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

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5. The Organisation and Gradual Integration of Christianity in the First Cataract Area

Until recently, it was believed that the spread of Egyptian Christianity was a gradual process that started in Alexandria and reached Philae, that bastion of 'pagan' worship, at the final stage.³¹ Thus, the new religion passed from region to region: first to the Delta, then to Middle Egypt and finally to Upper Egypt.³² In this view, the 'critical years' in which Egypt became Christian were during the first half of the fifth century, when temples were systematically closed, in Egypt starting with the destruction of the Serapeum in 392.³³ However, as we have seen, the main impetus to the organisation of Christianity in Egypt was already given under the Emperor Constantine in the first third of the fourth century. Consequently, the idea of a gradual diffusion of Christianity from north to south has to be discarded. This can be illustrated by discussing the evidence for Christianity at the southern end of Egypt during the fourth and fifth centuries.³⁴

Just as in Egypt in general, the Church had undoubtedly fully organised itself in the area of the First Cataract not long after 325. This appears from ecclesiastical documents, transmitted through the works of Athanasius, that mention bishops from the region.³⁵ In 346, Bishop Neilammon of Syene signed a list of ninety-four bishops at the Council of Sardica.³⁶ As is attested in a Festal Letter by Athanasius, a homonymous bishop succeeded Neilammon one year later, as the latter had died by then.³⁷ The creation of the diocese therefore dates back to before 346. As Neilammon is not mentioned in the list of new bishops in the preceding Festal Letter of 339, the bishop was probably ordained in the 330s, perhaps on the occasion of a visit by Athanasius to the Thebaid in 330.³⁸ The second Neilammon was banished to the Siwa oasis in 356 by the Arian Archbishop George of Cappadocia.³⁹

Another bishop of Syene was Hatre, who is mentioned in the Coptic calendar of saints, the *Synaxarion*, at 12 Choiak (8 December), and in two unpublished Arabic manuscripts, which contain a *Life* of Hatre with essentially the same information as provided in the *Synaxarion*.⁴⁰ All three texts probably draw on an earlier, Coptic *Vorlage*.⁴¹ Hatre was ordained bishop by Archbishop Theophilus of Alexandria (385-412) and died during the reign of Theodosius. It has been suggested that the epithet 'who loved God', added to the name Theodosius, must refer to Theodosius I (379-395), and, hence, that Hatre must have been bishop between 385 and 395. In support of this suggestion, a passage from the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* is quoted.⁴² However, in this passage the epithet is used for Theodosius II (408-450).⁴³ Nonetheless, the epithet seems to have been rather general and

³¹ E.g. Rémondon, 'Suprême résistance', 67-8; Trombley, *Hellenic Religion* 2, 205: 'The new religion took root at the great metropolis of Alexandria by the end of the first century and gradually spread to the smaller cities of the Nile basin'.

³² This is e.g. suggested by the title of Trombley's ninth chapter: 'The Nile valley from Canopus to Philae'.

³³ Rémondon, 'Suprême Résistance', 68-9; Trombley, *Hellenic Religion* 2, 206.

³⁴ Documents about Christianity on the southern Egyptian frontier have been collected by S. Timm, *Das Christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, 6 vols (Wiesbaden, 1984-92) 1.222-35, 392-401; 3.1044-9, and L.S.B. MacCoull, 'Christianity at Syene/Elephantine/Philae', *BASP* 27 (1990) 151-62.

³⁵ Martin, *Athanase*, 84-9.

³⁶ Ath. *apol. sec.* 49.3 Opitz 2, p. 129 (no. 184).

³⁷ Ath. *ep.* 19 (Migne, *PG* 26, col. 1430: *Ergo Syene pro Nilammone, alter pari nomine Nilammon*).

³⁸ See Athanasius' index of Festal Letters (*SC* 317, pp. 228-9).

³⁹ Ath. *h. Ar.* 72.2 Opitz 2, p. 222. See C. Haas, 'The Alexandrian Riots of 356 and George of Cappadocia', *GRBS* 32 (1991) 281-301. Cf. Hahn, *Gewalt und religiöser Konflikt*, 64-71.

