

## A Coptic Fragment of the Gospel of John with *Hermeneiai* (P.CtYBR inv. 4641)\*

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This article discusses briefly a category of New Testament manuscripts with ‘*hermeneiai*’ before offering a critical edition of P.CtYBR inv. 4641, a Coptic codex leaf containing portions of the text of John that was recently discovered by the present author in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University. Unidentified until now, this codex leaf represents the first known example of a *hermeneia* manuscript of John written solely in Coptic. As such, the Yale fragment has much significance for discussions about the ἐρμηνεῖα manuscripts, their origin, influences and functions.

**Keywords:** Coptic New Testament, Gospel of John, P.CtYBR inv. 4641, *hermeneia*, codex leaf, New Testament manuscripts

### 1. Introduction

Among the registered manuscripts containing the Greek text of the Gospel of John, there are a total of five papyrus fragments and three parchment fragments known as ‘*hermeneia*’ manuscripts, that is, fragments containing a certain passage from the Gospel of John, below which occurs the word ἐρμηνεῖα, centred on the page, which is then followed by a kind of enigmatic comment or note on the biblical citation.<sup>1</sup> All of these manuscripts follow precisely this tripartite pattern: (1) some text of John, (2) the word ἐρμηνεῖα and (3) a brief comment. To give

\* I thank Wally V. Cirafesi and Kevin W. Wilkinson for graciously providing copies of their forthcoming articles on the *hermeneia* manuscripts and the anonymous reviewers of this journal for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.

1 The texts are: P.Vindob. G 26214 (P<sup>55</sup>), P.Ness. II 3 (P<sup>59</sup>), P.Berlin 11914 (P<sup>63</sup>), P.Vindob. G 36102 (P<sup>76</sup>), P.Monts. Roca 83 (P<sup>80</sup>), lost parchment from Damascus (0145), P.Berlin 3607 + 3623 (0210) and P.Berlin 21315 (0302). Two further manuscripts (P.Ness. II 4 (P<sup>60</sup>) and P.Vindob. G 26084 (0256)) are likely ἐρμηνεῖα manuscripts, although the term ἐρμηνεῖα is not visible. Codex Bezae (GA 05) has ἐρμηνεῖα but they occur in Mark’s Gospel and lack the tripartite structure of other ἐρμηνεῖα manuscripts; the ἐρμηνεῖα appear at the bottom of the page and were added by a much later scribe.

just one example, I reproduce here the verso of P.Monts. Roca 83<sup>2</sup> (formerly P. Barc. 83), also known as P<sup>80</sup>:

[Text of John 3.34]  
ἐρμηνεία<sup>3</sup>

ἀληθῆ ἐστιν τὰ λ[ελαλημένα]  
παρ' αὐτοῦ ἐάν σ[υ ἐν αὐτοῖς]  
ὠφελθῆση.

Thus, the comment appears to be a statement that expresses something further about the phrase ‘speaks the words of God’ (τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ λαλεῖ) that occurs in the Johannine citation. In addition to the Greek comments in these eight manuscripts, there are also comments in Coptic alongside the Greek in P.Berlin 11914 (P<sup>63</sup>) and Paris, BnF Copte 156, a Greco-Coptic manuscript discovered at Antinoe and published by Walter E. Crum in 1904.<sup>4</sup> There are also ἐρμηνεία comments in Latin in Codex Sangermanensis (GA 0319), as well as in manuscripts in Armenian and Georgian.<sup>5</sup> All extant ἐρμηνεία manuscripts, of which only a handful are known to us today, are by definition ‘non-continuous’ manuscripts (or fragments thereof), in that they were not originally written out as complete and *continuous* (i.e. unbroken or uninterrupted) copies of whole books.<sup>6</sup>

2 Published by R. Roca-Puig, ‘Papiro del evangelio de San Juan con “Hermeneia”: P.Bar. inv. 83—Jo 3,34’, *Atti dell’ XI Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia, Milano 2-8 Settembre 1965* (Milan: Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere, 1966) 225–36. This papyrus now resides in the Montserrat Abbey in Spain.

3 A common misspelling (itacism) of ἐρμηνεία.

4 W. E. Crum, ‘Two Coptic Papyri from Antinoe’, *Proceedings from the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 26 (1904) 174–8, esp. 174–6. Paris, BnF Copte 156 was re-edited by H. Quecke, ‘Zu den Joh-Fragmenten mit “Hermeneiai”’, *Orientalia* 40 (1974) 407–4 and cited as ‘K’ in G. W. Horner’s edition of the Sahidic New Testament (*The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect* (7 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1911–24)). See also J. van Haelst, *Catalogue des papyrus littéraires juifs et chrétiens* (Paris: Sorbonne, 1976), no. 1124. On the problem of classifying non-continuous New Testament manuscripts (including ἐρμηνεία manuscripts), see S. E. Porter, ‘Textual Criticism in the Light of Diverse Textual Evidence for the Greek New Testament: An Expanded Proposal’, *New Testament Manuscripts: Their Text and their World* (ed. T. J. Kraus and T. Nicklas; TENT 2; Leiden: Brill, 2006) 305–50.

