The Nag Hammadi Codices as Monastic Books

Edited by
HUGO LUNDHAUG and
CHRISTIAN H. BULL

Studien und Texte zu
Antike und Christentum
134

Mohr Siebeck
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134
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Hugo Lundhaug and Christian H. Bull

Mohr Siebeck
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The present volume is the result of many years of collaborative work. It builds on the premise of arguably the most important result of the research project New Contexts for Old Texts: Unorthodox Texts and Monastic Manuscript Culture in Fourth- and Fifth-Century Egypt (NEWCONT),\(^1\) namely the conclusion that the Nag Hammadi Codices were most likely produced and used by monks. The editors would therefore especially like to thank the European Research Council (ERC), without whose generous funding of the NEWCONT project the path leading to this book would never even have been started. We are also grateful to the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo for hosting the NEWCONT project in the period 2012–2016, and for their continuing support of Coptological studies in Oslo also in the following period, leading ultimately to the development and establishment of the ERC-funded research project Storyworlds in Transition: Coptic Apocrypha in Changing Contexts in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods (APOCRYPHA).\(^2\) Special thanks to Sigurd Hanserud for copy editing and proof-reading the manuscript, and to Lloyd Abercrombie for producing the volume’s indices. We would also like to thank the Program Director of Biblical Studies, Early Christianity, and Jewish Studies at Mohr Siebeck, Elena Müller, the editors of the STAC series, Liv Ingeborg Lied, Christoph Markschies, Martin Walraff, and Christian Wildberg, and the production and marketing team at Mohr Siebeck, Markus Kirchner, Kendra Mäschke, and Ilse König for their efforts leading to the completion of this book. Numerous colleagues around the world, far too many to mention, have contributed to the scholarship expressed in this book through scholarly exchanges at conferences and seminars around the world, and especially at the workshops held in Oslo in the period 2012–2019, for which we are profoundly grateful. Above all, we would like to express our most sincere gratitude to the contributors to the present volume. We very much appreciate the efforts and patience of everyone involved.

