

## John Bishop of Assiut, Manfalūt and Abū Tīġ

[Juan, obispo de Asiut, Manfalūt y Abū Tīġ]

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**Resumen:** En este artículo ofrecemos nueva información sobre Juan obispo de Asiut (s. XIV) y sobre sus obras y actividades religiosas.

**Abstract:** In this article our aim is to offer new information about John bishop of Assiut (14<sup>th</sup> c.) and his religious activities and works.

**Palabras Clave:** Cristianismo. Egipto. Época mameluca. Obispo de Asiut.

**Key Words:** Christianity. Egypt. Mamluk era. Bishop of Assiut.



### Introduction

This bishop of Assiut was not identified until recently. Samir Khalil thought John of Assiut was from the thirteenth-century.<sup>1</sup> While Randall Stewart talked about two bishops Paul, who was bishop of Asyut, Abū Tīġ, and Manfalūt, and Yuḥannis, bishop of Assiut.<sup>2</sup> In a previous study I highlighted the importance of John of Assiut and his literary works,<sup>3</sup> meanwhile more information data came to my knowledge including the publication of the homily on Severus of Antioch by a bishop of Assiut, which motivated me to write this paper.

### 1. John of Assiut and his time<sup>4</sup>

John was contemporary to at least three patriarchs Gabriel V (1409-1427), John XI (1427-1452) and Matthew II (1452-1465).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Samir KHALIL, “Yu’annis”, CE 7, p. 2355.

<sup>2</sup> Randall STEWART, “Asyut”, CE 1, p. 296-297.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, “Jean évêque d’Assiut, de Manfalūt et d’Abu Tig et ses activités littéraires”, *Études coptes VIII. Dixième journée d’études. Lille 14-16 juin 2001*, «Cahiers de la bibliothèque copte» 13 (Lille – Paris, 2003), p. 314.

<sup>4</sup> Most of this part is taken from Samir KHALIL, “Gabriel V”, CE, pp. 1130-1133, Subhi Y. LABIB, “John XI”, CE 4, pp. 1344-1345, Subhi Y. LABIB, “Matthew II” CE 5, p. 1571.

## — Gabriel V 88th

During the patriarchate, Gabriel V the 88<sup>th</sup> who was a monk of the monastery of Saint Samuel of Kalamūn,<sup>6</sup> the Coptic Church went through a difficult period for the church. Egypt was politically, unstable. Assassinations and revolts were frequent.

Alone four sultans held power in succession during the 1421. Egypt became economically weak due to incessant wars moreover four plagues ravaged the country in a period of thirty years. One year later, Barsbay became sultan, his reign is marked by a series of *fatwas* against Christian, with interdiction to employ them in administration, confiscation and other financial discriminations, destruction of the churches and imposing other steps on dressing. This policy led many Christians and Jews to convert to Islam.

Copts being minority suffered more than the rest of the country under these conditions. Ahmad Darrag in his study, wrote:

“The persecutions are the result of government directives.... These directives can be classified in several categories: (1) prohibition against employing [Christians and Jews] in government offices; (2) confiscations, contributions imposed on the community, various types of financial obligations; (3) humiliating measures regarding dress and manners; (4) demolition of religious edifices. These various harassments, periodically renewed, lead to conversions of Christians and Jews who desired to maintain their employment by government; Abū al-Maḥāsin’s forceful comment on the situation is telling: “The Qaḍī of the ruler is a recently converted Muslim, his Shaykh is a Christian”.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Alfonso ‘ABDALLAH, *L’ordinamento Liturgico di Gabriele V, 88 patriarca copto 1409-1427-«Studia Orientalia Christiana Aegyptiaca»* (Cairo, 1962), pp. 16-42. P. LUISIER, “La lettre du Patriarche Copte Jean XI au Pape Eugène IV”, *OCP* 60 (1994), pp. 87-129, 519-562, especially pp. 540-562.

<sup>6</sup> A.KHATER, O.H. E. BURMESTER, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church*, «Textes et documents» (Le Caire, 1970), III:3, p. 158 [Arabic], p. 272 [English] The biographies of these three patriarchs are extremely brief, only few line for each partriarch, it seems that they were composed by some scribes of the patriarchal cell cf. J. DEN HEIJER, *Mawhūb Ibn Mansūr Ibn Mufarriḡ et l’historiographie Copto-Arabe*, CSCO 513, Subs. 83 (Lovanii, 1989), p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> A. DARRAG, *L’Egypte sous le règne de Barsbay (825-841/1422-1438)* (Damas: Institut Français de Damas, 1961), pp. 141-142.

One can compare Darrag's observations with other evidence to the persecution of the Copts under the Baḥrite Mamluks<sup>8</sup> offers an analysis of four studies and mentions five others.

In the year 1412, Sultan al-Mū'ayyad gathered Jews and Copts in the mosque of the caliph al-Ḥākīm, in the presence of Muslim leaders, and he demanded doubling the current tax, which is paid by the non-Muslims. A year later, measures became even more stringent. In 1414, al-Mū'ayyad forbade the Copts access to his offices and those of his emirs. In 1419, he increased restrictions regarding vestments and their usage.<sup>9</sup>

Persecutions continued under the rule of Barsbay (1422-1438). On 1st May 1422, a new directive was issued prohibiting the employment of Copts in public offices.

