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Religious encounters on the southern Egyptian frontier in Late Antiquity (AD 298-642)

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11. The Church at Syene and Elephantine

The Paternouthis Archive

To the same lot of Coptic manuscripts, among which was the manuscript containing the *Life of Aaron*, and which were acquired by De Rustafjaell in 1907, belonged 'a dozen Greek papyri with fragments' which came from the island of Elephantine.⁴⁸² De Rustafjaell passed them on to the papyrologist Sir Harold Idris Bell (1879-1967). In August of the same year an equally large group of papyri was shown to the German excavators at Elephantine, who acquired the texts only after a year and subsequently sent them to Munich.

The British and German teams started to publish both halves of what is now known as 'the Paternouthis archive': the Munich half was published in 1914 and the London half in 1917.⁴⁸³ Although some preliminary articles were published, and both teams shared descriptions of the papyri, the separate publication of both halves has left its mark on the archive.⁴⁸⁴ Nonetheless, since 1917 several useful studies have appeared, paying attention to more formal aspects of the documents such as the subscription of the documents by notaries and the use of imperial titulature. The archive has also been used as a source for Late Antique society, including its use of status designations and evidence for the late Roman army.⁴⁸⁵

Recently, it has been suggested that several fragments of papyri published separately belong together. These joins have important consequences for the chronology, and hence the interpretation, of the papyri.⁴⁸⁶ Subsequently, an issue of a journal was dedicated to four different points of interest emanating from the archive: the legal and financial disputes in the archive, the sale of houses containing detailed descriptions of the houses and topography of Syene, evidence for the army stationed there and, finally, the evidence for Christianity in the papyri.⁴⁸⁷ The first two documents in the archive (dating to 493) have already been discussed above and showed that, compared with other fourth and fifth-century papyri from Elephantine, Christian names had become a significant part of Syenian nomenclature by the end of the fifth century.

Reading through the sixth and seventh-century documents in the archive, this phenomenon needs no further explanation. Formulas in the archive are also of a demonstrably Christian character, including typical invocations of Christ and swearing by Christian relics (κειμήλια), chapels (εὐκτηρία) and, even, a monastic habit (σχιῆμα).⁴⁸⁸ On the other hand, in one case the traditional swearing by the imperial fortune (τύχη) is maintained.⁴⁸⁹ Since the archive also gives a picture of how the Church had become intertwined with daily life in the sixth century, a subject only briefly touched upon in the article mentioned, we will focus our attention on this aspect.⁴⁹⁰ There is all the more reason to do so, since a recent study of ecclesiastical

⁴⁸² Rustafjaell, *Light* 3.

⁴⁸³ *P.Mon.*, of which a second edition appeared in 1986 as *P.Münch*. I, and *P.Lond*. V 1722-37.

⁴⁸⁴ E.g. H.I. Bell, 'Syene Papyri in the British Museum', *Klio* 13 (1913) 160-74.

⁴⁸⁵ Jones, *Later Roman Empire* 2, 654-5, 662-3, 669; J.G. Keenan, 'The Names of Flavius and Aurelius as Status Designations in Later Roman Egypt', *ZPE* 11 (1973) 33-63 at 35, 55, 62-3, and *ZPE* 13 (1974) 283-304 at 289, 295, 299-300; K.A. Worp, 'Byzantine Imperial Titulature in the Greek Documentary Papyri: The Oath Formulas', *ZPE* 45 (1982) 199-223 at 211-4, 217; J.M. Diethart, K.A. Worp, *Notarsunterschriften im byzantinischen Ägypten*, 2 vols (Vienna, 1986) 1.91-4.

⁴⁸⁶ Farber and Porten, 'Paternouthis', and Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 389-406.

⁴⁸⁷ J.J. Farber, 'Family Financial Disputes in the Paternouthis Archive', and G. Husson, 'Houses in Syene in the Paternouthis Archive', *BASP* 27 (1990) 112-21, 123-37; Keenan, 'Evidence'; MacCoull, 'Christianity'. For houses in the Paternouthis archive, see also, most recently, Alston, *City*, 110-1.

⁴⁸⁸ *P.Münch*. I 1.26; *P.Lond*. V 1728.9, 1729.25.

⁴⁸⁹ *P.Münch*. I 12.47.

⁴⁹⁰ Cf. MacCoull, 'Christianity', 156-8.

dignitaries in the papyri has greatly enhanced our knowledge on this subject and provides an excellent background for comparison.⁴⁹¹ Finally, the papyri from the Paternouthis archive can be complemented by the ostraka from Elephantine published thus far.

The Paternouthis archive consists of thirty-three Greek and four Coptic papyri, ranging in date from 493 to 613.⁴⁹² However, most of these texts fall in the period from 574 onwards, and only eight texts date to the period between 493 and 557 or 558.⁴⁹³ Among these are three loan contracts that were written in Thebes and some other documents that do not concern the family of Paternouthi(o)s, his wife Kako and his mother-in-law Tapia, the persons mentioned in almost all documents dated to after 574. It has therefore been presumed that the archive belonged to the family of Paternouthis, although the exact relation between the earlier and later texts has still to be satisfactorily clarified.