Oslo, January 2023

Hugo Lundhaug and Christian H. Bull

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Abbreviations

ActIr  Acta Iranica
ACS  Ancient Commentaries on Scripture
ADAI.K  Abhandlungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo, Koptische Reihe
Aeg  Aegyptus
AGJU  Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AGLB  Aus der Geschichte der lateinischen Bibel
AJP  American Journal of Philology
AnBoll  Analecta Bollandiana
ANRW  Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
ANTF  Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Textforschung
APF  Archiv für Papyrosforschung
Ap. Patr.  Apophthegmata Patrum
ARG  Archiv für Religionsgeschichte
ASAÉ  Annales du service des antiquités de l’Égypte
ASKÄ  Arbeiten zum spätantiken und koptischen Ägypten
ASP  American Studies in Papyrology
ATSLLC.S  Accademia Toscana di scienze e lettere La Colombaria, “Studi”
BA  Biblical Archaeologist
BAB.L  Bulletin de l’Académie royale de Belgique: Classe des lettres et des sciences morales et politiques
BASP  Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists
BCNH  Bibliothèque copite de Nag Hammadi
BCNH.C  Bibliothèque copite de Nag Hammadi, section “Concordances”
BCNH.É  Bibliothèque copite de Nag Hammadi, Section “Études”
BCNH.T  Bibliothèque copite de Nag Hammadi, Section “Textes”
BEHE.R  Bibliothèque de l’Ecole des Hautes Etudes, Sciences Religieuses
BG  Berlin Gnostic Codex (P. Berol. 8502)
BKP  Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie
BIE  Bulletin de l’Institut Égyptien
BIFAO  Bulletin de l’institut français d’archéologie orientale
BJRL  Bulletin of the John Rylands Library
BO  Bibliotheca Orientalis
BSac  Bibliotheca sacra
BSAC  Bulletin de la Société d’archéologie copite
BSIH  Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History
BSR  Bulletin for the Study of Religion
ByzZ  Byzantinische Zeitschrift
BZNW  Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
C1, C2, etc.  P. Nag Hamm. Coptic 1, Coptic 2, etc.
ConBNT  Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CBC</td>
<td>Cahiers de la Bibliothèque copte</td>
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<td>CBM</td>
<td>Chester Beatty Monographs</td>
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<td>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</td>
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<td>CCR</td>
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<td>Church History</td>
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<td>Cursor Mundi</td>
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<td>CNRS</td>
<td>Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique</td>
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<td>Comptes rendus de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles lettres</td>
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<td>CRBS</td>
<td>Currents in Research: Biblical Studies</td>
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<td>CRINT</td>
<td>Compendia rerum iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum</td>
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<td>CS</td>
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<td>CSCO</td>
<td>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</td>
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<td>Cistercian Studies Quarterly</td>
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<td>Codex Tchacos</td>
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<td>Collections des universités de France</td>
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<td>The Early Church Fathers</td>
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<td>ECS</td>
<td>Early Christian Studies</td>
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<td>EPRO</td>
<td>Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’Empire romain</td>
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<td>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</td>
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<td>ExpTim</td>
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<td>FC</td>
<td>Fathers of the Church</td>
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<td>Die Fragmente zur Dialektik der Stoiker</td>
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<td>FH</td>
<td>Fragmenta Hermetica</td>
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<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
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<td>G1, G2, etc.</td>
<td>First Greek Life of Pachomius, Second Greek Life of Pachomius, etc.</td>
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<td>G1, G2, etc.</td>
<td>P. Nag Hamm. Greek 1, Greek 2, etc.</td>
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<td>GCS</td>
<td>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte</td>
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<td>GCS.NF</td>
<td>Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten drei Jahrhunderte: Neue Folge</td>
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<td>HistTh</td>
<td>History and Theory</td>
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<td>Hors. Reg.</td>
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<td>HTR</td>
<td>Harvard Theological Review</td>
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<td>Hyp</td>
<td>Hypomnemata</td>
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<td>HZ</td>
<td>Historische Zeitschrift</td>
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<td>IBAES</td>
<td>Internet-Beiträge zur Ägyptologie und Sudanarchäologie</td>
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<td>ICS</td>
<td>Illinois Classical Studies</td>
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<td>JAC</td>
<td>Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum</td>
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<td>JAOC</td>
<td>Judaïsme ancien et origines du christianisme</td>
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<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
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<td>JARCE</td>
<td>Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt</td>
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<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<td>JCS</td>
<td>Journal of Coptic Studies</td>
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<td>JCSCS</td>
<td>Journal for the Canadian Society of Coptic Studies</td>
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<td>JEA</td>
<td>Journal of Egyptian Archaeology</td>
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<td>JECS</td>
<td>Journal of Early Christian Studies</td>
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<td>J. Ethics</td>
<td>Journal of Ethics</td>
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<td>JHS</td>
<td>Journal of Hellenic Studies</td>
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<td>JJP</td>
<td>Journal of Jurist Papyrology</td>
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<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</td>
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<td>JPT</td>
<td>International Journal of the Platonic Tradition</td>
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<td>JRH</td>
<td>Journal of Religious History</td>
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<td>JRS</td>
<td>Journal of Roman Studies</td>
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<td>JST</td>
<td>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</td>
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<td>JTS</td>
<td>Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture</td>
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<td>LCL</td>
<td>Loeb Classical Library</td>
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<td>LEGC</td>
<td>Letteratura egiziana gnostica e cristiana</td>
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<td>LSJ</td>
<td>Liddell, Scott, and Jones, Greek-English Lexicon (9th ed.)</td>
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<td>LTP</td>
<td>Laval théologique et philosophique</td>
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<td>MDAI</td>
<td>Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts</td>
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<td>MDAIK</td>
<td>Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo</td>
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<td>MRE</td>
<td>Monographies Reine Elisabeth</td>
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<td>MTSR</td>
<td>Method &amp; Theory in the Study of Religion</td>
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<td>Mus</td>
<td>Le Muséon</td>
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<td>NAPSPMS</td>
<td>North American Patristic Society Patristic Monograph Series</td>
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<td>NH</td>
<td>Nag Hammadi Codex/Codices</td>
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<td>NHMS</td>
<td>Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies</td>
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<td>NHS</td>
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<td>NovT</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum</td>
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<td>NovTSup</td>
<td>Supplements to Novum Testamentum</td>
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<td>NPNF2</td>
<td>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2</td>
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<td>NTOA</td>
<td>Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus</td>
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<td>NTS</td>
<td>New Testament Studies</td>
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<td>NTTS</td>
<td>New Testament Tools and Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>O. Mon. Epiph.</td>
<td>Ostraca from the Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes</td>
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<td>OCP</td>
<td>Orientalia christiana periodica</td>
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<td>OECS</td>
<td>Oxford Early Christian Studies</td>
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<td>OECT</td>
<td>Oxford Early Christian Texts</td>
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<td>OECGT</td>
<td>Oxford Early Christian Gospel Texts</td>
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<td>OLA</td>
<td>Orientalia lovaniensia analecta</td>
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<td>OLZ</td>
<td>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</td>
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<td>OPIAC</td>
<td>Institute for Antiquity and Christianity Occasional Papers</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAM</td>
<td>Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean</td>
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<td>PapyBrux</td>
<td>Papyrologica Bruxellensia</td>
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<td>Papyrologica Coloniensis</td>
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<td>Paral.</td>
<td>Paralipomena</td>
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<td>PAST</td>
<td>Percorsi, Strumenti e Temi di Archeologia</td>
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<td>PatSor</td>
<td>Patristica Sorbonensia</td>
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<td>PEES.GR</td>
<td>Publications of the Egypt Exploration Society, Graeco Roman Memoirs</td>
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<td>PG</td>
<td>Patrologia graeca. Edited by J.-P. Migne</td>
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<td>PGL</td>
<td>Patristic Greek Lexicon (Lampe)</td>
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<td>PGM</td>
<td>Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri</td>
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Abbreviations