In the year 1422 Barsbay forbade Christian pilgrims access to the Holy Sepulchre due to the frequent harassments by Catalans and Genoese pirates to the Egyptian shipping. To carry on their pilgrimage, Copts were obliged to pay heavy bribe. In retaliation to that, in the year 1423, the *negus* Yeshaq attacked the Muslims of Ethiopia and ravaged the Islamic kingdom of Jabart. Barsbay took his vengeance on the Copts. And only by the intervention of Eric VII, king of Denmark, in the year 1426, was reopened the Holy Sepulchre.

The state of confusion of the Mamluk administration spared neither Copts nor Muslims from encroachments on their possessions, nor were they protected from continuous searches of their homes. The situation of the people worsened by an outbreak of the plague. In Upper Egypt, the marauding Hawwarah Arabs descended on the unprotected valley and looted both cattle and agricultural produces, while a plague of rats finished what was left.

Frankish fleet, in the year 1440, attacked three Islamic ships in the waters of Damietta, a port city on the Mediterranean coast, and its Muslim sailors were either killed or drowned. Jirjis, a Christian native of Damietta, whose ethnicity is unclear, celebrated the sad news and this infuriated the bereaved Muslim inhabitants, who seized him and wanted to kill him. The viceroy Nāṣir al-Dīn ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Sallām came to his rescue and put him in front of the court. Jirjis feigned apostasy to Islam, thinking that that would save his skin. But this was to no avail, and in the end he was condemned to death, and his body was burned. The mob then pillaged the Christian churches. In Cairo, in 1441, a Copt by the name of al-'Afif was arrested for committing crimes; he was beaten, and was released only after he had espoused Islam, but his children were allowed to retain their Christianity. The sultan issued a

<sup>8</sup> Khalil SAMIR. "Chrétien sous les Mamluks", *Bulletin d'Arabe chrétien* 3 (1979), pp. 68-74.

<sup>9</sup> A. DARRAG, *L'Égypte sous le règne de Barsbay...*, pp. 142-143.

decree forbidding Coptic physicians from treating sick Muslims. Some Copts were converting to Islam and being punished when they changed their minds. Although the Coptic sources have refrained from mentioning names of Copts who apostatised to Islam in the later Middle Ages, but the Islamic annals of those times listed a considerable number of them, especially those who occupied the highest positions in the administration, from secretarial to ministerial dignitaries as well as those in finances and in the high Islamic judicial system.

To add to Gabriel's problems, he and the *negus* of Ethiopia were not on good terms. In fact, Yeshaq ceased to send the traditional contribution of the kings of Ethiopia to the Egyptian church.

John XI (1427-1452) (successor of Gabriel V) during his patriarchate the relations with Ethiopia returned back to normal, and in the year 1431 the Negus dispatched special embassy carrying gifts of gold and rare medicinal products to the Mamluk sultans. The embassy submitted a royal brief asking the authorities in Egypt to refrain from harassing the Copts and to let them live in peace unmolested and their churches secured.

After his ordination, Matthew II (1452-1465) took residence in Church of the Virgin at Ḥārīt Zūwaylah,<sup>10</sup> which was a Coptic quarter. Apparently the situation of the Copts in his times was relatively secure and peaceful, the sultans being too involved in their own troubles with their Mamluk amirs did not devote much time to the patriarch and his church. Shortly after the investiture of Matthew II, probably in the year 1453, an Ethiopian embassy arrived in Cairo with gifts for the sultan and a request to appoint a Coptic archbishop for their country by Matthew II. They asked for continued peace and security for the Copts and their churches in Egypt. Accordingly Gabriel, the monk, was consecrated as bishop of the Abyssinia.

During the fifteenth century, relations between the Coptic and Syrian churches were strong. In the event of internal troubles the Syrians could depend on the Copts for help.

### *1.1. Destruction of Churches and monasteries in the XVth century*

In 1430 the monks in John Kame monastery abandoned their monastery and resided in Dayr al-Suryān, bringing with them the relics of their patron saint.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Myriam WISSA, "Harit Zuwaylah", *CE* 4, pp. 1207b-1209a.

<sup>11</sup> F.C. BURKITT, F. C. BURKITT, "The Monasteries of the Wadi'n-Natroun", *Journal of Theological Studies* 4 (1933), pp. 188-192; H. G. EVELYN-WHITE, *The Monasteries of the Wadi'n Natrun*, Pt. 2, The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and Scetis (New York, 1932);

In A.H. 840/A.D. 1436, a Mamluk emir ordered the destruction of the Coptic Church in Shubrat al-Khiyām, a suburb of Cairo. And the mob pillaged its stores while the sacred relics kept in its sanctuary were burned.

In the following year, Dayr al-Maghtis by the Lake Burullus, a highly revered Coptic pilgrimage centre, was also destroyed.

In the year 1439, the Church of Al-Mu‘allaqah in Old-Cairo was partially destroyed by government representatives on the pretext that they were recent additions contradicting the terms of the Covenant of ‘Umar.

