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A NEW COPTIC FRAGMENT OF 2 SAMUEL 10:13–14, 17–18:  
MCGILL MS NO COPTIC 2

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A NEW COPTIC FRAGMENT OF 2 SAMUEL 10:13–14, 17–18:  
MCGILL MS NO COPTIC 2\*

McGill MS NO Coptic 2

H × W = 8.2 cm × 6 cm

Provenance unknown

This fragment represents one of four unpublished Coptic manuscripts in the McGill University Library that originally belonged to Mr. Erik von Scherling, a Swedish rare book dealer who, in the first half of the twentieth century, sold various Greek and Coptic papyri and parchments in a private catalogue titled *Rotulus*.<sup>1</sup> The entry for item number 1956 from *Rotulus* 4 (1937) reads as follows: “1956 PALIMPSEST, scrap on vellum. 3 × 2 inch. First writing a fine Greek uncial script of the fourth century, the second writing a Coptic magical text of the sixth century. Verso much faded. Fourth–sixth century.” It is not altogether clear whether von Scherling himself gave this description or if it was supplied by an anonymous advisor. In any case, the description regarding the language of the first writing is incorrect: the first writing is in fact Sahidic Coptic, not Greek.

It is clear that the fragment, with the current McGill inventory number “MS NO Coptic 2” (hereafter Coptic 2), belongs to a page of a codex currently housed in the Montserrat Abbey, which was published as P.Monts. Roca II 4 in 2007 by Sofía Torallas-Tovar.<sup>2</sup> The underwritten text of the “Samuel codex”, as the editor calls it, is written in two columns and preserves the following contents of 2 Samuel: 9:11–10:9 (folio 1); 10:9–11:1(4) (folio 2); 12:1–12 (folio 3); 12:13–24(26) (folio 4); 16:16–17, 20–21 (folio 5); 18:18–28 (folio 6).<sup>3</sup> According to Torallas-Tovar, the fragments that make up this manuscript were “scattered through the boxes of the Roca-Puig collection. The parchment folios seem to have been deliberately torn apart, probably because of the magical – hence heretical – contents in the second use of the parchment.”<sup>4</sup> The physical appearance of our fragment would corroborate Torallas-Tovar’s claim that the manuscript was torn (see images below). It is possible, however, that the splitting up of the parchment results not from any aversion to the manuscript’s contents, but was done rather for the purpose of being sold piecemeal to individual buyers – a common (and unfortunately lucrative) practice among private dealers and sebbâkhîn in the Middle East.<sup>5</sup> As for the magical text, it was not edited by Torallas-Tovar; however, it is currently being studied by Jacques van der Vliet.<sup>6</sup>

\* The fragment belongs to the Rare Books and Special Collections of McGill University’s McLennan Library. I thank Richard Virr, Head Curator of Manuscripts at McGill University, for his generous support of my autopsies of the Coptic manuscripts at McGill and for his permission to publish the fragment, along with images. I would also like to thank Klaas A. Worp (Leiden University), André Gagné (Concordia University), Alin Suciú (Université Laval), and Wolf-Peter Funk (Université Laval), without whose help this paper would not have been possible. I would like to extend a special word of appreciation to Sofía Torallas-Tovar (CSIC, Madrid), whose collaboration and generosity have exemplified the meaning of the papyrologist’s motto, *amicitia papyrologorum*.

<sup>1</sup> I learned from Prof. Klaas Worp that the Coptic manuscripts at McGill University had originally been for sale in Mr. von Scherling’s catalogue during the 1930s and 1940s. While Mr. von Scherling sold objects to various customers from various countries all over the world, Canada had not been known to be one of them until now. On Prof. Worp’s attempts to reconstruct the contents of von Scherling’s collection, see See M. Bakker, A. Bakkers, and K. Worp, Back to Oegstgeest: The von Scherling Papyrus Collection. Some von Scherling Texts in Minnesota, *BASP* 44 (2007) 41–73. See also note 13 below.

<sup>2</sup> S. Torallas-Tovar, *Biblica Coptica Montserratensia (P. Monts. Roca II)* (Orientalia Montserratensia 2; Barcelona, 2007). I am indebted to Alin Suciú for making this connection.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>5</sup> See K. Vandorpe, Archives and Dossiers, in *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*, ed. R. Bagnall (Oxford, 2009) 216–255. On the splitting up of archives, Vandorpe states: “Most archives, however, were split up when they were brought onto the antiquities market. Even individual texts that belonged to an archive were, deliberately or through ignorance, torn into pieces” (224). See the examples Vandorpe gives on 224–226.