5 See the survey in B. Outtier, ‘Les Prosermeneia du Codex Bezae’, in *Codex Bezae: Studies from the Lunel Colloquium June 1994* (ed. D. C. Parker and C.-B. Amphoux; NTTS 22; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 74–78.

6 On the definition of a ‘continuous manuscript’, see E. J. Epp, ‘The Papyrus Manuscripts of the New Testament’, *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (ed. B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995) 5.

The function of these comments is anything but clear. Bruce M. Metzger, Stanley E. Porter and, most recently, Wally V. Cirafesi and Kevin W. Wilkinson have all written significant articles on the ἑρμηνεῖαι.<sup>7</sup> Drawing on J. Rendel Harris' work on *sortes sanctorum* and the Greek–Latin ἑρμηνεῖαι in Codex Bezae (GA 05) and Codex Sangermanensis (GA 0319), Metzger argues that these special manuscripts were likely used for the purpose of divination and not as a reading copy of the Gospel.<sup>8</sup> According to Metzger, the ἑρμηνεῖαι were oracles disconnected from the biblical text above.

Other scholars, such as Porter, disagree with the theory that these are oracular statements. According to Porter, the ἑρμηνεῖαι are 'biblically motivated and connected reflections on the biblical text', or at least individual parts thereof.<sup>9</sup> In a similar line of argument, Cirafesi, highlighting the bilingual character of these manuscripts, suggests that ἑρμηνεῖαι are interpretive comments (loosely understood) that functioned as liturgical tools to facilitate early Christian worship services needing to accommodate the use of two languages within a particular community'.<sup>10</sup> In support of this thesis, one may also point to the occurrence of the 'summary notes' in P.Bodmer VIII (P<sup>72</sup>), where it appears that a Coptic scribe was responsible for drawing attention to certain themes in the

7 B. M. Metzger, 'Greek Manuscripts of John's Gospels with "Hermeneiai"', *Text and Testimony: Essays on New Testament and Apocryphal Literature in Honour of A. F. J. Klijn* (ed. T. Baarda et al.; Kampen: Kok, 1988) 162–9; S. E. Porter, 'The Use of Hermeneia and Johannine Papyrus Manuscripts', *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Wien 22.–28. Juli 2001* (ed. B. Palme; Papyrologica Vindobonensia 1; Vienna: Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2007) 573–80; W. V. Cirafesi, 'The Bilingual Character and Liturgical Function of "Hermeneiai" in Johannine Papyrus Manuscripts: A New Proposal', *NovT* 56 (forthcoming); K. W. Wilkinson, 'Hermeneiai in Manuscripts of John's Gospel: An Aid to Bibliomancy', *My Lots Are in Thy Hands* (ed. A. M. Luijendijk and W. Klingshirn; Leiden: Brill, forthcoming). See also D. C. Parker, 'Manuscripts of John's Gospel with Hermeneiai', in *Transmission and Reception: New Testament Text-Critical and Exegetical Studies* (ed. J. W. Childers; TaS 3.4; Piscataway: Gorgias, 2006) 48–68. Parker shows in his study through a textual analysis of the eight manuscripts that 'these are documents which are of use to the editor of John' (68).

8 See J. Rendel Harris, *The Annotators of the Codex Bezae (with Some Notes on Sortes Sanctorum)* (London: Clay, 1901). For a discussion of Coptic fragments of *sortes sanctorum* lacking biblical citation, see A. van Lantschoot, 'Une collection sahidique de "Sortes Sanctorum"', *Le Muséon* 69 (1956) 35–52; L. Papini, 'Fragments of the *Sortes Sanctorum* from the Shrine of St. Colluthus', *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt* (ed. D. Frankfurter; Leiden: Brill, 1998) 393–401, and the literature cited there.

9 Porter, 'The Use of Hermeneia', 579. See also S. E. Porter, 'What Do We Know and How Do We Know It? Reconstructing Early Christianity from Its Manuscripts', *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture* (ed. S. E. Porter and A. W. Pitts; TENT 9; Leiden: Brill, 2013) 41–70, at 60–3.

