Miscellanea Epigraphica Nubica IV:  
A New Edition of the Wizz Codex with an  
English Translation  

[Miscellanea Epigraphica Nubica IV:  
Una nueva edición del Codex Wizz con una traducción inglesa]  

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Abstract: The discovery of a complete codex in Coptic at the Nubian monastery  
of Qasr el Wizz has attracted the attention of several scholars. The edition of  
Péter Hubai has provided a base for all subsequent analyses of the text and  
already two related publications have been announced. The present contribution  
is the result of reading the Wizz Codex in a study group at the University of  
Bergen on Coptic texts, yielding an updated transcription and translation of the  
text.  

Resumen: El descubrimiento de un códice completo en el Monasterio nubio de  
Qasr el Wizz ha atraído la atención de varios estudiosos. La edición de  
Péter Hubai ha provisto una base para todos los análisis posteriores del  
texto y ya han sido anunciadas dos publicaciones relacionadas. La presente  
contribución es el resultado de la lectura del códice Wizz por parte de un  
grupo de estudio de textos coptos de la Universidad de Bergen, que ha dado  
lugar a una transcripción y traducción actualizadas del texto.  

Key words: Lower Nubia. Qasr el Wizz. Wizz Codex. Coptic. The Cross.  

Palabras clave: Nubia Baja. Qasr el Wizz. Códice Wizz. Copto. La Cruz.  

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Introduction

The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago was one of numerous institutions that participated in the Aswan High Dam Campaign, which was conducted under the auspices of UNESCO in the 1960s. Among the sites excavated, most have already been published in the Oriental Institute Nubian Expedition (OINE) publication series. The monographs of the last three remaining sites are set to be published by 2015. They concern the sites of Dorginarti, Serra East and Qasr el Wizz. Material from all these sites has already been published by different scholars in various venues. For example, the monastic site of Qasr el Wizz has become famous mainly through two publications regarding two of the hundreds of textual finds there. More precisely, a bilingual (Old Nubian and Greek) version of the Benedictic, written with ink on the walls of the church at the monastery, was published by John Barns;¹ and a complete codex in Coptic, containing two hitherto unknown Early Christian texts, was published by Péter Hubai.²

The focus of this fourth paper in the series Miscellanea Epigraphica Nubica will be the corrigenda to the Coptic codex published by Hubai. These will be provided as an updated transcription and translation that were prepared during the group reading of both texts of the Wizz Codex at the University of Bergen.

Publication History

Since the discovery and excavation of the monastic site at Qasr el Wizz, the codex in question has been the object of research activities on three different occasions. The first was undertaken by the philologist of the

Oriental Institute, the late George Hughes. A preliminary translation in English was produced, but never published due to Hughes’ expressed wish that it remain in the archive of the Oriental Institute. Hughes’ translation has been consulted by several other scholars in the years that ensued, including Péter Hubai, the Hungarian scholar who published a monograph on the Wizz Codex, first in Hungarian and then in German. Hubai correctly noted the similarities between the Wizz Codex and the Gospel of the Savior. An English translation of the second text of the Wizz Codex was published by Pierluigi Piovanelli, who also linked the Wizz text with the Gospel of the Savior. These similarities have also been discussed by Stephen Emmel while he was preparing the reedition of the translation of the Gospel of the Savior. In the same work, Emmel also presented his own translation of the first five folia of the Wizz Codex. In a forthcoming collection of Christian apocrypha edited by Tony Burke and Brent Landau, Alin Suciu “will be contributing with several translations, including the partly parallel ‘Gospel’ of the Savior and in the same volume Paul Dilley will present his own English translation of the Wizz Codex.

As mentioned above, all the archaeological material unearthed at the Wizz monastery in 1965 by OINE will be published in the Chicago series

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3 For an interesting case, see http://alinsuciu.com/2012/10/04/george-elliott-west-translation-of-a-coptic-apocryphal-manuscript-the-qasr-el-wizz-codex/
8 http://alinsuciu.com/2012/10/04/george-elliott-west-translation-of-a-coptic-apocryphal-manuscript-the-qasr-el-wizz-codex/
of monographs. Although the final publication of the OINE series will not include a translation of the Wizz Codex, upon reading the text it became apparent that there were still some issues to be settled. In anticipation of OINE and Dilley’s publications, we decided to present in this short paper the outcome of our weekly meetings that took place between January and March 2013.

**Transcription and Translation**

The transcription of the Wizz Coptic Codex, presented in the column on the left-hand side, follows the Leiden editorial rules. The main points of divergence between the present transcription and the one of Hubai concern the supralinear strokes; two cases where visible (but corrected by the scribe) letters are not transcribed (page 11, line 8, and page 17, line 9); one case of a haplography wrongly transcribed (page 24, line 1); and three more substantial improvements to the reading of the text, namely in page 17, lines 7 & 8, in page 25, lines 1 & 2 and in page 25, line 3.

The updated translation is presented in the right-hand column and attempts, to the extent that it is possible, to respect the distribution of lines in the original. Some points of grammar are explained in footnotes.

