

Martyrs and Archangels

Edited by
MATTHIAS MÜLLER
and SAMI ULJAS

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116

Mohr Siebeck

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116



Martyrs and Archangels

Coptic Literary Texts
from the Pierpont Morgan Library

Edited by

Matthias Müller
and Sami Uljas

Mohr Siebeck

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Werner Widmer/Zürich (1940–2014)
&
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Preface

The volume at hand contains a publication of the following three hitherto unedited Coptic literary works preserved on manuscripts currently in the collections of the Pierpont Morgan Library in New York:

- I. *The Martyrdom of St Phoibamon of Preht*,
Pierpont Morgan Codex M582 ff.1R–20V
- II. *The Martyrdom of SS Theodore the Anatolian, Leontius the Arab, and Panigerus the Persian*,
Pierpont Morgan Codex M583, ff. 59R–75R
- III. Archelaos of Neapolis: *On Archangel Gabriel*,
Pierpont Morgan Codex M583, ff. 1R–16R

All three texts derive from the so-called Hamuli find, which arguably represents the most important single discovery of Coptic literary manuscripts ever made. The story behind the find and its contents has been often told,¹ and it suffices here to give merely the briefest of summaries. In the spring of 1910, a group of Egyptian farmers chanced upon a cache of Coptic manuscripts reportedly buried in a stone container close to the ruins of the Monastery of St Michael near the modern village of al-Hamuli in the western Fayyum area. The founders, quick to realise the value of their discovery, divided the manuscripts among themselves and subsequently sold them to several dealers in Cairo. Fortunately, the find was brought to the attention of Mssrs Émile Chassinat and Henri Hyvernat, both eminent coptologists, who, impervious to the difficulties involved, managed to re-unite the material. Following various arrangements, the codices were soon thereafter offered for sale to John Pierpont Morgan (1837–1913), the famed American financier, philanthropist, and collector of antiquities. The deal was approved of, and in December 1911 Mr Morgan's agent secured the purchase in Paris of the entire find consisting of over eighty items, among them the codices that were later to be assigned

¹ See Hyvernat, in *JBL* 31; Depuydt, *Cat.*, lviii–lxix.

the sigla M582, M583, and M607. The manuscripts were to travel widely between Paris, London, Rome, and New York, before they finally reached their current home at the Pierpont Morgan Library by 1929 after undergoing restoration work in The Vatican.

The editions in this volume aim at presenting as thorough an account of the texts as possible.² They are based on very high-quality images of the original manuscript leaves taken in 2012. During their stay at Rome in the 1910s and 1920s, the Hamuli codices were photographed, and under the direction of Henri Hyvernat, twelve sets of facsimiles consisting of 56 plate volumes and one index volume were prepared and donated to different institutions in Europe and Cairo.³ These volumes, now also freely accessible online,⁴ and the images therein continue to form the most important recourse for researchers and editors of the Hamuli material. However, when the work on the present edition was initiated in early 2012, it soon transpired that Hyvernat's old images were, in spite of their often excellent quality, not always sufficiently clear in the case of M582 and M583. Consequently, the present editors contacted Pierpont Morgan Library, and in connection with acquiring the permission to edit these and a number of other Coptic texts in the collection, asked the library authorities to prepare a new set of images for the purpose. These provided a solid and accurate basis for carrying out the work without actually having direct access to the original manuscripts.

Each text here is treated in its own, self-standing part of the book that consist of an introductory chapter followed by a transcript of the Coptic text, a translation thereof, a set of indices, and a possible appendix. The introductory section discusses the textual tradition and transmission of the work in question, its historical and geographical aspects, and main protagonist(s). This is followed by an outline of the narrative or contents of the text and a technical description of the manuscript edited, including its grammatical and orthographic characteristics.

The transcripts of the Coptic texts are presented in a diplomatic edition corresponding as closely as possible to the original. Although unusu-

² For additional information on the edition work described here, see Uljas, in *Coptic Society, Literature & Religion* II.

³ See Hyvernat, *Codices* in general and vol. 41, pls. 1–32 (text III) 117–149 (text II), and vol. 46, pls. 3–42 (text I) for the three works edited here in particular.

