

Neue Erkenntnisse zur äußeren Kirchengeschichte findet man in diesem Register nicht, aber wertvolle Einblicke in die Verwaltung des Ordens und das innere Leben, den Geist, der den General und Tausende seiner Ordensleute beselte. Darum wird man mit dem Dank für diese Edition den Wunsch verbinden, daß auch die weiteren Bände der Reihe in nicht zu großen Abständen der Geschichtswissenschaft geboten werden können.

*Gröbenzell*

*Hermann Tüchle*

J. M. Plumley: *The Scrolls of Bishop Timotheos, Two Documents from Medieval Nubia*, (Texts from Excavations, ed. THG James, First Memoir). London (The Egypt Exploration Society) 1976, pp 44 with 24 Plates, £ 5.00.

The finding of the scrolls of Bishop Timotheos was the most remarkable of a series of important discoveries made by the Egypt Exploration Society's expedition to Q'asr Ibrim in 1963-64. Though long delayed, Professor J. M. Plumley's publication is fully worthy of the occasion. The description of the find, the text and translation accompanied by economic but scholarly notes, and the plates which enables the reader to read every line of the Bohairic Coptic and Arabic texts, add up to a superbly produced volume. No little credit goes to Professor Plumley's photography under difficult conditions which has enabled such excellent results to be produced.

The two scrolls had been attached to the thighs of the bishop at the time of his burial under the arched entrance to the North Crypt of the cathedral of Q'asr Ibrim. In the last phase of the Christian use of the cathedral the entrance of the North Crypt and the stairway leading into it had been covered by paving which had laid over the whole area. A space, however, had been left below the arch and this had served as a tomb for the bishop.

The scrolls were of paper, each assembled by gumming ten sheets together making a total length of nearly 5 metres and a width of 34 cm. Each scroll was headed by a magnificent illuminated cross. The main body of the text consisted of 166 lines in the Coptic scroll and 58 lines in the Arabic. The Coptic scroll, which must be the finest example of medieval Coptic manuscript art, begins with eleven lines of large ornamental letters, eight lines in black ink and three in red. The main contents is a Letter Testimonial (*Ἐπιστολή Συνταξιακή*) from the Patriarch Gabriel iv (1370-78) to the people of Nubia, informing them that in succession to their deceased bishop, Athanasios, he had consecrated for them a new bishop, and instructing them to receive and enthrone Bishop Timotheos as Bishop of Pachoras in his see. The ceremony of consecration took place on Sunday 19 Hathor (November) 1371 in the Hanging Church at Old Cairo. At the end of the Patriarch's commendatory letter, were appended the autograph letters of four episcopal witnesses. Two of these had been present at the consecration, and two at Timotheos' enthronement, three months later on 15 February, the second Sunday of the Lenten Fast in 1372 (the Year 1088 of the Era of the Martyrs), not in Nubia but "in the Church of the Holy Martyr, Victor in the monastery and lavra of Kamouli" (modern Naqada in upper Egypt). Not the least interesting part of the discovery is what would appear to be Timotheos' attempts to work out the dates of the Sunday before the Lenten Fast and Easter between 1372 and 1378 inclusive. His calculations were written on the back of the Arabic scroll, but after 1375 he had evidently given it up as a bad job.

The importance of these documents for the history and organization of the Church in Nubia cannot be overestimated. The Coptic Patriarch was still the source of authority, as he was for all Christians in the Nile valley and Maghreb. The form of Gabriel's letter followed an established pattern, an incomplete example of another similar also of the fourteenth century being preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Arab 203), and pointed out to Professor Plumley by Dr. G. H. Bebawi. The Q'asr Ibrim text provides a complete version of one such letter. The scrolls also prove that nearly a century after Northern Nubia had become an Egyptian

protectorate (circa 1286), there was still an organized Christian church and people. Timotheos himself is described as a Nubian. Organization was on monastic lines, for Timotheos is appointed "*hegomenos*" as well as bishop, and he wore a brown monastic habit as his outer garment. Greek too, was in use among the bishops in Egypt who consecrated him, and Timotheos himself uses Greek words and numerals in his calendrical calculations. Loss of independence did not involve immediate destruction of Nubian Christianity. This fell to other, probably nomadic forces.

So far as Timotheos' see is concerned, one may perhaps reserve judgment on the author's view that Ibrim had "by now taken over the name of Pachoras". "Ibrim" is indeed written above „Pachoras“ on the Arabic scroll (see line 11) but "Pachoras" is not erased. The two sees had been linked closely for centuries. If Ibrim still had its cathedral in the fourteenth century, Pachoras (Faras) could boast a large monastery on the site of its cathedral.

The author's main interest lies in the philology of the documents. This is an excellent philological study, easy to read and follow. With an exception not readily accountable, that he has omitted lines 163–168 of the Coptic scroll from his translation (a final benediction), no textual detail misses his attention. He is less concerned, however, with their historical and archaeological importance.

Except to suggest that conditions in Nubia may have been too disturbed for Timotheos' enthronement to have taken place in Ibrim, he offers few hints of the new historical and ecclesiastical perspectives opened up by the discovery. Indeed, the historical significance of the documents is confined to a cursory reference in the editor's Foreword.

The editor's brief description of the circumstances of the find does not completely satisfy curiosity. The writer of this review was his Associate on the excavations, and was in charge of their day-to-day conduct. He was on the spot within seconds of the workmen's discovery. The bishop was not buried in the normal sense of the term. He had been laid in the space below the arch of the crypt on top of accumulated soft debris, clothed in his ordinary everyday clothes, but enveloped in a white shroud suspended from his shoulders, and his head was covered with a green cloth. He lay slightly hunched up on his back and when found was covered only by a thin layer of dust. A palm branch staff lay near his feet, and it was noticed that one of these was missing. It looked as though he had been laid to rest surreptitiously and in some haste. How he died is a mystery.

The scrolls too, cannot be divorced from the other objects found with the bishop, his iron pectoral cross suspended from his neck and the little leather phylactery with curious cabbalistic signs that he wore close to his chest. These together with his clothing, notably the brown monastic habit richly decorated with woven fabric across the shoulders, build up a picture of a fourteenth century Nubian bishop. Separation of the individual objects inevitably makes it more difficult to gauge the significance of the discovery as a whole. Brief reports on the discovery, the bishop's clothing (particularly valuable for comparison with that of the clergy shown on the Faras frescoes), and the other objects found with his body, as well as an assessment of the significance of the find could have been included without impinging on the central feature of the text of the scrolls. The interval between the discovery and publication of these has been long enough.

Thus, the world of scholarship is left with a magnificently produced study of medieval Nubian documents of very great interest, but isolated from their context. One can have nothing but praise for the author's skill as an editor, but the archaeological sense that would have related the discovery to its environment and assessed its importance in the history of Christian Nubia has been lacking. In congratulating Professor Plumley and Mr. T. G. H. James on so fine an opening volume to the Egypt Exploration Society's *Texts from Excavations*, we may also hope that subsequent volumes will not surrender all other aspects of similar discoveries on the altar of philology.

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