PLB  Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava
Pr.  Praecepta
PTA  Papyrologische Texte und Abhandlungen
PTS  Patristische Texte und Studien
QSGKAM Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums und des Mittelalters
RB  Revue biblique
RdE  Revue d’égypologie
RGRW  Religions of the Graeco-Roman World
RHPR  Revue d’histoire et de philosophie religieuses
RHR  Revue de l’histoire des religions
RSPT  Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques
RSR  Recherches de Science Religieuse
RTP  Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie
RVV  Religionsgeschichtliche Versuche und Vorarbeiten
S¹, S², etc.  First Sahidic Life of Pachomius, Second Sahidic Life of Pachomius, etc.
SAA  Studia Antiqua Australiensia
SAC  Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SBL  Society of Biblical Literature
SBLDS  Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP  Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSymS  Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBLTT  Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations
SBo  Recension of the Life of Pachomius represented by the Bo, Av, S⁴, S⁵, S⁶, S⁷, etc. (compiled and translated by Armand Veilleux, Pachomian Koinonia, vol. 1)
SBT  Studies in Biblical Theology
SC  Sources chrétienes
SecCent  Second Century
SGM  Sources gnostiques et manichéennes
SH  Stobaei Hermetica
SHR  Studies in the History of Religions (supplements to Numen)
SMSR  Studi e materiali di storia delle religioni
SNTSMS  Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPAW.PH  Sitzungsberichte der Preussichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse
SPCK  Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SPhilo  Studia philonica
SPNPT  Studies in Platonism, Neoplatonism, and the Platonic Tradition
STAC  Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
StOR  Studies in Oriental Religions
StPatr  Studia Patristica
TC  TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism
TENT  Texts and Editions for New Testament Study
Theoph  Theophaneia
TJT  Toronto Journal of Theology
TLZ  Theologische Literaturzeitung
TS  Theological Studies
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<th>Abbreviations</th>
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<td>TSAJ</td>
<td>Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum</td>
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<td>Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur</td>
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<td>Writings from the Greco-Roman World</td>
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<td>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>Yale Classical Studies</td>
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<td>ZAC</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum</td>
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<td>ZÄS</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZDMG</td>
<td>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZNW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZPE</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</td>
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Monastic Readings of the Nag Hammadi Codices

