

THE LIFE OF
BISHOI



THE LIFE OF BISHOI

The Greek, Arabic,
Syriac, and Ethiopic *Lives*

Edited by Tim Vivian and Maged S.A. Mikhail

Contributors:

Apostolos N. Athanassakis, †Rowan A. Greer,
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Foreword by Mark N. Swanson

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In Memoriam
Rowan A. Greer
1935–2014
Priest, Scholar, Professor, Mentor
Yale Divinity School



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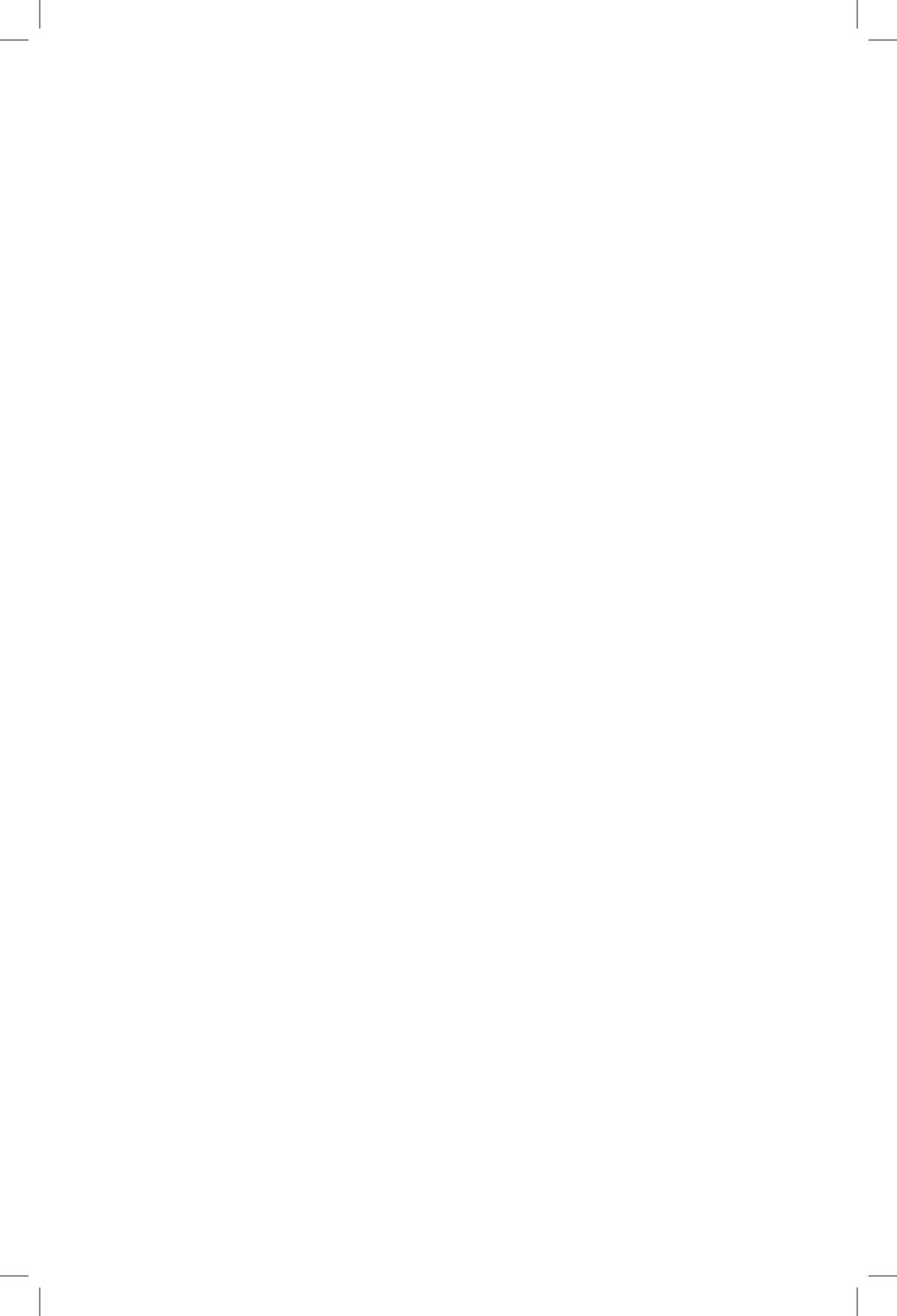
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ABBREVIATIONS

AlphaP	<i>Apophthegmata Patrum</i> , Alphabetical Collection
BHG	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca
BHO	Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis
CPG	Clavis Patrum Graecorum
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
GCAL	Geschichte der christlichen arabischen Literatur
Lampe	Lampe, <i>A Patristic Greek Lexicon</i>
LSJ	Liddell, Scott, James, <i>Greek-English Lexicon</i>
LXX	Septuagint
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PG	Patrologia Graeca
PO	Patrologia Orientalis
POM	I.V. Pomialovskii (1902)
SOCC	Studia Orientalia Christiana Collectanea



FOREWORD

Mark N. Swanson

Tim Vivian and Maged S.A. Mikhail introduce this extraordinary volume by telling us that “Saint Bishoi of Scetis (d. ca. 417) enjoys tremendous popularity throughout the Christian East.” For some readers, that may be news. The name Bishoi is not very well known among Western Christians. My own knowledge of the saint until not so many years ago was limited to the following: he was the Coptic St. Christopher (¶v, appendix); there was a monastery named for him in Egypt’s Wadi al-Natrun (¶t); and there was a place within the ancient church of the neighboring Monastery of the Syrians (Dayr al-Suryān) where he was said to have tied his hair to a hook or peg in the ceiling in order to help him keep vigil at night (¶20). For many readers, indeed for me, a volume like this present one is an introduction to a new world—or better, a number of intersecting worlds.

At the historical level there is the world of Eastern Christianity, a world of diverse but deeply interconnected communities. In that world, stories of saints like Bishoi readily jumped linguistic and confessional barriers, “the same” story being refashioned in subtle (and not-so-subtle) ways so as to inspire awe, give hope, instill virtues, warn against demonic “thoughts,”¹ defend the faith, or simply provide entertainment—in a wide variety of cultural and political settings. The general introduction traces the journey of the *Life* through four languages, three major families of manuscripts, and (by my count) sixteen recensions—a testimony to painstaking and determined historical detective work! The presentation of results may be a bit daunting at first read, but I found myself repeatedly returning to this general introduction, with increasing profit, as I became more familiar with the texts themselves and began to think of them synoptically: for every individual anecdote, we are given four “snapshots” of its evolution through time and space.

Another world to which the texts point us is an imaginative world, a world of wonders: the Egyptian desert conceived of as a place where earth and heaven meet. There, saintly individuals can fast from physical food because they are fed with heavenly food (§17);² Christ (e.g., §§12–13, 69) or the prophet Jeremiah (§9) or the emperor Constantine (§§35–40) might drop in for a visit; a Syrian saint can ride home on a cloud (§52); saints can defeat Satan (e.g., §§14–16, 59–62); and angels protect those who sleep (§53A). This world of wonders may already be familiar from other literature of the Egyptian desert; *The Life of Bishoi* is a witness to its importance in the imaginations of Eastern Christians, an element in the resilience of Christian cultures that, even in the bleakest historical moments, have sustained the confidence that heaven can touch earth and that Christ dwells with the saints.

But not all is perfect in that imaginative world. *The Life of Bishoi* also reminds us that this is a *distant* world, a *strange* one, not to be too easily romanticized or made into a kind of utopia. Scholars of this ancient literature of the desert ascetics may be used to pointing out (for example) examples of anti-Judaism or misogyny as unfortunately typical. Newcomers to these texts,³ however, may react to them with deep offense, to the point of wondering *why* they should be invited to read a text that includes something like, say, the story of the monk Isaac and the Jewish woman (§§64–67)—a story that became *more*, not less, misogynistic over the passage of time. Perhaps Content Warnings are in order?⁴ As someone who loves the literature of the desert Christians and who has used it in teaching “spiritual formation” courses, I find in such passages a call to some soul-searching (and syllabus revision): perhaps in my teaching I have implied the quasi-canonical status of texts that cannot and should not be expected to bear that weight.

In spite of the strangeness of these texts about the ancient desert Christians, and increasing awareness of the ways in which they participate in human fallenness, I and many others have regularly been surprised by their capacity, across barriers of time and space and culture, to capture mind and heart with questions about what is truly important in a human life. What sticks with me about the portrayal⁵ of St. Bishoi in the *Life* is not his feats of fasting or his mystical conversations, but rather his humility and care for others, some of whom have lost their way or “fallen into some kind of mental and spiritual depression.”⁶

There is some irony in this portrayal. Bishoi had a “longing desire” (*eros* in the Greek *Life*) for God, to be lived out in “contemplative solitude” (*hēsychía*). In his introduction,⁷ Tim Vivian has a fascinating discussion of the importance of this for a Christian reclamation of the category of the

erotic. However, the *Life* is not finally a story about a solitary figure whose “heart was on fire” (§69) with love for God, but rather a story about a person who, *despite* an intense desire for solitude, became a teacher, intercessor, guide, and head of a community (§§33–34, 48–49). It is not the solitary lover of God, but rather the one who “spiritually struggles *and ministers to others*,” whom Christ calls “my son and heir” (§49, Greek, my emphasis).

The ancient request made to the desert teachers was for “a word” to live by.⁸ I heard “a word” to me in this call to teach and guide, in spite of desires to invest my time in “higher” (in my case, purely academic) things. Other readers of the literature of the desert ascetics have had similar experiences. So, I believe I can say: Read on, in the hope that, for all the text’s distance and strangeness, you will hear “a life-giving word” about “problems . . . and disciplines . . . [that] are directly and profoundly our business.”⁹ Even if not, you’ll gain insight into the faith that has sustained ancient Christian communities, from the time of the historical Bishoi down to our own day.

