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VOX PATRUM

ANTYK CHRZEŚCIJAŃSKI

The Miracles of St Menas
in the Traditions of the Christian East

Co-editor of the volume
Przemysław Piwowarczyk

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This volume brings together a diverse range of articles which, collectively, offer new insights into the cult of St Menas. The contributions represent historical, literary, philological, and liturgical perspectives, and span over 1,500 years of devotion to St Menas across a wide array of Christian languages and cultures, including Byzantine Greek, Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic, Nubian, Slavic, Armenian, and Georgian. Of particular significance is the inclusion of newly prepared translations, which for the first time make the Armenian, Ethiopic, and Old Church Slavonic versions of the *Miracles of Saint Menas* accessible to both scholars and the wider public in modern languages.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all members of the research team who contributed to this volume: Nikoloz Aleksidze, Mirosław Cichoń, Agata Deptuła, Filip Doroszewski, Julia Doroszevska, Jan Stradomski, and Rafał Zarzeczny. I am also deeply thankful to the scholars who accepted our invitation and submitted their own papers: Hiroko Miyokawa, Katarzyna Piotrowska, and Ewa Wipszycka.

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I also wish to thank the editor-in-chief of *Vox Patrum*, Rev. Prof. Marcin Wysocki, for accepting the proposal of a monographic volume dedicated to St Menas, as well as his editorial team for their dedication in bringing the project to completion.

Przemysław Piwowarczyk

Artykuły



The Birth of the Cult of St Menas

Ewa Wipszycka¹

Abstract: It is not necessary to go through all the stages of initiation into the intricacies of hagiographical studies to immediately recognize, when reading the works related to the dossier of St Menas, that we are dealing with a subgenre of hagiography which contemporary scholars term “fictional hagiography”. The figure of the Saint and the events of his life were invented by anonymous authors and editors in various ways, according to their own tastes and the anticipated tastes of their audience. This article seeks to identify the narrative elements, terms, and descriptions of events that serve as markers of this specific genre. My aim is not to reconstruct the biography of the saint, but to gain a better understanding of the religiosity of those who came to Abū Mīnā, particularly their expectations. Researchers of the St Menas dossier are fortunate to have at their disposal extensive findings from archaeological excavations, which enable not only the dating of the sanctuary’s establishment and expansion but also aid in reconstructing the spaces and buildings where the cult of the Saint took place. While literary texts require ongoing critical assessment of their reliability, the extensive sanctuary, its furnishings, churches, houses, and streets relieve us from an excessive level of skepticism. Although the article’s title suggests a focus on texts, archaeology assists the historian in creating a comprehensive picture of what occurred at Abū Mīnā.

Keywords: Cotyaeum; Mareotis; Nikiou; Philoxenite; Phrygia; Abū Mīnā sanctuary; camels of St Menas; excavations at Abū Mīnā; fictive hagiographic texts; markers of fiction in hagiographic texts; persecutions of Christians; relics of martyrs; self-denunciation of future martyrs

1. The Sources

The available literary dossier on St Menas comprises several works of different nature and content providing information on his life, martyrdom, and the circumstances surrounding the creation of his tomb and sanctuary for pilgrims. It is appropriate to begin by presenting these texts before proceeding with my commentary on them.

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1.1. Greek *Martyrdom(s) of St Menas*

The most well-known version of the martyrdom of St Menas, both in the East and, through its Latin translation, in the western Mediterranean world, is the result of editorial interventions made by Symeon Metaphrastes (10th/11th century) on a much earlier text². Exactly how much earlier we cannot determine, as the original version subjected to these interventions remains unknown. The Vorlage of this manuscript tradition must have existed in the 5th century, when the sanctuary was flourishing, since it could not have functioned without works praising the saint and describing not only his martyrdom but also his family, career, and virtues.

1.2. Coptic *Martyrdom of St Menas*³

It is found in the codex from Ḥāmūli in the Fayum (now housed in the Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum, under the shelfmark M.590). From its colophon, we learn that work on the manuscript was completed in 892/893, which is the only date we can safely assign to this work. The *Martyrdom* does not contain any information that would allow us to propose a *post quem* date. The manuscript has been severely damaged, which is why its editor, James Drescher, published only the beginning and the end of it. The omitted text could be reconstructed based on an Arabic translation made in the 14th century⁴.

² *Passio S. Menae* Graece, Metaphrastic text: G. van Hooft, *Acta Sancti Menae martyris Aegyptii*, AnBol 3 (1884) p. 258-270; R. Miedema, *De Heilige Menas*, Rotterdam 1913, p. 93-103; Pre-Metaphrastic text: K. Krumbacher, *Miszellen zu Romanos*, München 1907, p. 31-43.

³ J. Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas*, Cairo 1946, p. 1-6 (text), 100-104 (tr.).

⁴ F. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen zum heiligen Menas*, Heidelberg 1993, p. 86-105. Jaritz also provides information about other Arabic manuscripts.

1.3. Prologue to the collection of miracles of St Menas⁵

The Coptic text is preserved in already mentioned codex M.590⁶. The shorter Greek version can be found in Ivan Pomialovskii's edition, which is based on a single manuscript⁷.

1.4. Coptic *Encomium on St Menas*⁸

We know this text from a single manuscript found in codex M.590 as well. It begins with the following introduction:

An Encomium delivered by our blessed and most honourable father, Apa John, Archbishop of Alexandria, on the noble conqueror (*gennaios athloforos*), the blessed martyr of Christ, the holy Apa Mena, telling of him from his birth to his consummation, informing us of his distinguished race and illustrious parentage, his city and his family, and how he strove in the confession of Christ and gained the crown of martyrdom. In peace. Amen⁹.

Considering that the *Encomium* mentions the Arab invasion, we must look for a Patriarch named John between the mid-7th and late-9th centuries. Within this time frame, two patriarchs bore the name John: John III (677-686) and John IV (776-799). Choosing between them is not easy, as each possibility has supporting arguments; personally, the second option (John IV) seems more plausible to me¹⁰.

⁵ P. Piwowarczyk provides a detailed introduction to the *Miracles of St Menas* in his article "Prolegomena to the Study of the Miracles of St Menas" VoxP 94 (2025) p. 35-64.

⁶ Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 7-10 (text), 108-110 (tr.).

⁷ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. I. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie prepodobnago Paisiia Velikago i Timofeia patriarkha Aleksandriiskago poviestvovanie o chudesakh" sv. Velikomuchenika Miny*, Saint Petersburg 1900, p. 62-63.

⁸ Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 35-72 (text), 128-149 (tr.).

⁹ Iohannes (IV?) Alexandrinus, *Encomium in S. Menam*, in: Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 35 (text), 128 (tr.).

¹⁰ See arguments given by P. Piwowarczyk, *Literary Sources on Philoxenite: A Survey*, in: *Philoxenite on Lake Mareotis: A Town and Pilgrimage Station on the Way to the Sanctuary of Saint Menas (Abu Mena)*, v. 1: *History and Topography*, ed. T. Derda – M. Gwiazda, Leuven 2025, forthcoming.

Thus, we are dealing with a late text, written at a time when a literary tradition around the saint already existed. The *Encomium* engages in a polemic with this tradition. The author of the *Encomium* claims that he used the archives of the Alexandrian Church:

We shall not invent and tell you fictitious tales but the things which our fathers have set forth for us from the beginning, which we have found lying in the library of the Church of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, written in Greek by the old chroniclers who lived at that time, these who saw with their eyes from the beginning and became officers of the word, instructing us about his family and his martyrdom¹¹.

Drescher wrote about this passage: “This kind of circumstantial detail usually betrays apocrypha”¹². He, too, was aware that it is best not to take John’s claim seriously. Similar assertions appear in many hagiographic texts and are intended to reassure the reader of the narrative’s veracity.

The text of the *Encomium* was used in the compilation presenting the life of St Menas in the 14th-century Coptic *Synaxary* in Arabic¹³.

2. Life of St Menas in his Late Antique Dossier

The literary dossier of St Menas is not confined to the Late Antiquity. He remained extraordinarily popular throughout the Middle Ages, not only in Byzantium but also, to a lesser extent, in Western Europe. However, I will not focus on this later cult, which is accompanied by a corresponding set of hagiographic works. My objective is to examine the earliest phase of the legend, when the literary and artistic image of the saint was taking shape in the sanctuary at Mareotis.

The most informative and coherent narrative of St Menas’s life can be found in the *Encomium*. According to its author, the parents of St Menas belonged to the elite, who were personally dependent on the emperor and his decisions. Not all martyrs came from noble backgrounds (for example, soldiers are often the heroes of hagiographies), yet the majority came

¹¹ Iohannes (IV?) Alexandrinus, *Encomium in S. Menam*, in: Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 37 (text), 129 (tr.).

¹² Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 129.

¹³ *Synaxarium Copticum*, ed. R. Basset, PO 3, p. 293-298 [217-222].

from the upper social strata. One would think that being a Christian martyr would be a sufficient reason for fame, but the authors of hagiographic works, like people of their time, greatly respected social hierarchy. Enhancing the authority of saints in this way was a typical approach taken by the creators of fictional hagiographies.

While St Menas's noble origins are a constant element in his biography, other pieces of information about his life vary significantly, demonstrating that these details reflect the particular agendas of different authors.

According to the *Encomium*, the family of St Menas came from Nikiou, an important city in the western Delta (the author believed that the prestige of this city would enhance the prestige of St Menas's family). However, it was neither Mareotis nor Nikiou, but Phrygia that was the setting of St Menas's earthly life. His father, under direct orders from the emperor, was sent to this province, to the city of Cotyaeum, where he brought his family and entire household. There, until his death, he held the prestigious position of governor (*eparchos*).

A miracle was needed for Menas to be born. As the years passed and his mother could not conceive, she fervently prayed to the Mother of God for a longed-for son, fasting often and sharing her wealth with the poor. The mother's infertility and, ultimately, the miracle of her son's birth are common motifs in hagiography. In this way, the future martyr was marked as exceptional from the moment of his birth.

According to the *Encomium*, after the death of his parents, St Menas did not return to Egypt, but remained in Phrygia. At the age of 15, he was forcibly conscripted into the army, joining a unit called the *Routiliakoi*¹⁴. He served as an exemplary soldier, loved by all. When Diocletian issued his edict initiating persecutions, Menas left the army and retreated into the wilderness, where he led a devout life. He acquired several camels, which he used to earn money to sustain himself and give alms; his retreat from the world was thus not complete, as he continued to serve people and earn money with his camels.

One day, he had a vision in which he saw martyrs in heaven receiving crowns from angels. As a man of fervent piety, he yearned to join their ranks. Ultimately, a voice from heaven urged him to denounce himself, promising that he would become the most renowned martyr and that

¹⁴ A unit by this name is not attested anywhere, and this is not the only reason to doubt the veracity of the account of St Menas's conscription into the army. In the Roman Empire, fifteen-year-olds were not forced into military service. In fact, young men from families high in the social hierarchy were generally not compelled to join the army at all.

people from all nations would honour him in his martyrion. St Menas resolved to present himself before the authorities.

Visions of martyrs in heaven and heavenly voices foretelling future fame are common hagiographic motifs. Although the Church did not encourage self-denunciation, if God called a future martyr to it, the act was considered justified¹⁵. It is clear that St Menas presented himself to the authorities rather than waiting to be arrested. In the view of hagiographers, voluntary martyrdom provided a greater claim to glory than ordinary martyrdom.

St Menas made his declaration of Christian faith at a significant moment: during the festivities for the emperor's *dies natalis*, in the presence of the people and soldiers (as noted in the *Encomium*). A trial ensued, accompanied by torture. The magistrate sentenced that he should be beheaded and that his body should be burnt. However, his body was rescued by the Christians.

Other Coptic texts do not mention Phrygia. Their authors place the entire life of St Menas in the Mareotis, referred to by the Coptic term 'Nepaeiat'¹⁶. The prologue to the miracles, comprising a short biography of the Saint, knows nothing of his life in Phrygia. The passage, according to the author or authors of this version of St Menas's biography, demonstrates that his martyrdom took place in the Mareotis. When the Saint decides to denounce himself, he entrusts the camels he had previously acquired to a man from 'Nepaeiat'. No mention of Phrygia occurs in the surviving sections of the Coptic *Martyrium* either.

¹⁵ A list of ecclesiastical authorities condemning self-denunciation or deliberate actions aimed at provoking martyrdom (up to the beginning of the 4th century) was compiled by G.E.M. de Ste. Croix (*Christian Persecution, Martyrdom, and Orthodoxy*, Oxford 2006, p. 157-161). Importantly, de Ste. Croix emphasizes that there is no Christian author "apart from the works of heretics and schismatics, including Tertullian in his later, Montanist phase" (p. 155) who would endorse self-denunciation. On the other hand, hagiographic texts containing numerous examples of self-denunciation enjoyed recognition and popularity.

¹⁶ In the Coptic language, 'Nepaeiat' refers to Libya or Mareotis, see J. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 101. It appears that the boundary between these regions was not sharply defined in the minds of the authors.

3. St Menas and Phrygia: 20th Century Discussions

The results of excavations conducted by Carl Maria Kaufmann in Abū Mīnā (1905-1907) sparked interest in the texts concerning St Menas that were accessible at that time¹⁷. Although the Coptic works later edited by James Drescher were still awaiting publication, sufficient material was already available in synaxaria of various origins, Ethiopic). In 1900, Ivan Pomialovskiĭ published a substantial, previously unknown Greek text of the miracles¹⁸.

Connecting the ‘Phrygian version’ with the ‘Mareotis version’ of the Saint’s *vita* poses significant challenges for scholars studying the hagiography of St Menas. Are we dealing here with two martyrs who share the same name, each with his own legend – one recounted in Phrygia and the other in Mareotis? When and how was the story of the martyr from Cotyaeum adapted for the sanctuary near Alexandria?

William M. Ramsay, the well-known researcher of the history of Asia Minor, asserted that priority should be assigned to the Phrygian version, which he believed to have arisen from the Christianization of an old deity worshipped in Anatolia and appearing in Anatolian sources under various names Mannis, Mnios, Mnaos, Menes, and Men¹⁹. The very name ‘Menas’ is undoubtedly a theophoric name that originated in the area where the cult of Mena was widely disseminated. However, it penetrated Egypt very early; the database papyri.info records (as of July 30, 2024) 34 attestations for the period up to 300 AD, with 19 from the 2nd century. In other words, someone born in Egypt could have received this name from parents with no ties to central Anatolia and unaware of the Anatolian origin of the name.

The mere Anatolian character of the name does not necessarily mean that Ramsay was correct in claiming that St Menas represented a Christian version of Men. Ramsay belonged to a group of religion scholars active at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries who were convinced that pagan gods often hid behind the names of saints. This theory faced

¹⁷ Numerous publications from these years are discussed by H. Delehay in the bibliographic bulletin accompanying the review of M.A. Murray’s work: *AnBol* 27 (1908) p. 458-459.

¹⁸ *Miracula S. Menae Graece*, ed. I. Pomialovskiĭ.

¹⁹ W.M. Ramsay, *The Utilisation of Old Epigraphic Copies*, “The Journal of Hellenic Studies” 38 (1918) p. 151-158, 166-168. The cult of Men has been described by S. Mitchell, *Anatolia. Land, Men, and Gods in Asia Minor*, v. 2: *The Rise of the Church*, Oxford 1993, p. 24-25.

vigorous criticism, particularly from Catholic scholars. It was abandoned when it quickly became apparent that it lacked a solid basis in sources.

Roots in Egyptian beliefs were also sought for St Menas. Rhein Miedema, in his doctoral dissertation, which he defended at the University of Leiden in 1913, tried to find in the cult of St Menas elements of the worship of the most important Egyptian deities, both from the Pharaonic period and from the Roman times. According to him, “the cult of St Menas is a Christianized form of the worship of the Egyptian gods”²⁰.

In 1910, Hippolyte Delehaye vigorously defended the Egyptian origins of St Menas²¹. He viewed the available dossier from the perspective of his research on hagiographic literature, including that produced in Egypt. Having formed an opinion about its characteristic features, he found them to be present in texts concerning St Menas. The ‘Phrygian’ part of the biography did not deter him, as he was convinced that the cult of the saint spread rapidly in Asia Minor, particularly in the Phrygian city of Cotyaeum. According to him, the inhabitants of this city, in their zeal, came to believe that they had given the Church a great martyr. A work written in Cotyaeum, which recounted the Phrygian life of the saint, made its way to Egypt and was received enthusiastically, especially since no local legend yet existed²².

From the perspective of contemporary research, Delehaye was mistaken. His main argument, the early success of the cult of St Menas in Asia Minor, is entirely unfounded. Paweł Nowakowski, who has meticulously gathered all available inscriptions related to the cult of saints in this area (of which there are an enormous number), found only one inscription attesting to the cult of St Menas, and that is far from Phrygia, in Cilicia, in Dilekkaya (ancient Anazarbus)²³.

Forty years after Delehaye’s publication, Paul Peeters, a Bollandist (like Delehaye) and a prominent researcher of hagiography, proposed an entirely new hypothesis to explain why Cotyaeum became a city

²⁰ Miedema, *De Heilige Menas*, p. 133.

²¹ H. Delehaye, *L’Invention des reliques de saint Ménas à Constantinople*, AnBol 29 (1910) p. 117-150.

²² Delehaye, *L’Invention des reliques de saint Ménas à Constantinople*, p. 127.

²³ P. Nowakowski, *Inscribing the Saints in Late Antique Anatolia*, *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplement* 34, Warsaw 2018, p. 576-577. I would like to warmly thank the author for his very effective assistance in the writing of this part of my study.

sanctified by the martyrdom of St Menas²⁴. He recalled the figure of Cyrus, a Greek poet from the Egyptian city of Panopolis, who made a dazzling career in the circles of power in Constantinople, holding high positions; he was an ordinary consul in 441 and belonged to the elite group of patricians appointed by the emperor. However, when he fell afoul of Theodosius II in 441, he was forced to resign from secular life and accept episcopal ordination for the diocese in Cotyaeum. The Christian community in this city had a bad reputation. As John Malalas writes, four consecutive bishops lost their lives there²⁵. Cyrus could have met the same fate (perhaps that was the emperor's intention?). However, he managed to survive until the death of Theodosius in 450. At that point, he renounced his clerical status and lived quietly for many more years (he died during the reign of Leo I [457–474], but the exact date of his death is unknown)²⁶.

I now give the floor to Peeters:

Cyrus était homme de ressources: il réussit à vivre en bonne intelligence avec le peuple de sa ville épiscopale. Nous n'irons pas jusqu'à dire que ce fut là peut-être le mieux prouvé historiquement des miracles de S. Ménas. Mais on accordera qu'il est difficile de ne pas trouver quelque rapport entre ces trois faits: S. Ménas populaire à Panopolis, ville natale du poète Cyrus; ce même poète Cyrus de Panopolis, devenu évêque de Cotyée en Phrygie dans des conditions assez spéciales, qui devaient l'inviter à faire un effort d'imagination; et même S. Ménas transformé en martyr de Cotyée, où jusque-là il était totalement inconnu.

Cette histoire eut son épilogue. La Passion de S. Ménas, fabriquée pour les gens de Cotyée, sur une inspiration partie d'Égypte, fut introduite au Delta. Les hagiographes indigènes la jugèrent de bonne prise. Elle leur fournit

²⁴ P. Peeters, *Orient et Byzance. Le Tréfonds Oriental de l'hagiographie byzantine*, *Subsidia hagiographica* 26, Brussels 1950, p. 38–41.

²⁵ Iohannes Malalas, *Chronographia* 14.16 (362), *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, ed. J. Thurn, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae* 35, Berlin 2000, p. 282; *The Chronicle of John Malalas: A Translation*, tr. E. Jeffreys et al., Melbourne 1986, p. 197–198. I admit that I find it hard to believe in the credibility of this information – it seems like some sort of anecdote. The killing of bishops in the fifth-century empire could not have failed to provoke intervention from the authorities (including the central ones).

²⁶ On the biography of Cyrus, see J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, v. 2: *A.D. 395–527*, Cambridge 1980, p. 336–339 (s.v. Cyrus 7).

un cadre dans lequel ils firent entrer ce qui subsistait encore des souvenirs locaux²⁷.

According to Peeters, Cyrus encountered the cult of St Menas while still in his hometown, Panopolis. This was, in the Bollandist's opinion, one of the first places where St Menas was venerated, judging by the many ampullae depicting this saint found in Panopolis. Here Peeters was completely mistaken. Only three ampullae originate from Panopolis, and they were not discovered during excavations. The person who provided information about them (Robert Forrer, a Swiss antiquities dealer) had purchased them from sellers, so they could have arrived in southern Egypt at any time in the early 20th century, when the antiquities market was oversaturated with ampullae due to Kaufmann's excavations. Thousands were discovered in Abū Mīnā and were popular among tourists²⁸. This mistake by Peeters has little significance for us; Cyrus would undoubtedly have been aware of the sanctuary of Abū Mīnā that was rapidly developing in the early 5th century. In the 440s, the first church already stood over the tomb of St Menas, and an entire city was being constructed to accommodate visitors.

Peeters's idea was adopted and developed by Alan Cameron in his essays: "Wanderings of Poets" (1966) and "Empress and the Poet" (1982) ('Empress' refers to Eudocia, the wife of Theodosius II, who highly valued the poetry of Cyrus)²⁹. Characterising the various literary genres practiced by Cyrus, he included a subsection in his book titled "The Hagiographer"³⁰, but no new argument was presented in it. There is no way around it: no such argument exists.

It is true that by accepting the hypothesis of Peeters and Cameron as plausible, we could explain why Cotyaeum, rather than another city, appears in our dossier (Cotyaeum certainly was an important city, but

²⁷ Peeters, *Orient et Byzance*, p. 40.

²⁸ This has been proved by Ádam Bollók, who found the papers of Forrer, an amateur archaeologist, far from reliable: see Bollók's paper "Portable Sanctity" Brought to the Afterlife: *Pilgrim Eulogiai as Grave Goods in the Late Antique Eastern Mediterranean*, in: *Across the Mediterranean – along the Nile. Studies in Egyptology, Nubiology and Late Antiquity Dedicated to László Török*, v. 2, ed. T.A. Bács – Á. Bollók – T. Vida, Budapest 2018, p. 763-770.

²⁹ Both have been included in the volume of collected works by A. Cameron, *Wandering Poets and Other Essays on Late Greek Literature and Philosophy*, Oxford 2016, to which I refer.

³⁰ Cameron, *Wandering Poets*, p. 37-80.

the capital of the province of Phrygia was Synnada). However, this seems insufficient grounds for accepting their hypothesis. Moreover, it is not at all evident that by offering a martyr as an attractive object of veneration to the unruly Christian community, Cyrus could have gained their favour. It would have been a cult without relics, which were introduced at a time when they played a significant role in religious consciousness. Sanctuaries generally possessed them.

The ideas of Peeters and Cameron have been largely overlooked by researchers studying the dossier of St Menas and the history of his sanctuary. It is surprising that no one has paid attention to the studies of these two well-known authors, which are also easily accessible in European libraries. This reflects poorly on the flow of information within academic circles. I do not claim that these ideas had to be accepted right away, but they certainly deserved to be discussed.

Przemysław Piwowarczyk, with whom I have discussed whether the hypothesis of Peeters and Cameron was plausible, is (like me) convinced that their ideas must be rejected and that we should seek explanations in another direction: the well-documented penchant of Egyptian authors for placing their invented narratives in distant, exotic lands, often even in entirely fictional ones. While we do not consider Asia Minor to be 'exotic' (contacts between Egypt and various regions of Asia Minor were frequent), Coptic authors who mentioned its cities in their fictional hagiographical works had a different opinion.

My reader has likely already understood that we are unable to determine how events occurring in Phrygia were introduced into the legend of St Menas. Just to be clear, we are still dealing with the 'literary reality' created by successive authors/editors of the dossier of St Menas; we are not discussing 'lived reality'.

4. The Journey of St Menas's Bodily Remains to Mareotis

The texts concerning St Menas recount in various ways how, thanks to whom, and under what circumstances his remains came to rest in Mareotis in an underground crypt that became the cradle of the future sanctuary.

In the Coptic *Martyrdom*, the main role here is assigned to his sister, whom Menas had asked before his death to bury him in Egypt. When she arrived with his remains in Alexandria, crowds gathered. A grand

martyrion was immediately constructed in the city. However, an angel informed the archbishop that God had designated a different place for the martyr's eternal rest and instructed him on what to do: he was to place the body on the back of a camel, let the camel roam freely, and bury the saint's remains wherever it stopped.

In the Greek texts, this role was fulfilled by Christian comrades from the unit in which the saint had once served. They believed that the martyr's body would protect them during military operations. They placed the remains in a sarcophagus and laid them in a temporary grave. When the unit was transferred to Egypt, where they were tasked with defending Mareotis against raids by desert nomads, they took the relics with them. When they were ordered to return to Phrygia, they wished to bring back the remains of St Menas, but the camel refused to move from its place.

In both versions of the story regarding the final resting place of St Menas, it was not a human decision but rather the camel carrying his physical remains that determined the location. Animals often served as signals of divine will, acting as the voice of Providence³¹. In the story of St Menas, camels play a special role: after leaving the army following Diocletian's decree, he acquired several camels, which he used to work, thereby earning a living and supporting his acts of charity. When the saint's body was being transported to Egypt, the ship was accompanied by fantastical sea creatures with camel-like necks and heads. Numerous ampullae depict St Menas flanked by camels in an adoring stance, emphasising the animals' symbolic role alongside the saint.

The *Encomium* mentions with horror the existence of a now-lost story in which the saint was referred to as a "camel herder" (ΜΑΝΘΑΜΟΥΧ). This term likely denotes not a herder, but a camel driver or camel handler (Greek: *kamelites*) – a role that Menas appears to play in the Introduction to the miracles, though the Coptic term is not used here. Interestingly, this story is more fully developed in the abbreviated introduction to the *Miracles* than in the Coptic *Martyrdom*, where it is only briefly hinted at. It is possible that a local legend once existed but was effectively erased from collective memory in favour of a more appealing narrative.

³¹ The inspiration for such motifs came from the story of Balaam's ass (Num 22).

5. The Tomb in the Desert

I will address separately those passages in our dossier that describe the tomb constructed in the desert by St Menas's comrades-in-arms (or by Alexandrians following the camel under divine guidance), because this is the only episode that can be directly compared with findings from archaeological excavations.

Let us begin with the Coptic texts recounting the burial of St Menas's body. The *Coptic Martyrdom of St Menas*:

And, when it was God's pleasure, the camel knelt in that place. And the people there took the blessed Apa Mena's body down from the camel. And they laid the foundations of a tomb. They built it in a befitting manner. They placed his holy body in it. And they had a silver coffer made. They put the blessed Apa Mena's body in it. They placed it in a crypt. It has remained there till the present day³².

The *Encomium*:

The *stratelates* [i.e. the commander of the unit in which St Menas had once served] (...) put the remains of the blessed martyr in a coffin of incorruptible wood and placed the wooden image which he had made upon his remains. He buried them there with commemorative writings. He had a small edifice built over the saint in the form of a small vaulted tomb³³.

In both texts, the grave is dug in a desolate area specifically for the saint. We are not told how much time passed before the miraculous power of the martyr's body was revealed. A boy, lame from birth, experiences this power when he approaches the grave, drawn by a light he saw above it. The boy falls asleep, and when he awakens, he is healed. Upon learning of the miracle, the residents of a nearby village bring all their sick, blind, and lame to the grave. All of them are healed: "So they [i.e. the villagers] build over the tomb a small oratory like a tetrapylon"³⁴.

The entire narrative is constructed from literary *topoi*, including the section about the activation of the relics and the light over the grave

³² *Passio S. Menae* Coptice, in: Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 5 (text), 103 (tr.).

³³ Iohannes (IV?) Alexandrinus, *Encomium in S. Menam*, in: Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 63-64 (text), 142-143 (tr.).

³⁴ Iohannes (IV?) Alexandrinus, *Encomium in S. Menam*, in: Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 65 (text), 144 (tr.).

guiding the one who was the first to receive a miracle. According to the conventions of hagiography, this individual is a random, unaware person of humble origins.

In another version of the story, the power of the martyr's earthly remains manifested itself for the first time when sheep grazing nearby were affected. Their shepherd observed a scab-ridden sheep, which, after bathing and rolling on the ground at the holy site, was immediately healed³⁵.

The tomb believed to contain the body of St Menas was discovered by Carl M. Kaufmann, the director of the first excavations at Abū Mīnā. During the interwar years, a few skilled archaeologists occasionally worked at the site. Still, it was not until 1976 that systematic research began under Peter Grossmann, who had been working at Abū Mīnā since the 1960s and remained the excavation director until the site's definitive closure in 2013. Their findings diverged significantly from literary accounts³⁶.

On the site (or more precisely, beneath the site) where the basilica was erected in the first half of the 5th century, there was not a single grave but the remains of an extensive collective hypogeum – an underground burial complex. Another similar hypogeum was located in Qasimiya, not far from Abū Mīnā³⁷. This type of grand tomb served the local wealthy families' need for ostentation. The hypogeum where St Menas's remains were later interred was carved out in pre-Christian times, as evidenced by three small steles depicting Horus-Harpocrates and figurines of Thoth in

³⁵ *Synaxarium Copticum*, ed. R. Basset, PO 17, p. 566-567 [1108-1109]. The sick sheep was not enough for the author of this version. He added a story about a king's daughter afflicted with leprosy, to whom St Menas appeared in a dream, instructing her to unearth his remains and build a church on that spot.

³⁶ A comprehensive, scholarly publication on the excavation results within the tomb chamber and the basilica built above it can be found in: P. Grossmann, *Abu Mina I: Die Gruftkirche und die Gruft*, Archäologische Veröffentlichungen 44, Mainz 1989. For a more concise and easily accessible overview, consult Grossmann's article, *The Pilgrimage Center of Abu Mina*, in: *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. D. Frankfurter, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 134, Leiden 1998, p. 281-302.

³⁷ P. Grossmann – A. Abdal-Fattah, *Qasimīya: Report on the Survey Work from June 17 to June 19, 2003*, "Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte" 48 (2009) p. 27-44. Qasimiya is located on the northern side of the modern road between Hawariyya and Borg el-Arab.

the form of a seated monkey (the baboon was sacred to Thoth), all discovered *in situ* by Kaufmann³⁸.

The tomb was accessed by a shaft whose base lay 5.3 metres below ground level, leading into a spacious chamber that opened into three galleries, each with seven burial niches carved into the walls. The redesign of this complex involved adding a new chamber to hold the sarcophagus containing St Menas's remains. At ground level, above the tomb, a "Baublock" (Grossmann's term)³⁹ was installed in the initial phase of construction – most likely in the last quarter of the 4th century – serving as a cenotaph⁴⁰.

The entrances to the galleries were sealed, and a second shaft was cut. Stairs were installed in both the original and new shafts, allowing visitors to enter and exit the tomb chamber without causing congestion. Subsequent renovations provided an appropriate architectural setting on the surface for the revered relic.

In the literary dossier of St Menas, there are no traces of memory regarding the transformation of the pagan hypogeum into the tomb of a Christian martyr, nor about the early phase of the development of the sanctuary.

We are unable to reconstruct what the sources remain silent about. Instead, we can take a different approach: we can refer to the current state of research on the emergence of the cult of martyrs and the buildings dedicated to them in the Roman Empire. We are fortunate that in 2019 an excellent book by Robert Wiśniewski, *The Beginnings of the Cult of Relics*, was published. The author, a researcher of the cult of saints and hagiographic works, was a senior investigator on the Oxford-based project *The Cult of Saints from its Origins to c. 700 AD*. I have drawn on his expertise to reconstruct the development of the cult of martyrs in Egypt, which led to the rise of centres like Abū Mīnā. I am operating here within the realm of hypotheses – but better hypotheses than ignorance.

The graves of martyrs from the persecutions in the 2nd and 3rd centuries were undoubtedly treated with attention and veneration by Christians

³⁸ C.M. Kaufmann, *Die Menasstadt und das Nationalheiligtum der altchristlichen Aegypter in der westalexandrinischen Wüste. Ausgrabungen der Frankfurter Expedition am Karm Abu Mina 1905-1907*, v. 1, Leipzig 1910, p.71.

³⁹ Grossmann, *Abu Mina I*, p. 14-22.

⁴⁰ A cenotaph is a symbolic tomb that does not contain remains. The one at Abū Mīnā was constructed from mud bricks encased in unworked limestone blocks, which are abundant in the area.

from the beginning. Many were remembered, and the faithful gathered at these sites on specific days to pray, often sharing a meal together. However, these actions did not go beyond the ordinary customs of commemoration, which were familiar to both pagans and Christians. There was not yet a belief that the bodies buried in these graves possessed a unique power to which Christians could appeal, nor did the remains of the deceased have any particular religious status.

However, let us note the emergence, in the second half of the 3rd century, of the belief that martyrs could intercede with God on behalf of the living with particular effectiveness – greater than that of ordinary, devout Christians – though not necessarily at their burial sites.

The memory of the martyrs of the Great Persecution must have been vivid in the first decades of the 4th century, and it was often known who was buried in a specific grave. For a Christian community, a martyr having a grave of their own became a source of pride, elevating it above those who lacked such a privilege. This explains why, starting in the 330s, bodies were relocated to “better” sites, and tombs were given a more prominent form. They took the form of a chapel, often in a small church, where masses could be celebrated. They became the centre of celebrations held on the anniversary of the martyr’s death. Major changes, however, occurred later. Toward the end of the 4th century (and of course afterward), large sanctuaries with sizable churches and numerous clergy were built at the graves of famous martyrs, drawing many pilgrims. These sites also typically had a considerable number of lay attendants. Abū Mīnā is one such example.

Our sources indicate that by the mid-4th century, miracles began to occur at the graves of martyrs. Initially, those who received such grace were primarily individuals with mental illnesses, commonly believed to be possessed by demons, unable to live independently and seeking refuge and basic care at the sanctuaries. Only later did other types of miracles begin to appear.

Let us return to the findings of archaeological research. We know Abū Mīnā’s history begins with the burial of an important individual – probably, according to Drescher, a local martyr⁴¹ – in an existing tomb. However, a significant amount of time passed before the local residents decided to intervene to address the state of the tomb and carry out its further expansion. According to Grossmann, this expansion

⁴¹ Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. IX-X.

occurred at the end of the 4th century, as no older archaeological traces have been found, and the first church over the grave was constructed in the first half of the 5th century. This aligns with the model proposed by Wiśniewski: first was the burial of an actual martyr, then the emergence of a desire to place him on display and thereby honour him, followed by the construction of a church and possibly the first non-religious buildings, such as baths or inns.

The local inhabitants remembered that a martyr had been buried in the hypogeum, but they knew nothing specific about him. The authors who created the literary dossier necessary for the cult – since the cult required at least an account of martyrdom for use in sermons – had to rely on their imagination, drawing from the already rich martyrological tradition of the Greek-speaking part of the Roman Empire.

6. History of the Pilgrimage Shrine

The *Encomium* is the only text in our dossier that provides information on the history of the creation and expansion of the large pilgrimage sanctuary. Its author attributed the achievements to the successive patriarchs and emperors who collaborated in these efforts. The first figures mentioned are Athanasius (329-373) and Jovian (363-364), followed by Jovian's sons, Valentinian (363-375) and Valens (363-378). It was through their joint efforts that the first basilica at Abū Mīnā was reportedly built, and the assembled Egyptian bishops placed the body of St Menas in a crypt. Theodosius the Great (379-395) and his sons Arcadius (395-408) and Honorius (395-423) then ordered the construction of "a spacious memorial church"⁴², large enough to prevent pilgrims from having to stand outside in the desert and endure "distress". When the great basilica was completed, the then-patriarch Theophilus convened a synod, and the bishops performed the consecration.

The next pair mentioned is Timothy (Timothy Aelurus, 457-477) and Zeno (474-491). According to the *Encomium*, the patriarch persuaded the emperor to provide military protection for Mareotis against barbarian attacks. Moreover, Zeno supposedly ordered senators to build palaces at Abū Mīnā⁴³. However, the claim that Timothy Aelurus

⁴² *Encomium in S. Menam*, in: Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 66-68 (text), 144-146 (tr.).

⁴³ Regarding the political context of Zeno's decision to support the expansion of Abū Mīnā, see E. Wipszycka, *Philoxenite: Pilgrims on the Road to Abu Mina*, in: *Philoxenite*

supported the sanctuary alongside Zeno is fictional. Zeno reigned as emperor between 474 and 491, while Timothy Aelurus served as patriarch from 457 to 460, after which he was in exile until 475. He was then briefly reinstated from 475 to 476 when Basiliscus temporarily seized power from Zeno. Furthermore, the statement that Zeno allocated fiscal revenue from the “eparchy” to Abū Mīnā may reflect a distorted version of Justinian’s later decision to merge Mareotis with Libya Inferior, directing taxes from this wealthy region to support military forces in a relatively poor province that required a constant military presence.

During the reign of Emperor Anastasius (491-518), according to the *Encomium*, Philoxenus, a high-ranking official, contributed to the expansion of a pilgrimage centre located on the shores of Lake Mareotis, known as Philoxenite. We know from other sources that he held various top positions within the empire, including *magister militum per Thracias* under Anastasius and consul under Emperor Justin in 525⁴⁴. Notably, despite Philoxenus’s long career, there is no mention of him holding any office in Egypt. Of course, this does not rule out his involvement in Abū Mīnā; he may have had personal reasons for venerating St Menas.

We do not know when the construction work at Philoxenite took place. It is not at all certain that it occurred during the reign of Anastasius. It could have taken place later, under Justin or Justinian. It is worth considering that any manipulation that “inserted” the name of an emperor known for his anti-Chalcedonian sympathies in place of Justin, a staunch pro-Chalcedonian, might have had practical value during the Arab period. At that time, there was intense rivalry between the Melkites and Monophysites over control of the sanctuary, with Arab governors serving as arbiters in these disputes. Both patriarchs named John were actively involved in conflicts with the Melkites.

The history of the sanctuary as recounted in the *Encomium* contains several apparent inaccuracies; the author of the *Encomium* was poorly informed about the history of the period in which Abū Mīnā’s expansion occurred. Archaeologists are sure that Athanasius could not have been involved in the construction of the sanctuary, as it would have been far too early (to recall, the first church above the tomb was built only in the first

on Lake Mareotis: *A Town and Pilgrimage Station on the Way to the Sanctuary of Saint Menas (Abu Mena)*, v. 1: *History and Topography*, ed. T. Derda – M. Gwiazda, Leuven 2025, forthcoming.

⁴⁴ Martindale, *The Prosopography*, p. 879-880 (s.v. Philoxenos 8); R. Bagnall *et al.*, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire*, Atlanta 1987, p. 585.

half of the 5th century). Theophilus might seem a better candidate as a builder, but archaeological evidence suggests that a role for Cyril is more likely. The author seems to have chosen Athanasius and Theophilus due to their reputation: Athanasius, the great defender of orthodoxy and organiser of the Church, was perceived by Egyptians as responsible for everything that happened in the 4th century, while Theophilus left a lasting image as a major builder of churches. Both must have appeared to the author as obvious candidates for having ensured the construction of Abū Mīnā's two most important religious buildings.

It is curious that Valentinian and Valens are mentioned in the *Encomium* as sons of Jovian (they were merely his successors); however, Valens was an ardent Arian who persecuted Catholics in Egypt. Arians were outside the tradition of the orthodox church, so they should not even have been mentioned. Valentinian ruled in the West, and Abū Mīnā – if he had even heard of it – would not have been of interest to him. Among the emperors credited with contributions to Abū Mīnā, Justinian (527-565) is notably absent, despite the fact that, according to archaeologists, he built the large basilica there. This omission is understandable: Justinian was remembered as a persecutor of anti-Chalcedonians, which rendered him unworthy of mention.

Imperial foundations for famous places of worship were nothing unusual in late antiquity. The very architecture of the most important churches in Abū Mīnā suggests the involvement of imperial funds and the presence of architects who designed churches and other buildings according to non-Egyptian models, on a scale that required vast resources.

7. Abū Mīnā in the Desert?

While reading texts about St Menas, I realised that in all of them, behind everything that happens at the sanctuary and in its surroundings, is the desert. The camel carrying the saint's remains stops at a specific spot in the desert, the sanctuary complex is built in the desert, and the devotees of St Menas travel to his tomb through the desert.

Modern commentators on the dossier feel certain that this was indeed the case. Scholars such as Carl M. Kaufmann, James Drescher, Peter Grossmann, Paul Devos, and Seÿna Bacot (editor of a new Coptic manuscript containing the miracles of St Menas) were convinced of it. However, Mareotis at the end of antiquity was not a desert! The area was

characterised by its numerous vineyards, as archaeologists conducting surface surveys have observed. They have found the remains of 17 kilns from the 1st to 3rd centuries AD used to produce wine amphorae, as well as several kilns that operated in late antiquity⁴⁵. Old maps confirm this, showing many Arabic toponyms containing the words *karm* (vineyard) or *bir* (well or cistern). Mareotis wine was well-regarded, even beyond Egypt⁴⁶.

In Mareotis, there were also orchards with fig trees, carobs, date palms, and olive trees. Naturally, some small barren areas existed, but these were not “deserts” in the usual sense of the word.

Mareotis had a distinctive geological structure: south of the lake, eight limestone ridges ran parallel to the coastline, formed during the Pleistocene era. The ridges closer to the sea were lower in elevation (10, 25 or 35 metres), while those further inland rose higher (between 60 and 110 metres). Between these ridges, in places, there were areas suitable for cultivation, provided that hydrological investments were made. In autumn and winter, rain fell in Mareotis at varying intensities and flowed down the slopes, allowing for water to be collected in cisterns. In some places, the land lay below sea level, so the water-bearing strata were often close to the surface, making the construction of wells possible. Additionally, small canals connected to the Canopic branch of the Nile allowed water to reach the areas around Lake Maryūt.

During the relatively stable period of late antiquity, land cultivation yielded high agricultural output, making Mareotis a vital food source for Alexandria. However, in the 8th century, devastating invasions by Bedouin tribes, brought from the Arabian Peninsula by the Arab rulers of Egypt, destroyed Mareotis’ hydrological infrastructure, leading to its depopulation⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ *A Multidisciplinary Approach to Alexandria’s Economic Past: The Lake Mareotis Research Project. British Archaeological Reports 2285*, ed. L.K. Blue – E. Khalil – A. Trakadas, University of Southampton Series in Archaeology 5, Oxford 2011, p. 7-11, 299-300.

⁴⁶ Ch. Décobert, *Maréotide médiévale. Des Bédouins et des chrétiens*, in: *Alexandrie médiévale 2*, ed. Ch. Décobert, Études alexandrines 8, Cairo 2002, p.127-162.

⁴⁷ T. Barański, *Abu Mina, Philoxenite and the Mareotic Vineyards under the Muslim Rule*, in: *Philoxenite on Lake Mareotis: A Town and Pilgrimage Station on the Way to the Sanctuary of Saint Menas (Abu Mena)*, v. 1: *History and Topography*, ed. T. Derda – M. Gwiazda, Leuven 2025, forthcoming.

Why are there no mentions of vineyards or orchards in our texts concerning St Menas? I believe this absence results from the influence of monastic literature, which attributed a special value to desert spaces and created the myth of the desert. The desert was consistently portrayed as an eerie place, inhabited by demons, but it also became an ideal setting for ascetics, who found there the best conditions for pursuing *hesychia* (spiritual tranquillity) and seeking personal paths to God. However, evil spirits remained present, and monks waged an ongoing battle against them⁴⁸.

8. Conclusions: Saint Menas: a *Fictional Hero*

Modern scholars of hagiographic literature recognise that a significant proportion of works extolling martyrs belong to the category of “fictional hagiography”, meaning that their protagonists never existed but were instead invented by their author⁴⁹. The term ‘fictional’, despite its negative connotations in contemporary discourse, should not be misconstrued as implying a derisive stance on the part of scholars who employ it. These scholars do not accuse the creators of fictional hagiographies of deliberately deceiving their audiences for personal gain, particularly in terms of material gain. Instead, these texts constitute a form of pious literature – sanctifying and extolling the greatness of the Christian faith. Their authors had noble intentions: they sought to persuade their audiences of the heroic virtues and courage of martyrs, qualities believed to guarantee the efficacy of their intercession before God.

Even when composing narratives about historical martyrs (that is, individuals whose existence can be verified with certainty), hagiographers were often compelled to fabricate numerous elements of

⁴⁸ J. Goehring, *The Encroaching Desert: Literary Production and Ascetic Space in Early Christian Egypt*, in: *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert. Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism*, ed. J. Goehring, Harrisburg 1999, p. 39-52; J. Goehring, *The Dark Side of Landscape: Ideology and Power in the Christian Myth of the Desert*, “Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies” 33 (2003) p. 437-451.

⁴⁹ The term “fictional hagiography” was popularized by A. Busine in her numerous articles. See especially: A. Busine, *Les Vies de Saints et la construction temporelle des espaces sacrés dans l’Orient romain tardo-antique*, in: *Espaces sacrés dans la Méditerranée antique. Actes du colloque de Poitiers (13-14 octobre 2011)*, ed. Y. Lafon – V. Michel, Rennes 2016, p. 273-287; A. Busine, *L’hagiographie fictive: Origines et développement d’un genre littéraire dans l’Antiquité Tardive*, in: *Des saints et des martyrs: hommage à Alain Dierkens*, ed. S. Peperstraete – M. Weis, Brussels 2018, p. 39-47.

their accounts, as they rarely possessed sufficient reliable information about the martyr. Consequently, the incorporation of fictional elements in such texts was almost inevitable. However, from the perspective of a historian striving to reconstruct the past – one that is distinct from the literary past – the distinction between hagiographic texts that fabricate non-existent martyrs and those that contain at least some trustworthy information about their protagonists and historical context is of considerable importance, particularly for scholars investigating the cult of saints.

Classifying a text as “fictional hagiography” does not entail its dismissal as a historical source. However, it necessitates adherence to specific methodological principles. First and foremost, it is crucial to recognise that such a text serves as a source for understanding the period in which its authors lived rather than the era of its protagonists. Information regarding institutional structures, official titles, military organisation and commanders, and the locations where martyrdoms purportedly took place should be approached with scepticism. Additionally, one must consider whether the text was the work of a single author or whether it underwent revisions and expansions by subsequent contributors.

This “fictional hagiography” is revealed primarily through the use of stereotypical depictions of the behaviours of martyrs, their judges, and executioners, as well as the Christians accompanying them. Such descriptions appear in numerous hagiographic works with relatively uniform wording, serving as pre-made elements used to build narratives. Scholars of hagiography refer to these by the Greek term *topos* (plural *topoi*)⁵⁰. Their presence – especially in large numbers – indicates that the author knew nothing about the real-life figures in question, relying instead on the narrative and lexical material available in the literature known to him or what was conveyed by preachers in churches. Another sign that we are dealing with a “fabricated” text is the occurrence of glaring errors in the depiction of events well-known from other sources. These can include wars that were never fought, rulers who lived in different periods, and so forth. If relics play an important role in the story of a saint prior to the second half of the fourth century, we should take this as a signal that the author is misleading us, as the cult of relics only emerged in the latter

⁵⁰ T. Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos. Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit* (Berlin – New York 2005), provides a comprehensive survey of hagiographic *topoi*

half of that century⁵¹. Of course, authors writing centuries after the time of their subjects might have acquired accurate knowledge by consulting reliable sources that recorded local traditions, but this was rarely the case.

Authors of fictional hagiography did not only employ *topoi*; they sometimes simply copied existing works (or parts thereof), incorporating extensive passages written by others in honour of different saints into their texts. Such a case is found in the story of the martyrdom of St Menas, where a homily written by Basil of Caesarea in honour of a martyr from that city named Gordius was used⁵².

By analysing each work individually, we can reconstruct the intentions of their successive authors, editors, and copyists, along with their religiosity. We can understand why they introduced certain episodes, omitted others, chose particular styles, and crafted descriptions of miracles in the way they did. When describing the area where the pilgrimage city grew, they could not deviate excessively from reality – though at times they did – but in all other respects, they had freedom. Their purpose was to glorify the martyr and support the sanctuary's finances by emphasising the value of the offerings made in various forms.

They were remarkably effective in their efforts. For the residents of Alexandria, visitors from around the world, and inhabitants of nearby villages, oral tradition about the sanctuary and its grand festivals – where speeches were given in the martyr's honour – was sufficient. However, it was this literary dossier that contributed to the spread of the cult of St Menas throughout almost the entire Mediterranean basin (though not in Asia Minor, as was discussed earlier)⁵³.

It was precisely works like those belonging to the dossier of St Menas that bishops and priests relied on when preparing sermons. It was rare for preachers to create new compositions; they usually read from or adapted pre-existing texts.

⁵¹ R. Wiśniewski, *The Beginnings of the Cult of Relics*, Oxford 2019.

⁵² Basilus Caesariensis, *In Gordium martyrem*, PG 31, 389-508; Basil of Caesarea, *A Homily on the Martyr Gordius*, tr. P. Allen, in: 'Let Us Die that We May Live'. *Greek Homilies on Christian Martyrs from Asia Minor, Palestine and Syria (c. AD 350–AD 450)*, London – New York 2003, p. 56-67. Basil knew almost nothing about Gordius, except that he came from Caesarea. He praised not so much the martyr himself as the concept of martyrdom. Unlike the authors writing about St Menas, he did not even attempt to create a biography for him.

⁵³ For a survey of literary and other written sources, see A. Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides. L'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*, Paris 2001, p. 146-154 (s.v. ΜΗΝΑΣ).

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Prolegomena to the Study of the *Miracles of St Menas*¹

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Abstract: This article aims to outline the key developments in the early history of the *Miracles of St Menas*. It presents arguments supporting the primacy of the Greek text over the Coptic version. The article then examines the time and place of the original composition, locating it at Abū Mīnā in the latter half of the 6th century. The complex process of the collection's development spanned several centuries, with key stages including the formation of the 13-miracle collection after 614; its translation into Coptic before 641; the subsequent expansion of the Coptic collection; and the revision of the Greek original. Finally, the article argues that the original collection had a local character, aimed primarily at the local community.

Keywords: St Menas; Abū Mīnā; miracle collections; hagiography; Late Antiquity

1. Textual tradition

1.1. Manuscripts and redactions in Greek and Coptic

The primary witnesses of the *Miracles of St Menas* are manuscripts in Coptic and Greek. The main collection of the *Miracles* in Coptic is represented by five manuscripts, though none of these has been preserved in its entirety:

- The Morgan Library and Museum M.590 (CLM 221)³, AD 893, from the Monastery of Archangel Michael at Phantoou (Ḥāmūli)

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³ The CLM (Coptic Literary Manuscript) is an identification system for all known literary manuscripts in Coptic. It is utilised within the Archaeological Atlas of Coptic

in the Fayyum. The manuscript includes the prologue and 17 miracles. However, it is severely damaged, rendering parts of the text for some miracles illegible. As this is the only known Coptic manuscript where the number of the last miracle preserved, it cannot be concluded that 17 was a typical number in the Coptic collections. The prologue attributes the *Miracles* to Theophilus, the Alexandrian Patriarch. Parts of M.590 were edited by James Drescher (prologue + miracles 1 to 4 [in part] and 14 [in part] to 17) and Paul Devos (miracles 8 and 10)⁴. None of the Arabic manuscripts studied by Felicitas Jaritz follow the sequence of M.590⁵;

- IFAO copte inv. 315-322 (CLM 1770), 9th-10th c. (PATHs), 11th c. (Devos)⁶, from the White Monastery. These leaves constitute a second quire from a larger, lost codex. The miracles follow a different sequence than in M.590. Most of the leaves were edited by Seïna Bacot (miracles 2 [in part] to 5), but a single miracle was edited by Paul Devos (miracle 6)⁷. The text diverges from M.590 in numerous instances, preserving significant readings that align with the Greek text but are absent in the other Coptic witnesses;
- London, British Museum, Or. 4919 (4) = *P.Lond.Copt.* I 340 (CLM 1324), undated, provenance unknown. It consists of fragments of

Literature, developed as part of the PATHs project <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/> (accessed 22.11.2024).

⁴ J. Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas, Edited, with Translation and Commentary*, Cairo 1946, p. 7-34 (text), 108-125 (tr.); P. Devos, *Un récit des miracles de S. Ménas en copte et en éthiopien*, AnBol 77 (1959) p. 454-462; AnBol 78 (1960) p. 156-157; P. Devos, *Le juif et le chrétien: un miracle de saint Ménas*, AnBol 78 (1960) p. 292-301; S. Bacot, *Saint Ménas, soldat et martyr. Sa vie, ses miracles, son sanctuaire*, Bagnole 2020, p. 64-78 translated several miracles into French (1, 10, 15-17 according to the M.590 sequence; in Bacot's numeration they bear the numbers 6-10).

⁵ H.N. Takla recently discovered a manuscript (Ms. Mar. Mena 2) based on the Coptic text preserved in M.590. However, no further details about its content have been provided, see H.N. Takla, *The Arabic Version of the Miracles of Apa Mina Based on Two Unpublished Manuscripts in the Collection of the St. Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society in Los Angeles*, in: *Christianity and Monasticism in Northern Egypt: Beni Suef, Giza, Cairo, and the Nile Delta*, ed. G. Gabra – H.N. Takla, Cairo – New York 2017, p. 167.

⁶ <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/1770>; Devos, *Le juif et le chrétien*, p. 279.

⁷ S. Bacot, *Quatre miracles de saint Ménas dans un manuscrit copte de l'Ifao (Inv. 315-322)*, "Bulletin de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale" 111 (2011) p. 35-73; Devos, *Le juif et le chrétien*, p. 285-292. The miracles correspond to nos 6, 2, 3, 4 and 8 in Ms. M.590.

miracles 2 and 3, and was edited by Walter E. Crum and re-published by Seřna Bacot⁸;

- Egypt, Cairo, Egyptian Museum, shelfmark unknown (CLM 6412); 8th-10th c.; found in Qasr Ibrim. At the current state of research, it is known to contain fragments of the prologue and miracle 1. It remains as yet unedited, but an edition by Joost Hagen is anticipated⁹;
- Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms. or. oct. 409, f. 27, 28 (CLM 6255), 11-13th c., from the White Monastery. It contains miracle no. 11¹⁰.

The Greek tradition regarding the *Miracles* has been thoroughly studied by Luigi Silvano and Paolo Varalda, who examined numerous manuscripts, none of which dates back to earlier than the 10th c. This tradition divides into four recensions, with recension α preserving the most reliable text. The Greek collection includes up to 13 miracles, although most manuscripts contain only a selection of them. Some manuscripts attribute authorship to Timotheus of Alexandria. Italian scholars describe the Greek textual tradition of the *Miracles* as “estremamente fluida” (“extremely fluid”)¹¹. Based on their research, Silvano and Varalda have edited four of the miracles, with one additional miracle edited solely by Varalda¹². The only complete edition of the Greek collection remains Ivan Pomialovskiĭ’s, which is based on a single manuscript from Moscow (recension β)¹³. Rein Miedema edited five miracles from one of the α manuscripts (*Vaticanus Gr.* 797) and another

⁸ W.E. Crum, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the British Museum*, London 1905, p. 156-157 (see also a corrected shelfmark on p. 520); Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 51, 55, 57.

⁹ Joost Hagen presented a paper on the manuscript at a Workshop on the *Miracles of St Menas* in Katowice in October 2022. Based on Hagen’s preliminary analysis, the version from Qasr Ibrīm contains numerous variant readings compared to Ms. M.590.

¹⁰ P. Piwowarczyk, *A New Fragment of the Coptic Miracles of St Menas* (Berlin Ms. or. oct. 408, Fols. 27-28), “Journal of Coptic Studies” 27 (2025) (forthcoming).

¹¹ L. Silvano – P. Varalda, *Per l’edizione dei Miracula sancti Menae* (BHG 1256-1269), “Philologia Antiqua” 12 (2019) p. 58.

¹² Silvano – Varalda, *Per l’edizione*, p. 51-85; P. Varalda, *Il ricco Eutropio e i piattii. La versione greca di uno dei Miracula sancti Menae* (BHG 1258), “Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata” 18 (2021) p. 207-236.

¹³ *Zhitie prepodobnago Paisiia Velikago i Timofeĭa patriarkha Aleksandriiskago poviestvovanie o chudesakh* sv. Velikomuchenika Miny, ed. I. Pomialovskiĭ, Saint Petersburg 1900, p. 62-89.

five from a γ manuscript (*Vaticanus Gr.* 866)¹⁴. Paul Devos edited the miracle *The Jew and the Christian* based on an α manuscript (*Laurentianus* XI, 9)¹⁵. Two Arabic manuscripts, consulted by Jaritz, are translations of the Greek 13-miracle collection. These manuscripts, designated as Š and L (both dating to approximately the 13th century and originating from the Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai.), represent Felicitas Jaritz's Version 7 of the *Miracles*. The prologue of these manuscripts attributes the miracles to Timotheus¹⁶. The 5-miracle version published by John Duffy and Emmanuël Bourbouhakis is an abridged text from the 12th-century Synaxarium and does not contribute to discussion on the early tradition of the *Miracles*¹⁷.

1.2. Appendix I. The sequence of miracles in main collections

Convention- al title of the miracle	Greek col- lection (ac- cording to BHG = Po- mialovskii)	Coptic collection according to Ms. M.590 (standard sequence in Coptic)	Coptic collection accord- ing to the IFAO Ms.	Arabic collections accord- ing to Jaritz's sigla		
				M. (standard sequence in Arabic)	F	Š
<i>The Isaurian Pilgrim</i>	1	2 (ed. Dre- scher)	3	5	1	1
<i>Eutropius and the Silver Plates</i>	2	3 (ed. Dre- scher)	4	7	2	2
<i>The Female Pilgrim (So- phia)</i>	3	4 (ed. Dre- scher, in part)	5	9	3	3
<i>The Jew and the Christian</i>	4	8 (ed. De- vos)	6 (in part)	10	4	4
<i>The Paralytic and the Mute Woman</i>	5	9		11	5	5

¹⁴ R. Miedema, *De Wonderverhalen van den Heiligen Menas*, "Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis" 14 (1918) p. 212-221, 231-236.

¹⁵ Devos, *Le juif et le chrétien*, p. 282-285. The second Ms. used by Devos, *Athon. Lavr.* Δ 50, was not consulted by Italian scholars.

¹⁶ F. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen zum Heiligen Menas*, Heidelberg 1993, p. 58, 60, 150, 183.

¹⁷ J. Duffy – E. Bourbouhakis, *Five Miracles of St. Menas*, in: *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations. Texts and Translations Dedicated to the Memory of Nicolas Oikonomides*, ed. J.W. Nesbitt, Leiden – Boston 2003, p. 65-81.

<i>The Samaritan Woman</i>	6	16 (ed. Drescher)		23	19	6
<i>Three Brothers, the Pigs, and the Crocodile</i>	7	10 (ed. Devos)		12	6	7
<i>The Poor Woman's Sheep</i>	8	14 (ed. Drescher, in part)		15	10	8
<i>The Barren Camel</i>	9	1 (ed. Drescher)		17	12	9
<i>The Foal with Three Legs</i>	10	6	2 (in part)	19	14	10
<i>The Wood Offering</i>	11	11		13	7	11
<i>The Possessed Man</i>	12	15 (ed. Drescher)			18	12
<i>The Pig Thief</i>	13	5		18	13	13
<i>The Pig Killed by the Deamon</i>		7		20	15	
<i>The Soldier and The Pig</i>		12		14	8	
<i>The Abused Female Pilgrim</i>		13		4	9	
<i>The Water Miracle</i>		17 (ed. Drescher)		16	11	
<i>The Resurrected Worker</i>				1		
<i>The Falsely Accused</i>				2		
<i>The Possessed Jew</i>				3	21	
<i>The Unjust Merchant</i>				6	23	
<i>The Snake in the Vessel</i>				8	22	
<i>The Pig Offering</i>				21	16	
<i>The Stolen Horse</i>				22	17	

2. History of the Collection

2.1. Discussion with proponents of Coptic priority

Most modern scholars recognise a Coptic origin for these miracles¹⁸, generally dating them to the late 5th or early 6th c.¹⁹ If proven, the *Miracles* would represent an exceptionally rare, if not unique, instance of translation from Coptic into Greek²⁰. However, for several reasons, I find such a direction of translation highly improbable. Since my proposition challenges this mainstream view, I begin by discussing the arguments put forward by proponents of a Coptic origin for the miracles.

James Drescher, who had only limited access to the Greek text, considered the Coptic readings to be superior. He supported this assessment with two examples of toponyms as evidence²¹.

One example is Λοζονῆτα (which Drescher knew only through Pomialovskii's edition as transmitted by Delehayé)²² versus the more accurate Coptic Ⲫⲓⲟⲗⲟⲁⲛⲓⲧⲏ. Drescher suggested that the initial Ⲫⲓ was mistaken for the Bohairic definite article and was left in the translation. However, the edition by Silvano and Varalda demonstrated that various Greek

¹⁸ Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 105; P. Peeters, *Orient et Byzance. Le tréfonds oriental de l'hagiographie byzantine*, Subsidia Hagiographica 26, Brussels 1950, p. 37; Devos, *Le juif*, p. 275-277; Á. Narro, *Tipología de los milagros griegos de San Minás (BHG 1256-1269)*, in: *Mite i miracle a les literatures antigues i medievals*, ed. L. Movellán Luis – J.J. Pomer Monferrer, Reus 2018, p. 104; Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, p. 55; indirectly also S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit. Eine Sammlung christlicher Stätten in Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, v. 4, Wiesbaden 1988, p. 1599.

¹⁹ Peeters, *Orient et Byzance*, p. 36 (not earlier than the end of the 5th c.); S. Efthymiadis, *Greek Byzantine Collections of Miracles: A Chronological and Bibliographical Survey*, "Symbolae Osloenses" 74 (1999) p. 196-197; after him Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, p. 55.

²⁰ The most well-argued example of such a translation is the *Sermo asceticus* by Stephen of Thebes, see A. Suciu, *The Sermo asceticus of Stephen the Theban in Sahidic Coptic*, JTS 69 (2018) s. 628-673.

²¹ Two additional examples are provided in the footnotes (Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 113, 122). The substitution of Coptic 'comes' for Greek 'king' and Coptic 'ass' for Greek 'horse' illustrates that the Greek text, as it exists today, has lost some of its original Egyptian flavour. This observation aligns with our argument for the loss of the Greek original.

²² H. Delehayé, *L'invention des reliques de saint Ménas à Constantinople*, AnBol 29 (1910) p. 127-135.

manuscripts contain distorted readings, although some still preserve the initial Φ²³. These distortions are unsurprising, as the Greek text was reworked at a time when the toponym ‘Philoxenite’ would have held little meaning for Byzantine Christians.

The second example is the toponyme Πανηφαιάτ, cited in Greek as the birthplace of Menas in *The Barren Camel*. Drescher interpreted this as a misreading of the Coptic ΠΑΝΗΠΑΙΑΤ meaning “one belonging to Nepaiat” (or “the man of Nêphaiait” in Drescher’s translation), a construction typical in Coptic, where a possessive article is followed by a place name.

However, Drescher also entertained an alternative explanation for this place name in Greek: “If the Greek priority is to be maintained, it would appear the extant Greek text is merely a late debased version of a Greek original now lost”²⁴. The evidence strongly supports this alternative option. In the Coptic version, the phrase is absent and the toponyme Nepaiat does not occur at all in this miracle. The form which Drescher quotes occurs only in the prologue to the miracles in wording ΝΕΠΑΕΙΑΤ. ΠΑΝΗΠΑΙΑΤ does not appear in the Coptic text at all. The meaning “a man of Nepaeiat” occurs in the *Encomium*, but in the form ΟΥΡΕΜΝΕΠΑΕΙΑΤ²⁵. The Greek Mss. of recension α that I was able to check have the readings: πόλεως Πανφαιτῶν²⁶; the Old Church Slavonic translation has отъ града Панифаіата. However, the proper Coptic name of the region begins with πα-/φα- in the northern dialects²⁷. In the Coptic *Martyrium of St Menas* we can find only one instance of a similar form – τπαειατ²⁸. This toponym is attested in Greek papyri in many forms²⁹.

Timm argues for a Coptic text behind the phrase ἀπὸ πόλεως Πανηφαιάτ as well, but his reasoning differs from that of Drescher. According to Timm, the whole phrase is a result of a mistranslation of the Coptic нте нефает³⁰. Unfortunately, he does not discuss this idea in

²³ Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione* p. 62, e.g. Φαινοζεντῶν in Mss A1 and V2.

²⁴ Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 105.

²⁵ Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 36, c. 2, l. 28-29.

²⁶ Firenze, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, plut. XI 9, f. 97v, col. II, l. 28, in: <https://tecabml.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/plutei/id/1446182> (accessed 10.11.2024); Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, gr. 1468, f. 276v, col. II, l. 10, in: <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b107218498> (accessed 10.11.2024).

²⁷ V. Vycichl, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue copte*, Leuven 1983, p. 159.

²⁸ *Passio S. Menae*, ed. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 2, c. 1, l. 14. The form παιατ is also attested in *Passio Shenufe* (f. 109v II), ed. Reymond – Barns, p. 91.

²⁹ Vycichl, *Dictionnaire*, p. 159.

³⁰ Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, v. 4, p. 1599.

detail. He might have in mind Coptic ⲧⲙⲉ (variants ⲧⲓ, ⲧⲙⲉ) rendered as πόλις, but πολίς is a loanword frequently found in Coptic, and the word ⲧⲙⲉ means a ‘village’.

I find it likely that the native Coptic toponym was already present in the original Greek collection, and there is no reason to reconstruct a supposedly misinterpreted Coptic phrase here. The spelling of the name in ancient Greek and Coptic texts – both in papyri and literary sources – is so varied that it is impossible to determine whether Πανηφαιάτ represents a form included in the original Greek core collection or if it reflects scribal errors.

Paul Devos presents a more complex linguistic argument, which requires a detailed analysis³¹. In *The Jew and the Christian*, the latter loses a personal item after falling from a horse. In the Coptic text, the object is referred to as a ⲫⲟⲩⲣ ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲃ, which falls from the Christian’s finger. In the Greek version, it is described as a δακτυλοκλείδιον τοῦ σκεβρίου falling ἐκ τοῦ κόλπου³² αὐτοῦ. According to Devos, it is difficult to explain how δακτυλοκλείδιον τοῦ σκεβρίου could have been translated into ⲫⲟⲩⲣ, but he argues that the reverse change is easier to reconstruct. Devos suggests that the word ⲫⲟⲩⲣ was part of the original Coptic text. Referring to Crum’s dictionary, he notes that ⲫⲟⲩⲣ has a dual meaning: ‘key’ and ‘ring’³³. Noteworthy, Crum bases a secondary meaning ‘as key’ primarily on δακτυλοκλείδιον in Greek text of St Menas’ miracles³⁴. The translator into Greek, choosing the first meaning, was logically led to introduce a money box (σκεβρίον), which the key would presumably open, Devos argues.

³¹ Devos, *Le juif et le chrétien*, p. 276.

³² Devos translates this as ‘sein’, but we may also understand it as ‘fold of a garment’, ‘pocket’ (H.G. Liddell – R. Scott – H.S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford 1996, p. 974, s.v. κόλπος).

³³ Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, p. 121.

³⁴ Additionally, Crum brings three pieces of papyrological evidence for ⲫⲟⲩⲣ meaning a ‘key’. Two of them are relevant: *BKU* 299 and *P.Mon.Epiph.* 397 (W.E. Crum – H.G. Evelyn White, *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, v. 2, New York 1926, p. 257 contains interpretation of both pieces). Both pieces are ostraca from Western Thebes, which might suggest that this meaning of the word was of local character. The third piece *CO* 459 remain inconclusive. It is a list of books and other items (it does not seem to be a list of church property) among them ⲩⲙⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲫⲟⲩⲣ ⲉⲃⲱⲟⲟⲥⲉ ⲁⲉⲓⲣⲓⲧⲟⲩ what Crum translates as “beaten, wrought (iron) keys”. Interestingly, in an original publication (*Coptic Ostraca from the Collections of the Egypt Exploration Fund, the Cairo Museum and Others*, ed. W.E. Crum, London 1902, p. 42), he translates “8 damaged rings which have been taken away”.

However, I see no reason to dismiss the possibility of the reverse process. Assuming a Greek original, a Coptic translator, uncertain of the meaning of δακτυλοκλείδιον, may have selected the term ζογρ, a general word for ‘ring’³⁵ that also refers to a signet ring used for sealing³⁶. This choice aligns well with the context, as a signet ring would serve as a means of identifying the owner. Arabic translations follow an unambiguous interpretation of the Coptic ζογρ as a signet ring. Mss. F and M have: ‘a golden ring (*hātām*)’³⁷. The Arabic term *hātām* means ‘seal’ or ‘signet ring’. What is most important for us is that the Arabic Ms. Š, translated from Greek, also denotes the item expressly as “his ring” (*hātīmuh*), and “a ring by which he sealed”³⁸. It appears that ‘ring’ – more precisely, a ‘signet ring’ – rather than ‘key’, was the primary meaning of δακτυλοκλείδιον. A “ring to the box” would therefore refer not to a locking mechanism but to a signet used to stamp a seal on the money box³⁹. Notably, in the story, δακτυλοκλείδιον is used to identify its owner (γνωρίζεις αὐτό; – ‘Do you recognise it?’), rather than to open anything⁴⁰.

The term has no attestation in the TLG corpus. However, it does appear in papyri, specifically in *P.Fuad Univ.* 8, dated to the second c. AD⁴¹. The papyrus contains a list of items for sale, including a silver δακτυλοκλιδιν (interpreted as δακτυλοκλείδιον). The papyrus editor, David S. Crawford, references only an entry previously discussed in Crum’s Coptic dictionary⁴².

³⁵ James 2:2: “ερεξενζογρ ἡνογβ ρῆ νεφτηηβε” (Greek ἀνήρ χρυσοδακτύλιος).

³⁶ Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary*, p. 121.

³⁷ Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 399, l. 16; 420, l. 7.

³⁸ Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 150, 220.

³⁹ The term σκευβίον (‘money-box’) is also quite rare in Greek, with only three attestations in the TLG corpus. It is a spelling variant of the more common σκευρίον (see Devos, *Le juif*, p. 276, n. 3). It is possible that modern editors have favoured the reading σκευρίον, meaning the term might be more frequently represented in the manuscripts than in the published editions. The earliest attestation appears in the *Life of St Theodore of Syceon*, written in the 7th c. by George of Syceon – a work contemporary with the 13-miracle collection of St Menas. Other attestations are found in the Byzantine *Basilica* (9th to 13th c.) and in the *Canonarium* by Nikon of the Black Mountain (11th to 12th c.).

⁴⁰ Devos, *Le juif*, p. 284, l. 15.

⁴¹ *Fuad I University Papyri*, ed. D.S. Crawford, Alexandria 1949, p. 10-15.

⁴² *Fuad I University Papyri*, p. 13.

It is difficult to imagine a functional key made of silver, as silver is a soft and malleable metal, but a silver signet ring would be more plausible. However, caution is still necessary. From a late medieval source, we know of a silver key (not part of a ring) used for a reliquary in Constantinople⁴³. Additionally, at least one example exists of a Byzantine gold signet ring with an actual key attached, dated to the 9th c. and currently housed in Dumbarton Oaks. Similar objects, often made of iron, are also known, though their shape would have prevented them from being worn on the finger for a long time⁴⁴.

Now we can easily imagine that the original Greek already had δακτυλοκλειδίον and aptly described how it was worn. It was the later Coptic translator who, finding the word and object unfamiliar, decided to describe the situation in a more straightforward way.

Paul Peteers offered yet another argument in favour of Coptic precedence. His assessment is based solely on personal linguistic preferences and reveals explicit Eurocentric biases against Coptic literature:

Le fait qui seul nous intéresse en ce moment, c'est que ces récits, fond et forme, sont d'inspiration copte. L'hellénisme aurait doublement tort de revendiquer ces pauvretés, d'une langue plus qu'à demi barbare et que, par endroits, il faut remettre en copte pour y trouver un sens acceptable. Elles sont le produit d'un terroir où il continua d'en pousser, après que les Grecs eurent cessé d'y prendre intérêt⁴⁵.

Such a subjective valuation requires no in-depth refutation.

⁴³ G. Vikan – J. Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium: Locking, Sealing and Weighing*, Dumbarton Oaks 1980, p. 4. It is a report by Spanish envoy Gonzalez de Clavijo.

⁴⁴ On such objects, Vikan – Nesbitt, *Security in Byzantium*, p. 4-5; Crawford, in: *Fuad I*, p. 13. Vikan and Nesbitt (*Security in Byzantium*, p. 4) note that “the hoop and swivel joint suggest that Byzantine keys were carried about the house on the hand – the hoop fit over the finger like a ring, and the short barrel and bit folded neatly on the palm”. While I find this solution plausible in certain situations (e.g., in cases of particular danger), holding a metal element in the hand would inevitably form a fist, making it difficult to use that hand effectively.

⁴⁵ Peeters, *Orient et Byzance*, p. 37.

2.2. Arguments for the Greek priority of the *Miracles*

Having refuted the arguments of other scholars, I strongly advocate for a Greek origin of the *Miracles*, as the geographical and historical context makes a Coptic original highly improbable. The fifth and sixth centuries witnessed the emergence of the earliest miracle collections in Greek, the most significant of which are associated with St Thecla and Sts Cosmas and Damian. Thecla was venerated in Mareotis⁴⁶, while Cosmas and Damian were honoured in Alexandria⁴⁷. Although it remains unclear whether these miracle collections reached Egypt immediately, it is quite possible that they inspired the composition of similar collections at pilgrimage shrines near Alexandria – specifically, of Sts Cyrus and John at Menouthis, and that of St Menas at Abū Mīnā. In the following, I will focus on the latter shrine.

The written evidence from Abū Mīnā, including inscriptions and ostraca, is exclusively in Greek, and Philoxenite also yields only Greek texts⁴⁸. To the best of my knowledge, not a single St Menas' flask bears a Coptic inscription⁴⁹. The flasks are generally rare in Egypt, reinforcing the view that the sanctuary did not enjoy widespread popularity among Egyptians⁵⁰. The earliest known visual representation of St Menas also originates from a Greek-speaking region west of Alexandria (The Ennaton Monastery,

⁴⁶ E. Wipszycka, *Sainte Thècle dans la Maréotide*, in: *Unending Variety: Papyrological Texts and Studies in Honour of Peter van Minnen*, ed. A.J. Connor – J.H.F. Dijkstra – F.A.J. Hoogendijk, *Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava* 42, Leiden 2024, p. 207-211.

⁴⁷ J. Gascoü, *Églises et chapelles d'Alexandrie byzantine: recherches de topographie culturelle*, *Studia Papyrologica et Aegyptiaca Parisina* 1, Paris 2020, p. 21-22.

⁴⁸ With the possible exception of one word at ostrakon inv. M200249, ed. T. Derda – M. Gwiazda – J. Burdajewicz, *A Private House in 'Marea'/Philoxenite Transformed into a Monastic Institution and Other Christian Hybrid Buildings in the Mareotis Region*, "Journal of Coptic Studies" 25 (2003) p. 116, 121. From the entire area of the so-called Western Coast, including Abū Mīnā, the Trismegistos database yields only a single text in Coptic: a funerary stele from Taposiris Magna (*SB Kopt.* 2.1237 = TM 102051).

⁴⁹ The literature on St. Menas' flasks is extensive, but for a comprehensive survey of inscriptions, see A. Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides. L'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*, Paris 2001, p. 148.

⁵⁰ E. Wipszycka, *Philoxenite: Pilgrims on the Road to Abu Mina*, in: *Philoxenite on Lake Mareotis: A Town and Pilgrimage Station on the Way to the Sanctuary of Saint Menas (Abu Mena)*, v. 1: *History and Topography*, ed. T. Derda – M. Gwiazda, Leuven 2025 (forthcoming).

modern Dēr az-Zaggāg)⁵¹. This depiction, carved on a 5th-century stele, originates from a site that also yielded Greek inscriptions⁵². The cult clearly first flourished locally within the Greek-speaking area between Abū Mīnā and Alexandria, with the earliest confirmed representations in the Nile Valley appearing only in the 6th c.

Furthermore, if the sanctuary had been more popular among Egyptians, we would expect to see a noticeable presence of the local Bohairic dialect in the text of the *Miracles*. However, the Coptic *Miracles* are primarily written in standard Sahidic and display no features specific to Bohairic. Instead, most of the peculiarities in the IFAO manuscript are shared with the Fayyumic dialect⁵³, which also influenced Sahidic in both the New York and Berlin manuscripts.

It is rarely acknowledged that, from AD 539 onward, Mareotis and Abū Mīnā did not administratively belong to Egypt. At that time, Mareotis was detached from Egypt and annexed to Libya⁵⁴. In the second decade of the 7th c., Sophronius refers to Abū Mīnā as “the pride of all Libya”⁵⁵. The miracle in manuscript Ms. M.585 similarly refers to Abū Mīnā as Libya (ΛΙΒΗ)⁵⁶. Additionally, the Coptic *Martyrdom of St Menas* identifies Nepaeiat (the Coptic equivalent of Mareotis)⁵⁷ as part of Libya⁵⁸. Finally,

⁵¹ S. Hodak, *Coptic Literature as a Source for Coptic Art, Part Two, Second Fascicule: Martyrs (and Other Saints)*, in: *Pharaonen, Mönche und Gelehrte. Auf dem Pilgerweg durch 5000 Jahre ägyptische Geschichte über drei Kontinente Heike Behlmer zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. D. Atanassova – F. Feder – H. Sternberg el-Hotabi, Texte und Studien zur Koptischen Bibel 4, Wiesbaden 2023, p. 375; *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, ed. K. Weitzmann, New York 1979, p. 573-574.

⁵² A. Łajtar – E. Wipszycka, *L'építaphe de Duḥēla SB III 6249: moines gaïanites dans les monastères alexandrins*, “The Journal of Juristic Papyrology” 28 (1998) 55-57.

⁵³ Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 38.

⁵⁴ Iustinianus, *Edictum* 13, 18, in: *The Novels of Justinian: A Complete Annotated English Translation*, v. 2, tr. D.J.D. Miller – P. Sarris, Cambridge 2018, p. 1094.

⁵⁵ Sophronius Hierosolymitanus, *Miracula SS. Cyri at Iohannis* 46, 1, ed. Fernández Marcos, p. 351: “πάσης Λιβύης καθέστηκεν φύραγμα”.

⁵⁶ *Miracula S. Menae* ex Codice M.585, ed. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 96 (text), 159 (tr.).

⁵⁷ The equivalency is clear from medieval Arabic *scala* dictionaries, see Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, v. 4, p. 1601; see also Abū al-Barakāt, *Scala magna*, ed. Macomber, p. 164.

⁵⁸ *Passio S. Menae* Coptice, ed. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 5 (text), 103 (tr.): “ΤΛΙΒΗ ΝΝΕΠΑΙΕΑΤ”.

Mareotis is regarded as part of Libya not only in hagiographic literature but also in other sources⁵⁹.

However, the distinction between Egypt and Mareotis is not merely administrative but, above all, ethnic. The presence of Libyans in the region is noteworthy. Historically, the Egyptian name *Paiet* denotes a Libyan/Berber tribe native to this area⁶⁰, which was clearly regarded as inhabited by non-Egyptian people.

Among the vineyard workers recorded in the ostraca from the winery at Abū Mīnā, three individuals are identified as Libyans and two as Egyptians. Additionally, one worker is noted as originating from the Libyan/Mareotic village of Kobio. Other individuals from the Egyptian towns Terenuthis and Naucratis are also mentioned⁶¹. The ethnonyms and places of origin recorded likely indicate that these individuals came from outside the town. The ratio of outsiders identified as Libyans and Egyptians appears to be roughly equal. Although a relatively small number of individuals in the ostraca bear native Egyptian names, it is important to recognise that this does not rule out the possibility that workers with Christian or traditional Greek names could also have been of Egyptian (or Libyan) origin⁶².

The literary tradition reveals strong connections between Mareotis and Libya with Abū Mīnā, yet shows almost no links to Egypt. In the recorded miracles, no pilgrims from Egypt are mentioned, though there is one from Libya (Marmarica) in *The Poor Woman's Sheep*. Another Libyan is noted as a wealthy benefactor to the poor⁶³. The *Encomium* further describes the route of the saint's relics passing through Mareotic and Libyan settlements: "And, leaving Alexandria, they put the saint on a ship of Lake Marea. They came westward on that day to the Taposiriac Taenia. They put him on a camel and brought him first to Kobio, a village of Mariotes. And when, by the grace of God and His holy martyr, they

⁵⁹ Dionysius Alexandrinus, apud Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7, 11, 14, ed. Bardy, Sch 41, p. 182: "καὶ λιβυκωτέρους ἡμᾶς μεταστῆσαι τόπους ἐβουλήθη, καὶ τοὺς πανταχόσε εἰς τὸν Μαρεώτην ἐκέλευσεν συρρεῖν" – It is noteworthy that both Dionysius and Eusebius wrote long before Justinian's edict. See also Iohannes Ephesinus, *Historia ecclesiastica*, ed. E.W. Brooks, CSCO 105, p. 190 (text), CSCO 106, p. 142 (tr.).

⁶⁰ Vycichl, *Dictionnaire*, p. 159.

⁶¹ *Greek Ostraca from Abu Mina (O.AbuMina)*, ed. N. Litinas, Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete Beiheft 25, Berlin – New York 2008, p. 45-46.

⁶² *Greek Ostraca from Abu Mina*, p. 44.

⁶³ *Miracula S. Menae* Coptice ex Codice M.585, ed. J. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 91 (text), 157 (tr.).

had defeated the barbarians, they brought his holy remains to the village of Este”⁶⁴.

Notably, according to the tradition preserved in the *Martyrium*, St Menas was descended from a local Mareotic family⁶⁵. The term ‘Paeat’ is explicitly used here as an equivalent for Mareotis⁶⁶. However, the same *Martyrium* refers to him as “Egyptian according to his family”⁶⁷. The latter notion appears to be an interpolation intended to reconcile local and translocal traditions. In the 8th c., the *Encomium* criticises a presumably local tradition asserting that St Menas was from Nepaeat (οὐρεμνεπαεiat) or Mareotis (παπμαριωτης πε), thereby distinguishing between the two locations⁶⁸. The *Encomium* sought to establish St Menas as an Egyptian by claiming he was born in Nikiu in the Delta. However, this appears to be a later invention, likely introduced by the *Encomium*’s author.

Given the complex and cohesive linguistic and historical context, it seems improbable that the miracles were originally composed in Coptic, as this language would have neither resonated with the local population nor attracted pilgrims. St Menas and his cult originally has only weak connections to Egypt. Greek was the principal language of the sanctuary, the surrounding region, and patriarchs of Alexandria, to whose episcopal domain Mareotis belonged. It was also the language in which the miracles were first composed. Unfortunately, the original Greek text has since been lost.

2.3. A hypothetical reconstruction of the collection’s history

The *Miracles of St Menas* passed through a lengthy and multistage redactional process. I propose the existence of a core set of miracles that dates to the latter half of the 6th c. While the precise number of miracles

⁶⁴ Iohannes (IV) Alexandrinus, *Encomium in S. Menam*, tr. Drescher, p. 141.

⁶⁵ *Passio S. Menae* Coptice, ed. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 2, c. 1, l. 10-14 (περγενος [Δε] νεφνι ετεχ[ωρ]α ννεμαριωτης τετογμογτε ερος δε τπαεiat); *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 84 (Πανηφαιάτ). In the Coptic miracle it is only said that he handed his camels to a man from Nepaeiat (Drescher, p. 10, col. 1, l.5: “νεπαεiat”).

⁶⁶ For this equation, see Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, v. 4, p. 1598, 1601.

⁶⁷ *Passio S. Menae* Coptice, ed. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 6, c. 1, l. 6-8: “νεογρμνηκημε πε κατα περγενος”.

⁶⁸ Iohannes (IV) Alexandrinus, *Encomium in S. Menam*, ed. Drescher, p. 36-37.

within this core remains uncertain, three specific miracles appear consecutively in both the Greek collection and two Coptic manuscripts: *The Isaurian Pilgrim*, *Eutropius and the Silver Plates*, and *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*. This pattern suggests that these three miracles originally formed a cluster at the time of their composition. Although it is not possible to definitively confirm or refute the inclusion of additional miracles within this core, many of them share significant terms and phrases with these core miracles, lending further support to their association⁶⁹. At the same time, it remains possible that some of the miracles later included in the 13-miracle collection may predate this core set⁷⁰.

A reference point for the *terminus post quem* is the toponym ‘Philoxenite’, which is mentioned by name in four miracles and described in the Coptic *Encomium* as having been founded “in the time of Anastasius, the king”⁷¹. Emperor Anastasius ruled from 491 to 518. If Philoxenite is indeed the same as the site known as ‘Marea’⁷², archaeologists generally date the beginnings of the settlement to the late 5th or early 6th c. However, the foundation of the planned town is attributed to the mid-6th c., under Justinian. The miracles refer to this phase, as it is stated that the town had an agora⁷³.

In the IFAO Ms., the events of two miracles – *Eutropius and the Silver Plates* and *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)* – are noted to have taken place during construction activities at the sanctuary. Based on the chronology of the site established by Peter Grossmann, this likely refers to construction

⁶⁹ The toponyme Philoxenite appears in *The Isaurian Pilgrim*, *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*, *The Jew and the Christian* and *The Samaritan Pilgrim*; terminus technicus ‘spatharios’ in: *The Isaurian Pilgrim* (in Greek only), *The Barren Camel*, *The Samaritan Pilgrim*, *The Pig Killed by the Deamon*.

⁷⁰ Perhaps *The Barren Camel* could be taken from an earlier narrative, as it is the only miracle with a main character directly linked to St Menas’ lifetime (see p. 53).

⁷¹ For a comprehensive survey of all occurrences of the toponym in the hagiographic dossier of St Menas and the Greek *Life of St Apolinaria*, see P. Piwowarczyk, *Literary Sources on Philoxenite: A Survey*, in: *Philoxenite on Lake Mareotis: A Town and Pilgrimage Station on the Way to the Sanctuary of Saint Menas (Abu Mena)*, v. 1: *History and Topography*, ed. T. Derda – M. Gwiazda, Leuven 2025 (forthcoming).

⁷² This is actually a prevalent idea among scholars working on this site; see the monographic volume: *Philoxenite on Lake Mareotis: A Town and Pilgrimage Station on the Way to the Sanctuary of Saint Menas (Abu Mena)*, v. 1: *History and Topography*, ed. T. Derda – M. Gwiazda, Leuven 2025 (forthcoming).

⁷³ Wipszycka, *Philoxenite: Pilgrims on the Road*; for ‘agora’, see *The Jew and the Christian*; Devos, *Le juif*, p. 289, c. 2, l. 7; p. 296, c. 2, l. 14-15.

work undertaken during the reign of Justinian or slightly afterwards, placing these events in the mid to late 6th c.⁷⁴ Interestingly, these details are absent from manuscript M.590 and the Greek text.

Some terminological evidence aligns well with this dating. For example, in the description of mooring in the miracle *Eutropius and the Silver Plates* (IFAO Ms.), the term μονοβολος appears⁷⁵, which seems to be a local Egyptian term for an anchor used on riverboats. The term is attested in papyri dated between the third and sixth centuries⁷⁶.

In *The Barren Camel*, *The Pig Killed by the Deamon*, and *The Samaritan Pilgrim*, St Menas is referred to as spatharios⁷⁷. Spatharios was first a court military title. *Chronicon Paschale* (around 630) under year 450 mentions that “Chrysaphius the spatharius was slain at the gate of Melen-tias”⁷⁸. As far as we know, Chrysaphius was the first to hold this position which he assumed in 443⁷⁹. However, *spatharioi* are attested as soldiers in inscriptions and papyri only later, between the second half of the sixth and the beginning of the 7th c.⁸⁰

⁷⁴ P. Grossmann, *The Pilgrimage Center of Abu Mina*, in: *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. D. Frankfurter, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 134, Leiden 1998, p. 284-286; L. Lavan, *Public Space in the Late Antique City*, v. 2: *Sites, Buildings, Dates*, Leuven 2020, p. 147, argues for a wider timeframe of the monumental rebuilding, up to 619.

⁷⁵ Bacot, *Quatre miracles* 2011, p. 56 (p. 24, c. 2, l. 20-21). Greek has τὴν ἀρχὴν τοῦ σχοινίου ‘end of rope’; *variae lectiones*: ‘σχοινίου’ (Varalda, *Il riccio Eutropio*, p. 221). Against IFAO Ms. and Greek, Ms. M.590 does not mention any object being thrown. *Lectio difficilior potior* criterion suggests a primacy of *monobolos* in a lost Greek original.

⁷⁶ H. Zilliacus, *The Stolen Anchor*, “Arctos. Acta Philologica Fennica. Nova Series” 1 (1954) p. 205.

⁷⁷ For unedited *The Pig Killed by the Deamon*, see M.590, fol. 29v. c. 1, l. 25-26. I refer to a scan of the facsimile edition by H. Hyvernât. *Codices coptici photographice expressi*, tomus XXI: *Codex M 590. Passio S. Menae, Iohannis Alex. Sermo in laudem S. Menae Sahidice*, Romae 1922, in: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/community.38250270> (accessed 11.04.2025). The term spatharios appears also in a miracle from M.585, see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 80, c. 2, l. 25-26.

⁷⁸ *Chronicon paschale*, tr. M Whitby – M. Whitby, p. 80.

⁷⁹ J.R. Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, v. 2: *A.D. 395-527*, Cambridge 1980, p. 295-297; A.P. Kazhdan, *Spatharios*, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, v. 3, ed. A.P. Kazhdan, Oxford 1991, p. 1936; N. Oikonomidès, *Les listes de préséance byzantines des IXe et Xe siècles*, Paris 1972, p. 297-298.

⁸⁰ M. San Nicolò, Σπαθάριος, in: *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Series 2, v. 3/6, Stuttgart 1929, c. 1545-1546. The last attestation from

In the IFAO Ms., in the miracle *The Jew and the Christian*, a very accurate phrase describes the portico exonarthex between the Great Basilica and the Martyr Church: τέσσερα μνητοῖς ἐκτὸς τοῦ ναοῦ (“external portico of the shrine”)⁸¹, which fits Justinian’s rebuilding of the Great Basilica⁸².

The core collection appears to have been expanded prior to its translation into Coptic. The most secure addition is the miracle of *The Paralytic and the Mute Woman*. Only the Greek version is easily accessible, as manuscript M.590 is partially damaged and remains unedited in this section. This miracle likely originates from an external source, as it focuses on the practice of incubation – a ritual poorly attested by other sources concerning Abū Mīnā⁸³. Moreover, the Greek narrative does not mention St Menas throughout the story, referring instead to an anonymous ‘saint’. The name ‘Menas’ appears solely in the doxology-like conclusion.

Most importantly, a similar story appears in two other collections of miracles from Late Antiquity⁸⁴. A closely related account is included in the anonymous collection of miracles attributed to Sts Cosmas and Damian and is also mentioned in Sophronius’ *Miracles of Sts Cyrus and John* (Miracle no. 30)⁸⁵, composed in the early 7th c., most likely between

Egypt is *P.Oxy.* 16.2045 (*The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, v. 16, ed. B.P. Grenfell – A.S. Hunt – H.I. Bell, London 1924, p. 265). A slightly later one might be *P. Ness.* 3.89 (*Excavations at Nessana*, v. 3: *Non-Literary Papyri*, ed. C.J. Kraemer Jr., Princeton 1958, p. 251-260) from Nessana in Palestine.

⁸¹ Devos, *Le juif*, p. 288, c. 2, l. 20-21. M.590 says only that the Jew kept a distance. In the Greek, there is *νάρθηξ* in this place. IFAO Ms. and Greek tradition against M.590 proves that there was a mention of the narthex in the original composition.

⁸² Grossmann, *The Pilgrimage Center*, p. 285-286.

⁸³ Abū Mīnā is often described as an incubation shrine – most recently by I. Csepregi, *Incubation in Early Byzantium: The Formation of Christian Incubation Cults and Miracle Collections*, Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 41, Turnhout 2024, p. 100-101. However, except for *The Paralytic and the Mute Woman*, which is, as we have said, of external origin, only *The Samaritan Pilgrim* miracle contains an incubation motif. Some other miracles include a dream vision of St Menas, but these did not occur at his shrine and do not involve healing prescriptions. We may then assume that incubation practices appeared, but they did not form a typical way of healing.

⁸⁴ The story has also been incorporated into the Coptic miracle of St. Mercurius. However, as the only manuscript dates to the 10th or 11th century, its reliance on earlier sources cannot be conclusively established, see W.C. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Märtyrlegenden*, v. 1, Rome 1935, p. 40-41.

⁸⁵ Sophronius Hierosolymitanus, *Miracula SS. Cyri at Iohannis* 30, 14, ed. Fernández Marcos, p. 305-306 (Note that a new edition of the *Miracula* by Marina Detoraki is

610 and 614⁸⁶. Sophronius was aware that the story he encountered at the Menuthis shrine was already associated with Sts Cosmas and Damian. However, he does not mention the shrine of St Menas in this context, even though he references it elsewhere. He was likely well-informed about Abū Mīnā, possibly through his Alexandrian patron, Patriarch John the Almsgiver, who is documented to have visited the site⁸⁷. It is also quite plausible that Sophronius himself visited Abū Mīnā. Given his familiarity with the miracles of Sts Cosmas and Damian, it is reasonable to assume that he was acquainted with this type of miracle literature. However, his silence regarding the association of *The Paralytic and the Mute Woman* with the St Menas sanctuary suggests that this miracle was added to St Menas' collection after the second decade of the 7th c. The presence of this story in both the Greek and Coptic traditions suggests that the two versions diverged at a later point in time. We may, therefore, assume that redaction of 13 miracles was made after 614 but before the Coptic translation was made. The inclusion of the *The Paralytic and the Mute Woman* miracle, alien to local traditions but very attractive as an amusing piece of literature, had to be done at this period and probably took place outside Abū Mīnā – perhaps in Alexandria.

The exact timing of when the Anti-Chalcedonians took control of Abū Mīnā remains uncertain. It may have occurred shortly after the Arab conquest⁸⁸. However, for over a century, both the Coptic and Melkite factions held influence there, with each side experiencing periods of dominance. Even if the Anti-Chalcedonians reclaimed the shrine of St Menas shortly

currently in press, to be published in the Corpus Christianorum – Series Graeca). This miracle seemingly appears in full within the Arabic collection of the Miracles of Sts Cyrus and John, which only partially overlaps with Sophronius' text and was translated from a now-lost Coptic original. Our knowledge of this version is limited to a brief reference in R. Boutros, *Le culte des saints Cyr et Jean chez les Coptes à la lumière des sources hagiographiques arabes*, in: *Alexandrie médiévale*, v. 3, ed. J.Y. Empereur – C. Décobert, Alexandrie médiévale 3, Cairo 2008, p. 139.

⁸⁶ The proposed dates span between the beginning of the patriarchate of John the Almsgiver (610-619) and the conquest of Jerusalem by Persians, see Sophronius Hierosolymitanus, *Miracula SS. Cyri et Iohannis*, ed. Fernández Marcos, p. 9.

⁸⁷ *Vita S. Iohannis Eleemosynarii*, ed. Delehay, p. 24.

⁸⁸ A snippet from a Melkite report on the ownership of Abū Mīnā, prepared for a trial before Arab authorities during the time of Patriarch Michael I, is quoted in the *History of the Patriarchs*: "The Muslims, after their conquest of Egypt, handed them [the churches] over to the Copts" (*Historia patriarcharum Alexandrinorum*, ed. and tr. Evetts, PO 5, p. 123 [377]).

after 641, later in the 7th c. the Melkite Theophanes became the governor of Mareotis⁸⁹. During the patriarchate of Michael I (743-767), the Melkites engaged in a legal dispute with the Copts before the court of the Arab governor, as recorded in the *History of the Patriarchs*⁹⁰. Both sides presented evidence to support their respective claims to Abū Mīnā. It is likely that, within the context of such disputes in the first century following the Arab conquest, the Anti-Chalcedonians developed a narrative portraying Patriarch Damian as a benefactor of the Abū Mīnā shrine. This tradition is preserved in a collection of two miracles found in a single manuscript from Ḥāmūli, held at the Pierpont Morgan Library and Museum (Ms. M.585). However, these miracles were not included in the main collection of St Menas' miracles, although later Arabic collections merge miracles from both traditions.

As has already been said, M.590 is the only Coptic manuscript of the *Miracles of St Menas* of which we have both the beginning and end, so we know that it numbers 17 miracles – although some remain barely legible and have been left unedited. The Coptic redactor developed a prologue at the beginning containing a shortened version of the martyrdom. He shifted miracle no. 9 (according to the sequence in Greek) to the beginning of the text and makes its protagonist a contemporary of St Menas, to whom the Saint personally handed over his camels before his martyrdom – an episode introduced in the prologue. It links the miracle with the prologue summarising the saint's life and martyrdom but does not fit the rest of the miracles, which are clearly distanced in time from St Menas' supposed lifetime and from when the sanctuary thrived. In Greek, the protagonist is the son of a friend of St Menas, thus temporally detached from the days of the Saint.

The Coptic translation of the miracles was likely prepared in the 7th c., based on the original Greek text. The striking absence of monastic themes in these miracles suggests that a monastery was an unlikely setting for the translation. Regarding the time and place of its origin, we must rely on circumstantial evidence. The Coptic version includes all

⁸⁹ Little is known about Theodosius, also referred to as Theodore. He is mentioned in the *History of the Patriarchs* (*Historia patriarcharum Alexandrinorum*, ed. Evetts, PO 5, p. 259-260 [5-6]) and in the *Synaxary* (*Synaxarium Copticum*, ed. Basset, PO 1, p. 341-342 [127-128]) as an opponent of Patriarch Agathon (662-680). The *History of the Patriarchs* emphasizes that he did not have the support of the local Chalcedonian community. It remains unknown whether he was involved in any clerical affairs at Abū Mīnā.

⁹⁰ *Historia patriarcharum Alexandrinorum*, ed. and tr. Evetts, PO 5, p. 119-126 [373-380].

13 miracles known from the Greek text, which suggests it postdates AD 614. However, because there is no indication of the Arab conquest or of conflicts between the Copts and Melkites over the shrine, we can assume it predates AD 641, although this argument from silence remains inconclusive. The language of the miracles (though not their narrative content) resembles that of other Coptic collections, implying they were likely translated or newly composed during a similar period⁹¹. The manuscripts containing these miracles are generally dated no earlier than the 7th c.⁹², leading me to attribute the Coptic miracles of St Menas to this time. At some point in this century, the 13-miracle Greek collection was translated into Coptic and combined with material of varied origins to create a more comprehensive collection, potentially intended for liturgical purposes. Abū Mīnā is an unlikely origin place for this work, considering the recycling of already existing and inclusion of non-local stories. Alexandria also seems improbable, as it remained predominantly Greek-speaking for a considerable time following the Arab conquest. More plausible centres for Coptic literary activity include the Fayyum (especially considering that the oldest manuscript, M.590, originates from the Fayyum and shows linguistic features from this region) and the Nile Valley.

Of the four miracles absent from the Greek version but listed in Drescher's register of the Pierpont Morgan codex, only *The Water Miracle* remains legible and has been published. This account is distinctive in several ways. First, it lacks a single protagonist. Instead, a collective group of thirsty people gathered at the shrine assumes the role of the collective hero. Second, St Menas does not appear or intervene. Rather, it is Archangel Michael who strikes the rock with his rod. Historically, the issue of water supply likely reflects the period of Abū Mīnā's decline, when the earlier cistern system had ceased to function. A similar water miracle is also recorded at Abū Mīnā in the *History of the Patriarchs* during the patriarchate of Shenouda (859-880)⁹³. However, this story could not have directly inspired *The Water Miracle*, as the latter does not involve

⁹¹ The only introduction to the miracle collections in Coptic is G. Schenke, *Das koptisch hagiographische Dossier des Heiligen Kolluthos, Arzt, Märtyrer und Wunderheiler*, CSCO 650, Subsidia 132, Leuven 2013, p. 193-204.

⁹² Ms. Berlin, Staatliche Museen P. 9036, dated between 601 and 800, in: <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/737> (*Miracula Colluthi*).

⁹³ *Historia patriarcharum Alexandrinorum*, tr. 'Abd al-Masīḥ – Burmester, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, v. 2/1, p. 50-52; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 123-124.

a patriarch and describes water gushing from a spring, in contrast to Shenouda's account, where rain provides the water. Nevertheless, both episodes reflect the persistent issue of water shortages during the shrine's final days.

