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RESOURCES AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES OF THE EGYPTIAN MONASTIC COMMUNITIES (4TH–8TH CENTURY)*

THIS IS NOT MY FIRST ARTICLE with terms 'monastic communities' and 'economy' in the title.[1] Therefore, I should begin with an explanation of the scope of this text to give the reader an idea of its content. It focuses on aspects of monastic economy that I have not yet discussed in detail. Lengthy passages concern the baking of bread in monasteries and hermitages, as well as pottery production. I devoted a lot of space to the sub-

* Abbreviations:

The apophthegms in alphabetical order (those of the so-called *Alphabetikon* or *Gerontikon*) are cited as follows: after the name of the monk to which the tradition attributes the given apophthegm I give two numbers: the first one is the number in the group of apophthegms in which that monk is the central figure and the second one (in parentheses) is the number of the apophthegm in the whole collection (e.g. Antony 1[1]). Edition of the alphabetical collection: J. B. COTELERIUS (1677), reprint in *Patrologia Graeca* 65 (71–440); English translation I used: Benedicta WARD, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers. The Alphabetical Collection*, Kalamazoo 1975.

B°- Vita Bohairica – edition: L. Th. LEFORT, *Sancti Pachomii Vita Bohairice scripta*, *CSCO*, Louvain 1925; translation used: A. VEILLEUX, *Pachomian Koinonia*, I. *The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples*, Kalamazoo 1980.

BSAC – Bulletin de la Société archéologique copte.

CE – The Coptic Encyclopedia.

ject of land cultivation. I attempted, as far as the sources allowed, to give a fairly detailed presentation of the role of non-monks in the economy of monastic communities. I tried to change the perspective of my studies: to glimpse economic matters from the 'outside', whereas my efforts to date were aimed at reconstructing the economic balance of the communities, their economic mentality, as well as the impact of economic activity on the organisation of monasteries and lauras. Aware of the gaps in my previous discourses, in this paper I turn to the management structure of landed property, to the participation of ascetics in the exchange of goods, and to fiscal burdens. I intended to create an autonomous text that would be comprehensible without systematically referring to my other works.

CSCO – *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.*

C.Th. – *Theodosiani libri XVI cum Constitutionibus Sirmondianis*, ed. Th. Mommsen, Berlin 1905; translation used: C. Pharr, *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, Princeton 1952.

Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson – Anne Boud'hors, J. Clackson, C. Louis, Petra Sijpesteijn (ed.), *Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt. Ostraca, Papyri, and Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, Cincinnati 2009.

Études sur le christianisme – Ewa Wipszycka, *Études sur le christianisme dans l'Égypte de l'Antiquité tardive*, Rome 1996.

G[1]- *Vita prima Graeca* – edition: *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae*, ed. F. Halkin, Brussels 1932; translation used: A. Veilleux, *Pachomian koinonia*, I. *The Life of Saint Pachomius and His Disciples*, Kalamazoo 1980.

History of the Patriarchs – *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria. Agatho to Michael I*, ed. B. Evetts, *Patrologia Orientalis* V, Paris 1909.

Moines et communautés monastiques – Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IV^e^-VIII^e^ siècles)*, Warsaw 2009 (*JJurP Supplement* XI).

The Monastery of Epiphanius, I, II – *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes*, I. *The Archaeological Material* by H. E. Winlock; *The Literary Material* by W. E. Crum; II. *Coptic Ostraca and Papyri*, ed. W. E. Crum; *Greek Ostraca and Papyri*, ed. H. G. Evelyn White, New York 1926.

O. TT 29 – *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29. Autour du moine Frangé*, I–II, ed. Anne Boud'hors, Chantal Heurtel, Brussels 2010.

PO – *Patrologia Orientalis.*

[1] I have written several detailed studies which, following some necessary changes, were included in the book *Moines et communautés monastiques*. Economic aspects are discussed in chapter X, pp. 471–565 ('Aspects économiques de la vie de la communauté des Kellia'; 'L'économie de la congrégation pachômienne des premières générations'; 'Le fonctionnement de l'économie des monastères et des laures').

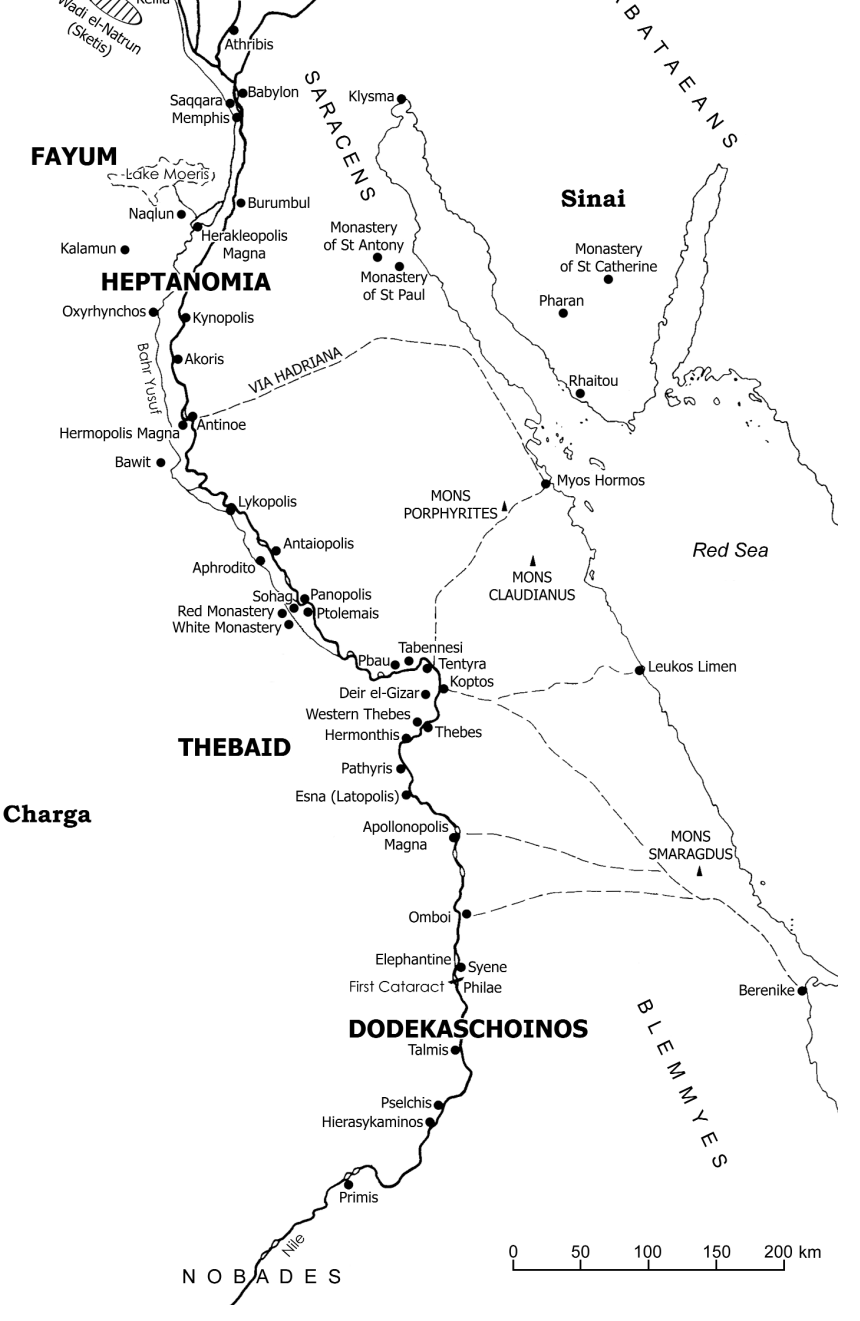

Fig. 1. Monastic Egypt (drawn by G. Ochała)

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I must begin by repeating that the organisation of Egyptian monastic communities varied to a degree that finds no parallels in the world of Late Antiquity. Monks inhabited hermitages they shared with no more than a handful of companions or disciples, or with a servant, they formed lauras that united hermitages under a common abbot and a common *oikonomos*, or, lastly, they lived in coenobitic monasteries. Of the two congregations that emerged in the fourth century, the one founded by Shenoute turned out to be long-lived, but it only comprised three monasteries located in close proximity to one another and it does not seem that its leaders harboured ambitions to influence other monasteries. On the contrary: they did not want their rule to be conveyed to other monastic communities, which is for us a baffling attitude.[2] The Pachomian congregation was larger (both in the number of monasteries and the size of the communities), its monasteries were dispersed over a large area, but even at the time of its prime, in the second half of the fourth century, its members did not represent a significant fraction of Egyptian monks. Thus, Egyptian monastic communities constituted a dispersed milieu that was never bound by organisational ties and in which distinct groups enjoyed full autonomy and adhered to their own local traditions.

Neither the Greek nor the Coptic terminology distinguished between different types of monastic communities. It is us who do it based on criteria established thanks to the analysis of monastic customs and organisational forms. A great majority of Egyptian Late Antique sources use the term *monasterion*, more rarely other equally non-specific designations.[3] This fact causes many problems for the researchers: I admit that I am not always able to assign a monastic community encountered in the sources to a specific category, especially if it appears in random papyrus docu-

[2] See the life of Abraham of Farshut, who was said to have copied the rule of Shenoute at the White Monastery and secretly handed it over in a sealed vessel to another important figure among sixth-century monastic leaders, Moses, to store at the monastery. *Synaxaire Jacobite (rédaction copte)*, ed. R. Basset, *PO* 11 (1916), pp. 685–687.

[3] More on this subject: *Moines et communautés monastiques,* pp. 281–323.

ments that mention its representative, the abbot or the *oikonomos*, but give no other information about it. The term 'monastery' is a derivative of *monasterion*, thus suggesting – falsely – that the terms are synonymous. Nonetheless, I will use it. If my knowledge allows to do so and the context requires it, I will use more precise terms: 'laura' and 'coenobium'.

THE RESOURCES OF MONASTIC COMMUNITIES

The available documentary sources allow for a fairly precise assessment of the material assets of monasteries. Monks entering the monastery usually came with material goods from 'the world', which constituted their contribution to the property of the community: land plots, livestock, houses, workshops, and money. The status of these assets varied depending on the decision (usually a written one) of the brother-to-be. He could transfer them all or in part to the community represented by the abbot.[4] He could keep them at his disposal, which meant that already as a monk he could cede, mortgage or sell it to individuals from outside the monastery (but also to fellow brothers). He also had the right to bequeath it in a will to a designated heir or to the monastery. I do not recall any documentary texts specifying who was liable for taxes payable for land 'kept' by the monk, but I suspect it was the brother himself and not his community.

The picture constructed on the basis of papyri stands on opposition to data found in normative texts.[5] We find in them imperial ordinances aimed at establishing strict control over cases of endowing monasteries with land belonging to *curiales*, above all when they entered a monastic community. The emperors were also against alienation of curial property in order to give the obtained money to the poor. The goal of these impe-

[4] Petronios upon entering the Pachomian congregation brings as a gift, according to the author of G^1, 80: sheep, oxen, camels *καὶ σκεύη παντοῖα*. The author of the Bohairic text provides a longer list: sheep, goats, oxen, camels, donkeys, carts and barges (B^o56).

[5] The state of research on this subject was presented in an excellent article by A. Laniado, 'The Early Byzantine state and the Christian ideal of voluntary poverty', [in:] M. Frenkel, Y. Leev (ed.), *Charity and Givings in Monotheistic Religions*, Berlin 2009, pp. 15–43.

rial interventions is clear: it was necessary to stop the decrease of the area of arable land burdened with *munera.* This is evident from the constitution of Valens from AD 370 (*C. Th.* 12,3,63):

> Certain devotees of idleness have deserted the compulsory services of the municipalities, have betaken themselves to solitudes and secret places, and under the pretext of religion have joined with bands of hermit monks. We command, therefore, by Our well considered precept, that such persons and others of this kind who have been apprehended within Egypt shall be routed out from their hiding places by the Count of the Orient and shall be recalled to the performance of the compulsory public services of their municipalities, or in accordance with the tenor of Our sanction, they shall forfeit the allurements of the family property which We decree shall be vindicated by those persons who are going to undertake the performance of their compulsory public services.

In 386 Theodosius the Great determined the conditions under which *curiales* could dispose of their land, which should not fall into unauthorised hands (*C. Th.* 3,1):

> If any decurion should be forced by necessity to alienate landed estates, either rustic or urban, or any slaves whatever, he shall appeal to a competent judge and shall set forth in detail all the causes by which he is being constrained, so that if he should prove his claim, he shall obtain a decree that will be permanently valid for the purchaser. For thus it will take place that no unregulated seller or unjust purchaser can be found. Furthermore, hereafter there shall be no grounds whereby any seller shall complain that he was circumvented by the stratagems or overwhelmed by the power of a purchaser, since indeed the necessity of the seller and the wishes of the buyer shall be made clear by the trustworthy testimony of the public records. But if any man, contrary to this prohibition, by secret devices and through persons interposed by fraud, should become the purchaser of any place whatever that is sold by a decurion, he shall know that he will be deprived of the price that he gave and of the place that he bought.

While this law does not explicitly mention prospective monks, one may

assume that the wish to fulfil the Christian ideal of voluntary poverty could not be recognized by the state as a necessity (so Laniado[6]).

Not only donations made by *curiales*, but also, and in a higher degree, donations made by members of senatorial families worried the emperors, if they involved huge fortunes (land and money). The most famous examples of such donations are that made by Olympia, a friend of John Chrysostom, and that made by a married couple of Hieronymus' Roman friends, Melany the Younger and Pinianus.[7]

Limitations imposed on alienation of curial (and senatorial) land were the subject matter of other legislative acts (I refer the reader to Laniado's article). However, neither papyri nor hagiographic texts from Egypt contain the slightest trace of enforcement of these regulations. Like Laniado, I hesitate to conclude that legislative acts regarding this matter were never put into practice. The silence of the sources may be deceiving. In any case the municipal *curiae* knew that they had been given an instrument they could use to force those entering monasteries to leave the greater part of their property to family members who assumed responsibility for *munera*. One might only ask if in the Christian Empire the *curiae* wished to and – given the atmosphere in the cities – were able to take advantage of the possibilities offered by the legislation. I suspect that the pious decurions and councils of cities in which the donors lived managed to come to some sort of a compromise, the mention of which was not considered necessary in the available sources. There was certainly no reason to refer to it in the Lives of monks. One would have to have access to acts of city council meetings, but unfortunately the preserved scraps of such texts on papyrus contain nothing of the sort.

[6] Laniado, 'The Early Byzantine state and the Christian ideal of voluntary poverty' (cit. n. 5), pp. 24–25.

[7] Olympias: G. Dagron, *Naissance d'une capitale. Constatinople et ses institutions de 330 à 451*, Paris 1992, p. 502; Melania the Younger: *PLRE* I, *s.v.* 'Melania 2', p. 593; Pinianus: *PLRE* I, *s.v.* 'Pinianus 2', p. 702. On these donations, see J. Gascou, *Les grands domaines, la cité et l'État en Égypte byzantine* [= *Travaux et Mémoires* 9 (1985)], p. 33, who concludes as follows: 'Les péripéties de la liquidation des biens de Mélanie et de Pinien, au début du v^e^ siècle, montrent que la réalisation d'une fortune sénatoriale, loin d'être une simple affaire commerciale, engageait activement les plus hautes instances de l'État.'

Individual monks and monastic communities certainly paid taxes for the land they owned and we find ample evidence of this in tax registers from Egypt. We know less about *munera* with which the land was encumbered. Further on I will have the opportunity to discuss boats in possession of monasteries that transported grain collected as tax to Alexandria (pp. 216–219). Unfortunately the source data ends here and caution advises not to draw a conclusion from their silence that monasteries were free from all dues owed to the state.

An interesting mention on duties which monasteries were burdened with is found in the *Life of Samuel of Kalamun*: 'Then on one occasion an order was issued: the camels of the monastery and those of everyone else were requisitioned to take corn to Klysma. Those of the monastery were taken, as I have said, and for six whole months were not released. And so they were unable to find a way of transporting bread for the brothers'. (The reason why the *Life* refers to this fact is that it took a miracle to obtain a means of feeding the men).[8] Given what we know about the dates of Samuel's life, this event took place already under Arab rule. Klysma, as the editor Alcock notes, was the designated port for grain transport to Medina. It appears from the context that the obligation to supply pack animals was a requisition, not a *munus* that constituted a permanent burden for taxpaying owners. In the first years of the new regime, its needs – especially the extra ones not satisfied by tax revenues inherited from the Byzantine system – were fulfilled through requisitions.[9]

Income from labour and property of monks was the second source of material wealth of the communities. Managing this income was carried out in a variety of ways, depending on the type of community and on its collective decisions. The latter assumed the form of rules (verbal or, more rarely, written ones) according to which a certain part of the profit (or all of it) became shared property or remained in the monk's purse.[10]

[8] *The Life of Samuel of Kalamun*, ed. A. Alcock, Warminster 1983, chapter 36, text p. 30, transl. p. 109; editor's commentary p. 129.

[9] This is best described by F. Morelli in the introduction to his edition: *L'archivio di Senmouthios* anystes *e testi connessi. Lettere e documenti per la costruzione di una capitale*, *CPR* xxx, Berlin 2010.

[10] Broadly on this subject in: *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 546–554.

Monastic communities received gifts of diverse character and size. We have ample proof that many lay people ordered their heirs to endow monasteries with plots of land and houses, as well as sums of money as *prosphora*, pious gifts.[11] The psychological pressure exerted on the individual to make such a donation to monasteries and churches was compelling and effective.[12] The heirs often learned that in his or her zeal the deceased had given away property burdened with loans, or significantly reduced the wealth of the family, beyond the common practice. This led to numerous lawsuits. What is more, relatives, not to mention creditors, resorted to violence preventing the monks from claiming the bequest.[13]

[11] For example (the documents are numerous): *P. Cairo Masp.* II 67151 [*ca.* 545/6], a will of a physician from Antinoe; *P. Köln* X 421 [second quarter of the 6th century] from Aphrodito. The editor of this text, J.-L. Fournet, comments on it as follows on p. 189: 'La mention d'un ou deux monastères (τοῦ ἁγίου ὄρους, l. 36; τῷ ἁγίῳ νεοκτίστου ὄρει, l. 45) implique une donation ou la création d'une fondation effectuée pour le salut de l'âme du futur défunt. Ce type de disposition est d'une extrême fréquence dans les testaments byzantins: historiquement, il rend compte pour une part de l'accroissement des biens des monastères et des églises. Cela constitue aussi un trait intéressant de l'histoire des mentalités: comme le souligne J. Beaucamp, reprenant une analyse de G. Dagron, c'est aussi une façon de « se transférer à soi-même ses propres biens » par l'intermédiaire des pauvres dont s'occupent moines et clercs, d'autant plus que ces offrandes ont pour but le salut de l'âme du défunt.'

CPR IV 177 [6th? 7th century? dates proposed in old editions were usually too early] from Hermopolis: somebody donates to the monastery of Hervoč 6 artabae of wheat 'for eternity'. In exchange for a donation the physician from Antinoe whom we know from *P. Cairo Masp.* II 67151 will be buried at the monks' cemetery and his name will be entered on the list of the deceased for whom the monks raise their prayers.

[12] T. G. Wilfong, *Women of Jeme. Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt*, Ann Arbor 2002, pp. 85–86. 'Now, I myself was this wretched woman awaiting her hour of death. Because of the great sickness into which I had fallen, I knew that I was approaching my end... Then God put it into my heart to donate this little memorial to the Holy Monastery (of Paul) which I mentioned at the head of this deed: first may his prayers and his holy dignities be favorable to me before the Judge of Truth, and that my little memorial be preserved for the sake of the great charity which is now done for the poor who pass by the holy monastery' (*P. KRU* 106, 57–77, transl. T. G. Wilfong).

[13] The best text attesting this aspect of a donation *mortis causa* is a short work of the *erotapokriseis* ('questions and answers') genre from a papyrus codex (6th or 7th century), constituting a record of a (fictional) conversation between Cyril of Alexandria and two deacons. The discussion concerns Church property, but as far as the subject of interest to us is concerned there was no difference between donations to monasteries and donations to

In the dossier of the estates belonging to the Apions, major property owners in the Oxyrhynchite nome and in the Fayum, there are records documenting a kind of permanent subventions for certain monasteries and churches. Did this influential and very wealthy family limit itself to this form of support for monasteries? Or did it build monasteries? We know nothing about it, but this may be incidental, since only relics of its archives are available to us. We have to remember that in regions other than Egypt members of the early Byzantine elite readily assumed the role of founders; proof of such activity is found in hagiographic texts. However, hagiographic works of Egyptian provenance (regardless of the language in which they are extant) do not refer to pious foundations of great families.[14] I cannot offer an explanation of this fact.

It needs to be stressed that monasteries inherited a part of their property from past generations of monks. An established community that had been in existence for a long time may have amassed considerable wealth, mostly in real estate. However, monastic communities sometimes dissolved; when they did, what happened to their land and houses? We never find out. The emperor tried to secure the property of monasteries by forbidding the sale of real estate in their possession,[15] but life took its own

churches. In the course of this discourse, which is full of interesting remarks, Cyril is asked what should be done if relatives protest against land donation and responds that the charity of the Church does not seek what does not belong to it (in other words, the property should be given back to the family), and the interlocutors reply by saying: if it were done so, the Church would be stripped of property. W. E. Crum, *Der Papyruscodex saec. VI–VII der Phillipsbibliothek in Cheltenham*, Strasbourg 1915, p. 28 (Coptic text), pp. 61–62 (German transl.). On the complications brought about by the acquisition of landed property donated to a certain monastery I wrote in the paper: 'Le monastère d'Apa Apollôs: un cas typique ou un cas exceptionnel?', [in:] J.-L. Fournet (ed.), *Les archives de Dioscore d'Aphrodité cent ans après leur découverte*, Paris 2008, p. 267, commenting on *P. Cairo Masp.* I 67003.

[14] The only case I am aware of is a monastery near a large village, Aphrodito, founded by a man who was affluent, but not rich; I discussed it in my study cited above: 'Le monastère d'Apa Apollôs' (cit. n. 13), pp. 261–273.

[15] Novella VII from AD 535: 'De non alienandis aut permutandis ecclesiasticis rebus immobilibus aut in specialem hypothecam dandis creditoribus, sed sufficere generales hypothecas.' The emperor wanted to enhance the efficacy of the prohibition by annulling whatever *pragmatica sanctio*, i.e. any permit that might have been given by his own chancery; see chapter 9: 'For the reason that it is probable that someone, for the purpose

course. A text from Oxyrhynchos, which I discuss below (pp. 193–194), shows us that Kopreus, a founder of a monastery, sold his bakery to a local female property owner, unconcerned by the fact that it was located within the monastery.

The monastic communities that had liquid cash were able to purchase plots and took land in execution for debt. An illustration of such a situation is found in *P. Oxy.* LXIII 4397 [545]. It is worthwhile looking into this text in detail, since it gives an idea of the scale and nature of economic endeavours of a small monastery in Oxyrhynchos called the Monastery of apa Hierax.[16] A delegation of its monks journeyed to Constantinople (the reason for travel is obscure; one can only guess that they were seeking fiscal exemptions or privileges, or perhaps they sought audience with a member of the Egyptian Apion family residing in the capital). While in Constantinople, the delegation ran into an Oxyrhynchite notable in need of liquid cash. The brothers loaned him 80 solidi and when this amount turned out to be insufficient the debtor received another 50 solidi in cash. Security for this operation was initially a plot of saqiya-watered land 16.5 arurae in area, but subsequently a *hypotheca generalis* was created, which means that the creditors had the right of execution on the debtor's entire property. The man died without repaying his debt, but when the monastery of Hierax attempted to take possession of the land, it turned out to be burdened with an earlier mortgage in the form of a debt payable to one of the Apions. In the light of the law, the Apions' claim of the land was more justified because it was earlier. The brothers made attempts to

of evading this law, may attempt to obtain from Us a pragmatic sanction authorizing the purchase of ecclesiastical property, We hereby prohibit everyone, of whatever rank or political station or those immediately attached to Our service, or anyone residing among the people, from doing anything of this kind: and We decree that it shall, under no circumstances, be lawful to produce a pragmatic sanction for the purpose of acquiring immovable property belonging to the churches, monasteries, convents, or any other religious establishments' (*The Civil Law*, transl. S. P. Scott, vol. XVI, Cincinnati 1936, p. 48).

[16] An interpretation of *P. Oxy.* LXIII 4397 can be found in the article by J. Urbanik, '*P. Oxy.* LXIII 4397: 'The monastery comes first or pious reasons before earthly securities', [in:] *Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, pp. 225–235. Urbanik cites Justinianic novellae containing regulations on monastic property and comments on the monastery's dealings from the legal viewpoint. This monastery also appears in *P. Oxy.* LI 3640 from 533.

convince members of this family to let the monastery get the plot after all (the *oikonomos* of the monastery of Hierax travelled to Constantinople again to speak to the head of the family), finally the brothers got their money back instead of receiving the plot in question, which for obscure reasons the estate administration did not want to surrender. It does not cease to amaze me that, first of all, a small monastery was able to send a delegation – twice – to the imperial capital, and second, that the monks were in possession of such a huge sum of money, or were able to borrow it on the spot (so they found people who were ready to vouch for them, perhaps someone from the Constantinopolitan palace of the Apions, who knew of the monastery).

Another example of a financial transaction leading to the purchase of land is found in *P. Lond.* v 1686 [565] from Aphrodito – a sale of three arurae of land to the Pachomian monastery in Zmin (*περὶ τὴν περαίαν τῆς Πανοσπόλεως*). The former owner, Dioskoros of Aphrodito, did not receive the money but the monastery paid his dues on account of *ἀστικὴ συντέλεια* for 16 arurae of arable land at the tax office.

Another text attesting the purchase of land, *P. Mon. Apollo* 24, comes from eighth-century Bawit. The monastery of Apa Apollo buys three arurae of 'good' *χόρτος*-land (land sown with plants used as fodder for livestock) and 25 arurae of *κατανομή*-land (Clackson: pasturage) from representatives of the *κοινώτης* of residents of the *epoikion* Poraheu (we do not know its exact location, but it may have been in the vicinity of Koussai) for the price of two gold solidi less one tremissis.

To go from listing potential sources of income to estimating their size in absolute values is a task almost impossible to perform. Documentary sources provide random data, for instance they talk about a lease of a particular plot, purchase of a specific house, but they never show us a total of the communities' assets. An important exception is the data on Aphrodito obtained from two large documents: a fiscal register of money taxes on land drafted in 525/6 for the entire village[17] and a cadastre from *ca.* 523[18]

[17] The text was published with a substantial commentary and introduction by C. Zuckerman, *Du village à l'empire. Autour de registre fiscal d'Aphroditô*, Paris 2004.

[18] J. Gascou, 'Le cadastre d'Aphroditô (*SB* xx 14669)', edition with broadened com-

supplemented with isolated documents from the same village. 3/5 of arable land in Aphrodito belonged to a major landowner, *comes* Ammonios, and the remaining 2/5 were divided between two categories: *kometika* – plots for which taxes were paid in the village office, and *astika* – plots for which taxes were paid in the city office. Two monasteries from Panopolis, the one of Apa Zenobios and the one in Zmin (both of them Pachomian) are among the wealthiest landowners in Aphrodito, but the money tax they pay for their property constitutes *ca.* 3% of the *kometika*. However, monasteries in general (not only the latter two) hold 11.5% of land in the category of *astika.* From Constantin Zuckerman's collective figures for the whole village it appears that monasteries possess under 5% of all the land. The major landowner, Ammonios, dominates. Monasteries most probably own slightly more land than it can be calculated from the entries that list their names. Dues for their plots may have been paid by middlemen and in this case it was the latter who went on the record.

Jean Gascou published yet another important fiscal register containing data on land owned by monasteries; it refers to the Hermopolite nome.[19] It lists 25 monasteries, but lacunae in the text make it impossible to do calculations analogous to ones that can be done in the case of Aphrodito.

