45.27 (Williams 2001, 14–7). See Williams 2001, 158–67. Like in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, we also hear in *Great Pow.* that there will be a conflagration of fire at the end of time. See *Great Pow.*, 46.19–33 (Williams 2001, 16–7).

<sup>66</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Ach 42.11–13 (Steindorff 1899, 104): σεκοῦ ἀρρηί ἤτσαρξ ἡπικοςμος σεχι ἡνοῦσαρξ ἡπῖα. This part of the text is only extant in Ach.

<sup>67</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Ach 42.13–43.2.

<sup>68</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>1</sup> 8.8–10 (Steindorff 1899, 128): τῆνακω ερραῖ ἤτσαρξ ἡπικωνα τῆρωτῆ ἡμοκ. Cf. Sa<sup>3</sup> 16.14–15. Ach (35.7–8) here has “we will lay aside the flesh of the spirit and kill you” (τῆνακοῦ ἀρρηί ἤτσαρξ ἡπῖα τῆρωτῆ ἡνακ), but the entire passage where this occurs seems to be corrupt in this manuscript (cf. Steindorff 1899, 93, esp. nn.3 and 4).

<sup>69</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 1.19–21 (Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 20): φηατῆνοοῦ ἡπερωῆρε επκοσμος χεεφεναρῆ[ν] εβελ ῆηταρῆναλωσια. Cf. Sa<sup>2</sup> 263.1–3; Ach 19.10–14. Both Sa<sup>2</sup> and Ach have “the captivity of this age.”

<sup>70</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 1.21–2.1 (Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 20, 22): ἀφωβτῆ[ν] ἡοε νοῦρ[ω]με εφ[ν]ηῦ ὠα]ρ[ο]ῖ[ν] χεεφεναρῆῖ εβωλ ῆητς] ἀρξ. Cf. Sa<sup>2</sup> 263.13–4; Ach 20.8–10, although in the latter two cases the word σαρξ is unfortunately lost in a lacuna.

<sup>71</sup> See Lundhaug 2017. For an argument that *Apoc. Elijah* depends on I Cor. 15, see Miroshnikov / Somov 2020.



Coptic literature.<sup>72</sup> The *Treatise on the Resurrection*, only extant in Nag Hammadi Codex I, a text that is styled partly as a letter by a teacher to a person named Rheginos, speaks of a spiritual resurrection that swallows the carnal and the psychic elements of the body alike, and argues that since one receives (material) flesh upon entry into the world through natural birth, one will also receive flesh, albeit a spiritual one, when one is spiritually reborn and ascends into the aeon after the death of the material body.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, in the *Gospel of Philip*, from Nag Hammadi Codex II, the acquisition of a spiritual flesh, which is equated with Christ's flesh and attainable through the Eucharist, is described as being a requirement for resurrection.<sup>74</sup> When, in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, Enoch and Elijah kill the Son of Lawlessness, they cause him to melt,<sup>75</sup> this can be regarded as the direct result of their spiritual flesh, considering the close connection between spirit and fire in philosophical and early Christian sources alike. The aforementioned *Gospel of Philip* takes this connection for granted,<sup>76</sup> as does the New Testament, when the Acts of the Apostles describes the reception of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost in terms of tongues of fire resting on top of the apostles' heads (Act. 2,3–4).

There are several themes and ideas touched upon in the *Apocalypse of Elijah* that become highly popular in later apocrypha. The nature and roles of angels and archangels, and the story of the Devil's fall from heaven, for example, are among the most prominent topics in the later Coptic apocrypha.<sup>77</sup> While the devil's fall from heaven is not dealt with at length in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, it is alluded to in a passage that seems to blend the Antichrist character with that of the devil. When Elijah and Enoch accuse the Antichrist of being an enemy of all the heavenly,<sup>78</sup> they also call him "a devil"<sup>79</sup> and state that he has "fallen from heaven like the morning stars,"<sup>80</sup> echoing Is. 14,12.<sup>81</sup> As for angels and archangels, we read in the *Apocalypse of Elijah* that the archangels Gabriel and Uriel will lead the righteous to the Tree of Life to eat and wear white

garments,<sup>82</sup> and that Christ will send sixty-four thousand angels from heaven to bring people to trial, lifting them up on their wings. What is unusual in the way this is portrayed in the *Apocalypse of Elijah* in relation to other, especially later, Coptic apocrypha is the absence of the Archangel Michael in these proceedings. Indeed, based on those later texts, one would expect to see Michael and Gabriel, or just Michael, rather than Gabriel and Uriel, in this kind of scene.<sup>83</sup>

An interesting detail in the description of the role of the archangels Gabriel and Uriel in the *Apocalypse of Elijah* is that the way they will lead the righteous to heaven is by making "a pillar of light" (οὐρανὸς ἰσχυρῶς) that goes before them.<sup>84</sup> First and foremost, this description echoes Ex. 13,21,<sup>85</sup> but there is also a possible allusion here to the mighty angel with feet like pillars of fire from Apoc. 10,1. Indeed, it has been suggested that this unnamed "mighty angel" from Apoc. 10,1 may be identified with the archangel Gabriel,<sup>86</sup> which may perhaps explain the appearance of this particular angel. As for Uriel, whose presence in the *Apocalypse of Elijah* may well derive from the way he is portrayed in *1 Enoch*,<sup>87</sup> he is mentioned as one of the premier archangels in later Coptic apocrypha,<sup>88</sup> but is not given as prominent a position as in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*.

The trial and punishment of sinners and apostates, and descriptions of heavenly rewards for the righteous, are also among the most common topics of the later Coptic apocrypha, for instance in such texts as the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael*, or pseudo-Timothy, *On the Feast of the Archangel Michael*, just to mention two examples among many. Similarly, martyrdom, a prominent theme in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, is found all over Coptic literature, both in apocrypha and in many late martyrdom accounts.<sup>89</sup>

72 For detailed examples, see Lundhaug 2017.

73 *Treat. Res.*, 474–8; Lundhaug 2009, 189–90.

74 *Gos. Phil.*, 571–19; Lundhaug 2010, 229–42.

75 *Apoc. Elijah*, Ach 42.15–43.2.

76 Lundhaug 2010, 175, 329 n.644.

77 See, e.g., pseudo-Timothy, *On Abbaton* (cc 405), the *Investiture of Michael* (cc 488); the *Investiture of Gabriel* (cc 378).

78 *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>1</sup> 7.13–18; Sa<sup>3</sup> 15.13–16.

79 *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>1</sup> 7.23–24 (Steindorff 1899, 126): ἄνθρωπος ἄβυσσος ("you are a devil"); cf. Sa<sup>3</sup> 15.20: ἄνθρωπος π[ῆ]λαβος ("you are the [devil]").

80 *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>1</sup> 7.18–19 (Steindorff 1899, 126): ἀκρὸς ἐβόλῃς ἰσχυρῶς ἡμῶν ἡμῶν ἰσχυρῶς; cf. Sa<sup>3</sup> 15.16–17.

81 Cf. also Luc. 10,18; Apoc. 8,10; 9,1.

82 *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 19.10–15; Sa<sup>1</sup> 11.24–12.2; Ach 39.7–12. A fascinating description of the righteous wearing garments of light while eating from the Tree of Life can be found in the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael*, M593.35; M614.26; IFAO 147r (translation of all three witnesses in Lundhaug 2020, 536).

83 See, e.g., pseudo-Timothy, *On the Feast of the Archangel Michael* (cc404), MERC.AM 139.

84 *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>1</sup> 11.25–29; Sa<sup>3</sup> 19.10–12; Ach 39.7–10.

85 Cf. Wintermute 1983, 750.

86 See Charles 1920, 1.258–59; Reddish 2001, 192.

87 Another possibility is his portrayal in book 2 of the *Sibylline Oracles*.

88 For references, see Müller 1959, 54–8.

89 On the later Coptic martyrdom accounts, see esp. Baumeister 1972. On the Coptic church's understanding of itself as a "Church of the Martyrs," see Papaconstantinou 2006.

## 5 A monastic context?

While none of the four Coptic codices discussed here has a secure late antique provenance, it is worth keeping in mind that in all the cases where we do have secure provenances for Coptic manuscripts, they derive from a monastic context, and there are multiple additional cases where such a provenance is by far the most likely one.<sup>90</sup> It is thus reasonable to suggest that a monastic connection is likely also for the manuscripts discussed here,<sup>91</sup> and that it is worth taking the time to consider the potential interest of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* for Egyptian monastics of the fourth and fifth centuries, the period when our surviving manuscripts were produced and used. Apart from the simple fact that apocryphal literature may have been of interest to many highly biblically literate readers or hearers, of which there seems to have been many among the early Egyptian monastics, judging from the writings associated with the early Pachomians as well as those of Shenoute.<sup>92</sup> There is also little doubt that several of the topics dealt with in the *Apocalypse of Elijah* would potentially have been of special interest to a monastic readership, such as its specific warnings against demons and the passions of the flesh, emphasis on fasting and prayer, and reminders to embrace a spiritual life, topics that are found all over fourth- and fifth-century monastic texts. One needs to look no further than the writings of the early Pachomian leaders Pachomius, Theodore, and Horsiesios,<sup>93</sup> the highly prolific Shenoute,<sup>94</sup> or less well-known figures such as Paul of Tamma or Stephen of Thebes.<sup>95</sup>

According to the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, escape from this world is indeed the main objective of the righteous, and we are told that one ought not to love the world nor what is in it, that worldly pride belongs to the devil, and that remembrance of the Lord's mercy is what may save the righteous from "the captivity of [this] age."<sup>96</sup> There is no lack of references in other early Coptic apocrypha to the necessity of detachment from the material world. The *Book of Thomas*, in Nag Hammadi Codex II, which also refers to its readers

as "captives" (ἡδαιχναλωτος),<sup>97</sup> admonishes them: "Watch and pray that you will not remain in the flesh, but that you will leave the bond of the bitterness of life, and praying you will find rest."<sup>98</sup> As is the case here in the *Book of Thomas*, the importance of prayer is stressed in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, where it is also combined with an emphasis on fasting: "For the pure [fasting] forgives sin. [It] heals illnesses. It casts out demon[s]. It works/generates towards the [throne] of God a sweetness, a perfume forgiving sins with a holy prayer."<sup>99</sup> This combination of fasting and prayer is also on display in literature associated with the early Egyptian monastics. In an ascetic sermon by Stephen of Thebes, preserved in Coptic in a manuscript from the White Monastery, we find the following instruction to the monk sitting in his cell: "Sitting in your cell, be diligent in your prayers and your fasts, and the struggle of your heart, so that you may persist in the works that purify the heart."<sup>100</sup> Similarly, Pachomius talks about this in no uncertain terms, also connecting, like the *Apocalypse of Elijah*, the practice of fasting and prayer with the struggle against demons, stating that when he flees "to God weeping and humble with fasting and nightly vigils, the enemy grows weak before me with all his spirits."<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the *Apocalypse of Elijah*'s insistence on not being "in two minds" (ἄρητ σναγ) when praying, because then the angles will not listen,<sup>102</sup> is also found in the writings of Shenoute. In his sermon *As I Sat Upon the Mountain*, Shenoute admonishes his listeners not to be "in two minds" in their Christian faith and worship. According to Shenoute, being of two minds is especially problematic in relation to Christianity's most sacred and mysterious sacrament, the Eucharist, lamenting those who "receive from the Holy Mystery while being in two minds."<sup>103</sup>

<sup>97</sup> *Book Thom.*, 143.22 (Layton / Turner 1989, 198).

