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A fragment of the Book of Revelation in the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection (T-S AS 177.202)

The genizah of the Ben Ezra Synagogue of Fusṭāṭ, Egypt, has preserved a considerable amount of Eastern Christian manuscript fragments in a variety of languages of these Christian communities.[1] While some fragments may have entered the repository inadvertently, such as those that were made into palimpsests and, hence, clearly exhibit secondary use by members of the Jewish community, the presence of others, especially of manuscripts of Christian Arabic provenance, suggest that they not only circulated within a Jewish milieu, but actually attracted the interest of Jewish readers.

This is particularly fascinating in the case of Christian Arabic translations of the Bible. We know that the Coptic Christians of Egypt took a lively interest in versions of biblical books produced by other communities, including the Jewish community. For instance, the

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[1] See Agnes Smith Lewis and Margaret Dunlop Gibson, *Palestinian Syriac Texts: From Palimpsest Fragments in the Taylor-Schechter Collection* (London: J.C. Clay and Sons/Cambridge University Press, 1900); Charles Taylor, *Hebrew-Greek Cairo Geniza Palimpsests from the Taylor-Schechter Collection: Including a Fragment of the twenty-second Psalm According to Origen's Hexapla* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900); William F. Macomber, "An interesting fragment of an East Syrian festal hymnary of the fourteenth (?) century", *Oriens Christianus* 57 (1973), pp. 72-78; Michael Sokoloff and Joseph Yahalom, "Christian Palimpsests from the Cairo Geniza", *Revue d'Histoire de Textes* 8 (1978), pp. 109-132; Sebastian Brock, "East Syrian liturgical fragments from the Cairo Genizah", *Oriens Christianus* 68 (1983), pp. 58-79; idem, "Some Further East Syrian Liturgical Fragments from the Cairo Genizah", *Oriens Christianus* 74 (1990), pp. 44-61; Natalie Tschernetska, "Greek-Oriental Palimpsests in Cambridge: Problems and Prospects", in: Catherine Holmes and Judith Waring (eds), *Literacy, Education and Manuscript Transmission in Byzantium and Beyond*, The Medieval Mediterranean, 42 (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2002), pp. 243-256; Kristina Szilágyi, "Christian Books in Jewish Libraries: Fragments of Christian Arabic Writings from the Cairo Genizah", *Ginze Qedem*, 2 (2006), pp. 107*-162*; Friedrich, Niessen, "New Testament Translations from the Cairo Genizah", *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia*, 6 (2009), pp. 201-222; Ronny Vollandt, "Biblical translations into Christian Arabic preserved in the Cairo Genizah collections", *Biblia Arabica Blog* (30 April 2019), URL=https://biblia-arabica.com/biblical-translations-into-christian-arabic-preserved-in-the-cairo-genizah-collections/; Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, "A fragment of the Gospel of John preserved in the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection", *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 19 (2022), pp. 207-213; Christa Müller-Kessler, "The Book of Joshua in a Christian Palestinian Aramaic Palimpsest Fragment (T-S 12.758)", Cambridge University Library, Genizah Research Unit, Fragment of the Month (March 2023), URL=https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/collections/departments/taylor-schechter-genizah-research-unit/fragment-month/fotm-2023/fragment-1.

Rabbanite scholar Saadia Gaon's (d. 330/942) *Tafsīr* of the Pentateuch and revisions of it are widely attested in manuscripts of Coptic provenance.[2] The Christian Arabic Bible translations from the Cairo Genizah give the reverse perspective. Jews from Fusṭāṭ owned and later deposited in their genizot parts of codices that contained e.g. Christian Arabic translations of the Book of Psalms and the Pentateuch (including the Coptic recension of the *Tafsīr*) as well as liturgical manuscripts with major portions from the Old Testament.[3] Jewish interest in the Christian Old Testament can be accounted for as an instance of an awareness of a shared scriptural heritage. But Jewish readers were also intrigued by the sacred scriptures of non-Jews that did not overlap with their own. In the case of Christianity, this is evidenced by the fragments of the New Testament in the Cairo Genizah.

