



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Arabic documents for slavery in early Islamic Egypt

Bruning, J.; Rowlandson, J.L.; Bagnall, R.S.; Thompson, D.J.

Citation

Bruning, J. (2024). Arabic documents for slavery in early Islamic Egypt. In J. L. Rowlandson, R. S. Bagnall, & D. J. Thompson (Eds.), *Slavery and dependence in Ancient Egypt* (pp. 343-431). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/9781139506809.008

Version: Publisher's Version

License: [Licensed under Article 25fa Copyright Act/Law \(Amendment Taverne\)](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4198867>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

7.1. Introduction

JANE ROWLANDSON AND ROGER S. BAGNALL

This chapter covers the period from the fifth century to the mid-eighth (Islamic mid-second century), and its textual basis comes from documents in Greek, Coptic, and Arabic. After a brief introduction, the chapter is organised by language. This structure has disadvantages, but in fact the Coptic and Arabic documents are largely later than the Greek, and each linguistic textual corpus has its own issues of vocabulary and institutions. There is thus a discussion of terminology in each section. We hope that cross-references will allow the reader to make connections where needed.

It is not only terminology that divides these bodies of evidence, however. They are very different in terms of the types of texts that provide information about slavery and other forms of dependence, and thus in the types of information they give. This fact complicates our view greatly, as it is hard to say if an aspect of slavery documented only in one of these linguistic groups was unique to it or, instead, simply gives us an insight into something that is present across this entire period and is hidden from our view in other languages. For instance, it is the Arabic documents that give us the best evidence for the full integration of enslaved persons into the religious life of the households to which they belonged (below, 7.4.3). There were hints at this integration in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, but little direct evidence (above, 5.3). Did Islam change the situation, or do we simply have more informal texts that help make it clear? On the other hand, the Arabic documents are relatively poor in information about the work carried out by slaves (7.4.4), but they do provide instances of slaves living independently from the household to which they belonged (286). Although it would be unwise to assume that things did not change over all of these centuries, it is likely that many of the behaviours visible in the Coptic and Arabic texts were already present in the period when the more formal Greek documents were written.

There has been much debate about the importance of slavery in late antique and early medieval Egypt. For the fourth century, as Chapter 6 shows, the institution was still vital. There is no good reason to think that the number of slaves

or their role in society declined before the fifth century.¹ Matters are less clear after the early fifth century.² In the absence of ‘hard’ census data, assessment of the prevalence of slavery can only be impressionistic and subjective: the evidence for slaves in Egypt undoubtedly both shrinks and shifts in character, but this is primarily a feature of the evidence,³ and it is difficult to gauge the extent to which it translates into a substantive drop in slave numbers. The largest archives of this period, those of Dioskoros and his family, from Aphrodito, and of the Apions, from Oxyrhynchos, have little to offer, but there are good reasons for this: Aphrodito was a village, and slavery in Roman Egypt had been a strongly urban phenomenon; and slave labour played little part on the Apions’ estates, where the institution of ‘registered tenants’ (see below, 7.2.1) is far more prominent. Other forms of dependence or coerced labour, outside the limits of legally defined slavery, also play a role in the Coptic texts, and the terminology of the Arabic texts often leaves the precise status of individuals unclear.

Slavery is, in any case, still taken for granted as a normal part of life in the fourth- and fifth-century literature generated by the Christian monastic movement. For example, in a section devoted to Paphnoutios, the *Historia monachorum* (14.5–7) includes a story told to the monk by a flute player in the city Herakleopolis Magna, who gave a destitute and wandering woman 300 *solidi* with which she paid her husband’s debt to the treasury and thus freed him from prison and redeemed their three children, who had been sold into slavery. An anecdote in the *Lausiac History* (37) tells us that a monk sold himself to a group of Greek mimes for 20 *solidi*. Once he had converted them to Christianity, he offered the money back to them, but they told him to give it to the poor. One need not suppose that either of these events actually happened, but both take it for granted that the audience for the books would have been familiar with enslavement for debt, at least to the treasury, and with self-sale into slavery.

Justinian’s legislation shows that chattel slavery persisted in sixth-century society: see *Institutiones* 1.3 for the definition of slavery versus freedom, which is central to the emperor’s conception of slavery. This persistence occurred despite the increasing prominence of other degrees of unfree status from the fourth century onwards, especially in the complex and controversial phenomenon of ‘the colonate’ (see below, 7.2.1). Justinian’s extensive legislation on slavery introduced significant modifications to earlier Roman slavery.⁴ But the fundamental

1 Most recently Harper 2011, with earlier bibliography.

2 See Rotman’s remarks in *Law and Legal Practice* 461–469.

3 This is already a problem in earlier periods, see Bagnall 2011. For the Byzantine period, see Bagnall 1993b.

4 See Lenski 2010 for laws that involved doing away with distinctive early Roman features, like Junian Latin status and also the *SC Claudianum* (52 CE) that punished sex between free woman and male slave.

characteristics of the Roman institution remained into the Byzantine period and indeed beyond.

As we have said, references to slaves and slavery in the Byzantine documents are notably scarcer than in earlier periods, even allowing for the number of preserved documents. This reduction in attestations of slaves is probably in the main the result of the different character of these documents, which come from fewer sites and contexts than in earlier periods. The matter is complicated further by some shifts in the use of the terms used to identify slaves, and these need discussion before we proceed. See below, **7.3.2**, for Coptic terminology, which can to a considerable degree be mapped to Greek terms.

doulos: this was the standard legal term in the Roman period (Chapter 6), but in Byzantine texts from Oxyrhynchos, *doulos* is almost always metaphorical.⁵ This partly reflects the limited contexts of these Oxyrhynchite documents; the two slave sales from Hermopolis (**246**, **247**) both use *doulos/doule* in a literal sense (see also the fragmentary sale *P.Princ.* 2.85). The metaphorical uses are mostly to social superiors, but the term can also denote respect when used for oneself in addressing older family members, as already in *P.Oxy.* 56.3862 (4th–5th century), where the writer addresses his mother and father, calling himself ‘your *doulos* and your worshipper (*proskynetes*)’. Even a woman who is probably the wife of her addressee refers to him as ‘master’ and herself as ‘your *doule*’.⁶ Its users were not, however, only people of low status. It goes hand in hand with reference to the addressee as *despotes*, a term commonly used in reference to the emperors in dating formulas and oaths but also frequently in addressing one’s superiors. The vast majority of occurrences in the Aphrodito archives are also metaphorical, but there too in legal documents it is used in a literal sense; see especially *SB* 18.13274.⁷ In the archive of the pagarch Papas, from post-conquest Apollonopolis Magna (Edfu), the term appears with a more generic sense of ‘servant’, as can be seen in the account *P.Apoll.* 79, where some of the *douloi* listed have family relationships, including fathers.

andrapodon: although this is found in papyri from the Ptolemaic period onwards, its use in the Roman period is rare compared to *doulos*.⁸ Throughout, it is normally used in the plural as a collective abstract term (*andrapoda*), rather than denoting a particular slave. It remains in use in this collective sense in

⁵ Fikhman 1974.

⁶ *SB* 18.13762.29; translation in Bagnall and Cribiore 2006: 235–236.

⁷ Translated in *Law and Legal Practice* 9.3.3.

⁸ And found esp. in particular contexts, such as Theban receipts for tax on slave sales: *O.Bodl.* 2.1097, 1098; *O.Wilck.* 1066, 1454. It is very common in the drafts in *P.Ammon* (348 CE, Panopolis).

the fourth century and down to the early eighth.⁹ For this reason it is not a term that helps us identify particular persons as slaves.

oiketes: this term has been the source of debate, and its uses may have changed over time. It is not found in the Roman period until the third century and from then is common even beyond the end of Roman rule. Despite claims that it simply means ‘slave’ in late Roman texts,¹⁰ there are clear examples of free men referred to by the term, as for example in *Pap.Choix* 25, where the individual has a patronymic, something slaves lacked in Roman law. But clearly *oiketai* could be slaves; in the third-century will *P.Oxy.* 27.2474 the testator refers first to the *doulīka somata* whom he had purchased in his wife’s name, and of whom he now bequeathed to her full ownership, and then two *oiketai* (a male and female) who were to be freed on the testator’s death. To be manumitted, the *oiketai* must have been legally slaves, but their preferential treatment suggests that use of this word alludes to their position as personal servants rather than to their legal status. It is likely that the term is relational rather than legal, and that it can encompass members of a *familia* who may be slave or free, high or low status, but all permanently dependent. After the fourth century, the overwhelming majority of cases are found in a fossilised phrase in the Apion archive, where documents are addressed to the Apions *dia Mena, oiketou* (‘through Menas the *oiketes*’).

paidiske, paidarion, pais: all of these terms are difficult to interpret in the Byzantine documentation. There appears to be consensus that *paidiske* no longer means ‘slave’ but ‘maidservant’; see *P.Oxy.* 77.5124 (249). Similarly, in *PSI* 6.709, a *paidiske* of the ‘Glorious House’ of the Apions submits an application to lease a house; she gives her father’s and mother’s names and her origin in Oxyrhynchos, the self-identification of a free person. References to *paidaria* are common, including in the Apion archive, and pose some of the same ambiguities as in earlier periods. It seems clear that they are not in all cases slaves; some are engaged in military service. Some have indications of free status such as father’s names or their own families.¹¹ There also seem to be several cases where *pais* certainly designates a servant, whether free or slave, rather than a child.

soma: this term is sometimes used in earlier periods, particularly the Roman, but is rare in the Byzantine period. An example occurs in *PPetra* 3.28 (559 CE), and the compound word ‘slave dealer’, *somatemporos*, is found in *SB* 18.13173 (247).

9 One fragmentary exception is *P.Apoll.* 66, which appears to refer to a particular *andrapodon* used as security for a loan; it is unclear if the term was accompanied by a personal name or was generic, ‘a slave’.

10 As in Harper 2011.

11 Bagnall 2023.

7.2. Greek documentary sources¹²

JANE ROWLANDSON AND ROGER S. BAGNALL

7.2.1. Slaves, dependents, and *coloni* on great estates

The study of dependence in Byzantine Egypt has been heavily influenced by the long and voluminous debate over an institution or status usually referred to as the ‘late Roman colonate’, a term derived from the Latin *colonus*, which originally meant a ‘farmer’ or ‘tenant farmer’.¹³ For Egypt, the colonate has featured mainly in discussion of a major dossier of papyri centred on the sixth century that concerns the administration of the Oxyrhynchite estate of the prominent and wealthy Apion family. This archive has been extensively studied, both to elucidate the size and organisation of the estate itself, and for the light it may shed on late antique agrarian relations more generally, especially in connection with the colonate.

