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Maria Chiara Giorda

BISHOPS-MONKS IN THE MONASTERIES: PRESENCE AND ROLE

1. INTRODUCTION: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BISHOPS AND MONASTICISM

SINCE THE EARLIEST DAYS OF MONASTICISM bishops have assumed both a supervisory and protective role, one that was immediately accepted by the monks.¹ Within an institutional context, one may note cases where authority was exercised by bishops over monasticism. However, generally,

¹ C. RAPP, 'The elite status of bishops in Late Antiquity in ecclesiastical, spiritual and social contest', *Arethusa* 33 (2000), pp. 379–399. See also the studies by Rita LIZZI, 'Vir Venerabilis. The Bishop, Fiscal Privileges and Status Definition in Late Antiquity', *Studia Patristica*, 34 (2001), pp. 125–144; EADEM, *Il potere episcopale nell'Oriente Romano. Rappresentazione ideologica e realtà politica (IV–V d.C.)*, Roma 1987; in particular on the intellectual elite represented by the bishops, compared with the philosophers and on the relationship with the civil authorities. Again, P. BROWN, *Power and Persuasion in Late Antiquity: Towards a Christian Empire*, Madison 1992; IDEM, 'The rise and the function of the holy man in Late Antiquity', [in:] *Society and the Holy in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley 1982, pp. 103–152; H. CHADWICK, 'The role of the Christian bishop in ancient society', [in:] IDEM, *The Role of the Christian Bishop in Ancient Society* [= *Protocol Series of the Colloquies* 35], Berkeley 1980. An old volume, but one which continues to be of fundamental importance, including its bibliography, is H. G. BECK, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im Byzantinischen Reich*, München 1959: more specifically, there is a section dedicated to the figure of the bishop, pp. 67–74.

relationships were always close and there were many points of contact between both parties. In the fundamental stage represented by the clear definition of the bishop's role, within the canons of Chalcedon and the norms of Justinian's codex,² control over the monastic movement seems to have occupied a central position. This aspect can be seen in the ecclesiastical and lay legislation of the fifth century, which accompanies those testimonies provided by literary sources that confirm the authority of the bishops. On the other hand, in some cases, the authority of the monks is also clearly indicated, though both bodies worked together with the aim of achieving common objectives. This close collaboration between the Episcopal and monastic worlds became even more explicit following the Council of Chalcedon, in order to support both parties as they developed and grew.

In the canons of the Council of AD 451 monasticism and the monasteries had to be placed under the control of the bishop, for reasons that were not just religious (the germs of what would become, a century later, an irreparable fracture between the Byzantine and Monophysite churches, were already present), but also related to the growing importance of monasticism on a social and political level, so much so that the same was mentioned in various canons.³ In essence, according to what was affirmed in AD 451, monasticism had to be controlled and subject to the agreement of the bishop⁴ and no monastery could be founded without his approval.

² An initial bibliographic indication relative to the role of the bishops in law (canonical and, more generally, ecclesiastical) is represented by J. GAUDEMET, *La formation du droit séculier et du droit de l'église aux IV^e et V^e siècles*, Paris 1979; JILL HARRIES, *Law and Empire in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 1999; L. UEDING, 'Die Kanones von Chalkedon in ihrer Bedeutung für Mönchtum und Klerus', [in:] A. GRILLEMEIER & H. BACHT (eds.), *Das Konzil von Chalcedon II*, Würzburg 1953.

³ *Acta conciliorum œcumenicorum. Concilium universale Chalcedonense*, E. SCHWARTZ (ed.), Berlin – Leipzig 1932–1938, 6 vols.: ACO II, *Chalcedon* 2–4, 6–8, 16, 18, 23, 24. G. BARONE ADESI, *Monachesimo ortodosso d'oriente e diritto romano nel tardo antico*, Milano 1990, especially pp. 323–333, on canon 4.

⁴ *Chalcedon 4* discusses the bishop's supervision over the monasteries (προνοίας τῶν μοναστηρίων). I disagree with BITTERMAN who thinks that the authority of the bishop over monasteries was only spiritual and not administrative: H. R. BITTERMAN, 'The Council of

On the other hand, the bishops had to supervise the monastic movement, safeguard the *stabilitas loci* of the monks and ensure they respected the rules of morality. Since the prescriptive plan did not, by definition, coincide with reality, in the face of institutionalisation on the part of the ecclesiastical and later state authorities, the actual situation was much more dynamic and complex. We can notice, however, that this role of supervisors played by the bishop is a feature also within the communities of monks who were not favourable to Chalcedon. Undoubtedly, in the fifth and sixth centuries, the role of the bishops relative to the monks and monasteries can be seen in various literary and documentary sources which come from that part which was opposed to the decision of the Council: there are a few letters by bishops and patriarchs sent to the heads of monasteries, or to the clergy present in the monasteries, with the aim of controlling the activities of the community in question (*P. Sarga* III 375), numerous meetings between monks and bishops,⁵ cases involving the consecration of places of worship linked to the monasteries by the bishops.⁶

The imperial legislation of Justinian also embodied an attempt at further consolidating the subordination of monasticism within the ecclesiastical hierarchy, in so far as it was formalised in the Chalcedon canons, with continuous overlapping between ecclesiastical and civil legislation. More specifically, with respect to the relationship with the bishops, total submission was ordered to episcopal authority whose obligations were,

Chalcedon and episcopal jurisdiction', *Speculum* 103 (1938), pp. 198–203. See also C. V. HENRY, *Canonical Relations Between the Bishops and Abbots at the Beginning of the Tenth Century*, Washington DC 1957, pp. 6–18.

⁵ 'Vie de Manassé', [in:] E. AMÉLINEAU (ed.), *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de Égypte chrétienne aux IV^e et V^e siècles* [= *Mémoires de la mission archéologique française au Caire* IV, 2], Paris 1895, pp. 666–679, especially p. 673, for a meeting with Abraham, bishop of Diospolis; 'Vie de Moïse', *ibid.*, pp. 680–706, especially p. 684, where the bishop has a vision in which Moses will become a monk, the father of monks.

⁶ Joseph, bishop of the Fayum, helps Samuel in the construction of the Church of the monastery of Kalamoun and consecrates it: A. ALCOCK (ed.), *The Life of Samuel of Kalamun*, Westminster 1983, pp. 96–97.

however, reaffirmed.⁷ The construction of new monastic communities was subject to the agreement of the bishop, who was also supposed to contribute to the same in economic terms (*Novella* 79 [539]; 123 [546]). Monks involved in legal cases were preferably judged by the bishop rather than by the civil authorities (*Novella* 79; 123) and, even more interesting, bishops were also responsible for choosing the heads of the monasteries: they had to examine the candidate and approve him, and, finally, they were also responsible for ensuring he took up his position (*CJ* 1.3.46.3–4 [530] and *Novella* 5.9 [535]).

In addition, ever more frequently, monastic life is a necessary pre-requisite for becoming a bishop. According to legislation, it was necessary to have served as a cleric for at least six months or have been a monk, a route that became easier for all those involved in public activities and business, who could not be ecclesiastics (*Novella* 6.1.7 [535]; 123. 1.2.7 [546]). This fact contributed, gradually, to a situation whereby the selection of candidates to the Episcopacy was increasingly made from among members of the monastic orders.

The overlapping of the role of monk with that of the bishop can be clearly seen in the profile of the figure defined as the monk-bishop.⁸ In the history of the Coptic Church, in those centuries which we wish to take into consideration, namely subsequent to AD 451, the names of bishops and patriarchs who were monks are known to us, first and foremost that of Timothy Aelurus consecrated in AD 457, after practising the ascetic life in a monastery in the Fayum. He was ordained presbyter by Cyril and served Dioscorus, accompanying him to the Council at Ephesus in AD 449. Timothy's adversary too was another ex-monk, Timothy Salophaciol,

⁷ *CJ* 1.3. 39 (484–524: it is quite impossible to give a precise date).

⁸ On monk-bishops, cf. the article by P. ROUSSEAU, 'The spiritual authority of the monk-bishop: Eastern elements in some western hagiography of the fourth and fifth centuries', *JTS* 23 (1971), pp. 380–419, and A. STERK, *Renouncing the World, Yet Leading the Church. The Monk-Bishop in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2004. There are interesting studies by C. RAPP, see in particular the last: C. RAPP, *Holy Bishop in Late Antiquity. The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, Berkeley – Los Angeles 2005.

Chalcedonian in faith. He withdrew in AD 475 to his monastery of origin, that of *Metanoia*, where moreover Aelurus even gave him a pension of one dinar a day.⁹ The successors of Peter Mongus, John I Hemula (496–505) and John II Niciota, both came from the monastic world: the former from San Macarius at Scetis, the latter from Enaton. To cite other patriarchs who were monks, one need only consider the case of Paul the Tabennesiote, (537–539), abbot of the monastery of Canopos, consecrated at the behest of Justinian; Eulogius (581–608), who was a *begoumenos* in the monastery of the Theotokos at Antioch, both favourable to Chalcedon, and finally Damian, an important Monophysite patriarch, who was a monk at Enaton.¹⁰ In this paper, however, we will concentrate on less illustrious bishops who were monks, thanks to works based above all on the episcopal lists of the Coptic Church,¹¹ to then move on to Abraham of Hermonthis, a particularly interesting figure given the wealth of sources that we have concerning him. In this prosopographic presentation, we will try to highlight the differences between those who, having been monks, became bishops, those who, continuing to live in a monastery, exercised an episcopal function, and those who, exceptionally, were at the same time both archimandrites at the head of a monastery and bishops. Abraham represents an excellent example of the last case.

⁹ E. W. BROOKS (ed.), *Historia ecclesiastica Zacchariae Rhetori vulgo adscripta* [= CSCO 83, 84, 87, 88], Paris 1919–1924 (2nd ed., Louvain 1953), v 4.

¹⁰ D. MULLER, 'Damian, Papst und Patriarch von Alexandria', *OrChr* 70 (1986), pp. 118–142.