Paternouthis, son of Menas, is attested in documents from 578-582 until 613 and should not be confused with a Flavius Paternouthios, son of Dios, mentioned in an enrolment of a new recruit in the regiment of Elephantine,⁴⁹⁴ nor with Flavius Paternouthi(o)s, son of Menas, alias Benne, a soldier of the regiment of Syene whose sale of a boat has been recorded.⁴⁹⁵ Aurelius Paternouthis, son of Menas, is first mentioned in a sale of house shares, which is dated between 578 and 582.⁴⁹⁶ He was actually born in Syene, where he worked as a boatman.⁴⁹⁷ Later he became a soldier in the regiment of Elephantine and, probably for a brief intermediate period, in the regiment of Philae.⁴⁹⁸ Paternouthis received the status designation 'Flavius' upon becoming a soldier at Elephantine, for he is called Flavius Paternouthis for the first time as soldier of that regiment.⁴⁹⁹

The documents in the Paternouthis archive consist mainly of legal transactions performed for the family of Paternouthis, such as sales, loans, settlements of disputes and a will. Together they provide insight into the legal matters that occupied Paternouthis and his family at the end of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh century. At this point, it is important to realise that, although deposited on Elephantine, the documents were mainly written in Syene, which is why they are sometimes referred to as 'the Syene papyri'. Thus, over the shoulder of the legal issues concerning the Paternouthis family (and other people), we occasionally catch a glimpse of daily life in this town.

⁴⁹¹ Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger*.

⁴⁹² The texts are printed in English translation with commentary by Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, nos. D 20-52 and E 1-3. Add the Greek fragments under the entries *P.Lond.* V 1850-9, 1861, and *P.Münch.* I 17-8, and the fragmentary Coptic text edited by S.J. Clackson, 'Four Coptic Papyri from the Paternouthis Archive in the British Library', *BASP* 32 (1995) 97-116 at 112-3. From now on, reference will be made to the Greek or Coptic text and Porten's translation.

⁴⁹³ *P.Lond.* V 1855 + *P.Münch.* I 15 = D 20; *P.Münch.* I 16 = D 21; *P.Lond.* V 1722 = D 22; *P.Münch.* I 8 + *P.Lond.* V 1857 = D 23; *P.Lond.* V 1720 = D 24; *P.Lond.* V 1734 = D 25; *P.Lond.* V 1719 = D 26; *P.Lond.* V 1721 = D 27. *P.Rein.* II 107 = D 28 dates to 27 March, 558 or 573.

⁴⁹⁴ *P.Münch.* I 2.2, 23 = D 31 (May-6 October 578).

⁴⁹⁵ *P.Münch.* I 5 r^o 1 + *P.Lond.* V 1726.5, 12 + *P.Münch.* I 4.47-8 + *P.Münch.* I 5 v^o 1 = D 34.1, 5, 12, 47-8, 59 (581).

⁴⁹⁶ *P.Lond.* V 1724.6-7 = D 32 (578-82).

⁴⁹⁷ *P.Münch.* I 7.10-1 + *P.Lond.* V 1860 = D 36.10-1; *Lond.* V 1729.7-8 = D 37; *P.Lond.* V 1727.4, 62-3 = D 38; *P.Münch.* I 9.9 + *P.Lond.* V 1734 = D 40.9; *P.Münch.* I 10.6-7 = D 43; *P.Lond.* V 1732.1-2 = D 44, *P.Münch.* I 14.14, 102-3 = D 48; *P.Lond.* V 1736.4-5 = D 51; *P.Lond.* V 1737.4-5, 28 = D 52 (dating from 23 June 583 to 9 February 613).

⁴⁹⁸ Regiment of Elephantine: *P.Lond.* V 1730.6-7 = D 41, *P.Münch.* I 10.6-7 = D 43, *P.Münch.* I 12.3-4 = D 46; *P.Münch.* I 13.7 = D 47; *P.Münch.* I 14.102 = D 48; *P.Lond.* V 1736.4, 21-2 = D 51; *P.Lond.* V 1737.4 = D 52 (22 August 585-9 February 613). Regiment of Philae: *P.Lond.* V 1732.1-2 = D 44 (16 August 586 or 601).

⁴⁹⁹ *P.Lond.* V 1730.6 = D 41 (22 August 585). For this phenomenon, see Keenan, 'Names', 61-3.