The story of *The Pig Killed by the Deamon*⁹⁴ survives as whole only in Arabic translations, which differ across various manuscripts. Although the Coptic text in M.590 remains unpublished, the first half is largely legible in the manuscript. This narrative includes elements typical of the core collection: St Menas appears as a *spatharios*, mounted on a "spiritual horse". The plot does not recycle motifs from other miracles but is original – a pig offered to the sanctuary is killed by a daemon (referred to as Satan in Arabic translations) and then resurrected by St Menas, who brings it back to life with a kick. I postulate the existence of a Greek original for this tale. First of all, the Coptic text preserves a lengthy greeting phrase in Greek, which is not typical of original Coptic compositions⁹⁵. The story's entertaining and slightly irreverent tone may have contributed to its exclusion when the Greek collection of 13 miracles was standardised.

Two further miracles are known only through translations into Arabic, as the Coptic text in Ms. M.590 remains illegible. *The Soldier and the Pig* contains numerous features typical of other miracles in the main collection⁹⁶. A transgression against the shrine's herd as in *The Pig Thief*, a soldier as a bad character as in the *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)* and *The Wood-Offering*, hanging the perpetrator in the middle of the church as in *The Possessed Man* and lifelong service in the sanctuary like in a few other miracles. As a whole it looks like a compilation of motives from preexisting miracles. The miracle *The Abused Female Pilgrim*, a reworking of *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*, is devoid of certain details present in the latter esp. those associated with the local context: Philoxenite or the Martyrion of St Thecla do not appear⁹⁷. It seems that *The Soldier and the Pig* and *The Abused Female Pilgrim* were composed outside of Abū Mīnā, drawing on preexisting material. Their inclusion in the collection

⁹⁴ M.590, fol. 29r-30v; Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 178, 205, 233-234.

⁹⁵ M.590, fol. 29v, c. 2, l. 4-6: "κύρι χαῖρε καλημέρα σου κύριε σπαθάριε (κύριε χαῖρε καλημέρα σου κύριε σπαθάριε)".

⁹⁶ Ms. M.590, f. 37v-38r (barely legible); Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 173, 197-198, 226-227.

⁹⁷ Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 107; Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 164-165, 183-184, 213-214.

likely occurred after the translation of the Greek into Coptic, suggesting a period after the mid-7th c.

The Greek version of the text underwent substantial revision, likely within the Byzantine Empire and in a monastic milieu, and is unlikely to have been reworked in Arab-controlled Egypt. Ángel Narro identifies a quotation from John Climacus' *Scala Paradisi* within the Greek text of *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*⁹⁸. Since John Climacus was active in the first half of the 7th c., the miracle, as it appears in this Greek version, could not date earlier than the mid-7th c. Notably, this quotation is absent from the Coptic version.

Among the primary editorial changes in the reworked Greek text are the inclusion of passages that highlight the monastic status of the repentant sinner. The murderer of the Isaurian pilgrim vows to "take the habit" (λαμβάνων καὶ τὸ σχῆμα), the parents of the healed demoniac have him tonsured (ἀπεκούρευσαν αὐτὸν), and the Samaritan pilgrim shaves her head (a practice also found in the Coptic version). The latter act is rendered by the Greek word ἀποκείρω, which, in the Byzantine context, signifies a monastic dedication⁹⁹.

The revised Greek text incorporates biblical and ascetic quotations and allusions¹⁰⁰, titles for individual miracles, and exhortations that enhance the coherence of the collection, presenting it as a unified whole. This final objective was achieved primarily by including brief addresses to the readers at the beginning of certain miracles, thereby creating a sense of continuity throughout the series, as in the following examples: "Ἐτερον θαῦμα βούλομαι διηγῆσασθαι τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ πανολβίου μάρτυρος Μηνᾶ γενόμενον"¹⁰¹, and: "Ἐτερον θαῦμα βούλομαι διηγῆσασθαι ἀδελφοί"¹⁰².

⁹⁸ The exact text of John Climacus goes ἀλλοτρίᾳ μερίδι μὴ προσεγγίσητε (*Scala Paradisi*, PG 88, 640). The parallel in St Menas' miracle is not exact: καὶ μνήσθητι τοῦ εἰρηκότος· ἀλλοτρίας μερίδος μὴ προσεγγίσης; see Narro, *Tipología*, p. 103. Silvano and Varalda (*Per l'edizione*, p. 61) see the only analogy to this phrase in late-Byzantine author Nicetas Myrsiniotes (14th-15th).

⁹⁹ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 65, 78, 88.

¹⁰⁰ The edited part of the Coptic collection contains only two direct biblical quotations: Mt 6:18 (*The Isaurian Pilgrim*), 1John 2:17 (*The Female Pilgrim [Sophia]*). There are also echoes of Luke 3:4 (*The Isaurian Pilgrim*), Eph 15:14 (*Eutropius and the Silver Plates*); Ex 12:37; 17:6; John 17:42 (*The Water Miracle*), and Luke 18:30, 22:42 (*The Female Pilgrim [Sophia]*).

¹⁰¹ Varalda, *Il ricco Eutropio*, p. 218 (*Eutropius and Silver Plates*), tr: "I wish to relate another miracle of the holy and most-blessed martyr Menas that occurred".

¹⁰² *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 84 (*The Barren Camel*), tr: "I wish to relate another miracle, brothers".

There are also introduced intertextual connections between specific miracles. For instance, the Samaritan pilgrim references a barren woman rescued in the desert, clearly referring to *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*: οὐχὶ σὺ ἐλυτρώσω τὴν γυναῖκα τὴν στεῖραν ἐκ χειρὸς τοῦ στρατιώτου ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ¹⁰³. A similar reference appears in *The Eutropius and Silver Plates*, where the protagonist recalls a dismembered merchant resurrected by St Menas, as in the immediately preceding miracle, *The Isaurian Pilgrim*: Ἐλπίζω εἰς τὸν Θεὸν καὶ εἰς τὰς πρεσβείας τοῦ ἁγίου Μηνᾶ, τοῦ τὸν μεμελισμένον ἐγείραντος σῶον¹⁰⁴. Notably, neither of these phrases appears in the Coptic versions.

2.4. Appendix II: The *Miracles of St Menas* and the *Syriac Life of Symeon the Stylite*

Paul Peeters, dating the miracles no earlier than the late 5th c., references the previously discussed episode from the *Miracles of Cyrus and John*, as well as possible connections to stories found in the *Syriac Life of Symeon the Stylite*, composed in 473¹⁰⁵. While he does not provide specific passages, he asserts that such parallels would be easy to identify¹⁰⁶. I attempted to locate these connections but found none. Although some thematic similarities appear across three episodes, they differ significantly in key aspects from St Menas' miracles, making any direct influence unlikely. Another important point would be to examine the channels through which Syriac material might have influenced the clergy of Abū Mīnā – an analysis Peeters does not undertake. The three episodes in question are briefly discussed below¹⁰⁷.

In *Vita Simeonis Stylitae* (Syriace) 35, the story recounts the healing of a possessed soldier who had raped a maiden on a road. While this may

¹⁰³ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 77, tr. “Did you not redeem the barren woman from the hand of the soldier in the desert?”.

¹⁰⁴ Varalda, *Il ricco Eutropio*, p. 221, tr. “I place my hope in God and in the intercessions of St Menas, who raised the dismembered man back to life”.

¹⁰⁵ Peeters, *Orient et Byzance*, p. 36. The date 473 is given in the colophon of the Ms. *Vaticanus Syriacus* 160.

¹⁰⁶ In Peeters's own words (*Orient et Byzance*, p. 36): “Je n'en puis faire la preuve ici; mais elle serait faite depuis longtemps si la Vie de ce S. Syméon, dont nous aurons à reparler, avait trouvé des lecteurs plus attentifs”.

¹⁰⁷ I make use of the commented translation in: R. Doran, *The Lives of Simeon Stylites*, Cistercian Studies Series 112, Kalamazoo 1992.

seem reminiscent of the story of *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*, the structure is markedly different. In Symeon's *Life*, the emphasis is placed on the soldier, with the rape (which was committed, not merely attempted as in the miracle of St Menas) presented as a past event, and no information is provided about the woman's fate afterward. By contrast, in *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*, the woman occupies a central role, serving as an active agent who initiates the saint's miraculous intervention.

In *Vita Simeonis Stylitae* (Syriace) 71, St Symeon rescues a ship caught in a storm caused by an evil spirit, seizing the demon – who appears in the form of an Indian – by its hair. A similar motif, where a possessed person is lifted into the air, appears in the story of *The Possessed Man*, though in a very different context. Notably, in St Menas' miracle, it is the possessed individual rather than the demon itself who is seized. Additionally, the motif of lifting a person by the hair appears in *The Wood Offering*, though here it involves a sinner, not a possessed person. While this motif would be a valuable subject for comparative study, it does not suggest a direct link between the *Life of St Symeon* and the *Miracles of St Menas*.

In *Vita Simeonis Stylitae* (Syriace) 75, the story describes how St Symeon brings rain during a severe drought. A similar miracle occurs in *The Water Miracle* of St Menas, but under quite different circumstances. Notably, in St Menas' miracle, it is the Archangel Michael who brings forth water from a rock, creating a new spring that quenches the crowd's thirst, rather than through rainfall.

In summary, the *Miracles of St Menas* are not only independent of the Syriac *Life of St Symeon the Stylite*, but they also share no common narratives.

3. Agenda behind the Miracle Collection

The Coptic *Martyrium* presents St Menas primarily as a healing saint: "And the Saviour fulfilled all that he had said to the holy Apa Mena and all that he had promised him. And all who suffer from any kind of illness, and the blind and the lame and those possessed with devils, when they come and do reverence before his holy body, receive healing forthwith"¹⁰⁸. In the *Miracles of Sts Cyrus and John*, Sophronius, seeking to

¹⁰⁸ *Passio S. Menae* Coptice, tr. Drescher, p. 103.

elevate his chosen saints over St Menas, subtly depicts the latter as an ineffective healer¹⁰⁹. There is no doubt that the healing fame of St Menas was the primary reason pilgrims from across the Mediterranean world were drawn to Abū Mīnā.

However, healing activity is conspicuously absent in the *Miracles*, a phenomenon most striking in the cases of *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)* and *The Samaritan Woman*.

The Coptic story of *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)* begins by mentioning that Sophia was barren. She decides to journey to the shrine and offer her fortune there. The narrative centers on a miraculous rescue by a soldier in the desert, but after that, there is no happy resolution involving pregnancy. It seems that the story lacks the conclusion that the reader might have expected. In the extant Greek version, sterility does not trigger pilgrimage and is only mentioned briefly as the reason for Sophia's decision to donate her fortune to the shrine. As a result, the plot is more coherent. In contrast, the Arabic manuscript (miracle no. 9) resolves the issue with the miraculous birth of a child, who is named Menas.

In *The Samaritan Woman*, the protagonist is introduced as suffering from a severe headache, which is given as the reason for her visit to Abū Mīnā. This illness is referenced multiple times throughout the story, and even St Menas, when he appears, promises her recovery. However, by the end of the story, no such healing occurs. The same is true for the Greek version, where the focus shifts to her rescue from a rapist and her service at the shrine. In contrast, in the Arabic manuscript (miracle no. 23), she is ultimately shown to have been healed.

The only episode, aside from the secondarily added *The Paralytic and the Mute Woman*, that highlights a form of healing is the exorcism of a demon from a possessed young man in *The Possessed Man*.

The miracles appear to have little interest in promoting St Menas' fame as a healer on a broad scale. Supposedly, they primary audience likely consisted of locals whose actions could pose threats to the safety of pilgrims and the property of the shrine. Initially, these miracle accounts were probably shared within the immediate local community, perhaps performed during liturgical gatherings on Sundays as part of homilies.

Committed to writing as a collection, the miracles secondarily addressed those who already recognised St Menas' healing powers but

¹⁰⁹ See esp. Sophronius Hierosolymitanus, *Miracula Cyri et Johannis* 45 and 46, tr. Gascou, p. 15.

hesitated to undertake the pilgrimage due to fears of the dangers along the journey – suggesting that rumours of peril were widespread, potentially circulating in Alexandria, a translocal pilgrimage hub. From this perspective, the original purpose of the collection was to reassure pilgrims and encourage their offerings, thereby sustaining and increasing the shrine's wealth. Over time, however, the miracles reached a broader audience, gradually detaching from their local context.

When translated into Coptic, they became part of a tripartite dossier typical of martyr literature in Coptic, consisting of a martyrdom, an encomium, and miracles. The peculiar local collection was likely chosen due to the absence of any alternative compilation focused on more universal accounts of the saint's miraculous interventions.

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Menacing Menas? Saint Menas as a Military Saint and Divine Trickster in his Greek Miracle Collection (BHG 1256-1269)¹

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Abstract: This study examines the Greek miracle collection of Saint Menas (BHG 1256-1269), investigating the literary construction of the saint as both a military protector and a divine trickster. The analysis highlights the inconsistencies in Menas's portrayal, contrasting his literary depiction as a mounted avenger with non-literary evidence that emphasizes his role as a healer. Using comparative hagiographic analysis, the paper explores the influence of late antique principles of decorum, which shaped depictions of saints to avoid direct violence. The study delves into Menas's punitive and protective miracles, analyzing their reliance on humor, trickery, and indirect retribution rather than overt combat. These narratives are contextualized within the broader framework of military saints, including Theodore, Demetrios, and Phoibammon, whose miracles also embody justice and protection through divine intervention. This paper reveals how such portrayals reflect evolving Christian attitudes toward violence, sanctity, and the supernatural. The findings contribute to the understanding of late antique religious imagination, showcasing how narrative ingenuity addressed both theological and societal needs in Christian antiquity.

Keywords: cult of saints; St Menas; saint Theodore; saint Demetrios; saint Phoibammon; military saint

Our contribution to this special issue of the *Vox Patrum* aims to examine the literary layer of the Greek miracle collection of Saint Menas (BHG 1256-1269). The holy protagonist of this work has not yet been studied as a literary character, whereas the peculiarities of this personage and his thaumaturgic portfolio, which together construct his portrayal,

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definitely deserve such a study. We can tentatively call what is striking about Menas's literary creation 'inconsistency'. On the one hand, Menas is represented in this text as a mighty protector and avenger, manifested in the form of a cavalryman. On the other hand, however, when performing punitive and protective miracles, he is not seen fighting evil with his own hands and armour as one would expect from a soldier saint; instead, he resorts to trickery and applies a repertoire of puns, pranks and mischief. In other words, he does not pierce his opponents with his weapon, but stays away from such "wet work" and reintroduces justice through various coercive means, employing tricks that combine elements of cunning, deceit, and subterfuge. We can also add to this his literary profile as an avenger, which does not align with the one we can reconstruct from non-literary evidence pertaining to his posthumous cult, since archaeological and papyrological sources show that Menas was venerated mainly as a healer. All of these inconsistencies, between Menas the Healer, Menas the Warrior, and Menas the Trickster, make his figure particularly intriguing. In what follows, we analyse the literary portrayal of Menas against the background of his cult as a healer in Abu Mena and the cult of military saints that dynamically grew during the period when Menas's miracle collection was composed. We examine the motifs which concern the miraculous interventions of Menas in the light of the Greek and Coptic hagiographic tradition of other belligerent and military saints⁴. We argue that there was a specific unwritten principle in late antique hagiography which forbade representing saints of God being involved in the direct use of violence and shedding of blood, except in cases involving enemies who threatened Christianity itself. This principle of decorum, according to which killing and the shedding of blood would not be in keeping with the Christian concept of sainthood, paved the way for representing punitive and belligerent saints in quite a specific and seemingly inconsistent way: exposing their apotropaic profile by affiliating them with punitive and protective thaumaturgy, but also simultaneously representing them as divine mischief-makers who exhibit traits associated with magicians,

⁴ Due to our unfamiliarity with the Coptic language, however, in the latter case, we will rely on material available in the Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity database, which provides extensive summaries and partial translations from the original into English of the late antique Christian texts collected therein. We also owe great thanks to Gesa Schenke, who helped us to understand several details of the original Coptic texts. Last but not least, we are also grateful to Ewa Wipszycka and Przemysław Piwowarczyk whose insightful comments and suggestions allowed us to improve our article.

pranksters, and tricksters. The Greek miracle collection of Menas will be our case study, through which we demonstrate the various and different faces of this phenomenon. By means of such an analysis, we seek to provide insights into the mentality and religious imagination of late antique Christians.

1. Saint Menas: a Healer or a Warrior?

Fun fact: the image of Saint Menas as an avenger that emerges from the Greek miracle collection does not align with the image of him as a great healer, which we reconstruct from archaeological evidence. Literary sources provide us with thirteen miracle narratives in which the saint mainly defends the oppressed against the enticements and scheming of villains, and punishes cases of murder, perjury, sexual harassment, theft and scam. Most importantly, all his interventions take place in his Mareotic shrine in Abu Mena, located some 45 km south-west of Alexandria, and its surroundings, and are made on behalf of pilgrims to the shrine and/or against wicked individuals who wish to harm the sanctuary in some way⁵. It must be emphasised that all the characters represented in these stories – pilgrims, soldiers, sanctuary staff – are said to be local people. By contrast, in his actual cultic site, one of the most famous and thriving pilgrimage centres in Late Antiquity, attracting crowds of pilgrims from all corners of the empire, he was venerated first and foremost as a healer, possibly with a further narrow specialisation in female reproductive health⁶. The broader specialisation is evidenced by the thousands of clay flasks for water from a spring near Saint Menas's tomb or for sacred oils bearing the saint's image that have been discovered in all former regions of the late antique empire, the narrower one is suggested by

⁵ For the Mareotian and Libyan affiliation of Menas and his shrine, see P. Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Miracles of St Menas*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 46-47 (the current issue).

⁶ On Abu Mina as a pilgrimage centre see Grossmann, *The Pilgrimage Center of Abû Minâ*; on female pilgrimage specifically see G. Stafford, *Evidence for Female Pilgrims at Abu Mina*, in: *Transmitting and Circulating the Late Antique and Byzantine Worlds*, ed. M. Ivanova – H. Jeffery, Leiden 2019, p. 11-43; for a survey of excavations carried out in Abu Mina since early 20th century see P. Grossmann, *Abu Mina: A Guide to the Ancient Pilgrimage Center*, Cairo 1986 and *Abu Mina, Ägypten: Das Pilgerzentrum*, "e-Forschungsberichte des Deutsche Archäologische Institut" 1 (2015) p. 1-3.

figurines depicting women, often with a child in their arms, found in situ in the shrine⁷. Meanwhile, the theme of Menas as the patron saint of female fertility is observed in the miracle collection only in the background of a few stories. This discrepancy between the text and the artefacts is in itself intriguing, especially given that the miracle collection was possibly composed in the heyday of the cultic shrine in Abu Mena, that is, somewhere in the 6th century⁸. The dating of the text is, however, problematic, since it provides us with no internal evidence that would allow us to deduce the date of its composition. Most manuscripts attribute its authorship to Timothy, Patriarch of Alexandria, which could allude to any of several personages with this name, such as Patriarch Timothy I (381-384) or one of the later Timothies: Timothy II Ailuros (457-460), Timothy II Salophakiolos (460-475), or Timothy IV (518-536). It is difficult to say whether these attributions have any historical value, but it is commonly accepted that the text predates the 7th century, and a 6th century date is preferable⁹; Przemysław Piwowarczyk, however, in the introductory article to this

⁷ On the flasks see Z. Kiss, *Ampulla, The Coptic Encyclopedia* I 116-118; C. Lambert – P. Pedemonte Demeglio, *Ampolle devozionali ed itinerari di pellegrinaggio tra IV e VI secolo*, “Antiquité Tardive” 2 (1994) p. 205-231; S. Bangert, *Menas Ampullae, a Case Study of Long-Distance Contacts*, “Reading Medieval Studies” 32 (2006) p. 27-33; Anderson, *Menas Flasks in the West*. For the female figurines see Z. Kiss, *Menas i Afrodyta. “Dewocjonalia” z sanktuarium świętego Menasa*, VoxP 35 (2015) p. 231-248; cf. A. Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbasides. L’apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*, Paris 2001, p. 151. However, E. Wipszycka, *Philoxenite: Pilgrims on the road to Abu Mina*, in: *Philoxenite on the Lake Mareotis: a town for pilgrims built under Justinian*, ed. T. Derda – M. Gwiazda, Leuven – Paris – Bristol, forthcoming, suggests that the pilgrims could have prayed to Menas for things other than healing, such as a safe journey, or the well-being of their families, or successful business transactions. She also suggests that the presence of the clay flasks found in various places, such as e.g. in Alexandria, does not necessarily mean that they were brought there by pilgrims, but that they could have been exported from Abu Mena and bought by customers, for example as gifts.

⁸ Grossmann, *The Pilgrimage Center of Abû Minâ*, p. 282; S. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women’s Piety in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2001, p. 114-115.

⁹ See e.g. S. Efthymiadis, *Greek Byzantine Collections of Miracles. A Chronological and Bibliographical Survey*, “Symbolae Osloenses” 74 (1999) p. 196-197; P. Peeters, *Le Tréfonds Oriental de l’hagiographie Byzantine*, SubHag 26, Bruxelles 1950, p. 36; S. Efthymiadis, *Collections of Miracles (Fifth-Fifteenth Centuries)*, in: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography, II, Genres and Contexts*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, Farnham – Burlington 2014, p. 197; Silvano–Varalda, *Per l’edizione dei Miracula sancti Menae*, p. 51.

volume, advocates for 614 as the *terminus post quem* for the composition of the collection consisting of all 13 miracles, while he does not rule out that some of the miracle narratives or their clusters may be much older¹⁰. Ángel Narro also points to the 7th century, and more precisely to its second half, arguing that in one of the thirteen miracles (i.e. miracle 3), we find a literal citation from the *Scala Paradisi* (1,640) written by John Klimakos, an author who lived in the first half of the 7th century¹¹. Another problematic issue is the interdependence of the Greek miracle collection and its Coptic counterpart, which is in turn ascribed to Theophilos of Alexandria (385-412)¹². An earlier hypothesis by James Drescher posits that the Greek collection derives from the Coptic one, but in his view, the opposite is also theoretically possible, although less probable, while Przemysław Piwowarczyk convincingly argues in this volume for the primacy of the Greek collection over the Coptic one¹³.

Regardless of which collection was produced first, their thematic correspondence in terms of content and type of interventions – both of which are protective and punitive in nature – indicates that their purpose was to assuage the anxiety of potential pilgrims against the dangers lurking along their way, including assault, robbery and even murder¹⁴. These threats were probably quite real, and awareness of them may have spread as Menas's fame as a healer grew among pilgrims. Another potential rationale behind Menas' role as an avenger and soldier may have been to serve as a warning to potential robbers, thieves and swindlers not to dare attack pilgrims or threaten the property of the shrine. It seems likely, therefore, that at a time when Abu Mena was gaining more and more popularity and drawing larger and larger crowds, it was in the interest of its clerical staff to keep things going by promoting the image of Menas

¹⁰ Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena*, p. 52.

¹¹ Á. Narro, *Tipología de los milagros griegos de San Minás (BHG 1256-1269)*, in: *Mite i miracle a les literatures antigues i medievals*, ed. M. Movellán Luis – J.J. Pomer Monferrer, Tarragona 2018, p. 103.

¹² For the discussion of all of the attributions of authorship of Menas's miracle collections, see also E. Wipszycka, *Philoxenite*, forthcoming.

¹³ J. Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas*, Le Caire 1946, p. 104-105; cf. also Narro, *Tipología de los milagros griegos de San Minás*, p. 102 and 110; see also Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione dei Miracula sancti Menae*, p. 51-52 for more bibliography on the issue.

¹⁴ For a typology of all Menas's miracles see especially Narro, *Tipología de los milagros griegos de San Minás*, *passim*.

the protector, a figure able to protect his followers from the dangers of travelling through late antique Egypt and Libya.

For this purpose, the author of the collection chose to exploit the military context of Menas's biography, exploring the motifs of the emerging special category of military saints. They thus cast this saint in the role of a cavalryman, often abandoning the common dream motif as a medium for his manifestations in favour of his "real" presence. Interestingly, however, contrary to this promising costume, we will not see Menas intervening with weapons in hand, fighting and shedding the blood of his enemies. Instead, he sets traps for villains or remotely incapacitates his victims using paralysis, and where physical force is used nonetheless, he remains invisible or dons a disguise. In cases of lighter guilt, he employs mischief and pranks to teach a lesson to those who cross him. We discuss below all the strategies used by Menas and indicate their constitutive elements.

2. Menas the Warrior among Military Saints

Late antique hagiography and art introduced a distinct category of sacred figures known as military or warrior saints. Broadly defined, these saints were originally believed to have been Roman army soldiers who converted to Christianity and were subsequently martyred during periods of persecution. Some of the most renowned figures in this group include Theodore Teron, George, Sergios and Bakchos, Merkourios, Artemios, and Menas. Over time, other saints, such as Demetrios of Thessaloniki, who initially had no military background, were also associated with this category. In the early stages, their military identity was not a significant focus in hagiographic writings or artistic depictions. However, between the 5th and 6th centuries, the cult of these saints grew rapidly, and they began to be portrayed explicitly as soldier-martyrs in texts and images¹⁵.

According to Christopher Walter, these martyrs were believed to possess numerous posthumous powers, with one of their most significant roles being the ability to ward off evil. This often involved vanquishing a dangerous beast or adversary, a trait inherited, albeit indirectly, from

¹⁵ P. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843-1261)*, Leiden 2010, p. 57-60.

ancient heroes like Perseus and Hercules¹⁶. For instance, Theodore is said to have slain a dragon, Merkourios to have killed Julian the Apostate, George is credited in the Georgian tradition with the death of Diocletian, and Sergios and Bakchos were relentless in their fight against evil¹⁷. Their military identity thus played a vital role in shaping their apotropaic, or protective, function. This role was heavily influenced by the protective nature of armies and the concept of defensive warfare, solidifying the image of military saints as defenders against both physical and spiritual threats.

The earliest traces of Menas's military background can be found in two sources considered to be the oldest testimonies in his hagiographic dossier. One of them is a hymn attributed to Romanos Melodos in which the saint is called a soldier (στρατιώτης) and a member of the army in Phrygia, and is said to be of Egyptian origin. The other one is Menas's earliest passion, which is more detailed and presents its protagonist as a Christian, who, having enlisted in the army, was sent with his companions to Kotyaion, in the Roman province of Phrygia Salutaris. During the reign of Diocletian, Menas abandoned his legion, retreating to the desert; later, however, he decided to return to the city and publicly declare his faith in front of the crowd gathered in the theatre. For this gesture he was arrested, condemned to death and beheaded, and his body was set on fire¹⁸. The dating of both sources is problematic. Although the attribution of the hymn to Romanos (died after 555) would allow for dating it to the 6th century, his authorship has been questioned¹⁹. While the passion cannot be dated with certainty, it was probably composed sometime in the 5th or 6th century²⁰. Furthermore, both of these sources are considered to

¹⁶ C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, London 2016, p. 50.

¹⁷ Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, p. 50; Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints*, p. 53. See also H. Delehaye, *Les légendes grecques des saints militaires*, Paris 1909.

¹⁸ Both the passion BHG 1254c, and the *kontakion* attributed to Romanos Melodos were first edited by Karl Krumbacher in his *Miscellen zu Romanos*, Munich 1907.

¹⁹ Krumbacher, *Miscellen zu Romanos*, p. 94-99; see also P. Maas – C. Trypanis, *Sancti Romani Melodi Cantica. Cantica dubia*, Berlin 1970, p. 108-115 and 202-203 who place this hymn among the dubious ones.

²⁰ As proposed by N. Kälviäinen in the Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity database (henceforth CSLA), record no. E06942 whose argument is based on H. Delehaye's survey of the genre of the "epic" passions to which the passion BHG 1254 can be counted; according to Delehaye, "epic" passions are a genre which evolved in the 5th/6th centuries

be modelled on an earlier passion, which has been lost²¹. It is therefore difficult to determine whether the tradition of Menas the soldier explored in his passion and mentioned in the hymn could have been an inspiration for the author of the miracle collection or whether the latter exploited it independently, drawing information from earlier sources. Despite the challenges in establishing the chronological sequence of the texts in Menas's hagiographical dossier and their interrelationships, "[t]hat Menas was a soldier was not called into doubt by the Byzantines", and thus his affiliation with the group of military saints is confirmed²².

Most of the miracle narratives assembled in his Greek collection refer to him as a mounted soldier. To be more precise, the term 'soldier' itself appears once, when Menas is described as a "horse rider in the guise of a soldier" (καβαλλάριος ἐν εἵδει στρατιώτου), while he is most frequently depicted simply as a horseman (καβαλλάριος – horse rider; ἔφιππος – on horseback). Once the saint is said to appear on horseback "in the guise of *spatharios*", i.e., a soldier (ἐν σχήματι σπαθαρίου)²³. All of these descriptions evoke an image of a mounted military man who, by default, must have been equipped with some kind of weapon.

This leads to another inconsistency. The image of Menas as a horse rider and a cavalryman fits perfectly into one of the most popular iconographic types of warrior saints: the image of a holy rider. Many such depictions on pieces of fabric, terracotta wall tiles, stone steles, and finally, thousands of clay flasks dating back to the 6th century have been found. The figures on them are identified, often thanks to inscriptions, as Saints George, Theodore, or Sergios, but, curiously, not Menas²⁴. Me-

from the earlier "historical" passions which emerged in the 4th century (H. Delehay, *L'invention des reliques de S. Ménas à Constantinople*, AnBol 29 (1910) p. 117-146).

²¹ See Krumbacher, *Miscellen zu Romanos*, p. 44-48; cf. H. Delehay, *L'invention des reliques de Saint Menas à Constantinople*, AnBol 29 (1910) p. 121-122; Silvano – Valada, *Per l'edizione dei Miracula sancti Menae*, p. 53.

²² Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, p. 186.

²³ *Miracula Sanctae Menae*, Mir. 8; 1; 3, 6, 7, 9; 1 respectively. The term *spatharios* once referred to a military title at the imperial court, but from the late 6th century/early 7th century it referred to a soldier, see M. San Nicolò, Σπαθάριος, in: *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft, Series 2*, v. 3/6, Stuttgart 1929, c. 1546; A. Kazhdan, *Spatharios*, in: *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, v. 3, New York – Oxford, s.v.

²⁴ The earliest representations of Saints George and Theodore include e.g.: textiles depicting Coptic horsemen (equestrian saints) killing a serpent. They date to sometime in the 5th to 7th centuries, possibly the 6th century; their origin is unknown but is

nas himself is very rarely represented in iconography as a cavalryman, even though his depiction in the miracle collection draws on images of the holy riders²⁵. Instead, on the clay flasks from Abu Mena, which are the most important and numerous pieces of evidence for Menas's iconography, he is represented as a standing figure in an orant pose, and is typically wearing a short tunic and a cloak fastened on his right shoulder. His appearance here is identified by some scholars as civilian, while others think it to be military attire, comprising a muscled cuirass²⁶. Still, if the flasks represent Menas as a soldier, it is a soldier on foot, so in either case, the literary depiction of him does not align with the iconographic ones.

Furthermore, the soldier Menas in his miracle collection plays a clearly defined role as a “punisher” or “avenger” (ἐκδικῶν) and a protector who, as the text explicitly mentions, “redeems those who invoke him in oppression” (ὁ τοῖς παρακαλοῦσιν αὐτόν ἐν θλίψει λυτρούμενος)²⁷. These roles seem to sit comfortably with his military attire. Curiously, however, he never acts as a soldier, apart from the fact that he is depicted riding on horseback. He is never using a weapon nor fighting with enemies with his hands, nor shedding blood personally. Instead, he relies on tricks, subterfuge and, in lighter cases, pranks and mischief. We suggest there is a certain reluctance observable in the miracle collection to rep-

presumably Egypt; terracotta wall tile from Sousse (Tunisia) with image of a mounted warrior fighting a serpent, 6th century; stone stele from Brdadzori, Georgia, 6th century; Saint George killing the dragon/serpent. For their reproductions and accompanying discussion, see A. Pedersen – S. Oehrl, *Late Viking-Age Dragon-Slayers – Two Unusual Urnes-Style Brooches from Sjælland, Denmark*, “Medieval Archaeology” 65/2 (2021) p. 333-339.

²⁵ Some such exceptional images have been noted by C. Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie der Menas-Ampullen*, Cairo 1910, p. 135 (image dated to the 9th c.) and 148 (image dated to 7th c.).

²⁶ Walter (*The Warrior Saints*, p. 186) says that this image of Menas is not necessarily military, while Grotowski (*Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints*, p. 90) sees on the flasks Menas in cuirass; Suzana Hodak also identifies the cloths of Menas as military in representations which depict him standing in an orant pose, see S. Hodak, *Coptic Literature as a Source for Coptic art*, in: *Pharaonen, Mönche und Gelehrte. Auf dem Pilgerweg durch 5000 ägyptische Geschichte über drei Kontinente. Heike Behlmer zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. D. Atanassova – F. Feder – H. Sternberg el-Hotabi, Wiesbaden 2023, p. 375; cf. W. Woodfin, *An Officer and a Gentleman: Transformations in the Iconography of a Warrior Saint*, “Dumbarton Oaks Papers” 60 (2006) p. 111.

²⁷ Mir. 13 and 3 respectively.

resenting him being directly involved in using violence and killing. This reluctance leads to Menas assuming the role of the trickster.

3. Menas the Trickster: The Peculiarities of the Saint's Policework

The most telling illustration of this reluctance is the well-known story of the sterile woman named Sophia who travelled alone to Menas's shrine in Abu Mena, intending to offer all of her wealth, since she had no heir²⁸. On her way there, she was confronted by a soldier on horseback who was tasked with patrolling the area, as the text explicitly mentions. The soldier attacks the woman intending to rape her. To ensure his freedom of action, he dismounts and ties his horse's reins to his ankle. At that moment, the martyr Menas, called upon by Sophia, suddenly appears on his horse. He rescues her from the soldier's grasp, places her on his horse, and takes control of the reins, urging the horse to flee. The horse bolts, dragging the soldier – who was still tied to it – along the ground until they reach the shrine of Abu Mena. There, seemingly unfazed by his rough ride, the soldier offers his horse to the shrine and dedicates the rest of his life to repentance and prayer.

This story vividly illustrates Menas's strange approach. While one might expect a showdown between two mounted warriors – or a “good cop, bad cop” scenario – this is not what unfolds. Rather than engaging in direct combat, Menas uses clever deception to foil the soldier's temptations. He turns the soldier's setup against him, trapping him in a reversal of his own making. In this way, Menas acts more like a cunning trickster, skilfully outwitting his opponent without resorting to force. The trickster is defined in religious studies as an archetype of a divinity or a semi-divine being who exhibits a great degree of intellect or secret knowledge and uses it to play tricks or otherwise disobey standard rules and defy conventional behaviour. One of his most important functions is that of a mediator between the human and the divine realms who often assumes the roles of a transformer and cultural hero. This figure is characterised by their inclination to use deceit, disguises, mischief and pranks in order

²⁸ Mir. 3, *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)* (BHG 1259); for the summary of the story see E. Rizos in CSLA E07443.

to invert a situation and through these means bring about a change and reinstate order²⁹.

Cast in the role of trickster, Menas relies on a variety of tricks not only in the abovementioned case of the assaulted pilgrim Sophia, but also in other cases where he interferes: he assumes disguises or invisibility to deceive people, and uses subterfuge, mischief and pranks to confuse, outwit and ridicule his victims.

One of the means he frequently uses is paralysis. Another female pilgrim, traveling to Abu Mena to pray to be healed from her severe migraines, is rescued from the hands of a lewd innkeeper in whose inn the woman stops during her journey³⁰. As the assailant prepares to attack her with a sword and rape her, she calls upon Menas and the attacker's arms instantly become paralysed. The saint then appears on horseback, breaks down the inn's doors and rescues her. Following this, she visits the shrine and asks the chief presbyter to baptise her, choosing to spend the remainder of her life there. Later, the innkeeper who had attempted to harm her is freed from his paralysis when he visits the shrine with his arms still incapacitated and receives holy oil from the saint's lamp. Grateful, he donates his entire fortune to the shrine and spends the rest of his life serving alongside the woman he had once tried to assault. In this narrative, Menas functions as a magician, inflicting paralysis on the innkeeper as if casting a spell before intervening personally. Once again, the punishment is inflicted on the wrongdoer without the saint being directly involved in the retribution.

Menas resorts to paralysis twice more in his miracle narratives. Once he punishes in this manner a case of perjury, when a wealthy pagan man steals a sheep belonging to a poor Christian widow³¹. When he is accused

²⁹ On the trickster, their properties and functions, see esp. W. Hynes, *Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide*, in: *Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms*, ed. W. Hynes – W. Doty, Tuscaloosa 1993, p. 33-45. See also L. Hyde, *Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art*, New York 1998; S. Miceli, *Il demiurgo trasgressivo. Studio sul trickster*, Palermo 2000; M. Grau, *Refiguring Theological Hermeneutics: Hermes, Trickster, Fool*, New York 2014. On the Christian trickster saints, see J. Doroszewska, *Trickster Saints and Their Manifestations and Miracles in Late Antique Hagiography* (forthcoming with Routledge).

³⁰ Mir. 6, *The Samaritan Woman* (BHG 1262); summary based on that by E. Rizos in CSLA E07446.

³¹ Mir. 8, *The Poor Woman's Sheep* (BHG 1264); summary based on that by E. Rizos in CSLA E07448.

by his neighbours of this evil deed, he goes to the shrine in Abu Mena and takes a false oath believing that he will suffer no harm from the perjury, since he is unbaptised. He could not have been more wrong, as immediately after vowing on the saint's sarcophagus and the saint's relics that neither he nor his servant had stolen the sheep, his legs and arms are suddenly paralysed. Terrified, he confesses his crime and promises to restore four sheep to the widow, but suddenly the saint's voice is heard asking him to shut his mouth. The chief presbyter and the crowd tie him to one of the columns of the saint's ciborium, where he spends the rest of his life, apparently having not been healed, begging for forgiveness, and being served by his wife. After his death, his wife dedicates all of his fortune to the shrine and spends the rest of her life there. In this episode, whose climax is set in the shrine, Menas, although presumably present there, remains invisible nonetheless, while he mercilessly and irreversibly punishes the perpetrator. Again, the saint refrains from direct violence and hides himself behind magical tricks involving invisibility and paralysis.

In yet another story, a poor pagan man named Pastamon, who kept stealing the best pigs from the shrine, receives a dream vision of Menas, who strictly prohibits him from further thefts because there are other poor people who need to be fed³². The man ignores the warning and steals another pig, which he slaughters with the intention of salting the meat. However, the meat suddenly turns to stone, infuriating him and leading him to vow to continue stealing. The saint appears to him in a dream, threatening him once again, but Pastamon wakes up resolute to steal the finest pig from the saint's sty. He sneaks in early in the morning but is immediately paralysed, remaining motionless until the herdsmen discover him. They bring him to the shrine, where he confesses his sins and spends the rest of his life as a penitent. In this account, the sudden paralysis and the petrification of the meat are magic tricks used by Menas to avoid violence. While the saint does appear visibly in this instance, it is only to warn the audacious thief, and notably, this is a rare occurrence of the saint appearing in a dream. The punishment itself, on the other hand, takes place in the absence of the saint, who does not participate in the scene.

Another trick of Menas is acting in an invisible form or in disguise, presumably to keep clear from being openly involved in violence. In one episode, a soldier requisitions a quantity of timber offered by someone

³² Mir. 13, *The Swine Thief* (BHG 1269); see E. Rizos in CSLA E07453 for a full summary.

to the shrine and beats up the sanctuary servants who attempt to stop him³³. Suddenly, the soldier is lifted into the air by an invisible force, which holds him by his hair and transfers him to the shrine. In front of an astonished crowd, the soldier confesses his sin and is safely brought to the ground. He offers twelve pieces of gold and leaves happily. A similar motif appears in an episode which combines a protective motif with a healing one. It recounts how the parents of a demoniac who had been possessed by an evil spirit since childhood bring him to the shrine to pray for his deliverance³⁴. They spend a long time there but receive no miracle on behalf of their son, so they decide to leave. On their way back home, the saint appears to them “as if in the form of a man” (ὥς ἐν σχήματι ἀνθρώπου τινός) and advises them to return to the shrine. They claim that they are unable to control the demoniac, who behaves in a very aggressive way, and they fear losing their life at his hands. Seeing that the stranger is mighty and powerful, however, the parents ask for his assistance in this matter and offer him remuneration in return. The saint suggests that they offer the money in the shrine and seizes the possessed man by the hair, brings him to Abu Mena, and then vanishes. The man, who is lifted into the air screaming, soon collapses as though dead. The people place him near the saint’s sarcophagus and anoint him with oil from the lamp in the tomb. A voice from the tomb commands the demon to leave, as the saint intends to disgrace it publicly. The demon exits the man’s body through his mouth as a flame. Grateful, the man’s parents dedicate his intended inheritance to the shrine and have him tonsured there. Sometime later, he passed away at the shrine. In the cases of both the soldier and the demoniac, Menas solves the problems in a violent manner, but uses evasions to avoid being associated with violence in his own form. To this end, he employs magic tricks, namely the gift of invisibility and disguises himself as an accidental stranger.

The disguise is a trick that appears in yet another episode, this one about a pilgrim to Abu Mena murdered by a greedy man at whose house the unfortunate man stayed for the night³⁵. The villain killed the pilgrim to steal his pouch of gold and quartered his body, which he then put in

³³ Mir. 11, *The Wood Offering* (BHG 1267); see E. Rizos in CSLA E07451 for a full summary.

³⁴ Mir. 12, *The Possessed Man* (BHG 1268); summary based on that by E. Rizos in CSLA E07452.

³⁵ Mir. 1, *The Isaurian Pilgrim* (BHG 1257); see E. Rizos in CSLA E07441 for a full summary.

a basket with the intention of throwing it into Lake Mareotis. However, he did not have time to cover the tracks of this crime, and Menas rushed onto the scene on horseback disguised as a *spatharios* accompanied by a large crowd. The saint grabs the murderer and reveals the crime. These tricks are enough to make the murderer, in horror at this sudden appearance of the “police”, confess his sin, promise to give to the *spatharios* the victim’s money plus a hundred pieces of gold, and become a monk at the shrine of Menas. With another trick, Menas resurrects the body of the murdered pilgrim, whereupon he reveals his true identity to the victim and the murderer and disappears. Both men come to the shrine and make dedications. The murderer confesses to committing this act, while his victim is astonished to hear that he was slain. Thus, even in the case of such a serious transgression of divine and human law, Menas reacts like a trickster, not a soldier, and the punishment inflicted is more about forcing a public confession and offering financial compensation to the sanctuary; it is therefore relatively mild when compared to the lifelong paralysis inflicted upon the perjurer who stole a poor woman’s sheep (Mir. 8).

Another trick used by Menas is arranging accidents as a form of punishment. In the well-known miracle of the Jew and the Christian, a Jewish merchant from Alexandria entrusts a Christian friend with a sealed purse of money, asking him to safeguard it while he is away³⁶. When he returns, the Christian denies ever receiving the money. The Jew suggests they visit the church of Saint Menas to swear oaths. Believing that an oath taken in a Christian church will have no effect since his dispute is with a Jew, the Christian agrees. They both pray, and, contrary to the Jew’s hopes, nothing happens to the Christian. On the way back, the Christian falls from his horse, losing his signet ring to the sealed purse, but remains uninjured, which he interprets as a minor punishment for his dishonesty³⁷. When they arrive in Filoxenite, they stop for food³⁸. While the Jew despairs, the Christian’s slave suddenly appears, carrying the Jew’s purse and the Christian’s signet ring. He explains that a powerful figure, a soldier on horseback, visited the Christian’s wife, gave her the signet ring, and instructed her to send the money to her husband, because the saint had forced him to do so by torturing him. The Jew rejoices upon receiving his money, praises the Christian faith, donates a third of it to Saint Menas’s

³⁶ Mir. 4, *The Jew and the Christian* (BHG 1260) E07444.

³⁷ For the discussion on the signet ring see Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena*, p. 42-44.

³⁸ On the role of Philoxenite on the road to the shrine in Abu Mena, see, Wipszycska, *Philoxenite*.

shrine, and is baptised. The Christian, deeply affected, donates half of his wealth to the shrine and spends the rest of his life there as a penitent. Thus, despite appearing in the costume of a soldier to the Christian's wife, Menas does not threaten her, and the Christian's fall from his horse occurs either without the saint's involvement or he acts in an invisible form. The purse and the keys to it are thus obtained by the saint through trickery, not only so that the rightful owner can recover them, but also so that the guilty party admits to the deed.

The saint acts similarly in another episode, in which a certain Eutropios from Alexandria has two silver plates produced, intending to dedicate one of them to Menas³⁹. When the vessels are made, the one bearing the saint's name proves to be more valuable. The man decides to keep this finer vessel for himself and offer the less valuable one to the shrine. He boards a boat to cross Lake Mareotis, but along the way, his slave falls overboard with the prized vessel. Deeply distressed, Eutropios prays to the martyr to save his servant. Two days later, the servant emerges from the lake, holding the vessel and explaining that the martyr and two handsome men kept him safe for three days and returned him to land. They go to the shrine, where Eutropios dedicates both vessels and his servant. Here, too, this deception is an accident orchestrated by Menas. It is another case of punishment whereby the saint tricks a person into eventually giving more to the sanctuary than he originally planned.

In the next two cases, the saint also punishes swindlers and crooks, but this time the tone is much more humorous than in the previous cases. One such story recounts the tale of the son of Porphyrios, a devotee of Saint Menas from Panephaia⁴⁰. Porphyrios' son owns a barren camel and asks the saint to help her conceive, promising to dedicate her first offspring to him. The camel gives birth three times, but the man fails to fulfil his vow. One day, the saint appears on horseback, surrounded by a great cloud, and gathers all four camels – the mother and her young – and takes them to his shrine. When the man realises his camels are gone, he understands why. The saint then appears to him, explaining that he has claimed what was due to him but has spared the man from punishment out of respect for his father, Porphyrios. The man travels to the shrine and finds his camels there. Filled with remorse, he dedicates all his possessions to the saint

³⁹ Mir. 2, *Eutropius and the Silver Plates* (BHG 1258) E07442; see also P. Varalda, *Il ricco Eutropio e i piatti. La versione greca di uno dei Miracula sancti Menae* (BHG 1258), "Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata" 18 (2021) p. 207-250.

⁴⁰ Mir. 9, *The Barren Camel* (BHG 1265) E07449.

and spends the rest of his life at the shrine, where he is appointed as caretaker of the saint's camels. Menas requisitions the donations due to him by means of a cloud in which he hides the camels, instead of taking them from their owner by violence. He acts here like an illusionist magician. He also does the same, although much more amusingly, in a similar case involving a pagan named Prinos, who lives near Lake Mareotis in the Alexandria region⁴¹. In his village, there was a large temple with a statue to which he regularly offered sacrifices and gifts. He owned a fine mare that had not been able to conceive. After overhearing some Christians discuss the miracles of Saint Menas, he vowed that if his mare gave birth, he would dedicate three of the colt's legs to the martyr and one to his god. When the mare does give birth, the colt is born with only three legs. That night, the saint appears to Prinos in a dream and challenges him to ask his statue to provide a fourth leg. This experience leads Prinos and his entire household to convert to Christianity, and he donates half of his wealth to Saint Menas' shrine.

To complete the survey of Menas's miraculous interventions based on a combination of trickery and violence, we cannot miss one more episode that has a protective and healing character⁴². It recounts how three brothers from Alexandria set out to visit the saint's shrine, bringing piglets as offerings. Along the way, they stop at Lake Mareotis to let the piglets drink. Suddenly, a crocodile seizes one of the piglets, and when one of the brothers tries to save it, the crocodile pulls him into the water as well. The man cries out to Saint Menas for help, and the saint appears on horseback in the middle of the lake, rescuing him. The saint immediately heals the man's injured stomach, puts him into a deep sleep, and transports him to the shrine. The man awakens by the saint's sarcophagus, where the shrine's clergy find him and, mistaking him for a thief, have him detained by the crowd. After he tells his story, the people marvel at

⁴¹ Mir. 10, *The Foal with Three Legs* (BHG 1266); CSLA E07450 (E. Rizos).

⁴² Mir. 7, *The Three Brothers, the Pigs, and the Crocodile* (BHG 1263) E07447. We deliberately omit one episode, namely, Miracle 5, *The Paralytic and the Dumb Woman* (BHG 1261), because it is distinctly different in character, as it talks about a healing via an incubation ritual and has nothing to do with Menas as a military saint. Furthermore, the same miracle is attributed to other saints, i.e. Kosmas and Damianos, as well as Merkourios, and is also mentioned in the Miracles of Cyrus and John by Sophronius of Jerusalem; we will analyse this miracle in a separate article. It is worth mentioning, however, that this miracle also endows Menas with a great deal of trickery and deception.

the miracle. Meanwhile, Saint Menas appears on horseback to the man's brothers, who are mourning by the lake, and tells them to go to the shrine, where they will find him. The saint vanishes, and the brothers, encouraged by his words, go to the shrine and reunite with him.

This is a peculiar story because it contains a theme of punishment without guilt. For unexplained reasons, the typically protective intervention of Menas results in very unpleasant consequences for its subject: the man rescued from the crocodile's jaws is mistakenly accused of theft and bound like a criminal. This is a direct result of the fact that Menas is extremely discreet in placing the man at his tomb, so his sudden appearance arouses suspicion in those present. Given his power, could the saint not have arranged this in a more victim-friendly way? Or was it a punishment for unmentioned faults? There are no answers to these questions, but the conclusion is clear. This is further evidence that the saint works through wiles and tricks, which often include a violent element, but in which Menas is never directly involved.

To sum up, despite the costume of a mounted soldier and intervention in criminal cases or other accidents, Menas does not act according to the expected stagecraft, but handles these cases with trickery each time. He sets traps for sexual predators, inflicts sudden paralysis on perjurers and thieves, arranges mishaps for villains and crooks, and punishes petty miscreants with miracles that express outright mockery and mischief; alternatively, he uses disguises or "invisibility caps" to protect his sacred identity when he decides to get personally involved in a case and appear at the scene of an intervention. Thus, Menas has been dressed in the costume of a trickster who, possessing a whole repertoire of tricks and mischief, not only protects people, but also converts criminals and sinners, and to top it all off, acquires abundant material goods as tribute to his sanctuary every time. He is thus an arch-trickster, capable of outwitting anyone and thereby gaining not only his due and promised offerings, but often taking everything. This ability has a two-fold significance: in addition to yielding material donations for his shrine, it also results in "spiritual offerings", since the saint wins human souls for heaven – not only the souls of the pious, whom, by protecting them, he strengthens and comforts in their faith, but also those of hardened and daring sinners, whom he transforms into fully devoted servants of God who decide to spend their entire life in the shrine.

Cleverly outsmarting the enemy and taking them by surprise with trickery is a strategy for injecting humour into stories at the expense of

the victims of the practices depicted in them. As a result of his sly actions, a bully soldier attacking a defenceless woman loses control of his horse and, brought to the sanctuary by him, becomes the subject of a spectacle there. A lewd innkeeper with a similar deed on his conscience must meekly come to the shrine to beg the saint to undo his paralysis, as must the perjurer who robbed a poor old woman, and the daring pig thief who challenged the saint himself. There is a similarly hilarious element in the cases of saintly manipulation, when the thief's wife hands the masked saint the keys to the stolen purse, or when the dishonest devotee's servant falls into the water, only to emerge later with a valuable plate that had been the subject of a dispute with the saint, as well as the other 'accidents' orchestrated by the saint to outwit sly men and spinsters. People donate multiples of what they had previously planned, and sometimes even their entire wealth, while great sinners offer their hearts and souls and become servants of his shrine.

Whether these actions involve very severe punishments or lighter ones, the saint's humorous outmanoeuvring of his opponents produces a pleasant feeling of double satisfaction in the audience. For the punishment is double: not only is the guilty party duly punished, but they also become a laughing stock. Their scheming and sins are exposed in all their pathetic futility when confronted with divine power and wisdom. Satisfaction also comes from the feeling that order has been restored, because evil has not only been punished, but atoned for and replaced by good. This is why the divine avenger assumes the role of divine trickster and jester. In this role, Menas acts as an agent of transformation. Through his tricks and pranks, he instigates growth, whether by humbling those who consider themselves smart and powerful, making them repent, or by enlightening the ignorant, or forcing reflection on moral or spiritual matters. Humour thus appears to have a spiritual dimension in these stories and is a tool for spiritual teaching.

Undoubtedly, therefore, the strategy of staging Menas as a trickster figure translates directly into a great variety of miraculous narratives by juggling motifs and humorous punchlines which are revealed to have a deeper spiritual and moral meaning. It seems that we owe the development of the trickster paradigm to the principle of decorum, which tacitly forbade depictions of Menas fighting with weapons in hand and directly using violence. Before we pass on to discuss the potential religious and aesthetic rationale behind this tendency, we will compare the specificities of Menas's activity with that of other military saints with

a protective-punitive profile that can be found in Late Antique hagiography, both in miracle collections and other literary genres, to sketch out a broader context for the phenomenon in question.

4. Other Military and Belligerent Saints

In terms of texts dedicated specifically to the miracles of military saints, we have a Greek collection of texts concerning Saint Theodore and Saint Demetrios, while in terms of Coptic texts, we have the Apa Phoibammon collection and the *Enkomion on Merkourios*, as well collections dedicated to saints who are not military *sensu stricto*, but are still quite belligerent, such as Saint Thekla.

Saint Theodore, as represented in the *Enkomion on Theodore* by Chrysippos of Jerusalem, composed in the 460s or 470s, is also involved in actions related to seeking justice in various cases of wrongdoing⁴³. The collection of twelve miracles performed by this saint, appended to the *Enkomion*, depicts Theodore in a curious manner, as in his interventions he oscillates between being a severe judge of evil-doers and a sympathising ally of thieves. Although the text claims that the saint always wears military garb, which he never removes, not even while in heaven, he rarely appears to his followers⁴⁴. Only twice do depictions of him evoke his military background. Once he appears riding on horseback, but only to retrieve a boy abducted from his family home. Even here, the saint does not fight the kidnapper, but discreetly appears when the boy is alone and offers him a second horse as transport⁴⁵. In another example, he is seen threatening a stubborn sinner with a sword in a dream to put pressure on him; in this case, he appears – like Menas – in the guise of a *spatharios* to force the murderer to confess⁴⁶. In other

⁴³ Chrysippos of Jerusalem, *The Enkomion on Saint Theodore* (BHG 1765c). The miracles are edited by A. Sigalas, *Des Chrysippos von Jerusalem Enkomion auf den hl. Theodoros Teron*, Leipzig – Berlin 1921 (BHG 1765c), p. 50-79 and H. Delehaye, *De Sancto Theodoro martyre Euchaitis Helenoponti*, in: *Acta Sanctorum Novembri*, v. 4, Brussels 1925, p. 11-89. The translation and commentary by J. Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints: The Martyrdoms and Miracles of Saints Theodore 'The Recruit' and 'The General'*, Liverpool 2016. For a dating of the text, see Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints*, 44.

⁴⁴ Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints*, p. 66 (= Sigalas: 59, 10-13).

⁴⁵ Mir. 1: Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints*, p. 67-69 (= Sigalas: 59, 21-62, 16).

⁴⁶ Mir. 4: Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints*, p. 72-73 (= Sigalas: 65, 10-68, 5); cf. the *Miracles of Menas*, Mir. 1 (BHG 1257).

cases, he acts in a manner similar to Menas, for example, by punishing a thief with the sudden death of his horse, by arranging that a thief carrying a stolen item is caught by the victim of the theft, and by exposing a gang of robbers by tangling their steps so that they are unable to escape from the scene of the theft⁴⁷. Elsewhere, after assuming an invisible form, he suspends another thief in the air, who is horrified and confesses his guilt; in other cases, the saint even discreetly helps poor people steal as a means of supporting them financially⁴⁸. The repertoire of coercive measures used by both saints is therefore quite similar and based on parallel types of trickery.

The Coptic *Miracles of Apa Phoibammon*, dedicated to a soldier and martyr from Assiut with whom several shrines in Egypt are linked, provide us with a handful of parallels⁴⁹. This collection, probably composed in the 6th century, comprises a number of posthumous miracles performed by this saint, from among which three are punitive. In these stories, Apa Phoibammon appears once as a mounted soldier and on another occasion punishes a pilgrim who steals a golden cross which embellishes the saint's tomb⁵⁰. The saint first brings the cross back to its former location, while the pilgrim who returns to the sanctuary to look for it is bound by his head to the tomb by an invisible force, which makes him publicly confess his guilt. A thief who steals a lamp from the saint's shrine is inflicted with a severe illness, leading the man to restore the stolen object to its rightful location, while a perjurer who is suspended in the air confesses his sin⁵¹. In all of these cases, the saint remains invisible or acts remotely, although his punitive actions have quite physical consequences for the culprits.

⁴⁷ Mir. 2: Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints*, p. 69-70 (= Sigalas: 62, 17-64, 4); Mir. 3: Sigalas: 64.5-65.9; Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints*, p. 71-72; Mwer. 8: Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints*, p. 76 (Sigalas: 71, 10-72, 1).

⁴⁸ Mir. 5: Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints*, p. 74 (= Sigalas: 68, 6-69, 5); Mir. 7: Haldon, *A Tale of Two Saints*, p. 75-76 (= Sigalas: 70, 13-71, 9).

⁴⁹ Editing and translation of the text: K. Verrone, *Mighty Deeds and Miracles by Saint Apa Phoebammon: Edition and Translation of Coptic Manuscript M 582 ff. 21r-30r in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, Dissertation, Brown University 2002, *non vidimus*; we used the summary of the miracle narratives and discussion of the text by G. Schenke in CSLA E00240.

⁵⁰ Apa Phoibammon in military garb: Mir. 3 (Fol. 23r I,21-24v I,6): *The Pious Peasant* (reward miracle); The punitive miracle: Mir. 2 (Fol. 22v I,5-23r I,20): *The Impious Thief*.

⁵¹ Mir. 6 (Fol. 26v I,1-27r I,8): *The Lamp Thief*; Mir. 7 (Fol. 27r I,9-II,32): *The False Oath*.

An extant fragment of the *Miracles of Merkourios*, about a soldier and martyr from Caesarea in Cappadocia, composed probably between the 5th and 7th centuries, appears to recount how a thief punished by the saint with blindness prays afterwards at his shrine for forgiveness. Once cured, he returns the stolen money and makes a large offering at the martyr's shrine⁵². The Coptic *Encomion on Merkourios*, attributed to Basil of Caesarea, and possibly written in the 6th century, relates six miracles connected to his martyr shrine in Caesarea. Here, in one miracle, a woman who refused to make a donation to the shrine is punished by the saint with a severe illness that no one can cure, and regains her health only when she eventually makes a donation⁵³. In another miracle, robbers steal objects from a shrine to the martyr and try to sell them to a different shrine⁵⁴. The saint clouds their minds so that they return to the same shrine, trying to sell the objects they had earlier stolen from it. When the robbers realise their mistake, they implore the saint not to punish them, while he rebukes them for stealing objects that belonged to him.

We can observe a whole range of stories concerning punishing and protective miracles in the examples discussed here; in these stories, soldier saints, despite their military garb and affiliation, are not eager to engage in hand-to-hand combat or use direct violence to injure or kill their opponents. It should be stressed, however, that all of these cases involve the punishment of common criminals or sinners for vulgarly mundane sins, including rape, perjury, murder (for profit), violent robbery, petty theft and fraud.

There is a recurrent motif in hagiography in which military saints do not hesitate to take someone's life as punishment. These are cases of a different kind, in which great heretics and persecutors of Christianity fall prey to the saints. Thus, we have the motive of killing a sinister emperor who threatens the Christian orthodox state. In the aforementioned Coptic *Encomion on Merkourios* attributed to Basil of Caesarea,

⁵² For the text and German translation see W.C. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Martyrlegenden*, v. 1, Rome 1935, p. 19-20; *non vidimus*; we used the summary and discussion of the text by G. Schenke in CSLA E01848.

⁵³ Miracle 4; for the text and translation see F. Weidmann, *Encomium on St. Mercurius the General* (M 588, ff. 27vb22-31r), in: *Homiletica from the Pierpont Morgan Library: Seven Coptic Homilies attributed to Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and Euodius of Rome*, ed. L. Depuydt, CSCO 524, Louvain 1991, Copt. 43, p. 3-9 (text) and CSCO 525, Copt. 44, p. 3-9 (tr.). We used the summary by G. Schenke in CSLA E01861.

⁵⁴ Miracle 5; we used the summary by G. Schenke, CSLA E01861.

the author recounts a vision of his in which Merkourios slays the Emperor Julian the Apostate⁵⁵. Basil says that he saw the saint drawing his spear and announcing that he would no longer let the impious emperor blaspheme God. Three days later, news arrives that Julian has died; afterwards Basil sees the martyr in heaven with his spear stained with Julian's blood. The same vision of Basil is recounted by John Malalas in his *Chronographia*⁵⁶. A similar motif is found in the Armenian *Epic History* by P'awstos the Singer (Faustus of Byzantium), written in c. 470, where the Arian emperor Valens is killed by Saints Theodore and Sergios⁵⁷. Still, it is worth emphasising that the scenes of slaughter in both cases are not rendered but marked by other means which suggest the commission of such a slaughter: the saints either report having committed it or the blood on their spear bears witness to it. Arch-heretics or high-profile persecutors of Christians therefore constitute another category in which the principle of decorum does not apply, though there is some reserve about any literal depiction of the saint shedding blood.

There is yet another category of motifs that allows for the depiction of a saint fighting and inflicting death. These are cases in which the saints are involved in defending the cities for which they are patrons from an enemy. A similar situation occurred in the case of Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki, a martyr who posthumously assumed the role of a soldier in order to protect his city from an attack by Avars and Slavs. The two late antique miracle collections recount how Demetrios, in hoplite attire, materialises on the city walls and actively supports the citizens in their battle against the attackers. The text explicitly mentions that the saint kills with a spear the first enemy to climb the walls⁵⁸. A parallel motif can be found in the *Miracles of Thekla*, who was not a military saint whatsoever. Still,

⁵⁵ Miracle 6 (G. Schenke, CSLA E01861).

⁵⁶ Iohannes Malalas, *Chronographia* 13, 25, ed. L. Dindorf, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae, Bonn 1831; J. Thurn, *Ioannis Malalae Chronographia*, Berlin 2000, tr. E. Jeffreys – M. Jeffreys – R. Scott, *The Chronicle of John Malalas: A Translation*, Sydney 1986; see E. Rizos in CSLA E02775.

⁵⁷ P'awstos, *The Epic Histories* 4, 10, ed. and tr. N.G. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand (Buzandaran Patmut' iwnk')*, Cambridge 1989, *non vidimus*; we used the summary of ch. 10 of the text and the discussion of it by N. Aleksidze in CSLA E00243.

⁵⁸ *Miracula Sancti Demetrii*, collection II (BHG 499-516k), mir. 13, 120, ed. and tr. P. Lemerle, *Les plus anciens recueils des miracles de Saint Démétrius et la pénétration des Slaves dans les Balkans*, Paris 1981, p. 135.

in this text, the eponymous saint is represented as a belligerent figure. She once defends her hometown of Ikonion against attackers, whom she seizes in her hands, sprinkles sand in their eyes, and then kills⁵⁹. A very similar motif appears in the Coptic *Enkomion on Saint Merkourios*⁶⁰. During the consecration of the martyr's shrine by the bishop, the celebrations attract such a large crowd that many people have to stand outside the shrine. During the service, barbarians known as Sarmates attack these people and take them captive. However, the attackers are unwilling to enter the sanctuary itself out of fear of the saint. The barbarians take their prisoners with them, and after having travelled for three days, they encounter Merkourios, who has descended from heaven mounted on a white horse with crowds of cavalrymen surrounding him. The saint kills many barbarians with his spear and then frees the captured people and brings them back to his sanctuary.

The three categories of saintly interventions discussed above show that, while in exceptional cases that pose a threat to the orthodox Christian state or some of its communities from a pagan or heretic emperor or an external barbarian enemy, direct violence and bloodshed fall within the concept of sainthood, while in cases of individual threat, it does not. Cases of misdemeanour by petty criminals or swindlers are too insignificant or too trivial for the saint to become personally involved in them. The situation is different with punishment that makes use of trickery of various kinds – these allow the saint to avoid defiling himself through contact with a common carjacker, while at the same time, punishing him. The actual punishment is often of a mocking nature, which further disgraces the culprit. It can therefore be said that the type of punishment is appropriate to the nature of the sins committed – the latter being either too vulgar, too filthy or too pitiful for the saint to have intervened as a heavenly soldier. Below, we will outline the cultural background that may have influenced the fact that literary representations of military saints in one case allowed for their use of direct violence, while in others they did not. We will argue that these differences are due to changes in attitudes among Christians towards war and military service that resulted in the emergence of cults of military saints, on the one hand, and, on the other, in the development of a principle of decorum that allowed for representations of violent saints only in certain circumstances.

⁵⁹ *Miracula Sanctae Theclae* (BHG 1718), mir. 6: ed. and tr. G. Dagron, *Vie et miracles de sainte Thècle*, Bruxelles 1978.

⁶⁰ *Miracula Sancti Mecurii*, mir. 3; G. Schenke in CSLA E01861.

5. Christian Attitudes Towards Violence, War and Military Service

In the first few centuries of Christianity, the prevailing Christian attitude toward violence was generally pacifist. Early Christians were often reluctant to engage in violence or warfare. This stance was largely informed by Jesus's teachings on loving one's enemies and turning the other cheek (Matthew 5:39). This was especially evident during periods of persecution, when Christians suffered martyrdom rather than resorting to violence to defend themselves. The idea of martyrdom, where Christians willingly suffered death rather than renounce their faith, became central in the Christian conception of sanctity. This tendency highlighted a preference for enduring suffering with dignity rather than resorting to violence. Thus, the idea of a holy martyr not defending himself in any way against his oppressors also extended to martyr soldiers, which may have subsequently influenced hagiographic depictions of these saints as seeking to avoid resorting to direct violence.

A related but separate issue is the Christian attitude to war and military service. In his book on the iconography of Christian military saints, Piotr Grotowski briefly discusses the complex interplay between Christian pacifism and the acceptance of war within Byzantine religious and political contexts. As he sketches it, Christianity initially embraced a pacifist stance, viewing peace as a divine gift⁶¹. Early Church teachings, influenced by the Sixth Commandment, discouraged participation in military service and condemned violence. Prominent figures like Origen argued that prayer was a more effective means of supporting rulers than arms.

At some point, however, shifts in the doctrine can be observed as the Church's stance evolved, particularly after Constantine's "Edict of Milan" (313), which led to the acceptance of Christian participation in the military as a necessary protection against barbarian threats. Councils like the Synod of Arles (314) formalised this shift, treating those who refused military service for religious reasons as deserters⁶².

⁶¹ Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints*, p. 63-74.

⁶² Modern criticism has questioned whether the document issued by Constantine and Licentius actually had the status of an edict, and has considerably downplayed its

The concept of Holy War began to emerge, leading religious leaders like Augustine to justify defensive wars as a last resort for protecting the Christian community, while still emphasising the importance of maintaining peace whenever possible. The emergence of the doctrine of “Just War” paralleled the Christianization of the Roman Empire, influencing the portrayal of military saints as protectors of the faithful. The latter was also influenced by imperial and religious propaganda, in which emperors like Heraclius linked military campaigns to divine will, framing wars as battles between the forces of good, namely, Christianity, and evil ones – their pagan adversaries. Religious symbols, including icons, were integrated into military practices, bolstering morale and reinforcing the notion of divine endorsement. The gradual Christianization of military customs saw the replacement of pagan rituals with Christian ones. Warrior saints emerged as symbolic defenders against both physical and spiritual enemies.

The Church’s changing perspective on military service reflected a balance between pacifist ideals and the practical need for war. Defensive warfare, particularly against external threats, began to be seen as a necessary means for protecting the Christian state. However, the Church did not fully endorse war or killing, as evidenced by Basil the Great’s guidance that soldiers who had taken lives in battle should abstain from Communion for three years as a form of penance. While this rule was not universally enforced, similar sentiments were echoed by other Church leaders in the late fourth century. Peace remained central to Christian teachings, with John Chrysostom emphasising it as God’s greatest gift in his liturgies and sermons. The invocation of peace during the liturgy, which persists in the Eastern Church today, reflects its enduring importance. To summarise, Grotowski’s insights suggest that, although defensive wars were tolerated, pacifist tendencies were still observable and bloodshed remained something undesirable.

In our opinion, it is in this context that we should understand the principle of decorum applied in hagiography and other Christian writings concerning depictions of the interventions of military saints. The gradual acceptance by Christians that defensive war could be considered a necessity contributed to the emergence and flourishing of the cult of military saints. This new cultural phenomenon was, in turn, reflected in hagiographic images that depicted heavenly warriors assisting in such a war. The field of

importance, see e.g. N. Lenski, *The Significance of the Edict of Milan*, in: *Constantine: Religious Faith and Imperial Policy*, ed. E. Siecienski, London 2017, p. 27-56.

action of the military saint also extended to individual internal enemies of the Christian state when, by virtue of their position, they posed a real threat, as in the case of heretical emperors or persecutors of Christians. However, war and general threats are not the same as the petty affairs of individual sinners, even when they are guilty of serious crimes. In other words, military support in battle from the saints does not fall into the category of punitive interventions. The slaughter of sinister emperors should probably likewise not be considered as such, since this was more about removing a serious threat than punishing its executor. Therefore, the punitive and protective miracles performed on behalf of ordinary people by Menas and his saintly colleagues are different in character than the former category and are consequently underpinned by different principles.

In cases of ordinary individual matters, possible bloodshed or hand-to-hand combat, combined with the idea of sanctity, were undesirable for the late antique authors of miracle collections and their audiences deemed it as being too strong a combination of the sacred and the profane. It seems to me, therefore, that we are dealing here with religious criteria, on the one hand, and aesthetic ones, which underlie this peculiar principle of decorum, on the other. Nonetheless, hagiography, and in particular those collections of miracles oriented towards promoting the image of the saint in question as a heavenly protector and executor of punishment, needed a model by means of which the saint could carry out the activity of establishing order and justice. This provided a space for the development of the trickster saint as a model for a holy punisher and a divine mischief-maker whose capacities and mode of action do not resemble mundane reality but reflect a divine one. It made room for the emergence of punitive miracles based on tricks, which allowed for the avoidance of triviality and vulgarity, as well for literalism, realism and predictability, and instead highlighted the supernatural and miraculous nature of the saints' interventions. Although it is not easy to pinpoint the basis on which the model of the military trickster saint was formed, below we point to some elements that it may have drawn from.

6. Saintly Magical Tricks and Other Deceptions

The punishing tricks used by Menas and other military saints are meant to reflect the divine powers they wield for the good of the people. These are supernatural abilities that prove their elevated position in

the hierarchy of entities and give them a unique advantage. Concepts of these abilities can be found primarily in the oral and epic traditions that speak of divine figures and semi-divine heroes and their divine qualities and characteristics, as well as in the magical practices of the time, which were aimed at acquiring certain supernatural powers as well.

As we have seen, both Saint Menas and his Greek and Coptic colleagues often used invisibility in order to use violence against the culprit while still keeping their identities secret or their image unsullied. This motif refers us back to folk traditions and magical practices. Magical invisibility is one of the most enduring and versatile themes in folklore, with folklorists identifying as many as fifty subcategories⁶³. It frequently appears in ancient myths and epics, where various magical items, such as the Cup of Invisibility, are wielded by the gods. The motif's enduring appeal lies in its narrative flexibility. An invisible character can move freely, unbound by societal norms and restrictions. As Elisabeth Tucker explains, invisibility provides the freedom to take risks, pursue desires, and engage in adventures without fear of punishment or disapproval. This behaviour aligns with Jung's archetype of the trickster – a bold, rule-defying figure who prioritises personal desires over societal expectations⁶⁴. In the realm of hagiography, the motif grants saintly tricksters a miraculous ability to combat evil and restore justice on their own terms. The power to remain unrecognised or unseen enables them to outsmart their enemies. Invisibility was also highly sought after in ancient magical practices, as evidenced by the Greek Magical Papyri, which include rituals and spells aimed at achieving this coveted ability⁶⁵.

Another option for concealing a saint's identity was to use a disguise. In terms of disguised appearances by Menas, numerous parallels are provided by the epic tradition. The Homeric gods, such as Athena in the *Odyssey*, frequently employ this device to mask their divine identity⁶⁶. However,

⁶³ See S. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaeval Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends*, Copenhagen 1955, D1980: Magic invisibility.

⁶⁴ E. Tucker, *Magic Invisibility, Motif D1980*, in: *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handbook: A Handbook*, ed. J. Garry – H. El-Shamy, New York 2017, p. 160.

⁶⁵ H. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells, Volume 1: Texts*, Chicago – London 1986, p. 9: PGM we222-32; PGM 247-62.

⁶⁶ Athena disguises herself in the *Odyssey*: as Mentes: 1, 105-324; as Mentor: 2, 267-320; as a Shepherd-Boy: 13, 221-371, etc. On the disguises of Homeric gods vis à vis those of saints see V. Déroche, 'Tout d'un Coup': *L'épiphanie Masquée Dans Les*

the closest parallel to the military saints is the Homeric Odysseus, king of both trickery and disguise. He provides the clearest model for the figure of a warrior who favours trickery over physical strength and skill with weapons as a means for defeating his opponent; he achieves his goals not through violence, but above all through reason⁶⁷. This is not to imply that Odysseus' repertoire of tricks is the same as that used by Menas and his holy colleagues, but that this characteristic type of action, whether used in self-defence, for revenge, or to achieve some other goal, is founded in both cases not on the use of force, but on intelligence and cunning, aided by magical or divine helpers, props, and one's own abilities.

One of Menas's preferred methods of punishment was to paralyse his victims. This approach echoes the use of aggressive magic, which was highly prevalent in antiquity. Evidence of this can be found in numerous lead tablets known as *katadesmoi* in Greek and *defixiones* in Latin⁶⁸. These so-called binding spells, as modern scholars refer to them, were functional curses dating back to 5th-century B.C. Greece. From there, they spread across the Mediterranean, persisting until the end of Antiquity⁶⁹. The tablets often bore the name of the intended victim and, over time, included increasingly complex texts outlining specific rituals. These rituals involved the binding, piercing, or burning of wax, clay, or lead effigies, akin to "voodoo dolls". The tablets were then deposited in graves, wells, or springs, effectively delivering the victim to chthonic deities and restless spirits, who carried out the curse. The primary purpose of these spells was to immobilise the target, often for personal, legal, or economic reasons. Aside from erotic spells or those aimed at courtroom adversaries and business rivals, a significant portion targeted thieves and slanderers. John Gager describes these as "pleas

Recueils de Miracles de l'Antiquité Tardive, in: *Dōron Rodopoikilon: Studies in Honour of Jan Olof Rosenqvist*, ed. D. Searby – E. Balicka-Witakowska – J. Heldt, Uppsala 2012, p. 147-157.

⁶⁷ Many thanks to Janek Kucharski for drawing our attention to this parallel. Odysseus's tricks: The Trojan Horse, *Odyssey* 8, 492-520; The Encounter with Polyphemus (Cyclops) when Odysseus introduces himself as 'Nobody' 9, 105-542; Disguises and Deception in Ithaca, when Athena helps Odysseus assume the disguise of a beggar to deal with the suitors: 13, 375-420; 17, 336-500; 19, 107-250. On Odysseus as a trickster see P. Pucci, *Odysseus Polutropos: Intertextual Readings in the Odyssey and the Iliad*, Ithaca 1987; K. Zieliński, *Odysseus-Trickster and the Issue of the Compatibility of the Image of the Hero with Its Function in the Traditions of the Oral Epic*, "Studia Religiosa. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego" 53/3 (2020) p. 181-202.

⁶⁸ F. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, Cambridge – London 1997, p. 114 and 173 n. 12.

⁶⁹ On binding spells in antiquity see esp. Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, p. 118-175.

for justice and revenge”⁷⁰. Binding spells thus became a common method for addressing enemies and wrongdoers. Menas, by paralysing evildoers, mirrored the actions of sorcerers who crafted binding spells, enabling him to inflict harm on his victims remotely and with immediate effect. It should be added here, however, that the motif of paralysis can also be traced back to biblical traditions, where it occurs as a form of punishment for one’s sins: 1 Kings (13,4) recounts how King Jeroboam ordered the capture of the prophet by stretching out his hand, which immediately withered away; and John’s gospel (John 15,1-18) mentions Jesus’ words commenting on the case of a paralysed man, saying that a person could face a punishment worse than paralysis for his sins, which does not explicitly express a belief that paralysis is a punishment.

Regarding the pranks attributed to Menas – such as making a mare give birth to a three-legged colt or abducting camels from within a cloud – close parallels are scarce. One distant comparison might be drawn from inscriptions found in the Epidaurian Asklepieion, which document miracles performed by the god on behalf of his followers. One of these tells the story of Amphimnastos, a fishmonger who vowed to give a tenth of his profits to Asklepios but ultimately failed to follow through⁷¹. While selling fish in the agora of Tegea, his entire stock was struck by lightning and burned. This remarkable event drew a crowd, prompting Amphimnastos to confess his greed and pray to the god. In response, the fish were miraculously restored, and he fulfilled his pledge by offering the promised tenth to Asklepios.

This tale stands out among the Epidauros inscriptions in terms of the character of the divine intervention. Despite the poor condition of the stele, which complicates the reading of many inscriptions, most seem to focus on healing⁷². The story of Amphimnastos, however, showcases a different aspect of Asklepios: a god who enforces offerings owed to him, combining retribution with a touch of humour. Through a playful yet stern trick, he compels the unfaithful follower to fulfil his vow, but unlike Menas, Asklepios only claims what was initially promised. While this episode bears some resemblance to Menas’s mischievous acts, the humour here is more subdued and purposeful. It is unclear, however, whether such

⁷⁰ J. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World*, New York – Oxford 1999, p. 177.

⁷¹ L. LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Atlanta 1995, p. 121 (C4 [47]).

⁷² LiDonnici, *The Epidaurian Miracle Inscriptions*, p. 116.

stories influenced the Christian miracles associated with Menas, although the Asklepian healing cult documented in the Epidaurian inscriptions is sometimes compared with Christian miracle collections; in our opinion, both traditions could have drawn from a common folk reservoir of motifs.

These various elements from both oral and literary traditions, as well as from everyday life, may have made up the conglomerate that resulted in the formation of the holy trickster warrior who had at his disposal a range of supernatural powers and who, like Odysseus, preferred to fight with cunning and artifice rather than with weapons, and to hide behind disguises to avoid revealing his identity. Cleverly outsmarting the enemy and taking them by surprise with trickery is a strategy for injecting humour into stories at the expense of the victims of such practices depicted in them. Such is the significance of the punitive tricks performed by Menas and other saints.

7. Conclusion

The transformation of Saint Menas from a healer into a protector and avenger in his Greek miracle collection reflects both pragmatic and cultural shifts within the development of his cult. During the height of Abu Mena's popularity as a pilgrimage centre, the promotion of Menas as a divine guardian addressing the very real perils faced by travellers was likely an intentional response to the concerns of pilgrims. This shift also aligns with the rise of military saints in late antiquity, a trend that reimagined soldiers-turned-saints as celestial protectors wielding divine authority to uphold justice. The author of the miracle collection thus exploited the growing popularity of military saint cults, and gathered or invented miracles which tapped into Menas' military identity, casting him thereby in the role of a local policeman ushering in order and justice.

However, adherence to a principle of decorum shaped how Menas's interventions were depicted. The hagiographer avoided representations of direct violence that might appear incongruent with the sanctity associated with Christian saints. Instead, Menas emerges as a trickster – a figure who embodies divine power through cunning, humour, and supernatural feats. This approach not only avoids trivialising the sacred subject and preserves it from being polluted with incongruent profane elements, but it also provides ample opportunities to enrich and diversify the narrative by incorporating various motifs in the form of numerous punishing tricks.

These, in turn, allowed for complex moral and spiritual lessons to be introduced into the discourse.

The figure of Menas as a trickster reveals a nuanced understanding of justice in late antique Christianity. By leveraging humour and indirect retribution, his miracles convey dual messages of divine authority and moral transformation. Evildoers not only face punishment but are also often converted or redeemed through their encounters with the saint. This dual function highlights Menas's role as a mediator between the human and divine realms, capable of transforming both material circumstances and inner dispositions.

Furthermore, the study of Menas as a military saint highlights broader trends in Christian attitudes toward violence and sanctity, and sheds light on the mentality of late antique Christians. While the emerging doctrine of "just war" allowed for the acceptance of defensive violence in certain contexts, saints like Menas operated within a framework that distanced them from the vulgarity of direct bloodshed. This principle underscores the adaptability of Christian hagiography, which combined theological rigor with narrative creativity to address evolving cultural and social needs.

In sum, Saint Menas's literary portrayal as a divine trickster illuminates the intersection of humour, justice, and sanctity in the late antique religious imagination. His ability to safeguard the faithful while converting sinners showcases the pragmatic and spiritual goals of his cult. The trickster paradigm, with its blend of cunning and morality, remains a testament to the ingenuity of early Christian storytelling and its capacity to adapt to the complex realities of its audience. By emphasising the multifaceted nature of Menas's miracles, this study not only enhances our understanding of his cult but also provides a broader framework for analysing the cultural and religious dynamics of late antique hagiography. The complexity of Menas's figure is, however, revealed in his name itself: according to tradition, it is an anagram of "Amen", but it also brings "menaces" to mind⁷³.

⁷³ The story about Menas's name derives from the saint's Coptic Encomium, see on that Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 133.

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Medieval Slavic Translations of the *Miracles of Saint Menas*: Sources and Textual Problems¹

Jan Stradomski²

Abstract: A collection of miracles attributed to St Menas appeared in medieval Old Church Slavonic literature as a result of contacts between Orthodox Slavs in the Balkans and Byzantine Christian literature. By the 10th century, at least two distinct translations of the had likely been produced in Bulgaria. These translations have been preserved in Slavic collection manuscripts (dating from the late 13th to the 17th centuries) in both an abridged version (a compilation of several miracles) and a full translation of the entire collection, comprising 13 miracles. This article presents the current state of research on the subject, the most important sources, the hypothesized routes of migration of Greek sources into Old Church Slavonic (and later Church Slavonic) literature, and a proposed reconstruction of the transmission process of these translations within the Slavic textual tradition.

Keywords: St Menas; Greek/Byzantine literary; Orthodox Slavdom; Hagiography; Church-Slavic literature

The beginnings of the Slavic literary tradition are closely tied to the process of Christianization and intensifying contacts between Slavs and Greco-Latin Mediterranean culture. In the early period (7th century to mid-9th century), the primary challenge that limited access to and assimilation of the Christian literary heritage among Slavs was the lack of an appropriate alphabet – a tool necessary for effectively recording the Slavic language and translating religious and secular texts. A breakthrough occurred in 863 with the arrival of two missionaries, Saints Constantine-Cyril (d. February 14, 869) and Methodius (d. April 6, 885), who were sent to Great Moravia by the Byzantine Emperor Michael III (“Michael the Drunkard”, 842-867) and Patriarch Photios I of Constantinople (858-867 and 877-886). These two brothers, undoubtedly Greeks from Thessalonica (called Solun

¹ The research presented in this article has been funded by the National Science Centre (Poland) under the project “Across centuries, languages, and cultures: The Miracles of Saint Menas as a historical source, literary composition and liturgical text”, project no. UMO-2021/41/B/HS1/00550.

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by the Slavs), were fluent in the Slavic language. They are credited, particularly Constantine-Cyril, with creating the first Slavic alphabet (Glagolitic) and producing the earliest translations of Greek liturgical books. The birth of Old Church Slavonic literature³ is thus closely connected to Eastern Christian (Byzantine) literature and liturgy⁴. As a result, the most popular Greek religious texts quickly became accessible to the Slavs through translations, especially in the Balkans. In the realm of hagiography – which played a fundamental role in consolidating Christian doctrine and fostering piety among the faithful – the Slavic tradition aligns with the broader cult of saints characteristic of Byzantine cultural influence. Our research focuses specifically on the Old Church Slavonic literary legacy concerning the miracles of St Menas, attributed to Patriarch Timothy of Alexandria. Consequently, we leave aside considerations of iconography and hymnography, which address the visual and liturgical-auditory aspects of the cult.

³ The term ‘Old Church Slavonic’ is not universally accepted by medievalist scholars worldwide as the most appropriate designation (e.g., Bulgarian researchers often use the term ‘Old Bulgarian’). However, I will employ it here, as it precisely reflects the actual function of this Slavic language as a medium for liturgical and literary purposes. Due to the extensive use of ecclesiastical (theological and liturgical) terminology, unknown to Proto-Slavic language and the Slavs prior to Christianization, the earliest Old Church Slavonic texts required the introduction of numerous linguistic calques from Greek as well as Slavic neologisms. Consequently, this language differs stylistically, lexically, and syntactically from the vernacular spoken by the Slavs in the vicinity of Thessalonica. Therefore, distinguishing it from any regional dialect of everyday speech seems appropriate. The translation of the collection of miracles of St Menas was likely produced during the period when Old Church Slavonic was still in use (9th-12th centuries). However, the Slavic manuscripts serving as the primary sources for this study are much later (late 13th-17th centuries) and were written in a later form of the literary language known as ‘Church Slavonic’. This later form displays far more evident regional linguistic features.

⁴ We can recall here attempts, likely undertaken as early as the late 8th century in Carinthia and Pannonia (and probably also in western Moravia), to translate and transcribe Roman Christian prayers and teachings into the Slavic language. Examples of such efforts include the so-called Freising Manuscripts (10th century). Their continuation can be observed in medieval (12th-14th century) Latin-language manuscripts from the Polish territories. These texts include attempts to record Slavic speech using the so-called ‘simple orthography’, which relies exclusively on the letters of the Latin alphabet, without digraphs (combinations of letters) or the creation of new symbols for palatal consonants or nasal vowels. (cf. L. Moszyński, *Wstęp do filologii słowiańskiej*, Warszawa 1984, p. 9-13). However, these efforts, associated with the Latin cultural sphere, did not have as significant an impact on the development of Slavic literacy as the traditions linked to Glagolitic writing and, slightly later, Cyrillic. These two scripts represent the most enduring achievements of the Cyrillo-Methodian mission and connect the oldest monuments of Slavic literature primarily with Greek-language Byzantine literature.

1. Slavic Liturgical-Hagiographical Tradition

The Slavic hagiographic tradition concerning the holy martyr St Menas (св. Мина) is rich yet largely confined to the cultural domain of *Slavia Orthodoxa* (“Orthodox Slavdom”)⁵, where it originated, and Eastern Slavia, where many of the most significant monuments have been preserved. Texts dedicated to St Menas can be found in both primary types of liturgical books and in codices not used in worship but intended for individual or communal reading, primarily in monastic contexts. The first group includes synaxarions (referred to in Slavic as prologues) and liturgical menologia, while the second consists of reading menologia (intended for non-liturgical readings, the so-called *čet’i-minei* and codices (referred to in Slavic as *sborniki*) – primarily calendar-hagiographic collections, though occasionally also compilatory codices with varied contents. Depending on the type of book and its intended use, certain differences in the texts can be observed, particularly in terms of translation strategies (literary and formal treatment) and content (the selection and sequence of miracles).

Since the liturgical commemoration of St Menas was present in the Greek synaxarion⁶, it is reasonable to assume that the cult of this

⁵ The term was introduced into medieval Slavic studies by the Italian scholar Riccardo Picchio (1923-2011). Although his concept, which fundamentally divides the medieval Slavic cultural world into two spheres (the other being *Slavia Romana*), has its opponents. The debate largely focuses on refining its definitions and scope, primarily in a diachronic perspective, rather than challenging the core idea of the cultural influence exerted on the Slavs by two dominant models of Christian culture. For more on this topic, see R. Picchio, *Letteratura della Slavia ortodossa (IX-XVIII sec.)*, Bari 1991, p. 7-83; H. Goldblatt, *Guidelines to the study of the literary civilization of orthodox slavdom*, “Krakowsko-Wileńskie Studia Slawistyczne: seria poświęcona starożytnościom słowiańskim” 15/2 (2019) p. 9-40; T. Chynczewska-Hennel, *Between Slavia Latina and Slavia Orthodoxa. The Discussion of Ihor Skochylyas with the Concept by Riccardo Picchio*, “Studia Polsko-Ukraińskie” 9 (2022) p. 179-186.

⁶ The veneration of St Menas is recorded under the date of November 11 in the so-called *Synaxarion of the Church of Constantinople*, compiled at the end of the 10th century, as well as in the *Menologion* of Emperor Basil II from the early 11th c. On the same date, three other early Christian martyrs are also commemorated: Victor (a soldier), Vincent (a deacon), and the female martyr Stephanida. As a result, in later Slavic liturgical tradition, St Menas appears in two distinct commemorative forms: as an independent feast and as part of a joint commemoration of the three martyrs (together with Victor and Vincent; BHG 1252-1253). See *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. E codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi. Adiectis synaxariis selectis*, ed. H. Delehaye, Bruxellis

martyr appeared in the Slavic context very early, coinciding with the baptism of the Slavs and their adoption of the Byzantine liturgical calendar. This is evidenced by the iconography of early Slavic churches, where depictions of St Menas have been preserved in frescoes dating as early as the first half of the 11th century⁷. By that time, the basic hagiographic and liturgical texts dedicated to him must have been known and used in Slavic translations⁸. However, it remains a matter of hypothesis whether the extensive pre-metaphrastic reading menologia (*čet'i-minei*), translated in eastern Bulgaria in the second half of the 10th century, included not only the expected *passio* of St Menas but also his collection of miracles. Unfortunately, only the March volume of this collection has survived to

1902 [= *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris*], p. 211-214; PG 117, 153-156; Sergey (Spasskiy), arkhiep., *Polnyy mesyatslov Vostoka: V trekh tomakh*, v. 2, p. 351; v. 3, p. 464.

⁷ An example of this is the fresco in the Church of Saint Sophia in Kyiv (1040s), where St Menas is depicted in a half-length portrait wearing the attire of a martyr (*chiton* and *himation*) and holding a cross. See L.R. Frangulyan, A.N. Kryukova, M.A. Makhank'o, A.A. Turilov, L.V. Prokopenko, E.V. Shevchenko, E.M. Saenkova, *Mina*, in: *Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya*, v. 45, ed. P. Kirill of Moscow and All Rus, Moscow 2017, p. 251 [=PE].

⁸ The Byzantine hagiographic tradition dedicated to St Menas is rich and diverse. Chronologically, the oldest text is the pre-Metaphrastic *passio* (BHG 1254-1254c), along with the kontakion attributed to Romanos the Melodist (H. Delehaye, *L'invention des reliques de saint Ménas à Constantinople*, *AnBol* 29 (1910) p. 121). Another *passio* (BHG 1250) was composed by Symeon Metaphrastes (10th c.). The pre-Metaphrastic *passio* already incorporated material from the homily in honour of St Gordios by Basil the Great (*Homilia in Gordium martyrem*, BHG 703; CPG 2862); this material is present in Romanos' hymn as well as in all the *passiones* (albeit to varying degrees). In the Greek synaxarion under the date November 11, alongside the commemoration of St Menas, the feast of three other martyrs – Menas, Victor, and Vincent – was also celebrated. Their *passiones* (BHG 1252-1253) were read together with another anonymous *passio* (BHG 1251), which shows stylistic and lexical similarities to the works of Metaphrastes. Additionally, a *Laudatory Oration* (BHG 1255) is known from a single manuscript dated to the 11th c. The Byzantine hagiographic corpus is completed by a collection of 13 miracles attributed to St Menas (BHG 1256-1269), pseudo-epigraphically ascribed to Timothy I, Patriarch of Alexandria (381-385). This collection reflects literary connections between Byzantine literature and Egyptian Christianity. See P. Franchi de' Cavalieri, *Hagiographica. I. Osservazioni sulle leggende dei ss. martiri mena e Trifone*, Roma 1908, p. 9, 15, 17, 26; L. Silvano – P. Varalda, *Per l'edizione dei Miracula sancti Menae* (BHG 1256-1269), "Philologia Antiqua" 12 (2019) p. 53, 55; D.P. Atanasova, *Chetivata za sv. Mina v (yuzhno)slavyanskite kalendarni sbornitsi*, "Palaeobulgarica-Starobalgaristika" 48/2 (2024) p. 62.

this day (*Codex Suprasliensis*, 10th c.)⁹. Nonetheless, given its extensive contents, we cannot exclude the possibility that the November section contained narrative texts dedicated to St Menas¹⁰.

We have no doubts, however, about the existence of a very early Slavic hymnographic tradition (liturgical poetry). The oldest preserved manuscript containing the complete text of the liturgical office (*officium*, cs. *služba*) in honor of the martyrs Menas, Victor, and Vincent (November 11) dates back to the second half of the 12th century and is certainly a copy of a much older source. From the 14th century onwards, manuscripts under the date of November 11 include copies of a separate, more extensive office dedicated solely to St Menas of Egypt¹¹. In terms of content and factual basis, hymnographic texts rely heavily on early Greek synaxaria and, together with these, form the core literary corpus used in the liturgy for the commemoration of the martyr. In Slavic synaxaria from the 11th to the 14th centuries (the so-called ordinary prologue), only a brief *vita* is present (a pre-metaphrastic *passio* [BHG 1254]), with no reference to the miracles¹². They appear later in so-called verse prologue/

⁹ The manuscript is most likely associated with Preslav, a prominent centre of literacy in the capital of the first Bulgarian Empire. This manuscript, one of the most valuable monuments of Slavic literature, has been the subject of extensive scholarly research. For a comprehensive overview, including most of the relevant bibliographic references, see one of the latest collections of studies: *Preotkrivane: Suprasl'ski sbornik, starobulgarski pametnik ot X vek – Rediscovery: Bulgarian codex Suprasliensis of 10th century*, ed. A. Miltenova, Sofia 2012.

¹⁰ Byzantine calendar-type hagiographical collections reflect the regulations of the Studite and Evergetian typika. Some preserved Greek menologia of the quarterly type (four parts, each covering three months) include instructions to read the *passio* authored by Symeon Metaphrastes and/or the miracles attributed to Timothy of Alexandria on the commemoration day of St Menas (11 November). However, the collection to which the *Codex Suprasliensis* belongs did not have a typical liturgical application. Therefore, theoretically, the *passio* of St Menas and a collection of miracles (even a selected one) could have been included in it. See A.A. Dmitrievskii, *Opisanie liturgicheskikh rukopisei, khryanyashchikhsya v bibliotekakh pravoslavnogo Vostoka*. v. 1. Kiev 1895 (fototip. ed. Hildesheim 1965), p. 311; A. Ehrhard, *Überlieferung und Bestand der hagiographischen und homiletischen Literatur der griechischen Kirche von den Anfängen bis zum Ende des 16. Jahrhunderts*, v. 1, Leipzig 1937, p. 374, 377, 385; Atanasova, *Chetivata za sv. Mina*, p. 63.

¹¹ The Greek-language hymns of this service are attributed to the renowned Byzantine hymnographer Romanos the Melodist (5th/6th c.). See Delehay, *L'invention des reliques*, p. 121.

¹² See *Slavyano-russkii Prolog po drevneishim spiskam. Sinaksar' (zhiitiina-ia chast' Prologa kratkoi redaktsii) za sentiabr'-fevral'*, v. 1, ed. L.V. Prokopenko,

verse synaxarion (early 14th c.), where a slightly longer and reworked *passio*, adapted to the requirements of the new typikon (the *Jerusalem Typikon*), is accompanied by an abridged redaction of five miracles of St Menas (BHG 1269m)¹³.

Thus, the early Slavic tradition concerning the collection of miracles of Saint Menas is primarily associated with calendar collections of the menologion type, specifically the reading menologia. The oldest Slavic manuscripts of this type attest to the presence, under the date 11th November, of an incomplete collection of the miracles of Saint Menas attributed to Timothy (“the Archbishop of Alexandria”), usually consisting of a *prologue* (P) and six miracles (1-5, 7)¹⁴. The prototypes of these books, as indicated by preserved linguistic and orthographic traces, were produced in Old Bulgarian literary centres in the 9th-10th centuries (Preslav, Ohrid) and most likely represent the Slavic variant of one of the pre-Metaphrastic types of Greek menologia in three-month volumes of texts (September-November).

Moskva 2010, p. 332-334. The collection of miracles attributed to Timothy of Alexandria was conceived from the outset as a text separate from the *passio*, as it contains no information about the life and martyrdom of St Menas, offering only a brief mention (in the prologue) of the circumstances surrounding the construction of a church in his honour in Alexandria. The collection itself exhibits clear signs of literary composition, integrating the distinct themes of the individual miracles into a unified narrative framework and even including textual connections between them (allusions and interjections). The evident purpose of this compilation was to highlight the saint’s posthumous activity and his effectiveness in resolving complex issues through miraculous intervention (e.g., murder, attempted assault, infidelity, theft, perjury, illness and disability, demonic possession, etc.), thereby encouraging pilgrimages to the sanctuary at Abu Mina and the offering of votive gifts.

¹³ Edition of the text: GRM 1897, p. 801-805; G. Petkov – M. Spasova, *Tarnovskata redaktsiya na Stishniya Prolog. Tekstove. Leksikalen indeks*, v 3: *Mesets noemvri*, Plovdiv 2009, p. 39-43. For a list of preserved redactions and manuscripts, see *Predvaritel’nyi svodnyi katalog tserkovnoslavyanskikh prolozhnykh tekstov*, v. 2: *Oktyabr’*, ed M. Chistyakova, Vilnius 2019, p. 211-217.

¹⁴ Such a text arrangement can be found in the following menologia: *HBKM 1039*, 14th c.; *Деч. 94*, 14th c.; *TC/I 669*, mid-15th c. See D.P. Atanasova, *The Miracles of the Great Martyr Menas in the Medieval Slavic Pre-Metaphrastic Menaia-Cheti* (critical edition of the text, based on MS 1039 from the National Library “SS Cyril and Methodius” Sofia), “Scripta & e-Scripta” 6 (2008) p. 305-324; *Stanislavov cheti-miney*, v. 1: *Izdanie na teksta*, ed. D. Atanasova – A.M. Totomanova, Sofia 2018, p. 798-813; Atanasova, *Chetivata za sv. Mina*, p. 63.

2. Old Church Slavonic Translations of the *Miracles of St. Menas*

In Slavic medieval studies, there is a belief that within the Old Church Slavonic literary tradition, there were two translations of the *Miracles of St Menas*, based on the same, though not identical, Greek variant (redaction)¹⁵. Both translations were most likely produced in Bulgaria around the 10th century, as indicated by a number of archaic linguistic features and textual traces visible in the preserved manuscripts¹⁶. The translations differ from each other with a fairly rich set of characteristic markers (differences, variations) in the areas of lexicon, syntax, and content, meaning that it is possible not only to distinguish them but also to reconstruct the transmission (development, changes) of the text in a diachronic perspective. This task is not easy due to the considerable volume of the text(s) and the need to examine a large number of surviving manuscript copies. However, these same factors make it possible to carry out a fairly detailed reconstruction, which could therefore provide a reliable picture of the historical-literary development of the work. At present, it is impossible to determine which translation was earlier and which was later, so I will refer to them provisionally as translation A and translation B. While these terms create a certain (alphabetical) ordering, they relate exclusively to the distinctive features of the surviving copies and not to the presumed chronology of the translations.

2.1. Slavic Translation A

Translation A has survived in a relatively large group of South Slavic manuscripts as well as in manuscripts clearly linked to the Balkan tradition of East Slavic (Russian) manuscripts. These are primarily reading menologia written using the old, pre-Metaphrastic redaction¹⁷ and calendar

¹⁵ PE, p. 245-246; Comparative and critical studies of the surviving Greek copies of the collection of miracles of St Menas have allowed for the identification of four versions of the text (α, β, γ, δ), of which the first two are of the greatest significance for the study of the Slavic literary tradition. See. Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, p. 58-59.

¹⁶ For the purposes of this study, sources attested in 24 Slavic manuscripts from the early 14th century to the second half of the 17th century were used. For a list, see the bibliography to the article.

