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A Lycopolitan Forgery of John's Gospel*

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The internet publication of a Coptic Gospel of John fragment demonstrated that both it and the related *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* fragment were modern creations. The Coptic John fragment was clearly copied from Herbert Thompson's 1924 publication of the Lycopolitan Qau codex, and shared the same hand, ink and writing instrument with the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* fragment. The present discussion will first survey the extant Coptic tradition of John's Gospel, and second outline the evidence for dependence on the Qau codex publication.

Keywords: Coptic, forgery, *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*

1. Introduction

Although doubts had always persisted concerning the authenticity of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* fragment (*GJW*) since its announcement on 18 September 2012, scholars had assumed that the associated fragments mentioned in Karen King's initial publication were authentic. Proponents of the *GJW* considered these accompanying papyri as corroboration of the recounted modern journey of the papyri from Potsdam, Germany in 1963 through the Freie Universität Berlin in 1983 and into the hands of the current owner. Dr King received copies of three modern documents from the present owner: a contract of sale for six Coptic papyrus fragments (dated 12 Nov 1999), a typed and signed letter from Egyptologist Peter Munro (dated 15 July 1982), and an unsigned, handwritten note mentioning Egyptologist (Gerhard) Fecht.[1] In December 2011, the owner delivered the *GJW* to Dr King. A second Coptic papyrus from the collection, of John's Gospel in Lycopolitan Coptic (hereafter, HLJ 'Harvard Lycopolitan John fragment'), arrived on 13 November 2012.[2]

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1 K. L. King, '"Jesus said to them, 'My wife . . .'": A New Coptic Papyrus Fragment', *HTR* 107 (2014) 131–59, at 153–4.

2 Ibid., 154, text and n. 107.

In April 2014, a *Harvard Theological Review* issue published several articles discussing the authenticity of the *GJW*, including four articles presenting scientific results from radiometric dating, ink analysis and multispectral imaging. Some articles directly referenced the HLJ, but none of the articles presented images of the *GJW* or of the HLJ.[3] A dedicated website, hosted by the Harvard Divinity School, offered numerous images of the *GJW*, as well as more extensive versions of the scientific reports by Azzarelli *et al.* ('Study of Two Papyrus Fragments') and Yardley and Hagadorn ('Characterization of the Chemical Nature')[4] which contained images of the HLJ.

Shortly after publication of the *Harvard Theological Review* issue, the present author encountered images of the Coptic John fragment, and realised the significance of the fragment for demonstrating that both it and the *GJW* fragment were modern creations.[5] The two Coptic fragments clearly shared the same ink, writing implement and scribal hand.[6] The same artisan had created both essentially at the same time. The John fragment was in fact a crude but almost exact copy from Herbert Thomson's 1924 publication of the Qau codex. The present article will first survey the known witnesses to John's Gospel in Coptic and then relate those arguments which have compelled scholars to identify the HLJ as a modern simulation of an ancient manuscript.

2. The Qau Codex in its Coptic Context

Coptic, the final stage of the Egyptian language, was written with the Greek alphabet plus six or seven Demotic characters and was widely used from the fourth to thirteenth centuries in Egypt. The rise of written Coptic was undeniably tied to the rise of Christianity and monasticism in Egypt during the late third and fourth centuries. Until the sixth century, most Coptic literature had been translated from Greek or another language, and although a wide variety of literature survives in various more or less fragmentary forms from the pre-Islamic period,

3 Ibid., 135; J. T. Yardley and A. Hagadorn, 'Characterization of the Chemical Nature of the Black Ink in the Manuscript of the Gospel of Jesus's Wife through Micro-Raman Spectroscopy', *HTR* 107 (2014) 162–4; J. M. Azzarelli, J. B. Goods, T. M. Swager, 'Study of Two Papyrus Fragments with Fourier Transform Infrared Microspectroscopy', *HTR* 107 (2014) 165; G. Hodgins, 'Accelerated Mass Spectrometry Radiocarbon Determination of Papyrus Samples', *HTR* 107 (2014) 166–9; N. Tuross, 'Accelerated Mass Spectrometry Radiocarbon Determination of Papyrus Samples', *HTR* 107 (2014) 170–1.

4 http://gospelofjesusswife.hds.harvard.edu/scientific-reports.

5 Malcolm Choat and Gregg Schwendner first discovered the images; http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2014/04/jesus-had-ugly-sister-in-law.html (published 24 April 2014).

6 The reader may consult the contribution of Ira Rabin and Myriam Krutsch in this issue for a discussion of the physical properties of the two papyrus fragments under discussion.

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biblical texts are the most common type preserved.[7] Coptic was written in a number of distinct dialectal systems, several of which disappeared before the Arab invasion,[8] often meaning that a given New Testament text would only now be extant in the main dialects (Sahidic and Bohairic) with perhaps some fragments of one or two other dialectal translations. John's Gospel, however, survives not only in the greatest total number of Coptic manuscripts, but also in the largest variety of dialects — seven in total.[9]

For over a century, scholars have focused on the Sahidic biblical tradition, because of the extensive number of early surviving witnesses to the tradition. Fortune favoured a cache of several hundred highly fragmentary manuscripts from the White Monastery of Sohag dating from the tenth–twelfth centuries[10] as well as forty-seven well-preserved codices from the Archangel Michael Monastery of Hamuli dating from the ninth–tenth centuries.[11] Numerous further examples of Sahidic manuscripts can be dated as early as the fourth century.[12] Although the origins of Sahidic are unknown, the dialect flourished

7 Christian 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; Leiden: Brill, 2012^2) 201–30.

8 The present article surveys the dialects relevant to the Johannine tradition, and generally presumes the six-dialect scheme which Paul Kahle outlined in his pivotal work; P. E. Kahle, ed., *Bala'izah: Coptic Texts from Deir el-Bala'izah in Upper Egypt* (2 vols.; London: OUP, 1954). The actual complexity of the extant Coptic tradition has led scholars to offer a more sophisticated system with dozens of distinct orthographic systems; Rodolphe Kasser, 'KAT'ASPE ASPE: constellations d'idiomes coptes plus ou moins bien connus et scientifiquement reçus, aperçus, pressentis, enregistrés en une terminologie jugée utile, scintillant dans le firmament égyptien à l'aube de notre troisième millénaire', *Coptica – Gnostica – Manichaica : mélanges offerts à Wolf-Peter Funk* (Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi-Études 7; Louvain and Paris: L'Université Laval/Peeters, 2006) 389–492.

9 For a more complete survey of the Coptic John tradition, one should refer to the present author's published Cambridge PhD dissertation; C. Askeland, *John's Gospel: The Coptic Translations of its Greek Text* (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung 44; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012).

10 Tito Orlandi tentatively estimates that 94 of the 325 manuscripts from the White Monastery contained biblical texts; T. Orlandi, 'The Library of the Monastery of Saint Shenute at Atripe', *Perspectives on Panopolis: an Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab conquest: Acts from an International Symposium Held in Leiden on 16, 17 and 18 December 1998* (ed. A. Egberts, B. P. Muhs, J. van der Vliet; Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava 31; Leiden: Brill, 2002) 211–31, at 14.