<sup>6</sup> E-mail from Sofía Torallas-Tovar, 27 May 2012. I would be interested in seeing a list of all early biblical manuscripts that were reused as magical texts in order to make an analysis of the data. I am not aware of any such list, but if there is one I would be grateful to learn about its existence.

Our Coptic 2 is written on a fine piece of narrow parchment measuring 8.2 cm × 6 cm that has suffered some damage, perhaps due to its being torn from the codex from which it came. Only portions of the upper margin are preserved. The first line of the underwritten portion of text is situated just beneath the sewn binding (which goes in the same direction as the writing), to which a thick thread is still attached.<sup>7</sup> It is clear that the hair side of Coptic 2 formed the upper part of column 1 of Torallas-Tovar's folio 2 (hair side), and the flesh side of Coptic 2 formed the upper part of column 2 of that same folio (flesh side). The bold illustrations of the overwriting on the fragment make it easy to discern where the fragment fits within the larger codex. On the flesh side, there is a minuscule piece of parchment that has apparently been pasted onto the folio just above the binding, bearing what is presumably an abbreviation: ΧΙ with a center dot on the left side. It is unclear what purpose this obscure abbreviation served.

The hand is of medium size, employing a refined unimodular or biblical uncial script. The Μ is characterized by a deep saddle-like curve in the middle, which the scribe wrote without lifting the stylus. The Ω is very wide. Ϛ is round, except that in one occurrence on the hair side it is written irregularly with a downward stroke on the right side, graphically bearing a resemblance to Ϙ. The Δ is written in a cursive stroke, and its tail leads into the next letter. ΙϞΡΔΗΛ is written as a *nomen sacrum* (ΗΛ) in contracted form without the supralinear stroke.<sup>8</sup> ΔΔΥϠΙΔ is written consistently in *scriptio plena* in this fragment and throughout the larger manuscript; according to A. H. R. E. Paap, contraction of ΔΔΥϠΙΔ is a “rarity” in Greek papyri of the first five centuries of the common era.<sup>9</sup>

In her edition, Torallas-Tovar did not provide a date of P.Monts. Roca II 4. It is well recognized that the dating of Coptic manuscripts on palaeographical grounds is notoriously difficult.<sup>10</sup> Dating is also significantly exacerbated by the fact that this is a palimpsest, and the letter-forms are difficult to discern at times. There are simply no reliable methods in the dating of Coptic manuscripts due to the lack of external and internal evidence (coins, pottery, colophons, etc.), and so I, like Torallas-Tovar, have left the dating open.

I should like to make a final observation, and that is to say that it is not clear when or by whom Coptic 2 made its way into the hands of Mr. von Scherling. It is evident that Father Ramón Roca-Puig (1906–2001) personally established his own collection of Greek and Coptic materials (from which the present fragment is a part) during the 1950s.<sup>11</sup> We also know that he purchased most of these in Cairo through the *Institute Copte* and the *Società delle missioni africane*, as well as from an antiquarian in Lugano, Switzerland.<sup>12</sup> But Mr. von Scherling had already acquired Coptic 2 about two decades prior to Father Roca-Puig's purchases. The immediate question is when Coptic 2 became separated from the larger Samuel codex now housed in the Montserrat Abbey. It is possible that, given the codex's fragmentary nature, some of the fragments were sold individually early on (among which was Coptic 2) and only later the remnants sold as a lot to Father Roca-Puig. We may never have the complete picture of this manuscript, but this is at least one theory about how our fragment (and possibly others) was separated from the Samuel codex now in the Roca-Puig collection. The “submerged” von Scherling Christian manuscripts of various types that have gone missing with no trace of their whereabouts total thirty-three in number. My own experience with the McGill manuscripts

<sup>7</sup> “The six folios we have partly reconstructed have been sewn to each other on the upper and lower margins of the page to create a long narrow parchment surface on which the magical text was written on the flesh side and, in one case, on the hair side” (Torallas-Tovar, *Biblica Coptica Montserratensia*, 19).

<sup>8</sup> Torallas-Tovar states that “Apparently there are no superlinear strokes or punctuation marks, but there are frequent instances of dihaeresis with the i” (ibid., 20). However, “Jerusalem” is given a supralinear stroke at 2 Samuel 9:13 as well as “Israel” in 2 Samuel 10:9. Coptic macrons are also present in her edition of the codex, and so her statement that “there are no superlinear strokes” is unclear.

