SHENOUTE OF ATRIPE

AND THE USES OF POVERTY

RURAL PATRONAGE,
RELIGIOUS CONFLICT, AND MONASTICISM
IN LATE ANTIQUE EGYPT

ARIEL G. LÓPEZ

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Ariel G. López

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"O degli altri poeti onore e lume . . ."

—Dante, *Inferno*

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PREFACE

This book is a revised version of the dissertation that I defended at Princeton University in 2010. It is the product of almost a decade of strenuous and challenging work. It has also been a source of great joy and many pleasant surprises for me. I can say with confidence that, like Saint Augustine, I have learned many new things just by writing about them. As I look back, much of it seems now to be the product of timely coincidences. Coptic is what brought me to late antiquity. As an amateur Egyptologist, I had started learning this language before leaving high school. I first read Shenoute, with much difficulty, when I was sixteen years old in Buenos Aires, Argentina. But it was only toward the end of six years of training in social history, at the University of Buenos Aires, that I discovered this fascinating historical period. I decided to take a seminar on late antiquity thinking that I would finally put my knowledge of Coptic to some use. To prepare, I borrowed Peter Brown's celebrated book, *The World of Late Antiquity*, from a close friend. This work revealed a whole new world to me. It showed me that it was possible to write ancient history with the same vividness and sophistication that I had seen in the work of many French and English historians of the medieval and modern periods. I spent weeks working through the little volume, reading and rereading, and synthesizing its contents to the point of memorizing large chunks of it.

When I found out that elite American universities were willing to pay graduate students "simply" to do their own research, my goal was set: I was going to be Peter Brown's student. I can still picture my father's disbelief when I told him that Princeton University was going to financially support my study of ancient history. Princeton gave me endless time and resources, the opportunity to be the student of my intellectual idol, and the chance to meet my wife. I will forever be thankful for that.

My first seminar with Professor Brown dealt with the development of the care of the poor in late antiquity. For someone trained in social history as I was, this issue presented obvious attractions. This study is, in many ways, a very long and late version of the paper I should have written for that seminar. At the time, however, I had no idea of the potential of Shenoute's writings for the study of social history. I settled on Shenoute of Atripe as a dissertation topic simply because I knew that this abbot was by far the most important writer in Coptic. It was only slowly, through painful and sometimes tedious work, that I came to discern this study's main thesis: that Shenoute's entire public life was articulated in terms of his relationship to the poor. I would like to stress what a great and pleasant surprise this was for me. It meant that I could study social history, in late antiquity, in Coptic!

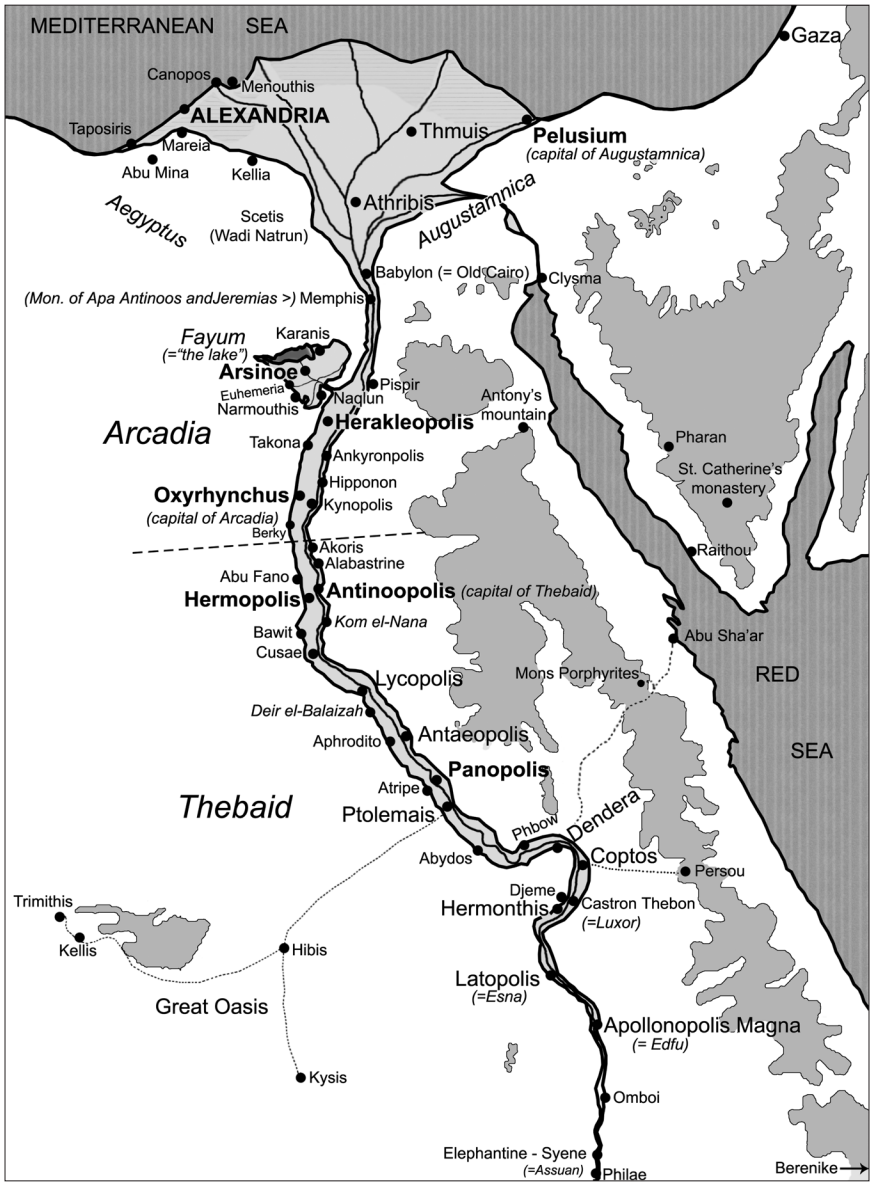
Such research, however, has presented me with multiple difficulties. First and foremost, Shenoute's literary corpus is a daunting challenge for any scholar. Voluminous, fragmentary, disorganized, much of it unpublished or untranslated, it can be overwhelming at times. I was fortunate enough to be able to consult the digital images of numerous unpublished manuscripts in Rome thanks to the kindness of Professor Tito Orlandi. I have read, in the original Coptic, every text quoted in this study (see appendix B on my handling of the sources). But the reader should be warned in advance. The study of Shenoute's literary corpus is a lifelong endeavor. There are texts that—for different reasons—I have not been able to consult. And who knows how many unrecognized fragments of Shenoute's manuscripts may still lurk in European, Egyptian, or American libraries? It has certainly not helped that many of the editions available are not trustworthy or were made by scholars with little interest in the history of the period. I have included numerous and lengthy quotations in this work in the belief that these texts deserve to be more widely known and knowing that they would not be accessible to most scholars otherwise. In my translations, I have tried to avoid the Orientalizing, überliteral translation technique that is so common among scholars with an exclusively philological interest in these texts. If we translated ancient Greek literature as literally as Shenoute is usually translated, it would sound as bizarre and alien as Shenoute is usually made to sound.

A second challenge I have encountered has to do with the Janus-faced tradition of scholarship on late antique Egypt. Any historian interested in this field will have to tackle two forbidding disciplines: papyrology and Coptology. Both have traditionally valued the philological study of documents—Greek papyri and Coptic manuscripts respectively—over the research of historical issues. As a result, they tend to be mutually blind and to ignore each other's accomplishments. Papyrologists rarely read Coptic literature, and Coptologists have little use for Greek papyri. I have tried, therefore, to integrate the insights of both disciplines, an undertaking that is not easy but very rewarding. For the combination of an unparalleled wealth of documentary evidence with a large literary corpus presents a rare opportunity

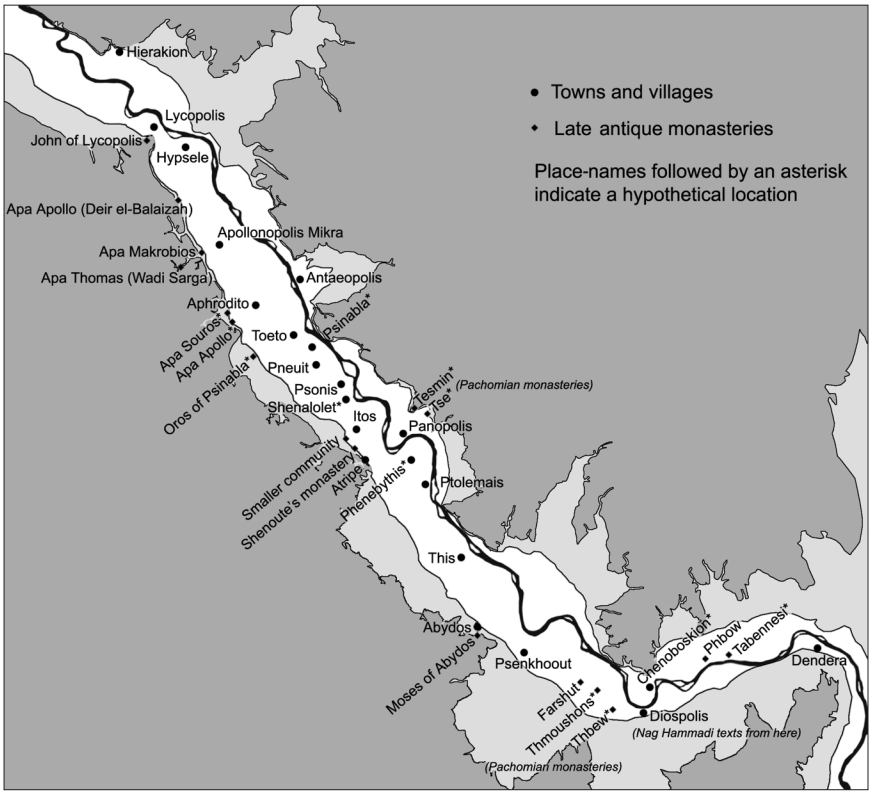
in the history of the ancient world. When this exceptional body of evidence is set against its wider, non-Egyptian background—as I try to do throughout this study—it becomes possible to ask questions of it that are rarely raised by scholars of late antique Egypt.

I owe much to innumerable scholars whose works I have pillaged for information of all kinds. In particular, I would like to name Stephen Emmel, without whose reconstruction of Shenoute's literary corpus this study would not have been possible; Jairus Banaji, who has been a fundamental inspiration for my third chapter; and Daniel Caner, whose work on the ideology of exchange in late antiquity taught me the importance of the notion of "blessings" in a monastic setting. How much I have learned from my teacher Peter Brown and his work should be obvious to everyone. Above all, I have learned from him not to answer long questions with short answers. I can only hope that my answer is long enough.

I would like to dedicate this work to the memory of my father. It was he who instilled in me, from an early age, a sense of duty and a respect for truth.



MAP 1. Egypt in Late Antiquity



MAP 2. The Nile Valley around Panopolis

Introduction

"Rustic Audacity"

This book studies the public life of an extraordinary Egyptian monk, Shenoute of Atripe, and the discourse on poverty that he put forward to promote and legitimize his active role in society. Shenoute was abbot of a group of three monasteries located near the city of Panopolis, in southern Egypt, during the first half of the fifth century.[1] By this time, monasticism in Egypt already had a long and vigorous tradition behind it. Pachomius had founded coenobitic monasticism in the early fourth century. Saint Antony's instantly famous biography was written not long after, around 360. Even before the end of the fourth century, the monks of Egypt had acquired celebrity status in the Mediterranean world. Pilgrims from all over the Roman Empire now invaded Egypt in search of the "Desert Fathers," supreme exemplars of Christian piety.

The monastic tradition encountered by these pilgrims is well known because it quickly became canonical and has had an enduring influence throughout the Christian world. Monks were deemed to belong to a special, separate world, the "desert"—in Egypt itself a stark-enough reality. They were expected to spend life in their cells (either a natural cave or a man-made hermitage) practicing asceticism, paying attention to themselves, and steering clear of any disturbing involvement in the world. The values of work, humility, and obedience were assigned paramount importance. In southern Egypt, where the coenobitic system was particularly influential, most monks gathered around charismatic holy men in unusually large monasteries. Written rules regulated their life in painful detail.

Shenoute's monasticism belongs in this prestigious tradition in its southern, coenobitic variant. Though living in a desert cave, he kept a firm grip on three large monasteries—two for men and one for women—through occasional

visits, harsh letters, and innumerable written regulations. The organization of these three communities clearly imitates the monastic system of Pachomius, who is explicitly recognized by Shenoute among the founding fathers of monasticism. The economic interdependence of several monasteries, the internal division into so-called houses, the hierarchy of authorities in each monastery, all this and much more make Shenoute a faithful exponent of the Egyptian tradition of coenobitic monasticism.

Yet unlike his celebrated countrymen, Shenoute has had a bad reputation in modern scholarship. It has been traditional to portray him as an enfant terrible whose unseemly behavior deviates from what is otherwise an admirable pattern of religious life. A version of his biography has been published in English but only to be read as "a warning sign for everything that can go wrong with monasticism." His name evokes associations of violence, intolerance, tyranny, and a disturbing fanaticism that knows no bounds. His temperament has been described as "an erupting volcano: an impressive sight, though not necessarily a pretty one" An embarrassing aberration, in short, that needs to be explained away.[2]

This bad reputation stems not only from Shenoute's supposedly cruel treatment of his own monks and nuns, but above all from his energetic interventions in the world at large. For Shenoute may have been a cave-dwelling inhabitant of the desert, but the affairs of the world were still very much his concern. Many other Egyptian monks are known to have been involved in the world that they had supposedly renounced, yet few if any seem to have played a role in society comparable to Shenoute's. Public preaching, a care of the poor on a monumental scale, large building projects, loud denunciations of social injustice, criticism of imperial authorities, and an aggressive struggle against paganism were beyond their means if not intentions. Yet, as we shall see, all these are defining aspects of Shenoute's public life, and he was unashamedly proud of them.[3] The desert, for Shenoute, was not only a refuge from a sinful world. It was a platform from which the powers of the world could be challenged and confronted with irrefutable evidence of their injustice. He was at once Desert Father and biblical prophet.

Derwas Chitty once defined the late fourth century, when pilgrims invaded the Egyptian desert in order to witness the spectacle of humanity at its best, as a moment when "the world breaks in."[4] What we witness with Shenoute in the first half of the fifth century is quite the opposite: monasticism breaking into the world at large and claiming a position of political, economic, and religious leadership that nobody was willing to give up without a fight. Shenoute was no longer content to be the spiritual leader of a private religious institution, as Pachomius and many other monks had been. Prepared for the first time to occupy the high ground of society, holy men like Shenoute had to carve out for themselves a place in public life that was by no means guaranteed beforehand. The monastery therefore could no longer be simply an interesting prospect for religious overachievers. It had to

be a public institution recognized by the state and respected by the local elite. This book is a study of this restless struggle for leadership and public recognition—a study, in other words, of an abbot's public career.

Shenoute's remarkably active role in society has been noted by scholars before, but this aspect of his life has been usually subsumed either under the issue of his extraordinary character or under that of his prophetic self-understanding. The first, traditional option—widely discredited nowadays—simply turns him into a negative stereotype that is self-explanatory, an object of moral condemnation and not of historical understanding. However remarkable Shenoute's character may have been, it cannot—in any case—explain by itself his rise to public prominence. More recent studies, on the other hand, have paid closer attention to Shenoute's prophetic language and self-presentation as instruments of religious authority.[5] But they have done so from a purely religious perspective, and they have focused on Shenoute's relations to his own monks and nuns, and not the world at large. Such an approach, although responsible for the very best work on Shenoute done so far, leaves many of the issues discussed in this book unaddressed, and it tends to isolate Shenoute from his political, economic, and social background no less than traditional opinions. Shenoute's "prophetic" life did not take place in a social vacuum, but against the background of major social and cultural transformations in late antique Egypt. These transformations need to be spelled out clearly if we are to understand the significance of Shenoute's actions and what made them possible in the first place. Let us take a moment, then, to look at the rural world of late antique Egypt and the Near East, the world that produced both Shenoute and his admirers.

A fourth-century document written by a certain Papnuthis may be a good starting point. Papnuthis was the agent of an urban landowner in Oxyrhynchus, a city in the middle Nile valley. Sometime between the years 359 and 365, he wrote a letter full of frustration to his employer. People like Papnuthis, usually called *pronoētēs* in the papyri, played a key role in the rural economy of the ancient world. His job was to collect from the villages around Oxyrhynchus the rents owed by his employer's tenants, and the taxes for which this landowner, as a member of the civic elite of Oxyrhynchus, was responsible. In the southern village of Berky, however, the local inhabitants did not have a friendly welcome for Papnuthis. The wheat they were supposed to pay was mixed with cheaper barley, and their intention was to measure it using their own measure, which they claimed was equivalent to the standard public one. One of the two villagers who were supposed to help him collect what was due disrespectfully replied, "I don't have any time," while the other excused himself simply by saying, "It's none of my business." Papnuthis's letter demanded further instructions from his employer, but he also suggested the use of soldiers, following the example set by another urban magistrate who—with the help of soldiers—"collects from them as he pleases."[6]

No reply to this letter has been preserved, but any sensible landowner would have told Papnuthis that having recourse to soldiers was a risky strategy. Soldiers would want their own share, and, more importantly, they were not under the direct control of civic magistrates. Once they were involved in the process of tax or rent collection, there was little stopping them from engaging in this activity for their own benefit. A new, unpredictable interest group standing between urban landowners and rural tenants and taxpayers was the last thing any civic magistrate wanted.

Papnuthis's troubles were no isolated incident. Fourth-century documents from Egypt contain many such complaints against "rustic audacity" (*komētikē authadeia*). Stubborn villagers were accused of refusing to pay rents and taxes, and of failing to show deference to their natural superiors. Outside Egypt, too, many late antique landowners expressed a similar sense of outrage. In Gaza, for example, a group of villagers was said to have refused to pay the rents on land owned by the church and to have beaten the church's steward with clubs. In late sixth-century Asia Minor, the villages belonging to the church were considered to be "a source of constant trouble" for their manager. In Syria, the pagan sophist Libanius of Antioch complained that the peasants had turned into brigands sheltered by powerful military protectors—the very group whose intervention Papnuthis had called for. Tax collectors were welcomed in the same way as bishops intending to convert those villages to "orthodox" Christianity: with rocks.[7]

It is important to identify precisely what lies behind all these complaints of "rustic audacity." They do not need to be the symptom of a new communal village identity or of a general, collective peasant resistance. If anything, the case seems to have been the opposite. Numerous documentary and literary sources show that villagers were displaying a remarkable "audacity" not only in their dealings with urban landowners but even more so in their dealings with each other. We have a significant amount of evidence, in this period, for conflicts between villagers and in particular between villages.[8] Roger Bagnall has described the Egyptian villages of the fourth century as "rudderless and captainless vessels." They have few public structures—a characteristic they share with the late antique villages of Syria—and no clearly defined authorities.[9] The overwhelming concern with solidarity in Egyptian monastic literature reflects the breakdown of village solidarities that most monks had witnessed earlier in life. Mediating in these conflicts quickly became one of the traditional functions of Egyptian and Syrian holy men such as Shenoute.[10]

Conflicts between villagers and struggles against the payment of taxes and rents are of course a perennial aspect of rural life in Egypt and elsewhere.[11] In late antiquity, however, these issues were magnified by a fundamental and well-known process: the fragmentation of the ruling class and the resulting development of rural patronage. These had been among the unintended consequences of the "Late

Roman Revolution."[12] Following the third-century crisis, the Roman Empire reinvented itself in the late third and early fourth centuries and redoubled its efforts to become an effective presence in the life of every one of its inhabitants.[13] The roots of this revolution go much further back in time, to the age of the Antonines, but it was only in the late third century that, through the establishment of a "New Deal," the state took advantage of irreversible social and cultural changes instead of trying to contain them.[14] The result, in Egypt and elsewhere, was a dramatic acceleration of some of the historical processes that had been slowly advancing during the previous three centuries of imperial rule.

The Roman state expanded, diversified, and developed a stronger presence at the local level. As a consequence, urban control over the countryside splintered. The collection of rural rents and taxes, the lifeline of an ancient city, came to depend on the cooperation of multiple groups with different and potentially conflicting interests: the civic councilors themselves, the military hierarchy, the provincial governor and members of his staff (*officium*), former magistrates (*honorati*), administrators of imperial land (*domus divina*), and eventually the clergy and monks. The institutional pluralism that is so characteristic of late Roman society supplied the rural population with a large pool of enterprising would-be patrons. As a result, competing patronage networks flourished in the countryside in this period and gave villagers unprecedented room to play patron against patron and thus to acquire the "audacity" that troubled landowners so much.[15] These vertical relations of rural patronage threatened not only other patrons and landowners, but also the always-fragile horizontal solidarity of the rural population. They did this, above all, by offering new, disruptive opportunities: the opportunity to abandon one's village and settle at a more attractive estate settlement; the opportunity to enjoy differential protection; the opportunity to evade taxes; the opportunity to lease vineyards, which required large investments beyond the reach of most peasants; the opportunity to become a monk.

Moreover, the capillary presence of the state in rural areas threatened to bypass cities and to deprive them of their traditional control of the surrounding countryside. The juridical and economic unity between city and its dependent rural hinterland, so defining for the classical city, can no longer be taken for granted in late antiquity.[16] Many cities, in particular those that did not become capitals of the new, smaller provinces, had a hard time adjusting to the new situation.[17] The well-known case of the struggle between the large village of Aphrodito and the town of Antaeopolis—both located not far from Shenoute's monastery—shows what might be at stake for the city in such a situation. In the fifth century Aphrodito had gained the right to pay much of its taxes directly to the imperial government by delivering them to the provincial capital, Antinoe, instead of having them collected by magistrates of the nearby city of Antaeopolis.[18] The *domus divina*, one of the many new branches of the central government with a local presence, had apparently become

Aphrodito's patron and protector.[19] This was unacceptable for the elite of Antaeopolis: it threatened to curtail its influence in the countryside and to reduce the profits brought by tax collection. It threatened, in other words, to reduce the city to the status of a simple village to the advantage of the provincial capital.[20] The result was a prolonged conflict in which the village elite of Aphrodito appealed constantly to the provincial governors and even directly to the emperor against the encroachment of the local civic authorities, who must have regarded Aphrodito's ambitions as nothing more than another case of "rustic audacity." A member of this village elite, the notary and poetaster Dioscorus, eventually moved to the provincial capital, where he made a living as a notary drafting petitions on behalf of members of his village and other provincials. In the end, the village lost its privilege, but the fact that it could put up such a long and tenacious fight is revealing.[21]

A corollary of this partial weakening of urban control over the Near Eastern countryside may have been that, at least in some areas and during specific periods, more wealth stayed in the countryside than ever before. The spectacular ruins of late antique villages preserved from southeastern Turkey to the Negev in Palestine are palpable evidence that for many villagers this was a truly prosperous age. And this was not an exceptional development restricted to marginal areas of the countryside. Innumerable late antique synagogues and churches all over Palestine show what a vibrant rural world awaits the spade of archaeologists elsewhere, once they abandon the traditional civic centers.[22] Little excavation has been undertaken in the villages of the Nile valley, yet recent surveys in Middle Egypt also suggest that the late antique period may have been the most prosperous era in this area until the nineteenth century.[23]

The developments in the countryside of the late antique Near East were thus a direct consequence of transformations in the structure of the urban landowning elites. It was the fragmentation of these elites that gave many villagers the means to challenge the urban landowners' formerly unquestioned control over them. Yet the "Late Roman Revolution" had some positive implications for the lives of these elites as well. An expanded state apparatus—including a new senate drawing its members from all over the Eastern Empire—and a wider recruitment pool meant new opportunities for social and economic advancement. This development is particularly visible in Egypt, where it represented a radical departure from the previous situation. After more than three centuries of imperial rule, the elites of the Nile valley finally gained access to the prestigious and profitable offices of the Roman administration, an administration that—from an Egyptian perspective at least—had suddenly become an "equal opportunity employer." This is part of a wider development that includes the complete assimilation of the legal, administrative, and monetary systems of Egypt to those prevailing elsewhere. As the empire's center of gravity moved to the east and therefore much closer, Egypt was drawn fully and inexorably into late Roman civilization.

What is important here is that this unprecedented opening up of opportunities unleashed, both in Egypt and elsewhere, a process of competition and internal differentiation among the traditional civic elites. As a consequence, the elites of the fourth century were, as we have seen, fragmented and divided against themselves, but what they lost in unity and homogeneity they gained in dynamism. Many landowners must have surely experienced a relative degradation in their status and must have suffered the "audacity" of tenants protected by more powerful patrons. But a few managed, through an opportunistic combination of imperial officeholding and local landowning, to achieve a degree of economic growth and stability that had been beyond the reach of the traditional elites of the Nile valley.[24]

These successful officers cum landowners would eventually become the new "senatorial" aristocracy of late antique Egypt—"senatorial" because the appointment to an imperial magistracy conferred on its holder a permanent official status in an empire-wide hierarchy centered in the senate of Constantinople. Their rise was a slow, long-term process that begins in earnest only toward the end of the fourth century. But by the end of the fifth century the outcome becomes clear: an imperial aristocracy organized into durable dynasties that had managed, in some areas at least, to push aside competitors and consolidate local authority. It has been argued, in fact, that this aristocracy built up huge landed estates based on wage labor and estate-owned settlements that profoundly transformed the face of the Egyptian countryside. By the sixth century, this theory implies, the economic and social conditions that had enabled many well-off farmers to behave "audaciously" toward their landowners were—at least in certain areas of Egypt—long gone. Villages were rapidly losing their autonomy to all-powerful landowners who had overcome the fragmentation of power by controlling, at the same time, key positions of the civic administration, the local imperial government, and even part of the military (through access to the so-called *bucellarii*, soldiers in private service), thereby ensuring an unchallenged authority over the countryside.[25]

The problem is that it is not easy to estimate the speed, scope, and ultimate consequences of this process. The fact that these senatorial estates eventually became the building blocks of a reorganized urban administration certainly points to their profound impact. And the mushroom growth of estate settlements in certain areas of fifth- and sixth-century Egypt also suggests that important transformations were taking place in the countryside. But it is by no means clear how large these "large estates" were, what their impact on rural society as a whole was, or whether their growth always curtailed the autonomy of village life or could simply provide villagers with new economic opportunities.[26] As we have seen, there is evidence for "rustic audacity" in some areas of Egypt even in the late sixth century.

The same has to be said about the rapidly rising senatorial titles found in documents that have been used to argue for the equally rapid rise and overwhelming prominence of this new group of landowners. Given the high grade inflation

evident throughout late antiquity, one needs to be very careful with the value attributed to these titles. Tracking the emergence of an aristocracy by taking these titles at their face value is like comparing fortunes today with those of a century ago without distinguishing real and nominal prices: by the late sixth century, even a village assistant was a *clarissimus*, that is, nominally a "senator" in Egypt![27]

In any case, the real novelty in the Nile valley may not have been so much an unprecedented accumulation of wealth as the fact that these aristocrats now had local origins. In this they were very different from the greatest landowners of Egypt in the third and earlier centuries, Alexandrian councilors who owned large estates in the immense hinterland of Alexandria that was the whole Nile valley.[28] The emergence of a new "creole" aristocracy with local roots but wide social and cultural horizons—and whose estates seem in many ways to reproduce and expand the management methods practiced by their Alexandrian forerunners—is therefore another aspect of the relative progress of the Nile valley in respect to Alexandria in this period. This is a process that, as we shall see, is also apparent in the cultural sphere and that eventually found an administrative expression. After Justinian's reforms in the sixth century, Egypt's south came for the first time in a *very long* time under the rule of a governor who was no longer dependent on Alexandria, who held the same rank and titles as the governor stationed in Alexandria, and who finally became, in the late sixth century, a member of the local aristocracy.[29]

"Audacious" farmers and "senatorial" landowners: the very transformations that had allowed unprecedented village prosperity and autonomy paved the way, in the long term, for the emergence of a landowning class that threatened to do away with them. It is not surprising, therefore, that social and economic tensions were a structural feature of life in the countryside of the late antique Near East. The late fourth-century orations of Libanius of Antioch contain a firsthand account of such tensions. On the one hand, Libanius interprets the fragmentation of Antioch's civic elite as an invasion of state-sponsored "strangers" who threaten to buy out traditional landowners such as himself. On the other, he complains about the "rustic audacity" now displayed by the rural population and in particular by a group of his own tenants, "some real, proper Jews" who "presumed to define how I should employ them."[30] His description of the outrages suffered by the civic councilors in charge of tax collection is memorable: when taxes and rents are reasonably demanded—he claims—the villagers reveal their "armoury of stones" and the tax collectors end up collecting "wounds instead of tithes and make their way back to town, revealing what they have suffered by the blood on their clothes."[31] The problem, Libanius argued, was the obstruction of tax and rent collection by rural patrons, particularly the military authorities who protected the peasants in exchange for an illegal and private "tax." Libanius's text makes clear that this was by no means class warfare, as Rostovtzeff once believed: the late antique elite was as much the beneficiary as the victim of this process.

Yet in these orations Libanius is profoundly misleading in one crucial respect. His description of the peasantry as "country bumpkins who have their oxen for company" does not do justice to the dynamic countryside of the late antique Near East.[32] It implies a cultural distance between city and countryside that was quickly becoming an anachronism. For late antiquity witnessed the final and complete success of the process of Hellenization in the Near East. Graeco-Roman civilization sank its roots so deeply that its effects would be felt there for centuries after the Muslim conquest. One only needs to look at the architecture of late antique Syria, the sculpture and textiles of late antique Egypt ("Coptic art"), or the mosaics of late antique Palestine to be convinced of this. It is common to speak of these characteristic products of late antique art as expressions of "local cultures," but their iconography—Dionysus, Aphrodite, Romulus, Aeneas . . .—derives almost entirely from Greek and Roman models. Far from representing the rebirth of ancient indigenous traditions, this Near Eastern art illustrates—to use the apt words of Peter Brown—how "Greece had gone native. The classical inheritance had become a form of folk art."[33]

The triumphal march of Graeco-Roman culture did not stop at cities but reached far into the countryside, reducing thereby the stark contrasts that had characterized classical civilization and producing a "flatter" world. The changing relationship between Alexandria and the Nile valley illustrates this process very well. The Roman conquest had changed the relationship of Alexandria to Egypt "from the basic model of royal capital of the kingdom to, initially, that of city (polis) and administratively dependent territory (chōra)."[34] Alexandrian aristocrats owned large estates in what they called the *chōra*, the economic and cultural hinterland of their city, and took turns acting as governors (*stratēgoi*) of the nomes, small districts that were not deemed worthy or capable of self-government. In the Nile valley itself, Egyptian priests preserved and developed a native cultural tradition that claimed to be largely autonomous and prided itself on being untouched by Hellenism.[35] Graeco-Egyptian art, with its characteristically incongruous juxtaposition of purely Hellenistic and purely Egyptian elements, defines this period's culture.

This situation had already started to change gradually in the second century, when, for example, the position of *stratēgos* came to be filled more and more frequently by inhabitants of the towns of the Nile valley (although not in their own towns).[36] Further administrative and social transformations in the third century—in particular the introduction of city councils by the emperor Septimius Severus—helped to bridge the large gulf separating city and *chōra*. But it was only in the early fourth century that these transformations gathered a decisive momentum and resulted in a dramatic turnaround.

To put it in a few words: Upper Egypt, a cultural backwater that had had a very limited participation in the intellectual life of the Graeco-Roman world,[37]

became the center of Greek poetry in the later Roman Empire and produced teachers, grammarians, lawyers, and historians who pursued successful careers both in Egypt and in the empire as a whole.[38] Abundant literary and educational papyri, in both Greek and Latin, show how eagerly the inhabitants of the Nile valley were making Graeco-Roman literary culture their own. Recent discoveries in the isolated villages of the southwestern oases of Egypt—almost two hundred miles from the Nile valley—have drawn attention to this extraordinary diffusion of Greek education: classrooms with rhetorical examples written on the walls, a codex of wooden tablets containing three orations of Isocrates, and—to take just one example—a letter from a mother demanding to be sent, from the Nile valley, "a well-proportioned and nicely executed ten-page notebook" for her son, "for he has become a speaker of pure Greek (*hellēnistēs*) and an accomplished reader."[39]

It is important to stress two crucial aspects of this development. In the first place, it was not an exclusively urban phenomenon. The distinctive products of late antique religion, literature, art, and architecture have been found in villages as much as in cities. All the Manichaean texts found in Egypt, for example, have been discovered in villages.[40] In the second place, this development has to be seen in the context of a new relationship between state and society in southern Egypt and elsewhere. The reason late antique Egyptians were so enthusiastic about learning Greek and Latin literature is that this traditional education was the door to a host of new opportunities that had opened up. To take, once again, the well-known example of Dioscorus of Aphrodito: Jean-Luc Fournet has shown that Disocorus was not simply an amateur, self-taught poet who attempted hopelessly to master Greek poetry for fun. For Dioscorus, poetry was above all a vehicle to communicate with the state. Every one of his petitions to the imperial governors and to the courtiers of Constantinople was accompanied by a poetical version of the text.[41] The reason the case of Dioscorus is so significant is precisely the fact that he was so mediocre and average. He stands for thousands of little poetasters all over the Near East who now felt—to the dismay of classical scholars—that they had the capacity to express themselves in the language of Homer, to speak as if they belonged.

The ever-increasing role of Roman law in provincial life points in the same direction. The legal documents that have survived in Egyptian papyri are eloquent evidence for this process of cultural integration and for the state's role in it. We know now that no such thing as "Coptic law" ever existed. The law in use in late antique Egypt was Roman imperial law, and it became more and more Roman throughout late antiquity.[42] A vivid example of this is a document from as late as 646, in which an illiterate peasant from the deep south of Egypt, "not versed in legal matters" (so he claims), rejects a document presented by his opponent, an urban deacon from the town of Edfu. The document, he argues, does not follow the rules set up in the laws of Justinian for legal documents, rules that he quotes and claims to have learned from "those who know."[43]

Many of the farmers met by an urban notable around Antioch—or anywhere in Palestine or in the Nile valley—were therefore far from being savage rustics who had never had any contact with Graeco-Roman civilization. What the urban landowner or tax collector faced in these recalcitrant, "audacious" farmers were individuals who were far more similar to himself than he would have liked to admit: people who knew how to write petitions, how to appeal to different and competing instances of power, even how to use Roman law to their benefit. And this must have been all the more obnoxious.[44]

Set against this historical background, the figure of Shenoute of Atripe takes on more familiar contours. For Shenoute may have been an otherworldly prophet with the fiery temperament of an "erupting volcano." But he is also a particularly well-documented example of late antique "rustic audacity." Shenoute's "audacity," which his enemies denounced as violence, but he called *parrhēsia*—that is, fearless and truthful speech on behalf of the poor—is proudly displayed and magnified throughout his works. As we shall see, he liked to define his role in society in terms of a principled opposition to the city of Panopolis and its civic elite. As patron of the countryside against the interests of this urban elite, he complained about urban tax-collectors,[45] relentlessly defied and denounced urban landowners and their oppressive practices, and—if we believe in his enemies' complaints—even intercepted and appropriated some of the surplus that these landowners extracted from the countryside around their city. We have unfortunately no contemporary records for the opinions and attitudes of the elite of Panopolis, but Shenoute's replies leave no doubt that some of them must have felt about him the same way Libanius felt about those military men who protected and fostered the "audacity" of the rural population.

Like the village of Aphrodito in respect to Antaeopolis, Shenoute's "audacity" threatened the monopoly hitherto enjoyed by the elite of Panopolis over the political, economic, and cultural life of its region. He usurped traditional civic functions: he intruded on the relationship between urban landowner and rural tenant; he preached like a bishop to monks and laity alike—something not common for monks in Egypt; he built, spent, and gave like a civic benefactor, but on his own monastery and for the "poor." Like Dioscorus of Aphrodito (whose father founded a monastery, just like Shenoute's uncle), he interacted constantly with the imperial governors and claimed a privileged relationship to them, arousing, thereby, the suspicions and jealousy of the local elite; again, like Dioscorus and his father, he traveled all the way to Constantinople to complain about the poverty of the "poor" and about the "violence" they suffered. Last but not least, he took the law into his own hands, in particular against paganism, both urban and rural.

Hence the importance of Gesios of Panopolis, Shenoute's great rival and bête noire. Gesios was the social and economic counterpart to Shenoute's "rustic audacity." A former imperial governor and great landowner based in Panopolis, he

seems to have been a fairly typical representative of the new aristocracy emerging in fifth-century Egypt. His rivalry with Shenoute is an exceptionally well-documented example of the chronic tensions that pervaded rural society in the late antique Near East. Yet this rivalry also had a religious dimension, for Gesios was a pagan with no taste for intolerant Christian monks: Panopolis's own Libanius. The result was a bitter and protracted conflict between monk and landowner that has, in its viciousness, no parallel in the late antique world. This conflict is one of the leitmotifs of this study, and many of the most important sources I have used deal more or less explicitly with it.

Gesios was in fact more to Shenoute than a political, economic, and religious rival. He was an antitype, unnameable and omnipresent at the same time.[46] It was always in contrast to Gesios that Shenoute defined his own public role. A compelling narrative needs two characters: while Shenoute builds a church and monasteries to honor God, Gesios builds mansions, baths, and boats to honor himself. If Shenoute is warmly received by the provincial governors and is their favorite friend, Gesios is rebuffed by them when he denounces Shenoute's supposed crimes. When Shenoute denounces the hypocrisy of a superficially Christian society, which tolerates paganism in its midst, Gesios himself turns out to be a cryptopagan who worships his "gods" in secret at home. If Shenoute's monastery receives thankful offerings from the population of the countryside (in fact, from Gesios's own estate administrators), Gesios extracts this wealth with violence and deceit, a violence that Shenoute never tires of denouncing. Even after Gesios's death, when Jesus had "scattered" his wealth, when nobody recalled his memory or mourned him anymore, Shenoute cannot stop talking about him and holding him up as a negative example.[47] It is clear that he positively needed an enemy. As a result of this obsession, Gesios is scarcely less important for this book than Shenoute himself.

A study of this kind is made possible by the survival of a substantial if fragmentary part of Shenoute's literary corpus. This corpus was originally divided by Shenoute himself into two parts. The "Canons" contain exhortations and a set of five hundred rules addressed to the monks and nuns at Shenoute's three monastic communities. The "Discourses," on the other hand, include sermons, treatises, and open letters that show an all-too-human holy man constantly interacting with the society that he had supposedly renounced.[48] Together with a few fragmentary letters, the "Discourses" will be the main body of evidence used throughout this work.[49]

Much has been traditionally made of the fact that these texts are in Coptic, the last stage of the Egyptian language. The nineteenth-century equation of language with culture has led many scholars to see in Shenoute a "native," a "Copt." His works have been read with an Orientalist mind-set: in search of the unique, the alien, and with an overriding concern for philological issues. More has been written on Shenoute's use of specific verbal tenses or on the structure of his

literary corpus than on his historical significance. This emphasis on Shenoute's supposed "Copticism" is misleading. Shenoute was bilingual and—like Dioscorus of Aphrodito, for example—could write in both Greek and Coptic. He must have often preached in Greek, and I suspect that many of the letters and sermons contained in his corpus were originally written or delivered in Greek. Only one papyrus (fragments of a sermon) and one inscription related to Shenoute have survived from the fifth century, and both are in Greek.[50] And several of his (Coptic) sermons, as preserved in his corpus, are actually "first-person reports" to his monastic audience of sermons and dialogues with the Roman authorities that can only have been held in Greek.[51]

Furthermore, the equation of language with "national" culture is particularly inappropriate to Coptic. Far from being the product of a native priestly literary tradition or of the reemergence of an ancient underground culture, Coptic was biblical Greek gone native: the linguistic equivalent, in fact, of the Greek mythology one finds in Palestinian mosaics and in Egyptian textiles.[52] The Coptic *writing system*, which includes the Greek alphabet plus a few consonants taken over from Demotic, was invented in the early Roman period by Egyptian priests for whom linguistic virtuosity was a source of professional pride.[53] Yet the Coptic *language* as it emerged in the late third century was a Christian, quasi-biblical language deeply influenced by Greek. And not just Greek: one-third of all the non-Greek words in Coptic have no attested Egyptian etymology, "including some of the most common vocabulary in Sahidic [the principal southern dialect of Coptic]."[54]

From this point of view, Coptic is not comparable to Syriac, that other late antique language with which it is usually grouped. Syriac was an older language with its own literary traditions, writing system, and educational institutions, and it did not experience a comparable influence from Greek until later. Egypt never had a counterpart to Edessa/Nisibis, their Syriac schools and partially autonomous literary culture. Coptic was used at schools in Egypt—it may have been Christian teachers who created it in the first place as a literary language to translate the Bible—but it was always limited to a primary education that focused on simple reading, writing, and practical skills, such as the writing of letters.[55] In late antique Egypt, true literature—that is, the use of language as an art—was with very few exceptions Greek literature.

Shenoute's Coptic does have a unique flavor and deserves the philological and literary study that it has always received. But the real value of his writings lies less in their literary qualities than in their importance as a historical source.[56] For even in their present fragmentary state, these texts are crucial evidence for the more prosaic aspects of the life of a holy man, that religious virtuoso who embodied the ultimate ideals of late antique society. Like few other sources, these documents allow us to follow an abbot's activities "on the ground" and to set them against a concrete social, economic, and cultural context. An entire history of the relation

of a major monastery to the society and economy of the Nile valley can thus be written from them.

Admittedly, if there is one aspect of late Roman religion for which we have plenty of evidence, it is certainly that of holy men. Yet holy men like Shenoute are usually written about by others; they rarely speak directly to us in their own words. The filter of hagiography tends to turn these holy men into stereotypes: they are too holy to be men at all. With Shenoute, in contrast, we have the unique opportunity of comparing and contrasting the devout portrait painted by his disciple and biographer Besa with the real, day-to-day abbot as he dealt with the issues of his time.[57]

These issues were neither particular to Egypt nor to Shenoute himself. They are, rather, crucial to the interpretation of late antiquity as a historical period and to the problem of the so-called end of the ancient world. Studying the public career of Shenoute involves dealing with some of the distinctive concerns of late antique society: rural patronage, religious violence, Christian and non-Christian systems of gift giving, and the changing relationships between city and countryside and between state and local society. This fundamental fact has been obscured by his monotonous rhetoric on behalf of the "poor," which transforms these concerns and distorts them so as to fit them into a simplistic paradigm of social relations, the Christian "care of the poor," in which he and his monastery claimed a primordial role.

Hence the title of this book. By claiming to act and speak on behalf of the "poor" even in the most unexpected contexts, Shenoute could always identify his own interests with those of society at large and thus legitimize his unwelcome emergence as a player in local politics. This constant appeal to poverty, both his own and that of the people he claimed to represent, sets Shenoute firmly in the context of contemporary late Roman politics. It is a somewhat paradoxical aspect of this period that the "audacity" and, in some cases, even the prosperity of new groups and institutions had come to be asserted and defended in terms of the need to protect an ill-defined, helpless, and passive poverty. Christian bishops all over the Roman Empire had been developing, from the middle of the fourth century onward, a distinctive discourse on poverty that explained and justified the public role they now claimed to play in society.[58] The representation of social reality that they put forward was nothing less than revolutionary. A society used to glossing over or euphemizing stark disparities in wealth and power was confronted with a discourse that claimed to lay bare those very disparities with brutal honesty.

The vision was as simple as it was powerful: a society divided along purely economic lines into two opposite and complementary groups, the few rich and the many poor. The rich were pictured as if standing on a high peak of infinitely concentrated wealth, only to be urged to stare down at a vast ocean of poverty. This was of course a drastic simplification of social reality. As depicted by Christian

preachers, the rich and the poor were simply stereotypes defined against each other. The poor and their poverty, above all, their overwhelming numbers and utter helplessness, were always the main emphasis. For their very existence was a call to action, to charity and condescension. The love of the poor had always been a duty inside the Christian community, but now it was pushed to the fore and advocated as a public virtue that the state was expected to recognize and reward. As such it was embodied above all in the person of the bishop, professional spokesman and protector of the poor and role model for the rich and powerful.

This Christian discourse on poverty should not be taken at face value. The ubiquitousness of poverty in the rhetoric of this period does not reflect the impoverishment of late Roman society but rather a specific political situation: the rise to prominence of the representatives of the Christian church. The reason for the quick success of this discourse was, in no small degree, that it lent to these new participants in late Roman politics the legitimacy to challenge the establishment and to make a name for themselves. By stressing their relationship with a group that had no place in the traditional model of urban society—the "poor"—the bishops projected a form of authority within the city that outflanked the traditional leadership of urban notables.[59] Moreover, the fact that this discourse ignored the hierarchical distinction between city and countryside, so dear to the political ideology of the classical world, had important implications. It meant that even villagers or a rural abbot could now use this language to express their growing sense of entitlement.

Hence the significance of this development for Shenoute's self-presentation. That what was true about Christian bishops was also true about him, that his discourse on the care of the poor explained and legitimized the prominent role he aspired to play in local society, will be shown in detail in the next four chapters. My conclusions can be summed up here in a few words. As analyzed in this book, Shenoute's discourse on poverty is structured around three parallel antitheses—political, economic, and religious—which tend to be confused and ultimately overlap:

Friend	=	Lover of Poverty / the Poor	=	Christian	=	Shenoute
|		|		|		|
Enemy	=	Lover of Wealth	=	Pagan	=	Gesios

The first, friend/enemy antithesis, "the ultimate distinction to which all action with specifically political meaning can be traced," will be at the center of the political analysis of the first chapter.[60] I will argue that Shenoute's universal application of the friend/enemy distinction to local and imperial elites betrays his aspiration to be part of these elites. The active political involvement of a Christian abbot was highly controversial and demanded a continuous effort of self-presentation. Shenoute's uncompromising and critical attitude toward both "friends" and

"enemies" legitimized his public role by marking him out as the emperor's "loyal opposition."

The second, economic antithesis will be analyzed in chapters 2 and 3, the center of this book. Shenoute's own monastery was the ultimate example of the generous love of the poor. Its welfare activities and its miraculous wealth will be analyzed in chapter 2. It will be shown that his discourse of endless abundance and generosity legitimized—in terms reminiscent of a "Christian euergetism"—the receipt of unprecedented amounts of lay gifts. Furthermore, Shenoute's tireless denunciation of the violence of the rich—who loved wealth more than their own souls and oppressed the poor without mercy—will be discussed in chapter 3. It will be shown there that Shenoute's discourse of economic inequality betrays his active involvement in a conflict of rural patronage. The third and last antithesis, that between Christians and pagans, will be analyzed in the fourth chapter. My analysis will show that Shenoute's discourse in favor of intolerance and his attempts to justify his controversial actions against paganism by deliberately confusing religious with economic issues reveal his powerlessness to put a definite end to the old religions.

This reading of Shenoute's literary corpus, I would like to stress, is anything but straightforward. It demands a constant and often difficult distinction between representation and reality. Many of the fundamental issues addressed in this study can be identified, in the first place, only by comparing and contrasting Shenoute with his better-known contemporaries. It is crucial, therefore, to read these texts in the right context. But this has seldom been done. Modern scholarship has tended to confine Shenoute within the narrow boundaries of Coptic literature and has thus isolated him from the wider late antique world in which he truly belongs. The result has been an undue emphasis on his uniqueness. For it has to be admitted that, when confined to Egypt, Shenoute seems indeed incomparable and larger than life. After all, how do we explain the emergence of a public preacher who thrives on controversy and factionalism within a monastic tradition characterized by an inward-looking mentality, an emphasis on social peace and noninvolvement, stability, and humility? Even in the sixth century—when monasticism had become very much part of the fabric of daily life—it is hard to find any parallels for Shenoute's public role among Egyptian monks. This may be simply due to the scarcity of monastic sources for the sixth century, yet even Shenoute's own disciple Besa seems, in comparison, to have had a low profile in society. Among his surviving writings, we find no equivalent to Shenoute's "discourses" aimed at society in general, nor any attacks on the corruption and sinfulness of the world at large.

In any case, to decide whether Shenoute was unique or exceptional we first need to look outside Egypt and set him in a wider context. We need to abandon, therefore, a "Coptological" perspective. I do not like the *idea* of Coptology. It encourages narrow-mindedness and ahistorical thinking. Shenoute may be the only really good example of the development of the care of the poor in Egypt,[61] but

he seems unique only when seen in isolation from his eastern Mediterranean background. A purely Egyptian perspective is not enough. Particularly so when a rich literary documentation originating in Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor is available for comparison. There is, as a matter of fact, no better introduction to Shenoute's world than the famous speeches of Libanius of Antioch—although from a point of view diametrically opposed to that of Shenoute. And there are no better historical parallels for his role in society than the archimandrites of fifth-century Syria and Constantinople, many of whom were his exact contemporaries. Like Shenoute, fifth-century holy men such as Hypatius, Alexander, and Marcellus the Sleepless or Symeon the Stylite—all of them Syrian—were very much involved in the world that they had given up. Far from rendering them indifferent to the concerns and controversies of their age, their asceticism had given them the capacity and the will to impinge upon society with unlimited self-confidence and determination. Their unavoidable and disturbing public prominence, their denunciations of social injustice, their advocacy on behalf of the poor, their criticisms of Christian hypocrisy, and their hostility toward paganism: all this shows that Shenoute was not an aberrant character but rather a faithful exponent of his age.[62]

Let us take the case of Hypatius, for example, one of the many holy men who pursued a career in the area around Constantinople. When Thrace was devastated by the Goths at the end of the fourth century, he protected the poor at his monastery and interceded on their behalf before the imperial authorities. Shenoute did exactly the same thing some time later when Upper Egypt was invaded by Nubian tribes. While Shenoute attacked private pagan shrines, village temples, and the secular traditions of the city (baths, theaters, poetry, etc.), Hypatius attacked the sacred trees of Bithynia and threatened violence when a prefect intended to celebrate the Olympic games at Chalcedon. Hypatius also became the head of a rapidly growing monastery outside this city, but that did not stop him from preaching in public. Every feast day, he would leave the monastery and go to a large church (originally built by the praetorian prefect Rufinus for his suburban villa) to celebrate Mass there.[63] As I have already noted, Shenoute also preached regularly to nonmonastic audiences. Finally, both holy men constantly interacted with the authorities, provincial in Shenoute's case, imperial in Hypatius's case, and derived important material benefits from this interaction.

One crucial obstacle in any attempt to set Shenoute's "career" against a specific historical background can unfortunately not be definitely solved: the chronology of his life and activities. We know for certain that, in general terms, his activities have to be located in what has been called the "classical period" of preaching on poverty, that is, the years 370–450.[64] Given our circumstantial evidence, more precision can be achieved only tentatively. This issue requires a long and technical discussion, and I have therefore relegated it to an appendix. What is important here is that, regardless of when Shenoute was born or died, the few unambiguous

pieces of evidence we have point to the years 420–460 as his floruit as a prominent abbot. It was in this period that Shenoute communicated with the archbishops of Alexandria, that he attended the council(s) of Ephesus, that he received the frequent visits of imperial governors, that he built a grandiose monastic church, and that he attacked a pagan village nearby.

It has been suggested, on the other hand, that the beginning of Shenoute's public life should be pushed much further back in time. The claim in his biography that he lived for no less than 118 years; his own statements that he had spent, at some point in his life, "more than a hundred years in the desert" and that he had been "reading the Gospels for more than sixty years" when attending a council at Ephesus (but which one?); the possible identity of his enemy Gesios with an imperial governor of southern Egypt who ruled in the years 376–378, that is, more than forty years before the floruit I propose: all this has made scholars seriously consider the possibility that Shenoute had a preternatural life span, that he accomplished some of his greatest deeds—like the building of his church—when he was in his hundreds.

Though not impossible, this claim seems improbable to me.[65] As long as we have no clear evidence to the contrary, I think we should stick to the few certainties we have and see in Shenoute essentially a fifth-century character, an inhabitant of the "Greek Roman Empire" of Theodosius II recently described by Fergus Millar.[66] Shenoute's contemporaries are, therefore, men such as Rabbula of Edessa, Symeon the Stylite, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus, not the Cappadocian Fathers. This is important, among other things, because the fifth century is a poorly documented period but one in which critical transformations are thought to have taken place in the Near Eastern countryside. The importance of Shenoute's writings as a historical source lies not least in their capacity to illuminate the social and economic history of this dark but crucial period.

1

Loyal Opposition

"SIN CITY": SHENOUTE, PANOPOLIS, AND THE POOR

One of the basic difficulties any study of Shenoute must face is the lack of context. Even for the fifth century, a particularly ill-documented period, his is an unusual case. He is not mentioned in any contemporary sources, from Egypt or anywhere else. Although he has a relatively important place in later Coptic tradition, Greek hagiographers and historians of the church pass him over in silence. With few exceptions, his works cannot be dated and do not name people known otherwise. The only datable "event" in his life would be his much-vaunted participation at the council(s) in Ephesus, yet council acts do not mention him either. To make things even more interesting, his writings come almost exclusively from medieval manuscripts found at *his own* monastery.[1]

An "incomparable" character, indeed, living in an apparently self-contained world. Everything we know about Shenoute comes, inevitably, from his own writings and a biography that is heavily dependent on them, when not biased by an all-too-obvious hagiographic intention.[2] It is not an accident, therefore, that his own self-presentation has shaped our modern perception of him. What we know about Shenoute is what he has decided to let us know about himself. And self-presentation was, for this very egocentric holy man, no light matter.

His literary corpus, as we have it today, is not simply a random group of works that have happened to survive by chance. Even in its present fragmentary state, we can discern, behind its structure, Shenoute's hand administering his literary legacy as carefully as he administered his own reputation. No text seems to be entirely out of place. His *Letters* and *Discourses*, in particular, should be read as a whole

and not just individually.[3] For seemingly disparate texts, discourses dealing with topics as varied as the devil, the martyr cult, or the plight of the poor, letters both hostile—quoted to be refuted—and friendly, add up to a consistent self-portrait of his persona in action. A hint that this was in fact Shenoute's original intention—and not simply the modern reader's illusion—is provided by his own introduction to the last volume of *Canons*. Looking back at the end of his life, he makes plain with what spirit he engaged in this last compilation of his writings:

> These words and commands were in my heart, and I was concerned to establish them before I depart. I had written them on tablets (*pinakis*), so when I came to the monasteries [from my desert cave], we copied them onto papyrus sheets during those distressful days before Lent. Thus the great disturbances and all the tearful distress that this miserable man has suffered at the hands of pagans, the violent, and he who goads them against us, Satan, have not been able to keep us from doing everything we want.[4]

This final declaration of victory reads, in a way, like a programmatic statement about Shenoute's life and work. Self-assertion in the face of the world and its powers had always been one of his central preoccupations. One of the most striking aspects of his works is, in fact, the extent to which so many of them can be described as "ego-documents." Everything revolves around his public status, his exploits, the reactions he provokes, and the admiration he evokes. His writings are "full of himself." He is the kind of public character who will often refer to himself in the third person. Against the evil rich who do not listen to him, he declares, with a threatening voice, that "this one has torn his garments and others have torn theirs with him [on behalf of the poor]. But not in vain: he knows what he is doing!" Vis-à-vis provincial governors, he claims that "the good fame of he who tramples upon the love of authority (i.e., *my* fame) has quickly spread" to Alexandria, Ephesus, and the imperial court. Teaching his own monks, he does not hesitate to exalt his own exemplary courage:

> Don't you know all the evil that they (the evil tax collectors) have tried to do to your brother (i.e., to me, Shenoute) because he says [to them]: "You are evil because you oppress the poor"? Above all, they have tried to do evil to the poor because of your brother, but God has hindered them in their impious plan.

One gets the feeling that, for moments, his public self was too massive a burden for his ego to bear.[5]

It certainly was too massive a burden for many of his contemporaries. That is, at least, the impression conveyed throughout his works. One of the most interesting aspects of his strategy of self-presentation is his insistence on the widespread negative reactions provoked, in local society, by his actions on behalf of the poor and against paganism. Shenoute's enemies seem to be everywhere, and he claims,

with ill-concealed pride, to be the victim of their constant accusations. What other abbot or bishop has ever talked so much about his own alleged crimes? Who preserves so many hostile documents only to refute them? Harboring thieves, "gathering men to fight each other on account of the villages" and distributing bread to them, destroying temples, causing trouble and tumults, being violent, maltreating the poor, making demands of other landowners' tenants, beating up his own monks, helping murderers because they owe money to his monastery, slaughtering cows and pigs in the houses of pagans during Easter, "turning the heart of the poor away" from their pagan masters, breaking into his enemies' houses to destroy their pagan idols, stealing books from "the godless man," using an antipagan raid as a pretext to plunder a village—these are only some of the "crimes" Shenoute was, *according to himself*, accused of.[6]

Being hated by the "right" people and for the "right" reasons seems to have been one of Shenoute's major claims to prominence. He is the sort of controversial figure who thrives on threats, whether real or perceived. This is particularly true of his relationship to Panopolis, the local town across the river, where he likes to claim for himself the status of persona non grata. Panopolis was one of the success stories of late antique Egypt. The city is well known to have been an important center of Hellenism in this period. Numerous poets and grammarians—many of them pagan—were educated there and went on to have successful careers in the imperial bureaucracy. During Shenoute's lifetime, for example, Cyrus of Panopolis, a poet and bureaucrat, managed to become both praetorian prefect and urban prefect in Constantinople. His power and popularity were such that the emperor himself felt threatened. Nonnus of Panopolis, on the other hand, also a contemporary of Shenoute, reformed Greek poetry and became one of the most influential poets of his age. His *Dionysiaca* is considered the last great epic poem from antiquity. Shenoute's mockery of Aristophanes—who had displaced Menander as one of the "four pillars" of literary education in late antiquity—and of philosophers who "grow their hair like women" also point to the importance of Hellenistic schools in the city.[7]

Like Madaura in Africa, also a provincial center of education associated with paganism, Panopolis had a bad reputation among Christian ascetics. When Pachomius established a monastery outside the city in the mid-fourth century, a delegation of philosophers, "who prided themselves on being teachers," came out to challenge the Christian monks in a vain attempt to humiliate them. And the later "Apocalypse of Čarour," a text that attacks the moral decadence of the Pachomian monastic communities, complains that "the roads of Phbow (the main monastery of the Pachomian federation) have become like the roads of Panopolis; we yell like in the *agora* of Panopolis."[8]

But Panopolis was also a Christian city with its own bishop. Its temples had been converted into churches, and it was surrounded by an impressive number of monasteries. Numerous Christian texts, in Greek and Coptic, have been found in the

city's environs. They show a remarkable symbiosis between Christianity and Greek literature.[9] Shenoute's own writings, in fact, leave no doubt that many of his supporters and admirers must have lived there, and that many wealthy and powerful Panopolitans attended his sermons, offered gifts to his monastery, and were moved to tears by his denunciations.[10] The pious rich man from Panopolis who—according to Besa's account—came to the monastery every weekend to make an offering and attend Mass must have been a fairly typical character.[11] Yet Shenoute sees only enemies in Panopolis. He addresses curses and rebukes to the city as a whole (a feminine "you"), while speaking of himself—again in the third person—as "he from whom the people of Panopolis hate to hear about the glory of God."[12] He never mentions the Christian bishop of the city, not even when protesting against the invasion of the city's churches by dubious martyrs' relics—a sacrilege he has witnessed "only in Panopolis."[13] "That worthless city,"[14] he argues in a revealing pun, deserves to be called not *Panos polis* (the city of Pan) but instead *Panomos polis*, "Sin City."[15] It is there that his archenemy, Gesios, whom he never names but always references ("the fox," "the fruitless tree," "the liar," "that hostile man from Panopolis," "that pestilent child," "the man worthy of being cursed," "he who does not deserve to be named," etc.), lives and rules. This rich pagan—whose impiety was matched only by his avarice—is such an obsessive concern to Shenoute that he keeps preaching against him even after he and "his companions" had died, and when nobody "recalled his memory."[16] And he was by no means Shenoute's only enemy in Panopolis. By not naming Gesios, he generalizes his rivalry with one powerful notable to the city as a whole. His enemies seem to be everywhere. They are both pagan *and* Christian, and they never tire of plotting against him. They are all certainly liars—he claims—but they have good reasons to resent his formidable presence:

> As for those of you (people of Panopolis) who will hide behind what you accuse me of having done, you are hateful and hostile to me. And if you (pl.) know God and belong to Jesus (i.e., if you are Christians), truly you are worthy of the curse and you will not escape denying yourselves before the angels of God. For you have lied before Him when you set unlawful words against me in documents. For it is unlawful for you to have written them [but] it is even more unlawful against the crown of your head. *For you have left me alive, whereas I deserve to die according to the works that you ascribe to me*.
>
> And perhaps this is the reason that such a great curse has come upon that unlawful governor from God, who delivered him into the hands of the emperors that they might take revenge on him, even before he goes into the hands of Him who will judge him and you. Him because he did not take my head, you (pl.) because you have not completed your task, oh friends. *For if I had not shaken you* (sg.), *oh Panopolis, against your works of violence and your servitude of Kronos, you would have accused me to the rulers for nothing*. How can a foreign man (i.e., a foreign governor) know whether I am good or I am bad? How will this impure judge—who brought these afflictions onto himself because of bribes—how will he dare say these

> words, namely, sometimes "What am I going to do with the places of Christ (i.e., Shenoute's monasteries)?" Sometimes also "Shall I kill him?" Just as also that miserable military governor sent to me saying: "Get wisdom."[17]

This confrontational style differs markedly from the self-confident poise of Isidore of Pelusium, Shenoute's contemporary in the northeastern corner of the Nile delta. Isidore was also a monk of the "desert" heavily involved in the affairs of the "world." Like Shenoute in Panopolis, he had plenty of enemies in the important harbor town of Pelusium. His blunt denunciations of corruption and injustice recall those so vehemently voiced by Shenoute. Yet Pelusium was *his* city in a way that Panopolis could never be Shenoute's. He considered it his particular right and duty to plead in front of governors on behalf of his hometown. On the arrival of a new friendly governor, his address to his fellow citizens opened with an exulting "God still cares for Pelusium!"[18] His numerous letters to members of the civic elite emphasize the *paideia* shared by him and his interlocutors. Shenoute, in contrast, owes nothing—or so he claims—to Panopolis. His rivals and accusers seem to have a tight hold over urban life there. They compete with him and his city on the "hill"—that is, his monastery—for access to usually well-minded but ignorant foreign governors, whose ears they poison with lies about him. Shenoute does not represent Panopolis before Roman magistrates. He represents the "poor," and the oppressors of the "poor" happened to be landowners who lived and ruled in Panopolis.

His attitude toward the "violent"—as he usually calls these villains—wavers between self-righteous victimization and daring provocation. He is constantly answering their accusations and insisting that he is not afraid of them. He disclaims, time and again, the need to do what he is permanently doing, justifying himself. A good example—one of many—of this "doubletalk in which the provocateur is playing at one and the same time the role of assailant and victim"[19] is the "discourse which he preached to the crowd attached to *the man worthy of the curse* (i.e., Gesios) wishing that they would tell him what he (Shenoute) often says about him":

> What will I fear from senseless men? Will the lawlessness of the pagans surround me?
>
> What will Christ's enemies say against me except for lying about me and [saying] all sorts of things that are not true?
>
> Those wealthy and violent people? They have nothing to say against me except for saying: "You turn the heart of the poor away from us, so that they no longer labor beyond their power in the vineyards and everywhere else."
>
> And they also say: "He came into our houses openly. He removed what we worship (i.e., our pagan idols) to our shame for we could not hinder him."
>
> Therefore I am not worried about these things (i.e., these accusations): Didn't [even] a pagan military governor dare to say when he came here: "I am amazed that you are happy"? I told him: "Why wouldn't they be happy, those who have no God but Jesus?"[20]

When his enemies are not lying, they are invariably accusing him of something he is actually proud of. In any case, all those accusations only show his powerful impact on local society. At the same time as he professes innocence, therefore, he preserves every hostile document and makes a point of mentioning those accusations in other contexts. For he may be innocent, but he is certainly not harmless. He likes to provoke and challenge his rivals and adopts a defiant tone when addressing them. For moments, he seems to be flirting with illegality. "There is no crime for those who have Christ," is one of his answers to accusations of theft.[21] "I do not care [about your accusations]. I do not flee from the laws." "Only Christ's tribunal has anything to do with me and I have nothing to confess to its president, Jesus."[22] He claims to be proud of many actions that his foes repudiate, and he never misses an opportunity to proclaim them: raiding the pagan houses of a village and vaunting the spoils removed from them, humiliating his great enemy in Panopolis (i.e., Gesios) by "openly" breaking into his house and destroying his pagan idols with the help of "only seven monks," burning down a temple at Atripe near his monastery, leading all sorts of audacious actions on behalf of the "poor" against the evil landowners of Panopolis . . .[23] One is reminded of the Syrian monks despised by Libanius: fanatics who "flaunt their excesses, boast of them, advertise them to those who are unaware of them, and claim that they should be rewarded."[24]

As he himself sees it, Shenoute's life has, altogether, an almost epic quality. For he is not simply an abbot, a spiritual guide, or even a holy man. He is an Old Testament prophet with a sacred mission. Overwhelmed by the consciousness of being chosen, enraptured by the possession of truth—a truth that he cannot contain—he has no option but to call the sinners of the world to repentance. This is an emotionally taxing duty ("I often weep until I can no longer"[25]) that he has not chosen. It has chosen him. As the important studies of Rebecca Krawiec, Caroline Schroeder, and David Brakke have shown, Shenoute takes on such a prophetic role not only in relation to the city of Panopolis but, to begin with, in relation to his own monastic community.[26] From his desert cave, a voice cries out in the wilderness and denounces the lawlessness of the world. This lawlessness is often expressed—as in the Old Testament—in sexual terms: the prophet is a male; Panopolis (or the monastic community) is the woman guilty of infidelity and fornication.[27] Indeed, Shenoute's language is so well blended with that of the prophets that they can hardly be distinguished. In his writings, Panopolis takes on the contours of Samaria or Jerusalem; his enemy Gesios those of a sinful Old Testament king. Like a good old prophet, he claims to be an outsider, both to his community and to the world at large; he acts as the (reluctant) intermediary between God and a world for whose sins he can but weep; he is a lawgiver—for his own communities—and an interpreter of the (biblical) law; he stands for social justice and the poor; and last but not least, he endures perpetual persecution.

It has recently been argued that Shenoute's biographies are but late compilations that were put together centuries after his death.[28] This may well be right, but

the fact remains that these biographies depict Shenoute precisely how he would have wished to be remembered. He is, here again, an Old Testament prophet whose "righteous anger" cannot be checked,[29] who communicates through histrionic gestures, and whose feats defy belief. We see him confronting the patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius, in the midst of the bishops at the Council of Ephesus; physically defeating an "impious pagan" in Panopolis—on behalf of the poor, of course; miraculously facing down a pagan military governor at Antinoe, the provincial capital, in defense of his fellow Christians . . .[30]

One thing is clear here. If Shenoute has a bad reputation—and he has one: impulsive violence, intolerance, lack of self-control—it is he who has made it. Faced with such shocking evidence provided in his own writings and—a fortiori—in his *Life*, many modern scholars have simply accepted it as too ugly not to be true. As a result, the "great" abbot has become larger than life. His fanatical zeal seems, in many modern accounts, to have no limits. His long arm reaches all the way from his desert cave to Panopolis, where people have apparently nothing better to do than to talk and worry about Shenoute's latest exploits. Imperial magistrates are rendered powerless by his courage; local society is at his mercy.[31]

It is essential to avoid this mistake. Given our sources, the question "Who is Shenoute?" can only be answered with another question: "Who did Shenoute say he was?" And *his* answer—"I am the enemy of Panopolis because the rulers of the city oppress the poor"—is clearly one-sided and by no means innocent. To start with, it should be made clear that Shenoute's exploits may have been less spectacular, his enemies less numerous and powerful, than he maintains. They may have been less worried about him than he was about them. It is true that the monks' irruption into the late fourth-century world of politics was deeply disturbing for many traditional civic notables.[32] Many of Shenoute's enemies were certainly only too real. His attempt to become the moral and religious leader of his region threatened the status quo, that is, the monopoly over the economic, cultural, and religious life held by the elite of Panopolis. His provocations cannot have failed to arouse resistance there, though probably more often a passive resistance—simply ignoring him—rather than the active opposition of a Gesios. Yet Shenoute feeds on this opposition and exalts it to a degree out of proportion with reality.

