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The Legend of Saint Aūr and the monastery of Naqlūn : the Copto-Arabic texts

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Introduction to the present study: aims, methods, outline.

In a country in the East a certain king kept a famous magician called Abrašīt at his court. This magician fell in love with the king's daughter. She bore him an illegitimate son whom she named Aūr. When the king discovered his identity, Abrašīt was forced to take two elder sons of his and Aūr with him and flee from the court. They set out for Jerusalem, but the archangel Gabriel guided them to the Fayyūm in Egypt, where the family settled in the desert of Naqlūn and grew prosperous by practising the arts of magic. The father Abrašīt died some five months after their arrival. Following miraculous appearances of the Virgin Mary and the archangels Michael and Gabriel, the three young men were converted to Christianity and Aūr started building a church in the name of Gabriel.

In the meantime the king of the country in the East had been succeeded by his son, who yielded to his mother's request for the return of her grandson Aūr. Messengers were sent in search of Aūr and after some time they found him at the mountain of Naqlūn. Reassured by the archangel Gabriel that this matter was from God, Aūr went with them. With great joy Aūr was welcomed at the court and he stayed with the royal family in the palace. After one month Aūr wished to return the Fayyūm to continue the building of the church. Loaded with gifts Aūr returned to the mountain of Naqlūn, where he restarted building the church, as the queen-mother, his grandmother, had told him to do. The archangel Gabriel defended its construction against attempts by Satan to frustrate the building operations. On 26 Ba'ūna the bishop of the Fayyūm, Anbā Isaac, consecrated the new church, and at the same time ordained Aūr priest. On the death of this bishop, the patriarch of Alexandria made Aūr his successor. Aūr built cells for the monks and houses for the pilgrims at the mountain of Naqlūn and he took care of the poor.

As his death drew near, Aūr called the anchorite John to him and told him the story of his life. This John, speaking in the first person, reports these last moments of Aūr's life and informs us that he is recording the story of Saint Aūr for the use and benefit of the monks and to glorify the archangel Gabriel.

So far a summary of the legendary story about St. Aūr and the building of the church of the archangel Gabriel at the mountain of Naqlūn. The principal text containing this legend, indicated in the following as the *Naqlūn homily*, is the main subject of this study. Previously, the text was only known in a French translation by E. Amélineau published in 1888, in a

volume composed of several tales and romances originating from Christian Egypt.¹ Apart from the French translation, the text was also known in an English translation, made by Sir Ernest Wallis Budge and published in 1935, that was most probably based on Amélineau's earlier translation.² Budge included his version of the legend similarly in a volume consisting of Egyptian tales and romances, originating not only from a Christian environment, but from a pagan and Muslim background as well.³

The principal aim of the present study is to make the *Naqlūn homily* available for a scholarly audience in the form of a critical edition accompanied by an annotated translation in English. In addition to this philological work, the contents of the text are studied from a literary, historical, and hagiographic point of view and commented upon, in order to do justice to the importance of the text in particular for the (literary) history of the monastery of Naqlūn and in general for the Coptic hagiographic tradition to which field it belongs.⁴ The text is also investigated for its particular linguistic features. In the following a few explanatory remarks are made on these various aspects and on the organization of the present study.

The first step in my research was to collect the manuscripts containing the *Naqlūn homily*. I searched the catalogues of libraries and undertook several journeys to Egypt and Paris and a virtual journey to Chicago to trace the relevant manuscripts. The surprising result of these journeys was the discovery of a number of twenty-three manuscripts related to the monastery of Naqlūn.⁵ In addition to the *Naqlūn homily*, four other homiletic texts and a hymn were identified, each related to the monastery of Naqlūn in a different way. The five homiletic texts and the hymn are part of the subject matter of the present book.

The majority of the twenty-three discovered manuscripts, more precisely seventeen, contain the *Naqlūn homily*, and a description of each is presented (chapter I). The *Naqlūn homily* appears to be represented in four different versions, here called recensions.⁶ The four recensions are represented in a varying number of manuscripts and the relations between these

¹ Amélineau translated the legend from a manuscript that had been copied for him on his request. This manuscript is kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris under number Paris Ar. 4796-2, f. 82v-106v, see the description of ms. E below in chapter I, 2. *Presentation and description of the manuscripts*. Amélineau adds to this text the following title: *Histoire d'Aour*. See Amélineau 1888, 1:109-143.

² Budge 1935, 247-263. Budge adds to this text the following title: *The History of Aur, the son of the magician Abrashūt by a queen*. Budge does not mention from which text he translated this story, but its similarity with the story as given by Amélineau is remarkable.

³ Budge 1935.

⁴ The term Coptic in this respect refers to Egyptian Christianity in general, implying literature written in Coptic as well as in Arabic.

⁵ The number of 23 manuscripts concerns the available manuscripts solely. To my knowledge there is an unknown number of manuscripts related to the legend kept in the monastery of St. Paul at the Red Sea (and perhaps at other places too), but these were not available for this study.

⁶ For the term recension, see Macé 2015, 336, 340.

manuscripts have been unravelled and made visible in a stemma, a hypothetical reconstruction of the textual history of the *Naqlūn homily*. Concerning the edition, one of the manuscripts has been selected as the base manuscript that can serve as a starting point. From the remaining manuscripts those have been selected that appear to contain valuable variants with respect to the base text (chapter II). The complete text of the *Naqlūn homily* is presented, accompanied with a translation into English and the variants are noted in the critical apparatus (chapter III).

The *Naqlūn homily* is written in Arabic. Until now no text in Coptic has been found, although Budge gives the impression of the existence of a Coptic original in the introduction of his book, by which other scholars were misled.⁷ The *Naqlūn homily* is written in the characteristic language of this type of Christian Arabic literature, the so-called Middle Arabic language. Actually, all six texts are written in this language variety, including the hymn that is bilingual, written both in Middle Arabic and in Bohairic Coptic. The specific linguistic characteristics of the *Naqlūn homily* have been studied and the results are presented in chapter IV.

In addition to the central work concerning the text edition, the *Naqlūn homily* is studied and commented upon from a literary and a historical point of view. Apart from its literary genre, namely a homily, several other features attract the attention, such as the aspect of magic and the important role of the archangel Gabriel. The names of persons and places and other indications contained in the text may provide historical information. The author wrote the text down with a specific aim in mind, at a specific moment in the history of the monastery. Study of all these aspects give this text a particular and unique place in the broader field of Coptic hagiographic literature (chapter V).

The first five chapters concern the edition and study of the *Naqlūn homily* in all its aspects and they form the first and the core part of the book (part 1). The five other texts that are related to the monastery of Naqlūn in different ways, are dealt with in the second part of the book (part 2), in chapters VI-IX and appendix 1. The texts themselves, insofar as accessible, are presented, accompanied with a translation, and in each case followed by a comprehensive commentary. The second text, indicated as *The Journey of St. Aūr*, describes two episodes of St. Aūr's life in a very detailed way (chapter VI). The third text, *The Life of Anbā Isaac of the mountain of al-Barambil*, underlines the historically well known relation between St. Antony and the Fayyūm (chapter VII). The fourth text, *The origins of monasticism at the mountains of Qalamūn and Naqlūn*, reveals a special view on the origins

⁷ See Budge 1935, 11-12; 28-29.

of monasticism at these mountains, two monastic sites that were situated in each other's vicinity and maintained close relations in history (chapter VIII).

Apart from the manuscripts containing the *Naqlūn homily* as a whole, two manuscripts were discovered that contain a homily in which a part of the *Naqlūn homily* is inserted. The homily concerns the consecration of a sanctuary of the archangel Gabriel in a church in al-Ḥandaq⁸ in Cairo, performed by Patriarch John XI of Alexandria in the fifteenth century. On this occasion a homily had been composed in which a passage about the building of the church of the angel Gabriel at the mountain of Naqlūn was included. The text is referred to in this study as the Ḥandaq homily (chapter IX).

Moreover, in one of the two codices containing the Ḥandaq homily, a hymn on the archangel Gabriel is included, in which mention is made of the monastery of Naqlūn and St. Aūr. The codex is dated to AD 1470-1473 and the hymn is written in Bohairic Coptic and Arabic in parallel columns. This hymn is briefly discussed in appendix 1 and an edition and translation are presented.

In addition to the manuscripts written in Arabic, a large number of manuscripts in Ge'ez, *i.e.* Classical Ethiopic, dealing with the legend of St. Aūr and the monastery of the archangel Gabriel at Naqlūn were identified. A survey of these Ethiopic manuscripts is presented in appendix 2.

The abovegiven outline of the present study concerns the texts themselves. For a better understanding of the material, first some information about the context of these texts is provided, from a historical, literary and geographical point of view.

⁸ For the village al-Ḥandaq, see Timm 1984-1992, 3:1082-1087.

Context

1. Introduction

All texts studied in this book are related to the monastery of Naqlūn. First some information about the monastery itself is presented, based on the results of the archaeological investigations carried out on site. This short historical sketch is followed by a study of the secondary literary and liturgical sources. References to the *Naqlūn homily* occurring in other literary sources form external indications for its popularity and may help to establish the date of its composition. The manuscripts containing the *Naqlūn homily*, or referring to it, originate from various places in Egypt. The geographical distribution of the manuscripts gives an idea of the diffusion of the text itself and consequently of its popularity. The history of the monastery, the secondary sources, and the diffusion of the *Naqlūn homily* provide the context for the study of this text in particular, and situates it in its historical, literary and geographical background. Insight into the context is also important for the study of the other texts that are similarly related to the monastery of Naqlūn. This study of the context as a prologue to the actual study ends with a short conclusion.