Notes

- 1 Note the treatment of anger (§§48, ζ) and vainglory (§77).
- 2 And note the account of a monastic “intervention” at §58.
- 3 I have in mind some of my own students, who have been formed by the Black Lives Matter and the Me Too movements, and who have known far too many instances of violence directed at faith communities.
- 4 This was the solution of one of my students in a report for my “Desert Discipleship” class during spring semester, 2019.
- 5 Or better, “portrayals.” I note the way that the descriptions of Anba Bishoi and his teachings become more down to earth, as we move from the Greek to the other versions; see, for example, §63.
- 6 From the Introduction to the Ge‘ez *Life*, p. 200.
- 7 The introduction to chapter one, “The Greek *Life of Pairsios* in Translation.”
- 8 As in §63, Greek.
- 9 Rowan Williams quoted at the end of Tim Vivian’s introduction to chapter one, p. 46.



GENERAL INTRODUCTION

SAINT BISHOI OF SCETIS

Maged S.A. Mikhail

Our Righteous Father, the perfect man, the beloved of our Good Savior

—Coptic Diptych

Saint Bishoi of Scetis (d. ca. 417) enjoys tremendous popularity throughout the Christian East, and particularly among the Copts. “Bishūy” is a common name within that community, busloads of pilgrims visit the saint’s monastery at Scetis (Shihēt/Wadi al-Natrun) every week, and his life has been made into a full-length movie. The saint and his monastery only increased in popularity since the 1980s as the late Coptic Patriarch, H.H. Pope Shenouda III (Patr. 1971–2012), established his patriarchal residence adjacent to the monastery, which rendered it the leading monastery in Egypt.

The historical Bishoi lived during what may be easily regarded as the Golden Age of Scetis, a remarkable era in which a litany of larger-than-life monastics lived and interacted with one another.¹ Even among such elite company, however, Bishoi stood out as the founder of one of the four great monasteries of Scetis: those of Macarius, John the Little, Bishoi, and the Roman Fathers (al-Barāmūs).² In fact, Bishoi is the patron of two monasteries at Scetis. As the Aphthartodocetic controversy ripped through anti-Chalcedonian ranks in Egypt during the first half of the sixth century,³ pitting the followers of Severus of Antioch against those of Julian of Halicarnassus, monks from the Monastery of St. Bishoi likely founded the neighboring community, “the Monastery of the Mother of God of the Syrians of Abba Bishoi,” which is best known as “the Monastery of the Syrians” (*Dayr al-Suryān*). Soon, as the Aphthartodocetic controversy faded into the footnotes of the history of Christology, both monasteries flourished as monuments to the memory of the saint. Among other points of interest, ancient and modern visitors to the Monastery of the Syrians have always sought out

the cave where the saint tied his hair to the ceiling to force himself to stay awake praying (*Life of Bishoi* [*LBsb*] ¶¶20), and the Tree of Ephrem, which is associated with that saint's visit to Bishoi (¶¶50–51).⁴ Moreover, several of the Syriac manuscripts of the *LBsb* discussed below came from the Monastery of the Syrians, which still retains the oldest known manuscript.

Sometime in 407, Scetis was sacked by barbarians, prompting many monastics, including John the Little and Bishoi, to depart for other regions.⁵ At that juncture, Bishoi fled to Middle Egypt, where his legacy became intertwined with that of Paul of Tamma. The two saints lived together perhaps for as long as a decade (407–17) and their relics remain together until this day.⁶ Eventually, as detailed in greater length below, their relics were translated to what would become known as Dayr Anba Bishoi at al-Barsha in Antinoë/Ansina, and, subsequently, they were brought to Bishoi's monastery at Wadi al-Natrun in the ninth century.

In spite of Bishoi's prominence, his biography has received only sporadic, scattered attention. It survives in Greek, Syriac, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Garshuni⁷ recensions, though, oddly, no Coptic text survives. The goal of this study is to make the various recensions of his hagio-biography more accessible to both scholars and the general public,⁸ particularly those interested in early Christian and monastic spirituality or Egyptian (Coptic) Christianity. Another goal is to provide discussions and commentary on the literary and historical heritage of these texts, several aspects of which may be appreciated only by contrasting the various recensions. Finally, the volume presents new editions and translations for *LBsb* based on the oldest accessible manuscripts. The Greek text provided in chapter two, though not intended to be a critical edition as such, is based on four of the earliest accessible manuscripts, only one of which has been edited, by Pomialovskii in 1902, and none previously translated. Similarly, the English translation of the Syriac recension is based on an unpublished manuscript that provides a far more reliable textual witness than the sole edition published by Paul Bedjan in 1892. An edition of that manuscript is forthcoming. In a similar vein, the Arabic translation is based on the oldest accessible manuscript for that recension. The Ge'ez (Ethiopic) version of the *Life*, the first translation into English, is based on the critical edition published by Gérard Colin in 2002. The remainder of this general introduction focuses on the meaning of the saint's name and identity, the translation of his relics, a controversial pericope in the *Life*, and the textual history of *LBsb*.

Bishoi's Name and Identity

The saint is known by various names throughout history. Not only has his name changed somewhat as various scribes translated his hagio-biography

from one language into another but, at least in Syriac and Arabic, fluctuations in orthography and the phonetic pronunciation of the name are well attested. Moreover, confusion as to the different figures who share the name “Bishoi” persists among the laity and within scholarly literature, along with uncertainty surrounding the meaning of his name.

Attempts at discerning the meaning of the saint’s name often beg a basic question: which of the dominant forms—Gr. Παῖσιος, Cop. P[i]shōi, Syr. Bishoi [Byshwyhy], Eth. Bsoy, Ar. Bishūy, Bishiyyah, and Bishāy—should be considered original and which are derivatives? The etymology would be preserved in the original form of the name, but not necessarily within its variants. To that end, Evelyn-White forwarded a problematic etymology of Παῖσιος that calls for reading this Greek form, which is not attested in any non-Greek manuscript, according to a mixed, Greek–Coptic, etymology: *pa-Isis*, “he who belongs to Isis.” Reading the name as Coptic, however, resolves this oddity. The original etymology is likely closer to “Pa-Shai,” i.e., “he who belongs to Shai”—the popular Egyptian god of fate. Unconcerned with linguistic accuracy per se, *LBsb* provides an etymology of the name in ¶7 by way of a ubiquitous hagiographic trope that underscores the meaning of a saint’s name.⁹ The passage maintains that Abba Amoi (Gr. Pambo/Syr. Bemoi) called the saint “Sunrise,” or “the Shining Father.” Behind the gloss is a wordplay that understands *sboi* as a synonym for the verb *shai*, “to rise,” which also designates “dawn.”¹⁰ Confusion between *sboi* and *shai* is reflected in the common Arabic variant for the saint’s name, “Bishāy,” which is also attested in Syriac.¹¹

Given that the wordplay is intelligible only in Coptic, the form “Pshōi” should be considered original. This passage (¶7) is attested in the Arabic, Syriac, Garshuni, and Ethiopic recensions, but the extant Greek manuscripts (see below), while retaining the structure and wording of the trope in part, fail to comprehend the wordplay and do not retain it. This, among other clues (discussed below), indicates that the accessible Greek recension, while preserving early readings and passages of *LBsb*, is not the oldest. Regardless of which language *LBsb* was originally drafted in, whoever penned the autograph must have understood the wordplay on the saint’s name in Coptic.

The popularity of the name and its cognates has led to a great deal of confusion within the historical record.¹² Here, the first three figures discussed shared the same name in Greek (Παῖσιος), Coptic (Pshoi), Ethiopic (Bsoy), Syriac and Arabic (Bishoi, Bishay; but also, Ibshāy, Bīshā), while the other four shared one or more variants of it. (1) The first and most famous bearer of the name is our saint, Παῖσιος or Bishoi of Scetis (d. ca. 417), the focus of this study. Commemorated on 8 Abib (July 15), this saint was born in Egypt and never left the province. Moreover, there is no evidence that

he spoke a language other than Coptic, or was ordained to a clerical rank. Most likely, this saint also carried the designation “Bishoi of Jeremiah.”¹³ *LBsb* records that the saint was particularly fond of the Book of Jeremiah; he memorized it, and the prophet would come and explain it to him (§9). (2) A second figure is Paΰsios/Bishoi of Constantinople, the author of the *Life of Maximus and Domitius*. This Bishoi was a Greek-speaker and a citizen of Constantinople, who came under the guidance of Macarius the Great. In the manuscript record, he is identified as “the Archdeacon of Constantinople, who became the first Archdeacon in the desert of Scetis.”¹⁴ (3) A third saint with an identical name is Bishoi of Akhmim (or Sohag), the founder of the famed Red Monastery, who was associated with Saint Shenoute of Atripe. He is commemorated on 5 Amshir (February 12).

Other saints are more marginal, but have also been conflated with one or more of the above-named saints. (4) One figure is Bishoi Anub (Bishay Anub), a martyr commemorated on 19 Ba’ūna (June 26), though confusion here seems to be minimal, given that “Anub” is typically given as part of his name. (5) Another Bishoi (Bishay) was also a martyr; he is commemorated on 29 Ba’ūna (July 6). (6) The final Egyptian figure sharing this name is Saint Pshōi of Tud, a seventh-century monastic in Upper Egypt, who was the patron saint, or possibly the founder, of a monastery.¹⁵ He is commemorated on 25 Kiyahk (January 3). (7) Outside of Egypt, phonetic similarity led to confusion between Bishoi of Scetis and the late eighth-century East Syrian Saint Beh Isho’, whose biography is a version of *LBsb*.¹⁶ Having distinguished the various saints who shared this name, the focus now shifts to the traditions surrounding the translation of the saint’s relics to Scetis/Wadi al-Natrun.

