Liturgical texts relating to the First Council of Ephesus (431): 
the Origin of the Date of 12th of Tût in the Coptic Calendar

[Textos litúrgicos relacionados con el Concilio de Éfeso (431): el origen de la fecha del 12 de Tût en el calendario copto]

Youhanna Nessim YOUSSEF
University of Divinity- Saint Athanasius College
ynyoussef@hotmail.com

Abstract: The Council of Ephesus is an important event in the Church History. In this paper, we give an introduction about the main events of this council; we will make an overview about the date of this event in the Byzantine, Syriac and Coptic traditions. We will provide the reader with three sets of the Coptic liturgical texts relating to this council and we will give a brief commentary on these texts.

Keywords: Coptic Bohairic liturgy; Church History.

Resumen: El concilio de Éfeso es una fecha importante en la historia de la Iglesia. En este trabajo, ofrecemos una introducción de los eventos más destacados de este concilio; haremos un recorrido sobre la fecha de esta festividad en la tradición bizantina, siria y copta. Además, ofrecemos al lector tres ejemplos de textos litúrgicos coptos relacionados con este concilio, así como un breve comentario de estos textos.

Palabras clave: Liturgia copta bohaírica; Historia de la Iglesia.
Youhanna Nessim

Introduction

The council of Ephesus is a turning point in the life of the Church. A Coptic tradition attributes to this council the introduction of the Creed.\(^1\) The sources relating to this council arrived in different languages such as Greek, Latin, Coptic, Syriac, Armenian and Georgian.\(^2\) In this council, Cyril of Alexandria played an important.\(^3\)

Despite this rich documentation, very few studies are dedicated to the liturgical texts relating to this council.

The Coptic liturgical texts provide an amazing date of the 12 Tût. In this paper, we will overview of all the dates relating, then we will give the commemoration of 12 Tût in the different calendars in order to show that the council of Ephesus is not mentioned in any at this date.

We will study the different calendars known in the Coptic tradition and we will conclude with the edition of the full texts of different l

Chronological table

The table below gives the development of the events\(^4\) in this council.\(^5\)

430

November 19. The Emperor Theodosius II invitation to the Synod at Ephesus.

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431

7 May. The Pope Celestine answers a letter giving a beautiful proof of his peace-disposition to Cyril.

15 May the pope Celestine addressed to the Emperor Theodosius saying that he could not be present at the Council

22 June. First session Nestorius is condemned by the Cyrillian council.

26 June. Cyril and Memnon are condemned by the Oriental.

29 June. Sacra sent to the Cyrillian council by Palladius.

1 July. Relation of the Cyrillians to Theodosius carried by Palladius.

10-11 July. The legates of the pope subscribed to the condemnation of Nestorius.

16-17. After three convocations John of Antioch is condemned by the Cyrillians.

22 July. Affair of the priest Charisius at the Cyrillian council.

Sacra confirming the depositions of Nestorius, Cyril and Memnon and putting them under arrest

13 August. The Cyrillian bishops sent to Constantinople wrote the Cyrillian council.

Eight legates of each party are sent to the court by imperial order

11. September. The legates of the prefecture of the Orient are received in audience by the Emperor

25 October. Maximian is ordained with the assistance of the Cyrillians.

31 October, Cyril escape from the prison and returned back to Alexandria.

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End of July Theodosius wrote to John of Antioch and to Simon Stylite for the peace with Cyril

25 December Sermon of Paul of Emesa at Alexandria in front of Cyril.
As we can see none of the dates mentioned above corresponds to date of 12th Tút (9th September). The closer date is 11th September when the legates of the Oriental are received by the emperor. Hence it is important to investigate the origin of the date in the Coptic Synaxarion.

