‘And from his side came blood and milk’: The Martyrdom of St Philotheus of Antioch in Coptic Egypt

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Thesis abstract

My thesis examines the function and development of the cult of saints in Coptic Egypt. For this purpose I focus primarily on the material provided by the texts forming the Coptic hagiographical tradition of the early Christian martyr Philotheus of Antioch, and more specifically – the *Martyrdom of St Philotheus of Antioch* (Pierpont Morgan M583). This *Martyrdom* is a reflection of a once flourishing cult which is attested in Egypt by rich textual and material evidence. This text enjoyed great popularity not only in Egypt, but also in other countries of the Christian East, since his dossier includes texts in Coptic, Georgian, Ethiopic, and Arabic.

This thesis examines the literary and historical background of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and similar hagiographical texts. It also explores the goals and concerns of the authors and editors of Coptic martyr passions and their intended audience. I am arguing that these texts were produced in order to perform multiple functions: to justify and promote the cult of a particular saint, as an educational tool, and as an important structural element of liturgical celebrations in honour of the saint.

Another aim of this work is to stress the entertainment value of such texts. I explore the sources used by Coptic hagiographers for creating such entertaining stories, as well as the methods they used to re-work certain theological concepts and make them more accessible to the audience.

The thesis begins with description of the manuscript tradition of Philotheus and a brief outline and comparison of its main versions. The second chapter discusses the place of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* in Coptic hagiography and its connection to the so-called cycles. The next two chapters explore the motifs and *topoi* characteristic of Coptic martyr passions, especially the legend of Diocletian the Persecutor and the image of Antioch as the Holy City in Coptic hagiography, as these two motifs appear in one way or another in the majority of the martyr passions. Chapter 5 is dedicated to one of the focal points in the *Martyrdom* – the miracle of resurrection and the tour of hell – and its literary and theological background. Chapter 6 discusses representations of magic and paganism in Coptic hagiography and some of the concerns of Coptic hagiographers. In the last chapter I explore the geography of the cult, its iconographic and hymnographic dimensions and the transformation of the perception of the saint; the second part of this chapter discusses the questions of performance, authorship and audience.

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Abbreviations

The abbreviations used throughout the notes and bibliography are as follows:

AB – Analecta Bollandiana (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1882 --)

ANRW – Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung (Berlin & New York: Walter de Gruyter & Co.).

ARAM – ARAM Periodical, published by ARAM Society for Syro-Mesopotamian Studies.

BHG – Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca, ed. by F. Halkin (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1957[3]).

BHO – Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis (Bruxelles: Société des Bollandistes, 1910).

BIFAO – Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale

BSAC – Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte

CE – The Coptic Encyclopedia, ed. by A. Atiya (New York, 1991).

CSCO – Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium (Louvain, 1903 --).

DOP – Dumbarton Oaks Papers

HE – Historia Ecclesiastica

HTR – Harvard Theological Review

JTS – Journal of Theological Studies

PG – Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca. Ed. by J.-P. Migne et als. (Paris, 1857-1866).

PL - Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina. Ed. by J.-P. Migne et als. (Paris, 1844-1900).

PO – Patrologia Orientalis (Paris, 1904 --).

PSBA – Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology

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Introduction

'If not through the blood of martyrs,
it is not possible to forgive the sins of the world'.[1]

When reading Coptic martyr passions one's first impression is that these texts are too bloody: blood gushes forth from the martyrs' wounds on nearly every page; the streets of the cities and courts of justice are washed in the blood of the martyrs and of those bystanders who also convert to Christ, inspired by their courage. On the other hand, the blood of the martyrs, shed for the name of Christ, is considered to be a precious treasure and has healing properties:

> Every person who was sick – in a grievous illness of any kind – took [a little] of the blood of the saints and put it upon their limbs which were sick: the blind received sight, the lame walked, the deaf received hearing, the dumb began to speak, and the lepers were cleansed...[2]

Although this attitude to the martyrs might appear a mere hagiographical convention of centuries past, it has, however, deeply penetrated all layers of the self-consciousness of Egyptian Christians and has become an integral part of their self-identification as the Church of the Martyrs. Moreover, we can see that this special veneration of martyrs by the Christians of Egypt has not only survived until our time, but is growing stronger, especially in the light of recent events in the Middle East. In an interview about the recently-produced icon of the 21 New Martyrs of Libya its creator, iconographer Tony Rezk, a Coptic artist now based in America, said:

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[1] *Martyrdom of St Philotheus*, f.78r *b*.
[2] *Martyrdom of St Shenoufe and his brethren*, cf. E.A.E. Reymonds, J.W.B. Barns, *Four Martyrdoms from the Pierpont Morgan Coptic Codices* (Oxford, 1973), p.124.

> My ultimate purpose was to honor them and the sacrifice that they made. Tertullian, a Christian apologist from the third century, before he joined a non-Orthodox Christian sect, said, "The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church." We believe that their martyrdom will help the Church grow stronger.[3]

Indeed, the idea of the blood of the martyrs as the foundation of their Church has been very important for the Egyptian Christians. The cult of martyrs played a very special role in the formation of the self-perception and mentality of the Copts: thus, Meinardus points out that 'medieval Coptic synaxaria list 184 commemorations of the martyrs and only sixty-three for the ascetics of the church'.[4] At a certain point the Egyptian Christians even claimed to be the nation that had produced the apocryphal 'first martyr' or 'protomartyr' – the youth Eudaimon[5] – who must be considered a predecessor to the officially recognised protomartyr Stephen whose story is described in the *Acts of the Apostles*. The Copts have produced a vast corpus of hagiographical texts dedicated to martyrs: first of all, passions, secondly, encomia and collections of shrine miracles.

But for a long time scholars of hagiography, starting with the famous Bollandist Delehaye,[6] rejected Coptic martyr passions for their lack of historical veracity and legendary character; many scholars were put off by the general fictitiousness or

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[3] http://www.nationalreview.com/article/414400/what-martyrdom-looks-interview (accessed 05.04.2015)

[4] For more on the perception of martyrs in Coptic spirituality see O.F.A. Meinardus, *Coptic Saints and Pilgrimages* (Cairo, 2002), pp.25-28 and A. Papaconstantinou, 'Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic "Church of the Martyrs" in Early Islamic Egypt' in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 60 (2006), pp.65-86.

[5] De Lacy O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt* (London, 1937), p. 133. O'Leary makes a remark, however, that Eudaimon 'seems to have been quite an imaginary character' and that he was not 'a very prominent figure in Egyptian hagiology'. See also Papaconstantinou, 'Historiography, Hagiography', pp.79-80.

strikingly repetitive features of these accounts.[7] Their value as historical sources was totally dismissed: for example, Clarysse insists that 'the only historical value they have is that of topography: they attest the cult of a martyr, of which only the name is historical, in a certain locality of Egypt'.[8]

The first aim of this thesis is to show that in fact these neglected texts are a critical witness to how the cults of saints developed and functioned in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt and that hagiographical writing played a central role in the formation and development of these cults. For this purpose I will use primarily the texts forming the Coptic hagiographical dossier of the early Christian martyr Philotheus of Antioch. His cult and textual tradition will be the focus of the present thesis: more specifically, it will concentrate on the *Martyrdom of St Philotheus of Antioch*, preserved in a ninth-century Coptic manuscript, belonging to the Pierpont Morgan Library collection (M583).

Although Philotheus was never as famous as some other martyrs venerated in the Coptic Church, such as, for example, George or Victor, nevertheless, his cult once flourished in Egypt as is attested by rich textual and material evidence. The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* – which has not hitherto been published[9] – provides us with an excellent opportunity to

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[6] H. Delehaye, 'Les Martyrs de l'Égypte' in *AB* 40 (1922), pp.5-154, 299-364, and idem, *Les passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Brussels, 1966).

[7] See, for example, a very dismissive description of these texts in O'Leary's work, *The Saints of Egypt,* pp.12ff.

[8] W. Clarysse, 'The Coptic Martyr Cult' in *Martyrium in Multidisciplinary Perspective: Memorial Louis Reekmans*, ed. by M. Lamberigts and P. van Deun (Leuven, 1995), p.392.

[9] Although the legend of St Philotheus sparked a certain interest among the scholars of the Christian East, especially after the publication of the Georgian version of the *Martyrdom* by Kekelidze in 1960, which was followed by two articles – one by M. van Esbroeck in 1976 and another by T. Orlandi in 1978 – the

examine the function and development of the cult of saints in Coptic Egypt: since Philotheus' tradition includes texts of various genres from various periods, it allows us to trace the changes and shifts in the formation of the discourse of the martyrdom from Late Antiquity until the Middle Ages.

On the other hand, since the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is not a completely independent or unique text, given that it belongs to a larger group of martyrologies connected with Diocletian's persecution, it can be studied in comparison with similar texts from the same period, especially with the hagiographical texts and panegyrics in honour of other Antiochene martyrs, such as Victor, Theodore the General, Theodore Anatolius, and others. It allows us to see which motifs and *topoi* were considered by the authors of these hagiographical texts to be more important or more interesting than others. Special attention will be given in this thesis to the legend of Diocletian the Persecutor and to the image of Antioch as the Holy City in Coptic hagiography, as these two motifs appear in one way or another in the majority of the martyr passions connected with the Great Persecution.

This thesis also aims to examine the goals and concerns of the authors and editors of Coptic martyr passions and their intended audience. It will be argued that these texts were produced in order to perform multiple functions: they were used as a means to

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Coptic text is still available only in the facsimile edition of 1922, cf. *Bibliothecae P. Morgan codices coptici photographice expressi* (Rome, 1922), t. XLI. However, M. Müller and S. Uljas have started a project aimed at producing the critical editions of five Coptic texts from the Pierpont Morgan Library Collection – which includes, among others, the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*. A doctoral thesis on the Coptic text of the *Martyrdom* by N. Kouremenos ('La passione copta di San Filoteo di Antiochia secondo il codice M583 di Pierpont Morgan Library a New York') was defended just a few months ago at the Pontifical Institute in Rome; unfortunately I have not been able to consult it.

justify and promote the cult of a particular saint, as an educational tool, and as an important structural element of liturgical celebrations in honour of the saint.

Another aim of this work is to stress the entertainment value of these texts: the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is not only a promotional element of cult, but also a literary composition – a well-written and elaborated composition, especially in comparison with other texts of the same genre. Attention will be given to the literary and historical backgrounds of this text and the sources used by Coptic hagiographers for creating such stories, as well as the methods they used to re-work certain theological concepts and make them more accessible to the audience.

Comparative analysis of the two main versions of the Martyrdom

The story of Philotheus enjoyed great popularity not only in Egypt, but also in other countries of the Christian East, since his dossier includes texts in Coptic, Georgian, Ethiopic and Arabic. The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* has come down to us in two main versions – Coptic and Georgian. The Coptic version of the text is richly developed and appears to be a specifically Coptic re-working of a legend of St Philotheus with special features which include many visions, deaths and resurrections, a tour of hell, a magic duel, walking statues, and talking animals – all of this taking place in the city of Antioch during the Great Persecution of Diocletian. The Georgian text of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* (probably produced earlier but surviving in a later manuscript) appears to have been based on another, shorter version of the legend, presumably Greek, possibly from Syria or Palestine, which appears to have been lost. A comparative study of the

Coptic *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and its Georgian counterpart allows us to see what has been added by the Coptic compilers and what subjects they considered to be of particular interest.

The Nature of the Source Material

Apart from the Coptic and Georgian versions of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* (their manuscript tradition will be discussed in the first chapter), there are other Coptic passions and encomia to be brought in consideration – those honouring saints who were either connected with Antioch or were believed to have been martyred during Diocletian's persecution. The majority of these texts are preserved in manuscripts dating from the eighth to eleventh centuries and are kept now in various libraries across Europe or in the large Coptic collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York. Some of them were edited and published in the first half of the last century and therefore are relatively well-known, as, for example, the *Martyrdom of St Victor*;[10] but others, like the *Martyrdom of St Phoibamon of Preht*[11] are only now being prepared for publication.

Much attention is given in this thesis to the hymnographic material pertaining to the cult of Philotheus as well as to hymns in honour of other Antiochene saints, as the hymns provide an important testimony to the later development of the stories of martyrs in the context of their cults. Some of the hymnographic collections are, in fact,

[10] It was first published by E.A. Wallis Budge, *Coptic martyrdoms etc. in the dialect of Upper Egypt* (London, 1914); later Elanskaia published another version of this text, cf. A.I. Elanskaia [А.И. Еланская], *Коптские рукописи Государственной публичной библиотеки им. Салтыкова-Щедрина* in *Палестинский Сборник* 20 (83) (Leningrad, 1969).

contemporary with the extant hagiographical collections,[12] and some are preserved in very late manuscripts[13] – this provides us with yet another opportunity to make observations on the development, longevity or impermanence of certain features of the cult of martyrs in Egypt.

Notes on transcription and translation

Wherever necessary, I quote the original Coptic text (whole sentences or smaller phrases) without transcription, but with English translation. All translations in the thesis are my own, unless indicated otherwise. I am providing English translations of the Coptic and Georgian versions of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* in the appendices to this thesis for the aid of readers.

As for transcription of the Arabic names of places and cities which appear in some chapters of this work, I mostly follow the system adapted in the *Coptic Encyclopedia*;[14] however, some place-names are quoted from books and articles as they appear in the original texts.

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[11] I would like to thank S. Uljas, who kindly allowed me to use his preliminary work on this text.
[12] For example, one of the earliest dated liturgical manuscripts (M574 of the Pierpont Morgan Library), which dates to 897/898 AD; see discussion in Chapter 2.
[13] Thus, the edition of the *Difnar* (*Antiphonarium*) of the Coptic Church is based on two eighteenth century manuscripts, cf. De Lacy O'Leary, *The Difnar (Antiphonarium) of the Coptic Church*, part I (London, 1926), foreword.
[14] *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, ed. by A. Atiya (New York, 1991).



Photo from Bulletin de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France (1898), p.331.

Chapter 1

Description of the text and of its manuscript tradition

Introduction

During excavations at the necropolis of Antinoe, an ancient city in Upper Egypt, sacked by Amr ibn al-ʻĀs in 642, many remarkable objects, such as prayer-chaplets, baskets, phials, and ivory boxes were brought to light.[1] Among these objects was a pen case which seems to have belonged to a scribe named Pamio.[2] The pen case bears two inscriptions and an image of a Christian saint who was probably Pamio's patron: this saint is depicted as a warrior, with his left hand resting on an oval-shaped shield, and his right holding a lance, the point of which is pressed into the neck of the crowned head of a serpent-like figure. The Greek inscription above the head of the saint reads: ⲁⲅⲓⲉ ⲫⲓⲗⲟⲑⲉ ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲓ ⲧⲱ ⲇⲟⲩⲗⲱ ⲥⲟⲩ ⲡⲁⲙⲓⲱ ('Saint Philotheus, help your servant Pamio'); the same name, St Philotheus, is repeated beside the image. The thirteen-line-long inscription below the image is probably an incantatory or apotropaic formula; the rhymed endings of the lines form a certain pattern.[3] Although this image might give the

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[1] A. Gayet, 'La nécropole gréco-byzantine' in *Annales du Musée Guimet*, t.XXVI, 3 (Paris, 1897), p.56-58.

[2] H. Omont describes this pen-case in much detail in *Bulletin de la Société nationale des antiquaires de France* (1898), pp.330-332.

[3] It might as well be a Gnostic litany, as Omont suggests, or one of the 'powerful utterances' or *voces magicae* used in the Coptic magical texts; on *voces magicae* in general see W.M. Brashear, 'The Greek Magical Papyri: an Introduction and Survey' in *ANRW* II 18.5, pp.3429-3438. The text of the inscription reads as follows (slashes mark the ends of lines): ⲓⲗⲗⲟⲡⲓⲑ/ ⲫⲕⲡⲟⲡⲓⲥ/ ⲙⲗⲗⲟⲡⲓⲍ/ ⲗⲗⲟⲡⲓⲡ/ ⲙⲗⲗⲟⲡⲓⲍ/ ⲓⲗⲟⲡⲓⲡ/ ⲓⲗⲗⲟⲡⲓⲍ/ ⲗⲗⲗⲟⲡⲓⲡ/ ⲗⲗⲟⲡⲓⲡ/ ⲗⲗⲗⲟⲡⲓⲍ/ ⲗⲗⲟⲡⲓⲡ/ ⲗⲗⲗⲟ/ ⲡⲓⲍ. Leclerq defines this inscription as a sample of 'Ephesian letters', cf. H. Leclerq, 'Philothée' in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie*, ed. by F. Cabrol, vol. II (Paris, 1913), col.1581. This *vox magica* has 'certain tendencies to *homoioteleuton*, *homoiarcton* and general rhyme and rhythm', as Brashear describes similar utterances, cf. Brashear, 'The

impression that this Philotheus was one of those military martyrs who were so numerous and popular in the Christian tradition[4] and especially in Egypt,[5] the account of his life, as will be shown below, reveals a story different to that of a typical military martyr. According to the textual tradition of this saint, he was a young boy from Antioch, who became a martyr for Christ at the age of thirteen.

The first part of this chapter will present a summary of the legend and discuss the differences between its two main versions, Georgian and Coptic; the second part will offer an outline of the manuscript tradition and available editions of the legend of Philotheus. The third part of the chapter will look at the hymnographic evidence of the cult of St Philotheus of Antioch.

I.1 Synopsis of the legend of St Philotheus

The story of St Philotheus is in many ways characteristic of an early Christian martyr, including the elements of childhood conversion, a pagan ruler who persecutes the

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Greek Magical Papyri', p.3431. So far I have not been able to find any correspondences to this particular *vox magica*.

[4] There are, indeed, several martyrs bearing the name Philotheus, one of them being a martyr from Samosata. Still, the image on this pen-case can almost surely be attributed to Philotheus of Antioch, which will be shown later in the section dedicated to the interaction between Philotheus and Diocletian. A. Papaconstantinou discusses the possibility of the homonyms and is also inclined to think that Philotheus depicted here is Philotheus of Antioch: 'Philothée est meme représenté en soldat sur un étui à calames trouvé à Antinoé (BoisLouvre 2006). Fait-il en conclure que ces enfants-martyrs ont été assimilés à des saints militaries? Ou penser simplement qu'il s'agit une fois de plus d'homonymes? Leur présence à côté de personnages aussi celebres fait pencher en faveur de la première hypothèse.', cf. A. Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte: des Byzantins aux Abbassides: l'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*, (Paris, 2001), p.235.

[5] On the popularity of the military martyrs as reflected by icons and frescoes in the Eastern Mediterranean in general and in medieval Egypt in particular see forthcoming work of H. Badamo, *Image and Community: Representations of Military Saints in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean*, which is so far available in the form of her PhD thesis in Art History, defended in 2011 at the University of Michigan.

martyr, and severe tortures leading to eventual death (or even two deaths in this case).[6] The two main versions of his *Martyrdom* – Georgian and Coptic – tell the audience that Philotheus was born in Antioch and was martyred under Diocletian 'in the beginning of his reign', aged only thirteen (or fifteen, according to the Coptic version).

The story of Philotheus begins with a description of his conversion and narrates how the boy, living in the city of Antioch with his wealthy parents, observes their pagan worship. Feeling unable to bring himself to worship a grass-eating calf with his parents, Philotheus starts seeking the true God and at first turns to the sun and other celestial bodies. Having been warned by the sun of the danger of idolatry, however, the boy then receives a revelation from Christ Himself. Christ announces to the boy that he will undergo martyrdom in His name and from then on Philotheus meets all arguments against Christ and unbearable tortures with unshakable faith.

According to the narrative, the boy's parents are gored to death by the calf they have been worshipping and after three days Philotheus revives them by his prayer. They are then converted to Christianity and the whole family receives baptism. Two years later the parents of Philotheus pass away and he is denounced to the emperor by some unspecified pagans or, according to the Coptic version, by the Devil himself. After preliminary interrogation Diocletian tries to force the boy to sacrifice to his gods, but Philotheus destroys the golden idol specially brought to the emperor's throne with

[6] Similar stories are, for example, those of St Pancras of Rome, who converted to Christianity during his trip to Rome at the age of fourteen, or of St Margaret (Marina) of Antioch, a fifteen-year-old martyr; both martyrs are said to have suffered around 304 AD during the reign of the emperor Diocletian. Their cults are relatively early and very wide-spread in both Western and Eastern Christian traditions.

heavenly fire. Three soldiers of Diocletian who had been sent to fetch him witnessed this miracle. They turn to Christ and by their preaching convert other soldiers to Christianity. Then, as the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* tells us, they unanimously confess their faith and are killed. After this the emperor, enraged both by their conversion and by the understandable loss of manpower, orders the boy to be flogged cruelly and then dismembered. In order to disgrace Diocletian Christ grants healing to the martyr's wounds. Angered and frenzied, Diocletian loses all hope of breaking the boy's obstinacy and orders his soldiers to spear the martyr and then burn his body. The martyr's body, left undamaged by the fire, is then taken away by the faithful and buried.

I.2 Differences between the two main versions of the Martyrdom of Philotheus

The short summary of the legend presented above is the one preserved in Georgian tradition. The Coptic version, although it coincides with the Georgian in the main points, is much longer, due to the addition of a number of episodes which are not present in the Georgian text or in the *Synaxaria* (preserved in the Arabic Coptic *Synaxarium* and Ethiopic *Book of Saints*). Apart from its length, the Coptic version has a much more fantastic character than the relatively realistic Georgian version; it captivates the reader with its epic features stressed nearly to the utmost. Miracles and visions are strongly emphasized: the story features a magic duel, demons in disguise, talking celestial bodies and animals, and even walking statues. These additional episodes (see table of episodes at the end of this chapter) which seem to be part of later development or, rather, elaboration of the story were not inserted into the narrative at

random: they perform certain functions and bring the story into compliance with the established patterns of Coptic hagiography. These episodes were also meant to enhance the entertaining and promotional value of the text, as they emphasize the power of the saint's prayer (as demonstrated by his numerous miracles) and the strength of his intercession (such as the authority to deliver the souls of the departed from the torments of hell).

The problem of the relationship between the Georgian and Coptic versions has not been fully solved so far. Kekelidze, the editor of the Georgian text, suggested that its translation into Georgian was made directly from Coptic.[7] This hypothesis was challenged by van Esbroeck, who insisted that even though some phrases and whole episodes in the Georgian text coincide verbatim with the Coptic version, 'il n'est pas possible que la rédaction conservée en géorgien dépende de la longue épopée copte'.[8] He suggested that there might have been a now lost Greek original of this legend, probably of Palestinian provenance.[9] Indeed, the Georgian text of the *Martyrdom* seems to be based on a shorter version of the same story. Since the majority of the additional episodes in the Coptic version (especially miracles, tortures and multiple deaths of the martyr) are those that are found in other Coptic passions, we may accept van Esbroeck's hypothesis that this elaboration of the original text was performed in Egypt. But it does not seem possible to identify with any certainty the language, place or date of the composition of this original legend, since we do not have enough data.

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[7] კ. კეკელიძე [K. Kekelidze], ფილეტეოსის მარტვილობა [Fileteosis martviloba] in *ეტიუდები ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორიიდან* [*Etiudebi dzveli kartuli literaturis istoriidan*], v. 6 (Tbilisi, 1960), pp.81-83.

The synaxaric versions of the story seem to follow the Coptic *Martyrdom*, although they present the events in an abbreviated form: see, for example, the theatre episode (No.25 in the table), which is compressed to a few lines in the synaxaric texts. Perhaps, due to later editorial censure both synaxaria tend to omit the most spectacular miracles and pay less attention to entertaining moments; on the whole, the fantastic events are much fewer there in comparison with the full *Martyrdom of Philotheus*. But, no matter how fantastic the character of the Coptic legend may be, it enjoyed great popularity in Egypt in the Middle Ages – the *Martyrdom* and other hagiographical works connected with Philotheus continued to be copied in different parts of Egypt for centuries, as will be shown below, and spread further through Coptic iconography and hymns.

II. Textual traditions of the legend of St Philotheus

II.1 Coptic tradition

Although the memory of this martyr is attested in liturgical and hagiographical sources in other countries of the Christian East, judging by the number of the surviving manuscripts and fragments containing accounts of his *Martyrdom*, his cult was especially flourishing in Egypt. The oldest extant fragments of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* come from Egypt and are dated by W. Crum to the 7th century. The Coptic tradition includes one complete text and nine fragments.[10]

M A complete text of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, in the Sahidic dialect, is preserved in the manuscript kept at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (M 583). So far the

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[8] M. van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheos d'Antioche' in *AB* 94, p.124.
[9] Ibidem, p.125.

codex has only been published in a phototype edition of 1922,[11] however, a critical edition of the text is being prepared by S. Uljas and M. Müller. It was found in 1910 at the site of the monastery of St Michael near the present-day Hamouli (Fayoum). The manuscript was written and illuminated by the priest Epima for the monastery of the Archangel Michael in Sôpehes.

The parchment codex is a synaxarium for the months from Toth to Tubeh and it contains different texts, mainly the lives of saints, but also some homiletic works; the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* takes folia 75r *b* to 102 v *a*. The copying of the manuscript was finished on the 8th of February 848 according to the colophon.[12] Orlandi suggests that the manuscript consists of two codices which were bound together at an early stage;[13] in any case, both parts are written by the same hand. The contents of the manuscript include:[14]

1. *Encomium on Archangel Gabriel* by Archelaus of Neapolis;
2. *Martyrdom of Psote*;
3. *Encomium on St John the Baptist* by Theodosius of Alexandria;
4. *Martyrdom of Theodore Anatolius, Leontius the Arab, and Panigerus the Persian*;
5. *Martyrdom of Philotheus of Antioch*;

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[10] In the description which follows I adhere to the order used by T. Orlandi, 'Il «dossier copto» di San Filoteo d' Antiochia' in *AB* 96 (1978), pp.117-120.

[11] *Bibliothecae P. Morgan codices coptici photographice expressi* (Rome, 1922), t. XLI, pp.149-204.

[12] A. van Lantschoot, *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d'Égypte,* I, 1 (Louvain, 1929), n. V, pp.10-12.

[13] T. Orlandi, *Il dossier copto del martire Psote* (Milano, 1978), p.10.

[14] For a more detailed description of the codicological characteristics, contents and conservation state of this manuscript see L. Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Leuven, 1993), № 164, pp.325-332.

6. *Martyrdom of Shenoufe and his brethren*;
7. *Homily on the Virgin Mary* by Cyril of Jerusalem;
8. *Life of Hilaria* by Pambo of Scetis;
9. *Martyrdom of Apaioule and Pteleme*.

The *Martyrdoms* in this codex are gathered on the basis of the calendar: thus, Stt Theodore the Eastern, Leontius, Panigerus, Philotheus, Apaioule and Pteleme are all commemorated in month Tubeh. The Dormition of the Mother of God is also celebrated in Tubeh.

The manuscript is decorated (presumably, by the same scribe Epima who copied it): it has a number of ornamental paragraph marks, there are also drawings of birds, gazelles, lions, rabbits, and an ox; it also has 'eleven human portrait figures – nine of which are marginal drawings accompanying the text of a Life of St. John the Baptist'.[15]

F1 A leaf fragment from a papyrus codex, in the Sahidic dialect, corresponds to ff.75r *b* l.25 – 76r *b* l.13 of **M**.; also in the Pierpont Morgan collection. This fragment was edited and translated into English by W.E. Crum.[16] It is said to have been brought to a dealer in Luxor from Hū, ancient Diospolis Parva, according to A.H. Sayce, and then purchased by Lord Amhurst in 1906. Later, in 1912, it was purchased by Pierpont Morgan.[17] This

[15] T. Petersen, 'The Paragraph Mark in Coptic Ornament' in *Studies in Art and Literature for Belle da Costa Greene*, ed. by D. Miner (Princeton, 1954), pp.313-314.
[16] W.E. Crum, *Theological Texts from Coptic Papyri* (Oxford, 1913), No. 16, pp.68-70.
[17] See also Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, № 134, pp.267-268.

fragment was dated by Crum to the 7th century on the grounds of palaeography; however, he admitted that this dating was not secure.[18]

F2 Two fragments from two leaves of a papyrus codex, in the Sahidic dialect. These fragments are not successive. They correspond to ff. 95v *b* l.2–96r *b* l.2 and ff.98v *a* l.2–99r *a* l.6 of **M**. At present these fragments are kept at the Pierpont Morgan Library (C17),[19] and were edited and translated into English by W.E. Crum.[20] As with the previous fragment, no secure dating exists; Crum dated both F1 and F2 to the seventh century.[21]

F3 Three fragments from a papyrus codex, in the Sahidic dialect, from the Des Rivières-Kennard collection. At present they are kept at the British Library (Or 7561, nn. 123, 124, 125, 126). They partly correspond to: 1) no. 126 to f.80r of **M**; 2) no. 125 to 81v *b*-82r *a*; 3) no. 124 to 87v; 4) no.123 to 91r *b* – 91v *a*. These fragments date to the 8th century.[22]

F4 A fragment of a parchment codex in the Fayoumic dialect, corresponding to ff.96v *a* l.4 - 97v *b* l.24 of **M**. Edited and translated by H. Munier in 1916,[23] and then re-edited by S.-P. Girard in 1923.[24] This fragment is kept in the collection of the Pierpont Morgan

[18] Crum, *Theological Texts*, preface.
[19] Depuydt, op.cit., p.268.
[20] Crum, *Theological Texts*, No. 17, p.70-73.
[21] See n.18 above.
[22] See description in B. Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic literary manuscripts in the British Library acquired since the year 1906* (London, 1987), pp. 201-203, No 165.
[23] H. Munier, 'Un passage nouveau du martyre de Saint Philothée' in *Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 16 (1916), pp.247-252.
[24] L. Saint-Paul Girard, 'Un fragment fayoumique du martyre de Saint Philothée' in *BIFAO* 22 (1923), pp.105-113.

Library (Ms 3823), originally from the Coptic Museum in Cairo (see description in Depuydt, pp.638-639).

F5 Two complete leaves from a paper codex in the Sahidic dialect, of unknown origin, corresponding to pages ff.100r *b* l.3 – 100v *a* l.4 and ff.101v *a* l.29 – 102r *a* l.6 of **M**. At present they are kept in the British Museum Collection (Or 1241, 1, Crum's Catalogue, n. 330[25]). Edited and translated into Russian by A. Rogozhina.[26] Original pagination is ⲣⲗⲍ–ⲣⲗⲏ, ⲣⲙⲍ–ⲣⲙⲏ. The manuscript dates to the 11th century.[27]

F6 Two complete leaves from a codex in the Sahidic dialect, found at the monastery of Al-Baramūs in Wādi 'n-Natrūn in 1928. These fragments correspond to f.91v *a* l.17 – f.92r *b* l.19 of **M**. They are at present kept at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, and were edited and translated into English by Yassā 'Abd al-Masih,[28] who suggested that this codex dates to the 11th century.

F7 A fragment of a codex in the Sahidic dialect, edited and translated into German by W. Till.[29] This piece corresponds to f.95v *a* l.25 – f.96r *a* l.6 of **M**. Originating probably from the library of the White Monastery, this fragment is now kept at the Austrian National Library (cod. Wien K 9501). The fragment is dated to the 11th century.

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[25] W.E. Crum, *Catalogue of the Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London, 1905), pp.150-151.

[26] А.А. Рогожина [A.A. Rogozhina], 'Коптские фрагменты «Мученичества св. Филофея Антиохийского» из собрания Британского музея' in *Литературные традиции христианского Египта* (Moscow, 2008), pp.9-21.

[27] Orlandi suggests that **F5** and **F6** are probably parts of the same codex, cf. Orlandi, 'Il «dossier copto»', p.119.

[28] Y. 'Abd al-Masih, 'A Sa'idic Fragment of the Martyrdom of St. Philotheus' in *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 4 (1938), pp.584-590.

[29] W. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Martyrerlegenden,* vol. I (Rome, 1935), pp.1-2.

F8 Three leaves of a palimpsest codex from the library of the White Monastery, in the Sahidic dialect. At present they are kept at the Vatican Library (Borgiano Copto 109, fasc. 73, Cat. Zoega n. LXXIII), edited and translated into Latin by G. Balestri.[30] The upper layer contains the text of John's Gospel. The lower layer of the codex contains different texts: the first leaf of the codex is a part of a homily on creation; the second leaf contains an account of the miracles of St Philotheus. The original pagination is ⲓⲑ–ⲕ; the third leaf provides a story of the emperor Julian's death, the fourth leaf is illegible and the fifth contains another portion of the account of the miracles of St Philotheus. The sixth leaf, containing the *kidan* from the *Martyrdom* (see discussion of *kidan* in Chapter 7), roughly corresponds to f.99v of **M**. The part of the lower layer, dedicated to St Philotheus, probably dates to the ninth century.

F9 Three leaves of a palimpsest codex, in the Sahidic dialect with a mixture of Fayoumic, edited and translated into French by J. Vergote.[31] At present these fragments are kept at the Berlin State Museum (9755). The recto side of the first leaf contains the ending of the *Martyrdom of Colluthus*, and the verso side – the title of the story and two brief fragments of a panegyric to St Philotheus ascribed to bishop Demetrius (Demetrianus) of Antioch.[32] The original pagination is ⳍ–Ⳏⲁ. Leaves 2 and 3 contain parts of the account

[30] G. Balestri, 'Di un frammento palimpsesto copto-saidico del Museo Borgiano' in *Bessarione* ser. II, 4 (1902-1903), pp.61-69.

[31] J. Vergote, 'Le texte sous-jacent du palimpseste Berlin nº 9755' in *Le Muséon* 42 (1955), pp.275-296.

[32] Demetrius of Antioch is a fictitious figure, most probably invented by the anonymous creators of the Coptic Cycles. Demetrius is said to be the author of two homilies and two hagiographical texts – the aforementioned panegyric to St Philotheus and *Miracula Victoris (Miracles of Victor)*, which survived only in the Ethiopian translation. The fragments of the panegyric to St Philotheus give a strong impression of being modelled on the analogous *Miracula Colluthi (Miracles of Colluthus)*, with whom Philotheus is sometimes mixed. Cf. T. Orlandi, 'Demetrius of Antioch' in *CE* 3, pp.893-894.

of other miracles by St Philotheus; the original pagination is ⲛ–ⲛⲁ, ⳉⲇ–ⳉⲉ. The palaeographic features suggest that this fragment dates to the 9th century.

Although some scholars suggested that Philotheus was venerated in Egypt already in the fourth century,[33] there are no manuscripts or inscriptions that would prove this statement. The earliest extant manuscript fragments date to the seventh century; the pen case from Antinoe is probably of the same period (van Esbroek, though, conjectures that the owner of the pen case 'very probably transcribed the Passion in the fifth or sixth century'[34]). Another claim that Philotheus' commemoration was mentioned in one of the Oxyrhynchus Papyri (POxy XI 1357), dated to the 535-536,[35] – a restitution, introduced by the first editors of the text in 1915[36] and then repeated by later scholars[37] – was refuted by A. Papaconstantinou in her re-edition and commentary on this source.[38] However, there is solid evidence that in the seventh century the cult was

[33] M. van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheus of Antioch' in *CE* 6, p.1961 and in 'Saint Philotheos d'Antioche' in *AB* 94, p.121, suggests that a certain fibula of the fourth century and a jewel from the third to the fourth century, on which the saint is portrayed on horseback, actually depict St Philotheus of Antioch piercing a dragon with his spear. These images, however, cannot be securely attributed to St Philotheus as there are no names inscribed on them, but might rather be attributed to other martyrs, far more popular as dragon-slayers – for example, St Theodore or St George, since this iconography is more characteristic for him; for more on the images of St George see J.B. Aufhauser, *Das Drachenwunder des heiligen George in der griechischen und lateinischen Überlieferung* (Leipzig, 1911).

[34] Van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheus of Antioch', p.1961.

[35] J.-M. Sauget, 'Filoteo di Antiochia' in *Bibliotheca Sanctorum* (Rome, 1998), p.807.

[36] B.P. Grenfell, A.S. Hunt, *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, XI (London, 1915), pp. 19-43.

[37] H. Delehaye, *'Le calendrier* d'Oxyrhynque pour l'année 535- 536' in *AB* 42 (1924), pp.83-99.

[38] 'Il n'y a aucune raison d'attribuer à la fête de Philothée la synaxe qui a lieu le 16 tybi à l'église de Phoibammon comme le font les éditeurs. Cette date est, certes, celle à laquelle le synaxaire arabe commémore ce saint (*PO* 11, 1916, p. 601-604), mais elle n'est pas attestée à la haute époque'. Cf. A. Papaconstantinou, 'La liturgie stationale à Oxyrhynchos dans la première moitié du 6e siècle. Réédition et commentaire du POxy XI 1357' in *Revue des études byzantines* 54 (1996), p.147.

already well established and there were shrines dedicated to Philotheus in Upper Egypt, as is witnessed by papyri and ostraka.[39]

II.2 Georgian tradition

1. The Georgian version of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is somewhat unique as there are no other manuscripts or versions of this text in Georgian hagiography, apart from some hymns in honour of St Philotheus which are described below. The text was edited and published by K. Kekelidze.[40] R. Blake, who found the manuscript in the Patriarchal library of Jerusalem, assigned number 20 to it.[41] The manuscript dates to the second half of the 11th century. It contains *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* of John Climacus, a homily of Pseudo-Basil on the Dormition of the Mother of God, and the Martyrdoms of St Abdalmasih, of St Charalampius and of St Philotheus. The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* (*წამება წმიდისა და ნეტარისა ფილეთეოსისა*) is on ff. 284r –293v.

2. An entry in the Palestinian Georgian calendar of John Zosimos (10th century).[42]

II.3 Copto-Arabic tradition

1. A panegyric (encomium) dedicated to the transfer of the relics of St Philotheus to a church consecrated in his name in Antioch, the Syriac text for which, now most likely

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[39] Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte*, pp.202-203.

[40] კ. კეკელიძე [K. Kekelidze], ფილეტეოსის მარტვილობა [Fileteosis martviloba] in *ეტიუდები ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორიიდან* [*Etiudebi dzveli kartuli literaturis istoriidan*], v. 6 (Tbilisi, 1960), pp.81–102.

[41] R.P. Blake, *Catalogue des manuscrits géorgiens de la Bibliothèque patriarcale à Jérusalem I* (Paris, 1924-1926), p.52-53.

[42] G. Garitte, *Le calendrier palestino-géorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (X siècle),* (Bruxelles, 1958), p.44, see entry under the 12th of January.

lost, is ascribed to Severus of Antioch.[43] It has been recently published and translated into English by Y. Youssef.[44] This encomium is preserved in three different manuscripts, one of which, the seventeenth century manuscript kept at Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris (ms. Paris, *arabe* 153, 243b)[45], is in a very poor condition. The other two manuscripts – one from the Coptic Museum of Cairo and another from the collection of St Macarius monastery in Wadi Natrun, described below – were used for this publication. This encomium is not listed among the homilies securely attributed to Severus, but the Copto-Arabic tradition ascribes to him several encomia to various saints: such as St Leontius of Tripoli, Archangel Michael, St Claudius and St Philotheus of Antioch and St George. Both encomia dedicated to the Antiochian saints – Philotheus and Claudius[46] – follow the same model and both represent Severus as an eye-witness of the miracles accompanying the discovery of the saints' relics. If this panegyric were indeed composed by Severus of Antioch who died in 538, the cult of St Philotheus might then be attested in the first half of the sixth century; however, this is hardly possible.

2. A complete text of an *Encomium* in honour of Philotheus ascribed to Acacius of Caesarea, preserved in the sixteenth century manuscript (Hag. 34) in the library of the monastery of Abu Maqar (St Macarius), still unedited. This encomium, as U. Zanetti indicates, includes twelve miracles performed by St Philotheus. The manuscript is a composite codex, the first part of which, dated by 1547 AD, is dedicated entirely to

[43] Arabic manuscript Hist. 470, fol. 144–153, Coptic Museum in Cairo.
[44] Y.N. Youssef, 'The Encomium of St. Philotheus ascribed to Severus of Antioch' in *Coptica* I (2002), pp.169-221.
[45] G. Troupeau, *Catalogue des Manuscits Arabes* (Paris, 1972), t. I, pp.123-127.
[46] G. Godron, 'Textes coptes relatifs à saint Claude d'Antioche' in *PO* 35/4 (Turnhout, 1970), pp.486-507.

Philotheus (it includes also some hymns, the so-called *turuhat*, in his honour); the second part, dated approximately to the seventeenth-eighteenth centuries, contains lessons and homilies related to the Holy Week, various lives of saints and homiletic works.[47] The first part of the codex also contains complete Arabic version of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* in the same manuscript, which seems to correspond to the Coptic **M** and a panegyric ascribed to Severus of Antioch.[48]

3. A complete Arabic text of the *Martyrdom* in another sixteenth century manuscript (Hag.46) from the same library; the codex is a hagiographical miscellany.[49]

4. A manuscript of the Coptic Museum in Cairo Hist. 480, which contains the short account of the martyrdom, still unedited.[50]

6. An account of the life of St Philotheus (Faltaus) in the Arabic Coptic synaxarium under the 16th of month Tubeh.[51]

II.4 Ethiopic and Syriac traditions

In Ethiopic:

1. The account of the life and *Martyrdom of St Philotheus*, nearly identical to the account in the Arabic Coptic synaxarium, is placed under the 16th of Ṭer (24th of January) in the Ethiopic synaxarium, which was partially translated into English by E.A. Wallis

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[47] U. Zanetti, *Les manuscripts de Dair Abû Maqâr: inventaire* (Genève, 1986), No.400, p.59.
[48] Ibidem.
[49] Ibidem, No. 412, p.63.
[50] Arabic manuscript Hist. 480, fol. 60-71 – an excerpt can be found in Y. 'Abd al-Masih, 'A Sa'idic Fragment of the Martyrdom of St. Philotheus', cf. also G. Graf, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes chrétiens conservés au Caire* (Vatican, 1934), p.283.
[51] R. Basset, 'Le synaxaire arabe jacobite (rédaction copte)' in *PO* 11 (Paris, 1915), p.601-604.

Budge.[52] For his publication Budge used the manuscript kept at the British Library (Or.660).

In Syriac:

1. St Philotheus' memory is placed in the Syriac Jacobite calendar under the 11th of January; however, his companions are not mentioned at all.[53]

III. The hymnographic tradition

III.1 Coptic hymns

Coptic hymnographic tradition of St Philotheus is relatively late in comparison with the extant manuscripts and fragments of his passion. It comprises a number of liturgical hymns in the Bohairic dialect, preserved in various liturgical collections. Three of these hymns were published by O'Leary in his edition of the *Difnar* (see discussion of the contents of these hymns in Chapter 7). A few decades later Y. 'Abd al-Masih published the incipits and explicits of some edited and unedited Bohairic doxologies[54] amongst which one finds a number different hymns in honour of Philotheus;[55] however, the incipits of the hymns do not provide enough information on their contents. The following list of Coptic hymns dedicated to Philotheus is not comprehensive and needs revision:

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[52] E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church*, t. 2 (Cambridge, 1928), pp.501-508, under 16 Ṭer (11th of January). There are also separate entries for the companions of St Philotheus, p.504 and 507-508.

[53] F. Nau, 'Un martyrologe et douze ménologes syriaques' in *PO* 10/1 (1915), p.117 and 70.

[54] Y. 'Abd-al-Masih, 'Doxologies in the Coptic Church. Edited Bohairic Doxologies' in *BSAC* 6 (1940), pp.19-76; see also his articles on doxologies in *BSAC* 8 (1942), pp.31-61, and *BSAC* 11 (1947), pp.95-158.

[55] 'Abd-al-Masih, 'Doxologies in the Coptic Church' in *BSAC* 6, p.70; see also references in n. 59 below.

1. Two Bohairic hymns in honour of St Philotheus in the *Difnar* (*Antiphonarium*) of the Coptic Church under the 16th of month Tubeh.[56]

2. A different hymn from another manuscript containing the same antiphonarium; O'Leary defines this hymn as an 'additional' hymn to St Philotheus.[57]

3. Two hymns ('turuhat') in honour of St. Philotheus, still unedited, in Ms.No.Lit.321 of the Coptic Museum in Cairo.[58]

4. A different hymn (in 'Adam' mode) in the Bohairic dialect from a Copto-Arabic manuscript, found at the church of the Virgin Mary at-Hārat az-Zuwaileh, № 90, published in 1922 in Egypt.[59]

5. Another hymn (in 'Batos' mode) in a manuscript from the same church (№89), dated 13 Hatūr A.M. 1539, still unedited.[60]

6. A number of doxologies dedicated to Philotheus was described by Yassā 'Abd al-Masih in his edition of some late Bohairic liturgical manuscripts.[61] He published the incipits and explicits of these hymns which show that these hymns differ from those in the *Difnar*.[62]

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[56] De Lacy O'Leary, *The Difnar (Antiphonarium) of the Coptic Church*, part II (London, 1926), pp.16-17.
[57] Ibidem, p.114.
[58] 'Abd al-Masih, 'A Sa'idic Fragment', p.585. Unfortunately, the author did not provide much information on this edition.
[59] Ibidem.
[60] Ibidem.
[61] For descriptions of the manuscripts used for the edition see 'Abd-al-Masih, 'Doxologies in the Coptic Church (Unedited Bohairic Doxologies I)' in *BSAC* 8 (1942), pp.32-33.
[62] 'Abd-al-Masih, 'Doxologies in the Coptic Church (Unedited Bohairic Doxologies II)' in BSAC 11 (1947), pp.98-99.

III. 2 Georgian hymns

The Georgian hymnographic tradition of Philotheus is represented by two canons preserved in four different manuscripts:

1. A full canon, edited by K. Kekelidze, from *Iadgari* (*იადგარი*) of Michael Modrekili, dating from 978-988.[63] Kekelidze based his edition of the canon on this manuscript (ff.193-196).[64] The text of the canon is accompanied by archaic musical notation. Remarkably, this canon has all nine odes and begins with a kondakion. This canon was later translated into French by M. van Esbroek, who argued that this hymnographic composition, judging by its contents, was in fact written for a different saint and might be a combination of two unrelated hymns.[65]

2. A different canon (eight odes) in honour of St Philotheus in two Sinaitic Menaia, dating to the 10th century (mss Sin. 59 and 64), still unedited.[66]

3. The same canon to be found in the Dumbarton Oaks Menaion, copied by Ioane Dvali for Georgios Prochoras in the 11th century (ff. 213-216), also unedited.[67]

Conclusions

This introductory chapter presented a short summary of the legend of St Philotheus of Antioch and discussed the differences between its main versions, Coptic and Georgian.

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[63] For a more detailed description of this manuscript cf. *ქართულ ჰელნაწერთა აღწერილობა* [*K'art'ul helnacert'a agceriloba*], ed. by E. Metreveli and T. Bregadze, v. 1 (Tbilisi, 1959), pp.544-567.

[64] Kekelidze, op.cit., pp.98–102.

[65] Van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheos d'Antioche', pp.107-135.

[66] N.I. Marr [Н.Я. Марр], *Описание грузинских рукописей Синайского Монастыря* (Moscow, 1940), pp.100, 136.

It has been argued that the additional episodes in the Coptic version are mainly those that relate miracles, visions and other entertaining units, characteristic of later stages of Coptic hagiographical production. Thus, it appears that the Georgian text, although it is preserved in a slightly later manuscript, represents the earlier version of the legend.

The second part of this chapter looked at the manuscript tradition of the legend and of its wider cultic development (encomia and hymns) in Egypt and other countries of the Christian East in the Middle Ages. The cult of Philotheus spread from Egypt to Ethiopia and made its way into Syriac Jacobite tradition. It also appears in Georgian manuscripts of Palestinian and Sinaitic origin, but does not feature in manuscripts originating from Georgia.

It is rather striking that, despite the great popularity of his cult witnessed by this substantial textual evidence, the name of Philotheus has never made it into the lists of saints of other Eastern Orthodox Churches – perhaps, due to the fact that no Greek version of his passion has been preserved. The death of St Philotheus is still commemorated only by the Coptic Church on the 16th day of the month of Tubeh or Tobi (11th of January),[68] by the Ethiopian Church on the 16th of Ter (24th of January) and by the Georgian Church on the 12th of January.[69]

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[67] G. Garitte, 'Le ménée géorgien de Dumbarton Oaks' in *Le Muséon* 77 (1964), pp.29-64.

[68] S. Spassky, however, notices two separate commemorations of St Philotheus in the Coptic menologia of 1338 and 1425 under January 10th and 11th respectively, cf. Архиеп. Сергий (Спасский) [Archb. Sergiy (Spassky)], *Полный месяцеслов Востока* (Moscow, 1901), v. 1, p.641.

[69] Kekelidze, op.cit., p.93. See also van Esbroeck's commentary on this change of the feast day of St Philotheus in 'Saint Philotheos d'Antioche', pp.130-133.

Table of episodes

Episode synopsis	Coptic Martyrdom	Georgian Martyrdom	Arabic Coptic Synaxarium (Ethiopic Synaxarium mostly coincides)
1. Description of the calf and the parents' worship, parents encourage the boy to worship the calf	f.75v The calf is an animal named Smarakdos. Lengthy description of the rituals of the calf worship.	Ch.1 The calf is an animal named T'ot'i the Glorious (T'ot'i patiosani).	The bull is either an animal or a statue made of topaz.
2. Description of the boy's appearance and wisdom	f.75v *b* – 76r The boy is compared to Joseph.	Ch. 1 The boy is compared to Joseph.	Very short description
3. The boy seeks for true God and speaks with the Sun	f.76v *b* – 77r Lengthy conversation between the boy and the Sun	Ch. 2 A shorter conversation between the boy and the Sun	A short conversation
4. Vision of the Archangel Michael/ an angel of God	f.77r *b* Archangel Michael raises the boy and brings him to the Christ's chariot	Ch. 2 An angel of God raises the boy from sleep and he sees Christ on the throne	An angel is sent from God to enlighten and instruct the boy about divine incarnation
5. Christ appears to Philotheus on the chariot of Cherubim	f.77v *a* – 78r *b* Christ promises Philotheus to support him in his witness and to give him power to perform miracles	Ch. 2 The angel tells the boy of the conversion of his parents, his martyrdom and miracles	-
6. The boy leads ascetic life	f.78v *a-b* The boy begins strict fasting. He says 300 prayers per day and per night.	Ch. 3 Very short description of the boy's fasting and almsgiving.	Very short description of the boy's fasting and almsgiving

7. The parents insist on the boy's participation in their worship	f.79r – 80r *a* The parents try to convince Philotheus to offer a sacrifice, promising to organise a great feast	-	The parents decide to give a feast and require their son to offer a sacrifice.
8. Conversation between Philotheus and the calf	f.80r b – 81r a A lengthy conversation in which the calf tells its story and mentions the dragon who instructed him in haughtiness.	-	A voice comes from the bull saying that he is not God, but the Satan had entered him.
9. The calf kills the parents of Philotheus	f.81r The boy gives Smaragdos permission to attack his parents.	Ch. 3 The boy prays, asking to show mercy to his parents. The calf gores them to death.	Very short description of the calf's attack. No prayer or permission preceding.
10. Resurrection of the parents	f.81v On the fourth day the boy utters a prayer; the parents, Valentios and Theodoti, arise with fear and trembling. Their bodies smell of death.	Ch.3 After the boy's prayer his parents, Ivlintian and Theodotia, come back to life and are in great awe.	God gives grace to the saint; he prays and the parents come back to life. Short mention of the punishments of hell.
11. A tour of hell	ff.82r-83v Long and detailed description of the punishments of hell, followed by rescue	-	-
12. Conversion and baptism; peaceful death of the parents	f.84r Philotheus finds a priest, brings him to the house, and the family is baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. Two years later the parents die peacefully.	Ch. 3 The priest baptizes them in a church at night in the name of the Holy Trinity. Two years later the parents die 'in firm faith'.	Philotheus and his parents are baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. The death of the parents is not mentioned.
13. Philotheus performs miracles	ff.84 r-v Detailed descriptions of miracles and healings.	Ch.3 'And the blessed Philotheus was performing miracles and many wonders'.	'And God gave him grace and power; he began to heal illnesses by his prayers'.

14. Devil appears in disguise of an angel; Philotheus recognizes and overcomes him	f.84v - f.86r A very detailed story of Philotheus' battle with the devil; the devil changes his appearance (an angel, a bull, and a sparrow).	-	-
15. Philotheus is reported to Diocletian; his arrest by the three generals	f.86v-f.87r The devil, disguised as a court dignitary, reports Philotheus. Three generals and 900 soldiers are dispatched to arrest him; they are impressed by his holiness.	Ch.4 The boy is denounced by some 'idolaters'. Three soldiers are sent to fetch him.	The emperor sent for him. No mention of the generals.
16. First encounter of Philotheus and Diocletian	f.87v – f.89r Diocletian admires the boy and tries to persuade him to offer sacrifice. Lengthy discussion of the nature of Christian faith and pagan worship between the protagonists.	Ch. 4 Diocletian and Philotheus talk about the death of Jesus and the Holy Trinity.	Diocletian tries to persuade the boy to offer incense to Apollo.
17. Philotheus destroys the idol	f.89r – f.90r Philotheus utters a prayer and the statue of Apollo it falls on the ground. The fire from heaven destroys the statue of Apollo, leaving a lump of gold and jewels on the side.	Ch. 5 The boy shouts at the idol of Apollo and it falls on the ground. Then the heavenly fire burns down all the idols.	The boy disregards the emperors' words and knocks the statue down.
18. The court magician restores the idol	f.90r – f.90v The magician Elementas restores the destroyed idol with his magic.	-	-
19. Philotheus destroys the idol and the magician	f.90v – f.91r The boy kicks the statue and it is swallowed by the earth. The magician also falls in the abyss.	-	-

20. Conversion of the soldiers; first portion of tortures	f.91v – f.92r The three generals announce their faith. The emperor orders to scourge Philotheus and to pour vinegar on his wounds. Later heavy chains and stones are put on Philotheus; he is cast into prison.	Ch. 5 The soldiers announce their faith; the emperor orders to scourge Philotheus. Then the boy is chained and cast into prison.	No mention of the soldiers' conversion. The boy is severely scourged, but his faith is unshakable.
21. The angel heals the wounds of Philotheus.	f.92r The archangel Raphael loosens the bonds and heals all wounds.	Ch. 5 The angel of God loosens the bonds and heals the boy	-
22. Martyrdom of the three generals and their soldiers	f.92v – f.93r The three generals with their 900 soldiers threaten Diocletian with riot if he does not kill them. He orders their execution.	Ch. 6 The three soldiers convert 9.000 people and threaten Diocletian with riot if he does not kill them. He orders their execution.	-
23. Diocletian is struck by divine power	f.93v Philotheus slaps Diocletian for his blasphemy; the emperor is dumb and cannot speak. The boy heals him at the pleading of the court.	-	-
24. The second portion of tortures; the limbs of the boy are restored	f.94r – f.94v The boy is dismembered, his eyes and tongue are plucked out. His teeth are broken. Raphael fortifies him and restores all his limbs.	Ch. 7 The boy's limbs are cut off, his eyes and tongue are plucked out. After a prayer all his limbs are restored.	The tongue is plucked out; the teeth are broken. No mention of healing.
25. Theatre episode: idols march from the temple and then kill their priests	f.94v – f.97r The idol of Hercules, sent by Philotheus, summons the rest of the idols and their priest. After a conversation with the	-	Diocletian orders to bring the idols and their priests. While on the way, they are swallowed by the

on Philotheus' orders	priests the saint orders the idols to kill them.		earth.
26. Mass conversion, followed by slaughter of the converted	f.97r – f.98r Nine hundred and thirty six people are killed in the theatre.	-	Many people believed in Christ. They are all beheaded.
27. General Romanus becomes possessed; his healing	f.98r – f.98v After being healed by Philotheus, Romanus advises Diocletian on how to better finish Philotheus off.	-	-
28. Third portion of tortures and the first death of Philotheus.	f.99r Philotheus is struck with swords. His flesh is cut into pieces and then burnt; the ashes are thrown in the sea.	-	-
29. Christ revives Philotheus	f.99r Christ revives the boy and comforts him.	-	-
30. The *kidan* (solemn promise of Christ to the saint)	f.99v – f.100v Various rewards are promised to those who will invoke the name of Philotheus	-	-
31. Philotheus provokes Diocletian	f.100v – f.101r Philotheus throws stones at Diocletian and tears his crown off	-	-
32. The final prayer and execution of Philotheus	f.101v – f.102r A lengthy prayer. The two soldiers pierce the sides of Philotheus; water, blood and milk come from his sides.	Ch. 7 and 8 A lengthy prayer. The soldiers pierce the sides of Philotheus; blood and milk come from his sides.	Philotheus is beheaded. Very brief description.
33. The body of Philotheus is saved from fire and buried.	f.102v The heavenly power takes the body from the fire. The people healed by Philotheus bury his body.	Ch. 8 The angel saves his body. Later the faithful bury it with honour.	-

Chapter 2

The legend of Philotheus in the context of the Coptic martyr cycles

The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is a curious example of Coptic hagiographical production, as it presents those who study it with a number of problems: it appears, at a first glance, to belong to one of the so-called *cycles*, so typical of late Coptic hagiography, since it seems to display some of the textual markers characteristic of Coptic cycles. On the other hand, a closer reading of the *Martyrdom* reveals some specific features that might impede direct linkage between the *cycles* and the legend of Philotheus.

As for the genre affiliation of this text, it must be placed among the so-called epic passions, since it has all the characteristic features of the genre which was described by H. Delehaye in his fundamental work on hagiographic texts as an 'epic passion' (*passion épique*).[1] The first part of this chapter will discuss the conventional structure of Coptic epic passions and the main stages of their production. The second part will look at the cyclic development of Coptic hagiography and the place of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* within it.

I. Epic passions in Coptic hagiography

I.1 Main features of epic passions

Epic passions are generally distinguished by their stereotypical form – they are constructed around certain main characters in a particular way, which repeats itself

[1] H. Delehaye, *Les Passions des martyrs et les genres littéraires* (Brussels, 1966²).

almost identically in all the texts, except for minor changes in proper names or circumstances. The usual scheme employed for such a passion is as follows:

- an introduction where the name of a saint, his date of death, and the ruling emperor, who is normally called lawless and apostate, are introduced;
- an encounter of the main character with the authorities, usually preceded by the first vision of Christ or an angel, during which a blessing for future martyrdom is given;
- an interrogation, which as a rule consists of long altercations between the judge and the martyr, and is followed by a series of severe tortures and sometimes a first execution. This interrogation is interspersed with episodes describing miracles, more visions, divine support, and healing (and in a number of cases revival after the 'first death'[2]);
- minor passions inserted into the main story – during interrogation and torture there are often many spontaneous conversions or parallel trials; however, these newly converted Christians are mostly executed on the spot;[3]
- a final death (beheading is most common, but crucifixion or drowning also occur);
- burial of the martyr's body and miracles at the martyrium.

[2] O'Leary makes a sarcastic remark that 'in some cases the martyr was put to death several times in succession and raised to life after each until the last one when he is suffered to rest in peace because 'he was quite fatigued with dying', cf. De Lacy O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt* (London, 1937), p.19.
[3] G. van den Berg-Onstwedder, 'Diocletian in the Coptic Tradition' in *BSAC* 29 (1990), p.113.

The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* faithfully follows this scheme and displays all the necessary elements of an epic passion. The Georgian version of the legend also has some of these elements, including an inserted minor passion (the soldiers who were sent to arrest Philotheus later become martyrs), and tortures interspersed with miracles and healings. However, the Georgian version does not have one specifically Coptic, or rather, Egyptian, element – the first death of the martyr and his subsequent resurrection. The absence of this element might help us in assessing the possible date of the creation of the Coptic version. Let us now turn to the main arguments of the scholars of Coptic literary culture concerning the dating of martyr passions.

I.2 The problem of the dating of Coptic martyr passions

Delehaye, one of the pioneers of the analytical study of hagiography, who characterized Coptic hagiography in general as 'cette misérable littérature',[4] considered it to be born from its Greek counterpart, mainly as a result of translations from Greek.[5] This, in Delehaye's view, would place the production of the epic passions and their translation from Greek into Coptic around the late fourth or early fifth century.[6]

Delehaye's views were challenged by Baumeister in his seminal work *Martyr Invictus*, where he analyzed Coptic passions from a different perspective and successfully proved that Coptic epic passions also have some typically Egyptian features – for example, the

[4] H. Delehaye, 'Les Martyrs de l'Égypte' in *AB* 40 (1922), p.148.
[5] Delehaye, 'Les Martyrs de l'Égypte', p.152. This idea was seconded by O'Leary: 'The life and character of the Christian martyr belong to the Greek world, they have nothing in common with ancient Egypt', cf. O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, p.13.
[6] Delehaye does not specify the period of this first stage, but he proposes the fourth century ('Les Martyrs de l'Égypte', pp.152-153). Orlandi accepts his position: see Orlandi, 'Coptic Hagiography' in *CE* 4, p.1192.

so-called '*koptischer Konsens*', which includes the idea of the 'indestructible life', represented by uniform events in a great number of Coptic passions.[7] Therefore, these passions, although inspired by the Greek epic genre, were very much influenced by certain Egyptian concepts and thus should belong to a period later than the Greek passions, that is, to the period between the fifth and late seventh centuries.[8]

This view of the dating of Coptic martyr passions was partially accepted by Orlandi who tried to combine both approaches[9] in order to define the literary trends within the genre and examine their development. Orlandi rightly points out that,

> The authors of the texts did not confine themselves to narrating specific events or the activities of the specific saints; they also drew on the traditions of their literary genre as well as the mentality that produced it.[10]

The authors of these texts, therefore, were writing with specific purposes in mind and had to maintain strong coherence between the stories, even if the events described were completely imaginary – otherwise they would not have been so widely recognized and accepted. It is due to this coherence between the saints' accounts that some scholars were inclined to think that 'the majority of the passions of the martyrs connected with

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[7] Th. Baumeister, *Martyr Invictus: der Martyrer als Sinnbild der Erlösung in der Legende und im Kult der frühen koptischen Kirche* (Münster, 1972), pp.27-30, 149ff. The 'indestructible life' ('unzerstörbares Leben') pattern is as follows: the body of a martyr, no matter what and how many unbearable tortures, deadly blows and strikes, or even burnings with consequent scattering of the ashes, it might receive, will be healed and restored until the final death. Baumeister, however, was not the first scholar to notice the continuation of ancient Egyptian themes and motifs in Coptic hagiography – in 1913 E.A. Wallis Budge wrote that Egyptian Christians 'never succeeded in removing from their minds a number of religious beliefs, and eschatological notions, and mythological legends, which were the product of their pagan ancestors'; cf. E.A. Wallis Budge, 'Egyptian Mythology in Coptic Writings' in *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London, 1913), lxi.

[8] Cf. Baumeister, *Martyr Invictus*, pp.72-73.

[9] Orlandi, 'Coptic Hagiography', p.1192.

[10] Ibidem.

the persecution of Diocletian seem to be of the same period and to be the work of the same authors'.[11]

However, Orlandi's analysis of the literary development of Coptic hagiographical writings shows that the passions of the Diocletianic martyrs were in fact created at different times. Thus, some of them appear to have been composed in the late fourth century; some were written in the fifth century when the lives of monastic saints also began to be composed (e.g. *The Life of Phib* by Papohe the Steward), but the main body of texts belonging to different *cycles* was produced, as it seems, in a period between the sixth and ninth centuries. Orlandi suggests that the main redaction of the Coptic passions 'following the forms that Baumeister calls *'koptischer Konsens*' took place after the Council of Chalcedon, because the local, 'Egyptian' tradition clearly prevails in the texts of this period over the more international 'Greek' tradition. In the post-Chalcedonian period, epic passions that could be spread in an anti-Chalcedonian environment were re-worked 'with an implied argument against the official Byzantine regime, and in certain cases giving prominence to a privileged agreement between Alexandria and Antioch'.[12] The 'transposition into the Egyptian style' of some of the passions of the main foreign saints, e.g. St George or St Theodore, can also be attributed to this period. Thus, the epic genre in Coptic hagiography, in Orlandi's opinion, mostly evolved and underwent certain alterations, which conformed it to the *'koptischer Konsens'* theme, in the sixth and seventh centuries.

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[11] O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, p.19.
[12] Orlandi, 'Coptic Hagiography', p.1195.

Orlandi's views were recently challenged by Papaconstantinou,[13] who, although accepting in general his model of the development of Coptic hagiography, points out that the linear development of Coptic hagiography, as described by Orlandi, is an 'ideal model and does not go without some difficulties'. She suggests that the high period of hagiographical production in Egypt, the so-called cyclic development, took place later, not earlier than the eighth century.[14] In her other article on Coptic hagiography Papaconstantinou argues that the majority of texts were written or re-written after the Arab conquest during that period when the Egyptian miaphysite community was forming a new identity as the Church of the Martyrs.[15]

Indeed, some new elements were emphasized in Coptic hagiography in this period, such as, for example, the symbolic figure of the Egyptian 'first martyr': instead of the archdeacon Stephen who had been recognised as the protomartyr before the Arab conquest, a new character was introduced – a youth Eudaimon, a native of Upper Egypt, who is said to have suffered at the hands of pagans during the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt.[16] The legend of the 'true' Egyptian origin of Diocletian and his apostasy[17] seems to have been developed in the same period as well. Both Orlandi and Papaconstantinou speak of 'complete rewriting'[18] of the texts or 'co-option' of the main characters[19] – all

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[13] Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. Volume I: Periods and Places*, ed. by S. Efthymiadis (Farnham, 2011), pp.331-334.
[14] Ibidem, p.333.
[15] For more detailed analysis of how the ideas of persecution and suffering were reconstructed in early Islamic Egypt see A. Papaconstantinou, 'Historiography, Hagiography, and the Making of the Coptic "Church of the Martyrs" in Early Islamic Egypt' in *DOP* 60 (2006), pp.65-86.
[16] O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, p.133.
[17] See discussion in Chapter 3.
[18] Orlandi, 'Coptic Hagiography', p.1196.
[19] Papaconstantinou, 'Historiography, Hagiography', p 80.

for making more convincing and coherent the claim for the foundation of the Coptic Church on the blood of the early martyrs and underlining its independence from the imperial Church of Constantinople. It is the period when the martyr cycles reached their most standardized and literary form and were produced in considerable numbers.[20] Here the question arises: to which of these stages should the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* be dated?

The presence of the episode describing the resurrection and complete restoration of Philotheus after his first death allows us to place the *Martyrdom* among those Coptic passions that were composed in accordance with the *koptisher Konsens*. Orlandi places Philotheus' passion with other epic passions, 'which were built around saints of various provenance, each with his own peculiarities', between the fourth and sixth centuries.[21] In the same article, however, he mentions it again among 'several late and genuinely Egyptian Passions, written according to the *koptischer Konsens*, which are not included in the Cycles'.[22] He perhaps means that the core of the legend of St Philotheus was composed rather early, but was later re-edited, elaborated and brought into compliance with the *koptischer Konsens* form. It must be noted, however, that he does not associate the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* with any of the martyr cycles; other scholars tend to think that it should be connected with the *Cycle of Basilides*.[23] But if the *Martyrdom of*

[20] Reymonds and Barns suggest that 'everything seems to point to the existence of scriptoria where martyrologies were produced to order, and, one suspects, paid for by the yard; they were padded out with stock passages to the requisite size', cf. E.A.E. Reymonds, J.W.B. Barns, *Four Martyrdoms from the Pierpont Morgan Coptic Codices* (Oxford, 1973), p.3.
[21] Orlandi, 'Coptic Hagiography', p.1194.
[22] Ibidem, p.1196.
[23] For example, Baumeister, *Martyr Invictus*, p.126; van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheus of Antioch', p.1960; Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints*, p.203.

Philotheus were indeed a part of this *Cycle*, its dating to the sixth or even seventh century would be rather problematic, since the *Cycle of Basilides* is considered to be one of the latest.[24] In order to see whether the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* should be connected with any cycles at all, it is necessary to give a brief outline of the phenomenon of cycles and the cyclic development of Coptic literature.

II. Cycles in Coptic literary culture

II.1 The definition of a cycle; different types of cycles

The term *cycles*[25] refers to groups of texts that consist either of a number of martyr passions, connected by recurring characters or episodes (hagiographical cycles), or of a number of homilies, ascribed to one author (homiletic cycles). The cycles – in a proper sense – seem to appear already in the sixth century, but the cyclic editing of the existing texts and the composition of the new ones took place, as it seems, in the period between the late sixth and early ninth centuries.[26]

The so-called homiletic cycles are comprised mainly of theological homilies or of encomia in honour of saints. As Orlandi points out, the homiletic cycles are lesser known than the hagiographical cycles; their study and dating are advancing slowly

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[24] Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', p.332; Orlandi sees the *Cycle of Basilides* as a late development of what he calls the *Cycle of Antioch*, cf. Orlandi, 'Coptic Hagiography', p.1196.

[25] On the main features of what later was defined by Orlandi as cyclic development of Coptic hagiography see Reymonds, Barns, *Four Martyrdoms*, introduction, pp.1-21, and O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt.* On the cycles themselves see more recent works of Orlandi and Papaconstantinou: Orlandi, 'Coptic Hagiography' in *CE* 4, pp.1191-1197; Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', pp.328-335.

[26] Papaconstantinou insists that there are 'good reasons to date them no earlier than the eighth century', cf. Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', p.333. Her main arguments are the rarity of the manuscripts containing martyrologies before the seventh century and the good conditions for hagiographical production in the early Abbasid period (ibidem, p.334)

because of the overwhelming number of false attributions.[27] The homilies are usually attributed to famous (real or fictitious) Church Fathers. Orlandi identifies the following major homiletic cycles: the *Cycle of Athanasius*, the *Cycle of Cyril of Jerusalem*, the *Cycle of Theophilus*, the *Cycle of Basil of Caesarea*, and the *Cycle of Evodius of Rome*.[28] He suggests that these pseudo-attributions might be explained by the prohibition of the authorities against writing of new texts after the Arab conquest – by attributing them to the writers of the past the Copts were making these texts compliant with this prohibition.[29] Papaconstantinou, however, argues that the two main reasons for the appearance of so many pseudepigrapha were, first, the desire of the copyists and editors to lend 'greater prestige and legitimacy' to their productions, and second, the manner in which these texts were transmitted – namely, their continuous reworking and redaction.[30]

As for the hagiographical cycles, scholars working in the field of Coptic literary studies have not yet agreed on the titles or dating[31] of individual hagiographical cycles: although some titles are used conventionally, they do not necessarily refer to exactly the same groups of texts.[32] However, there is a general consensus about the titles of major cycles: the *Cycle of Basilides*, the *Cycle of Julian of Aqfahs*, and the *Cycle of Theodores*.

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[27] Orlandi, 'Cycle' in *CE* 3, pp.666.
[28] Ibidem, pp.667-668. See also a general introduction by T. Orlandi, *Omelie copte: scelte e tradotte, con una introduzione sulla letteratura copta* (Torino, 1981), and idem, *Coptic Texts Relating to the Virgin Mary: an Overview* (Rome, 2008), pp.81-90.
[29] Orlandi, *Omelie copte*, pp.15-16.
[30] Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', p.333.
[31] Ibidem, pp.331-335.
[32] Compare, for example, the discussions on the texts belonging to the *Cycle of Basilides* in Orlandi, 'Cycle' in *CE* 3, pp.668, and in Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', p.330. Orlandi includes the texts on

Papaconstantinou identifies also the cycles named after the persecutors Julian the Apostate and Arianus.[33] Orlandi suggests that the *Cycle of Basilides* and the *Cycle of Theodores* developed on the basis of an earlier cycle, which he describes as the Antiochene Cycle, although 'it never coincided with them'.[34] It seems that titles such as 'Antiochene Cycle' or 'Diocletianic Cycle', although they might appear too general, could be used by scholars for a larger group of texts which would include different types of sources (not only passions, but also homilies and hymns) united by their geographical setting or by the figure of the main persecutor.

The cyclic tendencies observed in the later stages of Coptic hagiography are yet to be given proper attention: for example, no research has been done on the impact of the cycles on the further development of martyr cults and in particular on hymnographic production in Egypt. It appears that the tendency of Coptic authors to link characters and events in different texts was not limited to the sphere of hagiographical and homiletic literature; this linking of everyone with everyone else was performed on all levels and had a major impact on the cultic development of the stories of martyrs, as will be shown below.

II.2 Cycles and hymnographic production

If one looks for traces of the cycles in Coptic hymnography, one sees that the authors of hymns to the saints whose lives or passions belong to certain hagiographical or homiletic

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Victor and Claudius in the separate *Cycle of Victor and Claudius*, which in his opinion is very early; Papaconstantinou attributes them to the *Cycle of Basilides*.

[33] Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', p.329.

[34] Orlandi, 'Coptic Hagiography', p.1196.

cycles tried to preserve the same connections in the hymns. For example, one of the earliest hagiographic cycles, the *Cycle of Victor and Claudius*, is supported by hymns in honour of these martyrs preserved in one of the earliest liturgical Coptic manuscripts, M574 from the Pierpont Morgan Collection.[35] One of these hymns, which seems to be based on the encomia in honour of Claudius composed by Constantine of Assiout,[36] unites Claudius and Victor by underlining their close connection already in the first stanza. Although Victor and Claudius were not so closely related as other saints of the Antiochene cycle (such as the two Theodores, who sometimes seem to be completely inseparable),[37] the hymnographers deemed it possible to transform these two popular saints into one unit[38] – they stress their friendship from the beginning until the end of the hymn and liken Victor and Claudius to David and Jonathan: 'There is no friend as good in the scripture / as David and Jonathan. / There is no friend as good among the martyrs / as Victor and Claudius' (stanza 13).[39]

Another such example of the influence of the cycles on hymnographic texts is to be found in the hymn to St Victor from the same collection.[40] The first half of the hymn recounts a story from Victor's childhood which is not recorded in his *Martyrdom*, but appears in the *Encomium* in his honour, attributed to a fictitious bishop Theopempus of

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[35] This manuscript dates to the year 897/8, according to the colophon, and it comes from the monastery of St Michael near Hamuli in the Fayoum. For more on this manuscript see L. Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Leuven, 1993), pp.113-121.

[36] G. Gordon, *Textes coptes relatifs à Saint Claude d'Antioche* in *PO* 35/4 (Turnhout, 1970).

[37] On the legend of Theodore and the possible division of his legend into two separate stories see E.O. Winstedt, *Coptic Texts on Saint Theodore the General, St Theodore the Eastern, Chamoul and Justus* (London, Oxford, 1910), introduction, and T. Orlandi, 'Saint Theodorus' in *CE* 7, pp.2237-2238.

[38] As does Constantine of Assiout in his *Encomium*, cf. Gordon, *Textes coptes*, pp.525-546.

[39] K. Kuhn, W.J. Tait, *Thirteen Coptic acrostic hymns from MS M574 of the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Oxford, 1996), pp.50-51. In this thesis I am using their English translation of the hymns.