Translation of Relics

It is essential to delineate the two translations of the relics of saints Bishoi and Paul of Tamma (§79). The sequence of these events is hopelessly confused in the *Synaxarium* and most modern studies,¹⁷ though they inform how we may read and date various recensions of *LBsb*. Two details are consistent across all texts: the saints died at different times, and at different locations. Moreover, the pattern of translation is nearly identical across most manuscripts, though the proper names of the individuals involved and the location where the relics were deposited differ. The following description is based on Manuscript *Family B* [MS *FamB*] and *Family C* [MS *FamC*] (see below for the manuscript families and recensions); the account in MS *FamA* retains the same overall pattern parsed here, though it forwards a problematic reference addressed separately below in the context of *LBsb*’s textual history. Notably, the long recension of the *Life of Paul of Tamma*

places the death of Paul at Aswan rather than Antaiopolis/Qaw, as proposed below.¹⁸ In general, while the *Lives* of Bishoi and Paul maintain that the saints were buried together,¹⁹ the details in Paul's *Life* are irreconcilable with those in *LBsb*. Moreover, while Bishoi appears in two passages in the *Life of Paul*, the close relationship between the two saints carefully cultivated in *LBsb* is lacking in that text.²⁰

Bishoi passed away ca. 417, at what *Recension WN2 Ar1* identifies as Minyat al-Saqr (or al-Saqr); it, along with the Ethiopic Mukyāduḥ and the Syrian Mounēya Duwany, remains unidentified. "Minya" is most likely a port district,²¹ perhaps that of Panopolis or Hierakonopolis.²² Regardless, the details of the account position that location south of Antaiopolis/Qaw.²³ After Bishoi's death, Paul of Tamma relocated to the north and passed away a few months later. Hearing of Bishoi's passing, an abbot from a monastery at Antinoë/Ansina traveled south on a boat to procure his relics.²⁴ The Arabic (*Rec. WN2 Ar.1*) identifies the abbot as "Athanasius" of Ansina, while the Syriac, Garshuni, and Ethiopic texts identify him as [S-y-r-w-s] "Siyrwūs" or "Siyrawes" of Ansina. (The Greek recensions' identification of "Isidoros" is discussed below). Athanasius is otherwise unknown, but Siyrwūs is likely the "Sūrus" of Ansina and Asyut, referred to in the *Life of Paul of Tamma*,²⁵ and is likely synonymous with the Apa Soures (or Sourous) attested in several Coptic inscriptions alongside Bishoi and Paul—though those inscriptions are farther north, at Saqqara.²⁶

The abbot acquired Bishoi's relics, but on the trip back north to Ansina the boat halted near the location of Paul's burial. Two days later, an anchorite Jeremiah—whose name is consistent across all recensions—informed the crew that the bodies of Bishoi and Paul must remain together. Jeremiah is likely the noted anchorite, and perhaps the founder of the Monastery of Jeremiah, that is, Dayr Anba Harmina, near Antaiopolis (Tkoou/Qaw al-Kabir).²⁷ Once the crew brought Paul's remains on board, the boat sailed, and the abbot proceeded to deposit the remains of both saints at his monastery, where they remained until the 840s. This monastery is almost certainly Dayr al-Barsha, near Antinoë/Ansina. This first translation of relics occurred within the fifth century, though the *Synaxarium* does not cite it. Still, it grafts the account of the immovable ship onto the narrative of the later translation from the second quarter of the ninth century.

The second translation proceeded during a unique historical juncture—the late eighth to early ninth centuries—during which several monasteries were renovated and the relics of many saints were translated to Scetis/Wadi al-Natrun.²⁸ These translations included the relics of saints who had left the wadi in the fifth century due to violent barbarian raids. Hence, at the end of the eighth century, the remains of John the Little were translated to his

monastery at Wadi al-Natrun,²⁹ but Bishoi's and Paul's relics had to wait. The second and third decades of the ninth century were extremely turbulent. In 817, the Fifth Sacking of Scetis devastated the monasteries of the region, and the Fourth Fitna (civil war) between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn for control of the caliphate, and its turbulent aftermath, along with the ensuing Bashmūric Revolt in the Delta, brought a great deal of chaos and violence to Lower Egypt.³⁰ With great effort, the government restored order in the mid-830s, and by the 840s the *History of the Patriarchs* reports that the monasteries prospered and an era of "grace and peace" commenced.³¹

Sometime in the 840s, Patriarch Yusāb I (Joseph: 830–49) called for the second translation of the relics of Bishoi and Paul.³² (One manuscript provides an exact date: 4 Kiyahk AM 558/30 November AD 841.)³³ Thus, the relics were translated from Ansina to the Monastery of St. Bishoi at Wadi al-Natrun; it is this translation that is recorded in the *Synaxarium*.³⁴ As demonstrated below, the drafting of the exemplar for *LBsb* MS *FamB* almost certainly occurred prior to this event, though the normative shape of the recension at the core of that family came about in the wadi. On the whole, the monastic centers at Ansina had been in decline since the late eighth century, and the Coptic patriarch instigated the translation of the relics. Moreover, beyond the fame and antiquity of the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun, the wadi was quickly developing into one of the preeminent centers of ecclesiastical authority in the Coptic Church.³⁵ The procurement of relics bolstered that prestige.

Later, by the early fourteenth century, the Monastery of Anba Bishoi had fallen into disrepair, and suffered from what appears to have been a major termite infestation. Patriarch Benjamin II, who visited the wadi in AD 1330, spearheaded the restoration efforts, which included the consecration of a church (though, perhaps, only an altar).³⁶ The renovation proceeded so swiftly that we are told that "if not for human weakness, [the workers] would have seen angels aiding in the restoration."³⁷ Significantly, the earliest reference to the tradition of the incorruptibility of Bishoi's body dates to the fourteenth century (see below), and at least one source directly links it to the patriarch's visit.³⁸

Purgation in the Desert

Undoubtedly, the most sensitive account in *LBsb* is in ¶¶22–31. In that detailed narrative, Bishoi's intercessions with Christ on behalf of a fallen monk result in the latter's release from "Gehenna." Previously, he was supposed to remain in punishment there until the "Lord returns upon a cloud." Resoundingly, the pericope is disquieting in the East today, but it is imperative to note that the medieval audiences who heard the account,

and the scribes who copied the Greek, Arabic, Syriac (including two different abbreviated recensions), Garshuni, and Ethiopic versions of *LBsb*, were clearly not as disturbed by it; hence, they retained it in all these recensions and manuscripts. Premodern audiences focused on the saint's intercessory powers, not the purgation aspect per se.

Nonetheless, though attested in all the Arabic manuscripts surveyed, the account is lacking in every modern Arabic publication³⁹ save one, which appends a scolding footnote stating that the account is "contrary to divine justice, logic, and the Holy Bible."⁴⁰ We see a similar attitude in P. Bedjan's edition of the Syriac *LBsb*,⁴¹ in which he transcribed the first three lines of BnF Syr. 236 fol. 25v, but then placed a series of ellipses and shifted the focus to an account based on another manuscript, and then commenced with fol. 26v. He must have read, and decided to forgo, the remainder of fol. 25v and all of fol. 26r—which preserve the account in question. All indications are that he intentionally omitted this account. A more malicious approach may be observed in the unpublished BL.Or. (Syr.) 963 [Add. 14,732.8], where the pertinent folio (116r–v) was hastily torn out of the manuscript, leaving behind only a thin sliver of the torn folio still attached to the binding.

Regrettably, the hypersensitivity around this issue, heightened in the modern era due to the East's various encounters with the Roman Catholic Church, is largely misplaced. Purgation is not the same as Purgatory. The latter is a specific Roman Catholic doctrine that, by most accounts, developed in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, gaining its dogmatic articulation at the Second Council of Lyon in 1274.⁴² Nonetheless, while the Christian East rejects the doctrine of Purgatory, the Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Anglican communions are in agreement that prayers for the dead are efficacious (see Job 1:5; 2 Macc 12:42–44), and that on its journey to heaven a soul is prepared or conditioned for the heavenly realm and the encounter with God's glory. In the East, as J. A. McGuckin notes, theological "speculation" on these matters, though common, never achieved the doctrinal status it gained in the West.⁴³ Moreover, the East tends to conceive of purgation in terms of the purification of the soul in anticipation for the encounter with God as opposed to a notion of judicial punishment per se.

On the whole, references to purgation (as opposed to Purgatory) are not rare in early Christian, patristic, or medieval writings.⁴⁴ Such references are scattered throughout the literature of the East in general, and certainly within the writings of the Coptic Orthodox Church:⁴⁵ from early references in the writings of Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Athanasius to the annual Kneeling Prayer (*ṣalāt al-sajdab*), which retained unambiguous references to purgation until 29 May 1999, when the Coptic Holy Synod removed the three most obvious references.⁴⁶ In all, the Western doctrine

of Purgatory, which interjects specific concepts of time and space in the hereafter, is not accepted in the Christian East, but purgation is a different matter. In the East, there is a long history of speculation on the soul's journey to heaven and how it is purged of "sin that does not lead to death" (1 Jn 5:16–17). Here, the hagiographic account is not commenting on doctrine. Rather, its primary focus is the incredible intercessory power of Saint Bishoi (see also ¶21), God's "chosen one," as the *LBsb* reminds us on at least fifteen different occasions.

A Textual History of the *Life of Bishoi*

Largely unknown in the West until the modern era, the manuscript evidence leaves no doubt as to Saint Bishoi's renown among Christians in the East; pro-Chalcedonians (Greek Orthodox), anti-Chalcedonians (Coptic, Ethiopian, and Syriac Orthodox), and East Syrians (the Church of the East) celebrated his sanctity and reflected on the core of his biography. In Egypt, three monasteries and a host of churches and altars were named after the saint, while his *Life* circulated in several recensions. Among Syriac-speaking Christians, Bishoi's biography transcended the West/East Syrian divide, inspired religious poetry,⁴⁷ and provided the textual basis for commemorating an East Syrian saint.⁴⁸

With few exceptions, the extant manuscripts of the *Life of Bishoi* [*LBsb*] are far removed from the recensions they document, each text preserving a fossilized form of multi-tiered, evolving recensions that are not easily disentangled. Nonetheless, keeping in mind the above discussion of the two translations of the saint's relics, the textual history of *LBsb* may now be written in broad strokes. This analysis clusters the available manuscripts and recensions into three text families, or types, and provides tentative dates for the emergence of each family. Notably, while two families are dominated by manuscripts in the same language, allegiance to a family is, nonetheless, based on textual similarities, not language per se. Hence, MS *FamB* is attested in Syriac, Garshuni, and Ethiopic manuscripts, and, doubtless, an Arabic version existed as well.

The archetype [Ω]

As often noted, John the Little's purported authorship of *LBsb* is an impossibility given that he died before Bishoi, and that they separated later in life. At best, John would have been able to comment only on Bishoi's stint at Shihēt/Scetis. For their part, medieval scribes accepted the traditional attribution, but also attempted to account for the narratives they penned (see ¶79). Be that as it may, the accessible manuscripts conceal Ω quite well: hence, the language of original composition remains obscure, and while the

complete absence of a Coptic *Life* for the saint remains enigmatic, and a Coptic original is not inconceivable, the evidence suggests a Greek exemplar. Demonstrably, all manuscripts postdate Ω by several generations and present longer versions of that autograph.