¹⁷ The group of South Slavic manuscripts includes reading menologia: *HBKM 1039*, 14th c.; *Деч.94*, 14th c.; *Pc.59*, 1614-1625; *Hil.441*, 1624. In the case of the Ruthenian

hagiographical codices (prologues/synaxaria and *sborniki*)¹⁸. In the manuscript witnesses of this translation, we usually read the *martyrium* (M¹⁹), and the collection attributed to Timothy of Alexandria, consisting of a *prologue* (P) and a collection of miracles, typically numbering six.

2.1.1 Menologia

In the case of the reading menologia, the order of the miracles generally corresponds to the full Greek version in redaction β, as published by Pomialovskii²⁰, though this includes only its initial part (1-5, 7, with the regular omission of miracle 6 – *The Samaritan Woman*)²¹. A characteristic feature of the South Slavic copies is the omission of the *martyrium* (M) text, which is present in the Russian manuscripts. However, the language and translation solutions in the *martyrium* (M) and the miracle collection are very similar, so it can be assumed that the entire work was translated in the same place and time, although the collection was later copied in two variants.

On the diachronic level, a comparison of the surviving copies indicates that the South Slavic manuscripts can be grouped into two main

manuscripts, these are menologia of the so-called older or pre-Makariievian edition, which preserve the Church Slavonic hagiographical tradition prior to the spread of the so-called *Great Reading Menologion* by Metropolitan Makary (1st half of the 16th c.). Examples include *TCJI* 669, mid-15th century and – to some extent, as I will discuss further – *TCJI* 670, 16th c.; *ΠΑΔΑ Φ. 201 № 53*, 1550.

¹⁸ The miracles of St Menas are preserved in the following manuscripts: *Berl. Wuk* 48 (the so-called *Berlinski Sbornik*), 13th/14th c.; *ΠΓΒ φ.212, № 13*, mid-16th c.; *ΠΑΔΑ Φ.181 № 1002*, mid-16th c.; *TCJI № 793*, 16th c.; *ΠΓΒ Φ.98 № 89*, second half of the 16th c.; *ΠΓΒ Φ.212 № 15*, first half of the 17th c.; *ΠΓΒ Φ.98 № 191*, second half of the 17th c.

¹⁹ For the Slavic manuscripts I use the term *martyrium* and the abbreviation ‘M’ for the *passio* to avoid interference with the abbreviation for the *prologue* (P).

²⁰ *Zhitie prepodobnago Paisiia Velikago i Timoŕeia patriarkha Aleksandriiskago poviestvovanie o chudesakh" sv. Velikomuchenika Miny*, ed. I. Pomialovskii, Saint Petersburg 1900, p. 62-89.

²¹ The Church Slavonic manuscripts maintain their own continuous numbering (i.e., miracle 6 is recorded as 5), but this does not serve as a significant textual clue for us, as this numbering is secondary (some early manuscripts do not have it, nor do they have titles for the miracles). Therefore, it has no direct connection with the text of the Greek protograph.

branches in terms of transmission²², which confirms the general tendencies observed in the historical-literary development of the Old Bulgarian literary (scribal) tradition²³. In the case of the East Slavic (Russian) manuscripts, such branching is not found. The absence of the *martyrium* (M) in the South Slavic books is the most easily noticeable, though not the sole, distinguishing feature. In the surviving manuscripts, textual and linguistic differences also emerge, suggesting that the basis for the Slavic translation A was most likely a Greek codex containing recension α , rather than β ²⁴. However, these differences are not significant enough to speak of separate translations or redactions, though they do allow for a distinction to be made between the South Slavic and East Slavic traditions for copying the collection. I will return to this issue below.

A fundamental question arises at this point: did the original Slavic translation of the miracles in translation A include only the aforementioned texts – the *martyrium*, *prologue*, and six miracles (1-5, 7), as indicated by the oldest manuscripts? Given the current state of research, it is impossible to definitively state whether the original translation contained only the initial part or all 13 miracles in the version attributed to Timothy of Alexandria. However, what is puzzling here is the fact that the translation faithfully renders the initial units of the Greek text, which rules out the source being a protograph containing a revised version, and suggests an incomplete variant instead. Diana Atanassova has proposed that the original translation A could have been complete, but that the Slavic protograph was damaged, leading to later surviving (from the 14th c. onward) manuscripts attesting to an incomplete version²⁵. In my opinion, this hypothesis is unlikely because such a scenario would require manuscript damage at a very early stage, when there was likely only one or at most two copies of the text (still in the Balkans), as indicated by the regularity of the set and its arrangement. Even if such an event had occurred, it seems highly probable that in the Old Bulgarian literary and

²² One group is comprised of the copies *НБКМ 1039* and *Деч.94*, while the other group consists of *Рс. 59* and *Нил.441*.

²³ Atanasova, *Chetivata za sv. Mina*, p. 68.

²⁴ In most Greek manuscripts of recension α , the collection of miracles varies significantly between them, but at least three manuscripts are known that contain a complete collection of miracles in the order corresponding to version β , based on the Moscow manuscript *ГИМ Синод. гр. 161* (11th c.), which was used for the edition by Pomjałowski. Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, p. 57. I will return to this issue later.

²⁵ Atanasova, *Chetivata za sv. Mina*, p. 66-68.

translation centres (10th-early 11th c.), which were producing numerous translations from Greek at the time, the text would have been quickly supplemented. I find the second hypothesis proposed by Diana Atanassova more convincing, namely, that the manuscripts preserved the original form of the collection and that the Old Bulgarian translator had access to a Greek manuscript containing an incomplete collection, mainly covering the initial part²⁶. This manuscript could have been physically defective or – what I find more likely – represented one of the incomplete Greek variants of the collection. Accepting this hypothesis logically explains why miracle 6 (*The Samaritan Woman*) is regularly omitted in the translations and why the same number of miracles is regularly copied in the various manuscripts. But did the Greek protograph really consist of miracles 1-5 and 7, and was the Slavic translation limited to just six miracles? There are indications that suggest that there may have been more miracles.

2.1.2 Hagiographical Codices (*sborniki*)

To attempt to answer this question, we will draw on material found in hagiographical codices (*sborniki*). The texts comprising the collection of miracles of St Menas found their way into these manuscripts very early, as evidenced by a fragment (miracle I) preserved in the *Berlin Codex* (the so-called *Berlinski Sbornik*) *Berl. Wuk* 48, from the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries²⁷. Although the source material is preserved only fragmentarily, it allows for a clear connection of the copy with translation A, while the characteristic linguistic and orthographic features of the text (visible in many later copies, including those of the Balkan reading menologion type) align with the Bulgarian tradition. Unfortunately, we do

²⁶ The Pinakes database provides information on four such manuscripts: two with the text of the *prologue* and miracles 1-5: *Mss G 063 sup*, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, Milan, 11th-12th c., and *Mss Add. 26114*, British Library, London, 12th c. (BHG 1256, 1257-1261); and two containing only miracles 1-5 (BHG 1257-1261): *Mss H 206*, Great Lavra, Mt Athos, 14th c., and *Gr. 101*, National Library 'SS Cyril and Methodius', Sofia, 14th c. (BHG 1257-1261). See Atanasova, *Chetivata za sv. Mina*, p. 68.

²⁷ Editions: H. Miklas – V. Zagrebin, *Berlinski sbornik*, Graz 1988; H. Miklas – L. Taseva – M. Jovčeva, *Berlinski Sbornik: Ein kirchenslavisches Denkmal mittelbulgarischer Redaktion des beginnenden 14. Jahrhunderts ergänzt aus weiteren handschriftlichen Quellen*, Sofia – Wien 2006.

not have other comparative material related to the early South Slavic manuscripts of this type, though these codices are more frequently represented in the East Slavic collections. In the Russian context, *sbornik* as a type of book did not quickly come under the influence the influence of the new redaction of texts brought to East Slavic literature by the Moscow Metropolitan Makary's *Great Reading Menologia* (*Menaia*). Therefore, the same translation A has been preserved in essentially all of the manuscripts. Interestingly, the arrangement of the texts in *sborniki* differs from that in menologion, and usually follows this sequence: M + 6, 8, Pr + 1-4²⁸. We thus see that the collection in *sborniki* contains the same number of miracles as in menologion (six), but that not only their arrangement but also the set of miracles included differ. In the *sborniki* version, we consistently find the presence of both miracle 6 (*The Samaritan Woman*), which is omitted in the pre-Metaphrastic menologion translations, and miracle 8 (*The Poor Woman's Sheep*), which is also absent in the menologia. The set of known traditions relating to the Old Church Slavonic miracles of St Menas is thus much broader. Furthermore, we also see two distinct traditions for copying texts in the reading menologia (*čet'i-minei*) and in codices (*sborniki*). Let us now return to South Slavic reading menologia.

2.1.3 The New Redaction in the Reading Menologion *Драг. 700*

The seemingly clear picture of translation A's history is further complicated when we consider two other manuscripts of this type that are linked in their provenance to Moldavian-Wallachian territories and textually linked to the Bulgarian lands of the Second Empire period (late 12th to late 14th c.). These are a manuscript from the Romanian monastery of Dragomirna (*Драг. 700*, 15th/16th c.) and *ГБЛ М.3170*, from the 16th century²⁹. Both represent a three-month variant (September-November) of the reading menologia, but they belong

²⁸ Slightly different in the copies: *РГБ ф.212, № 13* (M + 6, 8, P + 1, 2, 4); *ТСП № 793* (P + 1, 2, 4).

²⁹ This group most likely also includes an incomplete Romanian copy from *BAR 552* (15th/16th c.), which I have been unable to verify. Since I also do not have access to the text of the copy *ГБЛ М.3170*, and I have deduced its similarity to the manuscript *Драг. 700* based on data from BHBS and information in the cited works of D. Atanasova, I will refer only to the manuscript from the Dragomirna Monastery in the following arguments.

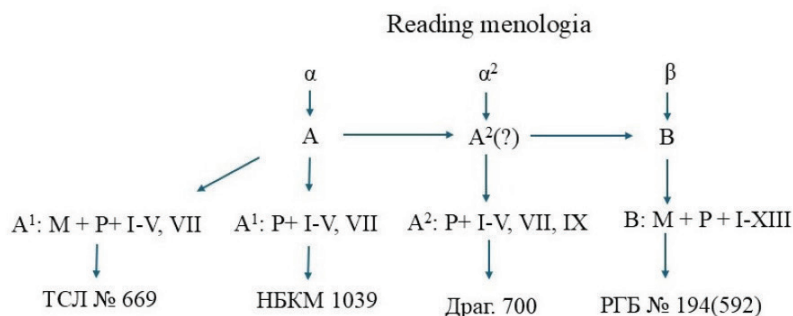
to the so-called new type, reflecting changes that first occurred in liturgical and hagiographical literature in the Balkans in the early 14th century due to the adoption of the Jerusalem Typikon. In manuscripts from this period, which are primarily linked to translation centres and scriptoria at Mount Athos and in Bulgarian monasteries (mainly around Tarnovo), new translations and redactions of these texts appear. In the menologion *Дпаз.700*, under the date 11 November, there is the collection attributed to Timothy, dedicated to Saint Menas, consisting of a *prologue* (without *martyrium*) and seven (not six!) miracles. The initial arrangement of the texts is exactly the same as in the early menologia with translation A: P + miracles 1-5 and 7 (also with the omission of 6). However, in this case, the additional (final) text in the collection (maintaining the continuity of the Slavic numbering) is miracle 9 (*The Barren Camel*). We thus have another example of an expanded repertoire of translated miracles, but we also have a situation in which one more miracle from the complete Greek version is omitted – miracle 8 (*The Poor Woman's Sheep*). It seems that this was neither a coincidence (another manuscript defect?) nor a conscious decision by the Slavic translator, since the content of miracle 8 appears to fit better with medieval cultural contexts (the plundering of a poor widow) than miracle 9, which tells the story of the martyr's friendship with his fellow villager and the punishment for appropriating a camel colt. The copy *Дпаз.700* also differs linguistically from the other copies of translation A, as well as – of course – from copies of translation B, although not on all levels of linguistic-textual comparison. It seems that we are dealing here with a distinct variant, although it is difficult to determine which source it was based on – Greek or (earlier) Slavic. Assuming the first hypothesis, the text would be another translation that – as suggested by its language, orthography, and textual environment in the manuscript (this is a menologion of the new type) – was likely made by Bulgarian-speaking translators in the 14th century, based on some Greek manuscript with a selection of miracles (P + 1-5, 7, 9). However, we notice a striking similarity in the sequence of texts in the collection between the old and new South Slavic menologia (the new ones having one more miracle). If we also consider certain archaic linguistic features and similarities to translation B in the translation solutions applied, another hypothesis arises.

It is worth considering whether there might have existed a separate Old Bulgarian branch of translation A, which was based on a Greek

manuscript of recension α but in a variant similar to the Greek manuscript *Vat. gr. 797* (10th c.), which – as noted by Silvano and Varalda – “peraltro condivide molte lezioni singolari con M, tanto che non escluderei che da un suo progenitore possa discendere la redazione β ”³⁰. Such a version (α^2) could have become the source for the Middle Bulgarian edition, a copy of which we see in manuscript *Дпаз. 700*. This translation (provisionally referred to as A^2) would have been created or known in the same literary environment as the complete translation of the collection of miracles, translation B, and therefore would possess features found in recension β . Adopting this assumption allows us to explain the analogy in the arrangement of textual units between the old and new types of menologia, as well the presence of certain linguistic archaisms, somewhat surprising in a hypothetical new translation from the 14th century (most likely), and textual-translation features similar to those found in manuscripts of translation B (See Diag. 1). The linguistic differences in the copy *Дпаз. 700* compared to translation A may be the result of a Middle Bulgarian revision (possibly also verified against the Greek text), in which traces of the old variant were preserved, and are thus visible in the known copies of both translation A and translation B. In the preparation of translation B, it is possible that the solutions found in Variant A^2 were used, as it was certainly well known to the translator(s). The collection of miracles of St Menas might have originally spread in South Slavic reading menologia in two slightly different variants of translation A- A^1 : P + 1-5, 7 and A^2 : P + 1-5, 7, 9³¹.

³⁰ See Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, p. 58.

³¹ In the case of Church Slavonic synaxaria (prologues) of the newer type, where the texts essentially follow translation A, in addition to the *martyrium*, there is a shortened collection of miracles 1, 2, 3, 5, 4. This set of texts is found in the most widespread Church Slavonic synaxarion, the extended (so-called verse synaxarion/prologue in verse), which was compiled in Bulgaria at the beginning of the 14th century, undoubtedly based on local South Slavic manuscript monuments, such as the aforementioned pre-metaphrastic menologia. See A.A. Turilov, *K istorii Stishnogo prologa na Rusi*, “Drevniaia Rus’. Voprosy medievistiki” 23/1 (2006) p. 70-75; *Predvaritel’nyi svodnyi katalog*, p. 211-217. The variant containing the first five miracles is the most widespread among Greek manuscripts which include the *Miracles of St Menas*. Shortened versions of the first five miracles are attested in Greek synaxaria, although the Greek tradition of the collection “has been characterized by exceptional fluidity from the very beginning” (Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, p. 57-58).



Diag. 1

2.1.4 Synopsis of the Example from *Miraculum 3*

To illustrate the relationships between *recensiones*, I will provide an example of parallel lessons from the initial part of Miracle 3 in copies representative of each variant. The excerpts are provided in the following arrangement:

- Greek text of recension α (Silvano/Varalda);
- Greek text of recension β (Pomialovskiĭ);
- Translation A¹ – old-type reading menologia, South Slavic (*HBKM 1039*);
- Translation A¹ – old-type reading menologia, East Slavic (*TCI № 669*);
- Translation B – East Slavic reading menologia (*ПГБ Ф.113 № 194(592)*);
- Translation A² (?) – reading menologion *Дпаг. 700*;

Miraculum 3

- Ἦν τις γυνὴ ἐκ τῆς χώρας τῶν Φιλοξενιτῶν· αὕτη ἦν πλουσία ἐν τε χρυσίῳ καὶ ἀργυρίῳ ἐκ τῶν γονέων αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ἀνδρός, καλουμένη Σοφία· ἦν δὲ θεοσεβὴς πάνυ (...). Ἀνέστη δὲ ἡ εὐλαβὴς γυνὴ ἐκείνη καὶ ἔλαβεν πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτῆς καὶ ἀπῆλθεν μόνη εἰς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ ἁγίου ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ μὴ νοήσαντός τινος τῶν τοῦ οἴκου αὐτῆς. (Silvano/Varalda, 1-2, 7-9);
- Ἦν τις γυνὴ ἐν χώρᾳ τῶν Φεκοζεητῶν· αὕτη ἦν πλουσία ἐν τε χρυσίῳ καὶ ἀργυρίῳ κεκοσμημένη ἐκ τῶν γονέων καὶ τοῦ αὐτῆς, καλουμένη Σοφία· ὁ δὲ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς ἦν θεοσεβὴς πανυ (...). Ἀνέστη δὲ ἡ γυνὴ

ἐκεῖνη καὶ ἔλαβεν πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτῆς καὶ ἀπῆλθεν πρὸς τὸν ναὸν τοῦ ἁγίου ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ μὴ νοήσαντος τοῦ οἴκου αὐτῆς ὅπως μὴ ἀπαγγείλωσι τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς καὶ κρατήσει αὐτήν· (Pomialovskii, p. 68 (29-31), 69 (8-11));

- Бѣше же жена ѿ земли физитинскыѣ, и бѣаше богата зѣло и сребро мѡго имоуши. и оукрашенѣна ѿ родителю своею и ѿ моужа своего. име же бѣше женѣ тои софїа. и моужь ѿ бгѡчѣтивъ бѣ зѣло (...). И въставѣши жена възвѣмѣши вѣса иже имаше и поиде въ црѣквѣ сѣтаго тѣи. и невѣдоушоу никомоуже въ домоу ѿе, таѣше во се глѡущи въ себѣ аще оувѣдѣтъ ме тѡ не въдадѣтъ ми ити нѣ оудръжетѣ ме зѣде. (НБКМ 1039, f. 332d-333a);
- Бѣше жена етера ѿ земли физитѣскыѣ. бѣаше бѣта зѣло. злато и сребро имоуши. оукрашена ѿ родителю своею и ѿ моужа своего. именемѣ софїа. и моужь еѣ бѣ бгѡчѣтивъ зѣло (...). И въставши жена възвѣмѣши еже имѣѣше и поиде ѱдина въ црѣквѣ сѣтаго тѣи. невѣдоушоу еѣ никомоуже въ домоу своемѣ, не вонѣ глѡаще. аще мѣ оувѣдѣтъ ити. то оудержать мѣ. (ТСЛ № 669, f. 201, 201v);
- Бѣ же жена нѣкаѣ, въ странѣ фекосѣистѣ, и та бѣ богата. златомѣ и сребромѣ оукрашена ѿ родителю своею, и ѿ моужа своего. имѣ же не софїа. и моужь же еѣ бѣ бгѡчѣтивъ велии (...). И въставѣ же та жена, възвѣмѣши все свое имѣнїе, и иде ѱдина къ црѣкви сѣтаго ѡтѣи, нечюущи никомоуже ѿ домашнїи еѣ. ꙗко да не възвѣстѣтъ моужю еѣ, и оудръжать ю. (РГБ Ф. 113 № 194(592), f. 212);
- Бѣ нѣкаѣ жена въ странѣ фекѡзентѣстѣмѣ. сѣ бѣ богата златомѣ и сребромѣ оукрашена ѿ родителїи и ѿ мѣжа своего. и бѣше бгѡчѣтива зѣла (...). Въставши оубо жена она и възвѣмѣши въсѣ имѣнїѣ своѣ, поиде въ храмѣ сѣтго ѡтѣи, никомѣ оувѣдѣвшоу ѿ домашнїихъ еѣ. ꙗко да не оповѣдѣтъ мѣжѣи еѣ, и постражѣтъ ѿ него (Драг. 700, f. 393).

When comparing the copies, let us first focus on the archaic lexical and morphological features of the language in the manuscripts, which point to the early translation mentioned earlier. The Russian menologion *ТСЛ № 669* retains the Old Church Slavonic pronoun *етѣръ* for the Greek *ἐτερος* or *τίς*, which is a characteristic feature of the oldest Cyrillic-Methodian texts and early translations of Balkan (mainly Bulgarian) provenance. In later manuscripts (especially East Slavic), this pronoun is replaced by the equivalent forms *нѣкыи/ѱдинъ*. When this occurs in passages corresponding to the Greek *τίς*, as seen in this example, it represents a relic of the early stage of Old Church Slavonic and

consistently points to an early translation³². Such traces are also found in Translation B, e.g. the use of aorists (including sigmatic aorists, e.g., **БЫСТЪ**, **ВЪЗЛАТЪ**, **ИДЕ/ПОИДЕ**), often in constructions with a Greek parallel. The copies also preserve traces of early orthography and phonetics (digraphs, jer and nasal vowels in etymological positions, e.g., **ВЪЗЪМЪШИ**, **МЖЖЪ**). Often, much information about the textology of the manuscript can be gathered from toponyms. In the case of the port name (**Φιλοξενιτῶν**), we see that although the Slavic translation clearly distorts the term, the old-type menologia (both South Slavic and Russian) follows the Greek recension α (**Φιλοξενιτῶν** – **ФИСИТИНСКЫЕ**, **ФИЗИТЪСКИА**), while menologia of Translation B and *Драг. 700* follow the Greek recension β (**Φεκοζητῶν** – **ФЕКОЗЪИСТЪКЪ**, **ФЕКЪЗЕИТСТЪКИА**). A similar relationship with the Greek recensions is observed in the use of the expression **ῶ** **ЗЕМЛЕ**/**ῶ** **ЗЕМЛА** (rec. α, Translation A) vs. **ВЪ** **СТРАНЪ** (rec. β, Translation B), as well as the strengthening of information through the addition of the adverb **ЗЪЛО** in its attributive form (only in A copies)³³. Similarly, a common feature for the sources of Translation B and copies of *Драг. 700* is the presence of the passive participle for the feminine gender **ΟΥΚΡΑΣΗΕΝΑ** as a translation of the Greek **κεκοσμημένη**, which is present in recension β. The existence of two separate Slavic translations is especially evident in places where the text of both Greek recensions is identical. In the copies of Translation A, the phrase referring to the woman's possessions, expressed in Greek by a participle – **πάντα τὰ ὑπάρχοντα**, is translated descriptively with a verbal expression (**ВЪСА** **ИЖЕ** **ИМАШЕ**), while in Translation B, it is rendered using a noun (**ВСЕ** **СВОЕ** **ИМѢНІЕ**).

There is more evidence for the presence of two independent Slavic translations of the quoted passage. In Translation A (A¹), the woman travels secretly from the household members (rec. α), while in Translation B (and *Драг. 700*), she does so also in secret from her husband

³² See. A.A. Pichkhadze, *Slav. ETER: k voprosu o gruppirovke drevneslavianskikh pamiatnikov*, "Scrinium: Journal of Patrology, Critical Hagiography and Ecclesiastical History" 7-8/2, p. 219, 227; T.V. Pentkovskaia, *K istorii ispravleniia bogoslužebnykh knig v Drevnei Rusi v XIV veke. Chudovskaia redaktsiia Novogo Zaveta*, Moskva 2009, p. 36-37; I. Hristova-Shomova, *Sluzhebniiat Apostol v slavianskata rukopisna traditsiia*, v. 1: *Izledvane na biblijskii tekst*, Sofia 2004, p. 456.

³³ The copy of the Sofia menologion (*menaion*), *HBKM 1039*, at this point likely transmits a distorted text (the word **ЗЛАТО** is missing). It is probable that the word **ЗЛАТО** was mechanically omitted or that a word was accidentally dropped due to contraction (shortening) or contamination of two neighbouring words in the phrase (**ЗЪЛО**, **ЗЛАТО**).

(rec. β). The lack of mention of the husband at this point (A^1) in the version following Greek recension α is most likely a result of interpreting the incipit of the miracle story, which suggests that the woman inherited her possessions from both her parents and her husband (ἐκ τῶν γονέων αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ἀνδρός), thus indicating that she is already a widow. In this context, the use of the feminine form in the phrase in the *Драг. 700* copy, where the attribute of piety is ascribed to the woman (и бѣше бгѣчѣства сѣла), as opposed to her husband (as in the other copies), becomes clear. It therefore seems that this is a remnant of the Greek recension α , which has survived in the Greek transitional (α^2) or early recension β , and is found in the Slavic translation in version A^2 . Essentially, recension β , where the husband is clearly treated as being alive, emphasizes his position and importance, highlighting his piety and strong decision-making role in the household. However, this creates a fundamental logical contradiction between the phrases ὁ δὲ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς ἦν θεοσεβὴς πανυ and τῷ ἀνδρὶ αὐτῆς καὶ κρατήσῃ αὐτὴν, that is, his piety/nobility, on the one hand, and the refusal of the wife's right to make a pilgrimage to the shrine of St Menas, on the other. In the *Драг. 700* copy, we most likely have insight into some intermediate Slavic recension, where the attribute of piety is still assigned only to the woman (a trace of recension α), but where there is also her fear of her husband's reaction (influence of recension β). The omission of the woman's name (Σοφία – София) in the *Драг. 700* copy may be a random omission or a remnant of a defective prototype. Whether this is a characteristic of this copy alone or of the entire group/recension cannot be determined without access to the Moscow copy ГБЛ М.3170 and the Romanian BAR 552. In any case, however, the *Драг. 700* copy is much closer textologically to recension β and Slavic Translation B than one might expect from a formal analysis of the collection, which, as we recall, suggests its strong ties with the tradition of Translation A.

2.1.5 Conclusions for Slavic Translation A

Summing up the data from the analysis of 17 manuscript copies associated with Translation A, we can state that at least the following textual units of the hagiographical collection of St Menas were known in the Slavic medieval literary tradition: *martyrium* (M), as well as the *prologue* (P) and miracles 1-9, although I am not aware of any manuscript in which all of these texts are present together. In the literature on the subject,

two Russian menologia are mentioned – *ТСЛ № 670* (16th century) and *РГАДА Ф.201 № 53* (1550), where the texts M + P + the full collection of miracles (1-13) can be found. However, this is a hybrid version in which miracles 1-5 and 7 belong to Translation A, while miracles 6 and 8-13 are taken from Translation B. In this case, it is most likely that a mechanical supplementation of the missing texts from the South Slavic menologia occurred under the influence of the spread of the model of the Russian, Metropolitan Makary's *Great Reading Menologia*³⁴.

2.2. Slavic Translation B – Complete

The Slavic translation B of the collection of miracles of St Menas is also found in reading menologia and hagiographical codices (*sborniki*), but, in contrast to translation A, it exhibits exceptional stability in its structure and set of texts. In practically all manuscripts, it faithfully follows the Greek text of recension β, as we know it from Pomialovskii's edition, and the text arrangement is as follows: M + P + 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. Unfortunately, in this case, we do not have South Slavic sources, and the oldest surviving manuscript with the full text is the aforementioned *Volokolamsk menologion* from the late 15th century (*ПГБ Ф.113 № 194(592)*). Although this manuscript already shows distinct phonetic and orthographic features of Russian, the South Slavic origin of its prototype remains evident. We notice even more of these features in somewhat later texts, such as the two 16th-century Russian menologia *ТСЛ №782* and *ТСЛ №783*, where, in addition to archaic lexicon, forms with traces of Old Bulgarian inflection (simple and compound future tense forms with *хощети/имати* + *infinitive*, e.g., *что сътворити имамъ тѣлеси сеи* (*Mirac. I*)) and phonetic-orthographic features (e.g., large nasal vowels in etymological places or unvocalized jer) are preserved. At the current stage of research, it is difficult to determine whether translation B was made directly from the Greek recension β or if an existing Slavic copy of the hypothetical variant A² was used for this purpose. However, we can reasonably assume that translation B, following the Greek recension β, reached the East Slavic (Russian) milieu already in its complete form, that is, with all 13 correctly ordered miracles. These qualities likely led to this version being included in the 16th-century Metropolitan

³⁴ See. PE, p. 245.

Makary's *Great Reading Menologion* and, over time, becoming dominant in the Russian (Moscow) manuscript tradition. A comparative analysis of seven manuscripts of this translation reveals the presence of three branches of copies, two of which are connected to menologia of the old (РГБ Ф.113 № 194(592), РГБ Ф.98 №23, РГБ Ф.98 №19) and new (Соф. № 1319, Кол. № 505/524) types, while one is associated with calendar-based hagiographical codices (ТСЛ №783, ТСЛ №782).

A comparison of the copies of translations A and B clearly shows that the Greek proto-texts used by the Slavic translators were certainly not identical. This knowledge allows us to better understand the presence of omissions (*lacunae*) and additions in the text, as well as some significant semantic and lexical differences, without resorting to the simplistic explanation of greater or lesser freedom in translation, or the use of different translation strategies for the same Greek words. In addition to the examples already mentioned above, there are some additional arguments that can be made here. A characteristic feature of one group of manuscripts of translation A is the continuity of the *prologue* text and *Miracle 1*, where at the boundary between the texts, there is only a dot or a larger initial letter (the Lombardic capitals) next to the word ЧЛОВЕКЪ ('man'). In manuscripts with translation B, however, the *prologue* is regularly and clearly separated from *Miracle 1* (with a number mark and separate title, as in Pomialovskii's edition), and the text of the miracle begins with a sentence that is essentially the conclusion of the *prologue*. Shifting it to the beginning of the next text (*Miracle 1*) may cause confusion because it refers, in terms of content and logic, to earlier information from the *prologue* (the efforts of the people of Alexandria to build a temple for Saint Menas in the city). This structure is found in the Greek text of recension β and the Slavic translation B, but it is most likely a trace of early codices with the collection of miracles, where the texts were written *in scriptio continua* without numbers or titles. We can see this clearly in the manuscripts with translation A, where the early and archaic copies look just like this. A somewhat later Slavic tradition shows an increasing tendency to mark the boundary between texts more clearly, with a more explicit indication of the beginning of *Miracle 1* by highlighting the phrase члкъ нѣкто ѿ земли саворьскыѣ (ἄνθρωπος τις ἦν ἐκ τῆς χώρας τῶν Ἰσαύρων). This sentence begins the logical narrative continuity of the story that follows, and it is also a stylistic link to the typical introductory phrases found in other miracles in the collection (and not just this one). It is also worth noting that this tendency, visible in manuscripts of translation A, is also

present in the *Дпаз. 700* copy, which provides further evidence of the early origin of its protograph.

3. Late Church Slavonic Literary Tradition of St Menas' Miracles

Translations A and B represent the primary milestones in the narrative hagiographical tradition of the cult of St Menas within the Slavic context, although they are not the sole extant texts. Another collection is found in the Church Slavonic printed *Reading Menologion* by St Demetrius of Rostov (Daniil Tuptalo), who utilized the Russian variant of the menologia (*čet'i-minei*) translation B, as well as the sinaxarion of a new redaction, the so-called verse synaxarion/prologue in verse³⁵. The *martyrium* and the collection of miracles of St Menas in this edition have undergone literary revision in terms of language and style, and have been significantly abridged. As in the Slavic liturgical prologue, only five miracles are included³⁶, but the very presence of this collection in the widely circulated printed menologia is indicative of continued interest in the cult of St Menas within the Orthodox Slavic cultural milieu of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

4. Final Thoughts

An analysis of several Slavic manuscript copies of translations A and B has revealed certain divergences, which have facilitated the tracing of textual transmission within each respective translation. Each branch of the tradition is marked by a considerable number of textual markers, such as the specific use of vocabulary and grammatical constructions, which were either preserved or omitted in the diachronic transmission. The observations presented here are, however, preliminary and represent only a proposal for reconstructing the historical and literary process of the Slavic translation, which requires verification based on a much broader corpus of sources. Ultimately, the key instrument for research into the Slavic tradition will be a critical edition of the Greek collection

³⁵ Dimitriy Rostovskiy, *Kniga zhitiĭ svyatykh*, v. 1 (Sentiabr', okt'iabr', noiabr'), Kiev 1764, fol. 335-338v.

³⁶ PE, p. 246.

of miracles of St Menas, which will provide a stable textual counterpoint for the study of the Slavic material.

Abbreviations

- BHBS – Ivanova K., *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica*, Sofia 2008 [Иванова, Кл. *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Balcano-Slavica*. София, 2008].
- BHG – *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, v. 1-3, ed. F. Halkin, Bruxelles 1984.
- GRM – Metropolitan Makary's *Great Reading Menologion* = Makarii, Metropolitan, *Velikie Minei Chet'i, compiled by All-Russian Metropolitan Makarii. November. Days 1-12*, Saint Petersburg 1897 [Макарий, митрополит, *Великие Минеи Четии, собранные Всероссийским митрополитом Макарием. Ноябрь. Дни 1-12*. Санкт Петербург 1897].
- PE – Frangulyan L.R. – Kryukova A.N. – Makhan'ko M.A. – Turilov A.A. – Prokopenko L.V. – Shevchenko E.V. – Saenkova E.M., *Mina*, in: *Pravoslavnyaya entsiklopediya*, v. 45, ed. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus', Moscow 2017, p. 239-252. [Франгулян Л.Р. – Крюкова А.Н. – Маханько М.А. – Турилов А.А. – Прокопенко Л.В. – Шевченко Э.В. – Саенкова Е.М., *Мина*, in: *Православная энциклопедия, под редакцией Патриарха Московского и всея Руси Кирилла*, v. 45, Москва 2017, p. 239-252].

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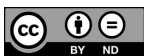
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Saint Menas and His Miracles in the Ethiopian Tradition¹

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Abstract: The fame of St Menas, the Egyptian martyr, spread far beyond Egypt, extending into historical Ethiopia. This widespread reverence stems from the longstanding unity between the Churches of Alexandria and Ethiopia, alongside the significant translation of Copto-Arabic texts into the classical Ethiopic language. By the fourteenth century, *The Life and Martyrdom of St Menas* was translated into Ge'ez and became part of the *Gadla Samā'etāt* collection of accounts on other prominent saints and martyrs. A concise version of St Menas's acts appears in the hagiographical compilation for liturgical use, the *Synaxarium*. Ethiopia commemorates St Menas on *Hedār* 15 and the construction of his shrine at Maryut on *Sanē* 15. The latter occasion entails reading aloud a comprehensive collection of nineteen miracles, also translated from Arabic. The image of a saint who defends devout pilgrims like a knight, protects his sanctuary, heals the sick, liberates the possessed, punishes sins, repairs damage, and bestows blessings upon worshippers, evoked awe, reverence, and piety, especially in the Horn of Africa. Additional texts, including hymns and antiphons, further underscore the cult's vitality. St Menas's canonical depiction on horseback aligns with the broader tradition of equestrian saints, a frequent motif in Ethiopian iconography.

Keywords: St Menas; Ethiopia; acts; synaxaria; miracles; homily; hymns; liturgy

The veneration of saints holds a special place in the Christian tradition of the people living in Ethiopia and Eritrea³. Saints receive reverence

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³ The origins of Christianity in modern Ethiopia and Eritrea date back to the ancient Kingdom of Aksum in the mid-fourth century, continuing uninterrupted despite the changing tides of history. Until the mid-twentieth century, the Ethiopian Orthodox Church was under the Patriarchate of Alexandria, but the relationship between Egypt and Ethiopia extended beyond mere administrative issues. In fact, religious and

not only as holy patrons, but also as exemplars, healers, and protectors, interceding on behalf of individuals and their families before God⁴. Their veneration extends well beyond personal devotion, playing a significant role within Christian communities and the broader fabric of society. This practice, a cornerstone of the region for centuries, continues to influence its spiritual and social life.

The presence of saints gains prominence through their representations in churches and their surroundings. Holy images attract throngs of devoted believers of all ages – monks, the clergy, and the laity, men, women, and children alike – who pray before them with great reverence, sometimes for long hours, fall prostrate, seek protection and blessings, call for help in times of misfortune, and ask for intercession before God. People typically identify churches by the names of the latter's patron saints. A notable feature of this tradition is the altar slab, known as the holy *ṭābot*, which draws from the biblical tradition as a symbolic representation of the stone tablets from the Ark of the Covenant, signifying

dogmatic unity resulted from the influence of the entire culture, shaping both faith and tradition in profound ways. For a detailed history of Christianity in Ethiopia and Eritrea, with an essential bibliography, see S. Munro-Hay – U. Zanetti, *Christianity*, in: *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* (EAe) I 717-728. Additionally, recent works on Christianization in the Horn of Africa include C. Haas, *Mountain Constantines: The Christianization of Aksum and Iberia*, “Journal of Late Antiquity” 1 (2008) p. 101-126; A. Brita, *I racconti tradizionali sulla “seconda cristianizzazione” dell’Etiopia: il ciclo agiografico dei nove santi*, Napoli 2010; G. Hatke, *Aksum and Nubia*, New York 2013; E. Isaac, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Tāwahīdo Church*, New Jersey 2013; C. Giostra, *La diffusione del cristianesimo lungo il Mar Rosso alla luce dell’archeologia: la città-porto di Adulis e il regno di Aksum*, “Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana” (2017) p. 249-313; J. Binns, *The Orthodox Church of Ethiopia: A History*, New York 2018; P.F. Esler, *Ethiopian Christianity. History, Theology, Practice*, Waco 2019; G. Castiglia, *La cristianizzazione di Adulis (Eritrea) e del regno Aksumita. Nuovi dati dal Corno d’Africa d’età tardo antica*, “Rendiconti della Pontificia Accademia di Archeologia” 91 (2020) p. 91-127; V.A. Grasso – M.J. Harrower, *The Basilica of Betā Sāma ‘ti’ in its Aksūmite, Early Christian, and Late Antique Context*, “Journal of Near Eastern Studies” 82 (2023) p. 59-76.

⁴ For a more general discussion of the veneration of saints in Ethiopia and Eritrea, see for example S. Kaplan, *Hagiographies and the History of Medieval Ethiopia*, “History in Africa: A Journal of Method” 8 (1981) p. 107-123; S. Kaplan, *The Ethiopian Cult of Saints: A Preliminary Investigation*, “Paideuma” 32 (1986) p. 1-13; *Veneration of Saints in Christian Ethiopia: Proceedings of the International Workshop Saints in Christian Ethiopia: Literary Sources and Veneration, Hamburg, April 28-29, 2012*, ed. D. Nosnitsin, Wiesbaden 2015. Moreover, see Nosnitsin’s encyclopaedic entry *Saints, Christian*, EAe IV 476b-480b, with a bibliography.

the enduring presence of God among his people. These slabs are generally consecrated in the name of saints venerated within a specific church. It is therefore unsurprising that Christians in Ethiopia and Eritrea, particularly those of the Orthodox faith, traditionally bear names derived directly from the Bible, both from the Old and New Testament, or names of other saints, as a sign of their personal commitment, reflecting a profound and lasting connection between their personal identity and the sacred figures they revere.

Naturally, saints who hold particular significance within the local Church – especially those associated with places linked to their lives, ascetic practices, martyrdom, and cult – enjoy considerable veneration. Among the most prominent are figures such as Abuna Takla Hāymānot, founder of the monastery in Shewa province; Saint Gabra Manfas Qedus, associated with Mount Zeqʷālā; the semi-legendary Yārēd, known as Maḥletāy (Melodos); monastic saints such as Garimā, Zamikāʿēl Aragāwi, Paṅtalēwon, Yoḥanni, and Samuʿēl of Waldebba in Tigrāy; ʾIyasus Moʿā of Dabra Ḥayq ʾEstifānos; the saint nun Walatta Pētros; and saint rulers, such as ʿĒzānā, Kālēb, Yemrehānna Krestos, Naʾakkʷeto Laʾab, and Minās, along with many others⁵. However, the saints of the universal Church receive equal reverence and veneration. The Orthodox Church of the Geʿez rite unreservedly recognizes the saints from the time prior to the Council of Chalcedon (451). Additionally, it acknowledges all the saints recognized by the Coptic Church, as well as those commemorated in the Alexandrian *Synaxarium* and other documents of that tradition.

As is common in Eastern Christian communities, the recognition of sanctity does not follow any formal process but rather derives from the spontaneous faith of the people, who naturally acknowledge the holiness of certain individuals. This recognition has roots in the renown of their virtuous lives, as exemplified by holy monks and ascetics, the orthodoxy of their faith, particularly in the case of the great Church Fathers, the fame of their martyrdom, especially those from the era of Diocletian, and, ultimately, the miracles and graces experienced by the faithful who venerate a saint at designated times or visit sites and churches associated with that person.

⁵ For information on Ethiopian local saints, in addition to their entries in *Enciclopedia dei Santi. Le Chiese Orientali* (1998) and in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica*, see also Kinefe-Rigb Zelleke's *Bibliography of the Ethiopic Hagiographical Traditions*, "Journal of Ethiopian Studies" 13 (1975) p. 57-102.

Unlike the Latin and Byzantine traditions, where the veneration of relics holds particular significance, Ethiopian Christians place greater emphasis on observing the feast days of saints by visiting churches and sanctuaries dedicated to those persons. They engage fervently in communal prayers and liturgies, invoking the benevolence of their patron saints. When possible, they also visit the saints' tombs, expecting special graces and even healings. This may reflect the enduring belief in the sanctity of certain places and spaces. The Ethiopian expression of the cult of saints also manifests through the veneration of images and the reading of texts that recount their lives and virtues.

Among the various saints, martyrs in particular garnered profound veneration and attention from the faithful. Accounts of their unwavering commitment to proclaiming the faith despite intense persecution, the miracles attributed to them during their lifetimes, and, most notably, the excruciating tortures they endured, elevated them to the status of archetypal defenders of the faith and paragons of virtue. This reverence for the martyrs became especially pronounced during periods when Christians in the Ethiopian Highlands faced the imminent threat of persecutions during the Muslim invasions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, endured internal schisms within the Church resulting from theological disputes, and contended with the devastating religious conflicts of the seventeenth century.

Influenced by Byzantine and Oriental iconography, the soldier saints' and martyrs' depictions in Ethiopia presented them as warrior saints on horseback⁶. Beside the inscriptions bearing their names, each saint held distinct attributes that served to differentiate them. Saints such as George of Lydda slaying the dragon, Mercurius bearing two swords, Theodore of Amasea with his spear, Philotheus of Antioch piercing the bull, Victor of Marseille vanquishing his enemies, or Claudius, known in Ethiopia as Galawdēwos, among others, including St Menas, collectively formed a distinct iconographic canon. This visual tradition, particularly when rendered on the walls of Ethiopian churches and accompanied by

⁶ On equestrian saints and their iconographic representations with the Ethiopian tradition, see E. Balicka-Witakowska, *Equestrian Saints*, EAe II 347b-351a. The Ethiopian iconography of St Menas constitutes a distinct topic and requires a separate study. Basic observations appear in the article by E. Balicka-Witakowska, *Menas in Art*, EAe III 919a-920a, along with a comprehensive bibliography. See also C.M. Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie der Menas-Ampullen*, Cairo 1910, p. 145-149; D. Tešić Radovanović – B.M. Gugolj, *Visual Representations of Saint Menas and Saint Thecla: Objects and Sources*, "IKON" 14 (2021) p. 9-20.

hagiographic and liturgical texts, has played a crucial role over the centuries in shaping and cultivating the piety of Christians living at the sources of the Nile⁷.

Ethiopian hagiographic literature encompasses various categories of texts, including acts of saints, known as *gamlāt*, which describe the life and the martyrdom of a saint; miracles attributed to specific saints (*ta'ammerāt*), occurring both during the saint's lifetime and after their death, often linked to the graces experienced in locations associated with the saint's cult; hagiographical notes designated for commemorative days according to the Ethiopian calendar (*senkessār*); shorter or longer poetic texts, such as *salāmtā* and *malke'āt*; and liturgical texts, such as antiphons and acclamations (*mawāše'ī*). The hagiographical *dossier* for a saint may be complete or consist only of selected texts, depending on the saint's significance for individual piety and the communal life of the Church. These texts do not necessarily circulate together in a single manuscript, although such cases also exist.

Additionally, hagiographical works, particularly those recounting the miracles of saints, often exist in multiple recensions, thereby enriching the corpus with supplementary texts. This phenomenon pertains to both translated texts and those of indigenous composition. The existence of multiple versions may result from alterations introduced during the manuscript transmission process, which can lead to modifications in

⁷ The body of work on Ethiopian iconography is extensive, with significant contributions from scholars such as S. Chojnacki (see *Major Themes in Ethiopian Painting*, Wiesbaden 1983), M.E. Heldman, D. McEwan, M. Gervers, and particularly E. Balicka-Witakowska. A comprehensive entry, along with an extensive bibliography, appears in the joint article by A. Marx – E. Balicka-Witakowska – M.E. Heldman, *Painting*, EAe IV 90b-101a. In addition, several recent publications have further enriched the field, such as C. Bosc-Tiessé, *Spirit and Materials of Ethiopian Icons*, Addis Ababa 2010; H. Rubinkowska-Anioł, *The Paintings in St. George Church in Addis Ababa as a Method of Conveying Information about History and Power in 20th-century Ethiopia*, "Studies in African Languages and Cultures" 49 (2015) p. 115-141; C. Chaillot, *The Role of Images and the Veneration of Icons in the Oriental Orthodox Churches: Syrian Orthodox, Armenian, Coptic and Ethiopian Traditions*, Zürich 2018; J. Gnisci, *A Fifteenth-Century Ethiopian Icon of the Virgin and Child by the Master of the Amber-Spotted Tunic*, "Rassegna di Studi Etiopici" 3 (2019) p. 87-100; S.A. de Ménonville, *Making the Tasteless World Sweet: An Ethnography of Image Practices in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church as Lived Theology*, Paris 2022; V.Z. Kuvatova, *Eastern and Western Influence in Wall Paintings of Abuna Yemata Guh Church (Ethiopia)*, "Oriental Courier" 3 (2023) p. 262-272.

content and structure. Such variations are often influenced by the distinct traditions and interpretative frameworks prevalent within the specific cultural and historical context of a text's composition, translation, or reproduction.

1. Life and martyrdom

The primary and most comprehensive account of St Menas's unexpected birth, virtuous life, glorious martyrdom, and the miraculous discovery of his relics in the classical Ethiopic language appears in *The Life and Martyrdom of St Menas* (*Gadla Minās*, CAe 3165)⁸, to which we refer below as *The Acts* or *The Life*. This text survives in approximately twenty Ethiopic manuscripts, with the oldest, including BL Or. 691, EMM 1833, and EMM 6965, dating to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century⁹, a period of translating the text from its Arabic model¹⁰.

Similarly to the hagiographies of many other saints, the original sources for Oriental versions of *The Life* originate from the Greek

⁸ In classical Ethiopic (Ge'ez), the term *gdlāt* refers to the lives of saints and martyrs. It derives from the root verb *gadala*, which signifies struggling or fighting, both in the physical and spiritual sense. As such, we can translate *gdl* as "conflict, combat, spiritual contending or struggle", similar to the Greek *ἀγών*; see W. Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic): Ge'ez-English/English-Ge'ez, with an Index of the Semitic Roots*, Wiesbaden 1987, p. 182; W. Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, Wiesbaden 2010, p. 211b; cf. A. Dillmann, *Lexicon linguae aethiopicae cum indice latino*, Lipsiae 1865, c. 1201; S. Kaplan, *Gädl*, EAe II 642a-644b. *Clavis Aethiopica* (CAe) is a comprehensive index of Ethiopian literary heritage, including both individual texts and larger collections, encompassing original works as well as translations. Access is possible via the project's website, *Beta maṣāḥāft: Manuscripts of Ethiopia and Eritrea*, at the University of Hamburg, under the direction of A. Bausi (<https://betamasaheft.eu/clavis-list.html>).

⁹ A comprehensive list of manuscripts containing *The Acts of St Menas*, along with codicological analysis and commentary, will appear separately in a forthcoming article. In this study, we consider only select individual manuscripts that exhibit textual variations from the version presented by Budge.

¹⁰ The Ethiopic *Passio Menae* (BHO 746) was edited with an English translation by E.A.W. Budge, *Texts Relating to Saint Mēna of Egypt and Canons of Nicaea in a Nubian Dialect with Facsimile*, Oxford 1909, p. 62-73 (ed.), 44-58 (tr.), based on ms BL Or. 689, fols 73va-78vb, with emendations from two other manuscripts in the British Library. A French translation based on ms BnF d'Abb. 92 (Conti Rossini 129), fols 123va-130ra, appears in M. Chaîne in Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie*, p. 33-45.

tradition¹¹. However, the Ethiopic text exhibits significant divergence from the Greek acts as presently known¹²; instead, it aligns more closely with the Coptic and Arabic sources¹³.

The Ethiopic version of *The Life* begins with a narrative detailing St Menas's family origins. His father allegedly came from Egypt, specifically from a place called *Qēṭewā* or *Qēṭebā*¹⁴. According to *The Acts*, this "city was called after the name of a certain governor, who built therein a tower and made strong the walls thereof", implying an artificial etymology for the name. In contrast, the Greek version of *The Acts* locates

¹¹ Another question regards the Greek text that served as the model for the Coptic, Arabic, and, consequently, Ethiopic version of *The Life*; see P. Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Miracles of St Menas*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 35-64. See also the hagiographical entry on St Menas by J.M. Sauget – M.C. Celetti, *Menna (Menas)*, in: *Biblioteca Sanctorum*, v. 9, p. 324-343. For more information on St Menas the Martyr in the Ethiopian tradition, see also W. Witakowski, *Menas*, EAe III 918-919; M. Krause, *Menas the Miracle Maker, Saint*, in: *The Coptic Encyclopedia* V 1589-1590. For other Oriental saints with this name, see Wadi Abuliff in *Enciclopedia dei Santi. Le Chiese Orientali*, v. 2, c. 485-488.

¹² Sources attest three recensions of the Greek *Passio Menae*: the text by Symeon the Metaphrast (BHG 1250), edited and translated into Latin by G. van Hooft, *Acta sancti Menae martyris Aegyptii*, AnBol 3 (1884) p. 258-270; another recension (BHG 1251) in the *Passio Menae, Victoris et Vincentii*, edited by T. Ioannou, *Μνημεία αγιολογικά*, Venice 1884, p. 284-324 (Menas, § 1-15, p. 284-298); and the third recension (BHG 1254), edited by K. Krumbacher, *Miscellen zu Romanos (II)*, München 1907, p. 31-43.

¹³ For the Coptic *Passio Menae* (CCo 287) from ms M.590, in J. Drescher, *Apa Mena. A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas. Edited, with translation and commentary*, Le Caire 1946, p. 1-6 (ed.), 100-104 (tr.); see also P. Piwowarczyk, *Greckie i koptyjskie Męczeństwo św. Menasa. Wstęp i przekład z komentarzem*, "Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne" 51/2 (2018) p. 371-374, which includes a Polish translation of the text. Another fragmentary Coptic *passio* attributed to Cyril of Alexandria appears in BHO 747. For the Arabic text based on ms H, see F. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen zum Heiligen Menas*, Heidelberg 1993, p. 351-365 (ed.), 86-105 (tr.). However, the Ethiopic version aligns more closely with "Version 2" in Arabic mss D, N, F, and Ī; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 106; for Arabic fragments and their German translation, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II 5, 2), p. 372-373 (ed.), 117-119 (tr.). For a concordance of the Arabic version of *The Life* in various manuscripts, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II, 3-7), p. 105-144.

¹⁴ Eth. *wa-zentu qeddus samā'et beḏu' Minās za-beḥēra Gebṣ 'enta semā Qēṭewā*; see Budge, *Texts*, p. 62. The form *Qēṭebā* appears in several early manuscripts, such as EMMI 1833, fol. 129va; BL Or. 691, fol. 170rb; BnF éth. 57, fol. 1rb.

his origin in Κοτυαέων in Phrygia¹⁵, while the Coptic version situates his family in Maryut, in a place called Τραεiat (Τραεiat)¹⁶. The Arabic sources likewise maintain that St Menas's family came from Maryūt¹⁷. Furthermore, the Ethiopian *Synaxarium*, drawing on its Arabic model, asserts that the martyr's father was the governor of Nikiou in Lower Egypt.

According to the Ethiopic *Acts*, the father of St Menas was Eudoxius (Eth. 'Awdaksis)¹⁸, while his mother's name was Euphemia ('Awfomyā)¹⁹. When Eudoxius faced accusations by his own brother, Anatolius²⁰, the king named 'Abrayos appointed the former to 'Afrīqyā²¹. Clearly, these names derive from Arabic words, which, in turn, are translations of Greek terms. However, there exists a clear distinction between Greek *Phrygia* (Φρυγία), located in Asia Minor, and Arabic 'Ifriqiya. The latter term derives from the name of the Roman province *Africa*²², specifically referring to the territories along the Mediterranean coast that now

¹⁵ See Budge, *Texts*, p. 44, with note 2, which cites Krumbacher's edition, *Miscellen*, p. 31. See also G. van Hooft, *Acta*, p. 260. In fact, Greek Κοτυαέων, or Latin *Cotiaeum*, on the Roman road from Dorylaeum to Philadelphia in Phrygia Epictetus, has mentions in Strabo, *Geogr.* 12, 8, 12, and Pliny, *Hist. nat.* 5, 32, cf. W. Smith, *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, v. 1, London 1856, p. 697-698. For more on the original place of St Menas, see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. i-iv.

¹⁶ See Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 2a, l. 15 (ed.), and 101 (tr.), with note 1.

¹⁷ See Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 382 (ed.), 133 (tr.); E. Amélineau, *La géographie de l'Égypte à l'époque copte*, Paris 1893, p. 241-243.

¹⁸ See Budge, *Texts*, p. 66 (ed.), 44 (tr.). This name can appear in various forms across the Ethiopic manuscripts, such as 'Adoksyos and 'Awdoksis in EMMML 1833, fol. 132vab (14th cent.), or 'Awdosis in the late fifteenth-century ms EMMML 1479, fol. 122ra. In the Arabic version (ms H), the name appears as 'Awdūksīwos or 'Awdūksīs; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II, 2), p. 351-352 (ed.), 88-89 (tr.). However, another Arabic recension of the story (ms T) mentions the name as *Tawris*; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II 7, 2), p. 133, note 584.

¹⁹ Eth. 'Āfomyā in EMMML 1833, fol. 132vb, and EMMML 1479, fol. 122ra.

²⁰ Eth. 'Aṭālyos in BL Or. 689, or 'Anṭāliwos in EMMML 1833, fol. 132vb. In the Arabic version (ms H), his name appears as *Abṭālis*, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 352 (ed.), 88 (tr.).

²¹ Eth. 'Abrāqēyā or 'Abrakiyā according to the text of Budge, but 'Afrīqyā in EMMML 1833, fol. 132vb and some other manuscripts.

²² For more about the history and organization of the Roman province in North Africa, see D. Fishwick, *On the Origins of Africa Proconsularis, I: The Amalgamation of Africa Vetus and Africa Nova*, "Antiquités africaines" 29 (1993) p. 53-62.

encompass Tunisia, Libya, and parts of Egypt²³. In the Ethiopic texts, this distinction appears overlooked or misunderstood. As a medieval translation from Arabic, the Ethiopic texts often disregard distant geographical realities and historical facts, which results in the distortion of personal names and the creation of new toponyms. Consequently, the Ethiopic *'Afrīqyā* becomes an ambiguous term, blending Latin *Africa*, Greek *Phrygia*, and Arabic *'Ifriqiya*²⁴.

As recounted in the Ethiopic *Gadl*, Euphemia was sterile, and thus Christians regard the birth of Menas as a genuine miracle. On the feast day of the Holy Virgin, Euphemia went to church, engaging in fervent prayer and weeping as she pleaded for God's mercy. There, she heard a voice saying "Amen". Subsequently, Euphemia conceived and gave birth to a son, whom she named Menas. In this way, the Greek name Μηνῶς and the Coptic ⲙⲏⲛⲁ evolved into *Minā* in Arabic, and subsequently *Minā(s)* in Ethiopic. This transformation has an intrinsic link with the response (Gr. ἀμήν, Ar. *amīn*, Eth. *'amin* or *'amēn*) that Euphemia heard in the church²⁵. As a result, both manuscripts and printed editions of texts pertaining to Menas in the Ethiopic language almost equally attest various forms of the saint's name – *Minā*, *Minās*, and *Mēnās*. This narrative remains absent from the text of the Greek *Acts*, though it undoubtedly draws from the Coptic *Encomium* and its Arabic elaborations.

The Ethiopic account of the early years of St Menas highlights his strong faith, which he inherited from his father, and his youthful devotion, demonstrated through fasting and prayer. He lost his father at the age of eleven and became an orphan when his mother died three years later. Renouncing material wealth to aid the poor and support the Church, Menas enlisted in the army at the age of fifteen. In response to an edict issued

²³ For these issues, see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 103-104, with note 1.

²⁴ The potential association of two different saints named Menas, one from Phrygia and the other from the Libyan Desert (see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. iii-iv), holds no significance from the Ethiopian perspective. Therefore, please see above the discussion already addressed in this issue: E. Wipszycka, *The Birth of the Cult of St Menas*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 15-19.

²⁵ See Budge, *Texts*, p. 45 (ed.) and 63 (tr.). For details on the Ethiopic terminology derived from the Semitic root *'mn*, see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 24; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 735-739; H. Wildberger, "Glauben". *Erwägungen zu* מִן, in *Hebräische Wortforschung*, ed. B. Hartmann et al., Leiden 1967, p. 372-386. For further discussion of the origins of the name of St Menas, see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. iv-v; see Wipszycka, *The Birth of the Cult of St Menas*, p. 15.

by Emperor Gaius Valerius²⁶, he deserted the army to avoid idolatry and fled to the desert, where he became an eremite. After some time, however, and by God's inspiration, he returned to the city to openly profess his faith in Christ. As a result, Menas was arrested and subjected to cruel and prolonged tortures, and then beheaded with a sword on *Hedār* 15 in the Ethiopian calendar, which corresponds to November 11 in the Julian calendar. His body, initially intended for burning, resisted the fire, so soldiers buried him with respect in a private property. The Ethiopic text describing the martyrdom of St Menas generally aligns with other traditions, except for the inclusion of the saint's prolonged dialogues with his persecutors, his orations, and more detailed descriptions of his torments.

The following section of *Gadla Minās* recounts the discovery of the saint's body and the construction of his shrine, a narrative absent from the Greek *passio*²⁷. Instead, this account primarily derives from Coptic and Arabic sources²⁸. This portion of the text is particularly significant, as it provides the context for the miracles that later formed a collection, whose translation we present below, in the next part of this work.

According to the Ethiopic text, a governor of 'Afriqyā (Ar. 'Ifriqiya) named Athanasius ('*Atenāsīs*) took the saint's body with the hope that it might help in the fight against the people of the Five Cities²⁹. Thus, the soldiers

²⁶ Eth. *Gāyeyos wa-Felesāyos*, cf. Budge, *Texts*, p. 63. Caius Galerius Valerius Maximianus, commonly known as Galerius, was Roman emperor from AD 305 to 311. The Greek text refers to emperors Diocletian (Διοκλητιανός) and Maximian (Μαξιμιανός), see van Hooff, *Acta*, p. 258, or *Dīqlādiyānūs wa-Maksīmiyānūs* in the Arabic version (ms H), see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II 2), pp. 353 (ed.), 91 (tr.).

²⁷ For the Greek text on the discovery of the relics of St Menas, which, however, recounts the story of a different saint named Menas, who was martyred at Alexandria along with Hermogenes and Eugehrius and is associated with the church in Constantinople, where tradition gives him the title of καλλικέλαδος, see H. Delehay, *L'invention des reliques de Saint Ménas a Constantinople*, AnBol 29 (1910) p. 117-150; D.N. Wilber, *The Coptic Frescoes of Saint Menas at Medinet Habu*, "The Art Bulletin" 22/2 (1940) p. 87, with note 3. For more on the process of the conflating different saints with the same name Menas, see C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, London – New York 2003, p. 181-190.

²⁸ The Coptic text on the *translatio* and the detailed description of the shrine's construction, along with the French translation, in Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 59-72 (ed.), 140-149 (tr.). For the Arabic text from ms A, with the German translation and notes, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II 5), p. 368-372 (ed.), 110-125 (tr.).

²⁹ Eth. *ḥammestu 'ahgur*, see EMM 1833, fol. 137va. The name Pentapolis, referring to the historical region of Cyrenaica, denoted the five main cities of the area: Apollonia, Cyrene, Ptolemais, Teucheira, and Berenice.

travelled across the sea from *'Afrīqyā*, which means a journey from the Libyan desert to Alexandria. As the saint's body was already aboard the ship, two camel-headed beasts emerged from the sea, clearly intent on causing harm. However, a fire emanating from the saint's body drove the beasts away. When this event occurred again, with a similar outcome, the beasts recognized their defeat, bowed to the saint's relics, and then departed. Upon arriving in Alexandria, the power of the relics helped the soldiers to defeat the Berbers. Later, the relics were deposited in a place called *Mēstēn*, near the shore of Lake Maryut³⁰. As we see, this part of the Ethiopic text fully aligns with other Oriental versions, which have been freely compiled³¹.

A brief narrative follows regarding an attempt to transport the saint's body, which fails due to the resistance of the camels. This provoked interpretation as another miracle, signifying the saint's will to remain in the same place, within a strong wooden coffin³². In response, the faithful created an image showing the saint dressed as a soldier, with two monsters resembling camels bowing in homage to him. The image, placed on the saint's body and carried away by soldiers, became a sign of protection and aid during maritime travel and warfare³³. Without question, this motif alludes to the image of St Menas depicted on clay ampoules, which were widely popular in the late antique Christian world³⁴. However, this reflects Egyptian realities and the Copto-Ara-

³⁰ See Budge, *Texts*, p. 71 (ed.), 55 (tr.); cf. EMMML 1833, fol. 139vb. The Coptic *encomium* refers to the same place as a "village of Esti (Ἐστὶ)", located about fifteen kilometres above the shrine, near the tower built for protection against barbarians; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 61b, l. 22 (ed.), 141 (tr.), with note 3; see also M. Chaîne in Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie*, p. 42, note 2, with a reference to the Libyan population Mastieni or Mastita. However, the toponym *Mēstēn* seems absent from the Arabic dossier of St Menas in this exact form. In the *translatio* according to ms H, the place where the soldiers brought the saint's body is called *Buḥayrat Bayāḍ*, which perhaps corresponds to "Libya of Nepaeiat" in the Coptic ms M.590, a Libyan name for Mareotis; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 104, with note 463.

³¹ See Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 111-112 (tr.).

³² The Arabic version of this episode (ms H) is available at the end of the acts in Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 363-364 (ed.), 104 (tr.).

³³ For the Arabic accounts of the miracles associated with the transport of the saint's body by sea, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II 5, 3), p. 120-125, with the text on ms T, p. 373-375 (ed.), 120-123 (tr.).

³⁴ The ceramic pilgrim flasks featuring images of the saint and words of blessing (*eulogia*) became some of the most recognizable elements of the cult of St Menas. The earliest examples date back to the late fifth century and were most popular during the reigns of Justinian and Heraclius. Their production in Maryut ceased with the Arab

bic model of the Ethiopic narrative, as both the orant-style image and the ampoules themselves remained practically unknown in ancient and medieval Ethiopia³⁵.

The following section of the *Gadl* describes the interring of St Menas's body in a robust wooden coffin, buried at a designated location. The text then recounts the story of a crippled boy who, desiring to see the lamp suspended above the saint's grave, approaches the structure and experiences miraculous healing. This narration also compiles various versions of the discovery of the saint's relics, as presented in the Arabic sources³⁶.

As the site gained renown, numerous other healings and deliverances of the possessed followed³⁷. According to the Ethiopic *Acts*, the tenure of Archbishop Athanasius of Alexandria (328-373) saw the erection of the first church dedicated to St Menas, then solemnly consecrated during the reign of Emperor Theodosius (379-395) and the tenure of Archbishop Theophilus (385-412)³⁸. The shrine underwent a significant expansion under Emperor Zeno (474-475 and 476-491), who established a garrison with 123,000 soldiers to protect the pilgrims and further developed the city, including the port on Lake Maryut³⁹. Additionally, a new special

invasion. The iconographic motif was adapted from pre-Christian representations of Horus – Harpocrates, shown in military dress and taming hostile beasts held in his left and right hands; see Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie*, p. 93-120; Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, p. 185-186, with notes 34 and 35.

³⁵ The only evidence of St Menas's cult in the former Kingdom of Aksum is an ampoule bearing his image in the orant posture, discovered during excavations at Adulis in present-day Eritrea; see R. Paribeni, *Ricerche nel luogo dell'antica Adulis*, "Monumenti antichi" 18 (1907) c. 537-538, fig. 54; cf. C. Giostra, *La diffusione del cristianesimo lungo il Mar Rosso alla luce dell'archeologia*, RACr 93 (2017) p. 284-286. Later Ethiopian iconography almost entirely neglects this type of representation in favour of the image of a horseback rider, a trend that persists into modern times, possibly changing today only under the influence of popular publications and images.

³⁶ The episode appears in the Coptic *encomium*; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 64-65 (ed.), 143-144 (tr.). We find the same story attested in the Arabic text "Version 2"; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 372 (ed.), 118 (tr.); for the same in ms A, see *ibid.*, p. 107.

³⁷ The Coptic *encomium* once again refers to this site as Esti (Ἑστὶ); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 64a, l. 19 (ed.), 143 (tr.). See footnote 29.

³⁸ For the Arabic source text of this tradition, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 371-372 (ed.), 115-117 (tr.), according to the Arabic ms A.

³⁹ This information relies on the edition by Budge, *Texts*, p. 72. However, other early Ethiopic manuscripts record the number of soldiers as 1,200; see EMMML 1833, fol. 139ra, BnF éth. 135, fol. 19ra; see also the translation by M. Chaîne in Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie*, p. 44. The Coptic text informs us that Zeno established a garrison of

tax supported the church. The narrative concludes by noting that people visited the shrine even after the Muslims took control of Egypt during the reign of Emperor Heraclius (610-641)⁴⁰. These pilgrims, coming from distant regions, experienced numerous miracles and healings; they offered sacrifices and returned to their homes in joy, disseminating the veneration of St Menas across the known world⁴¹.

Although this entire narrative has roots deeply in the Egyptian context, it likely resonated also with Christians in Ethiopia, where the Church established similar sanctuaries dedicated to local saints. A notable example is Dabra Libānos monastery, originally known as Dabra 'Asbo, located in the Ethiopian province of Shewa, where St Takla Hāymānot, a key figure in the thirteenth-century renewal of Christian life in Ethiopia, lived and was buried⁴². His tomb later became a prominent pilgrimage site, renowned for numerous healings and exorcisms that took place there, as attested by the miracles recorded in an extensive collection read to this day⁴³.

12,000 warriors; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 69 (ed.), 147 (tr.). The Arabic ms A states that the garrison consisted of 16,000 soldiers; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 117.

⁴⁰ See also Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 117. For the late history of the shrine in Copto-Arabic sources, see *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, III: Agathon to Michael I (766)*, ed. and tr. B. Evetts, PO 5, Paris 1910, chapters 18-19.

⁴¹ The same Ethiopic text regarding the construction and renovation of the shrine in Maryut is also transmitted separately as two miracles in ms SSB, fol. 34va-35va (ed. Budge, *Texts*, p. 71, l. 16-72, l. 12), and fols 35vb-36vb (ed. Budge, *Texts*, p. 72, l. 12-73, l. 9).

⁴² For more about St Takla Hāymānot and his shrine, with an extensive bibliography, see E.A.W. Budge, *The Life and Miracles of Tāklā Hāymānōt in the Version of Dabra Libānōs*, London 1906; Taddasse Tamrat, *Church and the State in Ethiopia 1270-1527*, Oxford 1972, p. 160-169; I. Campbell, *The Church of Saint Takla Haymanot at Dābrā Libanos*, "The Sociology Ethnology Bulletin of Addis Abeba University" 1/3 (1994) p. 4-11; A. Pankhurst, *Dābrā Libanos Pilgrimages Past and Present, the Mystery of the Bones and the Legend of Saint Tāklā Haymanot*, "The Sociology Ethnology Bulletin of Addis Abeba University" 1/3 (1994) p. 14-26; I. Ormos, *The Life of Tāklā Haymanot as a Source for the Study of Popular Religious Practices in Ethiopia*, "The Arabist" 9-10 (1994) p. 305-332; D. Nosnitsin, *The Ethiopic Synaxarion: Text-Critical Observations on Tāklā Haymanot's Commemoration (24 Nāhase)*, OCP 73 (2007) p. 141-183; D. Nosnitsin, *Tāklā Haymanot*, EAe IV 831a-834b; M.L. Derat, *Dābrā Libanos*, EAe II 25b-28a.

⁴³ The miracles attributed to St Takla Hāymānot often appear alongside his life (*Gadl*) in Ethiopic manuscripts. These narratives detail the healings and other divine graces attributed to the saint's intervention. Budge edited them, with an English translation, in *The Life and Miracles of Tāklā Hāymānōt*, v. 2, p. 267-344. For further information on the manuscripts, see R. Zarzeczny, *Catalogo dei manoscritti etiopici di due*

2. Ethiopian *Synaxaria*

The reception of *Gadla Minās* was likely very limited among Ethiopians, as it exists in only a relatively small number of manuscripts. However, an alternative version of the story is much more popular, as it appears in the Ethiopian *Synaxarium*, the book of saints for the entire year, publicly read in connection with the daily liturgy⁴⁴.

St Menas the Martyr receives commemoration twice during the Ethiopian liturgical year⁴⁵ and, as a result, enjoys two separate entries in the *Synaxarium*. The primary observance takes place on *Hedār* 15⁴⁶.

collezioni private (Tomasi – Luc-chesi), con repertorio dei testi, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 309, Roma 2020, p. 301-304.

⁴⁴ The Ethiopian *Book of Saints* (Eth. *Senkessār*) was translated from its Copto-Arabic model in the fourteenth century and later revised and expanded to include local saints' lives. For an overview of the current research, see G. Colin, *Le synaxaire éthiopien. État actuel de la question*, AnBol 106/3-4 (1988) p. 273-317. For further details, see G. Colin – A. Bausi, *Sənkəssar*, EAe IV 621a-623a, with an extensive bibliography; cf. Zarzeczny, *Catalogo*, p. 369-370. A critical edition of the texts for the entire year, with a French translation, is available in several volumes of the *Patrologia Orientalis* series; for specifics, see the index in PO 48, 3, Turnhout 1999. The complete English translation by E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church: A Translation of the Ethiopic Synaxarium መጽሐፈ ስንክሳር : Made from the Manuscript Oriental 660 and 661 in the British Museum*, v. 1-4, Cambridge 1928.

⁴⁵ The Ethiopian Christian calendar rests on the Alexandrian system used in the Coptic Church, which follows the solar cycle. The year consists of twelve months, each with thirty days, and a thirteenth month (*Pāgʷamēn*) lasting five or six days. The Ethiopian year begins on *Maskaram* 1, which corresponds to September 11 in the Gregorian calendar. The names of the months originated in Egyptian, with modifications influenced by Greek and Arabic. An alternative system of calculating years, resulting in a gap of seven or eight years, also characterizes the Ethiopian calendar system. For more details, see E. Fritsch – U. Zanetti, *Calendar*, EAe I 668a-672b. For the organization of the liturgical year, see especially E. Fritsch, *The Liturgical Year of the Ethiopian Church: The Temporal, Seasons and Sundays*, Addis Ababa 2001.

⁴⁶ Several editions of the Ethiopian *Synaxarium*'s entry for *Hedār* 15 are available. For a critical edition, accompanied by a French translation, see *Le synaxaire éthiopien. Mois de hedār*, ed. G. Colin, PO 44, 3, Turnhout 1988, p. 308-313 (76-81). Another French translation, based on ms BnF éth. 126 (*olim* éth. 113), fol. 75-76, was provided by M. Chaîne in Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie*, p. 45-48. The Ethiopic text, along with an English translation from ms BL Or. 660, fols 66va-67rb, appears in Budge, *Texts*, p. 59-61 (ed.), 39-43 (tr.). The same English translation appears in Budge, *The Book of the Saints* 1, p. 246-249. Moreover, we find the Ethiopic text of the entry copied separately in ms SSB-010, fols 17vb-21rb.

The Ethiopic text generally agrees with its Arabic model⁴⁷, although several differences appear, especially when compared to *The Acts*. First, the father's name is Eudoxius ('*Awdokynos*)⁴⁸, as in *The Acts*, but the mother's name remains absent. Second, Eudoxius comes from Nikiou (*Nāqiyos*), which corresponds to *Niqiyūs* in Lower Egypt, as also indicated in the *Synaxarium Alexandrinum*⁴⁹. The Ethiopic entry briefly narrates the story of the saint's miraculous birth, his early years, and military service, echoing *The Acts*, though the description of his passion under Diocletian (*Dīyōkletyānūs*) is much shorter.

Subsequently, the *Synaxarium* recounts the episodes involving the relics transported by sea, the camels that refused to move, and the concealment of the body in the desert. The discovery of the relics by a shepherd introduces a new element to the story: one of the shepherd's sheep, suffering from scab, immersed itself in the water flowing from the spring at that site and was healed. The miraculous event spread far and wide, even reaching Constantinople (*Q^wastētenyā*). When the king – whose name remains unknown, though the author likely meant Emperor Constantine⁵⁰ – heard of the event, he sent his only daughter, who also suffered from a skin disease to the site in the desert. The girl took dust from the place, mixed it with water from the spring, and rubbed it all over her body. That night, St Menas appeared to her, instructing her to dig at the site to find his body. The following morning, the girl proved completely healed, and the saint's body was discovered as foretold. In gratitude, the king built the first church to honour the saint at that site. Under Emperors Arcadius ('*Arqādēwos*; 395-408) and Honorius ('*Onorēwos*; 393-423), the sons of

⁴⁷ See *Synaxarium Alexandrinum* for *Hātūr* 15, ed. I. Forget (CSCO 47/Ar. 3), Beryt – Parisiis 1905, p. 107-109; Lat. tr. (CSCO 78/Ar. 12), Romae 1921, p. 124-126. The discovery of St Menas's body by the shepherd, in its Arabic recension, also appears in manuscripts separate from the *Synaxarium*; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II 7, 2), p. 388-389 (ed.), 143-144 (tr.).

⁴⁸ The manuscripts also attest variants such as '*Awdākyos*, '*Awdokiyos*, or '*Awdokiwos*.

⁴⁹ See ed. I. Forget (CSCO 47), p. 107, l. 16. This is, in fact, the Coptic *Pšati* (Πῡᾱῡ), or Νικιοϥ derived from the Greek name Νίκιος; see Amélineau, *La géographie de l'Égypte*, p. 277-283; R. Stewart, *Nikiou*, CE 6, p. 1793b-1794a.

⁵⁰ The Coptic and Arabic versions of the prologue to the *Miracles* mention Emperor Constantine as a just king who succeeded the lawless Diocletian, granted liberty to Christians, strengthened the true faith, and ordered the construction of St Menas's shrine; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 7-8 (ed.), 108 (tr.); Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (mss N, F, and Š), p. 181-183 (tr.).

Emperor Theodosius I, authorities beautifully expanded the church and established a great city. The narrative concludes with the statement that great crowds of pilgrims visited the church, many of whom were healed, and other miracles and signs took place. In response, Satan incited wicked people to destroy the church and steal St Menas's body. However, a new church was later built, to the glory of God.

The basic outline of the story aligns with the final chapters of *The Life* in both the Arabic and Ethiopic versions. Nevertheless, a notable difference occurs, particularly in the new account of the discovery of the saint's relics, which now involves the Emperor of Constantinople, who orders the construction of the shrine. Additionally, the *Synaxarium* attributes the renovation of the shrine to the imperial brothers Arcadius and Honorius, with no mention of the Bishop of Alexandria⁵¹. This stands in contrast to the *Gadl*, which explicitly states the names of Emperor Theodosius and Bishop Theophilus, as well as Emperor Zeno and Bishop Timothy⁵². In this context, Ethiopian literature has absorbed all the elements of the dichotomous Copto-Arabic tradition concerning the rise and decline of the shrine in Maryut. For the same reason, we should seek the identification of the "evil people stirred by Satan" from the Ethiopian *Synaxarium* in the Arabic sources⁵³. Still, all these texts place equally strong emphasis on the miracles and signs associated with the sanctuary, which certainly reflects the significant role the shrine has played over the centuries.

In the *Synaxarium* for *Sanē* 15⁵⁴, which commemorates the consecration of the church in Maryut, the episode of the sick sheep that drank water from the cistern in the desert and was healed reappears in the same

⁵¹ Similarly in the Arabic *Synaxarium Alexandrinum*, see ed. Forget (CSCO 47), p. 109, l. 12; tr. (CSCO 78), p. 126.

⁵² Similarly in the Arabic version in ms A; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 371 (ed.), 116 (tr.). For more on the authorities involved in the construction of the shrine in the Arabic sources, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II 5), p. 110-125.

⁵³ According to Budge, they refer to Bishop Theophilus and his companions; see Budge, *Texts*, p. 43. The *Gadl* mentions the invasion of Muslims without any dramatic emphasis; see Budge, *Texts*, p. 58.

⁵⁴ The Ethiopic text was edited with a French translation in I. Guidi, *Le Synaxaire éthiopien. Les mois de sanē, hamlē et nahasē*, PO 1, 5, Paris 1907, p. 611-613 (93-95); see also Budge, *The Book of the Saints* 4, p. 1001-1002. The Ethiopic version corresponds to the Arabic text found in the *Synaxarium Alexandrinum* for *Ba'ūnah* 15, ed. Forget, CSCO 67/Ar. 11, Beryti – Parisiis 1912, p. 170-171; Lat. tr. CSCO 90/Ar. 13, Lovanii 1926, p. 169-170.

manner as the account for *Hedār* 15. Similarly, the miraculous healing of the king's daughter and the discovery of the saint's body receive a brief description, along with general information about the church's construction, although the text mentions no specific names.

Furthermore, the succinct account of the life of St Menas, briefly outlining his miraculous birth following his mother's prayer to the Holy Virgin, his youth, the military service, and the martyrdom under Diocletian, is an almost mechanical transcription from the first part of the *Synaxarium*, incorporated into the Ethiopic collection *The Miracles of Mary* (CAe 3645). This miracle appears in two distinct recensions: a shorter version preserved in a limited number of manuscripts, and a longer, more widespread one⁵⁵.

3. Other Ethiopian sources

Before discussing the collection of miracles, it is important to mention some secondary texts regarding St Menas in the Ethiopic language. The first is a homily attributed to Archbishop Dorotheus (CAe 1616)⁵⁶. This brief speech, likely intended for the liturgical commemoration of the martyrdom of St Menas, encourages perseverance in faith despite adversities and suffering. It opens with a paraphrased passage from the Let-

⁵⁵ For the *rec. brevior*, see BnF éth. 60 (*olim* éth. 144/60, fols 114ra-115ra, cf. Zotenberg, *Catalogue*, p. 65; MY-005, fol. 98rc-vb. The *rec. longior* appears, for example, in the ms of Veroli, BG-01, fols 101 (*olim* 99) va-102 (*olim* 100) ra (16th cent.); EMMML 3872, fols 26va-27ra; Paris, BnF éth. 62 (*olim* éth. 43) (26), fols 39va-41ra, cf. Zotenberg, *Catalogue*, p. 68, n. 26; Lucchesi 3, fol. 180ra-vb, cf. Zarzeczny, *Catalogo*, p. 364, which includes an extended list of codices. For the Ethiopic collection of *The Miracles of Mary* (*Ta'ammera Māryām*), along with a bibliography, see E. Balicka-Witakowska – A. Bausi, *Tā'ammārā Maryam*, EAe IV 788a-793b.

⁵⁶ The Ethiopic name *Dorotēwos*, *Derāteyos* or *Derotēwos*, likely refers to Timothy (*Timotēwos*, also as *Damatēwos*, *Damaytēyos* or *Damātreyos*) of Alexandria; see W. Witakowski, *Timothy of Alexandria*, EAe IV 962. The text is clearly a translation from Arabic, although the presumed model remains unspecified. Three manuscripts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries attest the Ethiopic version: EMMML 1763, fols 57vb-60rb, EMMML 8509, fols 19rb-21rb, and YC-001, fols 30ra-31vb. Additionally, a modern copy of the text, directly derived from HMMML 1763, is available in EMMML 9185, fols 42va-44rb. Its modified version also appears in the book by Sāmu'el Darsē, *Gadla qeddus Minās ba-ge'ez-nā amāreññā. Targwāmi azagāgenā asātāmi mamher Sāmu'el Darsē*, [Addis Ababa 2013 A.M. (= 2020/21 A.D.)], p. 59-64.

ter to the Hebrews: “Blessed Apostle Paul spoke and said that those who believe, hope for future goods that are not yet seen (cf. Heb 11:1). Truly, glorious is God in His saints (cf. Ps 67:36 LXX), for the Holy Spirit speaks through them”. In this homily, St Menas exemplifies those who forsake temporary pleasures in exchange for the eternal treasures stored in heaven. He renounced his earthly life to become a soldier of Christ, a servant, and a witness to the Lord, who values neither gold nor silver in this world, but rewards those who shed blood for his name with eternal life. The name of Menas, which means “the one who believes”, became the guiding principle of his life, especially when, in the face of persecution, he confirmed his willingness to lay down his life for Christ. He embraced the crown of martyrdom, anticipating the future glory promised by the Saviour to his friends. St Menas fought a victorious battle, his blood flowing like water. After his death, his body – worn by fasting, renunciations, and torture – became a sign of hope for those who visit his shrine. The mention of water and the body as signs of hope for worshippers suggests that the homily may have been intended for proclamation at the church in Maryut.

Another category of literature dedicated to St Menas, which contributes to his wide recognition within Ethiopian tradition, consists of hymns or poetic salutations known as *salāmtā*⁵⁷. These texts, typically brief, usually accompany the entries of saints in the Ethiopian *Synaxarium*, although they also appear independently across various manuscripts. One such salutation to St Menas, beginning with the words “Salutation to you, soldier chief, martyr of the Saviour”, appears in *Synaxaria* codices dating from no earlier than the sixteenth or seventeenth century⁵⁸. Another hymn of this kind starts with “Salutation to you, Menas, chosen from the multitude of hosts”⁵⁹.

⁵⁷ For more on this literature, see D. Nosnitsin, *Sālam*, EAe IV 484. A comprehensive list of such Ethiopic hymns appears in M. Chaîne, *Répertoire des salam et malke’e contenus dans les manuscrits éthiopiens des bibliothèques d’Europe*, ROC 18 (1913) p. 183-203, 337-357.

⁵⁸ Eth. *Salām la-ka ḥarāwī masfen semā’eta madḥen*; see, for example, ms Lucchesi 100, fol. 65vb. The same salutation, even with secondary variants, appears in ms SSB-010, fol. 21rb. In Budge’s translation, the martyr’s entry for *Hedār* 15 concludes with the words: “Salutation to thee, O Minas, officer and nobleman, for whom thy other prayed to the image of the Virgin Mary”; see Budge, *The Book of the Saints* 1, p. 249.

⁵⁹ Eth. *Salām la-ka Minās ḥeruy ’emenna ’a’elāf ḥarā*; see EMMML 2810, fol. 90r-v, or EMIP 480, fol. 151rb-vb.

Additionally, more elaborate and extended hymns, known as *malke'āt* or “images” of the saints, poetically depict and glorify various parts of the saint’s body, thereby emphasizing his spiritual virtues⁶⁰. Some of these hymns are included in larger anthologies known as the *Collection of Images* (*Malke'a gubā'e*, CAe 1850)⁶¹. One such composition, glorifying St Menas in seventy-five strophes, begins with the words “Salutation to the remembrance of your name, which has the taste of milk and the fruit of the bee” (CAe 247)⁶². Another *malke'* hymn to St Menas, beginning with “O Mary daughter of Judah and Levi” (CAe 3087), comprises twenty-five strophes⁶³. In some manuscripts, however, the same hymn begins with what in other manuscripts is the second strophe, “Salutation to the remembrance of your name that was inscribed by God in the Tablet of the Law”⁶⁴. This list of hymns, without a doubt, is far from complete⁶⁵.

⁶⁰ For more on such hymns, along with a bibliography, see Habtemichael Kidane, *Mälkä'*, EAe III 700b-702b.

⁶¹ For more about the *Collection of Images*, see Gezahegn Getachew, *The Mälkä': Its Major Features and Sources*, Addis Ababa 2000; Gezahegn Getachew, *Is Latin the Origin of the Mälki'?*, in: *Ethiopian Studies at the End of the Second Millennium: Proceedings of the XVIth International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, November 6-11, 2000, Addis Ababa*, v. 3, ed. B. Yimam *et al.*, Addis Ababa 2002, p. 1936-1962; Habtemichael Kidane, *Mälkä'a gubā'a*, EAe III 704a-705a; Habtemichael Kidane, *Celebrating the Holy Saints: The Origin, Evolution, and Liturgical Use of the Mälkä'*, Piscataway 2024. A doctoral dissertation by A. Dickinson, currently in preparation at the University of Hamburg, offers a comprehensive study of the entire *Malke'a gubā'e* manuscript tradition. He also curates the website <https://malkeagubae.com>, which provides access to several *malke'* texts and an extensive bibliography.

⁶² Eth. *'Aqadm 'a'ekkwitoto 'enza 'ebl (...)* *Salām la-zekra semka za-yeṭ'em 'em-ḥalib wa-'em-ferēhā la-nehb*. This hymn appears in the *Malke'a gubā'e* collection, included in an early sixteenth-century manuscript presently held at the National Archives and Library Agency in Addis Ababa, ms NALA 73 (= EMIP 2878), fols 73rb-80ra.

⁶³ Eth. *O Māryām walatta Yehudā wa-Lēwi*; see, for example, mss BL Or. 577, fol. 182r-, EMMML 659, fols 124rb-126ra, EMMML 2706, fols 143va-144va, or EMIP 480, fols 148ra-151rb; see Chaîne, *Répertoire*, no 367. The same text was edited by Sāmu'el Darsē, *Gadla qeddus Minās*, p. 183-190.

⁶⁴ Eth. *Salām la-zekra semka ba-salēdā ḥeggu za-talakk'ā la-'egzi'abeḥēr*; see ms SSB-010, fols 37ra-40.

⁶⁵ In his *Répertoire*, Marius Chaîne identifies at least two additional hymns with incipits that, however, differ from those of the aforementioned texts; nevertheless, we could not consult them directly for the present study. Hymn no 224, which begins with *Salām ebl la-Minās dengel*, is attested in ms Aeth. 22 in the Vienna collection; see Rhodokanakis, *Die äthiopischen Handschriften*, p. 55, no 13. Another hymn, no 286, with the incipit *Ba-qedma zāti bēta krestiyān yamāna faṭāri za-šārārā* “Before this church that

Furthermore, several prominent liturgical texts are also associated with St Menas. They include a collection of antiphons (*Mawāše'et*, CAe 1990) for the commemoration of St Menas, edited by Budge, where the acclamation “This Menas was just indeed, rejecting his glory became a soldier of heaven” (CAe 4441) reappears several times⁶⁶. A more detailed analysis of these texts would require a separate study and publication.

Finally, a few more words are needed regarding the thematic anthologies in some individual manuscripts. In the Ethiopian literary tradition, it is common for entire handwritten books to be dedicated to a single argument or saint. This is also true for St Menas, as demonstrated by the late fifteenth-century manuscript of Paris, BnF éth. 135 (*olim* éth. 57), which provides *The Life*, alongside a collection of the *Miracles*, as well as a *salām* hymn added later.

Another nineteenth-century codex from the Bēta Hawāryāt church near Addigrat in Tigrāy, northern Ethiopia, underwent digitization in recent years by the Ethio-SPaRe project of the Hiob Ludolf Centre for Ethiopian and Eritrean Studies at the Hamburg University. The manuscript has been assigned the shelf-mark SSB-010⁶⁷. Comprising forty-three folios, this modern codex presents a rich anthology of texts dedicated entirely to St Menas. The included works are as follows:

the Creator’s right founded” (CAe 3006), appears in ms Paris BnF d’Abb. 170 (CR 89); Conti Rossini, in his catalogue, mistakenly links this hymn with St Victor, see no 21. He instead associates hymn no 22, *Salām la-zekra semka za-la’ālāwīyān ’ikaśattekā*, “Salutation to the remembrance of your name that is not uncovered to the apostates”, with St Menas, see Conti Rossini, *Notice sur les manuscrits éthiopiens de la collection d’Abbadie* [III], “Journal Asiatique” 20 (1912) p. 471. Moreover, several manuscripts that include the *malke’* collection — such as GG-144 (17th cent.) and EML 6993 (19th/20th cent.) — list a hymn dedicated to St Menas (*Malke’a qeddus Minās*) in their tables of contents, although the hymn itself is missing from the main body of the text.

⁶⁶ Eth. *Zentu-sa Minās šedeq we’etu mannino kebro konu ḥārā samāy*; cf. Budge, *Texts*, p. 74–75. This antiphon also appears in ancient codices such as ms Parma Bibl. Palat. ms 3845, fols 41r–42v (14th/15th cent.). Additionally, see the book of antiphons and hymns for the entire year, known as *Deggwa* (CAe 3178) for example ms EML 4667, fol. 31rb–vb. For more information on the Ethiopian antiphonaries, see Habtemichael Kidane, *Māwaśə’ət*, EAe III 877a–878a.

⁶⁷ For a comprehensive account of the church’s location and the materials documented on site, see D. Nosnitsin, *Churches and Monasteries of Təgray: A Survey of Manuscript Collections*, Wiesbaden 2013, p. 136–139. I express my gratitude to Dr. Denis Nosnitsin of the HLCEES for granting me access to this manuscript for the purposes of the present study.

- *The Narration of the Greatness of St Menas*, which presents another recension of his *Life and Martyrium* (fols 6ra-18vb)⁶⁸;
- The *Synaxarium* entry for *Ḥedār* 15 (fols 18vb-21rb), followed by the short salutation “Salutation to you, soldier chief, the martyr of the Saviour” (fol. 21rb);
- *The Life and Martyrium*, meaning the *Gadla Minās* (CAe 3156) in its most common recension (fols 21va-31vb);
- *The Covenant (of the Miracle) of St Menas*, which primarily reflects the final section of the *Gadl* (CAe 3165). After a paraenetic introduction that outlines the promises granted to those who venerate St Menas (fol. 32ra-b), the narrative continues with an account of the gathering and translation of the saint’s relics (fol. 32rb-vb)⁶⁹, followed by their discovery. This story unfolds through a series of distinct miracles, including the episode involving the sea monsters (fols 32vb-34rb)⁷⁰; the miracle of healing the crippled boy (fols 34va-35va)⁷¹; and the miracle concerning the construction and renovation of the shrine in Maryut, carried out in accordance with the emperors’ orders (fols 35vb-36vb)⁷²;
- The *malke*’ hymn “Salutation to the remembrance of your name that was inscribed by God in the Tablet of the Law” (CAe 3087), added posteriorly by another scribe, which completes the anthology of texts compiled in this codex (fols 37ra-38rb, 39ra-40vb).

The book edited by *Mamher Sāmu’ēl Darsē* presents a distinct subject for study⁷³. This comprehensive collection of texts, primarily dedicated to Menas, also features stories about Abuna Ḥarā Dengel, an Ethiopian monk involved in the religious conflicts of the seventeenth century. Whereas an Amharic translation accompanies the Ge‘ez texts, the source manuscript for the original texts remains unknown, making the work impossible to verify.

⁶⁸ Eth. *Zēna ’ebaya gadlu la-beḍu’e wa-la-qeddus Minās*. A similar text also appears in the printed edition by Sāmu’ēl Darsē, *Gadla qeddus Minās*, p. 13-53, where it is divided into readings assigned to various months of the liturgical year. This text likely corresponds to the Arabic version preserved in ms A; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 107: “Version 4”.

⁶⁹ See Budge, *Texts*, p. 70, l. 1-71, l. 9 (ed.), 54-55 (tr).

⁷⁰ See Budge, *Texts*, p. 71, l. 10-16 (ed.), 55-56 (tr.).

⁷¹ See Budge, *Texts*, p. 71, l. 16-72, l. 11 (ed.), 56-57 (tr.).

⁷² See Budge, *Texts*, p. 72, l. 14-73 (ed.), 57-58 (tr.).

⁷³ See *Gadla qeddus Minās ba-ge’ez-nā amāreññā. Targwāmi azagāgenā asātāmi mamher Sāmu’ēl Darsē*, [Addis Ababa 2013 A.M. (2020/21 A.D.)].

4. Ethiopic miracles

The miracles attributed to St Menas in the Ethiopic version form three groups:

- miracles embedded in the narrative of *The Acts*: this category includes the answered prayer of the saint's mother and the vision in the desert that led St Menas to martyrdom. The miraculous birth of the saint, as recorded in the Ethiopic recension of *The Acts*, appears as a distinct miracle first in the *Synaxarium* entry, in *The Miracles of Mary* collection, and in ms SSB-010, fols 6rb-7vb;
- *post mortem* miracles, including the translation of the saint's body, its discovery, and the construction of the shrine in Maryut. Such episodes, aside from supplementing the saint's acts in the Ethiopic version, can also constitute separate miracles, as evidenced in ms SSB-010, fols 32ra-36vb;
- miracles that occurred at the shrine in Maryut: these miracles form a distinct tradition, entirely independent from *The Acts* (*Gadl*) or the *Synaxarium* entry. They fall under the category of narratives beneficial to the soul and primarily focus on the experiences of pilgrims arriving at the sanctuary of St Menas in Maryut during late antiquity. For the remainder of this study, we will concentrate exclusively on this final category.

The extensive collection of miracles of St Menas in Maryut in their Ethiopic recension consists of nineteen narratives, undoubtedly translated from an Arabic model, although these episodes also spread through other Oriental versions.

A short introduction to the miracles, which slightly varies across the manuscripts, designates the fifteenth day of the Ethiopian month *Sanē* – corresponding to June 21 in the Gregorian calendar – as the feast of St Menas. Both the Copto-Arabic and the Ethiopian *Synaxaria* observe the same day to commemorate the consecration of the church dedicated to St Menas in Maryut. The foundation of his shrine links here to the miracles supposed to feature in a homily attributed to Theophilus (*Tēwoflos*), Archbishop of Alexandria⁷⁴. This attribution reappears

⁷⁴ Several writings attributed to Theophilus of Alexandria (385-412) appear in the Ethiopic tradition. These include his *21st Festal Letter* (CPG 2589) in the *Hāymānota Abaw* collection (CAe 1586); the *Homily on the Departure of the Soul* (CAe 1645); the *Homily for the Lenten Fast* (CAe 1615); the *Homily for the Midpoint of the Easter Season* (CAe 6741); the *Homily on the Three Youth in the Furnace of Babylonia* (CPG 2626, CAe 1664);

in the epilogue of the Ethiopic collection. However, this statement requires further clarification.

An introductory narrative (δύγησις) in the Greek collection of miracles attributed to Timothy of Alexandria is primarily rhetorical in nature and does not reference the saint's wonders⁷⁵. In contrast, the prologue to the Coptic *translatio*, recounting "miracles and wonders wrought by the holy Apa Mena after his martyrdom", is attributed to Theophilus of Alexandria⁷⁶. The Coptic narrative begins with the rhetorical formula "Listen also to the wonders and miracles", and specifically honours the elevation of the shrine by Emperor Constantine and the manifestation of miracles. It briefly recounts the life of St Menas, including the desertion of his regiment and his vision of the angel that led him to martyrdom for the sake of Christ's name. A similar introduction, in the form of a homily (*maymar*), which provides a short version of the saint's life and martyrdom, appears in the Arabic manuscript N, attributed to Archbishop Theophilus (*Tā'ōflos*)⁷⁷. However, manuscript Š once again ascribes a modified version of the same narrative to Timotheus (*Ṭimōṭāwōs*), followed by the miracle of the Syrian man (Ar. 5, Eth. 7)⁷⁸. It seems plausible that one of these or similar narrations in the Arabic version was intended in

the *Homily on Saint John* (CAe 1277); the *Homily on the Virgin Mary on Mount Qusqām* (CPG 2628, CAe 2487). This latter work also has an abbreviated version, known as the *Vision of Theophilus*, often associated with *The Miracles of Mary* collection; see Zarieczny, *Catalogo*, p. 104-105, 286; cf. W. Witakowski, *Theophilus of Alexandria*, EAe IV 947b-948b.

⁷⁵ See I. Pomialovskiĭ, *Zhitie prepodobnago Paisiia Velikago i Timofeia patriarkha Aleksandriiskago poviestvovanie o chudesakh" sv. Velikomuchenika Miny*, Saint Petersburg 1900, p. 62, cf. Delehay, *L'invention*, p. 127-128. In fact, Oriental traditions sometimes confuse Timothy of Alexandria (381-284) with his successor, Patriarch Theophilus; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 104, note 1. Furthermore, several writings by Timothy Aelurus (457-460, 475-477), authentic or spurious, have been translated into Ethiopic, including the *Refutation of the Synod of Chalcedonia* (CPG 5482), the *Homily on the Church of the Rock* (CAe 5492), and the *Homily on the Archangel Mikael* (CAe 1637), a text also known from its Coptic recension; see Layton, *Catalogue*, p. 197, no 163; Zarieczny, *Catalogo*, p. 86; cf. W. Witakowski, *Timothy of Alexandria*, EAe IV 961a-963a.

⁷⁶ See Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 7a (ed.), 108 (tr.); cf. S. Bacot, *Quatre miracles de saint Ménas dans un manuscrit copte de l'Ifao* (Inv. 315-322), "Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale" 111 (2011) p. 40. Scholars attribute other Coptic *encomia* in honour of St Menas to John of Alexandria (CCop 181) or to St Athanasius; cf. H. Delehay, *The Legends of the Saints: An Introduction to Hagiography*, London 1907, p. 72; Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 55, n. 250.

⁷⁷ See Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 5, 1, 1), p. 410-411 (ed.), 181-182 (tr.).

⁷⁸ See Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 5, 1, 4), p. 411-412 (ed.), 183 (tr.).

the prologue to Ethiopic miracles, without replicating the content found in the *Gadl*⁷⁹. This may suggest that both the miracles and this short prologue are not merely an Ethiopic liturgical addition but rather refer to an Arabic model.

The content of the nineteen miracles collection in the Ethiopic recension is as follows⁸⁰.

Miracle 1: A man fails to fulfil his vow to offer a camel and its offspring to the church of St Menas. The saint himself appears to admonish the man, transporting the animals through the air to his church, where the man finds them later. He repents and offers the camels in service to the shrine.

Miracle 2: A man named Astamon steals pigs belonging to the shrine of St Menas. As a consequence, he receives punishment from the saint, who causes his petrification.

Miracle 3: A wealthy Alexandrian vows to bring an offering to the church of St Menas and his idol if his horse bears foals. When the mare gives birth to a three-legged foal, the saint appears and, in an ironic twist, instructs the man either to divide the animal or to ask the idol to create the missing leg.

Miracle 4: Eight men embark on a journey from Alexandria to the church of St Menas, bringing pigs to offer. When the devil kills one of the pigs, the saint appears and restores it to life, demonstrating his power and inspiring admiration and faith among the travellers.

Miracle 5: A wicked Christian and his wife betray a Jewish merchant. After swearing a false oath in the shrine of St Menas, the Christian loses his ring. Later, St Menas appears in the form of a messenger from the Christian's wife and returns the ring. The perjurer acknowledges his transgression and performs penance, while the Jewish merchant converts and requests baptism.

Miracle 6: A paralytic man and a mute woman, having come to the shrine of St Menas in search of healing, receive their cures in a most unexpected manner. Alarmed by what she perceives as an act of aggression

⁷⁹ Another recension of the same Arabic prologue is the homily (*maymar*) attributed to Anbā Mazdāriyūs Archimandrite of Wādī al-Naṭrūn; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 4, 1), p. 160-161. For anonymous prologues to the life and martyrdom of St Menas in the Arabic version, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II 4), p. 108-110.

⁸⁰ Several authors briefly outline the Ethiopic miracles: M. Chaîne in Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie*, p. 48-49, D.N. Wilber, *The Coptic Frescoes*, p. 102-103 (Appendix 2), and W.F. Macomber and Getatchew Haile in HMML (V, p. 281-282).

on the man's part, the mute woman suddenly cries out for help, while the paralytic man, fearing an accusation of impropriety, rises to his feet and flees.

Miracle 7: A wicked merchant murders a Syrian Orthodox pilgrim traveling to St Menas in the city port and cuts his body into pieces. The saint appears in glory, forces the wrongdoer to confess his crime, and restores the pilgrim to life. The two men then proceed together to the shrine to offer sacrifices.