Antioch.[41] This story relates events connected with the miraculous golden garment of the boy Victor and is meant to explain Diocletian's hatred of the future martyr. The hymn omits most of the events from the *Martyrdom of St Victor* and, after relating the legend of the golden garment, jumps directly to the final stages of Victor's story: his banishment to Egypt, his meeting with Christ in the fortress of Antinoe, and the final *kidan* (a textual unit used for promoting the saint's cult through promises of heavenly and earthly rewards for the devotees[42]). The last stanzas of this hymn also incorporate the vision of St Paese of Busiris,[43] a local Egyptian martyr, in which the status of Victor as the most honoured of all martyrs is confirmed.[44] Therefore, we must conclude that the composers of this hymn used material from three different texts – the *Encomium* of Theopempus, the *Martyrdom of Victor* and the *Martyrdom of Paese* – which they united and blended into one textual unit, simultaneously establishing two important connections: a cyclic link between Victor and Paese and the connection of Victor with Egypt, his new domain.

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[40] Ibidem, pp.36-45.

[41] See *Encomium on St Victor attributed to Theopempus of Antioch*, ed. by A. B. Scott in *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library: Five Coptic Homilies* CSCO 47 (Leuven, 1993), pp.133-152.

[42] For discussion of the role of the *kidan* in Coptic hagiography see Chapter 7.

[43] On Paese see O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, p.211; A.S. Atya, 'Paese and Tecla' in *CE* 6, p.1865. The *Martyrdom of Paese and Thecla* was published by Reymonds and Barns, see *Four Martyrdoms*, pp.31-79.

[44] '20. Truly, Paese of Busiris,/ when taken up to heaven,/ was shown the house of Apa Victor,/ built of gold and precious stones. 21. This kind of house is the king's,/ said Paese to the angel./ He said: It is the house of Apa Victor/ which was built in heaven. 22. Bestow this (other) house on yourself,/said the angel to Paese./ He said: You have remembered me, my lord,/ but it is smaller than the first. 23. O the abundance of this great honour,/which Jesus gave to Apa Victor!/ Paese said to the angel:/ I wanted my own to be like this. 24. Indeed, the house of the king is different,/ and the house of the ruler is different./ This is the house of Apa Victor,/there is none like it', cf. Kuhn, Tait, *Thirteen Coptic acrostic hymns*, pp.44-45. This part of the hymn is based on the vision of Paese recounted in his *Martyrdom*, cf. Reymonds, Barns, *Four Martyrdoms*, pp.67-71, English translation pp.175-177.

Since these hymns, representing an already well-developed tradition, are preserved in the ninth-century manuscript (M574) which is contemporary with the majority of the manuscripts containing martyr passions, one might suggest that the cyclic editing of the hagiographical and homiletic texts was done prior to or simultaneously with the composition of the hymns, most likely in the eighth century or earlier. The contents of the hymns provide yet another proof of how pervasive and influential this process of the cyclic linking has been on all levels.

II.3 The Martyrdom of Philotheus *and its place among other cyclic texts*

As has been mentioned above, many scholars have claimed that the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is a part of the *Cycle of Basilides* or, at least, has to be linked with it. The *Cycle of Basilides* is a group of passions associated with martyrs who suffered during Diocletian's persecutions, and who were related by ties of kinship to each other and to a certain Antiochian prince Basilides. Basilides is said to have been a high court dignitary. His son Eusebius is identified as a general, and the martyrs Claudius, Victor, Theodore the Eastern (Anatolius), Apater and Justus are all said to have been his nephews, and officers in the army of Diocletian. They were all at some point banished to Egypt by Diocletian and later executed there. This cycle seems to have been based on the *Cycle of Victor and Claudius*, which is probably the earliest among the Coptic cycles and is itself based on Greek epic passions, very popular in Egypt in the fifth and sixth centuries.[45]

[45] Orlandi, 'Hagiographical Cycles' in *CE*, pp.668.

The *Cycle of Basilides* might be distinguished by several characteristic elements or textual markers: the action begins in Antioch which in Coptic texts is the residence of Diocletian,[46] although Egypt is almost always the final place of martyrdom; the characters of Romanus, one of the imperial high-rank generals, and his son, Victor, are mentioned at one point; the legend of Diocletian's 'true' Egyptian origin is usually inserted, and the characters of Basilides and of two Theodores – Theodore the General and Theodore Anatolius– are essential.[47]

In the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, however, most of these textual markers, which might relate it to the *Cycle of Basilides*, are absent: there is no mention of Basilides or either of the two Theodores; nothing is said about Diocletian's origin from Egypt, and, what is even more striking, there is no mention of Egypt at all, apart from some short references to the biblical characters of Joseph,[48] Moses, Pharaoh and the apocryphal Egyptian sorcerers Jannes and Jambres.[49] It is clear from the text that Philotheus suffered in Antioch and was buried there; moreover, nothing is said elsewhere – neither in the *Martyrdom* nor in any other texts associated with Philotheus – about his relics being transferred to Egypt.

Furthermore, there are practically no references to the characters of other passions; the only one appears to be an artificial insertion rather than an original part of the story. Thus, the only character from the other cycles to be found in the *Martyrdom* is the

[46] Van den Berg-Onstwedder, 'Diocletian in the Coptic Tradition', p.108.
[47] Orlandi, 'Coptic Hagiography', p.1193.
[48] 'And he was gentle and kind, perfect in every beauty as Joseph, king of Egypt' (f.76r *a*).

famous 'villain' of the Coptic passions – a certain military general named Romanus, the father of the martyr Victor. Romanus is introduced in the final part of the text as the man who advised Diocletian on how to kill Philotheus.[50] The whole episode seems to be rather incoherent and might be one of those 'stock passages',[51] which the composers of the Coptic passions would use to extend the story – at first, Romanus is said to have stopped the emperor from killing all the spectators in the theatre, explaining that they had been bewitched by Philotheus;[52] but later in the text Romanus is possessed by an unclean spirit and chases the emperor 'wishing to kill him', so that Diocletian has to implore Philotheus to heal Romanus. After the miraculous healing Romanus expresses his wonderment at the great power of this boy and suggests another punishment for him – dismembering and burning of all the pieces of his body, in order to avoid the possibility that a martyrium might be built for the relics.[53]

Although there are no other references to the story of Victor in the full *Martyrdom*, there is, however, a reference to the martyr Victor in the fragment of a palimpsest codex from the library of the White Monastery, published by Balestri (**F8**).[54] In the sixth leaf of this codex, which contains the *kidan* (Christ's promises to give certain powers to the

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[49] 'You, who has given strength to Moses, your great blessed prophet, to do all these wonders before the Pharaoh, breaking down the power of Jannes and Jambres' (f.89v *a*).
[50] See f.97v *b* – f.98v *b*.
[51] Reymonds and Barns, *Four Martyrdoms*, p.3.
[52] 'He said to Diocletian: 'Our lord and emperor, you will wipe out the whole city; you have not understood that they do not really know what they are saying, because Philotheus has bewitched them!' (f.97v *b*).
[53] 'We would like you to cut him in pieces and then burn him with fire until he dies. And then you should take the ash and throw it into the sea so that his body might never be found, thus they will not be able to build a martyrium for him – for they build such martyria in the recent times and great miracles happen in them. And now, our lord and king, we want you to apply this torture to him' (f.98v).
[54] See description of this fragment in Chapter 1.

future shrine of St Philotheus),[55] an interesting addition is found: 'And I will give glory to your name on the earth, as I have given to Victor, son of Romanus'.[56] This phrase does not appear either in the main text of the *Martyrdom* (**M**) or in the corresponding fragments from the British Museum collection (**F3**). However, it appears in a different source – namely, in the acrostic hymn to St Victor which has been mentioned above. Christ addresses Victor and makes a solemn promise to him: 'I swear to you, O my chosen, Victor,/ if I glorify a martyr,/ I shall say to him: I shall glorify you/ like Victor, the son of Romanus' (stanza 19).[57] This short phrase, found in two sources of completely different geographical provenance,[58] shows that this particular tradition was indeed very widespread in Egypt. Could it serve as evidence for the existence of a central scriptorium, as Delehaye and recently Orlandi have suggested,[59] at which the martyr stories were produced and then distributed to different monasteries of Egypt, where they continued to be copied and disseminated further? It is difficult to say, but in any case this formulaic phrase reveals the strong connection between hymnographic and hagiographic production in Coptic tradition.

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[55] See discussion in Chapter 7.

[56] Balestri, 'Di un frammento palimpsesto copto-saidico del Museo Borgiano', pp.66-67.

[57] Kuhn, Tait, *Thirteen Coptic acrostic hymns*, pp.42-43.

[58] The fragment **F8** comes from the library of the White Monastery (known also as the Monastery of Apa Shenute) in Upper Egypt, while the manuscript **M574** was found at the site of the Monastery of St Michael in the Fayyum oasis: for more on this manuscript see Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts*, p.121.

[59] Delehaye suggests that this hagiographical production was centred in Alexandria, cf. Delehaye, 'Les Martyrs de l'Égypte', pp.149-154. Orlandi proposes a completely different site – the Monastery of Apa Shenute in Atripe: 'We shall recall, for our purpose here, that this unit was the main center of Coptic literary (but so, also of religious) culture until the IXth cent. I very much suspect that in this monastery the arrangements of the texts according to the necessities of the liturgical festivals has been mostly carried on, in the VIII and IX centuries'; cf. T. Orlandi, *Coptic Texts Relating to the Virgin Mary: an Overview* (Rome, 2008), p.15.

It might be asserted that the people responsible for the composition or editing of hymns were very familiar with the hagiographical works. Were they perhaps the same people who composed the hagiographical texts? Again, it is difficult to say.

As for the passions of Philotheus and Victor, it must be admitted that there are no direct links between them, apart from the rather implausible presence of Victor's father Romanus in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*. There is a common theme in both passions – that of the seventy idols of Diocletian – which might be seen as a link between the story of Philotheus and the passion of Victor, in which the creation of these idols and the emperor's edict prescribing their veneration are related.[60] However, the legend of the seventy idols is integrated into many other Diocletianic passions and, therefore, it would be a rather far-fetched conjecture to insist that its presence in both texts portends a strong connection between the two passions.

Thus, if one wants to establish a relation between the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and any of the generally recognised martyr cycles, one should proceed with great caution; the association, if any, should be made with the earlier *Cycle of Victor and Claudius* and not with the *Cycle of Basilides*. It appears that the core of Philotheus' legend was formed at first as an independent text and did not belong to any of the cycles. In the later period when the cult developed and evolved, the *Martyrdom* seems to have been re-worked and (rather clumsily) linked to the story of Victor.

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[60] E.A. Wallis Budge, *Coptic martyrdoms etc. in the dialect of Upper Egypt* (London, 1914), pp.1-2; A.I. Elanskaia [А.И. Еланская], *Коптские рукописи Государственной публичной библиотеки им. Салтыкова-Щедрина* in *Палестинский Сборник* 20 (83) (Leningrad, 1969), pp.25-26.

Conclusions

The analysis of the structural characteristics of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* shows that this text in its extant shape is a literary elaboration of a typical epic passion, preserved in its earlier form in the Georgian version of the legend. This elaboration, which took place in the sixth or seventh century, was done in accordance with the so-called *koptischer Konsens*: for example, the episode in which Philotheus is revived and 'reassembled' from the ashes scattered over sea[61] is one of the typical textual units preserving an ancient Egyptian concept of the integrity of the body.[62]

Later (or perhaps simultaneously) an attempt was made by an editor of the text to link it to the story of Victor – probably, in order to emphasize the Antiochene origin of Philotheus: an episode featuring Romanus, the father of the martyr Victor, was inserted. This was probably done within the framework of the all-pervading process of cyclic linking, which deeply affected all spheres of Coptic literary production – as has been demonstrated with the example of hymnographic material – in the period between the late seventh and ninth centuries. The mention of the general Romanus in the story of Philotheus made some scholars think that the text should be linked to the *Cycle of Basilides*; however, as has been shown in this chapter, it seems more appropriate to place the extant form of Philotheus' story among a larger family of texts, which might be designated as the 'Cycle of Diocletian' or the 'Cycle of Antioch'. In the following chapters I will discuss the main features of these texts and the sources used by Coptic

[61] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.99r.
[62] Baumeister, *Martyr Invictus*, pp.63ff.

hagiographers for creating the literary universe in which the events described in Diocletianic passions take place.

Chapter 3

The Great Persecution and Diocletianic Legend in Coptic Passions

> It happened during the reign of the erring and apostate emperors, who withdrew themselves from Christ, Diocletian and Maximinian, those who ruled in cruelty and persecuted everyone who called on the name of Christ, that there was a young boy in Antioch, whose name was Philotheus.[1]

These opening words of the Coptic *Martyrdom* set the scene and the time of Philotheus' life and passion and bring out not only the hero of the story, but also its anti-hero, whose main task in the narrative is to bring glory to the martyr of God by submitting him to various tortures and ultimately to death. The aim of this chapter is to discuss the main features of the fictional 'historical' background against which the life and martyrdom of Philotheus are situated, namely, the Great Persecution, and to describe the second protagonist of the *Martyrdom*, the emperor Diocletian himself.

Since Diocletian's persecution was chosen by the Coptic Church in Early Islamic period as its foundational myth,[2] it is necessary to outline the most characteristic features of Diocletian in Coptic tradition and the differences between the real Diocletian and Diocletian the Great Persecutor as he appears in Coptic hagiographical texts.

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[1] *Martyrdom of Philotheus,* ff.75r-75v.

[2] A. Papaconstantinou, 'Historiography, Hagiography', p.79.

I.1 Introduction: the cult of martyrs in Coptic Egypt and the impact of the Great Persecution

Coptic synaxaria (i.e. collections of shortened versions of the saints' lives, usually arranged according to the liturgical calendar of the year) contain commemorations not only of the well-recognised martyrs of early times, such as St Babylas of Antioch[3] or the martyr Demetrius of Thessalonica,[4] who were venerated in other Churches of the Christian East, but also a great number of commemorations of the local martyrs who were born and suffered in Egypt, such as, for example, the very popular martyr Menas (Mina or Abu Mina) the Wonderworker, an alleged native of Pentapolis to the west of Alexandria, and others.[5] They also contain a great number of commemorations of foreign saints who later became appropriated by the Coptic Church, such as a group of Antiochene saints (Apoli, Basilides, Besamon, Claudius, Isidorus, Justus and others) whose relics were claimed to belong to Egypt either because these saints were martyred in Egypt or because the relics had been transferred to Egypt at some point.

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[3] Babylas, Bishop of Antioch, was martyred under Decius in 251 or 253 and is distinguished for being the first saint whose relics were 'translated' (transferred) by Caesar Gallus a century after his death to a different church for political and religious purposes; John Chrysostom dedicated two of his homilies to this event.

[4] Demetrius of Thessalonica suffered martyrdom during Diocletian's persecution and by the seventh century became one of the most popular military saints in the Christian East; later he became one of the patron saints of the Crusaders. On the development of his cult and iconography see a chapter dedicated to St Demetrius in C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Ashgate, 2003), pp.67-93; also E. Russell, *St Demetrius of Thessalonica; Cult and Devotion in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 2010).

[5] There are still some debates on the exact provenance of Menas since the synaxaria contain commemorations of two different martyrs bearing the same name – one being an Egyptian, and the other originating from Phrygia; O'Leary and Krause suggest that this was a derivation of the original cult or a confusion of several martyrs, cf. O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt,* p. 194 ff; M. Krause, 'Saint Menas the Miracle Maker' in *CE* 5, pp.1589-1590. St Menas was certainly one of the major warrior saints venerated in Egypt, on his iconography and cult cf. Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, pp.181-190.

The majority of passions that constitute the martyrological part of the Coptic *Synaxarium* and that make up a significant part of Coptic literature deals with the so-called Great Persecution of Diocletian.[6] This period sets one of the basic reference points or 'hagiographical coordinates', described by Delehaye,[7] van Esbroeck[8] and recently by Lourie in his work on the critical hagiography.[9] The hagiographer who composes a passion of a martyr is more interested in the date of this martyr's death, since it is one of the milestones of the liturgical year, and not so much in absolute (historical) chronology. When the exact period of the martyrdom is not known, as Lourie points out, in all likelihood it will be assigned to the reign of one of the two main persecutors – either Decius (249-251) or Diocletian (284-305).[10] At the same time, the place and the date of the martyr's death might still be historically accurate.[11]

Some of the texts in the Coptic *Synaxarium* relate the stories of the martyrs from Egypt, tortured and killed under the local governors who were following the orders of the emperor Diocletian – thus, Arianus, the governor of Antinoe (also described

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[6] There is an overview of the Diocletianic tradition in Coptic hagiography by G. van den Berg-Onstwedder, 'Diocletian in the Coptic Tradition' in *BSAC* 29 (Cairo, 1990), pp.87-122; unfortunately, the author does not provide much of a critical analysis of the materials assembled. However, the article is a good reference tool, as it contains bibliographical information on most of the editions of the Coptic martyr texts – the author uses more than forty hagiographical texts which mention Diocletian – mostly passions, but also encomia and homilies (p.104).

[7] H. Delehaye, *Cinq leçons sur la méthode hagiographique* (Bruxelles, 1934), pp.7-17.

[8] M. van Esbroeck, 'Le saint comme symbole' in *The Byzantine Saint: University of Birmingham, fourteenth Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, ed. S. Hackel (London, 1981), pp.128-140.

[9] V.M. Lourie [В.М. Лурье], *Введение в критическую агиографию* (St Petersburg, 2009).

[10] Lourie, *Введение в критическую агиографию*, p.24.

[11] Cf. Delehaye, *Cinq leçons*, p.13, and Lourie, *Введение в критическую агиографию*, pp.24-25, 204-206.

as *praeses* of Thebaid) at the time,[12] and Armenius, the *dux* of Alexandria,[13] seem to be the most prominent persecutors in this type of martyrdoms. Sometimes the martyrs are questioned and tortured by Maximian, Diocletian's co-ruler.[14]

A great number of texts, however, features Diocletian himself as the judge and torturer of Christians. The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* belongs to this group of texts; the second part of the *Martyrdom* is a depiction of a spiritual fight between the boy Philotheus and the apostate Diocletian, which includes not only descriptions of tortures interspersed with short conversations (as in the case of some other martyr passions), but also arguments about the nature of Christian and pagan worship. Thus, it provides us with valuable information on how Coptic editors of martyr passions saw the role of Diocletian in the Persecution and what means they used to recreate the historical background of the events. Other texts belonging to the 'Cycle of Antioch' – passions and encomia in honour of the two Theodores, members of the

[12] Arianus was the persecutor of many saints among whom were Abadion, Abamun, Apollonius and Philemon, Callinicus, Colluthus (whom he put in prison but did not kill, as Colluthus was his brother-in-law), Justus, Ter and Erai, and others. Since Arianus is featured in the cycle of passions attributed to Julius of Aqfahs, a fictional 'scribe' who allegedly was an eye-witness of the martyr trials, Arianus was considered to be a fictional character as well. But his historical existence was proven by the papyrus P. Grenf II 78 (February-March 307), cf. C. Vandersleyen, *Chronologie des préfets d'Egypte de 284 à 395* (Brussels, 1962), pp.86-90, 92-95. There is also a fourth-century papyrus containing the reports of the court proceedings at the trial of a priest Stephen by the same Arianus, cf. W. Clarysse, 'The Coptic Martyr Cult' in *Martyrium in Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Leuven, 1995), pp.380-381. According to the Coptic tradition, Arianus later repented, converted to Christianity and became a martyr himself. For the Sahidic text of the acts of Arianus which might be dated to the sixth century see F. Rossi, *Un nuovo codice copto del Museo egizio di Torino contenente la vita di S. Epifanio ed i martiri di S. Pantoleone, di Ascla, di Apollonio, di Filemone, di Ariano e di Dios, con versetti di vari capitoli del "Libro di Giobbe"* (Roma, 1893), pp.69-86. There is also a Syriac version, most likely written in the fifth century, cf. S. Brock, 'The Earliest Syriac Manuscript of the Martyrdom of Philemon and Companions' in *Ægyptus christiana: mélanges d'hagiographie égyptienne et orientale dédiés à la mémoire du p. Paul Devos bollandiste* (Geneve, 2004), pp.29-42.

[13] Armenius is claimed to have killed Agathon and his brothers, Ari, George of Alexandria, Epima, Heraclides, Piroou and Athom, Macrobius and others. See also C. Vandersleyen, *Chronologie des préfets d'Egypte*, pp.88, 92.

[14] These are Athanasius and Irene, Banina and Naou, Dios (Abadyus), Shenouti (Sinouti) and others.

Basilides' clan, Psote of Psoi, Claudius of Antioch, Leontius and Panicyrus, Epima, Ter and Erai, and others – will also be used for analysis of development of the Diocletianic legend in the Coptic tradition. Since Diocletianic legend is closely connected with the Constantinian legend in Coptic tradition, the text of the story of Eudoxia, a seventh century legend, will also be used in this chapter.

I.2 The Great Persecution in contemporary historical sources

The persecution was described in much detail by contemporary Christian historiographers: by Eusebius of Caesarea, in his two historical works *Historia Ecclesiastica* and *De Martyribus Palaestinae*[15] and by Lactantius in *De Mortibus Persecutorum*[16]. Their accounts formed the basis of at least some of later historical works produced in Egypt which described the same period: thus, the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiou definitely depends on Eusebius in descriptions of the atrocities of Diocletian and his co-rulers.[17] On the other hand, the Arabic *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*,[18] a tenth-century compilation of the lives of the

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[15] English translation by K. Lake, *Eusebius: The Ecclesiastical History* (London, Harvard (Loeb Library), 1926).

[16] *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, Latin text and English translation by J.L. Creed (Oxford, 1984).

[17] See, for example, how John of Nikiou borrows a description of the 'abominable practices' of Maximian, who, being 'persistent in evil deeds, placed many enchantments on Diocletian, and he was addicted to abominable practices and to the invocations of demons; and he cut open the wombs of pregnant women and sacrificed men and women to impure demons' (*Chronicle*, LXXVII.23). Compare with Eusebius' description of Maxentius, the son of Maximin: 'To crown all his wickedness, the tyrant resorted to magic. And in his divinations he cut open pregnant women, and again inspected the bowels of newborn infants. He slaughtered lions, and performed various execrable acts to invoke demons and avert war' (*HE* 8.14.5). See also *HE* 8.16 and *Chronicle* LXXVII, 28-31 for the description of the death of Galerius.

[18] This compilation used as one of its sources the fragmentary Coptic *History of the Church*, which was an original Coptic composition, based on the now lost Coptic sources and Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica*, cf. T. Orlandi, *Storia della Chiesa de Alessandria* (Milan, 1967-1970). The Arabic compilation is usually ascribed to Severus ibn al-Muqqafa, cf. English translation of the Arabic text by

Alexandrian bishops, seems to be less interested in the global impact of the persecution and concentrates only on the important local figures, such as Peter of Alexandria. Diocletian is represented as a typical fairy-tale villain in this text[19] but no explanation of his motives to start a world-wide persecution is given.

This campaign was the last and most severe persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. It began in 303 with the destruction of the great church at Nicomedia and a series of edicts issued by the Emperor Diocletian and his co-rulers, the Emperor Maximian, and the Caesars Galerius and Constantius, by which the legal rights of Christians were revoked and compliance with traditional religious practices of the empire was enforced.

The first three edicts,[20] promulgated between February 303 and November 303, were directed more against the clergy than the laymen, while the fourth edict, issued by Galerius in the spring of 304 (due to Diocletian's severe illness the power was at that time in Galerius' hands[21]) demanded that all men, women, and children should gather in a public space and offer a collective sacrifice. In case of refusal, they were to be tortured or executed.[22] Both Diocletian and Maximian abdicated in 305,

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B. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria I-IV* (Patrologia Orientalis, vol. I.2, I.4, V.1 and X.5).

[19] See discussion in Chapter 4 on the story of a wife of one of Diocletian's officials from Antioch.

[20] On these edicts and their chronology, see S. Corcoran, *The Empire of the Tetrarchs: Imperial Pronouncements and Government, AD 284-324* (Oxford, 1996), pp.179-182.

[21] The question of who actually was responsible for the issuing of the final edict remains an open one: thus, for example, S. Williams does not agree with the attempts of some historians 'to mitigate Diocletian's responsibility' and blame Galerius for it, but insists that this 'final Edict was in Diocletian's name and on his authority, and he must surely bear the responsibility', cf. S. Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery* (London, 1985), p.173 and 255, note 4.

[22] For more on the details of these edicts and its consequences see classical works of W.H.C. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* (Oxford, 1965) and G.E.M. de Ste. Croix, 'Aspects of

Galerius and Constantine became Emperors (Augusti), while Maximin Daia and Severus were appointed Caesars. The persecution continued in the Eastern part of the empire: according to Eusebius (*De Martyribus Palaestinae* 4.1), Maximin in particular was eager to persecute the Christians – moreover, he published his own edicts in 306 and 309 demanding universal sacrifice.[23] Eusebius accuses Galerius of continuing the persecution as well (*Historia Ecclesiastica* 8.14.9ff), although in 311, being already on his deathbed, Galerius issued an edict[24] proclaiming partial religious tolerance and restitution of rights for the Christians (*HE* 8.17; *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 33.11ff). Thus, the Great Persecution seemed to be at an end, but seven months later Maximin resumed it in the East where it continued until his death in 313. During this last upsurge of violence Egypt was once again under severe pressure: many bishops, including Peter of Alexandria, were executed (*HE* 9.6.2).

The persecutions in Egypt and Asia Minor were brought to an end in 313 when the news of the victories of Constantine and Licinius reached Maximin and he felt the necessity to change his policies: he published a new edict,[25] restoring the former liberties and rights for the Christians and blaming the local authorities for cruelty rather than recognising his own faults (*HE* 9.10.6-11). This did not help him much, however, as Licinius defeated him in the battle at Adrianople after which Maximin

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the Great Persecution' in *HTR* 47 (1954), pp.75-131; also P.S. Davies, 'The Origin and Purpose of the Persecution of AD 303' in *JTS* 40 (1989), pp.66-94; also on Diocletian's involvement in the matter see 'Diocletian and the Great Persecution; Rise of Constantine' in H. Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford, 2001), pp.176-189, and T.D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, Mass., London, 1981), pp.15-28.

[23] S. Corcoran, *The empire of the Tetrarchs*, pp.185-187.

[24] Ibidem, p.186.

[25] Ibidem, p.189.

retreated through Asia Minor and committed suicide by poison in Tarsus, but at least the tortures were stopped. In June 313 Licinius published in Nicomedia the last edict concerning the persecutions (the so-called Edict of Milan, which had been signed by Constantine and Licinius during their meeting in Milan in February 313), proclaiming full religious tolerance towards Christians.[26]

I.3 The role of the emperor Diocletian in the Persecution as seen by Coptic authors

> And in very truth, O Diocletian, when I remember your rule, and the evil which you have done unto the noblemen of Antioch, I curse you, I call you by evil names, O you evil, blood-shedding lion, you dragon that dwells in the abyss![27]

The intensity of persecutions varied across the empire, but Egypt and other Eastern provinces were most severely hit by this outburst of violence against the Christian population.[28] Thus, in the *Martyrdom of Isidorus* the number of people martyred during Diocletian's reign is reported as 'forty-five myriads (i.e. 450,000) of martyrs who shed their blood for God's name, apart from nine myriads of confessors'.[29] Of course, these numbers are greatly exaggerated, but they explain why the martyr

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[26] Both Lactantius and Eusebius preserved the text of the edict, although there are certain divergences between their copies. Lactantius presents it as a letter from Licinius to the governors of the Eastern part of the empire (*De Mortibus Persecutorum* 48.2-12). Eusebius presents it as a letter to the governor of Palestine (*HE* 10.5.2-14); see also S. Corcoran, *The empire of the Tetrarchs*, p.189.

[27] Budge, 'Encomium of Theodore of Antioch to Theodore Anatolius' in *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.3.

[28] Eusebius speaks of hundreds of martyrs put to death on a single day (*HE* 8.9.3) – a testimony which would make Egypt the region which suffered the most. But already in the period of Enlightenment historians (such as Edward Gibbon in his *History of Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* published in 1776) began to question these numbers. Gibbon insisted that the scale of persecution had been greatly exaggerated by Christian writers. Other historians, such as De Ste. Croix and Frend, support this point of view, but the figures still remain very impressive: Frend estimates that at least 3000 to 3500 Christians were killed, cf. Frend, *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church*, pp.393-394. On the historical evidence of the persecutions in Egypt see also H. Delehaye, 'Les Martyrs de l'Égypte' in *AB* 40 (Brussels, 1922).

[29] H. Munier, 'Les actes du martyre de Saint Isidore' in *BIFAO* 14 (1918), p.185.

stories have gained such huge popularity in Egypt and why the Copts referred to their Church as the *Church of the Martyrs*.

One of the most prominent features of the late Coptic narratives is that it is usually Diocletian who is made responsible for the massacre, not Galerius.[30] Although the persecution did not begin with Diocletian's accession in 284, the year when his reign began was since the fourth century regarded by the Copts (and by the Ethiopian Church) as the first year of the so-called Diocletian's Era – or, in later times, the Era of the Martyrs.[31] His involvement in the persecutions of the Egyptian Christians, his severe suppression of two large revolts in Egypt that occurred during his reign, and unpopular reforms and attempts to establish uniformity throughout the empire provided the Copts with a perfect villain, whose historical role and personality were later completely altered and twisted in Coptic hagiography, making Diocletian's name a real *nomen odiosum* in their narratives. Diocletian's entire life, beginning from his childhood, has been rewritten by the hagiographers for their own purposes.

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[30] Frend points out also that 'the many martyrdoms recorded in Eusebius belong, however, to the reign of Maximin (305-313)', cf. W.H C. Frend 'Diocletian' in *CE*, pp.904-908. Maximin is sometimes mentioned in Coptic martyrdoms alongside Diocletian (apparently confused with Diocletian's co-emperor Maximian) as his co-ruler and a 'lawless apostate'.

[31] Diocletian's reign as a military emperor began in November 284 during the Alexandrian year which starts on the first day of the month Thoth (this date corresponds to the 29th or 30th August 284). This era was used to number the year in Easter tables produced by the Church of Alexandria. The first examples of the use of this era are, however, found not in the Christian sources, but in pagan cultic context – in the computation of horoscopes and astrological literature, cf. R.S. Bagnall and K.A. Worp, 'The Era of Diocletian and of the Martyrs' in *Chronological Systems of Byzantine Egypt* (Leiden, 2004), pp.66-87. On the use of the Era of Diocletian and the Era of the Martyrs and the difference between them see L.S.B. MacCoull and K.A. Worp, 'The Era of the Martyrs' in *Miscellanea papyrologica in occasione del bicentenario dell'edizione della Charta Borgiana*, vol. II (Florence, 1990), pp. 375-408. For more on Coptic Calendar in general see A. Cody, 'Coptic Calendar' in *CE* 2, pp.433-436.

The Christians in Egypt needed to appropriate all the key figures of the narrative,[32] and Diocletian certainly was one of the key figures in the history of the Church of the Martyrs – it is not surprising, therefore, that after this 'appropriation' his real life had very little in common with the legend created by the Coptic authors.

I.4 The real Diocletian

The main sources of information on Diocletian are the works of the Christian historiographers (Eusebius, Lactantius, Zonaras and John Malalas), the anonymous Latin panegyric orations (*XII Panegyrici Latini*)[33] and later historical works by pagan authors, such as *Liber de Caesaribus* by Aurelius Victor (361), *Epitome de Caesaribus*, often falsely attributed to the same author (circa 395),[34] *Historia Augusta* (*Carus, Carinus et Numerianus*) and *Breviarium historiae Romanae* by Eutropius (circa 369).

Diocletian[35] (full name Caius Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, previously Diocles) was born somewhere in Dalmatia, embarked on a military career and, after having reached the position of *dux Moesiae*, he was appointed the commander of bodyguard of the Emperors Carus and Numerian.[36] After the death of Numerian in 284

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[32] Papaconstantinou, 'Historiography, Hagiography', p.79.

[33] C.E.V. Nixon, B.S. Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors: The Panegyrici Latini* (University of California Press, 1994); panegyrics that mention Diocletian are the ones dated 289 (X), 291(XI), 297(VIII), 298 (IX) and 307 (VII).

[34] Critical edition of the Latin text M. Festy, Abrégé des Césars (Paris, 1999); on-line English translation by Th.M. Banchich, *Epitome de Caesaribus: A Booklet about the Style of Life and the Manners of the Imperatores*, (Canisius College, New York, 2009) http://www.luc.edu/roman-emperors/epitome.htm (accessed on 15.04.2013).

[35] For a concise biography of Diocletian see S. Corcoran, 'Diocletian' in the *Lives of the Caesars*, ed. by A. Barret (Oxford, 2008), pp.228-254.

[36] Zonaras, *History* XII.30-31.

Diocletian accused the military prefect Aper, Numerian's father-in-law, of plotting against the young emperor, killed him and thus was elevated to the rank of the emperor.[37] He then seized power from Numerian's brother Carinus (who was betrayed by his own officers);[38] after this victory Diocletian's authority was recognized by both the western and the eastern parts of the empire. He then fought against Teutons and Sarmatians near the Danube and afterwards returned to the East and made Nicomedia his residence. At this point Maximian was made Augustus and also received a name Aurelius Valerius.[39]

During Diocletian's reign two large revolts occurred in Egypt: the first one, the revolt of Busiris and Coptos in 291-293, was suppressed by Galerius.[40] Since Diocletian's attempts to change the tax system in Egypt so that it would comply with universal standards were not accepted favourably, another revolt began after Galerius' departure to Syria. Following the establishment of the tetrarchy, the Alexandria mint was brought under direct control of the emperor. Diocletian ended the mint's traditional independence and made it strike the same themes as the other imperial mints.[41]

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[37] Eutropius, *Breviarium* IX, 20; Lactantius, *De Mortibus Persecutorum* 17.1; Zonaras, History XII.31. See also H.W. Bird, 'Diocletian and the Deaths of Carus, Numerian and Carinus' in *Latomus* 35 (1976), pp.127-132. Bird discusses question which arises from the accounts of *Historia Augusta*, Eutropius and Lactantius – did Diocletian just use Aper as a scapegoat in his own plot – and suggests that Diocletian might have been directly involved in the deaths of all three emperors.

[38] *Epitome de Caesaribus* 39, 11-14.

[39] *Panegyrici Latini* VI.15.

[40] There is an ongoing dispute whether it was Galerius' or Diocletian's operation; Barnes insists that it was Galerius, not Diocletian, cf. T.D. Barnes, *The new Empire of Constantine and Diocletian* (Harvard, 1982), p.62.

[41] For details of the reform see J.G. Milne, 'The organisation of the Alexandrian Mint in the reign of Diocletian' in *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 3 (1916), pp. 207-217.

But his attempts to bring Alexandria in line with the rest of the empire proved to be difficult. A certain L. Domitius Domitianus[42] proclaimed himself emperor in August 297 and was recognised in many regions of Egypt and in Alexandria.[43] Domitianus began striking coins on the same imperial model, both in his name and that of the other tetrarchs, trying to show that he belonged to the same imperial college and to legitimize his claim. Diocletian managed to defeat him and his supporters, starting with rebels in the Thebaid and then moving on to besiege Alexandria. Domitianus died in December 297, and Diocletian took control over Egypt by the end of the year, but Alexandria did not fall until March 298.[44] John of Nikiou describes the siege of Alexandria in his *Chronicle* and mentions that the city was actually taken due to the treason of its citizens:

> And he went to the land of Egypt and made it subject to him, and as for the city of Alexandria he destroyed it. And he built a fortress towards the east of the city and remained there for a long time, since he could not seize the city and bring it into his hands with the means (he had). And after a long time some people of the city came and showed him an entrance whereby he could enter. And so with much toil and trouble he unlocked the city and he had with him an innumerable army. And in the city itself many thousand troops were gathered because the war was waged amongst them. And Diocletian set fire to the city and burnt it down, and he established his authority over it.[45]

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[42] Barnes points out that all literary sources mention a man named Achilleus as the leader of the revolt, but numismatic evidence reveals L. Domitius Domitianus as Augustus at Alexandria in 297. It seems that after the death of Domitianus Achilleus was responsible for organising the defence of Alexandria and managed to hold out until March 298; *Eutropius, Breviarium* IX, 23: 'Diocletian, meanwhile, besieging Achilleus in Alexandria, obliged him to surrender about eight months after, and put him to death. He used his victory, indeed, cruelly, and distressed all Egypt with severe proscriptions and massacres'. Aurelius Victor also mentions Achilleus, cf. H.W. Bird, *Liber de Caesaribus of Sextus Aurelius Victor* (Liverpool, 1994), p.43.

[43] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p.17.

[44] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p.17; also for chronology of the events see Nixon and Rodgers, *In Praise of the Later Roman Emperors*, pp.114-116, n.16; pp.172-174, n.81-82.

[45] *Chronicle*, LXXVII; see also John Malalas, *Chronographia (Chronicle)* 12.41.

John Malalas adds to this vivid description of Diocletian's savagery a few more gruesome details which, even if partially true, might explain the long-lasting hatred of the Egyptians towards Diocletian:

> He made his entrance into the city on horseback with his horse trampling on the corpses, for he had ordered his army not to stop their slaughter until the blood of the slain came up to the knees of the horse on which he was mounted. It happened at God's command that, near the gate where he had entered, the horse on which the emperor was mounted trod on a man's horse and stumbled and knelt on it so that the horse's knee was bloodied. The emperor noticed this and granted a pardon, and the soldiers stopped cutting down the citizens of Alexandria.[46]

After suppressing the revolt Diocletian ordered a census to be carried in Egypt;[47] he also reassumed control over the mint. Diocletian moved from Upper Egypt in September 298 to Syria in February 299, where he met up with Galerius. Diocletian visited Egypt again in 301/302, when he set up distribution of bread in Alexandria,[48] and then returned to Antioch in the autumn.[49]

The persecution of Christians began in 303 (its main stages have been described above) and did not finish with the abdication of Diocletian. He and Maximian resigned together in May 305 in Rome, after which Diocletian moved to his 'private estates', presumably at Salona in Dalmatia.[50] In November 308 he met Galerius and Maximian to discuss the reorganization of the tetrarchy, which was not functioning

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[46] English translation and commentary by E. Jeffreys, M. Jeffreys and R. Scott, *The Chronicle of John Malalas* (Melbourne, 1986), p.168.
[47] See discussion of the chronology of the edicts on census in Barnes, *New Empire*, p.230.
[48] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p.19.
[49] Barnes, *New Empire*, p.55.
[50] *Epitome de Caesaribus* 39, 5.

properly at this point. A few years later, most probably in the summer of 313, Diocletian committed suicide;[51] he was divinized and interred in Salona.[52]

II. Main features of the Diocletianic legend in Coptic texts

II.1 Diocletian's provenance and change of name

> And when Diocletian the Egyptian became emperor, the army turned to help this heretic and persecutor of the faithful and the greatest of all oppressors. But the city of Alexandria and Egypt revolted against him and refused to submit to him. And he made himself strong for war against them with numerous troops and army and with his three companions in the empire, Maximian from an evil race, Constantius, and Maximian (Galerius). And he went down to Egypt and made it subject to him, and as for the region of Alexandria he destroyed it....And he was an idolater and offered sacrifices to impure demons and persecuted the Christians. He was like a wild beast. And he hated all good things and he stood against God; for the power of all Rome was in his hand. And he put to death all bishops, priests and monks, men, women and little children, and he shed without any mercy or compassion the blood of innumerable innocent people by the hands of his flesh-devouring agents whom he had appointed in every place. And he destroyed churches and burnt with fire the Scriptures inspired by God. It was a persecution of all the Christians lasting for nineteen years, from the time when he came to power and became the conqueror of the land of Egypt. And at this time he sent men of Alexandria to cut off the head of the holy father Patriarch Peter, the seal of the martyrs. And he put to death all the bishops of Egypt when he found them to be in the orthodox faith and a pure course of life, until everyone believed him to be the enemy of Christ, who had come to destroy all the world; for he was the dwelling-place of evil and the lurking-place of wrong.
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> John of Nikiou, *Chronicle* LXXVII

[51] *Epitome de Caesaribus* 39, 5: 'He was consumed, as was sufficiently clear, by voluntary death as a result of fear. Inasmuch as when, called by Constantine and Licinius to the celebrations of a wedding which he was by no means well enough to attend, he had excused himself, after threatening replies were received in which it was being proclaimed that he had favored Maxentius and was favoring Maximian, he, regarding assassination as dishonorable, is said to have drunk poison'.

[52] Eutropius, *Breviarium* IX, 28.

This emotional description of Diocletian's personality preserved in the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiou, the historian of the late seventh century, perfectly represents the attitude of Egyptian Christians towards Diocletian. All the negative epithets applied to Diocletian by John in this passage – 'the greatest of all oppressors', 'wild beast', 'enemy of Christ', 'the dwelling-place of evil' – are found in Coptic hagiographical texts which contain parts of a bigger story, the story of Diocletian the Persecutor and, consequently of the Church of the Martyrs. Coptic hagiographers, although they were apparently familiar with the works of Eusebius and John Malalas (the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiou is very much dependent on Malalas),[53] still did not have enough data about Diocletian's personality to fill the lacunae in his legendary bibliography – they had no information about Diocletian's childhood or the motives that moved him to start the persecution. This is why they had to attract also other material for the building of a new legend: they used literary sources not related directly to Diocletian, but connected with the place which they considered to be his residence (i.e. Antioch), hymnographic material, and folklore. The Coptic legend of Diocletian cannot be reconstructed on the material of one source only – its parts are scattered in passions of different martyrs, in encomia dedicated to those martyrs, liturgical hymns and other sources.

The Copts have created for Diocletian an entirely different life story – different in practically every aspect, from his birth and childhood until the very end of his life. In Coptic passions Diocletian is given a different birth name – Agrippidas

[53] H. Zotenberg discusses the sources used by John of Nikiou in 'Mémoire sur la chronique byzantine de Jean, évêque de Nikiou' in *Journal asiatique* 12 (1878), pp.245-248.

(sometimes spelt as Akripitas/Akripitos). Thus, the picture drawn by the authors of the Sahidic version of the *Encomium of Archbishop Theodore on Theodore Anatolius*[54] portrays this future enemy of Christianity as an Egyptian by origin[55] and accuses him of having unseemly connections with the devil at a very young age (which he demonstrated by teaching the goats he was looking after to dance to the tune of his flute[56]). Agrippidas' employment in the army of the emperor Numerian,[57] a lucky marriage to the emperor's eldest daughter who 'was delighted with his singing',[58] and his ascension to the throne are described in Coptic texts as a result of the direct intervention of the Devil.[59]

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[54] E.A. Wallis Budge, *Miscellaneous Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London, 1915), pp.31ff.

[55] Also in the *Encomium to Claudius of Antioch* attributed to Constantine of Assiout (Gordon, *Textes coptes relatifs à Saint Claude d'Antioche*, p.120), in the *Martyrdom of Justus* (Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.190), in the *Encomium to Theodore Anatolius and Theodore the General* attributed to Theodore of Antioch (I. Balestri, H. Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum*, II CSCO 44 (Paris, 1924), p.138). It seems that Diocletian was not proud of his Egyptian provenance: in the *Encomium to the Theodores* Diocletian threatens one of them with banishment to the 'barbarian land of Egypt'; Theodore, however, reproaches the king for this disrespectful attitude: 'It is not befitting you, Diocletian, to abuse the land of Egypt in which you grew up in your orphanhood…' (Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.8).

[56] The difference between the future martyr St Psote, whose story is inserted in the narrative, and Agrippidas (Akripita in this version), the future persecutor, is underlined by the fact that, although they both were shepherds, Psote was looking after the sheep and Akripita after the goats. Later, when Akripita is taken as a recruit, he slaughters the innocent sheep of Psote with his sword in a paroxysm of savage joy.

[57] Numerian in Coptic hagiography has practically nothing in common with his historical prototype apart from the name. The real Numerian was a son of the praetorian prefect Carus and was Roman Emperor for less than two years (282-284) with his brother Carinus. He died on his way to Bithynia and his body was only found by the soldiers in the closed coach after the arrival. A military assembly was gathered and Valerius Diocles, the commander of the imperial bodyguard, accused the prefect Aper of murdering Numerian and killed him in front of all the troops. Diocles then was proclaimed emperor and changed his name to Diocletian. On Numerian see Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, pp.4-5; D.S. Potter, *The Roman Empire at Bay: AD 180–395* (London, 2004), pp.279-280. See also note 37 above on the death of Numerian and the possible involvement of Diocletian.

[58] This is how her affection is described in the fragment of the martyrdom of St Theodore Anatolius, cf. P.E. Kahle, *Bala'izah. Coptic texts from Deir El-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt* (Oxford, 1954), p.444. She 'lusted after him' so much that she persuaded him to abandon the military career and take duties in the imperial stables, cf. Budge, *Miscellaneous Texts*, p.33. Amelineau provides a longer version of this love-story based on the Copto-Arabic synaxarium (27 of Kihak, memory of St Psote of Psoi): Agrippidas enchanted the king's daughter by staging a show in the imperial stables – he would play

Moreover, even his name is changed from Agrippidas to Diocletian in accordance with the Devil's instructions: in the *Martyrdom of St Theodore Anatolius and of his companions Leontius the Arab and Panicyrus the Persian* the Devil appears to Agrippidas in a vision and instructs him to change his name[60]. He tells Diocletian that this name is actually the Devil's name, too, as he is the main persecutor of the 'Galileans', and that Diocletian's main task will be to persecute and exterminate them entirely – apparently this passage was supposed to provide at the same time a clear (as Copts saw it) etymology for the name of the infamous emperor and predict his future actions.[61]

His idolatry and rabid attacks on Christianity also receive an explanation – although Coptic writers do not always agree on Diocletian's religious background (sometimes he is portrayed as an apostate from Christianity,[62] and sometimes as a merciless pagan from the very beginning[63]), they do agree on the reasons for his persecutions:

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his flute and the horses, possessed by the devil, would dance and prance; cf. E. Amelineau, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Église copte* (Paris, 1890), p.165.

[59] Budge, *Miscellaneous Texts*, pp.31ff.

[60] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* I, p.38: 'your name shall not be Agrippidas (Akripidos) from now on, but it shall be Diocletian the king, for my name and your name are the same'.

[61] It seems that the authors had in mind here the Greek verb διώκω 'to persecute', although in the Bohairic version edited by Balestri this verb is in a lacuna and only the first character ⲧ is visible. Balestri suggests ⲧ ⲟⲩⲃⲉ, 'to fight against, be opposed' (*Acta Martyrum* I, p.38, note 4), but this conjecture will make it impossible to connect the name 'Diocletian' with διώκω. See also Y.N. Youssef, 'La genèse d'une légende copte sur l'enfance du roi Dioclétien' in *BSAC* 28 (Cairo, 1989), pp.107-109.

[62] Thus, in the *Encomium to Claudius of Antioch* the author claims that Diocletian was Christian before his apostasy and that it was the Devil who changed his heart (Gordon, *Textes coptes*, pp.522-524). The same statement is found in the *Martyrdom of John and Simeon*, see H. Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyres de l'Égypte* (Paris, 1886), p.192, and in the *Encomium to the Theodores* (Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.22), where Diocletian's officials have to conceal their idolatry from the emperor. In the same text Diocletian comes to the church to participate in the Eucharist (*ibidem*, p.56).

[63] This is how Diocletian-Agrippidas is represented in a fragment of the *Martyrdom of Psote*, edited by Crum: Psote has a vision of Agrippidas resting his head on the great black dragon who addresses Agrippidas as 'my son', cf. Crum, *Theological Texts from Coptic Papyri* , pp. 73-74.

apart from his close connection with the Devil, who keeps instigating the emperor's rage against Christians, Diocletian was also deceived by the Archbishop of Antioch which made him very angry.

II.2 The story of the treacherous bishop and Diocletian's apostasy

Considering that the story of the treacherous bishop appears in many Coptic hagiographical works,[64] it might be useful to summarize its main points here. During the war with the Persians, Diocletian's generals defeat the Persian king and capture his son, usually named Nicomedes. This young prince is brought to Antioch and put in charge of the archbishop, sometimes called Gaius (this name is given in the story of Epima[65]), and sometimes Peter (as in the story of the two Theodores[66]). The archbishop receives a substantial bribe from the Persian king and secretly sets Nicomedes free, proclaiming that the prisoner has died from a snake bite. Meanwhile, a new war with the Persians begins and Nicomedes is seen on the battlefield again. He is captured for the second time and brought to the emperor, at which point he tells the story of his release. Diocletian decides to test the archbishop and insists on a public oath in the church that the captive prince has really died. The archbishop makes an oath and then Nicomedes is brought out to everyone's surprise. Seeing that the perfidious bishop is not struck immediately by divine justice,

[64] For example, in the stories of Claudius, Epima, John and Simeon, the Theodores, Leontius and Panicyrus.
[65] T. Mina, *Le martyre d'Apa Epima* (Cairo, 1937), p.1.
[66] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum,* II (CSCO 44), p.142.

Diocletian executes him for treason, renounces Christianity, creates seventy idols and begins the persecutions.

This account, in Winstedt's opinion, 'does supply a more or less reasonable ground for Diocletian's action'[67] – to the Coptic writers, who sought to provide more or less logical explanations for all the events occurring in the texts they composed, this explanation probably seemed to be reasonable enough. Naguib suggests that the popularity of this episode uncovers one more layer of Coptic religious memory – i.e., the perfidy of the bishop of Antioch is a metaphor of the events of the Council of Chalcedon: 'By blaming the archbishop of Antioch for the sufferings endured by Christians, Coptic religious memory kept the perfidy of the Antiochenes at the council of Chalcedon alive'.[68]

This may have been one of the factors that contributed to the wide dissemination of this part of the legend, together with the fact that this particular episode was probably composed on the basis of the historical evidence, preserved in the works of historians Lactantius (*De Mortibus Persecutorum* 9.5-7) and John Malalas (*Chronographia* 12.39). There was indeed a war with Narses (Narseh) in 296-298, in

[67] Winstedt, 'Some Coptic Legends about Roman Emperors' in *The Classical Quarterly* 3/3 (1909), p.221. Winstedt adds also that in his opinion 'the date and the place are equally favourable. Antioch lay in Galerius' province; and if he were hostile to the Christians, the treachery of its archbishop would supply him with the very argument likely to win Diocletian's acceptance of his views', ibidem, 222.

[68] S.-A. Naguib, *Martyr and apostate: Victor son of Romanos and Diocletian: a case of intertextuality in Coptic religious memory* (Jakaja, 1993), p.108.

which his wife, harem and several of his children were indeed taken hostages.[69] After Galerius' victory peace negotiations took place in 299; Barnes also mentions that Narses had sent 'a trusted court official to seek the return of his wives and children'.[70] Although the archbishop of Antioch is not mentioned in the accounts of either Lactantius or Malalas, there is evidence that the archbishop Cyril I (280-303)[71] was indeed imprisoned in 297, while 'the reasons of his imprisonment are nowhere clearly stated'.[72] He was sentenced to work in the mines and died in exile in 303.

II.3. The gods of the emperor

Another important feature of the Diocletianic tradition in Coptic texts is the legend of the seventy idols (ⲙⲙⲟⲩⲛⲓ ⲛϭⲓⲝ, 'made by hands') which he created after the betrayal of the bishop.[73] They are mentioned in the passions of many martyrs (Apa Ari, Claudius, Eusebius, Isidorus, Philotheus, Pirou and Athom, Ter and Erai, Shenoufe and his brethren, Victor, and others[74]) and quite often play a very active role in the narrative. The texts usually mention that the gods were made of gold[75] or

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[69] John Malalas speaks about the wife of the king, Arsane, who was taken a hostage and was kept in Daphne 'in great honour'. She was then returned to her husband after the peace treaty was signed (*Chronicle* 12.39).

[70] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p.18. In Coptic texts this 'court official' is represented by two figures – Leontius the Arab and Panicyrus the Persian, who later convert to Christianity and become martyrs themselves.

[71] R. Devreesse, *Le patriarcat d'Antioche, depuis la paix de l'Église jusqu'à la conquête arabe* (Paris, 1945), p.117.

[72] Winstedt, 'Some Coptic Legends', p.222.

[73] The *Martyrdom of John and Symeon* describes how Diocletian was waiting for the heavenly fire to consume the treacherous bishop but nothing happened and the king desecrated the holy chalice and decided to make his own gods – seventy gods of gold, cf. Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs*, p.195.

[74] For references see Van der Berg-Onstwedder, 'Diocletian in the Coptic Tradition', p.109, n.73.

[75] Although sometimes they are referred to as 'made of stone' as in the *Martyrdom of John and Symeon* (Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs*, p.199) or 'made of wood' as in the *Martyrdom of Apa Ari* (ibidem, p.202).

silver[76] and that thirty five of them were male deities, and thirty five female.[77] In some fragmentary pieces, however, the number of gods is different: thus, the fragment of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* (**F 2**)[78] which describes the assignment given to the idol by St Philotheus speaks of nineteen idols.[79] Since Coptic writers usually try to ensure that all events have a certain background and a convincing explanation, they employ here their favourite device – the sinister council of the usual villain, the Devil himself, who brings this idea to Diocletian:

> O my son Agrippida, I know of seventy old gods whom people abandoned. So make the golden statues of them and I will make it so that gods will secretly enter in those statues and inhabit there, and I will make so that they give you a victory in war. [80]

In his altercations with the martyrs the emperor always underlines how supportive his gods are and how they bring him victories in wars.[81] The explanation for this military, almost weapon-like, function of the gods is put by the Coptic authors into the mouth of Diocletian himself:

> For every man who has many gods, if one goes off to a country to war, his companions remain, and they watch over his kingdom until he obtains the victory in war and returns to his house safe and sound. As for that one whom

[76] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.95v *b.*
[77] For example, Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs*, p.78 (*Martyrdom of Ter and Erai*), p.202 (*Martyrdom of Apa Ari*); Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, p.202 (*Martyrdom of Isaac*).
[78] See description in Chapter 1.
[79] Crum, *Theological Texts*, p.71. Also the *Martyrdom of Isidorus* mentions eight hundred and four hundred statues, although this part of the manuscript is badly damaged, cf. Munier, 'Les Actes du martyre de saint Isidore' in *BIFAO* 14 (1918), p.103. A short remark in the *Martyrdom of Victor* mentions one hundred and forty idols altogether – seventy idols made of gold, and 'another seventy made of silver', cf. Elanskaia, *Коптские рукописи*, p.26, and Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, pp.1-2.
[80] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, p.142-143 (the Theodores).
[81] For example, in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.87v; in the *Martyrdom of Apatil*, Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* I, p.89.

> the Christians glorify and for whose name they suffer and die, he was unable to save himself from the hands of the Jews.[82]

Coptic writers also needed to emphasize the evil and demonic nature of Diocletian's idols and therefore some of the texts provide the audience with an explanation of their help: these false gods insist on persecution of the Christians in return for their support and protection. In the *Martyrdom of Justus* Diocletian consults the pagan priests as to what should be done for the worship of gods. The priests give him the answer of the gods:

> We want to be worshipped in every city and town in your kingdom and we want you to persecute the Christians. And if you do these things, all the gods will go out with you to war and aid you.[83]

Diocletian and his governors who are responsible for the martyrs' trials take great care of the statues of gods; they make sure that the idols receive all the necessary sacrifices (incense, wine and oil, the finest flour of wheat[84]) and that they are held in great awe. Thus, in the *Martyrdom of Victor* Diocletian organises a public sacrifice with great pomp – the temple and the whole city are decorated with wreaths of flowers, silver altars and golden pedestals are set for the idols, two hundred candles on candlesticks made of gold and silver are lit and two hundred white horses[85] draw the gods into the temple. When the statues are brought into the temple, Diocletian rises from his throne, takes off his own crown and places it on the head of his favourite god, Apollo, bowing and worshipping this idol and praising him for his

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[82] *Eudoxia and the Holy Sepulchre: a Constantinian legend in Coptic*, ed. by T. Orlandi (Milano, 1980), p.36.
[83] Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.189.
[84] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.2.
[85] The version published by Elanskaia has everything doubled: 'four hundred white horses without a single black mark adorned with precious stones', cf. Elanskaia, *Коптские рукописи*, p.27.

help.[86] The thick smoke of incense causes suffocation in the crowd, and thousands of people are reported to have died, either 'being choked by the fumes of the frankincense' or 'crushed by the crowd'.[87] All this seems to be pleasing Diocletian who announces further festivities 'to the glory of his gods' near the gates of the temple.

It is worth noting that the statues themselves – no matter how evil and hostile to Christians the gods who dwell in them are – sometimes appear in the narratives as a neutral instrument used by the Christian martyrs to perform miracles. Thus, in the *Martyrdom of Isidorus* Diocletian is performing a trial on the people who, in his opinion, had robbed the temple. The priests bring the gods into the theatre. St Isidorus sends a little baby to fetch the rest of the idols who duly obey. Upon arriving, the statues tell in one voice that the accused are innocent, and the robbery was done by the Egyptians who took the loot with them and left for Egypt. Then the people are released and St Isidorus orders the statues to kill their priests, after which he allows them to return to their temple.[88]

Although Coptic texts contain so many imagined details about the rituals and the worship of Diocletian's gods,[89] only a few of their names are actually reported. The first one in the list of names is always Apollo, then Zeus and Artemis, who is very

[86] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, pp.2-3.
[87] Ten thousand altogether in Budge's version (*Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.4), nine hundred in Elanskaia's version (*Коптские рукописи*, p.28).
[88] Munier, 'Les Actes du martyre de saint Isidore', pp.129-130. A similar episode is found in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, ff.96-97.
[89] See, for example, instructions provided in the *Martyrdom of Shenoufe and his brethren* where general Romanus basically drafts the text of the edict for the emperor: Reymonds, Barns, *Four Martyrdoms,* pp.83-84.

often given a title 'the mother of all gods',[90] sometimes also Athena, Hercules, and Hermes are mentioned. In 1913 Crum published a papyrus fragment of an unidentified Coptic martyrdom from Lord Amherst's collection in Pierpont Morgan Library which contains a part of Diocletian's edict and provides a list of the goddesses' names.[91] In 1969 Elanskaia added a few conjectures, based on the Leningrad version of the *Martyrdom of St Victor*, to Crum's edition.[92] According to this list, some of the female deities worshipped by Diocletian were: Artemis, Persephone, Selene, Thellas (ⲑⲉⲗⲗⲁⲥ), Calliope, Erinys (ⲧⲉⲣⲩⲛⲓⲥ), Nemesis, Hera, Dyranos (ⲧⲇⲩⲣⲁⲛⲟⲥ) and others, whose names are uncertain (perhaps, Ananke and Hekate[93]). The *Martyrdom of George* mentions also Astarte and Ezabel (ⲉⲍⲁⲃⲉⲗ probably Jezebel).[94]

The curious title of the 'mother of all gods' (ⲑⲙⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ in Bohairic martyrdoms where it appears most often) which the Coptic authors so consistently add to the name of the virgin goddess Artemis seems to have its origin in the Greek and Demotic magical texts. Artemis is very often merged with other mother goddesses in these texts and their titles are thus transferred onto her. Although the most common fusion of goddesses in the Greek magical papyri is that of Selene,

[90] See, for example, in Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* I: p.200 (*Martyrdom of Apa Anoub*), also p.73 (edict of Diocletian in the *Martyrdom of Isaac*).
[91] Crum, *Theological Texts*, pp.83-85.
[92] Elanskaia, *Коптские рукописи*, p.24.
[93] Crum, *Theological Texts*, p.84.
[94] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, p.270.

Hekate and Artemis, as has been shown by Hopfner,[95] there were also other combinations – for example, with the Egyptian mother goddess Isis. A Greek hymn to Isis from Medinet Madi (First Hymn of Medinet Madi,[96] 11.14-24) speaks of Artemis as of one of the avatars of Isis:

> All mortals who live on the boundless earth,
> Thracians, Greeks and Barbarians,
> Express Your fair Name, a Name greatly honored among all, (but)
> Each (speaks) in his own language, in his own land.
> The Syrians call You: Astarte, *Artemis*, Nanaia,
> The Lycian tribes call You: Leto, the Lady,
> The Thracians also name You as *Mother of the gods*,
> And the Greeks (call You) Hera of the Great Throne, Aphrodite,
> Hestia the goodly, Rheia and Demeter.
> But the Egyptians call You 'Thiouis' (because they know) that You,
> being One, are all
> Other goddesses invoked by the races of men.[97]

As late as the fourth century AD, Artemis is still fused with the moon-goddess Selene, Hekate and Persephone, as can be seen in a Greek papyrus containing a prayer to Selene; the prayer addresses the goddess as the 'mother of gods and men'.[98] Since the authors of the Coptic hagiographical texts had certain, even if vague, familiarity with magical texts, as will be shown in Chapter 6, this seems to be the most plausible explanation for the provenance of this peculiar title.

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[95] T. Hopfner, 'Hekate-Selene-Artemis und Verwandte in der griechischen Zauberpapyri und auf den Fluchtafeln' in *Pisciculi*, Festschrift F.J. Dolger (Munster, 1939), pp.125-145.

[96] This is the first of four Greek Hymns to Isis, written by Isidorus at a temple in the Fayum, dating from the early first century BC. The text was inscribed at the south gate of this large Greco-Egyptian temple, the ruins of which are situated near a village in the extreme south of the Fayum. The modern name of the village is Medinet Madi.

[97] V.F. Vanderlip, *The four Greek hymns of Isidorus and the cult of Isis* (Toronto, 1972), p.18; see also her commentaries on the hymn, pp.19-34.

[98] H. Betz, *The Greek Magical papyri in translation: including the Demotic spells* (Chicago, 1986), pp.90-91.

As regards the names of male deities, no such list has survived, but some names appear in the texts time and again. Judging by these references, the composers of Coptic passions strongly believed that Diocletian's favourite god was Apollo: he usually insists on offering a sacrifice to Apollo; Apollo's name is used in oaths by Diocletian and his servants (ⲱϵ ⲡⲟⲩⲭⲁⲓ ⲙⲡⲓⲁⲡⲟⲗⲗⲱⲛ); it is always Apollo to whom Diocletian refers as 'my great god'.[99] As for other gods, Zeus can be found in some texts, too, but his name is always second to Apollo and appears rather seldom in comparison with Apollo's name[100]; he is not mentioned in the oaths, neither is he invoked by the emperor's magicians when they are summoned to defeat the magic of the Christian martyrs. The name of Zeus appears more often in texts that are connected with other persecutors – for example, with Julian the Apostate: thus, in the *Martyrdom of Cyriacus, archbishop of Jerusalem,* Julian insists on a sacrifice to Zeus.[101] Hermes,[102] Scamander,[103] Poseidon,[104] and Serapis[105] are sometimes

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[99] Moreover, Apollo and Artemis are referred to as 'the great saviours of the whole universe' (ⲛⲛⲓⲱⲧ ⲛⲣⲉϥⲛⲟⲩⲉⲙ ⲛⲧⲉϯⲟⲓⲕⲟⲩⲙⲉⲛⲏ ⲑⲏⲣⲥ), cf. Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.164. It seems that for late Coptic authors Apollo and Artemis were generic 'pagan gods': thus, in the *Chronicle* of John of Nikiou the future Patriarch of Alexandria Theophilus is brought together with his little sister to a pagan temple – a temple 'of abominable gods, namely of Artemis and Apollo'; 'when the children entered, the gods fell to the earth and were broken' (*Chronicle*, LXXIX, 3-4). Since the aim of this episode was not to inform the reader of the particular idols which fell down because of the presence of the future saint, but to underline his spiritual power, Artemis and Apollo were apparently used in a generic sense.

[100] For example, in the *Martyrdom of Isaac of Tiphre*, Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, p.77.

[101] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, pp.11-16.

[102] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, p.73, 77 (*Martyrdom of Isaac of Tiphre*), 270, 280 *(Martyrdom of George*).

[103] ⲥⲕⲁⲙⲁⲛⲇⲣⲟⲛ, a Greek river god, ibidem, p.270, 280.

[104] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, p.204: in the *Encomium to St George Diospolitanus* by Theodotus of Ancyra the king Dadianus (most probably a distorted form of 'Diocletianus') tells St George to make a sacrifice to Apollo 'who suspended the heaven' and to Poseidon 'who affirmed the earth'.

[105] *Martyrdom of Apa Epima*, Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* I, p.120. Since the cult of Serapis survived in Egypt until at least the late fourth century (the Serapeum in Alexandria was destroyed by the Christian mob in 391), his appearance in the list of Diocletian's gods is less surprising, than that of

mentioned along with Hercules[106] and, what is rather curious, Onocentaurus – a mythological animal rather than a god.[107]

II.4 The death of Diocletian the Persecutor

> While he was in the midst of those things the impious Diocletian fell sick of a grievous bodily disease in the third year after the end of the persecutions which he had brought upon the Christians, and his mind and reasoning were changed. Because of this he was removed from power and the Roman senate sent him in exile to the island named Waros, in which there were great forests, and it lay in the west. And he remained there alone. And in that island there was a small number of believers who had survived; these were giving him daily food, sufficient to sustain his body. And while he led this solitary life, his reasoning returned to him, and craving for power rose in him; he asked the army and the Senate to come and take him from the fortress (where he was) and make him emperor as before. But the governors, the army and senate refused, saying: 'This man, who has lost his reason and mind, whom we have banned, we will not receive him back again'. And in consequence of these words this enemy of God and of the holy saints was deeply grieved and was not able to do what he desired. He kept weeping and his eyes shed tears in abundance since misfortunes surrounded him on every side. And he lost his reason to a very great degree and became blind and his health perished and he died.[108]
>
> John of Nikiou, *Chronicle* LXXVII

Scamander or Onocentaurus. Diocletian built a temple to Serapis in Rome, cf. Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, p.161.

[106] In the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* (f.95v *a*) the martyr asks Diocletian to bring out the god he trusts and place him in the middle of the crowd: 'The blessed one said: 'Bring now your great god, who is strong in his power!' And Diocletian replied: 'I will tell to bring you Phyrakles (Hercules), who is mighty in his strength!' And the king ordered the statue to be brought and two priests were standing before it. And it was written on the image: 'This is Phyracles, the great god''.

[107] Onocentaurus (ⲟⲛⲟⲕⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲣⲟⲥ) in the *Encomium to the Theodores* (Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, p.155): St Theodore, after defeating a dragon, entered into the pagan temple and saw a local god that the priests were worshipping; he pierced it (the statue) with his lance and destroyed all sacrifices which caused great tumult among the priests who reported the incident to the king; see also another *Encomium to the Theodores* (Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.64). It is probable that the composer of the encomium was referring to an unspecified animal deity and that 'Onocentaurus' was a generic name describing the appearance of this deity rather than its' name. On the appearance of onocentaurs in mosaics see P.G.P. Meyboom, 'The *Onokentaura*' in *The Nile Mosaic of Palestrina: Early Evidence of Egyptian Religion in Italy* (Leiden, 1995), pp.111-114.

[108] It must be noted that this particular version of Diocletian's imprisonment on the island of Waros preceding his death seems to be entirely original. For some reason it did not make it into Coptic hagiography, apart from the description of Diocletian's blindness – perhaps, because the hagiographers wanted to keep Diocletian in Antioch.

It is rather peculiar that, although the legend of Diocletian is so well developed in Coptic hagiographical texts, only a few of them speak about the death of the Persecutor. In the *Martyrdom of Macarius* the end of the apostate is outlined without much detail: Diocletian loses his sight and is thrown out from the country by his army and generals.[109] The *Encomium to Claudius* attributed to Severus of Antioch provides a few more particulars:[110] Diocletian is also blind and has to beg at the gate of the city he used to terrorise,[111] throwing stones and cursing at the children of Christians who come near him. Once the Devil appears to the ex-emperor, reminding him of how he has raised Diocletian to the throne; Diocletian with tears asks why he has abandoned him and the Devil explains that it happened because Diocletian has not succeeded in exterminating the Christian race. Diocletian promises that if his sight is restored by the Devil, he will wipe the Christians off the face of the earth, to which the Devil, rather incoherently, replies that the fire of hell is waiting for them both, because the great God they used to blaspheme is angry against them and plunges his enemies into the lake of fire.[112] Diocletian then tries to repent of his former sins and proclaims that he is Christian. The voice from heaven says that there can be no repentance for him, after which the angel comes down from heaven, strikes him and he dies an unspecified 'horrible death'.[113]

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[109] Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte*, vol. I, p.69.
[110] Gordon, *Textes coptes*, pp.70-72.
[111] See also *Encomium to St Mercurius* by Acacius of Neocaesarea in T. Orlandi, *Passione e miracoli di S. Mercurio* (Milan, 1976), p.56. Here the name of the city is given: Diocletian sits at the gates of Antioch.
[112] This is most probably a reference to the Apocalypse of John (19:20; 20:10, 14-15).
[113] Compare with *Acts* 12:23 where king Herod is struck by the angel of Lord. The only text that specifies the nature of this 'horrible death' is the Ethiopic *Martyrdom of St Theodore Anatolius (the*

A different version of Diocletian's end is presented in the *Miracles of St George* attributed to Theodosius of Jerusalem: the Archangel Michael and St George overturn the throne of the emperor and the golden pomegranates that were hanging above it, fall on his head and into his eyes, leaving him blind. Diocletian tries to repent his sins, but the archangel's voice tells him that there is no remission for him and that his reign is given over to Constantine who is 'ten thousand times more honourable'.[114]

This version of Diocletian's death coincides with the one found in the story of Eudoxia – a seventh-century Constantinian legend, edited by T. Orlandi and translated by B.A. Pearson.[115] The text was composed no later than the end of the seventh century (most probably, in the first half) and it tells the story of Constantine's accession to the throne and the finding of the True Cross in Jerusalem by a fictitious sister of Constantine, named Eudoxia. The first paragraphs of the text describe the prayers of the righteous suffering under Diocletian's persecution and the subsequent punishment of the emperor inflicted on him by the Archangel Michael. The Archangel overturns the throne of Diocletian first time without causing him any serious injuries – probably, giving him an opportunity to repent,

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Eastern), in which Diocletian is not only blind and sick, but is eaten alive by worms: this is clearly based on the biblical description of the death of Herod in the Acts (12:23), see F.M. Pereira, *Acta Martyrum I* in CSCO 37 (1907), pp.144-145, transl. pp.125-126. Exactly the same death is predicted for Diocletian by St Victor, son of Romanus, in a conversation with his mother before he is exiled from Antioch, cf. Elanskaia, *Коптские рукописи*, p. 42. A very similar description is provided by Eusebius for the illness of Galerius (*HE* 8.16.4-5), which Eusebius sees as a punishment for the persecution.

[114] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum,* II (CSCO 44), p.359.

[115] *Eudoxia and the Holy Sepulchre: a Constantinian legend in Coptic*, ed. by Tito Orlandi; introduction and translation by Birger A. Pearson; historical study by Harold A. Drake (Milano, 1980).

which he refuses – and then for the second time, leaving him blind and trembling.[116] Broken and distressed Diocletian summons Constantine and gives him the kingdom, after which his generals take him to the gates of Antioch where he is left to beg for seven years until the day of his death. On his last day Diocletian tries to repent but is refused; suddenly his tongue fills his mouth and he is eaten by worms.[117] This latter detail reminds of the description of Galerius' death in Lactantius: Drake suggests that the author transferred the disease from Galerius to Diocletian in order to 'streamline the succession of Diocletian-Galerius-Constantine – too complicated in any case for the popular imagination – into a more direct and dramatic narrative'.[118] In any case, the death of Diocletian would take place outside the timeframe of a typical martyr narrative, which is usually finishing with the martyr's glorious death, and this is probably why there are not so many descriptions of the death of the Persecutor in Coptic martyr texts.

II.5. Diocletian and Apollo

One of the most peculiar features of the Diocletianic legend is the personal relationship between Diocletian and Apollo. The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* describes it in this way:

> At that time Diocletian made a small statue of gold which was one cubit high and two palms wide. He had inlaid this statue with many precious stones and had given it a name Apollo; he then decorated it with many adornments and

[116] Ibidem, pp.31-37.
[117] Ibidem, pp.38-39.
[118] Ibidem, p.97.

> vain glory. And each time it was brought to the place where the lawless emperor was sitting and it was set before him day and night.[119]

This unusual association of Diocletian with Apollo is not reflected in any sources other than Coptic narratives; on the contrary, the numismatic evidence of that period shows that Diocletian had much stronger connections with Zeus (Jupiter) than with Apollo.[120] Diocletian associated himself with Jupiter, while his co-ruler, Maximian, associated himself with Hercules: their relationship is reflected in the titles they acquired – *Iovius* and *Herculius*.[121] Diocletian was rather conservative in his religious beliefs and his aim was to restore and affirm the traditional Roman cults. As Williams points out, since

> Jupiter was the father and supreme ruler of gods and men, under whose intimate care Diocletian had placed himself and his whole Tetrarchic system of government: he ruled with Jupiter's power, in his name, and in his manner. To Jupiter he had built innumerable temples and altars and made abundant sacrifices, and the reciprocity of Jupiter towards him had been plainly manifest to everyone.[122]

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[119] *Martyrdom of Philotheus,* f.88v *b.* The Georgian *Martyrdom* follows the Coptic text here: Then the godless one ordered that the golden idol be brought and placed near the throne. And he said to the blessed Philotheus: 'Worship now without delay this god, the great Apollo!' (chapter 5).

[120] If there was anyone who could be linked with Apollo, it should have been Constantine who allegedly had a vision of Apollo (before his conversion to Christianity), described by the anonymous panegyrist in the *Panegyric to Constantine* (*Panegyrici Latini* VI), cf. Nixon, Rodgers, *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, pp.248-251, and B.S. Rodgers, 'Constantine's Pagan Vision' in *Byzantion* 50 (1980), pp.259-278.

[121] S. Corcoran, 'Before Constantine' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine,* ed. by N.E. Lenski (Cambridge, 2012[2]), p.40 and 51. Corcoran points out that since Diocletian chose Jupiter and Hercules as two tutelary deities, 'Jupiter and Hercules are, not surprisingly, prominent on the coinage'. See also S. Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, pp.41-60, especially 58-59, and Nixon, Rodgers, 'Maximian and the Genesis of the Tetrarchy' in *In Praise of Later Roman Emperors*, pp.44-51.

[122] Williams, *Diocletian and the Roman Recovery*, p.161.

Also John Malalas, a sixth-century historian from Antioch, whose *Chronographia*[123] (*Chronicle*) provides a deep insight into the local Antiochene history and folklore and gives a detailed account of Diocletian's actions in Antioch, does not mention any special connection between Diocletian and Apollo. On the contrary, he describes the building of the stadium at Daphne and a temple dedicated to Olympian Zeus in that stadium, the building of the temples of Nemesis and Hecate, and only briefly mentions the restoration works on the temple of Apollo carried out during Diocletian's stay at Antioch (*Chronographia* 12.38). Moreover, Malalas reports Diocletian's words before abrogating from power: 'I have put aside the empire and have put on the likeness (σχῆμα) of the immortal Zeus' (*Chronographia* 12.44), once again underlining this emperor's connection with Zeus/Jupiter. So what would be the source for the Coptic representations of Diocletian's religious practices and why would the Copts insist on this special connection between Diocletian and Apollo?