10 Cirafesi, 'Hermeneiai'. Cf. H. Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 231: 'Thus both the production of non-Greek versions of scripture and the use of bilingual manuscripts are rooted in the liturgical reading of scripture and witness the effort to make the sense of scripture accessible to all.'

margin,<sup>11</sup> or the Coptic glosses in Old Fayyumic in P.Beatty VII (Isaiah),<sup>12</sup> not to mention anything of the Greco-Coptic lectionaries and various Greco-Coptic New Testament diglots.<sup>13</sup> Such phenomena demonstrate clearly that Coptic and Greek co-existed within many Coptic Christian communities and so Cirafesi's theory concerning liturgical contexts and the need to accommodate the use of more than one language is appealing.

In a forthcoming essay, Kevin W. Wilkinson argues that the ἐρμηνεῖαι were 'an aid to bibliomancy', and that the comments are clearly related to the gospel passages that they accompany (contra Metzger). According to Wilkinson, '[a]nyone wishing to inquire into his or her fate would arrive by some means at a passage of John and then consult the accompanying "interpretation," which translated the language and/or content of the biblical text into an oracular prediction or command'.<sup>14</sup> Wilkinson's treatment of the ἐρμηνεῖαι provides much of the clarity necessary for understanding the structure of the oracular system. However, while the questions about the very nature and purpose of the ἐρμηνεῖαι have not been fully answered, such lines of inquiry are outside the scope of this study.

Now that I have given a brief discussion of the ἐρμηνεῖαι I would like to turn to the primary purpose of this paper. In the summer of 2013, while examining various manuscripts in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University,

- 11 See the list of these 'summary notes' in D. G. Horrell, 'The Themes of 1 Peter: Insights from the Earliest Manuscripts (The Crosby-Schøyen Codex ms 193 and the Bodmer Miscellaneous Codex Containing P<sup>72</sup>)', *NTS* 55.4 (2009) 502-22, at 511-12. The notes in the margin consist of the preposition περί followed by a word or phrase that describes the adjacent text. What is odd about the notes is that most of the words following περί are in the nominative and not the required genitive (e.g. περι εἰρήνη, περι ἀγαπή, περι ἀγνία (*sic*)). Considering that Coptic nouns do not decline and Greco-Coptic words always take the nominative form, we may possibly be dealing with a Coptic scribe. In further support of this, the note at 2 Pet 2.22 glosses ἀληθου (for ἀληθους) with the corresponding Coptic word ꞙꞏꞏ. See also T. Wasserman, *The Epistle of Jude: Its Text and Transmission* (CBNTS 43; Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2006) 31-2.
- 12 R. S. Bagnall (*Early Christian Books in Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009)) refers to the Coptic glossator of P.Beatty VII as 'a member of the book-possessing population, bilingual, a fluent writer, from the Fayyum or somewhere in its vicinity, and probably something of an experimenter with language, because he is not working in an established writing system that he could have learned in school or anywhere else. And, of course, he may be assumed to be a Christian' (67).
- 13 E.g. Florence, Museo Egizio inv. 7134 (P<sup>2</sup>), Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Nationale P. k. 362 + 379 + 381 + 382 + 384 (P<sup>6</sup>), P.Vindob. K 7541-7548 (P<sup>41</sup>), P.Vindob. K 8706/34 (P<sup>42</sup>), P.Oslo inv. 1661 (P<sup>62</sup>), P.Vindob. K 7244 (P<sup>96</sup>), just to name the papyri. For a complete list of Greco-Coptic manuscripts, see S. G. Richter, 'SMR-Liste koptischer neutestamentlicher Bilinguen', *SMR-Datenbank des Projektes Novum Testamentum Graecum - Editio Critica Maior der Nordrhein-Westfälischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Künste*, December 2009, available online at: <http://intf.uni-muenster.de/smr/pdf/SMR-Bilinguen.pdf>.
- 14 Wilkinson, 'Hermeneiai in Manuscripts of John's Gospel'.

I came across P.CtYBR inv. 4641, a previously unpublished Coptic parchment codex leaf, and identified it as a copy of the Gospel of John in the Sahidic dialect containing portions of chapter 3. I further realised that this manuscript contains ἔρμηνεῖαι on both the flesh and hair sides, arranged in the same tripartite structure as all other Johannine ἔρμηνεῖα manuscripts (i.e. citation of John, the word ἔρμηνεῖα, a brief comment). As such, P.CtYBR inv. 4641 represents the first known example of a Coptic-only manuscript with both the text of John and the ἔρμηνεῖαι in Coptic; the other examples that do contain Coptic comments are bilingual.<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Yale fragment has much significance for discussions about the ἔρμηνεῖα manuscripts, their origin, influences and functions. Below, I publish P.CtYBR inv. 4641 by discussing relevant issues pertaining to the manuscript, offering a transcription of its text, and recording variants of special interest.<sup>16</sup>