In analysing the Apion archive, scholars have noted the absence of slavery on any significant scale from their workforce. This is not in itself surprising, because slavery was arguably just as unimportant on most earlier agricultural estates in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt.¹⁴ In estate correspondence, furthermore, the term *doulos* often expresses the writer’s social and economic subordination to the recipient, correspondingly termed *despotes*, ‘master’ (see 241), not an actual legal status. (Compare the similar self-deprecating use of ‘*abd*’ in Arabic documents, 7.4.1). Among the many lengthy estate accounts, just one entry uses *doulos* in a literal sense, referring to a slave who had received bricks from the estate where he worked in conjunction with many more *georgoi*, ‘farmworkers’ or ‘tenant farmers’) under the supervision of three overseers.¹⁵ For those drawing up such accounts, the legal status of individuals was less important than their occupation or their relationship to the estate.

Other terminology is also difficult to pin down if one is looking for indications of legal status. Estate accounts record transactions involving ‘Gothic *paidaria*’ who have wives, as do *buccellarii*. These are quasi-military personnel, some of whom, and perhaps all, were certainly free. Payments were made to ‘free *paramonarioi*’.¹⁶ The latter had obligations to remain in service, but they were not

12 Texts included in this section were written in Greek unless otherwise noted.

13 Monographs devoted primarily to the Apion estate are Hardy 1931; Mazza 2001; Banaji 2007; Hickey 2012. For work contracts on the Apion estate, see Benaissa 2007. Lenski 2022 provides a recent survey of the debate about the nature of the ‘colonnate’.

14 For Zenon, see 5.1. On the Appianus estate and the Heroninos archive, see Rathbone 1991: 89–91.

15 *P.Oxy.* 18.2197.40.

16 For the Gothic *paidaria*, *PSI* 8.953 and other papyri; see Bagnall 2023. Free *paramonarioi* occur in *P.Oxy.* 58.3960, along with Egyptian *paidaria*.

juridically enslaved. As we shall see (7.2.2), people with service and residence obligations were not entirely free to move as they wished, but neither were they slaves. As noted above, *oiketes* is also a term suggesting role or relationship rather than legal status.¹⁷

In the Greek of the Apion documents *enapographos georgos* ('farmer of enrolled status') translates the Latin term *adscripticius colonus* used in legal sources. It has been argued that this status must have had its origins in the third century,¹⁸ but it has equally been claimed that 'the catalyst for the creation of the concept of registered tenancy was the new tax system of the Late Roman Empire'.¹⁹ From the legal sources we get a sense of imperial insistence that *coloni* were not slaves, and yet a tendency to describe them using a vocabulary suitable to a servile condition.²⁰ Unlike 'free' *coloni*, but like slaves, *adscripticii* have a *peculium*, or capital fund (*CJ* 11.48.23.5),²¹ which they could not alienate without the estate owner's permission (esp. *CJ* 11.50.2.3).²² Unlike slaves, however, they may have had other property, and whether *peculium* has quite the same force as with slaves is hard to say.²³ There were also restrictions on marriage with women of different status; slaves, legally, could not marry at all. And in trying to go to law against their masters they were essentially in the same condition as freedmen. On the other hand, thirty years' service allowed them to change their status to free *coloni*.²⁴ And *coloni* could be bequeathed in a will along with the estate to which they were attached, suggesting a degree of dependence akin to slavery.²⁵ But *georgoi* were responsible for their own capitation taxes, even though the estate initially paid them and then recovered them from the *georgoi*.²⁶ In this respect they were more like free

17 Many documents from the estate over a long period (523–620) are addressed to members of the family through one Menas, *oiketes*, who can hardly be a single individual. Whether this represents an unbroken succession of men of the same name in this role as steward or is instead a fossilised phrase used by those drafting the documents has been debated; the latter seems more likely. See *P.Oxy.* 58.3935.7n., Mazza 2001: 136–137.

18 Sirks 1993, followed by Lenski 2022.

19 Grey 2007: 159, following a position argued earlier by Jean-Michel Carrié. Benaissa 2020 also sees the term as primarily a fiscal institution. Lenski 2022 accepts the fiscal origin but follows Sirks in believing that it developed into a 'de facto juridical status', for which he cites abundant evidence from imperial legislation.

20 Grey 2007: 167.

21 Cf. Sirks 2008: 134.

22 Sirks 2008: 138–140.

23 Grey 2007: 167.

24 Sirks 2008: 142.

25 See Grey 2011: 43 on the estate of Remigius in Gaul.

26 Sirks 2008: 132, see, e.g. *P.Oxy.* 27.2478, 63.4398, and 27.2479 (243 below).

persons. In any event, we must treat their status as a case of its own and not as quasi-slavery or serfdom.²⁷

It is also essential to keep in mind that our evidence for the *enapographoi georgoi* in Egypt comes entirely from the Oxyrhynchite nome, mainly from the Apions' estates but also from other large landowners' operations. That does not mean that this status was unique to this region, but it does limit our ability to generalise about the regime of agricultural labour in Egypt as a whole and the degree to which this status was widespread or narrowly limited to a small number of very large landed estates.²⁸

Opinion has been divided between a view of the *enapographoi georgoi* as wage labourers and an understanding of them as tenants.²⁹ The estate accounts do not help, as they ignore this status marker just as they do others. But there is clear evidence that they leased land, owed either fixed or proportional rent, and were able to dispose of surpluses after paying their rent; 244 provides one very clear example of tenancy. And there are individual lease agreements involving the *enapographoi georgoi* as well. Their dependent status is not in doubt, but it is probably overemphasised by the fact that surety deeds and receipts for parts of water-lifting machinery dominate the estate documentation about them. In most respects, their daily economic lives seem difficult to distinguish from those of free tenants.

240. Imperial legislation differentiating slaves and *coloni*

240a. Justinian on the nature of *coloni*

CJ 11.48.21

Written: Constantinople

Date: 530 CE

Language: Latin

This 'constitution' of the Emperor Justinian, which applied to the empire including Egypt, clarifies the legal status of the offspring of unions of persons with different status, but it ends with a rhetorical question about the difference in practice.

27 Useful reflections on the historiographical phenomenon of the colonate can be found in Shaw 1998.

28 An exhaustive analysis of the papyrological evidence for the subject appears in Fikhman 2006: 190–250, translating a Russian article of 1984. See more recently (but briefly) B. Haug in *Law and Legal Practice*, 430–432, followed by translations of *P.Oxy.* 14.1692, *SB* 6.9503, *P.Oxy.* 1.194, and *P.Oxy.* 27.2478.

29 The interpretation of them as strongly subordinated wage labourers is argued in most detail by Banaji 2007. A review of interpretations and a persuasive argument in favour of them primarily as tenants appears in Benaissa 2020.

So that it not be doubted any longer, if anyone has been born from a woman of enrolled status (*adscripticia*) and a male slave (*servus*), or from a male of enrolled status (*adscripticius*) and a female slave (*ancilla*), as to which status he is or should be, or which fortune is worse, whether registered status or slave, we ordain those things that were provided for in earlier laws for such offspring as was born from women of enrolled status and free males, namely that it (the issue) be left in its own status and that offspring of registered status be created from such copulation. But if someone has been born either from a male slave and a woman of enrolled status, or from a female slave and a male of enrolled status, he or she shall follow the womb of the mother and be of such a condition as she was, whether she was a slave woman or a woman of enrolled status; this was observed up to now in slaves alone and free persons. For what difference will be understood between slaves and people of enrolled status, since each has been placed in the power of his owner, and he can manumit a slave with his *peculium* and expel from his ownership a person of registered status with his land? (trans. D. P. Kehoe in Blume et al. 2016: III, 2739–2741)

Bibliography: Banaji 2007: 209.

240b. Justinian, *Novel* 162.2

Date: 539 CE

Language: Latin

This ruling of Justinian contains the only outright definition of *colonus*. It makes it clear that the essential characteristic is that of being permanently resident on the estate; in this sense, residence, with its related taxpaying, lies at the origin of the colonate. The passage also makes it clear that *georgos* in Greek texts should be taken in a broad sense as a farmworker, encompassing both tenants and those in wage labour. But it does not address the question of the juridical freedom of the *colonus*. On one hand, it contrasts the registered farmworker with a ‘free’ wife, but even a free person may be tied to the estate, whether ‘registered’ or not. More striking still is the statement that a *colonus* could acquire land of his own, and if this was sufficient to support him, he could be released from his registered or enrolled status. From this it seems clear that the farmer stood on the free side of the free-slave divide; his registered status was intended to guarantee that his labour was productively used and thus yielded taxes.

Then the second head of your excellency’s enquiry was whether – after our constitution with intention that any born of a free woman (*libera*) and a man of enrolled status (*adscripticius*) should thus be considered as free, as a result of the mother’s status – such offspring, even if they have not become registered in the original sense, nevertheless do in any case become *coloni*, as a result of our other constitution by which children of *coloni* are also not permitted to leave the land,

but are required to remain as *coloni*, that being all the more necessary because such persons include the offspring of such workers.

That, then, was the subject of your excellency's question on the said head; but what those who are scrutinising our intention must recognise is that we never permit the issue of a free woman's womb to be such a man of enrolled status. For one who has been born after the law then enacted, it must be signed and sealed that, in all cases, those born of a free mother are unmistakably free.

Accordingly, should someone be born of a free mother and such a man of enrolled status he remains free (*liber*), never losing his maternal free birth in any way; but the constitution laid down on that by us demonstrates its intention that such people are to remain living on the estate properties as field workers (*cultores*), because of having been born there: for that indeed is what the appellation of *colonus* means. We do not, therefore, allow them licence to leave the estate property and move over to others. Whenever certain people are born on a certain estate property, if they are born to a mother of enrolled status, they will certainly be persons of enrolled status in any case, but if to a free mother, they will remain free: what they acquire will be their own and not become the *peculium* of their master, but they will not leave the estate property. They will work on that, and will have no licence to leave it and travel about on others' holdings; that is, unless they should become secure possessors of a holding of their own and move onto that, if the work there is an adequate occupation for them, and permits them not to work on other holdings as well. Otherwise, we decree that they are without fail to remain on the estate property, as being free, but tied to the domicile. (trans. Miller 2018, modified)

241. Petition for return

P.Oxy. 27.2479

TM 36070

Written: Oxyrhynchos (?)

