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# THE NAG HAMMADI LIBRARY AND THE MONKS A PAPYROLOGIST'S POINT OF VIEW

The discovery of the monastic dossier in the covers of the codices found in Nag Hammadi stimulated the discussion on the relations between the monastic communities and the readers of the unorthodox treaties (most of them, either gnostic or hermetic do not seem to agree with the mid-4th century Church orthodoxy). Therefore I am not the first author to ask whether the monks would copy, purchase and read the writings forming the Nag Hammadi library. Instead I am the first papyrologist (if we do not consider the editors of *P. Nag Hammadi*) who takes part in this discussion. I think that my papyrological background allows me to have a more convenient (and in any case, different) starting point than the one falling to patrologists and historians of philosophy

I am going to start with some basic information about the papyri found within the covers. All this must be well remembered when I pass on to formulating the answer to the question raised at the beginning of the article.

The collection consists of 158 Greek texts (primarily fiscal and economic documents and private letters) and 19 Coptic (two literary excerpts and all the rest are letters).[1] From a paleographic point of view the whole of the collection can be dated between the end of the 3rd century and the second half of the 4th century. The earliest text, official account (G 22) dated not on the paleographic basis, goes back to the years 298-323 and the latest, a guarantee agreement, goes back to the year 348 (G 65). The topographical data furnished by the documents found in the codex covers are rare: G 1 mentions oil production in

[1] *Nag Hammadi Codices. Greek and Coptic papyri from the cartonnage of the covers*, ed. by J.W.B. BARNS, G.M. BROWNE & J.C. SHELTON, Leiden 1981.

Diospolis 'near Chenoboskion' (to differentiate it from other Diospolis 'near Thebes', also called *Parva*). Chenoboskion (or Chenoboskia) is also mentioned in G 31 and G 153, in G 64 one comes across a village, Techty, of Diospolis nome (we do not know which one) and a clerk from Tentyra (a town situated 60km from Diospolis Parva). The fiscal accounts G 22 surely comes from an office of high rank, it must have been written in the Thebaid governor office which was situated in the north, in faraway Antinoopolis. The overwhelming majority of the texts does not include any data which would make it possible to identify the place they originate from. One cannot take it for granted that all papyri come from the same region, though it is probable.

G 65 provides *terminus post quem* for the production of the cover of the codex VI,[2] other covers could have appeared earlier or later but the relative homogeneity of the covers' type makes one suppose that the differences in the dates should not be significant. It is very difficult to establish when the treaties were translated and when our copies were made. Literary hand is hard to date it precisely because of its nature and Coptic literary writing is particularly resistant to any endeavours of dating it. Nothing can be said except that the manuscripts were written between the end of the 3rd century and the end of the 4th century (or the very beginning of the 5th century).

We do not know whether the collection of the codices is a 'library' collected on purpose from the start by a private person or by a religious sect or whether (what is more probable) it comprises smaller collections which only later on were put together. We know nothing about an owner or the owners, about the reasons and the circumstances of concealment. The space for hypotheses, also for those of little likelihood, is huge.

Already at the primary stages of the research it was suggested that the codices could have belonged to one of the Pachomian monasteries. Nag Hammadi is situated in the area of Pachomian foundations (see the map), a few kilometres from the mother monastery in Pabau, Tabennesi (the oldest monastery) and the monastery in Chenoboskion. The merit of the 'Pachomian connexion' hypothesis is that with the use of it one can easily explain why the texts were hidden. In the 39th *Paschal Letter* of 367 Athanasius, who claimed that people read *apocrypha* out of simplicity and ignorance, included a list of Biblical books and books recommended by tradition, condemning heretics and their works

[2] We do not know how many years passed between the day on which our documents were written and moment they were used in the production of a cover. This comment is important as the specialists dealing with the treaties claim sometimes that the codices (all of them) were created as early as the following year. There is no rule which would make it possible to establish how many years had to pass before a contract or a guarantee document could have been thrown away. Comparing the dates of the documents written on *verso* and *recto* in cases when they do not have anything in common shows that the time span varies (even below one hundred years). Therefore, there is no obstacle to date the creation not only of the covers but also of the texts at the beginning of the 5th century.

