

## ACACIUS, BISHOP OF [CAESAREA](#)

To whom a *Coptic Encomium of the Martyr Mercurius* (of [Caesarea](#) of Cappadocia) is attributed. Some ambiguity exists concerning this attribution, for, whereas patrologists recognize only one Acacius, bishop of [Caesarea](#) in Palestine (340-366), Coptic [literature](#) makes mention of another Acacius in Dioscorus' *Encomium of Macarius of Tkow*. The first-named Acacius succeeded Eusebius as bishop and was the predecessor to Gelasius (who continued the *Historia ecclesiastica* by Eusebius). An exponent of Arian theology, he wrote biblical commentaries, *Symmikta Zetemata* (Various questions), an essay *Against Marcellus*, and an *Encomium of Eusebius*. The second Acacius, according to pseudo-Dioscorus, was of Neocaesarea, and therefore of Cappadocia. He was deposed by the Council of EPHESUS (431) not as a heretic but rather as a "disobedient," and was then replaced by a certain Firmo, only to be reinstated later at Firmo's death.

It is not clear which of the two personalities was in the mind of the man who originated the attribution. He surely was active in the period known in Coptic homiletic [literature](#) as "The Period of the CYCLES" in the seventh and eighth centuries.

The above-mentioned *Encomium of the Martyr Mercurius*, bearing this equivocal attribution, has come down in two forms: one probably original, and a second [derived](#) from the first and elaborated therefrom. In its first form, the encomium has a title that makes vague mention of a "Saint Apa Acacius, Bishop of Caesarea." But the codices containing the encomium in its more extended form speak of a "Saint Apa Acacius, Bishop of Neo-[Caesarea](#) of Cappadocia," a reference that could indicate the latter of the two Acaciuses as its author.

The encomium in its original form has been transmitted only in the [codex British Library](#) Oriental 6802.25-43 (Sahidic, eleventh- twelfth centuries). It comprises a brief prologue followed by an exposition of the *Passio* in a

somewhat lengthy form. As a matter of fact, this particular text is merely a modest reworking of the *Passio*, reduced to an encomium, so as to render it more fitting to the needs of the homiletic [literature](#) reserved for the feast of Mercurius.

The encomium in its [derived](#) and more elaborate form has been transmitted in two codices: New York Morgan Library 588.8-26 (Sahidic, ninth century), and New York Morgan Library 589 (Sahidic-Fayyumic, ninth century). It contains a prologue, a brief summary of the *Passio*, the miracle of the death of Julian the Apostate (in an expanded form when compared to the account in the [Historia ecclesiastica](#)), the cycle of the seven posthumous miracles (similar to the composition of the *Martyrium* of Mercurius), and lastly, a brief epilogue. This extended text was reconstructed by assembling works that had formerly appeared separately (this can be said at least for the *Passio* and the miracle relating to Julian). The fact that this longer and more detailed text is actually a compilation of many works would indicate that the so-called original form was probably the first. At any rate, this encomium is a typical work of the Period of the Cycles, and therefore can be dated to the seventh century.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Budge, E. A. W. *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, pp. 231-55. London, 1915.
- Orlandi, T., and S. di Giuseppe. *Passione e Miracoli di S. Mercurio*. Milan, 1976.

TITO ORLANDI

Tags: [Eminent](#)