¹¹ In our study, the following are essential: K. A. WÖRZ, 'A checklist of bishops in Byzantine Egypt (A.D. 325–750)', *ZPE* 100 (1994), pp. 283–318. Also see works by: E. CHRYSOS, *Die Bischofslisten des v. ökumenischen Konzils (553)*, Bonn 1966; G. FEDALTO, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, II: *Patriarchatus Alexandriae, Antiochae, Hierosolymitanae*, Padova 1988; D. FEISSEL, 'L'évêque, titres et fonctions d'après les inscriptions grecques jusqu'au VII^e siècle', [in:] *Actes du XI^e congrès d'archéologie chrétienne, Lyon, Vienne, Grenoble, Genève et Aoste, 21–28 septembre 1986*, Roma 1989, pp. 801–828; H. MUNIER, *Recueil des listes épiscopales de l'Église Copte*, Cairo 1943; J. MUYSER, 'Contribution à l'étude des listes épiscopales de l'Église copte', *BSAC* 10 (1946), pp. 115–176; W. VAN GUCHT, 'Some Egyptian bishops and the date of *P. Landlisten*', [in:] *Atti del XVII Congresso internazionale di papirologia* III, Napoli 1984, pp. 1135–1140.

2. BISHOPS WHO WERE MONKS

The custom of choosing bishops from among monks became a consolidated practice over the centuries.¹² There are some names that stand out regarding the production of texts and the role that they had in the life of Egyptian Christian institutions. They include Constantine of Siout (Lykopolis),¹³ who lived between approximately AD 550 and 640, according to the information in the Alexandrian *Synaxarion* which cites the name of Constantine during the period of devastations identified with the invasion and occupation of Egypt by the Persians.¹⁴ He was a monk at Scetis and travelled to the Holy Land; he was consecrated bishop of Lykopolis in Middle Egypt by Patriarch Damian,¹⁵ probably prior to AD 598.¹⁶

¹² For previous cases of monk-bishops, including the well-known figures of Bishop Aphu of Oxyrhynchos and Bishop Macarius of Tkouw, see our previous study: Maria Chiara Giorda, 'Vescovi e monaci e monaci-vescovi tra il IV e il V secolo', [in:] *Monachesimo e Istituzioni ecclesiastiche in Egitto tra il IV e il V secolo*, Bologna 2010.

¹³ S. TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten* [= TAVO Beihefte B 41/1–6], Wiesbaden 1982–1992, I, pp. 235–240.

¹⁴ J. FORGET (ed.), *Synaxaire alexandrine* [= CSCO Arab III 18], Louvain 1905, p. 346, as well as R. BASSET (ed.), *Le synaxaire arabe jacobite (rédaction copte)* [= PO 3], Paris 1909, p. 493.

¹⁵ This information can be found in the Arabic encomium of St John of Heraclea. Conserved in the ms. Brit. Mus. Or. 5648, fol. 39v, ll. 10–13. His name is cited, together with other bishops, in the *Life of Damian* in the *History of the Patriarchs*, B. EVETTS (ed.), *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria (S. Mark to Benjamin I)* [= PO 1], Paris 1904, p. 477, and in C. F. SEYBOLD (ed.), *Severus ibn al Muqaffa', alexandrinische Patriarchengeschichte von S. Marcus bis Michael I, 61–767*, Hamburg 1912, p. 92. For a study of the role of the bishop, see G. GARITTE, 'Constantin, évêque d'Assiout', [in:] *Coptic Studies in Honor of W. E. Crum* [= *Bulletin of the Byzantine Institute* 2], Boston 1950, pp. 287–304; pp. 287–297 list the works of Constantine. The contribution was republished in *Scripta disiecta 1941–1977*, I, Louvain-la-Neuve 1980, pp. 119–136.

¹⁶ Pisenthius, bishop from AD 598, following his consecration in his episcopal seat, met bishop Constantine: W. E. CRUM & H. E. WINLOCK, *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes I*, New York 1926, p. 136, where it is stated that a manuscript was found in one of the churches of Luxor. The name of Constantine, a very humble bishop, is also found in the document dated AD 600: *Ep.* 131.

A manuscript discovered at Luxor, which conserves the text of the Arabic *Synaxarion* in the Upper Egyptian recension,¹⁷ contains the lives of saints, including that of Constantine.¹⁸ Here, it is possible to read information concerning his past, before he became a bishop. The information in the text is written in a typically hagiographic style:

Le neuvième jour du mois béni d'Amsir.

En ce jour aussi, s'est endormi le prêtre vertueux, irradiant Anba Constantin, l'évêque saint, évêque de la ville d'Asyut. Il choisi dès sa jeunesse, la vie angélique, c'est à dire le monachisme et revêtit le saint schéma de la main de son frère, saint Anba Moïse; il lutta dans son corps et s'adonna à l'ascèse dans le jeûne et la veille. On raconte qu'ils étaient dix à revêtir le schéma en ce jour-là; la grâce de l'Esprit saint descendit sur eux tous et ils devinrent des pères et des docteurs, des pères vertueux. Le premier d'entre eux était ce père, Anba Constantin, le second Anba Rufus, évêque de Sutb et le troisième, Anba Yusab, évêque d'Isfaht. Quant à ce père, Anba Constantin, à cause de la chasteté de son corps et de la pureté de sa conscience, la grâce de Dieu descendit sur lui. Il apprit par cœur les quatre évangiles, les épîtres du Grand Docteur l'apôtre Paul, le Catholicon, les Actes, les Psaumes de David et les prophètes, les petits et les grands car la grâce de Dieu l'enveloppait; tout cela n'était chez lui ni de vanité ni d'orgueil, mais il était miséricordieux, humble et bon pasteur; en un mot le Seigneur était avec lui en toutes ses actions.

Constantine wrote various sermons and lives of saints and martyrs.¹⁹ His works contributed to the formation of a specific Egyptian tradition, literary *in primis*, which had religious and political implications. This tradition had its roots in the figure of Athanasius, to whom Constantine dedicated

¹⁷ The ms. was presented by R. G. COQUIN, 'Le Synaxaire des Coptes: un nouveau témoin de la recension de Haute Égypte', *AnBoll* 96 (1978), pp. 351–365.

¹⁸ See the edition, translation, and comment of sheets 216r–217r, relative to the life of Constantine by R. G. COQUIN, 'Saint Costantin, évêque d'Asyut', *SOC, Collectanea* 16 (1981), pp. 151–170, especially p. 157. Part of the information is set out in a separate ms: Paris Arab. 4895, fol. 5r, conserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

¹⁹ Very significant are two encomia of St Athanasius, two of St Claudius, one of St George, a homily on Lent and Easter, an encomium of St John of Heraclea, martyr, a homily on the fallen soul, and, lastly, an encomium by Shenute.

two homilies.²⁰ The operation by means of which Constantine links Claudius, a martyr of Antiochian origin, to Egypt, where the martyr was put to death, is, in our opinion, also part of an attempt at constructing a continuous and firm Egyptian ecclesiastical history.²¹

It becomes clear from the subsequent part of the text that the bishop was constantly committed against the Melitians,²² and this information is also contained in the second encomium of Claudius.²³

Among those that are cited in the above-mentioned *Synaxarion*, embracing the monastic life together with Constantine, there are two other names in addition to that of the bishop of Siout: *apa* Yusab/Joseph, bishop of Isfah (Apollinopolis Parva), of whom we have no further information,²⁴ and Rufus of Sotep (Hypsels),²⁵ who was also a monk before becoming a bishop. The latter was the author of some commentaries on the Gospels and sermons preserved in an Arabic version.²⁶

²⁰ T. ORLANDI, *Constantini Episcopi urbis Siout Encomia in Athanasium duo* [= CSCO 349–350], Louvain 1974.

²¹ G. GODRON (ed.), *Textes coptes relatifs à Saint Claude d'Antioche* [= PO 35], Turnhout 1970, pp. 399–699; IDEM, *Recherches sur les textes coptes relatifs à Saint Claude d'Antioche*, Louvain 1976; J. DRESCHER, 'Apa Claudius and the thieves', *BSAC* 8 (1942), pp. 63–86.

²² In reality, it is the Arians that are named as enemies by Constantine, but the Melitians are identified with them. It is also interesting to identify the mountains referred to in the text with the monasteries: in this way, the Arians present near the bishop's city and in the mountains, are quite simply the Melitian monks, still present in community structures at the end of the sixth century: see COQUIN, 'Saint Costantin' (cit. n. 18), pp. 165–166.

²³ See GODRON, *Textes coptes relatifs à Saint Claude* (cit. n. 21), pp. 626, 664.

²⁴ See the attestation regarding Apollinopolis Parva in MUNIER, *Recueil des listes épiscopales* (cit. n. 11), pp. 15, 51, 57; MUYSER, 'Contribution à l'étude des listes épiscopales' (cit. n. 11), p. 140. In addition: TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten* III (cit. n. 13), pp. 1433–1434. An important documentary testimony on a bishop called Joseph is provided by some inscriptions from Thebes: KFM 1299, Lamp BM Q 2210; Lamp BM Q 2213. Because of the geographical distance between the two areas, this bishop cannot be precisely identified with Joseph of Apollinopolis Parva.

²⁵ TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten* v (cit. n. 13), pp. 2416–2419.

