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THE ARABIC GOSPEL TEXT OF CODEX BEIRUT,  
BIBLIOTHÈQUE ORIENTALE, 430:  
IS IT RECENT OR ARCHAIC?

By  
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INTRODUCTION .....	106
A. THE COLOPHONS OF CODEX BEIRUT, B.O. 430 (SIGLA E) .....	107
1. <i>Colophon one:</i> .....	107
2. <i>Colophon two:</i> .....	108
3. <i>Colophon three:</i> .....	108
B. IBN AL-'ASSĀL'S USE OF THIS VERSION .....	109
1. <i>Ibn al-'Assāl and the text of Codex B.O.430</i> .....	109
2. <i>What do we know of manuscript "س"?</i> .....	111
C. THE VORLAGE OF CODEX BEIRUT, B.O. 430 .....	111
1. <i>What do we know about the Vorlage of this version?</i> .....	111
2. <i>Textual evidence</i> .....	112
3. <i>Linguistic evidence</i> .....	113
4. <i>The women caught in adultery in John 7:53-8:11</i> .....	114
D. A FRESH TRANSLATION OR AN EDITION OF A MUCH ARCHAIC TRANSLATION? .....	117
GENERAL CONCLUSION .....	121

## INTRODUCTION

At first glance, codex Beirut, B.O.430, copied in the nineteenth century, seems to be a late *ad hoc* translation of the four Canonical Gospels containing little textual, linguistic and historical value. Up to this point we know that this version survived in only one manuscript (codex Beirut, B.O.430). However, what lies behind this codex will soon be brought to light and will reveal some invaluable information about the history of transmission of its text. This artefact stands as a reminder of the historical and textual complexity which lies beneath almost each of the extant manuscripts of the Arabic Gospels<sup>1</sup>.

The aim of this paper is to argue first, that although Codex B.O.430 is a nineteenth century codex it must have been in circulation no later than the tenth (possibly ninth) century; second, that Codex B.O.430 is translated from/corrected against the Syriac Peshitta version; and third, that it is not a fresh translation but an extended edition of the text of Vat. Ar. 13<sup>2</sup>.

In order to qualify the above statements, it is necessary to do the following: First, the three colophons of codex B.O.430 will be transcribed and examined in brief. Second, Ibn al-‘Assāl’s eclectic edition will require scrutiny in order to show that Ibn al-‘Assāl had a copy of the same version and quoted it extensively in his critical apparatus. Third, the *Vorlage* of (or the language/source behind) this version will need to be examined. Finally, Matthew 1:12-25 will be taken as a case study to argue for a close relationship between codex B.O.430 and the earliest surviving text of the Gospel, namely, Codex Vat. Ar.13.

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1) For a general introduction on the Arabic Gospel manuscripts see Hikmat KACHOUH, ‘The Arabic Versions of the Gospels: A Case Study of John 1.1 and 1.18’, *The Bible in Arab Christianity* (Brill, Leiden, 2006) 9-36; Sidney H. GRIFFITH, ‘The Gospel in Arabic: An Inquiry into its Appearance in the First Abbasid Century’, *OC* 76 (1983), pp. 126-167.

2) Vat. Ar. 13 originally contained the Psalms, the Four Gospels, Acts, the Seven Catholic Epistles, and the Fourteen Letters of Paul (the Letter to the Hebrews is considered to be written by Paul). Of those, only Mt 1:1-28:11, Mk 5:19b-16:8, Lk 3:31-7:11, and the Fourteen Letters of Paul survived. The Gospels were translated from Syriac and the Letters from Greek. On linguistic ground it is almost certain that the Gospels were translated much earlier than Paul’s letters. The author of this article presupposes that the text of Codex Vat. Ar. 13 (which is copied about 800 A.D.) probably goes back to the fifth or sixth century (in the text of the Gospels only). This article is only concerned with codex B.O.430 and its relationship with Vat. Ar. 13 and not the text of Vat. Ar. 13 *per se*.

## A. THE COLOPHONS OF CODEX BEIRUT, B.O. 430 (SIGLA E)

Notwithstanding the codicological and paleographical description of manuscript E by Fr. Louis Cheikho<sup>3</sup>, a transcription of the three colophons of this codex demand comment.

