Episcopal networks and authority in late antique Egypt : bishops of the Theban region at work

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General introduction

A WIDOW'S PETITION TO BISHOP PESYNTHIUS

In 1944 James Drescher published a Coptic letter written on an ostracon (a limestone flake) at the Coptic Museum in Cairo, which is now kept at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum.[1] The letter includes a petition from the desperate wife of the late Pesente to Bishop Pesynthius, whom she addressed by his short name "Pesente".

The widow started with the conventional greeting formula for addressing a person of high spiritual authority, but added two phrases that express the conviction that the bishop was "our patron who intercedes on behalf of us before God and men". Then, she explained the reasons for her overwhelming grief. Not only did she lose her husband, but she also suffered from the violence committed by the Persians, who beat up her son and carried off part of her livestock. After that event, her son went away in a depressed state and she had to take a loan, in order that she could pay her tax.[2] Being unable to repay her loan, the money-lender seized the rest of her livestock and sold it. Now that she was poverty-stricken, the *lashane*, or village headman, of Jeme and an official named Amos still held her responsible for the land-tax.[3] She beseeched the bishop to bring these men and to persuade them to let her stay in her house, so that she would not be forced to wander about.

Judging from the contents of the text, the widow lived in or near the town of Jeme, which was located in Western Thebes, on the west bank of the Nile opposite modern Luxor. The town, which developed upon and around the remains of the ancient mortuary temple of Ramesses III (ca. 1155 BC) at Medinet Habu, was one of the main centers of social and economic interaction in the region from the sixth to the eighth centuries.[4] The letter can be dated to the period of the Persian (Sasanian) occupation of Egypt, between AD 619 and 629.[5]

Apart from its human interest, the letter merits our attention for four reasons. The first reason concerns the identity of the addressee. According to the Copto-Arabic *Synaxarium*, a liturgical calendar compiled before the fourteenth century, there were two prelates called

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[1] Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum, no. 0923 (former Coptic Museum, no. 4326): *ed. princeps* Drescher 1944; republished as *SBKopt.* I 295. Recent pictures of the ostracon are available on the website of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina: http://antiquities.bibalex.org/Collection/Detail.aspx?lang=en&a=923.

[2] The Persians did not murder the son, as Ruth Altheim-Stiehl (1991a, 1939 and 1992, 94) stated.

[3] Bagnall and Cribiore 2006, 243. Drescher (1944, 93 n. 2) suggested that she had to carry out an agricultural task. For the office of *lashane*, see Winlock and Crum 1926, 176-77; Steinwenter 1967, 38-60.

[4] Timm 1984-1992, vol. 3, 1012-35; Wilfong 2002, 1-22 (with more bibliographic references). For the archaeological record of Jeme, see Hölscher 1954; Wilfong 2002, 8-18, Fig. 2; Alston 2002, 119.

[5] The Oxyrhynchite district and the regions south of it, including Western Thebes, were occupied after July 619, and in June 629, Sasanian troops left the city of Alexandria; cf. Altheim-Stiehl 1991b and 1992, 89, 96. On the Sasanian occupation of Egypt, see Winlock and Crum 1926, 99; Gariboldi 2009; Sänger 2008 and 2011.

Pesynthius during the Persian occupation: the bishops of Hermonthis and Koptos.[6] Jeme belonged to the diocese of Hermonthis, but Pesynthius of Hermonthis does not fit in the chronological framework created on the basis of documents from the 620s.[7] It is more likely that the widow addressed her petition to Pesynthius of Koptos (599-632), who withdrew to Western Thebes when the Persians invaded Egypt, and who stayed at the *Topos* of Epiphanius, a semi-anchoretic community, for a while.[8] After all, he was a monk-bishop, who preferred to live in a monastery instead of in the city of Koptos. He is well known from various kinds of sources: his professional Coptic documents;[9] the Coptic and Arabic versions of the hagiographic *Encomium*, or speech of praise, dedicated to him;[10] a Coptic circular letter from the time of Patriarch Benjamin I (626-665), in which he is called "thrice blessed";[11] a possibly authentic Coptic homily written by him on the hermit saint Onnophrius, which was still copied in 1031/2;[12] a tenth-century Arabic apocalyptic letter attributed to Pesynthius;[13] the unpublished Arabic *Life of St Andrew*, in which he is associated with the monk-priest Andrew;[14] a fragmentary Coptic homily on Bishop Pesynthius from Qasr Ibrim in Nubia;[15] pottery lamps with invocations of "Abba Pesynthius" from Faras in Nubia;[16] wall paintings in monastic churches;[17] and the notices on him in the Copto-Arabic and Ethiopic *Synaxaria*[18] and in Coptic lectionaries,[19] which were composed to be read on his feast day (Abib 13, or July 7). Until present, the Coptic Orthodox Church commemorates Pesynthius as a saint.

A second aspect that makes the petition highly interesting is the fact that the widow did not send it to the bishop of Hermonthis, under whose authority Jeme officially fell, but to

[6] Ed. Basset 1909, 490-491. The beginning of the notice, lacking in Basset's manuscript, was transmitted by another Arabic manuscript, which was published in Winlock and Crum 1926, 136-137 (text, English summary); cf. Doresse 1949: 338 (French transl.). For the dating of the Copto-Arabic *Synaxarium*, see Coquin 1991c, 2172.
[7] The chronological conundrum is explained in §3.1.11. For Pesynthius of Hermonthis see Winlock and Crum 1926, 136; Gabra 1984b; and Benaissa 2008, 181-82.
[8] Winlock and Crum 1926, 223-24; Van der Vliet 2002, 63-64; Dekker 2011a, 37 and 2016a, 759-60.
[9] Winlock and Crum 1926, 133, 221-24; Van der Vliet 2002; Dekker 2011a; Calament 2012; Van der Vliet 2012, 31-37 and 2013.
[10] Gabra 1984a; Dekker 2010, 2011b and 2016b; cf. Dekker, *The Sahidic Encomium* (unpublished MPhil-thesis).
[11] Pap.Berlin P. 11346: ed. Camplani 2012.
[12] British Library, Or. 6800: ed. Crum 1915-1917. For a description of the manuscript, see Layton 1987, 152–53. For recent discussions of the text, see Wilfong 2002, 24-27; Donker van Heel 2014, 70-72, where the contents of the homily is compared with the demotic admonitions of Ankhsheshonqy from the Ptolemaic period.
[13] Winlock and Crum 1926, 228; Van Lent and Van der Vliet 1996, 207-13; Van Lent 2010.
[14] Paris, Bibliothèque nationale, arabe 4882, fols 1-14v: summarized in Di Bitonto Kasser 1989, 168–70, 173; cf. Troupeau 1974, 60.
[15] Qasr Ibrim, reg. no. 84/746 (eighth century; unpublished). The contents are discussed in Dekker, *The Sahidic Encomium*, 10, 41–42, Appendix 2 (by Joost Hagen, who identified the homily); Dekker 2010, 22 and 2016b.
[16] Gabra 1989.
[17] In the Church of the Virgin at Dayr al-Suryan, Wadi al-Natrun (ca. 800 AD): Innemee and Van Rompay 2002, 2, Fig. 246-47; in the Church of St Anthony in the Monastery of St Anthony (thirteenth century): Van Moorsel 1997, vol. 1, 150-51 and vol. 2, pls 87-88; Bolman 2002, Fig. 8.26.
[18] Copto-Arabic *Synaxarium*: ed. Basset 1923, 649–51; Ethiopic *Synaxarium*: Budge 1913, 331-34 (ed., transl.).
[19] E.g. in the Bohairic Coptic "lectionary of Samuel" (fourteenth century); cf. Zanetti 1985, 116.