<sup>9</sup> A. H. R. E. Paap, *Nomina Sacra in the Greek Papyri of the First Five Centuries A.D.: The Sources and Some Deductions* (Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava 8; Leiden, 1959) 106.

<sup>10</sup> See B. Layton, Towards a New Coptic Palaeography, in T. Orlandi and F. Wisse (eds.), *Acts of the Second International Congress of Coptic Studies* (Rome, 1985) 149–158, “The lack of palaeographic dating is, perhaps, the single greatest deficiency of Coptology in its present state” (152). Not much has changed since Layton wrote this statement in 1985.

<sup>11</sup> Torallas-Tovar, *Biblica Coptica Montserratensia*, 9. See also J. Gil and S. Torallas-Tovar, *HADRIANVS. P.Monts. Roca III* (Barcelona, 2010), ch. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Torallas-Tovar, *Biblica Coptica Montserratensia*, 9.

attests to the fact that merely inquiring into the holdings of a library may well yield more von Scherling manuscripts, and it is my hope that this study will prompt others to do just that.<sup>13</sup>

## Text

| Coptic 2   | Coptic 2 + P.Monts. Roca II 4  |
|--|--|
| <b>Flesh Side</b>                                |  |
| 1 ὕψωτπ ζα<br>νωηρε δε<br>ναμμων η               | 1 [α]ὑψωτπ ζα τεϑϑη (2Sa 10.13)<br>νωηρε δε ζωογ (2Sa 10.14)<br>ναμμων ητε           |
| 4 ρογναγ χε<br>ρια εωτπ<br>ζωογ ζα π<br>βιϑα αγ  | 4 ρογναγ χε [α]τϑγ<br>ρια εωτπ [αγλο]<br>ζωογ ζα π[ζ]ο να<br>βιϑα αγ[βωκ ε]ζογ[η]    |
| 8 ολι  | 8 [ετπ]ολιϑ ιωαβ   |
| <b>Hair Side</b>                                 |  |
| 1 ραδνηϑ αϑ<br>εζραι ε ελαμ<br>τϑγρια αζε        | 1 οραδνηϑ αϑ- (2Sa 10.17)<br>[ει] εζραι ε ελαμ<br>α τϑγρια αζε-                      |
| 4 ογ ογβε δαγ<br>αγπολεμ<br>αϑ αγω τ<br>ϑεωτπ ϑι | 4 ρατογ ογβε δαγ-<br>εια αγπολεμ[ε]ι<br>ημμαϑ αγω τϑγ- (2Sa 10.18)<br>ρια αϑεωτπ ϑι- |
| 8 πιηλ αγω<br>αϑμογο                             | 8 θη [η]πιηλ αγω<br>[δαγεια] αϑμογο[γτ]  |

## Translation

... they fled before him. When the sons of Ammon saw that the Syrians fled, they also fled before the face of Abisa; they went into the city ... Jordan and he came into Elam. Syria stood itself against David; they fought with him. And Syria fled from before Israel. And David killed ...

## Notes

## Flesh Side

2. δε ζωογ: Other Sahidic manuscripts of 2 Samuel omit the δε and read ζωωϑ instead of ζωογ.<sup>14</sup>

4. χε: Torallas-Tovar has δε in her reconstruction. Following most manuscripts, Coptic 2 clearly reads χε, which is a translation of the underlying Greek ὅτι in 2 Samuel 10:14 (LXX).

6. ζωογ: The edition of P.Monts. Roca II 4 reads ζϑ at the end of line five and the reconstruction picks up on line six with ογ. However, in our fragment all of ζωογ is present in line six, which makes the ζϑ at the end of line five in the edition improbable. Some manuscripts omit the ζωογ altogether.<sup>15</sup>

## Hair Side

1–2. οραδνηϑ αϑ[ει]: The edition by Torallas-Tovar reads οραδνη, an unlikely reading given the reading of Coptic 2. αϑει correlates with Drescher's edition.<sup>16</sup> The αϑει would correspond to the underlying Greek παρεγένετο or ἔρχεται, which are two variants of παρεγένοντο in the LXX.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> K. A. Worp and R. Dekkers have compiled a list of various Greek and Coptic papyri and parchments that were originally sold by Mr. von Scherling but have since gone missing. This list will appear in the 2012 issue of the *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* (e-mail from K. A. Worp, 23 February 2012).