1. *Colophon one:*

The first colophon is found on folio 182<sup>r</sup>. It reads:

المجد لله دائما سعى في هذا الانجيل المبارك الحقيق [مستماون] رئيس الكهنه مطران بعلبك  
الرب الاله يغفر للكاتب والقارئ ولمن قال امين وكان مطران على ايام [ايمائنا] الكهنه  
وهم الخوري يوسف والقس ابراهيم والقس يوسف والقس موسى  
كان الانجاز من هذا السفر الشريف المقدس يوم الاربعه الثاني والعشرون من شهر اذار  
سنه ١٥٠٠ للاسكندر نقل من نسخه تاريخها نهار الثالث اثني عشر خلت مرقوت<sup>4</sup> سنه  
٩٧٦ للبيعه وهي سنه ٧٠٠ لفلبيانوس

This colophon discloses some valuable information. Of particular interest here is that it reveals the existence of two manuscripts of this version: the first manuscript is copied on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1500 of the Alexander (1187 A.D.)<sup>5</sup>. For this manuscript we give the *sigla* C; the second manuscript, which is the exemplar of manuscript C, dated on the twelfth of *Tut*, 976 of the church (984 A.D.)<sup>6</sup>, which is seven hundred of Diocletian. This manuscript will receive the *sigla* B.

3) See Louis CHEIKHO, *Catalogue raisonné des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Orientale IV: Philosophie et Écriture Sainte*, (Imprimerie Catholique, Beirut, 1925), p. 157.

4) Underneath this expression is written “من توت”.

5) The Era of Alexander begins on the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 312 B.C. See, François DÉROCHE, *Manuel de codicologies des manuscrits en écriture arabe*, (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, 2000), p. 347.

6) The date of the church could be the same as the date of the incarnation. To obtain the A.D. date one needs to add eight or nine years (976 + 8 = 984). The date 984 corresponds with the date 700 of Diocletian. (The Diocletian Era begins on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 284 A.D., see DÉROCHE, *Manuel*, 347). On the view of subtracting (and not adding) eight or nine years see Samir Khalil SAMIR, “The Earliest Arab Apology for Christianity”, *Christian Arabic Apologetics during the Abbasid Period (750-1258)*, (Brill, Leiden, 1994), 63. If so the A.D. date would be 968/9 (976 – 8 or 9), but this date does not correspond with the 700 of Diocletian.

## 2. Colophon two:

The second colophon is found on folio 183r. It reads:

كامل نسخ الاربعه اناجيل المباركه المقدسه بعون الله وتسيحه وتمجيده وتسديده يوم  
الاربعاء الثاني والعشرين من شهر اذار سنه الف وخمسمائيه للاسكندر بن فيلفوس  
المتاقدوني الموافق للثالث من شهر صفر سنه خمس وثمانون وخمسمائيه نقل من نسخه  
تاريخها يوم الثالثه لاثني عشر خلعت من توت سنه سته وسبعين وتسع مائه للبيعه وهي سنه  
سبعمائيه لذقليطيانوس الموافق العشر ليال خلون من تسع الاف سنه وسبعين وثلثمائيه  
للهجره نقل من نسخه بخط اندراوس قسطنطين وهو ابو عيسى رضى الله عنه ورحمه من  
تطرقه ودعا بالرحمه والمغفره لاسحيا الحقيير وللعالَم التحرير امين

The second colophon gives somewhat similar information as the first colophon. Moreover, it adds the *Hijrah* equivalence. In both cases the *Hijrah* dates are incorrect. Furthermore, this colophon seems to refer to a third manuscript (*sigla* A) which could have been the exemplar of manuscript B. It is copied by “اندرائوس قسطنطين وهو ابو عيسى”. If our interpretation of the colophon is correct then it is possible to date manuscript A back to the ninth century or the first half of the tenth century (pre-984 A.D.).

## 3. Colophon three:

The third colophon is found on folio 183<sup>v</sup>. It reads:

كانت تمت هذا الانجيل الشريف ثمار الاربعاء في اول شباط شهر اب المبارك في سنه سبع  
الاف ومائيه وستة واربعون لاينا ادم عليه السلام على يد احقر العباد وازلها فرح باسم  
مطران يحننا ببيت حزير ابن الحاج عطاالله المرحوم ومن كتب هولاء الاسطر يدعى له  
بالمغفره ويكون له نصير ذلك

The third colophon reveals the existence of a fourth manuscript (*sigla*: D) which was copied on the first of February 7146 of Adam (1636 A.D.)<sup>7</sup>. This manuscript could be the basis from which the scribe of E has copied his manuscript.

To summarize, the colophons show the existence of:

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7) The Adam era starts on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 5509 B.C. See, DÉROCHE, *Manuel*, 347. It is worth noting that the use of the Adam era (in this colophon) and the Diocletian era (in the previous colophons) might show that this manuscript circulated amongst the Melkites (who used to refer to the era of Adam) as well as the Copts of Egypt (who used to refer to the era of Diocletian or Martyrs).

- a) Manuscript A copied by “اندر اوس قسطنطين” (known as “ابو عيسى”) possibly in the ninth or early tenth century.
- b) Manuscript B copied in 984 A.D.
- c) Manuscript C copied in 1187 A.D. and was in the possession of Gabriel Mokhalla’.
- d) Manuscript D copied in 1636 A.D.
- e) Manuscript E (codex B.O. 430) copied *circa* 1885 A.D.<sup>8</sup>.