The reasons for this go beyond his self-understanding as a biblical prophet, or his remarkable personality. They have to do with his problematic position in society. In the first place, we cannot take Shenoute's influence outside his monastery for granted. This was a position that had to be established and earned. What an abbot like Shenoute needed, therefore, was above all to have an impact, to provoke a response. He could take, in fact he needed, the opposition and the "persecution." What he could not afford was indifference and to be ignored. "The only thing worse than being talked about," Oscar Wilde has said, "is not being talked about." In the second place, Shenoute's pose as the courageous and persecuted

prophet who defends the "poor" allowed him to be deeply involved in the life of Panopolis—as he undoubtedly was—while remaining the "supreme stranger" to its corrupt way of life. But his critical statements about the city do not need to be taken literally any more than do similar disapproving statements about his own community.[33] The irony, in fact, is that the success of Shenoute's "counterculture" may have owed much to Panopolis's own success during late antiquity. That is, his criticisms, however shocking, may have been unwittingly functional to a society that was successful but felt uncomfortable with its sudden prosperity.

Even if answering accusations was a pressing need for his political survival, Shenoute clearly made a virtue out of this necessity. His insistent claim to be a controversial character, both hated and feared by the "violent" of Panopolis, was not simply an inevitable reaction to the inevitable hostility of the powerful. It was, rather, an essential aspect of the role that he had to act out to define and legitimize his problematic involvement in politics, that of the fearless spokesman of the "poor." To understand this role's rationale and implications, we need to set Shenoute's discourse of self-presentation in the context in which it belongs: the political structures, traditions, and ideologies of the later Roman Empire. Faced with such an idiosyncratic character, we need to focus, more than ever, on the fundamental needs and values of the society that admired but also scorned or ignored him. In the apposite words of Clifford Geertz,

> No matter how peripheral, ephemeral or free-floating the charismatic figure we might be concerned with—the wildest prophet, the most deviant revolutionary—we must begin with the center and with the symbols and conceptions that prevail there if we are to understand him and what he means.[34]

"VERTICAL SOLIDARITY": THE ROMAN STATE AND THE POOR

Let us look now, therefore, at the "center" of Late Roman society: the Roman state. Too much emphasis on Shenoute's violent rhetoric or on his self-understanding as a prophet has made us overlook something so obvious that it is seldom observed: that he lived in the Roman Empire. Shenoute's relationship to the representatives of the Roman state and, in particular, to the provincial governors seems to have been for the most part the exact reverse of his hostility toward the local powerful at Panopolis. Far from displaying any separatist tendencies or any Egyptian nationalism, he identifies completely with the Roman order and relies on it to fight off his local enemies. He never criticizes a Roman emperor or the Roman state as such. Quite the opposite. As Shenoute sees it, the duty to care for the "poor" and to ensure social justice belongs, above all, to the state. The ideal of social justice that so many of his sermons and writings advocate can be described in two words: "vertical solidarity."[35] A vertical chain links God, the emperor, his

magistrates, provincial governors, and the local "poor," as represented in the person of Shenoute himself. The members of this chain are, ideally, linked with each other by ties of hierarchical reciprocity. Loyalty and obedience are owed to one's superior—and above all to the emperor—in exchange for protection. Justice and mercy are owed to one's inferior—always pictured as the "poor"—in exchange for loyalty. This vertical chain of protection and loyalty should bypass and neutralize the corporate interests of the local elites. But an effective advocate of the "poor" will occasionally have to travel "up" all the way to the imperial capital and skip missing links. For it is the "righteous emperors" who are, in Shenoute's opinion, the last resort of the "poor." They have been established by God to bring justice to the land and to punish all those unjust landowners who oppress the weak.[36] "In their love for God," they have also put an end to the public practice of paganism and have offered financial support to his monastery. Shenoute only has words of praise for them.

If not for the modern belief that Shenoute somehow represented a "national" Egyptian Christianity, this should have been expected. The identification of the imperial court as a model of heaven on earth and as the "exemplary center" of society is one of the dominant themes of late antique Christianity in the Eastern Empire. The faithful, it has been said, came to "see the realization of God's kingdom in the miracle of the sumptuous imperial court, which had converted to the new faith."[37] Christopher Kelly has documented the grip of the imperial court on the Christian imagination of the time. When Pachomius's successor Theodore saw an angel in a vision, what he saw looked like an imperial bureaucrat. When Porphyry of Gaza witnessed the procession for the baptism of the child-emperor in Constantinople, the splendor of the imperial ceremonial and its hierarchical perfection suggested to him the splendors of heaven. When theologians argued about the true nature of Christ, their arguments replicated debates on the nature of imperial power as expressed in the courtly ceremonial at Constantinople.[38]

Shenoute always made sure that both friends and enemies knew about his positive relationship to this numinous center. He once declared to a visiting governor that he was "amazed" that someone who despised ambition and worldly honors as much as he himself did had still managed to become famous among the powerful, "not only in Alexandria or Ephesus, but also at the imperial *comitatus* and at the court of the emperors, just like light carrying off the darkness and scattering the gloom."[39] He also claimed to have been offered money by the pious emperor Theodosius II himself, only to refuse it of course.[40] And his biography illustrates the same aspiration in its usual, over-the-top way. According to a story contained therein, the emperor once "thirsted" for Shenoute's presence in Constantinople. The military governor of the Thebaid was therefore commanded to bring him over to the imperial capital where the "entire senate" was looking forward to his visit. Shenoute was unfortunately too busy praying for his own sins. The solution: he

mounted a shining cloud, flew over to the royal palace in Constantinople, blessed the emperor, and came back the same night![41]

Stories like this, also reported about other holy men famed for their familiarity with the powerful (John of Lycopolis; Victor of Tabennesi, said to be the "secret son" of Theodosius II),[42] show the value placed by such holy men and their admirers on an "immediate," almost miraculous contact with the emperor. A privileged access to the emperor was considered crucial for any success in local politics. Visiting the imperial capital and approaching the imperial court was expensive and dangerous, but no miraculous clouds were needed. In the fifth and sixth centuries, Constantinople was invaded every year by thousands of petitions and petitioners from the provinces in the hope of finding a favorable, quick, and definitive resolution to their conflicts. This was a situation fostered by the Roman government itself. By rewarding petitioners, the emperor encouraged criticism of local powers and even of his own provincial representatives as a way to strengthen his precarious hold over provincial life and the state apparatus. Just when they refused to leave their capital, the emperors' role in local life became more important than ever. As a result, all politics, in the late antique Near East, was imperial politics. Two well-known examples of this situation—which has been described as an "advocacy revolution"[43]—come from Egypt. The famous petition of Appion, bishop of the border town of Syene (Assuan), demanding military protection for his churches, shows that the emperor was available even in the most remote confines of the empire.[44] Dioscorus of Aphrodito, on the other hand, the "pompous, vain and opinionated"[45] villager who repeatedly resisted the demands of the city of Antaeopolis on his village, traveled twice to Constantinople in the mid-sixth century to argue on behalf of his "poor" village and against the violence it suffered at the hands of the powerful of Antaeopolis.[46]

It is not surprising, therefore, that Shenoute frequently threatened his enemies at Panopolis with a trip to the emperor, or that he boasted of a privileged relationship to the imperial court.[47] His writings show that he did eventually travel to Constantinople. And like Dioscorus of Aphrodito, he did it to denounce "the violence which the powerful (*archōn*) were inflicting upon the poor."[48] To make clear what he stood for, he showed up at the imperial palace dressed like a beggar, and then proceeded to humiliate a powerful senator before an amazed emperor.[49] We do not know what—if any—the results of this mission were. We only know that he would often recall it with pride:

> I have said this about those who came up to me on the hill (i.e., the monastery) in the night with their document saying, "Your brothers do violence to us": If *I* have crossed the sea to the *comitatus* on account of those who do violence and we are the ones doing it, how great will God's judgment against us be?[50]

On a day-to-day basis, however, the emperor was a distant presence and only a last-resort solution. The imperial authorities typically approached by Shenoute

were the military and civilian governors of the Thebaid (usually called the *dux*/*comes* and the *hēgemōn*, respectively). They play a central role in his writings, and, in marked contrast to the anonymous "violent men" from Panopolis, they have specific names. Shenoute names at least nine military commanders, nine civilian governors, and one Augustal prefect of Alexandria.[51] It was in the person of these provincial governors that Shenoute focused, first and foremost, his hopes for "vertical solidarity." For it was they who made the emperor's will a reality in Upper Egypt, and it was from them, above all, that Shenoute could expect protection from his enemies in Panopolis, justice for the "poor," and, potentially, financial aid.

The central role of provincial governors is a well-documented aspect of the political life of the later Roman Empire. It is related to the new political structure of the empire, in which the unit of government was no longer the autonomous city, but the small province. The provincial capital now assumed an unprecedented weight in political life and eclipsed every other city in the province.[52] In the case of Upper Egypt, this was the city of Antinoe, or rather the "twin cities" of Hermopolis and Antinoe. The aristocracy itself—made up not only of civic notables but also of the members of the governor's staff and above all of former magistrates (the so-called *honorati*)—was now organized on a provincial and no longer on a civic level, and its life was focused on the provincial capital. There they would meet and welcome the military and civilian governors, both of them foreign individuals (at least in the sense of being foreign to the province) who would keep their position for only brief periods of time—so much so that they were advised not to bring their wives.[53] Shenoute points out, as a remarkable feat, that a particularly righteous governor had obtained his position for three consecutive years, and this without paying any bribes.[54]

In modern accounts of Shenoute's public role, the hostile letters from governors Dorotheos and Theodosius—which he duly refuted and preserved in his literary corpus—loom large (in part simply because they are the first texts in Leipoldt's edition) and seem to confirm his quintessential hostility to the powerful.[55] As we have seen above, a "corrupt" governor supposedly went even so far as to consider killing him. And Shenoute attributed the defeats suffered by some military governors to their paganism, which cannot have endeared them to him.[56] Overall, however, these are rather exceptional cases. As a rule, Shenoute's writings and his biography emphasize that good provincial governors were his "friends." They respected him more than anyone else in the province, they liked to listen to his preaching, they needed and heeded his advice and correction, and they protected him when necessary. Even a pagan military governor, we have seen, could not help but be amazed at Shenoute's "happiness." In contrast, the villains of Panopolis had a much harder time getting heard by the governor and tried in vain to give Shenoute a bad name. Thus when the military governor Chryssipos was visiting Panopolis, "that godless one"—almost certainly Gesios—accused Shenoute of theft to the

governor. Shenoute had broken into his house and removed his heathen books. But Chryssipos's answer to these accusations was deeply gratifying. "A dear friend," Shenoute writes, "informed me that Chryssipos told that miserable man: 'Look, your judgment applies to me too; for I am also a Christian.'" In the same way, when a governor was "furious" at some of Shenoute's people (Christians accused of antipagan violence?), and the latter was forced to travel to the governor's palace in Antinoe to justify himself, Gesios was there hoping to witness Shenoute's public humiliation. Once again, his hopes were dashed: "He in whose holy name we came trusting Him did according to those He loves and they were saved instead of dying and He let the chains be removed from them and they were released."[57]

Shenoute seems to have visited the provincial capital relatively often. In fact, it seems to be the only city in Upper Egypt besides Panopolis that he honored with his presence. We know that he preached there against paganism, at the so-called Church of the Water; that he traveled there to defend both his own monasteries and other Christians accused by the pagans; and that he shared his wisdom with both bishops and imperial authorities in the city. He claimed to have an almost infinite capacity to inspire deference among the Roman magistrates of Antinoe, and he resorted liberally to name-dropping in order to prove it:

> Many also asked me in Hermopolis and Antinoe about many issues and things, and they did not dare to [say] this senselessness (i.e., like a certain hostile philosopher).[58] If they looked for a word from me, they did so with prudence. The governor Alexander and also the governor Peter, I talked to them many times, and they did not say follies of this sort. And I also talked to you,[59] to Aidesios the military governor, and to Peter the civilian governor inside the governor's palace, and they did not say such senselessness. If they hide their darkness in their hearts, you should know it, for they are your friends.
>
> Many started to reveal their error in that city, and when I talked to them about what is right, they stopped in their loquacity, knowing that I say the truth from the scriptures. The son of the general who was in the city those days dared to [say] these confusing things . . . [and when he heard me] he repented. The tribune of the Cusites asked me about many things when he came to us.[60]

More important, though, than Shenoute's visits to Antinoe were the visits of the governors themselves to Shenoute's monastery. Other Egyptian holy men had been visited by provincial governors before. John of Lycopolis, the famous late fourth-century recluse who had predicted the victories of the emperor Theodosius, angered his visitor Palladius by giving priority to a governor who had arrived later than he.[61] He also blessed military governors on their way to the war-torn southern frontier.[62] But the visits received by Shenoute seem to have been far grander occasions. One or both governors—for they usually traveled together[63]—would arrive at the monastery in the company of their staffs, lawyers and assessors (the omnipresent *scholastikoi*), "friends," "brothers," former magistrates residing in the

area (*honorati*), troops, and other members of the provincial elite to pay him their respects, attend Mass at the monastery, and listen to his words. The presence of the provincial elite on Shenoute's doorstep was a tribute to his status among the powerful. It validated his claim to be the true spokesman of his region among the Roman authorities. Hence the jealousy of his enemies in Panopolis, who could not stand the sight of a governor visiting and praising Shenoute's own "city in the desert":

> What did the God-loving military governor Chossoroas, whom you could not dissuade from visiting us, say? He said, glorifying God: "You have made the desert a city." In Panopolis it has been reported otherwise, twisting the words into a lie.[64]

Why did all these governors like Shenoute so much? For the same reason—he claimed—that Panopolis hated him: he cared for the "poor," and he would not shut up. The "panegyrics" on the governors Heraklammon and Flavianus, which Shenoute delivered on the occasion of their visits in lieu of a regular sermon, make this point very clear.[65] These magistrates and Shenoute admired each other because they had a similar passion: they were all "lovers of the poor." This kinship of interests created an immediate if fleeting friendship:

> I have said these words and other things to Dioskorides the governor and Heraklammon, his *scholastikos*, who became governor after him.[66] I also spoke to Theodotos, the military governor, as was fitting. And I did not hide what was in my heart to Spudasios, the *comes* of the empress,[67] and also to his brother. For they were my friends, and they are men who love God very much, being merciful, pitiful, philanthropic, and, in particular, lovers of the poor.
>
> I also said further things to Ailianos, who was governor of the Thebaid and then became Augustal prefect in Alexandria. But he became suspicious when he heard this, thinking that I was talking about that hostile man who lives in Panopolis (i.e., his enemy Gesios). I answered him as it was fitting and removed his suspicion. Furthermore, I spoke with many notables and magistrates, and I also spoke to Andreas, the military governor. Therefore it is not a wonder that I have spoken before you (the governor Flavianus) and that I have not hidden what has been revealed to me. For I am a miserable man, and I only want you to profit from your effort of coming here.[68]

By listing the authorities who, in striking contrast to his rivals, had respectfully asked for his spiritual guidance, Shenoute declared himself to be an "authorized" interlocutor with the powerful. This passage, from his speech to Flavianus, hints at one remarkable trait of these "panegyrics": they are as much about Shenoute as about the magistrates themselves. Shenoute makes every virtue that he praises in a good governor—love of the poor, justice, disinterestedness, courage—a synonym for himself and becomes thereby the measure of everyone and everything.[69] Shamelessly extolling himself as the universal exemplar was the best way to teach and commend the holders of power.

Governor Heraklammon is thus presented with an inspiring paradox: a monk (i.e., Shenoute) who flees power and fame only to become world famous and be offered a bishopric by the powerful archbishops of Alexandria:

> How many bishops have spent how many days and nights here (i.e., at Shenoute's monastery) with a multitude of clerics, the elite, soldiers, and other laypersons by the command of the archbishop and his letters so that I might go to him to be ordained bishop? But I did not go, because I wanted the name of God to be glorified . . .
>
> . . . when we went to the great meeting of the holy ecumenical council [in Ephesus], the glorious archbishop testified [about me] to other archbishops, bishops, and the whole council, praising me and boasting of me, saying things like: "When I sent for him because of that issue (i.e., to ordain him as bishop) he did not come, but when I wrote to him to come to the council with us, he did not place any concern for himself and joined us quickly in this city before other bishops, before we had decided anything."[70]

One wonders what the bishop of Panopolis would have made of all these grandiose claims. Shenoute's writings—we have seen—never mention him, not even when discussing issues related to the church of Panopolis. The bishops that truly count for Shenoute are the archbishops of Alexandria. And for good reason. The power of the Alexandrian archbishop over his church—he had absolute power over every single episcopal ordination—was unparalleled anywhere else in the empire.[71] Egypt never had a counterpart to Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Porphyry of Gaza, or Rabbula of Edessa in late antiquity. As far as we can tell, no Egyptian bishop outside of Alexandria ever had more than a local impact in this period. A powerful abbot like Shenoute could act therefore as if these low-profile bishops did not exist, and he could afford to refuse any offers for episcopal ordination. Even though late antique sources from Egypt talk about the care of the "poor" as a defining duty of the local bishop and his church, Shenoute willfully ignores them and focuses all his expectations for help on the imperial governors.[72]

How, then, should these governors show their love for the "poor"? Above all, according to these peculiar "panegyrics," through their exercise of justice. As Peter Brown has noted, the qualities admired by Shenoute in "his" governors were the standard values of an ancient and Mediterranean-wide language of power that emphasized control of anger, humanity, wisdom, and justice.[73] This language had become suffused, since the late fourth century, with the Christian ideals of the care of the poor, and, as a result, it had come to represent the ideal of "vertical solidarity." The governor's two cardinal virtues should be mercy and justice, which has itself "become a form of almsgiving".[74]

> The first good thing (Shenoute tells Flavianus) is to protect justice, and its ornament is mercy. For these are the two principal and necessary things. They crown each other, justice and mercy. Whoever protects justice but is not merciful although he has [wealth to give] or whoever is merciful but does not protect justice although he

> has the power [to do it] is like a maimed person whose hand is not straight and has become weak, that is, he has gold, silver, money, power but no mercy, for his power to have mercy and to do justice has become weak.[75]

The governor, as described by Shenoute, towers high above local society and is expected to condescend to the "poor" in the same way that God lowered himself to become human. Old Testament prophets, "who speak about us, and not about themselves," provide the language to describe his virtues and potential vices. A good governor will avoid the typical sins of a late Roman bureaucrat: buying his post and selling justice for bribes. "If the magistrates desire it," he tells Flavianus, "they can become rich in good works in a single year and a single tour to the province." Such a good governor had a bright future both in heaven and on earth:

> Truly, just as he (i.e., Flavianus) is famous for his way of life, he is even more famous because he protects righteousness, mercy, and justice. He gives what belongs to God to God and what belongs to the emperors to the emperors with the wisdom and zeal of his intelligence. He is loved by the poor, he is also loved by the emperors [so much so] that they gave him the magistracy three times for nothing. He will be honored by the emperors and praised by Christ.[76]

Shenoute's endeavor to become the privileged friend of imperial magistrates was, without any doubt, a reasonable political strategy. There is no question that he needed a direct link to the imperial authorities if he was going to bypass the local town and become the preeminent interpreter and spokesman of local interests (the "poor"). Having the ear of the governor could turn a monk into an influential personality. The letters of John of Lycopolis, preserved in papyri, show this clearly. "The knowledge of our intimacy," John wrote to a magistrate, "causes many who know your feelings toward me to flee to me and (in this case) to make me ask from your nobility [the following favor . . .]."[77] In the case of Shenoute, it cannot be denied that his "friendship" with imperial magistrates produced spectacular results: his impressive church building, which—as we shall see in the next chapter—was founded and financed by the military governor Caesarius. Indeed, even Cyril of Alexandria needed the help of Shenoute when traveling to the emperor, and Cyril's enemy Nestorius, the disgraced patriarch of Constantinople exiled to a fortress near Shenoute's monastery, had no other choice but to turn to him when dealing with the authorities. After several unsuccessful letters to Andreas, a military governor and one of Shenoute's "friends," Nestorius "sent to Antinoe and appealed to Caesarius, the military governor, because he was a friend of our father Shenoute."[78]

That having been said, it is essential not to confuse Shenoute's hopes with an accurate description of reality. His very insistence on his friendship with Roman magistrates and on their admiration for him should make us somewhat skeptical about his claims. For they seem to be as exaggerated as his enmity toward Panopolis. If the imperial authorities were this close to Shenoute, if they listened

to him with such unfailing respect and invariably protected him from his enemies, why did he feel such a pressing need to reassure his audience of it? Behind the plethora of names and titles listed by Shenoute among his powerful "friends," there lies a deep sense of insecurity and uncertainty. It could not have been any other way. With a new foreign governor showing up at Antinoe every one or two years, the struggle for the governor's favor was a never-ending affair. We know from Dioscorus's archive, for example, that petitions had to be repeated every time a new governor took office.[79] For every "God-loving" governor praised by Shenoute, there may have been several others—both pagan and Christian—who were either indifferent or hostile. The use of the language of "friendship" to describe a relationship to imperial magistrates was a rhetorical device regularly used in the later Roman Empire to co-opt a powerful stranger of uncertain intentions.[80] Libanius knew only too many such "self-styled friends" of the powerful, who induced the emperor—he complained—with their "hurtful counsel" to behave unlike his "true self."[81]

We cannot therefore take Shenoute's success for granted. In any case, the power of a short-term foreign governor would have been limited in a strange province. He would have been highly dependent on the local aristocracy, that is, on people like Shenoute's own bête noire, Gesios. Gesios himself was a former governor—although probably not of the Thebaid—and therefore a *honoratus*.[82] As such, he must have claimed the right to "fill the governor's headquarters with turmoil" and to feel offended when the governors did not visit him.[83] *Honorati* "felt entitled to treat the incoming governor as a junior colleague."[84] Such a situation must have been as intolerable to Shenoute as it was to Libanius, and it helps to explain the former's exasperating self-promotion in front of provincial governors.

Altogether, Shenoute's penchant for branding the "rulers" of the world as either his friends or his enemies should not be interpreted simply as the result of a prophet's black-and-white perception of the world. For this is a distinction with a profound political meaning.[85] Shenoute may have been an abbot, a holy man, and even a prophet. But his ostentatious display of powerful "friends" and "enemies" in front of powerful visitors conveyed a clear message: I am one of you, and I cannot be ignored.

"VIOLENCE" AND *PARRHĒSIA*

Any analysis of Shenoute's role as spokesman of the "poor" needs to define two notions that are fundamental to his self-understanding: "violence" and *parrhēsia*. As Shenoute puts it, his enemies are the "violent" (*nrefči-nqons*), who do "violence" (*či-nqons*) to the "poor." Gesios, above all, is "the prince of the violent."[86] But the accusation of "violence" was also leveled against Shenoute himself by disgruntled monks, and against his own monasteries by malicious outsiders. The Coptic

word that we usually translate as "violence" has a wider range of meaning than its English counterpart. As used by the Coptic Bible—particularly in the Prophets, the Psalms, Job, and Proverbs—and by Shenoute himself, it means essentially "social injustice."[87] A "violent" man is an unrighteous man who takes advantage of his power or wealth to abuse those weaker than him, that is, the "poor." "Violence" is therefore an active transgression against the ideal of vertical solidarity that may but does not need to include a physical assault. As Shenoute sees it, much of the wealth of the rich has been wrung from the "poor" through "violence," that is, largely economic abuses.

The use of this language to describe the world and petition the authorities is by no means particular to Shenoute. One only needs to read late antique petitions from Egypt to notice how widespread this so-called violence had become. By the sixth century, it seems, every crime had become a crime of the rich and powerful against the weak and poor—"violence" in Shenoute's language. Social contrasts and inequality come to be portrayed in dramatic terms and form the background to every petition. The poor, miserable petitioner represents himself in the bleakest possible terms while complaining about the abuses endured at the hands of his all-powerful rivals.[88]

Shenoute himself contributed actively to the spread of this language. And not only with his preaching. It has been argued that the very existence of a monastic sector tends "to raise the pitch of the ideological discourse and articulation of other groups and sectors—themselves influencing, at least in part, monastic discourse and organization."[89] In Peter Brown's apposite words, "The monks functioned much as a chemical solution functions in a photographers' darkroom: their presence brought out with greater sharpness of contrast the new features of a Christian image of society."[90] Like Shenoute—whose *Discourses* and *Letters* can be considered a long, single-minded, and ultimately successful petition—the writers of these petitions never run the risk of understatement when begging for justice and attention from the provincial governor.

What such a "violent" world needed was a courageous truth-teller who would speak truth to power and denounce all this "violence" to the emperor and his representatives. What it needed, in other words, was *parrhēsia*, fearless speech, a concept Shenoute uses when describing his words and deeds against the "violent."[91] The ideal of *parrhēsia* was of course very old. For centuries it had been incarnated by the philosopher who was expected to act as an honest and courageous adviser and critic of the powerful. In late antiquity, the concept was infused with new life with the emergence of bishops first and then monks as its new embodiment. The Christian takeover of the old role of the philosopher as the public conscience of society introduced important Old Testament echoes into the classical ideal. Someone like Shenoute was as much a *parrhēsiastēs* as an Old Testament prophet. His truth-having was guaranteed not only by his objectivity and moral rectitude,

but also by a privileged relationship to the divine. His *parrhēsia* before the powerful of this world derived to a large degree from his *parrhēsia* before God himself. His criticisms, therefore, attacked not only the abuse of power and wealth but also impiety and sinfulness.

What are the specific implications of *parrhēsia* as a discursive style? Michel Foucault's brief lectures on this topic are particularly helpful to understand Shenoute's self-presentation.[92] In the first place, the relation between *parrhēsia* and rhetoric deserves some consideration:

> The word *parrhesia*, then, refers to a type of relationship between the speaker and what he says. For in *parrhesia*, the speaker makes it manifestly clear and obvious that what he says is his *own* opinion. And he does this by avoiding any kind of rhetorical form which would veil what he thinks. Instead, the *parrhesiastes* uses the most direct words and expressions he can find. Whereas rhetoric provides the speaker with technical devices to help him prevail upon the minds of his audience (*regardless* of the rhetorician's own opinion concerning what he says), in *parrhesia*, the *parrhesiastes* acts on other people's minds by showing them as directly as possible what he actually believes.[93]

The idea that Shenoute's style of preaching derives somehow from the Greek rhetoric of the Second Sophistic[94] is misleading not because as a "Coptic," uneducated peasant he bitterly resented Greek culture and language, but rather because for a *parrhēsiastēs* the only legitimate mode of communication was straight talk. The desired effect of *parrhēsia* was in fact to silence rhetoric, the "loquacity" and impertinent questioning of a self-indulgent audience—whether in Greek or Coptic.[95] This is particularly important because Shenoute's rivals lived at Panopolis, a "college town" overflowing in poetry—and poetry had taken over many of the traditional functions of rhetoric in late antiquity. While Shenoute attempted to impress imperial magistrates with his plain speaking, his opponents composed epics comparing the same magistrates to Homeric heroes who fought the barbarians to save the Thebaid.[96] As a traditional rhetorician Shenoute stood no chance against Panopolis: "Because the old power-holders work within a code of formalization, they cannot be challenged gradually but only altogether, by an almost deliberate, sacrilegious disregard for a traditional culture which the holders of old power are busily creating and evermore formalizing to exclude the usurpers."[97]

One of the many interesting points raised in Foucault's illuminating lectures is that the use of *parrhēsia* implies necessarily a specific self-presentation.[98] The truth of what the *parrhēsiastēs* says—and he never has the slightest doubt that what he says is true—is guaranteed not by a logical demonstration but rather by the possession of certain moral qualities by the speaker. We have seen that Shenoute never tires of enumerating his own virtues when speaking to the authorities. It was these

virtues that gave him the right to criticize and advise the powerful and his enemies. His personal life was presented as a blazon of essential truths that served as a guideline for his audience. Above all, it was crucial to give proofs of personal courage. A *parrhēsiastēs* is courageous because his criticism of the powerful is dangerous to himself. This courage proves his sincerity. Shenoute liked to emphasize that his tireless denunciations often provoked outrage among his audience. His "panegyric" on Flavianus, for example, has a curious excursus in which he tells the governor about the reaction of another magistrate to this straight talk. Apparently, Shenoute had spoken on behalf of the poor preaching justice and charity only too blatantly. The result:

> A friend from your province (i.e., Flavianus's country of origin) who came to us, not only did he not like my speech, but he [even] accused me to the governor. But I did not say anything that is not in the scriptures, in particular in the Psalms. That nothing may be hidden from you, I will tell you how he lied against us and what we wrote to him.

Then Shenoute quotes, in the middle of his speech, his extensive "letter to Bakanos and those who are with him, against his accusations," of which the following extracts give a good idea:[99]

> I have to tell you the truth: I grieve for you exceedingly. For what cause, I will not say—God will judge us both. About the accusation that you have made against me in the law-court, lying: I don't care. I don't flee from the laws. Only God's court has anything to do with me and I have nothing to confess. When you go up to the final judgment, we will see whether we came up to this hill (i.e., Shenoute's monastery) to "gather men to fight each other on account of the villages" and whether "I gave them bread" (these are the real accusations of Bakanos against Shenoute). You lie; you slander the places of God (i.e., the monasteries). Who will trust you? If we had wanted to practice (*gumnaze*) the laws against the things you said, you would have not avoided their refutation. You have come to Egypt to lose your soul for nothing. This is not the moment to add numerous biblical quotations.

The victims of Shenoute's courage are therefore not only to be found in Panopolis; they are even among the "friends" who visit him. Only Flavianus's extraordinary friendship had prevented him from becoming furious at such supposedly incendiary criticisms:

> For unless you were wise and unless love supported every thing and every word which a friend will tell his true friends in Christ, *you would hate me when I tell you these things. . . . Don't blame me because I tell you the truth*. . . . Oh magistrates, do not listen to my manner of speaking and become furious![100]

The typical setting for the display of *parrhēsia* in the classical world was a dialogue between ruler and *parrhēsiastēs*, what Foucault has called the "parrhesiastic game."[101]

In this, too, Shenoute's interaction with the authorities recalls classical traditions. He is always taking the questions of his audience and answering them in such a forceful way that he hurts the questioners' pride. His discourses to the military governors who visited the monastery, for example, portray them as coming with the intention of holding an innocent, polite conversation with the holy man, a "stereotyped linking of stereotypes."[102] They ask safely irrelevant questions about the size of the sky in comparison to the earth; they question the prevalence of certain practices among the Christians of Egypt (why do Egyptians take communion with a full stomach?); they complain about the situation of the church or the power of the devil.[103] Like a true spiritual guide, Shenoute responds by placing the questioners themselves in question. "The real question is less what is being talked about than who is doing the talking."[104] Governors—he claims—should not use the devil as an excuse for their own faults nor should they waste his time with inappropriate questions:

> For a military governor asked me when he came to us: "Is the sky the same size as the world?" I answered him: "Your horse seems by all means stronger than many. Mount it, spur it on, go up [to the sky!], check it, and come back! . . . Go up and you will find out the measure of sky and earth and come back, so that not only you know but so that you also tell us!" . . .
>
> You see, he was asking for things that are not fitting that I might not talk to him about what is fitting.[105]

Such harsh dismissals were in store for magistrates who inquired after things that were none of their business. The proper questions for a military governor to ask—Shenoute insisted—were those about his own duties as a magistrate:

> If I talk with the soldier about the duties of a monk and with the monk about those of a soldier, what will the soldier do with the things of a monk and the monk with those of the soldier?

This is a point that Shenoute needed to make time and again. It is well known that Eastern Christianity tended, like Theravada Buddhism, to develop a two-tiered morality. While upholding the supremacy of renunciatory, otherworldly orientations and values, it tended to isolate them and segregate them from day-to-day life.[106] Enshrined at the very apex of the hierarchy of cultural orientations, the values embodied by a holy man like Shenoute could be revered, but their scope kept at bay. Such a double standard threatened to render Shenoute's *parrhēsia* on behalf of the "poor" harmless and ineffective. Military commanders, for example, thought that they could come to the monastery to talk about otherworldly things only to go back to their mundane concerns feeling reassured that sinlessness was demanded only from the "perfect."

Hence Shenoute's firm refusal to be thus "domesticated." This refusal went so far as to deny altogether the validity of a double ethic. Despite their obvious differences,

he insisted, the life of a monk and the life of worldly authorities have similar ethical imperatives. Not everyone needs to be "perfect" like a monk—faithful marriage, for example, is a valid alternative—but everyone needs to try. No one should let the perfect be the enemy of the good. Above all, everyone needs to avoid the false hope that salvation will be somehow guaranteed by the prayers of the perfect:

> I have not forgotten what a friend said while you listened: "It is [only] monks who are supposed to fast. Truly they are the ones [who should fast] because of their hope in heaven." But as he has spoken idly, amusing himself, I will also tell him, without shame: he needs to fast more [than we do]. . . . Who should fast [more]: the righteous monk, who lives with little and inadequate food, or you, who eat calves and drink wine and other goods of every different kind? . . . *When the monk fasts, does he fast on your behalf?* When you act as a judge, you do not judge on his behalf, do you? Let each do his best to find God's mercy.[107]
>
> Truly all Christians have the same one God, and everyone has the same one piety according to his capacity.[108]

If the authorities wished to harbor any hope for salvation, therefore, they had better take Shenoute's *parrhēsia* seriously. For his criticisms were no joke. His "friends" the military commanders, for example, were told in no uncertain terms that they were not living up to their obligations. The military authorities often rob soldiers and workers of their salary; all they want is money. The common soldier only asks for his *annona* (i.e., his wage and provisions), and they try to kill him. The soldiers, on the other hand, plunder "villages, cities, houses, roads, boats, vineyards, fields, threshing floors, *epoikia*, monasteries, and even the offerings that are brought to the places of God." They threaten and beat up anyone who complains. "They despoil those on whose behalf they claim to fight. Their lawlessness is just like that of the barbarians." "They do not think whether it is right to take—let us not say plunder—and inhabit the houses of people who are not their enemies."[109] This was the proper kind of conversation between a holy man and the military authorities, not empty talk about the size of the sky. The reason—Shenoute argued—that the emperor and good governors listened to him and not to his "violent" enemies was that, as a bearer of *parrhēsia*, he invariably said the truth, and the truth was not nice. They might get furious at his words, but they would get the truth from no one else.

Yet Shenoute's criticisms, I would like to stress, are seldom original. His complaints are highly reminiscent of those of many late antique bishops, rhetors, historians, and the legalistic pessimism of the Theodosian Code itself.[110] This was the kind of commonsense criticism everyone could be expected to agree with. I do not think, therefore, that the "parrhesiastic game" was "a rare moment in which the 'hidden transcript' of subordinated groups penetrates into public discourse."[111] Rather than an idiosyncratic "Coptic" or "popular" perspective, what the military governors heard from Shenoute was what Edward Shils has called a

"hyper-affirmation of the central value system."[112] It was the very predictability and universality of these criticisms that made them such an effective rhetorical tool of self-presentation. For it was such conventional, well-tried *parrhēsia* that evoked "the respect vice pays to virtue." The more Shenoute "criticized" his friends the governors, the more they liked him:

> Listening to this (i.e., Shenoute's criticisms) together with those who were with him, he (i.e., the governor) said: *"Nobody says this as clearly as you show us and teach us."*
>
> (To which Shenoute replied:) "What I am telling you is clear to you because I speak with you about *your* duties and those of the people who are here with us."[113]

Shenoute's "opposition" to these governors, therefore, was a very "loyal opposition," that is, precisely the kind of opposition that the emperors were interested in fostering in the provinces. We have seen that the central authorities of the Roman state, structurally weak and therefore jealous of local powers and even of their own provincial representatives, promoted centralization through a policy of divide and rule that encouraged both local criticism of the powerful and a constant appeal to the imperial court itself as the ultimate judge.[114] Shenoute's words and deeds fit nicely into this role of the emperor's man in the province. He never questions imperial law directly nor does he ever claim—as it has been argued—that godly zeal overrides secular law.[115] When accused by governors, he is easily offended at any hint that he might have broken the laws. "Will you make *me* a companion of thieves?!" "Will you judge me in absence?" "We thank God and the laws and do not flee from them nor are we provoking disturbances."[116] *Anomia*, that is, lawlessness, is what defines his enemies in Panopolis.[117] He is very much concerned, for example, to show that his actions against paganism did not involve any disturbances in accordance with imperial laws, which forbid any unrest or turbulence on account of religious intolerance.

The reason Shenoute loved to dwell on the accusations made against his person by both enemies and "friends" was not to show that his holy courage was beyond earthly laws. All those accusations and, of course, his replies were simply the best possible evidence for his *parrhēsia*, which his hypocritical enemies deliberately misrepresented as a blatant disregard for the law. His controversial actions and criticism on behalf of the poor and against paganism may have been holy, but—this is always stressed by him—they were also legal. Far from representing a challenge to Roman power, they were carried out in the name of the emperor and his laws:

> For the Christian emperors are worthy of all honor. But among those who are entrusted with offices or magistracies, there are many, not to say everyone, who pervert justice for money. The majority of those who obtain magistracies are Christian, and still they do not care for the affairs of God, that is, justice, mercy, and all his commands.[118]

To care for the poor, to extirpate paganism, to criticize the unjust, to scold the ignorant or corrupt governor: this is not wrongdoing—Shenoute argued—but the true spirit of the law, what the emperor really wants but incompetent governors, too cowardly or involved in local interests, will not dare do themselves.[119] An overzealous application of the laws was Shenoute's only "crime," and he was very proud of it.

A LANGUAGE OF CLAIMS: POVERTY AND POLITICS

Shenoute's single-minded, relentless, and, for moments, crude campaign of self-definition—his "ego of epic proportions," in other words—cannot be explained by appealing solely to psychological factors or biblical role models. Its raison d'être lies rather in the structurally unclear position he occupied in contemporary society. The reason so many of his works answer the questions "Who am I?" "Who are my enemies?" "What gives me the right to do and say what I do?" is that his ill-defined position did not grant him any clear-cut legitimacy to intervene in society at large as he aspired to do. "Friends," enemies, and his own monks—whose interaction with the world was strictly controlled—had to be constantly reassured. Above all, he embodied a new kind of leadership whose success—in the late fourth and fifth centuries—we cannot take for granted. This was a man who, as far as we know, had inherited neither the wealth nor the education traditionally necessary to be a member of the provincial elite. Here as elsewhere, the power of a self-made man who had acquired and not inherited his status was inherently suspect.

This was particularly true in this case, since Shenoute was a monk, and monks, it could be and was often argued, belonged to the "desert," not to the "world." An impious governor was imagined to have said, after reading Shenoutes's demands in a letter: "Let Shenoute talk in his church and among the monks. He has no jurisdiction over me as far as administrative affairs goes." "He has nothing to do with me."[120] Indeed, who was Shenoute to tell anyone else what to do? No other Egyptian abbot, before or after him, is known to have been so active outside his monastery. His involvement in politics was beset with dilemmas and ambiguities. His very involvement in the world, which contributed to his public status, could also undermine it by compromising the withdrawal and segregation from society on which his spiritual prestige depended.[121] This is why when accused by provincial governors, Shenoute's answer to them is to stress that he *is* a monk, that he stays inside his monastery, that only God's tribunal has anything to do with him, that the "things of this world" are not his concern. His answer, in other words, is to stress the otherworldliness that underlay his spiritual prestige but was threatened by his passion to be actively involved in the world at large.

It is interesting to compare Shenoute from this point of view with his better-known contemporary Theodoret. Theodoret was a wealthy Antiochene who had

been sent as bishop to the small nearby town of Cyrrhus. His enemies, however, repeatedly accused him of spending more time in Antioch than in Cyrrhus: he supposedly preached, gathered synods, and even kept an apartment there. His answer was a flood of letters to every important authority in the empire. Although it is hard to imagine somebody more different from Shenoute than Theodoret, these letters show that he had to deal with comparable dilemmas. While Shenoute replied to his critics that he was indeed a monk and always stayed at his monastery, Theodoret felt the need to state, time and again, that he liked "a peaceful life free from cares" and that he was completely dedicated to the small town of Cyrrhus. He claimed to have built public bridges, baths, porticoes, and even an aqueduct for this "little ugly town . . . whose ugliness I have dissimulated with multiple and magnificent buildings." He had even distributed his inheritance there. Yet the paradox, here again, is that the very letters that he wrote to make this point show how involved he was in imperial politics. He clearly felt that he was too big a man for such a small town.[122]

The only way for Shenoute to validate his anomalous involvement in politics while preserving his externality was to stress the oppositional aspects of this involvement. We have seen how he cultivated the status of persona non grata in Panopolis and claimed to be the sworn enemy of its elite, the "violent." We have also seen that when he does admit to having "friends" among the powerful, all these "friends" happen to be imperial magistrates. They are foreign, and their appointments are brief. They are not a threat to his outsider status. They are Shenoute's friends, in any case, only if and when they are willing to accept his courageous criticism. We have seen, above all, that he always presented himself as the spokesman of "the poor," who suffered unremitting "violence" at the hands of the powerful of this world. His legitimacy to challenge Panopolis and the "violent" stemmed neither from divine inspiration—to which he was reluctant to appeal[123]—nor from extraordinary asceticism, whose intrinsic value he questioned because he took it for granted.[124] It stemmed, rather, from his representativeness, that is, his claim to stand for "the silent majority." In contrast to his enemies, who spoke only for themselves and their own individual interests, all of Shenoute's interventions in the "world" were presented as actions on behalf of the helpless and needy "poor."

Hence his frequent reference to the "crowds" (*mēēše*) that apparently followed him around and congregated at his monastery. Although he had to answer more than once the accusation that he had gathered dangerous "crowds," which caused disturbances in city and countryside, both Shenoute's works and biography consistently portray him surrounded by "crowds" of the harmless "poor," who flocked spontaneously to him. They gathered at his church every weekend, at his monastery's gate to receive alms; they listened to his preaching; they defended him at a trial in the provincial capital; and they marched behind him when attacking rural paganism. It seems as if Shenoute positively needed a "critical mass" around him

to send the clear message that what he did was actually done by the "poor," and what he said was not the expression of a particular interest but the voice of the silent majority.[125]

Shenoute's answer to the question "Who are you to tell me what to do?" was, therefore, "I am the poor." We should not take such an answer for granted. It is true that, by the fifth century, the Christian "care of the poor" was already an imperially sanctioned practice, a public service provided by the church that the government could be expected to recognize and reward in very concrete terms. "Since it is part of our duty to provide for the needy," the emperors Marcian and Valentinian declared in 451, "and to take care that nourishment is not lacking for the poor, we order that the payments of diverse kinds that have been assigned so far to the holy churches from the public treasury shall remain as heretofore and shall be furnished undiminished by anyone, and we assign to this most ready bounty perpetual endurance."[126] The care of the poor defined and delimited the public role of the Christian church in late Roman society. Yet it had been bishops, not monks, who had been at the forefront of this development. It was only in the fifth century that large monasteries—such as Shenoute's—began to take over this public service and to develop it on a large scale in the countryside, where it was "unevenly distributed and erratically maintained."[127] The wholehearted appropriation of this institution and discourse by certain monks had important consequences for the relationship between monasticism and society. It encouraged and legitimized a stronger and more active involvement in public life. Together with the defense of orthodoxy, the care of the "poor" became the primary argument for a Christian monk to justify his actions in the "world."

But for a social historian such rhetoric is not self-explanatory. It raises a basic question: Who were the "poor"? What kind of people made up the "crowds" that followed Shenoute? These are questions that will come up again in every other chapter of this book, but it is important to understand why our answers can never be completely clear. In the first place, Shenoute's notion of the "poor" could refer to the *voluntary* poor, that is, the poor who lived in the desert as monks. When Shenoute complains about the violence the "poor" are suffering at the hands of the "violent," he may be simply referring to the taxes or rents that his monastery has to pay. Or he may be defending the "poverty"—that is, the wealth—of his monasteries from criticism by his rich and wicked enemies, as in the following example:

> Who again are those whose houses have been laid waste, so that they [have to] beg and sell themselves to their creditors or give themselves as pledges to the moneylenders—[men] just like this lawless governor who forgot the oppression of a crowd of the poor? Is it your (pl.) people or is it the communities of God (i.e., my monasteries)? Would that *you* (pl.) had to endure poverty, oh you who are quick to blaspheme because of the shortage! As for us (i.e., the monks), we are tried in everything, [but] even if we are naked, even if we are in need of bread, we thank Jesus.[128]

However rich Shenoute's monasteries may have been—and we shall see that they had a formidable economic power—their "poor" monks could be spoken of as naked beggars who had sold themselves to their creditors and lacked bread. This ambiguity of the notion of the "poor" was particularly useful for a holy man who was attempting to legitimize his notorious involvement in the world. The defense of the (involuntary) "poor" in the world at large came naturally to an abbot who presided over a large monastery full of (voluntary) poor monks. The care of the "poor" set Shenoute free from the narrow bounds of his monastery.

When referring explicitly to the *involuntary* "poor" of the "world," on the other hand, Shenoute's descriptions seem to indicate that we are dealing above all with rural workers, small landowners, and the tenants of large landowners. Yet here again his biblically inspired language is very vague and drastically simplifies a very complex economic reality. As is so common in the Christian discourse on poverty in late antiquity, it blurs the traditional Greek distinction *penēs–ptōchos*, that is, between the man who has to work to earn his daily bread and the beggar.[129] This basic distinction is, in any case, ignored in Coptic, which usually subsumes both kinds of "poverty" under the all-embracing category of *hēke*, originally meaning the "hungry." As a whole, the "poor"—whether voluntary or not—are defined by Shenoute only in a negative way: they are those who suffer "violence" at the hands of his enemies, and on whose behalf he fights and speaks.[130]

The reason for this is quite simple. The language of poverty was above all a language of claims. Rather than a category with intrinsic meanings, the "poor" was a *relational* category often used with a polemical intent. Most of the time, it simply meant the "oppressed." One can see this clearly in the petitions of Dioscorus of Aphrodito against the authorities of Antaeopolis. Although Aphrodito is known to have been a prosperous village, Dioscorus's descriptions of its misery could well have been written by Shenoute:

> [We are] all miserable orphans leading the existence of young children—as evident from our naked aspect—who cannot find our necessary nourishment without danger. We call upon the Lord God as witness to this, namely, that we eat raw vegetables and emmer in winter; in the summer, we eat in our hearths (?) the refuse left over after sifting our grain and grains dropped during the transport of our grain-taxes, since after this nothing at all remains to us.[131]

When in need of an imperial favor, *everybody* at Aphrodito was an orphan, naked and hungry. In the same way, Shenoute's attempt to define his ambivalent position in the "world" by referring to a vague and ill-defined notion made perfect political sense. Like "middle class" or "proletariat," the "poor" was a "social concept with variable geometry."[132] Much of its political usefulness lay precisely in the fact that it defined and legitimized one's position in reference to an ill-defined group that could—if necessary—be identified with society as a whole. Claiming to stand for

the "poor" thus allowed Shenoute to universalize his own interests and to identify his own foes as public enemies of society. Any attempt to use his writings as a source for social history must take this political context into account.

On the other hand, for a self-made politician such as Shenoute, who needed to mobilize "crowds" in city and countryside, the language of poverty could be a political discourse with a very real symbolic power and concrete social consequences. Language, in particular authorized language produced by an authority such as a preacher, has structuring power. It can prescribe while seeming to describe. By producing and imposing representations of the social world that rendered a group—the "poor"—visible to itself and to others, Shenoute was in fact promoting the existence of this group as a group. For there may have been many poor people in late antique Egypt, but the "poor" did not exist as an actual group waiting for Shenoute to act as its spokesman. They had to be created as such, given a common identity and mobilized in defense of their own interests. "Le representant"—Pierre Bourdieu has said—"fait le group qui le fait." Shenoute, we could say, promoted the existence of a group that promoted his existence as a public man.[133]

It is important not to confuse this circular relationship—characteristic of much political representation—with cynical manipulation. Shenoute was not a hypocrite politician who used the "poor" to further his own interests. He believed in his own mission more than anyone else. But much of his success surely stems from the fact that his own interests and those of the "poor" he defended tended to coincide. Helping the "poor" was the best way for him to help himself. Moreover, although the "poor" had to be created as a group and mobilized—both in action and language—they were far more than passive spectators or a rhetorical concoction. As innumerable late antique petitions show, they actively took over the Christian language of the care of the poor and used it to further their own interests. They constantly appealed for help to holy men such as Shenoute, who claimed to defend the "poor," and took them at their word:

> I often go to bed with my children without having eaten, since I work for this place. Do a great deed, for they have put me in chains and locked me up. They have freed me [only] upon surety. Do a great deed. Look with God for whatever [money] you can find. You do it not for a man but for God. *You are our man*.[134]

The "poor," therefore, were not always voiceless creatures. In the making of Shenoute's public career, their active contribution should not be forgotten.

2

A Miraculous Economy

"Everything that God did with Moses on the mountain of Sinai, God has granted it to me on the mountain of Atripe."[1] These are the proud words attributed to Shenoute by the Arabic version of his biography. Whatever else one may say about his character, understatement was never his style. Reading his biography and his own writings, one is indeed struck by his recurring claim to have performed economic miracles at his monastery. Whether it is repeatedly feeding crowds during times of famine or scarcity, caring for twenty thousand refugees for three months, building magnificent churches, or ransoming prisoners of war for large sums of money, nothing was beyond the monastery's economic power as long as it enjoyed God's blessing. What's more, he advertises these accomplishments, in writing and preaching, with remarkable enthusiasm. His descriptions of his monastery's expenses during a refugee crisis, for example, display extraordinary levels of circumstantiality. What other abbot tells us how much his monastery spends on doctors and boiled vegetables? Or how much bread he bakes on a daily basis?

This proud exaltation of wealthy generosity and large-scale building is not common in early monastic literature. Whereas the Pachomian corpus displays a painful realism in describing the monastic economy, and a marked suspicion toward any show of wealth, with Shenoute wealth and its circulation come to bear a far greater symbolic weight. No longer simply an economic problem of subsistence or an issue of ascetic renunciation, they come to stand for the power of God and for God's endless capacity for gift giving. It is this discourse on generosity and abundance, and its concrete economic implications, that I want to analyze in the present chapter.

A "GREAT HOUSE"

It is not easy to perform a reality check on this rhetoric. Our knowledge of the real economy of Shenoute's monastery comes only from bits of circumstantial evidence. It is best to begin, therefore, in the one area where we have some concrete physical remains: the buildings.[2] A section of Shenoute's seventh *Canon* deals explicitly with the issue of the monastery's wealth and buildings. It was written during and after the monastery was involved in its greatest building project: the new church, the "Great House," as he calls it.[3] Far from feeling uncomfortable about the grandeur of the new building, Shenoute shows no reticence when discussing the magnificence of the new church or the monastery's expenses:

> This great house of such magnitude! And by the providence of God, not only did we spend just four months constructing it, or five in all, but also all the things we gave as wages and expended on it—everything we had—indeed, they have not become scarce, but rather He who is Blessed, the Son of Him who is Blessed, God Almighty, blessed them and added even more.[4]

The church was later seen as one of Shenoute's great achievements. Besa's biography tells us that an angel had already predicted to Shenoute's uncle the wonderful building activities of his nephew, and it had been the Lord himself who had commanded Shenoute to undertake this bold project: "Take care to build a church in My name and in your name. It will be called the Holy Congregation, and the saints will gather in it, everybody will want to look at it and they will trust in it."[5] "My father," Besa continues, "arranged for the workmen and craftsmen, the stonemasons and the carpenters. They worked on the church and with the Lord helping them in all that they did with everything that they needed, they completed it."[6]

The great church was only the most prominent part of a larger building program. Shenoute also mentions, besides his "great house," the "other buildings that we have built along with it, and also this lavatory (*niptērion*)."[7] When confronted with sinful monks, he is worried that they will defile "this house or the houses and buildings that we have built in His (i.e., God's) name with great toil and plenty of gold and money and every [other] thing."[8]

> For, it is fitting that in buildings (*topos*) whose proportions, design, and entire appearance are [so] beautiful, [only those] men [should] dwell whose hearts have beautiful proportions, whose souls have a beautiful design, and whose uprightness is beautiful. The buildings of Christ are a house within which another house (i.e., a good Christian) is to be built. Just as it is good to decorate what is external, it is even better to decorate what is internal. I am talking about the church: the bricks, the stones, and the wood with which they work on it are the external; the people who go into it or who stay inside it are the internal.

> I said another time that every adornment that is in the house of God in wood, in stone, in walls, in every place in it, and everything that is of any sort or any color, they are good, and it is possible for us to bring them to the spiritual, since they are fleshly things, like the water that became wine in Cana of Galilee.[9]

Even the construction of the monastery's well was deemed important and miraculous enough to deserve an account in Shenoute's *Life*.[10] As we shall see, it was later credited with the extraordinary power to quench the thirst of twenty thousand refugees for three months, thanks to God's blessings.

The archaeological evidence shows that Shenoute's words cannot be dismissed as empty rhetoric. The monastery's well, for example, was not simply a hole in the ground. It was an elaborate hydraulic installation built of fired bricks and ashlars, with two waterwheels installed on top of it. "A large number of pipes extend from the well, transporting water in several different directions across the site, often interrupted by small rectangular boxes for subsidiary lines."[11] Rather than a simple cistern (which the monastery also has), we are dealing with a small "aqueduct."[12] Moreover, Shenoute's church is one of the most impressive remains of late antique Egypt and deserves the attention of every scholar of early monasticism. Together with the contemporary church of the Pachomian congregation at Phbow, it is probably the biggest monastic church built in the Mediterranean world during the late antique period, and both these churches are far bigger than any urban church known in Egypt south of Hermopolis. The church is so much out of proportion with everything else around it that for a long time it was held to be the whole monastery in itself. A simple comparison makes the enormous size of this building evident: the church of Euthymius's monastery, near Jerusalem, would fit in Shenoute's church almost seven times; the church of the nearby monastery of Martyrius more than sixteen times; the church at Deir Turmanin, in northern Syria, more than four times. Let us keep in mind that these last two monasteries have been upheld as good examples of the enrichment of monastic establishments in late antiquity.[13] Even an imperially funded monastery, that of St. Catherine near Mt. Sinai, has a church that would fit at least four times inside Shenoute's.

This was true wealth. And it is all the more striking since monastic churches in Egypt are generally characterized by their modesty and small size.[14] Only the cathedrals of larger Egyptian cities—and Egypt is known to have had the largest churches of the Near East[15]—are comparable or superior in size to this building. One only needs to think of the enormous expenses that must have been involved in covering the church with a huge timber roof, made of a wood that is unlikely to have come from Egypt, to realize why Shenoute was so proud of his accomplishments.[16] The sober church exterior, which, in the apposite words of Robert Curzon, "resembles a dismantled man-of-war anchored in a sea of burning sand,"[17] contrasts with the magnificent interior design. In this respect, the equally large

Pachomian basilica at Phbow seems to lag far behind Shenoute's sophisticated church.[18] With decorated niches, columns taken from classical Roman buildings, mezzanines above the aisles, a regular narthex that has been described as "an imperial little room,"[19] a huge lateral narthex, and above all a magnificent and richly decorated triconch apse, this church boasted all the stylistic refinements of contemporary Roman architecture.[20] Although its cubic exterior crowned by a cornice is usually compared to Egyptian temples,[21] its general design is in fact reminiscent of the fourth-century imperial baths at Alexandria, with their triconch *caldarium*.[22] This was a truly imperial church, both in scale and style, and it would be imitated—although at a much smaller scale—more than once in Upper Egypt.[23]

We do not know how many monks lived at Shenoute's monastery. The Arabic *Life* claims that his entire congregation was made up of 2,200 monks and 1,800 nuns, but this sounds suspicious with regard to the number of monks, and absurd as an estimate of the number of nuns that could have inhabited the small community located in the village of Atripe.[24] What is clear, in any case, is that Shenoute's church was far too big for the immediate needs of his monastery. This was meant to be a public, not a monastic, church. Shenoute's frequent and proud reference to the "crowds" and authorities that visited the monastery and listened to his sermons makes this fact all too clear.[25] The huge lateral narthex and the multiple entrances of the church (and the galleries above the lateral naves?) can be explained by the need to distribute this very diverse audience in an organized space.[26]

On feast days, the monastic church would become a public stage. "Crowds" would stream to the monastery, and Shenoute would descend from his desert cave to preach and celebrate the liturgy. This was the moment for Shenoute to seize the limelight and showcase his endless generosity and devotion to the care of the "poor," as if in a huge banquet hall—and let us remember that triconch-shaped dining halls were a hallmark of wealthy villas in this period:

> Every Saturday, many of the poor came to my father to receive communion from his pure hands. . . . A table was set for the crowd, everybody ate, and after they had slept, the community of the monks would wake them up, saying: "Stand up and go to the house of the Lord to be blessed." For every Saturday night a vigil was kept to pray and sing, and the whole church was illuminated on that night and the following day. Lamps and candles were lighted, and the whole church shone as the offering was made. And [my father] gave them (i.e., the poor) communion, a table covered with dishes was set for them, they ate, and my father made them whole again.[27]

That reality could be more prosaic is shown by Shenoute's own writings, such as a sermon entitled "A brief instruction on Sunday morning, after the Psalter had been read, on a feast day, when the crowd wanted to go home soon."[28] In any case, Shenoute's imposing church monumentalized his piety and hard work and instantly made him a public figure. Illuminated with candles for the Saturday vigil,

it must have been an impressive sight and the envy of any bishop. It is among contemporary bishops, in fact, that the best parallels for these building activities can be found. I am thinking above all of Porphyry of Gaza, who celebrated the completion of his monumental church with a civic banquet in the best tradition of Graeco-Roman euergetism.[29]

How did Shenoute pay for this church and his other buildings? Besa's biography has a very simple answer. God himself sent Shenoute a small amphora full of gold for this specific purpose, which the holy man found near his cave in the desert.[30] Only a miracle could explain such a miraculous church. Shenoute's own writings insist on the same idea. He never praises the church as a work of art. For him, rather, such a grandiose building was an "argument in stone": it spoke of the endless wealth brought by God's blessing to his faithful servants. For Shenoute's point when discussing the construction of the church ("not to examine how straight or beautiful it is, but to examine ourselves in it") was that despite all his enormous expenditures in "wages," "gold," "money" and "other things," the wealth of the monastery "*does not diminish*." God's blessing was working miracles for the monastery's economy:

> Otherwise, how would we have been able to build this great house in this way, and these other buildings that we have built along with it, and also this lavatory?[31]

Hence it is important to distinguish carefully Shenoute's discourse on building from that of his better-known contemporary Paulinus of Nola. Paulinus had also built, in southern Italy, an imposing basilica with a triconch apse. Like Shenoute, he had "hoped that these material renovations would spur on his own spiritual improvements. He asked rhetorically, 'How, therefore, can this construction present me with a model by which I can cultivate, build and renew myself inwardly, and make myself a suitable lodging for Christ?'"[32] Yet this common appeal to the parallel between material and spiritual edification masks a profound difference. For Paulinus, a wealthy aristocrat, building was above all an aesthetic experience. His discourse takes human labor for granted. Its key concepts are light, color, space, and harmony. For Shenoute, on the other hand, the greatness of his church was an economic feat that had been possible only because the ascetic discipline of his monastery had earned the blessings of God. As Caroline Schroeder has shown, the church was at the same time a symbol of success and a warning for his monks, a symptom of and a model for communal purity. The key concepts of Shenoute's discourse are size, discipline, work, poverty, and purity.[33]

Shenoute's enthusiasm for building would be curious enough in any monk associated with the Upper Egyptian tradition of Pachomian monasticism. It had been none other than Pachomius, after all, who had deliberately "spoiled" the oratory he had just built at his monastery, in order to avoid pride and the misguided praise of art.[34] But it is all the more surprising as Shenoute himself had, as a younger monk

alienated from his community, denounced the use of the monastery's wealth to engage in building projects, instead of spending it on the care of the poor:

> Stop, congregation, taking all that is left over to you *due to the blessing of God* and spending it on buildings and demolitions, the wages of architects and craftsmen, the luxuries and other things for the workers, so that they knead and bring clay and carry bricks to build beautiful and fair houses! Unless you had a surplus of wealth, you would not take care of all these things that are useless in the moment of your need (i.e., the final judgment). Why have you not spent your wealth on your bread and clothing and everything that relates to them for yourself, oh miserable wretch? Stop taking the leisure of God's blessing and the strength of your youth, your elders, and all your children to give it away on things that are not suitable for you, instead of spending all that is left over to you due to the Lord's blessing on alms (*mntna*) for the poor, the strangers, the widows, the orphans, the invalid, and the needy, and on numerous philanthropies![35]

The monastic community then led by Ebonh had become, in the mind of young Shenoute, a victim of its own success. It had fallen into *lithomania*, the unrestrained eagerness to build typically associated with wealthy bishops such as Theophilus of Alexandria and Porphyry of Gaza—whose church was criticized for being far too large for the immediate needs of his small congregation (one wonders what Shenoute's enemies thought of his church).[36]

Shenoute's early monastic career presents some interesting parallels to that of Theodore of Tabennesi, the main character of the Pachomian corpus. Both of them claimed a special, privileged relationship to the monastery's founder: Theodore was supposed to be Pachomius's favorite disciple; Shenoute was Pgol's nephew. Neither of them, however, was named superior after the death of their spiritual fathers. Instead, both of them became alienated from their communities and retired provisionally from them. Both of them also grew exceptionally sensitive to the issue of accumulation of wealth by their monasteries. Theodore, it is said, became distressed when the monasteries started to gather "numerous fields, animals, and boats," and he even refused to use the monastery's boat, preferring instead to walk.[37] For him, as for young Shenoute, it was not enough for the monks to be individually poor. The monasteries had to be poor, too.

How do we explain then Shenoute's drastic change of mind? Where did he get the idea that building a huge church was a way to glorify God, and not a misuse of the wealth of the poor? When did God's "blessings" grow large enough that such a careless liberality was no longer out of place at a monastery?

BREAD FOR THE MULTITUDE

The same emphasis on a miraculous prosperity generated by divine "blessings" and spent endlessly by the monastery can be found in a set of five stories about grain,

bread supply, and famine relief reported in Shenoute's *Life*. They all display the monastery's capacity to generate an overwhelming surplus of bread precisely when it was most dearly needed. "Just like in the gospel,"[38] God's "blessing" (*smu*)—a word used in the sense of both divine aid and miraculous abundance of bread—multiplied the monastery's loaves of bread in quantities large enough to feed multitudes:

> It happened once that there was a great drought, and the inhabitants of the district of Panopolis and those of Ptolemais came in a crowd to my father to be fed by him. My father gave them bread until the loaves ran out, and the brother who was in charge of the bread-store came to my father Apa Shenoute and said: "That was a blessing (i.e., a great amount) of bread, my father (*apismu šōpi henniōik*)! What will you do [now] for the multitudes who have gathered to us and for the brothers?" In reply, my father said to me and to the one who distributed the loaves: "Go and gather up the remaining loaves together with [all] the little fragments, moisten them, and give them to the crowds to eat." We then went off in accordance with his word and gathered them up, and we left nothing behind. We went back to him and told him: "We have left nothing behind," and he said to us: "Pray to God that he will bring about such a blessing (*smu*) that you can feed them all." We did not wish to disobey him, but instead went away, and when the time came, we went to open the door of the bread-store, and the abundance (*smu*) poured forth upon us while we were still outside the door of the bread-store. In this way, the multitudes ate, and when they were full they glorified God and our father.[39]

Indeed, the abundance of grain was so great that the bakers complained about the amount of ashes they had to carry away from the ovens.[40] Similarly, when Shenoute brought home a magic grain that he had found at the imperial palace in Constantinople—quite an interesting place to "find" the source of endless wealth—he threw it under the millstone, and "the Lord sent so great an abundance (*smu*) from the mill-stone that they were quite unable to gather it all up." Only Shenoute, with his palm branch, was able to stop the mill from producing.[41]

These stories present us with a stark contrast between famine and overwhelming abundance. The generation of wealth at the monastery follows an explosive rhythm: just like the grandiose church, extraordinarily completed in "only four months or five in all," scarcity is miraculously resolved at one stroke.[42] What makes such abundance legitimate and acceptable—and what produces it in the first place—is that it is used in the right way: in the care of the poor. Material "blessings" are a divine reward for the piety and charitable work of Shenoute's monastery. As the apostle Paul himself told Shenoute in a vision:

> Because you love charity and give alms to anyone that asks you and keep all the commandments in all ways because of the love [of God], behold! The Lord has sent me to you to comfort you because of what you do for the poor and the destitute.[43]

Paul gave Shenoute a loaf of bread blessed by Jesus himself, which he secretly deposited in one of the bread stores. What happened next follows the same rhythm

as in the previous stories. Shenoute's servants complain that the storeroom is empty and ask permission to open another one. Shenoute insists, but the steward cannot open the door. Then, the climax: at Shenoute's commandment ("Arise and bring forth the Lord's abundance (*smu*), and if it should not be enough, we will open another store-room and draw from that"),

> the door then opened immediately, and from inside a great heap of bread poured forth, and there was such a mass of bread that it filled up the doorway. In this way, the multitudes and the brothers were supplied for six months by the abundance (*smu*) of bread which came forth from the door of the bread-store, and to this very day that bread-store is called the "Store-Room of the Blessing" (*paho mpismu*).[44]

It is not surprising that the traditional hostility of late antique bishops toward granaries, the symbol of social injustice and selfish speculation by unscrupulous landowners,[45] is almost entirely absent from Shenoute's rhetoric against the rich. As we shall see, he was far more concerned about what dishonest landowners did with their wine than about their accumulation of grain or bread. Nor is it surprising that Shenoute's enemies found the availability of a large surplus of bread at the monastery alarming. Where Shenoute and his biographer saw "multitudes" of the "poor" being fed, his enemies saw rural patronage in action and an out-of-control abbot. In the words of his accusers, he was "gathering men to fight each other on account of the villages" and "giving them bread."[46] One is reminded of the accusations usually leveled against the patriarchs of Alexandria and their use of grain to buy loyalty.[47]

The recurring idea that God tended to reward those truly faithful to him with economic miracles was a new development of fifth-century Christianity and should not be taken for granted as inherently part of the Christian tradition. Jesus may have multiplied bread and fish, but fourth-century bishops and monks seldom, if ever, claimed to do so. Unlike Shenoute and his contemporaries, their economic life took place in a far more realistic framework, in which scarcity and economic struggle were facts of life. This can be seen very clearly in another story contained in Shenoute's *Life*, very similar and yet so different from one contained in the Pachomian corpus.

During a time of drought and famine, we are told, Shenoute's monastery was suffering from an unusual scarcity:

> We suffered very much. When the people came to us, we thought, "Where will we find bread to feed those who come to us?" We thought hard.[48]

Eventually, Shenoute decided to send his disciple Besa "into that worthless city," that is, Panopolis, to buy as much wheat as possible with one hundred *solidi*—and we know in fact from Shenoute's rules that his monastery regularly bought wheat.[49] One *solidus* usually bought ten *artabas* of wheat in normal conditions,

but the landowners of Panopolis disrespectfully told Besa that his hundred *solidi* would not even fetch a hundred *artabas:*

> Nobody agreed to sell or to give generously. My father sighed against Panopolis and cursed those who desire drought and famine.[50]

But Shenoute did not despair. He knew exactly what to do:

> We arose, we went into the church and prayed. When we had finished praying, we turned around and saw wheat rising up, shining brighter than the sun, and we did not know where it had come from. . . . When we had finished milling, we found one thousand *artabae* of flour. . . . Instead of one month's baking, or two or three, we had six months.[51]

The parallel story in the Pachomian corpus begins in an identical way.[52] During a famine, Pachomius sends a disciple with a hundred *solidi* "to go round the villages and countryside to buy wheat." But then the account becomes far more circumstantial and interesting. After some negotiations with a pious civic councilor of Hermonthis who happened to be in charge of the public granary, Pachomius's disciple decides to buy 1,300 *artabas* "at thirteen *artabas* a *solidus*—when one could not find wheat in the whole of Egypt at five *artabas* a *solidus*." On top of that, he borrows the same amount of wheat, promising to pay for it when the monastery gathers enough money. When the "Great Man" Pachomius heard about this operation, he would have none of it:

> Do not bring one grain of that wheat to this monastery. . . . What he has done is very unlawful. And not only that, but he has taken another hundred coins worth of wheat. . . . He enslaved all of us, putting us in debt; he used the giver's kindness insatiably, and he acted in a greedy manner, bringing us wheat beyond our need. He has borrowed on his own initiative what we have no means of repaying.