Two examples come from Copto-Arabic lectionaries (T-S 52.219 and T-S Ar. 52.220).[4] The first contains pericopes from various books of the New Testament (John, Acts, Hebrews, 1 Corinthians) and the Psalms. The second is particularly fascinating. It is a reworked Holy Week lectionary (T-S Ar. 52.220) with readings from the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), the Pauline Epistles (Galatians), the Psalms, and parts of a homily (Dionysius of Alexandria [?]).[5] The text is transcribed in Judaeo-Arabic and partly vocalised using Tiberian vowel signs. According to Kristina Szilágyi who first contextualised this fragment and highlighted its importance, it is "far from being a hasty copy: it is written very carefully, the unusual words being provided with full Arabic vocalization".[6] This shows that Jews undoubtedly took an interest in lectionaries as such, i.e. as witnesses to the celebration of liturgy rather than witnesses to biblical texts. But it may also indicate curiosity about how exactly biblical texts were used in a liturgical context.

Apart from these lectionary fragments, two further fragments of Christian Arabic New Testament manuscripts can now be added to the corpus of Christian Arabic Bible translations in the Cairo Genizah. Their shelfmarks are T-S Misc.27.4.24b and T-S AS 177.202. Both are in the database of the Princeton Geniza Project since 2022. On 6 May 2022, images of the first were posted on the official social media account of the Princeton Geniza Lab (PGL), run by Alan Elbaum, and identified subsequently in a collective effort as containing portions of the Gospel of John, chapter 19. The fragment, probably dating from the tenth century, was then subjected to a more thorough study by Juan Pedro

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[2]   See Ronny Vollandt, *Arabic Versions of the Pentateuch: A Comparative Study of Jewish, Christian and Muslim Sources*, Biblia Arabica, 2 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), pp. 67-70; esp. p. 69: "The *Tafsīr* was in heavy use until recent times and accorded something of a canonical status. This is clear not only from the sheer number of surviving manuscripts, but also—and all the more so—in light of the frequency with which it was revised, augmented, and adorned with prefaces, short treatises and commentaries by Coptic scholars".

[3]   See the fragments listed in R. Vollandt, "Biblical translations".

[4]   See K. Szilágyi, "Christian Books", pp. 130*-133*; F. Niessen, "New Testament translations", pp. 206-213; R. Vollandt, "Biblical translations".

[5]   For a more detailed description, see F. Niessen, "New testament translations", pp. 209-213.

[6]   Szilágyi, "Christian Books", p. 130*.

Monferrer-Sala who narrowed down the text as John 19:24-29 and 34-38 and showed that the translation is based on a Syriac *Vorlage* with possible influence from a Greek base-text.[7] Images of the second fragment were posted on the same account on 12 May 2023. Elbaum had already identified it as a fragment of the Book of Revelation. The aim of what follows is to offer a description of T-S AS 177.202 and discuss its text. I would like to express my gratitude to Sarah Sykes of the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Research Unit and to Dr Ben Outhwaite, the head of the Genizah Research Unit, who provided me with images of the fragment.[8] These are reproduced below with the kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

Description

Provenance and date: The fragment is part of the Taylor-Schechter Cairo Genizah Collection at Cambridge University Library. Hence, it is one of the roughly 200,000 fragments that Solomon Schechter (1847–1915) brought from Cairo to Cambridge with the financial support of Charles Taylor (1840–1908) in 1896/7.[9] It is impossible to say when exactly the fragment was deposited in the genizah of the Ben Ezra Synagogue. We may venture a *terminus post quem* though. The earliest date that might be assigned to the fragment on palaeographical grounds is the eleventh century CE. Its text is of Coptic provenance, which means that the original manuscript to which the fragment used to belong could have been produced and used in close proximity to the Jewish community of the Cairo Genizah.

Codicology: The fragment preserves the recto and verso of one folio. The writing support is paper. It is torn on all sides and measures in its present state 77,5×70 mm, exhibiting six lines of text on each side. The top preserves an empty margin of ca. 10 mm. The bottom with approximately one line and supposedly an empty margin is missing. Accordingly, the manuscript's original dimensions were roughly 100×80–90 mm. There are no indications of a liturgical use. Hence, the fragment comes from a rather small booklet that originally could have served a personalised use. The colour of the ink that was used is black-brown (probably iron-gall).