To the best of my knowledge, manuscript E is the only manuscript which has survived from this version and whose location is known today. As far as manuscript C is concerned, Father L. Cheikho seems to have had access to it in the late nineteenth century<sup>9</sup>. As for the rest of the manuscripts mentioned above, their location is still unknown.

## B. IBN AL-‘ASSĀL’S<sup>10</sup> USE OF THIS VERSION

### 1. *Ibn al-‘Assāl and the text of Codex B.O.430*

Ibn al-‘Assāl’s eclectic edition is one of the most famous Arabic versions of the Gospels. Scholars in the past have given considerable attention to this version<sup>11</sup>. However, outside the introduction of Ibn al-‘Assāl, no one is capable of telling us more about the versions which Ibn al-‘Assāl made use of in preparing his edition. The reason is because we still do not have a proper classification of the Arabic Gospel manuscripts which in turn can enable us to compare these Arabic versions with the biblical quotations found in the apparatus of Ibn al-‘Assāl’s edition.

Now that a substantial number of manuscripts have been classified, a comparative study of the Arabic Gospel manuscripts with the biblical quotations in Ibn al-‘Assāl’s apparatus is possible. When I conducted this comparative study, I was able to detect a close relationship between some of the

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8) The date 1855 is not found in the colophon of the manuscript. It is mentioned by Louis CHEIKHO in his catalogue. See CHEIKHO, *Catalogue*, 157.

9) See Louis CHEIKHO, “Nusaḥ ‘arabiyyah Qadimah fī al-Mašriq”, *Al-Machriq*, 4 (1901): 102 and also Louis CHEIKHO, “Al-maḥṭūṭāt al-‘arabiyyah fī ḥazānat Kulliyatinā al-Šarqiyyah”, *Al-Machriq*, 7 (1904), pp. 37-38.

10) By Ibn al-‘Assāl I mean: Abū al-Faraġ Hibat Allāh Ibn Abū al-Mufaḍḍal As‘ad Ibn Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm Ibn Abū al-Sahl Ġirġis Ibn Abū al-Biṣr Yūḥannā ibn al-‘Assāl (see Codex, British Library, Or. 3382, fol. 385’).

11) The most recent is Samir Khalil SAMIR, “La version Arabe des Évangiles d’al-As‘ad Ibn al-‘Assāl”, *ParOr* 19 (1994), pp. 441-551.

extant Arabic Gospel manuscripts and the biblical citations in the Apparatus of Ibn al-‘Assāl’s recension. Here I will only refer to the relationship between the version of B.O.430 and one of Ibn al-‘Assāl’s manuscripts. Below are a few examples extracted from the critical apparatus of Ibn al-‘Assāl’s edition<sup>12</sup> which show the close relationship between the quotations and the text of B.O.430. I shall take Mark 6:14-20 and Lk 15:11-20 as a case study.

a) In Ibn al-‘Assāl’s edition, the text of Mark 6:14a reads: “وسمع هيرودس  
”المملك لان اسمه ظهر”:

In the margin below the line and under the expression “المملك”, Ibn al-‘Assāl writes the following variant: “س” (which refers to his Arabic manuscript translated from the Syriac) followed by “بئير يشوع”. This means that his Arabic manuscript, which is translated from Syriac, adds “بئير يشوع”. Similarly, codex B.O.430 reads: “وسمع هيرودس المملك بئير يشوع”.

Moreover, in the margin beside “ظهر” Ibn al-‘Assāl points to the following variant “س قد عرف عنده”. B.O.430 also reads “لان اسمه قد عرف عنده”. This similarity cannot be coincidental as it occurs endless times between the edition of Ibn al-‘Assāl’s and the text of B.O. 430. Here below are a number of other examples. After the Biblical reference, I will insert the reading as it is found in the text of Ibn al-‘Assāl’s edition, followed by the variant found in the apparatus, and finally the reading found in Cod. B.O.430.

b) Mark 6: 14b: تجرى على يده الجرايح ; variant in س : تعمل به القوى  
B.O.430 : تجرى على يده الجرايح

c) Mark 6:16 : احذت انا راسه هو هذا قد قام من بين الموتى ; variant in  
(probably)<sup>13</sup> : قطعت راسه وهو : B.O.430 : قطعت راسه وهو قام من بين الاموات

d) Mark 6:17a : وقذفه ; variant in س : وشده

e) Mark 6:17b : بسبب ; variant in س : من اجل

f) Mark 6: 19 : تكن تقدر ; variant in س : فلم تتمكن

g) Lk 15:17a : فلما رجع اليه قلبه ; variant in (probably) س : فلما رجع الى نفسه قال  
B. O. 430 : فلما رجع الى نفسه قال

h) Lk 15:17b : كم من الاجرا الان في بيت ابي : variant in س : كم اجير لابي  
B.O.430 : كم من الاجره الان في بيت ابي

12) As found in Codex British Library, Or. 3382.