<sup>98</sup> *Book Thom.*, 145.8–11 (Layton / Turner 1989, 204): ροει ετετῆσονῆ σεετῆτῆσῶφιπε αν ρῆτσαρζ αλλα δεετῆτῆσαι εβολ ρῆτῆρρε ἱπριωε ἱτεπβιος αγω ετετῆσονῆ τετῆτῆσῶσιε ἱογῆτον.

<sup>99</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 4.6–12 (Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 26): τῆη[στια] γαρ εσογααβ φασκανοβε εβολ φ[α]σ[θ]εραπεγε ἱρενωδνε φασνεχρ[ε]ν[δ]αμιονιον εβολ φασνεργη φαρ[ο]ρ[ο]νος ἱππογτε εγῆνε ευσῆνογφ[ε] εγ[κ]ανοβε εβολ ἱππογπροσεγχι ε[σ]ογααβ.

<sup>100</sup> Stephen of Thebes, *Ascetic Sermon* MONB.ON 2 (Suciū 2018, 651): εκρῆμοσ ρῆτεκρη προσκαρτηρει ενεκαφληλ ἡνεκνηστια ἡπαγων ἱπεκρητ ταρεκσω ρῆναπῆββο ἱρητ.

<sup>101</sup> Pachomius, *Instr.* 1.11 (Lefort 1956, 3): ειωανπαυτ δε ερατῆ ἱππογτε ρῆογῆρε ἡπογῆββιο ἡπογῆηστῆ ἡρενωγῆη ἡροεισ φαρειπαδε ρσων ἡναρραι ἡνεφκεπνεγῆη τῆρογ. As for the authorship of this work, it has been suggested that the final redaction was done by Pachomius' successor Horsiesios (see Joest 2007).

<sup>102</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 4.20–5.1 (Pietersma / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 26; 28).

<sup>103</sup> Shenoute, *As I sat on a Mountain*, MONB.HB 263 (Leipoldt 1908, 45): αἱ εβολ ρῆπῆγστηριον ετογααβ ετετῆνο ρητ σναγ.

<sup>90</sup> For the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Lundhaug / Jenott 2015; for the Dishna papers, see Lundhaug 2018.

<sup>91</sup> One of our four Coptic manuscripts (Sa<sup>2</sup>) does seem to have been discovered in a monastic burial if Budge is to be trusted (see n.32 above), while the suggested monastic connections of the other three lack supporting evidence.

<sup>92</sup> See, e.g., Lundhaug 2014; Lundhaug / Jenott 2015, 165–77; 246–56.

<sup>93</sup> See, e.g., Veilleux 1980–1982.

<sup>94</sup> See Emmel 2004.

<sup>95</sup> Suciū 2017; Suciū 2018.

<sup>96</sup> *Apoc. Elijah*, Sa<sup>3</sup> 1.6–12 (Pietersman / Comstock / Attridge 1981, 20): τεχναλωσια ἡ[π]δαιχναλω.

## 6 Conclusion

Both codicologically and palaeographically the manuscripts in which the *Apocalypse of Elijah* has been preserved constitute a highly diverse group. Not only do they sport different formats and scribal styles, but in two of the four Coptic codices, the Chester Beatty codex included, the copying of the *Apocalypse of Elijah* was done in a highly idiosyncratic manner. Does this tell us something about the status of the text among its copyists and intended users? Could it indicate that the work may have been considered to be of relatively low importance? Despite its relatively wide attestation in early manuscripts, being attested in four manuscripts that are all from the earliest phase of Coptic manuscript production,<sup>104</sup> the *Apocalypse of Elijah* seems to have fallen out of favour not long after, as there is no direct evidence that the work continued to circulate in this form in later centuries. On the other hand, there are works that are only attested in much later manuscripts, including the *Apocalypse of Shenoute* and the *Death of Joseph the Carpenter*, which seem to depend on certain traditions that are at the very least highly similar to what we find specifically in the *Apocalypse of Elijah*. These are texts that reflect similar ideas about the Antichrist and the role of Enoch and Elijah in defeating him, as well as traditions regarding the final judgement, the role of the angels, and discussions of fasting and martyrdom. In short, while the *Apocalypse of Elijah* seems to have circulated only in the earliest centuries of the Coptic tradition, many of the themes discussed in it continued to be debated for centuries. With regard to the time when its extant witnesses were produced, the *Apocalypse of Elijah's* treatment of fasting and prayer finds close parallels in contemporary

monastic writings, indicating at least some of the reasons why early Egyptian monastics may have been interested in this work.

The *Apocalypse of Elijah* is a good example of how dependent we are on the discovery and preservation of fragmentary remains of papyrus manuscripts from Egypt for our knowledge of ancient literature. Indeed, it is only by piecing together the remains of several manuscripts that this work, with its unique presentation of Christian eschatology, can be read and understood in its entirety. In addition, the extant papyri give us intriguing insights into the contexts in which such literature circulated in Egypt. The papyri discussed here show us, for instance, that the *Apocalypse of Elijah* may have circulated on its own (as indicated by Sa<sup>3</sup>), as well as together with other texts, both canonical (as in Sa<sup>2</sup>) or apocryphal (as in Sa<sup>1</sup> and Ach), and that it circulated in at least two Coptic dialects simultaneously. Finally, the codicological diversity of the extant manuscripts indicate that the format of the material objects constituted by the papyrus books was not determined by, and did not determine, their contents. Or, if the codicological differences indicate differences in use, then it also indicates that the *Apocalypse of Elijah* could be used in different contexts. Each material artefact attesting to the *Apocalypse of Elijah* thus adds to our knowledge of the work and its contexts of production and use, and provide us with a picture of great diversity, rather than uniformity, in its circulation. Indeed, none of the papyrus fragments containing the *Apocalypse of Elijah* are redundant, as they all provide different pieces of the jigsaw puzzle constituted by the circulation of early Christian literature in all its diversity, and in particular its production, use, and transmission in Egypt.

يفحص الكاتب في هذا المقال نص سفر الرؤيا لإيليا ، وهو نص مكتوب باللغة القبطية تمثل مخطوطاته جزء من مجموعة بيتي الشهيرة. ويخلص المؤلف في نهاية المقال إلى أنه على الرغم من أن الاهتمام بمثل هذا السفر يبدو أنه قد تلاشى في أواخر العصور القديمة، إلا أن الموضوعات التي يتناولها هذا السفر تظهر في وقت لاحق في الكثير من النصوص القبطية غير المعتمدة وعلى الرغم من تلاشى هذا النص وظهور موضوعاته في نصوص ثانوية إلا أن هذه المخطوطة تمثل عينة نموذجية لما يمكن لأوراق البردي المكتشفة في مصر في مطلع القرن العشرين من أن تخبرنا به عن تاريخ النصوص المقدسة القبطية وتؤكد على المقولة التي تتردد بين المتخصصين من أنه بدون البرديات كان من الممكن أن يضيع الكثير من تاريخ النصوص اليهودية والمسيحية المبكرة. المقال مهم لكل المتخصصين في الدراسات القبطية وغيرهم من المتخصصين في تاريخ النصوص غير المعتمدة.

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<sup>104</sup> Having as many as four fourth or fifth century copies of a work in Coptic is in fact quite extraordinary.

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# Characterising Discipleship in the Fifth Manichaean *Psalm of Heracleides*: Women's Participation in Late Antique Egypt

الحواريون والحواريات في المزمور المانوي الخامس لهراقليدس: دور المرأة في مصر في أواخر العصر القديم  
كيمبرلي إيه فاوولر

## 1 Introduction

Over the course of the past two decades there has been a significant amount of research into the place of women within ancient Manichaeism. It is fair to say, however, that the general consensus has been that the “feminine” was viewed largely favourably, and that women could enjoy more esteem when it came to religious roles than in early Christianity<sup>1</sup> as a broad phenomenon.<sup>2</sup> The rather vague abstraction “feminine,” however, might be seen to cover anything from concepts of the divine as mother to the women's names found in the doxologies of the Manichaean *Psalm Book*, often thought to be honourific references to martyrs or renowned disciples.<sup>3</sup> Moving in a new direction, this essay is concerned with the didactic function for women (but also men) of a Coptic liturgical text within a fourth century Egyptian Manichaean community. I will use the fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* (*Man. Ps. II 191,18–193,12*) from the Manichaean *Psalm Book* (Dublin, Chester Beatty, Codex A; LDAB 107976; see Figures 1–3) as a case study, rethinking its function and reception within

this milieu, particularly in light of ongoing discussions as to how women were presented and participated in Manichaeism. The *Psalm Book*, along with the other Chester Beatty Manichaean papyri from Medinet Madi, is an important witness to Manichaeism as it manifested specifically in fourth century Egypt. It reflects a Manichaean *ekklesia* which shared textual and ideological traditions with various expressions of Christianity, and as such also enriches our impression of the latter in this cultural milieu. With the discovery and publication of the Kellis papyri since the early 1990s,<sup>4</sup> a more intimate insight into everyday late antique Egyptian Manichaean lives has been made possible, inviting us to re-assess our readings of the material within the Medinet Madi Codices. As Gardner and Lieu once put it, “not only does Kellis explain itself, but it also provides a number of keys for the unravelling of the history of the Medinet Madi corpus.”<sup>5</sup> In the case of *Man. Ps. II 191,18–193,12*, which is the focus of this paper, its key theme of discipleship provides an opportunity to rethink how it reflects the complexities and nuances involved in this form of religious self-understanding and practice.

The psalm is built upon the parable of the wise and foolish virgins from Matth. 25 and it has drawn attention due to its prominent featuring of a list of exemplary women from biblical and extra-biblical texts and traditions. These include several characters from various apocryphal acts of the apostles, who proceed a list of Jesus's male disciples and the apostle Paul. Most other interpreters have viewed this psalm primarily as further evidence for asceticism, celibacy, and missionary activity being held up as the aspirational ideal for Manichaean women. However, I read it as indicative of the fact that the communities using it contained women (and men) in a range of social and religious

<sup>1</sup> The precise degree to which Manichaeism ought to be considered just one manifestation of diverse Christianity (especially in the third or fourth century CE) has been a subject of disagreement over the years. For a critical interrogation of the term “Manichaean” in this regard, see Lim 2008. See also Baker Brian 2011, 23; Teigen 2021, 11–9.

<sup>2</sup> The question of women's prestige in early Christianity, particularly in relation to leadership roles, has been revisited recently, with more emphasis placed upon the variety of forms that this could take. See the collection of studies in Taylor / Ramelli 2021.

<sup>3</sup> A similar point is made by Denzey Lewis 2021, 109 in relation to the study of women in Gnosticism, which like Manichaeism has undergone (and is still undergoing) an interpretative process of being viewed either as part of or distinct from Christianity, as well as more endorsing of women's status and religious roles.