Palaeography: The script is a clear *Nasḫī* with sporadic *iʿǧām* and *taškīl*. The earliest date that might be assigned to it is the eleventh century CE. This makes the fragment the oldest known manuscript witness of a Coptic version of the Book of Revelation. For comparison, of the known manuscripts containing this version, the majority (six) was written in the 18th

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century. Additionally, we have four manuscripts from the 19th, two from the 17th, four from the 16th, one from the 15th, and three from the 14th century (see below). On the verso, the scribe had to correct the text twice. In l. 1, the word ابد is written above the first few letters of الى الابدن to correct the phrase to الى ابد الابدن. In l. 4, two crosses are used as annotational signs above the words ان and المجد to indicate that something is missing from the phrase ان نكون المجد. The missing expression لك was supposedly supplied in the margin.

Text: The text preserved on this fragment is Revelation 4:5-7 (recto) and 4:9-5:1 (verso), part of Chapter 9 in the Coptic tradition. Below follows a diplomatic transcription and English translation.

Translation	Recto	lines
[4:5][...] rumblings, and thunder, and seven lamps [a fire …]	[٤:٥][...] اصوات ورعد وسَبع مصَابح ن[ـار ...]	1
[...] God's seven spirits. [6]And in front of […]	[...] السَبعه ارواح اللّه [٦]وفدام [...]	2
[...] glass resembling ice. And in the centre of the [throne …]	[... ز]جاج يشبه الجليد وڡى وسَط الـ[كرسى ...]	3
[...] covered with eyes, in front and back. 7 And [...]	[...] ممتلىـاب عىون مں ڡدام وحلف [٧]و[...]	4
[... the] lion and the second creature resembles the [ox …]	[... السـ]بع والحيوان الثانى يشبه الـ[ـور...]	5
[... the face] of a son of man and the [fourth] creature [...]	[... وجـ]ـه ابن الانسان والحيوان [...]	6

Translation	Verso	lines
[9][... to him who] sits on the throne and lives for ever and ever [...]	[٩][... للجـ]ـالس على الكرسى الحى الى ^{ابد} الابدن [...]	1
[10][...] the twenty[-four] elders and prostrate before [...]	[١٠][... الار]بعه وعشرن كاهنا ويسحدون امام [...]	2
[... and] drop their crowns before the throne, saying [...]	[... وىـ]ـتركون اكاللهم قدام الكرسى قايلين [...]	3

4	[¹¹] [...] تستحق †أن نكون [لك] المجد† والكرامه [...]	[11][...] You are worthy to have glory and honour [...]
5	[...] حلقت كل سى وَبِمَسك ك[انت ...]	[...] you have created everything and by your will [is …]
6	[⁵:¹][...] راس على يمن الجالس على [...]	[5:1][...] I saw in the right hand of him who sits on […]

Commentary

The text of this fragment is nearly identical to the one printed by the Dutch Orientalist Thomas van Erpe (Erpenius, 1584–1624) in his 1616 edition of the New Testament (henceforth: Erp.), which was the first complete Arabic New Testament printed in Europe.[10] The differences are minimal and quickly summarised as follows: recto: l. 1: *ra ʿd*] *ru ʿūd*; l. 2: *as-sab ʿa*] *sab ʿ*; *wa-quddām*] *wa-ra ʾaytu quddām*; l. 4: *ʿuyūn*] *ʿayunan*; *wa-ḫalf*] *wa-min ḫalf*.