In the latter part of the XVth century the monastery of Saint Anthony and the monastery of Saint Paul near the Red Sea and their libraries were destroyed by the Bedouins who worked there in the service of the monks.<sup>12</sup>

The monastery of saint Arsenius at Turah, was deserted by the fifteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

### 1.2. *The Relics in the XV century*

In this context troubles, insecurity and persecutions, the Copts tried to protect the most precious heritage i.e. the relics of Saints and liturgical books. the relics of Saint George were translated to the church in Old Cairo that bears his name, during the patriarchate of Gabriel V according to Coptic and Ethiopian traditions.<sup>14</sup>

But this weak situation of the Copts, allowed the Venetians to steal the Copts’ most important relic, the head of Saint Mark; an act that deeply affected the Coptic community.

## Conclusion I

We see that the Egyptians in general, and the Copts in particular, had a very hard life in the fifteenth century. Consequently the population decreased, the monasteries were deserted. In this time of persecution, the Coptic minority

C. MARTIN, “Les Monastères du Wadi Natroun”, *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 62 (1935), pp. 113-134, 238-252.

<sup>12</sup> O.F.A. MEINARDUS, *Christian Egypt Ancient and Modern* (Cairo: American University in Cairo, 1977, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), p. 494. O.F.A. MEINARDUS, *Monks and Monasteries in Egypt* (Cairo: American University Press, 1989, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), pp. 12-13. SAMUEL TAWADRÛS AL-SURIANI, *الاديرة المصرية العامرة [the inhabited Egyptian monasteries]* (Cairo, 1968), p. 59 mentioned that the monastery of Saint Paul was destroyed for the second time in 1588, and was rebuilt by the monks of Saint Antony in 1704AD. I did not find this information elsewhere, but anyway it does not affect our conclusion for the manuscript could be copied indirectly from the manuscript of the Monastery of al-Suriani Monastery through the library of Saint Anthony.

<sup>13</sup> O.F.A. MEINARDUS, *Christian Egypt Ancient and Modern*, pp. 144, 350-353.

<sup>14</sup> Alfonso ‘ABDALLAH, *L'ordinamento Liturgico di Gabriele V...*, p. 34, n. 32.

turned towards her heritage; Liturgy (the *ordo* of Gabriel V), Hagiography (which will be the subject of this paper).

## 2. John of Assiut and his pastoral activity

We may ask what motivated a bishop of Assiut to deliver a homily for the diocese of Esna?

1. Judging from his knowledge of the Coptic hagiography, Scriptures, John was the most learned person of his generation.
2. According to the list of the bishops attending the concoction of the Myron in 1458 AD, there were no bishops for Esna, or any southern city. Only six bishops attended this ceremony: Isaac bishop of Minia, John bishop of Assiut Manfalūt and Abū Tīḡ (our author), Michael bishop of Qusiyyah, Isaac bishop of Sundufāh and Maḥallah, John bishop of Fayoum and Michael of Qusqam, Hence Assiut is nearest city to Esna having a bishop.<sup>15</sup>
3. An autobiographical section, contained in the homily on Severus of Antioch, shows that John of Assiut (even before his ordination as bishop) had an excellent relationship with many persons including the monastic organisations of Kalamūn and Assiut.<sup>16</sup>
4. From the homily delivered by John of Assiut on the consecration of the Church of the Archangel, by the hand of John XI (1427-1452), we know that the bishop of Fayyoun was Isaac.<sup>17</sup>
5. He had sound knowledge of the Coptic language because he was able to compose a *psali* for Sunday in that language.

## 3. John of Assiut as author of the homily on Severus

John of Assiut is the bishop of Assiut, Manfalūt and Abū Tīḡ in the fifteenth century. He was ordained bishop by the Patriarch Gabriel V, the 88<sup>th</sup> of the Church of Alexandria, in the year 1140 EM = 1423/1424 AD. He attended the consecration of the Myron in the year 1458 AD where he was a senior bishop

<sup>15</sup> GEORGIUS ATTALAH & ROSHDY WASSEF, الميرون المقدس [*The holy Myron*] (Cairo, 1988), p. 31. Not mentioned in H. MUNIER, *Recueil des listes épiscopales de l'église copte* (Cairo, 1943); nor in J. MUYSER, "Contribution à l'étude des listes épiscopales de l'Eglise Copte", *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 10 (1944), pp. 115-176.

<sup>16</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch by a bishop of Assiut*, «*Patrologia Orientalis*» 50, fasc. 1 N 222 (Roma – Turnhout: Pontificio Istituto Orientale – Brepols, 2006), § 89.

<sup>17</sup> Nabih Kamel thinks that the church in question is the church of the Angel Michael in Cairo hence the presence of the patriarch and bishop of Atfih, cf. NABIH KAMEL DAOUD, تاريخ كنيسة الملاك البحري بجداائق القبة (Cairo, 2003), pp. 32-34.

and his name occurs in the second place as the bishop of Assiut, Manfalūt and Abū Tīğ cities respectively North and South of Assiut.<sup>18</sup>

It seems that the homily on Severus was delivered during the early part of his career as bishop. Hence his name was not mentioned but only his title “a bishop of Assiut”.