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<sup>4</sup> For brief overviews of the archaeological excavations at Kellis (Ismant el-Kharab) which led to these discoveries, carried out as part of the Dakhleh Oasis Project (<https://dakhlehoasisproject.com>, accessed 17 February 2022), see Teigen 2021, 7–8; Gardner / Lieu 1996. The papyri have been published in various volumes between 1999 and 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Gardner / Lieu 1996, 161.

positions. As demonstrated by documentary papyri from Kellis, a fourth century Egyptian Manichaean community could have consisted of a mixture of individuals, both married and unmarried, with and without children, some Manichaean catechumens, some part of or in communication with the Elect, some with a Christian background of some sort, and others perhaps without. It is my contention that the framing of the psalm around the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, combined with its disciple list of role models enables it to function as a liturgy precisely for a congregation made up of a range of adherents. The psalm reflects the concerns of a diverse community.

## 2 The Manichaean Psalm Book and the medinet madi manuscript find

It will be helpful to begin with some contextual background to the manuscript and its relevance for the long-standing question of Manichaeism's relationship to Christianity. The Manichaean *Psalm Book* was reportedly discovered as part of a larger collection of seven manuscripts that came to the antiquities market in Egypt in 1929, in a water-damaged wooden chest from the ruins of a house in Medinet Madi in the southern Fayum. As with other similar caches of ancient documents discovered during the twentieth century, like the Nag Hammadi Codices and the Dishna Papers, the precise details of the find story are shrouded in uncertainty and likely illicit activity.<sup>6</sup> In order to maximize saleability, the codices were divided up to be sold separately, but in addition to the *Psalm Book* the collection originally consisted of Coptic manuscripts of the Manichaean *Kephalaia*,<sup>7</sup> a set of Manichaean *Homilies*,<sup>8</sup> a collection of Mani's letters,<sup>9</sup> a book of commentary on the *Living Gospel*

of Mani (the *Synaxeis*),<sup>10</sup> and a volume containing the *Acts* of Mani and the history of the Manichaean church.<sup>11</sup> The poor preservation of the papyri necessitated substantial conservation work, much of which was carried out by the prominent conservator Hugo Ibscher. Yet, over the course of World War II the documents unfortunately suffered further damage as they became dispersed and transferred from place to place by different interested parties.<sup>12</sup> Most of the manuscripts eventually found their way into the hands of either Chester Beatty or Carl Schmidt, and are therefore housed today in Dublin and Berlin, with the exception of a few leaves in Warsaw and Vienna.<sup>13</sup> The *Psalm Book*, 672 pages long in total, and consisting of a minimum of 362 psalms (of which only 289 were numbered) was divided into two parts shortly after its discovery by the Cairo-based antiquities dealer Maurice Nahman, both of which were eventually purchased by Chester Beatty in 1930 and 1931. The *Psalm Book* contained various smaller collections of psalms divided by author or occasion, and in 1938, C. R. C. Allberry published what he called "part II" of the *Psalm Book*. The fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* comes from this part of the manuscript and is part of the sub-corpus identified as the Psalms of the Lord Heracleides (ΨΑΛΜΟΙ ΚΥ̅ ΗΡΑΚΛΕΙΔΟΥ).<sup>14</sup> While the *Psalm Book* is dated to the mid-fourth century it is thought to be a translation of a Greek<sup>15</sup> or Syriac<sup>16</sup> text possibly dating to the late-third century or slightly later. The fact that the texts in this collection are all written in the sub-Achmimic Coptic dialect has led to the suggestion that they were not originally produced in the location where

<sup>6</sup> For a synthesis of the accounts of the find story and subsequent fates of the manuscripts, see Robinson 2015, 1–48, 51–79. Robinson's account attempts to draw together and supplement various earlier publications on the early history of the codices, including the notable description of Schmidt and Polotsky 1933, as well as archival documentation (most notably from the Chester Beatty). See also Sharp / Nongbri, Unkel, and Gad in this volume.

<sup>7</sup> Dublin, the Chester Beatty, Codex C (LDAB 107977); Warsaw, Department of Papyrology, PP. 447–454; Vienna, Nationalbibliothek, K 11010; Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum, P.15996 (LDAB 108111).

<sup>8</sup> Dublin, the Chester Beatty, Codex D (LDAB 108112); Dublin, the Chester Beatty, fragments (LDAB 108140).

<sup>9</sup> Warsaw, National Museum, inventory number unknown; Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum, P.15998 (LDAB 108139).

<sup>10</sup> Dublin, the Chester Beatty, Codex B; Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum, P.15995 (LDAB 108137).

<sup>11</sup> Warsaw, Department of Papyrology, inventory number unknown; Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum, P.15997 (LDAB 108138).

<sup>12</sup> See Robinson 2015, 113–44.

<sup>13</sup> Three unpublished leaves (plus fragments) from the first volume of the *Kephalaia* codices (most of which were purchased by Carl Schmidt) are reported to have been sold to Adolf Grohmann of the German University in Prague in the early 1930s, who purchased them for the Austrian National Library in Vienna. After being sent to Berlin for conservation by Hugo Ibscher, the leaves were returned to Vienna. Five leaves of this codex and possibly part of a leaf from the *Acts* codex are in the Institute for Papyrology at Warsaw University, which possibly ended up there via looting of trains carrying items from the Berlin Museum to Leningrad in 1946, although the exact circumstances are unclear. See Robinson 2015, 32–4, 40 n.98. Three unpublished leaves from the *Letters* codex were also found in the National Museum in Warsaw after World War II, perhaps having arrived there in the same manner as the leaves from the *Kephalaia* and *Acts* codices mentioned above. See Robinson 2015, 41, 253.

<sup>14</sup> For the collection of Heracleidean psalms, see Allberry 1938, 187–202.

<sup>15</sup> Schmidt and Polotsky 1933, 12.

<sup>16</sup> Allberry 1938, xix.

they were discovered, and perhaps were transported there by Manichaean missionaries.<sup>17</sup> Authorship is also uncertain. The ascription to Heracleides, an apparently close disciple of Mani and disseminator of his work,<sup>18</sup> may well only be an attribution. Regardless, the *Psalm Book* is valuable for the window it gives us on liturgical practice among Manichaeans, and as a reflection of some of the concerns, self-understandings, and worldviews that existed among communities of followers in late antique Egypt.

### 3 Manichaeism and Christianity in late antique Egypt

Some psalms in the broader collection of the Manichaean psalter contain little or nothing on the surface that distinguishes them from Christian material familiar from, or similar to, that in texts that would eventually form the New Testament. Others, however, also incorporate motifs and language that are closer to what we find in certain so-called “gnostic” texts from the Nag Hammadi Codices, including examples of docetic descriptions of Christ, his suffering, and his death.<sup>19</sup> The reality of Manichaean reception and use of Christian traditions, though, is not likely reflective of the stark lines that have traditionally been drawn between the range of late antique sources available to us and their implied authors and audiences.<sup>20</sup> Regarding the *Psalm Book* in particular, aside from offering further evidence for the variety of Christian pseudepigraphal and apocryphal literature which Manichaeans of the late-third and fourth centuries may have been influenced by, I suggest that the common material and motifs which can be found in these sources are indicative not simply of the fact that Manichaeans were particularly drawn to “gnostic” expressions of Christianity, but rather of the intra-Christian diversity present in Egypt during the fourth century.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Gardner 1995, xviii.

<sup>18</sup> So claims a curse against the Manichaeans: see Böhlig 1980, 300; Richter 1992, 249 n.5.

<sup>19</sup> For example, the *Second Discourse of Great Seth* (Nag Hammadi Codex VII, 2) and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (Nag Hammadi Codex VII, 3) both share docetic language and motifs with parts of the Manichaean *Psalm Book* in relation to Christ’s suffering and death (or, rather, lack thereof). Notably, the fourth and sixth *Psalms of Heracleides* (*Man Ps. II* 191,4–11; 193,27–194, 3; 196,22–28).

<sup>20</sup> See Bermejo 2015, 34 n.3.

<sup>21</sup> That Manichaeism had become popular in Egypt by the mid-fourth century is apparent from Athanasius’s *Life of Anthony*, in which the anchorite admonishes Egyptian monks dabbling with Manichaeism (*Vita Anthonii* 68). See Gardner / Lieu 2004, 119–20;

To further contextualise the proceeding discussion of the *Psalm Book*’s use of female characters drawn from the apocryphal acts of the apostles, it should be noted that scholars of Manichaeism and Christianity have long emphasised that Manichaeism, particularly between the fourth and sixth centuries CE, was significantly influenced by Christian and Jewish apocryphal and pseudepigraphal literature.<sup>22</sup> The claim (even if not the precise historicity) has roots as far back as the fourth century, when Augustine reports various apostolic acts used by the Manichaean bishop Faustus of Milevis.<sup>23</sup> Because the New Testament canon as we now have it was not a stable entity during the third or fourth century, the period that gave rise to the material under discussion in this paper, there is also the question of how strongly this divide should be stressed when thinking about the way Manichaeans approached Christian literature in general. Even if one accepts the argument that “apocryphal” or “non-canonical” literature was particularly popular with Manichaean authors, these classifications and differentiations probably do not reflect the discernment of late antique Manichaeans.<sup>24</sup> There have, nonetheless, been a significant variety of studies exploring the incorporation, rewriting, or apparent influence of apocryphal texts, motifs, and traditions on Manichaean material. One of the most frequently made connections between Manichaeism and Christian apocrypha has been that between the *Psalm Book* and the apocryphal acts,<sup>25</sup> which we know were extremely popular among early Christians. However, some have also argued for the use of several sayings from the *Gospel of Thomas* in

Iricinschi 2009, 262. Among those who view Manichaeism as part of Christianity, rather than a religion separate from it, are Baker-Brian 2011, 15–24 and 2013, 501 n.6; Gardner 2010; Lieu 1985, 64, viewed Manichaeism as a branch of Gnosticism, later commenting that the “gnostic” Nag Hammadi Codices “ha[ve] provided a context for the growth of manichaeology as [Gnosticism’s] heir apparent.” Similarly, Marjanen described Manichaeism as “a religion in its own right” yet “generally characterized as Gnostic or as an offspring of Gnosticism” (Marjanen 1996, 203 n.1).

<sup>22</sup> A recent summary and discussion can be found in Coyle 2015, who posits that it may have even been Manichaeism that brought the apocryphal acts into mainstream Christian attention from the fourth century onwards (see p. 91). For Nagel 1973, 156, it was the popularity of apocrypha among the Manichaeans that fuelled its eventual marginalisation by “orthodox” Christians.

<sup>23</sup> Augustine, *Contra Faustum* 30.4.

<sup>24</sup> Coyle 2015, 71 employs the term “biblical” for writings that were not subsequently included in the canon that we have today in his discussion of pseudepigrapha among Manichaeans in Roman North Africa, in acknowledgement of the way that pseudepigrapha were viewed by receivers in this context.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Nagel 1973, 149–82; Kaestli 1977, 107–16; Leloir 1991, 191–201; Coyle 2015, 78–82.