The fourth-century Pachomian congregation did receive occasional gifts of wheat—in this case, wheat at a bargain price and as a loan. Yet unlike Shenoute and his monks, it did not receive them from God, but rather from specific human donors.[53] These gifts created obligations and could therefore threaten the economic and spiritual autonomy of the monastery.[54] Whereas in Shenoute's monastery receiving gifts is something that deserves to be celebrated, both because they come from God and because they are given to the poor, in Pachomius's they seem to be proof of the monastery's failure to sustain itself.

All in all, there is very little that is miraculous in the economy of the fourth-century Pachomian communities. Their granaries seem to lack the capacity to receive divine "blessings." When scarcity and famine strike, the monks are in serious trouble, and they are far too concerned with their own survival to even think of feeding the crowds of the poor such as would later flock to Shenoute's monastery.

Pachomius's response to famine in the world is to abstain from eating and to pray for the Nile to rise,[55] not to feed multitudes. Theodore's instructions contain a vivid if brief account of such a famine:

> [God] caused serious hardships to arise among the brothers in [Apa's] time, *to such a degree that so great a man as he had recourse to seculars for bread*. That good man with his own eyes saw his sons working little mills and licking the meal with their tongues in consequence of their great hunger. And he was vilified by the great ones among them [who said]: "You are murdering the children of men by hunger." And for long, God kept him tongue-tied so that he might not speak. . . . For want of bread, not once was in all those days the signal given for a meal.[56]

This economic realism is not an extraordinary trait of the Pachomian corpus linked to Pachomius's extraordinary poverty. Fourth-century bishops such as Basil of Caesarea faced the same limitations as Pachomius. Gregory Nazianzen's funerary oration in honor of Basil praised his friend's actions of famine relief in Cappadocia, around 370,[57] while acknowledging that economic miracles belonged to a different age:

> He indeed could neither rain bread from heaven by prayer to nourish an escaped people in the wilderness, nor supply fountains of food without cost from the depth of vessels which are filled by being emptied and so, by an amazing return for her hospitality, support one who supported him; nor feed thousands of men with five loaves whose very fragments were a further supply for many tables. These were the works of Moses and Elijah, and my God, from Whom they too derived their power. Perhaps also they were characteristic of their time and its circumstances: since signs are for unbelievers, not for those who believe. But he did devise and execute with the same faith things which correspond to them, and tend in the same direction. For by his word and advice he opened the stores of those who possessed them, and so, according to the Scripture dealt food to the hungry, and satisfied the poor with bread, and fed them in the time of dearth.[58]

If instead of looking backward in time, however, we look forward to the late fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries, we can easily find numerous parallels to Shenoute's "miraculous economy." Monasteries feeding "crowds" and granaries magically replenishing themselves with God's "blessings" (*eulogia* in Greek) can be attested throughout the Near East for this period. Marcellus the Sleepless and Hypatius fed crowds during times of scarcity in Constantinople; the monasteries of Amida in northern Mesopotamia remembered by John of Ephesus did exactly the same thing; Abraham of Farshut, a sixth-century monk from Upper Egypt and an admirer of Shenoute, also had granaries bursting with abundance, and he also used them to feed multitudes; Euthymius, the famous sixth-century Palestinian monk whose church we have compared (unfavorably) to Shenoute's, was said to have fed a crowd of four hundred Armenian pilgrims with an empty granary filled only by God's "blessing."[59] The *Life of Theodosius* by Theodore of Petra, above all,

considered "a dull piece of rhetoric" by Festugière, contains numerous and striking parallels to Shenoute's biography. Writing in 530, at a time when Theodosius's monastery, the largest *coenobium* in Jerusalem's desert, was undergoing rapid expansion, the writer cannot help but admire the greatness and vastness of his monastery, its miraculous granaries, and its workshops, annexes, and inns for the poor. He describes enormous crowds of pilgrims and the poor visiting the monastery and being cared for and fed on "a hundred tables a day." Shenoute may well have discovered a magical grain at the imperial palace in Constantinople; Theodosius discovered one in the beard of his fellow monk Marcianus![60]

These miracle stories may be "pious banalities," but they need to be taken seriously by a social historian. They point to a crucial change in the attitude to wealth among the monasteries of the fifth-century Near East. They show that increasingly rich monasteries were forced to "develop their own way of thinking, in positive terms, about the acquisition and management of excess material wealth."[61] Shenoute is one of the earliest and most distinctive examples of this development. Moreover, Bernard Flusin has shown that the very dullness, repetitiveness, and remarkable similarity of all these stories imply a very particular and for moments paradoxical conception of what a miracle actually is. In the first place, a "miracle" can be imagined only within the framework of biblical history. There is no miracle without biblical precedent. This is as true for hagiography as it is for Shenoute's own writings. In the second place, these "miracles" are always earned through hard work. They are not random, unexpected divine interventions that reduce monks to the role of passive spectators. "We are in a world, that of the ascetic, in which the miracle can no longer be distinguished because everything is miraculous there." The emphasis is on the paradoxical need to give away the God-given abundance as a precondition to receive it. God rewards the selflessness and hard work of the monks. In the third place, these miracles follow an annual rhythm. They always take place at or right before Easter, that is, at the end of the winter, when the peasantry was running out of food from the previous year's harvest. The miraculous multiplications of bread relieved a structural, yearly famine and restored to Easter some of its original connotations as an agricultural festival. As Theodosius's *Life* explicitly states, the crowds coming to the monastery came both to flee the famine and to celebrate Easter. This ambiguity is also clear in Shenoute's biography, although it is not made explicit. Yet six years after Shenoute's death, his successor Besa imitated him by feeding a crowd of "more than five thousand people or six thousand, sometimes more than this or less" "with everything necessary through the blessing of Christ Jesus, our Lord." This time Besa tells us when this took place: in March, right before Easter.[62]

Miracles, Flusin notes, became a language of power that monasticism used to uphold its claims, both within society as a whole and, more specifically, within the ascetic movement. This is very clear in Palestine, where the use of miracle stories

by hagiographers reflects the rivalry between the *coenobia* of Theodosius and the *lauras* of Sabas. Could the emphasis on miracles found in Shenoute's writings and biography be related in part to a (friendly) competition with the Pachomian organization in Upper Egypt?

GLORIFYING THE LORD: THE REFUGEE CRISIS

Shenoute's celebration of his monastery's wealth and of his endless capacity for gift giving reaches its climax in a short work, "Continuing to glorify the Lord,"[63] where he describes his heroic care for the multitude of refugees who had fled from the Blemmyes and Nubians, the "barbarians" who periodically attacked southern Egypt during late antiquity. This work is contained in an "appendix" to the seventh volume of *Canons*, which, as we have seen, dealt with the building of Shenoute's great church:

> The rest of the words in this book [is what] we have said and written in the second year after we had built that house (i.e., the church), at the time when the barbarians despoiled [the land] and came down all the way to the city of Kois (= Kynopolis, near Oxyrhynchus), at the time also when this large crowd dwelled with us in their flight from those Ethiopians, who boast of their power [but only] because of the powerlessness of the pagan military governors.[64]

Only two years after the Lord had blessed Shenoute's monastery with the miraculous wealth needed to build the great church, the barbarian invasion made God's "blessings" more necessary than ever. For this had been no simple raid: if we believe Shenoute, most of southern Egypt had been overrun, and crowds of refugees had flocked to his monastery.

Such an occasion put Shenoute's monastery to the test.[65] God's wealth stood up to the challenge, and it turned out to be a moment of glory for everyone involved. Whereas Shenoute's writings on his church glorified God by praising "this great house, of such a magnitude" that God had helped build, this latter account glorified God by describing "this great crowd, of such a magnitude" that God had helped feed:

> Continuing to glorify the Lord God and to thank Him for all the good things He has done for us, I will say: this great crowd, of such a magnitude, that dwelled with us or stayed at the gate of these monasteries and in all their surrounding area with their women and children, so that they were around 20,000 persons or even more, all the brothers—except for those who had no strength—took care of them for three months *with our property in the blessing*, and there was nothing that they might have needed that was not brought to them.

The work is divided into two clear sections. Shenoute first presents us with a fascinating "literary account-book" carefully detailing the expenses of his

monastery. In case the "miraculous" church was not evidence enough for the divine "blessings" received by Shenoute's monks, the additional testimony provided by this account was irrefutable. It is worth quoting in full:

> Seven doctors healed those who were sick among them and those who had been wounded with arrows or spears, and we paid their salary, which amounted to 500,000 [myriads of] *denarii* (lit. "money"). Fifty [men] and forty-four [women] who died were buried by us, *with our property. But it is [really] the property of the King, Christ*. For the need of those [women] who gave birth to fifty-two [babies] we spent sometimes 25,000, sometimes 30,000 [myriads of *denarii*] on boiled vegetables every week, besides the vegetables that we have [in the monastery]. One hundred and fifty *sextarii* (ca. 75 liters) of oil was the daily measure used for cooking every day; of lentils, sometimes 17, sometimes 16 *artabas* (1 *artaba* = ca. 30 kg) or even more daily. Four ovens were baking bread daily, some days 18, others 19, 20, 17, or 16 palms (?), and it was [all] eaten. And we did not allow the brothers to eat from them, so that they (i.e., the refugees) would find enough. And [still] it was not enough for them. And besides we took care of all their numerous animals, camels, sheep and calves, cows, dogs, goats, and all their baggage. And also the small spring was wonderful, *for had He* (i.e., God) *not blessed it*, it would not have been enough for them to drink water.
>
> But I will make this brief. Truly, if we believe, we recognize [this miracle], we, who take care and watch closely every vessel from which we take, and who spend on this whole crowd who gathered [here] because of these enemies: besides the usual matter at the gate (i.e., the normal alms-giving), money and gold; dresses, shoes, mats, cloaks, and burial garments; wheat, bread, barley, and every grain seed; wine and vinegar; eggs, cheese, and pigeons; [special?] meals, olive oil, grapes, fruit, and everything a sick man needs; and also everything that was paid: not less than 615,700 [myriads] of *denarii* (lit. "money")![66] As to wheat and bread themselves, they amount to 8,500 *artabas* (= ca. 255,000 kg) and even more. And the amount of [radish] oil that was spent on them was 200 *artabas* of radish, that is 40 *iope* (ca. 1,000 liters), one *iope* each 5 *artabas*. And I did not want to mention everything.
>
> And also in those same years we ransomed 100 prisoners, who were in need of everything, for the price of 40,000 [myriads of *denarii*] each one, besides the money, dress, expenses, and freight [they needed] to get to their homes. And truly, they were not in need of anything as I have already said. *But He* (i.e., God) *added even more*. And would it not be a source of reproach, anger, and curse [by God], if those who dwell in these places had lacked anything of what they need for their bodies? For they were neglecting their souls in those days.

The interest of this text for the study of the monastic economy of late antique Egypt is evident. Shenoute does not "give without counting"! One is reminded of the seventh-century life of John the Almsgiver, the Alexandrian patriarch, by Leontius of Neapolis. There, too, the wealth of numbers contained in the text serves

both to give it a documentary slant and to suggest the endless wealth provided by God's blessings to his endlessly generous servant.[67] Are these numbers trustworthy? Vincent Déroche has argued that Leontius's hagiographic perspective, with its emphasis on a "miraculous economy" and its interest in rendering daily economic activity sacred, had no reason to suppress or distort the concrete wealth of the church and its real sources. The data contained in the *Life of John the Almsgiver* constitute, therefore, a first-class source for economic history.[68] Such a conclusion is unacceptable. A simple analysis shows that Leontius's work does distort economic reality, both by inflating numbers ad absurdum and by selectively forgetting to mention such crucial sources of wealth as the land owned by the church or subventions received from the state.[69] We will do well, therefore, neither to accept nor to dismiss Shenoute's numbers a priori. Their accuracy can be determined only through a specific economic analysis.

The first thing that needs to be said, in favor of Shenoute, is that his figures do not fit, as a whole, into the traditional patterns of stylization of monetary valuations found in ancient literary sources.[70] Their very randomness seems to vouch for their credibility. One important exception, however, is the number of refugees he claims to have fed. Twenty thousand persons is a lot of people, far too many for only 52 births or 94 deaths during three months. If we assume the standard birthrates and death rates usually considered to be typical of the ancient world,[71] then 52 births in three months would imply a population somewhat below 5,000, whereas 94 deaths would imply something close to 9,000. Given the warlike circumstances pointed out by Shenoute, the birthrate must have been lower than normal, the death rate far higher.[72] This would point to a population size somewhere in between the two figures given.

This population had to be fed, and wheat and bread played a crucial role there, both economically and symbolically. Assuming that the refugees were fed the same famine ration that is attested in contemporary Jerusalem and Edessa—one Roman pound of bread a day, which could be supplemented with lentils and other foodstuffs—8,500 *artabas* would have been enough to feed ca. 7,500 persons, which agrees well with the previous calculations.[73] This is far lower than Shenoute's number, of course, but it is still a huge amount of people for one monastery to handle.[74] The amount of wheat given by Shenoute is also interesting from another point of view: 8,500 *artabas* would be the yield of slightly more than 1,200 *arouras* of land.[75] We know that in mid-fourth-century Hermopolis, the most important city in Upper Egypt, anyone with more than 100 *arouras* would have been welcome at the ruling city council, and only six landowners possessed more than 1,000 *arouras*.[76] It is evident, therefore, that we are dealing with huge quantities of wheat that very few landowners could have amassed and that even fewer could have spent in only three months.[77]

The text also makes it very clear that the large-scale spending of money was no taboo for Shenoute. No "peasant-like passion for self-sufficiency" can be detected here:[78] if the monastery was self-sufficient, it was only insofar as it had enough money to buy everything it needed. Shenoute is clearly proud of the huge amounts of money he has spent, on the refugees as much as on the church. This intensive involvement in the market economy—deemed so dangerous in the Pachomian corpus as well as in Shenoute's own rules[79]—is here "overdetermined" by the logic of gift giving and the ideology of disinterestedness. It is the contrast between a market ruled by "naked self-interest" and Shenoute's generosity that makes the latter stand out all the more clearly.

A comparison with contemporary prices shows that Shenoute's information on these monetary expenses was, at least, believable. Assuming that the currency unit he uses is that of "myriads of *denarii*," as is usually the case in fifth-century accounts, we can estimate what kind of expenses we are talking about.[80] We know that the gold *solidus* was valued during the fifth century at around 4,000 "myriads of *denarii*," a price that was relatively stable, since the currency inflation had stopped or slowed down at some point in the early fifth century.[81] This would mean that Shenoute had spent exactly 125 *solidi* to pay for the seven doctors or around 18 *solidi* for each doctor for three months' work. Flavius Phoibammon, the public doctor of Antinoe in the mid-sixth century, earned 60 *solidi* a year, that is, 15 *solidi* every three months.[82]

The price for ransomed prisoners given by Shenoute also lies plainly within the limits of the possible: 10 *solidi* each, that is, 1,000 *solidi* in total. In the closely contemporary Treaty of Margus (434), Attila demanded 8 *solidi* as ransom for each prisoner who had escaped from him; nine years later and after a new defeat, the Romans were asked to pay 12 *solidi* for each prisoner who had escaped from Attila without ransom.[83] The ransoming of captives was of course nothing extraordinary in the fifth century. It was practiced all along the Roman frontier, from the Ireland of Saint Patrick to Edessa on the Syrian frontier. Ibas of Edessa in the fifth or Caesarius of Arles in the sixth century claimed to have spent many thousands of *solidi* on this account.[84] Bishops "not only accepted but actively solicited this responsibility, for, like other charitable activities, the liberation of captives enabled them to reinforce or expand ties of *clientela*, enhance their own status as local patrons, and publicly enact, and so promote and validate, the Christian ideal of *caritas*."[85] Such activity was so much to be expected of any wealthy bishop (or, in this case, abbot) famed for his love of the "poor" that I suspect the Blemmyes may have camped with their captives near Ptolemais, very close to Shenoute's monastery, simply because they knew Shenoute would buy them back there.[86]

We can take our inferences about Shenoute's economic power one step further. The following table attempts to translate all his expenses into gold, thus giving us a rough estimate of the dimensions of his welfare activities:[87]

Item	Amount given by Shenoute	Gold-*solidi*
Doctors	500,000 myriads of *denarii*	125
Vegetables	25,000 myriads of *denarii* × 12 weeks	75
(Radish?) oil	150 *sextarii* × 90 days (= 13,500 *sextarii*)	225
Lentils	16 *artabas* × 90 days = 1,440 *artabas*	72
Wheat	8,500 *artabas*	700
Radish oil	40 *iope* = 2,000 *sextarii*	33
Money	615,700 myriads of *denarii*	154
Prisoners	100 × 40,000 myriads of *denarii*	1,000
Total		2,384

This table may considerably underrepresent Shenoute's expenses by assuming normal prices for a critical situation such as a barbarian raid. In any case, it is evident that we are dealing with a "miraculous" amount of wealth for one monastery to spend in only three months. Only bishops of affluent churches had this kind of wealth normally at their disposition. Rabbula, for example, the bishop of the very wealthy church of Edessa and a contemporary of Shenoute, was said to have spent 7,000 *solidi* a year on the poor of his city.[88] Far from equating Shenoute's and Rabbula's wealth, this simply stresses what an extraordinary economic feat Shenoute was claiming to have accomplished.

Such an outstanding capacity to spend and to give is made more credible by two circumstances. The church, in the first place, cannot be dismissed as rhetorical exaggeration. It must have cost many hundreds or rather thousands of *solidi*.[89] Furthermore, a series of gold hoards have been discovered at Shenoute's monastery. They add up to a value of 730 *solidi*, which makes them the greatest treasure of gold coins discovered in Egypt for this period. Although they date to the early seventh century and were probably buried in connection with the Persian invasion and occupation (when the church was partly destroyed), they are a reminder that Shenoute's wealth should not be dismissed as pure rhetorical invention.[90]

Where did all this wealth come from? Certainly not from Shenoute's own properties. He may well be able to give endlessly, yet he constantly claims to be utterly poor: "I do not own any field, any garden, any sheep, anything [at all]. I only own one *aroura* of land which I work, sowing it sometimes with one crop, sometimes with another, for I do not own anything else. I am talking about my body."[91] His monastery is in fact so devoted to poverty that it does not have "a single bronze lamp."[92] When Shenoute comes, therefore, to deal with the issue of the sources of the monastery's wealth, in the second part of "Continuing to glorify the Lord," his answer is straightforward: such wealth does not have any human origins. This is, again, a miraculous economy:

> Now, do we have all these things available among us? If we do, then we are liars, for we have taken our cross, and we have followed the Lord (i.e., we are monks and should not own anything). Where do we get these things? From what field or in what business have we earned them? It is from the work of our hands that we live, *besides the blessing of the Blessed One*, the Lord, God of All. The pious are astonished and speak about his holy place (i.e., the monastery) glorifying Him. For they know that every good belongs to Him. *The impious and the pagans are amazed and say about us: "Where do these men find all these things?"* For they do not know that He who blessed the five loaves of barley and the seven loaves and they all ate and were filled and also filled baskets, He it is also who blesses now everything that belongs to anyone who believes; for He has the power to do anything that He wants. Or are our belongings not greater than those of the widow at Sarepta (1 Kings 17:10)? What was in those small vessels? Where did this whole meal and this oil come from so that that prophet (i.e., Elijah), worthy of all satisfaction from God, could live from them with this widow and her child these three years and six months without them running out? *What are they going to say now? We do not have any treasures here, do we?* Do we have great vessels? Is it not a small jar (*kapsakēs*)? Is it not a small water-pot (*hydria*)?[93] Just like in the case of the woman whose children the creditor took away: where did all this oil come from into this small jar so that she could fill all those jars with it (2 Kings 4:1)? And just like he said, the men ate from the ten loaves of barley-bread, and they left [some] behind, as he had said: "They will eat, and they will leave behind."
>
> For the Lord has said and made us worthy of such great good deeds that we may perform them in the second year, less one month, after we had built this house (i.e., the church).

All the biblical feeding miracles could be replicated, here and now. With God's blessing, Shenoute's monastery could turn the laws of the economy upside down. When scarcity and famine ruled in the world, resources at the monastery were more abundant than ever. By being given out to the poor, the monastery's wealth became involved in a "virtuous circle." The more Shenoute gave, the more "blessings" he received from God:

> Have we not also increased the goods [devoted] to the service (*diakonia*) of the poor year after year? Don't we always draw and spend [our wealth] on this just cause like copious water abundantly flowing on a plain? And still, the possessions of our poverty have not lacked anything or become scarce, to prove what we have already said (i.e., about the church), namely, *that it is God that blesses them all* (i.e., the goods of the monastery).[94]

Income and the creation of wealth have no place in this kind of discourse. Wealth only circulates and only in one direction. When a penitent sinner offered Shenoute 150 *solidi* to expiate his sin (having married his own niece), Shenoute rejected the offer and told the sinner to go donate his money at some other monastery: "This is not the place where one receives, but the place where one gives. We

give constantly to the poor and the indigent."[95] Who needs lay gifts anyway when God himself is the main donor to the monastery?

"BLESSINGS," THE SOURCES OF SHENOUTE'S WEALTH

It is time to ask ourselves the question Shenoute is not willing to answer. Where does his surplus wealth really come from? What stands behind all those divine "blessings" he claims to have received? There are good reasons to believe Shenoute when he claims that it is neither "fields" nor "business" (*pragmatia*). The issue of monastic landowning, in the first place, is a thorny one, and the lack of evidence makes speculation inevitable. We know that monasteries owned land already in the fourth century, and the slow accumulation of property—one would think—was inevitable at institutions that required prospective monks to renounce all their possessions on behalf of the community.[96] By the early sixth century, several monasteries—including Shenoute's—owned properties in the nearby village of Aphrodito,[97] and at least by the late sixth century, donations of land to monasteries had become common among the pious laity. The well-known will of Flavius Theodorus, a magistrate from the provincial capital of Antinoe, allocates all his immovable properties in the districts of Antinoe, Hermopolis, and Panopolis to Shenoute's monastery. Their income is to be used in "pious distributions" and the ransoming of captives of war.[98] What better place for this than Shenoute's monastery?

The problem is that it is not clear whether we can assume a similar situation for Shenoute's lifetime in the first half of the fifth century. Despite Eunapius's characteristic complaint in the early fifth century that monks were appropriating most of the land on the pretext of helping the poor—with the result that everyone else was becoming a beggar—we have no evidence for *land* being donated to monasteries, either by prospective monks or by pious laypersons, before the sixth century.[99] If not an accident, this dearth of evidence may indicate that donating land to a monastery was not yet as common or—legally—as simple as it would later become. In fact, with the exception of "a small piece of land" that the monastery sowed to feed its animals,[100] landed wealth has left no traces in Shenoute's sermons or, more significantly, in his rules—which *do* mention the regular purchase of wheat and wool.[101] Is this an ideological silence, comparable to the one observed about landed wealth in the *Life of John the Almsgiver?* Most certainly. Such a large monastery needed substantial amounts of land if it was to feed itself and survive at all.[102] But it is highly unlikely that it possessed in the early fifth century—or at any time indeed—the enormous amounts of land needed to perform the miracles described above in this chapter.

As to "business," that is, basically, the manufacture and sale of baskets and mats by monks and cloth by nuns: we should not overestimate the productive capacity of late antique monasteries in Egypt. The analogy with factories sometimes

used in modern literature is profoundly misleading.[103] For Shenoute's or Pachomius's monks, manual work was a means for survival and an occupational therapy, but never their main raison d'être. The internal organization of these monasteries hindered true specialization and economies of scale. Although the "houses" that made up the monasteries were sometimes assigned specific occupations,[104] the overwhelming concern of these spiritual communities was solidarity, "mechanic solidarity" in fact, that is, a solidarity of resemblance. What linked monk to monk was not their functional interdependence, but their total subordination to communal discipline and the spiritual authority of the abbot. Every monk was ideally interchangeable with any other monk and often encouraged to rotate occupations. For such communities, weaving was the lowest common denominator, not professional craftsmanship.[105] Hence their circumspect attitude toward buying and selling. Work was good, but business was dangerous, and those in charge of buying provisions and selling the monastery's products had to be strictly supervised in case they became only too proficient at their job.[106] Rather than being the source of Shenoute's "blessings," "business" could at best have helped the monks be self-sufficient and therefore give away every "blessing" they received.

Shenoute's miraculous *surplus* wealth, therefore, can only have come from gifts, gifts that were spoken of as "blessings" from God, although they really came from the local laity, imperial magistrates, and, above all, from the emperor himself. This can be proven beyond reasonable doubt in the case of the great church, and suggested with a good degree of probability for Shenoute's other expenses. There is no reason to find this surprising or shocking. Despite the Egyptian tradition of monastic work and autarchy, the evidence for gifts being donated to Egyptian monasteries—above all in the form of wheat, money, and vinegar—is extremely abundant.[107] I agree with Thomas Sternberg: the reason so much emphasis was placed on the fact that great monks earned their living only from manual work is that the opposite was taken for granted.[108] Shenoute himself is no exception to this: notwithstanding the emphasis of his works and biography on giving instead of receiving, I have been able to find at least ten explicit references to the gifts received by him. Two telling examples: a certain Akylas complains in a letter to Shenoute that the deceased Pergamios, who had donated many things to the monastery, had been forgotten when he needed help. Shenoute's archenemy Gesios, for his part, complains that the administrators of his rural estates bring their produce as gifts to Shenoute's monastery without his permission.[109]

These gifts were donated to the "poor" in the hope of receiving worldly and otherworldly rewards. Powerful prayer and "treasures in heaven" were promised to prospective givers.[110] "To everyone who makes an offering at this monastery"—Shenoute is recorded to have said—"I will pay his salary."[111] The ambiguity of the notion of the "poor," so crucial for the "political economy" of early Christianity, has to be kept in mind: the "poor" who received these gifts included the poor

by vocation, that is, the monks, as much as the involuntary poor. The monasteries' commitment to poverty, it was argued, ensured that everything received by them and not needed by their own holy poor would be immediately passed on to the involuntary poor. Even the exiled patriarch Nestorius was thought to have offered his belongings to Shenoute that they might be distributed to the poor.[112] Who could be a better giver than someone not interested in possessing? When Shenoute exhorts the rich to give to the "poor," therefore, he is implicitly asking for gifts for his monastery. The monastery's administration was called the "administration of the poor" (*diakonia nnhēke*)—although its functions went far beyond the care of the poor, strictly speaking[113]—and I suspect many of the poor fed by Shenoute on Sunday after communion were poor *monks* visiting his monastery.[114]

Yet doubts and suspicion remained. Were these monks truly poor? Did they give away everything they received? Neither monks nor laypeople were entirely convinced. Early coenobitic monasticism witnessed a recurring debate on "the poverty of the poor": the monks had to deal with the paradox that it is very easy to be poor by accident, but very hard by design.[115] What was the meaning of monastic poverty, when monasteries could grow as rich as great landowners? We have seen that for Theodore as for young Shenoute it was not enough for individual monks to be poor, if the monastery itself was growing in wealth. Some laypeople harbored the same doubts. A man from Oxyrhynchus planning to donate 120 *solidi* to Shenoute's monastery to be distributed as alms (*agapē*) needed to see to believe: he dressed up as a beggar and asked for alms from Shenoute first, to test his generosity.[116] It is not surprising that anyone entrusted with fortunes on the sole basis of his personal reputation and holiness should be under strict public scrutiny.

Hence the need—clearly well recognized by Shenoute—to make of the care of the poor not simply a routine that was practiced at the gate of his monastery,[117] but rather a public spectacle. It was necessary to demonstrate publicly time and again that the monastery's wealth was the wealth of the "poor," that the gifts donated were used in the right way. Only so would the gifts keep coming and growing: "a gift invites a gift in return and giving is contagious."[118] The more the monastery gave, the more it would be able to give in the future, thanks to the "blessings" that this indiscriminate generosity elicited—a virtuous circle indeed.

> Look at the way these people have gone away and left us today and these days. Where are all these crowds [now]? But truly, this (i.e., what the monks have done for the crowds) is also a good thing, and it is in this (i.e., our activity) that men find an example for bringing offerings to the church, for giving their bread to the hungry, clothing the naked, loving strangers and the poor. . . .
>
> For it is written: "People curse the man who hoards grain" (Prov. 11:26). The man who hoards without mercy, and not the man who hoards to be merciful. For if he does not gather [wealth], with what will he be merciful?[119]

The identity of the donors is, given Shenoute's economic discourse, a problematic issue. Everyone was encouraged to give, and all the authorities whose visits Shenoute proudly records cannot have left without donating anything—the spectacular setting of the church was indeed a good investment from this point of view. Yet there was one donor in particular whose gifts could be "miraculous" in scale: the emperor himself. A few successful days in Constantinople could make a world of a difference to a provincial monastery. Contemporary sources such as the biography of Porphyry of Gaza and that of Sabas show that imperial favor could lead to permanent endowments, tax exemptions, and enormous sums of money.[120] There are several indications that Shenoute received gifts from Theodosius II, an emperor well known for his love for monks,[121] and I suspect that it was these "blessings" that made miracles happen at the monastery. We know that Shenoute visited Constantinople at least twice: once to complain about the violence done against the "poor"—a category that included his monks, as we have seen—by the "violent"; a second time, in the company of Cyril, to combat Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus. In the first case, the emperor dismissed him with a "generous gift" (Arabic: *karāma jazīla*);[122] in the second, Shenoute supposedly visited the palace in the garb of a beggar—poverty incarnated—and it was at the palace itself, as we have seen, that he found a magic grain that made the monastery's mills produce endless "blessings."[123]

Yet the one indisputable proof we have of imperial patronage is an inscription located on the lintel of the main entrance to Shenoute's church. It commemorates the "founder" of the church: not Shenoute, but the military governor of Upper Egypt in the mid-fifth century, Caesarius, son of Candidianus.[124] Caesarius, we know, was Shenoute's friend and visited his monastery more than once. Given his complete name—Flavius Aspar Nomus Candidianus Caesarius—it is clear that he cannot have been Egyptian. He can only have founded Shenoute's church in his official capacity as military governor of Upper Egypt, and it would not be surprising if imperial troops had somehow been involved in the construction of the church. There is some additional evidence to support this idea. We have seen that the main church of the Pachomian federation at Phbow, also built in the mid-fifth century, had extraordinary dimensions (though not design) that are almost identical to those of Shenoute's church. We happen to have an almost certainly fictitious sermon pronounced by the patriarch Timothy II on the occasion of the inauguration of this church in the year 459. Despite some of its patently absurd claims, much of the information contained in the sermon is too interesting to ignore and may well reflect a true historical tradition. The sermon makes it very clear that the church of Phbow, like Shenoute's church, was an imperial church. Given its dimensions and its five-nave design—typical for imperial churches—this claim sounds very likely.[125] Who financed the building? The emperor Theodosius II. Apa Victor, the archimandrite of the Pachomian federation (and Theodosius's secret son according to the sermon!), asked him to finance a church "as vast as the glory of your

empire,"[126] and the emperor provided him with wood, columns, iron, precious vessels, landed properties, and even a fortress. Who was in charge of directing the building activities? The pious military governor of Upper Egypt.[127]

If Shenoute received so much from the emperor and the local laity, why did he speak of these gifts as "blessings" from God? Why did he ignore the (real) donors and focus instead on the merits of the recipients? To answer these questions, it is first necessary to understand the ideological underpinnings and implications of the notion of "blessings" as a mystifying representation of the practice of gift giving. A fragmentary and unpublished document sheds some light on this issue. It seems to be a letter written by Shenoute to prospective donors in Alexandria or (more probably) Constantinople and carried there by one of his monks in charge of collecting the "blessings" for his monastery. That this is the right interpretation of this document is suggested by a series of parallels found in the monastic biographies of Cyril of Scythopolis. Palestinian monasteries benefited, according to Cyril's account, from annuities—called "blessings"—promised by the aristocracy of Constantinople, Antioch, and Scythopolis. Such "blessings," however, had to be personally retrieved every year by the monks, who would send a representative for this purpose.[128]

Shenoute's letter makes clear what an uncomfortable situation this must have been for someone who was supposed to be beyond such worldly affairs.[129] It is a very clear statement of the ideology of disinterestedness. He starts by expressing how reluctant he had been to send his monk away for a long period during such an important time of year as Easter. The donors are then warned about the perils of wealth and are counseled not to obsess about it, for "it is the blessing of God that makes one rich" (Prov. 10:22).

> I say things of this kind because I love you. The things of this world are not my concern. Let no one bear a grudge against me. Only Christ knows the affairs of this miserable man's heart. Therefore let nobody put it in his heart to murmur against me and contradict me or to make me go to court against him because of the root of all evil, avarice (*tmntmaihomnt*). . . .
>
> As to our brother, I ordered him not to engage in conflicts or disputes or to go to court or to the laws—I am not like that—except for the very thing on account of which we have sent him.

As every reader of Near Eastern hagiography knows very well, the denial of any interest in receiving gifts was mandatory for any reasonable holy man. Every great gift had to be refused before being reluctantly accepted. Only in this way would the donor know for sure that this was a worthy recipient, for "who should this be but the one who is most unwilling to receive it?"[130] A conspicuous case was that of Mare the Solitary who hurled back at the emperors the bag containing the 7,200 *solidi* that they had offered him. Mare "had determined in his mind never to support himself

on the labour and sweat, that is on the sins, of others." Yet he retired in his old age to a suburban villa near Constantinople that he purchased for 360 *solidi*![131]

How did Shenoute and other holy men then justify to themselves and to others the frequent acceptance of gifts while denying any interest in receiving them? The care of the poor is only part of the answer. The notion that everything in the world belongs to its Creator, to whom it is therefore no longer possible to give anything but only to give *back*, was well established in late antique Judaism and Christianity.[132] Many Christian and Jewish donor inscriptions show a tendency to undercut the claims of donors, whose self-effacement contrasts with the self-advertisement of Graeco-Roman benefactors.[133] What fifth-century holy men did was to put a new emphasis on this traditional theme. In this alternative economic universe, giving can be taken for granted, since the only real giver is God. It is receiving that becomes, paradoxically, truly challenging and praiseworthy, for it entails responsibilities not toward the earthly giver but toward God himself. "God," Shenoute once told his monks "will ask us about everything that is given to the *diakonia*, including even the price of an iron nail that a man has given on behalf of his soul."[134] The reason Shenoute was willing to receive only too often, he argued, was of course not out of self-interest. Quite the opposite: he was doing a favor to the donors. Even receiving was, for him, a way of giving:

> Truly, it is scarcely with any great peace that things of this kind (i.e., gifts) come to me, and I wish to receive [only] because of the love of Christ and his kindness toward those who vow them, as a mercy to them. It is not a small thing to give account to God for a thing (i.e., a gift) that a man has entrusted to one who will [then] find it against himself in his final judgment.[135]

Few donors would have been willing to agree explicitly with this curious representation of the process of gift giving. Such donors—who could afford to give without owning—personified supreme generosity: by claiming their gift to be a "blessing" that came from God, they were willing to part not only with the gift itself, but also with the credit they deserved as givers. Donor and recipient colluded therefore in misrecognizing the true nature of the gift and denying the social relationship it created. Such a donor had been, for example, the Constantinopolitan aristocrat Acacius:

> Knowing that [the holy man Theodosius] could not bear ever to receive anything from anyone, he buried in the cave without his consent a box containing a hundred *solidi*, and so embraced him and departed. On his return to Byzantium he continued for a long time to send each year to the blessed Theodosius a large fixed sum as a "blessing." . . . The great Theodosius on the day after the departure of the *illustris*, found the said money hidden in a cave. With it he first of all founded a hospice.[136]

One wonders who actually buried the amphora full of gold that Shenoute supposedly found near his desert cave and used to build his church! A more significant

example, for our purposes, is that of the emperor Theodosius II himself. The best evidence of disinterestedness Shenoute could put forward was his reaction to the emperor's own offers. As he explained to the donors in his letter,

> It is also not my wish to receive [anything] without complete agreement. If the righteous emperor Theodosius forced me to receive by giving from his hand to my hand with his eunuchs, and [still] I did not wish to receive, *although he said that it was a "blessing,"* shall I wish to receive things in strife?[137]

Whether the donor acknowledged it or not, the representation of the gifts received by the monastery as "blessings" from God helped to defuse the inevitable danger inherent in those nonreciprocated gifts actually donated by the rich and powerful.[138] By dissociating gift from giver, the monastery could claim spiritual autonomy while profiting from the cascade of lay gifts well attested for the late fifth and sixth centuries. "Blessings" had originally been a technical term for the leftover loaves of bread brought as offerings to the church but not used for the Eucharist.[139] After being blessed and thus given to God, such leftovers could be redistributed to the clergy (or to the monks) without any danger, for they could be thought of now as coming from the Lord and not from specific donors. This liturgical language was quickly applied to the monastic economy. Used first to designate the small symbolic gifts given by monks to each other and to their visitors, "blessings" became, from the fifth century onward, a term applied both to the large benefactions enjoyed by monasteries and to monastic wealth in general—including, undoubtedly, sources of wealth such as land rents that may have been more important than our sources dare to declare.[140] By simply attributing all ownership to God, this notion marked out the monastic economy as a sphere that was ruled by noneconomic principles. The monastery's wealth was incommensurable with regular wealth—the intrinsic value of a "blessing" is usually either too small or too large to be measured (although Shenoute tries!). Though used by the monks, this wealth was, to quote Shenoute again, "the property of the King, Christ," for "His are the men, His is the money, the gold, and everything else."[141]

A CHRISTIAN EUERGETISM?

Shenoute's spectacular care of the poor won him a reputation that lived on after his death. The "History of the Church of Alexandria" remembers him as "a spirit-bearing ascetic, a teacher, a dispenser of charity such that his charity reached to all the poor who wished to receive it. He did not refuse any man who asked him to dispense charity and he fulfilled their requests and gave to each of them more than he had asked of him."[142] And when his successor Besa had to describe his own welfare activities on behalf of the poor during a famine, he clearly modeled the descriptions of his accomplishments on those of his spiritual father Shenoute.[143]

This fame was well deserved. Shenoute's care of the poor and discourse of endless generosity had accomplished more than simply legitimizing an unprecedented accumulation of wealth by monks. They had helped to establish his monastery as a public institution with a vigorous and prominent role in local life. His well-publicized, "miraculous" achievements on behalf of the poor had won him the right to mingle among the provincial elite while criticizing it and demanding its generosity. The increasing recognition by the imperial government of the care of the poor as a public duty had also granted him a privileged access to the state and—we have seen—its wealth.

It seems appropriate, therefore, to compare these successful activities to the traditional Graeco-Roman system of public gift-giving known as euergetism, which also marked out a "private" citizen as a public man. The provision and distribution of public wheat or bread was a common service in many Hellenistic and Roman cities. In Egypt, such a system is well attested in third-century Hermopolis and Oxyrhynchus and in fifth-century Alexandria.[144] As a rule, the expenses involved were paid with the city's public money and not by private benefactors. Yet extraordinary individuals could, in times of crisis, take over the system and help the city pay for its bread, in a show of generosity and patriotism.[145] Moreover, the magistrate in charge of the food supply in every city—the *eutheniarch*—was assigned not a specific expense but instead a specific task for which he was financially liable. Such an arrangement left room for individual generosity and *philotimia*, the love of honor. The "civic councilor in charge of public wheat" who generously lent wheat to Pachomius's monastery during a famine may have been one of these *eutheniarchs*. Is Shenoute's generosity comparable to that of such civic benefactors so well attested, for example, in the cities of Asia Minor?[146]

The differences between the Christian care of the poor and Graeco-Roman euergetism have been pointed out often enough. In Shenoute's case, it seems evident that his activities are entirely nonurban, as they take place at his monastery and not in any city, the stage for the quintessentially civic practice of euergetism. Whereas the gifts a civic benefactor makes to his city are usually portrayed as an homage paid to the city,[147] Shenoute's gifts are given to the "poor" out of pity for their plight, and all this in the context of an explicit hostility and challenge toward the city of Panopolis. Furthermore, whereas civic systems of giving had strictly and legally defined beneficiaries, usually a group within the citizen body, the "poor" helped by Shenoute are only vaguely defined. For moments it is not even clear whether he is talking about monks or the poor in general.

There is no doubt, therefore, that the care of the poor and euergetism are very different as "ideal types." Yet, if we are to understand the transition between these systems of gift giving in the fourth and fifth centuries, we cannot write history in terms of "ideal types." For doing so would only lead us to make false distinctions, to take "the things of logic for the logic of things." As Peter Brown has shown, both

systems of giving were fused and confused during this period by the interested parties: "Wealth released through symbolically charged gestures to new categories of the population—the poor—had a way of trickling towards more ancient watercourses hollowed out by centuries of civic practice."[148] "We are dealing with a society that still knew how to praise the generosity of the rich in old-fashioned terms, even when this generosity took place on a considerably more moderate scale than had been the case in the glory days of the high empire, and even when the givers were new figures—imperial governors rather than local notables, bishops, and pious men and women rather than civic leaders."[149]

Shenoute belongs to the large group of late antique Christian leaders whose behavior is sometimes less original than the justifications they give for it. A Christian euergetism did exist in late antiquity, and bishops such as Basil of Caesarea, Porphyry of Gaza, and Theodoret of Cyrrhus can be counted among its adepts.[150] Shenoute, as a rural abbot, is a less likely candidate for the practice of a Christian euergetism than these urban bishops, particularly so in an area such as Egypt, where the evidence for traditional euergetism is very slim. Yet the so-called Monument of Ptolemagrios, an early third-century stele found near Panopolis itself,[151] portrays one traditional benefactor at work in terms that evoke Shenoute in more than one way. Ptolemagrios's celebration of his achievements, like Shenoute's two centuries later, mixes inextricably the notions of generosity, piety, and moral excellence in a self-congratulatory panegyric. He also fed multitudes: "by nature generous beyond his means," he would nourish "twice every year all the people of Pan who inhabit the mountains [i.e., the desert?], during the festivals of Phoebus, inviting two leading men for each class, as well as the priests of each class and the companions of his toils [i.e., his fellow soldiers?], in (the number of) one hundred." And like Shenoute, he expressed his piety and wealth through building:

> Ptolemagrios has devoted his efforts to the newly planted persea trees, setting them up with the help of his children. As for those trees formerly planted which were drying out, he has saved them now by renewing nearly barren land.[152]
>
> See what Ptolemagrios has accomplished through his piety, building for the Uranids and the blessed Gods everything that extends from the area to the right, near the enclosure of the great Pan, to the sacred lake of Phoebus.
>
> Such is the life of Agrios and his children: . . . initiators of numerous and pious works, thanks to which they live like true philosophers leading a simple life, in all sorts of works, far from wealth and malicious envy.

"Virtuosi of euergetism" like Pliny the Younger,[153] always busy publicizing and writing about their benefactions and building projects, may therefore be closer to the concerns of Shenoute than we would think at first sight. Shenoute's large-scale munificence, banquets, and welfare activities translated into the "desert" traditional civic practices. His care for thousands of refugees during the barbarian

invasion "was what an old-fashioned *tropheus*, a 'nourisher' of the community, had once been expected to do."[154] We should do well, therefore, to remember the words of the "God-loving *comes* Chossoroas," the military commander of Upper Egypt. During one of his visits to Shenoute's monastery he said in amazement and "glorifying God": "You have made the desert a city."[155] He may have been doing more than just paraphrasing the *Life of Antony*.

3

Rural Patronage: Holy and Unholy

A DISCOURSE OF ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

Criticizing the rich, their dishonest exploitation of the poor, and their uncharitable behavior was for Shenoute, as for many bishops in the later Roman Empire, part and parcel of the care of the poor. The exemplary activities of his own monastery—as described in the previous chapter—were clearly not enough to spur the wealthy to action. These scoundrels needed to be presented, face to face, with vivid and irrefutable evidence of the social injustice prevailing in the world. In the agrarian economy of late antique Egypt, this meant that Shenoute had to remind the wealthy landowners of Panopolis, time and again, of the sufferings they inflicted on the rural poor, that is, on their own workers and tenants. As a result, a discourse of economic inequality, focused on the living and working conditions in the countryside, pervades many of Shenoute's works and sermons.

This social criticism follows, in Shenoute's hands, the same rhetorical structure on display in the works of more eloquent preachers such as Basil of Caesarea, John Chrysostom, and Ambrose of Milan.[1] The goal is to move the crowd, preferably to make them weep in repentance—we know in fact that Shenoute managed to do that at least twice.[2] The preacher holds up a tableau for his audience and proceeds to fill it with touching and heartbreaking vignettes. These vignettes turn the ideology of innocent prosperity espoused by ancient landowners—such as we find represented in the mosaics of late antique villas or in Egyptian tapestries—squarely on its head. On the one side stand the foolish rich with their blind and endless ambition. In Shenoute's rhetoric, one specific, if unnamed individual sums up the worst characteristics of this anonymous group: Gesios, the greedy miser

of Panopolis, the "fruitless tree" who gives no alms to the poor just as the cursed fig tree gave no figs to the Lord. "Everything I have said," Shenoute claims in one of his sermons against the evil rich, "applies to every unmerciful rich man, but in particular to that impious one (i.e., Gesios) and to those who are like him."[3]

Blind greed and self-indulgence have led to the compulsive accumulation and conspicuous consumption of wealth. The description of this offensive luxury provides the preacher with an occasion to display his virtuosity and imagination. Basil of Caesarea, for example, tells about

> purple-blankets which cover the [rich men's] horses like fiancés; a multitude of mules, classified according to color. . . . An infinite number of servants, for all their magnificence. . . . Cooks, bakers, cupbearers. . . . Baths in the city, baths in the countryside. Houses shining with various marbles, one with stones from Phrygia, another with slabs from Laconia or Thessaly. One is warm during winter; the other is cool for the summer. The pavement is decorated with mosaics; the ceiling with gold. The whole surface of the walls that is not covered with mosaic revetments is decorated with painted flowers.[4]

Shenoute, who may have been familiar with Basil's sermons against the rich, denounces their wealth in similar terms.[5] The rich man possesses "beautiful houses shining with ornamentation, some in the cities, others in the villages," "many garments of different types, some for the summer, others for the winter," and "many dwellings of different kind, some that are cool in summer, others that are warm in winter." He sleeps on ivory beds, surrounded by cushions, pillows, and blankets of different kinds; he likes to have his feet massaged until falling asleep; he shares his bed only with his exotic puppies, puppies that are covered with blankets of variegated colors (while the poor are naked!); he drinks all sorts of wines, both Egyptian and imported; his servants wash him in his own baths and even dress him; he receives innumerable gifts but never gives except to bribe corrupt judges; he owns numerous "houses, store-rooms and boats, gardens and vineyards, baths and pools—both next to the river or on its banks and inside the gates of his houses, with his ceilings (i.e., awnings?) and many other things, including his blankets and dishes."[6]

On the opposite side of this greed and vain display of wealth stands their inevitable result: the absolute misery of the population of the countryside, who toil for the rich. The preacher demands his audience envision an appalling spectacle: wretched creatures, wandering in the countryside, with no clothing to wear, nothing to eat and little to drink, desperately hunting for food in the hills ("hares, foxes, gazelles, and antelopes"—Shenoute claims), sleeping on the river quays under the winter frost, worse off than the animals of their masters, always in debt, their bodies tortured with arduous tasks and used as beasts of burden. Heat and frost have made their skin "black like an oven" and their bodies "dry like wood." Meanwhile,

the rich man has a body of admirable color and strength, "as if he was converting your flesh, through many hardships, into his (own) body." He even likes to work out. As for the poor, violence has scattered them from one end of the earth to the other, father and son can no longer find each other.[7]

The dramatic contrast between the poverty of the poor and the wealth of their masters served to demystify this wealth by revealing its true human cost. In an operation that is the exact opposite of Shenoute's glorification of his monastery's wealth, this discourse of economic inequality exposes rural production for what it is: not the effortless and joyful gathering of the bountiful gifts of Mother Nature, but instead a violent and abusive activity that takes from the poor what they rightfully deserve. "What," Shenoute asks, "is in the house of the greedy rich that does not belong to the poor? Even his dogs are fed by the poor."[8]

This "preliminary bombardment"—to use the apt expression of Peter Brown[9]—set the stage for more positive demands from the rich. A halt to violence and exploitation was not enough. The rich also needed to give, to the poor and—this is only implied—to those who took care of them, such as Shenoute's monastery. Since all wealth comes from God and ultimately belongs to him, it is an act of foolish irresponsibility—all these preachers argue—to handle it ungenerously. The wealth of this world is ephemeral and of no use at the moment of final judgment. Terrible suffering—described in detail by Shenoute in one of his sermons[10]—awaits the ungenerous rich man after death. Instead of obsessing so much about their treasures on earth like the rich fool of the gospel, the rich should gather treasures in heaven, by giving to the poor and by acting in a charitable manner toward their own dependents.[11] As we shall see, Shenoute was only too happy to gather treasures in heaven on behalf of those who donated gifts to his monastery, that is, to the "poor."

It is important to keep this positive subtext in mind when reading Shenoute's scathing attacks on the violence of the rich. His relationship to the wealthy landowners of Panopolis was complex. Many of them attended his church and were the main audience for his sermons against greed. Shenoute used these opportunities not only to denounce his enemies, Gesios in particular, but also to scare, to humiliate, and to shame those present—for whom Gesios was presented as a negative example—into positive action. His hypercritical stance ensured that he had the ears of this group and that they would respond with a favorable disposition when asked for favors. The setting of a crowded church was particularly apt for this purpose. Confronted, as in a popular assembly in classical Greece, with the searching looks of the crowd in a small face-to-face society, the rich had no choice but to promise to mend their ways.[12]

Yet between a promise on the spot and an actual change of behavior there was a long road—as Shenoute himself knew.[13] The hyperbolic character of much of his rhetoric could in fact have worked against him. "Literary exaggeration," it has been

argued, "always risks self-effacement by de-realizing itself in its very excess."[14] Did the rich recognize themselves at all in the terrible portraits painted by Shenoute? More in general, is there any relationship whatsoever between Shenoute's imagery and the rural economy of late antique Egypt? And does it reveal anything about the concrete role of Shenoute's monastery in the countryside? After all, there is no doubt that much of his discourse on economic inequality consisted in the straightforward deployment of traditional stereotypes, many of them biblical (especially from Job and the Prophets), others probably absorbed from the works of other preachers, and others still apparently taken from an almost timeless repertoire of criticisms of evil wealth. To go no further than Egypt, Shenoute's description of the afflictions of the miserable rural worker—a situation in which everything that can go wrong will go wrong—reminds me of those literary exercises in which ancient Egyptian scribes praised their own job and disparaged all the others by imagining all their possible shortcomings.[15]

Fortunately for us historians, there is indeed more to Shenoute's rhetoric than such a generic denunciation of wealth. His preaching against the rich is exceptional from several points of view. Yes, it is full of stereotypes, but these are in many cases—as I will show in this chapter—specifically Egyptian stereotypes, which point to a particular economic background. Owning boats, for example, is a typical attribute of the rich man for Shenoute, and we know in fact from papyri that ownership of boats was a defining characteristic of the elites of the Nile valley. This has no biblical prototype and is unlikely to have been true in, say, the Milan of Ambrose or the Cappadocia of Basil.[16] Omissions can also be very significant. Granaries, for example, a traditional symbol of greed for urban bishops, who denounced the scarcity of bread created by speculators, play a negligible role in Shenoute's denunciations. This may be related to the fact that Shenoute's monastery seems to have had access to large reserves of bread.[17]

More importantly, much of Shenoute's rhetoric targets a specific individual, Gesios, known to have been his religious, economic, and political rival—something, as far as I know, unique. Gesios is not only held up as the archetype of the evil rich man for the benefit of good Christians. He is also the explicit addressee of hostile documents such as Shenoute's well-known "open letter" denouncing his oppressions.[18] This protracted conflict between abbot and rich landowner grounds all of Shenoute's imagery in a very concrete context. And last but not least, Shenoute's writings and sermons have occasionally preserved the criticisms and objections made against *his own* behavior in the countryside. These are crucial pieces of evidence. Not only do they show that Shenoute's monastery was actively involved in the economic life of the countryside. They also reveal that much of his rhetoric against the unmerciful rich was actually his reply to the criticisms of those landowners who felt threatened by the encroaching power of his monastery. The best defense was to attack.

Once we separate the wheat from the chaff, therefore, Shenoute's preaching provides a valuable and little-known perspective on the economic conditions in the countryside of late antique Egypt and on the role of his monastery in it. Indeed, we have in this case the unusual opportunity of complementing and contrasting literary and documentary sources dealing with the same issues. The innumerable documents preserved in Egyptian papyri cannot be ignored by anyone attempting to understand the context and function of Shenoute's preaching against the rich. Like a huge dictionary, these documents will help us make sense of his sometimes-obscure denunciations. This immense corpus of documentary evidence has given rise to a lively historiography that has ignored Shenoute almost completely. It is to this historiography and its issues that we need to turn first.

LARGE ESTATES AND RURAL PATRONAGE

At the center of this historiography is a large archive of papyri found at Oxyrhynchus, one of the major centers of the Nile valley. It contains, to date, some 250 documents related to the administration of the landed estates of the Apion family.[19] This seems to have been one of the wealthiest and most powerful families in late antique Egypt. Its earliest known representatives were civic councilors in mid-fifth-century Oxyrhynchus, and therefore contemporaries of Shenoute, but by the late fifth century the family had attained imperial prominence, a prominence that it maintained until the early seventh century. Members of this family occupied some of the highest positions in the imperial bureaucracy, culminating with the consulship of "Apion II" in the year 539. The Apions were actively involved in the governing of Egypt on behalf of the empire, in religious controversies, and supposedly even in the construction of the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople.[20] All in all, this family is as good an example for the imperial service aristocracy of the late antique period as any.

The large number of well-preserved and highly detailed documents belonging to this archive, including separate accounts for different types of products, labor contracts, and all sorts of receipts, would seem designed to provide the historian with unqualified certainties. Yet nothing has been further from the truth. Scholars have failed to reach an agreement over even the most basic aspects of the operation of these estates. At stake is nothing less than our views of the economic, social, and institutional development of Egypt in late antiquity. We know that "large" estates existed in Egypt, not only in late antiquity but also earlier—a good example being the third-century estate located in the Fayum and belonging to an Alexandrian notable, which Dominic Rathbone has carefully studied.[21] The question, above all, is one of scale. How large were these estates? What percentage of the land of Egypt in, say, the mid-sixth century had been absorbed into these "vast" accumulations of rural property? Did these large estates come to dominate the society

and economy of late antique Egypt? If so, when and how? Is the apparent contrast between fourth- and sixth-century Egyptian society due to the different nature of our sources or to profound economic transformations? Is there any fundamental difference—in size, in structure—between the large estates known to have existed in the third century and those from the late antique period? Is the development of these large estates something particular to Egypt or to one specific region of Egypt, or is it a more general development that has to be assumed for the entire Near East during late antiquity? Is the village of Aphrodito—well known from sixth-century papyri—an exception to the supposed dominance of these large estates?

Two recent books, by Jairus Banaji and Peter Sarris, have proposed a "maximalist" answer to all these questions.[22] The idea that the transition from the ancient to the medieval world was marked by the growth of large estates is of course very old. But these had been thought to be self-sufficient estates. The rise of a natural economy and a vaguely defined feudalism were long seen as the causes and consequences of the decline of the Roman world. The discovery and edition of the Apion archive modified this view only partially. Edward Hardy saw in the Apion estate a semifeudal institution. It relied on the work of serfs, it threatened the power of the Roman state by usurping public functions, and yet it received most of its income in gold coins. The development of these estates into full-blown feudalism was thwarted in Egypt, according to Hardy, by the Arab invasions.[23] What Banaji and Sarris have done is to turn this old model on its head. In their view, the expansion and eventual dominance of large estates does define the late antique economy, both in Egypt and elsewhere. Yet these estates were highly dynamic institutions. They were, in fact, the main engine behind the economic growth of the late antique countryside, growth that archaeological remains from southeastern Turkey to the Negev desert have now placed beyond doubt.[24] Rather than fiefs, what aristocrats such as the Apions administered was a sophisticated agrobusiness.

The fact that very few leases of land have survived from this period in Oxyrhynchus—whereas they were very common in earlier periods—is, according to these scholars, revealing. It suggests that large estates were characterized by the direct control of the production process.[25] In other words, the wealthiest landowners of late antique Egypt were not content with drawing a fixed rent from numerous but small holdings that they simply leased out. Instead, they used the landless peasantry—which their "primitive accumulation" had created—as wage workers in large, consolidated landholdings that they administered themselves. This landless workforce—the famous *coloni* of the legal codes—was housed in specifically created estate settlements. Small plots of land and dwelling space were granted to them in exchange for their work on land directly administered by the estate, the *autourgia*. The estates were, therefore, bipartite like a medieval manor. We should not be misled—Peter Sarris has claimed—by the many accounts that show that most of the income of the estate was spent locally by its agents, and relatively little

was left over for the estate's owners. All these accounts—most of our evidence, in fact—concern the administration of the land granted to the estates' workers, not the *autourgia*, which is where the estate made the real money and for which, alas, we have very little evidence. How did the Apions make this money? By producing cash crops, above all wine, which they sold at thriving urban markets and exported outside Egypt. Hence their significant investment in artificial irrigation—revealed by the frequent mention of waterwheels in the archive—which was necessary for the cultivation of grapes in Egypt. Two features typical of leases in late antique Egypt are further indications of the expansion of the "wine economy" during this period, although *not* due to these large estates (since these are *leases*): they tend to be indifferent to flood variations, which shows that they presuppose artificial irrigation, and a large proportion of them are sharecropping leases, an arrangement typical for wine production.[26]

How large then were these "large" estates? According to Sarris, fiscal documents suggest that "by the late sixth century the Apiones probably owned at least a third of the cultivable land around Oxyrhynchus."[27] If we keep in mind that the Apions were only one of several aristocratic families living in Oxyrhynchus, it becomes immediately evident that—if this analysis is correct—this would be a world completely dominated by the owners of these estates and characterized by drastic contrasts of wealth and poverty.[28] It is no surprise therefore that Shenoute's discourse of economic inequality has been adduced by Sarris as an "eye-witness account" of the growth of large estates in late antique Egypt. His descriptions of the poverty of the poor and the wealth of the wealthy fit this model only too well.[29]

On the other hand, papyrologists such as Jean Gascou, Roger Bagnall, and—more recently—Todd Hickey and Roberta Mazza have been far more skeptical about the changes and innovations that are supposed to have taken place in the countryside of late antique Egypt.[30] Theirs is rather a "minimalist" model. In the first place, they point out that the fiscal accounts traditionally used to calculate the size of the Apion property confuse public and private money, that is, the taxes paid by the Apion family and those they collected on behalf of the state.[31] As a result, the Apion properties may have been far smaller than previously thought. Furthermore, Hickey's analysis of the accounts of the archive has shown that almost all the income in produce—mostly wheat and wine—was spent locally to pay for taxes and the running costs of production. This was a very inefficient agriculture. Crucially, the accounts of wine show that income and expenses balance each other year after year. In other words, wine was no cash crop at all but was used instead as a currency to pay for labor and other services. It is not surprising, therefore, that almost no sales of wine are attested in the archive. "The very existence of a surplus is uncertain; if one did exist, it was not marketed by the estate itself."[32] In any case, only a small proportion of the estate's lands—according to Hickey—was used for the production of wine. Where did the Apions' money

come from then? From the rents in gold paid by the estate's tenants, who leased the innumerable and spread-out plots of land owned by the estate. This has interesting implications: it means that most tenants were selling whatever they produced at a market in order to receive the gold that they paid as rent. The almost total absence of leases in the archive has to be explained, then, by a simple accident of preservation, or by a change in documentary practices.[33] Although certain aspects of the estate production were managed directly, such as irrigation, the use of wage labor was insignificant in comparison to tenancy.[34] How do we account then for the fact that the income in gold from individual sections of the estate, as preserved in accounts, is not very impressive? Very simply: the Apions were not that rich after all, and their wealth cannot be compared to that of Western aristocrats. Hickey estimates their property at less than one-third the total estimated by Sarris.[35]

The fact that such a well-documented estate could have given rise to two diametrically opposed interpretations is a good reminder of the always-underestimated blind spots that plague all papyrological documentation. Here as elsewhere, there are no facts, only interpretations. Yet the single biggest difficulty faced by every scholar studying this issue has been the relative lack of papyri for the fifth century, the period when these large estates are supposed to have emerged and when other far-reaching transformations are thought to have taken place in Egypt. These supposedly crucial developments have always been studied—or rather assumed—by referring to the legal codes, not to papyri. The legal codes, however, talk about rural patronage, not about large estates.[36]

Rural patronage of some kind is an almost universal feature of complex, large-scale agrarian societies. A rural patron usually has privileged access to the centers of society, that is, to state institutions and the powerful in general. Land ownership, an abundant supply of cash, and special access to major markets, among other things, may also underlie his position. Important landowners have always tended to act as rural patrons. The patron's simultaneous influence in city and countryside allows him to play the role of a broker who bridges the gap between city and state, on the one hand, and the rural world, on the other. He does this by providing his rural clients with a protection that may take multiple and diverse forms: loans, help with irrigation, work opportunities, access to land tenancy, contacts with the powerful, protection from the demands of the state and other landowners (taxes, rents, liturgies), and—crucially in a late Roman context—legal protection at court. In exchange for these services, a late antique patron received not only loyalty, but also more concrete rewards. We know that late antique villagers paid their patrons a fee, an illegal tax sometimes called *patrōnikia*, in cash or agricultural products.[37] This is an important feature to keep in mind when comparing late antique patronage to other patronage systems, in which the patron typically exchanges economic resources for noneconomic benefits, such as political loyalty.[38]

In order for the patron to defend his clients' interests as if he was defending his own, it was necessary to establish a legal relationship between the two. This could be accomplished in several ways. One possibility was a transfer of land, either real or "colorable." In the first case, the patron purchased land in the client village; in the second, the clients—an individual farmer or the village as a whole—pretended to transfer control over some land to the patron "under pretext of a gift, sale, lease, or any other contract"[39] but still retained actual ownership. In any case, these purchases gave the patron the right to claim for the land or village in question and its population the legal privileges that he in fact enjoyed. He could, for example, demand that any conflict affecting the said land or village be tried in a court favorable to himself. Whether real or "colorable," these transfers of land were above all a means to establish a jurisdiction—a factor of crucial importance in the complex and confusing late Roman legal system.[40] Hence the existence of laws forbidding "strangers" to purchase land in independent villages.[41] And hence the significance of patronage for the issue of the emergence and growth of "large estates" in late antique Egypt. For such purchases could potentially provide the powerful with a means to build up or expand their rural properties.[42] Libanius's famous oration against patronage describes another variant of this system.[43] In this case, the patrons are military officials who station troops in the villages under their protection. The soldiers defend the village from tax collectors and landowners in exchange for a tribute: "wheat, barley, the fruit of the trees, or else bullion or gold coin." When the affected parties threaten to sue, the patron claims the right to have the affair tried at a military court—which he controls—since soldiers are involved.[44]

Rural workers, the most important economic resource for an ancient landowner besides land, could also be the subject of patronage-induced transfers, both real and "colorable." Papyri and laws often mention farmers fleeing their villages or landowners in order to hide among the tenants or workers of a powerful landowner and patron.[45] The Roman pope Gelasius, for example, complained that rural workers were fleeing to the church and to monasteries "under the excuse of religious behavior," bringing thereby legal troubles to the church. Unscrupulous priests and abbots were accepting these rural workers and apparently turning them into fake monks or members of the clergy to establish their legal immunity from the claims of their previous landowners.[46] For a village, in particular, the loss of agricultural workers could have dramatic consequences, since it was collectively responsible for its tax obligations. There was no longer any census of persons in late Roman Egypt. Taxation fell on villages as a corporation. When a farmer fled his village—physically or only in status—he was effectively escaping taxation. The remaining villagers had to come up with the same taxes with fewer people to pay for them. A fourth-century law established therefore that these clients of powerful patrons who had seceded from the tax corporation of the village should be forced

to repay with interest what other villagers had paid on their behalf.[47] Although villages as a whole could have a common patron, a frequent effect of patronage was therefore to undermine the horizontal group organization and solidarity of clients through the establishment of vertical relations.[48]

In order to understand the nature and functions of late antique patronage, it is crucial to avoid too unilateral a view of its workings. We tend to imagine powerful patrons making passive, helpless villagers an offer they cannot refuse.[49] Yet late Roman laws make it very clear that the problem, for the Roman state, was not simply that bureaucrats were willing to provide illegal protection. The problem was also the "audacity" of numerous villages and farmers who were actively looking for this illegal protection in order to avoid their duties toward their natural superiors. The relation was bilateral, if asymmetric. Theodoret of Cyrrhus's biographies of holy monks in late antique Syria show that the lack of a patron was seen by villagers as a disadvantage.[50] Patronage for them was an indispensable insurance policy, if an expensive one. The villagers' audacity was fed, to a large degree, by the momentous change in the "institutional markets" that took place in the late third and early fourth centuries.[51] The expansion and diversification of the Roman state created a large supply of enterprising would-be patrons. The establishment of a parallel military administration, in particular, whose competence was never completely clear, proved especially problematic. The military, together with former magistrates, members of the staff of provincial governors, administrators of imperial properties, and later even priests and monks, came to threaten the long-standing monopoly of traditional patrons, that is, urban landowners. The endemic and dynamic rivalry between actual and aspiring rural patrons in the midst of an increasingly heterogeneous elite is the distinctive feature of rural patronage in late antiquity.

Hence my skepticism toward the common view that rural patronage resulted automatically in exploitation and greater social inequality. It is no doubt very common for patronage to degenerate into exploitation. What starts as protection often becomes domination, the client turns into a prisoner of his patron and ends up losing—usually through indebtedness—the properties he wanted to protect at the hands of the one who was supposed to protect them. "Colorable transfers" thus become real ones, and entire villages may be swallowed up, step by step, by a patron who has now become a large landowner. This process—described by Salvian of Marseille in a famous text—is indeed what must have happened in the fifth century, in a systematic and large-scale fashion, according to those scholars who believe in large estates as a defining characteristic of the period.[52] The Theodosian law of 415, in particular, leaves no doubt that many patrons, including the church of Alexandria, were acquiring properties through patronage and even threatening to turn entire villages into their own domains. The state reacted first by trying to stop, then by reluctantly legitimizing these transfers of property in order to ensure proper tax collection.[53] Further imperial laws referring to private prisons, "autopragia," that

is, the right to pay one's taxes directly to the imperial governor and not through the civic administration, and the so-called "colonate" have also been read as evidence of the usurpation of public powers by private patrons and landowners.[54]

The evidence leaves no doubt, in other words, that patronage *could* lead to exploitation, greater social inequality, and eventually the growth of large estates.[55] Yet this was by no means its inevitable result. The specific political and economic conditions of the late antique period gave rural clients a large margin for action. If one patron did not satisfy them and turned out to be a crook, they could in many cases—unlike in previous periods—resort to another one. Patronage did not always lead to greater social inequality. It could also undermine the control of landowners in the countryside. Social inequality was presupposed in the relationship but not necessarily its result. Moreover, as the ancient sources—particularly Libanius[56]—make very clear, patronage tended to undermine the horizontal group organization and solidarity not only of clients but also of the patrons themselves, who competed with each other. This was particularly so because many of the patrons of the late antique period were new men—such as Shenoute himself—who seem not to have been great landowners at all.