11 L. Depuydt, ed., *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Louvain: Peeters, 1993) lxii–lxiv.

12 S. Emmel, 'Toward (Re-)Constructing a Coptic Reading Experience in Late Antique Egypt', *The Nag Hammadi Codices in the Context of Fourth- and Fifth-Century Christianity in Egypt* (ed. H. Lundhaug and L. Jenott; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming); C. Askeland, 'Dating Early Greek and Coptic Literary Hands', *The Nag Hammadi Codices in the Context*

across southern and middle Egypt until the twelfth century, aided by its dialectally neutral phonology.[13]

Approximately 155 witnesses to Sahidic John are currently known,[14] most of which are shattered remains of once glorious codices, consisting of a few leaves or even a single fragment. Five of these Sahidic John witnesses preserve a basically complete text of the gospel.[15] The Sahidic translation of John's Gospel systematically parallels the Lycopolitan Coptic translation. Although the various Coptic dialectal translations of John share similarities which naturally derive from essentially stable Greek tradition and the common vocabulary and grammar of the Coptic language, the similarity to the Lycopolitan is uncanny when compared with the other Johannine Coptic translations. Although one can only guess whether the Sahidic or Lycopolitan had precedence, the two versions must have derived from the same translation event. In this sense, it can be said that the Lycopolitan translation is the earliest extensive witness to the Sahidic version of John's gospel. Note the exact parallel between the Sahidic and Lycopolitan in the selection in Table 1, disregarding the dialectally related vowel changes.

Until the nineteenth century, Western scholars generally knew Coptic through one dialect — Bohairic, which flourished in the Nile Delta and was the principle dialect in the monasteries of Scetis. Probably because of the prominence of these monasteries, Bohairic emerged as the official liturgical language of the Coptic Orthodox Church from the thirteenth century onwards.[16] Essentially all extant classical Bohairic manuscripts date from the thirteenth through nineteenth centuries, whereas the earlier Bohairic manuscripts did not survive the humid conditions of the Nile Delta, where the dialect was spoken.[17] Only perhaps six Bohairic witnesses date to the first millennium, four of which preserve a sub-dialect of Bohairic labelled Proto-Bohairic or Old Bohairic.[18] Following several nineteenth-

of Fourth- and Fifth-Century Christianity in Egypt (ed. H. Lundhaug and L. Jenott; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming).

13 Ariel Shisha-Halevy, 'Sahidic', in *Coptic Encyclopaedia* (1991), 194–202, at 194–5.

14 Hans Förster is currently editing the Sahidic John version for the International Greek New Testament Project, and has kindly shared this estimate (personal correspondence, 14 Nov 2014).

15 P. Palau Ribes 183,CBL Copt. 813 and 814, M 569, CM 3820, Polish Mission N.02.030; Askeland, *John's Gospel*, 83–94.

16 J. M. Sheridan, 'The Mystery of Bohairic: The Role of the Monasteries in Adaptation and Change', *Coping with Religious Change in the Late-Antique Eastern Mediterranean* (ed. C. Kotsifou and E. Iricinschi; Studies and Texts in Antiquity and Christianity; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

17 The primary exception may be a ninth-century gospels catena; P. de Lagarde, ed., *Catenae in Evangelia Aegyptiacae quae supersunt* (Göttingen: Arnold Hoyer, 1886).

18 Askeland, *John's Gospel*, 168.

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Table 1. The extant Coptic translations in John 6.12

NA[28]	συναγάγετε	τὰ περισσεύσαντα κλάσματα,	ἵνα	μή τι	ἀπόληται
sa	ϫⲉ ⲥⲱⲟⲩϩ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ	ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲗⲁⲕⲏ ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲥⲉⲉⲡⲉ	ϫⲉⲕⲁⲥ	ⲉⲛⲏⲉⲗⲁⲁⲩ	ϩⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
ly	ϫⲉ ⲥⲱⲟⲩϩ ⲁϩⲟⲩⲛ	ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲗⲉⲕⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲥⲉⲉⲡⲉ	ϫⲉⲕⲁⲥⲉ	ⲛⲉⲗⲁⲩⲉ	ϩⲁⲉⲓⲉ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ
mf	ϫⲉ ⲧⲟⲩⲉⲧ	ⲛⲓⲡⲉⲱⲓ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉ̣ⲧ̣ϩⲁⲩ̣ⲣ̄ ϩⲟⲩⲁ	ϫⲉⲕⲉⲥ	ⲉⲛⲏⲉⲛ[ⲓⲛⲉⲓ	ϩⲓ ⲉ]ⲃⲁⲗ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ
pbo	ϫⲉ ⲑⲱⲟⲩⲧ	ⲛⲛⲓⲗⲁⲕϩ ⲉⲧⲁⲩⲉⲣ ϩⲟⲩⲟ	ϩⲓⲛⲁ	ⲛⲧⲉⲱⲧⲉⲙϩⲗⲓ	ⲧⲁⲕⲟ
bo	ϫⲉ ⲑⲱⲟⲩⲧ	ⲛⲛⲓⲗⲁⲕϩ ⲉⲧⲁⲩⲉⲣ ϩⲟⲩⲟ	ϫⲉ	ⲛⲛⲉⲟⲩⲟⲛ	ⲧⲁⲕⲟ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛϧⲏⲧⲟⲩ

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and early twentieth-century acquisitions of large collections of Sahidic manuscripts from Sohag, Hamuli, Edfu, Nag Hammadi[19] and elsewhere, extensive study of Bohairic literature in general and the Bohairic biblical tradition in particular essentially ended. George Horner's edition of the Bohairic New Testament (1898–1905) was the last major publication.[20]

Horner cited forty-two manuscripts in his edition of Bohairic John.[21] Unlike the other Coptic dialects, Bohairic manuscripts are often preserved intact, and likewise often contain dated colophons or watermarked paper allowing for precise dating. While scholars have often exaggerated the 'Greekness' of Bohairic versus Sahidic in terms of the use of Greek loanwords,[22] the Bohairic translator of John's Gospel was generally less formally literal in his translation, frequently employing Greek words and structures where the expected word or structure was not to be found.[23] Bohairic uses the character khei ϧ /x/ to distinguish the voiceless pharyngeal fricative from the character horeh ϩ /h/ found in all the dialects. The Bohairic dialect has a number of other distinctions such as some unique vocabulary, different verbal conjugation and the aspiration of certain consonants, which differentiate it from Sahidic and the dialects of southern Egypt. One papyrus codex discovered among the Dishna papers (P.Bodmer 3) contains an early Bohairic translation of John's Gospel which differs in the translation that it preserves and also offers a distinct sub-dialect of Bohairic.[24] Whereas

19 Two distinct finds emerged from the area of Nag Hammadi. The Dishna papers, most of which were collected by Martin Bodmer, consisted of a variety of Greek and Coptic manuscripts, some of which preserve unique Coptic dialects. The Dishna papers constitute the largest collection of early witnesses to the biblical tradition in Greek and Coptic. A second library of twelve and a half codices, which is often referred to as the Nag Hammadi Library, preserves a number of texts such as the *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Gospel of Philip* and the *Apocryphon of John*, and has been a key source of information in modern discussions concerning early Christian theological diversity; J. M. Robinson, *The Story of the Bodmer Papyri: From the First Monastery's Library in Upper Egypt to Geneva and Dublin* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011). Although certain Nag Hammadi texts preserve a distinct variety of Lycopolitan, the majority of the texts reflect an irregular Sahidic dialect which has been termed Crypto-Subachmimic; W.-P. Funk, 'Toward a Classification of the "Sahidic" Nag Hammadi Texts', *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Washington, 12–15 August 1992*, vol. II (ed. D. W. Johnson; Rome: CIM, 1993) 163–77.

20 G. Horner, ed., *The Coptic Version of the New Testament in the Northern Dialect, Otherwise Called Memphitic and Bohairic* (4 vols.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1898–1905).

21 G. Horner, ed., *Memphitic and Bohairic*; A. A. Vaschalde, 'Ce qui à été publié des versions coptes de la Bible: deuxième groupe, textes bohaïriques', *Le Muséon* 45 (1932) 117–56, at 122–3.