What I have written above on the assets of monastic communities is based on sources dated to the sixth–eighth centuries. It is true that we have a few documentary texts on this subject from the fourth century, but they concern land (or houses) belonging to individual monks, not monasteries.[20] Thus, the beginning of the process of acquisition of landed property by monastic communities lacks documentation in the sources – all sources, not just papyri. The situation is paradoxical, as we have knowledge of the economic mechanisms, but we are in the dark as to the legal form applied to them. What actions were performed by a member of a monastic community who owned a plot/plots of land (or a

mentary (compared to the *editio princeps* of 1987), [in:] *Fiscalité et société en Égypte byzantine*, Paris 2008, pp. 247–305. Leslie S. B. MacCoull, 'Monastic and church landholding in the Aphrodito cadaster', *ZPE* 178 (2011), pp. 243–246.

[19] J. Gascou, *Un codex fiscal hermopolite (P. Sorb. II 69)*, Atlanta 1994.

[20] They have been collected by M. Choat, 'Property ownership and tax payment in fourth-century monasticism', [in:] *Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, pp. 129–140.

house/houses) and wanted to bequeath it/them to his brothers upon his death? Did he leave it to one of the brothers in a will? Such a solution could not have been applied in the case of the Pachomian congregation, in which the new members had to leave their properties behind – either to persons from 'the world', or to the community, and the latter donation could not be rescinded. It is true that, as usual with the Pachomian congregation, we do not know how to date the information obtained from Rules and Lives – they may have referred to the times of the second or third generation of the monks.

The first legal text that testifies to the existence of community property is *C.Th.* 5,3,1 dated to AD 434. It is without a doubt that in the eyes of the law monastic communities were landowners in a much earlier period.

CRAFTSMANSHIP IN MONASTIC COMMUNITIES

The share of craftsmanship in the economic activity of monastic communities is well attested in the documentary record. Especially literary texts make craftsmanship the leading source of their income. Also archaeological sources often show monks as artisans at work. Historians of the monastic movement, therefore, have an understandable tendency to regard the economic pursuits of monasteries as tantamount to their artisanal activity. One must reach for papyrus documents to make significant corrections to this view and to change the ratio of income in favour of agriculture.

I have written a lot about craftsmanship in my book and I will not repeat the information presented there. I especially have no intention of going into the subject of basketry, which I have broadly discussed already.[21] I shall only repeat the conclusions, as the image of a monk weaving baskets for a living conveyed by apophthegms and similar literary texts is so suggestive that it must be continuously combated with

[21] *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 477–479; 532–545.

incessant reminders of its falseness. For the sake of this article it is sufficient to recall that nearly all monks took to weaving baskets, ropes, nets and mats, but the income they received as a result of these activities was low. One needs to remember that although the collection of certain kinds of grasses used for making plait work and mats did not generate costs since they were collected on dry land, in the desert, or on wasteland, to obtain reeds one had to purchase them (in Egypt reeds were cultivated primarily for the needs of vineyards). Palm fibres used for basketwork also had to be bought by monks who did not have their own trees. Flax well suited for making ropes was purchased from peasants.[22]

Weaving closely followed basketry on the list of common crafts performed by monks. As opposed to simple occupations, like the production of baskets and ropes, it required good vocational training that an artisan living in 'the world' obtained through several years of apprenticeship. Of course at the monastery weaver-monks taught this skill to individuals who were clever enough and whose hands were not yet deformed by hard labour.[23]

The situation of women was different. They learned to spin and weave since childhood under the care of women in their family. They would need apprenticeship only if they wished to master the technique of making decorative and fine textiles, in other words, luxury products. Upon entering the monastery all of them were able to produce textiles. They were employed in their manufacture and most probably had little opportunity to work in other fields, excluding everyday housework. We find many mentions of spinning and production of clothing in Shenoute's texts exhorting the nuns of his congregation. Excavations conducted at Athribis-Wanninah at a temple adapted for the needs of the female monastery of Shenoute confirm that the women who lived there specialised in this type of production.[24]

[22] Poemen 10 (584).

[23] A trace of such a situation is found in *P. Kellis* 12 [4th cent.], which mentions sending a boy to a monastery to learn *τέχνη λινοϋφική*.

[24] Oral communication of J. Kościuk, member of the staff. Unfortunately two volumes devoted to the female monastery do not talk about work performed by the nuns: I refer

Archaeological research on some monastic sites has brought to light installations that held weaving-looms (see Figs. 2–3). They were first identified in the hermitage of Epiphanius (seven items) and that of Cyriacus (six).[25] Later research brought to light similar installations in hermitages of Western Thebes. Johanna Sigl, who undertook the task of documenting such installations and studying them from the technological point of view, stated their presence at Gournet Murrai (four items), Deir el-Bachit (four), TT 29 (one), TT 89 (one), TT 85 (five), TT 95 (one), TT 1152 (one).[26] Outside of the Theban region loom-pits have been found in hermitages of Abydos (eight, of which two near the wall of a room), of Amarna (eight, in various hermitages), of Deir el-Qarabin[27] and Naqlun.[28] Let us also note the presence of a loom-pit in Jeme, near the western wall of a room, north of a church, without any monastic context. It is likely that traces of loom-pits have been brought to light in other places as well, but have not been recognised as such.

to Rebecca Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery. Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2002; Caroline T. Schroeder, *Monastic Bodies. Discipline and Salvation in Shenoute of Atripe*, Philadelphia 2007.

[25] *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, I, pp. 67–71; Winlock marked two loom-pits on the plan (plate III).

[26] During a long time the installations found in the hermitages of Epiphanius and Cyriacus were not the subject of special studies. It was the recent find of loom-pits in Deir el-Bachit that gave to Ina Eichner the idea of entrusting her student Johanna Sigl with the task of doing research work on this kind of installations. Sigl has published two papers on this subject: 'Pits with crossbars – investigations on loom-remains from Coptic Egypt', [in:] K. Endreffy, A. Gulyás (ed.), *Proceedings of the Fourth Central European Conference of Young Egyptologists* [= *Studia Aegyptiaca* 13], Budapest 2007, pp. 357–372; and 'Koptische Webstuhlgruben in den Gräbern von Amarna?', *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 37 (2008), pp. 355–361; with Ina Eichner and T. Beck, 'Deir el-Bachit', [in:] M. Görg, St. Wimmer *et al.* (ed.), *Texte, Theben, Tonfragmente*, Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 92–106. Her MA dissertation is going to be published under the title 'Gruben mit Querholz', [in:] Ina Eichner, G. Burkhard *et al.* (ed.), *Deir el-Bachit – Grabungsbericht der Kampagnen 2003–2008*.

[27] Béatrice Huber, 'Die Klosteranlage Deir el-Qarabin bei el-Kom-el-Ahmar', *BSAC* 45 (2006), pp. 63–64.

[28] W. Godlewski, 'Naqlun 2007. Preliminary report', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 19 (2007), pp. 234–235, mentions an 'installation', without specifying its nature. However, as the author told me, he later became convinced that that installation was a loom-pit.

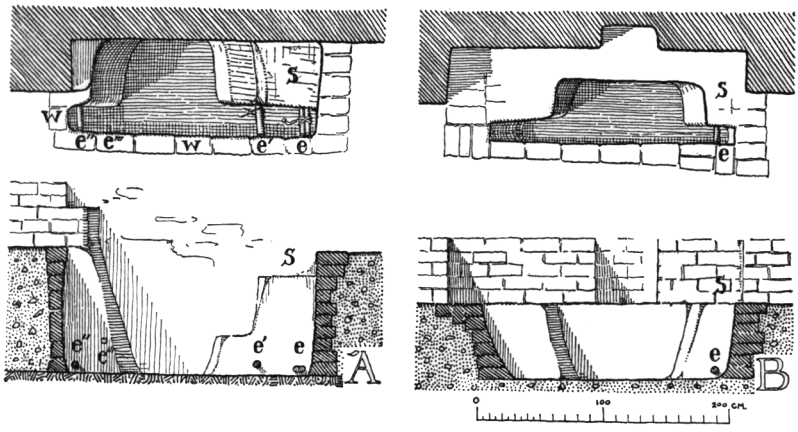


Fig. 2. Drawings of loom-pits found in the laura of Epiphanius: plan view and section through the middle. All loom-pits (also all those found outside the laura of Epiphanius) were located near walls. Pits are brick lined, from 60 to 100 cm deep, from 125 to 145 cm long, and 50 to 75 cm wide with a barrow slot alongside 200 cm in length and from 20 to 25 cm in width. The operator seat (S) is on the floor level (or very little below) at the right hand of the end of the pit (after *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, I, p. 69, fig. 25)

I am impressed by the number of loom-pits found in single hermitages. I think we can venture to surmise that every inhabitant of those hermitages had his own loom (for we know that hermitages were often inhabitated by more than one monk). This gives us an idea of the scale of textile production among the monks and shows its importance among their sources of income.

Johanna Sigl convincingly maintains that the looms for which the loom-pits found in hermitages were made were designed for weaving large pieces of tissue, therefore shrouds and/or clothes, not *keiriai*, as Winlock thought.[29]

[29] Johanna Sigl has devoted much work to the difficult task of reconstructing the looms that were installed in the loom-pits. She has come to the conclusion that the only kind of loom that could fit those loom-pits was the vertical frame-loom which we know from Palestine and Syria. Such a loom 'consists of a rectangular frame fastened to the edges of

Fig. 3. One of the four loom-pits found at Deir el-Bachit monastery. See also http://www.aegyptologie.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/projekte/deir_el_bachit/index.html consulted 21 Jan. 2012. Johanna Sigl describes this find as follows: 'the interior of the pit is plastered with the same mud that covers the rooms' floors. Near each end and near bottom crossbars are installed in the narrow parts of the pit. One of these bars is still in situ [...]'. 'The loompit has an indisputabled seat construction in middle position to the slot [in this respect it differs from the loom-pits described by Winlock – EW]. The weaver had to sit in this chair-like depression facing the room' ('Pits with crossbars' [cit. n. 26], pp. 358 and 361) (copyright Grabung Deir el-Bachit; with kind permission of Ina Eichner)

The care with which those loom-pits were made is worth noticing. It is in keeping with the general outlook of the hermitages: these were tidy dwellings, carefully planned and constructed by men who had sufficient financial means. This remark may be useful for those of my readers who are in the habit of relying mainly on literary sources, which present monks living under utterly poor material conditions. I remember how I

the pit at its lower end and leant against a nearby wall or fixed to the roof at its upper end. The weaver sits with his feet hanging down into the pit with the lower beam resting right above his lap' ('Pits with crossbars' [cit. n. 26], p. 364).

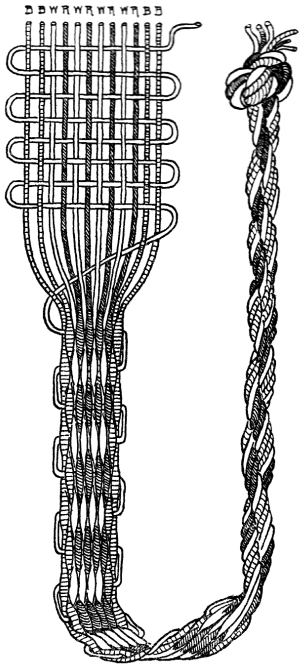


Fig. 4. Diagram of bandages (*keiriai*) weaving (*The Monastery of Epiphanius*, I, p. 71, fig. 27). The loom required must have been designed to take only a dozen, two-play woollen warp thread, dyed red and white, or red, white and brown. A bobbin with white weft thread was woven back and forth making a ribbon which was vaguely striped, from 1 to 1.5 cm wide and of considerable length

reacted not only at the sight of the splendid hermitages of Kellia dating from the last period of the existence of that monastic centre, but also when I first saw the much more modest hermitages in Naqlun.

During archaeological excavations it would be useful to look for remains of flax and wool fibres, as well as ready yarn, in the refuse constituting garbage dumps.[30] Such relics are proof that weaving was performed by monks.

[30] A good example of an analysis of refuse from textile production is an article by Béatrice Huber, 'Bautätigkeit und Wirtschaft in Deir el-Qarabin, Klosteranlage bei el-Kom el-Ahmar/Šaruna', *BSAC* 46 (2007), pp. 61–67.

Many ostraca from the Theban region point to a developed production of a specific type of textiles in the hermitages: linen veils used as shrouds: Coptic *hboos*, *šneto* and Greek *soudarion*, *sindon* (Martin Krause 'Leichentücher', Walter Ewing Crum 'grave-clothes', Anne Boud'hors 'draps') and linen tapes, purchased in pairs with which the shrouds were bound to the body of the deceased, Coptic and Greek *keiriai* (Crum 'bandages', Boud'hors 'bandelettes').[31] They were produced on narrow weaving looms that were simpler to operate than an ordinary loom. There must have been considerable demand for these tapes among the inhabitants of nearby villages: people thought ahead about their burial attire and purchased the necessary textiles in advance, as their means permitted (even as recently as in the previous century poor women in Poland bought dresses and shoes 'for the grave'). The production of such textiles was technologically simple.

The earnings of a weaver producing *keiriai* may have been fair. Frange, an eighth-century monk living in the Theban region, whom we know well thanks to his correspondence, expected to receive three artabae (or over 90 kg) of 'good' grain for four pairs of *keiriai* (*O. TT 29*).[32] If we only knew the length of these *keiriai*... However, even if they were longer than average, the amount of grain was still considerable. An ostracon from Deir el-Bachit gives the price for 28 linen cloths for wrapping the dead: two solidi and two tremisses (coins worth a third of a solidus).[33] The value of a solidus converted to wheat varied from 28.5 artabae (*O. TT 29* 235) through 18 artabae (*O. Crum* 198) to 12 artabae (a common price).

[31] Anne Boud'hors, M. Durand, 'Les termes du textile en langue copte', in the exhibition catalogue *L'Égypte, la trame de l'Histoire*, Paris 2002, pp. 105–108. In this catalogue on p. 135 there is a photograph of a bundle of wrappings. One of the desiccated bodies of monks from the monastery of St Mark in Western Thebes supplied *keiriai ca.* 60 m. in length. In order to obtain such a long textile strip, several separately made strips were tied together. See also Chantel Heurtel, 'Tissage et tissus funéraires', *Grafma Newsletter* 7/8, décembre 2003–2004, pp. 60–66.

[32] For more on Frange and his correspondence, see below, p. 183. The texts of the archive were published by Anne Boud'hors and Chantal Heurtel in *O. TT 29*.

[33] I know the text from Heike Behlmer's hand-out distributed during the Congress of Coptologists in Münster 1996. I have not found it in publications.

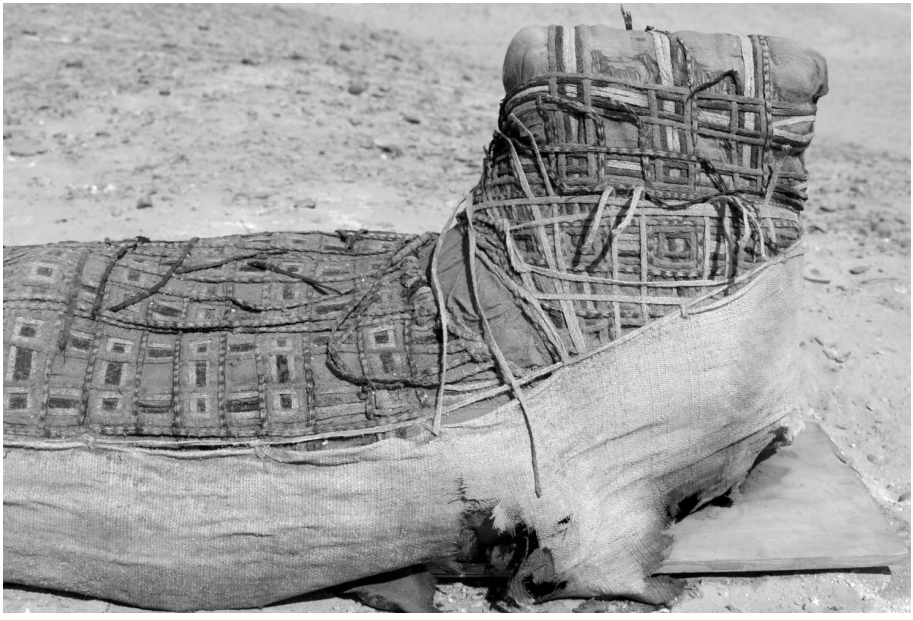


Fig. 5. Upper part of a corpse wrapped up in grave sheets and bandages (*keiriai*), found in the necropolis of Naqlun (C.T. 13) (photo B. Czaja-Szewczak/Archive of PCMA; with kind permission of W. Godlewski)

A very interesting text indicating the production of garments by monks is a Coptic inscription found in Deir el-Medina on the façade of the temple of Hathor.[34] In Late Antiquity (or at the beginning of Arab rule) the space within the enclosure wall of this temple precinct was occupied by a monastic community, which used many of the buildings and built a well in the courtyard. Burials were found along the east wall of the temple. The inscription contains instructions for weavers:

[34] Chantal Heurtel, *Les inscriptions coptes et grecques du temple d'Hathor à Deir al-Médîna*, Cairo 2004, n° 25, pp. 20–23. The temple precinct at Deir el-Medina was the object of excavations conducted in 1935–1940 by B. Bruyère, *Rapport sur les fouilles de Deir el-Médineh*, Cairo 1948, pp. 42–50 (plate XXVIII, plans I, VI). Unfortunately, Bruyère had no knowledge of Christian Egypt and the number of obvious errors in his text is staggering (he places his account of the 'Coptic Christian' period before the report on the Roman Imperial period!).

> The instruction (*logos*) for the tunics (*lebiton*): 10 handbreadths in width, 21 in length. The large shirts (*thalis*):[35] 7 in width, 14 handbreadths and 2 fingers in length, and 10 fingers its neck-opening. The small shirts: 6 handbreadth and 8 fingers in width, 13 handbreadth and 2 fingers in length and 9 fingers neck-opening' (transl. Winlock, *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, p. 9).

Heurtel, who thoroughly commented on this absolutely unique document, compared the dimensions it provided with the dimensions of the garments of dead monks buried in the lauras of Qurnet Mar'i (or Murrai) and of Epiphanius, since they were in close proximity. I am astonished at the remarkably careful execution of this inscription: it is the finest of the inscriptions carved into the temple walls. Made with such care, it must have been meant to serve for an extended period – these were not occasional notes scratched on the wall by some weaver. Therefore, the monks weaved, as did the brothers in other communities of the Theban region.[36] The editor was puzzled by the inscription's location on the façade of the church and in her opinion the clothing mentioned in the inscription could not have been ordinary garments. She writes: 'Pour quelle raison prendre la peine de graver ce compte de tuniques et de chemises, et surtout leurs mesures très précises sur le mur extérieur du temple, qui était alors celui de l'église, si ce n'est pour proclamer les dimensions des vêtements liturgiques tenues pour idéales?' (p. 21). I believe that this is wrong: liturgical garments had to be clean, in good condition, possibly in the colour of natural wool, but did not have the sanctified character they acquired in the later periods, not to mention that their form hardly dif-

[35] Bag- or sack-like shirt.

[36] My interpretation of the nature of the site differs from that of Chantal Heurtel, who hesitated to call it a monastery. The character of the complex, in her opinion, was defined by the church (more precisely a martyrion) of Isidore the Martyr and the surrounding structures were meant for its personnel and for the pilgrims (pp. 86–87). I see no grounds for this conclusion; above all there is no clear evidence of the presence of numerous pilgrims (it would be safer to use a different, somewhat more modest term: 'église à visites' – 'visits, differ from pilgrimages'). The occupation of the temple precinct of Hathor by monks finds parallels in other Theban sanctuaries: we find traces of the monks' presence everywhere. I do not see why we should conclude that a monastery and a church did not go together (in nearby Deir el-Bahari, which housed the relics of St Phoibammon, a monastery functioned for several generations).

fered from that of everyday clothing.[37] The aim of this inscription was to give instructions about measurements on behalf of monks producing garments. The fact that these instructions were written on the façade of the church has nothing to do with the nature of the objects that those monks produced.

A weaver-monk usually received the raw material from his clients, as did a lay weaver.[38] It appears from the correspondence of monks from the Theban region that they purchased raw materials from individuals from 'the world' just as frequently. An intriguing ostracon was found in the laura of Epiphanius: 'When I came away from thee and had said, two solidi, I did not deceive thee. Lo, the 150 bundles[39] of flax have I finished; if thou wouldest that I leave them here, send me the costs. Lo, I have bleached the linen. If thou wouldest that I send them unto thee, send to me. I have paid 11.5 for straw' (*P. Mon. Epiph.* 353, first half of the seventh century). The text is not fully clear to us: we do not know if the letter refers to flax fibres that underwent preparatory processing (this is suggested by the mention of bleaching the linen, an operation performed before spinning) or ready yarn.

We know that flax spinning was sometimes done by monks (the stereotype according to which spinning yarn was a female occupation does not apply to Egypt), as one of the apophthegms clearly indicates: 'I drop the spindle and before lifting it I put death in front of my eyes' (N 58); another text of the same collection (N 59) mentions a certain ascetic who 'did not do the kind of work that was profitable at the given moment [...], but when the situation was good for the production of nets, he pro-

[37] 'The garments of the priests, wherein they celebrate, shall be white and washed': *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria. The Arabic and Coptic Versions*, ed. W. Riedel, W. C. Crum, London 1904, no. 28 (Arabic version). Basic information on liturgical garments: Maria Parani, 'Fabrics and clothing', [in:] Elizabeth Jeffreys, J. Haldon, R. Cormack (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, Oxford 2008, p. 413.

[38] Ewa Wipszycka, *L'industrie textile dans l'Égypte romaine*, Wrocław 1964, pp. 17–21. See also *O. Crum VC* 62 – a monk asks someone from the valley: bring flax, light and fully wrought, for the wrappings.

[39] Flax stems were tied into bundles after pulling them out of the ground and before retting; flax fibres were probably also tied into bundles after dressing and before spinning. If the total of two solidi refers to flax, the second option is possible.

duced tow, and when there was a demand for yarn, he produced (cables of flax?), so that his mind should not get upset while he was working.'[40]

Monks would obtain raw material based on agreements with peasants who would grow flax in exchange for cash loans received before sowing.[41] It is somewhat surprising to learn from the apophthegm of Arsenius 26 (64) that brothers from Alexandria travelled to the Thebaid in order to obtain flax. There are no grounds upon which to doubt the reliability of this piece of information, as it is not part of the literary layer of the text and it does not serve to glorify Arsenius, being an element of the background reality. The Thebaid is a long way from Alexandria (and from its environs), but one might ask what it was to the authors of the *Alphabetikon*. Localities we would place in Middle Egypt according to the administrative division of the period the authors from outside Egypt often tended to assign to the Thebaid. The journey south to obtain flax can be explained by lower prices in that region; the monks would have also probably taken the opportunity to visit famous ascetics on the way. (In the quoted apophthegm we see the brothers from Alexandria seeking audience with Arsenius, who lived in Sketis. The latter refused to speak to them because their visit was merely a stop on their way, not the sole purpose of their journey. When selecting the purpose of travel the author of the apophthegm chose the purchase of flax, which he thought to be a plausible reason).

If we were to believe the texts from the Theban region, we would place the copying of manuscripts right after weaving on the list of monastic crafts.[42] However, we do not know if copyist-monks were equally numerous in other places.

[40] F. Nau, 'Histoire des solitaires égyptiens', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 12 (1907), nos. 58 and 59, p. 180.

[41] *P. Mon. Epiph.* 85: for two solidi two arurae will be sown and the peasants will perform all the necessary tasks for flax cultivation. These are significant figures, indicating a large-scale production. We do not know who dealt with the flax after it was uprooted. It may have been somebody else. A similar text is *P. Köln* III 151 (AD 423) from the Kynopolites.

[42] A. Boud'hors, 'Copie et circulation des livres dans la région thébaine (VII^{e}–VIII^{e} siècles)', [in:] *'Et maintenant ce ne sont plus que des villages...'. Thèbes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine*, Brussels 2008, pp. 149–161.

In the light of both literary and documentary texts there is no doubt that many monks performed several crafts at a time. The most interesting information comes from the archive of a monk named Frange, who lived in the late seventh – early eighth century in the Theban tomb no. TT 29. Besides simple basketry, his occupations included weaving and professional copying of manuscripts – very different specialties no one would expect to see combined. Texts concerning Frange are important, as they corroborate literary accounts about two saints from Hermonthis found in an Upper Egyptian version of an Arabic synaxarium. The first is a biography of Anba Youna, who was born in Hermonthis and brought to the desert at the age of three. His master was a monk who knew many crafts. When he saw that the boy was getting sleepy, he changed the type of work (14 *kihak*). The second one is about Pesynthios, the future bishop of Hermonthis. When he was eleven he began learning the art of copying and binding manuscripts; he was also a mason and a carpenter (20 *kihak*).[43] Finally, a careful study of finds from hermitages may supply information on various crafts performed by the brothers, as it is the case of the inhabitant(s) of the Theban hermitage TT 1152, who weaved and produced leather objects (oral communication of Tomasz Górecki). The latter craft is absent from monastic texts, which I find puzzling.[44]

Being skilled at two (or more) specialties had an obvious economic purpose. It was a way for monks to gain additional clients, which was probably not easy in desert hermitages located at a distance from the Nile. Perhaps such difficulties can explain the combination of manuscript copying with rope plaiting in Frange's case. Even so, one is puzzled by such a strategy, as it seems that basketry work would have led to deformation of fingers over the years and the profit from ropes must have been lower than from copying manuscripts.

[43] Passages from the biography of Anba Youna were translated by J. Doresse, 'Monastères coptes aux environs d'Armant en Thébaïde', *Analecta Bollandiana* 64 (1949), pp. 335–336 and 340.

[44] However, there are mentions of cobbler (or tanner?) monks in 'laundry list' type inscriptions: *P. Sarga* 29, 80; J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara*, III, Cairo 1909, pp. 53–54 and 111.

Upon entering a monastery a monk had to realise that he would not be able to limit his occupation to a vocation he had mastered. It was not because it was undesirable to pursue activities hitherto performed as laymen and to take pride in a job well done, but for purely pragmatic reasons (such as demand for services). Forcing monks to perform labours regarded as inferior, as they were more strenuous and did not require skills, often led to protests. We learn about this from a very interesting text of Pachomian provenance, the *Apocalypse of Čarour*. It mentions a rebellion of heads of houses of craftsmen (the text talks mostly about shoemakers), who refused to participate in the harvest.[45] There were also protests among the monks of Shenoute.[46]

In monasteries, especially the ones engaged in wine production, there may have been pottery workshops catering to internal needs.[47] Archaeological remains discovered in Saqqara at the monastery of Apa Jeremia are sound testimony of such activity.[48] Interesting data on the organisation of pottery production is supplied by a Coptic text on an ostracon found in the temple in Akoris, in rooms that housed a pottery workshop.[49] The

[45] The text in *Œuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples*, ed. L.Th. Lefort (*CSCO*), 1956, Coptic text p. 103, transl. pp. 105–106.

[46] Letter 11, canon 6, *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita et Opera*, IV, ed. J. Leipoldt (*CSCO*), p. 77; J. Leipoldt, *Schenute von Atripe und die Entstehung des national-ägyptischen Christentums*, Leipzig 1903, p. 111.

[47] Pascale Ballet, 'L'approvisionnement des monastères. Production et réception de la céramique', [in:] Marianne Eaton-Krauss, Cäcilia Fluck, and Gertrud J. M. van Loon (ed.), *Arts Historical and Archaeological Studies for Gawdat Gabra*, Wiesbaden 2011, pp. 27–33. In this useful article containing a general description of the process of pottery production and a list of places in which its relics are extant, one conviction of the author seems to me quite erroneous: she treats Abu Mina as a monastic site, which this huge pilgrimage centre never was.

[48] H. Ghaly, 'Pottery Workshops of Saint-Jeremia (Saqqara)', *Cahiers de la céramique égyptienne* 3 (1992), pp. 161–171. A list of centres throughout Egypt: Fatma Mahmoud, 'Organisation des ateliers de potiers en Égypte du Bas-Empire à la conquête arabe. Les productions céramiques égyptiennes', [in:] *Actes du VIII^e Congrès Copte*, Paris 2006, pp. 267–278; see also S. Gallimore, 'Amphora production in the Roman world. A view from the papyri', *BASP* 47 (2010), pp. 155–184.