The problem with defining late antiquity as a period of transition (between the ancient and medieval worlds) has always been that such a definition tends to give the history of this period an air of historical inevitability. When studying patronage and its consequences we need to avoid this sense of inevitability. We cannot take the development of large estates for granted, as if they were the unavoidable result of patronage. Patronage may have certainly led, in specific areas and specific moments, to large accumulation of rural properties, but if it did so, it did it by overcoming numerous obstacles—such as rival patrons and the "audacity" of one's clients. We should not, therefore, let Shenoute's discourse of economic inequality mislead us. His denunciations are indeed a fascinating account of the exploitation of the rural poor in the countryside and can teach us much about the rural economy of late antique Egypt. Yet, when read carefully and against their specific late antique background, it becomes evident that this discourse articulates a "horizontal" conflict between patrons—such as Shenoute and Gesios—in terms of a "vertical" conflict between the rich and the poor. Patronage was "exploitation" when practiced by one's rivals. When practiced by oneself, it was protection or—in Shenoute's terminology—the care of the "poor."[57]

UNHOLY PATRONAGE

Gesios

Gesios, a rich landowner who lived in Panopolis, was Shenoute's main rival in the struggle for the control of the countryside around the city. We know very little about him, but it is certain that he was a former provincial governor (of an unknown

province). He is a good example, therefore, of the typical late antique combination of landownership and officeholding. As a former magistrate, he enjoyed the privileges associated with the status of a *honoratus*, such as special access to the imperial governor. Crucially, he was also a pagan in whom a Christian holy man such as Shenoute could inspire little if any respect or deference. Shenoute's rhetoric against the rich is usually couched in generic terms and addressed to a plural "you," yet he makes it abundantly clear that every one of his denunciations applies particularly to Gesios and to "those who are like him." Gesios's sins are depicted as the stereotypical sins of every rich landowner in late antique Egypt.[58]

Many of these sins are succinctly enumerated in a well-known text of Shenoute entitled "Not because a fox barks," apparently an "open letter" addressed explicitly against Gesios. This text is divided into two parts. In the first part, Shenoute answers Gesios's accusations. In the second, he goes on the offensive and denounces—addressing now a plural "you"—the oppressions of the poor perpetrated by Gesios and others. This text is well known thanks to an old translation by John Barns, which I will quote in extenso while correcting two critical mistakes:[59]

> Your (sg.) godlessness (i.e., your paganism) is matched by the way in which you afflict the poor with your oppressions. Is this not just another kind of persecution, that you (pl.) pursue the people, especially the priests of the church, till you scare them out of their houses—and at such a time as this, too, when these great distresses are upon the earth! You go into their habitations; there are no children there, no parents, nobody at all in them, because they have fled; you carry off their beasts with their carts (*aqolte*) and their hay and take them to your vineyards (*qoom*)[60] and you force them to irrigate them beyond their capacity. And what of the great Pascha? You people do not give them leisure to observe it—even the new ships which you have built, you make them launch them in it; and instead of their observing it as a time of mourning you make them sing shanties (lit. "shout aloud") against their will.
>
> Who shall be able to enumerate all your (pl.) misdeeds? How you people slaughter your calf, because it is moribund or rejected as unfit for your work, and divide it up just as you please, and foist it upon them, even upon the widows, the old men and women, the orphans and the strangers, exacting exorbitant sums of money from them till you amass twice the price the calf was worth for wretched meat which is nothing but bones and worthless stuff. And again, how you people give them calves and cows to rear, distributing them among their holdings (*kata hoi*), till they are full grown, and then take them, making some of them give them to you as gifts and giving no benefits in return, and making others of them maintain them for you; you do the same with horses and donkeys and sheep and calves and pigs. I wish you were content with that. For any whose cattle or any other goods you covet, you people seize them from them, some for no payment at all, some for some trifling price; to say nothing of bread and wine, and fodder and hay and barley for your beasts, and all the rest. And how you round them up to keep guard for you on the ships on the occasions when you are running away from the barbarians. Doesn't the barbarian

> pursue them too?—with their wives and children and their poor possessions loaded upon their beasts and their carts as they flee from their habitations to other places to save themselves. And that is how many of them come to hire other men with their own wages (*beke*) and send them to keep guard for you.

To judge from this text, the "poor" oppressed by Gesios are both tenants and wage workers.[61] They include Christian priests. They own livestock and, strangely enough, carts (*aqolte*), something very unusual and expensive in Egypt.[62] They are not, therefore, miserable landless laborers. They can afford to hire other workers in order to avoid their duty as guards of Gesios's boats.[63] One of the typical abuses of the landlord consists in forcing them to purchase "rejected" products, in this case a calf. Much of the relationship between landowner and tenants/workers seems, in fact, to involve livestock and its uses. The landowner forces the "poor" to take care of his animals without rewarding them; he uses their fodder, hay, and barley to feed his own animals without paying for it; and he takes their cattle and carts away to use them himself.[64] Papyri from this period show that livestock could indeed play a crucial role in the relationship between landowner and tenants. A sixth-century papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, for example, contains a pathetic petition from one peasant (*geōrgos*) to his landowner. This peasant used to live at an *epoikion*, that is, an estate-owned settlement. The death of his cattle, however, meant disaster for him. It forced him to flee, and the landlord's administrator (the *pronoētēs*) plundered all the peasant's possessions. He asks now (after three years' absence) to be readmitted and to be assigned new land, for "I cannot pay, lord," he says, "unless I can sow."[65]

One of the reasons for the central role of livestock in the relations between landowners and their tenants was that—as Shenoute's text shows—these animals could be used to operate the waterwheels irrigating the landowner's own land, above all his vineyards and other crops requiring perennial irrigation.[66] The diffusion of waterwheels in late antique Egypt seems to be one of those silent revolutions that no contemporary ever cared to note. "All types of water-lifting wheels," Roger Bagnall writes, "become dramatically more common in the documentation after the middle of the third century of our era."[67] Waterwheels were a major capital investment, and their omnipresence in late antique papyri—and not only in those originating in great estates—is a symptom of the intensified exploitation of the Egyptian countryside in this period. They were used not only to irrigate crops requiring perennial irrigation but now also for arable land, where they could be combined with the natural inundation. They allowed both the growing of crops in previously inaccessible land and more stable and predictable yields. As we have seen, this is probably why late antique leases in Egypt are indifferent to flood variations, unlike in previous periods. The importance of this technological revolution, therefore, cannot be overestimated.[68]

It was common for tenants to be hired to irrigate the land of their landlords using their own animals. This must have been an easy way for landowners to outsource a very expensive task.[69] A sixth-century account of the Apion estate, for example, records payments to a group of peasants who irrigate the estate's orchards and fields "with their own animals instead of [doing it with] the estate oxen of the glorious house."[70] As Shenoute's text shows, such arrangements could lead to abuses. In extreme cases, when the poor had run out of food for their animals, the evil rich would attach their very bodies to the yoke "like cattle and incite them with goads to make them water the vineyards (*qoom*)."[71] Such a description is probably rhetorical exaggeration and is unlikely to reflect a regular practice. Yet abuses did exist, as shown by another petition dating to the year 464, one year before Shenoute's death. In this document, one of these "farmer-irrigators" (*hudroparochos kai geōrgos*) from Kynopolis, a small town near Oxyrhynchus, begs for justice from the *ekdikos* (in Latin *defensor civitatis*), the official patron of the town whose job—like Shenoute's—was to "lend assistance to the oppressed." After this tenant's master, a civic councilor of Kynopolis, had died, his brother took over the management of his properties and immediately and "tyrannously seized eight fine beasts out of my kine." Not content with taking his tenant's best cattle away, he also imprisoned him, with the result that the rest of his cattle died of hunger.[72]

As this and other documents show, Shenoute's rhetoric cannot be dismissed out of hand. His denunciations have in fact a concrete and specific background: artificial irrigation and—as I will show below—wine production.

Epoikia

The relations between landowners and the "poor" as described by Shenoute in his libel against Gesios reflect an arrangement typical of the so-called *epoikia*, the estate-owned settlements of late antique Egypt. As we shall see, this is indeed what Shenoute himself thought. *Epoikia* are mentioned in passing more than once in Shenoute's descriptions of the countryside. When he tells us how the rural population came out spontaneously to attack the "enemies of God" at a village, he depicts them setting out from "many villages and many *epoikia*."[73] When he complains about soldiers plundering the countryside, the list of their victims includes "villages and cities, houses, roads and boats, vineyards, arable fields and threshing floors, *epoikia* and even the offerings (*prosphora*) that are brought to the places of God."[74] The "people who live in the *epoikia*" are also the addressees of one of Besa's letters. Concerned that "they were undertaking to fight each other," he writes to the "priests, deacons, (landlord-) administrators (*pronoētai*), headmen, and all the people who live in the *epoikia*."[75] This concept has been misunderstood by Shenoute's modern translators, but in papyri it is attested very often.[76] It designates a small rural settlement built and owned by a (rich) landowner to house his rural workers. Such settlements may have been common in many areas of the

Mediterranean world, but they are called *epoikia* almost exclusively in Egypt.[77] The word is attested already in Ptolemaic times, but the late antique period seems to have been witness to a veritable explosion in the building of *epoikia*, which came to play a major role in the Egyptian countryside. In the area around Oxyrhynchus and in the Fayum, in particular, the mushroom growth of *epoikia* in this period—they outnumber independent villages by far—must have changed the face of the rural landscape considerably.[78] The dependent nature of these settlements can be easily recognized in their names. When not named after their (original) owner or a nearby village,[79] they tend to have clearly artificial names denoting a particular function, characteristic, or natural feature: we find *epoikia* called "the Vine-Tree," "the Hills," "the Dovecote," "the Sixteen *Arouras*," "the Shepherd," "the Jar," "the Gospel," "the Doctor," "the Island of Leukadios," and so on.[80] Interestingly, at least some of those names could be translated into Coptic, showing that their etymological meaning was very much alive to their users.[81]

The large number of new *epoikia* that show up in the sources of the fifth and sixth centuries bears witness to the active role of great estates in the expansion of settlement in late antique Egypt. It shows that great estates could indeed be a dynamic force in the countryside, and it suggests that late antique landowners tended to be more actively involved in rural production than as simple rentiers.[82] This is the best indicator, in my opinion, that Banaji's and Sarris's ideas must contain some truth. Together with monasteries, *epoikia* are the distinctive imprint left on the Egyptian countryside by the late antique period. Unlike in Syria or Palestine, the expansion of rural settlement in Egypt faced two formidable obstacles: the desert edge, extensively colonized by monasteries;[83] and—easier to overlook—the Nile inundation, braved by *epoikia*. The fact that most of Egypt was under water for more than a month every year had far-reaching consequences for its settlement pattern: it was highly nucleated and extraordinarily stable.[84] Rural populations huddled together in relatively few sites, permanently beyond the reach of the dangerous Nile waters. Usually located on natural levees, these settlements had been in occupation, by Roman times, for millennia. It was only during periods of extraordinary rural development that the "secondary" settlement sites were occupied.[85] Small elevations in the middle of the floodplain, or islands in the river, these unstable sites were created (and eventually destroyed) by depositions of Nile silt. It was by building *epoikia* on such "secondary" sites that the large estates of late antiquity colonized the floodplains of Middle Egypt, the "richest but hydraulically more difficult areas" of the Nile valley.[86]

Chris Eyre has shown in an excellent study that "the ordered landscapes of modern Egypt depend on perennial irrigation. In antiquity the landscape was more varied, with patchy cultivation."[87] There was always plenty of "untamed" land around. What was truly scarce was not land but manpower. Finding and keeping men was the real challenge for landowners.[88] The *epoikia* are a specifically late

antique answer to this perennial problem. But this was neither the first nor the last period in Egyptian history to witness such a spreading out of rural settlement. Cycles of colonization and abandonment are characteristic of the long-term history of rural Egypt. The New Kingdom papyrus Wilbour shows a similar process of internal colonization in the same area of Middle Egypt.[89] Closer to us and better known are the *ezbahs* of nineteenth-century Egypt, related to the diffusion of sugarcane and the modern demographic explosion.[90]

Like an *ezbah*, an *epoikion* "often, if not normally, took the form of a barrack-block."[91] Workers and their families rented "cells" (*cellae*)[92] from the owners, as well as facilities like bakeries, wine- and oil-presses, and weaving shops. John Chrysostom describes Syrian landowners trying to make their estate-villages attractive to the rural population by building public structures in them.[93] The numerous brick-makers attested at *epoikia* point in fact to constant building activity at these settlements, not only on the buildings themselves but probably also on the enclosure walls needed for every vineyard and orchard.[94] Gatekeepers, administrators (*pronoētai*), and also—as we learn from Besa's letter—priests and deacons could be among the inhabitants of the settlement. Sixth-century accounts from the Apion estate show us (surely very humble) churches in each *epoikion* being supported by the payments of their owners.[95]

The relation between these inhabitants and their landlord was variable. Besides being tenants of their habitations, they could be assigned land in tenancy, work for the landlord (particularly as irrigators, as we have seen), or any number of combinations of these three. A papyrus from Hermopolis contemporaneous with Shenoute, for example, records a contract between a civic councilor who owns an *epoikion* and five villagers who decide to rent "little houses" (*oikeia*) in it. Besides the rent for their habitations, these tenants promise to work for the landowner when he needs it, but no land is mentioned at all.[96] Papyri also mention inhabitants from *epoikia* renting land elsewhere from landowners who seem to have no relationship whatsoever to the *epoikion* in question.[97]

Epoikia could therefore sometimes function as little villages. Yet the distinction between an *epoikion*, a small "village" owned by a single landowner, and a real, independent village was very clear to contemporaries. Libanius complained that both "large villages belonging to many owners" as well as those that have "a single owner" (i.e., *epoikia*) were having recourse to patrons.[98] In the first case, the result was that taxes could not be collected by civic councilors; in the second, the patron would deprive the legitimate owner of his income, which would instead be given by the clients to their patron as gifts. In a similar vein, imperial laws against patronage insisted that large villages (which they call *metrocomiae*) were to remain under "unimpaired public dominion" and not become private settlements. Powerful patrons were clearly threatening the independence of some of these villages and treating them as their private property, that is, as *epoikia*.[99] What had started

as illegal protection had become illegal exploitation. This is in fact exactly what Shenoute claims Gesios was doing. His denunciations reach their climax in a passage that was misunderstood by Barns:

> You demand from some of them a vessel of wheat for each house, [claiming] that they are numerous in men; from some others 25 *matia* (= 2.1 *artabas*) and from others still one *artaba*, on the pretext of washing in baths. They weep, saying: "We don't want to wash! We have no bread to eat; we have no care for anything of the sort while our children are starving and naked." Most of them testify, saying: "We never wash in baths." But is it not they who do the forced work to build them (i.e., the baths) and also the houses on account of which you make them work? *Are the villages [perhaps]* epoikia*? You have not built their houses in them* (i.e., the villages), *have you? And [still] you oppress them with the same kind of afflictions* (i.e., those that you would use in an *epoikion*) *with your corvées and stinking wine, all your oppressions and your violence*.[100]

What Gesios was doing to the "poor"—corvées, forced purchases of rotten products, compulsory use of their animals for irrigation, imposition of a fee on account of the (compulsory) use of baths, and so forth—was bad enough at an *epoikion*. At a village, it was unacceptable and illegal. It was patronage at its worst.

Mixidemus, a rural patron attacked by Libanius in one of his orations, may be a good parallel to Gesios. He also was a rich former magistrate, and thus a *honoratus* with privileged access to the powerful. This allowed him to sell his services as a patron to the villagers of Syria. "The wretch," Libanius wrote, "slaves on behalf of countrymen." He had taken over the patronage of some villages previously provided by members of the governor's staff. "Letters come back and forth from the countryside commanding this and that, and he cannot sit idle but has to leap up and be at the disposal of the clients." Yet what was originally meant to be protection had become, here again, exploitation: "Those who work the good earth under the hills work more for Mixidemus than for themselves. . . . Hence he has much wheat, barley, and everything. The peasant's women do household chores for him. . . . He is not ashamed at the poverty of those who reach this situation through him." Through patronage, moreover, Mixidemus was threatening to take over large, public villages: "For him a little is a lot. And like this he introduces himself into other large villages, often through a single *jugerum* for whose price he has not paid enough."[101]

Yet one wonders what Mixidemus, Gesios, and their clients themselves thought. Were these large villages being exploited, or provided with a service? Bathhouses owned and leased by landowners, for example, are attested (in the third century) in both villages and *epoikia*. At the Appianus estate in the Fayum, workers had a fee deducted from their wages for their use of the estate-owned bath.[102] Shenoute claims that Gesios was first forcing the villagers to build the bath and then

charging them for its unwanted use.[103] Yet inscriptions from two Syrian villages, dating to the fifth and sixth centuries, are a good reminder that building a bath at a village could be something to be proud of: "Ioulianos made [this building] and the entire village proffers its gratitude. With his wife Domna he has granted inexpressible happiness and glorified his fatherland. May [its] sight drive away envy, and may glory and renown always raise you above the rest." "I, Thomas, have given this bathhouse to all the tillers of the land for the benefit of all, thereby giving myself remembrance. What is the name of this bathhouse? Health! Entering through this [gate], Christ opens to you the bathhouse of healing."[104]

Stinking Wine

Among the abuses mentioned in Shenoute's text as perpetrated by Gesios against villagers and not only against his own *epoikia*, there is one that deserves a more detailed discussion: "stinking wine" (*ērp etloms*). The importance of this issue is reflected in an episode contained in Shenoute's *Life* and preserved in two slightly different versions:[105]

> There was an island in the western part of the river planted with vineyards. They called it "the island of Paneheou"[106] and it lay within sight of Panopolis. The owners of these vineyards were pagans who each year forced on the farmers the stinking (*lōms*) wine of the island, extorting from them by violence what was not theirs. These farmers arose, went to the monastery, asked for my holy father the prophet Apa Shenoute, and told him of the oppressions the men were inflicting upon them and of the distress they were in. My father the prophet said to them: "Arise, go, and God will determine your judgment." During the night, our father the prophet Apa Shenoute arose and went over to that island in the water with vineyards planted on it, and struck the soil of the island a blow with the little palm branch he had in his hand and said: "O island of Paneheou, I say to you, go to the middle of the river and sink down for ever, so that the poor will cease to suffer because of you." Straightaway the island with vineyards and waterwheels[107] crossed over and went into the middle of the river, and before dawn had broken, the waters covered them and ships were sailing over them. In this way, the name of God was glorified by our holy father Apa Shenoute the righteous.

The fragmentary Sahidic version of the same story adds a few interesting details. Here the island lies west of Panopolis and is owned by Gesios (who else?), who foists on the "holy poor of those villages and regions and upon everyone who was in that island" "the surplus of the wines in that island that was found to be sour (*hemč*) or stinking (*lōms*)," demanding from them "a great price for sour and stinking wines." Shenoute "spent a long time speaking to those pagans but they did not listen to him."[108]

Indeed, Shenoute did spend a long time speaking about "stinking wine." Almost everything he wrote against the rich mentions this contentious issue.[109]

Although we know that the vast majority of land in the Nile valley must have been arable land sown with wheat, Shenoute's denunciations envision almost exclusively winemakers. The stereotypical crime of the stereotypical landowner was not, for Shenoute, to hoard wheat in wait for higher prices, but to get rid of the refuse of one's wine production by "foisting" it on the "poor." Several texts express his frustration at those landowners who disregarded his constant preaching about this issue. Two fragmentary pages of a codex, for example, contain the end of a work against a violent rich man, the servant of the devil, probably Gesios himself. Shenoute imprecates him, expresses his regret that God has not yet destroyed such a violent man, and complains:

> You liar in all your words and deeds! What happened with what you said: "I will not foist wine on the poor," oh you prince of the violent?![110]

The rich and their wine are also the protagonists of one of the most memorable scenes depicted in Shenoute's works. This scene is described in an unpublished text devoted entirely to the oppression of the poor. Shenoute threatens the rich with the Lord's judgment ("'The Lord says: 'You will build beautiful houses but not inhabit them, you will plant beautiful vineyards but not drink their wine' [Amos 5:11]") and denounces their oppressions, many of which are related to the production of wine: "The spoilt wines, those of the last year, they foist upon the poor; they leave behind the new [wines] because they are good" "The weak have worked at the vineyards of the impious without receiving wage or food; some have been expelled from their houses or even from their cities; you have deprived the laborer (*ergatēs*) who has sown your fields of his wage, he cries out and the cries of those who have sown have reached the ears of the Lord Sabaoth."[111] Then—after using five entire pages to quote the Prophets against the rich—he reflects on his relentless preaching and its feeble effect on the behavior of the rich:

> Have I not been saying for many years and with great grief "great sins!" and have I not been advising those who commit them to stop? Who among the rich, the elite, or any of those who are involved in such oppressions has come to us due to their philanthropy? And not only have they heard me when I speak about such oppressions, but they have also seen me. . . . For what they have seen should be enough. For many times I have brought the stinking wine into the middle of the house of God, and I have shown it to all of them, and many of the members of the elite swore and agreed, while shedding tears, not to foist wine onto anybody. These things have worried my heart for a long time, and I have been patient even until now. After having denounced them with *parrhēsia*, I look forward to seeing whether any good will come out of this.[112]

The scene at the church described by Shenoute—the rich listening to him and shedding tears of repentance when shown the evidence of their violence, the "stinking wine"—is revealing. It shows that Gesios's open conflict with Shenoute

should not be taken necessarily as a paradigm for all of Shenoute's relations with the rich and powerful. In the setting of a Christian mass, I suspect, "stinking wine" was the Eucharist turned on its head. Whereas Shenoute's monastery distributed at church a wine that had become, through the Lord's generosity, his own blood, the wine of the rich had become putrid through their oppressions.

Such texts make me seriously doubt Hickey's hypothesis that wine was of relatively minor importance for the great landowners (e.g., the Apions) of late antique Egypt.[113] Vineyards must have had an importance out of proportion to the area they occupied, in particular for members of the elite who would use their wine to pay for all sorts of services and favors.[114] An important landowner who respected himself, I suspect, needed to have access to abundant wine. For what it may be worth, an early seventh-century account belonging to an estate in Hermopolis records substantial sums (ca. 115 *solidi*) invested over four years in the creation of sixty-one *arouras* of vineyards, an amount equivalent to 10 percent of the total area of vineyards owned—according to Hickey—by the Apions.[115] It was worth spending a lot of money to gain access to wine.

In any case, what is certain is that by giving wine such a prominent role, Shenoute was not simply "biblicizing" the Egyptian landscape. For wine replaced beer, in the fourth century, as the staple drink of Egypt, and it is mentioned endlessly in our documentary sources: "After centuries of abundant attestation in the papyri, the traditional drink of the Egyptian masses, beer, almost disappears from the documentation in the fourth century. . . . For what appears, above all, is wine. Expensive wine, ordinary wine, cheap wine, bad wine and wine vinegar all play a part. People produce wine, buy and sell it, ship it; in wealthy households, it is a major medium of payment for food and services."[116] We also know with certainty that there were vineyards in the vicinity of Shenoute's monastery. A text of Besa rebukes some monks who had been caught stealing wine and grapes from nearby vineyards.[117] And a small third-century archive found in a village less than three miles from Shenoute's main monastery (Itos, today Edfa) contains instructions (presumably from Panopolis) to a poultry producer stationed in the village. He is ordered to deliver chickens and eggs to the purchasers of the estate's wine, as a bonus, and to the estate's workers during vintage.[118]

Numerous papyri show that wine was frequently used by landowners to pay their workers.[119] A nice example, dating to Shenoute's lifetime (441/2), is a small order to pay from Oxyrhynchus, which instructs a certain land laborer (*geōrgos*) to pay specific amounts of wine to "the workers from the different *epoikia* who work on the new well" of the landowner.[120] The problem was that the quality of ancient wine was highly variable, and that gave landowners vast room for "violence," as Shenoute knew only two well: "I say to you: Is there any lawlessness (*anomia*) worse than to do violence to the poor in any way, including to pay their wages in broken baskets or in wine or in any other product at all that has gone

bad or is rejected?"[121] We have seen that Shenoute describes the evil landowners' wine as "sour" or "stinking." The papyrological evidence helps us once again to understand this language. Given the limitations of ancient technology, bad wine was an almost inevitable by-product of the process of winemaking: "The wine was not protected adequately in store against the summer heat, and inefficient sealing of the jars permitted oxidation, turning the wine into 'sour wine' (*oxos*), or bacterial infection, which made it 'malodorous' (*ozarios*)."[122] Fermenting or aging wine had therefore to be regularly inspected to make sure that it was not "turning."[123] At the third-century estate of Appianus, in the Fayum, central inspectors had the duty of checking and classifying the wine produced by the estate. The same two categories they used, "sour" and "malodorous," are used in Greek and Coptic (*oxos* = *hemč* and *ozarios*/*ozomenos* = *lōms*) sales of wine in a standard clause stipulating that the wine delivered has to be in good condition.[124] "Stinking" or "malodorous" wine was considered unusable, but "sour" wine was not. When not sold for a lower price, it was commonly used to pay low-level employees of the estate.[125] On the Appianus estate it was "sold" to them together with nonsour wine, and its price—set by the central administration—was deducted from their wages. Later estates show similar practices.[126] The accounts of the Apion estates, on the other hand, show enormous amounts of "sour wine" being handled and—confirming Shenoute's complaints—being included in their distributions indiscriminately.[127] Interestingly, all of the monasteries mentioned in the Apion estates as recipients of gifts receive sour wine (i.e., vinegar) instead of wine.[128] Could this be why Shenoute was so sensitive about this issue?

Yet to understand Shenoute's complaints about sour and stinking wine, it is essential to emphasize one of his crucial—if easily missed—points. According to him, sour or stinking wine was used by unscrupulous landowners not only to pay their workers at their *epoikia*. It was also imposed on independent villagers as compulsory purchases for unfair prices. This was not simply a theoretical sale that concealed a wage payment, as shown by yet another text dealing with this issue:

> Such a great judgment be upon the head of those who oppress the poor, and upon the crown of the head of those who foist upon them stinking and worm-eaten wine. For God, who has given his blood for us, Jesus the Son of God, does not force men to perform the works of his divinity beyond their capacity, but according to their power against sin. The violent ones, however, force the poor to work for them beyond their power, so that God will break the life of those who do not stop from oppressing the poor, and he will scatter it in the place to which they will go.
>
> For not only have these things been said in the midst of a city (i.e., in public) and not in private, but it has also been seen that this one (i.e., Shenoute) has torn his garments and others have torn theirs with him. But not in vain: he knows what he is doing. I have stopped [denouncing you(?)], but you did not stop [from sinning], even as you have added to your sins, *by foisting upon the poor your bad things this*

> *year again*. You have feared neither God nor the righteous emperors, they whose destruction are those who do violence, as the Scriptures say: "The destruction of a king is he who does evil."
>
> You, for your part, [go ahead and keep] commanding: "Extort the money for the wine!" after the words that you heard bear witness against you: "These works that you do are not good." I, myself, say this: "You are not demanding money for wine, but money for worms! 708 *nummi* (*numes*) the *diploun*!"[129]

The price demanded by these evil winemakers for a *diploun* of wine—708 *nummi*—is more than double the highest price attested for the same quantity of wine in fourth- and fifth-century papyri[130]—that is, good wine of course. How did these landowners manage to force villagers to pay them for their stinking wine? I suspect the answer may be, once again, patronage. Sour or stinking wine may be just another example of the patron's abuses of the villages he was supposed to protect. Just as Gesios forced the villagers to pay him for their (supposedly) unwanted use of the village bath or for a moribund calf, he could also force them to buy his bad wine. A captive market may thus be one of the many (illegal) benefits associated with "bad" patronage.[131]

For a social historian, Shenoute's preaching can only be fascinating, but we need to remember that it is also very one-sided. An estate account dating to the end of the third century, for example, already shows many of the practices that led to the abuses denounced by him. Next to the rents in money received from *epoikia* and villages, it registers the money received from different wine-sellers to whom the estate wine had been "decreed." Further on, the document records the rents received from the "*epoikion* of Demetrios" for the use of an estate-owned bath. Wine, baths, and *epoikia:* a fatal combination? Maybe not. For in the fifth century we hear again of the "*epoikion* of Demetrios," and what we hear contradicts Shenoute's depiction of large landowners and their *epoikia* as unmitigated oppressors of the rural population. A tax receipt indicates in fact that this *epoikion* must have become an autonomous village at some point in the fifth century, for the church of Hermopolis owned land in it and paid its taxes to the *comarchs*, that is, the *village* authorities of the "*epoikion*."[132] How did this *epoikion* achieve the autonomy of a village? Was it thanks to the patronage of the church of Hermopolis? Was it thanks to "holy patronage"?

HOLY PATRONAGE

Gesios's "unholy" patronage, which Shenoute called "violence," was challenged by Shenoute's "holy" patronage, which he called the care of the "poor." This was indeed a different kind of patronage: we have no evidence that Shenoute's monastery was a great landowner like Gesios. The possibility of being a rural patron without being a landowner on a substantial scale is one of the distinctive

features of the rural history of late antiquity. A rich landowner's clout in the countryside is predictable and universal. The capacity of a bureaucrat, a member of the clergy, or a monk to challenge him is not. It horrified the likes of Libanius. Unlike Gesios's patronage, which we know only from the hostile accounts of Shenoute and which seems therefore to have been a purely oppressive arrangement, Shenoute's descriptions of his own practices display exclusively the positive side of patronage. It is only in the accusations of his enemies, occasionally preserved in Shenoute's answers, that we see that the same language used by Shenoute to discredit his enemies could be used by his enemies to discredit him.

It should come as no surprise to see an abbot and holy man like Shenoute acting as a patron in the late antique countryside. Peter Brown's famous article "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity" argued a long time ago that holy men played the role of the "'good patron' writ large" in a tension-ridden countryside.[133] "What men expected of the holy man," Brown wrote, "coincides with what they sought in the rural patron."[134] Many of the activities described by Brown as typical of these "good patrons"—mediating in conflicts between villagers, interceding before the authorities and the landowning class, arranging loans—can be documented for Shenoute and many other Egyptian holy men, particularly those whose letters have survived in papyri. We know, for example, that Shenoute, as much as his disciple Besa and his admirer Moses of Abydos, wrote to villages to rebuke them and to persuade them to stop their constant fighting.[135] What makes Shenoute's patronage particularly interesting is that it was developed in a context of explicit rivalry with specific landowners and "unholy" patrons. This helps to make the mechanisms of patronage in this case clearer than ever. It also shows that the "good patronage" of a holy man could flourish not only in a world of large independent villages, but also in the interstices left open by the incomplete control of powerful landlords.

The great landowners of late antique Egypt lived in cities. Their control over the countryside depended to a large extent on one specific character, the *pronoētēs*, sometimes called the *oikonomos* or *phrontistēs*. The *pronoētēs* played a crucial role in the rural economy, and his activities are very well attested. He represented his employer in the countryside by performing two basic operations: collecting rents and taxes. In the Apion estates—which employed many—each *pronoētēs* was in charge of several *epoikia* and of the estate properties located in nearby independent villages.[136] Yearly contracts, several of which have been preserved, specified his duties and wages.[137] But the landowners' representatives did not always have to be their full-time employees. They could also be independent landowners on a smaller scale who could combine the management of their own properties with that of wealthier landowners'. There was in fact a wide range of rural middlemen, from the simple employee to the rural notable and village capitalist, who ensured that men, tools, animals, and seed came together on cultivable land. The father of

Dioscorus of Aphrodito, for example, one of the wealthiest landowners of his village, also managed the properties of a certain *comes* Ammonius, a landowner from the nearby town of Antaeopolis. What is important for us here is that the need to have middlemen managing production on the spot resulted in a layering of claims on the land and its produce that could threaten the landowner himself.[138]

Many of the accounts written by *pronoētai* for their landowners have survived. In the Apion estate, these accounts show that *pronoētai* were in charge of collecting all the income in money and agricultural produce except for wine, which was collected by the estate's central administration.[139] All of these accounts show, moreover, how inefficient ancient agriculture was: a very large proportion of the income had to be spent locally by the *pronoētēs* himself, to pay for the running costs of production and for the taxes owed by the property. He could also be in charge of giving away some of this produce as gifts on behalf of the property's owner. The late fourth-century account book from Kellis, for example, shows that the *pronoētēs* in charge spent at a local level 90 percent of the wheat, barley, and wine he received (this was more than half the total income of the unit managed by him). Among his expenses, he listed a disbursement (surely a gift) "to the church for the bishop," and several for the *agapē*, in all likelihood the well-known Manichaean ceremony. A Manichaean monastery (*topos Mani*) was in fact among the tenants of the landlord, and the Manichaean community of fourth-century Kellis is well known.[140]

Since *pronoētai* themselves spent a large part of the income they collected, their broad responsibilities were a potential source of danger for their employers. Could they ever be completely sure that their *pronoētai* were not using their property for things they did not approve? This was Gesios's predicament. His accusations against Shenoute, quoted and answered in the first part of "Not because a fox barks," are very much reminiscent of Libanius's accusations against the patrons of the Syrian countryside. Villages that have a single owner (i.e., *epoikia* belonging to a landowner)—Libanius claimed—"also have recourse to the hireling (i.e., the patron) and pay [him] the price, but at the owner's cost, and they provide their gifts from what they deprive him of. Yet these villages belong to men of standing, too, people capable of offering a protecting hand to the distressed."[141] In the same way, Gesios's control over his own administrators and *epoikia* was threatened—he claimed—by Shenoute's encroaching patronage over them. His administrators, he argued, were using his own property to give gifts to Shenoute's monastery, their illegal protector:

> Whereas you (Gesios) have said "My people and my stewards (*oikonomos*) take things to him (i.e. Shenoute)," you thereby inform us of your own malice and reveal it; for you did not want the children of God to bring an offering (*prosphora*) to his church, or to do a single good thing in the name of Jesus. You will be glad if you hear that they have gone to the oracles of the demons—for you yourself bow down and

> worship the creature rather than the Creator of all things, Jesus, Who is blessed for ever and ever—rather than hear or see them go to God in every place where he is called upon and blessed and glorified. If more than the multitudes of whom you say "They take things to him" regularly bring [things] to me unsparingly—since I am a true servant to them, because they are my brethren, gathering into heavenly treasures for them what they bring as gifts for God—have they brought them from your house or the house of your fathers? You grasp at what is not your own, you villain. You play the villain yourself and set obstacles for those who give to the poor, knowing that those things which they give and wherein they show charity to the needy belong to Christ who gave them to them to enjoy (*apolausis*) and enrich themselves in good works in them.[142]

Gesios's complaint, like Libanius's, shows that it was not necessary in the late antique Near East to be a great landowner to extract surplus from the countryside. Rural patronage could do the job as well, by undermining the control of urban landowners over their own estates. This was surely a source of concern for every landowner, but Gesios seems to have been particularly sensitive to this issue for one simple reason: he was not an "absentee" landowner in the sense that he lived in the provincial capital, in Alexandria, or in Constantinople. Absentee landowners may have been very cooperative with Shenoute's monastery, not because they were particularly pious but simply because they could not avoid it. Gesios, on the other hand, resided in Panopolis and may have been able and willing to keep a closer control over his properties. This may help to explain why he resented Shenoute's interference so much.

Shenoute's activities in the countryside were exploiting one of the structural weaknesses of ancient estates. Setting himself up as a mediator between landowner and rural administrators and workers, he claimed the right to question the landowner's authority over his own workforce. In fact, he preached a whole sermon to "the crowd belonging to the man worthy of the curse" (i.e., Gesios) in order to "turn the heart of the poor away from them [i.e., the landowners], so that they do not work in the vineyards and everywhere else beyond their capacity," and to reassure them: Christians—he claimed—will not be punished for the lawlessness of their pagan masters.[143]

One of the fascinating aspects of Shenoute's defense against Gesios's accusations is his Christian reinterpretation and justification of patronage. What for Libanius or Gesios were illegal payments for patronage were for Shenoute nothing other than offerings (*prosphora*) for the church and gifts to the "poor." The "multitudes" who gave to Shenoute "unsparingly" (*ačn tiso*) were perfectly justified—he claimed—in doing so. They were justified in the first place because their gifts came from their own properties and not from those belonging to Gesios. Gesios clearly disagreed. Secondly and more importantly, they were justified because their wealth, just like Gesios's own wealth, came from God and ultimately

belonged to Him. It was everyone's duty to use it in a charitable way by giving to the "poor." By receiving this wealth and gathering "treasures in heaven" (*henaho hntpe*) on behalf of the donors, Shenoute was in fact doing them a favor. This argument implied, therefore, that Shenoute's monastery was entitled to receive gifts from Gesios's properties because such wealth really belonged to God and the poor. Gesios had shown himself to be a very bad administrator of the possessions God had entrusted him with. His oppressions, narrated in detail in the second half of Shenoute's "open letter," had made that all too clear.

Needless to say, such arguments found no favor in the eyes of a pagan landowner whose Christian dependents were using his own property to give gifts to an intolerant Christian monk. A remarkable incident narrated in a long sermon by Shenoute against the rich shows this vividly. At the old temple of Atripe, Shenoute recalls, he caught Gesios worshipping "Satan" and reproached him:

> God has given you wealth and you despise Him! He answered with his tongue that deserves to be plucked out from his throat: "It is not God who has given me wealth. It is my father who has given it to me."[144]

This was exactly the same response received by John Chrysostom when preaching to the rich on charity: "Where is your wealth from? You took it from someone else. 'From his father,' he says. [But God made goods for everybody!] My father—he says—gave it to me. But where did *he* get it from?"[145]

The rural managers of Gesios and other wealthy landowners were in fact Shenoute's clients and not simply devout Christians. They expected value for their money. Several episodes in Shenoute's biography, as well as a brief unpublished letter written by him to an important landowner, seem to have been intended as proofs that they did in fact receive what they paid for. Given our sources, we can only guess at the benefits of Gesios's patronage. Those of Shenoute's are well documented. A good example is a story recorded in Shenoute's biography:[146]

> It happened once that a *pronoētēs* who worked for one of the members of the elite (*archōn*) of Panopolis ruined the income (*proshodos*) [he was supposed to collect]. [His master] became enraged and threw him into prison.[147] There was a man in charge of the prisoners in the city. The *pronoētēs* sent his own wife to that man that she might ask him to go to our holy father Apa Shenoute to beg him that he send [a letter] to the master (*archōn*) that he might have mercy on the *pronoētēs* in this necessity. . . . Our holy father, through the mercy of God that is in him for all those in distress, sent to the master and exhorted him: "Forgive this man, that God may also forgive your own sins in the day of your necessity." . . . The master did not contradict [Shenoute] but instead he sent [a command] immediately and freed the man who was imprisoned. And he also forgave him all his debts.

Peter Sarris has argued that late antique hagiographical texts were essentially "fund-raising or patronage seeking documents aimed at members of the secular

landowning elite." They were produced by monasteries in need of a patron. They distorted reality by stressing the independence and restlessness of the peasantry, and by overstating the importance of the interstitial role played by the church. Hence the "near total absence of the figure of the great landowner from the hagiographic accounts." The goal was to show landowners how much they needed monks to control an autonomous peasantry, whereas the opposite was the real situation: it was the monks who needed the patronage of a landowner.[148]

I have to disagree, and not only for the obvious reason that landowners show up in hagiography more often than Sarris thinks. It is wrong, I think, to assume that only powerful landowners could act as patrons in the countryside. If anything, texts such as that quoted above seem to function as "patronage-offering" documents. They demonstrate the capacity of a holy man to protect his clients and inspire deference among the powerful. This was the "good patron" at work. Such texts, therefore, may have helped holy men and their monasteries gain clients, rather than patrons. Let me give another good example for this. A very fragmentary but fascinating letter of a certain Akylas (a priest?) contains many accusations against Shenoute.[149] Among them is Akylas's complaint that a certain Pergam[i]os had given a lot to Shenoute's monastery, but "when he came up [to the monastery] because of his need, the monastery forgot him." Who was this Pergamios? I suspect it was the same Pergamios on whose behalf Shenoute wrote to an important landowner, none other than the Augustal prefect of Alexandria. In fact, Shenoute may have preserved this letter as a way to answer the accusations of Akylas:[150]

> Shenoute the most humble writes to his beloved brother, the most magnificent Paulos, the prefect (*megaloprepestatos eparchos*). Greetings in the Lord! We wished daily to write to your magnificence but due to the occasion that has arisen . . . [several lines missing] . . . the poor. He also [takes] care of your servants. We also entrust to your magnificence our beloved brother Pergamios, the manager (*phrontistēs*) of your businesses (*pragmata*), that you may pay attention to him and give him respite, for he is an old one (*palaios*) in your house, and he administers (*dioikei*) them well. For we, too, give him trouble many times on behalf of the poor, so that they may also find the means to render service (*hypurgei*) for your works. Health in the Lord, my beloved and esteemed one!

If my interpretation is correct, and the two Pergamioses are to be identified, this affair fits very well with my general argument so far. Pergamios is, again, the manager of the properties of a powerful landowner. Like Gesios's managers, he has donated many gifts to Shenoute's monastery. Shenoute admits, in fact, that he has troubled Pergamios very often "on behalf of the poor." Akylas's letter shows that such donors expected protection in a time of need. Shenoute's letter shows that they received it. In this case, too, Shenoute sets himself up as an intermediary between the landowner and his managers and workers, but he emphasizes his

positive role: he protects the poor that they may find the means to work for their landowner. Such a positive relationship between holy patron and Christian landowner may have been more typical than Shenoute's open conflict with Gesios.[151]

Akylas's fascinating letter against Shenoute, however, shows that Gesios was not alone. Another landowner, "Lady (*kyra*) Mendesia," on whose behalf Akylas was writing, also felt threatened by Shenoute's actions in the countryside. Mendesia was a landowner who administered imperial properties—the so-called *domus divina*—probably located around Panopolis. Imperially owned land, which could be held on the very advantageous terms of an *emphyteusis* or a perpetual lease, was a very coveted possession in the late antique world. It could serve as a springboard to a career of patronage and enrichment.[152] The first members of the Apion family we know of, those contemporary with Shenoute, administered the lands of the *domus divina* around Oxyrhynchus.[153] The *magnificent* Theodosios and his son (?) the *comes* Ammonius, the patrons of Aphrodito, who protected the village from the tax collectors of nearby Antaeopolis in the sixth century, may also have been administrators of imperial properties. Aphrodito had in fact "given" itself to the *domus divina* as a gift through a massive "colorable transfer" in order to escape the orbit of Antaeopolis.[154] Imperial laws attempted to curtail such practices. In the late sixth century, the emperor Tiberius II remarked in a constitution that landowners "both from amongst those living in this glorious city (i.e., Constantinople), and also from almost all the subject provinces" had complained to him of the illegal patronage exercised over both land and labor by individuals charged with the administration of imperial estates. Thus "many have approached us . . . owning estates near imperial properties or dwellings . . . announcing themselves to have been wronged through the manifold injustices of the *pronoētai* and *chartoularioi* . . . and others associated with the imperial estates."[155] A sixth-century papyrus from Oxyrhynchus contains in fact a list of peasants who had fled to a property of the *domus divina*.[156]

The rivalry between Mendesia and Shenoute's monastery is not, therefore, very surprising. Yet Akylas's letter deals with Shenoute's, not Mendesia's, patronage. Akylas claims that Shenoute's monastery is making demands from Mendesia's own tenants (*misthotēs*) and turning them into monks. Shenoute is not only extracting some of the surplus Mendesia claims as her own property. He is taking her tenants away, apparently through a variant of the "colorable transfer" of rural workers that the Roman pope Gelasius criticized in the late fifth century. By turning these tenants into fake monks, Shenoute established a legal relationship to them that enabled him to protect them efficiently. Meanwhile, Akylas claimed, the monastery forgets about the "poor" Shenoute claims to protect. Through actions of this sort, Shenoute's monastery was threatening to "rob Mendesia of her properties and of those of the emperor."[157] The context for Akylas's complaints is clearly the conflict for rural laborers so typical of late antique patronage.[158] Authorities and

landowners complained about the mobility of their workforce and attempted to restrain it through laws (the whole set of laws dealing with the "colonate") and special contracts (sureties and cash advances),[159] yet they never hesitated to profit from such mobility when they found it convenient. The temptation to poach the neighbor's manpower was irresistible.

It is ironic that Akylas starts his letter by accusing Shenoute, the rural patron, of the same crime Shenoute had always accused Gesios of: Shenoute's monastery, Akylas complains, does violence to the poor! Patronage was always exploitation when practiced by one's rivals.

Let me say, to conclude, that Shenoute's texts are indeed an invaluable resource to study the rural economy of late antique Egypt. Yet they have to be read carefully, because Shenoute was not a disinterested observer. He was deeply involved in the reality he describes, and his involvement leads to inevitable distortions in the picture he paints. I hope to have demonstrated that the context for his preaching against the rich is far more complicated than the simple growth of large estates.

4

The Limits of Intolerance

No study of intolerance and religious violence in late antiquity is complete without a reference to Shenoute's notorious attacks against pagans and paganism. This is the one aspect of his public role that has received keen attention in modern scholarship. Shenoute has been held to personify the ugliest face of the late Roman Near East: the wild activities of bands of fanatical monks who uproot idolatry by brute force. "These forces," writes David Frankfurter, echoing the hostile language of Libanius, "cared little for the nuances or even the existence of the imperial codes, instead rampaging freely and homicidally throughout the countryside with the distinct sensation of extirpating demons."[1] Stereotypes like this make one shudder, but they are stereotypes, meant to arouse indignation and incite to action. We need to restore to these monks—described by Libanius as monsters who "eat more than elephants," and by Eunapius as "men [only] in appearance" who "lead the lives of swine, and openly did and allowed countless unspeakable crimes,"—some measure of humanity and historical probability.[2]

Shenoute's case is particularly apt for this purpose. He certainly lived in an age when the monastic movement was at the forefront of the violence-ridden process of Christianization in the countryside. Whether it is Hypatius cutting down sacred trees in Bithynia, Syriac monks burning down synagogues and temples, or Egyptian hermits "of a very fiery disposition" attacking the Roman governor on behalf of the bishop of Alexandria, Christian violence did not lack its enthusiasts among the inhabitants of the "desert."[3] Yet Shenoute is far more than simply another, particularly nasty, example of this phenomenon. His writings are exceptional in that they describe in the first person and with considerable detail what is otherwise either stigmatized by hostile commentators or exalted by enthusiastic

hagiographers. Instead of merely confirming the stereotypes, his descriptions allow us to question them. In order to do so, however, we need to set his actions against a more precise historical background than has been provided thus far. It is not enough to point to the general rising tide of religious violence in the Near East or to appeal to Shenoute's irremediably violent personality to explain his activities and their impact on religion and society around him.[4] We need a more specific background: social, religious, and, if possible, chronological. Only by first identifying this period's "limits of the possible" can we hope to assess the true scale of Shenoute's actions and to avoid the distorting effects that modern scholarship has produced by focusing exclusively on religious conflict.

ATRIPE: THE PAST ABOLISHED

Shenoute's writings contain many references to his actions against paganism, but a careful analysis reveals that for all his pride and self-publicized zeal, all these references add up to probably no more than three incidents.[5] We shall start where we know least: the temple of Atripe, which Shenoute claims to have "burned down with everything that was inside it."[6] Atripe was a typical desert-edge town built on top of a wadi bed as it runs from the desert cliffs into the Nile valley.[7] Less than two miles due south from Shenoute's main monastery—also on the desert edge—Atripe would have been a place of obvious practical and symbolical importance to him. In fact, his monastery was officially located at the "Hill of Atripe,"[8] which may point to an administrative connection; and the southern village in which Shenoute's notoriously misogynistic writings place his female congregation was almost certainly Atripe itself.[9] Here, as elsewhere in Egypt, a cluttered, mud-brick town surrounded an imposing Egyptian-style stone temple. In size comparable to the famous temple of Dendera, this old temple—bigger even than Shenoute's grand church—was more than a regular village sanctuary such as those found in many Fayum towns.[10] Numerous Greek and Demotic mummy labels from the necropolis of Atripe show that the temple had regional importance: elite villagers, including priestly families, from all over the western area of the Panopolite nome paid to be buried in its necropolis until at least the late third century C.E., when mummy labels cease to be used.[11] The importance of the main temple in a settlement of this kind went, however, far beyond religious practice and belief. In most towns in Upper Egypt the temple enclosure and, in particular, the *dromos*—that is, the "avenue" in front of the temple's entrance—played the role of a forum in a Graeco-Roman city. It was the public space par excellence, where edicts were published, court and market were held, imperial temples were dedicated, and, in Christian times, churches were built.[12]

By Shenoute's times this temple had been in existence for centuries,[13] but it is impossible to say specifically what its condition was when Shenoute's actions took

place at some point in the early fifth century. There is a dramatic reduction in the amount of evidence for traditional Egyptian paganism after the mid-third century, and from the mid-fourth century onward the little that we have comes—with the exception of Philae in the extreme south—almost exclusively from Christian sources.[14] The latest Roman emperor mentioned in an Egyptian temple is Maximinus Daia (in Tahta/Toeto, a village in the Panopolite nome not far north of Shenoute's monastery), but already by his time some temples at least were being secularized and reused for nonreligious purposes, as can be seen in the fortresses of Luxor and Taposiris Magna (near Alexandria). By the early fifth century, two "deserted" temples in Hermopolis (of Ammon and Horus) are sold to a government official; the "former temple of Panopolis" is evidently being used as a church or monastery, since the archbishop Dioscorus complains to Shenoute that it contains Origenist and heretical books; two temples in Lycopolis are described as "abandoned"; in Elephantine, the largest temple is converted into a fortress.[15] The evidence for Atripe's temple itself is unfortunately not unequivocal. Since a papyrus from 298 records that a *palation* for the traveling emperor Diocletian had been installed in it, it has been argued that this temple also must have been abandoned already at that early date. Yet a fourth-century letter mentions a priestess of the temple, and priestly offices and families in Panopolis and elsewhere are well attested until at least the middle of the fourth century.[16]

In any case, by the early fifth century Atripe's temple would have been, like so many pagan temples in the Roman Empire, a monument to a past that had officially ceased to exist, "rather like the beautiful cathedrals of some Communist states,"[17] where cult had been officially disestablished at the latest during Shenoute's childhood in the late fourth century. This would not have prevented zealous pagans, however, from discreetly practicing all kinds of acts of devotion inside and around it. We should not underestimate the continuing attraction of officially "abandoned" temples, despite all those terrible and empty threats in the Theodosian Code.[18] Three examples for this phenomenon should suffice here: Antony of Alexandria, a "most holy [pagan] man with a soul firmly disposed towards divine worship," spent, in the late fifth century, "most of his time in the temples"; his contemporary Asclepiodotus, an aristocrat, led a religious revival in Aphrodisias and "provided the temples with many devices of his own invention, adorning the gods' statues and contributing hymns to some of them"; in the same way, the great temple of Heliopolis in Syria had supposedly been "destroyed" by Constantius, yet it was still being used by pagans in the sixth century.[19] Even if it was no longer openly used for religious purposes, the mere presence of the temple and, of course, its idols seems to have had a reassuring effect on many pagans. As we know from Libanius, they considered secularization and reuse a minor and hopefully momentary offense, unlike outright desecration and destruction, which—even if the temple had been out of use for centuries—would have constituted an act of

deliberate provocation.[20] The temples stood as symbols of identity and continuity with the past. They were—to use Libanius's words—the "soul of the villages": "They mark the beginning of their settlement, and have been passed down through many generations to the men of today."[21]

While most Christians were content with simply looking away from the religious connotations of those ancient buildings, some pious souls felt that they were a source of danger. Augustine of Hippo, for example, complained that the rural population was "tempted" by the continuing presence of temples to do things in them, as if they were seeing a brothel. In Egypt, this problem had an additional dimension related to the very peculiar aspect of Egyptian temples. Whereas it was relatively easy to empty out Graeco-Roman temples by removing their idols, this was not possible in Egypt, where the walls, columns, and ceilings of temples such as the one at Atripe were completely covered in "idols," that is, representations of gods, pharaohs, and hieroglyphic writing itself. These representations were not considered mere decoration by pagans, but images endowed with divine power. The liturgies that were celebrated periodically in every temple to "recharge" its idols with divine power by uniting them with the sun mention this fact explicitly. In fact, in Ptolemaic times at least, the ceremony of the "opening of the mouth," traditionally performed to give life to mummies and divine statues, was performed on the temple building as a whole, as if it were alive. The temple itself, therefore, could be understood in Egypt as a living idol.[22]

Whether officially "abandoned" or not, therefore, such a temple would have been for Shenoute an intolerable eyesore and at the same time a convenient target. Reconstructing his actions involves unfortunately a large amount of guesswork. We do have, it is true, the remains of the temple and the settlement themselves. Yet Shenoute himself describes his actions only in a few brief remarks in the context of his arguments against his accusers in Panopolis. His point there is to show—against all evidence—that his later, very controversial actions in the city were nothing but a natural extension of his "smooth" operation at Atripe. To judge from these remarks, he faced no open resistance in the town—if he had, he, of all people, would certainly tell us. The whole thing, he stresses, was a rather straightforward affair: smashing the old idols and "burning down" the idolaters' temple without provoking "any disturbance" and in compliance with the laws of Theodosius's successors, who "have commanded in their laws to destroy and dig out the foundations of the remaining ones (i.e., the temples not destroyed by Theodosius himself) until not one stone is left over another stone in them."[23] The relics of ancient error were done away with, and, in the midst of laughter, mockery, and songs, the past was simply abolished.[24]

Yet the "past" refused to die out. Opposition came from outside the town, in the shape of an Egyptian Libanius, the pagan notable Gesios of Panopolis. A crucial incident narrated by Shenoute in one of his sermons against the evil

rich shows that what most contemporary Christians would have conveniently dismissed as a relic of a dead past was, for some, very much alive. The pagan "past" was, after all, only too present and needed to be actively eradicated. After his unceremonious desecration of the temple, Shenoute told his audience, he "caught" Gesios in flagrante reconsecrating it, and therefore in contravention of imperial law:[25]

> I caught him in the temple of Atripe when he was worshipping Satan and pouring libations to him. He scattered roses and peach-twigs and bunches of vine leaves and other aromatic herbs. We had burned down that place of idols with everything that was inside it. I say these things openly, and I ask that if anyone among you is familiar with him, you would tell him that I constantly utter curses against him and angry words filled with the rage of our God Jesus. When that impure man heard about Jesus, when I was advising him to believe in Christ, he spat. He said, blaspheming, that the miracles that Jesus the Lord of All performed were also performed by Apollonius of Tyana and Plato.

This incident shows that Shenoute's attack on the temple of Atripe needs to be seen against the wider background of his conflict with Gesios for the religious and economic control of the countryside around Panopolis. "Freeing" the village from its pagan "past" and freeing it from its pagan patron—against whose unfair treatment of the rural "poor" the whole sermon was directed—may have been two sides of the same coin.[26]

At some point after his memorable encounter with Gesios, Shenoute seems to have installed his own female congregation based at Atripe in the temple itself, which was converted into a monastery. As archaeological remains show, the temple reliefs were mostly chopped away, the walls were plastered, a group of buildings for the nuns was built to the east of the temple, and a small basilica church was set up right in front of the temple's entrance.[27] An unfortunately very fragmentary sermon of Shenoute dealing with, among other things, the duty of charity, the monastery's wealthy poverty, and the relations between the men and the women of his congregation, records and celebrates the conversion of a temple that is most likely to be identified with this temple in Atripe:[28]

> Thus, from now on, instead of the shrine (*topos*) of an unclean spirit, it will be the shrine of the Holy Spirit. And instead of being a place where Satan receives sacrifices, is worshipped, and feared, it will henceforth be a place where one serves Christ, bows down to him, and fears him. And where there was blaspheming, there will henceforth be blessings and hymns.
>
> And if previously prescriptions (*nomos*) for murdering a man's soul were therein, written in blood and not with ink alone—there is nothing else written for them other than the shape of snakes and scorpions, dogs and cats, crocodiles and frogs, foxes, other reptiles, beasts and birds, cattle, etc.; furthermore, the shape of the sun and the moon and all the rest, all their things being nonsense and humbug;[29] instead of these,

> it is the soul-saving scriptures of life that will henceforth come to be therein, fulfilling the word of God. . . .
>
> Blessed be the man and the woman whose end is like the end of this house when they repent from their evils.[30]

If this hypothesis is correct, and the monastic buildings around the temple are to be identified with Shenoute's female community, then this would have important implications. The establishment in the heart of Atripe of a monastery that was not only under Shenoute's personal control but also economically integrated into his organization would represent more than mere religious intolerance. It would be an important step in Shenoute's attempt to carve out a sphere of religious and economic influence around his monastery. Indeed, the temple's conversion could have amounted to nothing less than making the town of Atripe his own. The emphasis in this fragmentary sermon on the monastery's care of the poor as an example of everybody's responsibility for charity is very suggestive: the sermon may have originally justified, more or less explicitly, the takeover of the temple through reference to Shenoute's activities on behalf of the poor.[31]

Shenoute's successful actions must soon have become an example to follow. Moses of Abydos, his admirer and imitator, seems to have replicated his activities at the temple of Abydos, which was openly used, until at least the mid-fourth century, as a famous oracular shrine of the god Bes.[32] Here too, the cult may have been officially disestablished long before Moses arrived on the scene at some point in the late fifth century. Yet the memory of the "demon Bes" persisted and must have found more or less secret admirers and devotees. Moses's monastery was located near the temples of Abydos, and after his desecration of the shrine of Bes, a female congregation seems to have been installed in its buildings, as witnessed by many graffiti left by female nuns who frequently invoke "Apa Moses."[33]

Yet, from a religious point of view, this may have been a rather empty victory. As Shenoute knew only too well, desecrating or converting temples was not enough to eradicate paganism.[34] It only drove it back into a domestic, less conspicuous world beyond any possible control. Many old temples seem to have functioned as safety valves in the religious struggles of the fifth century. They focused religious conflict but at the same time contained it and limited its wider implications. Zealous Christians could openly desecrate them, declare victory over the demons, and go back reassured to normal life, a life involving constant interaction with pagans and with practices that Shenoute would have considered pagan. As Peter Brown has shown, it was enough for most Christians in the fourth and fifth centuries to assert Christ's victory, to see paganism "defeated" and simply avoid it. A "minimalist definition of the triumph of the Christian church" tacitly limited the scope and opportunities for intolerance. Except for a few critical years in the 380s and 390s, when anything seemed possible, and the destruction of the Serapeum of

Alexandria shocked public opinion all over the Mediterranean world, "tolerance based on contempt," rather than open conflict, regulated relations between Christians and pagans in a religiously ambiguous world.[35] Only seldom did the desecration or secularization of temples spill over into open conflict, as seems to have happened in Gaza, according to the biography of its bishop Porphyry.[36]

This situation made Shenoute's battle for a purely Christian world an uphill struggle. Worshipping local pagan divinities in private household shrines, pouring libations to the Nile, kissing one's hand to greet the sun and the moon, worshipping the *Shai* (the protective divinity of one's house and village) by "lighting lamps and offering incense,"[37] consulting astrologers and magicians, reading "deceitful books," listening to philosophers who "grow their hair like women" and to "foolish poets" who mimic "the sound of birds"—all this was easier to ignore than to eradicate, in particular because many Christians shared much of this culture with their pagan neighbors, with whom—to Shenoute's dismay—they interacted constantly.[38] The problem, as he once said in a speech to the "crowd" (*mēēše*) of Gesios (the Christians who worked for him in the countryside?), to warn them to stay away from the paganism of their master, was those Christians who shared meals with pagans, who exchanged gifts with them "establishing ties of friendship with the enemies of Christ," and who agreed with those pagans "who say in their audacity: 'Just as we cannot convert you to paganism, you will not be able to convert us to Christianity.'"[39] The problem, in other words, was most Christians.[40]

This becomes particularly clear in Shenoute's more controversial actions. If his battle against paganism was to be successful, if he was to have an impact on the religious life of the area around Panopolis worthy of his piety, scorn for paganism and even the desecration of temples could not be enough. What Panopolis needed was a good "shakeout."[41] Inevitably, therefore, he had to overstep the "limits of intolerance" and take the fight to another level.

GESIOS IN PANOPOLIS: A "HOUSE FULL OF DARKNESS"

Given the current conditions of pagan worship, any effective attack on paganism had to involve attacks on private shrines. And this is where the problems really started. Shenoute boasted of two such attacks on private shrines, which I plan to examine in detail in the rest of this chapter: that on Gesios's house in Panopolis and a raid on some villagers' houses probably in the village of Pneuit. What makes Shenoute's descriptions so fascinating to the modern scholar is his insistence on the negative reactions provoked by his attacks. His "descriptions" are actually replies to accusations, from Christians as much as from pagans. They vent his frustration with a hypocritical Christian world that did not appreciate its true champion and that was willing to tolerate intolerance only in very specific and restricted

contexts. Far from showing the widespread rule of religious intolerance in late antique Egypt, what these documents show is a society reluctant to accept threats to the delicate religious consensus that had emerged from the conflicts of the late fourth century. Shenoute's actions are the exceptions that prove the rule.

Let us start with Shenoute's favorite cause célèbre: his raid on Gesios's household "shrine" in Panopolis. He brags about it constantly and with undisguised satisfaction. This incident has become, among modern scholars, the epitome of the violent intolerance that is supposed to have held sway in late antique Egypt. But the evidence and its context have not received the careful attention they deserve.

Gesios's paganism was the cultivated "neo-paganism" typical of civic notables in the late antique Near East. It combined pious respect for local traditions with a learned attachment to cosmopolitan Hellenism. Behind this piety with intellectual pretensions lay the process of accelerated Hellenization experienced by the elites of Upper Egypt in the late third and early fourth centuries, so evident in the "Coptic" sculpture, the tapestries (Egypt's mosaics), and the Greek literary culture produced in the Nile valley during late antiquity.[42] In fact, all the articulate pagans whom we know in late antique Egypt have one thing in common: a good Greek education. They are either philosophers, rhetors, lawyers (*scholastikoi*), or grammarians. They are, in short, *hellēnes*—the revealing name used for pagans tout court in the late antique Near East.

These are the people who defended the Serapeum in Alexandria and who make up the pagan world of the late fifth century so vividly portrayed in the *Life of Severus* by Zacharias Scholasticus or in the *Philosophical History* of Damascius.[43] Hence the sarcasm of the legendary *Life of Makarius of Tkow* (Tkow = Antaeopolis, not far from Shenoute's monastery), which gives an evil pagan priest the ridiculous but striking name of "Homer."[44] This momentous transformation of Egyptian paganism can be followed with some detail in the family history of Ammon of Panopolis, whose archives have partially survived. His family held several priesthoods of Min (the main god of Panopolis) in the late third and early fourth centuries but was by then quickly "converting" to the world of *paideia*. Proud priests, priestesses, and "prophets," still jealous of their traditional privileges and status, coexisted in the same family with lawyers and rhetors reared in (Greek) "literature and philosophy." Being pagan meant for them, more and more indeed, being a *hellēn*, just as it did for Orion of Thebes, another member of one of these old priestly families and a contemporary of Shenoute, whom we meet in Alexandria as a grammarian and teacher of the great Proclus.[45]

This anti-Christian "Hellenism" put Egyptian religious traditions in a new perspective. Far from dismissing them as parochial or barbarian, it bestowed on them an unprecedented weight: that of being the most authentic, concrete, and "down to earth" expressions of the majesty of the divine cosmos, "Platonism for the people."[46] "The opposite of monotheism," Jan Assmann has argued, "is not polytheism,

nor even idol-worship, but cosmotheism, the religion of an immanent god and a veiled truth that shows and conceals itself in a thousand images that illuminate and complement, rather than logically exclude, one another."[47] For a true *hellēn*, the "Genius of paganism"[48] consisted precisely in its ability to render transcendental divinity accessible through seemingly arbitrary local traditions, myths, and rituals:

> I do not worship demons but God. I do have idols, but through them I call upon the powers of God as gods, and through these upon God. And the Great One is not grieved; and he is attainable if he has other gods under him.[49]

The result of this reverence for local traditions and for an immemorial past that was dying out was an almost "Egyptological" paganism, which approached ancient holy places, statues, and ceremonies with the spirit of a pious antiquarian and spiritual tourist.[50] We should not dismiss the sincere piety of these "neo-pagans" on the grounds that they seem to be too educated to be really religious or too Hellenized to know about Egyptian traditions. It was perfectly possible for someone like Gesios to admire Greek sages like Plato and Apollonius of Tyana and at the same time to worship the local gods in the old temple of Atripe.[51] After all Besa, a fourth-century lawyer (*scholastikos*) from Panopolis, visited and admired the Valley of the Kings at Thebes—an ancient tourist attraction and source of quasi-religious wonder—"on account of Plato";[52] and Ammonius and Helladius, although grammarians in fifth-century Alexandria and Constantinople, identified themselves as priests of Zeus (= Ammon) and the "Ape" (= Hermes/Thot).[53]

Our best example of this new synthesis of Hellenism and Egyptian traditions comes, in fact, from a village very close to Atripe itself, Phenebythis.[54] While Shenoute was busy abolishing the "past," a pagan family from this village had very different ideas in mind. Horapollo the Elder, a landowner in the village contemporary with Shenoute, was sucked into the *carrière ouverte aux talents* generated by the late Roman state in Upper Egypt as elsewhere in the Near East. "A brilliant representative of his art and no less famous than the most celebrated grammarians of old times," he taught—like any truly successful teacher—in Alexandria and Constantinople. His children, Heraiscus and Asclepiades, became leading figures in the pagan circles of Alexandria. Heraiscus, "of godlike nature," dwelt in "shrines and places of initiation, as he revived the ancestral rites not just in Egypt, but also abroad wherever any such customs might have survived." "He had the natural gift of distinguishing between animate and inanimate sacred statues." But his brother, Asclepiades, was "more knowledgeable in the wisdom of the Egyptians" and "native theology," since he had been educated in Egyptian literature. He composed hymns to the Egyptian gods, a treatise on the agreement of all theologies, and a book on Egyptian prehistory. When Heraiscus died, Asclepiades rendered him "the honors customary to the priests" and wrapped him in the garments of Osiris

(i.e., he mummified him[55]). Horapollo the Younger, Asclepiades' son and also a landowner at Phenebythis, continued the family tradition by becoming a famous pagan teacher in Alexandria and composing a well-known treatise on Egyptian hieroglyphics.[56]

Like Gesios in Panopolis, many of these pagans responded to the growing pressure of Christianity on public life by collecting their own ancient idols and setting up discreet, semiprivate shrines. Domestic cult was of course no novelty in ancient religions, but now it was set into new relief by hostile circumstances. Pagan aristocrats reacted to this hostility by making a virtue out of necessity: open display of paganism is potentially dangerous, but who needs to show the hoi polloi true piety anyway?[57] The elitism that is such an obvious feature of much late pagan literature encouraged therefore a privatization of religious cult that was linked as much to feelings of superiority as to fear.[58] Such a private collection of "idols" (ancient Greek statues) has been found, for example, in the Athenian house identified as the residence of Damascius, the sixth-century pagan author of the *Philosophical History*, while the house tentatively identified as the residence of Proclus in the same city had a niche for a small statue of Cybele (Mater Magna).[59] In fact, when the statue of "Lady Athena" was expelled from her temple (the Parthenon) in the fifth century, she appeared to Proclus in a dream, telling him that she "desired to live with him."[60] It is not surprising, therefore, that Porphyry, the bishop of Gaza in the early fifth century, attempted to seek out and destroy these domestic idols after desecrating the civic temples, nor that the secret shrine of Isis at Menouthis, a house covered in hieroglyphs (an old Graeco-Roman tomb rather than a temple?), was exposed by hostile Christians, in the later fifth century, as a hiding place for ancient Egyptian idols collected from the temples of Memphis.[61] These collections of "idols" enjoyed the fragile safety of a double ambiguity: they were "private" in a world where aristocratic houses were major centers of socialization and culture; and they could be presented, if circumstances demanded, as purely artistic collections, devoid of any religious meaning.