the bishop of a neighboring diocese. Perhaps, Abraham of Hermonthis (ca. 590-621), the other protagonist of this book, was still in office at the time. He was bishop as well as abbot of the Monastery of St Phoibammon at Dayr al-Bahri in Western Thebes.[20]

Thirdly, Pesynthius must have been relatively approachable for petitioners, if a woman could request him to come and bring village officials, rather than ask for an audience. She even dared to call him by his short name. Ewa Wipszycka was the first to observe that both Abraham and Pesynthius "were very close to the faithful".[21]

Finally, the widow adopted a rhetoric of patronage, expressing great confidence in the efficacy of Pesynthius' intercession, not only with worldly officials, but also with God, the supreme patron.[22] She addressed Pesynthius as "our patron", "the one whom God made a true high priest". In the present Western society, which is increasingly secularized and where the concept of episcopal authority is demystified, the spiritual dimension of the episcopal office is often overlooked, but in ecclesiastical canons bishops are presented as Christ's representatives on earth.[23] Pesynthius' case appears to be exceptional, given the fact that he is still remembered as a saint, whereas his colleague Abraham was long forgotten until the discovery of his testament in ca. 1856.[24]

In this book we argue that the monk-bishops Pesynthius and Abraham were in office during a formative period in the history of the Coptic Orthodox Church. They represented a new hierarchy that was created by Peter IV, the anti-Chalcedonian Patriarch of Alexandria (576-578), and successfully organized by Damian (578-607), the patriarch who ordained both bishops.[25] In what follows we first discuss the rise of this new, Theodosian hierarchy, and the involvement of Abraham and Pesynthius in a monastic network, which we call the Theodosian network in the Theban region. Then, we will explain the aims of this book, our sources and the adopted approaches. We will conclude with describing the contents of this book and the enclosed CD.

THE RISE OF A NEW, THEODOSIAN HIERARCHY

In the sixth century, the conflict over the Christological formula of the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) resulted in definitive religious divisions, when anti-Chalcedonian factions started to create their own hierarchies alongside the official Chalcedonian church. The Gaianites were

[20] For the revised dating of Abraham's episcopate, see §3.1.1 and Dekker 2016c.
[21] Wipszycka 2015, 333.
[22] For a study on the rhetoric of patronage and benefaction in antiquity, see Crook 2004, 91-150.
[23] Noethlichs 1973, 31.
[24] Garel, *Les testaments*, vol. 1, 13 (unpublished dissertation).
[25] The dates are based on Jülicher 1922, 20-23; Grumel 1958, 444.

named after Patriarch Gaianus of Alexandria (February-June 535), whereas the Barsanuphians took their name from Bishop Barsanuphius.[26] The hierarchy represented by Peter IV and Damian is sometimes called "Severan" after Patriarch Severus of Antioch (512-538),[27] but contemporary Chalcedonian authors used the term "Theodosians" for the followers of Patriarch Theodosius I of Alexandria (535-566), Peter IV's predecessor.[28] Both Severus and Theodosius I were important for the early history of the Coptic Orthodox Church.

Severus, who promoted a moderate Miaphysite theology, fled to Egypt in 518, when he was persecuted by the Byzantine state for undermining attempts to end the Chalcedonian schism.[29] In Egypt he got involved in a theological conflict with Julian of Halicarnassus, who believed that the body of Christ was incorruptible before the resurrection, whereas Severus argued that, since Christ had really suffered, his human body must have been corruptible.[30] According to the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, which was compiled in the eleventh century, Severus first stayed at the Enaton, a large conglomeration of monastic communities at nine miles distance from Alexandria. Later, he went "from place to place and from monastery to monastery", until he found shelter at the house of a certain Dorotheus in Xois (Sakha), in the central Nile Delta.[31] After his death, on February 8, 538, his body was brought to the Enaton and he was commemorated as a saint and a champion of orthodoxy.[32]

Theodosius I adopted Severus' view and is called "one of the most influential of the sixth-century Severan theologians".[33] In February 535, he was performing the funerary ceremony for the deceased Patriarch Timothy III of Alexandria, when Julianist monks and laymen came in to depose him and to have their own candidate Gaianus ordained.[34] After being informed about the revolt, Emperor Justinian (527-565) sent his chamberlain Narses to Alexandria, in order to establish which patriarch had been consecrated first. Narses deposed

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[26] The various anti-Chalcedonian factions are discussed in Maspero 1923, 182-210. On the Gaianites and their theological views, see Grillmeier and Hainthaler 1996, 45-52; cf. Evelyn White 1932, 228-35, in relation to the Wadi al-Natrun. Epigraphic evidence of Gaianites is provided by a Greek epitaph from a monastic community at Dukhela, near Alexandria (*SB* III 6249; May 22, 601); ed. Łajtar and Wipszycka 1998. On the Barsanuphians, see also Van der Vliet 1991, with further references.

[27] Van der Vliet 2012, 29 and 2016, 158.

[28] Οἱ Θεοδοσιανοί: Eulogius of Alexandria (581-608), *Contra Theodosianos et Gaianitas*, which is quoted in *Bibliotheca* by Patriarch Photius I of Constantinople (820- 891): ed. Henry 1965, 111-14; cf. Lampe 1961, 625a.

[29] Crum 1922-1923; Allen and Hayward 2004, 3-30; cf. Evelyn White 1932, 228-31. His Christology and theological disputes are discussed in Grillmeier and Hainthaler 1995, 21-175; Hovorun 2008, 15-28. For a recent monograph on his life and works, see Youssef 2014.

[30] On the conflicting theological views of Julian and Severus, see Grillmeier and Hainthaler 1995, 25-26, 79-111; Hovorun 2008, 15-29; cf. Evelyn White 1932, 228.

[31] *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*: ed. Evetts 1904, 457-58.

[32] Allen and Hayward 2004, 30; Gascou 2008, 85. For the Enaton, see Wipszycka 2009a, 119-20, 228-89, 415.

[33] Hovorun 2008, 33.

[34] Wipszycka 2011, 273 and 2015, 162, based on the *Breviarium causae Nestorianorum et Eutychianorum*, a polemic work written by Liberatus, an archdeacon of Carthage, in 560-565 (idem 2011, 288 and 2015, 21-22).