2. The monastery of Naqlūn

The *Naqlūn homily* has as its central theme the building of the church dedicated to the archangel Gabriel at the mountain of Naqlūn. The church still exists today as part of a monastic complex, that is known in history under three different names: Dayr al-Naqlūn (the monastery of Naqlūn, in Coptic: ⲛⲉⲕⲗⲟⲛⲓ), Dayr al-Malāk Ġubriyāl (the monastery of the angel Gabriel), and Dayr al-Ḥašaba (the monastery of the Beam) (in Coptic: ⲛⲟⲛⲁⲥⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ ⲙⲏⲟⲩⲉ).⁹ This monastery, repopulated since the 1980s, is situated in the south eastern region of the Fayyūm province in Egypt, at the foot of a ridge of desert hills that belong to the mountain of Naqlūn.¹⁰ It lies about 136 km southwest of Cairo and 16 km southeast of the city of Fayyūm, the capital of the province, and 3 km to the east of the village Qalamša. Its distance to the canal Baḥr al-Ġaraq, which flows round the Fayyūm oasis, is about 1.300 m.

⁹ The monastery is sometimes also named Dayr Abū Kašaba; thus it occurs on a map of the Fayyūm province, first published in Egypt in 1957, and as Dayr Abū Schaschab on a map by Schweinfurth 1886, map 2. For a discussion of the name of the monastery, see chapter V, 10. *History and religious landscape* (with references). See also below, about al-Maqrīzī's work mentioning the three names of the monastery.

¹⁰ For a map of the region and plans of the site and excavations, see Derda 1995a, vol. 2 (Plates); see also an updated map of the site made in 2007 by W. Małkowski, in Godlewski 2010, 231, fig. 1.

Since 1986 archaeological investigations have been carried out at the site.¹¹ A Polish team under the direction of W. Godlewski started excavations, following the rediscovery by papyrologist E. Wipszycka of the monastic *Rule* attributed to St. Antony that was purportedly written for the monks of the monastery of *Nacalon*, that is, Naqlūn.¹² According to the reports regularly published by the Polish team,¹³ the origins of the monastic community go back to the fifth century, when the first hermitages were cut in the slopes of the desert mountain of Naqlūn. These hermitages were used by monks practising a semi-anachoretic style of life. At present a number of eighty-nine caves has been discovered in this mountain. The majority of these rock-cut complexes, altogether eighty-one, are located in the mountain hills to the east of the modern monastery. A smaller group of eight hermitages is located to the west, near the canal. The caves were in use in different phases from the second half of the fifth century up till probably the fourteenth century, when the last hermitage was abandoned.

Apart from the hermitages the monastery consisted of a number of central buildings representing the coenobitic type of monastic life. Two ancient cemeteries have been unearthed, located to the west of the modern monastery, and are dated to around the sixth century.¹⁴ Near the present-day monastery, at the east side of it, the ruins of the former central monastic complex have been found. The structures include monastic architecture from the end of the fifth and the sixth centuries, and later buildings, including the (presumed) church of the archangel Michael, dating from the tenth-eleventh century. Shortly later, in the eleventh century, a large cemetery developed in the ruins of the ancient monastery around the (presumed) church of the archangel Michael and remained in use until the fourteenth century.¹⁵ Central in the present-day monastery stands the church of the archangel Gabriel. This church had been erected in the eighth century and after its destruction, probably due to a great fire, it had been refurbished.¹⁶ The walls of the church were (re-)decorated with paintings, and inscriptions were added to several of them. As these inscriptions include names of persons and places and dates, they form an important source for the history of the

¹¹ For literature on the monastery of Naqlūn before the start of the excavations in 1986, see especially Timm 1984-1992, 2:762-767. See also Johann Georg 1930, 19, fig. 41-43; Abbott 1937; Martin 1966, 187, 188, 190; Meinardus 1967.

¹² See Wipszycka 1990.

¹³ Modern (not exhaustive) bibliography: the yearly reports of the excavations at Naqlūn published in *PAM* since 1990; for a general overview, see Godlewski 1997; see also Derda 1995a, 19-40; Godlewski 2005a. For further information see also: Godlewski, Herbich and Wipszycka 1990; Dobrowolski 1990; Godlewski, Derda and Górecki 1994; Derda 1994; 1995a; 1995b; Godlewski 1997; 2000a; 2000b; 2000c; 2005a; 2005b; Godlewski and Łajtar 2006; Wipszycka 1996; 2009, 128-138.

¹⁴ See Godlewski 2011, 468-472.

¹⁵ See Godlewski 2011, 472-477.

¹⁶ For the date of the construction of the church, see Godlewski 2002, 169, and 2010, 230. See also Grossmann 1982, 118, 120 and Dobrowolski 1990, 201.

monastery itself and its relation to the environment.¹⁷ Among these is the foundation inscription found in the apse, which mentions the name of Patriarch Zakharias, who was miaphysite patriarch of Alexandria in the period 1004-1032. This information makes it possible to situate the (re-)building of the church in the first half of the eleventh century.¹⁸ The renovation of the church took place under the direction of the archimandrite Papnoute, the head of the monastery, whose name also occurs in the foundation inscription. Among the inscriptions is a prayer for the local bishop and another records the visit of a bishop of Atfīḥ round the year 1033. A bilingual (Coptic and Arabic) inscription, dated to AD 1183, commemorates the death of a bishop, and his burial 'at this holy place', which suggests that bishops may have resided in this monastery.¹⁹ Several inscriptions made by the painters and by visitors mention their places of origin, including Atfīḥ and Aqfahs, and also the monastery of St. Antony (most probably not the famous one situated at the Red Sea, but the one located close to the Fayyūm),²⁰ which suggests that there were relations between the monastery of Naqlūn and these other sites. The inscriptions show that in the period of renovation of the church of the archangel Gabriel, in the eleventh century, the church and probably the monastery as a whole were flourishing.

After this period, the monastery slowly declined and in the fourteenth century only the Church of the archangel Gabriel and the area around it were left over.²¹ For the following centuries a few reports of travelers confirm this situation. The first European²² who visited this site in the seventeenth century was J.M. Wansleben, and he reported that, what at the time was known as the Monastery of the Beam, was quite old and nearly totally ruined, except for the church of the archangel Gabriel, which he describes as very beautiful.²³ He found that there was another church that he could not enter because it was used for the storage of the provisions of the monastery. Wansleben also visited a few hermitages in the mountain behind the monastery, but they were deserted.

¹⁷ J. van der Vliet, who recorded the inscriptions in the church, kindly gave me a copy of his (not yet published) edition of the inscriptions discovered in the Church of the Archangel Gabriel at Naqlūn.

¹⁸ See Godlewski 2000b, 91.

¹⁹ One of the Coptic letters excavated in the central area at Naqlūn is addressed to a bishop, see Van der Vliet 2005, 191. Bishops often chose monasteries as their dwelling place, see Derda 1995a, 154; and more generally, Giorda 2009.

²⁰ This monastery founded by St. Antony was located probably near Atfīḥ, but its exact location is still uncertain, see Timm 1984, 2:742-749; Wipszycka 2004, 141; Wipszycka 2009, 251-259.

²¹ Godlewski 1997, 133.

²² Vansleb, Johann Michael Wansleben, a German Orientalist and monk of the Dominican order, visited Egypt in 1672-73 and bought several manuscripts for the Royal Library of Paris. About his stay in Egypt, see his report, Vansleb [1678] 1972. About Vansleb, see Hamilton [2006] 2009, 142-151; Horn 1992, 2:1-6, with further literature in nt. 1.

²³ Vansleb [1678] 1972, 166-167.

Later visitors, like Johann Georg Duke of Saxony in the first half of the twentieth century and the scholar O. Meinardus in more recent times, wrote in their reports also about the presence of the church of the archangel Gabriel.²⁴ The monastery had been abandoned at a certain moment, but most probably the church remained continuously in use. In the second half of the twentieth century, a monk called Father ‘Abd al-Masīḥ, who started his monastic life in the monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, came to live at the monastery of Naqlūn and other monks followed. At present the monastery is experiencing a revival and is inhabited by about twenty monks; new buildings have been erected and the central church of the archangel Gabriel has recently been renovated.²⁵ The archaeological investigations are still being continued and especially W. Godlewski of Warsaw University, the director of the excavations, has frequently published reports on this monastic site.²⁶ The textual material that has come to light in the central area as well as in the hermitages comprise documents in Greek, Coptic, Arabic and even Latin. A number of the Greek papyri have been published by T. Derda in two volumes.²⁷ Chr. Gaubert and J-M. Mouton studied an archive written in Arabic that once belonged to a Coptic family, Banū Bifām, living in a nearby village and dating around the year 1000.²⁸ The Coptic texts are mostly documentary and a few are private letters, the majority dating from the tenth-eleventh centuries. After several preliminary publications, the late K. Urbaniak-Walczak has published part of them²⁹ and J. van der Vliet is preparing a publication of the remaining Coptic texts.³⁰ A codex containing the Gospel of John in Sahidic Coptic (dated to AD 1099/1100) discovered in a coffin buried in the central cemetery is also in the process of publication.³¹ A relatively large number of the discovered texts is related to the period of the tenth-twelfth centuries, when the monastery appears to have been flourishing.