Christian H. Bull and Hugo Lundhaug

The Nag Hammadi Codices remain some of the most enigmatic manuscripts from Late Antiquity. Despite thousands of scholarly publications on the texts contained in the remains of these thirteen papyrus codices, consensus regarding the times, places, and purposes of their authorship, or their intended original readers, remains elusive. Recently, however, progress has been made regarding the producers and users of these manuscripts, which were discovered in 1945 at the Jabal al-Tarif in Upper Egypt, a cliff littered with ancient tombs and caves, situated close to the sites of the ancient Pachomian monasteries of Sheneset and Pbow.¹

Research into the question of who produced and used the Nag Hammadi Codices got a major boost through the European Research Council’s funding of the University of Oslo-based research project New Contexts for Old Texts: Unorthodox Texts and Monastic Manuscript Culture in Fourth- and Fifth-Century Egypt (NEWCONT), a project that ran from 2012 to 2016.² The work of this project resulted in a number of publications demonstrating the likelihood of a monastic provenance for the Nag Hammadi Codices,³ as well as a

¹ Today, these are the sites of the modern villages of al-Qasr and Faw Qibli respectively.
² The research team consisted of Hugo Lundhaug (PI), Lance Jenott and Christian H. Bull (postdocs), and Kristine Toft Rosland (PhD student), together with close collaborators Paula Tutty and Lloyd Abercrombie (PhD students), all located at the University of Oslo, Faculty of Theology.
number of studies focusing on various aspects of methodology, most notably material philology and textual fluidity, as well as manuscript dating.4

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The studies in the present volume build specifically on one of the publications that emerged from the NEWCONT project, the monograph by Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, in which it is argued that the most likely producers and users of these manuscripts were fourth- and/or fifth-century monastics in Upper Egypt, and that the *most likely* candidates for such monastics would be those of the Pachomian monasteries in the vicinity of the manuscripts’ discovery location. It should be noted that the argument of the book concerns the *codices* as material objects, and not the authorship of the *texts* they contain. The argument is based on the combined evidence of the cartonnage documents contained in the covers of the Nag Hammadi Codices, the colophons found in some of the codices, their discovery location and dating, as well as contextual evidence for the reading of apocrypha by Egyptian monastics. The book also challenges alternative theories of “Gnostics” or “urban intellectuals” as the codices’ producers and users. Having assessed the available evidence, the authors conclude:

While there were also other ascetics in the area, the Pachomian monks who lived close to the Jabal al-Tarif, at the monasteries of Shenete and Pbow, are in our view the most likely people to have owned the Nag Hammadi Codices. Even if one doubts that the owners were specifically Pachomians, the evidence from the colophons, cartonnage, location of manufacture and discovery, and from the controversial history over apocryphal books and “Origenist” teachings in Egyptian monasteries, not to mention the Coptic (not Greek) language of the texts, point overwhelmingly to a cenobitic monastic community.

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5 Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*. See also idem, “Production, Distribution and Ownership.”

6 The question of the texts’ original authorship is only briefly discussed towards the end of the volume, primarily in the context of the textual fluidity of the transmission of the texts (see below).


Importantly, the conclusions of this study open further questions for discussion. If those who manufactured and read the Nag Hammadi Codices were monastics, maybe even Pachomian monastics, what interest did they have in the texts contained in them? This is what the contributions in the present volume seek to address.

The relevance of a reading of the texts of the Nag Hammadi Codices exactly as they are found there, and in the historical context of the codices themselves and of Coptic literature, was already emphasized by Stephen Emmel in a seminal essay given at the 50-year commemoration of the discovery of the codices at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature held in Philadelphia in 1995, where he stated that “The task is to read the texts exactly as we have them in the Nag Hammadi Codices in an effort to reconstruct the reading experience of whoever owned each of the Codices.” Lundhaug and Jenott make some preliminary suggestions along these lines in their monograph, but more in-depth studies have also been published alongside and following that volume, not least in their 2018 edited volume *The Nag Hammadi Codices and Late Antique Egypt*. While that volume approached the Nag Hammadi Codices and their texts from a broad fourth- to fifth-century perspective, the contributions to the present volume focus specifically on the monastic context of the transmission, and especially reception, of the texts they contain. For if the codices were owned by monastics, the task at hand, following Emmel’s suggestion, is to read them in light of fourth- and fifth-century monasticism, and ask why Egyptian monks, Pachomian or otherwise, would have read such books.