The Church at Syene

Two institutions seem to have been deeply integrated into the society of Late Antique Syene: the Army and the Church. This is already manifest from the topographical indications mentioned in the papyri.⁵⁰⁰ For example, in a sale dated to the end of the fifth century, a building is situated 'in the southern part of the fortress (φρουρίου) and in the quarter (λαύρα) called (quarter) of the camp, namely (quarter) of the cobblers (παρεμβολῆς ἤτοι σκυτέων)', a name it retained for at least another century.⁵⁰¹ Apparently, the military camp of Syene lent its name to the quarter it was situated in. Another point of reference in sixth-century Syene was 'the camel yard of the transport (service) from Philae (τοῦ καμηλῶνος (read καμηλῶνος) ἡ βασταγὴ τῶν Φιλῶν)', lying in the same quarter of the camp,⁵⁰² which later even gave its name to a separate quarter.⁵⁰³

Christian buildings also became points of reference in the town.⁵⁰⁴ The same southern part of the fortress contained 'the quarter of the shrine of the holy and triumphant Viktor (ἡ λαύρα τοῦ εὐκτηρίου τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ ἀθλοφόρου Βίκτορος)',⁵⁰⁵ apparently named after 'the holy *topos* of the martyr Apa Viktor (ὁ ἅγιος τόπος ἀπα Βίκτορος μάρτυρος)', lying in this quarter.⁵⁰⁶ All three these quarters were situated in the 'southern part of the fortress' (περὶ τὸ νότινον μέρος τοῦ φρουρίου), perhaps a general term for the fortified town of Syene.⁵⁰⁷ It has even been proposed that there is evidence for a monastery within the town walls. In the description of the boundaries of a courtyard, it is said that it borders on 'the public wall of the monastery' (τὸ δημοσίον τείχος τοῦ ὄρους).⁵⁰⁸ However, the term ὄρος also means 'desert' or 'mountain', and it is more likely that the town wall stretching towards the desert is meant, for otherwise the name of the monastery would have been mentioned.⁵⁰⁹

Another manifestation of Church and Army in the documents from Syene is through the persons involved in these texts.⁵¹⁰ In almost all cases where witnesses

⁵⁰⁰ Husson, 'Houses', 130-2. For the terminology of the division of towns, see Alston, *City*, 130-57. See now also K.A. Worp, 'Town Quarters in Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Early Arab Egypt', in P.M. Sijpesteijn, L. Sundelin (eds), *Papyrology and the History of Early Islamic Egypt* (Leiden, 2004) 227-48, which replaces Alston's lists.

⁵⁰¹ *P.Münch.* I 16.7-8 = D 21. Cf. *P.Lond.* V 1722.12-3 = D 22; *P.Münch.* I 8.19 + *P.Lond.* V 1857 = D 23.19; *P.Münch.* I 9.54-5 + *P.Lond.* V 1734 = D 40.54-5, *P.Münch.* I 13.21-2 = D 47.

⁵⁰² *P.Lond.* V 1722.14 = D 22 (adapted).

⁵⁰³ *P.Münch.* I 11.23 = D 45, *P.Münch.* I 12.18-9 = D 46.

⁵⁰⁴ For parallels in other cities, see Worp, 'Town Quarters', 236-45.

⁵⁰⁵ *P.Münch.* I 9.37 + *P.Lond.* V 1734 = D 40.37. Cf. *P.Lond.* V 1733.25 = D 49.

⁵⁰⁶ *P.Lond.* V 1733.36 = D 49 (slightly adapted). For the interchange of the terms εὐκτήριον and τόπος, see Papaconstantinou, *Culte des saints*, 272-3. On the basis of the term λαύρα, Timm, *Christlich-koptische Ägypten* 1, 224, and Richter, *Christianisierung Nubiens*, 138, mistakenly think that the sanctuary is a monastery, but cf. Papaconstantinou, *Culte des saints*, 304 (n. 105). See also for a parallel Papaconstantinou, 'Sanctuaires de la Vierge', 83.

⁵⁰⁷ Cf. Husson, 'Houses', 129-30.

⁵⁰⁸ *P.Münch.* I 13.28 = D 47.

⁵⁰⁹ See H. Cadell, R. Rémondon, 'Sens et emplois de τὸ ὄρος dans les documents papyrologiques', *REG* 80 (1967) 343-9 at 344. A confirmation that in this case 'desert/monastery' is meant is provided by the inscription *IThSy* 237.6-7 from Syene, a building inscription of the town wall, which mentions 'that part of the wall which extends towards the desert' (τὸ μέρος τοῦτο τοῦ τείχο[υ]ς τὸ ἐπὶ τὸ ὄρος). Cf. Husson, 'Houses', 131; Farben, *Elephantine Papyri*, 532 (n. 21). For τὸ ὄρος in the sense of 'monastery', see Papaconstantinou, *Culte des saints*, 277-8, with examples.