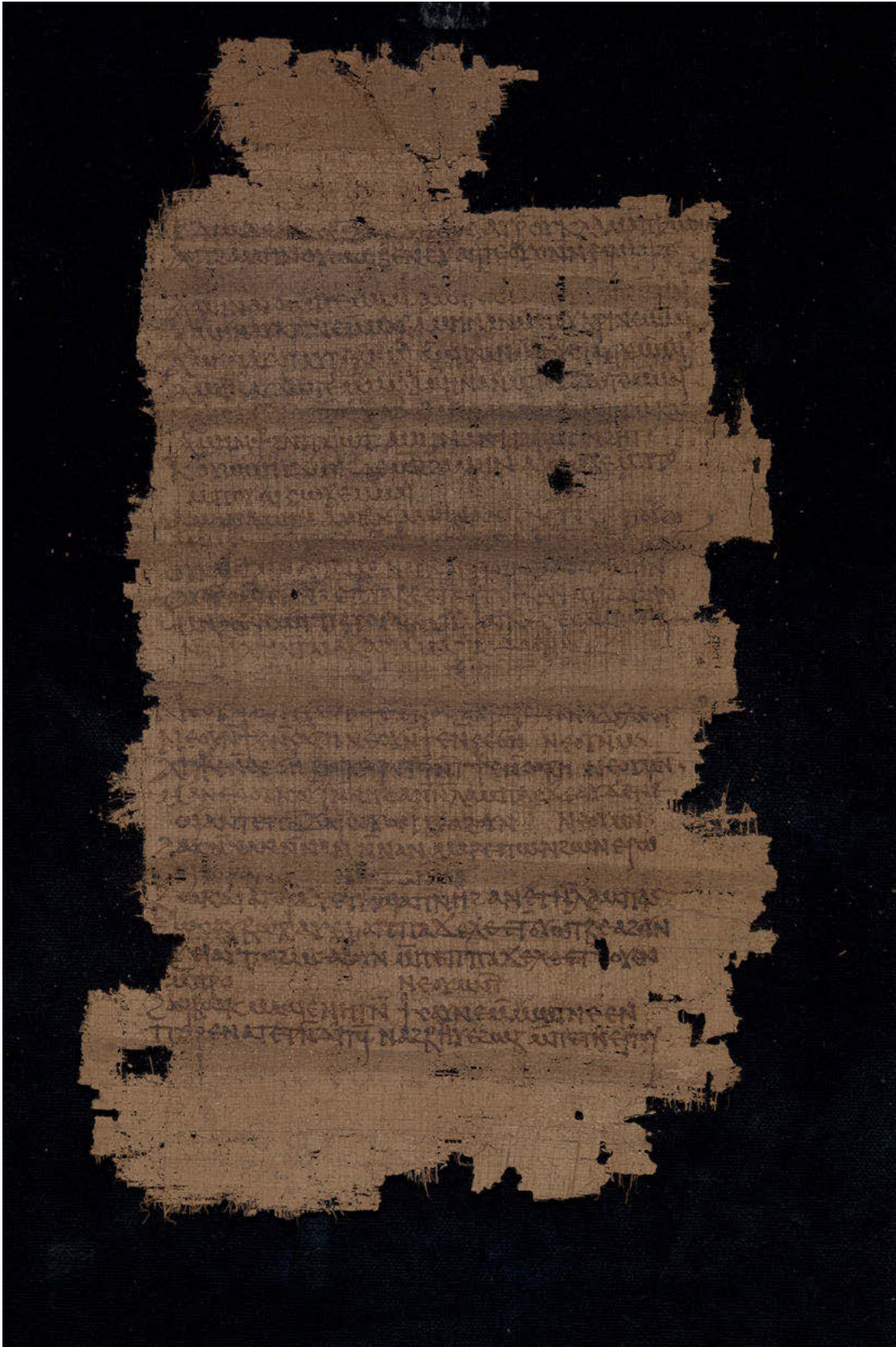
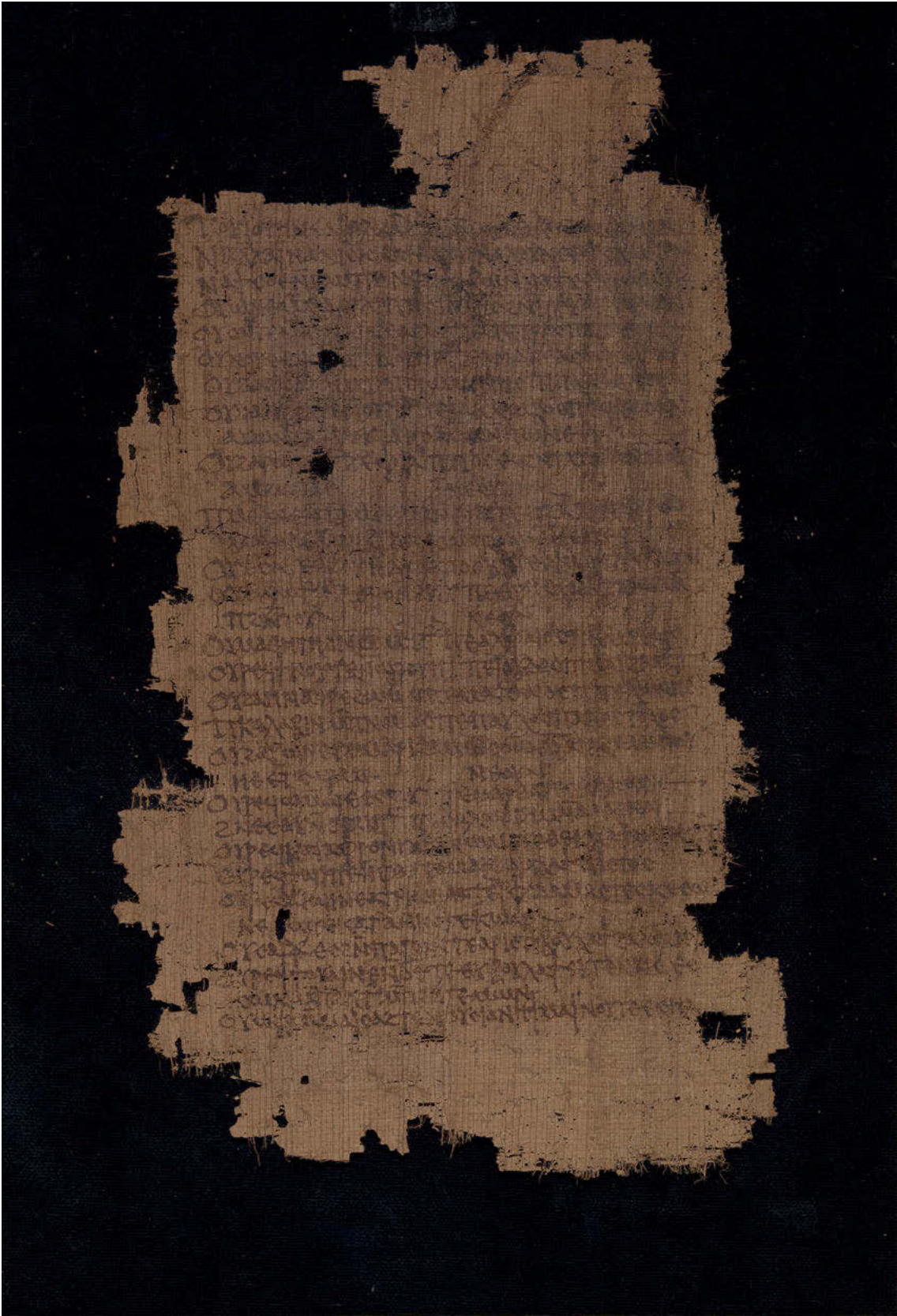


Figure 1: Dublin, the Chester Beatty, Codex A, Pma 4.191–192 recto, showing the first 13 lines of the fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* preceded by the final 17 lines of the fourth *Psalm of Heracleides*.



**Figure 2:** Dublin, the Chester Beatty, Codex A, Pma 4.191–192 verso, showing 32 lines of the fifth *Psalm of Heracleides*, including the majority of the disciple list up to Drusiane.

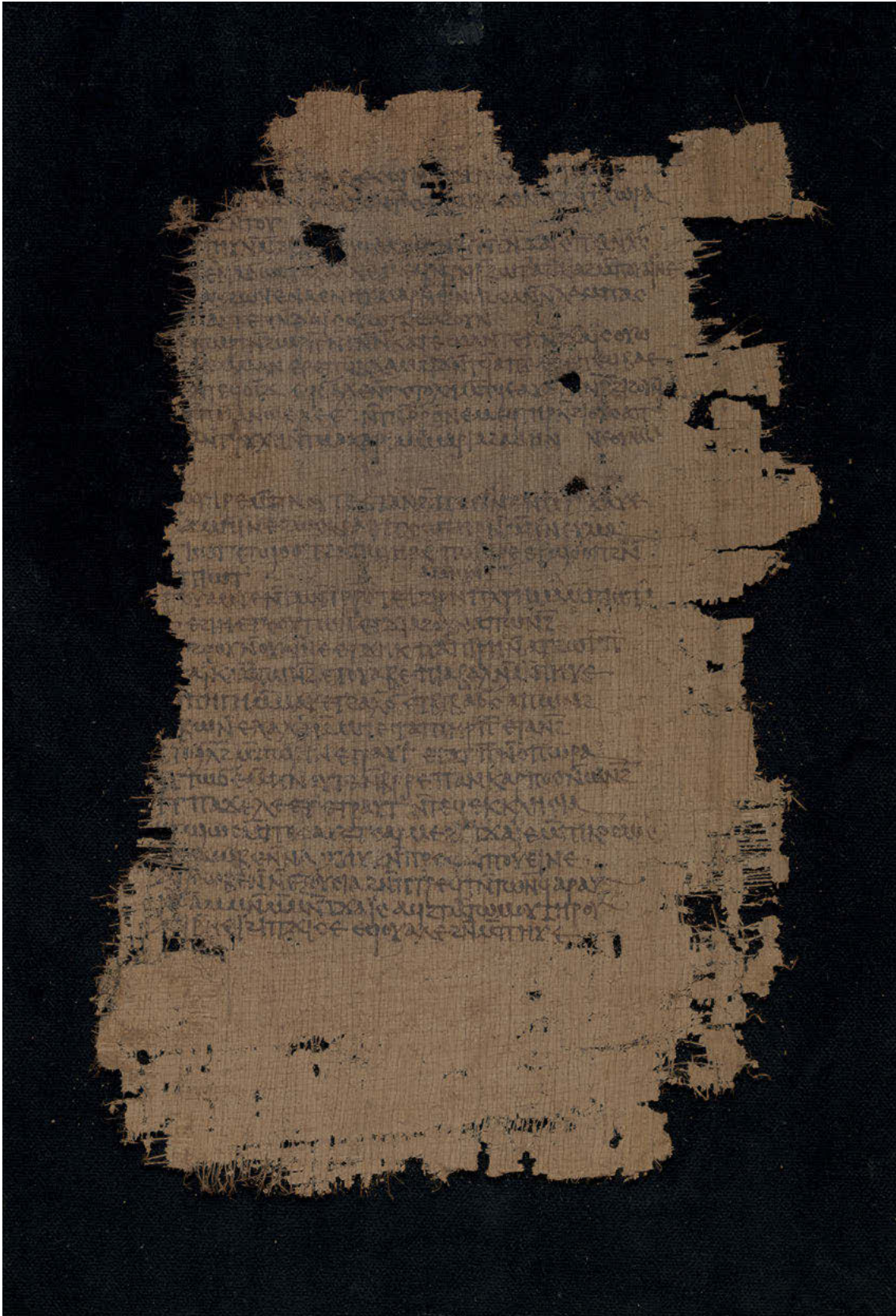


Figure 3: Dublin, the Chester Beatty, Codex A, Pma 4.193–194 recto, showing the final 12 lines of the fifth *Psalm of Heracleides*, and the first 18 lines of the sixth *Psalm of Heracleides*.