⁴ <https://archive.org/details/PhantooLibrary> (accessed January 2018).

al formatting of words and lines, as well as errors, omissions, and other peculiarities are always indicated and explained in notes accompanying the transcript, we have deliberately avoided all attempts to ‘formalise’ or otherwise tamper with the text or its layout. This is because we believe that an edition should straddle the boundary between presentation and facsimile. Short of providing actual images, an edition should still remain faithful to the original form whenever possible. For ease of referring, we have divided the Coptic text into consecutively numbered paragraphs (indicated in the margins as §§) that correspond to similar divisions observable in the original, in conscious opposition to the common practise of freely subdividing texts into discrete units.⁵

The translation of the Coptic text is accompanied with a full philological and linguistic commentary.⁶ The running text is divided into distinct chapters, paragraph numbers corresponding to those in the Coptic text are included, and the progression of pages and changes between columns of text are clearly indicated with superscript sigla and asterisks (*) respectively.

Each chapter closes with individual indices for the text. These include a list of personal names and toponyms, of occurrences of foreign words, a complete Coptic lexical index, a grammatical index of constructions attested in the text, and finally a list of citations and allusions to Biblical and other texts. Parts I and III also include additional appendices at the end for editions of fragmentary manuscripts from elsewhere that contain sections and/or a variant version of the Pierpont Morgan text. At the end of the volume can be found a joint bibliography of the texts edited.

The present volume is intended as a first part in a series of similar publications of Coptic literary works that mostly have not been previously edited, but also of texts that either have been published in a manner that renders re-edition desirable or that have been edited but whose edi-

⁵ See Müller, in *LingAeg* 19 (2011), 338–39 for some reasons for this.

⁶ Here, however, we have partly followed our individual preferences in emphasising various issues. For example, in Parts II & III by Müller, for Biblical references in the original text, the corresponding text from the (Coptic) Scriptures is given in full in the footnotes. This is intended to cater for Biblical scholars among the readership. In Part I by Uljas, similar occurrences are merely noted by giving the reference to the passage as it occurs in the Scriptures. However, in Part I coincidences of wordings, themes, and topoi in other martyrological works are more fully indicated. This is hoped to be of use to readers interested in philological comparisons and interconnections between such texts.

tions remain (probably permanently) inaccessible to a wider audience. The study of these latter types of material has progressed alongside work on the texts included here, which has taken rather longer than anticipated due to other tasks and commitments. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the appearance of subsequent volumes will not be unduly delayed.

The authors would like to thank the Pierpont Morgan Library for the permission to publish the texts presented and for the images of the manuscripts without which our work could scarcely have been accomplished. We also wish to tender our thanks to the *Basler freiwillige akademische Gesellschaft* for their financial support in covering the costs of the images. Additional help was provided by Prof. Susanne Bickel, whom we would similarly wish to thank along with the Institute of Egyptology of the University of Basel. Our deepest gratitude for their help and assistance is also due to the following friends and colleagues: James P. Allen (Brown University), Christian Askeland (Indiana Wesleyan University), Heike Behlmer (Göttingen), Marie Besso (Basel), Anne Boud'hors (Paris), Chip Coakley (Cambridge), Jennifer Cromwell (Copenhagen), Claudia Gamma (Basel), Julien Delhez (Göttingen), Gunnel Ekroth (Uppsala), Victoria Fendel (Basel), Eitan Grossman (Jerusalem), Andrea Hászanos (Budapest & Berlin), Sabine Hübner (Basel), Anthony Kaldellis (Ohio State University), Ingela Nilsson (Uppsala), Luigi Prada (Oxford), Clémentine Reymond (Basel), Gesa Schenke (Oxford), Alin Suciu (Hamburg & Göttingen), Sofia Torallas Tovar (Chicago), and Martin Wallraff (Basel & Munich) as well as the members of the Coptic reading group at the University of Zürich (Robert Barnea, Peter Günther, Kurt Locher, Nicola Schmid, Renate Siegmann, and Toshiko Verhave-Yoshida). Eleonora Kael (Basel) shouldered the task of proofreading the whole manuscript before submission; any remaining errors are of course ours. Last but not least, it is hoped that the dedication of this volume to two friends and scholars with an interest in Coptic will repay some of the gratitude owed to them.

