

MAXIMUS AND DOMITIUS, SAINTS

[The entry on these two brothers consists of two parts: the Coptic Tradition and the Arabic tradition.]

Coptic Tradition

The Life of the brothers [Maximus](#) and Domitius is known through one long document attributed to a certain PSHOI OF SCETIS, who professes to be a native of Constantinople and who ended his days at Scetis as a disciple of the great MACARIUS (d. c. A.D. 390). He claims to have received the personal testimony of Macarius. In fact, the most recent person quoted in this document is Theodosius the Younger, who began to reign in 408.

Pshoi's long account is not the oldest life of [Maximus](#) and Domitius. In fact, he quotes—using the formal epithet “it is written that”—an apothegm of Saint Macarius (no. 33 in the Greek nominal collections and in the Old Latin translation). The episode tells anonymously how Saint Macarius received two young “Romans” (i.e., Greeks) in the desert of Scetis, and how that was the occasion of the founding of a monastery.

In a shorter form, the episode is also inserted in the Life of Saint Macarius of Scetis (Bibliotheca Hagiographica Orientalis 573, ed. Amélineau, 1894, p. 87) attributed to SERAPION OF TMUIS (d. c. 362). As nothing precise is known about Pshoi, who authored the Life of the two brothers, only internal criteria allow one to estimate the date of composition of the Life. Nobody has cast doubt on the reality of the foundation of the DAYR AL-BARAMUS (or [pa](#)-Rhomaïos, that of the Romans) by the two brothers received by Macarius, but their names appear only in Pshoi's Life.

Pshoi's account has come down in two different forms in Coptic. The more important is a Sahidic version translated and published in 1917 by

H. Munier (Pierpont Morgan Library, codex 40, tenth or eleventh century). Unfortunately, the text lacks a beginning. About ten leaves dealing with the youthful years of the saints are missing from the beginning of the Life.

Details of the beginning can be found only in the second document, a Bohairic *Life* (Vatican Library, Coptic manuscript 67, fols. 34-58, published by E. Amélineau, 1894). Comparison of the second part of the two *Lives* in the two versions shows that the Sahidic redaction is more complete and more precise. Through accident or negligence, many details have been omitted in the Bohairic version, which, when it adds something is specific and modernized. One example is the camel driver of Djebro Menesine, who is mentioned in the Sahidic version; the Bohairic versions adds “from the diocese of Arbat” or ‘Arwat.

The legend may be summarized as follows. Under Valentine, son of Jovian (363-364), religious peace reigned. [Maximus](#) and Domitius, the sons of Valentine, the new Constantine, receive a perfect education in asceticism and mysticism and seek to become monks. They first go to NICAIA, the place of the 318 fathers, where they meet the holy priest John. The latter cannot receive them, but recommends them to Agabos of Tarsus, a Syrian anchorite.

Agabos cannot accept them either, but in a dream he sees Saint Macarius of Scetis, who will receive the two youths. There follows a series of miracles occurring in different towns. In Askalon, Saint Macarius delivers a man possessed, as he approaches the dwelling of the holy brothers; at Iconium a greedy dragon is immobilized and neutralized by the prayer of the miracle workers; at Lystra a leper is cured; at Pisidian Magdala a man with an inverted face is put straight.

Pshoi informs us that he has his information from merchants met earlier in Constantinople (no doubt it has to do with the miracle worked by COSMAS AND DAMIAN on the person of Carinus; even the names of

these two thaumaturges are not too remote from those of the two brothers). At Gabala, a certain Zachariah performs miracles through the power of the devil.

He is exorcised by an order written by [Maximus](#) in the name of Macarius. From this point, the Sahidic account allows us to recover the story whose beginning is lost of a Laodicean woman who appears to have killed her illegitimate child; at Seleucia in Isauria a concubinary priest, suffering from cancer of the stomach, is healed in the name of Agabos and Macarius; in Athens Skeptic philosophers, simulating illnesses, are stricken with the very maladies that they had imitated, and are then cured by Domitius (this miracle and that of the dragon are found particularly in the work of Gregory Thaumaturgus).

But after some time, Valentine finds the youths with the help of sailors from Antioch who had called on the protection of the saints by putting their names on their ship's sails. However, the emperor consents to leave them in their own way of life. From this moment, the text speaks of the "Egyptian" origin of Theodosius the Great (379-395), chosen by Valentine before his death. The Sahidic version contains the comment "Let no [Arian](#) sit on the throne of our fathers" (p. 125).