13) The letter “س” is dropped accidentally in codex British Library, Or. 3382.

There is no need for this article to demonstrate this point further. The examples above sufficiently argue that the manuscript translated from Syriac (“س”) in Ibn al-‘Assāl’s edition contains the same text as the text of B.O.430.

## 2. *What do we know of manuscript “س”?*

Following his edition of the Four Gospels, Ibn al-‘Assāl gives a general introduction about his elaborated apparatus and the manuscripts he used in preparing his recension. He refers to at least five manuscripts in Arabic and three in Coptic. Concerning the manuscript which, as I have argued above, contains the same text of B.O.430, Ibn al-‘Assāl first informs us that the manuscript contains the Gospel of Mark, Luke and John (without Matthew); second, that he does not know who translated it and finally that it is translated from Syriac<sup>14</sup>.

Unfortunately, the name of the scribe, the date and the place of this manuscript are not given. What we can be certain of is that the version of B.O.430 was in circulation before and during Ibn al-‘Assāl’s time (pre-thirteenth century) in Egypt, and that its translator is (at least for Ibn al-‘Assāl) unknown. Moreover, Ibn al-‘Assāl believed that it was translated from Syriac.

The *Vorlage* of this version will now be considered.

## C. THE VORLAGE OF CODEX BEIRUT, B.O. 430

### 1. *What do we know about the Vorlage of this version?*

Up until about 1904, L. Cheikho believed that this version was translated from Coptic<sup>15</sup>. In 1904 he changed his mind and indicated that this version was translated from Syriac. Linguistically he referred to three expressions which clearly show a Syriac influence (ايشوع، اليشايع، ملكه التيمن). Moreover, he referred to one textual variant in Matthew 6:13 which agrees with the Syriac Peshitta<sup>16</sup>.

14) See British Library, Or. 3382 folios 384-386.

15) See his reference to Gabriel Muḥalla’s codex in Louis Cheikho, “Niṣaḥ ‘arabiyyah Qadīmah fī al-Maṣriq”, *Al-Maḥriq*, 4 (1901), p. 102.

16) L. CHEIKHO, “Al-maḥtūṭāt al-‘arabiyyah fī ḥazānat Kulliyyatinā al-Šarqiyyah”, *Al-Maḥriq*, 7 (1904), pp. 37-38.



As early as the thirteenth century, Ibn al-‘Assāl had claimed that the version of the text of B.O.430 was translated from Syriac and Cheikho eventually concurred.

However, the evidence for a Syriac origin has not been adequately established. A textual and linguistic examination of a substantial number of Arabic Gospel manuscripts shows that mixture of *Vorlagen* (especially Greek and Syriac) is not uncommon among Arabic Gospel manuscripts. Thus, vast portions of the Gospels need to be examined in order to reach a convincing conclusion. Father Cheikho’s sole reference to Matthew 6:13 is insufficient argument in favour of a Peshitta origin.

2. Textual evidence

After a thorough examination of the Gospel of John, a solid conclusion confirms Ibn al-‘Assāl and Cheikho’s second claim of a Syriac origin (or more accurately Syriac *Peshitta* origin) with one exception: the narrative of the women caught in adultery in John 7:53-8:11. The constraints of space do not allow for a full citation of readings which support the Peshitta. Below I have referred to ten textual variants (from the first chapter of John only) which agree with the Peshitta against the Greek Majority text.

N°	Refr.	B.O.430	Peshitta <sup>17</sup>	Greek – Majority Text
1	1:4	به كانت الحياه والحياه هي نور الناس	ܟܘܡ ܟܘܡ ܟܘܡ ܩܘܡܘܢܘܢܘܢܘܢܘܢ ܩܘܡܘܢܘܢܘܢܘܢܘܢ	ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων
2	1:17	فاما الحق النعمه	ܩܘܡܘܢܘܢܘܢܘܢܘܢ ܩܘܡܘܢܘܢܘܢܘܢܘܢ	ἡ χάρις καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια
3	1:18	الله لم يره انسان قط الوحيد الله	ܟܘܡܟܘܡܟܘܡܟܘܡ	ὁ μονογενὴς υἱός
4	1:21	فقال كلا	ܟܘܡܟܘܡܟܘܡܟܘܡ	καὶ ἀπεκρίθη Οὐ
5	1:28	هذه الامور كانت في عبر الاردن	ܟܘܡܟܘܡܟܘܡܟܘܡ ܟܘܡܟܘܡܟܘܡܟܘܡ	Ταῦτα ἐν Βηθανίᾳ ἐγένετο πέραν τοῦ

17) The Syriac *MELTHO* font is from Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute [www.BethMardutho.org].

