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Diachronic and Synchronic Approaches

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Searching for a source of the Coptic hemerology. Diachronic and synchronic approaches*

Christoffer Theis

Abstract

The article offers a study of the known Coptic calendars with favorable and unfavorable days, entitled hemerologies, and compares the given information with the information presented in earlier calendars from Egypt and Mycenaean Greece and also with later sources written in Arabic and Latin. The starting point of this study is Pap. Heidelberg Inv. Kopt. 236, a newly edited Coptic hemerology which forms the second oldest example of this type known so far. In comparison, the material clearly shows that predictions for certain days are not necessarily results of direct influences and can be seen as examples of cultural convergences.

Keywords

Coptic hemerology • Egypt • Calendars

Schlüsselworte

Koptische Hemerologie • Ägypten • Kalender

Zusammenfassung

Der vorliegende Beitrag bietet eine Studie zu den bisher bekannten koptischen Kalendern mit günstigen und ungünstigen Tagen, welche als Hemerologien bezeichnet werden, und vergleicht diese sowie die in ihnen vorliegenden Informationen mit früheren Kalendern aus Ägypten und der mykenischen Kultur wie auch mit späteren Quellen auf Arabisch und Latein. Den Ausgangspunkt der Studie bildet Pap. Heidelberg Inv. Kopt. 236, eine neu edierte koptische Hemerologie und bisher das zweitälteste Exemplar dieser Gattung. Im Vergleich zeigen die heute bekannten Texte klar, dass Vorhersagen für bestimmte Tage nicht zwangsläufig auf direkte Einflüsse zwischen Kulturen zurückzuführen sein müssen, sondern als Beispiele für kulturelle Gemeinsamkeiten gelten können.

1. Introduction

A hemerology – from the Greek ἡμερολόγιον “calendar” – is a calendar with a basic tendency to inform the reader about *fas et nefas*. Hemerologies are known from Egypt, Mycenaean Greece and Mesopotamia from the second and first millennium BC and also from later sources written in Coptic, Arabic and Latin. The aim of the study is to present an intercultural comparison of the type ‘hemerology’ and to outline the cultural convergences of the specific information, given in different texts from different cultures and periods, spanning 3000 years. On occasion of the “4th International Coptic Summer School” in Heidelberg (August 26 to September 9, 2012) I was able to edit a hitherto unpublished Coptic hemerology, now Pap. Heidelberg Inv. Kopt. 236. This papyrus is a typical example of

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a hemerology, a 'calendar of favorable and unfavorable days'. The ductus places it slightly later than Pap. London, British Library Or 9035 (19), making it the second oldest example of this type known so far. The papyrus contains a badly preserved fragment of a calendar of favorable and unfavorable days. The recto provides information about the twelfth and thirteenth day, while the verso contains details of days 21 through 23. Based on known parallels, the leaf was part of a larger ensemble in antiquity. This is clear from a comparison with the text of Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112 und 9885–9900, published by Walter Till.¹ The ductus places the papyrus in the eighth century AD.² As a starting point, the Coptic hemerologies known so far will be collected and the presented information about lucky and unlucky days will be compared. In a second step, the sources will be compared with texts from other cultures, which will give insights into the construction of hemerologies in different cultures and different times. In sum, parallels of certain predictions can be seen in all of the material and can be described rather as examples for cultural convergences than as direct cultural influences.

2. Coptic hemerologies

A translation of the text of Pap. Heidelberg Inv. Kopt. 236 shall serve as a basis for the following comparisons with hemerologies from other cultures.

^{rt.}[Twelfth (day) ... A man, who ..., he will ...] and he will die through h[im]. [A wom]a[n, who] marries a man, she will get divorced and they will be ashamed. 13th (day:) They gave birth to her ..., who he (or: their) ... is. A woman who is (on this day) conceived, she wi[ll] become (a) harlot; a man, who is born (on this day), will become a poor fellow. (The day) is not good to go [a]broad. (The day) is not good for washing your [cl]othes. Do not vouch for a man [o]r a woman. Do not give (sc. loan) [them] money, [an]d do not give (your) children to a trade. Do [no]t buy a slave or an animal. Do [no]t go to court (and) do not speak with [a] powerful man. Do not [tra]de on this day!

^{vs.}[...(The) 21st (day) of the month: ... (and) she will lie with (her)] husband and she will stay! (The) 22nd (day) of the month: [...] was born. It is good, [for undertaking] any business on it. It is good for going [to] any [pl]ace, for taking and giving, (as well as) for buying a donkey. [He who] will go and he who will get lost, they will return home! He who will be ill, will recover. Those who are conceived will live. She who will marry, wi[ll] immediately be pregnant. The 23rd (day): [...] was born. A day that is good for buying a sla[ve], for buying and selling, to go [on] a journey that is long, to sail and to tr[avel] by ship, to celebrate a marriage, to make friends with the great (and) [those] who have power. It (sc. the day) is goo[d to ...] and to settle that place together with things of your greatness. Those who [will] get lost and those who will be on the road [they] will be found quickly. He who will be sick will recover an[d] a blessing (will) emanate from hi[m]!"

1 See TILL 1936, 108–149.

2 THEIS forthcoming. Cf. the ductus offered by STEGEMANN 1936, 11. On the problems relating to the palaeographical dating of Coptic documents see, for example, BOUD'HORS 2006, 95–109; EMMEL 1993, 22–49; EMMEL 1999, 65–78; KASSER 1994, 175–184 and LAYTON 1985, 149–158.