Erp. is based on MS Leiden, Universitaire Bibliotheken, Or. 217, a paper manuscript of the New Testament (Gospels, Pauline Epistles, Catholic Epistles, Acts, Revelation) from Wādī n-Naṭrūn, dated 1059 AM (= 1343 CE).[11]

Georg Graf identified three groups of translations of the Book of Revelation based on a Coptic (Bohairic) *Vorlage*:[12] recensions A–C. According to him, Erp., and consequently the text of the Leiden manuscript (though not included in Graf's survey)[13] belongs to recension

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10 Thomas Erpenius (ed.), *Al-ʿAhd al-Ǧadīd li-Rabbinā Yasūʿ al-Masīḥ: Novum D. N. Iesu Christi Testamentum Arabice: Ex Bibliotheca Leidensi* (Leiden: Typographia Erpeniana Linguarum Orientalium, 1616). The text of the Book of Revelation is found on pp. 611-648. On the manuscript used by Erpenius, see Vevian Zaki, "The 'Egyptian Vulgate' in Europe: An Investigation into the Version that Shaped European Scholarship on the Arabic Bible", *Collectanea Christiana Orientalia* 18 (2021), pp. 237-259; esp. at pp. 247 and 252. On the version of the Book of Revelation printed in Erp., see Georg Graf, "Arabische Übersetzungen der Apokalypse", *Biblica* 10:2 (1929), pp. 170-194, at p. 171; Georg Graf, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, vol. 1: *Die Übersetzungen*, Studi e testi, 118 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1944), p. 182.

11 Jan Just Witkam, *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the University of Leiden*, vol. 1: *Manuscripts Or. 1–Or. 1000: Acquisitions in the Period between 1609 and 1665: Mainly the Collections of Jacobus Golius (1629), Josephus Justus Scaliger (1609) and Part of the Collection of Levinus Warner (1665)* (Leiden: Ter Lugt Press, 2007), p. 96. A colophon is found on f. 127r. For a transcription and English translation, see V. Zaki, "The 'Egyptian Vulgate'", p. 247, n. 45.

12 G. Graf, "Arabische Übersetzungen"; G. Graf, *Geschichte*, pp. 182-184.

13 The manuscripts listed by Graf are the following: MSS Cairo, Coptic Orthodox Patriarchate, [Graf nos] 187 [26] (18th c.), 189 [29] (dated 1792), 214 [156] (18th/19th c.), 260 [254] (19th c.), 305 [338] (dated 1771); MS Lainz, Biblioteca Rossiana, No. 924 (18th c.); MS London, British Library, Or. 1326 (dated

A. This text, in Graf's words, "follows the Bohairic version in an accurate and faithful rendering".[14] Following the conventions established in more recent scholarship on Arabic Bible translations, the translation preserved in our fragment is an independent translation (version) on the basis of a Bohairic *Vorlage*.[15] We may dub it Arab^{Copt}1. This version has been printed a number of times, including also in the third volume of the *Biblia Sacra Arabica* (1671), but as with so many Arabic versions of biblical books there exists no critical edition.[16] The text is the same that the Coptic scholar Ibn Kātib Qayṣar (fl. ca. 1250) used in his commentary on the Book of Revelation, *Kitāb Šarḥ ar-Ruʾyā*.[17] It was also used in an anonymous Copto-Arabic commentary on Revelation.[18]

The following comparison of the Arabic text of our fragment with the Bohairic version edited by George William Horner allows us to more clearly appreciate the relation between the Arabic translation and its Coptic *Vorlage*:[19]

1585–87); MS Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Ar. Christ, Uri 33; MSS Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Ar. 80 (17th c.); Syr. 65; MS Rome, Biblioteca Angelica, Copt. 1 (15th c.); MSS Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Borg. Ar. 34 (17th c.); Borg. Copt. 71 (date 1751); Borg. Sir. 47 (related recension, dated 1399); Borg. Sir. 67 (16th c.); Vat. Ar. 31 (16th c.); Vat. Ar. 406 (dated 1335); Vat. Ar. 466 (18th/19th c.); Vat. Ar. 517 (17th c.); MS Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Or. 1571 (dated 1831).

[14] G. Graf, *Geschichte*, p. 182; Eng. tr. mine.

[15] See G. Graf, "Arabische Überstezungen", p. 192: "Beide Rezensionen, A und B, sind selbstständige Übersetzungen aus dem Bohairischen".