⁵¹⁰ In the following analysis I have omitted the documents written in places other than Syene, *P.Lond.* V 1720 + *P.Lond.* V 1720 v^o = D 24, *P.Lond.* V 1719 = D 26, *P.Lond.* V 1721 = D 27 (Thebes), *P.Münch.* I 7 + *P.Lond.* V 1860 = D 36 (Antinoopolis), *P.Lond.* V 1735 + *P.Lond.* V 1851 = D 50 (Bau).

subscribed, they were either soldiers of the regiment of Syene or clergymen: of the 126 witnesses, ninety-three are soldiers and nineteen clergymen.⁵¹¹ What kind of titles do the latter bear? Some have the titles priest or deacon without further specification, some have the specification 'of Syene' and some have the specification 'of the church of Syene'.⁵¹² With 'the church of Syene', perhaps the main church, that is, the episcopal church is meant. In general the term used for it is ἡ καθολικὴ ἐκκλησία or ἡ ἅγια τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐκκλησία.⁵¹³ This last term is exactly what we find at another place in the archive, where a 'Ioannes, son of Abraamios, most humble priest of God's holy church of Syene' signs on behalf of the sellers of a house-share, because they are illiterate.⁵¹⁴ However, in the papyri it seems that with the term ἐκκλησία a concrete building is always meant. Because there were certainly several churches in Syene at this time, the most important of these buildings may be meant, that is, the episcopal church.⁵¹⁵ These examples illustrate the difficulty in identifying specific churches from papyri.⁵¹⁶

The signing of documents for private persons seems to have been left to the lower clergy: there is only one higher ecclesiastical dignitary mentioned as a witness, 'Isakos son of Taeion, archdeacon of (the church of) Saint Mary of Syene'.⁵¹⁷ The title archdeacon (ἀρχιδιάκονος) is not uncommon in the papyri and designates the leader of the deacons of a church.⁵¹⁸ The title implies that a larger number of clergy were involved in the church in question, and hence that it denotes a larger church. As is supported by our text, these churches need not always have been episcopal churches. On the basis of a single wall painting, it has been proposed that this church of St Mary was the converted temple of Isis.⁵¹⁹ However, it seems hard to base all this on one, fragmentary wall painting. Moreover, Mary is depicted in many churches which are not dedicated to her.⁵²⁰ We should therefore be hesitant in identifying the church mentioned in the papyri with the converted temple of Isis.

To return to the subscribers it appears that soldiers and clergymen were important persons in the daily life of the town for they were frequently asked to sign documents for private persons. In doing this, ecclesiastical dignitaries were not acting on their own behalf as private persons but as clergymen. On the other hand, this position was not based on their ecclesiastical prerogatives but on the trust and respect

⁵¹¹ In two cases, the soldiers are from Philae: *P.Münch.* I 16.49 = D 21 (Flavius Paenos, son of Iakob, *ordinarius* of Philae) and *P.Münch.* I 13.80 = D 47 (Flavius Psan, son of Aron, soldier of the regiment of Philae).

⁵¹² Priest/deacon: 6; priest/deacon of Syene: 2; priest/deacon of the church of Syene: 9.

⁵¹³ Wipszycka, *Études* 157-75 ('Καθολικὴ et les autres épithètes qualifiant le nom ἐκκλησία: contribution à l'étude de l'ordre hiérarchique des églises dans l'Égypte byzantine', 1994'); Papaconstantinou, *Culte des saints* 271; Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger*, 35.

⁵¹⁴ *P.Lond.* 1724.79-80 = D 32.

⁵¹⁵ Mohrmann, *Études* 4, 215.

⁵¹⁶ Personal communication from G. Schmelz. Cf. Wipszycka, *Études* 163: 'En ce qui concerne les actes officiels, le nom ἐκκλησία porte toujours une épithète (...), sauf dans les signatures des témoins, où les épithètes sont parfois omises'. On the terminology for Christian places of worship see Wipszycka, *Études* 157-75, and Papaconstantinou, *Culte des saints* 267-81.

⁵¹⁷ *P.Lond.* V 1731.45 = D 42 (20 September 585), *P.Münch.* I 11.77 = D 45 (7 October 586). The *editio princeps* of the Munich text reads Πταείονος, but this reading was corrected to Ταείονος by H.I. Bell, in *BL* I, p. 310 (I owe this reference to K.A. Worp). Apart from these papyri, one of the fragments belonging to the archive, *P.Lond.* V 1850, mentions a πρεσβύτερος τῆς ἁγίας Μαρίας. Cf. Richter, *Christianisierung Nubiens* 138, who seems to equate the episcopal church with the church of St Mary, but this cannot be true, cf. Timm, *Christlich-koptische Ägypten* 1, 223; Husson, 'Houses', 131-2.

⁵¹⁸ Wipszycka, *Études* 195-224 at 222-3 ('Fonctionnement de l'église égyptienne aux IV^e-VIII^e siècles (sur quelques aspects)', 1992'); Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger*, 37. In n. 238 Schmelz overlooks the attestation *P.Lond.* V 1731 = D 42.

⁵¹⁹ Husson, 'Houses', 132: 'The church of Holy Mary must be the Ptolemaic temple of Isis', followed by Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 525 (n. 16); Richter, *Christianisierung Nubiens*, 138.

⁵²⁰ Papaconstantinou, 'Sanctuaires de la Vierge', 90.

they had among the people. In this way, the authority of the clergy reached into the public sphere, where they acted as protectors, judges, guarantors in private matters, and local politicians.⁵²¹ Two such functions of the clergy in the public sphere return in the Paternouthis archive: clergymen as private notaries and clergymen as judges.