## 2. The Manuscript

P.CtYBR inv. 4641<sup>17</sup>

14.6 x 9.1 cm

5th–7th c. CE

Provenance Unknown

Yale University purchased the manuscript in 1996 from Gallery Nefer, Zurich, owned by Frieda Tchacos Nussberger, the famous Zurich antiquities dealer who was instrumental in bringing the *Gospel of Judas* to light. It was inventoried under the genre of a ‘literary work’ but its contents remained unidentified until now. The fragment measures 14.6 cm high × 9.1 cm wide, and flesh and hair are distinguishable by colour. There are eleven lines of text on the flesh side and fifteen lines on the hair side. The fragment is from the bottom portion of a codex folio; the bottom left margin (flesh) and bottom right margin (hair) are preserved. Original dimensions cannot be reconstructed with any precision, since the text is not written in a continuous fashion. However, we may tentatively suggest that the upper part of the hair side (now lost) did not contain much text, since it is separated from the text of the flesh by only eleven or so words (by reconstruction). If this estimation is correct, then the original size of the codex must have been relatively small, perhaps falling within Turner’s Categories 9 or 11.<sup>18</sup>

15 See K. Treu, ‘P.Berol. 21315: Bibelarakeln mit griechischer und koptischer Hermeneiai’, *APF* 37 (1991): 55–60. In his article, Treu published the edition of P.Berol. 21315 (GA 0302) and listed all extant examples (at the time) of ἔρμηνεῖα manuscripts.

16 I thank Joseph Manning of Yale University for giving me permission to publish P.CtYBR inv. 4641. Images are reproduced by permission of the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

17 On 4 October 2013, I made Professor Karlheinz Schüssler aware of this fragment, and he registered it in his *Biblia Coptica* with the call number ‘sa 972’. Sadly, just days after our correspondence, Professor Schüssler died in a tragic car accident.

18 E. G. Turner, *The Typology of the Early Codex* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977) 28–9.

The text is arranged in a single column and written in a very neat and elegant hand. The script is unimodular (or biblical majuscule), and the letters are strictly bilinear and lack decoration except for a few very light finials or return strokes on the tips of some letters and serified ε's. The script is upright, with three-stroke μ, wide ε ο c, short γ, and tall ϣ and ρ.<sup>19</sup> The thickness of strokes is virtually uniform; horizontal strokes are at times only slightly thinner than the vertical strokes, which is less common for Coptic manuscripts with wide ε ο c. The only form of punctuation is the middle dot, which occurs twice (flesh l. 9, hair l. 12). Surprisingly, supralinear strokes (of both the connective and single-letter types) are completely absent.<sup>20</sup> The hand of P.CtYBR inv. 4641 may be compared to P.Monts. Roca II 8 (2 Samuel).<sup>21</sup> It is also very similar to BM Or. 6696 (Psalter) and BM Or. 6697 (Acts; Horner's '14'), although the contrast between thick and thin strokes is more pronounced in these latter manuscripts.<sup>22</sup>

We have no sufficient evidence that would allow us to secure a precise date for this manuscript. Unlike Greek palaeography, which follows a fairly established set of criteria as well as a general understanding of the development of Greek literary hands, Coptic palaeography has been established on criteria that are both circular and unreliable, and many editors of Coptic texts leave the dating open, an approach I myself have taken in the past. That said, however, I suggest that, adopting wide parameters, the manuscript was written before the Arab conquest (ca. 640) on account of its (1) relatively small size, (2) single-column format,<sup>23</sup> (3) uniform thickness of strokes and (4) lack of decorations and other signs of stylistic development. Indeed, some early Coptic manuscripts do contain ornamentations and some late manuscripts lack them. For the most part, however, early Coptic manuscripts are without heavy decorations, and when all three features above are considered together, it increases the probability that our manuscript is earlier rather than later. Thus, I tentatively propose a date of ca. 5th–7th century CE.

19 Descriptions of script follow the 'descriptive method' explained in B. Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired since the Year 1906* (London: British Library, 1987) lxiii–lxiv.

20 There is one possible exception in l. 5 of the flesh side, where there is a minuscule trace of ink that may in fact be a supralinear stroke.

21 Published by S. Torallas-Tovar, *Biblica Coptica Montserratensia* (P. Monts. Roca II) (Orientalia Montserratensia 2; Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat; Consejo superior de investigaciones científicas, 2007).

22 For images of BM Or. 6696 and BM Or. 6697, see Layton, *Catalogue*, Pl. 8.6 and Pl. 9.4, respectively.

23 C. Askeland, 'The Coptic Versions of the New Testament', *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (ed. B. D. Ehrman and M. W. Holmes; NTS 42; Leiden: Brill, 2013<sup>2</sup>) 201–29: 'Earlier texts (fourth to sixth centuries) possessed a wide variety of formats, but were generally smaller and had single columns, even in parchment codices' (210).