Gaianus and restored Theodosius I to his see.[35] In 538, Justinian summoned the latter to Constantinople, hoping to convince him to accept the Chalcedonian view on Christ. Since Theodosius I did not comply with the emperor's wish, he was deposed and shortly banished to Derkos in Thrace. In 539 he was allowed to return to Constantinople and placed under house arrest, which lasted until his death in 566, almost thirty years later. All this time, his followers continued to recognize him as their leader,[36] which is the main reason why they are called "Theodosians" in this book, and why their hierarchy is referred to as "Theodosian" instead of "Severan". Three more reasons are the mention of "Theodosians" by contemporary authors, the practice of naming anti-Chalcedonian hierarchies after actual leaders (Gaianus and Barsanuphius) instead of theologians, and the fact that the term "Severan" is already in use for those who supported Severus during his life.[37]

In 538 Justinian arranged the ordination of Paul the Tabennesiote as the new patriarch of Alexandria (the first Chalcedonian one since 482).[38] He also issued laws that forbade "heretical" Christians to enter civil or military service, gather for worship and leave inheritances, and women could only benefit from certain property rights if they became "orthodox", but in practice, the Theodosians were not actively persecuted.[39] Since the churches in Alexandria were under Chalcedonian control, the Theodosians built two new church buildings: the Angelion and the Church of Cosmas and Damian, which was allegedly finished in 561/2, a few years before Theodosius I died.[40]

According to the Arabic *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*, the usual source cited for this period, Peter IV succeeded Theodosius I without an interruption. It merely states that Peter IV was secretly ordained out of fear for the emperor and the Chalcedonian patriarch Apollinaris (551-570), and that he lived at the Enaton, since he was hindered from entering the city of Alexandria.[41] The reliability of the *History of the Patriarchs* as a historical source is questionable, since it was compiled long after the events described, and is strongly biased, pitting the "good" Theodosian patriarch against his "bad" Chalcedonian rival. The editor, the deacon Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarrig (ca. 1025-1100), based the notices relevant to this

[35] Wipszycka 2015, 162-63, based on the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*; ed. Evetts 1904, 460-61.
[36] Davis 2004, 104-05; MacCoull 2008, 3, 7-8; Wipszycka 2011, 269-70 and 2015, 144. In Qusur al-Izeila at Kellia two Bohairic-Coptic epitaphs for the priest Ammonius were painted on the walls of an oratory (QIz 90), "while Apa Theodosius, who was in exile, was archbishop"; ed. Bridel 1999, 311 (no. 147), 314 (no. 154). The inscriptions are dated May 11, 549 or 564, according to Luisier 2007, 221 and n. 28.
[37] Σευηριανός: Lampe 1961, 1230b; Grillmeier and Hainthaler 1995, 344-84.
[38] Wipszycka 2011, 278, 280, 291 and 2015, 153, 158, 440.
[39] Alivisatos 1973, 32-39.
[40] *History of the Patriarchs*: Evetts 1904, 467: "they finished it in the year 278 of Diocletian", i.e. 561/2; cf. McKenzie 2007, 232, 251. On the popularity of Cosmas and Damian, see Gascou 2009, 85-88.
[41] *History of the Patriarchs*: Evetts 1904, 469-71.

study, from Theodosius I to Benjamin I, on a church history composed by the archdeacon George, a secretary of Patriarch Simon I (692-700).[42] Another problem is that the *History of the Patriarchs* presents a "conveniently coherent and seemingly uninterrupted story".[43]

By contrast, contemporary Syriac sources indicate that the course of events was more complex: the *Documenta Monophysitica* (copied after 580/581),[44] the biography of Jacob Baradaeus in the *Lives of Eastern Saints* by the anti-Chalcedonian Bishop John of Ephesus (late 560s),[45] and the *Ecclesiastical History* by the same author (after 588).[46] They reveal that Theodosius I tried to stop the decreasing number of bishops by authorizing Patriarch Paul of Antioch and Bishop Jacob Baradaeus, founder of a new, anti-Chalcedonian hierarchy in Syria, to ordain bishops in Egypt in his name.[47] The Alexandrian clergy did not want to work with Paul, on account of his difficult personality.[48] When Theodosius I died in June 566, the Theodosian see of Alexandria was vacant for nine years and there were just six Theodosian bishops left: John of Kellia, Joseph of Metellis, Leonidas, whose see is unspecified, Theodore of Philae, John of Pelusium and Longinus of Nobadia (Nubia).[49] The new patriarch elected in 575 was not Peter IV, but Theodore, who is ignored by the *History of the Patriarchs*.[50]

The archpriest and the archdeacon of Alexandria took the initiative to restore the Theodosian hierarchy. Since John of Kellia and Joseph of Metellis refused to work together on account of a conflict, the clergymen invited Longinus of Nobadia to come to Egypt and ordain a new patriarch. On his way north Longinus visited Theodore of Philae, who was too old to travel, but authorized Longinus to act in his place.[51] At the *martyrium* of Apa Mena, south of Lake Mareotis, Longinus and the Syrian bishops John of Chalcis and George Urtaya

[42] *History of the Patriarchs*: Evetts 1904, 455-518. On the editorial history of this work, see Den Heijer 1989.
[43] Van der Vliet 2012, 28.
[44] A collection of forty-five documents, which is preserved in a single Syriac manuscript; Latin transl. Chabot 1933. Documents of particular interest for this introduction are summarized in Van Roey and Allen 1994, nos 2, 19-22, 42-45: the synodical letter of Theodore and the reply from Paul of Antioch; a mandate from Theodosius I to Paul of Antioch to consecrate bishops in Egypt; two letters from Theodosius I to bishops, and one to the clergymen, monks and laity of Alexandria; and a pamphlet by the Syrian hermit Sergius.
[45] *Life 50*: ed. Brooks 1926, 153-58. For John of Ephesus, see Van Ginkel 1995, 27-37. On the *Lives of Eastern Saints*, see idem, 2, 39-44.
[46] Part III, Books 1.40 and 4.9-18: Latin transl. Brooks 1936, 141-48; cf. Van Ginkel 1995, 2, 70-85.
[47] *Life 50* states that Jacob first ordained two bishops, and later twelve more; ed. Brooks 1926, 155-57.
[48] Wipszycka 2011, 271 and 2015, 145. Later, the Alexandrian clergy disliked Paul even more for trying to become the new patriarch of Alexandria; cf. Van Ginkel 1995, 36; Wipszycka 2015, 165.
[49] *Documenta Monophysitica*: Van Roey and Allen 1994, nos 19 (signed by John of Pelusium and Longinus, who was still a priest), 20-21 (John of Kellia, Joseph of Metellis, Leonidas, Theodore of Philae), no. 42.6 (on the bishops Longinus and Theodore); cf. Wipszycka 2015, 144-45. Also see Dijkstra 2008, 282-92, 302-04 (on Longinus) 221-222, 324-33, 360 (on Theodore).
[50] Grillmeier and Hainthaler (1996, 71-88) place the beginning of a new, anti-Chalcedonian hierarchy in 575.
[51] *Ecclesiastical History* III, Book 4.9. The pamphlet of the hermit Sergius also discusses the letters of the Alexandrian clergy and Theodore's mandate to Longinus, and the dispute between John of Kellia and Joseph of Metellis; cf. Van Roey and Allen 1994, no. 42.6; Dijkstra 2008, 285; Wipszycka 2015, 164-65. The omission of Leonidas suggests that he was no longer alive.

consecrated a new patriarch: Theodore, the Syrian abbot of one of the monasteries of Scetis (Wadi al-Natrun).[52] His ordination took place in secret out of fear for the state authorities, and even without involving the Alexandrian clergy, who had asked Longinus to ordain a patriarch in the first place. When they were informed about it, they rejected Theodore, not just because the ordination had taken place without them, but also because Paul of Antioch, whom they disliked, had nominated Theodore.[53] They elected a counter-patriarch, Peter IV, an elderly deacon, who had accompanied Theodosius I in exile. He was consecrated by the Egyptian bishop John (of Pelusium?) and two Syrian bishops called Antoninus at the Enaton.[54]