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| A discourse that our Savior and our Master, Jesus the Christ, taught his holy and glorious apostles before he was taken up, concerning the power and the
authority and the conduct of the glorious and life-giving Cross. In God’s peace.

My beloved ones! It happened one day, while our Savior was sitting on the Mount of Olives, four days before he was taken up into the heavens, with his apostles gathered around him, that he told them the unfathomable mysteries, those that are in the heavens and those that are upon the earth, and also how he would judge the living and the dead, and the resurrection of the dead. Peter spoke, and
said to him:

“Our Lord and our God, and

Savior of the souls and of everyone

who has his hopes in you, and Cure of the souls that are wounded by sins:

You have revealed to us:

all the mysteries; now as well,

come on, reveal to us the mystery

that we will ask you about.”

The Savior replied and said:

“O Peter, my chosen one, and you,

my fellow heirs;

Tell me, have I ever kept hidden

from you a single word

The form ἐκεῖ is not easily identifiable as any known Coptic verbal conjugation prefix. The proposed translation here and in Page 9, line 6 is conjectural and based on the context.
that you have asked me about?
Nor will I
hide anything from you.

But, come on, ask me
about everything that
you wish to know

about, and I
shall reveal them

Page 10
tοὺς ἄνωυντάς
παντετροφὸς αὐχαω

σας ἂν ἁπαχο
 eius ἄχω οἰκίνπρ
τέ κ αὐχο πείνην
τάθουντος εὑρέκ
ταμιον ἁμμῦστι
ριον ἱμηεὐαγ
τος ετή μεγα
ἐκ

Page 11
καρκηνίς ἐτιάκ
καὶ παν ἱμηεὐαγρος
εττακακο ζεκας
σεικαγιατί σεολ
ηγατρικοκτ ονις
τα [ε] ἦς σεινατα
οκανήον ἑμποκος

Page 12

world.” The Savior
replied
and said: “O Peter, my chosen one, and you, my brothers, you know all the things that they did to me, namely the lawless Jews, as well as

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the blasphemies that they heaped upon me on the Cross - they spat on me, they punched me, they put on me the crown of thorns - and the insulting words that they cast upon me.

That is why I will bring with me the Cross, so that I may expose their shame. And I will lay their lawlessness upon their head. But now listen closely to me, and I will explain to you another great honor
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Page 16

ο Ἰησοῦς Κυρίων · ἥμαρτον ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἡμῶν

3 τὰν ἐν χειρὶ θανάτου

ἐξήρισεν τὸν Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν

πέμψας· ἀπεθανεῖν

6 κρίνει Κύριος

μοι τῷ πρῷτῳ κοινωνίᾳ

ἀρχὴν ἔθηκεν ἡμῶν

9 Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς θεοῦ Υἱὸς

Page 17

While its root goes down into the earth, its branches will go up again, as before. Now, its branches have covered the earth, the three parts of the earth. Anyone who has believed in the Cross with all their heart will come under the shadow of the Cross and they will stand there - either if one has given the hungry to eat, or they have given the thirsty to drink, or one gives clothes to the naked, but especially in the valley of Josaphat.

Page 16

While its root goes down into the earth, its branches will go up again, as before. Now, its branches have covered the earth, the three parts of the earth. Anyone who has believed in the Cross with all their heart will come under the shadow of the Cross and they will stand there - either if one has given the hungry to eat, or they have given the thirsty to drink, or one gives clothes to the naked, but especially
to those who have written the books of praise
to the Cross - until I finish judging the entire world.

After I have judged the just and the sinners, the Cross arose again

and went up to the heavens. Everyone who has believed in it will return with it, entering the kingdom of heaven. They will inherit eternal life.

I will not judge anyone among them, either by word or by deed, but they will be saved by the power of the Cross.

Normally κερεῖκαε, takes focalized past, not the present tense; cf. B. LAYTON, A Coptic Grammar (Wiesbaden, 2004), § 457 & § 493.
But now, O my holy members, go and preach to the entire world, so that they may follow the Cross.

When we heard these things, we the apostles worshiped our Savior, and said to him: “Glory to you, the Father who is in the Son; the Son who is in the Father and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever, Amen. For at all times you have glorified those who love you.”

So let it come to pass for us that we find mercy and grace on the day when he will judge with justice.
Now and always and forever:

Amen.

And it happened one day as the Savior sat on the Mount of Olives, before the lawless Jews had crucified him, that all of us gathered around him. He conversed and said: “O my holy members, gather around me and I shall sing a hymn to the Cross. And as for you, you shall sing after me.” And as for us, we made a circle and surrounded him. He said to us: “As for me, I am in your midst just as little children.” He said: “Amen. It is a little (while) longer that I am with you in your midst. They take counsel against me now. Do not hold me back, O Cross! Arise,

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O holy Cross, and raise me up,
O Cross. I am rich. Amen. I will climb up on you,
O Cross. They will hang me upon you as a testimony against them.
Take me to you, O Cross. Amen. Do not cry, O Cross, but rather rejoice.

greatly, Amen.” And when he had completed the hymn, we repeated after him all together: “Amen.”
He said to us again: “Gather around me, O
while you repeat
after me saying: Amen. O

Cross that is full of
light. And again:
It will bear the

light, Amen. I will
rush up to
you, O Cross,

Amen. I shall climb

up on you as a testimony
against them. Take me
to you, O Cross!
Do not reveal
my body, Amen.”