II.6 Sources used by Coptic hagiographers

The *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, a well-tailored and elaborated story, relates a conversation between the martyr and the emperor which reflects the views of the Coptic writers on pagan worship and the relationship between Diocletian and Apollo. The martyr insists that the idols 'deserve great shame because they call themselves gods, while they are not gods', to which the emperor replies with a rhetorical question: 'Is not he a god then – Apollo, my great god in his power?' The

[123] Critical edition of the Greek text: *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, ed. by I. Thurn (De Gruyter, 2000).

saint answers: 'He is not God, but a statue without a soul'. To this familiar statement which he must have heard from many other Christians Diocletian responds with his own claim: 'But when I stand before him, asking him something, he usually answers me'. The following exchange of remarks deserves to be quoted in full:

> Saint Philotheus said: 'Like someone who dreams, and then he wakes up and he can not find the dream, likewise the words of this one – they are just a vision'. The emperor replied: 'Probably, but I find that every word that he says to me is true'. The blessed one said: 'Since God has chosen you to fulfil His will on the earth, the demons speak to you about these things, leading you astray to your own fall and destruction.'[124]

This statement of Diocletian that his god 'usually answers him' whenever he seeks an answer to his questions, brings to mind the ancient custom of consulting the oracle before making a serious decision – the custom which Diocletian undoubtedly practiced in his religious life, as is witnessed by the contemporary sources (Eusebius, Lactantius, *Panegyrici Latini*). Since the beginning of the Great Persecution, as Lactantius reports it, directly depended on the answer given by the oracle of Apollo, the connection between the persecutor and the shrine from which Diocletian received the 'blessing' to purge the army of the Christians might have been transformed by Coptic authors into this personal relationship described in the martyr passions.

Lactantius recounts how Diocletian turned to haruspices during his stay in the East in order to get the prediction, and the haruspices could not read anything in the entrails of the sacrificed animals, because 'the demons were chased away' by the sign

[124] F.88r *a-b*.

of cross made by some Christians who were present at the rite. The haruspices frequently repeated the sacrifices, but with no success. After a while Tages, the chief haruspex, 'said that the reason why the sacrifices were not yielding an answer was that profane persons were present at the sacred ceremonies' (*De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 10.3). This made Diocletian so angry that he ordered not only all who were present at the ceremonies, but also all who resided within the palace, to sacrifice, and, in case of their refusal, to be scourged. This order was also to be sent out to the army commanders that all soldiers should sacrifice.[125] It did not have much impact outside the army, and things went quiet for a while. A few months later, however, Galerius convinced Diocletian to consult some civil officials and army commanders and learn their views (as Lactantius suggests, so 'that his own misdeeds could be blamed on others'[126]). Some of these counsellors were hostile towards Christianity, some were not, and Diocletian remained undecided – that was why he sent a haruspex to consult the oracle of Apollo at Didyme, near Miletus. The oracle, according to Lactantius, gave an answer 'as one would expect of an enemy of the religion of God',[127] and thus the Persecution began.[128]

Eusebius also mentions this episode in his *De Vita Constantini* (*Life of Constantine*) in a chapter entitled 'That the persecution originated on account of the oracle of

[125] *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, 10.1-5.
[126] Ibidem, 11.5.
[127] Ibidem, 11.7.
[128] Since Lactantius tries to blame Galerius for the persecution, he adds that 'although he [Diocletian] could struggle no longer against his friends, and against Caesar and Apollo, he tried to preserve some moderation by ordering the business to be carried through without bloodshed; though the Caesar wanted those who resisted sacrifice to be burnt alive', ibidem, 11.8.

Apollo, who, it was said, could not give oracles because of "the righteous men"' and provides a more detailed testimony from Constantine himself who was then present at the court of Nicomedia. This account mentions that Apollo answered 'through the medium of no human voice':

> About that time it is said that Apollo spoke from a deep and gloomy cavern, and through the medium of no human voice, and declared that the righteous men on earth were a bar to his speaking the truth, and accordingly that the oracles from the tripod were fallacious. Hence it was that he suffered his tresses to droop in token of grief, and mourned the evils which the loss of the oracular spirit would entail on mankind.[129]

Constantine then goes on with his testimony that Diocletian was making enquiries as to who those 'righteous men' might be and that when he received an answer from one of the pagan priests that 'they were doubtless the Christians', he was very glad and immediately 'issued those sanguinary edicts'.[130] There is an echo of this episode – the presence of the Christian soldiers impeding the divination process – in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*:

> Diocletian said: 'How then do they [the gods] give us victories in wars?' The boy said: 'Let it not happen (ⲙⲏ ⲅⲉⲛⲟⲓⲧⲟ), it is not them who give you victories in wars, but they are the ones who incite against you wars and evil discords. But there are many among your soldiers who secretly have awe for Christ, while you do not know that Christ is the one who saves them in battles'.[131]

It is not clear, however, how well the Coptic authors, who composed original martyr passions, and the later editors, who re-worked the existing texts in accordance with the *koptischer Konsens* (see discussion in Chapter 2), were familiar with the works

[129] Eusebius, *Vita Constantini*, II.50.
[130] Ibidem, II.51.
[131] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.87v.

of Eusebius, Lactantius, Malalas and other historians. They apparently had access to some of their accounts through the works of local historians, such as John of Nikiou, as has been said above, or the anonymous authors of the early biographies from the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*,[132] but obviously they were not concerned with historical accuracy and therefore allowed themselves to add, change and omit certain episodes, or present the events from a different perspective.

One of the reasons for the Coptic writers to connect the names of Diocletian and Apollo was the geographical setting of the stories they composed or edited: the majority of Diocletianic passions is set at Antioch. And Antioch was, indeed, very closely associated with the cult of Apollo, since the famous shrine of Apollo was situated in one of Antioch's suburbs, Daphne.[133] This connection between Apollo and Antioch reveals yet another group of sources which the Coptic hagiographers used in their work in addition to historiographical accounts, namely homiletic and hymnographic material, especially the works of John Chrysostom[134] and Severus of Antioch.[135]

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[132] The dependence of the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* on Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* has been first demonstrated by O. von Lemm, *Koptische Fragmente zur Patriarchengeschichte Alexandriens* (Saint Petersburg, 1888) and W.E. Crum, 'Eusebius and Coptic Church Histories' in the *PSBA* 24 (1902), pp.68-84. Later T. Orlandi confirmed their observations in *Storia della Chiesa di Alessandria* (Milan-Varese, 1968-1970); see also idem, 'Nuovi frammenti della *Historia Ecclesiastica* Copta' in *Studi in onore di Edda Bresciani* (Pisa, 1985), pp.363-383.

[133] On the foundation of the temple at Daphne and its cults see G. Downey, *A History of Antioch: from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, 1961), pp.82-86; see also S.N.C. Lieu, *The Emperor Julian: Panegyric and Polemic* (Liverpool, 1989), p.51-52.

[134] John Chrysostom was regarded by the Copts as one of the most authoritative Doctors of the Church, despite his conflict with Theophilus of Alexandria, another highly esteemed hierarch of Church. For an overview of Chrysostom's reception in Coptic tradition, including the list of translations into Coptic (which is still updated, as new fragments are being identified, cf.

Apollo was one of the two main tutelary deities of the Seleucid dynasty (the other being Zeus), as he was reputed to be the father of Seleucus.[136] According to Libanius (Lib. *Or.* II.242), the Daphne temple stood near the spring of Castalia, in which an oracle of Apollo was thought to reside, and the water from the spring flowed along either side of the temple. This Daphne shrine has become a recurring *topos* in the late fourth and early fifth century literature – both pagan and Christian – because of a chain of events that took place before and during the reign of Julian the Apostate.

Caesar Gallus (351-354) transferred the relics of the hieromartyr Babylas, martyred in 251 or 253 under Decius, from the cemetery in Antioch to Daphne and built a martyrium near the temple of Apollo. Although Sozomen explains this translation of relics by Gallus' religious motives ('in order to purify Daphne of pagan superstition'[137]), this was also a political action, 'since it violated a long-standing taboo on the burial of bodies in sacred spaces and was a direct insult to the cult of Apollo'.[138] The oracle of Apollo ceased functioning – this 'silencing' of the oracle was mentioned by historians of the time and, of course, celebrated by Church writers. The hymn on St Babylas attributed to Severus of Antioch is mostly dedicated to this victory of the saint over the god and his servant, the emperor Julian the Apostate:

Chrysostom's section in the CMCL database, http://cmcl.aai.uni-hamburg.de/ accessed on 10.10.2012) and pseudo-Chrysostomic corpus in Coptic see T. Orlandi, 'St John Chrysostom' in *CE*, pp.1357-1359.

[135] Severus of Antioch, one of the most famous leaders of the Monophysite community, was another favourite saint and Doctor in the Coptic Church. His works, especially his cathedral homilies, were translated into Coptic at an early date and enjoyed great popularity in Egypt. Severus played a crucial role in establishing closer contacts between Antioch and Alexandria, cf. J.M. Fiey, 'Coptes et Syriaques, Contacts et Échanges' in *Collectanea* 15 (Cairo, 1972-1973), pp.310-318.

[136] Lieu, *The Emperor Julian: Panegyric and Polemic*, note 63 on p.68.

[137] This event is reported by Sozomen in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.19.

[138] W. Mayer, P. Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch (300-638 CE)* (Leuven, Paris, 2012), p.136; Downey, *A History of Antioch*, p.364.

> Accordingly even his dust is very formidable to the demons; and Apollo the idol, which was set up at Daphne, was struck dumb and ceased to utter its lying folly, because of the neighbourhood of the dead man who was alive through the performance of the signs which he wrought; and to Julian the tyrant, who had gone mad and ordered demon-worship, it was unable to give a deceitful revelation: and, after the precious bones of the martyr had been removed and taken away, the spirit that speaks from the earth, the full of fatuity, began to utter folly. And so through both facts, by its silence, I mean, and also by its foolish speaking it proclaims and declares the victory of that combatant: by whose prayers, Christ God, have mercy upon us.[139]

After being advised that the bones of St Babylas and other 'dead bodies' were suppressing the oracle,[140] Julian ordered the removal of those bodies from the vicinity of the temple. This resulted in a massive procession: Antiochian Christians drew the casket of St Babylas back to Antioch with triumphal singing and joyful celebrations.[141] Sozomen reports that this manifestation angered Julian and he ordered the prefect Sallustius to arrest and torture Christians. Sallustius unwillingly obeyed the order, but later convinced the emperor to release the prisoners, because their courage and firmness in enduring the tortures would expose the emperor and his court to ridicule 'while the Christians would acquire more glory'.[142]

Shortly after these events the temple at Daphne with its huge chryselephantine statue of Apollo was destroyed by fire and Julian suspected the Christians. This accident 'inflamed the emperor with such anger, that he ordered stricter

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[139] Hymn 142, VI in *The Hymns of Severus and Others in the Syriac Version of Paul of Edessa as revised by James of Edessa*, ed. and trans. E.W. Brooks, *PO* 7/5 (Paris, 1911), p.600.
[140] Sozomen, *HE* 5.19.
[141] Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 3.18. See also Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 22.12, although he does not mention the silence of the oracle, only 'the bodies that had been buried there'. Also St John Chrysostom, *De Sancto Hieromartyre Babyla*, 2-3, *PG* 50, cols.531-532; Sozomen, *HE* 5.19. This 'certain dead body' is also mentioned by Libanius in his '*Monody on the temple of Apollo at Daphne, destroyed by fire*': 'but now ... delivered from the hateful neighbourhood of a certain dead body which disturbed you, you have withdrawn from the midst of your worship'.
[142] Sozomen, *HE* 5.20.

investigations than usual to be made, and the greater church at Antioch to be closed'.[143] The Christians insisted that the building had been struck by lightning as a sign of divine retaliation;[144] the pagans were not certain in their opinions: thus, Ammianus Marcellinus reports that the fire was caused by candles left unattended in the temple,[145] and Julian himself admits in *Misopogon* that the temple was destroyed by the negligence of its keepers.[146]

These events are also mentioned in the homily of Severus on St Babylas[147] and in the second homily on St Leontius (the silencing of Apollo by the presence of St Babylas' body) by the same author,[148] in the homilies of John Chrysostom on St Babylas and in his commentaries on the Psalms (*In Psalmum CX*).[149] It is worth noting that the episode with heavenly fire, consuming the statue of Apollo, also appears in Coptic martyrdoms – it is, of course, re-imagined in the traditions of Coptic hagiography. The martyr, after having promised to perform a sacrifice before the statue of Apollo, utters a prayer in which the Old Testament prophet Elijah would be remembered[150] and then the heavenly fire would burn the idol of the impious emperor. The

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[143] Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 22.12, Eng. translation by J.C. Rolfe (Harvard, 1972), p.269.
[144] Chrysostom, *De Sancto Hieromartyre Babyla,* 3; Sozomen, *HE* 5.20.
[145] Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 22.13.3.
[146] 'And when I sent away the body from Daphne, some of you, in expiation of your conduct towards the gods, handed over the shrine of the god of Daphne to those who were aggrieved about the relics of the body, and the rest of you, whether by accident or on purpose, hurled against the shrine that fire which made the strangers who were visiting your city shudder, but gave pleasure to the mass of your citizens and was ignored and is still ignored by your Senate', cf. *The Works of the Emperor Julian* (Harvard, London, 1923), English translation by W.C. Wright, pp.485-486.
[147] *Les Homiliae Cathedrales de Sévère d'Antioche*: Homily XI, *PO* 38/2 (1976), pp. 370-381.
[148] *PO* 35, pp.358-367. The silencing of Apollo is mentioned since the church of St Leontius was also situated at Daphne, see pp.362-363. This homily existed in Coptic translation (No. 0887 in CMCL database), so it was definitely familiar to Coptic authors, cf. P. Allen and C.T.R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (London, 2004), p.31. See also on transmission of Severus' works in Coptic, *ibidem*, pp.31-32.
[149] *In Psalmum CX*, *PG* 55, col.285.
[150] Cf. 1 Kings, 18:36-38 and 2 Kings, 1:11-12.

Martyrdom of Philotheus provides this depiction for such a burning of the emperor's idol:

> The boy Philotheus said: 'O God, Who has given fire from heaven to the prophet Elijah, your servant, give me also fire from heaven to burn this idol before all this multitude of people who are standing here'. And behold, immediately fire came from heaven and burnt down the idol before everyone. And the gold which was in the statue became a big lump on a side, while the precious stones were gathered separately.[151]

This description of the heavenly fire destroying the idol of Apollo appears to be modelled on that found in the *Homily on St Babylas* by John Chrysostom:[152]

> But the unhappy god soon realised that his wily artifices had been in vain and that the struggle was not with a dead body but with a living and moving spirit, triumphant not only over Apollo himself but over all gods. For Babylas prayed that *God would send down fire* upon the temple of Daphne: whereupon *fire* indeed destroyed the whole of the roof and *consumed the idol right down to its feet, leaving nothing but a heap of dust and ashes*: and of the whole temple only the walls were left standing.[153]

Chrysostom underlines that this was not a natural phenomenon, but a clear and fearsome manifestation of the power of the saint's prayer:

> A visitor to the site as it is now would certainly say that what happened was the work of fire: for the destruction was not haphazard nor as if it originated from some inanimate material but rather as if some hand was guiding the flames to destroy some parts and spare others. Indeed, the temple was burned out skilfully and systematically, not like buildings burnt out in the usual way, but like those retaining its principal walls and lacking only its roof.[154]

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[151] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.90r *a*; also in the *Martyrdom of St Theodore Stratelates* the heavenly fire consumes the pagan temple, all the priests and idols, see Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* I, p.166.

[152] *De Sancto Hieromartyre Babyla, contra Julianum et contra gentiles*, *PG* 50, cols.533-572.

[153] English translation by M.M. Morgan in Lieu, *The Emperor Julian: panegyric and polemic*, p.73, 93.

[154] Ibidem, p.94; see also notes 36 and 37 on p.85 (references to descriptions of the state of the temple building in the works of historiographers).

Since historical sources do not provide any information on the special connection between Diocletian and Apollo, it might be suggested that the authors who worked on developing the Diocletianic legend used the material provided by the two popular 'Antiochian' authors – Severus of Antioch and John Chrysostom. Thus, the geographical setting of the events in the Diocletianic legend has, in a way, contributed to the forging of the imaginary link between Diocletian and Apollo, which is so characteristic for the Coptic tradition.

Conclusions

The analysis of the legend of Diocletian in hagiographical texts presented in this chapter shows that Coptic authors completely appropriated Diocletian and used him as their own Judas Iscariot, 'the necessary renegade' in the narrative of the foundation of their Church, the Church of the Martyrs.[155] While creating this legend they used various types of sources: thus, they obviously used some material from the works of Christian historiographers, such as Eusebius, Lactantius, John Malalas and their own compatriot John of Nikiou. However, the authors of Coptic hagiographic texts were not very much concerned about the historicity of their narratives: all the main features of the legend, such as Diocletian's childhood and adolescence in Egypt, his employment in the army of Numerian and rise to power, the war with the Persians and the treason of the bishop which gives a start to the persecutions, creation of the 70 idols and, finally, the overthrow of his throne and disgraceful death, have very little to do with historical reality. The succession of events in the

[155] Cf. Papaconstantinou, 'Historiography, Hagiography', p.81.

Diocletianic passions was freely changed – for example, in Coptic tradition Diocletian's immediate successor on the throne is Constantine, not Galerius.

The authors also drew inspiration from the homilies and hymns of the Fathers of Church, such as John Chrysostom and Severus of Antioch; moreover, some of the missing parts of the jigsaw puzzle – such as the names of the gods of Diocletian – were borrowed, as it seems, from magical texts. All this material was re-worked and re-imagined in accordance with the traditions of Coptic hagiography in order to become more accessible and, in a way, more entertaining for the audience. This re-imagining included adding fantastic and legendary details to the existing story lines (such as, for example, greatly exaggerating the number of the people killed during the pagan celebrations to the gods of the emperor) or creating entirely new ones (such as the story of Diocletian's apostasy). The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and other texts of the Antioch cycle discussed in this chapter present us with yet another opportunity to examine the sources and techniques used by the hagiographers as well as the results of their work. And these results are very impressive, since the story of Diocletian the Persecutor has become the major corner stone in the building of the identity of the Church of the Martyrs.

Chapter 4

'My city Antioch is glorious even as Jerusalem for the number of the martyrs slain in it': Antioch as 'the holy city' in Coptic hagiography

> 'I bless the true Creator, the Christ, Who has remembered my city of Antioch and has raised up for us these great and brilliant luminaries, these true pearls in the house of righteous kings, these warriors who were mighty men of war'.[1]

Having discussed the timeframe set by the Coptic hagiographers for the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and the second protagonist of this story, Diocletian the Great Persecutor, I will now turn to the geographical setting of the *Martyrdom*. The observant reader of the Coptic martyr stories will undoubtedly notice that in these texts, especially those connected with Diocletian's persecution, the city of Antioch plays a very special role. In Coptic texts Diocletian's residence is always located in Antioch, not in Nicomedia[2]; the persecution itself starts in Antioch, not in Nicomedia where in fact it began with the burning of its newly built cathedral in February 303.[3] The trials of the martyrs usually take place at the palace or the theatre in Antioch, and so do the miracles and final executions of those martyrs who are not sent to Egypt or elsewhere. Thus, it appears that the authors of the Coptic martyr passions and of the encomia in honour of these martyrs have established Antioch as a very strong literary *topos* in their works.

Indeed, even a cursory glance at the Coptic *Synaxarium* shows that more than forty martyrs[4] are reported either to have been born in Antioch (for example, Eusignius,[5] the

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[1] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, pp.4-5.
[2] For example, in the stories of Ter and Erai, Justus, the Theodores, and others.
[3] Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius*, p.22.
[4] See table at the end of this chapter.

members of the Basilides family, Cyprian, Philotheus and others), or to have lived in Antioch for a while (like the brothers Cyrus (Abakir) and John, natives of Alexandria[6]), or to have been brought to Antioch for trial – such as Sarapamon, a Jew from Jerusalem, who became a monk in Egypt, then a bishop of Nikiou and was then summoned to Antioch where he was questioned by Diocletian and sent back to Alexandria for beheading[7]. Moreover, Coptic hagiographers find ways to insert Antiochene connections even into the lives of those saints who otherwise have no connection with Antioch whatsoever: thus, only in Copto-Arabic tradition is it stated of the famous *anargyroi*[8] brothers Cosmas and Damian, who were in fact martyred somewhere in Asia[9] (different versions of their passions suggest Cilicia, Pheremma, Rome), that they were summoned to Antioch for trial by the governor Lysias and underwent tortures in the great theatre of this city.[10] Their mother Theodote was also brought to Antioch and was tortured and killed by Diocletian, who did not allow anyone to bury her body – only a boy Victor, son of Romanus, a future martyr for Christ and one of the most popular military saints of

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[5] The passion of Eusignius seems to be one of the earliest, cf. M. van Esbroeck, 'St Eusignius' in *CE* 4, pp.1071-1072, also Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte*, p.83.

[6] O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, p.119; on the evidence of their cult in Egypt see also Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte*, pp.135-136.

[7] O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, pp.244-245.

[8] This epithet – *anargyroi, unmercenaries* - is applied to those saints who did not take payment for their medical help. Apart from Cosmas and Damian, it is usually applied to the martyrs Cyrus and John, Pantaleon, Tryphon, and Sampson the Hospitable, who founded a hospital for the poor in Constantinople.

[9] M. van Esbroeck, 'La diffusion orientale de la légende des saints Cosme et Damien' in *Hagiographie, cultures et sociétés: IVe-XIIe siècles: actes du colloque organisé à Nanterre et à Paris, 2-5 mai 1979* (Paris, 1981), pp.61-77.

[10] In order to underline the saints' connection with Antioch the authors of their Coptic life insert the episode with the treacherous bishop into this text. See also W.E. Crum, 'Place-Names in Deubner's *Kosmas und Damian*' in *PSBA* 30 (1908), pp.129-136.

Egypt, was brave enough to bury Theodote's body.[11] Naturally, this enraged Diocletian and set conditions for the future banishing of Victor to Egypt; this episode served as a link between the *Cycle of Victor* and the Copto-Arabic passion of Cosmas and Damian. These persistent appearances of Antioch in the lives of different saints naturally raise a question: why was Antioch so important for the Copts?

In this chapter I will try to suggest some answers to this question by focusing on one of the enduring motifs of Christian hagiography – the image of the 'holy city', which in Coptic martyr passions is represented by Antioch. I will look at the representations of Antioch in Coptic hagiography and, more specifically, in the texts belonging to the Antioch cycle. In the second part of this chapter I will examine the main landmarks used in these texts for creating an imaginary urban landscape. The third part of this chapter will discuss the possible reasons for this hagiographical re-imagining of Antioch and historical evidence for the connections between Antioch and Egypt.

I. Antioch in hagiographical reality

I.1 Antioch as the Holy City; Antioch and Jerusalem

While composing numerous hagiographical texts concerning the Antiochene saints the Copts created, just as they did for Diocletian – probably unintentionally – a hagiographical reality in which Antioch, in a way, has replaced Jerusalem as the Holy City. In this parallel reality Antioch had much stronger connections with Egypt than it had in historical reality and assumed some special features which were meant to assert

[11] This story is related in the *Encomium on St Victor attributed to Theopempus of Antioch*, cf. *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library*, pp.133-152.

its status as the City of the Martyrs. Peters, discussing the phenomenon of the holy city and holy places in Christianity and Islam, writes:

> What constitutes a holy city is not then the mere existence of such holy places, but rather the presence in the city of a *sacrum*, or perhaps several, of such an order of importance or allure that the cultus connected with it exercises an attraction not merely on the city's immediate hinterland but over an extended network.[12]

The special holiness of Antioch, as constructed by Coptic writers, although it could not really surpass the holiness of Jerusalem, because Jerusalem was the place of Jesus' life, passion and resurrection, was nevertheless regarded as something close to it and certainly had great influence over an extended network reaching to Egypt. For the Copts the *sacrum* of Antioch was the blood of the thousands of martyrs converted to Christianity by the famous leaders – Victor, Claudius, Theodore and others, who then shed their own blood either in Antioch or in Egypt (or in both places), thus creating a network of shrines and relics. In this respect Antioch could, as the Copts saw it, rival Jerusalem.

This attitude is best expressed in the *Encomium to the Theodores* attributed to a certain Theodore, archbishop of Antioch, found in a tenth-century Bohairic codex (Vat. Copt. 65).[13] The title of the encomium[14] states that it was delivered in the martyrium of St

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[12] F.E. Peters, *Jerusalem and Mecca: the Typology of the Holy City in the Near East* (New York, 1986), p.3.
[13] Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, pp.1-72, English translation pp.73-133. The same text is published in Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, pp.90-156.
[14] The title 'encomium' is a self-designation of the text, but in fact it is difficult to place it among the classical Christian encomia. On the Coptic encomia of the late sixth and seventh centuries see M. Sheridan, 'The Encomium in the Coptic Literature of the Late Sixth Century' in *From the Nile to the Rhone and Beyond: Studies in early Monastic Literature and Scriptural Interpretation* (Rome, 2012), pp.253-275. The present encomium has a very long and lavish *prooemium* and is written in a very 'high style', but the main body of the text – that is, the stories of the two Theodores – is quite convoluted and

Theodore Anatolius (or Eastern) in Antioch on the day of the feast of St Theodore the General (Stratelates) on the 20th of the month Epiphi. The author, claiming to be speaking at the time of the Emperor Constantine, frequently compares Antioch and Jerusalem in the long *prooemium* (opening part) of the encomium. He then moves on to describe in brief some of the miracles and victories of the mighty heroes – the martyrs of Antioch, finishing this introduction with a praise of Antioch as the city 'whose seed are the ones who dwell in heaven and in Sion'.[15]

The next part of the *Encomium* is dedicated entirely to the praise of Antioch:[16] the city is compared to a spring of pure water in a beautiful garden full of trees laden with sweet-smelling fruits. This garden is ruined and defiled by a wicked tyrant who cuts down the trees and pollutes the spring, bringing the wrath of God on himself. By God's will the spring – 'the city of Antioch which abides in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ' – reappears in the garden, bubbling happily and feeding the roots of the trees which start to grow again. The trees which had been cut down but then were restored are the glorious martyrs of Antioch (apart from the two Theodores, Claudius, Ter, Victor, Justus, Eusebius, Basilides, Sisinnius, Stephen, and Apoli are mentioned) whose bodies are revealed to the faithful and perform signs and wonders, curing the sick. Another, different *Encomium in honour of St Theodore Anatolius* attributed to the same bishop

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confusing, the events in both storylines occur at the same time and are not properly linked or explained; the language is much poorer.

[15] Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.9. This kind of rhetorical praise of the city might have been inspired by Byzantine hagiography, where it appears as one of the typical elements of hagiographical discourse, see H.G. Saradi, 'The City in Byzantine Hagiography' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography. Volume II: Genres and Contexts*, ed. by S. Efthymiadis (Farnham, 2014), pp.437-438. Saradi shows how in hagiographical texts the holiness of a saint sanctifies also the city where he or she was born and gives it transcendental qualities.

[16] Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, pp.9-12.

Theodore also likens his native city to a garden; this comparison, in his opinion, unites Antioch with the heavenly Jerusalem:

> The orchard is a pleasant place, and trees in it cluster round about it, they blossom and are laden with fruit, O my beloved. ... All the great ones are around it, and the mighty men and the generals rejoice and are glad in it. These words do not [apply] to Antioch only, but also to the heavenly Jerusalem, the habitation of all the saints.[17]

This image of an orchard takes on a new meaning in Coptic hymnography where it is employed to assert the connection between the two churches. In the acrostic *Hymn to the martyr Claudius of Antioch*, preserved in the manuscript M574 from the Pierpont Morgan Collection,[18] Antioch is again represented as a garden of fruit-bearing trees, but here we see these trees transplanted into the new soil where they bear more fruit (stanzas 15 and 16):

> For when from fruit-bearing trees/ one takes away shoots/ and plants them in new earth / they will bear much fruit./ Behold, Victor and Claudius/ were taken to Antioch,/ and they were brought to the land of Egypt./ They healed everyone who was sick.[19]

But the author of the *Encomium to the Theodores* has not finished comparing Antioch and Jerusalem – in a following lengthy passage he suggests that Antioch is the ultimate answer to the riddle found in the Psalms: 'Their blood they have shed like water all around Jerusalem, and there was no one to bury them' (Ps 79:3). The preacher asks his audience a question, thus engaging them in the solving of this riddle – 'who are those people slain around Jerusalem whose bodies were not buried?'. He insists that the bodies of the prophets and the Apostles were buried and these words do not, therefore, refer to

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[17] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.2.
[18] See description of this manuscript in Chapter 2, n.35.
[19] Kuhn, Tait, *Thirteen Coptic acrostic hymns*, pp.45-46.

them, and then rhetorically addresses David himself: 'Now, my father the prophet, tell me of those who were slain near the city if not the little children whom Herod killed from among his people, for their bodies were many'. The comparison between the massacre of the babies in Bethlehem and the persecution of the Christian people in Antioch which was so severe that streets of the city ran with streams of blood leads the author to a rather unusual conclusion: 'The wonder of my city surpasses that of Jerusalem, because her great and mighty warriors and her rich men' died of their own will, unlike the little children of Jerusalem who were not voluntary martyrs, because 'they were killed against their own wish and that of their parents'. It is the author's opinion that the little children of Jerusalem 'stand waiting before' the martyrs of Antioch who had to make greater sacrifices than those innocent souls, since the martyrs of Antioch were mainly people of noble birth and considerable wealth which they abandoned for Christ's sake.[20]

At this point the name of Stephen the Protomartyr, the true glory of the Church of Jerusalem, is brought up before the audience by the preacher – and again, the author of the *Encomium* finds a way to show that Antioch can also boast of her own protomartyr.[21] His name was also Stephen, the first fruit (ⲁⲡⲁⲣⲭⲏ) of the confessors of Antioch, since he was the man who tore down the decree of Diocletian. But his zeal was even greater than that of Jerusalem's Stephen, for his head, severed from his body by Diocletian's own hand, kept 'crying aloud abundantly mentioning all the saints of

[20] Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, pp.11-12.
[21] Ibidem, pp.13-14.

Antioch' and continued to do so from the ground even after its burial, so that the king ordered the head to be placed in a vessel of lead with its mouth sealed and cast into the sea. Having told this bizarre story, the author returns to the memorial of St Theodore the General and explains why the body of this saint, which, as it might seem, belongs to Antioch, now abides in Egypt and why it should not cause any disturbance among the Christians of Antioch. In the course of the story the audience learns that for St Theodore Egypt 'was not a foreign land, but the land of his fathers' and it is only natural that his body had been returned there.

This account, however fantastic and improbable it may sound, reveals a lot about the intentions of the author of this encomium – the aim of this discourse is not only to explain the importance of Antioch and even her superiority over Jerusalem in certain aspects, but also to assert the special connection between Antioch and Egypt through the network of the saints' martyria and relics. It also reflects the dual perception of Antioch as the place where previously the martyrs had been tried and tortured and where now the Christian faith shines forth through their victory over the evil tyrant and through their posthumous miracles which occur at the shrines.

The contrast between the former Antioch, the Antioch of Diocletian and his abominable gods, and the Antioch of now, 'the Christ-loving city' (as it is referred to in the Copto-Arabic *Encomium of St Philotheus*[22]), is underlined in a number of texts, especially in the encomia attributed pseudonomously to various Antiochene bishops (Theodore, Severus and others). The writers of these encomia assign great importance to the

[22] Youssef, 'The Encomium of St. Philotheus', p.179.

physical imprints of the persecution on the city of Antioch which have now become places of worship and prayer. Thus, the *Encomium in honour of St Theodore Anatolius* asserts that

> The tree on which Theodore Anatolius was crucified was made into the doors of his martyrium by the command of the Emperor Constantine and into the apse of his chamber of service, and into the bier on which his holy body [lay]...[23]
> The stone slabs over which they dragged him [Victor, son of Romanus] and which were smeared with his holy blood, ... and the fetters which they laid on his feet and legs ... now hang on the doors of his holy martyrium where he drives out the demons, and the stone slabs ... are now laid down in his martyrium and illumine the whole city...[24]

Since Theodore Anatolius was crucified in Antioch and Victor's trial and first tortures took place also in Antioch, the presence of these relics in Antioch might seem plausible to the audience. But the preacher mentions also other relics pertaining to the cult of St Victor, which could only be brought to Antioch from Egypt, probably as a symbol of union and friendship between the two churches in the context of the text:

> When I look at the sword of Horion, the companion of the holy Apa Victor,[25] and the flat shield of gold[26] which hangs in his martyrium, again I lift up my eyes

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[23] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.4. This detail is a purely Coptic invention. Eusebius describes Constantine's death in great detail in *Vita Constantini* (IV, 65) and does not mention any wooden bier, but describes how the soldiers lifted the body from the couch and placed the body in a golden coffin, 'which they enveloped in a covering of purple, and removed to the city which was called by his own name'.

[24] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.4.

[25] Horion the Kourson (ϩⲟⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲡⲕⲟⲩⲣⲥⲟⲛ) is a rather peculiar saint – his name is not present in the Coptic *Synaxarium*, but he appears at the very end of the martyrdom of St Victor where he delivers the mercy stroke to the suffering Victor, whose head had not been cut off properly. At first Horion refuses to strike his fellow soldier, saying that he never 'stretched out his hand even against a bird', but later, moved by the agony of his friend Victor and the latter's promise that he himself would soon receive the crown of martyrdom, cuts off Victor's head. Cf. Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.44. This is probably the same sword which was used for this mercy killing that the author of the encomium is referring to, which shows close acquaintance of the author with the *Martyrdom of St Victor*.

[26] The 'flat shield of gold' (ⲡⲉⲇⲁⲗⲟⲛ ⲛⲛⲟⲩϐ), as Budge translated this expression, does not appear anywhere in the legend of St Victor – on the contrary, his *Martyrdom* and all encomia in his honour emphasize Victor's contempt for luxurious clothing or weapons. On the other hand, the *Martyrdom of Victor* mentions the golden chain which St Victor tore off his neck while proclaiming his faith before the Emperor, see Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.11. Since the Greek word πέταλον means 'leaf' or 'leaf of

> to the heights of heaven, and I see his crown of gold, and his royal sceptre, and four and twenty angels bearing them in heaven...

The mention of these relics, apparently originating from Egypt, brings in another point of discussion – a regular accentuation of the special connection between Antioch and Egypt, which is sometimes described indirectly, as has been shown above in the example from the *Hymn to the martyr Claudius of Antioch*, and sometimes rather straightforwardly, as will be shown below.

I.2 Connection between Antioch and Egypt as represented in Coptic martyr texts

> And when I see their martyria that have been built around my city of Antioch like a wall, and when I hear the bells of gold that hang behind the curtain inside their martyria, and when I see the multitudes of people exulting in their holy festivals, I rejoice immediately and bless my King Christ.[27]

The emphasis on the existence of the saints' martyria both in Antioch where these saints were born or suffered, and in Egypt where their relics are kept, which we noticed in both encomia attributed to Theodore of Antioch, is quite significant. In his theoretical work on hagiography, *Cinq leçons sur la méthode hagiographique*, Delehaye maintained that the name of the place where a saint was born or grew up was not so relevant for hagiographers; the only indispensable piece of information, the first hagiographical coordinate (the second being the date of the martyr's death or the day of his/her commemoration), was the name of the place where the saint's body was kept.[28] This

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metal', it might be a reference to the golden breastplate which Victor received from Diocletian in his childhood – this story is not recorded in his *Martyrdom*, but in an encomium in his honour. It is attributed to Theopempus of Antioch, another fictitious Antiochian bishop; cf. *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library*, p. 142, English translation in CSCO 545 (48), p. 110.

[27] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.6.

[28] Delehaye, *Cinq leçons sur la méthode hagiographique*, p.13.

hagiographical coordinate, the so-called martyrium, was usually a focal point of a saint's cult.[29]

But in both encomia quoted above the model proposed by Delehaye is not wholly applicable – the strong and unbroken connection of the Antiochene martyrs whose bodies mostly reside in Egypt (this is the case especially with Victor, Claudius, Theodore the General) with their birth-place is constantly underlined. It is also rather unusual that the hagiographical texts, especially encomia attributed to the Antiochene bishops, do not contain any mention of the purported authors' wish to bring these relics or at least some parts of these relics back to Antioch, where the martyria in honour of these saints supposedly exist. The division of the saints' relics was already practised in the fourth century[30] and one would expect that at least some parts of the martyrs' bodies would be sent to their native city, as was done, for example to the bones of St Ignatius of Antioch, martyred in Rome. On the contrary, the encomia emphasize that it was very natural for the relics of the Antiochene saints to be kept in Egypt.

This discrepancy between the historical reality and the hagiographical reality in the encomia ascribed to the Antiochene bishops allegedly writing at the time of Constantine

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[29] On martyria in general see the seminal work of A. Grabar, *Martyrium; recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique* (Paris, 1943-1946), especially the chapter on martyria built for the relics of the saints, vol.1, pp.335-385. However, Grabar's methodological approach to the problem of the origins of martyria of the saints and their influence on the Holy Sepulchre Martyrium in particular was challenged by R. Ousterhout who suggested that the Holy Sepulchre Martyrium is in fact derived from the Old Testament Temple and the Ark of the Covenant, see R. Ousterhout, 'The Temple, the Sepulchre, and the Martyrion of the Savior' in *Gesta* 29 (1990), pp.44-53.

[30] On the change of attitude towards disinterring of the martyrs' bodies and the distribution of relics see R.A. Markus, *The End of Ancient Christianity* (Cambridge, 1990), pp.139-155, especially pp.148-149. By the end of the eighth century no church could be consecrated without at least a small part of the relics of a saint (Canon 7 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council of 787).

– the fictitious Theodore and Theopempus – could perhaps be explained by the absence of such practice at this early time. But the same anomaly is also observed in a text ascribed by Coptic editors to Severus of Antioch, in whose time the practice of division and translation of relics was wide-spread. Thus, in the *Encomium to Claudius of Antioch*[31] we read about the vision of Severus in which Claudius tells him to go to Egypt, to the province of Asyut, where his body is concealed near a pagan temple, and to build a martyrium for him there, since Severus will be forced to go to Egypt anyway. After his banishment to Egypt Severus finds the place and with the help of a certain Apa Stephanos, a local hermit, encourages the people of the nearby village (which already had three churches in it) to build the martyrium. They first destroy the pagan temple and purify the place and then start building under the supervision of Apa Stephanos, whom Severus leaves in charge of the project. A few weeks later, Severus returns to the village where the building of the sanctuary is carried on at amazing speed with the help of the local governor. When the body of the saint is at last found, the nobles of the province come to venerate it. The body is transferred to the newly-built church with great pomp, and then the local bishop consecrates the church. After the consecration of the church, and another veneration and prayer before the relics of St Claudius, Severus departs, leaving Apa Stephanos in charge of the shrine.[32] He does not take any parts of

[31] Published with French translation by G. Godron, *Textes coptes relatifs à Saint Claude d'Antioche* (Turnhout, 1970).

[32] Gordon, *Textes coptes*, pp.486-507. The authenticity of this homily has been questioned already as early as 1944, cf. J. Drescher, 'An Encomium attributed to Severus of Antioch' in *BSAC* 10 (1944), pp.43-68. He insists that this is 'the work is an Egyptian writing for Egyptians'. However, he admits that there is one point that might prove its authenticity – the mention of St Drosis, whose cult was very well established in Antioch partly because of Severus' efforts to promote it. Both Chrysostom and Severus dedicated homilies to her (Chrysostom: *Homily on St Drosis*, *PG* 50; Severus: *Homeliae cathedrales*, Homily 100, *PO* 22,

the relics with him; neither does he mention any intention to bring back to his city anything material related to the martyr.

It appears that the only mention of any material objects transferred to Antioch is the above quoted passage from the *Encomium to Theodore Anatolius* in which two rather questionable *reliquia* – the sword of Horion and the golden shield or armour of Victor – are referred to. In other texts it is usually the records of the martyr's trial and death that are brought from Egypt to Antioch: thus, Martenianus, Victor's childhood friend, brings the records of his martyrdom and hides them in his house.[33]

Since there is no evidence in the sources discussed in this thesis that any relics of the Antiochene saints who had been martyred in Egypt were ever taken back to their native city, the question arises as to why did Coptic hagiographers put so much energy into providing a convincing Antiochian background for these saints – i.e. the alleged existence of their martyria in Antioch? In answering this question one has to bear in mind that, as Wilfong rightly points out,

> What can be said for certain is that sources composed in Coptic were directed at an exclusively Egyptian audience: with only a very few and very late exceptions, Coptic was not used outside of Egypt.[34]

This means that the Coptic authors, among other things, were addressing a specific Egyptian problem here – and that problem was the cult of the martyrs' relics. Already at

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pp.230-248 and Homily 114, *PO* 26, pp.290-306); Severus also composed a hymn in her honour, *PO* 7/5, p.621-622. Despite her great popularity in Antioch, her cult was never really strong in Late Antique Egypt, cf. Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte*, pp.76-77. She appears in the *Synaxarium*, however, and there are hymns for her in the *Difnar*, but it is difficult to assess how late her tradition is.

[33] Cf. *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library*, p.149-151.

[34] T.G. Wilfong, 'Constantine in Coptic: Egyptian Constructions of Constantine the Great' in *Constantine: History, Historiography and Legend*, ed. by S.N.C. Lieu and D. Montserrat (London, 1998), p.178.

the time of Shenute (fifth century) the problem of questionable or, in some cases, openly fake relics, was very serious. Shenute was very clear in his objections to the hunt for the martyrs' bones: in the homilies '*Since it Behooves Christians*' and '*Those Who Work Evil*' he ridicules the 'visions' in which evil spirits in the disguise of 'martyrs' appear to gullible souls and convince them to seek for their bones which later turn out to be dogs' bones;[35] Shenute says that they dig up some random bones and give them the empty name 'martyrs' and then they build martyria for them or bring them into churches for veneration.[36] If this is taken into consideration, then the answer to the above question becomes obvious – apart from establishing the sense of unity between Alexandria and Antioch, Coptic writers were trying to provide a certain historical background for the relics of the Antiochene martyrs kept in the Egyptian shrines which were already very numerous in the fifth century.[37] The shrines were built, the cults were thriving, and the people who came to venerate the relics needed a convincing story of their provenance.[38] Hence the elaborate stories of the martyrs' childhood, youth and adolescence in Antioch, the city of the martyrs, and of their later banishment to Egypt where the final executions take place.

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[35] E. Amelineau, *Oeuvres de Schenoudi* I (Paris, 1907), p.208.

[36] Ibidem, p.212ff. However, it must be noted that Shenute does not attack the cult of martyrs as such, just the extremes that he observes.

[37] On the transformation of the cult of saints and the change in the spread of relics and shrines see A. Papaconstantinou, 'The cult of saints: A haven of continuity in a changing world?' in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300-700*, ed. by R.S. Bagnall (Cambridge, 2007), pp.350-364.

[38] Papaconstantinou suggests that this should be considered the main reason for the appearance of such texts; she insists that they were 'made up to justify the discovery of the martyrs' relics over a century after their supposed death, and the establishment of new shrines in their name', cf. Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', p.329. But we should also take into consideration the liturgical aspect of the hagiographical production and the church-political context of the composition of the martyr passions.

But there is one more striking feature in the narratives describing the background of the Antiochene martyrs. In the Coptic account of the building of the martyrium at the grave of the martyr Claudius in Egypt, Severus, addressing his (probably fictitious) Antiochian audience, mentions specifically that he noticed the unanimity and great endurance of the Egyptian people: 'I saw there a nation that carried the cross and worshipped with one heart', says Severus, 'and I gave glory to God'.[39] This compliment, which the authors of the encomium put into the mouth of Severus, one of the most respected Church writers, is not just a formal courtesy – it plays an important role in establishing Egypt as a 'land of saints'. This 'Egyptocentric' focus, characteristic for Coptic hagiography in general,[40] very often emerges in the narratives connected with Antioch. In such texts the roles of Antioch and Alexandria are reversed and Egypt is depicted as a source of sacramental grace and a birth-place of the martyrs who come *from Egypt to Antioch* and shed their blood there.

I.3 Reversing the roles of Antioch and Alexandria

The *Synaxarium* of the Coptic Church commemorates on the 7th of Hator the memory of the martyr Naharoua (Nehroua), who was a native of the Fayyum. When he heard about the deeds of the martyrs, he went to Alexandria to die for Christ. However, he was told

[39] Gordon, *Textes coptes*, p.504. It is worth mentioning that the strong adherence of the Egyptians to the Christian faith is also reported by negative personage – in the *Encomium to the Theodores* the mother of Theodore Anatolius, a pagan noble lady, exclaims: 'Woe is me, my beloved son! Why did I send you to school so that you might learn to write until you found the mad love of the Egyptians for their God? Let there never be any rest for my father's soul, for it was he who married me to your father, the Egyptian. Now, the madness of that Egyptian came on you!' (Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.27).

[40] On Egyptocentrism in Coptic hagiographical writing see H. Behlmer, 'Patriotische Heilige in Ägypten' in *Patriotische Heilige. Beiträge zur Konstruktion religiöser und praktischer Identitäten in der Vormoderne*, ed. by D.R. Bauer, K. Herbers and G. Signori (Stuttgart, 2007), pp.157-178.

in a vision that he must go to Antioch. While Naharoua was thinking of how to go there and was looking for a ship to embark on, the archangel Michael carried him on his wings from Alexandria to Antioch and set him down before Diocletian. Diocletian asked him about his name and his country, and offered Naharoua much money and many prizes to turn him away from his faith. Naharoua refused, and therefore Diocletian ordered that he be tortured in many different ways. He was tortured by beasts, by burning in a fire, by squeezing in the wheel, and by being boiled alive; finally, he was beheaded. Thus, Naharoua became a counterpart for those from Antioch who were martyred in the land of Egypt. His body, it is said, was returned to Egypt by the author of many Coptic martyr stories Julius of Aqfahs, who happened to be in Antioch at that very moment.[41] The martyr Naharoua does not feature in any Syriac sources and is, most probably, a fictitious character, whose story was also aimed at promoting the union between Alexandria and Egypt.[42] This story is undoubtedly late as it belongs to the cycle of Julius of Aqfahs, but the same idea of exchange in grace appears in a much earlier text – the story of Eudoxia, dating to the seventh century.[43]

[41] O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, p.28. His story appears in a fragment from Vienna Library (Wien K.9509-12), published by Till, *Koptische Heligen- und Martyrerlegenden* I, pp.3-14. Another fragment of Naharoua's miracles was published by U. Bouriant, 'Fragments de manuscrits thébains du Musée de Boulaq' in *Recueil de travaux relatifs à la philologie et à l'archéologie égyptiennes et assyriennes* IV (1883), pp.153-154.

[42] Naharoua's story, in its turn, is counterbalanced by the story of the martyr Hour (Hor), a soldier from Antioch who went to Alexandria seeking martyrdom. His memory is celebrated on the 29th of Paone; see O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, p.155.

[43] *Eudoxia and the Holy Sepulchre: a Constantinian legend in Coptic*, ed. by T. Orlandi (Milano, 1980).

When Constantine, the Christian Emperor, the antipode of Diocletian the Persecutor, decides to receive baptism, he invites priests from Egypt to Antioch as if there are no priests or bishops in Antioch:

> The king had not received baptism. After the glory of Christ Michael the Archangel of heaven came to him and instructed him, [saying]: 'Send to Egypt for the holy ones, seventy two in number, so that they come and baptize you and teach you the faith of your salvation'.
> And the king did according to everything which the Angel of the Lord [ordered] him. He sent and brought them. They taught him and all those who were in his house. They baptized him and those who were in his household and they had with him a celebration in the offering of salvation.[44]

This account certainly cannot be reconciled with the version of Eusebius that Constantine was baptized on his deathbed (*Vita Constantini*, IV, 62-63), but the reason for its existence is rather obvious – the legend was created at the time when such late baptism would provoke serious doubt about the strength of the emperor's faith. The urge to provide an earlier baptism for the first Christian emperor has resulted in other legends as well: one of the most popular ones in the West is the baptism of Constantine by St Sylvester, who was the bishop of Rome at the time of Constantine's reign (314-335).[45] The figure of Sylvester was Orthodox enough to quieten the unease caused by the fact that in historical reality Constantine was baptized by the Arianizing bishop Eusebius of Nicomedia. The baptism received from 'the seventy two holy men of Egypt' in the Eudoxia narrative plays the same role in the Egyptian context – as Drake points out, 'their participation helped assimilate Constantine to local traditions'.[46] But it also

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[44] *Ibidem*, p.42; English translation by B.A. Pearson.
[45] One of the versions of this legend is related in the famous medieval forgery *Donatio Constantini*.
[46] *Eudoxia and the Holy* Sepulchre, p.107. See also his remark on the significance of the number seventy two.

underlines that special connection between Egypt and Antioch which is so important for the Copts.

Another such story, accentuating the importance of Egypt (or, in this case, of Alexandria in particular) for the very existence of the Christian faith in Antioch appears in two sources: in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*[47] and in the *Encomium of Flavianus on Demetrius, archbishop of Alexandria*.[48] These accounts are virtually identical, with a few differences in names (the *Encomium* provides names for all personages, while in the *History of the Patriarchs* they mainly remain anonymous) and details. The story in the *Encomium* goes as follows:

A certain Zokrator (Socrates in the *HPA*) was originally a Christian, but then apostatized. His wife had rather a charactonym than a real name – Martyria (ⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲓⲁ); Martyria and Zokrator had two sons, Philopator and Eutropius. Martyria wanted to baptize the boys in Alexandria, but her husband refused to accompany her there, so she took the children and went to Alexandria on her own. Shortly after their departure from the port of Antioch the ship was seized by a mighty storm. Martyria, fearing that her children might die before they are baptized, took a knife, cut her right breast and drew three drops of blood from it with which she made the sign of cross on her sons' foreheads in the name of the Holy Trinity. She dipped them in the sea three times,

[47] *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria I-IV* , *PO* 1/4, pp. 385-391.
[48] Published by Budge in *Coptic Martyrdoms in the dialect of Upper Egypt*, pp.137-156. Budge suggests that some episodes in the narrative 'appear to be extracted from a work that dealt with the lives of the Patriarchs of Alexandria' (ibidem, p.vii).

saying the baptismal formula, and prepared to die together with them, but then the storm was stilled.

Martyria arrived in Alexandria before the very day of the Holy Week when all the children of Alexandria were going to be baptized, and she therefore sent her children along with the others to be baptized by the archbishop. When St Peter attempted to submerge the children into water, the water congealed and became like stone; this miracle repeated three times, while the other children were baptized normally. The archbishop invited Martyria to tell her story and, having heard her account, said a prayer over her and her sons, blessed them and invited them to be his guests until the end of the Easter period. Upon their return to Antioch, Martyria and her sons were brought to Diocletian by Zokrator, who accused his wife and Peter of Alexandria of adultery and other abominable things. Diocletian was enraged and sent an order to execute St Peter whom he had hated before for his preaching against idolatry; then he questioned Martyria and, having received no answer from her, ordered her to be burnt together with her sons.[49] The encomium abruptly finishes here with a short discussion of what the true east, to which Martyria turned her face at the time of death, means. The *History of the Patriarchs* proceeds a little bit further and tells the story of St Peter in prison and his voluntary death for the sake of his congregation.

In both narratives Egypt is represented as a source of sacramental grace for people in Antioch. The situation is described as if one could not receive baptism in Antioch at the time of persecution or shortly thereafter and had to turn for it to Egypt, the land of 'the

[49] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, pp.149-155.

holy men'. As Behlmer points out, there was no real necessity for that trip and the point of this episode was to show the higher level of 'readiness for martyrdom on the part of the Coptic Church', represented in the story by St Peter.[50] But such narratives, especially when accumulated in the minds of the Egyptian Christians, also conveyed another, latent message: they underlined the doctrinal links with an Antiochene tradition which also held to a miaphysite confession. They also showed that the connection between the two ecclesiastical bodies – symbolised by generic 'Antioch' and 'Egypt' – had a very long history, extending into the time of the Great Persecution. This connection, they maintained, was established through the blood of martyrs and was beneficial for both communities, as they exchanged their saints and shared the grace.

However, there is a certain internal contradiction with other accounts of the Antiochene saints – we see in their lives that most of them had been baptised in Antioch prior to their trials or exiles. Thus, the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* explicitly states that Philotheus found a priest in Antioch who baptized him and his parents after their miraculous resurrection:

> The boy got up in haste and searched the city, he then found a great man who was hiding in the city because of the fear of Diocletian – a priest. He brought him to his house, and the priest baptized them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.[51]

Moreover, Victor is said to be a regular attendant of the Eucharistic gatherings;[52] the baptism of Theodore Anatolius and Claudius is celebrated by the whole city of

[50] Behlmer, 'Patriotische Heilige in Ägypten', p.165.
[51] F84r *a*.
[52] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.6.

Antioch,[53] although it must be noted that their baptism was performed before Diocletian's apostasy. Since the accounts in the sources considered here contradict each other, no final conclusions can be made as to what the general consensus of the Coptic authors was. From the existing narratives one might deduce that although the churches did exist after the beginning of the persecution, they were either closed or did not function properly: the priests were hiding, the sacraments had to be obtained in secret[54] or elsewhere (in Alexandria). However, with the end of the persecution the situation changes abruptly, since the God-loving emperor Constantine opens the churches which had been closed and builds new martyria in Antioch. Coptic authors put a lot of effort in creating a more or less convincing background for these Antiochian martyria, but this brings us to the following question: did these martyria, so carefully and lovingly described in Coptic texts, really exist?

This question has been answered by Mayer and Allen in their recent collaboration on the churches of Syrian Antioch in the period between 300 and 638. They discuss the validity of the material provided by Coptic hagiographical texts using as a particular example the panegyrics dedicated to St Victor and the arguments of Lassus[55] and Maraval[56] who supported some of the claims of the Coptic authors, and come to the conclusion that 'legends from cycles within Coptic hagiography that purport to situate

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[53] Budge, *Miscellaneous Texts*, pp.8-9.
[54] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.84r *a*.
[55] J. Lassus, *Sanctuaires chrétiens de Syrie. Essai sur la genèse, la forme et l'usage liturgique des édifices du culte chrétien, en Syrie, du IIIe siècle à la conquête musulmane* (Paris, 1947).
[56] P. Maraval, *Lieux saints et pèlerinages d'Orient: histoire et géographie des origines à la conquête arabe* (Paris, 1985). See, for example, Maraval's claim for existence of the shrine of Claudius at Antioch, which is based on the *Encomium to Claudius*, pseudo-attributed to Severus, p.339.

martyria or shrines of Egyptian saints at Antioch' have to be dismissed.[57] These legends, composed in Egypt, have relevance there 'for the period that they were composed (seventh to eighth centuries), not Antioch during the period under investigation here'.[58] For the same reason they also exclude from the list of reliable sources the topographical borders of the so-called Danielstoff, a piece of textile from the collection of the Berlin Museum, published by Strzygowski in 1901, which depicts Daniel in the lions' den; the borders of this textile depict some stylized churches and buildings with names. This piece attracted a lot of attention, since it was considered by some scholars to be connected with the Yakto mosaic[59] and, therefore, with Antioch.[60] It appears that, unless new systematic excavations provide new evidence for the existence of the martyria of the Coptic cyclic martyrs at Antioch, one has to accept the view of Mayer and Allen – there were no martyria dedicated to these martyrs despite the claims of the Coptic authors.

It might be suggested that the authors of the texts describing the existence of the martyria in Antioch tried to show the dire contrast between the situation before the persecution and the situation in which the Christians found themselves during the period of the active persecution and shortly after its end. This contrast is also quite

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[57] W. Mayer, P. Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch (300-638 CE)* (Leuven, 2012), pp.22-26.
[58] Ibidem, p.27.
[59] The Yakto mosaic (dated approximately to 450-460), also referred to as the Megalopsychia Hunt, shows hunters attacking or fighting beasts. It was found in the Yakto complex at Daphne. For description of this mosaic see J. Lassus, 'La mosaïque de Yakto' in *Antioch-on-the-Orontes* I (Princeton, 1934), pp.114-156.
[60] A. Papaconstantinou discusses the Danielstoff in 'Antioche ou l'Égypte? Quelques considerations sur l'origine du «Danielstoff»' in *Cahiers archéologiques* 48 (2000), pp.5-10, and comes to a conclusion that the textile might have been produced in the sixth century somewhere in Egypt, not in Antioch.

noticeable in the narratives dealing with the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine respectively.

I.4 Antioch and the Emperors

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Copts saw Antioch as the main residence of Diocletian and, consequently, the place where the persecution broke out and where the majority of martyrs were either tried and killed, or tried and tortured before being exiled to Egypt where they would finish their valiant struggle. In the Diocletianic martyrdoms Antioch at the time of persecution is depicted as a frightened, scared city, where Christians are hiding in fear;[61] its streets are covered with the blood of the martyrs;[62] the Christian churches are shut or destroyed while the pagan temples are thriving.[63] But everything changes once the God-loving Emperor Constantine is enthroned: the churches are reopened, the pagan temples are demolished, and the prisoners are released. This dramatic change is reported by in the *Encomium in honour of St Theodore Anatolius*:

> For when I look upon the palace of Diocletian, this murderer of the mighty men of Antioch, which is now under the settled order of the God-loving Emperor, and when I see his places [of worship] of idols, which are now destroyed, and which have been made into churches, wherein are read the books of the gospels, and when I see his throne of lawlessness, which has been removed from under him, and his bedchamber of lawlessness, which has been destroyed, I exclaim: 'Well it is that the pride of that arrogant man Diocletian has been humiliated, and that there has been raised for us the humble and God-loving Emperor

[61] See, for example, the above quoted passage from the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.84r *a*.
[62] Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.11.
[63] Godron, *Textes coptes*, p.432. Diocletian probably had to hire more priests for the pagan temples; in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* pagan priests explain their employment by Diocletian in this way: 'We have been idle since our childhood and we don't have any skills, so when then the king began to make these gods, we rejoiced and joined them only for the sake of food and drink, and for every idle thing' (f.96v a).

> Constantine, who remembered his fellowship with them and his rank of general, and that the throne of Antioch has been given to him!'[64]

Although Diocletian's connection with Antioch technically finishes with his death, in fact it extends into the period following his death. Therefore, it is necessary to say a few words about Antioch and Constantine, who in the Coptic tradition is Diocletian's direct successor.[65] Despite the fact that historical sources available to Coptic hagiographers clearly speak of Galerius, Maxentius and Constantius (see, for example, John of Nikiou, *Chronicle* LXXVII), they do not seem concerned with historical verisimilitude, but rather with moral and edifying effect of the narrative. That is why Constantine appears in the Coptic narratives as Diocletian's heir and antipode – his function in these texts is to contrast the evil Persecutor in every aspect by playing the role of the first Christian emperor. However, texts featuring Constantine the Christian Emperor, are rather few in comparison to those featuring Diocletian. There just was not enough time for such texts to be composed and become popular, since the attitude of the Church of Egypt to the Church of the Metropolis has always been rather complicated and became rather hostile in the course of time with the growing tensions between the Chalcedonian and anti-Chalcedonian factions.

Constantine could not escape the pull into the legendary fabric of martyr stories – just like Diocletian, who was made a paradigmatic villain, Constantine was also turned into a symbol, a model of a Christian ruler, a triumphant vanquisher of the enemies (usually represented in Coptic hagiography by some generic 'Persians'), the redeemer of the evil

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[64] Budge, *Miscellaneous Texts*, p.5.

[65] For a general overview of the Constantine legend in Coptic texts and especially of his role in the interactions with the Persians, see Wilfong, 'Constantine in Coptic', pp.177-188.

deeds of his predecessor. Since the persecution started and was centred in Antioch, the deliverance also had to start in Antioch. That is why Coptic writers introduced Antiochene connections into the story of Constantine as well: not only was he baptized in Antioch, but the edict of tolerance towards Christians (which at first sight strongly resembles the edict of Milan) was actually issued in Antioch, too, as the authors of the Eudoxia legend claim. Thus, the Eudoxia story asserts that after his enthronement Constantine immediately wrote to his subjects and commanded them to leave idolatry, make pagan temples 'places of lamentation', build churches and celebrate Eucharist in them. Those Christians who were in exile or in prison were to be 'set free from the second day of the month of Tobe'.[66] This proclamation was sent from Antioch to every province of his realm and the orders of the emperor were followed straightaway. Drake suggests that this edict from Eudoxia narrative is not in fact the famous edict of Milan, but a much later document issued by Constantine in 324, which is described by Eusebius in the *Vita Constantini*.[67] In any case, the authors of the Eudoxia story obviously made an effort to emphasize the fact that the edict was issued in the same city of Antioch which used to be the centre of persecution.

But connecting Constantine with Antioch was also done on a deeper level, in the best traditions of cyclic linking; it was certainly not enough for the composers and editors of Coptic texts to place Constantine in Antioch in a merely geographical sense. There had to be deeper and stronger ties, as required by the conventions of cyclic editing, and of course, Coptic hagiographers discovered, or rather, invented them. The usual way to

[66] *Eudoxia and the Holy Sepulchre*, p.40.
[67] Ibidem, pp.101-105.

connect characters in Coptic cycles was to establish some family relations between them,[68] but this method was not applicable in this situation and therefore the hagiographers had to choose other means. The introductory part of the *Encomium in honour of St Theodore Anatolius* reveals that Constantine and some of the Antiochene martyrs knew each other and were battle comrades before their martyrdom:

> Our God-loving Emperor has known their might from the time when they were in the flesh [while alive] with him, for they were warriors who fought the wicked barbarians. When Constantine saw that he had become Emperor he knew that he had needed them in the war, for he knew that they were more of value than many mighty men of war.[69]

It is this old friendship and admiration for their strength that inspired Constantine to build their martyria and seek for their bodies. The introduction finishes with the author's claim that Constantine especially admired Theodore Anatolius to whom the *Encomium* is dedicated, which allows the author to turn to the story of this saint.

But, as if this friendship with one of the most popular Antiochene saints and receiving baptism in Antioch were not enough to establish the link between the God-loving emperor and the God-loving city, the Copts added another association. The *Discourse on the Cross*, pseudo-attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem,[70] which contains another version of Constantine's involvement in the finding of the True Cross, slightly different from that in the Eudoxia legend, suggests that his claim to the authority over the whole empire

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[68] See, for example, Winstedt's remarks on the family connections in the Basilides cycle: Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, pp.xx-xxvii.
[69] Budge, *Miscellaneous Texts*, p.6.
[70] Orlandi marks this homily as spurious, as it belongs to the 'Cyrillian Cycle', cf. 'Cyril of Jerusalem' in *CE* 3, pp.681-682.

was approved by the Council of Antioch as well as by the Senate of Rome[71] (ⲁ ⲛⲁⲧⲥⲩⲛⲕⲗⲏⲧⲟⲥ ⲙⲛ ⲡⲃⲟⲩⲗⲉⲩⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲛⲧⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲥⲛⲧⲉ ⲣⲱⲙⲏ ⲙⲛ ⲧⲁⲛⲧⲟⲭⲓⲁ):

> And by the providence of God the members of the Senate and the Council of the two cities, Rome and Antioch, took Constantine and placed him on the throne of Rome, and put the crown of the kingdom on his head and the sceptre. And the noblemen of the two cities brought him gifts.[72]

This tendency – to connect Antioch and Rome through Constantine – explains also the episode in the *Encomium on St Victor* attributed to Celestinus of Rome in which the two martyria of St Victor are discussed: the one in Rome and the older one in Antioch, both built by the God-loving Constantine. A certain general was very sick and could not be cured by any physicians. He went to the martyrium of St Victor in Antioch, spent two days there, but did not receive healing. On the night of the third day he saw St Victor in a vision and the saint told the general to go back to Rome, to the martyrium of St Victor there. Victor rebuked the general for his neglect of the newly-built shrine in Rome: 'Did you not know that this self-same power abides in my martyria in Rome and in Antioch?' The general repented his sinful attitude, gave gifts to the Antioch martyrium and went to Rome where he was finally healed.[73] At the same time, it should be noted that Antioch and Constantinople, the new capital of the empire, are not mentioned together in similar contexts.

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[71] This is a passage from a slightly later manuscript (11th century), published by Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.6. Earlier manuscripts of this homily do not mention Antioch at all, cf. A. Campagnano, *Omelie Copte sulla Passione, sulla Croce e sulla Vergine* (Milan, 1980), pp.126-127. However, the homily itself might be dated to the late sixth or seventh century, cf. Campagnano, *Omelie Copte*, p.14.

[72] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, pp. 214-215.

[73] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, pp.63-65.

Despite the general fictitiousness and the church-political background of the Coptic accounts concerning Constantine's connection with Antioch, they do reflect – in their own manner – some historical facts. The composer of the *Encomium to St Theodore Anatolius* specifically praises Constantine for building martyria of the saints in Antioch. Constantine did in fact build many churches around the empire and Antioch was no exception. Eusebius reports that Constantine built a magnificent church in Antioch:

> He also decorated the principal cities of the other provinces with sacred edifices of great beauty; as, for example, in the case of that metropolis of the East which derived its name from Antiochus, in which, as the head of that portion of the empire, he consecrated to the service of God a church of unparalleled size and beauty. The entire building was encompassed by an enclosure of great extent, within which the church itself rose to a vast elevation, being of an octagonal form, and surrounded on all sides by many chambers, courts, and upper and lower apartments; the whole richly adorned with a profusion of gold, brass, and other materials of the most costly kind (*Vita Constantini* III, 50).[74]

Downey points out that although no remains of the church have as yet been found, there is no reason to doubt its existence, as it is mentioned in various sources and there is also an archaeological representation of this church, if somewhat conventional, in the Yakto mosaic of Antioch. This church was known as 'the Golden Church' or 'the Great Church'; in the fifth century sources it is sometimes referred to as 'Repentance', or Concordia (Omonoia).[75] It probably stood on the island in the Orontes, in the so-called New City, and it was 'placed in close association with the imperial palace there'.[76]

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[74] English translation by E. C. Richardson, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 1, edited by P. Schaff and H. Wace (New York, 1890.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight.: http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/25024.htm, accessed on 12.08.2013.

[75] Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria: from Seleucus to the Arab conquest* (Princeton, 1961), pp.342-349.

[76] Ibidem, p.346.

However, as is clear from the sources examined here, Coptic hagiographers are not very concerned with the historicity of their compositions: they never refer to this famous church and prefer to describe the multiple martyria, the existence of which is very doubtful. This brings us to the next question – can we glean any valuable information from their descriptions of Antioch?

Part II. Fictional and real landmarks in Antioch; places of trial and places of worship

The stories of the majority of the Antiochene saints usually begin in Antioch and then continue elsewhere, usually in Egypt. But in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* all events take place in the city of Antioch and its suburbs. The city, although it is not described in much detail, forms the necessary topographical background and provides the story with certain essential landmarks – the house of the saint's parents, the palace of the emperor, the theatre, the temple, the prison, and, although not in the *Martyrdom* itself, but in other texts which constitute Philotheus' tradition, the martyrium built over the place of his burial. This standard set of components of a city's structure in Coptic martyr stories usually looks rather generic, and in the case of Philotheus there are not many differences from other stories. However, in comparison to the Georgian version of Philotheus' legend, the description of Antioch in the Coptic text appears to be much more customized and has some additional functions.

II.1 The house of the saint's parents

In the Georgian version the family house of Philotheus is not given any attention at all. The Coptic version, although it does not depict any parts of the house itself, describes

some details of the life of the family residing in it: the special caves made for the calf Smarakdos (f.75v and 79v), the preparations for Philotheus' birthday feast that was supposed to follow his first sacrifice to the calf-god (f.79r), the storehouse where his parents' bodies remain unburied for three days after the calf's attack (f.81r), the baptism of the whole family in their house[77] and the subsequent emancipation of all their slaves (f.84r). These scenes are from the martyr's childhood; they set the context for the future events, but are never recalled in later parts of the narrative.

In other texts belonging to the Antioch cycle one might find even more scenes from the imagined domestic life of the future martyrs: for example, Victor's classes and his walk home from school during which he finds the body of the martyr Theodote, the mother of Cosmas and Damian,[78] his quarrel with the servants of his mother Martha,[79] Victor's birthday celebration to which Diocletian was invited and Martha's conversation with the enraged emperor,[80] or the bathing of Theodore the General by his mother when he was a little child,[81] and other scenes.

All these episodes, no matter how trivial they might seem, perform a double function in the narrative – they are used to make the story more engaging and, at the same time, to show that the virtues and the grace of the future athletes of Christ were manifest already at this young age: thus, the bathing episode from the *Encomium to the Theodores*

[77] In the Georgian version baptism takes place in a church, not in the house, cf. ch.3.
[78] *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library*, pp.135-136.
[79] Ibidem, p.137.
[80] Ibidem, pp.141-143.
[81] Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.24.

actually describes the reaction of the idol who Theodore's mother worshipped,[82] not the domestic bliss of the saint's early years.

In Victor's story, which is more developed in comparison to other legends of the Antiochene saints, his family house features more often than in other texts of the Antioch cycle – it even appears in the narrative describing Victor's adult life, not just in the stories of his childhood. It is in his parents' house where Victor made for himself a little chamber in which he would spend every night in prayer and conversations with Christ;[83] it is in this same house where Victor had a final conversation with his mother before being exiled to Egypt.[84] But, compared to other topographical components of the martyrs' narratives, such as the king's palace, their family houses are mainly used for forming the background of the story.

II.2 The royal palace (ⲡⲁⲗⲁⲧⲓⲟⲛ ⲛⲉⲣⲣⲱⲟⲩ)

The emperor's palace at Antioch plays a very prominent role in the narratives of the Antiochene saints. It is the centre of the city's life and the lair of the 'dragon of the abyss', i.e. Diocletian. The actual martyrdom usually begins when a saint is brought to the emperor's palace: all preliminary interrogations and trials take place at the palace and are witnessed by numerous but, again, rather generic 'crowds', presumably the military guard of the palace and local nobility. At the same time the expression 'royal

[82] 'Many times when Straticia undressed the little boy to bathe him, the idol, if it saw the boy, would fall upon its face', cf. Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.24.
[83] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.6.
[84] Ibidem, pp.15-18. It is rather unusual, though, that despite Victor's emphasized requests to his mother that she should bring his body back to this house, we never see these requests fulfilled and the body of Victor remains in Egypt.

palace' is used in these narratives to denote the royal court as an institution – Philotheus is entitled to a place at the royal palace, as his mother suggests, because he comes from a wealthy and noble family (f.79r a) and because Diocletian likes the boy at first and tries to persuade him to make a sacrifice:

> 'Well then, I forgive all this, but you have to go now and make a sacrifice to my great god Apollo. Then I will make you a patrician and you will be called 'the father of the king', for I can see your knowledge and wisdom and that you are worthy to be seated in the royal palace'.[85]

There was indeed a great palace at Antioch constructed under Diocletian at some point before 298. It is thoroughly described by Libanius in his panegyric of Antioch written in connection with the Olympic games which took place in Antioch in 360 (Or. II.203-207).[86] Libanius praises the beauty and the size of the palace that surpass those of other palaces; the construction of the great palace is also mentioned by Malalas.[87] However, it is obvious that in Coptic narratives the emperor's palace is not a real building, but a generic landmark, used for creating the fictional landscape of an imperial city.

II.3 The theatre of Antioch (ⲡⲉⲑⲉⲁⲧⲣⲟⲛ ⲛⲧⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲟⲭⲓⲁ)

The theatre (ⲑⲉⲁⲧⲣⲟⲛ) is another landmark which features quite often in the Coptic passions as a second main venue for martyrs' trials. The reason for this choice of place is explained in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* by the necessity to have more spectators:

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[85] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.88r *b*.

[86] It is also mentioned by Theodoret, a historian of the fifth century, in his *Historia Ecclesiastica* (4.26), and Evagrius Scholasticus, a sixth century historian, in his work which has the same title, in the passage describing the earthquake of 458, which destroyed some parts of this great palace (Evagrius, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 2.12).

[87] Malalas, *Chronographia* 12.38. Downey discusses the testimonies of Malalas and Libanius and compares it with the archaeological data from the excavations of the 1930-s, cf. Downey, *A History of Antioch*, p.321, 640-647.

> Saint Philotheus answered him: 'I am wise at all times and I have come again to receive wisdom and progress. But if you wish me to make a sacrifice to your gods, well then, let us go to a place which is broader, so that all the multitude of people of this city could see me making a sacrifice'.[88]

The capacity of the theatre, indeed, allowed more people to observe the trial and therefore, it served Coptic authors as a perfect location for mass conversions – one of the constructive elements of the martyr passions – which usually follow some especially spectacular miracle performed by a martyr in front of a larger audience.[89] The theatre episode is one of the 'stock' episodes used as an interlude between the series of tortures and conversations: we see such episodes in the stories of Philotheus, Isidorus, Naharoua and Cosmas and Damian. Theatre miracles are not necessarily bound to the Antioch theatre: thus, Macarius wins a magic duel in the theatre of Alexandria which makes the crowd acknowledge the God of Macarius.[90]

Unsurprisingly, the theatre episode is absent in the Georgian version of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, as it seems to be a later Coptic development. While narrating the theatre episode, the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* adds a few psychological traits to the story to build up the suspense (unlike the *Martyrdom of Isidorus* which, although it contains two very similar episodes, does not introduce them into the story as such):

> And on the instant he ordered the herald to proclaim around the whole city: 'Gather in the theatre and see Philotheus performing a sacrifice to the emperor's gods!' When all the people of the city heard this, they were grieved, because many of them had come to believe in God through Philotheus and the many

[88] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.94v *a*.

[89] Since there were sometimes multiple mass conversions occurring in the same story, the authors also employed the city forum (ⲁⲅⲟⲣⲁ) as a trial venue: it performed the same function in the text as it allowed more people to see the miracles, see, for example, Munier, 'Les Actes du martyre de saint Isidore', p.105, 136, 148.

[90] H. Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte* I, pp.60-61.