Why Gesios, then? Why did Shenoute single him out for harassment? His paganism, as far as we can tell, was in no way exceptional, and he cannot have been the only pagan in Panopolis. He did stand for a group ("those like him"), and he certainly had—like any self-respecting notable—a large entourage of relatives, dependents, and parasites: "harlots, effeminates, homosexuals, singers, dancers, slanderers, and all the impure men and women who belong to that impious man and who eat and drink in excess from the things that he has gathered with violence and plunder."[62] Yet with the exception of his attempt to reconsecrate the temple of Atripe after Shenoute's actions, we have no evidence for the open practice or public patronage of paganism on his side.[63] Shenoute's denunciations imply in fact that his pagan practices needed to be "exposed" so Christians would finally realize how dangerous he was.[64] He had repeatedly denied the divinity of Jesus ("not only in

private but also in the agora and on the streets"), and he would have liked his rural workers "to go to the oracles" (rather than to Shenoute's church), but reviving public paganism as Asclepiodotus would do in Aphrodisias was apparently beyond his means if not desire.[65]

Gesios's economic and social prominence, on the other hand, made his paganism doubly dangerous for Shenoute's ambitions. In the first place, it was a fact well known to late antique bishops that landowners had a powerful and potentially dangerous influence on the spiritual life of the rural population. John Chrysostom, for example, held landowners responsible for the salvation of the rural "poor" who inhabited their rural properties and villages, and he requested from them that they build churches for the peasants instead of the rather more popular baths and shops. Village churches, he argued, would bring religious and practical advantages. On the one hand, the village would be blessed and thrive. On the other, the presence of a church and a respectable priest would be an effective tool for social control: it would ensure peace, security, and the absence of "shouting, tumults, or other enemies." "They work the land, you work their souls."[66] In the same way, Augustine knew that the best weapon to fight paganism and Donatism in the countryside was the active support of the Catholic landowners, which he requested several times.[67] Gesios's direct economic control over Shenoute's own "constituency," the Christian "poor" who lived in Panopolis and in the villages around it, was therefore particularly alarming from a religious point of view. Even if Gesios had never tried to force his own beliefs on his Christian dependents (and how could one be sure that he would not?), his oppressions made a truly Christian life impossible for the "poor" who worked for him: they could not celebrate Easter, because they had to work for him; they could not go to church, because they had to be at his house every morning; they could not give gifts to Shenoute's monastery, and so on.[68] Shenoute's attack on Gesios's household shrine was carried out—so the former claimed—on behalf of these "poor," who were oppressed by their master economically and therefore also religiously. Shenoute's catalogues of Gesios's sins therefore juxtapose economic and religious crimes: "For just as you are godless," he says, "so you oppress the poor with your violence."[69] And his responses to criticism deliberately confuse his preaching on behalf of the poor with his antipagan activities at Panopolis:

> What evil have I done, just by saying: "Do not do violence to the poor"? Is there any witness more reliable than the witness of the Scriptures? Show me from them what sin I have committed. In what way have I erred by removing idols from a godless man?[70]

Furthermore, Gesios's public prominence threatened Shenoute's spiritual authority among the Christian elite of Panopolis. By virtue of his connections and prestige among these Christians—many of whom must have had more in common

with him than with Shenoute himself—Gesios endangered the integrity of the Christian community as imagined by Shenoute. His paganism was a dangerous source of pollution surreptitiously contaminating the life of Christians who should have known better. These Christians, who were only too happy to turn a blind eye to his paganism when convenient, needed to be reminded time and again of the "guilt by association" incurred by those who mingled with such an idolater. It was at these Christians, above all, that Shenoute's denunciations of Gesios were directed. His aim was to isolate Gesios like a contagious disease—to the point of never even mentioning his name—while establishing his own spiritual authority:

> What I say, I do not say it hiding. If anybody here is familiar with him (i.e., with Gesios), I truly want you to tell him that I curse him very often. . . . But if you prefer not to tell him anything—just as you have answered, angry with that sinner: "Let it not happen that we share [anything] with that sinner in respect to such talk, lest we become stupid like him"—then you know [what I mean]."[71]

It is important to appreciate what a difficult task Shenoute had set for himself. The opposition between Christianity and paganism was less clear-cut to most contemporaries than Shenoute would have wished. Christianization, it has been recognized, was a truly intricate process full of uncertainties and ambiguities, not least because the protagonists themselves played with religious ambiguity to their own advantage. Public advocacy of paganism was no longer within the limits of the possible, but pagans like Gesios had other options. Many pagans converted just to protect their idols. But it was also possible, for example, to become a catechumen and to have the best of both worlds. Many of the "pagans" Augustine dealt with in Africa were officially catechumens. At the fringe of the church, a catechumen gained the advantages of belonging to the official religion without losing any of the liberties that were usually surrendered with full conversion.[72] Faced with Shenoute's attacks, Gesios responded not with a defense of paganism but with a strategic retreat. *Yes*, he had denied the divinity of Jesus, but "I was young back in those days."[73] Although everybody knew about his pagan sympathies, officially he was neither pagan nor Christian—his position seems to have been that of "anti-antipaganism." He would even go to church just to hear Shenoute furiously reproaching him:

> By which road have you come to us, by the King's highway or by the wilderness' highway? Have you come with the mind of Christ or with the mind of Kronos? And (Shenoute later told his audience) I also struck him on the breast saying to him: "May they cut off your tongue, with which you blasphemed and said: "Was Jesus [really] divine?"[74]

Yet Gesios held steady and played dumb. He declared to Shenoute that there were no idols in his house (clearly Shenoute had heard otherwise), and he even

promised in front of other witnesses to convert, eventually, to Christianity. Nothing ever happened, and Shenoute knew that he had been taken for a fool.[75] Gesios's hypocritical claims of innocence were all the more infuriating to Shenoute as they revealed in public his powerlessness to remove such a stain from "his" community. The very presence of such a prominent (and hostile) hypocrite at church put the whole ceremony in question and undermined Shenoute's spiritual authority.

One of Shenoute's sermons addresses specifically the question of these "double-hearted Christians," who were really pagan and came to church, as incredulous spectators of the liturgy, only "because of the fear of men."[76] It was delivered on the occasion of the visit of a "pagan philosopher" who was mocked—if we believe the text—by the Christian aristocrats of Panopolis who were attending Shenoute's sermon. We can sense, in this text, the atmosphere of one-sided debate that must have pervaded many of Shenoute's sermons in front of "hypocrites" like Gesios. Faced with such a silent challenge, Shenoute displayed the usual combination of threats, scolding, and scorn: like flies, pagans are hated, despised, and useless; they go to church, "but just like birds" (i.e., for no good reason); like insects inside a sycamore fig, they think they live in fullness, but once the fruit is opened, they are blown away by the wind; they visit oracles just as children ask frogs on the riverbanks if the Nile will rise;[77] like a housefly, which moves constantly from one place to the other, sometimes they go to church, they listen to the word of God and may even praise his name, but then they create things and worship them; their eyes are darker than those of a bat; their hearts are like caves of hyenas filled with bones.[78]

We should not read these texts as evidence of Shenoute's uncontested spiritual authority. The verbal violence deployed by him was a poor substitute for the ability to have a true impact on the habits and practices of the Christians of Panopolis. In any case, such a strategy had proven utterly unsuccessful against Gesios. To deal with Gesios, direct action was needed. It took the shape of an expedition against his house in Panopolis, in order to expose his wickedness and hypocrisy. We know in detail about it thanks to Shenoute's later justifications and self-defense.[79] It all happened during the night. In the company of seven of his monks,[80] Shenoute crossed the river and proceeded "quietly"—as he emphasizes many times—to the house. The Lord was his guide in this epic deed:[81] "He brought fear upon those who live in that place and its surroundings" "He enabled us to open the doors as he wanted it" "He guided us through the atrium and up the stairway of that house, until we came upon those hidden abominations." The Lord and nobody else: Shenoute's unlikely claims that he had had no inside help were met with understandable skepticism among his accusers in Panopolis, who knew that many of Gesios's dependents were Christians:

> I also spoke and testified to clear those who were suspected of collaborating with us that neither servant nor farmer (*woye*) nor anyone else connected to that fool had any knowledge of what we did. And that we received neither iron key nor wooden

> key nor [key-]ring from any man of his, and that we had no opening-tool of any kind. [I said] rather that *we* opened those doors of such great size that were firmly fastened. We did not say that they opened by themselves (a claim Shenoute was accused of making), but that *we* opened them, as the Lord had ordained. And the door by which we entered the room that is on the second story—where those vain things (i.e., the idols) were kept—popped out when we put our shoulders against it and lifted it with force. Neither with a tool nor with anything else (?), but rather, when he from whom the people of Panopolis hate to hear about the glory of God grabbed it, it fell as it came out of its hinge. We removed it easily and we did not suffer any hurt and our feet did not stumble in that house that is full of darkness since the lord of that house is dark.[82]

Behind that door Shenoute found exactly what he was looking for: "a great number of idols for which numerous lamps had been lit," the statues of Zeus, Hecate ("by whom men are deceived with oracles"[83]), Kronos,

> and the images of other demons, since it was not enough for him to have the statues of effeminate men and lewd and licentious women whose works it is shameful to name. Just as you have seen them all, each one in its [peculiar] shape, including even the images of [Egyptian] priests whose heads are shaven and who carry altars in their hands.

This was not art. This was the ancient error, idolatry plain and simple:

> If it is said in you (i.e., in Panopolis), "They have broken into people's houses and stolen their statues," ask what kind of statues they were, or what acts were performed for them, including even the cubit, the measure of the water's rise: this object which we brought in gratitude to the holy church, they have brought before the likenesses of demons, just as we [found] it standing at their feet in the midst of them.

The altars, in particular, were incontrovertible evidence:[84]

> I took the gods he worships lighting a multitude of lamps to them and offering up incense to them on altars and so-called *kuphi* and breaking up bread before them.

The old Egyptian priestly statues (precisely described),[85] the lamps, the incense, the use of *kuphi* (an ancient Egyptian unguent important enough for Manetho to write a book about its preparation),[86] the bread, the altars, the books,[87] and most interestingly the "cubit," that is, the measure of the Nile's rise that was found amid Gesios's idols and brought to the church of Panopolis "in gratitude"[88]—all this left no room for doubt: Gesios was a *hellēn*. He had simply gathered the remnants of idolatry and hidden them in his "dark" house.[89]

These descriptions of pagan religion need to be taken seriously. Sacrifice, the stereotypical "crime" of a pagan in Christian eyes, is pointedly absent from Shenoute's denunciations. It is true that animal sacrifice never had in Egyptian religion the central role it had in the Jewish or Graeco-Roman traditions. Yet horned

altars and "holocausts" had been introduced into Egypt from Palestine in the early Hellenistic period at the latest. These late Egyptian sacrifices were mostly interpreted as ritual destructions of a symbol of evil, such as a donkey or a pig, and not as a gift for the gods. Such ritual exterminations of the gods' enemies were still performed once a year at the old temple of Deir el-Bahari in the mid-fourth century.[90] Yet if Shenoute's rivals had indulged in such bloody practices, he would have been the first to denounce it. His silence—as well as some evidence from outside Egypt—suggests that sacrifice was no longer the central act of worship in much of contemporary paganism.[91] In contrast, the legendary and later lives of Moses of Abydos and Makarius of Tkow (both of whom supposedly admired Shenoute) emphasize the dreadful pagan sacrifices that their heroes manage to stop.[92]

Another interesting and intriguing aspect of Shenoute's denunciations is his constant association of Gesios with the god Kronos.[93] Unfortunately, his complaints are too vague to allow more than speculation. Kronos had always been a god who was more important in mythology than in actual cult. In late antiquity he was significant, above all, as patron of the Kronia, that is, the Saturnalia celebrated around the winter solstice throughout the Mediterranean world. Such festivals, never completely shorn of their pagan associations, continued to be celebrated for centuries. They were, in a way, the "afterlife" of a public paganism that had officially died out. Shenoute's allusions to Kronos are not very helpful to understand this god's association with Gesios. On the one hand, Shenoute pokes fun at Kronos's Greek mythology, like a good Christian apologist, while confusing him with the devil. On the other, he identifies Kronos with Petbe, an obscure Egyptian deity who appears in magical papyri only in the Roman period, possibly as a translation of the Greek Nemesis, a goddess associated with the planet Saturn (i.e., Kronos). But what made Gesios in particular a "servant of Kronos"? Was it his prominent involvement in the Kronia celebrated in Panopolis?[94]

In any case, with such promising evidence in his hands, Shenoute and his monks proceeded to remove the idols "quietly" in order to expose Gesios in public and to "make an example of him." Given the weight of these statues, this must have been an arduous endeavor. It lasted "the whole night."[95] Before leaving, however, they left a "souvenir":

> I attached papyri with your scorn and shame (Gesios's magical books?) to the doorposts of your house. I broke your urine, stored in jars like wine, over the threshold and the door of your house and [the houses] of those like you.[96] But there is no crime for those who have Christ, just as there is no freedom for those who trust Kronos.[97]

The next step, of course, was

> to expose [the idols] with *parrhēsia* so that everybody would recognize his contempt and shame and know that he is a liar since he had said, "There are no idols in my

> house" when I had asked him. Now Jesus, in whom he does not believe, has exposed his evil nature.[98]

The subsequent events are harder to reconstruct with our sources. One thing is certain though. What should have been Shenoute's greatest moment of glory turned out to be very controversial and frustrating. Gesios's paganism stood "exposed," but for many that was a minor and pardonable fault in comparison with the "disturbances" provoked by Shenoute. The aristocracy of Panopolis, whether Christian or pagan, was far more concerned about public order and "civility" than about religious differences. A healthy measure of religious hypocrisy was vital for this ruling class to lead a peaceful existence. One only needs to read the letters of Shenoute's contemporary Theodoret of Cyrrhus to be convinced of this. Theodoret, a Christian bishop, may have written a refutation of paganism, but when he had to recommend a teacher for the children of Cyrrhus's elite, he could think of no better alternative than the openly pagan sophist Isocasius. When Isocasius needed a wood-carver to decorate his home, he applied to the Christian bishop, who promptly sent him the craftsman, asking for him to be returned as soon as possible. One wonders what this wood-carver was supposed to carve in Isocasius's home. Hopefully not idols.[99]

With his uncomfortable revelations, Shenoute's actions had overstepped the "limits of intolerance" and threatened this prudent religious reticence. His priorities did not match those of the society he claimed as his constituency. Desecrating and even burning down temples like that of Atripe was fine and sometimes even praiseworthy. Attacking private houses, however, was out of the question. The reaction therefore was one of indignation, and not only among pagans. A "prominent woman" (most likely a Christian) summed up these feelings when she yelled at Shenoute, "on the day when we (i.e., Shenoute and his monks) removed the idols of the godless people from their dwellings": "You have destroyed your glory today! You have destroyed your glory!"[100] Shenoute, as we have seen, made a public show of the idols and took the Nile-cubit to the "holy church" in gratitude. Yet the people of Panopolis "did not become furious in their hearts against he who does these [things]"

> rather they became furious against he who had removed the idols from that place (i.e., me, Shenoute). They did not appreciate him at all, but they even scorned him because of what he had done. They honored a godless man (Gesios) more than him inside you (i.e., in Panopolis). They embraced someone who blasphemes against the name of Him who feeds you and does every good thing for you, Jesus. And they thought badly of him who had shaken that fruitless tree.[101]

It is interesting to compare these events at Panopolis with those that took place in late fifth-century Alexandria. In Alexandria, the archbishop Peter Mongus gave full support to and in fact incited the monks of Henaton who had discovered

a secret hiding place of idols at Canopus outside the city. When the idols were brought to the city by the monks, a public assembly was convened in the marketplace—including the military authorities, the civic elite, the clergy, and much of the populace– and the idols discovered were consigned to a huge public bonfire.[102] In Panopolis, on the other hand, no public support of any kind is mentioned by Shenoute. In fact, the bishop of Panopolis is not mentioned at all. Where was the spiritual leader of Panopolis in the midst of all this religious commotion? The events of Panopolis are more reminiscent of those in contemporary Chalcedon, near Constantinople, where the prefect Leontius tried to reinstate the Olympic games in the city theater in 434/5. The holy man Hypatius assembled a band of monks to fight the games and to put pressure on the bishop to stop them from taking place. Yet the bishop was not going to take any of that. He rebuffed Hypatius's threats by simply saying: "Since you are a monk, go back and be quiet. This is my business."[103] Bishops and Christian laymen were enthusiastic about Christianization, but only as long as it was a process whose extent, pace, and mode they could control themselves.[104] The same reluctant attitude toward antipagan violence can be detected in Augustine's writings of the early fifth century. As Robert Markus has shown, the bishop of Hippo tried to restrain those Christians who, encouraged by an imperial commission and carried away by their antipagan zeal, were bent on taking the law into their own hands, trespassing on private property and destroying cult statues:

> I am saying this to your graces, to make sure you don't do this sort of thing when it is not in your lawful power to do so. It is characteristic of depraved people like the ranting and raving circumcellions to be violent where they have no lawful authority to do so. . . . Do not do what you are not authorized to do. . . . Many pagans have these abominations on their properties; are we to invade these in order to destroy them? No—let us rather act so as to break the idols in their hearts.[105]

Hence Shenoute's understandable frustration. What in his eyes had been his finest hour in the fight against paganism was seen by the outraged public opinion of Panopolis as nothing but theft and a dangerous breach of the public peace. His response to these accusations was very simple: Gesios's activities at home *are* paganism, and paganism is illegal. The ancient error, the "past" that had existed before the times of the emperor Theodosius I and that had been abolished by him and his successors at places like Atripe, was the *same* error that had been exposed, quietly and without disturbing the public peace, in Gesios's house. Here at Panopolis, to paraphrase William Faulkner, the past was not dead. It wasn't even past:[106]

> If God has commanded through his prophets in the Scriptures to remove the abominations from his face, and the just emperors have ordered that the whole earth be cleansed from perverted works, and if "man can lay no foundation other than the one which is laid" (1 Cor. 3:11), how come it is not a very good thing that we

> have exposed a house and its owner as a nest of that serpent Satan, about whom the prophet has said: "The Dragon, the twisted snake"?
>
> Why have they opened their mouths against me in "Sin City" (*polis panomos* instead of *polis panos!*)? I am not talking about most of your people, that is the blessed flock of the good shepherd Christ, but I am talking about those who are alien to the flock.[107] The law cannot judge a man without listening to him first, as it is written. What evil have I done, just by saying: "Do not do violence to the poor"? Is there any witness more reliable than the Scriptures? Show me from them what sin I have committed. In what way have I erred by removing idols from a godless man?
>
> If it were not allowed to remove demonic idols from the house of that man, how could it be allowed to remove them from their temples? For those idols on account of which the righteous emperors have commanded in their love of God to destroy the temples and to demolish them and to smash them together with the idols inside them are the same idols that we removed from that place. If it had not been we who smashed them (i.e., the idols) in the temple [of Atripe] that we burned down with everything that was inside it, we might not have recognized them. Perhaps some will doubt what I say, but what we found in the temple is the same [kind of] thing that he worships in that place.

"Perhaps some will doubt what I say . . ." Clearly many Panopolitans preferred to believe that Gesios's statues were simply that, statues, and not "every thing that used to be in the temples before the times of the righteous emperor Theodosius." And many others may not have cared at all whether they were statues or idols. They were satisfied with the unofficial "Don't ask, don't tell" policy.[108]

Incredibly, the games between Shenoute and Gesios were not over after this attack. In a tacit admission of guilt, Gesios invited Shenoute once again to search his house and reassure himself that paganism was no longer lurking there. Shenoute found no idols this time, but was still unconvinced:[109]

> Since you sent to me, saying: "Come and check my houses to see if you find any idols in them." When I checked your house again, I did not find idols inside it. But don't you have others besides those I removed? And even if I remove the idols that are in your house, how can I hide the sun in the sky, the moon and the stars that you worship?[110] Do I have to build walls in the direction of the setting sun to prevent you from praying to the west? Do I have to keep guard on the river and your canals so that you don't pour your libations to Kronos over the waters? Stop lying!

Gesios's pagan practices may actually have continued, but what else could Shenoute do about it? The attack on Gesios's house had been largely a failure: it had made little difference to Gesios's paganism, and it had threatened to destroy Shenoute's reputation in Panopolis. It is significant that in his own monastic rules—by necessity more realistic than his sermons and public letters—Shenoute banned his monks from attacking pagans, "that we may be safe from any disturbance."[111] He knew, evidently, that he lived in a society impervious to the religious polarization he

advocated. His emphasis on Gesios's economic sins, his oppression of the "poor" and unfair treatment of his own workers, is a telling indicator that religious arguments could take one only so far. Such economic arguments—we have seen—turned Gesios into a negative stereotype, the counterpart of the ideal rich Christian as imagined by Shenoute, that is, the compassionate, almsgiving Christian who cares about the "poor." The "poor" was the only legal category on whose behalf Shenoute could legitimately intercede. And this was not enough. Not long after Shenoute's death, Panopolis was still producing pagan celebrities like Pamprepius (the "panopolitan misfortune," as his pagan enemies called him), an openly pagan poet and grammarian whose dramatic career led him to become teacher at Athens, *quaestor*, and consul, and to attempt the public restoration of paganism before perishing ignominiously during Illus's revolt.[112]

PNEUIT: SHENOUTE'S ANSWER TO LIBANIUS

The situation was by no means different in the villages of the countryside around Panopolis, as the case of Pneuit will clearly show. Here too, the Middle Ages—a world in which the identification between society and church is taken for granted and religious dissent is therefore intolerable—were far away.[113] Here too, religious intolerance was a luxury that most Christians could simply not afford, and a lesser priority in comparison to issues like taxation or the maintenance of public order. When pursued beyond the control of the local elites and beyond the realm of temple desecration, it was downright intolerable.

The village of Pneuit (Banawit today) was located in the district of Panopolis about thirteen miles north of Shenoute's monastery. It lies in a stretch of countryside remarkable for its associations with our story (see map 2). At Pneuit itself, inscribed blocks of a Ptolemaic temple were seen by early nineteenth-century travelers: this could be the same temple mentioned, as we shall see, in Shenoute's writings. Less than five miles to the southeast lies the village of Psonis (Basuna today), known to us through the mummy labels of its priestly families buried, until the third century C.E., at Atripe's necropolis. Here too, remains of a Ptolemaic-Roman temple have been found, where Min, the main god of Panopolis, was worshipped. Interestingly, Apa Pshoi, a friend of Shenoute's uncle and one of his spiritual fathers, came from this village according to tradition, and Shandawil, the modern village identified with Shenalolet, Shenoute's own hometown, lies not far to the south. Furthermore, the Roman military unit known as Ala Secunda Herculia Dromedariorum was stationed in the nearby camp of Toeto-Psinabla, where first pro-Athanasian bishops and later Nestorius himself were held prisoner. A fascinating late fourth-century papyrus shows that the former commander of this military unit had once been unsuccessfully approached by the famous anchorite John of Lycopolis on behalf of a villager who wished to avoid enrollment in the imperial army.[114]

At some point in the early fifth century, some of the Christians of Pneuit attacked and burned down their village temple, provoking—according to Shenoute—the reaction of the local pagan priests, who accused them to the provincial governor. When Shenoute found out that these Christians had been taken to the provincial capital, Antinoe, to be tried, he departed immediately to make good use of his *parrhēsia* before the powerful in their defense.[115] The presence of Shenoute (and, surely, his monks) created a commotion in Antinoe—if we believe the account contained in his biography. Like a provincial governor criticized by Libanius for speedily abandoning the prosecution of justice once "he heard the chanting of hymns from the cave-dwellers,"[116] the governor was helpless before Shenoute's miraculous *parrhēsia* and the crowd that acclaimed him. After facing down the governor, Shenoute was taken triumphantly on the shoulders of the crowd to the "Church of the Water" in Antinoe, where Christian men and women struggled to touch the holy man and receive his blessing. And "when he returned to the monastery, he composed a sermon against the pagans in which he makes an example of their idols, called 'The Lord thundered in heavens and the Most High uttered his voice'" (Psalm 18:13).[117] Large fragments of this sermon have survived. It pours scorn on the pagans and their idols and praises those Christians who attack their temples and are therefore accused before magistrates, like the Christians of Pneuit. Paganism is condemned in its multiple manifestations, from simple greetings to the sun and the moon to Hesiod's mythology, Aristophanes' comedies, and, of course, that "pestilent son who denies Jesus' divinity," namely, Gesios.[118]

Besa's biography of Shenoute contains a version of this incident at odds with much of what Shenoute himself says. In this later version, Shenoute himself becomes the center of action. He is now the leader of a violent attack against the pagans of Pneuit, which culminates in the destruction of temples and the forced conversion of recalcitrant pagans.[119] Like Balaam in the book of Numbers, he is saved by his donkey from the magical books and potions that had been buried on the road by those pagan villagers.[120] He goes to Antinoe, but to defend himself, not other Christians, against the accusations of the pagans of "Pneuit and Panopolis." Besa (or whoever else wrote this biography) seems to have conflated or confused two separate incidents: Shenoute's defense of the Christians of Pneuit, who had destroyed a temple by themselves and without Shenoute's intervention,[121] and Shenoute's later raid of some houses—not temples—in a village, an incident that, to judge from this confusion, may also have taken place in Pneuit.

This second episode is known to us from Shenoute's rebuttal of the accusations it prompted. No temples were involved in this raid. Shenoute was not keen on understatement: if he had destroyed a temple, he would have proclaimed it loud and clear. As in Panopolis, his raid in Pneuit (?) targeted rather the household shrines owned by the pagan inhabitants of a "great village."[122] For once, we have chronological indications: the text mentions Cyril of Alexandria as the head of the

Egyptian church but also calls him a "martyr." This can only refer to the short time Cyril spent in prison during the first council of Ephesus. Shenoute's text must date, therefore, between 431 and 444 C.E. Such a late date is significant. We are far away from the dramatic late fourth-century events that had rocked the empire and had allegedly done away with the pagan "past." In the fifth century, the fight against paganism had become a slow, long-term endeavor, constantly set back by a style of life that refused to turn religion into its main organizing principle.

Shenoute's replies to his accusers from this village are contained in a difficult text, but I think most of it becomes immediately intelligible once we realize that his rebukes were aimed primarily at the *Christians* of the village, rather than at the pagan villagers who had been the victims of the raid. The text presupposes that the actions of Shenoute and his followers had been most unwelcome in the village. The victims of the raid had responded by making the same accusations heard in the late antique Near East every time violent monks made an appearance, accusations that found their most eloquent exposition in Libanius's famous oration *For the Temples*. According to Libanius, what monks like Shenoute did in the countryside was nothing less than "war in peace time waged against the peasantry."[123] These glorified thieves, he argued, "sweep across the countryside like rivers in spate, and by ravaging the temples, they ravage the villages, for wherever they tear out a temple from a village, that village is blinded and lies murdered."[124] Their motive was as shameful as their methods, the love of plunder:

> They claim to be attacking the temples, but these attacks are a source of income, for, though some assail the shrines, others plunder the wretched peasantry of what they have, both the produce stored from the land and their stock; and the invaders depart with loot from the places they have stormed. Others are not satisfied with this, but they appropriate the land too.[125]

This looting with religious excuses deprived the affected villages of the means to pay their taxes, something no reasonable emperor—Libanius thought—should tolerate:

> And the land no longer enjoys the same care, nor can the yield match what it was before, and, if this be the case, the peasant is the poorer, and the revenue jeopardized. . . . So the outrages committed by these hooligans against the villages bear upon vital matters of state.[126]

Shenoute's text shows that Libanius was expressing a very widespread dislike for religious intolerance.[127] Pagan and even Christian villagers in Upper Egypt would have agreed with many of his denunciations, in particular when we keep in mind that Libanius was speaking about the destruction of temples and not about the even more troubling attacks on private houses performed by Shenoute and his people. At Pneuit, idols, books, and cultic paraphernalia had been removed

from the houses of pagan villagers. Like Gesios in Panopolis or Libanius in Antioch, they responded by accusing Shenoute of theft and of plundering their village. What was really irritating to Shenoute, however, was that even the Christians of the village were worried and afraid about the consequences of the raid. Some of them had claimed "through ignorance"—according to Shenoute's generous interpretation—that such a violent raid would spell economic ruin for them. Instead of thanking Shenoute for his actions, they had tried to stop him. Pagan villagers had accused them of being implicated and had threatened to take them to court: "Watch our places! Men have come inside our houses and have disturbed us!" Worse, the pagans had threatened to withdraw all collaboration in the paying of taxes—for which the village was liable as a corporation:[128]

> And if those among you Christians who care about the pagans—just as I saw many covering themselves with dust, weeping and begging: "Spare them!"—are afraid that they might not collaborate with you, as I heard, how devilish are you! For toward those who [really] help you (i.e., me, Shenoute) you are evil. If the pagans did not care for God, how are they going to care for [you] men?
>
> And if the pagans say, "We pay taxes," withdrawing, do not let them be examined to see how they are (?), and they [will] harm themselves.[129] The earth over which God has set up faithful emperors is also the earth from which one should give (?) to the emperor what belongs to the emperor (i.e., everyone has to pay taxes). Or are they going to say in the houses of such men accomplished in every deceit and destruction that they are emperor-less (i.e., that they do not pay taxes)?[130]

For many Christian villagers, maintaining a reliable modus vivendi with their pagan neighbors was clearly more important than accommodating Shenoute's wishes for religious purity.[131] It was to rebuke and to reassure these fainthearted Christians that Shenoute wrote the text we possess today, a precise, firsthand answer to Libanius's famous oration. His main point: do not complain about my people, for they did not attack the village to plunder or to rob anything, neither from pagans nor from Christians. They have actually done God's work:

> Only I tell everyone who dwells in this village in which such impious and devilish men perform these pestilential works: "Observe that nothing has been removed from you!" For some [Christians] had said: "They will despoil us, especially since the times are difficult." I myself have replied to them all: "Unless you have said these words through ignorance, God will be furious against you or bad things will happen, for we have performed this [raid] in the name of God."
>
> Look out to the land and see what is more abundant: sown fields or abandoned fields that have not been sown since the Merciful One has not sent water to the earth because of our sins? They (Shenoute's people) have not touched any grown field nor have they destroyed anything. For they came in the love of Him who works in them, in their desire for Him. And they also went guided by His grace, for He did not pour forth over the earth that it might tremble.

The reason the village was in financial trouble—Shenoute seems to be saying—had nothing to do with his raid. The Merciful One had decided not to "pour forth," the inundation had not come ("the times are difficult"), and much of the village land lay "abandoned." There was not much left to plunder. The reason, of course, was "our sins," among them certainly the villagers' tolerance of paganism. But he himself had been very careful to avoid removing lawful possessions from any house lest anyone should reject his actions with the arguments of a Libanius:

> Your servant (Shenoute declares to God), who remembers Your own justice decided in this affair not to remove money or dresses or any other thing at all from the houses of the lawless men, lest some might say: "He loves gold or silver more than You, Christ," the true possession and wealth of those who love you; and lest they might reject what we had done as arising from the root of all evil, the love of money. For do we need anything other than You? Is it not enough for us that You have made Yourself known to us? Those men who do not know that You are God, even if they have the whole world, they do not have anything; they are cursed because they do not know that the gold, the silver, and the world with everything that is in it is Yours.[132]

Given the exemplary conduct of Shenoute and his people during the raid, the Christians of the village—he claimed—had no reason to be afraid or to complain. The accusations and threats of the pagans, "who fled like foxes flee from lions and from whose houses we removed the idols and books filled with abominations,"[133] were nothing but empty talk. They had no valid justification to stop paying taxes. How would the emperor allow it? And as to their legal accusations, Shenoute himself would take care of them:

> I will let you (pagans) know the emperors, who will subordinate you to the church and its enlightener, our most holy father and martyr the archbishop Cyril, or the sword will wipe most of you out and the rest of you will go into exile!
>
> Since you (pagans) have said: "Whoever has a conflict with us, let him go to the courthouse." *I* have a problem with you and *I* oppose you. Therefore you (Christians) do not be afraid. I am not hiding. I myself [will] oppose such wizards, magicians, and astrologers who number the stars of the sky and worship idols.

The weakness of the pagans was revealed, Shenoute insisted, in their own accusations. They claimed that their houses had been plundered, yet they could not mention precisely what had been removed because they knew their idols were a forbidden possession. They declared not to know why they had been singled out for attack ("just as they have said: 'We do not know for what reason [we have been attacked]'"). In contrast, Shenoute's actions had been public and visible: "We have not done the works of God secretly, just as they do the works of the devil secretly, have we?" And he was all too happy to vaunt the spoils taken from those houses:

> And the spoils about which they said: "They have done it to us." Look! We have them all under our control: Pan, who is Min—*whose heart is as hard as his shame*;

> the sword with which they kill and destroy the creation of God, the book filled with magic; and also their other idols and everything they offer to them and the vessel full of bread on behalf of them and all the first fruits and the lamp-stand that was in front of them.

Like Gesios in Panopolis, these pagan villagers did "the works of the devil" privately in the apparent safety of their domestic shrines, lighting lamps, offering bread and first-fruits (but no sacrifices) to their idols, and using "books filled with magic."[134] As in nearby Psonis, they worshipped Min/Pan, a god represented in Upper Egypt since prehistoric times as a man with an erect penis.[135] Hence Shenoute's pun that Min's heart was as hard as his shame. Despite the overwhelming Hellenization of Egypt in late antiquity, the ancient gods had found a way to adapt and survive.[136] Let me repeat what I have already said about Shenoute's descriptions of Gesios's paganism: this seems to me to be a realistic description of contemporary pagan practices and cannot be explained away simply as accusations invented to disparage one's rivals; otherwise Shenoute would have mentioned sacrifices, the worst possible crime associated with paganism.

There is one final aspect of this raid that Shenoute needed to justify before Christians, pagans, and above all the imperial government: the involvement of "crowds" (*mēēše*). Shenoute had often been accused of gathering "crowds" in the countryside, a particularly pressing concern for the Roman state and the local elites who represented it, since it threatened the monopoly of violence and authority they claimed. According to imperial law, not even the fight against paganism could be used as an excuse to provoke disturbances in the countryside. Shenoute's reactions to these accusations had usually been to deny what they claimed: he did not gather "crowds," he took care of the rural "poor," helpless and harmless creatures. His accusers were precisely those who did violence to those "poor":[137]

> But you (i.e., the evil rich and powerful who do "violence" to the poor) who hate the works of God, you complain that we receive those of that kind (i.e., the miserable poor), saying: "He gathers crowds." How did I [ever] gather crowds? On what day did I march in front of a crowd? Could I have done any works of disorder (*ataxia*), even if they are works related to the service of God? For I have not provoked any disturbance (*štortr*), neither when we burned the temple of the idolaters that is at Atripe, nor when we went with the Christians who had been taken to the judge of Hermopolis and Antinoe having been accused by the priests because of another temple that they had also destroyed themselves in their village. Or how many men did I take with me on the day when I removed the idols from the bedroom of that one (i.e., his enemy Gesios) except for seven monks?

In the case of this raid, there was no denying the intervention of "crowds," but Shenoute claimed to have nothing to do with their coming and going. In a way

that Shenoute himself could not explain, the Christians of the countryside had gathered "spontaneously" to fight against the enemies of God:

> Where did such large crowds come from to that place, hour after hour, men and women together? Who informed them [about the raid]? Or who directed them? (Sc. Nobody, of course.) In particular since we were going there secretly at dawn when the sun was rising, for we did not want anybody to know about it. Where were they going to, so quickly, from many villages and many *epoikia*, filled with rage against those enemies of God and with faith in Christ—who works in the love of all their hearts—so [numerous] that the roads could not receive them all from their abodes, as they were crying out with one voice: "Jesus! Jesus!"? The impious ones were amazed as they saw them in their carts (*aqolte*), marching and giving glory to God and praising his Jesus Christ who has purified their heart with his blood.

Shenoute's image of the rural Christians leaving their villages, filling the roads and streaming toward Pneuit (?) at the voice of "Jesus! Jesus!" offers a beautiful counterpoint to Libanius's "rivers in spate" that "sweep across the countryside." We have met these Christians before, living in villages and *epoikia* and traveling in their carts. It is the same people whom Shenoute defended from the oppressions of Gesios: the "poor" of course, spontaneously and legitimately doing against the pagans what the powerful did not dare.[138]

As we have seen throughout this book, such an argument came naturally to Shenoute, whose entire public career was justified in terms of the "care of the poor." Yet it is highly doubtful that Christian—not to say pagan—villagers would have felt somehow reassured by his explanations. For the "silent majority" of the towns and villages of Upper Egypt, rabble-rousers like Shenoute may have been simply an annoyance and a liability, ignored when possible and restrained when necessary. This "silent majority" ensured that Shenoute's fight against paganism had very limited success. Pockets of paganism endured in Egypt and in the Near East well into the sixth century.[139] It is therefore appropriate to finish this chapter with a reminder of the fragility of Shenoute's achievement. At some point after 536 C.E., so probably around a century after Shenoute's actions, the bishop of Panopolis gave a sermon in a newly built *martyrium* of Apa Colluthus in a village of his diocese.[140] Among others, the audience included the bishop of Antinoe (from where some of the relics of Colluthus had been transferred), the governor of Upper Egypt, and most of the elite of Panopolis. The *martyrium* had been built to Christianize the village, a "Sodom" of Upper Egypt full of "lawless," that is, pagan, men. This village, Colluthus's new residence, was Pneuit.

Conclusion

One of the fundamental characteristics of Shenoute's life as a monk was his extensive involvement in the world outside his monastery. Such an active and, for moments, confrontational role was neither common nor traditional among Egyptian monks, either before or after Shenoute's time. The contrast with the stars of the Egyptian monastic tradition—Antony, Pachomius, the monks of Nitria and Scetis—is clear. Notwithstanding their reputation and prestige, most of these monks were, in comparison with Shenoute, relatively harmless. Neither Antony nor Pachomius is known to have been involved in economic and religious struggles with the surrounding countryside. Neither seems to have had enough power in local society to threaten wealthy landowners. They rarely if ever preached about social injustice or the behavior of magistrates. In fact, they rarely preached to nonmonastic audiences. As far as we know, they never felt powerful enough to publicly attack paganism. To put it briefly, an Egyptian who lived in any town near Antony's outer mountain or near a Pachomian congregation could have led his life—if he chose to—in complete ignorance of the fact that there were monks living nearby. This was not possible around Panopolis, for Shenoute made sure that everybody in the area knew that *he was there* and that he had an opinion about them, an opinion that—if necessary—he might try to impose on them.[1]

I have argued that the best parallels for Shenoute's public life are not to be found in Egypt but elsewhere, among Christian bishops all over the Roman Empire and, above all, among the monks of Syria and Constantinople. But this is not a problem. Shenoute lived in a very large and homogeneous empire. The issues he dealt with were faced at the same time by other Christians all over the Mediterranean world. Thus, although few historians of the ancient and medieval worlds will have

ever heard of Shenoute, the characters I have introduced to illuminate his life—Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Alexander the Sleepless, Libanius of Antioch, Augustine of Hippo, Rabbula of Edessa, Hypatius the monk, and many others—belong in every handbook of late antique history.

The public prominence achieved by self-made men like Shenoute was, in Egypt as elsewhere, problematic and fraught with tensions. This was particularly so in Shenoute's case, given his monastic status. Hence his constant need to explain himself and his actions. There were of course many self-made men in the later Roman Empire, and there were other monks in the fifth century who managed to gain power and influence over local society. But they faced problems similar to those faced by Shenoute. Their power was not traditional. It was something new, something easy to criticize, something unstable, insecure. Shenoute's numerous writings on this issue allow a better appreciation of this problem, a problem that must have been faced by many "holy men" all over the eastern Mediterranean.

A central claim of this book has been that Shenoute consistently articulated this public role in terms of his relationship to the "poor." This relationship is a complicated thing. It cannot be summed up in a formula. There is no one sentence that will do justice to such a variegated, intricate, and interesting issue. There are many interesting aspects of Shenoute's public life, and I try to deal with several of them in this book. Not all of them are directly related to the concrete practice of the care of the poor. But all of them are more or less closely related to the discourse on poverty that Shenoute adopts and develops. This has become clear, I think, in every one of the chapters in this book, including chapter 1, "The Loyal Opposition," and chapter 4, "The Limits of Intolerance," which do not deal with specifically economic issues.

The first of these chapters analyzes Shenoute's own answer to the question "Who is Shenoute?" Such an analysis is necessary because, as I show throughout, Shenoute was obsessively concerned with his self-presentation as a public character and never misses an opportunity to explain and justify himself. His answer is not simple. It is formulated in terms of the dichotomy friend-enemy as applied to the powerful of the world. But in the ultimate analysis, the answer always turns out to be the "poor." Who is Shenoute *according to himself?* He is the enemy of Panopolis, because people there oppress the poor he represents and worship Kronos (two aspects of the same crime). He is the (conditional) friend of imperial magistrates, if and when they love the "poor" like he does and show deference to his *parrhēsia*. He is, in sum, the emperor's "loyal opposition," a local representative of the ultimate values of a Christian Roman Empire, values that include the ideal of "vertical solidarity" and intolerance for paganism.

A similar articulation of local tensions in terms of a discourse on poverty has been described in chapter 4, "The Limits of Intolerance," which analyzes Shenoute's struggle against domestic paganism. This chapter makes it clear that for Shenoute

religious and economic issues are inseparable. His conflict with Gesios and paganism is at the same time an economic and a religious conflict. As Shenoute presents it, it is a conflict between the Christian "poor" and ruthless pagan aristocrats. Shenoute's attack on the pagans of the village of Pneuit is also portrayed by him as a spontaneous attack by the rural poor, who have taken into their own hands the task of eradicating the paganism tolerated by the elites. Even in the case of the destruction of the temple of Atripe, about which we know so little, it is patent that we are dealing with a religious struggle that has a social and an economic component: the rivalry between Gesios and Shenoute as rural patrons of the countryside around Panopolis, a rivalry that is consistently portrayed as a conflict between the rich and the poor.

In chapter 2, "The Miraculous Economy," and chapter 3, "Rural Patronage: Holy and Unholy," the relation between Shenoute's public prominence and his discourse on poverty is more obvious. Chapter 2 analyzes Shenoute's welfare activities on behalf of the "poor" and tracks the emergence of a new economic discourse developed to justify the "miraculous" wealth acquired by large monasteries in the late antique Near East. What becomes clear through this analysis is that the financial support of the state could turn large monasteries into alternative centers of economic redistribution in the late Roman countryside. Here and elsewhere in the late antique Near East, the care of the poor seems to be an aspect of the relationship between state and local society.

Finally, chapter 3 analyzes Shenoute's denunciations of the "violence" perpetrated on the "poor" by ruthless landowners. This analysis benefits from a tight integration of documentary and literary sources, and it has—I believe—important implications for the social and economic history of late antique Egypt. In the first place, it puts rural patronage back where it belongs: at the center of any discussion of life in the late antique countryside. There are of course well-known sources for rural patronage in late antiquity, but the almost complete absence of clear papyrological evidence has lately led many papyrologists to doubt the import of this informal institution, an institution practiced—it turns out—not only by Shenoute's enemy Gesios but also by Shenoute himself.

In the second place, Shenoute's denunciations, as analyzed here, represent an important contribution in favor of the questioned unity of late antique Egypt. The abundant but ill-distributed evidence of late antique papyri has led many scholars to draw a sharp contrast between the societies of fourth- and sixth-century Egypt, on the one hand, and between the social worlds of the northern city of Oxyrhynchus and the southern village of Aphrodito, on the other. Whereas, it is often said, the society of fourth-century Egypt seems to be dominated by middle-sized civic landowners and a vibrant peasantry, sixth-century Egypt comes to be dominated by a far wealthier imperial aristocracy that controls a large workforce of tied laborers. Yet at the same time, it has been argued that a similar contrast exists between

the society of northern Middle Egypt—as represented by the Apion archive from Oxyrhynchus—and the more egalitarian village world of Aphrodito in southern Middle Egypt.

Shenoute's fifth-century writings represent, I believe, the "missing link"—that is, the bridge between fourth- and sixth-century Egypt. They help us understand the transformation of one into the other, but they also suggest that the contrast between those two centuries may be less stark than previously thought. Furthermore, the very fact that Shenoute denounces the typical abuses of great landowners but does so from a monastery located only twenty-five miles south of Aphrodito suggests that great landowners and large independent villages should not be considered exclusive realities but must have coexisted all over Egypt.[2]

APPENDIX A

The Chronology of Shenoute's Life and Activities

Given the state of our information and barring new discoveries, the chronology of Shenoute's life is an insoluble problem. Yet in order to situate his actions against a concrete historical background, it is important to achieve as much precision in this respect as our sources allow. I have argued in the introduction that, regardless when Shenoute was born or died, all the evidence seems to point to the years 420–460 as his floruit as a prominent abbot. The evidence for this falls into seven groups.

1. Shenoute exchanged letters with three archbishops of Alexandria: Cyril (412–444), Dioscorus (444–451), and Timothy (457–460).[1] An element of uncertainty is introduced here by the fact that two other archbishops named Timothy ruled the Alexandrian church at this time, one from 380 to 385, the other (a Chalcedonian bishop) from 460 onward. Shenoute's very brief and formulaic letters do not allow any clear decision. Stephen Emmel has hypothetically assumed that one of Shenoute's letters was intended for the earlier, fourth-century Timothy, while another one had been written to the second, fifth-century Timothy,[2] but I see no reason whatsoever to believe that. Given the arguments below, I prefer the easier solution: Shenoute wrote to three successive patriarchs, namely, Cyril, Dioscorus, and Timothy II (the "Cat"). This would place his activities as abbot between 412 and 460.

2. A letter of Shenoute defending himself after a raid on a pagan village mentions Cyril of Alexandria as the head of the Egyptian church but also calls him a "martyr."[3] This can only refer to the short time Cyril spent in prison during the first council of Ephesus. Shenoute's attack on the village—on which see chapter 4—must date, therefore, between 431 and 444 C.E.

3. Two of the many secular officials mentioned by Shenoute are known from other sources. First, he claims to have spoken with a certain *comes* Theodotos, who *may* be the same Theodotos who was the military governor of Lower Egypt in 435.[4] More importantly, Shenoute mentions Caesarius, the military governor of Upper Egypt (the Thebaid), in

two different discourses. Caesarius was clearly an admirer of Shenoute and visited his monastery at least twice. He is recorded in the "History of the Church of Alexandria" as a personal friend of Shenoute, and, crucially, he is named in an inscription above the main gate of Shenoute's church as the founder of the church. He is also the only figure mentioned by Shenoute for whom we certainly have papyrological documentation: some fragmentary court proceedings in which the date has unfortunately not been preserved.[5] When did Caesarius rule Upper Egypt? Two different arguments point to the mid-fifth century. In the first place, the papyrus already mentioned contains his complete titles as governor of Upper Egypt. These were long and complicated titles that tended to evolve relatively quickly. We have an inscription from Philae that mentions another military governor of Upper Egypt with exactly the same titles as Caesarius, and this other governor ruled the Thebaid *either* in 449 or in 464.[6] In the second place, Shenoute claims to have finished his church (i.e., Caesarius's church) two years before a large invasion of Nubian and Blemmy tribes. If this invasion is identical, or at least connected, with the conflict mentioned by the historian Priscus (who traveled to Upper Egypt together with Maximinus to take care of the Nubian and Blemmy problem),[7] then it has to be dated around the years 450–452, which would mean that Shenoute's church was built two years before this date, when Caesarius was in charge of the Thebaid. All these considerations point to the years 430–460 as the time of Shenoute's activities, in particular the building of his church and the care of the refugees produced by the Nubian/Blemmy invasion.

4. Shenoute's biography claims that its hero went to the *first* council of Ephesus (431), where, after publicly humiliating Nestorius, he was named archimandrite by the archbishop of Alexandria, Cyril.[8] Shenoute's actions against Nestorius are certainly a later legend, but there is no doubt that he went to Ephesus (and to the imperial court): two different discourses were written by him the year after he came back from Ephesus, as he himself says; he mentions his own fame in Ephesus and how the archbishop of Alexandria (whom he does not name) praised him there in front of the council of bishops; and he compares the martyr cult, as he saw it in Ephesus and elsewhere, with the practices of Upper Egypt (which he criticizes).[9] The Council of Ephesus has crucial importance for Shenoute's chronology, given his statement, in one of the discourses pronounced the year after he had come back from there, that he "had been reading the holy gospels (i.e., been a monk?) for more than sixty years" and had been "preaching from them (i.e., been an abbot) for more than forty-three years since my holy fathers passed away."[10] The problem is that there were two councils in Ephesus, not one, one in 431 and the other in 449, and I do not see any reason to assume that Shenoute is referring here (or, for that matter, in the other texts mentioned) to the first council, in 431. We should keep in mind the possibility that these words were pronounced in 450 and not in 432 (as is usually assumed), for a later chronology helps to explain many aspects of Shenoute's life, whereas an earlier chronology raises even more questions than we already have.[11] Let me give one example. A traditional question asked in connection with Shenoute has always been, "Why is he not mentioned by Palladius in his *Historia Lausiaca?*" Palladius was exiled in Egypt and visited monasteries around Panopolis in the years 408–412. If Shenoute became an abbot (i.e., started preaching) only in 407 (and not in 389), this could help to explain why Palladius did not feel the need to mention him. Shenoute did not yet have a public reputation.[12]

5. Neither Shenoute's date of birth nor the date of his death can be established with certainty. A text of Besa written six years after Shenoute's death can be dated with a good

degree of probability to either 456 or 471. This means that Shenoute died either in 450 or in 465, but choosing between these two options is not easy. Philippe Luisier has argued against Emmel's dating of Shenoute's death to the year 465, but his arguments are not altogether convincing.[13] It is true that several Coptic texts claim that Shenoute died before the Council of Chalcedon in 451; it is also true that neither Shenoute nor his biographies ever mention this council;[14] and it *might* also be true that Shenoute's description of Nestorius's death (a passage that would favor the later date for Shenoute's death) is a later interpolation.[15] The problem is that the Coptic texts cited by Luisier are by no means trustworthy and tend to contain as much fiction as historical reality. Moreover, if Shenoute did indeed die in 450, then his letters to an archbishop Timothy can only have been written to Timothy I, who was bishop of Alexandria between 380 and 385 (Timothy II was bishop of Alexandria from 457 onward). No matter what chronology we choose, there is no doubt that Shenoute was not yet abbot at such an early date.[16] Yet the letters addressed by Shenoute to this Timothy clearly presuppose a position of power and influence. It is extremely unlikely that he would have written them as a simple monk. The fact that Shenoute's letters to Timothy follow a letter to Dioscorus in one of our manuscripts also makes it likely that the Timothy in question is Timothy II. In other words, Shenoute most probably died in 465, not 450.

6. The biographies of Shenoute claim that he lived 118 years, no less, a statement that Emmel accepts, setting Shenoute's birthdate at 346/7.[17] These biographies explicitly model Shenoute on Moses, whose proverbial life span encompassed 120 years. Were it not for our sins, Shenoute—it is said—would have lived as long. In fact, Shenoute himself once claimed to have lived "in the desert for more than a hundred years."[18] This probably indicates that Shenoute did indeed reach a very advanced age. But how advanced? Can we take those texts literally? I do not think so. It is well known that a long life was a symbol of holiness in late antique hagiography: if we believed in our texts, the life expectancy of monks should have been at least ninety. If Emmel is right, and Shenoute was born in 346/7 and died in 465, then he performed some of his most famous deeds, like the construction of the church and the care of the refugees from the barbarian invasion, when he was *at least* in his nineties. This seems simply unbelievable to me. If we follow the chronology I propose instead, Shenoute would have been born at some point in the 380s. He would have become a monk as a child in 390 (when he would have been taught to read the gospels). He would then have become abbot in 407, in his late twenties (not an unlikely age when we keep in mind that the monastery's founder was his uncle), and he would have died in 465, in his eighties.

7. Finally, we know that Shenoute's archenemy Gesios was a former governor.[19] Since the governor of the Thebaid in the years 376–378 was Flavius Aelius Gesius, Emmel has argued that this governor should be identified with Shenoute's enemy.[20] If true, this would have major implications for our interpretation of Shenoute's conflict with Gesios. Yet this seems an unlikely solution to me, for two reasons. In the first place, it is chronologically implausible, since it implies, again, an almost supernatural life span for Shenoute. Secondly, it assumes that Gesios, a local landowner in Panopolis, would have been named governor of his own province, something illegal and quite uncommon.[21] Gesios was an uncommon but by no means unique name.[22]

APPENDIX B

The Sources

We have two main sources of information on Shenoute's life: his biographies and his own works. Both groups of texts have a complex history and present a daunting challenge to any researcher. Shenoute's biography, in the first place, is not an individual work but consists of a group of closely related texts transmitted in Sahidic and Bohairic Coptic, in Arabic, and even in Syriac and Ethiopic versions. Many of these texts are explicitly attributed to Shenoute's disciple Besa, yet some of our fragments contain statements that make it clear that Besa cannot have written them. Indeed, one of these biographical texts is even written in Shenoute's first person.[1] Nina Lubomierski has studied all these texts and reached some important conclusions.[2] She has argued that the texts that we call collectively Shenoute's *Life* are relatively late compilations based on encomia pronounced—by different monks—in honor of the monastery's greatest abbot on the anniversary of his death. There was, therefore, never a single, canonical *Life* of Shenoute, but instead a constantly evolving collection of episodes and stories that could be rearranged, expanded, or abridged according to necessity. This collection reached its greatest extent in the seventh century (represented by our Arabic version and some Sahidic fragments) and was subsequently abridged multiple times (giving us our Bohairic, Ethiopic, and Syriac versions).

This argument has much going for it. Many lives of late antique bishops and monks were originally encomia pronounced in their honor, and the distinction between encomium and biography is often a moot point when dealing with hagiography. Hagiography, moreover, has a well-known tendency to grow almost "organically." However, I would not go as far as Lubomierski does and also dismiss Besa's connection to these texts as a later addition. As stated above, all the complete versions we have of Shenoute's biography are attributed to Besa, and Besa figures in them as a character—the most important character, I would say, after Shenoute himself. I do not see any reason to believe that Besa cannot have been the first of those monks to pronounce an encomium in honor of his spiritual master—in fact, there are late antique parallels for this, and it is what one would expect a priori. Besa's

encomium could have formed the core, which was later expanded, abridged, rearranged, and so on. The most accurate way of describing the situation would certainly be to attribute the authorship of the biographies to the "Monastery of Apa Shenoute" as a collective entity. Yet I am reluctant to simply drop Besa's name when I believe that many of the episodes we have may stem originally from him. (We have many letters of Besa, and several mention his father and predecessor Shenoute as an example to be followed.)

In any case, whether it is Besa or other, later monks who are behind the stories discussed in this study makes no difference for any of my arguments. For even if Lubomierski is right, and none of our stories go back to Besa himself (something that seems unlikely to me), the text would be typical hagiography and would represent the institutional memory of Shenoute's monastery, the representation it gives itself of its greatest abbot. This representation is based on memories that have a factual basis, as can be seen when one compares the biographies with Shenoute's works. Certainly, the lives of Shenoute are—like all hagiography—problematic sources that are meant to represent not facts but rather models after which to pattern one's life. They contain many of the distortions of reality typical of hagiography. I still think, though, that the correct way to study Shenoute is by reading his biographies and works side by side, to see how they illuminate, complement, and contradict each other. I have used therefore all these biographical texts, no matter who may have written them. Some specific passages may be more accurate than others, and some may need to be discarded altogether, but that has to be decided in each specific instance and not a priori, since the value of any story does not depend on its presence or absence in any particular compilation. For the sake of simplicity, I refer in this study to all these texts collectively as Shenoute's biography or *Life* (what else can we call them?) and—given the doubts I have expressed above—I retain Besa as their (putative) author, even though both designations are, as we have seen, problematic.

Shenoute's own works are an even more complicated puzzle, one that has been solved, to a large degree, thanks to the work of Stephen Emmel. These works have been preserved almost exclusively in medieval manuscripts copied and kept at Shenoute's own monastery. Unfortunately, these manuscripts reached Europe in an extremely fragmentary and disorganized state. Emmel's work provides now a reliable guide to navigate this mess, but it was not available to the editors and translators of most of the texts quoted in this study. This is not the only reason, however, that these editions are problematic. Some of them were produced by scholars with inadequate philological expertise or with little interest in or knowledge of late antiquity. That having been said, a historical study of Shenoute will have to rely, as this study does, on many of these editions. Doing anything else would render such a study the task of several lifetimes. The vast majority of the Coptic sources I have used are indeed published and edited sources, which I quote from their editions. I have checked these editions against the original manuscripts but only when dealing with crucial passages. I have also used many unpublished manuscripts, which I was able to consult through the digital images provided by Professor Tito Orlandi in Rome. These images are of variable quality. Some are excellent; others are almost unreadable. I have checked every manuscript available for any unpublished passage I quote, but the truth is that this was rarely necessary because most unpublished texts that were relevant to me were preserved in only one manuscript (for the passage in particular, not for the work as a whole). I have also read all the fragments of every work quoted here as listed by Emmel, but I have not of course read every single manuscript of Shenoute.

Given the very fragmentary condition of most of Shenoute's writings, their context—specific audience, setting, and overall purpose—is more often than not a mystery. I have provided in my text all the information available and relevant for my argument. I understand that this is not enough sometimes. Sometimes, indeed, passages are quoted without any introduction whatsoever. But the problem is this: a large number of the texts I use have no context whatsoever, no possible chronological indications. In fact, more often than not we are dealing with parts of one page of one lost manuscript, or with two or three pages of a work without beginning or end. Yet I think that I have furthered the understanding of these fragments by reading them in the context of Shenoute's care of the poor. *This*, I have argued, is the context in which these texts need to be understood.

Moreover, it has to be kept in mind that Shenoute's texts and sermons are not always thematically coherent. Sometimes he seems to jump from topic to topic like a jazz performer who regularly improvises on a limited number of themes. Knowing that several fragments belong together will, therefore, not always further their understanding.

ABBREVIATIONS

EDITIONS OF SHENOUTE'S LIFE

LA Arabic *Life* edited by Amélineau (1888) 289–478
LB Bohairic *Life* edited by Leipoldt and Crum (1906) and translated by Bell (1983)
LS1 Sahidic fragments edited by Amélineau (1888) 237–248
LS2 Sahidic fragments edited by Amélineau (1895) 633–649
LS3 Autobiographical fragments in Sahidic edited by Behlmer and Alcock (1996)
LS4 Sahidic fragments edited by Lubomierski (2007)

EDITIONS OF SHENOUTE'S WORKS

Quoting Shenoute's works presents unsolvable problems. I have always tried to give as much information as available on every quoted text, and I have followed Emmel's (2004) reconstructions of the structure of Shenoute's literary corpus. According to Emmel, Shenoute's works were organized in a series of nine volumes of "Canons" and eight volumes of "Discourses." Accordingly, I identify these works—whenever possible—by the letter C or D respectively, followed by the volume number and the work number, as established by Emmel. To this, I add the incipit of the work (as identified by Emmel) and the modern edition. Some works have been identified by Emmel, but their incipit is not known. They are known therefore as "acephalous" works. I quote them with the letter A followed by the work number as assigned by Emmel and the modern edition. Furthermore, there are works whose incipit has been preserved but cannot be assigned to any specific volume of Canons or Discourses. Accordingly, I quote them by their incipit and modern edition, when available. Whenever I quote an unpublished manuscript, I use the system of sigla established by Orlandi and Emmel. The most important modern editions are abbreviated as follows:

ShA1 Amélineau (1907)
ShA2 Amélineau (1913)
ShCh Chassinat (1911)
ShL1 Leipoldt and Crum (1908)
ShL2 Leipoldt and Crum (1913)

Finally, Shenoute's letters have been preserved only fragmentarily. I quote them with the letter L followed by a number that I have assigned arbitrarily as presented in the following list, and by their modern edition when available.

L1 Shenoute against accusers in Panopolis and governors who threaten him
MS ZM 355–356 and *ShL1*, no. 11, pp. 25–26
L2 To Theodosius *comes* and *dux*
ShL1, no. 10, p. 25 + no. 8, pp. 22–23 (?—this may be the end of the same letter)
L3 From Dorotheus *hēgemōn*
ShL1, no. 9, first part, pp. 23–24
L4 To Dorotheus *hēgemōn*
ShL1, no. 9, second part, pp. 24–25
L5 To Paulos *megaloprepestatos eparchos*
Munier (1916) 92–93
L6 Akylas (representing Lady Mendesia) to Shenoute
Wessely (1909) no. 9236 + no. 9234 (first two columns?)
L7 Shenoute (?) to Akylas (?)
Wessely (1909) no. 9234 (last two columns?)
L8 Shenoute to ?
Wessely (1909) no. 9235 (first two columns?)
L9 Shenoute to villagers
Wessely (1909) no. 9235 (last two columns?) + no. 9237 (first column)
L10 To the *prōtokōmētai* and *kephalaiōtai* of the villages of Ebod and Pepoike (?)
Munier (1916) 93–95
L11 Besa to the villagers
Kuhn (1956) no. 41, pp. 129–130
L12 From Cyril
ShL1, Additamenta Ia, p. 225
L13 From Cyril
ShL1, Additamenta Ib, pp. 225–226
L14 From Cyril
ShL1, Additamenta Ic, p. 226
L15 From Disocorus + Memorandum to bishops
Thompson (1922) (incomplete) + Munier (1916) 146–149
L16 To Dioscorus (?) or Cyril (?)
MS ZG 297–298 + Young (1993) 174–175
L17 To Dioscorus
ShL1, no. 1, p. 13 (incomplete) + Young (1993) 175
L18 To Timothy
ShL1, no. 2, pp. 13–14

L19 To Timothy
ShL1, no. 3, p. 14 (initial fragment) + Munier (1916) 95–96
L20 To archbishop ?
ShL1, no. 4, pp. 14–15
L21 To clerics of Ptolemais
ShL1, no. 5, pp. 15–16
L22 Shenoute (?) recommending priest and archimandrite Abdiesous
MS HD 341–342 + ZG 349–350 + Kuhn (1956) no. 40, p. 129
L23 Shenoute (?) to monk/bishop (?)
Wessely (1909) no. 9237 (last three columns)

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

CJ Codex Justinianus
CTh Codex Theodosianus

Papyri are cited according to the abbreviations in the *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, edited by J.F. Oates, R.S. Bagnall, S.J. Clackson, A.A. O'Brien, J.D. Sosin, T.G. Wilfong, and K.A. Worp, which can be found online at http://library.duke.edu/Rubenstein/scriptorium/papyrus/texts/clist.html.

PG Migne, J.P. 1857–1866. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*. Paris.
PL Migne, J.P. 1844–1855. *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina*. Paris.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. All the places mentioned in this book can be found on maps 1 and 2.

2. Bell (1983) 9. Cf. Leipoldt (1903) 53, 60, 76, 102; and A. Veilleux's preface to Bell (1983).

3. I have to disagree with Jean-Luc Fournet and Jean Gascou (2002), who argue that Pachomian monasticism was characterized by an aggressive, antipagan missionary zeal. The only evidence for this would be the participation of Pachomian monks from the Metanoia monastery near Alexandria in the destruction of a pagan shrine at Menouthis in the late fifth century; Zacharias Scholasticus, *Life of Severus*, in Kugener (1907) 29. I have no doubt that the Metanoia monastery (and many other monasteries around Alexandria) must have been very involved in Alexandrian life, but the pagan shrine of Menouthis, located in the neighborhood of the Metanoia monastery, had been active for almost a century without apparently causing any uproar among the zealous monks. It had to be "discovered" by the monks of Henaton, a monastery located very far from this area, and the archbishop Peter Mongus had to invite the monks of Metanoia to take part in the desecration. The Metanoia monastery itself was located in or near the old temple of Canopos, but, again, this temple (and the Serapeum of Alexandria) had been destroyed before the archbishop Theophilus invited the Pachomians to found a new monastery there. Neither Pachomius nor Theodore nor Horsiese are attributed any anti-pagan actions in the Pachomian sources. Shenoute's missionary zeal, in other words, was a novelty.

4. Chitty (1966) 46; the title of his third chapter is "The World Breaks In."

5. See Krawiec (2002); Brakke (2006) and (2007); Schroeder (2006) and (2007). Scholarly research on Shenoute has moved exceptionally fast since 2000. Many of the studies quoted in this book were not available to me while doing my initial research.

6. *P. Oxy*. XLVIII 3400. Papnuthis was simultaneously an assistant to a magistrate in charge of collecting taxes (*boēthos*) and the steward of his properties (*pronoētēs*).

See Bagnall (1993) 158–160 on the confusion between these two roles. (See the list of abbreviations for the abbreviations used in this book to cite the evidence—papyri and, above all, biographies and works of Shenoute.)

7. *CPR* V 9 (339 C.E.); *CPR* XVIIA 9b (320 C.E.). Other references in Bagnall (1993) 171 n. 125. Cf. also *SB* VI 9527 (a late fourth-century complaint of a *pronoētēs* of the Alexandrian church accusing two village *pronoētai* who—with "daring and audacity"—refuse to come up to the city to render their accounts of church property located in their village); *P. Oxy*. I 67 (a civic councilor of Oxyrhynchus accusing in 338 C.E. two villagers of "oppressing" him and of encroaching on his property); *P. Col*. VIII 242 (a tax collector complaining of violent villagers in fifth-century Karanis); Ammianus Marcellinus 22.16, in Hamilton (1986) 254, on the stubbornness of the Egyptians: "It puts a man to the blush if he cannot exhibit a number of weals incurred by refusing to pay tribute." Evidence outside Egypt: Libanius, *Oration* 47.13, in Norman (1977) 512–513; *Life of Porphyry* 22, in Hill (1913) 29; *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* 75–76, in Dawes and Baynes (1948) 139–140; Theodoret, letter 113, in Azéma (1965) 62–63. Cf. Justinian, *Nov*. 80.2, mentioning the farmers (*agricolae*) who come to Constantinople to accuse their landowners. For a striking parallel in contemporary North Africa, see now the remarkable study of Dossey (2010).

8. Intervillage conflicts: Palladius, *Lausiac History* 31, in Meyer (1964) 90–91; *History of the Monks of Egypt* 8.31–32 and 36 in Russell (1981) 74–75; Shenoute's letters L9, in Wessely (1909) no. 9235 (last two columns?) + no. 9237 (first column); L10, in Munier (1916) 93–95; Besa's letter L11, in Kuhn (1956) vol. 1, no. 41, pp. 129–130; Moses of Abydos, in Amélineau (1895) 705–706; *P. Oxy*. XVI 1831 (late 5th c.); XVI 1833 (late 5th c.); XVI 1853 (6th/7th c.); XIX 2233 (350 C.E.); *Chrest. Wilck*. 23 (early 5th c.); *P. Sakaon* 39 (318 C.E.). The death of several well-known Fayum villages during the fourth and early fifth centuries (see Van Minnen [1995]) may be an extreme consequence of such intervillage conflicts. These villages seem to have died out due to the scarcity of water provoked by other villages situated further upstream. This could never have happened in the early third century, when Alexandrian aristocrats owned large properties in those villages. Water distribution was a perennial issue in the Fayum, but it seems to have become unmanageable only in the fourth and fifth centuries. See Rathbone (1991) 219–228 on the role of great estates in maintaining the irrigation system, and Rathbone (1998) 1116–1117 on their role in the recolonization of these villages in the sixth century. Intravillage conflicts: *PSI* I 71 (6th c.); *P. Cair. Goodsp*. 15 (363 C.E.); *P. Kell*. I 23 (353 C.E.); *LB* 14–16 in Bell (1983) 46–47; the archive of Aurelius Isidorus contains many good examples of these tensions and conflicts inside villages, e.g., *P. Cair. Isid*. 73 (314 C.E.), 74 (315 C.E.), 126 (308/9 C.E.), 128 (314 C.E.). *P. Cair. Masp*. II 67143 (mid-6th c.) is a long "list of people [i.e., villagers] to be accused" belonging to Dioscorus of Aphrodito; on this text, see Ruffini (2008a) 161. These criminals are known to Dioscorus because they have been denounced by other villagers whose names he also records. One of those denouncers figures at the same time among the persons "to be accused"!

9. Bagnall (1993) 137; Tate (1992) 65–84, 215–224. Cf. also the contrast between the collective irrigation techniques used in the Negev in the Nabataean period and the private cisterns of late Roman times. Leslie Dossey has argued that a similar development was taking place in contemporary North Africa. See particularly Dossey (2010) 122: "In short, at a time when North African rural communities were at their peak of wealth and cultural integration, they reached their nadir of recognized self-government."