			ܐܘܨܬܐ	Ἰορδάνου
6	1:38	يا معلمنا	ܐܘܨܬܐ	ῥαββί
7	1:40	وان واحد اوليك الذي سمعا من يوحنا وتبعنا ايشوع كان اندراوس اخو شمعون	ܘܢ ܘܚܕ ܘܠܝܟ ܘܕܝܘܗܢܐ ܘܬܝܒܥܐ ܘܐܝܫܘܥ ܕܐܢܕܪܘܫ ܘܚܘܫܡܥܘܢ	Ἦν Ἀνδρέας ὁ ἀδελφὸς Σίμωνος Πέτρου εἰς ἓκ τῶν δύο τῶν ἀκ- ουσάντων παρὰ Ἰωάννου καὶ ἀκολουθησάντων αὐτῷ
8	1:41	قد وجدنا المسيح	ܩܕ ܘܨܘܕܢܐ ܡܫܝܚܐ	Εὐρήκαμεν τὸν Μεσίαν ὃ ἐστὶν μεθερμηνευόμενον Χριστός
9	1:42	انت تدعى الصفا	ܐܢܬ ܕܥܝ ܫܘܒܐ ܕܩܦܬܐ	Σὺ κληθήσῃ Κηφᾶς ὃ ἐρμηνεύεται Πέτρος
10	1:50	قال له ايشوع	ܩܐܠ ܠܗ ܐܝܫܘܥ	ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ

### 3. Linguistic evidence

Below is a list of ten expressions from the Gospel of John which demonstrate the Syriac influence on the Arabic text of B.O.430.

- a) “ܦܠܠܥܘܬܐ” becomes “فيلفوس” (for instance John 1:46; 6:5; 12:21 and 22)
- b) “ܫܘܒܐ” (bridegroom) becomes “الحتن” (John 2:9)
- c) “ܥܡܠܝܬܐ” (Siloam) becomes “شيلوحا” (John 9:7 and 11)
- d) “ܡܫܘܚܐ” becomes “قنومه” (John 5:26)
- e) “ܫܡܥܘܢ” becomes “شمعون” (John 1:40, 41, 42 etc.)
- f) “ܦܐܪܩܠܝܬܐ” becomes “فارقليط” (John 14:16, 26) or “بارقليط” (John 15:26; 16:7)
- g) “ܡܚܠܐ” becomes “مالح” (John 18:10)
- h) “ܦܠܠܥܘܬܐ” becomes “فيلاطس” (John 18:29, 31, 33)

- i) “*كنا منكم*” becomes “*ابن ابا*” (John 18:41)  
 j) “*ملكه*” becomes “*قليوفا*” (John 19:25)

#### 4. *The women caught in adultery in John 7:53-8:11*

##### a) *A later addition?*

Investigation of the Gospel of John demonstrates with a high degree of certainty that B.O.430 was translated from the Syriac Peshitta. However, the inclusion of John 7:53-8:11 (narrative of the woman caught in adultery), which is not found in the Peshitta, seems to argue in favour of another origin. How do we explain this textual conundrum?

It is postulated that the passage of John 7:53-8:11 is not authentic and must have been added later. There are a number of reasons for this claim:

- (1) There is no doubt that this manuscript is translated from Syriac, and since this narrative is almost absent in the Syriac tradition<sup>18</sup>, it is more likely that a scribe added it later from another source. This postulation might be precarious but the following information pushes the argument further.
- (2) There are three expressions in this narrative not found elsewhere in the Gospel of John. (1) The expression “*المعتزله*” for “the Pharisees” (John 8:2). (In the Gospel of John the “Pharisees” are called “*الاحبار*”). (2) The expression “*الناموس*” in John 8:5. A different expression is used elsewhere (i.e. *توراه/توريه، سنه/سنن*). (3) In John 8:7 and 11, Jesus is called “*السيد ايشوع*”. This combination is not found elsewhere in the Gospel of John.
- (3) Finally, in his edition, Ibn al-‘Assāl wrote an incisive comment on this narrative. It will not be mentioned here as it can be found elsewhere<sup>19</sup>. Our interest focuses in on the quotation which he transcribed from a mar-

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18) See G. A. KIRAZ, *Comparative Edition of the Syriac Gospels: Aligning the Sinaiticus, Curetonianus, Peshītā and Harklean Versions*, 4 vols. (E. J. Brill, Leiden, New York, Köln, 1996) and P.E. PUSEY, G.H. GWILLIAM, *Tetraevangelium Sanctum juxta simplicem Syrorum versionem ad fidem codicum, massorae, editionum denuo recognitum*, (Clarendon, Oxford, 1901), *ad loc.* It is however found in one Syriac lectionary (but John 8:2 is missing). Agnes SMITH LEWIS, Margaret DUNLOP GIBSON, *The Palestinian Syriac Lectionary of the Gospels: Re-edited from two Sinai manuscripts, and from P. de Lagarde’s Edition o the “Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum”* (Paternoster, London, 1899), pp. 242-3.