[49] A new edition of an ostracon from Akoris with a very broad commentary on wine amphora production is found in the article by F. Morelli and G. Schmelz, 'Gli ostraca

ostracon is entitled: 'In the name of God and Archangel Michael, this is a list of *koufa* from the pottery workshop'. I suspect that the unusual reference to Archangel Michael at the beginning of the list of produced vessels is proof that the workshop belonged to a monastic community whose patron was Michael and which was installed, as it was often the case with monasteries, inside the temple.

The firings of the kilns found at the monastery of Apa Jeremia may have produced around 5,000 amphorae per day. There are as yet no traces of pottery kilns in Bawit, although large-scale wine production in this monastery must have entailed heavy use of amphorae. Perhaps excavations in the sector in which a geophysical survey indicated the presence of various kilns will supply the expected data.

The registers of crafts performed in the congregation of Shenoute mention potters;[50] the internal needs of monasteries belonging to this community were large enough to launch such production. I admit that I am surprised by the lack of pottery kilns in Naqlun, a centre large enough to produce containers on site and located near a canal and fields, from which fuel could be obtained. Are we to suppose that the monastery of Naqlun did not have its own vineyards? In turn, the total dependence of Kellia on the production of distant centres is understandable – the lack of fuel at hand and the type of soil rendered the production of pottery impossible. Finally, we have an isolated mention of a pottery workshop in the monastery of abba Souros at Aphrodito (*P. Cairo Masp.* I 67110 from AD 565) – a community listed as an affluent landowner in the aforementioned cadastre of this village.[51] The workshop belonged to Souros' family and after his death a third part remained in the hands of his kin, while two thirds were handed over to the monastery he had founded. The workshop consisted of one pottery kiln, a cistern and three vaulted rooms used for storage of drying amphorae and fired vessels, as well as a furnace for melting the pitch used to cover the interiors of wine jars. The annual

di Akoris 19 e 20 e la produzione di *koufa* nell'area del Tempio Ovest', *ZPE* 139 (2002), pp. 127–137.

[50] *Letters and Sermons of Besa*, ed. K. H. KUHN (*CSCO*), Leuven 1956, p. 33.

[51] GASCOU, 'Le cadastre d'Aphroditô' (cit. n. 18), collected data on the monastery, p. 137.

rent for a third part of the workshop (which probably means the possibility to manufacture vessels for a third part of the year) was 2,400 *koufa*. A comparison with data in *P. Lond. Copt.* 1 695, quoted above, indicates that the workshop was small.

Some monasteries produced not only amphorae, but also pottery for daily use: tableware (plates, bowls), kitchenware, jugs with painted decoration, cups, 'pigeon pots', and water jars: this is the case of Deir el-Dik (the lower monastery, not the laura in the *gebel*), Deir el-Majma (Deir Mari Girgis) a small monastery in the Theban region, and the monastery of St Jeremias at Saqqara, whose series of jugs with painted decoration may have found buyers in the region.[52]

Large monasteries, especially ones directly involved in land cultivation and in need of iron work tools, should have been interested in setting up a forge, but testimonies are hard to find. Archaeological evidence is lacking (are there any remains of Byzantine forges in Egypt?). The appearance of blacksmiths on the list of craftsmen working in the Pachomian monastery described by Palladius (*Historia Lausiaca* 32, 9; 12) and in Shenoute's congregation (see the text of Besa quoted above) does not guarantee that a forge was indeed located on the premises; the lists are very suspicious and they appear to be a collection of crafts mentioned *exempli gratia*.[53] We find a mention of a blacksmith-monk in Bawit.[54] However, the monk may have been called a blacksmith if that was his vocation in 'the world', in order to distinguish him from other brothers bearing the same name.

Of great significance and of great interest from the economic viewpoint was the production of bread in monasteries. Bread was a staple commodity for the brothers, therefore we tend to assume *a priori* that it was produced in every community. Daily bread had the form of small, round loaves made from thick dough, *ca.* 12 cm in diameter. Its standard weight ranged from five to six ounces (*ca.* 150 g). It is still made in this

[52] See Ballet, 'L'approvisionnement des monastères' (cit. n. 47), pp. 29–30.

[53] I have written about this in detail in 'Les activités de production et la structure sociale des communautés monastiques', [in:] *La vie quotidienne des moines* (in print).

[54] J. Maspero, E. Drioton, *Fouilles de Baouît*, Cairo 1932–43, no. 428.

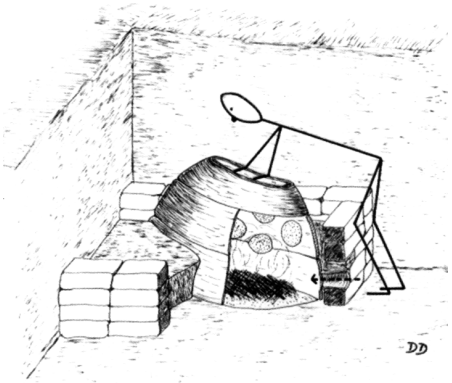
form in some monasteries.[55] To be sure, several kinds of bread existed; we know their Coptic names, but it is impossible to determine their specific traits. For instance, in Theban texts there is mention of *čače* (Boud'hors: sorte de pain, galettes), small in size, always brought in baskets, which most probably constituted a measure for it.[56]

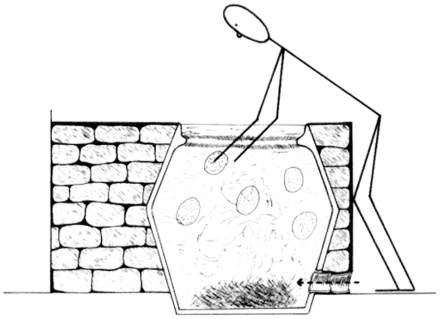
Fortunately, we are able to determine the quantities of bread consumed daily by one monk, as two authors from the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries provide us with amounts considered to be the reasonable norm: John Cassian (*Conlationes* 2, 19; 12, 15) – two loaves weighing one pound, or *ca.* 327 g, and Palladius (*Historia Lausiaca* 22, 6) – two or three six-ounce loaves. According to Palladius, Antony ate one loaf a day. It is safe to assume that monks who were not heroes of hagiographic stories ate larger quantities of bread. When Macarius the Egyptian cured a boy possessed by a demon, who pushed his victim to gluttony, he set his daily norm to three pounds (*ca.* 981 g) (*Historia Lausiaca* 17, 13). With two loaves a day one monk would have needed *ca.* 10 kg of bread per month and *ca.* 120 kg per year.

Even in small communities the need for bread was considerable and we can imagine how much was consumed by large coenobia of several hundred brothers. The Pachomian central monastery in Pbau, which was said to number 600 monks in the 360s (according to a very trustworthy source, namely *Epistula Ammonis* 20), needed at least 46.2 kg daily, and 16,863 kg annually. The Pachomians who lived in the cultivated area ('in Egypt' as our sources call it) could have (theoretically) bought extra bread from professional bakers, but given the scale of needs this solution would have been too expensive. Desert monasteries, especially the remotely located ones, had no such possibilities.

[55] L. Regnault, *La vie quotidienne des Pères du Désert en Égypte au IV^e siècle*, Paris 1990, pp. 79–82.

[56] On *čače*, see L. Th. Lefort in the commentary to Horsiese, *Règles de la boulangerie* (*Œuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples* [*CSCO*], 1956, text p. 93, transl. pp. 92–93). The Pachomians placed a basket of *čače* in the refectory and the brothers reached into it after a meal, it was therefore a kind of dessert. In Strabo the term κάκεις (or κακεῖς) means a kind of Egyptian bread (Lefort: a type of *crêpes*?). In the *Apocalypse of Čarour*, depriving the rebellious monks of *čače* is treated as a punishment: 'il n'y aura pas de *čače* dans la corbeille' (text p. 104, transl. p. 106).





Figs. 6–7. Bread oven (drawings by D. E. Depraetere)

Excavations have supplied examples of bread ovens in hermitages. Their list and a technological commentary to the construction and baking technique is found in a study by D. D. E. Depraetere, to which I refer the reader and from which allow myself to borrow the following illustrations.[57]

A good description of ovens found in hermitages of Kellia is provided by Françoise Bonnet, whom I quote:

> Les fours à pain sont du type 'tandur'; leur forme est celle d'un cylindre à peu près aussi haut que large, à paroi légèrement convexe, d'environs 60 à 80 cm de diamètre intérieur (les grands fours à pain font plus d'un mètre de diamètre). Les fours sont souvent en céramique, d'une argile à forte teneur en dégraissant de paille et cuite à basse température; s'il existe plusieurs formes de fours en céramique, tous comportent un relief imprimé au doigt sur la paroi interne permettant l'accrochage des galettes de pain. Parfois, le four est constitué de briques cuites, dans le cas notam-

[57] S. Yeivin, 'Miscellanea Archaeologica', *Annales du Service des Antiquités de l'Égypte* 34 (1934), pp. 114–121; D. D. E. Depraetere, 'A comparative study on the construction and the use of the domestic bread oven in Egypt during the Graeco-Roman and Late Antique/Early Byzantine Period', *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Abteilung Kairo* 58 (2002), pp. 119–156.

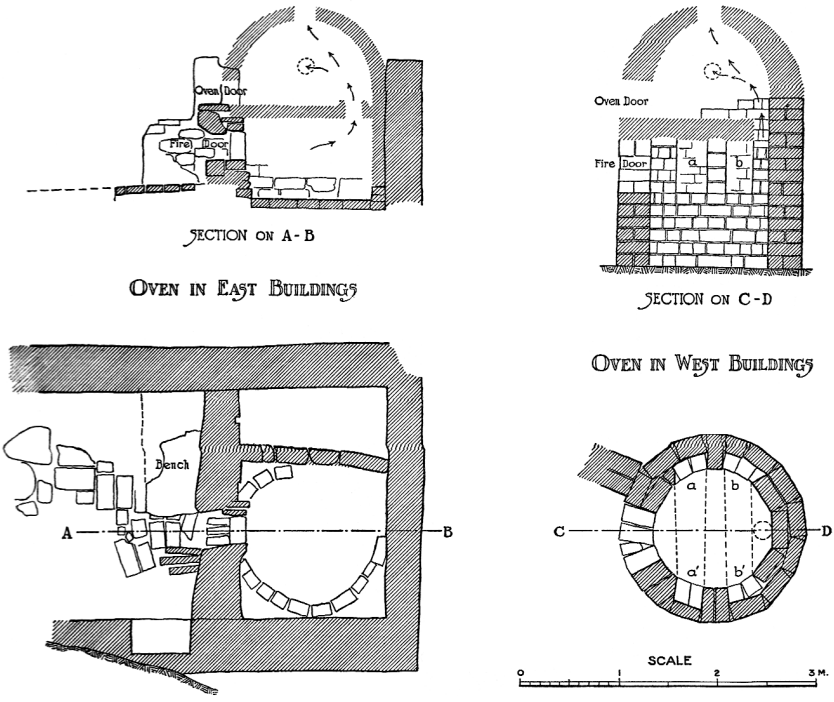


Fig. 8. Construction of ovens as reconstructed
by H. E. Winlock, *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, p. 54, fig. 13

ment des grands fours, ou alors de briques crues et revêtu à l'intérieur de tessons de céramique pour l'accrochages des galettes de pain. Les fours sont toujours équipés d'un conduit de tirage situé à leur base, généralement à une dizaine de centimètres au-dessus du sol de la cuisine, conduit formé par des cols d'amphore en enfilade. Quelques fours de grandes dimensions sont partiellement entérrés; le conduit de tirage est alors placé obliquement et monte en direction du sol. Le four possède parfois un couvercle en céramique, ce qui semble être cependant plus fréquent au V^e^ qu'aux VII^e^ et VIII^e^ siècles.

Voici brièvement résumée l'utilisation de ces fours: on les chauffe à l'aide de braises jetées à l'intérieur, puis on applique les galettes de pain, des deux côtés successivement, sur les parois brûlantes jusqu'à ce qu'elles se

détachent sans difficulté, ce qui indique la fin de la cuisson. Ces manipulations se font à l'aide de gants spéciaux et de tiges de fer.[58]

A more sophisticated type of oven, built at the end of the sixth or in the early seventh century, was discovered in the laura of Epiphanius.[59]

The space in which the fire burned was separated from the one in which the bread loaves were placed. In addition, it was much bigger than that of the ovens from hermitages in Kellia or Esna: its diameter was 117 cm; only the foundation is extant, so the height is unknown (Winlock hypothetically suggested 250 cm, but this is absolutely impossible, judging from what we know about Kellia). Both of these large ovens were located in rooms of ordinary hermitages, which is certainly a surprise, as one would expect them to constitute the furnishings of a bakery producing bread for a large circle of buyers. It is easier to explain the appearance of a big oven with the base diameter equal to 140 cm in the large medieval monastery of Anba Hadra.[60] Other ovens in this monastery were of average size. The increase of production was achieved by multiplying ovens that operated simultaneously rather than by constructing larger ones.

In semi-anchoretic lauras bread was usually baked at the economic centre rather than at individual hermitages. Baking ovens are absent from most hermitages at Naqlun. An exception is Hermitage 44, located farther away from the centre and significantly earlier than others; it must have been built prior to the existence of the laura. However, in the laura near Esna half the hermitages had bread ovens. They probably met the demands of brothers inhabiting the hermitages that lacked them.[61] To judge by the finds in Bawit, the site of a large monastery, besides the common bakery the monks also had private ovens.[62] It is hardly surprising,

[58] F. Bonnet, 'Aspects de l'organisation alimentaire aux Kellia', [in:] *Le site monastique copte des Kellia*, Geneva 1986, pp. 58–59.

[59] *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes*, I, pp. 53–54.

[60] C. C. Walters, *Monastic Archaeology in Egypt*, Warminster 1974, p. 208.

[61] S. Sauneron, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désért d'Esna*, IV, Cairo 1972, pp. 34–35.

[62] A. Delattre, *Papyrus coptes et grecs du monastère d'apa Apollô de Baouît*, Brussels 2005, p. 85, on finds of private ovens in Bawit.

given that they were often in possession of grain obtained from their own plots of land or exchanged for products of their craft.

Monasteries must have had not only ovens, but also grain mills, as in Antiquity the object of sale was grain, not flour.[63] In larger monasteries grain was most probably ground using rotary mills powered by animals, usually donkeys, since otherwise the supply of the necessary amount of flour would have required an immense amount of work. Unfortunately, besides the medieval monastery of Anba Hadra, no remains of quern-stones large or small have been discovered.[64] As a matter of fact, this is not surprising – quern-stones were too valuable to abandon and they were passed down to kin in wills or sold.[65] They constituted pieces of equipment that were precious enough to attract people willing to transport them to their own houses and courtyards after the hermitages were abandoned.

The presence of bakeries in almost all the communities regardless of their size did not mean that they operated on a systematic basis and that monks ate fresh or relatively fresh bread. At the White Monastery bread was baked for Annunciation and Pentecost, and baking took place approximately at the same time in the Theban region.[66] We know well that ovens were operated very rarely and dried bread loaves required

[63] On the grinding of grain, see L. A. Moritz, *Grain Mills and Flour in Classical Antiquity*, Oxford 1958, which is still a fundamental work despite the passage of time. Worthy of recommendation are also the remarks of J. Rea in his commentary to *P. Oxy.* li 3639 [412]. The text concerns the lease of an *elaiourgeion*, but the oil mill did not differ significantly from the grain mill. Rea treats very broadly on the subject.

[64] Walters, *Monastic Archaeology* (cit. n. 60), p. 209.

[65] In *P. CLT* 4 the abbot of a monastery near Jeme at the end of the seventh century buys quern-stones that will be installed in the bakery of the monastery.

[66] *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, I, p. 162. I take this opportunity to correct a commonly accepted interpretation of *P. KRU* 93, 33–34, one of the deeds of donation of children to the monastery of Phoibammon at Deir el-Bahari. It is said in the text that among the future tasks of the slave labourers is the *dioikesis* of bread for visitors passing through. This *dioikesis* could not have been the baking of bread, a complex task performed infrequently. I do not believe that bread was baked separately for non-monks, from *P. KRU* 93 we can only infer that it was stored separately. The servants may have been responsible for its division, preparation for consumption, maybe placing it in the open air.

soaking prior to consumption.[67] They also had to be regularly placed in the sun so that they do not become mouldy.[68]

In a large monastery the baking of bread was a very time-consuming process that required the mobilisation of a large number of brothers to grind the wheat and knead the dough, since bread was made in large quantities. Abundant information on this is found in the Pachomian dossier. In the beginning of its existence the monastery in Pbau (the one that was later to become the hub of the congregation) did not have its own bakery, so its annual reserves were baked in Tabennesi, at a distance of more or less 12 km.[69] Even if we accept the lowest estimates stating that the two monasteries housed several hundred (not several thousand) brothers, we must realise that they baked from 1.5 to 2 tonnes of bread (or half of that amount if the baking took place twice a year) – and in a short time. Why they did so is difficult for me to explain. By storing dry bread the monks did as the Egyptian peasants did, but the scale of problems such behaviour brought about was incomparably greater – what was economically rational for a peasant family of several individuals (the use of fuel necessary for heating up the oven) no longer made sense for a community of several hundred people. Let us note that there is no mention whatsoever of this being motivated by ascetic practice (although it is no

[67] Let me quote one of the numerous testimonies of this custom, B° 81. According to this passage, Pachomius decided to set out with Theodore to the monastery in Thmoušons at the seventh hour, so before the meal. 'Another day, at the seventh hour of the day, when the heat was very great out of doors, our father Pachomius called Theodore and said to him, "Let us go and eat a little bread, for we are going to proceed quickly to the monastery of Thmoušons for the sake of a brother catechumen, who is at death's door". Theodore said, "As you wish". They went at once to the refectory. At that moment there was no one in the refectory but the two of them alone. When they had placed their loaves in water, he said to Theodore, "Let us pray while we wait for the loaves to soften"' (transl. Veilleux p. 104).

[68] This is mentioned in the apophthegm Ammoe 5 (134). The old man purportedly laid out for drying 50 artabae of bread (more or less 1,500 kg), a completely fantastical amount (it had to be so to show the readers/listeners the magnitude of the virtue of Ammoe, who abandoned such a treasure, having realised that something in the vicinity could be harmful to his soul).

[69] B° 77.

coincidence that in miraculous tales monks who have food brought to them by angels receive fresh bread).

We realise this when we read the instructions of Horsiese for a bakery – a very interesting text.[70]

The baking of bread, especially in large quantities, was not an easy task, as it demanded skills acquired through apprenticeship and work experience. We know that, in the absence of specialists in their midst, monks hired bakers from 'the world'.[71] We learn about this from Theban texts (*O. Crum ST* 282; *O. Crum* 327). It is puzzling that monks from Theban hermitages clearly wished to bake for themselves – one would expect that they lacked water and fuel and had to fetch both from the cultivated area. However, we no not have sufficient knowledge of the conditions in the region to conclude that the monks' behaviour was irrational from the economic point of view.

An oven found in a monastery could have served people from 'the world'. This is indicated by several texts that deserve our attention. Let us start with *P. Oxy.* XVI 1890 from AD 508, a lease of a bakery and mill (*μυλοκριβανεῖον* or *μυλοκλιβανεῖον*). The installations stood in a small monastery, located in the desert to the west of Oxyrhynchos and named after Kopreus, its founder. The fundamental problem is that the owner of the *μυλοκλιβανεῖον* is not the monastic community, but Serena – a wealthy member of the urban elite. The lessees are two specialists (*κλιβανεῖς καὶ μυλώναρχοι*) who acquire the right to use for a third part of a year the workshop, which contains the following:

[70] *Œuvres de S. Pachôme et de ses disciples*, ed. L. Th. LEFORT (*CSCO*), Leuven 1956, text pp. 92–98, transl. pp. 92–98.

[71] Documents collected by CRUM, *The Monastery of Epiphanius*, pp. 162–163; e.g. *P. Mon. Epiph.* 296: 'From – – – to Isaac. Before (coming to) the matter of our humility, we greet thy revered father[ship] in [all] the fullness of our soul. Be so kind and have us in remembrance [in] the raising of thy holy hands. Hereafter: be so kind, if the thing be easy to thee, if [thou] find a man about to go north unto the dwelling of Apa John of Pshouêb, do thou be kind and send unto him (John) in thy name, that he may send it to Keft and seek a baker well skilled to bake and skilful to make butter (leaven?) and may send him south unto us by the 2nd day of – – –, that he may bake us our bread and we give him his wage. Be so kind, neglect not to send him. Give it unto the holy father, Apa Isaac; from this humblest one [– – –]'.

ἐν ᾧ ἐστιν κλίβανοι τρεῖς καὶ μυλῶνες δύο καὶ λίθος σιτοκοπικὸς σὺν θυείῃ καὶ λίθος ἀλετικὸς σὺν θυείῃ καὶ [τ]ὰ ἄλλα πάντα χωρή[μ]ατα καὶ χρηστήρι[α] ἤτοι δικαιώματα τὰ ἀνήκοντα τῷ αὐτῷ κλιβανίῳ.

Three baking ovens, two mills, and a stone for crushing corn with a mortar and a containing stone with a mortar, and all the other receptacles and fixtures or belongings appertaining to the said bakery.

They are to pay Serena three solidi and one 'doorkeeper's loaf' and, in addition, three chickens and thirty eggs for festivities, and she has to give them twelve solidi by way of advance. It is probable that the 12 solidi are a loan enabling the lessees to start production. The conditions of this contract show that a well-equipped bakery yielded significant profits. I suspect that the bakery was also leased out when the monk Kopreus was its owner. The presence of such a workshop in a small monastery leads me to think that Kopreus owned it before he became a monk and that the hermitage was 'added on' to the bakery.

Information on the use of monastic ovens to satisfy the needs of people from 'the world' is found in an interesting literary text – the *Life of Moses*, in a letter addressed by Moses to a female monastic community subordinate to him. Moses' monastery was double: it was composed of a male community and a female one. The latter was a small community, numbering ten-odd nuns at most, and it was located in a temple at Abydos. Moses severely condemns allowing outsiders access to the ovens: it is only fitting that bread be baked in them for the brothers.[72] It is not hard to understand why the abbot threatens to anathemise the nuns and the persons baking the bread: harmless in itself, the service opened the door of a female monastery to laymen.

No such limitations were imposed on the production of bread for 'the world' in a male monastery. This is indicated by four documents issued in AD 564 by the Oxyrhynchite administration of the Apion estate. They constitute a small dossier.[73] Three are orders to issue bread and are

[72] E. AMÉLINEAU, 'Fragments de la vie de Moïse', [in:] *Monuments pour servir à l'histoire de l'Égypte chrétienne aux IV^e^, V^e^, VI^e^ et VII^e^ siècles* [= *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire* 4], Paris 1895, p. 698.

[73] *P. Oxy.* LXXII 4926–4928.

addressed to the abbot of the monastery of Musaios: he is to distribute bread, three loaves each, to workers from localities in which land of the Apions was found. The fourth text is a document issued by the abbot himself, listing distributions of bread:

21 May to 100 persons from Meskanounis (*name of estate*) 3 loaves each, total 300;
23 May for 213 persons from Senokomis 3 loaves each, total 639;
from 16 to 24 May 22 persons from Theagenous 3 loaves each, total 66;
27 May 24 persons from Laura, total 72.

To judge by the dates, the people who received the bread rations were participating in the harvest. Mobilised by the administration, they could not be catered to by their own estate bakery (the Apions had more than one of those), and it was necessary to order bread near the place where the work was done; turning to the monastic bakery was a good solution. Its ovens (and quern-stones?) worked at full capacity and the grain was undoubtedly brought in from estate storehouses. If the monastery was capable of baking almost a thousand loaves of bread in two days, it had to have a sufficient number of ovens. The monks most probably baked bread for people from outside the monastery also before and after the harvest; it is unlikely that the monastic community hastily built ovens, even small ones, just to satisfy the needs of the Apion administration.

Although we do not have many texts referring to oil production practised in monasteries, it cannot be doubted that at least the large monastic communities did practise it. We do not know exactly how much oil was consumed by a monk (a real one, as opposed to his ideal model from the apophthegms). Let us note that in letters of the archive of Frange there are frequent requests for oil as an urgently needed commodity.[74] The need for oil was certainly considerable. Monks also needed oil to hand it out to employees on the same basis as wheat and wine.[75] I am aware of only one document testifying to the existence of a monastic

[74] *O. TT 29* 9, 66, 67, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 90, and 165.
[75] F. Morelli, *Olio e retribuzioni nell'Egitto tardo (v–viii d.C.)*, Florence 1996.

elaiourgeion – it belonged to the Oasiton monastery in Aphrodito.[76] A standard equipment, certainly expensive, described in *P. Oxy* LI 3639 included quern-stones, a mortar for crushing, a courtyard, buildings, and a well. It was a set of facilities used in the manufacture of oil from oilseeds, less frequently from olives (olive trees were rather rare in Egypt). Oil was easy to market and oilseed plants were cash crops.

LAY WORKMEN AT MONASTERIES

In various situations monasteries that were unable to satisfy their own needs for products and services hired specialists from 'the world'.[77] We never learn what pushed the heads of monastic communities to these ends: The lack of specialists in their midst? Their illness? The need to intensify production?

In such circumstances the parties drew up contracts, several of which are extant. I will discuss two of them below, as they reflect two different situations. *P. Sarga* 161 (6th–7th century) is a labour contract with a carpenter.[78] The abbot of the monastery agrees to pay him 25 artabae of wheat, 25 *labe* of wine, 4 artabae of barley and 2 jugs of wine, an unknown amount of fodder (figure in lacuna), a mantle, a garment, and a pair of sandals for a year of work. *P. Sarga* 164 must be quoted in full:

> The council of the holy monastery [of Apa] Thomas, through the pious father, Apa E[ ], the agent, writes to Psynhôr, the salt-dealer, (saying),

[76] *P. Flor*. III 285 (AD 522); *P. Lond*. IV 1419, 224, 1255, 1258, 1260 (after AD 716). This is a very interesting case: the monastery had a *diakonia* with an oil press in Aphrodito. The monastery itself was located in an unknown place in the Great Oasis. See G. WAGNER, *Les oasis d'Égypte à l'époque grecque, romaine et byzantine d'après les documents grecs*, Cairo 1987, pp. 370–371. See also *P. Sta. Xyla* 10 (6th cent.): *archon elaiourgos* of the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit; Cäcilia WIETHEGER, *Das Jeremias-Kloster zu Saqqara unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Inschriften*, Altenberge 1992, catalogue no. 383 (p. 439).

[77] At this point I only deal with cases of labour contracts drawn up with artisans; I will deal with fieldworkers and transporters separately.

[78] In *P. Sarga* 164 we encounter a carpenter, a monk from the monastery of St Thomas. However, nothing can be inferred from this fact as far as the needs of the monastery are concerned, as we are unable to date the texts properly.

> [Every] month which he passes bringing 3 . . . . . [of . .] . . daily, we will pay him his wage, [name]ly, each month, 3 *artabae* of [*ma*]*aje* of fodder, a *lakoote* of wine [ ] we will feed him therewith, a *maa*[*je*] . . . . . of pickle, a cloak [ ] a single (shoe) sole. You too, for your part, shall do your work without any neglect, throughout the year; and we, for ours, will pay you your wage. Written month Payni 25th. (Wages) making 1 *solidus*.

In the first case (*P. Sarga* 161) it is without a doubt that the carpenter did not move to the monastery, but remained in his village (where he probably had a family). In the second case we are dealing with a specialist in salting various foodstuffs, who appears in the monastery from time to time and is then fed, receives alimentary rations and one solidus. The inclusion of fodder in the rations in both contracts indicates that each of the specialists owned a donkey (at least, if not a camel).

The best proof that the craftsmen from 'the world' were hired by the monks are the hermitages themselves – their construction is often complicated enough to require the employment of teams of professionals. Even a cursory glance at the publications of fieldwork in Esna, Kellia, Bawit and Naqlun is enough to confirm this.