which had been falsely assigned ancient origin. Such works should not be read.[3] The *Letter* does not suggest *eo ipso* that Athanasius meant such writings as our treaties but regardless of the intentions of the patriarch his letter must have made the abbots control much more carefully everything included in the collection which was available to the monks. If the treaties from Nag Hammadi had reached the monastery library of the Pachomians (and this existed for sure) in the way unknown to us, after reading the Athanasius's *Letter* appropriate means would have been taken in order to remove them from there.

When regarding 'Pachomian connexion' as probable one has to explain what led to the situation in which the monks, whose orthodoxy was guaranteed by Atanasius himself, could possess and read the texts of such unorthodox character. There was a scholar, T. Säve-Söderbergh, who considered the collection of the codices as the *dossier* compiled by the monks in order to fight false beliefs.[4] His hypothesis was soon rejected as completely contradictory to what we know about the mentality of ancient (not only Christian) polemicists who used to tear their enemies' reputation to shreds but did not bother to understand their doctrine in detail. The advocates of 'Pachomian connexion' emphasised more the fact that dogmatic sensibility of the monastic circles had been changing in the time; what was regarded to be an obvious heresy in the 60s of the 4th century, could have been viewed without suspicion thirty years earlier.

The Pachomian hypothesis gained unexpectedly strong support in the information which was printed in 1975 and seemed to show that the codices (or at least their covers) had been produced in one of the Pachomian monasteries. In the introductory report on the papyri included within the covers J.W.B. Barns, a well known and respected Coptologist of older generation, claimed that among the Greek and Coptic papyri there were also monastic letters and one of them seemed to have been addressed to Pachomius himself.

The letter (C6), which is so poorly preserved that only the first seven lines can be read and roughly translated, includes the following text: 'To my dearest father, Pahome, Papnoute salutation to be with Lord. Above all, I greet you today, I greet my brother E[...], I am unworthy my dearest Father, [...] I greet you [...] Father Makari(os).' *Verso* included an address out of which only single letters were preserved:

]. ⲁⲡⲣ[ . ]. ⲏⲧ[ . . ] ⲉⲓⲱⲧ
]ⲧⲉ . [

Inspite of this, Barns proposed the following reconstruction of the address:

[3] S. Athanase, *Lettres festales et pastorales en copte*, ed. L.-TH. LEFORT, Louvain 1955 (in the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium series ????*).

[4] T. SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH, "Holy Scriptures or apologetic documentation? The Sitz im Leben of the Nag Hammadi Library", [in:] *Nag Hammadi Studies* VII, Leiden 1975, 9-17.

[ταας μ]ⲡⲁⲡⲣ[ο]ⲫⲏⲧ[ⲏⲥ] ⲛ̄ⲉⲓⲱⲧ
[ⲡⲁϩⲱⲙⲉ ϩⲓⲧⲙ ⲡⲁⲡⲛⲟⲩ]ⲧⲉ

In this form the address would mean: 'To be delivered to my Prophet and Father Pahome, from Papnoute.' A few monks named Papnoute are known to us from the Pachomian literary *dossier* but one of them seemed to be an appropriate candidate for the sender of the letter: the first general steward of the congregation. The restitution suggested by Barns is from the point of view of the present rules of papyrologist's work contrary to the commonly followed editorial regulations. It is a typical example of restitution *exempli gratia*, which can be neither rejected nor proved as it is based on imagination and not facts which could be examined. Barns died in 1974, before the texts were ready for the publication and thus the responsibility for preparing the final edition was taken by G.M. Browne and J.C. Shelton. Both of them are good specialists and careful editors; the introduction Shelton provided the publication with can serve as the example of a critical analysis of sensational source material. However, the harm that was done by Barns took a long time to be made up for. Surely because of the reverence towards the deceased, Shelton and Browne did not decide to totally remove his restitution from the publication but in the introduction signed by Shelton there was all necessary information to make a reader understand that it could not be accepted. Unfortunately, most scholars did not read the introduction or did not want to take its arguments into consideration. At the moment of the publication patrologists and historians of monasticism had been attacking or defending Barns for six years. It is extremely hard to remove from academic writings such an attractive, though false, view based on the category of sources which is not commonly read by people studying the Nag Hammadi treaties. Besides, the attention was not paid to this part of Shelton's argumentation in which he was trying to make a reader aware of the fact that the names Pachomius and Papnoute were commonly used and thus the names themselves could not serve as the basis for the identification.