> healings that he had been performing. [They were saying]: 'Woe to us! What has happened to you, our Lord Philotheus? Can it be that the spirit of erring has led away your heart from God? But let us go and see what happens!'[91]

When everyone is gathered, Philotheus performs an impressive series of miracles: first, he sends an idol to fetch the rest of the emperor's gods, secondly, he converses with them and their priests in front of the crowd, then he orders the idols to kill their priests and finally commands the earth to swallow them.[92] The people in the theatre, who, as we have been told, were already inclined to believe in one God, express their faith by crying out 'One is the God of Christians! One is the God of Philotheus, Christ Jesus! And we openly are all Christians'.[93] This mass conversion results in a massacre of the newly converted during which nine hundred and thirty-six people (including women and little children) are killed;[94] they are celebrated in the *Encomium to Philotheus* attributed to Severus of Antioch.[95]

The theatre episode in the story of Isidorus seems to be modelled on the one described above – the idols are summoned to the theatre by the saint and carry out his orders, which makes some of the people convert.[96] But the episode from the Coptic fragment of

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[91] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.94v – 95r.

[92] One cannot but notice that the authors of the text – consciously or not – allow a certain degree of theatricality in the description of the martyr's actions: he masterfully manipulates the audience and turns his conversations with the idols and their priests into a real show with many special effects. Some of his actions are probably modelled after Apostle Paul's: in the *Acts* 20:40 Paul also makes a sign to the crowd to be silent and then addresses them; compare with the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.96r b, where Philotheus quietens the crowd before revealing the folly of the pagan priests.

[93] Ibidem, f.97r *b*.

[94] Ibidem, f.97v *b*.

[95] 'So who is able to describe the great joy of God and His holy angels for these great numbers who struggled alongside the martyr without any obligation or force. So they entered the marriage feast of Christ with their lamps lit. I mean, O listeners, the righteous, who were perfected with this martyr, Philotheus, and he is in front of them like a general of a great army'; cf. Youssef, 'The Encomium of St. Philotheus', p.179-181.

[96] Munier, 'Les Actes du martyre de saint Isidore', pp.129-132.

the passion of Cosmas and Damian is rather different: the king places his seat in the theatre of Antioch, where the saints are bound to a pillar, and orders a fire to be kindled before them. At Cosmas' bidding ('bend down to the earth', ⲕⲟⲗⲍⲕ ⲉⲡⲉⲥⲏⲧ ⲉϧⲙ ⲡⲕⲁⲉ) the pillar bows down, and the theatre quakes, which frightens the crowd and thus allows Cosmas to address them.[97] Another theatre miracle is the one found in the story of Naharoua (it seems to be a combination of two Old Testaments stories, those of Daniel and the lions and of Balaam and his ass): Naharoua is given to the beasts, but the lion does not attack the saint – instead it bows down at his feet and then speaks in a human voice, declaring his refusal to attack the holy man because of the presence of the angel. The angel then takes the lion out of the city on his wings and sets this clever animal free.[98] What unites these episodes, no matter how different they seem to be, is the common pattern – theatre miracles usually involve some kind of inanimate matter (idols, pillars) which becomes, in a sense, animate, even sentient, and responsive to the command of a martyr.

Thus, the theatre of Antioch appears to be included just to serve a literary function, since it serves in the text as a generic 'public place' that allows for mass conversions and, consequently, provides the story with more martyrs, underlining the impact of the saint's inspiring example. Nonetheless, it was at the same time a real landmark, which, like the royal palace, did really exist in Antioch. There were in fact not one, but many buildings in Antioch and its suburbs that can be referred to as 'theatre'. There were two

[97] Till, *Koptische Heligen- und Martyrerlegenden* I, pp.158; Crum, 'Place-Names in Deubner's *Kosmas und Damian*' in *PSBA* 30, pp.131- 132; H. Munier, 'Nahroou et les actes de son martyre' in *Annales du service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 19 (1920), pp.69-80.
[98] Till, *Koptische Heligen- und Martyrerlegenden*, vol. I, p.4.

circuses,[99] an amphitheatre (*monomacheion*) designed for the gladiatorial fights,[100] a theatre[101] and another big theatre at Daphne.[102] It is difficult to determine whether the authors knew of the existence of all these buildings in Antioch, but in any case it is obvious that they considered a theatre to be one of the essential elements of any large city.

II.4 Tetrapylon; prison

Among other landmarks that feature in hagiographical texts of the Antioch cycle are the *tetrapylon* and the city prison. Tetrapylon ('four gates'), a monument of cubic shape, with a gate on each of the four sides, is an architectural element of many Roman cities; it was usually built at the important crossroads. In the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* the tetrapylon is mentioned only once; when the devil is plotting against Philotheus, he instructs the emperor about where to find the boy, who 'made the whole city obedient to him': 'Behold, he is now near the Tetrapylon at the house of a man who had been born blind, for he gave this man light by his magic'.[103] It is unlikely that the authors had in mind the real tetrapylon of Antioch;[104] it seems that they just used this term for a

[99] Downey, *A History of Antioch*, pp.647-650.
[100] Malalas, *Chronographia* 9.5; Downey, *A History of Antioch*, pp.155-157.
[101] Downey points out that there must have existed a theatre in the Seleucid period, but by the time the archaeological excavations began at Antioch, the remains of the theatre completely disappeared, cf. Downey, *A History of Antioch*, p.156, n.66. Malalas mentions that Julius Caesar 'built' or 'reconstructed' the theatre on the slope of the mountain, cf. Malalas, *Chronographia* 9.5.
[102] On the excavations of the theatre at Daphne see D.H. Wilber, 'The Theatre at Daphne' in *Antioch-on-the-Orontes* II (Princeton, 1938), pp.57-94.
[103] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.86v *b*.
[104] There was a tetrapylon before the palace at the crossing the main streets on the island; Malals mentions the so-called Tetrapylon of the Elephants not far from the royal palace on which Julian the Apostate posted his *Misopogon* (Malalas, *Chronographia* 13.14); Downey suggests that it was presumably 'a tetrapylon surmounted by a statue showing elephants drawing a triumphal quadriga', cf. Downey, *A History of Antioch*, p.322.

plausible, but fictitious landmark, because tetrapyla (sometimes spelt as ⲧⲉⲧⲣⲁⲡⲏⲗⲟⲛ, ⲧⲉⲧⲣⲁⲡⲓⲗⲱⲛ, ⲧⲉⲧⲣⲁⲡⲏⲗⲱⲛ, ⲇⲉⲧⲣⲁⲡⲩⲗⲟⲛ) also feature in narratives, not connected with Antioch.[105]

A prison is another indispensable element of a city, and, naturally, prisons feature widely in martyr stories – first, martyrs are arrested and put into prison, then they would be brought there after the first and any subsequent part of the trial. Prisons are not described in much detail, as they only serve as a background in another type of stock episode, that is, in apparitions and healings that usually occur after the series of tortures. In the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* the martyr is brought to prison half-dead and bound with heavy chains; the Archangel Raphael appears to him, loosens the chains and heals all his wounds (f.92r). The same sequence of events is observed in nearly all other passions, only the names of the Archangels sometimes differ.

II.5 Pagan temple

The real Antioch, as any other large imperial city, had many temples dedicated to various deities, but in the imagined space of Diocletianic Antioch created by Coptic authors the pagan temple is usually represented as the only one (normally referred to as 'the temple of Diocletian's gods'). When this temple of Diocletian's gods had been robbed by some unknown people, Diocletian has to have the trial elsewhere and the gods had to be carried to the theatre.[106] The rituals and the pomp surrounding pagan

[105] Isidorus is tried by the governor of Celeucia at the tetrapylon of this city, cf. Munier, 'Les Actes du martyre de saint Isidore', p.167.
[106] Munier, 'Les Actes du martyre de saint Isidore', p.128.

worship have been discussed in the previous chapter, but it must be added that the Coptic authors clearly had very limited knowledge of the actual worship in the temples and had to invent most of the details – that is why the temple is never described in much detail, but serves as a generic holding place for Diocletian's gods, from where they either march on their own or are carried by the priests to other places (theatre, forum etc.). In the Georgian version of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* none of these landmarks (tetrapylon, prison, pagan temple) are mentioned.

Thus, this short survey of the edifices and institutions mentioned in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and other martyr stories connected with Antioch shows that the authors of these texts were not in the least interested in the real urban structure of Antioch, since all these locations and buildings only serve as a background for the actions of the martyrs and the supporting characters. That is why there is usually just one 'pagan temple' in which all the idols of the emperor are kept and just one 'theatre' which in some stories is easily replaced by the market or forum space, since its main function is to allow as many people as possible to witness the miracles performed by the martyr.

Part III. Historical relations between the Churches of Alexandria and Antioch

> The truth has appeared from the land of Egypt, and righteousness has arisen from the East. Egypt and Syria have become one in doctrine; Alexandria and Antioch have become one Church, one virgin-bride of one pure and chaste bridegroom, who is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Only-begotten Son, the Word of the Father.[107]

[107] These are the words of Athanasius of Antioch (595-630) at the assembly in Egypt where he preached before the clergy of Alexandria, cf. Evetts, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* in *PO* 1/4, p.482.

One of the objectives pursued by the authors of Coptic hagiographical texts connected with Antioch, as has been argued above, was to underline the links between the two communities belonging to the same strand of the Eastern Christian tradition, which is very often defined as 'monophysite' or 'miaphysite'. Behind this objective was a certain historical background which I will now briefly outline.

The great division between the so-called Oriental Orthodox and the rest of the Christian world began in the fifth century, when Dioscorus of Alexandria and some other Egyptian bishops refused to accept the Christological formulas of the Council of Chalcedon of 451. This schism, which resulted in the separation of a great part of the Universal Church, emerged slowly and was not caused by theological disagreements only, although Christological formulas were the most important issue; political and ecclesiastical problems were also debated during that period.

The main stages and personalities in the history of the monophysite ('miaphysite' is a more correct term, although it also is not entirely satisfactory) movement have been exhaustively described by Frend in his classic work *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement*[108] and there is no need to repeat them here, but it is important to outline briefly the relations between the Egyptian and Syrian miaphysite communities in the period relevant for this study, i.e. the period of the production of the main body of Coptic hagiographical texts between the sixth and ninth centuries.

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[108] W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement* (Cambridge, 1972). See also his article with regards to the formation of the miaphysite doctrine and hierarchy in Egypt in particular, idem, 'Monophysitism' in *CE* 5, pp.1669-1678. See also a more recent work which includes material on the history of the miaphysite movement: S.A. Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis: John of Ephesus and the Lives of the Eastern Saints* (Berkeley, London, 1990).

III.1 The formation of the miaphysite community; the union of 617

After the deposition of Dioscorus the power was for a while in the hands of the pro-Chalcedonian bishops. During the second phase of the controversy (in 482-535) Egypt had six anti-Chalcedonian archbishops; from around the 530s the emperors began to show their support for the pro-Chalcedonians in a more pronounced way.[109] Before the appearance of Severus (465-538) on the stage of church politics the anti-Chalcedonians – bishops and their dioceses who did not accept the acts of the Council of Chalcedon – did not act as a consolidated body, neither in Egypt, nor in Syria. Some of the provinces of the empire (Egypt, Antioch, eastern Syria and Mesopotamia, and the provinces of Isauria and Pamphylia) were mostly anti-Chalcedonian, while Constantinople with its clergy, the European provinces and western Syria were mostly pro-Chalcedonian. However, the arrival and activity of Severus in the capital changed the situation dramatically. As Frend points out,

> The activities of Severus as patriarch mark the transition between anti-Chalcedonianism and monophysitism. He provided opponents of Chalcedon with a clear-cut alternative theology that justified rejection of the *Tome* and the council. His organizing ability resulted, even against his will, in a rival Monophysite hierarchy challenging that of the Chalcedonians in many parts of the empire.[110]

After Severus' deposition and flight to Egypt in 512 the breach between the two parties continued to grow rapidly – in no small measure because of the imperial persecution of

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[109] *Histoire du christianisme des origines à nos jours. Tome 3: Les églises d'Orient et d'Occident (432-610)*, ed. by L. Pietri, J.-M. Mayeur, B. Beaujard (Paris, 1998), p.528ff.
[110] Frend, 'Monophysitism', p.1672.

the miaphysite clergy.[111] In 536 Severus was condemned as heretic by the local synod in Constantinople and from that point on all efforts to reunite Chalcedonians and Miaphysites were unsuccessful. Paul of Tinnis, appointed by Justinian in 538 as archbishop of Alexandria, was ordained in Constantinople by Menas, which was against all traditions, as the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church* did not fail to point out.[112] The successors of Paul, the so-called Melkites, were also ordained in the capital by the patriarch of Constantinople. This dependence or even subjugation of the official Alexandrian hierarchy to the imperial church led to a certain opposition on the side of the monastic establishments, so much so that the emperors had to support their candidates with armed force.[113]

The miaphysite party soon began to ordain its own clergy and became more and more consolidated, especially after the missionary work of bishop Jacob Baradaeus, who visited and maintained individual miaphysite congregations between 542 and 578. As Frend notes, the success of his mission, 'especially in eastern Syria, indicated both the underlying anti-Chalcedonian sentiment of the mass of the people and their readiness, at least in matters of belief, to oppose the will of the emperor'.[114] By the end of the sixth century the Miaphysites controlled most of the countryside of Egypt and Syria, while the Chalcedonians had control over the cities and major towns. The miaphysite bishops

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[111] On the imperial policy towards the anti-Chalcedonians in the sixth century see L. Van Rompay, 'Society and Community in the Christian East' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. by M. Maas (Cambridge, 2005), p.239-266. On the persecution of the anti-Chalcedonian clergy in Egypt see also Harvey, *Asceticism and Society in Crisis*, pp.84-87, 103-104.

[112] *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* in *PO* 1/4, p.469.

[113] *Histoire du Christianisme*, pp.529-530.

[114] Frend, 'Monophysitism', p.1675.

mostly resided in the monasteries, which continued to grow and accumulate more and more power in the sixth century.

The miaphysite patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch, despite their shared doctrinal stance, were not always united on the level of church politics. Since the time of Paul the Black, deposed by Peter IV of Alexandria in 575, the Syrian and Egyptian miaphysites were at loggerheads. There was an attempt at reconciliation between Alexandria and Antioch during the pontificate of Damian (569-605),[115] who was himself Syrian by origin. However, the negotiations did not succeed and Damian broke off communion with the archbishop of Antioch Peter Callinicus. The first major success in restoring ecclesiastical unity took place in 616/617,[116] when Athanasius 'the Camel Driver' of Antioch and Anastasius of Alexandria signed a union.[117] This important event is featured in the *Chronicle* of Michael the Syrian (10.26-27)[118] and in the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*.[119]

The union between the two sister Churches continued to exist on the administrative level. The Churches used to exchange so-called synodical letters: each time when a new patriarch was elected, he would send an official letter professing his faith to his

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[115] E.R. Hardy, 'Damian' in *CE* 2, pp.688-689; see also J. den Heijer, 'Les Patriarches coptes d'origine syrienne' in *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage: In Honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I. at the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. by R.Y. Ebied and H. Teule (Leuven, 2004), pp.127-128.

[116] D. Olster places this union in 616, cf. next footnote; however, Ph. Booth in discussion of this union gives a reference to the yet unpublished thesis of M. Jankowiak who fixed it 'in the second half of 617', cf. P. Booth, *Crisis of the Empire: Doctrine and Dissent at the End of Late Antiquity* (Berkeley, 2013), p.104.

[117] On this union in the context of the Persian war and the role of the Byzantine official Nicetas see D. Olster, 'Chalcedonian and Monophysite: the Union of 616' in *BSAC* 27 (1985), pp.93-108.

[118] See summary of Michael's account in Booth, *Crisis of the Empire*, p.104.

[119] *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* in *PO* 1/4, p.481ff.

counterpart in the sister Church. Moreover, some of the patriarchs of Alexandria were actually Syrian by origin (Damian, Simon I, Abraham ibn Zura and others);[120] the names of the patriarchs of Antioch were commemorated in the liturgy in Coptic churches and vice versa.

III.2 Communication between the miaphysite communities of Egypt and Syria

Apart from the official contacts on the level of church administration, there also existed connections on a smaller scale. Fiey in his comprehensive study 'Coptes et Syriaques, Contacts et Échanges'[121] provides an excellent overview of the history of contacts between various ecclesiastical groups. In Fiey's opinion, the most important and productive network was the one that connected monastic movements in Egypt and Syria. These contacts are reflected in hagiographical legends which allow us to see certain tendencies in these contacts. One such tendency is the appropriation of certain Syriac monastic saints by the Copts, such as, for example, St Ephrem the Syrian.[122] Fiey relates the legend of St Ephrem's visit to Egypt and his conversations with Anba Bishoi, which itself is a part of a rather late legend of the translation of his relics to the monastery of Anba Bishoi. This legend once again reveals the tendency of the Coptic Church to appropriate, or at least, bring closer the saints from the sister Church.

Fiey provides a list of similar narratives describing the visits of Syrian monks to Egypt – among them are such names as Abraham of Kashkar or Isaac of Nineveh,[123] whose relics,

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[120] J. den Heijer, '*Les Patriarches coptes d'origine syrienne*', pp.127ff.
[121] J.M. Fiey, 'Coptes et Syriaques, Contacts et Échanges' in *Collectanea* 15 (Cairo, 1972-1973), pp.295-365.
[122] Ibidem, pp.298-302.
[123] Although these two saints belonged to the Church of the East, not to the miaphysite Church.

again, are allegedly kept at the monastery of St Macarius (Anba Maqar).[124] Egyptian monks, on their side, travelled to Syria and these visits are attested by such names as James the Recluse or Egyptian (who was martyred in 421).

A more recent article by J. den Heijer on the contacts between Egyptian and Syriac monastic groups as witnessed by the epigraphic evidence from the Monastery of the Syrians[125] shows that the dialogue and collaboration continued long into the late Middle Ages. A very important role in this continuous dialogue was played by the Monastery of the Syrians (Dayr al-Suryān) in Wadi al-Natrun, southwest of the Nile Delta.[126] It was built probably in the early sixth century as a counterpart of the monastery of Anba Bishoi for the followers of Severus of Antioch who moved there from the monasteries controlled by the party of Julian of Halicarnassus (also known as the Gaianites). Later, after the reconciliation of these two groups around 710, this monastery was purchased by a certain Marutha, a man of East Syrian origin (presumably a miaphysite from Takrit in Iraq), and converted into a Syrian monastery; by the late sixteenth century there still were Syrians among the monks. Dayr al-Suryān is still functioning as a monastery, although its congregation is now entirely Coptic.

The Syriac inscriptions at Dayr al-Suryān, which can be dated to a period extending from the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century to the end of the

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[124] Ibidem, p.302.

[125] J. den Heijer, 'Relations between Copts and Syrians in the Light of Recent Discoveries at Dayr as-Suryân' in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium, I–II: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies*, ed. by M. Immerzeel, J. van der Vliet (Leuven, 2004), pp.923-938.

[126] For the history of the community and its architecture see H. G. Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries of the Wadi'n Natrun*, Vol. 2, *The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis* (New York, 1932), pp. 232-35, 309-321, 337-38, 439-57.

eleventh century, witness 'the Coptic-Syriac coexistence within the monastery from the early eighth century until far into the sixteenth century'.[127] At certain stages the monastery was inhabited simultaneously by Coptic and Syrian monks.[128] The oldest inscription discovered so far in Dayr al-Suryān reads 'saintly Cyriacus, patriarch of Antioch', which, Van Rompay suggests, most probably refers to the Syrian patriarch of Antioch, Cyriacus (793-817). The second inscription is dated by Van Rompay to 818/819 A.D. There are two patriarchs named in this inscription – Ya'qūb of Alexandria (819-830) and Dionysius of Tel-Mahre (818-845). Den Heijer points out that 'the inscription is dated to the very beginning of both patriarchates, and thus to a time when there had not yet been any direct contact between them, for it was only in 825 and in 830 that Dionysius would personally travel to Egypt to deliver his synodical letters'.[129] Two other inscriptions are found on the wooden doors of the church; they are dated to 914 and 926.[130]

III.3 Appropriation of foreign saints in Egypt

Although the epigraphic data from Dayr al-Suryān mainly provide evidence for the mutual recognition of the hierarchy in both communities, they also show that the connection between the Syrian and Egyptian miaphysite groups was still strong in the late eighth to tenth centuries, the period in which the majority of the passions of the Antiochene martyrs was copied and gained popularity in Egypt. These monastic

[127] Den Heijer, 'Relations between Copts and Syrians', p.924.
[128] On the Syrian monks in Scetis in general see K. Innemée, L. Van Rompay, 'La présence des syriens dans le Wadi al-Natrun, Egypte' in *Parole de l'Orient* 23 (1998), pp.167-202.
[129] Den Heijer, 'Relations between Copts and Syrians', p.927.
[130] Innemée, Van Rompay, 'La présence des syriens', pp.193-194.

networks and connections, suggests Fiey, served as a medium for the process of the exchange of saints: the saints of Syria and especially those of Antioch (together with the so-called Persian saints) start to infiltrate the menologia of Egypt.[131] Among the ones who are best known are the martyrs Theodore Anatolius, James the Sawn Asunder (Intercisus or Persian), Sergius and Bacchus, the female martyrs Drosis and Febronia, Symeon Stylite and others. Some of these saints have their commemorations on the same days as in Syriac menologia (Febronia, Barsauma); in other cases the commemoration dates do not coincide (as is the case with Ephrem or James the Sawn-Asunder).[132] It must be noted that in his study Fiey does not do justice to the spread of the cult of the Antiochene military saints, although he mentions some of the names – for example, Hour and his family, and Theodore Anatolius. In any case, the Antiochene saints whose lives belong to the Coptic literary cycles are found only in late Syriac menologia, which indicates yet again that their stories were composed in Egypt and have no background in Syria.

This exchange of saints between Egypt and Syria, which I have very briefly touched upon in this section, is a complex and sometimes perplexing phenomenon[133] and it exceeds the scope of this research. But what can be asserted is that this borrowing of saints, especially on the Egyptian side, was not just a spontaneous action – in fact, there was a certain ideology behind this process. We can clearly see that Coptic authors

[131] Fiey, 'Coptes et Syriaques', p.305.
[132] Fiey, 'Coptes et Syriaques', pp.305-308.
[133] For example, two very popular Antiochene saints – martyrs Romanus and Pelagia – never made it into the Coptic *Synaxarium*, despite the fact that their cults were promoted in Antioch by Chrysostom and Severus.

developed a very strong interest in Antioch and Antiochene saints: this interest begins to form already in the texts composed in the seventh century, such as the legend of Eudoxia. It continues to grow more intense in the following two centuries and results in the creation of a hagiographical Antioch in the martyr passions composed in the eighth century and later.

This increase of interest in Antiochene saints is also reflected in the collections of liturgical texts, which were forming in the same period. The earliest dated liturgical Coptic manuscript in Sahidic dialect (M574 of the Pierpont Morgan Library), which has been mentioned above, contains thirteen acrostic hymns in honour of the Lord, the Mother of God, and the saints. Four out of these thirteen hymns are dedicated to the martyrs – and only one to the Mother of God. Five hymns altogether are dedicated to the saints who originated from Antioch: the martyrs Victor, Claudius, Theodore and two hymns in honour of Severus of Antioch.

Another early liturgical collection, the *Antiphonarium*, which is preserved in the ninth century Sahidic manuscript, also kept at the Pierpont Morgan Library (M575),[134] witnesses the same enthusiasm towards foreign saints. It contains, among others, hymns to Apa Kosmas and Fellow Martyrs; Apa Menas and all Martyrs; Mercurius and the Holy Martyrs; James the Persian; Apa Eustratius and Fellow martyrs; Severus of Antioch, and Ignatius of Antioch.[135] The fact that the hymns to the Antiochene saints appear in

[134] For description of this manuscript see Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, № 58, pp.107-112.

[135] Some of these hymns have been published by Y. 'Abd Al-Masih, whose aim was to show certain of the Bohairic Doxologies in use in the Coptic Church at the present day existed in a Sahidic version already in

organised collections indicates that this tradition was already well-developed by the end of the ninth century, which suggests that the whole Antioch cycle should be dated to the eighth, rather than to the ninth century.

One of the foundations for this continuing interest in borrowing and appropriation of the historical or invented saints from Antioch was laid by the champion of the miaphysite unity – Severus of Antioch. He has already been mentioned many times in this context and it seems appropriate at this point to look more closely at his role in this process.[136]

III.4 Severus of Antioch, his importance for the Coptic Church, and his role in establishing the cult of martyrs in Egypt

> Whence comes it that Egypt, which used to vomit forth the filthiness of idol-worship like fountains, and used to say that she herself was wiser than every city and country, and in madness committed folly and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into the likeness of a dumb image of a corruptible man, and of bird and of four-footed beasts and reptiles, has become a paradise abounding in the beauties of the worship of God, and with the blossoms and flowers of martyrs, as with the doctrines of the orthodox faith, enlightens and crowns even cities that are removed beyond the borders, and Nilus, Psom, Paor and Jeremias, and those who were martyred and crowned with them have shown themselves true ambassadors for us who dwell in Syria? This is your change who are the only Christ, "the change of the right hand of God and the Father Most High", David also sings with us, praise to you![137]

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the ninth century, since these appear in this early Sahidic collection, cf. Y. Abd-al-Masih, 'Doxologies in the Coptic Church' in *BSAC* 5 (1939), pp.175-191 (and in later issues of *BSAC*).

[136] On Severus in general see P. Allen and C.T.R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (London, 2004). On Severus in the Coptic and Copto-Arabic tradition see a recent work of Y.N. Youssef, *The Life and Works of Severus of Antioch in Coptic and Copto-Arabic tradition: texts and commentaries* (Piscataway, 2014).

[137] *On the holy Egyptian martyrs*, 151 – I – VIII, *PO* 7/5, pp.609-610; I am using the English translation of this hymn by E.W. Brooks.

The above quoted hymn *On the holy Egyptian martyrs*, composed by Severus of Antioch, is a very good example of his work on promoting the unity between the two miaphysite strongholds – Egypt and Antioch. Interestingly enough, he expresses his admiration for the conversion of Egypt and the strong faith of its saints in very much the same manner as John of Hermopolis, the author of the 'Egyptocentric' *Encomium to St Mark the Evangelist*, who spoke of the darkness of Egypt before the arrival of St Mark which brought light to this land.[138] It is difficult to say whether Severus shared the views of the Egyptian Christians on the importance of Egypt as the land of saints, but he certainly was closely familiar and sympathetic with Egypt's special love and admiration for martyrs and, on his own part, did a lot to promote the exchange of saints between the two communities.[139]

From his early youth Severus had close ties with Egypt: he studied in Alexandria after the death of his father, according to his biographer Zachariah Scholasticus;[140] before his ordination in 512 and later, at the time of his episcopate Severus maintained good contacts with Alexandria: he exchanged letters with Peter of Alexandria and the priests of his diocese.[141] In 512, when Severus became the patriarch, he sent a synodal letter to the patriarch John II (505-515) to which John promptly replied. The next patriarch of Alexandria, Dioscorus, also exchanged letters with Severus. After his deposition it was Alexandria where Severus fled; he spent a very long time in Egypt before going to

[138] T. Orlandi, *Studi copti* (Milano, 1968), pp.14-16. See discussion of this discourse and the *Panegyric to St Antony* by the same author in Behlmer, 'Patriotische Heilige in Ägypten', pp.168-169.
[139] Y.N. Youssef, 'The Role of Severus of Antioch in the Dialogue between Greek, Coptic and Syriac Cultures' in *Parole de l'Orient* 31 (2004), pp.163-184.
[140] Zachariah, Bishop of Mytilene, *Life of Severus*, translated by L. Ambjörn (Piscataway, 2008).
[141] Fiey, 'Coptes et Syriaques', p.310.

Constantinople in 532 from where he was again exiled to Egypt. After this second banishment he lived in various Egyptian monasteries and desert hermitages until his death in the town of Sakha (Xois) in February 538. His life, composed by Athanasius 'the Camel Driver' who signed the union of 617 was translated into Coptic at a relatively early point.[142] His popularity in Egypt was, in a way, unrivalled and it might be said that at some point Severus was considered to be one of the most important saints in Egypt, second to St Peter the Apostle, as is seen in a Bohairic doxology in his honour:

> You have received the honour of Peter, the prince of the Apostles. Christ raised His right hand upon your head. He entrusted to you the keys of the kingdom of the heavens in order that you should be a director over the Churches to guide your people into righteousness and peace.[143]

Severus' zeal in establishing and affirming miaphysite unity and in promoting the cults of saints (which in, a way, supported this unity of Church) was highly praised by the Coptic hymnographers.[144] One of the most striking examples of such activity is his promotion of the cult of the martyrs Sergius and Bacchus in Egypt. Youssef, who has published a large number of articles on Severus in Coptic and Copto-Arabic tradition,

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[142] Orlandi suggests that the fact that Athanasius signed the union was the reason why the Copts preferred this Life rather than the ones composed by Zachariah or John of Beth Aphtonia, cf. T. Orlandi. 'Athanasius of Antioch' in *CE* 1, p.304. This *Life* is preserved in Ethiopic translation, there are also fragments of Sahidic, Bohairic and Arabic versions. It was published by E.J. Goodspeed, cf. *The conflict of Severus, patriarch of Antioch, by Athanasius*: *Ethiopic text ed. and tr. by Edgar J. Goodspeed with the remains of the Coptic versions by W. E. Crum* in *PO* 4/6 (Paris, 1098).

[143] 'Abd-al-Masih, 'Doxologies in the Coptic Church', p.95. Severus was also an object of devotion in Syria as the hymns composed by John of Beth Aphtonia show, cf. E.W. Brooks, *The Hymns of* Severus, *PO* 7/5, pp.653-656.

[144] Hymn Six, *On the Patriarch Severus*: '2. All the lives of the saints/ and the teachers of the Church/ you have introduced, and you have spoken about them/ to establish the faith. ... 17. Vain is all the worship/ of the bishops of Chalcedon,/ for the doctrines of Severus/ destroyed them quickly'; cf. Kuhn, Tait, *Thirteen Coptic acrostic hymns*, pp.66-75. L. Farag points out that 'St. Severus of Antioch is especially honored in the Coptic Church liturgy. In the *Absolution of the Servants* that is said after the offerings and in the diptych, Severus of Antioch is the first in the hierarchy of the patriarchs to be mentioned, even before Dioscoros, Athanasius and Cyril of Alexandria', cf. L. Farag, 'Coptic-Syriac Relations beyond Dogmatic Rhetoric' in *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 11:1 (2008), p.13.

uses this example while discussing the role of Severus in the dialogue between Greek, Coptic and Syriac cultures. There is no commemoration in the Syriac menologia of the consecration of the church of Sergius and Bacchus in Resapha, but it exists in the Coptic calendar on 19th of Hathor.[145]

It must be noted that the hymns testify to both the antiquity and the longevity of the traditions introduced by Severus in Egypt: thus, the *Difnar* hymns to Sergius and Bacchus on Hathor the 19th[146] contain details from the cathedral homily on Sergius and Bacchus by Severus which he pronounced at Chalcis;[147] and not only that, but they seem to be very similar to the Greek hymns of Severus translated into Syriac by Paul of Edessa.[148] This early hymnographic collection is indeed remarkable, as it contains not only hymns to the groups of martyrs[149] or hymns in honour of the most popular saints venerated in Syria, such as the Maccabees or the forty martyrs of Sebaste, but also hymns to the martyrs Sergius and Bacchus, Menas, Peter, archbishop of Alexandria, and to the female martyrs – Thecla, Drosis, Euphemia and Pelagia. Even if not all of the hymns ascribed to Severus in this collection are in fact composed by him, it still reflects the strong interest of Severus in promoting the cults of local and foreign martyrs. It must be noted that the hymns of Severus to the martyrs do not contain any doctrinal points –

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[145] Youssef, 'The Role of Severus of Antioch', pp.163-184.

[146] O'Leary, *Difnar*, pp.65-66.

[147] *Homily LVII* in *PO* 4/1, pp.83-94. On this homily see also E.K. Fowden, *The Barbarian Plain: Saint Sergius Between Rome and Iran* (Berkeley; London, 1999), pp.23-25.

[148] It is difficult to say when exactly this collection of hymns was formed, but it is obviously not later than the second half of the seventh century, when James of Edessa made his revision of the Syriac translation of the hymns. It contains hymns on the feasts of the Lord and some hymns to the saints; the hymns are ascribed mostly to Severus and other Syriac hymnographers, such as John of Beth Aphtonia. For hymns in honour of Sergius see Brooks, *The Hymns of Severus*, *PO* 7/5: *Hymns on the holy Sergius*, pp.602-603.

[149] There are hymns to the Holy Martyrs in general (14 hymns) and to the Holy Egyptian martyrs, Holy Persian martyrs, Holy Gentilian martyrs, Holy Homerite martyrs.

they are wholly dedicated to the praise of the saints and therefore are void of propaganda of his theological views; their aim is to underline the universality of the saints' deeds and to make their achievements better known to the congregation.

Conclusions

The image of Antioch as the 'holy city', equal or even surpassing in some aspects Jerusalem, the Holy City of Christianity, was constructed by Coptic authors in the period of massive hagiographical production in the seventh to ninth centuries. This coincided with the period of the formation of the identity of the Coptic Church as the Church of the Martyrs (which stimulated the development of the cults of the Antiochene military martyrs) and as a miaphysite community, strongly opposed to the pro-Chalcedon Church of Constantinople, its former metropolis. It is no surprise that the famous ancient centre of Christianity, Antioch, was chosen to replace Jerusalem and to fulfil the functions of a 'holy city' as a birthplace of some popular martyrs, such as Victor, Claudius, Macarius and others, since Antioch was also – for a certain period[150] – a stronghold of the miaphysite confession in the East.

Thus, Coptic hagiographers artfully used this already existing link between the two communities – the link which was established through official communications between the miaphysite patriarchates and through monastic networks – and created a monumental image of the city washed in and sanctified by the blood of martyrs who

[150] The later miaphysite patriarchs of Antioch were unable to reside in Antioch itself because it was a stronghold of the Chalcedonians. But for the Copts the name of Antioch was associated with the Syrian miaphysites, even though the city itself had turned against them. The same attitude can be observed in Egypt: the Egyptian miaphysites spoke of Alexandria as of their see, although the miaphysite patriarchs had to live in monasteries outside of Alexandria.

were then sent to Egypt and sanctified it, too, by their sufferings and posthumous miracles. This legend of Antioch, like the legend of Diocletian in its Coptic re-working, consists of many parts scattered in different texts that altogether form what might be called the 'Cycle of Antioch'. This group of texts includes martyr passions, in which Antioch is used for creating the necessary urban background; texts connected with the emperors Diocletian and Constantine, such as the legend of Eudoxia and *Discourse on the Cross*, pseudo-attributed to Cyril of Jerusalem, in which Antioch is used to emphasize the contrast between the two types of the ruler – the Persecutor Diocletian and the God-loving Constantine; and hagiographical panegyrics in honour of the Antiochene saints ascribed to various fictitious bishops of Antioch.

Supported by the hymnographic texts, composed approximately in the same period, which also praise Antiochene saints and describe Antioch as the orchard from where shoots of fruit-bearing trees are transferred into the new soil of Egypt and bear more fruit, this *Cycle of Antioch*, taken as a whole, also provided solid background for the martyria and relics of these saints in Egypt. The problem of dubious relics and questionable martyria witnessed already in the fifth century by the colourful sermons of Shenute thus received a solution: since some of the texts forming this Cycle are ascribed to bishops of Antioch (and especially to such respectable figures as Severus), who all claim to be eye-witnesses of certain events in the lives of the martyrs or of their posthumous miracles at the martyria in Antioch, there was no reason for the audience to question the origins of a particular martyr. The passions and encomia in honour of the martyrs read at their shrines depicted their childhood and adolescence in Antioch, their

first encounters with the pagan authorities and their subsequent banishment to Egypt, explaining in this way their connection with the birthplace; the hymns performed at the celebrations in honour of the saints also affirmed these ideas. In the course of time, inserting Antiochene links into the story of a saint became rather fashionable and led to the construction of new links, as in the case of Cosmas and Damian and their mother Theodote. Mayer notes that,

> ...in Egyptian circles the introduction into a saint's life of a connection to Antioch became a means of increasing that saint's prestige. Setting events at Antioch under the rule of Diocletian is a characteristic of this cycle of Coptic hagiography that both magnifies the saint's confession and lends historical verisimilitude.[151]

Antiochene connections also helped to boost the significance of Egypt as the land of martyrs: hence the stories of saints who travel from Egypt, usually symbolised as Alexandria, to Antioch or vice versa, suffer martyrdom in the respective counterpart places (Naharoua goes to Antioch from Egypt, Martyria travels to Egypt to baptize her children) and thus establish the network of miracles and shrines. All these small pieces in the end formed an impressive mosaic image of the holy city Antioch, closely connected with Egypt by ties of faith and by common saints.

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[151] Mayer, Allen, *The Churches of Syrian Antioch*, p.22. See also Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints*, pp.32-34.

Appendix to Chapter 4. Martyrs who according to the Coptic tradition have connections with Antioch

Name	*Native of Antioch*	*Brought to Antioch for trial and torture*	*Belongs to the Cycle of*	*Martyred in*
1. Abshai (brother of Hour)	yes	n/a	-	Alexandria
2. Agape / Love (daughter of Sophia)	yes	n/a	-	n/a
3. Anatolius the Persian	no	yes	Basilides or the Theodores	Antioch
4. Apoli (son of Justus and Theoclia)	yes	n/a	Basilides	Egypt
5. Drosis / Atrasis, (daughter of either Hadrian or Trajan)	n/a	supposedly yes	-	Antioch (?)
6. Babylas, bishop of Antioch	yes	yes	-	Antioch
7. Banikarous/ Panicyrus the Persian	no	yes	Theodores	Egypt
8. Basilides	yes	no	Basilides	Egypt
9. Besamon	yes	yes	Basilides	n/a
10.Christopher	-	yes	-	Antioch, martyred under Decius
11. Claudius	yes	n/a	Claudius	Egypt
12. Cosmas (brother of Damianus, son of Theodote)	no	yes	-	Antioch (only in Coptic tradition)
13. Cyprian (and Justina)	yes	no	-	Nicomedia
14. Cyrus / Abakir (brother of John)	Native of Alexandria, lived in Antioch	no	-	Alexandria

Name	*Native of Antioch*	*Brought to Antioch for trial and torture*	*Belongs to the Cycle of*	*Martyred in*
15. Daidara/ Dendera (mother of Hour and Abshai)	yes	n/a	n/a	Alexandria
16. Damianus (brother of Cosmas)	no	yes	-	Antioch (only in Coptic tradition)
17. Erai / Irai, Herai (sister of Ter)	yes	no	Basilides	Egypt
18. Eirene / Peace (daughter of Sophia)	yes	n/a	-	Antioch (?)
19. Eusebius (son of Basilides)	yes	no	Basilides	Egypt, Hnes
20. Eusignius / Eugenius	yes	yes	-	Antioch (killed by Julian the Apostate)
21. Helpis / Hope (daughter of Sophia)	yes	n/a	-	Antioch (?)
22. Hor / Hour / Apa Hour	yes	n/a	n/a	Alexandria
23. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch	yes	no	-	Rome
24. Isidorus	yes	yes	Basilides and Victor	Antioch
25. John, brother of Cyrus	Native of Alexandria, lived in Antioch	no	-	Alexandria
26. Justina (and Cyprian)	yes	-	-	-
27. Justus	yes	no	Some links to Basilides	Antinoopolis
28. Leontius the Arab	no	yes	Basilides	Tripoli (?)
29. Macarius	yes	no	Basilides	Alexandria/ Shetnufi (Pchati)

Name	*Native of Antioch*	*Brought to Antioch for trial and torture*	*Belongs to the Cycle of*	*Martyred in*
30. Marina	yes	yes	n/a	Antioch (?)
31. Naharua (Nehroua)	Native of Fayyum	yes (went there himself)	n/a	Antioch
32. Philotheus	yes	no	Victor and Claudius	Antioch
33. Pistis/Faith (daughter of Sophia)	yes	n/a	-	Antioch (?)
34.Procopius/ Proconius	Born in Jerusalem, brought up in Antioch	-	-	On his way to Egypt
35. Pteleme	yes	no	-	Hnes
36. Sarah and her children	yes	yes	-	Antioch
37. Sarapamon	no (Jew, Jerusalem)	yes	-	Egypt
38. Sisinnius	yes	yes	-	Antioch (?)
39. Sophia (mother of Agape, Eirene and Pistis)	yes	n/a	-	Antioch (?)
40. Ter/Apater (brother of Erai)	yes	no	Basilides	Egypt
41. Theoclia (wife of Justus)	yes	no	Basilides	Egypt
42. Theodore the General (or Stratelates)	yes; his father was Egyptian	yes	-	Euchaita
43. Theodore Anatolius (or Oriental)	yes	no	Basilides	Ctesiphon
44. Theodosia (mother of Procopius)	Lived in Antioch	-	-	-

Name	*Native of Antioch*	*Brought to Antioch for trial and torture*	*Belongs to the Cycle of*	*Martyred in*
45. Theodote (mother of Cosmas and Damian)	no	yes	n/a	Antioch (only in Copto-Arabic tradition)
46. Victor	yes	no	Victor and Claudius	Egypt

Chapter 5

Enduring motifs: a miracle of resurrection and a tour of hell

Having discussed the general features of the fictional geographical reality in which the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and other texts of the Antioch cycle are set – namely, the figure of Diocletian and the image of Antioch, we should now turn to the features which are particular to the story of Philotheus. In order to see how the text of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* was created, what place it held in the context of contemporary hagiographical and, in general, popular theological literature, it may be worth looking at what the text itself can say about the context and the atmosphere in which it was composed. The narrative draws the attention of the audience to certain episodes which are written with more care about the detail and coherence of the events while other episodes, sometimes connected rather loosely, merely repeat general clichés, typical in Coptic martyrdoms.

This chapter will focus on the origins and literary context of one such episode which relates the events that led to the repentance and conversion of Philotheus' parents, Antiochian pagans of noble birth and great wealth. The second part of this chapter will discuss some Egyptian and Judaeo-Christian motifs in the description of hell present in this episode and their Coptic re-working and adaptation.

Part I. Tour of hell and its literary and theological context

I. 1 Death and resurrection of the martyr's parents in the different version of the Martyrdom *and in Coptic liturgical hymns*

The following chain of events can be derived from the different versions of the *Martyrdom*[1]: the boy is brought to offer a sacrifice to the mysterious calf which his parents worship; the calf has a conversation with Philotheus[2] and then receives permission from him to kill his parents;[3] it attacks them and gores them to death; the parents are left to lie dead and unburied for three (Georgian version and synaxaria) or four (Coptic version) days until Philotheus finally revives them. They repent of their previous infidelity and receive baptism from a Christian priest.

This providential death and the following conversion of the pagan parents seem to be two of the focal points of the Coptic liturgical hymns in honour of St Philotheus.[4] Thus,

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[1] This episode is found in all full versions of the *Martyrdom*, including the synaxaria: Coptic Martyrdom, ff. 80*v*–84*r* (pp.155*b*–171*b* of the Rome 1922 edition); Georgian Martyrdom, ch. 3 (pp.94-95 of Kekelidze's 1960 edition); Arabic Coptic synaxarium f.112*v* (see R. Basset, 'Le synaxaire arabe jacobite (rédaction copte)' in *PO* 11 (1915), p.603); Ethiopic synaxarium f.127*b* (see E. A. Wallis Budge, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church*, t. 2 (Cambridge, 1928), English trans. p.502). The resurrection of parents is also briefly mentioned in the Arabic encomium (cf. Y.N. Youssef, 'The Encomium of St. Philotheus ascribed to Severus of Antioch' in *Coptica* I (2002), p.180).

[2] Here again the Coptic Martyrdom provides a lengthy conversation in which the calf explains, beginning with touching memories of its innocent childhood, how it came to be worshipped by Philotheus' parents, and quotes the epistle of Paul to the Romans (f.80*r* and *v*). Both synaxaria describe this encounter in a more concise form: 'And the boy Philotheus stood up before the bull and said unto him, "Is it true that thou art a god which men worship?" And a voice came forth from the bull which said, "I am not a god, but Satan hath entered my heart and I have become a deceiver of men." (cf. Budge's translation, *The Book of the Saints*, p.502). The Georgian text omits this conversation entirely.

[3] The Coptic version does not specify the manner of killing. It is the Georgian text that describes it as 'goring' (ch. 3). The Arabic Coptic and Ethiopic synaxaria both insist on 'goring with horns' (see Basset, op.cit., p.603, and Budge, *The Book of the Saints*, p.502).

[4] O'Leary, *The Difnar* II (London, 1926), pp.16-17, 114.

the first hymn, which is in Adam mode,[5] is wholly dedicated to this particular episode of the martyr's life while the martyrdom itself – his confession, struggle with the emperor and glorious death – is only briefly mentioned in the last few lines.[6] The second hymn, in Batos ('Bush') mode, also praises Philotheus for killing the calf, raising his parents from the dead and bringing them to the true God as a gift.[7] Likewise, an additional hymn to St Philotheus glorifies him for enlightening his pagan parents and making them worthy of the good things to come.[8]

One might see therefore the importance of this episode for the construction of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and further development of his cult in the Coptic Church.[9] This episode provides yet another opportunity for dating and placing the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* in a broader context of contemporary Coptic literature.

[5] These variable hymns of the Coptic Church in honour of saints are sung in one of the two modes (tones) – Adam or Batos. The Adam mode is used on Sundays, Mondays and Tuesdays. The name of this mode comes from the first line of the Monday Theotokion (hymn to the Mother of God). The Batos mode is used on Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays, its name is taken from the first line of the Thursday Theotokion. For more details on the use of Adam and Batos melodies in the daily worship of the Coptic Church see M. Kuhn, *Koptische liturgische Melodien: die Relation zwischen Text und Musik in der koptischen Psalmodia* (Leuven, 2011), pp.64-84 and 244-297.

[6] O'Leary, *The Difnar*, p.16.

[7] Ibidem, p.17: ⲭⲉⲣⲉ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲫⲩⲗⲟⲑⲉⲟⲥ ⲉⲧⲁϥⲧⲟⲩⲛⲟⲥⲟⲩ ϧⲉⲛⲛⲏ ⲉⲑⲙⲱⲟⲩⲧ ⲙⲉⲛⲉⲛⲥⲁ ⲅ ⲛⲉϩⲟⲟⲩ ⲟⲩⲭⲟⲥ ⲁϥⲧⲏⲓⲧⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲙⲫⲧ ⲙⲙⲏⲓ, 'Rejoice, O Philotheus, who raised them who were dead after three days and gave them as a gift to the true God'.

[8] Ibidem, p.114: ⲟⲩⲟϩ ⲛⲉⲕⲓⲟⲧ ⲛϧⲉⲗⲓⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲉⲛⲁⲩⲟⲡ ⲛⲁⲧⲥⲟⲩⲉⲛ ⲫⲧ ⲁⲕⲑⲣⲟⲩⲥⲟⲩⲱⲛϥ ϩⲓⲧⲉⲛ ⲡⲓϩⲙⲟⲧ ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲭ̅ⲣ̅ⲥ ⲉⲧⲱⲟⲡ ⲛϩⲏⲧⲕ ⲟⲩⲟϩ ⲁⲕⲥⲟⲃⲧ ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲫⲩⲭⲏ ⲛϩⲁⲛⲁⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲉⲩⲟⲩⲁⲃ ⲙⲫⲧ, 'Also your pagan parents, for they did not know God – you made them know Him through grace of Christ which was in you. You also prepared their souls as a gift to Holy God'.

[9] It is remarkable that there is no mention of Philotheus' parents or their conversion in the Georgian canon in honour of St Philotheus from *Iadgari* (იადგარი) of Michael Modrekili, published by K.Kekelidze (cf. Kekelidze, op. cit., pp.98–102).

The typical confrontation between a future martyr and his pagan parents, which reveals his genuine zeal for following Christ,[10] is reflected in other liturgical hymns in honour of martyrs of the Antiochian cycle, for example, in a hymn dedicated to one of the most popular saints, Apa Victor,[11] whose *Martyrdom* formed the core of the *Cycle of Victor and Claudius*. But none of the Martyrdoms belonging to the *Cycle of Victor and Claudius* contains anything like the story of the parents of Philotheus, i.e. a story of conversion to Christianity through temporary death.

Since the miracle of resurrection is the first miracle performed by the future martyr after his conversion (but before his baptism), both the Georgian and Coptic versions pay special attention to it. The resurrection scene is described very similarly in both texts, with a number of minor differences in details, such as, for example, the prayer over the dead, which, as usual, is longer in the Coptic version. It should be noted that the Coptic version underlines that the miracle of resurrection was performed 'after three and a half days' and then stresses again that 'their body still smelled of death, for it was four days

[10] Thus, a martyr shows that he or she is ready to obey Christ's ultimate vocation expressed in these words: 'For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me' (NKJV Matthew 10:35-37). Then the future martyr is supposed to first break all family ties, if they are an obstacle on his path of witness.

[11] Since Victor, son of Romanus, is the only link between the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and other Cycles of Antiochian martyrs (see Introduction), it is worth noticing that two different hymns is his honour are mostly dedicated to Victor's opposition to his father Romanus: one in a Batos mode, from a relatively late Bohairic manuscript, published and translated into Russian by Elanskaia, *Коптские рукописи*, pp.123-129, and another one published by O'Leary in *The Difnar,* part II, p.114.

since their death' (f.81r *b*), thereby clearly linking this episode to Lazarus' resurrection on the fourth day.[12]

I.2 A 'tour of hell' in the Coptic Martyrdom *and apocalyptic 'tours of hell'*

What follows the resurrection scene in the Coptic text might be probably referred to as a 'tour of hell'.[13] The Georgian version omits this episode completely – there is no account of the boy's parents' 'afterdeath experience', but a short remark that they 'stood up, with fear and great trembling, amazed and shaken by what had happened to them' (ch. 3), while in the Coptic text their miserable condition is explained in this way: they 'were in great fear because of the things that they had seen in hell' (f.81v *a*). The synaxaria versions only make a brief comment that the parents 'told him how they had seen punishments which were in Sheol'.[14] At this point the Coptic *Martyrdom of Philotheus* provides an elaborate and highly literary story (ff.82r-83v) which describes the journey and torments of the souls of Philotheus' parents, Valentios (ⲟⲩⲁⲗⲉⲛⲧⲓⲟⲥ) and Theodoti (ⲑⲉⲱⲇⲱⲧⲏ),[15] in hell after they have been slaughtered by the calf. They start their tale with the appearance of Death, hanging in the air and constantly changing shape. They then tell how they were brought to the Judge of Truth where the verdict

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[12] Jesus said, 'Take away the stone'. Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, 'Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days'. (NKJV John 11:39).

[13] The term is suggested by M. Himmelfarb in her profound study on the descriptions of hell in the apocalyptic literature; cf. M. Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell: an Apocalyptic Form in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Philadelphia, 1983).

[14] Budge, *The Book of the Saints*, p.502; see Basset, op.cit., p.603.

[15] This is the only instance where the names of the parents are given; cf. f.81v *a*: 'My father Valentios (Oualentios) and my mother Theodoti, in the name of Jesus Christ, rise up'. In the Georgian version the parents are called Ivlintian and Theodotia: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, Who gives life to all, rise up, father Ivlintian, and you, mother Theodotia!' (ch.3)

over them was pronounced and their punishments began: namely, immersion in the river of Fire; suffering in the pit, full of snakes, worms and Decans; goring by the iron horns; plucking of their eyes and tongues; great cold and tempest, and other punishments. On their way to the last, 'unrelieved' punishment their souls were taken back from the executioners by the angel of light and brought back into their bodies by the prayers of Philotheus.

There are many other 'tours of hell' in Coptic literature which describe the divisions and punishments of hell in great detail – such as, for example, the *Visio Pauli (Apocalypse of Paul)*[16] or episodes from the *Life of Pachomius*,[17] but the most striking difference between these texts and the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is that the parents of Philotheus are not just mere observers as are St Paul or Apa Pachomius. The protagonist of such apocalyptic stories – an apostle, a prophet or a saint – would, after having visited all the different spheres of heaven and hell with a guiding angel, then relate to the audience what he had seen or what had been explained and shown to him by his guide.[18] This is

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[16] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts* (London, 1915), pp. 556-559, 537-548, trans. pp.1043–1047, 1057-1069. I use modified translations based on Budge's translations in this chapter. The *Apocalypse of Paul* (or *Visio Pauli*, to distinguish between the Gnostic *Apocalypse of Paul* from Nag-Hammadi library and the text belonging to the body of Early Christian apocrypha) was probably composed originally in Greek sometime in the late fourth century and then translated into many languages; cf. W. Schneemelcher, *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Übersetzung* II, 6th ed. (Tübingen, 1997), pp.644-647. The Coptic version of this text has been known to survive only in a tenth-century Sahidic codex, which was published by Budge in 1915. A. Suciu mentions two new fragments which 'can be dated on palaeographical grounds to the 6th or 7th century CE, thus being the earliest testimony of the *Visio Pauli*', cf. http://alinsuciu.com/2012/06/17/update-aelac-meeting-dole-june-28-30-2012-schedule-and-paper-abstract/, accessed on 06.10.2013. For more on the literary context of the *Visio Pauli* see J.N. Bremmer and I. Czachesz (eds), *The Visio Pauli and the Gnostic Apocalypse of Paul* (Leuven, 2007).

[17] L.Th. Lefort, *Les vies coptes de saint Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs* (Louvain, 1943), pp.148-149.

[18] As visitors, they get access to the most remote and horrible parts of hell. Thus, for example, the pit of the abyss is opened for Paul to see: 'And the angel who accompanied me said to the one who was over the pit of the abyss, 'open the pit in order that Paul, the beloved of God, may see it, for he is permitted to see

one of the particular features of the literary form of such texts: observing a specific group of tormented people, a visitor of hell would ask his guide, 'Who are these?', and then would hear an answer beginning, 'These are…' (e.g. 'these are those who have committed adultery'). Himmelfarb defines these answers as 'demonstrative explanations'.[19] They appear in almost all the apocalyptic texts which discuss the fate of the dead and the punishments in hell. R. Baucham points out another special feature of the apocalyptic tours of hell:

> Almost all of them are describing the punishments suffered by the wicked now, immediately after death, before the day of judgement at the end of history. … So the texts are an expression of the belief in the active punishment of the wicked immediately after death, before the last judgement.[20]

This feature is, in fact, found in other types of narratives describing the fate of the dead (the idea of the immediate punishment of the wicked is quite prominent in certain monastic texts as well, which will be discussed later), but is indeed very important for the apocalyptic texts, since their main concern 'is to show how a wide range of particular sins is specifically punished by appropriate forms of judgement in the afterlife'.[21]

Philotheus' parents, however, are not visitors; they do not receive any explanations about the punishments of hell, but describe only their own, rather physical, experience

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everything relating to the punishments which he wishes to see'. Cf. Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.546, trans. p.1066.

[19] See Himmelfarb, *Tours of Hell,* chapter 2, pp.41-67.

[20] R. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead: Studies on the Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (Leiden, Boston, 1998), p.206.

[21] Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, p.35. Bauckham adds that such tours of hell were very popular in the Middle Ages and 'together with the parallel descriptions of paradise, they form a literary tradition whose greatest product was Dante's *Divine Comedy*', cf. ibidem.

of the torments which they had to suffer according to the sins they had committed. This explains the final remark in their account, that they 'have not seen the punishment of hell of those who worship idols or of those women who leave their husbands, defiling themselves with others, or of those who swear falsely, or of magicians who destroy the creation of God', which is probably aimed at making the tale sound less 'invented' and therefore more convincing, as if narrated by real witnesses who only relate their own experience.

I.3 Descriptions of the tortures of hell in monastic literature

A different type of narratives relating the first person experience of the torments of hell is found in monastic literature. First of all one might recall the famous story of St Macarius and the skull from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*,[22] a collection of sayings of the Desert Fathers, one recension of which is known to have existed before the end of the fifth century.[23] St Macarius of Egypt (ca. 300-391) finds the skull of a pagan priest in the desert and inquires about his afterdeath fate. The priest tells Macarius about his suffering in hell and about the comfort that the prayers for the departed bring to those undergoing punishments. This story has been widely quoted as one of the arguments for

[22] E. Amelineau, 'Apophthegmes sur Saint Macaire' in *Histoire des monastères de la Basse-Egypte* (Paris, 1894), p.225; M. Chaine, *Le manuscrit de la version copte en dialecte sahidique des "Apophthegmata Patrum"* (Cairo, 1960), p.66, trans. p.139; B. Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers: the Alphabetical Collection* (London, 1975), pp.136-137.

[23] J.-C. Guy, *Les Apophtegmes des Pères: collection systématique* (Paris, 1993), pp.80-84. J. Pauli, though, suggests that the alphabetical collection of the Apophthegmata appeared later, in the first quarter of the sixth century, cf. J. Pauli, 'Apophthegmata Patrum' in *Lexikon der antiken christlichen Literatur*, ed. by S. Döpp, W. Geerlings (Freiburg, 2002[3]), p.52.

the necessity of praying for the dead.[24] Later this narrative was borrowed in Islamic tradition where it became very widespread in a form of conversation between Jesus and a dry skull, and then, having undergone certain transformations, was transferred back into Christian literature and reappeared in the history of Arsenius.[25] Although the torments of hell are depicted here as a personal experience, this short episode does not present any detailed description of other parts of hell, and therefore cannot be regarded as a proper 'tour of hell'.

Another *Apophtegma* (№237 in the systematic collection[26]) tells the story of a virgin who had a vision of her departed parents receiving the reward for their lives: her righteous father enjoying the pleasures of paradise and her lascivious mother suffering in the eternal fire. Although this account contains a few more details of the torments of hell and has some 'personal touches', it doesn't describe any spheres of hell.

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[24] Thus, for example, the sermon 'On the faithful departed' attributed to St John Damascene quotes this episode (*PG* 95, col.255-256).

[25] St Arsenius the Great in Coptic tradition is one of the famous desert fathers who, before starting his monastic life, used to be the imperial tutor at the court of Theodosius; see also D. Afinogenov [Д. Афиногенов], 'К происхождению легенды о св. Арсении – воспитателе императоров Аркадия и Гонория' ['To the Origins of the Legend about St Arsenius – the Tutor of Emperors Arcadius and Honorius'] в *Вестник древней истории* 1 (2004), pp.49-61. In the Syriac version of this legend, however, Arsenius is a king of Egypt whose dry skull Jesus finds in the desert. Arsenius tells Jesus of his sinful life, repents it sincerely and is raised by God the Father, after which he becomes a monk. One of the versions of this legend was published by I. Hall, 'The Story of Arsânîs' in *Hebraica* 6 (1890), pp.81-88. For more on this subject see an article by D. Bumazhnov to whom I owe this reference, D.F. Bumazhnov [Д.Ф. Бумажнов] «Разговор с черепом на стыке двух религий» (Le dialogue avec une crâne à la charnière des religions) in *Символ* 58 (Paris-Moscow, 2010), pp.104-126.

[26] A.I. Elanskaia [А.И. Еланская], *Изречения Египетских Отцов. Памятники литературы на коптском языке* (Saint Petersburg, 1993), p.84-86.

A similar episode appears in the *Life of Shenute* (allegedly composed by his disciple Besa between 466 and 474[27]) where the dead man in the desert is revived by Christ so that he might tell Shenute about his posthumous experience and, as a side effect, bolster Shenute's authority before the intended audience of his *Life*.[28] This passage does not provide any detailed information on the punishments of hell or the fate of sinners, apart from a general impression of grief and suffering, but it sets the pattern for later narratives, as will be shown later. This episode has also influenced the above-mentioned legend of the conversation between Jesus and the dry scull.[29]

I.4 Ideological background as reflected in Coptic homilies

The theme of the *post mortem* fate of souls has always attracted great interest among Christians, but one does not find much on this topic, apart from very few instances, in the Gospels or in the earliest monastic texts, such as the early recensions of the *Apophthegmata Patrum*. As J. Wortley notes in his study of the Byzantine 'beneficial tales',

> It is no exaggeration to say that the scriptures did not give them much to go on. Most of the Old Testament writers had no such expectation, while the New Testament texts are, to say the least, somewhat laconic concerning "the last

[27] This attribution is contested by N. Lubomierski, who insists that the attribution of this *Life* to Besa is absent in the earliest Sahidic fragments; cf. N. Lubomierski, *Die Vita Sinuthii. Form- und Überlieferungsgeschichte der hagiographischen Texte über Schenute den Archimandriten* (Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum, 45) (Tubingen, 2007), pp.156–170.

[28] 'The Lord said to him: 'As much as you have been worthy to see me on earth, together with my servant apa Shenute, I will give you a little relief. Sleep now so that mercy may come upon you, and rest until the day of the true judgement'. Cf. D.H. Bell, *The Life of Shenute* (Kalamazoo, 1983), p.86; for Coptic text see J. Leipoldt, *Sinuthii archimandritae vita et opera omnia*, CSCO Series II, vol. 41 (Paris, 1906), pp.66-68.

[29] On the importance of this episode for Islamic and Christian legends of the conversation between Jesus and the scull see D.F. Bumazhnov [Д.Ф. Бумажнов], 'Неизвестные христианские параллели мусульманской легенды о разговоре Иисуса с черепом' (Unbekannte christliche Parallelen zum Gesprach Jesu mit einem Schadel) in *Miscellanea Orientalia Christiana* (Moscow, 2014), pp.248-257.

> things." He who would say something about them was pretty well obliged to "make it up" from somewhere or other, either by extrapolating on the slight hints given in the scriptures or by borrowing from some other tradition (both of which the church appears to have left men free to do).[30]

This is why, as Wortley shows in numerous examples from the beneficial tales, there was 'a great variety of beliefs' concerning the *post mortem* fate of the soul, and they did not necessarily agree with each other.[31] But what kind of beliefs would one observe in Coptic martyr tales and what kind of theological background do these beliefs have?

To answer these questions, one should first look at the contemporary theological texts composed specifically with the aim of teaching the official doctrine of the Church to its flock – the homilies, intended for oral performance in the church, usually after the reading of the Holy Scripture. It is there where the roots of the 'popular theology' of the hagiographical texts, re-worked for easier understanding, are found. There are some allusions to the posthumous punishments of the wicked in hell in the homilies composed in the sixth and seventh centuries and attributed to the famous bishops and doctors of the Church such as St Athanasius of Alexandria. These homilies reflect a general interest in this theme, but do not usually provide any detailed descriptions of different departments or tortures of hell, and neither do they provide any of the demonstrative explanations that are so characteristic of the apocalyptic texts.

Looking at the contents of these homilies, one might see, however, what ideas their authors had about death, judgement and hell: five out of the ten homilies published by

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[30] J. Wortley, 'Death, Judgement and Hell in Byzantine "Beneficial Tales"' in *DOP* 55 (2001), pp.55.

[31] E.g., a question whether the prayers for the departed can alter their fate, Wortley, 'Death, Judgement and Hell', pp.55-56.

Budge,[32] contain mentions of the imminent meeting with Death and his merciless angels, of the eternal fire that consumes the sinners who are 'tied up in bundles like garden waste'[33] and thrown into it, allusions to the river of fire, the judgement before the awful throne of the Judge of Truth[34] and so on. These texts do not discuss any specific punishments or particular features of Hell or its inhabitants; they mostly follow the path of the Gospels and do not allow the imagination to go too far. But the ideas and imagery used by the authors of the homilies allow us, nevertheless, to speak of a certain 'expansion of repertoire' of the Biblical ideas;[35] whether or not this expansion was carried out by bringing in some ancient Egyptian ideas, is a different question.[36] Since these homilies were read to the monks during their daily services and meals and enjoyed great popularity in monastic institutions in Egypt and Syria, they have apparently influenced the contents of the hagiographical texts composed by monks and scribes working in the monastic scriptoria. Thus, the theme of the inevitable experience of the tortures of hell *immediately after* a sinner's death seems to infiltrate hagiographical texts composed in monastic circles in the seventh and eighth centuries.

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[32] See more E.A. Wallis Budge, *Coptic Homilies in the Dialect of Upper Egypt; edited from the papyrus codex Oriental 5001 in the British museum* (London, 1910), p.xv and xxiii.

[33] Budge, *Coptic Homilies*, p.36.

[34] This is what we find in the *Discourse of Apa John on Repentance and Continence:* 'You know, therefore, that it will be necessary for you to stand before the awful throne, where neither advocate nor possessions will be able to help you, and that your soul will come forth on the river of flame which flows before the throne of Christ, as the fathers say who have been in that place before you', cf. Budge, *Coptic Homilies*, p.22.

[35] See, for example, this observation on the variety of punishments in the same *Discourse of Apa John*: 'Look at some of them, and see how they are tied up in bundles, like garden waste, and cast into the furnace of fire. And see how they[the executioners] bind the hands and the feet of the others and cast them out into the outer darkness, and how some of them are given to the worm which never sleeps, and to the gnashing of teeth'; cf. Budge, *Coptic Homilies*, p.36. But the author does not provide any explanation for this difference in punishments.

[36] Budge insisted that many of these images had their direct prototypes in ancient Egyptian texts, cf. Budge, *Coptic homilies*, pp.xxx-xxxii; also Worteley, 'Death, Judgement and Hell', p.69.

I.5 Tours of hell in Coptic hagiographical texts

Stories about the immediate judgement of soul and people's personal experience of hell from monastic texts start to appear in hagiographical texts with a number of slight changes at first – the stories become more vivid, and dialogues between the characters are framed with miraculous events. As J. Baun notices in her study of the medieval Greek apocalypses, the aim of these stories is to make the '*moral* teaching <...> at once more attractive and more compelling',[37] to incite both the interest and the sense of 'pious fear' among the audience. Indeed,

> Few imaginative venues can match the gruesome fiery punishments of the Other World as a showcase for the grim consequences of sin. Moral norms that might seem abstract as expressed in conventional preaching or canon law become immediate, personal, and unforgettable.[38]

These stories usually follow the pattern set in the *Life of Shenute*: a saint revives a dead person and asks him or her to relate his experience of the after death fate. One such episode, very close in its structure and wording to the story from the *Life of Shenute*, is found in the *Martyrdom and Miracles of St George*:[39] the martyr is asked by the pagan governor to revive the bones of the people buried in a forlorn sepulchre. He does so and then a group of resurrected pagans tell their story to the governor, his court and St George himself. The 'speaker' of the group confesses that he worshipped idols and mentions that he had to undergo the river of fire and the never-sleeping worm in hell.

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[37] J. Baun, *Tales from another Byzantium: Celestial Journey and Local Community in the Medieval Greek Apocrypha* (Cambridge, 2007), p.11.
[38] Ibidem, p.11.
[39] E.A. Wallis Budge, *The Martyrdom and Miracles of Saint George of Cappadocia* (London, 1888), pp.219-221; *The Encomium of Bishop Abba Theodotus*, ibidem, pp.303-304.

He also notices that, being pagan, he would receive no relief on the Lord's Day, unlike those who have been baptized. Having heard the story of the resurrected pagans and their plea for mercy, St George miraculously produces a spring of water and baptizes them, thus giving rest and absolution to their souls.

Since the *Martyrdom of George* and the *Encomium to St George* attributed to Theodotus of Ancyra were certainly composed later than the *Life of Shenute* (the encomium might be dated to the seventh or even eighth century[40]), this episode, most probably, has been directly borrowed or constructed under the influence of the *Life of Shenute*. But it has been adorned with lengthy conversations and miraculous events in order to enhance the narrative, to draw the audience once again into contemplation on the importance of penitence before death, and to promote the cult of St George.

Further development of this theme in Coptic hagiography will be shown by two narratives that are very close in their contents and style to the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*. They follow the same model: a saint revives a person who died a while ago; he asks about the fate of this person in the netherworld and receives an answer containing information on the departments of hell and different tortures. Unlike the homiletic texts or the *Apophthegmata* narratives, these texts describe hell and its horrors in the manner of the above-mentioned apocalyptic 'tours of hell' with many details and a certain number of 'movements' between different departments. There are two major differences from the apocalyptic tours of hell, however: first of all, there are no demonstrative

[40] T. Orlandi, 'Theodotus of Ancyra' in *CE* 7, p.2242.

explanations and no guides are provided for the travelling souls, and, secondly, the story only concerns the person who was revived.

One of these sources is an *Encomium to bishop Pisentius of Keft*,[41] composed probably by his successor bishop Moses of Keft in the seventh century and based on the memoirs or oral accounts of Pisentius' disciple John.[42] Pisentius was the bishop of Keft (Coptos/Qift), a town of Upper Egypt on the east bank of the Nile, at the time of the Persian invasion of Egypt in 619 (this invasion is mentioned both in the *Encomium*[43] and in the *Life of Bishop Pisentius*, written by John the Elder[44]). An episode from the *Encomium to bishop Pisentius of Keft* recounts a conversation between Apa Pisentius and a mummy in the desert.[45] When Keft was taken by the Persians, perhaps in 620, Pisentius and his disciple John were forced to flee three miles into the rocky desert. There they found a cave with remains of an ancient Egyptian tomb with a number of richly adorned mummies in it. Pisentius decided to stay in this tomb for a while, praying for their souls, and John, coming back to the cave with water and food, witnessed a conversation between the bishop and one of the mummies.

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[41] E. Amélineau, *Un Evêque de Keft au VIIe siècle. Encomion par Abba Moise, Evêque de Keft, au sujet de Abba Pisentios, Evêque de cette même ville de Keft* (Mémoirs de l'Institut Egyptien, Cairo, 1889), pp.260-423. For more on Pisentius see C. Detlef, G. Müller, G. Gabra, 'Saint Pisentius' in *CE* 6, pp.1978-1980, and R. Dekker, 'Bishop Pesynthios of Koptos (Egypt): 'He did not pursue the honour, but it was the honour that pursued him'" in *Episcopal Elections in Late Antiquity*. *Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte* 119, ed. by J. Leemans, P. van Nuffelen, S.W.J. Keough, C. Nicolaye, (Berlin, Boston, 2011), pp.331–342.

[42] Amelineau discusses the authorship of this panegyric in the introduction and concludes that 'il n'y a nulle raison de douter que Moïse, évêque de Keft après Pisentios, ait compose un panégyrique dans lequel il exaltait les vertues de son prédécesseur sur le trône épiscopale de Keft', cf. *Un Evêque de Keft*, p. 266.

[43] Amélineau, *Un Evêque de Keft*, p.397.

[44] Budge, 'The Life of Bishop Pisentius, by John the Elder' in the *Coptic Apocrypha in the dialect of Upper Egypt* (London, 1913), Coptic text pp.75-127, trans. pp.258-321. For more on this text and other texts related to Pisentius see G.G.A. Sayed, *Untersuchungen zu den Texten über Pesyntheus Bischof von Koptos, 569-632* (Bonn, 1984).

[45] Amélineau, *Un Evêque de Keft*, pp.406-409.

The mummy introduces itself as a man from Ermant, the son of pagans who worshipped Poseidon, and describes his 'post-mortem experience'. First of all, Death appeared to him hanging in the air in many forms, accompanied by pitiless angels who also change their form.[46] They pierced the man's ribs with spears and tore out his soul, bound it to the black horse of Death[47] and dragged it to the West. After this the man was cast to the outer darkness, into a pit more than two hundred cubits deep, filled with reptiles and worms. What is worse, the worm with iron tusks and wild animals never ceased to eat ('fill their mouths' with) him. He then reveals to Apa Pisentius that sinners have some relief in their suffering on the Sabbath and the Lord's Day,[48] and that he was released from a hook of iron which was in his mouth after the intercession of Apa Pisentius. The story ends just like the one in the *Life of Shenute* – the suffering soul receives a blessing

[46] In this encomium they are rendered as the Cosmocrators, which is yet another function of the Egyptian deities named Decans, who will be discussed later.

[47] This description is perhaps borrowed from the Bohairic *Life of Pachomius* where an angel tells St Pachomius of the procedure for extracting of the sinful soul from the body at the hour of death and transporting it to Amente: 'then they insert a curved instrument, which resembles a fishhook, into his mouth and extract his miserable soul from his body <...>. Afterwards they tie it to the tail of the spiritual horse – since it is also a spirit – and thus take it away and cast off into torments'. Although the *Life of Pachomius* underlines the spiritual nature of the horse, the *Encomium to bishop Pisentius of Keft* represents it in a more fleshy nature, even indicating the colour of the Death's horse. Cf. L.Th. Lefort, *S. Pachomii Vita Bohairice scripta* CSCO series III, vol. VII (Louvain, 1936), p.61.

[48] It is worth noting that the motif of sinners being released from their punishments on the Lord's Day (Sunday) also appears in later hagiographical texts as well as being also found in Ethiopic lives of the Coptic saints. Thus, in the Ethiopic *Life of Apa Cyrus* the priest Pambo, who visits St Cyrus in his hermitage, is greatly perturbed by the cries of people and the trembling of the rocks and mountains which start at the ninth hour of Saturday. St Cyrus explains to him that this noise is produced 'by the voice of those who are in hell, since it is Saturday, and every night before Sunday the sinners are brought up from hell and get rest from their torments, and God gives them repose from their sufferings from the ninth of hour of Saturday until the sunset of Sunday. And that is why they are praising God – for He gives them rest on the day of His glorious Resurrection', cf. B.A. Turaev [Б.А. Тураев], *Коптско-эфиопское сказание о преподобном Кире*, (Saint Petersburg, 1903), p.7. Also in the Coptic version of this Life one finds a similar episode when Apa Cyrus explains to Pambo the reasons for the earthquake and cries which start at the dawn of the Lord's Day: 'Be not afraid, O my son, that God will come down for the sake of punishments. He has commanded the angels who inflict the punishments upon souls to give them a respite, for today is the Lord's Day, and [the day of] the Resurrection of the Lord', cf. Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.133.

to sleep in peace until the day of resurrection – so it might be suggested that it was based on the stories of Shenute and Macarius.[49] However, the structure of the narrative is closer to the apocalyptic descriptions – the narrator is describing his movement through the different spheres and various punishments of hell (outer darkness, pit of reptiles, the never sleeping worm), thus providing the audience with some information on its geography; moreover, some of the features of this account coincide verbatim with the descriptions presented in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, especially with the descriptions of Death and the tormentors and the idea of the iron hook in the man's mouth.

Another narrative, which is the closest to the account in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, is that found in the *Martyrdom of Macarius of Antioch*.[50] St Macarius revives a dead man from the village of Pchati in order to manifest 'the glory of his Lord Jesus' to the crowd, taking part in the funeral procession. Seeing Apa Macarius, the resurrected man falls down to his feet, exactly like the parents of Philotheus, and expresses his gratitude for saving him from the torments of hell. The wording of his story sometimes coincides completely with that of the parents of Philotheus. Though this account is shorter than the episode in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and it describes fewer punishments, these two texts most probably share a common source, or, perhaps, are a good example of

[49] Amelineau also suggests that this episode might have been borrowed: 'Il est malheureux pour la beauté du fait que ce récit soit calqué sur d'autres récits semblables qu'on trouve dans la vie de Macaire et de Schnoudi'; cf. Amélineau, *Un évêque de Keft au VIIe siècle*, p. 307.