Sébastien Favre, an archaeologist with years of experience in excavating hermitages in Kellia, comments on this in the following words:

> Si l'on excepte les très modestes cellules du v^{e} siècle trouvées à Qouçoûr Isâ Sud 1, cellules qui peuvent fort bien avoir été bâties par un seul moine, les constructions trouvées aux Kellia ont nécessité souvent l'emploi de techniques complexes et la mise en œuvre de matériaux requérant une bonne expérience. La parfaite maîtrise que traduit le travail effectué et l'importance des moyens qu'il a fallu mettre en œuvre semblent indiquer qu'il a existé en permanence sur le site tout un groupe de population constitué de spécialistes du bâtiment, gens du métier. On peut affirmer qu'il y a eu des architectes ou conducteurs de travaux connaissant les plans types et tous les problèmes liés au bâtiment: statique, résistance des matériaux, techniques d'étanchéisation et de ventilation. Il y a eu des maçons maîtrisant l'emploi de la brique, crue ou cuite, que ce soit dans les murs où la régularité de la pose et la technique d'imbrication trahissent des professionnels, que ce soit dans les arcs dont les briques-claveaux sont posées de façon parfaite, ou dans les voûtes enfin, dont la technique est complexe et délicate, mais tout à fait maîtrisée. Il y a eu enfin des spécia-

> listes des enduits connaissant les dosages et capables des travaux les plus délicats (niches ornées par exemple) avec une grande économie de moyens, des peintres et des décorateurs dont les œuvres se reconnaissent d'un bâtiment à l'autre. Et cette liste n'est pas exhaustive.
>
> Tous ces ouvriers, en possession d'un outillage important (échafaudages, cintres multiples nécessaires à la pose des arcs), ont mis en œuvre des quantités très importantes de matériaux, brique cuite locale, mais aussi des matières importées: pierre, brique cuite, bois, chaux. Ils ont construit, en particulier dans les dernières périodes d'occupation du site, des bâtiments presque luxueux.[79]

Kellia and Bawit have rich painted decoration and in Esna and Naqlun, where it is lacking, we can admire the skilful structure of the hermitages themselves; their builders invariably succeeded in achieving forms that suited the environment.[80] Naturally there existed monks who possessed the proper qualifications, but their presence in all places where cells were built is unlikely.

A different picture is presented by literary texts:

> If there were many who came to him [*referring to a famous ascetic named Ammonios*] wishing to be saved, he called together the whole community, and giving bricks to one, and water to another, completed the new cells in a single day. Those who intended to live in the cells were invited to the church for a feast. And while they were still enjoying themselves, each brother filled his cloak or his basket with loaves or other suitable things from his own cell and brought them to the new ones, so that no one should know which gifts had been brought by which brother. When those who were to live in the cells returned to them in the evening, they were surprised to find everything that they needed (*Historia monachorum in Aegypto* 20, 10–11, transl. N. Russell).

[79] Ph. Bridel (ed.), *Le site monastique copte des Kellia. Sources historiques et exploration archéologique*, Geneva 1986, pp. 113–114.

[80] G. Husson, 'L'habitat monastique en Égypte à la lumière des papyrus grecs, des textes chrétiens et de l'archéologie', [in:] *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron 1927–1975*, II. *Égypte post-pharaonique*, Cairo 1979, pp. 191–207. I know the hermitages at Naqlun from my own experience as a member of the archaeological mission investigating this site, as well as a visitor returning to this site from time to time to see the progress of the works.

The author of this text was in Egypt at the turn of the fourth century and saw the hermitages he describes, but it is not difficult to explain why he ultimately wrote a fictitious account: the scenes he created were to show his readers a milieu full of brotherly love and consideration; they are as miraculous as the passages that mention angels bringing bread to ascetics (bread that is always fresh!).

LAND CULTIVATION

Over the course of the last decade the subject of agrarian relations in Late Antique Egypt has become the object of ambitious research, which profoundly changed the model of large estates accepted by historians. Scholars like Peter Sarris, who primarily rely on papyrus archives of major landowners (suffice it to mention the name of the Apions as a call signal), stressed that the sixth and seventh centuries were characterised by forms of direct exploitation, in which the initiative and labour management were in the hands of a hierarchically organised group of landowners.[81] The land was cultivated on their behalf by field labourers of various status and economic condition, who usually had little or no land of their own and performed certain tasks in exchange for rations of foodstuffs (grain or bread, wine, oil). They usually inhabited housing compounds built by the landowners, referred to in the texts as *epoikia*. The main interest of the managerial staff of the given estate (which was usually an agglomeration of plots with an administrative centre in the *epoikion*) was cash crops, i.e. crops meant for sale, especially vineyards.

To be sure, the lease – especially a long-term, often emphyteutic lease – remained the common form of land exploitation, one of greater importance than direct management.

Land cultivation in monasteries is rarely the object of interest of ambitious authors, as the data on monastic agriculture found in the sources is far from satisfying. Collecting pieces of information scattered through time and space can only confirm what is apparent from a cursory glance

[81] P. Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian*, Cambridge 2006, esp. pp. 29–36.

at the sources – that monasteries owned land. In order to venture beyond such conclusion we would have to have larger assemblages of texts allowing to calculate the area under cultivation, to learn about the types of crops, the revenues they yielded, the status of persons working in the fields, the number of draft animals necessary to perform the works, the state of the irrigation system, etc. Interesting studies on Egyptian agriculture are written mostly based on the analysis of data from so-called papyrus archives, which abound for the sixth and seventh centuries. We have no such archives for monasteries. We can only scrutinise smaller assemblages, setting less ambitious aims for ourselves and looking for possible traces of the direct management model.

It bears repetition that for the fourth century we have no documents attesting monastic ownership of arable land.[82] Were it not for the information derived from the Pachomian dossier (especially from the time when Horsiese headed the congregation), it would be possible to maintain that communities had not yet begun the process of land acquisition and did not engage in cultivation of land belonging to others (i.e. leased land). This did not cause anxiety among historians of monasticism; the silence of fourth-century sources was in agreement with conclusions drawn from the apophthegm Poemen 22 (596):

> A brother came to see Abba Poemen and said to him, 'I sow my field and give away in charity what I reap from it.' The old man said to him, 'That is good,' and he departed with fervour and intensified his charity. Hearing this, Abba Anoub said to Abba Poemen, 'Do you not fear God, that you have spoken like that to a brother?' The old man remained silent. Two days later Abba Poemen saw the brother coming in and in the presence of Abba Anoub said to him, 'What did you ask me the other day? I was not attending.' The brother said, 'I said that I sow my field and give away what I gain in charity.' Abba Poemen said to him, 'I thought you were speaking of your brother who is in the world. If it is you who are doing this, it is not right for a monk.' At these words the brother was saddened and said, 'Forgive me.' Abba Poemen said, 'From the beginning I too knew that it was

[82] There are, however, texts from the fourth century, that refer to the land plots belonging to individual monks, as shown by M. Choat, 'Property ownership and tax payment in fourth-century monasticism', [in:] *Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, pp. 129–158.

> not the work of a monk but I spoke as I did, adapting myself to his ideas and so I gave him courage to increase his charity. Now he has gone away full of grief and yet he will go on as before' (transl. Benedicta Ward).[83]

Such a declaration from the lips of one of the most important Desert Fathers did not provoke even the slightest of doubts among researchers specialised in apophthegms and is widely quoted in modern scholarship.[84] However, it requires a critical commentary. Poemen does not explain the reason for which monks should not cultivate land. A historian who knows monastic texts from Egypt should feel concerned: texts created in the milieu of two congregations, those of Pachomius and Shenoute, treat agricultural work as something of the obvious. Poemen's declaration does not even correspond to the reality of the fourth and fifth centuries, not to mention later periods, when papyri provide evidence allowing certainty in this matter.

As it is often the case with apophthegms, the text attributed to Poemen does not describe reality, but reflects an ascetic ideal, one created in the milieu of monks living in hermitages grouped into lauras. According to this ideal, the monk's work should take place far away from the 'world', in the place of ascetic practice – the monk's cell (or one of the cells at his disposal). Contact with the 'world' was inevitable, but should be limited to a minimum. Systematic work in the fields, i.e. outside of the hermitage, weakened the monk's bond with his proper location and posed threats: not only men worked in the fields but also women; children wandered the roads; it was necessary to discuss various matters (irrigation, for instance) and to argue. However, to remain in a cell was (with the exception of recluses) literally a pious hope, not reality.

[83] For a commentary on this text from a somewhat different perspective, see R. S. Bagnall, 'Monks and property: rhetoric, law, and patronage in *Apophthegmata Patrum* and the papyri', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 42 (2001), pp. 20–24.

[84] One scholar even concluded on the basis of this apophthegm that monks were forbidden to work in the fields. He did not consider who would have been able to introduce such a ban or how monks could have been made to obey it. Interdictions, even the most obvious ones (not to eat meat, to not to charge interest on loans), functioned in the sphere of ideals, not fact.

The work at the harvest, usually undertaken in groups of brothers to lessen their 'dépaysement', exposed the monks to such temptations that afterwards they had to subject themselves to further ascetic exercises aimed at soothing the heart's tremors.[85] However, being limited to about ten days or little more, it may have caused less damage than a frequent presence in the fields. In any case, the grain obtained by monks during harvest was absolutely necessary and without it they would have had difficulty surviving, especially if they did not possess sufficient sources of income outside the monastery. The custom of harvest work, accepted in the first generations of monasticism and anchored in the tradition of the Great Elders of the apophthegms, permanently entered the canon of monastic behaviour. It did not occur to anyone to question its usefulness.

Documentary papyri provide evidence that monks do not conform to the ideal expressed in the apophthegm quoted above: they worked the land with their own hands. I will refer to one of them, which leaves no doubt as to the interpretation. In *P. Mon. Apollo* 26 (8th century) two monks lease from their own monastery a plot of eight arurae requiring manual irrigation, and plan to cultivate it themselves (ⲁⲩⲧⲟⲩⲣⲣⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲟⲟ) rather than sublease it.

Leasing land by monks is mentioned in the so-called Rule of St Antony, which came into being at Naqlun at an unspecified time (5th century? 6th century?): 'Terram vectigalibus subiectam ne semines et societates cum dominis ne contrahas' (cap. 18, transl. Abraham Ecchellensis).[86] The very fact that the text of the Rule advised against it indicates that such a situation was common.

Monks from Pachomian monasteries cultivated land – not only the

[85] John Kolobos 35 (350): 'It was said of the same Abba John that when he returned from the harvest or when he had been with some of the old men, he gave himself to prayer, meditation and psalmody until his thoughts were re-established in their previous order' (transl. Benedicta Ward).

[86] *Patrologia Graeca* 40, 1067. The translation of Abraham Ecchellensis (1646) is at this point better than the translation of M. Breydy published in my book *Études sur le christianisme*, p. 400. In any case, the Arabic term which Abraham Ecchellensis translates as *vectigal* cannot be rendered as 'taxe', as we would have obtained an absurd piece of information: all the land in Egypt would have been subject to tax payment.

plots they owned, but also ones they had leased.[87] It is beyond doubt that this activity was not questionable from the viewpoint of the model of monastic asceticism. Also Shenoute's federation must have supported its numerous monks with profits from land cultivation.

The situation of a researcher on monastic economy varies depending on the period under consideration. At his or her disposal are texts from the sixth/seventh centuries, but also particularly abundant sources from the eighth century. The majority are Coptic documents. The largest assemblage comes from the monastery of Bawit, located in the Hermopolite nome.[88]

The monastery of Bawit owned land in various villages whose (approximate) location is provided by the Coptic document P. Duke inv. 445 (7th–8th century) published by Alain Delattre.[89] The text contains 14 toponyms (eight of which are attested elsewhere) preceded by terms ϥοϊ and ⲡⲛⲁ): 'field' and 'estate'. Unfortunately, the right side of the text is lacking. Delattre proposes to consider the localities as 'domaines producteurs de blé'. Even despite the lack of detailed information on the area, the amount of produce and the sums of taxes paid, the list is impressive. Unfortunately, it cannot be determined if the difference between ϥοϊ and ⲡⲛⲁ lies in the size of the plot belonging to the monastery or if in both cases we are dealing with toponyms. Another interesting text that permits to reconstruct (in part) the structure of estates of Bawit is *P. Brux. Bawit* 32 (7th–8th century), a register of payments of *embole*, a tax in kind, by the *ousia* of Koussai in the 12th indiction. The entries in the calculations consist of *topoi* + toponym or *topos* + personal name followed by the number of artabae of wheat or wheat and barley. Not all figures are preserved; the highest total is 130 artabae, the lowest – six artabae of wheat and six

[87] On this topic, see my research on the economy of the Pachomian community in *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 522–528.

[88] We owe a good study of the administration of landed property of the monastery of Bawit and of Coptic land leases to T. S. Richter: 'The cultivation of monastic estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt. Some evidence from Coptic land leases and related documents', [in:] *Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, pp. 205–215. I also addressed the problem of landed property of Bawit in my book *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 545–565.

[89] A. Delattre, 'Une liste de propriétés foncières du monastère d'Apa Apollô de Baouît', *ZPE* 151 (2005), pp. 163–165.

artabae of barley. It is hard to tell what the term *topos* refers to: land cultivated by a specific farmer (this is possible in the case of the minor payments), or land in a given location that was cultivated by more than one farmer? The text is incomplete, which significantly limits its value. The same two terms, ϥοϊ and ⲡⲛⲁ, appear in invoices *O. Clackson* 6, 7, 8, 19.

The rich documentation of economic life of the monastery of Apa Apollo in Bawit includes a dossier of papyri which are, according to their editor, Sarah Clackson, a part of the records created in the process of managing this community's landed property.[90] To judge by the palaeography, the assemblage belongs to the seventh/eighth century. A common denominator of this dossier is the collection of *aparche*. The texts are written according to the same scheme: first, a presentation of the parties – always monks – then a statement that monk *X* received from or conveyed to monk *Y* a locality *A* (*topos* or toponym) so that he may collect *aparche* for the monastery of Apa Apollo (and three other monasteries in two of the papyri). The remainder would be used to pay the *demosion* (in four texts) or *pakton* (in nine texts). Finally the witnesses, the date, and the formula (not always preserved): the guarantee (*asphaleia*) + proper name, and toponyms.

The *aparche* collection dossier includes also three slightly different documents:

1. *P. Mon. Apollo* 16: a letter of a monk who mentions brothers from the monastery in Bawit, stating that in Pousire (in Egypt there were many localities of that name – one was in the Hermopolite nome and probably that village is meant) the *aparche* was successfully collected for the monastery of Apa Mena Pelekteme.

2. *P. Apollo* 17, a letter written by a representative of the monastery of Apa Apollo to a village headman and requesting that no difficulties are placed in the way of the monk collecting the *aparche*.

[90] *Coptic and Greek Texts Relating to the Hermopolite Monastery of Apa Apollo*, ed. Sarah J. Clackson, Oxford 2000. This dossier (nos. 1–20) was studied by me first in the article 'Le fonctionnement interne des monastères et des laures en Égypte du point de vue économique. À propos d'une publication récente de textes coptes de Bawit', *JJurP* 31 (2001), pp. 169–186, and then in the book *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 556–566. The present discourse partly repeats the previous ones, but my overall interpretation underwent major changes.

3. An abbot's request to the *oikonomos* to deliver a garment (*lebiton*) to a person that is in some way associated with the collection of the *aparche*.[91]

Aparche is a well-attested term that always designates first fruits.[92] However, Clackson decided to translate this word as 'tithe', though there are no grounds for such translation in the dossier from Bawit or in any other texts, as Clackson herself had stressed.[93] She justified her choice as follows:

> The taxes gathered by a monastery from its land-tenants can include *aparche*, here translated as 'tithe' (note that a distinction is made between this term and *remet* literally 'tenth', in two texts mentioned below [these are texts from Jeme, which have nothing to do with the dossier discussed here EW]) This interpretation is the most appropriate for the texts in this edition because they specify that the tithe is then paid out as a tax-rent designated *pactum* or *dêmosion*. It is unlikely that a monastery would have demanded a tithe from its land tenants in addition to a tax-rent payment.
>
> In the texts monks are allocated areas for the tithes collection which probably corresponded to monastic estates, and they undertake to make specific payments to monastery officials. In most cases the payment is designated as *pactum* but the term *dêmosion* is also used. The amount of the tithe to be collected from each assignment therefore appears to have been dictated by how much *pactum* or *dêmosion* needed to be raised, and this sum in turn was probably dependent upon the level of land tax. Both *pactum* and *dêmosion* are left untranslated, as they can mean 'rent' or 'tax' in this situation: the term tax-rent is appropriate because tenant's rent would pay the land taxes owed to the state [here Clackson refers to Gascou – EW].[94] Normally distinctions are to be made between the two terms: *pactum* may be used specifically of rent paid in emphyteutic leases, but *dêmosion* for public domains, as well as designating tax levied by the state.[95]

[91] Monika Hasitzka, 'Brief des Klostervorstehers Theodoros die *Aparche*-Sammlung betreffend', *JJurP* 31 (2001), pp. 55–58.

[92] Ewa Wipszycka, *Les ressources et les activités économiques des églises en Égypte du IV^e^ au VIII^e^ siècle*, Brussels 1972, pp. 70–71; *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 559–561.

[93] In Lampe's *Lexicon of Patristic Greek*, there are no instances of such a meaning of *aparche*.

[94] J. Gascou, 'Les grands domaines, la cité et l'état en Égypte byzantine', [in:] *Travaux et mémoires* (Centre de recherches d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance), 9 (1985), p. 15.

[95] Clackson, introduction to the edition cited in note 90, pp. 18–20.

Although I accept the interpretation of the pair of terms *pactum*/*dêmosion* proposed by Clackson (following Gascou), I insist that the change of meaning of *aparche* is not a good idea.[96] I would rather assume that the monastery tried to force the peasants who tilled monastic land to pay a tithe besides the rent. Such payment was usually treated as proof of special religious zeal rather than an unconditional duty of every Christian.

Worthy of note is the collection procedure, which we are able to reconstruct with considerable probability. The abbot of the monastery or its *oikonomos* divided the villages in which monastic land was located and ceded the collection duty to individual monks, who had to go to these localities and, in exchange, kept a part of the collected money or payments in kind. There were monks who chose to relinquish this profit (or at least part of it) and yielded the areas assigned to them to other, less prosperous brothers. Documents found in *P. Mon. Apollo* 1–23 refer to this act. It is a mystery to me why the monastic administration (the *diakonia*, to use its own terms) established such a procedure of collection of payments from lessees. Why did the *diakonia* not take care of it on its own, distributing the responsibility to individual monks? Why were the corrections in the distribution of collection duties not introduced immediately during division of tasks? If *aparche* is to keep its lexical meaning, why was the first-fruits gathering separate from the tax-rent collection (according to the Clackson – Gascou terminology)? Unfortunately, these questions cannot be answered with the available documents. Perhaps new texts will surface and prove helpful in this respect. In any case, the *aparche* dossier shows once again that the economic life of monasteries had two levels: of the community as a whole and of individual monks.

The largest category of documents from Bawit is constituted by short texts generated in the process of administrating the monastery. We can divide them into two groups:

1. orders to supply which usually begin with the 'our father formula' (*peneiot petšai*) 'it is our father who writes to his son/sons';

[96] I am not convinced by the interpretation of T. S. Richter, who suggested to see in *aparche* a ceremonial term justified by the sanctity of the monastery of Apa Apollo. We have not the slightest parallels for such lexical procedures. Richter comments on 'the riddle of the *aparche* collection' in 'The cultivation of monastic states' (cit. n. 88), p. 211.

2. invoices ('lettres de transport') – documents which accompany shipments of grain and wine and begin with the Coptic formula *šine nsa* (Clackson 'enquire after', Boud'hors 'faire rentrer').[97]

The former are written almost exclusively on scraps of papyrus and kept for reference; the latter are ostraca discarded after the load was received. Both categories allow to reconstruct the workings of a decision-making centre (*dikaion* or *diakonia*[98]) of a large monastery and its storeroom (or rather storerooms, the circulation of various goods was significant), but they add little to our knowledge on monasteries due to the brevity of the texts, which do not explain why a given product is to be issued from the storage, or why the monastery received the foodstuffs. Data obtained from these short texts cannot be added up, as we do not know what fraction of 'daily' documentation the texts at our disposal constituted. What can be ascertained on their basis is the centralisation of economic activities subordinated to the 'father' of the monastery or his *oikonomos*, the existence of separate groups of monks who dealt with tax collection, supervised the production of carpets, 'place of weaving', piggery, etc. Nothing more. We cannot even specify the division of labour between the abbot and the *oikonomos* (assuming that it existed in permanent form and was not an effect of a specific, variable situation). Unfortunately we do not find out if a monastery like Bawit managed a part of its landed property in a direct fashion.

Monasteries were often owners of vineyards and their storerooms contained large amounts of wine, which was sold or consumed by monks and 'people of the monastery'. Next to grain, wine was the most common commodity transported from different villages to the headquarters, as we learn from invoices from Bawit, Wadi Sarga and Edfu.[99] At first glance all

[97] Sara Clackson, Anne Boud'hors, 'Ostraca de Baouit conservés à l'Institut d'Égyptologie d'Heidelberg', [in:] *Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, pp. 1–22.

[98] On the meaning of both of these terms I wrote in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*, *s.vv.*, and in *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 547–549.

[99] Editions of texts from Bawit: see above, notes 62, 88, 90; *Wadi Sarga. Coptic and Greek Texts*, ed. W. E. Crum, H. I. Bell, Copenhagen 1922; Edfu: *Ostraca grecs et coptes de Tell Edfou*, ed. Seÿna Bacot, Cairo 2009. A very good study on the subject is the article of

these texts seem to be testimony to vineyard ownership. However, the situation is not so simple, for there are numerous sales of wine for future delivery on the part of the monastery.[100] It cannot be determined if they prove that monastic vineyards did not meet the needs of the community, or they are evidence of crediting, which ensured profits for monasteries paying lower prices for goods they could later re-sell without difficulty. Dorota Dzierzbicka, the author of a monograph on the production and import of wine in Egypt, cautioned me against the illusion of treating invoices as proof of direct management of vineyards.[101] The owners of the latter, if they had not signed a contract with the lessees stating that they would receive payment in money, received wine in the form of must several days after the initial phase of grape processing at the winery. Invoices of must prove, however, that further stages of wine production took place in the monasteries, which must have had the proper storage space for maturing wine, as well as specially trained staff, either monks or individuals hired for the purpose.

Calculations based on invoices with dates immediately following the vintage give us 25,665 L of must transported on camels to the monastery of Wadi Sarga from 22 villages, 15 of which can be identified (seven villages from the Hermopolite nome, six from the Herakleopolites, two from the Fayum; Wadi Sarga itself lies over 20 km south of Lykopolis).[102] What strikes is the significant scattering of the vineyards. It is a pity that we do not know anything about the process of acquisition of landed property by this monastery, which as far as we can tell from the archaeological evidence was a medium-sized community. Nothing proves that it played a significant role in monastic Egypt, for instance that it was home to famous monks, which would explain donations made in distant localities. Maybe the monastery did buy vineyards after all?

Seÿna Bacot, 'La circulation du vin dans les monastères d'Égypte à l'époque copte', [in:] N. Grimal, B. Menu (ed.), *Commerce en Égypte ancienne*, Cairo 1998, pp. 241–248.

[100] List of texts: N. Kruit, 'Three Byzantine sales for future delivery', *Tyche* 9 (1994), pp. 67–88; N. Kruit, K. Worp, '*P. Bad.* IV 55: Ein neuer Text', *ZPE* 137 (2001), pp. 215–219.

[101] Dorota Dzierzbicka, *Wine in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, unpub. Ph.D. diss., University of Warsaw 2011.

[102] See the paper by Bacot, 'La circulation du vin' (cit. n. 99), pp. 273–275.

Mentions of gardens and orchards cultivated by monks are rare. They are found mostly in literary sources and only as a background of other, more important occupations of the brothers. We know that they existed in the Pachomian congregation.[103] Monasteries located on the stretch of arable land were able to devote a considerable area to cultivation of vegetables and fruit trees.

Monks staying in the desert also cultivated small plots of land, if only their water resources permitted it (that is, if they had direct access to a water source). The first to do so was St Antony in his hermitage near the Red Sea:

> Antony then, as it were, moved by God, loved the place, for this was the spot which he who had spoken with him by the banks of the river had pointed out. So having first received loaves from his fellow travellers, he abode in the mountain alone, no one else being with him. And recognising it as his own home, he remained in that place for the future. But the Saracens, having seen the earnestness of Antony, purposely used to journey that way, and joyfully brought him loaves, while now and then the palm trees also afforded him a poor and frugal relish. But after this, the brethren learning of the place, like children mindful of their father, took care to send to him. But when Antony saw that the bread was the cause of trouble and hardships to some of them, to spare the monks this, he resolved to ask some of those who came to bring him a spade, an axe, and a little corn. And when these were brought, he went over the land round the mountain, and having found a small plot of suitable ground, tilled it; and having a plentiful supply of water for watering [the source issuing at the foot of the mountain was especially abundant; we can admire it even today, it suffices for cultivation of an olive grove within the monastery walls – EW], he sowed. This doing year by year, he got his bread from thence, rejoicing that thus he would be troublesome to no one, and because he kept himself from being a burden to anybody. But after this, seeing again that people came, he cultivated a few pot-herbs [*lachana*], that he who came to him might have some slight solace after the labour of that hard journey' (chap. 50, 4–7; transl. H. Wace).

[103] Gardens are mentioned several times in the Rule, namely in *Praecepta*: 71, 73, 75, 76, 77. The precepts in these points regulate the matter of what and by whose permission the monks are allowed to eat when they are in a garden, an orchard, or a vineyard. On an especially pious gardener, see *Paralipomena* 29.

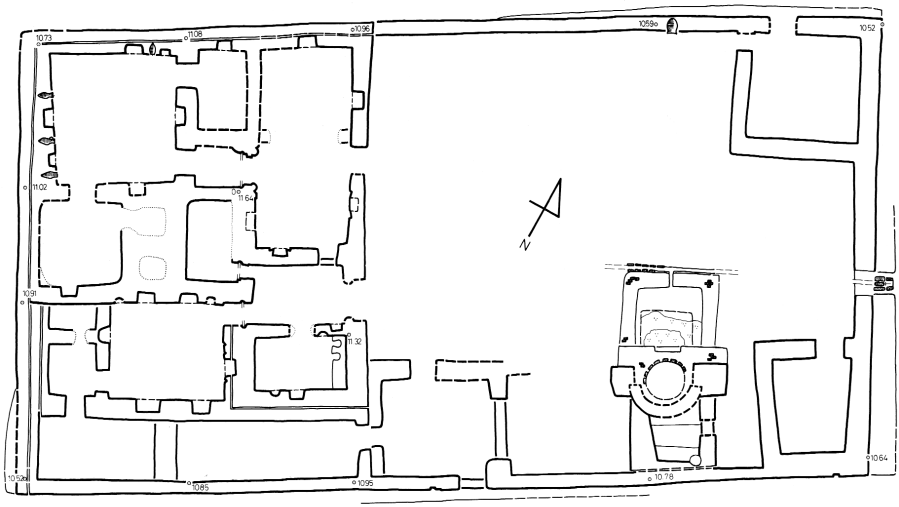


Fig. 9. Plan of a hermitage at Kellia (ri 50) with a round well and a square basin. For a description of this courtyard, see note 105 (*EK 8184*, II. *Survey archéologique des Kellia, Basse-Égypte*, Leuven 1983, pl. 50)

In similar desert conditions at Mons Porphyrites monks were able to cultivate some grain.[104] Excavations in hermitages at Kellia allowed to observe that almost all hermitages had small gardens watered by a well (groundwater was close to the surface in Kellia).[105] Walls surrounding the hermitages protected the gardens from being covered by windblown sand.

[104] *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 202–204.