22 Askeland, *John's Gospel*, 174–6.

23 Ibid., 21–2.

24 Daniel Sharpe is preparing a new edition of P.Bodm. 3. For an overview of the peculiarities of the Early Bohairic sub-dialect and translation, cf. Askeland, *John's* Gospel, 167–73. R. Kasser,

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Bohairic manuscripts typically date from the twelfth–nineteenth centuries, this Early Bohairic Gospel of John probably dates with the remainder of the Dishna papers to approximately the fourth century.

Scholars have classified manuscripts into several other 'minor dialects', so named because only a limited number of representative literary manuscripts survive, and because these dialects mostly did not survive beyond the fifth century. John's Gospel is extant in the best-known dialects, plus some unique sub-dialects. Fragmentary remains of ten Fayumic manuscripts of John represent the most widely attested of the minor dialects. Fayumic appears to have survived as a written form into the eighth century,[25] during which time the canal systems which supported agriculture in the Fayum Oasis failed, allowing for the preservation of a large amount of manuscripts in this quickly deserted region.[26] Fayumic shares verbal conjugations with Bohairic, but is best known for lambdacism; Fayumic texts often have lambda ⲗ *in lieu* of rho ⲣ. A Middle Egyptian or Oxyrhynchite translation of John survives in one papyrus fragment from the Oxyrhynchus excavations.[27] Middle Egyptian, like Fayumic and Bohairic, shares a northern Egyptian verbal conjugation system, but has a distinct orthography for the perfect conjugation (ϩⲁ- versus ⲁ-). The University of Michigan possesses a series of papyrus leaves with a 'Middle Egyptian Fayumic' translation (P.Mich. inv. 3521).[28] The text is not rigorously consistent with regard to dialect, and likewise the scribe vacillated between a distinctly Middle Egyptian *shai* ϣ /ʂ/ character and the *shai* typical of other biblical majuscule texts. Although the Middle Egyptian Fayumic offers a distinct and stable translation, the dialect may have been a short-lived or idiosyncratic phenomenon.

Two minor dialects can be localised to southern Egypt. A fragmentary series of papyrus leaves in Strasburg contain an edition of 1 Clement and the epistle to James in Achmimic Coptic, a dialect indigenous to ancient Thebes. This manuscript, known as $(\mathfrak{P})^6$, also contained a pericope from John's Gospel, which alternates between sections of John 10–11 in Achmimic and Greek.[29] Similar to

ed., *Papyrus Bodmer III: évangile de Jean et Genèse IIV, 2 en bohaïrique* (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 178; Louvain: Secrétariat du CSCO, 1958).

25 Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, lxv.

26 B. Kraemer, 'The Meandering Identity of a Fayum Canal: The Henet of Moeris / Dioryx Kleonos / Bahr Wardan / Abdul Wahbi', *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology, Ann Arbor 2007* (ed. T. Gagos; American Studies in Papyrology; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2010) 365–76.

27 UC 71048; Askeland, *John's Gospel*, 148–55.

28 E. M. Husselman, ed., *The Gospel of John in Fayumic Coptic (P.Mich. Inv. 3521)* (Ann Arbor: Kelsey Museum, 1962).

29 P.Strasb.Copt. 371, 372, 375–85; F. Rösch, ed., *Bruchstücke des ersten Clemensbriefes nach dem achmimischen Papyrus der Strassburger Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek, mit biblischen Texten derselben Handschrift* (Strasbourg: Schlesier and Schweikhardt, 1910).

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Bohairic, Achmimic has a distinctive character *khei* ϧ /x/. The last dialect to be discussed here, and the most relevant to the present discussion, is Lycopolitan (formerly Subachmimic),[30] which must have been related to Achmimic. The first witness to John's Gospel in Lycopolitan is a seven-leaf writing exercise containing chapters 10–13 of John's Gospel,[31] which has essentially the same text as the primary witness to Lycopolitan John, the Qau codex.[32] This Lycopolitan manuscript is famous not only for its antiquity (discussed below), but also for the extensive amount of text which is preserved and its unique relationship to the wider Sahidic tradition.

Table 2 illustrates the dialectal diversity of the Coptic John tradition. The readings below are based on the recurring stock phrase, 'Jesus answered and he said.' Except for the Middle Egyptian version, each instance has been based upon a specific occurrence of the phrase. These occurrences have been grammatically standardised to allow the reader to compare the differences. For instance, the following list has standardised the placement of the name 'Jesus'. The dialects are listed geographically starting in Upper Egypt (Sahidic, Lycopolitan, Achmimic), moving to Middle Egypt (Middle Egyptian, Middle Egyptian Fayumic, Fayumic) and ending in Lower Egypt (Early [Proto-]Bohairic, Bohairic), with respective sigla as used in the Nestle–Aland editions.

The diversity of extant dialects suggest that John's Gospel was the most widely read not only of the Gospels, but indeed of any biblical text. Although the discovery of a new fragment of John in Coptic would be far from extraordinary, the emergence of a new fragment in one of the minor dialects would certainly attract attention.

3. The Harvard Lycopolitan John Fragment

From the beginning, the bizarre character of the *GJW* handwriting perplexed scholars.[33] Malcom Choat, a prominent Coptologist with wide-ranging experience with both documentary and literary texts, stated:

30 R. Kasser, 'A Standard System of Sigla for Referring to the Dialects of Coptic', *J. Copt. Stud.* 1 (1990) 141–51, at 144.

31 W.-P. Funk and R. Smith, 'John 10:7–13:38 in Subachmimic', *The Chester Beatty Codex Ac. 1390: Mathematical School Exercises in Greek and John 10:7–13:38 in Subachmimic* (ed. W. Brashear and J. M. Robinson; Chester Beatty Monographs 13; Louvain: Peeters, 1990) 59–133.

32 Cambridge University Library, BFBS Mss 137; H. Thompson, *The Gospel of St John according to the Earliest Coptic Manuscript* (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1924).

33 '"We put it up on the screen, and we all sort of said, 'Eeew'", said Bagnall, one of the world's leading papyrologists. "We thought it was ugly. And it is — ugly. The handwriting is not nice — thick, badly controlled strokes made by somebody who didn't have a very good pen."' Lisa Wangsness, 'Historian's Finding Hints that Jesus Was Married: Discovery May Bear on Modern Christianity', *The Boston Globe*, 18 September 2012, www.bostonglobe.com/metro/

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Table 2. A comparison of the Coptic dialects of John

Greek	5.19	ἀπεκρίνατο	ὁ Ἰησοῦς	καὶ	ἔλεγεν	αὐτοῖς
sa	5.19	ⲁⲫⲟⲩⲱϣ̄ⲃ	ⲛ̄ⲥⲓ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅		ⲉⲫⲭⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ	ⲛⲁⲩ
ly	5.19	ⲁⲫⲟⲩⲱϣ̄ⲃ	ⲭⲓ ⲓ̅ⲏ̅ⲥ̅		ⲡⲁⲭⲉⲫ	ⲛⲉⲩ
ac	11.9?	ⲁⲫⲟⲩⲱϣⲃⲉ	ⲛ̄ⲥⲓ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅		ⲡⲁⲭⲉⲫ	ⲛⲉⲩ
mae	![34]	ⲣⲁⲫⲭⲉ ⲟⲩⲱ	ⲛⲭⲏ ⲓ̅ⲏ̅ⲥ̅		ⲉⲫⲭⲱ ⲙⲙⲁⲥ	ⲛⲉⲩ
mf	6.29	ⲣⲁⲫⲟⲩⲱⲣ̄ⲙ	ⲛ̂ⲭⲓ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅		ⲡⲉⲭⲉⲫ	ⲛⲁⲩ
fa	1.50	ⲁⲫ† ⲣⲉⲗⲟⲩⲱ	ⲛⲭⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅		ⲡⲉⲭⲉⲫ	ⲛⲏⲩ
pbo	5.19	ⲁⲫⲉⲣ ⲟⲩⲱ	ⲛⲭⲉ ⲓ̅ⲏ̅ⲥ̅		ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲫ	ⲛⲱⲟⲩ
bo	5.19	ⲁⲫⲉⲣ ⲟⲩⲱ	ⲛⲭⲉ ⲓ̅ⲏ̅ⲥ̅	ⲟⲩⲟⲣ	ⲡⲉⲭⲁⲫ	ⲛⲱⲟⲩ

[34] Only a handful of verses have survived from the Middle Egyptian tradition (14.26–28, 14.31–15.3). The reconstruction above has been produced from a dialectally similar manuscript (Matt 3.15); H.-M. Schenke, ed., *Coptic Papyri I: Das Matthäus-Evangelium im mittelägyptischen Dialekt des Koptischen (Codex Schøyen)* (Manuscripts in the Schøyen Collection 2; Oslo: Hermes, 2001).