Ω survives in recensions that adhere to three text families. Distinctive readings and pericopes establish the direct reliance of MS *FamC* on *FamB*; the link between MS *FamA* and *FamB*, however, and their relationship to Ω remain ambiguous. To be sure, the two manuscript families address the same figure and share a great deal with regard to structure and content. Nonetheless, a pericope from a *FamB* manuscript may forward an abridged or an embellished version of the parallel passage in a *FamA* text. Overall, while the exemplar for MS *FamB*, that is, *Rec. β* , developed before the AD 840 translation of relics, the distinctive readings and features attested in the available manuscripts point to a ninth-century date and the immediate environment of Wadi al-Natrun (hence a date post-AD 840—see below). Here, the reconstruction presumes the primacy of the exemplar for MS *FamA*, *Rec. α* , and maintains that the exemplar for *FamB*, *Rec. β* , was most likely a heavily reworked manuscript from that family. Hitherto, the earliest manuscript witness for *LBsb* is a tenth-century Syriac manuscript belonging to MS *FamB* (see below), though MS *FamA* recensions must have also been in circulation by that juncture.

MS Family A

BHG 1402–3; CPG 2503

(*Rec. Gr α , Gr1, and Gr2*)

MS *FamA* is hitherto exclusively attested in Greek manuscripts,⁴⁹ and appears to present an early form of the *Life*, though the extant manuscripts are several generations removed from Ω and are not older than the exemplar for MS *FamB* (*Rec. β*). *FamA* manuscripts retain the normative structure of *LBsb*, and read: ¶¶1–80. Thus far, this recension is attested in thirty-three manuscripts,⁵⁰ some of which retain the entirety of the biography, while others are incomplete or preserve only excerpts. The exemplar for this family, *Rec. α* , was likely drafted sometime between the seventh and early ninth centuries,⁵¹ though the earliest witness to the extant recension, *Rec. Gr.1*, is the incomplete BnF suppl. gr. 759, which dates to the late twelfth century. It is one of the manuscripts included in the critical apparatus for the Greek text and translation forwarded in this volume.

The priority of MS *FamA* is likely, given that several pericopes lacking in this Family (that is, ¶¶ α – ν) are better interpreted as later amendments rather than intentional omissions, and that its reading of ¶¶41 and 53B ff., discussed below, is likely earlier than that presented in the other families.

Another characteristic of *Rec. Gr1* is that while various aspects position it squarely within the Egyptian hagiographic tradition,⁵² the recension is, nonetheless, loosely grounded in Egypt's topography. By contrast, MS *FamB* (and, by extension, *FamC*) typically replace generic designations (e.g., "city") with the names of specific Egyptian towns.⁵³ Moreover, *FamB* appends references to well-known hagiographic accounts (e.g., the Tree of Obedience and Macarius' encounter with Hieracas; ¶¶8, 41).⁵⁴ What emerges in MS *FamA* is a saint whose association with Egypt is incidental, while in the other families Bishoi and his *Life* are thoroughly Egyptian.

Rec. Gr1 also retains a unique tradition that explicitly places the relics of Bishoi and Paul of Tamma outside Egypt,⁵⁵ in Pisidia in Cappadocia (modern Antalya, on the southern coast of Turkey).⁵⁶ It is unlikely that *Rec. α* forwarded this problematic reading. No other source maintains that the saints' relics were housed at, or translated to or from, that region. Moreover, it is not readily apparent why the otherwise unattested Isidore of Pisidia would travel to Middle Egypt (Antinoë/Ansina) to recover the relics of two Egyptian saints who, at that point, were relatively unknown beyond the province or to the Greek tradition.⁵⁷ A variant tradition, *Rec. Gr2*, cited by some secondary sources, but hitherto not directly read in the manuscripts, attempts to resolve this tension by identifying "Isidore" as Isidore of Pelusium (d. ca. 450)—a saint recognized by pro- and anti-Chalcedonians. Nonetheless, that tradition faces similar challenges: Isidore appears suddenly in the narrative, and there is no tradition for the translation of the saints' relics to or from Pelusium.

It is possible that ¶79 in *Rec. Gr1* is primarily concerned with positioning the saint (and his divine patronage) within a pro-Chalcedonian context, rather than with historicity per se.⁵⁸ Another possibility is that the recension conflates Paĩsios (Bishoi) of Scetis (clearly the subject of this biography) with Paĩsios (Bishoi) of Constantinople, the author of the *Life of Maximus and Domitios*, discussed above.⁵⁹ The confusion is common enough. Notably, other than who procured the remains of Bishoi and Paul, and where they were deposited, all the miraculous details associated with the translation of the relics—attested in the three manuscript families—follow a well-established Egyptian topos: the divinely guided ship.⁶⁰

MS Family B

BHO 181–182

(*Rec. β*, *WN1 γ*, *SA δ*, *SA Syr1*, *SA Syr1–Short1*, *SA Syr1–Short2*, *SA Syr2*, *SA Eth*, *SA Gar*)

This is the most linguistically diverse manuscript family. It constitutes the "Semitic" recensions of *LBsb*; that is, the Arabic, Syriac, Garshuni, and

Ethiopic versions of *LBsb* that circulated among Christians living under Islamic rule. Many surviving Greek manuscripts doubtless circulated under Islamic rule as well, but MS *FamB* appended new traditions to *LBsb*, redrafted existing pericopes to address Islamic polemics (¶¶41 and 53B–56), and introduced two declarative passages focused on intracommunal tensions at Wadi al-Natrun (¶¶ι and κ).

Structurally, while retaining the same order of accounts as MS *FamA*, *FamB* exhibits several distinctive features:

- A) It interjects new pericopes, ¶¶α–μ, in the following order: ¶¶1–29, 31–37, 39–67, α–ε, 68–75, ζ–μ, 76, [77A, 78A, 77B, 78B], 79–80. Later, some *FamC* manuscripts also appended ¶¶ν. Several of the new additions present autonomous pericopes, though a few are carefully interconnected to other parts of the *Life*, especially ¶¶μ and the details of the translations of the saints' relics in ¶¶79. The additions are:
- α. A Lesson about Theft
 - β. Instructions to Monks on Attending Festivals and Visiting Shrines
 - γ. Bishoi and John Flee Scetis after a Barbarian Invasion
 - δ. Bishoi Instructs on Dogma, Sacrament, and Love
 - ε. Bishoi Tests the Brothers; Isaac Answers Correctly
 - ζ. Bishoi Teaches about Anger
 - η. Bishoi as an Abbot
 - θ. Bishoi Teaches a Disgruntled Monk about Work
 - ι. The Hierarchy of the Four Great Monasteries
 - κ. On the Position of Bishoi's Monastery in Wadi al-Natrun
 - λ. The Healing Well at Bishoi's Monastery
 - μ. Bishoi and Paul Accept a Disciple
 - ν. Bishoi Carries the Lord (see appendix)
- B) Paragraphs 77 and 78 are rearranged in the following manner, ¶¶77A, 78A, 77B, 78B.
- C) It lacks ¶¶30 and 38, which are likely later additions to *Rec. G1*.
- D) ¶¶79 clearly positions the relics of Bishoi and Paul of Tamma in Egypt, in anti-Chalcedonian hands, and forwards an extended narrative focused on the translation of their remains to what may be identified as Dayr al-Barsha, near Antinoë/Ansina.
- E) Several passages were redrafted to better resonate within a post-Umayyad (AD 661–750) socioreligious setting (¶¶41, 53B ff., 65).⁶¹
- F) Saint Macarius and his monastery are repeatedly cited.

This final aspect is striking. References to Saint Macarius and his monastery are entirely lacking in MS *FamA*, yet high praise and extended passages focused on both are scattered throughout MS *FamB* (§§12, 41, 51, 1), and an additional reference is appended to the concluding paragraph in *FamC* manuscripts.

MS *FamB* originated prior to the mid-ninth century; that much is certain. In a crucial passage near the end of §79, the author states that the bodies of Saints Bishoi and Paul continue to perform miracles up to his day, and that he is assured of this from “faithful, trustworthy people who came from the city of Ansina.”⁶² Unambiguously, this passage places the saints’ relics in Antinoë/Ansina rather than at Wadi al-Natrun; hence, MS *FamB Rec. β* must predate the translation of the saints’ relics to the wadi in the 840s.

Other features of MS *FamB* also point to a ninth-century provenance. Thematically, while the *LBsb* consistently associates Bishoi with John the Little, Bishoi is entirely lacking in the eighth-century *Life of John the Little* by Zacharias of Sakhā. His omission from the lengthy list of monastic saints at the conclusion of the first paragraph of that *Life* is particularly glaring. On the whole, Zacharias appears to have been unaware of *LBsb*, though the authors of *Rec. α* and, with more certainty, *Rec. β* were acquainted with the *Life of John the Little*.⁶³ Another clue is the above-mentioned redrafting of pericopes to function as implicit Christian apologetic. *Rec. Gr1* §41 forwards a brief defense of the doctrine of the Trinity, which was routinely attacked by Jewish and, later, Muslim polemicists. In MS *FamB*, Bishoi’s terse response morphs into a lengthy, scripturally based defense.

Even more revealing, where in *Rec. Gr1* §53B a Jewish merchant argues that Jesus was not the awaited messiah, in MS *FamB* his comment is replaced with the prevalent Islamic assertion, based on Qur’ān 4:157, that Jesus was not crucified but rather someone who resembled him.⁶⁴ (Placing Islamic critiques and polemics on Jewish lips is a common literary strategy in Christian Arabic literature.) The account then proceeds to detail the dire spiritual consequences for accepting such a claim (§§54–57). Documenting the polemic and couching a response in a hagiographic text, which would have been read by—and, more importantly, to—the laity rather than theologians, *mutakallimūn*, points to an era of increased contact between Christians and Muslims in Egypt. Such a dynamic hardly existed under the Umayyads, but is easily reconciled with the socioreligious environment that prevailed under early Abbasid rule (post-750).⁶⁵ Finally, one finds Arabic toponyms (e.g., Fustat, §64) and terminology (*‘āmil*, §14) across all recensions of this family. Consistently, the ninth century emerges as the most likely period for the genesis of the extant recensions of MS *FamB*.