When I visited the monastery in 1999 I met the abovementioned monk Father ‘Abd al-Masīḥ and he told me the legend of St. Aūr as it is known from the manuscripts.³²

According to the *Naqlūn homily* the church of the archangel Gabriel and other monastic buildings have been founded by St. Aūr. However, no archaeological or documentary

²⁴ Johann Georg 1930, 19, fig. 41-43; Meinardus 1967; Meinardus [1969, 1989] 1992, 186-188; see also Viaud 1979, 13-14.

²⁵ See Godlewski 2010, 230; Godlewski 1997, 123; see also Godlewski and Łajtar 2006, 43-62.

²⁶ See his yearly reports in *PAM*.

²⁷ See Derda 1995a; Derda 2008.

²⁸ See Gaubert and Mouton 2014; see also Gaubert and Mouton 2004; Mouton 2002.

²⁹ See Urbaniak-Walczak 1999.

³⁰ See Van der Vliet 2000 and 2005 and 2015; and Van der Vliet’s publication of the Coptic inscriptions (forthcoming).

³¹ See for a preliminary report on the codex, Van der Vliet 2003.

³² Father ‘Abd al-Masīḥ died in March 2007.

evidence that would refer to the existence of a holy monk and bishop named Aūr at any moment in the long history of the monastery of Naqlūn has been found up till now.

3. Secondary literary and liturgical sources

3.a. The early sources

Various other literary and liturgical sources, in addition to the main texts studied in this monograph, may shed light upon the veneration of Saint Aūr and the monastery of Naqlūn. The abovementioned *Rule* attributed to St. Antony reminds one of St. Antony's visit to the Fayyūm province as reported in this saint's Life.³³ St. Antony, who lived in the third-fourth centuries, is generally regarded as the founder of monasticism. Historical and monastic literature composed in the centuries after the saint's death contain numerous references to him. S. Rubenson made a study of the Letters of St. Antony and related literature, revealing the saint's great popularity.³⁴ According to the title of the *Rule*, it is St. Antony himself who addresses here the monks of the monastery of Naqlūn.³⁵ However, a study of the *Rule* shows that St. Antony's authorship is very unlikely and that it was almost certainly composed after the saint's death.³⁶ From a literary point of view, however, the existence of the *Rule* and its attribution to St. Antony is of great importance for the monastery of Naqlūn.³⁷

Another early text referring to Naqlūn is the Coptic Life of Samuel of Qalamūn,³⁸ written by one Isaac the presbyter probably in the ninth century.³⁹ The latter writes that the monk Samuel was forced to flee Scetis in the year 631 in fear of repressions. He went to Naqlūn and spent there three years and a half, living in a remote hermitage and coming to the monastery on Saturdays and Sundays. This Life mentions one hundred and twenty monks and two hundred lay people living at the monastery of Naqlūn.⁴⁰ This statement demonstrates that in the ninth century the monastery at Naqlūn was quite famous. However, no name of a monk

³³ See Garitte 1949a, 21 (Coptic text); 1949b, 12 (Latin transl.); Bartelink 1994, 176 (Greek text), 177 (French transl.).

³⁴ See Rubenson 1990; see also Rubenson 1990-1991, 40-45.

³⁵ For an edition of the Arabic text with a translation in French, see Mokbel 1966; see also the articles about the *Rule* written by Wipszycka 1996, 363-371; Breydy 1996; an edition in Arabic is made in Cairo in 1899 by the monk Andraos under supervision of bishop and abbot Mark of the monastery of St. Antony, entitled: *Kitāb raudat al-nufūs fī rasā'il al-qiddīs Anṭūniyūs (Book of the Garden of the Souls in the Letters of St. Antony)*, see Graf 1944-1953, 1:457-458; Mokbel 1966, 215; Breydy 1996, 398; Rubenson 1990, 20 (Breydy corrected Mokbel and Graf, who both assumed erroneously that the editor was bishop Mark of the monastery of St. Antony, who was actually the supervisor of the edition made by the monk Andraos); see also Rubenson 1990, 46; Rubenson 1990-1991, 43.

³⁶ See Rubenson 1990-1991, 43.

³⁷ See chapter VII in which the relation between St. Antony and Naqlūn is discussed.

³⁸ See Amélineau 1888-1895, 2:775-778; Alcock 1983, 8-11 (text), 82-85 (translation).

³⁹ See Alcock 1983, 38 nt. 7.

⁴⁰ See Alcock 1983, 9 (text), 84 (translation) (lay people: Alcock was not sure about this translation of the Coptic word: κοσμίκοι, see in the edition his nt. 102).

or a bishop Aūr who would have played a role in the history of the monastery of Naqlūn is mentioned in this Coptic hagiographic text.

Apart from the Sahidic Coptic version of the Life of Samuel of Qalamūn, this text has also been preserved in Ethiopic and in Arabic, the latter in a very late copy, of unknown provenance and anonymous, dating from 1945.⁴¹ In the introduction to the Arabic version, the editor, A. Alcock, suggests that the process of transmission of the text is from Coptic to Arabic to Ethiopic.⁴² This Arabic version states that at the time of Samuel more than a thousand monks lived in the mountain of Naqlūn, but again, there is no mention of the name of a saint Aūr.⁴³

For the early ages of the existence of the monastery the names of Aūr and Isaac as bishops of the Fayyūm are not attested in documentary texts either, although it must be admitted that for this early period no complete list of bishops is available.⁴⁴

3.b. The Copto-Arabic Synaxarium

An important liturgical source in which the names of many bishops and saints of the Coptic church are mentioned, is the Synaxarium.⁴⁵ The Copto-Arabic Synaxarium consists in two different recensions, one of Upper Egypt and another of Lower Egypt; the latter is also called the Alexandrine version.⁴⁶ The recension of Upper Egypt, of which only the first six months of the year have been preserved, has probably been composed in the period between 1111 and 1241.⁴⁷ The Alexandrine version has been composed in two parts in different periods. The first part, which covers the first six months of the Coptic year, has been composed most probably around 1200. The second part has been composed much later, in the first half of the fourteenth century, assumingly between 1317 and 1354.⁴⁸ The celebration day of St. Aūr and the consecration of the church of the archangel Gabriel is on 26 Ba'ūna. This date falls within the second half of the Coptic liturgical year. Hence, only the Alexandrine version of the Coptic Synaxarium can be used for this study.

⁴¹ Alcock 1996, 321-345; 1998, 377-404.

⁴² Alcock 1996, 322.

⁴³ See Alcock 1996, 339.

⁴⁴ Abbott 1937, 32-34. For the names of attested bishops for the period 325-750, see Worp 1994; see also David 1930; Munier 1943.

⁴⁵ Coquin 1991b; Atiya 1991c.

⁴⁶ Papaconstantinou 2001, 28-29, and the references; see also Graf 1940; Coquin 1995.

⁴⁷ Garcin 1976, 31 nt. 1. For the dates Garcin refers to an oral communication held by Coquin on 3 June 1971 at the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale in Cairo. See also Colin 1988, 283, nt. 41. Colin refers in this article also to the work of Garcin, wondering on what information Coquin based the date of AD 1111. Coquin's later articles do not clarify this question, see Coquin 1978 and 1995.

⁴⁸ Coquin 1995, 82.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, two editions of the Synaxarium have seen the light,⁴⁹ one with a translation in French, published in the *Patrologia Orientalis*,⁵⁰ and the other with a translation in Latin, published in the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*.⁵¹ In Cairo, in 1935-1936, an edition in Arabic of the Synaxarium appeared in two volumes.⁵² A revised second edition was published in 1972 by the Coptic Patriarchate.⁵³ The third edition of this modern Arabic Synaxarium appeared in 1978 (first volume) and 1979 (second volume).⁵⁴ According to the preface, this edition was based on several Egyptian manuscripts, dating from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century, and on the Paris edition of the *Patrologia Orientalis*.⁵⁵ The composers used manuscripts unknown in Europe, suppressing what they considered inappropriate, which makes this edition untrustworthy.⁵⁶ Below, the commemorations concerning 26 Ba'ūna, as found in the abovementioned editions of the Synaxarium, are put together in a table⁵⁷:

PO (ms. 16 th c.) ⁵⁸	PO (ms. 14 th c.) ⁵⁹	CSCO (ms. date?) ⁶⁰	Cairo (mss. 14 th -18 th c.) ⁶¹
وفيه ايضا تكريز كنيسة الملاك الجليل غبريال المبشر شفاعته تحملنا امين	وفيه ايضا نعيد لتكريز كنيسة الملاك الجليل غبريال رئيس الملائكة وظهور عجائبه شفاعته معنا امين	وفيه ايضا نعيد لتكريز كنيسة على اسم الملاك غبريال رئيس الملائكة وظهور عجائبه . شفاعته معنا امين	وفيه ايضا تذكار تكريز كنيسة باسم الملاك الجليل جبرائيل المبشر ، بجبل النقلون بالقيوم . شفاعته تكون معنا . ولربنا المجد دائما . امين
On this day also the consecration of the church of the glorious angel Gabriel, the messenger.	And on this day also we celebrate the consecration of the church of the glorious angel Gabriel, the archangel and the	And on this day also we celebrate the consecration of a church with the name of the angel Gabriel, the archangel, and the	And on this day also the commemoration of the consecration of a church with the name of the glorious angel Gabriel, the messenger, on the

⁴⁹ For an older edition of the synaxarium with translation in German concerning the first half of the year, see Wüstenfeld 1879. The unedited second part is kept in Göttingen, see the remark in Coquin 1995, 75, nt. 2; and Graf 1944-1953, 2:418, nt. 1.

⁵⁰ Basset [1924] 1994, 17³: [1142] 600.

⁵¹ Forget 1912, 19:189-190.