Found: Oxyrhynchos

Date: sixth century CE

Material: papyrus

Location: London, British Library, Papyrus 3062

An *enapographos georgos* who had absconded from his land for three years abjectly petitions his master (*despotes*) to be allowed back along with his children.³⁰ The use of *doulos*, 'slave', in the opening address is metaphorical, but this is the only case in which it is used of an *enapographos georgos*.

³⁰ See Sirks 2008: 121 n. 17.

To my good benefactor and lord, petition and supplication from Pious your slave (*doulos*) from the village of Kinea.

Your all-glorious lordship's love of the poor and of Christ, going out over all the land, has caused many of its people to have recourse to your lordship, and they come forward and receive justice and every mercy. Therefore I too, wretched one, come forward weeping and saying of myself that I am your all-glorious lordship's registered farmer (*georgos enapographos*) and that these three years ago my beasts died and I ran away from my farm, as I have said, three years ago, and stayed away from home. And having remained away from home for that same space of three years that I might find ... food (?) and for me to be nourished along with my children ... of the farm ...

I beg and supplicate your all-glorious lordship to give orders that I am to return to the farm and not to have dues collected for what I did not sow, so that I might henceforth labour on the same farm and bring up my unhappy children. And I shall send up to the Lord Christ my prayers for the life of your all-glorious lordship. For I am unable, master, to pay dues on what I do not sow. There are those who sowed and can pay. And this too I say: that the steward came on the farm and plundered all my poor possessions for this cause. And I beg to receive your pity. For I call the Lord God to witness that I have not even dry bread to break with my children, because of this helplessness (?)³¹ that I have mentioned. And on this account I have recourse to your lordship, so that I may be counted among all those benefited by your lordship, most all-glorious benefactor, lord, master. (trans. J. R. Rea, ed. pr., modified)

Bibliography: Keenan 1980.

242. Agreement to deliver wine

P.Oxy. 77.5123

TM 140189

Written and found: Oxyrhynchos

Date: 555 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Oxford, Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library, Egypt Exploration Society, *P.Oxy.* 5123

Two *enapographoi georgoi* acknowledge an existing debt to the Apion estate of 259 *sekomata* of wine and take on another 70 *sekomata* of debt, to be discharged a few months later at the vintage. The landlord in effect purchases wine before it is produced, paying the price

31 Helplessness (?) (Greek *asthenias*): The text says 'abundance' (*euthenias*), evidently a slip by the writer. Banaji (*BL* 13.158) suggests instead taking it to refer to 'a slump in prices owing to an abundant harvest', but this seems implausible.

up front. The money in turn functions as a loan, providing the farmers with credit to sustain them until the harvest and wine-pressing. Transactions of this sort were normal elements in the lives of free tenants who depended on credit to get through the year.

In the reign of our most godly and most pious master Flavius Iustinianus, the eternal Augustus and Emperor, year 29, under the consuls for the fourteenth time after the consulship of Flavius Basilius, *vir clarissimus*, Pachon 4, indiction 3, in the city of Oxyrhynchos.

To Flavius Apion the all-renowned and most extraordinary former ordinary consul, landowner also here in the splendid city of the Oxyrhynchites, through Menas, *oiketes*, who puts the formal question and supplies to his own master, the same all-renowned man, the conduct of and responsibility for (the transaction), we, Aurelii Apollos son of Abraamios, his mother N.N., and Hatres son of Phib, his mother ..., both originating from the holding Peran Mermerthon, property of your excellence, of the Oxyrhynchite nome, registered farmers (*enapographoi georgoi*) of yours, greetings.

We acknowledge that we are in debt and owe to your excellence on account of the arrears (?) of the flow of wine of the present third indiction ... to you, 259 *dipla* of wine. And we received from the subordinates of your excellence 1 gold *solidus* and we agree to provide to you on account of this an additional seventy *sekomata* of wine ... grand total 329 *sekomata* of wine; which wine we agree to return to you, with our flow as well, at the wine press from the unadulterated must, the subordinates of your excellence providing to us (?) the empty jars, in the month of Mesore of the (God willing) flow of the fourth indiction, without delay and without any dispute, at the risk of our property which is pledged to this end. The deed, written in a single copy, is normative, and in reply to the formal question we assented.

(2nd hand) We, Aurelii Apollos son of Abraamios, and Hatres son of Phib, the aforementioned, have made this deed of the 329 estate(-*sekomata*), and we shall return (them) on the appointed day, and everything satisfies us as aforementioned. I, Victor son of Philoxenos, wrote on their behalf as they are illiterate.

Completed through me, Victor.

(Back, 1st hand?) Deed made by Apollon and Hatres from the holding Peran Memerthon. (trans. A. Benaissa, ed.pr., lightly modified)

Bibliography: Benaissa 2020.

243. Surety for a registered farmer

P.Oxy. I.135 = *W.Chr.* 384; *Sel.Pap.* I.26

TM 20774

Written and found: Oxyrhynchos

Date: 579 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 10018

A lead-worker of Oxyrhynchos serves as guarantor that an *enapographos georgos* will remain on the Apion estate. We do not know why he undertook this responsibility, but such guarantees seem to have been routine rather than a reflection of any particular risk posed by the particular tenant.

In the 4th year of the reign of our most godly and pious master and greatest benefactor Flavius Tiberius Constantinus the eternal Augustus and Emperor, Phamenoth 25, 12th indiction. To the most magnificent heirs of Apion of glorious memory, patrician, landowners in this illustrious city of the Oxyrhynchites, through their servant Menas who is acting on their behalf and assuming for his masters, the said all-honoured persons, the rights and obligations of the agreement, from Aurelius Pamouthios, lead-worker, son of Georgios, his mother Anni-ana, of the city of Oxyrhynchos.

I acknowledge of my free will, swearing the divine and imperial oath, that I accept for your magnificence, through your representatives, the charge and responsibility for Aurelius Abraham son of Herminos, his mother Herais, who comes from the estate of Great Tarouthinas belonging to your magnificence in the Oxyrhynchite nome and your enrolled farmer (*enapographos georgos*), engaging that he shall uninterruptedly remain and abide on his proper estate along with his family and wife and animals and all his household gear, I being answerable for all that regards his person or his registered status, and that he shall in no wise leave the said estate or remove to another place; and if he is required of me by your magnificence through your representatives at any date and for any reason whatsoever, I will bring and deliver him in a public place debarred from every sanctuary and subterfuge, even where I received him, in the guardroom of your said honourable house. If I fail to do this, I agree to pay down for his desertion and my failure to deliver him 8 gold *solidi*, to be really and truly exacted.

This deed of surety, made in a single copy, is authoritative, and in answer to the formal question I have given my assent.

Executed by me, Anastasius.

Deed of surety of Pamouthios, lead-worker, son of Georgios, of Oxyrhynchos, accepting responsibility for Abraham son of Herminos of the estate of Tarouthinas. (trans. Hunt and Edgar, *Sel.Pap.* 1.26, modified)

7.2.2. Slaves and servants in Egyptian cities

244. Letter ordering the pursuit and imprisonment of linen workers

McConnell 2013

TM 382533

Written: Unknown (Egypt)

Found: unknown (Egypt)

Date: fifth–sixth century CE

Material: papyrus

Location: University of Michigan, P.Corn. inv. 127

Despite its fragmentary character, this letter is similar to earlier notices about fugitive slaves (see 162). Names and ages are likely to have been provided in text missing at the start. Whether ‘house-born’ referred to all or only one of the people mentioned here is uncertain. The sender orders the recipient to seek out and imprison five weavers of Tarsian-style fabrics. Although many weavers were freeborn, this letter adds to the evidence for the use of slaves in skilled occupations. The butcher in flight may well also have been a slave.

(recto) ... house-born ... five weavers of Tarsian fabric ... fine to their bodies ... -eyed. Hurry ... seek them out from all quarters ... over the whole body ... that they be clapped in irons and sent off to me. I wish you good health for many years, my most honoured lord. (PS) And interrogate Apollo(nios?) himself and our *oiketes* Sosimos ... the Antiochene butcher in flight ...

(verso) To my lord brother Phoibammon, Poimenios. (trans. R. McConnell, ed. pr.)

245. A monk frees his servant

P.Köln 3.157 + *P.Köln* 4, pp. 241–242

TM 21227

Written: Apollonopolis Heptakomias

Found: Unknown

Date: 14 July 589 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Cologne, Institut für Altertumskunde, Inv. 5907

The monk Victor here declares that he has set free his *oiketes* Menas ‘from all yoke of slavery’. While the very fact that Menas is being set free would seem to be *prima facie* evidence of his being a chattel slave, the document is, unlike Roman emancipation documents, a private, not public, declaration, addressed to Menas himself. Menas is identified by patronymic, metronymic, and village of origin, which earlier, and as far as we know, still designated only persons of freeborn status. This identification complicates the question of his legal status and thus the force of *oiketes* in this period; as noted above, it may speak more to role and relationship than to legal status. It is conceivable that Menas was freeborn and had become a slave only later, in which case his patronymic is more readily explicable.

In the reign of our most godly and pious master Flavius Mauricius Tiberius the eternal Augustus and Emperor, year seven, and in the consulship of the same, year 6, Epeiph 15, in Apollonopolis the Small.

Victor son of the late Cornelius, his mother Maria, a monk with God's help of the holy monastery of Apa Makrobios, originating from the village of Terythis of the Apollonopolite (nome), to Menas son of Victor, his mother Eirene, my *oiketes*, coming from the village of Pouchis of the Antaiopolite nome, greetings.

Wishing to find mercy at the time of my death before the awful tribunal of our lord Jesus Christ, I have made you, the aforementioned Menas, free from all yoke of slavery so that I may obtain mercy for the remission and absolution of my sins. In accordance with this, I the aforementioned Victor acknowledge voluntarily and willingly, without force or fraud or compulsion or fear or any sort of robbery or circumvention or any legal objection, that I have set you the aforementioned Menas free from the entire yoke of slavery from now for all time ... no one shall be able ... at any occasion or time to drag you into any sort of slavery ... nor to denounce you nor to burden nor ... concerning any matter at all pertaining ... in a court or outside a court, whether local or superior, small or large, neither through my heirs nor through mandate nor through any sort of straw man, because I have drawn up the present manumission document for you willingly and of my own accord. For your security and because things are so and I shall not go back on this, I have sworn by the Holy and Consubstantial Trinity and the holy habit that I wear and the safety and victory and perpetuity of our most brilliant masters Flavius Mauricius Tiberius and Aelia Constantina the eternal Augusti and Imperatores to cherish and abide by the force of this manumission for all time and in no way to disturb it or any part of it. If at any moment or time anyone of my heirs should dare to proceed against this manumission, he shall pay on account of a fine and his transgression ... ounces of gold ... to be collected in fact and by force from him and it shall remain no less valid and unassailable for all time ... wherever it is produced ... and having been asked the formal question in person I acknowledged that things are thus and undertook to carry it out, give, act, and preserve it.