Shelton also emphasised the fact that the remaining monastic letters could not have been produced in the Pachomian circle as they mentioned monks freely contacting with the world and dealing with various matters of economic character. Let us take the most interesting letter as an example: G 72, written by a woman and addressed to two monks: Sansos and Psas (or Psates).[5] It includes a request to purchase some chaff for donkeys; the woman also wanted to know what the price of the load was. All we know about the Pachomian congregation makes us reject definitely the thesis about the Pachomian origin of this kind of correspondence. Pachomian monks were completely isolated from any contacts with 'the world' and did not undertake such economic ac-

[5] Other monastic texts — see Table II.

tivities that are testified by the letters from the covers. It was a very narrow group within the authorities of the congregation that dealt with organising the production and trade (and this was done only for the monasteries' needs). Even if one supposes that *Pachomius' Lives* present an ideal model and not reality unavoidably more and more distant from the ideal, it is impossible to imagine the Pachomians acting on their own within the sphere of economy.

The fact that Shelton's arguments were not taken into consideration at first cannot be surprising as a matter of fact. Patrologists and historians of monasticism know nothing about economy including monastery economy and did not feel like getting engaged in economic reasoning.[6] Even such a distinguished specialist in the history of Pachomian congregation, Armand Veilleux, did not realise how crucial these pieces of information were for the evaluation of the origin of the texts from the covers.

The discussion was continued on a different level: the Pachomian *dossier* was searched for evidence for or against the Gnostic inclinations of the Pachomians. The results of this search were more than miserable but the participants of the debates did not mind that. They had an apparently reasonable excuse: the Pachomian *dossier* was created late, towards the end of the 4th and at the beginning of the 5th century and thus the knowledge about Pachomian past, transmitted by its authors/editors to next generations, was exposed to censorship. What was not appropriate for orthodoxy of the end of the 4th century was doomed to oblivion (and there was a lot to be removed as the Christian doctrine underwent significant changes throughout the 4th century).

Due to severe criticism most scholars rejected 'Pachomian connexion'. A papyrologist may experience *Schadenfreude*; had the Shelton's commentary been read more carefully, one would have nothing to discuss. Yet, there is 'monastic connexion' left and according to it codices belonged or at least were created (in a physical sense) in the circles of the semianachoretical monks who coexisted side by side with the cenobitical monasticism also on 'the Pachomian territories'. The thesis is much more difficult to fight but equally hard to accept with for a historian of monasticism. Its acceptance ruins the basis of the reconstruction of monastic spirituality created by various researchers in the last quarter of the century. If there were some serious reasons one should summon up enough courage and undertake such an iconoclastic task. Are there any such reasons, though?

I am convinced that 'monastic connexion' is a path of research with no source basis (at least today; we do not know what new sources are going to disclose). I am going to prove this statement with the help of another source material, not the one that has been so far used in the discussion. I am going

[6] The economy of Pachomian congregations and the series of false opinions about it are discussed in my article "Contribution à l'économie de la congrégation pachômienne", *JJP* 26 (1996) 167-210.

