A contribution to the history of Dayr al-Maymūn

[Contribución a la historia de Dayr al-Maymūn]

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Resumen: En este artículo nos ocupamos de un manuscrito hallado en la Iglesia de Dayr al-Maymūn. Dicho manuscrito contiene un texto sobre el rito de consagración de algunos instrumentos litúrgicos. Pese a la época del manuscrito, éste es una mina de información que será de enorme ayuda para investigadores posteriores interesados en este lugar.

Abstract: This article deals with a manuscript found in the Church of Dayr al-Maymūn. This manuscript contains a text on the rite of consecration of some liturgical instruments. Despite the age of the manuscript, it is a mine of information that will help further scholars interested in this site.


Key words: Coptic liturgy. Dayr al-Maymūn. Coptic manuscript.

Introduction

The church of Dayr al-Maymūn is considered, according to tradition, the first place where Saint Antony began his ascetic life. S. Timm identified the

*I would like to thank Dr Adel Ghoneim, Director of the Coptic and Islamic sector of this region as well as my friend Dr Gamal Hermina, who facilitated to me this visit on the 14 October 2010. Lisa Agaiby was kind enough to correct the English language.
location as Pispir,¹ while E. Wipszycka disagreed this identification and proposed the village of Burmbul.² R.-G. Coquin and M. Martin discuss the history of this church in an entry in the Coptic Encyclopedia³ where P. Grossmann also provides an architectural description.⁴ Another description together with an architectural plan is provided by Fr Samuel al-Syriany and Badii Habib.⁵ Finally, the article by M. Dewachter,⁶ also provided a description of the church in the nineteenth century.

The Document
The document published below – was found in situ (in the church of Dayr al-Maymun) – and contains a text on the consecration of the liturgical items. It is well known that all the liturgical vessels and even vestments used during services in the Coptic Church, must be consecrated by either the patriarch or by a bishop as part of the general process of consecration.⁷ This book can be called Pontificals.⁸

⁵ Fr. Samuel AL-SURIANY and Badii HABIB, Guide to Ancient churches and monasteries in Upper Egypt (Cairo, 1991), number 198, pp.150-151.
Manuscript Description
The manuscript contains details on the rites of consecration. It was compiled for private use, which is evident if we take into account the small dimensions of the piece (70mm x 110 mm). It does not contain foliotation. The body of the text was written in Coptic while the titles are in Arabic in black ink. The original binding did not survive. There is a drawing in black ink of a simple flask at the beginning of the text. The scribe used cheap local paper. There are traces of wax and dirt, especially at the corners of the sheets, which must be due to frequent use. It contains 14 lines per page and 3-5 words per line. The scribe displays an elegant, professional hand, although with many mistakes, showing that he was not well acquainted with Coptic grammar.

Manuscript contents
• Consecration of all the vessels of the altar
• Consecration of the Paten and its veils
• Consecration of the Chalice and its veils
• Consecration of the spoon
• Consecration of the black veils of the altar
• Consecration of the censer
• Consecration of the icons (written in a different hand)

In O.H.E. Burmester’s monumental work, 9 he provides a detailed description of the liturgical veils, vessels and instruments; 10 however, he does not mention the consecration of these objects. 11 Therefore, we believe

9 O.H.E. Burmester, The Egyptian or Coptic Church a detail description of her rites ceremonies (Cairo, 1967).
10 O.H.E. Burmester, The Egyptian or Coptic Church, pp. 23-29.
11 It is important to mention that Horner edited only the rite of consecration a new church. G. W. Horner, The Service for the Consecration of a Church and Altar, According to the Coptic Rite (London, 1902).
that providing the reader with an English translation of these texts will help for a better understanding of the whole rituals.

There are three editions of some of these texts: the first was published by R. Tukhi\(^{12}\) in 1761 in Coptic and Arabic; the second edition was published by Metropolitan Athanasius of Beni Suef in 1959 and reprinted by his successor who bore the same name and same title in the year 1992, in both Coptic and Arabic.\(^{13}\) Abdallah – while studying the ordo of Gabriel V – provides us with an edition of these texts as well as an Italian translation.\(^{14}\)

In our edition, we will separate between the pages with * and the new page will start in the following line. The separation between the prayers represented in Manuscript by a zigzag line is here represented by :

The ornament in the beginning is represented by:

\(^{12}\) R. TUKHI, πιευχολογία πάσης επίσκεψης του Βασιλείου Ευστάθιος εν Σαντορίνι (Rome, 1761), pp. 45-51.

\(^{13}\) ΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΣ, Metropolitan of Bani Souef, πιευχολογία πάσης επίσκεψης του Βασιλείου Ευστάθιος εν Σαντορίνι (Cairo, 1992), p. 140.

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A comparison with the photos will help the reading to figure out the manuscript.

The text reads as follows:

Prayer for the consecration of all the vessels of the altar

O Good and holy God, who ‘delights’ in the saints, and through His goodness and His holy commandments, Moses Your child sprinkled blood over all vessels of the service.