I, Victor son of Cornelius, the aforesaid, made this manumission ...

(*Signatures of the witnesses follow.*)

246. Sale of a slave boy

SB 24.15969

TM 79264

Written and found: Hermopolis

Date: 491–518 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Vienna, Austrian National Library, Inv. G 39761 + 39708

The terms of this sale are straightforward and its language standardised. The sellers are both soldiers, like the *actuarius* from whom they bought the boy. The buyer has a descriptive epithet (*thaumasiotatos*) that suggests that he also holds a military or official position. The boy is being sold for at least the second time by the age of twelve.

Ophis ... and Iosephis ... to Menas ..., greetings. We, the aforementioned Ophis and Iosephis, soldiers, with one another as sureties and guarantors, acknowledge through this our written deed or declaration, by our free will and authoritative and irrevocable and deceit-free intention, with firm consciousness, upright disposition, and we additionally swear by almighty God and the piety and victory of our all-conquering master Flavius Anastasius the eternal Augustus and Emperor, according to this written deed, from now on for all following and future time, that we have sold and transferred to you, the aforementioned most marvellous Menas, by the fullest entire right of ownership and in good faith, the slave (*doulos*) named Nepheros, black-skinned, with a scar on his right hand, or by whatever other name he may be called or shall be called, about twelve years old, more or less, faithful with a good disposition and not prone to run away, who is free from epilepsy and vice and *epaphe*³² and hidden illness and possession by demons, who belongs to us and came to us by right of purchase from Epiphanios son of Makarios, the devoted former *actuarius* of the unit of Mauri of the same city; for the price for him agreed on between us and agreeable to us of 8 counted imperial genuine *solidi* of gold, each less 4 *keratia*, by the public scale of the same city of the Hermopolites, that is, 8 *solidi* of gold minus 4 *keratia*, which *solidi* we the aforementioned sellers Ophis and Iosephis have received from you the purchaser, the aforementioned revered Menas, from your hand into our hands in full, in the sight and at the wish of the undersigned witnesses, who sign below by our instruction, so that you, the aforementioned revered purchaser Menas, are to control and possess and own and use and manage and dispose of him and to hand him on to your heirs or successors or praetorian successors³³ or in whatever fashion you choose, without impediment or prevention, with this guarantee for every warranty resting on us the sellers for all time, and we cannot take legal action against you the purchaser or against those who may succeed you, nor can anyone else on our behalf, concerning anything in this sale in any way. If we should take legal action against you or not guarantee, the suit shall be invalid and we shall pay

32 *Epaphe*: competing interpretations have seen this term either as referring to a disease, generally supposed to be leprosy, or to liability to seizure by a third party; Urbanik 2010 most recently argues for the latter, suggesting that it specifically refers to the Roman concept of noxal liability, that is, the owner's liability for damage caused by wrongful acts on the part of slaves.

33 Praetorian successors: a technical term of Roman law referring to the possessors of property of a deceased person by order of the judge rather than by strict inheritance through a Roman will.

in addition or for our action against you the purchaser or those who shall succeed you, both all the damages and expenses and on account of a penalty as our private debt twice the price, and an equal amount to the treasury, and this sale shall nonetheless remain unchanged and unshakeable and ... and valid ... (trans. based partly on German trans. in Hoogendijk 1996)

247. Sale of a Nubian slave girl

SB 18.13173

TM 18404

Written and found: Hermopolis

Date: 629 or 644 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, P.gr. 2029–2033; previously P.gr. 1404

This very full slave sale and acknowledgement of receipt of price (more than 3 metres long, despite some damage) comes from a moment when the rule of Egypt was insecure, thus apparently either at the end of the Persian occupation (619–629) or just after the Arab conquest; no name of a ruler is given. Uniquely for a papyrus document, it indicates that the slave girl sold here had originally been acquired from professional slave dealers from 'Aithiopia'; the sellers refer to them as 'the other slave dealers', suggesting that they themselves are professional slave dealers. It is to be noted that they are both literate. This trade is described in an early sixth-century text: 'Indeed, most of the slaves (*andrapoda*) who come to us are from these peoples and still today they are found in the hands of the merchants there.'³⁴ The political turmoil of the seventh century had apparently not prevented this trade from continuing any more than had its Christianisation in the late sixth century. The part of Nubia from which the slave came, Alodia, was known still in medieval times for trafficking in slaves. The slave girl, aged about twelve, is described as 'Moorish', a generic term meaning dark-skinned.

(Lines 3–99)

... We, Patermouthis son of Christophoros and Anatolios son of Makarios ... from this city of Hermopolis, on Thoth 21 of the current third indiction, dispose and make this written contract for Aurelia Isidora, the most well-born daughter of Victor, from the same city of Hermopolis, greetings.

We, the aforementioned Pathermouthis and Anatolios, acknowledge through this our written contract of sale, of our own free will and with voluntary intent and irrevocable and sincere resolution, with steadfast conscience, with correct intention, without any fraud or intimidation or violence or deceit or constraint

34 Cosmas Indicopleustes, *Christian Topography* 2.64, in the edition of Wolska-Conus 1968: 378–379.



Figure 7.1 247. SB 18.13173. Strasbourg, BNU inv. 2029–2033. Photo courtesy of the Bibliothèque Nationale et Universitaire, Strasbourg.

or any bad faith or deception, that we have sold to you the aforementioned most well-born Isidora, and that we have made over to you with all the most complete right of lawful ownership and with good faith and full authority and perpetual possession in accordance with every species of ownership, by means of this written sale in a single copy, from now in perpetuity, the girl who belongs to us and who has come to us by right of purchase from the other slave traders of the Aithiopians, a Moorish slave (*doule*), Atalous by name, now renamed by you Eutychia, about twelve years old more or less, an Aloan by race, which aforementioned Moorish slave not being previously mortgaged for any principal sum whatsoever or for any business or agreement or afflicted by any old injury whatsoever or leprosy or beating or concealed ailment, but being free from any principal and business and agreement and any old injury whatsoever and any *epaphe* and any beating and any hidden ailment, for the mutually agreed, approved, resolved between us full and just price for this same Moorish slave, Atalous by name, now renamed by you Eutychia, an Aloan by race, about twelve years more or less, 4 gold *solidi* of full weight on the Alexandrian standard, making 4 gold *solidi* of full weight on the Alexandrian standard, which aforementioned price we, the sellers Pathermouthis and Anatolios, have been paid at once by you the aforementioned most well-born Isidora, from your hands into my hands, in full, in the sight of the witnesses who have subscribed in order below, having seen and confirmed their receipt for her, the slave to belong to you, the purchaser, the most well-born Isidora and to your testamentary heirs and successors and legal heirs, the aforementioned Moorish female slave together with those offspring who, God willing, shall be born of her, henceforth, already, or from this very day, which is the twenty-first of Thoth of the current third indiction, and from the day itself, continuously, perpetually, for you to possess and to control and to own with every right of ownership, to acquire, to possess, to use her and, God willing, her children, to manage and to administer concerning her, to sell, to put up as security, to give away, to exchange as dowry and to give ... and to give to your children and descendants, to leave behind and to transmit to your testamentary heirs, successors, and legal heirs, and in general to do and perform with her all such acts as the laws enjoin upon absolute owners to do with their own property, unhindered and unimpeded, from now forever, this perpetual warranty and clearance of title and defence of the present sale in regard to every warranty falling on us, the sellers, and we further undertake that neither we nor anyone else on our behalf will proceed or defend ourselves against you the purchaser, the well-born Isidora, and your testamentary heirs and successors and legal heirs, concerning any matter relating to this sale in any manner whatsoever. If we do proceed or do not guarantee this sale and do not ward off others, let the procedure be without

effect; and I (*sic*) shall pay in addition, or the person who proceeds on our behalf against you the purchaser, or against those who are your successors, the penalties and all the costs, and by way of a penalty, as a personal debt, twice the aforementioned price and all the expenses or fines twofold, and in addition even after the payment of the penalty the present sale will remain in force, being valid and warranted wherever produced and presented before any magistracy and authority at any time and on any occasion, always; and that this is the way things are, that we will pay the penalties, that we are acting, are protecting, are content with, are abiding by, and are acting in accordance with the terms of the sale to the limit; we have sworn by the Holy Consubstantial Trinity and the welfare of the Emperor, giving as security to you for the warranty of the present sale and for the payment of, as is reasonable, the twofold penalty and costs, if thus it should befall, all the property we now have or shall acquire by way of a pledge and with the right of mortgage, as if on the basis of a lawsuit; and with regard to all the above-written, having been questioned, we have made acknowledgement, renouncing now and in the future every legal resort which aids us or could aid us in respect of the present sale or any detail thereof.

(*An invocation, repeated date, seal impression, subscriptions, and subscriptions of witnesses follow.*) (trans. Pierce 1995, modified)

Bibliography: Pierce 1995.

248. A thieving slave

PSI 13.1344 verso

TM 36089

Written: unknown

Found: Antinoopolis

Date: sixth century CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Cairo, Egyptian Museum, SR 3796 25/1/55/2 (34) and Cairo, Egyptian Museum PSI 1344 (parallel)

A draft of a letter, which the writer made two attempts on the other side of the sheet to put into more formal shape, about a slave *eis paramonen* (as it is phrased on the other side) who was thrown into prison after having repeatedly disrespected and stolen from his master. The slave in question is referred to as *país*, but *doulos* on the recto (not fully published). Whether these apparently interchangeable terms indicate legal status or a relational sense ('servant') is hard to say. The reference to *paramone* may suggest that the person complained about was required to stay with the writer not because he was a slave but as a result of a long-term contractual obligation (cf. 7.2.4).

I have a slave (*pais*) residing with me for some days, and I found him repeatedly scorning me³⁵ and I threw him into jail. So I ask your brilliant friendship to instruct the soldier in charge of the jail to hold him for three days so that I may get what he owes me. But by all means keep this matter in mind, for a cook of the respected *magister* gave a guarantee to me for him, and on his authorisation I threw him in the jail, and he is coming to you, master ... I sent ... of her slaves (*douloi*).