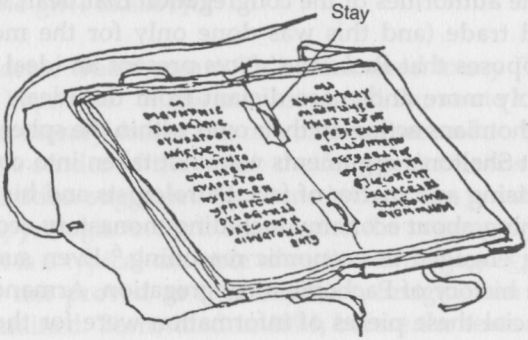


Fig. 1. Single quire sewing.
After *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, p. 407

to deal with the codices covers and not just the material used to stiffen the covers.

In their debates patrologists as historians of monasticism were not interested in the covers from a purely bibliological point of view. There are not many works on this subject. The first information about them can be found in the article of Jean Doresse[7] who was one of the first scholars who had the codices in hand. It was also him who made the first extremely precious photographic documentation, the more so that as it often is the case the preservation works have obliterated the original form of the discoveries and searching for the papyri in stuffing of the covers resulted in their irrevocable damage. There are a few articles written by Berthe van Regemorter who saw the codices (though not all of them) twice but for a short time, first time in 1957, thus at the very beginning of the research on the dossier.[8]

It was James M. Robinson[9] who started working on the covers systematically and with great enthusiasm. He supervised (or co-supervised) the work of the special committee within UNESCO which patronised the publication of the

[7] J. DORESSE, "Les reliures des manuscrits gnostiques coptes découvertes à Nag Hammadi", *Scriptorium* 13 (1961) 27-49.

[8] B. VAN REGEMORTER, "La reliure des manuscrits grecs", *Scriptorium* 8 (1954) 3-23; "Le codex relié depui son origine jusqu'au Haut Moyen-Age", *Le Moyen-Age* 61 (1955) 1-26; "La reliure des manuscrits gnostique découvertes à Nag Hammadi", *Scriptorium*, 14 (1960) 225-234.

[9] J.M. ROBINSON, "The construction of the Nag Hammadi Codices" in: M. KRAUSE (ed.) *Essays on the Nag Hammadi. Text in honour of Pahor Labib*, Leiden 1975, 170-190. Besides: *The Facsimile edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices. Introduction*, Leiden 1984, 71-86 and also in the same series, in the introductions to the codices with preserved covers.