In his above mentioned publication, TILL describes texts of this genre as a 'Mondlaufbuch' ['lunar cycle book'] that outlines the good and bad characteristics of 30 days. Since the calendars are organized in groups of 30 (lunar) days, the genre as a whole has often been described as 'Sammellunar' ['aggregative lunar calendar'].³ The Coptic parallels available today consistently deviate from the Heidelberg piece since they show more specific day omens. Hitherto, only very few examples of Coptic calendars with information about good and bad days are available; in part, these also contain instructions for farmers. The label 'farmer's calendar' for Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 is rejected here for a simple reason, namely that the passages preserved do not deal with the natural cycle of the year, which would be relevant for a farmer.⁴ An example of a 'farmer's calendar' is provided by the menological Coptic-Arabic farmer's calendar published by Enno Littmann. Organized by months, this text offers descriptions of how to handle the seed and other objects relevant to farmers.⁵

The following list outlines the known Coptic calendars with favorable and unfavorable days in chronological order:

- A fragment from the Wādī Sarga, WS 19, now London, British Library Or 9035 (19).⁶ Papyrus, probably from the sixth or seventh century. It contains a few lines about the thirteenth and fourteenth day.
- Heidelberg Inv. Kopt. 236.⁷ Papyrus, from the eighth century.
- Two fragments of a Bohairic hemerology.⁸ Papyrus, written probably between the sixth and eighth century, found in Hermitage 25 in Dayr al-Naqlūn, room E.⁹ The pieces preserve a few scraps of information about the eleventh and twelfth day.
- Vienna, National Library, K 5506.¹⁰ Papyrus, ninth century. Only a few traces remain to identify the sixth day.
- University of Michigan Library, inv. 590.¹¹ Parchment, late ninth century. The end of the sixth and the entire seventh day are preserved.
- Vienna, National Library, K 1112 and 9885–9900.¹² Parchment, ninth or tenth century.

- 3 Besides the sources listed, one might also mention London, BM Cod. Egerton 2852, fol. 107r from the fifteenth century AD; see the partial text given by ERIKSSON 1956, 11, who described this genre p. 12 as "Mondwahrsagebücher" ["lunar prophecy books"].
- 4 On the agricultural situation in eighth century Egypt see MÜLLER-WODARG 1957, 14–78. On agriculture and its structure in Egypt in general one may refer to the somewhat dated but still useful work by HARTMANN 1923, 121–131. For an introduction to the Coptic calendar see WASSEF 1971b, 23–85.
- 5 See LITTMANN 1938, 108–113. The Arabic calendars often directly reference names of Coptic months, as in, e.g., PELLAT 1986, 21, or festivals, as in GRIVEAU 1914, 313–343. See also VARISCO 1994, 72.
- 6 Published by CRUM, BELL 1922, 50f. (no. 19). Referenced in TILL 1943, 334. Translated by WILFONG 1999, 227 (= TM 108460).
- 7 THEIS forthcoming.
- 8 These two pieces are going to be published by GHICA forthcoming.
- 9 See the preliminary excavation report by GODLEWSKI 1991, 49f.
- 10 Published by TILL 1943, 329–334; translation by WILFONG 1999, 228 (= TM 110269).
- 11 Published by BROWNE 1979, 45–57; translation by WILFONG 1999, 227. ORLANDI 1991, 444 lists this papyrus under inventory number 6590, which should be corrected to 590. ORLANDI also lists another text from the State Museums at Berlin, which should, with WILFONG 1999, 224, n. 34, be treated as a magical text with no connection to a calendar.
- 12 Published by TILL 1936, 108–149. On this see also the revised and supplemented passages in BROWNE 1979, 60–63. Further translation in WILFONG 1999, 228–233.

- Vienna, National Library, K 7027.¹³ Parchment, written in the tenth or eleventh century; contains only a single passage on the first lunar day.
- Fragment of uncertain date, now at Ann Arbor.¹⁴
- Cairo, Coptic Museum, inv.-no. 3808.¹⁵ Paper, twelfth century. The piece is from Idfu and contains information about the fifth and sixth day.

Till also mentions another source, London, British Library, Or. 4920 (2),¹⁶ which is in fact a badly preserved astrological text that deals with the sun and the moon.

The Coptic examples listed, namely Pap. Vienna, National Library, K 5506, Parch. University of Michigan Library, Inv. 590 as well as the first part of Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112 and 9885–9900, should be treated as hemerologies due to their textual structure, i.e., they give specific dates and the actions that are auspicious and inauspicious on these dates, as do the earlier examples Pap. Cairo, Äg. Mus. JdE 86637 and Pap. Sallier IV. Whereas these dates are spread throughout the year, Pap. London, British Library Or 9035 (19), the second part of Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112 and 9885–9900, Pap. Vienna, National Library, K 7027 and Pap. Cairo, Coptic Museum, inv. no. 3808 describe only a single month with thirty days, but give a relatively detailed account of every day.

If one compares the statements made in Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 with those of the other Coptic calendars, one observes a few analogies, but the majority of the text is quite different, which suggests a difference in the underlying strands of tradition.