⁵² Edited by the archpriests 'Abd al-Masīḥ Mikhā'īl and Armāniyūs Ḥabaṣī Šattā al-Birmāwī; see also Graf 1944-1953, 2:418; Coquin 1995, 77.

⁵³ The name of the authors are not given in this second edition, see Coquin 1995, 77.

⁵⁴ Edited by Butrus al-Ḡamīl, bishop of Malīḡ, Mikhā'īl, bishop of Atrīb, Yuḥanna, bishop of al-Barallos, and others.

⁵⁵ See p. 6 of the third edition.

⁵⁶ Coquin 1995, 77.

⁵⁷ In general in this study, existing translations are quoted without changes, including in their transcriptions.

⁵⁸ Based on ms. A, Par. ar. 256, dated 16th c., see Basset [1924] 1994, 17³: [1142] 600.

⁵⁹ Based on ms. B, Par. ar. 4869-4870, dated 14th c., see Basset [1924] 1994, 17³: [1142] 600.

⁶⁰ Forget 1912, 19:189-190. The manuscripts in which the mention occurs originate from very different periods, ranging from 14th to 18th century, which makes it difficult to attach an exact date to it.

⁶¹ See p. 274 in vol. 2 of this third edition in Arabic.

May his intercession support us. Amen.	manifestation of his miracles. May his intercession be with us. Amen.	manifestation of his miracles. May his intercession be with us. Amen.	mountain of Naqlūn in the Fayyūm. May his intercession be with us. And glory be to our Lord for ever. Amen.
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Apparently, the name of saint Aūr occurs nowhere in the published versions of the Arabic Synaxarium of the Coptic Church. All four versions state that the consecration of the church of the angel Gabriel is commemorated on this day. Both the *PO* and the *CSCO* editions, with the exception of the 16th century manuscript of the *PO*, add to this the manifestation of the archangel's miracles. The Cairo Synaxarium has a different addition, namely the mention of the location of the church, that is on the mountain of Naqlūn in the Fayyūm. From this it can be concluded that at the time of the origin of the second part of the Copto-Arabic Synaxarium, the first half of the fourteenth century, the church of the archangel Gabriel on the mountain of Naqlūn in the Fayyūm was known, but a saint Aūr from Naqlūn was unknown to or ignored by the compiler(s) of the Synaxarium.

3.c. *The Calendar of Abū I-Barakāt*

Another literary source in which one would expect the mention of saint Aūr, is the encyclopedic work of Coptic religious knowledge compiled by Abū I-Barakāt (died 1324). This work consists of twenty-four sections, of which the twenty-second section deals with the calendar.⁶² This calendar gives for 26 Ba'ūna the following text:⁶³

شهر بوونة 26 وقوف الشمس ليشوع ابن نون وتذكار غيريال بمدينة فيوم

“Month of Ba'ūna 26

The stand-still of the sun for Joshua, son of Nun, and the commemoration of Gabriel in the city of Fayyūm.”

The text mentions the city of Fayyūm, which may refer in an imprecise way to Naqlūn. The edition of this calendar is based on a manuscript dating from the fourteenth century, very close to the period in which its author lived. In the critical apparatus the editor, E. Tisserant, gives a variant found in two other manuscripts, one dating from the fifteenth-sixteenth century and the other from 1718:

شهر بوونة 26 وقوف الشمس ليشوع ابن نون وتذكار غيريال

“Month of Ba'ūna 26

⁶² Tisserant 1915.

⁶³ See Tisserant 1915, 274.

The stand-still of the sun for Joshua, son of Nun, and the commemoration of Gabriel.”

Apparently, these later manuscripts kept the name of the archangel but they left out the location where the celebration should be held. Moreover, all the versions remain silent on saint Aūr. Possibly Abū l-Barakāt used the same source as the compilers of the Synaxarium or he quoted from the Synaxarium itself for this calendar. Clearly, the *Calendar*, too, does not give any evidence about the existence of a saint Aūr of Naqlūn.

3.d. The Ethiopic Synaxarium

Although the Ethiopic Synaxarium is based on the Arabic version, it contains additions which are taken from other sources and for this reason it is worth to be quoted here.

The Ethiopic Synaxarium has been translated from the edition of Lower Egypt of the Copto-Arabic Synaxarium at the end of the fourteenth century in the monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea.⁶⁴ The revised second recension became the final one, probably in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁶⁵ The revision consisted for the greater part of additions, like excerpts from the apocryphal acts of the apostles and commemorations of Ethiopian and non-Ethiopian saints, martyrs and biblical persons.⁶⁶ The edition of the Ethiopic Synaxarium, made by several scholars, is published in the *Patrologia Orientalis*, and it is based on manuscripts containing either the first or the second recension.⁶⁷ Another edition, made by Budge, is based on manuscripts that contain the second recension only.⁶⁸

On 26 Sanê, which is the Ethiopic name for the month of Ba’ūna, the Synaxarium published in the *Patrologia Orientalis* gives the following text according to the French translation:⁶⁹

“Le 26 de Sanê (20 juin)

En ce jour, mémoire de l’ange glorieux, Gabriel, archange, de la dédicace de l’église du couvent de Naqlôn, dans le désert de Fayum, et des miracles qui s’y produisent,

⁶⁴ Colin 1988; see also Coquin 1984, 50; and 1991c.

⁶⁵ Colin 1988, 308.

⁶⁶ Colin 1988, 310-314.

⁶⁷ For the edition and French translation, see Colin and Guidi [1905-1945] 1986-1999. For a description of the available manuscripts, see Colin 1988, 288-299; for the mss. used for the edition, see Colin and Guidi [1905-1945] 1986-1999, 1^s: 523, of which the ms. Paris, B.N. d’Abbadie 66-66^{bis}, dated to the end of the 15th century, the only manuscript containing the complete first recension, is used as the base ms., (for information on this ms. see Coquin 1984); Colin continued the work using the same mss. with the addition of one ms., dated to 1581, the oldest ms. of the second recension, see Colin and Guidi [1905-1945] 1986-1999, 43^s: 323.

⁶⁸ For the edition and English translation, see Budge [1928] 1976. Budge based his edition on mss. 232 and 233 (ms. Oriental 660 and 661) kept in de British Museum, dating 1654-1655, see Budge [1928] 1976, 1:xxix.

⁶⁹ See Colin and Guidi [1905-1945] 1986-1999, 1^s:675-676. The text of the month of Sanê is almost completely translated by M. Desnoyers, see the introduction to the edition in Colin and Guidi [1905-1945] 1986-1999, 1^s:525. The translation is here quoted without changes, including transcription.

opérés par lui. C'est dans le bois du toit de son église que se produit l'annonce [de la crue]⁷⁰ du fleuve de l'Égypte. Car au temps [anniversaire] de la dédicace, de l'eau apparaît dans ce [bois] comme de la sueur ; s'il doit y avoir abondance, cette année-là, il en tombe des gouttes d'eau [abondantes], mais s'il doit y avoir famine, l'eau y apparaît comme [des gouttes] de sueur. Nombreux sont les miracles de cet ange glorieux Gabriel, archange. Que Dieu nous fasse miséricorde par sa prière, et que sa bénédiction et son intercession soient avec nous dans les siècles des siècles. Amen."

The above given passage is found in all three manuscripts on which the edition is based. The following addition, a so-called salutation, occurs only in the two later manuscripts, both from the eighteenth century:⁷¹

"Salut pour la dédicace de ton église, Gabriel, l'égal des chérubins, elle qui, au couvent de Naqlôn, fut construite avec art ; pour chaque [anniversaire de la] dédicace, elle fait couler [de l'eau] du bois du toit ; par les nombreuses gouttes on connaît [qu'il y aura] l'abondance, et par une eau [peu abondante, comme] d'un peu de sueur, l'on connaît [qu'il y aura] famine."

The edition and English translation made by Budge, gives the following text for this date:⁷²

"26 Sanê. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, one God. On this day is celebrated the commemorative festival of the glorious angel Gabriel, (fol. 94 a 3) the archangel, and of the consecration of his church, in Dabra Naqlôn, in the desert of the Fayyûm, and of the manifestation of his miracles therein. And the wood of the roof inside the church [gave] indications concerning the rise of the river of Egypt, for during the Offering water used to appear upon it like sweat. If there was to be abundance that year, many drops of water would drop from it, but if there was to be hunger, the water would appear on it only in the form of sweat. And the glorious angel, the Archangel Michael, performed many miracles. Salutation to the consecration of thy house, O Gabriel."

The passages are almost identical, except for the reference to the archangel Michael occurring in Budge's text only. Indeed, archaeological investigations show that in the past the monastery of Naqlûn possessed two churches, one dedicated to the archangel Michael and the

⁷⁰ The words in rectangular brackets in the translation have been added by the translator M. Desnoyers in order to make the text easier to understand and are not found in the original text, see Colin and Guidi [1905-1945] 1986-1999, 1⁵:525.

⁷¹ See Colin and Guidi [1905-1945] 1986-1999, 1⁵:523-525; Colin 1988, 286. The translation is here quoted without changes, including transcription.

⁷² See Budge 1928, 4:1035.

second to the archangel Gabriel.⁷³ However, this reference may also be considered a writing error, because it occurs without any relation to its context. Comparing the Ethiopic Synaxarium with the Copto-Arabic Synaxarium, it appears that the first is more specific about the location than the latter by indicating that the concerned church belongs to a monastery situated in the desert of the Fayyūm. But again, neither here nor in the Copto-Arabic Synaxarium a saint Aūr from the Naqlūn is mentioned.