Miracle 8: Eutropius, a wealthy man from Alexandria, commissions two silver plates, promising one of them to the shrine. When his careless servant accidentally drops the more beautiful plate into the sea while aboard the ship and subsequently drowns, Eutropius vows to give all his possessions to the sanctuary if he can recover his servant. Upon reaching the port near the sanctuary, he finds the boy with the plate in hand, who then recounts how St Menas saved him from the sea.

Miracle 9: Three pilgrims are on their way to the shrine of St Menas to offer their gifts. A crocodile attacks one of them and pulls him into a lake, but the saint saves the man and places him in the sanctuary. Later, the temple servants learn about the event by listening to the testimony of the other pilgrims.

Miracle 10: A man who swore to bring wood for the construction of the church of St Menas witnesses the punishment of a wicked guard, carried through the air to the shrine.

Miracle 11: A pig belonging to the shrine of St Menas attacks a soldier riding toward the church. The soldier kills the pig in anger and then receives punishment from the saint in his shrine.

Miracle 12: A man fails to fulfil his oath to give a pig to the church of St Menas. Having killed the animal and kept it for himself, he finds the flesh petrified. He repents and offers an equivalent sacrifice to the shrine.

Miracle 13: A man made an oath to donate a horse to the church of St Menas every year. When he neglects his promise, the saint appears in the form of a guard and offers a small payment in gold instead. The man repents for his neglect and eventually fulfils his vow, donating the horse to the shrine.

Miracle 14: An impious soldier attacks a widow bringing an offering (*q^werbān*) to the church of St Menas. The saint appears to punish the man, whose horse carries him off directly to the church.

Miracle 15: A wealthy judge from Constantinople, who stole the only sheep from a poor elderly woman, receives a severe punishment after

swearing a false oath in the shrine of St Menas: he becomes partially petrified and publicly displayed in the church until his death.

Miracle 16: A pagan from Alexandria, possessed by a demon since childhood, is brought to the church of St Menas, where the saint exorcizes him over several days.

Miracle 17: A Samaritan woman from Alexandria, suffering from a headache for three years, intends to visit the church of St Menas. However, a guard molests her at the port near the church until the saint appears in his glory, causing the wicked man's hand to wither. The healed woman, along with her companions, proceeds to the shrine, where she remains, as does the impious man, whom the saint carried there.

Miracle 18: Sofia, a childless wealthy woman from Maryut, meets a soldier while on her way to the shrine. The soldier attacks her, but the saint appears in his glory, punishes the man, and carries Sofia to the church.

Miracle 19: Many people run out of water while on their way to the shrine of St Menas. When the priests of the shrine, together with the faithful, ask for the intercession of St Menas, the Archangel Michael himself descends from heaven and opens a spring from the rock.

The collection of miracles in the Ethiopic recension concludes with an epilogue in which Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria speaks in the first person, asserting that he compiled and recorded these wonders in reference to the Orthodox faith⁸¹. He affirms that God "allowed the soul of this saint martyr to once dwell within his body, speaking through his face, mouth to mouth, as if he were still alive". This homiletic discourse enumerates the graces bestowed upon the protagonists of the miracles, alongside promises for those who will visit the saint's shrine, observe his feasts, take oaths, and make offerings to the church. God will reward each person thirtyfold, sixtyfold, or a hundredfold (cf. Mark 4:20) and inscribe their names in the Book of Life. We find a similar epilogue attested in a much shorter recension in the Coptic ms M.590⁸²; however, in this form, it is absent from the Arabic manuscripts collected by Jaritz⁸³.

The attribution to Archbishop Theophilus, as presented in both the prologue and epilogue, is not an original Ethiopic assertion but rather a reiteration of earlier Oriental sources. Both Coptic and Arabic traditions commonly invoke the names of prominent bishops and patriarchs

⁸¹ See in ms A, fols 110rb-111rb; ms B, fols 79rb-81rb; ms C, fol. 152ra-c.

⁸² See Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 34 (ed.), 125 (tr.); cf. Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 77 (tr.).

⁸³ For a brief epilogue in Arabic ms A, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 213.

of Alexandria, a practice that does not necessarily signify their authentic authorship. In this instance, the attribution likely reflects the perceived influential role played by the Alexandrian archbishops of the fourth and fifth centuries in the establishment and development of the shrine of St Menas in Maryut, as documented in the *Synaxarium* and other historical records. At its core, the collection of miracles functions as a panegyric, celebrating the sanctuary itself, with the ascription primarily serving to reinforce its authority within the broader context of late antique Christendom. However, for medieval Ethiopian Christians, both the attribution and the associated historical facts bear little significance. For them, the true importance lies in the manifestation of God's power through his saint, who acts in God's name as the authentic miracle worker. Thus, St Menas becomes the conduit of divine grace, the protector of sanctity, the mediator of blessings, the avenger of apostates, the healer of diseases, and the expeller of demons.

Naturally, the collected miracles of St Menas are not an original Ethiopian composition, but rather a translation – or possibly a compilation – of a corresponding Arabic corpus, which in turn depended on Greek and Coptic texts. A comparative analysis of the content and structure of the Ethiopian collection, in relation to other extant anthologies, leads to the following observations.

First, Ethiopic miracles number 4, 11, 14, and 19 are absent from the Greek collection in its currently known form. Second, there is no evidence to suggest that the Greek text directly influenced the Ethiopic version⁸⁴.

⁸⁴ Generally speaking, translations from Greek into Ethiopic likely took place only during the classical Aksumite period of Ethiopian Christian civilization, between the fourth and eighth centuries. From this period date the translation of many biblical books, particularly from the New Testament, alongside apocryphal works such as the *Book of Enoch*, the *Book of Jubilees*, and the *Ascension of Isaiah*. Other translated texts include the lives of certain saints, such as St Antony, and some patristic texts, such as the collection of dogmatic writings by Cyril of Alexandria and his followers (*Qērellos*). However, the vast majority of Ethiopic translations were made from Arabic originals, starting from the late thirteenth century. This later period saw the production of a significant number of translations of homiletic, monastic, and hagiographical literature, including the acts of saints and martyrs, along with their miracles. For more on the Classical Ethiopic literature, see especially E. Cerulli, *La letteratura etiopica. L'Oriente cristiano nell'unità delle sue tradizioni*, Firenze 1968; G. Lusini, *Appunti sulla patristica greca di tradizione etiopica*, "Studi Classici e Orientali" 38 (1988) p. 469-493; Getatchew Haile, *Gə'əz Literature*, EAe II 736a-741a, with a bibliography; A. Bausi, *Ethiopic Literature Production Related to the Christian Egyptian Culture*, in: *Coptic*

Still, miracles 12 and 13 lack attestation in the Coptic tradition. Third, we cannot directly compare the Ethiopic episodes 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, and 14 with the Coptic manuscripts due to their poor condition. Nevertheless, the presence of the corresponding miracles in M.590 remains unquestionable⁸⁵.

With regard to the Arabic recension, all the Ethiopic stories, with the exception of miracle 16, have counterparts in the Arabic text⁸⁶. The question of whether the sequence of episodes reflects the decision of the Ethiopian translator or compiler, or whether it follows the structure of an Arabic model, remains a complex issue. Indeed, none of the extant Arabic manuscripts preserves the same collection or the same sequence of texts as found in the Ethiopic version. Nevertheless, we can make some considerations, particularly in reference to the Arabic codex M⁸⁷. It appears that the sequence of Arabic miracles numbered 17-20 corresponds to Ethiopic miracles 1-4, while Arabic miracles 12-14 align with Ethiopic miracles 9-11. Moreover, Arabic miracles 10-11 and 21-22 correspond to Ethiopic episodes 5-6 and 12-13, respectively. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the first miracle in the Ethiopic collection mirrors the first miracle in the Coptic manuscript M.590, while Ethiopic episodes 2-6 follow the same sequence as Coptic narratives 5-9. We cannot attribute this

Society, Literature and Religion from Late Antiquity to Modern Times, ed. P. Busi – A. Camplani – F. Contardi, Leuven – Paris – Bristol 2016, p. 503-571; A. Bausi *et al.*, *The Axumite Collection or Codex Σ (Sinodos of Qəfrəyā, MS C3-IV-71/C3-IV-73, Ethio-SPaRe UM-039): Codicological and Palaeographical Observations. With a Note on Material Analysis of Inks*, “COMSt Bulletin” 6/2 (2020) p. 127-171.

⁸⁵ Drescher references the list of the seventeen Coptic miracles based on M.590 in *Apa Mena*, p. 107.

⁸⁶ The Arabic texts of the St Menas tradition were the subject of study and publication by F. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen zum Heiligen Menas*, Heidelberg 1993. The German scholar collected and analysed 25 manuscripts transmitting *The Acts*, a collection of St Menas's *Miracles*, and some other texts such as *Legend* found in Cairo and the *Encomium* attributed to Anba Mazdāriyūs. A detailed description of these manuscripts appears in Part I of her book; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen (I)*, p. 49-82. Part II concerns *The Acts of St Menas*, Part III discusses the miracles attributed to St Menas, and Part IV focuses on the Cairo legend text. Part V addresses various issues related to the St Menas tradition. Finally, Jaritz also edits the Arabic texts.

⁸⁷ A detailed list of miracles in the Arabic manuscripts, indicating their sequence in the individual codices, is provided by Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 154-160. From the perspective of textual recension, the Ethiopic version generally aligns with manuscripts belonging to the same group as the Arabic manuscripts F, R, and Š. For specific episodes, see the concordance and notes in the English translation in this issue (VoxP 94 [2024] p. 273-348).

alignment solely to coincidence. While there is considerable freedom in the selection of individual episodes in the Oriental hagiographic compilations, it is only natural that certain texts may have been transcribed in the same order across recensions and manuscripts. This suggests a nuanced, organic relationship between the Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic collections, one that goes beyond the mere mechanical copying of texts and points to a shared tradition of textual transmission.

Further information on the Ethiopic text and the manuscripts transmitting the entire collection of the miracles of St Menas appears in the introduction to the complete English translation of these miracles, presented later in this issue⁸⁸.

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⁸⁸ R. Zarzeczny, *Miracles of Saint Menas the Martyr: The Ethiopic Recension (Ta'ammera Minās, CAe 2386)*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 273-348.

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The *Miracles of Saint Menas* in the Armenian Tradition¹

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Abstract: In this article, I aim to outline the *Miracles of St Menas* in the Armenian tradition. I describe the two available editions prepared by the Mekhitarists in Venice and outline the characteristics of the collection of manuscripts containing the works under study. On this basis, I correct the identification of miracles contained in BHO 748–750, namely *De Agapio* as *Eutropius and the Silver Plates*. In the further part, I provide a translation from Classical Armenian into English, accompanied by a commentary, of three miracles of St Menas preserved in the Armenian tradition: *The Isaurian Pilgrim*, *Eutropius and the Silver Plates*, and *The Jew and the Christian*.

Keywords: St Menas; Armenia; Hagiography

The Armenian Church, according to tradition, dates back to the apostolic times, when St Bartholomew and St Jude Thaddeus visited the territories of Armenia. Researchers of historiographic sources suggest that Christianity reached Armenia from two directions: Greek (Cappadocia) and Syrian³. The baptism of King Trdat III and his court took place in 301 through Gregory the Illuminator (Grigor Lusaworič⁴).

A key event in building and strengthening the Armenian Christian tradition was the invention of the alphabet (405/406 AD) by an Armenian

¹ The research presented in this article has been funded by the National Science Centre (Poland) under the project “Across centuries, languages, and cultures: The Miracles of Saint Menas as a historical source, literary composition and liturgical text”, project no. UMO-2021/41/B/HS1/00550.

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³ Cf. R.W. Thomson, *Syrian Christianity and the Conversion of Armenia*, in: *Die Christianisierung des Kaukasus/The Christianization of Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia, Albania)*, ed. W. Seibt, Wien 2002, p. 159-169.

⁴ Cf. S.J. Voicu, *Gregorio l'Illuminatore*, NDPAC I 2460-2461. Another opinion shifts the traditional date to the year 314; cf. P. Ananian, *La data e le circostanze della consacrazione di s. Gregorio Illuminatore*, “Le Muséon” 74 (1961) p. 43-73, 317-360. I follow the Hübschmann-Meillet-Benveniste transliteration system used in “Revue des Études Arméniennes”.

monk, Mesrop Maštoc⁵. His youngest disciple Koriwn describes this story in the work *Vark' Maštoc'i* (Life of Maštoc'), which, together with *Patmut'iwn Hayoc'* (History of Armenia) by an anonymous author, we should consider the first native works of Armenian literature⁶. Mesrop's alphabet became the beginning of the monumental effort of translating biblical books and the works of the Church Fathers into the Armenian language⁷. In addition to the above-mentioned works, the translation of hagiography from Syriac and Greek into Armenian began at that time.

1. Outline of the Early Armenian Hagiography

Aside from translations of Greek and Syriac hagiographical texts, Armenians also produced other original hagiographic works such as *Passio* of

⁵ Cf. S.J. Voicu, *Mesrob*, NDPAC I 3239-3240.

⁶ Cf. S.J. Voicu, *Koriun*, NDPAC I 2724. The *Life of Maštoc* by Koriwn has two editions referred to as *Koriwn I* and *Koriwn II*. The text of *Koriwn I*, most likely from the first half of the fifth century: *Vark' Maštoc'i* [Life of Maštoc'], ed. M. Abelean, Erevan 1941; reprint edited by: K.H. Maksoudian, *Vark' Mashtots'i, Koriwn. A Photoreproduction of the 1941 Yerevan Edition with a Modern Translation and Concordance and with a New Introduction*, Delmar 1985. The text of *Koriwn II*, from several centuries later: *Patmut'iwn varuc' ew mahuan srboyn Mesropay vardapeti meroy t'argmanč'i* [History of the Life and Death of Saint Mesrop Vardapet, Our Translator], Venezia 1894. A recent critical edition appeared in *Matenagirk' Hayoc' (Armenian Classical Authors)*, v. 1, ed. Z. Ekawean, Ant'lias 2003, p. 225-272. German translation of both editions: G. Winkler, *Koriwns Biographie des Mesrop Maštoc' . Übersetzung und Kommentar*, OCA 245, Roma 1994. English translation of *Koriwn I*: B. Norehad, *Koriwn. The Life of Mashtots*, New York 1964. French translation based on *Koriwn I*: J.-P. Mahé, *L'alphabet arménien dans l'histoire et dans la mémoire. Vie de Machtots par Korioun. Panégyrique des saints traducteurs par Vardan Areveltsi*, Paris 2018. For a description of the alphabet's invention and Bible translation, see especially *Koriwn I*, § VI, VIII, XI, and XIX. Vardapet, a title characteristic of the Armenian tradition, now means a monk-teacher, proficient in theology; in an earlier period, it meant a missionary monk teaching pagan peoples. Cf. R.W. Thomson, *Vardapet in the Early Armenian Church*, "Le Muséon" 75 (1962) p. 367-384.

⁷ There are several stages and related separate methods of translating the text. Cf. L. Ter Petrosian, *Ancient Armenian Translations*, tr. K. Maksoudian, New York City 1992; S.J. Voicu, *La patristica nella letteratura armena (V-X sec.)*, in: *Complementi interdisciplinari di patrologia*, ed. A. Quacquarelli, Roma 1989, p. 657-696; G. Muradyan, *The Hellenizing School*, in: *Armenian Philology in the Modern Era: From Manuscript to Digital Text*, ed. V. Calzolari – M.E. Stone, Leiden 2014, p. 321-348; E.G. Mathews, *Syriac into Armenian: The Translations and Their Translators*, "Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies" 10 (2010) p. 20-44.

Vahan Gołnac'i (BHO 1235) from the time of the revolt against the Muslims (705) and *Passio* of Hamazasp and Sahak Arcruni (BHO 544) under the Arab rule (785/786). An important work is the homiliary compiled by Solomon of Mak'enoc⁸, which became a model for the well-known *Homiliary of Muš* (twelfth century)⁹. Interestingly, none of them mentions St Menas.

Another document that played an important role was Armenian *Synaxarion*, referred to as *Yaysmawurk'*, lit. 'on this day', from the incipit of almost every description for a given day¹⁰. We know the different stages of its formation: (1) In the tenth century, Yovsēp' of Constantinople (991)¹¹ undertook the translation of the Greek *Menologion*. (2) The thirteenth and fifteenth centuries saw the creation of several recensions of the Armenian *Synaxarion*, ascribed to Tēr Israēl (ca. 1240), Kirakos (1269), *catholicos* Grigor Anavarzec'i (ca. 1300), and Grigor Xlat'ec'i (fifteenth century)¹². I should also mention Grigor II V kayaser (Martyrophile), *catholicos* of the Armenian Church (1066-1105), who received the epithet 'Martyrophile' for his translation of martyrologies from Greek, Syriac, and Latin into Armenian¹³.

2. Armenian tradition of the *Miracles of St Menas*

The Armenian version of *Martyrdom of St Menas* (BHO 745) precedes the cycle of miracles¹⁴. We find basic information about the Armenian

⁸ M. van Esbroeck, *Salomon de Makenoc, vardapet du VIIIe siècle*, in: *Armeniaca. Mélanges d'études arméniennes*, Venezia 1969, p. 33-44.

⁹ M. van Esbroeck, *Description de répertoire de l'homélaire de Muš*, REArm NS 18 (1984) p. 237-280.

¹⁰ G. Bayan, *Le synaxaire arménien de Ter Israel*, PO 21/1, Paris 1930. Actually, Bayan published the recension of Kirakos and not of Tēr Israēl; see below.

¹¹ Cf. N. Akinean, *Yovsēp' Kostandnupolsec'i, t'argmanič' Yaysmawurk'i (991)* [Yovsēp' of Constantinople, the Translator of *Yaysmawurk'*], "Handēs Amsōreay" 71/1-2 (1957) p. 1-13.

¹² Cf. J. Mécérian, *Bulletin arménologique, deuxième cahier: II. Introduction à l'étude des synaxaires arméniens* (Տոյսմաւրկ), "Mélanges de l'Université saint Joseph" 30 (1953) p. 99-154; U. Zanetti, *Apophtegmes et histoires édifiantes dans le synaxaire arménien*, AnBol 105 (1987) p. 168-170.

¹³ Basic information on Armenian hagiography appears in P. Cowe, *Armenian Hagiography*, in: *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, v. 1: *Periods and Places*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, London – New York 2016, p. 299-322.

¹⁴ For the life of St Menas, see E. Wipszycka, *The Birth of the Cult of St Menas*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 9-34.

tradition regarding the miracles of St Menas in BHO 748-750. There are three miracles attributed to him, identified as: *De mercatore peregrino*¹⁵, *De Agapio*¹⁶, and *De Iudaeo Alexandrino*¹⁷. BHO cites one publication containing the works in question, namely *Vark' ew vkayabanut' iwnk' srboc'* (The Life and Martyrdom of Saints)¹⁸. This edition, published by Mekhitarists, unfortunately contains no information about manuscripts on which the publication relies, nor a critical apparatus¹⁹.

In addition, it was possible to find another, earlier publication prepared by the Mekhitarists, not mentioned by the BHO editor. Entitled *Liakatar vark' ew vkayabanut' iwn srboc'* (Complete Lives and Martyrdoms of Saints), this work contains the same three miracles in a slightly different recension with annotations. Similarly to the previous document, this one also lacks critical apparatus and precise information about manuscripts²⁰.

During the research, I managed to isolate some manuscripts containing the miracles of St Menas, with a plan to draft a more detailed report. The identified manuscripts come from the Matenadaran in Yerevan²¹, the Mekhitarian libraries in Venice and Vienna (V201, W10),

¹⁵ The miracle entitled *The Isaurian Pilgrim*.

¹⁶ An analysis of the Armenian texts allowed me to identify the miracle entitled *De Agapio* as *Eutropius and the Silver Plates* (BHG 1258).

¹⁷ The miracle entitled *The Jew and the Christian*.

¹⁸ *Vark' ew vkayabanut' iwnk' srboc'* [The Life and Martyrdom of Saints], v. 2, Venice 1874, p. 67-73.

¹⁹ The Mekhitarist editions rely on the manuscripts available to them, not always on the most reliable. Also, they sometimes made changes without indicating them. Therefore, it would seem useful to prepare a future critical edition of the Armenian version of the *Miracles of St Menas*. Interestingly, the catalogue of the collection of Venetian Mekhitarist manuscripts at codex V201 notes that the text of the miracles of St. Menas is different from that included in the *Vark' ew vkayabanut' iwnk' srboc'* edition; cf. B. Sargisean, *Mayr c'uc'ak hayerēn jeragrac' matenadaranin Mxit'ar-eanc' i Venetik* [Main Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts of the Mekhitarist Library in Venice], v. 2, Venice 1924, c. 51.

²⁰ *Liakatar vark' ew vkayabanut' iwn srboc'* [Complete Lives and Martyrdoms of Saints], v. 9, ed. M. Awgerian, Venice 1813, p. 341-357 (the martyrdom), p. 357-367 (the text of miracles), p. 368-370 (footnotes). The footnotes related to the miracles of St Menas mention two manuscripts called *Č'arəntir A* and *Č'arəntir B*, most probably to be identified as V200 from 1224 and V201 from the twelfth-thirteenth century; however, these codices do not form the basis for this edition.

²¹ The following manuscripts seem particularly interesting: M7441 (Selection of Homilies) from 1322, M639 (Miscellany) from 1409 (ff. 285v-293r), and M1511 (Armenian

and the National Library in Paris (P118)²². They cover the period of the thirteenth-seventeenth centuries and mainly include *Yaysmawurk*‘ (*Synaxarion*) and *Č‘arəntir* (Selection of Homilies). A preliminary analysis does not allow us to conclude that any of the manuscripts contains miracles from outside the list of three miracles mentioned in BHO 748-750.

The Greek tradition of the *Miracles* has received a thorough study by Luigi Silvano and Paolo Varalda, who have distinguished four recensions (α , β , γ , δ), where α is the most ancient²³. As shown below, the Armenian version of the miracles contained in *Liakatar vark*‘ *ew vkayabanut*‘ *iwn srboc*‘ most probably follows the β tradition.

3. Translation of the Armenian Miracles of St Menas

This translation relies on the text contained in *Liakatar vark*‘ *ew vkayabanut*‘ *iwn srboc*‘. I omit the part that apparently forms an editor’s comment (p. 357-358)²⁴. In some cases, I refer to the text published in the *Vark*‘ *ew vkayabanut*‘ *iwnk*‘ *srboc*‘ to show the fundamental differences. In the translation, I made effort to preserve the Armenian syntax as much as possible, sometimes at the expense of English fluency.

3.1. (The Isaurian Pilgrim)²⁵

There was a certain man very rich²⁶ at that time and he came from the country of the Isaurians²⁷ to Alexandria for the purpose of trade. And having heard there in the city about all the miracles and healings that

Synaxarion in a recension by Grigor Xlat‘ec‘i) from 1471 (ff. 210r-213r).

²² To indicate Armenian manuscripts, I follow the acronym system of the Association Internationale des Études Arméniennes (AIEA); cf. B. Coulie, *Armenian Manuscripts. Catalogues, Collections, Libraries*, Corpus Christianorum, Turnhout 2020, p. 450-462.

²³ L. Silvano – P. Varalda, *Per l’edizione dei Miracula sancti Menae (BHG 1256-1269)*, “Philologia Antiqua” 12 (2019) p. 56-59.

²⁴ This comment contains general reflections about the author of the miracle cycle and the feast day of Saint Menas (11 November).

²⁵ I use parentheses because the edition does not contain the titles of individual miracles.

²⁶ We could also translate Arm. մեծաւոր (mecatun) as ‘noble’.

²⁷ The recension in the *Vark*‘ *ew vkayabanut*‘ *iwnk*‘ *srboc*‘ edition does not mention the merchant’s country of origin.

Saint Menas²⁸ had performed, he said, “I would also like to go and pray in the shrine²⁹ of Saint Menas and worship his holy relics and make there a small gift from my property, so that God will help me through the intercession of the saint”.

And rising, he took with him a purse³⁰ of gold, and went by boat through the gulf of the sea or through the lake³¹, and came to a place called Loxoneta³². Having gone down to a certain inn³³, he said to the innkeeper, “Friend, do me a favour and welcome me into your house, for it is almost evening and I do not dare to go on my way alone”. And the innkeeper said, “Brother, come in until the morning”, and brought the table and set it before him. After supper, when the man wanted to sleep, the innkeeper saw the purse, for at that hour Satan entered his heart, as he daily fights with mankind.

While the merchant was sleeping, the innkeeper arose, and took a sword, and killed him, and took his purse with all the treasure. And he said to himself, “What shall I do with his body, so that no one sees it and brings danger upon me? Now I will arise and cut up all his limbs, and throw them into a basket³⁴, and with it into the lake”. And when he had cut that [body] up and hung it up in a basket to find time to throw it into the depths

²⁸ The spelling in Classical Armenian is Minas and not Menas.

²⁹ Arm. տաճար (*tačar*); this corresponds to the following Greek terms: ναός, νέως, νηός, ιερόν; Lat. *templum*, *sacrarium*. Cf. NBHL II 841.

³⁰ Arm. քսակ (*k'sak*); according to NBHL, the term is an equivalent of the Greek μαρσέππιον, βάλαντιον, σακκος; cf. NBHL II 1013. The Greek text uses the term βάλαντιον; cf. *Zhitie prepodobnago Paisiia Velikago i Timofeja patriarkha Aleksandriiskago poviestvovanie o chudesakh* sv. Velikomuchenika Miny, ed. I. Pomialovskii, Saint Petersburg 1900, p. 63, l. 18.

³¹ Here, we find a literal translation of two terms: sea (Arm. *cov*) and lake (Arm. *lič*). An interesting question is whether this is a translation of two different terms found in the text, or whether the translator was unsure whether the Greek term referred to a sea or a lake and thus opted for a double translation. The recension in *Vark' ew vkayabanut 'iwnk' srboc* edition only mentions that the merchant ‘sailed to the other side of the sea’.

³² The same name of the place appears in the Greek version of the miracle; cf. *Zhitie prepodobnago Paisiia Velikago*, p. 63, l. 19. Silvano and Varalda consider Pomialovskii's manuscript to represent the β tradition, which indicates that the Armenian text follows this version; cf. L. Silvano – P. Varalda, *Per l'edizione dei Miracula sancti Menae* (BHG 1256-1269), “Philologia Antiqua” 12 (2019) p. 58.

³³ Arm. պանդոկ (*pandok*), Greek πανδοχεῖον, πανδοκειον, Lat. *diversorium publicum*, *taberna*, *stabulum*, *cauponium*; cf. NBHL II 595-596. This term quite clearly refers to an inn, a tavern.

³⁴ Arm. սակաւի (*sakari*), Greek κόφινος, Lat. *cophinus*, *corbis*, *qualus*; cf. NBHL II 684.

of the sea, the day dawned, and he was afraid to do what he wanted, and he took the head and wanted to smash it to make it invisible.

And behold, Saint Menas came galloping with many men as if sent by a king. The innkeeper, seeing this through the window, hastened and hung his – namely the rich man’s – head with the other limbs inside the inn, [for] he did not know what to do from fear. But Saint Menas opened the door of the house and seized the innkeeper and said to him, “Tell me the truth! Where is the man who was staying with you?”. He denied it and said, “No one was staying here”. The saint said, “If you do not wish to speak about the man, I will find him”. And immediately the saint took the basket and found the head with the limbs in it.

At that moment the innkeeper began to implore him and cried out, “I have sinned, for I see – he said – the graces of God towards you, and I confess my transgressions, that when I saw the man’s purse, the heart of this unfortunate man was filled with madness, and I rose and killed him, and here, my lord, [is] his purse full of treasure. I give [it] to you, and from my treasure a hundred coins³⁵, only free me from this murder of mine”. The saint answered him and said, “Repent, and I will forgive you your trespasses”. And he said, “My Lord, I will do as you command, in order to be saved by the king, I will go to the shrine of Saint Menas and I will do penance and take monastic habit”³⁶. When the saint saw his repentance, he said to him, “Pull out the basket which contains the limbs of the man, so that the glory of Christ may be revealed in his saints”. And falling on his knees, Saint Menas prayed for a long time, and then said to the dead man, “I say to you, in the name of Jesus Christ, who has made me the rock of his confession, stand up immediately and with all your limbs strong. Let heretics and pagans know through your hands the glory of Christ my God, so that you may also know that I, Menas, am the servant of God”.

And immediately he arose as he was before, and falling on his knees he worshiped the holy martyr and the multitude that [were] with him. And he said, “Thanks be to the Lord God who has shown me mercy through your coming, O holy one of God, for I was overcome with sleep and you, O Lord, came with great power and resurrected me”. For the man

³⁵ Arm. դաիւկան (*dahekan*), Greek δηνάριον, νόμισμα, δραχμή, χρύσεος, Lat. *denarium*, *nummus*; cf. NBHL I 592.

³⁶ Arm. սքեմ կրօնաւորութեան (*sk'em krōnaworut'ean*); this means entering a monastery and putting on the monastic habit. Doing penance in a monastery was a common practice.

did not know what had been done to him, and the innkeeper had not told him. And the holy martyr blessed the slain man and became invisible to them. And the innkeeper, having taken the hundred coins which he had promised to the saint, and the merchant his purse, went to the shrine of Saint Menas and fulfilled their vows. At that time the innkeeper confessed before everyone what had been done by him to the merchant, and how the saint had resurrected him; and all praised God. And the merchant was amazed when he heard that he had truly been killed and had resurrected, and he gave glory to God, and went about declaring to all the glory of God. And the innkeeper became a monk³⁷ and lived five years and died with accepted penance, always preaching the power of saint Menas through whom many pagans and heretics came to the true faith.

3.2. (Eutropius and the Silver Plates)

Again, a certain man named Eutropius in Alexandria decided to have two silver plates made³⁸, to give one to the shrine of Saint Menas and the other to serve at his table. He called a certain silversmith³⁹ to him and said to him, “Take from me the best silver and make two plates similar to each other, and write my name on one and the name of Saint Menas on the other”. And so he did. And [the bowl] of Saint Menas was found to be more beautiful than the other, and when the man saw it, he envied the saint’s vessel. And he said to himself, “I will go to the holy martyr and give him the bowl on which the silversmith has written my name, and I will have the saint’s [bowl] with me for my needs, and after my death I will give this to the holy one’s shrine”.

When he had sailed out in the boat with this thought, it was time for supper, and the servant, having set the table, brought the holy bowl to serve his master, according to his commandment; and the servant, having

³⁷ According to the *Vark’ ew vkayabanut’iwnk’ srboc’* edition, the innkeeper lived ‘in great mortification and a virtuous life’. In both recensions, the penitential period was five years.

³⁸ Arm. սկուտէղ (*skutel*). According to NBHL, the term is an equivalent of Greek σκυταλή, πύναξ, Lat. *scutella*, which means a plate, bowl, or vessel; cf. NBHL II 722. According to the *Vark’ ew vkayabanut’iwnk’ srboc’* edition, the man ordered the making of two cups (Arm. *skih*).

³⁹ Arm. արծաթագործ (*arcat’agorc*), Greek ἀργυροκόπος, Lat. *conflator argenti*, clearly indicating a craftsman working in silver; cf. NBHL I 361.

taken the vessel after supper, went to wash it by the side of the boat, and the waves broke and took the bowl from his hands. The servant, terrified that he would be punished by his master, threw himself into the sea after the sunken bowl. When the man learned what had happened, he said, “Woe is me! For I have sinned against God by envying the holy vessel⁴⁰, and therefore I have lost my servant. And if people learn that I had a holy vessel to serve, what disgrace will not offend me? If I had known this earlier, it would have been better to give three to the holy martyr instead of one bowl, and not enter into such misfortunes and the bitter shame of death”. Then he made a vow and said, “If I am worthy to bury the body of the deceased, I will give two chalices or plates to the shrine of the holy martyr Menas and the price of the lost vessel”. When he reached the harbour on the third day, he looked at the seashore, to this side and to that, wondering whether the waves would perhaps throw the dead man onto dry land. The sailors said, “What is this madness of yours? For after two days of our voyage you are looking for his body”. The man said to them, “I hope in the Lord God, through the intercession of Saint Menas, who resurrected the man who was cut apart with his limbs, as if from a dream⁴¹, that at least he will show me his body before my death”. And as he was speaking these things, behold, his servant came swimming, and came with a vessel in his hand over the sea, and inquired after his master’s ship. And when the sailors saw the servant, they cast noose, and took hold of him, and went out upon dry land. When his master saw him, he embraced him and kissed him with tears, and asked, “How were you saved from the sea?”. And he said, “As I fell into the depths, I saw a brilliant man who said to the two men who were with him, ‘Hold this man, lest he drown’. And from that time on they did not depart from me until I came to this place”. When the man and the whole multitude heard this, they gave glory to God and testified that the holy martyr Menas had quickly come to his aid. And the man went into the holy shrine and donated two plates and other abundant gifts there, installing the servant to serve the holy shrine. And he himself returned to his house, praising and blessing God.

⁴⁰ Arm. ւնւօթ (*anōt*), Greek ἀγγεῖον, σκεῦος, Lat. *vas*; cf. NBHL I 256.

⁴¹ A reference to the miracle *The Isaurian Pilgrim*.

3.3. (The Jew and the Christian)

There was a certain Jew, a merchant in Alexandria, who lived near a certain Christian, and the Jew and the Christian were very fond of each other. When the Jew was getting ready to go somewhere on business, he came to the Christian's house, gave him his purse sealed with his ring, and gave it to him as a deposit until he returned. The merchant went away, and when he returned from his journey, he sent presents to the Christian. But he laughed to himself and said, "I have received presents, and if he asks for things, he will take nothing", for he had brainstormed with his wife, saying, "O woman, if it is possible, we will deny the Jew's purse, and if he binds us to an oath, we will swear, and nothing will hurt us, because we swear to a Jew, and not to a Christian". So by the counsel of the Adversary the man denied the purse when the Jew asked for it from him until the multitude gathered around them, and a great conflict arose, because there was no witness between them.

Then the Jew had an idea and said to the Christian, "I have heard, brother, about Saint Menas, how great his glory is, and that he puts to shame those who swear falsely by him. Now arise, and let us go there, so that you may swear by his glory. And if you have received nothing from me, depart in peace". The Christian said, "How will this be, since a Jew does not enter the church⁴² of a Christian?". The Jew said, "If I am not allowed to enter, I will remain outside the vestibule⁴³, and when you enter, you will swear before the others". But the Christian, disregarding his oath, said to himself, "Saint Menas will forgive my oath". And so, rising, they went to the door of the shrine of Saint Menas. There, the Jew said to the Christian, "Tremble, friend, before God and may he have mercy on your soul! Take from the treasure as much as you want, and give the rest

⁴² Arm. եկեղեցի (*ekelec'i*), which means 'church' as a community, as well as a building.

⁴³ Arm. գաւիթ (*gawit'*), Greek αὐλή, Lat. *atrium*; cf. NBHL I 533. According to the *Vark' ew vkayabanut' iwnk' srboc'* edition, the Jew was praying in the space referred to in Armenian as *urpuh (srah)* and in Greek as αὐλή, περίβοος, πρόθυρον. From approximately the eleventh century, the term *gawit'* in Armenian architecture described a four-column structure intended for the tombs of the nobles, as well as a space for penitents and catechumens; cf. E. Vardanyan, *The Žamatun of Hořomos and the Žamatun/Gawit' Structures in Armenian Architecture*, in: *Hořomos Monastery: Art and History*, Paris 2015, p. 207-236. In the fifth century, the term referred to the open courtyard in front of the sanctuary rather than to the enclosed structure; cf. N. Garsoïan, *The Epic Histories Attributed to P'awstos Buzand (Buzandaran Patmut' iwnk')*, Cambridge 1989, p. 526-527.

to me, only do not swear!". And when the Christian did not want to listen, the Jew appealed to the saint in his vestibule and said, "Saint Menas, although I am not worthy to call upon your name, show your miracles today, so that I may praise you". The Christian went in, having no fear of God in his heart, and swore an oath; and the Jew looked to see if there would be a sign for the sake of the oath, but the saint was patient with him.

When he had finished his oath, they both returned and rode away, and when they had ridden three miles, suddenly the Christian's horse reared up, threw him to the ground, and he lost the key to the chest in which there was the Jew's purse, together with the ring. He searched and did not find it, and was very glad at his fall and at rising in health, considering this to be the punishment for his oath. When they came to a certain place and sat down to eat, the Jew became sorrowful and said, "Why did I believe in Saint Menas as a miracle-worker? I have not seen a single sign that I have heard of. And if the Christian had not been bound by me to an oath, after a few days he would have surely given me back what is mine". He said this and wept and said again, "I commit my life to the Lord and to his holy martyr Menas". Now while they were sitting together, behold, a servant of the Christian came, holding a purse full of treasure.

And when they saw him, they were both amazed. And the master of the servant was greatly afraid, and said to the servant, "Where do you come from, and what is this you are holding?". He answered and said, "I came because you sent me, my master, to fulfil your command". His master said to him, "Whom have I sent, and what command have you come to fulfil?". The servant said, "My lord, today, there came a certain rider, tall and very fierce, to my mistress, and he had your ring and the key to the chest⁴⁴ in which you put your treasures, and he said to my mistress, 'Do you recognize this?', and she said, 'Yes'. The rider said, 'Your husband asked me and sent me to you, saying, 'Open the Jew's purse for me through my servant, for I am terribly tormented by the holy martyr'. So I ran and brought your purse. Here is your ring and the key to your treasure, which that rider brought to my mistress". At that moment the Jew arose and took the purse with the seal, and cried out with joy, saying, "Great is the God of the Christians, and great is his holy martyr Menas! The faith of Christians is wonderful, because no one who

⁴⁴ Arm. արկի (arkel), Greek κυβωτός, γλωσσόκομον, Lat. *arca*, *arcula*, *theca*; cf. NBHL I 363.

trusts in You, Lord, and in the intercession of Saint Menas, will return in shame. Behold, Lord, I too become a Christian because of the miracles of the holy martyr Menas". And coming again to the shrine of the saint, he gave there the third part of the purse, which was calculated on the scale to be 1,000 coins, and said, "You know, O holy one of God, that before you I said to the man, 'Take as much as you want for you, and give the rest to me', but he did not want to. Now I give it to your sanctuary". Leaving the service of the Jews, he and his entire house were baptized, and their house was counted among the believers in Christ, and with piety and sincerity they blessed God and his holy martyr Menas. And from that day on, no one dared to swear in the holy shrine, neither lie nor truth.

But the Christian went to his home filled with shame and sorrow, and then, taking half of his wealth, he gave it as an offering to the shrine of the holy martyr, and there he repented his sins, and did not leave it until his penance was revealed to be accepted, and from that time he blessed God and the holy martyr Menas until the day of his death.

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Saint Menas in Medieval Georgia¹

Nikoloz Aleksidze²

Abstract: Despite the survival of St Menas's hagiography in various Georgian iterations and his commemoration in practically all Georgian calendars and martyrologies – both pre-Constantinopolitan and Byzantine – the cult of St Menas was weak in Georgia. To this day, collections of St Menas's miracles in Georgian await discovery, apart from one miracle discussed near the end of my article. Nonetheless, given the significant role Georgian evidence plays in the study of late antique and mediaeval hagiography and the cult of saints, the article attempts to contextualise the cult of St Menas from the Georgian perspective.

Keywords: ecclesiastical calendar; hymnography; metaphrasis; warrior saints; medieval translations

1. A short overview of Georgian hagiography

Since the creation of the Georgian alphabet in the early fifth century, martyrdom accounts and related narratives have dominated Georgian literature. The earliest surviving pieces of Georgian writing recount stories of martyrdom under the Sasanians and Arabs. In addition to original hagiographies, translations from Greek, Syriac, and Armenian, and later from Arabic, have proliferated. Multiple hagiographic codices, dated primarily to the tenth century, contain translations created between the fifth and ninth centuries.

Scholars conventionally divide the Georgian hagiographic corpus into three types:

- pre-metaphrastic hagiographies. Mediaeval and modern Georgian scholarship refers to the pre-metaphrastic corpus as *keimena*, a term

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explained in the tenth century as “original” hagiographies written in what functioned as simple and plain language at the time, and often relatively short. The earliest corpora containing these pre-metaphrastic compositions are miscellaneous hagiographic narratives, such as the so-called *Mravalt’avi* codices, as mediaeval authors knew these works. Like *keimena*, *mravalt’avi* is a calque of a Greek term, *polykephalon* (“of many chapters”), used as a reference to various hagiographic and homiletical texts (chapters)³;

- metaphrastic hagiographies. A comparably large corpus of mediaeval Georgian hagiography consists of the metaphraseis, which started to appear in the tenth century. Along with the translations of Symeon Metaphrastes’s hagiographies, a continuation of the metaphraseis undertaken supposedly by John Xiphilinos has survived and undergone translation only in the Georgian language⁴;
- the *Great Synaxarion*. Finally, shorter martyrdom accounts form the eleventh-century *Great Synaxarion* of George Hagiorites. The *Synaxarion* essentially relies on the Athonite adaptation of the Typikon of the Stoudiou Monastery in Constantinople⁵.

Apart from hagiographies, miracle collections remained equally well known in Georgian writing. Several collections were indeed particularly popular and widespread. For example, extended and abridged versions of the miracles of St Nicholas of Myra, St Timothy the Wonderworker⁶, St Basil the Great, St Demetrios of Thessaloniki, or St Theodore of Euchaita, or multiple collections of the miracles of St George have survived in numerous manuscripts⁷.

St Menas appears in all of these hagiographic collections: pre-metaphrastic, metaphrastic, and the *Great Synaxarion*. However, the exceptionally popular miracle collections of St Menas, whether in their full or abridged form, are regrettably absent.

³ K. Kekelidze, *Simeon Metafrast po gruzinskim istochnikam* [Симеон Метафраст по грузинским источникам; Symeon Metaphrastes According to Georgian Sources], in: K. Kekelidze, *Etiudebi* 5, Tbilisi 1957, p. 212-226.

⁴ For an overview of Georgian hagiography see B. Martin-Hisard, *Georgian Hagiography*, in: *The Ashgate Companion to Byzantine Hagiography, Volume 1: Periods and Places*, ed. S. Efthymiadis, New York 2011, p. 285-298. Xiphilinos’s metaphraseis remain unedited; I am currently performing their edition and translation.

⁵ Giorgi Mt’acmideli, *didi svinak’sari* [დიდი სვინაქსარი; *Great Synaxarion*], ed. M. Dolakidze – D. Chitunashvili, Tbilisi 2017.

⁶ Kekelidze, *Etiudebi* 6, Tbilisi 1960, p. 336-406.

⁷ See E. Gabidzashvili, *k’art’uli nat’argmni hagiograph’ia* [ქართული ნათარგმნი ჰაგიოგრაფია; Translated Georgian Hagiography], Tbilisi 2004.

2. The cult of warrior saints in medieval Georgia

Although Georgia introduced and established the cult of warrior saints at an early stage, the Georgians appeared selective about which cults to embrace and which to disregard. As a result, while the cults of certain soldier saints flourished, others remained relatively marginalized. Among the prominent figures, St George, St Theodore Tiron, St Stratelates, and St Demetrios stood out, enjoying substantial veneration in medieval Georgia. In addition to these well-known saints, lesser soldier saints also gained notable traction, such as St Eustathios, whose cult enjoyed greater prominence in Georgia and Cappadocia than in other regions.

Later, St Eugenios of Trebizond rose in popularity, along with other regional or international soldier saints. The emergence of these cults often stemmed from clear historical and political contexts: Georgia's elites, particularly the Bagratids, adopted figures like St Demetrios and St Eugenios from the Byzantine political rhetoric and wove them into their own power narratives. Other cults, such as those of St George and, to a lesser extent, St Theodore, were more ancient – that is, internalized and incorporated into folklore early in Georgia's history.

Notably, the success of any soldier saint largely depended on their association with a political agenda or the ambitions of a powerful individual or dynasty. Conversely, other celebrated soldier saints who thrived in the surrounding region often fell outside the focus of Georgia's ruling elites, resulting in their significant absence within the country. For instance, St Sergios, widely venerated in neighbouring Armenia, is almost completely absent from Georgia.

3. St Menas in the pre-Constantinopolitan liturgical tradition

Before the tenth century, when Georgian monasteries appeared in Byzantium, the epicentre of Georgian writing and liturgical tradition functioned in the monasteries of Holy Land rather than in Georgia itself. In fact, our understanding of the heritage of Georgian monks in the Holy Land is likely deeper than of their contribution within Georgia. The earliest evidence in Georgian language for the cult of St Menas stems from Palestine, specifically from the seventh-century *Lectionary of Jerusalem*. The fifth-seventh century *Lectionary* is the earliest witness to the Hagio-polite rite and has largely and predominantly survived in the Georgian

language – apart from the *Armenian Lectionary*, which reflects an even earlier stage of its development. The *Lectionary of Jerusalem* commemorates St Menas three times: 10 July⁸, 31 October – together with the Prophet Isaiah and martyr Phokas⁹ – and 12 November¹⁰. In all three instances, the *Lectionary* points to a particular site of the stationary liturgy where St Menas must receive commemoration: the church of St Menas founded by Bassa, an aristocrat and friend of Empress Eudocia, who founded the monastery where Bassa was an abbess. We learn from Cyril of Scythopolis that “blessed Bassa called Andrew, the brother of Bishop Stephen of Jamnia, from the laura of the great Euthymios and appointed him the superior of the shrine of St Menas, which she had founded”¹¹. This must have happened by c. 456¹². If the current identification of the church is correct, based on the surviving inscription, then the foundation must have later become part of the Armenian patriarchate of Jerusalem¹³.

St Menas appears multiple times in another important liturgical document, the tenth-century *Calendar* of Ioane Zosime. Compiled at Mar Sabas Monastery in Palestine, the *Calendar* unites several liturgical traditions, including that of the *Lectionary of Jerusalem*. St Menas’s feast falls there on 4 May, 10 July, 31 October, 11 November, and 12 November¹⁴. This multiplication of feast days is not unusual to Zosime’s *Calendar*, which suggests that it was indeed a transitional calendar, uniting several local and larger liturgical calendars.

Crucially, St Menas appears in a tenth-century hymnal, the *Iadgari*, and its various versions, which highlight his shrine as a particularly strong miracle-working site, with a reference to the types of miracles St Menas performed:

⁸ For St Menas and the general discussion on the *Lectionary* see e.g. CSLA.E03270 (N. Aleksidze). Below, CSLA refers to the Cult of Saints in Late Antique Database, followed by the ID number.

⁹ CSLA.E3415 (N. Aleksidze).

¹⁰ CSLA.E3427 (N. Aleksidze).

¹¹ Cyrillus Scythopolitanus, *Vitae monachorum Palaestinae, Vita Euthymii* 49, 20-25, tr. R.M. Price, p. 46.

¹² S. Verhelst, *Les lieux de station du lectionnaire de Jérusalem. 1ère partie: Les villages et fondations*, “Proche-Orient Chrétien” 54 (2004) p. 47.

¹³ <https://dig.corps-cmhl.huji.ac.il/epigraphicals/jerusalem-old-city-st-menas> (accessed: 15.05.2025).

¹⁴ CSLA.E03729, E03796, E03912, E03923, E03924 (N. Aleksidze). For a study of the *Calendar* with the full text see *Le Calendrier Palestino-Géorgien du Sinaiticus 34 (Xe siècle)*, ed. G. Garitte, *Subsidia Hagiographica*, v. 30, Brussels 1958.

და გვრგვონსად გმოსჩნდი : მოწამეო მენა მოვისწრფოთ ტადრად
შნდა : და მსგვსად კურნებსა და სენთა ლხინებსა : აღმოვივსებთ
უხუებით ვსენებასა : შნსა ვადიდებთ ჩნ ყლითურთ : მინა ყდ ქბულო
გვთხოე ქესგნ : გმოვსნად შეცთომილთაჲ : მონებსგნ მტრისა¹⁵.

You appeared as a crown-bearer. Martyr Menas, we come to your shrine and are filled with healings and deliverance from afflictions. We glorify your feast day in unity. Praiseworthy Menas, intercede on our behalf with Christ, to save those who have erred and [save us] from the servitude to the enemy.

This reference suggests that at least a part of the Georgian monastic community, especially those people who lived in the Near East, knew the shrine in Alexandria and its miracles.

4. The hagiography of St Menas: The pre-metaphrastic tradition

The only copy of the *Martyrdom of St Menas* is unedited and appears in MS O/Sin.georg.11, kept on Mount Sinai, where most of the Georgian Palestinian manuscripts ultimately arrived¹⁶. The manuscript is a hagiographic collection copied, as the colophon suggests, at the “Palavra” (*Palaia Lavra*) Monastery, namely the monastery of St Chariton in the Judean desert¹⁷. In the tenth and eleventh centuries – the supposed time of copying the MS – the monastery had a substantial presence of Georgian monks. The same colophon points to Seit‘ as the translator, living in the eighth or early ninth century; however, it is unclear which texts he translated. While some texts, such as the *Martyrdom of St Menas*, are clear translations from Greek, others had an Arabic source. As of now, the Georgian pre-metaphrastic martyrdom of St Menas remains unstudied and its relationship with the source language is not immediately clear.

¹⁵ Mik‘ael Modrekili, *himnograph‘ia* 2 [ჰიმნოგრაფია 2; Hymnography 2], ed. V. Gvakharia – R. Burchuladze – S. Amiranashvili, Tbilisi 1978, p. 306.

¹⁶ <https://www.loc.gov/item/00279388379-ms> (accessed: 15.05.2025).

¹⁷ For the Georgian literary production in Palestine in general and specifically at the Monastery of St Chariton see e.g. T. Chronz *et al.*, *Palestine*, in: *Mediaeval Georgian Literary Culture and Book Production in the Christian Middle East and Byzantium*, ed. T. Otkhmezuri, Köln 2022, p. 23-106.

5. Metaphrastic translations

The *Martyrdom of St Menas* appears as two independent metaphrastic redactions: Ivir.georg.36 – translated at the Iveron Monastery on Mount Athos by Theophilos the Hieromonk, and another translation from the same century by Ephrem the Lesser of the Black Mountain (Mss. S 384 and A 128 at the Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts)¹⁸. Both translations emerged independently but follow the Greek original relatively faithfully. The colophon to Ephrem's translation is noteworthy as it reveals the monastery's abbot's particular interest in St Menas:

წმიდანო მამანო, ესე წმიდისა მინდს წამებაჲ იყო ძუელადცა თარგმნილი კიმენისაგან, რამეთუ ესრეთ ეწოდების პირველ ლიტონად აღწერილსა წიგნსა მოწამეთასა. ხოლო აწ ესე ითარგმნა ახლად მეტაფრასისაგან ბრძანებითა კალიპოსელთა წინამძღურისა ბასილისითა, რამეთუ მას უკმდა მინა წმიდისათეს და ესე ირჩია ლოლოთეტისა სვემონის შეკაზმულისა მოწამეთადსაგან, რომელსა მეტაფრას ეწოდების. შეგვანდევიტ და ლოცვა-ყავტ¹⁹.

Holy Fathers, the *Martyrdom of St Menas* had been translated earlier from *kimeni*, which is the name for the first simple martyrdom accounts. Now, however, it has been translated anew on the order of the abbot of Kalippos, Basil, for he wished to [have] St Menas and chose the rewritings of Symeon Logothetes, which are called *metaphraseis*.

The colophon suggests that the Black Mountain's community realized the existence of an older translation but that St Menas was not a particularly popular saint, prompting the abbot to revive his memory in the Georgian milieu of the Black Mountain.

6. St Menas in Constantinopolitan liturgy

The Georgian Constantinopolitan liturgical manuscripts represent St Menas equally broadly. We do not know whether he enjoyed

¹⁸ For the Greek source see *Acta Sancti Menae martyris Aegyptii*, ed. G. van Hooff, AnBol 3 (1884) p. 258-270.

¹⁹ L. Akhobadze, *zveli metap'rasuli krebulebi. Noembris sakit'xavebi* [ძველი მეტაფრასული კრებულები. ნოემბრის საკითხავები; Old Metaphrastic Collections: Readings for November], Tbilisi 2020, p. 301.

commemoration in Euthymios Hagiorites's *Minor Synaxarion* (1030), copied in Constantinople, since that section of the MS has gone missing. However, St Menas is present in George Hagiorites's *Great Synaxarion* (c. 1044), where his commemoration falls on 11 November. Still, the attached biographic note is extremely brief and generic²⁰. St Menas also appears in George Hagiorites's *Menaion* as well as other liturgical manuscripts from the period.

7. St Menas in Georgian art

In medieval Georgian art, St Menas is one of the most poorly represented soldier saints. Medieval and late medieval Georgian monumental art provides a strikingly rich array of saints, especially of soldier saints. Starting from the tenth century, monumental images of St George, St Theodores, St Demetrios, and other soldier saints dominate in most churches²¹. Since medieval Georgians were particularly keen on adopting and internalizing the cults of soldier saints, the absence of such an early and great soldier saint as St Menas is striking.

Nevertheless, one can explain this fact. The proliferation of the imagery of soldier saints was almost always a conscious project of royal or other military elites. While the cult of St George had a long tradition, his incorporation in royal rhetoric was a project of the Bagratids. The same applies to St Demetrios of Thessaloniki. The appearance of other soldier saints, such as St Eugenios of Trebizond, in royal foundations stemmed from the strategic requirements of the era. The remarkable popularity of other soldier saints who were less prominent outside the region, for example that of St Eustathios Placidus, originated from the similarity of his story to the Sasanian narratives of royal hunt and to the Georgian story of conversion of its first Christian king through a similar miracle. In contrast, St Menas, associated with asceticism and desert monasticism, struggled to secure a prominent place in the visual aesthetics of Georgia's military elites. His cult showed a weaker connection to military life and he was primarily known as a specialized miracle worker, which likely limited his appeal in this context.

²⁰ Giorgi Mt'acmideli, *didi svinak'sari* [დიდი სვინაქსარი; *Great Synaxarion*], ed. M. Dolakidze – D. Chitunashvili, Tbilisi 2017.

²¹ For a detailed study of the cult of soldier saints in medieval Georgian art see *Warrior Saints in Medieval Georgian Art*, ed. N. Aleksidze – E. Gedevanishvili, Tbilisi 2025.

To the best of my knowledge, only one image of St Menas has survived in Georgian murals, and in a rather unusual setting. A portrait of St Menas, depicted in well-established traditional iconography, appears in the dome of the cathedral church of Iṣxani (1032) in south-western Georgia, on the territory of modern-day Turkey. The dome's window soffits display half figures of saints: in addition to St Menas, one can see the busts of St Sergios, St Konon, St Phokas, St Orentios, St Demetrios, St Prokopios, and St Theodore²². Apart from the last three, representations of the other saints shown in Iṣxani are equally rare.

The presence of St Menas in Iṣxani may stem from his popularity in the ethnically diverse region of Tao, located in north-eastern Anatolia, where ethnic Armenians and Georgians lived side by side. One can suggest that the introduction of St Menas in Iṣxani, much like St Sergios, served the intent of incorporating “new” and less common saints into the Georgian literary and visual tradition.

Another unique image of St Menas appears in a fifteenth-century Georgian-Greek liturgical manuscript kept at the National Library of Russia in St Petersburg²³. Menas is represented among other martyr saints (86v) with Christ's portrait depicted on the front-piece of his himation, which is typical for Byzantine monumental art as well as liturgical manuscript illuminations.

8. A miracle at Abu Mena

Despite the absence of miracle collections of St Menas, one miracle associated with Abu Mena appears in the Georgian collection of apophthegms.

The miracle reports the following story: A rich man in Alexandria fell ill. Fearing death, he distributed thirty pounds of gold to the poor and was

²² See E. Privalova, *Notes on the Murals of Tao-Klardjeti (X-XIII cc.)*, in: *Hagion Oros: Physē – Latreia – Technē II*, Thessaloniki 2001, p. 68-70.

²³ L. Evseeva, *Afonsakaia kniga obraztsov XV veka. O metode raboty srednevekovogo xudozhnika* [Афонская книга образцов XV века. О методе работы средневекового художника; Athonite book of images of the 15th century. Concerning the method of work of a medieval artist], Moscow 1998, p. 251; See, also, *k'art'ul-berž-nuli ilustirebuli xelnaceri sankt-peterburgis kolek'c'iidan* [ქართულ-ბერძნული ილუსტრირებული ხელნაწერი სანკტ-პეტერბურგის კოლექციიდან; Georgian-Greek Liturgical manuscript from the collection of St Petersburg], ed. E. Dughashvili – N. Kavtaria, Tbilisi 2012, p. 3-8.

immediately cured. Then, however, he began to regret his own generosity. The man had a friend, a pious and good man, and to him he confessed that he regretted his own good deeds. The friend replied that instead of regretting, he should be rejoicing since he had offered his money to Christ, but he was unable to convince the man. Then the friend told him to take his own thirty pounds of gold, for he too was a wealthy man, go to the church of St Menas, say that it was not he who donated to charity, and keep the money. The man did so; he went to the shrine of St Menas, confessed that he was retracting his donation, and kept thirty pounds of gold. Upon leaving the shrine, however, he fell and died immediately. The monks asked the real owner of the gold to take the money back. The man refused and said that he had offered it to Christ and wished them to distribute the money among the poor. And so they did²⁴.

The earliest attested version of the story appears in a Georgian manuscript from Mount Athos (MS Ivir.georg.9.) dated to 977 and copied at the Oški Monastery in Tao-Klarjeti. It forms part of an addendum to the *Spiritual Meadow* of the Georgian John Moschos, which is probably a translation from Arabic. The editor of Moschos dates the addendum to no later than the beginning of the ninth century²⁵. The addendum bears the title “ესე თავები იპოვა კვპრეს ადგილსა რ(ომე)ლსა ჰრქჳან თეომორფო მიმსგავსებოვლი სამოთხესა” (These chapters were found in Cyprus at a place called Theomorphos²⁶, resembling the Paradise [Moschos’s original composition])²⁷. The Georgian text follows almost verbatim the version published by Wortley in the “anonymous collection”, whereas Theophilos’s translation has a slightly more expanded and embellished source.

Another translation of the same story, albeit longer and more elaborate, appears in the Georgian translation of the “systematic collection” of *Apophthegmata Patrum*. The monks of Mount Athos translated the systematic collection twice: Euthymios Hagiorites (955-1028) performed the work first, and near the end of the eleventh century, Theophilos the Hieromonk produced an expanded translation. The miracle of Abu Mena appears in Theophilos’s translation.

²⁴ T’ēop’ile Xuc’esmonazoni, *mamat’a scavlani dat’xrobani* [მამათა სწავლებანი და თბრობანი; Teachings and Sayings of the Fathers], Tbilisi 2014, p. 496.

²⁵ Ioane Mosxi, *Limonari* [ლიმონარი; Leimonarion], ed. I. Abuladze, Tbilisi 1960, p. 86; for commentary see p. 020–022.

²⁶ Evidently modern Morphou in North Cyprus.

²⁷ See J. Gippert – B. Outtier – S. Kim, *Holy Monastery of Iviron, Catalogue of the Georgian Manuscripts*, Mount Athos 2022, p. 107.

Although the miracle appears in the Georgian translation of the systematic collection, it is missing from alphabetical and anonymous collections²⁸. Structurally and in terms of the message that it conveys, the story resembles other miracles of St Menas, where the saint punishes or nearly punishes those who make a promise to his shrine but fail to keep their word. These include the “Eutropius and the Silver Plates” miracle ascribed to Theophilos of Alexandria²⁹ and, perhaps more marginally, the “Barren Camel” miracle.

9. Conclusion

St Menas was a known and celebrated figure in the Georgian liturgical tradition; he enjoyed commemoration in all the early liturgical calendars and in the later *Synaxaria*. His martyrological dossier exists in all three manifestations: pre-metaphrastic, metaphrastic, and the abridged versions of the *Synaxaria*. Nonetheless, one can hardly speak of the “cult” of St Menas in Georgia. His representation has marginally transcended monastic literature, and his visual imagery has never established itself. The faithful apparently knew his cult as Abu Mena and the associated miracles, yet he has not garnered sufficient interest to cause the translation of the miracle collections.

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²⁸ For the same miracle in the Greek anonymous collection see J. Wortley, *The Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Cambridge 2013, p. 42-44.

²⁹ CSLA.E01222 (G. Schenke).

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I made you bear a son, and you shall call his name Mena! **The Saint, the Egg, and Medieval Nubia¹**

Agata Deptuła²

Abstract: This article examines the Old Nubian Miracle of St Menas, preserved in the British Library Ms. Or. 6805, as a unique testimony to Christian traditions in medieval Nubia. While sharing certain motifs with earlier miracles known from Coptic, Greek, and Arabic sources, this text presents a distinctive narrative absent in other traditions. The article is structured around two main sections: the historical and cultural context of medieval Nubia and a detailed analysis of the miracle, focusing on its connections to other Menas traditions. The analysis employs a comparative method, juxtaposing the Old Nubian text with earlier textual sources. Material evidence, including paintings and inscriptions, is also incorporated to contextualize the miracle within broader Nubian Christian practices. The text, either translated into Old Nubian or partially composed in this language, references symbols and concepts familiar to a local Nubian audience.

Keywords: Medieval Nubia; Cult of St Menas; Hagiography

1. Ab ovo

It seems appropriate to begin the article *ab ovo* – in this case, quite literally, with the egg. The egg (κωμπος in Old Nubian) plays a pivotal role in the only known Old Nubian miracle of St Menas. Throughout the narrative, it serves as a companion to the protagonists, a symbol of hope and renewal, a valuable offering to the saint, and, ultimately, the proof of sin. This distinctive element not only shapes the plot but also differentiates the text from Coptic, Greek, and any other tradition. However, before delving into the specifics of St Menas and the egg, it is necessary to step back, start *ab ovo*, and outline

¹ The research presented in this article has been funded by the National Science Centre (Poland) under the project “Across centuries, languages, and cultures: The Miracles of Saint Menas as a historical source, literary composition and liturgical text”, project no. UMO-2021/41/B/HS1/00550.

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the broader cultural and historical context of the community for which this text was prepared.

In the fifth century, the Middle Nile Valley saw the emergence of three new political entities on the ruins of the former kingdom of Meroe: Nobadia in the north, with its capital at Faras; Makuria in the central region, with Dongola as its capital; and Alwa in the south, extending beyond the Fifth Cataract, with its center in Soba³. By the sixth century, all three kingdoms had become part of the Christian *oikoumene*. While the general outlines of Nubia's Christianization are known from external sources, many details remain unclear. What is clear is that these efforts began during the reign of Emperor Justinian, with Egypt playing a significant role in the process⁴. The adoption of Christianity brought the Nubian kingdoms into the broader Mediterranean Christian world, not only in terms of faith but also through the adoption of Greek as the primary liturgical language and the assimilation of cultural norms and traditions.

Until the end of Christianity in the region, Nubian sees remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Based on fragments of liturgical calendars, it can be concluded that the liturgical calendar followed the Egyptian civil model⁵. To complicate matters further, it is important to note that throughout this period, Greek served as the primary language for the performative parts of the liturgy, while the persuasive parts were conducted in the native language, Old Nubian⁶. Moreover, there are numerous attestations of readings, homilies, and lives of saints in Coptic, suggesting that, to some extent, it was also employed in liturgical contexts.

³ For the history of the medieval kingdoms of Nubia see D.A. Welsby, *The Medieval Kingdoms of Nubia. Pagans, Christians and Muslims along the Middle Nile*, London 2002; G.R. Ruffini, *The History of Medieval Nubia*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Nubia*, ed. G. Emberling – Bruce B. Williams, Oxford 2021, p. 759-771.

⁴ R. Werner, *Das Christentum in Nubien. Geschichte und Gestalte einer afrikanischen Kirche*, "Studien zur Orientalischen Kirchengeschichte" 48 (2013) p. 35-65; J.H.F. Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion. A Regional Study of Religious Transformation (298-642 CE)*, Leuven – Paris – Dudley 2008, p. 271-304.

⁵ G. Ochała, *The Nubian Liturgical Calendar: The Evidence of the Nubian Lectionaries*, "Le Muséon" 128 (2015) p. 1-48.

⁶ A. Łajtar – G. Ochała, *Language Use and Literacy in Late Antique and Medieval Nubia*, in: *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Nubia*, ed. G. Emberling – B. Williams, Oxford 2021, p. 787-805.

2. Cult of Saints in Medieval Nubia

Like many other aspects of Christian Nubia, the veneration of saints in this region remains underexplored⁷. This is partly due to the scarcity of sources, particularly the absence of synaxaria. The available evidence for reconstructing the cult of saints includes fragments of hagiographic texts, dedications in inscriptions, wall paintings with accompanying legends, as well as prayers and hymns mentioning the venerated figures. Additional insights into the popularity of specific saints can be drawn from dedications of sacred buildings and the prevalence of certain personal names, both among the clergy and laypeople. Unfortunately, many textual sources with relevant information remain unanalyzed and are often mentioned only briefly in general studies of archaeological sites. Since few of these sources contain references to actual ritual practices, this section focuses primarily on textual and visual attestations of the veneration of saints.

Unsurprisingly, the Virgin Mary occupied a central role in local religious practices, as evidenced prominently both in iconography and in textual sources⁸. At the same time, the Archangels, particularly Michael, were among the most highly revered figures⁹. Both the Theotokos and the Archangels played a crucial role as intermediaries between humanity and God, who remained beyond direct human reach.

Other venerated figures are known only to a limited extent and include apostles and other figures from both the New and Old Testaments, martyrs, Church Fathers, and anchorites – primarily those already prominent in Eastern Christianity. The only confirmed local cult identified so far is that of St Anna (most probably a male figure), whose sanctuary was discovered in the monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola¹⁰.

The following numerical data regarding attestations of the veneration of saints in textual sources mainly comes from the Database of

⁷ A brief overview of the topic can be found in: Werner, *Das Christentum in Nubien*, p. 381-401.

⁸ Werner, *Das Christentum in Nubien*, p. 367.

⁹ M. Łaptaś, *The Position of the Archangel Michael within the Celestial Hierarchy: Some Aspects of the Manifestation of His Cult in Nubian Painting*, in: *The Archangel Michael in Africa: History, Cult, and Persona*, ed. I.S. Gilhus – A. Tsakos – M.C. Wright, London 2019, p. 95-107; A. Deptuła – A. Cedro, *Inscribed Vessels from Banganarti*, in: *Banganarti Studies II*, ed. B. Żurawski, Warsaw 2023, p. 71-154.

¹⁰ A. Łajtar, *Anna, the First Nubian Saint Known to Us?*, “Bulletin de La Société d’archéologie Copte” 56 (2017) p. 91-110.

Monuments of Nubian Territory (DBMNT)¹¹, where 4,518 sources are currently recorded. These include all texts that have been published or at least mentioned in the literature. However, it should be noted that many texts, including the largest collection from Qasr Ibrim, remain unpublished and are, therefore, only partially included in the database.

Undoubtedly, the most detailed information comes from hagiographic works, of which 26 identified texts are recorded in the DBMNT. Additionally, around five more were recently mentioned in an article published by Adam Łajtar¹². Among these are several copies of the martyrdoms of Saints George¹³, Mercurios¹⁴, and Epimachos, as well as those of Iulitta and Kyrikos, Mark the Evangelist, Hilaria, Marina, Dioskoros of Alexandria, and Menas¹⁵. Interestingly, the vast majority of these texts are preserved in Coptic. Only the accounts of George and Mercurios are known in Greek, while only Menas and Epimachos are each represented by a single manuscript in Old Nubian. The predominance of Coptic might seem surprising, especially since Greek was the primary language of the liturgy, while a significant portion of the liturgical texts, such as readings and sermons, is believed to have been conducted in the native language, Old Nubian. However, it is important to remember that most of the finds come from Faras, Qasr Ibrim, and Qasr el-Wizz, located in the northern part of Nobadia near the border, areas where contact with Egypt was much

¹¹ The DBMNT is an online databank designed by Grzegorz Ochala, which contains metadata for all written sources from Christian Nubia. It is available at www.dbmnt.uw.edu.pl (accessed: 30.11.2024).

¹² A. Łajtar, *Literary Manuscripts and Writing Supports in Christian Nubia in Context. Three Case Studies: Qasr Ibrim, Faras, Dongola*, in: *Coptic Literature in Context (4th-13th Cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production, and Manuscript Archaeology. Proceedings of the Third Conference of the ERC Project "Tracking Papyrus and Parchment Paths: An Archaeological Atlas of Coptic Literature. Literary Texts in Their Geographical Context ('PAThs')"*, ed. P. Buzi, Rome 2020, p. 183-209.

¹³ W.H.C. Frend, *Fragments of a Version of the Acta S. Georgii from Q'asr Ibrim*, JbAC 32 (1989) p. 89-104. New edition of the Greek fragments from the same site is now being prepared by Adam Łajtar and Agata Deptuła.

¹⁴ W.H.C. Frend, *Fragments of an Acta Martyrum from Q'asr Ibrim*, JbAC 29 (1986) p. 66-70.

¹⁵ All these texts remain unpublished. A list of hagiographical works from Faras and Qasr Ibrim, including their titles, is appended to an article by Adam Łajtar (*Literary Manuscripts*, p. 198-204).

more frequent. It is also possible that Coptic communities were present in the region¹⁶.

Both hagiographies and church paintings indicate the significant popularity of warrior saints¹⁷, reflecting a broader Byzantine trend where such figures gained prominence in the 5th and 6th centuries. These saints were especially revered for their ability to defeat demons, a trait that symbolized their role in protecting humanity from evil, securing their place in popular piety¹⁸.

In Nubia, the pantheon of warrior saints includes Mercurios, Georgios, Theodore, Epimachos (despite not being a professional soldier), Sisinnios, and Phoibammon. In paintings, they are frequently portrayed on horseback, capturing the moment of vanquishing their foes – whether demons or emperors persecuting Christians. It also appears that many of these depictions served an apotropaic function, offering protection against evil influences¹⁹.

The cult of St Menas, one of the most popular saints of Egypt, was also known in Nubia. Churches devoted to St Menas are mentioned a few times in Nubian documentary sources: in an Old Nubian land sale from Qasr Ibrim²⁰, in a private letter from Ab Kanarti²¹, and, last but not least, in the three inventories of churches from Qasr Ibrim²². However, the only church confirmed in archaeological sources is the one dedicated to St Menas in Selib, where excavations were conducted between 2011 and 2016 by a Polish archaeological team led by Prof. Bogdan

¹⁶ A. Tsakos, *Religious Literacy in Greek from the Christian Monastery at Qasr El-Wizz, Lower Nubia*, in: *Graeco-Africana et Afro-Byzantina: Proceedings of the International Conference on Graeco-African and Afro-Byzantine Studies at the University of Johannesburg (27 October-1 November 2014)*, ed. T. Sansaridou-Hendrickx – B. Hendrickx, Johannesburg 2016, p. 220-230.

¹⁷ W.H.C. Frend, *The Cult of Military Saints in Christian Nubia*, in: *Theologia Crucis – Signum Crucis. Festschrift für Erich Dinkler zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. C. Andersen – G. Klein, Tübingen 1979, p. 155-163; Werner, *Das Christentum in Nubien*, p. 394-396.

¹⁸ C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, London – New York 2003, p. 33-40.

¹⁹ Werner, *Das Christentum in Nubien*, p. 394-395.

²⁰ G.M. Browne, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim*, v. 3, London 1991, cat. no. 34 (i).

²¹ G.M. Browne, *An Old Nubian Document from Ab Kanarti*, “Le Muséon” 116 (2003) p. 9-14.

²² Browne, *Old Nubian Texts*, cat. nos. 77, 78 and 79.

Żurawski²³. The identification of the building was made possible due to the decipherment of inscriptions discovered on-site²⁴. The dedicatory inscription left by King Zacharias in honor of St Menas suggests that the building functioned as a prominent cultic center near Dongola, the capital of one of the Nubian kingdoms. Additionally, texts written on the walls by visitors, as well as those on pottery sherds, suggest that the site attracted pilgrims. According to Żurawski, St Menas was likely venerated alongside Thecla, who is believed to have had an early sanctuary at a site north of the Church of Menas. However, her identification relies solely on a terracotta object with repeated stamped representations of a female figure surrounded by animals²⁵.

The popularity of the name Menas further demonstrates the saint's significance in the region. The DBMNT records 40 attestations of the name, likely reflecting both secular and religious figures. Notably, Menas is listed as one of the first bishops of Faras²⁶. The name Menas was also borne by two bishops who attended the synod held in Dongola in the ninth century²⁷, the eparch of Nobadia²⁸ and a vice-eparch²⁹. Additionally, there are attestations of individuals (at least six) bearing a compound name characteristic of Nubia. Name ΜΗΝΑΚΟΥΔΑ combines

²³ B. Żurawski, *Banganarti and Selib in 2011/2012 and 2013*, "Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean" 24/1 (2015) p. 369-388; B. Żurawski, *Banganarti and Selib in the 2013/2014 and 2014/2015 Seasons*, "Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean" 25 (2016) p. 349-402; B. Żurawski, *Banganarti and Selib. Season 2010*, "Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean" 22 (2013) p. 273-294; B. Żurawski, *Banganarti and Selib. Season 2011*, "Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean" 23/1 (2014) p. 323-342.

²⁴ A. Deptuła, *Inscriptions from Saint Menas' Church in Selib*, in: *Nubian Voices*, v. 2: *New Texts and Studies on Christian Nubian Culture*, ed. A. Łajtar – G. Ochała – J. van der Vliet, Warsaw 2015, p. 119-135.

²⁵ B. Żurawski, *The Altar Casket with a Representation of St Thecla ad bestias from the Vicinity of the St Menas Church in Selib (Northern Sudan)*, "Études et Travaux" 29 (2016) p. 203-224.

²⁶ S. Jakobielski, *A History of the Bishopric of Pachoras on the Basis of Coptic Inscriptions*, Warsaw 2017, p. 190-195.

²⁷ T. Derda – A. Łajtar, *Organization of the Church in Medieval Nubia in the Light of a Newly Discovered Wall Inscription in Dongola*, "Jahrbuch Des Österreichischen Byzantinistik" 69 (2019) p. 135-154.

²⁸ P. QI 2 22.

²⁹ A. Łajtar, *A Survey of Christian Textual Finds from Gebel Adda in the Collections of the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto*, in: *The Fourth Cataract and beyond: Proceedings of the 12th International Conference for Nubian Studies*, ed. J.R. Anderson – D.A. Welsby, Leuven – Paris – Walpole 2014, p. 956-958.

the saint's name with the Old Nubian word -KOYΔΔ, meaning 'servant'³⁰, clearly referencing devotion to the saint.

Unfortunately, we have only three confirmed depictions of St Menas – in which he is unambiguously identified by accompanying inscriptions: in the Northwest Annex³¹ and the sanctuary of St Anna in the monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola³² and Meinarti³³. However, it is very likely that another image of a mounted warrior without an inscription also represents St Menas.

3. The Old Nubian Miracle of St Menas (British Library Ms. Or. 6805)

Evidence of the cult of Menas in Nubia also includes manuscripts recounting his miracles. So far, two examples are known, though only one has been published. The first is a fragment from Qasr Ibrim containing a Coptic version of the miracle of *The Barren Camel*³⁴. The second is a complete manuscript discovered outside Nubia, in Southern Egypt. However, the fact that it was written in Old Nubian indicates that it was prepared for a Nubian audience. Notably, this is one of only two known hagiographic texts translated into the local language. The manuscript containing the miracle of St Menas was purchased by the British Museum in the early 20th century and later became part of the British Library's collection. The exact provenance of the manuscript is unknown; however, it was part of a larger collection consisting of twenty-four codices. Half of these, including the manuscript under discussion, were acquired and subsequently sold by the amateur archaeologist Robert de Rustafjaell. In his journals, the dealer claimed that the artifact originated near a Coptic monastery located close to Edfu. However, the circum-

³⁰ H. Satzinger, *Das altnubische Nameselement -KOYΔΔ: "Diener"?*, in: *The Intellectual Heritage of Egypt: Studies Presented to László Kákosy by Friends and Colleagues on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday*, ed. U. Luft, Budapest 1992, p. 519-521.

³¹ M. Martens-Czarnecka, *The Wall Paintings from the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola*, Warsaw 2011, cat. no. 63.

³² A. Łajtar, *Dongola 2010: Epigraphic Report*, "Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean" 23/1 (2014) p. 285-295.

³³ W.Y. Adams, *The Murals of Meinarti*, "Nubica et Aethiopica" 4/5 (1999) p. 9.

³⁴ Currently being studied by Joost Hagen. It is also referenced in: Łajtar, *Literary Manuscripts*, no. 52.

stances of the discovery remain unclear, as the manuscripts were not recovered through professional excavations, and de Rustafjaell's account has been met with skepticism³⁵.

Based on information contained within the manuscripts, it seems quite certain that the entire collection originated from southern Egypt, near the frontier zone with Nubia, specifically from the region around Edfu and Esna. In scholarly literature, this assemblage is commonly referred to as the 'Edfu-Esna hoard'.

The texts, preserved on both parchment and paper, were mostly written in Sahidic Coptic. However, the colophons of some manuscripts indicate that they were intended for Nubian communities, either settled in Southern Egypt or located in the Middle Nile Valley. These texts were prepared for places such as the Church of Our Savior Jesus Christ in Illarte (Or. 6744)³⁶ or the Church of the Cross in Serra (Or. 6799)³⁷. Additionally, some manuscripts were commissioned by Nubians, as evidenced by typical Nubian names appearing in the colophons³⁸. The collection contains a single manuscript composed entirely in Old Nubian, making it unique within the group. This manuscript is the key element discussed in this article.

The manuscript, cataloged as British Library Ms. Or. 6805, can be dated to the period between 960 and 1060. It comprises eighteen numbered parchment leaves arranged in three quires and is bound in a brownish leather cover. The text is written in black ink, with red used for the colophons and decorative elements on the first page. The script is identifiable as Old Nubian majuscules.

The book contains two texts: the *Miracle of St Menas*³⁹, which spans seventeen pages and is followed by an illustration of the saint on the final page of that section. The remaining pages (19-34) include a fragment

³⁵ J. van der Vliet, *Nubian Voices from Edfu: Egyptian Scribes and Nubian Patrons in Southern Egypt*, in: *Nubian Voices II: New Texts and Studies on Christian Nubian Culture*, ed. A. Łajtar – G. Ochała – J. van der Vliet, Warsaw 2015, p. 265-268.

³⁶ B. Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired since the Year 1906*, London 1986, p. 84-85.

³⁷ Layton, *Catalogue of Coptic Literary Manuscripts in the British Library Acquired since the Year 1906*, p. 89.

³⁸ Van der Vliet, *Nubian Voices from Edfu*, p. 271-272.

³⁹ The text has been published several times, most recently by El-Shafie el-Guzuuli and Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei (*The Miracle of Saint Mina – Gis Miinan Nokkor*, Hague – Tirana – Doha 2012). A discussion of the text, along with detailed bibliography, can also be found in Lucia Langener, *Über eine ungewöhnliche Menas-Darstellung:*

labeled in the text as the (*Pseudo-*)*Nicene Canons*⁴⁰, however, it would be more accurate to describe it as a set of instructions on proper conduct in the church, which, according to Detlef Müller, functioned as a homily explaining selected canons⁴¹. There are notable similarities between this text and a collection preserved in the Coptic tradition, known as the *Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea*⁴². While the Coptic text is significantly more extensive, the two are similar in form and share some overlapping instructions⁴³. Furthermore, the Coptic text is also unrelated to the Council of Nicaea itself; its title derives from the first known codex in which the text was attributed to the Nicene Synod⁴⁴.

Both the *Miracle of St Menas* and the (*Pseudo-*)*Nicene Canons* appear to form a cohesive collection, deliberately compiled in a single codex. Both texts are introduced by a colophon with a title set apart from the main text. Additionally, each begins with an Old Nubian direct appeal to the congregation: *ONTAKPAPOYĒKE*, which can be translated as ‘beloved’ and frequently recurs in homilies⁴⁵.

The *Miracle of St Menas*, which occupies the first part of the codex, can be summarized as follows: A wealthy but barren pagan woman from a village near Alexandria, grieving over her lack of a child, heard of St Menas’ miracles. Since all her slaves and livestock also cannot conceive, in desperation, the woman vowed to St Menas that if one of her fowl laid an egg, she would dedicate it to him. When this occurred, she

Das nubische Menasmirakel London Or. 6805, “Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte” 38 (1999) p. 99-125.

⁴⁰ Most recent publication: Gerald Browne, *Literary texts in Old Nubian*, Vienna – Mödling 1989.

⁴¹ D. Müller, *Die Homilie über die zwei Canones von Nikaia: Analyse und Einordnung eines altnubischen Textes*, in: *Nubische Studien. Tagungsakten der 5. internationalen Konferenz der International Society for Nubian Studies, Heidelberg, 22.–25. September 1982*, ed. M. Krause, Mainz 1986, p. 341-346.

⁴² A.C. Stewart, *The Gnomai of the Council of Nicaea (CC 0021): Critical Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary*, Piscataway 2015.

⁴³ Special thanks are due to Przemysław Piwowarczyk for drawing my attention to the existence of the Coptic text. The relationship between the Coptic and Nubian traditions certainly merits further investigation, but this is a topic for a separate article.

⁴⁴ Codex MONB.EF, this particular part is now kept in Naples; for more see: <https://atlas.paths-erc.eu/manuscripts/359>.

⁴⁵ E.g. *Stauros-Text* ed. G.M. Browne, *Literary Texts in Old Nubian*, Vienna 1989, p. 22-29 and Ps.-Iohannes Chrysostomus, *In venerabilem crucem sermo*, in: G.M. Browne, *Literary Texts in Old Nubian*, Vienna 1989, p. 28-45.

entrusted the egg to a sailor in Philoxenite to offer it at St Menas' church. However, the sailor deceived her, eating the egg instead of presenting it. Later, while praying in the church of the Virgin Mary, he had a vision in which St Menas, on horseback, confronted him. The Saint kicked the sailor in the head, causing the egg to reappear as a live fowl. St Menas then returned the fowl to the woman, blessing her household. She bore a son, whom she named Menas, and her entire household – including her servants, cows, and fowl – became fertile. Grateful, she and her family converted to Christianity, dedicating their lives to the church⁴⁶.

Upon initial examination, the story appears similar to accounts of St Menas' miracles known from other traditions, and many canonical elements can be observed in the narrative. First and foremost, the motif of a wealthy woman without children seeking help is known from the miracle *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*, which is preserved in the manuscript from the White Monastery (IFAO inv. 315-322)⁴⁷. Interestingly, in the Coptic version, the toponym "Philoxenite" also appears. Sophia is also known from a Greek version⁴⁸, where she is described as a childless widow intending to leave her wealth to Menas. However, in all these accounts, the emphasis is on the woman being childless, not infertile, and the central motivation is the lack of an heir, prompting her decision to dedicate her fortune to Menas rather than hope for conception. Only in the Arabic version does the narrative emphasize barrenness⁴⁹, and in the end, St Menas enables the woman to conceive a son, whom she names Menas in gratitude.

Also, in none of these stories is the woman portrayed as a pagan seeker who, upon hearing of St Menas' miracles, promises to convert to Christianity in exchange for help. This concept, however, can be found in

⁴⁶ The summary is based on the translation prepared by Vincent van Gerven Oei (el-Guzuuli –van Gerven Oei, *The Miracle of Saint Mina*).

⁴⁷ Published by Seřna Bacot, *Quatre miracles de saint Mėnas dans un manuscrit copte de l'Ifao (Inv. 315-322)*, "Bulletin de l'Institut franais d'archéologie orientale" 111 (2011) p. 35-73. The beginning of the same miracle is preserved also in the codex from the monastery of Archangel Michael in Hamuli (Pierpont Morgan Library M.590) published in: J. Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas, Edited, with Translation and Commentary*, Le Caire 1946.

⁴⁸ Miracle number 3 according to the *Miracula S. Menae Graece: Zhitie prepodobnago Paisiia Velikago i Timořeia patriarkha Aleksandriřskago poviestvovanie o chudesakh*" sv. Velikomuchenika Miny, ed. I. Pomialovskii, Saint Petersburg 1900.

⁴⁹ Miracle number 9 according to sigla of Felicitas Jaritz (*Die arabischen Quellen zum heiligen Menas*, Heidelberg 1993).

the miracle *The Foal with Three Legs*⁵⁰, where the main character, Prinos, is a pagan man who is seeking Menas' assistance with a barren mare. Ultimately, both Prinos and his entire household converted to Christianity following the miracle.

Another key element in which the Nubian version follows *The Pilgrim woman (Sophia)*⁵¹ is the journey to St Menas' sanctuary in Abu Mina, during which the seeker faces danger. Yet, this is where the similarities end, as the Nubian version introduces unique elements with no direct parallels. The story adopts a more anecdotal tone: instead of delivering the egg, the sailor eats it. St Menas intervenes, kicking him to retrieve it. Remarkably, the motif of a soldier attempting to assault the woman is absent. Instead, the focus shifts to the sailor's deceit, highlighting themes of trickery and divine justice.

Following the deception, all the miracles feature the saint's epiphany, typically with Menas appearing on horseback, holding his spear. The same occurs in the Nubian miracle: although the sailor seeks mercy in front of the image of the Theotokos, his plea does not shield him from punishment, as Menas enacts justice directly.

The story concludes canonically with the conversion and devotion of both the seeker (the woman) and the deceiver (the sailor). Both, having witnessed the saint's power, dedicate the remainder of their lives to serving at Menas' sanctuary. Similarly, the Samaritan woman and the would-be assailant remained in the service of the sanctuary in the miracle *The Samaritan Woman*⁵².

Moreover, the egg seems to play a significant role as an additional character in the story, absent from any other known tradition. This raises the question of whether the egg is merely a random object chosen by the woman as an offering to St Menas. Given her wealth, one might expect her to donate a portion of her fortune, as is seen in the miracles of *The Isaurian Pilgrim* and *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*. By comparison,

⁵⁰ The miracle is preserved with some minor variations both in Greek, Coptic and Arabic tradition. Cf. P. Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Miracles of St Menas*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 35-64.

⁵¹ The motif of a journey to the sanctuary also appears in other miracles. Notably, in *The Isaurian Pilgrim* and *Eutropius and the Silver Plates*, the pilgrimage takes place by water. Both miracles are preserved in Greek, Coptic, and Arabic traditions (cf. Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 38), but I primarily rely on the edition by Drescher (*Apa Mena*, p. 112-116).

⁵² Cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 123.

the egg seems like a simple offering whose significance in this context remains open to interpretation.

Eggs, particularly ostrich ones, were sometimes suspended as part of church decorations – such as at St Catherine's Monastery on Mount Sinai and the Monastery of St Anthony⁵³. Many indications suggest that similar lamps were also used in churches in Nubia⁵⁴. However, the symbolic role of the egg in this particular narrative seems distinct, especially since the text clearly specifies that it is an egg from the fowl of her household, explicitly excluding the possibility of an ostrich egg. The symbolic meaning is further emphasized by the woman herself, who declares that she is offering it in that church so that the God of St Menas may give it the seed of mankind.

4. The egg

Instead, the egg's importance likely lies in its symbolic meaning. At the beginning of the story, we learn that not only is the woman herself barren, but so are all her servants and livestock. Thus, the first laid egg would hold exceptional significance. Beyond its practical rarity, it seems that the egg carries profound symbolic weight.

In the Christian culture, the egg has long represented the beginning of life and the promise of resurrection. However, its symbolic significance predates Christianity. Across various cultures worldwide, the egg has independently emerged as a symbol of life and has often been integral to creation myths. It also serves as an emblem of the world's renewal through rebirth⁵⁵.

The symbolic power of the egg made it an essential element in popular beliefs and magical practices⁵⁶, serving both as a medium for

⁵³ N. Green, *Ostrich Eggs and Peacock Feathers: Sacred Objects as Cultural Exchange between Christianity and Islam*, "Journal of the Medieval Mediterranean" 18 (2006) p. 34-35; G. Galavaris, *Some Aspects of Symbolic Use of Lights in the Eastern Church Candles, Lamps and Ostrich Eggs*, "Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies" 4 (1978) p. 69-78.

⁵⁴ T. Gołgowski, *De lucernis et de ovis struthiocamelinis – symbolika jaj strusich w Kościołach wczesnochrześcijańskich*, in: *Hereditatem cognoscere: studia i szkice dedykowane Profesor Marii Miśkiewicz*, ed. Z. Kobyliński, Warszawa 2004, p. 21-26.

⁵⁵ V. Newall, *Easter Eggs: Symbols of Life and Renewal*, "Folklore" 95/1 (1984) p. 21-29; V. Newall, *An Egg at Easter: A Folklore Study*, Bloomington 1971.

⁵⁶ C. Riley Augé, *Field Manual for the Archaeology of Ritual, Religion, and Magic*, New York 2022, p. 4-5.

inscribing spells⁵⁷ and as part of ritual acts⁵⁸. Among archaeological finds very fragile eggshells are difficult to capture, however ostrich eggs are easier identifiable due to their durability. Fragments of such shells have been uncovered in a variety of contexts, ranging from the tombs of pharaohs to private homes⁵⁹ and churches, including those in Nubia⁶⁰. Their function is not always clear, but it is rather unlikely that they represent only post-consumption leftovers.

In many cultures, the egg is also associated with fertility, a belief Christianity adopted from earlier traditions⁶¹. While this connection is not clearly evident in sources from Christian Nubia, ethnographic accounts suggest that a related custom persisted into the twentieth century in some villages, where painted ostrich eggshells were hung in the bedrooms of women wishing to conceive as a symbol of fertility⁶². Notably, many practices concerning women's issues in Nubia have remained unchanged since Christian times. Therefore, the egg, given its symbolic value, stands as both an exceptionally precious offering and a representation of entrusting the woman's potential fertility to the Saint.

5. Menas and Theotokos

An additional significant element in the narrative is the symbolic presence of the Virgin Mary, which is not attested in any other preserved tradition, however, she plays an important role in the *Encomium on St Menas* (cf. below). Although she does not take an active part in the events, it is in the church dedicated to her that Menas' epiphany occurs, and the divine response to the sinner's actions takes place. This may reflect

⁵⁷ O.-P. Saar, *Jewish Love Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity*, Leiden 2017, p. 101-102. Also from Nubia from Funj period we have examples of eggshells inscribed with magical text cf. T. Barański, forthcoming.

⁵⁸ e.g. PGM XII.96.

⁵⁹ D. Dzierzbicka – A. Deptuła, *Courtyard A at the Monastery on Kom H*, in: *Dongola 2015-2016. Fieldwork, Conservation and Site Management*, ed. W. Godlewski – D. Dzierzbicka – A. Łajtar, Warsaw 2018, p. 79-99.

⁶⁰ K. Michałowski, *Faras. Die Kathedrale aus dem Wüstensand*, Einsiedeln – Zürich – Cologne 1967, p. 71.

⁶¹ Newall, *An Egg at Easter*, p. 113-141.

⁶² J.P. Boddy, *Wombs and Alien Spirits: Women, Men, and the Zār Cult in Northern Sudan*, Madison 1989, p. 61-66.

the exceptional role Mary holds in Nubian beliefs as an intercessor and defender of women.

A special connection between Mary and women's issues is evidenced by both iconographic and textual sources. A particularly intriguing example is the dedication of the Southeast Annex of the monastery on Kom H in Old Dongola. The iconography clearly indicates that the complex was devoted to Mary, emphasizing her role as the Mother of God, and the inscriptions underscore her function as a protector of women during childbirth⁶³.

The visual program in this space features depictions associated with womanhood and motherhood, such as the *Theotokos Galactotrophusa*, the Nativity, and the Annunciation⁶⁴. These scenes are accompanied by representations of female donors and inscriptions requesting support during childbirth. Notably, an Old Nubian inscription near the famous dancing scene explicitly asks for Mary's favor to aid a royal sister during labor pains⁶⁵. It appears that this area was intended as a sacred space for women seeking Mary's intercession during childbirth. It is possible that in Nubia, the whole church dedicated to the Theotokos could have been perceived similarly – as a place where women sought help and support in maternal concerns. This may explain why, in the local version of the miracle, part of the story takes place within a church dedicated to the Mother of God, where her patronage is explicitly expressed.

The question arises as to whether Menas could have played a somewhat similar role in Nubia with regard to women. While the Virgin Mary was seen as a protector during childbirth, St Menas, for example, may have been sought before for assistance with conception. This idea is tempting, however, given the limited data currently available, this remains a hypothesis. Menas' sanctuary in Abu Mina was similarly frequented by women⁶⁶, but the specific reasons for their visits remain unknown.

⁶³ A. Łajtar – V.W.J. van Gerven Oei, *Women in the Southwest Annex*, in: *Dongola 2015-2016. Fieldwork, Conservation and Site Management*, ed. W. Godlewski – D. Dzierzbicka – A. Łajtar, Warsaw 2018, p. 75-78.

⁶⁴ Martens-Czarnecka, *The Wall Paintings*.

⁶⁵ V.W.J. van Gerven Oei, *A Dance for a Princess: The Legends on a Painting in Room 5 of the Southwest Annex of the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola*, "The Journal of Juristic Papyrology" 47 (2017) p. 117-135.

⁶⁶ G. Stafford, *Evidence for Female Pilgrims at Abu Mina*, in: *Transmitting and Circulating the Late Antique and Byzantine Worlds*, ed. M. Ivanova – H. Jeffery, Leiden 2019, p. 11-43.

Additionally, several Coptic and Greek miracles address fertility, whether concerning people or animals⁶⁷.

It is also worth noting that one of the few identified depictions of St Menas in Old Dongola is located in the Northwest Annex of the sacred complex⁶⁸, whose layout mirrors that of the church itself. He appears alongside representations of Mary as the Mother of God. According to Dobrochna Zielińska, this section of the church was likely intended for women⁶⁹. A similar situation can perhaps be observed in Meinarti.

The connection between St Menas, the Virgin Mary, and fertility seems evident in hagiographic texts. *Encomium on St Menas* emphasizes that the very existence of the Saint was attributed to the Virgin's intercession⁷⁰. His mother, Euphemia, was barren and conceived only after praying to an icon of Mary during her feast. Unfortunately, we lack direct evidence about whether, or in what form, this version of Menas' life was known in Nubia.

6. Conclusions

While comparative material for the Old Nubian miracle of St Menas is limited, it stands out as unique compared to other traditions. Nonetheless, it demonstrates the clear transmission of motifs, particularly the miracle of *the Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*, which is central to the earliest Menas miracles and attested in Coptic, Greek, and Arabic sources. Minor elements also align with other stories about Menas. It remains uncertain whether the lack of direct parallels reflects the loss of similar traditions or a deliberate adaptation for a Nubian audience, employing symbols and concepts accessible to the local community.

The symbolic presence of the egg in this miracle serves not only as a narrative device but also reflects its perception, deeply rooted in

⁶⁷ E.g. already mentioned *The Barren Camel*, *The Foal with Three Legs* and the Arabic versions of *The Female Pilgrim (Sophia)*.

⁶⁸ Martens-Czarnecka, *The Wall Paintings*, cat. no. 63.

⁶⁹ D. Zielińska, *The Iconographical Program in Nubian Churches: Progress Report Based on a New Reconstruction Project*, in: *Between the Cataracts. Proceedings of the 11th Conference for Nubian Studies, Warsaw University, 27 August-2 September 2006*, v. 2, ed. W. Godlewski – A. Łajtar, Warsaw 2010, p. 643-651.

⁷⁰ The *Encomium* is edited and translated in: Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 108-125. For general information about this text see E. Wipszycka, *The Birth of the Cult of St Menas*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 11-12.

both Christian and older cultural traditions, as a promise of new life and a symbol of fertility. This promise is ultimately fulfilled through the divine intervention of St Menas and, by extension, the Theotokos – both of whom may have been invoked in Nubia when assistance was needed to bring new life into the world.

Whether it was an adaptation or a translation of an existing text, the story's selection was undoubtedly intentional, as its symbolism and familiar motifs would resonate with local society. The choice of Old Nubian further underscores the intent to reach a broader audience. Most hagiographic texts from Nobadia were written in Coptic, a language primarily understood in ecclesiastical settings, it seems clear that translating the text into Old Nubian was meant to ensure accessibility for the local community. Moreover, both texts in the codex – the Miracle and the *(Pseudo)Nicaean Canon* – directly address their readers, suggesting they were intended for use during communal celebrations.

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The Revival of St Menas's Veneration in Twentieth-Century Egypt

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Abstract: In antiquity, St Menas was highly revered throughout the Christian world and attracted large numbers of pilgrims to the pilgrimage centre of Abū Mīnā. In twentieth-century Egypt, however, this saint became a figure of limited recognition in the Coptic Orthodox community. The revival of St Menas's veneration, promoted by the Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church, Cyril VI, made the saint very popular in contemporary Coptic society. In this article, I argue that the resurgence of St Menas's veneration stemmed not only from Cyril VI's dissemination efforts based on religious motivations, but also from Coptic cultural nationalist motivations, led by the Coptic laity. The miraculous story that emerged during the Second World War among the Greek soldiers, and the nationalist response of a dozen Coptic lay youth in Alexandria, played an important role in the campaign to re-evaluate the Coptic past symbolised by St Menas and his pilgrim centre of Abū Mīnā.

Keywords: St Menas; modern Egypt; Coptic saint veneration; cultural nationalism; the Second World War; Greek Orthodox Church; Patriarch Cyril VI

Saint (St) Menas the Wonderworker (in Arabic, *Mār Mīnā al- 'Ajā 'ibī*) is now such a popular saint that his image is almost ubiquitous in contemporary Coptic Orthodox society. Because of this current popularity, one might assume that the saint has been venerated in Egypt for centuries. However, in the first half of the twentieth century, St Menas was a minor figure, whom Copts revered in some places as a local saint.

The situation changed when Patriarch Cyril VI (1902-1971, r. 1959-1971) promoted the revival of St Menas's veneration by building a monastery dedicated to this saint near the original site of the ancient pilgrimage centre of Abū Mīnā in Maryut, and by praying for his intercession whenever an occasion arose. Cyril VI had a family custom of celebrating the feast of St Menas², and after becoming a monk and then

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² D. Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch: Kyrillos VI (1902-1971) Life and Legacy*, New York 2019, p. 22-23.

the patriarch, he maintained spiritual ties to this saint and worked to disseminate the veneration throughout the Coptic society. Cyril VI played a pivotal role in the revival of St Menas's veneration, and the Copts still commemorate this saint alongside Cyril VI, as evidenced by several churches in Egypt and abroad dedicated to St Menas and Cyril VI together³. The story of St Menas and Cyril VI features in numerous newspaper articles and in social media such as YouTube channels⁴.

However, it was not only Cyril VI's efforts that contributed to St Menas's current popularity. The miraculous story of St Menas during the Second World War stimulated the nationalist feelings of the Coptic lay youth in Alexandria, and this led to activities to raise Coptic interest in St Menas, who earned a reputation of an Egyptian national saint.

In this article, I would like to clarify how these two trends interacted with each other to revive St Menas's veneration in mid-twentieth century. In doing so, I would like to shed light on the development of Egyptian cultural nationalism among the Coptic laity, and the role archaeology played in this phenomenon. The revival of St Menas's veneration was both a religious movement and a struggle over historical and cultural heritage symbolised by St Menas and his Abū Mīnā pilgrimage centre. Its underlying objective was to restore the Egyptians' authority to interpret the Egyptian history and manage Egyptian religious and cultural heritage.

1. St Menas the Wonderworker and the Abū Mīnā pilgrimage centre

St Menas the Wonderworker, also known as St Menas of Egypt, lived around the end of the third century, and according to some sources,

³ According to the online church directory of St Takla Haymanout Coptic Orthodox Website, eight churches bear both saints' names in Egypt; see Mawqī' al-'Anbā Taklā Hīmānūt al-Qibṭī al-Urthudhukṣī, in: <https://st-takla.org/Coptic-History/places/africa/egypt/name/mina.html> (accessed 01.12.2024). Following Patriarch Cyril VI's canonisation in June 2013, St Menas and Cyril VI are both considered saints.