The Council of Ephesus in the Coptic literature

Many Coptic texts are related to the council of Ephesus, for example, in one text we find the Abbot Victor of the monastery Pbow playing an important, in another tradition relating this council to Shenoute which is confirmed by the fragments of the History of the Patriarchs this tradition is also attested in the doxology Batos of Shenoute

ἀληθῶς ἀκολούθησας ἡμῖν ὁ θεός ἡ συνόδος ἡ ἔννοιαν ἡ ἑτεροδοξία ἡ ἑν τοις ἐφεσίσι, Truly, you became elevated in the midst in the Synod of our Orthodox fathers in the city of Ephesus

7 C. Lenormant, « Note relative aux fragments du concile œcuménique d’Éphèse » Mémoires de l’Académies des inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 19 (2) (1852)
9 Nahdat ’l-Kanais, Εις τὸν θεόν θερμήνευσας θεοῦν ἀνθρώποι τῇ προκρίμενῃ ἀποκαλύψει τοῦ θεοῦν, [The book of the holy psalmody as it was established by the fathers of the Coptic Orthodox church] (Cairo: s.n., 1949), pp. 423-424. This doxology, in the edition of Tukhi, is dedicated to Cyril of Alexandria as Shenoute is not recognized as a saint in the Catholic Church. cf. Y. ‘Abd al-Masih, “Doxologies in the Coptic Church. Edited Bohairic Doxologies”, Bulletin de la Société d’Archéologie Copte 6(1940), pp. 19-76 espec., p. 48.
You gave shame to Nestorius the impious patriarch, you confess the good confession.

In one unity of the Life giving Trinity the consubstantial The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, three names one God.

And you heard the voice from heaven, proclaiming and saying: You are consecrated Senuthius the archimandrite.

The Calendars

In the Byzantine tradition, the commemoration occurs in the Synaxarion of Constantinople on 9 September (12 Tūt):

Tē σεῦ ἡμερα μνήμην ἐπετελούμεν τῶν ἑκατόν πεντήκοντα ἑγίων

The Synaxarion of Constantinople was revised by the order of the Emperor Basil II (975-1025AD)11. In the tenth century, The Melkites started to translate their synaxarium12 to Arabic where we can find this commemoration in the Manuscript Paris Arabe 254 fol. 7r-v.13 The

10 H. Delehaye, Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e codice sirmondiano, (Bruxelles: Société Bollandistes 1954), Col. 31-32.
translation of the Melkite Synaxarion will have a great influence on the Copto-arabic synaxarion. We may assume that the date proposed by the Coptic Synaxarion is, in fact, the influence of the Melkite influence. It is worth mentioning that the number of the bishops in the Coptic tradition is two hundred while in the Greek tradition is one hundred and fifty.

While in the Syriac tradition the calendar: for the 9th September (Iylûl) commemoration of Šarbil and his sister, Mor Julian the elder, saint Basildes the martyr, the birth of the Virgin Mary, Joachim and Anna, Yûrâ the martyr. The commemoration of the Council of Ephesus is on 18 January (2 Canûn).

Hence we find that the commemoration of the Council of Ephesus in the Coptic Church is influenced by the Byzantine tradition rather than the Syriac one.

The commemoration is mentioned in the Synaxarion, (c.13 century) however only one manuscript of the Meneloges of the Gospels (12 Tût).

This commemoration is absent from the calendars of Ibn al-Rahib, (13 century) Abu Barakat Ibn Kabar (12 Tût) (14 century) and Qalqašandî. (15 century).

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14 Roger Akhrass, كليدار الأغياد السيدية وذكرات القديسين في كنيسة أهلة السريانية الأرثوذكسية، منشورات دار [Calendar of the Lordly feasts and the commemorations of the saints in the Church of Antioch the Syriac Orthodox, Publications of the centre of the Syriac studies,] (Damascus : Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East for the Syriac Orthodox, 2015), pp. 134-135.


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Only few fragments survive from the Coptic calendar of Upper Egypt, a late fragment of the lectionary from White Monastery, (Paris, BNF Copte 43, f.25r (= p. 7 of the quire) commemorates Anba Isaac the Stylite the anchorite.20

The commemoration of the 12th Tût is not mentioned in the seven manuscripts used by Bishop Samuel for his edition of the book the Order of the Church “Tartîb al-Bay’ah”

The Book of Turuhat (pl. 1)

O.H.E. Burmester was the first to study the Turuhat21 however his leading studies, very few studies were done in this subject. We will use the manuscript Coptic Museum 323 Lit22 from the fifteen century

Tarh Batos

The 12th day of the month of Thot, the Council of the 200 in Ephesus - Batos

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The 200 bishops assembled in the city Ephesus according to the order of Jesus Christ (and) His Good Father.