The wood in the roof of the church, giving indications about the rise of the river Nile, does not have much in common with the *Naqlūn homily*, but it does present some similarity with the text entitled as *The Journey of St. Aūr*,⁷⁴ in which timber plays an important role. No reference to the wood or the timber occurs in the passages of the Copto-Arabic Synaxarium, presented above, which served as the main source for the first recension of the Ethiopic Synaxarium. Possibly, the composer(s) of the Ethiopic Synaxarium used a different, as yet unknown, source, which was available in the monastery of St. Antony at that time.

3.e. The History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt

The abovementioned sources do not contain any reference to saint Aūr, but they refer in various ways to the church of the archangel Gabriel at the mountain of Naqlūn. Another important literary work, which calls for interest in this respect, is *The History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*, compiled most probably in Cairo by (among others) Abū l-Makārim in the twelfth-thirteenth century.⁷⁵ This work, referred to in this study as *HCME*, survives in a manuscript dated to AD 1338. About the monastery of Naqlūn is written:⁷⁶

“*The monastery of An-Naqlūn.*

The monastery called the monastery of An-Naqlūn lies to the east of the district called Nawasā.⁷⁷ This monastery contains a church named after the angel Michael, in which there is a pillar of marble, which sweats as if water were flowing from it; and also possesses a large keep, which overlooks a mountain on which there is a boulder. It is said that the foundations of this church were laid on the 13th of Hatūr, and that it was consecrated by the Lord Christ and his Apostles on the 18th of Abīb. Adjacent to the monastery there is a church named after the angel Gabriel, enclosed within a wall

⁷³ See above, in 2. *The monastery of Naqlūn*.

⁷⁴ This text is studied in chapter VII below.

⁷⁵ Evetts [1895, 1969] 2001. For more information about this work, which is a multilayered text, see Den Heijer 1993; 1994; 1996, 77-81; Zanetti 1995a; 1996, 77-80; Ten Hacken 2006.

⁷⁶ Evetts [1895, 1969] 2001, 90 (text), 205-206 (transl.), see also the edition in Arabic by Samuel al-Suryani [1984] 1999-2000, 2:91. Evetts' translation is quoted here without changes.

⁷⁷ Nawasā: see Timm 1984-1992, 4:1754. Timm and Samuel al-Suryani (see note above) situate the place close to Qalamša.

which was erected before the church on the 13th of Amshîr and was finished in this short time; and the building of the church was begun on the 26th of the same month, and finished on the 13th of Ba'ûnah, on the 20th of which month it was consecrated. It is said that the mountain called An-Naqlûn is that which contained the place where Jacob, son of Isaac, son of Abraham, enjoyed the shade, and worshipped; and sacrifices were offered to God there in the days of Joseph, the son of Jacob, when Joseph superintended the building of the Fayyûm and the Hajar al-Lâhûn. The church in the mountains of An-Naqlûn was consecrated, in the episcopate of Anbâ Isaac, by Aurâ, son of the queen's daughter and of Abrâshît, the magician, whom she hid away from him (Abrâshît?) and from her parents.”

Apparently, the *HCME* is up till now the only source, apart from the works mentioned below, containing a reference to St. Aūr, in the form of Aurâ. This name is, in the manuscripts studied here, only twice attested in this way, namely in the title of two of them.⁷⁸ In addition, the *HCME* reports about the existence of the two churches in the monastery, which is also attested by archaeological evidence.⁷⁹ In the third place the passage mentions a series of dates, partly different from the *Naqlûn homily*, which are discussed below.⁸⁰ Finally, the *HCME* reports on a pillar of marble that sweats water. This feature has a parallel in a different homily on the archangel Gabriel, attributed to bishop Archelaus of Neapolis.⁸¹ In one of the miracles performed by the archangel in the latter's church, a pillar miraculously has a fissure which gives off large quantities of oil with a fragrant odour holding healing power.⁸² Another parallel is found in the abovementioned Ethiopic Synaxarium, which refers to the wood in the roof of the church at Naqlûn that is told to secrete water drops.⁸³

3.f. *Antiphonaria*

A Coptic Antiphonarium (*difnâr*) for the month of Ba'ûna contains two hymns for the archangel Gabriel for 13 and 26 Ba'ûna.⁸⁴ The hymns are written in Bohairic and the date

⁷⁸ In H (f. 103r) and L (f. 104r). The name Aūr is discussed in chapter V, 9. *The Naqlûn homily in its context*.

⁷⁹ See the discussion above in 2. *The monastery of Naqlûn*.

⁸⁰ See chapter V, 8. *The liturgical calendar of Naqlûn*.

⁸¹ The Archelaus homily is used in this study as a comparison, see below in chapter V, *Introduction*. For an edition and French translation of the Bohairic Coptic text, see De Vis [1929] 1990, 242-291.

⁸² See De Vis [1929] 1990, 269.

⁸³ The *HCME* reports in the passage about Qifî, f. 103a, on a church dedicated to the archangel Gabriel situated at the top of a mountain and a pillar in the middle of the town indicating the rise of the river Nile at the date of 26 Ba'ûna. This report has much in common with the passage on the monastery of Naqlûn contained in the Ethiopic Synaxarium, see Evetts [1895, 1969] 2001, 130 (text), 280-281 (transl.).

⁸⁴ See the edition by O'Leary 1926-1930, 3:17-18, 23; see also Van Lantschoot 1947, 416, 418-419 (at 13 and 26 Ba'ûna); and Müller 1959, 136-137.

entries in Arabic. The entry of the hymn for 26 Ba'ūna refers to the consecration of a church of the angel Gabriel at a monastery named Dayr al-Muntālūn, which is almost certainly an error of the copyist, and can easily be corrected in Arabic script into Dayr al-Naqlūn, which is very much alike Dayr al-Naqlūn.⁸⁵ The codex containing this antiphonarium is dated to 1475 AM (= AD 1758), and copied by the priest Peter from Aḥmīm, at that time resident at Cairo, in St. Menas Church at Ra's al-Ḥalīg, who copied it from a manuscript dated to 1101 AM (= AD 1385) that was kept in St. Mary's Church in Ḥārat Zuwayla in Cairo.⁸⁶ Although the difnār appears to commemorate the consecration of the church of the archangel Gabriel at Naqlūn, the hymns themselves do not refer in any way to a St. Aūr or to the monastery of Naqlūn.

3.g. *Scholars and travellers*

Reports written by scholars and travellers who visited the monastery of Naqlūn, form another possible source of information about St. Aūr or Naqlūn. One of the oldest reports is written in the thirteenth century by al-Nāblusī, a Syrian official who was appointed governor of the Fayyūm by the Ayyubid sultan Naḡm al-Dīn. Al-Nāblusī, having been charged with writing a detailed report about the situation of the Fayyūm province, mentions the presence of thirteen monasteries, among which is Dayr al-Naqlūn. He tells us that it is situated on the mountain in the neighbourhood of Qambaša, at the east side of it.⁸⁷ Qambaša, also known as Qalamša, is a village situated at a distance of 3 km from the monastery of Naqlūn.⁸⁸

Al-Maqrīzī,⁸⁹ born in Cairo in 1364 and died in 1442, a Muslim historian and topographer, composed important works on Coptic history and topography.⁹⁰ His famous work, known as the *Ḥiṭat*, dating from the first half of the fifteenth century, contains the following passage:⁹¹

“Dayr al-Naqlūn: is called Dayr al-Ḥašaba and Dayr Ġubriyāl al-Malāk and it is under a cave in the mountain, which is called Ṭārīf al-Fayyūm,⁹² and this cave is

⁸⁵ In the title is written دبر المتالون, possibly a misreading of دبر النقالون, which is almost similar to دبر النقلون.

⁸⁶ See the colophon in Van Lantschoot 1947, 420-421.

⁸⁷ See the edition by Moritz 1899, 22.

⁸⁸ See Salmon 1901, 71-72; Ramzī [1952-1960] 1993-1994, II-3:85-86; see also Moritz 1899, 141-143.

⁸⁹ His full name is: Taqī al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn 'Alī ibn 'Abd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī. For information about this author, see Rabbat 2003.

⁹⁰ About his work, see Bauden 2003 and 2006.

⁹¹ The translation is mine, for the text in Arabic, see Sayyid 2002, 2:505; see also the appendix in Evetts [1895, 1969] 2001, 313-314, nr. 33.

⁹² According to Abbott (1937, 40) it is situated at the western foot of Gabal Sidmant (Sadmant). The word *Ṭārīf* is probably related to the noun *ṭaraf* (derived from the root طرف - *tarafa*) meaning: utmost part, but its exact meaning is unknown.

known among them as the shelter of Jacob. They believe that Jacob, peace be with him, when he came to Egypt, sought shade within it.⁹³ This mountain rises above two cities; which are called *Itfīḥ Šallā*⁹⁴ and *Šallā*.⁹⁵ The water for this monastery is drawn from the canal of *al-Manhī*,⁹⁶ and [it is] below *Dayr al-Sadmant*.⁹⁷ And this monastery has a celebration on which the Christians of the *Fayyūm* and other places assemble; and it lies on the road that goes down to the *Fayyūm*, but only a few travellers follow it.”

Al-Maqrīzī is the first to mention the three names of the monastery. One of these names, *Dayr al-Ḥašaba* (meaning Monastery of the Beam) underlines the importance of timber for the monastery, which became apparent also from the Ethiopic Synaxarium, discussed above.⁹⁸ Al-Maqrīzī mentions the cave, or the shelter, of Jacob, like the *HCME* did earlier. A similar reference to the Biblical Jacob occurs in the *Naqlūn homily*.⁹⁹ However, the name of Saint Aūr is not found in this source.