10. On solidarity and Egyptian monasticism: Brown (1978) chap. 4; on holy men as mediators: Brown (1971).

11. See, e.g., Blackman (2000) chap. 8.

12. Brown (1989) 10, evoking the title of R. Syme's famous study of the Roman (i.e., Augustan) revolution.

13. The central role of the Roman state in shaping the economy and society of the empire has been stressed by Mazzarino (1951), Hopkins (1980), and Wickham (1984).

14. Brown (1978).

15. The imperial law of 370 against patronage (*CTh* 11.24.2) makes this connection between illegal patronage and the "audacious schemes" contrived by farmers (*agricolae*) explicit. There is little *explicit* evidence for rural patronage in the papyri (see Bagnall [1993] 214–225 and Rathbone [2008]), yet there are numerous laws against it and several of them refer explicitly to Egypt. Rural patronage is the kind of relationship that is unlikely to be mentioned explicitly in documents, both because it was illegal and because it went without saying. The issue of patronage will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

16. A particularly clear statement of this fundamental fact can be found in Finley (1981). On the "capillary" presence of the state, see Wickham (2005) 418.

17. Cf. Mazzarino (1951) 209–210: "Le grandi città tendono a divorare le piccole." See also Liebeschuetz (2001) chap. 2.

18. *P. Hamb.* III 230, 7–11 (ca. 565 C.E.): "We submit to the office [of the provincial governor] our payment through our own tax-collector without paying anything to Antaeopolis."

19. Fournet (1999) 464–465.

20. Such a threat was particularly serious in Egypt where many of the settlements that ancient documents and modern scholars call "cities" were such only in name. With only a few exceptions—Oxyrhynchus, Hermopolis, Antinoe, Herakleopolis, Athribis, Arsinoe, and perhaps Panopolis—the "cities" of Roman Egypt were, structurally speaking, temple towns that had very little in common with Graeco-Roman cities. The difference between such "cities" and large "villages"—such as Aphrodito—was, above all, a legal status and the control over large areas of the countryside that derived from it. A curious passage in the "History of the Church of Alexandria" (Johnson [1976] 10–11) claims that in order to gain popularity for his "Nestorian" views in Egypt, the emperor Marcian promised that no "assistants" would come to the villages in order to collect taxes. Only the *pagarch*—the urban magistrate in charge of tax collecting—would collect the taxes and send them to the provincial governor. This seems to me to be an attempt to gain popularity among the urban elites by curbing the practice of *autopragia*, that is, the right held by some villages to collect their own taxes and send them directly to the provincial government. On city sizes in Egypt, see Tacoma (2006) chap. 2.

21. The best study on Dioscorus is Fournet (1999). Cf. Zuckerman (2004b) 90 on the outcome of this conflict: "An affair that starts, in 548, as the struggle of a village united behind its representatives, becomes, towards 551, a legal dispute opposing two village families." In other words, "vertical" relations of rural patronage end up destroying the "horizontal" solidarity of the village elite. See also Ruffini (2008a) on factionalism within Aphrodito.

22. See Tate (1992) and Tchalenko (1953–1958) for northern Syria; Varinlioğlu (2007) for Isauria; Villeneuve (1985) for southern Syria (the Hauran); and, on this phenomenon in general, Dagron (1979). Mango (1986) xiii-xiv shows that nearly all the inscribed ecclesiastical

silver treasures of late antiquity "fall into the category of donations to, or property of, village churches."

23. The 2005 Middle Egypt Survey conducted by Sarah Parcak found that "99% of the collected and photographed material culture dated the sites to the Late Roman period, ca. 300–800 A.D." "Results from the ground-truthing survey have shown the increased archeological importance of the area between Malawi and Dairut, namely during the Late Roman Period." I have read these reports on the Amarna Project website, but they have disappeared in the meantime. A very brief report on these surveys can be found in Parcak (2007). Evidence for village independence and prosperity in Egypt: Van Minnen and Gagos (1992); Hickey (2007) 298 (on the wealth of village headmen); Keenan (2007) 231–232. In the fourth century we have more evidence for villagers buying land from urban landowners than the opposite; Bagnall (1993) 72 n. 169, and also p. 149. A fifth-century account signed by the bishop of the small town of Apollonopolis Parva mentions the otherwise-unknown village of Taniathis, containing no less than ten churches and "diverse monasteries"; Wipszycka (1972) 125–129. A fifth- or sixth-century catalogue of church property belonging to the unknown church of Apa Psois in the village of Ibion mentions twenty-one parchment codices, three silver chalices, a marble altar, and many bronze and iron objects; *P. Grenf*. II 111, translated and analyzed by Mango (1986) 263–264. A sixth-century tax register from the village of Temseu-Skordon shows that this was a substantial village with a completely monetized economy; see Bagnall, Keenan, and MacCoull (2011). These are all isolated details, it is true, but they suggest that the death of several Fayum villages in this period was the exception rather than the rule, that the prosperous village of Aphrodito was not an aberration in Egypt, and that Egypt was not an aberration in the Near East, where villages thrive in this period.

24. Laurens Tacoma (2006) has argued in an interesting study—aptly entitled *Fragile Hierarchies*—that these traditional elites were subject to a cyclical social mobility that rendered the establishment of durable dynasties impossible. Cf., however, the reservations of Ruffini (2007).

25. Banaji (2001); Sarris (2006). For Egyptian examples of civic councilors becoming important imperial officers, see Palme (2005) and (2008a). The first known members of the aristocratic Apion family were civic councilors of Oxyrhynchus; Sarris (2006) 18.

26. Zuckerman (2004a) 221–222 has argued that Aphrodito was by no means a paradise for small landholders. Large estates were located near the village, and part of its population worked for them. The presence of these estates was not, therefore, an impediment to a vigorous village life and may even have contributed to it by providing new economic opportunities: seasonal employment for the rural workers, and managerial activities for the village elite. See, however, Bagnall's caveats regarding Zuckerman's theory in Bagnall (2008b) 188. This issue will be discussed in further detail in chapter 3.

27. These official titles found in documents are one of the main pieces of evidence used by Banaji (2001) and Sarris (2006) to study the emergence of a provincial aristocracy in the fifth and sixth centuries. If instead of measuring all these imperial dignities by comparing them to a hypothetical "degree zero," we compare them to the constantly rising epithets of the governor of the Thebaid (a relatively low office in the imperial administration), we might get a more realistic image of what is happening in Egypt in this period, and we would see that many of these "aristocrats" were far less powerful and rich than Sarris (2006) has

argued. Cf. Jones, Martindale, and Morris (1971–1992) vol. 3, p. vii on grade inflation and p. 101 for the village assistant who was a *clarissimus*.

28. Two examples: Sijpesteijn (1976) on the Tiberii Iulii Theones, a powerful Alexandrian family that owned estates around Oxyrhynchus and Hermopolis and that can be traced from the first century B.C.E. to the third century C.E.; Rathbone (1991) on the wine-producing estates in the Fayum owned by Appianus (also an Alexandrian magistrate) in the third century C.E. On these elites, see Tacoma (2006) 140–150.

29. Cf. Fournet (1999) 327–329. The best description of this aristocracy I know of can be found in the sixth-century encomium on Colluthus, the local martyr of Antinoe. Colluthus's father is described in very contemporary terms as the ideal Christian aristocrat of southern Egypt. See Isaac of Antinoe, *Encomium on Colluthus* 12–15, 29, 33, in Thompson (1993) vol. 47 (Coptic text), pp. 51–52, 56, 58; vol. 48 (English translation), pp. 40–41, 43, 45–46. Further evidence of this aristocracy and its imperial lifestyle is the spectacular treasure found somewhere near Antinoe and published by Dennison (1918). The total weight of the treasure is the equivalent of at least 666 gold *solidi*. Cf. also Mazza (2005) and Fournet (1999) 271 n. 175 on the celebration of the Brumalia, a Constantinopolitan festival, by the aristocratic family of the Apions in Oxyrhynchus, a festival "in which the landlord behaves like the emperor of Constantinople."

30. Libanius, *Oration* 47.13, in Norman (1977) 512–513.

31. Libanius, *Oration* 47.7–8, in Norman (1977) 506–507.

32. Libanius, Oration 47.22, in Norman (1977) 520–521.

33. Brown (2008). Even Syriac literature, the product of a very self-confident literary tradition, is no exception to this process of Romanization and Hellenization. As Syriac expands from its original heartland in Edessa, so does the influence of Greek on it, particularly from the sixth to the eighth century. An impressive "Eastern Hellenism" develops during these centuries in northern Syria and Mesopotamia, which makes Syriac the privileged vehicle for the transmission of Greek literature to the Islamic world. See Taylor (2002), particularly p. 316 (on the spread of Syriac in the villages of northern Syria) and 330 (on the influence of Greek on Syriac); Brock (1997) 159. On this "Eastern Hellenism," see Brown (2003) 310–313.

34. Bowman and Rathbone (1992) 125.

35. This was more self-presentation than reality. Van Minnen (1998) argues that the main owners of Greek literature in the villages of the Fayum were actually Egyptian priests. Many of these Egyptian priests seem to have appealed to what David Frankfurter (1998) 224–237 has called "stereotype appropriation," a common strategy in intercultural contact. Greeks and Romans were interested not so much in the real, contemporary Egypt, as in the exotic, millenarian, and mysterious wisdom of a priestly class. This is, therefore, what the Egyptians—however Hellenized they may have been—gave them. The so-called Hermetic literature may be the product of such a situation.

36. See, in general, the excellent study of Bowman and Rathbone (1992).

37. In this respect, the contrast between the Nile valley and Syria during the first three centuries of the Roman Empire is remarkable and instructive. See Sartre (2005) 284–291 on the vibrant intellectual life of Syria during this period.

38. Cameron (1965) is still the best study of the Egyptian poets. In late antiquity, a local poetic tradition developed in southern Egypt that translated local realities—such as the

conflicts with the Blemmyes, the "barbarians" who threatened the southern border—into Homeric hexameters. See Fournet (1999) 262.

39. *P. Kell.* I 67. Cf. also the fragments of the *Aeneid* and a Greek-Latin glossary for the poem dating to the sixth century that have been discovered in Nessana, a village in the southern Negev: Sivan (2008) 86.

40. Narmouthis (in the Fayum) and Kellis (in the Dakhleh oasis). A Manichaean letter from Kellis (*P. Kell. Copt.* 20) describes a "great [Manichaean] teacher" as traveling in Egypt in the company of a boy who is learning Latin from him.

41. Fournet (1999) is a brilliant study of these poetical petitions.

42. Beaucamp (2007); Richter (2008) proves in detail that Coptic legal documents derive from late Roman ones written in Greek and not from Demotic ones, which had disappeared many centuries before Coptic even began to be used for legal documentation, and belong to a completely different social and cultural world.

43. This is the so-called Budge Papyrus: Schiller (1968) 88–89; Beaucamp (2007) 277. See also Palme (2008b) and Van Minnen (1994). Further revealing details attest to the thorough Romanization of Egypt during this period: the replacement of beer with wine as the staple drink (Bagnall [1993] 32); the wide diffusion of imitations of African late Roman pottery for tableware (McNally and Schrunk [2000], especially p. 101, fig. 6); and the "contamination" of Greek writing with Latinate letter forms, which leads, eventually, to the development of the Byzantine minuscule (Cavallo [2009] 135–136).

44. Cf. Dossey (2010) on the parallel case of contemporary North Africa, particularly p. 8: "Rural populations were not asserting a separate indigenous culture in the fourth century, but in fact sharing more of the same commodities, community structures, and Bible stories than ever before. This was not a 'resurgence of indigenism' but rather a spread to the countryside of objects and cultural forms previously exclusive to the towns. And this very integration was a source of social tension."

45. C9.1, "God who alone is true," in *ShL2*, no. 71, pp. 99–100.

46. Shenoute never mentions Gesios by name. Except for a lost work of Shenoute, which apparently started by quoting a letter from his enemy (Emmel [2004] 239), the name "Gesios" appears only in the later biography of Shenoute (*LB* 88; trans. Bell, p. 67). As far as we know, Shenoute himself refers to Gesios only with paraphrases, such as "he who does not deserve to be named here," "that hostile man," and "that godless man." Such vague references leave some room for doubt. Does Shenoute always mean the same person? This study assumes he does, for Shenoute's criticisms of this man agree very well with what is said of Gesios in Shenoute's Life, and they are so repetitive and consistent that it is virtually certain that they all refer to the same person. Shenoute could afford never to mention that dangerous man by name because everyone knew to whom he was referring.

47. D4.10, "God is Blessed," in *ShCh*, pp. 188–189. Shenoute adds that there are still some "like him" alive.

48. Emmel (2004); Layton (2007) 66. This distinction between "Canons" and "Discourses" is not always consistently maintained .

49. A brief description of the sources used in this study (both biographies of Shenoute and his own works), their problems, and my approach in dealing with them can be found in appendix B.

50. Lucchesi (1981); *SB* III 6311.

51. This is clear in D4.9, "Blessed are they who observe justice," in *ShCh*, pp. 126–153; D4.6, "Many words and things I said," in du Bourguet (1958); D8.19, "I answered," in *ShL1*, no. 12, pp. 26–30; D8.20, "And after a few days," in *ShL1*, no. 13, pp. 30–32. Shenoute's role as translator is explicitly acknowledged in L15 (in Thompson [1922]), a (Greek) letter and memorandum from the archbishop Dioscorus that asks Shenoute to have the documented translated so that everyone can understand it.

52. I disagree on this point with Frankfurter (1998) chap. 6.

53. See, for example, their collections of magical spells, which include even rarities like Nubian spells in vocalized Demotic (Dieleman [2005] 37), or their religious hymns written on temple walls using only the variants of a single hieroglyphic sign.

54. Layton (2004) 12.

55. Until the sixth century the use of Coptic in documents was reserved for private, informal, and unofficial communications between socially homogeneous speakers or for letters to and from monks; see on this Fournet (2007) 430–445. These documents were written in bookish, uncial hands as if they were school texts or literary compositions, whereas their counterparts in Greek were written in a cursive writing full of ligatures. This is true even for a well-trained notary such as Dioscorus of Aphrodito in the late sixth century; see Fournet (1999) 245.

56. Cf. Fournet's (1999) similar arguments about the poetry of Dioscorus of Aphrodito.

57. As explained in appendix B, Shenoute's biography is not an individual work but comprises a group of closely related texts and fragments that collect episodes and stories from his life. As Lubomierski (2007) has shown, these texts probably derive from encomia composed in honor of Shenoute by later monks at his monastery, among them Besa himself. Although most of the texts we have are attributed to Besa, it is unclear how much of our text actually derives from him and not from later reworkings and expansions. Lubomierski is more skeptical than I am. She claims that Besa's name is simply a later addition. I am not convinced, and I have therefore chosen to retain his name as one of the sources of information on Shenoute's life. See appendix B for more detail. The reader should keep this caveat in mind every time I mention Shenoute's "biography" and Besa as its author. "Besa" stands in this context for "Besa and later monks at Shenoute's monastery."

58. For what follows, see in general Brown (2002) and, among many other books devoted to this issue, Holman (2001).

59. Brown (1992) 94.

60. Schmitt (2007) 26: "Let us assume that in the realm of morality the final distinctions are between good and evil, in aesthetics beautiful and ugly, in economics profitable and unprofitable. . . . The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy."

61. The *Life of John the Almsgiver*, a biography of the seventh-century patriarch of Alexandria, is the only other important source regarding the care of the poor in Egypt, but it belongs to a very different historical and cultural background. On this biography, see Déroche (1995).

62. A character as different from Shenoute as Alexander the Sleepless, for example, spent his time in Antioch "taking care of the destitute poor," attending to the construction of a hospice, courageously reproaching the military governor and the bishop for their faults,

and demanding from the rich to give to the poor; *Life of Alexander the Sleepless*, in Caner (2002) 272. Shenoute would have done no less.

63. Callinicus, *Life of Hypatius* 13.1–4, in Bartelink (1971) 120–123.

64. Patlagean (1997) 16 and 23. From the middle of the fifth century onward, Patlagean argues, Christian rhetoric comes to be dominated by theological issues, which play a relatively minor role in Shenoute's writings; but see Schroeder (2007) chap. 4.

65. See the discussion in appendix A.

66. Millar (2006).

1. LOYAL OPPOSITION

1. Emmel (2004) 20.

2. See Lubomierski (2007) chap. 5 for the biographies' dependence on Shenoute's works. On the biographies in general and their problems, see appendix B.

3. Hence the importance of Emmel's reconstruction of the original structure of this corpus.

4. C9.1, "God who alone is true," in *ShA2*, p. 533. The previous title calls this volume a "gift (ϫⲁⲣⲓⲥ) of Shenoute," i.e., for his community. According to Emmel (2004) 599, however, Shenoute's "departure" might refer not to his death but to his trip to the Council of Ephesus. We do not have evidence that Shenoute's *Discourses* were also collected into volumes by Shenoute himself, yet the introductory titles to these discourses show that whoever collected them—if not Shenoute—was in close contact with him and had access to information about those discourses not available in the discourses themselves (perhaps his disciple and successor Besa?). Shenoute's *Canons* were to be read aloud at his monasteries four times a year. As Emmel (2008b) 38 puts it, "We can say that Shenoute literally 'canonized' his own writings."

5. *ShA2*, p. 131; D4.9, "Blessed are they who observe justice," in *ShCh*, p. 129 (trans. Foat [1993] 119); C9.1, "God who alone is true," in *ShL2*, no. 71, pp. 99–100. There are many other examples of this self-referential use of the third person.

6. Harboring thieves: L3–4, in *ShL1*, no. 9, pp. 23–25 (and probably A7 in Crum [1905] 80, col. b, ll. 1–17); gathering men to fight and giving them bread: D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, p. 95; harboring men (probably deserters): L2, in *ShL1*, no. 10, p. 25; making demands of tenants, maltreating the poor, and helping murderers: L6–7: Wessely (1909) no. 9236 (39c) + no. 9234 (39a); breaking into his enemy's house: D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 39; D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GF 260 and "Let our eyes" (on this text, see chapter 4 in this book); slaughtering cows and pigs: D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 42; turning the heart of the poor away from their pagan masters: D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GF 260; stealing books: D8.20, "And after a few days," in *ShL1*, no. 13, p. 32; being violent: D8.18, "And furthermore I think," in MS ZD 195–197; gathering crowds: *ShL1*, no. 28, pp. 90–92; destroying temples and causing tumults: *ShL1*, no. 28, pp. 90–92; plundering a village: "Only I tell everyone who dwells in this village," in *ShL1*, no. 26, pp. 86–90; doing violence to his own monks: C4.1, "Why oh Lord," in *ShL1*, no. 40, p. 37.

7. Cameron (1965); cf. also the articles collected in Egberts, Muhs, and Van der Vliet (2002); and chapter 4 in this book. Lefebvre (1907) no. 325 is the (poetical) epitaph of one of the grammarians who must have taught at Panopolis; D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in

ShA2, p. 134; *ShA1*, p. 386. On Aristophanes in late antiquity: Marrou (1956) 163; Fournet (1999) 680.

8. *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 54–55, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, pp. 74–76; Lefort (1956) vol. 23, p. 101 (trans. in vol. 24, p. 103). On Madaura, see Augustine's letters 16, 17, and 232; and Brown (2000) 26.

9. L15, in Munier (1916) no. 9258, p. 148, a letter from archbishop Dioscorus to Shenoute mentions the "former temple of Panopolis" and implies that it has been converted into a church or monastery. The letter also mentions the "Great Church of Panopolis" (Thompson [1922] 372). The bishop of Panopolis is mentioned in this letter and in the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 54, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, p. 73, where he invites Pachomius to found a monastery outside the city. Eventually three Pachomian monasteries would be established around the city (*Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 57 in Veilleux [1980–1982] vol. 1, pp. 77–78; Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 32, in Meyer (1964) 94, claims to describe one of them), to which we need to add the three monasteries of Shenoute on the other side of the Nile. *SB* XXIV 16000, dating to the very early fourth century, already mentions (in line 103) a Christian church in Panopolis, and *P. Dubl.* 31 (355 C.E.) mentions the "Encampment of the Christians" apparently as the name of an area of the city (this same area is mentioned in Dioscorus's letter as a monastery). The Coptic dialect spoken around the area of Panopolis (usually called Akhmimic or Panopolitan) was used, alongside the standard Sahidic, to write Christian literature in the fourth and fifth centuries. Innumerable Christian texts, in Greek and Coptic (Akhmimic and Sahidic), are known or thought to come from Panopolis. Many of them clearly point to a school as the context for their use and production. See Fournet (1992).

10. The introduction to the sermon D1–3.4, "As I sat on a mountain," in *ShL1*, no. 18, p. 44 states that the rich and local elite (*archontes*) were attending Shenoute's sermon and mocking a pagan philosopher who was also at church; in D8.19, "I answered," in *ShL1*, no. 12, pp. 26–30, Shenoute talks to Caesarius, the military governor, and to other "rulers of the city"; in A26, in Behlmer (1996), Shenoute preaches to (and threatens) the rich of Panopolis (p. 114: "But you [pl.], the rich sitting here, don't you see the tears of the poor flowing down their cheeks? See, you are weeping in your compassion and you see me too, how sad I am. So pay attention to them with your philanthropy, oh rich!"); A4 also proves that Shenoute has often preached to the elite and the rich (in MS WW 25, Shenoute recalls how he has taught the elite many times at church; they have promised to stop sinning with tears flowing down their cheeks); similarly A1, in *ShA2*, p. 468 ("rich citizens and magistrates"); "Let our eyes," in MS WW 33–34 shows that even Gesios himself occasionally listened to Shenoute's preaching and thereby incurred his fury; in *LB* 68–69 (trans. Bell, pp. 61–62), the rich of Panopolis are depicted visiting Shenoute; in *LA*, p. 391, they defend Shenoute from accusations; in *LB* 5 (trans. Bell, p. 43), the rulers of Panopolis are taught by Shenoute's uncle Pjol; in *LB* 124 (trans. Bell, p. 77), Shenoute's secretary hears voices and thinks Shenoute might be talking to the rulers of Panopolis.

11. *LA*, p. 363.

12. "Let our eyes," in MS ZJ 27.

13. D8.30, "Those who work evil," in *ShA1*, p. 215 ("We have not seen a *martyrium* [ⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ] built over bones inside a church except only at the church of Panopolis"). Shenoute does not attack the martyr cult as such, only the "excesses" that he sees associated with it. Digging up the bones from a grave in order to install them inside a church was

for him one of those abuses of a legitimate practice. *Martyria* and churches had to be kept separate. His complaint is similar to the imperial law preserved in *CTh* 9.17.7 (386). In the Eastern Empire, the cult of the martyrs and episcopal power were in fact never fused as they were in the West (cf. Brown [1981] 10). Eventually (in the late sixth and seventh centuries), the martyr cult was taken over but by monasteries, not by bishops. See Papaconstantinou (2007); and, in general on the cult of the saints in Egypt, Papaconstantinou (2001).

14. *LS4*, p. 7 (trans. p. 15).

15. "Let our eyes," in MS WW 29.

16. D4.10, "God is Blessed," in *ShCh*, pp. 188–189.

17. L1, in *ShL1*, no. 11, pp. 25–26. In this and all other sources quoted in this book, italics are always mine.

18. Letters I.226 (*PG* 78:324B), II.25 (*PG* 78:473).

19. Gaddis (2005) 194 n. 168, quoting Arendt (1970) 66. Such double-talk, Arendt argues, is characteristic of "holy violence."

20. These are extracts from Shenoute's discourse D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GF 260, 263–264. The "man worthy of the curse" is his archenemy Gesios, as the accusations show.

21. D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 39.

22. D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 94–95.

23. "Only I tell everyone who dwells in this village," in *ShL1*, no. 26, pp. 86–90; *ShL1* no. 28, pp. 90–92. On these texts and their context, see chapter 4.

24. *Oration* 30.12, in Norman (1977) 112–113. It is fascinating to see how much Libanius's portrait of his enemies and Shenoute's portrait of himself resemble each other.

25. C2, in Kuhn (1956) 120–121 (Coptic); 116–117 (English): "These things I say weeping, even as I have wept many times before today and still now, the Lord being witness. And also our little brother who writes these words is witness, being thus troubled and weeping also, seeing me weep, my tears flowing over cheeks and down upon the ground . . . I often weep until I can no longer." Cf. also Besa, frag. 38, in Kuhn (1956) 126 (Coptic); 121 (English): "We know the sufferings which you (i.e., Shenoute) have endured on this hill. We know your love for the poor."

26. See Krawiec (2002), Schroeder (2006), and Brakke (2007) on this aspect of Shenoute's self-presentation.

27. See Schroeder (2006) on this "gendering of reality."

28. See Lubomierski (2007); and appendix B.

29. *LB* 129 (trans. Bell, p. 78). Libanius would have called it "deliberate lack of self-control"; *Oration* 30.21, in Norman (1977) 120–121.

30. *LB* 81–82 (trans. Bell, pp. 65–66); 128–130 (trans. Bell, pp. 78–79); *LS1*, pp. 237–240.

31. The best example of this confusion between language and reality has to be Shenoute's description of a vision he once had of himself fighting the devil at his monastery (C9.5, "In the night," in *ShL1*, no. 16, pp. 37–38). Many scholars, starting with Leipoldt (1903) 151, have taken this description for an actual fight between the monk and a Roman magistrate. See Bell (1983) 12; Van der Vliet (1992); Hahn (2004) 223–269 and Lefort (1955) 41: "À un homme aussi extraordinaire on ne peut appliquer les normes d'appréciation applicables au commun des mortels." On this text, see now the very different interpretation of Brakke (2006) 36–37.

32. As shown by the famous and often-quoted passages of Eunapius and Libanius. See Brown (1992) 72.

33. E.g., Shenoute's constant reference to the complaints of those who had been expelled from his monastery: C4.1, "Why oh Lord," in *ShL1*, no. 40, pp. 116–151; C6.1, "He who sits upon his throne," in *ShA2*, p. 305.

34. Geertz (1983) 121.

35. I borrow this concept from Assmann's (2006) study of the ancient Egyptian idea of Ma'at. The notion of "vertical solidarity" describes more than merely a social ideal in the late antique Near East. It highlights a key aspect of social relations in late antiquity, starting with the structure of the new "service aristocracy," whose members earned their status not through their membership in corporate groups but through their service to the emperor. This is why the only thing the senates of Constantinople and Rome ever had in common was their name. On the language of "vertical solidarity," see Brown (2002) chap. 3.

36. Shenoute on the emperors: "Let our eyes," in MSS WW 27 and ZJ 28 (the righteous emperors fight against paganism); MS ZJ 43 (the Christian emperors deserve every honor); A16, in MS XZ 65 (the emperor offers him money); D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 42 (Shenoute threatens his enemies with going to the emperors); *ShA2*, pp. 132–133 (righteous emperors vs. oppressive landowners); D4.9, "Blessed are those who observe justice," in *ShCh*, p. 129 (his fame at the imperial court); D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in *ShA2*, p. 135; A7, in Crum (1905) 80, col. b (God could easily destroy the oppressors of the poor, but he prefers to give an opportunity to those he loves that they may become emperors and destroy them); D4.3, "A beloved asked me years ago," in *ShCh*, p. 9 (pious emperors will destroy the pagans). It should also be noted here that Shenoute never mentions the Council of Chalcedon, where the archbishops of Alexandria were defeated by a party supported by the emperor, and that—as far as I know—he complains of taxes only once.

37. A. Donini, quoted in Mazzarino (1974) 168 n. 43.

38. Kelly (1998); Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry of Gaza* 47; Brown (2002) 97–112. The massive influence of imperial on Christian art is well known.

39. D4.9, "Blessed are those who observe justice," in *ShCh*, p. 129.

40. A16, in MS XZ 65.

41. *LB* 53–67 (trans. Bell, pp. 57–61).

42. *Arab-Jacobite Synaxary*, Hathyr 21, in Basset (1909) 326; Van Lantschoot (1934) 41.

43. Brown (2002) 81.

44. Feissel and Worp (1988). The military governor who received the imperial reply to this petition was probably a certain Andreas named by Shenoute as one of his "friends." See Zuckerman (2004a) 148.

45. Bell and Crum (1925) 179.

46. Fournet (1999) 318; Zuckerman (2004b).

47. In D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 42, Shenoute mentions how his enemy Gesios mocks his constant threats to go to the emperor.

48. *LB* 76 (trans. Bell, p. 64). Rea (1984) edits a fifth- or sixth-century text from Egypt that may be the draft for a petition. This text is a perfect illustration of Shenoute's position: an "archi-monk" petitions the emperors on behalf of the poor of his province who are being oppressed by the civic councilors of an unnamed city.

49. *LB* 80 (trans. Bell, p. 65).

50. D8.18, "And furthermore I think," in MS ZD 195–197. The *comitatus* is the imperial court.

51. Military governors (*comes* and/or *dux*): Chossoroas, Jovinus, Theodotos, Andreas, Caesarius, Chryssipos, Aidesios, Theodosius, and Heraklius; civilian governors: Ailianos, Alexander, Dioskorides, Dorotheos, Peter, Flavianus, Heraklammon, Taurinos, and Marcellinus; Augustal prefect: Paulos; "*Comes* of the empress": Spudasios. Unfortunately, only two of these magistrates are known from documentary sources.

52. Liebeschuetz (2001) 12. In many areas, the structure of the Christian church acted as a counterweight to this tendency of provincial capitals to absorb the cultural life of the whole province. The simple fact that every city needed a bishop, but no city could have more than one meant that many individuals with large reserves of economic and cultural capital had no choice but to become bishops in small towns in the middle of nowhere. Gregory of Nyssa and Theodoret of Cyrrhus are good examples. In their small towns, these bishops became large-scale patrons and made their cities "live." They also discovered, in their new provincial homes, all sorts of homegrown, "heretical" varieties of Christianity that had existed for centuries. I do not know, however, of any examples of this in Egypt.

53. Roueché (1998) 34.

54. D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, p. 106.

55. These are letters L2–4, in *ShL1*, nos. 8–10 (no. 8 may be the end of no. 10), pp. 23–25. The military governors accuse Shenoute of harboring some thieves who have stolen gold from a *scholastikos* (no. 9, probably referring to a law similar to *CTh* 9.40.16, from the year 398, explicitly condemning those monks whose *vis, usurpatio*, and *audacia* protect criminals from the authorities), and probably of harboring deserters (no. 10).

56. Cf. also the interesting text contained in MS ZJ 43–44, where Shenoute complains that unlike the pious emperors, many if not most magistrates sell justice for money. Great courtiers are also accused of selling offices for "treasures" without first checking whether the new officials are Christians and not pagans or heretics, whether they will "fight against the enemies of the empire," and whether they will be righteous toward the poor. D6.2, "Now the things we said before suffice," in MS ZM 391, also mentions a corrupt governor.

57. D8.20, "And after a few days," in *ShL1*, no. 13, p. 32; A7, in Crum (1905) 80, col. b, ll. 1–17 and MS TY frag. 3. That this last text refers to Gesios is clear from Shenoute's accusations. What is not clear is who the men are whose release is obtained by Shenoute.

58. The text is fragmentary at the beginning, and it is impossible to be certain about the role of this philosopher. Philosophers, it is well known, were the emblematic rivals of monks and bishops in their interaction with the imperial authorities. The most famous case is that of Shenoute's contemporary Hypatia in Alexandria and her rivalry with the archbishop Cyril that ended with her death.

59. This "you" has to be either a high imperial functionary or a member of the elite of Antinoe.

60. The tribune of the Cusites is probably the commander of the Legio II Flavia Constantia Thebaeorum stationed in Cusae, midway between Hermopolis and Lycopolis. A member of this legion left graffiti in the nearby monastery of Apollo in Bawit: Maspero and Drioton (1931–1943), Coptic inscription no. 85.

61. Palladius, *Historia Lausiaca* 35.5–6, in Meyer (1964) 100.

62. *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 1.2, in Russell (1981) 52. See the very similar stories about Shenoute and the generals on their way to fight against Blemmyes and Nubians in *LB* 106–108 (trans. Bell, pp. 73–74); *LB* 135 (trans. Bell, p. 80); *LS2*, pp. 642–643. According to these stories, visiting Shenoute was de rigueur for any military governor on his way to wage war in the south—that is, if he wanted to have any chances of victory. In contrast, Shenoute attributes defeats to the paganism of some military governors: C7.6, "The rest of the words," in *ShL1*, no. 21, p. 68. The general's victory was crucial for Shenoute because a defeat could result in a barbarian raid or an invasion and—as Shenoute saw it—it was always the "poor" who bore the brunt of these attacks.

63. Cf. the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 185, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, p. 223; D8.20, "And after a few days," in *ShL1*, no. 13, p. 30.

64. D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MSS GF 349 and GL 283. My translation modifies Emmel's (2004) 640 only slightly. On these visits, see Hahn (1991) and Behlmer (1998).

65. D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 84–125; D4.9, "Blessed are they who observe justice," in *ShCh*, pp. 126–153.

66. "The idea is that anyone who has been an assessor [= *scholastikos*] is also qualified to be put in charge of cities"; Libanius, *Oration* 33.5, in Norman (1977) 198–199.

67. "*Comes* of the empress" may be an abbreviated form of "*Comes* of the divine consistory and manager of the properties of the empress," the title held by Strategius I, the earliest (439) attested member of the famous family of the Apions in Oxyrhynchus, who was a contemporary of Shenoute: *P. Oxy*. LXX 4780 (457 C.E.). We know that in both Africa and Syria imperial properties were a substantial part of all land (more than 15 percent), and their administration was a highly profitable and prestigious role, as the case of the Apions shows. Cf. for Africa, Vera (1992).

68. D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 107–108.

69. Bourdieu (2001) 268–269.

70. D4.8, "Blessed are they who observe justice," in *ShCh*, pp. 128–130. Shenoute adds that he says all those things "not to praise myself but to teach you (i.e., Heraklammon) that we have to despise human glory." This text is translated in its entirety in Foat (1993). The pressure to ordain Shenoute bishop is also mentioned in C8.6, "I have said many times," in MS XO 306–307. I do not have access to this text and know about it only through Emmel (2004) 594.

71. Wipszycka (2007). The bishop of Panopolis is never explicitly mentioned among the abundant visitors to Shenoute's monastery, which did include ecclesiastical authorities. A story contained in Shenoute's biography tells of how the holy man once refused to receive the bishop because he was too busy speaking to Jesus in the desert. Even the bishop's threat of excommunication was ineffective. Only when Jesus himself commanded Shenoute to see the bishop, did the holy man oblige (*LB* 70 [trans. Bell, p. 62]). A fragment of a letter of Shenoute to the priests of the nearby city of Ptolemais also points to a tension-ridden relationship: it accuses the priests of violence (L21, in *ShL1*, no. 5, pp. 15–16). On the other hand, in D8.8, "I will also tell you," in *ShL1*, no. 30, pp. 92–94, Shenoute meets and answers the questions of the bishops gathered at Antinoe (not Panopolis), and Dioscorus's letter to Shenoute assumes that the monasteries of the district of Panopolis are firmly under episcopal control (L15, in Thompson [1922]). Isidore of Pelusium and the bishop of Pelusium were not on good terms either. See, e.g., *Ep*. 3.246, in *PG* 78:684D-685C. Shenoute's deliberate

ignorance of the local bishop contrasts with his well-publicized relationship to the bishops of Alexandria. He has, therefore, the same affinity for external authorities at the expense of local ones in the secular and ecclesiastical spheres.

72. On the bishop and the poor, see Crum and Riedel (1904) 25–28. The issue of poverty is never mentioned in Shenoute's letters to and from the archbishops of Alexandria.

73. Brown (1992) 140.

74. Brown (1992) 154.

75. D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 86–87.

76. All these quotes come from D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 91, 116, 106. Cf. also D4.9, "Blessed are they who observe justice," in *ShCh*, p. 133 (where the good governor present at church is contrasted with the evil Herod); and D4.7, "As we began to preach," *ShCh*, p. 62 (translated in Jaye [1980] 21), where Shenoute tells the *comes* Jovinus: "See how God honored you; He glorified and exalted you. You also honor Him, glorify Him. You honor Him even more when you observe His commandments and His laws."

77. *P. Amh.* II 145. Cf. L5, in Munier (1916) 92–93, a petition from Shenoute to the Augustal prefect of Alexandria Paulos (who was apparently a landowner in the area of Panopolis) on behalf of one of his estate administrators.

78. Cyril requesting Shenoute's assistance: L13–14. The letters and story of Nestorius are preserved in Evagrius's *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.7, in Whitby (2000) 18–25. The name of the governor Andreas is given by Rufus, *Plerophoriae*, 36, in Nau (1912) 84. This is probably the same governor who received the reply to the famous petition of Appion, bishop of Syene (since two other imperial replies also found at Elephantine/Syene are addressed to him: Mommsen [1863]). The information on Nestorius, Shenoute, and Caesarius is contained in the fragments of the "History of the Alexandrian Church" edited by Johnson (1976). This work claims that Nestorius asked Caesarius for intercession before Shenoute that the latter might accept his (Nestorius's) gifts for the "poor." I suspect that what actually happened may have been quite the opposite. Nestorius probably asked Shenoute for intercession before the governor Caesarius. Caesarius is the only magistrate named by Shenoute who is securely attested on a papyrus: Gascou (2002).

79. Fournet (1999) 324.

80. Brown (1992) 45–46.

81. *Oration* 30.49, in Norman (1977) 146–147.

82. "Let our eyes," in MS WW 34. Cf. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, letter XLIV (in Azéma [1982] 108–109): an *honoratus* does not belong to those ἀγομένων καὶ φερομένων by the governors.

83. Libanius, *Oration* 2.8, in Norman (1977) 14–15. In fact, Shenoute meets Gesios, as we have seen, at the governor's palace in Antinoe.

84. Brown (1992) 22–23. Note that the governor Flavianus becomes "suspicious" when he thinks that Shenoute is talking about "the hostile man who lives in Panopolis" (D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 107–108). Why was it not acceptable for Flavianus to criticize Gesios?

85. Schmitt (2007) 26.

86. A7, in MS TY frag. 3.1. I reconstruct the text as follows: [ⲱ ⲡⲁⲣ]ⲭⲏⲅⲟⲥ ⲛ[ⲛⲣⲉϥϫⲓⲛ] ϭⲟⲛⲥ.

87. The word ϭⲟⲛⲥ was originally a Semitic word borrowed into Egyptian during the New Empire. The hieroglyphic writing (i.e., the determinative) shows that its basic meaning included physical violence or constraint. The Coptic Bible does occasionally use it to translate the Greek βία and related words, but far more often it corresponds to the Septuagint's ἀδικία. See Crum (1939) 822–823.

88. On late antique petitions, see the studies collected in Feissel and Gascou (2004); Brown (2002) chap. 3; Keenan (2008), for a fascinating example; and the suggestive study of Kovelman (1991).

89. Friedrich-Silber (1995) 52.

90. Brown (1987) 292.

91. D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GF 266 ("I speak against you with *parrhēsia* in the midst of this crowd, that [my words] may be heard in the districts and throughout the entire earth"); "Let our eyes," in MS WW 33 (exposing Gesios's idols with *parrhēsia*); C9.1, "God alone who is true," in *ShL2*, no. 71, p. 99 (denouncing evil tax collectors with *parrhēsia*); A4, in MS WW 25 (denouncing the abuses of the rich with *parrhēsia*). According to Shenoute's biography, the emperor Theodosius II himself called Shenoute, in a letter asking for his presence at Constantinople, ⲧⲉⲕⲡⲁⲣⲣⲏⲥⲓⲁ, i.e., "your *parrhēsia*" (*LB* 54; Bell's translation [p. 58] seems to have confused this word with παρουσία, i.e., "presence"). In Shenoute's writings and in Coptic in general, *parrhēsia* also has the more general meaning of "truthfulness," "righteousness," or "justification" before God.

92. Foucault (2001).

93. Foucault (2001) 12.

94. An idea put forward by Orlandi (1986) and repeated elsewhere.

95. Several of the texts quoted in this book—and particularly in this chapter—seem to be "first-person reports" in Coptic in which Shenoute recounts sermons, discourses, and dialogues that can only have been held in Greek. Many of his powerful "friends" were foreign magistrates who could not have understood Coptic. In other words, Shenoute's use of Coptic for *public* preaching may have been mostly (although surely not totally) limited to his interactions with monks. Yet even this limited preaching in Coptic seems to have been an innovation that was later consciously imitated and admired (see Emmel [2004] 89 and [2007] 94). Let us remember that there is no evidence for Coptic rhetorical exercises in the educational papyri of late antique Egypt. Coptic reading and writing were taught simultaneously with Greek, but with a clearly practical aim: beginners were taught to write letters, something unknown in Greek education. See Cribiore (2009) 328. The use of Coptic was thus limited to primary education.

96. See Fournet (1999) passim and, especially, pp. 258–262, on the use of the so-called historical Theban epics as encomia.

97. Bloch (1975) 25. As Foucault (2001) 21 argues, however, *parrhēsia* can also be used by rhetoricians themselves as a rhetorical technique.

98. Foucault (2001) 13–16.

99. The letter to Bakanos is quoted in D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 94–97.

100. D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 93, 103, 113 ("When I spoke with a *friend*, he did not want to accept the truth"), 117. Strictly speaking, a *parrhēsiastēs* has only one friend: the truth.

101. Foucault (2001) 15.

102. Bourdieu (1990) 80.

103. D4.6, "Many words and things I said," in du Bourguet (1958) 111–113; D8.20, "And after a few days," in *ShL1*, no. 13, pp. 30–32; D4.7, "As we began to preach," in *ShCh*, p. 62.

104. Hadot (2002) 28 on the parrhesiastic role of Socrates in Plato's dialogues. Foucault (2001) chap. 4 makes a very similar argument.

105. D4.6, "Many words and things I said," in du Bourguet (1958) 112–113. In the end, Shenoute answers the question, but only "lest such lazy men should believe that I have said this because I could not answer them" (du Bourguet, 117).

106. Baynes (1960); Brown (1988) 205–209; Friedrich-Silber (1995) chap. 3. See Brakke (2007) on the tension between what Shenoute claimed to be, and what his lay and clerical admirers expected him to be.

107. D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 102–103. On marriage, see, for example, D8.19, "I answered," in *ShL1*, no. 12, pp. 26–30; D8.24, "Truly when I think," in *ShL2*, no. 50, pp. 22–26.

108. D4.6, "Many words and things I said," in du Bourguet (1958) 113.

109. D4.6, "Many words and things I said," in du Bourguet (1958) 112, 114–115; D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in *ShA1*, pp. 276–277 (with many more criticisms of the outrages committed by the army). *P. Abinn*. 28 and 48 (mid-4th c.) are good examples of these abuses of soldiers in the countryside.

110. Mitthof (2001) 11–28 collects a lot of evidence (including Shenoute) on the standard criticisms faced by the army. He shows that it was a standard rhetorical practice to approach this problem using the words of John the Baptist to some soldiers in Luke 3:14, which is exactly what Shenoute does. Cf. Ammianus Marcellinus 20.11.5, in Hamilton (1986) 202, where the treasurer Ursulus, at the sight of a city destroyed by the Persians, complains to Constantius: "See with what courage our cities are defended by men whom the resources of the empire are denuded to supply with pay." Another example of this commonplace pessimism is Priscus's famous dialogue with an exile at the court of Attila: Priscus, frag. 2, in Blockley (1981–1983) 268–271. One third of all the laws in the Theodosian Code deal with the corruption of magistrates: Palme (1999) 114.

111. Gaddis (2005) 152 n.3.

112. Shils (1975) 4.

113. D4.6, "Many words and things I said," in du Bourguet (1958) 112–113. Cf. Nicias's response to Socrates' *parrhēsia* in Plato, *Laches* 197e6 (quoted and translated by Hadot [2002] 28): "I see no harm in being reminded that I have acted or am acting in a way that is not good."

114. See Brown (2002) 83–84. Cf. *P. Cair. Masp*. I 67024: in response to a petition from Dioscorus of Aphrodito, the emperor Justinian admits to the governor of the Thebaid that although he has dealt with this affair before, "the intrigues of that man have been stronger than our commands." "That man" was Theodosius, probably an administrator of the *domus divina* itself: Fournet (1999) 318. The need for "loyal opposition" is felt whenever the state becomes large and complex enough to escape the immediate control of its rulers. Cf., on the well-known French case, Dewald (1980) 47: "[King] Henry, the first president emphasized, was angry with the Parliament, not for resisting his will, but for undertaking the wrong kinds of resistance. In his view, the magistrates were resisting measures of benefit to the

state as a whole, and letting pass without protest measures that benefited only individuals. He was not asking that the parlementaires give up their efforts to amend royal legislation, but that they apply them properly, for the defense of public interests and as a counterbalance to the influence of courtiers and favorites." What Henry wanted, in other words, was a loyal opposition.

115. Gaddis (2005) 208: "Central to their [the holy men's] justification was the belief that godly zeal overrode secular law, that they themselves possessed this zeal and that God would lend sanction to their deeds." As Shenoute sees it, imperial law does not need to be "overridden" by a holy man such as himself because it comes from the Christian emperors. It is only the corrupt, deficient enforcement of the law that makes his intervention necessary. He does occasionally claim that only God can judge him, yet at the same time he insists that he has never done anything truly illegal.

116. L4, in *ShL1*, no. 9, p. 25; L2, in *ShL1*, no. 10, p. 25.

117. *Anomia* is a central concept in the language of the Old Testament prophets and the Psalms, where it refers to sinfulness, idolatry, immorality, etc. As Shenoute uses it, it seems to have both this Old Testament meaning and a contemporary, more concrete one: behavior that violates Roman Christian laws.

118. MS ZJ 43. This is part of an interesting text that deals, in the pages that have survived, with the emperors, magistrates, and corruption.

119. Libanius answers these arguments in one of his speeches to the emperor: "May the powers that have placed your person in authority over land and sea deliver your house from such service!" *Oration* 30.49, in Norman (1977) 146–147.

120. Colin (1982) 56 n. 49 (this is the Ethiopic version of Shenoute's biography).

121. Cf. Friedrich-Silber (1995) 92.

122. Theodoret, letters 79, 81, 83, 102, 113, 125, 139, 147, in Azéma (1964) 183–189, 193–199, 205–219; Azéma (1965) 21–23, 57–67, 93–99, 143–147, 201. These letters describe Cyrrhus both as "a deserted town whose few inhabitants are beggars" (letter 32) and as the residence of "many and brilliant landowners" (letter 79). Modern historians, who have read the letters looking for evidence of decline, have usually forgotten this second aspect. On Theodoret's envy because "he has only succeeded in being named bishop of a small town, or rather a *castrum*," and on his house in Antioch, see the accusations recorded in Flemming (1917) 87 and 115. Shenoute was also accused of gathering a synod (at his monastery?): L2, in *ShL1*, no. 10, p. 25.

123. See on this, Brakke (2007).

124. Cf., for example, D8.25, "Truly when I think," in *ShL2*, no. 50, pp. 22–26.

125. Cf., for example, *ShL1*, no. 28, pp. 90–92 (Shenoute accused of gathering crowds); D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in *ShA1*, pp. 262–263 (Shenoute preaching to a crowd); and MS GF 349–350 ("Who gathers [these crowds]? What is this crowd doing at this monastery, if it is not God that summons it?"); D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, p. 95 (Shenoute accused of "gathering men to fight each other on account of the villages"); D4.9: "Blessed are they who observe justice," in *ShCh*, pp. 126–153 (on the "great crowd" that had gathered at the monastery); D4.10: "God is Holy," in *ShCh*, pp. 153–163 (praising a crowd for having gathered at the monastery and God for having gathered them); "Only I tell everyone who dwells in this village," in *ShL1*, no. 26, pp. 86–90 (Shenoute leading a crowd in an attack on the pagans of a village).

126. *CJ* 1.2.12 (451).

127. Brown (2002) passim and especially pp. 50–51.

128. D6.2, "Now the things we said before suffice," in Elanskaia (1994) 328. The context for this quote is, as usual, unclear. It belongs to a very fragmentary text and many pages before and after this passage are missing. But it seems to be a typical text of Shenoute against the rich in which he denounces their oppressions and justifies his own actions against them. The text starts as follows: "What we have said previously suffices to show the inhumanity of those who hate the poor and the evil aim of those who flee justice. Still now, they keep adding to their senselessness trying, with fabricated words" (MS ZM 368, as translated by Emmel). Judging from the surviving fragments, I believe that Shenoute's enemies (particularly Gesios) may have accused his monasteries of causing a shortage.

129. On this distinction, see Patlagean (1977) 25–35; Brown (2002) 15.

130. In the Coptic Bible—for example, the Psalms, which are so important for Shenoute's language—ϩⲏⲕϭ can render both *penēs* and, more frequently, *ptōchos*. Another word for the "poor" used by the Coptic Bible and therefore by Shenoute is ϭⲃⲓⲏⲛ (originally a Semitic word). Although the pair *penēs—ptōchos* is usually translated by the Coptic pair ϭⲃⲓⲏⲛ and ϩⲏⲕϭ—e.g., Psalms 9:18; 11(12):5; 34(35):10; 36(37):14; 39(40):17; 40(41):1—there is no clear distinction in meaning between the two Coptic words.

131. *P. Cair. Masp*. I 67002 (567 C.E.; see *BL* I 100, VIII 70, and XII 44), III 9–12. My translation follows Fournet's (1999) 540.

132. Bourdieu (2001) 133.

133. Bourdieu (2001) 157; 187–188.

134. Schenke (1990), a letter to a holy man in Middle-Egyptian Coptic that probably dates to the late fourth or early fifth century. Schenke thinks that the sentence "You are our man" means that the monk in question was a relative of the writer, but this would be an odd way of expressing such a relationship. Judging from parallel petitions to holy men, my interpretation seems more likely to me.

2. A MIRACULOUS ECONOMY

1. *LA*, p. 392.

2. Shenoute's monastery has been undergoing excavation for many years now. Unfortunately, many of the buildings discovered cannot be dated with any precision. See the excellent reports of the surveyors: Grossmann, Brooks-Hedstrom, et al. (2004) and (2009). A decorated tomb-chapel was recently discovered near the monastery. The decoration includes representations of Shenoute, leading to the identification of the building as Shenoute's own tomb. See Bolman et al. (2010).

3. Emmel (2004) 582–583. Shenoute's works devoted to this issue are either unpublished or published in an extremely fragmentary state.

4. C7.3, "This Great House," in MS XL 273. This translation is a modified version of Emmel's (1998) 83.

5. *LB* 8 (trans. Bell, p. 44); *LA*, p. 353.

6. *LB* 32 (trans. Bell, p. 52).

7. C7.3, "This Great House," in MS XL 274. To the south of Shenoute's church, archaeologists have found two rows of latrines and one row of basins; Grossmann, Brooks-Hedstrom,

et al. (2004) 374–375 and (2009) 180, fig. 12. Could this be the ⲛⲉⲓⲡⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ mentioned by Shenoute here? Public latrines were an essential element in every self-respecting city. Shenoute's ⲛⲉⲓⲡⲧⲏⲣⲓⲟⲛ might also refer, however, to a washing place discovered next to the well built by Shenoute. See Grossmann, Brooks-Hedstrom, et al. (2009) 189.

8. C9.5, "In the Night," in *ShL1*, no. 16, p. 40. Gold was, strictly speaking, not considered "money" in late antiquity; Jones (1986) vol. 1, p. 444. The word for "money" in Coptic, the equivalent of ἀργύριον, was ϩⲟⲙⲛⲧ, which also means "copper." This is an appropriate word, for in Shenoute's times there was besides the gold-*solidus* only one other, far less valuable currency in circulation, and it was almost entirely made of copper: the so-called *nummi*, tiny copper coins of very little weight (around 1.14 g) and very low quality. Like ἀργύριον, however, ϩⲟⲙⲛⲧ can be used in a generic sense without implying any specific metal: φιλαργυρία is ⲙⲛⲧⲙⲁⲓϩⲟⲙⲛⲧ in Coptic.

9. C7.1, "God is holy," in *ShA2*, pp. 144–145 and *ShA2*, p. 156. The word ⲧⲟⲡⲟⲥ usually means "martyr shrine," but Shenoute and other Coptic writers also use it to refer to any holy place, including monasteries, in this case, more specifically, the monastery's buildings. See also C7.1, "God is Holy," in MS GO 25: "The holy and beautiful places of God desire in turn men to inhabit them who are holy and beautiful. For [the house] of God is not the temple of the gods of stone, wood, and the rest." Cf. Augustine, Sermons 336 and 337, in Hill (1994). Such ideas on the church as a symbol of ascetic achievement and as a "monument to the community's relationship with God" (Schroeder [2007] 91) are found, however, in the context of and in tension with an attempt to minimize the material importance of the church in comparison to the "interior," i.e., the community that uses it, the true temple of God. See on this issue the excellent analysis in Schroeder (2007) chap. 3, which puts Shenoute's rhetoric on the church in the context of his "one-body ideology" (p. 68) manifest throughout the *Canons*.

10. *LB* 24 (trans. Bell, pp. 49–50).

11. Grossman, Brooks-Hedstrom, et al. (2004) 379, fig. E and picture 5. On this impressive well, see now Grossmann, Brooks-Hedstrom, et al. (2009) 186–190. Grossmann points out that similarity in style and proportion indicate that this building was built by the same architects as the great church. Cf. Rathbone (1991) 224 on stone wells as a major investment for landowners. A similar canalization system has been found in the Pachomian monastery at Phbow: Debono (1971) 211–215.

12. In Egypt, where aqueducts did not exist, since all water came either from the river and its canals or from underground reservoirs (also linked to the Nile), cities depended for their water supply on water towers or elevated cisterns that collected water lifted with waterwheels. The working of these towers was a municipal burden, as were aqueducts in other parts of the Roman Empire. We have a detailed account of the workings of one such system of water supply for Arsinoe, in the Fayum, in the times of Trajan; Habermann (2000). A water tower is the only Roman building still standing in the once-great city of Hermopolis Magna.

13. Caner (2006) 371–372. Augustine's basilica in Hippo fits more than four times inside Shenoute's church.

14. Grossmann (1996) 43. Only one other impressive monastic church from late antique Egypt has survived. It is an almost exact replica of Shenoute's church at ca. one-third scale, and it may also have been built by Shenoute (he speaks of the churches he has built in the

plural: C9.1, "God who alone is true," in *ShL2*, no. 71, p. 110): it is the church of his northern congregation, the so-called Red Monastery, located only two miles to the north. Shenoute may also have been involved in the building of a church for his female congregation in the village of Atripe (see chapter 4), and a church in the "oasis" is attributed to him in Besa's biography (*LS4*, p. 231, trans. p. 244).

15. Grossman (2007) 112.

16. Struck by the size of the nave, modern researchers have even doubted that it could have been covered by a wooden roof, suggesting instead an "open" basilica, an absurd idea (the holes for the wooden beams are visible everywhere) dismissed by Grossman (2002) 122.

17. Curzon (1852) 118.

18. See Grossman (1979) and (1990) on the Pachomian church of Phbow.

19. Curzon (1852) 117: "It is a splendid specimen of the richest Roman architecture of the latter Roman empire, and is truly an imperial little room. The arched ceiling is of stone; and there are three beautifully ornamented niches on each side. The upper end is semi-circular, and has been entirely covered with a profusion of sculpture in panels, cornices, and every kind of architectural enrichment."

20. Grossman (2002) 116: "Handwerkliche Unsauberkeiten in der Ausführung sind praktisch nirgends zu erkennen." See also Torp (1970) 41: "[In the] White Monastery of Shenuti, the Greco-Roman language rises to a magnificent climax just in the trefoil chancel, the architectural and spiritual center of the buildings"; Hodak (2008); and Kinney (2008).

21. A *superficial* similarity to the exterior of late period Egyptian temples (at least when looked at from their rear side) is undeniable: massive size, walls sloping inward toward the summit, and of course the cornice on the top. Egyptian temples, however, were covered with reliefs, whereas Shenoute's church seems to have lacked any decoration on the outside and, unlike a temple, has a double row of windows on each side. The use of so-called broken pediments for the niches inside the church also points to a local architectural tradition. Broken pediments are characteristic of late antique sculpture in the Nile valley.

22. Kiss (2007) 190. A plan of these baths may be found in Kołątaj (1992) 66.

23. Particularly at the so-called Red Monastery (which may have been built by Shenoute himself), at Dendera, and at Abu Fano.

24. Cf. on this issue the skepticism of Wipszycka (2005). Shenoute's rules define a "catchment area" for his monastery: every anchorite living in the desert between "the wadi north of the village of Atripe [in the south] and, in the north, the wadi south of the house of our old father, Apa Pshoi, the place in the desert where he first used to be," needs to attend his church for communion (C3, A22, in *ShL2*, no. 74, p. 120). It is impossible to say how many anchorites we could be dealing with. Both the nuns in the southern village of Atripe and the monks in the northern congregation had their own church.

25. D8.21, "See how clearly is revealed the foolishness of pitiless people," in *ShL1*, no. 38, p. 111; D8.22, "Reading today from the proverbs," in *ShL1*, no. 39, pp. 113–116; *LA*, p. 363 (on a rich man who comes every Saturday and Sunday to make an offering at the monastery); *LA*, pp. 432–433; *LS4*, pp. 12–13; D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 84–125; D4.9, "Blessed are they who observe justice," in *ShCh*, pp. 126–153 (praising the military governor Heraklammon, who "was standing in the church until the whole crowd finished taking the holy communion, for there was a great crowd here"); D4.10, "God is Holy," in

ShCh, pp. 153–163 (trans. Brakke [1989] 120), praising the crowd for having gathered at the monastery and God for having gathered them: "Even if soldiers were sent out for us they would not be able to gather us like this (i.e., in these numbers) from the places whence each one has come." Even men who live right next to the church in town have chosen to come to the monastery (p. 156).

26. Walters (1974) 36–37. Cf. Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006) 109 n. 46 on triconch architecture and its imperial connotations. Interestingly, her reading of Paulinus's poems leads her to hypothesize (p. 280) the existence of galleries above the side naves of Paulinus's basilica at Nola, from where visitors could see the apse and tomb. They may have had a similar function at Shenoute's church, as they did in the medieval basilicas of pilgrim monasteries: Duby (1981) 284.

27. *LA*, pp. 432–433; also *LS4*, pp. 12–13 (five thousand men come on Saturday night and need to be fed); and D4.10, "God is Holy," in *ShCh*, p. 157 (the crowd sleeps on the floor and eats in poverty at the monastery). Cf. the incipit of one of Shenoute's lost works: "See how many lamps we have lit tonight so that the place is shining"; Emmel (2004) 673. Shenoute's activities fit the description of the ideal bishop in the *Canons of Pseudo-Athanasius* 16, in Crum and Riedel (1904) 26–28 ("God hath established the bishop because of the feasts, that he may refresh [the poor] at the feasts). On Shenoute's endless generosity at his banquets, cf. *LB* 87 (trans. Bell, p. 67): "It happened one time that there was a feast day in the monastery . . . and when some clerics and cantors had entered the monastery, they came to my father apa Shenoute and asked him for a little wine. He then gave them what they needed. After this, they asked him for some other things, and he gave them to them gladly. Again, in the same way, they repeated their request insatiably, and he gave to them again for the third time. Those who were sitting by him were amazed at his generosity." This story follows and contrasts with a section on the avarice and dishonesty of the pagan landowners who were Shenoute's enemies.

28. D8.21, "See how clearly is revealed the foolishness of pitiless people," in *ShL1*, no. 38, p. 111.

29. *Life of Porphyry* 92, in Hill (1913) 101–102; cf. Veyne (1976) 56. The description of Porphyry as a builder reminds me of Shenoute: *Life of Porphyry* 83, in Hill (1913) 93–94: "The building went forward day by day, all men working with zeal and haste; for no man was deprived of his wages, but he rendered them more than their due, giving freely to the labourers; for he said: 'It behoveth that blessing and not a curse should be upon all the work of the building.'" Porphyry's money came from the emperor.

30. *LB* 30–32 (Bell's translation on pp. 51–52 does not recognize the word for "amphora"). This amphora is described in the Sahidic (and Bohairic) *Life* as ⲟⲩϩⲟⲩⲓ ⲛⲁⲥϩⲁⲗⲱⲛ ⲉⲩⲱⲁⲥⲣ ⲟⲩⲉⲣⲧⲱ {ⲛ}ⲛⲱⲓϩ: "a small 'Ascalonian' [amphora], measuring a handbreadth (?)." The Arabic version adds: "full of gold" (*LA*, p. 353). "Ascalonian" amphorae were mostly used to store wine. Their name (like the name *gazition* for amphorae from Gaza) reflects the importance of Palestine in the international wine trade of late antiquity. For a picture, see Decker (2009) 241.

31. C7.1, "This Great House," in MS XL 274, as translated by Emmel (1998) 83.

32. Grig (2006) 151.

33. On the fundamental role of light in the architectural thought of Paulinus, see Herbert de la Portbarré-Viard (2006) 250, 259; on his tendency to ignore the human

labor that goes into the building, see p. 261; for Shenoute's discourse on edification and the contrast with Paulinus of Nola, see in general Schroeder (2007) chap. 3. In the same way, the contrast between Shenoute and Suger—who asked spectators to admire "not the cost, but the art" of his buildings—could not be greater: see Duby (1981) 105. Yet Cistercian abbey churches, which lack facades and are turned inward (Duby, 123), are an interesting parallel to Shenoute's architecture. The wall paintings at the "Red Monastery" church (i.e., Shenoute's northern congregation) have been recently restored with spectacular results. If these paintings are an accurate guide to the original decoration of Shenoute's church—as argued by Elizabeth Bolman (2006), who dates those paintings to the late antique period—then any visitor to Shenoute's basilica would have been greeted by an explosion of color reminiscent of S. Vitale in Ravenna. Bolman's pictures are truly spectacular, but I have not yet seen specific reasons for her dating of those wall paintings.

34. *Paralipomena* 32, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 2, pp. 55–56.

35. C1, in MS YW 88–89; C1, in MS XB 152 contains similar ideas. Emmel (2004) vol. 2, pp. 558–565 has shown that this first volume of *Canons* contains the earliest works of Shenoute, which were written before he became abbot and while involved in a dispute with the administration of his monastery.

36. Porphyry's *lithomania:* Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry* 93, in Hill (1913) 102; Theophilus of Alexandria and his misuse of the wealth of the poor to indulge in building: Palladius, *Dialogue on the Life of John Chrysostom* 6, in Meyer (1985) 42. Isidore of Pelusium accuses both Theophilus (*Ep*. 1.152, in *PG* 78:284C-285B) and the bishop of Pelusium (*Ep*. 3.246, in *PG* 78:684D-685C) of the same sin. The same complaint against Theophilus can be found in Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 8.12.

37. *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 197, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, p. 244; Theodore refusing to use a boat: *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 204, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, p. 253. Ownership of boats was a distinctive trait of the Pachomian economic organization (Fournet and Gascou [2002]) absent at Shenoute's monastery. Horsiesius's answer to Theodore's concerns points to the future: "It is the Lord who has blessed the *Koinonia* and has expanded it. He also has the power to constrict it again in accordance with his good ordinances and according to his just and right judgment"; *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 197, in Veilleux (1980) 244–245.

38. *LS4*, p. 14 (trans. p. 18).

39. *LB* 27–28 (trans. Bell, pp. 50–51, with minor modifications).

40. *LB* 29 (trans. Bell, p. 51).

41. *LB* 17–20 (trans. Bell, pp. 47–48). Shenoute had traveled to Constantinople to accompany Cyril in his fight against Nestorius.

42. Cf. Veyne (1976) 297. Grossman (2002) 116 n. 6 considers such a short building time for the church impossible. The Arabic *Life* says it took six months (*LA*, p. 354).

43. *LB* 138 (trans. Bell, pp. 80–81). The apostle Paul had created or advocated the notion of *eulogia*, a gift given with a "cheerful" spirit by someone who does not demand any reciprocity, in the framework of his collections of money for the "Saints" of Jerusalem. See Caner (2006) 334–340.

44. *LB* 138–143 (trans. Bell, pp. 80–82).

45. For example, Basil's sixth homily against hoarding, edited by Courtonne (1935) 31 (no. 6): τὰ ταμιεῖα τῆς ἀδικίας, "the granaries of injustice." The rich, Basil argues, should use the stomach of the poor as their storerooms.

46. D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, pp. 94–97.

47. Athanasius, *Defense against the Arians* 9, 18, and 87, in Schaff (1983–1986) vol. 4, pp. 105, 109–110, and 146 (Athanasius accused of stopping the corn shipments from Alexandria to Constantinople and of selling the corn he received on behalf of the poor for his own benefit); Nestorius, *Bazaar of Heracleides* 2.1, in Driver and Hodgson (1925) 288–289 (Cyril stocking up monasteries with bread to be distributed to his partisans in Ephesus); Cyril, letter 108, in McEnerney (1987) 173 (Cyril accused of bringing ships loaded with grain from Alexandria to Ephesus and a "crowd of reckless fellows").

48. *LS4*, pp. 6–8 (trans. pp. 15–16).

49. C6.4, "Then I am not obliged," in *ShL2*, no. 54, p. 43.

50. *LA*, p. 458.

51. The Arabic version of the story (*LA*, pp. 458–459) has an even more spectacular conclusion: after Shenoute prays, "the doors of the church opened, and we saw the nave of the church shining as if at noon, although it was night. And I saw a great *blessing* of wheat and a crowd of saints standing in three ranks, stretching their arms in the shape of a cross as if to pray."

52. *Paralipomena* 21–22, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 2, pp. 44–46.

53. *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 39 and 53, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, pp. 62–63 and 73. Both gifts are also donated by civic councilors from different cities. In the first case, Pachomius is reluctant to accept the gift, and when he finally receives it, he gives in exchange to the donor some "little eulogies," that is, a symbolic gift of blessed food.

54. This is not the whole point of the story, though. The danger lies not only in having received a loan/gift, but above all in the business-like attitude of Pachomius's disciple toward wealth.

55. *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 100, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, pp. 137–138.

56. *Instructions of Theodore* 3.2, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 3, pp. 93–94.

57. On this famine, see Brown (2002) 39–42. Basil was not yet a bishop at this time but would very soon become one. His activities "fit into a pattern by which the heir-apparent of a dying bishop would establish his reputation as 'lover of the poor' by acts of public generosity and, often, by the building of a church or *xenodocheion*" (Brown, 41). Everybody expected Shenoute to become a bishop himself—at least so he claims—but his modesty stood in the way: D4.9, "Blessed are they who observe justice," in *ShCh*, p. 128.

58. Gregory Nazianzen, *Oration* 43.35, in Schaff (1983–1986) vol. 7, p. 407.

59. *Life of Marcellus the Sleepless* 26, in Dagron (1968) 308–309; *Life of Hypatius* 20 and 31, in Bartelink (1971) 134–135, 204–207 (the second case is more realistic: Hypatius borrows money to buy wheat during a time of low prices and then distributes this wheat at a time of scarcity); John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, in Brooks (1924) vol. 18, pp. 614–618; *Arab-Jacobite Synaxary*, Tubi 24, in Basset (1915) vol. 11, pp. 687–688 (this miracle takes place in the *diakonia*, the administrative building of the monastery); Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius* 17–18, in Price (1991) pp. 22–24 ("From the time of the miracle just related, the *laura* began to be blessed in both income and expenditure and in other ways too"; this story corresponds almost word for word to some of the stories in Shenoute's *Life*). There is, however, an early example of this type of miracle in the *Historia Monachorum* 8.42, in Russell (1981) 76–77, where Apollo miraculously feeds a multitude at his monastery. This work was written ca. 400 C.E.

60. Festugière (1963) 83; *Life of Theodosius* 13–15, in Festugière, 120–123, 143–145.

61. Caner (2006) 330. On the later extension of the sphere of the miraculous economy to lay society in general, see the brilliant study of Déroche (1995). He argues that, as if in a late medieval world, the new lay piety of the late sixth century felt entitled to demand from God the same kind of economic miracles the monks had enjoyed since the fifth century.