[50] Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte* I, pp.55-57. Macarius of Antioch is said to be the son of Basilides and brother of Eusebius and Theodore, exiled to Egypt with other members of the Basilides clan. The account of his passion is attributed to Julius of Aqfahs, linking the *Cycle of Basilides* with the martyrdoms composed by Julius. However, Winstedt suggests that, since this particular text is inconsistent in different ways, it perhaps 'does not belong to the regular Julian cycle, as it professes to be written by Samuel of ⲥⲓⲛⲓⲁⲗⲉ', cf. Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.XXIV. For more details on Macarius of Antioch see O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, p.181, and Orlandi, 'Saint Macarius' in *CE* 5, p.1489. His memory is celebrated on the 22nd of Epip.

what S. Averintsev defined as 'textual units' and M. Stone defined as 'multiform transmission of "clusters" of texts'. Such clusters are 'characterised by differing formulations or restructuring of the same narrative of other material, and sometimes by verbatim identical pieces of text'.[51] Problems connected with the so-called 'textual units' in apocryphal and hagiographical traditions have been discussed by S. Averintsev in 1987 on the material from Byzantine, Coptic and Syriac apocrypha and popular hagiographical stories. He pointed out that, due to the highly conservative nature of this literary environment, which reacted to the socio-cultural changes by producing new versions of the old stories with only superficial changes, the original genesis of certain apocrypha remains unclear to this day; sometimes it is impossible to say whether a text is a Jewish literary product, complicated by Christian interpolations, or a composition of a Christian author, who used ready 'textual units' from a Jewish text.[52] In his recent study M. Stone also discusses the problem of 'clusters of texts', by drawing attention to three specific 'clusters' (the Adam and Eve tradition, the writings related to Ezra, and some compositions attributed to Elijah) and shows that establishing any genetic relationship between different re-workings of the common material is extremely difficult.[53]

The textual unit containing a 'tour of hell' in the *Martyrdom of Macarius* consists of virtually the same elements found in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, and some parts of it coincide verbatim with the story of Philotheus' parents. The man begins his story with a

[51] M.E. Stone, 'Multiform Transmission and Authorship' in *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Cambridge, 2011), p.151.
[52] S.S. Averintsev [С.С. Аверинцев], *От берегов Босфора до берегов Евфрата* (Moscow, 1987), pp.26-27.
[53] Stone, 'Multiform Transmission and Authorship', pp.151-171.

confession of his former idolatry and then goes on to describe his encounter with Death and his attendants, the Decans. He recounts the River of Fire and the Judge of Truth, the place of darkness and frost, the never-sleeping worm and other reptiles that were devouring him, and the happy moment when he heard a voice commanding his tormentors to return him to earth on account of the prayers of Apa Macarius. There are, of course, certain differences between the two stories – the man spent only six hours in hell, not three days, like Valentios and Theodoti, and therefore he did not have much time to experience more tortures (the types of tortures and their order are compared in the table below).

Philotheus of Antioch	Death changing forms and faces	Judge of Truth	River of fire	Pit, snakes, worms, Decans	Calf with iron horns	Tearing of tongue	Frost, cold, worm	Unrelieved punishment
Macarius of Antioch	Decans changing forms and faces	River of fire	Judge of Truth	Place of cold and darkness	Worm			
Encomium to Pisentius	Decans and Death changing forms and faces	Outer darkness Deep pit	Reptiles with seven heads	Worms with iron tusks	Hook of iron			

The *Martyrdom of Macarius* provides more detailed descriptions of the Decans and their changing faces (they appear in the shapes of lions, dragons, crocodiles and other wild animals), and of the never-sleeping worm ('whose head was like a crocodile').[54] Also,

[54] Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte* I, p.56.

crossing of and plunging into the River of Fire takes place ***before*** the decision of the Judge of Truth, which reflects the twin notion of this feature in the Coptic texts – the concepts of the River of Fire both as a border, a geographical phenomenon, one of the rivers of Hades, in the Greek sources (Phlegethon or Pyriphlegethon), and as the place of torture in later Greek texts and in the apocalyptic tours of hell.[55] But the compilers of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* describe more varieties of tortures in their tour of hell and, rather unusually, try to provide a certain 'justification' for the choice of punishments featured in this episode.

I.6 'Custom-fitted' punishments in the Martyrdom of St Philotheus

Although the two narratives might at first seem to have been borrowed from the same source or to have been composed by the same author, the episode in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is in fact a very well tailored and elaborated story, much more personalised and 'thought through' by its authors. The punishments described in the *Martyrdom of Macarius* are mostly those which Himmelfarb defines as 'environmental punishments' as opposed to 'measure-for-measure' punishments: 'Measure-for-measure punishments form one major group of punishments in hell. A second group consists of punishments inflicted by the geography of hell'.[56]

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[55] For more on the underworld Rivers of Fire in apocalyptic literature and in the Greek texts see Himmelfarb, op. cit., pp.110-115.

[56] Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.106. Himmelfarb also notices that 'unlike measure-for-measure punishments, environmental punishments are not associated with particular sins, and often a single punishment contains several of the elements discussed above. Texts do not seem to borrow specific punishments from each other. It is the fact of environmental punishments that is transmitted; the development of the various motifs seems to be the work of the individual authors', ibidem, p.122.

Indeed, the torments the pagan from Pchati had to suffer were mostly inflicted on him by the geographical and climatological features of hell – the River of Fire, cold and darkness, etc. In contrast, the torments which Valentios and Theodoti had to endure were mostly the 'measure-for-measure'[57] type, based on the *talion* principle:[58] thus, they suffered the plucking of their eyes and tongues; they were tortured by the same calf that they had been worshipping during their earthly life, and were impeded by their tormentors to confess God. They did experience the environmental punishments as well (the River of Fire and the horrible stench of sulphur and bitumen, the pit of worms and snakes, the Decans), but the attention of the intended audience of the text is instead attracted to the vivid descriptions of the punishments of the first type. This idea of a carefully selected punishment is supported by the popular theology of that time: thus, in the *Teaching of Apa Psote, bishop of Psoï* one finds a passage explaining the connection between the sins committed in earthly life and their retaliation:

> And he does not know that the things which he does every day are written down in the books which never grow old, and cannot be destroyed, for they are books of the spirit, and in these [books] our sins are written down one by one. And since every sin has a different character, and the gravity of each [sin] varies, so the characters of the punishments and their severity are different.[59]

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[57] Himmelfarb, op. cit., pp.68-105.

[58] The *talion* principle (lat. *lex talionis*) is an idea that refers to the Biblical precept best expressed in the expression 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth' (Exod.21:24, Lev.24:20). For more on the use of the *talion* principle in Judaism cf. H.H. Cohn, 'Talion' in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 15 (Jerusalem, 1971), p.742; on *talion* in general cf. Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.75-78.

[59] Budge, 'The Teaching of Apa Psote' in *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.154. This text contains the sermon delivered by Psote during the celebration when a messenger from the governor Arianus arrived to Psoi (Ptolemais) 'to cut off his head'. Orlandi claims that, although it was probably composed earlier than the rest of the Psote tradition in Egypt – which means that it might have been written before seventh century – this text 'is connected only indirectly to the rest of the Psote tradition. Its author seems to have known nothing other than the brief text of the first Passion', cf. T. Orlandi, 'Saint Psote of Psoi' in *CE* 6, p.2032. Psote was a bishop, martyred under Diocletian circa 305, his writings enjoyed great popularity in Egypt. For his Coptic dossier see T. Orlandi, *Il dossier copto del martire Psote* (Milan, 1978).

The torment during which the eyes of Philotheus' parents are torn out by the executioners[60] is indeed a very 'natural' punishment for someone who refused to see the truth. Himmelfarb points out that 'blindness appears as a measure-for-measure punishment in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Visio Pauli*, and the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*'.[61] Thus, the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* describes a special group of sinners which consists of catechumens 'who heard the word of God, but were not perfected in the work which they heard'.[62] They are all blind. Blindness, as Himmelfarb notices, 'is the physical actualization of the lack of self-awareness or self-criticism that allows the sins come into being'.[63]

The second measure-for-measure punishment, designed specially for Valentios and Theodoti, is their goring with the horns of that same calf they had considered to be their god – with the difference that now this goring will be much more painful and go on forever.[64] The calf reappears in the narrative on the third day, adding more suffering to the pain, which was already caused by the frost and cold and the never-sleeping worm

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[60] 'Those who were holding our souls handed us over to him, and he gave us to the executioners. Their appearance was of this kind: their eyes were casting fire into our faces and their claws tore out our eyes and tongues. This is the first punishment of Hell, which the angel of Hell has ordered to bring on us' (f.82v *b*).

[61] Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.104.

[62] O.S. Wintermute, 'Apocalypse of Zephaniah (First Century B.C.-First Century A.D.)' in *The Old Testament pseudepigrapha,* ed. by J.H. Charlesworth (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1983-85), p.515.

[63] Or, in other words, 'blame-worthy ignorance is crystallized into physical blindness', cf. Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.105.

[64] 'And he ordered to bring out the calf – the one who we had been worshipping. The calf now had horns of iron, sharp as spears, so that he would torture us with them. He said this to us: 'Understand now that I am not God, but you worshipped me as God, and that is why I too am suffering this punishment with you'. He tortured us with his horns until all our limbs began to fall apart one by one' (f.82v *b* – f.83r *a*).

that was devouring them.[65] This is indeed a unique punishment, since the usual way to put someone to the 'body mutilating' or 'body piercing' torture in other tours of hell would be throwing the person in question to the regular residents of hell – those pitiless angels or demons with knives and spears who have been mentioned before, and whose main duty is to cut and tear. Nowhere else in Coptic texts would the measure-for-measure punishment be invented with such frightening precision, which underlines once more the literary style of the episode.

The third personalised torture is the impossibility to pray and repent their ignorance, because their tongues were plucked out and burnt.[66] An attentive reader would probably have observed a certain contradiction between the two passages: the tongues of the sinful souls had been already plucked out during the first punishment together with their eyes ('their claws tore out our eyes and tongues', f.82v *b*). However, this contradiction might be partly explained by the narrators' remark that 'after these [tortures] again our appearance was not dissolved, but then our torture was stopped'

[65] 'On the third day they cast us down into the great frost and cold and tempest, where the never-sleeping worm was devouring us. And also the calf was torturing us in the punishment, giving us much pain. And he was reproving us until the angel of Hell sitting on his throne rose up' (f.83r *b*). One cannot but agree here with Himmelfarb's observation that sometimes 'punishment is piled on top of punishment, often resulting in impossible combinations'. Cf. Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.107.

[66] 'And they did not give us any possibility at all to cry out to God, for even if the name of God would come to our heart so that we might utter it, they would hasten to tear out our tongue with a three-pronged tool. They plucked it out little by little and threw it into the unquenchable fire' (f.83r *a*). In the *Apocalypse of Paul* a similar episode occurs – a wretched soul is brought to the judgement of heaven and 'straightaway the mouth of the soul was closed, and it was unable to utter a single word before God', cf. Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.1045.

(f.83r *a*).[67] In the Bohairic version of the Old Testament apocryphon *Testament of Isaac* a similar notion of restoring the victim's body for further tortures occurs:

> And I beheld, and lo one was brought being pursued; and when they came unto the beasts, they who were going with him drew to one side; the lions came nigh unto him, they rent him in the midst, they tore him limb from limb, they rent him, they ate him. Then did they cast him up again, and he became like to himself again and when he came further than the lions, they likewise did thus unto him.[68]

Similar ideas about the afterlife state of the body in hell are found in one of the most popular homilies of the seventh century '*On Repentance and Continence*' by John, Archbishop of Constantinople,[69] where he explains that:

> In this world, if the body burns, the soul comes forth from it, and it exists undestroyed. In that world, even though the body rise up, and exist in an undestroyed form, the soul will burn forever. And if it is necessary that sinners shall rise up, and exist in an undestroyed form, this shall not happen in order that they may receive glory, but only that they may be punished with the never-ending punishment.[70]

Thus, it might be suggested that the bodies of Philotheus' parents – if one can speak of a physical body in this context – were restored after each punishment so that they might endure new tortures. It should be noted that later in the text of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* the limbs of the martyr will be also restored three times after the tortures

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[67] Also, in the *Martyrdom of Macarius* the worm, who had head of a crocodile and whose function was to devour, or rather, chew the sinners, 'caused all the wild beasts to eat also, and they tore us but we did not die', cf. Hyvernat, op. cit., pp.56-57.

[68] English translation by S. Gaselee in an appendix to G.H. Box, *The Testament of Abraham* (London, 1927), p.68.

[69] This homily, published by Budge, was a great favourite in monastic communities of Egypt and Syria, and at a comparatively early period it was widely known. It was generally attributed to St. John Chrysostom, but, as Budge suggests, it is more likely that the Homily was written by John the Faster, who was the Patriarch of Constantinople from April 11, 582, to September 2, 595. He died in 596. The homily was originally written in Greek, but was translated into Syriac and Coptic soon after John's death. This homily contains many allusions to the Last Judgement, and the punishments of the wicked. Cf. Budge, *Coptic Homilies*, pp.xxi-xxii.

[70] Ibidem, p.11.

(f.92r *b*; f.94r *b*; f.99r *b*) by the grace of God so that he, on his part, might continue the struggle with the impious emperor.

The motif of the plucking out and burning of the tongue of the unrighteous is not so common in the apocalyptic tours of hell – the usual punishment would rather be hanging by the tongue: hanging is 'particularly appropriate for the never-ending torment of hell, when execution is meaningless'.[71] The parents of Philotheus did not confess the name of Christ (though their son had tried to show them their error), but continued to worship the calf and confess its name as the name of their god. The importance of open verbal confession is further emphasized by the tormenting angels ('executioners'), who were saying to the parents during the punishment, that only 'as much as one has confessed Him before the people, only as much one is able to confess Him here' (f.83r *a*).[72]

Refusal to confess Jesus as their God is apparently a 'verbal sin' committed by Philotheus' parents and verbal sins in most of the apocalyptic texts, as Himmelfarb shows in her study, 'are uniformly punished by hanging by the tongue'.[73] Yet, there are narratives that describe the punishment of the verbal sins very much in the same way as

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[71] Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.85.

[72] This is a reference to Matthew 10: 32-33: 'Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven'. It seems that the Coptic hagiographers considered it particularly important to underline the need of the oral confession of Christ's name – i.e. with one's tongue and mouth – as is shown in the story of the magician Astratole incorporated in the *Martyrdom of Shenoufe and his brethren*. Astratole descended into hell out of his own curiosity and was threatened by demons, who wanted to kill or torture him; he invoked 'all the powers under heaven' but received no help, and only after uttering the name of Jesus Christ with his mouth he was relieved, cf. Reymonds, Barns, *Four Martyrdoms*, pp.102-103.

[73] Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.86. See also a comparative table of verbal and sexual sins on p.89.

the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*. Thus, in the *Visio Pauli* the guide shows Paul different torments in the River of Fire:

> And again I looked at my side, at the river of fire, and I saw one dragged along by them [the angels of wrath] who were running by his side, and they plunged him in the river of fire up to his lips. And a pitiless angel came with a razor of fire and he burned away his tongue and his lips little by little. And I sighed and wept, and I said to the angel, 'Who is this, my lord?'. He said to me, 'This is a reader who had to teach the people, but he did not act in accordance with the things which he read [to them], and with the commandments of God. [74]

Although the tongue of the impious reader is not plucked out as in case of Philotheus' parents, but is burnt away little by little, the explanation of this punishment makes it clear that this torture is applied to sinners for the sins they had committed with their tongue and lips.[75]

It is perhaps this punishment of the plucking out of the tongue that is depicted in the frescoes of the church in Tebtunis in the southern Fayûm: 'the demon appears to be holding some sort of long, pointed instrument in its hand, with which it is drawing out (?) something from the victim's mouth'.[76] The three-pronged instruments or hooks are

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[74] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.541.

[75] This description of burning of sinful tongue is probably inspired by one the New Testament mentions of the *talion* principle: 'And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell' (James 3:6). In the Jewish apocalyptic literature punishment for verbal sins also includes fire, cf. R. Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, pp.126-127. S. Lieberman also provides an example of a 'burning punishment' for verbal sins from an unknown midrash quoted by Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg in his *Responsa*: 'And those whose mouths were filled with hot coals of juniper are people who converse in the synagogue during the prayers, and cease from words of Torah and engage in conversation. All this is to make known that the Holy One blessed be He is a righteous judge. Those bodily members which commit transgressions are punished in Gehenna more than the rest of the members', cf. S. Lieberman, 'On Sins and their Punishments' in *Texts and Studies* (New York, 1974), p.40.

[76] C.C. Walters, 'Christian Paintings from Tebtunis' in *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 75 (1989), p.201. Walters suggests that this might be 'a representation of a passage from the Apocalypse of Paul which describes how a sinner's intestines are removed through the mouth'. Since the sin of the tortured man in the painting is that he 'took the wage of the labourers', it is not clear whether his sin should be

normally used by the demons at the time of death for extracting souls from the bodies,[77] but are sometimes employed for tormenting sinners in hell: thus, in the *Encomium to bishop Pisentius of Keft* the man from Ermant says that there had been a hook of iron in his mouth.[78]

Based on the above, it can be claimed that the story of Valentios and Theodoti in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* was written by someone who was well familiar with the *Visio Pauli*'s 'precision approach', but did not feel limited by it. The three special punishments chosen for these particular sinners by the compilers of the text are not just generalized 'environmental' punishments that await all sinners, but are meant to match the sins committed by the stubborn parents of the future saint who tried to convert them to the true faith. The editors of the Coptic version could have used a 'stock passage'[79] from the *Visio Pauli* which provides a very precise depiction of the punishment prescribed for 'the godless heathen':

> And I, Paul, saw other men and women who were immersed in [the drainage-conduits] of fire. Their clothes were black, and they were blind, and they were all going to one pit, which was filled with fire. And I said to the angel, 'Who are these, my lord?' And the angel said to me, 'These are the godless heathen who never know God; therefore they shall receive their punishment which will last forever'.[80]

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considered as one of the 'verbal sins', so this might be indeed the drawing out the entrails rather than the plucking of the tongue.

[77] For multiple examples see V. MacDermot, *The Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East* (London, 1971), pp.576-582.

[78] Amélineau, *Un évêque de Keft au VIIe siècle*, p.409. J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy: according to ancient Egyptian conceptions* (Leiden, 1960), p.339, gives other examples of the usage of trident as an instrument of torture, and notices that since 'in Egyptian texts torturing with a red-hot trident never occurs', 'one might think of Persian origin'.

[79] Reymond, Barnes, *Four Martyrdoms*, p.3.

[80] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.543.

But placing the souls of the parents in this particular place of punishment immediately after death or judgement would not allow for the proper 'tour of hell' during which the souls could travel through different departments of hell and which they would later describe in their account, so the authors have preferred to elaborate and expand the apocalyptical 'prescription' by adding some personalised, 'measure-for-measure' punishments, such as goring by the false calf-god. In the case of the *Martyrdom of Macarius*, however, the 'environmental' punishments are chosen from the 'stock punishments' described in the *Visio Pauli* and are just thrown into the pot without much consideration. Thus, even though the textual units used by the compilers of the two *Martyrdoms* consisted of the same material, they have been re-worked with a different degree of attention and care.

I.7 Conclusions

One may finally suggest that the accounts of the tour of hell provided in the passions of Philotheus and Macarius and in the *Encomium to bishop Pisentius of Keft* are in fact a new sub-type of narrative, which might be called a hagiographical tour of hell. It is based on two different types of narrative used for depicting the fate of souls in the netherworld – first of all, on the apocalyptic tours of hell with their detailed descriptions of various torments and spheres of hell, and especially on the *Visio Pauli*, since some of the punishments related by Philotheus' parents seem to have been directly borrowed

from the *Visio Pauli*.[81] But the tours of hell found in the three texts, which have been discussed in this chapter, are all lacking one of the most characteristic features of the apocalyptic tours – the demonstrative explanations provided in the apocalyptic texts by the supernatural guide of the visionary. The second major difference is that the hagiographic tours of hell do not describe the punishments of other sinners or any global eschatological issues – instead, the description of hell and its tortures is presented by the narrators as a first person experience, and in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* it is particularly emphasized that the protagonists only relate 'the things they saw' (f.83 v *a*).

Thus, the second source for such episodes might be found in monastic literature (e.g., in the aforementioned *Life of Shenute*) which takes a different approach to describing the punishments of hell, i.e. relating the experience of a torment from the first person rather than from an observer's point of view. Episodes occurring in the *Martyrdom of Macarius* and in the *Encomium to bishop Pisentius of Keft* represent this trend in literary development – they both combine the detailed descriptions of hell, characteristic for the apocalyptic texts, with the first-person narrative. Yet, the torments described in these two texts are mostly 'environmental' punishments, with very few exceptions. The episode in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* represents a different stage of the same literary trend, providing a more elaborate and personalised story, with punishments carefully chosen according to the *talion* principle ('measure-for-measure punishments') to match the sins committed by the characters of the story.

[81] Such as, for example, the burning of the tongue and lips (Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p. 541, trans. p.1061), immersing into the River of Fire (pp.538-539, trans. pp.1058-1059), casting into a pit full of worms and snakes (p.538, trans.p.1058) and other tortures.

Although the *Martyrdom of Macarius* has not been securely dated yet, it is certainly late (Orlandi claims this passion to be a part of the late Basilides Cycle, which emerged in a ninth-century Bohairic codex[82]). Since the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is witnessed by three different fragments, dating to the seventh century, and one fragment, dating to the eighth century,[83] it might be suggested that the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* served as a source of inspiration for the authors of the *Martyrdom of Macarius.* Meanwhile, the relationship between the *Encomium to bishop Pisentius of Keft* and the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is not quite clear: the date of the composition of the *Encomium* is still under discussion and varies between the late seventh and tenth centuries,[84] while the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, as has been said, is already attested in the seventh century. But it is not always possible to define the precise relationship between the textual clusters used in hagiographical texts, due to the continuous recycling of such textual clusters and due to the fact that these texts, produced 'to meet the sustainable demand of mass reader, retained the same literary character for centuries', as was noted by Averintsev.[85] A good example of the durability of the motifs discussed in the present chapter is found in a late Arabic apocryphon of St Stephen,[86] which contains a very

[82] Orlandi, 'Saint Macarius', p.1489.
[83] On the dating of the Coptic fragments, see Chapter 1.
[84] C. Detlef, G. Müller, G. Gabra , 'Saint Pisentius' in *CE* 6, p.1978.
[85] Averintsev, *От берегов Босфора до берегов Евфрата*, p.26. Stone uses a vivid image of a child playing with wooden blocks to describe the complexity of assessing this material: 'The textual material has been built, knocked down, and rebuilt, ordered and reordered, structured and restructured, and the individual documents do not clearly derive from one another in any distinct, genetic sequence', cf. Stone, 'Multiform Transmission and Authorship', p.151.
[86] Y. 'Abd Al-Masih, 'An Arabic Apocryphon of Saint Stephen' in *Studia Orientalia Christiana* 13 (1968-1969), pp.161-198. This text was studied and translated by 'Abd Al-Masih, but he died before publishing this work. A. Khater found it among 'Abd Al-Masih's papers and published with a short foreword, in which he also provided some information on the manuscripts of the text. It is not possible to date the text

similar story, sometimes coinciding verbatim with the resurrection episode in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*. The story goes as follows:

St Stephen revives a dead magician Yûâš on the third day after his burial at the request of his friend, the former magician Aristodemus. In his prayer St Stephen directly recalls the resurrection of Lazarus on the third day, saying: 'My Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who raised Lazarus (Al-'Azar) from the tomb after many days, <...> raise this magician, so that he may believe in Thy Divinity!'.[87] The dead magician arises and tries to flee away, but St Stephen signs him with the sign of the Holy Cross, and thus removes 'from him the fear which had come upon him from death, and from all subjugators'. Yûâš thanks St Stephen and says (very much in the same words that were used by the mother of Philotheus): 'Blessed be the hour in which I came together with you, O Apostle of the Lord Christ, Saint Stephen, for you have helped my soul and saved it from the lower hell'.[88] He then briefly describes the demons whom he used to worship and who seized him at the hour of death and his suffering 'at the bottom of hell, in difficulty and distress, and weeping and gnashing of teeth'. Then St Stephen accepts Yûâš' request to confer on him baptism, and Yûâš turns into a devout Christian – he and Aristodemus burn their magical books and become the followers of St Stephen.[89]

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itself at the moment, but the existing manuscripts are all very late, the earliest dating from 1733-1734 AD, see 'Abd Al-Masih, 'An Arabic Apocryphon of Saint Stephen', foreword by A. Khater, p.163.

[87] Ibidem, p.187.

[88] Ibidem, p.188.

[89] Ibidem, p.189. There are other links between this text and the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*: for example, the authors of the apocryphon also used the image of the calf which had such a prominent role in the story of St Philotheus – during the contest with St Stephen the magician rends the calf in twain with his magical powers and then St Stephen revives the animal by his prayer. But the story of the sudden death caused by the very creature that the characters worship (the parents of Philotheus are killed by the calf

The main focus of all these narratives is the importance of the saint's intercession for a suffering soul: these hagiographical tours of hell, no matter how long or short they are, concentrate on the personal experience of the narrator only and do not describe punishments suffered by other categories of sinners, whereas the apocalyptic tours of hell tend to paint a wide picture, describing various consequences of various sins. Thus, it appears that these hagiographical tours of hell are not actually aimed at moral teaching – at least, this is not their main concern, since no other sins but those of the narrators are mentioned. But the aim of these texts is still quite practical and it is to promote the cult of a particular saint whose prayer is so powerful that it can change the *post mortem* fate of a soul: thus, St Philotheus saves his parents who become devout Christians and lead pious life for another two years, St Macarius changes the fate of the pagan from Pchati by giving him the holy baptism, while Stt George and Pisentius give rest to the souls until the day of the Last Judgement. This promotional function of the resurrection episode in which the power of the saint's prayer is revealed in full is supported in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* by the usual *kidan*[90] ('covenant' or 'pact') at the end of the text:

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they consider to be their god, while the magician dies after being abandoned in mid-air by the evil spirits he used to worship) and of a three day burial, resurrection from the dead by the saint's prayer and the following conversion to Christ, with some verbatim coincidences between the two texts, clearly proves the continuing popularity of this particular textual unit.

[90] The Ethiopic term *kidan* is used to describe a specific textual unit in hagiographical texts which describes the covenant between God and His saint. It usually consists of the solemn promise of God to a saint to fulfil the prayers and requests of this saint's followers. On the meaning of this term and the use of *kidan* in Ethiopic hagiography see T. Tamrat, 'Feudalism in Heaven and on Earth: Ideology and Political Structure in Medieval Ethiopia' in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by S. Rubenson (Addis Abeba, Uppsala, Michigan State University, 1984), pp.195-200, and S. Kur, D. Nosnitsin, 'Kidan' in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, ed. by S. Uhlig (N. Wiesbaden, 2007), pp.394–395.

> Everyone who calls your name with faith, being in distress or in troubles on the earth, if he says: 'In the name of God of Saint Philotheus, have mercy on me!' I will quickly grant him My mercy.[91]

The combination of the resurrection scene with the frightening tour of hell, which is masterfully written and keeps the audience in suspense until the very end, was undoubtedly designed to influence the perception of the whole story by the audience, since it induced 'emotional arousal through undulating alternations of anxiety and relief'.[92] Together with the chain of grand miracles performed at the court of Diocletian, emphasized by the lengthy solemn *kidan* at the end of the *Martyrdom*, it must have enhanced the power of the narrative and contributed to the popularity of the story of Philotheus among the audience.

Part II. Special features of the description of hell in the Martyrdom of Philotheus

The relation between Coptic descriptions of hell and ancient Egyptian beliefs has been studied and discussed by many scholars and is, indeed, 'an ever recurring point of discussion'.[93] There are some features which appear to be entirely Egyptian (such as the Decans – the pitiless tormentors and executioners in Amente) and some that can be traced to their Greek, Jewish and Christian origin (such as, for example, 'outer darkness', Tartaros, and Gehenna). Some scholars were inclined to treat nearly all motifs used in

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Although the function of *kidan* in Coptic hagiography has not been studied yet, it seems to be an absolutely indispensable textual unit in late Coptic martyrdoms, see discussion in Chapter 7.

[91] F.99v *a-b.*

[92] E.D. Zakrzewska, 'Masterplots and Martyrs: Narrative Techniques in Bohairic Hagiography' in *Narratives of Egypt and the Ancient Near East: Literary and Linguistic Approaches* (Leuven, 2011), p.515.

[93] Cf. J. Zandee, *Death as an Enemy*, p.303-341. Zandee provides an overview of different statements presented in various monographs and articles up until 1960 and then provides his own profound analysis of the Coptic texts containing representations of the afterworld. See also a recent article by H. Behlmer, 'Ancient Egyptian survivals in Coptic literature: an overview' in *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, ed. A. Loprieno (Leiden, New York, Köln, 1996), pp.567–590.

descriptions of the hereafter as survivals of the ancient Pharaonic concepts; a good example of this kind of approach is to be found in the works of Wallis Budge.[94]

But this kind of 'uncritical enumerations' was refuted by other scholars, such as O.H.E. Burmester[95] and J. Zandee, sometimes with another kind of extremist approach. Thus, Zandee shares the opinion of Burmester that, since Coptic writers were Christians, 'their main source of inspiration would be the Holy Scriptures'. Zandee suggests that only a few of the features described as specifically Egyptian by Budge can be securely classified as such, while most of them are, in fact, biblical.

The study of survivals of Egyptian concepts in Coptic literature was continued in the 1970s by Theofried Baumeister who paid a lot of attention to descriptions of the *post mortem* fate of the soul in his study of Coptic martyr passions. He suggests that while some themes can be linked with biblical images, the selection of material which might itself have Christian origin still has a uniquely Egyptian character.[96] Baumeister demonstrates how the idea of the preservation of the physical integrity of the body, which played such a significant role in Egyptian concepts of the afterlife, was reflected in Coptic hagiographical texts and how it was reinterpreted in the scenes describing the multiple resurrections of the martyrs.[97]

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[94] Budge, 'Egyptian Mythology in Coptic Writings' in *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London, 1913), p.lxi ff. Budge lists twenty such features which he sees as remnants of Ancient Egyptian religion.
[95] O.H.E. Burmester, 'Egyptian Mythology in the Coptic Apocrypha' in *Orientalia* 7 (1938), p.355.
[96] Baumeister, *Martyr Invictus*, pp.80-86.
[97] Ibidem, pp.27-30, 149.

Although scholars still disagree on the number and influence of ancient Egyptian survivals in Coptic literature,[98] some kind of consensus has been reached on certain motifs used in descriptions of the posthumous fate of the soul: the river of fire, the heavenly ferryman, the avengers with changing faces, and the guardians of the gates of Amente are usually seen as remnants of ancient Egyptian beliefs.[99] The second part of the present chapter will look at some of these features in the description of hell in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and their literary and theological context.

II.1 Death and his attendants; the seizing of the soul

The first element in the description of the afterdeath experience in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is the appearance of Death and his attendants:

> When the calf attacked and killed us, the eyes of our soul saw death hanging in the air, and it was in many forms that were changing before us. After they had taken our soul out from the body, these changing faces seized us, and they were very fearful in their appearance.[100]

This description is very close to the narratives found in the other Coptic martyrdoms which have been discussed above. Nearly the same wording is used in the fragment of the story of St Stephen found in Qasr Ibrim: the mother of the dead boy is told, presumably by St Stephen himself, to speak to him, and by repeating the words of the

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[98] For example, D. Frankfurter sees Egyptian Christianity as 'Christianized Egyptian religion', cf. D. Frankfurter, 'The Cult of the Martyrs in Egypt before Constantine: the Evidence of the Coptic Apocalypse of Elijah' in *Vigiliae Christianae* 48 (1994), p.25. The opposite opinion is expressed by E. Wipszycka, who does not see that much of Egyptian survivals in Coptic culture, cf. E. Wipszycka, 'Le nationalisme a-t-il existé dans l'Égypte byzantine?' in *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'antiquité tardive* (Rome, 1996), pp.29-31.

[99] Behlmer, 'Ancient Egyptian survivals', p.568.

[100] F.82r *b*. The powers which appeared, preceding death, also caused terror by their change of form. This 'change of form', or more often, of 'face' was a description frequently applied to the demonic apparitions, seen at the time of death. Cf. MacDermot, *The Cult of the Seer*, p.155.

saint she raises her son from the dead. St Stephen then asks the boy to tell about what he has seen, and the boy first asks the saint to baptize him and then describes the moment of his encounter with Death: 'I saw, O my holy father, Death hanging in the air, having a multitude of forms. They seized me and went with me <to> the places of setting of the sun'.[101] The 'they' that took the boy away and 'they' who seized the souls of parents in both cases must be a reference to the many forms of Death, since no other supernatural beings are mentioned.

A possible explanation for this *topos* of 'changing of forms' might be found in the *Discourse on Abbaton* attributed to Timothy, Patriarch of Alexandria (380-385),[102] where the story of Abbaton-Muriel is told. Abbaton is the angel of death and occupies an important place in Coptic angelology. According to the *Discourse*, he was originally called Muriel, and was given the task by God of collecting the earth from which Adam was later created. After the fall of Adam and Eve, Muriel was appointed as a guardian and an angel of death. Everyone, both humans and angels, feared him, but he prayed to God and asked to give salvation and mercy to the men who venerated him during their lifetime. God gave him the power to change his form, and to appear to those whose names were written in the Book of Life as a kind angel, who would take their souls

[101] This fragment comes from excavations in Qasr Ibrim (Qasr Ibrim, exc, 1966a, tomb T2). It will be published by J.L. Hagen in his forthcoming doctoral thesis. A general introduction to Christian-period Qasr Ibrim and its texts can be found in J.L. Hagen, 'A pleasant sense of mild bewilderment: Re-excavating the Coptic texts from Qasr Ibrim' in *Ancient Egypt* 10.2 (2009), pp.46-54.

[102] M. van Esbroeck suggested that the authors of the texts had another Timothy in mind and that it should have been attributed to Timothy II Aelurus, who was Patriarch of Alexandria in 457-477, M.van Esbroeck, 'Saint Michael the Archangel' in *CE* 5, p.1620.

without pain and fear. While appointing him over this difficult task, God gives Muriel a new name and a terrifying appearance, including an ever-changing shape:

> Your appearance and your image shall be [associated with] complaining, and wrath, and threatening in all souls, until they have yielded up their spirits. ... There will be seven heads on the top of your head, and they will change their shapes and forms [continually]. ... You will be suspended in the midst, and you will sit upon a throne of fire. [103]

On the other hand, in the *Martyrdom of Macarius* and in the *Encomium to Pisentius*, as well as in other Coptic texts (for example, in the *Life of Pachomius* or *Apophthegmata Patrum*),[104] Death appears with pitiless tormentors who also keep changing their form. This description is probably based on the *Visio Pauli* where the Powers of Darkness are featured in great detail: they all have different but equally frightening appearances (some have faces of bears whose eyes shoot fire, some – of crocodiles, etc.) and it is their task to seize the souls.[105] These powers are depicted in a similar, but more sober, manner in the *Homily on Repentance and Continence* attributed to Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria:[106]

> In that hour the deepest darkness shall enshroud us, and the blackness of the night shall be upon our eyes, and it shall spread itself over all the light. And our heart shall be disturbed exceedingly by reason of those beings who shall come for us, and by the horror of their forms which shall benumb us, and by the terrifying aspect of their faces, and by the gnashing of their teeth, and by the wrath of their eyes, and by the quaking of their limbs, and by the striding of their legs, and by

[103] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, pp.241-242, trans. p.489.
[104] For more examples see a compilation of quotations by MacDermot, *The Cult of the Seer*, pp.576-583.
[105] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.556ff, trans. p.1044ff.
[106] Budge suggests that this Theophilus 'was probably the Archbishop of Alexandria who sat from 385 to 412, when he died', cf. Budge, *Coptic Homilies*, p.xxxv.

> the roaring of their lips, and by all the forms which they have, and by their rushing in upon us because they wish to devour us.[107]

The *Discourse on Abbaton* attributed to Timothy of Alexandria provides a description for them as well: 'The Powers shall be under your control, and you will send them after every soul. They shall strike terror into souls, and shall change their forms'.[108] They are sometimes called Decans,[109] or Rulers, or Cosmocrators.

Both Burmester and Zandee agree that this 'dread of encountering the accusers' with changing faces 'is certainly Egyptian, and we have parallels in the *Book of Dead*'.[110] Zandee mentions also that spirits of the netherworld with changing faces are described in the gnostic scriptures, such as *Pistis Sophia*, so this might be a common feature of the 'syncretistic-gnostic literature which preserved more of non-Christian representations'.[111] As for the 'snatching/seizing of the soul' by Death which is mentioned in the accounts provided in the *Martyrdom of Macarius*, *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and other Coptic texts, one cannot but agree with Zandee's remark, that although 'Coptic as well as the Egyptian texts know death as a being snatched away of a

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[107] Budge, *Coptic Homilies*, p.72, trans. p.218. These monsters, created probably under the influence of the Egyptian representation of demons with animals' heads, made their way also into later homilies of Coptic authors: thus, bishop Psote of Psoï mentions them in his last sermon before the congregation:'...beside those with different heads which are on the roads, and the merciless avengers, and the dekans who are without form, and who preside over [the infliction of] punishment', cf. Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.154, trans. p.733.

[108] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.242, trans. p.490.

[109] The Decans will be discussed later in this chapter, as they appear more often as the inhabitants of hell, rather than the angels who fetch the souls. The term 'decan' originally had astronomical connections, but is employed quite frequently in Coptic texts to describe a species of demon which serves the Lord of Darkness, particularly with regard to the inflicting of punishments', cf. Walters, 'Christian Paintings from Tebtunis', p.203.

[110] Burmester, 'Egyptian Mythology in the Coptic Apocrypha', p.365; Zandee, op. cit., p.329.

[111] Zandee, op. cit., p.330.

man, it need not be a borrowing here. The metaphor is due to a common human experience'.[112]

II.2 Judge of Truth

> And as a bird of prey when it seizes a dove, they flew with us to the Judge of Truth. We received such a decision: 'Bring these souls down to the punishment until they will know God Who created them'. And they flew with us until they handed us over to the punishment.[113]

The second element of the afterdeath narratives is usually the encounter with the Judge of Truth. It is not quite clear whether the Judge of Truth is a representative of the heavenly sphere (one of the righteous men of the Old Testament, such as Enoch) or the Devil who is often considered the king of hell. In the *Visio Pauli* the Judge of Truth is God Himself and the souls are brought *up* (ⲁⲛⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲧⲉⲓⲧⲁⲗⲁⲓⲡⲱⲣⲟⲥ ⲛⲯⲩⲭⲏ ⲉⲃⲣⲁⲓ) to Him,[114] so that He may judge them and send them down to Aftemeloukhos, the angel who is appointed to oversee the punishments. In the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* no clear answer is given, but, since it employs the notion of bringing the souls *down*, it might be suggested that the text here follows the ideas of the *Visio Pauli*.

The decision of the Judge is, as it seems, not final, because there is a possibility that this verdict's aim is to make the pagans understand their erring and repent. In the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*[115] a visionary describes holy people praying for those in

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[112] Ibidem, p.336.
[113] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.82r *b*.
[114] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.557, trans. p.1045. Here the parallel can be drawn with the ancient Egyptian concept of judgement after death – in Egypt it was regarded as the prerogative of divine powers: mainly Osiris and his female counterpart, the goddess Hathor. For description of judgement of the deceased in Egyptian texts see M. Smith, *Traversing Eternity* (Oxford, 2009), pp.2-3ff.
[115] Wintermute, 'Apocalypse of Zephaniah', p.515.

torments, thus giving them a chance to experience the mercy of God, because there will be a final judgement, pronounced by God Himself. It appears that the punishment inflicted immediately after one's death was seen rather as temporary or provisional than eternal, since the idea of the final judgement is found so often in conjunction with the proclaiming of the first verdict: 'Give this soul over into the hand of the governor of the abyss of Amente, and let him torture it until the day of the Great Judgement', says the Judge of Truth in the *Visio Pauli*.[116] Zandee suggests that this provisional punishment 'apparently changes into a definite and eternal one on the day of judgement'.[117] The preliminary nature of the verdict pronounced by the Judge of Truth is also underlined in the *Encomium to St Victor* attributed to Celestinus of Rome where the author claims that the souls

> ...should pay homage to the Judge of Truth, and He will pass sentence upon them before they are taken to the places which they deserve. And again, on the Day of Resurrection, their bodies will rise without any destruction, and the soul of each person will return to his body, and they will all receive according to what they have done.[118]

Although this idea might look very similar to the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory, it is, in fact, quite different. In his article on eschatology of the Coptic Church[119] A. Cody underlines that 'in Coptic tradition, the dead who suffer torment are considered to be in hell', not in some different, 'third' place. But, on the other hand, one might see that the Copts considered the change of the *post mortem* fate still possible through the

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[116] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p. 560, trans. p.1047.

[117] Zandee, op. cit., p.314. Also a phrase in the second epistle of Peter might support this hypothesis: 'the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment' (2 Peter 2:9).

[118] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.79.

[119] For more on Coptic eschatology see A. Cody, 'Eschatology' in *CE* 2, pp.973-974.

intercession of saints and acts of piety offered by the living. This 'bipartite eschatology' was noted by A. Gurevich in his study of the early medieval Western vision literature; while discussing the vision of Drychthelm in Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People* Gurevich points out, that

> ...it seems that two judgements are posited: one is individual and takes place immediately after death, while the other is postponed until the Second Coming: a compromise decision, indefinite, but symptomatic in the highest degree. Two eschatologies are apparently juxtaposed: a 'small', personal one, and a 'large', universal one. This duality appears more distinctly in vision literature than in church iconography, which knows only the judgement at the end of the world.[120]

The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* certainly reflects this dualistic eschatology – the parents of the martyr are judged and condemned immediately after death, they are placed in hell, not in some temporary 'holding zone'.[121] But later they are saved by the prayers of their son and given 'a second chance' to repent their past, which allows them to change their *post mortem* fate.

II.3 River of Fire

The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* provides this kind of description for the first punishment of Amente which every man, either righteous or sinful, has to go through:

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[120] A.J. Gurevich [А.Я. Гуревич], *Medieval popular culture: problems of belief and perception*, English translation by J.M. Bak and P.A. Hollingsworth (Cambridge, 1988), p.119. See also a recent overview of the main 'streams of inspirations' in various Christian discourses on the 'last things': J. Baun, 'Last Things' in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. III (Early Medieval Christianities, c.600–c.1100*) (Cambridge, 2008), pp.606-624.

[121] Unlike the medieval Byzantine apocalypses studied by J. Baun, which allow to speak about 'a holding zone for the dead, an interim state of the soul between death and the Last Day' (cf. Baun, *Tales from Another Byzantium*, pp.306-308), Coptic martyrdoms discussed in this chapter seem to be quite firm on the question of where exactly are the souls of the departed sinners held until the day of the Last Judgement – it is definitely Hell (Amente; sometimes also the words 'pit' and 'abyss' are used).

> We entered the river of fire which was seven times darker than the night. It was stinking as of sulphur and bitumen,[122] and the executioners assigned to us were plunging us into it, so that we were saying to ourselves: 'We have come down [to the depth of] seventy cubits'. We spent a day down there in this punishment.[123]

Although fiery pools also occur in the ancient Egyptian texts and the concept of hellfire is known to the Egyptians,[124] there are certain differences between the Egyptian and Coptic texts. The function of hellfire in Egyptian concepts is not a punishment of sinners, as Coptic texts represent it, but a final and complete annihilation of the human being, since 'without a body as essential element of the personality nobody can continue its existence'.[125] The dead have to cross the stream of fire, the middle path, in order to get to the 'beatific region'; they should also avoid rivers and pools of fire, for which reason the map was sent with the dead in their coffins.[126]

In the *Martyrdom of Macarius* one might see that the River of Fire also marks the border of hell, being the first obstacle on the way to Judge of Truth.[127] In some Coptic texts the River of Fire can be crossed with the help of a heavenly patron who would help the soul to ford it without harm: for example, in the *Encomium on St Victor* by Theopempus of Antioch the soul of a priest is brought to the River of Fire by the guiding angel. The priest is told to jump in the river and ford it, because, as the angel points out:

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[122] A very similar description of the 'sea of flame' is found in the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*: 'I discovered that it was entirely a sea of flame like a slime which casts forth much flame and whose waves burn sulphur and bitumen'. Cf. Wintermute, 'Apocalypse of Zephaniah', p.512.
[123] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.82r *b*-82v *a*.
[124] Zandee, op. cit., pp.14-15.
[125] Ibidem, p.15. There is, however, a remark in the *Book of Gates* II, as Zandee notes, which points towards the critical function of the River of Fire – the just pass it unhindered, the sinful are harmed, but 'for the rest it appears nowhere that the fire has a critical function', and therefore, in his opinion, this is not a clear survival of the Egyptian religion; cf. Zandee, op. cit., p.309.
[126] Ibidem, p.138.
[127] Hyvernat, op. cit., p.56.

"It is necessary for you to ford it, before you worship at the court of God." The priest sees his patron, holy martyr Apa Victor, and, reassured by his presence, jumps into the river and fords it 'as if it were cool water for him'. St Victor extends his hand, seizes the priest, and travels with him so that he might worship at the court of God.[128]

In the *Martyrdom of Philotheus,* however, just as in the *Visio Pauli* and other apocalyptic texts, the River of Fire is employed rather as an instrument of eternal torture, which clearly shows that this text is following the apocalyptic tradition.[129] Himmelfarb points out that in Greek conceptions of the underworld the River of Fire is sometimes used for torturing sinners, but it is usually more a geographical phenomenon than an instrument of punishment. In the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch 17:5) the River of Fire, which flows near the mountains of darkness, is not a river of punishment. It also appears in Dan. 7:10 in a description of the Ancient of Days where it flows from under his throne, but nothing is said about its punishing or critical properties.[130] Coptic texts preserved this concept of the River of Fire as a geographical phenomenon, but also added the 'critical' function which, under the influence of apocalyptic texts, has eventually developed and transformed it into an instrument of punishment.

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[128] *Encomium on St Victor attributed to Theopempus of Antioch* in *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library: Five Coptic Homilies* CSCO 47, ed. by A. B. Scott (Leuven, 1993), pp.148-149.

[129] Immersion in the River of Fire as a punishment is found in the *Visio Pauli*, in the Ethiopic *Apocalypse of Mary* and in the Greek *Apocalypse of Mary*, cf. Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.122-123, 145. In the *Apocalypse of Peter* it is a lake, not a river: 'And there was a great lake full of flaming mire, wherein were certain men that turned away from righteousness; and angels, tormentors, were set over them', see M.R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (Oxford, 1924), p.509. In the canonical New Testament a lake of fire occurs in descriptions of hell: the beast of the Apocalypse and the false prophet are 'both cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone' (Revelation 19:20). It is certainly an instrument of torture, not just a geographical feature of hell: 'And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever' (Revelation 20:10).

[130] Himmelfarb, op. cit., pp.110-113.

II.4 The Decans

The *Martyrdom of Philotheus* does not pay as much attention to the Decans as the *Martyrdom of Macarius* or other tours of hell and does not provide any description of their appearance apart from mentioning their 'changing faces':

> After that they transferred us and put us into a pit which was dug out to the depth of one thousand cubits. It was filled with snakes and scorpions and never-sleeping worms and [many] Dikanos with changing faces.[131]

The word 'decan' was used to denote the stellar deities connected to the divisions of the solar year. The Decans are originally 36 groups of small constellations which rise consecutively on the horizon throughout each rotation of the Earth. The rising of each *decan* marked the beginning of a new decanal 'hour' of the night for the ancient Egyptians. Because every ten days a new decanic star group appears in the eastern sky right before the dawn, these star groups are described by the Greek word *dekanoi* (pl. of *dekanos*) or 'tenths'. The Decans ruled over each ten-degree division of the Zodiac, so there were three Decans in each sign. MacDermot explains how Egyptians regarded the connection between the fate of men and the movements of the signs of the Zodiac:

> The effect, on man, of the movement of the planets within each sign of the Zodiac, was thought to be influenced by the decans which the planet 'faced'. The 'changes of face' were associated with changes of effect, favourable and unfavourable.[132]

In one of the most popular Gnostic treatises, *Pistis Sophia,* the so called Rulers (ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ), sometimes rendered as Cosmocrators, have animal faces that change according to the

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[131] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.82v *a*.
[132] MacDermot, *The Cult of the Seer*, p.156.

hour (*Pistis Sophia*, 287a-289a): answering a question of Maria, Jesus describes the twelve Treasuries of cruel punishments, whose Rulers have terrifying appearances – those of a basilisk, a mountain pig or a dragon – and produce all kinds of diseases or disasters: thus, the dragon emanates ice, cold and fever. Also, at the eleventh and twelfth Treasuries there is not a single Ruler, but a multitude of Rulers with seven heads which might have a certain connection with Abbaton, the Angel of Death (see above).[133]

In Coptic texts decans are usually depicted as demonic entities that are set over punishments of hell and are busy with devouring (eating, chewing) of the souls:

> Those who are there seize the souls, and when they have chewed them up in their mouths they swallow them straightaway; and afterwards they vomit them out ... and others chew them up and swallow them, and some of these give what they have chewed in turn unto others. They are pitiless towards the souls of sinners.[134]

This notion does not seem to be very Egyptian, as it does not imply final destruction and annihilation of the sinner's soul or body, which devouring means in Egyptian texts;[135] but, on the other hand, it does not occur in Greek or Jewish texts, where mainly the never-sleeping (never-dying) worm is featured. Bauckham mentions some parallels for this punishment, namely the one inflicted by wild beasts with teeth of iron which, after

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[133] C. Schmidt, *Pistis Sophia* (Hauniae, 1925), p.317ff. MacDermot points out that 'the authors of the *Pistis Sophia*, the Christian apocalyptic writings and the lives of the ascetics, in depicting hell, were each describing an experience known at that time to both the pagan and Christian worlds' (cf. MacDermot, op.cit., p.155).

[134] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.557, trans. p.1044.

[135] Zandee provides a number of instances from Egyptian texts where devouring is mentioned. See Zandee, op. cit., p.157ff.

chewing the soul, swallow it, vomit it up, and pass it to others who proceed in the same way.[136]

II.5 Angel of Hell (Tartarouchos)

> We saw the Angel of Hell sitting on the throne of fire and all his executioners were standing before him in order to punish the souls. Those who were holding our souls handed us over to him, and he gave us to the executioners. Their appearance was of this kind: their eyes were casting fire into our faces and their claws tore out our eyes and tongues.[137]

Avenging angels are one of the characteristic features of the tours of hell and appear in the *Apocalypse of Peter*, the *Visio Pauli* and its descendants, later Christian texts and in *Gedulat Moshe,* a medieval Hebrew text which relates the cosmic tour of Moses guided by Metatron (Enoch). The presence of the angels of torment in the tours of hell might be correlated with some exceptions to the presence of environmental punishments.[138] Sometimes these angels are treated as servants of God (as in the case of Abbaton), and sometimes as servants of the devil (e.g., in the apocryphal *Repose of St John*[139]). In the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* the Angel of Hell does not have any specific name and is represented as an administrator or an overseer of the punishments giving directions and tasks to the executioners, rather than an evil spirit who is also destined to be cast into

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[136] Bauckham, *The Fate of the Dead*, p.326.

[137] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.82v *b*.

[138] Himmelfarb, op. cit., p.120-121. Himmelfarb notices that this new class of angels, who are enjoying their horrible duty, is not found in the Bible, since angels of the Hebrew Bible perform missions of punishment but do not enjoy it.

[139] 'Let the holy angels wound the Principalities, and let the Powers of darkness withdraw themselves and fall down headlong', cf. Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha*, p.57. See also J. Zandee, op. cit*.,* p.328ff.

punishments with other demons. In other Coptic texts this Angel sometimes is given a name Tartarouchos.[140]

A spirit Tartarouchos belonging to the netherworld is mentioned later in the *Martyrdom* in the episode that describes a magic duel between St Philotheus and the emperor's magician Elementas (f.90r *b*–f.91r *b*). The emperor invites Elementas to perform some rituals asking 'the angel of Hell Tartarouchos' to 'make the earth cast out' the golden idol previously destroyed by Philotheus. Tartarouchos, however, does not turn up and the magician falls into the abyss which appeared at his pleading, while the martyr wishes him to 'go down to hell and have enjoyment with [his] father, the devil, until the end of time'. A similar episode is found in the *Martyrdom of Helias* where Tartarouchos is summoned by the magician Theocletos. Tartarouchos appears as a tormentor of souls in Hell, brings them with him and makes one of the souls speak before the emperor, but then has no active role in the narrative.[141] In these two narratives, Tartarouchos does not seem to have the same functions as the Angel of Hell, but is described rather as one belonging to the lower rank of the 'executioners'.

Conclusions

The text of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* provides a vivid description of some of the divisions and punishments of hell, employing images and motifs from both ancient

[140] J.-M. Rosenstiehl, 'Tartarouchos-Temelouchos' in *Deuxième journée d'études coptes* (Louvain, Paris, 1986), pp.29–56, gives a comprehensive overview of this personage in Greek, Latin, Ethiopic and Coptic texts. Tartarouchos appears in the Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul*, in the *Apophthegmata Patrum* and in Coptic magic texts.

[141] G.P.H. Sobhy, *Le martyre de Saint Hélias et l'encomium de l'évêque Stephanos de Hnès sur Saint Hélias* (Cairo, 1919), f. XVIIIr.

Egyptian and Judeo-Christian traditions (mostly apocalyptic). These enduring motifs were employed by the authors for enhancing the narrative and 'filling in the vacuums' in the information on hell found in the Gospels,[142] and, at the same time, for conveying a certain message about the 'last things' to the audience of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*. The brief and, no doubt, superficial analysis undertaken in this chapter shows that these images and ideas are usually so much fused, so much blended, that it is difficult to ascertain whether their background is Biblical or Pharaonic.[143] For example, the Decans that inhabit some parts of the Netherworld and have, at first sight, a very well-established tradition in Egyptian and Gnostic texts as the astrological Rulers, receive new functions and responsibilities in Coptic hagiography, such as being the executioners and tormentors in hell, while retaining their name. Their role in Coptic texts is to ensure that the souls receive a never-ending punishment by means of chewing and vomiting the souls out and them chewing them again – this idea is quite opposite to the ancient Egyptian notion of the ultimate destruction of the unrighteous by means of devouring.

The same refers to the image of the River of Fire which was known to ancient Egyptians in the form of fiery pools or a stream of fire; the nature of this fire was very different to the hellfire in Coptic texts, since it had the power to burn completely and therefore destroy the traveller on his way to the beatific region. Coptic texts, on the other hand,

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[142] Wortley, 'Death, Judgement and Hell', p.69.

[143] It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between the two traditions, because, as Behlmer justly points out, 'from the second half of the fourth century onwards, the Egyptian tradition had already become part of Hellenistic – and Christian – culture, had transformed it and had been even more transformed by it', cf. Behlmer, 'Ancient Egyptian survivals', p.584.

while preserving the original concept of the River of Fire as one of the geographical features of Amente, usually employ the hellfire as the instrument of torture, which is more characteristic of Biblical, Judeo-Christian concepts. These and other features of the description of hell that have been discussed in this part of the present chapter reflect how the transformation of some Egyptian concepts was taking place in the sphere of popular theological literature in Late Antique Egypt and how much this transformation depended on the apocalyptical tradition.

Chapter 6

Enduring motifs: re-imagining paganism, magic and miracles in the Christian context

Since the story of Philotheus came down to us in the form of a *martyrdom*, i.e. a text describing the testimony of his belief in Christ before his persecutors, one of its most prominent features is the depiction of paganism as the driving force behind the persecution of Christians. The text describes pagan worship of different varieties: first of all, the official or imperial polytheism of Diocletian in Coptic re-imagining, which has been discussed in Chapter 3; secondly, the text also pays great attention to a completely different type of pagan worship – that of Philotheus' parents, whose conversion from paganism to Christianity is the focus of the first part of the *Martyrdom*. However, the composers of this text used one more hagiographical *topos* – a magical duel between a martyr and a magician – which can be regarded as a third type of paganism, as the Copts saw it. The episodes in which these types of pagan worship are described represent three basic hagiographical *topoi*: the erring of a saint's parents, the raging pagan antagonist (usually a ruler of some kind) of a saint, and magic versus miracle-working. These *topoi* appear in other Coptic passions, especially in those connected with the Great Persecution (see, for example, the stories of Victor or Isidorus); however, very few of these texts can boast of having all three types in the narrative – the pagan ruler is, of course, a necessity in such stories; the second *topos* is usually a fight with a magician. Thus, the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* provides a rare example of a combination of all three *topoi* in the same text – a combination which simultaneously performs multiple

functions: apart from creating a gripping and entertaining narrative, it pursues important didactic and moral objectives.

The *Martyrdom of Philotheus'* representation of paganism as the veneration of a calf-god will be the focus of the first part of this chapter. The second part will discuss how the Coptic authors contrast Christian miracle-working and pagan magic.

I.1 Paganism of the parents of Philotheus

All extant versions of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* begin with descriptions of the childhood of Philotheus and his upbringing in a pagan household. This storyline, which incorporates the erring of the parents of a future saint, his own search for truth, the providential death and subsequent resurrection of Philotheus' parents, followed by the conversion and baptism of the whole family, seems to be part of the original text, as it is preserved in all versions with very few differences in detail. Despite the frequent repetitions of the words 'pagan' (ϩⲉⲗⲗⲏⲛⲟⲥ) in the text of the *Martyrdom* in regards to the beliefs of the martyr's family, their actual religious practices are presented as very different from those of Diocletian. Their religion is described as a monotheistic animal worship: they venerate only a calf[1] named Smarakdos (or T'ot'i in the Georgian version) and no other gods are mentioned. The raises a number of questions: was this particular storyline just a literary device employed by the authors to produce a more gripping narrative, or does it reflect some real concern of the authors and their audience at the

[1] The Coptic tradition (both hagiographical and hymnographic texts) uses only the word ⲙⲁⲥⲉ, which designates a young animal, especially a calf (its Greek equivalent being μόσχος), cf. W.E. Crum, Coptic Dictionary, p.186a. However, Smarakdos/ T'ot'i is described rather like a grown-up animal, not a suckling calf.

time of the composition of the original text? Is it just an allusion to the Old Testament golden calf and thus a true reflection of the Christian stereotypes of idolatry? Since the Georgian text most probably reflects the original version of Philotheus' legend, it seems natural to start with depiction of the calf cult in the Georgian text.

I.2 Veneration of the calf-god in the Georgian version of the Martyrdom

The Georgian version of the *Martyrdom*, despite its overall dry manner and simple style (if compared to the Coptic version), describes the religious practices of the parents of Philotheus in some detail: the text clearly states that they 'worshipped a calf and confessed him as God; he ate hay and his name was T'ot'i the Glorious (თოთი პატიოსანი). ... They made a golden necklace for the calf's neck and golden bracelets for his feet, and appointed two men who attended him'. The calf-god received from them a sacrificial offering twice a day which consisted of 'flour, mixed with oil and honey'; burning incense was also a part of the ritual as is clear from the conversation between Philotheus and his father. The text then describes the disbelief of the ten-year old Philotheus who doubts that a 'hay-eating animal can be God or can give wealth to men', and who promptly rebukes his parents and starts seeking the true God – another hagiographical *topos* which is used to underline the extraordinary wisdom of a future saint at a very early age,[2] especially when it is contrasted with the folly of the saint's pagan parents.

[2] For examples of usage of this *topos* in medieval Byzantine hagiography see T. Pratsch, *Der Hagiographische Topos: griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit*, (Berlin, 2005), chapter 'Unfromme Eltern', pp.68-72.

This unusually specific description of the cult and its rituals in the Georgian version, which in general is rather devoid of details and omits many episodes present in the Coptic version, attracted the attention of the scholars who worked on this text and presented them with a question: are there any possible links between the cult described here and Egyptian bull cults as Kekelidze suggested in his study of the Georgian text?[3]

The text itself provides at least some answers to the above question: it is precisely the details in the description of the cult that help to distinguish it from other stereotypical descriptions of a generic pagan cult in martyr texts. Since the Georgian version, as previously noted, does not pay such attention to the details of other episodes – for example, no such attention is given to the religious practices of Diocletian – it may be worth looking at these details more closely. First of all, the name of the calf-god, T'ot'i the Glorious,[4] is of particular interest in connection to this question: thus, K. Kekelidze, the editor of the Georgian version, built a whole theory of direct contacts between Egypt and Georgia at the end of the first millennium – his starting point was the calf's name, which, in his opinion, was a Georgian rendering of the name of the Egyptian deity Thoth. He speculated that, since in the Mengrelian dialect of Georgian the word for 'moon' is '*t'ut'e*', this name must have been a reference to the Egyptian Thoth, who was originally a moon-god. However, Kekelidze had to admit that Thoth's animal form was not a bull, but an ibis, and therefore one should actually see a reference to Apis here. In order to prove this theory, Kekelidze had to introduce evidence from the

[3] Kekelidze, ფილეტეოსის მარტვილობა (Fileteosis martviloba), pp.81-88.

[4] *პატიოსანი* (also spelled as*პატივსანი*) might mean both 'glorious, honoured' and 'precious'.

Georgian version of Pseudo-Nonnus' commentary on Gregory of Nazianzus, which dedicates a whole chapter to Apis. In the Georgian version of this text Apis is said to be born during the full moon – which, in Kekelidze's opinion, explains how Apis received in the Georgian version of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* the name of Thoth, the moon-god.[5]

Fifteen years later M. van Esbroeck argued against Kekelidze's rather complicated conjecture[6] and suggested that the name of the calf-god simply should have been read not as *თოთი პატიოსანი,* but as *თუალი პატიოსანი* (t'uali patiosani), 'precious stone' or 'gem',[7] which would correctly render the Coptic, or in fact, Greek version of his name, ⲥⲙⲁⲣⲁⲕⲇⲟⲥ (Greek σμάραγδος).[8] Van Esbroeck's explanation of the calf-god's name is indeed the most convincing one, as it is supported not only by the Coptic version of the text, but also by the synaxaria versions – in both of them the name of the calf worshipped by the saint's parents is based on the Greek word σμάραγδος (Maragd in the Ethiopic version[9]). However, van Esbroeck was not sure that Philotheus' parents actually worshipped a living creature rather than a statue made of precious stone.[10] But the extant texts of the *Martyrdom* clearly show that Smarakdos/T'ot'i was a living bull,

[5] Kekelidze, *Fileteosis martviloba*, pp.87-88. He also suggested that the epithet პატიოსანი, 'glorious' or 'honoured', is a slightly different rendering of the title of the sacred ibis of Thoth - პატივჩემული, 'honoured', and therefore should also point towards Thoth.
[6] Van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheos d'Antioche', pp.110-111.
[7] Ibidem, p.112, n.1.
[8] Σμάραγδος can mean 'emerald', 'malachite', or any precious or semi-precious stone of green colour.
[9] 'His parents worshipped a bull, whose name was Maragd', British Library Or 660, f.127. The Arabic synaxarium speaks of an idol of topaz, cf. R. Basset, 'Le synaxaire arabe jacobite (rédaction copte)' in *PO* 11 (1915), p.601.
[10] Van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheos d'Antioche', p.111, 118.

who ate hay and even had lengthy conversations with Philotheus in the Coptic version of the text (f.80vff), to which we will now turn.

I.3 Veneration of the calf-god in the Coptic version

The description of the calf cult in the Coptic version of the text mainly corresponds to the one found in the Georgian version; it adds a few embellishments, such as the precise measurements of the ingredients in the sacrificial offering or the different caves for seasonal recreation of the calf (f.75v), but most of the points in the description coincide verbatim in both versions. The point of divergence between the two versions is the conversation between Philotheus and Smarakdos before the official sacrifice which the boy has to perform on his own as part of his initiation into manhood.[11] This conversation is not present in the Georgian text, where the calf silently attacks the parents and kills them. But Coptic authors did not lose an opportunity to make the narrative more entertaining: they allow Smarakdos to offer a lengthy apology (f.80r-81r) in which the calf quotes the Scriptures and explains his seeming arrogance – the explanation, as usual, involves the familiar scoundrel, i.e. the devil himself who appeared to the gullible young calf in the form of a great dragon and inspired hubris in him.

The fate of the calf is described similarly in both versions: after goring the parents of Philotheus to death he is slaughtered and his remains are burnt. The next time we

[11] 'His parents said to him: 'O our son, this is not difficult, but behold, we will make a feast today after you have made a sacrifice, and we will take for you a bride when you are fifteen – we will take for you the daughter of Marcella, the great governor and my relative; he also has a great wealth. You do not have to do anything, but should only greet our god Smarakdos and offer him some incense and mixture of spiced wine, and say to him: 'I ask you, O blessed Smarakdos, that you give me honour and good fortune!' This is what we very much wish you to do', cf. *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, ff.78r-79v.

encounter Smarakdos in the story is during the parents' account of their experience of hell, where the calf is one of their torturers (see Chapter 5); this episode is present only in the full Coptic version of the *Martyrdom* (f.82v-83r).[12]

The storyline of the 'grass-eating calf' (ⲟⲩⲙⲁⲥⲓ ⲉϥⲟⲩⲉⲙϫⲟⲣⲧⲟⲥ) was also used by the composers of hymns in honour of Philotheus: thus, both hymns on the 16th of Tubeh in the *Difnar* (*Antiphonarium*) begin with retelling of the events described in the first half of the *Martyrdom*;[13] one of the chairetisms (short praises at the end of the hymn which begin with the Greek word ⲭⲁⲓⲣⲉ or ϫⲉⲣⲉ, 'rejoice') specifically commends Philotheus for killing the calf 'which his parents worshipped'.[14]

I.4 The calf-cult and the cults of divine bulls in Egypt

When Kekelidze suggested that the calf cult described in the Georgian version of the *Martyrdom* was in fact the cult of Apis, he based his hypothesis mainly on philological and linguistic intricacies,[15] which van Esbroeck quite convincingly refuted. However, in his argument against Kekelidze's hypothesis of a possible connection between the calf-god T'ot'i and Egyptian Apis,[16] van Esbroeck failed to notice the fact that the rituals described in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* closely resemble some of the rituals

[12] However, this is not the last appearance of a calf in the story – when the devil visits Philotheus in disguise of an angel and understands that his appearance has not deceived the boy, he turns into a great calf with sharp horns and attacks Philotheus (*Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.85v-86r).
[13] O'Leary, *The Difnar* II, pp.16-17.
[14] O'Leary, *The Difnar* II, p.17.
[15] Kekelidze, *Fileteosis martviloba*, pp.84-88. In his argument Kekelidze made extensive use of Turaev's 1898 work on Thoth and his connection with the sun-god Ra: cf. B.A. Turaev [Б.А. Тураев], *Бог Тот* (Leipzig, 1898).
[16] Van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheos d'Antioche', p.111.

pertaining to the cults[17] of Apis[18] and other sacred bulls (Buchis,[19] Mnevis[20]), and there is, therefore, a possible value in Kekelidze's suggestion that the original text of the *Martyrdom* might indeed have been composed in Egypt.[21]

The cultic practices of Philotheus' parents, as they are depicted in the text, include the adornment of the calf with a necklace and golden anklets, the sacrificial offerings of wheat flour, mixed with oil and honey,[22] and the appointment of special keepers who ministered to the calf's needs.[23] If we compare this description with the evidence collected by the Egypt Exploration society during the excavations at the Bucheum between 1927 and 1932, and other ample archaeological and literary evidence on the

[17] For a general overview of the cults of the divine bulls in Egypt see M. Rice, *The Power of the Bull* (London, 1998), chapter 'The Royal and Divine Bull of Egypt', pp.116-152.

[18] The cult of the Apis bull, who was considered to be the living embodiment of Ptah, the supreme deity in the region of Memphis, existed in Egypt already during the First Dynasty (about 3000 BC); on the existence of the Apis cult in the First Dynasty see W.K. Simpson, 'A Running of the Apis in the Reign of 'Aha and Passages in Manetho and Aeliean' in *Orientalia* 26 (1957), pp.139-142. During the Ptolemaic period the Apis bull was merged with Osiris, the god of the underworld, and together they formed the anthropomorphic god Serapis (Osarapis). Serapis was worshipped in Egypt until the fall of paganism in the fourth century CE. On the cult of Apis under the Ptolemies see D.J. Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies* (Princeton, Oxford, 2012[2]), pp.177-196; on the creation of Sarapis see F. Dunand, C. Zivie-Coche, *Gods and Men in Egypt: 3000 BCE to 395 CE*, English translation by D. Lorton (Ithaca-London, 2004), pp.214-221.

[19] The Buchis bull was sacred to the god Montu and was worshipped in the region of Thebes. Like the Apis, there was only one Buchis bull at a time. After death these bulls were mummified and buried at the so-called Bucheum necropolis at Hermonthis. There is evidence that the sacred bulls were buried in the Bucheum as late as 340 CE; Frankfurter notes that the last bull's funerary stela is dated by the era of Diocletian, not the reigning emperor Constantius II, cf. D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: assimilation and resistance* (Princeton, 1998), p.107.

[20] The Mnevis (or Merwer) bull, sacred to the sun-god Atum-Re, was worshipped at Heliopolis. Like Apis, he had to be black, and thus was sometimes known as Kemwer, 'the great black (one)'.

[21] Kekelidze, *Fileteosis martviloba*, p.82.

[22] The Coptic version and the synaxaria, which are dependent on it, also add anointing of the calf with aromatic mixtures three times a day and giving him spiced wine to drink (f.75v).

[23] The Georgian version does not specify what their duties were; the Coptic *Martyrdom*, however, provides a more specific description: 'The boy saw the three servants who were standing before the calf and wiping his eyes with sponges; they were also putting before the calf many types of incense', cf. *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.79 v.

Buchis cult, compiled by the authors of the monumental study on the Bucheum,[24] we will see that the calf-worship in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* has many similarities to the Egyptian bull cults. Thus, the data suggests that during the ceremonies the Buchis bull wore a crown and a special net to keep off the flies,[25] while Apis is said to have worn also the *menat* – a heavy ceremonial necklace, worn by certain deities, especially by the goddess Hathor.[26] The divine bulls had their own servants: according to the data of Mond and Myers, the Buchis cult suggested a staff of about twenty people[27] – and, as Thomson points out, 'Apis perhaps had more'.[28]

As for sacrificial offerings, Mond shows that apart from the traditional offering of incense, witnessed by numerous incense burners found at the Bucheum,[29] the Buchis bull during his life and especially after death also received 'edible offerings which after being formally offered to the bull became the property of the priests and were eaten by them'.[30] Moreover, some of the inscriptions on the offering tables mention the ingredients of such edible offerings given by kings to Buchis himself and to the great Cow, the mother of Buchis: among them are bread, wine, beer, and incense.[31] One more detail (however fabulous it might appear), which is not present in the Georgian version, but preserved in the Coptic text, might point towards the connection between the bull

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[24] R. Mond, O.H. Myers, *The Bucheum* (London, 1934).
[25] Ibidem, vol.I, p.16.
[26] For a more detailed description of the *menat* necklace, and on the connection between the bull Apis, his mother, the sacred cow Hathor, and the *menat* see J. Quaegebeur, 'Apis et la menat' in *Bulletin de la Société Française d'Égyptologie* 98 (1983), pp.17-39.
[27] Mond, Myers, *The Bucheum* I, p.21.
[28] Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies*, p.184.
[29] Mond, Myers, *The Bucheum* I, p.84, 89.
[30] Ibidem, p.21.
[31] Most of the offering tables are found in the bulls' necropolis; for inscriptions see H.W. Fairman, 'The Offering Tables' in *The Bucheum* II, pp.22-24.

cults and the calf-god of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*: the calf mentions in his apology before Philotheus that he was taken from his mother while he was still a little suckling.[32] The Apis bulls,[33] according to the testimony of Aelian, a third-century Roman historian, were also taken from their mothers at a very young age and placed in special houses where they were weaned for four months, after which, 'at the rising of new moon' they were transferred to Memphis.[34]

One cannot, of course, insist that the description of the cultic practices of Philotheus' parents is directly based on the eyewitness accounts of the cults of Apis or Buchis, but the details in this description demonstrate a certain level of familiarity of the authors with these cults. Since the cult of St Philotheus is attested in the region of Hermonthis (the centre of the Buchis cult) in the seventh century,[35] there might be a possibility that the authors of his *Martyrdom* were familiar with the local bull cult. Besides, the sacred bulls of Apis were still known in Egypt and outside of Egypt in the late fourth century: thus, Ammianus Marcellinus mentions the discovery of the long-sought Apis bull in 362 AD during the reign of Julian Apostate.[36] One later reference to Apis is found in the

[32] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.80v.

[33] The Apis was selected from all the young calves of Egypt after the death of the previous Apis. He was recognised by certain physical marks – he had to be black, with a white triangle on his forehead, a wing-shaped spot on his back, and other marks, cf. M. Rice, *The Power of the Bull*, p.145.

[34] Aelianus, *De natura animalium* XI, 10; Greek text and English translation by A.F. Sholfield in Aelian, *On the Characteristics of Animals* (London, Harvard, 1958-1959), pp.368-369.

[35] Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints*, p.202.

[36] 'When he left there after completing the sacred rites, a letter was presented to him from the governor of Egypt, reporting that after laborious search for a new Apis bull, they had finally, after a time, been able to find one, which (in the belief of the people of that region) is an indication of prosperity, fruitful crops, and various blessings', cf. Ammianus Marcellinus, *Res Gestae* 22.14.6. Some coins minted during Julian's reign have a figure of a bull with two stars accompanied by the words 'Securitas Rei Publicae', which might reveal Julian's personal support of the cult of Apis; however, this interpretation is not universally accepted, cf. K.A.D. Smelik, E.A. Hemelrijk, '"Who knows not what monsters demented Egypt worships?"

Panegyricus de IV consulatu Honorii Augusti (398 AD)[37] by the Roman poet Claudian (c.370-404 AD), who was born in Egypt and therefore could have seen one of the sacred bulls himself.

The cult of Apis was also well known to Christian writers, such as Lactantius, Augustine, Ephrem, Gregory of Nazianzus, Clement and Cyril of Alexandria, who used it in their polemics against paganism in general; Apis was very often equated with the golden calf of the Old Testament,[38] and his cult had numerous references in patristic literature. Yet, in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* the cult of the golden calf is never connected with the cult of Smarakdos,[39] but is alluded to in connection with the golden statue of Apollo which the martyr burns down with heavenly fire (f.90r) and which is then restored by the court magician.[40]

It must be noted that despite the general negativity of Christian polemists towards Egyptian animal worship, the cult of Apis is sometimes treated by them with mild

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Opinions on Egyptian animal worship in antiquity as part of the ancient conception of Egypt' in *ANRW* II 17.4, p.1952, nn.683, 684.