19) See Duncan B. MACDONALD, “Ibn al-‘Assāl’s Arabic Version of the Gospels”, *Homenaje a D. Francisco Codera en su Jubilacion Del Profesorado: Estudios de Erudicion Oriental* (Mariano Escar, Tipografo, Zaragoza, 1904), pp. 375-392.

ginal note found in the manuscript translated from Syriac (which, as has been argued above, contains the same text of B.O.430). The note says: “And I [Ibn al-‘Assāl] found a marginal note in the translation from Syriac, as follows, ‘this section is not in the Syriac or the Greek and is only found in the translation of the Coptic, so I have written it that it may not be lacking in the codex. It is written on the margin in Syriac in some Syriac Gospels, but not in others’<sup>20</sup>. This note clearly shows that the narrative is not original but was added later by the copyist. Moreover, it is evident that by this time (early thirteenth century), the narrative had already been included in the version of B.O.430.

It is now clear from internal and external evidence that this pericope was not in the original text of B.O.430. It was added later, at anytime before the thirteenth century.

The question worth asking is whether the text of this narrative is similar to any Arabic version known to us.

*b) An Arabic source?*

When the pericope of John 7:53-811 is compared with the same pericope found in other Arabic Gospel manuscripts and versions, one can ascertain that the text of the women caught in adultery in B.O. 430 was borrowed from an Arabic manuscript belonging to a version known as “the Alexandrian Vulgate”. To show this relationship adequately, it is necessary to make use of Codex Sinai, Ar. 101. This codex is a twelfth century codex and one of the earliest texts of the Alexandrian Vulgate. Both texts are placed in parallel below. The first line contains the text of B.O.430 and the second line contains the text of Sin, Ar. 101 (folios 351<sup>v</sup>-353<sup>r</sup>):

	53 فمضى كل واحد الى موضعه
	فمضى كل واحد الى موضعه
1	واما ايشوع فانطلق الى جبل الزيتون
	ومضى يسوع وانطلق الى جبل الزيتون
2	وباكر ادلج الى الهيكل وجا اليه جمع الشعب وجلس يعلمهم
	وباكر ايضا ادلج الى الهيكل وجا اليه جمع الشعب وجلس يعلمهم

20) See, *ibid.*, p. 392.

3	فقدم اليه الكتبه والمعتزله امراه وجددت في زنا وواقفوها في الوسط فقدموا اليه الكتبه والفريسيين امراه وجددت في زنى وواقفوها في الوسط
4	وقال يا معلم هذه الامراه قد وجدناها في زنا وقالوا يا معلم هذه الامراه قد وجدناها في زنا
5	وفي ناموس موسى يوصى ان ترجم فماذا تقول انت في سنه موسى يوصى ان ترجم هذه انت ما تقول
6	فقالوا هذا ليجدوا عليه عله فاما السيد ايشوع فاطرق وكتب باصبعه على الارض قالوا هذا ليجربوه ليجدوا عليه عله فاما السيد يسوع فاطرق وكتب باصبعه على الارض
7	فلما استبطوا سوا له رفع راسه وقال لهم من منكم بغير خطيه فليزجها اولاً بحجر فلما استبطوا سوا له رفع راسه وقال لهم من منكم بغير خطيه فليزجها اولاً بحجر
8	ثم اطرق وكتب على الارض ثم اطرق وكتب على الارض
9	فلما سمعوا هذا التعبير منه متفهمني التبيكت بدوا يخرجون واحد واحد الى ان خرج الشيوخ جميعهم وبقي ايشوع وحده والامراه في الوسط فقط فلما سمعوا هذا منه بدوا يخرجون واحد واحد الى ان خرج الشيوخ جميعهم وبقي يسوع وحده والامراه في الوسط فقط
10	فرفع ايشوع راسه وقال لها يا امراه اين هولاي الذين ادانوك فرفع ايشوع راسه وقال لها يا امراه اين هولاي الذين ادانوك
11	فقلت ما ارى احد يا رب فقال لها السيد ايشوع ولا انا ادبناك اذهبي من الان لا تعودى الى الخطيه فقلت ما ارى احد يا رب فقال لها السيد يسوع ولا انا ادبناك اذهبي ومن الان لا تعودى الى الخطيه

As the above exercise demonstrates, as far as the adulterous pericope is concerned, both manuscripts (B.O.430 and Sin. Ar. 101) contain the same version. Some of the variants are intriguing and require further independent

study. For instance, in verse five, B.O.430 reads “الناموس” (where elsewhere in the Gospel of John we read “التوراه” or “السنه”) and Sin. Ar. 101, surprisingly, reads “سنه” (where elsewhere in the Gospel of John we find “الناموس”). This amalgamation is confusing and shows how intricate and obscure the history behind these manuscripts is, and that what we know about these manuscripts and their relationship with each other is still minimal.