[105] D. Weidemann, one of the archaeologists who investigated Kellia, offers the following description of 'backyard' irrigation (*EK 8184*, I. *Explorations aux Ǫouçoûr el-Izeila 1981*, Leuven 1983, p. 415): 'Le puits lui-même est revêtu de briques cuites; sa margelle est flanquée de deux gros massifs de briques crues, les piles, qui supportaient le système d'élévation de l'eau ou une poulie [...]. Une demi-coupole, formant cul-de-four, abrite le puits [...]. Les eaux étaient déversées dans des récipients posés sur de petits bassins construits aux abords de la margelle, surplombant un grand bassin quadrangulaire, bétonné au tuileau. Ses parois sont construites en briques cuites liées au mortier de chaux. Cet ouvrage récoltait toutes les eaux des bassins secondaires; elles s'écoulaient par un réseau de petits caniveaux en briques cuites enduits au tuileau irrigant les plantations qui devaient

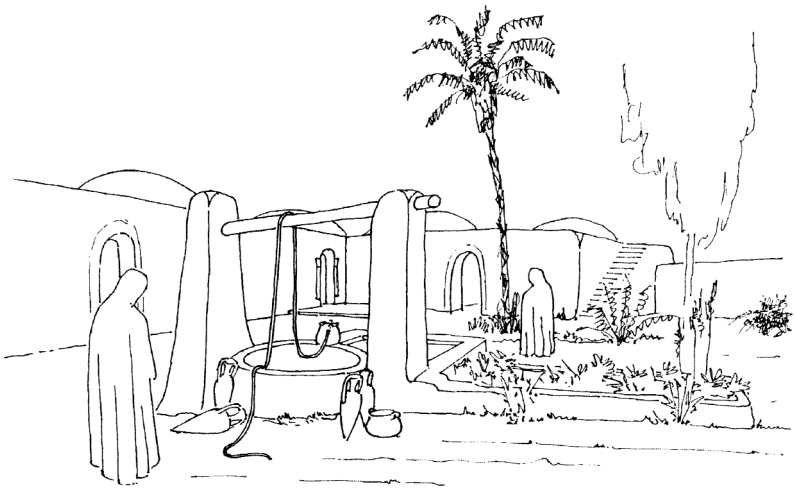


Fig. 10. A small garden in the courtyard of a hermitage in Kellia. This drawing – the only tentative reconstruction I know of – corresponds in the main to what we know about hermitages in Kellia. Some details are wrong. In Late Antiquity monks did not wear this kind of hooded coats.The palm tree is realistic, whereas the tree beside it is pure phantasy. If we compare this drawing with the description cited in note 105, we shall notice that a small dome ought to be placed above the well (a dome serving to protect the well against sand blown in by the wind). The two pillars probably ought to be lower. Other details, however, are correct: notice in particular the steps leading to the flat roof as well as the domes above the cells

The effort that the monks put into the cultivation of these scraps of land makes us treat the crops of their little gardens very seriously. 'Green vegetables' of different types, referred to with the common term *lachana*, are mentioned in various texts as products consumed by the brothers with or instead of bread. In Egypt, dates had an important share in the diet of those who ate little due to poverty or piety.

ombrager la cour'. See also *EK 8184*, III. *Explorations aux Qouçoûr el-Izeila 1981–1990*, Leuven 1999, pp. 108, 172, and 186.

We know very little about animal husbandry in monasteries. This was not a subject for literary sources and, more surprisingly, there is little mention of it in the documents.

Large monasteries that had landed property cultivated under direct management of their economic command centres (*diakonia*), especially ones that engaged in cultures requiring perennial irrigation (above all vineyards), were interested in the husbandry of cattle, used as draft animals. In the text of Pachomius' Rule we find information on cattle herding in monasteries of the congregation at least at the end of the fourth century, if not sooner.[106] Also the eighth-century monastery at Bawit owned cattle in order to have draft animals needed for irrigation.[107]

All monasteries that obtained their drinking water from a well over which a saqiya was installed (and such monasteries were plentiful) had to use draft animals. A remarkably beautiful example of a deep well is found at the White Monastery, at a small distance from the church; I had a chance to see it myself during my visits to this complex. The water needs of the monastery were so great that two saqiyas were installed over the well.

Sheep must have been commonly kept at large and small monasteries. Monks did not eat meat, at least in theory, but among their occupations was weaving (and so they needed wool) and leatherwork. The meat could be sold. Nevertheless, there are few mentions of sheep in monasteries: in Pachomius' Rule (*Praecepta* 108), at the monastery of Apa Apollo at Aphrodito (*SB* XX 14626 [6th century]), and at the Deir el-Balaizah monastery (*P. Bal.* 303B [7th–8th century]).

The Lives of famous monks and the apophthegms do not mention the consumption of cheese by monks, but the Pachomian dossier, which was closer to reality, suggests that the brothers did eat cheese, at least on special occasions. Many attestations of cheese consumption by Theban ascetics are found in the archive of Frange. Naturally, monks did not necessarily produce it from the milk of their own animals – the cheese could have been purchased.

[106] *Praecepta* 108.

[107] A. Delattre, 'Une lettre copte du monastère de Baouît. Réédition de P. Mich. Copt. 14', *BASP* 44 (2007), pp. 87–95.

A piggery is mentioned in Bawit and in Wadi Sarga.[108]

TRANSPORT

All monasteries, regardless of their size, needed transport animals: donkeys and camels, to ensure the supply of water, food, fuel, raw materials for the needs of craftsmanship, for transport of ready products, and finally for contact with 'the world'. The latter lay at a distance from monastic centres in the *gebel*, especially those further out in the desert.[109] Letters of monks often contain information about the transport of various goods:

O. Crum VC 62 (letter to an ecclesiastic): '... and as for the camel, do us this kindness, and send it us, laden with water from the well. We will transfer it forthwith and send it thee. For it is a great labour to move away (?) the tanks'.

P. Sarga 93: 'and provide 3 good camels for wine for us ... When the camels come up (down?) loaded with fodder, send them out to us, that we may load them with wine for coming down (up?). Farewell in the Lord'.

P. Sarga 94: 'be so kind, send us all the camels, that they may clear out these palm-branches'.

Pack animals belonging to monasteries were rented out to work beyond their walls. Appropriate contracts were signed with camel drivers, who shared their profits with the monastery. The most elaborate and

[108] *P. Sarga* 107: 'Apa Enoch it is writes to my brother Cosma, (saying,) set 4 sucking-pigs apart, in a place by themselves, and give them a little barley, so that their bodies may improve somewhat thereby. For it is desired to give them to the pagarch's bride. By all means, therefore, do not leave the matter undone.'

[109] On transport using pack animals, see C. Adams, *Land Transport in Roman Egypt. A Study of Economics and Administration in a Roman Province*, Oxford 2007, chapters: 'Transport animals and wagons' and 'Animal use and maintenance'. The author only cites sources from before the beginning of the fourth century, but the information collected by him is useful for understanding the situation in the Byzantine period.

therefore the most interesting text is a contract published by Crum in *P. Mon. Epiph.* 84 (first half of the 7th century).

> I, Severus, this humblest priest of the *topos* of Apa John in the desert, do write unto Phoebamon, son of Plôs, the camel herd, (saying,) By God's will, I am ready to pay thee the 5th part of the camel's fodder-crop and (I declare) that I will not take it from thee, until thou hast done thy part completely, thou (meanwhile) observing thy agreement that thou hast written me; and that I will not bring accusation against thee, except I bring a trusty witness against thee. And I will pay all the camel's fodder unto thee and its furniture out of my share of the crop. If so be that I send thee on business unto a brother, or unto a worldling and thou be not paid freight, I will suffer thee on thy part to go thy round in the proportion of that round; and I will give thee the blessing of the *topos* at the festivals accordingly. If I shall cast thee forth from (tending) the camel, without thou hast transgressed thy agreement and (without) neglect of the camel, I am ready to pay the fine that shall be imposed upon me.

Another Theban document worthy of note is a text from the first half of the seventh century: monks from the Theban monastery of St Mark (Qurnet Murai) signed a contract with a camel driver, among whose tasks was to 'draw water once a month for Apa Ezechiel and Apa Djor' (who lived in a different monastery, in TT 1152, but that did not bother the contracting parties). The driver had to work without neglecting the camel and was expected to cover the costs of maintaining the animal and its equipment out of his income. What remained would be divided evenly between the monastery and the camel driver.[110]

Monks often drew up contracts with animal owners living in the valley to ensure a steady supply of products they needed to live and work. Let one example suffice: a stylite, an unusual figure in the Egyptian monastic landscape, signed an agreement with a donkey driver somewhere on the outskirts of Antinoe for a systematic supply of water for himself and for monks living at the foot of the column (*P. Turner* 54 [6th century]).

One might presume that such contracts were convenient for the

[110] Chantal Heurtel, 'Le serment d'un chamelier: *O. Gournet Murraï* 242', *BIFAO* 103 (2003), pp. 297–306.

monks because of their low cost. However, purchases of animals also took place,[111] as one can infer, for instance, from a letter of Elias, a monk from one of the hermitages near Medinet Habu (*O. Thebifao* 13 [7th–8th century]).[112] The letter must be baffling to an economic historian, as the transport capacity of a camel goes far beyond the needs of a monk living in a small hermitage. One also inevitably has to ask how he managed to come into possession of the financial means necessary to purchase and sustain the animal.[113] Perhaps Elias owned land in the vicinity and its cultivation rendered it necessary for him to have a camel?

An interesting case is attested by *P. Mich. Copt. Texts* 11 (7th century). The editor paraphrases this document as follows:

> A village to the north of a monastery sent a delegation to request the removal of certain camels. This granted, they returned and counseled immediate removal by the villagers themselves. But the villagers said that, if the camels remained and they were ruined and fled to escape their taxes, the owners would have to remove the camels under less favorable conditions. A representative of the village writes to a representative of the monastery, reviewing the case and requesting action on a given date.

On many archaeological sites we find traces of enclosures for keeping donkeys (for instance at Naqlun near Hermitage 2[114]). At the monastery

[111] For instance: *P. Bal.* 119 [Persian period? or beginning of Arab rule] purchase of a donkey; *P. Sarga* 97 – camels.

[112] A large group of Theban ostraca is written in Elias' hand (see W. E. Crum, *Coptic Ostraca from the Collections of the Egypt Exploration Fund, the Cairo Museum and Others*, London 1902, p. 60), so there is no doubt that he lived in a hermitage – perhaps with someone else, but certainly not in a monastery like Wadi Sarga, see *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 155–157.

[113] On the camel load, see N. Kruit, K. Worp, 'Metrological notes on measures and containers of liquid in Graeco-Roman Egypt', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 45 (1999), pp. 147–148; Adams, *Land Transport* (cit. n. 109), p. 80. Usually the animal is burdened with six artabae of grain, *ca.* 180–200 kg. In ostraca from Bawit the invoices feature three or four sacks.

[114] Hermitage 2 had an outer courtyard where animals from the supply train were kept on occasion: W. Godlewski, 'Excavating the ancient monastery at Naqlun', [in:] G. Gabra (ed.), *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis. Essays from the 2004 International Symposium of the Saint Mark Foundation and the Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society in Honor of Martin Krause*, Cairo – New York, p. 159; Hermitage 85: 'The southernmost part of the complex (chambers 8 and 9) filled a domestic function as a place for stabling ani-

of Wadi Sarga the stables were remarkably large and probably housed a camel herd numbering at least 40 animals.[115] Wine producing monasteries used camels to carry must from vineyards to the central complex,[116] as well as to bring in grain from the fields.[117] Records of such transport (so-called invoices, transport lists, receipts), usually written on ostraca, are too laconic to allow us to determine the status of the camel drivers in each case: were they permanent employees of the monastery? It is highly probable in the case of large monasteries that had many plots scattered in various locations.

BOATS

Monasteries were in possession of barges and boats that sailed on the Nile and on canals. Large communities in possession of many land plots needed them to transport produce to monastic and fiscal storerooms. Barges were indispensable for transporting products of craftsmanship to places in which there was a chance of finding buyers. Baskets, mats, and ropes were even transported to distant cities, since peasants in neighbouring villages manufactured such goods themselves and had no need for monastic products. Barges ensured contact with other monasteries and with administrators of remotely located property. To be sure, the above applies only to large monasteries; monks from hermitages and small lauras, especially those in the *gebel*, a long way from the river and navigable canals, depended on professional carriers for water transport.

We have especially good knowledge of boats used by the Pachomian congregation. Information about them comes from literary sources referring to the first generations, as well as from papyri. The oldest document

mals and dumping rubbish (...)': W. Godlewski, 'Naqlun (Nekloni). The hermitages, cemetery and the keep in the early 6th century', [in:] Sandra Lippert, Maren Schentuleit (ed.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum – Texts and Archaeology. Proceedings of the Third International Fayum Symposium, Freudenstadt, May 29 – June 1, 2007*, Wiesbaden 2008, p. 103.

[115] *P. Sarga*, p. 2.

[116] *P. Sarga* 121–124; 209–381.

[117] *P. Sarga* 205–208; *O. Mich. Copt.* 25–27 (7th–8th century?).

attesting the ownership of boats by the congregation, *SB* XXII 15311, dates from 367/8.[118] It is a text drawn up in a tax office of the Hermopolite nome, registering the supply of grain by individuals and groups (villages). A part of the grain was loaded – and this is of interest to us in this section of the paper, aboard 'a monastery boat at Tabennesi': *ϵἰ̣ς̣ πλ(οῖον) μοναστηρίου Ταβεννησϵ πϵρὶ Τι̣.* (lines 17 and 19). Malcolm Choat thinks, correctly in my opinion, that Anubion is responsible for the ship and that he is one of the 'brothers who are on the boats' appearing in the Bohairic Life of Pachomius.[119] The text does not specify Anubion's role: did he carry out an assignment paid by the fiscus who hired the barge, or did he act as a representative of the monastery obliged to perform services for the state? To determine this is not possible.

The situation was different in the sixth–seventh century, when in a text from Aphrodito in the Antaiopolite nome we find barges belonging to the Pachomian monastery of Metanoia. They transported fiscal grain to Alexandria. Along with the barges the monastery sent supervising monks referred to as *diakonetai*. Excluding one instance of *diakonetai* active in Hermopolis, the others served in Antaiopolis. We are certain that in two years, AD 542 and 543, barges from Metanoia transported to Alexandria 5759 artabae of grain, which Aphrodito owed as *embole*.[120] Our documents do not indicate the character of this activity of the Metanoia. Was it a munus or a remunerated service? Having asked this question, Gascou writes (p. 31): 'l'examen des textes législatifs suggère fortement que sous Justinien, le corps des naviculaires-liturges n'existait plus et que

[118] Edition of the text: K. WORP, '*SB* XIV 11972 fr. A', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 39 (1993), pp. 29–34. For a good commentary to this difficult text, see CHOAT, 'Property ownership and tax payment' (cit. n. 82), pp. 130–134. See also J. GASCOU, '*P. Fouad* 87: Les monastères pachômiens et l'état byzantin', *BIFAO* 76 (1976), pp. 183–184.

[119] *Les vies coptes de saint Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs*, traduction française, Leuven 1943, Vie bohaïrique, § 96, p. 164. On *apotaktikos*, a term coined in the Pachomian milieu to denote a monk, see *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 308–316.

[120] J.-L. FOURNET, J. GASCOU, 'Moines pachômiens et batellerie', [in:] Ch. DÉCOBERT (ed.), *Alexandrie médiévale* 2, pp. 23–44. This excellent study contains a meticulous analysis of information on boats mentioned in the texts of the literary, as well as the documentary dossier of the Pachomians (including the publication of three new papyri from the 6th–7th century).

le convoiement de l'annone à Constantinople était exécuté par des nauclères ou transporteurs professionnels privés passant contrat avec l'administration fiscale et rémunérés par l'impôt du *τίτλος ναύλων*. Il en était probablement de même pour la partie fluviale du trajet jusqu'à Alexandrie. C'est donc très probablement en tant qu'entreprise privée que la Métanoia intervient dans le transport annonaire documenté par nos papyrus.' The boats of Metanoia also sailed to Constantinople, as we learn from the Panegyric on Macarius of Tkow.[121]

To the dossier of papyri attesting the participation of Pachomian monasteries in navigating the Nile River Gascou added texts referring to an Antinoite monastery called Peristera.[122] Gascou was convinced of the broadness of the range of the activities of the Pachomians, which were in his opinion not limited to what was imposed on them by the *munus*:

> Ce qui importe à notre propos, c'est qu'il y eut bien un monastère pachômien dit la Péristera, investi, comme la Métanoia, dans la batellerie et qui assurait à l'occasion, par ses bateaux, une sorte de transport du courrier en Haute Égypte. Une telle activité est d'autre part attestée par un autre texte antinoïte du VI^e^ siècle, où il est question du porte-lettre, *symmachos*, des *diakonetai*, agents typiques du milieu pachômien. [...] Il serait peut-être trop fort, au vu de ces deux seuls textes, de parler de service postal, mais il est clair que les matelots tabennésiotes rendaient courament au siècle ce genre de service, auquel les recommandait plus particulièrement l'obligation de discrétion inscrite dans leur règle (p. 39).

It seems to me that Gascou is exaggerating. His psychological commentary on the Pachomians in the passage cited above seems to me completely mistaken. Its basis is the 86th canon of the *Praecepta*, but it does not authorise such conclusions: 'Si quis ambulaverit in via, vel navigaverit, aut operatus fuerit foris, non loquatur in monasterio quae ibi geri viderit'. Leaders of the monasteries did all they could to limit the monks' contacts with the outside world and to focus their attention on pious matters. This has nothing to do with the discretion of carriers towards the senders and addressees.

[121] *Panegyric on Macarius, Bishop of Tkow*, ed. D. W. Johnson (*CSCO*), 1980, p. 41.

[122] *P.Ant.* II 94 (6th century), 95 (6th century), and *Lef.* 10, inscription from Dukhela with a tombstone of a monk from this monastery. For a detailed interpretation of the texts, see Fournet, Gascou, 'Moines pachômiens et batellerie' (cit. n. 120), pp. 37–39.

The *munus* of grain transport was also imposed on other monasteries, as indicated by *BGU* XIX 2780 (5th century) mentioning the monastery of Ammon in this context. The document comes from Hermopolis.

Finally, the requisitions of boats belonging to monasteries by the Arabs are worth mentioning; the cost of such an operation was covered by taxpayers in a given region.[123]

LAYPERSONS PERMANENTLY RESIDING IN MONASTERIES

In monasteries there was often (or perhaps always?) a group of laypersons residing there permanently. They may have been numerous (according to the *Life of Samuel*, at Naqlun in the first half of the seventh century there were 200 of them living alongside 120 brothers). The status of these individuals varied, as did their contribution to the economic life of the monastery. Many of them were people taken in by the monks due to illness or old age. Most but not all of them were poor. If they had their own means, they signed an agreement with the monastic authorities determining the conditions of their stay, the sums to be handed over to the community and, separately, the money to be distributed among the poor after their death. We know such a case thanks to two texts referring to the Theban monastery of Paulos (*P. CLT* 1–2, AD 698 and AD 703 respectively).[124]

Severos, the abbot of the same monastery[125] active in the first years of the eighth century, signed the following contract:

> [...] Since God put it into your heart to live in this holy place, I lay down this agreement/certificate (*homologia*) not to neglect you in anything. You, for your part, (will) obey me in accordance with/according to God and

[123] Monastery of Apa Apollo in Bawit: *SB* XVI 12266 (2nd half of the 7th century).

[124] On this monastery, see S. TIMM, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, III, Wiesbaden 1985, pp. 1373–1378. Its exact location cannot be determined.

[125] W. C. TILL, *Datierung und Prosopographie der koptischen Urkunden aus Theben*, Vienna 1962, p. 199.

> serve God and this holy place. (I), the most God-loving Severos, confirm this 'homologia'. (I), Athanasios, son of Ieremias, am a witness (*P. Ermitage Copt*. 10, transl. G. Ochała).

What strikes is the lack of precision of the contract. It neither states for what period it will be valid, nor does it establish the responsibilities on the part of the monastery towards the contracting party, besides the promise that he will not be neglected. It does not mention how he will make his living or what his service in the monastery will consist in. The man gives himself to the monastery for as long as the abbot is willing to support him. From the legal point of view the contract makes no sense; it was not drawn up to be used in court in case of a suit, but because both sides felt the need to formalise the situation. The faith in the power of written documents, as long as they met the formal requirements (in this case: the presence of a witness) had a strong tradition in Egypt, one could venture to say, from time immemorial. One need not wait for the period of Arab rule: we find such a situation already at the end of the third century, in *CPR* V 11, which is a contract of a deacon who asserts that he will accurately perform the duties of a deacon! The legal effectiveness of this document if the deacon went against canon rules was null.[126]

P. Ermitage Copt. 10 has much in common with *P. KRU* 104 of AD 771/2, a document by which a man offers himself [this is a case of *autoréduction en esclavage*, a term proposed by Gascou] to the monastery of Phoibammon at Deir el-Bahari: 'And now, God willing, from today on no man is to be owner/lord over my body, save only the holy monastery of the holy Abba Phoibammon the great martyr that lies in the holy mountain of Jeme, and I, aforenamed above, shall become and be servant/slave thereto, performing its commands like a servant/slave bought with money' (line 27).[127] On the practical side, the position of persons submitting themselves to the power of the monastery was identical in both cases,

[126] I dealt with the interpretation of this highly interesting document in the study 'Il vescovo e il suo clero. A proposito di *CPR* V 11', [in:] *Études sur le christianisme*, pp. 190–191.

[127] Transl. Leslie S. B. MacCoull, *The Coptic Legal Documents*, Arizona – Turnhout 2009, pp. 163–165.

even if the term 'slave' does not appear in *P. Ermitage Copt.* 10. It is a pity that the text is not exactly dated, so we do not know if the new tax regulations introduced in AD 705 were already in force and thus if the monastery had to pay the poll-tax for its new servant. The monastery of Abba Phoibammon certainly did.

A group of 26 Coptic documents written in years 734–786 in the monastery of Phoibammon at Deir el-Bahari testifies to the presence of slave servants offered to the monastery by their parents during childhood.[128] The texts explain that the parents' decision was motivated by the children's illness and that the latter were miraculously cured as a result of the intercession of the martyr Phoibammon. Sometimes they were even cured twice – if the parents hesitated to donate the boys (only boys), the illness returned as a form of punishment. Inspiration for the donors was the biblical story of Samuel (1 Samuel 1–2) and the notary drafting the document sometimes referred to this text. The aforementioned *P. KRU* 104 also belongs to this group – the man who gives himself over to slavery mentions his grave illness and the vow he had made. In hagiographic texts we also find mentions of people who, having experienced the grace of holy patrons of famous sanctuaries in various circumstances, decided to serve in them until their death. The oldest attestation is found in *Miracula SS. Cyri et Johannis* – the work of Sophronius, the future patriarch of Jerusalem, written between 610 and 615.[129] Other references to *servitude consentie* (an adequate term used by Gascou) are found in Coptic

[128] Edition *P. KRU* 78–103, transl. W. C. TILL, *Die Koptischen Rechtsurkunden aus Theben*, Vienna 1964, pp. 149–186, English translation in MacCoull's anthology cited in footnote 127. A painstaking analysis of texts, which unfortunately compiles the information in a rather mechanical manner, is offered by Anneliese BIEDENKOPF-ZIEHNER, *Koptische Schenkungsurkunden aus Thebais. Formeln und Topoi der Urkunden, Aussagen der Urkunden, Indices*, Göttingen 2001. Recent studies on the dossier: Arietta PAPACONSTANTINOU, 'Notes sur les actes de donation d'enfants au monastère thébain de Saint-Phoibammon', *JJurP* 32 (2002), pp. 101–105; EADEM, '*Theia oikonomia*. Les actes thébains de donation d'enfants ou la gestion monastique de la pénurie', [in:] *Mélanges Gilbert Dagron*, Paris 2002, pp. 511–526; T. S. RICHTER, 'What's in a story? Cultural narratology and Coptic child donation documents', *JJurP* 35 (2005), pp. 237–264.

[129] J. GASCOU, *Sophrone de Jérusalem, Miracles des saints Cyr et Jean. Traduction commentée*, Paris 2006, p. 150: miracles 11 and 40.

hagiographic works, which are certainly later, but as usual it is difficult to say exactly by how much.[130] In any case, this institution did not come into being as late as in the difficult times of the eighth century.

The donation acts from the monastery of Phoibammon specified the tasks to be performed by the children. The chores were adjusted to their age (it is not mentioned that they would change as the little slaves came of age, but that was obvious). They were to clean the sanctuary, sprinkle water in rooms, take care of water tanks, and above all watch over lamps in the sanctuary (systematically refill them with oil, clean them and change the wicks, in other words – to make sure they were always lit), and carry out any errands for the monastery within its walls and beyond them. The other tasks depended on the decision of the abbot and the *oikonomos*. Having come of age, they could receive permission of the authorities to leave the monastery and work on their own account, but in that case they were required to pay tribute referred to as a *demosion* to the monastery, which was, as Arietta Papaconstantinou explains following Jean Gascou, a *rente-impôt*, a fee that was a tax to the state and at the same time a payment to the owner resulting from his rights.[131] What strikes is that there is no mention of a possibility of donning a habit, although in one of the texts (*KRU* 95), which considers the eventuality of the donated boy's marriage, the notary adds the phrase: 'hopefully this will not happen'; one can see that this perspective was not positively regarded by the contracting parties. Any prospective children would inherit their father's status. Curiously, in hagiographic texts attesting the custom of donating children to the sanctuary becoming a monk is the happy ending. The difference between literary texts and donation acts is significant. Hagiographers portray an ideal and thus embellish reality, but documents generate obligations for the parties and cannot draw on fiction.

[130] The panegyric of Victor Stratelates, [in:] W. Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms*, London 1914; a panegyric of the same saint: O. von Lemm, 'Zu einem Enkomium auf den heiligen Viktor', *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* 48 (1911), pp. 81–86; Life of Matthew the Beggar, ed. E. Amélineau, [in:] *Mémoires publiés par les membres de la Mission archéologique française au Caire*, IV, pp. 720–723; Life of Moses of Abydos, [in:] W. C. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Märtyrerlegenden*, II, Rome 1936, p. 66; 'Second Panégyrique de St. Claude d'Antioche par Constantin évêque d'Assiout', ed. G. Godron, *PO* 35 (1970), pp. 663 and 665.

[131] Papaconstantinou, 'Notes sur les actes' (cit. n. 128), pp. 101–105.

Donation acts, which are undoubtedly among the most interesting texts from the early Arab period, attracted scholarly attention. In commentaries on them the most prominent position is occupied by the issue of the reliability of the motifs appearing in the texts. Artur Steinwenter, a distinguished historian of Coptic ecclesiastical institutions, concluded in his article of 1921 that the stories of the children's illnesses, though they appear stereotypical, must have roughly corresponded to the truth, and I shared this opinion.[132] However, the temptation to search for motives for the donations beyond the *narrationes* present in the documents (history of the illness, religious reasons for giving the child to the monastery) was compelling and it led some researchers to conclude that the real cause was the increasing poverty among peasants in the turbulent times of the eighth century.[133] Arietta Papaconstantinou was close to succumbing to this temptation, although in her opinion the underlying cause of the diffusion of the custom of donating children was not the problems the parents faced, but those experienced by the monastery. In order to explain the function of the *narratio* in these acts, she compared the stories in these texts with hagiographic works. She pointed out that there are very close parallels between the phrases used by (different) notaries in the part referring to the account of the children's illnesses, and passages from hagiographic texts.

> Les narrations contenues dans les actes de donation d'enfants suivent les normes rédactionelles d'un genre littéraire que l'on imagine habituellement bien éloigné de la diplomatique: l'hagiographie. [...] Les ressemblances entre les deux types de sources [hagiographie et textes documentaires] montrent à quel point les papyrus, réputés 'objectifs' peuvent en réalité véhiculer des discours issus de la littérature la plus imaginative. À son tour, ce phénomène incite à s'intérroger sur l'impact que pouvaient avoir sur la population les collections de miracles, souvent considérés par les savants uniquement dans leur fonction littéraire.[134]

[132] A. Steinwenter, 'Kinderschenkungen an koptische Klöster', *Savigny Zeitschrift*, Kan. Abt. 42 (1921), p. 181; E. Wipszycka, *CE*, *s.v.* 'Donations of children'.

[133] H.-J. Thissen, 'Koptische Kinderschenkungen. Zur Hierodulie im christlichen Ägypten', *Enchoria* 14 (1986), pp. 117–128.

[134] Papaconstantinou, '*Theia oikonomia*' (cit. n. 128), p. 517.