For the denying of the Godless Nestorius the impious, the heretic man who belongs to the evil heresy.

Who blasphemed the Son of God and made him two natures, two hypostases in his inferior mind.

Our holy fathers, the 200 bishops clothed themselves with might from the Elevated by the Holy Spirit.

They anathematized him and threw him from his high-priesthood and banished him from his throne.

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23 Read ἀστυπαρικός
24 In Arabic “desired ardently” or “agitare the arms while walking’ hence going on march.
25 Arabic: "deposed".
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And they cursed everyone who says his abominable statement, saying two Natures and two wills.

Afterwards, our fathers, the bishops victoriously went to their place by Jesus Christ who acts in them every time.

Pray to the Lord on our behalf our lords fathers the 200 bishops in Ephesus in order that He...

In order to respond to the following doctrine of Nestorius:

Who blasphemed the Son of God and made him two natures, two hypostases in his inferior mind.

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26 Arabic adds: “back”.
The *theotokia* of Monday states this:²⁷

Jesus Christ the Word, who was *incarnated*, without alternation, became *perfect man*.

He did neither alternate, nor mingle or separate *in any form* after the unity.

*But* He is One *Nature*, one *Hypostasis* and one *Prosopon* for God the Word.

Our text declares this statement:

> Our text declares this statement:

And they cursed everyone who says his abominable statement, saying two *Natures* and two wills.

The acts of the council mention the following statement:

The holy and great synod, therefore stated that the only begotten Son, begotten of God the Father according to nature, true God from true God... We too ought to follow these words and these teachings and consider what is meant by saying that the Word from God took flesh and became man. For we do not say the nature of the Word was changed and became flesh, nor that He was turned into a whole man made of body and soul. Rather de we claim that the Word in an

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²⁷ 
Nahdat 'l-Kanais, *pause* *ithe* *they* *philologe* *kayal*, p. 158, *Theotokia of Monday* part 6.
unspeakable, inconceivable manner united to himself hypostatically
flesh enlivened by a rational soul, and so became man and was called
son of man, not by God’s will alone or good pleasure, nor by
assumption of a person alone. Rather did two different natures come
together to form a unity, and from both arose one Christ, One Son. It
was not though the distinctness of natures was destroyed by the
union, but divine and humanity together made perfect for us ONE
LORD AND ONE CHRIST. 28

So we shall confess one Christ and one Lord. We do not adore the
man along with the Word, so as to avoid any appearance of division by
using the word “with”. But we adore him as one and the same,
because, because the body is no other than the Word... We ought not,
therefore, to split into two sons the one Lord Jesus Christ....29

Hence from this statement we see that only the “nature” was
highlighted and not Will, which will be raised by the crisis of the
Monothelitism: The teaching that the person of Christ has “one will”
or voluntative activity was promulgated by Patriarch Sergius in his
statement entitled Psephos (633), and officially endorsed by Emperor
Heraclius in his Ekthesis (638) in an effort (given the increasingly
fragile state of Byzantine. 30

Hence we can conclude that text provided here above was written
after the seventh century as it is more related to the Monothelite
controversy of the seventh century while it should be related to the
christological controversy of 431. The same confusion occurs also in
the life of Samuel of Kalamon where we find that Samuel opposed to
the council of Chalcedon.

28 N. Tanner, S.J. Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, volume One Nicaea I to Lateran V,
( Westminster: Georgetown University Press, 1990), pp. 41-42.
29 Tanner, Decrees of the Ecumenical, p. 43.
30 E. Epsen, “Monothelitism”, The Encyclopaedia of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, J.A.
To them also Adam

When the heretic Nestorius blasphemed against the Son of God

And he made Him (Jesus) in his abominable counsel: two Natures and two wills

They were asking him to return back from this blaspheme. He did not return.

