

Pylon 2 (2022)  
ISSN: 2751-4722

## **A Title of the Annunciation to the Shepherds in the Bodleian Library**

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Heidelberg: Propylaeum, 2022



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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48631/pylon.2022.2.92973>

Citation:

A. Benaissa, "A Title of the Annunciation to the Shepherds in the Bodleian Library," Pylon 2 (2022). DOI: <https://doi.org/10.48631/pylon.2022.2.92973>.

- §1 This papyrus fragment preserves the summary heading (τίτλος) of the second chapter (κεφάλαιον) of the Gospel of Luke, the so-called Annunciation to the Shepherds (2:8–20). The lack of writing on the other side suggests that it was written in the upper margin of a codex. If this were a title from the middle of the page before the section in question, one would have expected to find writing on the other side of the leaf. A papyrus roll is not, of course, a realistic possibility at this date. The implication would be that this was a codex with lavishly wide margins, since Christian codices with margins measuring above 4 cm are relatively rare. Those with the widest upper margins include [P.Beatty 5](#) (6 cm, papyrus, 2nd cent.), Codex Sinaiticus (5.3–6.3 cm, parchment, mid 4th cent.), Codex Vaticanus (3.7–4.8 cm, parchment, 2nd half of 4th cent.), [P.Köln 7 297](#) (5 cm, papyrus, 4th cent.), and [PSI 14 1371](#) (5 cm, papyrus, 4th/5th cent.).<sup>1</sup> In literary papyrus rolls of the Roman period, upper margins can be as deep as 7.5 cm, and margins above 4 cm are associated with finer manuscripts.<sup>2</sup> The earliest such section titles in the upper margin are found in Codex Alexandrinus of the fifth century, where they are written in red ink.<sup>3</sup> Headings for two chapters of Luke also appear on the two sides of [P3 Gregory-Aland](#) = [LDAB 2884](#) = [TM 61732](#) (Arsinoite nome; 6th cent.), but this opisthographic leaf contains excerpts rather than a continuous text of the Gospel.<sup>4</sup> Unlike the marginal titles in Codex Alexandrinus, the Bodleian title is written in tapering form over three lines in the manner of an end-title or colophon. One possible way to account for its separate preservation is to suppose that the original codex was drastically trimmed when it was rebound.
- §2 The writing, in brownish ink, runs against the fibres. The hand is a medium-sized specimen of the so-called Alexandrian Majuscule.<sup>5</sup> The blank spaces above and below the title are each *c.* 2 cm deep. The interlinear space measures *c.* 0.2 cm. Letters are *c.* 0.3 cm high. The widest letter is ω at 0.8 cm, the narrowest (besides ι) are ε and ο at 0.2 cm. The hand is bilinear, but ρ descends below the notional baseline. The bar of π extends beyond the uprights, which are of uneven length. μ is rounded, with the saddle level with the baseline. Uprights often end in a blob at the base. Strokes are generally thick, but some shading is observable, for instance on the first oblique of λ and the horizontal bar of π. Among dated parallels, the closest are [PSI 16 1576](#), a paschal letter securely datable to 420/21, and [P.Grenf. 2 112](#) = GBEBP 37, a paschal letter probably dating from 577.
- §3 According to the Bodleian’s handlist of papyri, the papyrus was bought from the Revd Grenville John Chester (1830–92) in 1878.<sup>6</sup> Its provenance is unrecorded but is likely to be the Fayum in light of other papyri sold by Chester to the Bodleian and British Libraries in that year: see R. Luiselli, *Gr.Med.Pap.* 1 3 introd., pp. 37–8, on MS. Gr. class. g. 69 (P), a leaf from a codex of Galen.<sup>7</sup>

Bodl. MS. Gr. class. g. 68 (P)  
[digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk](https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk)

6.7 (w) × 5.6 (h)

Fifth or sixth century  
 Fayum(?)

<sup>1</sup> On margin size in Christian codices, see [Mugridge 2016](#): 57–60, 470–478, who does not distinguish between papyrus and parchment codices.

<sup>2</sup> See [Johnson 2004](#): 130–141; cf. p. 141: “when a somewhat exaggerated margin was desired, a range from 4–6 cm was common for the upper margin among finely written examples, as was a range of 5–7 cm for the lower margin (though several manuscripts without pretension also employ margins of this size).” Cf. also [McNamee 2007](#): 13.

<sup>3</sup> See [Goswell 2009](#) and [Smith 2014](#): 156–179. Upper marginal τίτλοι for the Book of Acts are also present in Codex Sinaiticus of the mid fourth century, but they are not numbered; see [Milne and Skeat 1938](#): 38 with Figure 11. Cf. also the titles in the wide upper margins of Codex Zacynthius (probably 8th cent.), on which see [Houghton and Parker 2020](#): 34–39. [Hill 2022](#): 55–61 discusses the origin of numbered chapter headings.

<sup>4</sup> See [Allen 2022](#): 158–160.

<sup>5</sup> On the type, see [Cavallo 2005](#): 175–202 and [Bastianini and Cavallo 2011](#).

<sup>6</sup> On this collector and dealer, see [Bierbrier 2019](#): 100–101 and [Seidmann 2006](#): 145–150.

<sup>7</sup> I am grateful to N. Gonis for this reference.



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