> The handwriting is not similar to formal literary productions of any period and should be compared rather to documentary or paraliterary texts (though it does not closely resemble typical fourth-century Coptic documentary hands). While I cannot adduce an exact parallel, I am inclined to compare paraliterary productions such as magical or educational texts. The way the same letter is formed sometimes varies. Thin trails of ink at the bottom of many letters, multiple thin lines instead of one stroke, and the forked ends of some letters could suggest the use of a brush, rather than a pen: one may compare Ptolemaic-period Greek documents written with a brush. The brush had largely ceased to be used by the Roman period and should not be encountered in this context.[35]

Because the *GJW* had no known parallels among extant Greek-Coptic hands, it was surprising to encounter the same handwriting, ink and writing instrument in the Lycopolitan John fragment. The two fragments were almost certainly the product of the same hand — even of the same writing instrument.[36] Compare the samples from the two papyri (Table 3).

Although King originally referenced this fragment simply as a 'Gospel of John in Coptic',[37] it is immediately recognizable as a Lycopolitan Coptic text. As already mentioned, one would by default expect to encounter Sahidic on a papyrus fragment, as other dialects are comparatively rare and therefore noteworthy. The Harvard John contains John 5.26–31 on the recto and 6.11–14 on the verso, texts which are extant in only one other Lycopolitan manuscript — the Qau codex.

During a 1923 British School of Archaeology excavation led by Guy Brunton at Qau el-Kebir, excavators discovered a broken pot made of red pottery and decoratively painted (Figure 1, sketch), which contained a papyrus codex wrapped in

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2012/09/18/harvard-professor-identifies-scrap-papyrus-suggesting-some-early-christians-believed-jesus-was-married/VzqcRBAfiDRVFL9nWt4iTN/story.html.

35 M. Choat, 'The Gospel of Jesus's Wife: A Preliminary Paleographical Assessment', *HTR* 107 (2014) 160–2, at 161.

36 According to Roger Bagnall, '[a]s the two are very similar and are likely to have been produced close in time, the overlap zone is what one should concentrate on … As to the handwriting, it is not possible to date with confidence a very rudimentary hand of the kind in use in both of these fragments (which are if not in the same hand at least extremely close).' C. Allen, 'The Deepening Mystery of the "Jesus' Wife" Papyrus', *The Weekly Standard*, 28 April 2014, http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/deepening-mystery-jesus-wife-papyrus_787462.html. I know of no specialist in Coptic or Greek scripts currently inclined to dispute this argument. For a more extensive survey of the similarities of the two hands, a discussion of the reactions to the Lycopolitan John fragment and an exhaustive comparison of the extant letters in the two papyri, see C. Askeland, 'A Fake Coptic John and its Implications for the "Gospel of Jesus's Wife"', *Tyndale Bull.* 65 (2014) 1–10.

37 K. L. King, '"Jesus said to them, 'My wife…'": A New Coptic Gospel Papyrus', *HTR* (rejected) (2012) 1–52, at 2. The 2014 version did not mention the language of the fragment.

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Table 3. Gospel of Jesus Wife and Lycopolitan John scripts

GJW fragment	Harvard Lycopolitan John
	

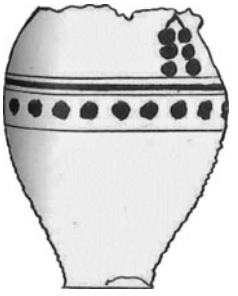

Figure 1. Burial pot[38]

linen.[39] In little more than a year, Herbert Thompson published this Qau codex, which is now in the holdings of the Cambridge University Library along with other manuscripts owned by the British and Foreign Bible Society, including photographs of every page alongside typeset transcriptions.[40] As will be discussed below, the HLJ is a direct copy from this publication, which has been widely available on the internet since as far back as February 2005.[41] The arguments for dependence and simulation are as follows:

i. Seventeen shared line breaks
ii. Radiocarbon dating and the demise of Lycopolitan
iii. Dialectal implausibility of ⲉⲃⲟⲗ/ⲁⲃⲁⲗ (Suciu)
iv. Writing both through and around a hole in the papyrus (Krueger)

38 This public domain image is here reproduced from G. Brunton, ed., *Qau and Badari* (4 vols.; Egyptian Research Account 50; London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1927) III.xlii.

39 The jar and linen cloth have recently been rediscovered in Cambridge; Askeland, *John's Gospel*, 141–3.

40 Thompson, *Gospel of St John*, ix.

41 The PDF's creation date is 21 Feb 2005, and it was modified on 5 February 2005. Currently, the document is available via: *ETANA: Electronic Tools and Ancient Near East Archives*, http://www.etana.org/node/698.

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v. Codicological reconstruction (Emmel)
vi. Shared peculiarities (Emmel)
vii. Forger's errors (nonsense readings)

i. ***Seventeen shared line breaks***

The HLJ has seventeen line breaks, all of which agree with line breaks in the Qau codex. Such agreement is unparalleled, for instance, among the known Sahidic witnesses of John and, perhaps more significantly, between the Chester Beatty writing exercise which contains John 10.7–13.38 in Lycopolitan (Ac. 1390), and the Qau codex.[42] The following parallel rough transcriptions illustrate how the copyist meticulously skipped every other line in Thompson's edition (Table 4). For the purpose of illustration, the Codex Qau text which is not preserved in the Harvard fragment appears in grey.

To understand why the copyist skipped every other line, one should consult Thompson's edition. Herbert Thompson transcribed two leaves of the codex on each page of his edition, and likewise presented two leaves side-by-side in each photo. Each leaf contained only one column of text. Greek and Coptic manuscripts from pre-Islamic Egypt rarely survive in a two-column format, but the modern copyist who produced the Harvard fragment must have mistaken the Qau codex as a two-column codex based upon Thompson's presentation. By skipping lines, the modern copyist probably was naively attempting to reconstruct two columns of content into a one-column format.[43]

While every line break in the Harvard fragment matches a line break in the Thompson edition, the line-skipping pattern deviates with the last line of the verso. The copyist does not skip a line in John 6.14, but the reason is almost immediately obvious when Thompson's edition is at hand. Whether the copyist used the online PDF or a printed edition of Thompson's 1924 edition, he or she would have turned the page at this line break, because the penultimate line of the Harvard fragment is the ultimate line of the codex Qau page 8. This deviation only proves further the copyist's dependency on Thompson's publication, since the reconstruction of the lacuna in ⲛⲉⲩϫⲱ [ⲙⲙⲁⲥ ϫ]ⲉⲡⲉⲉⲓ ⲙⲁⲙⲛⲉ ⲡⲉ is too small compared to the other lines and cannot be expanded by appeal to textual variation, because the grammatical formula used here is stable. The Coptic verb ϫⲱ 'to say' is always followed by the phrase ⲙⲙⲁⲥ (ⲛⲁⲩ) ϫⲉ, leaving little doubt that a significantly longer variant text could expand the lacuna (Cf. transcription in Table 4.) Furthermore, the suggestion that the scribe could have been writing around a hole in the papyrus is complicated by the regularity of the line breaks on the recto, which do not support the presence of a hole.