⁴⁰ For the *Synaxarion* see E. De Lacy O'Leary, *The Saints of Egypt in the Coptic Calendar* (London and New York, 1937); R.-G. Coquin, 'Le synaxaire des coptes. Un nouveau témoin de la récénsion de haute Égypte', *AB* 96 (1978) 351-65, and 'Synaxarion, Copto-Arabic', *Copt. Enc.* VII (1991) 2171-3.

⁴¹ *PO* 3, pp. 430-4. On Hatre see De Lacy O'Leary, *Saints of Egypt*, 150; G. Gabra, 'Hatre (Hidra), Heiliger und Bischof von Aswan im 4. Jahrhundert', *MDAIK* 44 (1988) 91-4; R.-G. Coquin, 'Hadra of Aswan, Saint', *Copt. Enc.* IV (1991) 1190; A. Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides* (Paris, 2001) 224. The latter also mentions a monastery of Hatre in the Coptite nome.

⁴² Gabra, 'Hatre', 94.

⁴³ *PO* 1, p. 430.

cannot be used to distinguish a specific emperor.⁴⁴ Therefore, the dating of the episcopate of Hatre must remain within the years of the episcopate of Theophilus (385-412). From the *Synaxarion* at 11 Hathyr (7 November), three more bishops of Syene are known, Ammonius, who was ordained by Archbishop Timothy I (380-385) or II (457-477), and his immediate predecessor and successor, Valerius and Macrinus, respectively.⁴⁵ Whether they were bishops in the fourth or the fifth century must remain undecided, although it has been argued that the fifth-century date is more likely.⁴⁶

Through the Coptic *Life of Aaron*, the subject of Chs. 6 and 7, the names of the first three bishops of Philae are known, and they can thus be identified in ecclesiastical documents. The first bishop of Philae is apparently a certain 'Eusebius, bishop of Philae', who is attested in the *Annales* by the tenth-century Patriarch Eutycheus of Alexandria, but this Eusebius of Philae is a mistake, probably for Eusebius of Caesarea.⁴⁷ The name of the first bishop of Philae, Macedonius, appears, just like Neilammon of Syene, on the list of the Council of Sardica in 346, so the diocese of Philae may have been created during the same visit by Athanasius in 330, or in any case not much later.⁴⁸

The second bishop of Philae, Mark, was banished to the Siwa oasis in 356 with five other bishops from the Thebaid, among whom was the second Neilammon of Syene.⁴⁹ In a letter to the Antiochenes in 362 Athanasius also mentions a 'Mark of Philae'.⁵⁰ Furthermore, the successor to Mark, the third bishop of Philae, Isaiah, is mentioned in a Coptic Festal Letter of 368.⁵¹ These attestations show that Athanasius, probably in 330, created two dioceses in the First Cataract area: at Syene and Philae. They also demonstrate that Christianity did not reach the extreme south of Egypt only at the end. Syene and Philae may not have been the earliest Egyptian dioceses, but they were created only five years after the Council of Nicaea, when the ecclesiastical map of Egypt was drawn.

However, documents illustrating Christianity are scarce for the fourth and fifth centuries. In Chs. 3 and 4, we discussed thirty-six fourth and fifth-century inscriptions, in both Greek and demotic, which have been found on Philae and testify to Ancient Egyptian cult activity, though languishing, until around 456/457. Additionally, seven inscriptions, though undated, have been adduced as witnesses to the Christian community of Philae before the sixth century.⁵² Most of these inscriptions, however, must date to the period when the Ancient Egyptian cults were no longer alive, so in any case after around 456/457, for the inscriptions were found within the walls of the temple of Isis. It is more likely that they date to the sixth century or later, as they were found in the part of the temple of Isis that was partly turned into a church in that century. Only a handful of inscriptions from other parts of the island can have dated to before this event, but unfortunately their dates are unknown.