[37] 'Apis abases his horns and lows in reply', cf. *Panegyric on the Fourth Consulship of the Emperor Honorius (A.D. 398)* in The Loeb Classical Library *Claudian*, vol. I, Latin text and English translation by M. Platnauer (Harvard, 1963), pp.328-329.

[38] See, for example, Lactantius, *Divinae Institutiones* IV.10: 'When their leader Moses climbed the mountain and stayed there forty days, they made a calf's head of gold, calling it Apis, to go before them on a pole', English translation by A. Bowen, P. Garnsey in Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* (Liverpool, 2003),p.238. For other references see Smelik, Hemelrijk, "Who knows not what monsters demented Egypt worships?", pp.1981-1996, esp. 1995, n.929.

[39] In van Esbroeck's opinion the worship of the Smarakdos is simply a reference to the golden calf of Israel, cf. van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheos d'Antioche', p.111.

[40] 'And Saint Philotheus answered him: 'When God wished to destroy the sinners from the people of Israel, He allowed the devil to create a golden calf. They gave their earrings to Aaron, the priest of God, and he cast them into the fire – and the calf came from the fire without any work, without anvil or hammer of the artisan's hand, for God wished to destroy all sinners. For this reason, o king, you shall see what will happen to this miserable magician' (f.90v).

compassion and condescension:[41] thus, Clement of Alexandria insists that the immoral gods of the Greeks are worse than the irrational beasts of the Egyptians, because they 'are not adulterous, they are not lewd, and not one of them seeks for lust contrary to nature' (*Protrepticus* II, 39). One cannot but notice that the same or, at least, similar attitude is displayed by the composers of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* – for example, they never use such epithets as 'abominable' in regards to the cult of Smarakdos, but refer to it as to 'folly', 'erring', 'ignorance';[42] the worship of the calf inspires laughter, not anger or disgust which was aroused by Diocletian's pagan worship.[43] If one compares the depiction of the cult of Smarakdos with depictions of other pagan cults in Coptic hagiographical texts – for example, with that of Kothos in the *Panegyric on Macarius of Tkow*, attributed to Dioscorus of Alexandria – the difference in attitude appears to be really striking: the cult of Kothos, as described in the *Panegyric*, involved the waylaying and killing of Christian children, pouring their blood onto the altar of Kothos and using their intestines as strings for magical harps.[44] The authors of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* chose to mock the cult of Smarakdos, rather than portray it as an abomination – and this might be an indication that although the cult of sacred bulls was

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[41] Smelik, Hemelrijk, "Who knows not what monsters demented Egypt worships?", pp.1988-1991.

[42] For example, in the Coptic text: 'Now, my Lord Jesus, make no reckoning of my parents' folly, but forgive their ignorance!' (f.80r); in the Georgian text: 'I pray to You and ask, O Life of those who hope in You, God just and great, that You might not punish those who do evil, for they are ignorant and they do not know what they do' (ch.3).

[43] 'He [the boy] laughed a lot when he saw the folly of his parents' (*Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.80r).

[44] D.W. Johnson, *A Panegyric on Macarius, Bishop of Tkôw*, CSCO 41 (Louvain, 1980), p.30; English translation in CSCO 42, p.22. D. Frankfurter also notes that, since 'the representation of opponents and conflict in hagiography draws on a wide repertoire of literary caricatures', very often in hagiographical texts 'cult devotions are imagined according to Roman atrocity legends – child sacrifice and the such – and thus an intrinsic danger to society, rather than the simple dressing and processing of images or the grain offerings that we know about from inside sources of the second and third centuries', cf. D. Frankfurter, 'Hagiography and Reconstruction of the Local Religion in Late Antique Egypt: Memories, Inventions, and Landscapes' in *Church History and Religious Culture* 86/1 (2006), p.20

familiar to them, they did not take it seriously since it was a phenomenon of the past. The calf, 'the reasonless beast', as the *Martyrdom* frequently calls Smarakdos, could not be a rival or a real enemy for Philotheus – it was Diocletian and his magicians whom the martyr had to fight and put to shame.

II. Representations of magic; magic and Christian miracle-working

II.1 Accusations of magic and sorcery

One of the most standard features of Coptic martyr stories is how these texts represent magic and magicians. Accusations of magic or, rather, sorcery, which is usually rendered in Coptic as ⲉⲃⲏⲩⲉ ⲙⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ ('works of magic'), are amongst the most frequent charges thrown at the Christian martyrs by pagan governors. D. Abrahamse in her article on magic in medieval Byzantine hagiography points out that,

> If the fear of sorcery is to be measured by frequency of accusations of magic practice, the sources examined here demonstrate, at the outset, that accusations of magic were relatively rare in mid-Byzantine saints' lives. Of the 48 texts examined, conflicts between saints and various kinds of magicians were found in just six texts, and suspicion of magic in two others.[45]

Judging by the frequency of references to magic and magicians in medieval Coptic hagiography, the fear of sorcery at the time of composition of these texts must have been very high. The stories of martyrs of the Great Persecution use the word 'magic' (ⲙⲁⲅⲓⲁ, ⲙⲁⲅⲉⲓⲁ) or 'magician' (ⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ) very often, especially while describing the interaction between Christians and pagan authorities. The judge, be it one of the governors or

[45] D. de F. Abrahamse, 'Magic and Sorcery in the Hagiography of the Middle Byzantine Period' in *Byzantinische Forschungen* 8 (1982), pp.6-7.

Diocletian himself, usually insists that all miracles performed by the martyr are works of magic and can therefore be destroyed by his own magicians. This is how this standard accusation is rendered in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*:

> Then Diocletian said to the boy Philotheus: 'O Philotheus, you have done this by means of magic! If this is what you are looking for, well then, I have here a magician who is greater than you'.[46]

This charge seems to be the most common one: the martyrs are reproached for bewitching the judges[47] or the crowds at court,[48] their miracles are dismissed as 'work of magic'; the martyrs themselves are often addressed as 'magicians',[49] 'poisoners'[50] or even 'master magicians'.[51] This seems to have become a well-established *topos* in later hagiographical texts, which the hagiographers used not only in the passions of the Diocletianic martyrs, but also in the lives of earlier saints – thus, in the *Martyrdom of St Luke the Evangelist* the emperor Nero accuses him of being a master magician (ϣⲁϩ

[46] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.90r. The same charge is made against Macarius, George, Victor, Epima and others.

[47] 'On the morrow, the duke fell sick with a great sickness. He cried out, saying, 'It is this lawless one Paese who has bewitched me with his sorceries, so that I have fallen sick', cf. Reymonds and Barns, *Four Martyrdoms*, p.165.

[48] 'The next morning the king Diocletian referred to his three generals, saying to them and to their nine hundred soldiers: 'What happened to you yesterday that you said those words? For I know that you said those words, because that boy had bewitched you, but I have beaten him as he deserved!'', cf. *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.92v; see also a similar accusation in the story of Timotheus, cf. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Martyrerlegenden* I, p.116.

[49] Sometimes also with the epithets 'wicked' or 'impious': e.g. ⲡⲉⲓⲁⲛϩⲟⲥⲓⲟⲥ ⲙⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ ⲛⲭⲣⲏⲥⲧⲓⲁⲛⲟⲥ ('this wicked Christian magician') in the story of Panesneu, cf. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Martyrerlegenden* I, p.96.

[50] In the *Martyrdom of Apa Anub* the prefect accuses him of being a poisoner/sorcerer (ⲫⲁⲣⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ), cf. Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum,* I, p.211, 218.

[51] See, for example, the *Martyrdom of Sarapion*: 'truly you are a master magician' (ⲁⲗⲏⲑⲱⲥ ⲛⲑⲟⲕ ⲟⲩⲥⲁϩ ⲙⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ), cf. Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum,* I, p.72.

ⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ).[52] Although accusations of sorcery were certainly made against Christians,[53] one does not find such episodes in the earlier Coptic acts of martyrs.[54] They enter the repository of the standardised and ever-recycled textual clusters at a later stage and are then actively used by the hagiographers.

Harmful magic and poison-making (*maleficium* or *veneficium*) were indeed outlawed and persecuted in the Roman empire before the arrival of Christianity[55] – following the legislation of the Twelve Tables (451 BC), which was aimed at those who caused harm by their magical actions (Table VII, Law XIV),[56] the so-called *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis* passed by Sulla in 81 BC also prescribed death penalty for those who practiced harmful magic.[57] Professional divination was made a criminal offence under Tiberius;

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[52] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum,* II (CSCO 44), p.6. Thecla, the famous female disciple of Apostle Paul, is also accused of following 'the magic of the Christians', cf. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Martyrerlegenden* II, p.131.

[53] 'Acts of idolatry, cannibalism, sexual promiscuity, infanticide, and unspeakable rites were leveled at Christians (and are found in the work of the Christian apologists) from the fund of social invective that the Romans reserved for a number of categories of infamous people, including political conspirators', cf. E. Peters, *The Magician, the Witch and the Law* (University of Pennsylvania, 1978), p.11. One of the most detailed allegations of magic was charged against Christians in the late second century by Celsus, whose invectives, although lost, were generously cited by Origen in *Contra Celsum*. Celsus did not doubt that Jesus himself was a magician, and that all Christian miracles were performed by the means of magic or were simply a trick.

[54] For example, earlier versions of the *Martyrdom of Colluthus* do not mention magic at all. The Paris fragment BN Copte 78, dated to the ninth century, however, contains a reference to the 'magic of the Christians', cf. G. Schenke, *Das koptisch hagiographische Dossier des Heiligen Kolluthos, Arzt, Märtyrer und Wunderheiler* (Louvain, 2013), p.92. On the dating of the various versions of the *Martyrdom of Colluthus* see Reymond and Barnes, *Four Martyrdoms*, pp.9-10, and Schenke, *Das koptisch hagiographische Dossier*, pp.33-36. Another early Coptic account of a martyrdom, that of St Stephen (Stephanos) of Lenaios, dated to second half of the fourth century, also does not contain any accusations of sorcery, cf. P. van Minnen, 'The Earliest Account of a Martyrdom in Coptic' in *AB* 113 (1995), pp.13-38.

[55] For more on the anti-magic legislation in the Roman Empire see M.W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London, 2001).

[56] Ibidem, pp.142-145.

[57] Ibidem, pp.145-147. See also J.B. Rives, 'Magic, Religion, and Law: The Case of the *Lex Cornelia de sicariis et veneficiis*' in *Religion and Law in Classical and Christian Rome*, ed. by C. Ando, J.Rüpke (Stuttgart, 2006), pp.47-67.

other emperors fought against those who produced and wore magical amulets.[58] Exactly how this legislation operated is difficult to assess, since we continue to see court (or in-house) magicians, freely practising their art, as well as wandering magicians, especially Egyptian, who also enjoyed relative freedom.[59] On the other hand, there is evidence that Roman provincial governors actually used this legislation 'against magic-workers or persons they saw as magic-workers who were causing trouble in their jurisdiction'.[60] Dickie points out that the prefect of Egypt issued an edict in 198 AD, commanding the local governors to exterminate those who claimed to be able to see the future;[61] these actions against the diviners were probably connected with the emperors' fear of conspiracy and plots against them.[62] At a certain stage accusations of sorcery and treason became 'interwoven', as was shown by the famous trial of 371 AD in Antioch, during the reign of the emperors Valentinian and Valens, described in great detail by Ammianus Marcellinus (*Res Gesta* XXIX 11.28).[63]

In Coptic martyr legends accusation of sorcery is very often combined with accusations of rebellion or treason: for example, in the story of Victor the prefect says to the martyr

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[58] A.A. Barb, 'The Survival of Magic Arts' in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity*, ed. by A. Momigliano (Oxford, 1963), pp.102-103.
[59] Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, pp.219-236.
[60] Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, p.157.
[61] Ibidem.
[62] For discussion on the accusations of magic, especially in the fourth century, see Barb, 'The Survival of Magic Arts', pp.110-114; P. Brown, 'Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity' in *Religion and Society in the Age of Saint Augustine* (London, 1972), pp.119-146, and I. Sandwell, 'Outlawing 'Magic' or Outlawing 'Religion'? Libanius and the Theodosian Code as Evidence for Legislation against 'Pagan' Practices' *in The Spread of Christianity in the First Four Centuries: Essays in Explanation*, ed. by W.V. Harris (Brill, 2005), pp.87-123.
[63] Barb, 'The Survival of Magic Arts', pp.111-113.

that he was sent to him as a rebel and magician (ⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲁⲥⲧⲏⲥ ⲙⲙⲁⲅⲟⲥ).[64] This feature seems to be a late development, because we do not see such accusations in earlier texts, as has been noted above.

II.2 Magic contest between a Christian martyr and a magician

Most often, the judge simply applies different gory tortures to the martyr in order to punish him for his unlawful magical actions; in some cases, however, the judge chooses to fight the Christian magic with his own, lawful magic – i.e. the magic performed by one of the court magicians. This second option is what Diocletian chooses in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*:

> And he ordered to bring there a great magician who was very powerful in magic. His name was Elementas. He came and stood before the boy, and said to him: 'O Lord Philotheus, you are the one who has burnt down Apollo, the great god of the king! But I will be victorious against what you've done to him – all the people will see the statue standing before you again just as it was before'.[65]

Very similar accounts are found in the stories of other martyrs: after performing some astonishing miracles Macarius of Antioch has to contend with the magician Alexander;[66] Victor converts an unnamed magician by staying alive after drinking a poisonous potion concocted by him;[67] in the *Martyrdom of St Cyriacus, bishop of Jerusalem*, which belongs to the cycle of Julian the Apostate, we also see a powerful magician, named

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[64] Elanskaia, *Коптские рукописи*, p.56; similar motifs in the stories of Claudius (Godron, *Textes coptes*, p.54) and Apa Anub (Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* I, p.217). In the story of Phoebammon his parents renounce him before the commanding officer, saying: 'We confirm to you that he is not our son. Instead, he is magician. Do with him whatever you want to do, because he has not obeyed us' thus witnessing against their son and confirming his status of a criminal, cf. *Martyrdom of St Phoibamon of Preht*, §§96-97, forthcoming critical edition by S. Uljas, who kindly shared his preliminary work on the text.

[65] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.90r.

[66] Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte* I, pp.59-61.

[67] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, pp.37-38; Elanskaia, *Коптские рукописи*, pp.56-58.

Admon, whose task it is to fill a pit, where the saint is kept, with venomous snakes, basilisks and other dangerous creatures.[68] Another well-known account of a magic contest is the one found in the story of St George[69].

In their portrayals of pagan magicians Coptic hagiographers strictly follow the rules of the genre: magicians are always represented as the servants of the devil; at the same time they are portrayed as recognised by and acceptable to the pagan authorities, which thus are further associated with the demonic powers.[70] A magician invokes the names of the demons,[71] summons and uses them as his servants; however, the relationship between them is highly unstable, because demons can turn against the magician when he has no protection against them. The most striking example of the consequences of such dangerous relationship is the story of the magician Astratole which is used in two different passions – those of Epima and of Shenoufe and his brethren. Astratole was a great magician of Shmoun who desired to go to hell and see it with his own eyes. After he made an invocation, he fell down into the abyss and found himself surrounded by bloodthirsty demons who threatened him with all kinds of tortures. Astratole tried to invoke the names of various powers, but nothing could deliver him; only when he remembered the name of Jesus, he was able to break free from hell and return to earth,

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[68] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II , pp.17-18.

[69] *Encomium of Theodotus of Ancyra to St George* in Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum* II, p.209-211.

[70] P. Brown notes the 'pervasive identification of paganism and magic in Christian sources' in the fourth and fifth centuries (cf. Brown, 'Sorcery, Demons', p.138); Coptic hagiographers seem to have accepted and developed this identification to the utmost degree.

[71] On the names of demons invoked in Coptic magic see D. Frankfurter, 'Demon Invocations in the Coptic Magical Spells' in *Actes du huitième Congrès international d'Études coptes*, ed. by N. Bosson and A. Boud'hors (Leuven, 2007), vol. 2, pp.453-466.

where he declared himself a Christian and became a martyr.[72] P. Brown notes that this paradox of unstable power is used in Christian sources for contrasting the saint with the sorcerer:

> The contrast between the saint and the sorcerer is not that the saint commands the demons while the sorcerer is their agent: both can command; but the saint has an effective 'vested' power, whereas the sorcerer works with a technique that is unreliable and, above all, cumbersome.[73]

The outcome of a magic contest is also predictable: a magician may either convert to Christianity (as in the *Martyrdom of Elias*, where the magician Theocletus receives baptism and becomes a martyr[74]), or continue to fight against the martyr and die an infamous death (as in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, where Elementas falls into the abyss of hell[75]). These highly popular textual units – descriptions of conversions or continued resistance – are so standardised that it is difficult to assess the directions of the textual transmission; very often such descriptions coincide in different passions nearly verbatim.

The question that the immense popularity of these narratives raises is: what did the authors want to achieve by inserting them into martyr stories composed a few hundred years later than the events they purport to describe, apart from entertaining their audience? Can this be a reflection of genuine concern on the part of the Church authorities about lingering pagan practices which had made their way into Christian lifestyle? These examples are too many to be ignored, for, as Drake points out,

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[72] Reymond, Barnes, *Four Martyrdoms*, pp.102-103; Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum,* I, p.139.
[73] Brown, 'Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity', p.140.
[74] G.P.H. Sobhy, *Le martyre de Saint Hélias et l'encomium de l'évêque Stephanos de Hnès sur Saint Hélias* (Cairo, 1919), pp.49-50.
[75] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.91r.

> The frequency of such accounts reflects not only their popularity with native audiences but also the need of early Christians constantly to distinguish the genuine miracles of their saints from the pagan magic so familiar to their contemporaries.[76]

Judging by the material evidence of the same period[77] – magical artefacts, spell scrolls, leaden curse tablets and various types of magical amulets found by archaeologists in Egypt – the problem of expelling magic from the life of ordinary Christians was still not solved by the Church at the time of the composition of the texts under discussion here.[78]

In his article on depictions of holy and unholy miracles in Byzantine hagiography A. Kazhdan explains the need for such narratives in popular theological discourse with the example of two very similar stories about the miracles involving oxen, one performed by a saint, and another performed by a magician: an ordinary man needed some means for distinguishing 'good and beneficial miracles from the pseudo-miracles launched by the

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[76] H. Drake, 'The Legend of Constantine and Eudoxia: Sources, Date, Significance' in *Eudoxia and the Holy Sepulchre*, p.110-111. It is worth noting that the magicians *topos* is also used in the legend of Eudoxia – the Persian generals persuade their kings to renew the war against Constantine, who previously was saved from their hands by his magic, because 'he knows the magical potions of the Christians'; they insist that now they also have 'some magicians who can take note of everything that he will do with his arts, and teach us about them', ibidem, p.44-45. However, this topos appears to be rather superfluous here, as it does not get any development in the narrative.

[77] See, for example, M. Meyer, R. Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Princeton, 1999); H.D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation* (Chicago, 1986); H.J. Magoulias, 'The Lives of the Byzantine Saints as Sources of data for the history of magic in the sixth and seventh centuries A.D.: Sorcery, Relics and Icons' in *Byzantion* 37 (1967), pp.228-269; H. Maguire, *Byzantine Magic* (Washington, Dumbarton Oaks, 1995); N. Janowitz, *Magic in the Roman World: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (London, 2001).

[78] A similar phenomenon was described by A.J. Gurevich in his works on medieval Western culture, see especially A.J. Gurevich [А.Я. Гуревич], *Средневековый мир: культура безмолвствующего большинства* (Москва, 1990), pp.43-52. Gurevich shows that despite the fact that most of the West European countries had been Christianized for centuries, the Church still had to fight with the remnants of pagan cultic practices in the seventh to the ninth centuries, which is clearly demonstrated by plentiful references to both 'heathen practices and popular superstitions in saints' lives, canons, papal letters and royal legislation, cf. Gurevich, *Средневековый мир,* p.49. Numerous medieval *penitentialia* (handbooks for confessors, containing sets of church rules concerning the sacrament of penance) show how seriously 'paganism', by which the Church authorities meant 'practice of magic', was taken: this sin is given much more attention than other transgressions.

devil and his companions in order to cheat and confuse the faithful'.[79] Kazhdan describes the main types of holy miracles which are mainly 'beneficial' and have positive impact on the people and the environment: healings, providing food, struggle with natural disasters, taming wild beasts.[80] The magicians, on the other hand, tend to kill, poison or inflict troubles of various kinds – in short, 'unholy magic causes death, confusion, sexual misbehaviour; holy miracles are creative, healing, and reviving'.[81] However, the saints do sometimes perform miracles of a different kind – that is, non-beneficial miracles which might involve death or serious illness; these harmful miracles are only performed on the real and resistant opponents of the saints, the magicians. Such dark miracles, the main point of which is to show that magicians cannot really withstand the divine power operating through the saint, are very characteristic of Coptic passions: the martyrs simply eliminate their opponents in the most violent and spectacular manner or miraculously shut the mouths of the blasphemers.[82] The hagiographers do not seem to have felt any doubts about using all means possible (to an extent which Frankfurter defines as 'demonizing in most vivid terms'[83]) to form a very negative opinion of magic and its practitioners. I will now turn to discussion of some of the means they used.

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[79] A. Kazhdan, 'Holy and Unholy Miracle Workers' in *Byzantine Magic*, ed. by H. Maguire (Washington, 1995), p.74.

[80] Ibidem, p.74-77. See also D. Frankfurter, 'Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond' in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, ed. by M.W. Meyer and P.A. Mirecki (Leiden, 2002), p.174ff.

[81] Kazhdan, 'Holy and Unholy Miracle Workers', p.79.

[82] In the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* the magician is swallowed by the earth (f.91r) and the blaspheming emperor is made dumb by the martyr's blow (f.93v). But in the *Martyrdom of Phoibamon* we read of much more frightening miracles: the martyr, to put it simply, curses and exterminates the whole family of his persecutor, starting with the only son and heir who is killed by a collapsed wall (§204).

[83] D. Frankfurter, 'Dynamics of Ritual Expertise in Antiquity and Beyond', p.174.

If one looks at the depiction of the martyrs' reaction to the accusations of sorcery, their indignant responses make it crystal clear that being accused of it was for them the greatest insult possible:[84] they either refute such accusations in passionate speeches, which, as a rule, include an emphatic formula μὴ γένοιτο (lit. 'may this not happen') or its Coptic equivalent, or even use physical violence against the accuser. Thus, Apa Anub says to the prefect Cyprian: 'Why do you call the servants of Christ magicians? God forbid (ⲛⲛⲉⲥⲱⲟⲩⲡⲓ)!';[85] Philotheus actually slaps Diocletian:

> The king said to him: 'Are you going to perform magic again before me in the name of Jesus?' And St Philotheus ran to him and gave him a strong blow, saying: 'Shut your mouth, O evil beast, for you are speaking blasphemy against Him who created you!'[86]

Since the saints were perceived as the role-models for the Christian community, who naturally associated themselves with the Christian protagonist of the story, it appears that these vividly described refutations and the obvious disgust of the martyrs at hearing accusations of sorcery have been employed by the hagiographers in order to arouse in the audience disgust for magic and its practitioners. This intended feeling of aversion and disgust was further corroborated by unpleasant details in the descriptions of the magicians' actions. Here two main patterns are usually present: the magicians either prepare poisonous potions which are intended to kill the martyr (this is what we see in

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[84] As Worley indicates, quoting the letter of Macarius the Great, 'a charge of magic and φαρμακεία' was at some point regarded in Egypt 'one of the worst things that might befall a Christian', cf. J. Wortley, 'Some Light on Magic and Magicians' in *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 42 (1991), p.295. The *Visio Pauli* also views magic as one of the gravest offences: 'And I saw certain men and women who were immersed [in the blood] up to their knees, and others were immersed up to their lips. And I said to the angel, 'Who are these, my lord?' And he said unto me, 'These are the magicians who worked enchantments on men and women, and they will be left here to suffer until they die', cf. Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.542.

[85] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum,* I, p.218.

[86] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.93v.

the stories of Victor, George, Macarius, Elias), or they perform some spectacular miracle, the main aim of which is to repair the damage caused by the martyr or to impress the audience. In both cases potions or mixtures are used as an instrument of magic, even if the planned action itself does not require any consuming of a potion; the magician always invokes the names of demons over the potion. The authors of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* chose the second pattern: the magician has to restore the destroyed statue of Apollo, the favourite god of the emperor. He restores the statue itself, but the martyr sends it down to hell with a precise blow of his foot. The magician, however, is not discouraged and mixes up an offering to the demon of hell, Tartarouchos:

> So, the magician got up, took the tooth of a lioness, some hair from a wild pig, the horn of a hart, some treacle clover, palm fibre and papyrus, and he cast them on fire with some other herbs, calling Tartarouchos. And the earth opened down to the very abyss, and there was no sign of the idol, because he had gone to where the righteous one had ordered him to go.[87]

The list of ingredients used by Elementas in the ritual does not contain any particularly repellent substances – rather, it is reminiscent of the lists of ingredients usually attached to non-harmful spells in spell handbooks.[88] However, other Diocletianic passions which exploit the same *topos* present different descriptions of magical potions, especially in those cases when the potion is meant to kill. Thus, in the story of Victor[89] we see the magician first using a simple mixture of poisons (extract from poisonous plants mixed

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[87] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.91r. Tartarouchos is mentioned in the same context in the *Martyrdom of Apa Elias*: the magician Theocletus takes the king to the sepulchre and there invokes Tartarouchos, who appears with a crowd of souls, chained and agonizing. Cf. Sobhy, *Le martyre de Saint Hélias*, p.36.

[88] Numerous examples of magical offerings see in *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*, ed. by M. Meyer and R. Smith (San Francisco, 1994). On the nature of the exotic ingredients in Greco-Roman magic recipes see L.R. LiDonnici, 'Beans, Fleawort, and the Blood of a Hamadryas Baboon: Recipe Ingredients in Greco-Roman Magical Materials' in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, pp.359-377.

[89] Both in Budge and Elanskaia: Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, pp.38-39; Еланская, *Коптские рукописи*, p.57-58.

with snake poison) on Victor, which does not do the martyr any harm, since he is protected by the power of the cross – in fact, he looks like someone who is enjoying good wine. The second potion is much stronger and its ingredients include gall (ⲥⲓⲱϵ), someone's unidentified liver (ϩγⲡⲁⲣ)[90] and some liquid discharge or pus taken from a dead body (ⲓⲁⲁⲃϵ ⲛⲟγⲕⲱⲱⲥ). This potion is so strong that it causes a little earthquake. Nevertheless, again it does not do Victor any harm, and this clear manifestation of the divine power makes the magician embrace Christianity. The *Martyrdom of Elias* describes a similar set of ingredients used by the magician Theocletus, who was employed by the governor to frighten and then kill the indestructible Elias: his potion included dragons' gall, fat, liver, pus from the dead body (ⲓⲁⲃϵ ⲛⲣϵϥⲙⲟⲟγⲧ), and a wild poisonous plant.[91]

The choice of magical potion ingredients in Coptic texts is not accidental – all these substances are associated with dark, illicit sorcery and necromancy of the worst sort; it must inspire a feeling of immediate and inevitable danger to the martyr and any other victim of magic.[92] But the authors skilfully use the emotional state of the audience for

[90] Absent in Budge's edition, but present in the manuscript which was used by Elanskaia, *Коптские рукописи*, p.57.

[91] Sobhy, *Le martyre de Saint Hélias*, pp.40-50. The description of the contest between St Elias and Theocletus is the most impressive one among other accounts of magical duels: it includes exploding mountains, scary dragons (who are clever enough not to interrupt the martyr's prayer), partying demons and the Devil himself, the Archangel Michael with a whip of fire, and a burning rock which is later transformed into a spring of water for the baptism of the repentant magician. The composers of this text must have put together the most dramatic scenes from other martyr passions and created a story which is totally unconvincing, as it has too much action in it.

[92] A similar tactics was employed a few hundred years later by Shakespeare in *Macbeth*; his witches put into their cauldron all disgusting substances imaginable: poisoned entrails, adder's fork, a scale of dragon, a tooth of wolf, witches' mummy, liver of blaspheming Jew, gall of goat, 'finger of birth-strangled babe ditch-delivered by a drab', and so on (*Macbeth*, IV, 1).

their own purposes, which are, as has been stated in the beginning of this chapter, not only entertaining, but also didactic.

II. 3 Means of protection from harmful magic

The didactic purposes of such narratives are clearly shown in those standard episodes in Coptic martyr passions which explain how this dark and lethal magic is triumphantly defeated by the martyrs. Despite some minor differences in details, they all look very much alike as they are united by the same context: they show the audience how one can protect himself or herself from the harm caused by spells and the assault of the spiritual adversaries, i.e. the demons who carry out the orders of the magicians. This is how the Church relates its doctrinal teaching to the simple, uneducated audience – in the form of entertaining stories incorporated into the lives of saints,[93] which were recited during liturgical celebrations of the saints' feasts and were designed to leave a lasting impression in the mind of the listener.

Such accounts always underline that the martyr protected himself from harmful magic with prayer and the sign of the cross – these are the only means of protection a good Christian might use without any doubt, as Christ Himself prescribed in the Gospel: 'And these signs will follow those who believe: in My name they will cast out demons; they

[93] The same observation has been made regarding the Byzantine hagiographical texts describing the victories of saints over magicians, cf. M.W. Dickie, 'Narrative-Patterns in Christian Hagiography' in *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 40 (1999), pp.83-89, esp.86-87. Dickie points out that in Byzantine hagiography a saint, after rescuing some unfortunate soul from the power of demons under which it would have fallen through the maleficent spell cast by the sorcerer, would usually reprimand the rescued person for not participating in the Liturgy in a due manner – a lifestyle which opens a soul to the demonic attacks. This latter part of the magic-defeat narrative is not present in Coptic martyr texts; however, Coptic texts suggest a similar 'defensive weapon' – the power of the cross.

will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them' (Mk 16:17-18). The authors of the martyr stories state it quite unequivocally: no invocations of demonic names, so often used in Coptic magic which the Church was trying to extirpate, can withstand the prayer of the martyr. The only names a Christian should invoke in times of trouble are the names of Jesus Christ – hence the popularity of the story of Astratole (see above) which emphasizes that no other names of power could save him from hell – and of those saints who had successfully fought against magic during their lifetime.

At the same time it must be noted that some Coptic spells are, in a way, reminiscent of the prayers uttered by the martyrs, since they use very similar language and *historiolae*.[94] The line between an acceptably orthodox prayer and a spell which invokes the Christian saints along with the demons and deities of Ancient Egypt must have been nearly invisible; it is quite possible that some spells were actually modelled after prayers – at least, there is strong evidence that monastic scriptoria were to a certain extent involved in the copying and distribution of the ritual texts.[95] Thus, the prayer of Philotheus before his first miracle in the presence of the emperor contains all the elements used in the spells: an invocation, some short *historiolae,* which in this case are the story of the pagan adversaries of Moses, the Egyptian magi Jannes and Jambres, and

[94] *Historiolae* are short stories inserted into magic formulas for providing a mythological precedent for the desired outcome of the spell; sometimes the precedent can be taken from ancient Egyptian mythology, sometimes from the Bible. For more on historiolae see D. Frankfurter, 'Narrating Power: the Theory and Practice of the Magical Historiola in Ritual Spells' in *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, pp.457-476.
[95] Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, pp.258-260.

the story of Elijah and the priests of Baal, and the request itself. Here is the opening part of the prayer:

> O God, God of my salvation and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy blessed Spirit, who are also Trinity consubstantial, undivided and unchangeable, by whose holy name I have performed all these great omens. You, who has given strength to Moses, your great blessed prophet, to do all these wonders before the Pharaoh, breaking down the power of Jannes and Jambres; You, who has given power to Elijah to slay all the priests of Baal before Ahab, IAO, Adonai, Lord Sabaoth, Blessed of the blessed, receive my prayer![96]

Another important means of protection, constantly brought to the attention of the audience of the martyrs' lives, is the sign of cross. As Wortley points out, St Antony the Great 'enunciated the principle very clearly: "Where the sign of the cross is made, sorcery wastes away and poison does not work."'.[97] The saints always make a sign of the cross over poisonous potions which are offered to them or 'seal themselves' (ⲥⲫⲣⲁⲅⲓⲍⲉ) with the same powerful sign. The mentions of this familiar gesture in the texts are too numerous to be cited, as they are repeated time and again in various combinations – in this way the idea of the protective power of the cross becomes firmly imprinted in the subconscious of the audience. For example, the martyrs who are given poisonous potions, make the sign of the cross over them and not only survive, but appear to be even healthier or merrier than before.[98] Moreover, in the *Martyrdom of Epima* the sign of the cross protects the martyr from all kinds of tribulations so much so that the prefect

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[96] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.89v. Compare, for example, with the invocation in the so-called Coptic book of ritual power from Leiden: 'I beg you, father of our lord Jesus Christ, god of gods, king of all kings, incorruptible, undefiled, uncreated, untouchable, morning star, mighty hand, Adonai Eloei Elemas Sabaoth, god of gods, the king who is mighty in all things…', cf. *Ancient Christian Magic*, p.314.

[97] Cf. Wortley, 'Some Light on Magic and Magicians', p.304.

[98] Victor looks 'like a man who is enjoying wine', cf. Elanskaia, *Коптские рукописи*, p.57. At the same time these potions remain as lethal as they can be: when the magician who is trying to kill Macarius of Antioch tastes the potion which does not seem to work on Macarius, he explodes on the spot, cf. Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte*, I, p.61.

Culcianus expresses his admiration for Epima's magic and asks Epima what kind of sign he puts on his face so frequently; Epima provides him with an extensive explanation of the power of the cross.[99]

These repeating patterns in the narrative contain the same message that Chrysostom tried to convey to his audience – nothing is more powerful than the sign of the cross and there is no need to use other rituals or amulets. This is what Chrysostom says on the issue of the apotropaic amulets and some obviously pagan practices of covering the child with mud, which were still in use among his flock:

> What shall we say about the amulets and the bells which are hung upon the hand, and the scarlet woof, and the other things full of such extreme folly; when *they ought to invest the child with nothing else save the protection of the Cross*. But now that is despised which has converted the whole world and given the sore wound to the devil and overthrown all his power: while the thread, and the woof, and the other amulets of that kind are entrusted with the child's safety. ... God has honoured you with spiritual anointing; and do you defile your child with mud? God has honoured you, and do you dishonor yourself? And when you should inscribe on his forehead the *Cross which affords invincible security*; do you forego this, and cast yourself into the madness of Satan?[100]

Apparently, the problem of the enduring presence of the magic amulets and pagan rituals in the lives of Christian laity could not be solved even with the persuasive skills of the great preacher Chrysostom, for we continue to see the same idea of the sufficiency of the cross and other means offered by the Church, such as sacraments, repeated time and again in sermons[101] and canon law.[102] Popular church literature (hagiography and

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[99] Balestri, Hyvernat, *Acta Martyrum,* I p.132).

[100]Chrysostom, *Hom. XII in 1 Cor* in *PG* 61; English translation by T.W. Chambers in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, First Series, Vol. 12, ed. by P. Schaff (Buffalo, NY, 1889.). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/220112.htm accessed on 19.11.2014. This homily was translated into Coptic at an early point.

[101] Many of Shenute's sermons discuss the problem of magic and paganism.

beneficial tales alike[103]) also did its duty in conveying this same message to the audience in a more indirect (if compared to the homiletic texts) manner, through gripping and entertaining stories of magic contests between saints and magicians.

Conclusions

The skilful combination of three hagiographical *topoi* in descriptions of paganism in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* which has been discussed in this chapter reflects the techniques used by the authors of this text in order to achieve their goals – to increase the negative attitude of the audience towards the use of magic and to instruct the audience in the proper, 'orthodox' way of repelling the attacks of the dark forces. Attitudes towards paganism in the text differ between regarding it as a folly (animal worship) or as abomination (idols of Diocletian). The paganism of the parents of the saint is depicted with a certain amount of humour, as if to stir some sympathy in the audience, since his parents are potentially good characters who, despite their erring, still have a chance of repentance and conversion – which, as we know, does indeed take place in the next episode. On the contrary, the schematic villain of the martyr passions, the Great Persecutor Diocletian, is not supposed to evoke any sympathy, and therefore his pagan beliefs and practices are described in very negative terms, using what Zakrzewska defines as 'attitudinal modifiers'.[104] The most frequent term applied to Diocletian's worship is ⲃⲟⲧⲉ, 'abomination'; moreover, his pagan worship is firmly

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[102] Dickie, *Magic and Magicians*, pp.257-260.
[103] Wortley, 'Some Light on Magic and Magicians', pp.304-307.
[104] E. Zakrzewska, 'Masterplots and Martyrs: Narrative Techniques in Bohairic Hagiography' in *Narratives of Egypt and the ancient Near East: literary and linguistic approaches*, ed. by F. Hagen et als (Leuven, 2011), p.513.

linked with the use of dark magic, since Diocletian often employs court magicians to perform some gruesome rituals that are meant to harm or kill the martyr.

The theme of magic in general pervades all late Coptic martyr passions: multiple accusations of sorcery made against Christian martyrs are always denied by them with great fervour, sometimes resulting in physical actions, such as a slap in the face of the accuser. Descriptions of magical rituals are very negative; they usually include invocations of demonic names, mixtures of disgusting and poisonous ingredients and other unpleasant elements (for example, the use of urine[105]) – all for triggering a predictable reaction in the audience.

But the authors of these texts also used another technique to affirm the negative attitude to magic in their audience and to instruct them to stay away from it – very positive, even triumphant, descriptions of miracles performed by divine power through the martyr. These miracles, defined by G. Loomis as 'white magic', were meant to attract the attention of the Christian flock to the power given to Church and the saints from God. As Loomis points out,

> Theoretical theology was forced to recognize the impossibility of stamping out the belief in magic. A wise substitution of Christian magical elements was made wherever possible. Old beliefs were reinterpreted, and the cult of wonder served

[105] A very bizarre set of actions is found in the stories of Macarius and Phoebammon: the dux commands the servants to bring some 'flesh of swine' and 'a pot of urine' and makes them rub the pork into his body and pour the urine over the martyr, 'so that he would not be able to perform magic', cf. S. Uljas, *Martyrdom of St Phoibamon of Preht*, §§195-196, forthcoming. In the story of Macarius the same treatment is applied to the martyr by the magician Alexander, cf. Hyvernat, *Les actes des martyrs de l'Égypte* I, p.59.

> to capture the popular imagination. Christian dogma could not reach the mass of men, but marvellous incidents were convincing in a thousand localities at once.[106]

Indeed, the miracles performed by martyrs if compared to those wrought by magicians are no less spectacular – apart from multiple healings and resurrections they frequently include earthquakes, selective burning of various objects with heavenly fire, and other impressive wonders. However, these miracles, even though they obviously perform an entertaining function in the text, are all embedded in the narrative with a very straightforward objective – to emphasize the power of prayer and of the sign of cross. The saints survive poisonous potions and repel attacks of dragons with only one weapon and means of protection – that is, with the name of Christ combined with the sign of the cross. On the other hand, since the name of Jesus Christ was widely featured in magical texts alongside the names of various pagan deities or demons, there was a strong need to set clear boundaries for the usage of the divine name. Coptic hagiographical texts show that their authors were aware of this problem and tried to solve it in their own manner: we see that the martyrs immediately (and sometimes very severely) punish any person who dares to suggest that Christ's name can be associated alongside any dark powers. For example, in the story of Phoebammon the court clerk says that Phoebammon is the servant of Jesus, who is 'the one above demons'; he is immediately chastised by the saint who summons a demon and allows him to possess the clerk.[107] Such stories provide their audience with simple and clear guidelines for the proper, orthodox lifestyle: it is not

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[106] G. Loomis, *White Magic: An Introduction to the Folklore of Christian Legend* (Cambridge: Mass., 1948), p.8.

[107] Cf. S. Uljas, *Martyrdom of St Phoibamon of Preht*, §§153-157, forthcoming. A similar episode involving possession by an unclean spirit is found in the story of Philotheus (f.98r *b*– f.98v *a*): the martyr allows Romanus, the father of St Victor, to be possessed by the demon as a punishment for his words.

right to mix the name of Jesus with any other names; the sign of the cross and the prayer are the best way to protect oneself from harm, etc. Thus, one can see how these popular textual units – descriptions of magic duels and of magic and magicians in general - that kept being recycled and transmitted from one martyr passion to another, perform a double function: it simultaneously entertain the audience and instruct the people in the teaching of the Church.

Chapter 7

The minds that shaped the text

When trying to situate the text in a particular time and in a particular milieu, one must bear in mind that the full text of the Coptic *Martyrdom of Philotheus* as we have it now has evolved greatly; it has been given a certain shape, first of all, by its authors and editors, but also, to some degree, by its audience, i.e. the people who participated in and spread the cult of this saint. The text and the cult mutually influenced each other: the text of the *Martyrdom* provided material for further hymnographic and iconographic production; at the same time the existing form and the contents of the *Martyrdom* were shaped and influenced by the needs of the evolving cult (hence a relatively large number of promotional and instructional elements which are not present in the Georgian text). Thus, the story received the form that the audience would have expected – an entertaining narrative, enhanced by what E. Zakrzewska defines as 'oral-like communicative strategies', that is, by 'the episodic structure with clear boundaries, uncomplicated syntax, formulaic expressions and repetitions', all of which were employed to facilitate the processing of the story.[1]

On the other hand, the text of the *Martyrdom* served as the basis of the hymns dedicated to St Philotheus which testify to the longevity and popularity of his cult in a much later period.[2] If we want to see what role this text played in the development and

[1] E. Zakrzewska, 'Masterplots and Martyrs', p.515.
[2] The hymns in his honour continue to be copied in the eighteenth century liturgical manuscripts, see below.

the promulgation of the cult of St Philotheus, we have to discuss not only its historical and literary contexts as has been done in previous chapters, but also seek out its performative context, placing it among other – liturgical, hymnographic and iconographic – elements of this saint's tradition in Egypt. The first part of this chapter will look at the geography of the cult, its iconographic and hymnographic dimensions and the transformation of the perception of the saint; in the second part I will discuss the questions of performance, authorship and audience.

Part I. The development of the cult of St Philotheus in Egypt

I.1 Churches dedicated to St Philotheus; geography of the cult.

Apart from the rich textual tradition which has been discussed in Chapter 1, there is ample evidence that a number of churches in Egypt were dedicated to St Philotheus. The list of churches of Egypt published by S. Clarke as an appendix to his work on Christian antiquities in Egypt[3] mentions four churches dedicated to the holy martyr Philotheus. Clarke notes that he received this list 'through the courtesy of H.B. the Patriarch', and that it was 'printed as supplied', meaning that he could not guarantee its accuracy or correctness;[4] I am quoting it as printed. All four churches were situated in Upper Egypt:

[3] S. Clarke, *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley: a contribution towards the study of the ancient churches* (Oxford, 1912).
[4] Clarke, p.199.

1. A church in Shark el Khiam in the district of Balyana (the diocese of Girgeh and Akhmim);[5]

2. Another church situated in El Motiaa in the district of Assiut (diocese of Asyut);[6]

3. Another at Nazlet el Kadi in the district of Tahta (diocese of Abu Tig);[7]

4. Another one in Edfa in the district of Sohag (diocese of Girgeh and Akhmim).[8]

Delehaye and Vergote both indicate that there existed yet another church dedicated to St Philotheus in the monastery of St Victor in Qati'a in the province of Asyut.[9] However, the cult of Philotheus is also attested in Middle and Lower Egypt. Abu al-Makarim, Coptic historian of the thirteenth century, known also as Abū-Sālih the Armenian,[10] mentions that the church of the monastery of Dayr Al-Nastur (The

[5] Clarke, p.214, No. 41. This must be the church in the monastery of Dayr Al-Shahid Philuthawaus in Jirja, Naj' al-Dayr (Village of the Monastery) on the right bank of the Nile. 'It is not known to which Saint Philotheus this monastery is consecrated, the martyr of Antioch or the more recent martyr of A.M. 1097/A.D. 1380, a native of Durunkah. Since this town is near Asyut and hence somewhat distant from the present monastery, the martyr of Antioch seems the more likely dedicatee', cf. R.G. Coquin, M. Martin, 'Dayr Al-Shahid Philuthawaus' in *CE* 3, pp.861-862.

[6] Clarke, p.211, no.11. This church and the third one on the list, however, might have been dedicated to another St Philotheus – that of Durunkah, as they are both situated in the Asyut governorate, to which Durunkah also belongs. This church is also listed by S. Timm in his list of Coptic churches, cf. S. Timm, *Christliche Stätten in Ägypten* (Wiesbaden, 1979), p.163.

[7] Clarke, p.212, no.33. Timm's list indicates that this church was dedicated to the Mother of God, cf. Timm, *Christliche Stätten*, p.124.

[8] Clarke, p.213, no.9; Timm, *Christliche Stätten*, p.94.

[9] H. Delehaye, *Les martyres d'Égypte* (Bruxelles, 1923), p.99; J. Vergote, 'Le texte sous-jacent du palimpseste Berlin nº 9755' in *Le Muséon* 42 (1955), p.280. Their information is based on the remark in the travelogue of J.M. Vansleb (Wansleben) who travelled in Egypt in 1672-1673, cf. J.M. Wansleben, *Nouvelle relation en forme de journal d'un voyage fait en Egypte par le P. Vansleb en 1672 et 1673* (Paris, 1677), p.365.

[10] For more on Abu al-Makarim see U. Zanetti, 'Abu L-Makarim et Abu Salih' in *BSAC* 34 (1995), pp.85-133, and J. den Heijer, 'The composition of the *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt* – some preliminary remarks' in *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies: Washington, 12-15 August 1992*, edited by T. Orlandi and D.W. Johnson (Rome, 1993), pp.209-219.

Monastery of the Nestorians)[11], to the south of Old Cairo on the edge of the lake Habash, was rededicated to St Philotheus, when the monastery became the property of the Copts in the late twelfth century:

> This monastery came into possession of the Copts of Miṣr in the patriarchate of Anba Mark ibn Zar'ah, the seventy-third in the order of succession, who made it patriarchal, and dedicated the church in it to Saint Philotheus of Antioch. ... The church was solemnly opened and the liturgy was said in it the first week of the blessed fast, namely on Tuesday, the 16th of Amshir, of the year 899 of the Righteous Martyrs, which is equivalent to the 24th of Ramadan of the year 576 (A.D. 1181).[12]

Amelineau indicates that there existed another church of St Philotheus in the village of Qelemah (modern Qalama) in the district of Qalyub.[13] He does not provide more information, but the modern directory of the churches of the Coptic Orthodox Church contains a church dedicated to St Philotheus[14] in the governorate of Qalyubia, north of Cairo; this is probably the same church. The cult of St Philotheus in Middle Egypt (in Aphroditopolis and Hermonthis) is attested by the seventh and eighth century papyri and ostraka, as Papaconstantinou has shown.[15]

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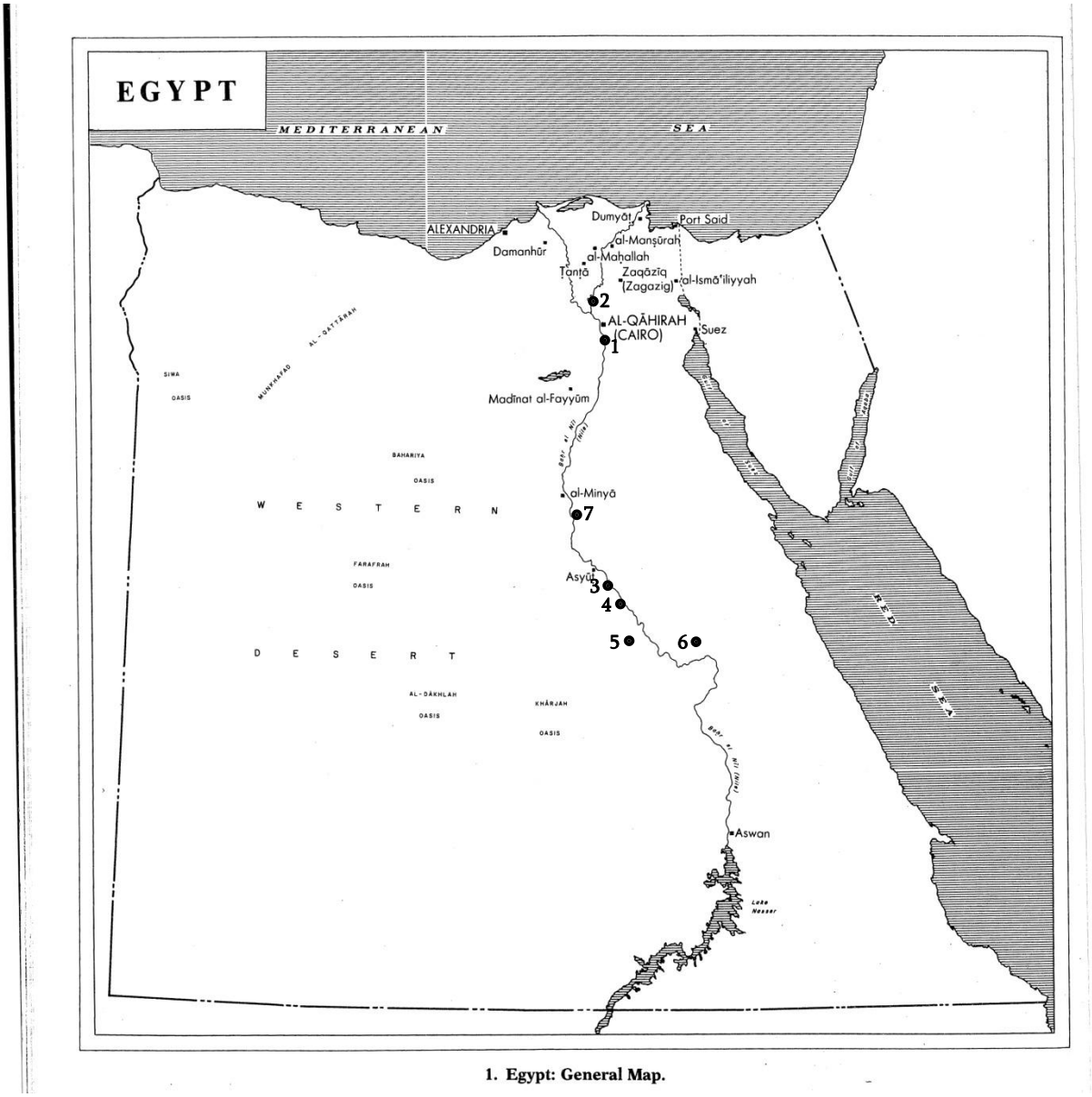
[11] R.G. Coquin, M. Martin, 'Dayr Al-Nastur' in *CE* 3, p.848: 'It was a monastery of the Nestorian rite, dedicated to St George. In 1102-1130, under the caliphate of al-Amīr, Shaykh Abū al-Fadā'il, a Nestorian, restored this monastery at his own expense. But the caliph, displeased at this restoration, undertaken without his permission, had a mosque built within the monastery grounds'. In the late twelfth century the monastery became the property of the Coptic Church.

[12] English translation by B.T. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries*, *attributed to Abu Salih, the Armenian* (Oxford, 1895), pp.134-135. Abū-Sālih also adds that all expenses of the building and maintenance of the church were paid by the Sheikh Abu Al-Mansur ibn Bulus, 'who also paid for the liturgies and the eucharistic elements and the rest, and did not cease to supply all that was needed until the day of his death', ibidem.

[13] E. Amelineau, *La géographie de l'Égypte à l'époque copte* (Paris, 1893), p.215.

[14] Number 35 in the section on the Dioceses of Beheira, Damietta, Dakahlia, Gharbia, Monufia, Qalyubia and Sharqia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Coptic_Churches_in_Egypt (accessed on 12.01.2015).

[15] Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte*, pp.202-203. See also H.I. Bell and F.G. Kenyon, *Greek Papyri in the British Museum* (London, 1910), nn. PLond 4.1459; 4.1469; 4.1476; also W.C. Till, *Die koptischen Ostraka der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek* (Wien, 1960), n. 42;



1. Egypt: General Map.

Figure 2. A general map of Egypt, taken from *CE* 7, p.2.[16]

1. A church in the monastery Dayr Al-Nastur in Cairo. 2. A church in Qelemah (modern Qalama) in the district of Qalyub. 3. A church in El Motiaa (modern transcription Al-Mutia) in the district of Asyut (diocese of Asyut). 4. A church in Nazlet el Kadi in the district of Tahta (diocese of Abu Tig). 5. A church in Edfa (modern transcription Idfa) in the district of Sohag (diocese of Girgeh and Akhmim). 6. A church in Shark el Khiam (modern transcription Al- Khayyam) in the district of Balyana (the diocese of Girgeh and Akhmim). 7. Antinoe (Antinoopolis) where the pen case bearing the image of St Philotheus was found.

M.R.M. Hasitzka, *Koptisches Sammelbuch I ‹KSB I›* (Mitteilungen aus der Papyrussammlung der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek (Wien, 1993), 1.12.

[16] Location marks in this map are not entirely precise, but it allows us to see the geography of the cult.

St Philotheus' memory is still celebrated in the Coptic Church and an entry for him exists under the 16th of Tubeh in different Coptic synaxaria.[17] Apart from the complete manuscript and many fragments of his passion, his cult in Egypt is also witnessed by the diptychs, published by R. Tuki.[18] The name of St Philotheus appears on the funerary stelae in various churches and monasteries of Upper Egypt: for example, on a limestone slab in the monastery of Apa Jeremias, after the names of the four principal martyrs revered in Egypt – Victor, Phoebammon, Mena, George – and a child martyr Cyriacus.[19]

Thus, judging by the geographic location of the churches, dedicated to his name, and other material evidence, it might be asserted that the cult of St Philotheus of Antioch was indeed wide-spread and thriving in late antique and medieval Egypt, although it must have lost some of its popularity in modern times, as we can now see only one church dedicated to St Philotheus in the directory of the Coptic Orthodox Church. The cult seems to have been especially well established in Upper Egypt, judging by the number of churches and inscriptions; however, if indeed the main church of the Monastery of the Nestorians (Dayr al-Nastur) was dedicated to St Philotheus of Antioch, as Abu Al-Makarim suggests, it can be claimed that this saint was also well-known in the region of Cairo. Nonetheless, none of the available sources provide evidence for the existence of a personal shrine (*martyrium*) of Philotheus in Egypt, nor is there any

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[17] S.C. Malan, *The Calendar of the Coptic Church* (London, 1874), p. 18. See also H.F. Wüstenfeld, *Synaxarium, das ist Heiligen-Kalender der coptischen Christen* (Gotha, 1879), pp.241-243.

[18] R. Tuki, *Theotokia* (Rome, 1764), p.41.

[19] J.E. Quibell and H. Thompson, *Excavations at Saqqara. The Monastery of Apa Jeremias* (Cairo, 1912), № 203, p.59-61. It is interesting to note that Philotheus is given a title 'Apa' in this inscription, while Cyriacus does not have this honorary title. Also, Philotheus is placed before the forty martyrs of Sebaste. Another example is a stele in the monastery of Bawit, cf. J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouît* (Cairo, 1904-1916), i, pl. XXXI.

indication that his relics (or parts of relics) were preserved anywhere in Egypt. Unlike other cults of Antiochene martyrs, his cult, despite its great popularity in Egypt, seems to have kept its focal point in a fictitious shrine[20] at Antioch, the building and consecration of which shrine are the focus of the *Encomium* in honour of St Philotheus, ascribed to Severus of Antioch.

I.2 Iconographic evidence and its relevance; representation of St Philotheus as a military saint in the Coptic tradition

Given the fact that his cult was so wide-spread in Egypt, it is remarkable that there are very few images of St Philotheus. The only early image that can be attributed with reasonable certainty as depicting Philotheus of Antioch is the one on the pen-case from Antinoe.[21] Philotheus is portrayed as a warrior performing a ceremonial gesture of *calcatio colli* on someone who appears to be the emperor Diocletian, featured as a crowned, serpent-like figure.[22] Indeed, in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, Diocletian is regularly referred to as 'apostate' (ⲁⲡⲟⲥⲧⲁⲧⲏⲥ), and as 'the erring king' (ⲡⲣⲣⲟ ⲙⲡⲗⲁⲛⲟⲥ); and in addition, he is often addressed by the martyr as 'the dragon who is in the abyss' (ⲡⲉⲇⲣⲁⲕⲱⲛ ⲉⲧⲯⲙⲡⲛⲟⲩⲛ). Thus, the serpent-like creature most probably represented Diocletian, who was considered by the Copts to be both an enemy of the

[20] Y.N. Youssef, 'The Encomium of St. Philotheus ascribed to Severus of Antioch' in *Coptica* I (2002), pp. 169-221.

[21] See description of this image in Chapter 1. Ch. Walter in his study on the representations of the military saints assigns particular importance to this pen-case, 'because', he writes, 'along with other Egyptian representations of warriors, St Philotheus' portrait conforms very early in date to what would become a standard iconographical type. Thus there is a strong possibility that it originated in Egypt'. Cf. Ch. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Ashgate, 2003), p.234.

[22] See also Van Esbroeck's argument for this attribution in 'Saint Philotheos d' Antioche', p.121.

Christian Church, - and, naturally, of Christ himself[23] – and at the same time, an usurper (ⲧⲩⲣⲁⲛⲛⲟⲥ), since his legitimacy as an emperor has always been doubted within the Coptic tradition, as has been shown in Chapter 3. But the question remains: why is a child martyr represented as a warrior?

The young age of Philotheus is constantly underlined and repeated throughout the text of his passion – the most common term employed in the *Martyrdom* is a 'young boy' (ϣⲏⲣⲉ ϣⲏⲙ), and there is no mention that he was a soldier or was in any way associated with the military service, as the rest of the Antiochene martyrs. On the other hand, he is frequently addressed as an athlete or warrior. While being encouraged by Christ and the archangels Michael and Raphael before his confession and during the passion itself, Philotheus is told 'to be strong', 'to fortify himself'.[24] He is furthermore directly called an athlete of Christ.[25] This 'athletic' language, used in conjunction with 'amphitheatrical' language (an important part of the trial takes place in the theatre and attracts many spectators), is aimed to portray the martyr 'as active – and thus manly – in approaching death'.[26] As P.H. Wasyliw notes in a chapter dedicated to the child martyrs of the early Christian Church,

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[23] Moreover, Van den Berg-Onstwedder remarks that in the Coptic tradition 'Diocletian had a close connection with Satan. He called Satan his father and Satan on his part called him "my son"'; cf. Van den Berg-Onstwedder, 'Diocletian in the Coptic Tradition', p.109.

[24] See, for example, an expression used by the angel in the episode of loosening the bonds of the martyr (f. 92r *b*): ϫⲣⲟ ⲙⲙⲟⲕ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲅⲥⲙⲥⲟⲙ, where both verbs have also a connotation of a victory in a battle or in a contest (νικᾶν) and behaving like a man, coming to manhood (ἀνδρίζεσθαι).

[25] 'The athlete of Christ (ⲡϣⲟⲉⲓϫ ⲙⲡⲉ$\overline{\text{ⲭⲥ}}$) said: 'For this reason you will die from the hands of your idols' (f.96v *b*).

[26] L.S. Cobb, *Dying to Be Men: Gender and Language in Early Christian Martyr Texts* (New York, 2008), p.33.

> The ordeal of voluntary facing torture and death was considered to require the strength and dedication of an athletic contest, and was not for the weak of mind, body, or spirit. Children might be considered unlikely contestants in such a struggle, yet a number of child martyrs of this era are venerated in the western and eastern traditions.[27]

Philotheus is one of the very few child saints venerated in Egypt[28] – alongside the prominent Three Holy Children from the Old Testament[29] and the martyr Cyriacus (Cyricus, Quiricus), son of Julitta,[30] who was believed to be three years old at the time of his martyrdom. Despite their young age[31] and a clear absence of any links with the army service in their stories, both Philotheus and Cyriacus appear in litanies together with the military saints, such as the martyrs Victor and George,[32] thus joining the ranks of the military martyrs. Elsewhere in the Coptic hymns dedicated to the Antiochene saints Philotheus appears alongside other generals and soldiers.[33] This transformation of a child martyr into a military martyr is quite conspicuous in the development of the cult of St Philotheus in Egypt.

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[27] P.H. Wasyliw, *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic: Child Saints and their Cults in medieval Europe* (New York, 2008), p.13.

[28] There are other child martyrs, mainly girls, in the Coptic *Synaxarium*, but their cults were not as popular as that of Philotheus. O'Leary mentions some of them in his book *The Saints of Egypt*: for example, Basilissa (6th of Tout), a girl aged nine, beheaded (p.103); Maharati (14th of Tubeh), a girl aged twelve (p.185); Matruna the New Martyr (10th of Tout), killed by her Jewish mistress (p.191); and the famous sisters Pistis, Elpis and Agape (Faith, Hope and Love), the daughters of Sophia (pp.257-258).

[29] The Three Holy Children seem to be of a special significance in case of Philotheus – as his role models and protectors against the destruction by the fire: in his final prayer Philotheus recalls the famous episode from the book of Daniel, asking God, 'Who descended from heavens, entered the burning furnace and saved the three holy men so that the fire did not touch them', to protect his 'body from the fire of this tyrant' (f.101v *b*).

[30] For more on the cult of St Cyriacus in Egypt see Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte,* pp.132-134.

[31] It might be argued that Philotheus, being nearly fifteen years old at the moment of his encounter with Diocletian, should not really be considered a child; nonetheless, the text of the *Martyrdom* and the hymns consistently call him 'a boy' or 'a youth' (ϣⲛⲣⲉ ϣⲛⲙ). It appears that the first part of his legend, relating the story of the miraculous conversion of the boy and his family, when Philotheus was only thirteen years old, seemed no less (if not more) important to the editors of the text.

[32] Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte*, p. 235.

[33] Y.N. Youssef, 'The Doxology to the Seven Generals of Antioch' in *Journal of Coptic Studies* 9 (2007), pp.53-54.

A much later iconographic image of Philotheus on a thirteenth century icon of equestrian martyr saints from Cairo[34] depicts him as a horseman, piercing with his lance a red –colored calf, not the serpent-like figure. The saint is wearing traditional garments of military martyrs: a scale armor, red cloak, close-fitting trousers etc.[35] In the left bottom corner of the icon the parents of Philotheus are portrayed as entombed mummies; the appearance of the calf and of the parents in the icon is certainly based on text of the *Martyrdom*.[36]

Thus, the iconographic evidence of the cult asserts the status of Philotheus as a military saint; however, the earliest stages of such development can be spotted already in his *Martyrdom*, even though the story does not explicitly connect him with the military service. Of course, one cannot deny that the idea of children becoming adults through their witness and overcoming the natural infirmity and weakness of their tender age is, in fact, integral to the early child martyrs: the child 'demonstrated strength in weakness, and thus attained heroic virtue'.[37] In order to underline and demonstrate the inner 'manhood' of the child martyrs, despite their physical age, the martyrologies depict their heroes as gladiators and athletes – 'some of the most potent cultural symbols of

[34] Z. Skalova, G. Gabra, *Icons of the Nile Valley* (Giza, 2003), pp.184-186. The authors point out that this icon was painted 'at a time when Copts did not serve as soldiers and were forbidden to ride horses. In a hostile world, to behold an exclusively Christian cavalry must have been particularly heartening for them', ibidem, p.184; also p.68 on the 'mounted' martyrs. Also depicted on this icon are Stt Victor, Menas, Theodore the General, George and Isaac of Tiphre; originally there were ten military saints, but the panel was cut into pieces and later wrongly reassembled.

[35] For more on the attire of the military saints see P.L. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)* (Leiden, Boston, 2010), on the armour – pp.125ff; on the cloaks – pp.254-270; on the lance and spear – pp. 323-329.

[36] It must be noted that other saints in this icon, apart from St Victor, are also depicted with minor characters from their passions or *Miracles*: for example, St Menas is depicted with two camels, featured in the *Encomium* in honour of this saint, cf. J. Drescher, 'St. Menas' Camels Once More' in *BSAC* 7 (1942), pp.19-32.

[37] Wasyliw, *Martyrdom, Murder, and Magic*, p.17.

masculinity – thereby revising their audiences' expectations of the events narrated'.[38] Since the 'Graeco-Roman milieu had made familiar the stadium with its athletic contest',[39] martyrdom is very often depicted as a competition of athletes in an amphitheatre[40] rather than a battlefield. Thus, a passage in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* relating the minor passion of the newly-converted people of Antioch, who had gathered in the theatre to watch the trial, renders their martyrdom as a contest, the winners of which are going to be crowned:

> And Saint Philotheus was edifying the people, [saying]: 'Struggle and do not fear, O athletes of Christ, for ready are your crowns and they will be given to you by the angels who are waiting for you!' And thus, none of the holy ones drew back, from little ones to adults.[41]

The amphitheatre, therefore, was not incidental to the story of the martyrs. Although it had a practical function in the literary elaboration of martyr stories and so was used by the authors of Coptic martyrdoms as a part of the fictional urban landscape in which the events were set, it also had a symbolic meaning as a place where the true masculinity and manhood of the martyrs, whatever their age or gender might be, was revealed.

It must be noted that in the Georgian version of his *Martyrdom* Philotheus is not represented as a military saint – he might be rather placed in the group of child martyrs venerated in Georgia, such as the nine children of Kola. The story of Philotheus' quest for the true God and his following conversion must have resonated in the hearts of its

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[38] Cobb, *Dying to Be Men*, p.33.
[39] D.W. Riddle, *The Martyrs: a Study in Social Control* (Chicago, 1931), p.87.
[40] On martyrdom as a theatrical spectacle see also P. Brown, 'Enjoying the saints in late antiquity' in *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000), pp.9ff; E.A. Castelli, *Martyrdom and memory: early Christian culture making* (New York, 2004), pp.119-125; D.S. Potter, 'Martyrdom as Spectacle' in *Theater and Society in the Classical World*, ed. by R. Scodel (Ann Arbor, 1993), pp.53-88.
[41] Cf. *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.97v *a b*.

Georgian audience, who were certainly familiar with a very similar story of the martyred children of pagan parents in the valley of Kola, in the region of Tao in southern Georgia.[42] Their story goes as follows:

Pagan children used to play with Christian children and follow them to church. Since the pagan children were denied entry to the Liturgy, they asked to be baptized and insisted on it numerous times. The Christians eventually agreed, and the children were baptized in the river Kura on a frosty winter night. During their baptism the water became warm and the angels brought them white robes from heaven. Having learnt of their children's conversion, the pagan parents beat them severely, and then, unable to persuade them to abandon the Christian faith, went to the local prince who gave them all power over the children. The pagan parents wounded the Christian priest, seized his possessions and drove him out of his dwelling. Then they invited the prince and the court to witness the executions of the children: they made a deep hole near the river, cast the children into it, smote their heads and broke their skulls. The mob also picked some stones and helped the parents to stone the children. That place later became a sepulchre and a shrine for their holy relics.

This account, 'composed sometime between the late fifth and early seventh century',[43] has many thematic resemblances to the story of Philotheus – the conversion of the child before the parents, the zeal of the newly-converted child (Philotheus fasted all week,

[42] The passion is preserved in the tenth-century manuscript from Mount Athos, cf. N.I. Marr [Н.Я. Марр], *Тексты и разыскания по армяно-грузинской филологии* V (Saint Petersburg, 1903); English translation in D.M. Lang, *Lives and Legends of the Georgian Saints* (London, New York, 1956), pp.40-43.

[43] S.H. Rapp, *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes: Caucasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature* (Farnham, 2014), p.15, see also p.37 on the background of this text.

the children of Kola did not take any food for seven days after their baptism, not wishing to eat anything that might have been dedicated to the idols) and the perseverance in the newly acquired faith. It appears that the compilers of the collection of texts in which the Georgian version of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* is preserved[44] also thought of Philotheus as of a child martyr, not a military saint – his passion is preceded in the codex by the passion of another child martyr, St Abd al-Masih (Abdulmasih).[45] Since the memory of Abd al-Masih is marked on the 25th of February, it is obvious that the person who put these texts together was not following the calendrical order, but what exactly, if not the similarity of these two passions, made him put them together is not clear. St Abd al-Masih (აბდალმესია in the Georgian text) was an eleven-year old Jewish boy, who, having heard the stories of Christ and the martyrs from the Christian children he met daily at the well, asked them to baptize him. The Christian children, reluctant at first, were moved by his plea and baptized him in the waters of the spring. Later, while celebrating his conversion, one of the Christian boys pierced the ear of the newly baptized Abd al-Masih and gave him one of his own gold earrings. When the mother of the boy saw the earring in her son's ear, she was afraid of the father's anger and hid the boy for a while. One night the boy had a comforting vision of Christ[46]

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[44] See description of this manuscript in Chapter 1.

[45] On St Abd al-Masih see J.M. Fiey, 'Encore 'Abdulmasih de Singar' in *Le Muséon* 77 (1964), pp.205-223, and G. Garitte, 'Le ménée géorgien de Dumbarton Oaks' in *Le Muséon* 77 (1964), p.57. Since the Georgian passion has not yet been edited, I am using the English translation of the Syriac version (courtesy of D.G.K. Taylor).

[46] There is a close resemblance between the visions of Philotheus and Abd al-Masih: compare the encouraging words of Christ addressed to Abd al-Masih in the Syriac version of his passion ('I am Christ, he in whom you trusted and called out to me. And now be strengthened in me and do not be afraid') and the words of the angel in the vision of Philotheus: 'Rise up, Philotheus, and do not fear, for this is the true God, to whom you were aspiring; let your heart be calmed. Be strong, for from now on God is with you' (ch.2).

after which he felt the courage to contradict his father. He confessed his faith at the Shabbat dinner at his father's house before all the guests; the father, angered by the boy's comments about the disbelief of the Jews, took a knife from the table and chased his son to the spring where the boy had been baptized. There the boy uttered his last prayer in which he asked for the conversion of his mother; a few minutes later his father attacked him and slaughtered him on the rock near the spring. The mother of Abd al-Masih, having heard the news of her son's death, came to visit the grave of the boy and was secretly baptized there.

Although the story of Abd al-Masih does not entirely coincide with the story of Philotheus, both of whose parents convert to Christianity and receive baptism, the similarity between the two narratives is very strong. Unfortunately, the hymnographic tradition of Philotheus' cult in Georgia has not yet been studied deeply – only one canon was published by Kekelidze[47] and later studied by van Esbroeck, who has convincingly shown that this canon was actually composed for a different saint or, rather, is a combination of two different hymns.[48] It is therefore not yet possible to determine how his cult developed in Georgia. In any case, there is no evidence that his popularity in medieval Georgia was comparable to that in Egypt: the Georgian manuscript tradition only consists of one codex, nor are there any contemporary iconographic images of Philotheus. The Coptic material is more copious and provides more information on the development of the cult.

[47] Kekelidze, *Fileteosis martviloba*, pp.99-102.
[48] Van Esbroeck, 'Saint Philotheos d'Antioche', pp.124-135.

I.3 Hymnographic evidence

The cult of Philotheus includes, apart from his images and churches dedicated to him, a number of hymns.[49] Most of them still remain unpublished; however, one finds three hymns in honour of Philotheus under the 16th of Tubeh in the *Difnar* (*Antiphonarium*) of the Coptic Church. The term *difnar* (ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲫⲱⲛⲁⲣⲓ in Coptic) comes from the Greek *antiphonon* – a hymn, usually performed by two choirs, one of which sings a verse in response to a verse sung by the other choir. In the Coptic Church, the reader recites in Coptic the first verse of each Antiphon (*Psali*) and then the cantor sings or chants the rest to the air of one of the two modes (tones) Adam or Batos, as the case may be.[50] The *Difnar*'s edition, prepared by De Lacy O'Leary, was based on the two eighteenth century Bohairic manuscripts: the Vatican Cod. Copt. Borgia 59, dated AD 1737, and the John Rylands Coptic 21 and 23, which is dated AD 1799.[51]

The three hymns dedicated to Philotheus, although they have very standard incipits and endings, are not generic *martyrika* (hymns in honour of a martyr) which is so often the case with hymns in honour of many early martyrs of whom virtually nothing is known apart from their names[52] – on the contrary, they are clearly based on the full text of the

[49] For discussion of manuscripts and editions of hymns see Chapter 1.
[50] On the Adam and Batos modes see footnote 5 in Chapter 5.
[51] De Lacy O'Leary, *The Difnar* I, foreword.
[52] Such generic hymns might be used in the service to a martyr or a group of martyrs if there are no special hymns composed. Thus, in the Byzantine practice the same generic troparion for martyrs is used five times in the course of one month (September): for the martyr Mamas (Sept. 4); martyr Sozon (Sept. 7); martyr Severian (Sept. 9); and, with some words changed to plural forms, for the martyr Eustace and his companions (Sept. 20) and for the martyr Callistratus and companions (Sept. 27). The text of such troparion is applicable to any martyr: 'Your Martyr, O Lord, (name of the martyr), has through his sufferings obtained from you, O our God, an incorruptible crown; for rejoicing in your strength, he overcame his tormentors and subdued the impotent offenses of the demons; by his intercessions, O Lord,

Martyrdom. Their main themes are the pagan worship of the parents of Philotheus, the conversion of the boy and his parents, and his glorious victory over the persecutor Diocletian. However, the hymns tend to emphasize certain episodes of Philotheus' story more than others – for example, the story of the calf and miraculous conversion of the saint's parents becomes one such focal point (see discussion in Chapter 5), while the martyrdom itself is described briefly and in very generic terms.

At the same time, Coptic hymns in honour of St Philotheus from the *Difnar* also reflect the evolution of the cult of St Philotheus from a child martyr to a military saint. The hymnographers, just like iconographers, also saw his martyrdom as an act which transformed a child into an adult warrior of God: therefore Philotheus is frequently called 'a soldier of Christ', ⲙⲙⲁⲧⲟⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲡⲉⲭ̅ⲥ, who puts to shame (as in a combat or an athletic competition) Satan with his demons. He thus becomes not only a winner, whom Christ crowns (ⲉⲣⲥⲧⲉⲫⲁⲛⲓⲛ) with an unfading crown, but a 'judge of the contest', ⲡⲓⲁⲅⲱⲛⲟⲑⲉⲧⲏⲥ,[53] and protector of the faithful, ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲟⲥⲧⲁⲧⲏⲥ[54]. Other Bohairic hymns in honour of St Philotheus, the incipits of which Y. 'Abd al-Masih published in his article on Bohairic doxologies,[55] also use this 'athletic' language addressing Philotheus as a 'prize-bearer' (ⲁⲑⲗⲟⲫⲟⲣⲟⲥ) and praising his victorious contest: ⲡⲉⲕⲁⲅⲱⲛ ⲇⲓⲥⲓ ⲉⲙⲁⲯⲱ ⲡⲉⲕⲭⲁⲟⲙ ⲛⲁⲧⲁⲱⲙ ⲙⲙⲏⲓ ⲡⲉⲕⲉⲣⲫⲙⲉⲩⲓ ⲙⲏⲛ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲡⲓⲁⲅⲓⲟⲥ ⲫⲩⲗⲟⲑⲉⲟⲥ ('Your contest was

save our souls'. For examples of Coptic martyrika see Y. 'Abd-al-Masih, 'Doxologies in the Coptic Church (Edited Sa'idic Doxologies)' in *BSAC* 6 (1940), pp.45-46; however, it must be noted that 'Abd-al-Masih provides only the incipts and explicits of the hymns.