Manichaean literature,<sup>26</sup> as well as motifs attested in literature such as the tractate known as *Eugnostos* from Nag Hammadi Codex III and even the *Epistle of Barnabas*.<sup>27</sup> In addition, Jewish pseudepigraphic works<sup>28</sup> have been identified as influencing the hagiographical biography of Mani found in the Cologne Mani Codex.<sup>29</sup>

Despite this dominant trend in scholarship, there has been some questioning of precisely to what degree the Manichaean sources available to us really evidence a strong propensity toward Christian apocryphal literature, and what conclusions we can really draw about the popularity of such material over and against other Christian texts and traditions. Gábor Kósa, for instance, has argued that while it makes perfect sense for Manichaeans in late antiquity to have made use of Christian apocrypha given the religious environment they shared with Christians, the popularity particularly of apocryphal acts among Christians, and the fact that some Manichaeans had started out as Christians, scholars have exaggerated this relationship.<sup>30</sup> He maintains that the evidence in the sources is actually relatively slim for apocryphal works being *widely* read and intensely utilised among Manichaeans, since unambiguous references to, say, the apocryphal acts are few and far between.<sup>31</sup> In the *Psalm Book*, Kósa claims that apocryphal material only accounts for 60 out of around 7000 lines of text. Biblical allusions and citations, on the other hand, permeate the entire collection. Kósa's conclusion is that the *Psalm Book* is actually evidence for the relative *lack* of popularity of

apocryphal acts of the apostles among Manichaeans. It is perhaps worth asking, then, whether non-biblical Christian material more generally in Manichaean sources has stood out to modern scholars perhaps disproportionately, partly just by virtue of the fact that it is now extra-canonical.

The fifth Heracleidean psalm provides a window onto this discussion since the majority of the text draws upon and interacts with now-canonical gospel material. Extra-biblical influences are certainly apparent, but they are by no means *more* prominent. Nevertheless, the psalm's list of twenty-three exemplar figures has drawn interest largely because of its inclusion of seven women recognisable (at least by name) from the apocryphal acts. These characters, however, accompany other named individuals from biblical tradition, and in the case of one (Arsenoe) possibly from specifically Manichaean tradition also. The proceeding discussion will consider the function of the disciple list within the broader didactic message in this psalm. Particular attention is given to the characterisation of the women in the psalm's catalogue, whom it will be argued provide a wider range of exemplary models than has been customarily acknowledged. As such, this focused study of one text from the Coptic Manichaean *Psalm Book* is offered as evidence for the way that a literary source such as this, when read in conjunction with other data such as the Kellis documentary papyri, might further refine our understanding of Manichaeism in late antique Egypt (see Figures 1–3).

## 4 The fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* within current thought on women in Manichaeism

The fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* begins on the eighteenth line of the papyrus folio known as Pma 4.191–192 recto (Figure 1) and ends on the twelfth line of Pma 4.193–194 recto (Figure 3). Despite some relatively minor damage to the psalm's leaves, making a couple of verses impossible to confidently reconstruct, most of the script is reasonably legible. The final abbreviated refrain “there were ten. . .” (ΝΕΟΥΜΗΛ) can be seen clearly after the concluding verse, where it appears on the same line separated by a short vacat. Throughout the rest of the psalm, the refrain appears inconsistently after some verses, and in slightly varied form, which is typical of other psalms in the collection. The psalm narrates its focal parable of the ten virgins from Matth. 25,1–13 over the course of the first nine verses. The refrain, which would be recited at the end of each verse, also draws on this parable:

<sup>26</sup> Including both the *Kephalaia* and the Manichaean *Psalm Book*. See Mirecki 1991, 243–62; Funk 2002, 67–94; Coyle 2007, 75–92. On the *Gospel of Thomas* and Manichaeism, see recently Falkenberg 2015.

<sup>27</sup> Timothy Pettipiece has explored Manichaean reception of Christian apocrypha via the use of the “five limbs” motif, attested to various degrees in a range of sources from the *Acts of Thomas* to *Eugnostos* (NHC III, 3) to the *Epistle of Barnabas*, and linked by Irenaeus and Hippolytus to Basilides and Simon the Magician, respectively. Essentially, the tradition refers to a series of intellectual qualities that make up the soul, and Pettipiece demonstrates that it is applied most widely in Manichaean writings, particularly the *Kephalaia*. Pettipiece 2015, 303–13.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. apocrypha attributed to Adam, Seth(el), Enos(h), S(h)em, and Enoch, as well as the *Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch*.

<sup>29</sup> Tardieu 1995, 303–10.

<sup>30</sup> Kósa 2011, 107–19.

<sup>31</sup> It has often been noted that five apocryphal acts in particular formed a defined pentad for Manichaeans (namely those of Paul and Thecla, Andrew, Peter, John, and Thomas). See Nagel 1973, 152–53 (although he does point out (p. 174) that even this group is mostly represented in the so-called “pilgrim psalms” (see discussion below of *Man. Ps. II* 142,17–143,14) and the second group of *Psalms of Heracleides*); Schäferdiek 1992, 87–100; Coyle 2015, 87–8; and for a contra argument see Kaestli 1977, 108–12.

*Man. Ps. II* 191,18–30:<sup>32</sup>

18. There were ten virgins watching for the bridegroom
19. There were five that were wise; there were five that were foolish
- Refrain:* There were ten. . .
20. The five foolish ones went to the five wise
21. ‘Give us a little oil for our lamps because they (will) extinguish, | until our Lord enters’
23. They said ‘no, no, no, ours is not | sufficient for us’
25. ‘Go to the market, (and) buy oil for your lamps’
26. While they were coming and going, the bridegroom entered
27. They come and knock, (but) the bridegroom does not open | the door
29. He said ‘go, go, I do not know you’
30. My name you have taken, (but) my works you have not done

While the manuscript does not feature the refrain in its entirety – and after various verses even the abbreviated version is not written out – it likely repeated at least the words which open the psalm: “There were ten virgins watching for the bridegroom.” The narrative of the wise and foolish virgins thus frames the entire psalm, with the closing verses urging the hearers to put oil in their own metaphorical lamps “until the Lord enters” (193,7). The *Psalm Book* as a whole suggests that the parable of the ten virgins was particularly popular within Manichaean circles, and this probably extends to groups reading biblical material in late antique Egypt more generally, since we find within one of the codices from the Dishna Papers collection (Crosby Schøyen MS 193) an otherwise unattested homily in which the parable of the ten virgins is evoked to urge participants to “keep their lamps filled” while they wait for the saints and the bridegroom.<sup>33</sup> In fact, if the Dishna Papers are connected to the same monastic community that produced and used the Nag Hammadi Codices, which there is a strong case for,<sup>34</sup> then this might be another piece of evidence for shared textual and interpretational traditions between Manichaeism and some “gnostic” Christian material (or at least the type of Christianity that the audiences of the Nag Hammadi Codices were sympathetic to). The Matthean parable of the ten virgins is one which shares bridal imagery connected with an

emphasis on self-preparation that is key in various of the Nag Hammadi texts.<sup>35</sup> In this particular psalm, however, the central message is for participants to decide how they can best pursue wisdom and avoid folly. The key instruction is self-preparation; its hearers should ensure that they can be counted amongst the wise, not the foolish, and the esteemed exemplars provided in the disciple lists offer a series of model behaviours for achieving this.

However, I do not think this psalm supports a one-size-fits-all picture of women’s Manichaean practices. It is therefore useful for fleshing out our understanding of how Manichaean women were viewed in the fourth century Egyptian context, and the range of spiritual roles they could adopt. While the ascetic, endurance, or leadership examples set by the women in the apocryphal acts and Mary Magdalene might be held up as the ultimate ideal, not all the figures in the catalogue are portrayed quite so remarkably. We need to consider more deeply how the *Psalm Book* might reflect the many, perhaps the majority, who would have belonged to the ranks of Hearers, or catechumen, rather than the Manichaean Elect, and for whom missionary activity or strict asceticism was not a reality.

It was not until the beginning of the twenty-first century that the issue of women within Manichaeism received much direct attention. This was despite the fact that the “feminine,” in terms of how it manifested in representations of the cosmological realm and/or how this related to views of real women, their roles, and their status, has been a hot topic in the study of “gnostic” Christianity for some time. Given the close relationship that many, even most scholars see between Gnosticism and Manichaeism, it seemed inevitable that the latter would eventually receive similar interrogation in this area. In a series of studies since 2001, J. Kevin Coyle argued for a significantly favourable place for women in the movement, where they were able to enter the inner circle of the Manichaean Elect and act as travelling missionaries, a role which Madeleine Scopello has also examined in some detail with reference to sources from both within and outside Manichaeism.<sup>36</sup> More recently, Jessica Kristionat’s 2013 monograph surveyed examples of historical Manichaean women witnessed in the available sources, while also considering the idealised figures such as those which feature in the disciple lists of the *Psalms of Heracleides*. Kristionat similarly argues that women formed part of the Manichaean Elect and were prominent within

<sup>32</sup> This and all other translations are mine, based on the Coptic text in Richter 1999, 68–73. Manuscript page and line references are to those in Allberry 1938.

<sup>33</sup> Knust 2017, 109.

<sup>34</sup> Lundhaug 2018.

<sup>35</sup> See *Gospel of Thomas* (NHC II, 2) 75 and 104; *Gospel of Philip* (NHC II, 3); *Exegesis on the Soul* (NHC II, 6); *Teachings of Silvanus* (NHC VII, 4), *Authoritative Teaching* (NHC VI, 3), *Dialogue of the Saviour* (NHC III, 5).

<sup>36</sup> Scopello 2005.

the movement as teachers, ascetics, prayer leaders, and missionaries, although she cautions that the evidence for the latter is somewhat uncertain due to its polemical origin. Her analysis of the *Psalm Book* specifically leads her to the conclusion that Mary Magdalene provided the archetype for female Manichaean Elect missionaries, and that the apocryphal acts women featured in the psalms are there as models of asceticism and martyrdom.<sup>37</sup>

Majella Franzmann has attempted to read “against the grain” of the textual evidence in the *Psalm Book* and the *Kephalaia* to reconstruct a much more varied and complex picture of women’s portrayals in Manichaean sources than has traditionally been appreciated.<sup>38</sup> As she acknowledges, the *Psalm Book* regularly presents women as either virgins, continent, or married, and with the highest level of worth ascribed to the first two of these.<sup>39</sup> The idealising of sexual asceticism is found in the fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* in the descriptions of Thecla as a “despiser of the body” (οὐρεκαταφρονη ἰπρωμα) and Maximilla as a “shamer of the serpent” (οὐρεϋτ ὠπε ἴφαϋ), which appear consecutively (*Man. Ps. II* 192,25–26). Yet, Franzmann also argues that the very nature of liturgical texts such as the psalms, necessitated that they provide clear and memorable, but often unsophisticated pieces of teaching, and for this reason we should not be surprised to find that the *Psalm Book* is less varied and complex when it comes to women’s roles than other sources where there is more scope and space to explore them more fully.<sup>40</sup> For this reason, Franzmann sees the *Psalm Book* as a significantly inferior tool for better understanding the experiences of ordinary Manichaeans in all their individual diversity than, say, the papyri discovered at Kellis.

