INTRODUCTION

COPTIC MSS. OF THE PUSHKIN STATE FINE ARTS MUSEUM

The collection of Coptic MSS. in the Fine Arts Museum in Moscow is the most important in Russia, leaving far behind even those of Russia's National Library (*olim* The Saltykov-Schedrin State Public Library) and the Hermitage in St. Petersburg, which may be regarded as second in importance. It contains both literary MSS. and documents in contradistinction to the Hermitage, where literary MSS. are practically lacking, or to the National Library which possesses literary MSS. only.

The major part of documents both from the Moscow Museum and the Hermitage were published by Peter Jernstedt in two fine volumes¹ (nothing but fragments were left) and the National Library literary MSS. were catalogued and some of the most interesting of them published by the present author.² But the Moscow collection of literary MSS. is here presented in its entirety for the first time.³

Its portion that comprised the MSS. that had not previously been published was dealt with in this writer's book that appeared in 1991, but the rest was only described in a catalogue appended to this publication (Elanskaya, *CLT*). Now all the literary MSS. are reproduced, autographed, translated and commented upon.

These MSS. originally belonged to the Coptic section of the private Egyptian Museum founded in St. Petersburg by Vladimir Golenischev, the distinguished Russian Egyptologist, who, owing to financial losses he had sustained in 1908, had to sell his treasures to the Government (1909). The latter bought them with a view of depositing them in Moscow in the Fine Arts Museum, which at that time was in the process of construction. The Museum was opened to the public on June 12, 1912 and functions successfully ever since.⁴

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² Elanskaya, *Coptic MSS. SPL.*
³ Liturgical MSS. will not be included here as forming in the collection a section apart, with the exception of I.1.b.653, which contains a hymn to Shenoute.
⁴ In 1937 the Museum was named after A.S.Pushkin.
INTRODUCTION

As Golenischev did not believe much in a museum documentation where the growth of his collections could have been reflected, we have no other information, so far as his Coptic MSS. are concerned, as to the place and time of their purchase, than the scraps he saw fit to leave to us in his works or the data he supplied to his colleagues when permitting them to publish some of his MSS. or to take them in some other way into account. Golenischev only points out Egypt as the source of his collection of Coptic MSS., but other possibilities (Russia, which Golenischev had not once left before 1875, and Europe, which he began to frequent four years prior to his first visit to Egypt) cannot be excluded either. All the more so that not a few of his Egyptian antiquities were bought both in Russia and Europe.

The provenance and the date of acquisition of the Coptic MSS. are almost invariably left unspecified in the Museum Inventory and other documents relative to his collection, but, as was already said, some data can be gleaned from his works and those of his colleagues and friends. Such gleanings, as the reader will presently see, are not few in number, but nevertheless are rather exceptions than the rule. These fortunate exceptions are I.1.b.295, 297, 298, 299, 305 and 307, which came from the famous White Monastery near Achmim and were brought by Golenischev in 1889 (purchased in December of 1888),5 I.1.b.308, which was bought, in 1901, in Edfu, I.1.b.629, acquired in Deir el-Medineh, and I.1.b.670, brought to Petersburg from Golenischev’s “last trip” to Egypt (the statement dates from 1900).6

In some cases it was possible to attribute our folios to MSS.

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5 This piece of information is due to O.E. von Lemm who published all these MSS. but one (I.1.b.295). That this last, though originally from a library in Fayyum (cf. Lantschoot, fasc. 1, p. 94), was also among them, is clear from Golenischev’s words. Having mentioned the MSS. he had acquired in Achmim in that year, he wrote, inter alia: “It follows from a note added to the text on one folio that the MS. it belonged to was presented to Apa Shenoudi’s Monastery in 678 of Diocletian’s era” (Golenischev, p. 15). This purchase of 1888 is, in all probability, alluded to by Maspero, when writing on the fate of the MSS. from a cache in the White Monastery, which he wanted to secure to France, but which nonetheless had partly escaped his vigilance and found their way into the collections of St. Petersburg and other cities (Maspero, Études, p. 426). Cf. Maspero, Fragm. AT and Hebbelynck, Manuscrits. Lemm in Transactions, pp. 341–342 also points out the Achmimic (Deir el Abiad) origin of the Golenischev folios of Apophthegmata Patrum (I.1.b.649, 711, 713). See also HyvIntr. p.110, note 5; CBM, p. x.

6 Rahlfs, p. 8.