We can summarize our investigation as follows:

(1) As far as we know the Arabic version examined in this article is represented by six manuscripts. The only manuscript to which we have access is codex Beirut, B.O. 430.

(2) B.O.430 was copied in the nineteenth century but its text was in circulation as early as the tenth or possibly ninth century. Thus, it is possible to claim that its archetype goes back to the ninth century.

(3) This version is translated from the Syriac Peshitta. There are three variants in the Gospel of John which reflect pre-Peshitta readings<sup>21</sup>. The passage which does not come from a Syriac origin is the narrative of the woman caught in adultery in John 7:53-8:11.

(4) The inclusion of the adulterous narrative is intriguing. It is certainly not original and must have come from another source. It was added to the text prior to the thirteenth century.

(5) The text of the adulterous narrative (as is found in B.O.430) is the same as the one found in Sinai, Ar. 101 (a representative of the Alexandrian Vulgate). Some of the variants in the narrative reflect the amalgamation of this version with other manuscripts from the Alexandrian Vulgate.

The last question to be considered is whether the text of B.O.430 (which was prepared in *circa* ninth century) is a fresh translation or an edition of an even earlier version.

#### D. A FRESH TRANSLATION OR AN EDITION OF A MUCH ARCHAIC TRANSLATION?

Codex B.O.430 probably dates back to the ninth century. Is it a fresh translation? We shall see below that in fact it is not; it is an extended edition of the text of Vat. Ar. 13. First, however, a preliminary remark:

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21) See John 4:10, 5:11 and 21:25.

An investigation into the earliest extant Arabic Gospel manuscripts shows that by the eighth/ninth century, Arabic translations, like the one found in the text of Vat. Ar. 13 (which is a loose and inaccurate translation), was superseded by more literal translations. These literal translations originated in about the seventh century. A linguistic and textual study of Vat. Ar. 13 (in the Gospels only) clearly shows that its text preceds this period. Moreover, in the ninth century the Gospel in Arabic was copied and used extensively. It is not unlikely that during this period (eighth/ninth century) the text of B.O.430 was produced. The text of B.O.430, which is set out below, attempts to re-edit the text of Vat. Ar. 13 into a more literal translation of the Syriac Peshitta. This also follows the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> century fashion for literal translations.

The purpose here is not to study the text of Vat. Ar. 13 but to show the close relationship between both texts.

The following tables show the text of Matthew 1:12-25 from both codices in parallel<sup>22</sup>. The first line contains the text of Vat. Ar. 13 and the second line the text of B.O.430.

12		ومن	بعد	النقله	الى	بابل	يوكنيا	ولد	سالتيل	سالتيل	ولد	زرنابل
	فاما	من	بعد	خلا		بابل	يوخنيا	اولد	شلتال	شلتال	اولد	زربابل

13	زرنابل	ولد	ابيود	ابيود	ولد	الياقيم	الياقيم	ولد	عازور		
	زربابل	اولد	ابيود	ابيود	اولد	الياقيم	الياقيم	اولد	عازور		

14	عازور	ولد	زادوق	زادوق	ولد	اخيم	اخيم	ولد	اليود		
	عازور	اولد	نازوق	نازوق	اولد	اخين	اخين	اولد	اليود		

15	اليود	ولد	اليعازر	اليعازر	ولد	ماثان	ماثان	ولد	يعقوب		
	اليود	اولد	اليعازار	اليعازار	اولد	ماثان	ماثان	اولد	يعقوب		

22) This narrative was chosen as scholars can compare this text with the same text from other Arabic versions found in the Guidi's monumental work. See Ignazio GUIDI, "Le Traduzioni Degli Evangelii in Arabo e in Etiopico", in *Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei*, vol. 4, ser. 4 (Tipografia Della R. Accademia Dei Lincei, Rome, 1888), pp. 5-33. (I have also added verses 12-17 to enable further comment on verse 12 (see below) as well as to show the Syriacisms in the text).

16	يعقوب	ولد يوسف	زوج	مریم	التي	منها	ولد يسوع	الذي	يدعى	المسيح
	ويعقوب	ولد يوسف	خطيب	مریم	التي	منها	ولد ايشوع	الذي	يدعى	المسيح

17a	فجميع	هذه القبائل	من	ابراهيم الى داود	اربع عشر	ومن داود	الى	خلا	بابل	اربع عشر [قبيله]
	جميع	القبائل	من	ابراهيم الى داوود	اربعه عشر قبيله	ومن داوود	الى	خلا	بابل	اربعه عشر قبيله

17b	ومن	[خلا]	بابل	الى	المسيح	اربع	[عشر قبيله]			
	ومن	خلا	بابل	الى	المسيح	اربعه	عشر قبيله			