In general, the papyrus describes the twenty-second and twenty-third day as good (ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲩⲥ), whereas the thirteenth is called “ungood” (ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲩⲥ ⲁⲛ) for various undertakings. Comparable passages, e.g., in Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112, K R°, l. 2.4.9 and K V°, l. 1.7 employ ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲩⲥ ⲉ instead of ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲩⲥ ⲛ.¹⁷

The warning uttered for the thirteenth day “a man, who is born (on this day), will become a poor fellow” is paralleled by day 23 in Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9899, L V°, l. 4f.: “If a boy is born to you, he will be poor” (ⲉⲩⲱⲁⲛⲙⲁⲥ ⲟⲩⲗⲟⲟⲩⲧ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲱⲁⲣ ⲉⲃⲏⲛ).¹⁸ Similar observations are made for the third day in Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9894, G V°, l. 3f.: “The children that are born to you are weak” (ⲛⲉⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲛⲁⲗⲡⲟⲟⲩ [ⲛⲁ]ⲕ ⲗⲛ ⲉⲱⲃ ⲛⲉ), and the twenty-fifth day in Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9895, M R°, l. 3f.: “If children are born, they will be weak” (ⲉⲩⲱⲁⲛⲗⲡⲟ ⲗⲛⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲱⲁⲩⲣ ⲉⲱⲃ).¹⁹

A prediction that is almost identical to the passage “A woman who is conceived (on this day), will become (a) harlot” in Pap. Heidelberg Inv. Kopt 236 is found in Parch. Vienna National Library, K 9899, L V°, l. 3f.: “If a girl is born to you, she will become a harlot” (ⲉⲩⲱ[ⲁⲛ]ⲙⲁⲥ ⲟⲩⲕⲗⲏ[ⲉ] ⲛⲁⲕ ⲱⲁⲣ ⲡ[ⲟⲣ]ⲛⲏ).²⁰ In this case, the prediction is assigned to the twenty-third

13 Noted by TILL 1936, 113f.

14 Briefly referenced by WILFONG 1999, 225.

15 Published by ABD AL-MASIH 1956, 1–9. Translation by WILFONG 1999, 233.

16 Cf. TILL 1943, 334; published by CRUM 1905, 252f. (no. 523). The older reference is Pap. Lond. Copt. 470 and Pap. London, BM 523 (= TM 86153).

17 Published by TILL 1936, 127f.

18 *Ibid.*, 129. On ⲉⲃⲏⲛ in general and for the parallels see VYCICHL 1983, 38.

19 Published by TILL 1936, 123.

20 *Ibid.*, 129.

day as a bad omen. The same applies to Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9899, L V°, l. 6f., which also says “Do not give your child to a trade” (μηρῖπεκωρηε εὔτεχνη),²¹ but gives this advice for the twenty-third day, rather than the thirteenth found in the Heidelberg papyrus.

For the twenty-third day, Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9899, L V°, l. 6 offers “Do not vouch for a man” (μηρωπτωρε νρωμε),²² which the Heidelberg papyrus does not mention for the twenty-third, but assigns to the thirteenth day, at least as far as the preserved part suggests. Whereas Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 negatively associates the thirteenth day with going to court, the hemerology in Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112, V°, l. 8f. mentions the nineteenth day as positive for going to court (εβωκ επραπ).²³ The phrase “to buy a donkey” (ε ωπ ιω) for the twenty-second day is found also in Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9885+9886, J R°. l. x+10.²⁴ Whereas Pap. Heid. Kopt. Inv. 236 names the twenty-second and twenty-third day as days of recovery for the sick, Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9892, H V°, l. 2f. and K 9896, I R°, l. 11f. give the sixth and ninth day, and there are also examples where this event does not occur at all. London, British Library, Or 9035 (19) describes a fourteenth day on which the sick will not recover but continue to suffer.²⁵ Days that favor sea travel are mentioned not only for the twenty-third day in Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236, but also in Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9894, G R°, l. 14, K 1112, K R°, l. 3 and N R°, l. 1.²⁶ These describe the second, sixteenth and twenty-ninth day as favorable for travel. Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9896, I R°, l. 7 describes the ninth day as suitable for a wedding (ερ ωελεετ),²⁷ as does Pap. Heidelberg Inv. Kopt. 236 for the twenty-third, using the same phrase. Similarly, persons who have gone away shall be found on the twenty-third day in Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 – the same is true for Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9896, IV°, l. 6f.,²⁸ but the prediction is made for only one person (πετπωτ σεναδοντ). The fact that there are also days on which fugitives are no longer found, is evident from the remark made for the seventeenth day in Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112, K R°, l. 12f.²⁹ The text explains that “if someone flees, he will not return” (ερω[α]νογα πωτ φναστοφ αν φα εν[εε]). In a similar fashion, Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112, K V°, l. 14f. predicts for the twentieth day that “who goes abroad will never return” (πετ ναβωκ [ε]πωμμο φναστοφ αν φα ενεε).³⁰

This comparison between the predictions for the days preserved in Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 and those made in other Coptic hemerologies clearly shows that the days are almost invariably assigned different predictions and that the auspices can change from good to bad and vice versa. The significance of this observation is unfortunately limited by the state of the source material. Most of the texts are very badly preserved and only Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112 and 9885–9900 is actually complete. As a result, it is at least theoretically

21 *Ibid.*, 129.

22 *Ibid.*, 129.

23 *Ibid.*, 128.

24 *Ibid.*, 127.

25 Published by CRUM, BELL 1922, 50 (no. 19).

26 Published by TILL 1936, 123, 127 & 131.

27 *Ibid.*, 125.

28 *Ibid.*, 126.

29 *Ibid.*, 128.

30 *Ibid.*, 128.

conceivable that the Heidelberg fragment diverged from other hemerologies only in the passages preserved. The evidence gained from the remaining passages and the comparison with other hemerological calendars makes it far more likely, however, that in practice every text created its own evaluation of positives and negatives and that their allocation is unique to every text. We can note that neither of the calendars is connected to any of the others, since the days are too different from one another. The parallels that do occur can be most easily explained by treating them as incidental overlaps, since the total pool of events described in hemerologies is rather limited.

