

9. Conto. Scrittura grossa, non professionale. Sono nominate persone varie con la loro professione (profumieri, orefici, panettieri ecc.).

10. Lista di prodotti consegnati a un abate del monastero. Scrittura accurata, non del tutto corsiva.

11. Lista di capi di vestiario consegnati al monastero.

12. Lettera del vescovo(?) Nikolaos al *comes* Basileios. Scrittura accurata, simile a quella di Dioscoro di Afroditopoli; ma lo stile e gli errori fanno pensare che sia stata scritta da un copto.

13-14. Due iscrizioni su anfore di età bizantina (VI) con la formula Θεοῦ χάρις κέρδος.

Nell'Appendice l'a. tratta del simbolo ΧΜΓ e ne passa in rassegna le interpretazioni; a mia conoscenza ce ne sarebbe un'altra, per quanto meno condivisa dagli studiosi, anch'essa isopsefica: ΧΜΓ = 643 = ἡ ἀγία τριάς Θ(εός).

Il volume è completato da Indici accuratissimi. Da notare alcune parole nuove: il nome proprio Κωστίνοσ, abbreviazione di Κωνσταντίνοσ; μυροφόσ (= μυρεφόσ); γαλέριν (= γαλέριον).

Il fascicolo annesso fornisce bellissime piante topografiche e complete riproduzioni fotografiche dei documenti in grandezza naturale.

Auguriamo una buona continuazione dei lavori archeologici e nuove pubblicazioni di documenti.

ORSOLINA MONTEVECCHI

MARTYRIUS SYRIANI, *Târikh Deir al-Anba Yubanes Kâmâ al-qadîm wa sîra alqadîs bi'l-lughâ al-qubtîya* (*History of the Ancient Monastery of Abba John Kame and the Life of the Saint in Coptic*), Cairo (published privately) 1992, 143 + 35 pages, illus. 3LE.

Martyrius says in his introduction that he has been inspired to write this book by the presence of the remains of the Saint in the Syrian Monastery (Wâdi Natrûn), about 3 km north of the ancient monastic site, and that his archaeological research has been facilitated by recent nearby building activity.

After a brief summary fo the *Vita*, the name John Kame is discussed. « John » is ἰωϋαννησ in Sahidic and ἰωαννησ in Boharic. « Kame », though understood by some « black », is thought by Martyrius to be an inappropriate epithe for someone described as « handsome of appearance » (it seems to be a popular Egyptian prejudice that « black » cannot be beautiful), but I cannot find this phrase in the Coptic text; the 12th century Abu'l Makarram (sometimes also called Abu Sâlih the Armenian) completely misunderstood the name as Yukâmâ the Black; the identification with Egypt, proposed by Iris Habib, is also disputed. The Coptic text (fol. 101 r) says quite simply that the name was given to John by the Angel of the Lord: « and you will be called John Kame until you complete all the will of the Lord ». There is, in fact, no clue in the text what the name might refer to. The date of John's arrival in Scetis is placed plausibly enough between the Berber invasions of 818 and the successful re-settlement of the area by the future Patriarch Jacob in 825.



Discussion of the terms $\mu\alpha\lambda\omega\omega\pi\epsilon$, $\lambda\alpha\gamma\rho\alpha$ and $\uparrow\text{N}\text{I}\omega\uparrow\text{N}\text{R}\text{I}$ is followed by a description of the various types of *manschûbîya*:

(1) in which the spiritual father and disciple live, with a guest room beside the entrance (also used sometimes for storing water jars);

(2) in which there is a complex of 10 to 12 rooms for monks who gather around a spiritual father, with a common assembly room that may have an apse in the eastern wall;

(3) in which there is a church with dependent buildings at the centre of a quite extensive complex, where the cells can be up to 40 metres apart from each other; there is usually a small keep (*hisn*), about 8 m², to provide protection against nomadic incursions.

A brief description of *libe* in a *manschûbîya* is followed by historical notes on seven *manschûbîyât* associated with famous monks of the medieval period. Using the evidence of the *Vita* as source material, Martyrius examines the geography of the area where John Kame built his monastery. The historical association of the Blessed Virgin Mary in encouraging monks like John Kame to settle in the desert is traced back to the Theotokos dispute initiated by Nestorius in the 5th cent., when the Egyptian Patriarch Cyril called on the monks of Scetis to defend the Mother of God.