42 Funk and Smith, *The Chester Beatty Codex Ac. 1390.*

43 This explanation was first suggested by Ulrich Schmid.

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Table 4. Shared line breaks in the Harvard John and Thompson's transcription of codex Qau

	Harvard Lycopolitan John 5.26–30, recto →	**Thompson, page 7**	
+ 1	ⲧⲫ [5.27]ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲧ [ⲛⲉϥ ⲛⲧⲉⲍⲟⲩⲥⲓⲁ ⲁⲧⲣⲉϥⲓⲣⲉ ⲙⲫⲉⲡ ⲭⲉⲡⲱϫⲛ]-	ⲧⲫ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁϥⲧ ⲛⲉϥ ⲛ̄ⲧⲉⲍⲟⲩ-	7
	ⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲡⲉ [28]ⲛ̄ⲡⲣⲣ̀[ⲙⲁⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲭⲉ ⲟⲩⲛ ⲟⲩⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ ⲛⲙⲛⲩ]	ⲥⲓⲁ ⲁⲧⲣⲉϥⲓⲣⲉ ⲙⲫⲉⲡ̀ ⲭⲉⲡⲱϫⲛ- ⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲡⲉ· ⲛ̄ⲡ[ⲣ]ⲣ̄ⲙⲁⲉⲓ- ⲣⲉ ⲭⲉⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩⲛⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲙⲛⲩ	10
	ⲉⲟ<ⲩ>ⲁⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧⲣⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲫⲟⲥ [ⲛⲁⲥⲱⲧⲙ ⲁⲧⲉⲩⲥⲙⲏ [29]ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲥⲉ]-	ⲉⲟⲩⲁⲛ ⲛⲓⲙ̀ ⲉⲧⲣⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲫⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄ ⲁⲧⲉⲩⲥⲙⲏ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉ-	
	ⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ [ⲛ]ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛⲙ[ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲛⲱⲱⲛⲣ]	ⲉⲓ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ̀ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩ[ⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲙ̄ⲡⲉ]- ⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩ ⲁⲩⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲁ[ⲥⲓⲥ ⲛⲱⲱⲛⲣ]	
5	ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲑⲁ[ⲩ ⲁⲩⲁⲛⲁⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲛⲕⲣⲓⲥⲓⲥ [30]ⲙⲛⲥⲁⲙ ⲁⲛⲁⲕ]	ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲑⲁⲩ ⲁ[ⲩⲁⲛⲁ]- ⲥⲧⲁⲥⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲕⲣⲓⲥⲓⲥ· ⲙ̄ⲛⲥ[ⲁ]ⲙ̄ ⲁⲛⲁ[ⲕ]	15
	ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲣⲗⲁⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲍⲱ[ⲃ ⲫⲁⲣⲁⲉⲓ ⲟⲩⲁⲉⲉⲧ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲉⲧⲥⲱⲧⲙ]	ⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲣⲗⲁⲩⲉ ⲛ̄ⲍⲱⲃ ⲫⲁⲣⲁⲉⲓ ⲟⲩⲁⲉⲉⲧ̀ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲑⲉ ⲉⲧⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄	
	ⲉⲉⲓⲣ̄<ⲕⲣ>ⲓⲛⲉ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲁⲕⲣⲓⲥⲓⲍ [ⲟⲩⲙⲛⲉ ⲧⲉ ⲭⲉⲉⲓⲁⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲛⲥⲁⲡⲁ]-	ⲉⲉⲓⲣ̄ⲕⲣⲓⲛⲉ· ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲁⲕⲣⲓⲥⲓⲥ ⲟⲩ-	
	ⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲉⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲛⲁⲉⲓ [ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛⲥⲁⲡⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲙⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲧⲉⲩⲁ]-	ⲙⲛⲉ ⲧⲉ ⲭⲉⲉⲓⲁⲱⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲡⲁ- ⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲉⲛ ⲙ̄ⲙⲓⲛ ⲙ̄ⲛⲁⲉⲓ· ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲛ̄ⲥⲁⲡⲟⲩⲱⲱ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲧⲉⲩⲁ-	20
	ⲉⲓ [31] ⲉⲱⲱ[ⲡⲉ ⲁⲛⲁⲕ ...	ⲉⲓ· ⲉⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲁⲛⲁⲕ̀ ⲫⲉⲓⲱⲁ ⲣⲙⲛ̄-	
	Harvard Lycopolitan John 6.11–14, verso ↓	**Thompson, page 8 and 9**	
+ 1	... ⲛⲁⲑⲛⲧⲛⲥ ⲁ]ⲉ ⲁⲩϯ ⲛ̀ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲏϫ̀ ⲁⲩ-	ⲧⲛⲥ ⲁⲉ ⲁⲩϯ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲏϫ̀ ⲁⲩ-	
	[ⲱ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩϫⲓⲧⲩ ⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲫⲛ]ⲛ̣ⲧⲃⲧ· [6:12] ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲟⲩⲥⲓ	ⲱ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩϫⲓⲧⲩ ⲁⲣⲁⲩ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ̀ ⲫⲛ̄ ⲛⲧⲃⲧ· ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲟⲩⲥⲓ	
	[ⲁⲉ ⲡⲁϫⲉⲩ ⲛⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲑⲛⲧⲛⲥ ⲭⲉ]ⲥⲱⲟⲩⲍ ⲁⲣⲟⲩ[ⲛ] ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲗⲉ-	ⲁⲉ ⲡⲁϫⲉⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲩⲙⲁⲑⲛⲧⲛⲥ ⲭⲉⲥⲱⲟⲩⲍ ⲁⲣⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲗⲉ-	25
	[ⲕⲙⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲥⲉⲉⲡⲉ ⲭⲉⲕⲁⲥⲉ ⲛⲉⲗⲁⲩ]ⲉ ⲫⲁⲉⲓⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ [13] [ⲁ]ⲩⲥⲁⲩ-	ⲕⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲥⲉⲉⲡⲉ ⲭⲉⲕⲁⲥⲉ ⲛⲉⲗⲁⲩⲉ ⲫⲁⲉⲓⲉ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ̀· ⲁⲩⲥⲁⲩ-	
5	[ⲣⲟⲩ ⲟⲉ ⲁⲩⲙⲁⲣⲙⲛⲧⲥⲛⲁⲟⲩⲥ ⲛⲃⲓⲣ ⲛ]ⲛ̣ⲗⲉⲕⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲥⲉ-	ⲣⲟⲩ ⲟⲉ ⲁⲩⲙⲁⲣⲙⲛⲧⲥⲛⲁⲟⲩⲥ ⲛⲃⲓⲣ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲗⲉⲕⲙⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲩⲥⲉ	
	[ⲉⲡⲉ ⲁⲛⲉⲧⲟⲩⲱⲙ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ ⲫⲛ ⲡⲧⲟ]ⲩ ⲛ̄ⲁⲉⲓⲕ ⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲱⲧ̀· [14] ⲛ̄-	ⲉⲡⲉ ⲁⲛⲉⲧⲟⲩⲱⲙ̀ ⲁⲃⲁⲗ̀ ⲫⲛ̄ ⲡⲧⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ⲁⲉⲓⲕ̀ ⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲱⲧ̀· ⲛ̄-	30
	[ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲟⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲣⲟⲩⲛⲉⲩ ⲁⲡⲙⲁⲉⲓⲛ ⲛ]ⲧⲁⲫⲉⲉⲩ ⲛⲉⲩⲭⲱ	ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲟⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲣⲟⲩⲛⲉⲩ ⲁ- ⲡⲙⲁⲉⲓⲛ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲫⲉⲉⲩ ⲛⲉⲩⲭⲱ	← new
	[*lacuna is too large* ⲙⲛⲁⲥ ⲭ]ⲉⲡⲉⲉⲓ ⲙⲁ̣ⲛ̣ⲏⲉ ⲡⲉ	ⲙ̄ⲛⲁⲥ ⲭⲉⲡⲉⲉⲓ ⲙⲁⲙⲛⲉ ⲡⲉ	page

ii. *Radio-carbon dating and the demise of Lycopolitan*

Scientists in Arizona and Massachusetts radiometrically dated the Harvard Lycopolitan John fragment to 681–877 and 648–800 CE respectively.[44] Insofar as