²⁶ G. GARITTE, 'Rufus, évêque de Sotep et ses commentaires des évangiles', *Le Muséon* 69 (1956), pp. 11–33. Regarding Shotep, cf. A. VAN LANTSCHOOT, 'Chotep', [in:] A. BAUDRILLART *et alii*, *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques* 69–70, Paris 1951, coll. 763–764. For

Among the bishops who came from a monastic environment in the discussed centuries, there are only a few regarding whom we have any information, but, unfortunately, not too detailed. John the Penitent was a contemporary of Constantine;²⁷ he was a bishop of Hermopolis²⁸ and the author of a panegyric on St Anthony.²⁹ Colluthos Stylite, who wrote the *Acts of St. Phoibammon*,³⁰ could have been another bishop of Hermopolis, in the light of the title of this work. The location of his seat is uncertain. Indeed the only documentary evidence regarding a bishop of this name refers to the seat of Hermothis (*P. KRU* 97, 73). Of John of Lykopolis, the author of a panegyric dedicated to the Martyrs of Esne,³¹ we have no further biographical information.³² Very little is known about two monk-

a presentation of this personage, see A. CAMPLANI, *L'Egitto cristiano. Aspetti e problemi in età tardo antica* [= *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 56], Roma 1997, p. 120; J. DORESSE, 'Les anciens monastères coptes de Moyenne Égypte d'après l'archéologie et l'hagiographie (du Gebel et Teir à Kôm Ishgaou)', *Neges Ebrix. Bulletin de l'Institut d'archéologie yverdonnaise* 3 (2000), pp. 184–188. E. LUCCHESI, 'La langue originale des commentaires sur les Évangiles de Rufus de Shotep', *Orientalia* 69 (2000), pp. 86–87; IDEM, 'Feuillets édités non identifiés du «Commentaire sur l'Évangile de Matthieu» attribué à Rufus de Chotep', *Le Muséon* 115 (2002), pp. 261–277. M. SHERIDAN, *Rufus of Shotep: Homilies on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, Rome 1998; IDEM, 'The influence of Origen on Coptic exegesis in the sixth century: The case of Rufus of Shotep', [in:] L. PERRONE, P. BERNARDINO & D. MARCHINI (eds.), *Origeniana Octava. Origen and the Alexandrian Tradition/Origene e la tradizione alessandrina, Papers of the 8th International Origen Congress, Pisa, 27–31 August 2001* II, Leuven 2003, pp. 1023–1033.

²⁷ See SEYBOLD (ed.), *Severus ibn al Muqaffa'* (cit. n. 15), p. 92; in his edition, EVETTS translates 'Cleistus', though in reality it concerns John the Hermit (in Greek ἡγικλειστος). For a discussion, see GARITTE, 'Constantin, évêque d'Assiout' (cit. n. 15), p. 298.

²⁸ The papyrus *P. Rain. Cent.* 79, 1, dated to the sixth century, may refer to this bishop: see WÖRPP, 'A checklist of bishops' (cit. n. 11), p. 286.

²⁹ The encomium is entirely contained in the ms. Pierpont Morgan M 579, published and translated by G. GARITTE, 'Panégyrique de Saint Antoine par Jean évêque d'Hermopolis', *OCP* 9 (1943), pp. 100–31; 330–65.

³⁰ For the text of the *Acts* refer to Pierpont Morgan 46; the Arabic version can be seen in Vatic. Cod. Ar. 172; see DORESSE, 'Les anciens monastères coptes' (cit. n. 26), p. 189, n. 40.

³¹ The text is preserved in Ms. B. N. Ar. 780, but for a discussion of the work and the double attestation Ioannes and Paulus as names of the bishop in question, see DORESSE, 'Les anciens monastères coptes' (cit. n. 26), p. 189, n. 41.

³² WÖRPP, 'A checklist of bishops' (cit. n. 11), p. 302, mentions a Iohannes, bishop of

bishops, Victor and Isaac, both elected to the seat of Antinoe between the fifth and seventh centuries.³³ Victor wrote a biography and recounted the miracles by *apa* Phoibammon, while Isaac wrote a eulogy of St Colluthos.³⁴

3. PISENTHIUS OF COPTOS: EXAMPLE OF A BISHOP-MONK

Pisenthilus of Coptos was a bishop-monk of the seventh century about whom we have a biography and a documentary dossier of letters,³⁵

Lykopolis, and writes that no date for this bishop can be established, while FEDALTO, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis* II (cit. n. II), p. 644, places him in 1673 (FEDALTO cites M. LE QUIEN, *Oriens Christianus* II, Paris 1740, col. 600).

³³ See WORP, 'A checklist of bishops' (cit. n. II), p. 296, who also cites TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten* I (cit. n. 13), pp. III–113. FEDALTO, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis* II (cit. n. II), p. 639, places a bishop Isaac in 1086.

³⁴ See DORESSE, 'Les anciens monastères coptes' (cit. n. 26), p. 189, n. 43–44.

³⁵ The only available edition of these texts dates from the beginning of last century, nevertheless, it still contains many misinterpretations and mistakes: E. REVILLOUT (ed.), 'Textes coptes. Extraits de la correspondance de St. Pésunthius, évêque de Coptos, et de plusieurs documents analogues (juridiques et économiques)', *RevEg* 9 (1900), pp. 133–177; 10 (1902), pp. 34–47; 14 (1914), pp. 22–32; in the tenth of these letters Constantine is mentioned, bishop of Siout, contemporary of Pisenthilus (*Ep. Pis*), 10, 8. 12. 19. Some of these texts were re-edited (or published again): 64 = *P. BKU* 1 78; 65 = *P. KRU* 115; 67 = *P. BKU* 1 48; 72 = *P. KRU* 109; 73 = *P. KRU* 111; and 83 = *P. KRU* 40. I am still cautiously using these new editions because, until now, they are the best starting point to investigate the life of Pisenthilus. Probably, only the first sixty-one papyri of this collection might belong to the archives of Pisenthilus. However, as Professor Jacques VAN DER VLIET has recently argued, the situation is much more complex (I refer to his still unpublished paper presented at the XIV Journées des Études Coptes [Rome, 11–13 June 2009]). On Pisenthilus, see also: 'The life of Bishop Pisenthilus, by John the Elder', [in:] E. A. WALLIS BUDGE, *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, New York 1913, pp. 75–127, 258–321 (*V. Pts.*); H. E. DE LACY O'LEARY, *The Arabic Life of St. Pisenthilus: According to the Text of the Two Manuscripts Paris Bib. Nat. Arabe 4785, and Arabe 4794* [= *PO* 22], Paris 1930, pp. 322–483. W. CRUM, 'Discours de Pisenthilus sur Saint Onophrius', *ROC* 20 (1915–1917), pp. 38–67; H. SOTTAS, 'Une nouvelle pièce de la correspondance de Saint Pesunthius', [in:] *Recueil d'études égyptologiques dédiées à la mémoire de Jean-François Champollion* [= *Bibliothèque de l'EPHE* 234], Paris 1922, pp. 494–502.

inevitably leading us to reflect on the complementary and parallel use of documentary and epistolary sources.³⁶

His twofold role and the way in which the analysis of his life has contributed to our research will be explored below. Here, we wish to consider the nature and history of the sources concerning him, as well as the information they contain. The letters and documents, written in Sahidic Coptic, are testimonies to the everyday life of the bishop and his relationships with his followers. From this emerges the picture of the man who is much more 'normal' than that of the saint whose life and deeds are narrated in the biography. Indeed, mention is even made of his physical illnesses, with a certain Gennadius offering some concrete remedies. The documents, which constitute the 'archive' of Pisenhius, come from the Theban region. For the most part, they came to light during excavations in the first half of the nineteenth century; unfortunately, these discoveries are poorly documented. The first certain port of call for these papyri was the French antiquities market, where they came into the hands of Guillaume Libri, a collector of ancient manuscripts, but an unscrupulous and underhand individual from a methodological point of view. The Louvre Museum purchased approximately sixty of these in the mid-nineteenth century in somewhat obscure circumstances. Some of them were then resold in London in 1862 to Sir Thomas Phillipps.³⁷ In the mid-twentieth century, traces of selling these manuscripts can be discovered in London

³⁶ See the article by J. VAN DER VLIET, 'Pisenhius de Coptos (569–632): moine, évêque et saint', *Topoi Suppl.* 3 (2002), pp. 61–72. For a similar example of the possibility of interpreting two types of sources, see also the case of *apa* John of Lykopolis, monk at the end of the fourth century, with whom some documents are related (in *P. Herm. Rees*); some accounts of his life are inserted into classic monastic works, like the *Historia Lausiaca*, the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, in some testimonies by Cassian; all of these can be compared and put together to reconstruct an overall impression of this figure (see an interesting article by C. ZUCKERMAN, 'The hapless recruit Psois and the mighty anchorite, *Apa John*', *BASP* 32 [1995], pp. 183–194).

³⁷ On these two persons, see P. A. MACCIONI RUJU & M. MOSTERT, *The Life and Times of Guglielmo Libri (1802–1869), Scientist, Patriot, Scholar, Journalist and Thief: A Nineteenth Century Story*, Hilversum 1995; A. N. L. MUNBY, *The Formation of the Phillipps Library from 1841 to 1872* [= *Phillipps Studies* 4], Cambridge 1956, pp. 81–83; IDEM, *The Dispersal of Phillipps Library* [= *Phillipps Studies* 5], Cambridge 1960.

and New York, and still today the papyri are items of trade between private collectors in Europe and the United States. Before Sir Thomas Phillipps and his successors had dispersed the collection, Walter E. Crum studied the Coptic parts, which resulted in the publishing of many documents belonging to the archive of Pisenthius in 1921.³⁸ These texts constitute the original nucleus of the archive, scattered over two continents and three countries. In 1912, the archaeological mission of the Metropolitan Museum of Arts in New York discovered a significant number of documents bearing the name of Pisenthius, buried on the site of the monastery of Epiphanius in Thebes. These documents are now located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and at Columbia University. This second discovery is important not so much for the quantity of material (much smaller than the previous find), but because it confirmed that the bishop's writings originated from a monastery. In this sense, it is the archaeological character of the documents that provides us with precious information and makes their contents so complex and interesting.³⁹

Finally, we have an isolated papyrus that is part of a private French collection and which is addressed to the bishop of Coptos.⁴⁰ The history of Pisenthius' papyri helps us to point out the problematic features of these sources: their origin and state of preservation (large part is only fragmentarily preserved).⁴¹

³⁸ W. E. CRUM, *Short Texts from Coptic Ostraca and Papyri*, Oxford 1921.

³⁹ CRUM & WINLOCK, *Monastery of Epiphanius* I (cit. n. 16), pp. 209–231; see *Ep.* 117, 152, 153, 254, 330, 410, 425, 440, 494, 469, 484.