Both ordinations were contested.[55] Due to the political situation, they did not take place in the patriarchal church at Alexandria, and since the number of Theodosian bishops was low, Syrian anti-Chalcedonian bishops assisted in the consecration ceremonies. Neither Theodore nor Peter IV was fully accepted by the clergymen, the community and the bishops altogether, as is recommended by ecclesiastical canons.[56] Various factors contributed to Peter IV's success, at the expense of Theodore: the strong support from the Alexandrian clergy; the passive role of the few remaining Egyptian bishops; Theodore's wish to avoid agitation and his withdrawal to his monastery; the fall of Paul of Antioch, who supported Theodore, but was no longer recognized as a religious leader; and Peter's recognition by Jacob Baradaeus, the actual spiritual leader of the anti-Chalcedonian (Jacobite) church in Syria.[57]

John of Ephesus considered Theodore as the legitimate patriarch and disapproved of Peter IV's ordination. He suspected that the clergymen of Alexandria had deliberately elected an old, incompetent man, in order to gain control over the church revenues. He reported that

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[52] *Ecclesiastical History* III, Book 1.40 and 4.10; cf. Van Roey and Allen, *Monophysite Texts*, no. 46.2, which adds that John of Kellia, who did not attend the ceremony, sent a letter of approval afterwards; cf. Dijkstra 2008, 289; Grillmeier and Hainthaler 1996, 71, n. 70; Wipszycka 2009a, 271, 280, 291 and 2011, 271, 291. On the Syrian bishops, see also Honigmann 1951, 227, 232-37. *Canon* 4 of the Council of Nicaea (325) stipulated that there should be at least three bishops, and those who could not come were expected to confirm their consent by letter; ed. Alberigo, Dossetti et al. 1973, 7 (Greek and Latin), 41* (Latin summary). *Canon* 1 of the *Apostolic Canons* (Antioch, late fourth century) requires two or three bishops; ed. Funk 1905, vol. I, 564 (Greek, with a *modern* Latin translation); De Lagarde 1883, 209-37 (Sahidic); cf. Riedel 1900, 20-27; Faivre 1977, 138-42.

[53] *Ecclesiastical History* III, Book 1.40 and 4.11; cf. Davis 2004, 107-08. According to John (Book 4.10), Paul could not attend the ordination, because he was excommunicated for having communicated with Chalcedonians. On Paul's excommunication, see also Van Ginkel 1995, 35-36.

[54] *Ecclesiastical History* III, Book 1.40, 4.11; *History of the Patriarchs*: Evetts 1904, 470-71; cf. Wipszycka 2015, 166. On the Syrian bishops, see Honigmann 1951, 227 (where John is identified with John of Kellia), 238.

[55] Wipszycka 2015, 166: "Considering the presence of the Alexandrian clergy at the consecration ceremony, it is Peter who had the right to the throne". Ecclesiastical sources and imperial law insist that the community is involved in the election, which did not happen in either case; cf. Noethlichs 1973, 32-33, 55.

[56] *Apostolic Constitutions*, Book 8, 4:2 (Syria/Palestine; ca. 380): ed. Funk 1905, vol. I, 472-73 (uneven numbers: Greek; even numbers: a *modern* Latin translation); cf. Faivre 1977, 75-96, 204-05; Denzinger, Hünermann and Hoping 2010, 40 (§60). *Apostolic Tradition* attributed to Hippolytus of Rome (d. 235): ed. Funk 1905, vol. 2, 98 (1:1; Latin); Till and Leipoldt 1954, 2 (31; Sahidic). This source was previously known as the *Egyptian Church Order*; cf. Faivre 1977, 47-66, 204-205; Denzinger, Hünermann and Hoping 2010, 22 (§10).

[57] *Ecclesiastical History* III, Book 4.18; cf. Grillmeier and Hainthaler 1996, 71-72.

they persuaded Peter IV to consecrate a high number of bishops, allegedly seventy at the beginning of his patriarchate, and over eighty in total.[58] Even if the number is exaggerated, it indicates that Peter IV ordained bishops for practically every diocese in Egypt and created the Theodosian hierarchy in a short period.[59] It is unclear how many bishops were actually able to go to their dioceses and fulfil their office.[60] Peter IV lived at the Enaton and is said to have supervised six hundred monastic units and farms. This high number of "monasteries" is hardly imaginable on the narrow strip of land between the Mediterranean Sea and Lake Mareotis, but the statement aims to indicate the success of the new hierarchy.[61]

Peter IV was succeeded by his secretary, the Syrian monk Damian, who resided at the Enaton as well.[62] Upon his accession in 578 he sent Jacob Baradaeus a synodical letter, in which he formulated his theological views. This letter circulated in Egypt and a Coptic version was even copied on a wall of the main hermitage at the *Topos* of Epiphanius in Western Thebes.[63] Damian effectively organized the Theodosian church, raised its intellectual and moral standards, and temporarily convinced other anti-Chalcedonian factions to accept his authority.[64] Several bishops in his days are still remembered as saints, writers and founding fathers of the Coptic Orthodox Church, including John of Hermopolis, Rufus of Hypselis (Shotep), Constantine of Asyut, John of Parallos, and Pesynthius of Koptos.[65]

Here I must emphasize the historical significance of the decision of the Alexandrian clergy to elect Peter IV. If they had accepted Theodore, the Theodosian hierarchy (and the Coptic hagiographic tradition associated with it) would have developed in a much different way, and Damian, Abraham and Pesynthius may not have become major church leaders at all. It is also important to stress that the Theodosian dioceses were still relatively new and needed to be organized, when the bishops ordained by Damian assumed their office.

[58] *Ecclesiastical History* III, Book 1.40 and 4.11-12.
[59] Wipszycka 2011, 267 and 2015, 140.
[60] Wipszycka 2015, 122-23.
[61] *History of the Patriarchs*: ed. Evetts 1904, 472; cf Wipszycka 2009a, 415-17.
[62] *History of the Patriarchs*: ed. Evetts 1904, 473-78; Grillmeier and Hainthaler 1996, 75.
[63] Syriac version, as transmitted by the *Chronography* of Michael the Syrian (twelfth century): ed. Chabot 1901, 325-34 (transl.); Sahidic Coptic version: Crum and Evelyn White 1926, 148-52 (text), 331-37 (transl.), pl. 15.
[64] Grillmeier and Hainthaler (1996, 80) mention the Gaianites and tritheists. Damian could not prevent that some of the (anti-Chalcedonian) Acephali created a separate, Barsanuphian hierarchy; cf. Maspero 1923, 191, 290. He also caused a schism between the patriarchates of Alexandria and Antioch, which lasted until 617; cf. §6.1.
[65] Van der Vliet 2012, 29; cf. *History of the Patriarchs*: ed. Evetts 1904, 477. On Constantine of Asyut (§3.1.3) and his colleagues, see Garitte 1950, 287-304; Coquin 1981; Müller 1991 (John of Parallos).