249. Loan agreement between two maidservants

P.Oxy. 77.5124

TM 140190

Written and found: Oxyrhynchos

Date: c. 579–595 CE (20 March)

Material: papyrus

Location: Oxford, Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library, Egypt Exploration Society, *P.Oxy.* 5124

Theodora borrows from a fellow *paidiske*, Mariam. These may have been free maidservants rather than slaves, for they have patronymics and origins. The editor suggests possible identification of Paulos with men of that name mentioned in other documents; if this is correct, the date is probably the late 570s or early 580s.

... Phamenoth 24, indiction [x]. Theodora, servant (*paidiske*) of Paulos, the *gloriosissimus illustris*, daughter of Amantios, mother Anti..., from the city of the Oxyrhynchites, to you, Mariam, also servant, daughter of Apollos, from the same city, greetings. I acknowledge that I have received from you on loan for my pressing needs one-third of a gold solidus in current coin at the private standard, total 1/3 gold solidi at the private standard; and I agree to hand this over to you without delay whenever you wish to recover it, and (I agree to hand over) on account of monthly interest on it one-quarter of a carat at the standard of Alexandria. This deed, written in a single copy, is normative, and upon being asked the formal question, I gave my assent.

(*2nd hand*) Theodora, the aforementioned – (this deed) suits me as stated above. I, Anastasios, wrote on her behalf because she is illiterate.

Completed through me, Anastasios.

(*Back, 1st hand?*): Deed of Theodora, servant, daughter of Amantios, from the city of the Oxyrhynchites, of 1/3 gold sol. at the private standard. (trans. A. Ben-
naissa, ed. pr.)

35 Scorning me: On the other side, 'and stealing from me' is inserted, no doubt the actual wrongdoing at stake.

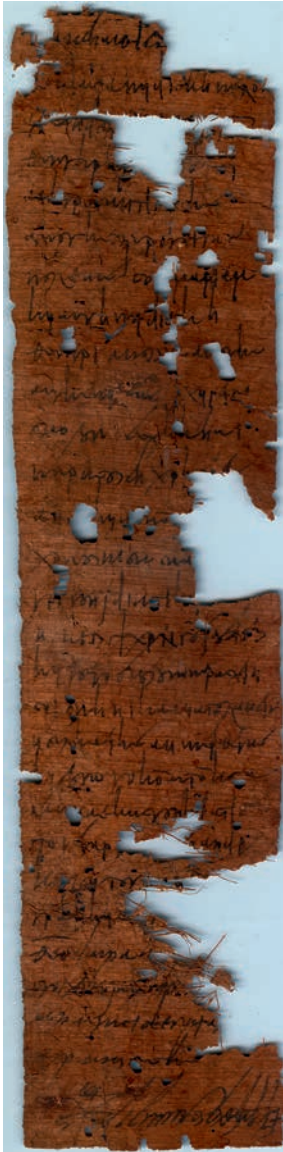


Figure 7.2 249. *P.Oxy. 77.5124*. Photo courtesy of the Egypt Exploration Society and the University of Oxford Imaging Papyri Project.

250. Slaves used as security for a loan

BKU 3.360 = SB 10.10554

TM 36126

Written and found: Pathyris (Gebelein)

Date: last quarter of sixth century CE

Material: parchment (leather)

Location: Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, P. 21530

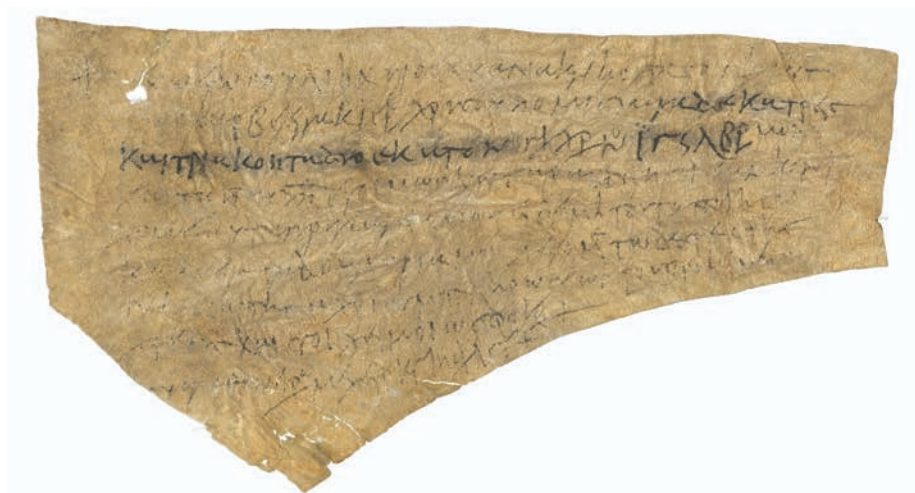


Figure 7.3 250. BKU 3.360 = SB 10.10554. © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Photo: Archiv, P. 21530.

This text belongs to an archive stemming from a community of Blemmyes from Nubia settled in Gebelein and acknowledging their own ruler in Nubia and mainly written in Coptic; other texts from this archive are translated in the next part of this chapter (7.3.4.I, with a general introduction). Despite Christian elements (a cross at start and end, the phrase ‘God willing’), the lender is a pagan priest; the Blemmyes still practised their traditional religion. The legal practices, however, mirror those of Roman slavery.

+ I have received, I, Soulien, son of Wanaktikuta, from you, Phant son of Kirbeet-
itak, priest, thirteen and thirty-two hundredths solidi of gold, making 13 $\frac{32}{100}$
solidi of gold only. And this, God willing, I am prepared to return to you when
I return from my business. If I do not do this, you are in command of my slaves
(*doularia*) called Todete and her daughter until payment of the above-mentioned
loan. And it is satisfactory to me as above.

Written by me, Agathon, on the 23rd of Mecheir, 13th indiction. + (trans. T. Hägg, in Eide et al. 1998)

Bibliography: Eide et al. 1998: 1208–1209 (*Fontes historiae Nubiorum* no. 335); *SPP* 3².2.119–238, pp. xxvii–xxxi, 136 (F. Mitthof, on the readings, provenance, date, and context).

251. Christian slaves sent to Babylon

P.Apoll. 51

TM 39110

Written: Upper Egypt?

Found: Edfu

Date: second half of the seventh century CE

Location: Cairo, Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, C45

This letter concerns instructions from the *amīr*, the governor of Egypt, with respect to Christian slaves belonging to two deceased Christian men and their wives. The description of the slaves as Christian probably means that they were Egyptian rather than captives from Nubia or a nomadic people of the region. Babylon means the fortress now in modern Old Cairo, or perhaps the new Arab capital at Fuṣṭāṭ. There is no explanation for the enormous fine levied against one of the widows, which has been suspended by the *topoteretes* or deputy governor pending further consultation of the *amīr*. It seems likely that the author belonged to that official's office.

... for him to go to Babylon. Johannes, the son of Constantinus, has come with a letter of our master the renowned *amīr*, ordering that the Christian slaves (*andrapoda*) of the late Justinus and the late Johannakios and of their wives should be arrested at once and sent to Babylon. Moreover, the said Johannes has penalised her who is, by the grace of God, the widow of Johannakios, with an unjust fine of 1,000 *solidi*, and he has ordered her to be imprisoned along with the widow of Justinus. And the most renowned *topoteretes* has written in her favour and has left her free until we receive a further letter from our master the most renowned *amīr* ...

7.2.3. Slavery in the Dioskoros archive

Given the large size and prominent position of the archive of Dioskoros of Aphrodito in the documentation of Byzantine Egypt, it is striking how small is the place that slavery occupies in it.³⁶ On the surface, *doulos* and its compounds appear in the archive a respectable number of times, but all except one of the texts in question date precisely to the period 566–568, when Dioskoros was working as a notary in Antinoopolis, the capital of the Thebaid, and they do not concern village matters. The sole exception is *SB* 18.13274 (below n. 40), an affidavit that a woman is *not* a slave. Several of the documents from the Antinoopolite period are of great interest, however. Besides those in this section, **256** is also from Antinoopolis.

252. Sale of two female slaves

P.Cair.Masp. 1.67120

TM 19050 and 19051

Written: Antinoopolis

Found: Aphrodito

Date: c. 567–568 CE

³⁶ Ruffini 2018: 108.

Material: papyrus

Location: Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JdE 40854 fr. and CG 67120 fr. (pp. 193–194) (parallel)

This fragmentary text is one of the very few surviving sale contracts for slaves from this period and also interesting for the varied vocabulary used for the two slaves, a mother and daughter: they are described in the first instance as *oikogeneis* (house-born) *therapainides*, the latter a term referring more to their function as servants than to their legal status; and then by the uncommon feminine form (singular) *doulis*, a perhaps pretentious by-form of the usual *doule*. For the warranty compare 246 above.

During the consulship and reign of our most godly master Flavius Justinus the eternal Augustus.

[I declare that I have sold to you according to the entire?] proprietary power and not subjected previously to any other debtor contract or deed or burden or claim but being the aforementioned two female servants (*therapainides*), Eulogia and her daughter Rhodous, house-born and of well-ordered behaviour and pure disposition, whom I have sold to you in good-faith intention, without hidden illness and epilepsy and vice and *epaphe*, working without inclination to run away and not dishonestly so that you, the illustrious purchaser Joannes, the said finance official, and after you your heirs and successors and praetorian heirs control and are owners and masters of the above-named two slave girls (*doulides*) from now until the end of time; and to drive them and to lead them under the yoke of slavery (*doulikon zygon*) under you forever, in whatever way you may want, at my risk and under mortgage of my whole property, that inherited and my own, in any way mortgaged and obliged ...

(*verso*) and to all that is agreed, having been asked, I have agreed that this is so and that I shall give, make, warrant, and fulfil to the limit, and I have released (*document breaks off*). The witnesses of the sale are Iezechiel and Philemon *ekphl*() and Achilleus *singularius*. (trans. Urbanik 2010, modified)

Bibliography: Urbanik 2010.

253. A sister pledged as security for debt

P.Coll.Youtie 2.92

TM 20901

Written: Antinoopolis

Found: Aphrodito

Date: 15 May 569 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JdE 40765 + Monterey, private collection Fitzhugh; Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 67023 (parallel)

This contract belongs to a well-known category in which work is to be provided in return for a loan, the so-called antichretic agreements.³⁷ The girl here is also pledged as security for the loan. Creditors were prohibited by a law of 556 from receiving children as pledges from their parents, or for using them in a servile capacity (Justinian, *Novel* 134.7), but the practice did not disappear. In the present instance, it is the older sister who pledges the girl. She had previously been pledged to another man under a similar arrangement, so this deed represents in effect a transfer to a new master. We may suppose that Martha expected that Prokla would receive better treatment from her new household than the previous one, but this is implicit rather than stated.