They cursed him with all who are with him and they broke with him and exiled him

They established saying: “Jesus Christ three hypostases, One God

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31 Not in Coptic.
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He is not divided at all (even) for one second: One God, He is never divided.

But one Nature, one Hypostasis, one God, He is God the Word

Through the prayers of the 200 bishops Lord grant us...

Commentary

The first stanza confuses Christological doctrine with Trinitarian doctrine as Nestorius never denied the Divinity of Christ.

“When the heretic Nestorius blasphemed against the Son of God, And he made Him (Jesus) in his abominable counsel: two Natures and two wills They established saying: “Jesus Christ three hypostases, One God He is not divided at all (even) for one second: One God, He is never divided.

But one Nature, one Hypostasis, one God, He is God the Word As we mentioned in the previous text, Nestorius did not tackle the problem of “Wills” which will appear two centuries later.

The text here echoes the theotokia of Monday (mentions above) as well as the doxology of Shenoute.

The text makes an overview about the heresy of Nestorius however the theological expressions are not accurate
Doxology

No doxology is found in the collection of manuscripts used by Yassa Abd al-Masih, however I find a doxology in the Manuscript Paris Copte 123 (Pl. 2).

The 12th of the month of Tut the commemoration of the Angel Michael and the assemble of the 200 in Ephesus

Doxology Batos for the third council of the 200 in Ephesus

Our holy father, Abba Cyril the great high-priest and our fathers the bishops all assembled in Ephesus

Jesus the great shepherd was in their midst and they confirmed that the Virgin gave birth to God the Word

Because of the word of blasphemy of the impious Nestorius that the Virgin did not give birth to God

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34 Read ἱλαστήριον
35 Read εὐφεσιος
36 Read Νεστοριος
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The 200 of Ephesus became full of the Holy Spirit and they reproved him and they destroyed his blasphemous word.

Then blessed are you truly, O priests of Christ, the bright stars on the whole World

Pray: the 200 of Ephesus abba Cyril and who are with him.

Commentary

While the doxology is too short and the scribe did not master the Coptic language as it is apparent from the number of mistakes, however his understanding of the history of theology is more accurate than that of the Tarh.

Difnar

The Difnar of Lower-Egypt has this commemoration while it is absent from the Antiphonarion of Upper Egypt.

57 Read ἐφεσός
58 Read εὐεργετή
59 Read ἐφεσός
We can compare the text with the text of the Antiphornarion, (Difnar)\textsuperscript{42} for which we use the manuscript Coptic Museum 357A Lit.\textsuperscript{43}

The 12\textsuperscript{th} of the month of Tút, the holy council of the 200 at Ephesus

Our fathers the bishops and our father Cyril assembled against Nestorius

This who blasphemed with his abominable tongue who is worthy to be cut from his evil mouth

Against our Mistress of all, the Mother of God, the pride of the faithful, the holy Mary

He said: The Virgin did not give birth not to God but a man


\textsuperscript{43} Nashaat Mekhaiel, Untersuchungen zur Entstehungs- und Überlieferungsgeschichte des koptischen Difnars, Aschendorf Verlag, Münster, 2010 (= Jerusalemer Theologisches Forum 14), pp. 42-47.

\textsuperscript{44} Read ṕενικοπος

\textsuperscript{45} Read ῥετάωριος
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But afterwards, God became in Him not in unity but in wish

In this means calling Christ that two natures and one hypostasis

They established with their life-giving words: The holy Virgin gave birth to God

He became man without changing until He saved the race of Adam

They rebuked Nestorius and who are with him afterwards they anathematized him

46 Read μετοποιος
They established canons and teachings of life in the church forever. They established canons and teachings of life in the church forever.

Blessed are you O Bishops. 200 who assembled at Ephesus.

Through the prayers.