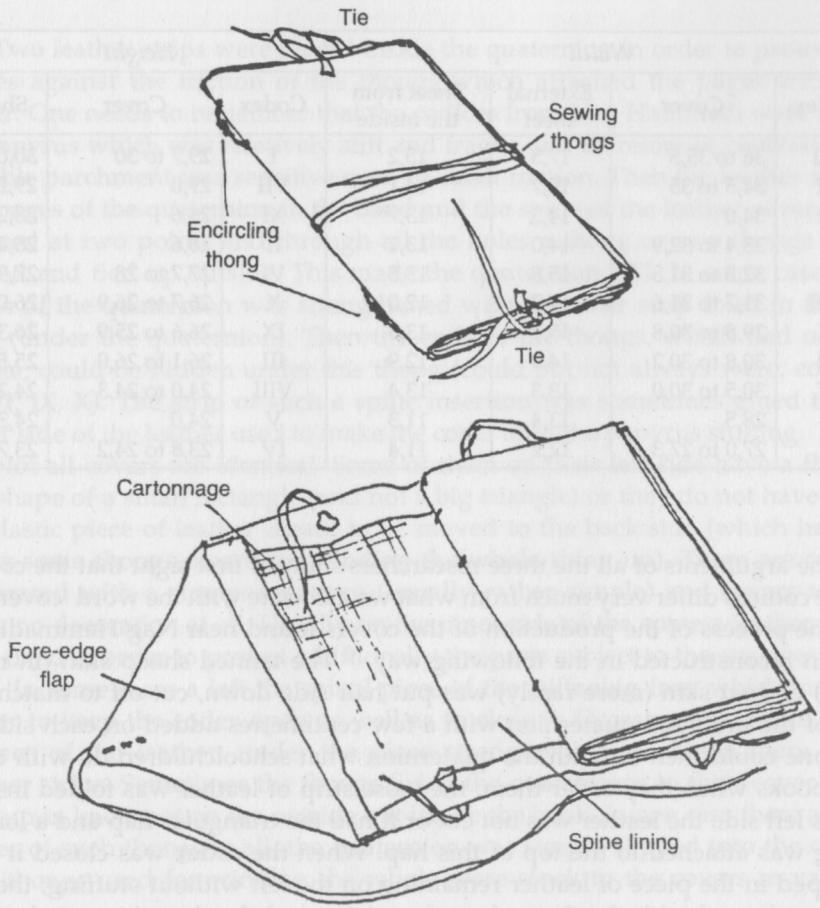


Fig. 2. Cover components, before and after opening.
After *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, p. 408

codices as well as prepared the publication of the facsimile of the whole discovery. He spent a lot of time in Egypt and as the man in charge of the works on the codices had a free access to them. Robinson was very critical in his evaluation of the arguments formulated by van Regemorter and claimed that she had committed significant mistakes in the description of the covers. It is very probable that she had but one cannot verify this opinion as the object of the discussion does not exist any longer.

TABLE I: THE SIZES OF THE CODICES AND THEIR PAGES

| *Width* | | | | *Height* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Codex | Cover | External sheet | Sheet from the inside | Codex | Cover | Sheet |
| VII | 36 to 35,5 | 17,5 | 15,2 | I | 29,7 to 30 | 30,0 |
| III | 34,5 to 35 | 15,7 | 14,1 | VII | 29,0 | 29,2 |
| XI | 34,0 | 14,3 | 13,7 | XI | 28,6 | 28,2 |
| I | 33,4 to 32,9 | 14,0 | 13,1 | II | 28,6 | 28,4 |
| II | 32,3 to 31,8 | 15,8 | 13,8 | VI | 27,7 to 28 | 27,9 |
| VIII | 31,7 to 31,6 | 14,7 | 12,0 | X | 26,7 to 26,9 | 26,0 |
| IX | 29,8 to 30,8 | 15,2 | 13,6 | IX | 26,6 to 25,9 | 26,3 |
| VI | 30,8 to 30,2 | 14,9 | 12,9 | III | 26,1 to 26,0 | 25,5 |
| IV | 30,5 to 30,0 | 13,3 | 13,4 | VIII | 24,0 to 24,3 | 24,2 |
| V | 28,5 | 13,4 | 11,3 | V | 24,0 | 24,3 |
| X | 27,0 to 27,3 | 12,2 | 11,4 | IV | 23,8 to 24,2 | 23,7 |

The arguments of all the three researchers show at first sight that the covers of the codices differ very much from what we associate with the word 'cover'.

The process of the production of the covers found near Nag Hammadi Robinson reconstructed in the following way.[10] The tanned sheep skin (in most cases) or goat skin (more rarely) was put hair side down, cut off to match the size of the unfolded quaternion with a few centimetres added on each side so that one could then do with the quaternion what schoolchildren do with their copybooks when they cover them: the loose strip of leather was folded inside. On its left side the leather was not cut or it had the triangular flap and a longer thong was attached to the top of this hap. When the codex was closed it was wrapped in the piece of leather remaining on the left without stuffing, the codex was bound with the thong for a few times and the thong was tied up so that the whole thing adhered firmly. If the skin used for the production of the covers was not large enough an appropriate piece was sewn up to it. The activities involved in this phase of the production are illustrated by the enclosed figures. The sizes of the covers were not standard (compare with Table 1).

The cover was stiffened by the layers of papyrus pasted together and placed on its inner side. Then the leather pieces left on the remaining three sides were folded and glued on to the surface of the stuffing. The inner side of the cover was usually covered with a clean sheet of papyrus which was stuck

[10] The covers from Nag Hammadi are not the only covers of the 4th century that were preserved. Robinson carefully compared other known cases. However, the information provided by them is much more modest. The set of the codices from Nag Hammadi has also this advantage that it includes the pieces of one class which can be compared.

to the stuffing and to the fringes of leather which had earlier been folded inside.