<sup>14</sup> See J. Drescher, *The Coptic (Sahidic) Version of Kingdoms I, II (Samuel I, II)* (CSCO 313; *Scriptores Coptici* 35; Louvain, 1970) 129.

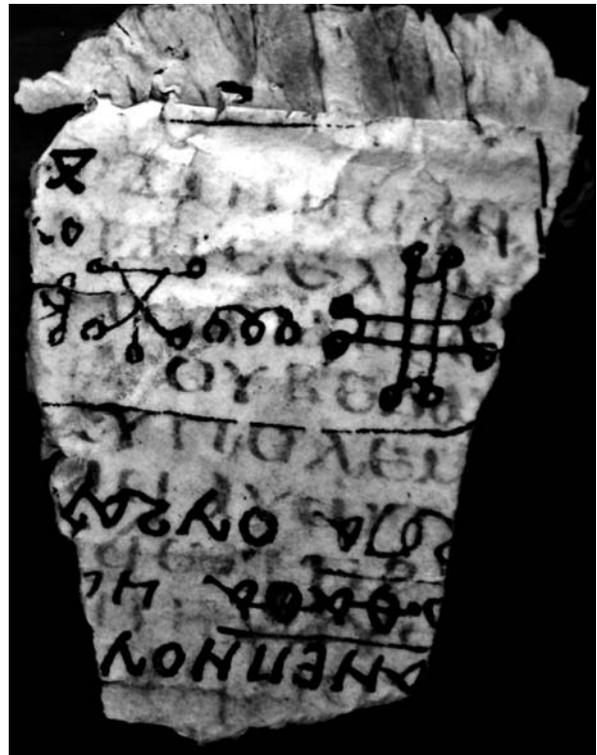
<sup>15</sup> See *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> A. Rahlfs (ed.), *Septuaginta id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes* (vol. 1; rev. ed.; Stuttgart, 2006) 583.

2. ⲉⲗⲠⲁⲓ ⲉ ⲉⲗⲁⲙ: Some Sahidic manuscripts of 2 Samuel read ⲉⲗⲠⲁⲓ ⲉⲗⲁⲙ, but our manuscript reads ⲉⲗⲠⲁⲓ ⲉ ⲉⲗⲁⲙ (*pace* T-T).<sup>18</sup>
- 3–4. ⲁⲗⲉⲠⲁⲧⲟⲩ: The underlying Greek word is *παροτάσσω*, which is normally translated by the Coptic ⲃⲱⲧϢ, not ⲱⲗⲉ, from which ⲁⲗⲉⲠⲁⲧⲟⲩ is derived.<sup>19</sup>
6. ⲁⲮⲱ: Some Coptic manuscripts lack ⲁⲮⲱ.<sup>20</sup> Our manuscript is closer to the LXX, which at this point reads *καὶ ἔφυσεν Συρία*. The ⲁⲮⲱ stands in for the *καὶ*.<sup>21</sup>
8. ⲒⲬⲗ: The edition restores with ⲁⲗⲮⲉⲓⲁ, following some Greek and Coptic manuscripts. Codex Alexandrinus reads *δαυιδ*, but Rahlfs's edition prints *ισραηλ*. The scribe wrote *ⲒⲠⲠⲬⲗ* in contracted form as a *nomen sacrum* but without the supralinear stroke. In Greek papyri of the first five centuries, Israel is commonly written as a *nomen sacrum*, although omission of the supralinear stroke is rare.<sup>22</sup>

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Flesh and hair sides of McGill MS NO Coptic 2