### 3. The Text

For convenience, restorations of lacunae and word division are based on the edition of Horner.<sup>24</sup> Punctuation, tremata and supralinear strokes have also been reproduced from Horner. We have compared our transcript with the edition of Horner (= H; and variants), Quecke's edition of P.Palau Rib. Inv.-Nr. 183 (= sa 1), as well as the variants of Chester Beatty Library Cpt. 813 (= sa 4), Chester Beatty Library Cpt. 814 (= sa 5) and Pierpont Morgan M569 (= sa 9), which are cited by H. Quecke.<sup>25</sup> These are cited below in the apparatus and commentary at relevant points of discussion.

#### *Flesh*

- 
- 1 [ἸΠΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΑΛΛΑ ΧΕ]ΚΑΖ John 3.17  
 ΕΡΕ ΠΚΟΣΜΟΣ ΟΥΧΑ]Ι ΕΒΟ[Λ]  
 [ἸΠΤΟΟΤ῀ ΠΕΤΠΙΣ]ΤΕΥΕ Ε[ΡΟϞ] John 3.18  
 [ἸΣΕΝΑΚΡΙ]ΙΝΕ ἸΜΟ[Ϟ]  
 5 [ΑΝ ΠΕΤ]ΕἸϞΠΙΣΤΕ[ΥΕ ΔΕ]  
 [ΑΝ Η]ΔΗ ΑΥΚΡΙΝΕ Ἰ[ΜΟϞ]  
 [ΧΕ] ἸΠ῀ΠΙΣΤΕΥΕ ΕΠ[Ρ-]  
 [ΑΝ] ἸΠ[ΩΗΡΕ ἸΟΥ[ΩΤ ἸΤΕ]  
 ΠΝ[ΟΥ]ΤΕ·
- 10 ΕΡΜΗ[ΝΙΑ]  
 ΕΑΠ῀ ΕΤΡΕΚ.[ ]

#### *Hair*

- 
- 1 [ΠΚΑΚΕ Νῆ]ΟΥΟ [ΕΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ] John 3.19  
 [ΝΕΡΕ ΝΕΥῆΒ]ΗΥΕ Γ[ΑΡ ΖΟΟΥ]  
 [ΠΕ ΟΥΟΝ Γ]ΑΡ ΝΙΜ Ε[ΤΕΙΡΕ] John 3.20  
 [ἸἸΠΕΘΟΟ]Υ ϞΜΟϞ[Ε]  
 5 [ἸΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ Α]ΥΩ ΜΕϞΕΙ Ω[Α]  
 [ΠΟΥΘΕΙΝ ΧΕ] ΕΝΝΕΥΧΠΙΕ  
 [ΝΕϞῆΒΗΥΕ] ΧΕ ΣΕΖΟΟΥ

24 G. W. Horner, *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect Otherwise Called Sahidic and Thebaic*, vol. III (Oxford: Clarendon, 1911).

25 H. Quecke, *Das Johannesevangelium saïdisch: Text der Handschrift PPalau Rib. Inv.-Nr. 183 mit den Varianten der Handschriften 813 und 814 der Chester Beatty Library und der Handschrift M569* (Rome and Barcelona: Papyrologica Castroctaviana, 1984).

[ΠΕΤΕΙΡ]Ε ΔΕ Ν̄ΤΟ[Ϛ Ν̄Τ]ΜΕ John 3.21  
 [ΩΔΕΙ Ω]Α ΠΟΥΟΙΝ̄ ΧΕ-  
 10 [ΚΑC ΕΡΕ] ΝΕΓΕΒΗΓΕ  
 [ΟΥΩΝ̄ Ε]ΒΟΛ ΧΕ Ν̄ΤΑΦΑΑΥ  
 [Ε̄Μ ΠΝΟΥ]ΤΕ.  
 [ΕΡΜ]ΗΝΙΑ

[ ] Ν̄CΩϚ Ν̄Γ ΝΑ  
 15 [ ] ΟϚ [Α]Ν

#### 4. Critical Apparatus

##### *Flesh*

- 1 ΧΕ]ΚΑϚ: ΧΕΚΑΑC sa 4  
 5 ΠΕΤ]ΕΝ̄ϚΠΙCΤΕ[ΥC: ΠΕΤΕ- omits BnF Copte 129(9) (Horner's 91 and 133)  
 7 Μ̄Π̄ϚΠΙCΤΕΥΕ: Μ̄ΠΕϚΠΙCΤΕΥΕ sa 9

##### *Hair*

- 1 Ν̄]ΟΥΟ: ΕΞΟΥΕ sa 1  
 2 ΝΕῩΒ]ΗΥC: ΝΕῩΒΗΟΥΕ sa 4  
 3 ΝΙΜ: omits sa 9  
 5-6 Α]ΥΩ ΜΕϚΕΙ Ω[Α | ΠΟΥΟΙΝ̄]: omits sa 1  
 6 ΕΝΝΕῩΧΠΙC: Ν̄ΝΕῩΧΠΙC Η // ΕΝΝΕῩΧΠΙC sa 9  
 8 ΔC: omits Η  
 9 ΠΟΥΟΙΝ̄: ΠΟΥΟΙΝ sa 1