⁴⁴ Cf. e.g. the Emperors Valentinian and Gratian, who have the same epithet in *PO* 1, p. 427. I kindly thank H. den Heijer for discussing this passage with me.

⁴⁵ *PO* 3, pp. 276-7. Macrinus directly succeeded Ammonius on the episcopal throne, as appears from *PO* 3, p. 277, where Ammonius says to Macrinus: 'Que ton âme soit animée d'un beau zèle, car je vois que les clefs t'ont été livrées', to which the following remark is added: 'il faisait allusion par là au degré de l'épiscopat après lui' (tr. Basset).

⁴⁶ Timm, *Christlich-koptische Ägypten* 1, 222-3; Gabra, 'Hatre', 94; Richter, *Christianisierung Nubiens*, 137. Cf. *PO* 3, p. 277, and Monneret de Villard, *Storia*, 45.

⁴⁷ Migne, PG 111, col. 1005 (*Comites autem se Ario praebuerunt episcopi duo, quorum unus nomine Eumenius [Eusebius], Nicomediae episcopus, alter Eusebius Philae episcopus, open a Constantino implorantes*). See Martin, Athanasie, 88 (n. 240). Cf. G. Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis II. Patriarchatus Alexandrinus, Antiochenus, Hierosolymitanus* (Padova, 1988) 654, and Worp, 'Checklist of Bishops', 305, who both include Eusebius in their lists of bishops of Philae.

⁴⁸ Ath. *apol. sec.* 49.3 Opitz 2, p. 130 (no. 218).

⁴⁹ Ath. *h. Ar.* 72.2 Opitz 2, p. 222.

⁵⁰ Ath. *tom.* 10 (Migne, PG 26, col. 808).

⁵¹ R.-G. Coquin, 'Les lettres festales d'Athanase (CPG 2102). Un nouveau complément: le manuscrit IFAO, Copte 25', *OLP* 15 (1984) 133-58 at 146 (IFAO, Copte 25, fol. 8a).

⁵² Trombley, *Hellenic Religion* 2, 237-9, wrongly refers to *LPhilae* II 227, 234, 235, 237, 238, 240 and 243 as 'pre-Justinianic Christian inscriptions', for they are generally dated to Late Antiquity. Similarly, Trombley remarks that *LPhilae* II 243 'suggests the existence of the new religion on the island in some form as early as the mid-fourth century', but Bernand only gives the reign of Constantine as a *terminus post quem*.

Since I find myself with my churches in the midst of those merciless barbarians, between the Blemmyes and the Annoubades (Noubades), we suffer many attacks from them, coming upon us as if from nowhere, with no soldier to protect our places. As the churches in my care for this reason are humiliated and unable to defend even those who are fleeing for refuge to them, I prostrate myself and grovel at your divine and unsullied footprints so that you may deem it right to ordain that the holy churches [under my care (?)] be defended by the troops (stationed) near us, and that they obey me and be placed under my orders in all matters, just as the troops stationed in the garrison of Philae, as it is called, in your Upper Thebaid serve God's holy churches at Philae.⁶³

In line 3, Appion introduces himself as 'bishop of the legion of Syene, Contra Syene and Elephantine'. Although military chaplains were known in Late Antiquity, the term 'legion' does not seem to be in line with the *portée* of this part of the petition, in which Appion asks for troops to protect the churches in his diocese and for these troops to be put at his disposal.⁶⁴ For why should Appion want to ask for the protection and disposal of the troops of a legion if he himself belonged to it?⁶⁵ Moreover, a legion at Syene, Contra Syene and Elephantine is not attested in the sources. The *Notitia Dignitatum* (c. 400) only mentions a legion at Philae at this time, and smaller detachments at Syene, Contra Syene and Elephantine. It is thus improbable that Syene, Contra Syene and Elephantine together formed one legion less than fifty years later. Only from 493 onwards was a 'legion' stationed there, and this legion was at Syene.⁶⁶

The most probable solution to this problem is that λεγεῶνος (read λεγεῶνος) is a *lapsus* for ῥεγεῶνος, the Latin *regionis* not an illogical error in view of the context, in which soldiers play such a decisive role.⁶⁷ The term *regio* is used in contemporary sources for settlements that did not have the status of a town, but nevertheless had a bishop.⁶⁸ This would fit the anomalous position of Syene, which had all the characteristics of a town, but was not a town in a strict sense since it was not the nome capital.⁶⁹ It seems that Syene, being the largest settlement in the region, received the privilege of having a separate diocese. If the interpretation of *regio* for *legio* is correct, Appion's diocese consisted of Syene, Contra Syene and Elephantine.