During the patriarchate of John XI (1427-1452 AD) he delivered a homily for the consecration of the sanctuary of the Archangel Gabriel, where his name is not mentioned but only the title as “a minister (bishop) of the Christian people in the city of Assiut”.<sup>19</sup>

When he composed the *psali* of Sunday his title was bishop of Assiut and the cities of the East (rank of Nile). It was later during the patriarchate of and Matthew II (1452-1465) that he became bishop of Assiut, Manfalūt and Abū Tīğ.

The homily on the martyrs of Esna was composed most likely to be near the end of his career as he was described as “an elder”.<sup>20</sup> He sent the homily to be read on their day of commemoration, contrary to his personally delivering the homily on Severus and the homily on the consecration of the sanctuary of the Archangel.

In my publication of the homily on Severus of Antioch, I mention the name of John of Assiut only as the most likely author,<sup>21</sup> due to the similarities in composition between this homily and the homily on the martyrs of Esna<sup>22</sup>:

Similarity	homily on Severus	homily on the martyrs of Esna
1. An introduction with the contents of the text	The author mentions the contents of his texts including the life of Severus in Upper-Egypt, our Lady the Virgin Mary granted him her monastery which is under the	The contents including the martyrdom of mother Dilagui, the martyrdom of the four notables, the martyrdom of the weak old woman, the martyrdom of the inhabitants of

<sup>18</sup> J. MUYSER, “Contribution à l’étude des listes épiscopales de l’Eglise Copte”, *Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte* 10 (1944), pp. 115-176.

<sup>19</sup> Mohamed Fathy KHORSHID, “Study of the Arabic Manuscript (Maimar) in the Coptic Museum, Cairo: No. 48 Liturgy”, *Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte* 39 (2000), pp. 149-156. Dāwūd NABIH KAMEL, تاريخ كنيسة الملاك البحري..., pp. 34-35.

<sup>20</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d’Esna de leur évêque Amon et de leur persécuteur Arien* «Studia Orientalia Christiana Aegyptiaca» 18 (Le Caire, 1981), p. 7 (text), p. 12 (trans.).

<sup>21</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, p. 12.

<sup>22</sup> S. TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Agypten in arabischer Zeit* «Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des vorderen Orients» 41/3 (Wiesbaden, 1985), pp. 1181-1193.

	rock in the mountain near the city of Assiut, his return to return to Lower-Egypt and of his death in the city of Saḥā, in the house of Dorotheus, and how his body was translated to the monastery of al-Zuḡāḡ; and the reason for his translation, after many years, from the monastery of al-Zuḡāḡ to his monastery in the mountain near the city of Assiut. The homily adds also a section on the martyrs of Antioch commemorated in Assiut <sup>23</sup>	Esna in the mountain of Agathon, the martyrdom of the bishop Amon, the martyrdom of the three peasants, the lamentation of Arianus. <sup>24</sup>
2. The reason of the homily	The reason is the arrival of the relics of the saint to his monastery in Assiut and the request of the monks of the monastery to get more information about their patron saint. <sup>25</sup>	The reason for the homily on the martyrs of Esna is on the request of inhabitants of Esna who transmitted their request through the demand of a trader who used to visit regularly the city of Assiut. <sup>26</sup>
3. Theological introduction	The Author praises the holy Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit <sup>27</sup>	The Author praises the unique and great God in one substance, one nature and three Hypostase and attributes. <sup>28</sup>
4. An Introduction from the psalms	the psalms 92[91]:1-5, 12-13; 99[98]:5-6; 110[109]:4 <sup>29</sup>	psalm 132 <sup>30</sup>
5. The references of his work:	the <i>mimar</i> of the Archangel Michael, <sup>31</sup> the biography of	The homily of Dorotheus is expressly mentioned <sup>36</sup> while

<sup>23</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, §§ 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, pp. 5-7 (text), 9-11 (trans.).

<sup>25</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 4.

<sup>26</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 7 (text), 12 (trans.).

<sup>27</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 5.

<sup>28</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 8 (text), 13 (trans.).

<sup>29</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 6.

<sup>30</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 8-10 (text), 13-15 (trans.).

<sup>31</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 77.



	Macrobius of Qaw <sup>32</sup> are expressly mentioned in the text. The synaxarium, <sup>33</sup> the Antiphonarium, <sup>34</sup> the Arabic life of Severus attributed to Athanasius <sup>35</sup> are quoted without giving the reference.	the Synaxarium, <sup>37</sup> the martyrdom of Theodore the Oriental, or Psate (where is the legend concerning the infancy of Diocletian as a shepherd) <sup>38</sup> and the martyrdom of Philemon and Apollonius <sup>39</sup> are quoted without giving the reference.
6. The comparison between the Egyptian cities and biblical cities	Assiut is compared with Antioch. <sup>40</sup>	Esna is compared with Jerusalem <sup>41</sup>
7. The praise of the mountains	of Assiut and the mountain Ebot	Esna (the mountain of Goods)
8. The pun	the name Severus became the priest of the time <sup>42</sup>	the mountain of Agathon became the mountains of Goods <sup>43</sup>
9. Local traditions	The mention of a feast of Severus on the 14 Misra <sup>44</sup>	The mention of the feast of Anba Isaac the Hermit <sup>45</sup>
10. The mention of the Phoenix	Severus is compared with the Phoenix <sup>46</sup>	Amon the bishop is compared with the Phoenix <sup>47</sup>
11. List of the	Claudius, Theodore son of	Claudius, Apater and Iraie,

<sup>32</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 37-39.