In the reign and consulship of our most godly lord Flavius Justinus, the eternal Augustus (and) Emperor, the fourth year, Pachon the twentieth, at the beginning of the third indiction, at the most illustrious city of Antinous, to Flavius Hella-dius, the most illustrious secretary of the illustrious ducal staff in the area of the Thebaid, son of <blank> of excellent memory, originating from the fair city of the Panopolites, from me, here present, Martha daughter of Menas by my mother Thekla, salt-fish seller, herself also originating from the city of Antinous, acting without a male guardian but providing a signatory on her own behalf and witnesses, whose subscriptions immediately follow, to the present contract of pledge on the agreed-upon conditions as set forth below, on all the terms contained in it, greetings.

My father having fallen into the utmost poverty, and being well off (?) [...] long since, before having completed his life's service – Menas by name, nicknamed 'the Bath-attendant' – and of necessity having then made a pledge of my orphan sister, more indigent (*sc.* of years, i.e. younger) than me, called Prokla, to the most illustrious lord Nonnos for one gold solidus pursuant to the deed of pledge made by him at that time to the most illustrious gentleman, and after his death, in these (circumstances) I spared no effort, until I repaid by my manual labour the half of the aforesaid solidus to the said gentleman, in the desire to redeem my overworked sister, I, the above-written Martha, not having the means to repay it in full, but being blessed (to meet) Your Illustriousness moved by the love of God, have applied entreaties to It (i.e., 'Your Illustriousness') to lend the remaining amount for the redemption of this same orphan sister. Accordingly, I, the same Martha, acknowledge that I have received from your hand into my hands and have borrowed from you along with this deed of security the nine gold carats by the public standards of Antinoopolis, and by the deposition of the guarantee and surety and full and unfailing payment, I pledge to you now on the spot and have pledged as security and by right of pledge my said sister Prokla, being fifteen years old more or less, upon condition that she reside in your household,

37 Jördens 1990: ch. 7, enumerates seventeen cases (pp. 418–462).

performing all servile offices and requirements of yours unremittingly, willingly and submissively and obediently, doing all things sincerely and without any attempt at flight or theft or any manner of recklessness whatsoever, at my own risk and my resources being at stake entirely to this end, until the settlement of the aforesaid debt of the nine gold carats; she, however, being fed and clothed (by you), is to reside with you respectfully until the repayment of these; and for your security I have drawn up this amicable deed based upon all the prescribed terms and issued it, and in response to the formal question I gave my assent.

(2nd hand) + I, Aurelia Martha daughter of Menas the bath-attendant, the aforesaid, have deposited this pledge of Prokla my sister in exchange for the nine gold carats, and I shall repay as aforesaid. I, Aurelius Victor son of Ioannes, of Antinoopolis, wrote on her behalf since she has little facility with letters.

(3rd hand) + I, Aurelius Kollouthos son of Kallinikos, by God's will notary, bear witness to the pledge, having heard it from its depositor. (trans. *Law and Legal Practice* 272–273, J. G. Keenan modifying ed. pr.)

Bibliography: Ruffini 2018: 153–154.

254. Testamentary manumission

P.Cair.Masp. 3.67312

TM 18440

Written: Antinoopolis

Found: Aphrodito

Date: 31 March 567 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JdE 40464 + Cairo, Egyptian Museum, CG 67312 (parallel)

In his long will, of which we give only an excerpt, Flavius Theodoros, having no children, bequeaths all his immovable assets, rural and urban, to the monastery of St Senouthes (i.e. Shenoute) at Atripe, and all other assets and liabilities to the convent of St Mousaios in the Hermopolite and to his maternal grandmother. His ancestral house in Antinoopolis is to be sold and the proceeds used to ransom prisoners of war and for other pious purposes. He also frees all his male and female slaves with their *peculium*; they also receive legacies from his estate.

(Lines 99–112)

I wish and command that at my death all of my male and female slaves (*douloi*, *doulides*), (enslaved) by whatever circumstance or reason, are to be freed with their *peculium*, and that each shall be given a single payment, on an equal basis, of 6 *solidi* of full weight by my most reverend heirs Petros and Phoibammon. I wish and

command that Tadelphe my nurse and Leontia her daughter are to have yearly from the aforementioned most reverend Petros and Phoibammon or through the holy monasteries my heirs 12 full-weight *solidi* per year in a single payment. And I wish Petros and Phoibammon, my most reverend heirs, to give to Rhea, the nurse of my thrice-blessed mother Lia, in addition to the legacy already given her according to the same most blessed woman's will, ...

Bibliography: Ruffini 2018: 108.

255. Division of slaves as part of an inheritance

P.Cair.Masp. 3.67313

TM 36530

Written: Antinoopolis (?)

Found: Aphrodito

Date: sixth century CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Cairo, Egyptian Museum, JdE 40465 + CG 67313 (parallel)

In this excerpt from the division of a substantial inheritance, Philemon notes the receipt of two slaves as part of his share. In the line after this passage there is a fragmentary reference to an annual *peculium*, whether of one of the slaves or of both is not clear.

(Lines 65–67)

And that I have been allotted in addition to these likewise two slaves (*prosopa*, mostly restored) who are brother and sister, the male called Besas, the female named Matrona, along with the offspring that shall eventually come to them ...

7.2.4. On the borders of freedom and slavery: *paramone*

As we have seen above (7.2.2), the registered tenants, *enapographoi georgoi*, of great estates were obliged to stay in residence (the Greek verb is *paramenein*, the noun *paramone*) on the estate and not leave for another location. But these Greek terms were used in the context of other labour relationships as well, and they have a long history going back to classical Greece (cf. 84 and 163a and b). Whether either the verb or the noun had a technical legal meaning at one time or another has been debated, but in the Roman period (6.11) the noun generally refers to an obligation undertaken by a debtor to remain with the creditor and perform work until the loan is paid off or discharged by the labour itself, in which case the loan may be seen as an advance on salary.³⁸ In some cases the labour merely substitutes

³⁸ See Yiftach-Firanko 2010 with earlier bibliography.

for interest on the loan, and the principal must be repaid separately (see *Law and Legal Practice*, 5.5.2 for an example).

In the Byzantine period, *paramone* appears as an element in what otherwise would seem to be normal labour contracts, and this practice continues after the Arab conquest. We find the noun *paramonarios* coming into use in the seventh century for someone in this situation (257).³⁹ There is no indication here that the status impaired the legal free condition of the individual in question. Still, the entire obligation to stay with a master could give rise, especially if it continued across generations, to a suggestion that one was of servile status. An interesting text from the Dioskoros archive gives us an affidavit by a ‘master’ to the free birth of a servant in his household, who was the only survivor of a family that had been in service, despite their free birth, since the time of the grandparents of the woman, whose status had apparently been questioned by a third party, under circumstances not made clear in the text. It appears, however, that the master actually intended to marry the woman, and the document was designed to protect her eventually against possible claims by his heir.⁴⁰ Because there might be no other documentation to show whether a person was slave or free – slaves’ condition would normally be documented only at the time of sale – multi-generational free residence in an employer’s household could be hard to distinguish from slavery. It must in some cases have been difficult to see what the substantive difference was between slavery and free employment in a position of dependence, particularly if compensation came in the form of maintenance.

256. Contract to act as a servant

P.Strasb. 1.40

TM 18670

Written: Antinoopolis

Found: Aphrodito

Date: 27 September 569 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire, P. gr. 1780

This labour contract, like others of its period, takes the form of a lease (*misthosis*), adopting the Roman practice of using a lease contract (Latin *locatio conductio*) to hire labour as

39 For an example clearly datable after the Arab conquest, see the seventh-century *CPR* 4.161 (TM 82290), a Coptic work contract in which the worker, characterised as a *paramonarios*, receives compensation in wheat, barley, oil, wine, and cash. See Delattre 2019 for improvements to the text, particularly to compensation.

40 *SB* 18.13274 (TM 36279), first quarter of the sixth century; translation with detailed discussion in *Law and Legal Practice* 9.3.3; cf. Ruffini 2018: 154–156.

well as property.⁴¹ We have left untranslated the terms in which the person drawing up the contract in Kollouthos' name describes his position, which in their fullest form are *familiarius*, *hedraios*, *katadoulos*, and *pais*. He is thus a member of the *familia*, the household; he is resident in the family seat (*hedra*; the term *hedraios* appears in no other papyrus); he is a 'slave', as one might (with the dictionary) render the last two terms (*katadoulos* again appears in no other papyrus). And yet he is guaranteed to be of free status, he receives a wage for his services, and the agreement is for four years, not forever. The servile element in his description is relational rather than juridical. The use of *paramenein* (line 30) puts this into that broad category of arrangements, as a contract for work, with agreement on wages.

+ In the reign and consulship of our most godly master Flavius Justinus the eternal Augustus and Emperor, fourth year, Thoth thirtieth of the second indiction in Antinoopolis the most brilliant.

To Flavius Phoibammon, the most brilliant and most learned *scholastikos* and advocate in the forum of the Thebaid, son of the *comes* Thomas of blessed and distinguished memory, landowner here in this city of the Antinoites, from Aurelius Kollouthos son of Victor, from the village of Thmounkreki of the Antaiopolite nome, formerly ... of the most brilliant city of the Antinoites, and wishing to furnish himself as *hedraios familiarius* in your most benevolent household through the present written contract of hire on the terms of agreement set out below with all of its included provisions, with me, Aurelius Kollouthos son of Sergios, his mother Dionysia, landowner coming from the same village of Thmounkreki but living for a long time here in the same city of the Antinoites, as surety, who also guarantees and takes responsibility for the person and entire good faith and attitude and disposition and guarantee for the security of the present contract of hire, at my risk and with my financial means and expense of all of my property and that of the aforementioned person, which is available for the fulfilment of all of the terms agreed on that are stated below, with no possibility of transgression, greetings.