Two leather strips were placed inside the quaternion in order to protect the pages against the friction of the thongs which attached the pages with the cover. One needs to remember that the codices from Nag Hammadi were made of papyrus which was relatively stiff and fragile and therefore in contrast with flexible parchment was sensitive even to small friction. Then the leather strips, the pages of the quaternion in the band and the spine of the leather cover were pierced at two points and through all the holes a thong or two thongs were pulled and tied up outside. This made the quaternion still. In some cases the spine of the quaternion was strengthened with a leather strip fixed in the inside (under the quaternion). Then the ends of the thongs, which tied up the whole, could be hidden under this thong (could but not always were: codices II, VI, IX, X). The strip of such a spine insertion was sometimes glued to the inner side of the leather used to make the cover or to the papyrus stuffing.

Not all covers are identical. Some of them on their left side have a flap in the shape of a small rectangle (and not a big triangle) or they do not have such an elastic piece of leather meant to be moved to the back side (which had always some thongs meant for winding the whole thing up). There are covers decorated with a stamped pattern (usually rather simple) and covers which have no decoration at all. Usually on the inner side of the spine a leather piece was fixed in order to protect additionally the parts subject to the strongest friction. In some cases a left the spinal piece of the stiffening free, which made it easier to keep the codex open as well as to close it. Occasionally on the inner surface of the leather, under the piece strengthening the spine there were leather strips. Sometimes the thongs fixing the quaternions to their cover were tied up in knots not on the outside but inside the book. In one case there are no traces of such thongs at all, the quaternion was simply slipped into the cover. The thongs used for winding the whole were stuck to the covers in various ways.

On the basis of the differences between the covers Robinson distinguished three groups: codices IV, V, VIII, codices II, VI, IX, X and codices I, III, VII, XII.[11] It is rather unlikely, however, that they come from different periods. Probably the differences resulted from various traditions of particular workshops. One cannot rule out that craftsmen applied different methods. If we accept the opinion carefully and successfully defended by A. Khosreyev, who claimed that these had been separate smaller collections which only later were put together and formed the set found in Nag Hammadi, we will have reasons to suspect that the covers were made in different workshops.

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[11] J.M. ROBINSON, introduction to a volume of facsimile of papyri from the covers, p. XIII-XV. However, M. Krause divided the set in a different way: 1. Codices IV and VIII; 2a. VI, IX, X; 2b. II, VII, XI, maybe also I; 3. III and V. The suggestions of A. KHOSROYEV are still different.

It is bad luck that one is not able to correlate the types of the covers with separate 'hands' which transcribed the treatises. It is extremely difficult to distinguish particular 'hands' in general. I am not surprised by the extreme divergences in this matter as literary texts are usually written in such a way that it is very hard to identify a scribe. It is even more difficult because of the fact that the Coptic literary writing of the 4th century seems to be particularly standardised. It would be best to give up all the attempts to establish any facts concerning the scribe and scriptoria which the codices were to come from. One should be particularly careful and possess some healthy scepticism as far as some too detailed suggestions go.

It is difficult to ascertain whether in case of the codices from Nag Hammadi the pages that were being bound had earlier been written or a scribe was given a bound codex. The codicology of antiquity has not achieved any convincing results in this matter. It seems that both instances were the case. I suspect that the papyrus codices were bound after the text had been written on them because the stiffness of the papyrus pages fixed within the cover would make the copyist's work harder. On the other hand, the position of the spots left of the ink drops and leaving their traces on the neighbouring pages after the book was closed on the first page correspond exactly to the position on the second page. This fact may (but does not have to) prove the thesis according to which the quaternions were first bound and only then the text was written on them.

How do these reflections on the covers of the codices from Nag Hammadi affect the hypothesis of the 'monastic connexion' group?