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List of Abbreviations

The following list of abbreviations pertains mainly, but not only to grammatical abbreviations used in the grammatical description and in the indices.

Ø	null morpheme	ms(s)	manuscript(s)
1, 2, 3	person	neg	negated
ADJ	adjective	NEG	negation
BN	Bibliothèque Nationale	NOM	nominal (subject)
CMCL	Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari (www.cmcl.it)	P, PL	plural
CNJ	conjunctive	PF	perfect
COP	copula	POSS	possessive
DEF	definite	PRE	subject preceding the verbal form
DEL	deleted	POST	subject following the verbal form
DEP	dependent clause	PRT	preterite
F	feminine	R	recto
f.	folio	REL	relative
FUT	future	S	singular
IDF	indefinite	SE	subject element
INF	infinitive	SUB	subject (+ DEL subject deleted)
M	masculine	transl.	translation
MONB	Monasterio bianco (White Monastery) followed by letter sequence identifying individual codices	V	verso
		VB	verb

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Part I:

The Martyrdom of St Phoibamon of Preht

Pierpont Morgan Codex M582, ff. 1R–20V (CMCL 0297)

Sami Uljas

Introduction

Transmission of the Text

A number of Coptic witnesses of the Martyrdom of St Phoibamon of Preht have survived until modern times, scattered among several, mainly European collections. Besides Pierpont Morgan Library M582 edited here, which is the sole manuscript to preserve the text in its entirety, there are – or, at least were until relatively recently – four other sources of the text in existence, viz.:

- a) British Library (formerly British Museum) Or. 6012:
part of a single papyrus leaf
- b) British Library Or. 7561, ff. 67–69:
three fragmentary pages of a papyrus codex
- c) British Library Or. 7561, ff. 114, 116 & 117:
three papyrus fragments
- d) Bayerische Landesbibliothek (Munich), Hs. koptisch 3, ff. 52–58:
seven fragmentary papyrus leaves

A number of unedited Arabic and Ethiopic versions of the work and encomia of the martyr have also been reported in the Coptic Museum in Cairo as well as in Leipzig, Munich, and the Vatican.¹ Some of these, however, do not in fact relate to St Phoibamon of Preht but rather to his namesake of whom more will be said below.²

¹ According to Graf (*Catalogue*, 274/no. 717.5 and *Geschichte*, 538) and Bachatly et al., (*Mon. Phoebammon* I, 13), these include Cairo Hist. 138 ff. 140R–150v; 275; 474 ff. 131R–180v; 712 f. 281R; 717 ff. 131R–180v; Leipzig Univ. Or. 1064; Munich Or. 948 ff. 143R–162V and Vatican Ar. 172 ff. 189v–213v. An Ethiopic translation of the latter occurs in BL (<BM) Eth. MS 256 f. 9; 257 f. 34, and 258 f. 42 (Graf, *Geschichte*, 538 n.5).

² Thus e.g. the miracles of Abu Bifam (= Phoibamon) in Leipzig Univ. Or. 1064 as described by Vollers (*Kat. Leipzig*, 376/no. 1064) clearly relate to Phoibamon of Bushim (see below). The same holds also with the encomium by Nilus, the Bishop of Tacha in Vatican Ar. 172 ff. 192v–213v noted by Graf (*Geschichte*, 538; see also n.46 below). On the other hand, according to Crum (in *Epiphanius* I, 110; cf. O’Leary, *Saints*, 231), the *acta* Phoibamon “the soldier” in ff. 189R–192R of this same manuscript “is much the same