In later periods also European travelers came to the monastery and wrote about it. Wansleben, already mentioned above, writes that the church had been build by ‘Ur’ (i.e. Aūr), who was the son of ‘Ibrascit’ (i.e. Abrašīt), a famous magician.¹⁰⁰ However, he adds that he drew this information from a manuscript that he had brought with him from Egypt and was kept at the Royal Library (i.e. the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris).¹⁰¹ Therefore this reference cannot be considered an independent attestation for local traditions about St. Aūr. Similarly, the scholar Meinardus gives a summary of what he calls ‘the legendary story of Aūr’.¹⁰² Nor do reports of other travelers, like Johann Georg Duke of Saxony, contain independent information on a St. Aūr of Naqlūn.¹⁰³

4. Popularity of the legend of St. Aūr

⁹³ According to the Bible, Jacob has lived in the region Gosen, situated in the north-eastern Delta, which is north of the province of Fayyūm, see Gn 46-47. See also Viaud 1979, 63-69.

⁹⁴ *Itfīḥ Šallā*: a village located in the Fayyūm; according to al-Nābluṣī, the village was located close to Tuṭūn, see the edition by Moritz 1899, 86, 87, 176 (the index of al-Nābluṣī’s book refers to the wrong lines for p. 87); Salmon seemed to have overlooked the reference to this village, see Salmon 1901, 73.

⁹⁵ *Šallā*: a village located in the Fayyūm, and it is mentioned in an Arabic document dated 947, see Abbott 1937, 10-11 (text), 18-21 (transl.); see also Timm 1984-1992, 5:2250; this village was already abandoned in the time of al-Nābluṣī as has been noticed by Salmon 1901, 31; it was situated according to al-Nābluṣī south of the river Tanabṭawayh, see Moritz 1899, 17.

⁹⁶ The canal of *al-Manhī* (*Baḥr al-Manhī*) forms the lower part of the *Baḥr Yūsūf*.

⁹⁷ For *Dayr al-Sadmant*, see *Sadamant* in Timm 1984-1992, 5:2222-2225.

⁹⁸ The timber forms a central theme in chapter VI, 6.e. *The timber*.

⁹⁹ See chapter V, 10. *History and religious landscape*.

¹⁰⁰ Vansleb [1678] 1972, 166-167.

¹⁰¹ This is ms. Arabe 148-4, which is ms. A, see below chapter I-A.

¹⁰² Meinardus [1967, 1989] 1992, 186-187.

¹⁰³ Johann Georg 1930, 19.

From the above it appeared that apart from the manuscripts containing the *Naqlūn homily*, only the *HCME* composed by (among others) Abū l-Makārim mentions St. Aūr. The *HCME* was written in Arabic in the twelfth-thirteenth century and it is unknown which sources its compiler(s) used for the passage about Naqlūn. The passage immediately following deals with the monastery of Qalamūn and refers to the year AD 1178, implying that this latter passage was written (shortly) after this year.¹⁰⁴ So, towards the end of the twelfth century, information about Naqlūn and St. Aūr may have been known in Cairo. The end of the twelfth century is therefore a probable date *ante quem* for the composition of the legend of St. Aūr.

This single explicit reference to the legend of St. Aūr in the *HCME* could suggest that the legend was little known. The opposite appears to be true, however. The large number of manuscripts containing the *Naqlūn homily*, of which the legend is a part, are evidence of its popularity. In this paragraph it will be demonstrated that after its composition, the text became known, not only in the near vicinity of the south eastern region of the Fayyūm province, but outside the Fayyūm as well.

The *Naqlūn homily* contains a prophecy about the site, spoken by the archangel Gabriel to saint Aūr after the construction of the church had been completed, which predicts its fame:

§182 ... its (the church) fame shall spread to all the regions of the earth...

§183 ... (this mountain) shall be like dovecots because of the great number of crowds that come to it from all places...

And further in the text the prophecy is fulfilled when many people come to visit the church (§201). The fame of the church at Naqlūn is also reflected in the diffusion of the manuscripts containing the *Naqlūn homily*. Indeed, the text has been copied many times, and the copies were kept in bookcases and libraries of churches and monasteries at various places. An indication for the diffusion of the legend of St. Aūr, and consequently for its popularity, may be inferred from the colophons of the codices. They often contain the name of the place where the manuscript was kept or copied, or the church or monastery to which it had been donated. Assumingly, at these places and in these churches and monasteries, the text was known. Moreover, the dates of the codices (if these are given) reflect in which period the legend was known. Apart from the *Naqlūn homily*, three of the other texts discussed in this study (in chapters VI, VII, IX) contain references to the legend of St. Aūr, implying that the legend of

¹⁰⁴ See Evetts [1895, 1969] 2001, 90-92 (text), 206-208 (transl.).

St. Aūr was known, at least to the author of these texts.¹⁰⁵ For the study of the diffusion of the legend, the information found in the colophons of the manuscripts of these three texts and the *Naqlūn homily* is taken into consideration. Below, first a survey of all discovered Arabic manuscripts is presented in tables in order to show in concise form the complete material that forms the basis of this study. Then the diffusion of the legend is studied from a chronological and a geographical point of view.

4.a. Survey

As already mentioned above, a number of twenty-three manuscripts, all written in Arabic, were accessible for this study. Each of these literary witnesses reveals a certain relationship with the literary tradition about the church of the archangel Gabriel at the mountain of Naqlūn. This collection of twenty-three manuscripts comprises five homiletic texts, entitled: *The Naqlūn homily* itself, then *The Journey of St. Aūr*, *The Life of Anbā Isaac of the mountain of al-Barambil*, *The origins of monasticism at the mountains of Qalamūn and Naqlūn*, *The Ḥandaq homily*, and, in addition, a bilingual (Bohairic and Arabic) hymn on the archangel Gabriel. In the survey below, the manuscripts containing a similar text, or recension of a text, are grouped together in one table in the order of their (presumed) dates. The sigla, the date of the codex, and the information found in the colophons are noted in separate columns. The number of manuscript units, indicated in the first column, counts up to twenty-five, but is actually twenty-three. In one case three texts (nrs. 22, 23, 25) were copied in one and the same codex. In two other cases the scattered folios of one text were bound in two different codices during restoration (nrs. 1 and 18). The sigla are attributed in a rather arbitrary way: whenever a ‘new’ manuscript came available for study, in the form of a microfilm, photos, photocopies or digital photos, it received the next letter of the alphabet.

Text 1. The Naqlūn homily.

Recension α-1

nr.	siglum	catalogue	date	particulars
1	B	Cairo Coptic Museum 98 (Hist. 476)	1380	Cairo – al-Mu’allaqa church
	I (B)	Cairo Coptic Museum 6438b	1380	
2	T	ms. 101	1565?	Formerly kept in St. Menas Church at Mīt Gamr

¹⁰⁵ These three texts deal with: the Journey of St. Aūr to his homecountry and back; a prophecy of St. Antony about St. Aūr; the consecration of a sanctuary of the archangel Gabriel at the village of al-Ḥandaq for which a text passage of the *Naqlūn homily* has been borrowed.

				(province of al-Daqahliya, north of Cairo); at present kept in the monastery of St. Menas at Maryūt near Alexandria
3	L	Cloister of St. Menas 134-18	1655	Undated <i>waqf</i> ¹⁰⁶ to the monastery of St. Menas at Cairo; at present kept in the monastery of St. Menas at Maryūt near Alexandria.
4	O	Monastery of St. Antony 98	1693	
5	Q	Monastery of St. Antony 76	1702	
6	C	Paris 6985-1	1720?	
7	R	Monastery of St. Paul 110 / hist. (53 Vitae of Saints)	1738	
8	D	Cairo Coptic Patriarchate 615 (Hist. 28)	1755	
9	E	Paris 4796-2	between 1854-1887	Copied from a manuscript (E*) that was a <i>waqf</i> by bishop Michael of Esna and Luxor to the Church (or monastery) of St. Antony at Luxor

Recension α -2

10	J	Chicago A 12063	1552	Donation to the monastery of St. Macarius in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn
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Recension α -3

11	S	ms. 28	<1702	Formerly kept in the church of the Holy Virgin in Ḥārat Zuwayla in Cairo. At present kept in the monastery of St. Menas at Maryūt near Alexandria
12	A	Paris 148-4	1654-1655	A note (f. 331) indicates that the manuscript has been read in Manfalūt, in the year AD 1657.
13	P	Monastery of St. Antony 68	1702	Donation to the monastery of St. Antony

Recension β

14	F	Paris 154–11	±1607	Copyist Yūsuf ibn Mīchāʾīl, known as Ibn Fabīq, in the time of Anbā Buṭrus Suwaydān al-Miṣrī, bishop of the Fayyūm.
15	G	Cairo Coptic Patriarchate 649 (Hist. 78)	1727	In the colophon is mentioned Dayr al-Qiddīs Abū Yūḥannā al-Qaṣīr, which is most likely to be identified as Dayr Abū Ḥinnis al-Qaṣīr, near the town of Mallawī.
16	U	Monastery of St. Paul 297 General-76 –Hist. (new nr: 78 Vitae of Saints)	1739	
17	H	Paris 4888-2	1886-1888	The provider of the manuscript is the teacher Bāsīliyūs Ġirġīs from Naqqāda.

Text 2. The Journey of St. Aūr.