Clergymen as Private Notaries and Judges

Documents were usually drafted by professional notaries but could also be given to 'private notaries'. Private notaries were not officially trained for this task, but were sufficiently trained in legal matters to write down a document. Clergymen functioned both as professional and private notaries to draft documents.⁵²² In the papyri from the Paternouthis archive, only one professional scribe is mentioned with his title (συμβολαιογράφος), a Christophoros, son of Paternouthios.⁵²³ Besides this official scribe, of the twenty-seven scribes in total, nine are military officials and four belong to the clergy. As was to be expected, people in Syene also went to the record keepers of the army (the *adiutores*), and other military officials, such as former *vicarii*, soldiers, a *decurio* and a former *actuarium*.⁵²⁴ Among the clergymen writing down documents for people were Phosphorios, a priest (twice), Theophilos, a deacon, and Petros, a deacon.⁵²⁵ These numbers again show the important role of Army and Church in the society of sixth-century Syene, in which the function of military officials as notaries is particularly striking.⁵²⁶

Another function of Army and Church was to sign for people who were illiterate. Here the numbers are even more striking. Only four people could sign for themselves; in the cases where people could not sign, this was done by either clergymen (four times) or military officials, most often soldiers (twenty-one times). One of the clergymen signing for illiterates we have already encountered was Ioannes, son of Abraamios, priest of the church of St Mary.⁵²⁷ The other signers are the deacon Theophilos, son of Paeion, and the deacon Theophilos. In fact, the deacons may be one and the same person, and be identical with the private notary also called Theophilos the deacon.⁵²⁸ Apparently, military officials and ecclesiastical dignitaries had such standing that private persons asked them to write, subscribe and sign their documents.

A last public function the Army and Church performed in the Paternouthis archive was arbitration, a common means to avoid a trial in court.⁵²⁹ Both parties went to a person of standing, set out their case, the judge came to a verdict, and this verdict was sanctioned in an official document. For example, in the Paternouthis archive, a trained lawyer (σχολαστικός) arbitrated in a dispute over a legacy.⁵³⁰ In another

⁵²¹ E. Wipszycka, *Les ressources et les activités économiques des églises en Égypte du IV^e au VIII^e siècle* (Brussels, 1972) 154-73; Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger*, 255-6.

⁵²² Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger*, 250-4.

⁵²³ *P.Münch.* I 14.111 = D 48.

⁵²⁴ *P.Münch.* I 8.50 + *P.Lond.* V 1857 = D 23.50, *P.Lond.* V 1733.81 = D 49 (*adiutores*); *P.Münch.* I 2.22 = D 31 (*ordinarius* and *adiutor*); *P.Lond.* V 1727.73 = D 38, *P.Münch.* I 9.111 + *P.Lond.* V 1734 = D 40.111 (former *vicarii*); *P.Lond.* V 1722.60 = D 22 (*centurio*); *P.Lond.* V 1736.34 = D 51 (former *actuarium*); *P.Lond.* V 1723.29 = D 30, *P.Münch.* I 13.85 = D 47 (soldiers). On these functions, see Keenan, 'Evidence', 147.

⁵²⁵ *P.Lond.* V 1855 + *P.Münch.* I 15.26 = D 20.26, *P.Münch.* I 16.52 = D 21 (Phosphorios), *P.Lond.* V 1724.88 = D 32 (Theophilos), E 3.7 (Petros).

⁵²⁶ Diethart and Worp, *Notarsunterschriften* 1, 13: 'Es fällt auf, daß öfters Offiziere der Garnison Syene als Notare auftreten'.

⁵²⁷ *P.Lond.* V 1724.79-81 = D 32.

⁵²⁸ *P.Lond.* V 1728.25-6 = D 39; *P.Lond.* V 1733.73-4 = D 49.

⁵²⁹ Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger*, 272-88.

⁵³⁰ *P.Lond.* V 1849 + *P.Münch.* I 6.84 = D 35.4, 84. On σχολαστικός, see A. Claus, 'Ο σχολαστικός' (Diss. Cologne, 1965); Gagos and Van Minnen, *Settling a Dispute*, 21; *P.Aphrod.Lit.*, p. 688 (n. 98).

dispute over a legacy, the parties invoke 'the board of the devoted leaders of the regiment of Syene' (τὸ κοινὸν τῶν καθοσιωμένων πρώτων ἀριθμοῦ Συήνης), that is, a military board, to resolve the issue.⁵³¹ But it was apparently also quite normal to go to an ecclesiastical official to settle a dispute.