Before describing the contents of the Pierpont Morgan manuscript and its appearance, some notes are in order concerning the other Coptic witnesses of St Phoibamon's martyrdom listed above. The London leaf BL (<BM) Or. 6012 apparently formed part of the finds of Coptic mss and fragments made between 1895 and 1907 in and around the White Monastery near Sohag by E.A.W. Budge under the auspices of the British Museum.³ It was subsequently described and transcribed by Crum in his 1905 catalogue of Coptic texts in the British Museum.⁴ The fragments BL Or. 7561 ff. 67–69, 114, 116 & 117 as well as the Munich leaves Bayerische Landesbibliothek Handschrift koptisch 3, ff. 52–58 were all bought, according to the original purchaser Harris, "at Thebes" in 1846.⁵ Two years after this transcripts of them were made by one A. Des Rivières, and these and the fragments themselves ended up, through various hands, in London and Munich.⁶ The folia BL Or. 7561 ff. 67–69 were presented to the British Museum in 1910 and described first by Crum and later in more detail by Layton.⁷ The fragments ff. 114, 116 & 117, again described by Layton, were part of the same gift.⁸ The Bayerische Landesbibliothek fragments and Des Rivières's transcripts had reached Munich by 1875 when they were described by de Lagarde in the catalogue of Oriental mss of the library.⁹ However, both have been reported as lost since the early 1970s.¹⁰

here as in the Coptic (Morgan)".

³ See Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, vol. 2, 341. The appearance of the name of Reverend C. Murch (Bierbrier, *Who Was Who*, 392) in Crum's entry for the fragment (*Cat. BM*, no. 999/p. 414) gives the impression that it was acquired by or from him. According to Budge, this is not the case (*ibid.*, 341 n.4).

⁴ See the previous note.

⁵ For what follows, see Layton, *Cat. BL*, xxxiii–xxxv.

⁶ Shisha-Halevy, in *Or 44* (1975), 150; Layton, *Cat. BL*, xxxiv; cf. Crum, *Cat. BM*, 414b n.1. For the enigmatic M Des Rivières and his transcripts, see Layton, *ibid.*, xxxiv, n.37; Galtier, in *BIFAO* 5 (1906), 88–91. Cf. also Crum, in *PSBA* 25 (1903), 267 and Winstedt, in *PSBA* 28 (1906), 137.

⁷ Crum, in *Epiphanius* I, 205; Layton, *Cat. BL*, 204–05 (cat. no. 167).

⁸ Layton, *Cat. BL*, 159 (cat. no. 138).

⁹ de Lagarde in Aumer, *Cat. Monacensis* I/IV, 99; cf. Crum, *Cat. BL*, 414n.1; Spanel, in *CE* 6, 1963. Layton (*Cat. BL*, xxxiv) states that the material reached Munich "sometime before 1906", but seeing that they are described in Aumer's 1875 catalogue, the date can be narrowed down to somewhere between this and the year 1848.

¹⁰ This was the outcome of an inquiry to the Bayerische Landesbibliothek by Prof. A. Shisha-Halevy in 1974 (Shisha-Halevy, in *Or 44* [1975], 150).



Fig. 1: M582 fol. 1 recto

It is clear that the codex of which BL Or. 6012 forms a small and currently the only extant part, once contained an identical version of the martyrdom of St Phoibamon as M582. The correspondence between the texts runs as follows:

BL Or. 6012 recto = M582 f. 11v a36–b16
 verso = M582 f. 12R a33–b5

By contrast, BL Or. 7561 ff. 67–69 and 114, 116, & 117 show a different recension of the text, although ff. 67–69, which are consecutive, do not in fact originate in the same codex as ff. 114, 116 & 117. Given the bad preservation of the fragments and the often wide differences between them and the Pierpont Morgan M582 version, textual correspondences between the mss are occasionally difficult to fix. Nevertheless, the following matches may be made with some certainty:¹¹

BL Or. 7561 f. 67 recto = M582 f. 5v a9–26
 verso = M582 f. 5v a27–b14
 f. 68 recto = M582 f. 5R a13–34
 verso = M582 f. 5R a35–5v a9
 f. 69 recto = M582 f. 4v b5–28
 verso = M582 f. 4v b28–5R a13
 f. 114 recto = M582 f. 19R b25–30
 verso resembles M582 f. 20R b19–21
 f. 116 recto = M582 f. 18v a11–b8
 verso = M582 f. 18v b11–35
 f. 117 recto resembles M582 f. 20v b15–16 & 24–26
 verso resembles M582 19v a3f