62. Flusin (1983) 157, 160, 171, and 187; Patlagean (1977) 78; Besa's text, in Kuhn (1956) vol. 1, no. 16, pp. 41–42 (trans., vol. 2, pp. 39–40). The "poor" in this case are fed "gruel (ϧⲑⲩⲣϧ = ἀθήρα), food (ϭⲓⲛⲟⲩⲱⲙ), salted pigeon, eggs, cheese." Bread or wheat are not explicitly mentioned, yet the gruel mentioned by Besa is made with wheat, and the category "food" (which is to be understood as "regular monastic food" in contrast to the special products in the list) almost certainly includes bread.

63. C7.7, "Continuing to glorify the Lord," *ShL1*, no. 22.1, pp. 69–74. Unfortunately, this fascinating text has never been studied in detail; there is only a very old German translation in Leipoldt (1902).

64. C7.6, "The rest of the words," in *ShL1*, no. 21, p. 68.

65. Jonas's activities in Thrace at the end of the fourth century (after the Gothic attack of 395) are comparable: *Life of Hypatius* 6, in Bartelink (1971) 92–95. The invasion mentioned by Shenoute is probably related to the conflicts between Romans, Nubians, and Blemmyes mentioned by the historian Priscus for the mid-fifth century (in Blockley [1981–1983] 325).

66. It is not clear to me what this amount refers to. It is far too low to be the complete expenditure in money or to refer to the price of the 8,500 *artabas* of wheat mentioned in the following sentence. Another manuscript has 65,700 instead of 615,700. The latter number is almost certainly to be preferred (65,700 is too small an amount.)

67. Déroche (1995) is a brilliant study of Leontius of Neapolis and his works. A similar literary technique is used by the contemporary *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* (translated in Dawes and Baynes [1948]), although not with numbers but with innumerable place-names, which seem to derive from a tax document or rent roll such as many found in Egypt. Every village is presented as if "repaying" the miracles it has received from the holy man with offerings to his monastery, but they may have been simply paying rent for the monastery's land.

68. Déroche (1995) 153.

69. See Wipszycka (2002).

70. Scheidel (1996). We need, however, a similar study for Christian sources.

71. Bagnall and Frier (1994) 105: 44/1000 and 42/1000 respectively.

72. Of course, there are many potential problems with all these arguments. For example, Shenoute might not be counting failed births; births may not have been equally distributed over the year; many women who were at least six months pregnant when the invasion took place may have either died or lost their children before getting to Shenoute's monastery; older people may never have made it to the monastery either, etc. However, I still think that, especially if we combine these two numbers with the amount of wheat given below, it becomes clear that Shenoute was exaggerating, and the actual number of people was probably lower than 10,000. It is interesting that Shenoute says "around" 20,000, whereas he gives every other amount as an exact number.

73. Theodore of Petra, *Life of Theodosius* 14, in Festugière (1963) 122; *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite* 42, in Wright (1882) 31. Benedict's monks were also supposed to eat one pound of

bread a day: see the *Rule of Benedict*, chap. 39. According to *P. Oxy*. XVI 1920, one *artaba* produces 80 Roman pounds of bread. See Patlagean (1977) 51–52. Bagnall (1993) 116 gives 24 *artabas* as the amount of wheat necessary for a family of four or five during a year. That turns out to be ca. 1.2 pounds a person for three months, which results in slightly more than 7,000 refugees.

74. These numbers can unfortunately not be compared to Besa's description of a famine six years after Shenoute's death, according to which out of "five or six thousand, sometimes more, sometimes less" refugees, 128 died during an unspecified amount of time; Kuhn (1956) vol. 1, no. 16, pp. 41–42 (trans., vol. 2, pp. 39–40).

75. Assuming, with Bagnall (1993) 116, a yield of 7 *artabas* per *aroura* (taxes and seed already taken out). But the capacity to spend 8,500 *artabas* implies much more than 1,200 *arouras*, since middlemen and workers would usually get much of the produce.

76. Bagnall (1993) 69–70. This is an entire century before Shenoute's text. The concentration of wealth may have increased a great deal in the meantime, but without similar documents for the fifth century it is impossible to say how much. According to Zuckerman (2004a) 222–223, the sixth-century landowner Iulianos, whose properties lay close to Aphrodito and therefore relatively close to Shenoute's monastery, owned more than 8,000 *arouras* of arable land. Yet if Ruffini (2008b) 197 and 247 is right, the large payment of Iulianos may simply be a fiscal share and not an indication of the size of his estates.

77. For comparison: a large fourth-century property in Hermonthis possibly belonging to a temple is recorded to have spent 2,200 *artabas* in four months; Bagnall (1993) 126. Bagnall estimates that if this landholding spent 6,600 *artabas* a year, it must have been as large as the largest landholdings recorded for Hermopolis: between 1,500 and 2,000 *arouras*. The emperor Zeno is said to have established a yearly endowment of 3,000 *artabas* of wheat (and 600 measures of oil) for the monks at Scetis; *Arab-Jacobite Synaxary*, Tubi 21, in Basset (1915) vol. 11, p. 636. This imperial endowment is also mentioned (without specific numbers) in the biography of John II in Severus of el-Ashmunein's *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, in Evetts (1904) 448–449. Since a donkey could carry at most 3 *artabas* of wheat (see Bagnall [1985]), no fewer than 2,833 donkeys would have been needed to transport Shenoute's wheat.

78. Finley (1985) 108.

79. C6.4, "Then I am not obliged," in *ShL2*, pp. 43–44: "The leader of these communities shall always select very trustworthy men and take counsel with them about anything that needs to be done, including the price in gold or money that should be paid for the wheat, the wool, or anything else"; "any man who comes to acquire gold, money, baskets, sacks, books, or any other ware in exchange for wheat, wool, or anything else that we acquire from them. . . ." The excavators of Shenoute's monastery have so far collected 1,185 copper coins as single finds. This is an extraordinary number of stray coin finds for a monastery. See Grossmann, Brooks-Hedstrom, et al. (2009) 217 n. 108.

80. See, e.g., *P. Oxy*. LI 3628–3636 (5th c.).

81. This is the value of the *solidus* in, e.g., *P. Oxy*. LI 3628–3636.

82. *P. Cair. Masp*. II 67151 (570 C.E.).

83. Priscus, frags. 2 and 9, in Blockley (1981–1983) 227 and 237.

84. Ibas claimed to have spent more than 6,000 *solidi* on the ransom of captives. His enemies, however, maintained—at the second council of Ephesus (449)—that he had sent

only 1,000 and kept the rest for himself; Flemming (1917) 58–59. On Caesarius of Arles and his ransom of prisoners, see Klingshirn (1985).

85. Klingshirn (1985) 183.

86. *LB* 89–90 (trans. Bell, p. 68).

87. Prices for radish oil (60 *sextarii*/*solidus*): *P. Mich*. XI 613 (Herakleopolis, 415 C.E.); lentils (ca. 20 *artabas*/*solidus*): Bagnall (1993) 25–26; wheat (12 or 13 *artabas*/*solidus*): e.g., *P. Oxy*. LI 3628 and 3269 (5th c.). I have used relatively low prices for these conversions in comparison with some of those listed in *P. Oxy*. LI 3628–3636. During a time of crisis and barbarian invasion, the real prices may have been much higher. Pachomius's monastery had to pay for wheat at 5 *artabas* the *solidus* during a famine (*Paralipomena* 21, in Veilleux [1980–1982] vol. 2, pp. 44–46). The same monastery used only 40 *sextarii* of oil *a month*, according to *Paralipomen*a 15 (in Veilleux [1980–1982] vol. 2, p. 37). Morelli (2004) has shown that, as a rule, oil was pressed in Roman Egypt from radish seeds. Olive oil was a more expensive alternative.

88. Doran (2006) 89. This document uses for *solidi* the Persian word *darics*, as was common in Syriac documents of this period, which use both *denarii* and *darics* equivalents of *solidi*. The patriarchs of Alexandria lived in a different economic universe: Cyril's bribes (lit. "blessings") for the imperial court amount to ca. 78,000 *solidi*, without taking into account nonmonetary gifts. Paul the Tabennesiote was said to have offered the emperor Justinian ca. 50,000 *solidi* to be ordained patriarch of Alexandria. See Wipszycka (2002) 77–78.

89. A church located in the village of Khirbet Hassan in northern Syria is recorded to have been built at a cost of 580 *solidi* plus 480 *modii* of grain, beans, and lentils; see Decker (2009) 72 n. 178. The interior space of this church, ca. 220 m^2, is more than ten times smaller than that of Shenoute's church. A church built in Edessa in ca. 505 was worth 720 *solidi*, a synagogue near Damascus 700 *solidi:* see the list of prices in Patlagean (1977) 398–399. Ca. 2,500 *solidi* were spent on the cathedral of Narbonne in the mid-fifth century (*CIL* 12, 05336).

90. Grossman and Mohamed (1991) 60. See now on these hoards Grossman, Brooks-Hedstrom, et al. (2009) 215–217. Only part of this treasure has been published. The second largest coin hoard from Egypt, according to Noeske's catalogue ([2000–] 88), was discovered in Karnak and contained 500–600 *solidi*. From the *diocesis Oriens*, there is only one comparable hoard, from the monastery of Nikertai, in Syria (525 *solidi*).

91. D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, p. 99, ll. 38–57 (trans. Chérix [1979] 26).

92. A6, in MS TY 17. Cf. the belongings of the village church listed in *P. Grenf*. II 111, trans. in Mango (1986) 263–264, which include bronze and iron lamps, a marble altar, textiles, silver chalices, etc.

93. ⲕⲁⲩⲁⲕⲏⲥ and ϩⲩⲁⲣⲓⲁ are the two words used in 1 Kings 17:12 for the widow's (miraculous) oil bottle and the jar containing the meal.

94. C7.3, "This great house," in Pleyte and Boeser (1897) 320 and MS XL 274. Cf. the *Life of John the Almsgiver* 12, in Dawes and Baynes (1948) 220: "But if perhaps, because you have no faith or are of little faith, you fear that the amount given away may exceed the moneys which we receive, I myself refuse to share in your little faith. For if it is by God's good will that I, an unworthy servant, am the dispenser of His gifts, then were the whole world to be brought together in Alexandria and ask for alms, they would not straiten the holy Church

nor the inexhaustible treasures of God." The analogy between flow of wealth and flow of water is of course a commonplace (e.g., Artemidorus, *Oneirocriticon* 2.27.32–37: When a rich man dreams of a river flowing out of his house, it means that he will rule his city and be a great benefactor. Many in need will roam his home. "For everyone needs a river."), but it was particularly poignant in Egypt where all life comes from the Nile inundation, "abundantly flowing on the plain" of the Nile valley. Cf. Dioscorus of Aphrodito's poem no. 23, edited by Fournet (1999) 420–421 and 599–602, where the benefits of the Nile inundation foreshadow those of Theodore (the magistrate praised by Dioscorus) toward the "poor": "Your name is a synonym for flood; you dress the sick, you care for the crippled, the blind."

95. *LA*, p. 321. The Sahidic version is preserved in Crum (1905) 165: ⲘⲠⲘⲀ ⲛ[ⲭⲓ ⲁⲛ] ⲡⲉ ⲡⲁⲓ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ⲡ[ⲙⲁ] ⲛⲧ ⲡⲉ. Cf. Acts 20:35: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" and Rabbula's similar saying: "On every count it is we who are under an obligation to give, and not to receive" (*Life of Rabbula* in Doran [2006] 85). Marrying one's niece was forbidden by imperial law: *CTh* 3.12.1. Cf. also Theodoret of Cyrrhus, letter VIII, in Azéma (1982) 79–80, complaining that the civic councilors of Zeugma are marrying their cousins and nieces.

96. On this issue, see the excellent article of Choat (2009), which shows that the papyrological evidence is inconclusive. Cf. also Theodore's complaints that his monastery was accumulating "numerous fields, animals, and boats"; *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 197, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, p. 244. Monks and nuns who joined Shenoute's congregation were compelled to donate their belongings to the *diakonia*, that is, the administration of the monastery: C5, in *ShL2*, no. 60, p. 71; trans. Layton (2007) 60 n. 85: "Any, whether male or female, who comes to us to be a monastic shall first renounce unto the *diakonia* all the things that they possess as soon as they are at the gatehouse of the Lord's congregation. And one, two, or at most three months after they have come they shall renounce in writing everything they have brought according to the regulations of our fathers." C3, A22, in *ShL2*, no. 74, p. 122; trans. Layton (2007) 60 n. 84: "Cursed shall be those who meet us in order to live with us . . . if . . . they do not renounce all the things they possess, whether gold, silver, bronze, garments, or anything else." But note that land, the most obvious source of wealth, is not mentioned in this list. Similarly, Besa, frag. 31, in Kuhn (1956) 104–105: every prospective monk should donate his belongings to the "administration (*diakonia*) of the poor."

97. In the years 523–526, eight monasteries owned land in the village of Aphrodito (the total land of Aphrodito amounted to 5871.5 *arouras*). The most substantial properties were:

—Monastery of Apa Souros (a local monastery that owned 250 to 300 *arouras* of arable land, 5.6 *arouras* of vineyards, and 18.2 *arouras* of orchards)

—Monastery of Apa Zenobios (from Panopolis, it probably owned more than 120 *arouras* of arable land)

—Monastery of Smin (from Panopolis, it owned ca. 90 *arouras* of arable land and 4.75 *arouras* of vineyards; this may be the Pachomian monastery of Tesmin)

—Shenoute's monastery (owning a bit less than 20 *arouras* of arable land; it also owned land in the nearby village of Phthla: *P. Ross. Georg.* III.48)

—Monastery of Porbis (from Hermopolis; it owned 11.8 *arouras* of arable land)

This information results from combining the data contained in the cadastre edited by Gascou (1987) and the tax register edited by Zuckerman (2004a).

98. *P. Cair. Masp*. III 67312, dating to 567 C.E., so more than a century after Shenoute's death. Other sixth-century donations of land to monasteries: *P. Cair. Masp*. I 67003 (ca. 567 C.E.; see *BL* I 100); *P. Cair. Masp*. II 67151 (570 C.E.); *P. Oxy*. LXIII 4397 (545 C.E.).

99. This complaint is taken over by Zosimus, *New History* 5.23.4. The case usually cited is that of Petronius, a rich man who joins the Pachomian congregation and donates "all he had" to his new community: sheep, goats, cattle, camels, donkeys, carts, boats, and even his own monastery; *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 56, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, p. 77; and *First Greek Life of Pachomius* 80, in Veilleux, 352. But land is, once again, missing from this list. Gerontius's *Life of Melania the Younger* 20, in Clark (1984) 43, shows that it was more common to donate money than land to a monastery.

100. C9.1, "God alone who is true," in *ShL2*, no. 71, p. 99.

101. C6.4, "Then I am not obliged," *ShL2*, no. 54, pp. 43–44.

102. D8.22, "Reading today from the proverbs," in *ShL1*, no. 39, p. 114, does mention "lands," although in generic terms, among the worries of Shenoute's monks. A story contained in Shenoute's life (*LB* 162–171, in Bell [1983] 86–88) might represent, in idealized form, the reality of the monastery as a landowner that leased out its land to farmers through sharecropping agreements. In the case in point, Shenoute renounced his share to benefit the pious farmer. The fact that the land was leased out and not managed directly by the monastery might help to explain Shenoute's silence. When discussing possible ideological silences, one also needs to keep in mind that Shenoute's rules explicitly command the leader of his monasteries to discuss sensitive administrative issues with a confidant who knows how to read and write and how to keep a secret: C9.1, "God who alone is true," in *ShL2*, no. 77, p. 167.

103. See Wipszycka (1996).

104. *First Greek Life of Pachomius* 28, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, pp. 315–316; and other references mentioned by Wipszycka (1996) 172; there are hints that the same could be true at Shenoute's monastery: Layton (2007) 48.

105. In twentieth-century Egyptian villages, children between the ages of twelve and sixteen years were already in charge of making ropes and mats by twisting the fiber of palm trunks: Ammar (1966) 31–32. In other words, the task assigned to most monks in late antique Egypt was something that *anybody* could be expected to accomplish. On the regular rotation of jobs at Pachomius's monastery, see *First Greek Life of Pachomius* 28, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, pp. 315–316. The conflicts in the Pachomian congregation described by the *Apocalypse of Čarour* shed much light on the tensions generated by the refusal to accept a true division of labor; Lefort (1956) vol. 23, pp. 100–104; vol. 24, pp. 100–108. Cf. also C9.1, "God who alone is true," in *ShL2*, no. 77, p. 163.

106. The monks involved in the administration of the monastery (*diakonia*; hence their name in later papyri: *diakonētai*) were always in danger of falling into temptation, since they were in charge of buying, selling, and receiving gifts and redistributing them. The *Apocalypse of Čarour* (Lefort [1956] vol. 23, p. 100), for example, complains that they have enriched themselves. On the dangers of business, see also C9.1, "God who alone is true," in *ShA2*, p. 349; and Besa, frag. 12, in Kuhn (1956) vol. 1, no. 12, p. 35 (trans., vol. 2, p. 33), listing all the crafts practiced at the monastery.

107. Some examples: Pachomian monks receiving gifts in the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 39 and 53, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, pp. 62–63 and 73; Cassian, *Conferences* 21.1–2, 8, in Ramsey (1997) 719–720 and 724: landowners come to the monastery to offer their

"firstfruits and tithes" to the "poor" (see on this passage the excellent study of Sternberg [1988]); Palladius, *Lausiac History* 61.4, in Meyer (1964) 143: Melania sends no less than 10,000 *solidi* to the monasteries of Egypt and the Thebaid; Palladius, *Lausiac History* 58.2, in Meyer (1964) 139: Melania sends 500 *solidi* to a monk near Antinoe; Chaine (1960) no. 244, p. 76 (trans. p. 147): Apa Bane, a holy man who founded a monastery near Hermopolis, receives gifts from his patrons and distributes them to the poor near his monastery; *History of the Monks of Egypt* 14.18–22, in Russell (1981) 97: a businessman from Alexandria distributes his possessions to the monks of Egypt; Isidore of Pelusium, letter I 317, in *PG* 78:365C: a letter thanking a landowner for having donated to the monastery and promising worldly and otherworldly rewards; *P. Cair. Masp*. II 67139 (544/5 C.E.): the landowner Ammonius gives 100 *artabas* of wheat to the monastery of Psinabla (located very close to Shenoute's monastery), and 413 artabas to a monastery at Aphrodito; *P. Oxy*. XVI 1913 (ca. 555 C.E.): the Apion family of Oxyrhynchus gives 400 *artabas* of wheat to the monastery of Apa Apollo; Hickey (2007) 220–221 contains a list of donations of vinegar by the same family to different monasteries. Thomas (1983) chap. 3 lists numerous other examples from Egyptian papyri, and there are innumerable examples from other areas.

108. Sternberg (1988) 180.

109. L6, in Wessely (1909) no. 9236 (39c) + no. 9234 (39a); D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, pp. 40–41. Cf. also *LB* 51 (trans. Bell, p. 56) = *LA*, p. 359 (donating a silver plate inscribed with Shenoute's name); *LA*, p. 363 (a pious rich man who visited the monastery very often brings offerings to the church on Saturday and Sunday); D4.6, "Many words and things I said," in du Bourguet (1958) 114 (soldiers plunder even the offerings (ⲡⲣⲟⲥⲫⲟⲣⲁ) brought to the monasteries). According to Abu Salih, a late twelfth-century Armenian traveler (in Evetts [1895] 239), Shenoute's church contained a wooden chest "which Saint Sinuthius had made to contain books, and he used to inscribe there the amount of votive offerings accruing to the monasteries." On the relation between these gifts and rural patronage—which may have allowed Shenoute's monastery to acquire land—see chapter 3.

110. Treasures in heaven: D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, pp. 40–41; A6, in MS TY 13–14; A26, in Behlmer (1996) 57, 113, and 142. The promise of both worldly and otherworldly rewards: D8.22, "Reading today from the proverbs," in *ShL1*, no. 39, p. 115; A6, in MS TY 13–14.

111. *LA*, p. 393 (through prayer).

112. Johnson (1976) 9.

113. See Sternberg (1988). ⲇⲓⲁⲕⲟⲛⲓⲁ ⲛⲛⲉϩⲏⲕ: C3, A22, in *ShL2*, no. 74, p. 122. In C8.4, "Many times I have said," in Young (1993) 33 and 36, however, Shenoute distinguishes the "*diakonia* of the poor"—that is, the very rewarding activity of giving to the (involuntary) poor for whose souls Shenoute is not responsible—from the frustrating care of his own sinful monks.

114. Cf. the monastic festival described by Cassian, *Conferences* 9.1, in Ramsey (1997) 669.

115. Southern (1970) 288. This is a structural, perennial debate that results from the inner contradictions in the very definition of monasticism. Monasticism, both Christian and Buddhist, tends to engender its own criticism. See Friedrich-Silber (1995) 41–43.

116. *LA*, p. 355. Shenoute rebukes the man and shows him that his doubts are misplaced. John the Almsgiver was tested in an identical way: *Life of John the Almsgiver* 9, in Dawes and Baynes (1948) 216.

117. This routine almsgiving at the gate is called by Shenoute ⲡⲧⲱⲱϥ ⲙⲡⲣⲟ, "the (regular) service of the gate," and is distinguished from his more spectacular care for the refugees (C7.7, "Continuing to glorify the Lord," *ShL1*, no. 22.1, p. 71; cf. also C9.1, "God alone who is true," in *ShA2*, p. 348). See also the *Life of Moses of Abydos*, in Till (1936) vol. 2, p. 51, on the monastery gate as the place to receive alms (ⲙⲛⲧⲛⲁϩ). The poor living at the gate was also an institution in eastern Syrian monasticism: Palmer (1990) 84.

118. Gernet (1995) 214 on the "inexhaustible treasuries" of Buddhist monasteries in seventh-century China, which present many interesting parallels to the "miraculous economy" of late antique monasteries in the Near East.

119. D8.22, "Reading today from the proverbs," in *ShL1*, no. 39, pp. 114–115.

120. Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry* 53–54, in Hill (1913) 63–65; Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Sabas* 51, 54, 72, in Price (1991) 152, 156, 185.

121. The Theodosian dynasty in general seems to have been particularly well liked by Egyptian monks: John of Lycopolis foresaw the victories of Theodosius I; Apa Bane predicted the day of the emperor's death; Arsenius was the former tutor of Arcadius and Honorius; Shenoute was admired by Theodosius II; Apa Victor was the secret son of Theodosius II, etc.

122. *LA*, p. 382. A very fragmentary manuscript contains a story depicting a similar encounter between, apparently, Besa and the emperor Zeno. At the conclusion, the emperor tells the holy man: "Because of the poor, we have been worthy to see you. . . . The affairs of my Lord have reached conclusion. You have received your petitions; you have been satisfied. You have filled us with joy. May we be worthy of your holiness: receive this small amount [of money] for our salvation." Crum (1905) no. 359, pp. 169–170.

123. Cf. Zeno's benefaction—3,000 *artabas* of wheat and 600 measures of oil—for the monks at Scetis. *Arab-Jacobite Synaxary*, Tubi 21, in Basset (1915) vol. 11, p. 636.

124. Monneret de Villard (1923). The inscription reads: "In eternal remembrance of the most magnificent count Caesarius, son of Candidianos, the founder (κτίστου)."

125. The cathedral of Hermonthis with its five-nave design may be an imitation of this church, just as the cathedral of Dendera was clearly an imitation of Shenoute's church. Abu Salih, an Armenian who lived in Egypt in the late twelfth century, reports (in Evetts [1895] 282) that this church, which by his time was already a ruin, had colorful wall mosaics. If true, this would be exceptional in Egypt, where mosaics are extremely rare, and would also point toward imperial patronage.

126. Van Lantschoot (1934) 43.

127. Van Lantschoot (1934) 43–45. A military unit is indeed attested for Phbow in the sixth century—part of its *annona* was paid by the village of Aphrodito; see Zuckerman (2004a) 151; *P. Grenf.* II 95 from ca. 566 C.E., with *BL* VII 63. The pink granite columns of the church, most likely from Assuan, are also a good hint that the state was involved in this building; Debono (1971) 195–196.

128. Cyril of Scythopolis, *Life of Euthymius* 47, in Price (1991) 65 (sending a priest to Antioch to collect the "blessings" promised by the *illustris* Caesarius); *Life of John the Hesychast* 20, in Price (1991) 236 (the monks come to Cyril's own family house in Scythopolis to collect their *eulogia*); *Life of Theodosius* 3, in Price (1991) 264 (the *illustris* Acacius from Constantinople sends yearly blessings to a Palestinian monastery). The monastery of St. Catherine in the Sinai was still doing this in the early eleventh century: the monk

Symeon—who after an eventful life ended up as a recluse in the Porta Nigra of Trier—was sent by this monastery to the Duke of Normandy to receive the alms he had promised, probably during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem; *Acta Sanctorum*, June 1; cf. Southern (1953) 52–53.

129. A16, in MS XZ 62–65.

130. Parry (1986) 460.

131. John of Ephesus, *Life of Mare the Solitary*, in Brooks (1924) vol. 18, pp. 630–641.

132. Shenoute expressing this common idea: D8.22, "Reading today from the proverbs," in *ShL1*, no. 39, pp. 115–116; D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 41; A26, in Behlmer (1996) 131–132.

133. Rajak (1998). See, for example, the fifth- or sixth-century inscription from Corycus in Herzfeld and Guyer (1930) 106–107, where the donor states that "the Lord knows his name," and it is therefore not necessary to inscribe it; or the formula on a chalice from the Kaper Koraon treasure in Syria: "Your own from your own we offer you, Lord" (in Mango [1986] 145). This latter formula, however, while very common in Italian churches, is not often encountered in the East: see Baumann (1999) 308.

134. A6, in MS TY 17. On the responsibility toward God entailed by receiving, see also D8.22, "Reading today from the proverbs," in *ShL1*, no. 39, p. 115 ("Everything the merciful man gives, does he not give it on behalf of his soul and body? What then can he who receives give on behalf of his own soul other than caring for the limbs of Christ?" This is precisely—Shenoute complains—what some of his monks were not doing); and A16, quoted below.

135. A16, in MS XZ 65.

136. *Life of Theodosius* 3, in Price (1991) 264–265; cf. also *Life of Sabas* 31, in Price (1991) 125; Gerontius's *Life of Melania the Younger* 38, in Clark (1984) 52–53. As this story itself shows, Cyril of Scythopolis is too thorough and too candid a historian to simply present us with this monastic ideology of "blessings" while ignoring the true nature of these gifts. His lives of the monks of Palestine are a mine of information on the specific human sources of monastic wealth. From the *Life of Theodosius*, for example, we learn that the *Life* of the same monk by Theodore of Petra discussed above was written during a period of rapid expansion at the monastery thanks to a "huge and uncountable offering" from a eunuch; *Life of Theodosius* 5, in Price (1991) 266–267. This may be the reason for Theodore's strong emphasis on economic miracles.

137. A16, in MS XZ 65.

138. A regulation of Rabbula contained in his *Life* seems to state that his monks and clergy are only to accept gifts if the donors call them "blessings," in which case they can be distributed among clergy and monks. In every other case, however, "it is we who are under an obligation to give, and not to receive"; *The Life of Rabbula*, in Doran (2006) 85. The idea, here and elsewhere, seems to be that only God can give without humiliating. The interpretation of this passage, however, is not certain. Cf. C9.1, "God who alone is true," in *ShA2*, p. 350 (Shenoute commanding his monks always to pay for what they need from strangers and not to go around receiving gifts—no matter how small a thing, even the fare for a boat); C9.1, "God alone who is true," in *ShL2*, no. 71, p. 99 (Shenoute commanding his monks not to accept favors from the tax collectors lest he should lose moral authority and not be able to criticize them with *parrhēsia*).

139. Caner (2006).

140. In southern Indian Buddhist monasticism, even when monks are landlords, the acquisition of goods takes the form of receiving alms: Carrithers (1983) 140. The same seems to have been true at the monastery of Bawit (south of Hermopolis) in the eighth century: the rents collected by the monks from the land and houses owned by their monastery were called *aparchē*, i.e., first-fruits; Delattre (2008) 56.

141. C7.7, "Continuing to glorify the Lord," in *ShL1*, no. 22.1, pp. 71–72.

142. Johnson (1976) 15.

143. Kuhn (1956) vol. 1, no. 16, pp. 41–42 (trans., vol. 2, pp. 39–40).

144. Rathbone (2006) 109–110. The Oxyrhynchus corn-dole archive is edited in *P. Oxy*. XL. On the Alexandrian distribution of bread in the fifth century, see *CTh* 14.26.1–2 (412 C.E.); Priscus, frag. 28, in Blockley (1981–1983) 325; and the very interesting *P. Oxy*. LXIII 4395 (499 C.E.), where rations of the Alexandrian bread dole are used to pay the interest of a loan.

145. Veyne (1976) 223–226. He calls this system "redistribution," not euergetism. Yet, as he himself shows, special circumstances could erase this distinction.

146. Cf. the sixth-century inscriptions nos. 85–87 edited by Roueché (2004) on "the never-to-be-forgotten benefactor who, with baths and with command of the corn-supply, drove away plague and famine, Rhodopaeus, lover of his country." On euergetism and food supply in late antiquity, see Garnsey and Humfress (2001) chap. 6.

147. Veyne (1976) 189.

148. Brown (1992) 120.

149. Brown (2002) 77.

150. For Theodoret's euergetism, see in particular letters 79, 81, 113–115, in Azéma (1964) 183–189, 193–199 and Azéma (1965) 57–69, 143–147.

151. Criscuolo (2000).

152. This garden must have been part of a temple. A good parallel may be the inscriptions edited by Bernand (1984) nos. 86–87, recording the setting up of a garden in a temple in the early third century by an official of the Roman army in Coptos; cf. Bagnall (1996). In *CJ* 11.78.1, the emperors Arcadius and Honorius forbid the cutting of persea trees throughout Egypt, putting them on a par with the trees of the sacred grove at Daphne near Antioch.

153. Brown (2002) 11.

154. Brown (1992) 141.

155. D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GF 350.

3. RURAL PATRONAGE: HOLY AND UNHOLY

1. Ambrose's writings against the oppression of the poor, particularly his *De Nabuthae* and *De Tobia*, are analyzed in detail in Brown (2012) chaps. 7 and 8. Brown's analysis has been an important inspiration for the first section of this chapter.

2. In A26, in Behlmer (1996) 114, Shenoute preaches to (and threatens) the rich of Panopolis: "But you (pl.), the rich sitting here, don't you see the tears of the poor flowing on their cheeks? See, you are weeping in your compassion and you see me too, how sad I am. So pay attention to them with your philanthropy, oh rich!" In A4, in MS WW 25, Shenoute recalls how he has taught the elite many times at church, and they have promised to stop sinning, with tears flowing down their cheeks. This passage is quoted below.

3. A26, in Behlmer (1996) 91. Gesios is called "the fruitless tree" in "Let our eyes," in MS ZJ 28.

4. Basil of Caesarea, *Against the Rich* 2, in Courtonne (1935) 44–47.

5. Basil's sermons were translated at some point into Coptic, and fragments of his sermons were found in the (medieval) library of Shenoute's monastery. Amélineau edited, by mistake, some of these fragments among the works of Shenoute (*ShA2*, pp. 530–532). On Basil's works in Egypt, see Lucchesi and Devos (1981) and Cribiore (1997).

6. A4, in MS ZJ 9; A26, in Behlmer (1996) 95–100; D4.10, "God is Blessed," in *ShCh*, pp. 191–192 (in reference to "that impious man," i.e., Gesios, who was already dead). Similar indictments of the ungenerous man's wealth can be found, for example, in a sermon of John Chrysostom, *Homily on Psalm XLVIII* 11, in *PG* 55:39AB: "This man who had so many cupbearers, cooks, silver and golden cups, such a large amount of land, so many houses, slaves, horses, mules, camels, troops of servants. . . . For all this, as much as we have reckoned, these fountains, promenades, baths, this gold and silver, these horses and mules, these rugs and these coverings, they are the glory of the house, not the glory of the man who inhabits it"; or in a sermon of Gregory of Nyssa, *On the Love of the Poor* 1, trans. in Holman (2001) 198 (magnificent beds, flowery hangings, enormous houses, expensive silver tables, etc.). Behlmer's introduction to A26 (pp. C-CVI) finds parallels for many of Shenoute's clichés but only in pseudepigraphical and therefore undatable Coptic texts.

7. A26, in Behlmer (1996) 65–67, 136–137; D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GL 284; *ShA2*, pp. 129–133; *ShL1*, no. 28, pp. 90–92; A15, in *ShL1*, no. 19, pp. 62–67 (on money lending); D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, pp. 38–62; A8, in *ShL1*, no. 29, p. 92; Crum and Evelyn-White (1926) 13–14 (trans. p. 163); A4, especially MS ZJ 9–10. Two good parallels: John Chrysostom, *Homily on Matthew* 61.3, in *PG* 58:591A: the rich treat the poor "more cruelly than barbarians. They impose on people consumed by famine and who spend their whole life exhausted, unceasing and intolerable contributions; . . . they use their bodies as they would use donkeys or mules, or rather stones, without giving them even an instant to breathe. What could be more pitiful than the condition of this people who, after suffering all winter, worn out by cold, rain, and vigils, go away with their hands empty, and even remain in debt?" Ambrose, *De Naboth* 5.20, in Gori (1985) 142–145: the poor worker "falls from the roof while building great storehouses for your (the rich man's) wheat; another falls from the top of a high tree, while choosing which grapes to harvest to make wines worthy of your table. Another drowns in the sea, so that your table may not lack fishes or oysters. Another one dies frostbitten by the winter cold, while he hunts for hares or tries to catch birds with a lasso."

8. A26, in Behlmer (1996) 130.

9. Brown (2012) 144.

10. The lengthy sermon A26, in Behlmer (1996), deals with this issue.

11. A26, in Behlmer (1996), e.g., p. 57: "Send your surplus wealth through the poor to heaven so that when you die . . . " "Treasures in heaven" are also referred to in Behlmer, 113 and 142, and in several other works of Shenoute.

12. Veyne (1976) 215 calls this the "stratégie d'assemblée." By the sixth century, magistrates were expected to receive petitions when entering or exiting church during festivals. See Fournet (1999) 471.

13. A4, in MS WW 25–26 (quoted below). Cf. also A1, in *ShA2*, p. 468: "For what profit do I gain by saying to you words that are as numerous as raindrops, [if] after I

finish speaking you reply that I [myself] have not put any of them into practice, as it is your custom, particularly you, rich citizens and magistrates?"

14. Bourdieu (1998) 36.

15. Lichtheim (1976) vol. 2, pp. 170–171. Conversely, late Roman mosaics and textiles depicting the idyllic life of the countryside remind me of those Egyptian tomb reliefs in which the rural workers and servants of the tomb owner work in the countryside while singing and exchanging lines such as "It is a beautiful day, it is so cool!" "Hasten with the work that we might finish quickly!" "I will work more than the master expects me to!" (Tomb of Paheri at El-Kab). That was every landowner's dream.

16. The rich man's boats: A26, in Behlmer (1996) 76 (the poor build ships for the rich and have to row for them); D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 44 (the poor have to work on the rich man's boats even during Easter); p. 46 (landowners use the poor as guards on their ships in case of barbarian invasions). On boats as a typical possession for a rich man in the Nile valley, see Bagnall (1993) 36–38.

17. See chapter 2.

18. D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, pp. 38–62.

19. Sarris (2006) 26 n. 81.

20. Hickey (2001) 17.

21. Rathbone (1991).

22. Banaji (2001); Sarris (2006). For clarity's sake, I will gloss over the (mostly nonessential) differences between these two authors.

23. Hardy (1931).

24. Yet very few of these impressive archaeological remains point clearly to the existence of large estates; see Tate (1992). From a purely archaeological point of view, the rural world of late antiquity was, in the West, a world of villas, but in the East, a world of villages. Sarris claims that only villages have survived in the East because they occupied marginal land that was not attractive to powerful landowners.

25. See Jördens (1990) chaps. 4–5, whose analysis is followed by Banaji.

26. Banaji (2001) 94 and 18 n. 82 (two-thirds of all the wine leases that survive on papyrus are from the sixth or seventh century). There is, however, very little evidence for the export of wine from Egypt in this period. The Apions sent wine to their residence in Constantinople (see Hickey [2001] 134), and *P. Cair. Masp*. II 67168 shows a Pachomian monastery in Middle Egypt selling wine to a bishop of Cyrenaica. That is about all the late antique evidence I can think of. Banaji (2001) 19, based on Luzzato (1996), argued that a trader from a village in Upper Egypt sent great shipments of wine to Constantinople; yet Morelli (2010) has shown that this wine shipment had nothing to do with Constantinople and took place inside Egypt. Archaeological evidence does not point to Egypt as a great exporter of wine either: Sarris (2006) 11–12.

27. Sarris (2006) 85.

28. An important difference between Banaji and Sarris is their treatment of Aphrodito. Banaji follows Jördens (1990) 256–258 in arguing for a regional difference between the southern area of the Nile valley, more favorable to independent villagers (such as those of Aphrodito), and a northern one, dominated by large estates. If true, this could help to explain why monasticism and Coptic literature seem to have been far more important south of Hermopolis than north of it. Sarris, on the other hand, claims that such regional

differences are illusory: large estates had come to dominate the entire Nile valley and all of the Near East. Zuckerman (2004a) 222–223 has indeed claimed that a certain Iulianos possessed a large estate near Aphrodito that was larger than all of Aphrodito's land taken together: ca. 8,000 *arouras* of arable land. But this huge estate may be, once again, an illusion: see Ruffini (2008b) 197 and 247.

29. Sarris (2006) 195–196.

30. Gascou (1985); Bagnall (1993); Hickey (2001); Mazza (2001). See also the important article of Benaissa (2007) and Mazza's (2008) review of Sarris.

31. This is an important point of Gascou (1985), who emphasized the collaboration and confusion between the administration of large estates and that of the late Roman state.

32. Hickey (2001) 139, 206.

33. Mazza (2001) 106–120 advances several possible explanations, among them the preservation of the leases in Alexandria (where papyri do not survive) and not in Oxyrhynchus. In any case, she shows convincingly that the rent registers of the Apion estates need to be understood as complementary to those (lost) leases. Much of the language of these registers can be illuminated by reading them, as Mazza does, hand in hand with the few leases that have survived from late antique Oxyrhynchus.

34. The so-called *enapographoi geōrgoi*, usually identified with the *coloni adscripticii* of the law codes, are, according to Hickey (2001) 97–104, mostly specialized irrigation workers, and they do not represent the typical workforce at the Apion estates.

35. Hickey (2001) 70–74, 204–207. An underlying assumption in all these arguments is that the Apions derived most of their income from their landed estates in Oxyrhynchus, not from other areas of Egypt, the Roman world, or their service to the emperor (in which we know fortunes could be made).

36. *CTh* 11.24.1 (360); 11.24.2 (370); 11.7.12 (383); 11.24.3 (395); 11.24.4 (399); 11.24.5 (399); 11.24.6 (415); *CJ* 11.54.1 (468); 10.9.8 (468); 11.56.1 (468); 11.54.2 (6th c.); *Nov. Just*. 17.13–14 (535); Tiberius II, *De divinis domibus*, Coll. I, Nov. 12 (578–582). Other laws that have been read as indicating the rise and public recognition of great estates are those against private prisons (*CTh* 9.11.6 [388]; *CJ* 9.5.0 [486]), those regulating or forbidding privileged systems of tax collection (the so-called *autopragia: CTh* 11.22.4 [409]), those against *bucellarii* (the private use of soldiers: *CJ* 9.12.10 [468]), and the whole set of laws on the "colonate."

37. Libanius, *Oration* 47.4, in Norman (1977) 502–503. On *patronikia*, see Zuckerman (2004b) 74–77, and Fournet (1999) 464–465.

38. See in general Eisenstadt and Roniger (1980); on rural patronage in late antiquity, see Garnsey and Woolf (1989).

39. *CJ* 11.54.1. See in general de Zulueta (1909).

40. Jones (1986) 484ff.

41. We have abundant evidence for urban landowners owning land in villages, apparently in contravention of this law. Two examples: *P. Oxy*. LXIII 4390 (469 C.E.): the *clarissima* Isis (a member of the Apion family) leases out 19 *arouras* with a waterwheel that she owns in a village to a local villager; *P. Jena* 3 (477 C.E.; see *BL* VIII 325): a villager rents 40 *arouras* located in his own village from a landowner from Hermopolis. Yet the situation may have been complex. At Aphrodito, land was classified into two categories: land owned by villagers, and land owned by strangers to the village; Zuckerman (2004a) 235–236. It is not clear to me how this relates to the issue of patronage.

42. Cf. Brown (1971) 117: "The hard work of patronage, which Libanius dismissed contemptuously as 'slaving for the country folk', was the only way in which men whose careers lay on the fringe of the traditional landed aristocracy could gain access to the one permanent source of wealth and prestige in the ancient world, to the land."

43. Libanius, *Oration* 47, in Norman (1977) 493–535; Jones (1986) 775–778.

44. Libanius, *Oration* 47.4, in Norman (1977) 502–503. In this famous text, Libanius may be exaggerating the plight of the civic councilors of Antioch and the power of these new patrons. On the other hand, the fact that patronage, an illegal or informal practice, leaves no traces in documentary and archaeological sources may have led modern scholars to underestimate its role in the late antique world.

45. See Sarris (2006) 185ff.; Libanius, *Oration* 47.17–18, in Norman (1977) 514–517. A very good illustration of this process is *P. Turner* 44dupl. (331/2 C.E.), a complaint from the villagers of Theadelphia, who claim to have found fugitive villagers hiding in an *epoikion*, an estate-owned settlement, belonging to a landowner of Oxyrhynchus. This landowner, they claim, does not even allow them to approach the gate of the *epoikion*.

46. Gelasius, *Epistula IX: Ad Episcopos Lucaniae* 14, in *PL* 59:52C-53A.

47. *CTh* 11.24.1

48. Cf. Eisenstadt and Roniger (1980) 50.

49. For the traditional view on rural patronage in late antiquity, see Harmand (1955).

50. Brown (1971) and (1982). See Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria* 14, in Price (1985) 110–112; and 17, in Price, pp. 120–124.

51. I borrow the expression "institutional markets" from Eisenstadt and Roniger (1980) 77. I think it is particularly appropriate to the realities of the late Roman state.

52. Salvian's *On the Governance of God* was written around 440. His purely negative description of the system of patronage may not be applicable to the Eastern Empire because in Gaul the Roman state was far weaker and landowners far wealthier than in the East. It may not even be applicable to Gaul itself. See the study of Grey (2006), in particular p. 180: Salvian's complaints "may have more to do with aristocratic attitudes towards banausic labor and dependence on others than with the realities of life for small peasant proprietors."

53. *CTh* 11.24.5. The same reluctant legitimation of the properties acquired through patronage can be seen in *CJ* 11.54.1 (468). This law against patronage states that it shall apply only against those properties acquired illegally in the previous thirty years, but presumably not earlier.

54. See in general Sarris (2006) chaps. 9–10.

55. Cf. Bloch (1961) 265: "Protection, oppression—between these two poles every system of clientage inevitably oscillates."

56. Libanius, *Oration* 47, in Norman (1977) 493–535.

57. De Zulueta (1909) 38: "In seeking a patron the peasants were only using a means of defense which seemed perfectly legitimate to their betters when used by themselves, or when they themselves were the patrons."

58. We have no idea how wealthy Gesios was. The fact that he lived in Panopolis probably indicates that his wealth cannot be compared to that of great imperial aristocrats such as the Apions. But the reason Gesios is a good example of the new aristocracy of late antique Egypt is not that he owned a specific amount of land. It is that he combined imperial office-holding with landowning; that he showed a clear propensity for the production of wine; that

he owned *epoikia* with waterwheels; that he collected rents/taxes through representatives in the countryside. Gesios has this in common with most great landowners of late antique Egypt, including the Apions. The emergence of landowners such as Gesios is thus part of the same development that led to the—probably far wealthier—Apions.

59. Barns (1964).

60. The word ϭⲱⲙ (pl. ϭⲟⲟⲙ) means "garden" land in the sense of a plantation of trees beyond the reach of the Nile inundation and surrounded by a wall, as opposed to arable land (ⲥⲱϣⲉ, ⲉⲓⲱϩⲉ, ⲕⲁⲉⲓⲉ, ϩⲟⲓ), and not exclusively vineyard (which technically would be ⲙⲁ ⲛⲉⲗⲟⲟⲗⲉ). However, from the context it is usually clear that Shenoute uses the term mostly, if not always, in the more restricted sense of "vineyard," which is what the word meant in ancient Egyptian. This is also the most common meaning for the word in other Coptic texts. See Crum (1939) 817B.

61. Shenoute complains many times that the rich rob the poor of their wages. For example, in A8, in *ShL1*, no. 29, p. 92; A4, in MS WW 24; A15, in *ShL1*, no. 19, pp. 62–63: "You (the rich) have defrauded him (the worker) to avoid paying him what he is due, and you seek a pretext against him, although he is free, saying: 'You have misplaced my goods,' or 'You have wounded my cattle,' or also other things of this kind. And especially you add to your sins, saying: 'If you do not work for me next year, I will not pay you your salary (ⲃⲉⲕⲉ) for this last year.' And so you rob many of their salary, because you do not know that those who do violence to the poor in any way are liable to the judgment of God."

62. See Bagnall (1985). Carts are also mentioned by Shenoute in his descriptions of the poor who live in villages and *epoikia*, in "Only I tell everyone who dwells in this village," in *ShL1*, no. 26, p. 87. Bagnall (1993) 38 claims that all the references to wagons in fourth-century papyri occur "in the context of the estate management operations of large landowners." Yet there is so little evidence that I doubt we can generalize. In *P. Cair. Masp*. III 67303 (553 C.E.), a tenant farmer leases from Dioscorus a transport wagon for use during the harvest. He pays the substantial amount of ten *artabas* of wheat. Cf. also Förster and Mitthof (2004).

63. In medieval France, the "poor" described by Shenoute would have belonged to the wealthier class of the peasantry, the so-called *laboureurs* who owned draught animals. These wealthier peasants were particularly appreciated by the noble and bourgeois landowners whose land they leased. The truly poor (*brassiers*) had to rely on the strength of their own arms; Bloch (1966) 193–196. On service at boats and how to avoid it, cf. *P. Grenf*. II 80–82 (400–403 C.E.): Aurelius Senouthes, from Hermopolis but living in Panopolis, is burdened with a hereditary liturgy as a rower in the governor's "principal" boat. To avoid it, he pays other sailors to perform his job.

64. Similar crimes are denounced in *ShA2*, pp. 129–133 (the poor are forced to feed the rich man's cattle), and in A4, in MS ZJ 10 (evil rich men oppress the beasts belonging to the poor with heavy burdens).

65. *P. Oxy*. XXVII 2479, ll. 19–20 (*P. Oxy*. I 130 is a very similar case). In twentieth-century Egypt, losing the water buffalo meant economic disaster for a peasant family; Ayrout (1945) 56–57. *P. Oxy*. I 134 (569 C.E.) is a deed of surety in which a leadworker guarantees the continuing presence at the Apion estate of a *colonus* "along with his friends and wife and *herds* and all his possessions." For the prohibitive cost of oxen, see Rowlandson (1996) 23. I have always tried to quote fifth-century papyri contemporary with Shenoute, but, given the scarcity of papyri from this century, this is not always possible.

66. This is the first important mistake in Barns's translation. What he translated as "You carry off their beasts with their carts and their hay and take them to your plantations and make them drive them round and round (ⲕⲱⲧⲉ) beyond their power" actually says: "You make them irrigate your vineyards beyond their power." ⲕⲱⲧⲉ means "to irrigate by going around the waterwheel with one's oxen."

67. Bagnall (1993) 18: "The *saqiya*, the waterwheel generally called *mechane* in the Greek papyri, was a major capital investment. Such wheels, driven by animal power, appear increasingly commonly in papyri of the fourth century and later." Hardy (1931) 114: "The provision and maintenance of irrigating machines is one of the most regularly recurring items of expense in estate accounts." Waterwheels were made of expensive wood and required constant repairs. *P. Oxy*. XIX 2244 (earlier than 566 C.E.; see *BL* IX 194) is a list of axles showing that on the Apion estate alone ca. fifty new axles were needed. Cf. also Rathbone (1991) 33: at the Appianus estate in the third-century Fayum each *ktēma* (i.e., plantation surrounded by a wall) had its own ox-driven waterwheel for irrigation; Zuckerman (2004a) 225: two-thirds of all the tax payments made by the artisans of Aphrodito were made by waterwheel carpenters. A certain Menas, a soldier, was accused by the people of Aphrodito of killing the village priest, Victor, by beating him with a piece of irrigation machinery! (*P. Mich*. XIII 660, from the early sixth century, with Keenan [1995] and Sarris [2003] 107). I wonder if Besa's letter in which he reproves the inhabitants of the *epoikia* for fighting each other for "a piece of wood" (L11, in Kuhn [1956] vol. 1, no. 41, pp. 129–130) could actually refer to a waterwheel, particularly its axle, which usually needed to be replaced after some time (for a religious interpretation of this conflict, see Frankfurter [2000]). A new document type related to the waterwheel appears in the mid-fifth century: a receipt by which the inhabitant of an *epoikion* attests to having received, from his landlord, the necessary parts for the repair of the waterwheel with which he works; examples include *P. Oxy*. XVI 1982 (497 C.E.); XXXIV 2724 (469 C.E.); XVI 1899 (476 C.E.; *BL* VIII 250); LXVIII 4697 (489 C.E.).

68. Gascou (1985) 9; Rowlandson (1996) 220; some fifth-century examples of waterwheels irrigating arable land: *P. Flor*. III 325 (489 C.E.; *BL* VII 53); *P. Mich*. XI 611 (412 C.E.); *P. Oxy*. LXIII 4390 (469 C.E.); *P. Jena* 3 (477 C.E.).

69. Contracts for irrigation of vineyards that stipulate a wage or cash advance show how expensive this task might be: *P. Vindob. Sal.* 9 (509 C.E.: 7 *solidi*); *SB* VI 9284 (553 C.E.: 3 *solidi* minus 18 carats); *P. Lond*. III 1037 (6th C.: 4 *solidi* minus 24 carats); *P. Flor*. I 70 (early 7th C.: 6 *solidi* minus 23 carats). On the volatile fodder market in Roman Egypt, see Rowlandson (1996) 238.

70. *P. Oxy*. XVI 1913 (ca. 555 C.E.?; *BL* IX 191). A fifth-century example of this is edited by Palme (2005) 470.

71. *ShA2*, p. 130. A similar vignette, though not related to irrigation, can be found in A4, in MS ZJ 10: the poor workers are forced to carry small baskets (ⲥⲁⲣⲁⲕⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲱⲙ) strapped on their back "like horses." Cf. *P. Turner* 55, a Coptic letter from the sixth-seventh century in which a certain Abraham promises to irrigate fields with his own animals (ϯⲛⲁⲕⲱⲧⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲁⲧⲥⲟⲟⲩ ϩⲛ ⲛⲁⲧⲃⲛⲟⲟⲩⲉ: exactly the same language Shenoute uses in the passage just quoted) and remit half of the wage "which everyone receives per *aroura*."

72. *P. Oxy*. VI 902 (464 C.E.). Many of these "farmer-irrigators" partnered with vinedressers to lease vineyards: see Hickey (2001) 90–91.

73. "Only I tell everyone who dwells in this village," in *ShL1*, no. 26, p. 87 (ϩⲛϩⲁϩ ⲛ†ⲙⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ϩⲛϩⲁϩ ⲛⲉⲡⲟⲓⲕⲓⲟⲛ).

74. D4.6, "Many words and things I said," in du Bourguet (1958) 114.

75. L11, in Kuhn (1956) vol. 1, no. 41, pp. 129–130.

76. In Wiesmann's Latin translation of Shenoute's works (*CSCO*, vol. 96, p. 49) it is rendered as "colonia," which could mean virtually anything; in Kuhn's translation (1956) vol. 1, no. 41, pp. 129–130, it is "village"; du Bourguet (1958) 114 translates it as "bâtisses"; Barns (1964) does not understand a crucial passage to be discussed below.

77. A few inscriptions mention *epoikia* in Syria (Kaibel and Lebègue [1890] nos. 2329 and 2332; Jalabert and Mouterde [1950] vol. 3.1, nos. 872, 883, 884; Jalabert and Mouterde [1953] vol. 3.2, no. 1031; Jalabert and Mouterde [1955] vol. 4, no. 1382), but in general estate settlements in Syria were called *chōrion*. See, for example, letter XVIII of Theodoret of Cyrrhus (in Azéma [1982] 89–90) where the *magister militum* Areobindus is asked to have mercy on a *chōrion* he owns near Cyrrhus.

78. Banaji (2001) 174. See also Liebeschuetz (2001) 73. For the Oxyrhynchite nome, all the data is collected by Benaissa (2009) and Krüger (1990) 41–46 and 265–308; for the Hermopolite, by Drew-Bear (1979). In the Oxyrhynchite, *epoikia* become far more numerous than villages (*kōmai*), especially in the fifth to seventh century. In the Hermopolite, although *epoikia* are also numerous (some ninety are attested), the relative number of independent villages seems to have been larger. Does this indicate a real difference, or is it simply a consequence of the fact that we do not have any estate archives from Hermopolis, whereas most of our evidence from Oxyrhynchus is from the Apion estate archive? Both Krüger and Drew-Bear show that some—not very numerous—settlements were apparently called *kōmē* and *epoikion* at the same time. But I do not think that this means that the terms were ultimately synonyms (as they both argue). In nineteenth-century Egypt many villages were called "the ezbah so-and-so," but everybody knew that an *ezbah* and a village were different things.

79. Banaji (2001) 174–175. According to him, *epoikia* tend to be named after their owners in Oxyrhynchus but after nearby villages in the Fayum. In the Hermopolite nome, Coptic names for *epoikia* are more common.

80. "The Vine-Tree": Banaji (2001) 178; "the Hills," "the Shepherd," "the Jar," and "Saint Pinoution" in *P. Lond*. IV 1459 (8th c.); "the Sixteen *Arouras*" in *P. Oxy*. XIX 2244 (6th c.; *BL* VIII 256), l. 48; "the Island of Leukadios" in *P. Oxy*. XVI 2025 (6th/7th c.), l. 4; "the Gospel" in *P. Oxy*. XVIII 2195 (578 C.E.; *BL* XI 160), l. 139; "the Vegetable Island" in *P. Amh*. II 149 (6th c.), l. 5. There are innumerable examples for this.

81. Banaji (2001) 178: Ἀμπελίου = ⲧⲃⲱⲛϩⲗⲁⲗⲁⲗ (“the Vine-Tree”); Crum (1939) 115A: ἐποίκιον Βουνῶν = ⲡⲕⲣⲟ ⲛⲧⲟⲟⲩ (“the Hills”).

82. I can think of only one other possible explanation, which is not convincing to me: that the diffusion of *epoikia* was simply a way for villagers to escape taxation and therefore a reaction to the new fiscal system instituted in the late third and early fourth centuries.

83. See Kemp (2005) 11 on monasticism as "a strikingly distinctive way of life which, for the first time since the early Neolithic, utilized the desert margins for settlement on a significant scale."

84. Rowlandson (1996) 8.

85. This distinction is made by Kessler (1981) 11–13. Kessler's discussion of the topography of the Nile valley (and especially his maps, which show the actual *structure* of the floodplain) is excellent.

86. Eyre (1994). On the broad floodplains of Middle Egypt, cf. Butzer (1976) 101: "Only in Coptic times did the population density of the broader floodplain segments increase to relative proportions comparable to those of today"; 105: "The process of 'filling out' was completed, as the many new Hellenistic and Byzantine-Coptic settlements in northern Upper Egypt show. By the time of the Arab conquest a totally different pattern of urban centers and relative population densities is apparent in the Nile valley. . . . This pattern persisted into modern times"; 107: a "massive input of labor" was needed to colonize the larger flood basins.

87. Eyre (1994) 58.

88. Eyre (1994) and (1997). I agree with Mazza (2001) 122–129: the widespread use of sureties and cash advances in the contracts between landowners and tenants in this period indicates that *coloni* were a scarce commodity in the Egyptian countryside. Landowners had to resort to these practices to secure the tenants' presence and to make sure they stayed on their land. Manpower was scarce relative to the needs of landowners and relative to the land potentially available for agriculture. This does not need to mean, therefore, that the total population of Egypt was in decline, since the scarcity may have been produced by the expansion of the estates and by the diffusion of artificial irrigation. The omnipresence of "untamed" land is very clear in the *Lives of Pachomius* and the *Paralipomena*, which often depict the monks gathering rushes, wood, and charlock in what is clearly no-man's-land.

89. Katary (1999) and Eyre (1994). As Kessler (1981) 12 notes, these movements of inner colonization introduce an element of discontinuity to the history of settlement in Egypt, given the unstable nature of many of the new settlements from a long-term point of view. On the cycles of colonization in Middle Egypt, cf. Eyre (1997) 377 n. 52: "A significant proportion, and essentially the most prosperous, of the peasant population of Middle Egypt [in modern times] can be traced to Bedouin settlement in the mid-nineteenth century."

90. Banaji (1999) 204–208. Lozach and Hug (1930) is an excellent study of the settlement pattern of nineteenth-century Egypt and the role of the *ezbahs* in it. As Hug shows (chap. 5), the diffusion of *ezbahs* marks the transition from a very nucleated settlement pattern to a more dispersed one.

91. Rathbone (1991) 31.

92. Rathbone (1991) 31–32.

93. *In Acta Apostolorum XVIII*, 4, in *PG* 60:146. See Patlagean (1977) 286. In Egypt, landowners also advanced cash to prospective tenants in order to attract them to their estates: Mazza (2001) 124–129.

94. See Benaissa's (2009) catalogue. Mazza (2001) 153–154 shows that hundreds of thousands of bricks were produced each year by the Apions for their different building activities.

95. An example is the sixth-century account in *P. Oxy*. XVIII 2195, which, after detailing the yearly income from six *epoikia*, specifies the expenses of the "great lord Strategius" (a member of the Apion family) on the wages of *pronoētai* and brick-makers, but also on "the holy churches of the six properties." None of the churches receives more than six *artabas* and half a *solidus*.

96. *P. Vind. Sijp*. 11 (453 C.E.; to be read with *BL* V 61 and IX 152).

97. Some fifth-century examples showing different arrangements: *P. Wash. Univ*. II 102 (5th or 6th c.): a list of workers from different *epoikia* who are scheduled to do work for a landowner; *SB* XVIII 14001 (486 C.E.; *BL* IX 310): a vinedresser from the city of Arsinoe rents a vineyard in an *epoikion* belonging to an urban landowner; *P. Oxy*. XXXIV 2724 (469 C.E.): a landowner from Oxyrhynchus gives a waterwheel axle to two *enapographoi geōrgoi* who live in one of her *epoikia*—this is an example of the well-attested "waterwheel receipt"; *P. Vind. Sijp*. 7 (463 C.E.; *BL* VIII 199 and VII 96): a tenant (*misthōtes*) from an *epoikion* guarantees that a fellow vinedresser will stay in the *epoikion* and take care of his vineyard; *P. Oxy*. XVI 1941 (5th c.): Serenos, a priest's son and probably the *pronoētēs* informs a tenant that he is to leave the irrigated land assigned to him in an *epoikion* so that it can be assigned to someone else in tenancy (*misthōsei*); *P. Mich*. XI 611 (412 C.E.): the heirs of a former *dux* lease out 30 *arouras* of arable land served by a waterwheel in the village of Plelo to an inhabitant of the *epokion* "The Fuller"; *CPR* VII 40 (492 C.E.): the inhabitant of an *epoikion* borrows money from a soldier; *P. Köln* II 102 (418 C.E.): a so-called *paramonē* contract, in which a woman from an *epoikion* receives 2 *solidi* as prepayment for her work for a landowner from Oxyrhynchus; in exchange she promises to stay and obey him; otherwise she has to return the money. Many inhabitants of *epoikia* have the status of *enapographoi geōrgoi*. What this status precisely means and whether it is the equivalent of *colonus adscripticius* in the imperial laws is the subject of endless debate. As far as I can tell, Shenoute's writings do not help us to elucidate this difficult issue.

98. Libanius, *Oration* 47.4 and 47.12, in Norman (1977) 502–503 and 510–511.

99. *CTh* 11.24.6.

100. D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, pp. 46–47. The crucial passage in Coptic is ⲏ ⲛⲧⲟⲟⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉⲧⲣⲕⲃⲁ ⲉⲣⲟⲟⲩ ϣⲁⲛⲧⲟⲩⲕⲟⲧⲟⲩ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲕⲉⲏⲓ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲧⲣⲉⲩⲣⲕⲃⲁ ⲉⲧⲃⲏⲏⲧⲟⲩ • **ⲏ ϩⲉⲛⲉⲡⲟⲓⲕⲓⲟⲛ ⲟⲛ ⲛⲉ ⲛϯⲙⲉ** • ⲙⲏ ⲛⲧⲱⲧⲛ ⲟⲛ ⲁⲧⲉⲧⲛⲕⲉⲧ ⲛⲉⲩⲏⲓ ⲛϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ • ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲓⲑⲗⲓⲯⲓⲥ ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲧ ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲑⲗⲓⲃⲉ ⲙⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲛϩⲏⲧⲟⲩ ϩⲛ ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲕⲃⲁ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲉⲧⲛⲏⲣⲡ ⲉⲧⲗⲟⲙⲥ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲉⲧⲛϩⲓⲥⲉ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲉⲧⲛϫⲓⲛϭⲟⲛⲥ.

101. Libanius, *Oration* 39 (particularly 39.10), in Förster (1903–1922) vol. 3, pp. 264–276. Cf. Liebeschuetz (1972) 198–200.

102. Rathbone (1991) 199–200. In Egypt, every bathhouse needed a waterwheel attached to it.

103. Baths are mentioned also in A26, in Behlmer (1996) 76, in a list of the oppressions that the poor suffer.

104. Jalabert and Mouterde (1955) vol. 4, no. 1490 (bath built in Serjilla in 473) and no. 1685 (bath built in Androna in the sixth century). *P. Oxy*. XVI 1921 (621 C.E.; *BL* X 45) shows that the Apions also owned and leased village baths. See on this Hardy (1931) 130. John Chrysostom complains that Syrian landowners prefer to build baths rather than churches on their properties and in villages (John Chrysostom, *In Acta Apostolorum Homilia XVIII*, in *PG* 60:146–150). John's distinction between κώμη and χωρίον corresponds, according to Sarris (2006) chap. 7, to the Egyptian distinction between κώμη and ἐποίκιον.

105. *LB* 85–86 (trans. Bell, pp. 66–67).

106. I suspect that "the island of Paneheou" may have been an *epoikion* belonging to Gesios. We know of several *epoikia* called "the island of so-and-so." Settlements called "island"—which were not necessarily real islands in the river—were usually located on unstable sites created by fluvial deposits, what the Egyptians called "new" land. The Coptic

word for "island" (ⲘⲞⲨϴ) means in fact "new" (i.e., land). This story reflects this instability. *Epoikia* were frequently named by landowners after their original owner. Sarris (2006) 81–82 mentions a fifth-century civic councilor from Oxyrhynchus named Leucadius, who—he thinks—may have sold an *epoikion* to the Apions. The *epoikion* was known afterward as the "Island of Leucadius." Paneheou is in fact a personal name attested in a third- or fourth-century mummy label (as Πανεήου, in genitive?): *SB* XXII 15409 (3rd/4th c.). The initial Pan- may indicate that this is a theophoric name, very appropriate for the city of Panopolis.

107. The Bohairic text (*LB* 86) has here ⲭⲁⲙⲁⲛⲱⲟⲩⲓ, the plural of a word that—as far as I know—does not exist in Coptic. Bell translates it as "farms" without any explanation; Wiesmann's translation of Leipoldt's text renders it with the Latin "casae." I think ⲭⲁⲙⲁⲛⲱⲟⲩⲓ could be a mistake for ⲙⲁⲭⲁⲛⲱⲟⲩⲓ, that is, the plural of ⲙⲁⲭⲁⲛⲏ = μηχανή = waterwheel. See Förster (2002) s.v. ⲙⲏⲭⲁⲛⲏ. On the other hand, ⲭⲁⲙⲁⲛⲱⲟⲩⲓ could also be the plural of χῶμα, i.e., "dike."

108. *LS2*, pp. 643–644.

109. D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 47; A26, in Behlmer (1996) 76; A4, in MS WW 25–26; A7, in Crum (1905) 80B; A8, in *ShL1*, no. 29, p. 92; *ShL1*, no. 28, p. 90; *ShA2*, pp. 129–133; Crum and Evelyn-White(1926) 13–14 (trans. p. 163).

110. A7, in Crum (1905) 80B.

111. A4, in MS WW 18, 24.

112. A4, in MS WW 25–26.

113. The *Encomium on Colluthus* by Isaac of Antinoe, written in the late sixth or early seventh century, describes the stereotypical rich aristocrat as someone who owns many vineyards and orchards; Thompson (1993) no. 13, p. 51 Coptic; p. 40 English. Banaji (2001) 61 claims that "monasteries and aristocrats were at the forefront of the revival of the wine economy." About Egyptian aristocrats, Banaji seems to me to be right, but I doubt that this assertion applies to late antique monasteries as well. I have seen only one piece of evidence that would support it: *P. Cair. Masp*. II 67168, a sixth-century receipt issued by Theodoros, bishop of Pentapolis, to the monks of the Pachomian monastery of Pouinkoreus, in the Hermopolite nome. Theodoros had bought 1,500 *knidia* (a *knidion* can contain either 4 or 8 *sextarii*) of wine from the monastery. At the Apion estate, the rent for vineyards was 150 *dipla*/*aroura* (Hickey [2001] 68), which would mean that—if 1,500 *knidia* is the equivalent of 1,500 *dipla*—this Pachomian monastery owned ca. 10 *arouras* of vineyards, an important but not an impressive amount. Hickey (2001) 67–70 estimates that the Apions owned ca. 600 *arouras* of vineyards.

114. Rathbone (1991) 38 estimates that the Appianus estate owned only 5 percent of the total arable land in Theadelphia, but "between a third and a half of the village's garden land and vineyards." Yet this is not a fact; it is simply a guess. Cf. also Rathbone, 188 and 244 on the priority of vineyards at this estate.

115. Schnebel (1928).

116. Bagnall (1993) 32.

117. Kuhn (1956) vol. 1, no. 23, pp. 62–63; trans., vol. 2, pp. 60–61. On the theft of grapes, see Schnebel (1925) 277.

118. Boyaval (1965). Let us remember that Shenoute was a native of a village called Shenalolet (*LB* 3; trans. Bell, p. 42), that is, "the Vine-Tree" (an *epoikion?*). A brief notice in his Arabic biography (*LA*, p. 386) also records his actions against the rich at a place called

Piahaloli, that is, "the Vine's Field." The tax registers from Aphrodito, edited by Gascou (1987), show, however, that the overwhelming majority of the village's land was used for grains and olive trees, not for vineyards. This may indicate that the village of Aphrodito specialized in the production of olives (or that vineyards were concentrated in the hands of great landowners). A story in the *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* may also indicate the abundance of olives in Panopolis itself: *Bohairic Life of Pachomius* 55, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 1, pp. 74–75.

119. Hickey (2001) 166ff.; Banaji (2001) 112–115.

120. *PSI* III 165 (441/442 C.E.; *BL* VIII 393). Other examples: *P. Oxy*. LXIII 4391 (471 C.E.): the *clarissima* Isis commands a vinedresser who lives at an *epoikion* to pay the irrigators the equivalent of 11 *solidi* in wine—429 *dipla*—as payment for the vintage; *P. Oxy*. I 141 (503 C.E.): the *comes* John commands his butler to make payments in wine to many of his workers.

121. A8, in *ShL1*, no. 29, p. 92.

122. Rathbone (1991) 258.

123. The *Geoponika*, a tenth-century compendium of the agricultural knowledge of the ancient world, shows clearly how obsessed winemakers were with this issue. The numerous recipes for preventing wine from "turning" (7.10–16) range from adding salt to it to writing Psalm 34:8 ("Oh, taste and see that Jehovah is good") on an apple and setting this apple on the wine cask (7.14). See also the *Miracles of St. Stephen* 3.2, in *PL* 41:849–850.