One has to be aware of the fact that these covers ('jackets') are not so closely connected with the contents of the codices as it was the case with other covers of the late-ancient or medieval codices. Attaching the quaternion to 'a jacket' was not difficult and moreover it could have been omitted at all. In case of the codices in which the thongs pulled through the openings in the pages and the cover were tied in a knot on the outside or the inside of the book, nothing can make us claim that it required a specialist. The 'jackets' could have been used one after the other for different books, only the sizes had to be roughly similar.[12] The cover once made could be used longer than its fragile contents. Thus, nothing entitles us to claim that the production of covers had to be carried out at the same place and time as the production of copies.

Papyrologists dealing with the texts obtained from covers claimed that the craftsmen must have used waste paper purchased from traders and we know quite well that waste paper trade existed in antiquity. The emergence of such an amazing set, which the pages of the covers filled with writing are, cannot be explained without referring to the above hypothesis. The mixture of texts com-

[12] J.M. ROBINSON had a different opinion about it but did not quote any arguments as he already had an established view on the way in which the set was created; he was not interested in differentiating the process of producing the covers from the process of writing the treaties.

ing from fiscus office (of high rank), private documents, private letters from and to persons not related to one another, could not emerge in any other way.

Does the fact that the set includes monks' letters mean that the covers were produced by the monks who made them on commission using 'someone else's waste paper' purchased from a trader and 'their own waste paper' which they did not have to buy? It is possible but we have no reason to consider this explanation as the only one or at least the best one. One should also take into consideration another question and another hypothesis. Could it not be the case that the monastic letters got to a craftsman preparing the cover-folder from a waste paper trader? In other words, would monks sell their covered with writing papyrus pages which they did not need any more? If we think of what thanks to papyri we know about economic undertakings that monks carried out, I cannot see the reason why we should exclude such a possibility. The ascetics from semianachoretical communities or hermits needed money, any money, as it often happened that they had difficulties in obtaining means to support themselves.[13] Writings about monks describing them as people isolated from the world, managing almost without food, clothes, equipment, uninterested in any possibility of obtaining some material goods must be seen as an ideal picture, 'réalité narrative' and not as 'réalité vécue'. Stories about monks say that distinguished brothers were sometimes fed by angels and for less distinguished ones it was enough to produce one basket per day (or less) and from the money obtained cover one's own needs as well as give high alms to the poor. In reality monks, if they did not come from wealthy families, struggled with troubles and lived in obsessive awe of what was going to happen to them when they were old or ill. Larger communities, which among them had a big number of brothers unable to work, often experienced real famine.

Anyway, if someone is shocked by the perspective of small trade carried out by monks it is possible to accept another equally probable hypothesis. Personal possessions of a monk leading a solitary life or living in a community of semianachoretical type, after his death were received primarily by his family and there were no reasons why the family should give up even a very modest amount. It is true that within the cover of codex VII there are only a few monastic letters and little money could be obtained for them but we do not know how many papyrus pages were passed to a waste paper trader or straight to a craftsman who made the covers. Larger set of used papyri that earlier had be-

[13] I discussed the economic aspects of the monastic communities in Egypt and particularly of semianachoretical communities in the article "Les aspects économiques de la vie de la communauté des Kellia", [in:] *Le site monastique des Kellia. Sources historiques et explorations archéologiques*, Genève 1986, 117-144, reprinted in the same collecton: *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'Antiquité tardive*, Roma 1996, 337-362; compare also the study by M. KRAUSE, "Die Möglichkeit von Besitz im apotaktischen Mönchtum Ägyptens", in: *Acts of the IInd International Congress of Coptic Studies*, Roma 1985, 121-133.

longed to monks could have been placed in different covers out of which we possess only one.