The fourth dance
of the Cross: “I am
not poor, O
light-giving Cross,
Amen. I will
fill you

with my richness,

Amen. I will climb
up on you. Take me
to you, O Cross!
Glory to you for you have
obeyed your
Father, Amen. Glory
to you, sweetest of all, 12

12 This is a rather free translation of what stands in the text, which literally says: ‘all sweetness’.
Amen. Glory to the divinity, Amen.

Open your grace, O Father,

so that I can sing hymns to

the Cross, Amen. I have taken for myself the crown of the kingdom from the tree, Amen. I will make my enemies subject themselves to me, Amen.

The enemy will be brought to naught by the Cross, Amen. The sting of death will be annulled by the only-begotten Son, Amen.

To whom does the kingdom belong to? It belongs to the Son, Amen.

Where is his kingdom from? It is from the tree, Amen. Who is the one who sent him to the Cross? It is the Father, Amen.

What is the Cross? Where is it from? It is from the Spirit, Amen.

It exists from eternity, always, from
<table>
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<td>3</td>
<td>ΤΚΑΤΑΒΟΛΗ ΜΠΚΟΣ</td>
<td>the foundation of the</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ΜΟΣ ΑΜΗΝ : ΑΗΟΚ Π [ε]</td>
<td>world, Amen, I am</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ΆΛΦΑ ΑΜΗΝ : ΑΥΩ [ω]</td>
<td>Alpha, Amen. And Omega,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ΑΜΗΝ : ΤΑΡΧΗ ΑΥΩ</td>
<td>Amen. The beginning and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ΠΤΕΛΕΙΟΝ ΑΜΗΝ : ΑΗ [οκ]</td>
<td>the end, Amen, I</td>
</tr>
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<td>6</td>
<td>ΠΕ ΤΑΡΧΗ ΠΑΤΡΙΔΩ [ε]</td>
<td>am the ineffable beginning</td>
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<td>ΕΡΩΙ13. ΑΥΩ ΠΤΕΛΕΙΟΝ</td>
<td>and the ineffable end</td>
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<td>ΠΑΤΡΙΔΩ ΕΡΩΙ - ΑΥΩ</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>ΠΤΕΛΕΙΟΝ ΟΛΗΕΙΣ ΑΜΗΝ Π` :</td>
<td>the eternal end, Amen.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ΑΜΗΝ ΑΣ ΠΤΕΡΗ ΣΟΡΤΗ</td>
<td>And as for us, when we heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ΕΝΑΙ ΜΗΙΕΟΟΥ ΚΗΠΟ Ψ`ΤΕ</td>
<td>these things, we glorified God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>ΠΑΙ ΕΤΕΙΟΝ ΠΕΝΕΙΟΟΥ</td>
<td>His is the glory</td>
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<td>ΟΔ {ε}ΕΝΕΙΣ ΏΝΕΙΣ ΨΌ :</td>
<td>forever and ever, Amen.</td>
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<tr>
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<td>XX------XXXX------XXX</td>
<td>XX------XXX------XXX</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>XX------XXXX------XXX</td>
<td>XX------XXX------XXX</td>
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Concluding remarks

The Wizz Codex is a luxurious example of Early Christian book production. The codicological, paleographical and iconographical details of the manuscript are therefore worth becoming the objects of special case studies in the future. This will allow research to move beyond Hubai’s publication which has opened the path for further investigations on the dating of this work, the locality of the scriptorium that produced it, the meaning of the texts, their liturgical function and literary significance. The ambition of the present paper has been solely to improve the reading and understanding of the two literary works written on the 17 parchment leaves of the Wizz Codex.

The text is written in easily understandable Sahidic Coptic. However, the scribe seems to have been uncomfortable with longer and more

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13 Read ἐροι.
complicated sentences. The most characteristic example, and a passage that might appear obscure in our translation without further commentary, is the phrase between the end of page 17 and the first lines of page 18: “…they will come under the shadow of the Cross and they will stand there - either if one has given the hungry to eat, or they have given the thirsty to drink, or one gives clothes to the naked, but especially to those who have written the books of praise to the Cross”. In our opinion, the italicized to translates the direct object marker \( \tilde{\text{h}} \), which puts the authors of the books in the same category as the hungry, the thirsty and the naked. Therefore they are not to be counted among those who will stand under the shadow of the Cross, but are rather among those who are recipients of benefactions. This element in the text points to the existence of Christian patrons who commissioned the production of such prestigious objects. Thus, for the scribe of the Wizz Codex his (or her?) patrons are set among the merciful Christians who deserve the blessings of the Cross. Our reading of this passage gives the modern reader insight into the sentiments evoked by this object of religious contemplation, as well as into the social dynamic between those who participated in the book market in Christian Nubia and Coptic Egypt.

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