124. One Greek example: *P. Ant*. I 42 (557 C.E.; *BL* VIII 9): "Should any of the said wine be found to be sour (*oxos*) or unsuitable or malodorous (*ozomenos*) up to and including the month of Tubi in the same indiction, I am to exchange it for better wine of good quality." Many Coptic examples are quoted by Crum (1939), s.vv. ⲁⲱⲙⲥ and ϩⲉⲙⲍ.

125. Rathbone (1991) 258; Banaji (2001) 112; Hardy (1931) 103. *P. Oxy*. XVI 2044 is a sixth-century account of the Apion estate showing huge quantities of sour wine being handled by the estate "dispenser of wine." *PSI* VIII 953 (567/8 C.E.; *BL* V 125), a similar document, shows sour wine being dispensed by the estate to prisons and monasteries (to be used in the preparation of food?).

126. Rathbone (1991) 258, 286, 300. *CPR* VI 12 (300/301 C.E.) shows an early fourth-century landowner paying wages in wine and fixing the value of good and sour wine for the payment. Good wine is, in this case, 25 percent more valuable (exactly the same difference in *P. Oxy*. LIV 3765, twenty-six years later). In *P. Oxy*. XVI 1974 (538 C.E.; *BL* VII 143), an inhabitant of an *epoikion* in the Oxyrhynchite nome acknowledges owing a man from Oxyrhynchus a certain amount of money because some of the wine he had sold him had been found to be sour.

127. Hickey (2001) 183 ("writing off vinegar"). John Chrysostom also talks about wine going sour in relation to the rich and the poor, but he says exactly the opposite: the rich prefer to let their wine go sour and waste it rather than give it to the poor (*In epistulam I ad Corinthios* 8, in *PG* 61:344).

128. Hickey (2001) 143. Two papyri from extremely different historical and social contexts show that this was a perennial concern: *P. Oxy*. XLVII 3366 (258 C.E.), the well-known complaint of the grammarian Lollianus from third-century Oxyrhynchus claiming that his salary is being paid with sour wine; and *P. Col. Zen*. II 66 (*BL* IX 61), the complaint of a camel driver from the third century B.C.E., who tells Zenon that he has been paid with sour wine and taken advantage of because he is a barbarian and does not speak Greek.

129. *ShA2*, pp. 129–133.

130. Assuming that the *solidus* was worth around 7,200 *nummi*. Casson (1939) studies a fourth-/fifth-century document in which the *diploun* of wine was valued between 1/24 and 1/22 of a *solidus*, so between 300 and 318 *nummi*. I wonder if Shenoute, in this passage, is simply doubling what he considers the normal price of the *diploun* of wine. Casson shows that it is very complicated to compare prices of wines, because neither measures nor qualities were really standardized. A *diploun* can contain 4½, 6, or even 8 *sextarii* according to the context (Casson, 6).

131. Cf. John Chrysostom, *Homily on Matthew* 61.3, in *PG* 58:591–592: "And what could one say about the wholesale and retail sales that they [the landowners] impose [on the peasantry]?" One is reminded of the medieval *banalités*, and in particular of the so-called *banvin*, that is, a feudal lord's right to force his peasants to buy his own wine: see Bloch (1961) 251; Bloch (1966) 80. Landowners like Gesios may also have taken advantage of the alcohol dependence created by wine payments, especially in a population not used to wine. In Africa, Augustine dismissed the *circumcelliones*, mobile rural workers, as "drunkards": *Exposition of Psalm 132* 3, in Boulding (2000) 176–177.

132. *P. Bad*. II 26 (293 C.E.; with multiple corrections in the *BL:* III 255 [for the date], and especially VI 7–8 and XI 9); *PSI* I 43 (5th c.). In the extensive Hermopolite nome, Drew-Bear (1979), especially pp. 379–388, finds four times more villages than *epoikia*, and many of the *epoikia* she names ended up becoming (autonomous) villages. Modern *ezbahs* could also become villages: Lozach and Hug (1930) 159–160. In Syria, the *chōrion* Beth Misona and the *chōrion* Sarabaon, both probably estate settlements, even had their own small silver treasures: see Mango (1986) 228–231 and 248. According to Michael Decker, the Syrian village of Kaper Koraon, where a famous silver treasure has been discovered, may also have been originally an estate settlement that grew into a village. It is called *epoikion* in an early inscription; Decker (2009) 72 n. 178. *SB* III 6612 (365 C.E.) is a notable document recording the sale of a substantial estate (61 *arouras*) by the former president of the civic council of Oxyrhynchus. The buyer is the inhabitant of an *epoikion!*

133. Brown (1971) 129.

134. Brown (1971) 120.

135. L9, in Wessely (1909) no. 9235 (last two columns?) + no. 9237 (first column): "I have heard that you want to fight with the men of Tiaune for nothing, you and the others. My heart grieves a lot, for things of this kind are not suitable for us Christians"; L10, in Munier (1916) 93–95: mediating a conflict between the village of Ebod (= Abydos?) and Pepoike (= the *epoikion?*); L11, in Kuhn (1956) vol. 1, no. 41, pp. 129–130: to the inhabitants of the *epoikia* who are fighting each other for "a piece of wood"; similarly Moses of Abydos as recorded in his *Life:* Amélineau (1895) 705–706. The late fourth-century letters attributed to John of Lycopolis are also a good example of a holy man's rural protection. See, for example, Zuckerman (1995); *P. Lond*. III 981; *P. Herm*. 10; *P. Herm*. 17; *SB* XVIII 13612; *SB* XIV 11882; *P. Amh*. II 145 and (not belonging to John's archive) Schenke (1990); *P. Bingen* 121 (late 4th or early 5th c.); and many other examples.

136. Sarris (2006) 52.

137. Sarris (2006) 51–53 and Benaissa (2007). *P. Oxy*. VIII 1134, dating to 421 and thus contemporary with Shenoute, also describes the duties of one of these *pronoētai*. According to their own accounts, the *pronoētai* earned a very modest wage, the equivalent of ca. 4 *solidi* a year (Sarris [2006] 43), which was less than what they had to pay to get the position

in the first place (12 *solidi*; see Hardy [1931] 92). They must surely have been compensated with a percentage of what they collected on behalf of their employer. At least this is the way most bureaucrats were paid in the later Roman Empire. Hickey (2001) 177 suggests that they may have been paid in wine, which would fit Shenoute's complaints very well. One of the three *pronoētēs* contracts that have been preserved, *P. Oxy*. LVIII 3952 (early 7th c.), specifies that the *pronoētēs* in question was a Christian priest, and his guarantor was a schoolteacher (in *P. Oxy*. XVI 1856, from the sixth or seventh century, a *pronoētēs* is called *eulabestatos*, which almost certainly implies that he also was a priest). This gives us some idea of the social position of many of these *pronoētai*, who needed to be able to read and write. It also suggests that when Shenoute criticized Gesios for persecuting "especially the priests of the church," he may have been criticizing him for his treatment of his own *pronoētai* and not only the priests or deacons who happened to be his tenants. If some of Gesios's *pronoētai* were indeed Christian priests, it would have been very hard for him to avoid Shenoute's interference in his own properties. Besa's letter L11, in Kuhn (1956) vol. 1, no. 41, pp. 129–130, also mentions priests alongside *pronoētai; SB* XX 14294 (538/9 C.E.?) is a receipt written by one of these priests-*pronoētai; P. Munch*. III 102 (455 C.E.) mentions a priest who is also the *curator* of a Hermopolitan landowner.

138. On these middlemen, see Eyre (1997), particularly pp. 372 and 381. For an illuminating parallel in modern Egypt, see Harik (1974) 38–42. The terms *pronoētēs, oikonomos*, and *phrontistēs* are by no means always equivalent, and their meaning depends on the context. Different estates sometimes use different terminology. I am not concerned here, however, with these important differences. What matters to me is that regardless of the specific meaning of these terms in different contexts, all these *pronoētai, oikonomoi, phrontistai*, and *hypodektai* have one crucial aspect in common. They are intermediaries between landowners and their workers/tenants. In one way or another, they will be in charge of collecting rents and taxes, making payments from those, transporting surplus to the landowner's house, etc. This position gives them a certain power over the surplus they collect and distribute that could potentially threaten a landowner's control over his own properties.

139. Hickey (2001) 57.

140. The accounts of Apion *pronoētai* show that all the revenue in kind was spent locally by the *pronoētēs* himself (Sarris [2006] 34); these accounts usually start with payments to churches and charitable institutions. Cf. also *PSI* VII 786 (with *BL* VIII 401), a sixth-century receipt from a monk of the village of Berky by which he acknowledges having received the "customary" *prosphora* of six *solidi* from the *oikonomos* of a landowning family; and *PSI* I 89 (with *BL* I 391 and VIII 392), for an early seventh-century *pronoētēs* who administers properties in the village of Terythis and gives the usual *prosphora* of 25 *artabas* to a monastery. For the late fourth-century Kellis agricultural account book (also written by a *pronoētēs*), see Bagnall (1997) 78 and 81–83. Schnebel (1928) analyzes an early seventh-century *pronoētēs* account from an estate near Hermopolis and concludes that between 40 and 55 percent of the total income was spent by the *pronoētēs* himself (this account does not include the wine, however). I do not know any similar analysis of Apollo's accounts for the properties of the *comes* Ammonius that he managed (*P. Cair. Masp*. II 67139, from 543/4 C.E.), but it is clear that he was in charge of distributing a lot of wheat as gifts to monasteries.

141. Libanius, *Oration* 47.11, in Norman (1977) 510–511.

142. D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, pp. 40–41; trans. in Barns (1964) 157.

143. D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in *ShA1*, pp. 262–263. A lost work of Shenoute (D6.4) apparently began by quoting a letter of Gesios to his *pronoētai:* ⲅⲉⲥⲓⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲧⲥϩⲁⲓ ⲛⲛⲉⲩⲡⲣⲟ[ⲛⲟⲉⲧⲁⲓ?]. Clearly Shenoute thought that Gesios's relationship to his *pronoētai* was very much his business. I suspect a similar situation lies behind a passage in D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, p. 104, where Shenoute recalls once telling a certain man—who must have worked for a landowner as a *pronoētēs* or in some other capacity—to "'give respite to the poor who work for you [pl.],' for that man did not love righteousness and hated the poor. He answered: 'It is sinful to eat a man's bread and not to do what he commands.' For he was under the authority of someone else." In A26, in Behlmer (1996) 26, a sermon against the rich and their exploitation of the poor, Shenoute listed the *pronoētai* among those who could collaborate with the rich in their oppressions. Yet as a rule it is landowners, not *pronoētai*, who are to be blamed according to Shenoute. *Pronoētai* are the victims of exploitation rather than its perpetrators.

144. A26, in Behlmer (1996) 131–132.

145. *Homily in 1 Timothy* 4, in *PG* 62:562–563.

146. *LS1*, pp. 244–247 (= *LA*, pp. 382–384). Two other similar incidents are *LS3*, pp. 9–12 (on an *oikonomos* who fails to collect his taxes), and possibly *LA*, pp. 388–392, on a man oppressed and imprisoned by the "great" and their lieutenants.

147. Cf. *P. Oxy*. XVI 1840 (6th c.): "Send the *pronoētai* to the country to collect, telling them to have many *solidi* ready for me for, as the Lord lives, if I do not find that they have been very vigorous in collecting, I will punish them well."

148. Sarris (2003).

149. L6, in Wessely (1909) no. 9236 (39c) + no. 9234 (39a), to be read, as far as I can see, in that order.

150. L5, in Munier (1916) 92–93. Cf. *P. Oxy*. XVI 1899 (476 C.E.; *BL* VIII 250): a certain Flavius Alexander (*megaloprepestatos kai endoxotatos stratēgos)*, who may be identical with the *dux Aegypti limitis* and *praefectus augustalis* Alexander of the year 468–469, owns *epoikia* in Oxyrhynchus with waterwheels and vineyards. Shenoute's Paulos could be a similar case.

151. See, for example, *P. Oxy*. XVI 1952 (564 C.E.): the Apion estate orders the archimandrite of a monastery to pay the workers from an *epoikion* (on the *epoikion* mentioned in this text see Hickey [2001] 280) a specific amount of bread. The archimandrite in this case is collaborating with the landowner and in fact apparently working as his administrator. Cf. also *P. Oxy*. I 146 (555 C.E.) and 148 (558 C.E.), which show the close economic links between the Apion estate and the monastery of Andreas (in the second document the monastery supplies a bath owned by the landowner with mats presumably made by the monks).

152. On the importance of imperially owned land, see Vera (1992).

153. Sarris (2006) 18; Hickey (2001) 13–14. A former *dux et augustalis* of Egypt, the highest imperial magistrate in the country, also administered the *domus divina* in Oxyrhynchus in the mid-sixth century. See Tacoma (1998).

154. Fournet (1999) 464–465, quoting *P. Cair. Masp*. I 67024 (ca. 551 C.E.), ll. 5–8: "Since they [the inhabitants of Aphrodito] had suffered uncommon injustice from the part of the civilian governors of the time, they have offered themselves to our *domus divina*, and they have placed themselves under its patronage." Cf. also *P. Cair. Masp*. I 67002 (567 C.E.) II, ll. 14f.: "We are under [the protection] of the most magnificent patrician [i.e., the *curator* of the

domus divina, as shown by Morelli (2008)], and we are his people and people of the *domus divina*." The same document explains that Aphrodito has given a house as a gift to the *domus divina* for its administrator to use when staying at the village. On the other hand, Zuckerman (2004b) 75–77 thinks that Theodosios and Ammonius were Aphrodito's patrons but probably not functionaries of the *domus divina*. See also Zuckerman (2004a) 221–222.

155. Kaplan (1981). *CJ* 10.9.8 (468 C.E.) is further evidence for the *domus divina* as a patron.

156. *P. Oxy*. XVI 2055 (they are said to come from the estates of the Apions).

157. Cf. Jones (1986) 419 on the "precarious" position of the perpetual lessee of the very much coveted imperial properties.

158. See Libanius, *Oration* 47.17–19, in Norman (1977) 514–517: "Now, I have mentioned this as a demonstration of the damage done to many families by these desertions of peasants, for in every city there are such peasants, such doors to receive them, such payments, such agreements, such gains and such losses, such transports of joy and such depths of despair. Moreover, from the other estates those who do not have their way clear for such excesses, many of them deserting their wives and children, scuttle to those persons of influence, such towers of strength, to enjoy their illegal power to the full." Let us remember that Shenoute was accused of gathering and harboring "people" at his monastery. The *Epistula ad Saluium*, edited by Lepelley (1989), is an excellent illustration of this struggle for rural laborers in contemporary Africa.

159. See Mazza (2001) 125–129.

4. THE LIMITS OF INTOLERANCE

1. Frankfurter (1998) 26.

2. Libanius, *Oration* 30.8, in Norman (1977) 106–107; Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, in Wright (1921) 422–423. Eunapius adds: "For in those days every man who wore a black robe and consented to behave in unseemly fashion in public possessed the power of a tyrant."

3. Socrates Scholasticus, *Ecclesiastical History* 7.14, in *PG* 67:765B. Callinicus, *Life of Hypatius* 30.1, in Bartelink (1971) 200–201. Cf. Gaddis (2005) 233: "Rather than prevent monks from abandoning worldly society [as previous legislation did], Theodosian policy heartily encouraged them. The main concern now seems to have been the trouble caused by errant monks who left their proper seclusion and returned to the cities to meddle in secular affairs."

4. This has been done, with more or less success, by Gaddis (2005); Hahn (2004); Trombley (1993). All these works and Frankfurter's are hampered by a limited and superficial knowledge of the Coptic sources.

5. It is important to keep this in mind. I can only disagree with Michael Gaddis (2005) 156 when he states: "How frequent or numerous such incidents [i.e., of violence] actually were is not especially relevant." We have to be careful to distinguish stereotypes from reality. As Emmel, Gotter, and Hahn (2008) 19 point out, there is no evidence for a systematic destruction of temples in late antique Egypt.

6. "Let our eyes," in MS ZJ 28. A similar phrase is used in reference to Atripe's temple in A26, in Behlmer (1996) 92.

7. This was a typical settlement pattern for the Nile valley since prehistoric times. Cf. the diagram in Kemp (2006) 75.

8. *P. Cair. Masp*. III 67312, the sixth-century will of Flavius Theodorus, describes Shenoute's monastery as located ἔν τῷ ὄρει Τριφίου. Shenoute calls the village, in Greek, ⲦⲔⲰⲘⲎ ⲚⲦⲢⲒⲪⲒⲞⲨ (C3, in *ShL2*, no. 74, p. 120); in Coptic, ⲁⲦⲢⲒⲠⲈ (A26, in Behlmer (1996) 91). Palladius, *Lausiac History* 29 mentions a female monastery led by Elias and then Dorotheus in "the city of Athribis." This is not Atripe, as the translator R. Meyer (1964) 191 n. 263 thinks, but Athribis in the southern delta. Atripe would never be called a "city," and its Greek name was Tripheion, not Athribis.

9. Layton (2005) 26 n. 8 shows that the nuns lived in "the village" to the south of Shenoute's own monastery. Atripe is the obvious choice and, as we shall see, remains of a monastic settlement have been found there.

10. The temple was devoted to the goddess Repyt/Triphis (consort of Min, main god of Panopolis), whom, as far as I know, Shenoute never mentions (unless Hecate is her Greek equivalent). The temple's outer layout measures 76 × 47 m while Shenoute's church measures 74.5 × 37 m.

11. The works of Michel Chauveau have shown how much can be learned about the religious landscape of the western area of the Panopolite nome in Roman times from the study of these unprepossessing mummy labels, most of which come, in fact, from the necropolis of Atripe. See Chauveau (1991), (1992), and (2002). Mummifiers must have been attached to the temple, as they were to the Memphis Asclepieion in Ptolemaic times; Wilcken (1927) 48.

12. See in particular Quaegebeur (1993a). The two best-preserved examples of this crucial area in front of the temple entrance are at Karnak and Dendera. In Near Eastern cities the area in front of one of the city gates often played the role of the forum in the Graeco-Roman world; Veyne (2005) 268. The biblical gate where the poor expect justice corresponds to the Egyptian "Gate of rendering justice." A stele from Panopolis or Atripe itself shows a priest who lived under the emperor Hadrian proclaiming to the god Min: "I did not commit any injustice at your 'Gate of rendering justice' nor did I raise my voice"; Scharff (1926) 104.

13. The temple was mainly built in late Ptolemaic and early Roman times. The latest imperial name attested is, according to the excavator Petrie, that of Hadrian; Petrie (1908) 4. By Shenoute's times, therefore, the latest recorded additions and decorations had been in place for centuries.

14. By "traditional Egyptian paganism," I mean the kind of paganism that traces its roots to the pharaonic past, is centered in the temples of the country, and is supported by a priestly elite with a specific ritual and linguistic knowledge. Bagnall (1993) 261–273 lists most of the late antique evidence. The evidence from Philae—a series of Greek, Demotic, and Meroitic graffiti attesting to the presence of a family of pagan priests of Isis until the mid-fifth century—is clearly exceptional. This family is responsible for the latest dated hieroglyphic (394 C.E.), Demotic (452 C.E.), and pagan Greek (456 C.E.) inscriptions. Its presence in Philae seems to have been an expression of Blemmy piety and power in Lower Nubia, not an example of late Roman paganism. See Burkhardt (1984). Priscus (Blockley [1981–1983] 322–323) describes how the temple of Isis in Philae was still working around the years 451–452 but for the "barbarians," that is, Blemmyes and Nubades who received

oracles from the statue kept there. The Coptic text known as the *Histories of the Monks of Upper Egypt* attributes the end of paganism in Philae to the activities of its first bishop, Macedonius, a contemporary of Athanasius. According to the text (Vivian [2000] 85–98), Macedonius destroyed a holy hawk worshipped in the island's temple, baptized the pagan priests, and then the entire population. None of these claims can be substantiated.

15. Maximinus Daia's temple in Toeto: Capart and Grégoire (1940); the temples at Hermopolis: *SB* VI 9598 and *Stud. Pal.* XX 143 (*if* we accept Rémondon's [1965] 64–65 interpretation of these texts; both texts date to around 435 and refer to a τόπος ἔρημος of Ammon and the Eagle, i.e., Horus; Shenoute also refers to the temple of Atripe as a τόπος, and, interestingly, the official named in these papyri, the *comes Aegypti* Theodotos, is very probably identical with a *comes* Theodotos whom Shenoute counts among his friends in D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, p. 108); an imperial temple in Oxyrhynchus converted into a church is mentioned in *P. Merton* I 41 (406 C.E.); the "former temple of Panopolis" in L15, in Munier (1916) no. 9258, p. 148—this might be the huge Egyptian temple that survived until the fourteenth century, was admired by Arab geographers, and is never mentioned by Shenoute: Sauneron (1952); the temple of Elephantine converted into a fortress: Grossmann (1980); abandoned temples in Lycopolis are mentioned by Gascou (2001) 542. See also Emmel, Gotter, and Hahn (2008).

16. A *palation* in the Tripheion: *P. Panop. Beatty* I 259–261; and Bagnall (1993) 265. The nature and function of this *palation* is a mystery to me. The priestess of the temple of Atripe is mentioned in a fragmentary letter by a certain doctor Eudaimon, which dates to the fourth century: *P. Fouad* I 80. A priestly family from Panopolis is well attested in the archive of Ammon (*P. Ammon* I-II), where the latest document dates to 371. *SB* XXIV 16000, a fragment of a topographical register of Panopolis from the early fourth century, mentions four temples (ll. 293, 494, 642, and 702—there must have been many more) and at least seven priests.

17. Brown (1989) 103.

18. Like the American "War on Drugs" (or illegal immigration), the late Roman war on paganism was hypocrisy on a national scale. Some of Theodosius's laws against paganism are dated by the consulship of two famous pagans, Symmachus and Tatianus, and one (*CTh* 16.10.10) is addressed to the prefect of Rome, Albinus, who was also a pagan; see Fowden (1978) 56. Paganism had very few martyrs.

19. Damascius, *The Philosophical History* 87 and 133, in Athanassiadi (1999) 220–221, 298–299. On the temple of Heliopolis, see Emmel, Gotter, and Hahn (2008) 1–2. Proclus prayed in the Asclepeion of Athens in the late fifth century "according to the ancient manner," an action that he could accomplish "only by hiding from *hoi polloi*," that is, the Christians; *Life of Proclus* 29, in Saffrey and Segonds (2001) 35.

20. Libanius, *Oration* 30.42–43, in Norman (1977) 138–139. The secularization and reuse of temples was far more common than their destruction or conversion into churches. See Emmel, Gotter, and Hahn (2008).

21. Libanius, *Oration* 30.10, in Norman (1977) 108–109. This discourse makes much better sense to me if we translate ἀγρός as "village" rather than "estate," as Norman does.

22. See Assmann (1991) 50–58, especially pp. 52 and 56. These liturgies date to the Ptolemaic and early Roman periods, but the idea of recharging divine statues by uniting them to the sun is still mentioned by Rufinus of Aquileia when discussing the destruction of

the Serapeum in Alexandria in 391/392 C.E. See the excellent analysis of Thelamon (1981) 177–185. A Christian attempting to convert one of these temples into a church could either try to hack off the ubiquitous images one by one (a rather hopeless task) or simply cover the walls with white plaster.

23. "Let our eyes," in MSS WW 27–28, ZJ 28; *ShL1*, no. 28, p. 91; A26, in Behlmer (1996) 91–93. Shenoute may be referring here to Arcadius's law of 399 (*CTh* 16.10.16) ordering the destruction of rural temples without provoking disturbances.

24. D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in *ShA2*, p. 136. This passage refers to the destruction of temples by Christians in general and not specifically to the case of Atripe, but it shows the dismissive attitude of Shenoute toward pagan temples.

25. A26, in Behlmer (1996) 91–93.

26. The sermon, A26, in Behlmer (1996), is directed against the evil rich in general, but Shenoute says several times that his threats apply in particular to "that godless man," i.e., Gesios. I am reasoning by analogy with some of the stories contained in Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *History of the Monks of Syria*, in particular 14, in Price (1985) 110–112: Letoius, a prominent pagan councilor of Antioch, owned or (more probably) controlled a Christian village and "demanded crops from the peasants with more severity than was needed." The holy man Maësymas intercedes on behalf of the village. See also *History of the Monks of Syria* 17, in Price (1985) 120–124: the holy man Abraham defends a village from rapacious tax collectors, agrees to become the village's patron, and builds a church for the village.

27. Petrie (1908) 5; on the monastic buildings and the settlement in general, which is currently being excavated, see el-Masry et al. (2006).

28. A6, in Young (1981) 349–350 (I have slightly modified Young's translation). The reason I assume this text refers to Atripe's temple is that it deals mostly with the women of Shenoute's congregation, located in Atripe, and with their relationship to the congregation's men (and Shenoute, in particular). A fragment of this sermon (MS TY 18) mentions in passing Shenoute's visit to the imperial court on account of the "violent ones" (i.e., people like Gesios). If we assume that this visit took place during Shenoute's participation at the Council of Ephesus, this would place the temple's conversion after 431 at least. Temples being imperial property, Atripe's temple could have been granted to Shenoute as a result of this visit (a good parallel would be the *Life of Porphyry* by Mark the Deacon). But all this is very uncertain and hypothetical.

29. This is Shenoute's only reference to Egyptian hieroglyphics, contrasted here to the new scripture, the Bible.

30. Cf. the very similar inscription recording the conversion of a temple into a church of the martyr George in the village of Zorava, in southern Syria, dating to 515: "The abode of demons has become the house of God. The light of salvation shines where darkness caused concealment. Where sacrifices to idols occurred, now there are choirs of angels. Where God was provoked, now he is propitiated" trans. in Trombley (1993) 363. No remains of this former pagan temple were found in Zorava, however. The "narrative" of Christianization had its own triumphalist logic, which trumped reality. Even if a Christian shrine had no pagan past, it could be described as if it did; cf. Brown (2003) 149.

31. A6, in Young (1981) 351–352 (on treasures in heaven, on the necessity of being charitable, and on God's rewards for charity in this world and the next); MS TY 17–18 (on the monks' personal responsibility for everything that is donated to the *diakonia* of the

monastery, and on the monastery's extraordinary poverty: it does not have a single bronze vessel or bronze lamp). An intriguing entry in a medieval *typikon* in Vienna (K9729)—which contains a list of liturgical readings taken from the works of Shenoute—contains this instruction: "Also if you wish to read the passage [i.e., from a lost work of Shenoute] about the wealth (ϫⲣⲏⲙⲁ) of the temple of Atripe that they wanted to destroy (? ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ, or maybe "unearth"?) in his days, you can do it."

32. The *Life of Moses of Abydos* explicitly mentions Shenoute as an example to follow. The devil complains (in Till [1935–1936] vol. 2, p. 50): "Shenoute expelled me from Panopolis, he took my temples and converted them into churches, he also took my pagan children. And he did not stop at that, but he persecuted me from the hill (ⲡⲧⲟⲟⲩ) of . . ." The text breaks up there, but it seems safe to assume that the missing word is ⲁⲧⲣⲓⲡⲉ. Besides the case of Atripe, we have no evidence for Shenoute destroying temples and converting them into churches.

33. The oracle of Bes at Abydos and its fourth-century activity are described in Ammianus Marcellinus 19.12, in Hamilton (1986) 181–183. It is also attested archaeologically by the graffiti left by the late Roman visitors: Perdrizet and Lefebvre (1978). These graffiti show that the shrine, installed in the ancient temple of Seti I, was in Ptolemaic and early Roman times dedicated to Osiris/Serapis and Isis, and only later became an oracle of Bes. The desecration of the temple by Moses of Abydos is narrated in his fragmentary biography published by Till (1935–1936) vol. 2, pp. 46–81. The Christian graffiti left in the temple by a female community, which frequently invokes Apa Moses, are published in Murray (1904) 38–43. Moses himself frequently quotes Shenoute in his letters to his female congregation (published by Amélineau [1888] amid the fragments of Moses's *Life*).

34. Cf. letter 232 of Augustine of Hippo to the pagans of Madaura, the Panopolis of Africa (in Teske [2001–2005] vol. 4, pp. 124–128): "You cannot deny that you see some temples of the idols fallen into ruin through neglect, others thrown down by violence, others closed, and some applied to other purposes; you see the idols themselves either broken to pieces, or burnt, or shut up, or destroyed" yet at the same time, he admits, "against those idols your temples are more easily shut than your hearts." Cf. also Augustine's Sermon 198.28, in Hill (1997) 202: "All of them [the pagan images], indeed, have been removed in the name of Christ by the laws of the state, and have ceased to be honored. . . . But just as previously there were also private magic rites, so too these things are still being done secretly, after their public official practice has been forbidden."

35. Brown (1998). This fundamental article has been the main inspiration for this chapter.

36. Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry of Gaza*, in Hill (1913). I believe in the (disputed) historicity of the events described in this work, but we need to leave much room for exaggeration by its author.

37. *Shai* was originally the Egyptian name for the fate determined for an individual by the divinity. By the Graeco-Roman period, however, it had become a popular protective genius represented as a snake that guarded house, village, vineyard, etc., i.e., a *genius loci*. The name is translated into Greek as *agathos daimōn*. Personal names show that this divinity was particularly popular in the area of Panopolis, and we also know that it had its own temple in the city in the early fourth century (*SB* XXIV 16000, l. 642). See the exhaustive study of Quaegebeur (1975), particularly pp. 160–166.

38. Some of these practices are mentioned in D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in *ShA2*, p. 134; *ShA1*, pp. 379–380, 386; MS GG 12. This text describes the stupidity of pagan practices and beliefs and contrasts them to Christianity. Yet at the same time, it complains about those who say, "We have become Christian," but are still divided in their faith and mix with pagans and heretics. The fact that Shenoute felt such a fervent need to demonstrate the irreconcilable differences between pagans and Christians shows that this was a point worth making again and again. His complaints confuse pagan religious practices with the secular world of urban culture, what contemporary preachers called the "city of Satan." Libations to the Nile: D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 44; A26, in Behlmer (1996) 132. Deceitful books in the houses of pagans are also mentioned in D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in *ShA1*, p. 273.

39. D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in *ShA1*, pp. 263–265. The same issues were faced by Augustine of Hippo and by bishops all over the Mediterranean world. Cf. Augustine's Sermon 198, in Hill (1997) 180–237, against the pagans, delivered in the New Year festival of 404: Christians should not exchange gifts with pagans, play dice with them, get drunk with them; they should avoid the theater, etc. There are similar arguments against the theater in Homily 5 of Jacob of Serugh in Moss (1935). Cf. also *Letters of Barsanuphius and John 775*, in Chryssavagis (2006) vol. 2, p. 281: "If a Jew or pagan happens to invite me to a meal during the season of his feast, or perhaps even sends me gifts during that season, should I accept or not?" The answer is, of course, no!

40. Cameron (2007) 44 claims that "liberal" Christians were Shenoute's problem. That is a misleading designation: these Christians were not innovating in any way. It was Shenoute who was redefining the traditionally porous borders of Christianity. On the relative proportion of Christians and pagans in the population of late antique Egypt, see the debate between Roger Bagnall and Ewa Wipszycka in Bagnall (1982) and (1987) and Wipszycka (1986). Both these scholars, it seems to me, confuse Christianization with conversion, notions that need to be carefully distinguished.

41. L1, in *ShL1*, no. 11, p. 26: "For if I had not shaken you, oh Panopolis, against your works of violence and your servitude of Kronos, you would have accused me to the rulers for nothing."

42. The poetry, sculpture, and textiles of late antique Egypt, though full of pagan gods, are anything but Egyptian, either in style or content. They are the local manifestation of a purely Hellenistic tradition—whether pagan or Christian—that had grown local roots.

43. The Serapeum and its defenders, professors of philosophy and grammarians, in Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.16–17, in *PG* 67:604–605; Zacharias Scholasticus, *Life of Severus*, in Kugener (1907); Damascius, *The Philosophical History*, in Athanassiadi (1999). Rufinus's description of the Serapeum, as analyzed by Thelamon (1981) 159–277, shows that many traditional Egyptian religious conceptions and practices were still very much alive in the Serapeum at the time of its destruction. The Hellenization of Egyptian paganism did not necessarily imply the suppression of native Egyptian traditions but rather their reinterpretation.

44. *Panegyric on Macarius of Tkow attributed to Dioscorus of Alexandria*, in Johnson (1980) 34. According to Olympiodorus of Thebes (Thebes probably stands here for anywhere in the Thebaid: see Fournet [1992] 261 n. 121), a pagan Egyptian historian contemporary with Shenoute, Homer had in fact been born in the Thebaid (Blockley [1981–1983] 196–197).

45. *P. Ammon* I-II. Ammon himself, a lawyer (*scholastikos*) who claims to have been educated in philosophy and literature, may also have been a priest. In a fragmentary petition (*P. Ammon* II 47) he complains that an official has violently dragged him from one place to the other in his "holy habit." Ἅγιον σχῆμα is elsewhere used, as far as I know, only to designate the Christian monk's habit. Here its meaning seems to be "holy office, position" (*P. Duk. inv*. 198 also mentions a priest Ammon: see Van Minnen [2002] 184). On Orion of Thebes, see the *Life of Proclus* 8, in Saffrey and Segonds (2001) 10. Ammon was in Alexandria to secure the main priesthood of Panopolis for his nephew, also called Horion. Cf. also the "bearded philosopher Pythiodorus of Thebes" who chased Athanasius out of Alexandria on behalf of the emperor Julian; *Index to the Festal Letters of Athanasius* 35, trans. in Martin (1985) 265.

46. Hadot (2006) 75. This famous phrase of Nietzsche originally described Christianity, but as Hadot shows, it applies better to the attitudes of many Platonizing pagans in late antiquity: "For the Neoplatonists, pagan myths and rituals were also a Platonism for the people, or even more precisely, a hidden physics."

47. Assmann (2010) 43.

48. Hadot (2006) 57.

49. A pagan as imagined in a saying attributed to Pachomius, in *Paralipomena* 17.37, in Veilleux (1980–1982) vol. 2, pp. 60–61.

50. This process can be traced in the entire Near East and is by no means limited to Egypt. Damascius's *Philosophical History* is particularly revealing of these attitudes. Proclus takes these tendencies of late antique paganism and pursues them ad absurdum: he goes on a spiritual pilgrimage in Asia Minor and is initiated to the "ancient religious practices still preserved there" (*Life of Proclus* 15, in Saffrey and Segonds [2001] 18); he celebrates the religious festivals of all nations according to their ancient traditions and respects the Egyptian *dies nefasti* "better than the Egyptians themselves"; he composes hymns to Marnas of Gaza (whose temple had been destroyed long before by Porphyry), to "Isis still venerated at Philae," and to many other gods; in sum, he is the universal priest of all the religions of the world (no. 19, p. 23) and shows the agreement between all the national theologies (no. 22, p. 26).

51. Apollonius of Tyana had been contrasted to Jesus as his pagan counterpart since Hierocles and Porphyry in the early fourth century. Soterichus of Oasis, a late third- to early fourth-century poet from the southern oases of Egypt (directly connected by a road to Ptolemais, south of Panopolis), wrote a poetical *Life of Apollonius* (*Suda*, s.v. Soterichus). Soterichus must have lived in a house similar to that recently discovered in Amheida (Dakhleh oasis, some nine days away from the Nile valley by camel), with Greek mythological paintings and Greek poetry written on the walls. Apollonius's reputation among Christians was ambivalent. Isidore of Pelusium, for example, a monk in northeastern Egypt contemporary with Shenoute, seems to have had a relatively sympathetic view (letter 1.398, in *PG* 78:405B), although he condemns the use of talismans falsely attributed to him. Cf. on this issue the study of Jones (2006). I have learned not to underestimate the most elemental religiosity of these Platonizing intellectuals from a reading of Apuleius's *Apologia*.

52. Baillet (1926) no. 1266. Other graffiti show that, by the fourth century at least, Plato was believed to be intimately connected to these tombs. Martin and Primavesi (1999) 45 n. 2 speculate that the representation of the judgment of souls on one of the tombs, where many "Platonizing" visitors left their mark, may have been seen by them as the origin of some of

Plato's eschatological theories. As Baillet remarks (p. LXIX), this was an "anonymous cult": visitors admired the *mania* (no. 1550) of the ancient Egyptians. Fl. Tatianus, pagan governor of the Thebaid in 364, expresses his admiration in this way: "Oh amazing wonder of the wise Egyptians that causes us great consternation!" (no. 1380).

53. Socrates Scholasticus, *Historia Ecclesiastica* 5.16–17, in *PG* 67:604–605.

54. Phenebythis was the principal village of the southern "toparchy" of the Panopolite nome, which means it must have been located relatively close to Atripe. Inhabitants of Phenebythis were at least occasionally buried at Atripe; Chauveau (1992) 108.

55. By the fifth century, the population of Egypt practiced a "toned-down" mummification: the bodies were desiccated—but no longer eviscerated—and covered with many layers of textiles and big linen shrouds wrapped from head to feet and held together by diagonally crossing cloth tapes or strings. The textiles covering the deceased were now textiles of daily use without funerary religious connotations or portraits. What Asclepiades presumably did for his brother Heraiscus was to practice an "old-style" mummification, involving the use of funerary shrouds with a depiction of the deceased in the guise of Osiris, a common practice in Roman Egypt. Dunand (2007) argues that—at least in the fourth century—old-style mummification was characteristic of pagan burials, while the later "toned-down" mummification was practiced by Christians.

56. Damascius, *The Philosophical History* 72–76, in Athanassiadi (1999) 184–199.

57. Already under Constantius it took "great courage" for the high imperial magistrate Anatolius of Beirut to offer sacrifices and visit temples during his visit to Athens: Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, in Wright (1921) 502–503 (yet as a prominent public figure, Anatolius may have enjoyed less religious freedom than most). It took *parrhēsia* (public courage and fearless speech) for Proclus to greet the moon in Athens in the later fifth century: *Life of Proclus* 11, in Saffrey and Segonds (2001) 14.

58. In the words of Peter Brown, "It was not like priests' holes in Protestant England, but more like owning one's own Matisse."

59. Athanassiadi (1999) appendix I; Saffrey and Segonds (2001) 171 n. 3.

60. *Life of Proclus* 30, in Saffrey and Segonds (2001) 36.

61. Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry* 71, in Hill (1913) 81–82; Zacharias Scholasticus, *Life of Severus*, in Kugener (1907) 14–37.

62. A26, Behlmer (1996) 91 and 112. This entourage is also mentioned in D4.10, "God is Blessed," in *ShCh*, p. 189: "his evil servants" (who speak against Jesus, just like their master); "the other people who share with him in his lawless acts"; "the other people living now who resemble him and are no different from him."

63. Frankfurter's (1998) and Brown's (2002) 90 views on Gesios ("vocal and articulate defender of traditional piety and critic of Christianity"; "old-world civic benefactor" who celebrated banquets in honor of the pagan gods) were put forward when much crucial evidence had not yet been published.

64. Shenoute's actions and self-justifications are therefore a good example of what Michael Gaddis (2005) 193 calls the "rhetoric of exposure": holy men's deeds "unmasked the hypocrisy, corruption and pretense of authorities who claimed to be Christian but failed to govern according to Christian values."

65. D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GF 265–266: ⲉⲩⲭⲉ ⲙⲛⲧⲣϩⲟⲩⲟ [read ⲙⲛⲧϩⲣⲟⲩⲟ?] ⲅⲁⲣ ⲁⲛ ⲉⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲕⲣⲱⲙⲉ ϩⲛ ⲛⲁⲁⲓⲙⲉⲓⲟⲛ ⲁⲗⲗⲁ ϩⲛ

ⲛⲁⲣⲱⲣⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ϩⲛ ϩⲉⲛⲡⲗⲁⲧⲓⲁ ⲉⲛⲁⲩϣⲉ ⲛⲉⲧⲥⲱⲧⲙ ("For they speak high-sounding words against God and his people not only in [private] rooms, but also in the *agora* and in the streets while many listen." Shenoute adds: "But I *also* speak to you with *parrhēsia* in the midst of this crowd that [my words] may be heard in the *nomes* and over the whole of the earth.") Attacking Jesus's divinity: A26, in Behlmer (1996) 91–93; D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in *ShA1*, p. 379; *LB* 88 (trans. Bell, pp. 67–68); "Let our eyes," in MS WW 34; D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GF 261–262. Going to the oracles: D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 40.

66. John Chrysostom, *In Acta Apostolorum, Homilia XVIII*, in *PG* 60:146–150. Villages in this text are called κώμη and χωρίον. The latter term may be the equivalent in Syria of *epoikion* in Egypt. An Egyptian papyrus, *P. Oxy*. LIX 4003 (late fourth-early fifth century), shows a landowner giving detailed instructions to his manager to finish the building of a church located in all likelihood in an *epoikion* or village. The manager is also ordered to make a tour of the estate and repair its waterwheels. The letter ends: "Don't neglect the columns. Drive the stewards (*pronoētai*) on. Find a free man to be doorkeeper [i.e., of the church]."

67. Vera (1992) 471: "Farmers had little hope of following religious beliefs different from those espoused by the *domini*." Cf. also Maximus of Turin, *Sermons* 107–108, in Ramsey (1989) 236–238.

68. A26, in Behlmer (1996) 102; D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, pp. 40–41, 44–45. In this text, Shenoute claims that Gesios forced his Christian workers to launch his new boats into the river during Easter. This complaint could have a religious dimension: was Gesios celebrating the *navigium Isidis*, the pagan festival that marked the opening of the sailing season in the Mediterranean and was celebrated by launching a boat into the ocean in early March, i.e., during Lent? D5.5, "God says through those who are his," is a sermon preached to the (Christian) "crowd" belonging to Gesios to warn them to stay away from their master's paganism and to reassure them of their salvation in spite of having a pagan master.

69. D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 44. Cf. Emmel (2008a) 168: "Robbing a pagan of his idols is somehow equivalent to protecting the poor from cruelty and exploitation." This confusion between economic and religious issues is also very clear in D6.2, "Now the things we said before suffice," in MS ZM 368, 391–392 (in Elanskaia [1994] 328–330), 397–400.

70. "Let our eyes," in MS WW 29–30; and Emmel (2008a) 184. Emmel's edition and translation of this fundamental text—which I had originally read and translated myself from the manuscripts—has saved me from many an error and has clarified many obscure passages. I have used his translation to improve mine.

71. A26, in Behlmer (1996) 92–93, a sermon addressed to the rich.

72. Brown (1998) 658. Markus (1990) is excellent on this. Cf., for example, p. 33: "The churches were filled with people who had come to them 'in their bodies' (*corporaliter*) and needed admonishing to abandon their former ways. . . . There was a wide no-man's land between explicit pagan worship and uncompromising Christian rejection of all its trappings and associations. It left ample room for uncertainty." Augustine's letter 232 to the pagans of Madaura, the Panopolis of Africa (in Teske [2001–2005] vol. 4, pp. 124–128), shows that pagans could even adopt a Christian language and appeal to the bishop when convenient.

Ammianus Marcellinus 22.10, in Hamilton (1986) 245, complains of Julian's "lack of tact" in judicial examination, "asking at an inappropriate moment what religion each of the parties professed." On catechumens in Egypt, cf. Shenoute's complaints in D7.2, "There is another foolishness," in *ShA2*, p. 398: "Why do you go away so happy when they close in your face the doors of the house of God, the church, when it is announced 'Depart, catechumen,' making yourself miserable by not receiving the holy mystery, wealth than which there is nothing greater? I wish it was due to ignorance or young age, but after such a great lifetime, with so much grey hair and at such an advanced age?"

73. "Let our eyes," in MS WW 34. But—Shenoute replied—how young could he have been if at that time he had already been a governor? And now, after all this time, what would he argue now? Cf. Augustine, Sermon 62.15, in Hill (1991) 165: "He doesn't say openly, 'Come to the idol.' He doesn't say openly, 'Come to my altars, join the feast there.' . . . Let him say that. Well of course, he doesn't dare say it, he has other deceitful tricks up his sleeve."

74. "Let our eyes," in MS WW 33–34.

75. Cf. Augustine, Sermon 352A.5, in Hill (1995) 91, on catechumens: "'Tomorrow,' he says. . . . Every argument with them is about putting things off."

76. D1/2/3.4, "As I sat on a mountain," in *ShL1*, no. 18, pp. 44–61.

77. The mud left by the receding waters of the Nile inundation brimmed with a sudden abundance of "spontaneously generated" frogs. Frogs were therefore associated with the inundation and human birth in Egyptian religion and were the symbol of the goddess Heket, consort of Khnum, a god worshipped in Elephantine and responsible for the inundation. See Helck and Otto (1972–) s.v. Frosch. Children had good reason to ask frogs about the inundation.

78. D1/2/3.4, "As I sat on a mountain," in *ShL1*, no. 18, pp. 44–61.

79. The main text is "Let our eyes." It has been studied by Emmel (2002) and has been published by him in Emmel (2008a). This chapter was originally written before this publication, but I am happy to see that we agree on all essentials, despite a slightly different reconstruction of the course of events. The episode is also mentioned in *ShL1*, no. 28, pp. 90–92; D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GF 260; D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 39; D6.2, "Now the things we have said before suffice," in Elanskaia (1994) 329; D8.20, "And after a few days," in *ShL1*, no. 13, p. 32 (on Shenoute stealing books from Gesios); *LB* 125–127 (trans. Bell, pp. 77–78); and D4.3, "A beloved asked me years ago," in Wisse (1991) 135 (trans. p. 138).

80. *ShL1*, no. 28, pp. 90–92.

81. All the following quotations come from "Let our eyes," in MSS WW 26–34; ZX frag. 1v:1:18; ZJ 21–22 and 27–28.

82. Gesios's house as a dark place ("from door to ceiling") is also mentioned in D6.2, "Now the things we said before suffice," in MS ZM 500. In this text, Shenoute prophesies doom and destruction to Gesios.

83. Hecate played an important role in theurgy, Greek magical papyri, and the Chaldean literature so popular among the pagans of this period. Cf. *Life of Proclus* 28, in Saffrey and Segonds (2001) 33; Eunapius, *Lives of the Philosophers and Sophists*, in Wright (1921) 434–435.

84. Cf. Augustine, Sermon 62.10, in Hill (1991) 163: "I mean, that they have a deity there, and take that statue for a deity, is obvious from the evidence of the altar. What's an altar

doing there, if that thing isn't regarded as a deity? Don't tell me, any of you, 'It isn't a deity, it isn't God.' I have already said, if only they knew this, just as we all know it. But what they have there, what thing they take it for, what they do there, is all perfectly obvious from that altar."

85. A Ptolemaic priestly statue from Panopolis that fits Shenoute's description (although, understandably, its head and feet have been cut off!) has been published by Blasius (2002). The statue represents a priest carrying a "naos" (i.e., small shrine) of Min, the main god of Panopolis.

86. Verbrugghe and Wickersham (1996) 166; a fifth-century papyrus seems to be an epitome of Manetho: *P. Bad*. IV 59. The pagans of Beirut who suffered persecution in the late fifth century (some of them Egyptians) possessed (magical/astrological) books of Manetho: Zacharias Scholasticus, *Life of Severus*, in Kugener (1907) 62. The "Apotelesmatika" and the "Book of Sothis," hermetic astrological treatises, were attributed in late antiquity to Manetho. The "Apotelemastika" was written between the second and fourth century C.E. These, I suppose, would be the "deceitful books" harbored by the pagans.

87. D8.20, "And after a few days," in *ShL1*, no. 13, p. 32: Gesios accuses Shenoute to the governor for stealing his books, but the governor responds that he is also a Christian like Shenoute. It is not clear if this is part of the same episode or a later development.

88. The word for "cubit" in this text was recognized by Emmel (2008a). The Nile's "cubit," Greek πῆχυς, Latin *ulna*, was part of the religious paraphernalia typical of many Egyptian temples. It served in theory to measure the Nile's inundation and thus to predict scarcity or abundance. "Cubits" may have been kept within the temples' Nilometers, but by this time they can only have had a religious function. In Alexandria, the "cubit" was carried in the annual procession from and to the Serapeum celebrating the river's rise, together with a golden vase holding the new water. Constantine removed the "cubit" to the church, a decision reversed by Julian (see Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.3). With the destruction of the Serapeum (where the Alexandrian "cubit" was stored) by Theophilus, patriarch of Alexandria, the "cubit" ended up once again in an Alexandrian church. Gesios can only have found his "cubit" in a temple (maybe at Atripe?) By bringing it to the church, Shenoute seems to have deliberately emulated the famous Theophilus. Cf. Rufinus of Aquileia, *Ecclesiastical History* 11.30, in Amidon (1997) 87 and particularly pp. 109–111 n. 50.

89. In D4.3, "A beloved asked me years ago," in Wisse (1991) 134–135, Shenoute also describes images painted on the walls and engraved on drinking and eating utensils as typical of the houses of pagans.

90. Quaegebeur (1993b); Junker (1911); Łajtar (2006) 97–100. A (priestly) "slaughterer of calves" is attested in early fourth-century Panopolis: *SB* XXIV 16000, l. 439.

91. Brown (1998) 641 suggests that polytheism may have evolved by adopting aspects of Christianity. The lamps and bread-offerings mentioned by Shenoute might give additional support to this hypothesis. Neither Gesios nor the pagans of Pneuit (see below) are accused by Shenoute of sacrificing to their gods. This is true even at the temple of Atripe.

92. *Life of Moses of Abydos*, in Till (1935–1936) vol. 2, p. 49; and Amélineau (1895) 682; *Panegyric on Macarius of Tkow attributed to Dioscorus of Alexandria*, in Johnson (1980) 29 (trans. p. 22). In D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in *ShA2*, p. 384, Shenoute does mention human sacrifices to Kronos but in a rhetorical and generic context where his intention was clearly to impress the audience. In Menouthis, also, the Christians supposedly discovered

an altar and a statue of Kronos covered in blood from pagan sacrifices; Zacharias Scholasticus, *Life of Severus*, in Kugener (1907) 29.

93. L1, in *ShL1*, no. 11, pp. 25–26; D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in *ShA2*, p. 382; D4.3, "A beloved asked me years ago," in Layton (1992) 131; D4.4, "Because of you too, oh Prince of Evil," in du Bourguet (1961–1962) 29–30; D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 44; D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in *ShA1*, p. 263; D6.2, "Now the things we have said before suffice," in MS ZM 397; "Let our eyes," in MS WW 30.

94. On the Kronia as an Egyptian festival, see *P. Oxy*. I 122 (3rd or 4th c.); *P. Oxy*. VII 1025 (late 3rd c.); Epiphanius, *Panarion* 51.22, in Holl (1915–1933) vol. 2, p. 284. On Nemesis, Kronos, and Petbe, see Hornum (1993) 28–32; Frankfurter (1998) 116–119.

95. "Let our eyes," in MS WW 33.

96. Cf. letter 17 of Moses of Abydos, in Amélineau (1895) 700: "I tell you: there are many whose interior is stinking like those vases into which people urinate, due to impure thoughts." One of the possible uses of human urine in the ancient world was as a fertilizer for vineyards: Schnebel (1925) 85–86.

97. D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 39.

98. "Let our eyes," in MS WW 33.

99. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, letters XXVII, XXVIII and XXXVIII, in Azéma (1982) 94–95 and 102–103. On Isocasius's paganism, see Brown (1992) 132–133.

100. D6.2, "Now the things we have said before suffice," in Elanskaia (1994) 329. Shenoute's answer deserves to be quoted: "I shall destroy it, I shall destroy it again, such glory! I shall cause it to fall to the ground for a blessing to me and to us, and you will not be able to hinder us nor any others like you."

101. "Let our eyes," in MS ZJ 28; this is a difficult (and fragmentary) passage. I have had to modify one personal pronoun (ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲛϥⲓⲧⲟⲩ to ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁⲥϥⲓⲧⲟⲩ), but I see no other possible translation, and I am confident of the general idea conveyed by my translation, which is also confirmed by Emmel (2008a). The fruitless tree (Mk 11:20–26; Mt 21:19–22), which had no figs for Jesus, stands for the rich man who gives no alms to the poor.

102. Zacharias Scholasticus, *Life of Severus*, in Kugener (1907) 26–37; Haas (1993).

103. Callinicus, *Life of Hypatius* 33.6, in Bartelink (1971) 216–219.

104. Brown (1998) 646–647.

105. Augustine, Sermon 62.17, in Hill (1991) 166. On this, see Markus (1990) chap. 8.

106. Faulkner (1994) 535. "Let our eyes," in MS WW 28–30; MS ZJ 28.

107. "Most of your people" is a translation for Shenoute's "your [fem.] entire crowd" (ⲡⲟⲩⲙⲏⲏⲩⲉ ⲧⲏⲣϥ). If this translation, in which I follow Emmel (2008a) 184, is correct, then Shenoute is saying here that most people in Panopolis are Christians, and his fight is only with the pagans. Judging from the rest of this text and other replies of Shenoute to his accusers, this is wishful thinking. "True" Christians by definition agreed with Shenoute.

108. Brown (1998) 644: "The modern issue of toleration was swallowed up in a specifically late Roman insistence on civility."

109. D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, pp. 43–44.

110. Cf. Proclus greeting the moon: *Life of Proclus* 11, in Saffrey and Segonds (2001) 14.

111. C9.6, "I have been considering," MS DF, pp. 355–357.

112. Damascius, *The Philosophical History* 77 and 112, in Athanassiadi (1999) 198–201, 268–271; Malchus frag. 23 (*Suda* II.137), trans. in Blockley (1981–1983) 452–455. Pamprepius

was a student of Proclus at Athens. As we have seen above, Proclus had himself been the student of a teacher from Upper Egypt (Orion of Thebes) when he studied at Alexandria.

113. Southern (1970) 16.

114. Porter and Moss (1927) vol. 5, p. 5; Chauveau (1991) 136 (the mummy labels he studies show that Min was the "great God" of Psonis, which is why I assume that the village temple was dedicated to him); *Ala Secunda Herculia Dromedariorum*, in *Notitia Dignitatum* XXXI.54, in Seeck (1876) 65; Timm (1984) vol. 1, p. 367 (Psonis); vol. 3, p. 1464 (Kom ash-Shaqaf = Psinabla?); vol. 4, p. 2038 (Psinabla); Zuckerman (1995).

115. *ShL1*, no. 28, pp. 90–92; D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in *ShL1*, no. 25, pp. 84–85.

116. Libanius, *Oration* 45.26, in Norman (1977) 184–185: "giving out that it was improper to observe any of the proprieties of law, once they had put in an appearance."

117. This episode is narrated in *LB* 83–84 (trans. Bell, p. 66); *LA*, pp. 385–388; *LS1*, pp. 237–240. The "Church of the Water" is mentioned in *LA*, p. 387, and by the twelfth-century Armenian traveler Abu Salih (in Evetts [1895] 245).

118. The accusations against Christians are mentioned in D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in *ShA1*, p. 366; greetings to the sun and the moon in *ShA1*, p. 379; the Greek myth of Kronos in *ShA1*, p. 384; Aristophanes' play *The Birds* is mocked in *ShA1*, p. 386. In *ShA1*, p. 379, Shenoute complains about Gesios's attacks on Jesus's divinity and exclaims: "May his tongue be bound to his toes on the day of his distress, and may he be thrown down to the depths of hell, and may hell swallow him!" Sure enough, after Gesios's death Shenoute saw him in hell in a vision (*LB* 88; trans. Bell, pp. 67–68): "I saw him in hell with his tongue bound to the big toe of his foot, tormented without forgiveness because of his impiety."

119. The Arabic *Life* (p. 386) fantasizes that Shenoute and his monks hammered the heads of the pagans with stones until their blood was flowing.

120. Cf. Porphyry's arrival in Gaza (*Life of Porphyry* 17, in Hill [1913] 22–23): pagan villagers try to stop him by strewing the road with thorns, pickles, and foul-smelling things.

121. Shenoute says this explicitly in *ShL1*, no. 28, p. 91.

122. The village is so described in a very small final fragment of a mostly lost work that clearly refers to the same episode, as Leipoldt saw: A1, in *ShL1*, no. 27, p. 90 (this fragment mentions the bread and first-fruits that, as we see in our main text, were offered by the pagans to their gods, and also their houses in a context similar to that of our main text). The *Life of Pamin*, edited by Amélineau (1895) 737, also talks about the nearby village of Psonis—not Pneuit—as a "great village" (ⲟⲩⲛⲟϩ ⲛ†ⲙⲉ).

123. Libanius, *Oration* 30.13, in Norman (1977) 112–113. As noted above, I have translated ἀγρός always as "village" rather than "estate," as Norman does.

124. Libanius, *Oration* 30.9, in Norman (1977) 108–109. Libanius maintains that attacks on temples happen everywhere, but they are more common in the countryside than in the cities.

125. Libanius, *Oration* 30.11, in Norman (1977) 110–111.

126. Libanius, *Oration* 30.10–11, in Norman (1977) 108–111. The loss of tribute is an age-old argument in petitions. A similar use of this theme as an argument for religious (in) tolerance can be found in Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry* 40–41, in Hill (1913) 49–52: the Christians, on the one hand, complain to the emperor that the pagans "oppress the Christians, suffering them not to hold any civic office, nor to till their own fields, from which they pay taxes unto your government." The emperor, on the other hand, replies: "I know that that city is idolatrous, but it is well-disposed in the matter of the paying of taxes, contributing

much money. If therefore we come suddenly upon them, and affright them, they will flee and we shall lose so much tribute."

127. "Only I tell everyone who dwells in this village," in *ShL1*, no. 26, pp. 86–90. Unless otherwise noted all the quotations come from this text.

128. I have tried to clarify the meaning of the confusing personal pronouns, so typical of Shenoute's style, by adding "Christians" or "pagans" as demanded by the context.

129. ⲏ ⲉⲩⲱⲁⲛⲍⲟⲟⲥ ⲍⲉ ⲧⲛ̀ⲧ ⲁⲏⲙⲟⲥⲓⲟⲛ ⲉⲩⲣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲙⲡⲣⲧⲣⲉⲩⲁⲛⲁⲕⲣⲓⲛⲉ ⲙⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲧⲱⲧⲛ ⲍ[ⲉ ⲥ]ⲉⲟ ⲛⲁⲱ ⲛ̀ⲣⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲥⲉϯⲟⲥⲉ ⲙⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲙⲁⲩⲁⲁⲩ. I am not entirely sure how to translate this passage. The meaning seems to be the following: if they claim that they will not pay their taxes, do not worry about them; they will harm themselves. ⲟⲥⲉ might also mean "fine" here.

130. In this remarkable passage, the relationship between taxpayers and the emperor seems to be analogous to the relationship between donors and God in Eucharistic votive offerings: the donor gives to God what belongs to God.

131. At the village of Menouthis near Alexandria, Christian villagers were supposedly bribed by their pagan neighbors to overlook their pagan worship. See Zacharias Scholasticus, *Life of Severus*, in Kugener (1907) 30–31. The narrative of a Christian attack on a village near Antaeopolis contained in the so-called *Panegyric on Makarius of Tkow* (in Johnson [1980] 39) describes a very different situation: the pagans abandon their idols and houses, and the enthusiastic Christians take them over. Yet I doubt this text has any historical value whatsoever. It seems to have been written in Alexandria by someone who considered the Thebaid the "barbaric south" (Johnson, p. 107) and who knew very little about the local circumstances.

132. A1, in *ShL1*, no. 27, p. 90. The same argument in "Only I tell everyone who dwells in this village," in *ShL1*, no. 26, pp. 86–90: "After I came out from the houses, we did not let anything bad happen to them." Cf. Augustine, Letter 47.3, in Teske (2001–2005) vol. 2, pp. 189–190 (when you destroy a temple do not take anything from them lest they think that you are acting out of greed and not out of piety).

133. Gesios is also compared to a fox whose barks the lion Shenoute does not fear (D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, p. 38). Cf. also D4.1, "The Lord thundered," in MS GG 9: "They (the Christians) chase you (the pagans) out of the Catholic church just as they chase foxes out of vineyards, and they destroy your sanctuaries and temples just as they destroy the caves of foxes."

134. The discovery of "books filled with magic" was a standard part of antipagan persecutions in the late antique Near East. See, for example, the persecution in late fifth-century Beirut described by Zacharias Scholasticus, *Life of Severus*, in Kugener (1907) 57–69. This persecution targeted many Egyptians, among them one from Upper Egypt (John the Fuller, the leader of the pagan students). See also Mark the Deacon, *Life of Porphyry* 71, in Hill (1913) 81–82. As we have seen above, Shenoute also took books from Gesios's house, and he claims elsewhere that the houses of the pagans were "full of deceitful books": *ShA1*, p. 273. Magical texts from Egypt do preserve some ancient Egyptian traditions well into the early Middle Ages, yet I do not think that it is correct to equate Graeco-Roman magic, an ancient technology with its own, increasingly autonomous history, with an immemorial, unchanging popular religion, as Frankfurter (1998) does. Strictly speaking, magic and astrology were neither pagan nor Christian, and they were forbidden for reasons more important than their presumed paganism. A very interesting discovery, in this respect, is the late

fifth-century hermitage of the Christian monk Phibammo in Naqlun: he appears to have been a physician, as indicated by the finds in his cell of medical instruments but also of magical texts written in Coptic. See Godlewski (2008).

135. Kemp (2006) 128–131. Stephanus of Byzantium (sixth century) also knew about the statues of Min/Pan in Panopolis and their aspect: *Ethnika*, s.v. Πανός, in Meineke (1849) 501.

136. Although I have to agree in general terms with Smith's (2002) harsh criticism of Frankfurter's work, Shenoute's evidence leads me to think that we tend to underestimate the resilience of some pagan practices and beliefs.

137. *ShL1*, no. 28, pp. 90–92. Cf. also D5.5, "God says through those who are his," in MS GF 349–350 (Shenoute responds to accusations of gathering crowds: "And who gathers them (i.e., the crowds)? What is this whole crowd doing on this hill (i.e., monastery) except that God summons them?"); D4.8, "I have heard about your wisdom," in *ShCh*, p. 95.

138. D4.5, "Not because a fox barks," in *ShCh*, pp. 44–47.

139. Déroche (1995) 139 n. 129.

140. Till (1935–1936) vol. 1, pp. 168–181.

CONCLUSION

1. Egyptian monks such as John of Lycopolis, Moses of Abydos, and the Apollo of Hermopolis described by the *Historia Monachorum* 8 (in Russell [1981] 70–79) seem to have more in common with Shenoute than the famous figures I just mentioned. If we knew more about their lives, Shenoute might not seem so extraordinary in an Egyptian context.

2. I agree, therefore, with Ruffini's "Aphrodito in Oxyrhynchus model"; see Ruffini (2008b) 249. That is, I think that the apparent contrast between the world of the Apion archive in the north and the world of the Aphrodito villagers in the south is, *to a certain extent*, illusory. There were prosperous and independent villages in the north and very wealthy landowners in the south, although the papyrological evidence we have tends to ignore both. The blind spots of the papyrological evidence can never be underestimated.

APPENDIX A

1. L12–14 are letters from Cyril. L15 and L17 are letters from and to Dioscorus (L16 could be a letter to Dioscorus in exile, but it is too fragmentary to tell). L18, L19, and probably L20 are letters to Timothy. Proterius was bishop of Alexandria between 451 and 457, but he was resisted by the local population, and Shenoute never mentions him.

2. Emmel (2007) 7–8 nn. 8–9. It seems unlikely to me that Shenoute would have written letters to the fourth-century archbishop Timothy of Alexandria who ruled the church between 380 and 385. At this time Shenoute cannot have been an abbot yet (see below), and his letters presuppose a position of influence.

3. "Only I tell everyone who dwells in this village," in *ShL1*, no. 26, p. 89.

4. *CTh* 6.28.8. He is also mentioned in *SB* VI 9598 and *SPP* XX 143 as buying two deserted temples in Hermopolis, that is, in an area over which he had no military authority strictly speaking. These two papyri are undated.

5. On Cesarius: D8.19, "I answered," in *ShL1*, no. 12, pp. 26–30; D8.20, "And after a few days," in *ShL1*, no. 13, pp. 30–32; *SB* III 6311; Gascou (2002); Johnson (1976).

6. Lefebvre (1907) nos. 592–593.

7. Shenoute's statement in C7.6, "The rest of the words," in *ShL1*, no. 21, pp. 67–78; Priscus's narrative, in Blockley (1981–1983) 324–325.

8. Shenoute's *Life* (*LB* 17, in Bell [1983] 47) mentions that he went to Ephesus together with Cyril and Apa Victor, the archimandrite of the Pachomian order. An Apa Victor received in fact letters from Cyril during the Council of Ephesus: letters 106–109, in McEnerney (1987) 169–175. Another letter of Cyril (L13) requests Shenoute to come down quickly to Alexandria so they can travel together to the imperial court, but Shenoute seems to have been sick and could not undertake the trip (L14). Shenoute's encounter with Nestorius in Ephesus is certainly a fantasy, but bringing to the court or to a council an overzealous monk like Shenoute who had neither shame nor honor to protect and whose actions could be disowned if necessary was a reasonable and common strategy.

9. Ephesus mentioned in Shenoute's works: D4.2, "Since it is necessary to pursue the devil," in *ShA1*, p. 387; D4.9, "Blessed are those who observe justice," in *ShCh*, p. 129; D7.5, "I am amazed," in Orlandi (1985) 50–51; D8.1, "I have been reading the holy gospels," in Coquin (2001) 6; D8.30, "Those who work evil," in *ShA1*, p. 215; unidentified work, in MS DD 145–146, published in *ShA2*, p. 246. Ephesus is also mentioned in L16, in MS ZG 297—yet here Shenoute may be making a reference to Artemis of Ephesus—and probably in L19, in Munier (1916) 96.

10. D8.1, "I have been reading the holy gospels," in Coquin (2001) 6. "*More than* forty-three years" and "*more than* sixty years" here surely means forty-three and sixty years respectively (and not any random number higher than forty-three and sixty, as Emmel thinks). In C9.6, "I have been considering," in MS DF 357, quoted in Van Cauwenbergh (1914) 138 n. 4, Shenoute also claims to have established certain rules "nearly sixty years" after he had become a monk.

11. This does not need to mean that Shenoute did not also go to the *first* council of Ephesus, as his biography claims. Let us keep in mind, however, that Shenoute had to reject an invitation of Cyril to travel to the emperor (i.e., to Ephesus and Constantinople?) because of sickness (L13–14).

12. We do not have any evidence of communication between Shenoute and the archbishop Theophilus, another factor that favors the later chronology that I espouse.

13. Luisier (2009).

14. D8.20, "And after a few days," in *ShL1*, no. 13, pp. 30–32, might contain a reference to the troubles in Alexandria after the Council of Chalcedon, but this is not certain. In the case of Shenoute's biographies, this may simply be an instance of hagiography not taking sides in a still-undecided theological conflict: see Déroche (1995) 25.

15. D8.23, "And it happened one day," in Lefort (1955) 43. Luisier (2009) 274 dismisses this text as an obvious interpolation. I am not convinced.

16. The later chronology that I favor (choosing the second council of Ephesus as starting point) would have Shenoute becoming an abbot in 407. The earlier chronology (choosing the first council) would place that event in 389, still several years after the death of Timothy I in 385.

17. *LB* 174–175, in Bell (1983) 89; Emmel (2004) 12.

18. C3, in *ShL2*, no. 74, p. 115.

19. "Let our eyes," in MS WW 34.

20. This governor is attested in *Chr. Mitt*. 77–78. On this issue, see Emmel (2002) 102.

21. Jones (1986) 389; *CJ* 9.29.3 (385) is a law against this. There were, however, rare exceptions. See, e.g., Bradbury (2004) 18, on Gaianus and Celsus, who were both governors of their own provinces in the fourth century.

22. Bagnall (2008a) has argued that Shenoute's conflict with Gesios has to be located in the 370s and 380s. One obvious problem with this interpretation is that one of Shenoute's actions against Gesios clearly imitates Theophilus's destruction of the Serapeum, which happened in 391. Just as Theophilus took the Nile cubit from the Serapeum and brought it to a church, so Shenoute took the Nile cubit he found in Gesios's house and brought it to a Christian church in Panopolis. On this, see chapter 4.

APPENDIX B

1. Behlmer and Alcock (1996).

2. See Lubomierski (2006), (2007), and (2008).

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