> [...] Les textes hagiographiques et les collections de miracles étaient largement connus des fidèles, aphabétisés ou non, puisqu'ils étaient lus à haute voix lors des fêtes des saints. Pour certains chrétiens, il s'agissait sans doute, avec la Bible, et peut-être encore plus qu'elle, des textes les plus familiers. Ils proposaient à leurs auditeurs une grille d'interprétation de leur vie quotidienne, en particulier des affaires d'argent et de santé, qui au vu des documents thébains semble avoir parfaitement fonctionné. Ces actes trahissent en effet de la part de la population une certaine 'autosuggestion', voire même une simple 'suggestion', puisqu'il ne faut pas oublier que les intéressés n'en étaient pas les rédacteurs. Ces derniers étaient des professionnels, parfois des ecclésiastiques, plus souvent des laïques, qui disposaient pour leur travail de modèles préétablis, fortement inspirés, pour ce qui est des narrations concernant des 'guérisons', de la littérature hagiographique, toujours originaire, à cette époque-là, de centres monastiques.[135]

Papaconstantinou did not, therefore, definitely negate the realness of the events reported in the donation acts, but she tried to limit their role in her reasoning. Her study ends with the following statement:

> Un examen attentif permet donc de replacer les contrats de donation d'enfants dans un contexte plus large que celui dans lequel ils ont été initialement inscrits, et de nuancer l'originalité qu'on leur impute en l'expliquant, comme souvent, par une spécificité égyptienne. Leur mise en parallèle avec l'hagiographie permet en outre de formuler plusieurs conclusions: sur les récits contenus dans les contrats, qui relevaient manifestement de modèles savants et cléricaux; sur la nature de ces donations, qui participaient probablement d'une stratégie de pression et d'intimidation mise en œuvre par les monastères pour pallier leur situation économique déclinante; et enfin, sur la part d'initiative spontanée revenant aux donateurs, qu'il ne faut peut-être pas exagérer. Dans l'ensemble, ce dossier illustre, au moyen d'un exemple concret, l'empire de l'Église sur la population chrétienne sous les Omeyyades et les premiers Abbassides. Les communautés chrétiennes étaient ainsi placées sous une double pression, d'une part celle de l'État, de l'autre celle de l'Église et de ses institutions monastiques. On peut se demander si le souhait de se soustraire à l'une comme à l'autre, n'a pas contribué lui aussi à la conversion

[135] Papaconstantinou, '*Theia oikonomia*' (cit. n. 128), p. 521.

> relativement rapide des Coptes à l'islam, phenomène qui n'a cessé d'étonner les historiens.[136]

I confess that the idea that Copts converted to Islam because of pressure from ecclesiastical and monastic preachers is utterly unconvincing to me. Islam also imposed burdens on members of the Muslim community in the form of mandatory alms, as well as the costs of mosque maintenance and service. There was indeed pressure exerted on Christians approaching the end of their lives to donate a part of their property to pious institutions, but to give up their own children (or – more specifically – their help in a time when aging parents needed it most) was an extreme decision which, in my opinion, may be justified only by a misfortune such as an illness being a threat to the life of the child. I am also not sure if the process of Islamisation of the Copts can be called rapid.

Papaconstantinou's theories provoked Tonio Sebastian Richter to engage in a polemic and to re-analyse the history of the miraculous curing of children and their donation in the light of the rules of narratology. His conclusions drawn from the *narrationes* are as follows:

> I am afraid the children of Phoibammôn were no appropriate candidates [to become monks – EW]. This assumption is supposed by some non-stereotypical ornaments woven into the prefabricated texture of the *narratio*. For instance, a boy who is apparently born after seven months and whose disease is called 'demoniac'; a child who had been thrown into the fire, it is told, by the Devil (perhaps an epileptic fit?), and who almost burnt; a boy who ran away from home (*P. KRU* 93.15–17); a number of children obviously living with male or female single parents (*P. KRU* 79, 80, 81, 86, 95). Is it permitted to generalize from these few clues? The result would shed light on the misery of overexerted, discouraged parents of children who had become a burden, parents thus being in a complex dilemma of emotional, social and religious components. The narrative matrix would have served to integrate difficult lives by means of its intrinsic power, the 'persuasive power of coherent narrative', the therapeutic energy of a well-constructed story possessing a kind of immediate narrative truth and permitting us 'to make sense out of nonsense'.[137]

[136] Papaconstantinou, '*Theia oikonomia*' (cit. n. 128), p. 526.

[137] Richter, 'What's in a story?' (cit. n. 128), p. 260.

Richter's 'narratological' analysis of the donation acts convinces me fully, but his explanation of the causes of closing the door to monastic status for slave labourers seems naive. It is unlikely that children who suffered serious injuries lived on and were able to survive childhood illnesses. Not all *narrationes* suggest permanent physical impairment and being sick at a young age does not necessarily affect health later on in life. The truth seems to be a brutal one: monasteries admitted people who had a source of income that permitted them to purchase or build cells, as well as to cover at least a part of their living costs, since the products of their work often did not suffice. Very poor individuals could only serve at the monastery. Such a conclusion is shocking in the light of the ascetic doctrine and contrary to the testimony of apophthegms and Lives of famous monks, which state with great emphasis that it is the willingness to practice rigorous asceticism that was decisive in donning the habit. However, one should trust the documents, not literary texts.

The martyr Phoibammon venerated at Deir el-Bahari (his relics were most likely kept there) was very popular in the Thebaid, so the monastery of Phoibammon should, *mutatis mutandis*, be considered similar to the aforementioned sanctuary of Cyrus and John. It was not an ordinary monastery. We cannot regard it as typical. It is impossible to say whether or not there were in other monasteries (in the ordinary ones) people who had become, of their own will or on their parents' request, slaves of the community, whereas it is certain that the monks (as a community and as individuals) could own slaves purchased from dealers.[138]

From the economic viewpoint it is difficult to assess the benefits from this category of services for the monastery – this depended on their age, condition and workplace (in the monastery, or on land belonging to it). In any case, the balance of income and expenditure was positive. In the difficult times of the second half of the eighth century donations could be accepted and did not unbearably increase the tax burden, which also included payment for the slaves. Their presence certainly added splendour to the monastery. Servants young and old taking care of the monks and visitors, living off the mercy of the monastery and possibly off the

[138] *P. Köln* III 157 (AD 589) from Apollonos Polis (Heptakomias).

alms offered by the guests, running errands, assisting the elderly, performing minor tasks, eating scraps in the corner, clad in rags, are present in Egyptian sanctuaries even today.

MONKS AND MONASTERIES AS LESSEES. MONKS AND MONASTERIES AS LESSORS

In texts concerning loans monks and monasteries are mentioned both as lessees and lessors. These documents were studied in detail by Tomasz Markiewicz, whose article releases me from the obligation to quote them here.[139] The information he compiled in tables mostly refers to monks' independent activities. This may also apply to abbots of monasteries acting in their own name. Of special interest are the cases in which both parties are monks belonging to the same monastic community. Notably, monks openly charge interest on the loaned sums even though the ecclesiastical legislation clearly forbids it.[140]

Although we have little information about it, I have no doubt that monasteries also acted as both debtors and creditors.

THE PLACE OF MONKS AND MONASTIC COMMUNITIES IN COMMERCIAL EXCHANGE

All monastic communities regardless of their type, as well as monks living in isolation, participated in commerce. They constituted a milieu that needed to market all its produce, besides what was meant for internal consumption, and to buy the foodstuffs it did not produce on its own land, as well as products of craftsmanship which for various reasons it

[139] T. Markiewicz, 'The Church, clerics, monks and credit in the papyri', [in:] *Essays in Memory of Sarah Clackson*, pp. 178–204.

[140] This conclusion of Markiewicz is confirmed by a sixth-century text published recently by A. Benaissa, 'The usurious monk from the Apa Apollo monastery at Bawit', *Chronique d'Égypte* 85 (2010), pp. 374–381.

could not produce (metal objects were at the head of that list). We are aware of this thanks to abundant evidence, which fortunately consists of sources of various types: literary texts, documents, and the archaeological record.

When studying the sources of Egyptian origin one must keep in mind that we are not asking whether local trade existed – such a fact does not require proving. The purchase of a plot of land, a few or a dozen jars of wine, oil, or a garment is no surprise and is not worth commenting. We should instead look for groups of texts showing the circumstances in which the exchange took place. We need information on the prices, middlemen, longer journeys taken in order to buy or sell goods, data on marketing the goods in bulk, etc.

Literary sources, which usually shunned economic topics, did devote some attention to relations between the monks and the buyers. They did so because these contacts brought a variety of serious difficulties into the life of persons who decided to withdraw from 'the world'; buying and selling put the brothers at risk of breaking the rules of asceticism and often led to sin. Thus, monastic literature advised the monks, especially new monks (which does not mean only young ones – it was often the elderly who entered the monastery), how they should act in such circumstances. This didactic aim is the reason why the descriptions of contacts between brothers and buyers are not a neutral background element of daily life in monastic milieus. Therefore, it is necessary to treat literary accounts of trade with great caution, always keeping in mind the potential deformations in such texts.

The most important (from my point of view) is the information found in the apophthegms. We have no reason to question the historical authenticity of the individuals described and usually referred to by name. However, they appear in typical situations and the advice they offer had the value of common norms of monastic behaviour. The redaction of the collection of apophthegms called the *Alphabetikon* comes from the second half (most likely closer to the end) of the fifth century, and the oldest systematic collection is from the first half of the sixth century, but the date of the redaction does not correspond to the time in which one should place the protagonists of the given story. Some of them lived sev-

eral generations earlier. However, I would venture to say that chronological doubts as to the dating of the content of apophthegms do not have any major significance as far as my topic is concerned. The economic behaviour of monks in the desert lauras of the Western Delta did not change noticeably in the period from the fourth to the sixth century (below I will come back to what happened in the seventh century).

Two remarks are in order as a form of introduction to my discussion of the commercial exchange of goods: basketry (baskets, ropes, mats, boxes), the main source of the monks' income according to literary sources, did not generate high profits. Our texts lead us astray when they tell us that by selling them the brothers were not only able to provide food for themselves, but also obtained a surplus they later used to perform charitable deeds. Perhaps huge mats with colourful patterns provided monasteries with more substantial sums, but they constituted no more than a small fraction of the production. Such mats required the cooperation of several skilled specialists.[141] The situation was somewhat better as

[141] I recall a very interesting account of a medieval author, Abu Makarim (13th century), which I quote: 'The monks of those dairs [he refers to the monasteries of Wadi Natrun – EW] used to make mats, of the papyrus that grows in the valley in that desert, for the mosques of Cairo and its island. Those mats are carried in boats to Cairo and by the camels to the country council, where Qadi Al-Qudah (chief of the Judges) of the Muslims and a body of the jurists and the judges assemble, while the caliph sits in the manzara (pavillon), above of the gate of the gold to watch those mats. Then they are divided after all of them are priced and the judge of the judges distributes them and orders to pay their price to the monks from the public treasury. That price has been estimated according to: each thousand cubits of the mats are sold for 7 and one third and a quarter dinars. Every year the monks sell 200 mats. Each mat is 25 cubits long and 5 cubits wide, according to what was arranged by Al-Haqim Bi Amr Allah, who was the third Fatimid caliph in Egypt, and the sixth caliph of those who began their dynasty in the north of Africa.' Abu Al-Makarem, *Monasteries in Lower Egypt in the 13th Cent.*, ed. Bishop Samuel, transl. by Mina al-Shamaa', revised by Mrs. Elizabeth, Cairo 1992, p. 182. The authorship of the work I have cited was originally attributed to an Armenian, Abu Salih, and the author is cited under this name in older works. On the work, see J. den Heijer, 'The composition of the history of the churches and monasteries of Egypt: Some preliminary remarks', [in:] *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies*, Rome 1993, pp. 209–219; U. Zanetti, 'Abu-l-Makarim et Abu Salih', *BSAC* 34 (1995), pp. 85–138.

The monasteries of Wadi Natrun must have been famous – and for a long time – for the production of mats, which explains why they were burdened with the duty of providing

far as profits from textile weaving and leatherworking were concerned, not to mention copying manuscripts.

Monks living in hermitages of Nitria, Kellia, and Sketis had to look for buyers of their products of daily use 'in Egypt', more specifically in towns, since peasants themselves produced all that the monks had to offer and could become their clients only in exceptional situations. Although the texts do not tell us this, I believe that the monks arrived in towns primarily on market days, when the number of potential buyers increased. The dates of market days must have been widely known.

Mentions of monks travelling to distant places for trade reasons appear very often in the apophthegms. One only needs to look at the analytical index of the French translation of the corpus published by Dom Lucien Regnault under 'commerce, acheter, vendre' to be convinced about this. Trade did not interest the authors of the apophthegms, but anchoring the narration in the time of a journey or presence at a market created a literary framework in which one could introduce various unusual events: the monks' encounters with women, beggars or ill people requiring care (sometimes it turned out that they were in fact angels or even Christ himself putting the monks to the test).[142]

Presence at the market was a trying experience for a monk and the apophthegms instructed him on how to act and what to do:

> Apophthegm Pistamon 1 (781): A brother asked Abba Pistamon, 'What should I do? I get worried when I sell my manual work.' The old man replied, 'Abba Sisoes and all the others used to sell their manual work; that is not dangerous in itself. But when you sell it, say the price of each thing just once, then, if you want to lower the price a little, you can do so. In this way you will be at peace.' The brother then said, 'If I can get what I need by one means or another, do you still advise me to take the trouble to do manual work?' The old man replied, 'Even if you do have what you need by other means, do not give up your manual work. Work as much as you can, only do it without getting worried about it' (transl. Benedicta Ward).

them. It was at the same time a privilege appreciated by both sides. The presence of the caliph at the presentation of the mats hints at their high quality.

[142] Agathon 30 (112).

> Apophthegm Agathon 98 (16): It was said of him and of Abba Amoun that, when they had anything to sell, they would name the price just once and silently accept what was given them in peace. Just as, when they wished to buy something, they gave the price they were asked in silence and took the object adding no further word (transl. Benedicta Ward).

Sometimes hermitages located far out in the desert were visited by merchants who arrived with camels or donkeys to buy the goods produced by the monks and offered grain, vegetables or money as payment.[143]

The apophthegms that talk about travel for trade purposes lack mentions of pack animals. Meanwhile, carrying a substantial number of baskets or bundles of rope across the desert must have been highly cumbersome, if at all possible. The authors of apophthegms stripped their stories of everything that did not serve their pious cause and besides, the image of a monk carrying the heavy burden of his produce on his own back was better than that of a brother playing the role of a camel- or donkey-driver.[144]

Only the copyists of books could count on the clients to come to them, otherwise there would have been no sense in copying the manuscripts. The work was time-consuming and it required the purchase of expensive papyrus or even more expensive parchment. Therefore, making copies for unknown potential customers was burdened with a considerable risk. Perhaps – but this is only a reasoning *exempli gratia*, as sources are lacking – the copyists from Nitria, Kellia, and Sketis took such a risk after all. The situation of this group of monastic communities was peculiar: relatively close to them was Alexandria, a source of pious and sufficiently wealthy visitors. The purchase of a manuscript with the intention

[143] John Kolobos 31 (346): 'A camel-driver came one day to pick up some goods and take them elsewhere. Going inside to bring him what he had woven, Abba John forgot about it because his spirit was fixed in God. So once more the camel-driver disturbed him by knocking on the door and once more Abba John went in and forgot. The camel-driver knocked a third time and Abba John went in saying, "Weaving – camel; weaving – camel." He said this so that he would not forget again' (transl. Benedicta Ward).

[144] Carrying baskets was exhausting enough to justify the need for a miracle: Macarius 14 (467): 'It was said of Abba Macarius the Egyptian that one day when he was going up from Scetis with a load of baskets, he sat down, overcome with weariness and began to say to himself: "My God, you know very well that I cannot go any further," and immediately he found himself at the river' (transl. Benedicta Ward).

of offering it to a church, an oratorium or a monastery was a common act of piety (this is a custom well attested by the colophons of manuscripts, unfortunately late ones).

In groups of brothers who lived together the task of marketing their products usually was entrusted to one of them, referred to in the sources as the *oikonomos*. Palladius in *Historia Lausiaca* 10, in the chapter on Pambo, mentions his *oikonomos* that receives a gift from Melania – a chest containing 300 pounds of silver. Also Evagrius had an *oikonomos* who took care of material matters, having at his disposal large sums of money sent to him by friends. Palladius, who tells us about this, notes with awe that he had over 200 pieces of silver (all at once?). The presence of numerous guests visiting Evagrius (five to six daily according to Palladius) required that the *oikonomos* make systematic alimentary purchases.[145]

Pachomian monasteries in the form familiar to us from the *vitae* of their founder had separate administrative bodies responsible for the economic dealings of the communities.[146] The Greek *vita prima* (G^1 59) refers to them with the term *diakonia*, a designation well-known from monastic sources of the sixth–seventh centuries. They were subordinate to the head *oikonomos* residing in Pbau; the individual monasteries had their own *oikonomoi*.[147] What strikes is the pressure to keep written records of activity on all administrative levels. We know that during one of two general assemblies at Pbau the *oikonomoi* presented their account books to the head *oikonomos* (G^1 83).

[145] This information is not found in *Historia Lausiaca*, but in the Coptic biography of Evagrius, one of the many biographies of Egyptian monks that Palladius wrote during his sojourn in Egypt. Their Greek original is lost, but fragments of a Coptic translation are extant. See *Quatre ermites égyptiens*, présentés par G. Bunge, traduits par A. de Vogüé, Abbaye de Bellefontaine 1994, p. 162.

[146] The reader will find information on the sources for the history of the Pachomian congregation from the viewpoint of a historian interested in institutional and economic issues in my book *Moines et communautés monastiques*. Relations between the various parts of the rich Pachomian dossier are very complex and difficult to reconstruct. For my economic discussion the disputes on this subject are fortunately of little significance. It is sufficient to know that the core of the Pachomian tradition, from which the Lives emerged, came into being towards the end of the fifth century.

[147] On the Pachomian *oikonomoi*: F. Ruppert, *Das pachomianische Mönchtum und die Anfänge klösterlichen Gehorsams*, Münsterschwarzach 1971, pp. 320–328.

The Greek *vita* of Pachomius (G^1 59) puts great emphasis on the limits imposed on monks of the congregation whenever money was involved:

> (...) The brothers have no money, still less anything of gold; some of them died having never known such things. Only those entrusted with a ministry used money; and when they returned to the monastery they kept nothing with themselves for a single day but gave everything to the steward until they might go out again. And all that government is written in detail in the book of the stewards (transl. A. Veilleux).

The above text is unparalleled in the Coptic *vitae*. This is significant. It may indicate that the authors of G^1 did not find such information in the tradition of the congregation, but invented it, creating an image of a well-functioning monastery, in which the brothers were kept at a safe distance from hazards such as money and did not own any private property. It is an ideal construct and in this sense the account is worth quoting. In large monasteries, the ones in which brothers numbered by the hundreds (and the Pachomian congregation consisted of such) it was possible to reduce the size of the group of brothers with access to money to a minimum. However, it is difficult to believe that there existed monks who had never seen coins, as the great majority of individuals who joined monasteries were adults with experience in normal economic relations. We are dealing with a *topos* (similar to the one claiming that in monasteries there were monks who had never seen a woman's face).

Of great interest are the journeys to Alexandria mentioned in the *vitae*. In B^o 89 we read: 'Some time later the brothers went off to Alexandria, as was their custom.' (This sentence belongs to a chapter concerning Theodore of Alexandria. The events narrated cannot be exactly dated; Veilleux propose 333 or 343).[148] These journeys played an important role in

[148] See also G^1 113, where the episode narrated is placed in the last year of Pachomius' life: 'When the boat returned from Alexandria – there were only two boats for the whole community, one to sell the mats to procure the food and other things, the other for their tunics – Zacchaeus and Theodore came down and greeted him [Pachomius] and the brothers. He said to them, "How is the Church?". For he was grieved for it at that time because the blasphemous Arians, with a certain Gregory, had risen up against it with violence, like bandits' (transl. A. Veilleux).

S^5 118, about Petronius: 'Ayant appris que les frères partaient cette année vers Alexan-

the life of the congregation: they strengthened the ties between Pachomian monks and the head of the Church. Athanasius, for he held this function in the years I am referring to here, saw in the Pachomians a phenomenon worthy of supporting for religious reasons; among the Egyptian ascetic movements they presented a stance most akin to his own. In the violent conflicts within the Church the patriarch also needed the purely practical help of a dynamic and large organisation.[149]

Dealing with economy I have to inquire about the economic aspect of the journey, bearing in mind that Alexandria was located at a distance of hundreds of kilometers from the monastery closest to it in the vicinity of Panopolis. Travel was long and expensive: during this journey of many days the brothers who accompanied the transported goods had to eat and most likely pay for overnight stays. All of this would consume a greater part of the profit. Furthermore, closer at hand were large urban centres, in which the congregation could sell its products in order to acquire the necessary financial means. If the brothers were sent to Alexandria, their main aim could not have been the sale of baskets or mats. In my opinion, the Pachomians primarily journeyed by boat to the patriarch to listen to him preach, to receive a blessing and letters boasting their orthodoxy and piety.

Until this point my reasoning finds sound support in the sources, the reader should treat the discourse that follows as pure hypotheses, which I leave to his or her judgement. I believe that the monks could also expect material support from the patriarch, since the Alexandrian curia had at its disposal huge financial assets. I would also not exclude that besides the patriarch they could count on other donors: there was no shortage of religious, wealthy Alexandrians. Mats and baskets may have been offered as

drie pour faire visite à l'archevêque et pour acquérir les choses nécessaires aux frères malades, il appela Théodore et l'envoya avec les autres frères pour le service du monastère. Il lui remit une lettre à l'adresse de l'archevêque au sujet du décès de notre père et de ses compagnons.' *Les vies coptes de saint Pachôme et de ses premiers successeurs*, traduction française L. Th. Lefort, Leuven 1943, pp. 264–265.

[149] See the very well-balanced article by Annick Martin, 'Les relations entre le monachisme égyptien et l'institution ecclésiastique au IV^e^ siècle', [in:] A. Camplani, G. Filoramo (ed.), *Foundations of Power and Conflicts of Authority in Late-Antique Monasticism*, Leuven 2007, pp. 16–46.

eulogiai, pious counter-gifts, so typical to the relations between monks and the people who visited them. Of course it is not impossible that the monks appeared on the Alexandrian market with their baskets and mats.

Pachomian *oikonomoi* and their subjects responsible for the monasteries' participation in commerce did not have an easy task. They were driven not only by the monastery's economic interests, but also by the necessity to respect the rules of asceticism clearly formulated by Pachomius. They were not allowed to lend money with interest or take loans; they were also not supposed to take advantage of fluctuations of market prices of goods, to sell for more when there was a chance (it was even forbidden to accept prices raised by the client for pious reasons). Testimony of the existence of such rules, intended to discourage from increasing production with a view to magnifying the profits, is found in *Paralipomena*, a collection of unconnected stories containing lessons in asceticism, a valuable source for getting to know the Pachomian mentality. In *Paralipomena* 23 Pachomius condemns and punishes a brother who had accepted a higher price which the buyer had offered for sandals.[150]

It is a great pity that texts concerning the other great congregation, the one in which the third consecutive abbot was Shenoute, tell us nothing on the subject of commerce.

Frustrating to a researcher on this subject is the case of a dossier originating from the coenobitic monastery of Bawit, consisting of numerous papyri and ostraca in Greek and Coptic.[151] Mentions of commerce are practically absent from this mass of texts. The documents that are available to us come from the diakonia and its archive,[152] but the overwhelming majority concerns internal administrative matters: storeroom accounts (orders to pay, lists accompanying transports of wine and grain, tax registers, loans issued by the monastery). This applies to both papyri and ostraca. Clearly the relations with the 'world' – sale and purchase of products of craftsmanship made at the monastery and of foodstuffs at the

[150] *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae*, ed. F. Halkin, Brussels 1932, pp. 149–150.

[151] Bibliographic information: *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 86–87.

[152] Let me repeat that the term *diakonia* designates a special group of monks in charge of all kinds of economic affairs of the community. It can also refer to buildings used by this group. For more on this word see my entry on *diakonia* in *CE*, *s.v.*

disposal of the *diakonia* – were apparently in the hands of a different group of monks installed in a different part of the monastery.

What strikes is the scarcity of texts that mention cash operations; they are usually documents of the process of tax collection and payment.[153] The monastic authorities had money at their disposal – most likely substantial sums, considering the wealth of the community. It is easy to imagine that it was primarily acquired through the sale of foodstuffs (grain, wine). The monastery paid a part of its taxes in coin and acted as a source of loans for minor credit-seeking landowners. The needs were considerable in this respect and they were not met by the available monetary mass, of which there was a constant shortage.

It is precisely in this perspective that we should interpret some cases in which a monastery engages in sales for future delivery of wine. Such is the case of the monastery of Bawit. The monastery did not need to buy wine for its own consumption, as it received wine from its own vineyards in abundance. Besides reasons of a social nature (the farmers who asked for loans were dependent on the monastery) other aspects to consider were perspectives of sale for a higher price in a distant village or sale at a date more convenient as far as the price was concerned.

CASE STUDY: TRADE OF THE THEBAN MONKS

A separate and exceptionally rich group of texts consists of documentary sources from the huge Theban necropolis stretching over 7 km along the west bank of the Nile opposite Luxor and Karnak. Monks adapted the tombs cut in the walls of rocky hills, as well as ruined temples, for their purposes. Individual forms of monasticism and small coenobia, the best known of which is the monastery of Apa Phoibammon (Deir el-Bahari), developed in this area.

[153] In seven out of ninety-one texts in a series beginning with the words 'It is our father' (orders to pay, issue products or receive them, signed by the abbot of the monastery) money is used for paying taxes, in two it is a measure of value, and in only one text it is a means of payment. Among the texts published in *P. Mon. Apollo* (a total of 66) four refer to taxes, seven are loans, eleven are *pacta*, and only in eight of them money is a means of payment.