Commentary

The first three stanzas highlight the role of Cyril. The author/compiler of this text evokes in the following stanzas the doctrine of Nestorius who claimed that the Virgin Mary ought to be called only Christotokos, the Mother of Christ, and any other title given to her designated a false understanding of Christology, betraying (as he thought) a confusion of the divine and human properties in Jesus. Initially, Nestorius preferred to designate the Virgin Mary as Anthropotokos, Mother of the Man, but eventually chose to refer to her as Christotokos, Mother of Christ, as he sought to bring about unity in his divided church.

The dogma of Ephesus was in fact proclaimed in the year 433 AD, two years after the council with the Formula of Union (in Cyril’s Letters as “Let the Heavens Rejoice”), according to which they agreed that Christ was one person (hypostasis). The Council of Ephesus set
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the terms of the fundamental Christology of the church, determining the agendas of the next three ecumenical councils to come. 49

To them also tune Batos

Truly I am amazed and my mind is marveled when I talk about your honour Cyril the cub.

And the fathers bishops who assembled at Ephesus because of cause of Nestorius when he blasphemed against the Virgin

That impure and abominable that Satan talked in him delivering these evil words that the Virgin did not give birth to God


50 Read ὃς ὑπήρθη εἰς τὸν Ῥηγήματος τῆς ἑτήσιας ἐκκλησίας

51 Read Ἠν Ηπείρος τῆς ἑτήσιας ἐκκλησίας

52 Read εἴτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἔκκλησις τῆς ἑτήσιας ἐκκλησίας

53 Read it should be either εἴτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἔκκλησις τῆς ἑτήσιας ἐκκλησίας or εἴτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἔκκλησις τῆς ἑτήσιας ἐκκλησίας
Youhanna Nessim

But she gave birth to a man like every man afterwards God wished and came and dwelt in Him.

David the prophet killed Goliath the Allophyles and removed shame and reproach from Israel’s sons.

You killed Nestorius, O great bishops, you made him anathema with his father Satan.

O priests of Christ, the rational shepherd of the holy flock of the Orthodox.

O brave mighty and the good fighter against the evil heretics, the enemies of Christ.

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54 1 Sam 17:48-51.
55 Ps 151:7.
56 Read ἰεροοδοξος
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0 luminous pillars of the whole World who established truly for us the straight faith

Pray to the Lord on our behalf and this martyr Clems and his companions the martyrs so that He forgive our sins

Commentary

The text here repeats the same statement as the previous texts regarding the doctrine of Nestorius.

The image of David and Goliath is unique in the whole corpus relating to the council of Ephesus.

Again the last stanza, asking the in prayers of saint Clems is also unique, we should expect the prayers of the 200 hundred bishops assembled in Ephesus. It seems that there are some missing stanzas.

Conclusion

The Council of Ephesus is an important event in the Church History, as this is apparent from its inclusion even in the monastic biographies such as the life of Shenoute and Victor.

The Chronological table in the beginning of the article did not include any date close to the date of the 12th Tût (9th September).

While the Coptic church is a sister church of the Syriac church, however for the commemoration to the Council of Ephesus, we notice
that the source of this date is Byzantine Synaxarion of Constantinople, the Syriac calendar commemorates the council of Ephesus on the 18 January.

The Calendars of Lower Egypt such as the calendar of Ibn Kabar, Ibn al-Rahib, Qalqašandî did not include this commemoration and only one manuscript of the Menologe includes this event.

The Upper Egypt Typikon of the White Monastery commemorates for this day Isaac the stylite.

Only three sets of Liturgical text commemorate this event.

The Turuhat in both tunes, they highlight the doctrine of Nestorius however with anachronism as we find the mention of the “two wills”.

The doxology Batos, we find only one manuscript, despite its late date and the ignorance of the scribe, the theological contents are nearly accurate.

The Difnar also echoed the theological doctrines Nestorius concerning the Virgin Mary.

These texts are also used in other liturgical texts such as the doxology batos for Saint Shenoute and the Theotokia of Monday.

This study shows once more the importance of the studying of the liturgical texts for the history and theology.
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Manuscript Coptic Museum 323 Lit. fol. 206v-209r
(Pl. 1)
Paris Copte 123 fol. 26v-27r  
(Pl. 2)
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