18a	اما	ولاد يسوع	[المسيح]	كان	اذ	كانت	مریم	امه	خطيبه	ليوسف	قبل	ان	يشتراكا
	فاما	مولد ايشوع	المسيح	فهكذا	كان	كانت	مریم		مملكه	ليوسف	قبل	ان	يشتراكا

18b	وحدث	حبل	من	روح	القدس								
	وحدث	حبل	من	روح	القدس								

19	وكان	يوسف	بعلمها	برا	تقيا	ولم	يجب	ان	يشهرها	[.....]	يخليها	سرا	
	وكان	يوسف	بعلمها	بارا	فلما	يجب	ان	يفضحها	وقد	كان	هم	ان	يخليها

20a	فلما	هم	بهذا	ترايا	له	ملك	الرب	في	الريا	وقال	له	يا	يوسف	ابن	داود
	فلما	هم	بذلك	تراا	له	ملاك	الرب	في	الحلم	وقال	له	يا	يوسف	بن	داوود

20b	لا	تخف	من	قبض	مریم	خيلتك	الك	لان	الذي	يولد	منها	هو	من	روح	القدس
	لا	تخف	ان	تأخذ	مریم	خيلتك	الك	لان	الذي	يولد	منها	هو	من	روح	القدس

21a	وستلد	ابنا	وتسميه	ايسوع	و	هو	يحي	شعبه	من	خطاياهم		
	وستلد	ابنا	ويدعا	اسمه	ايشوع	لانه	هو	يحي	شعبه	اسرائيل	من	خطاياهم

22	وكل	هذا	الذي	كان	ليكمل	ما	قال	الرب	على	لسان	اشعيا	النبى
	وانما	كان	هذا	كله	ليتم	ما	قيل	من	الرب	على	لسان	اشعيا



23	[ها ذو]	العذرى	ستحيل	وتلد	ابنا	ويدعون	اسمه	عمانوال	تاويله	معنا [هنا]
	بانه ها هي ذه	العذرا	تحيل	وتلد	ابنا	ويدعون	اسمه	عمانوال	التي يترجم	الهنا معنا

24	فلما	انتبه	يوسف	من	نومه	فصنع	كما	امرہ	ملك	الرب	[وانطلق...ته]
	فلما	قام	يوسف	من	نومه	فعل	كما	امرہ	ملك	الرب	وضم امراته

25	ولم	يعرفها	حتى	ولدت	ابنها	البكر	ودعت	اسمه	يسوع	
	.		حتى	ولدت	ابنها	البكر	ودعت	اسمه	ايشوع	

This exercise is a brief demonstration of the linguistic relationship between the two codices. The similarities, here and elsewhere in the Gospels, are striking and leave no doubt that the text of Codex B.O.430 is a re-worked edition of Vat. Ar. 13.

A more thorough examination of both codices clearly shows that the scribe has two obvious aims for his edition:

1. To eliminate additions found in the text of Vat. Ar. 13 which do not reflect the text of the Vorlage (in this case the Peshitta);
2. To replace archaic expressions with more familiar expressions of the time<sup>23</sup>.

Finally, it is worth commenting on one variant found in verse twelve. Verse twelve (in Vat. Ar. 13) reads “ومن بعد نقله الى بابل...”. The expression “النقله” is foreign to this version. Normally the expression “حلا” is used and is more archaic than “النقله” (see for instance verse 17). It is noteworthy that B.O.430 reads “حلا” (and not “النقله”). *This is of significance because B.O.430 (in this specific reading) reflects a greater authenticity and accuracy to the archetype of Vat. Ar. 13 than Vat. Ar. 13 itself.* (See also *خطيبه/ملكه* in verse 18a)<sup>24</sup>.

23) It is worth noting that many archaic expressions were not replaced by the scribe which supports the fact that at the time these expressions were familiar to this scribe (otherwise he would have replaced them). This also shows that this edition was prepared possibly as early as the ninth century if not earlier.

24) This clearly indicates that the text of Vat. Ar. 13 has not escaped corrections and its text is not as authentic as we would like it to be.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

Codex Beirut, B.O. 430 is one of the latest Arabic Gospel manuscripts which also happens to be an edition of one of the earliest extant Arabic Gospel manuscripts (Vat. Ar. 13). Although it was copied in the nineteenth century, the history of its text goes back to a much earlier period. It was in circulation no later than the tenth century, amongst the Copts and possibly the Melkite community.

In the thirteenth century, Ibn al-‘Assāl made use of the same version and quoted it extensively in his eclectic edition. During the transmission of its text, it has assimilated readings from other Arabic versions of which the pericope of the women caught in adultery is a clear example.

The text of B.O.430 is not a fresh translation from the Syriac Peshitta but an edition of a much more archaic version. It was prepared sometime around the ninth century and is a re-worked edition of a text similar to that found in codex Vat. Ar. 13.

This article offers a further glimpse into the richness and complexity of the Arabic Gospel manuscripts, and invites us once more to engage further in the study of this corpus.

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