[53] O'Leary, *Difnar*, part I, p.114.

[54]Ibidem, part II, p.17.

[55] Y. 'Abd al- Masih, 'Doxologies in the Coptic Church (Unedited Bohairic Doxologies II)' in *BSAC* 11 (1947), pp.95-158.

greatly exalted, your truly imperishable crown [and] your commemoration remain, o holy Philotheus').[56]

One of the unedited Bohairic hymns from an undated manuscript from Old Cairo seems to have different contents judging by its incipit: it begins with the words of the sun, addressed to the future martyr. These words are based on the episode from the very beginning of the *Martyrdom*, which tells how the boy was seeking for the true God and asked the sun whether he was God. The hymn opens with the reply of the great luminary: ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉ ⲫⲧ ⲉⲧⲉⲕⲯⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲥⲱⲟⲩ ⲱ ⲫⲓⲗⲟⲑⲉⲟⲥ ⲉⲑⲣⲉⲕⲯⲉⲙⲯⲓ ⲙⲙⲟⲟⲩ ('I am not God who you are seeking, O Philotheus, that you may serve him').[57] This incipit might be yet another indication that the story of the conversion of Philotheus and his parents was considered by the people who promoted and observed the cult as more appealing than the story of the martyrdom itself.

I.4 Further transformation of Philotheus: Philotheus as patron of chastity

While reading the Coptic *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, one cannot but notice that the Coptic rendition of the story of Philotheus was aimed at portraying him not only as a mighty champion of Christ, but also as a model of chastity and asceticism, while the Georgian version only mentions it briefly,[58] not placing any particular emphasis on the chastity and asceticism of Philotheus. Yet the authors of the Coptic *Martyrdom* remind

[56] Ibidem, pp.98-99.
[57] Ibidem, p.99. The manuscript, containing this hymn, is described by 'Abd al-Masih in the first part of this article, published in *BSAC* 8 (1942), p.33.
[58] 'He was much loved by his relatives and by those who knew about his kindness and chastity, like Joseph the Israelite in Egypt', ch. 1.

the audience of the saint's virginity throughout the story, combining these allusions with detailed descriptions of the boy's ascetic lifestyle from the moment of his conversion:

> And he was friendly towards small and great, showing wisdom in every good action in fear of God. And he was also chaste (ⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲟⲥ) in his body and remained undefiled in all the days of his life, until he received the unfading crown and came to Christ the King. And all the food that was made for him every day he was giving to the poor as alms, but he did not eat it.[59]

In the formulaic *kidan*[60] near the end of the text Christ praises Philotheus for his chastity and describes the special rewards for it:

> Behold, I have granted three crowns to you: one for your virginity (ⲡⲁⲣⲑⲉⲛⲓⲁ), and another one for your prayers and chastity (ϧⲁⲅⲛⲓⲁ), and the third one for your blood, which will be shed for My name.[61]

Likewise, the author of the Arabic *Encomium*, ascribed to Severus of Antioch, seems to have thought that the chastity of Philotheus was a very important part of his sanctity and therefore has paid special attention to the 'crown for purity' in the discourse:

> Truly you became like pure wheat which contains no tares. ... And He gave you three crowns: one for purity, one for your holy martyrdom, and the shedding of blood in His holy name, and one for your straight faith.[62]

Coptic hymns also make a point of mentioning his virginity; moreover, they link it with the special grace of Christ which helped him make his parents convert: 'You made them know Him through the grace of Christ which was upon you because of your virginity'.[63]

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[59] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.78v *a*.
[60] See a more detailed description of the *kidan* later in this chapter.
[61] Ibidem, f.100r *b*.
[62] Youssef, 'The Encomium of St. Philotheus', p.204. In another version of the same *Encomium* the purity of the saint is underlined even more explicitly: 'You received many crowns, O martyr Philotheus: one for the purity of your body, and your chastity, for you have never soiled your body', p.180.
[63] O'Leary, *The Difnar* II, p.17.

This peculiar emphasis on the virginity and purity of the martyr,[64] which is completely absent in the Georgian version, reflects a very serious shift in hagiographical writing – apparently, it was no longer enough for a martyr to be just a witness for Christ; he had to acquire other virtues as well in order to retain his place as a proper role model for the community.[65] This is the point where one might see how the authors of the Coptic version elaborated the text according to the contemporary moral needs of the audience; the passion of the martyr was expanded in such a way that St Philotheus acquired in addition to his main achievement, that is, the martyrdom for Christ, also the virtues of virginity, charity and extreme asceticism:

> From this day the boy prayed abundantly and kept many fasts – he did not eat bread from Saturday to Saturday and he said prayers 300 times during the day and 300 times during the night. He did not eat any food from which the blood comes out from the day when Christ spoke with him until the day of his death. He did not even eat any cooked vegetables or any other food apart from bread and salt only. And he did not eat more than one time a week on Saturdays.[66]

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[64] It is worth noting that discussions of the importance and value of virginity, more or less expected in the narratives about female martyrs, at some point also find their way into Coptic stories of male saints as well. The authors of these texts do not hesitate to show that the aim of such discussions is to make people aspire to purity. Thus, in the *Encomium on SS Peter and Paul*, attributed to Severian of Gabala, one finds a long and flowery passage on the influence of the pure lifestyle of the Apostle John, stressing that John's virginity made many people become virgins and even removed impurity from those of his followers who had sinned before: 'As for those who have tasted defilement before hearing John teaching in virginity, John's virginity and his prayers removed every defilement from their bodies and made them live in purity by the power of Christ which was in him'. Furthermore, the virginity of John and his disciples is equalled to the restoration of Adam's sinless state in paradise, cf. *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library*, pp.108-109, English translation by M.E. Foat in CSCO 545 (48), pp.83-85.

[65] This shift later becomes one of the most common *topoi* of medieval hagiography – that of the contrast between the future saint and his/her peers in regard to purity: 'Adolescents, from the age of 14 on, and young people are condemned directly as frivolous and arrogant, unwilling to accept the authority of their elders and betters...; they are licentious and steeped in carnal lusts. In the Lives of saints, the exception to this rule is described as modest, pious, a diligent student, and, above all, a shining example in sexual chastity, in his thought, speech, and deeds', cf. Sh. Shahar, *Childhood in the Middle Ages* (London, 1990), p.16.

[66] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.78r-78v. Later in the story, the Devil tries to extinguish this ascetic zeal of Philotheus and appears to him in the disguise of an angel, passing a fake message from God, the contents

A very similar expansion of a martyr's holiness is found in the story of St Victor: his *Martyrdom* tells in great detail of his extreme fasting, abstinence from wine and any cooked food, night-long prayers, and almsgiving.[67] As F. Armanios points out, 'after Christianity was officially embraced by the Roman Empire, notions of asceticism, self-sacrifice, sexual purity, and abstinence took root as the new standards of piety',[68] and this is why the stories of martyrs had to be edited and elaborated in order to promote also these new standards.[69] The purity of Philotheus and Victor is furthermore demonstrated by the fact that both of them refuse to marry the brides chosen by their parents and prefer a life of celibacy – a feature, more characteristic of monastic saints.[70] However, their refusal was not meant to debase or undermine the idea of marriage; they never say anything on the matter itself. It seems that the composers of their stories wanted the protagonists to remain pure and undefiled in order to present them as ideals for the audience of these texts. But Philotheus' purity and innocence, so much emphasized in his *Martyrdom* and in the pseudo-Severan Arabic *Encomium*, is not a mere hagiographic cliché with no consequences – on the contrary, the idea of his special purity receives a further development in the cult as he gradually becomes a patron saint and protector of those who suffer from sexual harassment.

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of which might be summarized as 'take it slow'. The boy immediately recognizes the deceit, cf. ff.84v – 85v.

[67] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, pp.5-6.

[68] F. Armanios, *Coptic Christianity in Ottoman Egypt* (New York, Oxford, 2011), p.65.

[69] On the changing of the concepts of sainthood and for some examples see also S. Wilson, *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore, and History* (Cambridge, 1983), pp.3-5.

[70] In his work on the descriptions of childhood in the lives of the Ethiopian saints P. Marrassini discusses the *topos* of separating oneself from the family; apparently, this separation most often occurs through rejection of marriage, arranged by the parents of a saint. Marrassini suggests that this topos originated in the Coptic hagiography, cf. P. Marrassini, 'L'infanzia del santo nel christianesimo orientale: il caso dell'Etiopia' in *Bambini santi: rappresentazioni dell'infanzia e modelli agiografici*, ed. by A.B. Papi and E. Giannarelli (Torino, 1991), pp.165-166.

The most famous of his miracles, preserved both in the Arabic *Encomium*[71] and in a fragment from a palimpsest Sahidic codex, published by Balestri,[72] relates a story of a noble woman who is sexually assaulted in the desert by a treacherous slave.[73] The slave convinces her to travel with him to her husband who is in prison and then tries to rape her on the way. The woman utters a prayer (the Coptic version of this miracle does not clearly state that the prayer was addressed to St Philotheus) and the saint comes to her aid – the slave is dragged up in the air by an invisible hand and taken away. Later it turns out that the martyr transferred the slave to his own church in Antioch and hung him in the vault, where the wretch remained for three days. The woman, now in the safe company of the saint himself, as the Arabic *Encomium* describes it, returns to Antioch and goes to the church of St Philotheus, where her attacker is suspended under the ceiling. The villain confesses his sin before everyone and falls on the floor, dying the death of Simon Magus[74] (and of another great traitor, Judas Iscariot) – his belly bursts and his entrails gush out. This miracle is followed by a miraculous rescue of the woman's husband by St Philotheus, after which the reunited couple glorifies God and His saint and offers generous donations to the shrine.

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[71] Youssef, 'The Encomium of St. Philotheus', pp.189-194, 209-213.

[72] Balestri, 'Di un frammento palimpsesto', pp.61-69.

[73] There are more or less similar stories in the collection of *Miracles of St Menas* (miracles 4,13 and 16); the women in these stories are pilgrims travelling to the saint's shrine, cf. J. Drescher, *Apa Mena: a selection of Coptic texts relating to St. Menas* (Cairo, 1946), pp.22, 26-33. St Menas, who was conscripted to the army at the age of 15, also was 'a spotless virgin' and therefore received a special crown for his virginity, ibidem, p.48 and 59.

[74] Both texts specifically mention Simon Magus here: 'he will get the share of Simon the sorcerer' (Youssef, 'The Encomium of St. Philotheus', p.213), 'he will receive the lot of Simon Magus' (Balestri, 'Di un frammento palimpsesto', p.64).

Another miracle of Philotheus, which is preserved in a fragment of a palimpsest codex,[75] containing the panegyric in honour of Philotheus attributed to Demetrius of Antioch, tells a story of a deacon who was falsely accused[76] of having a sexual relationship with a rich widow. The bishop demoted the innocent deacon and lowered his rank to that of a reader, in which he remained for three years.[77] Eventually, the saint accepted the prayer of his servant and revealed his innocence – a terminally ill woman was cured at the shrine of the saint due to the prayers of the demoted deacon. She told everyone of the deacon's role in her healing and his rank was restored to him.[78] Although not directly related to protection against sexual assault, this miracle is still clearly connected with the notion of the special purity of St Philotheus who acquitted his faithful and equally chaste servant on all accusations of sexual nature.[79]

Thus, looking at the *Martyrdom of St Philotheus* in the context of his cult in Egypt, one might see how the perception of this saint in the Coptic tradition has shifted from a child martyr to a military saint and a patron of virginity. This gradual transformation, so

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[75] J. Vergote, 'Le texte sous-jacent du palimpseste Berlin nº 9755' in *Le Muséon* 42 (1955), pp.275-296.

[76] The innocent deacon is compared in this text with the righteous and innocent Susanna of the Old Testament; it is interesting that the same Old Testament figure was remembered in the prayer of the pious woman from the previous miracle.

[77] Apparently, the deacon had to do a certain penance for his other sin – he seems to have been involved in some usury business with the said widow which was quite inappropriate for a deacon.

[78] Vergote shows that the same miracle is to be found in the *Encomium on St Colluthus*, attributed to Isaac of Antinoe (Pierpont Morgan M591, AD 861, published in *Encomiastica from the Pierpont Morgan Library*, pp.47-83), cf. Vergote, 'Le texte sous-jacent', pp.292-294. Therefore, this particular miracle might have been borrowed by the authors of the panegyric or vice versa; it is practically impossible to establish the direction of textual transmission in this case.

[79] Unlike St Menas, who shared the function of the protector against sexual assault with Philotheus, St Victor who is also specifically praised for his virginity both in hymns and in encomia in his honour (although not as consistently as Philotheus), does not seem to have acquired the same patron function – his miracles are mostly those of healing or saving from bodily harm, see *Encomium on St Victor* attributed to Celestinus of Rome, which is in essence a collection of shrine miracles, cf. Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, pp.46-101, English translation pp.299-355.

obvious in the homiletic, iconographic, and hymnographic elements of his cult, reflects the profound changes in the community that observed the cult. The martyr, still remaining a role model for the Coptic Christians, acquired some additional virtues which the Church authorities saw necessary to promote in this period – sexual purity, asceticism (keeping the fasts and observing the hours of prayer) and almsgiving were very much in demand and, at the same time, were relatively easier to practice than the endurance of tortures. These particular virtues could be acquired not only by monks, but also by an ordinary lay person, who, moved by the inspirational story of Philotheus, might have felt a certain urge to emulate at least some of his achievements. But where and how would a lay person or a monk encounter such a story? Where and when would the text of the *Martyrdom* be performed?

Part II. Performance, audience and authorship

II.1 The performative context of the Martyrdom

As some scholars have recently noted,[80] Coptic hagiographical texts in their extant form have to be analyzed in their performative – which is, most often, liturgical – context, because, as Orlandi pointed out, 'the particular history of the Coptic textual manuscript tradition has inserted them, with appropriate transformations, into a system of liturgical

[80] See works of E. Zakrzewska on the features of the narrative in Coptic martyr passions: for example, 'Masterplots and Martyrs: Narrative Techniques in Bohairic Hagiography'; see also references to works of Orlandi and van der Vliet below.

utilizations and celebrations'.[81] J. van der Vliet also stresses the importance of the performative context in the assessment of these texts:

> For one thing, the religious texts that make up the greater part of what is conventionally labelled "Coptic literature" were meant to be performed orally and received aurally. And, secondly, their performance arena was not a literary salon, but the setting of Christian liturgy. Much of the Coptic manuscript material that derives from ninth-eleventh century libraries, such as those of the monasteries of Hamuli or Abu Maqar, bears the traces of having been consciously adapted in various ways to the demands of liturgical and commemorative use.[82]

So what would be the 'performance arena' in case of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*? Where exactly in the course of the Liturgy could this text be performed? As we know, the story of Philotheus is preserved in two main forms – full *Martyrdom* (Coptic and Georgian) and in the form of the abbreviated *Synaxarium* readings (Arabic, Ethiopic). Let us first look at the synaxaric readings, since they are still in use in the Coptic Church. Synaxarion (Συναξάριον in Greek, Synaxarium in Latin; from συνάγειν ' to come together, to bring together') is the name given in the Eastern Church to a compilation of saints' lives corresponding roughly to the martyrology of the western Church.[83] Synaxaria are usually divided into two groups: simple synaxaria, which consist of the lists of saints in calendrical order of their commemorations, and historical synaxaria, which include summaries of the saints' lives for the whole year.[84] One can

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[81] T.Orlandi, *Coptic Texts Relating to the Virgin Mary: an Overview* (Rome, 2008), p.10; also p.47.

[82] J. van der Vliet, 'Literature, liturgy, magic: a dynamic continuum' in *Christianity in Egypt: literary production and intellectual trends. Studies in honor of Tito Orlandi*, ed. by P. Buzi, A. Camplani (Rome, 2011), p. 555.

[83] For general discussion of Synaxaria and related terminology see H. Delehaye, 'Le Synaxaire de Sirmond' in *AB* 14 (1895), pp.396-434; and introduction to the *Synaxarion: The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church* (Holy Convent of the Annunciation of Our Lady, Ormylia; Chalkidike, 1998).

[84] On the formation of the present day Copto-Arabic *Synaxarium* see O.H.E. Burmester, 'On the date and Authorship of the Arabic Synaxarium of the Coptic Church' in *JTS* 39 (1938), pp.249-253; O. Meinardus,

make assumptions as to when the synaxaric version of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* was supposed to be performed, since the practice of reading the short synaxaric versions of the saints' lives on the day of their commemoration is still in use in the liturgical practice of both Eastern and Western Churches.[85] In his description of the Offering of Incense R. Taft indicates that in the Coptic practice the reading of the *Synaxarium* was appointed at the end of the service of the Morning Offering of Incense, which is more or less equivalent to the service of matins in the Byzantine rite.[86] The modern rite of the Coptic Church includes the reading of the *Synaxarium* in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, where it follows the readings from the Epistles and Acts of the Apostles.[87]

The performance of the full *Martyrdom*, however, was a different matter – the text is nearly thirty pages long (ff.75r – 102v of the Pierpont Morgan Codex M583) and its reading must have taken a considerable length of time. We know of several ways in which such hagiographical work could be presented to the audience, either in the context of liturgical celebrations of the saint's memory (incorporated into liturgical

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'A Comparative Study on the Sources of the Synaxarium in the Coptic Church' in *BSAC* 17 (1964), pp.111-156.

[85] In the introduction to the *Synaxarion: The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church* Hieromonk Makarios of Simonos Petra monastery of Mount Athos explains the position of the synaxarium reading in the practice of the Eastern Orthodox Church: 'After the sixth ode of the Matins canon, because of the number of hymns, the reading of the lives of the saints of the day was restricted to brief notices, called the *Synaxarion,* as a vestige of the practice of the first liturgical assemblies. From the ninth to the eleventh century, the compilation of the short notices that appear in the *Synaxarion* was completed. More often than not they are derived from the long lives written by Saint Symeon Metaphrastes in the tenth century or by one of the great ecclesiastical historians such as Eusebius of Caesarea, Socrates, Sozomen or Theodoret'. Cf. *Synaxarion: The Lives of the Saints of the Orthodox Church*, pp. vii-xviii.

[86] R. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West: the origins of the divine office and its meaning for today* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1986), p.254.

[87] J.P. Abdelsayed, 'Liturgy: Heaven on Earth' in *The Coptic Christian heritage: history, faith, and culture*, ed. by L.M. Farag (New York, 2014), p.145; see also O.H.E. Burmester, *The Egyptian or Coptic Church: a detailed description of her liturgical services and the rites and ceremonies observed in the administration of her sacraments* (Cairo, 1967), p.44.

celebration) or outside it (for example, during the meal in the monastery's refectory). One of the options to include the reading of the full version of a martyr's story into the liturgical service was to divide the text into smaller portions which could be read at the appointed moments during the liturgical celebration. Such practice is still attested in Eastern Orthodox Churches on the day of commemoration of St Mary of Egypt, whose *Life*, composed by Sophronius of Jerusalem in 634-638,[88] is divided into two parts which are read to the congregation before the beginning and in the middle of the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete.[89] E. Zakrzewska shows that the same practice of dividing the full text into smaller sections was in use in the Coptic Church, as is attested by numerous marginalia in Bohairic manuscripts containing the passions of the martyrs:

> Originally, the Martyr Acts must have been intended to be read aloud to the pilgrims visiting the shrine of the martyr on the occasion of his festival. The preserved manuscripts, which were compiled for liturgical purposes, contain several annotations to that effect, for example the date of the festival and instructions for the reader: **ⲱⲓ̀** 'read' and **ⲓ̀ⲱⲗ** 'up to (here)'.[90]

However, the manuscript M583 containing the full text of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* does not have such marginal notes which might indicate that the text was supposed to

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[88] Sophronius combined material from different sources, including a narrative from the *Life of St Cyriacus* by Cyril of Scythopolis, stories from the *Spiritual Meadow* of John Moschus and other sources. The Greek text of the *Life* (in *PG* 83) has not been critically edited. For more on the *Life of St Mary of Egypt* see B. Ward, *Harlots of the Desert: a Study of Repentance in Early Monastic Sources* (Mowbray: Oxford, 1987), pp.26-56; R.E. Pepin, H. Feiss, *Saint Mary of Egypt: three medieval lives in verse* (Kalamazoo, 2005), pp.9-12.

[89] Since St Mary is regarded as an example of active penitence, a number of troparia in her honour were added to the Great Canon of St Andrew of Crete; they first appear in the eleventh century manuscripts. English translations of this Canon are to be found in the *Lenten Triodion*, trans. by Mother Mary and Bishop Kallistos (Ware) (London, 1979); also in *The Great Canon [of] St Andrew of Crete: [and], The Life of St Mary of Egypt*, edited and translated by Sisters Katherine and Thekla (Newport Pagnell: The Greek Orthodox Monastery of the Assumption, 1974).

[90] Zakrzewska, 'Masterplots and Martyrs', pp.505-506. For examples of such marginal notes, see A. Hebbelynck, A. van Lantschoot, *Codices Coptici Vaticani, Barberiniani, Borgiani, Rossiani*, vol.1 (Vatican, 1937), vol. 1, pp.418-419, 424; for a short explanation of these notes see ibidem, pp.382-383.

be read in one piece: a suitable moment for this reading might have been chosen during an all-night vigil in honour of the martyr. Such vigils are attested already in the third century,[91] but from the fourth century onwards they become a wide-spread practice,[92] which was fervently promoted by some bishops, for example, by Ambrose of Milan.[93] Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea and Chrysostom mention vigils at the saints' shrines in their sermons and correspondence.[94]

An all-night vigil (Greek ἀγρυπνία or παννυχίς; Latin *vigilia*) usually began at sunset or later in the evening, lasted until dawn and practically always finished with the celebration of the Eucharist in the morning. Vigils, as Taft has shown,[95] can be divided into two groups: regular vigils which were celebrated usually before Sunday (attested in the Jerusalem rite already in the fourth century by Egeria) and were part of the forming cathedral and monastic rites, and occasional vigils in honour of the saints, especially at the martyrs' shrines. Both types of vigils included scriptural and non-scriptural readings, singing or reciting of psalms, hymns and antiphonal verses, prostrations, prayers and

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[91] Tertullian, *Ad uxorem* 2. 4; Eusebius, *HE* 2. 17. 21-22; Basil of Caesarea, Ep. 207; John Cassian, *De coenobiorum institutis* 3. 5, 8-9. See also Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, pp.15-28, 166.

[92] This practice is well-attested for North Africa already at the time of St Augustine, cf. V. Saxer, *Morts, martyrs, reliques en Afrique chrétienne aux premiers siècles* (Paris, 1980), pp.200-208, 224-227, 315-321. See also B. Gaiffer, 'La lecture des Actes des Martyrs dans la prière liturgique en Occident' in *AB* 72 (1954), pp.134-166. In Egypt we find a mention of such vigils in honour of martyrs in Shenoute's works: he mentions that 'some of the faithful inside the church sing psalms, read, and celebrate the mystery, while outside, others fill the air with the sound of trumpets and flutes', cf. Amelineau, *Oeuvres de Schenoudi* I (Paris, 1907), p.200.

[93] See, for example, *Epistola XX* in *PL* 16, 997-1002; also Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, pp.175-176.

[94] Thus, Chrysostom says to his congregation: 'You have turned the night into day by means of holy vigils (*pannychides*). Do not change day into night by intemperance and gluttony ... and lascivious songs. You honoured the martyrs by your presence, by hearing [the lessons]', cf. Chrysostom, *Homilia in martyres* in *PG* 50, 663-664; Basil of Caesarea, *In Psalmum CXIV* in *PG* 29, 484; Gregory of Nazianzus, *In 40 Martyres* in *PG* 46, 784-785. For more details see Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, p.168 (on evidence in the works of Gregory and Basil), p.172 (on Chrysostom's preaching at the vigil in honour of the martyrs).

[95] Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, p.165ff.

blessings pronounced by the presiding bishop or priest.[96] But it is at those occasional vigils in honour of saints, not at the regular Sunday vigils, where one would expect to hear the story of the saint commemorated.

It is very difficult to attempt any reconstruction of the exact structure of an all-night vigil in Egypt in the period between the seventh and tenth centuries, when the majority of martyr passions were composed: as Zanetti points out in the article on the liturgical rites of the White Monastery, 'because of the scarcity of the resources, we are in danger of taking as universal certain details which were valid only locally and for a limited time'.[97] The information on the position of non-scriptural readings in the course of an all-night vigil (especially in the early stages of its development) is even more scant, since the earliest lectionaries and rubrics only provide the references to the appointed scriptural readings. However, it might be presumed that one of the most appropriate moments for reading of the full text of a saint's life or of another hagiographical work dedicated to this saint (an encomium or a collection of miracles) was the interval between the end of the vesperal service and the beginning of night celebrations, where the rubrics indicated the so-called *great reading* (προανάγνωσις).[98] Since a vigil or *agrypnia* (in its original meaning 'sleeplessness', 'wakefulness') had to last from sunset

[96] For more details on the formation and development of all-night vigil see Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours*; and I.H. Dalmais, P. Jounel, A.G. Martimort, *The Liturgy and Time*, translated into English by M. O'Connell (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1985).
[97] U. Zanetti, 'Liturgy in the White Monastery' in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt Vol. I*, ed. by G. Gabra and H.N. Takla (Cairo, New York, 2008), p.204.
[98] A.A. Lukashevich [А.А. Лукашевич], 'Великое чтение' in *Православная энциклопедия* 7 (Moscow, 2009), pp.514-515.

till dawn,[99] the great reading was a practical tool to regulate the length of the vigil and to prolong the celebration if it were necessary. The great reading usually consisted of continuous reading of the Acts of the Apostles, Epistles, or some scriptural exegesis, especially works of Chrysostom. Still, there are indications in some typika that scriptural readings could be replaced with non-scriptural ones, such as the lives of saints whose memory was celebrated on that day.[100]

Since the monks and pilgrims who attended such services were sometimes coming from afar, they were each given a piece of bread and a cup of wine after the end of vespers in order to sustain them for the rest of the night's prayer; this practice was especially characteristic for the monasteries of Palestine.[101] Although no detailed descriptions of an all-night vigil according to the Palestinian rite until the twelfth century have been preserved, a simple meal between its two main parts – vespers and matins – is attested

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[99] There are numerous references to this practice in the collection of miracles: for example, the Miracles of St Menas clearly state that the people spent the whole night in prayer: ⲁⲩⲱ ϩⲉⲙ ⲡⲙⲁⲣⲧⲩⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲙⲡϩⲁⲅⲓⲟⲥ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲙⲏⲛⲁ ⲁⲩⲉⲣⲧⲉⲩⲱⲛ ⲧⲏⲣⲥ (they remained at the shrine of the holy Apa Menas; they kept the vigil all night'), cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p.94.

[100] Admittedly, we do not have direct evidence of such practices from Egypt; however, there is evidence from the monasteries of Palestine and Sinai, cf. А.А. Дмитриевский [A.A. Dmitrievskii], *Описание литургических рукописей, хранящихся в библиотеках православного Востока* III (Saint Petersburg, 1917), pp.23, 66. J. Mateos indicates the same practice in tenth century Constantinople, cf. J. Mateos, *Le Typikon de la Grande Église* I (Rome, 1962), p.4 (reading of the Life of St Symeon the Stylite on the 1st of September after the end of vesperal service (παραμονή) 'until the time when it was [appropriate] to begin Matins').

[101] The custom of blessing of the bread and wine at the end of the evening service is first witnessed in the rite of the Palestinian monasteries, mainly of the Holy Laura of St Sabbas the Sanctified (Mar Saba), from there it spread all over the Mediterranean and further due to the dissemination of Jerusalem rite. It is possible that the custom of the blessing of bread and wine was established by St Sabbas himself since, according to Cyril of Scythopolis, St Sabbas was very eager to keep proper all-night vigils in his monastery: see ch. 32 and 58 in Cyril of Scythopolis, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, English translation by R.M. Price (Kalamazoo, 1991), p.127, 169. On the eve of a great feast or on a Saturday evening all monks, both coenobites and celliots (semi-anchoritic), would assemble in the Laura for the festive vigil. Since monks and pilgrims could not leave the monastery for the night, they were all given bread and wine, which had been blessed at the end of vespers. For more on the laura-type monasteries see J. Leroy, *Monks and Monasteries of the Near East*, English trans. by P. Collin (London, 1963), pp.73ff.

relatively early even outside Palestine, as it is mentioned in the travel story of John Moschus and Sophronius, who went to Egypt in 587.[102] After finishing the vespers at the summit of Mount Sinai Nilus, the venerable elder, who presided over the celebration, offered John and Sophronius an evening meal.[103]

While eating,[104] the congregation would remain in the church and listen to the appointed reading. This was a very appropriate moment for the audience to engage in full with the story and its protagonists – the congregation would have already heard the name of the saint invoked in the preceding vesperal service and would naturally be willing to be reminded of his or her story in more detail. The celebration of the midnight service, followed by matins and Eucharist, would then resume and continue until morning.

There were other moments in the course of matins where a non-scriptural reading or a sermon could have been inserted[105] – for example, after the third or the sixth ode of the

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[102] For a detailed analysis of the liturgical section of this text and a critical edition see A. Longo, 'Il testo integrale della "Narrazione degli abati Giovanni e Sofronio" attraverso le "Ερμηνειαι" di Nicone' in *Rivista di studi bizantini e neoellenici* 2-3 (1965-1966), pp.223-267.

[103] Ibidem, p.251.

[104] There is an episode in the Coptic *Miracles of Apa Phoebammon* describing how the people who gathered at the shrine for the celebration of the memory of St Phoebammon all received small portions of bread and wine with 'a bit of food and fruit' from the specially appointed deacons, who emphasized that this act of charity was performed because they were 'celebrating for the holy martyr, Saint Apa Phoebammon'. The emperor, who happened to be in the town incognito, also received this food offering and then stayed for the celebration and the veneration of the saint's relics. Cf. K.E. Verrone, *Mighty Deeds and Miracles by Saint Apa Phoebammon: Edition and Translation of Coptic Manuscript M582 ff.21r-30r in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Senior honors thesis; Providence, Brown, 2002), p.16-18. John Moschus also describes the distribution of blessed breads, wine, wheat, and honey among the orphans and all the poor people in the monastery of Scopulos on Holy Thursday (*Pratum Spirituale* X, 85); however, this distribution should be linked with Great Lent custom of almsgiving rather than with regular distribution of food at vigils.

[105] For example, Louth shows in his article on the sermons of John Damascene that 'even outside a monastic context, there were sermons at other services than the Eucharist', providing examples of Chrysostom preaching at Vespers and Severus of Antioch preaching at Matins. Moreover, the sermons of

canon;[106] however, it is impossible to say whether the same practice was in use in Egypt in the seventh to tenth centuries. The full version of a saint's life could also be read at the time of a sermon at the celebration of Eucharist[107] or during the celebratory meal either in the monastery's refectory,[108] as was customary in the practice of both the Eastern and Western Churches, or at the shrine.[109] One might also suggest that the so-called urban stational liturgies[110] which consisted of processions between churches and celebrations at each of them would also include the reading of the saint's life, especially if the cult of this particular saint was the focus of the celebration; however, as the information on the stational liturgies in Egypt is very scarce,[111] it is hard to draw any conclusions.

John Damascene on the Dormition contain direct indications that they 'were originally a trilogy, given in the course of an all-night vigil', cf. A. Louth, 'St John Damascene: Preacher and Poet' in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. by M. Cunningham and P. Allen (Leiden, 1998), p.258.

[106] This is still a traditional moment for reading the *Synaxarium* in the practice of the Greek Orthodox Church; there is evidence in later monastic typika (for example, in that of Evergetis monastery) that a homily could be read at this point, cf. Dmitrievskii, *Описание литургических рукописей* I (Kiev, 1895), p.488.

[107] There is a mention of the 'eating from the martyr's table' in the *Encomium in honour of St Theodore Anatolius* attributed to Theodore of Antioch, which might be an allusion to the Eucharist, celebrated at the martyr's tomb, cf. Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, pp.6-7.

[108] See, for example, P. Gautier, 'Le typikon de la Théotokos Kécharitôménè' in *Revue des études byzantines* 43 (1985), p.89.

[109] An example of such festive meal at the shrine can be found in the *Miracles of St Menas* where it is described in great detail: a rich man who usually prepared the so-called **αγαπη** (an ancient term used for post-Eucharistic meal of the early Christians) decided to leave some of the meat for himself despite his former pledge, which ended badly, cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, pp.91-96.

[110] On the history and development of the stational liturgy see J.F. Baldovin, *The Urban Character of Worship: the Origins, Development, and Meaning of Stational Liturgy*, (Rome, 1987).

[111] On the evidence from Egypt see Papaconstantinou, 'The cult of saints: A haven of continuity in a changing world?', pp.354-355; eadem, '*La liturgie stationnale à Oxyrhynchos dans la première moitié du VIe siècle. Réédition et commentaire de POxy XI 1357' in Revue des études byzantines* 54 (1996), pp. 135-159.

The story of the martyr, especially if it were read aloud by a skilful reader who was able to accentuate certain points,[112] combined with other sensory effects, such as music or scents,[113] must have left a lasting impression on the audience.[114] Its ultimate goal was to inspire the audience to imitate the saint's lifestyle, or, in other words, to move them from *anamnesis* (recollection) to *mimesis* (imitation), as is also the goal of the readings from the Scripture. C. Harrison writes:

> In all of these instances of listening to God, remembering what had gone before (or *anamnesis*) had the potential to become *mimesis*, or active representation and repetition, in the present. The listener could be moved to repeat and re-present, in their own lives, the revelation of divine truth, goodness, and beauty which had been so compellingly played out in the history of salvation or the lives of the saints, so that they too became part of the ongoing story, and their lives were transformed by it. Hearing (*audire*), in other words, had the power to compel and inspire; to lead to imitative action, or obedience (*obaudire*).[115]

Thus, the reading of a martyr's story provided the people with some food for thought, since its aim was not only to familiarize them with the story of a saint, but also to inspire pious aspirations in their hearts; at the same time it gave them, in a way, an entertaining break from the inevitable monotony of the worship, or, in the words of Zakrzewska, it was meant 'to edify the believers while providing religiously sound entertainment,

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[112] The marginal notes in Bohairic manuscripts, containing hagiographical works, show that the reader not only had to follow the remarks regarding where to stop or continue reading (see note 81 above), but also to implement some 'performance effects', such as exclamations: thus, in a tenth-century manuscript of the *Life of St Symeon the Stylite* the marginal note on folio 44v indicates an exclamation, ⲱⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ, cf. Hebbelynck, Van Lantschoot, *Codices Coptici Vaticani*, p.418. Other performance notes include ⲥⲟⲕⲥ, 'drag' (f.43v), and ⲥⲕⲉⲣⲕⲉⲣ, 'lengthen, draw', cf. ibidem, p.383 and 398. Also on the role of the performer of martyr passions see Zakrzewska, 'Masterplots and Martyrs', p.511.

[113] P. Brown speaks of these effects and the feeling of the presence of a martyr, inspired by the reading of his or her *passio*, as the high point of a saint's festival, cf. P. Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago, 1981), pp.82-83, and idem, 'Enjoying the saints in late antiquity', pp.9-10.

[114] Zakrzewska also shows that the further processing of these texts by the audience 'was facilitated by oral-like communicative strategies: episodic structure with clear boundaries, uncomplicated syntax, formulaic expressions and repetitions', cf. Zakrzewska, 'Masterplots and Martyrs', p.515.

[115] C. Harrison, *The Art of Listening in the Early Church* (Oxford, 2013), p.232.

instruire en amusant'.[116] Let us now turn to the question of the intended audience of such texts.

II.2 Intended audience of the Martyrdom of Philotheus

Since Coptic hagiographical texts in their extant form were composed for performance during liturgical celebrations or in a similar, paraliturgical context, such as a common meal after the Liturgy, it seems natural to assume that the intended audience of these texts were the people who took part in these celebrations. The question of the social composition of the congregation, although it has been given some scholarly attention,[117] still remains largely understudied, especially with regard to the Coptic Church. However, one can draw certain conclusions on the basis of the evidence we have.

First of all, it is obvious that since most of the codices we possess were copied in monastic scriptoria, these texts were read to the monks who made up a significant part of the congregation if the celebrations were held at the monastery. The second part of the audience would then consist of lay people who came to the monastery in order to take part in the festivities – either from far away, or from a nearby town or village.[118] However, it is a universally recognised truth that the existing Coptic manuscripts represent only a tiny part of what must have once been a rich literary culture. The same

[116] Zakrzewska, 'Masterplots and Martyrs', p.500.

[117] See, for example, a collection of articles, discussing the question of the audience in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, ed. by M. Cunningham and P. Allen (Leiden, 1998). Some work has been done on the audience of Chrysostom, see especially the article by W. Mayer, 'John Chrysostom: Extraordinary Preacher, Ordinary Audience', ibidem, pp.105-137; also J.L. Maxwell, *Christianisation and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and His Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge, 2006).

[118] For an example of the study of the visitors/pilgrims to an Egyptian monastery see H. Behlmer, 'Visitors to Shenoute's Monastery' in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. by D. Frankfurter (Leiden, 1998), pp.353-383.

texts could have been copied for urban shrines (originally not connected with monasteries[119]), which means that the audience composition would have been different. One might suggest that if the celebrations in honour of the martyr were held at an urban shrine, the audience would mainly be comprised of the local population – i.e., people from different social classes (members of clergy, local nobility, various tradesmen, soldiers and urban poor) – and pilgrims, also of different backgrounds.[120] If the feast of the saint was celebrated at the monastery, the proportion of the monastics in the congregation was higher.

Women, children and servants, too, were part of the audience: there is evidence that both monasteries and shrines were visited by families with children.[121] From child donation documents[122] we also know of the children who were consecrated by their parents as a pledge to the saint; they lived on the premises and might have been expected to attend the celebrations with the rest of the congregation.

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[119] On the process of the merging of shrines and monasteries and the absorption of the martyr cults by the monasteries after the Arab conquest see A. Papaconstantinou, 'The cult of saints: A haven of continuity in a changing world?', pp.357-360.

[120] For example, *Miracles of Phoebammon* describe a wide variety of supplicants and visitors to the urban martyr shrine – mostly lay people with their everyday needs: wealthy families with children and servants (p.42); a farm labourer (pp.24-26), and so on, cf. Verrone, *Mighty Deeds and Miracles by Saint Apa Phoebammon*.

[121] Verrone, *Mighty Deeds and Miracles by Saint Apa Phoebammon*, p.42. See also works of Cornelia Horn on the participation of children in Syria in the religious activities of their parents, especially C.B. Horn, 'Children as pilgrims and the cult of the Holy Children in the early Syriac Tradition: the cases of Theodoret of Cyrrhus and the child-martyrs Behnam, Sarah, and Cyriacus' in *ARAM* 18-19 (2006-2007), pp.439-462.

[122] On the child donation contracts see A. Papaconstantinou, 'Notes sur les actes de donation d'enfant au monastère thébain de Saint-Phoibammon' in *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 32 (2002), pp.83-105; eadem, '*Theia Oikonomia*: les actes thébains de donation d'enfants ou la gestion monastique de la pénurie' in *Travaux et Mémoires* 14 (2002), pp.511-526; T.S. Richter, 'What's in a Story? Cultural Narratology and Coptic Child Donation Documents' in *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 35 (2005), pp.237-264.

But what do the texts themselves tell us about their intended audience? The methodology applied by scholars, studying the audience of the famous preachers of the early Church, often relies on the internal textual evidence, such as conversations with the audience, emotional comments on the side of the preacher, or other remarks that might yield some information on who they were addressing.[123] If we apply the same methodology to the hagiographical texts under discussion here, we shall see that they do not provide much information of this sort: they are mostly void of personal comments. Even Coptic *Encomia* in honour of Antiochene martyrs do not tell us much about the circumstances of their performance or about their audiences. Of course, these *Encomia* are mostly late compositions, ascribed to various Church fathers or famous bishops (sometimes fictitious) for the sake of greater authority, and are, therefore, very different in style and quality, for instance, to the authentic sermons of Chrysostom. Even though such encomia are sometimes highly rhetorical and flowery, they are at the same time highly standardized, so that they might be performed in different circumstances. They address their audiences in a very generalized and conventional way, calling them 'blessed Christian people',[124] 'God-fearing people',[125] 'beloved',[126] or simply 'listeners'.[127] There are very few remarks in the encomia on the reaction of the audience – but even those present are mostly rhetorical, as can be seen in the *Encomium on St Victor* attributed to Celestinus of Rome, where the author eloquently rebukes himself for

[123] For an example of such approach see Mayer, 'John Chrysostom: Extraordinary Preacher, Ordinary Audience', in *Preacher and Audience: Studies in Early Christian and Byzantine Homiletics*, pp.105-137, and other works in the same volume.
[124] *Encomium on St Victor* attributed to Celestinus of Rome, cf. Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.48.
[125] Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.5, 9.
[126] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, p.1; Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, p.3 and passim.
[127] Youssef, 'The Encomium of St. Philotheus', p.179.

upsetting his audience with admonitions to repentance, while he should have instead made them feel joyful because of the miracles wrought by the martyr.[128]

As for Coptic martyr passions, they appear to be even more standardized and, therefore, impersonal – they begin with the date of the martyr's commemoration and a short formulaic doxology, after which the narrative immediately turns to retelling the events without any introductory remarks. On the whole, the style of martyr passions tends to be 'impersonal', or 'detached', as Zakrzewska defines it,

> The narration is 'detached': objective, matter-of-fact, without modalization. Together with the scarcity of comments by the narrator, this objectivizing style can be interpreted as an authentication strategy, making the audience (including some modern scholars) believe that the Acts are based on authentic court reports from the time of the persecution...[129]

Thus, at first glance, the texts do not provide much information on who exactly they were supposed to impress and edify. However, the *kidan* – an important structural element, present in many Coptic martyr passions – gives us an opportunity to see which strata of society the texts were meant to reach.

II. 3. The kidan *and its functions; its role in promoting the saint's cult.*

The Ethiopic term *kidan* is used here to define a literary formula used in hagiographical texts which describes the pact between God and the saint. Since Coptic tradition does not give this literary formula any specific name, it seems appropriate to use the Ethiopic

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[128] Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, p.91.

[129] Zakrzewska, 'Masterplots and Martyrs', p.505. Later in the article Zakrzewska shows that this generally 'impartial' approach of Bohairic Martyr Acts has an important exception – the use of the attitudinal modifiers that express the narrator's attitude towards the main protagonists of the stories: the martyr and the persecutor, cf. ibidem, pp.509-510.

term here, since it defines exactly the same textual unit.[130] T. Tamrat provides the following definition of *kidan* in Ethiopic hagiography:

> The corner stone of the spiritual fiefs is the literary formula known as *kidan*, a kind of pact entered into between God and a saint at the completion of his martyrdom or monastic exploits. In this pact God promises to help both in Heaven and on earth all those who make offerings to the Church of the saint and in his name; refrain from physical labour on the days dedicated to the saint; prepare feasts to entertain the clergy and the poor on such days; and go on pilgrimage to the site of his martyrdom which is thereby proclaimed his holy premises. The followers of the saint who observe these commands and all those who were buried at the site of the saint's holy premises were assured of both earthly and heavenly bliss.[131]

The *kidan* is usually placed near the end of a martyr's story, right before his or her final execution (if the saint had to undergo a number of deaths, the *kidan* would be introduced before the final one).[132] The aim of the insertion of the *kidan* into a saint's life is to promote the cult of this saint, to establish the authority of the saint's shrine (**τοπος**) and to attract more devotees, since the promises of earthly and heavenly rewards for the followers of the cult in the *kidan* are usually worded in such way 'as to appeal to as wide a variety of clients as possible from the kings down to the simplest of

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[130] Turaev insisted that kidan actually originated in Coptic hagiography, cf. B.A. Turaev [Б.А. Тураев], *Исследования в области агиологических источников истории Эфиопии* (Saint Petersburg, 1902), p.19. This view is shared by S.A. Frantsuzov, who recently published the kidan from the Copto-Arabic version of the *Life of St John the Calybites*, cf. S.A. Frantsuzov [С.А. Французов], 'Завет святому в арабо-коптском житии Иоанна Каливита' in *Вестник ПСТГУ* III, 4 (Moscow, 2011), pp.87-95. A similar opinion was expressed by S. Kur, although he pointed out that in Coptic texts this textual unit is not as standardised as in Ethiopic hagiography, S. Kur, 'Le pacte du Christ avec le Saint dans l'hagiographie éthiopienne' in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by S. Rubenson (Addis Abeba, Uppsala, Michigan State University, 1984), pp.127-128.

[131] T. Tamrat, 'Feudalism in Heaven and on Earth: Ideology and Political Structure in Medieval Ethiopia' in *Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, ed. by S. Rubenson (Addis Abeba, Uppsala, Michigan State University, 1984), p.196.

[132] In the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* the *kidan* is placed immediately after the martyr's first death and following resurrection, ff.99v-100r.

peasants'.[133] Sometimes the Coptic *kidan* is formulated as a prayer of the saint for those who will observe his cult in the future and the answer to this prayer, as, for example, in the stories of Epima[134] or Chamoul;[135] more often it is presented as a monologue of Christ or one of the archangels[136] in the last vision of the saint. The formulaic assurances in the *kidan* are both general (since every follower of the cult has to live a pious life and commit acts of charity) and specific, as they provide people coming from different social groups with an opportunity to win the saint's favour through doing things that their position or profession enables them to do.

Let us now have a closer look at the *kidan* in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* (ff.99v – 100r). It begins with a promise of general protection and help for any person who invokes the name of the saint with faith:

> Everyone who calls your name with faith, being in distress or in troubles on the earth, if he says: 'In the name of God of Saint Philotheus, have mercy on me!', I will quickly grant him My mercy. Or if he is in danger of prison, or in bonds of iron or in any danger in the sea, or in rivers, or in danger of murder or theft, or in any other trouble of this world – if he calls your name and Mine with faith, I will help him.[137]

The next assurance in the *kidan*, addressed to the women in the congregation, deals with the problem of conception and childbearing:[138]

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[133] Tamrat, 'Feudalism in Heaven and on Earth', p.197.
[134] T. Mina, *Le martyre d'Apa Epima* (Cairo, 1937), pp.33-34.
[135] Winstedt, *Coptic Texts*, pp.183-184.
[136] In the story of St Claudius of Antioch the *kidan* is pronounced by a voice from heaven, Godron, p.480.
[137] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.99v *b*.
[138] Childless families are often featured in the Coptic collections of miracles: barren woman travels to the shrine of St Menas (Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p.22); a childless couple make a vow to St Victor to donate their future child to the shrine (Budge, Coptic Martyrdoms, pp.58-60). Numerous child donation contracts also provide evidence for pledging the miraculously conceived children to the saint.

> Also, if a woman calls your name and Mine with faith, while asking for a son, I will give her, and also if she is in birth pains, I will ease them for her quickly.[139]

The next cluster of promises in the *kidan* addresses laity in general; it provides a great range of options for charitable deeds – from feeding the poor and bringing offerings to the shrine to giving a cup of water to a thirsty person, which even the poorest member of the congregation could afford:

> For him who feeds poor and hungry in your name I will make it so that he will not be in want of anything that exists on the earth. Him who gives a cup of water at your feast, I will reward sevenfold in My kingdom. And I will not cause them any hindrance in anything good on the earth.
> And if a man plants a vineyard or seeds in the field and calls your name above these plants, I will multiply them and will double their fruits. Him who brings a gift or an offering to your shrine on the day of your memory, I will reward sevenfold in My kingdom.[140]

Rich people also have an option to please God through building or supporting the shrine of St Philotheus: 'He who builds a martyrium in your name on earth, I will let him recline at the feast of a thousand years and he will enjoy it in My kingdom'.[141]

The *kidan* explicitly stresses the importance of the saint's shrine (martyrium) as the focal centre of the cult – this is where people should seek healing and relief from their misfortunes; however, it admits the existence of a number of shrines, not a single one, which are all, nevertheless, considered to contain the same healing power.[142] It must be also noted that the reading of the martyr's story at the shrine is linked with the manifestation of the healing power of the saint:

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[139] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.99v *b*.
[140] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.100r.
[141] Ibidem.
[142] The same idea is presented in the *Encomium on St Victor* attributed to Celestinus of Rome where the martyr rebukes a petitioner for his negligence of a newly-built shrine in Rome, see discussion of this episode in Chapter 4.

> And in every shrine on earth that is named in your honour and where your martyrdom is read, I will every day heal a person in illness, be it a paralyzed man, or one possessed by demons, or one suffering from fever – moreover, suffering from any disease – I will heal one of them every day.[143]

Some *kidans* promise a special reward to those who copy, write or read to the audience the story of the martyr.[144] Since the copying of such texts was carried out mainly in monastic scriptoria and the performance (reading) took place during liturgical celebrations, this promise must be addressed to the monks and members of clergy. The *kidan* in the Pierpont Morgan manuscript containing the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* does not contain such assurances, but the fragment **F8** from the palimpsest codex, published by Balestri, does:

> [For] him who writes the book of your martyrdom so that your powers might be revealed, I will tear the manuscript of his sins and will give him to you [i.e. to St Philotheus] as a son in My kingdom.[145]

Another version of the *kidan* in the fragment **F5** from the collection of the British Library (BM Or 1241) promises rewards to the person who perform the *Martyrdom*: 'To every person, who will read aloud the book of your martyrdom to the people, I will bless him and forgive all his sins'.[146]

Thus, the *kidan*, the most 'promotional' element in the martyr passion, also sheds some light on the intended audience of this text: we can see that the text was meant to be read to a mixed congregation as it addresses lay people and clergy alike and includes promises of rewards for acts of piety expected from different social groups. The combination of

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[143] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.100r *b*.
[144] Frantsuzov, 'Завет святому в арабо-коптском житии Иоанна Каливита', p.93.
[145] G. Balestri, 'Di un frammento palimpsesto', pp.66-67; see description of this fragment in Chapter 1.
[146] Rogozhina, 'Коптские фрагменты', p.14.

the promises of protection and rewards in the *kidan* with the descriptions of miracles performed by the saint in other parts of the text must have appealed to the all possible varieties of audience in a very convincing way and helped to further promote and establish the cult of St Philotheus.

II.4 Authors and authorship

The *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, like many other Coptic martyr passions, does not contain any indications as to who its author might have been. It seeks to be an anonymous composition;[147] its primary 'narrator is covert and only occasionally chooses to become overtly manifest'.[148] As to the point of view from which the events are described, Zakrzewska indicates that,

> The narrator ... either speaks with an individual, personal voice or explicitly allows one of the characters to speak on his or her own account in direct speech. ... The narrator prefers to take up a position of authority and thereby enhances even more the verisimilitude of the story. Here again the avoidance of subjectivization turns out to be an effective linguistic authentication strategy.[149]

Although generally the names of the authors of individual passions are not mentioned in the texts, there is one notable exception to this rule – the figure of Julius Aqfahs. A great number of passions are ascribed to this famous martyrologist in the Coptic tradition. Julius was believed to be a native of the town of Kbehs (Aqfahs in Arabic) who served as a secretary to the *commentariensis* (court clerk) at the imperial court and secretly took

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[147] See discussion of the possible reasons for this anonymity in hagiographical production in a similar, but somewhat earlier, context in the introductory chapter of the book by D. Krueger on authorship in early Christianity, cf. D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness: the Practice of Authorship in the Early Christian East* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), pp.1-14, also pp.97-105 on the influence of monastic ascetical values on hagiographical writing.

[148] Zakrzewska, 'Masterplots and Martyrs', p.504.

[149] Ibidem, p.505.

care of the martyrs during their trials and of the martyrs' bodies after their executions. He himself finished his life as a martyr (feast day on the 22nd of Tout) at the end of Diocletian's persecution along with some other converted pagan officials.[150] His name is closely connected with martyrs both from Egypt and Antioch;[151] the texts ascribed to him claim that he was an eyewitness of the executions he described and even made trips abroad in order to obtain and bring to Egypt the bodies of the martyrs, as, for example, in the case of the martyr Naharoua.[152] Although it is difficult to assess the historicity of the martyrdom of Julius himself – there might have existed a court scribe who, having witnessed the courage and the faith of the martyrs, converted to Christianity and was executed; however, attribution of numerous independent passions to him is clearly a sign of the late cyclic development.[153]

Apart from the exception of the pseudo-author Julius no other names of the authors are mentioned in martyr passions. On the contrary, hagiographical encomia in honour of the same saints are always attributed to one individual or another. However, most of these attributions are false, as Orlandi points out: 'Nowhere can we trust the indications assigned to the texts by the copyists; if any of them are accurate, it is only by good fortune'. The uncertainty of attribution is one of the most prominent problems in the study of Coptic homiletic literature. Orlandi writes on this problem:

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[150] O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, pp.174-175.
[151] On the works ascribed to Julius of Aqfahs see T. Mina, 'Jules d'Aqfahs et ses oeuvres; à propos d'une icone conservée dans l'église d'Abou's-Sefein' in *BSAC* 3 (1937), pp.41-47.
[152] See discussion of this saint's legend in Chapter 4.
[153] Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', pp.329-330.

> ...the Coptic literary tradition in its final stage sought to compile a complete collection of "homilies" attributed to the most eminent Fathers, sometimes to fictitious fathers. These homilies were read on appropriate occasions during the liturgical year. The Coptic redactors chose whatever text they thought most suitable for a given event, but seldom left it in its original form. They omitted passages, pieced together others and changed the author's identity, ascribing the final result to whoever they thought more worthy of the credit.[154]

Many of the texts concerning the martyrs of Antioch – especially encomia – are attributed in the Coptic and Copto-Arabic tradition to the famous Fathers of the Church, such as John Chrysostom, or fictitious figures originating from the same city as the saints they are preaching on. For example, the Coptic dossier of Victor includes encomia attributed to Celestinus of Rome, Theodosius of Jerusalem and Theopempus of Antioch: as van Esbroeck comments, 'the three panegyrics touch Rome, Antioch, and Jerusalem, despite the fact that the existence of the cult of Saint Victor in these cities is highly improbable'.[155] The tradition of Theodore Anatolius also includes pseudo-attributions, such as the *Encomium* by Theodore of Antioch, which has been quoted above.

Among these invented bishops are such names as Anastasius of Euchaita, Flavianus of Ephesus, Eustathius of Thrace,[156] and Demetrius (Demetrianus) of Antioch, who according to the legend, was a bishop of Antioch in the early fourth century and ordained John Chrysostom as a priest. Orlandi suggests that,

> The only possible forerunner to such a tale is the authentic manuscript of John Chrysostom's *Ad Demetrium* (Clavis Patrum Graecorum 4308; PG 47, pp. 319-

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[154] T. Orlandi, 'The Future of Studies in Coptic Biblical and Ecclesiastical Literature' in *The Future of Coptic Studies*, ed. by R.McL. Wilson (Leiden, 1978), p.152.
[155] M. van Esbroeck, 'St Victor Stratelates' in *CE* 7, p.2304.
[156] For details on these bishops see relevant articles in *CE*: 'Anastasius', v.1, p.127; 'Eustathius', v.4, p.1073; 'Flavian of Ephesus', v.4, p.1117.

> 86), for which a Coptic translation is extant. Since Flavian, who in fact consecrated Chrysostom, was not recognized by the see of Alexandria, the idea of replacing Flavian with a fictitious person might have occurred to the Copts.[157]

In the Coptic tradition Demetrius is the alleged author of the two homilies in honour of the Antiochene martyrs – one is dedicated to Philotheus[158] and the other, which survived only in Ethiopic translation, dedicated to the miracles of Victor.[159] However, the Copto-Arabic tradition also ascribes to him a panegyric in honour of Victor and another text relating the events at the consecration of the church in his honour.[160] The attribution of hagiographical or homiletic texts to a bishop from Antioch, who usually relates his own encounter with the saint's miracles, would lend greater authenticity and prestige to this saint.[161]

In the hagiographical dossier of Philotheus we see three encomia – two in Arabic,[162] one in Coptic[163] – ascribed to three different bishops, of whom only one, Severus of Antioch, was a real historic figure. As has been noted above, one of the miracles of Philotheus (the acquittal of the innocent deacon) in the *Encomium* of Demetrius of Antioch is found also in the *Encomium on St Colluthus*, attributed to Isaac of Antinoe – and this is

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[157] T. Orlandi, 'Demetrius of Antioch' in *CE* 3, pp.893-894. See also an earlier article of Orlandi on the same subject: T. Orlandi, 'Demetrio di Antiochia e Giovanni Crisostomo' in *Acme* 23 (1970), pp.175-178.
[158] J. Vergote, 'Le texte sous-jacent du palimpseste Berlin nº 9755' in *Le Muséon* 42 (1955), pp.275-296.
[159] Orlandi, 'Demetrius of Antioch', p.893.
[160] K. Samir, 'St Victor in Copto-Arabic tradition' in *CE* 7, pp.2306-2308.
[161] Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', p.333. This is the case with the Copto-Arabic *Encomium to Philotheus*, attributed to Severus of Antioch: it is clear that the aim of the encomium is to provide a convincing background for this saint by creating an imaginary shrine, consecrated by the great Severus himself.
[162] One of them, the *Encomium* ascribed to Severus of Antioch has been published by Y.N. Youssef in 2002; the other, ascribed to Acacius of (Neo)caesarea, still remains unpublished; see descriptions of these texts in Chapter 1. On the works of Acacius in Coptic tradition see T. Orlandi, 'Acacius, bishop of Caesarea' in *CE* 1, pp.48-49.
[163] Three leaves from a palimpsest codex of contain a part of an encomium in honour of Philotheus ascribed to Demetrius of Antioch, see discussion of this fragment in Chapter 1.

just one of many examples that confirm the truth of the above-quoted words of Orlandi. Thus, one must admit that at the present moment the identification of the author or editor of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and similar martyr passions is impossible.

However, even though it is impossible to identify the individual composers and editors, some observations can be made regarding their literary and educational backgrounds. The authors, as has been shown in previous chapters, were clearly familiar with the corpus of other hagiographical works belonging to the Antioch cycle, as well as with monastic and apocryphal literature, such as *Visio Pauli*. Their knowledge of contemporary theological trends – for example, the ideas of the preliminary judgement and the immediate punishment of the soul after death reflected in the homilies of the same period – shows that they were very well-versed in this field and, moreover, were able to introduce these ideas to the general public in a form of the gripping narrative. They drew inspiration from a range of sources, including hymnographic and homiletic texts, such as the works of Chrysostom and Severus of Antioch. Such expertise and competence show that, despite the widespread attitude to the Coptic martyr passions, summed up by Delehaye as 'cette misérable littérature', the authors of these texts should not be regarded as simple and uneducated people whose literary imagination was poor and who could not even produce a convincing story. They knew exactly what they were doing with these stories and they knew how to achieve the desired effect – as we can observe in the longevity of the cult of the martyrs in Egypt.

The general consensus is that martyr passions were composed (or edited if the earlier versions needed to be elaborated and brought into compliance with the *koptischer Konsens* form) in monastic scriptoria: Delehaye suggested that there must have been a school of scribes in Alexandria which produced these texts;[164] Reymonds and Barns repeat the same point,[165] as does O'Leary.[166] However, it seems too strong an assertion to place all martyrological production in Alexandria; surely, martyr passions were produced in scriptoria in different parts of Egypt, as we can see that some cults gain more prominence in certain regions than in others. In any case, monastic scriptoria appear to be indeed the most appropriate environment for creating such narratives. The monks would have been familiar with hymnographic and homiletic material to a greater extent than lay people, since they were exposed to preaching and hymns on a daily basis.[167]

The authors must have seen this literary work as a way of self-improvement and edifying, as Krueger shows in his work on the authorship in the early Christian East:

> But in hagiography, authors deployed narrative simultaneously for the improvement of their readers and themselves. These literary acts of the making of saints were doubly generative, producing both the saints and their authors. Composing hagiography made one a hagiographer. Thus the lives of the saints are also the residuum of a process of authorial self-production, of the making of authors. In generating a Christian authorial persona, the author was inevitably the subject of his own creative act. Indeed, the authors of early Christian saints'

[164] Delehaye, 'Les Martyrs de l'Égypte', pp.149-154. See also discussion in Chapter 2.
[165] Reymond, Barns, *Four Martyrdoms*, p.3.
[166] O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, p.19.
[167] See also discussion in Chapter 2 on the possibility that Coptic hagiographers were probably also involved in the production of hymns.

> lives and miracle collections reconceived the production of literature as a highly ritualized technology of the religious self.[168]

It could also be a way to express one's particular appreciation of the saint, which, as we know from the *kidan*, the saint was expected to reciprocate in one form or another, or to ask for his or her special protection. Participation in such work could, perhaps, lead to the formation of an even closer personal relationship with the saint: the earliest surviving image of Philotheus was engraved on a scribe's pen-case – maybe, this scribe had been involved in copying or writing of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*? We can only guess.

Conclusions

The variety and nature of evidence examined in this chapter, especially in the section dedicated to the performative context of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, inevitably leads to a rather high number of conjectures regarding the development of the cult of St Philotheus and the people who influenced and developed it – the audience and the authors of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and of other texts (homiletic and hymnographic alike) pertaining to the cult. However, some conclusions, though tentative, can be drawn.

First of all, the hymnographic and iconographic evidence of the cult testifies to the popularity of this saint in Egypt not only in the first millennium AD, but also in the late Middle Ages. The hymns in his honour and iconographic representations of Philotheus reveal certain transformations in the perception of this martyr – from a child martyr

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[168] D. Krueger, *Writing and Holiness*, p.2.

into a military saint – which become very visible on a thirteenth century icon, where this saint is depicted exactly in the same manner as other military saints. This transformation does not seem to have occurred in the Georgian tradition of Philotheus, although there is a possibility that the publication of the still unedited Georgian hymns will prove otherwise. Another striking feature of the development of this saint's cult in Egypt is the addition of a new function – that of the patron saint of virginity and chastity – to his other functions in the course of the general evolution in hagiographical writing. Since the community needed a role model whose example the people could emulate, the original story of Philotheus was expanded so that it would include the virtues of purity, ascetic lifestyle and almsgiving. Thus the authors incorporated into it yet another pedagogical element and, at the same time, enhanced its promotional value by making the role model, i.e. Philotheus, more widely applicable.

On the whole, instructional and promotional features of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* are tightly intertwined. This is most visible in the *kidan*, a formulaic textual unit containing promises of rewards for the devotees of the cult, a bonding link between the cult and the people. Even though the formulas of the *kidan* are highly standardised and can be found in other martyr passions, they still provide us with valuable information on the audience of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*. They also shed light on what kind of instructions on how to achieve the ultimate goal – to join the saint in the heavenly kingdom – the authors of this and other such texts thought important to provide. Through simple acts of charity (like feeding the poor or giving water to a thirsty pilgrim) combined with the prayer to the saint even the least wealthy members of congregation

could receive the blessing and intercession of their holy patron. Although mostly aimed at the propagation of the cult and the increase of its popularity, the promises of the *kidan* also have a strong edifying meaning, as they inspire the faithful to lead a more pious and charitable life.

Since the passions of martyrs were meant to be performed in the context of liturgical celebrations, as has been shown in this chapter, this liturgical context together with the hymns in honour of the martyr made the story of Philotheus or any other martyr an integral part of the history of salvation, recreated in the Liturgy. This must have created what C. Harrison defines as 'transformative tension' – the tension 'between remembering the past (*anamnesis*) ... and anticipating the future which was yet to be revealed'.[169] These transformative emotions inspired the participants of the celebrations and gave them the hope of redemption and forgiveness through the intercession of the martyr who was already among the members of Church Triumphant. At the same time the story was written in a simple, accessible way, so that it would reach the minds of even the least educated among the audience. In a way, it served as a bridge between the more complicated texts of the Liturgy, such as the prayers of the anaphora, and the audience who would see it both as a welcome break between the toils of the worship and an uplifting story of hope and Christian triumph.

[169] Harrison, *The Art of Listening*, pp.233-234.

Conclusion

In his classic study of the legends of Egyptian martyrs published in 1922[1] H. Delehaye dismissively described Coptic martyr tales as 'cette misérable littérature' – an attitude which was shared by later generations of scholars and has placed Coptic martyrdoms among those texts thought to be unworthy of serious consideration, because they are 'apocryphal in the highest degree', as O'Leary noted in the introduction to his work on the saints of Egypt.[2] But this 'miserable literature' is indeed miserable only if considered as an inadequate historical account of the events described. However, if we study it as a source of information about the purposes, ideas and beliefs of the people who composed, read and circulated these stories, it provides deep insights into the world of Coptic Christianity in the period when they were compiled. One of such martyr legends – the story of St Philotheus of Antioch – has been used in this thesis as a case study of the function and development of the cult of the so-called Antiochene saints in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt.

This thesis examined the still unedited Coptic version of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* (M583 of the Pierpont Morgan Collection) and other texts forming the hagiographical tradition of St Philotheus, namely: 1) encomia in honour of this saint, 2) extant fragments of the now mainly lost collections of his miracles, and 3) hymns, since the hymns reflect a real, living cultic tradition and therefore provide an insight into what the Coptic Church considered to be particularly important in the life and miracles of St

[1] H. Delehaye, 'Les Martyrs de l'Égypte', p.148.
[2] O'Leary, *Saints of Egypt*, p.20.

Philotheus. So far, the rich repertoire of Coptic hymns remains in general unknown to scholarship and has seldom become an object of interest to Western scholars, as has been noted by L.S.B. MacCoull.[3] This material needs to be integrated into the study of the development of the cult of saints since it provides us with a crucial witness to, and means of understanding, the performative and liturgical context of the hagiographical and homiletic material.

Thus, an attempt to incorporate the hymnographic material into the study of the cult of St Philotheus has been undertaken. This allowed us to see how the cult and the texts pertaining to this cult evolved: for example, certain episodes in the story of Philotheus were considered more important than others by those who promoted and observed the cult. These are the episodes which relate the conversion of the pagan parents of the saint, their providential death, followed by a tour of hell, and their resurrection after three days, while the martyrdom itself is described in the hymns rather briefly, in a schematic and stereotypical manner. At the same time, certain features of the way of life of the martyr – his asceticism, frequent fasting and unceasing prayer, almsgiving and chastity – were strongly emphasized both in the *Martyrdom* and in the hymns.

However, the Georgian text of the *Martyrdom* which, as has been shown in Chapters 1 and 2, represents an earlier version of the same epic passion, does not stress any of these features. The comparative analysis of the two main versions which was carried out throughout the thesis allowed us to see where Coptic authors added certain details and

[3] L.S.B. MacCoull, 'Oral-Formulaic Approaches to Coptic Hymnography' in *Oral Tradition* 14/2 (1999), pp.354-400.

accents, and thus artfully modified the text in such a way that it could perform multiple functions.

The primary function of the *Martyrdom* was to promote the cult of the saint: therefore, the promotional features of this text were designed to inspire in the faithful a sense of personal connection with the saint and a hope of salvation through his prayers. But, unlike the straightforward supplicatory hymns in which the saint's intercession is invoked, these promotional elements were mainly presented to the audience in the form of captivating stories embedded in the narrative, such as the story of the afterdeath fate of the souls of Philotheus' parents, which was discussed in Chapter 5. The parents had to experience the punishments of hell but were saved at the very last moment by the prayer of their son, a future saint. This and similar episodes relating the miracles performed by the saint must have had a strong effect on the audience, especially when combined with the so-called *kidan*, the only explicitly promotional element in the passions. The discussion of the structure and the functions of the *kidan* in Chapter 7 has shown that it served as a bonding link between people and cult: it addressed all strata of society, thus allowing everyone, regardless of their background and status, to participate in the cult.

But these texts were not composed with only one purpose in mind – their second objective was to convey certain doctrinal and moral instructions to the intended audience. Again, this was done not through straightforward, direct preaching, but through tales and *exempla*, in which the pious always received a heavenly reward (even

though this reward – if it was a crown of martyrdom – might appear to a modern reader very strange and bizarre) and the impious were chastised. That is why, for example, the blasphemers in these texts are usually punished on the spot either by some gruesome disease or by the attack of the evil spirit so as to clearly show to the audience what the consequences of such actions would be. The same applies to magicians, the usual adversaries of the martyrs: they are always punished in one way or another – if they do not repent – for their dark magic is firmly associated with demonic powers. The stories of magic contests between magicians and martyrs also instruct the congregation about the acceptable ways of protection from the 'evil eye', symbolised in these stories by the activities of the pagan magicians: the texts never speak directly, but consistently and repeatedly describe the actions of the role models, the martyrs, who easily defeat all dark magic by the sign of the cross and the invocation of the name of Jesus.

These unsophisticated, clear instructions are presented throughout Coptic martyr passions in the form of narratives with the martyr being the inspirational role model of the proper Christian way of life which includes not only firm and unshakable faith, but also care for the poor, fasting, prayer, and sexual purity. However, such moral instructions are also found in a more straightforward form: the promises of the *kidan*, describing specific rewards for acts of pity and charity, function, in a way, as a guide-book on the path to salvation.

But these texts, despite their seeming simplicity, also managed to communicate important theological teaching – again, in a popular and accessible manner they speak of

the Trinity,[4] the crucifixion of Jesus,[5] the afterdeath fate of the soul[6] and other such topics, using the terminology and formulas which must have been familiar to the audience from the Liturgy.[7] Since these hagiographies were performed in the context of the liturgical celebrations in honour of a martyr, they interacted with other elements of the service, such as hymns, reciting of psalms, preaching, scriptural lessons and Eucharistic prayers. Altogether these 'words and actions, types and reality, figures and fulfilment, resonated with, informed, and interpreted each other',[8] thus forming a global, all-inclusive context for the history of redemption in which the story of a martyr was one of the elements.

One more observation should be made regarding the purposes and concerns of the authors of these texts: it should be noted that there is no obvious evidence of reaction to the arrival of Islam in the Coptic passions examined in this thesis. It might be claimed that the concept of the Church of the Martyrs represents such a reaction;[9] however, the

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[4] *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.101v *a*: 'O Father of all, dwelling in the light that no one can approach except for your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ and your Holy Spirit!'

[5] Ibidem, f.87v b; compare with a more lengthy conversation in the Georgian version: 'Diocletian said to him: 'Why then did your God accept death from the Jews?' The blessed Philotheus answered and said: 'Because sin, misdeed and impiety have increased on the earth, the Good One showed His mercy to humankind and deigned to come to the earth in order to give His body for the redemption of all and to deliver us from guilt and sin which were in us' (ch. 4). See also in the *Martyrdom of St Phoibamon of Preht*, §§92-93, forthcoming critical edition by S. Uljas.

[6] See discussion of the theological background of the tours of hell in Chapter 5.

[7] For example, in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.89r *b*: 'God of my salvation and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy blessed Spirit, who are also Trinity consubstantial, undivided and unchangeable'.

[8] Harrison, *The Art of Listening*, p.234.

[9] Thus, Papaconstantinou argues that the production of the martyr passions should be dated to the early Abbasid period onwars, since heavy taxation imposed by Umar II on the non-Muslims led to large-scale apostasy among Christians in Egypt and Syria, which might explain the abundance of the narratives of the new martyrs. There were not so many accounts of the new martys in Egypt, but 'there was during the same period a rise of martyrological writing in which one is inclined to see a form of heroic narrative designed to serve as a model of behaviour for Christians tempted by apostasy', cf. Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', p.334.

analysis of the development of the cult of Philotheus in Egypt shows that the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* and similar texts instead reflect a Coptic Christian world that was linking the past of the martyrs with the present of the cult, especially in the context of the Liturgy.

But if we are thinking of context, we should remember also the historical and political background of this text. In the discussion of the literary background of the *Martyrdom of Philotheus* in Chapters 2-4 it has been shown that his legend belongs to a large group of texts which can be defined as the *Cycle of Antioch* or the *Cycle of Diocletian*. The so-called cycles are a typical feature of Coptic literary production: they are characterised by recurring characters connected with each other by ties of kinship or friendship, another characteristic is certain recurring motifs and *topoi*; sometimes the cycles overlap, since certain passions, as a result of later editing, can be identified as belonging to two cycles.[10] The *Cycle of Antioch* has two main characteristics: the action takes place (or begins and then continues elsewhere) in Antioch and the martyrdom takes place during the Great Persecution of Diocletian. These two main reference points – Antioch and Diocletian – allowed Coptic hagiographers to create a new literary universe or hagiographical reality, in which the historical emperor Diocletian was given a completely different life story and turned into a proper fairy tale villain, while Antioch became the Holy City, surpassing Jerusalem in the number and glory of its martyrs. This hagiographical reality was constructed by Coptic authors in the period between the late sixth and the ninth

[10] Papaconstantinou, 'Hagiography in Coptic', p.330.

centuries – the period in which the identity of the Coptic Church as a miaphysite community and as the Church of the Martyrs was formed.

Antioch, a second bastion of the miaphysite confession in the East (due to its association with the Syrian miaphysite patriarchs of Antioch, and especially Severus of Antioch), was used in Coptic hagiographical texts as a place of origin for many martyrs and as a place where multiple martyria in their honour were built by the God-loving Emperor Constantine, a literary antipode of Diocletian the Persecutor. Encomia in honour of these martyrs were composed in the same period and ascribed to real or fictitious Antiochene bishops – all this helped to justify the existence of these cults and of the shrines of these saints in Egypt, because they could claim that they had counterparts in the Holy City Antioch, and at the same time perpetuated the sense of unity between the two miaphysite communities in Egypt and Syria. The *Cycle of Antioch* thus provides an important testimony to a contemporary Egyptian attempt to renegotiate political and religious identities, emphasising the sustained accord of the 'miaphysite movement' across, and irrespective of, political boundaries.

As they were creating this literary universe Coptic authors drew inspiration from a great variety of sources: homiletic, hymnographic and historiographical works which were composed in Coptic or translated from Greek; apocalyptic literature of all sorts; *Apophthegmata Patrum* and other monastic literature; Greek and Demotic magical texts – not to forget concepts lingering from the ancient Egyptian past. All this material was thoroughly re-worked, modified and brought into compliance with the conventions of

Coptic hagiographical production so as to produce entertaining and edifying tales suitable for incorporation into the framework of liturgical celebrations.

One of my aims was to counter the dismissive attitude of Delehaye and the following generations of scholars in regards to Coptic hagiographical literature. I hope to have shown that this literature is anything but miserable – on the contrary, it is jubilant, entertaining and informative, and it reveals a lot about the people who created and transmitted it.

Epilogue

'With Their Blood, They Are Unifying Egypt'[11]

On February 15, 2015, the militants of the self-proclaimed Islamic State (also known as ISIS or ISIL), released a video of the execution by beheading of 21 Egyptian Christians kidnapped between late December and early January in the Libyan city of Sirte. A caption in the video referred to the victims as the 'people of the cross, followers of the hostile Egyptian Church'.