3. Hemerologies from Pharaonic Egypt

Calendars that set out specific characteristics for each individual day are known from Pharaonic Egypt from the Middle Kingdom onwards.³¹ The earliest example so far is Pap. Kahun, XVII, 3, from the twelfth dynasty.³² The New Kingdom is generally a period of many well preserved texts. With Pap. Leiden I 346.II.6–III.2³³ and *Tablette hiératique*, rt. (a menology)³⁴ from the eighteenth dynasty, and with Pap. Cairo, Eg. Mus. JdE 86637 and Pap. Sallier IV (= Pap. London, BM 10184),³⁵ an ostrakon from Dayr al-Madina,³⁶ Pap. Turin CGT 54016 vs.³⁷ and Ostr. Gardiner 109,³⁸ which were written during the nineteenth dynasty, a lot of texts of this genre are preserved. We can include Ostr. Turin CGT 57304, which can be dated to the New Kingdom.³⁹ From the first millennium BC, only Pap. London, BM 10474 vs., approximately from the twenty-second to twenty-third dynasty,⁴⁰ and four fragments of Pap. Golénischeff, now Moscow, Pushkin Museum,⁴¹ are known.

Generally speaking, the Coptic examples are less extensive than some of these older texts. We also have a twelfth dynasty papyrus from al-Lāhūn that labels the thirty days of a month as “good” or “bad” and is thus quite close to the later Coptic material.⁴² From the late period,

31 General introductions include BÁCS 1987, 245–251; BRUNNER-TRAUT 1970, 332–347; SPALINGER 1994, 297–308 and the now dated work by WRZESINSKI 1913, 86–100. SMITH 1974, 27 mentions a demotic hemerology that seems to be unpublished as yet. Ostr. Turin CGT 57406 in CORTESE 1997, 128 and LÓPEZ 1982, 34 & Tf. 131 may also once have formed part of such a calendar, but not much survives beyond a couple of designations of days. In a comparable manner, the cult calendar Pap. Berlin P. 14472+Pap. Strasbourg BNU hier. 38a+Pap. Berlin P. 29065, which dates to the second or first century BC, shows notes such as “good, good” on the eleventh day that refers to the celebration of a festival, see the publication by QUACK 2012, 189–198.

32 Published by GRIFFITH 1897, 62 & Tf. 25 (no. 17).

33 First published by STRICKER 1948, 55–70. Translation in BORGHOUTS 1978, 12–14. Analysis of the vignette by RAVEN 1997, 277–285. Last studied by BOMMAS 1999 (addendum LEITZ 2002, 413–424).

34 Published by VERNUS 1981, 91–93.

35 Both published by LEITZ 1994.

36 Published by MALININE 1935–38, 879–883.

37 Mentioned by ROCCATI 1975, 245, no. 7.

38 Published by ALLAM 1973, 174–176 & Tf. 40f. and BÁCS 1990, 46f. & Abb. 1b.

39 Published by POSENER 1951, 186f. & Tf. 13 and LÓPEZ 1980, Tf. 96.

40 Published by BUDGE 1910, Tf. 31f.

41 See MALININE 1935–38, 883f.

42 Published by GRIFFITH 1897, 62 & Tf. 15 (no. 17). COLLOMBERT 2006, 33–42 argued that hemerologies were developed already in the Old Kingdom, but the small number of parallel passages he adduces are not strong enough to support such an argument without further material.

Pap. London BM 10474 vs. is providing evidence for an evaluation of good and bad days in the first millennium BC.⁴³ Based on the style, the calendar can be roughly dated to the twenty-second dynasty or a little later, whereas the teachings of *ʿImn-m-ḥp.t* found on the recto date as late as the twelfth dynasty. This list of days subdivides the days of the Egyptian months into segments, with any given day apparently having three subdivisions, individually specified as *nfr* “good” or *ḥc* “obstacle”.⁴⁴ The same scheme is used, for example, for the fifteenth of *ḥt* I in Pap. Cairo JdE 86637, rt. V, 4 that is described as “good, uncertain, uncertain” (*nfr ḥc ḥc*)⁴⁵ and the ostracon from Dayr al-Madīna.⁴⁶ Pap. London BM 10474 vs., and in some cases also Pap. Cairo JdE 86637, provide a similar, more accurate subdivision of the days that can no longer be observed in the Coptic period. More comparable to the Coptic material is the structure of Pap. Kahun, XVII, 3 that labels each day as *nfr* “good”, *ḏw* “bad” or as a mixture of the two.⁴⁷

4. *Parallels of Coptic hemerologies: The Arabic and Latin sources*

The comparison of the statements made in the various hemerologies, but also the comparison with Pap. Vienna, National Library, K 5506, which preserves only a few days, clearly shows that in the early Islamic period of Egypt, to which the pieces are dated, several different calendars existed side by side, which also provided quite different information about their respective time periods.⁴⁸ The Coptic lists of days known so far are related to earlier Egyptian texts, but also to contemporary Arabic pieces.⁴⁹ In Arabic, the calendars are often called *taqwīm*, whereas individual entries are denoted by a derivative term as *tawqīʿāt* “events”. A collection of the known examples was published by Christian Leitz.⁵⁰ One of the earliest surviving versions dates to the ninth century AD and was written by Yūhannā Ibn Māsawayh (–777–†857 AD). The thirty-second chapter of the astronomical work *al-Tabṣira fī ilm an-Nuyūm* by the Yemenite author al-Malik al-Ašraf Mumahhid ad-Dīn ʿUmar ibn Yūsuf ibn ʿAlī ibn Rasūl ibn Hārūn ibn Abī Fattāḥ al-Ḡassānī al-Turkumānī may serve as an example of a menological calendar that deals in detail with the twelve months of the year and identifies a specific event for every single day within this timeframe.⁵¹ Another

43 Published by BUDGE 1910, Tf. 31f. A comparison of the statements made in this calendar with Pap. Cairo JdE 86637 and Pap. Sallier IV has been assembled by PORCEDDU et al. 2008, 327–339.