A THEODOSIAN NETWORK IN THE THEBAN REGION

The Theban region includes all the localities in the Qena bend that extend from modern Huw almost to Esna over a distance of ca. 160 km.[66] In the late sixth and early seventh centuries, it was part of the Byzantine province of the Thebaid, which was governed by a duke, an official with both civil and military power who resided in the city of Antinoupolis in Middle Egypt.[67] More specifically, the Theban region belonged to the Upper Thebaid, which had its administrative center at Ptolemais (Psoi, modern Ibsay), a town ca. 40 km south of Panopolis (modern Akhmim).[68] The region was subdivided into four districts or "nomes".[69] Arranged from south to north, they were the Hermonthite district with the cities of Hermonthis (modern Armant) and Thebes (Diospolis Magna, Ape, modern Luxor); the Koptite district with the cities of Koptos (Keft, Justinianopolis, modern Qift) and Qus (Diocletianopolis); the district of Qena with the cities of Qena (Maximianopolis) and Dendera; and the district of Huw with its administrative center at Huw (Diospolis Parva). The cities also served as episcopal sees.[70]

The Coptic and Greek documentary texts relevant to this study focus on the districts of Hermonthis and Koptos (Map 1), and particularly on Western Thebes, on the west bank of the Nile in the Hermonthite district. This deeply Christianized society was physically dominated by ancient monuments, including rock-cut tombs and royal mortuary temples, which had lost their original purposes and were reused for habitation. In the early seventh century, the main centers of social interaction were the town of Jeme, the Monastery of St Phoibammon on top of the mortuary temple of Hatsepsut at Dayr al-Bahri, the *Topos* of Epiphanius, the *Topos* of St Mark the Evangelist at Qurnet Muraï, and the hermitage at T(heban) T(omb) 29 (Map 2).[71]

These communities were connected through a close-knit network that included eleven Theodosian bishops and may therefore be called a Theodosian network.[72] Abraham of Hermonthis lived at the Monastery of St Phoibammon, since he was also abbot of that

[66] Winlock and Crum 1926, 104: "a stretch of hundred miles or thereabouts".
[67] Maspero 1910, 110, 113; Rouillard 1928, 33-34; cf. Palme 2007, 246 fig. 12.1.
[68] Maspero 1910, 113; Rouillard 1928, 34. The administrative divisions of the Thebaid are recorded by George of Cyprus, *Descriptio orbis Romani*; ed. Gelzer 1890, 39 (Greek text), 133-36 (Latin commentary), based on six Greek manuscripts dating from the eleventh-seventeenth centuries (p. LXIV-LXVII). George composed his work in ca. 605/6 (p. XVI). On Ptolemais, see Timm 1984-1922, vol. 4, 1140-47.
[69] The ancient nomes still existed in Byzantine Egypt, but their number and boundaries changed repeatedly; cf. Bagnall 1993, 537. For the term νομός/ⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ, see Förster 2002, 549.
[70] George of Cyprus observed that Koptos is also known as Justinianopolis and called Qena Maximianopolis, Qus Diocletianopolis and Huw Diospolis (Parva) in *Descriptio orbis Romani*: ed. Gelzer 1890, 39-40, ll. 770-77; cf. Timm 1984-1992, vol. 1, 133-36 (Ape); 153-82 (Hermonthis); vol. 2, 544-48 (Dendera); vol. 3, 1120-25 (Huw); vol. 4, 1624-27 (Maximianopolis); vol. 5, 2157-79 (Qena), 2140-54 (Koptos), 2173-80 (Qus); vol. 6, 2904-19 (Luxor); Fournet 2000, 196-215 and 2002a, 56-60 (Koptos/Justinianopolis). For Ape, also see §2.1.1.
[71] On Western Thebes in general, see Winlock and Crum 1926, 3-24, pl. I; Timm 1984-1992, vol. 3, 1012-34 (Jeme); Wilfong 2002, 1-22; O'Connell 2007; Wipszycka 2009a, 171-97; §3.1.1 and 3.2.1-5.
[72] Dekker 2016c.

monastery, and most of his documents were found there, whereas part of Pesynthius' correspondence was discovered *in situ* at the *Topos* of Epiphanius. Their colleagues were Constantine of Asyut, Pisrael of Qus, Anthony of Ape, Horame of Edfu, Shenoute of Antinoupolis, Ezekiel, Serenianus and probably two bishops called John. Other members of the network were several patriarchs of Alexandria, who are rarely mentioned by name;[73] the priest and abbot Victor of the Monastery of St Phoibammon and his secretary, the monk David; the priest Mark of the *Topos* of St Mark; hermits at the *Topos* of Epiphanius, the hermitages at TT 29, TT 1152 and the "Place of Apa Terane"; "the archimandrite", a monastic leader who probably lived at Karnak; and the abbot Cyriacus of the Monastery of Apa Macarius near Pshenhor (Shanhur).

The hermits at the *Topos* of Epiphanius collected writings of Severus of Antioch and Damian, and a Coptic version of the latter's synodical letter was even copied on a wall at the main hermitage (see above), but their doctrinal position is not evident from their documents.[74] References to religious conflicts are also absent from the episcopal documents, which often deal with practical matters, such as church administration, marital problems and social conflicts.[75] Nevertheless, the involvement in a common network undoubtedly created a sense of community among the Theodosian bishops, the hermits at the *Topos* and the other monks associated with them. Another factor that strengthened the cohesion of the network and made the *Topos* of Epiphanius a major religious center was the fact that Epiphanius and Pesynthius were both regarded as holy men. On account of their extraordinary spiritual and ascetic authority they received petitions and were once asked to contact the same official.[76]

Being supported by the monastic network, the Theodosian monk-bishops Abraham and Pesynthius fulfilled their episcopal duties, while operating through their social networks and establishing their authority.[77] As representatives of a new hierarchy that was tolerated but not approved by the Byzantine state, they were still organizing the Theodosian dioceses of Hermonthis and Koptos.[78] In addition, they had to deal with social unrest, caused by the

[73] The timeframe of ca. 590-630 includes the patriarchs Damian (578-607), Anastasius I (607-619), Andronicus (619-626), and Benjamin I (626-665); cf. Jülicher 1922, 23.
[74] Winlock and Crum 1926, 99; cf. Van der Vliet 2012, 33-34 and 2016, 157-58. Texts relating to Severus: *O.Mon.Epiph.* 59 (letter), 81 (biography); relating to Damian: *O.Mon.Epiph.* 53, 55, perhaps 54 and 77 (Easter festal letters).
[75] Schmelz 2002, 319.
[76] The sender of *O.Mon.Epiph.* 165 hoped that Epiphanius and "the bishops", including Pesynthius, would write to master Elias. This text is discussed in §3.2.1 and §7.5.2.
[77] On monk-bishops, see Rousseau 1971; Sterk 2004; Rapp 2005; Giorda 2009.
[78] The development of the Theodosian hierarchy in the Theban region is discussed in §2.3.

Persian occupation of Egypt, violence by civil authorities, poverty and disputes.[79] All these circumstances must have affected their functioning as bishops.

THE AIMS OF THIS BOOK

In order to understand how Abraham and Pesynthius contributed to the rise of the Theodosian church in the Theban region, this book not only analyzes their individual and common social networks, but also the nature of their authority on the basis of their professional documents. The focus necessarily lies on these two bishops, since the number of documents that mention their colleagues is limited, and most of these documents are included in Pesynthius' dossier.

The first aim of this book is to reconstruct the wider social network of the Theban region in ca. 600-630, in order to answer four research questions. Firstly, we would like to know who were the central actors in these networks, which not only included bishops, but also clergymen, monks, civil and military officials and ordinary people. Secondly, by assigning the selected (episcopal and monastic) documents to a particular decade, we can examine how the Theban network developed in the course of time, or rather, when the bishops and other central actors became prominent, and when they were at the background. Thirdly, the analysis of the structural position of Abraham and Pesynthius in these networks will reveal how well they were connected. Finally, the topographical extension of the Theban network will be analyzed, in order to determine whether the Theodosian dioceses were limited to rural localities or included the cities of Hermonthis, Ape, Qus and Koptos as well. Ewa Wipszycka suggested that Abraham and Pesynthius supervised villages, or part of villages, in the countryside only, and that the cities were the domain of Chalcedonian bishops.[80] Our topographical study will test this hypothesis.