⁴⁰ VAN DER VLIET, 'Pisenthios de Coptos' (cit. n. 36), p. 64, to whom we owe the reconstruction of the archive of Pisenthius and the illustration of the sources relative to the bishop. This papyrus could arrive from the group of LIBRI's texts.

⁴¹ Understanding and bearing in mind these obstacles, some of which are insurmountable, like the very poor state of the edition by REVILLOUT, we have tried to use the multiplicity of sources that transmit information on Pisenthius, while awaiting an already scheduled critical, modern and complete edition. This is the PEP-project, 'Programme d'édition Pisenthius', undertaken in Leiden by a group of Coptologists led by Professor Jacques VAN DER VLIET. The aims of the project, expressed by VAN DER VLIET, help to understand the essentiality of critical editions, regarding which there is still a considerable need for the correct use of documents. They can also constitute a further general

The person of Pisenethius is particularly interesting because he provides us with an example of a bishop who had not only been a monk but also continued to live as a monk even after his election to the episcopal throne. Pisenethius was born in AD 569 in the district of Hermothis, in Psamêr, in a well-to-do family. He entered the monastery of Phoibammon⁴² at the age of seven and remained there for the next sixteen years, after he received the habit from the hands of Elias, the head of the monastery.⁴³ He was appointed bishop of Coptos by Patriarch Damian of Alexandria in AD 598. During his episcopacy, he lived in Tsenti (Gebel el-Asâs or Deir el-Gizâz, the ancient monastery of Phel of *apa* Samuel, about 12 km to the south-west of Qûs-Kôs), in a monastery. Despite his episcopal position, Pisenethius preferred a relative obscurity and rigours of a hermit's ascetic life. Rather than a literary *topos* or a choice linked to a spiritual search for silence and tranquillity, one may legitimately argue that this preference was due to his semi-covert status, the result of a double hierarchy, only one of which was legitimate, present in Egypt in his time: Damian and Anastasius were the Coptic orthodox patriarchs; Eulogius, Theodore I, and John V (with a gap of three years between AD 609 and 612) were the Byzantine patriarchs. Pisenethius lived in one of the monasteries of Deir el-Bahari until his death in AD 632; from there he carried out his duties: writing and receiving many letters, but also being visited by his people. His intense activity – well-documented in various texts – proves that a rural life did

consideration in the introductory chapter to the sources. As this is too arduous a task for only one researcher, a team of papyrologists and Coptologists has been created with the support of the University of Leiden. The first concrete objective is the compilation of a guide for the archives of Pisenethius, which organises all the documents, often scattered, examines them, illustrates the relations between them, and determines whether they are related to the same Pisenethius. This guide should also contain an onomastic index and updated bibliography. In this way, in addition to organising the texts of the archives, the guide would also make it possible to relate the texts to contemporary or similar sources in terms of locality, and to create comparative analyses. Clearly, the result should be a critical edition of the texts, supplied with photographs, reliable translations, a lexicographic index, and appropriate comments for each text.

⁴² Further reference will be made in the analysis relative to Abraham on this bishop.

⁴³ DE LACY O'LEARY, *The Arabic Life of Pisenethius* (cit. n. 35), p. 21.

not at all preclude the possibility of having an important social role. Papyri and ostraca have been found in the *topos* of Epiphanius⁴⁴ that refer to the name of Pisenithius,⁴⁵ but the nature of the relationship between Pisenithius and this *topos* is not entirely clear.

Pisenithius was buried near the monastery of Tsentì and his relics were transported to a monastery located some 6 km to the south, at the edge of the cultivated land that bears his name. He was celebrated as *apa* shortly after his death,⁴⁶ as indicated by a lamp, and his name was commemorated in the Arabic *Synaxarion* on Epeiph 13 (7 July).

Pisenithius' discipline in studying the Holy Scriptures made him a man of wisdom and excellent religious culture, matched by his constant dedication to the needs of the poor. For the rest, he carried out all the activities common to bishops in this period.⁴⁷ More specifically, he concen-

⁴⁴ Regarding the *topos* of Epiphanius, in addition to the first volume of the above-mentioned work by CRUM & WINLOCK, see TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten* III (cit. n. 13), pp. 1336–1338. C. THIRARD, 'Le monastère d'Epiphane à Thèbes: Nouvelles interprétations archéologiques', [in:] ANNE BOUD'HORS, J. GASCOU & D. VAILLANCOURT (eds.), *Onzième journée d'études, (Strasbourg, 12–14 juin 2003) [= Études coptes 9]*, Paris 2006, pp. 367–371. On the basis of the excavation data it is possible to reconstruct the stages in the development of the *topos*, with its outer wall and two towers. The presence of a central nucleus and an extension to the east, the caves linked by tracks, and the general architectural organisation of this monastic installation, all evoke the structure of a *laura*. In addition to the objects and results of the excavations, a number of written documents made it possible to date the life of the *topos* of Epiphanius: four texts allude to the Persian conquest of Egypt in the second and third decade of the seventh century (*Ep.* 200, 300, 324, 433). It had two major development phases: the first, in the period of Epiphanius, disciple of a certain Moses, who lived in a cave near the towers during the seventh century; the second was after the second half of the seventh century and it was linked to the building of one of the two towers and the cult of *apa* or saint Epiphanius. We might note that at the beginning of the seventh century the development of two monasteries, that of Epiphanius and that of Phoibammon, were linked to the presence in the area of West Thebes of two bishops, Pisenithius and Abraham, about whom we will speak in the next paragraph.

⁴⁵ CRUM & WINLOCK, *Monastery of Epiphanius* I, (cit. n. 16), pp. 209–231.

⁴⁶ See Lamp Gabra 3: G. GABRA, 'Zu den Pesyntius-Lampen aus Faras', *JbAC* 32 (1989), pp. 178–179.

⁴⁷ See J.-L. FOURNET, 'Coptos dans l'Antiquité tardive (fin III^e–IV^e siècle)', [in:] *Coptos*.

trated on preaching. In addition to speeches preserved in part in his *Life*, one recalls the eulogy attributed to him, dedicated to St Onophrios, an educational instrument aimed at spurring the faithful in their morality and Christian life.⁴⁸ As mentioned, the letters focus on practical matters, like marriage, heredity, death, disputes, decline in faith and in Christian practice, which Pisenithius explores with poise and intelligence; in some cases, rare but significant, they narrate episodes that are also present in his biography, with greater adherence to everyday reality and not the extraordinary and, to some extent, divine nature of the bishop which emerges from hagiographic descriptions.⁴⁹

In specifying the activities and role of Pisenithius as a bishop and monastic ascetic, we may note that in the collection of letters we find, for the most part, references to Pisenithius as *episkopos* (*Ep. Pis.* 6, 7) and also as *papas* (*Ep. Pis.* 9, 19); he is also, according to honorific titles largely used in monastic language, referred to as holy father and lord.⁵⁰

Unfortunately, the state of the sources is poor. Consequently, a general description of bishops' functions could only be outlined by paying attention to every single case supported by texts. The outcome of these investigations is a combination of civil and ecclesiastical functions, which were interwoven and set under the power of Pisenithius, the bishop.⁵¹ He exercised the control over places of worship in his area; in the majority of the letters, Bishop Pisenithius intervenes or is informed about disputes the

L'Égypte antique aux portes du désert, Lyon 2000, pp. 196–215. W. E. CRUM, 'A Greek diptych of the seventh century', *PSBA* 30 (1908), pp. 255–288. In addition, see the paragraph on Pisenithius of Keft, in CRUM & WINLOCK, *Monastery of Epiphanius* I (cit. n. 16), pp. 223–231; *Ep.* 117, 152, 153, 254, 330, 410, 425, 440, 494, 469, 484.

⁴⁸ CRUM (ed.), 'Discours de Pisenithius sur Saint Onophrios' (cit. n. 35).

⁴⁹ VAN DER VLIET, 'Pisenithios de Coptos' (cit. n. 36).

⁵⁰ He is called father and *apa* as well, also in the ostraca that refer to him: cf. *Ep.* 515; in 212 he is a priest; in *O. Crum* 345 and 378 he is an anchorite.

⁵¹ Ewa WIPSZYCKA, 'Il vescovo e il suo clero. A proposito di CPR V II', [in:] EADEM, *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'antiquité tardive* [= *Studia Ephemeridis Augustinianum* 52], Roma 1996, especially p. 190, n. 22, about the dossier of Pisenithius and in particular the lack of letters concerning the ecclesiastical bureaucracy.

contents of which concern religious or social matters, for example, the supervision of marriages that he has to protect and, in a way, organise.⁵² In some cases, according to some letters, he was helped and supported by priests; they played a role of intermediaries between him and the faithful.⁵³

He was often involved in guarantees and protestations⁵⁴ and had an active role in justice and official statements.⁵⁵ Many civil authorities collaborated with the bishop: some magistrates of the village, in particular the person of *lachane*,⁵⁶ occur in the texts to help Pistenthus.⁵⁷

As regards the monks that lived in the diocese under his supervision, some letters talk about some very concrete questions concerning the life of the monastery: for example, in the second letter of the dossier, Pistenthus is asked to solve the case of some animals that have been stolen from the monastery (*Ep. Pis.* 2).⁵⁸ Three papyri represent a little dossier where we find Pistenthus involved in everyday monastic life (*Ep. Pis.* 25, 25 bis and ter): he is asked to check the replacement of a baker at the oven in a monastery the

⁵² In *Ep. Pis.* 15 and 16, he was asked by some people to validate the promise of marriage which had been broken by one of the pair; for the details, see VAN DER VLIET, 'Pistenthus de Coptos' (cit. n. 36), pp. 68–69. Also, *Ep. Pis.* 19 concerns some questions linked to a marriage, as well as other letters: *Ep. Pis.* 14 and 31.

⁵³ *Ep. Pis.* 9 is a letter by the presbyter Pýchosh regarding the indictment of an archdeacon; *Ep. Pis.* 14, for example, is a report written by a priest about an engagement; in *Ep. Pis.* 19, Kalapesius the priest is the author of a letter concerning, as we have already said, a marriage.