In his recently published study of the Manichaean church at Kellis, Håkon Fiane Teigen uses the papyri discovered there to reconstruct the everyday lived religious practice and self-understanding among Manichaeans in the village. His study draws upon theoretical discussions from sociologists and religious studies scholars on social identity and “lived religion,” which essentially spurn older notions of homogeneity and constancy in religions, and instead emphasise softer, flexible boundaries and variation among groups and individual practitioners.<sup>41</sup> There is also recognition of the fact that “religious” and “non-religious” aspects of life cannot always be strictly delineated,

leading Teigen to argue that “Manichaeanness” was not something kept separate from the non-religious areas of Kellis Manichaeans’ lives, but rather permeated all sorts of daily contexts, indicated by religious language in a variety of personal and business documents.<sup>42</sup> Teigen critiques recent scholarship that has used the substantive Christian aspects of the Kellis material to argue that the lay members of the Manichaean community there identified as superior Christians, and for the most part just engaged with the more explicitly Christian aspects of Mani’s teachings.<sup>43</sup> Instead, he sees evidence for a more distinctly Manichaean communal identity, which should not simply be understood as a version of Christianity.<sup>44</sup> One piece of evidence Teigen draws on is the use in the documentary letters of “religiously charged phrases, allusions, and terms” which he designates “religious cues.”<sup>45</sup> It is clear that fourth century Egyptian Manichaeans and Christians overlapped in both ideological and literary spheres, and so instead of trying to establish how Christian the author(s) and users of the *Psalm Book* were themselves, my own examination takes the psalms as one *reflection* of Christianity, albeit contained within a larger Manichaean whole. This does not exclude the possibility that the psalms’ users thought of themselves firmly as Manichaeans. Crucially, however, it rethinks the significance of the substantial space given in the *Psalm Book* to material from what would become the New Testament as well as texts such as the apocryphal acts (and in some places Nag Hammadi texts also). This further exemplifies the diverse Christian reading culture of fourth century Egypt that has been increasingly appreciated in scholarship of recent years.

The Kellis documents, consisting of Coptic, Greek, and Syriac material, are valuable as contextualising sources for the Manichaean psalter, especially since they include seven psalms identifiable with those from the *Psalm Book*,<sup>46</sup> alongside prayers and documentary papyri, including personal letters from lay Manichaeans who lived and worked in the area. As such, they allow a glimpse into the lives of

<sup>37</sup> Kristionat 2013, 245–60.

<sup>38</sup> Franzmann 2010, 61–2.

<sup>39</sup> Franzmann 2010, 56.

<sup>40</sup> Franzmann 2010, 60.

<sup>41</sup> Teigen 2021, 109–12.

<sup>42</sup> Teigen 2021, 112.

<sup>43</sup> Gardner (et al.) 1999, ix–x, 75.

<sup>44</sup> Teigen 2021, esp. 15–9, 128–33.

<sup>45</sup> Teigen 2021, 109. So, for example, he points (among others) to P.Kellis V Copt. 15, which sends greetings to the “elect and the catechumens,” and P.Kellis V Copt. 31–33 (p. xvii) and P.Kellis I Gr. 63, which speak of the Light Soul, the Light Mind, and the sun and moon as storehouses of light (p. 132). This language displays a more identifiable Manichaean character than the frequently employed (in papyri from Kellis and more widely) “greetings in the Lord,” which was a stock phrase used in Christian letters (p. 115).

<sup>46</sup> See Gardner 2014, 18–24, 33, 42, 55, 64–72, who identified *Man. Ps.* 68, 222, 261, 108, 246, and 277–278, and Gardner 2007, 173, for Gregor Wurst’s addition of *Man. Ps.* 126.

those who made up and interacted with the Egyptian Manichaean church in the fourth century. While the broader collection of psalms discovered at Kellis are specifically “local products,”<sup>47</sup> the *Medinet Madi Psalm Book*, which appears to be more of a complete, perhaps “authorised” collection, still provides us with an anthology of liturgical material intended for use by late-third and fourth century Coptic adherents to Manichaeism, of which the Kellis community provide an instructive example.

Particularly interesting is the fact that women are either the authors or the recipients of more than 40% of the Coptic letters from Kellis, which marks a significant contrast with the Greek letters also discovered there. In the case of the latter, fewer than 10% are written to or by women.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, the Kellis letters evidence Manichaean catechumens who were also wives, mothers, and businesswomen, inviting a reading of texts such as the *Psalm Book* which takes into account the variety of auditors that could participate in communal liturgy.<sup>49</sup> Despite the temptation, however, to prefer the less idealised picture of everyday life that the Kellis papyri provide over the *Psalm Book* for reconstructing a picture of Manichaean religious teaching and practice, I do not think we should be so quick to dismiss the latter in this regard. We should not disregard the *Psalm Book*’s potential for nuance or assume that its portrayals of women (or men) are entirely black and white: either virginal/celebate or exemplary missionary. Rather, if we read these two sets of sources in conversation with each other, in the case of the fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* its varied demonstrations of failure and success at discipleship gain deeper context. Ascetic and missionary heroism is balanced out by the more generic virtues of obedience, service, and patience (and not explicitly in the context of persecution). For the non-Elect, lay Manichaeans who were also managing domestic, familial, and business responsibilities, this offered a different, yet complementary understanding of spirituality applicable more widely in different spheres of life.

The fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* exemplifies this complexity most clearly within its so-called disciple list, which catalogues the various merits of a series of mostly positive exemplars from different Christian literary sources

<sup>47</sup> Teigen 2021, 183.

<sup>48</sup> See Gardner (et al.) 2014, 14.

<sup>49</sup> Franzmann 2010, 57; see also her 2007 case study of a woman named Tehat, a businesswoman and weaver from fourth century Kellis, who was also a Manichaean. Another prominent woman from Kellis, who appears in various letters (P.Kellis Copt. 44–50) and was a mother and catechumen, is Maria. She has received a fair amount of attention: see Gardner 1997, 92–4; Gardner et al. 1999, 5–6, 11, 56, 74–82; Franzmann 2007, 23; Teigen 2021 studies the extended family network which included Maria in some detail (p. 56–80, esp. 64–5).

and traditions. The space given to women in this list has attracted attention from scholars attempting to work out Manichaean representations of gender, although the list is split relatively equally between named men and women. The next part of the discussion will analyse this relatively well-known part of the psalm, suggesting that what we have is more of a recognition of complexity when it comes to women’s (and also men’s) religious identities and roles than has typically been observed.

## 5 The disciple lists in the Manichaean *Psalm Book*

The fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* is one of two psalms in the broader collection that include disciple lists, which in addition to eleven of Jesus’s male disciples also include a certain Mary,<sup>50</sup> and a range of other women who appear in the New Testament texts as well as various apocryphal acts. Because modern scholarship has maintained the view that the Manichaeans were particularly drawn to Christian apocryphal literature, it has tended to see the attraction of this material lying in the strong preference for asceticism expressed by the apocryphal acts,<sup>51</sup> as well as the exemplary models of discipleship and endurance of hardships that the captivating narratives provide, prefiguring Mani’s own qualities.<sup>52</sup> This is supported by the fact that the fifth psalm begins with Jesus (the “pearl” in the gospel) in 192,4 and ends with Mani (the “wind” that will enable followers to sail to the “land of light”) in 193,4–5 as the fulfilment of the teaching and example of Jesus and his disciples (who are sandwiched in between).<sup>53</sup> It has also been suggested that the centralising of the apostolic figure was attractive to Manichaeans, for whom mission was understood to be an important undertaking.<sup>54</sup>

The list in the fifth psalm, constituting a substantial portion of the text, reads as follows (*Man. Ps. II* 192,5–193,7):

192,5. An unshakeable foundation is Peter the apostle

6. A mind that sees much is Andrew this twin

7. A lord for many is this virgin John

<sup>50</sup> The strongest case is for Mary Magdalene, as per the discussion that follows below.

<sup>51</sup> Nagel 1973, 176–77; and Kaestli 1977, 113.

<sup>52</sup> Nagel 1973, 175–76, 181.

<sup>53</sup> See Coyle 2015, 93; Nagel 1973, 174–76.

<sup>54</sup> Nagel 1973, 174, 178, 180–81; Kaestli 1977, 112; Junod / Kaestli 1982, 79–80.

8. A great seller of silver is James his other brother, | and he died by stoning<sup>55</sup>
10. A patient one is Philip who is in the land of the | cannibals
12. The sign of carefreeness is the old man Bartholomew, | who does not carry his daily bread
14. A rejoicing sheep to this day is Simon the Canaanite
15. A profitable merchant is Thomas in the land of | India
17. An obedient disciple is Alpheus the joyful
18. A one who is accused by God is Judas, this greedy one
19. A [ . . . ] is Matthias, this tax collector
20. The axe of the law is Paul the apostle
21. A net caster is Mary, who hunts the other eleven who were astray
23. A glad servant is Martha her sister also
24. Obedient sheep are Salome and Arsenoe
25. A despiser of the body is Thecla, lover of God
26. A shamer of the serpent is Maximilla the faithful
27. A receiver of salvation is Iphidama her | sister, imprisoned in these prisons
29. An athlete in the contest is Aristobula the endurer
30. An illuminator for others is Eubula the noble one, who | draws the heart of the governor
32. A wise one that loves [her] teacher is Drusiane the lover of God, | confined for [fourteen days] consulting her apostle
- 193,2. [A] true [ . . . ] that was found is Mygdonia in the land | of India
4. [A] north wind that blows on us is the Lord Mani, the living one, | which goes forth with us so we might sail to the land of light
6. As for us, my brothers, let us put oil in our lamps | until the lord enters

The other disciple list in the collection of psalms attributed to Heracleides comes in the sixth psalm (*Man. Ps. II* 194,7–22), and has several correspondences despite being shorter, since it only mentions four women. In both catalogues, the male figures come first. Peter is placed at the beginning of both lists, likely as an acknowledgment of his leadership. He is accompanied by ten of the other eleven male disciples named in the lists in Matth. 10,1–4, Marc. 3,13–19, and Luc. 6,12–16,<sup>56</sup> with the addi-

tion of the apostle Paul in the fifth psalm. Following on after are listed the series of women, which in the fifth psalm consists of Mary, Martha, Salome, and Arsenoe (who are also the four women named in the sixth psalm), preceded by several figures from the apocryphal acts of the apostles: Thecla, from the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, Maximilla and Iphidama from the *Acts of Andrew*,<sup>57</sup> Aristobula from the *Acts of John*,<sup>58</sup> Eubula from the *Acts of Peter* and/or the *Acts of Paul*,<sup>59</sup> Drusiane from the *Acts of John*, and Mygdonia<sup>60</sup> from the *Acts of Thomas*.<sup>61</sup>

The first four women come from both biblical and extra-biblical traditions, with an Arsenoe appearing in III Mac. 1,1,4 and the (*First*) *Apocalypse of James* 40,26, and

Judas “not the Iscariot” (Matth. 10,3; Luc. 6,16; Ioh. 14,22) does not appear.

<sup>57</sup> The *Acts of Andrew* 2 mentions that Iphidama was amongst others (including Maximilla) who visited prisoners, but there is no specific mention of her being incarcerated herself. See Schneemelcher 1992, 129. Maximilla’s serpent shaming is clearly a reference to ascetic practice.