Another aim of this book is to reconstruct the individual networks of Abraham and Pesynthius, which will help us answer five questions. Firstly, we are interested in the basic properties of the networks, such as their size, cohesion and whether they are similar or significantly different. Secondly, the reconstructed networks will reveal who were the central actors other than the bishops themselves. Thirdly, we will examine whether the number of recorded clergymen is large enough to reconstruct the ecclesiastical apparatuses under the supervision of Abraham and Pesynthius. Fourthly, we will compile a similar overview of the civil and military officials in the districts of Hermonthis and Koptos. Finally, we should

[79] §6.1 and 8.1 examine the social conditions under which the bishops operated.
[80] Wipszycka 2009a, 33 n. 20: "L'évêque monophysite Pisentios, qui exerçait ses fonctions en demeurant dans son monastère, n'aurait eu sous son authoritè que les villages du diocese, ou peut-être seulement une partie des villages"; cf. Wipszycka 2007, 344-45 and 2015, 142; O'Connell 2006, 119-20; Van der Vliet 2013, 268-69.

examine the accessibility of Abraham and Pesynthius for different social groups (clergymen, monks, state officials, ordinary people). Wipszycka recently argued that the bishops were remarkably close to their flock, while they watched the needs and conduct of their flock, whereas supplicants could easily present their complaints.[81]

The third aim is to examine how Abraham and Pesynthius used their authority while fulfilling their episcopal duties. We will analyze the bishops' activities in the light of various modes of authority, only one of which is based on the episcopal office. Hagiographic sources present Pesynthius as a man with an extraordinary personal charisma, and the present study offers the opportunity to compare this image with our impression of the bishop that is based on his documents. The last question that we intend to answer is whether Abraham and Pesynthius were engaged in all the aspects required by their office, or whether they could only fulfill part of their duties. Recently, Wipszycka argued that at least Abraham's diocese "did not have the same weight as 'normal' episcopal responsibility", in view of the modest size of his residence, the absence of an episcopal steward, who usually assisted the bishop, and Abraham's preoccupation with villages and monasteries, instead of with Hermonthis.[82] I agree that the bishops started on a modest scale, since they had to organize relatively new dioceses, but if all the aspects of the office are attested in their documents, they were fully bishop.

The embedding of the bishops in their social, spatial and temporal context through the Theban and topographical networks, the analysis of the structure of their social ties through the individual networks, and the study of their agency by examining their use of authority will reveal how Abraham and Pesynthius succeeded in organizing the Theodosian dioceses.

THE SOURCES

The position of the bishops in the social network of the Theban region, the structure of their individual networks, and the nature of their authority are analyzed on the basis of documents, but in Pesynthius' case, the analysis of authority is also applied to literary texts.

The episcopal documents are often called "archives",[83] but as they are assembled here, they are in fact "dossiers". A dossier is "a group of texts brought together *today* concerning a particular person or family", whereas an archive is "a *deliberate* collection of papers in antiquity by a single person, family, community or around an office".[84] It is likely that

[81] Wipszycka 2015, 333-35, based on an episode in the *Encomium* on Bishop Pesynthius.
[82] Wipszycka 2015, 141-42.
[83] Schmelz 2002, 10-13; Van der Vliet 2002; Calament 2010; Dekker 2011a; Wipszycka 2015, 34-41.
[84] Vandorpe 2009, 219.

Abraham's documents that were found together at the Monastery of St Phoibammon belonged to an actual episcopal archive, but as a whole, the selected documents form a dossier.[85]

It is unique that many original documents of Abraham and Pesynthius have survived, for no other substantial dossiers of Egyptian bishops are known. They are also unique in comparison to the letter collections of well-known late antique patriarchs and bishops, which were compiled and still copied centuries afterwards for the edification of the readers.[86] The letters of Abraham and Pesynthius often concerned specific individuals and events that were irrelevant to outsiders, but for researchers they are invaluable sources on episcopal activity in late antique Egypt, on the eve of the Arab conquest.

The documentary texts are organized in four datasets, which are available on the CD enclosed with this book. They comprise documents from Western Thebes written on papyrus or ostraca, which are pottery shards or limestone flakes. Although Greek was the official language of state and church, the majority of the selected documents is written in Sahidic Coptic. The few Greek texts – a testament and two prayers – relate to Abraham.

Dataset 1 includes seventy-six papyri and ostraca that feature two or more members of the Theodosian network. It is used for reconstructing the Theodosian and Theban networks, for tracing their development in the course of time, and for determining the structural position of Abraham and Pesynthius in these networks.

Dataset 2 consists of 134 papyri and ostraca that link members of the Theodosian network to localities, including toponyms and archaeological sites in Western Thebes where documents were found. This dataset was created to examine whether the social relations of the Theodosian bishops were limited to villages and monasteries or extended to the cities as well.

Dataset 3 presents an updated overview of the Coptic and Greek documents relating to Bishop Abraham, which are used to analyze his social network and the nature of his authority. Dataset 3 includes the 114 ostraca that were collected and examined by Martin Krause in his unpublished dissertation, *Apa Abraham von Hermonthis. Ein oberägyptischer Bischof um 600* (1956), plus twenty-eight relevant papyri and ostraca that were published separately.

Similarly, Dataset 4 provides an updated overview of the Coptic papyri and ostraca associated with Bishop Pesynthius, on the basis of which his social network and the nature of his authority are analyzed. A large part of his documents, all written on papyrus, is kept in the Musée du Louvre in Paris. Since the original edition by Eugène Revillout (*P.Pisentius*) is

[85] On Abraham's chancellery, see Godlewski 1986, 46.
[86] Most letter collections appeared in two series edited by Schaff 1886-1890, vols 1 (Augustine of Hippo) and 9 (John Chrysostom), and by Schaff and Wace 1904-1916, vols 4 (Athanasius of Alexandria), 5 (Gregory of Nyssa), 8 (Basil of Caesarea), 10 (Ambrose of Milan); cf. Schor 2011, 7-8 (Theodoret of Cyrrhus).

unsatisfactory, these documents are being re-edited by an international research project directed by Jacques van der Vliet (Leiden University/Radboud University, Nijmegen) and Florence Calament (Musée du Louvre) since 2007.[87] From the start of this project I actively participated in the Coptic papyrology seminar in Leiden, first as a graduate student and later as a PhD student. Presently, we are correcting our readings and plan to finalize the edition in 2018. In addition to the Louvre papyri, Dataset 4 includes documents that were published separately as well as texts that are known from Crum's unpublished transcriptions only.

Although the importance of the episcopal documents for the study of ecclesiastical, social and economic history is recognized, researchers have hardly been able to profit from them, since neither of the dossiers has been fully published. Dataset 3 and 4 both include texts that are known from unpublished transcriptions only. In addition, scholars with an interest in the Pesynthius papyri in the Musée du Louvre depend on the edition by Revillout, which is much criticized for its inaccuracies.[88] The present study does not provide a new edition, since re-editions are being prepared by Krause and the Leiden-Louvre project, but summaries of the selected documents in Datasets 3 and 4 are available on the CD.

The analysis of the nature of Pesynthius' authority is not only applied to episcopal documents, but also to non-documentary texts associated with him: the *Encomium* dedicated to him, the *Homily on St Onnophrius*, the *Life of St Andrew*, the *Letter of Pseudo-Pesynthius* and the Coptic circular letter from the time of Patriarch Benjamin I. The inclusion of literary sources will give us a unique chance to examine how the image of Pesynthius as a social actor based on documents compares with his representation and memory as a holy bishop.