18	M	Cairo Coptic Museum 6417	undated (14 th c.?)	
		Cairo Coptic Museum 6421		

¹⁰⁶ A *waqf* is an endowment of property to be held in trust and used for a charitable or religious purpose, see Bestawros 1991.

Text 3. The Life of Anbā Isaac of the mountain of al-Barambil.

19	X	Monastery of St. Antony Hist. 97	undated	Donation to the monastery of St. Antony
20	Y	Monastery of St. Antony Hist. 112	1824	Copied in the village Munša'a Ḥalbūṣ in the Fayyūm
21	Z	Monastery of St. Antony Hist. 117	1750	Donation to the monastery of St. Antony

Text 4. The origins of monasticism on the mountains of Qalamūn and Naqlūn.

22	W	General 98-Hist. 23	1470	Church of St. Mary in Ḥārat al-Rūm at Cairo
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Text 5. Ḥandaq homily.

23	W	General 98-Hist. 23	1470	Church of St. Mary in Ḥārat al-Rūm at Cairo
24	N	Cairo Coptic Museum 160-1 (Lit. 48)	?	

Text 6. Hymn.

25	W	General 98-Hist. 23	1473	Church of St. Mary in Ḥārat al-Rūm at Cairo
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4.b. Popularity through time

Above, I have suggested that the legend of St. Aūr was composed before the end of the twelfth century. The survey shows that the (presumable) dates of the twenty-three codices range from 1380 (B) up till around 1880 (E and H), and two are undated (N and X).

Apparently, after its composition the text has been used and copied without interruption during the following centuries up till the end of the nineteenth century, with a peak in the eighteenth century. Below this result is presented in a diagram that shows the number of manuscripts per century.

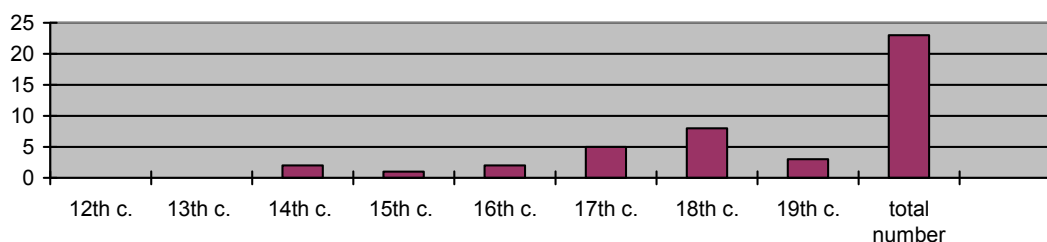


Diagram 1 Number of ms. copies by century

4.c. Popularity through place

A picture of the geographical diffusion of the legend of St. Aūr can be obtained from the names of the places mentioned in the colophons. The names of libraries to which the codices were brought in a later stage for conservation or restoration, like the monastery of St. Menas at Maryūt near Alexandria, the Coptic Patriarchate and the Coptic Museum, are not taken into account. The text has spread to regions far outside the Fayyūm province, in all directions, all over Egypt: northward to different churches in Cairo (4 mss.), and further northward to al-Ḥandaq (1 ms.) and Mīt Ġamr (1 ms.); in the northwestern direction to the monastery of St. Macarius in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn (1 ms.); to the eastern desert to the monasteries of St. Paul (2 mss.) and St. Antony (5 mss.); to the south beyond al-Minyā near Mallawī (1 ms.); Manfalūt to the north of Asyūt (1 ms.); further south near Naqqāda (1 ms.); the southern most place being Luxor (1 ms.). The provenance of three manuscripts, C (kept in Paris), D (kept in the Coptic Patriarchate) and M (kept in Coptic Museum) could not be traced. Two manuscripts come from the region in the neighbourhood of the Fayyūm. The first of these (Y in the survey below) has been copied in the village Munša'a Ḥalbūṣ. According to a geographical dictionary published at the end of the nineteenth century in Egypt, this village is situated at the west bank of the river Nile, in the district of al-Wāsiṭā¹⁰⁷ in the province of Banī Suīf.¹⁰⁸ However, the codex, dated to 1824, is at present kept in the monastery of St. Antony near the Red Sea. On the last folio a remark is written indicating that the scribe was present in the "monastery" in the year 1649. The name of the monastery is not given. The scribe of ms. Y of 1824, working in the village Munša'a Ḥalbūṣ, copied this remark.

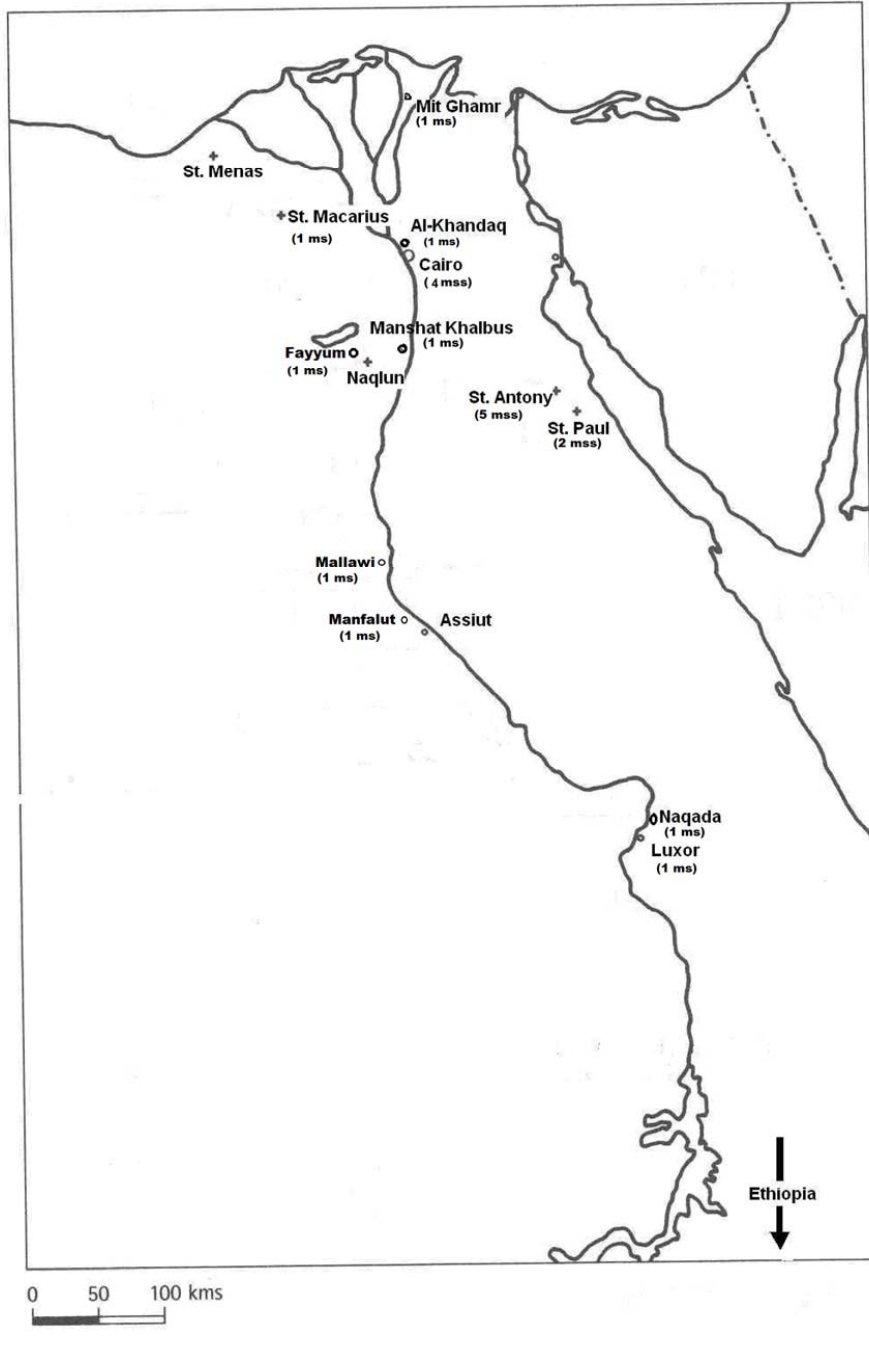
The second manuscript that has a certain relation to the Fayyūm (F in the survey), contains interesting information about the copyist, who was 'Yūsuf ibn Mīḥā'il, known as Ibn Fabīq in the time of Anbā Buṭrus Suwaydān al-Miṣrī, bishop of the Fayyūm.' The manuscript is dated to 1604-1607, implying that Anbā Buṭrus Suwaydān al-Miṣrī was bishop in this period in the beginning of the seventeenth century. Further information on the existence of a bishop Peter of the Fayyūm for this period has not been found.¹⁰⁹ The copyist is identified by linking him to a more famous contemporary person from his social or clerical environment. The copyist was almost certainly at work in the diocese of the Fayyūm, from which it follows that the manuscript originates from this same diocese.

¹⁰⁷ For al-Wāsiṭā, see Timm 1984-1992, 6:2993.

¹⁰⁸ Nizārat al-Māliya, 'Idārat al-Ta'dād (Ministry of Finance (of Egypt), Department of Census and Statistics) 1899, 757, 905.

¹⁰⁹ A bishop Peter of the Fayyūm is mentioned in the *History of the Patriarchs* for the beginning of the 13th century, see Atiya *et al.* 1943-1974, 4: 4 (text in Arabic); 7 (trans.).