Now we ask and beseech You, O good lover of mankind, deign to purify this vessel, that through Your Holy Spirit and the sprinkling of the blood of Your Christ that becomes purified as a sacred liturgical vessel of the holy and worthy service of the mystery, which is the life-giving Body.

And the pure Blood of Your

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15 Read صلاة
16 For this prayer, see Marcos Daoud, The Liturgy of the Ethiopian Church (Cairo, 1959), p. 13 numbers 37-40.
17 Read εὐαγγελία
18 Lit. “rested”.
19 Read τινὴν
20 Read πᾶσιν
Christ, for Your Holy Name is holy and full of glory in everything: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever.

Anoint it and say:

**Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.**

Prayer for the consecration of the Paten and its veil.  

The bishop says:

Master, Lord, and God, the good owner who stretched His holy arm and consecrated this plate full of good things that has been prepared by those who love Your name and those who recline in Your millennium banquet. Now also our Master, and lover of mankind, stretch Your divine hand over this blessed paten which will be filled

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21 Read εὐλογίτος
22 On this prayer, see M. DAUD, *The Liturgy*, p. 14 numbers 43-44.
23 Read άθανατος
24 Read ἀγαθοποιεῖται
25 Read ἀγαθοποιεῖται
26 Read άγαθοποιεῖται
with the coal in the remains of Your holy Body for which they (the people) will gather around the altar.*

The sanctuary of the holy pure Church of NN of the city NN for glory is due to You and Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit now (and forever). Then he anoints with the Myron oil.

Blessed be the Lord Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the sanctification of Holy Spirit Amen!

A prayer for the consecration of the Chalice and its veils.31 The bishop says:

Master and Lord, Jesus Christ the true One who is without (sin), being God and Man together, in His divinity.*

Who is without separation from His humanity. Who shed His own Blood for His own creatures, now place Your divine hand on this

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27 Read έτοιμοφόρονάζεται
28 Reference to the Apocalypse
29 Read Ἴποιούς
30 Read υούογ
31 On this prayer, see M. DAOU, The Liturgy, pp. 14-15, numbers 45-46.
32 The Arabic version in TUKI, AThANSIUS and ABDALLAH adds "sins"
33 Read υούετφώρχ
Chalice now and consecrate it and purify it so that it may carry within it Your honoured blood, and may it be healing and the forgiveness of all.*

Who will drink from it in truth, Glory be to You with Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit.

Now (the bishop) takes the Myron and anoints it from inside and outside and he says:
Purification, purity, blessing and sweetness to everyone who will drink from Your honoured true Blood, Amen!

A prayer for the consecration of the spoon. On this prayer, see M. DAOUD, The Liturgy, p. 15, numbers 47-49.

34 Read πᾶνφωτ
35 Read εὐνάχω
36 On this prayer, see M. DAOUD, The Liturgy, p. 15, numbers 47-49.
37 TUKHI and ATHANASIUS read της γροθ
38 TUKHI, ATHANASIUS and 'ABDALLAH read 61
39 TUKHI and ATHANASIUS read ερωτήσεις
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God the almighty, stretch out Your hand on this spoon by which the Holy jewels of Your precious Son, our Lord and our Saviour Jesus Christ, will be obtained. Bless it, (the veil) sanctified it. May You grant it the power and the glory given in that which the Seraphim in his right hand held. For to You, is the power, the glory and the might with Your precious Son Jesus Christ our Lord, and the Holy Spirit, Now (and forever).

Anoint it with the Myron oil saying:

Power and glory and light and sanctification of the Holy Trinity in the Holy Church of the city NN. Amen!

Consecration of the black veils of the altar

Lord and Master, Jesus Christ who

40 TUKHI and ‘ABDALLAH read тαυγοςωφ ως, ATHANASIUS тαυγοςωφ
41 For the Greek verb τυγασω
42 Lit. “relics”.
43 Read ποιοι
44 Read πασοι
45 Read τεσσαρη
46 Read σεραφη
47 Read φωκ
48 This prayer is not included in ATHANASUS’ edition. In TUKHI’s edition the title is for the veils which are the coloured veils of the altar. ‘ABDALLAH for the black veils. For the prayer, see M. DAOUD, The Liturgy, pp. 13-14, numbers 41-42.
has the treasures of mercy, who is the giver of good things to everyone who hope in Him.\(^{51}\) Who spread the heavens with meekness and gave different colours to the firmament (of heaven) and the clouds of the sky when yet there was no difference. Now also, our Master and lover of mankind, let Your divine power*

come over these vessels, these garments which will enclose the holy jewels so You send upon them the power of Your garment which Your holy Body was wrapped in within the tomb in order that they resemble all things heavenly.