#### 5. Notes

##### *Flesh*

- 8 [ΑΝ]: Although there was presumably room for this reading in the preceding line (cf. the length of lines 2, 3 and 8), there is a vertical stroke just to the right of the tear of the parchment that I take to be the second hasta of *nu*.  
 11 It is unfortunate that part of the actual ἐρμηνεία (on both flesh and hair) is lost, although we can make a couple observations. First, this comment is a one-liner, since subsequent text would be visible (cf. hair side). Second, the statement begins with 'It is necessary for you [sg.] to ...' (ε̄λπ̄ε̄ κ̄-), which would be completed with an infinitive. Based on the context of the Johannine passage quoted, a reasonable reconstruction would be ε̄λπ̄ε̄ κ̄ε̄ κ̄πιCτεΥε̄ ε̄π̄αν̄ ('It is necessary for you to believe in the name'). While this is admittedly only a guess, we might note that the verb



πιστεύω/πιστεγε occurs in the ἐρμηνεία in P.Berlin inv. 11914. It is also worth noting the use of the second singular masculine (ετρεκ-), which is found in four other ἐρμηνείαι (P.Monts. Roca 83, P.Berlin inv. 11914, P.Vindob. G 36102, Paris, BnF Copte 156). Papini drew attention to this common feature (second singular masculine) in the Coptic of P.Berlin inv. 11914 and Florence, Antinoe Copte 22.<sup>26</sup>

### Hair

- 5-6 The phrase αγω μερει ωα πογοειν translates the Greek phrase καὶ οὐκ ἔρχεται πρὸς τὸ φῶς. Its complete omission in sa 1 can probably be attributed to *parablepsis* facilitated by *homoeoteleuton*, since πογοειν occurs twice in close proximity (see transcript above).
- 6 κε]: I have not followed Horner here in reconstructing κεκαϛ, as the length of this line suggests against this reading. Coptic uses both κε and κεκα(α)ϛ interchangeably in purpose or result clauses; here it is translating ἵνα.
- 7 κε σεσογ: This phrase corresponds to the Greek phrase ὅτι πονηρὰ ἐστιν, which is a variant reading found in the text of John 3.20 in several Greek manuscripts, notably P.Bodmer II (P<sup>66</sup>). According to Bruce Metzger, the reading is a 'natural expansion' derived from the previous verse.<sup>27</sup> Thus, our manuscript, following the wider Coptic textual tradition, includes the phrase.
- 14-15 The ἐρμηνεία consists of two lines and is difficult to reconstruct. Based on what is preserved, perhaps we have an imperative with ἵνωϛ followed by the result of the action – for example, ϛωτηῖ ἵνωϛ ἵνῃ να ... ('Obey him and you will ...'). This is, however, an example and nothing more. Too little text remains for any plausible reconstruction to be made. It should be noted, however, that the conjunctive (ἵνῃ) is a second person singular (cf. recto). The last two words may be something like ἵνωϛ ἀν or ερωϛ ἀν (cf. John 11.37), but there are certainly other possibilities.

<sup>26</sup> Papini, 'Fragments of the *Sortes Sanctorum*', 398.

<sup>27</sup> B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1971) 204: 'If τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ ὅτι πονηρὰ ἐστιν were the original reading, no good reason could be found why scribes should have deleted the ὅτι-clause. On the other hand, the addition of the clause derived from the preceding verse or from 7.7, appears to be a natural expansion which was introduced early (P<sup>66</sup>). This entry, for some reason, is omitted altogether in the second edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994).

## 6. Concluding Remarks

P.CtYBR inv. 4641 is important for a number of reasons. First, it extends our knowledge of Sahidic manuscripts of John's Gospel. As mentioned above, it has already been assigned the call number 'sa 972' in K. Schüssler's *Biblia Coptica*, and just prior to submitting the final draft of this article, Siegfried Richter of Münster informed me that it has been registered in the official list of Coptic New Testament manuscripts (Schmitz-Mink-Richter) with the SMR number 'sa 402'.<sup>28</sup> It will therefore come to play a role in New Testament textual criticism.<sup>29</sup>