[16] G. Graf, "Arabische Übersetzungen", pp. 173-174 gives as a sample Revelation 1:1-8 with the text of Erp. and variants from the manuscripts. Generally, the Arabic translations of the Book of Revelation have thus far not attracted much scholarly interest. For an edition of the Greek-based version, see Martin Heide, "Ein früher Zeuge der arabischen Johannesoffenbarung", in Darius Müller and Marcus Sigismund (eds), *Studien zum Text der Apokalypse III*, Arbeiten zur Neutestamentlichen Textforschung, 51 (Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), pp. 313–357. Martin Heide, "Ein früher Zeuge der arabischen Johannesoffenbarung", pp. 323-357 provides the whole text on the basis of MS Sinai, St Catherine's Monastery, Ar. 85 (12th/13th c.) with variants from MS San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca de El Escorial, Ar. 1625 in the apparatus. On this manuscript and the text of the Book of Revelation contained therein, see Juan Pedro Monferrer-Salal (ed.), *Una traducción árabe del libro del Apocalipsis: Real Biblioteca de El Escorial Codex Ar. 1625*, «Ediciones y Estudios Arabica» 1 (Madrid: Editorial Sinéresis, 2017); Juan Pedro Monferrer-Sala, Lourdes Bonhome Pulido, and Faiad Barbash (eds), *Codex Arabicus Escurialensis MDCXXV: Studium, editio diplomatica atque indices*, «Aramaeo-Arabica et Graeca» 1 (Madrid: Editorial Sinéresis, 2019).

[17] G. Graf, "Arabische Übersetzungen", p. 193. See also idem, *Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur*, vol. 2: *Die Schriftsteller bis zur Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Studi e Testi, 133 (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1948), pp. 380-384. The text was edited in al-Qummuṣ Armāniyūs Ḥabašī Šattā Birmāwī (ed.), *Tafsīr Sifr ar-Ruʾyā li-l-Qiddīs Yuḥannā l-Lāhūtī li-Bn Kātib Qayṣar* (Cairo: n.p., 1939). An English translation of Revelation 1–3 was recently published in Stephen J. Davis, T.C. Schmidt, and Shawqi Talia, *Revelation 1–3 in Christian Arabic Commentary: John's First Vision and the Letters to the Seven Churches* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2019).

[18] G. Graf, "Arabische Übersetzungen", pp. 192-193.

[19] George William Horner (ed.), *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect Otherwise Called Memphitic and Bohairic with Introduction, Critical Apparatus, and Literal English Translation*, vol. 4: *The Catholic Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles Edited from Ms. Oriental 424: The Apocalypse Edited from Ms. Curzon 128 in the*

Bohairic Version[20]	Recto	lines

[4:5][...] ⲚⲈⲘ ⳍⲀⲚⲤⲘⲎ ⲚⲈⲘ ⳍⲀⲚⲂⲀⲢⲀⲂⲀⲒ·
ⲞⲨⲞⳍ Ⲍ̄ Ⲛ̄ⲖⲀⲘⲠⲀⲤ Ⲛ̄ⲬⲢⲰⲘ [...]

[...]اصوات ورعد وسَبع مصَابيح نَ[ـار ...] [4:5] 1

[...] ⲠⲒⲌ̄ Ⲙ̄ⲠⲚ̄Ⲁ̄ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲈ ⲫ̄ϯ ⲠⲈ· [6]ⲞⲨⲞⳍ
ⲈϤⲬⲎ Ⲙ̄ⲠⲈⲘⲐⲞ [...]

[...] السَبعه ارواح اللّه [6]وقدام [...] 2

[...] Ⲙ̄ⲂⲀⲬⲎⲒⲚⲒ ⲈϤⲞⲚⲒ ⲚⲞⲨⲬⲢⲒⲤⲦⲀⲖⲞⲤ·
ⲞⲨⲞⳍ ϦⲈⲚ ⲐⲘⲎϯ Ⲙ̄ⲠⲒⲐⲢⲞⲚⲞⲤ [...]

[... ز]جاج يشبه الجليد وفى وسَط ال[كرسى ...] 3

[...] Ⲛ̄ⲌⲰⲞⲚ ⲈⲨⲘⲈⳍ Ⲙ̄ⲂⲀⲖ· ⳍⲒⲦⳍ ⲚⲈⲘ
ⳍⲒⲫⲀⳍⲞⲨ· [7]ⲞⲨⲞⳍ [...]