This appears from another settlement of a dispute over a legacy, this time involving Paternouthis and his brother-in-law, Ioannes.⁵³² Ioannes felt himself hard done by the inheritance of his father. Initially, Ioannes had gone to the lawyer (γραμματεὺς) Paeion to plea against his mother Tapia, and he had been accredited four *solidi*. This is where Paternouthis came in, for he prevented his mother-in-law from paying her son this amount. As a consequence, Ioannes again went to an arbitrator, this time to a *vicarius* of Hermonthis, who fined Paternouthis seven *solidi*. After having quarrelled over this settlement for a while, both parties agreed to ask the priest Sereu of the holy church of Omboi, that is, the episcopal church, who happened to be in Syene, to arbitrate again. Sereu decided that Ioannes' claim of the four *solidi* was still legitimate, but that Paternouthis had to be given back five *solidi* from the payment he had made for the previous settlement, leaving one *solidus* for Ioannes to pay to Paternouthis as a settlement of the dispute. This arbitration shows that clergymen, even when not in their own diocese, could exert judicial power in important cases, such as that between Ioannes and Paternouthis certainly was, as it had taken two previous settlements and was drawn up by a professional notary.

Finally, apart from these functions in public life, clergymen also acted as private persons. For example, in a document dated to 12 March 584, the priest Ioannes, son of Patechnoumios, donates all his possessions to Paternouthis after his death including as a security a share of a house which had come to Ioannes by a legacy from his sister Mary. Apparently, the ownership of the house was disputed.⁵³³ As can be seen from some erasures, at first the document was addressed to Paternouthis' mother-in-law, Tapia, to whom Ioannes had sold shares of houses earlier. As a reason for his donation, Patechnoumios mentioned the continuous care from Paternouthis, a common motif in these acknowledgements to give the gift a bona fide character.⁵³⁴

Another document is a settlement of a dispute between the nun Aurelia Tsone and her mother Tapia.⁵³⁵ Tsone's parents divorced when she was small and her father Menas gave Tapia four *solidi* to raise their child. Tapia, however, never looked after Tsone, and the child was raised by her father. Now Tsone wants to claim back the four *solidi*, which her mother said was her dowry and was paid by Menas when they divorced. They settled the dispute by acknowledging that Tapia had to pay the four *solidi* to her daughter. The circumstance that Tsone is a nun is an interesting element in the story. Apparently, after her father died there was no guardian left and she sought refuge in a nunnery.

The Church at Elephantine

Glimpses of the daily life of the clergy at Elephantine in this period are given by the ostraka found there. Thirteen of these, written in Coptic, were found during the earlier German excavations of 1906-1911. They are now in Berlin and were published in the 1970s.⁵³⁶ They are all loans or acknowledgements of debts and on account of their

⁵³¹ *P.Münch.* I 1.19-20 = D 29, *P.Münch.* I 2.1 = D 31.

⁵³² *P.Münch.* I 14 = D 48, also quoted by Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger*, 275, 280, 283, 286, 288.

⁵³³ *P.Lond.* V 1729 = D 37.

⁵³⁴ Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 500 (n. 1).

⁵³⁵ *P.Lond.* V 1731 = D 42.

⁵³⁶ F. Hintze, 'Berliner koptische Ostraka aus Elephantine', *ZÄS* 104 (1977) 97-112 (nos. 1-13) = *SB Kopt.* I 24-35 (nos. 1-11, 13), 235 (no. 12) = E 4-16. Note that one of these, no. 13 = *SB Kopt.* I 35 = E 10, has been re-edited as a Greek text with some Coptic elements, K.A. Worp, 'Das berliner Ostrakon P. 14735: Koptisch oder Griechisch?', *AfP* 36 (1990) 75-7.

formulae are tentatively dated to either of the following indiction cycles: 597-611 or 612-626.⁵³⁷ Four more ostraka are in other places (Bristol, Oxford, London and Cairo) and consist of an acknowledgment of debt, two orders (on one ostrakon), a contract and an account.⁵³⁸ These texts are undated, but are probably contemporary with the other documents mentioned here (that is, they date to the end of the sixth or the first quarter of the seventh century). The last-named account contains the name of Haronch(is) who was an archdeacon.⁵³⁹

Interesting is a fragmentary contract in which the priest Sarapamon orders a certain Ienhor to take his daughter in apprenticeship for two years, 'so that you do not neglect [her] but teach her her work... If you neglect her, this de[ed] is dissolved'.⁵⁴⁰ Two of the Berlin ostraka were written by the deacons Papas and Daueid, son of Menas, who at the same time acted as witnesses, while Daueid may be the same person as the witness of this name in another ostrakon.⁵⁴¹ Thus although in the papyri scribes and witnesses are usually not the same persons, these documents show that the public function of the clergy at Elephantine was not so different from that at Syene.

The last document from Berlin to be mentioned here has a peculiar character. It is an acknowledgement of debt by the 'board of the leaders of Elephantine and the whole fort', a military board which we already encountered in similar terms for Syene. They acknowledge that Paham, son of Abraham, had lent them one *solidus* but that one third of this sum had been put forward as Paham's share in an expenditure (ΑΝΤΑΛΛΩΜΑ) to the poor (ΖΟΜΟΙΡΟΣ). The last word has been interpreted as deriving from Greek ἄμοιρος, 'poor'. Hence, later commentators remark: 'This text is a significant witness to charitable activity at Elephantine'.⁵⁴²