Second, it enriches our knowledge of ἑρμηνεῖα manuscripts of John, becoming the first known example of a Johannine ἑρμηνεῖα manuscript written solely in Coptic. As such, P.CtYBR inv. 4641 provides firm evidence that the production of these enigmatic manuscripts of John took place within Coptic Christian communities. To date, the biblical lemmata of Greco-Coptic ἑρμηνεῖα manuscripts of John exist only in Greek, which may indicate that Coptic Christians adopted the practice from their Greek-speaking predecessors with whom the practice originated. But this prompts the question: how extensive were these manuscripts within Coptic Christianity in Late Antiquity? If we base our reasoning on the evidence of Coptic-only ἑρμηνεῖα, then the answer would inevitably be that this textual phenomenon was not very popular in circles where Coptic was the primary language.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the fact that we have multiple Greco-Coptic ἑρμηνεῖα statements demonstrates that the practice did take place in communities in which both Coptic and Greek were presumably used simultaneously.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the bilingual character of other ἑρμηνεῖα manuscripts is significant, as Cirafesi has shown.<sup>32</sup>

Many questions remain, however, not only for our manuscript but ἑρμηνεῖα manuscripts of John in general. For one, it is still not clear whether these texts

28 Email correspondence, 16 October 2013.

29 It is somewhat ironic that P.CtYBR inv. 4641 can be registered as an official manuscript of the Coptic New Testament since it is non-continuous. In stark contrast, Greek manuscripts that are non-continuous (e.g. amulets, extracts) would never make the official list, even though the discipline was at one time of a different opinion in this regard.

30 Although we must remember that Greek was the primary language in ecclesiastical settings even into the seventh century. See R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 251–5.

31 According to Bagnall, 'it is clear that Coptic was developed, and its literature produced, predominantly in thoroughly bilingual milieus' (*Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 238).

32 Cirafesi, 'Hermeneiai'. Cf. Askeland's statement, 'These diglot and miscellaneous manuscripts [citing the example of Strasbourg, Bibliothèque Nationale P. k. 362 + 379 + 381 + 382 + 384 = P<sup>6</sup>] are not at all homogeneous in their details, and they raise important questions about how the Greek and Coptic texts were used and how their juxtaposition affected their transmission' ('The Coptic Versions of the New Testament', 220).

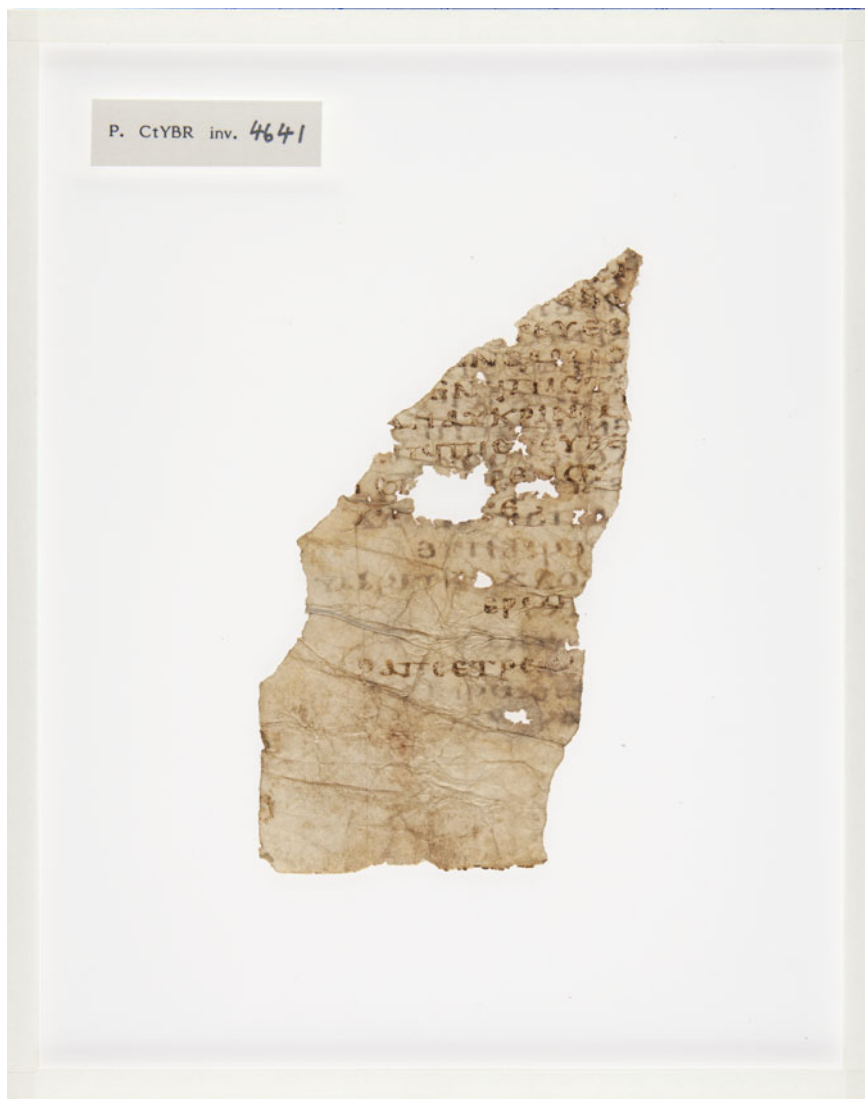


Figure 1. P.CtYBR inv. 4641 – Flesh

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were created for private or public reading. If they served the liturgical and catechetical needs of individual communities (as Cirafesi argues), then how did the *anagnostes* proceed with both the reading of John and the ἐρμηνεῖαι? And why was John the text of choice? It is true that ἐρμηνεῖαι occur later in other biblical books (e.g. in Mark in Codex Bezae), but the evidence suggests the practice was