The likelihood of the 'waste paper trader' hypothesis demands caution in all reasoning concerning the date of when the covers were made on the basis of the dates mentioned in the documents from the papyrus stuffing. The covers could have been made much later. Within the cover of the codex from the beginning of the 5th century including Coptic gnostic texts there was found a Christian recommendation letter paleographically dated to the beginning of the 4th or even the end of the 3rd century.[14] It is obvious in this case that the craftsman received a text from some private chest (or clay vase), the relation between its owner and its producer is out of the question.

To sum up one can say that we do not have to persist in looking for reasons because of which monks (any monks) copied, put into jackets and read (*horribile dictu*) works far from being orthodox even in the widest sense of the word. Maybe they had nothing in common with the codices from Nag Hammadi at all.

TABLE II: MONASTIC TEXTS FOUND IN THE COVERS OF THE NAG HAMMADI CODICES

| | |
|---|---|
| G 67 | Letter. Beginning damaged. The addressee (name in the gap) is referred to as brother, the letter includes greetings for the addressee and his fellow brethren from the sender (name in the gap) 'and those who are with me'. The sender asks for transporting corn on donkeys εἰς τὸ μονάχιον (the word appears for the first time, but there is no doubt that it means the same as *monasterion*, in the language of the period the place where a monk lives, not only monastery but also a hermitage, a cell). |
| G 68 | The letter from Harpokration to Sansnos, called in the address father, probably the same Sansnos from G 72, G 78 and C 8. The sender wants Sansnos to plead with Peter for the date of the rent repayment (probably the rent for the leased fields). The request to buy 10 loads of chaff and the information about the price. Greetings for the brothers who 'are' with Sansnos. |
| G 69 | The letter from Sansnos to Aphrodisias mentioning various issues concerning the breeding of sheep and goats. Greetings for 'brothers' and the children of Haraklus (there is no information about him). |
| G 71 | The letter from Horon to [ ]arios and Dorkon, the presbyters. The request to buy two skins and the information about sending two artabs of dates, value of which should cover the cost of the purchase. The addressee is to send back the |

[14] K. TREU, "P. Berol. 8508: Christliches Empfehlungsschreiben aus dem Einband des koptisch-gnostischen Kodex P. 8508", *AfP* 28 (1982) 53-55.

| | |
|---|---|
| | information about the relation between the value of dates and the value of skins. It is not sure whether the two presbyters are monks but it is very probable. |
| G 72 | The letter from a woman called Proteria to Sansnos and Psas (Psatos?), the monks; presented in the text. |
| G 75 | The letter from Besarion to Sansnos, preserved in fragments. Sansnos's father is to give someone five artabs of wheat. |
| G 76 | The tiny extract from Makarios's letter to Sansnos's 'son'. J.W.B. Barns pointed out that Makarios, of clearly higher position than Sansnos, could be Makarios known to us as the successor of Sourus on the post of the prior in the Pachomian monastery Pachnoum. However, the name Makarios was highly common and Sansnos may be referred to as son because of the disparity in age. |
| G 77 | Preserved in fragments letter from Zachaios, Kom[ ] and Pechenephnibis, three presbyters, to Sansnos. It mentions domestic economy matters and the bishop's interference in them. Greetings for the 'brothers'. |
| G 78 | Two excerpts of the letter from Zachaios, the presbyter, to Sansnos, the brother and presbyter recommending to him brother Herakleios. |
| C 4 | The letter from Daniel to 'father' Aphrodosias. Daniel expresses his delight at the improvement of Aphrodisias's health condition and writes about him with deep respect. He asks to remember him in the prayers. He sends greetings to 'brothers who are with' Aphrodisias. |
| C 5 | The letter from Aphrodisias to Sansnos written on the *verso* of C4. |
| C 4 | Aphrodisias writes about the purchase of wheat and gives instructions as to the money which Sansnos is to take from someone and pass to somebody else. The sender mentions his illness. Greetings for those 'who are' with Sansnos. |
| C 6 | Very poorly preserved letter from Papnoute to Pahome, mentioned above in the text. |
| C 8 | The excerpt of the letter from a monk, preserved so badly that one can say nothing about its contents. |

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