[...] مىتلاب عيون من قدام وخلف [7]و[...] 4

[...] ⲚⲞⲨⲘⲞⲨⲒ· ⲞⲨⲞⳍ ⲠⲒⲌⲰⲞⲚ Ⲙ̄ⲘⲀⳍⲂ̄·
ⲈϤⲞⲚⲒ ⲚⲞⲨⲘⲀⲤⲒ [...]

[... الس]بع والحيوان الثانى يشبه الـ[ـثور...] 5

[...] ⲈϤⲞⲚⲒ Ⲙ̄ⲠⳍⲞ ⲚⲞⲨϢⲎⲢⲒ Ⲛ̄ⲢⲰⲘⲒ·
ⲞⲨⲞⳍ ⲠⲒⲌⲰⲞⲚ Ⲙ̄ⲘⲀⳍⲖ̄ [...]

[... وجـ]ـه ابن الانسان والحيوان [...] 6

Bohairic Version[21]	Verso	lines

[9][...] Ⲙ̄ⲫⲎ ⲈⲦⳍⲈⲘⲤⲒ ⳍⲒⲭⲈⲚ ⲠⲒⲐⲢⲞⲚⲞⲤ
ⲫⲎ ⲈⲦⲞⲚϦ ϢⲀⲈⲚⲈⳍ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲈ ⲠⲒⲈⲚⲈⳍ [...]

[9][...الجـ]ـالس على الكرسى الحى الى   ابد الابدن 1
                                    [...]

[10][...] ⲠⲒⲔ̄Ⲁ̄ Ⲙ̄ⲠⲢⲈⲤⲂⲨⲦⲈⲢⲞⲤ   ⲞⲨⲞⳍ
ϢⲀⲨⲞⲨⲰϢⲦ Ⲙ̄ⲠⲈⲘⲐⲞ [...]

[10][... الار]بعه وعشرن كاهنا ويسجدون امام [...] 2

Care of the British Museum (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905). The manuscript employed by Horner for the edition of Revelation is MS London, British Library, Or. 8773 = Curzon 128, which is a bilingual Coptic-Arabic manuscript, dated 1037 AM = 1320 CE, and, hence, roughly contemporary to the Leiden manuscript used by Erpenius. On this manuscript, see Bentley Layton, *Catalogue of the Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired Since the Year 1906* (London: The British Library, 1987), pp. 321-322. Using Horner's edition is, of course, not meant to suggest that the text of Arab[Copt]1 is directly based on the Bohairic text found in this manuscript.

20   Horner, *The Coptic Version*, pp. 470 and 472.
21   Horner, *The Coptic Version*, pp. 472 and 474.

[...] ϢⲀⲨⲬⲰ ⲚⲚⲞⲨⲬⲖⲞⲘ ⲈⲂⲢⲎⲒ ⲘⲠⲈⲘⲐⲞ ⲘⲠⲒⲐⲢⲞⲚⲞⲤ ⲈⲨⲬⲰ [...]	[...] ويـ]ـتركون اكاللهم قدام الكرسى قايلين [...]	3
[11][...] ⲚⲐⲞⲔ ⲈⲦⲈⲘⲠϢⲀ Ⲡ︤Ⲟ︦Ⲥ︥ ⲠⲈⲚⲚⲞⲨ︦ϯ ⲈϬⲒ ⲘⲠⲒⲰⲞⲨ ⲚⲈⲘ ⲠⲒⲦⲀⲒⲞ [...]	[11][...] تَستحق +أن نكون [لك] المجد + والكَرامه [...]	4
[...] ⲀⲔⲤⲰⲚⲦ Ⲛ︦ϨⲰⲂ ⲚⲒⲂⲈⲚ ⲞⲨⲞϨ ⲠⲈⲦⲈϨⲚⲀⲔ ⲀϤϢⲰⲠⲒ [...]	[...] حلف كل سى وَمَسك كـ[ـانت ...]	5
[5:1][...] ⲀⲒⲚⲀⲨ ⲤⲀⲞⲨⲒⲚⲀⲘ Ⲙ︦ⲪⲎ ⲈⲦϨⲈⲘⲤⲒ ϨⲒⲬⲈⲚ [...]	[5:1][...] راب على بمن الحالس على [...]	6