Leaving aside the question of “when” and turning to the question of “where” *Rec. β* was drafted brings us back to the authorial gloss in ¶79: “I have learned [these things] from faithful, trustworthy people who came from the city of Ansina. They came to the Monastery of Saint Abba Shenoute, prayed in it, and informed us concerning all things.” This positions the drafting of *Rec. β* at a “Monastery of St. Shenoute.” This gloss is crucial in delineating the two major branches of this family (*WNI* and *SA*), and in tracking the circulation of *LBsb* in Egypt. Now, this specific Shenoutian reading is from MS *FamC*, which likely emerged in the 1300s, when the saint’s relics had long been deposited at Wadi al-Natrun; hence, the assumption that the gloss is a carryover from the much earlier MS *FamB Rec. β*. (Less likely, though still possible, is that this is the location in which the exemplar for MS *FamC* emerged.) Here, we proceed with the most likely scenario: namely, that MS *FamB Rec. β* was drafted at a “Monastery of Saint Shenoute.” But which one? The monastery in question may have been the famed White Monastery near Sohag, which had a steady stream of pilgrims throughout the Middle Ages, or, less likely, the saint’s monastery in Ansina.⁶⁶ Still, the little-known Monastery of St. Shenoute in al-Fayyum provides another alternative.⁶⁷ Al-Fayyum had several manuscript-copying centers, including the famous Touton, which provided manuscripts to the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun.⁶⁸

The contents of the lost archetype, *Rec. β*, drafted before the translation of relics ca. 840, remain hypothetical. It certainly retained the tradition of the translation of relics to Dayr al-Barsha (Ansina) and likely appended ¶¶α–ε, and perhaps ¶¶ζ, η, and θ as well. As that text made its way to Wadi al-Natrun, perhaps alongside or shortly after the translation of the saints’ relics, the normative recension that lies at the core of MS *FamB*, that is, *Rec. WNI*, emerged. It is possible that *Rec. β* and *WNI γ* are one and the same, though that seems unlikely. Whether drafted in al-Fayyum, Ansina, or Atripe, it is doubtful that *Rec. β* would have: 1) repeatedly interjected Saint Macarius and his monastery at such great length and detail into the biography (¶¶12, 41, 51, ι); 2) weighed in so decisively on the contentious issue of the hierarchy among the monasteries of Wadi al-Natrun, as in ¶¶ι and κ⁶⁹ (pre-ninth century hagiography lacks this aspect altogether);⁷⁰ or 3) included a tradition that is exclusive to Bishoi’s monastery at Wadi al-Natrun (¶λ). These same reasons also argue against the priority of the Saint Antony recensions (*SA*), below, as opposed to that of *WNI*. A *Rec. WNI* must have existed, though, hitherto, it remains unattested among the manuscripts surveyed.

At some point prior to the late tenth century (the date of Syr. Monast. 30D), a manuscript belonging to *Rec. WNI* made its way to the Monastery of Saint Antony, where the second major recension—*Rec. SA δ*—developed.

Rec. SA δ is primarily distinguished by the crucial scribal gloss at ¶79, which was altered to read: “as we were told by faithful, trustworthy people who came from the city of Ansina to the Monastery of Saint Abba Antony.”

Rec. SA δ retained this distinctive Antonite reading and served as the basis for six closely related recensions. One is an Ethiopic translation: *Rec. SA Eth*. Gérard Colin edited and translated two fifteenth-century Ethiopic manuscripts of this recension into French; he believed that the texts reflected two different Arabic manuscripts.⁷¹ Robert Kitchen has translated Colin’s Ethiopic text into English in chapter three, below. In general, monks at St. Antony’s Monastery translated a long list of Christian Arabic literature into Ethiopic from the early 1200s until the monastery’s destruction in 1484, and again after its restoration in 1540. These translation projects included the *Synaxarium*, *Kitāb al-bustān*, and al-Ṣafī ibn al-‘Assāl’s *Nomocanon (al-Majmū’)*, to name but the most prominent texts.⁷² Given the date of the manuscripts Colin utilized, *Rec. SA Eth* must have been completed during the first phase, prior to 1484. Notably, among several unique readings, the recension retains a tradition at the conclusion of ¶ε that identifies Bishoi’s successor as the monk Isaac (the subject of ¶¶ε and 64–66).

Rec. SA δ is also attested in Syriac:⁷³ *Rec. SA Syr1*. The earliest surviving version of this recension is also the earliest known manuscript within the whole dossier: the tenth-century Monastery of the Syrians Syr. MS D.30, fols.139r–166r. Caution is required here, since only the first and last folios (139r and 165v–166r) are accessible.⁷⁴ Nonetheless, this manuscript retains the Antonite reading and a comparison with BL.Or. (Syr.) 971 (see below) yielded only a few, insignificant variants. Hence, at the moment, the earliest surviving manuscript for *LSsb* is a Syriac manuscript based on an Antonite recension preserved at the Syrian Monastery in Wadi al-Natrun.

In itself, this is significant. The history of the Monastery of St. Antony is not well documented from the eighth to the twelfth centuries, though the meager evidence suggests that the monastery had a strong Syrian presence—if it was not entirely under Syrian leadership for much of that period.⁷⁵ This manuscript reflects the existence of a channel of communication and exchange between the Syrian monks at St. Antony’s by the Red Sea and those at the Syrian Monastery in Wadi al-Natrun. Notably, the manuscript resists identifying the “Syrian elder” who visited Bishoi as St. Ephrem (¶¶50–51), though he is noted on the margin.⁷⁶ In fact, only the Salomon Manuscript, below, identifies the elder as Ephrem in the main text of *LSsb*, and only one recension of the *Life of Ephrem* mentions the encounter.⁷⁷

The complete *Rec. SA Syr1* is attested in an unpublished thirteenth-century manuscript, BL.Or. (Syr.) 971 [Add. 14,735], fols. 24v–50v, in what W. Wright described as a “rather inelegant hand.”⁷⁸ It is translated here

into English (chapter four), and an edition of the Syriac text is forthcoming. It reads: ¶¶1–29, 31–37, 39–67, α–ε, 68–75, ζ–μ, 67–76, [77A, 78A, 77B, 78B], 79–80. *SA Syr1* is also attested in a Garshuni manuscript (*Rec. SA Gar*) at the Syriac Orthodox Monastery of Saint Mark in Jerusalem: MS 199A, fols. 66r–a – 80r–b. In AD 1733–34, Bishāra of Aleppo had completed this translation at Dayr al-Za‘farān. Its colophon (fol. 750v) maintains that the translation is of a Syriac manuscript dated AD 1178/9 (AG 1490).⁷⁹ Of the two *SA* recensions discussed thus far,⁸⁰ *Rec. Gar* consistently agrees with the structure and wording of *SA Syr1* more than any other manuscript or recension surveyed here, with *SA Eth* constituting the next-closest relative.

MS *FamB*, *Rec. SA Syr1* served as the basis for three subsequent recensions. The first, *Rec. SA Syr1–Short1*, is represented by BnF Syr. 236, fols. 21r–33r (AD 1193–94).⁸¹ P. Bedjan used this manuscript as the basis for his 1892 edition of the Syriac *LBsb*, but, regrettably, he fundamentally misinterpreted this manuscript and poorly represented it in his edition. Bedjan read Syr. 236 as a text filled with lacunae, which he supplied from a private manuscript placed at his disposal by his friend M. Salomon. Nonetheless, Syr. 236 is a complete manuscript that retains an intentionally abridged recension of *LBsb* (see the introduction to the Syriac *LBsb*, below). It reads: ¶¶1–29, 31,⁸² 35–37, 39–40, 47–48,⁸³ 53A–57, 64–67, 69A–74, η–*short*, 78B, 80. A second dependent recension is also “short”: MS University of Cambridge Add. 2016 (*SA Syr1–Short2*). Similar to Syr. 236, while the accounts appear whole, passages of various lengths, from words to whole pericopes, are excised. Nonetheless, it is undoubtedly a work independent of Syr. 236. The manuscript reads: ¶¶1–13, 17–29, 31–37, 39–40, 44–48, 50–57, 59–67, α–ε, 68–75, η–μ, 76, [77A, 78A, 77B, 78B], 79–80. Neither of the short recensions retains ¶ζ, but *SA Syr1–Short2* does retain versions of all the other distinctive pericopes of MS *FamB*.

A third recension dependent on *SA Syr1* is *SA Syr2*, which is attested in another thirteenth-century manuscript, BL.Or. Syr. 963 [Add. 14,732.8], fols. 113r–129v (written in a meticulous west-Syrian hand), and the “Salomon Manuscript” used by P. Bedjan. Both texts follow the same structure as *SA Syr1*, but their contiguous text unknowingly jumps over a large gap from the end of ¶52 to the middle of ¶60; hence, this recension reads ¶¶1–29, 31–37, 39–52 || 60–67, α–ε, 68–75, ζ–μ, 67–76, [77A, 78A, 77B, 78B], 79–80. In his edition of the Syriac *LBsb*, Bedjan made a serendipitous error. On page 595, which purports to transcribe BnF Syr. 236, which lacks this textual anomaly, Bedjan quietly switched to the Salomon Manuscript, the contiguous text of which jumps from ¶52 to mid-¶60, thus permitting the classification of the Salomon Manuscript as a second witness to *SA Syr2*. Still, if Bedjan’s transcription is accurate, the Salomon Manuscript likely

represents a later generation of that recension. It is the only text that identifies the Syrian elder in ¶¶50–51 as Saint Ephrem in the main text.