44 The dates above are the two sigma ranges. Hodgins, 'Accelerated Mass Spectrometry Radiocarbon Determination'; Tuross, 'Accelerated Mass Spectrometry Radiocarbon Determination'.

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some Lycopolitan manuscripts are datable, the fourth century is the prevailing period of origin. Perhaps eight tractates from the Nag Hammadi Codices could be classified as Lycopolitan; three documentary papyri from the binding of Codex VII preserve dates (20 Nov 341, 21 Nov 346 and 7 Oct 348 CE),[45] suggesting that the codices originated probably not more than a century afterward.[46] An archive related to Meletian monks containing three Lycopolitan documentary letters dates to approximately 330–40 CE based upon accompanying documents.[47] Likewise, archaeological excavations in the Dakhleh Oasis uncovered Lycopolitan documentary and literary papyri from a Manichean community which thrived from about 355 to 390, and a second group of Manichean Psalms codices reportedly found at Medinet Madi have been carbon-dated to the third–fourth centuries.[48] The dating of the Qau codex is a difficult affair. In an adjacent site, British archaeologists unearthed a horde of fifty gold coins which were minted in the period 343–61 CE.[49] Two coins from the excavation date from the ninth century,[50] so the evidence of the horde is tenuous. Although palaeographic dating is perilously speculative, Frederick Kenyon dated the scribal hand of the Qau codex to the third quarter of the fourth century.[51]

Because Lycopolitan manuscripts with a known date repeatedly have fourth-century origins, and because the Coptic documentary tradition which flourishes in the sixth through eighth centuries uses only Sahidic and Fayumic dialects, Coptologists assume that the minor dialects (e.g. Achmimic, Lycopolitan and Middle Egyptian) were extinct by the sixth century. The radiometric dating of the Harvard Lycopolitan John to the seventh–ninth centuries indicates that the papyrus plant was harvested one or more centuries after its text should have been written.

45 J. W. B. Barns†, G. M. Browne, J. C. Shelton, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices: Greek and Coptic Papyri from the Cartonnage of the Covers* (Nag Hammadi Studies 16; Leiden: Brill, 1981) 53–8.

46 H. Lundhaug, 'Shenoute of Atripe and Nag Hammadi Codex II', *Zugänge zur Gnosis: Symposium of the Patristische Arbeitsgemeinschaft (PAG)* (ed. Christoph Markschies; Patristic Studies 12; Leuven: Peeters, 2013) 201–226, at 209.

47 H. I. Bell, ed., *Jews and Christians in Egypt: The Jewish Troubles in Alexandria and the Athanasian Controversy, Illustrated by Texts from Greek Papyri in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1924) 91–9.

48 J. Debuhn, 'The Date of the Manichaean Codices from Medinet Madi and its Significance', *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference of the International Association of Manichaean Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), London, 9–13 September 2013* (ed. E. Hunter, S. Lieu, E. Morano; Turnhout: Brepols, forthcoming).

49 The coins came from section AC (486) near some native houses in the city of Ezbet Ulad El Hagg Aḥmed, while the Qau codex lay to the north in CE (1500) close to a wadi. Both objects lay in the eastern portion of the South Cemetery, separated from each other by no more than 30 meters. Cf. Brunton, *Qau and Badari*, 26, 29–30, Pls. v–vi.

50 Brunton, *Qau and Badari*, 30.

51 Thompson, *Gospel of St John*, xiii.

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iii. *Dialectal implausibility of* ϵϧⲟⲗ/ⲁϧⲁⲗ

Alin Suciu first noted that the HLJ deviates from the Qau text only in the spelling of the adverb ϵϧⲟⲗ (Sahidic)/ⲁϧⲁⲗ (Lycopolitan).[52] The Harvard John text therefore deviates from Lycopolitan (= Subachmimic) dialectal vocalisation only in two instances of ϵϧⲟⲗ (lines 4 recto and 4 verso). Although Lycopolitan forms frequently appear in Nag Hammadi texts like the *Gospel of Thomas* (and indeed the original publication of the *GJW* misinterpreted such a Lycopolitan negative aorist ⲙⲁⲣϵ- as the Sahidic homophone), the present Sahidic word reveals the naiveté of a modern copyist. To understand why a copyist might offer such alterations, one should consider Bentley Layton's description of the dialect of the Nag Hammadi Codex II, which contains the *Gospel of Thomas*:

> Superficially the Coptic of Codex II appears to consist of a random mixture of forms from the Sahidic (*S*) and Subachmimic (A^2) dialects, with a preponderance of Sahidic … It is reasonable to assume that the Coptic of Codex II is a literary language, which can be classed as 'Crypto-Subachmimic' (Crypto-A^2), showing 'the characteristics of a text written or translated by a native speaker of Subachmimic in which he attempts (without total success) to correct his own speech habits in conformity with another dialect — Sahidic in the case of Codex II — with the result that (a) vocalization of lexical forms according to the other dialect is common or prevalent (sometimes even with hypercorrection), but (b) important A^2 traits, especially in syntax and the spelling of grammatical forms remain'.[53]

The modern copyist may have attempted to imitate 'Crypto-Subachmimic' by adding a Sahidic element to the Lycopolitan text, but the kind of change does not parallel known dialectal variation. Consider the survey of Funk and Layton's 'Crypto-Subachmimic' tendencies in Table 5.[54]

It is not impossible that Sahidic ϵϧⲟⲗ could occur for Lycopolitan ⲁϧⲁⲗ; such a replacement does occur in Nag Hammadi Codex I,5, the Tripartite Tractate, whose dialect is predominately Lycopolitan with influence from Sahidic.[55] The appearance of ϵϧⲟⲗ in the Harvard John is extremely peculiar given other parallel texts, since the two deviations from Lycopolitan reflect a double vocalisation shift (ϵ → ⲁ, ⲟ → ⲗ) in an otherwise stable dialectal text. Generally, most dialectal

52 Personal correspondence, 24 April 2014. The Lycopolitan 'dialect' was in no way monolithic, but rather a constellation of sub-dialects which were related to Achmimic; W.-P. Funk, 'How Closely Related Are the Subakhmimic Dialects?', *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache Altertumskunde* 112 (1985) 124–39.

53 B. Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, vol. I (Nag Hammadi Studies 20; Leiden: Brill, 1989) 6–7; Funk, 'Toward a Classification of the "Sahidic" Nag Hammadi Texts', 163–77.

54 Layton, *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, 8–14.

55 H. W. Attridge and E. Pagels, eds., 'The Tripartate Tractate', *Nag Hammadi Codex I (the Jung Codex)* (Nag Hammadi Studies 22; Leiden: Brill, 1985), 159–337, at 162–63. Other tractates in the same codex are also in Lycopolitan but do not have such strong Sahidic influence.