Transcript and translation of the larger London fragments ff. 67–69 and 116 will be given in an appendix to the present chapter and a transcript of the smaller ones (insofar as these are readable) in the notes to the translation of Pierpont Morgan M582 below. Seeing that the lost Munich leaves Bayerische Landesbibliothek Handschrift koptisch 3, ff. 52–58 were undoubtedly once part of the same manuscript as BL Or. ff. 67–69 or ff. 114, 116 & 117, they will also have contained the variant recension of the *passio*.

Excluding the Arabic version(s), the surviving material thus testifies to

¹¹ Cf. Layton, *Cat. BL*, 159, 205.

the onetime existence of no less than four codices containing at least two recensions of the martyrdom of St Phoibamon: one originally at the Monastery of Archangel Michael near Hamuli; one in Shenoute's White Monastery; and at least two, as Crum put it, "in the possession of Theban ascetics".¹² The Theban connection is particularly intriguing since, as shall be seen shortly, there has been some uncertainty and scholarly disagreement over the possible connection of St Phoibamon of Preht with Thebes and his status there as a tutelary saint of local religious establishments (see further below).

Historical and Geographic Aspects of the Passio

As in most Coptic martyrdoms, the events in the *passio* of St Phoibamon of Preht are presented as having occurred during the great persecution instigated by Emperor Diocletian (AD 284–305).¹³ In Pierpont Morgan M582 the date of the saint's martyrdom is given as the 1st of Paone¹⁴ in Diocletian's first year, when the emperor purportedly published an edict proscribing the Christian faith.¹⁵ In reality, Diocletian's first edict against Christians, which initially targeted mainly the clergy and church property, was issued only in February AD 303 and was followed a year later by the fourth and most wide-ranging anti-Christian proclamation ordering every one to sacrifice to the imperial gods or face execution.¹⁶ Phoibamon's martyrdom will, with all likelihood, have taken place following the promulgation of the latter order. This is further suggested by the list of individuals that are said to have held office at the time of Phoibamon's suffering, although here too certain anachronisms are apparent. According to the Pierpont Morgan text, at the time the office of *hypatos* (ὑπάτος), or consul, was held by one "Cullianos" (ΚΟΥΛΛΙΑΝΟΣ) and that of the *dux*

¹² Crum, in *Epiphanius* I, 196; cf. Layton, *Cat. BL*, xxxiv.

¹³ For a comprehensive discussion of Diocletian's role in Coptic hagiographies, see van der Berg-Onstwedder, in *BSAC* 29 (1990), 87–122.

¹⁴ 26 May in the Julian and 8 June in the Gregorian calendar.

¹⁵ M582 f. 1R, a7–9, 25–28.

¹⁶ Of the many similar accounts, the description by Williams (*Diocletian*, 170–85) of the escalating conflict between the Roman state and the Christians under Diocletian is particularly lively. Variance of dates here is not at all rare in Coptic martyrdoms, where the edict and/or the start of the persecution is placed variously on the 3rd, 15th, 18th, and 19th year of Diocletian (van der Berg-Onstwedder, in *BSAC* 29 (1990), 104–05).

(military commander) of Thebaïs by Maximinian. “Cullianos” is certainly Clodios Culcianos, the prefect of Egypt between AD 301–06 and an arch-persecutor of Christians in numerous Coptic hagiographies.¹⁷ By contrast, other Coptic martyrdoms do not feature a *dux* called Maximinian,¹⁸ but, as will be discussed below, this man is possibly to be identified with a certain Roman official who held office only in AD 308–09 (or 310). The historicity of the other officials listed in the *passio* – Soterichus the *eparch* (ἑπαρχος) or prefect of the city,¹⁹ Romanos the general (στρατηλάτης) of the palace, and Philippus the *sticholêtikos* or commander of a file of soldiers – is not certain, although Romanos is surely the impious father of the famed St Victor the General appearing in great many Coptic martyrdoms.²⁰ Overall, the list mixes real historical figures, whose exact chronological position was only vaguely recalled, with perhaps wholly fictional characters.²¹ It also strongly resembles a corresponding list inserted at the beginning of the martyrdom of SS Apaïoule and Pteleme, where Culcianos, Soterichus, and Romanos again appear, and which, like the *passio* of St Phoibamon, derives from a Hamuli manuscript.²² Nevertheless, the temporal frame of the martyrdom may be narrowed down to the period shortly after AD 304 following Diocletian’s fourth edict ban-