⁴ To name a few, Mesat, the official YouTube channel for Saint Mark's Coptic Orthodox Church Cathedral, hosts a video entitled "Documentary Video about the Monastery of St Menas the Wonderworker in Maryūt"; see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SazKEybUzko> (accessed 01.06.2025). Another YouTube channel, run by Kyrillos Sidarous, hosts many videos about Patriarch Cyril VI and St Menas; see <https://www.youtube.com/@kyrillossidarous> (accessed 01.06.2025).

until the beginning of the fourth century⁵. Many versions of St Menas's hagiography exist in various languages because his veneration began even before the Council of Chalcedon (451), which caused the schism of the modern-day Coptic Orthodox Church. Beside this Church, many other denominations, including Eastern Orthodox and Catholic churches, consider St Menas a saint.

Despite the differences, one can provide the following summary of St Menas's hagiography currently in circulation in the Coptic Orthodox community: Born into a wealthy and influential Christian family in Nikiou, a town in what is now the Minūfiyya Governorate, Egypt, St Menas became a Roman soldier after his parents' death. When the Roman Emperor Diocletian (r. 284-305) began to persecute Christians, St Menas left the Roman army and retired to the desert to live an ascetic life. After five years, he saw a vision of martyrs and presented himself to the Roman authorities, declaring his Christian faith; this resulted in his arrest, torture, and finally martyrdom, probably at a young age. His martyrdom receives commemoration on 15 Hātūr in the Coptic calendar, which corresponds to 24 November in the Gregorian calendar. He was buried in a desert southwest of Alexandria, near Lake Maryut, where the camel carrying his body mysteriously stopped and refused to move. After his burial, there were reports of healing miracles taking place around his tomb. As word of the miracles spread, the tomb began to attract pilgrims and eventually became a major pilgrimage site⁶.

The ancient name of St Menas's pilgrimage site is unknown; the current name, Abū Mīnā, derives from the way the local Bedouins called it around the time of its discovery by the excavations conducted between 1905-1907, led by Carl Maria Kaufmann. The Martyr Church, built over St Menas's tomb, is the most important building in Abū Mīnā, and archaeological research shows that the first Martyr Church was built

⁵ According to one of the most referenced contemporary Coptic hagiographies, St Menas was martyred in 309 at the age of 24. See *Siyar al-Qiddīsīn wa al-Shuhadā' fī al-Kanīsa al-Qibṭiyya al-Urthūdhuksiyya*, in: https://st-takla.org/Saints/Coptic-Orthodox-Saints-Biography/Coptic-Saints-Story_1773.html (accessed 10.06.2025).

⁶ See al-Qummuṣ Ṭādrus Ya'qūb Malaṭī, *Mīnā al-'Ajā'ib al-Shahīd, Qāmūs Ābā' al-Kanīsa wa Qiddīsī-hā Ma'a Ba'd al-Shakhṣiyyāt al-Kunsiyya* (d-m), n.d., and Saint Mena Coptic Orthodox Monastery, *The Great Egyptian and Coptic Martyr the Miraculous Saint Mena*, Maryut 2005, p. 6-21.

around the end of the fourth century⁷. The main building phases of Abū Mīnā took place during the reigns of the emperors Zeno (r. 474-491) and Justinian (r. 527-565), and the pilgrimage centre developed into a large city with three interconnected churches – the Great Basilica, the Martyr Church, and the Baptistry – and accommodation for pilgrims⁸. The latter came from all over the Christian world of the day, and the clay flasks they brought back with them, engraved with St Menas's name and image, have emerged in various places around the Mediterranean and Europe.

After the Council of Chalcedon, the administration of the pilgrimage centre remained in the hands of the Melkites⁹, who are now Greek Orthodox. The seventh century saw the destruction of the Great Basilica, and other buildings in the centre also suffered fire, probably during the Persian invasion in 619. With the Arab conquest of Egypt in 639-641, the pilgrimage centre came into the hands of the Coptic Church¹⁰.

After the Arab conquest of Egypt, it became difficult for pilgrims to arrive from the Byzantine Empire and beyond, and the number of pilgrims dropped significantly. However, the city itself continued to function for several centuries since then, as mentioned in various sources. According to *History of the Patriarchs*¹¹, during the reign of Coptic Patriarch Khā'īl (r. 743-767), Melkite Patriarch Cosmas claimed ownership of the Church of St Menas in Maryut and its endowments and appealed to the Arab ruler, which resulted in vain. Around the end of the eleventh century, a Muslim pilgrim returning from Mecca stopped off in Abū Mīnā and described the building and pictures of the church, mentioning that the lamps burned day and night, that there was a mosque for Muslims in a part of the church, and that the surrounding areas were full of fruit trees¹². The last mention of St Menas's tomb and church in Maryut appe-

⁷ P. Grossmann, *Abu Mina*, in: *Coptic Encyclopedia*, v. 1, ed. A. Atiya, New York 1991, p. 24-29.

⁸ N. Litinas, *General Introduction: Abu Mina*, in: *Greek Ostraca from Abu Mina (O.AbuMina)*, ed. N. Litinas, Berlin 2008, p. IX.

⁹ Litinas, *General Introduction: Abu Mina*, p. IX.

¹⁰ P. Grossmann, *Abu Mina*.

¹¹ Sāwīrus bin al-Muqaffā', *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria III Agathon to Michael I (766)*, ed. and tr. B. Evetts, PO 5, Paris 1910, p. 119-132 (373-386).

¹² A.O. El-Bekri, tr. M.G. de Slane, *Description de l'Afrique Septentrionale*, "Le Journal Asiatique" cinquième série 12 (Octobre-Novembre 1858) p. 416-417. There is also an interpretation that Abū Mīnā had already stood abandoned, referring to the same part of the same reference. However, that does not explain who maintained the lamps

ars in Abū al-Makārim's *History of Churches and Monasteries*, written around the end of the twelfth century, which states that St Menas's relics lie in the church in Maryūt¹³. In the first half of the thirteenth century, following Abū Mīnā's destruction, St Menas's relics were unearthed from the rubble and transferred to St Menas's Church in Fum al-Khalīj, Cairo, during the reign of the Mamluk Sultan al-Mu'izz 'Izz al-Dīn 'Aybak (r. 1250-1257)¹⁴.

In the following centuries, there are fewer records of St Menas, and one of the earliest modern publications on St Menas mentions the following story: In 1873, St Menas appeared as an elderly man with grey hair in a dream of Hegumen Tādrus Mīnā, the abbot of St Menas's Monastery in Fum al-Khalīj, and asked him to find his lost relics, which resulted in their discovery inside the church as St Menas indicated¹⁵.

According to a Coptic studies scholar, Jirjis Fīlūthā'ws 'Awaḍ (1867-1954), St Menas's image shared in the Coptic community in the nineteenth century and until mid-twentieth century was that of an elderly man with grey hair in the Greek Orthodox style¹⁶. Also, the number of churches dedicated to St Menas in Egypt in 1957 was sixteen, including two newly built churches in the 1940s and 1950s, compared to the twenty churches mentioned by Abū al-Makārim at the end of the twelfth century¹⁷. Although venerated locally in the churches dedicated to him, by

and the fruit trees. See B. Voile, *Chapitre VII. Cyrille VI (1902-1971): l'homme du siècle et le saint*, in: B. Voile, *Les coptes d'Égypte sous Nasser: Sainteté, miracles, apparitions*, Paris 2004, paragraph 12.

¹³ Abū al-Makārim, *Tārīkh Abū al-Makārim: Tārīkh al-Kanā'is wa al-'Adyura fī al-Qarn al-Thānī 'Ashara bil-Wajh al-Bahrī*, v. 1, ed. al-'Anbā Ṣamū'īl 'Usqūf Shībīn al-Qanāṭir wa Tawābī'-hā, Cairo 1999, p. 145-146.

¹⁴ Dayr al-Shahīd Mār Mīnā al-'Ajā'ibī bi-Mariyūt, *al-Qiddīs al-'Aẓīm Mār Mīnā al-'Ajā'ibī*, Maryūt 1996, p. 148. According to the manuscript that the author refers to, the relics' delivery from Abū Mīnā took place during the reign of "al-Mu'izz", whom the author identifies as Aybak, not the Fatimid al-Mu'izz.

¹⁵ al-Jam'īyyat al-Qibṭiyyat al-Khayriyyat al-Urthūdhuksiyya, *Tārīkh Hayāt al-Shahīd al-'Aẓīm Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī*, Cairo 1906, p. 180-183, cited in Dayr al-Shahīd Mār Mīnā al-'Ajā'ibī bi-Mariyūt, *al-Qiddīs*, p. 162-163.

¹⁶ Hegumen Yūhannā al-Subky al-'Antūnī, supervised by Jirjis Fīlūthā'ws 'Awaḍ, *Maymar al-Shahīd al-'Aẓīm Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī*, [n.p.] 1948, p. 15, referred to in Dayr al-Shahīd Mār Mīnā al-'Ajā'ibī bi-Mariyūt, *al-Qiddīs*, p. 163. Contemporary Coptic icons show him as a young man dressed in the uniform of a Roman soldier or in a suit of armour with two camels.

¹⁷ M. Shukrī, *Kanīsa Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī 'ala Marr al-'Usūr*, in: Jam'īyyat Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī lil-Dirāsāt al-Qibṭiyya bil-Iskandariyya, *Muqtaṭafāt min Tārīkh*

the twentieth century, St Menas had become a little-known saint among ordinary Copts¹⁸.

2. Patriarch Cyril VI (Father Mīnā al-Barāmūsī) and the rebuilding of Abū Mīnā

‘Āzir Yūsif ‘Aṭṭā, who later became Patriarch Cyril VI, was born in Damanhūr, in the western Nile Delta, in 1902. While living in Ṭūkh al-Naṣārā in 1907-1910, ‘Āzir’s family would travel to St Menas’s Church and Monastery in Ibyār, Gharbiyya, also in the western Nile Delta, on a five-and-a-half-hour journey on foot to celebrate the *mawlid* of St Menas in late November. *Mawlid*, which literally means birthday, commemorates the death or martyrdom of a saint and entails a week-long open-air celebration. According to Daniel Fanous, the author of a detailed and extensive biography of Cyril VI, the pilgrimage to the *mawlid* introduced the young ‘Āzir to St Menas. For unknown reasons, he felt fascinated by the little-known saint, and the spiritual relationship lasted for the rest of ‘Āzir’s life¹⁹. On 25 February 1928²⁰, at the age of twenty-five, ‘Āzir took monastic vows at the Barāmūs Monastery, and the monks present at the ritual named the new monk Mīnā, after the saint of the day in the *Synaxarion*, St Menas the Monk²¹, rather than St Menas the Wonder-

al-Kanīsa al-Miṣriyya, Alexandria 1995, p. 222-224. This part appeared in 1957 and the volume contains its reprint. For some reason, Shukrī did not include St Menas’s Church in Old Cairo built in 1947, so the total number should be seventeen.

¹⁸ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 29. Winifred Blackman points out that “Māri Mīna al-‘Agayebi is a very popular Coptic saint, and he is venerated not only by the Christians, but also by many of the Muslims” (W.S. Blackman, *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt*, London 1927, p. 249). However, Blackman describes the situation in the area of the church dedicated to St Menas, which we cannot generalise to concern the whole Upper Egypt. Given the number of churches dedicated to St Menas in the middle of the twentieth century, it is more reasonable to think of him as a locally venerated minor saint.

¹⁹ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 26.

²⁰ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 84-86 and notes 85 and 88. There is some confusion concerning the date of tonsure, but Fanous refers to the newly discovered autobiographical fragments written by Cyril VI himself and thus more reliable. As Fanous shows throughout his work, there are many ambiguities, contradictions, and confusions in Cyril VI’s biographies, although he lived in the twentieth century.

²¹ Also known as Menas of Ashmunayn, commemorated on 17 Amshīr in the Coptic calendar. See De Lacy O’Leary, *The Saints of Egypt*, London 1937, p. 199.

worker, commemorated on 24 November. 'Āzir became Father (Fr) Mīnā al-Barāmūsī, and received priesthood three years later.

Fr Mīnā felt attracted to live in monastic solitude in the desert, which was exceedingly rare at the time and therefore very much discouraged²². Nevertheless, in 1934, he managed to obtain a permission to live in a desert near the Barāmūs Monastery in Wādī al-Naṭrūn as a hermit. In 1936, he began living in an abandoned windmill southeast of Cairo, where he became known to the residents of Old Cairo as a holy man with many healings, prophecies, visions, and other unusual divine events²³.

Fr Mīnā's affinity with St Menas continued, and his almost obsessive concern for the construction of a monastery dedicated to this saint in Maryut bore fruit after several attempts over two decades. In January 1937²⁴, Fr Mīnā read an article in *Risāla al-Maḥabba* published by the Friends of the Holy Bible Association (Jam'īyya 'Aṣḍiqā' al-Kitāb al-Muqaddas), reporting on the trip to Abū Mīnā organised by this association to hold a prayer and celebration of St Menas there, and lamenting the destruction of Abū Mīnā. Fr Mīnā wrote a letter to Maḥrūs Murjān, a lawyer who authored the article, expressing his admiration and joy about the trip²⁵ and asking the association to mediate on his behalf with Patriarch John XIX (r. 1928-1942) regarding the rebuilding of St Menas's Monastery in Maryut, but their requests faced rejection and sarcasm²⁶.

Later, during the Second World War, before Patriarch John XIX's repose in June 1942, Fr Mīnā obtained a permission from the patriarch to inhabit and rebuild the ruins of Abū Mīnā, but the British commander in

²² Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 121.

²³ Voile, *Chapitre VII*, in: *Les Coptes*, paragraph 26.

²⁴ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 170-171. As Fanous notes, most English sources, including the English abridged version of al-Masri's Arabic work (I.H. el Masri, *The Story of the Copts: The True Story of Christianity in Egypt*, v. 2, Newberry Springs 1982, p. 434), point out that Fr Mīnā chose to live in the windmill in Cairo because he was not allowed to live in solitude in the Abū Mīnā ruins, which means that Fr Mīnā's first attempt to rebuild the Abū Mīnā ruins took place in 1936. However, Fanous remarks that Fr Mīnā's request to the patriarch regarding the windmill came in after he had deliberately obtained permission to live in the windmill from the Ministry of Arabic Antiquity, which was responsible for the area. Therefore, it seems unlikely that he requested the rebuilding of the Abū Mīnā ruins in 1936.

²⁵ M.B. 'Abd al-Malik, *al-Rāhib al-Qibṭī Alladhī Ḥaḥiḥa Āthār Mār Mīnā lil-Kanīsat al-Qibṭiyya*, "Waṭani" 22 June 2022.

²⁶ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 170.

charge of the area categorically rejected the request²⁷. Fr Mīnā continued his efforts, and he managed to obtain a letter of introduction from Marqus Simayka Pasha, a notable Coptic layman and the founder and director of the Coptic Museum, to gain permission from the Antiquities Service, the responsible agency of the Egyptian government²⁸. Then, in mid-1943, he travelled to Alexandria, where he visited the Graeco-Roman Museum to meet archaeologist Bānūb Ḥabashī (1913-1956), the museum's inspector, and presented the idea of praying and living in the ruins of Abū Mīnā. Ḥabashī was very pleased and helped him secure permission from the Antiquities Service. Fr Mīnā's appeal led to the establishment of the Association of St Menas the Wonderworker (AMW) in 1945²⁹. While in Alexandria, Fr Mīnā also met with Prince 'Umar Ṭūsūn (1872-1944), known for his deep interest in archaeology, and the prince encouraged the idea should the patriarchate agree. With no patriarch on the throne between 1942 and 1944, the director of Arab Antiquities gave Fr Mīnā permission to perform religious rituals at Abū Mīnā, pending formal approval. Fr Mīnā wrote a letter to Ḥabīb al-Maṣrī, a prominent figure in the Community Council, composed of notable Coptic laypeople who manage the affairs of the Coptic community, to obtain the Council's permission. However, with the death of the prince and the chaotic situation in the Coptic community following the enthronement of the next patriarch in 1944, Fr Mīnā's project to rebuild Abū Mīnā faded³⁰.

The reason why Fr Mīnā was so keen to rebuild the ruins of St Menas's Church is ultimately unknown, but judging from his biographies, it seems reasonable to assume religious causes; as Fanous notes, "The saint chose him"³¹. During the Second World War, both the Cairo windmill and Abū Mīnā were important military zones for the British Army, which evicted Fr Mīnā from the windmill in 1945³² for fear of his being a spy, but it is difficult to find any evidence of political activity, let alone espio-

²⁷ I.H. al-Maṣrī, *Qiṣṣat al-Kanīsat al-Qibṭiyya 1956–1971*, v. 7, Cairo 1988, p. 24. al-Maṣrī does not mention the date of this event, but she notes that Patriarch John XIX commissioned her father Ḥabīb al-Maṣrī to write him a letter of endorsement.

²⁸ Jam'iyat Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī lil-Dirāsāt al-Qibṭiyya bil-Iskandariyya, *Qirā'āt fī Tārīkh al-Kanīsat al-Miṣriyya*, Alexandria 1993, p. 5.

²⁹ Jam'iyat Mār Mīnā, *Qirā'āt*, p. 21.

³⁰ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 353.

³¹ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 353.

³² Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 196. According to 'Aṭṭā, the British commander meant to protect the monk. See Ḥ.Y. 'Aṭṭā, al-Qiss Rāfā'īl 'Afā Mīnā, *Mudhdhakkirāt 'an Ḥayāt al-Bābā Kirillus al-Sādis*, Cairo 1972, p. 42.

nage, on his part. Fanous points out that the reason why Fr Mīnā sought to rebuild and inhabit the ruins of Abū Mīnā in 1943 was perhaps that he needed a suitable place to live as a hermit, because he could not live in neither his monastery nor the windmill at the time³³.

In 1947, with donations and cooperation from the community, Fr Mīnā built a monastery and a church dedicated to St Menas in Old Cairo, where he lived until his election as Patriarch in April 1959; this solved the problem of securing a place to live as a hermit. Still, Fr Mīnā continued to make a request to the patriarch and related ministers every few years to settle permanently in Abū Mīnā. In 1948, the Ministry of Arab Antiquities granted him formal permission to celebrate liturgical services on feasts at Maryut³⁴.

Finally, on 5 March 1958, during the confusion of the patriarchal elections and his own nomination, Fr Mīnā received news from the representatives of the Community Council and the patriarchate that they had decided to restore the altar of St Menas's Church in Maryut, which overwhelmed him with joy. Unable to sleep, he rushed at midnight to write to Munīr Shukrī (1908-1990), the director of AMW in Alexandria, with the news³⁵.

In April 1959, Fr Mīnā was elected the 116th Patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. At his ordination, he opted for the name Cyril VI as his patriarchal title, not Mina III, contrary to the expectations of many. This decision stemmed from a vision of Patriarch Cyril V (r. 1874-1927) that Fr Mīnā experienced following the election³⁶. In June 1959, Patriarch Cyril VI, accompanied by members of the Patriarchate of Cairo and members of AMW, travelled to Maryut to perform religious rituals at the archaeological site. He returned to Abū Mīnā on 27 November 1959 to celebrate an open-air liturgy on an altar erected over St Menas's tomb, attended by about 500 people. He then went to a nearby site where he had bought land from the Desert Reconstruction Agency, next to the archaeological site, and laid the foundation stone for what would eventually become St Menas's Monastery in Maryut. For the construction of this new monastery, Patriarch Cyril VI obtained a permission from the Archaeological Service to use the stones from Abū Mīnā which had little archaeological

³³ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 211.

³⁴ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 353-354.

³⁵ Jam'īyyat Mār Mīnā, *Qirā'āt*, pp. 18-19. It came with the approval of the Egyptian Antiquities Service, see "Rhakoti" 2(2) May 2005, p. 2.

³⁶ al-Maṣrī, *Qiṣṣat al-kanīsa*, v. 7, p. 28.

value³⁷. The efforts to rebuild the monastery at Maryut, a decades-old dream of Cyril VI, met with criticism, especially from the Community Council, regarding the waste of expenditure and effort on an “unnecessary” monastery³⁸. Despite the criticism and the difficulties of construction work in the middle of the desert with no water, the monastery buildings did emerge. Their inhabitants were first the monks brought from other monasteries and then those ordained at St Menas’s Monastery in Maryut. The new site developed into a large monastery with many monks and pilgrims coming from all over the world, and the monastery complex includes several churches and a huge guesthouse to accommodate large numbers of pilgrims³⁹.

Patriarch Cyril VI often visited and stayed in this new monastery in Maryut, where he made critical decisions and received important news⁴⁰. After his repose in 1971, the new cathedral in the Abbasiyya district of Cairo received his coffin first, but in his will, he had expressed his wish for a burial in St Menas’s Monastery in Maryut. His successor, Patriarch Shenouda III (r. 1971-2012), therefore decided to follow the will and had his coffin placed in the monastery in Maryut. Following Cyril VI’s canonisation in 2013, his tomb in the monastery has become a shrine (*mazār*) where pilgrims come to pray for intercessions.

3. Archaeology, Egyptian territorial nationalism, and the Copts

As we have seen, Cyril VI venerated St Menas as his patron saint, and he worked hard to rebuild Abū Mīnā and revive St Menas’s veneration, eventually building a new monastery next to the ancient pilgrim centre of Abū Mīnā. However, it was not only Cyril VI’s efforts that led to the revival of St Menas’s veneration; the activities of laypeople’s associations also played an important role. In contrast to Cyril VI, their interest in St Menas was not only religious, as it also had a nationalist tendency.

In the second half of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, as the idea of nationalism gradually spread, the Egyptians’ perception of their own history changed significantly, and the same was true

³⁷ ‘Atṭā *et al.*, *Mudhdhakkirātī*, p. 145-146.

³⁸ Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 357.

³⁹ Dayr al-Shahīd Mār Mīnā al-‘Ajā’ib bi-Maryūt, *al-Qiddīs*, p. 342-349.

⁴⁰ ‘Atṭā *et al.*, *Mudhdhakkirātī*, p. 148-149.

of the Copts. In search for a new, modern identity, they transformed their perception of history in relation to Egyptian nationalism.

After Jean-François Champollion deciphered hieroglyphs in 1822, European archaeologists began excavations in Egypt, which resulted in many important discoveries concerning the ancient history of Egypt. For Egyptian intellectuals of the early nineteenth century, ancient Egypt was, according to the conventional Islamic view of history, "the time of Jāhiliyya" or the age of ignorance before Islam. The statues of the ancient gods and pharaohs were the best evidence that they were polytheists and idolaters, so there was almost no interest in ancient history, let alone the preservation of ancient ruins. Similarly, for the Copts, ancient Egypt was a distant past that they did not recognise as part of their own history, which began with the arrival of St Mark the Evangelist in Alexandria and functioned as a church history.

However, throughout the nineteenth century, with modernisation and the spread of the notion of territorial nationalism, the Egyptian national narrative under construction gradually incorporated ancient Egypt. Rifāʿa al-Ṭaḥṭāwī (1801-1873), an intellectual of the Nahḍa (Arabic renaissance) era who stayed in Paris in the 1820s and familiarised himself with ancient Egypt and Egyptology there, waged a campaign to interest his compatriots in ancient Egypt. In 1868, he published his history of ancient Egypt, *Anwār Tawfīq al-Jalīl fī Akhbār Miṣr wa Tawthīq Banī ʿIsmāʿīl*, using evidence from European archaeology and philology⁴¹. As a result, Egyptians began to take an interest in ancient Egypt, and Egyptian Egyptologists such as Aḥmad Kamāl (1851-1923) started working in a professional capacity related to Egyptology in the 1880s. However, Egyptology and archaeology were overwhelmingly Western disciplines, relegating Egyptians to support positions with no real opportunity to make a serious contribution to the field⁴².

Between 1882 and 1922, Egypt was subject to British rule. As the independence movement intensified, Egyptian territorial nationalism garnered significant support from intellectuals and political activists. The advent of this nationalism transformed the history of ancient Egypt into a glorious past that all Egyptians could take pride in and that the rest of the world should admire.

⁴¹ D.M. Reid, *Whose Pharaohs? Archaeology, Museums, and Egyptian National Identity from Napoleon to World War I*, Cairo 2002, p.108-109.

⁴² Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, p. 188-189.

Copts, too, sought to establish a golden age as the foundation for their modern identity, and they could draw inspiration either from their spiritual leaders from the Roman-Byzantine times, a period characterised by persecution, or from ancient Egypt. In the Roman-Byzantine era, the Copts never held dominion over Egypt, and thus had only martyrs or ascetics as prominent historical figures to celebrate. By contrast, Pharaonic history offered a rich and illustrious ancestry⁴³. Therefore, in the early twentieth century, Coptic lay intellectuals linked Coptic religious culture to ancient Egypt, ardently asserting their intertwined Coptic-Egyptian identity⁴⁴. Si-mayka Pasha, who helped Fr Mīnā obtain permission to live in Abū Mīnā, famously remarked, “All Egyptians are Copts, some are Muslim Copts, and others, Christian Copts, but all are descendants of the ancient Egyptians”⁴⁵. He also established the Coptic Museum in 1910, nationalised in 1931 as he intended from the onset.

Coptic ecclesiastical leaders derived their legitimacy from the apostolic succession from St Mark the Evangelist and from their piety and asceticism, just like Cyril VI, so they did not need to seek a glorious past in ancient Egypt. It was the Coptic upper-class laity who felt more inclined to define their identity in secular Egyptian nationalist terms and were active in the reassessment of their history by connecting Coptic culture to ancient Egypt and the preservation of historical and archaeological artefacts⁴⁶.

In turn, the Coptic laity from the educated middle class focused more on the religious revival movement within the Coptic Orthodox community. This movement bears the common name of the Sunday School movement, founded by Archdeacon Ḥabīb Girgis⁴⁷ (1876-1951) in 1918 to promote religious revival and social reform. The movement had a revivalist and fundamentalist intellectual outlook, which aimed to restore religious

⁴³ Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, p. 280-281.

⁴⁴ See examples of such Coptic nationalist claims in: H. Miyokawa, *The Struggle over Egyptianness: A Case Study of the Egyptian Nayruz Festival*, in: *Minorities and the Modern Arab World: New Perspectives*, ed. L. Robson, Syracuse 2016, p. 122-139, and H. Miyokawa, *The Revival of the Coptic Language and the Formation of Coptic Ethnoreligious Identity in Modern Egypt*, in: *Copts in Context: Negotiating Identity, Tradition, and Modernity*, ed. N. van Doorn-Harder, Columbia 2017, p. 151-156.

⁴⁵ Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, p. 282.

⁴⁶ Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, p. 281.

⁴⁷ The Coptic Orthodox Church canonised Ḥabīb Girgis for his efforts to lead the Sunday School movement, and his canonisation took place at the same time as Patriarch Cyril VI's in 2013.

tradition and to return to the original church of the first centuries. Still, they dedicated their activities to fighting poverty, ignorance, disease, and crime, and organised social and cultural activities for Coptic youth, such as excursions to historical sites and summer camps⁴⁸. The Sunday School movement attracted numerous university students and urban young professionals and developed into an influential movement in the Coptic society.

In the 1950s, some of the first pioneers of the Sunday School movement became priests and monks. This new generation of clergy found a mentor in Fr Mīnā, who later ordained these young, educated monks with a background in the Sunday School movement as bishops during his tenure as Cyril VI⁴⁹. Bishop Anṭūniyūs, one of those bishops, later became Patriarch Shenouda III (r. 1971-2012), who led the Coptic Orthodox community with his strong leadership for over four decades.

In addition to the Sunday School movement, the religious revivalist movement of the Coptic middle class took the form of religious and cultural associations. The activities of the AMW, which I discuss below, fit within this trend. Compared to the more secular Coptic Egyptian nationalism described above, which sought to link Coptic religious culture with ancient Egypt, this religious revival movement among the middle class focused on the early Christian era. It aimed to rediscover and utilise the forgotten elements of the Coptic religious and cultural heritage, to create a more vibrant and more authentic religious life⁵⁰. However, these movements observed no clear division according to whether they were secular or religious, or whether their focus was on ancient Egypt or early Christianity. Sometimes they overlapped, as did their relationship to Egyptian nationalism.

Regarding the overall trend of Egyptian nationalism, it was in 1922 that ancient Egypt became the focus of the Egyptian nationalist movement. That year, the British unilaterally declared Egypt's independence in February in response to the increasingly fierce independence movement. This preceded the November discovery and opening of Tut Ankh Amen's tomb, a moment that brought archaeology and politics together in an unprecedented way⁵¹. As we know, the discovery of Tut Ankh Amen's tomb in 1922 led to a pharaonic boom in Egyptian society for

⁴⁸ S. Elsässer, *The Coptic Question in the Mubarak Era*, Oxford 2014, p. 42-45.

⁴⁹ Elsässer, *The Coptic Question in the Mubarak Era*, p. 48.

⁵⁰ Elsässer, *The Coptic Question in the Mubarak Era*, p. 45.

⁵¹ Reid, *Contesting Antiquity in Egypt*, p. 293.

about a decade. As a result, the mausoleum of the nationalist leader and prime minister Saʿd Zaghlūl (1859-1927) was built in a style modelled on pharaonic temples⁵².

This “independence”, unilaterally declared in 1922, was largely nominal, allowing the Egyptians limited political freedom, and the British army remained stationed in Egypt until the 1950s. However, regarding the management of cultural property and antiquities, the Egyptian authorities proved able to exercise greater control. The Egyptian government preserved the entire contents of Tut Ankh Amen’s tomb, banning their transport from Egypt, and imposed much stricter controls on exporting antiquities. In addition, the government began the Egyptianisation of museums and the Antiquities Service, emphasised pharaonic history in schools, founded a state university, and opened programmes in educational institutions to train Egyptian specialists in Egyptology and related fields⁵³.

4. The miraculous story of St Menas during the Second World War

As seen above, the 1920s were a period when archaeology, politics, and Egyptian identity intertwined very closely in Egypt. Perhaps because of this atmosphere, in August 1929, in a fiery speech denouncing the British presence in Egypt, Muslim nationalist leader Aḥmad Ḥusayn (1911-1982) referred to St Menas as the very example of a national hero who had resisted an invader’s oppression⁵⁴. This was probably an exceptional case, and his speech would have had little impact on his Egyptian compatriots, given the low level of this saint’s public recognition. Moreover, Ḥusayn was still a law student in 1929, and even after he founded Young Egypt in 1933, it never attracted a mass support for its extreme anti-British Egyptian nationalism.

In fact, St Menas and Abū Mīnā ruins seemingly attracted little attention from Egyptian nationalists, including the Coptic cultural nationalists mentioned above, who made no particularly notable comments or

⁵² R.M. Coury, *The Politics of the Funeral: The Tomb of Saad Zaghlul*, “Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt” 29 (1992) p. 191-200.

⁵³ Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*, p. 293.

⁵⁴ Voile, *Chapitre VII*, In “Les coptes”, paragraph 14. As mentioned, in the contemporary Coptic hagiography, St Menas did not rise against the Roman rule and bravely fight as a soldier, but rather left the army and lived a reclusive life in the desert.

activities about them, although they were a perfect material for combining Egyptianness and Christianity. One of the rare references is the aforementioned trip to the ruins of Abū Mīnā, organised sometime before January 1937 by the Friends of the Holy Bible Association, headed by Simayka Pasha, the director of the Coptic Museum. It was the Greeks and the Second World War that awakened the interest of some Alexandrian Coptic youth in St Menas and Abū Mīnā ruins in a most unexpected and mysterious context.

Like other Europeans, the Greeks began to settle in Egypt in the first half of the nineteenth century under the encouragement and protection of the Egyptian ruler Muḥammad 'Alī (r. 1805-1848), who aimed to modernise and industrialise the country. In the 1860s, the Egyptian cotton industry experienced a significant surge, leading to a further influx of immigrants from Europe. In 1907-1937, the Greeks constituted the largest foreign community in Egypt, followed by the Italians and the British⁵⁵. As a port city, Alexandria hosted the largest number of foreign residents. They received extraterritorial rights under the terms of the Capitulations, a centuries-old system that originated from Egypt's Ottoman past and remained in force until as late as 1937⁵⁶. Alexander Kitroeff clarifies that the Greek community consisted of diverse groups with different social classes, economic interests, political leanings, places of origin, and nationalities, but the Greek Orthodox faith was an important core that brought them together in ethnic and religious terms⁵⁷. The Greek Orthodox tradition has widely venerated St Menas, considering him the patron saint of several Greek cities, and his feast day is 11 November in the Greek Orthodox *Synaxarion*.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, another important factor that changed St Menas's position, Britain anticipated that Egypt would declare war on Germany. However, the Egyptian government maintained its neutrality in the face of the ambiguities of the war and sought to balance military protection from Britain with nationalist claims against Britain⁵⁸. In some cases, the Egyptian army engaged in combat operations, but doubts persisted in the British authorities' minds concerning

⁵⁵ A. Kitroeff, *The Greeks in Egypt, 1919-1937: Ethnicity and Class*, Oxford 1989, p. 25.

⁵⁶ Kitroeff, *The Greeks in Egypt, 1919-1937*, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Kitroeff, *The Greeks in Egypt, 1919-1937*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ M. Kolinsky, *Britain's War in the Middle East: Strategy and Diplomacy 1936-1942*, New York 1999, p. 123-124.

the willingness of the Egyptian army to fight. Therefore, it mainly served internal security purposes, in particular the protection of public utilities and communications infrastructure⁵⁹.

In 1940, the Italian army invaded Greece, and in the following year, the Germany-led Axis powers occupied the country. In May 1941, Greece's king George II and his government fled to exile in Egypt, followed by a number of Greek soldiers and officers. After a month, the king and the government left for South Africa and ended up in London, but some ministers and the Greek army remained in Egypt. The latter became established as the Royal Greek Army of the Middle East under British command. In December 1941, with the Egyptian authorities' permission, the Greek government in exile summoned the Greeks of Egypt into the army, with a total of about 7,000 men enlisting⁶⁰.

The summer of 1942 was the war's climax for Egypt, when the Axis army of Italy and Germany led by General Erwin Rommel, advancing from Libya, reached its farthest point in El Alamein in July, some 110 km southwest of Alexandria. The Second Battle of El Alamein, which took place from 23 October to 4 November 1942, resulted in a decisive victory for the Allied forces under the command of British General Bernard Law Montgomery. The victory marked a major turning point in the Second World War, which led to the Allied forces launching an offensive and overwhelming the Axis forces.

At the beginning of this battle in October, the Greek soldiers in El Alamein reported the apparition of St Menas⁶¹. In midnight on the day before the Second Battle of El Alamein began, the Greek soldiers fighting within the Allied forces allegedly witnessed St Menas coming out from his Abū Mīnā ruins and leading camels into the German camp⁶². According to this miraculous story, St Menas's apparition terrified the German

⁵⁹ Kolinsky, *Britain's War in the Middle East*, p. 131, 175.

⁶⁰ A. Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus from Egypt: Diaspora Politics and Emigration 1937-1962*, New York 2017, p. 41.

⁶¹ For an Arabic report of this story see Dayr al-Shahīd Mār Mīnā al-'Ajā'ib bi-Maryūt, *al-Qiddīs*, p. 397-400, and for an English version see Saint Mena Coptic Orthodox Monastery, *The Great Egyptian and Coptic Martyr*, p. 52-57. Both sources are publications by St Menas's Monastery in Maryut and refer to the same Greek reference (C. Vasilopoulos, *O Agios Menas*, Athens 1973, p. 49-52).

⁶² For reference, the ruins of Abū Mīnā and El Alamein lie about fifty to sixty kilometres apart. Some sources, especially the Greek ones, attribute the etymology of El Alamein to St Menas, but El Alamein literally means "the two flags" in Arabic, and the last part, "ein", is the suffix for the dual form of nouns. It is therefore unlikely that

soldiers and significantly undermined their morale, leading to their defeat in the battlefield. The same source points out that the English Protestants recognised St Menas's miracle and gave that area⁶³ to the Greek Orthodox Patriarch to rebuild the church dedicated to St Menas and to record the names of those who lost their lives in the battle.

On 10 November 1942, the English-language newspaper *The Egyptian Gazette*⁶⁴ reported this miraculous story, noting that the Greeks in Egypt hailed St Menas as the one who had saved Alexandria from the Axis invasion. It also reported that the saint's Greek Orthodox feast saw celebrations with due solemnity at St Sabas's Cathedral in Alexandria, in the presence of Patriarch Christopher II. Many devout Greeks were reportedly speaking of subscribing to the building of a church to St Menas somewhere near the site of the old monastery.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarch, Christopher II, actually collected donations from the congregation to purchase the land around the old monastery of Abū Mīnā from the Egyptian government, but the Greeks failed to reach the necessary agreement due to a historical dispute with the Copts over the ownership of Abū Mīnā⁶⁵.

St Menas's miracle at El Alamein spread among the Greeks, arousing great joy, and received commemoration in the form of a mural fresco depicting St Menas chasing away the German soldiers in the Great Lavra Monastery, the oldest and largest among the monasteries of Mount Athos in Greece, the spiritual centre of Eastern Orthodoxy. Also, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Alexandria still commemorates the miracle every year on St Menas's feast day⁶⁶.

Interestingly, St Menas's miracle at El Alamein is almost completely unknown to the Copts. Even the comprehensive volume that provides a thorough overview of all aspects related to St Menas, published by the Monastery of St Menas in Maryut, built by Cyril VI in 1959, mentions St Menas's miracle at El Alamein with a reference to Greek literature⁶⁷.

El Alamein has its roots in St Menas. See Saint Mena Coptic Orthodox Monastery, *The Great Egyptian and Coptic Martyr*, p. 52-53.

⁶³ It probably refers to the Abū Mīnā ruins.

⁶⁴ "The Egyptian Gazette", 10 November 1942.

⁶⁵ J. Šafwat, *Šūra wa Ta'liq. Kayfa Zahara al-Qiddīs Mār Mīnā fī al-Ḥarb al-'Ālamiyya al-Thāniya?*, "al-Dustūr" 13 November 2023, in: <https://www.dostor.org/4551743> (accessed 30.12.2024).

⁶⁶ Šafwat, *Šūra wa Ta'liq*.

⁶⁷ See note 61.

This information gap presumably stems from the fact that the Egyptian army did not directly participate in the Battle of El Alamein. Moreover, the wartime martial law imposed strict censorship, probably even more so for Arabic-language periodicals. In addition, the saint's low profile at the time, in contrast to the prominent status he would later enjoy among the Copts, and the inaccessibility of the ruins due to their location in the desert may have contributed to this enigmatic situation. Thus, it seems that the issue of ownership of the Abū Mīnā site, whose existence was poorly known, did not attract much attention in the Coptic community in the face of other pressing issues such as electing a new patriarch.

Cyril VI, or Fr Mīnā, who had endeavoured to obtain permission to live in the ruins of Abū Mīnā since 1937, seems to have taken interest in Abū Mīnā for spiritual reasons that had nothing in common with the war or the Greeks, at least at the onset. He presumably wanted to live as a hermit in the desert ruins, as he had done at the Barāmūs Monastery. However, he is most likely the first, and perhaps the only, person to realise that the Greek Orthodox Church intended to construct a church on the site of Abū Mīnā, and to attempt to address the issue.

In June 1943, eight months after the miracle of El Alamein, Fr Mīnā went to Alexandria and met with Bānūb Ḥabashī of the Graeco-Roman Museum. According to Munīr Shukrī, one of the AMW's founding members and its second director after Ḥabashī, at this meeting with Ḥabashī, Fr Mīnā expressed his surprise that the Copts were not even aware that St Menas had an archaeological site that still bore his name, or that one of the Christian denominations calling for building a church in that area had raised ten thousand Egyptian pounds in a single meeting⁶⁸. Shukrī notes that he interpreted Fr Mīnā's efforts to build a cell there as an attempt to preserve the Copts' right to and ownership of Abū Mīnā, and to draw Coptic attention to the site⁶⁹.

Moreover, when, as mentioned, Fr Mīnā wrote to al-Maṣrī in June 1943 in the context of asking the Community Council's permission for practicing religious rituals in the Abū Mīnā ruins, he stated, "before someone else precedes us and does it; especially as the martyr is an Egyptian, and his monuments should be under our hands and not anyone else's"⁷⁰. The response from the Community Council at the time is unknown, but

⁶⁸ Shukrī, *Qirā'āt*, p. 21.

⁶⁹ Shukrī, *Qirā'āt*, p. 21.

⁷⁰ Mina the Recluse (Cyril VI), *Letter to Habib Pasha el-Masri, June 28, 1943*, as cited and translated in: Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 353.

the Antiquities Service rejected the idea, stating, "We have no responsibility to protect you in this place"⁷¹. It is not clear how the Greek Orthodox Church approached the issue of Abū Mīnā at the time, but the war situation would not have allowed them to build a monastery either.

In June 1945, getting inspiration from Fr Mīnā's plea, Ḥabashī and a dozen of like-minded Alexandrian Coptic youth established the AMW. They had first organised a group under the name of the "Committee for the Commemoration of the Heroes of Christianity and the Church", but they later changed the name and officially registered as an association on 24 November 1945, the feast of St Menas⁷².

As stated in the founding declaration, the AMW's aim was to commemorate Coptic martyrs and heroes by speeches and writings, to publish Coptic studies articles written in an accessible way for the general public, and to prepare trips to archaeological sites of interest to every Copt⁷³. In other words, its aim was to disseminate the knowledge of Coptic history and culture with a special focus on St Menas. According to an essay commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the AMW's activities, the Copts at the time knew nothing about St Menas except for his name, and they knew nothing about his archaeological site⁷⁴.

The AMW's first major activity was to organise a trip to Abū Mīnā. Due to poorly developed roads and a route prone to confusion and misdirection, the journey took seven hours each way, even though the distance between Alexandria and Abū Mīnā was roughly sixty kilometres⁷⁵. The first trip was to Abū Mīnā ruins, the second to the monasteries of Wādī al-Naṭrūn, and the third to the St Menas's Church in Ibyar, which Cyril VI had visited as a child with his family, all in 1946. Then, for thirty years since 1950, the AMW organised regular trips to Abū Mīnā twice a year, the first on 22 June, the feast of the consecration of St Menas's Church in Maryut⁷⁶, and the other on 24 November, the feast of

⁷¹ K. Faraj Allāh, *Mā Lā Ta 'rif-hu 'an al-Shahīd al-'Aẓīm Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī*, "Waṭanī" 24 November 2024.

⁷² Jam'iyat Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī lil-Dirāsāt al-Qibṭiyya bil-Iskandariyya, *Muqataṭafāt*, p. 11.

⁷³ Jam'iyat Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī lil-Dirāsāt al-Qibṭiyya bil-Iskandariyya, *Muqataṭafāt*, p. 5-6; Shukrī, *Qirā'āt*, p. 20.

⁷⁴ Jam'iyat Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī lil-Dirāsāt al-Qibṭiyya bil-Iskandariyya, *Muqataṭafāt*, p. 15.

⁷⁵ "Rhakoti" 2(2) May 2005, p. 18-19, a reprint of an article that appeared in "Ākhir Sā'a" 18 April 1962.

⁷⁶ This feast refers to the consecration of the ancient church.

St Menas's martyrdom. Since 1947, the AMW published books and magazines on Coptic history and culture, such as monasticism, the Coptic language, and the Nayruz festival, and prominent Coptic studies scholars such as Aziz Suryal Atiya, the editor-in-chief of *Coptic Encyclopedia*, contributed their articles.

One of the AMW's most interesting activities was bringing ancient marble columns to St Menas's Church in Fleming, Alexandria. When the Community Council decided to build a church in Fleming, they presented proposals for the interior decoration, the most important of which was a plan to bring four marble columns, including the decorated base and the capital, from the archaeological site of Abū Mīnā and place them around the altar as in the ancient church. The AMW laid the cornerstone of the church in 1946, and the Ministry of Education, then responsible for antiquities, gave its approval – secured with the help of Togo Mina (1906-1949)⁷⁷, the second director of the Coptic Museum. Thus, the Church of the Great Martyr St Menas opened in 1948 with its four ancient marble columns⁷⁸.

According to Shukrī, who led this column project, this symbolic movement and Fr Mīnā's efforts resonated with other groups and individuals and led to publication of important literature on St Menas⁷⁹. Shukrī gives the following examples⁸⁰: James Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas*, Cairo, 1946, printed at the expense of Société d'Archéologie Copte, an association for Coptic studies established by a Coptic notable Mirrit Buṭrus Ghālī in 1933; and Hegumen Yūḥannā al-Subky al-'Anṭūnī, *Maymar al-Shahīd al-'Aẓīm Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī*, n.p. 1948. Along with the AWM's own publications, these publishing activities that emerged after the Second World War gradually led to an increase in the Coptic awareness of St Menas.

There was some resonance from monks as well; in August 1945, the author of the aforementioned book *Maymar*, al-'Anṭūnī – a Coptic monk – attempted to live in Abū Mīnā, but the wartime situation again prevented him from doing so. This is one of the earliest expressions of

⁷⁷ He was a lay Copt, so his name "Mina" was not an ecclesiastical name but his grandfather's name.

⁷⁸ Shukrī, *Qirā'āt*, p. 26, Jam'iyyat Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī lil-Dirāsāt al-Qibṭiyya bil-Iskandariyya, *Muqatafaṭ*, p. 14, Shukrī, *Isḥrūna 'Āman fī Khidma al-Tārīkh al-Qawmī wal-Kanīsa*, "Majalla Madāris al-'Aḥad" September 1967 (7) p. 29.

⁷⁹ Shukrī, *Qirā'āt*, p. 71.

⁸⁰ Shukrī, *Qirā'āt*, p. 26.

interest in the Abū Mīnā ruins by Coptic monks other than Fr Mīnā. Coptic Patriarch Joseph II (r. 1946-1956) visited the ruins of Abū Mīnā accompanied by archons – leading members of the Coptic laity – sometime during his office. Then, on 24 November 1957, the abbot of the Suryānī Monastery, Thāwfilus, accompanied by nine monks from the same monastery, including the future Patriarch Shenouda III, organised a trip to Abū Mīnā to hold a liturgy there, which became a regular event held twice annually – on 22 June and 24 November⁸¹.

Fr Mīnā's obsession with St Menas was religious in nature, but the dispute with the Greek Orthodox Church over the ownership of Abū Mīnā seems to have accelerated his enthusiasm for building a monastery there. In March 1958, Fr Mīnā wrote letters to Shukrī and to Ḥannā Yūsuf 'Aṭṭā, Fr Mīnā's own brother. In the former, as mentioned above, Fr Mīnā wrote that he was sleepless and overwhelmed with joy upon learning about the decision to restore the altar. He was so happy to receive this news, for the revival of the Greek Orthodox interest in Abū Mīnā took place at that very time. In the latter, he hoped that his brother would be able to personally discuss with Shukrī the reconstruction of St Menas's Monastery in Maryut. He wrote, "My intention is even to write everything in the name of St Menas' Monastery, because the ambitions of other parties have become evident"⁸². The letter mentions that two bishops, namely Bishop Murquṣ the Metropolitan of Abū Tīg and Bishop 'Antūniyūs the Metropolitan of Sūhāj, were supervising the matter⁸³.

In June 1958, in another letter to Ḥannā, Fr Mīnā outlined a concrete plan for constructing the monastery in Abū Mīnā. He wrote,

First, we will build a hermitage or two outside the monastery near the rest house which is there. Then we will start to restore the altar through the director of the Coptic Museum⁸⁴, because he is responsible for this operation. Once

⁸¹ Faraj Allāh, *Mā Lā Ta'rif-hu*, Dayr al-Shahīd Mār Mīnā al-'Ajā'ibī bi-Maryūt, *al-Qiddīs*, p. 202.

⁸² Mina the Recluse (Cyril VI), *Letter to Hanna Youssef Atta, March 5, 1958*, as cited in: Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 355. The Arabic version of the letter also appears in Shukrī, *Qirā'āt*, p. 27. For this part, the translation from Arabic is mine but based on Fanous's.

⁸³ Shukrī, *Qirā'āt*, p. 27.

⁸⁴ The director at the time was Pahor Labib (1905-1994), the son of 'Iqlawdiyūs Labīb, who tried to revive Coptic as a daily spoken language. The Coptic Museum began to excavate the Abū Mīnā ruins in 1950.

we put our feet there, be sure that the Lord will work with us. It is very important to care and meet Dr Munīr Shukrī, and whoever has anything to do with this matter⁸⁵.

This letter suggests that Shukrī was a key figure, deeply involved in the Abū Mīnā issue.

In February 1959, a few months before Fr Mīnā became patriarch, he sent a letter to Shukrī, informing him that the Greek Orthodox Church was going to buy the land of St Menas's Monastery in Abū Mīnā to build a monastery there. This news seems to have disturbed Shukrī very much, and he hoped that the AMW would endeavour to buy this land, and he wanted to put all his money into this project, even the price of his gallabiya⁸⁶. It is highly likely that Cyril VI rushed to the construction of a monastery in Abū Mīnā soon after his ordination because of this background.

Although the AMW was aware of the Greek Orthodox interest in Abū Mīnā from the onset, it did not directly criticise the Greeks. Instead, they emphasised the saint's Egyptianness and mentioned the issue of historical ownership in their publications, asserting the Coptic ownership of Abū Mīnā. There was no particular social tension between the Copts and the Greeks in Egypt in the 1940s and 1950s, and by late 1950s, the Greeks were already leaving the country after the Suez Crisis, so their presence was in decline⁸⁷. Therefore, the issue of Abū Mīnā ownership received such a circumlocutory treatment.

In an article published on 22 June 1959, Shukrī calls St Menas "the patron saint of the Christians of Egypt" (*shaft' masīhīyī Miṣr*) and describes St Menas's Church in Abū Mīnā as the greatest and the most famous Egyptian church, which attracted pilgrims from all over the Christian world at the time⁸⁸. He remembers to mention the ownership controversy with "the Melkites" that happened during the reign of Coptic Patriarch Khā'il in the eighth century and confirms that Bishop Khā'il proved the Coptic ownership of this church. He also mentions the theft of marble

⁸⁵ Hegumen Mina the Recluse (Cyril VI), *Letter to Hanna Youssef Atta, June 23, 1958*, qtd. and trans. in: Fanous, *A Silent Patriarch*, p. 377, n. 196. The Arabic version of the letter also appears in Shukrī, *Qirā'āt*, p. 27-28. For this part, the translation from Arabic is mine but based on Fanous's.

⁸⁶ Kanīsa Mār Jirjis bi-Isburting, *al-Shahīd al-Miṣrī Mār Mīnā al-'Ajāyibī*, Alexandria 1974, p. 52. *Gallabiya* is a traditional, long, loose-fitting garment.

⁸⁷ Dalachanis, *The Greek Exodus*, p. 305.

⁸⁸ Shukrī, *Kanīsa Mār Mīnā*, p. 220.

by the Melkites in the ninth century and that the perpetrator later regretted what he had done and sent money to repair the church he had destroyed⁸⁹.

It was not only the Greek Orthodox interest in Abū Mīnā but also the Coptic cultural nationalism that had already emerged in the first half of the twentieth century that led some Copts to imagine Saint Menas as an Egyptian saint and Abū Mīnā as the great past of Egypt. In September 1967, a few months after Egypt suffered an unexpected crushing defeat in the war against Israel, looking back on the AMW's activities over the past 20 years, Shukrī claimed,

“Isn't the history of the Copts part of the history of this beloved country? Isn't the heritage of the Copts part of the heritage of all Egypt? I see our duty towards these studies as an integral part of our national duty towards the homeland, science and history”⁹⁰.

The article states that its contribution serves to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the AMW's founding, but in reality, Shukrī may be reflecting on the AMW's activities to confirm the greatness of the Coptic/Egyptian past and regain his pride as an Egyptian in the shock of defeat. Coptic past is Egyptian past, and the Abū Mīnā ruins, whose profile the AMW was laboriously raising, are the symbol of prosperous Christian Egypt. The tendency to emphasise St Menas's Egyptianness also appears in the claim that the name Menas has its roots in the ancient Egyptian language, meaning “to remain, to be permanent”, and that it was also the name of the first king of Egypt, Narmer⁹¹, which leaves no room for the Greeks.

5. Conclusion

As we have seen, Cyril VI's efforts contributed to the revival of St Menas's veneration and his current popularity in Egypt. However, the AMW's efforts also contributed to the revival. The miraculous story of St Menas during the Second World War and the Greek Orthodox interest in St Menas and the Abū Mīnā ruins stimulated the nationalist feelings of some of the Coptic laity in Alexandria, and this led to the establishment of

⁸⁹ Shukrī, *Kanīsa Mār Mīnā*, p. 220-221.

⁹⁰ Shukrī, *ʿIshrūna ʿĀman*, p. 29.

⁹¹ Dayr al-Shahīd Mār Mīnā al-ʿAjāʾib bi-Maryūt, *al-Qiddīs*, p. 19-20.

the AMW and its activities to raise the Coptic interest in St Menas. Thus, St Menas and the Abū Mīnā ruins gained their reputation as the symbols of prosperous Christian Egypt in line with the prevailing trend of Coptic cultural nationalism.

Considering that Cyril VI himself retrieved the relics of St Mark the Evangelist, the founder of the Church of Alexandria, from Venice in 1968⁹², Cyril VI's interest in St Menas may not have been as purely religious as scholars generally believe. He may have been aware of the importance of owning historically and religiously significant objects and places to support the legitimacy and authenticity of the Coptic Orthodox community. The Coptic Orthodox tradition has carefully preserved relics of saints and holy places as tangible evidence of the authenticity of the Coptic religious identity. In some cases, they have also played a role in shaping the Coptic national identity.

The revival of St Menas's veneration in mid-twentieth century may have been a space where Coptic cultural nationalism and religious revival intersected. The fact that the two influenced each other in reconstructing the Coptic identity shows that this was an important turning point in the Coptic community, from cultural nationalism led by the laity to a religious revival led by religious leaders.

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⁹² 'Atṭā et al., *Mudhdhakkirātī*, p. 115-117.

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Tłumaczenia



The Slavic Miracles of the Great Martyr Saint Menas by Timothy of Alexandria¹

Jan Stradomski²

Abstract: The complete Slavic miracles of St Menas, consisting of a prologue and 13 miracles, is based on the edition of the *Great Reader Mineia* of the Moscow Metropolitan Makary. The text largely corresponds to the Greek version from Ivan Pomyalovsky's 1900 edition, making it a valuable resource for understanding the Greek tradition as well. The Slavic text has been compared with other manuscripts containing the full cycle of miracles and following the same translation (B).

Keywords: St Menas; Greek/Byzantine literary; Orthodox Slavdom; Hagiography; Church-Slavic literature

The medieval Old Church Slavonic literary tradition contains one of the most complete (alongside the Coptic, Greek, Ethiopian, and Arabic) collections of the miracles of St Menas. The interest in the cult of the Egyptian martyr among the Orthodox Slavs must have been significant, as the first translations of this cycle appeared as early as the 10th century, in at least two independent translations. Slavic manuscripts attest to the presence of a third translation, which may also trace its roots to the early period of intense activity in Bulgarian translation centers from the time of the First Bulgarian Empire (9th to early 11th century). Undoubtedly, the sources for the Slavic texts were Greek (Byzantine) manuscripts containing partial and complete collections of miracles in two main Greek redactions – α and β . The Greek β redaction is of the greatest importance for the Slavic tradition, as it appears in translation (A), which includes a selection of miracles (usually six). This translation is known in separate textual transmissions, depending on the type of manuscript

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in which it appears – *cheti minei*, *synaxaria*, or hagiographical codices, known as *sborniki*. The complete cycle of 13 miracles, attributed to Timothy of Alexandria, appears in manuscripts in a distinct translation (B). This translation is also related to the Greek β source, although slightly different from the one used for translation A. Clear traces of the translation tradition of the Greek α redaction are preserved in the manuscripts representative of the *Drag. 700* group. There are reasons to believe that they continue an early Slavic translation (A²) of a different Greek source than that used for translations A and B. It is speculated that the Slavic translation B was made using a source that was later (13th-14th century) used as the basis for the Middle Bulgarian variant of *Drag. 700*³.

The complete Slavic miracles of St Menas, consisting of a prologue and 13 miracles, published here, is based on the edition of the *Great Reader Mineia* of the Moscow Metropolitan Makary⁴. The text closely corresponds to the Greek in the Moscow manuscript *Mosqu. Synod. gr. 161* (Vlad. 379) from the late 10th or early 11th century, published by Ivan Pomyalovsky, and can thus also serve as an insight into the Greek tradition. The Slavic text has been compared with manuscripts on which the edition of the *Great Reader Mineia* of the Moscow Metropolitan Makary was based (primarily *PHF* ϕ .728, *Co* ϕ . № 1319, 1529-1541), as well as with other manuscripts containing the full cycle of miracles and following the same translation (B). The verification primarily concerned unclear passages and the often distorted toponyms, ethnonyms, and names in the Slavic sources.

The choice of the *Great Reader Mineia* of the Moscow Metropolitan Makary variant in the Slavic translation B as the source for the English translation is mainly driven by the desire to present the content of all thirteen miracles based on one specific manuscript variant. Difficult-to-translate concepts and proper names are provided in the original with footnotes. Footnotes also include alternative translations and the literal wording of certain phrases that were difficult to render in English due to stylistic reasons or potential

³ J. Stradomski, *Medieval Slavic Translations of the Miracles of Saint Menas: Sources and Textual Problems*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 111-117.

⁴ Patriarch Makary's Great Reader Menologion = Makarii, Metropolitan, *Velikie Minei Chet'i*, compiled by All-Russian Metropolitan Makarii. November: Days 1-12, Saint Petersburg, 1897, p. 447-477.

ambiguities. Additional clarifications and comments are provided in the footnotes to aid in understanding the original Slavic text⁵.

**On this day [November 11th], the composition⁶ of Timothy,
Archbishop of Alexandria, on the miracles of the great martyr
of Christ, Saint Menas**

After the death of the contemptible and God-hating Emperor Diocletian, by the will of God, the honorable and God-loving Emperor Constantine assumed (power) in the empire. And when he embraced the true Christian faith, the pure radiance of God's grace which shone within him through Christ our God, enlightened him, and the almighty hand guided him from above⁷, for where there is a prudent soul, (there) the Holy Spirit descends immediately. This holy and God-loving emperor, who feared God and promptly obeyed all His commandments, led every person to the haven of salvation, remembering what was said: "You shall not do obeisance before the foreign god" (Ps 80:10), (and) "the Most High will repay (you) according to your deeds" (Ps 61:13). For the emperor ordered an edict to be written for the entire world, that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, whom the ungodly and unrighteous Pagans⁸ had blasphemed, should be preached in all lands, and that people should believe in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He also ordered the construction of churches in honor of the holy martyrs who had suffered worthily for Christ, our true God, and had confessed the true faith as they should, and he commanded that every day pure and bloodless offerings should be made to Christ, our God, for the atonement (of sins) and the turning of all believers to Christ, the true Lord and God. And when certain (people) set out from the city of Alexandria to obtain the relics of Christ's martyr Menas and to build a temple in his name, this⁹ entire eparchy¹⁰ gathered to swiftly complete the church of the saint.

⁵ I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Przemysław Piwowarczyk for his consultations and assistance in preparing the final version of the text in English.

⁶ OCS: *spisanje*.

⁷ I.e., 'from heaven'.

⁸ Lit. 'Hellenes'. The term retains the same meaning throughout the text. In OCS, *illin* ('Hellen') refers to a polytheist of the Greco-Roman religion, while followers of traditional religions are called *jazyčnik*.

⁹ It means, the diocese of Alexandria.

¹⁰ In Orthodox Christianity, 'eparchy' means a church province under a given episcopal see, 'diocese'.

Miracle 1 [of Saint Menas] [About the man] who came to pray

When by God's grace and through the intercession of Saint Menas, the church of the holy martyr was swiftly completed, a wealthy man from the land of Isauria came to Alexandria to trade. He heard of all the miracles and healings performed by Saint Menas, and he said to himself: "I will also go to pray at the church of the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, and bow before his venerable relics, and I will make a small offering from my wealth there, for a blessing, so that God may support me and save me through the prayers of the saint". He rose immediately, took a bag of gold with him, and went to the sea lake¹¹, where he found a ship; he boarded it and, after crossing, arrived at a place called Loskonita. He disembarked and sought shelter, for the day was drawing to an evening. He then found a house in that place and said to the master of the house: "Friend, do me this favor¹² and take me into your home, for the day is already fading into evening. I am afraid to travel alone, and I have no one with me (for company)". The master of the house said: "Come in, brother, and rest here until daybreak, and in the morning, you will rise and set on your journey with joy". So the foreigner entered and sat down, (and) the master of the house ordered a bed to be prepared for him, so he could rest there. When the host saw the man's bag, the devil, who is always envious of our lives, entered his heart and ensnared him before he fell asleep. (The host) got up, took a knife, and stabbed the foreigner to death. He took his bag of gold and said to himself: "What shall I do with this body? If someone finds out about the murder I have committed and reports it to the authorities? I will get up, dismember him, put him in a woven basket, and throw it into the sea". After planning this, he dismembered him, placed (him) in a basket, and hung it in his house from the ceiling, (waiting) for a quiet moment to throw it into the sea. As he pondered this all night, a bright day soon broke, and the man feared to dispose of [the body] in the sea during the day. He also took his head, intending to cut it as well and place it in the basket.

And behold, Saint Menas, the martyr of Christ, arrived riding on a horse, with many men, resembling a high-ranking official. He came to the door of that house. The man saw the saint approaching and was

¹¹ A translation from Greek τὴν λίμνην τῆς παραθαλασσίας.

¹² Var. 'have pity on me'.

terrified, for the foreigner's head was still intact. In a hurry, the man took the head, placed it in the basket, and hung it in front of the door, not knowing what else to do out of fear. Saint Menas came and opened the door of the house¹³, dismounted from his horse, took the man, and said to him, "Tell me the truth, where is the man who stayed here last night?". The host replied to the saint, "There was no such man here as you speak of". Then Saint Menas said to him, "Was there (really) no such man? Be silent, unfortunate one, (for) I will find him myself!". (And) the saint entered the house, took the woven basket, and found the man's entered head along with the rest of his limbs. The saint then said to the host, "Did I not tell you that I would find him myself? What is it that you have done?".

Then the host saw this, along with the entire army that was with him (i.e., with Saint Menas), he was immediately seized by great fear, thinking that the king had learned of his murder and had sent to arrest him. Overcome with terror, he begged the saint, who appeared as a high-ranking official, saying to him,

Have mercy on me, my noble lord, for I have sinned, and I understand my sin, how great it is! If the king has sent you to me, a poor man, I confess to you that I have sinned before God and before you, for I see God's grace in you. When I saw that very large bag of gold, my heart was filled with hatred toward him, and I watched him until he fell asleep. When he slept, (I), miserable wretch, got up and stabbed him to death and took his bag of gold. Here it is, my lord, his bag, from which I have taken nothing, and I hand it over to your disposal¹⁴. From my own wealth, I will also give you a hundred gold coins, only save me from (the punishment for) this murder.

Saint Menas replied (to him) and said, "Repent for the wickedness you have committed, and I will forgive your sin" The man said, "My noble lord, I will do as you command! I will save myself at once, go to Saint Menas, repent, shave hair of my head, and become a monk". Seeing his repentance, Saint Menas said, "Bring here the woven basket in which the man's limbs are, so that God's glory may be revealed in His saints!".

And (the host) immediately brought the woven basket and placed it before Saint Menas, then left. Saint Menas knelt and prayed to God for many hours, asking that the dismembered man be restored: "So that,

¹³ That is, the gate of the outer fence, since the saint dismounts only later.

¹⁴ Lit. 'your power'.

seeing this, the heretics may believe in You, the true God, and come to the holy martyr of Christ, Menas". After these (words), he spoke to the dismembered (man): "I say to you: in the name of my Lord, Jesus Christ, who has strengthened me on the rock of faith in Him, come out whole and perfect, with all your limbs intact, so that through you, the heretics and those Pagans may learn and glorify Christ, the true God. Believe also yourself, for I am the servant of Christ, Menas". And immediately, at that very hour, the man arose, whole and unharmed, just as he was before.

The man knelt before Saint Menas and the large army that was with him, saying: "I bless God and the Lord, who has shown me this grace through your arrival, man of God, for the Lord came with great power and awakened me from a deep sleep". And Saint Menas, the holy martyr of Christ, blessed him just as he did the murderer, and assured him that (he) would receive what had been promised if (he went) to the church of the saint. The martyr of Christ said these (words) and immediately departed from him. The host then took the hundred gold coins, and the foreigner took his bag of gold, and they both went to the church of the holy martyr Menas, and gave the gold that had been promised to the saint. The host confessed before all the people that he had been the perpetrator of the man's murder, and how Saint Menas, the holy martyr of Christ, had raised him (i.e., the foreigner) from the dead. Together, they glorified God, and all the people were filled with fear, for (the man) who had been stabbed had immediately risen from the dead. The host begged the igumen and the elder who were there to shave hair of his head, and they shaved him, and he spent seven years there, and passed on to God with absolution. The foreigner, on the other hand, returned to his land rejoicing and spreading the glory of God and the miracles of the holy and illustrious martyr of Christ, Menas, to everyone in Alexandria. From that day on, many Pagans and heretics believed in the Lord, marveling that God, through the prayers of the saint, saves every soul.

Miracle 2

Of the Man Who Commissioned a Bowl

I wish to tell of another miracle of the holy and generous martyr of Christ, Menas, which occurred in Alexandria. There was a man named Eutropius. An (idea) came to his mind, and he said to himself: "God has abundantly satisfied me with His gifts, so I will go to the goldsmith and have him make two silver bowls. I will offer one as a gift to the church

of Saint Menas, and the other I will keep for myself for my (own) needs; and after my death, I will also give that one to the saint for the remission of my sins”.

So, he sent (for) and called the craftsman to his house, and said to him: “Do me this favor, come and take from my old silver vessels, and, having melted them down, make for me two bowls. But you must not make one vessel larger or smaller, but make them both equal. And on one, write the name of Saint Menas, and on the other, write my name. And when you have made (them), bring them to me”.

The skillful goldsmith completed both bowls and inscribed the names on them, (yet) the bowl of the saint was more beautiful and better made. And he brought them to Eutropius. When he (i.e., Eutropius) saw that the saint’s bowl was more beautiful, he desired (to keep) it and said to himself: “When I go to the saint, I will give the bowl with my name on it and keep the saint’s bowl for my own needs. And after my death, I will also give it to the saint”.

And he boarded a ship, desiring to sail to the church of the saint. As they sailed, the lunch time quickly came, and his servant prepared him a table so that his master could eat lunch. The servant took the saint’s bowl and placed it before his master. After the meal was finished, his servant took the saint’s bowl and went to wash it in the sea. And behold, a great darkness fell, and the servant became frightened and dropped the bowl into the sea. The servant feared his master, thinking that he would scold and punish him physically, so having removed his clothes, he threw himself into the sea after the bowl.

It was reported to his master that his servant had drowned, and (the master) became greatly distressed. He tore his garments and struck his face, crying out:

Woe is me, for I have sinned greatly; I coveted the saint’s bowl, and because of this, I have lost my servant! I do not know what will I do now, since I have no one to serve me? Woe is me, for I will cover myself in shame if people see that I kept the saint’s bowl for myself, and how great (will be) the disgrace before others. If only I had known earlier, I would have given the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, (it means) his church, three bowls instead of just one – two silver and the third one gold. But now that this misfortune and shame before the people have befallen me, it would have been better for me to give both bowls to the saint than to bring ruin upon my servant through a miserable death. If only I were worthy to at least see his body, so that I could give it

a proper burial. And when I go to the church of the saint, I will give the saint the bowl, and instead of the second bowl that I lost, I will give its equivalent¹⁵, for I have sinned against the saint by my lack of wisdom, keeping the saint's bowl for my own needs"¹⁶.

As he pondered this, the ship arrived at the port. Eutropius gazed out at the edge of the sea, hoping that the waves might wash his (servant's) body ashore, and that (if) he found it, he would bury it. (However), the sailors told him, "It's (all) in vain; we've been sailing here for two days now, searching for your servant's body". Eutropius said, "I have expressed great sorrow over my servant, but I trust in the mercy of my Christ and in the prayers of the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, who once resurrected (a man) who had been dismembered. I likewise trust the saint, that before my own death, I may at least see my young boy's body and bury it because of the shame before people".

As he was saying this, behold, the young boy approached with the bowl, following behind the ship¹⁷. Eutropius saw the boy from afar, standing and holding the bowl, looking for his master. The sailors, seeing the servant, threw the ship's ropes to the shore. The young boy grabbed the rope and boarded the ship. When his master saw him, he kissed him with joy, saying, "Behold, my servant was dead and has come back to life!"¹⁸. Everyone was overwhelmed with tears at what had happened, and they were amazed, comforting him¹⁹.

Eutropius, with a deep sigh, said, "I rejoice and am glad today, for God has shown mercy on me through the prayers of the holy martyr and intercessor Menas. To whom shall I not proclaim your miracles and signs, O martyr of Christ, which you have shown upon me, a sinner? Only one thing I fear and worry about: that even if I bring my entire wealth to you, O saint, it will not suffice, for I have sinned before you, forgetting what was said, not to do harm to one's neighbor²⁰. Yet I offended the saint by taking his bowl".

¹⁵ Lit. 'its price'.

¹⁶ Lit. 'to serve me'.

¹⁷ Certainly, he walked along the wharf, not through the sea, as it is later stated that he was at the shore.

¹⁸ Cf. Luke 15:32.

¹⁹ Or 'calming him down'.

²⁰ Cf. Exod 20:15; Deut 5:19; Matt 19:18; Luke 10:27.

And he said to the young boy, "Tell me what happened to you in the sea and who saved you".

And the young boy replied,

My lord! When I went to wash the bowl in the sea, a great darkness fell, and the bowl slipped from my hands. And I said to myself, "What shall I do or what will I say to my master?". I was frightened and threw myself into the sea. And when I found myself in the sea, I saw a man, shining greatly, and two others standing with him. The shining man said to them, "Take him!". Since then, they have never left my side until I came here, with the bowl in my hands, which (they) themselves gave back to me.

Eutropius immediately understood how swift an intercessor the martyr of Christ, Menas, truly (was), and he praised God, who grants such power to His saints. After this, both of them went together and arrived at the church of Saint Menas. Eutropius then gave both bowls to the church of the saint, so that they might serve the holy place. And when Eutropius returned to his home, he praised and blessed God and the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, who had saved him (as an example) for all people.

Miracle 3

Of the Woman Who Was Barren

There was a certain woman in the Phekozian land, and she was wealthy, adorned with gold and silver, (given to her) by her parents and her husband. The woman's name was Sophia, and her husband was a very noble man. When this woman heard about the blessed sufferer²¹ of Christ, Menas, she said to herself, "I will also go to the church of the saint, and having bowed before the saint, I will weep for my sins, for I have no child to inherit my wealth. For it is written: '(Her) desire will come into the world, if she wills it'²². I will take all my wealth and give it to the church of Saint Menas, for the forgiveness of my sins – will I not, (in this way), gain eternal life?".

And rising, the woman took all her possessions and secretly went alone to the church of the saint, without telling any of her household, so they would not inform her husband, lest he stop her.

²¹ OCS: *stratotjerpec*.

²² The exact biblical source of this quotation is uncertain, compare, however, Gen 25:21; Matt 7:7; Luke 7:13; John 15:7.

When she arrived alone in the wilderness, a thousand paces from the church of the holy first martyr Thecla, a man (appeared beside her), a certain soldier on horseback. When he saw the woman, the devil entered his heart, and he desired to commit adultery with her. It was about the sixth hour of the day, and he seized the woman and said to her, "Where are you going, woman?". She thought he would steal the valuables she carried with her as offerings²³ to the holy martyr Menas. And the woman said to him, "Behold, I am going to the church to pray to Saint Menas". But the soldier said to her, "This place is deserted, and no one can see us; come, let us lie together. And if you do not obey me, I will kill you with the weapon I have and take the valuables you are carrying with you". But she, with tears in her eyes, answered,

No, my lord! Do not commit this vile deed with me, for I left my home to go to the church of Saint Menas and to weep for my sins. I have never known any other (man) but my husband. Fear what is written: *Do not desire to harm your neighbor, do not covet anything that belongs to him*²⁴. I beg you now, do not force me, a pilgrim, to commit this grievous sin! I implore you by God and Saint Menas the martyr, if you dishonor me, you will bring great shame upon me, and this sin will not be forgiven you, neither in this life nor the next. I beg you now, have regard for my tears and spare my sighs, and if you release me, I will give you two gold coins.

However, the soldier did not agree and held her tightly. The woman, sighing, said, "Misfortune befalls me from every side – either to sin, or to die". And having fallen to her knees, with tears and sobs, she cried out, "Jesus, You who know the secrets²⁵ of men, behold, against my will, I am about to commit this iniquity, but as You, Lord, see, let Your will be done!". The woman also said with a sigh, "Martyr of Christ, Menas, help me!". And when the wretched soldier bound her to disgrace her, he tied his horse's reins to his own leg. The holy martyr of Christ, Menas, who swiftly rescues those who call upon him from all misfortunes, came at that moment²⁶ on horseback and took the woman from the soldier's hands, carrying her away on his horse. Meanwhile, the soldier's horse, which had been tied to (his) leg, suddenly bolted into a fast run, and

²³ Lit: 'to serve'.

²⁴ Inexact quotation of Deut 5:17-21.

²⁵ It mean, 'thoughts', 'intentions'.

²⁶ Lit. 'at that hour'.

dragged its master across the ground, fiercely enraged and neighing at its master, until it ran to the church of the holy martyr Menas.

Seeing this, all the people were struck with terror at the fury of the horse, for daily crowds of people gathered in the saint's church, and they seized the horse. And the soldier, seeing the glory of God and the holy martyr, told everyone present about the woman. And they praised God and the saint. The soldier took his horse and gave it to the church of the saint, and from that time on, he committed no sin until his death. Instead, he remained (there) in prayer and fasting, and with abundant tears, he prayed to the holy martyr of Christ, Menas. He stayed there²⁷ until his death, repenting for his sins, which were then forgiven.

Miracle 4

About the Jew and the Christian

A certain Jew, (who was) a merchant in Alexandria, lived near a certain Christian. This Jew was very friendly with the Christian. One day, (when) the Jew was setting out on a trading journey, he left a sealed bag of gold with the Christian. When the Jew returned from his trading journey, he sent gifts to the Christian as thanks for the favor and for safeguarding his bag. After the Christian received the gifts from the Jew, he began to mock in his heart and said, "Indeed, I will accept the gifts, and if he asks for his property, he will get nothing".

For the Christian had conspired with his wife this way: "Oh, wife! If possible²⁸, we will deny (this) Jew, and if he asks, we will swear to him that we took nothing. For a (false) oath does us no harm, because we are swearing to a Jew, not to a Christian".

So, in the morning, the Jew got up and went to the Christian to take his bag. The Christian, however, under the devil's influence, began to deny everything and said, "You never gave me anything, why are you bothering me?". They argued with each other, each trying to convince the other, so that people from all over the town gathered. Finally, the Jew thought (for a moment) and said to the Christian, "I have heard, my friend, about the famous martyr of Christ, Menas, and how great his renown is, for he shames those who swear against the truth. So, let us now get up and go there, and you will swear to me

²⁷ MSS have 'here', but I change it in the translation due to logic of narration.

²⁸ Var. 'if we manage'.

in his church that you did not take anything from me. And if you swear this oath, go in peace”.

The Christian said to the Jew, “A Jew cannot enter a Christian church”. The Jew said to him, “Then I will stand outside the temple, and you can go inside and swear to me”. The Christian, disregarding the oath, said, “Saint Menas will not count this as a sin against me”.

One day, they both went to the church of Saint Menas to swear the oath. The Jew said to the Christian, “Oh, Christian friend, fear God, have mercy on your soul! Take as much gold as you want, but give me back the rest, just do not swear!”. However, the Christian did not want to listen to him. The Jew knelt down and said with tears, “God, make me worthy to enter the church of Saint Menas, the martyr! Be the judge between me and the Christian in this hour”. And crying out loudly, he said, “Saint Menas, though I am unworthy to call upon you, show your miracles today, so that I may praise you!”.

The Christian, on the other hand, with no fear of God in his heart, entered the church of Saint Menas and swore: “You never gave me anything!”. The Jew expected to see some sign over him (i.e. the Christian), but the saint showed him great patience.

When they had finished swearing the oath, they both returned to their homes. After they had moved²⁹ about three miles³⁰ away from the church, the Christian’s horse became startled and threw its master down to the ground. The key to his chest³¹ fell out from his pocket³², and though he searched for it, he could not find it. The Christian was relieved that he had only fallen from his horse, believing that this was the punishment for his perjury.

Then he got up, mounted his horse, and they both traveled together. When they arrived at a place called Loxonit³³, they entered the market to buy food for themselves; and they both sat down together and ate. The Jew grieved and said, “Why did I trust Saint Menas that I would see a miracle (like those) I had heard he performs, but I saw nothing miraculous? It would have been better if I had not taken the oath from him, but to have given some of my (wealth) to Saint Menas”.

²⁹ Lit. ‘had departed’.

³⁰ Lit. ‘thrice a mile’.

³¹ Var. ‘locker’.

³² OCS: *ot op'czaga jego*. The noun means ‘pocket’, ‘bag’, ‘fold of garment’. It represent unprecise Greek κόλπος.

³³ OCS: *na město rekomoe Loskonit*’.

And he cried out with tears, saying, “Oh, how unfortunate I am! I have lost everything I had, and I do not know what to do! I will give glory to God and to the holy martyr of Christ”, he said, “and I will place my suffering and hope in the Lord. Whatever God decides, so it shall be”.

And as they both sat, behold, the Christian’s servant approached, carrying the bag of gold. Seeing (him), both were astonished. The master of the servant became very frightened and asked his servant, saying, “Where did you come from, and what have you brought here?”.

The servant answered and said, “I came to you, sent by my lady, to carry out your command”.

His master said to him, “What command?”.

And the servant said,

My lord! Today, a famous warrior, riding a horse, came to your house, to my lady, holding the key to your chest. And he said to your wife, “Take this key, woman, do you recognize it?”. And my lady said, “Of course, my lord, I recognize it!”. And the soldier said, “Your husband asked me, because he knows me, and sent me to you, saying: Send the Jew’s bag with my servant, for I am very troubled here in the church of Saint Menas”. That is why I was sent, and I brought you this bag. And if you do not believe me, look (here) at the key to your chest, which the soldier gave to my lady.

The Jew then stood up, took his sealed bag, and joyfully exclaimed, “Great (is) God and His holy martyr, Menas, and wondrous is the Christian faith! No one who puts their hope in You, Lord, and seeks help from You and the power of Your saints, will ever be put to shame!³⁴ Behold, master, I too will become a Christian, thanks to the prayers of Saint Menas, the martyr!”.

After this, he took his bag and returned with great joy to the church of Saint Menas, the martyr, and gave a third of the gold – one thousand gold coins – saying, “Here, holy martyr of Christ, I told him in front of you: Take as much as you want, and give me back the rest! And he did not want, (so) let your holy church take this for (its) needs and its adornment”.

The Jew renounced his Jewish faith and was baptized along with his entire household, and together they learned the faith with devout Christians, praising God and Saint Menas, the holy martyr of Christ, that he

³⁴ Ps 80:1

shames those who, against the truth³⁵, hold in contempt³⁶ the name of God and Saint Menas, the martyr. From that day on, no one dared to swear either truthfully or against the truth in the church of Saint Menas, the holy martyr.

The Christian, on the other hand, returned home ashamed, sighing and trembling. He took half of his wealth and brought it to the saint, and weeping was repenting for his sins. He did not leave the church of Saint Menas until he died. Diligently confessing (his sins), he departed to the Lord, having received forgiveness for his sins through the intercession of Saint Menas, the martyr of Christ.

Miracle 5

About the Lame³⁷ Man and the Mute Woman

There was a certain man who had been crippled since childhood. He could not walk on his legs at all, nor do anything with his hands, and he had received no help from physicians or from other people. Hearing from everyone about the miracles and healings of Saint Menas, the martyr, he persuaded some people to carry him to (the sanctuary of) Saint Menas. And they carried him to the church of Saint Menas. People from various places saw this and were amazed. There was also a mute woman there, who had been unable to speak since birth. Both the crippled man and the mute woman stayed in the church of the saint, praying for healing.

And here, for a long time, a crippled man stayed in the church, and he still did not receive healing. He grew angry and slandered the holy martyr, saying these (words): "As I see it, O martyr of Christ, everything that I have heard about you is at least a lie, and not the truth". That night, the holy martyr Menas appeared to him and said to the crippled man: "Why do you slander me, man, and what evil have I done to you, and why do you say that I cannot heal you? If you do not do what I tell you, you will never be healed"³⁸. The crippled man said to him: "What must I do, my lord?". The saint said to him: "If you want to be healthy, listen to me: go, without telling anyone, until you reach the bed of a mute woman, and lie with her, and you will receive health". The crippled man woke up

³⁵ Lit. 'without truth'.

³⁶ Lit. 'broke', 'transgress'.

³⁷ From the text, it is clear that the man was partially paralyzed, not just lame.

³⁸ Lit. 'you will not be healed forever'.

(from the dream) and was astonished, thinking that the saint was mocking him, or tempting him³⁹. And he said:

What shall I do? It seemed to me that I came to ask for healing for my body, and here the saint appears to me and urges me to commit adultery, and that in his own church. And I fear that if I do this, something even worse might happen (to me).

The saint appeared to him again in a dream and said to him, saying the same thing. But he, with indignation, said to the saint: "Martyr of Christ! If you cannot heal me, then why do you push me into adultery? Are these the teachings of the saints? Or are you mocking me?" The saint appeared to him a third time in a dream and said to him: "What I have told you, obey (it). If you do this, you will soon return to health"⁴⁰. The crippled man woke up and said: "Holy martyr Menas! Since you command it, I will do it, if God and your holiness and help permit me.

Then, when he noticed where the mute woman lay, he waited until all the people from (various) lands, who were in the church, fell asleep. And the crippled man immediately got up⁴¹ and, crawling on his toes⁴², reached the bed of the mute woman, and grabbing her clothing, he uncovered her. She, waking up in fear, became agitated and began to speak: "Oh, a wicked man has come to me!". The crippled man, out of fear and shame, wanted to throw himself to the ground and flee, (but) at that very moment, he quickly jumped up onto his feet⁴³ and swiftly ran away.

The people quickly rose and seized him, and when they saw that the crippled man had been healed and that the mute woman had spoken, all the people were amazed at what had happened. And they praised God and the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, because of the miracle that the mute woman spoke and the crippled man recovered⁴⁴. The crippled man also began to confess how the holy Menas had appeared to him in

³⁹ Var. 'leading him not temptation'.

⁴⁰ Lit. 'take health'.

⁴¹ This means, 'rose from his bed'.

⁴² In OCS the same word refers to both toes and fingers. It is likely that the Slavic author intended to mean both. In Greek, the participle *συρόμενος* does not explicitly suggest either fingers or toes.

⁴³ This means, 'stood straight on his legs'.

⁴⁴ OCS *cjel byst* literary means 'became whole' but in this context, it is used to mean 'he recovered'.

a dream and what he had commanded him to do. And so, both of them, healed, returned to their homes, praising God and the holy martyr Menas, who grants healing to all who come with faith.

Miracle 6

About the Samaritan Woman

There was a certain woman from Aphrakia⁴⁵, which was [a land] of the Samaritans, (who) suffered from a constant headache, day and night. For three years, she suffered from this illness⁴⁶, having given away all her wealth to physicians, yet she could not be cured. One day, she was accompanied by Christian women who comforted her. They remembered the miracles of Saint Menas and said to her: “Would you like to go with us to the church of Saint Menas? For many have gone there and received not only healing but also the forgiveness of sins”.

The Samaritan woman said to them, “I am afraid, for if my husband finds out [about this], he will kill me”.

And the Christian women said to her, “Rise now without fear and go with us, with happiness⁴⁷ and right⁴⁸ faith, and you will receive healing from the saint”.

And the Samaritan woman, rising from her bed without her husband’s knowledge, went with the two Christian women. Soon, night fell upon them in the middle of the road, and they turned aside to an inn near a lake. When they entered the inn to spend the night, the innkeeper, seeing the women, welcomed them. And he became inflamed with improper lust for the Samaritan woman – for she was very beautiful – and the innkeeper said to her, “Woman! I see that you are of noble birth and in very poor health. So rise, and I will take you to the inner part of my house, which is cleaner⁴⁹, so that those who come here, who are even more sick than you, will not cause harm to your head”.

When the woman heard this, (and) not suspecting any evil from him, she said to him: “Brother, if you wish to do me such a kindness, as you will!”. The innkeeper said to her, “For what reason or looking for what,

⁴⁵ In some other manuscripts, the name appears as Фракия, Фряческая земля, or Фраци, directly referring to Thrace, a region in the southeastern Balkans.

⁴⁶ Lit. ‘She was overcome by this illness’.

⁴⁷ I.e., ‘successfully’.

⁴⁸ I.e., ‘orthodox’.

⁴⁹ Also ‘more comfortable’, ‘more splendid’.

and where are you going?”. The Samaritan (woman) said, “I am going to Saint Menas, along with my traveling companions”. The innkeeper said to her, “What (more) do you want me to do for you?”. The woman said to him, “Nothing, brother, I only desire my health”. The innkeeper said to her: “Here, my lady, let the other women rest, but you should enter the inner house, where you will find better rest”. The woman said to him: “I have everything I need here, brother, because you have done me much good by bringing me to this place and not leaving me in the middle of the road”. The innkeeper said to her: “Soon, many (travelers) will come here as well”. And the Samaritan (woman) said to him, “Since you wish to ease my illness, if you will, then take me inside”. When the innkeeper heard that the woman believed his words – not understanding his deceit, as she did not want to defile herself with lust for a stranger – he led her into the inner chamber and locked the door with a key. The woman, overwhelmed by illness, lay down and fell asleep.

After she had fallen asleep, the innkeeper arose and said to her: “Woman, I will sleep with you!”. The woman said to him sighing: “Oh, brother, fear God! Do not commit this wicked act, for you are a Christian, and I am a Samaritan (woman)”. The innkeeper said: “If you do not let me be with you, I will kill you!”.

With tears, she said to him:

Is this how innkeepers should behave, committing shameless acts, or is this how one should welcome a traveler? Is this how you have learned to treat your traveling companions? Is this the reward you demand from the poor and travelers, (that) instead of food and drink, you seek to satisfy your passions, to commit adultery, and to murder? Is this the Christian law? For I have heard from my husband that Christians uphold the law with respect, yet you, being a Christian, want to kill me because I refuse to commit this wickedness with you? I cannot defile the bed of my husband.

Hearing this, the wretched man⁵⁰ drew a knife and swung at her, intending to kill her. Seeing this, the woman became frightened and said to him, “I beg you, by God, who created heaven and earth, (and) in whom you believe, leave me, a wretched and helpless woman, and I will say just one word to you”. The innkeeper said to her, “Speak, if you wish”.

The woman said to him,

⁵⁰ Var. ‘deplorable’.

Fear your God. Though I do not know the books⁵¹, I have heard what the Scriptures say: “Do not desire to defile your neighbor’s bed, nor covet another’s possessions”⁵². Now I beg you, have mercy on me in my misfortune, and do not defile my honor. Oh, brother! How can you not fear God, who is the mediator⁵³ between me and you, when I am to go to the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, to receive healing for my grievous illness, for I have suffered from this disease for three years?

The innkeeper said to her, “Let me be with you first, and then you may go to the saint’s temple”.

The woman said to him, “I avoid, brother, entering the saint’s temple defiled, especially since I am a Samaritan (woman), lest the saint becomes angry with me and sends upon me an even greater illness”.

And the innkeeper said to her, “It will be bad⁵⁴ if I do not have you, and I swear to you, I will kill you!”.

The woman wept, saying,

Woe to me, a wretched soul! Woe to me, without help! I am oppressed from every side! Holy martyr of Christ, Menas, help me! For I will go to your church with eagerness, for I have heard of your miracles; I believe – and I, too, will become a Christian! Have you left me like this, holy one, to be dishonored by this innkeeper? I have heard that you saved a barren woman in the desert from the hand of a soldier, that you are a saint, a hope for the hopeless, a help for the helpless. And now, Saint Menas, have you left me to this lustful and wretched man (so that he might force me) into adultery? Martyr of Christ, help me, a foreigner! You know, holy one, that I am coming to you, asking for healing, and now I will suffer even greater harm from this vile man! It would have been better for me to remain afflicted by my illness than to defile the body of my husband⁵⁵.

The woman said this with tears to the saint. Then, as if emboldened, she set (aside) all fear and said to the lustful innkeeper, “Since I have told you that I will not commit this wicked act of immorality with you, nor

⁵¹ Lit. ‘I cannot (read) books’.

⁵² Cf. Exod 20:17.

⁵³ OCS: *chodataj*.

⁵⁴ Lit. ‘It is bad’.

⁵⁵ Most probably an allusion to Gen 2:24 and/or Matt 19:5-6.

will I defile my bed, it is better for me to die than to live dishonored – do as you will!”.

The wretched innkeeper approached her violently and struck her on the head with his sword⁵⁶. The woman cried out loudly, terrified by the blow of the sword, and called out, “Holy martyr of Christ, Menas, help me!”. Immediately, both of his hands withered (up) to the shoulders, and there he (stood), holding the sword in his hand, struggling greatly to release⁵⁷ sword from his hand, but he could not. Immediately, people heard (what had happened) and came, and they were unable to remove the sword from his hand, for it was as if numb.

And behold, Saint Menas, riding on a horse, knocked at the door of the inn, opened it, and entered where the woman was. He took her by the hand and said to her, “Woman, why do you tremble?”. He made the sign of the cross over her, and the great fear fell away from her. He said to her, “Rise, I will take you to another place where you will sleep without fear until morning”.

When they both left the inn, the woman said to him, “My lord, who are you, since you possess such great power?”. Saint Menas said to her, “I am the servant of Christ, Menas. I saw that you were coming to my church with faith, and I came quickly to help you. Now, sleep here without fear, and when you wake tomorrow, go to my church, and you will receive healing”. And (as) he said this, he departed from her.

When morning came, the Samaritan woman arose, called upon the other Christian women who were with her, and said to them, “Rise, let us go! God has shown me the way to salvation”. As they walked along the road, she told them both what had happened to her that night and how the saint had saved her. The women⁵⁸ were amazed, not understanding what had taken place. When they arrived at the church of the saint and prayed, the Samaritan woman implored the senior *ierey*⁵⁹, saying, “Father, for the sake of the Lord, grant me this grace: baptize me and count me among the Christian women. For I have seen the glory of God and the help of the great sufferer of Christ, Saint Menas,

⁵⁶ The perfective verb indicates a completed action, but the subsequent narration does not suggest that the woman was injured.

⁵⁷ Lit. “threw out”.

⁵⁸ Christian women are meant.

⁵⁹ A monk who was an elder presbyter.

and how he saved me from vile destruction⁶⁰ and from the treacherous innkeeper”.

The priest, having instructed her (in the faith), baptized her with holy baptism. She also shaved the hair from her head, becoming a nun, and served in the temple of Saint Menas for (the rest of) her life, in great humility and faith.

After (these events), the innkeeper who had sought vile destruction rode on horseback here and there, held by both (hands)⁶¹, like a lifeless piece of wood. So, he was strapped to the horse, holding the sword with which he had intended to kill the woman. He lamented and said, “Martyr of Christ, Saint Menas, help me and forgive me, for I have greatly sinned!”. They took him off the horse and brought him into the church of the saint. He spent seven days in the church, weeping, repenting, and praying for healing. The saint took pity on him and appeared to him in a dream, saying, “I warned you not to commit this vile sin. If I forgive you, will you avoid such things?”.

The innkeeper said to him, “Oh, my lord, I call upon my God as my witness⁶² that I will not leave your holy church until my last breath!”. Saint Menas said to him, “Rise in the morning and do whatever the steward instructs you to do”.

When morning came, after *otrust*⁶³ in the *sobor*⁶⁴, the steward said to him, “Descend with those entering where the saint’s tomb is”. And when (he) entered, the ierey took holy oil from the oil lamp and anointed his shoulders, and immediately the man was healed. He brought all his possessions to the church of the saint and remained there, working, and alongside the Samaritan woman, with whom he had once intended to commit a sin, they both repented, confessing their sins with tears.

Both of them died on the same day, having received forgiveness (of their sins), praising God and the holy martyr Menas. The steward received a revelation from the saint in a dream that both had been granted the grace of the heavenly kingdom.

⁶⁰ It refers to irrevocable bodily defilement resulting from the sin of adultery.

⁶¹ Lit. ‘by two’; In the translation, ‘by both hands’ is a logical conjecture.

⁶² Var. ‘guarantor’.

⁶³ The morning service in the Orthodox liturgy.

⁶⁴ CSC *sobor* refers to the principal church within a monastic complex and is not necessarily associated with an episcopal see.

Miracle 7

About the Three Brothers

When the numerous miracles and signs of Saint Menas became famous throughout all the lands, three brothers in that province, from the city of Alexandria set out, having been enlightened⁶⁵, so that each of them would take a portion (of his wealth) as a gift and go to the church of Saint Menas to pray. Each of them brought with him a year-old sheep. As they journeyed together, they reached a lake, and after sitting down, they had lunch. After eating, each of them took his sheep to go the lake and water them.

And suddenly, one of the year-old sheep broke free from one of the brothers' hands and ran off. He chased after it, but suddenly, a crocodile appeared and seized the sheep. When the owner⁶⁶ saw the sheep, he ran and grabbed it by the legs, but the beast began dragging the sheep into the lake, pulling the man along with it into the lake. The man started shouting loudly. When the crocodile heard the man's cry, it let go of⁶⁷ the sheep and grabbed the man's leg instead, severely injuring it, and dragged him into the depths of the lake, intending to swallow him without hindrance. As the beast was pulling the man into the depths, the man cried out with a great voice: "Holy martyr of Christ, Menas, help me and save me from this beast!".

The swift intercessor and helper of those in distress arrived on horseback in the middle of the lake, and when the crocodile saw the saint, it released⁶⁸ the man and fled. The saint pulled the man out of the lake, placed (his) hand on the man's wound, on his leg and stomach, healed him, and restored him to his former condition.

Sleep overtook the man. The holy martyr of Christ, Menas, placed him on his horse and brought him to his church, as if (the man were) asleep, (and) concealed (him) from all the people who were in his church and laid him down near his tomb, then departed. When the man awoke from his sleep, he was astonished, for he thought he was still in the lake. He did not know how the saint had saved him from the beast and (drawn him) out of the lake. He said, "Where am I? And how did I end up in this church?".

⁶⁵ It means those who learned about the miracles.

⁶⁶ Lit. 'master'.

⁶⁷ Var. 'left'.

⁶⁸ Var. 'left'.

The church warden entered the church, and seeing him, cried out in a loud voice, saying to those with him, "Oh, brothers! Come quickly, for there is a thief⁶⁹ here in the church who is trying to steal the saint's sarcophagus!"⁷⁰.

The people who were there quickly rushed into the church, seized him, bound him, and led him out of the sanctuary. The man, being unaware (of what had happened), was bewildered⁷¹ and could not find an answer⁷² to give them all as they questioned him. The man said to them, "I implore you, O men, in the name of my God and in the name of this saint's church, tell me exactly⁷³ what this church is and what its name is". And they replied, "This is the church⁷⁴ of the holy martyr of Christ, Menas".

The man recounted to them everything that had happened to him with the crocodile in the lake and how he found himself here without knowing (how it happened). Upon hearing this, the people praised God, understanding that a miracle of the saint had taken place.

The holy martyr of Christ, Menas, returned to the place where the two (remaining) men were sitting by the lake, weeping over their (inability to) bury their third brother. The saint appeared to them, riding a horse and resembling a warrior. He said to them, "Why are you weeping, brothers?". The two (men)⁷⁵ told him what had happened to their brother, how the beast had dragged him into the lake. "Here we have his sheep, and we intend to go to the church of Saint Menas with (this) sorrow, for we do not know what misfortune⁷⁶ has befallen our brother".

The saint said to them, "Have hope in my God that it has not happened to him. He has not been devoured by the beast. But rise quickly and go in peace to the church of the saint without thinking about⁷⁷ this. I know that God has saved him from death through the holy martyr Menas. In the church of the saint, you will see the glory of God. Tomorrow morning, at the sixth hour, you will see your brother whole and unharmed, without any injury". And after saying this, the saint departed from them.

⁶⁹ Var. 'burglar'.

⁷⁰ OCS: *raka*. The word can specifically refer to a reliquary as well.

⁷¹ Lit. 'was amazed'.

⁷² Var. 'did not know the answer'.

⁷³ Lit. 'successfully'.

⁷⁴ Var. 'This church belongs to'.

⁷⁵ OCS has dualis here.

⁷⁶ Var. 'oppression', 'abuse'.

⁷⁷ Var. 'pondering over'.

Understanding that it was Saint Menas, both men cried out together, saying: “We believe, O Christ’s martyr Menas, with all (our) soul and mind, that even if the crocodile had killed our brother, you could bring him back (to life)”. After saying this, they rose and walked joyfully, leading the third sheep with them.

When they arrived at the temple of the saint and saw their brother alive and well, they bowed in worship to Christ God and to the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, who delivers those in distress who pray to him with faith. They also brought the sheep and offered them to the church of the saint. The (two)⁷⁸ returned home with joy, praising God and the holy martyr Menas.

Miracle 8

About the Rich Man and the Widow

There was a certain man from a land called Constancia, under the rule of Marmarica. He was very wealthy (and) of the pagan⁷⁹ faith. He had living with him an elderly widow, very poor, who had nothing except one sheep. (The sheep) nourished her and (the widow) made clothing for her body from its wool. And this rich man desired the poor widow’s sheep.

When the commemoration of the holy martyr Menas approached, seeing all those who were going (to the church) for the occasion of the saint’s commemoration, the rich man said to his wife, “Do you want us both to go to Saint Menas to pray that he may forgive us our sins?”.

His wife said to him, “Oh, husband! (A man) of your faith⁸⁰ cannot go to the saint, but if you listen to me and do what I tell you, if you get baptized, I will go with you. But if you do not do this, I will not be able to follow you”. And the husband said to her, “I will do what you have told me”.

The woman was pleased and praised God and the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, for directing his heart toward the Christian faith. His wife said to him, “Let us send, my lord, our servant to the flock to bring a fattened sheep, and we will prepare it properly for the journey. Tomorrow morning, after rising early, we will set out on the road, for the church of the saint is far away”.

⁷⁸ OCS uses the dual form here, which suggests that the third, rescued brother remained at the church.

⁷⁹ Lt. “Hellenic”.

⁸⁰ Lit.: ‘of your service’. Here, ‘service’ refers to ‘confession’ or ‘rite’.

The devil, however, entered the heart of the rich man, and he desired the widow's sheep. During the night, he went into the widow's hut⁸¹ with his servant and stole her sheep. He commanded his servant, (saying), "Tell no one of this, and if you are asked by your lady, say that you brought it from the flock". They (then) slaughtered it and cooked (it).

When the widow rose in the morning, she wanted to feed her sheep, but she could not find it. She cried out in distress, lamenting, "Woe to me, a poor widow! Woe to me, a stranger! Who has stolen the garment of my nakedness?! I have no other possession, only this one sheep. I do not know what to do!"

Hearing this, the wife of the rich man, who was a very devout woman, went with one servant to the widow's hut and asked her, saying, "Oh, mother! What has happened to you that you suffer so? Tell me, and I will grieve too because of that, for you are poor". The widow replied to her, saying, "Oh, wretched me! My lady, have mercy on me, a miserable one without hope! I had no other comfort on this earth – neither gold nor silver – God is my witness, I do not have even single *cat*!⁸² I had, oh Christ-loving lady, (only) one sheep, and I do not know who stole it. The accursed one did not fear God, nor did he regard my widowhood".

The devout woman replied to her, saying, "Be patient, oh mother, I will give you enough clothing until your last breath, for I am astonished that someone entered your hut and stole your sheep. Tomorrow, however, we shall go to Saint Menas. Go, and call your neighbors to Saint Menas, and let them swear (that they did not steal it). I hope that the thief will be revealed, for God will cause all his limbs to wither".

The widow did not want to do this, but she placed her hope in God and in the holy martyr Menas, and she said to her, "Do not despise me, a stranger⁸³, Lord, and do not deprive me of (the power of) the saint's prayers". The rich man's wife then entered her home, and, taking the young servant (aside), questioned him privately with great care and kindness. And she promised him gifts, saying, "Where did you bring this sheep from? Tell me, was it not the sheep stolen from the widow? It seems to me that no one else could have stolen it but you".