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Table 5. Examples of 'Crypto-Subachmimic' from the Nag Hammadi Codex II

Sahidic	ⲉⲡⲉⲥⲛⲧ	ⲉⲓⲙⲉ, ⲡⲓⲣⲉ	ⲟ, ⲧⲟ	ⲯⲓⲛⲁ	ⲉ- *versus* ⲁ-	ⲉⲛⲧ-, ⲛ̄ⲧ-
NHC II	ⲉⲡⲓ̄ⲧⲛ̄	ⲙ̄ⲙⲉ, ⲡ̄ⲣⲣⲉ	ⲉ, ⲧⲉ	ⲥⲙⲓⲛⲁ	ⲁ- *versus* ⲉ-	ⲉⲧ-
Sahidic	ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉⲩⲉ	ⲙⲉ	ⲧⲣⲟⲩ-	ⲟⲛ	ⲛ̄-	
NHC II	ⲡ̄ ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲉⲩⲉ	ⲙⲛⲉ	ⲧⲣⲉⲩ-	ⲁⲛ	*omit*	

deviations such as those found in Nag Hammadi Codex II or in the Tripartite Tractate reflect the vocalisation of a single vowel, and more significant deviations are in the minority. In the case of the Tripartite Tractate, ⲁⲃⲟⲗ is slightly more common than ⲉⲃⲟⲗ as a variant, and the form ⲁⲃⲁⲗ clearly predominates (ⲉⲃⲟⲗ × 17, ⲁⲃⲟⲗ × 20, ⲁⲃⲁⲗ × 375). Therefore, while the occurrence of this Sahidic form in a Lycopolitan text could be compared to parallels in the Nag Hammadi Corpus, the dialectal stability of the remainder of the HLJ (John 5.26–30 and 6.11–14) contrasts with these two major departures. One would expect two larger slips among numerous smaller dialectal deviations. Once again the text is more easily explained as a modern creation than an ancient one.

iv. *Writing both through and around a hole in the papyrus (Krueger)*

Joost Hagen published a PDF online, in which he shared Frederic Krueger's remarks about a papyrus hole and its relevance to the authenticity of the fragment.[56] Such lacunae are not uncommon in papyri. Sometimes, a scribe will write around a pre-existing hole in a papyrus or parchment leaf, and in other instances damage to the writing material deletes portions of the text. Krueger noted that the scribe of the HLJ wrote both *around* a hole, as if the hole were pre-existent, and *through* the hole, as if the hole were the result of post-scribal damage. In the images below, two characters have been lost on the recto, and the character *nu* is too diminutive to accommodate the papyrus hole, while an alpha has been lost on the recto presumably due to this hole (Table 6). The scribe appears to have been simulating a damaged papyrus, when he inconsistently wrote the character *nu* around the hole.

56 J. L. Hagen, 'Possible Further Proof of Forgery: A Reading of the Text of the Lycopolitan Fragment of the Gospel of John, with Remarks about Suspicious Phenomena in the Areas of the Lacunae and a Note about the Supposed Gospel of Jesus' Wife', 3–4, on Alin Suciu: Patristics, Apocrypha, Coptic Literature and Manuscripts, 1 May 2014: http://alinsuciu.com/2014/05/01/guest-post-joost-l-hagen-possible-further-proof-of-forgery-a-reading-of-the-text-of-the-lycopolitan-fragment-of-the-gospel-of-john-with-remarks-about-suspicious-phenomena-in-the-areas-of-the-lac/.

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Table 6. Writing both around and through a hole in the HLJ

recto →, line 4	*verso ↓, line 4*
	
… ⲉⲃⲟⲗ [ⲛⲉ]ⲛⲧⲁⲩⲉⲓⲣⲉ …	… ⲉⲃⲟⲗ [ⲁ]ⲩⲥⲁⲩ …

v. ***Codicological reconstruction (Emmel)***

Stephen Emmel, known for his expertise in reconstructing highly fragmentary manuscripts from the White Monastery of Shenoute, published a PDF online contending that the HLJ would have been ridiculously large, if the fragment had ever constituted part of an authentic codex:

> Thus the reconstructed John manuscript is either an extraordinarily tall and narrow single-column codex, or it is a short and even more extraordinarily wide two-column codex. If its existence be accepted as a fact, it would appear to deserve to be acknowledged as the tallest (or widest) papyrus codex yet known. Among extant papyrus codices written in Coptic in particular, this hypothetical John codex would stand out as even more extraordinary.[57]

Emmel notes that the largest surviving papyrus leaf (P.Berl. inv. 11739A) measures 40.4 × 21.5 cm (868.6 cm^2), and is dwarfed by the reconstructed Harvard John leaf, which according to Emmel's average would have been approximately 59 × 29 cm (1225 cm^2).[58]

vi. ***Shared peculiarities (Emmel)***

Emmel additionally noted two peculiarities in the HLJ, which suggest a dependency on Herbert Thompson's Qau publication. First, in line 5 of the recto, John 5.29, the Harvard fragment reads ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁⲩⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉⲑⲁ[ⲩ], 'the ones which did (the) evil', in accordance with the Qau codex. A reader might expect to encounter ⲙ̄ⲡⲡⲉⲑⲁⲩ here, but a ⲡ has disappeared due to a dialectal tendency. The Lycopolitan dialect often omits the definite articles ⲡ- and ⲧ- before initial

57 S. Emmel, 'The Codicology of the New Coptic (Lycopolitan) Gospel of John Fragment (and its Relevance for Assessing the Genuineness of the Recently Published Coptic "Gospel of Jesus' Wife" Fragment)', on Alin Suciu: Patristics, Apocrypha, Coptic Literature and Manuscripts, 22 June 2014: http://alinsuciu.com/2014/06/22/guest-post-stephen-emmel-the-codicology-of-the-new-coptic-lycopolitan-gospel-of-john-fragment-and-its-relevance-for-assessing-the-genuineness-of-the-recently-published-coptic-go-2/.

58 Ibid., 1 and 6.

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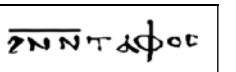
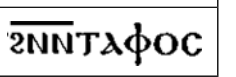
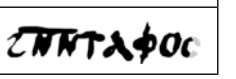
Table 7. Peculiar superlineation in the HLJ

Codex Qau, p. ⲕⲁ	
Thompson, p. 7	
Harvard John, recto	

consonants ⲡ and ⲧ, respectively.[59] So, the scribe of the Harvard John has correctly copied the Lycopolitan form ϯⲡⲉⲑⲁϥ, but ironically this scribe copied Thompson's peculiar reconstruction from two lines earlier, ⲛⲏⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟϥ 'the ones which are good', where one would expect ⲙⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟϥ from the Lycopolitan context.[60] Instead of basing his reconstruction upon the extant parallels in Lycopolitan (here and John 3.20), Thompson followed Horner's Sahidic text in this instance and assumed that Qau would have the direct object marker (ⲛ-), the plural article (-ⲏ-) and finally the noun (ⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟϥ). Thompson reconstructed an article where he should not have, and the HLJ has the same article.