I, the aforementioned Kollouthos son of Victor, *familiarius hedraios katadoulos pais*, through this my written agreement of hire, with as my surety Aurelius Kollouthos son of Sergios, landowner, who is present and undertakes responsibility on all of the points and agreements included in it for the person of the first-named individual, for his presence and appearance and his free condition, without any blame or condemnation or laziness, for his remaining with your brilliant Learning and being present without fault or fraud or ... and for his discharging his daily duties honestly and sufficiently, and to furnish his service with servile ... whether in other locations or in the household, unstintingly and with a good attitude, and not at all to be absent from his servile presence, receiving for the four-year

41 Jördens 1986: 69 n. 2.

period, reckoning from the beginning of the coming month of Phaophi of the just started second indiction inclusive and for the following period yearly until the completion of the same four-year period, with me as his guarantor being ready to assure that the first-named person complies and is in agreement with you in all of the matters assigned to him and entrusted to him, with the highest excellence and obedience in all beneficial works and speeches, without reproach, and to deliver all things to you without harm and to carry out your orders without theft or flight, receiving from you on account of a wage or daily allowance, yearly, 10 artabas of wheat by the small collection measure, for clothing 1 *solidus* of gold minus 5 carats, and 4 artabas of barley by the same measure, and 12 *sextarii* of oil and 24 *knidia* of wine, all each year, and the minor amounts customarily given, and festival and harvest presents in imitation of all of those provided to an inhabitant from your grace, and I agree to carry out in full all of the provisions agreed on earlier or to pay twice the amount, with good faith. (*Penalty clauses and subscription follow.*) (trans. controlling against Italian translation in Montevicchi 1950: 79–81)

Bibliography: Banaji 2007: 198 n. 51; Kudlien 1996: 363; Rotman 2009: 89; Fournet 2008: 287.

257. Hiring of a servant

SB I.4490

TM 41316

Written: Arsinoe

Found: Arsinoite nome

Date: (641 or) 656 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Paris, Louvre, AF 7400 (no. 11); Paris, Louvre Nouveau, no. 54 (parallel)

Like **256**, this document involves a contract to undertake work, limited in this case to a year. The wages received by the worker are not generous, only wheat and cash in modest amounts, with no barley, oil, or wine specified. The employer is a judicial official of high local rank, known also from *CPR* 14.17; the worker is apparently a Christian priest (*presbyteros*) who characterises himself as *paramonarios*, a worker tied to his place of work for the duration of the contract. It is surprising to find a clergyman in such a dependent situation, and it is conceivable that *presbyteros* here means ‘elder’ (i.e. elder son). But this designation, common in earlier periods, is rare if not nonexistent at this late date. The term does not appear in his signature at the end. The later of the two possible dates is more likely, given the absence of any regnal formula.

In the name of our lord and master Jesus Christ our God and Saviour, and our lady the Holy Godbearer and all the saints, Tybi 24, 14th indiction, in the city of the Arsinoites.

To Flavius Athanasius the most eloquent *defensor* of this city of the Arsinoites, Theodoros *paramonarios presbyteros*, son of the blessed Symeonios, from the same city, from the district of Therapeia, greetings. I acknowledge that of my free will I have hired myself to your eloquence to carry out with respect to It all of the work that is commanded of me by It, both in the city and in the fields, of necessity, without reproach, without negligence, and without demanding an extra payment, for a period of one year reckoning from the first day of the present month of Tybi of the present fourteenth indiction and that I have received from It on account of my wage for the same period of one year 9 artabas of wheat and 1 counted *solidus* of gold containing 23 carats, from the same wage, that I have received from It forthwith already the said 1 *solidus*, and that I have received the customary gratuities for the harvest and festivals and, if I shall seek before the completion of the year to leave my residence (*paramone*), that I shall repay to you if I got anything from It for wage, and I am to depart without wages.

The contract of hire is authoritative, and when I was asked the formal question I assented.

I, Theodoros, *paramonarios*, son of the late Symeonios, the aforesaid, the contract of hire is agreeable to me as aforesaid.

Signed through me, Iustus. Through me, Iustus, notary.

Bibliography: Montevicchi 1950; Jördens 1986: 61, 69.2n.

258. Surety for a *douleleutheros*

P.Oxy. 19.2238

TM 22187

Written and found: Oxyrhynchos

Date: 7 August 551 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Oxford, Bodleian Art, Archaeology and Ancient World Library, Egypt Exploration Society, *P.Oxy.* 2238

This surety guarantees the appearance of a man described as son of a deceased deacon of the principal church of Oxyrhynchos, who has stolen gold from the person in charge of the church, and the repayment of that gold. The term *douleleutheros*, 'slave-free', is attested nowhere else in the papyri. The editors rendered it 'freedman', but the man in question has a father of some standing in the church. It therefore seems more likely that the *doulos* part of the term has the more generic sense of 'servant', but the compound indicates someone with less than full ability to control his own life. That he is the object of a surety document of this type would be hard to explain in the case of someone under the legal control of the supervisor, who could discipline him directly. He may, however, have entered into a service contract requiring his residence with that official and have violated it by decamping with the gold.

In the reign of our most godly and pious master Flavius Justinian the eternal Augustus and Emperor, year 25, in the 9th consulship after the consulship of Flavius Basilius *vir clarissimus*, Mesore 14 of the 14th indiction, beginning of the 15th, in Oxyrhynchos.

To the most worshipful Menas, son of the late Praous, overseer of the holy Catholic church of the city of Oxyrhynchos, from Aurelius Phoibammon and Aurelius Elias, full brothers, sons of Anoup, their mother Tekrampe, and Aurelius Phib son of Pantaros, his mother Rachel, all three natives of the estate of ...ne in the Oxyrhynchite nome, belonging to the same holy Catholic church, greetings.

We acknowledge of our own free will and deliberate choice, swearing by God Almighty and the piety of the gloriously triumphant genius, that we are surety and pledge to your worship for Aurelius Onnophris, son of the late deacon Pamouthios, his mother Thekla, also a native of the said estate and formerly serving you in the capacity of a free servant (*douleutheros*). We engage that we will cause him to give to your worship what remains of your gold, which was stolen by him in your house a few days ago, and whenever he is required of us for this cause by your worship at any date, we will bring him forward and produce him in a public place in this city, without recourse to holy precincts, imperial portraits, or any attempt at asylum, in the prison of the hospital of the same holy church where we have become his surety, without any reason given or to be given to him, on this charge only. If we do not do this we, his sureties, acknowledge on our mutual security our responsibility to answer for all that is required of him, pledging for the due discharge of this pledge all our property present and future, in particular and in general, as security and by right of mortgage. The warranty, of which there is a single copy, is authoritative, and in reply to the formal question we have given our consent.

(2nd hand) We, Aurelius Phoibammon and Aurelius Elias, full brothers, sons of Anoup, and Aurelius Phib son of Pantarous, the aforesaid, have given this warranty, becoming surety for the said Onnophris, son of Pamouthios (?), jointly certifying in this warranty our own risk and that of our property and all our possessions as aforesaid, and in reply to the formal question we have given our assent. I, Appianus ..., deacon, have written for them, as they are illiterate.

(1st hand?) By me, Victor, the contract was made ... 14th indiction. (trans. ed. pr., modified)

Bibliography: Kudlien 1996.

7.3. The Coptic evidence⁴²

JENNIFER CROMWELL

7.3.1. Introduction

Identifying instances of slavery and dependency in Coptic texts faces several obstacles. Chief among these is a terminological difficulty in which the relevant words – *hemhal* and *ka(o)yon* – can mean ‘slave’ or ‘servant’ and can be used in a range of metaphorical and formulaic contexts. Furthermore, a number of other words, of both Egyptian and Greek origin, are also used to denote the dependent status of an individual. Attempts to adhere to clear terminological distinctions often obscure the situation at hand. Each occurrence of these words has to be considered in its given situation, whether a work of literature, a letter, a legal document, or any other text genre. The first section in this chapter focuses on this problem and on the range of words that can indicate dependency, including how Coptic rendered the relevant Greek vocabulary. The occurrence of these terms in the literary record helps us understand how they – and consequently the people described as such – were perceived. Gnostic texts, hagiographies, encomia, and the works of Shenoute are presented in this light in the second section.

The final section focuses on the non-literary evidence and therefore the evidence for actual cases of slavery and other forms of dependency in the Coptic evidence of the sixth to eighth centuries CE, the period to which most of the Coptic non-literary (documentary) record dates. The range of texts here is broad and taken from across Egypt. At the same time, their number is limited. The largest group of documents is that of child-donation deeds from eighth-century Thebes. These are discussed as a category, but only one document is provided in full, together with the self-donation of a man. Of the remaining texts, several from the archive of a Blemmyan tribe provide the clearest instance of slavery. A group of short letters from several sites provides evidence for paid servants, who are referred to using the same terminology as the other documents. Instances of clear forced labour – conscription of Egyptians by their Arab rulers – are also included in this section, as the duties imposed and the language used find points of contact with the other texts.

The Coptic evidence is not abundant. This most likely reflects the origins of much of the evidence, which comes from Egyptian villages or monasteries and predominantly from lower socio-economic levels of the population. Nevertheless, what does exist provides evidence for personal bondage among Egyptian and non-Egyptian groups, while simultaneously emphasising the need to treat the terminology of slavery with caution.

⁴² All texts included in this section are in Coptic. Translations are by the author.

7.3.2. Terminological issues: a slave by any other name?

Coptic presents the same terminological lack of clarity as do earlier phases of the Egyptian language. This is compounded by two other points. Following centuries of contact with Greek speakers, a large number of Greek loan words are found in Coptic texts of all types; Greek terms for slaves and servants, however, are uncommon.⁴³ For the Old and New Testament, where Coptic manuscripts survive, it is possible to see how these Greek terms are rendered in Coptic. Yet it soon becomes clear that there is a comparative paucity of Coptic terms for slave, meaning that a limited number of Coptic words are used, which thus have a broad utility and encapsulate a range of meanings. Recognition of this is vital when considering the evidence that survives solely in Coptic, whether literary or non-literary productions. The other factor to recognise is that Coptic includes a range of dialects. Most of the texts discussed below are written in Sahidic, the 'southern' dialect and main dialect of written communication in the fourth to eighth centuries. With the biblical translations, Bohairic, the 'northern' dialect, is important, and Akhmimic texts also appear, while Lycopolitan influence is found in Gnostic works. There is also one text written in Fayumic, the dialect from the Fayyum region. In order to discuss terms with the greatest of ease, the following sigla are used before words given in transliteration: ^G (Greek); ^S (Sahidic); ^B (Bohairic); ^F (Fayumic); ^A (Akhmimic); ^L (Lycopolitan).