<sup>58</sup> In what survives of the *Acts of John* (59) we learn only that Aristobula left her husband, Tertullus (who she later discovers has died in her absence) to follow John. The psalm’s reference to her as an “athlete in the contest” must either refer to suffering that was narrated in the now missing text, or else describes her chastity. See Schäferdiek 1992, 192.

<sup>59</sup> Eubula’s story in the *Acts of Peter* 17 involves her seeking assistance from the local magistrate, Pompeius, when her house is robbed by the sorcerer Simon and his accomplices. While there is nothing explicit resembling a “drawing/capturing of his heart” as is claimed in the psalm, it is narrated that she comes before him in such a state of distress, unusual for her, that he is compelled to act. It is possible that the psalm is here simply implying pity on the part of the governor (for the relevant text, see Schneemelcher 1992, 300–302). Eubula, a freedwoman and the wife of Diophantes, also appears in the Hamburg fragment of the *Acts of Paul* (p. 2–5), but similarly, no clear link to the psalm’s description is forthcoming (see Schneemelcher 1992, 251–52). Scholars have variously attributed the Eubula in the psalm to one of these two figures: Nagel 1973, 158 opted for the *Acts of Peter*, while Kaestli 1977, 111 argued for the *Acts of Paul*.

<sup>60</sup> See *Acts of Thomas* 82–105, 119–37, 157–60, 169 (Schneemelcher 1992, 371–79, 387–93, 401–402, 404).

<sup>61</sup> Another psalm from the collection, one of the so-called “pilgrim psalms” (ΨΑΛΜΟΙ ΣΑΡΑΚΩΤΩΝ) also lists the fates of several of the male apostles along with similar descriptions of some of the women from the apocryphal acts in order to exemplify patience in the face of suffering (see Allberry 1938, 142.17–143.13). Here, Thecla is similarly praised as a “lover of God,” but it is her martyrdom rather than her ascetic example that is the focus. Drusiane, similar to the depiction in *Man. Ps. II* 192,32, is described as having been imprisoned for fourteen days (on which see Junod / Kaestli 1982, 53), and Maximilla and Aristobula are said to have suffered torture, the latter of which is noted as an “athlete in the contest” in *Man. Ps. II* 192,29, implying the endurance of physical suffering. On the aforementioned “pilgrim psalm” see also Kósa 2011, 109–11, and Coyle 2015, 79–80 who designates it a “Psalm of Patience.”

<sup>55</sup> James the son of Zebedee (John’s brother) seems here to be confused with James son of Alpheus (the tax collector), who is mentioned separately below in line 23.

<sup>56</sup> The disciple variously named Thaddeus / Judas son of James /



seemingly a popular name among Manichaeans.<sup>62</sup> Martha is of course familiar from Luke's and John's gospels, and Salome from Mark's gospel as standing with Mary Magdalene to witness the crucifixion and taking spices to his tomb (Marc. 15,40; 16,1). One significant difference between the two disciple lists is that the shorter one in the sixth Heracleidean psalm focuses more on the listed figures as *recipients* of something from Jesus, or subjects of his actions in some way. The shorter list is framed within a narrative of the earthly saviour's activities, with the listed disciples introduced as people that he has chosen and offers spiritual benefits to.

*Man. Ps. II 194,7–22:*<sup>63</sup>

7. He found first Peter, the foundation of the church
8. He found Andrew, the first holy pillar
9. He found John, the flower of virginity
10. James, he found, the fount of new wisdom
11. He found Philip, who was great in patience
12. He found Bartholomew, the rose of love
13. He found also Thomas, the perfume that went to India
14. Also James, he found, the true brother of the Lord
15. Simon the Canaanite, he found, he who was zealous for life
16. He found Levi, the throne of trust
17. He gave the morsels to Judas; he took also the little light
18. He excluded the wolf from the flock, and he snared him
19. He chose Mary, the spirit of wisdom
20. He gave life to Martha, the breath of discernment
21. He called Salome, the grace of peace
22. He called Arsenoe; he gave her the crown of truth

The formula  $\alpha\varphi\sigma\iota\omega\epsilon$  ("he found") for all the male disciples except Judas ensures that the initial focus is the saviour's seeking. Similarly, he *chooses* Mary, *gives* life to Martha, and *calls* Salome and Arsenoe. While often discussed together with the longer list in the fifth psalm due to their similar format, the two actually function differently. The shorter one performs more of a supportive role in the narrative of the saviour's earthly exploits, while the longer list directly presents each named person as a behavioural

<sup>62</sup> All four of the women appear in this text. It is possible that Arsenoe was also a known Manichaean martyr venerated in several of the psalms. See Coyle 2009, 179.

<sup>63</sup> Based on the Coptic text in Richter 1999, 76–8.

archetype (or in Judas's case, the opposite) in their own right.

In our Manichaean psalm, the first woman listed is, in the Coptic,  $\mu\alpha\rho\iota\eta\lambda\alpha\mu\alpha$  ("Marihama"). There has been some discussion as to precisely who this refers to; three of the Heracleidean psalms in this collection refer to a  $\mu\alpha\rho\iota\eta\lambda\alpha\mu\eta$  ("Marihamē") (for which  $\mu\alpha\rho\iota\eta\lambda\alpha\mu\alpha$  may be a variation or even a spelling error),<sup>64</sup> yet there is also mention of a  $\mu\alpha\rho\iota\alpha$  ("Maria"), which is what we find in the Coptic version of Ioh. 20,1 to designate Mary Magdalene.<sup>65</sup> Because in the fifth psalm the Mary figure is followed immediately in the next verse by Martha, described as her sister, there is of course a logical argument for this Mary being Mary of Bethany (Ioh. 11,19; 12,23; Luc. 10,39). However, the actual description of this individual as the "net-caster" who "hunts the other eleven who stray," is far more suggestive of Mary Magdalene, who is sent by the risen Jesus to deliver the message of his resurrection to the male disciples (Ioh. 20,17–18). The case for this is significantly strengthened by the fact that in the first *Psalm of Heracleides* (*Man. Ps. II 187*) the broad strokes of Ioh. 20,11–18 are narrated, with Mary also depicted there as the gatherer of the male disciples who are "lost/strayed" ( $\sigma\alpha\rho\mu\epsilon$ )<sup>66</sup> after Jesus's death, in order to bring them the news of the resurrection (*Man. Ps. II 187,11–26*).<sup>67</sup> Another option would be to read "sister" not as indicative of an actual kinship bond, but rather a spiritual one, where Mary Magdalene is connected to Martha through their mutual service of the Lord. This is perhaps a reasonable suggestion if we follow the argument of Marjanen that, similarly to Peter, Mary Magdalene is placed at the head of the list of women to signify that she was viewed as in some way superior to or as a prototype of excellent discipleship for the subsequent figures.<sup>68</sup> However, it may well be that these psalms simply reflect the Christian practice of conflating the Marys, which can be seen as early as the third century.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>64</sup> Marjanen 1996, 203, 206–208, makes the point that  $\mu\alpha\rho\iota\eta\lambda\alpha\mu\eta$  is most often used of Mary Magdalene in "Coptic gnostic" texts, but not in reference to Mary the mother of Jesus.

<sup>65</sup> See the discussions in Coyle 2009, 175–86.

<sup>66</sup> The shared vocabulary of  $\epsilon\tau\sigma\alpha\rho\mu\epsilon$  (*Man. Ps. II 187,12*; *Man. Ps. II 192,22*) to describe the lost/strayed eleven, in addition to the narrative content related to Mary and the male disciples, further supports a connection between the two psalms in terms of their presentation of these figures and their didactic intent as demonstrations of the often changeable and instable nature of discipleship.

<sup>67</sup> The connections between these psalms are also discussed by Marjanen 1996, 207–14.

<sup>68</sup> Marjanen 1996, 213.

<sup>69</sup> For a classic summary, see Holzmeister 1922, 556–84. Subsequent discussion, especially in relation to Manichaean and so-called gnostic writings can be found in Coyle 2009, 176; Marjanen 1996, 131–32; and Grant 1961, 138. See also Murray 2004, 330.

For Marjanen, what the psalmist emphasises is Mary's role as a steadfast witness to Jesus's resurrection, who acts as a paragon of faithfulness. In the narrative lying behind the psalm, the male disciples have now completed their task to be fishers of men for Jesus, and this job has passed to Mary Magdalene in a reversal of roles that sees her drawing them together after her witnessing of Jesus's resurrection. However, Marjanen does not see the psalmist here as making any grander claims about Mary's authority over the male disciples.<sup>70</sup> While the psalmist may well not be intending to present Mary as superior to the male disciples, she *does* have a role in this psalm that marks her out distinctly from them. Marjanen argues that the word  $\sigma\omega\pi\eta\epsilon$  is in essence "a technical term [for] the condition in which a soul has been led astray and has lost its sense of where it belongs." It therefore brands the male disciples specifically as spiritually wayward. It is from this term that  $\epsilon\tau\tau\alpha\rho\eta\epsilon$  ("who are lost/who stray") is derived, which features both in *Man. Ps. II* 187,12 and *Man. Ps. II* 192,22. However, Marjanen does not see its use as a polemical elevation of Mary. Prior to her meeting with the risen Christ, he argues, Mary is in a comparable state of spiritual turmoil and alienation from the truth.<sup>71</sup> The graduation (or return) from lost to faithful disciple, validated through obedient delivery of Christ's message to others is something that the male disciples and Mary have each experienced, making them all archetypes for Manichaean mission.<sup>72</sup>

The problem, though, is that this does not adequately account for the difference between the male disciples' Christ-instructed mission to be "fishers of men" (the imagery of which is in the background of both the first and fifth Heracleidean psalms) and Mary's later task of gathering them after the resurrection. Specifically, Mary's mission is not one of general gospel spreading, but rather a targeted re-grouping. The missionary activity of the male disciples (Matth. 4,18–20; Marc. 1,16–18; Luc. 5,10) is certainly recalled through the net imagery in *Man. Ps. II* 192,21, yet Mary's task is slightly different. The eleven male disciples need to be *hunted* (the Coptic word  $\sigma\omega\pi\eta\epsilon$  that is used here generally evokes a context of chasing down and snaring or trapping prey).<sup>73</sup> This gives a much stronger sense of purpose and force than Mary simply looking for the disciples; Mary must hunt them down before she can cast her net over them and deliver the news the resur-

rected Jesus has charged her with. If a continuation of the male disciples' work as "fishers of men" was implied here, then the psalmist could have made this link more firmly by describing Mary specifically as a fisher ( $\sigma\gamma\omega\gamma\epsilon$ ), rather than a hunter. It has been observed that the net-casting theme combined with Mary's ( $\mu\alpha\rho\iota\gamma\alpha\mu\alpha$  /  $\mu\alpha\rho\iota\gamma\alpha\mu\mu\eta$ ) description as a hunter is used elsewhere in the Coptic Manichaean literary tradition, where this language is also used of Christ. In *Kephalaia* 5, the four light-hunters cast nets to draw in souls for redemption, with Jesus being the third hunter whose net is his wisdom ( $\sigma\omega\phi\iota\alpha$ ).<sup>74</sup> Wisdom is a quality ascribed to Mary in the disciple list of the sixth Heracleidean psalm (*Man. Ps. II* 194,19),<sup>75</sup> and the shared descriptors of net-caster and hunter between her and Christ convey an especially close link between the two, which should not be underemphasised when assessing her role and status in the fifth psalm.