44 Comparable is the passage of the Babylonian Almanac, VII, 8 in LIVINGSTONE 1993, 99, that states that the eighth day is only half auspicious. On this text in general see LIVINGSTONE 2007, 85–100, showing beyond reasonable doubt that the almanac was used not only by specialists but by a broader audience.

45 See LEITZ 1994, 28.

46 See MALININE 1935–38, 880f.

47 Published by GRIFFITH 1897, 62 & Tf. 25 (no. 17).

48 Cf. TILL 1943, 332.

49 On the Arabic almanacs see the publication by PELLAT 1979, 172–185; an introduction is provided by VARISCO 1994, 6–12. For the modalities of transmission see also WASSEF 1971a, 7–45, who contrasts two Arabic calendars from the years 1866 (Era of the Martyrs 1583) and 1959 (Era of the Martyrs 1675) and identifies clear parallels to earlier Arabic works. On the information found in calendars in general see also PELLAT 1955, 17–41.

50 Cf. LEITZ 1994, 9f. WILFONG 1999, 224, n. 33 adds MUNZEL 1939, 665f.

51 Translation in VARISCO 1994, 23–40, Arabic text VARISCO 1994, 41–60. This text is preserved in a fourteenth century AD copy that is now in Oxford, Bodleian Library, Ms. Huntington 233 (Uri 905). The text itself was

alternative method of structuring Arabic almanacs consisted in collecting the astrological events that start at a certain point in time and incorporating these events into the descriptions of one or several weeks, as is the case, e.g., in Cambridge, Taylor-Shechter Collection, 41:103, rt. 5–21 & vs. 5–22⁵² and in Cambridge, Taylor-Shechter Collection, Ar. 29:183, rt. 6–21 & vs. 6–18.⁵³ Lunaries have survived in large numbers and have also been called “apocalypses” or “visions” of the prophet Daniel.⁵⁴ Approximately contemporaneous with Pap. Heid. Kopt. Inv. 236 is Leiden, Codex 199 (catalogue 1050), a short hemerology written by Abū Jaʿqūb ibn Ishāq al-Kindī (800–†873 AD),⁵⁵ the renowned Alkindus. On the topic of choosing days for certain actions, we here find the following:

“if the moon is conjunct with the sun in trinity or sexuality, then it (sc. the day) is favorable to all business and needs.”⁵⁶

The specific statement that a day is good – or not – thus constitutes the intercultural link between all hemerologies.

The Latin material also contains comparable pieces. Emanuel Svenberg has collected the relevant manuscripts, all of which are from the fourteenth and fifteenth century AD.⁵⁷ Of these manuscripts, especially Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r shows remarkable parallels to Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 regarding the actions described.⁵⁸ The statement “Do not vouch for a man”, here made for the thirteenth day, occurs also for the twenty-third day in Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 9899, L V^o, l. 6 and is listed as *non feneras* for the sixteenth day of Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r.⁵⁹ The phrase listed for the thirteenth day in Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 “do not speak with a person of authority” is rendered in Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r as *non negutiare cum aliquem, non communicis*, and *non facies negutium non aliquid*, for the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth day respectively.⁶⁰ Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r also contains advice not to take or buy anything. For the third day, this is expressed as *nec des nec accipies*, for the fifth and twenty-first as *nec des nec accipias*.⁶¹ A prohibition to give and sell is rendered as *quia qui acciperit non reddit et qui dat non receperit* for the third day, as it occurs in Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 on the thirteenth day. In Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r, the Coptic phrase ⲛⲁⲧⲓ ⲁⲓⲱ ⲉ ⲧⲉⲓ that characterizes the twenty-second day in Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 is translated directly as

probably written in 1271 AD, date after Varisco 1994, 71. From Pharaonic Egypt, a menology with the *tablette hiératique*, rt. is known already from the eighteenth dynasty, published by VERNUS 1981, 91–93

52 Published by GOLDSTEIN, PINGREE 1979, 155–161.

53 Published in OP. CIT., 231f. For additional examples of this kind, see the literature given in n. 58 and 62, but also GOLDSTEIN, PINGREE 1983, 675–690.

54 See the compilation by ULLMANN 1972, 293, n. 4.

55 Published by WIEDEMANN 1912, 225f.

56 Cited after *ibid.*, 225f.

57 See SVENBERG 1963, 12–14.

58 Cf. the Latin text *ibid.*, 23–29.

59 Cf. the Latin text *ibid.*, 27.

60 Cf. the Latin text *ibid.*, 26f.

61 Cf. the Latin text *ibid.* 26 & 28.

bona in omnia (...) dare et accipere, at least for the majority of days.⁶² This corresponds to the Arabic version in Leiden, Codex 199, which describes a day that favors “taking and giving”.⁶³ For most days, Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r notes that they are *bona in omnia*,⁶⁴ which is, for all intents and purposes, identical to the Coptic $\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\sigma\tau\alpha\iota \epsilon\iota\varsigma \chi\alpha\iota\alpha \mu\iota\mu$. The statement in Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236 that children born on the twenty-second day will live, appears for most days in Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r, rendered variously as *et qui natur fuerit vitalis erit*, *vitalis et utilis et amabilis est*, *bonifacius erit* and comparable formulas.⁶⁵ In Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r, the sick recovers on most days, which is generally expressed as *et qui incadit sanabitur*.⁶⁶ In the Coptic text of the Heidelberg papyrus this occurs on the twenty-second and twenty-third day. The note about days on which something will happen to fugitives has a parallel in the Latin text of London, BM Cod. 2852, fol. 108v, which reports, under the heading of a certain lunar day and a certain hour, that he who flees will find lower standing (*qui fugerit in loco humili inuenietur*).⁶⁷ One should also mention Munich, Bavarian State Library, Cod. lat. 6382, fol. 42r from the eleventh century, which describes the year day by day.⁶⁸

If one compares the Latin text to the Coptic text under discussion here, it seems plausible that both texts ultimately derive from the same predecessors, or that a text similar to the Heidelberg piece was used as a model for Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r. It is obvious that the comparisons offered above should not be overemphasized, but the parallels are certainly worth noting. The Latin text is also very similar to Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112 and 9885–9900, especially as regards the assignment of the predictions to the individual days.

