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PHILOLOGICAL WORK ON THE SAHIDIC GOSPEL OF MARK IN THE 9TH CENTURY: THE CASE OF SA 123

BY ANNE BOUD'HORS & SOFIA TORALLAS TOVAR

Abstract

In our research for the critical edition of the Sahidic variants of the Gospel of Mark, the manuscript sa123 stands out as a very special example: it is likely to be a fragmentary witness of philological work in the Fayyum well after the Arabic conquest. The manuscript features extensive corrections performed by a second hand and based on a different type of text than the first copy. In this article we present the edition of one of its pages with the purpose of exploring the process and philological activity attested by it.

Establishing a new critical edition of the Sahidic text of the Gospel of Mark Gospel is the ultimate goal of the work we have been pursuing for many years, at a more or less regular pace. Our starting hypothesis is the existence of three types of texts:¹

- **sa I** = text of the main witness of the ancient translation (P.Palau 182, ed. Quecke), also attested by other fragmentary manuscripts.
- **sa II** = the revised translation, which is not witnessed by a unique manuscript, but by several fragmentary manuscripts that have the same textual type. It is the text most frequently given – though not always, by Horner's edition.
- **sa 9** = text of M 569 (ed. Aranda Perez), which occupies an intermediary or mixed position.

In recent years, the development of digitization of manuscript images, easier access to these reproductions, and collaboration with INTF Münster, has allowed us to examine many witnesses and to make progress in several aspects: determining the existence of additional witnesses for type sa I,² clarifying the text of sa II, and confirming that sa 9 is really a type of text, and not the text of an isolated manuscript, since at least three other manuscripts are obviously dependent on it (sa 125, sa 152, sa 156). In addition, it is now very likely that sa 9 is a kind of mixed text, the

¹ For a detailed explanation of the first steps in this inquiry, see Boud'hors, "L'évangile de Marc en copte-sahidique", "The Gospel of Mark in Sahidic Coptic", Boud'hors and Torallas Tovar, "Mc 1,1-11 et 1,40-45: La tradition manuscrite copte". The sigla used for the manuscripts and versions are based on the list established by Schmitz & Mink, G., *Liste der Koptischen Handschriften* (SMR, Münster: <http://intf.uni-muenster.de/smr/>), and Schüssler, *Biblia Coptica*.

² We have identified fragments of at least five manuscripts: sa 143, sa 162, sa 188 (?), sa 92 (papyrus), sa 99487 (= PM 601); the last two come from Fayyum.

result of a compilation work between sa 1 and sa II, carried out in Fayyum, perhaps at the monastery of Saint Michael of Phantou³.

The purpose of this article is to present the case of another highly illustrative manuscript, which shows how such a compilation work could have been done. This is the manuscript sa 123. Horner's edition uses this manuscript (No. 73), with various acronyms indicating that it contains many corrections, but it is impossible to rely on his edition to understand the meaning of those corrections. As we will see, these corrections are intended, at least in the Gospel of Mark, to conform, to an extent that needs to be assessed, a text originally related to sa 1 to the text of sa II. Moreover, this manuscript poses two kinds of difficulties for a publisher: 1) the edition of the corrections in a clear manner and 2) the use of this manuscript in the critical apparatus of the edition of the Gospel of Mark.

To try to illustrate both these difficulties and the interest of the manuscript sa 123, we have chosen a page, whose edition we present below, as well as a detailed analysis of the corrections for the episode of the Transfiguration (Mk 9:2-13). They are preceded by a description of the manuscript based on all the surviving sheets and a brief characterization of the various other witnesses to the passage.

Description of sa 123

Identification: SMR (Münster) sa 123 = Biblia Coptica (Schüssler) sa 531

Provenance: White Monastery ? ultimately Fayyum ?

Contents: Four gospels

State of conservation: remains of 28 folia, of which 9 contain Mk:

1:10-13,22-23,33-34,45	Paris BnF Copte 133 ² 19	sa 123 E/1
1:45b – 3:12	London BL 3579 B19 f.35	sa 123 F
8:31 – 9:35	London BL 3579 B19 f.36	sa 123 G
9:50, 10:1-3, 15-17	Paris BnF Copte 133 ² 18	sa 123 G/1
10:51-52, 11:13-14	Paris BnF Copte 133 ² 18b	sa 123 G/2
11:29b – 15:22	Venice BNM Or 193 (4 ff.)	sa 123 H

Dimensions: 35,5/37 × 27,5/29 cm.

Layout: Two column pages, at ca 36 lines in the column. There is pagination and headers (□□□□ in verso pages and □□□□□ in recto ones), as well as *paraphoroi* and polychrome *coronides* and drawings in the intercolumnar spaces.

³ On this monastery and its library, see Depuydt, *Catalogue* CIII–CXVI.