<sup>33</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, §§ 32-34, 60-61, 62-68.

<sup>34</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 35.

<sup>35</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, §§ 15-22, 24-25, 44-46, 69-74.

<sup>36</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 12 (text), 17 (trans.). R.-G. COQUIN, "Le panegyrique d'Ammonios, évêque –martyr d'Esna par son successeur Dorothée", *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* (1993), Pp. 11-54.

A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 6 (text), 10 (trans.).

<sup>38</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 12 (text), 17-18 (trans.).

<sup>39</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 32 (text), 41-42 (trans.).

<sup>40</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, §§ 95-103.

<sup>41</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 10 (text), 15 (trans.).

<sup>42</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 116.

<sup>43</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 45 (text), 56 (trans.).

<sup>44</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 4.

<sup>45</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 17 (text), 23 (trans.).

<sup>46</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 110.

<sup>47</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d'Esna...*, p. 53 (text), 64 (trans.).

Antiochene martyrs	Basilides, Apater and Iraie <sup>48</sup> , Phoebamon of Ausim <sup>49</sup>	Justus, Apoli, Theodore son of Basilides, Phoebamon, Phoebamon of Ausim, <sup>50</sup>
12. A Coptic hymn	The hymn of the twelve virtues <sup>51</sup>	The hymn of “Worthy ⲁⲗⲓⲠⲞⲤ. <sup>52</sup>
13. The saint blessing a land	Severus visited the Upper Egypt in order that the land of Upper Egypt got his blessing <sup>53</sup>	Arianus took Amon to Antenoe in order that this land be blessed by him <sup>54</sup>
14. The mention of Qusqam	It is the famous place of the flight of the Holy Family to Egypt <sup>55</sup>	It is linked also with the tradition of the martyrdom of the son of Joseph the Carpenter <sup>56</sup>
15. Asking help from the commemorated saint to praise him	“If my whole body became tongues and every limb of mine became a tongue, I would still be unable to describe you as befits you. But I will cut short my words and say that Severus’ tongue will praise Severus.” <sup>57</sup>	“I beseech him, with supplication, to this holy father, to help me to praise him, I depend on his prayers and I asked God, through the power of his prayer to help me to utter a little in his praising, not according to his honour but according to the words of my mouth and the weakness of my pure tongue.” <sup>58</sup>

The consecration of the sanctuary of the Archangel Gabriel is partially published by Nabih Kamel<sup>59</sup> according to a manuscript in the collection of the church of Ḥārit al-Rūm.<sup>60</sup> This text started with the list of contents, and a

<sup>48</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, §§ 52-53.

<sup>49</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, §§ 96-97.

<sup>50</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d’Esna...*, p. 34-35 (text), 43-44 (trans.).

<sup>51</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, §§ 111-115.

<sup>52</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d’Esna...*, p. 38 (text), 48 (trans.).

<sup>53</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, §§ 25, 41

<sup>54</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d’Esna...*, p. 25 (text), 33 (trans.)

<sup>55</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, §§ 50, 100

<sup>56</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d’Esna...*, p. 44 (text), 55 (trans.).

<sup>57</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, *A Homily on Severus of Antioch...*, § 114.

<sup>58</sup> A. KHATER, *Martyre des Citoyens d’Esna...*, p. 52 (text), 62 (trans.).

<sup>59</sup> Dāwūd NABIH KAMEL, *تاريخ كنيسة الملاك البحري*, p. 34-35.

<sup>60</sup> Aziz S. ATIYA, “Ḥārit al-Rūm”, CE, 1206b-1207b.

reference to the Synaxarium of 22<sup>nd</sup> of Kihak,<sup>61</sup> which corresponds to the investiture of the Archangel Gabriel, (This day is the commemoration of) the rest of Joshua son of Nun. He (John of Assiut) praised the archangels Michael and Gabriel and the miracles of God by the hand of the Archangel Gabriel. (fol. 3r-4r). John also added a section concerning the consecration of the sanctuary of the Archangel Gabriel and the arrival of the bishop of Atfiḥ, Michael<sup>62</sup> on the 26<sup>th</sup> of Bawūnah<sup>63</sup>

## Conclusion II

With all these similarities, it is safe to attribute the homily on Severus of Antioch to John Bishop of Assiut.

Hence we see that John followed his patriarch to secure a place for the relics of Severus of Antioch. For the Liturgy, like his patriarch who compiled the Liturgical Ordo, John wrote also a *psali* for Sunday.

## 4. John of Assiut as a witness of the liturgy in the fifteenth century

The development of the Coptic liturgy did not attract the attention many Coptologists. Only few works on this subject survived among them the description of Ibn Kabar in his monumental encyclopaedia the *Lamp of Darkness*,<sup>64</sup> the book of *Precious Pearl* by Ibn al-Sibā‘,<sup>65</sup> and the *Ordo of Gabriel V*,<sup>66</sup> however a close attention to the texts attributed to John of Assiut may give us a good idea about the liturgical books at that time.