Recently, this view has been challenged.⁵⁴³ Firstly, it is suggested that Paham, son of Abraham, was a *centurio* and belonged to the board of officers himself. The debt of the board was therefore some sort of account to which all officers had to contribute and from which they could spend money. Moreover, the Coptic word ΖΟΜΟΙΡΟΣ is derived from Greek ὄμηρος, 'hostage', a more plausible solution than the one proposed earlier. The deed for ransoming hostages is one in a long Christian tradition and is well imaginable in a frontier area. If the Berlin ostraka do indeed date to 597-611 or 612-626, which, admittedly, has yet to be proven, the dating of this ostrakon, the tenth indiction, would be either 25 May 607 or 622.⁵⁴⁴

In addition to the ostraka that the Germans found on Elephantine, a French expedition also found hundreds of ostraka which have mostly been stored in the Louvre. Recently, a study of the Greek papyri and ostraka from Elephantine, containing ninety-four ostraka dating to Late Antiquity, as well as a preliminary report on about sixty Coptic ostraka have appeared, which have greatly enhanced our view of Late Antique Elephantine.⁵⁴⁵ The Coptic ostraka were isolated from the large collection of the Louvre on several grounds: they contained the name 'Elephantine' (ⲒⲎⲔ) or terms and formulae found in other Coptic ostraka from Elephantine, they contained palaeographical similarities to these other ostraka or were identified on the basis of the pottery characteristic for Elephantine. On similar grounds, it seems that these ostraka

⁵³⁷ Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 572.

⁵³⁸ E 17-20.

⁵³⁹ E 20.2.

⁵⁴⁰ E 19.6-9.

⁵⁴¹ *SB Kopt.* I 24.13 = E 5; *SB Kopt.* I 26.8-9 = E 6; *SB Kopt.* I 30.18-21 = E 8.

⁵⁴² Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 585. Cf. Hintze, 'Berliner koptische Ostraka', 106.

⁵⁴³ P. van Minnen, 'Prisoners of War and Hostages in Graeco-Roman Egypt', *JJP* 30 (2000) 155-63 at 159-60.

⁵⁴⁴ Cf. Van Minnen, 'Prisoners of War', 160-1.

⁵⁴⁵ *O. Eleph. Wagner* 127-65, 220-78, 313-35, 361-72; S. Bacot, C. Heurtel, 'Ostraca coptes d'Éléphantine au Musée du Louvre', in Bosson, *Études coptes VII*, 17-45. Add a Coptic ostrakon now in Cairo which contains the name 'Elephantine' (ⲒⲎⲔ), R. Engelbach, 'A Coptic Ostrakon Mentioning Ieb (Elephantine)', *ASAE* 38 (1938) 47-51.

are contemporary with those of Berlin, that is to say, they date to the very end of the sixth or the early seventh century.

Just as in the Paternouthis archive, reference is made to military terms like 'camp' (ΚΑΣΤΡΟΝ) and 'regiment' (ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ), as well as to a military official, the *actuarius*.⁵⁴⁶ Two of the officials mentioned, a *comicularius* and a stolarch, were originally military titles, but by Late Antiquity had also become administrative officials, the former being a scribe and the latter responsible for navigation. With the busy boat traffic on the Nile at Elephantine, the stolarch must have been an important official.⁵⁴⁷ Other military activities appear from ostraka containing numbers for the *naulon* (ναῦλον), a military tax on boat transport, which is also mentioned in one of the ostraka in Berlin.⁵⁴⁸ These texts imply a similar heavy presence of the Army at Elephantine as appears from the Paternouthis archive for Syene.

There is also some evidence of the Church in the ostraka. For example, one ostrakon mentions a lector (ΔΙΔΑΚΤΩΤΗΣ) Abraam, son of Iakobos, probably of the main church of Elephantine.⁵⁴⁹ In other Coptic ostraka, deacons, priests and a bishop are mentioned.⁵⁵⁰ A Greek testament written on a pot sherd contains the only reference found thus far to a church on Elephantine. Unfortunately, it breaks off after the phrase 'priest of the holy...' (πρεσβύτερος ἁγίας Ι), where the name of the church of a saint or of the episcopal church would have been mentioned.⁵⁵¹ On the other Greek ostraka, deacons and priests are mentioned, several of them in a list of clergymen.⁵⁵²

Recently, a fragmentary ostrakon has been published, which has been transcribed as being a Coptic ostrakon but must be a Greek one due to the name of Elephantine mentioned in the text (Ἐλεφαντίνη in stead of ΗΒ).⁵⁵³ According to the transcription, the ostrakon bears the name of an Aurelius Papnouthis, son of Viktor, lector (ἀνακν(ώστης), read ἀναγν(ώστης)?) of the church of Elephantine.⁵⁵⁴ Probably, just as at Syene, the expression 'the church of Elephantine' denotes the most important church of the island, the episcopal church.⁵⁵⁵

The last text mentioned here contains striking evidence for monasticism on the island, namely in connection with the matting industry. Several Greek and Coptic ostraka from Elephantine are tickets for the receipt of a certain number of bundles

⁵⁴⁶ ΚΑΣΤΡΟΝ: inv. AF 12607. ΑΡΙΘΜΟΣ: AF 12559, 12560. ΑΚΤΟΥΑΡ(ΙΟΣ): AF 12561. Cf. Dijkstra, 'Late Antique Inscriptions', 61-2 (no. 5), the mentioned Greek inscription of Dios, son of Pasmel, from the quay wall at Elephantine, probably contemporary with the latter ostrakon and abbreviated in the same way.