A MIXED APPROACH FOR ANALYZING EPISCOPAL NETWORKS AND AUTHORITY

This book aims to offer an ethnographic study on bishops in late antique Egypt, but unlike ethnologists, the author could not collect data by using participant observation, but has to rely on ancient texts that are preserved and edited. The analyses of the episcopal networks and authority on the basis of ancient sources requires the combination of three approaches: traditional papyrology, social network analysis, and a social model of episcopal authority.

[87] Van der Vliet 2002 and 2013; Dekker 2011a; Calament 2012.
[88] Van der Vliet 2002, 64-65 and 2013, 264-65; Wipszycka 2009a, 98; Wilfong 2006, 323-24. For successful studies on church administration in late antique Egypt, which also discuss documents relating to Abraham and Pesynthius, see Wipszycka 1972 and Schmelz 2002.

Papyrology

Papyrology "is a discipline concerned with the recovery and exploitation of ancient artifacts bearing writing and of the textual material preserved on such artifacts".[89] A papyrological study is necessary for the selection of the documents that are relevant for the reconstruction of the episcopal and wider social networks, for the identification of the social actors engaged in them (prosopography), and for establishing the nature of the recorded social ties and events.[90] After collecting the relevant texts and proposing dates for as many of them as possible, the data were organized in a form that is easily imported by programs for social network analysis.

Social Network Analysis

Social Network Analysis (SNA) is the analysis of the structure of social networks by means of their visualization and the quantification of their properties (quantitative network analysis). Scholars can create simple charts themselves or use mathematical formulae to calculate aspects of a network, but special software for SNA is increasingly adopted to process large amounts of data and to perform actions that are too complex to do without a computer. *Ucinet 6* provides tools for calculating the cohesion of networks and the centrality of social actors, among other things, whereas *NetDraw* produces graphs that show which social actors appear in the same network and whether they were directly or indirectly connected.[91] SNA gives us the opportunity to check whether persons of high social status actually occupied a structurally important position in the networks. If many documents can be arranged by date, it is possible to reconstruct subnetworks by period for a chronological study.

In the past decades, SNA is increasingly used for historical research. In the 1990s most research focused on the quality of social ties and agency, but since 2000 some scholars are exploring the potential of quantitative tools and promoting their applicability to historical societies.[92] I will briefly discuss some studies that provided inspiration for my own research:

- Michael C. Alexander and James A. Danowski were the first to apply network analysis to an ancient network, that of the Roman orator and politician Cicero (68-43 BC), by adopting qualitative and quantitative techniques. The network that they reconstructed on the basis of Cicero's Latin letters revealed that senators and knights held

[89] Bagnall 2009a, xvii.
[90] On prosopography, see Bagnall 2009, 193-94.
[91] Borgatti, Everett and Freeman 2002.
[92] Ruffini 2008, 14-20; Waerzeggers 2014, Preiser-Kapeller (forthcoming).

structurally similar positions in Roman society, which contradicts the traditional view of a sharp division between the two status groups.[93]

- Elizabeth A. Clark, who studied the social webs underlying the Origenist controversy in the late fourth and early fifth century, observed that the factions involved in the conflict "lined up precisely on the basis of old friendships and associations", with few exceptions.[94] Her Latin sources included letters from Jerome, his supporters and his adversary Rufinus as well as historiographic and hagiographic sources.[95] Clark applied various concepts from network analysis and calculated the density of the networks of Jerome and Rufinus with a mathematical formula.[96]
- Adam M. Schor analyzed the social dynamics leading up to the Chalcedonian schism in 451 through the network that connected Theodoret of Cyrrhus with the Antiochene clergy.[97] Schor reconstructed Theodoret's network by using the Greek minutes made during church councils and Greek letter collections, and by identifying verbal cues that Theodoret and his correspondents frequently exchanged. He tested the importance of potential leaders in the network by removing them from the dataset, and observed that none of them was irreplaceable, for the network did not fall apart without them.[98]
- Margaret Mullet examined the network of the Archbishop Theophylact of Ochrid in present day Bulgaria (1088-1125) on the basis of 135 letters from his Greek letter-collection. She made a distinction between contacts in Theophylact's first order zone, including relatives, friends and acquaintances, and those in the extended zone, whom he barely knew, and analyzed his network for gender, power relationships and age structure. In addition, Mullett studied Theophylact's rhetoric and how he activated his network to achieve certain ends.[99] Recently, Johannes Preiser-Kapeller used quantitative techniques on the data collected by Mullett, in order to demonstrate the applicability of social network analysis in the field of Byzantine epistolography.[100]

[93] Alexander and Danowski 1990, 317-21, 327-28. The authors used various programs, including *Ucinet 6*, and list the social actors included in their dataset at the end of their article.
[94] Clark 1992, 16.
[95] Clark 1992, 16, 20-38 (the sources are listed in the footnotes).
[96] Clark 1992, 18-19, 39 n. 272-73.
[97] Schor 2011, 1-5 (on Theodoret's role in the controversy), 7 (on the sources), 13 and 20-23 (on the selected cultural cues); reviewed by Congrove 2011; Ruffini 2012; Shepardson 2012.
[98] Schor 2011, 51-56, 130. The author presented his results in numerous charts, but did not describe his dataset or the software used. As Ruffini (2012, 175) observed, it is not always clear which centrality measure he meant.
[99] Mullett 1997, 59, 178-195, 225; reviewed by Abrahamse 2000, 413-14. Summaries of the texts and data on the social actors appear in appendices, and the results of the analyses are presented in charts and diagrams.
[100] Preiser-Kapeller (forthcoming). The author used the programs *Pajek* and *ORA.5*

- Katja Mueller was the first to apply network analysis to documents from Egypt, when she tested non-metric multidimensional scaling (MDS) as a method for reconstructing the administrative geography of the Fayum in the Graeco-Roman period. Using data drawn from the on-line database *Prosopographia Ptolemaica* and combining MDS with traditional papyrology, Mueller proposed to locate the settlement of Alexandrou Nesos in the district Themistou Meris, and drew a new map of this district.[101]
- Giovanni Ruffini's study *Social Networks in Byzantine Egypt* is the best example of SNA applied to documents from Egypt.[102] Ruffini demonstrated the applicability of quantitative techniques to the extensive source material from the city of Oxyrhynchus and the village of Aphrodito. For both localities he first presented prosopographical studies, in order to flesh out recorded social ties. Being aware of the limitations of the material and the approach, Ruffini tested the validity of the results of network analysis by checking the impact of distorting factors on the networks. He convincingly showed that SNA can draw our attention to familiar social phenomena that are still easily overlooked, such as the fact that shepherds were well connected.[103]
- In his unpublished PhD dissertation of 2014 Richard Burchfield examined the social, economic and religious interactions in Western Thebes from the late sixth to the eighth centuries, and adopted visualization tools for plotting the West Theban Network.[104] The largest version of this network linked Jeme, the monasteries of St Phoibammon and St Paul, the *Topos* of Epiphanius and the hermit Frange to localities throughout Egypt. Burchfield did not conduct a quantitative analysis, since the limited amount of data would not produce results that could not be achieved by other means.[105]

Although these studies demonstrate that SNA can be applied successfully to historical societies, it is not a popular method in papyrology for several reasons. Firstly, it is easy to be impressed by graphs and calculations, but the complexity of the method makes the process look rather misty and does not invite papyrologists or ancient historians to check the data.[106]

[101] Mueller 2003. The author listed her sources at the end of the article, but did not mention the software used.
[102] Ruffini 2008. The author used *Ucinet 6*, *NetDraw* and *Pajek*, and made his datasets available online (p. 21, n. 67). The book was reviewed by Whately 2009; Sarris 2009; O'Connell 2010; Jördens 2011.
[103] Ruffini 2008, 207-11, 217-26, 240-41.
[104] Richard Burchfield, *Networks of the Theban Desert: Social, Economic, and Religious Interactions in Late Byzantine and Early Islamic Thebes* (Macquarie University, Sydney, 2014), 231-39, figs 4.4-4.6. The graphs were created with *NetDraw*.
[105] Burchfield, *Networks of the Theban Desert*, 21.
[106] Hickey 2009, 502-03.