### 3.1. The homily on Severus of Antioch.

1. Psalms from the Horologion out of 36 quotations there are only 5 not from the Horologion,

<sup>61</sup> I. FORGET, *Synaxarium Alexandrinum I*, CSCO 47-48-49, Arabici 3-4-5, (Louvain, 1963), pp. 168-169.

<sup>62</sup> He is not mentioned among the bishops who attended the consecration of Myron in 1458 (cf. supra), as his name precedes the name of John of Assiut it is that he was an old man and died meanwhile or became to old that he was not able to attend the Myron ceremony.

<sup>63</sup> I. FORGET, *Synaxarium Alexandrinum II*, CSCO 67, Arabici 11, (Louvain, 1954), p. 190.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Samir Khalil SAMIR, “L’encyclopedie Liturgique d’Ibn Kabar (+ 1324) et son apologie d’usage Coptes”, in H.-J. FEULNER, E. VELKOUSKA and R. TAFT (eds.), *Crossword of Cultures Studies in Liturgy and patristics in Honor of Gabriele Winkler*, OCA (Roma, 2000), pp. 629-655.

<sup>65</sup> V. MISTRIH, *Pretiosa Margarita de Scientiis Ecclesiasticis* «Studia Orientalia Christiana Aegyptiaca» (Cairo 1966).

<sup>66</sup> Alfonso ‘ABDALLAH, *L’ordinamento Liturgico di Gabriele V...*

Section	Psalm	Remarks
19	2:9	The Morning hour <sup>67</sup>
119	2:11-12	The Morning hour <sup>68</sup>
101	8:18.	The Morning hour <sup>69</sup>
28	27[26]:1-2	The Morning hour <sup>70</sup>
50	29[28]:5-6	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>71</sup>
50	29[28]:8	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>72</sup>
50	29[28]:9	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>73</sup>
50	29[28]:10-11	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>74</sup>
12	34[33]:8	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>75</sup>
87	34[33]:20	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>76</sup>
72	41[40]:1-2	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>77</sup>
72	41[40]:3	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>78</sup>
28	43[42]:1-5	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>79</sup>
105	45[44]:2-6	The prayer of the Third hour (Terce) <sup>80</sup>
114	84[83]:5-6	The prayer of the Sixth hour (Sext) <sup>81</sup>
88	85[84]:1	The prayer of the Sixth hour (Sext) <sup>82</sup>
50	96[95]:3	The prayer of the Ninth hour (None) <sup>83</sup>
50	97[96]:3	The prayer of the Ninth hour (None) <sup>84</sup>
50	97[96]:5	The prayer of the Ninth hour (None) <sup>85</sup>

<sup>67</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church, Coptic and Arabic text from a Mediaeval manuscript* «Studia Orientalia Christiana Aegyptiaca» (Cairo, 1973), p. 143 (trans.).

<sup>68</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 143 (trans.).

<sup>69</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 145 (trans.) Ms P.

<sup>70</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 149 (trans.).

<sup>71</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 158 (trans.).

<sup>72</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 158 (trans.).

<sup>73</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 158 (trans.).

<sup>74</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 158 (trans.).

<sup>75</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 159 (trans.).

<sup>76</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 159 (trans.).

<sup>77</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 160 (trans.).

<sup>78</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 160 (trans.).

<sup>79</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 161 (trans.).

<sup>80</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 161 (trans.).

<sup>81</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 169 (trans.).

<sup>82</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 170 (trans.).

<sup>83</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 177 (trans.).

<sup>84</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 177 (trans.).

<sup>85</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 177 (trans.).

6	99[98]:5-6	The prayer of the Ninth hour (None) <sup>86</sup> This psalm is read for commemoration of bishops who fought for Faith <sup>87</sup>
6	110[109]:4	The prayer of the Ninth hour (None) <sup>88</sup> This psalm is read, in the Matins of the feast of Severus of Antioch 14 Meshir <sup>89</sup>
21	112[111]:1-2	The prayer of the Ninth hour (None) <sup>90</sup>
21	112[111]:5-8	The prayer of the Ninth hour (None) <sup>91</sup>
27	118[117]:7-18	The prayer of the Eleventh hour (Sunset) <sup>92</sup>
54	119[118]:19	The Prayer of the Middle of the Night <sup>93</sup>
12	119[118]:103	The Prayer of the Middle of the Night <sup>94</sup>
107	132[131]:9	The prayer of the Twelfth hour (Compline) <sup>95</sup>
107	132[131]:16-18	The prayer of the Twelfth hour (Compline) <sup>96</sup>
72	142[141]:7	The prayer of the Twelfth hour (Compline) <sup>97</sup>
30, 114	146[145]:5-6	The prayer of the Twelfth hour (Compline) <sup>98</sup>
104	147[146]:3	The prayer of the Twelfth hour (Compline) <sup>99</sup>

## 2. Quotations from the Lectionary

Section	Psalm	Remarks
42	68[67]: 36	Vespers of the 5 <sup>th</sup> Abīb, <sup>100</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> of Hatūr, <sup>101</sup> and

<sup>86</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 179 (trans.).

<sup>87</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, «Recherches de l'Institut de Lettres Orientales de Beyrouth» XV (Beyrouth, 1960), pp. 44-46.

<sup>88</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 180-181 (trans.).

<sup>89</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p.41-42.

<sup>90</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 181-182 (trans.).

