

SAHIDIC COPTIC VERSIONS OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

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This annual report focuses on the edition of a Coptic text on which the authors of this report have collaborated for years, with Anne Boud'hors working from L'Institut de recherche et d'histoire des textes (a unit of the Centre national de la recherche scientifique, or CNRS) in Paris, France, and Sofía Torallas Tovar first from the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas in Madrid, Spain, and since 2014 from the University of Chicago. The project is finally coming to an end (see Boud'hors and Torallas Tovar, forthcoming), and now seems the right moment to assess our challenges and achievements.

Work on the Sahidic versions of the Gospel of Mark has seen small advances since the 1970s. Building on previous progress, our collaboration began in 2001. The earliest modern edition of the Gospel of Mark was published by George W. Horner in 1911. He benefited from the discovery in the 1880s of the remains of the library of the White Monastery in Achmim, Upper Egypt, also known as the Monastery of Shenoute. That library was soon thereafter broken up and its holdings scattered to collections throughout the world (Orlandi 2002). Horner's text for the Gospel of Mark was based on fifty-six witnesses, most of them dating to later than the seventh to eighth centuries CE, all of them fragmentary, and none of them presenting a complete text of Mark. Our analysis of all the manuscripts would later prove that the fragments combined by Horner were mostly, but not all, witnesses to what we would later call the "revised version" (saII), which survived only in fragments. Large parts of the Gospel are missing from this version, and parts of Horner's text were taken from fragments of other versions (saIII)—something we discovered only recently.¹

In 1972, Hans Quecke published P.Palau Ribes 182, an exceptionally beautiful and complete fifth-century CE manuscript that predated all the known fragments (fig. 1). It contained full texts of Luke, John, and Mark, in the Western order. Quecke noticed that P.Palau Ribes 182 features a linguistically archaic text with certain peculiarities when compared to the other known witnesses. A year later, in 1973, Tito Orlandi published an enlightening review of Quecke's edition in which he established the double tradition of the text of Mark (saI and saII), setting the first modern stone on which our project is based. Orlandi indicated that the ancient version witnessed by P.Palau Ribes 182 was later the object of a linguistic and textual revision represented by saII. He also noted that the ancient version was not substituted, for it continued to be copied, as attested by one of Horner's witnesses (H72, dated to the tenth century). In 1984, Boud'hors began researching the White Monastery fragments kept at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (Copte 132.1–4 and 133.1–2). She noted variations and affinities that led her to confirm Orlandi's first intuitions with firmer grounds (Boud'hors 1993).

In 1988, Pierpont Morgan Library Ms 569, a ninth-century CE manuscript acquired in 1910 from the monastery of Saint Michael in Hamuli by the New York collector John Pierpont Morgan, was published in an inadequate edition by Aranda Pérez. A few years later, Boud'hors joined the Marc Multilingue project, started by Christian Amphoux, a New Testament criticism scholar (CNRS, Montpellier, France). (For the

1. We refer to manuscripts using the siglum "sa" for Sahidic, followed by an arabic number, according to the repertories mentioned, and to the three versions, attested by multiple manuscripts, with the same siglum "sa" followed by a roman numeral.



Figure 1. P.Palau Ribes 182.

scope of the project, see the edited volume Amphoux 2005.) The project aimed to bring together philologists and editors of the different language groups into a single working team. Amphoux's initial idea was that the Greek text of Mark remained in flux until the end of the fourth century and that six of the great Greek Uncial manuscripts represent successive editions produced in Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch between 120 and 380 CE. According to this hypothesis, the fluctuating nature of the Greek Gospel of Mark would have influenced the Sahidic version—and all the other Eastern Christian versions—already in the earliest textual phases.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the publication of the first repertoires of fragments of the Sahidic New Testament were instrumental to the evolution of the project and the organization of the research on fragments (Schmitz and Mink 1986–91). The repertory initiative would later be inherited by the Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung (INTF) at the University of Münster, Germany, with whose scholars we have maintained constant and close collaboration (see the work of Siegfried Richter and Katharina Sandmaier at <http://intf.uni-muenster.de/smr/>).

As mentioned above, we began collaborating in 2001, first in the framework of the Marc Multilingue project and then independently. We soon had a draft of the edition of Mark's sixteen chapters in three versions: sa1 (Palau Ribes manuscript), saII (based on Horner's reconstruction), and sa9 (the Pierpont Morgan manuscript). In the past five years we have seen considerable progress on three additional fronts: first, in the identification of a further "family" of manuscripts we called "saIII"; second, via the analysis of manuscript sa123, which provided a glimpse into the philological activity in the Fayum that led to the production of the revised versions; and third, in our understanding of the ending of Mark (chapter 16).

Thanks to our access to libraries and the improvement of digital photography, we could thoroughly analyze the totality of the fragments of Mark. In our recent analysis, we realized that some of the fragments—namely, sa125, sa152, and sa156—aligned with sa9, the Fayum manuscript kept at the Pierpont Morgan Library. The manuscripts shared a clear textual affinity, as well as codicological and paleographical features. Though these manuscripts came from the White Monastery, they clearly show the influence of a Fayumic scribal milieu. Sa9 seems to be the earliest of this group of manuscripts, which attest the version we labeled saIII (Boud’hors and Torallas Tovar 2021).

Another ninth- to tenth-century manuscript with similar paleographical and codicological characteristics, sa123, provided interesting insights into philological activity (Boud’hors and Torallas Tovar 2020). Scattered among the British Library, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, and the Biblioteca Nazionale Marciana in Venice, this manuscript is a book of gospels from the White Monastery. The text of the Gospel of Mark that it contains presents substantial corrections in the form of marginal additions, erasures, and replacements, thus presenting an interesting opportunity to understand the aforementioned process of revision. We observed that the text of sa123, before correction, has affinities with saI, with some contaminations of saII and some readings of its own. We use sa123’s first, uncorrected text as a witness of saI. Furthermore, the corrections had the purpose of bringing the text closer to saII. This finding led us to believe that sa9 could have resulted from a similar process of collation.

Finally, we made progress on the complicated issue of the ending of Mark. Recent collaboration with the project SNSF Mark 16, spearheaded by Claire Clivaz (Geneva, Switzerland), gave additional impetus to our efforts to understand the structure of the final chapter of Mark in Coptic within a large textual tradition. Our three versions show interesting differences. The ancient version, represented mainly by sa1, presents the short ending—that is, the chapter ends with verse 8. SaII features the *conclusio brevior*—that is, verse 8 is followed by an addition, marked in the manuscripts with a distinctive style and a long ending; and sa9, and probably all the saIII family, has, like saII, the addition, but it is not distinctively marked as in saII (Boud’hors and Torallas Tovar 2022).

Summing up, the long-running project to provide an edition of the Sahidic versions of the Gospel of Mark is finally reaching its conclusion. Collaboration with several research projects in the international arena has provided a frame and platform for progress. We are working on the final versions of the critical edition of the chapters incorporating all the known manuscripts (eighty-six to date, compared to Horner’s fifty-six) and anticipate that we will soon see the final product of our toils.

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