

ter, and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. They are an invaluable historical resource relating to social and economic history dating from 870–1880. They are mostly in Arabic, written in Hebrew letters. (Hebrew letters being considered sacred, they could therefore never be destroyed, and many fragments were lodged at the Basatin cemetery east of Old Cairo, from where they were recovered.) Among the fragments are portions of Jewish religious writings and fragments of the Qurʾān, as well as several incomplete manuscripts of Sirach.

Following the Fātimid conquest in 969 CE, the al-Azhar Mosque was constructed, which developed into the second-oldest university in the world, with a library containing hundreds of thousands of books. The university continues to promote the study of Islam, and its rare manuscript collection is now being made available online.

The visitor to Cairo is able to experience the beauty of the ancient Coptic churches and of classical Islamic architecture. The Coptic Museum houses a large collection of Egyptian Christian art and includes a manuscript section. The Museum also houses the Nag Hammadi Library, the renowned collection of early Christian gnostic texts from the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, including the Gospel of Thomas.

Under Muslim rule, Jews and Christians, as “people of the book,” were given *dhimmi* status and were expected in principle to abide by the recognized regulations. These were not always imposed systematically, though from time to time a ruler thought it appropriate or advisable to enforce them. The Fātimid Caliph al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (996–1021) particularly stands out for the harsh measures he leveled against *dhimmīs*, among them allowing the abusive handling of their scriptures.

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See also →Cairo Codex; →Cairo Genizah

## Cairo Codex

The Cairo Codex of the Prophets is one of the important manuscripts of the Tiberian Masoretes. According to the colophon at the end of the manuscript, written in the first person, it was written by Moses Ben-Asher. That Masorete is a scion of the dynasty of the Tiberian Masoretes (all of the members of the dynasty were called “Ben-Asher” after the founding father of the dynasty). His son, Aaron Ben-Asher, vocalized and added the masoretic notes to the Aleppo Codex and composed a book that deals with the vocalization and accentuation of the Bible, the *Sefer Diqduḡei ha-teʿamim*. The Cairo Codex was written (according to its colophon) in the year 827 CE after the destruction of the Second Temple (i.e., 895 CE).

There are 288 leaves in the codex, each of them written on both sides in three columns of 23 lines

per page. The Masorah Parva appears adjacent to the columns, the Masorah Magna in the upper and lower margins. The Masorah mentions several times ancient codices, such as *mugah* (“the proofread codex”) and *mahzora rabba* (“the big codex”), and Masoretes such as Mosheh Moḥeh. A scholarly edition of the codex and its masoretic notes was published in Spain. About six percent of the Masorah Magna notes are in the category of the Cumulative Masorah. In these notes, which were published by D. Lyons, there was extensive use of micrographic writing and ornamentation. The pages at the beginning of the codex, those preceding the biblical text, are also illuminated in color and use micrographic script.

With regard to orthography, vocalization, cantillation marks, and masoretic notes, the codex belongs to a group of manuscripts that are close to the Aleppo Codex, and it is considered to be one of the representatives of the Tiberian Masorah. However, it does differ from the Aleppo Codex in some matters related to details of the cantillation marks (such as the conjunctive accent that precedes *zarqa* or *munaḥ legarmeh*). I. Yeivin identified evidence of greater sophistication, similar to that found in manuscripts that are vocalized in the expanded Tiberian vocalization system.

The “Book of Variants” (*Sefer ha-Ḥilufim*) by Michael ben Uzziel from the 11th century lists nearly 900 disagreements between two Masoretes, Aaron Ben-Asher and Moses ben David Ben-Naphtali. Surprisingly, the Cairo Codex agrees in 67% of the cases with Ben-Naphtali and is one of the closest manuscripts to his system. As a result of this fact and a number of additional characteristics, many scholars have cast doubt on the authenticity of the colophon which attests to the antiquity of the manuscript and its attribution to Moses Ben-Asher. The accepted opinion today is that the manuscript was written in the 11th century, and its scribe copied the colophon from an earlier manuscript written by Moses Ben-Asher. A chemical analysis conducted in 1995 confirmed the 11th-century dating.

The last known location of the manuscript was the library of the Abbasia St. Karaite Synagogue in Cairo. Its present location is unknown.

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See also →Ben-Asher, Aaron ben Moses