<sup>91</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 181-182 (trans.).

<sup>92</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 187-188 (trans.).

<sup>93</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 214 (trans.).

<sup>94</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 220 (trans.).

<sup>95</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, pp. 197-198 (trans.).

<sup>96</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, pp. 197-198 (trans.).

<sup>97</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 201 (trans.).

<sup>98</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, pp. 201-202 (trans.).

<sup>99</sup> O.H.E. KHS-BURMESTER, *The Horologion of the Egyptian Church...*, p. 202 (trans.).

<sup>100</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p. 23

<sup>101</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p. 33.

<sup>102</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p. 32

		Matins of the 25th of Hatūr, <sup>102</sup> and the Liturgy of 27 <sup>th</sup> Baramudah <sup>103</sup> Psalmody of Kihak, And the Ode of Kihak <sup>104</sup>
48	78[77]: 3-4	Liturgy of the 27 <sup>th</sup> of Hatūr <sup>105</sup>
6	92[91]: 12-13	Matins and Liturgy of 16 Baūnah <sup>106</sup>
81	107[106]: 27	Matins 29 Hatūr <sup>107</sup> and the liturgy of 3 <sup>rd</sup> Abīb used also for the commemoration of Severus of Antioch on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> of Bābah <sup>108</sup>

### 3. Quotations from the Euchologion<sup>109</sup>

Section		
	Euchologion	the absolution of the deacons Mt 18:18.
49	Euchologion, the morning offering of incense	The priest incenses the icon of the Virgin saying “We hail you with the Angel Gabriel saying. Hail be with you full of grace, the Lord is with you” <sup>110</sup>
94	Euchologion, the a	The absolution of the mass which is a quotation from Romans 5:20
	Euchologion	This part resembles to the supplications in the Coptic liturgy of Saint Gregory
		Inspired from the Absolution of the ministers in the Coptic liturgy
		The prayer of the Aspasmos
32	Euchologion	After finishing the reading of the chapters and the Gospel, and the three great orisons, which are the (Intercession) of fathers, the (Intercession) of peace and the (Intercession) of congregations, they

<sup>103</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p. 37.

<sup>104</sup> LABIB, 1912-1922, p. 220

<sup>105</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p.36.

<sup>106</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p.54.

<sup>107</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p.40.

<sup>108</sup> M. DE FENOYL, *Le Sanctoral Copte*, p.42-43.

<sup>109</sup> We refer to the edition prepared by Abd al-Masih Salib which is considered as the best edition of the Euchologion cf. U. ZANETTI, “Esquisse d’une typologie des Euchologes Coptes Bohairiques”, *Le Muséon* 100 (1987), pp. 407-418.

<sup>110</sup> Abd al-Masih SALIB, ΠΙΣΩΜ ΝΤΕ ΠΙΕΣΧΟΛΟΓΙΟΝ ΕΘΘΑΒ ΕΤΕ ΦΔΙ ΠΕ ΠΙΣΩΜ ΝΤΕ ΨΩΜ† ΝΑΝΑΦΟΡΑ ΝΤΕ ΠΙΔΓΙΟΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΟΣ ΝΕΜ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΣ ΝΕΜ ΠΙΔΓΙΟΣ ΚΗΡΙΑΛΟΣ ΝΕΜ ΖΑΝΚΕΕΨΧΗ ΕΘΘΑΒ, [The book of the Holy Euchologion which is the book of the three anaphorae of St. Basil, St. Gregory and St. Cyril and other holy prayers] (Cairo 1902), p. 47.

		recited the Creed.
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## 4. Quotations from the Psalmodia

	Psalmodia	<i>Psali</i> of Friday
	Psalmodia	The contemplation of the Name of Jesus Christ is the main theme of the Daily <i>Psalis</i> cf. E. Lanne, “La prière de Jésus dans la tradition égyptienne. Témoignage des <i>psalies</i> et des inscriptions” <i>Irénikon</i> 50, 1977, p163-203.
	Psalmodia	Inspired from the conclusion of the Theotokia (tune Batos

## 5. Different books

	<i>Antiphonarium</i>	This part is a direct quotation from the cf. O’Leary, <i>The Difnar</i> , Vol II, p. 44-45.
	Antiphonarium	O’Leary, <i>The Difnar</i> , Vol. I, p. 27. <i>The Difnar</i> , Vol II, p. 44. Cf. also Burmester, <i>The Turuhat</i> , p. 164-165.
	Coptic synaxarium	Cf. R. Basset, <i>Le Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite</i> , PO I/3, 1904, p. 246-250. I. Forget, <i>Synaxarium Alexandrinum I</i> , CSCO 47-48-49, Louvain 1963, p. 12-13 (8 <sup>th</sup> of Thot
	Coptic Synaxarium	R. Basset, <i>Le Synaxaire Arabe Jacobite</i> , ( <i>Patrologia Orientalis</i> I/3), p. 313-314, O.H. E. Burmester, <i>The Liturgy Coram Patriarcha aut Episcopo in the Coptic Church</i> , in <i>Le Muséon</i> , 49 (1936), p. 79-84.
	Synaxarium	commemoration of Theodosius cf. J. Forget, <i>Synaxarium Alexandrinum</i> , CSCO 67, Louvain 1954, p. 192-194
	Horologion	Mt 5:15 the gospel of the prayed of the Sixth hour-Sext prayer
	Coptic Offices	James 4:16-18 the prayer of the sick in the Coptic church
	Coptic Offices	James 1:6. taken from the service of the anointing the sick
		Funeral rites for Severus the grandfather of Severus.