The special status of Philae becomes apparent in that it constituted a second diocese in the region. It has been suggested that the bishops of Philae were *chorepiskopoi* (χωρεπίσκοποι), a kind of secondary bishops residing in villages who were subordinate to a nearby bishop, in this case the bishop of Syene.⁷⁰ However, there is no proof that the bishops of Philae were dependent upon the bishop of Syene. Rather, the Appion petition indicates that the bishop of Philae had attained special privileges earlier than the bishop of Syene, not the reverse. Moreover, the references in the ecclesiastical documents suggest that Philae was considered as a separate see.

The Appion petition also provides us with other important information on these dioceses. Both Syene and Philae are said to have 'churches', which makes it the first witness to such buildings in the area. Apparently, the soldiers stationed in the garrison of Philae already

⁶³ *P.Leid. Z* 5-11 = *FHN* III 314 (slightly adapted).

⁶⁴ *CPR* XXIV, pp. 90-105, discusses the evidence for ecclesiastical dignitaries in the Roman army without, however, mentioning bishops. In n. 28, it is stated: 'Sehr wahrscheinlich kein Militärbischof ist Appion'. Cf. Grossmann, *Elephantine II*, 26-9, followed by Arnold, *Elephantine XXX*, 20, who misinterprets this passage by inferring from it that there was no strong military presence in Syene, Contra Syene and Elephantine before Appion's request. However, Appion does not ask for more troops, but rather that the troops which are there should protect him and be put at his disposal.

⁶⁵ Feissel and Worp, 'P. Leid. Z revisé', 101.

⁶⁶ *P.Lond. V* 1855.7 + *P.Münch. I* 15.23, 25. The last attestation of the legion (λεγεῶν) of Syene is *P.Münch. I* 11.74 (586). The term 'regiment' (ἀριθμός) seems to have increasingly replaced λεγεῶν, an observation made by J.J. Farber and B. Porten, 'The Paternouthis Archive: A Third Look', *BASP* 23 (1986) 81-98 at 87.

⁶⁷ Wessely, 'Bilingues Majestätsgesuch', 45; Feissel and Worp, 'P. Leid. Z revisé', 101-3; *FHN* III, p. 1140 (n. 758); *CPR* XXIV, p. 97 (n. 28). Cf. MacCoull, 'Christianity', 152; Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 441-2 (n. 8).

⁶⁸ Feissel and Worp, 'P. Leid. Z revisé', 101-3, for an overview.

⁶⁹ For a list of other sees that were not situated in nome capitals, see Worp, 'Checklist of Bishops', 316-7.

⁷⁰ Cf. Worp, 'Checklist of Bishops', 317, who cites for *chorepiskopoi* e.g. Feissel, 'L'évêque', 804, 814-8.

protected the diocese of the bishop of Philae. This was not the normal situation, as appears from Appion's request itself. It seems that raids by southern tribes into his *regio* urged him to a direct appeal to the emperors.⁷¹

Although we have encountered only a few names thus far we have not found many examples of that second indicator of Christianity, Christian names. Three papyri from our region which date to this period and contain several subscribers may illustrate their increasing use. As it is problematic which names can be regarded as 'Christian', and our sample is too small to allow for a refined analysis, the best we can do is to look at how many names are certainly Christian and how they increase over time. In this approach, the non-Greek names from the Old and New Testament and a few other names, such as Martyria are taken to be 'Christian'. Originally Latin names such as Antonios and Viktor are counted as 'Greek' names, whereas Greek formations of Egyptian names are counted as 'Egyptian' names.⁷²