¹⁷ Although he is known from many documentary texts, scholars disagree over the date of Culcianos’ assumption of his prefectorate. According to Vandersleyen (*Chronologie*, 12, 73–77, 88, 93) this took place in AD 302 whereas Jones, Martindale & Morris give the date as AD 303 (*Prosopography*, 233–34) and Barnes (*New Empire*, 149) as AD 301. Besides Coptic sources, Culcianos is portrayed as a persecutor of Christians also by Eusebius (*Ecl. Hist.* IX, 11:4, tr. Williamson, *Eusebius*).

¹⁸ See van der Berg-Onstwedder, in *BSAC* 29 (1990), 105 for the usual suspects.

¹⁹ The martyrdom of St Macarius of Antioch also features a Soterichus, the *eparch* of the town of Bushim (*AdM*, 74).

²⁰ See *BCM*, xxiii–xxxvi. Romanos often plays an active role in inciting Diocletian to publish his edict and start the persecution of Christians – see e.g. the martyrdoms of SS Eusebius (*AdM*, 23) and Shenoufe *et al.* (*R&B, Mart.*, 83–84).

²¹ Cf. the similar opinion expressed by Spanel, in *CE* 6, 1963–64. See also Delehay, *Passions*, 242; but cf. *R&B, Mart.*, 7–8.

²² Pierpont Morgan M583 ff. 168R–173R; see *R&B, Mart.*, 131. Here Culcianos is again *hypatos* and Romanos a general, but now Soterichus appears as ἀρχος ἐτεχωρατηρῆς ὡλῆεσοῶ “Prefect of all the land up to the Ethiopians”. The text adds also the names of Euhius and Basilides absent from the version in *passio* Phoibamon. These two men, along with Romanos, appear as companions of Diocletian also e.g. in the Martyrdom of St Claudius of Antioch (Godron, *St Claude*, 434).

ning Christian practises and compelling his subjects to demonstrate their loyalty to the crown through public sacrifice to the imperial gods.

According to the Pierpont Morgan text, St Phoibamon suffered a martyr's death outside the city of Assiut, where he was brought from the military camp (καστρον, Lat. *castrum*) of Preht (πρεχτ), the Abraht of the Arabic *passio* of Phoibamon in Cairo Hist 275 and of the *acta* of certain other Coptic saints.²³ The location of this place is not known, but given the description in the martyrdom of Phoibamon's journey upstream to Antinoë and on to Assiut,²⁴ it must have lain north of both these major towns. It was also probably near Touho (τουχω), modern Taha al-'Amida north of Minya,²⁵ named in the *miracula* following the *passio* in M582 (see below) as the place of birth of the martyr.²⁶ The subsequent memory of St Phoibamon was kept alive at various places across the area containing these localities and beyond. According to the *miracula*, he had a *topos*, or shrine, at Touho, which under the reign of Theodosius I was to become a scene of a series of miracles that began sometime between AD 383–88.²⁷ Concrete evidence of this shrine is not forthcoming. The *miracula* mentions two further places of worship dedicated to the memory of St Phoibamon of Preht. The first of these was a chapel (εὐκτήριον) at Pshosh (πψωω), an unknown locality south of Antinoë,²⁸ and the other a *topos* at Thône (θωνε), i.e. Tuna el-Gebel.²⁹ The latter may or may not be

²³ See Bachatly *et al.*, *Mon. Phoebammon* I, 13; Amélineau, *Géographie*, 12; Crum, *Theol. Texts*, 164 n.1; cf. Crum, in *Epiphanius* I, 109.