The young man, fearful of his master, said nothing at all. However, the neighbors said to the widow, "The servant of the rich pagan stole your sheep. We saw it, but he did it on his master's orders". The widow

⁸¹ Var. 'household'.

⁸² A type of a small coin.

⁸³ Var. 'foreigner'.

remained silent until the time came for them to go to pray to Saint Menas. The rich man's wife sent a message to the widow, saying, "If you go with me to the church of the saint, I will be the first to swear an oath, and after me, the others will swear as well".

The next morning, the widow got up and went with them to the saint. When they came close to the sanctuary of the saint, the widow said to the rich man's wife, "Behold, my lady, I ask you to tell your husband that his servant stole my sheep on his orders. Many people saw the sheep being dragged by your husband. Tell him, my lady, that I do not want him to swear, so that nothing bad happens to him because of me".

The rich man's wife replied, saying, "I hope that God will reveal the truth⁸⁴ to me, and He will not ignore⁸⁵ our prayers because of the saint. If I learn this from my husband, I will give you two sheep for the one. But be a little more patient. I will ask him whether he will swear or not".

After this, the wife said to her husband, "My lord! The widow claims that your servant, on your orders, stole her sheep. Many saw you yourself dragging her sheep. Now go with your servant to the church of the saint and swear an oath to her". The rich man then became angry (and) said, "Let the old woman go to the church, and I will swear an oath to her". For he thought (to himself), "If I confess (what I did) before receiving baptism, then if I swear an oath to her before God and the saint [Menas], nothing will happen to me because I am not yet a Christian".

He said to his wife, "How could I have stolen that widow's sheep when I have a thousand sheep of my own? But if it pleases you, I will swear an oath myself to this wicked widow who slanders me". His wife replied to him,

If you wish, my lord, then swear the oath, but I do not want you to swear, lest something bad happen to you. But what is your decision, my lord – will you return (her sheep) or not? For the power of the holy martyr Menas is great, as you have heard (before). However, if neither you nor your servant have taken it, you can be confident that you are free of this sin. (So,) rise, go and swear the oath to her, and she will go to her home. But if it is otherwise, it is right to repay her twofold, rather than swearing.

⁸⁴ Var. 'what has happened'.

⁸⁵ Lit. 'hide'.

Then (that) cursed man, inflamed with anger by the devil, rose and went to the temple of the saint with his servant, cursing the old woman.

He shamelessly approached the altar, drew near to the tomb of the saint, and swore an oath to hwer, saying, “By the holy martyr Menas and his venerable relics, (I swear that) I did not steal this widow’s sheep, neither I nor my servant”. After swearing the oath, he stepped away from the tomb and (moved) to the center of the church. Immediately and unexpectedly, his hands and legs withered, and it happened just as his wife had foretold. Then the wretched rich man cried out in a loud voice, saying,

Oh, holy martyr of Christ, Menas, I have sinned! I will give this widow four sheep for the one! I have commanded my servant to steal this widow’s sheep, but forgive me, Saint Menas, and help me, a sinner! Behold, the stolen sheep is here, and I have brought it, cooked, intending to eat it. But if you wish, holy one, I will give all my sheep, as many as I have, to your holy church for my perjury.

The people standing (there) were greatly terrified, and the senior *ie-rey*⁸⁶, along with all the people, trembled with fear, (and) many hours they cried out, “Lord, have mercy!”. Suddenly, a voice was heard from the heights of the church, saying, “Shut your mouth, cursed one!”. Despite this, the man continued to cry out, but he was soon carried away and tied to a column near the tomb of the saint. His wife cared for him until he died, weeping and asking for forgiveness for her sins and for (her husband’s) perjury.

After he died, his wife returned to her home, and taking her husband’s wealth – his gold, silver, and all his possessions – she brought them to the church of Saint Menas. Every year, this woman would come and bring gifts to the saint, giving thanks to God and praising the name of the holy martyr of Christ, Menas. And so, she departed to the Lord with forgiveness [of sins].

Miracle 9

About She-Camel

I want to tell you, brothers, about another miracle that occurred after the martyrdom of the holy martyr of Christ and ever-victorious warrior, Menas. There was a certain man from the city of Paniphaiata – this city

⁸⁶ Var. ‘priest’.

was also the birthplace of the holy martyr Menas – and this man’s name was Porphyrius. The venerable martyr Menas had previously been friends with him, as both of them were once engaged in trade in this city. And when, by the grace of God, Saint Menas was being martyred, Porphyrius served the saint. After the death of the holy martyr, Porphyrius also passed away, leaving behind his son.

Then his father said to him (before his death): “Child, do not forsake the help⁸⁷ of the holy martyr Menas!”. Afterward, the son of Porphyrius had a barren she-camel, and he said: “My God! Through the prayers⁸⁸ of the holy martyr Menas, let my she-camel give birth to her first (foal), and when it is born, I will give (it) to the holy martyr of Christ, Menas”.

In a short time, his she-camel gave birth to a foal, (but) Satan prevented him from giving this foal to the saint. Another was born, and he did not give that one to the saint (either). After this, the she-camel gave birth to a third foal, and with hostile malice, he kept this one too, not offering (it) to the saint’s church. Saint Menas then appeared, riding a horse, to the place where the she-camel and her foals were roaming⁸⁹. And behold, a great cloud that reached the ground followed the saint, and suddenly, by the will of the martyr of Christ, three camel foals, along with their mother, entered the cloud and went to the saint’s church. Their master came to check on⁹⁰ them, but could not find them. He began to despair and said, “I promised to give one foal to the saint, but I deceived him, and for that, I have lost all my camels”.

Saint Menas appeared to him in a dream (and) said to him,

Since, my friend, with your own mouth you had promised to give one camel (foal) to my church, and you lied, forgetting our friendship I once had with your father, I do not wish to make you unhappy, nor do I desire to bring misfortune upon you. Therefore, I came myself without delay, and behold, in exchange for one camel (foal), I took all four camels, which you did not want to give as alms and send my offerings to my church. You could not find a person through whom to send what was promised me, so I came myself and took them. Now, I have come to return to you the blessing that was taken (from you), so that you may not continue to suffer. If you do not believe me,

⁸⁷ Vat. ‘do not remain without intercession’.

⁸⁸ Vat. ‘thanks to prayers’.

⁸⁹ I.e., ‘were pasturing’.

⁹⁰ Lit. ‘look at’.

when you rise, go to my church, and there you will find them, so that you may believe. O man! Do not do so that you promise something to someone⁹¹ and then lie, lest evil⁹² befall you.

Upon waking from the dream, the man quickly ran to the church of Saint Menas, and there he saw his camels. (And) he was astonished and said, "I will not leave the church of the saint until my dying breath". The man fell to his knees in the church of the saint and fell asleep, and once again, Saint Menas appeared to him in a dream and said to him,

Since, my child, you had promised to give me the first, second, and third (foal), and then you regretted it, I desired to direct my wrath upon you, but I relented, for your father did much good for me in Paniphaiata, so I will not bring⁹³ evil upon you. But, O child, take care of your soul's salvation and the day of your death, because it is necessary for me to [care] greatly for you and the salvation of your soul.

Waking up from the dream, the man rose, trembling, seized with fear and trembling. He returned to his home, took his possession, and gave it to the church of the saint, as he had promised. The steward then said to him, "Brother, since the saint desired your salvation, he commanded me that you should serve in the saint's church". The man said, "What you command me, Father, I will do". And so, he was made overseer of all the camels, to care for them. And so, he served the saint with praise and patience, asking for the forgiveness of his sins, (and) he departed to the Lord in peace. As the saint had commanded the steward in a dream, he was buried near the column close to the grave of the saint. And all gave glory to God and to the holy martyr Menas, (who), in this way, guided a human soul to repentance.

⁹¹ Lit. 'the other'.

⁹² Var. 'unfortune'.

⁹³ Var. 'let'.

Miracle 10

About the Rich Pagan⁹⁴

I want to tell you (pl.) another miracle. There was a certain man, a Pagan, named Prinos⁹⁵, who lived near a lake in the eparchy of the city of Alexandria. On his land, there was a large pagan temple⁹⁶, and in that temple, there was a great idol, (to which) gifts and sacrifices were brought every year. This wealthy (man) had a barren mare, which looked magnificent. Because of her beauty and speed, the rich man liked her very much and prayed to his idol, asking that his mare give birth, but she could not conceive.

One day, when he was told about the miracles of the holy martyr Menas, the Pagan, upon hearing this, said, “If my mare gives birth with the blessing of the holy martyr Menas, I will offer three legs [of the foal] to Saint Menas and one to the idol”. Then, his mare gave birth to a three-legged foal, and the pagan was greatly astonished.

And behold, Saint Menas appeared to him in a dream and said,

I am Menas, the servant of Christ. I have come to ask you why you are surprised by what has happened. You had made me a promise, so I allowed your mare to give birth to a foal with three legs. Now, let your idol, whom you worship, show his power regarding what you promised him, and let him give your foal a fourth.

When the Pagan awoke from his dream, he quickly rose, renounced the idol, and dedicated himself to Christ and to the holy martyr of Christ, Menas. He was baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and he was joined to the Orthodox Christians. He also gave his mare to the church of the saint and divided his wealth, giving half of it to the saint’s church, praising God for being enlightened through holy baptism. He also made all those in his household Christians, and many, seeing (what had happened), renounced Pagan⁹⁷ religion and became Christians, believing in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. leg.

⁹⁴ Lit. ‘Hellen’.

⁹⁵ The protagonist of the miracle in Greek bears the same name. In OCS, however, there is an additional wordplay, as *prinos* means ‘gain’ or ‘profit’.

⁹⁶ OSC: *chram idolskij velik*’.

⁹⁷ Lit. ‘Hellenic’.

Miracle 11

About (the Man) Sorting Wood

There was a man named Theophilus. He wanted to go to the church of the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, to pray, and he promised to give wood (as an offering). When he brought it, the steward ordered the wood to be dragged from the shore to the church. A soldier who was passing by said, "Give me a tenth of the wood". But he replied to him, "The wood belongs to the temple of Saint Menas". The soldier said to him, "I do not listen to⁹⁸ what you say, for I want to take a tenth of it". They were stopped by him, and he did not allow them to drag (the wood) any further, and he also beat them. So, they gave him two silver coins, saying with tears, "We place our hope in God's church and in the holy martyr Menas, and in his power, that the tenth part will be taken from you".

They spoke these words with tears, while being beaten, when suddenly and unexpectedly, the soldier was seized and hung by his hair in the air. He did not know where he was going until he reached the temple of Saint Menas. When he arrived at the church and was still hanging, the people who were in the church were struck with fear and cried out, "Lord, have mercy on us!". Then the soldier cried out in a loud voice and said, "I have sinned, martyr of Christ, I have sinned! I confess my wrongdoing, but grant me your mercy, for you are greatly patient". When he said this, the saint released him from the air without harm or injury. Then he promised the saint 12 gold coins. And all the people, seeing this, praised God and the holy martyr of Christ, Menas, who had shown him mercy. And when the soldier went to his home, he brought 12 gold coins and many other gifts to the church, praising God, and returned to his home rejoicing and glad.

Miracle 12

About the Man Possessed (by a Demon)

A certain (man) in Alexandria had been tormented by a demon⁹⁹ from his youth, foaming (at the mouth) and gnashing his teeth. The demon threw him into the sea like many others. When his parents witnessed this, they brought him, bound, to the church of Saint Menas, as they could not leave him because he was injuring people. When they arrived with him at

⁹⁸ Lit. 'I cannot see'; Var. 'I do not listen to'. This variant was used in the translation.

⁹⁹ Var. 'evil spirit'.

the saint's church, his parents fell to their knees on the ground and prayed with these (words): "Holy martyr of Christ, Menas, who has performed many miracles, accept our prayer, grant healing to our child, so that we may pray your holy name with all (people)". They sought understanding and lingered, but they left with nothing. Meanwhile, the demon tormented the young man even more.

As they were walking along the road, Saint Menas appeared to them in the form of a man and said to them, "Where is the possessed one?". They said, "Here, my lord! We were at the church of the holy martyr Menas and prayed for him, but due to our sins, the saint did not heal him". The saint then said to them, "Return to the church of the saint". They said to him, "We cannot, my lord, for he will kill us, (even) if we bind him, but we are unable to do so. Perhaps you, my lord, can bind him? For we see, my lord, your fame and might, and that you are young in body, and (in return), we will give you an alms"¹⁰⁰. They did not know that it was the saint himself.

Saint Menas said to them, "I take nothing, but if you wish to give something, offer it to the church of Saint Menas". After this, he stretched out his holy hand, grasped the head of the possessed one, being invisible to him, and carried him to his church. (The young man) hung in the air in the middle of the church, and the demon cried out loudly, "What do you want from me, martyr of Christ? Leave me, so I may live in him, for I have been with him for seven years now. I beg you, saint, leave me, for I have been commanded to destroy him".

Suddenly, the possessed young man fell from the height to the ground and appeared as if dead. All the people rose and cried out, "Lord, have mercy!". They placed him next to the saint's tomb, and the steward took (some) oil from the lamp over the saint's tomb and anointed him with the sign of the cross, saying, "Come out of God's creation, unclean spirit, for the saint could have tormented you on the road, but to shame you, he will torment you here before these people!". Hearing this, the demon came out of the young man's mouth like fire, and the man was healed.

His parents then took from their wealth his (i.e. young man's) entire part and offered (it) to the church of the saint, and they (had) him tonsured in the monastic way there. He remained there until the end of his life, and shortly thereafter, he passed away peacefully to the Lord, glorifying Christ our God and the holy martyr Menas.

¹⁰⁰ OCS: *mzdu*.

Miracle 13

[About the Man] Who Stole a Pig

There was a certain man named Pastamon who always entered the holy flock and stole the finest pigs from it. He was a Pagan¹⁰¹ and a miserable pauper. And he said to himself, "I am a wretch, the saint does not care about me". The saint appeared to him and said, "Man, enough already!". But he paid no heed to what the saint had said to him. For many others also wanted to take from the saint's flock, but they did not dare, as they were afraid of the saint. This Pagan pauper again entered the flock and chose the finest pigs, stole them, and slaughtered them. When he cut them into two parts because he wanted to salt them, suddenly the parts of the pig's body became like stones. This accursed thief did not believe the saint's words and was astonished at what he saw, so he said in his anger, "Saint Menas, either I am stealing, or you are taking revenge. Let's see¹⁰² if you can help your flock: I will now enter your flock and kill the largest pigs, and see if you can also turn these into stones". And he said this in his anger, and he fell asleep. Saint Menas appeared to him in his dream and said to him, "Curse and suffering, and the loss of your life! How long will you do evil and not amend your ways? Believe me: you should repent, as you will not gain any benefit. Try, however, if you wish, and go into the flock, and you will see that everything I told you will come to pass". And waking from his sleep, this accursed man, filled¹⁰³ with diabolical rage, said, "I will go there now and see what you will do to me". So the next morning he got up and reached the pen's fence, jumped straight into the flock, and withered from head to toe, becoming like a tree, lifeless and motionless. The shepherds who came found him standing in the middle of the pen, as if dead. They questioned him about what had happened, but he made no sound. The shepherds carried him to the temple of Saint Menas, and then before everyone, he confessed how he had done much evil. And he remained in the temple of Saint Menas until his death, then he died, having done penance and confession with a pure heart, praising God and Saint Menas, the martyr of Christ. Glory to our God forever and ever, amen.

¹⁰¹ Lit. 'Hellens'.

¹⁰² I.e., 'let's check'.

¹⁰³ Lit. 'being satiated'.



Miracles of Saint Menas the Martyr: The Ethiopic Recension (*Ta'ammera Minās*, CAe 2386)¹

Rafał Zarzeczny (Introduction and Translation)²

1. Introduction

1.1. Ethiopic text and manuscripts

The corpus of nineteen Ethiopic miracles attributed to St Menas (CAe 2386) survives in its entirety in three manuscripts. These are:

A = EMMML 1827, fols 84va-111va³;

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³ This parchment codex of the mid-fifteenth century consists of 210 folios, with the text written by a skilled hand in two columns. The manuscript includes approximately twenty acts of saints and martyrs (*Gadla samā'etāt*). The collection of nineteen *Miracles of Menas* is complete, with all the pages in their correct order. The codex was photographed in 1974 at the Monastery of Ḥayq Estifānos in the Wallo Province of Ethiopia for the Ethio-American project of the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library of Saint John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, Minnesota (HMML). For a more detailed description see W.F. Macomber – Getatchew Haile, *A Catalogue of Ethiopian Manuscripts Microfilmed for the Ethiopian Manuscript Microfilm Library, Addis Ababa and for the Hill Monastic Manuscript Library, Collegeville*, v. 5: *Projects Number 1501-2000*, Collegeville 1981, p. 280-284; for the miracles of St Menas see p. 281-282.

B = Paris, BnP éth. 135 (*olim* éth. 57), fols 22ra-81vb⁴;

C = Paris, BnP d'Abbadie 179 (Conti Rossini 163), fols 139va-152rc⁵.

The fourth copy of the same appears in the early twentieth-century manuscript EMLL 9185, fols 44rb-61ra⁶. However, this text is undoubtedly a direct transcription from the manuscript of Dabra Ḥāyq (EMML 1827), and as such, it holds no additional cognitive value. Therefore, we do not consider it in the present study, except for the sake of documentation.

Scholars recently discovered a fragment of Miracle 11 in the Ethiopic recension on a single leaf originating from an early manuscript, folded in half and used as the front guard of another codex⁷. Unfortunately, the existing photographs show only part of the folio, specifically the upper half of the verso page in the original manuscript⁸. Palaeographic dating reveals that this fragment comes from the fifteenth century. Although the fate of

⁴ A parchment codex dated to the late fifteenth century, 82 folios, two-column layout. For a catalogue description see H. Zotenberg, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens (gheez et amharique) de la Bibliothèque nationale*, Paris 1877, p. 203. This manuscript contains the *Life and Martyrium of Saint Menas* (n. 1), along with a collection of his *Miracles* (n. 2). The dating proposed by Zotenberg, namely seventeenth century, based on palaeography, needs correction, as suggested by the textual analysis; see below Footnote 153. Several folios in the *Miracles* section need renumbering due to their incorrect placement: fol. 25 should be numbered as 24; fol. 24 as 25; fol. 27 as 26; and fol. 26 as 27. The text displays numerous omissions due to homeoteleuton.

⁵ A parchment codex of the seventeenth or eighteenth century, 259 folios, three-column layout. It contains twenty-seven acts of martyrs (*Gadla samā'etāt*); instead of St Menas's acts, the codex reproduces a complete collection of his miracles; see M. Chaîne, *Catalogue des manuscrits éthiopiens de la collection Antoine d'Abbadie*, Paris 1912, n. 163, p. 109; C. Conti Rossini, *Notice sur les manuscrits éthiopiens de la collection d'Abbadie IV*, "Journal Asiatique" 2 (1913) p. 35, n. 163.

⁶ This manuscript, consisting of 223 paper cards, belonged to *Alaqā* Hadarā in Addis Ababa at the time of its photographing for the HMML project in 1994. To date, no catalogue description has appeared, aside from a card accompanying the microfilm. However, several recent publications reference the codex; see Getatchew Haile, *The Ethiopian Orthodox Church's Tradition on the Holy Cross*, Leiden – Boston 2017, p. 107-108, 265; Tedros Abraha, *The Gaaz Version of Jacoda of Song's Homily on the Annuntiation*, "Oriens Christianus" 102 (2019) p. 74-75.

⁷ That is, ms EMDA 560 from Na'akk^weto La'ab Church, Lālibalā, Wallo Province. I am grateful to Dr Ted Erho for providing me with the information on and a photograph of this manuscript.

⁸ The visible text includes fragmentary paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 in my translation, specifically the words from "[the soldier] mounted his horse" to "and he vowed his horse to the church in place of the pig".

the remaining parts of the codex is unknown, the presence of its *membra disiecta* suggests that the circulation and diffusion of St Menas's miracle collection in Ethiopia must have formerly extended beyond the reading of the four manuscripts described above.

Miracle 19, apart from its presence at the end of the great collection forms part of the collection of miracles attributed to the intervention of St Michael the Archangel⁹. Although slightly abbreviated and modified, the text remains the same episode. The oldest known manuscript containing this version of the miracle (EMML 1835) dates to the mid-fifteenth century¹⁰.

Three Ethiopic manuscripts of the *Miracles of Saint Menas the Martyr* transmit the same recension of the text, preserving the same order of episodes. Consequently, they all stem from a common Ethiopic archetype, which remains unidentified. A thorough analysis of the text demonstrates that the manuscripts are not one another's copies – with the notable exception of manuscript EMML 9185, which contains an arbitrary collection of predominantly hagiographical texts drawn from various manuscripts, including EMML 1827.

The differences in the text across the Ethiopic manuscripts are secondary, consisting mostly of omissions and other errors arising from mistakes in the copying process. These variations also result from grammatical revisions made to align the ancient text with the linguistic norms of the time. In terms of vocabulary, the differences remain limited to the introduction of equivalents for more difficult terms. This likely stems from the fact that the text is a translation from Arabic, as evident in numerous Arabic patterns, such as the recurring construction with the verb *kona*, the frequent use of the particles *'enka* and *'esma*, or the addition of the Arabic definite article to less comprehensible nouns or proper names. For example, in the story of the Syrian pilgrim

⁹ Regarding the Ethiopic homilies in honour of the Archangel Michael (*Dersāna Mikā'ēl*) see G. Lusini, *Darsanā Mika'el*, EAe II 139a-140a. This collection became very popular in modern times and appears in a great number of manuscripts, which, however, vary in their content; see also R. Zarzeczny, *Catalogo dei manoscritti etiopici di due collezioni private (Tomasi – Lucchesi), con repertorio dei testi*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 309, Roma 2020, p. 85-97.

¹⁰ See ms EMML 1835, fols 41ra-vb, with a description in HMML V, p. 320. A copy of the same in ms EMML 1841, fols 32rb-33ra (early 17th cent.); EMML 4082, fols 42rb-43ra (18th/19th cent.); Rome, Società Geografica Italiana ms 244, fols 11rb-12ra (19th cent.).

in Miracle 7(5), the term for “the storehouse” appears in Ethiopic for the first time as *bēta ḥanot*, but in the following phrase, it assumes the Arabic definite article and reads *el-ḥanot*. Furthermore, in the same miracle, an object that the man holds in his hand is *el-fābnās*, a corrupt form of the Arabic word *al-fānūs*, meaning “lamp” or “torch”, with the definite article. Another example concerns the long-forgotten Greek toponym “Philoxenite”, translated literally into Arabic and then into Ethiopic according to its proper meaning, as “foreigners’ dwelling” (*maḥdara ’engedā*) – see Miracle 7(3). We provide a detailed discussion of this and other similar issues, including those related to biblical citations, in the forthcoming article for the hagiographical volume in Hamburg.

1.2. Modern editions and translations of the miracles

The Ethiopic miracles of St Menas remain largely unedited, with only two episodes subjected to scholarly examination thus far. In 1959, Paul Devos published the original text of Miracle 9, which narrates the tale of a pilgrim abducted by a crocodile. This publication included a French translation, based on manuscript C, incorporating variants from the older manuscript B¹¹. Following this, the Bollandist scholar edited and translated Miracle 5, which recounts the story of a Jewish merchant and a greedy Christian¹². His publication of the Ethiopic version accompanied the corresponding Greek text of Ivan Pomialovskiĭ and the Coptic recension based on manuscript M.590. In addition, Devos analysed several philological aspects of the Coptic, Arabic, and Ethiopic texts¹³. He concludes that the Ethiopic text, even in the most recent of the miracles’ three recensions, retains a connection to the earliest form of the writing, which, according to Devos, is the Coptic text¹⁴. Marius Chaîne also offers some

¹¹ See P. Devos, *Un récit des miracles de s. Ménas en copte et en éthiopien*, AnBol 77 (1959) p. 455-463, and 78 (1960) p. 158-160.

¹² See P. Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien. Un Miracle de saint Ménas*, AnBol 78 (1960) p. 302-305 (ed.), 306-308 (tr.).

¹³ See P. Devos, *Les Miracles de Saint Ménas en éthiopien*, in: *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici (Roma, 2-4 aprile 1959)*, Roma 1960, p. 335-343.

¹⁴ See P. Devos, *Les miracles de saint Ménas en éthiopien*, in: *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Etiopici (Roma, 2-4 aprile 1959)*, Roma 1960, p. 343.

observations to mark Carl Maria Kaufmann's publication¹⁵. Despite these efforts, it appears that the Ethiopic text has received no significant further scholarly attention¹⁶.

Furthermore, neither manuscript SSB-010 nor the edition by Sāmu'ēl Darsē highlight the miracles from the large collection in any way. As one can see, they belong to an entirely separate textual and cultural tradition.

1.3. About the translation

The English translation of *The Miracles of Saint Menas the Martyr* constitutes the first comprehensive edition of the entire collection in its Ethiopic version. For this purpose, we considered all three principal manuscripts – designated as A, B, and C – with the most significant variant readings clearly indicated and even discussed in the notes. For editorial reasons, the Ge'ez text will appear separately. As with any translation, this work seeks to faithfully render a classical text into a modern language, despite the substantial linguistic and cultural differences between the two. Inevitably, certain concepts, nuances, and subtleties inherent to the Semitic source language have inevitably vanished in the process. Therefore, as a translator, we focused on faithfully conveying the essential content of the original text as accurately as possible. To assist the readers with understanding, we supplemented the translation with extensive footnotes that clarify the most notable interpretative challenges and distinctive features found in the original text.

The transcription of Ethiopic words follows the classical system, which marks long vowels with an obelisk¹⁷. Arabic expressions observe the same transcription principles, albeit in a simplified manner, while

¹⁵ See C.M. Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie der Menas-Ampullen*, Cairo 1910, p. 48-49.

¹⁶ Recently, Nicolò Sassi published an article re-examining the dates found in *The Acts of St Menas* as well as in the Arabic and Ethiopic *Synaxarium*, with particular emphasis on the miracles associated with the translation of the saint's body. However, Sassi does not address the collection of nineteen miracles discussed in the present study. See N. Sassi, *Circulation of Hagiographical Tales along the Incense Route: Storytelling as Technology of Enchantment*, in: *Storyworlds in Short Narratives: Approaches to Late Antique and Early Byzantine Tales*, ed. S. Constantinou – A. Andreou, Leiden – Boston 2025, p. 131-156.

¹⁷ See T.O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Classical Ethiopic (Ge'ez)*, Cambridge 1978, p. 8-9; cf. O. Raineri, *Introduzione alla lingua ge'ez (etiopico classico)*, Roma 2002, p. 9-12. For an explanation of the basic principles of Ethiopic lexicography, orthography,

Greek phrases appear in their original form. Coptic words, cited only when deemed appropriate, occasionally feature their Greek equivalents. References to dictionary entries serve to assist in identifying the semantic field when specific terms resist clear definition. Regarding the English language, Wolf Leslau's dictionaries receive priority, although citations from the comprehensive Latin *Lexicon* by August Dillmann follow immediately. Proper names in the main text intentionally appear in their Latin form, when available, with their variants provided in the notes.

Both in the introduction and, more extensively, in the footnotes to the translation, we frequently cite various manuscripts. Their designations follow the commonly accepted format. A more detailed list of abbreviations appears in *Encyclopaedia Aethiopica* and in my *Catalogo dei manoscritti etiopici di due collezioni private*, Roma 2020. The sigla for the Arabic codices of St Menas adhere to the typology established by Felicitas Jaritz. For a list of these manuscripts, along with descriptions of their contents, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen zum Heiligen Menas*, Heidelberg 1993, p. 56-62.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to my colleagues – Fr Paul Reilly MAfr, Fr Aaron Pidel SJ, and Fr Anthony Lusvardi SJ – for their assistance in preparing the introductory article and in making the English translation more accessible to modern readers. I am also grateful to Dr Senkoris Ayalew for his help in interpreting the more difficult passages of the classical text.

2. Translation

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God. Amen¹⁸. On the 15th of *Sanē*, we celebrate the feast of Abba Menas and

and transcription see the Introduction to W. Leslau, *Comparative Dictionary of Ge'ez*, Wiesbaden 1987, p. ix-xxvii.

¹⁸ The Trinitarian formula, a profound declaration of the Christian faith, traditionally opens Ethiopian texts in many manuscripts. It also frequently appears in Christian Arabic documents, expressed as *Besm al-Āb wa-l-Ibn wa-l-Rūḥ al-Qudus*, *Ilāh al-wāḥid*; see e.g. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen zum Heiligen Menas*, Heidelberg 1993, p. 351 (ed.), 68 (tr.), or 391 (ed.), 108 (tr.).

the consecration¹⁹ of his church²⁰. The beginning of the miracles of Saint Abba Menas associated with the construction of his church in Maryut²¹, as described in the homily²² about his martyrdom²³ delivered by Saint Theophilus, Archbishop of the great city of Alexandria²⁴.

¹⁹ Eth. *qeddāsē*, derived from the root *qaddasa* “sanctify, declare holy, consecrate, ordain, or perform sacred office, the liturgy”. From the same verb come adjectives such as “holy, saint, consecrated”, and nouns such as “sanctification, holiness”, or “temple and sanctuary”; see W. Leslau, *Concise Dictionary of Ge'ez (Classical Ethiopic)*, Wiesbaden 2010, p. 91; cf. A. Dillmann, *Lexicon linguae aethiopicae cum indice latino*, Lipsiae 1865, c. 465-467.

²⁰ The day 15 *Sanē* as the commemoration of consecrating the shrine at Maryut also appears in the Ethiopian *Synaxarium*, ed. Guidi, PO 1, 5, p. 611-613 (93-95); cf. E.A.W. Budge, *The Book of the Saints of the Ethiopian Church: A Translation of the Ethiopic Synaxarium መጽሐፈ ፡ ስንኳን ፡ Made from the Manuscript Oriental 660 and 661 in the British Museum*, v. 4, Cambridge 1928, p. 1001-1002. The day 15 *Hedār* commemorates the martyrdom of St Menas, as recorded in his Ethiopian *Acts*; cf. E.A.W. Budge, *Texts Relating to Saint Mēna of Egypt and Canons of Nicaea in a Nubian Dialect with Facsimile*, Oxford 1909, p. 70 (ed.), 54 (tr.); the same date appears in the Ethiopian *Synaxarium*, ed. Colin, PO 44, 3, p. 76, cf. Budge, *The Book of the Saints*, v. 1, p. 76-81, and in liturgical texts.

²¹ This seemingly refers to the discovery of the saint's relics in the desert during the reign of Emperor Constantine, leading to the construction of the shrine, as described in the Ethiopian *Synaxarium*; see R. Zarzeczny, *Saint Menas and His Miracles in the Ethiopian Tradition*, VoxP 94 (2025), p. 141.

²² Eth. *dersān* in mss A and C. Some Arabic manuscripts introduce the saint's acts as a “homily” or “sermon” (*maymar*, from the Syriac word *mīmra*) attributed to Anba Mardāriyus; see the prologue in Arabic ms A, according to Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (II 4, 1), p. 391 (ed.), 108 (tr.).

²³ Eth. *sem'* in mss A and C, meaning also “rumour, news, testimony, witness, martyrdom”, from the verb root *sam'a*, meaning “hear, listen, bear witness” see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 67; in ms B, “regarding the testimony of his spiritual combat (*gadlu*)”, referring to the same *Acts of Menas*.

²⁴ This prologue appears across the three Ethiopic manuscripts, each displaying its own grammatical peculiarities. In the Coptic ms M.590, ed. J. Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas*, Cairo 1946, p. 7 (ed.), 108 (tr.), a longer introduction to the miracles precedes the main text as well. Similar wording appears in the conclusion to the collection of the miracles in ms IFAO copt. inv. 315-322 of Cairo; see S. Bacot, *Saint Ménas, soldat et martyr. Sa vie, ses miracles, son sanctuaire*, Bagnolet 2020, p. 63. The Greek collection (no 9) attributes the narration to Archbishop Timotheus of Alexandria, but we do not know which one: Timothy I, *sed.* 380-384, or Timothy II Aelurus, *sed.* 457-60, 475-77. The Ethiopic version aligns with the Coptic tradition, ascribing it to Theophilus Archbishop of Alexandria; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 104; cf. S. Bacot, *Quatre miracles de saint Ménas dans un manuscrit copte de l'Ifao (Inv. 315-322)*, “Bulletin de l'Institut Français

The first miracle²⁵

1. There was a man²⁶, an owner of camels, who had a barren she-camel²⁷. Upon hearing of the miracles and powers²⁸ at the church of Saint Mar²⁹ Menas, he vowed that if the she-camel conceived and gave birth, he would dedicate its first offspring, whether male or female, to the church.

d'Archéologie Orientale" 111 (2011) p. 40. In contrast, the prologue in the Arabic manuscripts attributes the short life of the saint, the story about the construction of his church and its consecration, and the manifestation of his miracles to Anbā Mazdāriyūs Archimandrite of Nitria (Wadi al-Naṭrūn); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 55, n. 250, with the text on p. 108 and 160 (4.1).

²⁵ For the Greek text (BHG 1265) see I. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie prepodobnago Paisiia Velikago i Timofeia patriarkha Aleksandriiskago poviestvovanie o chudesakh" sv. Velikomuchenika Miny*, Saint Petersburg 1900, p. 84-86 (no 9). This is also the first miracle in the Coptic ms M.590; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 10b-12b (ed.), 110-111 (tr.); for the French translation see Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 64-65 (no 6). For the Arabic version see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 17), on ms M (III 4, 18), p. 405-406 (ed.), 175-176 (tr.); extracts from ms Š, where it is the ninth miracle (III 5, 13), p. 429-430 (ed.), 202-203 (tr.); additional notes (III 6, 15), p. 230-231. Moreover, in the Greek version, this miracle starts with a short parenetic invitation: ἕτερον θαῦμα βούλομαι διηγῆσασθαι, ἀδελφοί, "Another wonder I wish to narrate, brothers"; see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 84, l. 21. A similar invitation appears at the beginning of the Coptic collection in ms M.590: "Listen also to wonders and miracles which God wrought through the holy Apa Menas"; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 108 (tr.).

²⁶ In the Greek version of the miracle, the protagonist is Porphyrius (Πορφύριος) and comes from Panefaiat (Πανηφαίατ); see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 84, l. 22-23. The Coptic text calls him Julius ([Ι]ουλιος); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 11b, l. 11; cf. Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 65. In Arabic ms Š, his name once again is Porphyrius (Ar. *Burfīriyūs*), and he comes from Nikiou (Ar. *Nīqāṭun*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 429, 202; other Arabic sources leave him unnamed, similarly to the Ethiopic text.

²⁷ Eth. *nāqat* or *nāqāt*, referring to a female camel, derives from Ar. *nāqa(t)*; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 401a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 646. The masculine form is *gamal* (pl. *gamalāt*, 'agmāl), comparable to Hebr. *gāmāl*, Syr. *gamlā*, or Ar. *ḡamal*; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 194a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1146.

²⁸ Eth. *ḥaylāt* (pl. of *ḥayl*), meaning "powers, mights, forces"; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 115; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 608-609, *vis, potentia*, δύναμις.

²⁹ The title *mār* or *mārī* occurs frequently throughout the entire Ethiopic collection to refer to St Menas. The term originates from the Syriac *mārī*, meaning "my lord" or "my master". It has traditionally served as a title of respect for distinguished individuals, high-ranking ecclesiastics, and certain saints, such as St Ephrem, commonly called "Mar Ephrem". Christian-Arabic nomenclature adopted the term in its original forms, *mār* and *mārī*, and it subsequently became an integral part of the Ethiopic ecclesiastical vocabulary; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 356a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 163; R. Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, Oxford 1879, c. 2207 and 2211.

Remarkably, the she-camel conceived and gave birth³⁰. However, Satan put it into his heart not to give it to the church³¹. He made a second vow, but when the camel gave birth again, he gave nothing. And when it happened a third time, he still gave nothing to the church³².

2. When Saint Abu³³ Menas saw³⁴ that the man had failed to keep his promise three times, he went to him. Dressed in the garments of kings and rulers, he rode a white horse³⁵, with a cloud covering him. He descended from the cloud and led away the four camels: the she-camel and her three

³⁰ Sources attribute a similar miracle to the intervention of St Sergius and St Bacchus; see their Miracles 3 and 4 in the Arabic recension, ed. A. Khater, *Les Miracles des Saints Serge et Bacchus*, BSAC 15 (1958-1960) p. 115-117 (tr.); Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 176, n. 759.

³¹ The last two phrases are absent from mss B and C, likely due to homeoteleuton in their common archetype.

³² The Ethiopic ms A mentions three promises and three offspring, whereas mss B and C refer to only one oath and one offspring, a discrepancy that contradicts the subsequent narrative. Similarly, variations are evident in the Arabic texts: mss A, F, M, and N include promises concerning the second and third offspring, while ms Š refers to a single oath and offspring. For further discussion see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 230, n. 6. The Coptic version in M.590 corresponds to the Ethiopic *textus receptus*; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 110-111 (tr.); Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 64.

³³ The Coptic sources refer to the saint as “Apa” (ⲁⲡⲁ), a title derived from the Greek “Abba” (Ἀββᾶ). In contrast, the Arabic text of the miracles uses the respectful title “Abu” (*abū*, or its contracted form, *bū*), a designation traditionally reserved for the greatest Egyptian saints, such as Macarius, Bishoi, Moses the Black, or Serapion of Thmuis. The Ethiopic version of the text, as a translation from Arabic, adheres to this same convention.

³⁴ Lit. “when Saint Abu Menas knew/understood”, from the root verb *ʾaʾmara*; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 134-135.

³⁵ The white horse (Eth. *šaʾadā faras*) is a symbol of supreme authority, heavenly power, and the saint’s purity. In the Book of Revelation, the white horse (ἵππος λευκός) symbolizes Christ, who goes by the name “Faithful and True”, victorious over evil at the end of time; see Rev 6:1-2; 19:14; cf. Zech 1:8, Rev 7:14-15; C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, London – New York 2003, p. 14. Subsequent miracles refer to the animal as “his spiritual horse” (Eth. *farasu manfasāwi*).

offspring³⁶. The cloud then carried them to the portico³⁷ of the church of Saint Abu Menas. A multitude of people³⁸ gathered, watching as the cloud carried the camels, lifted by the wind, and all of them cried out in unison, “Kyrie eleison”³⁹. It was a great wonder that God the Magnificent⁴⁰ manifested through his martyr, Saint Abu Menas.

3. As for the man, the owner of the camels, he searched everywhere but could not find them. Later, Saint Abu Menas⁴¹ appeared to him in a dream and said, “You made a promise to me regarding the camels, but you did not fulfil it. Therefore, I came myself and took the camels. Now, come! Follow me to my church, and there you will find them. And do not make promises again if you do not intend to keep them”. At that very moment, the owner of the camels arose, went to the church of Saint Abu Menas, and saw the camels standing there.

³⁶ The miracles of St Thecla document a similar episode; see H. Delehay, *Les recueils antiques de Miracles des saints*, AnBol 43 (1925) p. 54. Additionally, sources mention St Epimachus’s travel through the air from Pelusium to Alexandria; see M. van Esbroeck, *Saint Épimaque de Péluse. Un parallèle arabe à la passion prémétaphras-tique BHG³ 593*, AnBol 84 (1966) p. 428. Similarly, in the *The Life of Shenoute* by Pseudo-Besa, a luminous cloud carries the saint; see D.N. Bell, *Besa: The Life of Shenoute* (18-19), Kalamazoo 1983, p. 48. The motif of miraculous airborne transfers also appears in Arabic mystical literature; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 176, n. 760.

³⁷ Eth. *meḥewār* in all manuscripts, derived from the verb root *ḥawar*, means “space, course, path, journey”, or even “orbit”; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 249b-250a. However, this term likely needs revision to *ḥewār*, meaning “porch, colonnade, platform, or courtyard”; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 115a, *ambulacrum, porticus*, στοά; John 5:2, 10:23; Acts 3:11. See also Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 64, “portique”.

³⁸ Eth. *feṭrat*, lit. “creation, creature, nature”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 246b.

³⁹ Eth. *kiryālāyson*, from the Greek acclamation Κύριε ἐλέησον, “Lord, have mercy”, commonly appears in the Ge‘ez liturgy and individual piety of Ethiopian Christians; see Getatchew Haile, *A Page from the History of Däbrä Libanos of Säwa*, in: *Ethiopian Studies in Honour of Amha Asfaw*, New York 2017, p. 384, for a discussion of its usage in the context of Good Friday celebrations.

⁴⁰ Eth. *’egzi’abeḥēr sebuḥ* translates the Greek ὁ θεὸς ἐνδοξαζόμενος in Ps 88:8 LXX; see also Exod 15:1; Dan 3:44 LXX. For the basic meaning of the Ethiopic term *sebuḥ* see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 483b, “praised, glorified, celebrated, glorious, illustrious”; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 357, *laudatus, laudabilis, celebratus, gloriosus*.

⁴¹ *Minā* in ms B. The abbreviated form of the saint’s name, derived directly from Arabic (*Mīnā*), is more characteristic of this manuscript, although it appears also in the others, thereby illustrating the considerable flexibility in the transcription of foreign names within the Ethiopian writing tradition.

4. The saint appeared⁴² to him again in a dream and said, “You mocked me, and I had intended to bring great misfortune upon you. However, I delayed it, remembering the former affection from the time of your dwelling in my home in Maryut⁴³. Therefore, I took nothing from you except what you had vowed in relation to it”. When the man awoke from his dream, he rose in the morning and went to his home. He brought his possessions to the church of Saint Abu Menas the Martyr and entrusted them to the church’s administrator⁴⁴. The chief then appointed him as head of the camels that served the church, to tend and guard them, until his death⁴⁵. And he praised God, glorified him, and exalted him greatly.

The second miracle⁴⁶

1. There was a man named Astamon⁴⁷, who regularly went to the sheepfold⁴⁸ of the church of Saint Abu Menas with the intention

⁴² Lit. “he came” (Eth. *maṣ’a*).

⁴³ Or, “in your home”, according to ms A, which refers to the man’s place. The overall meaning of the sentence remains ambiguous across all Ethiopic manuscripts, and the lack of a direct equivalent in other versions prevents a more definitive clarification.

⁴⁴ Eth. *liqa bēta krestiyān* refers to the head, chief, or senior in the church. The noun *liq*, from the verb root *lehqa*, means “chief, senior, superior, master, presbyter”. In this context, it likely refers to the individual responsible for managing the church property, an administrator or minister. Greek and Coptic texts also call him οἰκονόμος; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 8; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 27.

⁴⁵ Eth. *’eska gizē negdatu*, lit. “until the time of his journey”. A similar phrase concludes several miracles in this collection, emphasizing the protagonists’ authentic conversion and their lifelong service to the shrine.

⁴⁶ For the Greek text (BHG 1269) see Pomialovskiĭ, *Zhitie*, p. 89 (no 13), and L. Silvano – P. Varalda, *Per l’edizione dei Miracula sancti Menae (BHG 1256-1269)*, “Philologia Antiqua” 12 (2019) p. 74-75 (no 13). The text corresponds to Miracle 5 in the defective Coptic ms M.590; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 107. For the Arabic version see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 18), from ms M (III 4, 19), p. 406 (ed.), 176-177 (tr.); extracts from mss Š, N, and Ṭ (III 5, 14), p. 430-431 (ed.), 203-204 (tr.); notes (III 6, 16), p. 231-232.

⁴⁷ Eth. *’Aṣtāmon* or *’Aṣtāmen*, according to the Ethiopic ms C. In the Greek version, he is Παστάμων, described as πτωχὸς καὶ ἑλλην, meaning “poor” – probably in the sense of being rude, uncouth, or vulgar – and “pagan”; see Silvano – Varalda, *Per l’edizione*, p. 74, l. 1-3. In the Arabic text, his name appears as *Basṭāmūn*, *’Aṣtāmūn*, *’Aṣtāmā*, or *’Anastasius*; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 231, n. 1.

⁴⁸ Eth. *’aṣada ’abāge* clearly refers to sheep as the object of theft: *’abāge* is the plural of *bagge*; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 88b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 543. In

to steal from it. He went mad⁴⁹ and thought in his heart, “It is better not to fear Abu Menas, for I find no satisfaction for my soul except in these sheep”⁵⁰. Then, he rose and, as usual, went to the stall. He stole one of the pigs⁵¹, slaughtered it, cut it into pieces, and took it to his house.

2. At that very moment, the entire flesh turned to stone⁵². Despite this, Astamon still did not believe in the power of Saint Abu Menas. Instead, he said, “I will rest until midnight, then I will rise again to steal another pig, one even better than the first. As for me, I will see what Abu Menas does to me”.

3. As he pondered this in his heart, Saint Abu Menas appeared to him at that very moment and said, “Behold, you have witnessed my power, yet you did not believe in me. Therefore, O man, from now on, half of your body⁵³ shall turn to stone, and the other shall remain human, until the day of your death. Let all who come to my church see you and marvel at you”.

4. At that hour, the man became both half stone and half human, just as Saint Abu Menas had foretold. He remained in this state for six

contrast, the Arabic text (ms Š) consistently identifies it as a pig (Ar. *khinzīr*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 430 (ed.), 203 (tr.).

⁴⁹ The Arabic ms F employs the terms “ignorant” (*ġāhīlan*) or “poor” (*faqīr*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 231, n. 3. Similarly, in the Ethiopic text, *’abd* designates a foolish, mad, or insane person, or someone ignorant; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 2b-3a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 761.

⁵⁰ Eth. *’abāge*; see Footnote 48.

⁵¹ From then on, the text identifies the stolen animal as a pig (Eth. *ḥarāweyā*, *ḥarawiyā*, or *ḥarawiyā*); in the Greek text, it is χοῖρος; see Silvano – Varalda, *Per l’edizione*, p. 74, l. 2. For more on the meaning and forms of this Ethiopic term see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 244b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 88; B.A. Jurgens, *A Swine, A Stag, and ein Schafbock*, “Henoch” 39 (2017) p. 128-129, discusses the mistranslation of Esau’s speech in the Hebrew, Syriac, and Ethiopic text of Jub 37:20.

⁵² The Ethiopic sentence *kona ’ebna k’ello šegā*, lit. “its entire body/flesh/meat became stone”, is grammatically ambiguous, as it is unclear whether it refers to a petrified human or animal body. However, the context clearly suggests the latter. Additionally, the phrase “until today” (Eth. *’eska yom*) in mss A and C emphasizes the permanence of the transformation, linking it to the stolen pig. A similar addition (*’illā al-yūm*) appears in several Arabic manuscripts; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 232, n. 4. The Greek text explicitly refers to the animal’s body as well: ἐγένοντο δὲ τὰ μέλη τοῦ χοίρου λίθοι, “And the limbs of the pig became stone”; cf. Silvano – Varalda, *Per l’edizione*, p. 74, l. 5.

⁵³ Lit. “half of you”.

months⁵⁴ until his death in the church. The people carried him out, brought him from there⁵⁵, and buried him⁵⁶. All who witnessed this miracle glorified our Lord Jesus Christ and his martyr, Saint Mar Menas. May his prayer and intercession be with all of us Christians⁵⁷, now and forever. Amen.

⁵⁴ Lit. “the moons”. In the Greek text, the story ends differently: after receiving a vision of St Menas in a dream, the man obtains healing from the saint, converts, and serves the church for seven years; see Silvano – Varalda, *Per l’edizione*, p. 74-75. The motif of petrification, whether perpetual or temporary, is well known in hagiographic and moralistic literature, see Silvano – Varalda, *Per l’edizione*, p. 75, note 5.

⁵⁵ That is, from the church.

⁵⁶ All the verbs in this sentence in the Ethiopic manuscripts appear in third-person plural, with a suffixed personal pronoun.

⁵⁷ Eth. *weluda temqat*, lit. “sons of baptism”. This expression commonly appears in hagiographical texts, including the final supplications of the *Gadla Minās* in some manuscripts; see Budge, *Texts*, p. 73 (ed.), 58 (tr.). The same expression (Ar. *abnā’ al-ma’ mūdīā*) commonly appears in Christian Arabic texts and manuscripts.

The third miracle⁵⁸

1. There was a very wealthy man from the region of Alexandria⁵⁹. He kept an image⁶⁰ in his house, an idol⁶¹, which he worshiped. Every year, he offered sacrifices to him and served him⁶². Furthermore, he owned a barren horse⁶³.

⁵⁸ In ms C, both the title and numbering of the miracle are missing, causing the text to follow the previous one directly. For the Greek text (BHG 1266) see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 86-87 (no 10). The miracle of the three-legged foal in Coptic ms M.590 is nearly illegible; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 107 (no 6). In the IFAO codex (no 2), the miracle is acephalous; see Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 45 (ed.), 66 (tr.); Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 47 (no 1); cf. P. Piwowarczyk, *Cuda św. Menasa według rękopisu IFAO copt inv. 315-322 (Coptic Literature Manuscript ID 1770; Clavis Coptica 398)*, VoxP 79 (2021) p. 528. For the Arabic version see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 19), from ms M (III, 4 20), p. 406-407 (ed.), 177 (tr.); extracts from ms Š (III 5, 15), p. 431-432 (ed.), 204 (tr.); notes (III 6, 17), p. 232.

⁵⁹ The Ethiopic version does not provide the protagonist's name. The Greek text describes him as a Greek or pagan man (ἄνθρωπος ἑλλήν); his name is Prinos (Πρίνος), and he lives near the lake of the city of Alexandria, which refers to Mareotis; see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 86, l. 8-9; Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, p. 70, l. 1-2. According to the Arabic ms Š, he is a Zoroastrian – lit. “the Magian man” (Ar. *al-raḡul al-maḡūs*) – a term historically used to describe the followers of Zoroastrianism, particularly in the context of ancient Persia, and his name is *Yarīmus*; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 431 (ed.), 204 (tr.). In ms L, he is a Muslim named *Farīmūs*; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 232, n. 2.

⁶⁰ Eth. *še'l* refers to an image, picture, painting, icon, plan, or model; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 524b-525a. The Coptic text of the manuscript from IFAO (no 2) features the phrase “an idol in his village”; cf. Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 42a (ed.), 66 (tr.); for Pol. tr. see Piwowarczyk, *Cuda IFAO*, p. 528.

⁶¹ Eth. *mesl* means “likeness, similarity, form, figure, statue”; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 365a-366a. Both the Greek and Coptic texts refer to an idol (εἶδωλον); see Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 42a, l. 2.

⁶² This sentence varies across Arabic texts. In Arabic ms A, it reads, “He had a beautiful temple (*birbā*) with a small idol (*šanam*) in it, to whom he paid homage daily through incense, offerings, and prostrations”; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 6, 17), p. 232, n. 3. The Arabic *birbā* or *barbā* (pl. *barabī*), derived from the Coptic *rpe*, was the term medieval Arabs used for Egyptian temples and even pyramids; cf. J. Vergote, *L'Étymologie de ég. r3-pr: copte rpé: ar. birbā*, “Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde” 91 (1964) p. 135-137; O. El-Daly, *Ancient Egypt in Medieval Moslem/Arabic Writings*, London 2003, p. 71.

⁶³ Although the horse in the Eth. expression *faras makkān* is grammatically masculine, it is clear from the context that it refers to a mare. The Arabic ms M further states that the horse was of great value, worth approximately 50,000 drachmas; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 406 (ed.), 177 (tr.).

2. Upon hearing of the power of Saint Abu Menas⁶⁴, he made a vow, saying, “If Saint Abu Menas causes my horse to give birth, I will dedicate three-quarters⁶⁵ of what she bears to his church, with the remaining quarter⁶⁶ dedicated to my god, whom I worship in my home”⁶⁷.

3. Then, it happened that the horse gave birth to a deformed (offspring) with only three legs. The man, the horse’s owner, was astonished by this occurrence, and recognized it as a miracle.

4. After this, Saint Abu Menas appeared to him in a dream, saying, “I am indeed Abu Menas⁶⁸. Why are you surprised? You promised me three-quarters⁶⁹ of this three-legged (creature). You also promised another quarter to your god. If he is so mighty, let him create another leg, as I have done”⁷⁰.

5. And so, the man rose at that very hour and renounced the worship of the idol. He then entered the church of Saint Mar Menas the Martyr, where he was baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, the One God⁷¹. He remained a Christian until the day of his passing⁷².

⁶⁴ There is an addition in manuscript C: “that he made a horse give birth”, which anticipates the words found in the subsequent promise.

⁶⁵ Lit. “half and half of that half”.

⁶⁶ Lit. “half of half”; apparently, the man expected the mare to give birth to at least four foals.

⁶⁷ Eth. *ba-westa hagarya*, lit. “in my country”.

⁶⁸ The Ethiopic text in ms A is damaged.

⁶⁹ Lit. “half and half of its half”.

⁷⁰ The reaction and response of the rich man is absent from the Ethiopic version, but it appears in Arabic ms M as follows: “God opened the eyes of the man’s heart, and he prostrated himself before Saint Mar Mina, and said, ‘O lord, who possesses a glory such as I have never seen before, from now on I know that my god is incapable of such work. Therefore, I will believe in your God and serve you until the day of my death’”. See also Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 407 (ed.), 177 (tr.).

⁷¹ The phrase “in the name of the Father...” (*ba-sema ’ab wa-wald wa-manfas qeddus ’ahadu ’amlāk*) corresponds exactly to the Trinitarian formula traditionally used by Ethiopian and Eritrean Christians; see Footnote 18. The Arabic text in ms Š further notes that he was baptized along with his entire family; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 432 (ed.), 204 (tr.).

⁷² Eth. *’eska ’elata felsatu*, lit. “until the day of his assumption/migration/exile”, refers to the moment of death. For the root verb *falasa* see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 239; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1341, *migratio, peregrinatio, transitio*. In the miracles, as in many other hagiographical texts, it has a meaning of death as a proper moment for the migration from this world to God.

6. He donated all the horses and livestock he owned to the church of Saint Abu Menas. The horse, in turn, gave birth and multiplied for the church and for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ and his saint, the martyr Abu Menas. Thus, the days of its life were prolonged⁷³.

The fourth miracle⁷⁴

1. Eight men, companions of one another, set out from Alexandria⁷⁵. As they journeyed, they observed a multitude of people arriving at the church of Saint Abu Menas to worship on the 15th day of *Hedār*⁷⁶.

2. They were discussing among themselves, “How long shall we continue to sympathize with this world⁷⁷ due to the blindness of our hearts?”⁷⁸

⁷³ The final phrase in ms B is absent. Indeed, the text in the other Ethiopic codices fails to clearly specify whether the blessing of a long life pertains to the miracle’s protagonist or to his offering, specifically the horse.

⁷⁴ Ms C incorrectly numbers this miracle as the third at the beginning of the text. No corresponding Greek version is known. For the Coptic collection, the relevant pages of ms M.590 are illegible; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 107 (no 7). For the Arabic version, which is more consistent, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 20), the text from ms M (III 4, 21), p. 407 (ed.), 178 (tr.); variants from ms N (III 5, 16), p. 432 (ed.), 205-206 (tr.); notes (III 6, 18), p. 233-234. Unfortunately, extracts from ms F and another text in the same family, which seems closer to the Ethiopic version, are absent from Jaritz’s edition, except for some notes on pages 233-234.

⁷⁵ Eth. *wa-we’etomu* ‘*erukawiyānihomu* in mss A and B, lit. “and they were their friends”; but in ms C, the word appears as ‘*eruqānihomu*, derived from the verb root ‘*arqa* or ‘*araqā*, “be naked, emptied, orphaned” (cf. Matt 25:36, 1Cor 4:11, James 2:15, Rev 3:17). In a secondary sense, this root can also mean “be friendly” or “be equal”; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 70b-71a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 961-963. The interchange of the Ethiopic graphemes *kaf* and *qāf* may simply reflect an orthographic variant. Similarly, the Arabic ms M mentions eight men, while ms N references eighteen companions (*tamānīah* ‘*ašar*); cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 5, 16), p. 432 (ed.), 205 (tr.), with note 1 on p. 233.

⁷⁶ This is the commemoration day of St Menas’s martyrdom according to the Ethiopian *Synaxarium*; see Budge, *The Book of the Saints*, v. 1, p. 246-249 (tr.); ed. Colin, PO 44/3, p. 308-313 (Eth. text and Fr. tr.). The Arabic ms N points to the 15th of *Hathor*, in accordance with the Coptic calendar. Other versions of this miracle lack a similar reference.

⁷⁷ The text in Arabic ms N refers to the calamity (*al-muṣībah*), for which they were regretful (*wa-kānū nadmā*).

⁷⁸ A similar reference to the hearts blinded by this world appears in Arabic mss A and F; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 233, n. 2.

Let us rise, each taking two coins⁷⁹, and with what we collect, purchase a pig⁸⁰ to bring to the church of Saint Abu Menas, the Martyr. We will give half of it to the master⁸¹ and keep the other half for ourselves”.

3. So, they rose, purchased two pigs, and carried them aboard a boat⁸². However, Satan – may God disgrace him – rose and killed one within the very hour, near the shores of the sea of Alexandria⁸³. The men mourned as if they were grieving for one of their own.

4. While still in astonishment, they said, “It is not right for us to go to the church of Saint Mar Menas”, and resolved in their hearts to return home. Meanwhile, they did not recognize Saint Abu Menas, who stood before them, mounted on his horse like a knight⁸⁴, glorious in appearance. With him were twelve angels, following him in the manner of an army⁸⁵.

5. He said to them with gladness, “Peace be upon you, O brothers”. They replied, “And peace be upon you also, O lord governor”⁸⁶. He asked

⁷⁹ Eth. *qirāt*. In the Arabic mss, “two golden *qirāṭ*”; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 407 and 432 (ed.), 178 and 205 (tr.), with note 3 on p. 233. The Ethiopic *qirāt*, meaning a small coin, derives from the Arabic *qirāṭ*, which in turn originates from the Greek κεράτιον or the Syriac *qirāṭā*; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 445a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 429; Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, c. 3741; Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 309-310.

⁸⁰ Eth. *ḥarāweyā*; see Footnote 51.

⁸¹ Eth. *liq*; see Footnote 44, along with several variants found in the Arabic versions: “church administrator” (*quyyam*, ms A; *qayyim al-bi’a*, ms F), “chief to the camels” (*ra’īs ilā al-ḡamālīn*, ms Ṭ), “the camel guide” (*sā’iqū al-ḡamāl*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 231, n. 12.

⁸² This sentence appears to contradict previous information, which mentions only one pig. Even though ms C omits the numeral, the noun remains in its plural form. The Arabic text in both mss M and N uses the singular form. The Coptic text remains unknown.

⁸³ The Ethiopic expression *bāḥra ’ella ’Eskenderyā* clearly refers to Lake Maryut.

⁸⁴ Eth. *farasāwi*, “horseman, knight”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 241b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1354, *eques*.

⁸⁵ The Arabic ms M mentions no angels, whereas the fragment of ms N, as edited by Jaritz, contains references to the angels (*al-malā’ikah*) in the subsequent part of the text.

⁸⁶ Eth. *’egzi’e mak’annen*. The Ethiopic term *mak’annen*, derived from the verb root *k’wannana*, can denote a judge or vindicator. It may also refer to a master or powerful individual, such as a ruler, hegemon, prince, or satrap; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 287b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 856-857. The Arabic version in ms M replaces the salutation and reply in the words of consolation with “Why are you troubled? Peace be upon you! Do not be afraid!” (*limadā ’antum muḍṭaribūn? al-salāmu lakum! lā ṭḥāfū*); cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 407; p. 233, n. 9.

them, “What brings you here? Are you coming to sell or to buy?”⁸⁷. They told him everything that had happened to them. He said to them, “You promised this pig to the martyr, to bring it to the church of Saint Abu Menas. Do not listen then to Satan, nor turn back to your previous ways⁸⁸. Instead, take the (dead) pig with you and give it to the dogs⁸⁹ of (the shrine of) Saint Abu Menas. As for me, I believe you will receive that grace of Abu Menas that you intended to gain. And it will be credited to you that this (pig) will come to life”.

6. So they rose, listened to him, and went to carry (the pig) to the boat. But Satan entered the boatman⁹⁰, and said to them, “I will not carry this on my boat because it is dead, unless you⁹¹ give me additional money⁹² for my service”. Saint Abu Menas replied, “I will give you money⁹³ instead of them”. Since his attitude⁹⁴ was kind, the boatman agreed and carried the pig⁹⁵, though he did not recognize Saint Abu Menas. The saint then said to the man, “It is good for me to meet you and join with you⁹⁶. Again, I will travel with you⁹⁷, I and my companions⁹⁸, and I will give you the recompense you seek”.

7. The boatman replied, “It is good of you⁹⁹, O my lord master”. In fact, he was afraid that he would anger him, so he accepted it from

⁸⁷ Similarly, in the Arabic ms A; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 233, n. 8.

⁸⁸ It could simply mean “Do not return to your home”. The Arabic text adds a similar admonition, instructing not to engage the devil in the discussion.

⁸⁹ Eth. *kalabāt* is the plural form of *kalb*, “dog”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 149b. The Arabic text omits this part of the conversation.

⁹⁰ Eth. *liqa ḥamar*, lit. “chief, master, elder, superior” of the boat. Similarly, in some Arabic variants, the devil possesses the boatman, who then demands money for transporting the dead pig; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 233, n. 13; see also Footnote 44.

⁹¹ The plural form of the personal pronoun appears here.

⁹² Eth. *dinār*, from Gr. *δηνάριον* or Lat. *denarius*, referring to the silver or gold coin used in regions under Roman control, and mentioned several times in the New Testament; see e.g. Matt 17:24, 18:28, 20:2; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1115.

⁹³ Eth. *dinār*.

⁹⁴ Eth. *ḥeywatu*, lit. “his life”.

⁹⁵ This phrase is rather unclear in the Ethiopic text; we translated it according to the logic of narration.

⁹⁶ Plural pronoun used.

⁹⁷ Again, the text uses the plural form of the pronoun.

⁹⁸ That is, the angels that followed the saint.

⁹⁹ Lit. “It is right in your regards”. This expression likely serves as a polite negation, such as “No need, sir”, “You do not have to”, or “It is alright”.

him against his own will. And so, he boarded him and his companions, and they returned to the sea¹⁰⁰. They placed the dead pig at the bow of the boat.

8. When they reached the port near the church of Saint Abu Menas, they carried the wood¹⁰¹ ashore. Then, one of the angels who accompanied the saint said, “No one should disembark from this boat until the master has first stepped onto dry land”. Instead, Saint Abu Menas spoke to the owners of the pig and said, “I see that your hearts are sorrowful because of the pig’s death”. He then gave each of them three dinars and paid the boatman three dinars as well¹⁰². The man asked, “Do you want nothing, O my lord master?”. But the saint replied, “It is not proper for me to offend you”¹⁰³.

9. Then Saint Abu Menas took a step toward the bow of the boat, preparing to leap onto the dry land. But when he reached the spot where the dead pig lay, he kicked it with his foot. At that moment, the pig sprang to life and ran before Saint Abu Menas upon the boat’s side¹⁰⁴ until it reached the walls of the church. As for the saint, he vanished from their sight.

¹⁰⁰ Eth. *bāhr*, meaning “sea, lake, large river”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 95b; in this collection, it mostly refers to Lake Maryut.

¹⁰¹ Eth. *’ed*, meaning “tree, shrub, bush, wood, stick”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 182a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1025-1026, *’arbor, lignum*. In the context of the present narration, the word likely means “a trap” or “an anchor”. Regarding the Arabic text, the version in ms M is much shorter, while the corresponding fragments in other Arabic manuscripts remain unedited.

¹⁰² Similarly, the Arabic ms N mentions three dinars for the boatman; mss A, F, and T use the plural form of *dinār*; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 233, n. 16.

¹⁰³ The plural form of the pronoun appears here.

¹⁰⁴ The Ethiopic expression *lā’la ’asqaleta ḥamar* is difficult to interpret. The Ge’ez verb root *saqala* can mean “suspend, hang, crucify”; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 509b-510a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 350-351. The noun used may be a plural feminine form, though no dictionary lists such a form, particularly in a maritime context. It is possible that *’asqalat* transcribes the Arabic *asqālat*, derived from the same Semitic root *saqala*, meaning “weight” or “heaviness”, which could suggest “anchor”. However, according to ms Ṣ, the pig runs before St Menas (*ala al-asqāla*), lit. “under heavy burdens,” which Jaritz interprets as “auf der Landesteg”, meaning “on the landing stage”, referring to a structure at the shore; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 233, n. 19. Nonetheless, it remains unclear whether the Ethiopian translator fully understood the meaning and terminology of the Arabic text. Finally, if the Arabic term derives from Greek, it could relate to the noun *σκελετός*, referring to the construction of a ship, possibly its side.

10. And they¹⁰⁵ were speaking among themselves, “We cannot deny that it was Saint Abu Menas, the one who was riding with us on the boat, but we did not recognize him. And that it was he who brought the dead pig back to life. Let us not turn back to sacrifice it; instead, let us offer it to the church”. And they stayed for seven days, eating and drinking within (the shrine), glorifying God, and exalting his martyr, Saint Mar Menas. May his intercession protect all of us Christians¹⁰⁶. Amen.

The fifth miracle¹⁰⁷

1. There was an elderly Jewish merchant who lived in the city of Alexandria. In his neighbourhood¹⁰⁸, there also lived a Christian man. Whenever the Jew had to travel for business, he feared that his house

¹⁰⁵ That is, the people from Alexandria.

¹⁰⁶ Eth. *weluda temqat*, lit. “sons of baptism”. See Footnote 57.

¹⁰⁷ For the Greek text (BHG 1260) see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 70-73 (no 4), and Devos, *Le Juif et chrétien*, p. 282-285. A recent edition of the shorter version, along with an English translation, appears in J. Duffy – E. Bourboulakis, *Five Miracles of St. Menas*, in: *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations. Texts and Translations Dedicated to the Memory of Nicolas Oikonomides*, ed. J.W. Nesbitt, Leiden – Boston 2003, p. 75-77 (no 5). For the Coptic version from ms M.590 see Devos, *Le Juif et chrétien*, p. 292-301 (ed. and tr.), and from ms IFAO, p. 285-292 (ed. and tr.); see also Bacot, *Saint Ménas* (no 5), p. 59-63 (tr.). The Ethiopic text from ms C, along with the French translation, appears in Devos, *Le Juif et chrétien*, p. 302-308. For the Arabic version see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 10), based on ms M (III 4, 11), p. 399-400 (ed.), 169-171 (tr.); variants from mss F, Š, and ʾ (III 5, 6), p. 418-422 (ed.), 191-194 (tr.); notes, p. 219-221. A similar story about a man borrowing money from a Jew appears in the miracles of St Nicholas. However, in this version, the Christian pays for perjury with his life and is later resurrected through the saint’s intervention to atone for his sin; see Maistre Wace’s *Life of Saint Nicholas* (no 15), in: M.S. Crawford, *Life of St. Nicholas*, Philadelphia 1923, p. 31; Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 169, n. 751; Wace’s text and English translation (v. 724-806), in: J. Blacker – G.S. Burgess – A.V. Ogden, *Wace, the Hagiographical Works*, Leiden 2013, p. 309-311.

¹⁰⁸ Lit. “in his neighbourhood/vicinity”, as found in all Ethiopic manuscripts. Several Arabic codices, however, omit this information entirely. In mss A, Š, ʾ, and N, the text only mentions that they were neighbours, while ms F states that the Jew and the Christian lived in the same house as friends; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 219, n. 1.

might be plundered¹⁰⁹. Consequently, he would gather all his possessions and entrust them to his Christian neighbour until his return. This arrangement could last for an extended period, even up to seven years¹¹⁰. Each time he returned, the Jew would send a gift to the Christian and reclaim his deposit the following day.

2. It happened after this, when the Jew was traveling into a distant land, that Satan¹¹¹, the adversary of all good things, entered the Christian's heart. The Christian conversed with his wife and said to her, "O my sister, how long shall we forbear¹¹² this Jew and guard his deposit? After all, he is an enemy of God, while we are Christian people. If you listen to me, O woman, when the Jew returns, this time we will deny him, since there is no witness against us. We will say to him, 'You gave us nothing in deposit', and thus his deposit will be for ourselves and for our children, since we are Christians. And even if he demands that we swear an oath regarding his deposit, we will swear to him. Let us, you and me, be of one heart¹¹³, for the people will believe in our story, that we are innocent, because he is a Jewish man and we are Christians. So, be of one accord with me, and do not change my plan". Thus, the woman agreed with her husband on this plan, and they acted as one.

¹⁰⁹ Lit. "the Jew travelled constantly on his business, but he feared for his home, lest it be robbed".

¹¹⁰ The Ethiopic ms B mentions four years. Furthermore, since the numerals for 6 and 7 look similar in many Ethiopic manuscripts, one can confuse or interchange them easily. In the Coptic version, instead of specifying the exact number of years the merchant spent on his journey, the text states that a similar situation occurred six or seven times; see Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 286a, l. 21, 290; Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 59. The Arabic recension generally omits this detail; in fact, only some Arabic codices, such as A, T, and N, mention the years he spent traveling; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 219, n. 2.

¹¹¹ Here and elsewhere in the Ethiopic and Arabic versions, the Semitic term *sayṭān* appears consistently; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 399. In contrast, the Greek and Coptic texts employ the word διάβολος; see Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 282.2; 288a, l. 21.

¹¹² The Ethiopic verb in ms C appears in the first-person singular.

¹¹³ In the Arabic version, the text varies between manuscripts: "And I and you, let us become one heart and one soul" (ms A); "and I and you, we shall say the same, we shall be of the same word" (ms T); or "and you and I will be on the same word"; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 4, 11), p. 399 (ed.), 169 (tr.); 219, n. 3.

3. And this happened after a few days, when the Jewish man returned from his journey, as was his habit, and he sent a gift to the Christian. The Christian took (it) and laughed, saying in his heart, “Of course I will keep this gift he sent to me”. On the next day, the Jewish man got up early and went to the court¹¹⁴ of the Christian, greeted him, and said to him, “Give me back the deposit you are keeping with you”. But the Christian denied it and said, “You did not give me anything, and I do not know what you are talking about”. They began to argue, and soon a great crowd gathered around to see what was happening between them. The Jew was shocked¹¹⁵ when he heard the Christian’s harsh reproach¹¹⁶, as well as the insults of the Hebrews who were involved in their affairs, in front of the large crowd¹¹⁷.

4. After this, the Jew had a good thought in his heart and said to the Christian, “Behold, I have heard about the martyr Abu Menas¹¹⁸ from those who visit his church and bow down¹¹⁹, that he is mighty and possesses great powers, and he punishes¹²⁰ those who swear falsely in his church. So, let us go to his church. Swear to me and declare that I have not entrusted you with anything of mine, and I will leave you in peace”¹²¹.

¹¹⁴ Eth. *’aşad*, like Ar. *aṣīd*, refers to a circumscribed area, such as a courtyard or court. It may also denote a hawsehole, palace, territory, atrium, hall, or vestibule; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 181b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1023-1024, *area, vestibulum, atrium, villa, septum, habitatio*. This suggests a dwelling more distinctive than an ordinary house (Eth. *bēt*).

¹¹⁵ Lit. “the Jew’s chest was narrowed”.

¹¹⁶ Eth. *zerkāye*, meaning “calumny, reproach, insult”; cf. Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 643b. The text probably breaks at this point. All the Ethiopic mss incorrectly employ *za-re’eya*, “that he saw”, perhaps due to the graphic similarity between the Ethiopic letters *’alef* and *kaf*.

¹¹⁷ The Ethiopic text consistently refers to the miracle’s protagonist as the “Jew” (*yehudāwī*), in contrast to the standard form *’ayhudāwī*; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 626b. Additionally, the collective term “Hebrews” (*’ebrāwiyān*) appears here to refer to his coreligionists assisting in the dispute between the two protagonists. The Arabic text omits any mention of the other Hebrews, while the Coptic text of ms M.590 simply states, “qu’une grande foule s’attroupa autour d’eux”; see Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 299.

¹¹⁸ Ms B has “this Minā”.

¹¹⁹ Lacuna in the ms B from the words “and bow down (...) his church”, due to a homeoteleuton.

¹²⁰ Lit. “recompenses, repays, rewards”; cf. Leslau, *Concise*, p. 245b (Eth. *fadaya*).

¹²¹ Lit. “and I will go from you”.

5. The Christian replied, “A Jewish man is not allowed to enter a church that is for Christians”¹²². The Jew said to him, “I know that I am not permitted to enter, but you may go in¹²³ while I will stand at a distance. So, you will stand at the threshold of the church door¹²⁴, and swear to me in the name of the Lord and his martyr, Saint Abu Menas. As for me, I believe that his power extends everywhere. Afterwards, I will leave you in peace”¹²⁵. As for the Christian, Satan filled his heart¹²⁶, and he denied the power of Saint Abu Menas due to the vanity of this corruptible world.

6. The next day¹²⁷, after this discussion, they mounted their animals and went to the church of Saint Abu Menas. (Upon their arrival) the Jew bowed down at the feet of the Christian and said, “Take whatever you wish from what you have, and whatever remains, give it to me. But do not swear, for the power of the Martyr is great, and I fear that misfortune may befall you because of me”. However, (the Christian) did not listen to him. He was in fact filled with joy and lacked the fear of God. Thus, he ascended the stairs of the church to the threshold of the gate¹²⁸.

¹²² Lacuna in ms B from the words “that is Christian (...) the door of the church”, due to a homeoteleuton.

¹²³ In the Ethiopic text, the imperative mood appears here.

¹²⁴ Eth. *madrak*, from the verb *daraka*, “be rough, be hard”, means a doorway, threshold, porch, entrance court, or vestibule; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 193; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1095. For observations regarding the Greek and Coptic version see Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 291, n. 1. For the biblical equivalents of the Ethiopic expression *madraka hoḥet* see e.g. Sir 6:36, βαθμοὺς θυρῶν; Judg 19:26, παρὰ τὴν θύραν; Exod 27:16, πύλη; Exod 21:6; Deut 15:7, σταθμός.

¹²⁵ Lit. “I will go from you”.

¹²⁶ According to the Arabic ms M, Satan made the Christian shameless and used him freely, lit. “dressed him like a garment” (*wa-labasah kältüb*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 399 (ed.), p. 170, “Und weil der Satan den Christen unverschämt machte und ihn wie ein Kleid anzog”.

¹²⁷ Copt. “un jour déterminé”, according to Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 300, n. 3, but “après quelques jours” in the translation by Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 61.

¹²⁸ There are two Ethiopic expressions in this sentence, appearing consecutively: *diba ma’ārga bēta krestiyān* “on the steps/grades of the church”, and then *diba sawāsewa ‘anqaš* “on the ladder/step of the gate”. In fact, the Ethiopic nouns *ma’ārg* and *sawāsew* can serve as synonyms. For the corresponding sentence in Greek and especially for the Coptic texts, which indicate a portico (στοά) of the sanctuary (τόπος), see Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 288b, l. 20-21, 291.3: “Il [the Christian] eut l’audace de monter jusque dessus les degrés de St apa Mēna, alors que le Juif se tenait à distance, au-dessous de la *stoa* extérieure du sanctuaire [σταῖς τοῦ ἁγίου Μηνᾶ]”. See also Footnote 37.

7. The Jew stood at a distance and watched him, while the Christian spoke and swore, “May the witness of the power of the martyr Abu Menas be upon me, that you have not entrusted me with anything, and that I possess none of your goods”. The Jew, in fact, believed that the Martyr would strike the Christian down at the very moment he swore falsely.

8. After he had sworn, both took their animals and mounted them, and they rode on together. After traveling three miles¹²⁹ from the church of Saint Abu Menas, the ass carrying the Christian stumbled and threw him to the ground. The animal then trampled him, and the golden ring¹³⁰ on his finger fell off. He searched for it in vain but could not find it. He concluded (to himself) that what had happened to him was a result of the oath, and for no other reason. He then mounted his ass again, thinking that he had escaped the consequences of his false oath.

9. When they arrived¹³¹ at a guest house¹³², they went to the market¹³³ to buy food, and afterward, they met in the (same) place. However, the Jew thought in his heart, saying, “It would be better for me not to be-

¹²⁹ Eth. *me‘erāf* generally refers to measures of length; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 69b. A similar concept appears in the Coptic text; see Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 289a, l. 18-19 (ed.), 292: ⲛⲁⲩⲱⲙⲛⲧ ⲙⲙⲓⲗⲓⲟⲛ “trois milles”. The Arabic text contains the expressions “they had covered half of distance”, or “they had moved a little away from the church”; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 170 and 220, n. 8.

¹³⁰ Eth. *ḥelqata warq*; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 230a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 68. Several Arabic manuscripts and the Coptic version from IFAO mention only a “ring” (ⲛⲉⲗⲟⲩⲣ); see Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 289a, l. 25. However in ms M.590, the term appears as “golden ring” (ⲛⲉⲗⲟⲩⲣ ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲃ); see Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 296a, l. 30.

¹³¹ In ms C, both here and elsewhere, the verbs are in the singular, implying that the Christian is alone, while in mss A and B, we see plural forms. Similarly, plural forms appear in Greek (cf. Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 283), in Coptic (ⲁⲩ-ⲉⲓ (...) ⲁⲩ-ⲃⲱⲕ, “they came (...) they went to”, cf. Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 289b, l. 5-7; Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 62), and in Arabic (cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 398 and 170).

¹³² Eth. *māḥdara ʿengedā*, lit. “foreigner’s dwelling or habitation”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 143a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 615, *hospitium, diversorium, or mansio nocturna*; “auberge des étrangers”, in Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 307. In this instance, however, the Ethiopic text seems to translate literally, perhaps unknowingly, what in Greek (Λοξονίτα, cf. Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 283, para. 5) and Coptic texts refers to the toponym Philoxenite (ⲫⲓⲗⲟⲗⲉⲛⲓⲧⲁ); see Devos, *Le Juif et le chrétien*, p. 289b, l. 6 (ms IFAO), and 296b, l. 13 (cf. M.590, reconstructed). The name *filukṣānīda* also appears in several Arabic manuscripts; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 170 and 399, with variants, see p. 220, n. 11.

¹³³ Gr. ἀγορά, and Copt. ⲁⲣⲟⲣⲁ.

lieve in Abu Menas, since he did not manifest any of his powers. Instead of making him swear, it might be wiser¹³⁴ to ask him (that is, the Christian) if he would give me a little of what he has, since he has taken all I have struggled for”.

10. Both of them were upset: the Christian, because he had sworn by the Martyr¹³⁵, but he found some consolation in his heart due to the deposit he had falsely sworn about. The Jew, however, was not consoled at all. But while they were together¹³⁶, a Christian servant arrived from Alexandria, and they both hurried to meet him. A deposit was on the servant's shoulder; in fact, it was all the property of the Jew. Upon seeing it, they were astonished, and the master of the servant asked him, “Where have you come from, where are you going, and what is this?”.

11. The servant answered and said to him, “I came to you because a comes¹³⁷ came to my lady, your wife, and he had a gold ring¹³⁸ that belongs to you. He said to her, ‘This is a sign from your husband: “You will send your servant with the deposit belonging to the Jew that I have kept¹³⁹, for I am in great misfortune, and a severe calamity has come upon me”. Just get up and send all his goods with him. And if you wish to know that all I am telling you is true, I have brought you this ring, which is his’. So, she took the ring from him, and we recognized that it was yours. Then, I took the Jew's deposit¹⁴⁰ and I brought it to you”.

12. The Christian, therefore, took the ring and recognized that it was the one that had fallen from his finger. He was filled with fear and realized that he had sworn falsely and that he had gained nothing from it. The Jew, in turn, when he saw all his possessions, he leapt with great joy and praised God and his martyr Saint Abu Menas. He then took the deposit from the servant, returned to the church of the saint, and offered a portion of it. Afterward, he was baptized, along with all his household. He

¹³⁴ Lit. “it would be better”, as in the preceding phrase.

¹³⁵ Ms C, “on the name of the Martyr”.

¹³⁶ Eth. *wa-’enza hallaw we’etomu neburānihomu*. Ms C has another verb (Eth. *ḥabara*), “they joined each other”.

¹³⁷ Eth. *mak’annen*, lit. “a ruler, a judge”, carries also the idea of domination, power, and authority; thus, we can translate this term as “lord, master, governor, officer, nobleman, *princeps*, *dominator*, *dux*, ἄρχων, ἡγούμενος, δυνάστης”; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 287b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 856. See Footnote 86.

¹³⁸ Eth. *ḥelqat* (*helqāt* in ms C); see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 230a, “ring, finger ring, circle”; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 68, δακτύλιος. See Footnote 130.

¹³⁹ Ms C, “I ordered” (Eth. *’ezzuz*).

¹⁴⁰ Ms B, “redemption, salvation”.

became one of the Christians and continued to visit the church (on the saint's feast day), remembering it until the day of his passing¹⁴¹. Glory be to our Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour, forever and ever. Amen.

The sixth miracle¹⁴²

1. There was a crippled man who, for more than twelve years, could not walk at all and had to crawl on his hands and legs to reach the church of Saint Abu Menas. There was also a mute woman who had been unable to speak for a long time. Both of them sought healing from God through the intercession¹⁴³ of Saint Abu Menas¹⁴⁴.

2. The saint appeared in the likeness of a soldier¹⁴⁵ and said to the crippled man, "If you wish to be healed, when evening comes and everyone in the church falls asleep, crawl on your hands so that no one recognizes you, go to the bed of that mute woman, lie with her, and you will receive healing".

¹⁴¹ See Footnote 72.

¹⁴² The Greek text of this miracle (BHG 1261) is known from two versions. The longer version, which corresponds more closely to the Ethiopic text, exists in two editions: by Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 73-75 (no 5), and a more recent one, with an English translation, by Duffy – Bourbouhakis, *Five Miracles*, p. 79-81. The other, much shorter version of the miracle, along with an English translation, appears in their *Five Miracles*, p. 74-75 (no 4). The Arabic recension from ms M generally agrees with the Ethiopic text, except certain expressions that make the narration even more dramatic; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 11), on ms M (III 4, 12), p. 400-401 (ed.), 171 (tr.); for the alternative version see mss S and T (III 5, 7), p. 422-423 (ed.), 194-195 (tr.); notes (III 6, 9), p. 221-222.

¹⁴³ Lit. "by elevation of the hand".

¹⁴⁴ The story of the crippled man and mute woman seeking healing, as described in relation to St Menas, has parallels in other hagiographical texts. A similar account appears in the miracles attributed to St Cyr and St John (PG 88, 3520), and in the miracles of St Cosmas and St Damian; see L. Deubner, *Kosmas und Damian*, Leipzig 1907, p. 162-164 (no 24); cf. H. Delehaye, *L'invention des reliques de saint Ménas à Constantinople*, "Analecta Bollandiana" 29 (1910) p. 131-132; Delehaye, *Les recueils antiques*, p. 49.

¹⁴⁵ The Ethiopic term *ḥarāwi*, as an adjective derived from the noun *harā* "army", typically appears in translations as "soldier", or "warrior"; see Leslau, *Concise*, 17a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 85-86, *miles*, *centurio*, *tribunus*, στρατιώτης; Mark 15:39.44-45, John 19:23.

3. When the paralytic man woke up, he was amazed and thought that the dream was a temptation¹⁴⁶. He said to himself, “If I go and do this, seeking the health of my body, and fall into sin with this woman, shame and dishonour will befall me before the people”¹⁴⁷.

4. Then, when the next night came¹⁴⁸, the paralytic saw Saint Abu Menas in a dream, saying, “Do as I have instructed, and you will find healing. But do not tell anyone until the miracle has occurred”. Keeping the vision in his heart, the paralytic waited until everyone¹⁴⁹ had fallen asleep. He then crawled little by little until he reached the bed of the mute woman, took her coverlet, and uncovered her.

5. When he touched her body, she suddenly rose in terror and, with great agitation, cried out loudly¹⁵⁰, “Woe is me”¹⁵¹, for a man has come to lie with me!”. The paralytic man, startled and shocked, felt a great tremor among the great number of sleepers. So, he rose to his feet and began to run quickly like a runner¹⁵². All who witnessed this were astonished as they saw the mute woman speaking and the paralytic man walking, both by the power of the martyr Abu Menas¹⁵³.

¹⁴⁶ Similarly in some Arabic manuscripts; in others, the paralytic’s thought has the form of a longer internal dialogue; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 222.

¹⁴⁷ Lit. “in the middle of the people”.

¹⁴⁸ Mss B and C: “the first night”.

¹⁴⁹ Lit. “people”.

¹⁵⁰ Lit. “with a great voice”.

¹⁵¹ Here and later, this is the translation of the Ethiopic acclamation *way lita*; cf. Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 623b.

¹⁵² Eth. *badāri* (mss AC) or *badari* (ms B), an active participle of the verb root *badara* “be swift, hurry, advance”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 104a. However, this form is absent from Dillmann’s lexicon. The Arabic ms M explains that he run quickly, and no one caught up with him until he reached the outside of the church; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 401.

¹⁵³ The texts feature final notes with supplications, typical of Ethiopic manuscripts. In mss A and C, the note reads, “Praise and glory to our Lord and God, Jesus Christ, who granted this through his holy martyrs, who endured tribulations and torments for his holy name. Praise and glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, forever. Amen”. Another supplication in ms B reads, “May the prayer (of St Menas) and his blessing preserve our father Yeshaq and may never depart from him. May they also protect us from any hesitation or falling, forever and ever. Amen”. The second prayer likely refers to the Metropolitan Bishop of Ethiopia, who served around 1480 to 1500; cf. S. Ancel, *Yəshaq*, EAe V 62b-63b. If so, this supplication allows us to date ms B to the late fifteenth century.

The seventh miracle¹⁵⁴

Listen, O my brothers, to this great miracle, although it is a fearful thing to hear¹⁵⁵.

1. There was a Syrian man, an Orthodox¹⁵⁶, who possessed many goods. During his journey, he entered the city of Alexandria. Upon hearing about the glory of the martyr Abu Menas, his powers, and his miracles, he said to himself, “I will go to his church, worship before his pure body, and offer a small gift¹⁵⁷ to his church, so that the Lord may make my way prosperous”. He reflected on this thought, recalling the words the Lord said in the Holy Gospel: “Let your giving be in secret, and your Father who is in the heavens will reward you openly”¹⁵⁸.

2. He then stood up, took his pouch¹⁵⁹, and went to the port. There, he found a boat, boarded it, and set sail toward the port, the dwelling of

¹⁵⁴ For the Greek text (BHG 1257), see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 63-66 (no 1). A more consistent Greek version of this miracle, along with an English translation, appears in Duffy – Bourbouhakis, *Five Miracles*, p. 68-69 (no 1). For the Coptic text from M.590 (no 2) see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 12-17 (ed.), 111-114 (tr.). Another Coptic version, from ms IFAO (no 3), appears in Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 42-50 (ed.), 66-68 (tr.), and is closer to the Ethiopic text; its French translation is also available in Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 48-51 (no 2). For the Arabic versions see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 5), according to ms M (III 4, 6), p. 395-396 (ed.), 165-166 (tr.); and from ms Š (III 5, 3), p. 373-375 (ed.), 185 (tr.); additional notes (III 6, 4), p. 214-217.

¹⁵⁵ Such a rhetorical invocation is absent from the introductions to other versions of this miracle. However, it appears at the beginning of the Coptic and Arabic *encomium*; see Footnote 24.

¹⁵⁶ Eth. *be'si soryāwi 'ortadoksāwi* (mss AC) or *'artodoksāwi* (ms B). According to the Greek text, the man lived in the land of the Isaurians (ἄνθρωπος τις ἦν ἐκ τῆς χώρας τῶν Ἰσαύρων); see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 63, l. 11. The same indication appears in the Coptic ms M.590, which also identifies him as a Christian; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 13a, l. 3-4 ([lc]αγ[p]oc). In contrast, the Arabic ms M (III 4, 6) simply describes him as a wealthy merchant who went to Alexandria; other manuscripts identify him as a Syrian and even as an Orthodox; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 214, n. 2. A similar story features among the miracles of St George; see H. Günter, *Psychologie der Legende*, Freiburg 1949, p. 300.

¹⁵⁷ Eth. *nestita barakat*, lit. “a little of blessing”. The Greek word εὐλογία also appears in the Coptic text; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 13a, l. 24.

¹⁵⁸ Cf. Matt 6:4. This phrase, along with the quotation, appears in the Coptic version, though it features only in ms IFAO; see Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 44a, l. 21-27 (ed.), 66 (tr.). The fragment is absent from the Arabic manuscripts examined by Jaritz.

¹⁵⁹ Eth. *q^wenāmata warq*, lit. “a bag of gold”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 87a; Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 443. Similarly in the Coptic ms IFAO: “le sac (ράκος) d’or”; see

the foreigners¹⁶⁰. As evening approached and he was still on his journey, he entered a storehouse¹⁶¹ where a merchant¹⁶² happened to be. He said to the merchant, “If you would be so kind, I would like to stay here with you, for I am afraid to spend the night alone”. The man replied, “Come in and stay with me, there is no one else here”. The traveller entered, and the man prepared a place for him to sleep. Meanwhile, he took note of the pouch the traveller was carrying¹⁶³.

3. And Satan filled the merchant’s heart¹⁶⁴. He waited until the man fell asleep, then approached him and killed him. Afterward, he said, “When the people at the port fall asleep, I will go to the sea and throw his body into it”. However, as he was considering this, a great light suddenly shone in the place where he was, as if it were the break of dawn. When he saw the light, he became filled with fear¹⁶⁵ and said, “If the people around me knew what I have done, they would come in and so see the shameful deed I have committed”.

Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 44a, l. 29-30 (ed.), 66 (tr.). However, according to ms M.590, the man took 3,000 coins; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 13a, l. 28-30 (ed.), 112 (tr.).

¹⁶⁰ Eth. *ḥaba mars māḥdara ’engedā* in mss A and C, while ms B reads, *ḥaba mars wa-ḥadara westa māḥdare ’engedā*, which means that he arrived “at the port and he stood in a foreigner’s dwelling”. It is likely that *maḥdara ’engedā* translates the Arabic expression adapted from the Greek toponym Philoxenite, literally a “foreigner’s shelter”. Unfortunately, the passage survives as significantly abbreviated in the available Arabic manuscripts. Still, the name of the port appears in the Greek version: Λοξονήτα, see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 63, l. 19; and in the Coptic versions: ΦΙΛΞΑΝΕΙΛΗ, in M.590, see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 13b, l. 3-4; and ΦΙΛΞΑΝΙΤΑ, in ms IFAO, see Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 44a, l. 33-34.

¹⁶¹ Eth. *mazgab*, a noun derived from the verb root *zagaba* “collect, gather, store, accumulate”, can signify a “treasure, treasury, magazine, or storehouse”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 188b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1066-1067. The Coptic version of ms IFAO consequently refers to the place with the Greek word ἀποθήκη; see Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 44b, l. 2-3 (ἀποθήκη), 66 (“magazin”).

¹⁶² Eth. *be’si šayāṭi* “merchant, trader, vendor, seller”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 54b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 265, *venditor, mercator*.

¹⁶³ The texts of the Coptic ms IFAO and the Arabic ms M also mention a meal of bread and wine that the man had, while ms Š aligns more closely with the Ethiopic version; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 185 (tr.).

¹⁶⁴ Eth. *lebo* “his heart”, while the Coptic ms IFAO has “tout son corps (σῶμα)”, according to Bacot’s translation in *Quatre miracles*, p. 66.

¹⁶⁵ Lit. “he feared with great fear”.

4. He took the body, cut it into pieces, and threw it into a basket¹⁶⁶. Then he said to himself¹⁶⁷, “If I rise and find the way, I will cast it into the sea”. And holding the head in one hand and a knife¹⁶⁸ in the other, he wanted to cut it off. Suddenly, Saint Abu Menas, the Martyr of Jesus Christ¹⁶⁹, came riding his spiritual horse¹⁷⁰, accompanied by angels¹⁷¹ who took the form of servants walking beside him.

5. The saint entered the storehouse¹⁷² where the man was present. Overcome by great terror, the man held the head in one hand and

¹⁶⁶ Eth. *’asfārid* “basket”, originating from Greek σπιρίς and Syriac *’asparīdā*, both of which carry a similar meaning; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 42a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 753, *canistrum, fiscina, sporta*, Matt 15:37, Mark 8:8, Acts 9:25; Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, c. 317, also meaning *cophinus, corbis, sporta*. The Coptic ms IFAO uses the Greek word πυρά, which could mean “a fireplace”. However, Bacot translates it as “un panier”; see Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 46b, l. 9 (ed.), 67 (tr.). Piwowarczyk proposes correcting this reading to πήρα “travel bag”; see P. Piwowarczyk, *Cuda św. Menasa według rekopisu Pierpont Morgan Library M.590 (Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 221; Clavis Coptica 398)*, VoxP 80 (2021) p. 530-531, n. 37. The Arabic ms Š features the word *al-qafah*, which also means “basket” or “container”; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 413 (ed.), 185 (tr.), with observations on p. 216, n. 10.

¹⁶⁷ Lit. “in his soul”.

¹⁶⁸ Eth. *maṭbāht*, deriving from the verb root *ṭabḥa* “slaughter, slay, kill, cut up”, means a “sword, dagger, or knife”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 217; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1225-1226.

¹⁶⁹ Ms B abbreviates this solemn title to the customary “Saint Abu Menas”.

¹⁷⁰ Eth. *diba farasu manfasāwi*. A similar Coptic expression (ⲙⲡⲉⲩⲣⲉⲩⲟ ⲙⲡⲁⲩⲁ) appears in the text of ms IFAO; cf. Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 46a, l. 33 (ed.), 67 (tr.). In the Arabic text (Ar. 5), the expression “spiritual horse” (*hiṣān rūḥī*) appears as well, but only in mss A and N. The same term features in the following miracles and Arabic mss: Miracle 9 (Ar. 12), mss M and N; Miracle 17 (Ar. 23), ms R; Miracle 18 (Ar. 9), mss M and F; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 289. The Greek text employs another expression: “And behold, Menas, the holy martyr of Christ, arrived as a cavalryman (καβαλάριος)”; see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 64, l. 8-9.

¹⁷¹ “Two angels” (ⲁⲓⲣⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲉⲛⲁⲩ) in the Coptic version; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 14b, l. 1-2; Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 46a, l. 34. The Arabic text also mentions a host of angels following the saint, depicted as resembling men or soldiers; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 216, n. 11.

¹⁷² Eth. *bēta ḥanot*, as found in mss A and C, is an expression composed of *bēt* “house”, and *ḥanot*, which can mean “cell”, “tavern”, or even “butchery”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 22; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 109, *taberna, macellum, caupona*. It also appears in Prov 23:20 (ἄγορά?) and in Acts 28:15 – with *kawānit* for plural *ḥawānit*. The word derives from Arabic *ḥānūt* “workshop, tavern”, which originates from the Syriac *ḥānūtā*, meaning *cella, camera arcuata, taberna mercatoris, officina*;

the lamp¹⁷³ in the other. He swiftly placed the head into the basket and hung it in the corner of his house. Then, in haste, he unlocked the gate to admit Saint Abu Menas.

6. The saint immediately entered the cell¹⁷⁴, seized the man, and said to him, “Reflect on your soul and understand what you have done before I speak further”. The man replied, “O my lord governor, there is no one else here”. But the saint said to him, “Be silent now and sit down, for I came for this very purpose to meet you”. Then, turning toward the basket where the head of the slain man was hung, he said, “O man, did I not tell you that I would find exactly what I came for?”.

7. When the man saw the saint’s face, radiant and filled with divine glory, along with the angels who accompanied him, he thought and concluded that he was an officer¹⁷⁵ sent in connection with the man he had killed¹⁷⁶. But upon realizing that it was Saint Abu Menas, he was struck with great fear¹⁷⁷. Overcome by shock, he recognized the saint, bowed before him, and cast dust upon his head, saying, “O my lord, merciful father, save my poor soul from death, for I acknowledge that I have committed a great sin¹⁷⁸. I have seen the glory of the Lord reflected in your face, and

see Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, c. 1318-1319. The Ethiopic ms B renders the term as *bēta hārast*, from the root *ḥarasa* “plow, cultivate land”, see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 18, which we could interpret as a “house of farmers”. In the Coptic text of the miracle, the Greek term ἀποθήκη appears once again (ἀποθήκη); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 14b, l. 6-7.14.18-19 (ed.), 112 (tr.), and Bacot, *Quatre Miracles*, p. 46b, l. 4 (ed.), 66-67 (tr.). The Arabic versions refer to the place as a “shop” or “store” (*al-dukkān*).

¹⁷³ Eth. *’elfabnas*, in mss A and C, or the hardly understandable *’elf bnasa* in ms B, most likely originates from the Arabic word *al-fānūs* “lantern, lamp”, derived from the Greek φανός “torch”, see H.G. Liddell – R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Oxford 1996, p. 1915a, and the Persian *fanūs* “pharos, lantern”, see F.J. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, London 1892, p. 905, 940.

¹⁷⁴ The word *’elḥanot* in Ethiopic mss A and C, or *’ālḥenot* in ms B, is a variant of the previous expression *bēta hānot* (see Footnote 172), in which the copyist dropped the first element and added the Arabic definite article *al-* to *ḥanot*. This clearly demonstrates the Arabic *Vorlage* of the Ethiopic text.

¹⁷⁵ Eth. *mak’annen*, see Footnote 86. The Arabic versions also referred to him as a soldier, governor, hegumen, or comes (*al-qūmes*, from the Greek/Latin word κόμης/*comes*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 216, n. 11.

¹⁷⁶ Lit. “in the matter of the killed man whom he killed”.

¹⁷⁷ Lit. “feared with great fear”.

¹⁷⁸ Lit. “sinned a great sin”.

I now recognize my wrongdoing. When I first saw the pouch¹⁷⁹ that this man carried, I realized it was full of gold, and I left him until he fell asleep. Then, I arose and killed him, thinking I could take his property and become rich. O my lord, I have taken nothing from this¹⁸⁰, so I will bring it¹⁸¹ all back. I will also give you one hundred dinars¹⁸² to save me from my sin that I have committed”.

8. The saint said to him, “Repent, O man. I have hidden my face¹⁸³ from you, but you finally recognize me. Bring me this basket with the man cut into pieces, so that I may reveal to you the glory of the Lord, which was revealed to his martyr”. The man then rose, took the basket, and delivered it into his hands. Abu Menas said, “In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who has granted me the strength to believe in his holy name. I command you, arise, fully alive, with complete flesh and a whole body. And grant this man the understanding of who I am”.

9. At that very moment, the limbs were brought together, united as one, and the man became complete¹⁸⁴. Upon rising, he was fully alive, and he bowed to the ground before Saint Abu Menas and the angels who were with him. And he said, “O my lord, Saint Abu Menas, the Merciful, (may) the fullness of grace (be) upon all those who enter your church”. At that very hour, Saint Abu Menas blessed him and ascended into heaven with the angels who accompanied him, with great glory, and a luminous cloud enveloped him. And (as he ascended,) he said to the man, “Do not forget the promise you made”.

10. Upon witnessing the miracle, the man recognized the greatness of what had occurred through Saint Abu Menas. He immediately rose, took a large portion of the gold, (and) the other (man likewise took) from what he had¹⁸⁵. Together, they went to the church of Abu Menas, where they offered their gifts to the holy church and gave glory to God Most High,

¹⁷⁹ In the Coptic text, ⲕⲁⲩⲁ, from the Greek word *κάψα* and *κάμψα* “basket, case”, Lat. *capsa*; see Liddell – Scott, *Lexicon*, p. 873b.

¹⁸⁰ In fact, the demonstrative pronoun is in the plural form here: “of these (coins)”.

¹⁸¹ Another plural pronoun.

¹⁸² Instead, ms B mentions only “3 dinars”. In the Coptic text, “two thousand solidi (ὀλοκόττινος)” appear in both versions. The Arabic ms Š states “one hundred dinars”, similarly to the Ethiopic text; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 414 (ed.), 185 (tr.).

¹⁸³ Lit. “my soul”.

¹⁸⁴ Eth. *wa'kona feṣuma be'si*.

¹⁸⁵ Corrupt Ethiopic text in all the manuscripts.

the true miracle maker, along with his saint, [in the name of] the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

The eighth miracle¹⁸⁶

1. In the city of Alexandria, there was a wealthy man named Eutropius¹⁸⁷. He heard that some people¹⁸⁸ were going to the church of Saint Abu Menas. Reflecting within himself, he said, “I will rise and craft two silver plates¹⁸⁹. One shall be offered to the church of Saint Abu Menas, while the other I will use for my meals until the day of my passing¹⁹⁰. Later, this second plate will also be given to the church as an atonement for my sins”¹⁹¹.