Paleography: the hand is bimodular, a so-called Alexandrian majuscule, which is not far from the hand of sa 9. It also presents common features with the Fayyumic codices A and B⁴, with less regularity. Apart from its standard features, the supralinear stroke is used on top of autosyllabic vowels (also the case of sa 9), which can be characterised as a quite frequent use in Sahidic manuscripts copied in Fayyum. It also appears occasionally on Ⲛ before consonant (e.g. Mk 9:5, 12:22, 12:35, 12:42). The supralinear stroke is more or less long and more or less centered on the letter or slightly shifted to the left or right; in the sequence ⲚⲚ, the stroke is not distinguished from the extension of the horizontal bar of Ⲛ on the left. The current title (ⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚ on even pages, ⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚ on odd pages) was adopted by the first copyist.

There seems to be two correcting hands, one using the same kind of brown ink as that of the main copyist, the other writing in black ink (the latter is much less frequent, it is found mainly in the London sheets, to the point that one may wonder whether it is really a different hand). These two hands are quite coarse, it is difficult to date them and to say if they are contemporary with each other, but their corrections seem to go in the same direction. These corrections consist of deletions - sometimes crossing out some words to rewrite others -, adding words or letters in the margin, more rarely in interlinear spaces (see below for a detailed presentation of the corrections on the edited page). Since the erasures are never total, we often manage to read what was originally there. It is possible that the correcting hand was also responsible for the pagination.

Date: based on the comparison with sa 9 (dated between 820 and 915 approximately), one could propose the 9th or early 10th century for the hand of the first copyist.

The Fayyumic origin of the manuscript can still be detected in some spelling features: ⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚ (12,2); ⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚ (12,42): see the spelling of the **fa** version ⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚ vs. sa ⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚ; ⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚⲚ (12,41), which is once found in the **fa** version. An influence may also be reflected in some syntactic (9,4, 9,5) or lexical (8,35) features: see the details of the edition. It is well known that the monastery of St. Michael in Fayyum and its scriptorium in Touton had relations with the White Monastery in the 10th century: either manuscripts copied in Fayyum were sent to the White Monastery or, perhaps, fayyumizing copyists worked at the White Monastery.

Other testimonies

The following fragments have been collated either on the originals (Paris, Oxford, Berlin, Leipzig), or on photographs (Moscow and Rome). Horner has not used all of these fragments, although he included the manuscript numbers in his edition.

⁴ Cf. Chassinat, "Fragments de manuscrits coptes"; Boud'hors, "Réflexions supplémentaires". These manuscripts come from the White Monastery.

SMR BC	Horner	Inventory no.	Provenance	Text	Type
sa 112 (H) sa 0615	114/134	Vat. Copt.109 cass.13 fasc. 43, f°6-16	White Monastery	9:1–17	sa II
sa 122 (K) sa 0533	51	Cairo, Mus.Copt., JdE 44816/CGC 9220 ⁵	White Monastery	9:1–34	sa II
sa 134 (H) sa 0587	108	Paris, BnF Copte 161(4) f. 26 g	White Monastery?	9:1–13	mixte ⁶
sa 140 (H/2) sa 0523	64 part.	Moscow, GMII -: I.1.b.297-298 ⁷	White Monastery	9:1–2*	sa II
sa 249 sa 0775	-----	Berlin P 22088 a	?	9:12–14	sa II
sa 291 ^L sa 0636 ^L	f ^l	Oxford, Bodl. Hunt. 3	Upper Egypt ?	9:2–8	sa II
-----	-----	Leipzig, inv. 3000 ⁸ , f. 7v- 8	Fayyum	9: 1–8, 11b–13a	sa 1

A Fayyumic version (fa) is also available for this passage: it is a folio from a White Monastery codex kept at the French Institute of Oriental Archaeology in Cairo (IFAO, Coptic 122), which gives the text of Mk 8:24b to 9:12. This is manuscript “B” mentioned above (n. 3). As we will see in detail below, the text of sa 123 is very close to this version on a few occasions.

⁵ Unpublished. Cf. Munier, *Manuscripts coptes* 9–10.

⁶ The case of sa 134 is somewhat complicated: the attestation of the same passage of Mk 16 by two sheets (one of the BnF [161⁴ f. 26h], and the other of the Bodleian [Copt b 11 f. 4]) which had been gathered under the same acronym sa 134 in SMR, makes it clear that they are in fact two rather similar manuscripts. Horner may have been conscious of it, since he had assigned two numbers, 103 and 108, which were grouped under sa 134. K. Schüssler had also perceived the problem, since he isolated the BnF sheet under the acronym sa 0857, grouping all the others under the acronym sa 0587. This is not the place for a complete demonstration, but it is quite clear that, copied by scribes from the same school, these two manuscripts (between which the surviving fragments must now be divided) present different types of texts: the one we will temporarily call “sa134 bis” is apparently a witness to sa II, while sa 134 has a more floating text: many proximities with sa 1 and sa 9, but occasionally also with sa II, as well as some peculiar readings. The fragment we are interested in here belongs to sa 134. As both manuscripts include Oxford fragments, it is plausible that they come from the White Monastery (the rating of the BnF fragments is not entirely discriminatory in this respect, since these fragments are part of the disparate lots purchased by Seymour de Ricci). Yet their materiality clearly links them to the scriptorium in Touton, Fayyum. Were they copied there and sent to the White Monastery, like many other manuscripts during this period? If so, they are additional clues to textual activity on the gospel of Mark, such as sa 9 and sa 123.