5. Sources from Rome and Greece on auspicious and inauspicious units of time

Comparable statements about days can already be found in authors dating to the period of the Roman Empire. Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae* IV.9.5 reports that

“For those days are called *religiosi* which are of ill-fame and are hampered by an evil omen, so that on them one must refrain from offering sacrifice or beginning any new business whatever; they are, namely, the days that the ignorant multitude falsely and improperly call *nefasti*.”⁶⁹

Macrobius, *Sat.* I.16.21 offers the similar observation that the ancestors were wary of certain days and considered them inauspicious,⁷⁰ a thought that is also found in Ovid, *Fast.*

62 Cf. the Latin text *ibid.*, 23–29.

63 Cited after WIEDEMANN 1912, 226.

64 Cf. the Latin text in SVENBERG 1963, 23–29.

65 Cf. the Latin text *ibid.*, 23–29.

66 Cf. the Latin text *ibid.*, 23–29.

67 Latin text from ERIKSSON 1956, 11.

68 Partial translation in ERIKSSON 1956, 9.

69 Cf. MARSHALL 1968, 174.

70 Cf. KASTER 2011, 196, who also notes comparable passages in Lucius Cassius, *Ann.* 2 and Gnaeus Gellius, *Ann.* 15.

I.57f.: *omnibus istis proximus ater erit* “The next after all these (sc. the ides etc.) is black.”⁷¹ The *dies atri* mentioned in Ovid and the *dies postriduan*i listed in Macrobius are generally the days that follow the calends and ides. This is explicitly confirmed by Varro, *Ling.* VI.29, who remarks on the negative character of these segments of time:

“The days after the calends, nones and ides are called black, since on these days one should begin nothing new!”⁷²

Vergil, *Georg.* I.277–286 also singles out specific days as being favorable or unfavorable for certain actions,⁷³ when he describes the fifth as inauspicious and the seventh and ninth as auspicious. Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita* VI.1.12 also mentions days with auspices: *Tum de diebus religiosis agitari coeptum* “Then they (sc. the senate) began to argue about the religious days”.⁷⁴

From the Greek cultural sphere, on the other hand, hardly any texts are known that deal with auspicious days in a similarly calendric way. Two short texts that can be considered ‘oracles’ about good and bad days are known already from Mycenaean times. The remains of tablet *Documents* 207 = V 280 list six days of the month *Wo-de-wi-jo*⁷⁵ and have been interpreted as a report about ἡμέραι ἀποφράδες, or *dies nefasti*.⁷⁶ The remains state that the table (*to-pe-za* = τὸρπεζα)⁷⁷ is not good (*o-u-ki te-mi* = οὐχὶ θέμις) on the fourth day of the month and that the *a-pe-ti-ra*₂⁷⁸ are not good (*o-u te-mi* = οὐ θέμις) between the tenth and the thirteenth day. A comparable source is *Documents* 172 = Kn02,⁷⁹ a kind of calendar, ten days of which – evenly divided among two different months – are still preserved, including details to which god one should sacrifice on each day. The deities named include Hermes (*E-ma-a*), Zeus (*Di-we*) and Hera (*E-ra*). The dates of these texts are relatively close to those of the most important Egyptian hemerologies Pap. Cairo JdE 86637 and Pap. Sallier IV, as well as the tablet KUB 4, 46 + KUB 43, 1.⁸⁰ Proceeding in chronological order, the next attestation is provided by Hesiod, *Op.* 765–828, who remarks on various days of the month and occasionally makes statements about the auspices of a given day, while also offering other information.⁸¹ Hesiod does not present his material in chronological order, however, and does not seem to adhere to a specific scheme of organization.

The Coptic sources generally provide statements about the 30 *lunae*. As numerous, usually Latin sources show, these were compiled in ‘Sammellunarien’, aggregative lunar calendars. The same principle is inherent in the famous peg calendar from Rome.⁸² Petronius, *Cena Trimalchionis* XXX.4 describes a work comparable to such a calendar with the words *altera lunae cursum stellarumque septem imagines pictas et qui dies boni quique incommodi essent*.⁸³