¹⁸⁶ For the Greek text (BHG 1258) see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 66-68 (no 2); for another, more consistent recension of the Greek miracle, edited with an English translation, see Duffy – Bourbouhakis, *Five Miracles*, p. 71-73 (no 2). The Coptic text: from ms M.590 see Drescher, *Apa Mena* (no 3), p. 17-22 (ed.), 114-116 (tr.); from ms IFAO see Bacot, *Quatre miracles* (no 4), p. 50-58 (ed.), 68-70 (tr.); Bacot, *Saint Ménas* (no 3), p. 51-55 (tr.); cf. Piwowarczyk, *Cuda św. Menasa*, p. 403-405 (tr.). For the Arabic version see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 7), *rec. brevior* on ms M (III 4, 8), p. 397 (ed.), 167-168 (tr.), and *rec. longior*, closer to the Ethiopic text, on mss A and Š (III 5, 4), p. 414-416 (ed.), 186-187 (tr.); additional notes, p. 217-218.

¹⁸⁷ Eth. *ʾAṭrābiyos* (ms A), *ʾAṭrābyos* (ms B), or *Ṭebrāyos* (ms C). In the Greek miracle, his name is Εὐτρόπιος, cf. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 66, l. 11, while the Coptic text features ⲁⲩⲧⲣⲱⲡⲓⲟⲥ, see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 18a, l. 7ff. In the Arabic version (ms M), the man's name is Aleksandrūs of Alexandria; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 4, 8), p. 397 (ed.), 217 (tr.). However, in other Arabic manuscripts, the name appears in its original form *ʾAṭrābiyūs* (A, F, T, H, Š), *ʾAṭrābīs* (D, N), *Ṭarābiyūs* (R), or *ʾAwṭerāfiyūs* (Š); cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 6, 5), p. 217, n. 1.

¹⁸⁸ Lit. “they” (Eth. *weʾetomu*).

¹⁸⁹ Eth. *ṣāhl* (pl. *ʾaṣhel* and *ʾaṣhelt*) refers to a “dish, bowl, jar, pan, platter”, or even a large paten used for serving the Holy Eucharist; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 224a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1264, *patina, lanx, paropsis* (cf. Matt 23:25f), *accera, phila*; Gr. πίναξ in Matt 14:8, Luke 11:39. The Greek text of the miracle mentions two platters of gold (δύο δίσκοι ἄργυροῦς); see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 66, l. 12. In turn, the Coptic text simply refers to two dishes (ⲡⲓⲛⲁⲗ); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 17b, l. 9-10. The Arabic text has two silver tablets (*ṣīniyya*) in mss M and F, or plates or dishes (*ṣaḥn* and possibly *ṭabaq*) in other mss; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 217, n. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Eth. *ʾeska ʾelata felsatya*; see Footnote 72.

¹⁹¹ The last sentence is absent from the Coptic text in both manuscripts.

2. He sent for a smith¹⁹² and brought him to his house, saying, “Take this silver and fashion two plates, ensuring that neither is greater than the other. Inscribe then the name of Saint Abu Menas on one plate, and my name on the other. But be careful to ensure that neither plate is a greater work than the other in any way”. The smith took the silver, returned to his home, and completed the task of crafting the two plates.

3. One of his works was indeed more beautiful than the other. The smith brought them to Eutropius to receive his payment, and said to him, “As for the two plates I made, neither is larger than the other; however, one is crafted more beautifully than the other. Which one should I inscribe the name of Abu Menas on: the better one, or the other?”. The nobleman replied, “Write the name of Abu Menas on the second one, and my name on the better one. I will use it until the day of my passing¹⁹³, and then it will be given to the church of Saint Abu Menas”. The smith followed the instructions, received his payment, and left.

4. After a few days¹⁹⁴, Eutropius rose, went to the port, and boarded a boat with his servant. He also took with him two silver plates: one to offer to the church, and the other to use it until he reached his dwelling¹⁹⁵. When the time of eating approached, the servant rose and prepared (a meal). So, his master¹⁹⁶ ate from the plate and drank. And after he had eaten, drunk, and enjoyed his life, the servant took his master’s silver plate, which was still full of leftover food, and ate from it. Meanwhile, his master slept in the boat, unaware that it was drifting back.

¹⁹² Eth. *nahābi*, a *nomen agentis* derived from the verb root *nahaba* “to work metal, beat iron or any other metal, forge”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 119a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 631, *faber aerarius et ferrarius, aurifex, argentifex, fusor metallorum*. In the Ethiopic Bible, it translates Greek nouns such as χαλκεύς (Job 32:19; Isa 41:7, 54:16; Sir 38:28) and χρυσοχόος (Jer 6:29). However, in the Greek text of the miracle, it corresponds to τεχνίτης “artificer, craftsman”; cf. Liddell – Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*, p. 1785b. In Acts 19:24, the Greek τεχνῖται (plural of τεχνίτης) refers to craftsmen, while ἀργυροκόπος specifically describes Demetrius, a silversmith; only the latter term features in Ethiopic as *nahābē berur*; see C. Niccum, *The Bible in Ethiopia: The Book of Acts*, EMTS 19, Eugene 2014, p. 205.

¹⁹³ See Footnote 190.

¹⁹⁴ “After a few days” appears in mss A and C, as well as in both the Arabic ms A and the Coptic ms M.590. In contrast, the Ethiopic ms B has “the next day”.

¹⁹⁵ This part of the phrase could mean the day of the man’s death; however, in light of the further context, it seems to indicate a place of rest in Philoxenite; see Footnotes 132 and 160.

¹⁹⁶ Eth. *’egzi ’u*, lit. “his lord”, used here and later.

5. The servant intended to wash the plate in the sea. Suddenly, a great wind arose, and darkness covered the sea. All those in the boat were terrified. Overcome by fear, the servant was struck with great dread¹⁹⁷, and the plate slipped from his hand into the sea. Fearing that his master would punish him, he threw himself¹⁹⁸ into the sea, saying, “It is better for me to die in the sea than to be executed¹⁹⁹ by my master, for he loves his plate more than anything he owns”.

6. When his master saw what had happened to the servant, he wept, tore his clothes, and said, “Woe is me, more than all the people, for great is my sin. I desired the beautiful plate to be mine, and for this reason, I made a mistake. Now, both the plate and the servant are lost. What shall I do? I will never find a man among those who were aboard with me to console me²⁰⁰. Woe is me; my shame will be great when many people learn that I travelled and made a promise at the church of the martyr, only to lose everything and gain nothing. Moreover, I have lost my servant, for death came and took him.

7. Had I known what would happen to me, I would have made three plates: one of gold and two of silver and would have offered (them) to the church of Saint Abu Menas the Martyr, so that I would not have endured such affliction of heart. Now, if I find the body of my servant, it would be fitting for me to offer the plate that I still possess to the church of Saint Abu Menas. Moreover, from what I have, I would offer to his church an equivalent²⁰¹ of the plate that sank, since I have transgressed, and my heart has become very narrow. I left the beautiful (plate) for myself and offered the defective one to the church”. And he was saying this in his heart.

8. Upon reaching the port of the church²⁰², he gazed upon the land and said, “I wonder if the waves might bring my servant’s body onto the shore”. The sailors, however, responded, “O man, you have lost your mind²⁰³. After he sank in the sea, you say, ‘If the waves were to bring his body ashore’. How could such a thing be possible?”. The man replied,

¹⁹⁷ Lit. “terrified with great terror”.

¹⁹⁸ Lit. “he submerged his person”.

¹⁹⁹ Or “to be judged”, from the Ethiopic verb root *kʷannana*; see Footnote 86.

²⁰⁰ In the Coptic version, ms M.590, “Would that I had some friend on board to comfort me in my affliction”; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 115.

²⁰¹ Eth. *ṣēṭ*, “the price or value”; cf. Leslau, *Concise*, p. 54b.

²⁰² This means Philoxenite.

²⁰³ Lit. “your heart has departed”.

“As for me, I place my trust in God and in his martyr, Saint Abu Menas, that I will see my servant’s body once more”.

9. While he was saying this, they were no (longer) sailing on the sea²⁰⁴. As for the servant, he was walking along the seashore, carrying the plate, and looking for his master, to recognize him while aboard²⁰⁵. Then, Eutropius looked from the boat and saw his servant walking along the shore and looking around. The sailors, having risen, lowered the sail²⁰⁶, and then they brought the boat to the port²⁰⁷. They found the servant holding the rope and securing the boat in place at the port²⁰⁸. His master then stood, embraced him, kissed him, and said, “O my son, how wonderful that you have risen from the dead! Had I given everything I possess²⁰⁹ to the church of Saint Abu Menas the Martyr today, I would not be worthy of the glory I have received from the martyr of Christ. Now, my son, tell me what happened to you in the sea until you reached the shore”.

10. The servant answered and said, “At the moment the plate slipped from my hand into the sea, I leapt in, saying, ‘It is better for me to die in

²⁰⁴ Lit. “they did not move (‘ige‘zu) on the sea”. The sentence seems corrupt, but the intended meaning is clear: the ship had completed its voyage and was nearing the harbour. The Coptic text reads, “And as he was saying this the ship came to its moorings”; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 115. The text in ms IFAO states the contrary: “Or pendant qui’il se disait cela en son coeur, on navigauit”; see Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 69.

²⁰⁵ Or “he was strong”, according to ms B.

²⁰⁶ Eth. *qal’*, likely meaning “curtain”, from the root verb *qal’a* “uncover, bare open, strip”. However, the same verb can mean “throw from a sling, hit a ball”, which could suggest dropping an object as an anchor; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 426. The interpretation remains uncertain. There is no similar information in the Coptic ms M.590, but ms IFAO uses the Greek term *μονόβολον* for anchor; see Footnote 208.

²⁰⁷ Or, “they dropped the anchor in the port”.

²⁰⁸ Bacot translates the entire passus in the Coptic ms IFAO as follows: “Tandis (ὅσον) qu’il disait cela, voici que le jeune serviteur arriva, le plat (πίναξ) posé sur son épaule, avançant et examinant les bateaux pour voir s’il reconnaîtrait le bateau de son maître. Or quand Eutropios le vit cherchant du regard l’ensemble des bateaux, aussitôt les marins se levèrent, jetèrent l’ancre (μονόβολον) au rivage; le jeune enfant s’accrocha à la corde jusqu’à ce que le bateau entre au port”; see Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 69.

²⁰⁹ Eth. *za-malā’ekewo*, from the verb root *mal’a* “fill up, multiply, be full”; cf. Leslau, *Concise*, p. 29. In the Coptic ms M.590, we read, “Verily, if I give all my riches, I should not be able to repay Apa Mena”; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 115. In ms IFAO, this speech of Eutropius is much shorter, limited to an expression of joy at seeing the servant alive and asking him about the events that took place; cf. Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 69.

this water alone, for I know that your heart loves the plate more than all your possessions'. For this reason, I jumped into the sea. Then, a shining man appeared, and two others accompanied him. When I looked at him, he lifted me up and did not allow me to drown, but he stayed with me".

11. As for Eutropius, he went and gave thanks to God, blessing him for glorifying his holy martyrs, those who suffered for his name. He rejoiced with great joy and arrived at the church of Saint Abu Menas. He bowed before him to the ground and said his great homage. He blessed God and his martyr, Saint Abu Menas, and presented the two plates to the church. Moreover, the servant who had saved it [the plate] from drowning was also dedicated to it [the church]. And he [Eutropius] blessed God – praise be to him – and his only Son, along with his authority, greatness, ability, and power, forever and ever. Amen.

The ninth miracle²¹⁰

1. Three men²¹¹ went to the church of Saint Martyr Abu Menas to pray, each of them bringing a pig²¹² as a gift²¹³ to the church. When they led the pigs to the lake²¹⁴, they stopped to eat bread. They said, "Let's lead

²¹⁰ For the Greek version (BHG 1263) see Pomialovskiĭ, *Zhitie*, p. 79-81 (no 7). The edition of this miracle appears in both Coptic (no 10) and Ethiopic versions, along with their French annotated translations, in Devos, *Un récit des miracles*, p. 454-463 (I), and 156-160 (II); see also Bacot, *Saint Ménas* (no 7), p. 65-69 (tr.). For the Arabic text see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 12), based on ms M (III 4, 13), p. 401-402 (ed.), 172-173 (tr.); variants from mss Š, N, A, and F (5.8), p. 423-424 (ed.), 195-197 (tr.); with additional notes (III 6, 10), p. 222-225.

²¹¹ The translation follows ms A. Meanwhile, in ms C, preferred by Devos, the phrase "the soldiers went (*ḥarā ḥoru*)" likely reflects a duplication error arising from an additional noun, *ḥarā* "army, troops, soldiers", alongside the similarly written verb *hora* "go" in its plural perfect tense form *ḥawru* (as in ms A), eventually contracted to *ḥoru* (as in ms B), meaning "they went". Furthermore, ms B omits the numeral indicating the quantity "three", which is present in other codices.

²¹² Eth. *'ahrew* is the plural of *ḥarāweyā* "pig, wild boar"; see Footnote 51. Similar terms feature in the Greek (χοῖρος) and Arabic (*hanzīr*) versions, while "cochon" (pɪp) appears in the Coptic text, as noted by Devos.

²¹³ Lit. "to offer a gift out of respect", from the verb root *'ammeha*; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 135.

²¹⁴ Eth. *bāḥr*, lit. "sea", refers to Lake Maryut. In contrast, according to the Arabic texts, the setting is the bank of the Nile; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 196, and 223, n. 5.

our animals to drink before we eat". So, each man got up, took his pig, and led it to the water to drink.

2. Suddenly, a crocodile²¹⁵ leapt out of the water and grabbed one of the pigs. Its owner held onto its leg and tried to pull it toward the shore, crying out, "O God and Saint Abu Menas, come to my aid and deliver me!". However, the crocodile pulled the pig back, dragging the man with it. But when it saw the man, it abandoned the pig and attacked him instead. It tore into the man's body, pulling out his intestines from his stomach. Then, it submerged the man in the sea, intending to drag him to the shore of the lake²¹⁶ to devour him. At that moment, Saint Martyr Abu Menas arrived, riding his spiritual horse²¹⁷. He descended onto the lake, and the entire lake filled with light.

3. When the crocodile saw the martyr, it was seized with great fear. It released the man, leaving him with nothing but his soul²¹⁸, and, terrified, retreated into the water²¹⁹. As for the man, the saint placed his hand on his body, and he was brought back to life. From that moment on, he was fully healed of all his suffering and his wounds. The saint then mounted him on his spiritual horse²²⁰ and led him to the church. He placed the man in a secluded spot²²¹ and left him there, as the gates were closed. The saint then turned to the lake, to the spot where the immersed man's companions

²¹⁵ Eth. *ḥargaš*; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 18b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 89. The Coptic version of ms M.590 translates the Greek term κροκόδειλος as *msah* (ⲙⲥⲁⲩ); see Devos, *Un récit des miracles*, p. 458, l. 1 ff. The Arabic text uses the word *timsāḥ*.

²¹⁶ Eth. *ḥayq* "shore of the sea or lake", or "riverbank"; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 25b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 125.

²¹⁷ Similarly in the Coptic text; see Footnote 170.

²¹⁸ Eth. *wa- 'itarfa westētu 'allā nafso*, which means that the man was barely alive.

²¹⁹ The motif of St Menas as a crocodile-slayer seems to directly reference the image of the Egyptian divinity Harpocrates, or Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, portrayed standing on a crocodile and holding two serpents. This image became one of the models for the popular iconography of the saint from Maryut; see Kaufmann, *Zur Ikonographie*, p. 106-112. For an interesting discussion of the iconographic connections between St Menas and St Thecla, particularly in the context of their battles with animals as an example of the Christianization of motifs present in the iconography of the ancient Near East, see Tešić Radovanović – Gugolj, *Visual Representations*, p. 13-14.

²²⁰ See Footnote 170.

²²¹ Lit. "to the place alone", which Devos translates as "dans un lieu solitaire", while the Coptic text reads, "dans son sanctuaire, le conduisit en bas dans la crypte"; see Devos, *Un récit des miracles*, p. 458-459. Later, the text reveals the place as a treasury or crypt (κατάβασις) holding the saint's body; see Footnote 225.

stood. They were indeed weeping with heavy hearts, mourning the cruel death of their friend.

4. The saint appeared to them in the form of a soldier²²² passing along the road and spoke with comforting words to console their grief. He said, "Do not let your hearts suffer because of your companion who was taken by the crocodile. Do not turn to the past, but rather go to the church of Saint Abu Menas, as you originally intended. Rest your hearts there, for by the sixth²²³ hour you will see him alive, with no signs of decay or any wounds on his body".

5. When he finished speaking, he disappeared from their sight, and they could no longer see him. From that moment, they knew that it was Saint Abu Menas who had appeared to them. They cried out with loud voices, saying, "We believe in you, O mighty martyr, and we believe in your miracles with all our hearts. We believe in the power we have heard about, and that you reveal it in your church. We know ourselves that the one whom the crocodile took and tore apart, you will bring back to life, O mighty martyr, and it is fitting for us to see him again".

6. The day after²²⁴, when the morning light arose, a messenger came from the attendants of the church, carrying the keys of the treasury where

²²² Eth. *be'si ḥarāwi*, lit. "military man" or "man of the army"; see Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 85-86; see Footnote 145.

²²³ Instead of "three hours" in the Ethiopic ms B. The reading "sixth hour" appears in the Greek text, while "deux heures demain" features in the Coptic text according to Devos, *Un récit des miracles*, p. 460. In the Arabic ms A, the event occurs at midnight.

²²⁴ Lit. "and after this", but the text clearly refers to the next day. The Arabic ms M clearly states, "In the morning people came to pray as usual"; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 401, 172, and note 12, p. 224.

the saint's body was kept²²⁵. The presbyter, an elder²²⁶ named Menas²²⁷, stood and opened the gate of the treasury, and so the presbyters²²⁸ who were with him followed his example. They entered the church and looked inside and saw a man standing there. When the servant²²⁹ saw him, he was struck with terror and cried out loudly. The people rushed toward him, quickly approached, and seized him, asking, "Who are you, and how did you come here?"

7. He said to them, "I do not know what you are talking about". They replied, "Then you must have come here to steal the altar vessels"²³⁰. But he swore to them by the name of God Most High²³¹ and his

²²⁵ Eth. *mazgab*, derived from the verb root *zagaba* "collect, store, gather", denotes a "treasure, treasury, storehouse, magazine, or granary"; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 188b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1066-1067, *thesaurus, promptuarium, apotheca, armarium, cella*. In this context, it corresponds to the Greek κατάβασις used in the Coptic version (καταβασις), which Devos translates into French as "un crypte". In the Greek text, the saint placed the man "near his case below" (πλησίον τῆς θήκης αὐτοῦ κάτω); cf. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 80, l. 5. The Arabic version (ms M) mentions the sanctuary (*al-bay'a*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 401, 172.

²²⁶ Eth. *liq za-yeleheq*, lit. "the elder chief", contrasts with the Coptic text, where the individual is "a young lector"; see Devos, *Un récit des miracles*, p. 462. The Arabic texts employ a wide range of terms: sacristan (*al-'amnūt*, ms M) – seemingly not a standard Arabic word, servant (*al-ḥādim*, mss A, R and T), servant of the temple (*ḥādim al-haykal*), or custodian (*qayyim*, ms N). Jaritz identifies the term used in ms F as corresponding to the Greek ἀναγνώστης "lector"; see *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 224, n. 17. However, the Ethiopic term *liq* in this context could denote "presbyter", in which case "senior presbyter" would equal the Greek ἀρχιερεσβύτερος.

²²⁷ The same presbyter's name appears in the Coptic and Arabic (ms F and R) texts; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 224, n. 17, with footnote 809.

²²⁸ Eth. *liqāwent*, the plural form of the substantive *liq*, likely carries the meaning of the Greek πρεσβύτερος, -οι; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 27. See also Footnote 44.

²²⁹ Eth. *lā'k* "messenger, servant, attendant"; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 10b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 48, *minister, famulus*. In Devos' translation, "le serviteur". In the present context, it evidently refers to the person mentioned above.

²³⁰ Eth. *nawāya meśwā'*. The term *meśwā'* means "altar" or "sacrificial place"; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 53a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 257, *altare, sacrarium*; Gen 8:20, Exod 20:24, Matt 5:24. The term *nawāy* in its singular form means "vessel" or "utensil", but it can also refer to "property" or "goods" in a collective sense. In fact, Devos translates it in plural as "les biens (χρήμα)", (νε-χρημα); cf. Devos, *Un récit des miracles*, p. 156, 159; the plural form "pieniądze" also appears in Piwowarczyk, *Cuda św. Menasa*, p. 410. A similar expression "vessels/utensil of the sanctuary" (*'awāni al-baī'a*) features in the Arabic ms M; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 402 (ed.).

²³¹ Eth. *Egzi'abehēr le'ul*.

martyr, “I did not come to steal, nor have I ever done such a thing. If you²³² wish to know the truth²³³, let me into the church, and I will tell you about all the marvels²³⁴ that have happened to me”. When he said this, they allowed him to descend from the treasury²³⁵ and brought him before the altar. Then they summoned the servant to verify whether his words were true or not.

8. And the people in the church were amazed at everything that the man told them and how he recalled what had happened to him. He said to them, “If you do not believe my words, then come with me to the lake, for you will find my brothers bringing three pigs. It was he²³⁶ who saved me from the jaws of the evil crocodile, who told me that the crocodile had perished, and who showed me kindness. As for my brothers, they wanted to turn back, but he did not allow them. Instead, he told them, ‘Go to my church, and there you will see the glory of God that has been revealed’”²³⁷.

9. When the superior²³⁸ heard this, he sent two deacon servants²³⁹, had them ride, and dispatched them to the port to verify whether the story he had narrated was true or not. When they arrived, they found two men walking with three pigs. The messengers said to them, “O brothers, where are you coming from with these pigs?”. And the men recounted everything that had happened, including the story of their brother, whom they had lost. When the messengers heard their words and confirmed that everything was as the man had said, they understood his story was true. They marvelled at the wonders²⁴⁰ that had occurred. Then they hurried, along with the two men, until they reached the church of Saint Abu Menas.

10. When they arrived, they saw their companion and all the people watching him and listening to his words. So, they prostrated themselves

²³² The plural form appears in all the manuscripts.

²³³ Lit. “what is right”.

²³⁴ Eth. *ḥayl*, lit. “power, strength, force, might, virtue”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 115b. Ms B omits the word.

²³⁵ See Footnote 225.

²³⁶ This means St Menas.

²³⁷ The man’s confession is much shorter in the Greek text and the available Arabic versions; the Coptic version, although damaged, conveys it very closely to the Ethiopic text.

²³⁸ Eth. *liq*; see Footnote 44.

²³⁹ Eth. *diāqunata lā’ekāna*; ms B omits the Ethiopic numeral.

²⁴⁰ Eth. *ḥayl*; see Footnote 234.

before the altar, and cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Now we understand that no one is similar to our mighty lord Abu Menas the Martyr²⁴¹, and the miracles we have witnesses with our own eyes”. After this, they offered their gifts to the church of Saint Abu Menas, and then returned to their homes, glorifying God. As for the man who had been saved from the crocodile, he gave all that he had to the church of the Martyr of our Lord Jesus Christ²⁴². He remained there, serving the church until the time of his passing²⁴³. And he glorified the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen.

The tenth miracle²⁴⁴

1. A man²⁴⁵ was praying in the church of Saint Abu Menas and made a vow to provide wood for its construction. The administrator²⁴⁶ sent someone with him to carry it, and the man journeyed with him to Alexandria²⁴⁷.

²⁴¹ Or “to our mighty Lord and to Abu Menas the Martyr” in ms C, while “to the God of Abu Menas the mighty martyr” according to ms B.

²⁴² Or just “the martyr of the Lord Christ” in ms A.

²⁴³ See Footnote 72.

²⁴⁴ For the Greek text (BHG 1267) see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 87 (no 11). The Coptic text in ms M.590 (no 11) is illegible; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 107. A fragmentary text of the miracle appears in the manuscript of Berlin (CLM 6255); see P. Piwowarczyk, *A New Fragment of the Coptic Miracles of St. Menas (Berlin Ms. Or. Oct. 408, Fols. 27-28)*, “Journal of Coptic Studies” 27 (2025) (forthcoming). For the Arabic text, see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 13), on ms M (III 4, 14), p. 402 (ed.), 173 (tr.); extracts from mss N and Š (III 5, 9), p. 424-425 (ed.), 197 (tr.); notes (III 6, 11), p. 225-226.

²⁴⁵ In the Greek text, the man’s name is Theophilus (Θεόφιλος); cf. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 87, l. 4. The same name returns in the Arabic ms Š (*Thāwfilus*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 225, n. 1. However, ms M refers to the protagonist simply as a wealthy man (*raḡul ghaniyy*), as is the case in the Ethiopic version.

²⁴⁶ The Ethiopic term *liq* appears here in place of οἰκονόμος, as observed in the Greek text; cf. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 87, l. 6; see Footnote 44.

²⁴⁷ The Arabic ms Š additionally mentions transport of the wood *via* the Nile and its storage at a location distant from the shrine. Upon seeing the wood, the treasurer instructed the servants to drag it to the church. The Nile also appears in the fragmentary text in the Coptic manuscript from Berlin; see Piwowarczyk, *A New Fragment* (forthcoming).

Then, a soldier approached him²⁴⁸ and said, “Give me the tribute²⁴⁹ for this wood”. The man replied, “This wood is for Saint Abu Menas²⁵⁰, as a man has promised it for the sake of his soul”. The soldier responded, “I do not know what you are talking about, and I will not waive the tribute; it is two gold coins”²⁵¹.

2. He then gave it to the soldier, saying, “Take the tribute from the saint, and you yourself, if God wills, will double it and send it to his church”. While he was speaking to him, the soldier was seized by the hair of his head and lifted into the air²⁵². He did not know where he was being taken until he was brought to the church of Abu Menas²⁵³. There, he was suspended in mid-air by his hair²⁵⁴, and he cried out, saying, “Grant me pardon, O saint of God, for I have sinned. I will give

²⁴⁸ The Ethiopic version (mss A and C) applies the singular form, indicating that the servant travelled alone, whereas both the Greek and Arabic versions consistently use the plural form. Additionally, the Ethiopic expression translated here as “soldier” (*be’si ḥarāwi*, lit. “military man”) features in Arabic manuscripts as “one of army” (*aḥad al-aḡnād*), a “soldier” (*ḡundī*), or simply a “man” (*raḡul*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 424 (ed.), 173 (tr.), with observations on p. 225, n. 7. See also Footnote 145.

²⁴⁹ Eth. *ṣabāḥet*, from the verb *ṣabbāḥa* “pay duty, pay tribute, collect taxes”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 227a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1278, *tributum, stipendium*; see also Mt 22:17. In the Greek version of the miracle, we see τὰς δεκάδας “tithes, decima”.

²⁵⁰ Ms B omits the beginning of the conversation due to the copyist’s error.

²⁵¹ The Ethiopic text uses the phrase 2 *qirāṭa warq*; see Footnote 79. The Coptic fragment refers to “two silver *keratia* (κερατῖον)”; see Piowarczyk, *A New Fragment* (forthcoming). Similarly, in the Greek text, we find “two silver coins” (δύο ἀργύρια); see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 87, l. 11. Finally, the Arabic ms Š indicates “two drachmas” (*dirhamāin*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 424.

²⁵² A similar motive of punishment appears in a miracle performed by St Simeon the Stylite; see P. Piowarczyk, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Miracles of St Menas*, VoxP 94 (2025) p. 58.

²⁵³ The Arabic ms N similarly describes the guard’s transfer by air to the saint’s shrine; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 425 (ed.), 197 (tr.). See also Footnote 36.

²⁵⁴ Lit. “by the hair of his head”.

twelve dinars to the church”²⁵⁵. With that, the saint released him from his bond²⁵⁶.

3. And all the people watched as the man carried the gold along with many gifts, which he presented to the church. He then bowed before the altar²⁵⁷, and God, along with the saint, revealed many wonders to him. After a few days, during which the man slept in the church, he returned to his home²⁵⁸, praising God and his martyr, Abu Menas. Praise be to the Father, to the Son, and the Holy Spirit, now and forever and ever²⁵⁹.

The eleventh miracle²⁶⁰

1. There was a soldier²⁶¹ who mounted his horse to go to the church of Abu Menas the Martyr to pray. As he approached the church, a pig suddenly ran beneath the legs of his horse, causing the horse to rear and throw the man to the ground. The man then stood up, drew his sword²⁶²,

²⁵⁵ Here, the Ethiopic text seems corrupt. Mss A and B use the third person form “he gave 12 dinars”, which contradicts the narrative’s logic. Therefore, my translation follows ms C, whose scribe evidently attempted to resolve this inconsistency. In the Greek text, the guard offers the twelve dinars only after the saint has released the bonds, which suggests a possible abridgment and reordering of the Ethiopic version, possibly inherited from its Arabic model. In fact, a reference to the twelve dinars as compensation appears in the Arabic ms N, while ms M focuses on the votive offering and the confession of guilt before the assembly.

²⁵⁶ The singular form *mā’esar* occurs in mss B and C, while the plural form *ma’āser* appears in the oldest document, ms A. The Arabic ms M limits the entire scene of punishment to a statement that St Menas sent misfortune upon the greedy guard.

²⁵⁷ Eth. *meśwā’*; see Footnote 230.

²⁵⁸ Lit. “habitation” (Eth. *māḥdar*).

²⁵⁹ At the end of the text in ms B, there is another additional intercession, stating, “May his prayer and his blessing guard and protect our father (lit. *abuna*) Yesḥaq, forever and ever, amen”. For a similar addition, see Footnote 153.

²⁶⁰ This miracle is absent from the Greek collection. Its Coptic version in ms M.590 survives only partially; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 107 (no 12). For the Arabic version see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 14), from ms M (III 4, 15), p. 402-403 (ed.), 173 (tr.); variants of ms T (III 5, 10), p. 425 (ed.), 197-198 (tr.); additional notes (III 6, 12), p. 226-227.

²⁶¹ Eth. *be’si ḥarāwi*, lit. “military or army man”; see Footnote 145. The Arabic ms M adds that the soldier was in the service of the king.

²⁶² Eth. *sayf*, derived directly from Arabic and Aramaic roots; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 522a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 394-395, *gladius, ensis*, ῥομφαία; Gen 3:24,

and chased after the pig. Those who were present there witnessed this, and shouted, saying, “Stay away²⁶³ from the property of the church”. However, he did not listen to them but killed the pig with his sword and cut it into two pieces.

2. After this, the soldier mounted his horse again²⁶⁴, but it suddenly bolted, carrying him away, and he had no idea where it was heading. Eventually, the horse brought him to the desert, right in front of the church of Saint Abu Menas. However, he was unaware of this, as he was hanging (down from the horse).

3. And it happened that someone held him until he entered the church. And he cried out in his language, “Kyrie eleison”²⁶⁵. All the people watched him hanging long hours. And they begged God and the saint to untie and release him, trembling for what had happened to him.

4. The superior instructed the church servants to take him to the hospital within the church of Saint Abu Menas. And he remained there for seven days, hanging²⁶⁶ each day in the church, and everyone could see him. Afterward, he prayed to God and Saint Abu Menas, vowing his horse to the church in place of the pig²⁶⁷. He then returned to his home, giving glory God and the martyr Saint Abu Menas. May his prayer and blessing be with us for ever and ever. Amen²⁶⁸.

Josh 5:13, Song 3:8, Rev 19:15.

²⁶³ Lit. “do not approach”.

²⁶⁴ An addition, the Arabic ms M reads, “with the slaughtered pig in his arms”.

²⁶⁵ Eth. *kiryālāyson*; see Footnote 39. The reference to the Greek language the soldier supposedly speaks is noteworthy. However, this does not imply that the miracle’s setting changes to Greece or Asia Minor. Greek served as the lingua franca of the Hellenistic world, both in Alexandria and among soldiers stationed in Egypt.

²⁶⁶ The text literally states this, but its meaning remains unclear due to its corruption. According to the Arabic ms M, it was St Menas himself who abducted the man from the desert and then hung him in the middle of his church to punish him daily. There is no mention of a hospital in this version of the text.

²⁶⁷ According to the Arabic ms M, the man promised to the saint a hundred dinars during his punishment and then, once released, offered everything he had.

²⁶⁸ The conclusion follows manuscript C. In contrast, manuscripts A and B include the Trinitarian doxology, “Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen”. Manuscripts A and C also provide an additional prescription: “And do not eat (pork), for the teachers have forbidden the eating of pigs”. The prohibition of eating pork is a significant religious element in both modern Coptic and Ethiopian traditions, rooted in biblical texts (see Lev 11:7-8; Deut 14:8), cultural practices, and the desire to maintain religious and liturgical purity. Historically, however, even the Copto-Arabic *Nomocanon* and the Ethiopian *Legislation*

The twelfth miracle²⁶⁹

1. A man vowed to give a pig to the church of Saint Abu Menas²⁷⁰. The pig was small, but as it grew and became fat, his owner saw that it was fine. He said to himself, “I will slaughter this for myself and my children²⁷¹, and later I will give (another one) in its place to the church”. So, he slaughtered it, prepared it, and left it in the workshop²⁷² for preservation.

2. Then, Saint Abu Menas appeared²⁷³ and transformed the pig’s flesh, which was in a basin²⁷⁴, into stone, where it remains to this day. The owner of the pig was astonished by what he saw, and said, “How is it that this martyr of our Lord Jesus Christ can turn flesh into stone?”²⁷⁵. He then took three dinars²⁷⁶ and gave them to the church of Saint Abu Menas as a replacement for the pig he had slaughtered.

of the King (Ch. 23), the medieval sources of Christian civil and ecclesiastical law dating back to the twelfth century, do not explicitly prohibit the consumption of pork but instead refer to biblical decrees, especially the words of the Lord (Mark 7), the vision of Peter (Acts 10), the decision of the Apostles (Acts 15), and the teachings of the Fathers. For further discussion on this issue see Th. Guindeuil, *What Do Christians (Not) Eat: Food Taboos and the Ethiopian Christian Community (13th-18th Centuries)*, “Annales d’Éthiopie” 29 (2014) p. 59-82. For further discussion on the biblical origins of Orthodox practices see also U. Zanetti, *Christianity*, EAe I 725. For insights into dietary prohibitions see S. Kaplan, *Taboo*, EAe IV 800.

²⁶⁹ This miracle is absent from both Greek and Coptic collections. For the Arabic version see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 21), on ms M (III 4, 22), p. 408 (ed.), 178 (tr.); variants from mss F, N, and S (titled as the eleventh miracle; III 5, 17), p. 433 (ed.), 206 (tr.); additional notes (III 6, 19), on p. 234.

²⁷⁰ According to Arabic ms S, the man initially had nine piglets, one of which he vowed to the church.

²⁷¹ Or “for my son (*la-waldeya*)”, according to ms C. The Arabic texts use the plural form “children”.

²⁷² Eth. *gebr*, as a substantive derived from the Ethiopic verb root *gabra*, has a broad semantic field, consistently referring to work, activity, or production; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 206. It can specifically link to the basin mentioned below.

²⁷³ Ms A adds “to him”.

²⁷⁴ Eth. *nebtirā*, from the Greek *νιτήρ*, *acc.* *νιτήρα*, “washing vessel, basin”; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 384b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 657-658, *pelvis*, *pelluvium*, *malluvium*. This term appears in the Ethiopic text of John 13:5, where Jesus washes his disciples’ feet. In the Arabic version of the miracle, the equivalent term is *al-laqān*, which carries the same meaning of a basin or large bowl.

²⁷⁵ This soliloquy is absent from the Arabic versions edited by Jaritz.

²⁷⁶ Ms C omits the Ethiopic numeral for 3. The Arabic version – except for ms N – also indicates three dinars (*thalātha dinārīn*).

3. And he remained glorifying God all days of his life until the day of his passing²⁷⁷, giving thanks to God Most High and to Saint Abu Menas. May his prayer be with us. Amen.

The thirteenth miracle²⁷⁸

1. A man vowed to donate a horse every year to the church of Saint Abu Menas. When he came first time and the horse with him, he intended to present it to the church. Indeed, he had already set out on the journey, and the horse was with him²⁷⁹.

2. Suddenly, the Martyr appeared to him in the manner of a guard²⁸⁰ and said, “Do you know who I am, O brother?”. He replied, “I do not know you, O my lord”. The saint said, “I am, in fact, a servant²⁸¹ of the Lord Jesus Christ. When you go to my church to worship, go to my body, and you will find a small piece of gold. Take it for yourself instead of the horse that you offer to me each year”.

3. And when the man went to the church, he gave his horse to the superior²⁸² and bowed before the body of Saint Abu Menas. He found the gold, took it, and returned to his house, exalting God and his glorious martyr. May his intercession protect us Christians²⁸³ all the days of our lives. Amen.

²⁷⁷ This means “until his death”; see Footnote 72.

²⁷⁸ This short miracle is absent from the Greek and Coptic collections. However, it appears in the Arabic collection, with a particularly close resemblance in ms R, where it also features as the thirteenth; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 22), ms M, where the text is fragmented (III 4, 23), p. 408 (ed.), 179 (tr.); for mss R and S (III 5, 18), p. 433-434 (ed.), 207 (tr.); additional n., p. 234.

²⁷⁹ Since the last sentence repeats the content of the previous one, we may suspect text damage or a poor translation from the more elaborated Arabic version.

²⁸⁰ Eth. *be’si šagarāwi* (A), or *sagarātawi* (B), derived from the substantive *šagara*, pl. *šagarāt*, “guard, soldier of the guard, garrison”, or even “keeper of the instrument of torture, executioner”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 55a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 267, *lictiores, milites custodiae apposite, carcerum custodes*; Matt 27:65-66, John 18:3, Acts 5:23.

²⁸¹ Eth. *lā’k*; see Footnote 229. The noun *mal’ak* “messenger, herald, angel” derives from the same root verb (*la’aka*).

²⁸² Eth. *liq*; see Footnote 44.

²⁸³ Lit. “sons of baptism”; see Footnote 57.

The fourteenth miracle²⁸⁴

1. There was a woman, a widow, who took and carried offerings²⁸⁵ with her, crossing over the sea²⁸⁶, to the church of Saint Abu Menas. While she was traveling, a corrupt guard²⁸⁷ encountered her, intending to harm her on the road. He said to her, “O woman, where are you going alone through this desert?”. She replied, “I am on my way to the church of Saint Abu Menas. And I have this small *qurban* with me, which I will give and then I will return to my home”.

2. The soldier said to her, “Who is this Abu Menas, and where is his church?”. Then he added, “You will not pass through here unless I eat what you are carrying”. But the woman replied, “I beseech you, O my lord and my brother, do not commit this great error by eating the *qurban* I am bringing to the house of God”²⁸⁸.

3. However, he leapt upon this woman with his horse, seized her, struck her, and intended to eat what she had with her. Moreover, he

²⁸⁴ This miracle seems a variation of the Female Pilgrim (Sophia) miracle. The Coptic text in ms M.590 is illegible; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 107 (no 13). For the Arabic versions see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 4), on ms M (III 4, 5), p. 394-395 (ed.), 164-165 (tr.); variants from mss A and Š (III 5, 2), p. 412-413 (ed.), 183-184 (tr.); additional notes (III 6, 3), p. 213-214. Another elaboration of the same motif in Greek, edited and with an English translation, appears in Duffy – Bourboulakis, *Five Miracles* (no 3), p. 72-73.

²⁸⁵ Eth. *q^werbānāt* (pl.) according to mss A and C, or *q^werbān* (sg.) in ms B. In Christian texts, in addition to its primary meaning “offering, dedication, gift”, it can also refer to the Eucharist; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 440b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 427; Habtemichael Kidane, *Eucharist*, EAe II 448b. From the following Ethiopic narrative, it is evident that the word specifically refers to the bread designated for the Eucharistic celebration. The Greek text does not refer to any specific offerings. However, the Arabic ms M, as published by Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 394-395 (ed.), tr. 164-165 (tr.), mentions the gold brought by the woman to the church. Other manuscripts – F, N, and R – clearly refer to the bread for the offering (*qurbān*) as does the Ethiopic text; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 214, n. 3. Both the Ethiopic and Arabic terms originate from the Syriac *qūrbānā*; see Payne Smith, *Thesaurus Syriacus*, c. 3725-3726; T. Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*, Strassburg 1910, p. 37. Consequently, we render it as *qurban* in the translation.

²⁸⁶ Once again, it refers to Lake Mareotis.

²⁸⁷ Eth. *be’si šagarāwi*; see Footnote 280.

²⁸⁸ The traditional Ethiopic expression for any church, *bēta krestiyān*, lit. “house of Christians”, appears here in a modified version: *bēta egzi’abehēr* “house of God”, in reference to the shrine of St Menas. Notably, all these dialogues are absent from the Greek text.

thought in his heart²⁸⁹ to lie with her and defile her. But she warned him, saying, "Because you have intended to commit this act against me, God Most High and Saint Abu Menas, to whom I am journeying, will bring about your ruin. It is for his sake that I travelled from a distant place in search of his church. Indeed, I am but a weak widow, without power, but my strength comes from God and his martyr, Abu Menas".

4. When she said this, the soldier seized her by the head, struck her, and took what she was carrying. He then tied the bridle of his horse to his leg and sat down to eat the *qurban*. At that moment, the Lord commanded the horse, which leapt powerfully, pulling its owner through the desert until it dragged him to the church of Saint Abu Menas. His entire body was torn and his clothes shredded as he was dragged along the ground.

5. And all the people saw the *qurban* in his hand, since the Lord did not allow it to fall from his grasp to the glory of God and his martyr. The soldier then recounted to the people gathered in the church everything that had happened to him, and they were greatly astonished by the abomination he described. He began to think about what he had done to the woman, and how God and his martyr, Saint Abu Menas, prevented him, for he sinned in both his actions and his thoughts toward her.

6. The woman, for her part, cried out, proclaiming that great is God, and great is his martyr, Abu Menas, along with the wonders and powers he performs for all who visit his church. She entered the church and served there until the time of her passing²⁹⁰, glorifying God from that moment onward and forevermore. Amen.

²⁸⁹ Lit. "in his soul".

²⁹⁰ Meaning "until her death"; see Footnote 72.

The fifteenth miracle²⁹¹

1. There was a wealthy man of the city of Constantinople²⁹², originally from Phrygia²⁹³. He possessed gold, silver, numerous garments, goods, livestock, and various other such things. In the same neighbourhood, there lived an elderly widow, who resided below his estate²⁹⁴. She owned nothing except a single sheep²⁹⁵, which she kept²⁹⁶ on the roof. Each year, she used the wool from this sheep to make her clothes. As for the wealthy

²⁹¹ For the Greek version (BHG 1264) see Pomialovskiĭ, *Zhitie*, p. 81-84 (no 8); the short Greek version appears in Duffy – Bourbouhakis, *Five Miracles*, p. 74-77 (no 5). The Coptic text in ms M.590 (no 14) is fragmentary; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 23-24 (ed.), 117-118 (tr.). For the Arabic version see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 15), on ms M (III 4, 15), p. 402-403 (ed.), 173 (tr.); variants (III 5, 11), p. 403-405 (tr.), 198-201 (tr.); additional notes (III 6, 13), p. 227-230. The Poor Woman's Sheep miracle clearly refers to the biblical parable of Nathan in 2 Sam 12.

²⁹² Eth. *Qʿestantenya*. The name of the city in the Arabic version appears in some manuscripts only as *Qusṭantīniya* (R, S, and N), *Qusṭantīyānīs* (Š), or *Qusṭantīyānās* (L); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 227-228, n. 2.

²⁹³ Lit. "and he was from the people of Phrygia". The toponym used in this text is 'Afrāqyā (mss AC) or 'Afrāqiyā (ms B). The Arabic mss R, Š, F, and N employ the term 'Ifriqiya; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 227, n. 2. The region lies in North Africa along the Mediterranean coast, in modern-day Libya and parts of Egypt. The Greek text of the miracle refers to Μαμαρική; see Pomialovskiĭ, *Zhitie*, p. 81, l. 10. The Coptic ms M.590 is fragmentary and does not provide the relevant phrase of this miracle. However, according to the Coptic *Life of Saint Menas*, the man's father was appointed to a place named Φρηγία; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 41, l. 21.24. The Ethiopic *Acts* call the same place 'Abrāqiyā or 'Abrāfiyā, while Lake Maryut is "the sea which is between Africa and Alexandria ('Afrāqiyā wa-'Eskenderyā)"; cf. Budge, *Texts*, p. 62-63 and 71. The confusion between Phrygia and Africa in the Arabic and Ethiopic texts stems primarily from linguistic factors, with Arabic serving as a bridge between the Greek (Coptic) and Ethiopic texts. Specifically, the prefix with *alif* often adapts Greek and other names to Arabic phonetics, as seen in transformation such as Σμόρνη to 'Izmīr; Σκοθίας vel Scythia to 'Asqūṭiyā; Πρίντιζι vel Brindisi to 'Abrinṭas and 'Abrindas; or Rimini to 'Arīmniṣ; cf. J.C. Ducène, *Ptolemy's Geography in the Arabic-Islamic Context*, in *Cartography between Christian Europe and the Arabic-Islamic World, 1100-1500*, ed. A. Hiatt, Leiden 2012, p. 79. Furthermore, the phonetic shift *p > f > b* is characteristic of Arabic.

²⁹⁴ Eth. 'aṣad, which means a circumscribed area, such as courtyard, court, or palace; see Footnote 114.

²⁹⁵ Eth. *bagge*; see Footnote 48. The Greek text uses the phrase τὸ πρόβατον, while *khārūf* appears in the Arabic version. The final part of the Coptic text mentions sheep (ecooṡ) in the plural form.

²⁹⁶ Lit. "she fed it".

man's possessions, they were so numerous that he could not count his sheep nor goats.

2. And he became envious of the widow because of the sheep and began to consider taking it in his heart. As the feast of Saint Abu Menas drew near, and upon hearing that the townspeople were preparing their offerings to attend his church, he resolved to join them, despite having never participated before. This decision was motivated by his envy²⁹⁷ and his lack of genuine intent to offer alms²⁹⁸.

3. Upon hearing of the miracles of Saint Abu Menas and his powers, he summoned his wife and said to her, "O my sister, rise, let us go to the church of Saint Abu Menas, for I have heard of the miracles and powers that have occurred there. Although we have not performed any virtuous deeds, let us undertake this act, so that we may find mercy".

4. The woman replied, "You fool! Why would an unbeliever²⁹⁹ like you go to the church of Saint Abu Menas and not approach (the Holy Offering)?³⁰⁰ If you are willing to listen to what I am telling you, I will go with you. But if you refuse to listen, I will not accompany you, for your heart must not be divided. Now then, let us go to the church, be baptised, become Christians, and receive remission for the sins you have committed since your childhood".

5. He responded, "What are you telling me? I will listen to you and do as you ask. If you want me to abandon the faith of my fathers, I will obey you. As they used to say, 'Him whom a wife does not corrupt, nothing will corrupt'"³⁰¹. The woman was pleased and said to him, "Then send

²⁹⁷ Eth. *denṣāwē*, from the root verb *danṣawa*; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 198b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1120, *invidia*, *avaritia*.

²⁹⁸ Eth. *meṣwāt*. According to some Arabic manuscripts, he follows either the Zoroastrian or Muslim faith, while his wife believes in God, which suggests she is already a Christian; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 227, n. 1.

²⁹⁹ Eth. *kaḥadi* "apostate, impious, unbeliever, contentious, rebel"; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 150b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 825-826, *abnegator*, *infidelis*, *impius*, *perfidus*. In the Arabic mss M and F, he is *ḥanīf*, from the Syriac *ḥanpā* "pagan or impious person". In pre-Islamic sources, however, the term applies to some Christians and Jews as monotheists; cf. M. Goudarzi, *Unearthing Abraham's Altar*, "Journal of Near Eastern Studies" 23 (2023) p. 78. Jaritz interprets it as "Muslim"; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 228, n. 8.

³⁰⁰ Eth. *wa-ʾiyeqērreb*. In ms B the same expression indicating participation in the Church's liturgy, appears without the negative particle; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 83.

³⁰¹ A similar proverb appears in the Arabic version, particularly in ms R; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 228, n. 10. In contrast, the proverb is absent from the Greek

one of your servants to bring us a fat sheep from your flock so that we can prepare it together. We will leave early in the morning, as the place is far". He then called one of his servants³⁰² to carry out the task.

6. But Satan corrupted his heart and sought to destroy him. The man then took a servant, lowered him down with a rope, and hung him upside down above the old woman's dwelling. The servant took the sheep that belonged to her, tied it with the rope, and brought it (to his master). He said to the servant, "Do not reveal this to anyone. And if your mistress³⁰³ asks, 'Where did this come from?', tell her that I sent you to bring it from my flock". Then, he slaughtered the sheep and cooked it completely.

7. As for the elderly woman, she went up to the roof to tend to her sheep, but she could not find it. She then cried out in lamentation, saying, "Woe is me, an old, poor, sorrowful woman! Someone has taken my sheep, the one I relied on to make my clothes each year". Meanwhile, the wife of the wealthy man³⁰⁴ remained unaware, for she believed the sheep had come from his flock.

8. When she heard the elderly woman's lamentation, she put on her veil and went to her, accompanied by her maids³⁰⁵, since they were neighbours. She asked her what had happened that day, inquiring about the reason for her weeping, or if something had occurred involving a stranger. She even insisted that the elderly woman tell her what troubled her, as the lady's heart ached for her, especially because of her poverty. The elderly woman replied, saying, "Woe is me, my sister! I am poor, and now they have made me even poorer. They took my sheep, which I relied on to clothe my body with its wool. Woe is me, for I am naked, and the people of the city will see my shame".

9. The wife of the rich man said to her, "Be patient, O my sister, for I will clothe you every day of your life until the time of your passing³⁰⁶.

text, and the Coptic version survives fragmentarily.

³⁰² Eth. *gabr*, pl. *agbert*, translates the Greek noun δοῦλος, -οι, which similarly means "slave" or "servant".

³⁰³ Eth. *'egze'eteka*, lit. "your lady", like Lat. *domina*.

³⁰⁴ Eth. *mak'annen*, lit. a "master, lord, ruler"; see Footnote 86.

³⁰⁵ Eth. *'a'emāt* is the plural form from *'amat* "maid", referring to a female servant or domestic worker; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 135b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 733, *serea*, *ancilla*.

³⁰⁶ Eth. *'eska gizē felsateki*, lit. "until the time of your (*f.*) assumption", referring to death; see Footnote 72.

But I wonder, my sister, how they managed to climb onto the roof to the place where they took your sheep. As for me, tomorrow, I will go to the church of Saint Abu Menas to question everyone in your neighbourhood and all those around us, to find out if they have returned it before we go to the church. Saint Abu Menas will indeed expose the one who stole this sheep”.

10. The widow, for her part, remained silent and said nothing. The wife of the rich man returned to her house and secretly called her servant away from her husband. She said to him, “Did your master send you to take the sheep of the widow who lives in our neighbourhood?”, since she said, “No one could have taken it except you”³⁰⁷. But the servant revealed nothing to her, for his master had instructed him to keep the matter secret.

11. As for the elderly woman, all those around her said, “Indeed, it was the servant of the wealthy man³⁰⁸ who stole your sheep, and his master hauled it up with a rope to the upper part of his courtyard”³⁰⁹. The widow bore these words patiently until she went to the church of Saint Abu Menas. The wife of the man³¹⁰ then sent for the elderly woman and took her along, saying to her, “I assure you they will swear an oath to you”³¹¹. The next day, the widow got up, followed them, and walked for two days until she crossed over the sea³¹², joining the great assembly of those they were going to the church.

12. When she reached the church, she encountered the wife of the wealthy man and addressed her, saying, “O my sister, after considerable exhaustion, I have come so that you may relay to your husband what I have conveyed to you. I have been informed by the people that his servant took my sheep from the roof of my house, and many witnessed him carrying it until his master retrieved it with a rope and secured it. Now,

³⁰⁷ The Ethiopic plural form *za-'enbalēkemu* implies the involvement of both the servant and the master.

³⁰⁸ Eth. *mak'annen*; see Footnote 86.

³⁰⁹ Eth. *'aṣad* “household” or even “palace”; see Footnote 114.

³¹⁰ Eth. *mak'annen*; see Footnote 86.

³¹¹ According to the Arabic ms A, the elderly woman went directly to the rich man and asked him to return the sheep. When he denied having taken the sheep, she asked him to swear an oath; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 427 and 199.

³¹² Eth. *'abḥert*, is the plural form of *baḥr*, typically referring to Lake Maryut. However, this context suggests a longer journey, possibly without knowledge of the actual topography. In the Arabic version, there is no such reference in ms M, nor in the other extracts provided by Jaritz.

you should present this matter to him, for I do not want him to swear an oath and risk an exposure of his abomination³¹³. Instead, I will pray in the church and then return”.

13. The wife of the wealthy man said to her, “If he admits that he took it, he will give you two sheep as compensation, but if not, you must swear to him³¹⁴. Stay here, my sister, until I interrogate him to see whether he will swear or not”. Then, the wife of the man³¹⁵ said to her husband, “This old woman, whose sheep was taken, told me, ‘May your husband and his servant swear that they did not take my sheep. For there are people who say they saw them removing it from the rooftop’”.

14. This was difficult for the man³¹⁶, and he became very angry. He said, “Convey to this wicked elder that I will swear an oath to her. As for me, I possess a thousand heads of oxen, do I not? Should I take the sheep of this elderly woman, who has nothing else? But if you insist that I swear to her before the whole world, what choice do I have?”. The woman said to him, “O my brother, do not resort to swearing falsely, for you are not depraved at all. I fear that I may find you to be wicked, for your soul is worth more than all your possessions. You came to this place to do good and seek forgiveness for your sins. Therefore, do not sin again. The power of Saint Abu Menas is great, but if you truly believe in your soul that you are saved, then swear to her and return to your home”.

15. The man rose, enraged by Satan, along with the servant³¹⁷ who had bound the sheep with a rope and delivered it, and they approached the altar³¹⁸. When he stood before it, he found a priest³¹⁹ who was about to

³¹³ The Ethiopic participle *hešum* has a broad semantic range, encompassing meaning from aesthetic categories such as “detestable, abominable, despicable, ugly” to moral qualities like “evil, bad, wicked, harmful”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 17a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 81.

³¹⁴ Similarly, in the Arabic ms M, the woman pledges two sheep as compensation for one, whereas ms A states a guarantee of three sheep; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 199 and 229, n. 21.

³¹⁵ Eth. *makʿannen*; see Footnote 86.

³¹⁶ Eth. *makʿannen*; see Footnote 86.

³¹⁷ Eth. *baʿenta gebr*, lit. “concerning the servant”. However, according to the Greek text, the servant clearly accompanies the man on the way to the sanctuary (ἀναστὰς αὐτὸς καὶ ὁ δοῦλος αὐτοῦ), and we retain this detail in my translation; see Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 83, l. 26.

³¹⁸ Eth. *mešwāʿ*; see Footnote 230.

³¹⁹ Eth. *qasis*; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 447a, “presbyter, priest, elder”, from the Syriac *qaššīšā*, and Arabic *qassīs*; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 433.

celebrate the Eucharist³²⁰ in the small sanctuary³²¹. The man said to him, “O my father, I want to swear an oath to this old woman”. He replied, “Behold, you are approaching the great thing that is an oath. Do not proceed, O my son, but guard your soul, so that you are not found evil”³²².

16. The man³²³ replied, “I will not depart without swearing an oath to her. Show me, then, where I can swear, for I will not leave you until you allow me to swear”. So, the priest sent a lector³²⁴ with him and he entered the interior of the place where the body of Saint Abu Menas was kept. Upon entering, he placed his hand on it and swore, saying, “May the body of this saint bear witness that I did not take that sheep, nor did any of my servants”.

17. But when he swore falsely and exited, his hands and legs turned to stone, and the crypt³²⁵ in the place where the body of Saint Abu Menas was shuddered from top to bottom³²⁶. Then, the entire body of the weal-

³²⁰ Eth. *q^werbān*; see Footnote 285.

³²¹ Eth. *bēta maqdas*, from the verb root *qaddasa*, means a “sanctuary, temple, holy place, the innermost part of the church”; cf. Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 423a. In this context, the term specifically refers to the niche which holds the relics of St Menas’s body.

³²² Eth. *hešum*; see Footnote 313. The entire dialogue with the priest is absent from the Greek text. However, in the Arabic recension, according to mss F and N, the priest warns the rich man against swearing. In ms S, the priest advises him to give what the woman accused him of and not to swear, but the man refuses, as doing so would make him appear guilty; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 229, n. 23.

³²³ Eth. *mak^wannen*; see Footnote 86.

³²⁴ Eth. *’anāg^weneštis* is the Ge’ez equivalent of the Greek ἀναγνώστης, which refers to one of the minor orders in the Orthodox Church, entrusted with the recitation of the readings and responsorial psalms, ranking below the sub-deacons; see *Const. apost.* 2.26.3, and their Ethiopic version in *Didasc. apost.* 14, ed. Platt, p. 115; see also the *Statutes of the Apostles*, Can. 27, ed. G. Horner, London 1904, p. 17, tr. 147. The use of this classical term does not imply that the text is a translation from Greek, as the same word remains in use within the Ethiopian ecclesiastical tradition, including the Amharic language; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 29b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 780; Habtemichael Kidane, *Ordination*, EAe IV 48; D. Nosnitsin – E. Fritsch – Dimetros Weldu, *Churches and Church Administration*, EAe I 744a.

³²⁵ Eth. *ba’att*; see Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 526, *specus, spelunca, caverna*. However, when read as *ba’at*, the same word also means “entrance”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 102a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 526-527. This latter interpretation might better align with the stylistic context of the text. However, the Greek version of the miracle refers to the entire location as κατάβασις.

³²⁶ The Ethiopic verb *’ank^wark^wara*, used here, can literally mean “roll (tr.), revolve, rotate”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 152; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 838. Translation from

thy man³²⁷ turned to stone, except for his mouth, which he could still use to speak. He remained immobilized, with no movement in any part of him. Thus, he wept and cried, saying, “Woe is me! I will give four sheep in place of one³²⁸. Grant me pardon, O saint of God and Martyr Abu Menas, for I took the sheep of this poor widow, I cooked it, and then I came to your church. How could you tolerate such great impiety from me?”.

18. “Alas, woe is me! I had a thousand head of cattle, along with many sheep and goats³²⁹, yet my greed tormented me until I took a sheep of this widow who had nothing else. And now, I have fallen into great suffering. Forgive me, O saint of God. May the woman reclaim her sheep; I did not taste it at all”³³⁰.

19. “I will give her four³³¹ sheep, and I will also give all my cattle to the church because of the sin I committed. I, a sinner, contaminated my mouth with a false oath upon your sacred body. Now I have understood, O my Lord, that your power is great. But forgive me this sin. Woe is me, that I came to the church and this befell me because I did not believe in you and did not listen to my wife”.

20. At that moment³³², he heard a voice coming from within the body of the saint, saying, “May your mouth be silenced and remain mute, for this affliction will not leave you until the time of your passing”³³³. The priest and all those present in the church were astonished and filled with wonder. When they heard the martyr’s voice coming from his

the Arabic source probably distorted this phrase. Unfortunately, the corresponding part in the Coptic text has not survived; the sentence does not appear in the Greek text either.

³²⁷ Eth. *bā’el* “rich” in mss A and C, but *bā’āl* “husband” according to ms B.

³²⁸ Similarly, in the Greek text, the petrified man promises four sheep in atonement for the one he stole, all in the hope of forgiveness. This phrase may recur below, possibly for emphasis.

³²⁹ Another repetition of the rich man’s words; see above.

³³⁰ The final acclamation somewhat contradicts the statement above, in no 6.

³³¹ Or “one sheep”, according to ms B, while ms C omits the numeral but retains the noun its plural form (*‘abāge’*), always referring to the woman. The Arabic version (ms M) reads “ten rams” (*‘ašarah kibāš*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 404 (ed.), 175 (tr.), with note 27 on p. 229. In the Greek text, the man declares all his sheep to the church as atonement for the violation of the oath; cf. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 84, l. 6-7.

³³² Lit. “in this hour”.

³³³ See Footnote 72.

chest, they brought a coffin, secured the man to it³³⁴, and lifted him out of the crypt³³⁵. They then brought him into the church³³⁶ and set him upright like a pillar³³⁷ so that everyone could see him. His mouth continued to speak, even though his entire body remained petrified.

21. As for his wife, she remained in his service until the day of his death. Then, she returned to her homeland. She took all that she owned of gold and silver, along with all her goods, and donated them to the church of Abu Menas. She also brought the shepherd and the sheep and offered them to his church as well³³⁸. And they were shorn every year.

22. All of this was in regard of the salvation of her soul as well as the soul of her husband. Every year, she went to the church, gave alms, and marvelled at her husband's fall. She glorified God Most High and his martyr Abu Menas, continuing in this devotion until the time of her death.

³³⁴ The interrupted text of the Coptic ms M.590 begins in this place; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 23 (ed.), 117 (tr.).

³³⁵ Alternatively, "entrance" (*ba'at*); see Footnote 325. The Greek word κατάβασις appears also in the Coptic text; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 23a, l. 3 (ed.). In the Arabic text, ms M does not specify the place; however, in ms F, the faithful find the man in the corridor or portico (*min al-rū'aq*) and then bring him to the main church (*ila al-baī'ah*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (5.11.5), p. 428.

³³⁶ Copt. ΜΑΡΤΥΡΙΟΝ; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 23a, l. 5 (ed.).

³³⁷ Eth. *kama ḥawelt*, in mss A and B; or "they set him to the column", according to ms C. In fact, the Ethiopic term *ḥawelt* refers to a column, pillar, stele, obelisk, or pyramid; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 249a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 112. Notably, the Coptic text also specifies that "they fastened him to a pillar (CTYΛΛOC)"; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 23a, l. 6-7 (ed.). A similar dichotomy is evident in the Arabic text: we read, "like a pillar" in mss R and N, and "to a pillar" in mss L and F, which feature a more detailed description of elevating the man's body in the church. Finally, ms Š states, "under the pillar" (*tahta al-'amūd*), specifying that the pillar is near the descent to the cave (*bil-qurb min al-hubūt ila al-magāra*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 230, n. 31.

³³⁸ In the Coptic version, she gives all her sheep to the *oekonomus* (οικονομος); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 23a, l. 30 (ed.), 118 (tr.). The Arabic ms F describes the donation of the flock in more detail: the woman calls for her shepherd, records the number of the sheep from the oldest to the youngest, and entrusts them to the church administrator or steward (*ila wakīl al-baī'ah*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 5, 11, 5), p. 428. According to ms F, the elderly woman receives all the sheep; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 428 (ed.), 201 (tr.).

To the Lord Jesus Christ be glory, greatness, might, and power, now and forever, unto the ages of ages. Amen³³⁹.

The sixteenth miracle³⁴⁰

1. There was a man from the people of Alexandria, an unbeliever³⁴¹, who had been tormented by a powerful Satan since his childhood³⁴². Satan frequently struck him in the face, causing him to foam (at the mouth) and grind his teeth³⁴³ like a wild beast³⁴⁴. On numerous occasions, the devil even led him to the Bitter Sea, intending to drown him³⁴⁵. In response, his people took a beast, loaded him on it, and brought him to the church of Saint Abu Menas.

2. But Satan, seeking to harm them, threw the man down³⁴⁶ many times, causing him to run toward his people. They then prayed to God the Magnificent³⁴⁷ and to Saint Abu Menas, the miracle-worker³⁴⁸, saying, "May God have mercy on this poor man and save him from Satan, for you are our hope, and we truly believe in you".

3. As they journeyed to the shrine³⁴⁹, awestruck by the man's condition, Saint Abu Menas appeared before them in the form of a knight³⁵⁰ riding on his horse. He asked, "Where are you taking this man?". They

³³⁹ The Coptic version concludes that "the woman used to come every year of her whole life, making her votive offerings to the shrine and glorifying God and the holy Apa Mena"; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 118. A similar conclusion, emphasizing the woman's constant dedication to the shrine, appears in the Arabic ms S; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (5.11.2), p. 426.

³⁴⁰ *The Miracle of the Possessed Man*. For its Greek text (BHG 1268) see Pomia-lovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 87-89 (no 12). For the Coptic version on M.590 (no 15) see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 23-25 (ed.), 118-119 (tr.); see Bacot, *Saint Ménas* (no 8), p. 69-71. The Arabic version of this miracle has not emerged.

³⁴¹ Eth. *kaḥadi*; see Footnote 299.

³⁴² Ms B adds, "He made him crazy and threw him down".

³⁴³ Similarly in Mark 9:18; cf. Ps 36:12 LXX and Matt 13:42, 24:51, within the context of the final judgment and eternal punishment.

³⁴⁴ Lit. "like a pig" (Eth. *kama ḥarāweyā*); see Footnote 51.

³⁴⁵ Cf. Matt 17:15.

³⁴⁶ Cf. Luke 9:42, Mark 9:18.

³⁴⁷ See Footnote 40.

³⁴⁸ Eth. *gabārē mankerāt*.

³⁴⁹ Lit. "place".

³⁵⁰ The text again employs the Ethiopic term *mak"annen*, here denoting a high-rank soldier; see Footnote 86.

replied, "To the church of Saint Abu Menas so that he may find salvation and healing through him. However, we do not know how to guide him, as Satan does not give him rest"³⁵¹.

4. Saint Abu Menas said to them, "Bind him, for otherwise, you will not be able to lead him". Without realizing that it was Saint Abu Menas speaking, they replied, "Satan knows we are taking him to the church of Saint Abu Menas, and he does not allow us to approach it with him".

5. They also said to him, "Our lord, if you could guide him with us, we will pay you". The saint replied, "For me, it is not necessary to receive payment from anyone; but whatever you wish to pay, give it to the holy church". The saint then hung the possessed man up by the hair of his head, tied him to the back of his horse, and made him run alongside until he brought him to the holy church.

6. As for the men³⁵² who accompanied him, they followed and brought him³⁵³ to the church, not allowing anyone to see him. The others, for their part, those who were with the possessed man, were astonished at this. And the saint hung him up between heaven and earth; and so, Satan cried out, saying, "What have you to do with me, oh Menas?³⁵⁴ Leave me alone, for I have been ruling over him for seventeen³⁵⁵ years. Send me into him so that I may kill him, and after that, I will depart from him"³⁵⁶. As the people eagerly urged, Saint Abu Menas set him back on the earth.

³⁵¹ Cf. Luke 11:24-26.

³⁵² Eth. 'edaw; cf. Leslau, *Concise*, p. 179a; here, it refers to the angels, the host of St Menas.

³⁵³ Grammatically, it is unclear to whom the pronoun refers: St Menas or the possessed man.

³⁵⁴ See Mark 5:7.

³⁵⁵ My translation follows ms A, in alignment with the Coptic text, which spells out the number (ⲙⲏⲧϥⲁⲓⲛⲉ); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 24b, l. 33 (ed.), 118 (tr). In contrast, Ethiopic ms C records the number as "16", while ms B presents it as "12".

³⁵⁶ In all three Ethiopic manuscripts, the final verb (*waḏ'a*) appears in the third-person past tense: "and he went out of him", as though introducing a new phrase. In contrast, the Coptic text uses the first-person form; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 25 (ed.), 118 (tr.). In this context, we retain the first-person form to preserve the narrative logic, which suggests the continuation of the exorcism.

7. Two days later³⁵⁷, the Martyr suspended him by two fingers from the first hour of the day until the sixth, tormenting him³⁵⁸. The possessed man cried out, saying, “Behold, I will leave him, O my lord Abu Menas”. Then he fell as though dead. People carried him and brought him down to the cave³⁵⁹ where the body of Saint Abu Menas lay. The servant in the cave took the oil from the lamp that was before the saint’s body and marked the suffering man’s face with it.

8. And he heard Saint Abu Menas crying out with power, saying, “Depart from the creature of God the Magnificent³⁶⁰, and let him live. I indeed gained the power to destroy you in this place before your arrival at the church³⁶¹. But I have brought you here to shame you in the presence of those gathered in the church”.

9. And in the same hour, a fire with waves of flames came out from the possessed one, and the man was immediately revived. He then brought his offering to the church of Saint Abu Menas. Afterward, he returned to his house, glorifying God and giving thanks to the saint who performed the miracle and wonders in his church. May his intercession and prayers be with us all, the sons of baptism³⁶², and preserve us forever and ever. Amen.

³⁵⁷ In ms B, “after 6/7 days”. As mentioned above, the Ethiopic numerals for 6 and 7 look similar; see Footnote 110. The Coptic version begins the phrase with “after some days”; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 25a, l. 10 (ed.), 118 (tr.).

³⁵⁸ Once again, the numeral used in all the Ethiopic manuscripts is uncertain, being either six or seven. In the Coptic version, the indicated number is six; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 25a, l. 15. The Greek text specifies no hours.

³⁵⁹ Eth. *ba’att*; see Footnote 325.

³⁶⁰ See Footnote 40.

³⁶¹ The second part of this sentence is ambiguous in the Ethiopic text. Similarly, the Coptic text presents challenges in interpretation; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 25b (ed.), 119 (tr.).

³⁶² Eth. *weluda temqat*; see Footnote 57.

The seventeenth miracle³⁶³

1. After this³⁶⁴, there was a wealthy Samaritan woman³⁶⁵ from the city of Alexandria. She had an illness in her head. For three years³⁶⁶, she endured great distress due to a persistent headache³⁶⁷. Despite spending a great deal of money on doctors, she found no relief³⁶⁸.

2. Subsequently, she was seated one day with Christian women, her neighbours. They observed that she was suffering from the stroke that was accompanying her, and they said, "If you go to the church of Saint Abu Menas the Martyr, he will revive you, for all who visit his church are restored to health".

3. She replied, "I am afraid of my husband³⁶⁹ and my people, that they might find out about me and kill me". However, the Christian women

³⁶³ In the Ethiopic ms C, this miracle lacks a title or a number, as it directly follows the previous text, which causes a misalignment in the numbering of subsequent miracles. For the Greek text (BHG 1262) see Pomialovskiĭ, *Zhitie*, p. 75-79 (no 6). For the Coptic version (no 16) see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 26-33 (ed.), 119-123 (tr.); see Baccot, *Saint Ménas* (no 9), p. 71-76 (tr.). For the Arabic text in two different recensions see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 23), fragmentary *versio brevior* on ms M (III 4, 24), p. 408-409 (ed.), 179 (tr.); *versio longior* from ms F, much closer to the Ethiopic text, where the miracle's number is nineteen, with excerpts from other manuscripts (III 5, 19), p. 434-439 (ed.), 207-213 (tr.); additional notes (III 6, 21), p. 235-240.

³⁶⁴ Eth. *we-ʿemdeḥra-ze*. The miracle begins in an unusual manner for the collection, in a way that suggests a continuation of the previous narration.

³⁶⁵ Eth. *be'sit sāmrāwit*, or *samrāwit*. The Greek text mentions a "woman from the religion of Samaritans" (γυνὴ ἐκ τῆς θρησκείας τῶν Σαμαρειτῶν). The Arabic text in ms M is acephalous, with no identification of the woman's origin, while the Arabic ms F introduces her as a very wealthy Samaritan (*al-mar'ah Sāmīrīyah*), similarly to the Ethiopic version. The Coptic text lacks references to the material status of the Samaritan.

³⁶⁶ The same period appears in both the Greek and Coptic versions; cf. Pomialovskiĭ, *Zhitie*, p. 75, l. 10; Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 26 (ed.), 119 (tr.). The Arabic ms F indicates three years in the subsequent narration; see Footnote 379.

³⁶⁷ Eth. *zebṭata re'sa*, lit. "stroke of the head", from the root verb *zabaṭa* "strike, smite, beat, whipping"; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 186a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1051. The Greek text defines her condition as an uninterrupted headache (κεφαλόπονιον ἀδιάπαστον). The same term (ἐγκράνιον) appears in the Coptic text; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 26, l. 18-19 (ed.), 119 (tr.). The Arabic versions offer a wider variety of expressions: "she had headache" ('awḡa'a al-ra's, ms Š); "she had a sickness (*marad*) in her head" (ms R); or even "worms (*dūd*) in her head" (mss N and D); cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 235, n. 2.

³⁶⁸ In ms C, "medicine".

³⁶⁹ The same appears in the Arabic ms Š, whereas according to ms N, she was afraid of her ancestors ('*abahāti*).

who were with her encouraged her, saying, “Arise and go with faith, for you will find healing”. But the woman responded, “I am afraid to enter the church because I have not been baptized”.

4. The Christian women, however, urged her, saying, “Go and witness the glory of God”. So, the Samaritan woman secretly left her people and her husband. Early in the morning, she went to the port³⁷⁰, where she found a boat bound for the church’s harbour³⁷¹. She boarded it, accompanied by the Christian women who had followed her.

5. Upon their arrival at the port, they disembarked and went to the place where they could rest until morning. Now, a man who was on the land looked at the Samaritan woman, admired her, and desired to commit a wretched act³⁷² with her because of her beauty, for she had a pleasing appearance.

6. He said to her, “O woman, I see that you are beautiful, and it is not proper for you to sleep in this place. Instead, I will take you to a secluded spot where you can rest, so that others passing by will not look upon you with an evil eye, for you are indeed a beautiful woman, as I can plainly see”.

7. She listened to him but did not perceive the intention within his heart. She believed, in fact, that he was offering her mercy. She said to him, “O my brother, guide me to the place where you dwell; I will take refuge there”. The man asked her, “Where do you plan to go?”. She answered, “I wish to go to the church of Saint Abu Menas to pray”. Consequently, he took the woman and led her to the secret place.

³⁷⁰ Or “to Egypt” (*ḥaba mesr*), according to ms A. In fact, *Miṣr* is the Arabic name for Egypt. The biblical context identifies Mizraim (BH *Miṣrāyim*, LXX Μεσραιμ) as one of the sons of Ham, the son of Noah; cf. Gen 10:6.13. The term commonly refers both to the land of Egypt and its inhabitants; see e.g. Gen 13:10, 41:56; Exod 6:5 ff; 2Kgs 24:7; Jer 44:26. The dual suffix *-āyim* in Aramaic allows for the interpretation of *Miṣrāyim* as “two Egypts”, a reference to Upper and Lower Egypt. The term also features in mediaeval Ethiopic texts, such as the *Miracles of Mary*, where it may refer to both Egypt and, specifically, Cairo; see Zarzeczny, *Catalogo*, p. 314-315. However, in the context of Ethiopic manuscript B, this may represent a copyist’s error, potentially due to a transposition of graphemes in the Ge’ez word for “port/harbour”: Eth. *mars* to *mesr* in B. Additionally, in Classical Ethiopic, *messer* can also mean “lentil”. For further discussion on the various meanings of the root *msr* see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 367.

³⁷¹ Et. *mars za-bēta krestiyān*. It refers to Philoxenite, as explicitly indicated in the Coptic version; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 27a, l. 4-5. However, no Arabic manuscript attests the toponym.

³⁷² In the Arabic ms R, “dishonouring her”.

8. In the evening, he closed the gates of the port³⁷³ and went to the place where the woman was. He asked her, “What do you want from me?”. She replied, “I want nothing but the repose of my soul and relief from the pain³⁷⁴ in my head”. The man then said to her, “Understand this, I am suffering because of the very place where you are”.

9. The woman answered, “As for me, I do not suffer, for you have shown me mercy by bringing me into this place and not leaving me to sleep outside with the others”. Later, the man said to her, “Indeed, other people will come shortly to sleep here”. The woman said to him, “Then please take me to wherever you wish, for I do not want to be near or sleep with others”³⁷⁵.

10. When the man heard this, a great joy filled him³⁷⁶, for a desire to sin had taken hold of his heart. So, he led her, locked the door, and she fell asleep, overwhelmed by the fatigue that had overcome her. As night fell and everyone else in the port slept, the man rose and entered the room where the woman was sleeping, carrying a sword³⁷⁷ in his hand.

11. He said to her, “I want to lie with you”. But she replied, “Do not do what is evil, O my brother, and do not approach me. For I am a Samaritan woman, and you are a Christian man, baptized, while I am a woman esteemed among my people and my law”³⁷⁸. Nevertheless, the man said to her, “If you do not let me lie with you, I will kill you with the sword in my hand”.

12. The woman said to him, “Kill me, for I will not commit this abominable act”. The wicked man then drew his sword and threatened her with it. However, the woman implored, “Please, permit me to speak a few words before you kill me”. He replied, “Speak”.

13. She said to him, “I swear to you by the name of God, do not commit any evil to me. I am on my way to the church of Saint Abu Menas to pray, as I told you before, and – if mercy is granted to me – to be freed from this sickness in my head that has tormented me for three years, never allowing me peace, neither by night nor by day”³⁷⁹.

³⁷³ This implies that the man was the port’s gatekeeper.

³⁷⁴ Lit. “stroke”; see Footnote 366.

³⁷⁵ This phrase seems defective in all three Ethiopic manuscripts; however, its meaning remains clear, and it is consistent with both the Coptic and Arabic texts.

³⁷⁶ Lit. “he rejoiced with great joy”.

³⁷⁷ Eth. *sayf*; see Footnote 262.

³⁷⁸ Eth. *heggeya* “my law, rite, statute, norm”, from the verb root *ḥaggaga* “write or institute laws, legislate, ordain”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 26b.

³⁷⁹ A similar sentence appears at the beginning of the story; see Footnote 366. An almost identical phrase also features in the Arabic ms F.

14. But he said to her, "Now allow me to do with you as I wish. Afterward, you may go to the church³⁸⁰ and pray". She replied, "I am deeply afraid to go to the church while being unclean and as a Samaritan woman. Truly, I fear angering Abu Menas the Martyr and bringing upon myself a sickness even greater than the one that already torments my head".

15. However, he repeated, "If you do not allow me to lie with you, I will kill you with the sword you can see in my hand". She replied, "Kill me, then, for I will never do this". And she cried out in a loud voice, saying, "O Abu Menas, saint of God! I have come to your home³⁸¹ because I trust in God and in you. Save me now from the hand of this infidel!"³⁸².

16. At that moment³⁸³, he raised his hand with the sword, intending to kill her. But the hand holding the sword became petrified. Suddenly, Saint Abu Menas appeared³⁸⁴, riding a horse in the manner of a knight³⁸⁵. He struck the door of the house, and the door was immediately opened. A great light preceded him as he entered the place where the Samaritan woman and the despicable³⁸⁶ man were.

17. Then, Abu Menas the Martyr took the woman's hand in the midst of light and said to her, "O woman, what has happened to you?". Furthermore, he made the sign of the cross over her, and the fear vanished from her heart. He said to her, "Rise up, I will take you to the church"³⁸⁷. The woman stood up and followed him until she passed through the door. There, she said to him, "O my lord, who are you? I see you with such great glory and majesty, and I am afraid".

18. The saint replied, "I am Abu Menas, to whom you came from your home³⁸⁸. Behold, I have come to save you from this infidel man. When morning comes and the sun rises, go to my church, and I will heal you". Then Saint Abu Menas eased her fear and said, "Sleep here until dawn,

³⁸⁰ Lit. "to his church", namely to the shrine of St Menas.

³⁸¹ "From my home", according to manuscripts B and C; similarly in the Arabic ms F (*min manzāli*).

³⁸² Eth. *kaḥadi*; see Footnote 299.

³⁸³ Lit. "in this hour".

³⁸⁴ Lit. "Saint Abu Menas came".

³⁸⁵ Eth. *mak'annen*; see Footnote 86.

³⁸⁶ Eth. *mennun* is a passive participle used as an adjective to describe an evil man, derived from the verb root *mannana* "despise, disdain, reject"; cf. Leslau, *Concise*, p. 38b. See also Footnote 313.

³⁸⁷ In the Arabic ms F, the passage is shorter: "He said to her, 'Go to the church'. And she rose and followed him".

³⁸⁸ Ms B omits the words "from your home".

and do not be afraid³⁸⁹, for I will send an angel to guide³⁹⁰ you and your neighbours to my church". With that, he disappeared from her sight, and she never saw him again.

19. As for the infidel man, a great sorrow overtook him³⁹¹, and he cried out, confessing his sin to God and to Saint Abu Menas. When morning came, the woman rose before the light appeared. She said to the women who were with her, "Arise, let us go, for Saint Abu Menas has saved me"³⁹². And they got up and went together.

20. Furthermore, the Samaritan woman reported to her companions what had happened to her, and they were amazed. Then, an angel of the Lord³⁹³ appeared to them in the form of a monk³⁹⁴ and illuminated their path, leading them to the church of Saint Abu Menas. Upon their arrival, they entered and prayed there. The next day³⁹⁵, (the Samaritan) approached the archpriest³⁹⁶ and said, "O my father, I ask for your mercy, that you baptize me and count me in the number of Christians".

³⁸⁹ Cf. Luke 1:30.

³⁹⁰ Lit. "to go with".

³⁹¹ Lit. "a great beating or whipping (*zebṭat*) found him". See Footnote 367.

³⁹² Alternatively, "he is the one who redeemed me" (*za- 'adḥanani*); cf. Gen 48:16; Jub 7:34.

³⁹³ Eth. *mal'aka egzi*; similarly in the Arabic ms F: *malāk al-rabb*.

³⁹⁴ Eth. *manakos*, derived from the Greek μοναχός; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 350; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 190; similarly, the Arabic ms F mentions a "monk" (*rāhib*).

³⁹⁵ Eth. *ba-kāl'et 'elat* clearly refers to the second day. Similarly, "early morning" (ἔσπρωγε) appears in the Coptic versions; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 31a, l. 30. In contrast, the Arabic ms F uses an uncertain phrase *fī tālit yawm*, likely replacing the more accurate *fī al-yawm al-tālī* ("on the next day"), or *fī al-yawm al-thālith* ("on the third day"), the reading preferred by Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 209, "am dritten Tag".

³⁹⁶ Eth. *liqa kāhnat*, lit. "chief of priests", likely refers to the superior or bishop of the shrine. The Coptic version follows the Greek text, using the term archpriest (ἀρχιερεσβύτερος); cf. Pomialovskii, *Zhitie*, p. 78, l. 14; Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 31a, l. 32-33 (ed.), 122 (tr.). In the Arabic version, the used term similarly means the eldest, head, or archpriest (*kabīr/rayīs al-qusūs*, mss R and Š). However, some manuscripts note the patriarch Theophilus (*tāwofīlus al-baṭrīrak*) himself as the one who receives the Samaritan woman and her companions in the shrine; see ms M in Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 409 (ed.), 179 (tr.), 237, n. 37.

21. So, he baptized her in the name of Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit³⁹⁷, and granted her the Sacred Mysteries³⁹⁸. Later, she cut her hair and dedicated herself to serving the church of the Martyr³⁹⁹. On the day she was baptized, the infidel man who had sought to sin with her arrived, riding a beast⁴⁰⁰. His hand was like stone, and within it was the sword with which he had intended to kill the woman.

22. He cried out, saying, “Help me, O saint of God! I beg you to intercede on my behalf to the Lord, to forgive my sin and downfall”. They then brought him down from the beast and left him in the church to pray to the Lord Jesus Christ and his saint, the martyr Abu Menas. The people crowded around to see the man and his withered hand, and the sword still lodged in it, as if it had been nailed through.

23. He remained in the church for seven days⁴⁰¹, while those who had brought him kept watch over him. Saint Abu Menas, for his part, appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Now, I release you. Do not return to your transgressions, for I have granted you healing. From this day forward, guard your soul”. The man replied, “As God lives, I will not leave this place, but I will be your servant all the days of my life”.

³⁹⁷ The Trinitarian formula for baptism appears here in its unaltered form, without the additional words *ʾaḥadu amlāk* “one God”, commonly associated with the Ethiopian tradition. The monotheistic emphasis *al-allaʿ al-wāḥid* “the one God” appears also in the Arabic ms A, cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 5, 19, 2c), p. 438 (ed.), 211 (tr.), though it is absent from ms F.

³⁹⁸ Eth. *meṣṭira qeddesāt*, lit. “mystery of holiness”, clearly refers to the Holy Eucharist. The Coptic text mentions the “infinite offering” (προσφορά ἀπέραντον); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 31b, l. 10-12. In the Arabic ms F, we see “the holy mysteries” (*al-serāyīr al-maqdasah*); ed. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 436. Finally, the Greek text references only baptism.

³⁹⁹ The Coptic text also mentions the cutting of hair and service to the church. In some Arabic mss, she even becomes a nun; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 237, n. 39.

⁴⁰⁰ Eth. *ʾensesā* generally refers to an animal resembling cattle or an ox, distinct from a horse or donkey; the expression likely emphasizes the man’s humiliation. In the Greek text, the man appears as a horseman (καβαλλάριος) in this instance; cf. Pomialovskii, *Zhitiie*, p. 78, l. 20. In contrast, the Coptic text describes him as arriving on an ass (εἶο); cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 31b, l. 24. In the Arabic ms F, the man sits on his beast (*ʾalā dābtah*), similarly to the Ethiopic version.

⁴⁰¹ In ms C, the number is also “seven”, while ms B states “three days”. The Arabic manuscripts generally mention “seven”, except for ms F, which reads “nine”; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 179, 238, n. 41.

24. Saint Menas said to him, “When you wake up in the morning, do as the administrator⁴⁰² instructs you”. When morning came, before prayer, he implored the priest and the administrator, saying, “O my fathers, be merciful to me and bring me a little oil from the martyr’s lamp to anoint my body. If mercy finds me, this affliction will leave my body”. So, they brought him the oil⁴⁰³, and he made a sign of the cross on his hand, and immediately, it came back to life. In response, he took all that he owned, gave it to the church of Saint Abu Menas, and remained there⁴⁰⁴.

25. As for the Samaritan woman, with whom he had intended to sin and who was subsequently baptized, she passed away six months later⁴⁰⁵. They rested together on the same day and entered the eternal Kingdom of Heavens⁴⁰⁶. Glory be to God, and thanksgiving to his saint, now and forevermore. Amen.

⁴⁰² Eth. *lā’k* “messenger, servant, attendant”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 10b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 48, *minister, famulus* (paral. διάκονος, λειτουργός), *muneribus summis praefecti*. Jaritz explains the Arabic term as equivalent to “der Kirchendiener bzw. Ökonom”; cf. *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 238, n. 44. In fact, the Greek and Coptic texts use the term οἰκονόμος; see Pomialovskiĭ, *Zhitie*, p. 79, l. 3; Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 32a, l. 31-32, and 32b, l. 4-5 (οἰκονόμος), 123 (tr.).

⁴⁰³ The Coptic version provides a clarification: “the oil from the lamp burning before the saint’s body”; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 123. In the Greek text, the church servants commence the entire action in accordance with the saint’s directives given in a dream. The Arabic texts align with the Ethiopic version on this point.

⁴⁰⁴ The text in the Arabic ms F concludes at this point.

⁴⁰⁵ It is uncertain whether the numeral is six or seven, as these characters resemble each other in Ethiopic manuscripts. In this instance, the translation follows the Coptic text according to Drescher’s edition (ḡṡ mēzcooy Δε νεβoτ); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 32b, l. 32-33 (ed.), 123 (tr.). The Arabic version simply states that, after his conversion and healing, the man remains in the church – together with the Samaritan woman, as noted in ms F – and serves the church until his death; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 179 (ms A), 210 (ms F). According to the Arabic ms Š, the woman dies “after years” of service and is buried in the shrine of St Menas; so does the man, but in another time and grave; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 5, 19, 3c), p. 439 (ed.), 212 (tr.).

⁴⁰⁶ A similar conclusion appears in the Arabic ms Š.

The eighteenth miracle⁴⁰⁷

1. After this⁴⁰⁸, there was a wealthy woman known in Akteyālītā from the territories⁴⁰⁹ of Maryut⁴¹⁰, whose name was Sophia⁴¹¹. She had not been blessed with the grace of a child⁴¹². When she heard of the powers and miracles performed by Saint Abu Menas, she reflected and said, “I have no son to bring me joy, nor anyone to inherit what I will leave behind. What benefit is there in all that I have gathered if there is no one to entrust it to? For it is written that *the world transgresses and perishes, along with its desires*⁴¹³. Therefore, I will rise and go, taking

⁴⁰⁷ The Ethiopic ms C numbers the miracle as seventeen, reflecting the absence of a numeral for Miracle 17; see Footnote 363. For the Greek version (BHG 1259) see Pomialovskiĭ, *Zhitie*, p. 68-70 (no 3), and Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, p. 60-63 (no 3). In the Coptic ms M.590, this miracle survives only partially (no 4); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 22 (ed.), 116 (tr.); for another version from ms IFAO (no 5) see Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 58-64 (ed.), 70-71 (tr.); Bacot, *Saint Ménas* (no 4), p. 55-58 (tr.). For the Arabic text (no 9), particularly from ms F (III 5, 5), see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 416-417 (ed.), 188-189 (tr.), with notes (III 6, 7), p. 218-219.

⁴⁰⁸ Once again, the miracle begins as part of a longer narration; see Footnote 363.

⁴⁰⁹ Eth. *'adyām* in ms A (plural of *daym*), meaning “area, region, district, province, borders”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 146b; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 1126. Meanwhile, ms B uses *'adewāl* (plural of *dawal*), with a similar meaning, namely “region, territory, district”, but also “border, frontier, limit”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 198b.

⁴¹⁰ The text is corrupt in all the codices. The reading above follows ms A. According to ms B, the woman is from *'Asyāṭik* within the borders of Asyut (*'em-'adewāla 'Asyut*), while in ms C she is from a place in Maryut (*makāna Maryut*). The Greek and Coptic versions identify the woman as a resident of Philoxenite; see Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, p. 60, l. 1, ἐκ τῆς χώρας τῶν Φιλοξενιτῶν; Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 22a, l. 19. The first Ethiopic toponym reflects the Arabic name *'Aksālītā* or *'Aksābītā*, which is evidently a distorted form of *Fīlukṣānīdā*; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 168 and 218 (III 6, 7), n. 1.

⁴¹¹ The Ethiopic name *Sofeyā*, derived from the Greek Σοφία and Arabic *Ṣāfiya*, refers to the woman, whereas in the Coptic text, she remains anonymous. This typical Hellenistic name is not entirely unfamiliar in the Ethiopic tradition, where it appears in various contexts, including in the collection of miracles attributed to the Virgin Mary. For example, Sophia is the name of an abbess of the monastery on Mount Carmel (CAe 3611); cf. Zarzeczny, *Catalogo*, p. 324. The name also refers to a saint who reportedly appeared to St Basil alongside St Irene (CAe 3686); see Zarzeczny, *Catalogo*, p. 347. Additionally, Sophia denotes a noblewoman who donated all her possessions to the poor (CAe 5017); see Zarzeczny, *Catalogo*, p. 352. The Ethiopic version also attests the acts of martyrdom of Sophia and her three daughters (BHG 1637x, CAe 1900).

⁴¹² Eth. *wald*, lit. “a son”.

⁴¹³ Cf. 1John 2:17.

all my adornments⁴¹⁴, and I will give them to the church of Saint Abu Menas so that I may receive them back in the kingdom of heaven, which does not perish”.

2. She then rose, took all her belongings, and set out alone without informing anyone. She thought to herself, “It is better that my people do not know about me, and that they do not tell my husband, lest he become angry with me”. So, she walked alone through the desert until she approached the church dedicated to Saint Mari Thecla the Martyr, about one mile away⁴¹⁵. There, she encountered a watchman⁴¹⁶. When he saw her walking alone, Satan entered him, and he rode toward her on his horse. Upon reaching her, he seized her and asked, “Where do you come from?”.

3. Then she was terrified and afraid that he might rob her of what she had or kidnap her. She said to him, “As for me, it is my intention to go to the church of Saint Abu Menas to pray there”. But he responded, “There is no one here with us in this place; let me lie with you, so that I will not take everything you have and will not kill you”.

⁴¹⁴ Eth. *sargw* can encompass various forms of decoration, adornment, jewellery, and even the concept of beauty itself; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 69a; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 348; in Exod 32:2, it refers to gold intended for offering; in Num 31:30, it denotes various goods; in Sir 21:21, it specifically refers to golden ornaments; while in Eccl 12:9 it appears as an adjective describing the entire creation (κόσμος).

⁴¹⁵ Lit. “one measure”, which the Arabic text (ms F) renders as “one mile (*mīla*)”. For further information on the cult of St Thecla in late antiquity, as attested by numerous *ampullae*, see S.J. Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla: A Tradition of Women's Piety in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2001, particularly p. 113-148, which discuss the location and activity of her *martyrium* in the Mareotis region. While the primary centre of St Thecla's veneration was in Asia Minor, the sanctuary in Maryut was far more accessible to Egyptian pilgrims. Consequently, many people traveling from Alexandria to the shrine of St Menas also visited the church of St Thecla; see Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla*, p. 175-176. On the miracle of St Menas in this context see Davis, *The Cult of Saint Thecla*, p. 127-129; E. Wipszycka, *Saint Thècle dans la Maréotide*, in: *Unending Variety: Papyrological Texts and Studies in Honour of Peter van Minnen*, ed. A.J. Connor – J.H.F. Dijkstra – F.A.J. Hoogendijk, Leiden – Boston 2024, p. 207-211.

⁴¹⁶ The Ethiopic *nomen agentis* ‘*aqābi*, derived from the verb root ‘*aqaba*, means a “keeper, protector, guard, guardian, or watchman”; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 174; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 980. The Coptic text breaks here, and instead of a “watchman”, it refers to the man simply as a soldier; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 116. Similarly, the Arabic ms F describes him as a “soldier from the guards” (*ḡundī min ḥarās*); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 419 (ed.), 188 (tr.).

4. She said to him, “Do not commit this sin, my lord, for I left my house with the intention of going to the church of Saint Abu Menas. I now swear to you by God Most High, and by the power⁴¹⁷ of the master of the church⁴¹⁸ to which I am travelling. From the day I was born⁴¹⁹, I have known no man except my husband, to whom my parents gave me in marriage. So, do not commit this act against me, my brother, as you are considering. Instead, I will give you money”⁴²⁰.

5. But he did not listen to her, for Satan filled all his members with sin. The woman lifted her eyes to heaven and said, “O my Lord, you know that I do not want this, but if it is your will, let it be”. Now, the man sought to disgrace her, tied a rope from his horse to his leg, and seized her to fulfil his lustful desire upon her.

6. But at that moment, Saint Abu Menas the Martyr came riding on his spiritual horse⁴²¹, took the woman from the hands of the man who intended to act wickedly toward her, and carried her on his horse. As for the guard, he was beaten like a man attempting to steal another man’s horse and was suspended between heaven and earth. He remained hanging from the horse until they arrived at the church of Saint Abu Menas, and all the people saw him. The horse, meanwhile, behaved like a wild beast, kicking the guard constantly.

7. As for the woman, she was riding the horse that had leapt over the man⁴²². (Upon their arrival at the shrine,) she immediately offered everything that she had, along with what she had brought, to the church. Later, the man also donated his horse to the church, so it could provide water for those coming to the shrine. From that moment on, he refrained

⁴¹⁷ Lit. “by the intercession of” (Eth. *ba-tenbeleennāhu la-*).

⁴¹⁸ Eth. *bā’l bēta krestiyān*.

⁴¹⁹ Lit. “when I rose from the womb of my mother”.

⁴²⁰ Eth. *dinar*. In the Arabic ms F, the desperate woman offers “two dinars” (Ar. *dīnārīn*) to the soldier, while according to ms Š, the woman promises him a substantial reward; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 188 (tr.), with note 6 on p. 219. In the Greek text, instead of the words regarding the woman’s marital status, there is a longer passage that appears to paraphrase Exod 20:17, “Do not desire what is of your neighbour”.

⁴²¹ Similarly in the Coptic text; see ms IFAO, ed. Bacot, *Quatre miracles*, p. 64a, l. 2-3. For more see Footnote 170.

⁴²² The text is corrupt and probably abbreviated in all Ethiopic manuscripts. In the Arabic version (ms F), the woman rides with the saint and thus enters the church safely; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 189. A miracle involving water also appears in connection with this event.

from transgression and dedicated himself to fervent prayer, night and day. He continually implored and blessed the Lord, to whom praise and glory belong now and forever. Amen.

The nineteenth miracle⁴²³

1. It happened once⁴²⁴, when a large crowd had come to the church of Saint Abu Menas, that great trouble befell them because they lacked water⁴²⁵. They had only ten camels, and half of them went to the lake to carry water in order to fill the troughs and provide water for drinking.

2. As the gathering grew larger, people went to the administrator⁴²⁶ and said, “We are dying of thirst, we ourselves, our children⁴²⁷, and our animals”. They also went to the priest and the servant⁴²⁸, saying, “What

⁴²³ In the Ethiopic manuscript C, the Water Miracle receives number 18 due to the absence of a number for Miracle 17; see Footnote 363. This miracle does not have an equivalent in the Greek collection; however, it appears in the Coptic ms M.590 as Miracle 17; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 33-34 (ed.), 123-125 (tr.). For a French translation see Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 76-78 (no 10). For the Arabic version see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (no 16), from ms M (III 4, 17), p. 405 (ed.), 175 (tr.), and from ms F, where it appears as the eleventh miracle (III 5, 12), p. 429 (ed.), 201-202 (tr.). For information on the transmission of this miracle in other Ethiopic manuscripts see the Introduction.

⁴²⁴ In the Arabic shorter version, the miracle happens during the time of Theophilus, the Patriarch of Alexandria (384-412), a detail not mentioned in other recensions; see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen* (III 4, 17), p. 405 (ed.), 175 (tr.). According to the *History of the Patriarchs*, the water miracle occurs at the shrine of St Menas through the prayer of Patriarch Shenouda I (859-880); see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 123-124, n. 2. A similar story of obtaining water during a time of shortage also appears among the miracles recorded by the eleventh-century Islamic scholar Abu al-Qasim al-Quṣayrī; cf. R. Gramlich, *Die Wunder der Freunde Gottes*, Wiesbaden 1987, p. 145; Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 175, n. 756.

⁴²⁵ The Coptic text adds the phrase “because no rain had fallen that year”; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 123 (tr.), with observations regarding the shrine’s water supply, note 2.

⁴²⁶ Eth. *bā’la astadāliwiyān*, lit. “master of preparations”, corresponds to the Greek term οἰκονόμος used in the Coptic version; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 33a, l. 32 (οἰκονόμος), 125 (tr.). In addition to the administrator, the same Coptic version mentions an archpresbyter (παρχιπρεσβύτερος) – a title absent from the Ethiopic text.

⁴²⁷ Eth. *ḥedānnātina*, lit. “our infants”.

⁴²⁸ Eth. *qasis wa-lā’k*; in the Arabic text, it is *reyyīs al-qesūs wa-al-wakīl* “the head of priests and the representative”.

shall we do? We will die of thirst in this desert”⁴²⁹. The archpriest and the servant⁴³⁰ replied, “You must go”⁴³¹ to the body of Saint Abu Menas, beseech him⁴³², and lie prostrate before him, that he may intercede with the Lord Jesus Christ to grant you what you need”.

3. At that hour, they gathered and prostrated themselves before the body of Saint Abu Menas. Along with their women and children, they all cried out with one voice, saying, “O martyr of God, Saint Abu Menas, intercede for your people before God, that he may open for us water in this place, so that all who have come to you may drink and bless your holy name”.

4. And the saint spoke to them from his body, which lay upon the altar⁴³³, saying, “You who drew water from the rock at Horeb, from which more than two hundred thousand people drank⁴³⁴, let the water of life

⁴²⁹ This double dialogue in the Ethiopic text seems to be a repetition, possibly unintentional, when compared to the Coptic narration, which states, “And, being in distress because the multitudes were so great, the people went in haste to the archpriest and the *oeconomus*, saying, ‘What shall we do? Behold, we shall die of thirst, along with our children, in this desert’”; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 124-125 (tr.). The Arabic ms F also confirms the shorter version.

⁴³⁰ Eth. *liqa kāhnāt wa-lā’k*, lit. “chief of priests and messenger”.

⁴³¹ Lit. “go (pl.) yourself (pl.)”.

⁴³² Lit. “ask him”.

⁴³³ Eth. *ṭābot*. In the Ethiopic Bible, the term refers to the ark of Noah, the Ark of the Covenant, as well as the slab with the Ten Commandments. In the Christian context, it designates the altar in any church, placed under the consecrated slab of wood or stone, also called *ṭābot*; see Leslau, *Comparative*, p. 570; cf. Dillmann, *Lexicon*, c. 560. According to Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge*, p. 37, other than that, only the Jewish linguistic context attests the term. For further information see M.E. Heldman, *Tabot*, EAe IV 802a-804a, and E. Fritsch, *Tabot: Mānbārā tabot*, EAe IV 802b-807a, with a bibliography.