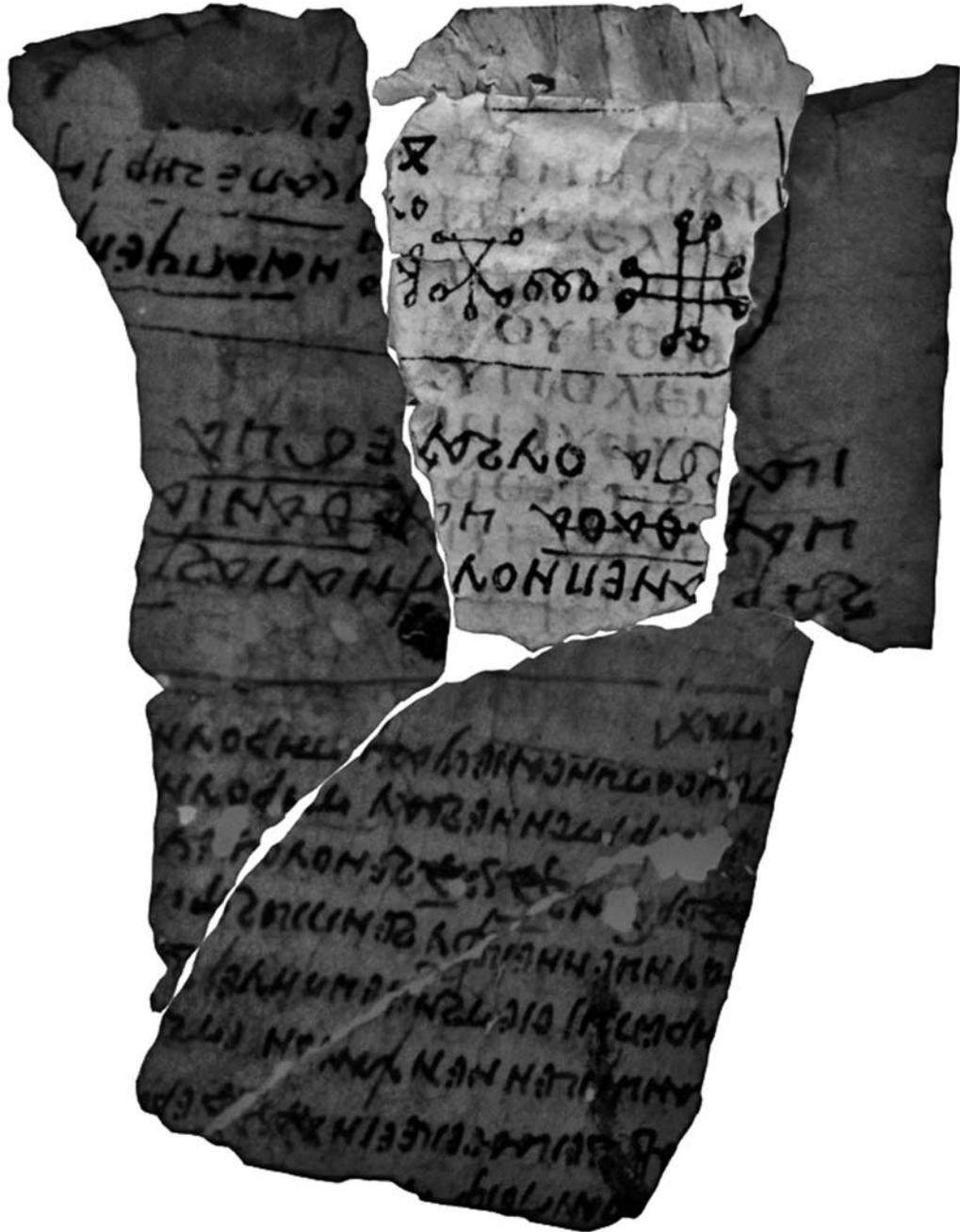
<sup>18</sup> For example, see P. Augustini Ciasca, *Sacrorum bibliorum fragmenta copto-sahidica Musei Borgiani* (vol. 1; Rome, 1885) 199.

<sup>19</sup> See W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford, 1939) 921.

<sup>20</sup> Drescher, *Coptic (Sahidic) Version of Kingdoms*, 129.

<sup>21</sup> For a study on Coptic renderings of Greek conjunctions, see E. Perttilä, How to Read the Greek Text behind the Sahidic Coptic, in A. Voitila and J. Jokiranta (eds.), *Scripture in Transition: Essays on Septuagint, Hebrew Bible and Dead Sea Scrolls in Honor of Raija Sollamo* (SJSJ 126; Leiden, 2008) 367–78.

<sup>22</sup> For examples and the discussion of the data, see Paap, *Nomina Sacra in the Greek Papyri of the First Five Centuries A.D.*, 106. The standard works on the subject of *nomina sacra* are, L. Traube, *Nomina Sacra: Versuch einer Geschichte der christlichen Kürzung* (Munich, 1907), to which Paap's work is a supplement; J. O'Callaghan, *Nomina Sacra*, in *Papyris Graecis Saeculi III Neotestamentariis* (Analecta biblica 46; Rome, 1970); C. H. Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief in Early Christian Egypt* (Schweich Lectures 1977; Oxford 1979); L. W. Hurtado, The Origin of the *Nomina Sacra*: A Proposal, *JBL* 117.4 (1998) 655–73.



Hair Side of P.Monts. Roca II 4 (with Coptic 2)