⁵⁴⁷ ΚΟΡ(ΗΙΚΟΓΛΑΡΙΟΣ): E 32583. ΣΤΩΛΑΡΧΗΣ: AF 12555. *Comicularii* are also known from two sixth-century Greek ostraka from Elephantine: *O.Eleph. Wagner* 315.1, 316.1. On these officials, see Bacot and Heurtel, 'Ostraca coptes', 30-4, and Mitthof, *Annona militaris* 1, 165.

⁵⁴⁸ *SB Kopt.* I 35.2 = E 10; AF 12605-6, 12608. See Farben, *Elephantine Papyri*, 588 (n. 7); Bacot and Heurtel, 'Ostraca coptes', 34-5.

⁵⁴⁹ AF 12594 (Fig. 3). On ecclesiastical lectors, see Wipszycka, *Études* 225-55 at 238-48 ('Les ordres mineurs dans l'église d'Égypte du IV^e au VIII^e siècle', 1992); Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger*, 38-9. Ecclesiastical lectors are attested only from the end of the fifth century onwards, which provides a *terminus post quem* for the dating of our document. The claim of Bacot and Heurtel, 'Ostraca coptes', 42, that this is the only known lector of Elephantine ignores the evidence of the ostrakon discussed below, which must also date to after the end of the fifth century.

⁵⁵⁰ Deacons/priests: inv. not mentioned. Bishop: E 32589.

⁵⁵¹ AF 12613. Cf. e.g. *P.Lond.* V 1850 (πρεσβύτερος τῆς ἁγίας Μαρίας); *P.Münch.* I 14.33 (πρεσβυτέρω τῆς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας).

⁵⁵² Priests: *O.Eleph. Wagner* 128.4 (fifth/sixth century), 154 (fifth/sixth century), 156 ('Byzantine period'), 251 (?; 'Byzantine period'). Deacons: *O.Eleph. Wagner* 277.2 (fourth century), 367.5 (fourth century), 368.5 (sixth century). List of clergymen: *O.Eleph. Wagner* 372 (fourth/fifth century).

⁵⁵³ Personal communication from S. Schaten.

⁵⁵⁴ Jenkins, 'Two Christian Period Finds', 61.

⁵⁵⁵ Jenkins, 'Two Christian Period Finds', 61-2.

(ΜΤΟΝ) of alfa (ΚΕΜ), the material used for mat (ΤΜΗ) weaving.⁵⁵⁶ Mat-weaving is generally associated with the activities of monks.⁵⁵⁷ So it was at Elephantine, for one of the receipts reads as follows: 'Psan, the priest, who writes to Psan, the *oikonomos* (οἰκονόμος): give him eight bundles of alfa and ...'.⁵⁵⁸ The *oikonomos* arranged the financial affairs of a monastery and apparently Psan received the material which was to be worked by the monks. Besides being interesting for Egyptian monasticism in general, this text proves that Elephantine had a monastery in the sixth or seventh century, as a later Arabic source, Abû l-Makârim, reports that there was one, though in ruins, in the twelfth century.⁵⁵⁹ Although far scantier than the evidence from the papyri of the Paternouthis archive, the evidence from the ostraka seems to support the impression that the Church, and Monasticism, had become an integral part of society of the First Cataract region in the sixth century.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁶ Greek: *O. Eleph. Wagner* 150 (dated to the sixth century); 327-9 (fifth/sixth century). Coptic: E 17; AF 12562, 12619, E 32584-5, 32588. See on the matting industry at Elephantine Bacot and Heurtel, 'Ostraca coptes', 36-40.

⁵⁵⁷ E.g. Wipszycka, *Études* 324-5.

⁵⁵⁸ E 32584, cf. 32585.

⁵⁵⁹ Abû l-Makârim, fol. 101b (tr. B.T.A. Evetts, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt* (Oxford, 1895) 276). On the disputed authorship of the work see U. Zanetti, 'Abû l-Makârim et Abû Sâlih', *BSAC* 34 (1995) 85-138.

⁵⁶⁰ Undoubtedly, the ostraka to be published from Elephantine and Syene will teach us more about onomastics and the participation of the Church in daily life. One unpublished contract on a Greek ostrakon from Elephantine (*O.DAIK* inv. 3177) already gives a preview. In this contract an Appa Iosephios is mentioned who is bishop of Syene and lends money to Aurelius Eucharios Silvanos, probably from Elephantine. On palaeographical grounds, this ostrakon dates to the fifth or sixth century and provides us with the name of a previously unknown bishop of Syene (personal communication from R. Duttonhöfer). As this ostrakon has not been published yet, I have left Iosephios out of the list of bishops of Syene in App. 3.