⁵⁴ *Ep. Pis.* 48 is a protestation addressed to the bishop by a young man who was disinherited by his family.

⁵⁵ *Ep. Pis.* 54, for example, is a letter addressed to the bishop concerning an act of violence against a woman. See *Ep. Pis.* 30 for another episode where a thief is involved. In *Ep. Pis.* 52 Pistenthus is involved in judicial proceedings.

⁵⁶ For this person, see VAN DER VLIET, 'Pistenthus de Coptos' (cit. n. 36), p. 69, n. 25; A. STEINWENTER, *Studien zu den koptischen Rechtsurkunden aus Oberägypten* [= SPP XIX], Leipzig 1920, pp. 52–60. G. SCHMELZ, *Kirchliche Amtsträger im spätantiken Ägypten nach den Aussagen der griechischen und koptischen Papyri und Ostraka*, Turnhout – München – Leipzig 2002, pp. 302–303.

⁵⁷ *Ep. Pis.* 1, 9, 16, 37, 50.

⁵⁸ We are not sure whether this text belongs to the archives of Pistenthus; anyhow, the letter *Ep. Pis.* 64 mentions the 'topos of *apa* Phoibammon'.

head of which was one Cyriac (*Ep. Pis.* 25). Pisenhius is the addressee of a letter from a monk who fears expulsion by his brethren.⁵⁹

(Depuis que j'ai reçu les lettres) de votre seigneurie, j'ai été très consolé. Vous souvenez de votre très humble serviteur. Pardonnez-moi mon seigneur. Je n'ai pas négligé les paroles venant de votre Paternité Sainte. Á Dieu ne plaise! (J'en jure par Dieu) tout-puissant, dont vous êtes placé ici bas comme la ressemblance. (Je n'ai rien fait de semblable). Et quant aux paroles devant me servir de guide que Dieu a mis dans votre bouche, je sais (qu'elles sont aussi utiles et profitables pour les hommes, que votre charité physique) qui leur donne souvent le pain et l'eau. Lorsqu'ils (m'ont menacé les frères, et qu'ils ont livré) mon nom à l'apa Georges, (je me suis soumis pour) le salut de mon âme, à fin qu'ils ne... (Un tel) a proféré ceci: 'il n'a rien (de bon), car...' et les frères m'ont dit. 'Va-t-en!' et que nous [...].

In the dossier attributed to Pisenhius one finds a set of rules relative to the tasks and duties of the hebdomadary: it seems to be no less than an extract of monastic canons preserved in the episcopal correspondence (*Ep. Pis.* 42).

Celui que fait la semaine (hebdomadaire), cinq pains par jour. S'il boit avec des personnages importants, il envoie l'eulogie à celui qui médite. S'ils insistent, pour qu'il le prenne (le vin) d'autres fois encore, il l'emporte au lieu de le boire. Quand la semaine est finie, il fait un tour... la communauté dans... (le soin de) la semaine que ne le prenions le soir (du samedi)...

It is interesting to note that the link with monasticism was specific to his role as a bishop, quite apart from the fact that he practised the monastic life. This is perhaps due to the nature of the letters which are used as a communication instrument with anyone who is part of Pisenhius' flock, but does not live in close physical contact with him and hence does not identify Pisenhius as a superior and spiritual monastic father, but simply as his bishop.

In his biography, coloured by literary clichés, one notes interesting data, especially as regards his training and his decision to adopt the monastic life, beginning with his roots in a monastery, the community of

⁵⁹ *Ep. Pis.* 47; as it is impossible to read and check the original text, the translation of REVILLOUT is referred to here, although we know this is an unsatisfying edition.

brethren in which the bishop also lived after his ordination. In line with the literary genre in question, there is a tendency in this source to emphasise the spiritual and thaumaturgical activities of the monk's role rather than that of the bishop – as exercised by Pisenethius independently of his hierarchical position. He is a holy man, the one who stands out due to his purity and simplicity, before as well as after being consecrated a bishop:⁶⁰ *apa* Pisenethius is recognised as a perfect man, in the tradition of holy *apas* at the head of illustrious monasteries, e.g., Palamon, Pachomius, Petronius, Theodore, and Orsisius,⁶¹ whose recurrent biblical model is Elijah, the monastic model *par excellence*. He received the charisma of divination and the gift of prophecy.

The biography, therefore, focuses more on Pisenethius the ascetic, an extraordinary man of God, whereas in the letters one perceives the bishop, with his entirely episcopal activities. In both cases the central position is occupied by the place where this monk-bishop lives, the monastery, the place where his correspondence is stored, where his followers live, the place of residence of Pisenethius. This is the location that binds together – without fusing – the two worlds, that of monasticism and that of ecclesiastical institutions, in an alliance that is necessary for vitality, or better, the survival of both in a difficult moment for the Coptic Church, which did not adhere to the provisions of the Council of Chalcedon. The identity of monasticism is constructed within and starts with the physical location of the monasteries, a monastic model that seems to be more widespread in Egypt compared to the anchoritic one, not least due to its profound links, which in a way undermine its independence, with the ecclesiastical structure.

⁶⁰ The ordination of a bishop is also narrated in accordance with the specifically monastic literary canons of the selection *par excellence* of Christian practice and the refusal dictated by the humility of the candidate to the said ordination, with a subsequent submission to the will of God personified in the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

⁶¹ *V. Pis.* 56b, p. 298. On the extraordinary activities and actions carried out by Pisenethius, see *V. Pis.* 74a, p. 314: he performed marvellous acts when he was a monk and even more prodigious ones when he was a bishop. We ignore the enumeration of all the miracles done by Pisenethius during his life, which in some cases can be compared with the contents of the letters: for these, see VAN DER VLIET, 'Pisenethios de Coptos' (cit. n. 36).

The monastery is the location where the correspondence of Pisen-
 thius was found, the place where the bishop spent a large part of his life,
 the place where his monks, his clergy, and his lay people lived. The data
 regarding the presence and activities of this bishop within a monastery,
 subsequently confirmed by those relative to Abraham, confirm the recip-
 rocal interpenetration of monastic and ecclesiastical structures.

4. ABRAHAM: BISHOP AND HEAD OF THE MONASTERIES

Abraham was the head of the monastery of Phoibammon, and at the
 same time he was the fourteenth bishop of Hermonthis, between AD 600
 and 620.⁶² The monastery dedicated to St Phoibammon⁶³ stood on the
 remains of the temple of Hatshepsut in western Thebes, some 10 km to
 the south-west of Deir el-Bahari, as described in the testament of *apa*
 Jacob, dating from the end of the seventh century.⁶⁴

⁶² M. KRAUSE, 'Zur Lokalisierung und Datierung koptischer Denkmäler. Das Tafelbild des Bischofs Abraham', *ZÄS* 97 (1971), pp. 108–111. KRAUSE brought together the documents concerning Abraham in his doctoral thesis, providing the edition of 114 letters sent to and written by Abraham: M. KRAUSE, *Apa Abraham von Hermontis. Ein oberägyptischer Bischof um 600*, Berlin 1956. The various sources will be presented in the section dedicated to the bishop.

⁶³ The monastery was inspected during the mission of the Société d'Archéologie Copte in 1947 in the Western Valley: M. BOUTROS GHALI, *Note sur la découverte du monastère de Phoebammon dans la montagne thébaine*, Le Caire 1948; C. BACHTALY, 'Thèbes. Le monastère de Phoebammon', *CdE* 50 (1950), pp. 383–384; *O. Mon. Phoib.* Letter no. 8 on an ostrakon, sent to *apa* Isacco, who is called the servant of *apa* Phoibammon venerating God, and numerous mentions of St Phoibammon in the graffiti seem to demonstrate the existence and consecration of the monastery to the saint: *O. Mon. Phoib.* pp. 106 and 113–114, and graffiti nos. 18, 26, 29, 34, 35, 38, 68, 119, 127, 154, 175. It is common today to hold that the monastery excavated by BACHTALY was dedicated to the same saint, but in reality another monastery is involved.

⁶⁴ P. KRU 65, 35. Leslie S. B. MACCOULL, 'Papyrus fragments from the Monastery of Phoibammon', [in:] R. S. BAGNALL (ed.), *Proceedings of the 16th International Congress of Papyrology, New York, 24–31 July 1980* [= *American Studies in Papyrology* 23], Chico, CA 1981, pp. 491–498.

A mention in the biography of Pisenthius regarding a certain Abraham – monk, priest, and *economus*⁶⁵ – could possibly refer to the future bishop of Hermonthis: the possible identification of the monastery referred to as the monastery of Phoibammon, makes it possible to deduce that it dates from the second half of the sixth century. Probably, at the end of the sixth century, a group of monks, including *apa* Abraham, left the convent and headed for the territory of Deir el-Bahari. The monks did not flee from the monastery that was destroyed by rocks that fell from the *gebel*, at the latest towards the end of the seventh century. Rather, they followed their superior, in compliance with an order from Damian of Alexandria.⁶⁶ In an ostracon in Coptic originating from the monastery of Phoibammon, we read:⁶⁷

[...] ΕΠΕΙΔΗ ΑΠΕΝΕΙΩΤ ΕΤΟΥΛΑΒ ΑΠΑ ΔΑΜΙΑΝΟΣ ΤΗΝΟΟΥ ΠΚΥΡΥΓ-
 ΜΑ ΕΡΗΣ ΝΑΝ ΕΤΑΧΡΟΝΜΜΟΝ ΣΗΤΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΜΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΑΝΩΟΠΡ ΕΡΟΝ
 ΤΕΤΗΝΟΟΥΝ ΧΕ ΠΕΝΟΥΦΩ ΑΠΠΕ ΕΤΡΕΝΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ ΣΜΠΕΝΜΑ ΑΛΛΑ
 ΣΙΤΗΤΜΗΤΡΑΙΡΟΟΥΦ ΜΠΕΝΕΙΩΤ ΕΤΟΥΑΒ ΜΗΠΣΚΥΛΜΟΣ ΝΤΑΥΦΟΠΡ

verso: ΦΑΝΤΟΥΕΙ ΦΑΡΟΝ.