⁴³⁴ The numbers in the Ethiopic codices vary: ms A cites 200,000 men; ms B states 20,003, while ms C mentions 30,000. In the Ethiopic collection of the Archangel Michael’s miracles, the oldest mss EMML 1835, fol. 41va and EMML 1841, fol. 32va, list the number as 200,000 men (Eth. 200-’*elf sab*’), while the later ms EMML 4082, fol. 42vb, reports 10,000. Meanwhile, the parallel Coptic miracle states that “more than six hundred thousand drank”; cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 125 (tr.). In the Arabic ms F, the number is “more than 60,000” (’*aktar min sittūn ālf*’); see Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 202. In fact, neither the Hebrew nor the Greek Book of Exodus specifies the number of people who drank the water Moses drew from the rock in the desert; see Exod 17:6. Similarly, the Ethiopic text of the Bible simply states that “water flowed from the rock, and many drank”. However, according to Exod 12:37, about 600,000 Israelites journeyed from Pi-Ramesses to Sukkoth, excluding women and children. In

flow from this desert. O my Lord Jesus Christ, my God, for whose name I endured all suffering⁴³⁵, have mercy on your image, that all may know and praise your holy name”⁴³⁶.

5. And at that very hour, the Archangel Michael descended from heaven⁴³⁷, holding a rod⁴³⁸ in his hand. He struck the rocks in the middle with it, and a great deal of water poured out from them. It flowed like a river from the sea into the desert, rising to a height of seven cubits, and running as wide as a stream⁴³⁹.

6. At that time, the people shouted and raised their voices, saying, “There is no God like our God, and none like his martyr, Aba Menas”. Then they all drank, along with their animals, and blessed the Lord, the martyr of Lord Jesus Christ, his saint and chosen one, Abu Menas, who performed wonders and miracles.

Num 11:21, Moses, standing before God, mentions 600,000 men, while Num 26:51 reports the total number of counted Israelites as 601,730. In Exod 38:26, the number of men who entered the Promised Land and then paid the tribute for the Tabernacle is 603,550, and the same number of men strong enough to fight appears in Num 1:46.

⁴³⁵ Apart from popular iconography and liturgical texts, the martyrdom of St Menas is best known within the Ethiopian tradition through his acts (*gadl*; see BHO 749, CAe 3165), and particularly in the abridged version found in the Ethiopian *Synaxarium* for 15 *Hedār*. For more information see the introductory article.

⁴³⁶ According to Gen 1:26-27, God created man in his own image; cf. Gen 5:1-3. In the New Testament, Jesus Christ, as the incarnated Word of God (cf. John 1:14), is the perfect image of the invisible God; see Col 1:15; cf. Rom 8:29; 2Cor 4:4. In this context, the prayer of St Menas resonates deeply with the words of St Irenaeus, “For the glory of God is the living man; and the life of man consists in beholding God”; see *Adv. Haer.* IV 20,7.

⁴³⁷ This miracle ranks among the miracles of St Michael the Archangel in several Ethiopic manuscripts; see the introductory article.

⁴³⁸ Copt. “rod of fire” (ⲡⲉⲩⲃⲉⲣⲱⲃ ⲛⲕⲱⲉⲣ); cf. Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 34a, l. 9 (ed.), 125 (tr.). Similarly, in Arabic ms F, “the angel Michael descended from heaven with his rod of fire (*bi’ikkāz an-nār*) and struck the rock”; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 429 (ed.), 202 (tr.).

⁴³⁹ Once again, it is unclear whether the number is six or seven in Ethiopic manuscripts A and B, while ms C omits the number entirely. The Coptic text states, “Water poured forth to a depth of three ells and for a distance of a mile”; see Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 125 (tr.). Similarly, the Arabic ms F records, “And fresh water came out of it, and flowed like dripping until it rose three cubits high and flowed as long as a river”; cf. Jaritz, *Die arabischen Quellen*, p. 202 (tr.). While referencing Exod 17:6 and Num 20:11, this sentence also seems to allude to passages such as Ezek 47:1-5, Ps 78:15, and John 7:38.

Epilogue

1. Thus, I, poor⁴⁴⁰ Theophilus, Archbishop of the great city of Alexandria⁴⁴¹, desired to record and preserve⁴⁴² these wondrous events for the edification of our Orthodox faith⁴⁴³. For the Magnificent God bestowed glory upon his saint, granting that the soul of the holy martyr should return to his body⁴⁴⁴. And behold, he spoke to the faithful from within, mouth to mouth⁴⁴⁵, as though he yet lived, proclaiming the glory of the Magnificent God, he who works wonders and miracles.

2. Indeed, great is the honour that God bestows upon his martyr, Saint Abu Menas, who grants healing to all the afflicted who come in faith to his church. Through the generations, he has revealed his power against those who have sworn falsely within his sanctuary. He grants children to barren women, blessing their wombs with fruit⁴⁴⁶. Yet, he is righteously angered by sinners who enter his shrine in defilement. But to those who have built churches in his name, he grants glory beyond measure. And to those who diligently record the acts of his martyrdom and his miracles, he bestows favour throughout their lives upon their possessions, interceding that Christ may increase their days. As for those who faithfully observe his feast days, who listen attentively to the holy books, and who perform acts of charity for the children, the offspring of life, their blessing shall endure for a thousand generations.

3. These accounts, beloved brethren, have been drawn from many books, offered as a testimony to the mighty works God has wrought through his holy martyr Abu Menas. And I, poor Theophilus, Archbishop of the great city of Alexandria, offer my prayers on behalf of all people upon the earth. To those who would vow a gift to the church, I say: delay not in fulfilling it. For the holy martyrs and saints gave their bodies to fire

⁴⁴⁰ Eth. *meskin*; see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 35b.

⁴⁴¹ Eth. *Tēwoflos* in mss A and C, but *Teyoflos* in ms B. For more on the attribution of the texts concerning St Menas see the discussion in the introductory article.

⁴⁴² The Ethiopic verb root *mattara* “cut, cut off, interrupt”, or even “excommunicate”, see Leslau, *Concise*, p. 37a, appears here to signify the act of isolating or individuating the narratives to preserve them in the memory of the faithful.

⁴⁴³ Eth. *retu'āna hāymānot* in ms C, but *heṣuṣāna hāymānot* “our insufficient faith” in mss A and B.

⁴⁴⁴ Lit. “he left the soul of his martyr once again to his body”.

⁴⁴⁵ See Drescher, *Apa Mena*, p. 34 (ed.), 125 (tr.); cf. Bacot, *Saint Ménas*, p. 77 (tr.).

⁴⁴⁶ Cf. Luke 1:42.

and to the sword⁴⁴⁷, laying down their lives for the name of Jesus Christ, receiving no earthly honour. Yet through them, healing flows to all who suffer, each according to his faith and the power of God working through them. They bore good works not for themselves but for others.

4. Therefore, let no one withhold what is rightly due, whether it be the oil of anointing, offerings for their churches, written commemorations of their lives, or garments for their altars. Let all these be given freely and with devotion, in the hope of securing the salvation of one's soul.

5. O my beloved sons, may those who worship the Lord and his holy martyr, Saint Abu Menas, praise and commemorate him on the day of his martyrdom. May the fifteenth of the month of *Hedār*⁴⁴⁸ be a day of blessing for those who are afflicted by suffering, the poor, the destitute, and expectant mothers, each receiving the grace apportioned to them. May the Lord reward each one according to his promise: some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold⁴⁴⁹. May he inscribe their names in the Book of Life and entrust them to the care of his holy martyr.

6. Rejoice, therefore, and render glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and forevermore, unto the ages of ages. Amen⁴⁵⁰.

⁴⁴⁷ According to *The Acts*, the holy martyr Menas died of decapitation with a sword, and the governor ordered the commitment of his body to the flames; see Budge, *Texts*, p. 54.

⁴⁴⁸ The commemorative day of the saint's martyrdom; see the introductory article. The *Prologue* of the Miracles designates 15 *Sanē* as the day of reading these miracles, coinciding with the Maryut shrine's consecration day.

⁴⁴⁹ Cf. Mark 4:20.

⁴⁵⁰ Some colophons or copyists' notes follow the epilogue. However, their content varies across manuscripts and does not relate directly to the miracle narratives. Accordingly, we will discuss these supplementary notes in more detail in the context of the original Ethiopic text's publication.



Cuda św. Menasa według bizantyńskiego synaksarionu z kodeksu New York, Harvard University, Houghton Library Typ 243H

Katarzyna Piotrowska (wstęp i tłumaczenie)¹

1. Wstęp

1.1. Rękopis

Cuda św. Menasa, których autorstwo grecka tradycja rękopiśmiennicza² przypisuje Tymoteuszowi, arcybiskupowi Aleksandrii³, zachowały

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² Cuda św. Menasa, skomponowane w V, VI lub VII wieku (zob. dyskusja w: P. Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena to the Study of the Miracles of St Menas*, VoxP 94 [2025] s. 48-57) zachowane są również w innych językach: koptyjskim, etiopskim, starocekiewnosłowiańskim, arabskim. Większość badaczy zgadza się co do tego, że greckie teksty stanowią przekład z oryginałów koptyjskich (J. Drescher, *Apa Mena: A Selection of Coptic Texts Relating to St. Menas, Edited, with Translation and Commentary*, Cairo 1946, s. 105) albo przynajmniej uważa ten kierunek za bardziej „ekonomiczny” (L. Silvano – P. Varalda, *Per l’edizione dei Miracula sancti Menae (BHG 1256-1269)*, „Philologia Antiqua” 12 (2019) s. 51, przyp. 2), jednak najnowsza analiza Przemysława Piwowarczyka dowodzi, że przekład miał miejsce w kierunku odwrotnym i oryginalnie cuda skomponowane były po grecku (zob. Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena*, s. 45-48).

³ Patriarcha w latach 381-385. Atrybucja jedynie na podstawie tytułu zawartego w manuskryptach, stąd raczej wątpliwa (J. Duffy – E. Bourboulakis, *Five Miracles of St. Menas*, w: *Byzantine Authors: Literary Activities and Preoccupations. Texts and Translations Dedicated to the Memory of Nicolas Oikonomides*, ed. J.W. Nesbitt, Leiden – Boston 2003, s. 65; Silvano – Varalda, *Per l’edizione*, s. 55), a nawet niemożliwa, jeśli wziąć pod uwagę elementy świata przedstawionego w cudach, jak istnienie wielkiego sanktuarium w Abu Mina czy nazwę Filoksenite, która nie jest wcześniejsza niż VI wiek (zob. Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena*, s. 49). Alternatywnie identyfikowany jako monofizyta Tymoteusz II Ailuros (Kot), patriarcha Aleksandrii w latach 457-460 i 475-477, co również uznaje się za mało przekonujące (Silvano – Varalda, *Per*

się w kilkudziesięciu manuskryptach⁴, z których część przekazuje wszystkie 13 cudów, w większości natomiast zachowana jest kompozycja 5 tekstów⁵. Wciąż brakuje krytycznej edycji wszystkich greckich cudów. Jedynym wydaniem całej trzynastki jest edycja rosyjskiego badacza Iwana Pomiałowskiego (*Miracula S. Menae Graece*)⁶ oparta na jednym rękopisie. Cztery *miracula* posiadają wydanie krytyczne, przygotowane przez Luigi Silvano i Paolo Varalda⁷, ponadto jedno – *Miraculum II* – wydał sam Varalda⁸. Włoscy wydawcy wyodrębniają w przekazie cztery recenzje i stwierdzają, że rozbieżności wykazywane przez teksty zawarte w poszczególnych manuskryptach wydają się nie być przypadkowe, a raczej stanowią świadome zabiegi redakcyjne⁹. Z pewnością o takiej, świadomej i celowej, interwencji można mówić w przypadku jednej kolekcji, która znacząco różni się od pozostałych, zarówno długością samych tekstów, jak i fabułą oraz szczegółami dotyczącymi bohaterów i okoliczności opisywanego cudu¹⁰. Chodzi o kolekcję pięciu cudów zachowaną w synaksarionie pochodzącym z XII wieku¹¹ i do czasów nowożytnych

l'edizione, s. 55 przyp. 7), a z podobnych przesłanek, co w przypadku Tymoteusza I, również nieprawdopodobne.

⁴ L. Silvano i P. Varalda podają 62 manuskrypty zamieszczone w bazie *Pinakes* (z czego odrzucają 2 oznaczone jako zaginione: Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, s. 56). W lutym 2025 roku baza *Pinakes* podaje już 65 manuskryptów (<https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/recherche-generale/results/page>; dostęp: 15.06.2025).

⁵ Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, s. 57. W języku koptyjskim zachowało się 17 *miraculów*.

⁶ *Žitie prepodobnogo Paisija Wielikogo i Timofieja patriarcha Aleksandrijskogo, powiastwowanie o czudesach sw. wielikomuczenika Miny*, red. I. Pomiałowskij, Saint Petersburg 1900, s. 62-89. Skrót *Miracula S. Menae Graece* za Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena* w tym tomie.

⁷ *Miracula III, V, X, XIII*, ed. Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, s. 59-76.

⁸ *Miraculum S. Menae Graecum II*, ed. P. Varalda, *Il ricco Eutropio e i piatti. La versione greca di uno dei Miracula sancti Menae (BHG 1258)*, „Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata” 18 (2021) s. 207-236.

⁹ Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, s. 58.

¹⁰ Duffy – Bourbouhakis, *Five Miracles of St. Menas*, s. 66-67.

¹¹ John Duffy podaje, że istnieje jeszcze jeden manuskrypt z kolekcją tych samych pięciu cudów, niestety nie precyzuje, o jaki rękopis chodzi. Zob. J. Duffy, *Revelations and Notes on a Byzantine Manuscript at Harvard*, w: *Early Christian Voices: In Texts, Traditions and Symbols. Essays in Honor of François Bovon*, red. D. Warren – A. Brock – D. Pao, Biblical Interpretation Series 66, Leiden – Boston 2003, s. 413, przyp. 11). Te same cuda (I-V, BHG 1257-1261) w wersji nieskróconej znajdują się w jeszcze kilku innych rękopisach z XII wieku (a także w późniejszych odpisach) oraz

przechowywanym w klasztorze św. Jana Teologa¹² na wyspie Lesbos, skąd (nie bezpośrednio) trafił do kolekcji amerykańskiego bibliofila Philipa Hofera i dzisiaj znajduje się w Bostonie, w Houghton Library (Uniwersytet Harvarda). Według katalogu Athanasiosa Papadopoulosa-Keramieusa, *Κατάλογος τῶν ἐν ταῖς βιβλιοθήκαις τῆς νήσου Λέσβου ἐλληνικῶν χειρογράφων* z 1888 roku w bibliotece klasztoru świętego Jana Teologa znajdowało się 57 rękopisów. Na tej podstawie trudno jednak stwierdzić, czy w klasztorze funkcjonowało skryptorium podobne do tego z monastyru św. Jana Teologa na Patmos. Według tradycji klasztor miał być założony przez Teofanesa Wyznawcę, a zatem jego fundacja miałaby miejsce w VIII wieku, jednak brakuje źródeł potwierdzających Teofanesa jako fundatora¹³. Interesujący nas rękopis pochodzi, jak powiedziano powyżej, z XII wieku i tę informację przyjmuję jako punkt wyjściowy do analizy zawartych w nim tekstów. Koniec XI i wiek XII w historii Bizancjum nazywany jest, od panującej wówczas dynastii, epoką Komnenów. Przypada na nią okres wzmożonej aktywności literackiej, zwanej czasami renesansem Komnenów¹⁴. Pewne trendy, pojawiające się w tym okresie, mogły mieć wpływ również na omawiane synaksarion.

w jednym manuskrypcie z końca X wieku (Vat. gr. 866). Baza *Pinakes* podaje ponadto jeden manuskrypt zawierający *recensio brevior* (San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Real Biblioteca, Y II 06) tych pięciu oraz dwóch innych cudów, również z XII wieku.

¹² Właściwie klasztorze Jana Teologa Wysokiego – Μονή του Αγίου Ιωάννου του Θεολόγου Υψηλού, dziś skrótowo nazywanego Moni Ipsilou. Taką nazwę zawdzięcza położeniu na najwyższym szczycie masywu Ordimnos.

¹³ Z osobą Teofanesa Wyznawcy (Sigriańskiego) łączy klasztor św. Nikodem Hagiorites, najprawdopodobniej myląc Sigriane, położone na wybrzeżu Morza Marmara, gdzie Teofanes faktycznie ufundował klasztor, z wioską Sigri na Lesbos. Inna lokalna tradycja przekazuje, że klasztor założył pewien syryjski mnich już w VII wieku. Z inskrypcji umieszczonej w katholikon (głównym kościele) obecnego klasztoru wynika, że stary kościół istniał już w 1101 roku.

¹⁴ Na temat renesansu Komnenów i zasadności stosowania takiego określenia, zob. przede wszystkim: R. Browning, *Enlightenment and Repression in Byzantium in the 11th and 12th Centuries*. „Past and Present” 69 (1975) s. 3-23; P. Magdalino, *The Empire of Manuel I Komnenos, 1143-1180*, Cambridge 1993; A. Kazhdan, *Change in Byzantine Culture in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, London 1985; P. Magdalino, *Cultural Change? The Context of Byzantine Poetry from Geometres to Prodromos*, w: *Poetry and Its Contexts in Eleventh-Century Byzantium*, red. F. Bernard – K. Demoen, Farnham – Burlington 2012, s. 19-37. Obecnie uważa się, że być może to, co wydaje się być powszechnym wzmożonym zainteresowaniem literaturą antyczną, w rzeczywistości może być projekcją indywidualnych zainteresowań kilku najbardziej prominentnych literatów na całą epokę.

1.2. Synaksarion

Sama koncepcja synaksarionu¹⁵ może być rozumiana dwojako: albo jest to kalendarz liturgiczny zawierający czytania na dany dzień, bez żadnych dodatkowych tekstów, albo – i z tym drugim rozumieniem mamy do czynienia – kalendarz zbliżony do menologium, a zatem przedstawiający krótkie historie związane ze świętymi wspominanymi tego dnia. Zasadnicza różnica pomiędzy menologium a synaksarionem wynikałaby z długości zamieszczonych w nich tekstów¹⁶, jednak nomenklatura jest tutaj dosyć płynna i tak np. słynne *Menologium Bazylego II* (X wiek)¹⁷ jest w zasadzie synaksarionem, będącym wersją *Synaksarionu Konstantynopolitańskiego* (*Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, X wiek)¹⁸. Nie ma też ściśle określonych zasad kompozycji synaksarionu – to, jakich świętych włączano do kalendarza, jakie przekazywano informacje o ich życiu, czy i które *miracula* mogły się w nim znaleźć, wynikało przeważnie z lokalnych przesłanek¹⁹. I tak np. we wspomnianym *Synaksarionie Konstantynopolitańskim*, pod datą 11 listopada, na którą przypada wspomnienie świętych męczenników: Menasa, Wiktora i Wincenta, w nagłówku czytamy tylko o tych trzech świętych, jednak w toku narracji, po Wiktorze, pojawia się wzmianka o świętej Stefanii, której męczeństwo jest ściśle związane ze św. Wiktorem. W drugiej sekcji zamieszczono informację, że tego samego dnia wspominamy również o „naszym świętym ojcu i wyznawcy, Teodorze, hegumenie klasztoru Studios”²⁰. Menologium Bazylego II wśród świętych męczenników na ten dzień już w tytule

¹⁵ Synaksarion był gatunkiem bardzo popularnym, doczekał się nawet parodii, jaką była wierszowana satyra pochodząca z XV wieku – *Συνάξαριον τοῦ τιμημένου γαδάρου* (Synaksarion szlachetnego osła).

¹⁶ R.F. Taft – N.P. Ševčenko, *Synaxarion*, ODB 3, 1991.

¹⁷ Manuskrypt *Menologion Bazylego II* znajduje się w Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana z numerem katalogowym Vat. gr. 1613 i jest najobficiej ilustrowanym rękopisem bizantyńskim, jedną trzecią każdego foliału zajmuje połączana ilustracja przedstawiająca wspominanych świętych.

¹⁸ N.P. Ševčenko, *Menologion of Basil II*, ODB 2, 1341-1342. Na temat *Synaksarionu Konstantynopolitańskiego* zob. D. Thomas – A. Mallet, *Synaxarion of the Great Church*, w: *Christian-Muslim Relations. A Bibliographical History*, v. 3: (1050-1200), red. D. Thomas – A. Mallet, Leiden 2011, s. 574-585.

¹⁹ S. Der Nersessian, *Remarks on the Date of Menologium and Psalter Written for Basil II*, „Byzantion” 15 (1940-41) s. 106.

²⁰ *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae (e codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi)*, ed. H. Delehaye, Acta Sanctorum 62, Brussels 1902 (repr. 1985), s. 185-266;

wymienia świętą Stefanię, której scena męczeństwa zajmuje niemal połowę zamieszczonej ilustracji przedstawiającej wszystkich wspomnianych tego dnia świętych²¹. Jednak w obu synaksariach informacje o świętych męczennikach są zdawkowe i całość nie przekracza 30 wersów. W manuskrypcie omawianego synaksarionu brakuje pierwszych foliałów, na których powinny znajdować się wrzesień, październik i pierwsza dekada listopada (jest to synaksarion zimowe, obejmujące miesiące od września do lutego). Zachowany tekst zaczyna się 11 listopada miniaturą przedstawiającą św. Menasa z towarzyszami – Wiktorem i Wincentym²². Ponieważ brakuje również kilku stron wewnątrz manuskryptu (czasem tylko foliałów, czasem całych kwaternionów)²³, nie można stwierdzić z całą pewnością, co i o których świętych zostało przekazane. Jednak z zachowanego tekstu wyraźnie wynika, że kompozycja przekazu o św. Menasie znacząco różni się od innych synaksariów. Po pierwsze, żywot świętego poprzedzony jest krótkim, trzywersowym wstępem, na który składają się dwa dwunastozgłoskowce bizantyńskie²⁴ i jeden klasyczny heksametr:

synaxarion mensis Novembris IA, żywoty Menasa, Wiktora i Wincenta wersy 1-27, dalej Teodor Studyta.

²¹ Vat. gr. 1613 fol. 174r; z tekstów *Menologium Bazylego II i Synaksarionu Konstantynopolańskiego* nie wynika, jakoby męczeństwo Wiktora i Wincenta było powiązane z męczeństwem św. Menasa. Grecka redakcja *Męczeństwa świętego Menasa* w niektórych recenzjach dodaje „i jego towarzyszy” jednak w samym tekście nie pojawiają się oni, poza jedną recenzją (BHG 1251-1253, wydana: T. Ioannou, *Mnēmeia agiologika*, Venetia 1884, s. 284-324), gdzie Menas występuje w towarzystwie Wiktora, Stefanii i Wincenta. Na temat Męczeństwa św. Menasa, zob. P. Piwowarczyk, *Greckie i koptyjskie Męczeństwo św. Menasa. Wstęp i Przekład z komentarzem*, „SSHT” 51/2 (2018) s. 361-375 (zwl. s. 362-364).

²² Ponieważ nie miałam możliwości skonsultowania manuskryptu Typ. 243H, bazuję na informacji podanej przez Duffy (*Revelations and Notes*, s. 412), który w ten sposób opisuje ilustrację (fol. 1r [Nov. 11] St. Menas and companions Victor and Vincentius). Warto dodać, że po tym, jak manuskrypt opuścił klasztor na Lesbos, przez jakiś czas znajdował się w posiadaniu Demetriosa Pelekastes, znanego malarza ikon, który dodawał fałszywe miniatury do rękopisów. Niestety, nie jest mi wiadome, czy podjęto próbę ustalenia datacji obecnej w manuskrypcie ilustracji i czy jest ona oryginalnym przedstawieniem wybranych świętych zamieszczonym w synaksarionie przez kompilatora z XII wieku.

²³ Dokładny opis brakujących fragmentów rękopisu daje: Duffy, *Revelations and Notes*, s. 415.

²⁴ Na temat dwunastozgłoskowca bizantyńskiego powstałego z trymetru jambicznego, zob. M. Lauxtermann, *The Velocity of Pure Jamb*, „JÖB” 48 (1998) s. 9-33.

Αἴγυπτος ὄντως εἰ τέκη τίκτει μέγαν,
 Τμηθεῖς ἀληθὲς τοῦτο Μηνᾶς δεικνύει.
 Μηνᾶς ἐνδεκάτη ξίφος ἔτλη γηθόσυνος κῆρ
 ‘Jeśli faktycznie Egipt rodzi wielkich synów,
 To Menas, którego ścięto, pokazuje, że to prawda.
 Jedenastego Menas zniósł miecz z radością w sercu’²⁵.

Zastosowane metra są bardzo charakterystyczne dla tego okresu literatury bizantyńskiej i razem z dwoma innymi (dystychem elegijnym i anakreontykiem) były w tym czasie w powszechnym użyciu²⁶. Fakt dołączenia wierszowanego wstępu do żywota świętego również jest zabiegiem dosyć typowym dla kompozycji synaksariów tego okresu – w niektórych dwunastowiecznych recenzjach wspomnianego wyżej *Synaksarionu Konstantynopolitańskiego*²⁷ żywoty świętych poprzedzają wersy z kalendarza metrycznego (365 heksametrów, po jednym na każdy dzień roku) autorstwa jedenastowiecznego poety, Krzysztofa z Mityleny²⁸. Twórczą imitacją kalendarza Krzysztofa jest jambiczny kalendarz autorstwa jednego z najwszechstronniejszych bizantyńskich literatów XII wieku, Teodora Prodromosa. W dziele tym pod datą 11 listopada czytamy:

Ὁ ἅγιος Μηνᾶς ὁ Αἰγύτιος ξίφει τελειοῦται.
 Ἔμεινε Μηνᾶς τὴν τομὴν εὐκαρδίως.
 ‘Święty Menas Egipski mieczem został zgładzony,
 Ścięcie zniósł Menas z sercem odwagą przepełnionym’.

²⁵ O ile nie zaznaczono inaczej, wszystkie przekłady na język polski pochodzą od autorki.

²⁶ Omówienie tych czterech miar, zob. H. Hunger, *Die hochsprachliche profane Literatur der Byzantiner*, t. 2, München 1978, s. 91-96. Najnowsze i najbardziej rzetelne ustalenia na temat metryki bizantyńskiej daje: M. Lauxtermann, *Byzantine Poetry from Pisides to Geometres. Texts and Contexts*, t. 2, Wien 2019, s. 265-381 (Appendix metrica).

²⁷ Są to przeważnie wersy inkorporowane z *Menologium Bazylego II*, w którym stanowiły opisy niektórych ilustracji (zob. Taft – Ševčenko, *Synaxarion*).

²⁸ Wers kalendarza na 11 listopada u Krzysztofa brzmi: Μηνᾶν τὸν μέγαν, καὶ Βίκτορα καὶ στερρὸν Βικέντιον – *Menasa wielkiego i Wiktora i silnego Wincenta* (C. Mytilanaeus, *Calendaria metrica*, ed. E. Follieri, w: *I calendari in metro innografico di Cristoforo Mitileneo*, t. 1, Subsidia hagiographica 63, Brussels 1980, s. 327-481, Sich. Nov. 11). Św. Menasa i towarzyszy dotyczy ponadto wyimek z ody 4 na listopad: Μηνᾶ δὲ καὶ Βίκτορος ἑκτομὴν συνάθλου τε κάθειρξιν – *Menasa i Wiktora i towarzysza ukaranie przez ścięcie*, (Mytilanaeus, *Calendaria metrica*, s. 327-481).

Wersy z omawianego synaksarionu nie zostały jednak zaczerpnięte ani z kalendarza Krzysztofa (heksametry)²⁹, ani Teodora (dwunastozgłoskowce/jamby). Nie znajdujemy ich również w innych, obecnie dostępnych dziełach tego rodzaju³⁰, można więc z równym prawdopodobieństwem założyć, że albo pochodzą z zaginionego lub niewydanego dotąd kalendarza, albo zostały skomponowane przez kompilatora synaksarionu³¹.

1.3. Miracula

Drugim elementem, który wyróżnia omawiane synaksarion, jest obecność miraculów zaraz po opisie męczeństwa świętego. Nie są to jednak oryginalne czy lekko przeredagowane wersje znanych skądinąd cudów, ale teksty bardzo skrócone i pozbawione licznych, istotnych dla narracji elementów. Celem niniejszego tekstu jest zaprezentowanie polskiego przekładu i wskazanie na najistotniejsze cechy rekompozycji zawartych w synaksarionie cudów w stosunku do ich (mniej lub bardziej) oryginalnych redakcji³². Analizując rekompozycję, postaram się wskazać

²⁹ Baza *Pinakes* podaje, że w manuskrypcie znajdujemy kalendarz metryczny Krzysztofa z Mityleny, jednak albo jest to zupełnie inna wersja kalendarza, albo po raz kolejny w przypadku identyfikacji tekstów tego rękopisu nastąpiła pomyłka. Zob. Duffy, *Revelations and Notes*, s. 410-411.

³⁰ Moja kwerenda została ograniczona do tekstów, których wydania są dostępne. Być może dalsze poszukiwania przyniosą inne rezultaty.

³¹ Najbliższą inspiracją, jaką udało mi się znaleźć, mógłby być wiersz Prodrmosa na innego Menasa, wspominanego 10 grudnia, który brzmi: 'Ο ἅγιος Μηνᾶς ὁ καλλικέλαδος ξίφει τελειοῦται./ Τμηθεῖς ὁ Μηνᾶς εἰς κελαδεῖ καὶ πάλιν. ('Święty Menas o płynnej mowie zginął zgładzony mieczem./ I chociaż ścięto Menasa, on pięknie przemówi raz jeszcze'), jednak participium τμηθεῖς, jako incipit wspomnienia o świętym, pojawia się często również w przypadku innych męczenników, a treść wiersza znacząco różni się od omawianego. Na temat identyfikacji trzech różnych Menasów, zob. C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition*, New York 2016, s. 184.

³² Jak zostało powiedziane powyżej, brakuje edycji krytycznej wszystkich cudów. Wydanie Pomiałowskiego oparte jest na recenzji określonej przez Silvano i Valaldę jako β, w dodatku na jednym tylko manuskrypcie, trudno więc mówić tu o „oryginalnej” wersji. Jest to jednak rękopis klasztorny z XI wieku, nie można zatem wykluczyć, że był źródłem dla kompilatora omawianych tekstów. Tam, gdzie to możliwe, korzystam z wydań krytycznych (*Miraculum II*, *Miraculum III* i *Miraculum V*, które jest pierwotnym dla cudu IV z omawianej kolekcji), odwołując się do pozostałych cudów (I i V), z konieczności tylko z wydania Pomiałowskiego (*Miracula S. Menae Graece*).

zarówno na to, co zostało zmienione, jak i (najczęściej) na to, czego w skróconej wersji nie ma, wskazując na funkcję zastosowanych zmian i pominieć, akcentując świadomy wybór kompilatora, wynikający z przesłanek lokalnych, historycznych i kulturowych.

1.4. Elementy rekompozycji wspólne dla całej kolekcji

Cechą, która dotyczy wszystkich pięciu cudów, jest anonimizacja bohaterów i miejsc, w których dzieją się opowiadane historie³³. Już sam ten zabieg powoduje, że zarówno bohaterowie, jak i święty oraz jego sanktuarium stają się generyczni, tracą zindywidualizowanie na rzecz przedstawienia uogólnionej prawdy moralnej, zilustrowanej rozmytą historią „jakiegoś człowieka” w „pewnych okolicznościach”. Nie tylko żaden z bohaterów miraculów nie ma imienia, ale nawet święty pozostaje w większości z nich anonimowy (imię Menasa pojawia się tylko raz w II i raz w V cudzie). Tak przedstawione miracula bliższe są Ezo-powej bajce, której morał zastąpiony jest ekspiacją winnego (w niektórych przypadkach również udzielonym za pośrednictwem świętego rozgrzeszeniem) i uwielbieniem Boga³⁴. Całkowite pozbawienie opowieści elementów historycznych³⁵ związanych z miejscem kultu świętego może wynikać z dwóch, dosyć prozaicznych, przyczyn. Po pierwsze, świadomość geograficzna mieszkańców Cesarstwa nie była szczególnie rozwinięta – geografia znajdowała się na pełnym marginesie szkolnego curriculum³⁶, więc operowanie nazwami miejsc, które dla dwunastowiecznego odbiorcy były najzupełniej obce, nie miało narracyjnego

³³ Cuda zazwyczaj mają miejsce w pobliżu albo w samym sanktuarium Abu Mina, w oryginalnej wersji podawane są szczegóły topograficzne, a bohaterowie znani są z imienia (jak Eutropiusz w *Miraculum II* czy Zofia w *Miraculum III*).

³⁴ *Miracula* określane są łacińskim sformułowaniem *narrationes animae utiles* (Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, s. 55), któremu odpowiada angielskie *beneficial tale* (Duffy – Bourbouhakis, *Five Miracles of St. Menas*, s. 66). W polszczyźnie byłaby to „powiastka umoralniająca”.

³⁵ O ile sam święty jest raczej postacią fikcyjną (zob. E. Wipszycka, *The Birth of the Cult of St Menas*, *VoxP* 94 (2025) s. 29-31), jego kult jest faktem historycznym, szeroko poświadczonym.

³⁶ Zob. D. Angelov, „*Asia and Europe Commonly Called East and West*”: *Constantinople and Geographical Imagination in Byzantium*, w: *Imperial Geographies in Byzantine and Ottoman Space*, ed. S. Bazzaz – Y. Batsaki – D. Angelov, Washington 2013, s. 46.

sensu. Po drugie, sanktuarium w Abu Mina³⁷ nie funkcjonowało już w tym czasie – upadło w drugiej połowie X wieku, można więc założyć, że ustał ruch pielgrzymkowy. Oczywiście, dwunastowieczni Bizantyńczycy mogli tego nie wiedzieć, jednak ciągle zamieszanie wynikające z najazdów arabskich i wypraw krzyżowych i tak nie sprzyjało pielgrzymowaniu przez objęte wojenną zawieruchą tereny, w związku z czym znika jedna z głównych funkcji, jaką miały pełnić teksty cudów. Bo nie ulega wątpliwości, że jednym z powodów, dla których kler sanktuarium św. Menasa w Abu Mina upubliczniał cuda świętego, było zabieganie o wsparcie finansowe ze strony pielgrzymów. Bohaterowie oryginalnej wersji miraculów deklarowali chęć przekazania dużych kwot (czasami połowy majątku) na rzecz sanktuarium jeszcze przed doświadczeniem cudu, a po interwencji świętego (albo na etapie prośby o nią – *Miraculum II*) podwajali kwoty. Również nikczemnicy, którzy dopuszczali się mordów, kradzieży, gwałtów czy krzywoprzysięstwa, po interwencji świętego oddawali na rzecz sanktuarium wielkie sumy. Przykłady te miały zachęcić pielgrzymów do hojności wobec sanktuarium. W omawianym zbiorze tylko jedno miraculum (cud II) zawiera wzmiankę o elemencie wotywnym, której nie dało się usunąć, ponieważ na nim opiera się oś historii. Jednak i tutaj datek nie jest tak szczodry, jak w oryginalnej wersji cudu, gdzie mieszkaniiec Aleksandrii, Eutropiusz, zamawia dwie srebrne misy, z których jedną zamierza ofiarować świętemu od razu, a drugą – po swojej śmierci. Wie, że „zgrzeszył i zapomniał słowa: ‘nie pożądam dóbr bliźniego swego’, a przede wszystkim ‘tego, co należy do świętego’”³⁸, gdyby wiedział, jakie nieszczęście to na niego ściągnie, „zamiast jednej, ofiarowałby trzy misy świętemu w jego sanktuarium, dwie srebrne i jedną złotą”³⁹, a ostatecznie oddaje wszystko i do naczyń dorzuca jeszcze uratowanego służącego jako wotum przebłagalne za swój grzech i dziękczynne za ocalenie sługi. W wersji synaksarionu z Lesbos nasz bezimienny bohater, kiedy staje w obliczu tragedii, obiecuje świętemu oddać równowartość utraconego, a wcześniej obiecanego mu naczynia, które z chciwości chciał zatrzymać dla siebie, oraz drugie, które właśnie dla niego wiozł (niewiele więc tutaj naddatku). W pozostałych cudach wszelkie informacje finansowe zostały usunięte, poza dwoma, w których działania bohaterów motywowane są chęcią nielegalnego zysku.

³⁷ Na temat lokalizacji sanktuarium i jego działalności, zob. Piwowarczyk (*Prolegomena*, s. 46-48) i Wipszycka (*The Birth*, s. 20-29).

³⁸ *Miraculum S. Menae* Graecum II, ed. Valalda, s. 222, w. 69-71.

³⁹ *Miraculum S. Menae* Graecum II, ed. Valalda, s. 220, w. 36.

W cudzie V, o Hebrajczyku i chrześcijaninie, podana jest kwota depozytu, jaki Hebrajczyk zostawił przed podróżą przyjacielowi – 500 solidów⁴⁰ w gotówce, ale nie ma ona żadnego związku z ewentualnym wotum na rzecz sanktuarium, podczas gdy w oryginalnej wersji cudu Żyd, który powierzył chrześcijaninowi „cały swój dobytek” (πάντα τὰ ἐμὰ)⁴¹, po odzyskaniu go za sprawą interwencji Menasa oddaje trzecią część (1000 solidów) na rzecz sanktuarium, a i chrześcijanin oddaje połowę swojego dobytku⁴². W cudzie I natomiast, w którym oryginalnie bogaty Izauryczyk wyruszył z sakiewką do sanktuarium św. Menasa i został podstępnie zamordowany przez właściciela przydrożnego składu, gdzie zatrzymał się na nocleg, ujawniony morderca oddaje zagrabaną sakiewkę i dorzuca od siebie sto solidów, które, rzecz jasna, trafią do sanktuarium. W dwunastowiecznej wersji bezimienny bohater ma ze sobą jakieś złoto, które jednak może być rozumiane jako zawieszony na szyi krzyż albo amulet. Po wskrzeszeniu zamordowanego złoty przedmiot jest mu zwrócony, ale nigdzie wprost nie zostaje powiedziane, że ma tę wartościową rzecz ofiarować w sanktuarium. W cudzie III oryginalnie występuje kobieta o imieniu Zofia⁴³, która jest bardzo bogata i bezdzietna, więc zamierza swoje bogactwo przekazać na rzecz sanktuarium. Kiedy po drodze zostaje zaatakowana, początkowo myśli, że na tle rabunkowym i proponuje napastnikowi dwa solidy, żeby nie robił jej krzywdy, ten jednak zamierza ją zgwałcić i grozi, że w razie oporu, zabije ją i zabierze cały jej dobytek. Trudno oprzeć się wrażeniu, że uratowanie Zofii było niezwykle opłacalne dla sanktuarium, bo wraz z jej przedwczesną śmiercią hojny datek by przepadł. W dodatku upokorzony napastnik ofiarował Menasowi w ramach ekspiacji własnego konia. W dwunastowiecznej wersji cudu nie ma ani słowa o planowanym wotum (tu bezimiennej) kobiety, ani rekompensacie za zamierzony grzech napastnika. Do tej kategorii nie zalicza się jedynie cud IV, w którym kwestie finansowe nie zostały poruszone również w pierwotnej wersji, jednak to konkretne miraculum nie należało

⁴⁰ W greckim tekście „nomismata”. Pod tą ogólną nazwą bito monety imperialne, czyli solidy, do XIV wieku. Do X wieku solid zachowywał stałą wagę, od XI wieku była ona zmienna, a udział złota w monecie został zmniejszony, dlatego wartości przekazane w tekstach były różne dla odbiorców z VI/VII i XII wieku.

⁴¹ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomiałowskij, s. 72, w. 17

⁴² *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomiałowskij, s. 73 w. 11 i 21-22.

⁴³ W niektórych manuskrypcach imię „Zofia” nie pojawia się w tytule cudu, niemniej i tak znajdujemy je w tekście. Zob. Silvano – Varalda, *Per l'edizione*, s. 60.

oryginalnie do cyklu i wiele wskazuje na to, że zostało zapożyczone z zewnętrznego źródła⁴⁴.

1.5. Elementy rekompozycji w poszczególnych cudach

1.5.1 Cud I (O człowieku zamordowanym przez gospodarza)⁴⁵

Prymarną, religijną funkcją cudów jest inspiracja do nawrócenia na wiarę chrześcijańską. Literatura hagiograficzna IV i V wieku pełna jest opisów zdarzeń, których przynajmniej część była co do formy zbieżna z biblijnymi charyzmatami, danymi Kościołowi u początków głoszenia Ewangelii. Jednak wraz z rozprzestrzenieniem się chrześcijaństwa na cały ówczesny świat, taka nadzwyczajna ingerencja Ducha Świętego (tu udzielanego za pośrednictwem świętych) przestała być potrzebna jako inspiracja do nawrócenia pogan. W XII wieku, wewnątrz na wskroś chrześcijańskiego Cesarstwa, motyw ten jest już nieistotny⁴⁶, dlatego nie może dziwić fakt, że nie występuje on również w omawianych miraculach. W dłuższej wersji cudu, św. Menas wskrzesza zamordowanego, ale „nie tylko ze względu na mordercę, ale też z uwagi na obecnych tam heretyków (αἰρετικούς) i pogan (Ἕλληνας)”⁴⁷, którzy przybyli tam razem ze świętym, ale uparcie nie wierzyli w niego. Wskrzeszając zmarłego w imię „Pana, Jezusa Chrystusa”, mówi mu: „Wyjdź ty, który byłeś umarły, połączone zostały wszystkie twoje członki: i za twoją sprawą heretycy i poganie niech poznają chwałę Boga; i ty sam poznasz, że ja jestem sługa Boży, Menas”⁴⁸. A następnie wszyscy udają się do sanktuarium,

⁴⁴ Takie samo *miraculum* obecne jest również w cudach Kosmy i Damiana, ponadto zawiera rytuał inkubacji, który nie był poświadczoną praktyką w sanktuarium Abu Mina. Zob. Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena*, p. 51-52.

⁴⁵ W przeciwieństwie do oryginalnych cudów, te zawarte w synaksarionie nie posiadają tytułów.

⁴⁶ Wojny z Arabami wprowadziły sprawiły, że problem pojawił się na nowo, jednak rozwiązania, jakie znajdujemy w literaturze tego okresu, są już nieco innego rodzaju. Zob. bizantyński romans *Digenes Akritas*, którego pierwsze redakcje pochodzą najprawdopodobniej właśnie z XII wieku.

⁴⁷ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, s. 65, w. 12-13: „οὐχὶ διὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπον τὸν φονεύσαντα μόνον, ἀλλὰ διὰ τοὺς τότε αἰρετικούς τε καὶ Ἕλληνας”.

⁴⁸ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, s. 65, w. 16-19: „ἔξελθε τετελειωμένος ἐσφιγμένα πάντα τὰ μέλη σου· καὶ μάθῃσι διὰ σου αἰρετικοὶ καὶ Ἕλληνες τὴν δόξαν τοῦ Θεοῦ”.

gdzie morderca, wdziawszy habit, odbył 7-letnią pokutę, a wskrzeszony pielgrzym rozповіда o tym, co mu się przytrafiło i na skutek jego opowieści „uwierzyło mnóstwo pogan i heretyków”⁴⁹.

Pojęcia heretyków (αἰρετικοί) i pogan (Ἕλληνες) w XII wieku miały nieco inny wydźwięk niż w pierwszych wiekach Kościoła. Wprawdzie termin *Hellen* nadal oznacza poganina⁵⁰, a zatem największym błędem wobec prawowitej wiary jest błąd hellenizmu, jednak, jak dowodzi Paul Magdalino, chociaż ortodoksja była niewątpliwie podstawą ideologii bizantyńskiej, w tym również ideologii Komnenów, to hellenizm, który zagraża Kościołowi, jest też kodem kulturowym, który jednoczy Bizantyńczyków⁵¹. Kodem, który jest jednocześnie pożądanym (solidne wykształcenie oparte na literaturze antycznej było kluczem do kariery w administracji) i niebezpiecznym, bo może skutkować oskarżeniem o herezję, która oznacza nie tyle głoszenie doktryny niezgodnej z ustaleniami soborów, co pewnego rodzaju bezbożność (tu zasadzającą się na zbytnim przywiązaniu do filozofii i literatury antycznej). W dwunastowiecznej wersji cudu nie ma mowy o świadkach wydarzenia ani o późniejszym opowiadaniu o nim i nawracaniu heretyków oraz pogan, bo dwunastowieczni *hairetikoí* i *Hellenes* nie muszą być nawracani w imię Jezusa Chrystusa, którego przecież znają. Teraz poganami we współczesnym rozumieniu tego słowa są innowiercy, raczej Σαρακηνοί niż Ἕλληνες. Warto też zauważyć, że długa pokuta odbywana w sanktuarium i wdzianie mniszej szaty zostały zastąpione pouczeniem i chłostą. Jeżeli miracula miały stanowić umoralniające lekcje dla obecnych w klasztorze mnichów⁵², pouczenie i chłosta

μάθεις δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς, ὅτι ἐγὼ εἶμι ὁ δοῦλος τοῦ Θεοῦ Μηνᾶς”.

⁴⁹ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, s. 66, w. 5-6: „ἐπίστευε δὲ πλῆτος τῶν Ἑλλήνων καὶ αἰρετικῶν”.

⁵⁰ W XIII wieku zaczyna nabierać znaczenia bardziej geograficznego – Teodor II Laskaris opisuje tereny Cesarstwa jako γῆ τῶν Ἑλλήνων i w polemice przeciwko religijnemu oponentowi z Zachodu dowodzi, że dzięki swemu położeniu Hellenowie (sic) mają doskonale zbalansowany charakter (Theodorus II Dukas Laskaris, *Sermones VIII de theologia Christiana*, ed. C. Krikonis, *Theodorou II Laskareōs peri christianikēs theologias logoi* (Θεοδώρου Β' Λασκάρεως περὶ χριστιανικῆς θεολογίας λόγοι), Thessaloniki 1988, s. 138-140). Na temat bizantyńskiego rozumienia Hellady, zob. Angelov, „Asia and Europe Constantly called East and West”, s. 50-51.

⁵¹ Magdalino, *The Empire*, s. 316-412 (*The guardians of Orthodoxy*).

⁵² Oczywiście nie ma gwarancji, że synaksarion powstało z myślą o mieszkających w klasztorze Jana Teologa mnichach. Nawet jeśli ułożono je w tamtejszym skryptorium, mogło zostać zamówione przez kogoś z zewnątrz, na co mogą wskazywać ilustracje podnoszące wartość manuskryptu (o ile są oryginalne, zob. przyp. 22). Manuskrypt

mogły bardziej przemawiać do wyobraźni odbiorców i przyczyniać się do kształtowania ich sumień niż perspektywa pielgrzymki do egzotycznego sanktuarium.

Kolejnym, prawdopodobnie celowo pominiętym terminem jest *σπαθάριος*, czyli konkretny typ późnorzymskiego żołnierza⁵³, w którego stroju pojawia się Menas w oryginalnej wersji cudu (ὡς ἐν σχήματι σπαθαρίου)⁵⁴. W martyrologii Menas przedstawiany jest jako żołnierz i jako taki pojawia się w ikonografii⁵⁵. Również bizantyńskie synaksaria przekazują, że był żołnierzem (στρατιώτης ὢν)⁵⁶. W omawianej kolekcji święty przybywa jako jeździec „jakoby w stanie żołnierskim” (ὡς ἐν τάξει στρατιώτου)⁵⁷, ale już bez skonkretyzowania rangi. Termin *σπαθάριος* nie był zupełnie obcy dwunastowiecznemu odbiorcy, ale znacząco zmienił swoją funkcję. O ile w czasach późnego Cesarstwa Rzymskiego oznaczał członka straży przybocznej⁵⁸ (w omawianym *miraculum* byłaby to straż cesarska, nie prywatna, ponieważ przyłapany na morderstwie złooczyńca, widząc Menasa, obawia się, że to cesarz wysłał go po niego)⁵⁹, począwszy od VII wieku zaliczany był bardziej do dworskiej asysty cesarza i wymieniany w gronie eunuchów⁶⁰. W VIII wieku był już tylko

Synaxarionu Konstantynopolińskiego (*Synaxarium Sirmondianum*, na którym oparte jest *Menologion Bazylego II*) powstał w klasztorze Bathyraksa w Bityni, ale był stworzony na użytek kościoła w Konstantynopolu lub w jego bliskiej okolicy (zob. Der Nersessian, *Remarks on the Date of Menologium*, s. 106). Możliwy jest też scenariusz odwrotny, mianowicie synaksarion zostało zamówione poza klasztorem na użytek jego mieszkańców. Wtedy argument jest w pełni uzasadniony.

⁵³ Na temat Menasa jako *spathariosa*, zob. J. Doroszevska – F. Doroszewski, *Menacing Menas? Saint Menas as a Military Saint and Divine Trickster in His Greek Miracle Collection (BHG 1256-1269)*, *VoxP* 94 (2025) s. 72.

⁵⁴ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomiałowskij, s. 64, w. 10.

⁵⁵ Zob. Wipszycka, *The Origins*, s. 13-14; Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena*, p. 50; Doroszevska–Doroszewski, *Menacing Menas*, s. 71-74.

⁵⁶ Np. *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. H. Delehaye, *Synaxarium mensis Novembris* 11, 4.

⁵⁷ *Five Miracles*, ed. Duffy – Bourbouhakis I 7.

⁵⁸ Jeszcze *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität besonders des 9.-12. Jahrhunderts*, ed. E. Trapp *et al.*, fasc. 1-8, Wien 1994-2017 (dalej: LBG) podaje definicję: „Schwertträger”, Angehöriger der Leibgarde, ale teksty, do których się odnosi, nie wykraczają poza VII-VIII wiek.

⁵⁹ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomiałowskij, s. 64, w. 24-26.

⁶⁰ *Chronikon Paschale* odróżnia „brodatego” Eulaliosa od eunuchów i *spatharioi*. Zob. *Chronikon Paschale* 627, 8-9, ed. L. Dindorf, *Chronicon paschale*, t. 1, Bonn, 1832, s. 3-737.

tytułem dworskim, nie rangą wojskową, do IX wieku całkiem stracił na znaczeniu, a po roku 1075 roku niemal zupełnie znika. Kiedy pojawia się w *Aleksjadzie* autorstwa Anny Komenny, dwunastowiecznej historyczki i córki Aleksego I Komnena, oznacza już tylko niższy tytuł w hierarchii bizantyńskich godności na dworze cesarskim⁶¹. Nic więc dziwnego, że powtórzenie tego tytułu za pierwotną wersją cudu mogło wydać się kompilatorowi dwunastowiecznego synaksarionu nie na miejscu, skoro opisywał budzącego trwogę⁶² żołnierza, w domniemaniu przysłanego przez cesarza, żeby przyprowadził zabójcę przed wymiar sprawiedliwości.

W sposób zupełny w narracji pominięte zostało jezioro Mareockie, przez które płynął nieszczęśliwy pielgrzym i w którym następnie morderca zamierzał utopić jego poćwiartowane zwłoki. W skróconej wersji cudu, w związku z brakiem jeziora w okolicy, morderca nie wie, co zrobić ze szczątkami, i na rozważaniu sekretnego miejsca, w którym mógłby go ukryć, mija mu noc. Kompilator podąża jednak za oryginałem i umieszcza zwłoki pielgrzyma w koszu, który morderca zawiesza pod sufitem. Oryginalnie pielgrzym zatrzymuje się na noc w magazynie (ἀποθήκη), czymś na kształt stodoły lub spichlerza, w którym pewnie bez problemu można było znaleźć kosz na tyle duży, żeby w nim zmieścić zwłoki dorosłego człowieka. Bohater cudu zatrzymał się w tym miejscu, ponieważ do Filoksenite⁶³ przyplłynął późno i obawiał się zostać sam na drodze wieczorem. W skróconej wersji cudu pielgrzym po prostu miał pecha.

1.5.2 Cud II [O dwóch misach wotywnych]

Obecność jeziora Mareockiego w pobliżu Abu Mina była oczywista dla pielgrzymów odwiedzających sanktuarium św. Menasa, dla dwunastowiecznego czytelnika topografia sanktuarium nie miała najmniejszego znaczenia. Być może dlatego, jak sugerują Duffy i Bourbouhakis, bohater drugiego cudu podróżuje po morzu, a nie po jeziorze⁶⁴. Badacze zwracają uwagę na ekumeniczny charakter św. Menasa,

⁶¹ Anna Comnena, *Alexias* II 11, ed. A. Kambylis – D.R. Reinsch, *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, Berlin – New York, 2001.

⁶² W cudzie V Menas opisany jest przymiotnikiem φοβερός – ‘straszny, budzący trwogę’ (*Five Miracles*, ed. Duffy – Bourbouhakis V 28).

⁶³ Na temat identyfikacji miejsca, zwanego w niektórych rękopisach greckich Loksoneta jako Filoksenite, zob. Piwowarczyk, *Prolegomena*, p. 40-41.

⁶⁴ Duffy – Bourbouhakis, *Five Miracles of St Menas*, s. 71, przyp. 15.

którego kult rozprzestrzenił się w chrześcijańskim świecie⁶⁵, i wysuwają hipotezę, że umieszczenie sanktuarium nad „jakimś morzem” dodaje mu nieco swojskości, ponieważ większości mieszkańców basenu Morza Śródziemnego znana była idea podróży po morzu, dzięki czemu sanktuarium nabiera bardziej uniwersalnego charakteru, a święty przestaje być ograniczony do jednego, odległego miejsca i może działać w dowolnym czasie oraz dowolnej przestrzeni⁶⁶. Nie polemizując ze spostrzeżeniami wydawców kolekcji, które wydają się zupełnie słuszne, na marginesie warto dodać, że a) w dwóch manuskryptach przekazujących pierwotną wersję cudu II (Biblioteka Ambrosiana, G 53 *sup.* i Biblioteka Apostolica Vaticana, gr. 866) w wersji 60 (według wydania *Miraculum II*, ed. Varalda) pojawia się rzeczownik *θάλασσα* (marynarze wrzucają linę „do morza”)⁶⁷ i b) w grece Nowego Testamentu w Ewangeliach Marka, Mateusza i Jana Jezioro Tyberiadzkie określane jest zawsze rzeczownikiem *θάλασσα* (‘morze’, tu: Galilejskie) i tylko u Łukasza znajdujemy *λίμνη* (‘jezioro’, tu: Genenezaret). Pozostawiając na boku przyczyny tego stanu (zaplecze językowe i kulturowe poszczególnych ewangelistów), trzeba pamiętać, że kompilator synaksarionu bezdyskusyjnie znał teksty Ewangelii i mógł mieć poczucie, że są to terminy stosowane wymiennie na terenach i w czasach, które mógł postrzegać jako wzajemnie nieodległe⁶⁸. Ponieważ jednak oba wspomniane wyżej manuskrypty pochodzą z XI-XII wieku, interpolacja (nieobecna w innych recenzjach) może świadczyć na korzyść tezy Duffy’ego i Bourbounhakisa⁶⁹, a możliwy wpływ języka Nowego Testamentu też jej raczej nie wyklucza.

⁶⁵ Na terenie cesarstwa poświadczone są trzy kościoły pod wezwaniem św. Menasa. Zob. C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints*, s. 183.

⁶⁶ Duffy – Bourbounhakis, *Five Miracles of St Menas*, s. 71, przyp. 15.

⁶⁷ Varalda, *Il ricco Eutropio*, s. 229.

⁶⁸ Jak już zostało powiedziane, świadomość geograficzna Bizantyńczyków nie była duża (zob. powyżej i przyp. 36), była ponadto mocno nacechowana ideologicznie. Konstantynopol uznawany był za centrum świata (nazywany „okiem oikoumene” już przez Grzegorza z Nazjanzu) i to on stanowił punkt odniesienia w wyznaczaniu kierunków, takich jak wschód i zachód. Afryka, a przynajmniej interesująca nas jej część, należała do Wschodu (Anatolia), razem z Azją Mniejszą. Co więcej, Konstantyn VII Porfirogeneta umieszcza Egipt i Etiopię w Azji (*De thematibus* 1-7). Można podejrzewać, że dla autora kompilacji wydarzenia opisywane w cudach działały się „gdzieś tam na Wschodzie”, a więc w tych samych okolicach, co wydarzenia biblijne.

⁶⁹ Nawet jeśli któryś z tych rękopisów stanowił wzór dla kompilatora (szczególnie prawdopodobny jest Vat. gr. 866, zob. powyżej, przyp. 11), zmiana „jeziora”

Nadaniu uniwersalnego charakteru opowieści służy pozbawienie go jeszcze jednego, bardzo ciekawego elementu, jakim jest swoiste *cross-reference* obecne w oryginale. Eutropiusz wyraża tam ufność w zdolność Menasa do odnalezienia ciała sługi, skoro potrafił wskrzesić pociętego na kawałki⁷⁰, którego znamy z cudu I. Taki zabieg nie tylko w pełni indywidualizuje *miraculum*, nie pozwalając przypisać go żadnemu innemu świętemu, ale też doskonale spaja kolekcję. Wyraźnie jednak pierwsza funkcja była dla kompilatora na tyle niewygodna, że walor drugiej był zbyt mały, żeby przeważać.

Jednak różnicę stanowią nie tylko pominięcia. Autor dwunastowiecznej kompilacji zdaje się przyjmować własną, ciekawą strategię narracyjną. Świadczy o niej drobna z pozoru zmiana – sposób, w jaki sługa chciwego pielgrzyma znajduje się za burtą. W oryginalnym cudzie niewolnik, któremu misa niechcący wypada do wody, z obawy przed gniewem swego pana sam „zdejmuje ubranie i rzuca się w ślad za misą” (ἐκδυσάμενος τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἔρριπεν ἑαυτὸν ὀπίσθεν τοῦ δίσκου)⁷¹, w skróconej wersji synaksarionu natomiast sługa wprowadzie drży z lęku, ale do wody wpada na skutek poluzowania chwytu i raczej „wyrzuciło go” (ἑαυτὸν ἀπερρίφη)⁷², niż celowo wyskakuje. Chwilę wcześniej w obu tekstach siłą sprawczą wydarzeń jest przyroda: w oryginalnym cudzie, kiedy niewolnik idzie umyć misę, nagle zmienia się pogoda (ἰδοὺ γνόφος μέγας ἐγένετο)⁷³, co staje się bezpośrednią przyczyną upuszczenia naczynia do jeziora. W skróconej wersji „misa została wyciągnięta z jego rąk, jak mógłby ktoś powiedzieć, i wrzucona w morze” (ὕποσυρεῖς δ’ ὁ δίσκος ἐκ τῶν χειρῶν αὐτοῦ, πῶς ἂν τις εἴποι, ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ ἀπερρίφη)⁷⁴. To nie sługa upuścił misę – to morze ją wyrwało, a potem podobny los spotkał

na „morze” nastąpiłaby w tym samym okresie, a zatem można ją potraktować jako wpływ trendów epoki.

⁷⁰ *Miraculum S. Menae Graecum II, Miraculum II*, ed. Varalda, s. 221, w. 50-51: „Ἐλπίζω εἰς τὸν Θεὸν καὶ εἰς τὰς πρεσβείας τοῦ ἁγίου Μηνᾶ, τοῦ τὸν μεμελισμένον ἐγείραντος σῶον;”.

⁷¹ *Miraculum S. Menae Graecum II, Miraculum II*, ed. Varalda, s. 220, w. 27-28 i później s. 222, w. 74-76: „ἐγένετο γνόφος μέγας καὶ ἔπεσεν ἐξ ἐμοῦ ὁ δίσκος, καὶ εἶπα ἐν ἑαυτῷ «Τί ἄρα ποιήσω ἢ τί ἀπολογήσομαι τῷ κυρίῳ μου;». Καὶ φοβηθεὶς ἔρριψα ἑμαυτὸν εἰς τὴν λίμνην” („nastąpiła wielka ciemność i wypadła mi z rąk misa i powiedziałem do siebie: ‘Cóż teraz zrobić i jak wytłumaczyć się memu panu?’. I z przerażenia rzuciłem się do jeziora”).

⁷² *Five Miracles*, ed. Duffy – Bourboulakis II 15.

⁷³ *Miraculum S. Menae Graecum II, Miraculum II*, ed. Varalda s. 219, w. 25.

⁷⁴ *Five Miracles*, ed. Duffy – Bourboulakis II 12-13.

i jego. Kompilator synaksarionu rozszerza działanie nadprzyrodzone z przedmiotu również na niewolnika. Sługa nie podejmuje samobójczej decyzji, ale jego wypadek (i pewna śmierć) są konsekwencją grzechu pielgrzyma, konsekwencją, której nie dało się uniknąć. Pewnym naprowadzeniem na to, co miało się wydarzyć, może być też użycie czasownika ἐκπλύνω, który w grece patrystycznej oznacza ‘zmywam (winy)’⁷⁵, we fragmencie, w którym sługa zabiera zbezczeszczoną chciwością misę przeznaczoną dla świętego i idzie ją niejako „obmyć z grzechu”, który transponowany został z osoby (pielgrzyma) na przedmiot (a ten jest jednocześnie przedmiotem grzechu – chciwości).

Jak zostanie również wykazane w analizie kolejnego cudu, przyroda jako agens i pośrednik boskiej interwencji jest ważnym elementem zastosowanej strategii narracyjnej, co wpisuje się w ogólny trend wzmożonego zainteresowania naturą w Bizancjum XI i XII wieku⁷⁶.

1.5.3 Cud III (O kobiecie, która uniknęła gwałtu)

W *Miraculum III*, kiedy zaatakowana kobieta, pielgrzymująca do sanktuarium, zwraca się do świętego z prośbą o pomoc, ten natychmiast zjawia się osobiście i nie tylko nie dopuszcza do gwałtu, unosząc kobietę z miejsca zbrodni, ale też łapie za lejce wierzchowca napastnika i, ciągnąc konia, włóczy po ziemi uwiązanego doń niedoszłego gwałciiciela⁷⁷. Można powiedzieć, że Menas nawet nie tknął sprawcy i że sprawa zostaje załatwiona niejako pośrednio. Jednak święty zjawia się na miejscu osobiście i fizycznie przymusza zwierzę do biegu. Autor dwunastowiecznej wersji cudu tym razem nie tylko pomija milczeniem imię świętego, ale w ogóle rezygnuje z jego fizycznej obecności. Modlitwa pielgrzymującej kobiety została wysłuchana, nastąpiła interwencja, ale nikt się nie pojawił i nikt jej stamtąd nie zabrał. Do gwałtu nie doszło, bo koń, którego napastnik uwiązał sobie do nogi, „zmarł się” przeciwko własnemu panu” (ἀγριωθείς κατὰ τοῦ ιδίου δεσπότητος)⁷⁸. Boska interwencja odbywa się w zupełności za pośrednictwem elementu świata

⁷⁵ Lampe: *wash away, forgiveness of sins*. W miejsce prostego πλύνω (‘myję’), które występuje w oryginale.

⁷⁶ Zob. S. Lazaris, *Thoughts on the Conception of Nature in Byzantium (11th-12th Centuries)*. „De Medio Aevo” 13/2 (2024) s. 353-364 (zwł. s. 357-360).

⁷⁷ *Miracula S. Menae Graece, Miraculum III*, ed. Silvano-Varalda, s. 60, w. 31-36.

⁷⁸ *Five Miracles*, ed. Duffy – Bourboulakis III 6-7.

przyrody. Udomowione zwierzęta, takie jak koń, osioł, byk czy wielbłąd, są naturalnym pośrednikiem między tym, co ludzkie – znane i zrozumiałe, a tym, co dzikie – niezrozumiałe i zewnętrzne. Praktyka powierzania im mocy ingerowania w ludzką rzeczywistość przez bóstwa różnego pochodzenia ma wielowiekową tradycję. W mitologii greckiej Kadmos zakłada Teby w miejscu, w którym spotyka byka wolnego od pracy, w Księdze Liczb oślica Balaama zatrzymuje proroka w drodze do króla Balaka, a wielbłądy wiozące szczątki św. Menasa stają w miejscu, które święty wyznaczył sobie na wieczny spoczynek⁷⁹. Święci, którzy sami są pomostem pomiędzy światem ludzi, żyjących tu i teraz, a rzeczywistością Bożą, będącą poza czasem i przestrzenią, mają przeważnie dobre relacje ze światem przyrody, wiedzą jak komunikować się ze zwierzętami i często wydają im polecenia⁸⁰. W hagiografii bizantyńskiej nie brakuje też przykładów transgresji mocy sprawczej między rzeczywistością świętych a światem zwierząt. Niektórzy święci mają szczególne związki z jakimś konkretnym gatunkiem, w przypadku Menasa są to wielbłądy i konie⁸¹. W oryginalnej wersji miraculów, w cudzie o chrześcijaninie i Żydzie (cud V) pierwsza część interwencji odbywa się również bez osobistego udziału Menasa, tylko właśnie za pośrednictwem konia, który rzuca krzywoprzysięzcę w celu „wytrząśnięcia” z niego przedmiotów, potrzebnych świętemu jako znak rozpoznawczy dla żony bohatera. U niej jednak Menas zjawia się już we własnej osobie. Julia i Filip Doroszewscy argumentują, że w ramach oryginalnej kolekcji cudów św. Menas interweniuje osobiście w przypadku poważniejszych zbrodni, a pomniejszymi zajmuje się niejako zaocznie⁸². W omawianym miraculum autor synaksarionu zdecydował się całość nadprzyrodzonej interwencji przenieść na

⁷⁹ Zob. Wipszycka, *The Birth*, s. 20. Nieco bardziej drastyczna nadprzyrodzona interwencja przeprowadzona za pośrednictwem zwierząt (tym razem były to osły) w celu ustanowienia miejsca kultu spotkała świętego Cyryla, biskupa Gortyny (BHG 467).

⁸⁰ Zob. A. Kazhdan, *Holy and Unholy Miracle Workers*, w: *Byzantine Magic*, red. H. Maguire, Dumbarton Oaks 1995, s. 75-76. Listę toposów zawierających interakcję świętych ze zwierzętami, zob. T. Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos: Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinischer Zeit*, Millennium-Studien 6, Berlin – New York 2005, s. 286-289.

⁸¹ Z jednymi i drugimi jest przedstawiany w ikonografii. Wielbłądy odegrały znaczącą rolę w jego męczeństwie (zob. Wipszycka, *The Birth*, s. 20), konno natomiast przeważnie pojawia się w cudach (zob. np. Doroszevska – Doroszewski, *Menacing Menas*, s. 79-80).

⁸² Zob. Doroszevska – Doroszewski, *Menacing Menas*, s. 73-83.

zwierzę, które nie tylko odciąga napastnika z miejsca niedoszłej zbrodni i włości go za sobą aż do sanktuarium, ale i dotarłszy do świętego miejsca, nadal aktywnie atakuje jeźdźcę, dopóki ten nie wyzna swojej winy. Nic z tych rzeczy nie ma miejsca w oryginalnej wersji, w której po dotarciu do sanktuarium sprawca „widzi chwałę świętego” i w ramach ekspiacji ofiarowuje jako wotum swojego wierzchowca. Dodatkiem dwunastowiecznego kompilatora jest też reakcja ludzi, którzy obserwują atak konia na swego pana. A właściwie brak reakcji – niedoszły gwałcieł widzi, że nikt nie zamierza mu pomóc i wyznaje winę, ponieważ obawia się o swoje życie. Nikt ze zgromadzonego tłumu nie przeszkadza boskiej interwencji, nawet w obliczu możliwej śmierci grzesznika. Na tle hagiografii bizantyńskiej nie jest to wcale wyjątkowe: konie występują często jako narzędzie boskiej interwencji⁸³, głównie wobec własnych jeźdźców, których zrzucają⁸⁴, kopią⁸⁵, a nawet zdeptują⁸⁶. Ciekawsze wydaje się pytanie, dlaczego dwunastowieczny kompilator wyrugował świętego z jego własnego miraculum, w którym odgrywał przecież niebagatelną rolę. Argument o wadze zbrodni raczej nie ma w tym wypadku zastosowania. Chociaż w hagiografii bizantyńskiej istnieje klasyfikacja rangi cudów, którą podaje Jerzy z Amastris, przedkładając uśmierzanie żywiołów nad wsparcie indywidualnych błagalników⁸⁷, autor synaksarionu nie kierował się raczej tego rodzaju przesłankami, uznawszy, że udaremnienie próby gwałtu stoi w hierarchii cudów na tyle nisko, że nie warto do niej angażować świętego osobiście. Sądzę raczej, że i tym razem należy wziąć pod uwagę dwunastowieczny zwrot w myśleniu Bizantyńczyków, do którego zalicza się również wzmożone zainteresowanie przyrodą i być może dlatego wola świętego ujawnia się wyłącznie za jej pośrednictwem⁸⁸.

⁸³ Na temat koni w bizantyńskiej hagiografii, zob. przeglądowy tekst: A.F. Stamouli, *Information of Middle Byzantine Hagiography Texts about Equids*, w: *Echoing Hoves. Studies on Horses and Their Effects on Medieval Societies*, ed. A. Ropa – T. Dawson, Leiden – Boston 2022, s. 112-138 (zwl. s. 125-131).

⁸⁴ Fałszywy oskarżyciel św. Jana Gockiego (VIII wiek, BHG 891) spada z konia, próbując na niego wsiąść, i ginie.

⁸⁵ Żołnierz, który aresztował Eliasza Młodszego (IX wiek, BHG 580) i jego ucznia, został kopnięty przez konia i umarł.

⁸⁶ W żywocie Szczepana Młodszego (VIII wiek, BHG 1666) grzesznik spada z konia i zostaje przez niego zdeptany, wskutek czego ginie.

⁸⁷ BHG 668.

⁸⁸ Ciekawą hipotezą mogłoby być dopatrywanie się inspiracji dla autora kompilacji w wymienionych powyżej żywotach Jana Gockiego i Szczepana Młodszego. Święci ci są męczennikami z czasów ikonoklazmu, a emanacja boskiej mocy w zachowaniu koni

Ponadto zabieg ten stanowi kolejny przykład na odindywidualizowanie tekstu i poprzez przeniesienie ciężaru z osoby świętego na siły przyrody zuniwersalizowanie go do poziomu umoralniającej opowieści, bliższej antycznej bajce, również z uwagi na obecność w niej zwierząt.

1.5.4 Cud IV (O chromym i niemej)

Pobieżne spojrzenie na omawianą kolekcję mogłoby sugerować, że czwarte miraculum zostało poddane najbardziej drastycznym zmianom narracyjnym, niewykluczone jednak, że przeszło w zasadzie proces podobny do pozostałych. Najbardziej wyrazistym motywem oryginalnego cudu jest polecenie zniecierpliwionego świętego, by wątpiący w jego moc uzdrawiania kaleka zakradł się w nocy do przebywającej na terenie sanktuarium niemej kobiety (również czekającej na odzyskanie zdrowia) i odbył z nią stosunek, co miałoby być jedynym gwarantem jego uzdrowienia (sic). Chromy pielgrzym długo się waha, święty musi interweniować trzy razy, w końcu decyduje się doczołgać do niemej, zdejmuje z niej szatę i obnaża ją (τὸ πάλλιον ἔσυρεν καὶ ἐγύμνωσεν αὐτήν)⁸⁹. Autor dwunastowiecznej kompilacji nie uznał za stosowne narażać współbraci na trwanie w wątpliwości,

dotyka ikonoklastów – w przypadku historii z żywota św. Szczepana kara wymierzona za pośrednictwem konia spada na żołnierza, który – po uzdrowieniu przez Szczepana za pośrednictwem ikon – wypiera się ikonolatrii wobec cesarza i otrzymuje za to honory (zob. Stephanus Diaconus, *Vita Stephani Iunioris* 54). Na wyspę Lesbos w 802 roku, czyli najprawdopodobniej już po fundacji klasztoru św. Jana Teologa (w którym znajdował się, a może i powstał, manuskrypt Typ. 243H), została zesłana cesarzowa Irena, wielka obrończyni obrazów. Nie można wykluczyć, że wśród lokalnej społeczności żywoty świętych ikonodulów były szczególnie rozpowszechnione, a wtedy mogłyby stanowić źródło inspiracji i zapożyczeń. Zwłaszcza motyw agresji konia wobec jeźdźca, któremu grozi śmierć na skutek boskiej interwencji, jest pewną nowością w stosunku do *modus operandi* męczenników z pierwszych wieków chrześcijaństwa, których zadaniem jest ratowanie życia (również w wymiarze moralnym), a nie odbieranie go (zob. Doroszevska – Doroszewski, *Menacing Menas*, w tym tomie). Zmiany w podejściu do przemocy, które nastąpiły w świecie chrześcijańskim po VI wieku, i ogrom prześladowań ikonoklastycznych zrewidowały *decorum* i dały świętym męczennikom licencję na zabijanie (czy raczej dopuścić możliwość wystąpienia „kary boskiej” wobec tych, którzy prześladowają świętych). Niestety, bez udowodnienia cyrkulacji wspomnianych żywotów w klasztorach na Lesbos oraz bez pewności, że tam właśnie powstało omawiane synaksarion, taka teoria pozostaje spekulacją.

⁸⁹ *Miracula S. Menae Graece, Miraculum V*, ed. Silvano-Varalda, s. 66, w. 21.

jaką wyrażał bohater cudu – czy święty mówi na poważnie, czy sobie z niego żartuje i kusi go? Bo jeśli pragnąc uzdrowienia, popełni grzech cudzołóstwa, czy nie ściągnie przez to na siebie jeszcze większego nieszczęścia?⁹⁰ Bizantyńczycy miewali nie lada kłopot w ustaleniu pochodzenia zjawisk nadprzyrodzonych, w tym również w odróżnieniu cudów dobrych, pożytecznych od pseudocudów, za którymi mógł stać sam diabeł, próbujący zwieść bezbronny lud Boży⁹¹. Wspomniana już Anna Komnena, opisując egzekucję Basiliosa, przywódcy Bogomilów, donosi, że „kaci bali się, żeby złe duchy otaczające Basiliosa nie sprawiły za przyzwoleniem boskim jakiegoś niezwykłego cudu”⁹². Można stąd wnioskować, że granica między tym, co prawdziwie boskie, a tym, co tylko przez Boga przyzwolone, ale pochodzące od demonów, była nieoczywista⁹³. Opisywana w *miraculum* sytuacja wydaje się tego rodzaju. I chociaż ostatecznie do cudzołóstwa nie doszło, wszyscy zainteresowani zostali uzdrowieni i uznali moc św. Menasa oraz jej Boże pochodzenie, sam pomysł mógł wydać się na tyle gorszący, że należało sprawę rozwiązać inaczej. Realizacja cudu nadal oparta jest na zaufaniu, chromy pielgrzym wciąż musi dokonać ryzykownego czynu, który skutkuje oskarżeniem o usiłowanie popełnienia przestępstwa. Ale oskarżyć go można chyba tylko o kradzież, bo nigdzie w tekście nie ma słowa o tym, że chwycona za płaszcz niema została wskutek tego obnażona. Święty zresztą nie precyzuje, w jakim celu kulawy ma się chwycić płaszcz niemej, cała scena może nawet przywołać na myśl jeden z cudów biblijnych, kiedy to kobieta chora na krwotok dotknęła się frędzli płaszcz Jezusa, dzięki czemu (a właściwie dzięki wierze, że tak się stanie) zostaje uzdrowiona. Analiza leksykalna obu scen nie potwierdza inspiracji, autor synaksarionu na określenie elementu garderoby używa słowa *παλλίον*,

⁹⁰ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, *Miraculum V*, ed. Silvano-Varalda, s. 66, w. 13-15.

⁹¹ Zob. Kazhdan, *Holy and Unholy*, s. 76-82.

⁹² Anna Comnena, *Alexias* XV 10, tł. O. Jurewicz, Anna Komnena, *Aleksajada*, t. 2, Wrocław 2005, s. 686.

⁹³ Kazhdan wskazuje, że prosta, wydawałoby się, klasyfikacja na cuda „święte” i „nieświęte”, zasadzająca się na ocenie ich skutków (twórcze, uzdrawiające, dające życie vs powodujące śmierć, zamieszanie, niewłaściwe zachowania seksualne), nie zawsze pozwala odczytać, jakie moce stoją za ich sprawcami, podając m.in. przykład z mało znanego żywota Jazona i Sosipatrosa, którzy angażują się w walkę z magikiem: cuda przedstawiane przez magika są twórcze i pozytywne, podczas gdy cuda sprawiane przez chrześcijańskich świętych przynoszą śmierć i destrukcję (zob. Kazhdan, *Holy and Unholy*, s. 79).

które zna z oryginalnego miraculum, nie tego z biblijnej opowieści (ἱμάτιον). Warto jednak dodać, że oba z czasem nieco zmieniły znaczenie i o ile ἱμάτιον będzie oznaczał po prostu ubranie⁹⁴, to παλλίον raczej już tylko płaszcz⁹⁵. Bez względu na występowanie aluzji do Nowego Testamentu lub jej brak, takie przedstawienie sprawy było na pewno bezpieczniejsze.

1.5.5 Cud V (O Hebrajczyku i chrześcijaninie)

Obszerne porównanie omawianej wersji cudu z niemal wszystkimi pozostałymi daje Przemysław Piwowarczyk⁹⁶. W tym miejscu chciałabym zwrócić uwagę tylko na motyw, który w oryginalnej narracji zdaje się odgrywać pewną rolę, a w omawianej kolekcji został pominięty albo zachowany w postaci szczątkowej. W oryginalnej wersji miraculum Żyd nie wchodzi do sanktuarium, bo chrześcijanin przypomina mu, że „Żydzi nie wchodzi do przybytków chrześcijańskich”. Żyd, któremu zależy na przysiędze złożonej wobec św. Menasa, bo ten „zawstydz krzywoprzysięzców”⁹⁷, deklaruje: „Nawet jeśli nie mogę wejść, to stanę w przedsionku na zewnątrz”⁹⁸. W synaksarionie, chociaż tylko chrześcijanin składa przysięgę, to jednak obaj wychodzą z kościoła, co oznacza, że wcześniej obaj musieli w nim być. Piwowarczyk konkluduje, że Żyd, o którym mowa, musiał należeć do nowej fali Żydów egipskich, ukształtowanych przez prawo talmudyczne, które podawało odległość (6 łokci), jaką Żydzi powinni zachować od miejsca bałwochwalstwa (tu: chrześcijańskiego kościoła)⁹⁹. Autor dwunastowiecznej kompilacji przypuszczalnie nie znał takich przepisów, dlatego pominął ten

⁹⁴ LBG s.v ἱμάτιον: *Gewand, Kleid*.

⁹⁵ LBG s.v. παλλίον: *Mantel*.

⁹⁶ P. Piwowarczyk, *O Żydzie i chrześcijaninie – koptyjskie, greckie i arabskie wersje cudu jednego z cudów św. Menasa*, „Scripta Classica” (w rękopisie udostępnionym przez autora).

⁹⁷ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomiałowskij, s. 71, w. 16.

⁹⁸ *Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomiałowskij, s. 71, w. 20-21.

⁹⁹ Piwowarczyk, *O Żydzie i chrześcijaninie* (w rękopisie). W dalszej części tekstu Żyd wzywa Boga i św. Menasa, prosząc ich o wstawiennictwo, chociaż został uznany za niegodnego, żeby wejść do przybytku świętego. To wskazywałoby na istnienie, być może niepisanego, zwyczaju zabraniającego Żydom przebywania w kościołach również ze strony chrześcijańskiej. Dla celów obecnego studium nie ma to jednak większego znaczenia, ponieważ motyw ten jest w omawianym tekście nieobecny.

fragment jako niezrozumiały. Nie przytacza też powodu, dla którego dla rozstrzygnięcia sporu mieli się udać do sanktuarium, a nie, np. do lokalnego magistratu, co wydaje się zupełnie zrozumiałe w świetle przepisu z *Basilika* (zbioru praw opartych na kodeksie Justyniana), na mocy którego Żydzi nie mogą zeznawać w sprawach dotyczących prawowiernych chrześcijan¹⁰⁰. Ten sam kodeks wyznaczał karę za kradzież żydowskiego mienia – nie tylko należało oddać równowartość skradzionych przedmiotów, ale też ich podwojoną wartość¹⁰¹. Być może dlatego dwunastowieczny kompilator dodał na wstępie informację, nieobecną w oryginale, o kwocie (500 solidów)¹⁰², jaką Żyd zostawił u chrześcijanina, żeby uzmysłowić czytelnikowi, o jakim rzędzie wielkości straty mówimy i ile, w razie przegranego procesu¹⁰³, chrześcijanin musiałby zwrócić. Z tekstu nie dowiadujemy się jednak, czy poczuwał się do zadośćuczynienia okradzionemu i oszukanemu Żydowi jego straty zgodnie z obowiązującym prawem¹⁰⁴.

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¹⁰⁰ *Basilicorum libri XVI* I 1. 34, ed. G.E. Heimbach *et al.*, Leipzig 1833-1897.

¹⁰¹ *Basilicorum libri XVI* I, 1.16.

¹⁰² Na temat wartości depozytu, zob. przyp. 40.

¹⁰³ Procesy, w których powodem był Żyd, a oskarżonym chrześcijanin, miały miejsce w Cesarstwie, a po reformie Manuela Komnena z 1166 roku zniesione zostały ograniczenia dla Żydów w dostępie do jurysdykcji państwowej. Zob. J. Starr, *The Jews in the Byzantine Empire 641-1204*, New York 1970, s. 21.

¹⁰⁴ W oryginalnej wersji cudu chrześcijanin oddaje połowę swojego majątku, ale nie Żydowi, tylko jako wotum przebłagalne za grzechy – sanktuarium.

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2. Przekład

Cuda św. Menasa wg kodeksu New York, Harvard University, Houghton Library Typ 243H

I¹⁰⁵

Kiedys jakiś człowiek, pielgrzymujący, aby pomodlić się w jego [św. Menasa] sanktuarium, został przyjęty na nocleg u pewnego gospodarza¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁵ Jak zostało powiedziane powyżej, skrócone wersje cudów nie posiadają tytułów. W wydaniu tekstów poszczególne cuda oznaczone są tylko numerem. Taki sam układ został przyjęty w przekładzie.

¹⁰⁶ Słowo „gospodarz” nie pojawia się w tekście, pielgrzym został przyjęty παρά τινος (‘przez jakiegoś [człowieka]’). W tłumaczeniu dodaję słowo „gospodarz”

Gospodarz ten, skoro zauważył, że gość nosi złoty medalion¹⁰⁷, wstał w środku nocy i zamierzył się na niego morderczą ręką: pociąwszy go na kawałki, włożył do kosza, a kosz zawiesił, czekając do rana. Był zresztą zdenerwowany, rozważając kiedy i gdzie wyniesie szczątki, żeby je w sekretnym miejscu schować.

I gdy pogrążony był w snuciu tych planów, święty świadek Chrystusa, ukazawszy się jako jeździec jakby w żołnierskim stanie, zapytał o przybysza, który zatrzymał się tu w gościnie. A kiedy morderca zapewniał, że nic nie wie, święty, zsiadłszy z konia, wszedł do wewnętrznej komnaty i zdjawszy kosz, spojrzał poważnie na zabójcę i zapytał: „Co to jest?”. Ten zaś, osłupiały ze strachu, runął¹⁰⁸ do kolan świętego.

Następnie święty poskładał razem pocięte kawałki i pomodliwszy się, wskrzesił zmarłego, mówiąc: „Oddaj chwałę Bogu”. Ten zaś, powstawszy jakby ze snu i dowiedziawszy się, co i jak wiele wycierpiał od swojego gospodarza, wielbił Boga i podziękowawszy temu, który wyglądał na żołnierza, oddał mu pokłon¹⁰⁹. A kiedy i morderca wstał, święty, wzięwszy od niego złoto i dawszy je pielgrzymowi, rzekł: „Idź dalej swoją drogą”. A zwróciwszy się do mordercy, stosownie go wychłostał¹¹⁰

dla uniknięcia zamieszania związanego z ustaleniem, który z „pewnych ludzi” czym się zajmuje.

¹⁰⁷ LBG definiuje ἐγκόλπιον jako *Brustkreuz, Amulett, Madaillon*. Wydawcy cudów tłumaczą „gold”, odwołując się do oryginalnej wersji cudu, w której pielgrzym ma ze sobą sakiewkę – βαλάντιον (Duffy – Bourboulakis, *Five Miracles*, s. 69). W moim przekonaniu nie ma powodu do takiego tłumaczenia, jeśli kompilator świadomie zamienił trzos ze złotem, które miało być ofiarowane w sanktuarium, na drogocenny drobiazg, co do którego wiemy tylko, że pielgrzym nosił go na szyi (por. wyżej).

¹⁰⁸ Dosł. „rzucił się w strasznym upadku”. Słowo πτώμα może być rozumiane jako „upadek” albo, w konsekwencji, jako „upadłe ciało”, czyli „zwłoki”. Składnia zdania pozwala tłumaczyć jak wyżej albo jako: „rzucił swoje nędzne zwłoki do kolan świętego” (zob. Duffy – Bourboulakis, *Five Miracles*, s. 69: cast himself at the feet of the saint like a wretched corpse). Należałoby pewnie wtedy rozumieć, że morderca ze strachu był półżywy.

¹⁰⁹ Pokłon – προσκύνεσις – oznacza dosłownie ‘przyklęknięcie’. Jest to akt złożenia hołdu, stosowny zarówno dla Boga, jak i dla władcy, obrazu lub świętego (w odróżnieniu od λατρεία – czci oddawanej tylko Bogu).

¹¹⁰ Czasownik τύπτω w późniejszej i nowożytnej grece oznacza już tylko naciśnięcie na sumienie i pojawia się jedynie w idiomie „ucisnąć sumienie”, czyli „wyrzut sumienia”. Tutaj jednak bardziej prawdopodobne jest bliższe antycznemu rozumieniu „uderzać, bić” (LBG: *schlagen, prägen*: νόμισμα, czyli „wybijać”, np. monetę). Być może jednak święty ugniatał sumienie grzesznika w jakiś mniej bezpośredni sposób.

i ponadto pouczył. Potem udzieliwszy rozgrzeszenia winnemu i pomógłszy się za niego, wsiadł na konia i zniknął mu z oczu.

II

Ktoś inny, obiecawszy świętemu misę ze srebra, zatrudnił¹¹¹ rzemieślnika i zlecił mu, żeby wykonał dwie misy i napisał na jednej imię świętego, a na drugiej – jego własne. Kiedy więc misy były gotowe, a ta przeznaczona dla świętego okazała się piękniejsza i bardziej znamienita, zatrzymał ją sobie, nie zważając na napis.

I gdy odbywał podróż żeglowną po morzu i na statku służący przygotował mu kolację, zjadł bez lęku¹¹² to, co leżało na misie świętego. Potem, kiedy posprzątano ze stołu¹¹³, posługujący mu niewolnik, wzięwszy misę, żeby ją obmyć, zanurzył ją w morzu. A misa, wyrwana mu z rąk, jak mógłby ktoś rzec, wpadła do morza. Sługa zadrżał i, owładnięty lękiem, na skutek odrętwienia osłabił uchwyt i sam w ślad za misą wylądował w morzu.

Zobaczywszy to, jego pan, lamentując, powiedział: „Biada mi, nieszczęsnemu, gdyż z powodu zazdrości o misę świętego straciłem razem z nią i sługę. Ale Tobie, Panie, Boże mój, składam tę obietnicę, że jeżelibym znalazł chociaż szczątki chłopca, to ofiaruję słudze Twojemu, świętemu Menasowi i tę misę, i wartość tej straconej. A zszedłszy ze statku na suchy ląd, rozglądał się po plaży, wypatrując i patrząc ze strachem w oczach, czy jest tam to, czego szuka, i pełen był niepokoju, czy zdoła zobaczyć szczątki chłopca. Więc gdy uważnie się rozglądał i naraż dojrzał idącego od morza niewolnika wraz z misą, zadrżał. A kiedy zakrzyknął wielkim głosem, wszyscy zeszli ze statku. I gdy zobaczyli

¹¹¹ Duffy i Bourbouhakis sugerują, że trudna do uzasadnienia obecność dativu jako dopełnienia bliższego mogłaby wynikać z faktu, że tekst w tym miejscu mógł być zepsuty i zamiast παραλαβών miało stać παραβαλών (odpowiadające oryginalnemu εισέρχομαι εἰς τεχνίτην). Wtedy należałoby tłumaczyć: „poszedł do rzemieślnika”. W tłumaczeniu podajam za tekstem wydania i, podobnie jak wydawcy, stosuję znaczenie czasownika παραλαμβάνω zaproponowane przez Lampe – bring in as a worker („zatrudnić”). Por. Duffy – Bourbouhakis, *Five Miracles*, s. 71.

¹¹² Przysłówek ἀνυποστόλως oznacza ‘bez lęku’ albo ‘bez wahania’. Oba tłumaczenia są uzasadnione – nie boi się, nieświadom ewentualnych konsekwencji użytkowania (a przez to beczeszczenia), misy świętego albo nie waha się popełnić świętokradztwa, świadomy możliwych następstw. Ponieważ w oryginalnej wersji cudu Eutropiusz zarzeka się, że gdyby przewidział konsekwencje, postąpiłby inaczej, zdecydowałam się na tłumaczenie „bez lęku”.

¹¹³ Dosł. „wyniesiono zastawę na zewnątrz”.

niewolnika trzymającego misę, wszyscy byli zdumieni i poczęli wielbić oraz wystawiać Boga.

I gdy go wypytawali, żeby dowiedzieć się, w jaki sposób ocalał, niewolnik wyjaśnił, mówiąc, że: „Jak tylko wpadłem do morza, piękny mąż¹¹⁴ wraz z dwoma innymi¹¹⁵ podnieśli mnie i podróżowali ze mną wczoraj i dzisiaj, aż do tego miejsca”.

III

Ale [była] też pewna kobieta, która pielgrzymowała do świętego i kiedy zaatakował ją jakiś człowiek, aby ją zgwałcić, poprosiła świętego o pomoc, a ten nie zlekceważył jej, ale wydał napastnika na widok publiczny i ją zachował nietkniętą.

Człowiek ten bowiem uwiązał konia do swojej prawej nogi i przystąpił do niewiasty. Koń natomiast znarowił się przeciwko własnemu panu i nie tylko przeszkodził w gwałcie, ale też, ciągnąc go po ziemi, nie zatrzymał się, aż dotarł do sanktuarium świętego. Zaraz też zaczął rzeć głośno i często i ściągnął niemały tłumek widzów. A ponieważ obchodzono święto, zgromadziło się tam mnóstwo ludzi.

A ten, którego to spotkało, gdy zobaczył zbiegowisko ludzi i konia, który narowił coraz bardziej i zorientował się, że nikt nie śpieszy mu na pomoc, wtedy z obawy, czy czegoś jeszcze bardziej zgubnego nie zazna od własnego konia, bez rumieńca [wstydu] wobec wszystkich wyjawiał swoją niegodziwość. I natychmiast koń przestał i uspokoił się. A jeździec, po tym, jak został uwolniony, udał się do świętego i padłszy przed nim, prosił świętego, żeby go więcej nie karał¹¹⁶.

¹¹⁴ Św. Menas opisywany jest jako wysoki i przystojny mężczyzna. Zob. *Acta sancti Menae martyris Aegyptii* (BHG, 1250), ed. G. van Hooft, AnBoll 3 (1884) s.258-270.

¹¹⁵ Varalda (*Il ricco Eutropio*, s. 226) proponuje porównanie do Łk 24,4, gdzie kobietom, które przyszły do grobu Jezusa, objawiają się dwaj mężczyźni w lśniących szatach, zrównując tym samym towarzyszy Menasa z aniołami. W koptyjskiej wersji cudu I Menas pojawia się właśnie w asyście aniołów. Zob. P. Piwowarczyk, *Cuda św. Menasa według rękopisu Pierpont Morgan Library M.590 (Coptic Literary Manuscript ID 221; Clavis Coptica 398)*, VoxP 80 (2021) s. 401-402.

¹¹⁶ „Μὴ πειρασθῆναι ἔτι” może znaczyć: ‘żeby już więcej nie był kuszony’ albo ‘żeby już nie był dręczony’. W oryginalnej wersji cudu winowajca prosi świętego, „żeby wybaczył mu jego grzech” (*Miracula S. Menae Graece, Miraculum III*, ed. Silvano-Varalda, s. 60, w. 40-41: „ὅπως συγχωρήσῃ αὐτῷ τὴν ἀμαρτίαν αὐτοῦ”). Zdecydowałam się na drugie znaczenie czasownika, ponieważ pierwsze nie jest uzasadnione bez szerszego kontekstu, który wskazywałby na kuszenie jako przyczynę zajścia (obecny w oryginalnej wersji cudu, zob. *Miracula S. Menae Graece, Miraculum III*, ed. Silvano-Varalda, s. 60, w. 12: „εἰσηλθεν ὁ διάβολος εἰς τὴν καρδίαν αὐτοῦ” – ‘diabeł wszedł do jego serca’).

IV

Gdy kiedyś człowiek chromy i niema kobieta oczekiwali w świątyni świętego wraz z wieloma innymi na uzdrowienie, w środku nocy, kiedy wszyscy byli pogrążeni we śnie, pojawił się święty i rzekł do chromego: „Wyjdź, póki jest jeszcze cicho, i chwyć płaszcz niemej, a zostaniesz uzdrowiony”. I gdy wyszedł, i chwycił płaszcz, pozbawiona okrycia kobieta krzyknęła i zaczęła oskarżać, podejrzewając kalekę. I została uzdrowiona, gdyż rozwiązał się jej język. A chromy zawstydził się i natychmiast wstał, zamierzając ratować się ucieczką. I kiedy oboje rozpoznali, że oto za sprawą świętego stał im się cud, zaczęli wielbić Boga.

V

Pewien Hebrajczyk, który miał przyjaciela chrześcijanina, zostawiał u niego sporo złota, ponieważ często wyjeżdżał do dalekiego kraju. Pewnego razu, gdy powierzona mu została sakiewka¹¹⁷ zawierająca pięćset monet¹¹⁸, [chrześcijanin] powziął w swym sercu myśl, żeby zaprzeczyć, jakoby dostał jakiś depozyt. Co też uczynił.

Kiedy Hebrajczyk powrócił i wedle zwyczaju poprosił o zwrot, [chrześcijanin] nie oddał mu, mówiąc: „Nie zostało mi powierzone tym razem nic takiego, czego żądasz”. A Hebrajczyk, ponieważ zaskoczyło go to, co usłyszał, przestał być sobą¹¹⁹. Gdy doszedł do siebie, powiedział do chrześcijanina: „Jako że nikt nie widział, jak było, przysięga rozstrzygnie tę kwestię”. I zażądał, żeby ten, który nie mówi prawdy, został wskazany przez świętego.

Udali się więc, na mocy porozumienia, do sanktuarium świętego Menasa. I zaraz chrześcijanin, niewiele myśląc¹²⁰, przysiągł, że niczego nie ma¹²¹.

¹¹⁷ W dalszej części tekstu pojawia się też kluczyk, którym najprawdopodobniej zamknięty był depozyt Żyda, co wynika z faktu, że w oryginalnej wersji cudu chrześcijanin zamyka sakiewkę w sejfie, a klucz zabiera ze sobą. Kompilator pominął ten szczegół, dlatego później obecność klucza może zaskakiwać.

¹¹⁸ I.e. *solidów*, zob. przyp. 40.

¹¹⁹ ἄλλος ἐξ ἄλλου γέγονεν – stał się inny niż był. Wyrażenie używane na opisanie przemiany wewnętrznej, zarówno pozytywnej (zob. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *Funebris in laudem Basilii Magni Caesareae in Cappadocia episcopi* 67, 3, ed. F. Boulenger, Grégoire de Nazianze. *Discours funèbres en l'honneur de son frère Césaire et de Basile de Césarée*, Paris 1908), jak i negatywnej (jak w tym przypadku).

¹²⁰ „Niewiele myśląc” (o konsekwencjach krzywoprzysięstwa) – w oryginalnej wersji cudu Hebrajczyk błaga chrześcijanina przed wejściem do sanktuarium, żeby ratował swoją duszę, ten jednak nie chce go słuchać i składa fałszywą przysięgę (*Miracula S. Menae* Graece, ed. Pomiałowski, s. 71, w. 24-26).

¹²¹ δι’ ὅρκου τὴν οἰκείαν ἐνστάσιν ἐβεβαίωσεν – ‘pod przysięgą potwierdził swoje wyparcie się’ (posiadania depozytu).

I gdy przysięga została złożona, a oni wyszli z sanktuarium i obaj wsiedli każdy na swego konia, koń chrześcijanina zaczął zachowywać się agresywnie wobec własnego pana i, gryząc wędzidło, groził jeźdźcowi gwałtowną śmiercią. I w końcu koń zrzucił go na ziemię, ale jemu nic się nie stało, stracił tylko chusteczkę¹²² z kluczykiem i jednym złotym sygnetem z pieczęcią¹²³.

Następnie zaraz wsiadł z powrotem na konia i ruszył, a był z nim i Hebrajczyk, któremu było ciężko na duszy i jęczał z głębi [serca], ponieważ źle znosił stratę. Odwróciwszy się więc, rzekł do niego: „Skoro miejsce jest stosowne, mój drogi, zejdźmy z koni i posilmy się jedzeniem”. I kiedy zaczęli jeść, po krótkiej chwili chrześcijanin, przypatrzwszy się, zobaczył swojego niewolnika, który stał tam i trzymał w jednej ręce sakiewkę Hebrajczyka, a w drugiej – utracony klucz wraz z chusteczką. A widząc to, bardzo się zadziwił i rzekł do niewolnika: „Cóż to?”. A ten odpowiedział: „Jakiś budzący trwogę jeździec przybył do mojej pani i, wręczywszy jej ten kluczyk wraz z chusteczką, powiedział do niej: «Jak najszybciej wyślij sakiewkę Hebrajczyka, żeby twój mąż nie znalazł się w niebezpieczeństwie» i ja, wziąwszy to, przyszedłem do ciebie, tak, jak rozkazałeś”.

Uszczęśliwiony Hebrajczyk zawrócił wraz z chrześcijaninem do [sanktuarium] świętego. I pierwszy prosił, żeby go ochrzczono, gdyż stał się naocznym świadkiem takiego cudu, a drugi błagał o przebaczenie za czyn, przez który zagniewał Boga¹²⁴. Obaj więc, gdy otrzymali to, o co prosili – jeden chrzest święty, a drugi – przebaczenie, radując się, wrócili do swoich.

¹²² Tu w znaczeniu: „zawiniątko”.

¹²³ Piwowarczyk dowodzi, że chodzi tu najprawdopodobniej o sygnet zaopatrzony w tłok pieczętny. Na ten temat oraz na temat różnic w grupie przedmiotów zgubionych przez chrześcijanina podczas upadku z konia i konsekwencji, jakie z tego wynikają dla wewnętrznej logiki poszczególnych wersji tekstu, zob. P. Piwowarczyk, *O Żydzie i chrześcijaninie – koptyjskie, greckie i arabskie wersje cudu jednego z cudów św Menasa* (w rękopisie). Sygnet ten może pełnić w tekście dwie funkcje. Po pierwsze, stanowi element rozpoznawczy dla żony chrześcijanina – ma pewność, że to mąż wysłał wiadomość. Po drugie, pozostawiona w domu sakiewka mogła być zapieczętowana tym konkretnie sygnetem (bohater gubi jeden sygnet, być może spośród posiadanych wielu), co ułatwiało jej identyfikację. W oryginalnej wersji cudu żona chrześcijanina jest zaangażowana w przywłaszczenie depozytu od samego początku, dlatego na pewno wiedziała, o jaką sakiewkę chodzi, tu natomiast pani domu nie ma potrzebnej wiedzy. A w każdym razie czytelnik nie wie, czy ją ma, dlatego użycie pieczęci do identyfikacji depozytu wydaje się uzasadnione.

¹²⁴ Boga: τὸ θεῖον. W grece średniowiecznej urzeczownikowane neutrum przymiotnika θεῖος jest równoznaczne z ὁ θεός – ‘bóg’ (Kriaras s.v. θεῖος I β).

Bibliografie



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Przemysław Piwowarczyk²

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³ This bibliography does not include field reports or detailed studies of specific aspects of the site. For a comprehensive bibliography, see the entry in the 4CARE

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