The first text is Papyrus Edmondstone, dating to 12 January 355, which comes from Elephantine and is now in a private collection.⁷³ The document, a manumission by the owner, Aurelia Terouterou, describes this event as follows:

... (I) have released you as free (persons) under earth and sky, in accordance with piety towards the all-merciful God, from now for all time, and in return for the good will and affection and moreover, for service that you have shown to me over time.⁷⁴

In this passage traditional and Christian elements seem to have been combined. Firstly, the phrase 'under earth and sky' (ὑπὸ γῆν οὐρανόν) is a variant of the formula normally used in manumissions 'under Zeus, Earth and Sun' (ὑπὸ Δία Γῆν Ἥλιον).⁷⁵ Perhaps the writer felt it would be improper to leave the names of the Greek gods Zeus and Helios in the formula and changed them into the more abstract 'earth and sky'.⁷⁶ Secondly, the phrase 'in accordance with piety toward the all-merciful God' (κατ' εὐσέβειαν τοῦ πανελεήμονος θεοῦ) is in itself unique but reminiscent of the opening phrase of Christian letters, 'I pray by the all-merciful God' (εὐχόμεαι πανελεήμονι θεῷ), the dates of which range from the fourth to the sixth centuries.⁷⁷ It is not clear if Terouterou was a Christian herself, nor can this be said of her husband, who wrote the document in her name.⁷⁸ In any case, of the persons mentioned, eleven bear Egyptian names, nine Greek names and not one a distinctively Christian name. The document may therefore show Christian traces, but this is suggested by the phrasing not by Christian names.⁷⁹

The next document, dating to the end of the fifth century, gives an entirely different picture. It is chronologically the first papyrus in the Paternouthis archive, to which we will come back in more detail in Ch. 11, and dates to 26 April 493.⁸⁰ The document contains the sale of a room and courtyard in the 'fortress' (φρουρίον) of Syene by Aurelia Thelporine to a soldier (whose name is lost) of the legion of the same town. Out of the twelve names mentioned, most of them subscribers, only two are Egyptian, seven are Greek, and three Christian. Moreover, the sale is written by the priest Phosphorios, who also wrote a cross

⁷¹ Cf. Brown, *Power and Persuasion*, 141-2.

⁷² Cf. Bagnall, *Egypt*, 280-1, and *Later Roman Egypt*, Ch. VIII at 110-2.

⁷³ *P. Edmondstone* = *P. Oxy.* IV, pp. 202-3 = *Chrest. Mitt.* 361, on which see R.S. Bagnall, K.A. Worp, 'Chronological Notes on Byzantine Documents, I', *BASP* 15 (1978) 233-46 at 235-6; Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 438-40 (no. D 18).

⁷⁴ *P. Edmondstone* 7-9 (tr. Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 439).

⁷⁵ E.g. *P. Oxy.* IV 722.6; *P. Kellis* I 48.4-5. See Wilcken, 'Heidnisches und Christliches', 404 (n. 1).

⁷⁶ Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 439 (n. 9).

⁷⁷ Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 439 (n. 10), with references. For this phrase in letters see G. Tibiletti, *Le lettere private nei papiri greci del III e IV secolo d.C. Tra paganesimo e cristianesimo* (Milan, 1979) 114.

⁷⁸ The statement 'Terouterou was clearly a Christian' by M.R. Jenkins, 'Two Christian Period Finds on Elephantine Island', *BACE* 9 (1998) 61-4 at 61, is overdone.

⁷⁹ Cf. *P. Kell.* I 48, which dates to the same year as *P. Edmondstone* (355), and combines the expression δι' ὑπερβολὴν χριστιανότητος, 'because of my exceptional Christianity', with ὑπὸ Δία Γῆν Ἥλιον.

⁸⁰ *P. Lond.* V 1855 + *P. Münch.* I 15 (tr. Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 443-6 (no. D 20)). See Farber and Porten, 'Paternouthis Archive', 83-7; Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 443 (n. 1).

before his name, and two more priests of the church of Syene and another priest subscribed the document as witnesses.