²⁴ See §§111–34 below.

²⁵ M582 f. 21R b8–14. For the identification, see Kessler, *Topographie*, 42; cf. Amélineau, *Geographie*, 471–72.

²⁶ F. 21R b7–13. Bachatly *et al.* (*Mon. Phoebammon*, 13) translate a passage from the Arabic version of the martyrdom of Phoibamon in Cairo Hist 275 where the *dux* asks the saint whether he is “le soldat, (originaire) de Tahâ (at-Tahâouî) qui est de la forteresse d'Abraht”. This suggests that Touho and Preht, if not quite identical, were very close to each other.

²⁷ The first two miracles involved Theodosius himself (ff. 21R a28–22R a5), who according to the text gave Touho its Greek name *Theodosiopolis* (f. 22R b34–22R a4; cf. Kessler, *Topographie*, 42 & n.166; Amélineau, *Géographie*, 471–72). Schenke, in *ZAC* 20 (2016) discusses the character and special practical and other features of the later cult of Phoibamon.

²⁸ M582 f. 26R a1–8.

²⁹ This *topos* appears in the fifth miracle (M582 ff. 24R a7–25R a32) involving a man from Ashmunein who wished to make a trip to the shrine of St Phoibamon in Touho to obtain healing, but could not travel there because of his illness. He subsequently saw the

one of the three Hermopolite shrines known from documentary sources as having been dedicated to a St Phoibamon, and there is similar evidence of a good many other such sites sacred to the memory of saints thus named.³⁰ However, apart from such exceptions as the church of Phoibamon at Abnub near Assiut,³¹ linking these with St Phoibamon of Preht has turned out to be rather difficult due to his confusion with another saint with the same name.

The Main Protagonists

The hero in the story of the Martyrdom of St Phoibamon was, as noted, a native of the town of Touho, who had reportedly reached the age of thirty-one when he was put to death.³² By that time he had probably been a Christian for some years.³³ Besides this, and the information given in the *passio* that he was born to unnamed pagan parents and had a Christian sister³⁴ called Sarah, nothing further is known about St Phoibamon, including whether he is a historical figure or a mere fictional product of imagination. He is one of three³⁵ Coptic martyrs named Phoibamon.³⁶ Besides Phoibamon (Bifâmon) son of John who has an entry in the Ethiopian *synaxar* on 5th of Sanê,³⁷ in the Copto-Arabic *synaxar* the mar-

saint in a dream and was told to go to the Thône shrine instead (f. 24R b25–31). For the identification of Thône as Tuna el-Gebel, see Kessler, *Topographie*, 19, 108.

³⁰ See Papaconstantinou, *Culte des saints*, 204–12.

³¹ Horn, *Studien*, 142–46.

³² M582 f. 2r b9–10 (§20).

³³ Spanel (in *CE* 6, 1963) gives the number of years as four. This is based on a remark by Phoibamon's father in M582 f. 7r b10–12 (§84), but, as shall be discussed later, the chronological implications of this are rather unclear (see §84 in the translation).

³⁴ Erroneously identified as his mother by Spanel, in *CE* 6, 1963. The fact that Phoibamon's sister was equally pious as he himself is one of the standard clichés of Coptic martyrologies (cf. R&B, *Mart.*, 2).

³⁵ Or more, if e.g. the similarly named side figures killed in the martyrdoms of SS Shenoufe and Claudius of Antioch are also included (see R&B, *Mart.*, 83–127; Godron, *St Claude*, 454).

³⁶ Crum (in *Epiphanius* I, 110) quotes Maspero's opinion that given the frequent writing of the name of the saints as ΦΙΒΛΜΩΗ (also in M582), it should be understood as formed of *phib-* rather than (god) *Phoebus*. However, the *phib-* version may simply reflect the actual pronunciation of the name: M582 offers also the versions ΦΟΒΛΗΩΗ (14R b20–21) and ΦΙΒΛΗΟΥ (12R a11–12).

³⁷ *PO* 1, 557–58. This Phoibamon was executed by the infamous persecutor Arianos.

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