Second, the HLJ superlineates at least one word in a manner inconsistent with ancient standards but similar to the typesetting of the 1924 edition of Codex Qau. Referencing the Harvard John reading ϩⲛⲛⲧⲁϕⲟⲥ, Emmel notes that 'in the printed edition on the facing page, it appears at first sight that Thompson transcribed ϩⲛ as ϩⲛⲛ'.[61] Thus, the copyist of the HLJ produced a bizarre superlineation which reflected his dependency on Herbert Thompson's published transcription (see Table 7).

vii. *Forger's errors (nonsense readings)*

To err is human. Authentic ancient manuscripts are littered with errors which would in no way suggest that they are modern forgeries. The HLJ, however, contains uncorrected scribal errors which suggest that the fragment's creator was not in fact producing a text which would ever have been read in an ancient context. These uncorrected errors on the recto (lines 3 and 7) suggest

59 'Omission of the definite articles ⲡ- and ⲧ- before words in initial /p/ and /t/. Known in *S* but especially common in A^2.' Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2–7, 9. For another example of the same form, cf. John 3.20, where the Lycopolitan reads ϯⲡⲉⲑⲁϥ for Sahidic ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ⲡⲉⲑⲟⲟϥ and Greek (ὁ) φαῦλα (πράσσων). John 18.23 offers an imperfect, but relevant, parallel: Greek περὶ τοῦ κακοῦ, Sahidic ϩⲁ ⲡⲁⲡⲉⲑⲟⲟϥ, Lycopolitan ϩⲁ ⲡⲡⲉⲑⲁϥ, demonstrating that the scribe has not consistently omitted the article ⲡ.

60 Just as the Sahidic translated the same Greek construction with plural articles, one would expect the Lycopolitan to render both constructions in tandem with singular articles; John 5.29 οἱ τὰ ἀγαθὰ ποιήσαντες … οἱ δὲ τὰ φαῦλα πράξαντες. This deviation between the Lycopolitan and the Sahidic is an exception to the rule that the Lycopolitan preserves the same translation as the Sahidic version; Askeland, *John's Gospel*, 195–208.

61 Emmel, 'The Codicology of the New Coptic (Lycopolitan) Gospel of John Fragment', 24.

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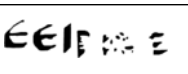
Table 8. Uncorrected and effaced errors (recto)

recto →, *line 3*	*recto* →, *line 7*
	
ϭⲟ<ⲩ>ⲁⲛ̣	ϭⲉⲓⲣ̄<ⲕⲣ>ⲓⲛ̣ⲉ

that the manuscript was a hastily constructed prop, and not a literary document or even a writing exercise. In both instances, the scribe has omitted characters, and then relied on the damaged nature of the papyrus to cover the mistake, probably even inflicting the damage him- or herself to cover these errors. In both instances, the reader encounters uncorrected nonsense (see Table 8).

4. Conclusions

The Harvard fragment of John's Gospel discussed here basically reproduces the text of the Qau codex published by Herbert Thompson in 1924. Not only is the text essentially identical in its content and line breaks (excepting the dialectal deviation of ϩⲃⲟⲗ), but in those instances where the text offers some minor deviation, the difference unfailingly reflects an attempt to reproduce Herbert Thompson's transcription onto a recycled papyrus fragment.[62] Before sceptics rush in with untenable notions of coincidence or a storyline in which the Lycopolitan Qau codex, which was probably buried during or shortly after the fourth century, was somehow copied onto a papyrus leaf harvested in the seventh–ninth centuries (when the dialect was no longer in use), the astute reader should consider the weighty parallels between the *GJW* fragment and the HLJ. These two fragments, which apparently reflect the same hand, the same ink, the same writing instrument, also irrefutably resemble PDFs freely available on the internet.[63] The most obvious origin for

62 From the limited photographic evidence, the Harvard John fragment may have been broken by folding (not cleanly cut) from the bottom of the *GJW* fragment, with the *GJW* cleanly cut from a probably inscribed piece of papyrus. The top of the Harvard John and the bottom of the *GJW* fragments are the same width, and the fragmentary nature of the edges is a rough fit. The *GJW* has a section protruding downward on the recto which corresponds to a gap on the John fragment, and the John fragment has fibres rising on the verso side which would relate to the entire side of the *GJW* which is effaced on the verso. One must note from the photographs that the *GJW* fragment appears significantly more worn than the John fragment, with large creases for which no parallel can be located. Perhaps, the artist created these creases when he tore the top half of the *GJW* fragment from the bottom.

63 Herbert Thompson was not modest in titling his Codex Qau edition 'The Gospel of John according to the Earliest Coptic Manuscript'. As a result, a Bing, Google or Yahoo search will no doubt produce this PDF as a result for an 'earliest Coptic manuscript' search.

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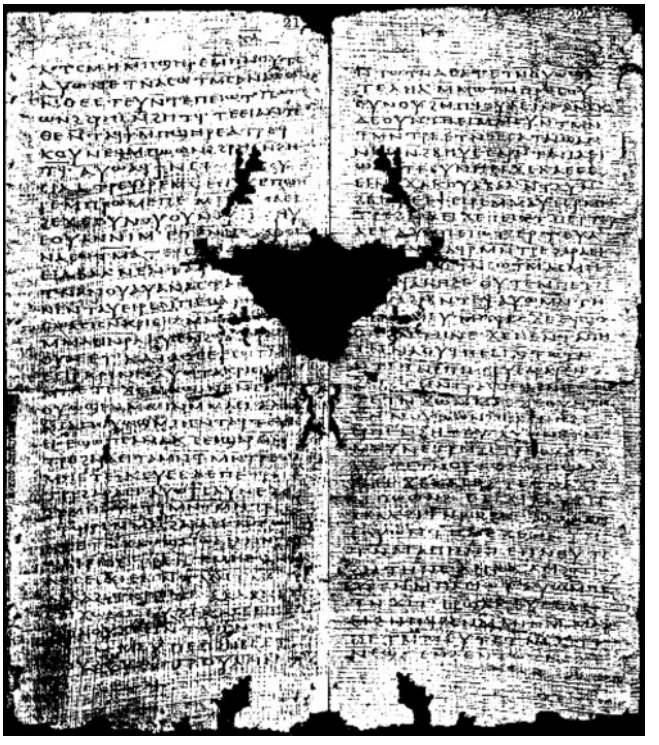

Figure 2. Qau codex, pp. 21–2

these two fragments would lie in the years immediately preceding their popular advent. Presumably, the German professors Fecht and Munro had already passed away when the accompanying documents which mentioned the *GJW* and this John fragment were created (2006 and 2009, respectively).[64]

The Harvard Lycopolitan John fragment served as a historical anchor for the *GJW* fragment, linking the more sensational manuscript with a less controversial group of papyri as well as a modern provenance (since 1963) which would allow a papyrologist to publish the fragment with a clear conscience.[65] Although the creator concocted the *GJW* patchwork in light of modern debates about the historical Jesus, the choice of text pericopes in the HLJ is not so easily discerned. The recto (John 5.26–30) discusses the authority of the Son of Man, and persons being resurrected from their tombs, while the verso (John 6.11–14)

64 For a more extensive discussion of the accompanying documentation, cf. Askeland, 'A Fake Coptic John and its Implications for the "Gospel of Jesus's Wife"', 7–9.

65 The American Society of Papyrologists has a statement forbidding members from direct or indirect involvement with papyri illegally exported from their source country after 24 April 1972; 'ASP Resolution Concerning the Illicit Trade in Papyri', American Society of Papyrologists homepage, June 2007: http://tebtunis.berkeley.edu/ASPresolution.pdf.

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relates the feeding of the multitude. Perhaps the intent was to choose unremarkable passages, which would subsist in the shadow of the more interesting *GJW* text. Perhaps, however, the perpetrator chose not the scriptural passage but rather the papyrus image, noting in the spirit of Hermann Rorschach that the deterioration of the page left a hole that was distinctive from all others in the manuscript. The relevant bifolium of the Qau codex is mocking us (see Figure 2).[66]

66 Stephen Emmel has reproduced the pattern as a yellow 'smiley face'; Emmel, 'The Codicology of the New Coptic (Lycopolitan) Gospel of John Fragment', 25.

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