To You is the power and the might with Your Good Father and the Holy Spirit, both now and …*

Anoint with the Myron oil and say: One is the holy
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Father, one is the Holy Son, one is the Holy Spirit Amen. Power and glory and might be to God Amen! Prayer for the consecration of the censer: Master and Lord Jesus Christ the merciful, we see the stainless Lamb who is called the pure censer, containing perfumed incense on the altar, that is to purify the sins of

The people. He looked upward with this prayer and the burnt-offering with one heart and charity in front of God. We beseech You, O our Saviour, accept unto You the censer and the incense and the worship by the priesthood. With the grace and the mercy and the…*

A prayer for the consecration of the icons. The bishop says:

Master, Lord and God the almighty, the Father of our Lord

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58 Read ἐπίσημον
59 Read ἐξωσμος
60 Read ἡνωγεν
61 Read φωτί
62 Read ἡνογεν
63 Written in different hand both Coptic and Arabic.
64 Read ἡνογεν
65 Read ἡν
And our Saviour Jesus Christ, God who through His servant Moses, gave us the Law from the beginning in order to place (it) in the tabernacle of covenant a figure of the Cherubim and the Seraphim who cover with their wings the Mercy Seat.*

And You gave Solomon wisdom through the house that he built for You in Jerusalem. And You revealed Yourself to Your chosen Apostles through the incarnation of Your Only Begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Churches and monasteries were named after the saints and the martyrs. Therefore we beseech and we ask You*

O lover of mankind, send Your Holy Spirit on this icon of saint NN in order that it will become a

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66 Read "n
67 Read etouγωνε
68 Read "nποτενθεντ
69 Ex 25:17-20.
70 Read πακ
71 See note below.
72 Read πακ
73 Read "ποτενθεντ
74 Read eouξον ϕαι
75 The scribe here jump one line from the original and read "νοτειγωνεται πακ ἄνθρωπον, "in order to build to You".
76 Read "ποτενθεντ
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harbour of salvation, a harbour of strength so that whoever advances towards it in faith receives blessing from God and the forgiveness of sins. For blessed and full of glory is

Your holy name Father and the Holy Spirit. Now and ...

Then he anoints it with the Myron oil saying:

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, the holy consubstantial Trinity

Finished and completed is the consecration of the icons in the peace of the Lord Amen!

Commentary

The first prayer does not occur in Metropolitan Athanasius of Beni Suef’s edition,\(^{83}\) however, it is attested in the edition of Tukhi\(^{84}\) and the *ordo* of Gabriel V.\(^{85}\) The scribe writes `κρεγος` without κ. The scribe used the

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77 Read ‘ποιμνήν
78 Read ‘ποιήαν
79 Read ἐροτ
80 Read περηγιν
81 See next note.
82 All the other witnesses add ἐν ημὶ ης, “and the Son”.
83 ΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΣ, Metropolitan of Bani Souef, παρειας μη χαλαρωυαν μη ποιβογια χαλαρωμεν ης ημὶ ης αναμνηστικης ης πενυγιείουνη ης ενθαρρυσει ποιμνήν κτρ. Παναγιετωρογιαν, p. 140.
84 R. TUKHI, περηγιν αρ. ης μη χαλαρωμεν χαλαρωμεν ης πενυγιείουνη ης παρειας μη χαλαρωμεν, pp. 49-50
singular for σκεύος while the word θηρωγον contradicts the singular. The title is for all the vessels, however, in the text we pray that the σκεύος (vessel) to become κυμιλιον (κειμιλιον). This second word means “treasure of a church, particularly sacred vessel”. 86

The Prayer of the consecration of the censer is not attested in the edition of Athanasius or Tukhi or Abdallah, or even in Manuscript 253 of the Coptic Museum 87 however, it is attested in the manuscript British Library Or 435 fol. Prk r-v. 88 This means that the scribe had access to a good library as it is unthinkable that a scribe with poor knowledge of Coptic – as we can see from the number of mistakes that he committed in copying the text, would compose such a beautiful text.

Conclusion

From this document, we can assume that a bishop visited the church of Dayr al-Maymūn at the beginning of the twentieth century. Apparently this visit took place after the renovation. On this occasion, he consecrated vessels of the altars, a paten, a chalice, a spoon, veils and a censer. It seems that no major architectural renovations were undertaken, as these renovations would require the prayer for re-consecration of the church. 89 We think that this visit was not organised in advance and hence the bishop did not bring with him the manuscript of the pontifical. A skilful scribe copied for the bishop a new copy (pocket size) to be carried in his pocket;

87 Youhanna Nessim Youssef, “Prayers for the consecration of the Censer, and liturgical garments” BSAC (forthcoming)
however, this skilful scribe did not possess enough knowledge of Coptic language.

Having prepared the manuscript, the bishop found that there was also an icon(s) to be consecrated, so another scribe (less skilful than the previous one) added the prayer for consecration for icons. Despite the recent age of this manuscript, we find that the prayer for consecrating the censer is rare, and it seems that the scribe found it in a local manuscript.

Our manuscript contributes to our better knowledge of the history of Dayr al-Maymūn’s site. However, an architectural study is still needed in order to be able to discern whether there were other renovations which took place around the date of consecration of the liturgical instruments as reflected by our manuscript.

Addendum

Some of these prayers were also used in the Ethiopian Church. Since the prelate of Ethiopia was Egyptian, he delegates his authority for consecrating the liturgical instruments to the priests to pray these prayers before the liturgy.

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