The generals Sergius and Anastasius are given the responsibility for ensuring the succession against a rival, "a friend of Julian [the Apostate]." Theodosius affirms the doctrine of Nicaea and assures its transmission through Honorius, Arcadius (395-408), and Theodosius the Younger (408-450). The critical moment for the two saints comes when the archbishop of Constantinople dies; only the Bohairic text calls him John. With a delegation of one *magistrianos* escorted by twenty five soldiers, Theodosius seeks out [Maximus](#) to establish him in the see of the capital. However, their mother warns them and urges them to flee. The saints then start on a long and exhausting march, incognito and tortured by the heat of the sun and by thirst. They are saved at the moment of death by an angel who leads them to Scetis. They are at once welcomed by

Macarius.

They heal the camel of a faithful servant, whose eye has been mutilated by wicked men. At the moment of his death [Maximus](#) relates particularly that he can see the [apostle](#) Paul telling the emperor Constantine to give him the book of Nicaea. Maximus dies on 14 [Tubah](#)/9 January and Domitius on 17 [Tubah](#)/12 January, both martyrs “without the sword.”

This Life almost organizes all the hagiographic stereotypes. It is, however, difficult to imagine its composition after the exile of Nestorius. The character of Valentine was undoubtedly Valentinian I (d. 375), called to succeed Jovian on 25 February 364 at Nicaea. Potentially, what is in the mind and the aim of the hagiographer was that [Maximus](#) and Domitius were the half-brothers of Valentinian II, the friend of Ambrosius, a pious and ascetic young man, proclaimed [Augustus](#) at the age of four in 375 and assassinated in 392 at the age of twenty-one. His intense religious life is a fact of history.

The potential rival of Theodosius was evidently the brother of Valentinian I, Valens (28 March 364 at Constantinople to 9 August 378), whose legitimacy Pshoi absolutely denies. Indeed, already toward 371, there were intrigues aimed at making Theodosius emperor. In 380 there was a [Maximus](#) in the see of Constantinople for some months after GREGORY OF NAZIANZUS. Pshoi's thesis is clear: The eastern part of the empire, subject to the [Arian](#) Valens, is saved by the thaumaturgical spirit of Macarius acting through the legitimate heirs of Valentinian I. One can scarcely prove that the existence of this Pshoi of Constantinople is pure fiction nor can one discount his appreciation of each miracle and each hagiographic theme.

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Arabic Tradition

The Arabic synaxarion of Mikha'il of Malij assigns 17 [Tubah](#) as the commemoration of the brothers [Maximus](#) and Domitius, sons of the Emperor Launtiyus and disciples of the great Saint Macarius of Scetis. This has nothing to do with the Emperor [Leo](#) I as one would be tempted to think since Valentinus has been altered to Launtiyus in Arabic. All the extant texts seem to depend on the Coptic Life by Pshoi. G. Graf (1944) has compiled a list of manuscript witnesses.

An Arabic manuscript of 1332 (Sin. Ar. 530, fols. 300r-52r) has also changed Jovian into Buqiyus (fol. 302r), while a thirteenth-century manuscript (Sin. Ar. 475, fols. 222v-76v), which is mutilated toward the end of the account, alters Jovian to Nufitus (fol. 227) and begins the evolution of the name Domitius through Dumada'us toward Timothy, which is found in more recent documents. Another manuscript (Sin. Ar. 530) changes the date of death to 17 Kanun I, a Syrian date. And, in fact, Baumstark (1922) points to a series of eleventh- and twelfth-century manuscripts that preserve the legend in Syriac (British Museum, Add. 14655, Add. 17262 and 14735, fols. 72-173; a Syriac résumé was published from the Paris manuscript Syr. 234 by F. Nau, 1910, pp. 752-66).

This résumé, too, is still dependent on Pshoi's legend. Some details are missing, even in the Sahidic version. Thus the name of Valentine is sometimes correctly Valentianus, closer to Valentinian. The date of the 12 Kanun I is again Syrian and is also to be found in some Syriac calendars. There is an Arabic Garshuni translation of this Syriac Life (Saint Mark of

Jerusalem manuscript 4; see Graf, 1944). Graf also points to a collection of miracles, interrupted at the 27th (Cambridge Add. manuscript 3214, fols. 94-165). One of the miracles described by Nau is not represented in Coptic: that of a sick and dead calf restored to its mother.

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