The area occupied by the various monasteries of the Wâdi Natrûn is provided in a table compiled by Prince 'Amr Tûsûn in 1935, and it shows that the monastery of John Kame is the second largest in the district (15,400 m²) after that of John Kolobos (16,000 m²).

The monastery had an enclosure wall, John Kame being the « first to appreciate the importance of building strong walls around the monasteries of Scetis ». A few years later, in 866 AD, Shenouda the First followed his example by building a wall around the Church of Abu Maqâr that could serve as a refuge for monks from Berber attacks. Martyrius believes that the original wall must have been more than 6 m high and dismisses the two-phase building suggested by Evelyn-White in *The Monasteries of the Wâdi Natrûn* pt III (1932) as « unsubstantiated conjecture ». There were two major churches, both dedicated to the Blessed Virgin: a small one in the keep (mentioned by Sâwirûs ibn Muqaffa') and a large one (consecrated between 932 and 952). There is a short description of the refectory, the keep, the cells, the well, and the diakonia, including the grain stores and kitchens, the guest rooms and the library (existence disputed).

To complement their spiritual life, the monks were required to perform physical labour, which included the tasks of copying of books and weaving mats. They also had to cope from time with attacks from marauding Berbers and roving bands of robbers. One such unsuccessful attack that took place in 966, a year of great famine in Egypt due to a series of poor inundation levels, is described in detail; the precarious economic situation was aggravated by the political unrest that followed the death of the Ikshidi ruler in 964. The monastery was also attacked by Sudanese soldiers towards the end of the 10th cent. and by Lewati Berbers in 1069.

Though the *Vita* states that John Kame was buried near the monastery of John Kolobos, there are reports from the 11th-12th cent. that his body was

being kept in the monastery named after him. The remains of several other saints associated with the monastery were also kept there.

The treasures of the monastery include three gold dinars presented to John Kame by the Blessed Virgin bearing the sign of the cross, an ancient icon of him, a linen garment belonging to him, and his inscribed gravestone.

Statistics illustrating the monastic population (by means of a graph and a table) reveal that the high point occurred c. 935 with more than 300 monks and that, after the evacuation in 1069, the population remained relatively small until the gradual transfer to the neighbouring Syrian monastery (1413-1442).

Brief notices are given of the visits paid to the monastery by Patriarchs (Egyptian and non-Egyptian), Sultans (the visit by Al-Nasir somewhere between 1309 and 1341 being a matter of speculation rather than documented fact), prominent religious figures and historians. It was also the workplace of several well-known calligraphers, including Makarius who drew up the collection of orthodox canon law known as the Nomocanon (unfortunately the footnote giving information about this document is missing).

One of the most distinguished inhabitants of the monastery was Bisûs, who spent 60 years there as a monk from 1032 to 1092. After the death of the Patriarch Christodoulos in 1077, an attempt was made by an assembly of bishops to elect Bisûs as their next Patriarch, but he took flight « because of his humility, and they considered him unworthy of the supreme position ». He was also endowed with the gifts of healing, clairvoyance and prophecy.

Among the contributory factors in the gradual decay of the monastery was the epidemic disease in 1348-49, known in Europe as the Black Death, that killed between 10,000 and 20,000 people in Cairo alone in one day.

Martyrius provides a brief description of some of the more ancient icons (18th and 19th cent.) depicting the saint with the Blessed Virgin. A useful table of historical events covering the period 793 to 1516 is given on pp. 106-107, followed by extracts from the Difnar relating to John Kame. There is also a good bibliography together with reliable indexes of place names and personal names.

The final section contains a reprint of the Coptic *Vita*, first published by M.H. Davis in *Patrologia Orientalis*, 14 (1920): 313-370.

The work is described at the bottom of its paper cover as a « private printing for those interested in Coptic studies » and, as such, is clearly aimed at Arabic speakers who do not have access to the vast body of Coptological literature in western languages, but I hope that this brief summary of its contents may be of interest to western Coptologists without a knowledge of Arabic.

ANTHONY ALCOCK