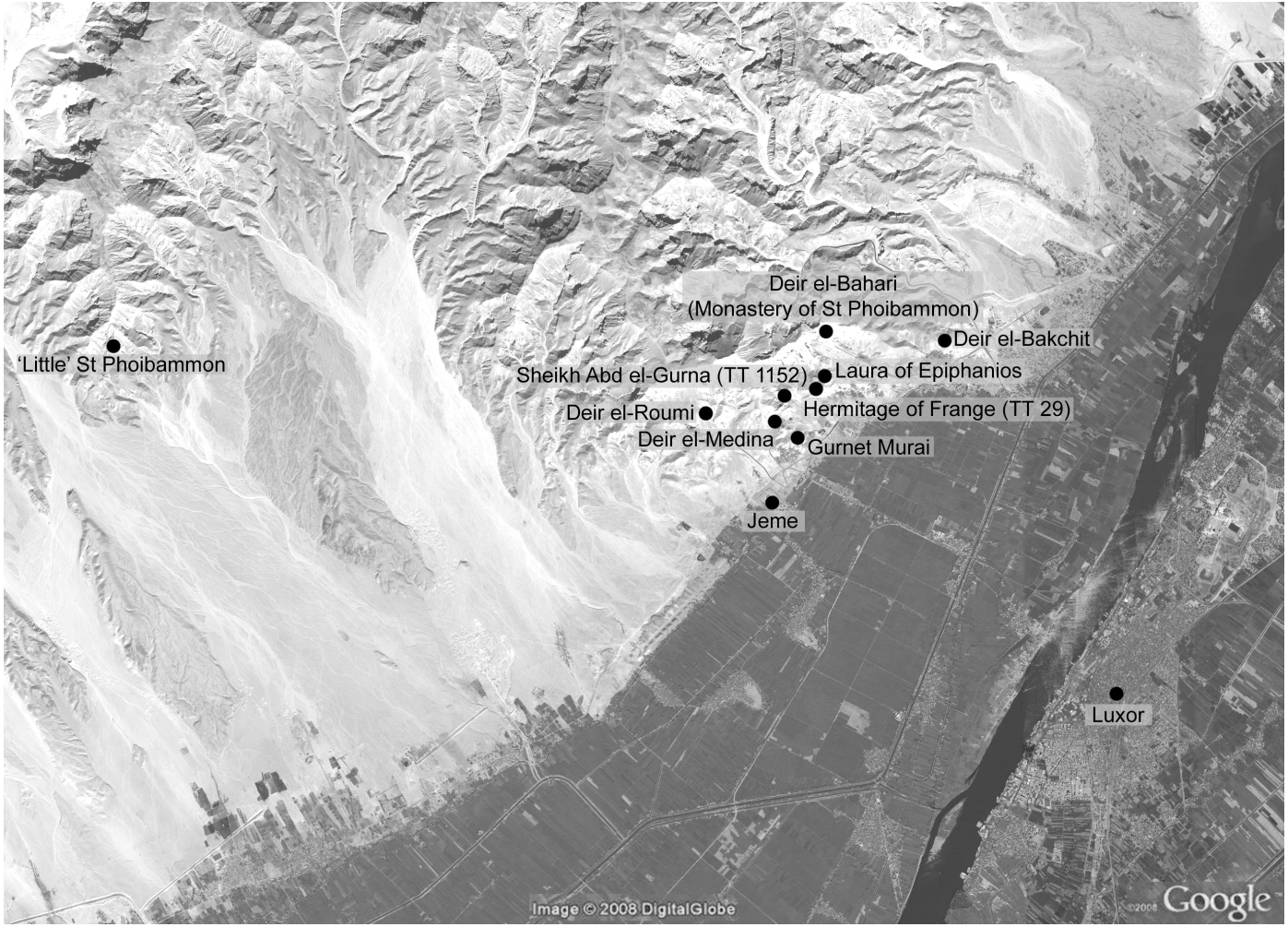


Fig. x. Satellite photo of the Theban region (drawn by C. Ochsh)

Especially promising was the investigation of a group of hermitages, the heart of which was a hermitage in the tomb of Daga, a vizier from the time of the XI dynasty. It was constituted by a laura referred to in literature on the subject as the Laura (or Monastery in English-language works) of Epiphanius, named after a monk that enjoyed particular esteem. Epiphanius lived at the beginning of the seventh century, but the laura flourished also in the second half of that century. The excavations took place in the years 1912–14; the fieldwork was conducted by archaeologist Herbert Eustis Winlock, and the inscribed material was taken care of Walter Ewing Crum. The effect of their cooperation is a monumental work, which today constitutes the core of our knowledge on material aspects of monastic life (not only in the Theban region).[154] Out of over 800 texts of various types brought to light as a result of the excavations, the most numerous (551) are Coptic documents, among which Crum distinguished the following categories: legal and financial texts, letters, accounts and lists.

Another rich assemblage of ostraca was found in a hermitage established in a tomb labelled as TT (= Theban Tombs) 29, which had been hewn out for Vizier Amenemope (reign of Amenhotep II). The group of texts numbered over 1000 ostraca, of which 806 were fit for publication. Three quarters of the assemblage is an archive of a monk, who lived in the first half of the eighth century and bore the very rare name Frange. Even prior to the excavation he was known from 26 ostraca found in places other than his own hermitage. Found in TT 29 were also 50 older, seventh-century texts. As opposed to the texts from the laura of Epiphanius, the texts in TT 29 were almost exclusively letters. Their excellent publication, a joint effort of Anne Boud'hors and Chantal Heurtel, contains a valuable commentary, as well as indices, which were of particular importance to me.[155]

Letters of monks from the Theban region very frequently refer to commerce. The brothers ask for delivery of various goods and notify of

[154] *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes*, II. *Coptic Ostraca and Papyri*, ed. W. E. Crum; *Greek Ostraca and Papyri*, ed. H. Evelyn White, New York 1926.

[155] *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29. Autour du moine Frangé*, I–II, Brussels 2010. Both editors are authors of numerous articles on the archive.

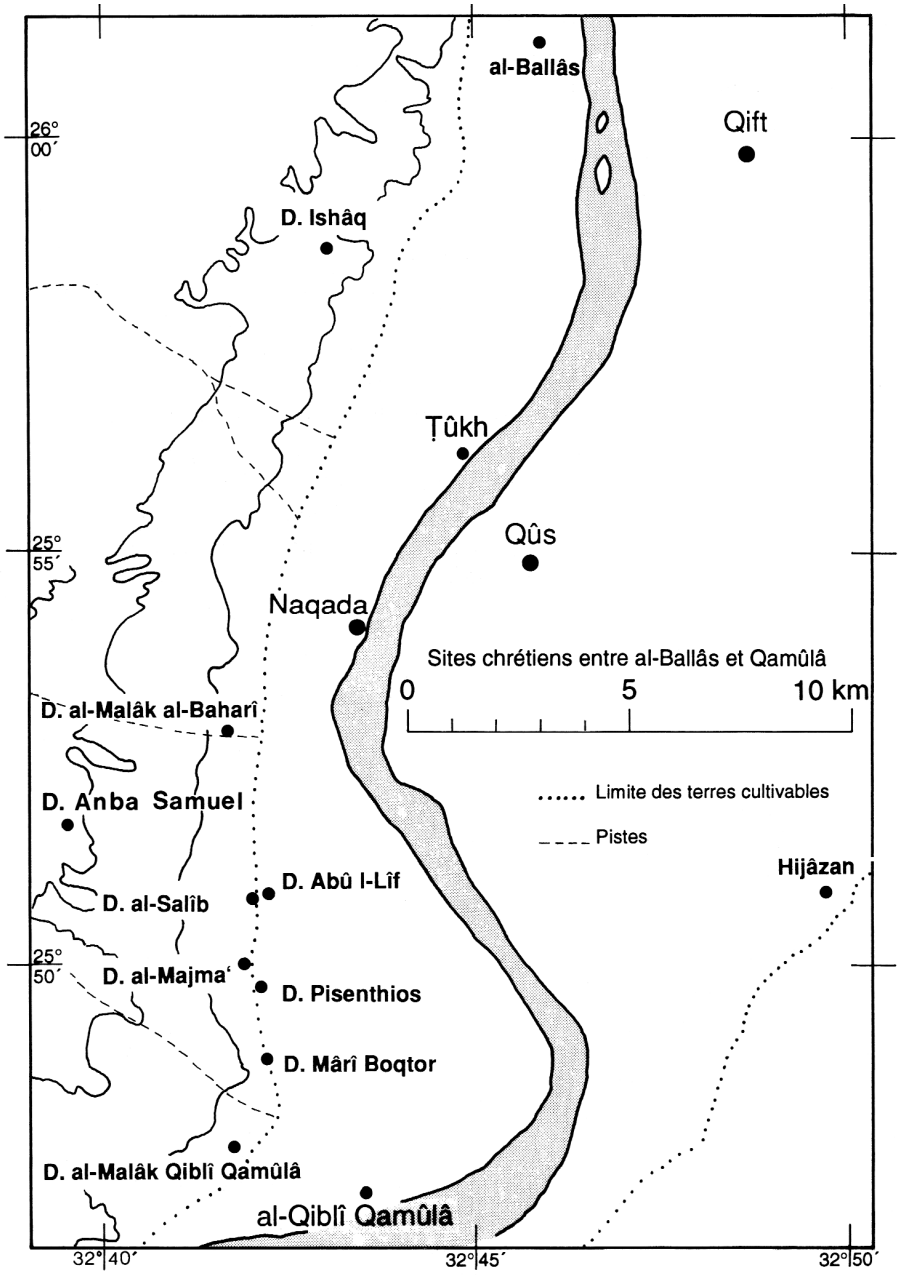


Fig. 12. Map based on the results of surveys carried out by R. Boutros and Ch. Décobert in 1996–98 (from R. Boutros, Ch. Décobert, 'Les installations chrétiennes entre Ballâs et Armant: implantations et survivances', [in:] *Études Coptes* VII, ed. N. Bosson, Paris 2000, pp. 77–108, fig. 1)

dispatching products of their own making. Most of the addressees of this type of letters live in the Nile Valley or along its edges, the distance between the villages and the hermitages ranges from 2 to 8 km or more, especially if the villages were located on the opposite bank of the Nile (the distance from Deir el-Bahari to the crossing is *ca.* 3 km). Contrary to common statements in literary texts, the monastic milieu was mobile as a whole, but indeed some monks (the more respected, elderly, in poor health) did not leave their cells. Frange does travel around the necropolis, but he claims that he cannot, for reasons obscure to us, journey to his home village of Petemout, located on the opposite bank of the Nile, 7 km to the northeast of Luxor. There are also no traces of his trips to Jeme (*ca.* 1.5 km). Contact with individuals in possession of goods the brothers needed, as well as with clients, is ensured by letters carried by travelling fellow monks and laymen. It seems that the monks from Western Thebes dealt with a circle of people they knew.

The ability to identify both the seller and the buyer is of outmost importance for the understanding of the nature of the transactions. Without it we would only be able to conclude that goods were exchanged, which we know anyway. The operation of identifying both parties of the transaction is easier in the case of the archive of Frange simply because of the number of ostraca. There is, however, one difficulty which limits the possibility of using the texts for research: in the correspondence we are not always able to distinguish letters sent to or by monks from ones sent to or by people not belonging to the monastic world, as Frange has a habit of referring to nearly all of his correspondents with the terms father, mother, brother, sister. At the same time one needs to keep in mind that among the letters preserved on the ostraca we also find ones that do not seem to belong to the monks' correspondence. We can easily think of reasons for which a letter was brought in from 'the world' and subsequently thrown away, but such a discussion is not worth engaging in because it is largely fruitless.

Another difficulty the reader should keep in mind lies in the lack of information that could enable us to date the texts. In the analysis of the material from the archive of Frange it would be important to establish a chronological sequence. The editors did try to consider the changes that

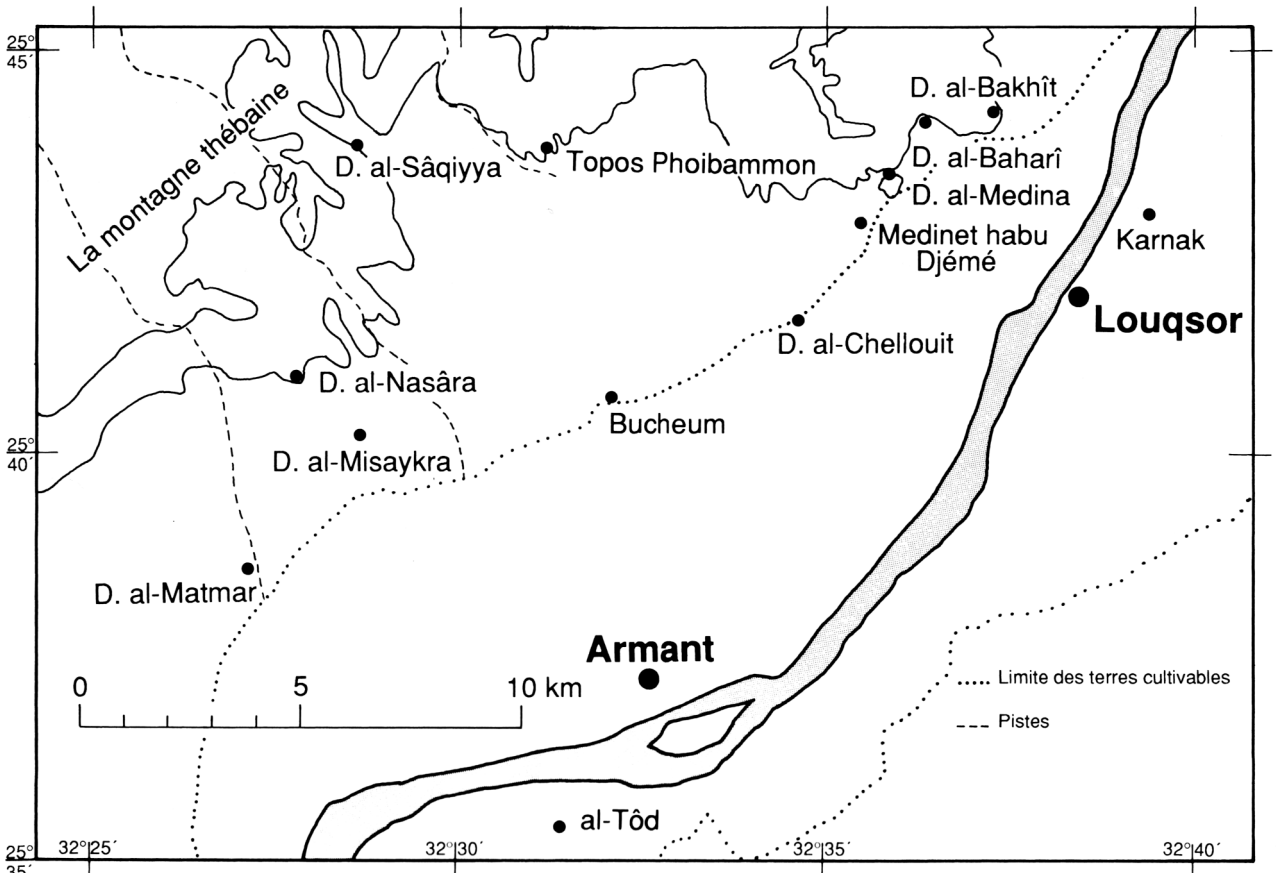


Fig. 13. Second part of the same map by R. Boutros and Ch. Décobert ('Les installations chrétiennes entre Ballâs et Armant' [cit. at fig. 12], fig. 2)

occurred in the handwriting with the passage of years, but the results of their efforts are meagre. It is therefore impossible fully to exploit the information on the quantities of products purchased and sold; the testimonies of transactions in the form of letters may be separated by long periods of time, but might as well be from the same month.

The products made by Theban monks, attested in texts and in the archaeological record, included the following:

Basketry: ropes, baskets (there is no mention of mats – perhaps this is not incidental, as mats required the cooperation of several artisans).

Textiles: linen shrouds and *keiriai*, purchased in pairs, linen garments.

Leather goods: certainly codex bindings, we cannot say anything more, since our conclusions on this category of crafts are drawn only from pieces and scraps of leather.

Copying manuscripts with bindings and without them.

The monks purchased the following:

Cereals: wheat, barley, lentils and bread (especially bread of a specific, fine type).

Oil, a very important commodity for the supply of which monks insistently ask various persons. The apophthegms suggest that the renouncement of oil or the consumption of very small amounts of it was something common among monks, but they should not be believed, as in this case they create an ideal image, which has little to do with reality. To monks oil was the only source of lipids, which were indispensable to the continuance of life.

Wine. Requests for wine are very rare in the Theban material (as opposed to requests for oil). In the hermitages, in turn, we find an abundance of amphorae originally used for wine. It is not to be excluded, however, that the monks collected empty wine jars from surrounding villages and brought them to their cells after filling them with water.

Honey (believed to be medication against heart disease).

Salt, appearing as an obligatory part of the diet of even the most rigorous ascetics.

Cheeses (from sheep's milk), fish preserves, cardamom, garlic.

Textiles: garments, blankets, despite the common practice of weaving in the hermitages, also confirmed archaeologically by remains of yarn and

loom pits. From Theban correspondence it appears that the monks were not able to produce a full array of textiles and limited themselves to what was the simplest, namely to linen cloth.

Raw material for weaving: flax in the form of skeins of yarn or flax prepared for spinning, wool.

Metal tools for leatherworking, wooden weaving looms or their parts.

All that could be used as fuel in hermitages located in completely barren areas (straw, reeds, stalks of flax and other plants, pieces of palm and acacia wood, finally cattle dung, which was mixed with chaff, shaped into flat discs and dried).

Earthenware vessels. Theban texts do not mention them, but it does not matter; no one in the Theban region produced pottery, and tableware and kitchenware broke easily.

The study of Theban ostraca shows that exchange always took place between specific individuals without the agency of the markets of neighbouring towns, bazaars, or fairs.[156] This is the most striking difference between the monks from the desert near the western edge of the Delta, who travelled to Terenenouthis, Nikiou, and Alexandria, and monks from Western Thebes. Is it possible that in the seventh–eighth centuries there were no fairs in the vicinity? Jeme was a large town most likely numbering 1,000–2,000 inhabitants, so it fulfilled all the requirements to have a fair, if only a minor one that catered to the needs of its inhabitants. I cannot give an answer to this question, as to my knowledge the sources lack testimonies permitting to do so. It would be dangerous to draw far-reaching conclusions from this silence of the sources – fairs are among institutions that can function without creating records of their existence.

Only once do we learn that monks from the small monastery of Abba Paulos in the Theban region travelled to the Fayum to sell ropes.[157] Why did the monks take their ropes from Thebes to the Fayum, when on the

[156] On fairs, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, Oxford 1964, rural and urban fairs: pp. 855–857; big merchant fairs: p. 867; R. Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt*, London 2002, p. 337.

[157] We find this piece of information in *CLT* 3 dated to 728 or 743, a document in which the Arab authorities are asked to grant permission to travel: see the quotation below, p. 252.

way there were so many towns in which they could market their products? Perhaps there existed a link between the monastery of Apa Paulos and some monastery in the Fayum, or there was a family capable of giving them shelter and protection?

The most common product – requested, received and anxiously asked about when delivery was delayed – was grain. The amounts mentioned are, of course, varied and often significant: *ca.* 18 artabae (*P. Mon. Epiph.* 303), 9.5 artabae (*O.TT 29* 235); 3 artabae (*O. TT 29* 61; 63; 69); 5 artabae (*P. Mon. Epiph.* 305); 1 artaba (*O.TT 29* 67; 250; *P. Mon. Epiph.* 315); measures smaller than artabae (*O.TT 29* 238; 633) (according to specialists on diet one artaba of grain = 30–33 kg provided the biological minimum for one person for a month). Mentions of grain purchases are so numerous in our documents that I feel relieved from the obligation to cite all specific documents. However, one should take a look at the texts that allow us to determine the nature of these deliveries. It is by no means certain that we are dealing with trade every time a delivery of grain is mentioned. Frange more than once openly demands gifts in the form of foodstuffs in exchange for prayers for various intentions. In *O.TT 29* 84, writing to a father of a newborn son Frange requests that he hastily arrive with oil, as it had been him (Frange) and his companion Moses who successfully prayed for the birth of his male heir. Another letter: Frange asks a certain woman to give ('quickly, quickly') to someone 2 measures of grain and some oil to bring to him; he adds: 'your heart will be completely at ease as far as the cattle is concerned' (*O. TT 29* 66). In another letter Frange asks somebody: send me good wine for the love of God, the salvation of your soul 'and the health of your cattle' (*O. TT 29* 98). Probably at least some of the letters in which we find only demands for grain, oil, and wine without additional explanation should be treated as requests to be given these products as gifts. How the addressees reacted to such epistolary harassment, we do not know; it was certainly not easy for them to deny the request. If all monks living in the Theban region acted in a similar fashion, the neighbourhood of the 'holy desert' of Jeme must have been a doubtful blessing for nearby households.

The texts I have cited are worthy of note, as they show the functioning of the system of donations to monks on what we might call a daily basis, not only in the face of death.

Reading numerous letters written by Frange to his biological sister, Tsie, I felt that the number of requests for various foodstuffs crossed the line of what one could consider an expected donation, even from a relative. I suspect that in this specific case we are dealing with a different phenomenon. We know that Frange had a vineyard (*O.TT 29* 170), and perhaps also some land used for planting other crops. The family may have managed the landed property, in which case Frange would have received the rent in the form of systematic deliveries.

Monks rarely make payments in cash, although they do receive it – mostly for copying codices, sometimes for *keiriai* and shrouds. Sometimes sums of money are mentioned to specify the amount of the goods. The monks' transactions take the form of a barter exchange in all possible combinations. As a rule, foodstuffs are received by the monks, but there are cases when they are exchanged by them for other articles. In *O. TT 29* 324 Frange asks for delivery of an *oipe* of wheat in order to exchange it for flax needed to make *keiriai*. In *O. TT* 167 lentils are to be exchanged for flax.

A somewhat different phenomenon is recorded in *O. TT 29* 156: Frange made an arrangement with someone to exchange funerary clothes for a σκεῦος, an object of some, probably considerably high, value (the letter does not specify what it was).[158] It served as surety on a loan. In order to explain this custom I refer to what Tomasz Markiewicz wrote in his unpublished doctoral dissertation:

> In absence of money – or its substitutes, such as silver bullion, in sufficient quantities – many sales had to be conducted as barter. In case of more substantial purchases it would be only rare that the buyer could provide immediately enough objects of value acceptable for the vendor (and we have to remember that in absence of market economy with steady supply and demand many sales and purchases had to be conducted as opportunity arose). He would have to collect such objects from his relatives, friends and neighbors incurring debts. Thus a network of long-outstanding debts

[158] See also *O. TT 29* 176 and 177. On σκεύη, see Seÿna Bacot, 'Avons-nous retrouvé la Grande mère de Kolodje?', [in:] *Akten des 6. Internationalen Koptologenkongresses Münster 1996*, Wiesbaden 1999, pp. 244–245.

> was created in which everyone (or nearly everyone) was the debtor and creditor of several other persons (...).
>
> We find this system in operation in Ramesside P. Cairo 65739.[159] It recounts how a lady Irinofret purchased a slave girl from a peddler merchant. She paid with a number of garments, apparently of her own, and several copper objects purchased from other people: their names and titles are carefully stated. Irinofret must have decided to buy the slave when the merchant knocked on her door: she paid with whatever items of value she could find in her own house and toured her acquaintances in order to borrow some more.
>
> Well, did she really 'borrow'? What was the transaction by which Irinofret indebted herself *vs.* her neighbors from the juridical point of view? Were the vessels loaned to her? Loan for using (Roman *commodatum*) implies that the same thing will be returned, but this could not have been expected. The vessels had to be eventually paid for with something else, and so we are dealing here with a form of sale with deferred payment. Although we are tempted to say that the lady Irinofret 'borrowed' some items from her neighbors, she actually bought them – promising that she would pay for them at a later date.

The text he cites dates from the Ramesside period, it is true, but this should not be a problem because we are dealing with a remarkably long-lived institution, which was not rendered obsolete by the introduction of coinage due to the small amount of currency in circulation.

Frange may have sold his own products and purchased what he needed through individuals known to him in nearby villages, especially members of his family (above all his sister Tsia). After all, he came from a village on the opposite bank of the Nile. Even if he were ready to systematically travel throughout the region, he would not have been able to find clients without middlemen living in 'the world', familiar with the needs of various people and with the prices of goods. A thorough study of literary texts shows that the figure of a permanent middleman between a monk and buyers is present in them. Such an individual is usually a pious layman

[159] A. H. Gardiner, 'A lawsuit arising from the purchase of two slaves, *JEA* 21 (1935), pp. 140–146.

inhabiting a nearby village, who takes away the ready products and brings food.[160] Middlemen received payments for their work: in *P. Mon. Epiph.* 348, out of 28 pairs of *keiriai* dispatched for sale the middleman can keep the profit from 6 of them (another time the same man can take 2 out of 15 pairs of *keiriai*) 'on account of thy pains that thou art at with me'.

Monks also played the role of middlemen in their own way, for persons from their circle. If they travelled, they took letters and goods belonging to other monks, wrote letters to people they knew who could sell or buy something. This correspondence between monks constitutes a significant part of monks' letters from the Theban region. It makes one suspect that the Theban monastic environment was obsessively preoccupied with the circulation of goods and that this was a vital element of everyday life, not a rarity. Is this impression true? I do not know. The lack of dates in ostraca hinders the assessment of the frequency of trade contacts between brothers.

TAXES

Monks and monastic communities paid taxes for their landed property like all inhabitants of Byzantine Egypt, as indicated by numerous tax-related papyri. It is worth noticing that we have only one testimony of a protest and attempt to obtain a tax exemption from the state (of course if we assume that the story quoted in the footnote conveys more than a literary concept).[161] Fulfilling this obligation was most likely not easy or

[160] For instance: *Vie des saints Maxime et Domèce*, ed. E. Amélineau, [in:] *Annales du Musée Guimet* 25, Paris 1894, pp. 301–304, a text that mentions 'gardiens sur les natrons' (we are in Sketis) who arrive with a camel to take baskets from the monks and to bring them bread.

[161] Ammonathas 1 (154): 'A magistrate came one day to Pelusium to levy the poll-tax (*epikephalaion*) on the monks, as on the secular population. All the brothers assembled together about this proposal and went to Abba Ammonathas. Some of the Fathers thought they ought to go and see the emperor about it. Abba Ammonathas said to them, "So much trouble is not necessary. Rather remain quietly in your cells, fast for two weeks, and I alone, with the grace of God, will deal with this matter." So the brothers went back to their cells. The old man stayed in the peace of his own cell. At the end of a fortnight the brethren were dissatisfied with the old man, whom they had not seen stir, and they

painless for the monasteries, but the problems that it brought about were not a matter made public and a subject of petitions to the authorities. Perhaps there were instances of individual tax exemptions, but we know nothing about them. However, monks and monasteries, as well as some clerics, were as a rule not liable for various *munera* that constituted a major burden for taxpayers of various social groups.

The first half a century of Arab rule did not bring about any fiscal changes for the monasteries. The fiscal novelty introduced by the Arabs – the poll-tax – excluded both monks and clerics. This privilege resulted from the power of the Church and of the monastic milieu, which demanded treatment with outmost respect. To be sure, military activity resulted in damage, looting and casualties throughout. However, there is much to indicate that the destroyed buildings were rebuilt and wealth was coming in at the same rate as before. Monasteries survived the period of chaotic, requisition-oriented fiscal policy of the Arabs, which characterized the time of the conquest and its immediate aftermath.[162] The division of extraordinary fiscal obligations, such as mandatory provisioning, requisition of animals and people for labour, was a task performed by local Christian officials, who certainly tried to avoid burdening the monasteries. The prestige of monastic communities in the second half of the 7th century facilitated a painless transition to the new reality for most of them. This state of affairs could not have persisted in the new situation, which was determined by increasing fiscal needs of the Arab state and, on the other hand, the growing feeling of security of the authorities, who ruled Egypt without facing resistance. Paradoxically, it turned out that monasteries suffered specifically because of their privileged position and amassed wealth.

said, "The old man has done nothing about our business." On the fifteenth day, according to their agreement, the brethren assembled again and the old man came with a letter bearing the emperor's seal. On seeing this the brethren said to him, in great astonishment, "When did you get that, abba?" Then the old man said, "Believe me, brother, I went that night to the emperor, who wrote this letter; then, going to Alexandria, I had it countersigned by the magistrate and thus I returned to you." Hearing this, the brothers were filled with fear, and did penance before him. So their business was settled, and the magistrate troubled them no further' (transl. Benedicta Ward).

[162] Nabia Abbott, *The Monasteries of the Fayyum*, Chicago 1936, pp. 51–56.

The increase of the tax burden and, above all, the liability of inhabitants of Egypt for doing compulsory labour far away from their home village or city, building ships that were subsequently manned by Egyptian troops or erecting buildings and palaces in Fustat, triggered waves of escapes to other towns. Upon the order of the central administration, local authorities countered such migrations, but they also struck deals with the fugitives.[163] We can be certain of this because without their help these people would not have been able to find a place for themselves and their families.[164]

Many fugitives escaped to monasteries. Arab authorities made energetic efforts to stop this process. The reconstruction of the measures they took is not an easy task, as the sources at our disposal are lacunose and not always reliable. The most important information is provided by a monumental work which belongs to the genre of the ecclesiastical history, begins its narration from St Mark and continues to recent times. It is commonly referred to as the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria* and it was written by many authors in three successive languages: Greek, Coptic, and Arabic. Its value strictly depends on who wrote the particular sections – on the author's knowledge, fairness and readiness to provide an unbiased account of a painful history full of inner conflict and persecution by the authorities. The *History of the Patriarchs* was written in the patriarchs' circle and it inevitably reflected their point of view and intellectual capacity. In practice this means that problems which had arisen far from the place of residence of the head of the Church are much less frequently presented than the ones the latter was involved in. Monasteries are never a

[163] They could not hide in the new location – this would not have been possible in densely populated Egypt. They also had to start paying taxes (but they avoided payment of debts). See F. Morelli, '*P. Brook.* 26: mogli, tasse e *ξένοι*. Un problema di punti di vista', *ZPE* 130 (2000), p. 220 with references to documents; N. Gonis, 'Arabs, monks and taxes: Notes on documents from Deir el-Balaizah', *ZPE* 148 (2004), pp. 219–221.