1. Short History of Scholarship

The first announcement of the astounding discovery of our papyrus codices only mentioned that the fellahin who discovered them came from the area near Nag Hammadi, the village with the closest railway station, but in 1949 Jean Doresse was able to affirm that the jar containing the codices had in fact been discovered at the foot of the Jabal al-Tarif, and henceforth he referred to it as the “Chenoboskion library,” in recognition of the nearby ancient village called Chenoboskion in Greek and Shenest in Coptic, which was the location of a

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15 Lundhaug and Jenott, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices*.

16 While this was also the focus of some of the contributions of Lundhaug and Jenott, eds., *Nag Hammadi Codices*, the present volume is dedicated to this perspective in its entirety.
major Pachomian monastery.\textsuperscript{17} Yet, Doresse and his collaborators did not entertain the notion that the Pachomians may have been the owners of these manuscripts; the library must rather have belonged to a Gnostic sect still thriving in the area in the fourth century, it was believed, and the sectarians must have buried the books due to pressure from the nearby monasteries, and then gone underground since the Pachomian literature does not mention any conflict with Gnostics.\textsuperscript{18} In his later monograph, Doresse changed his mind and stated that the Pachomians did in fact struggle with the local Gnostics, since we know that the abbot Theodore in 367 had received Athanasius’ famous Easter letter of this year – which included a list of canonical biblical writings and an attack on apocrypha – and had it translated and read aloud in his monasteries in order to combat heresy.\textsuperscript{19}

For nearly thirty years after Doresse, it was taken for granted that a group of Gnostics were the owners of the library, until John Barns in 1975 published a preliminary report of his findings from an analysis of the cartonage of the codices, which turned out to contain monastic papyrus fragments.\textsuperscript{20} This prompted Torgny Säve-Söderbergh in the same year to propose that the owners of the books were monks who had used the texts in order to combat heresy.\textsuperscript{21} Frederik Wisse, at the 1976 First International Congress of Coptic Studies, went further and pointed out that the lack of ecclesiastical control over fourth-century monasticism made it possible that there were “Gnostics” within the walls of monasteries, and that the Nag Hammadi Codices were

\textsuperscript{17} Jean Doresse and Togo Mina, “Nouveaux Textes Gnostiques Coptes Découverts en Haute-Egypte la Bibliotheque de Chenoboskion,” \emph{VC} 3 (1949): 129–41.


produced by the nearby Pachomians. However, after the death of Barns, John C. Shelton took over the project of publishing the cartonnage materials, and in his introduction to the 1981 publication he claimed that much of the cartonnage-material precluded the possibility of a monastic provenance. For this reason, James M. Robinson, who initially embraced the idea of a Pachomian provenance in his introduction to the first edition of *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* of 1977, revised his views in the third edition of 1988, where he simply stated that the Pachomian connection remained “a tantalizing possibility.” Soon after, a prominent scholar of Pachomian monasticism, Armand Veilleux, published a two-part article in which he minimized the importance of the cartonnage and reasserted that in his opinion monasticism and Gnosticism are two separate “universal archetypes.” After this, the popularity of the hypothesis of a monastic provenance began to wane, even though scholars such as Jon F. Dechow, Clemens Scholten, and James E. Goehring continued to show that fourth-century monastic diversity was such that producers, owners,

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and readers of the Nag Hammadi texts could easily have found a home in the monasteries. The majority of scholars were only too happy to revert to the hypothesis of Gnostic owners.

2. Alternative Hypotheses

2.1 Gnostics

The suggestion that the NHC were owned by Gnostic sectarians rests primarily on the testimony of Epiphanius of Salamis, that he encountered such Gnostics in Egypt, together with testimonies of Didymus the Blind and Serapion of Thmuis concerning Manichaeans. Epiphanius unfortunately does not give us a very lucid picture of his run-in with “the Gnostics” (his sect #26). He states that it happened in his youth, hence likely in the late 320s or early 330s, and that women including “the Egyptian wife of the chief cook” were in charge of “flirty-fishing” prospective members. Only after reading their books did the young Epiphanius understand that these women adhered to heretical myths, and he promptly procured the names of the heretics hidden within the church, ratting them out to the local bishops so that eighty people were expelled from the city. The mention of several bishops indicates that this was during a synod in Alexandria, where Epiphanius spent time in his youth. We are thus not speaking of a Gnostic sect in Upper Egypt, but – if Epiphanius can be taken at