Another document from Syene, written by the same Phosphorios, probably not long after 493, concerns the sale of a courtyard by the farmer Dios to a number of people (names lost).⁸¹ In this text, 39 names are mentioned of which thirteen are Egyptian, fourteen Greek, and twelve Christian. A deacon and a priest of the church of Syene subscribed the document, while four of the subscribers and the scribe have written a cross before their names. The number of distinctively Christian names, then, illustrates the increasing integration of Christianity in society, a development which can also be seen in the use of Christian phrases and crosses, and the increasing number of clergymen mentioned in the documents.

A final feature of the impact of Christianity was that monks filled the landscape. The fifth-century Coptic letter by Apa Mouses of Philae to the Noubadian chieftain Tantani, mentioned in Ch. 2, shows that monks were involved in the trade between Nubia and Egypt.⁸² Mouses informs Tantani that purple dye has been sent to him through another monk, Apa Hapi, and that pepper will be brought to the Egyptian town of Lykopolis (Asyut) through a third monk, Apa Paphnutius. The letter is Christian in style.⁸³ According to the author of the *Historia monachorum in Aegypto* (c. 400), the landscape around Syene was filled with monks:

What can you say about the Upper Thebaid, in the region of Syene, where even more admirable people live and an infinite number of monks? Nobody would believe in their ascetic practices, so much do they surpass human forces.⁸⁴

Despite the circumstance that no material evidence has yet been found of early monastic settlements, such a settlement can be assumed on the site commonly called the ‘monastery of St Simeon’, a site which originally bore the name of the bishop of Syene, Hatre (385-412).⁸⁵ Architecturally, the church within the monastic complex is dated to the first half of the eleventh century,⁸⁶ like two other monastic churches in the neighbourhood: the church of Qubbet el Hawa near the pharaonic tombs on the westbank of the Nile at Aswan (probably on the site where ancient Contra Syene has to be located), and that of Deir el Kubaniya, situated on the west bank 10 km north of Aswan.⁸⁷ The latter monastery was excavated in 1910-1911, but is now completely destroyed. From the texts and archaeological material found during the excavations, it is known that the site was called ‘the Mountain of Isis’ in Antiquity and contained a Ptolemaic temple.⁸⁸ The monastery was dated between the fifth and seventh centuries, but without conclusive evidence, and the typological arguments for a later dating are more convincing.⁸⁹

⁸¹ *P.Münch.* I 16 (tr. Porten, *Elephantine Papyri*, 447-50 (no. D 21).

⁸² Cairo, Coptic Museum inv. 76/50B [bis] = *FHN* III 322.

⁸³ *Contra FHN* III, p. 1175, it cannot be maintained that the phrase ‘God has appointed you’ makes Tantani a Christian.

⁸⁴ *Hist.Mon.* Ep. 1 Festugière (Τί γὰρ ἂν τις εἴποι περὶ τῆς ἄνω Θηβαΐδος τῆς κατὰ Συήνην, ἐν ἧ καὶ θαυμασιώτεροι ἄνδρες τυγχάνουσιν καὶ πλῆθος μοναχῶν ἄπειρον, ὧν οὐκ ἂν πιστεῦσειέν τις τὰς πολιτείας τὰς ὑπὲρ ἀνθρωπίνην ζωὴν ὑπαρχούσας; tr. after A.-J. Festugière, *Enquête sur les moines d’Égypte (Historia Monachorum in Aegypto)* (Paris, 1964).

⁸⁵ E. Somers Clarke, *Christian Antiquities in the Nile Valley* (Oxford, 1912) 95-111; U. Monneret de Villard, *Il monasterio di S. Simeone presso Aswân. Vol. I: Descrizione archeologica* (Milan, 1927) 9; Timm, *Christlich-koptische Ägypten* 2, 664-7; Gabra, ‘Hatre’, 91-2, and *Coptic Monasteries. Egypt’s Monastic Art and Architecture* (Cairo, 2002) 108-14; Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur*, 562-5. The correct name is known from a stela and a recently republished *dipinto* from the monastery grounds. For the stela see Munier, ‘Stèles coptes’, no. 176.12-4 = *SB Kopt.* I 674. For the *dipinto* see J.H.F. Dijkstra and J. van der Vliet, ‘“In Year One of King Zachari”. Evidence of a New Nubian King from the Monastery of St. Simeon at Aswan’, *BSf8* (2003) 31-9.