The implication, then, is not just that the male disciples have finished their work satisfactorily and now leave the field open for Mary to follow on after them, but rather that they are in need of correction, of being brought back in line. It seems to me, that the presentation of the male disciples and Mary's role in gathering them back into the fold, functions in two ways for the users of this psalm. First, as others have noted, Mary is set up as a role model for women missionaries, and the fact that she hunts down and regathers Jesus's core group of strayed disciples distinguishes her capability here. Moreover, it is also demonstrated that erring, or lacking in full understanding is possible even for those with a previously strong connection to the Lord (i.e. his male disciples). These are characteristics also embodied by the foolish virgins in this psalm. Mary's exemplarity as a faithful and effective evangelist in this psalm, then, is juxtaposed with an implicit warning against allowing oneself to stray.<sup>76</sup> Non-complacency and spiritual self-regulation lie at the heart of this psalm, hence its framing around the parable of the ten virgins, who serve as two contrasting sets of exemplars alongside those figures named in the disciple list. Immediately following the conclusion of the list this sentiment is summed up in eschatological anticipation: "Let us put oil in our lamps

<sup>70</sup> Marjanen 1996, 212–13; also Richter 1992, 260–61. The opposing view is taken by Coyle 2009, 171, who sees Mary Magdalene as exercising a "clear leadership role over the Eleven" (not only in this psalm, but the Manichaean psalm collection more generally).

<sup>71</sup> Marjanen 1996, 210–12. See also Richter 1992, 255.

<sup>72</sup> Marjanen 1996, 212–13; Nagel 1973, 176–77.

<sup>73</sup> See Crum 1939, 830.

<sup>74</sup> See the edition of Ibscher (et al.) 1940, 28 lines 26–28; English translation in Gardner 1995, 32: "The third hunter is Je[sus the Splendour who came from the] great[ness], who hunts after the light and lif[e; and he leads?] it to the heights. His net is his wisdom. . ."

<sup>75</sup> Nagel 1995, 226–27; Coyle 2009, 177.

<sup>76</sup> Coyle 2009, 175 notes Mary's "more active" role than her canonical gospel counterpart, which aligns her more closely with the Mary Magdalene of so-called Gnosticism (the most obvious example here is of course the *Gospel of Mary*).

until the Lord enters. Do not (let) us sleep and slumber until the Lord transfers us. . .” (*Man. Ps. II* 192,6–9).

I mentioned earlier that the exemplar list is bookended by the figures of Christ and Mani. However, a closer examination of the figures in between reveals a further logic to their ordering. Peter’s heading up of the male disciples likely reflects his authoritative status in church tradition, and Mary Magdalene’s position as first in the female section of the list perhaps indicates similarly her heightened significance among scriptural women of importance. Her placement in the list immediately after the eleven makes the most narrative sense, in any case, since the psalm conjures up a post-resurrection setting necessitating Mary’s pursuit of the scattered male disciples. There are observable sub-groupings of the other exemplars in the list that highlight three broad areas of virtue:

1. Service and obedience (Martha, Salome, and Arsenoe; *Man. Ps. II* 192,23–25)
2. Sexual renunciation (Thecla and Maximilla; *Man. Ps. II* 193,25–26)
3. Patience and endurance (Iphidama and Aristobula; *Man. Ps. II* 193,27–29)
4. Teaching and wisdom (Eubula, Drusiane, and Mygdonia; *Man Ps. II* 193,32–193,3)<sup>77</sup>

While it seems (at least based on the surviving literary evidence for the apocryphal acts that we have available) that some of the details of the backstories of these protagonists have either been confused or perhaps even intentionally adapted or described in slight vagaries,<sup>78</sup> this is of secondary importance for the psalm’s function. Indeed, some of the details of the stories of these heroines may not have been immediately recalled or necessarily even known in much detail by some hearers of the psalm. What this exemplar list presents is a selection of highlighted characteristics that address a range of behaviours to aspire to, and the broader applicability of some of these is important to draw attention to when considering how these stanzas would have chimed with their users. For instance, immediately following Mary Magdalene’s prestigious example of mission, we have Martha the cheerful servant, and Salome and Arsenoe the obedient sheep, whose modes of devotion seem targeted more to the majority of non-elect

<sup>77</sup> Lacunae make it impossible to reconstruct the beginning of the verse relating to Mygdonia, but it seems that she is somehow connected to the notion of truth, which fits with the theme of the previous two verses, where Eubula and Drusiane are praised respectively as an “illuminator for others” (possibly in reference to offering an example of good behaviour, rather than to specific teaching activity) and a seeker of wisdom through teaching.

<sup>78</sup> See n.53–55 above.

Manichaeans, who were not involved in missionary excursions but could still be compelled to aspire to a different model of discipleship.

While not everyone could be expected to match the renunciatory prowess of Thecla, or be afforded the “opportunity” for enduring the physical suffering attributed to Aristobula, the effectiveness of the psalm’s edification does not wholly rely on the particularities of its characters’ escapades. The crucial virtues are made explicit: loving of God; faithfulness; patience; seeking and impartation of wisdom. Coyle has argued that all the women in the disciple list (and also those in the shorter list in the sixth *Psalm of Heracleides*) would have been recognised as celibate by the Manichaean users of the psalms, even when this is not explicit in their description or wider backstory, since this was such a venerated quality. Although some of these women (Drusiane and Mygdonia) are married or widowed (Aristobula) when they appear in the apocryphal acts, their choice to live celibately is key to their idealisation.<sup>79</sup> The narratives and images that the psalm invokes are derived from the diverse range of texts and traditions that we know Manichaeism incorporated, yet their effectiveness for the hearers does not require complex interpretation or detailed knowledge of the source material due to its liturgical function. Rather, the narrative framework of the parable of the ten virgins, recited in the opening verses of the psalm, complements the disciple list to provide clear instruction and paradigms for what constituted wise and foolish behaviour.

## 6 Gender dynamics

Given that all the women disciples listed in the catalogue exemplify worthy qualities and behaviours, it is worth asking how much weight should be placed on the slighting of the eleven that is implied by Mary having to hunt them down after they have gone astray. With the exception of Judas, the male disciples are noted for their admirable conduct usually in relation to whatever piece of tradition about them is presented, be it from the New Testament or elsewhere. Peter is firm, unshakeable; Andrew is perceptive; Philip is patient (despite residing among cannibals!); and Bartholomew is so sure he will be provided for that he takes no food with him on his apostolic mission. We might ask why Judas is even included in this otherwise entirely celebratory catalogue of role models, since he has nothing

<sup>79</sup> Coyle 2009, 202, For a recent discussion of this theme, see Karaman 2021, 970–73.

positive to add, and instead is used as a warning against greed. Most likely, the psalmist is simply reproducing an inherited list.<sup>80</sup> But, the presence of failure is an important feature in this psalm more broadly, and not one which is generally commented on by interpreters, who tend to emphasise the prominent exemplarity in the disciple lists. The greed of Judas and the straying of the other eleven male disciples, especially when read against the backdrop of the parable of the ten virgins, sends the clear message to guard against complacency. It is stated imperatively to the psalm's hearers that they must not "sleep and slumber" like the foolish virgins so that the Lord's coming catches them unawares (ⲙⲡⲠⲣ ⲧⲚⲓⲣⲡⲓ ⲛⲧⲚⲓⲕⲁⲧⲉ) (*Man. Ps. II* 193,8).

Several questions can be posed at this point. First, with the male disciples providing in this psalm all the examples of stumbling, can we read the wholly positive list of female exemplars as a conscious effort to explicitly encourage women participants? Should this psalm be taken as evidence primarily for the favourable position of women in Manichaeism, for whom the ascetic missionary model is held up above anything else? Do the virgins in the psalm's focal parable have any bearing on this broader question, with the female exemplars acting specifically as the antidote to the foolish ones and the demonstration of what constitutes wisdom? My sense is that the second part of this hypothesis is true, but the broader popularity of the parable in the *Psalm Book* means that we should not pair it specifically with the women exemplars as opposed to the disciple list more broadly, which begins after all with the males.

## 7 Conclusion

The treatment of the topic of women in Manichaeism has often lacked nuance, and this is perhaps a natural part of the process when attempting to discern a movement's view on a particular issue, wrangling with diverse sources and what often appear to be contradictory presentations. Binary understandings of women as either predominantly

positive or negative in Manichaean thought have been tempting, especially since most of the literary sources offer either highly idealised or stridently negative portrayals of the feminine. It is for this reason that scholars have preferred to turn to the Kellis papyri to formulate a clearer picture of actual lived experience among Egyptian Manichaean women. This is of course an important step forward. However, I think interpreters of the *Psalm Book* have been too easily inclined to overlook the subtle acknowledgements it contains of the variety and limits of both women's and men's spiritual experience. While it cannot be denied that the radical actions of the women from the apocryphal acts, and the archetypal missionary activity of Mary Magdalene are upheld as the ultimate aspiration for female Manichaean followers, the fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* at the same time recognises constraints to women's and men's religious activity and expression. The gender dynamics in this psalm are not straightforward; the male disciples are both impressive and not, while the women exemplars can be pioneers of ascetic virtue and missionary prowess, or more generically described practitioners of obedience and willing service. Nuance is important for recognising the richness and complexity of our sources, yet this gradation can be overlooked when scholars attempt to reconstruct a coherent picture of women in a movement such as Manichaeism, or even women in one Manichaean textual collection, such as the *Psalm Book*, where we ought to be alert to the presence of a rather more multifaceted, diverse set of views, portrayals, and ideals.

A deeper understanding of the gender dynamics implied by the fifth *Psalm of Heracleides* is made possible when its message is interpreted beyond the boundaries of abstracted notions of the "feminine" in Manichaeism, or generalised views of women in the movement writ large. With the increasingly rich picture of local Egyptian Manichaeism that we have gained through the Kellis material, the papyri from the Medinet Madi codices invite further comparative work which interrogates them as relics of this context in late antiquity.

تتناول مقالة الباحثة أيضًا التقليد القبطي، مع التركيز هذه المرة على المزامير المانوية، والصورة التي تتجلى لنا من خلال هذه النصوص حول دور النساء في المجتمع المسيحي المبكر، وتفسير الشخصيات النسائية في أناجيل العهد الجديد وغيرها من الأدب المسيحي القديم. وتذكر الباحثة أنه عندما نقارن بين الأدلة التي تظهر لنا في الكتابات الأدبية المسيحية وبين الأدلة التي نستخلصها من البرديات الوثائقية المعثور عليها في كيليس على سبيل المثال، وهي المنطقة التي نعرف عنها أنه كان يوجد بها مجتمع مانوي نشط، يمكننا اكتساب فهم أعمق لدور المرأة في المجتمع وفي المسيحية المبكرة على نطاق أوسع. لا ينبغي إغفال البرديات القبطية لأنها يمكن أن تلقي ضوءًا مهمًا على تجسيديات حقيقية للأدب والممارسات المسيحية المبكرة. المقال مهم لكل من يريد أن يقارن بين نصوص الكتب المقدسة والنصوص الأدبية والنصوص الوثائقية للخروج بصورة أكثر وضوحًا عن دور المرأة في هذا الفترة التاريخية.

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