Since our holy father, *apa* Damian, sent the Festal letter south to us, which reinforced our faith in God, we have received it; you know that leaving our

⁶⁵ *O. Mon. Phoib.* 18a, 32, 71, 80, 93.

⁶⁶ This text also appears in *O. Crum Add.* 59 et *P. KRU* 105. In the first ostracon, we are told of the abandoning of the first monastery of Phoibammon, in accordance with the decision of the holy father, the *archiepiskopos* of Alexandria; in *P. KRU* 105 we find information on the ownership of the new monastery of Phoibammon. Both texts are earlier than the year AD 600. For further information, see M. KRAUSE, 'Die ägyptischen Klöster. Bemerkungen zu den Phoibammon-Klöstern in Theben-West und den Apollon-Klöstern', [in:] W. GODLEWSKI (ed.), *Coptic Studies. Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies, Warsaw, 20–25 August 1984*, Warsaw 1990, pp. 203–207; IDEM, 'Zwei Phoibammon-Klöster in Theben West', *MDAIK* 37 (1981), pp. 261–266; for the relations between the two monasteries, see the study by IDEM, 'Die Beziehungen zwischen den beiden Phoibammon Klöstern auf dem Thebanischen Westufer', *BSAC* 27 (1985), pp. 31–44, which demonstrates all the points put forward by this text.

⁶⁷ *O. Crum Add.* 59. We accept the transcription of KRAUSE in his, *Apa Abraham von Hermonthis* (cit. n. 62), text no. 98.

location is not our wish, but in the light of our holy father's concern and the inconvenience⁶⁸ which they (*sc.* the bearers of the letter) have endured to reach us (we will leave our location).⁶⁹

A group of monks from the monastery of Phoibammon I, including the future bishop, Abraham, therefore left the desert location of the monastery for the territory of Deir el-Bahari. They left their location at the order of Damian who, if we correctly interpret his words in document *O. Crum Add.* 59, perhaps wished to have more direct control over the monastery and easier access to it. The monks, therefore, only satisfied the desire of their superior who obeyed the order of the patriarch.⁷⁰ We can therefore affirm that the monastery of Phoibammon II or Abraham at Deir-el-Bahari was a continuation of the monastery of Phoibammon I. It is very probable that it was constructed at the end of the sixth century, before AD 598, the date of the consecration of Pisenthius as bishop.⁷¹ The transfer of the monastery must have taken place when Abraham was the superior of Phoibammon I but not yet the bishop of Hermonthis; he became the superior of the convent of Phoibammon II and only later bishop. Moreover, even after his nomination to the rank of bishop of Hermonthis, he lived there, in an *episkopeion* which occupied the northern part of the monastic complex of Phoibammon II. The archives of the monastery were probably located in this part of the structure.

Abraham's archive was put together by Martin Krause,⁷² who collected texts written on ostraca scattered throughout various collections and museums. Of the 114 texts that make up this archive, 72 are in the British

⁶⁸ In the edition of *O. Crum Add.* 59, we read ΜΝΙΤΙΟΝΖΟC; KRAUSE, *Apa Abraham von Hermonthis* (cit. n. 62), kept the version of CRUM & WINLOCK, *Monastery of Epiphanius I*, (cit. n. 16), p. 152, n. 10.

⁶⁹ The letter is incomplete; the ending is reconstructed *exempli gratia*.

⁷⁰ W. GODLEWSKI, *Le monastère de St. Phoibammon [= Deir el-Bahari v]*, Varsovie 1986, p. 63.

⁷¹ P. KRUI 105 is a papyrus that confirms or assigns property rights to land occupied by the monastery of Phoibammon: the monks are owners of the entire *topos* of Phoibammon; internal indications seem to assign a late dating to this document, first and foremost the writing: one can relate the papyrus to the foundation of the monastery (GODLEWSKI, *Le monastère* [cit. n. 70], p. 65).

⁷² KRAUSE, *Apa Abraham von Hermonthis* (cit. n. 62).

Museum, (including 69 found in 1901 as a result of excavations carried out by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 2 are from the collection of Prof. Archibald Sayce and one from that of Lord Amherst), 19 are conserved in Berlin, in the Ägyptisches Museum, 4 in the Ägyptologisches Institut in Leipzig; the other texts are located in different museums in Cairo, Moscow, Strasbourg, Chicago, Florence, and Oxford. The majority was published in other previous collections, but the work carried out by Krause remains of the highest importance and has not been superseded as regards the edition, translation, and comments on the texts.⁷³

Abraham was the successor of Bishop Ananias and was probably the first to combine in one person the monastic practice and office with that of his function as bishop. As we shall see, the twofold nature of the role (monk responsible for the monastery and bishop) was lost with his successors, since Victor, his closest disciple, who was a deacon and then a priest, inherited the management of the monastery, while Moses inherited the office of bishop. Abraham left the monastery of Phoibammon at least twice to carry out tasks linked not so much to his role as bishop, as that of the abbot of the monastery. On one occasion he had to leave against his will, obeying the order of Patriarch Damian who commended him to renounce the excessive fatigues of monastic life.

In his testament, Abraham defines himself as a 'bishop' and 'anchorite'; in the ostraca he is 'lord', 'father', 'saint', '*apa*', 'bishop'. Among his titles one can, finally, cite text no. 113 (*P. BKU* 258), in which *apa* Abraham is defined as 'orthodox': we know that in Egypt of this period, the adjective undoubtedly referred to the ecclesiastical faction that was opposed to Chalcedon.

4.1. *Abraham, lord of the topoi*

It is not easy to distinguish the role of monastic head from that of bishop, but it is clear that Abraham generally occupied himself with control over the life and discipline of the churches, monasteries, and all the *topoi* that

⁷³ Other texts have been collected in recent years by Professor Martin KRAUSE and his team is going to publish them.

were in the area around Hermonthis. In the texts we find some promises to carry out his duties, to respect the rules and the structured order within all of these.

The churches and monasteries belonged to him, as can be clearly seen when reading text no. 16 (*O. Crum Add. 9*): a man does not observe the rules and promises he made before entering the *topos*; he is ready to leave it together with his (spiritual) son, since the *topos*, which must be a monastery, is under the jurisdiction of Abraham:

And my son and I, we are ready to leave the *topos* without any objection, since the *topos* belongs to you and you are the lord.

Text no. 18 concentrates on and provides information about the responsibility of Abraham relative to a *topos* and its rules; especially as regards those who, within it, occupy an official position: the clerics and officers of the location are subject to him and must listen to and obey his orders. Text no. 77 (*BP 12497*) confirms his power over monastic locations. Since the letter is addressed to a priest (Johannes), it is clearly a way of controlling his discipline. The place where he lives is a monastic *topos*, called *apa* Ezekiel. Nevertheless, this power of controlling monasteries was part of the normal duties that a bishop was customarily obliged to carry out, as is clearly indicated in canonical and civil law in the fifth and sixth centuries.

Text no. 92 (*CO 51*) represents vital evidence in support of the fact that Abraham did not concern himself only with what fell to him as a bishop who lives within a monastery, but also managed all the work carried out in that context and was responsible for workers' payments and retributions in the monastery: the same could have been a specific task of the head of the monastery rather than a duty of a bishop.

Similarly, in text no. 102 (*CO 68*), Abraham ordered materials, bandages, and fabrics, which were probably used for mummification. In text no. 103 (*CO 311*) the priest, Moses, wrote to Abraham that he, or his successor in the event of death, would take the material back to the *topos/ma* of the bishop. Hence, Abraham lived in and in a way had rights over the *topos*, which is undoubtedly the monastery itself, or part of the monastery; effec-

tively the *topos* is his location. He organised the exchange of materials and was responsible for what was produced in the monastery, recorded in text no. 104 (CO 204), in which he was informed of the transport, place of conservation and sale of a certain measure or quantity of grain; or, as is written in text no. 105 (*Ep.* 399), he organised the return of a tool. These ostraca prove the real positions he held: the bishop was in charge of all aspects of the organisation of monastic life, even the practical ones, since he was the head of the monasteries and their monks.

At the very least, the texts confirm the fact that bishop Abraham permanently resided in the monastery.

4.2. *Control and organisation of the ecclesiastical order*

Some tasks that Abraham carried out as a bishop can be named: among the most important was the ordination of ecclesiastics in the reference diocese, which demonstrates the selection mechanisms for new clerics in the area under bishop Abraham, as the head of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.⁷⁴

The texts that provide information concerning access to the ecclesiastical hierarchy⁷⁵ allow noticing a number of constant features, which constitute the common practice for ordinations. The first text in Abraham's dossier is one of the rare examples of an ordination request that has not yet been carried out:

I, Johannes, priest in the village of Piôhe and David, the writer in the said village, and Simeon, reader in the said village, request our father, the bishop,

⁷⁴ Ewa WIPSYCKA discusses the tasks of *apa* Abraham regarding the control over his priests and deacons and also the meaning of the written statements and guarantees (WIPSYCKA, 'Il vescovo e il suo clero' [cit. n. 51], pp. 186–189).

⁷⁵ For an initial bibliography on the ordination, see P. VAN CAUWENBERGH, 'Coutumes ecclésiastiques en Égypte aux VII^e–VIII^e siècles d'après des ostraca coptes', [in:] *Mélanges d'histoire offerts à Charles Moeller* 1, Louvain – Paris 1914, pp. 234–243; W. RIEDEL, *Die Kirchenrechtsquellen des Patriarchats Alexandrien*, Leipzig 1900; Y. M. J. CONGAR, 'Ordinations Invitus, Coactus de l'Église antique au Canon 214', *Revue des sciences philosophiques et théologiques* 5 (1966), pp. 169–197; E. LANNE, 'Les ordinations dans le rite copte', *L'Orient syrien* 5 (1960), pp. 288–300.

to ordain Isaac for us as priest at the Church of Saint Mary in Piôhe, since the Church needs him. We act as guarantors for him [*verso*] in all his priestly activities, which he will not neglect, but which he will perform – in line with the works to be performed by a priest – from the altar. I, Johannes, the priest and David, the writer, and Simeon, the reader, stand as guarantors for him and we take responsibility for any errors he makes; we are in agreement regarding the above declaration. (*O. Crum* 36, text no. 1)

Three witness guarantors require the ordination of a fourth man who is not present at the drafting of the document, since a Church in the village from which they come seems to need a priest: the need to have worship services performed is the reason for this request being made to the bishop.