face value – of a group around eighty people who were part of the church of Alexandria, and evidently went undetected as regular members of the Christian church until the youthful heresy-hunter rooted them out. In the wake of the influential deconstructions of the term “Gnosticism” by Michael A. Williams and Karen L. King, the idea of Gnostic sectarians in fourth-century Egypt has fallen out of favor. If anything, the testimony of Epiphanius shows that Christians who were attracted to this kind of myth could happily find their place in the same church as Nicene Christians, perhaps constituting an extra-curricular study-group devoted to esoteric interpretation of Scripture.

Another contemporary “Gnostic” mentioned by Epiphanius is Peter the Archontic, who supposedly belonged to many a Gnostic sect in his youth, yet became a presbyter in the Church, and was only found out and deposed by a bishop named Aetius, who must be Aetius of Lydda. Defrocked, he went to Arabia, and Epiphanius implies he consorted with the Ebionites and Nazoreans there. In his old age he returned to Palestine before the end of the reign of Constantius (361), where he settled in a cave as a hermit, gathered other ascetics who called him “father,” and “wore a sheep’s fleece on the outside, and it was not realized that on the inside he was a ravening wolf.” It was only “from


31 Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40.1.3–7. See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 68–69. Andrew S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Salamis: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 78, no doubt correctly identifies Aetius as the bishop of Lydda, placing Peter’s expulsion from the presbytery before the 340s. The bishop cannot be Aetius of Antioch, denounced by Epiphanius as the founder of the heresy of the Anomoeans in *Panarion* 56, where he also quotes Aetius’ *Syntagmation* in full and refutes it point by point.

32 Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40.1.3: ἔξωθεν μὲν γὰρ ἀληθῶς κόριτιν προβάτου ἡμείσστο, ἠγνοεῖτο δὲ ἐνδόθεν λόγος υπάρχων ἁρπαζ (Karl Holl, *Epiphanius* [3 vols.; GCS 25, 31, 37; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1915, 1922, 1933]; trans. Frank Williams, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis: Book I (Sects 1–46)* [2nd ed.; NHMS 63; Leiden: Brill, 2009], 283–84). The Armenian Eutactus is said (Pan. 40.1.2) to have received his heretical teachings from Peter at the end of the reign of Constantius in Palestine. Presumably Epiphanius exposed him shortly after this, when he was still head of the monastery near Eleutheropolis (see Epiphanius, *Anchoratus*, proem.), not far from where Peter dwelled, close to Hebron. See Bentley Layton with David Brakke, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (2nd ed.; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021), 243–46, who place the encounter between Epiphanius and Peter in 350. It is more economical to presume that Epiphanius found out about the proclivities of Peter because of his teaching of Eutactus, ca. 360–361. See Oliver Kösters, *Die Trinitätslehre des Epiphanius*
things he had whispered to certain persons"\(^{33}\) that Epiphanius himself claimed to have exposed and anathematized him, so that he had to move to a cave, “abhorred by all and isolated from the brotherhood and from most who cared for their salvation.”\(^{34}\) Again, taking Epiphanius on his word, we see that Peter was not isolated in a Gnostic sect, but rather first served as a presbyter and later as a monastic (wearing the melotes sheepskin),\(^{35}\) apparently respected by most Christians, until his heterodox theological views were twice uncovered, and he was twice deposed, first from his priesthood, then from his monastic status.

One wonders what Peter would say in his own defense against the accusations of Epiphanius, who was not averse to painting his opponents with the heresiological tarbrush.\(^{36}\) In any case, Peter was settled in Palestine, and for some time Arabia, and had no connection to Egypt as far as we can tell. The story of Epiphanius can thus not be used to shed light on supposed fourth century Upper Egyptian Gnostic sects.\(^{37}\) Far from it, it indicates that people who were venerated as monks could harbor views incompatible with the orthodoxy of bishops (whether Nicene or Arian), and read suppressed literature, like Peter who as an “Archontic” supposedly used the *Ascension of Isaiah*, books of Allogenes, and a *Greater and Lesser Harmony*.\(^{38}\)

\(^{33}\) Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40.1.6: ἀφ’ ὄν εἰς ὅτα τινος ἐπιθύμησε ῥημάτων (Holl, *Epiphanius*).