⁷ Published by Elanskaya, *The Literary Coptic manuscripts* 431–440.

⁸ Edition Boud’hors forthcoming. See Boud’hors, “The Gospel of Mark in Sahidic Coptic”.

Edition of London BL 3579 B19 f.36R

(Fig. 1)

The page we edit below is page 89 (□□). For the sake of clarity, given the large amount of text contained in a single page, we edit the two columns successively. They contain verses 8:31b to 9:13, but only the text of 9:2-13 is detailed afterwards.

The supralinear stroke, which adopts various placements and dimensions, is edited by convention and placed on the second letter when it is connective. Occurrences of *ektheseis* are in col. 1, l. 12 (8:34), l. 33 (9:1), l. 39 (9:2).

As mentioned in the description, it seems that two correcting hands can be distinguished; one (column 1) uses a blacker ink and is coarser than the other (col. 1 and col. 2), which is itself not very refined. Both hands make corrections in the same direction. But the “black” hand seems to have ‘overcorrected’, for instance when it has crossed out the two □□□ which had already been deleted (col. 1, l. 23-24)

The correction methods are often crossing out of words with a line, erasure produced by scratching or abrasion with or without second text superposed, and added text in the interlinear spaces or the margins to the left and right of the text. We indicate with double brackets ([[]]) the deleted words or passages, and in italics the words or passages added or rewritten on the deleted passages by one of the two correcting hands. Some details on the position or nature of the corrections are given in the apparatus or commentaries. Most of them modify the text copied by the first hand, but some only repair errors or omissions.

Col. 1

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=> The text is in conformity with that of sa 1/sa 9, with the exception of □2□□□, where □ was added above the line by the corrector; □□□□□ x□□□□ was rewritten by the corrector on a few erased letters, perhaps the first scribe had written x□□□□ there and forgotten to write □□□□□.

Verse 13

sa □□□□ †x□ □□□□ □□□□ x□ □□□2□□□□□□ □□□□ □□□ □□□□□□ □□□
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□ □□□□ □□ □□□□□2□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

No variant in sa 123.

Results of the analysis

The text of sa 123a is a witness to the old translation (version **sa I**). However, it is not totally dependent on or in agreement with the manuscript sa1, and its text is already somewhat mixed or contaminated:

- with some exclusive features of sa II (the passage analyzed here does not show any, but there are in 2:7, 2:21, 11:32, 12:14, 12:29, 12:36);
- with apparently very few exclusive features of sa 9 (2:6, 11:30, 12:26, which have to be checked carefully);
- with some readings of its own that could betray an influence of Fayyumic; however, it does not seem to have any remarkable affinity with the Leipzig manuscript (sa 92), another witness of sa1 certainly copied in Fayyum, perhaps around the 7th-8th centuries (this point will be specified once the edition of sa 123 is completed).

Therefore, in general, sa 123a can be used in the apparatus as a witness for sa I.

The manuscript sa 123 has subsequently undergone a number of corrections in order to be harmonized with the text of sa II. Therefore, sa 123b can be used, to a certain extent, in the apparatus as a witness of saII. This revision is however not systematic and, at the current stage of our research, not very predictable: what were the criteria chosen by the corrector to intervene? Did he have a witness of sa II at his disposal, and if so, which one? Since we have very few witnesses of sa II from Fayyum, should we assume that this revision was done at the White Monastery? Should we even assume that sa 123 was copied at the White Monastery by a 'fayyumising' scribe?

It seems that the revision work of sa 123 is comparable (but not similar) to the one that led to the manuscript sa 9, where we observe the final result of what is not a systematic harmonization, but rather a compilation work between the two translations sa I and sa II. In addition, sa 9 appears to be slightly earlier than sa 123, but does not appear to have played a role in correcting sa 123a. Instructive in this respect is the case of verse 10: this verse was omitted by sa 1, sa 9 and sa 123a; it was reinstated in sa 123b, in accordance with sa II (which has here two witnesses : sa 112,

which also betrays some Fayyumic influences; sa 122, copied in a very classical biblical majuscule); sa 134, often close to sa 9, does not have this verse; the Leipzig papyrus (sa 92) probably did not have it either; but the **fa** version does, which reduces the scope of its influence on sa 123a.

There are still questions to be addressed. For example, in sa 123, is there a difference in the corrector's interventions according to the chapters? Are there also traces of a revision work in the other gospels of the manuscript, and in what direction do they go? Finally, one can also wonder whether sa 123 was a copy that was corrected in order to become the apograph for further manuscripts. It looks very untidy to be used in liturgy, but as exemplar in the scriptorium, it presented a collated text, ready to be copied further in new manuscripts.

In conclusion, the existence of these parallel processes attested by sa 9 and sa 123 testifies to the interest shown in the text of Mark's gospel at that time. Is it related to an attempt to make the text attributed to the evangelizer of Egypt reliable? Can this attempt be situated in the 9th century, at a time when Christianity in Egypt was beginning to weaken? This is matter for further research.

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Insérer Fig. 1

Fig. 1. London BL 3579 B19 f.36R. © British Library