In general, this comparison corroborates Graf's estimation that Arab[Copt]1 faithfully follows the Bohairic text. We can make the following observations with regard to the translation technique:

Syntax: The common word order in Arabic verbal clauses is Verb-Subject-Object.[22] In some instances, however, the Arabic translator followed the sentence structure Subject-Verb-Object, as found in the Coptic text, e.g. recto l. 3: [...] [*za*]*ǧāǧ yušabbihu l-ǧalīd* = [...] Ⲙ︦ⲂⲀⲬⲎⲚⲒ ⲈϤⲞⲚⲒ Ⲛ︦ⲞⲨⲬⲢⲒⲤⲦⲀⲖⲞⲤ ("[...] glass resembling ice"); l. 5: *wa-l-ḥayawān aṯ-ṯānī yušabbihu aṯ[-ṯawr]* = ⲞⲨⲞϨ ⲠⲒⲌⲰⲞⲚ Ⲙ︦ⲘⲀϨⲂ︦ ⲈϤⲞⲚⲒ Ⲛ︦ⲞⲨⲘⲀⲤⲒ ("and the second creature resembles the ox"). In one case, however, this close adherence to the sentence structure of the *Vorlage* is not followed: recto l. 2 has *wa-quddām* ("and in front of"), whereas the Coptic text reads ⲞⲨⲞϨ ⲈϤⲬⲎ Ⲙ︦ⲠⲈⲘⲐⲞ ("and *there is* in front of"). The verbal expression ⲈϤⲬⲎ was probably left untranslated (cp. Erp.: *wa-raʾaytu quddām*, "and I saw in front of"). It is noteworthy that the Arabic translator has resorted to using participles where the Coptic text has relative clauses: verso l. 1 and 6: ⲪⲎ ⲈⲦϨⲈⲘⲤⲒ (lit. "that one who sits") = *al-ǧālis*; ibid.: ⲪⲎ ⲈⲦⲞⲚϦ (lit. "that one who lives") = *al-ḥayy*. In one case, the relative clause is translated by a corresponding noun: verso l. 5: ⲠⲈⲦⲈϨⲚⲀⲔ (lit. "that which You will") = *mašīʾatika*. In another case, it is translated by a verbal expression: verso l. 4: ⲚⲐⲞⲔ ⲈⲦⲈⲘⲠϢⲀ (lit. "You who are worthy") = *tastaḥiqqu*.

Tenses: The Coptic text makes use of three tenses. First, the present (II tense), which is mostly translated with imperfect, e.g. recto l. 3, 5, and 6: ⲈϤⲞⲚⲒ = *yušabbihu*. In one case, it is translated with a participle: recto l. 4: ⲈⲨⲘⲈϨ Ⲙ︦ⲂⲀⲖ = *mumtaliʾāt ʿuyūn*. Second, the tense of habitude, which is also translated with imperfect: verso l. 2: ϢⲀⲨⲞⲨⲰϢⲦ = *yasǧudūna*; l. 3: ϢⲀⲨⲬⲰ = *yatrukūna*. Third, the perfect (I tense), which is translated with the perfect: verso l. 5: ⲀⲔⲤⲰⲚⲦ = *ḫalaqta*; ⲀϤϢⲰⲠⲒ = *kānat*; l. 6: ⲀⲒⲚⲀⲨ = *raʾaytu*. Furthermore, we

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[22] The only sentence without verbal predicate is found in verse 4:5: ⲈⲦⲈ ⲠⲒⲌ︦ Ⲙ︦Ⲡ︦Ⲛ︦Ⲁ︥ Ⲛ︦ⲦⲈ Ⲫ︦ϯ ⲠⲈ ("which are the seven spirits of God"). The fragment only preserves: *as-sabʿa arwāḥ Allāh*. Erp. reads: *allatī hiya sabʿ arwāḥ Allāh*. We can assume that the existential particle ⲠⲈ was translated by the pronoun *hiya* in our fragment as well.

may observe that the circumstantial ⲉϥϫⲱ ("saying") is translated with the participle *qāyilūna* (verso l. 3).