\(^{34}\) Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40.1.7: καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐν τῷ σπηλαίῳ λοιπόν, βδελυγμένος ὑπὸ πάντων καὶ μονοθεῖς ἀπὸ τῆς ἀδελφότητος καὶ ὑπὸ πλείστων τῶν τῆς ζωῆς ἑαυτῶν ἐπιμελομένων (Holl, *Epiphanius*). Cf. Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 68–69. Jacobs, *Epiphanius*, 78–80, accuses Epiphanius of inconsistency, since Peter lives in a cave as a monk before and after the exposure of Epiphanius. But this misses the point: Epiphanius says Peter before his exposure lived in a cave as a seeming hermit, venerated by all, whereas afterwards he also lived in a cave, but now shunned by all, with no pretense of genuine monkhood.

\(^{35}\) See Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, *Clothes and Monasticism in Ancient Christian Egypt: New Perspective on Religious Garments* (London: Routledge, 2021), 136–37, who suggests that Epiphanius does not use the traditional term melotes so as not to sully the venerable garb by association with Peter.

\(^{36}\) See Aline Pourkier, *L’hérésiologie chez Épiphane de Salamine* (Christianisme antique 4; Paris: Beauchesne, 1992), 488. Pourkier also supposes (ibid., 39–41) that Epiphanius encountered more groups in his time in Palestine, but this is far from certain.


2.2 Manichaeans

Didymus the Blind and Sarapion of Thmuis, who have also been invoked for the presence of Gnostics in fourth-century Egypt, do not write about Gnostics in the sense of adherents of the mythical system variously called Classical Gnosticism, or Sethian Gnosticism, to which several of the Nag Hammadi texts can be said to belong, but rather about Manichaeans. No one has so far provided a sustained argument for the Manichaean provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices, though Przemysław Piwowarczyk and Ewa Wipszycka have recently asserted that “the Manichaean connection seems equally – if not more – promising as the monastic one.” Nevertheless, despite the presence of Manichaeans in Kellis, Medinet Madi in the Fayyum, and Lycopolis at least in the late third century, there are no indications of any Manichaean presence on the Dishna plain surrounding Jabal al-Tarif, where the Nag Hammadi Codices were discovered, nor in Upper Egypt at all. Naturally, we do not dispute that Manichaeans would likely have been very interested in our texts, and indeed they also read and produced texts in Coptic. We also grant that Manichaeism may have influenced the development of monasticism, as Guy G. Stroumsa has proposed, and that early Pachomian coenobitism may have borrowed elements from Manichaeism, as James E. Goehring has suggested. Moreover, there may be Manichaean influence on some of the texts in the Nag Hammadi Codices, as Timothy Pettipiece, René Falkenberg, and Dylan Burns have

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39 Didymus the Blind, *Contra Manichaeos*, and several references in his commentaries, referring also to a meeting with a Manichaean; but again, this would be in Alexandria or its environs, not Upper Egypt. See Byard Bennett, “Didymus the Blind’s Knowledge of Manichaeism,” in *The Light and the Darkness: Studies in Manichaeism and its World* (ed. Paul Mirecki and Jason BeDuhn; NHMS 50; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 49–50; Serapion of Thmuis, *Contra Manichaeos*, provides no concrete information about Egyptian Manichaeism. See Oliver Herbel, *Sarapion of Thmuis: Against the Manichaeans and Pastoral Letters* (ECS 14; Strathfield: St Pauls, 2011).


41 The reason why Lundhaug and Jenott do not discuss a possible Manichaean provenance for the Nag Hammadi Codices is not that they were unaware of the Kellis discoveries, as Piwowarczyk and Wipszycka claim, but rather that these discoveries throw little light on the question of the provenance of the Nag Hammadi manuscripts. See Lundhaug and Jenott, *Monastic Origins*, 235 n. 4.


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