

PAOLA BUZI:

Coptic Manuscripts 7. The Manuscripts of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Part 4: Homiletic and Liturgical Manuscripts from the White Monastery. With Two Documents from Thebes and Two Old-Nubian Manuscripts.

(Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland, 21, 7.)

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The collection of manuscripts from the White Monastery in Atripe near Panopolis (Sohag, Upper Egypt) is vast, vibrant and fascinating. In the fourth and fifth centuries, the Archimandrite Shenoute, the third superior of the monastery and a prolific writer, made a significant contribution to Coptic literature in Sahidic. The library of the White Monastery continued to expand until the eleventh century with additions of works written in Arabic. Over time, manuscripts in Coptic became less prevalent and were almost forgotten. Manuscripts fell into such disrepair that Western travellers found their folios easy to collect. By sifting through this rich collection dispersed throughout the world's archives, libraries and museums, it is possible for scholars to conduct significant research while approaching the manuscripts from different perspectives.

Paola Buzi's book, the seventh catalogue of the *Verzeichnis der Orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland* series, offers excellent research on the homiletic and liturgical collection of Coptic manuscripts of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Preußischer Kulturbesitz – Orientabteilung, adding to the body of work on the White Monastery. This Coptic Berliner collection, currently housed at the Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Carl von Ossietzky in Hamburg, is an important collection of well-preserved parchment leaves of dismembered codices; the majority originate from the library of the White Monastery.

The volume provides a thorough codicological description (among other aspects quires, ruling, layout on the page and decoration supplemented with some palaeographical remarks). Following the *Borgian Coptic Fragments in Naples*, Paola Buzi wears her erudition regularly. Indeed, once again, she does an admirable job of identification and attribution of the folios to related fragments in other collections. The volume begins with a well-constructed introduction organized in four chapters including a useful explanation of the method (pp. 64–88). A substantial bibliography (pp. 15–56), alongside the abbreviations (pp. 13–4) adopted, complements this first part. The catalogue (pp. 89–226) consists of manuscripts dating from the fourth to the tenth/eleventh centuries. This covers mainly literary and liturgical manuscripts: Ms. or. fol. 1348–1350, 1605–1610, Ms. or. fol. 3065, Ms. or. oct. 409 and Ms. or. oct. 987 from the White Monastery; two papyri from Thebes: Ms. or. fol. 2097 and two manuscripts from Lower Nubia: Ms. or. quart. 1019 and Ms. or. quart. 1020. Buzi's meticulous analysis can be appreciated in her description of each codicological leaf, unit and lemma. Using Tito Orlandi's *sigla* system of the *Corpus dei manoscritti copti letterari*, the compilation of the descriptions can add to our excitement and understanding of the reconstructed codices in their entirety. The volume is enhanced by the comprehensive set of indexes (pp. 227–60) – fragments and related works, authors, related fragments belonging to other collections, ruling patterns, names and places, *sigla* etc. – and plates (pp. 261–78). More important is the synoptic index (pp. 255–60) of the published and unpublished catalogues. This includes the description of the *Staatsbibliothek*

zu Berlin codices and the correspondences between the current inventory numbers of the manuscripts and their previous designations.

The Manuscripts of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preussischer Kulturbesitz. Part 4: Homiletic and Liturgical Manuscripts from the White Monastery. With Two Documents from Thebes and Two Old-Nubian Manuscripts will remain an important tool. Scholars and students of Coptic codicology and literature will be effectively served by this volume.

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THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

ALESSANDRO BAUSI (ed.):

Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies: An Introduction.

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After many years of neglect, during which it was regarded as an “old” discipline worthy of being forgotten, manuscript studies is experiencing renewed interest. The emergence of the digital humanities has played a significant role in the reconsideration of the validity and utility of the discipline: manuscripts can be consulted without leaving one’s office; critical editions are easier to prepare and can be easily accessed if they are available on an open access basis. As a result, philology, codicology, palaeography and the like are terms that have reappeared increasingly frequently in publications over the last decade, in such a way that what was “old” is now regarded as “new”. Every researcher knows that an application for a grant is more likely to succeed if specific terms are borne in mind that will function as real keywords to open the magic doors during the evaluation process. In other words, the packaging has changed, but the contents are still the same. Be that as it may, what is important is the result: critical editions are again considered a scientific work provided, of course, that they are digital, accessible online and fully searchable. Manuscript studies are once again at the forefront of the scientific agenda of institutional research programmes, and proof of this is found in the book under review.

Generously funded by the European Science Foundation from 2009–2014, the Research Networking Programme “Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies” contributed to gathering, on various occasions, several teams of scholars specializing in one of the many disciplines linked to manuscripts. These meetings aimed to produce a handbook presenting succinctly and analytically the state of the art for the main disciplines deemed essential for the study of the texts preserved in Oriental manuscripts, as well as of the manuscripts themselves. By Oriental, the project intended “all non-Occidental (non-Latin-based) manuscript cultures which have an immediate historical (‘genetic’) relationship with the Mediterranean codex area” (p. 2). One understands that the scholars who participated in this project faced the problem of delimiting the linguistic and geographical boundaries of the manuscript cultures dealt with. This is even clearer with the further chronological and cultural limits they imposed: manuscripts belonging to the ancient, medieval and premodern periods and written in languages among the less taught “or somehow exotic in the present-day academic landscape of Europe (with the exception of Greek)” (p. 1). However, what is sometimes meant by “languages” is more accurately “script”, as exemplified by the case of “Arabic”: in fact manuscripts containing texts in Persian and Ottoman Turkish are also investigated, though on a smaller scale than for Arabic, by the contributors. The matter becomes more