Obviously, then, the legendary story of St. Aūr and the monastery of Naqlūn was read and copied all over Egypt. The greatest number of manuscripts are found in and around Cairo and in the monastery of St. Antony near the Red Sea. This may be explained by the fact that Cairo is the capital city of Egypt, and for St. Antony's monastery, apart from its expertise in copying manuscripts, the historical relation between St. Antony and the Fayyūm may also have played a role. For al-Ḥandaq the local presence of a sanctuary or church dedicated to the archangel Gabriel provides a link. Three of the four manuscripts belonging to recension β (GUH) come from southern Egypt. The fourth ms. (F) of this recension originates from the Fayyūm. Possibly this was the route followed by this recension of the text. Apart from recension β , recension α -1 is also found in the south (ms. E*). Below on a map the places are indicated where the legend of St. Aūr was known according to the manuscripts, and the density is expressed in the number of manuscripts present at that place.



Diffusion of Legend of St. Aûr

From the moment the legendary story of St. Aūr was composed, some time before 1200, it was copied uninterruptedly, resulting in a large number of manuscripts. The legend, at first sight of little importance, has been (and still is) very popular in the Coptic Church and is therefore a significant witness to the reputation of St. Aūr and the monastery of Naqlūn. When the monastery of Naqlūn fell into decline, presumably after the twelfth-thirteenth century,¹¹⁰ the text remained popular, with a peak in the eighteenth century, which is evidence for its independent value. In modern times new publications containing the legend of St. Aūr have appeared in Egypt, with the aim to strengthen the faith of the members of the Coptic Orthodox church and the reputation of the newly refounded monastery.¹¹¹ These publications, all written in Arabic, demonstrate the revival of the cult of St. Aūr in modern times, which is similarly reflected in the newly painted icon decorating the wall of the church and the mosaic above the entrance to the monastery, both representing ‘Anbā Aūr’, that is as the saint bishop of the Fayyūm.

4.d. Popularity outside of Egypt, in Ethiopia

Apart from the Arabic manuscripts related to the monastery of Naqlūn, there is a large number of manuscripts in Ge‘ez, *i.e.* Classical Ethiopic, dealing with the legend of St. Aūr and the monastery of the archangel Gabriel at Naqlūn. The history of the Ethiopian Church is strongly connected with the Coptic Church. The close relation between both churches was based especially on the tradition started in the fourth century by bishop Athanasius when he appointed a Coptic monk as head of the Ethiopian church. This tradition continued until the middle of the twentieth century. The history of Ethiopic literature has been influenced significantly by the translation of texts that arrived from Egypt.¹¹² The translation process comprised several literary works in Greek, a few texts in Coptic,¹¹³ and a large quantity of texts in Arabic that were all translated into Ethiopic. From the thirteenth century onwards, when Arabic had become the primary language even within the Coptic Church, numerous texts belonging to Coptic religious literature were translated from Arabic into Ge‘ez. One important person in this respect, was Abbā Salāmā, a Coptic monk who was metropolitan of the Ethiopian Church from his arrival in Ethiopia in 1348 until his death in 1388. His

¹¹⁰ See Godlewski 1997, 133.

¹¹¹ Among the popular publications are two editions in Arabic of the legend, based on the *Naqlūn homily* in its recension α-1, see Šalīb Ġubrān and Ġūrġī Ġirġis 1902, 123-141; and Murqus Ġirġis 1926, 190-220. Especially after 2004 the number of publications has increased, the majority composed at the monastery of Naqlūn itself.

¹¹² For the influence of Coptic literature on the Ethiopian Christian literature, see Kaplan 2008.

¹¹³ An example of an Ethiopic text that had been translated from a Coptic Sahidic original is given by Zanetti 2009.

enormous activity in the domain of translation awarded Abbā Salāmā the epithet ‘the Translator’.¹¹⁴ The works that were translated concerned all kinds of religious texts and many of them were not only translated but also revised and enlarged, like the Synaxarium and lives of saints. Going through the available catalogues of libraries holding Ethiopic manuscripts,¹¹⁵ studying the titles and the accompanying information, no less than forty-six manuscripts dealing with the legend of St. Aūr were identified.¹¹⁶ The majority of these manuscripts, thirty-eight, appear to be present in Ethiopia itself, in libraries of churches and monasteries and in private collections. A smaller number of manuscripts has been brought out of Ethiopia and these are kept nowadays in libraries in Rome, at the Vatican (3 mss.) and the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei (2 mss.), in London in the British Museum (1 ms.), in Berlin in the Staatsbibliothek (1 ms.) and in Dublin in the Chester Beatty Library (1 ms.).¹¹⁷ The dates of the manuscripts range from 1434 up till the twentieth century. The information provided in the consulted catalogues shows that all these texts are liturgical in character and related to the celebration of the archangel Gabriel. The exact date of the celebration is in some cases at the nineteenth day of the month, which is the usual celebration date in the Ethiopian Church for the archangel Gabriel, in other cases at 26 Ba’ūna, and in the remaining cases the date is not specified or could not be found. The rather large number of Ethiopic manuscripts that resulted already from this preliminary search in the limited number of available catalogues, suggests that the actual number of Ethiopic manuscripts dealing with the legend may be much larger. Below in a table the number of manuscripts is presented, arranged according to their dates.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ About Abbā Salāmā, see Van Lantschoot 1960; Colin 2002, 6.

¹¹⁵ For a survey of libraries and catalogues holding Ethiopic manuscripts, see Beylot and Rodinson 1995.

¹¹⁶ See the appendix 2 for a survey of the Ethiopic manuscripts.

¹¹⁷ According to the following catalogues: Wright 1877; Grébaut and Tisserant 1935-1936, 2 vols.; Cerulli 1965; Strelcyn 1976; Dillmann, 1978; Macomber and Haile 1975-1993, 10 vols.; Cerulli 2004.

¹¹⁸ The manuscripts dated in 17th-18th c. are ordered in the table under 17th c., those dated 18th-19th c. are put in the column under 18th c. and those of the 19th-20th c. are put in the column under 19th c.

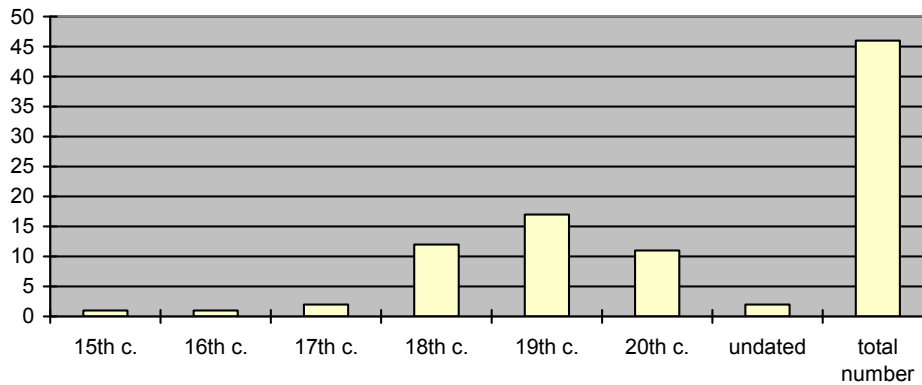


Diagram 2 Number of Ethiopic mss. by century.

Apparently, the legend of St. Aūr was (and still is) very popular in Ethiopia. The Ethiopic version of the legend has been read and copied, uninterruptedly from the fifteenth century onwards till present times and has been diffused all over Ethiopia. The reason for its popularity is possibly the veneration of the archangel Gabriel, because all texts are related to the commemoration of this archangel. The route the legend has followed from Egypt to Ethiopia is still to be investigated, but possible locations for the translation of the text into Ethiopic are the monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea, where also the Ethiopic Synaxarium came into being,¹¹⁹ and the monastery of al-Muḥarraq, to the northwest of Asyūt, which has been maintaining close relations with the Ethiopian church since the thirteenth century.¹²⁰ The legend had been translated already before 1434, the date of the oldest Ethiopic manuscript, which underlines once more the popularity of the text from a relatively early date. In a broader perspective, the legend being translated and transferred from Egypt to Ethiopia, provides extra evidence for the close ties between both regions from a literary as well as a religious perspective.

5. Conclusion

Right from the start the research on the legend of St. Aūr of Naqlūn produced unexpected results. The search for manuscripts resulted in the discovery of a much greater number of manuscripts than had been foreseen, and lead to the identification of five additional

¹¹⁹ Coquin 1984, 50; Colin 1988, 300; Coquin 1991c.

¹²⁰ For Dayr al-Muḥarraq, see Timm 1984-1992, 2:751-756; Coquin and Martin 1991d; for the relations between the monastery and Ethiopia, see Crawford 1958, 129; Coquin 1991c.

texts related to Naqlūn. Apparently, the textual tradition related to the monastery of Naqlūn is extensive and complex. The state of the archaeological investigations carried out on the site has been presented including a few characteristics of the long history of the monastery of Naqlūn, the monastery that occupies a central place in this study. The scarce references to St. Aūr of Naqlūn found in other literary and liturgical sources are in marked contrast with the large number of manuscripts containing the legend of St. Aūr, kept in libraries in all regions of Egypt up to Ethiopia. The popularity of the legend was widespread and after its composition, before the end of the twelfth century, it remained in circulation through all the following centuries until it received renewed attention after its discovery by Western scholars in modern times, which contributed to a new cult of St. Aūr at Naqlūn.

The following chapters comprise a study in the first place of the *Naqlūn homily*, and in the second place of the five additional texts related to the monastery of Naqlūn. In chapter I the focus is on the *Naqlūn homily* by giving a detailed description of the manuscripts containing this text. Step by step the study provides the reader with a colorful picture of the rich literary tradition that developed round the monastery of Naqlūn.