## 6. The Homily on the martyrs of Esna

8 text, 14 translation	Ps 132:	Psalmodia, Horolgion
9 text, 15	Euchologion	Cleaning the vessels after the communion and put the water on the beard
12 text, 18	Mt20:6	Psamodia, Tarh al-Fa'alah
16text, 23	Euchologion	Prayer of Thanksgiving, of the Apostles and Basil the Great for exorcism, ΦΘΟΝΟΣ ΝΙΒΕΝ ΠΙΡΑΔΜΟΣ ΝΙΒΕΝ ΕΝΕΡΓΙΑ ΝΙΒΕΝ ΝΤΕ ΠΑΤΑΝΑΔ ΠΟΘΗ ΝΤΕ ΨΑΝΡΩΜΙ ΕΨΩΘΟΨ ΝΕΜ ΠΤΩΝΨ ΝΤΕ ΨΑΝΖΑΔΨΙ ΝΗΕΤΨΗΠ ΝΕΜ ΝΗΕΘΟΨΟΝΨ ΕΒΟΛ and the conclusion of praising the Holy Trinity
17text, 23	Synaxarion	Commemoration of Isaac
19text, 26	Hymn	The Canticle of Amonius, the a hos for the martyrs (the book of the Kafus???... the conclusion is <b>ΜΑΡΘΟΥΣΑΨ</b> )
22text p31	Horologion	P127:3-4 Lectionary
31text 39	Euchologium	The prayer of the Gospel (i.e. the orison of the Gospel) and the absolution which is the conclusion of the vespers
31 text, 39	Eucholgion	Absolution to the Father (inaudibly) towards the end of the Eucharist
33 text42	Synaxarium	7 Barmhat the martyrdom of Philemon and Apollonius <sup>111</sup>
34 text 44	Synaxarium	29 kihak, the martyrdom of the martyrs of Akhmin (it is commemorated by the Sahidic version of the Synaxarium on the 30 <sup>th</sup> of Kihak <sup>112</sup> )
36 (text)45-46	Synaxarium	23 Abib The martrdom of Longinus <sup>113</sup>
37 (text) 47	Synaxarium	Diocletian as the son of Satan <sup>114</sup>

<sup>111</sup> I. FORGET, *Synaxarium Alexandrinum II*, p. 13.

<sup>112</sup> I. FORGET, *Synaxarium Alexandrinum I*, pp. 361-362.

<sup>113</sup> I. FORGET, *Synaxarium Alexandrinum II*, p. 236-237.

<sup>114</sup> Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF, "La genèse de la légende sur le roi Dioclétien", *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 28 (1986-1989), pp. 107-110.



38 48	(text) Euchologion	Hymn “ⲁⲗⲓⲐⲟⲨ Worthy, worthy”
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### Conclusion

We can conclude that John was bishop of Assiut in the beginning of his career ordained by Gabriel V, during this time the situation of the Copts was extremely difficult. And he died probably during the patriarchate of Matthew II. He was a great bishop and the most learned of his time. He mastered the Coptic language to a degree that that enabled him to compose a *psali* in Coptic. During his long career as a bishop he delivered several homilies, which are:

- The homily on Severus of Antioch, during the patriarchate of Gabriel V.
- The homily on the consecration of the sanctuary of the archangel Gabriel during the patriarchate of John XI, (it seems that at that time he composed the *psali* of Sunday).
- The homily on the martyrs of Esna during the patriarchate of Matthew II. It is during this time that his authority was extended to Abū Tiġ and Manfalūt. And he attended the rite of consecration the Myron in 1458 AD where he was a senior bishop.

The works of John of Assiut are very import for the following reasons:

1. They gave us a historical report for a period where our knowledge is extremely meagre.
2. They reflect the liturgical situation in Upper Egypt during the fifteenth century, the time when the Upper Egyptian liturgical were in its way to disappear and to be replaced by the Lower-Egyptian liturgical tradition.
3. They provide us with an important report on the hagiographical cults in the fifteenth century, which are not attested elsewhere. There is no mention of mother Dilagui neither in the inscriptions from the fifth to the seventh century,<sup>115</sup> nor in the inscriptions of the monastery of Esna,<sup>116</sup> or the hermitage of Esna.<sup>117</sup>

Recibido / Received: 18/04/2007

Aceptado / Accepted: 19/12/2007

<sup>115</sup> A. PAPAConstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Egypte des Byzantins aux Abbasides, l'apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes*. Préface Jean Gascou (Paris: CNRS, 2001), s.v.

<sup>116</sup> J. LEROY, *Les peintures des couvents du désert d'Esna*, MIFAO, 94 (Le Caire, 1975).

<sup>117</sup> S. SAUNERON, J. JACQUET, *Les Ermitages Chrétiens du désert d'Esna, I, Archéologie et Inscriptions*, FIFO, 29/1 (Le Caire, 1972).