71 Latin text from FRAZER 1996, 6.

72 Cf. KENT 1938, 200.

73 See ERREN 1985, 50–53.

74 Latin text from CONWAY 1958, 3.

75 Published by CHADWICK 1973, 311.

76 See *ibid.*, 311 and MERIGGI 1954, 24.

77 Cf. AURA JORRO 1993, 363.

78 According to *Op. cit.*, 79 the noun cannot be identified with certainty; CHADWICK 1973, 311 lists it as ‘releasers’.

79 Published by CHADWICK 1973, 286–289.

80 Published by FINCKE 2009, 121f.

81 See the translation by von SCHIRNDING 1991, 143–147. For this section see BOUCHÉ-LECLERCQ 1899, 458–461.

82 Discussion in ERIKSSON 1956, 17–23.

83 Latin text from MÜLLER 2009, 24.

6. Summary

It has been noted that the Coptic calendars cannot be brought into agreement as regards the dates for certain predictions and that they differ also from the Latin source Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r. As a result, every Coptic calendar has to possess its own tradition, both as a text and as regards the information it contains – unless of course one wants to assume that the writer simply made up the entries up. If one compares this to early Egyptian texts, one can even observe direct contrast: As Michel Malinine has previously shown, the statements about the thirds of the day made in Pap. Sallier IV, Pap. London, BM 10474, the fragments of Pap. Golénischeff and the ostrakon from Dayr al-Madīna differ only in details.⁸⁴ Another difference is that the Coptic material gives a relatively specific account of the positive and negative actions private individuals should or should not perform on each given day, whereas the Egyptian hemerologies known today are either mainly religious in nature or provide only curt prophecies for the day, such as “good” and/or “bad”. This kind of curt prophecy is known, for example, from Pap. Kahun, XVII.3.⁸⁵ The phrase that the day *nḥr m ḥrj.t ḥh.t nb.t* “is good for doing all things”, found in Ostr. Turin CGT 57304,⁸⁶ is somewhat more reminiscent of the Coptic *ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩⲩ ⲉⲛ ⲉⲱⲩ ⲛⲓⲙ*, and, as was noted above, also occurs as *bona in omnia* in Codex Parisinus Nouv. Acq. Lat. 1616, p. IX, fol. 10v–12r.⁸⁷ Ostr. Gardiner 109 also shows a rough distinction between “good” and “bad”, but simultaneously includes instructions for more specific actions on certain days.⁸⁸ On the fourth day, for example, sacrifices to gods should be avoided, on the twentieth no bread should be eaten in the house, on the twenty-first one should not go to court, and on the twenty-ninth arguments are to be avoided; the provisions are comparable to those made in Pap. Cairo JdE 86637, vs. XII–XIII.⁸⁹ The surviving part of the ostrakon from Dayr al-Madīna that details the third month of *Prj.t* also contains predictions aimed at regular people.⁹⁰

So where did the statements made in the Coptic calendars come from? While the instructions found on the calendars often have direct parallels in other cultures, this need not suggest intercultural transfer, since the calendologies deal only with a relatively limited range of activities. These activities must necessarily recur, either due to their significance, as is the case, e.g., for marriage, the birth of children, court cases, and sea travel, or their banal omnipresence, as is the case for, e.g., washing one’s clothes. Similar concerns are known also from Mesopotamia, but the more general positive or negative evaluation of days is also attested. The texts in question were created at around the same time as the ancient Egyptian and Mycenaean sources, but show predictions comparable to those found in the Coptic material.⁹¹ In the case of Astrolab. B there is, for example, a hemerology in I.1–III.46, divided into twelve

84 Cf. MALININE 1935-38, 884f.

85 See GRIFFITH 1897, 62 (no. 17).

86 See POSENER 1951, 187.

87 Cf. the Latin text in SVENBERG 1963, 23–29.

88 See BÁCS 1990, 54–56.

89 See BAKIR 1966, 52f.

90 Published by MALININE 1935-38, 879–883.

91 An overview of the surviving texts can be found in LIVINGSTONE 1993, 99–107. A collection of the material is available in the edition by LIVINGSTONE 2014, which was not available to me yet.

sections that make statements about the individual months and assign a star to each of them⁹² – even in the first century BC, Diodorus, *Bibl. Hist.* II.31 still noted the Chaldeans' exact knowledge of the moon. The thematic content of the predictions in this work is reminiscent of the Coptic and Arabic sources discussed here. A contrastive analysis of the information given about two specific actions in KUB 4.46 + KUB 43.1 (fourteenth cent. BC), the series *iqqur ipuš* (thirteenth cent. BC), and the hemerology from Aššur KAR 178 (c. eleventh cent. BC) clearly shows that these texts describe actions as positive or negative on the very same days, with only one exception.⁹³ A source that focuses strongly on marriage is KUB 4. 44 Vs. 7 and KAR 179+ Vs. iii 4'–5', stating explicitly that “He should take a wife” (DAM TUK) on the twenty-sixth day.⁹⁴ Going to court was of great significance already in the thirteenth century BC, with negative auspices preventing a positive outcome of the case on certain days. In the hemerology KUB 4, 42, Vs. II' 3' from Ḫattuša, the fourth day (DU.4.KAM) of an unknown month is characterized as follows: “For the laws[uit it is (un)favorable]” (*ina D[I ŠE / NU.ŠE]*).⁹⁵ The same occurs for the twenty-first day in Ostr. Gardiner 109, which was mentioned above.⁹⁶ Also comparable are the statement made in KUB 4, 44 Vs. 6 and KAR 179+, Vs. iii 2'–3' for the twenty-fifth day, namely “Favorable to a judicial procedure” (DI ŠE KI.MIN), and the identical phrase found in KUB 4, 45 Vs. 10', where it characterizes an unknown day.⁹⁷ The washing of clothes is also found in the hemerology KUB 4, 46 + KUB 43, 1, dated to the middle Hittite period. The text details for various days whether they are positive or negative for washing a garment (Vs. 1.3.5: TÚG-sú DADAG = *šubassu ubbubu*).⁹⁸ KAR 178, VII, 3 likewise reports that the third day is suitable for this activity.⁹⁹

Certain activities mentioned above and the parallels for deeds in Coptic hemerologies, mentioned in part 2, clearly show a set of predictions, which can be seen in all of the material, like washing of clothes, marriage or childbirth. But in fact even in the older material from Egypt, the dates of the predictions have significant differences, as is the case for the Coptic Hemerologies. One can detect the same activities, but they are mentioned with different dates and/or with different predictions about good or bad. Especially for the Coptic material these observations can be described rather as examples for cultural convergences than as a direct influence by another hemerology written in Coptic or another language. Direct cultural

92 Published by WEIDNER 1915, 85–87; briefly mentioned by ALBANI 1994, 225f.; compare also the source discussed by LENORMANT 1878, 444, which lacks a place of origin. An introductory overview of hemerological texts in Mesopotamia is provided by LABAT 1972-75, 317–323; dated is LABAT 1939. A particular focus on magic characterizes LIVINGSTONE 1998, 59–67. On the new edition of the “standard” hemerology KAR 178 by CASABURI 2003 the reader may here be referred to the review by LIVINGSTONE 2006, 138–141.