MS Family C

GCAL I: 539

(Rec. ε, WN2 Ar1, WN2 Ar2)

None of the extant Arabic manuscripts surveyed conforms to MS *FamB*, though such a text surely existed, and likely served as the basis for the Saint Antony recensions (cf. *SA Etb*). Rather, all Arabic manuscripts identified thus far belong to MS *FamC*, which is easily recognized due to its radical reshuffling of pericopes: ¶¶1–19, 35–37, 39–44, 50–57, 20–29, 31–34, 45–46, 68, 58, η–θ, 59–65, 67, α–γ, 69–75, ζ, ι–μ, 76, [77A, 78A, 77B, 78B], 79–80. All Arabic manuscripts read lack ¶¶30, 38, 47–49, 66, δ, and ε (this is the only manuscript family lacking ¶66). Moreover, ¶¶ζ and η are presented in rather short recensions, and there are sentences in ¶¶34, μ, and 78B that reflect a misreading of the Arabic (perhaps Syriac) exemplar for this family. The enigmatic reshuffling might have resulted from the quires of the exemplar manuscript falling out of order and being reassembled with only the introductory and concluding quires as guides. Whatever the case may have been, the exemplar for this family most likely emerged in the fourteenth century at Wadi al-Natrun: Rec. WN2 ε.

One of the distinctive readings in this recension is an enigmatic clause (in italics here) introduced in ¶11: “*But if you desire to surpass Moses*, let us keep vigil this whole night.” Significantly, the odd phrase is rendered intelligible in the context of a stanza from a fourteenth-century ode from Wadi al-Natrun: “I will liken the face of a man unto our Father Abba Bishoi: for he spoke with Christ, like Moses the Lawgiver.”⁸⁴ The theme of the saint’s ability to speak with God in person and at will is ubiquitous in *LBsb*. Another aspect denoting a later period is the manner in which this recension refers to geographic designations. Earlier readings favor Greek toponyms, but as time went on and Arabic nomenclature became more common, it became necessary to gloss certain terms. Hence, beginning in tenth-century manuscripts, “Antinoë” is often qualified as “Antinoë, that is, Ansina” (see Syriac text ¶¶γ, 71, 79; and Syr. Monastery 30D). Yet, by the time MS *FamC* emerged, “Ansina” altogether replaced “Antinoë.”

The oldest identifiable manuscript for this recension is dated AD 1363 (AM 1079). In 1957, Fr. Mīṣā’īl Baḥr published a five-page summary of that manuscript in his study of the *Life* of John the Little.⁸⁵ Regrettably, he did not clearly identify the manuscript, though it unambiguously reflects Rec. WN2 Ar1, save for a single discrepancy: the placement of ¶β. Still, it is not clear if this is due to an oddity in the manuscript or, more likely, if it was a

mistake introduced by Fr. Mīṣā'īl; ¶γ and all other pericopes cited by him adhere to that recension's peculiar structure.

When *Rec. WN2* emerged and how it came to displace the earlier *Rec. WN1* are not altogether clear. Perhaps this resulted from the reintroduction of the *Life* to the libraries of Wadi al-Natrun after the various devastations of the first half of the fourteenth century. At two junctures (without parallel in any other family or earlier manuscript), this recension notes the public recitation of *LBsb* during the saint's annual commemoration (¶¶1 and ι). Most likely, this was a mid-fourteenth-century phenomenon. The monastery was restored at that juncture, and the traditions surrounding the incorruptibility of Saint Bishoi's body gained popularity and—we may presume—attracted a greater number of pilgrims at that point. The incorruptibility tradition found its way into the Ethiopic *Synaxarium* ca. AD 1400, though, significantly, it is lacking in the Coptic Arabic *Synaxarium*, which achieved its normative wording and structure by 1300. As noted in the above discussion of the translation of the saint's relics, the discovery of the saint's incorruptibility is associated with Benjamin II's patriarchal visit to the monastery in 1330.

A slightly expanded version of *WN2 Ar1* also emerged, *Rec. WN2 Ar2*, which introduced a new account (¶v) in which the saint unknowingly carried his Lord (see the appendix). This incredibly popular tradition serves as the inspiration for much of the saint's modern iconography in the Coptic tradition,⁸⁶ though it is unattested in any of the recensions or manuscripts surveyed here. Nonetheless, this pericope is attested in some of the later manuscripts read by the late Fr. Ṣamū'īl al-Suryānī (the later Bishop Ṣamū'īl of Shibīn al-Qanāṭir), a manuscript published by Fr. Ibrahīm from the monastery of al-Anbā Bishūy,⁸⁷ and yet another which the late Fr. Bishūy Kāmil of Sporting, Alexandria, used as the basis for his booklet on *LBsb*.⁸⁸ Regrettably, none of these manuscripts is clearly identified. Notably, however, although habitually overlooked, the incorruptibility tradition is foundational to the newly introduced ¶v—*Rec. WN2 Ar2*. A more thorough discussion of the manuscripts and partial editions for *Rec. WN2* is provided in the introduction to the English translation of the Arabic text.

Finally, a note on the public performance or recitation of *LBsb*.⁸⁹ While all the available Arabic manuscripts reference this practice (¶¶1 and ι), BnF Ar. 4796 goes on to append a lengthy prayer at the conclusion of the text for the blessing of the congregation. A manuscript from the Church of Our Lady Mary in the village of Kafr al-Sa'idi, read by B. Pirone (identified as *Codex S* in his study), has a similar, though shorter, ending.⁹⁰ Here, the recitation and hearing of hagiography is transformed into liturgy.

A Note on Transliterations

Greek transliterations in this volume adhere to the guidelines in the *SBL Handbook of Style*, which have been supplemented with acute and grave accents as well as umlauts to better reflect the Greek original. Syriac transliterations follow the guidelines of *Hugoye: Journal for Syriac Studies*. Transliterations from Ethiopic adhere to Thomas Lambdin's *Introduction to Classical Ethiopic (Ge'ez)*; the Arabic conforms to the guidelines of the *International Journal of Middle East Studies*.

Notes

- 1 William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); H.G. Evelyn-White, ed. Walter Hauser, *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'N Natrun*, 2 vols. (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1926–32; repr. Arno Press, 1973).
- 2 Today, most of the laity would omit the Monastery of John the Little and substitute that of the Syrians. Nonetheless, until its abandonment in the fourteenth century, the Monastery of John the Little was undoubtedly second only to the Monastery of St. Macarius in size and number of monks. The order of the monasteries is not neutral, but something of a hierarchy. The same order is maintained in liturgical prayers, including the Diptych/Communion of Saints, and the hymn *pinisbti*.
- 3 The traditional accusation against the Aphthartodocetists, or Phantasiasts, led by Julian of Halicarnassus (d. after 527), is that they taught that the body of Jesus was like that of the pre-Fall rather than the post-Fall Adam. See Yonatan Moss, *Incorruptible Bodies: Christology, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016); Pauline Allen and C.T.R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 2:315–16.
- 4 As discussed below, however, the identification of the Syrian visitor as Ephrem is late.
- 5 Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 2:151–53, 154–60.
- 6 Earlier in his career, Bishoi had lived with John the Little after Abba Amoi's death (§8). On being joined at death, see §¶¶, 79; Claudia Rapp, *Brother-making in Late Antiquity and Byzantium: Monks, Laymen, and Christian Ritual* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 152–57. The *LBsb* provides incompatible details about how long Bishoi resided at Scetis and in Middle Egypt; cf. §¶¶78A and 78B.
- 7 Arabic written in the Syriac script.
- 8 On the permeable divide between hagiography and biography, see Patricia Cox, *Biography in Late Antiquity: A Quest for the Holy Man* (Berkeley:

- University of California Press, 1983); Stephanos Efthymiadis, ed., *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, 2 vols. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011–14); Arietta Papaconstantinou, “Hagiography in Coptic,” in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Byzantine Hagiography*, ed. Stephanos Efthymiadis, 1:323–43; Tomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau, eds., *Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- 9 See the references in Maged S.A. Mikhail, “A Lost Chapter in the History of Wadi al-Natrun (Scetis): The Coptic *Lives* and Monastery of Abba John Khame,” *Le Muséon* 127, no. 1–2 (2014): 171–74.
 - 10 See the discussions in W.E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), 543b–544b. Interestingly, it is not understood in light of *shōi*, “what is high,” “above,” “elevated” (Crum 550a).
 - 11 See MS Cambridge University Add. 2016.
 - 12 E.g., Édouard René Hambye, “Pishay, anachorète: une commémoration peu connue du calendrier de l’Eglise syrienne d’Antioche,” *L’Orient syrien* 7 (1962): 255–59.
 - 13 See *LBsb* ¶9; Long Recension of *Life of Paul of Tamma* ¶¶84–93, esp., 128; Alin Suciū, “Sitting in the Cell: The Literary Development of an Ascetic Praxis in Paul of Tamma’s Writings. With an Edition of Some Hitherto Unknown Fragments of *De Cella*,” *Journal of Theological Studies* n.s. 68, no. 1 (2017): 146. For contrary views that read Bishoi of Jeremiah and Bishoi of Scetis as two distinct figures, see Suciū, n. 18.
 - 14 The description is in MS Syrian Monastery (Syr.) 30, fol. 24v; Sebastian P. Brock and L. van Rompay, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts and Fragments in the Library of Deir al-Surian, Wadi al-Natrun (Egypt)* (Louvain: Peeters, 2014), 223.
 - 15 René-Georges Coquin, “Pshoi of Tud,” *CE* 6:2030; René-Georges Coquin and Maurice Martin, “Dayr Anba Abshay,” *CE* 2:718b–719a.
 - 16 Monica Blanchard, “Beh Isho’ Kamulaya’s Syriac Discourses on the Monastic Way of Life: Edition, English Translation, and Introduction” (PhD diss., Catholic University of America, 2001), 4–5 and n. 47; Johannes Sanders, “Introduction to the Life of Mar Bishoi (Siglum MB),” *The Harp* 8–9 (1995–96): 277–88.
 - 17 Cf. *Synaxarium*, 7 Bābah/7 Teqemt/18 October with *LBsb* ¶79.
 - 18 *Life of Paul of Tamma* (Ar. Long Rec.), ¶126; also see Suciū, “Sitting in the Cell,” 142–48.
 - 19 *Life of Paul of Tamma* (Ar. Long Rec.), ¶127.
 - 20 The second reference to Bishoi in the *Life of Paul* (Ar. Long Rec.), ¶127, seems to render the earlier reference in ¶¶84–93 a later interpolation. Bishoi is not attested in the Short Recension of this *Life*.