⁸⁶ Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur*, 564-5.

⁸⁷ Qubbet el Hawa: P. Grossmann, ‘Ein neuer Achtstützenbau im Raum von Aswân in Oberägypten’, in P. Posener-Krieger (ed.), *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar*; 2 vols (Cairo, 1985) 1.339-48; Gabra, *Coptic Monasteries*, 105-7; Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur*, 564 (n. 585). Deir el Kubaniya: H. Junker, *Das Kloster am Isisberg Bericht über die Grabungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien bei El-Kubanieh* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1922); *PM V* (1937) 218-9; Grossmann, *Christliche Architektur*, 560-2.

⁸⁸ Junker, *Kloster*: 7-14.

⁸⁹ Cf. Junker, *Kloster*; 23-5.

On the other hand, the dating of the church in the monastic complex of St Hatre on typological grounds is certainly in need of revision. A recently republished Coptic *dipinto* on the plaster of the southern wall of the northern aisle of the church, which dates to 19 April, 962, provides a *terminus ante quem* for the construction of the church.⁹⁰ Whatever the exact date of the monastic complex in its present state is, it must go back to an earlier predecessor, for monk cells within the complex, originally built inside ancient stone quarries, demonstrate a much older monastic community, whose wall paintings go back on the sixth or seventh century.⁹¹ Although material evidence for early monasticism in the First Cataract area is thus lacking, monasteries and monastic communities undoubtedly became part of the Christian landscape in the course of the fourth and fifth centuries.

By the sixth century Christianity had become fully integrated into society. This situation is hinted at, for instance, by the clergy writing and subscribing documents in the two late fifth-century papyri from the Paternouthis archive already mentioned. But evidence for the process that preceded these signs of a final integration is hard to come by. In 425-450, Bishop Appion of Syene asked the emperors to protect the churches in his see against raids of the Blemmyes and Noubades. Only two inscriptions from Philae can be ascribed with certainty to the fifth century. They attest to the supervision and financing of a building project by Bishop Daniel(ios) of Philae. For the rest, we are left entirely in the dark about the Christian communities in the First Cataract region.

It may be concluded from the few attestations that these communities were fairly small and insignificant, but the evidence from ecclesiastical documents and the *Synaxarion* speaks against this conclusion. They attest to sees that were already created in both Syene and Philae around 330 or not much later. Moreover, the bishops of both Syene and Philae took part in official ecclesiastical affairs. This appears from Neilammon of Syene and Macedonius of Philae, who attended the Council of Sardica in 346, and the second Neilammon of Syene and Mark of Philae, who were both banished to the Siwa oasis by the Arian Archbishop George in 356. Despite the lack of epigraphical evidence, it seems that the sees of Syene and Philae were not insignificant and that the framework for Christianity in the region, as in the rest of Egypt, was definitively laid in the reign of Constantine.

However, it was some time before Christianity became fully integrated into the society of the First Cataract region. The papyrus documents, although their number is perhaps too small to be diagnostic, show an increase in distinctively Christian names and other signs of Christianity such as formulae, crosses and titles, in the late fifth-century. An indication that the Church was becoming more powerful appears from the Appion petition and the inscriptions mentioning Daniel(ios) of Philae. These documents indicate that the bishop had gained an increasingly important position through co-operation with the secular authorities. In the meantime, Monasticism had also spread over the region. A hagiographical work about the fourth and fifth-century monks from the region is the subject of the next two chapters.

⁹⁰ Dijkstra and Van der Vliet, "In Year One of King Zachari".

⁹¹ Gabra, *Coptic Monasteries* 110, 112.