[164] My study cannot be a place in which the problem of runaways is treated in an appropriately broad manner. I refer the reader to an article by F. Morelli, 'Agri deserti (*mawât*), fuggitivi, fisco: una *klerosis* in più in *SPP* VIII 1183', *ZPE* 129 (2000), pp. 167–178, and to the extensive introduction and commentaries of the same author on papyri published in *CPR* xxx [*L'archivio di Senouthios anystes e testi connessi. Lettere e documenti per la costruzione di una capitale*], Berlin 2010.

privileged area of interest of the *History of the Patriarchs*, which can hardly be a surprise, considering their dispersion and sheer number. The first three quarters of the eighth century, of the greatest importance from my point of view, were recorded by a monk and deacon named John, who was one of the persons close to Patriarch Michael I (743–767). His Coptic work, which was quite satisfactory, though it shared the limitations of the writings of other authors of the *History of the Patriarchs,* was translated into Arabic and re-edited by Mawhub ibn Mansur in the 11th century.[165] The *History of the Patriarchs* does not have a counterpart on the Arab side: chroniclers, who began to write their works much later, had no interest in the topic we are dealing with, which from their chronological perspective remained completely unworthy of attention.

Persecution of monasteries began upon the initiative of el-Asbagh, a son of the governor of Egypt Abd el-Aziz and an official in charge of tax collection. It must have occurred some time before AD 705, the year of Abd el-Aziz's death, as the son had died even before the father. The patriarch at the time was Alexander II (704–729). The *History of the Patriarchs* reads:

> Al-Asbagh was a hater of the Christians, a shedder of blood, a wicked man, like a fierce lion [...]. And he did not shrink from any cruelty that he could inflict upon Christians. For as the damned heretics were in the habit of calumniating the Christian monks and saying that they did nothing but eat and drink, he sent one of his trusted friends named Yezid, accompanied by another and recensed all the monks in all the provinces and in Wadi Habib [Sketis] and on Mount Jarad and in the other places. And he laid a poll-tax upon them of one dinar from each individual, and commanded that they should make no more monks after those whom he has recensed.[166]

[165] *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria. Agatho to Michel I*, ed. B. EVETTS, vol. V, Paris 1909. On the redaction of Mawhub ibn Mansur, see J. VAN HEIJER, *CE*, *s.v.* '*History of the Patriarchs*'.

[166] *History of the Patriarchs*, *PO* V, 51. I quote this text including the correction of Y. RAGIB, 'Sauf-conduits d'Égypte Omeyyade et Abbasside', *Annales Islamologiques* 31 (1997), p. 143, who concluded that the text, instead of a term meaning castration, features a word meaning registration. This drastically changes the understanding of the behaviour of the Arab authorities.

John the deacon, who discussed these events in biographical categories, does not mention that el-Asbagh's measures corresponded well with with the reforms of Arab fiscalism, first introduced by caliph Abd el-Malik in Syria; their basis was a meticulous recension of taxpayers.

The counting of the monks and the ban on admitting novices were repeated by Usāma b. Zayd el-Tanūhi, who held the same office twice (714–17 and 722–23). Once again from the *History of the Patriarchs*:

> And he commanded the monks not to make monks of those who came to them. Then he recensed the monks, branded each one of them on his left hand, with a branding iron in the form of ring, that he might be known; adding the name of his church and monastery, without a cross, and with the date according to the era of Islam. Thus there was, in the year 96 of Hegira (AD 714), trouble among the monks, and oppression of the faithful.

Those who were discovered in monasteries without such bangles were to lose an arm, a leg, or their eyes were taken out.[167] Such actions of the authorities, had they been long-lived, would had threatend the existence of the institution. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine until when such measures were taken and how consistently they were executed. It is easy to imagine that these initiatives made it easier for the local authorities to commit robberies and extortions in both cash and kind in exchange for refraining from strict adherence to the letter of the law.

Combating the fugitives led the Arabs to create a system of population control using written permits to travel to a given locality and stay in its territory for a specified amount of time.[168] The *History of the Patriarchs* associates the introduction of this requirement with the aforementioned Usāma's term in office as governor of Egypt: 'Wherever a man is found walking, or passing from one place to another, or disembarking from a boat, or embarking, without a passport, he shall be arrested, and the contents of the boat confiscated, and the boat burned' (p. 69). The latest document of this kind known to us comes from AD 751 and concerns a monk

[167] *History of the Patriarchs*, *PO* V 68, 70.

[168] On these written permits erroneously referred to as passports in scholarly works, see the article by RAGIB, 'Sauf-conduits' (cit. n. 166), pp. 143–168, and Sophia SCHATTEN, 'Reiseformalitäten im frühislamischen Ägypten', *BSAC* 37 (1998), pp. 91–100.

from the monastery of Apa Jeremia at Saqqara, which certainly does not mean that the phenomenon ceased to exist, especially in the period of increased fiscal pressure.

For monks who had to travel to large agglomerations on a regular basis in order to sell their produce it was a major hindrance. One of the most interesting texts, *CLT* 3 found in the Theban region and dated to AD 728 or 743, is worth quoting:

> In the name of God, through us Chaēl and Iōhannēs, your serfs, men of your subservient Kastron Jēme, their epistle unto their lord, their illustrious emir, peace unto your lordship from God, hereafter.
> Since some monks of the Kulōl of Apa Paulos on the mount of Jēme, who shall deliver our worthless epistles to you, those whom we shall designate below in this petition, wished to go north to the district of the Fayyūm and sell their small amount of rope which is the result of their labors, they are unable to do this without a permit (seal) from your lordship. Therefore, we request your revered lordship to order that a permit be given to them for the period of three months from today on, so that they find a way to go north and sell their small amount of rope, which is the result of their labors and their life. They also are free men, and lo, we give surety for their persons. We sent it unto your lordship and peace unto you from God, hereafter.
> And they paid that which is due of them as taxes for the twelfth indiction.
> One list of permits for three persons for three months, permitting them to go to the Arsinoite nome.
> Iōsēph, son of Patzuen..., man (?), thick-skinned and yellowish and of the Cup, upon surety.
> Theodōros, son of Athanasios, man of the Cup, dark-skinned and corpulent, upon...
> Markos, son of Taurinus, man of the Cup, knuckle, upon...
> To the proper, good, God-loving and great lord and father, the esteemed... worthy and great protector, and ... beneficent, illustrious, and praiseworthy emir. Chaēl and Iōhannēs... serfs.

In other documents of the same type the stated purpose for travel is work to provide means for tax payment.[169] Was this formulaic statement (also encountered in permits issued for laymen) conform to reality, or was

[169] See texts published by RAGIB, 'Sauf-conduits' (cit. n. 166), texts V, VII, and VIII.

it a convenient excuse used to convince the officials who issued the documents? Anyhow, it is noteworthy that in 754 or 758 a man of the monastery of Apa Jeremia travelled to work in Fustat, a city in which a large number of buildings was still under construction – that very city from which people, sent there to do compulsory labour, tried to flee.[170]

Both the *History of the Patriarchs* and the Arab chroniclers that mention the influx of fugitives to monasteries tell us nothing about these people. Not only monks lived in monasteries, but also, as we have seen, laypersons performing various tasks or receiving aid. I suspect (although I have no proof) that most of those who arrived belonged to the second category.

According to many scholars, the increased and highly unstable taxes on land ultimately had more severe consequences than persecutions aimed at stopping the stream of people hiding in monasteries.[171] The situation of monasteries was made worse by the introduction of the poll-tax for monks in the first years of the eighth century, in a period when power over Egypt was in the hands of el-Asbagh.[172] The appropriate passage

[170] Ragib, 'Sauf-conduits' (cit. n. 166), text V.

[171] Works on the fiscal policy of the Arab state: D. C. Dennett, *Conversion and Poll Tax in Early Islam*, Cambridge Mass. 1950, pp. 65–115; K. Morimoto, *The Fiscal Administration of Egypt in the Early Islamic Period*, Kyoto 1981, pp. 53–144 (Morimoto's work needs to be confronted with its critical review by J. Gascou, 'De Byzance à l'Islam: les impôts en Égypte après la conquête arabe', *Journal of the Economy and Social History of the Orient* 26 (1983), pp. 97–109; supplemented and re-published in J. Gascou, *Fiscalité et société en Égypte byzantine,* Paris 2008, 99–112).

[172] The first mention of the poll-tax is provided by the *History of the Patriarchs* (*PO* V 57) in the life of Agathon (661–677). 'When a certain Chalcedonian, Theodore, was appointed as tax collector over Alexandria, Mareotis and neighbouring districts, he took the opportunity to harass the Monophysite patriarch: Theodore tyrannised over the father, Abba Agathon, and troubled him; not only demanding of him the money which he was bound to pay, and taking from him thirty six denarii as poll-tax every year, on account of his disciples, but that which he spent upon the sailors in the fleet he also exacted from him. And whenever he wanted funds he required the patriarch to supply them.' Although the redactor of the *History of the Patriarchs*, who lived in the 11th century, uses the Arab technical term *jizya*, it is unlikely that men of the Church were subjected to it in this period. Agathon's burden seems to have belonged to the category of extra payments extracted from patriarchs in bad years under various pretexts. The *History of the Patriarchs* mentions similar cases on many occasions.

from the *History of Patriarchs* is quoted above (p. 250). According to its author it was the first poll-tax paid by the monks. It would seem from this mention that the author of the work knew that in later years monks were exempted from it and then burdened with it again. However, in the Lives of later patriarchs holding the office in the eighth century no such events are mentioned and Arab chroniclers did not treat monks as a separate category. It can be supposed that exemption from the poll-tax took place when the central authorities were interested in gaining support of the Copts and dispensed with the strict fiscal policy. In my opinion this is how we can interpret the account of the *History of the Patriarchs* concerning decisions made by caliph Umar II (717–20), son of Abd el-Aziz, at the beginning of his reign.

> He commanded that there should be no taxes upon the property of the church and the bishops, and began to set the churches and bishops free from the impost on land; and he abolished the new taxes and rebuilt the ruined cities; and the Christians were in security and prosperity, and so were the churches.[173]

Prior to this Egypt had endured the nightmare of the reign of Usamah, a persecutor of Christians. The change for the better was short-lived, as the fiscal pressure returned and the poll-tax became an obligation for everyone ('even in the cases where it was not customary to take it'). Umar II was the first caliph to support the conversion of Christians to Islam, thus he exempted convertees from the poll-tax.

Tax relief policy was applied by Salih b. Ali, the first governor of Egypt after the triumph of the Abbasids, in return for the active aid he had received from the Christians during the war with Marwan II, the last Omayyad caliph. The *History of the Patriarchs* writes about this as follows:

> When the father, Abba Michael, requested of the governor to protect the propriety of the churches in all provinces, he complied with his request (p. 188).

However, this only lasted for two years:

[173] *History of the Patriarchs*, *PO* V, pp. 71–72. There is no mention of monks, but the author probably treated them as people of the Church.

> And in the third year of the rule of the Khorassanians they doubled the taxes, and exacted them from the Christians, and would not fulfil their promises to them. For the two secretaries aforesaid and the Khorassanians forgot that it was God who had given them the government, and neglected the holy Cross, which had gained them the victory. And Abd Allah, the prince, sent letters over the whole of his empire, declaring that every one who would adopt his religion, and pray according to his prayer, should be exempted from the poll-tax. So in consequence of the cruel extortions and burdens imposed upon them, many of the rich and poor denied the faith of Christ, and followed Abd Allah.[174]

D. C. Denett maintained that members of the clergy and monks were liable for the poll-tax only for a short time, specifically the period for which we have the testimony of the *History of the Patriarchs*.[175] His opinion was based on the fact that the dossier of eighth-century papyri from Aphrodito carried no references to monks or clerics. However, this testimony turned out to be unreliable: already the Coptic documents from the monastery in Balaizah published in 1954 by P. Paul Kahle proved this opinion false. Among them were many texts referring to the collection of the poll-tax, dating from various years of the first half of the eighth century. One of them, *P. Bal.* 130, can be precisely dated to AD 723/4.[176] Other Coptic documents corroborated the information provided by texts from Balaizah.[177]

The value of the poll-tax, as indicated by documents, depended on the financial situation of individual taxpayers and thus was subject to variation. Information found in the *History of the Patriarchs* and in Arab authors proves unreliable in this respect, as it gives us the tax value of a theoretical accounting unit. Texts that came into being as a result of the work of the administration (and are therefore undoubtedly reliable in this case) give specific figures and in some cases indicate the fraction of the theo-

[174] *History of the Patriarchs*, *PO* V, p. 189.

[175] Denett, *Conversion and Poll Tax* (cit. n. 171), p. 108.

[176] With corrections by Gonis, 'Arabs, monks, and taxes' (cit. n. 163), p. 215.

[177] Louvre E 27615: Mecheir 3 = 12 February 709. A. Boud'hors, 'Papyrus de Clédat au Musée du Louvre', [in:] Cäcilia Fluck, Lucia Langener, S. Richter, Sophia Schatten, and G. Wurst (ed.), *Divitiae Aegypti*, Wiesbaden 1995, pp. 30–31.

retical unit that constituted the burden for specific persons.[178] As far as monks were concerned, it was the monastic community that was the unit liable to taxation. The monastic authorities assumed responsibility for fulfilling the tax obligation. It was up to them to divide the burden among members of the community (monks and non-monks living in monasteries). Arabic texts analysed by D. C. Denett and Kosei Morimoto state that the poll-tax was imposed only on men over 20 years of age. The very poor were exempt (this must have been important for ascetics living alone in hermitages and not having any sources of income – such monks living off alms and possibly basketry certainly did exist in some places).

The poll-tax was a serious burden for monasteries, as well as for monks who lived on their own. The fundamental questions are: how severe was it and how did it affect the monastic economy?

Paul Kahle, who was the first researcher to wield evidence that spoke against D. C. Denett's conclusion, gave the following answer referring to the monastery in Balaizah (pp. 41–42):

> In fact, the taxes must have been extremely heavy on the monastery and it frequently had to borrow money, sometimes from its own members, to pay its taxes (102, 103, 108, 111). From the neighbouring monastery of Apa Mena we have a most interesting document relating to the appointment of a superior; a person who wished to become the superior of a monastery at this period had to make himself responsible for the payment of its taxes which clearly had to be paid from his own resources to a considerable extent. At Bala'izah the position must have been much the same and presumably this was the main reason for the appointment of Apa Ammone, a wealthy monk, as superior of the monastery here. Perhaps no other collection demonstrates so clearly that the disappearance of so many monasteries during the middle of the eighth century was directly due to heavy taxation; I need only mention number 290 here which shows that the monastery had to pay in one single year more than 88 solidi in taxes alone. This is an extraordinarily high figure for an establishment which had to pay its expenses mostly from handiwork or capital brought in by some of its wealthier members.

Paul Kahle was the most impressed by *P. Bal.* 290, which became the framework of his theory that the monastery in Balaizah was in a disastrous

[178] See Gascou, 'De Byzance à l'Islam' (cit. n. 171).

situation whose primary cause was the poll-tax. It is a tax-account with entries written down by three or four scribes on various days: 6, 14, 23 June, 15 July, 16 October, 23 November, all in the sixth indiction. It appears complete and it came into being as a result of adding up figures taken from other texts (this is implied by the altered order of months: Phaophi and Athyr should precede Paoni and Mesore. The sums were calculated twice: for Paoni and for Mesore – 76 1/24 1/48 solidi (line 14 a) and for Phaophi and Athyr – 88 1/3 1/24/ 1/48 solidi (line 22). In the first sequence of figures the highest numbers represent the poll-tax (*diagraphon*) – three times 15 solidi, totalling 45 solidi out of a grand total of 76 solidi. In the other sequence we have only 8 solidi for the poll-tax, the remaining figures were written in the damaged right part of the column. The monastery undoubtedly paid for the monks in several instalments, most likely as the necessary funds were collected. In *P. Bal.* 293, among the expenditures of the monastery, there are entries recording the poll-tax of individual monks. In two cases they amount to one solidus; in four – to a third of a solidus (there is also mention of payments of the monastery's debts). Another tax register from Balaizah, *P. Bal*. 300, records poll-tax payments, *dapane* for the period of 12 months, and *exedron* ('those away from home') for 28 persons, most of whom pay 1/48 of a solidus (only one individual pays 1/2 1/8, two 1/3 1/24 1/48, and one 1/3 1/8). We do not know what period these payments are for. In any case, the sums involved are small.

An important role in Paul Kahle's reasoning was also played by *P. Bal.* 102, a document that determined the manner of repayment of a debt to a *pistikos* (someone who accompanied the officials responsible for tax collection): 'Since we had need of eight solidi of gold that we should deliver them up as tax (*demosion*) of the monastery, we came and besought you. And your mercy met us and you gave them to us this day which is the sixteenth day of the month Mecheir in this year of the third indiction.' (lines 5–7). A detailed calculation follows: lentils for six solidi, and as for the two remaining solidi, the abbot promises: 'I shall repay them to you according as we shall find them. If God wills that we find honey, we shall repay them to you according to the price which shall be determined. Alternatively we shall repay them to you in lentils...' (lines 9–17). Paul Kahle interpreted this text as proof of the economic breakdown of the monastic community.

The very fact that money was borrowed to pay taxes is no proof of the debtor's desperate situation. Considering the type of commercial exchange, it is far from odd that the monastery did not have this sum at a given moment, at the same time maintaining good perspectives for the future. Repaying a cash loan in kind with a variety of products is well attested. Texts referring to the monastery of Balaizah (even the ones quoted above) mention payments of significant sums of money. Tomasz Markiewicz, who studied the currency turnover in this late period, offers the following assessment of the situation of churches or monasteries as debtors: 'An interesting question is whether borrowing money to pay taxes is indeed a sign of financial hardship. Lack of coined money may be sign of undermonetized economy, but not necessarily financial distress. The monastery would have drawn the majority of its income from his lands, and it may choose either to sell the crops from the last harvest and keep the money to pay the taxes, or sell the crops from the future harvest in advance when the need to rise money for the taxes arose.'[179] To assess the situation of a given monastery we would have to know a lot more about it, at least have access to relatively complete registers of income and expenditure for a period of a year, the basic cycle of both production and taxation. The archives of papyri from Deir Balaizah does not provide us with such an overview. It is possible that the monastery experienced economic difficulties in the first half of the eighth century, but this is no more than guesswork.

At the beginning of his interpretation of documents from Deir Balaizah, Paul Kahle mentions a Coptic text from Berlin, which originated in the nearby monastery of Apa Mena (*BP* 11937 = *SB Copt.* I 50).[180] It is a contract drawn up between its monks and Shenoute, a newly appointed abbot. Upon taking the position the abbot paid a sum of 53 solidi; if his brothers wished to strip him of his function they were required to pay him double this sum. In turn, if Shenoute were to abandon his post, he

[179] Markiewicz, 'The Church, clerics, monks, and credit' (cit. n. 139), pp. 181–182.

[180] C. Schmidt, 'Das Kloster des Apa Mena', *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache* 68 (1932), pp. 60–68. See also M. Krause, 'Zur Verfassung koptischer Klöster: die Abstwahl/Absternennung in koptischen Klöstern', [in:] M. Krause, Sophia Schatten (ed.), *Themelia. Spätantike und koptologische Studien Peter Grossmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden 1998, pp. 229–230.

would have to pay 400 solidi. Shenoute was to care for the monastery, its land and workshops, and to assume responsibility for the payment of taxes (*demosia*). He agreed not to introduce changes or appoint an individual whom the monks did not accept to some important but unspecified post (otherwise he would have to pay a fine of 4 pounds of gold). The editor writes as follows about the dating of this text: 'Our papyrus, in my opinion, comes from the eighth–ninth century and constitutes a compelling testimony of the decline of Egyptian monasticism, whose situation must have been perilous especially from the financial point of view, if the position of abbot could be "peddled" for 53 solidi.' (p. 68). The basis for dating this text is palaeography combined with the conviction that such a deplorable state of affairs must correspond to the conditions of the latest possible period. I believe that the presented image is highly exaggerated and the dating proposal is not justified.[181] The payment of the highest possible sum upon appointment to an ecclesiastical office was common practice and need not have ruled out authentic piety and readiness to serve the monastery.[182] The sums mentioned in the document are high and the relationship between them is striking: the monks risk payment of 106 solidi for the deposition of an abbot, but if he leaves on his own, it will cost him 400; for the appointment of someone who displeases the monks to an important monastic function he will pay 4 pounds of gold, i.e. 288 solidi. Contrary to the statement of Martin Krause, which is more drastic than Carl Schmidt's commentary, it is not stated anywhere in the text that the abbot of the monastery of Apa Mena paid the taxes out of his own pocket. He was responsible for their payment, as well as for the management of land and workshops.

Martin Krause saw the use of documents in the process of appointing an abbot as proof of the degradation of monasticism and recalled that Pachomius and Shenoute appointed their successors orally. However, the use of documents in moments of importance for the monastic community is attested already in AD 335, when a Melitian community draws up rules

[181] See *Moines et communautés monastiques*, pp. 350–352.

[182] On condemned practices such as simony, which were in fact of a much more complex nature, see my reasoning in *Études sur le christianisme*, pp. 195–212.

according to which the substitute of the abbot is supposed to act when leaving Egypt for a period of time (*P. Lond.* v 1914). Creating documents that regulate internal matters, especially financial ones, has nothing to do with the religious attitude of the contracting parties and does not constitute proof that the monastery is in poor financial condition.

Paul Kahle's opinion on the crisis of monasteries, repeated by Martin Krause,[183] was easily accepted, the more so as it corroborated the general message of the *History of the Patriarchs* which tells in a detailed and vivid way about the highly oppressive character of the rule of Arab authorities in the 8th century, especially about the persecution that specifically targeted the patriarchs, who were repeatedly called upon to pay high fines.[184] Clashes on financial grounds were meticulously described. Some governors of Egypt were good and just ('God-fearing man according to the method of Islam ', p. 73), but under their rule the Church was unable to fully recover what it had lost under the hostile governors, and the bad years that followed undermined the strength of the Christian congregations. At the same time, one needs to remember that all fiscal duties, not just the poll-tax, had unfavourable consequences for them. Thanks to their income and accumulated financial assets the Church and monasteries could fare better in the face of such demands than a common taxpayer, but the highly unstable fiscal policy of the Arab rulers inflicted serious damage.

Over the course of the eighth century, especially in its middle part, many monasteries disappeared or experienced a decline. Not all of them were affected, however, and among survivors were also some of the minor ones that seemed the most vulnerable to fiscal persecution and pressure

[183] Krause 'Zur Verfassung koptischer Klöster' (cit. n. 180), p. 230, concludes his discussion on the situation of monasteries in the eighth century as follows: 'Im 8. und 9. Jh. dagegen wird derjenige Mönch (oder vielleicht auch Laie?) Abt, der über genügend Geld verfügt, um die Steuern für das Kloster bezahlen zu können. Das Amt des Klosterbats wird also käuflich [...]. Nur durch diese Praxis überlebten von Hunderten ägyptischer Klöster eine kleine Anzahl die tiefe Krise, die fast zum Ende des Klosterwesens in Ägypten geführt hätte.'

[184] On the events and atmosphere of that period, see M. N. Swanson, *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt 641–1517*, Cairo 2010, pp. 5–26, and M. P. Martin, 'Une lecture de l'*Histoire des Patriarches d'Alexandrie*', *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 35 (1985), pp. 15–36.

from requisition-seeking authorities. Ample proof of this is supplied by a work entitled by its first editor, B. T. A. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*.[185] In it we indeed find information on abandoned and dying monasteries, but at the same time there are numerous descriptions of living monastic communities. Based on them we can see that the periods of oppression were punctuated by periods of friendly tolerance, when Christians and Muslims coexisted peacefully. When reading the work one is struck by the number of mentions of reconstruction, enlargement and embellishment of monasteries that had previously suffered damage for various reasons (also due to military activity of pretenders to the throne and Bedouin tribes pillaging various parts of the valley whenever the circumstances allowed).

It was only the growing hostility of the Muslim crowd that changed this state of affairs.

A researcher on the history of monasticism in the time of Arab rule has but a few scholarly works that can come to his aid, not counting works on the history of some monasteries written for apologetic reasons and exhibiting a poor command of critical instruments of historical research. There is one exception, which is unfortunately not widely accessible. It is the still-unpublished work of an important 20th-century researcher on monastic life in Egypt, Maurice Martin, SJ, who created files from material he collected over the years; each monastery attested in the sources had its 'fiche' or a shorter 'mention', reporting all that is found in the *History of the Patriarchs*, in the Synaxarium, in Arab geographers (including the so-called Abu Salih), in accounts of European travellers, in Napoleon's *Description de l'Égypte*, and lastly in papyri. Martin also investigated the remains of monasteries in the field and took his

[185] He erroneously attributed the work to an Armenian, Abu Salih. We now know that the work was a product of editorial interventions of two (or even three) authors, among which the most important role was played by Abu al-Makarim Sa'dallah Ibn Girgis ibn Massud (Abu Salih, whose name was written on the first page of the volume, was its owner). The writing process stretched from no later than 1171 to 1209/10. Abu Salih, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbbouring Countries*, edited and translated by B. T. A. Evetts, with added notes by A. J. Butler, Oxford 1895. See footnote 141 for further references.

observations into account when writing his work. He paid particular attention to minor monasteries that rarely appeared in modern research. He was able to demonstrate that a number of new monasteries emerged in the Arab period, contrary to the common belief that the Arabs forbade not only the building of new structures, but also the repair of ones that had fallen into ruin. The files remained in the form of a typescript,[186] various copies of which the author gave to persons close to him (I also have a copy of it on my desk while working on this paper), but the material they contained was used by Maurice Martin himself and by René-Georges Coquin for writing entries on monasteries in *The Coptic Encyclopedia*. The monasteries that could be located on a map were entered in the cartographic annex in volume 8 of this publication.

Maurice Martin's files show us the longevity of monasteries in the time of Arab rule. It was only in the 18th century that monastic life became limited to a few monasteries located deep in the desert.

The process of decline of monasteries had a complex nature and it would be naive to think that it was caused primarily by fiscal reasons. I will repeat what I have said at the beginning of this article about the resources in the hands of the abbots of these communities. In times when the Arabs did all they could to maximize the profits from Egypt and to secure the manpower they needed to build a fleet, raise palaces, etc., the monasteries had vast landed property.[187] This was not taken away from them, as the conquerors did not resort to confiscations beyond regions of insurgence, and these were not so numerous. Monasteries were never stable institutions and some of them ceased to exist even in the golden Byzantine age. The causes were varied and episodic: epidemics, lack of charismatic personalities who would attract new brothers, raids of bar-

[186] The IFAO authorities promise its publication, but it is a difficult task requiring the editor to actively interfere and make additions; I am not surprised it remains unfinished.

[187] In a passage quoted above P. Kahle seems to suggest that monastic assets were limited to income from handicraft and to 'capital' brought in by those monks who had been rich in 'the world'. He did not take into consideration the accumulation of property with the passage of generations, or donations of pious individuals, usually made at the time of death. I am also disturbed by the word 'capital', since the property in question was mostly land and houses, as we know today thanks to new documents.

barians from the desert, looting instigated by local magnates and even high-ranking officials, natural disasters like a bad inundation season. However, after a hiatus new monasteries emerged, often in the same area.

I suspect that the slow decline of monasteries was also (or perhaps primarily) brought about by other factors. Among them I would give priority to the impoverishment of a significant part of Egyptian Christians, who could no longer afford to offer donations as large as under Byzantine rule. Members of the Coptic elite were able to find a privileged place in the administration that ensured their prosperity, but they constituted a small group. Their pious donations usually went to famous sanctuaries, not to unknown monasteries. The islamization of Egypt entailed the shrinking of the social base of churches and monasteries, the decreasing of the number of new monks. Inner destabilization of the country – wars among the Arabs, raids, and pillage – weakened the Christian milieus in chora. It is certain, however, that not only throughout the caliphate of the Umayyads, but also under the Abbasids the decline of the monasteries was still a thing of the future.[188]

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[188] A similar opinion (perhaps more cautiously phrased) was expressed by A. Delattre, *Papyrus coptes et grecs du monastère d'apa Apollô de Baouît*, Brussels 2005, p. 75.