As those who had the stamina to watch the video report, some of the victims appear to be saying the words 'Lord Jesus Christ' before their death. In an interview with the Christian channel SAT-7 ARABIC, Beshir Kamel, brother of two of these martyrs, said: 'ISIS gave us more than we asked when they didn't edit out the part where they declared their faith and called upon Jesus Christ. ISIS helped us strengthen our faith'. He added

[11] J. Casper on Libya's 21 Christian martyrs http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2015/february-web-only/libya-21-christian-martyrs-with-their-blood-unify-egypt.html, accessed on 20.03.2015.

that he was proud of his brothers Bishoy and Samuel, saying that their martyrdom was 'a badge of honour to Christianity'.[12]

In the following investigation only 20 names of the Egyptians (Copts) were identified, and most of them were from the province of Al-Minya in Upper Egypt. The question arose as to who was this remaining one non-Coptic victim. The investigation has revealed that his name was Matthew Ayariga; he was a native of the sub-Saharan nation of Ghana. He has also been recognized as a Saint and New Martyr no less than the others, although he was not a member of the Coptic Church.[13] It is very illustrative how the narrative of his martyrdom along with the Copts is already forming. In an article by Fr Thomas Philipose of the Bombay Diocese of the Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church[14] written on the basis of the report on Ahram-Canadian News we read:

> He was a Chadian Citizen (darker skin shown in picture) who accepted Christianity after seeing the immense faith of his fellow Coptic Christians to die for Christ. When terrorist forced him to reject Jesus Christ as God, looking at his Christian friends he replied, "their God is my God", so the terrorist beheaded him also.[15]

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[12] http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/02/21/coptic_church_recognizes_martyrdom_of_21_coptic_christians_/1124824, accessed on 03.04.2015.

[13] G. Dipipo, 'An Icon of the Coptic New Martyrs of Libya', posted on the 25th of February 2015, cf. http://www.newliturgicalmovement.org/2015/02/an-icon-of-coptic-new-martyrs-of-libya.html (accessed on 05.04.2015).

[14] http://bombayorthodoxdiocese.org/what-made-a-non-believer-chadian-citizen-die-for-christ-along-with-his-20-coptic-christian-friends/, accessed on 30.03.2015.

[15] Ibidem.

This thesis has examined Coptic accounts of the early Christian martyrs which normally include as a structural element one or multiple conversions of the spectators to Christianity and their subsequent execution. These conversions might appear to critically inclined readers to be just a convention of the genre: the martyr bravely suffers horrible tortures or performs miracles and the witnesses of his or her actions unanimously cry out: 'One is the God of Christians! And we openly are all Christians', after which they are usually killed by the persecutors.[16] These recent events show that our sceptical attitude to these seemingly legendary and unconvincing narratives should perhaps be revised, as we see in real time how the firm faith of the martyrs for Christ[17] continues to impress and inspire those who come in touch with it – so much so that these people join their witness. The death of these people has also become, just as the stories of early martyrs had been for so many generations of Christians, a source of hope and inspiration.[18]

Pope Tawadros II announced that the names of the New Martyrs of Libya will be inserted into the Coptic *Synaxarium* and their memory will be celebrated on the 8th of Amshir of the Coptic calendar (February 15th of the Western calendar). In order to illustrate how the Coptic Church continues to keep the traditions of the veneration of

[16] See, for example, in the *Martyrdom of Philotheus*, f.97r *a*.

[17] S. Tadros, Senior Fellow at Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom, in his interview in the National Review, stresses the religious identity of the victims: 'I would argue that the most important aspect of the story, and one that was absent from the White House's reaction, is that these men were murdered because of their faith. ISIS gunmen chose these men from among other Egyptians living there because they were Copts. This was no random choice', see the rest of the interview at http://www.nationalreview.com/article/414252/martyred-copts-witnessed-their-faith-and-courage-interview (accessed on 03.04.2015).

[18] The examples of such unexpected response are too numerous to cite, but I would recommend an interview with the Coptic American iconographer Tony Rezk who produced the first icon of the New Martyrs of Libya, cf. http://www.nationalreview.com/article/414400/what-martyrdom-looks-interview

the martyrs, I would like to conclude this thesis with the recently composed *Panegyric in Praise of the 21 New Martyrs of Libya* composed by Fr. Tadros Yacoub Malaty and published on February 24, 2015:

> Why did you not cry, pleading with those who are about to murder you, that they may free you? Why did you not acquiesce to their demands?
>
> Did they not propose that you abandon your Christ? Wouldn't they have had mercy on you had you accepted their religion?
>
> Do you not fear death?! Whence did you acquire this courage?
>
> What theological training did you obtain? From what seminary did you graduate? What monastery did you frequent? What clerical rank do you carry?
>
> Tell me, how did you not resist death? I do not know your secret.
>
> Did you see (Christ) transfigured? Perhaps you heard Him? Truly, I do not know. The only certainty is that when you decided to utter your last words, those sweet words were "Oh my Lord, Jesus Christ."
>
> I come to you weeping. I do not weep on your account, for men who received crowns do not warrant sorrowful tears. I weep because of you.
>
> For when the light of your faith became manifest, my weakness became apparent before my eyes. And I realized that the veils of darkness do not obscure the vision of God. I realized that He searches the heart and the inner parts. I realized that He knows the faith that resides within each seemingly destitute and abandoned vessel. And I realized that I am not prepared or worthy of this gift which you have attained.
>
> Intercede for us, O righteous men, that He may have mercy on us through your prayers. Ask Him that He may guide us on the way of your faith, so that we may come to know your mystery.

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Appendix I. The Georgian Martyrdom

The martyrdom of the holy and blessed Philotheus (Fileteoz)[1]

1. In the beginning of the reign of the godless and erring kings, Diocletian and Maximian, who were elevated by the boldness of their strength, they restored persecution and suffering against Christians. At that time there was a youth in Antioch, whose name was Philotheus (Fileteoz), very beautiful in appearance and adorned with every virtue. His parents were pagan, who worshipped a calf and confessed him as God; he ate hay and his name was T'ot'i the Glorious ('T'ot'i patiosani)'.[2] This Philotheus was a chosen one. His parents did not have other children besides him and for this reason they loved him very much, and he was much loved by his relatives and by those who knew about his kindness and chastity, like Joseph the Israelite in Egypt. His parents were very rich; they made a golden necklace for the calf's neck and golden anklets for his feet, and appointed two men who attended him. And twice a day they brought him flour, mixed with oil and honey. But the noble Philotheus, who truly and willingly loved God with all his heart, when he saw his parents worshipping the reasonless animal, marvelled at this in his heart, saying: 'Is this animal indeed God, as my parents think? No, but He who created the heaven and earth and all that is therein, only He is God'. And because he was pondering this, he desired to approach the knowledge of God. He was then ten years old. His father ordered him to worship the calf and to offer incense to him, and he said to Philotheus: 'My son, learn that he whom we worship and give honour to and praise as our God, glorious God, gives us wealth and power, so that you also might be granted longevity!' The worthy Philotheus replied to his father and said: 'Father, do not tempt yourself! How can a hay-eating animal which receives worship from human hands be God or how can this animal give wealth to men? But I think that He who created the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is therein, He is the one and true God. Therefore I tell you and my mother that you should worship not an animal, but the living God!' His father said to him: 'O son, you are still a child and ignorant and you do not know what is beneficial for you'.

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[1] The following translation is based on the text edited and published by K. Kekelidze (კ. კეკელიძე), *ფილეტეოსის მარტვილობა (Fileteosis martviloba)* in ეტიუდები ძველი ქართული ლიტერატურის ისტორიიდან (Etiudebi dzveli kartuli literaturis istoriidan), v. 6 (Tbilisi, 1960), pp. 81–102. The manuscript containing the martyrdom of St Philotheus was discovered by R. Blake in the catalogue of the Georgian mss of the Patriarchal library in Jerusalem (R.P. Blake, *Catalogue des manuscrits géorgiens de la Bibliothèque patriarcale à Jérusalem,* p. 52-53).

[2] M. van Esbroeck suggested that the name of the calf should have been written as 'თუალი პატიოსანი' ('precious stone'), but has been distorted by the scribe's mistake; cf. van Esbroek, *Saint Philotheos d' Antioche* in *AB* 94 (Bruxelles, 1976), p.112, n.1. Kekelidze, however, insisted that it was Egyptian god Toth and the bull must have been Egyptian Apis; cf. Kekelidze, op.cit., pp.87-88.

2. The next day, when Philotheus woke up at dawn, he saw the sun rising, looked up to the east and said to the sun: 'I entreat you by your great power, O you, shining to the whole earth, that you tell me whether you are God, for I have seen your goodness which is the best of all visible things!' And when he said this, he heard a voice from heaven saying: 'I am not God, O beloved youth, but a creation and servant of God. If you want to know God, this night His power will be shown to you'. And in the night an angel of God, who was sent to him, appeared to him and said: 'Get up, Philotheus, and see the glory of God whom you seek'. Then the blessed Philotheus raised his eyes and saw Jesus Christ, the Son of God, sitting on the high throne, with thousands and tens of thousands of the heavenly hosts around Christ. And when he saw this vision, he fell down to earth on his face. Then the angel took his hand and said: 'Rise up, Philotheus, and do not fear, for this is the true God, to whom you were aspiring; let your heart be calmed. Be strong, for from now on God is with you and by His name you will perform miracles and signs in your lifetime, and after death you will receive a crown from Christ; your parents will turn to God through you, and godless Diocletian will be put to shame, and then you will receive a martyr's crown. For God has sanctified you in your mother's womb and gave you the name Philotheus, which means 'loved by God'.

3. From this day the boy began to pray and fast, and he ate nothing but bread and salt, only once every Sunday. And he shared food from his house with the poor, and he was grieved in his heart with his parents, because they were worshipping an animal, but not God. And he raised his eyes to heaven and said with a quiet voice: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Who created the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that is therein! To You is befitting glory with Your Father without beginning and with the Holy Spirit, to You Who deigned to appear to me, poor and unworthy. I pray to You and ask, O Life of those who hope in You, God just and great, that You might not punish those who do evil, for they are ignorant and they do not know what they do'. And when the blessed Philotheus said this, the calf leapt and gored his parents to death and slaughtered them. But the blessed Philotheus had been informed by the Holy Spirit of what should happen to his parents. And they remained lying dead on the earth for three days. After three days the blessed Philotheus prayed to God, then asked that God might revive his parents, and after he had finished his prayer, he cried out with loud voice and said: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, Who gives life to all, rise up, father Ivlintian, and you, mother Theodotia!' And immediately they stood up, with fear and great trembling, amazed and shaken by what had happened to them. Then he ordered his slaves to cut that calf into pieces and burn him with fire, and asked that they [his parents] should be baptized and converted to Christianity. After this the blessed Philotheus went to a certain priest who was hiding in the city out of fear, and asked to baptize him and his parents. The priest

brought them into church at night and baptized them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. After that they gave away all their possessions to the poor and the suffering, set their slaves free and paid whatever they owed them. And after two years his parents passed away in firm faith. And the blessed Philotheus remained and was performing miracles and many wonders.

4. Then some other idolaters, who were serving the devil, rose against him and came to the tempter and godless Diocletian and denounced him. And when the ungodly one heard [this], he ordered that the martyr be brought to him. Then three soldiers, who were standing before [the king], went for him. And when they came near, they saw the Holy Spirit descending on him – they fell down on the earth and venerated him, and told him what they had come for. The blessed Philotheus replied and said to them: 'May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, brothers, at all times and lead you into His heavenly kingdom!' And after he said this he stood up and went with them. And when he appeared before the throne of the godless king, he said to him: 'It is not befitting you, O king, to reject Him who gave you this greatness and who is God of all, and to worship idols which cannot speak!' Diocletian said to him: 'But these gods grant me victories in battles'. The blessed Philotheus said to him: 'It is not them who give you victories in battles, as you think, but rather it is them who incite enemies against you'. Diocletian said to him: 'You confess as God this Jesus, who was killed by Pilate, and how then are you not ashamed and how then do you insult my gods?' Then blessed Philotheus said to him: 'Those which you call gods do not deserve any honour, but insults and shame because they are bad, false and untrue. For it is written: 'Gods which have not created heaven and earth will perish'.[3] Diocletian said to him: 'Why then did your God accept death from the Jews?' The blessed Philotheus answered and said: 'Because sin, misdeed and impiety have increased on the earth, the Good One showed His mercy to humankind and deigned to come to the earth in order to give His body for the redemption of all and to deliver us from guilt and sin which were in us'. Diocletian said to him: 'So your God is in heaven, as you say'. Philotheus replied to him: 'Indeed, He dwells in heaven, sitting at the right hand of the Father'. Diocletian said to him: 'As I see, the Father is also God'. Then Philotheus said: 'You must know truly that I believe and confess now and forever my God Jesus Christ, Son of the living God'. Diocletian said to him: 'I do not believe these words that you have told me, but I will summon my magnanimity and forgive you all that you have said. Now leave this that you are insisting on and go now and make a sacrifice to Apollo, the great god, and I shall exalt you and glorify your name!' The blessed Philotheus answered him: 'Let this perfidy not

[3] Jeremiah 10:11 'Tell them this: 'These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens''.

happen to me that I might denounce my God, Creator of heaven and earth, and offer a sacrificial animal to idols, made by human hands!'

5. Then the godless one ordered that the golden idol be brought and placed near the throne. And he said to the blessed Philotheus: 'Worship now without delay this god, the great Apollo!' Then the blessed Philotheus shouted out at the idol and then he[4] fell on the earth and after that the holy martyr said a prayer: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, Who gave heed to Elijah with fire, hear also me today and cast fire from heaven and burn down the idols of this godless one, so that the people who are gathered here might believe through my martyrdom!' And when the blessed martyr of Christ said this, fire came from heaven and burnt down the idols before the people who were standing there. And when the soldiers that had brought him to the trial saw this miracle, they cried out with loud voices and said: 'Truly, only the God of Philotheus is great; know, O godless and treacherous king, that we are Christians from now on and we await for reward from Christ the Lord'. And then the godless one was very angered and ordered that he be whipped until his flesh began to fall off. And while they were severely scourging him, the godless one said to the martyr: 'Know now that sufferings will come upon you, O Philotheus; submit now and make sacrifices to gods, before even more [severe] sufferings reach you!' Philotheus answered him: 'I have proclaimed and confirmed, O son of the devil, that I will never denounce my God and will not slaughter a sacrificial animal for the idols; and you must know that you are increasing unshakable faith in me by this torture that you have set up against me, for I am becoming worthy of suffering for Christ's name!' When the ungodly one heard this word, his heart burnt with anger and he ordered that he be left in an isolated place, bound with suffocating chains, and that big stones be placed upon his stomach. And when they did this, the angel of God appeared to him, loosened his bonds, healed all his wounds and said to him: 'Do not fear, be strong and fortify yourself, O martyr of Christ Philotheus! Behold, I am with you and I will strengthen you, so that this godless one will be put to shame'.

6. And the next day the godless one summoned those three soldiers, who believed in God, and said to them: 'Who taught you to believe in the magic of Philotheus?' They replied to him and said: 'In what we said yesterday we are established today, because we are Christians. And regarding your words that Philotheus bewitched us, he is not a magician or a godless man, but he is the one who will destroy your spell in which you are remaining yourself and tempting the others'. But the godless one did not want to kill those three soldiers, because they were mighty and experienced in soldiery. And those blessed ones understood that it was the action of the devil, and they converted to the

[4] The grammatical structure here is rather dubious and it is not clear whether it was the idol or the martyr who fell on the ground.

Christian faith nine thousand people and were martyred with them. Then they said to the godless one: 'If you do not wish to finish us off immediately, we shall kill you and shall shortly deal with those who perform your will!' And they drew out their swords and showed that they would start a war in the city. When the godless one saw their valour and firmness in the Christian faith, he understood that they would not conform to his will, and he ordered that they be beheaded. Then they were accomplished in their martyrdom and they received a crown. And all who were standing there saw with their own eyes that the angels put the crowns on the heads of these martyrs.

7. And after this the godless and unmerciful one ordered that the tongue of the blessed Philotheus be cut out, then that his eyes be plucked out and the limbs of his body be cut off. And the martyr of Christ received every torture and suffered with joy and bravery, praying and saying: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, in whose hands is the soul of every living creature, let it be Your will that I might stand before You whole and perfect and that none of my limbs shall be lacking, so that this godless one might be put to shame!' And when he said this, immediately all his limbs were restored in their place where they had been before. Then he said to the godless one: 'Do you see the power of my God? See, how it has been revealed, and learn that my God Jesus Christ can do whatsoever He wishes, and He put my limbs back in their place, so that you should be put to shame!' After this the godless one became very angry and ordered that his body be pierced with the sword and then burned with fire. Then the executioners led him to the place where he commanded them in order to fulfill the sentence which the lawless one had proclaimed. Then the blessed Philotheus turned to the east, and said a prayer: 'I thank You, O Lord my God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has led me out of the darkness of temptation and brought me to the light of knowledge, and saved my parents from temptation and the worship of the reasonless animal, and made us worthy to know You, O One God, and Your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ, and Your life-giving Holy Spirit! And not only for this [I thank You], but also because You have granted me to perform miracles and many wonders by Your holy name before this godless tempter. Now I pray to Your goodness, O God of the just, that Your angel might appear from heaven and save my body intact from fire so that the godless one might not boast by his cunning. And so that he would not say: 'I have done this with my great power'. For to You belongs praise, greatness, glory and power, now and for ages of ages'.

8. And when he had finished his prayer, he said to the executioners: 'Now fulfill the will of your erring king!' The soldiers and executioners looked into his face, and saw that it was like of an angel of God, and they were frightened by the glory, given to him from God. Then two of them came near and pierced his sides with swords. And from his sides came blood and milk. And he committed his spirit to God, and angels appeared and

lifted up his soul with great glory and singing. And all the people who were standing there clearly saw his elevation by the angels. Then the executioners lit up a great fire and threw the body of the blessed Philotheus into it. At that moment an angel of the Lord suddenly came down and saved his body intact and untouched by the fire. Then the faithful came and took away his body and put it into a shrine. For all this we glorify the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs glory with His Father and the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Appendix II. Translation of the Coptic Martyrdom

[f.75r *b*] The Martyrdom of the holy blessed Apa Philotheus, blessed martyr of Christ, who completed his blessed martyrdom on the 16th of the month Tobi, and of all those who became martyrs with him, ten thousand and eight hundred thirty nine men, in peace of God. Amen.[1]

It happened during the reign of the erring and apostate emperors, who withdrew themselves from Christ, Diocletian and Maximinian, those who ruled in cruelty and persecuted everyone who called on the name of Christ, that there was a young boy **[f.75v *a*]** in Antioch, whose name was Philotheus. His parents were pagan; they did not know God, but worshipped a grass-eating calf.

And this is what his parents did for him [for the calf]: every day they made a mixture of three measures of fine flour, oil, water and honey; they were giving this to him so that he might eat from it. And they anointed him with perfumes three times a day. And they gave him to drink from wine and from spiced wine and from rosatum (rose wine) mixture.

And they made for him two caves: one [to provide] coolness in the summer time, and one for [shelter against] the cold of the winter. And they cast a golden necklace for **[f.75v *b*]** his neck and bangles for his feet. And three servants remained in his attendance day and night, serving him in everything for his rest.

The boy was the only child of his parents and they loved him very much. And they had great wealth. The boy Philotheus was very beautiful in his face like the angels of God. His flesh was very white, like a piece of finest silver.

And his locks of hair were black as ravens, his eyes were like circles of gold, his neck like **[f.76r *a*]** pure flour. And he was tall and subtle in his body as ivory. And his two cheeks were like roses in the month Pharmouthi, his lips were a purple-red thread on his mouth. His legs were straight as silver columns, firmly established on a base of sapphire. And he was gentle and kind, perfect in every beauty like Joseph, king of Egypt. And he was much beloved by everyone for his great humbleness and zeal.

The boy observed every day what his parents were doing for the calf **[f.76r *b*]** and how they worshipped him as a god. The boy said in his heart: 'Is he the God who created

[1] This is a translation of the yet unpublished manuscript, which is kept at the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York (M 583); so far it has only been published in a phototype edition: *Bibliothecae P. Morgan codices coptici photographice expressi* (Roma, 1922), t. XLI, pp.149-204. The manuscript is dated to 848 CE according to its colophon. It comes from the monastery of St Michael near the present-day Hamouli (Fayoum).

heaven and earth and all that is therein?' For the boy did not know [the word], but he desired to understand this mystery of the knowledge of God.

His parents worshipped the calf three times a day and they offered him sacrifices, and they called that calf Smarakdos.

When the boy was ten years old, his father said to him: 'My son Philotheus, go yourself and see the glory of my god Smarakdos and his greatness. Worship him yourself, so that he might give you [**f.76v *a***] many years. Behold, all men love you for your beauty, your wisdom and erudition'. The boy said to him: 'Father, is he really the God who created the heaven and the earth and the sea? Is he the one who made these great lights of heaven that rule the day and night, and the morning star, and the star Arcturus and the Pleiades, and all the stars?'

His parents said to him: 'You are little, our son, you have not yet found your sense – is it not possible for the reasonless calf to create them in this manner?' The boy said to his parents: 'O unwise ones, does a reasonless beast have a power to give remission of sins or to give [**f.76v *b***] you wealth?'

For the boy had [already] rejected the worship of the calf. Next morning he saw the sun that was rising on its base and he turned his face to the east and said this: 'O great minister, I entreat you by your great power which gives light to the whole earth that you tell me about this affair who you are and whether you are God, for I see you in this great glory and your great light'. The boy was thinking in his heart that probably the sun was God, because he did not know God, since his parents were pagan, and he had not learnt from them about the power of God. And he was considering the moon [**f.77r *a***] to be his [the sun's] son and the stars to be his angels.

While he was making this confession before the sun, there was a voice from heaven saying this to him: 'O boy, seeking for God Who created him, [you are] the one who will be chosen, so that everyone will be amazed by what will happen to you! I am not God, let it not happen the way you think of it! But I am his servant, and so are the moon and the stars, of whom you think they are his son and his angels. We are ministers of His, serving with our service for men according to the order of the Lord God. Besides, you will see and [**f.77r *b***] learn the power of God this very night'.

In the middle of the night, behold, Michael descended from heaven and came to the place where the boy was. He took the boy's hand and raised him up. He said to him: 'My son Philotheus, [whose name] means the one who loves God! Get up and do not fear and you shall see the power of the Godhead!'

The boy got up, raised his eyes to the heaven and saw the Saviour Jesus the Lord sitting on the cloud of light. The Cherubim were pulling His chariot and thousands of angels were to His right and left.

The boy was frightened and fell down [**f.77v *a***] on his face. And Michael the Archangel raised him up, then the voice of Christ, sitting on the chariot of Cherubim, reached him. He said to him: 'Do not fear, but strengthen and fortify yourself, for I am with you at all times. For this reason you will have great power in My name in your lifetime and also after your death.

Because of this I gave you this name through your parents from the moment of your very beginning, for you are shall be a great lover of God and shall receive honour from God and men.

And great healings will happen through you; also your parents [**f.77v *b***] will be killed because of you, they will die in the onslaught of the calf and will remain dead for three and a half days. After this you shall raise them by My name, and you will heal the lame and give sight to the blind; you will heal those who are possessed by demons in My name, so that a great multitude might believe in Me through you in My name in this city and in every place. You will also put to shame the lawless Diocletian with his idols, made by human hand. And a great multitude will believe in My name through you. Therefore, be firm and strong, for I am the Lord your King, Son of the High One and Son of the great God [**f.78r *a***] forever. And you shall receive the crown of martyrdom in great power and ascend to heavens to have rest with all the saints'.

Then the boy Philotheus said: 'O my Lord, why did You forgive these lawless emperors, so that they perform great abominations on the earth?' The Saviour said to Philotheus: 'Since the lawlessness of men multiplied on the earth, My Father was wroth as to destroy the world. But I implored My Father to forgive all transgressions of men. My Father said to Me: 'If not through [**f.78r *b***] the blood of martyrs, it is not possible to forgive the sins of the world'.

That is why, O Philotheus, this is the order of My Father that there should now appear a chosen one. So, depart and go in peace. My power and grace will be with you at all times'.

After that Christ ascended to heaven before him and the boy returned to the place where he was sleeping. From this day the boy prayed abundantly and kept many fasts – he did not eat bread from Saturday to Saturday and he said prayers 300 [**f.78v *a***] times during the day and 300 times during the night. He did not eat any food from which the blood comes out from the day when Christ spoke with him until the day of his death.

He did not even eat any cooked vegetables or any other food apart from bread and salt only. And he did not eat more than once a week on Saturdays.

And his joy was at all times like the joy of those who are cheered by wine. And he was friendly towards small and great, showing wisdom in every good action in fear of God. And he was also chaste in his body and remained undefiled in all days [**f.78v *b***] of his life, until he received the unfading crown and came to Christ the King. And all food that was made for him every day he gave to the poor as alms, but he did not eat it [himself].

After one year, on the day of his eleventh birthday his father said to his mother: 'You know that Smarakdos, our god, is the one who gave us this great wealth, and it is befitting us to give him great glory so that he might give great wealth to our son Philotheus'. His mother said: 'It is also befitting if our son Philotheus goes to worship our god Smarakdos [**f.79r *a***] that he also might show his love to the boy and give him wealth as great as that which he had given us, so that our wealth would be doubled and he might be admitted to an office in the royal court, for since we ourselves come from the kin of the Roman emperors, he might become an eparchus (governor) or a patrician'. His father answered, saying: 'By Smarakdos' health, you are right and you speak properly!' Then his father said: 'Arise, let us prepare a feast and summon our relatives and all friends to this feast so that we might worship our god Smarakdos and our son [**f.79r *b***] Philotheus might make a sacrifice to him'.

And they got up, prepared a feast and called the boy. They said to him: 'Our son Philotheus, go to offer up today a sacrifice to our god Smarakdos'. The boy said to his parents: 'Everything that you tell me to do I shall fulfil, only I do not know how to make a sacrifice'. His parents said to him: 'O our son, this is not difficult, but behold, we will make a feast today after you have made a sacrifice, and we will take for you a bride when you are fifteen [**f.79v *a***] – we will take for you the daughter of Marcella, the great governor and my relative; he also has great wealth. You do not have to do anything, but should only greet our god Smarakdos and offer him some incense and mixture of spiced wine, and say to him: 'I ask you, O blessed Smarakdos, that you give me honour and good fortune!' This is what we very much wish you to do'.

The boy said to them: 'Let us rise up and offer up the sacrifice before you make the feast!' [**f.79v *b***]. His parents rejoiced and brought the spiced wine and bread, saying to him: 'If you wish to make sacrifice first, before we prepare the feast, let us go then!' And his parents hastily went to the cave where the calf was.

The boy saw the three servants who were standing before the calf and wiping his eyes with sponges; they were also putting before the calf many types of incense. There was a

golden necklace on his neck and bangles on his feet. And they were putting before him [**f.80r *a***] dough made of pure [flour], water, oil and honey. And they were giving him to drink spiced wine and rosatum. He [the boy] laughed a lot when he saw the folly of his parents.

And he raised his eyes to heaven and said with joy: 'My Lord Jesus who created the heaven and the earth by the word of your mouth, who counted me worthy to reveal Yourself to me in a joyful voice and granted me unhidden grace, glory to You and to your all-good Father and to the Holy Spirit, from henceforth and to the ages of ages. Amen.

Now, my Lord Jesus, make no reckoning of my parents' [**f.80r *b***] folly, but forgive their ignorance!'

When they stood before the calf, he and his parents, they said to the boy: 'Our beloved son, go and offer a sacrifice to our god Smarakdos, for it is the hour of the feast. Then you shall see the beauty of Smarakdos, [who is] worthy of love'. And the boy approached the calf and said to him: 'Do you indeed want me to worship you?' The calf said to him in a loud voice: 'Verily, my lord Philotheus, let it not happen that the servant of God, Lord Jesus, will worship me, but it is I who shall [**f.80v *a***] worship you, for you are the servant of the living God, Who is great and [who is] the Lord of heaven and earth. Give me power and I will teach your parents, so that they would not worship me or invoke me again as God. But Paul the apostle of Christ said that men would change their glory into images of birds, beasts and reptiles[2].

But I, my lord, I am a reasonless grass-eating beast. When your parents took me from my mother, I was still a little suckling. They brought me to this place, and I did not know anything outside of a reasonless beast's [**f.80v *b***] mind and there was no evil in my heart.

On the first day on which your parents began to worship me, great haughtiness came upon me and I began to see every day an image before me – a likeness of a great dragon, seven cubits high, standing at my right hand. He was stirring great boldness in me, so that I have become very hard-hearted, and great haughtiness overcame me, so that I forgot God Who created me. And I was saying in my heart because of the boldness of the dragon: 'I am God'. But I am not God, O my lord Philotheus! And from [**f.81r *a***] this hour yesterday the dragon was telling this to me: 'O my son Smarakdos, at this hour tomorrow the servant of God Philotheus will destroy you'.

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[2] Romans, 1:23, 'And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man —and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things'.

Now then, o my lord, whatever you command me I am ready to do in fear'.

He said to him: 'I give you power over them, so that my ungodly parents would learn that God is on heights, yet their soul and breath is in His hand'. And immediately the calf attacked his parents and slaughtered them, and so, they were left to lie dead. And great fear seized his servants and everyone who was in his house. After this he ordered his servants, and they slaughtered the calf, cut him into pieces and burned him with fire, [**f.81r** ***b***] they took the ashes and threw them into the sea. And he ordered the caves of the calf to be demolished and they made them abominable for all.

After three and a half days after their death he came to the storehouse in the place where his parents had died.

He stretched up his hands and prayed thus: 'O Master of goodness who gave me the way to know Him, reveal Yourself to me and accept my supplication for your servants, my parents. Raise them up from the dead so that they might confess You, for You, my Lord Jesus, said to me: 'There will be great miracles shown through you in My name'. Glory to You and to your all-good Father and to your Holy Spirit to the ages of ages. Amen'.

[**f.81v** ***a***] Then immediately the boy called: 'My father Valentios and my mother Theodoti, in the name of Jesus Christ, rise up, come alive again and let there be no harm in you!' And immediately they rose up alive, but their body still smelled of death, for it was four days since their death. They got up and were in great fear because of the things that they had seen in hell.

The boy said to them: 'In the name of my Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten of the Father, let the fear of hell leave you!' And immediately they came to their senses, embraced their son and fell down to his feet. And they kissed him, saying this: '[**f.81v** ***b***] Blessed is the hour when God gave you to us, O beloved of God! The hour of your birth is the hour of joy and gladness, and the day of our rest and repose. *Hold for us*[3] this image, equal to the angelic one, we will tell you what we have seen in hell, for because of you our souls have been saved from hell and perdition. Through you we shall receive inheritance with the blessed ones and shall avoid eternal punishment.

By your salvation, our son Philotheus, these three days which we spent in punishments were for us like ten hundred years in punishments!

By your salvation, O [**f.82r** ***a***] Philotheus, these three days which we spent in punishments are worthy all the time that we had spent in the world until the end of time. For this reason you liberated sinners from their lawlessness, O our son Philotheus!'

[3] This line is not clear: ⲁⲛⲓⲭⲉ ⲙⲙⲟⲛ ⲡⲁⲧⲉⲓⲣⲓⲕⲱⲛ·

His mother said to him: 'Blessed is my womb because it has brought you forth and blessed are my breasts because you have sucked them!' The boy was very glad and his face blossomed with gladness as the face of an angel of God. The little boy said to his parents: 'Tell me now what you have seen in hell so that I might repent my sins!'

His parents said to him: 'It happened [**f.82r *b***] to us, O our lord, that when the calf attacked and killed us, the eyes of our soul saw death hanging in the air, and it was in many forms that were changing before us.

After they had taken our soul out from the body, these changing faces seized us, and they were very fearful in their appearance. And as a bird of prey when it seizes a dove, they flew with us to the Judge of Truth. We received such a decision: 'Bring these souls down to the punishment until they will know God Who created them'. And they flew with us until they handed us over to the punishment. We entered the river of fire which was seven times darker [**f.82v *a***] than the night. It was stinking as of sulphur and bitumen, and the executioners assigned to us were plunging us into it, so that we were saying to ourselves: 'We have come down [to the depth] of seventy cubits'. We spent a day down there in this punishment.

After that they transferred us and put us into a pit which was dug out to the depth of thousand cubits. It was filled with snakes and scorpions and never-sleeping worms and [of many] Dikanos,[4] with changing faces.

We saw the angel of Hell sitting on the throne of fire and all his executioners were standing before him in order to punish the souls. [**f.82v *b***] Those who were holding our souls handed us over to him, and he gave us to the executioners. Their appearance was of this kind: their eyes were casting fire into our faces and their claws tore out our eyes and tongues. This is the first punishment of Hell, which the angel of Hell has ordered to bring on us. And he ordered to bring out the calf – the one who we had been worshipping. The calf now had horns of iron, sharp as spears, so that he would torture us with them. He said this to us: 'Understand now that I am not God, but you worshipped me as God, and that is why I too am suffering this punishment with you'. [**f.83r *a***] He tortured us with his horns until all our limbs began to fall apart one by one.

After these [tortures] again our appearance was not dissolved, but then our torture was stopped. And they did not give us any possibility at all to cry out to God, for even if the name of God would come to our heart so that we might utter it, they would hasten to tear out our tongue with a three-pronged tool. They plucked it out little by little and

[4] Decans.

threw it into the unquenchable fire, saying this to us: 'As much as one has confessed Him before the people, only as much one is able to confess Him here'.[5]

[**f.83r** ***b***] On the third day they cast us down into the great frost and cold and tempest, where the never-sleeping worm was devouring us.

And also the calf was torturing us in the punishment, giving us much pain. And he was reproving us until the angel of Hell sitting on his throne rose up. Then his tormentors began to torture us even more for he [the angel] was threatening them.

On the fourth day the angel of punishment ordered us to be thrown into the unrelieved punishment, saying: 'Since these souls are the ones who made demons their gods, let them know [**f.83v** ***a***] that God is the one Who created them'.

When they were going with us to bring us to that punishment, we heard a voice saying: 'Return back, for these do not belong to you from this hour because of their son Philotheus'.

And immediately we saw an angel of mercy and you were walking with him. The place we were in ceased to be dark and became all bright. And immediately they took our souls, for you were walking with them, and put them into the bodies.

These are the things we saw, our lord Philotheus, but we have not seen the punishment of Hell of those who worship idols or of those women who leave [**f.83v** ***b***] their husbands, defiling themselves with others, or of those who swear falsely, or of magicians who destroy the creation of God. Their punishment is very severe.

Now then, our lord Philotheus, we have told your holiness everything that happened to us in Hell, and now we want to receive baptism in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And we want to receive the absolution of our sins which we committed in our ignorance. We will give away all our possessions to the poor and orphans and to those in need for our sins that we committed in our ignorance'.

[**f.84r** ***a***] The boy got up in haste and searched the city, he then found a great man who was hiding in the city because of the fear of Diocletian – a priest. He brought him to his house, and the priest baptized them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. And they received the remission of sins, and gave away all their possessions to the poor and orphans and to those in need so that there was nothing left for themselves from their great wealth. And they freed all their slaves and let them go free.

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[5] Probably a reference to Matthew 10: 32-33: 'Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.'

And after two years [**f.84r *b***] from that day his parents departed from their bodies: first his father, and then, after a month, his mother also passed away. They were taken into the place of repose for the ages of ages. Amen.

After this the boy Philotheus was walking at every time and serving the poor, the ones in need, the suffering and all those who were ill – he was healing them in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and everyone who was in distress and in pain, and those who were paralysed. And to the blind he was granting sight, and to the lame and deaf he was giving healing in [**f.84v *a***] the name of Jesus Christ. The lame he made to walk, to the paralysed he gave strength and the deaf he made to hear. And no one would contradict his word, but he would only say once: 'In the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and my great King, be healed!' And his word was with power, as of one of the apostles. Because of his purity and joy and great love for God he was perfect in grace and truth like Saint Stephen.

Then the devil became zealous about the boy for he caused many to abandon their idols and to worship Christ.

And so it happened, when he was [**f.84v *b***] praying at midnight, behold, the devil took the form of an angel and appeared before the boy. He said: 'Hail, O righteous Philotheus! Christ has seen your service to God and called you this name. For I have been sent to you from God to tell you the words of help. So, leave all these labours and this multitude of prayers and fasts, that you perform three times a day and three times during the night, and two fasts every week. Stop wearing yourself out in this manner and leave this multitude of prayers [**f.85r *a***] and fasts that you carry on, for it is written: 'Worshipping God [is to be] in moderateness'. And do not heal people again, lest the news about you reach the emperor – he might kill you because of these words and destroy your childhood, for your progress is like that of the angels of God. And you know yourself that God hates evil and He does not wish that any man might die before his time.

'Now then, my son Philotheus, give yourself some rest, for the time is short. And you know that these lawless people seek to attack the [**f.85r *b***] Christians'.

Saint Philotheus with joyful face said to him (for he had understood in Spirit that this was the devil): 'If you are an angel of God and have descended from heaven, let us get up and pray together before Him'.

The devil answered: 'I cannot stretch out my hands in prayer outside of my legion of angels, because I prayed with my companions before I was sent to you'.

Saint Philotheus said to him: 'It is written: "Pray without ceasing"'[6]. When the devil heard this he sought to flee, but the boy hastily [**f.85v *a***] made a mark on the earth. He said: 'As my Lord Jesus, my King, lives, you will not pass through this mark for I did not know what you were'. The devil leapt up and became a big calf with sharp horns, and then he jumped and ran towards the boy, wishing to kill him.

The devil said to the boy: 'I am not yet tired to raise up against you and [against] everything you have done to me, for you have killed the calf your parents were worshipping, then you took them from me through the healings you performed and you made them leave their idols and worship your God. I swear by my great power that I will make [**f.85v *b***] the emperors cut your body into pieces and scatter them around the earth!' He then moved towards the boy, trying to kill him. But the boy said: 'Give me power, O Jesus my King, born from the holy Virgin in the flesh, to put to shame this impious one!'

And the boy moved forth and seized both horns of the calf and held them until each of them did not fall into the calf's sockets, so that his brain fell apart. When the devil suffered in this punishment, he took the form of a sparrow in the hand of the righteous one and began to swear to the blessed one with such oaths: 'I adjure [**f.86r *a***] you by the right hand of the Father and by His throne and glory not to destroy me until my time is fulfilled. I adjure you by the great name of Christ that you give me a way to escape from you, for I have become powerless before you'.

When the blessed Philotheus heard these oaths, he conceded to let the devil escape and said to him: 'What should I do with you, O shameless one? You have adjured me with such oaths! No, I will reveal the power of my Lord Jesus Christ on you today!' After he had let the devil go, the devil, having been freed a little, said to the boy: 'So, you say that you have fortified yourself [**f.86r *b***] against me, but you will learn what I am going to do in the presence of the emperors'. Saint Philotheus said to him: 'The hour is near, [when] you with your erring and impious emperors will be put to shame'.

The devil then took on the form of a dignified man and came to the lawless emperor. He stood before him, weeping falsely, and said: 'May you have hundreds of years today, O sovereign emperor! And if the emperors who rule issue an edict that no one must withstand your power and contradict[7] the word of the emperor, for your power [**f.86v *a***] rules over all earth.

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[6] 1 Thess. 5:17.

[7] The manuscript here has ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲗⲓⲕⲉ instead of ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲇⲓⲕⲉ – 'to contradict, disagree'.

‘You have ordered in the whole earth that the whole universe should make sacrifices to the gods, who love mankind and give us victories in wars. There is a boy in this city who is approximately fifteen years old, whose name is Philotheus. He made this whole city turn away from our gods and he performs many omens through the means of magic, healing everyone who is ill, so that they all follow this Jesus the Nazarene and they worship Him, saying: “He is God Who created heaven [**f.86v *b***] and earth and all that is therein”.

‘So he made the whole city obedient to him, and he made them renounce your order. They put your gods to shame and behold, he is now near the Tetrapylon at the house of a man who had been born blind, for he gave this man sight by his magic’.

When the emperor Diocletian heard these things, the devil filled his heart with great and mighty anger. The emperor Diocletian, in great wrath, said to those who stood before him: ‘I swear by the power and by my great god Apollo that if you do not quickly bring this boy to me, I shall put your soul [**f.87r *a***] in his place!’

At this moment three generals came out before the emperor with their nine hundred soldiers. They went to pursue the boy and they found him in the house of a man called Eusebius, to whom the boy had given sight.

When they looked at him, they saw his beauty and the grace of God which surrounded him, for he was like an angel of God. They fell down and venerated him, saying: ‘Are you our lord Philotheus who performs these healings in this city?’ He answered them: ‘Yes, I am’. They said to him: ‘The lawless emperor is hunting after your piety, O righteous one of God. [**f.87r *b***] Therefore, if this thing is acceptable for you, go with us, and if not, we will not force you, because we have seen your face [which is] like the face of an angel of God!’

He said to them: ‘May the grace of my King Jesus call you to His blessed feast with your nine hundred soldiers!’ They replied to him unanimously: ‘May your grace direct us!’ The names of these three generals were Christophorus, Marcella and Kaliopios.

Then the blessed Philotheus went with them to the emperor. And when the boy appeared before him, the emperor saw his shining face and was disturbed [**f.87v *a***] greatly; he got up and stood before the boy.

Diocletian said to him: ‘Take a seat here before me, for I see great grace which is given to you from the gods of the Romans’. The boy replied to him: ‘It is not allowed to me to sit before the emperor autocrat, because it is God who gave him the empire, but he [the

emperor] went aside and worshipped gods who neither hear nor speak, and there is no breath in them'. Diocletian said: 'How then do they give us victories in wars?'

The boy said: 'Let it not happen; it is not them who give you victories in wars, [**f.87v *b***] but they are the ones who incite against you wars and evil discords. But there are many among your soldiers who secretly have awe for Christ, while you do not know that Christ is the one who saves them in battles'.

Again Diocletian said to him: 'Why do you go around this city preaching about Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified by the Jews under Hegemon Pilate, and why do you strike our gods?'

Then blessed Philotheus said to him: '[Indeed] they deserve great shame because they call themselves gods, while they are not gods'. The emperor said: 'Is not he a god then – Apollo, my [**f.88r *a***] great god in his power?' The saint replied: 'He is not God, but a statue without a soul'. The emperor then said: 'But when I stand before him, asking him something, he usually answers me'.

Saint Philotheus said: 'Like someone who dreams,[8] and then he wakes up and he can not find the dream, likewise the words of this one – they are just a vision'. The emperor replied: 'Probably, but I find that every word that he says to me is true'.

The blessed one said: 'Since God has chosen you to fulfil His will on the earth, the demons speak to you about these things, leading you astray [**f.88r *b***] to your own fall and destruction. Well then, tell me your request and the reason why you have been looking for me'.

Diocletian said: 'I have learnt what you were doing in this city, denouncing my order and preaching about Jesus. Well then, I forgive all this, but you have to go now and make a sacrifice to my great god Apollo. Then I will make you a patrician and you will be called 'the father of the emperor', for I can see your knowledge and wisdom and that you are worthy to be seated in the royal palace'.

Saint Philotheus answered him: 'Let this not happen that I should become the father of a godless [man]! But you already have a father – [**f.88v *a***] the devil who is your father and master'. Diocletian said to him: 'Why do you make the devil my father, O Philotheus?' Saint Philotheus replied: '[Shame] on this devil, for he himself is afraid and trembling before God Who created him according to the scripture. And you, O lawless one in the fear of God Who is before your eyes, though you know Him yourself, behold, now you

[8] The Coptic text has here **ⲡⲱⲱⲛⲉ** – 'to change' instead of **ⲡⲱⲱⲣⲉ** – 'to dream'; this is clearly a scribal mistake.

have refused Him [you] and everyone who obeys you. As for me – let this not happen to me that I should leave my Lord Jesus and worship idols, who do have neither life nor breath in them'. [**f.88v *b***] At that time Diocletian made a small statue of gold which was one cubit high and two palms wide. He had inlaid this statue with many precious stones and had given it the name Apollo; he then decorated it with many adornments and vain glory. And each time it was brought to the place where the lawless emperor was sitting and it was set before him day and night.

Diocletian said to the boy: 'Because I love you so much, I do not want you to go to the temple to the priests who serve there, but you should come to this Apollo who is standing before me at all times and you should worship him. [**f.89r *a***] Can you not see this great glory that surrounds him? Besides, no man can worship him ever, except for comites and patricians and all high ranking people of the court. And, since you are so precious for me, I tell you to worship him – and if not, I will not forgive you!'

Saint Philotheus said: 'So, you have truly granted me great favours, O emperor! Order then that your throne be moved away so that you will not die because of the idol's fall. And I will make you see great miracles'.

And so Diocletian rejoiced, thinking that he would be able to make the boy worship his idol. But the blessed Philotheus stepped aside a little [**f.89r *b***] to where the great [people] of the kingdom were sitting and they were saying in their hearts: 'Probably he will consider this and then he will worship Apollo'.

And those three generals who had been sent [to fetch] him were deeply grieved and they were saying to themselves: 'Is he really able to lead astray this just one who performed all these great omens in the name of his God?' And all the high-ranking people of the royal court were thinking the same in their hearts.

But the boy prayed with joy in this manner: 'O God, God of my salvation and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy blessed Spirit, who are also Trinity consubstantial, undivided and unchangeable, [**f.89v *a***] by whose holy name I have performed all these great omens. You, who has given strength to Moses, your great blessed prophet, to do all these wonders before the Pharaoh, breaking down the power of Jannes and Jambres; You, who has given power to Elijah to slay all the priests of Baal before Ahab, IAO, Adonai, Lord Sabaoth, Blessed of the blessed, receive my prayer! I am your servant Philotheus; as You have been with me until I fulfil your will, be now with me also until I fulfil your will concerning Diocletian in every deed [**f.89v *b***] and every power that I will use [them], so that this crowd might believe in your name through me. And strengthen me, so that I might remain immovable until I fulfil my witnessing in your

blessed name and [that of] your beloved Son Jesus Christ and your Holy Spirit and your honoured angels, from now and unto the ages of ages. Amen'.

When he finished this confession, he went into the middle where the idols were. And everyone was watching him [wondering] what he was going to do. When he came near the small golden statue, immediately it fell down on the earth on its face. The boy Philotheus said: 'O God, who has given fire [**f.90r *a***] from heaven to the prophet Elijah, your servant, give me also fire from heaven to burn this idol before all this multitude of people who are standing here'. And behold, immediately fire came from heaven and burnt down the idol before everyone. And the gold which was in the statue became a big lump on a side, while the precious stones were gathered separately.

Then Diocletian said to the boy Philotheus: 'O Philotheus, you have done this by means of magic! If this is what you are looking for, well then, I have here a magician [**f.90r *b***] who is greater than you'.

And he ordered to bring there a great magician who was very powerful in magic. His name was Elementas. He came and stood before the boy, and said to him: 'O Lord Philotheus, you are the one who has burnt down Apollo, the great god of the emperor! But I will be victorious against what you have done to him – all the people will see the statue standing before you again, just as it was before'.

Saint Philotheus said to him: 'Do as you wish, O wretched one, for it is not long before you shall go down to hell and receive the inheritance with your father, the devil'.

Then the magician [**f.90v *a***] ordered that fire be brought to him and he kindled it before the emperor. He took the lump of gold [that remained] of the idol and the precious stones, and cried out, saying names. He then cast the gold and the gems on the fire and immediately the image of that idol came out from the fire looking exactly the same as it had been made in the beginning.

And in this moment the emperor embraced the magician's head and kissed him on his head, saying: 'Now I have understood how great the power of my gods is'. He turned to Philotheus and said to him: 'Did not I tell you that the magician of this place would defeat you?'

And Saint Philotheus answered him: 'When God wished to destroy the sinners from the people of [**f.90v *b***] Israel, He allowed the devil to create a golden calf. They gave their earrings to Aaron, the priest of God, and he cast them into the fire – and the calf came from the fire without any work, without anvil or hammer of the artisan's hand, for God

wished to destroy all sinners. For this reason, O emperor, you shall see what will happen to this miserable magician'.

And Saint Philotheus came to the statue and gave it a blow with his foot, saying: 'Go down to the abyss, O soulless, and you will be a witness against lawless Diocletian on the [**f.91r *a***] day of judgement!'

And in that moment the earth opened and let the statue fall down to the abyss, while everyone was watching this. And then the earth covered the idol.

The magician said: 'Let this not bother you, O emperor! I will make sacrifices to call Tartaroukhos, the angel of hell, and he will make the earth cast out our god'.

So, the magician got up, took the tooth[9] of a lioness, some hair from a wild pig, the horn of a hart, some treacle clover, palm fibre and papyrus, and he cast them on fire with some other herbs, calling [**f.91r *b***] Tartarouchos. And the earth opened down to the very abyss, and there was no sign of the idol, because he had gone to where the righteous one had ordered him to go.

So, Saint Philotheus said again: 'I tell you, O doer of lawlessness, go down to hell and have enjoyment with your father, the devil, until the end of time!' And with great command the magician fell down into the abyss to the Tartarus of hell, and everyone was watching this. And then the earth covered him.

When the people saw this great miracle that happened, they cried out altogether loudly: '[**f.91v *a***] One is the God of Saint Philotheus!' And immediately those three generals – Kaliopios, Marcella and Christophorus – marched to Diocletian with their nine hundred soldiers. They unanimously said to Diocletian: 'O lawless emperor, who forgot God who created you! We confess that we are Christians and we are armed for the service of Christ, King of Philotheus, who performs these miracles before you. Thus we will conquer you, and your god and your magician!' The emperor became very angry and ordered to seize the blessed [**f.91v *b***] Philotheus, saying: 'With evil you came to me here today, O lawless one! For I have laboured to spare you for the sake of your beauty, [hoping] that you might become wise, but you have not done this: you have destroyed my great god, who was giving me strength in every place, equally you have done to my magician, and afterwards you bewitched my three generals and their troops. I swear by the power of the Romans, that I will cause your flesh to be cut into small pieces!'

And then the emperor in great wrath ordered that he be stretched out, tied to four thongs, and scourged with cords made of bull's sinews until his flesh became weak and

[9] The scribe wrote ⲟⲩⲃⲉ instead of ⲟⲃⲩⲉ, 'tooth'.

dropped off little by little upon the ground. He then ordered that vinegar [**f.92r *a***] and quick-lime be poured into his wounds. The emperor said to him: 'You have experienced the beginning of tortures, O Lord Philotheus, so will you make sacrifices or not?'

Saint Philotheus answered him: 'It will never happen to me that I forsake God, O dragon that is in the abyss! But rather you have given me great confidence today, for because of this small torture that you have caused to my body, I have been deemed worthy to receive the punishment for the name of my God, the Lord Jesus Christ. It was like a pleasure from wine that I have deserved to receive tortures for the name of my King Christ'.

Now Diocletian was even more [**f.92r *b***] angered when he heard this, and ordered that the boy be thrown into prison, tied with chains of iron and that a huge stone of four hundred (centenarium)[10] pounds be put on him until morning.

And behold, the angel Raphael appeared before him and loosened his bonds and healed him from scourging. He said to Philotheus: 'Be strong and fortify yourself!'

The angel of the Lord gave him strength, touched his body and healed him, for he was a boy. And then the angel went up to heaven, while the boy was looking at him.

The next morning the emperor Diocletian called [**f.92v *a***] his three generals, saying to them and to their nine hundred soldiers: 'What happened to you yesterday that you said those words? For I know that you said those words because that boy had bewitched you; but I have beaten him as he deserved!'

They all replied to him unanimously: 'What we said yesterday we also repeat today; namely, that we are Christians and we worship the God of Saint Philotheus. And regarding your words that Philotheus bewitched us, that is not correct, but he is the one who will destroy your magic before Christ, our King'. [**f.92v *b***] The emperor then asked them: 'What are these words that you are saying? Go now, make sacrifices and fulfil your military duty!'

The three generals altogether answered him: 'Let this be obvious to you – it will not happen again that we and our nine hundred soldiers will take part in your magic with you. But we will be companions of our brother Philotheus in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

And again the emperor did not want to kill them, because they were mighty warriors and they had been fighting for him in war. So he pretended to forget this. When [**f.93r**

[10] ΚΕΝΤΕΝΑΡΙΟΝ (Lat. 'centenarium') is a weight of 100 pounds.

a] they understood that he did not want to kill them, they made up a resolution together with their nine hundred soldiers: they drew out their swords from the sheaths and said to Diocletian: 'As our Lord and our great King lives, if you do not quickly pronounce a sentence upon us, we shall kill you and everyone who is around you!'

Then Diocletian was frightened, for he knew that they were able to raise a great riot against him. And he pronounced a sentence, so they were all beheaded by the sword: they were nine hundred soldiers and [**f.93r** *b*] three generals. And thus they completed their martyrdom on the 28th of month Koiak. And the crowd saw the angels crowning them and elevating their souls to heaven with great joy and singing.

After this the emperor with many threats ordered the blessed apa Philotheus to be brought out, for he was very angry with him because of those three generals and their multitude of soldiers. He said to the righteous one: 'Without reckoning what you have done to me – make a sacrifice, so that you do not die horribly!' The boy replied: 'It is obvious, O lawless one, that you will [**f.93v** *a*] be ashamed before me, you and your erring!'

The emperor said to him: 'Are you going to perform magic again before me in the name of Jesus?' And Saint Philotheus ran to him and gave him a strong blow, saying: 'Shut your mouth, O evil beast, for you are speaking blasphemy against Him who created you!' And immediately the emperor's face swelled from behind, his tongue filled the mouth, so that he became dumb and could not utter a word. And he fell down and worshipped the saint with his head and hands, but he could not utter a word.

And all the great people [of the court] began to implore Saint Philotheus to heal him. [**f.93v** *b*] The blessed Philotheus said: 'O my King Jesus, whom this lawless one was speaking blasphemy against, grant him healing until he fulfils his will on us'. And forthwith his mouth was opened and he began to speak. He said in great anger: 'The devil gave him boldness against the righteous one, because he fought with him and defeated him'. He said: 'You think, O Philotheus, that through your voice of your magic I will be scared of you. No, but I for my part will teach you!'

And at this moment [**f.94r** *a*] the lawless one ordered his tongue to be cut out, then his eyes to be plucked out and the elbows of his arms and the feet of his legs to be cut, and to strike him in the mouth until his teeth and the bones of his face would lie down on the earth.

And the saint received all these tortures. He looked up to the heaven and said: 'Jesus is my King, may my soul and spirit be ready to accept the pain for His blessed name, so that in resurrection I would stand before You in your kingdom. Send to me now quickly

your angel Raphael to give me [**f.94r *b***] my limbs, so that I will put to shame this beast and the works of his hands!'

Then, while these words still were in his mouth, the angel Raphael said to him: 'Behold, I am at your right hand at every hour, O Philotheus, and I have never left you. Now, open your mouth and your eyes and speak, and stretch out your hands and legs, and walk in the name of our King Jesus, for I am always with you in every trouble, and I am giving you strength'.

And in that moment all [the limbs] were given to him, so he stood before the emperor and none of his limbs was destroyed. The saint said to him: 'O beast, [**f.94v *a***] look, my King Jesus granted me my limbs once again, and again I have come to put you to shame!'

Diocletian said to him: 'Go now and be wise – make a sacrifice and I will make you my cubicularius (chamberlain), you will always be before me, for you are very handsome in your appearance and I like you very much'.

Saint Philotheus answered him: 'I am wise at all times and I have come again to receive wisdom and progress. But if you wish me to make a sacrifice to your gods, well then, let us go to a place which is broader, so that all the multitude of people of this city may see me making a sacrifice'.

The emperor rejoiced very much, [**f.94v *b***] he took Philotheus' head and put a kiss on it. He said: 'Now you give great rest to me, O my son Philotheus, by saying that you will make sacrifices to my gods!'

And on the instant he ordered the herald to proclaim around the whole city: 'Gather in the theatre and see Philotheus performing a sacrifice to the emperor's gods!' When all the people of the city heard this, they were grieved, because many of them had come to believe in God through Philotheus and the many healings that he had been performing. [They were saying]: 'Woe to us! What has happened to you, our Lord Philotheus? Can it be that the spirit of erring has led away your heart from God? [**f.95r *a***] But let us go and see what happens!' And all the people of the city have gathered in the theatre to see what was going to happen to the righteous one. And the emperor with all crowd and all his great people came to see what was going to happen.

Diocletian said to the blessed one: 'I am telling you, O my son Philotheus, do what you are going to do, and we will go and have a feast today!'

Then the blessed Philotheus asked him: 'I beg you, O emperor, [to tell me] how many gods and how many priests do you have here?' The emperor said: 'I have seventy male gods here, apart from the female ones, [**f.95r *b***] and I have two priests for every god who

bring the gods out'. Saint Philotheus said to him: 'Then you have one hundred and forty priests who serve your gods?' The emperor answered: 'Yes, indeed, I have here one hundred and forty priests and they eat from this dining table all together'.

Then Saint Philotheus said: 'Look, is there someone whom you want me to worship from among these seventy gods? The one in whose power you trust, bring him here and put him in the middle of the crowd, then I will worship him so that everyone could see me and learn!' The emperor exclaimed: 'Good is the word that you have said that you want me to bring more of them to you'.

[**f.95v** ***a***] The blessed one said: 'Bring now your great god, who is strong in his power!' And Diocletian replied: 'I will tell to bring you Phyrakles (Hercules), who is mighty in his strength!' And the emperor ordered the statue to be brought and two priests were standing before it. And it was written on the image: 'This is Phyracles, the great god'.

When Saint Philotheus saw it, he smiled and said: 'O my Lord Jesus, great King, You see the insanity of this erring emperor, for he calls this soulless statue god, but give me power on everything that I am going to do, O my Lord Jesus Christ, so that all this multitude of people might believe in [**f.95v** ***b***] You, my King Jesus!' And the angel Raphael was standing at his right hand at every time. Then the blessed Philotheus said to Diocletian: 'O evil beast, well now, your gods are powerless in every manner, if they need to be carried and cannot walk!' He then said: 'I tell you, O soulless statue, I command you in the name of my King Jesus, go quickly to the temple and bring the other sixty nine statues here to me with their one hundred and thirty-eight priests! Bring them here to me quickly, so that the power of my Lord Jesus might be seen today in the middle of this crowd!'

And the idol [**f.96r** ***a***] quickly went to the temple. There it said to the idols: 'I tell you, O statues of gold and silver, whom Diocletian created in his insanity and whom he called gods though they are not, that the servant of God Philotheus tells you to come quickly!' And immediately they all jumped down from their bases, for the angel Raphael was chasing them. And they all went out of the temple with their priests, while people were watching them until they entered the theatre and stood before Saint Philotheus in fear. And then they said altogether: 'Here we have come, O servant of God, because we have been [**f.96r** ***b***] told that you were calling us'. When the crowd saw these great wonders, they all started to cry: 'One is the God of Saint Philotheus, Jesus, Son of the living God!' Meanwhile the emperor was perplexed when he saw what had happened, for great confusion had arisen among the people.

And after a while the blessed one made a sign to the crowd to be silent. When they had become silent, Saint Philotheus said to the priests: 'O stupid and blind ones, sons of destruction, for how long will you be instruments of these idols? You are leading astray the souls of those who follow you!' The priests answered him: 'Be patient with us, our lord, [**f.96v *a***] and we will tell you. We have been idle since our childhood and we do not have any skills, so when the emperor began to make these gods, we rejoiced and joined them only for the sake of food and drink, and for every idle thing. Now we will die because of them and we shall answer to God for them'.

Saint Philotheus said: 'If you know that God exists and He will judge you, why do you do this all the more?' And these one hundred and forty priests unanimously replied: 'O our Lord Philotheus, we have finished speaking to you in these words, for you have the power to deal with us according to your will'.

The athlete of Christ said: 'For this reason [**f.96v *b***] you will die by the hands of your idols'. Then the blessed one said to those seventy statues: 'I tell you, O soulless statues, I command to each one of you in the name of my King Jesus to rise against your two priests and kill them'.

And then each idol seized the neck of the priest and twisted it, and they were smiting them on the earth, and the priests were dying in an instant. And when they understood that they all would die, some of them cried out: 'We confess You, O God of Saint Philotheus!' But Saint Philotheus said: 'Let none of them remain, not a single one, for it is out of fear that they confessed Christ'.

[**f.97r *a***] And when the idols had slaughtered all the priests, he turned to these idols and said to them: 'I tell you in your presence, O soulless ones, I command you to go down to hell until that hour in which God will judge all sinners of the earth. And you shall be witnessing about Diocletian and all that he has done to the servants of god, the blessed martyrs'.

And in that moment the earth opened and those one hundred and seventy statues fell down. And all the people were watching this and crying out: 'One is the God of Christians! One is the God of Philotheus, Christ Jesus! And we openly are all Christians.'

[**f.97r *b***] When the emperor saw what happened, he tore his garment and his purple raiment, and began to strike his own face, shouting loudly: 'Let no ease ever come to the body of the man who brought to me this boy! For in the first place he has destroyed my god and killed my magician; secondly he brought to death my three generals and their nine hundred soldiers. And now again he destroyed all my gods and their priests, and after this he made the whole city follow him! What should I do now? What should I do

with him?' And the people of the city continued shouting: 'O dragon, who is in the abyss, we are Christians openly!'

[**f.97v *a***] And since the crowd continued shouting that 'we are Christians, servants of Jesus Christ, the God of Philotheus', Diocletian became very angry. He said to the soldiers who were standing before him: 'Go now into the crowd and kill them, spare neither little nor adult, neither old nor young, not even a suckling child, until they recognize only my gods!'

Then the emperor's soldiers closed up the doors of the theatre and began slaughtering the people of the city from the dawn until sunset. And Saint Philotheus was edifying the people, [saying]: 'Struggle [**f.97v *b***] and do not fear, O athletes of Christ, for ready are your crowns and they will be given to you by angels who are waiting for you!' And thus, none of the holy ones drew back, from little ones to adults. After they had spent many hours killing the servants of God, a great general who was sitting before Diocletian, whose name was Romanus, who was the father of Apa Victor. He said to Diocletian: 'Our lord and emperor, you will wipe out the whole city; you have not understood that they do not really know what they are saying, because Philotheus has bewitched them!'

And immediately he ordered the soldiers to [**f.98r *a***] bring those whom they were killing. They counted those who were killed and the number was nine hundred and thirty six souls. Thus these saints finished their martyrdom on the second day of month Tobi and went up into heavens with joy and glory. And the saints were taken and buried with those three generals and their nine hundred soldiers.

Then blessed Philotheus turned to Romanus and said: 'O great dragon, full of poison, you are cursed, you and what you have said with your mouth, for you are a stumbling block at all times. [**f.98r *b***] And God will judge you for all what you have done to the servants of God!'

And in this moment an evil and unclean spirit entered Romanus and tormented him. He began to chase the emperor, wishing to kill him, and the emperor was imploring the saint to heal Romanus.

Then the blessed Philotheus said: 'Jesus, my King, have mercy on him and forgive his unbelief, release him from this evil spirit until he comes into your hands, and then you will teach him'. Immediately the evil spirit left him.

Romanus said to Diocletian: 'I swear by [**f.98v *a***] your health and power! We have seen many from the Christians performing wonders before us by their magic means, but we have not seen anyone like this boy, who is not yet fifteen years old!'

Diocletian said to Romanus and to all great people [of his court]: 'What other chastisement can I give the boy for the evil that he has done to us?' And all his great people said: 'We would like you to cut him in pieces and then burn him with fire until he dies. And then you should take the ash and throw it into the sea so that his body might never be found, thus they will not be able to build a martyrium for him – for they build such martyria in the recent [**f.98v *b***] times and great miracles happen in them. And now, our lord and emperor, we want you to apply this torture to him'.

And the emperor ordered him to be tortured in this manner, as they had proposed. The soldiers went and brought the boy in order to do according to the emperor's command. These soldiers said to him: 'O Philotheus, we would like to spare you for the sake of your beauty, but we are frightened by the emperor's command!'

And Philotheus, the noble and righteous one, answered them: 'I am very grateful to you, my brothers, may the Lord have mercy on you and may He not punish you. You will do me a favour, if you fulfil the command of the emperor'.

He sealed himself in the name of [**f.99r *a***] Jesus Christ and said: 'My Lord Jesus Christ, if Your will is that I finish my struggle in this punishment, then let Your will be fulfilled!'

And the soldiers were striking him with their swords until his flesh fell into pieces. Then they took the pieces of his flesh and burned them in the fire, and after this they took the ash and threw into the sea according to the emperor's command.

When they informed the emperor, he greatly rejoiced and said: 'Why could not his magic save him from my hands?'

And, behold, suddenly the Saviour descended from heaven sitting on the Cherubim who were glorifying Him – [**f.99r *b***] thousands of thousands with myriads of myriads.

He stood upon the sea and called three times: 'Philotheus! Philotheus! Philotheus! Learn that I am your Lord and your King!'

And immediately he jumped out from the sea, shining as someone who has just got up from a feast. He said: 'Here I am, my Lord!' The Lord said to him: 'Know me, O Philotheus!' He fell down and worshipped Him, kissing the chest and the head of Jesus.

Then he said: 'O my Lord Jesus, You gave me grace exceedingly, You gave me power and raised me to perform many healings, You granted me great mercy to fulfil Your will [**f.99v *a***] before this lawless emperor. Also You gave me power to raise up my pagan parents and You granted them place of repose for my sake, o my Lord Jesus! But what am I that You give me all these mercies?'

And the Saviour said to him gently: 'O Philotheus, go and appear before the emperor once again, because he was saying 'I am fortified against you'. And I am with you and I will show great wonders through you in every place, where your name will be called. I will give you glory on earth like that of the son of Romanus.

Everyone who calls your name with faith, [**f.99v** ***b***] being in distress or in troubles on the earth, if he says: 'In the name of God of Saint Philotheus, have mercy on me!', I will quickly grant him My mercy. Or if he is in danger of prison, or in bonds of iron or in any danger in the sea, or in rivers, or in danger of murder or theft, or in any other trouble of this world – if he calls your name and Mine with faith, I will help him.

Also, if a woman calls your name and Mine with faith, while asking for a son, I will give her, and also if she is in birth pains, I will ease them for her quickly.

And if a man [**f.100r** ***a***] plants a vineyard or seeds in the field and calls your name above these plants, I will multiply them and will double their fruits. Him who brings a gift or an offering to your shrine on the day of your memory I will reward sevenfold in My kingdom. He who builds a martyrium in your name on earth, I will allow him to recline at the feast of a thousand years and he will enjoy it in My kingdom. For him who feeds poor and hungry in your name I will make it so that he will not be in want of anything that exists on the earth. Him who gives a cup of water at your feast I will reward sevenfold in My kingdom. And I will not cause [**f.100r** ***b***] them any hindrance in anything good on the earth. And in every shrine on earth that is named in your honour and where your martyrdom is read, I will every day heal a person in illness, be it a paralyzed man, or one possessed by demons, or one suffering from fever – moreover, suffering from any disease – I will heal one of them every day.

Him who perjures in your place I will not forgive in the world to come and he will receive great torments on the earth.

Behold, I have granted three crowns to you: one for your virginity, and another one for your prayers and chastity, and the third one for your blood, which will be shed for My name. And I will leave the angel Raphael [**f.100v** ***a***] and he will not leave your place, serving you forever. Amen.

Go now and put to shame Diocletian, for in three days you will complete your lifetime and ascend with great glory into heavens to me'.

And the Saviour put his hands on Philotheus' body and blessed him. He then ascended into heavens with great glory.

Saint Philotheus got up in great strength and the power of Christ was with him. He went into the royal palace to Diocletian and began to reproach him, saying: 'O dragon, who is in the abyss, and apostate, whom [**f.100v *b***] God will destroy by the spirit of his mouth! Do you not know that you do not have power against the servant of God on high, O shameless emperor?'

And Diocletian did not know what to answer, so he was saying to himself: 'Better for me not to be ignorant of this, for the boy might put me to greater shame than the first time, when he destroyed my gods with their priests'.

So, since he did not respond to the blessed one, [the boy] took some sharp stones and threw them at his face,[11] so that he was bleeding. Then Diocletian ordered him to be brought near and said: 'Since I love you more than your parents [loved you], now listen to me and make a sacrifice, [**f.101r *a***] so that you might become a great patrician in the palace. Do you not you see Phirmus and Andronicus here, great and rich men, who came today to fulfill the duty – to stand before the altar, to offer the incense and make a sacrifice?'

Blessed Philotheus answered him: 'O lawless one, have I not seen so many before these that you are now trying to flatter them, until they will listen to you and make sacrifices? And then you bring upon them great wounds and shame <…>[12]

More than a hymn again you have not endured. You have questioned your god.

Truly, if danger befalls you, you will not endure with me.' Are these not the things you usually do to those who will [**f.101r *b***] listen to you, O lawless one, and will make sacrifices to your empty gods?'

Because the boy did not wish to finish his struggle, he hastily ran to the impious one, tore off the crown from his head and cast it down on the earth, so that its precious stones fell on the earth. Then the saint spat on his face, saying: 'Be ashamed, O lawless one! I have destroyed all works of your hands and your power, for my God is with me!'

And then Diocletian became very angry and ordered him to be brought out and pierced with spears [**f.101v *a***] and his body to be burned. This was his sentence. When the soldiers went out with him, following the emperor's order, they saw the angel Raphael going with the boy. They were like two brothers going the same way.

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[11] The same episode is found in the *Martyrdom of Isidorus* – the saint's sister, Sophia, throws stones in the face of the emperor. Cf. H. Munier, 'Les actes du martyre de Saint Isidore' in *BIFAO* 14 (1918), p.106.

[12] There must be a lacuna or some kind of corruption in the text here, because the following two phrases are not linked with the previous statement.

And the then the righteous one turned his face to the east and began to pray, saying: 'O Father of all, dwelling in the light that no one can approach except for your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ and your Holy Spirit!

I know, O my Lord, that I am a pagan and a son of pagans. But You have enabled me and my parents to know You, and You have given me power [**f.101v *b***] to perform all these great [works] before the emperor and all his court. Besides, You have granted a great number of healings through the hand of your servant, O my Lord Jesus Christ, who looks at the earth and shakes it to its second abyss, who gave great powers to the mouths of his prophets and his apostles and servants, the holy martyrs, who descended from the heavens, entered the burning furnace and saved the three holy men so that the fire did not touch them, who gave an order to Raphael, your Archangel, who remains with me and serves me until I finish all these mighty deeds and signs in your holy name, [**f.102r *a***] to protect my body from the fire of this tyrant so that he might not rejoice in ruining my body, and so that he might not say: 'I have polluted him with my great power'. To You belongs glory, O Mightiest of all, with your beloved Son and your Holy Spirit for ages of ages. Amen'.

After Saint Philotheus had uttered 'Amen', he said to the soldiers: 'Get up now, my children, and fulfill the order of your lawless emperor!'

The soldiers got up and looked into his face – they saw that it was like that of an angel of God. These ten soldiers were driven back and did not dare to put their hands on the [**f.102r *b***] servant of God. But two of them pierced the blessed one in his sides: one in the right side and the other one in the left. And from his sides came water and blood and milk.

And the angel Raphael prepared his garment. He took his blood and his soul and brought them up to heavens with great glory, and everyone was looking at him. And his soul received three crowns as the Saviour had foretold to him.

After this the soldiers set up a fire and threw his body into it. And power from God came down from heaven [**f.102v *a***] and took his body from the fire.

The brothers who had received healing from him took him with great praise and buried him. Thus blessed Philotheus completed his martyrdom on the sixteenth of the month of Tobi, before our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom belongs glory with his All-Good Father and the Holy Spirit to the ages of ages. Amen.

Appendix III. Coptic hymns in honour of Philotheus from the Difnar

Psali Adam, pp.16-17

There is sweetness of a honeycomb in the tongue of Philotheus while he is saying to his parents the following words:

'Show me God so that I might worship Him. I am a little child and I do not know anything'.

They showed him the calf who they worshipped in his [ⲕⲟⲛⲧⲁⲣⲓⲟⲛ]

'My father and my mother have abandoned my Lord Jesus Christ'.

Truly, they justly named you Philotheus [that is] he who loves God.

From your childhood you were seeking God in you free will which was truly right.

Because of this Lord Jesus Christ gave you grace of the Holy Spirit. You saved your parents.

Your [ⲅⲟⲩⲓ] was enlightened by the rays of the Holy Spirit which shone in you.

Your pagan parents did not know the God of heaven Who created the created world.

You made them know Him through the grace of Christ which was in you because of your virginity.

You prepared their souls as a true gift to Jesus Christ with His good Father.

In your great love for Christ you gave your body into great tortures.

For this Christ crowned you with an unfading crown in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Psali Batos, p.17

Truly I am amazed and my mind is stupefied when I speak of your glory, O holy Philotheus!

For your pagan parents worshipped a grass-eating calf; they called him Smaragdos and served him in this way.

When the blessed Philotheus saw the sun rising, he said: 'Maybe this is God Who created everything'.

But God appeared to him in the cloud of light and the chariot of cherubim and angels was gliding under Him.

Michael the angel raised the child who fell down on his face because he was afraid to look at this.

'Look at me, O Philotheus, stand up and do not be afraid! I am the Son of the living God Whom you have been seeking.

You know, O Philotheus, that I have chosen you so that powers will be [revealed] through you during your life and after your death!'

Have mercy on us the poor ones in Christ Whom you loved; give us his grace as a gift of the Spirit the Comforter.

Forgive us our sins, O our good Saviour, through the prayers of Philotheus for he is our protector.

Be for us as a wall, O holy martyr Philotheus, because God gave you glory above the measure of people.

Rejoice, O Philotheus, who killed the calf you parents had been worshipping and brought them back to the true God!

Rejoice, O Philotheus, who raised them who were dead after three days and gave them as a gift to the true God!

Rejoice, O Philotheus, who put to shame the kings and their evil leader who is the Satan.

Rejoice, O Philotheus, who received the incorruptible crown of martyrdom and celebrate with Jesus Christ!

Pray to God for us!

Additional hymn to St Philotheus, p.114.

...In the rays of the Holy Spirit which shine in you.

Also your pagan parents did not know God – you made them know Him through the grace of Christ which was in you.

Also you prepared their souls as a gift to the Holy God – they became worthy of the good things that remain for ever.

Because of your great zeal and love for Christ you gave your holy body to great tortures.

Holy martyr and soldier of Christ, blessed Philotheus, the faithful servant!

You put to shame the Satan with his evil demons through your great endurance when they tortured you.

You overcame the tortures through your great strength, preparing for yourself the crown of martyrdom.

He [ⲁⲭⲑⲣⲟⲩⲱⲗ] your head for the head of Christ; you brought the labours and prayers and joined all the saints, O holy judge of a contest!