93 See the overview compiled by FINCKE 2009, 125.

94 Published by FINCKE 2010, 134.

95 Published *ibid.*, 133.

96 See BÁCS 1990, 54–56.

97 Published in FINCKE 2010, 134 & 143f.

98 Published by FINCKE 2009, 121f. In the case of the Hittite source, scholars assume a ritual cleansing, since cleansing is often connected to ‘crying out laments’ (*šigû šasû*). For the Coptic culture this cannot be presupposed since the instructions given for the day largely refer to activities of every-day life. A further parallel is provided by KAR 177, Vs. II, 25–29, in *ibid.* 119; a comparison between the days given for cleansing garments in KUB 4, 46 + KUB 43, 1, from the *iqqur ipuš* series, published by LABAT 1965, 58–203, and in the hemerology from Aššur is offered by LABAT 1965, 125.

99 See LIVINGSTONE 1993, 100.

influences can probably be excluded due to the fact that the related material written in Latin or Arabic shows the same activities, but allocates them to different dates and/or to varying predictions – equality for a few cases can be seen as contingency due to the low percentage of occurrences.

If one considers the predictions made for the days that survive in the fragments of the Coptic material, it is obvious that pairings of prophecy and day very rarely recur. In practice, this means that one need only find and consult the “correct” calendar in order to obtain a positive omen and be willing to accept one’s fate. On a theoretical level, the Coptic calendars of the early Arabic era in Egypt cannot thus have been very important, since we can certainly assume that the persons responsible were aware of the divergent statements in the calendars. Rosemarie Drenkhahn, who compared the prophecies made in Pharaonic hemerologies with the travels and work days attested at Dayr al-Madīna, has drawn similar conclusions.¹⁰⁰ Her study showed that the prophecies made about individual days had no influence on the passage of life in this settlement, situated near Thebes on the west bank of the Nile.

In early work on Coptic calendars – which should not, as has been pointed out, be treated as mere ‘rural practice’ due to the diversity of their themes –¹⁰¹ their roots were usually sought in the Greek-speaking area or in Greek texts – mainly because the chronological gap between the Pharaonic hemerologies and the known Coptic texts seemed too large. A closer look at the tradition has shown that there is no Greek source comparable to the two main Coptic examples, Parch. Vienna, National Library, K 1112 and 9885–9900, and Pap. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 236. The existing material is in fact mostly Mycenaean, which is just as remote as Pap. Cairo JdE 86637 and Pap. Sallier IV. The only other relevant statement is found in Hesiod’s remarks on specific days in *Opera et Dies*. It has also emerged that the Pharaonic hemerologies deal almost exclusively with concerns absent from the Coptic material. However, even this brief survey has been able to show that there are numerous parallels to Mesopotamian hemerologies. One should thus consider whether these themes might not have been introduced from Mesopotamia. This transfer would have been conducted via intermediary texts, probably in Greek, that transported this knowledge from East to West.

Much more enlightening are the statements made by ancient, mostly Latin authors of the Roman Empire, since they attest the existence of at least some form of hemerology for the imperial period. It is worth quoting here a statement made in the lay astrological treatise London, BM, Cod. Sloan 3124, fol. 23r. The codex mentions sources that are firmly located in the oriental cultural sphere by means of phrases such as *sicut Egiptii scribunt* and *Babiloniam fames magna erit*.¹⁰² Even though the Codex Sloan is dated only to the fifteenth century, the

100 See DRENKHAHN 1972, 85–94.

101 KAI 182 can here be adduced as an example of a farmer’s calendar from a different cultural sphere. This so-called calendar of Gēzēr, dated to the tenth century BC, lists agricultural activities for each of the twelve months, starting with the autumnal olive harvest.

102 Latin text in ERIKSSON 1956, 9. Compare only the statement of Cassius Dio, *Historia Romana* XXXVII.18, that “the custom to name the days after the seven planets was established by the Egyptians”. A short time later, Tertullian, *Ieiun.* 2 calls the day *feria*, see the text in REIFFERSCHIED, WISSOWA 1890, 275. Bar-daišan, *Liber Legum Regionum* 25 in NAU 1907, 581 speaks out against Babylonian and Egyptian influence on western astrology by saying the following: *Legi libros astrologiae sed nescio quinam sint e Babyloniis et quinam ad Aegyptios pertineant*. On this form of cross-cultural influence see BOLL 1950, 268f. & 384f.

topics it discusses make it safe to say that it derives from much older documents. Already Carl Bezold and Franz Boll were able to show that Greek treatises could even draw on Babylonian sources.¹⁰³ Even Synesios of Cyrene, who wrote his *Aegyptii sive de providentia* around 400 AD, mentions inauspicious days around the time of the festivals of Osiris, which he describes as the days of the “sacred tears” (I.16).¹⁰⁴ I close with a quote from Vergil, *Georg.* I.277sq., who characterizes evaluations of days based on the moon in the following way:

Ipsa dies alios alio dedit ordine luna felicis operum

“The Moon herself has set certain days as variously auspicious for work.”¹⁰⁵

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103 See BEZOLD, BOLL 1911.

104 See the Greek text in KRABINGER 1835, 30. On this story see SCHMITT 2001, 304–358. If these days are directly related to the moon, one must ask whether this might be linked to the attested nature of the god; see the references collected by DERCHAIN 1962, 44–46.

105 Latin text from ERREN 1985, 50.

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