Secondly, it is a challenge to collect a large corpus of data and to keep it up-to-date.[107] Thirdly, the reconstructed networks are approximations, not exact renderings of the social networks that once existed, for they are based on preserved and edited texts. Their accuracy, which is difficult to assess, depends on the quality of the dataset, on the researcher's ability to apply SNA in a sensible way, and on his/her interpretation of the results. Some critical readers wonder whether the network approach does more than stating the obvious,[108] but scholars willing to try the approach may ultimately get concrete data to substantiate general impressions or to demonstrate the contrary.

SNA is the only approach that enables us to visualize and analyze the complex social networks of Abraham and Pesynthius, to compare these networks, and to establish the relative importance of the bishops in the Theban society in comparison with other social actors. Even if various episcopal documents are incomplete or do not fully describe social events, they still record enough direct or indirect social relations to form sizeable dossiers. They are "ideally suitable for an approach along the lines of social network analysis (…). Such an approach allows us to shift our attention from individual cases to the ways in which Bishop Pesynthius and the nascent Severan Church were linked to their world".[109] Therefore, SNA is applied in this study to examine how the new, Theodosian church developed on a local level.

A social model of episcopal authority

Episcopal authority is not a given reality, but the result of a bishop's agency. Although he has the power and right to manage ecclesiastical and social matters by virtue of his office, it depends on his personality, communication skills and the social circumstances whether he can successfully interact with others and earn their respect. For the Theodosian bishops it was particularly necessary to establish good relations with state officials, since they needed to mediate with them on behalf of members of their flock, but were officially regarded as heretics by the Byzantine state, which supported the Chalcedonian Church.

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[107] Ruffini (2008, 22-23, 199-200, 211) drew his data from Paola Prunetti's topographical register of Oxyrhynchus (1981) and from V.A. Girgis' prosopography of Aphrodito (1938). The dataset for Oxyrhynchus does not include the volumes of the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* that appeared after the publication of Prunetti's register, whereas Girgis' prosopography was already seventy years old at the time of Ruffini's analysis and is much criticized by papyrologists. Ruffini was aware of the limitations of his material, but argued that the datasets were large and representative enough, to ensure that the inclusion of new data or errors in the prosopography would have little statistical significance. Nevertheless, updated datasets would include all the available data and result in a closer approximation of the actual networks. For a similar view, see O'Connell 2010.

[108] Sarris 2009, 1572: "But do we really need social network theory to tell us that a city-based archive largely concerned with large estates will primarily reveal vertical ties of dependence, and a village-based archive will primarily reveal horizontal ones? Might an intelligent reader not have guessed as much?"

[109] Van der Vliet 2012, 36.

To understand how Abraham and Pesynthius justified their actions and decisions, why Pesynthius was regarded as a powerful patron and why he is still remembered by the Coptic Orthodox Church, we need a social model that distinguishes several modes of authority. The power based on the episcopal office is important, but a bishop's personal charisma, practical skills and use of legal or official texts could be equally instrumental in convincing people to cooperate and solving problems. Claudia Rapp's model for monk-bishops makes a distinction between spiritual, ascetic and pragmatic authority, but since her definition of pragmatic authority is too broad, it will be subdivided into professional, pragmatic and legal authority.[110]

A BOOK WITH A CD

The results of my research are presented in the form of a book and a CD. This book comprises eight chapters. Chapter 1 is a methodological chapter that describes how the three adopted approaches were applied: how a papyrological study helped to collect the relevant texts for Datasets 1-4 and to arrange them by period, after which the data could be organized in a form suitable for network analysis; why and how *Ucinet 6* and *NetDraw* were used to conduct the analysis; and how spiritual, ascetic, professional, pragmatic and legal authority are defined and identified in documentary and literary texts.

Chapter 2 examines the division of the Theban region into districts and dioceses, and the likely distribution of Theodosians and Chalcedonians in this region. The study of the topographical and administrative context in which Abraham and Pesynthius operated will help us to better understand the spatial distance and the social interaction between the bishop and his correspondents, particularly if the latter were civil or military authorities.

Chapter 3 introduces the main social actors of the Theodosian network, including eleven bishops and sixteen hermits, monastic leaders and priests in the Hermonthite and Koptite districts, and aims to place them in a common chronological framework. To this end, we need to establish which documents (probably) relate to the social actors involved, and where and when these individuals lived through a prosopographical study.

Chapter 4 presents the quantitative analysis of the social network of the Theban region in ca. 600-630, its development by decade, the structural position of Abraham, Pesynthius and the other bishops in this network, and the topographical extension of the Theodosian network. The topographical analysis reveals whether the Theodosian dioceses were limited to localities

[110] Rapp 2005, 16-18. Legal authority, or authority based on (written) sources of authority, is a revision of the concept of legal-rational authority, which was introduced by Weber 1978, 215-16.

in the countryside, as Wipszycka hypothesized, or extended to the cities as well. The chapter starts with a discussion of the documents selected for Datasets 1 and 2.

Chapters 5 and 7 focus on the quantitative analysis of the social networks of Abraham and Pesynthius on the basis of Datasets 3 and 4 respectively. After discussing the documents selected for the datasets, we will analyze the structure of the networks and identify the central actors other than the bishops, after which it is established where and about when they worked. Then, both chapters present a reconstruction of the ecclesiastical apparatuses of Hermonthis and Koptos, and an overview of the contemporary civil and military officials, and end with a study of the relations between the bishops and various social groups, such as clergymen, monks, civil and military officials, women and other social actors. Network analysis must demonstrate whether Abraham and Pesynthius were close to their flock, as Wipszycka argued.

Finally, Chapters 6 and 8 analyze the nature of the authority exercised by Abraham and Pesynthius, while they fulfilled their office and interacted with other social actors. After discussing the social, historical and practical setting in which they worked, we will examine the examples of spiritual, ascetic, professional, pragmatic and legal authority that are recognizable in the episcopal documents and in the literary texts relating to Pesynthius. If a bishop was actively engaged in all the activities required by his office, we may conclude that he bore the full responsibility of his office, even if his diocese was relatively small and his residence modest.

Appended to this book are maps of the districts of Hermonthis and Koptos as well as Western Thebes (Maps 1-2), lists of the selected documents in Datasets 1-4 (Lists 1-4), graphs of the reconstructed networks (Pls 1-15), tables and chronological overviews (Tables 1-10).

The complete datasets, with Excel-files, the tables and graphs created by *Ucinet 6* and *NetDraw*, and the results of the quantitative analyses, are available on the CD.