The other texts that concern ordinations are guarantees of the correct performance of the ecclesiastical office, after the request had already been submitted, or after the ordination had already been carried out. We have different groups of writings: they involve direct promises, made after the ordination of a new priest or a new deacon who undertakes to respect all the Church's rules and canons; or fulfil the guarantees that are offered on behalf of candidates.⁷⁶

Abraham therefore became, in his turn, a guarantor of respect for ecclesiastical regulations, since all ecclesiastical offices were accompanied by responsibilities that involved obligations and interdicts.⁷⁷

The ecclesiastics had to behave in accordance with the rules of the Church, observe the canonical laws, respect them, as well as be subject to ecclesiastical laws and the commands of their superiors. For example, they had to memorise the *Gospel of St John*, observe forty days of fasting and vigil. Furthermore, they had to respect the obligation not to move or change residence without a legitimate and recognised reason and without the consent of their bishop. A condition of *stabilitas* is overturned in text

⁷⁶ See, by way of example, texts nos. 2 (*O. Crum* 30), 11, 15 (*BP* 12493), 16 (*O. Crum Add.* 9), 80 (*O. Crum* 310), *Ep.* 145.

⁷⁷ Abraham was clearly responsible for the places of worship, their foundation and also their economic life: for example, in text no. 27 (*P. BKU* 69), one notes that Abraham had to control the construction of the churches in the region of Hermonthis.

no. 16 of Abraham's dossier (*O. Crum Add.* 9), where we learn that Psate promised Abraham to leave his place without objections if there were any transgressions of the rules.

Within the dossier, one notes a group of texts relative to the appointment of some men of trust to places of worship and respect for the rules that these roles required; at the same time, the bishop was a guarantor of the correct functioning of the system of punishments for those who transgress ecclesiastical rules.⁷⁸ *Apa* Abraham was concerned himself with the management of the hierarchy and, more specifically, he had to oversee order and discipline, via exclusion from Eucharistic liturgy and from the clergy, punishments and threats that were also directed at lay people, clerics, and monks. There is, for example, a group of texts that concern the celebration of the Eucharist: *apa* Abraham concentrates on the correct performance of the celebrations, either during ordinary Eucharistic meetings or in liturgical festivals, the use of water or wine to be consecrated, and the control over places under his authority. In particular, for those who were ordained, controlling the performance of their ecclesiastical duties properly also involved attributing disciplinary punishments of exclusion from the Eucharist and from the clergy, with later readmission where appropriate.⁷⁹

The authority to exclude someone from the clergy was generally reserved for bishops, who exercised this function directly or indirectly through priests or archpriests, although the last word always belonged to the bishop.⁸⁰ One also reads testimonies relative to guarantees extended in favour of a colleague under threat of exclusion.⁸¹ These were declarations addressed to the bishop as the person responsible for the clergy in his diocese. A particularly interesting declaration connected with monastic exclusions from the clergy can be found in text *Ep.* 154,⁸² where the

⁷⁸ Texts nos. 19–25 (*BP* 12 488, *BP* 12 500, *BP* 12507, *O. Crum* 57, *O. Crum* 58, *O. Crum* 63).

⁷⁹ See the series of texts nos. 28–38.

⁸⁰ See texts nos. 37 (*O. Crum* 485), 74 (*O. Crum Add.* 8).

⁸¹ No. 84 (*O. Crum Add.* 41). Text no. 86 (*O. Crum* 300) is very interesting piece: the priests Papas and Photinos offer a guarantee for *apa* Victor; if Victor is not obedient, they will be excluded from the clergy.

⁸² The text corresponds to no. 36 of the Abraham dossier.

threat, on the part of Abraham, of exclusion from the clergy was received by a priest who was in the monastery of Epiphanius, and who had to go and celebrate the liturgy in a monastery. Bishop Abraham was clearly responsible for various levels in the ecclesiastical institutions in the monastic territory of the western Thebes.

4.3. *The power of Abraham over the faithful*

There are some interesting texts that demonstrate the power of Abraham-bishop relative to the performance of his functions in the management of disputes; he is also often involved in judicial proceedings.⁸³ In particular, to give a sample of this attitude, we find a text in which two opponents apply to *apa* Abraham in order to resolve their dispute with an agreement which Abraham can actually conclude:⁸⁴ the text is full of blanks, but the general subject seems to be clear.

The bishop had an official function in disputes as intercessor, in order to solve them with alternative resolutions: arbitrations were always more frequent than the praxis of appealing to the court.⁸⁵

Apa Abraham played an important role even in matrimonial problems⁸⁶ and in managing the problems of the poor.⁸⁷ Some people wrote to him

⁸³ Cf., e.g., text no. 59 (*O. Crum* 59), sent by Abraham to some people who want to take their case to the court. Unfortunately, the text is in very bad condition and we have only a fragment containing a mere three lines. Texts nos. 46 (*P. BKU* 318) and 47 (*O. Crum* 49) are examples in which the bishop reset some disputes; there is a little dossier in the archives (texts nos. 48–68) completely made by documents concerning different forms of justice. See also SCHMELZ, *Kirchliche Amtsträger* (cit. n. 56), pp. 255–295.

⁸⁴ Text no. 48 (*O. Crum* 313).

⁸⁵ See the interesting article by J. URBANIK, 'Compromesso o processo? Alternativa risoluzione dei conflitti e tutela dei diritti nella prassi della Tarda Antichità', [in:] Eva CANTARELLA, J. MÉLÈZE MODRZEJEWSKI & G. THÜR (eds.), *Symposion 2005. Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte*, Wien 2007, pp. 377–400.

⁸⁶ Texts nos. 40–3 (*O. Crum* 72, 73, *O. Crum Add.* 1, *O. Crum* 484). For a commentary, see KRAUSE, *Apa Abraham von Hermonthis* (cit. n. 62), pp. 159–176.

⁸⁷ Texts no. 44 (*O. Crum* 71); no. 45 (*O. Gol.* 11): Abraham offers his help and the help of his Church to some people in economical difficulty.

to present themselves as guarantors for others: the bishop is a kind of official witness of these declarations and these offers of guarantee.⁸⁸

He could have had this power, in agreement with his role as supervisor of peace and justice in the territory under his jurisdiction, as also conferred by the public authorities and accepted by everyone. The monastery of Phoibammon became, in this way, as the seat of the bishop, a privileged meeting place for dialogue between parties involved in a dispute, with the submission of documents regarding legal matters.

Text no. 98 (*O. Crum Add.* 59) emphasises the role of practical, religious and moral responsibility on the part of the bishop: the letter cites a *Festal Letter* from Damian⁸⁹ which was received in a monastery and was directed at monks, clergy, and lay people⁹⁰ in the area of Hermonthis. Abraham was responsible, as bishop, for the letter reaching all the people in his community. Due to the arduous nature of the journey required to reach the monastery, he had to abandon his place of residence, probably the monastery of Phoibammon, even against his will. The text not only constitutes a testimony of the fact that Abraham was responsible for his church, but also that he resided in the monastery of Phoibammon. This in turn introduces the subject of the next paragraph, namely the role of Abraham as lord of the monastic environment in the western Thebes. Abraham continued to guide the spiritual and also material life of his faithful. The monastery was the place where orthodox Christians in the area met and from which they extended their influence.

4.4. *Transmission of Abraham's roles: Two channels*

The transmission of Abraham's two roles, which occurred through differ-

⁸⁸ Texts nos. 61–63 (*O. Crum* 86, 155, 42).

⁸⁹ The dates of the patriarchate of Damian (AD 578–605) also helps us to specify the period in which Abraham's activity has to be dated. Relative to the practice of sending *Festal Letters* on the part of a bishop for a monastery, see also the letter of Constantine for Epiphanius, holy father of the homonymous monastery (*Ep.* 131): the letter, in its form and contents, indicates, in addition to respect, also a recognition of the authority of the father of the monastery. See also *O. Crum* 18 and *O. Crum* 249.

⁹⁰ Despite the fact that the text opens with the singular, it subsequently addresses a group.

ent channels, is an important indication of the exceptional character of this bishop-monk at the head of a monastic complex: a monk who was also ordained bishop and who chose to continue to live as a monk inside the monastery, with maximum responsibility for the latter. It is therefore interesting to consider the twofold nature of the transmission of his roles, as a bishop and as a head of the monastery. With Abraham, as we have seen, these roles are united in the same person, but they separate, ceasing to be the prerogative of a single man, with his first successor, Victor, who succeeded him at the monastery of Phoibammon, while Moses succeeded him as bishop of Hermonthis. In the catalogue of bishops published by Walter E. Crum,⁹¹ one reads:

[...]
 ΑΝΑΝΙΑ [
 ΠΕΤΡΟΥ [
 ΜΙΧΑΙΟΥ [
 ΑΝΔΡΕΑ [
 ΑΒΡΑΑΜΙΟΥ [
 ΜΩΥΣΑΙΟΥ [
]

The reason for this double succession is not clear, since there are no obvious reasons why such a decision should have been made. We believe it was dictated by the fact that while the successor at the head of the monastery could be designated by the previous head⁹² (a mechanism that functioned in the case of Abraham, through a written testament of transmission of office and property),⁹³ the succession to the episcopal throne did not depend, at least formally, on the outgoing bishop, but on the election processes in which the clergy and even the populace were involved. Recourse to a testament was a widespread practice not just in the mon-

⁹¹ CRUM, 'A Greek diptych' (cit. n. 47).

⁹² Also Pachomius had chosen his successor personally, creating a literary model as an important reference.