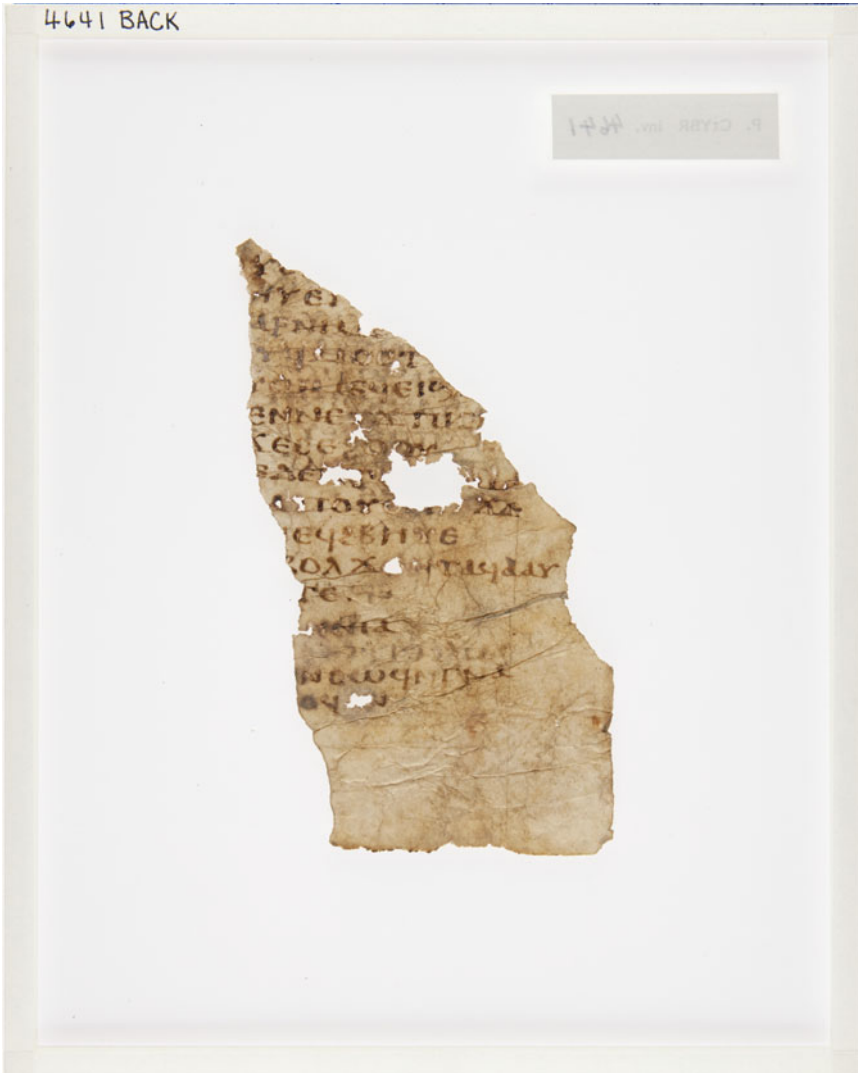


Figure 2. P.CtYBR inv. 4641 – Hair

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first applied to the text of John's Gospel.<sup>33</sup> It seems that ἑρμηνεῖαι were used early on for the purpose of divination just as they were in later manuscripts like Codex Bezae, and Wilkinson has provided the best explanation of the oracular system to

33 Porter, 'The Use of Hermeneia', 579–80.

date.<sup>34</sup> We may never have all the answers with respect to these and other questions, but it is remarkable that space was given to these oracular comments alongside scriptural citations in a composite form. Presuming that the various ἑρμηνεῖαι were produced *in scribendo* and not from an exemplar (although this possibility cannot be ruled out), their presence alongside scripture demonstrates that scribes were actively engaged in the process of bibliomantic interpretation. That is, the oracular statements were not afterthoughts but part of the process of manuscript production. In any case, future studies on the ἑρμηνεῖαι manuscripts of John will have to take questions such as the ones raised here into consideration, and P.CtYBR inv. 4641 will certainly be part of those studies.

34 Wilkinson, 'Hermeneiai in Manuscripts of John's Gospel'.