Differences: The Arabic translation is rather literal, but not to the extreme, exhibiting a few departures from the Coptic. For instance, twice it omits prepositions: recto l. 4: *min quddām wa-ḫalf* for ϩⲓⲧϩⲏ ⲛⲉⲙ ϩⲓⲫⲁϩⲟⲩ (the second ϩⲓ- is omitted; cp. Erp.: *min quddām wa-min ḫalf*); verso l. 3 *wa-yatrukūna akālīlahum quddām al-kursī* for ϣⲁⲩⲭⲱ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲭⲗⲟⲙ ⲉⲃⲣⲏⲓ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲙⲑⲟ ⲙ̄ⲡⲓⲑⲣⲟⲛⲟⲥ (the preposition ⲉⲃⲣⲏⲓ, "downward" is omitted). In one case, however, a preposition is added: verso l. 5: *bi-mašī'atika* (*bi-* has no equivalent in the Coptic text). In some places, Arabic nouns are definite where the corresponding Coptic expressions are indefinite, e.g. recto l. 1: *ra'd* for ϩⲁⲛⲃⲁⲣⲁⲃⲁⲓ (cp. Erp.: *ru'ūd*); l. 3: *al-ǧalīd* for ⲟⲩⲭⲣⲓⲥⲧⲁⲗⲟⲥ; l. 5: [*as-sa*]*b'* for ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲩⲓ and *aṭ*[-*ṭawr*] for ⲟⲩⲙⲁⲥⲓ; l. 6: *ibn al-insān* for ⲟⲩϣⲏⲣⲓ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲓ. The greatest difference can be noticed in verse 4:11 (verso l. 4). The phrase ⲛ̄ⲑⲟⲕ ... ⲡ̄ⲟ̄ⲥ̄ ⲡⲉⲛⲛⲟⲩϯ ("You are … the Lord, our God") has no equivalent in the Arabic text. However, some corresponding expression was probably found in the part that is no longer preserved. Erp. reads: *anta r-rabb ilāhunā*, which is a literal translation of the Bohairic text.

Concluding remarks

Our fragment testifies to the interest of the Cairo Genizah community in Christian Arabic translations of the Bible, especially of New Testament books. This interest, in fact, led to the preservation of the earliest known manuscript witness (or fragment thereof) of Arab[Copt]1. This version was in use among Coptic Christians and appears in manuscripts as an independent text as well as together with the Bohairic text or Arabic commentaries. Our fragment comes from a small booklet, which was probably used for private study. It must have been used with a similar intention by its later Jewish possessor(s). If it was studied for scholarly purposes or – as Szilágyi and Vollandt have suggested with respect to other Christian Arabic Bible manuscripts in the Cairo Genizah – even for polemical purposes,[23] is hard to tell and requires further research into the Jewish reception of the New Testament, especially the Book of Revelation, in a premodern arabophone Egyptian context. As for the Christian side, it should be noted that the Book of Revelation, not part of the NT canon in

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[23] See the remarks made with respect to T-S Ar. 52.220 in F. Niessen, "New testament translations", p. 213: "the reason for a Judaeo-Arabic transcription of a Coptic-Christian lectionary has not necessarily to be found in a polemical context as if its only purpose was to provide the source or raw-material for possible Jewish anti-Christian polemics. Ruling out the merely academic interest in comparative liturgical studies, the careful handwriting of the fragment suggests that it belonged to a book or booklet used for the services on Good Friday. The reason for the existence of a Judaeo-Arabic lectionary may be found in the fact that a Jewish convert to Coptic Christianity relied on a Judaeo-Arabic version of the biblical readings for the Holy Week. The Hebrew characters with which he was more familiar, would have enabled him to follow the readings more easily than a text written in Arabic characters".

all Eastern Christian churches, did not share the fate of other translations from Bohairic, which were later often supplanted by translations made from other base-texts. The textual history of the Christian Arabic translations of Revelation still awaits detailed scrutiny. In any event, it will have to take into account the reception history of this text as well, including the reception of non-Christian communities, for which the fragment discussed here offers important testimony.

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