- 21 Ar. *minyā* may be also a “garden” or “valley.”
- 22 Although that would require reading the *ṣīn* as a *ṣād*; hence, Madīnat al-Ṣaqr, “Hawk City,” Hierakonopolis (Nekhen), modern al-Kawm al-Aḥmar in the Aswan governorate.
- 23 Most modern publications in Egypt place the location near Dayr al-Barsha, but that is highly unlikely given the details of the account.
- 24 The proper name is not consistent across any of the recensions. Nonetheless, he was an abbot, not a bishop, as some literature claims. In the Coptic Church, combining the roles of bishop and abbot became normative in the 1970s, not before.
- 25 *Life of Paul* (Ar. Long Rec.) ¶60. It is uncertain if the abbot knew of Paul’s passing; he is depicted as a disciple to both saints in ¶¶.
- 26 Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 2:112, nn. 6–7; Suciū, “Sitting in the Cell,” 147–48.
- 27 Maurice Martin, S.J., “Dayr Harmina,” *CE* 2:808. The *Life of Abba Harmina*, based on BnF. Ar. 4748, has been published by Makarī of the Monastery of Saint Macarius, *Sīrat al-qiddīs al-‘aẓīm al-Anbā Hirmīnā al-sā’ih* (Cairo: Dār Yūsuf Kamāl lil-ṭiba‘ā, n.d. [after 2012]). That text does not mention Bishoi or Paul.
- 28 Maged S.A. Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Religion, Identity, and Politics after the Arab Conquest* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 207–10, 226–28, ch. 6.
- 29 *Life of John the Little* (Mikhail and Vivian, trans.), 296–99.
- 30 Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, 123–27.
- 31 B.T.A. Evetts, ed. and trans., *History of the Patriarchs*, PO 10.5: 652–53.
- 32 De Lacy O’Leary, *The Saints of Egypt* (London: SPCK, 1937; Amsterdam: Philo Press, 1974), 107. Often cited as AD 841; e.g., Zakariyā al-Baramūsī, *al-Qiddīs al-‘aẓīm al-Anbā Bishūy: tāriḫ dayrabu wā atbārub bi-Anṣinā ma‘a sīratub ḥasab al-naṣṣayn al-yūnāni wā al-‘arabī* (Cairo: Markaz al-Diltā lil-ṭiba‘ah, 2002), 89, though without reference. Mattā al-Miskīn, *al-Rabbanah al-qibṭiyah fī ‘asr al-qiddīs Anbā Maqqār*, 3rd expanded ed. (Wadi al-Natrun: Maṭba‘at Dayr al-Qiddīs al-Anbā Maqqār, 1995), 234–35, simply states that the translation was during the patriarchate of Yusāb. There is a short reference in H. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, trans., *Synaxarium, das ist Heiligen-Kalender der coptischen Christen* (Gotha: F.A. Perthes, 1879), Kiyahk 5. Here, it simply states that Bishoi’s relics came from Upper Egypt. The short entry is not in the manuscripts surveyed by René Basset in his edition of the *Synaxarium*. Also see Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 2:302, 395–96, appendix 5, fol. 113a.

- 33 There is an extended account of this translation in Fr. Zakariyā's *al-Qiddīs al-'aẓīm al-Anbā Bishūy* (91–93), but it is unclear which manuscript he is referencing.
- 34 The remains of both saints are accounted for in the 1088 census of relics at Wādī al-Natrun taken by Mawhub ibn Mansur. HP II.3: fol. 179r, Ar. p. 227/Eng. p. 359; Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 2:365.
- 35 Always important, the prestige and authority of the Monastery of St. Macarius, even in matters pertaining to the whole Coptic confession in the Middle Ages, was particularly striking from roughly the ninth to the twelfth centuries. See Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, 204–13; *Synaxarium*, 27 Baramhāt (Basset, 260). Twenty-nine Coptic patriarchs came from this monastery, and most patriarchs from the ninth to the fourteenth century were buried at it.
- 36 The restoration of the Monastery of St. Bishoi from his personal funds is one of the few things mentioned about this patriarch in the *History of the Patriarchs*: A. Khater and O.H.E. Khs-Burmester, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, 3.3 (Cairo: Publications de la Société d'Archéologie Copte, 1970), 233. This is most likely the context for the brief note in the Ethiopic *Synaxarium*: I. Guidi, *Le synaxaire éthiopien: les mois de sané, hamlé et nabasé*, PO 7.3 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1907), s.v. Hamle 13, pp. 308–309. The visit is summarized in Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 2:395–96, based on BnF Arabe 100, fols. 46r–69r; see especially 54v–56r.
- 37 BnF Ar. 100, fols. 46r–69r, “Book of the Consecration of the Mayrūn,” at fol. 56r.
- 38 Ethiopic *Synaxarium*, Hamle 8 (Guidi, PO 7.3:259); see the appendix, 323–27, below.
- 39 Notably, it is lacking in the editions by Makarī al-Bahnasawī, Ṣamū'īl al-Suryānī, B. Kāmil, M. Baḥr, Y. Ḥabīb, and in *Firdaws al-abā'*; all are discussed at length below.
- 40 Zakariyā al-Baramūsī, *al-Qiddīs al-'aẓīm al-Anbā Bishūy*, 31 n. 40. This Arabic text is a translation of the edition by Papadopoulos and Lizardos; see n. 49, below.
- 41 Paul Bedjan, *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum*, vol. 3 (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1892), 583. The omission, which was assumed to be in BnF Syr. 236, was later supplied by V. Scheil based on a private manuscript: “Restitution de deux textes dans le récit syriaque de la vie de Mar Bischoi (ed. Bedjan),” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 15 (1900), 104–106.
- 42 Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Eileen Gardiner, “Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven,” in *Handbook of Medieval Culture*, vol. 1, ed. Albrecht Classen (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 653–73. The Eastern

- reaction to the rise of this doctrine is discussed in Dragos Mirsanu, “Dawning Awareness of the Theology of Purgatory in the East: A Review of the Thirteenth Century,” *Studii Teologice* 4 (2008): 179–93.
- 43 John Anthony McGuckin, *Westminster Handbook to Patristic Theology* (Louisville, KY and London: John Knox Press, 2004), 286–87.
- 44 Isabel Moreira, *Heaven’s Purge: Purgatory in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Nicholas Constatas, “‘To Sleep, Perchance to Dream’: The Middle State of Souls in Patristic and Byzantine Literature,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 91–124; Constatas, “An Apology for the Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity: Eustratius Presbyter of Constantinople,” *On the State of Souls after Death* (CPG 7522),” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 10 (2002): 267–85.
- 45 E.g., *Life of Macarius*, ¶6 (Vivian, esp. 115–18); *Life of Paul of Tamma* (Ar. Long Rec.) ¶¶85–92; (Pseudo-) John III, *Les “Questions de Théodore”: Texte sabidique, recensions arabes et éthiopienne*, ed. and trans. A. Van Lantschoot (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1957), Third Question; Agostino Soldati, “Some Remarks about Coptic Colophons and Their Relationship with Manuscripts: Typology, Function, and Structure,” *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Bulletin* 4, no. 1 (2018): 115–19; Fr. Shenouda [Imīl] Mahir Ishaq, *al-Khalāṣ al-ladhī nuntaẓiruh*, vol. 2, *Ḥālat arwāḥ al-rāqīdīn*, 3rd printing (Cairo: al-Anbā Rūways al-Ufset, 2002), 66–70, 82–112.
- 46 See nn. 42 and 44, above. For the synodal decree, see Secretarial Committee, *al-Qararāt al-majma‘iyah fī ‘abd ṣāḥib al-qadāsah al-Bābā Shīnūdah al-thālith*, 3rd printing (N.p.: al-Markaz al-Thaqāfī al-Qibṭī al-Urthūdhukṣī, 2011).
- 47 He is part of Timothy of Gargar’s long metric *maymra* on Egyptian monastics: MS Mingana Syr. 83, 55v–105v; MS Deir al-Za‘farān, cod. pap. 71 (Dolabany).
- 48 See n. 16, above. Blanchard, “Beh Isho‘ Kamulaya’s Syriac Discourses,” appendix 1, contains a translation of the Syriac *LBsb* according to the Bedjan edition. Although Beh Isho‘ and his *Discourses* likely date to the late eighth century, his *Life*, which is a reworking of the *LBsb*, is later and survives in a manuscript dated 1900. As Blanchard notes, similarities between the two names—Bishoi and Beh Isho‘—may have led to confusion. St. Bishoi is not explicitly referenced by Beh Isho‘. The possible parallel Blanchard notes between the *Discourse* of Beh Isho‘ and the Syriac *LBsb* proper (22–23; cf. 28) speaks to monastic themes in general, but does not demonstrate Beh Isho‘’s acquaintance with the *LBsb*.
- 49 E.g., BnF Grec 1093 and the Greek *Synaxarion*. Leonidas Papadopoulos and Georgia Lizardos translated the *Life* based on the Greek *Synaxarion: Saint Pāisios the Great by Saint John the Dwarf of Egypt* (Jordanville, NY:

Holy Trinity Monastery, 1998). This English translation was rendered into Arabic by Fr. Zakariyā al-Baramūsī (*al-Qiddīs al-‘aẓīm al-Anbā Bishūy*). His study comments only on the Arabic *LBsh*, but it does not have the text for that recension.