⁹³ The practice of drafting a testament that was not just spiritual was very common: the nearby monastery of Epiphanius was also transferred for a number of generations through written testaments: for an example of transmission that has survived intact, see *P. KRU* 75.

astery of Phoibammon, where we have a series of testators in chronological order that have been conserved. Indeed, during the proto-Byzantine period it constituted the method for transmitting the office of head of the monastery in other monastic establishments as well, due to, above all, economic and property considerations.⁹⁴

The testament of Abraham, published in 1893, provides us with an image of an anchorite, a head of a monastery, and a bishop of Hermonthis, who dictated the text, drafted in Greek, before dying.⁹⁵ Abraham, as written in his testament, left the management of the monastery of Phoibammon to his disciple Victor, often cited in the sources as *presbyteros*: he had to govern and manage the monastery after Abraham. We set out below a section from the testament that was found during excavations at the monastery of Phoibammon in 1856 and has been conserved in the collection in the British Museum:⁹⁶

[...] May it be possible for me to live and be in good health and enjoy all my modest goods! But should I (which I pray may be averted) suffer the common lot the most pious priest and my disciple, shall enter upon all of my moderate property bequeathed by me and be my heir, viz. movable, immovable and animate property, of every kind and sort and of whatever type and quantity, in gold and silver and cloth and copper, and clothing and books and building sites and waste lands and buildings. In a word, [...] everything, from the most costly kind to the least and down to one

⁹⁴ A. STEINWENTER, 'Byzantinische Mönchstestamente', *Aegyptus* 12 (1932), pp. 55–64. M. KRAUSE, 'Die Testamente der Abte des Phoibammon-Klosters in Theben', *MDAIK* 25 (1969), pp. 57–67; A. STEINWENTER, *Das Recht der koptischen Urkunden*, München 1955.

⁹⁵ *P. Lond.* 1 77 + *BL* 1, p. 241. Notice the fictitious character in the list, which complies with the rules for compiling documents of this kind. One should also note that the testament is written in Greek, dictated by priest Joseph of the Church of Hermonthis; Abraham probably knew Coptic but not Greek, or not well enough to write a testament. For an introduction, commentary, and translation, see the edition of the 'Apa Abraham: Testament of Apa Abraham, Bishop of Hermonthis, for the Monastery of St. Phoibammon near Thebes, Egypt' in J. THOMAS & A. COSTANTINIDES HERO (eds.), *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents: A Complete Translation for the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, Washington DC 2000, pp. 51–58.

⁹⁶ We use the translation in the 'Testament of Apa Abraham' (cit. n. 95), p. 55 (2–3), by Leslie S. B. MACCOULL.

jugerum and the worth of one *assarion* and one *obol*, and whatever there happens to be of pottery and wooden and stone household utensils, as regards all of that same moderate property bequeathed by me, including what I inherited from my forebears and what I acquired by my own sweat and by purchase and by charitable gift and by any manner or intent whatsoever, by written or unwritten means.

Not only that, but also the holy monastery which is under me, that of the holy prize-bearing martyr Abba Phoibammon which lies in the aforementioned holy mountain of Memnonion, I leave to you in unhindered ownership, together with its venerable property, from the cheap kind to the costly, down to a cinder. I direct that you, the aforementioned Victor, the most pious priest and monk, my disciple, after my death immediately and forthwith are to enter upon the moderate property bequeathed by me, to manage it and own it and be master of it, of all the goods bequeathed by me, all of them, from the small to the least, down to one *jugerum* and one *assarion* and one *obol*, and whatever there happens to be of pottery and wooden and stone and household utensils, even including the pure oratory together with its venerable property, from the cheap kind to the costly.

In the part of the text that we have quoted, Abraham bequeathed all his property to his disciple, Victor; although the list of assets in Abraham's testament is a legal-notary fiction and therefore had no formal value, the monastery is nevertheless considered to be a personal possession of the bishop, who could therefore bequeath the same to his successor.⁹⁷ Not only in this case but also later, Byzantine founders would share some of *apa* Abraham's attitudes, such as the concern with keeping the monastery out of the hands of his family; this was, together with the author's decision to treat the monastery as a private property, a significant feature for the future history of private religious institutions in Byzantine Empire, which were often independent and autonomous foundations.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ In the same way, the successor of Victor, Petros, leaves the monastery to Jacob, who in turn left it to Victor II: *P. KRU* 77; *P. KRU* 65. Elisabeth R. O'CONNELL, 'Transforming monumental landscapes in Late Antique Egypt: Monastic dwellings in legal documents from Western Thebes', *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 15 (2007), pp. 239–273; especially pp. 266–268.

⁹⁸ 'Testament of Apa Abraham' (cit. n. 95), p. 53.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Among the examples of bishops who were monks, the model embodied by Pisenhius and Abraham is therefore that of monks who became bishops without giving up their ascetic life within monasteries, which constituted important places of worship in the period and area in which they were located. The fact that these bishops resided in monastic sites and not in the official episcopal churches, the *katholikai ekklesiassi* in their respective cities, namely Coptos and Hermonthis, is explained in the light of an obligation to take refuge in non-urban and more concealed places, in a period when the alternation of what were variously considered legitimate and illegitimate hierarchies tended to compromise the public and official life of the Church. In this situation, as has been argued, it was not possible for the two bishops who were in opposition to Chalcedon to carry out their activities within a main urban church sustained by the Byzantine Empire.⁹⁹ It is not suggested that in Egypt the Council of Chalcedon and the canons put together by Justinian were always respected and implemented, but ecclesiastical and imperial politics must certainly have had an effect, with favours granted to the Chalcedon hierarchies while obstructions were imposed on the Monophysite Church. The sources confirm the survival of a hierarchy that had not adhered to the Chalcedonian faith. This hierarchy remained rooted in the territory and represented a reference point for the faithful, especially when, as in the case of the two above-mentioned bishops, their authority was derived from a monastic environment, a holy place *par excellence*, and one in which they resided. We quote the words of Ewa Wipszycka regarding the presence of a double hierarchy and hence two bishops in Egypt during the centuries in question:¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ This would also explain why the city of Hermonthis and Coptos are never mentioned when one speaks about the functions of the two bishops. See Ewa WIPSYZYCKA, 'The institutional church', [in:] R. S. BAGNALL (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, Cambridge – New York 2007, pp. 331–349.

¹⁰⁰ WIPSYZYCKA, 'The institutional church' (cit. n. 99), p. 345.

It might well be, I think, that at the time of Abraham and Pisenthius the dioceses of Hermouthis and Koptos had two bishops each, a monophysite one and a pro-Chalcedonian one and that the pro-Chalcedonian bishop acted in the town and left the villages or some of the villages and the monasteries of the desert fringes to the Monophysite bishop. This would mean that the local state authorities did not conform with the emperor's policy of persecution of heretics but accepted a compromise that enabled both parties freely to act inside two tacitly delimited zones.

Where a bishop was also a monk and resided in a monastery, there are no real doubts as to the effectiveness of his authority: in such cases, the bishop-monk therefore intervened as a supervisor and guarantor of order in the ecclesiastical life of monastic communities.

The bishop, who was also a monk and resided in a monastery, continued to be the central figure in the life of the Church and it is for this reason that we feel it is appropriate to speak about bishops who were (had been) monks rather than monks who were elected bishops. Unlike the monastic clergy, it would seem that the episcopal role was more evident in those who exercised the said function while remaining within a monastic context. In a period when the legitimacy of a hierarchy, like that of the Monophysites, was vacillating and subject to oscillations, the possibility of gathering around a bishop who exercised responsibility and was able to guide his faithful conferred vigour on the Church. On the other hand, the propaganda strategies adopted by the episcopate and the forms of self-representation adopted by it played a fundamental role in constructing a solid and successful image among the group of Egyptian bishops led by a single *papas*, the Alexandrian patriarch.¹⁰¹

The fourth and the fifth centuries marked the rise to prominence of monastic communities in Egypt, communities that offered a powerful (and sometimes quite volatile) base of grassroots support for Alexandrian episcopal authority. In the midst of the doctrinal controversy at home and abroad, Alexandrian patriarchs like Alexander, Athanasius, Theophilus, and Cyril consistently portrayed themselves as privileged monastic

¹⁰¹ S. H. DAVIS, *The Early Coptic Papacy. The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity*, Cairo – New York 2004, p. xiv.

patrons and offered material forms of benefaction to monasteries in an effort to win the allegiance of Egyptian monks away from theological rivals; lastly, during the final two centuries of Byzantine rule in Egypt, an ethos of theological existence gripped the Coptic Church. Often politically disenfranchised and geographically displaced, the Egyptian popes in this period produced a complex rhetoric of resistance that was crafted as a response to colonial models of ecclesiastical control and often deployed as a standard for adjudicating internal disputes. And yet, even though these strategies of representation were each forged in the midst of specific conflicts, it was their adaptability to different times and to different social settings that allowed them to exert such a profound influence over the ways that ancient Copts perceived themselves and their leadership.

The case of Abraham and Pisenhius, exceptional because it involves bishops who resided in monasteries, is therefore an excellent example of the strategies adopted by the non-Chalcedonian Church,¹⁰² among its lay, ecclesiastical, and monastic members, not just to enhance its chances of survival but to further its own claims to centrality and legitimacy.¹⁰³ They therefore embody the bishop-monk (and not the monk-bishop) model which, in our opinion, is specific to Christian Egypt in the period subsequent to the Council of Chalcedon.

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¹⁰² A. CAMPLANI, 'L'identità del patriarcato alessandrino, tra storia e rappresentazione storiografica', *Adamantius* 12 (2006), pp. 8–42, at p. 11.

¹⁰³ For an example of a patriarch who embodied an attempt to place the anti-Chalcedonian patriarchate at the centre of attention, see the analysis on Damian by Ph. BLAUDEAU, 'Le voyage de Damien d'Alexandrie vers Antioche puis Constantinople (579–580): Motivations et objectifs', *OCP* 63 (1997), pp. 333–361.