- 50 See the Pinakes database: <http://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr/>; search, BHG 1402–1403, *Vita S. Paisii*.
- 51 The text may be earlier, but its use of *eros* and other terms of affection (see the introduction to chapter one) is not typical of an earlier era, though this correlates well with the seventh-century linguistic shift and emphasis discussed by Claudia Rapp in *Brother-making*, ch. 4.A.
- 52 E.g., referencing the Nile as the “sea.” Such references are common in Egypt and persist until today. Moreover, it should be noted that Paul is never identified as “of Tamma” in the Greek text, yet the identification can hardly be erroneous. Associating Bishoi and Paul demonstrates knowledge of the Egyptian hagiographic tradition. “Tamma” would have been unidentifiable to a reader outside of Egypt, and the designation would be somewhat useless given that Paul of Tamma is completely unknown to the Greek tradition.
- 53 Compare ¶41 in *Rec. Gr1* with the others. Also, in ¶64 “a city” in *Rec. Gr1* is “Fustat” in the other recensions. In *Rec. Gr1* ¶79, the only geographic location is “Pisidia” (in modern Turkey), while in the other recensions Antinoë/Ansina occurs in three passages in that same paragraph.
- 54 In case of the tree, a specific location seems to be implied—a location that would have been known to those who visited or lived at Wadi al-Natrun.
- 55 Isidore is said to have “wanted to enrich his homeland” (¶79).
- 56 The city appears in one of the accounts in the *Life of Maximus and Domitius*: Tim Vivian, “The Bohairic *Life of Maximus and Domitius*,” *Coptic Church Review* 26, no. 2–3 (2005): 44. Significantly, this *Life* is frequently attributed to Bishoi of Scetis in error. As discussed above, it is the work of a Bishoi (Paṣios) of Constantinople.
- 57 Evelyn-White cites what appears to be a passing Greek reference to Bishoi (*Monasteries*, 2:112). Paul was unknown to the Greek tradition.
- 58 Interestingly, Bishoi/Paṣios is glossed at several websites as a “Greek,” though his name is very much Coptic and there is no evidence that he read, spoke, or wrote anything in Greek.
- 59 See nn. 14 and 56, above.
- 60 E.g., *History of the Patriarchs*, PO I.2:495, 498–501; 8 Tūba, the attempt to steal the head of Saint Mark (one modern edition places the account on 30 Bābah); 28 Hatūr, Martyrdom of Serapion (Sarabamūn) of Nikiou; 12 Baramhāt, Martyrdom of Bishop Macrobius; 22 Abīb, Martyrdom of Macarius son of Basilides. Cf. 15 Tūt, Translation of the Relics of Saint

Stephen the Archdeacon; 10 Kiyahk, Transferring the Body of Patriarch Severus of Antioch.

- 61 An additional development is the elevated misogynistic tone of ¶65 in the Semitic recensions; cf. Maged S.A. Mikhail, *The Legacy of Demetrius of Alexandria: The Form and Function of Hagiography in Late Antique and Islamic Egypt* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 66–69. This incident was excised and circulated independently of the *Life*: Ms Berlin, Königliche Bibliothek, Syr. 201 (Sachau 165), fols. 12v–16v. Other passages that circulated independently in Syriac include BnF Syr. 234, fols. 1–9; Damascus Patriarchate 12/17, fols. 1–2.
- 62 Cf. ¶78B. Trying to account for evidence by alluding to accounts from visitors, or pilgrims, is not uncommon in this literature; e.g., *Life of John the Little*, ¶82; *Life of John Khame*, passage recovered in Mikhail, “A Lost Chapter,” 181, 185.
- 63 Cf. *LBsb* ¶¶ 8, 53A, γ with *Life of John the Little*, 25, 55, 76–77. *FamA* does not note the flight from Scetis as do *FamB* and *FamC*.
- 64 Itself echoing passages in the Gnostic *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Second Treatise of Seth*. Also see Mahmoud M. Ayoub, “Toward an Islamic Christology II: The Death of Jesus, Reality or Delusion (A Study of the Death of Jesus in Tafsiṛ Literature),” *Muslim World* 70 (1980): 91–121.
- 65 See Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, chs. 4–5; Sidney H. Griffith, *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Samir Khalil Samir and Jorgen Nielsen, eds., *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750–1258)* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).
- 66 The monastery in Ansina is mentioned in B.T.A. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895; repr. Gorgias Press, 2001), 244 (fol. 87r). If it were the monastery in Ansina, the author would have had firsthand knowledge of the traditions he recorded; rather, he states that he is depending on the accounts of pilgrims.
- 67 The monastery in al-Fayyum is mentioned by al-Nabulsi: B. Moritz, ed., [*Tārīkh al-Fayyūm wā bilādub*] *Description du Fayoum au VII^{me} siècle de l’Hégire par Abou ‘Osmân il Naboulsi iṭl Şafadi* (Cairo: National Press/al-Maṭba‘ah al-Ahliya, 1899), 161; M. Georges Salmon, “Répertoire géographique de la province du Fayoum, d’après le Kitāb Tārīkh al-Fayyoām d’an-Nāboulṣī,” *Bulletin de l’Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale* (1901): 66.
- 68 René-Georges Coquin, “Tutun,” *CE* 7:2283a–b.
- 69 Within the context of ¶κ, “this holy place” is clearly a reference to the Monastery of St. Bishoi at Wadi al-Natrun.

- 70 E.g., Coptic versions of the *Life of Macarius*, *Life of John the Little*, *Life of Maximus and Domitius*. See also Mikhail, “A Lost Chapter,” 179–85; Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 1:122, 2:97–98.
- 71 Gérard Colin, ed. and trans., *La version éthiopienne de l’histoire de Bsoy: Édition critique et traduction française*, PO 49.3 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002).
- 72 Ute Pletruschka, “Some Observations about the Transmission of Popular Philosophy in Egyptian Monasteries after the Islamic Conquest,” in *Ideas in Motion in Baghdad and Beyond: Philosophical and Theological Exchanges between Christians and Muslims in the Third/Ninth and Fourth/Tenth Centuries*, ed. Damien Janos (Leiden: Brill, 2016), ch. 3; Gawdat Gabra, “Perspectives on the Monastery of St. Antony: Medieval and Later Inhabitants and Visitors,” in *Monastic Visions: Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), ch. 10, esp. 176; Otto F.A. Meinardus, “Aethiopica in Aegypto,” *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 3, no. 1 (1965): 23–35.
- 73 There is a possibility that *Rec. SA δ* may have been a Syriac text. Hopefully, once MS Syrian Monastery 30.D is accessible, this aspect will be clarified. As is, the opening sentences of *WN1 Syr1*, edited in the *Catalogue* by Brock and Van Rompay, and *SA Syr1* are identical save for one word, but it is impossible to draw any conclusions based on that alone, especially since the beginning of hagiographic lives is often quite formulaic.
- 74 The first folio is published in Brock and Van Rompay’s *Catalogue*. Upon request, the authorities at the Syrian Monastery, H.G. Bishop Metta’us and the manuscript librarian, permitted Profs. Stephen Davis, Mark Swanson, and Ramez Mikhail to take a picture of the last folio for use on this project. We are thankful to all of them.
- 75 Gabra, “Perspectives,” 175–76.
- 76 Brock and Van Rompay, *Catalogue*, 225. The Garshuni manuscript, discussed below, also identifies Ephrem in a marginal note.
- 77 All recensions of the *Life of Ephrem (LEph)* bring him to Egypt (¶¶21–24), but only one (attested in two manuscripts written at Wadi al-Natrun, the earliest dating to AD 1100) records him meeting Bishoi: see Joseph P. Amar, ed. and trans., *The Syriac “Vita” Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian*, 2 vols., CSCO 629 and 630, Scr. Syr. 242 and 243 (Louvain: Peeters, 2011); on manuscripts, see CSCO 629: vi–viii, xv; on the meeting, chs. 22.B, 24.A; Amar, “Byzantine Ascetic Monachism and Greek Bias in the Vita Tradition of Ephrem the Syrian,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 58 (1992): 143–48. Even in that recension (Vat. Syr. 117), however, the narrative is disjointed. All recensions of *LEph* maintain that a bilingual disciple functioned as Ephrem’s translator in Egypt (chs. 21.A, 22.A); yet all recensions of *LBsb* emphasize that the saints could not initially

communicate since neither spoke the other's language, rendering their miraculous communication a re-enactment of Acts 2:7–11. Moreover, *LBsb*(¶52) maintains that Ephrem returned home after spending a week with Bishoi; yet *LEph* (ch. 24.A) states that he remained another eight years in Egypt. The account of the visit was reinforced by the tradition that the relics of Ephrem were translated to the Monastery of Bishoi in the thirteenth century (Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 2:114, 143 and n. 2). A late version of *LEph* (or so it is described) also mentions the “Tree of Ephrem” at the Syrian Monastery. The account maintains that Ephrem left his walking stick outside Bishoi's cell, but when he came out, it had grown into a large tree.

- 78 This manuscript is used as the base text for the upcoming textual edition of the Syriac *LBsb*. On the manuscript, see W. Wright, *Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts of the British Museum*, vol. 3 (London: Longmans/British Museum, 1872).
- 79 See <https://hmmloientalia.wordpress.com/page/12/?iframe=true&preview=true%2F> for a summary of this long manuscript. “AG” *Anno Graecorum* (“Year of the Greeks”), or *Seleucid Era*, or *Era of Alexander*, was a calendar inaugurated by the Seleucids. It was maintained by Syriac-speaking Christians long after (AG 1 = 1 October 312 BC).
- 80 There are differences among them; for example, the Garshuni text forwards a unique tradition that identifies Bishoi's parents as Iraqis (fol. 66r–a), which would make it likely that his parents were Syriac-speaking Christians.
- 81 This is presumed at the moment. The abridged nature of this manuscript, which lacks ¶79 altogether, makes it difficult to definitively classify it. What is certain is that it was not derived from *SA Syr2*, which lacks several of the paragraphs attested in that recension.
- 82 Only one sentence from this lengthy paragraph is retained in this recension.
- 83 Only the opening laudatory sentence of ¶48 is retained, which the scribe likely read as the conclusion of ¶47, rather than the beginning of ¶48. The remainder of that pericope is omitted.
- 84 Evelyn-White, *Monasteries*, 1:122.
- 85 [Al-Qummūš/Hegumen] Mišāʿil Baḥr, *Tārīkh al-qiddīs al-Anbā Yūhannis al-qašīr wā mantiqat Anṣinā* (n.p.: n.p., 1957), 134–39.
- 86 Otto F.A. Meinardus, “St. Bishoi: A Coptic Christophorus,” *Orientalia Suecana* 48 (1999): 67–73.
- 87 I have not been able to find this publication; the assertion that it reflects *WN2 Ar2* is based on the notes about this publication in Fr. Zakariyā's study.

- 88 In addition to summarizing the manuscripts at their disposal, Fathers Miṣāʾil and, especially, Bishūy directly quote sizable portions of the manuscripts they utilized. The adherence of their manuscripts to *Rec. WN2* is beyond doubt.
- 89 Introduction to the *Life of John the Little* (Mikhail and Vivian, trans.), 50–52.
- 90 Bartolomeo Pirone, ed., “Anbā Bishoy,” *SOCC* 45 (2012): 11–12.