Metaphorical applications, such as 'your humble servant/slave' that are common at the start of letters from the Hermopolite region (which are not included among the texts below),⁴⁴ denote a subordinate relationship, but are most likely deferential rather than implying actual service under the control of another (cf. above, 7.1). Such usage also refers to religious service, and so bondage to the Lord.⁴⁵ Conversely, what words and concepts terms for slavery are placed in opposition to is often illuminative. 'Slave/servant' is found paired with 'freeman' in lists of opposite concepts. Therefore, while a spectrum of dependent relationships

43 Lefort's concordance of Greek words in the New Testament includes no relevant word, while attestations in Förster 2002: 210 for the non-literary record are limited. In addition to *BKU* 3.332, for which see n. 57, only two inscriptions are included.

44 Letters starting with the formula 'It is your servant N.N. who dares to write ...' are collected in Delattre 2005. Most of these are fragmentary, and none can certainly be identified as referring to true slaves or servants; their use is to be understood as entirely formulaic. In most texts, ^S*ka(o)yon* is used, but in two fragmentary letters this is replaced with ^S*hemhal*.

45 For example, Moses in Exod 4:10 is referred to as 'servant of God', for which the Coptic uses ^S*hemhal*, which is used in contexts of clear bondage in examples discussed in 7.3.2.1, to translate ^G*therapon* (in turn, this is the same term used for the Egyptians who accompany Pharaoh in his pursuit of the Israelites in Exod 14:8, which the Coptic again renders as ^S*hemhal*).

may be encoded in these words, what is clear is that a form of dependency that is the antithesis of freedom is intended.

The following presentation of the key terms is divided into two parts. The first shows how Greek terms for a range of dependent relationships were translated into Coptic, based on biblical passages, highlighting the problems that are encountered. The second collates all the relevant terms occurring in the Coptic texts included in this chapter. This is not a complete analysis of all occurrences of the relevant words, but aims to show the extent of the difficulties involved in understanding situations presented in the non-literary record.

7.3.2.1. *Translating Greek terms*

In the Coptic translations of the Old and New Testament, ^s*hemhal* and ^b*bók* are used to translate a range of Greek terms, of which ^c*doulos* is the most common.⁴⁶ Despite this multiplicity of Greek terms, the same Coptic word (in the respective dialects) is applied. This is especially striking in passages in which two different categories of dependents are referred to by two Greek words, but by the same Coptic one. As the following passages do not reflect Egyptian attitudes towards slavery, and many of them are discussed above in more detail in Chapter 4, here they are discussed only with reference to the terms used.

The story of Abraham, the founding father of the Israelites, is told in Gen 11:26–25:18 and contains references to slaves in different contexts. In Gen 12:16, Abraham is given gifts of livestock and slaves by Pharaoh, which are referred to as ^c*pais* and ^c*paidiske* (male and female slave, respectively). The first part of chapter 16 concerns the inability of his wife, Sarah, to produce an heir. Sarah's solution is for Abraham to conceive a child with her Egyptian slave, Hagar, who later gives birth to Ishmael. In the Greek, Hagar is also identified as a ^c*paidiske* (as is the case of the slaves in 12:16), which the Bohairic renders as *bóki* (the feminine form of *bók*).⁴⁷ *Bóki* here clearly refers to a form of chattel slavery. In the Book of Exodus, the Coptic translation again uses ^s*hemhal* to render multiple Greek terms.

The account of the struggle of the Israelites makes it clear that chattel slavery is intended, their work ('difficult work' in the Coptic of 2:23) being under the direction of overseers and slave drivers. In the Sahidic version, 'slaves' is rendered

46 Wilmet 1959 notes only one attestation of ^s*kayon*, in 2 Cor 4:5 ('We are your servants, for Jesus' sake', translating here ^c*doulos*), and a further two of the compound *mentkayon*, again translating ^c*doulos*: Eph 6:6 ('slaves of Christ') and Col 3:22 ('Slaves, obey your earthly masters ...').

47 Bohairic after Peters 1983: 36 (Gen 16:1–16).

in each instance by ^s*hemhal*, but the Greek demonstrates that a range of forms of dependency is involved, which the Coptic obscures.⁴⁸ For example:

Exod 2:5–6: Pharaoh's daughter and her servants find Moses in a basket among the reeds. The Greek labels the servants ^c*abra*, 'favourite slaves', which here refers to her close female attendants. An interesting parallel to the use of ^s*hemhal* here occurs in the *Homily of Susanna* (also known as the *Explanation Concerning Susanna*), written as a guide for women by Apa John, archbishop of Constantinople. Susanna has both slaves and maidservants; the former are designated ^s*hemhal* (they are instructed to bring Susanna soda and soap), the latter as ^s*sheere shēm* (literally 'little girls'). Without a Greek original of this text, however, what the Coptic equates to is unknown.⁴⁹

Exod 5:15–16: following a request by Moses for the Israelites to be allowed to hold a festival for their God, Pharaoh instructs the slave drivers to stop providing the workers with straw. Instead, the Israelites are to gather their own straw, but must produce the same amount of bricks. When the official overseeing the Israelite workers (the ^c*grammateus*) goes to Pharaoh to complain about this situation, he refers to them as both ^c*oiketes* (a term typically used for a household servant rather than a slave) and ^c*pais*, but the Coptic only uses the single term. In Proverbs 13:13, which survives in multiple Coptic dialects, ^c*oiketes* is similarly rendered as ^s*hemhal* and ^s*bōk*.⁵⁰

Exod 6:5–6: the Lord appears to Moses and reveals his plans for the Israelites. This passage provides an indication of how other Greek terms concerning slavery were rendered in the Coptic, including the verb 'enslave' (^c*katadouloun*; ^s*eire en-hemhal*) and the abstract noun 'slavery' (^c*douleia*; ^s*ment-hemhal*).

Exod 14:12: Pharaoh and his army pursue the Israelites who, in their fear, accuse Moses of leading them to their deaths. They protest that it is better to serve (^c*douleucin*; ^s*er-hemhal*) the Egyptians than to die in the desert.

Moving to the New Testament, the same translation practice is encountered, with a range of Greek terms rendered through the use of a single Coptic word. In the Greek of Luke 12:45–47, the servant, ^c*doulos*, whose responsibility is to ensure the faithful continuation of duty in the absence of his master, instead beats the male and female slaves, ^c*pais*. However, both the Sahidic and Bohairic versions obscure the different status of the two groups, employing ^s*hemhal* (female

48 The Sahidic manuscript is after Kasser 1961.

49 Budge 1910: 46 ff. (text) and 192 ff. (translation).

50 Sahidic after Thompson 1908: 17–18; Bohairic after Burmester and Dévaud 1930: 42; also Akhmimic (^s*hemhel*) after Böhlig 1958: 64.

slave: ^s*hemhal enhiome*) and ^b*bók* (female slave: ^b*bóki*).⁵¹ However, this is not to say that the Greek terms employed are always consistent in differentiating between servant and slave. In Matt 20:26–27, servant and slave are placed in opposition: ‘He who would be great among you will be your servant, but he who would be first among you will be your slave.’ ‘Servant’ in the Greek, Sahidic, and Bohairic versions is rendered by the same term, *diakon(os)*. This is placed in contrast to ^c*doulos*, in the Greek, for ‘slave’, which is translated as ^s*hemhal* and ^b*bók*. In this context, to be a ^c*doulos*/^s*hemhal*/^b*bók* is not simply to be a ‘servant’ but necessitates relinquishing a greater degree of personal freedom.⁵²

Finally, as well as the distinction between servant and slave, there is also the opposition of slave and free. Several texts by Paul the Apostle place the two in opposition (e.g. Gal 3:28, ‘there is no Jew or Greek, there is no slave or freeman, and there is no man or woman’; cf. similarly 1 Cor 12:13, Col 3:11, Eph 6:8). In each instance, the Greek uses ^c*doulos* for slave and ^c*eleutheros* for freeman, which the Coptic translates as ^s*hemhal*/^b*bók* and ^{sb}*remhe*, respectively.⁵³ Being a ^s*hemhal*/^b*bók* is the opposite of being free. This common pairing also occurs in other texts, although not always with the same terms; e.g. the Gnostic *The Tripartite Tractate* (Nag Hammadi Codex I) 132.23–27 uses ^s*hemhel* for slave and ^c*eleutheros* for freeman, rather than a Coptic equivalent. Beyond literary works, a Greek–Coptic lexicon preserved on a limestone ostrakon from the seventh/eighth century CE, possibly from Diospolis Magna (Thebes east), includes the abstract nouns for slavery and freedom (*SBKopt.* 3.1656):⁵⁴

ἐλευθερία (<i>eleutheria</i>)	TMNTPM̄ZH (<i>t-ment-remhē</i>)	freedom
[δο]υλία (<i>doulia</i>)	TMNTPM̄ZΔΛ (<i>t-ment-hemhal</i>)	slavery

Two points arise here: ^s*hemhal* is the opposite of a free person and is the equivalent of ^c*doulos*.

Based on the above passages, the following set of equivalencies can be deduced (Table 7.1). As has already been stated, the number of Greek terms outnumbers those in Coptic, which therefore cover a broader range of meaning.

51 Bohairic manuscript after Horner 1969b: 182 and 184; Sahidic manuscript after Horner 1911b: 252 and 254.

52 Bohairic manuscript after Horner 1969a: 178; Sahidic manuscript after Horner 1911a: 220.

53 For the Coptic of Gal 3:28: Bohairic manuscript after Horner 1969c: 320; Sahidic manuscript after Horner 1920: 163.

54 Florence, Museo Egizio, inv. 5637, also referred to by the older papyrological sigla *O.Crum* 434 and *P.UnterrichtKopt.* 261 (TM 64423). See also Galante 1901 (with a hand-drawn facsimile) and Pellegrini 1906: 152–153 (#17).

Table 7.1 Greek–Coptic equivalencies

Greek	Coptic	Meaning	Evidence
<i>abra</i>	^s <i>hemhal</i>	maid	Exod 2:5, 6
<i>diakonos</i>	^s <i>diakonos</i> / ^h <i>diakon</i>	servant	Matt 20:26–27
<i>douleuein</i>	^s <i>er-hemhal</i>	being a slave/serving	Exod 14:12
<i>douleia</i>	^s <i>ment-hemhal</i>	slavery	Exod 6:5–6, 13:3; <i>SB Kopt.</i> 3.1656.6
<i>doulos</i>	^s <i>hemhal</i> / ^h <i>bôk</i>	slave	Gal 3:28; Matt 20:26–27
<i>doulos</i>	^s <i>hemhal</i> / ^h <i>bôk</i>	servant	Luke 12:45–47
<i>eleutheros</i>	^{sb} <i>remhe</i>	freeman	Gal 3:28
<i>eleutheria</i>	^s <i>ment-remhe</i>	freedom	<i>SB Kopt.</i> 3.1656.5
<i>katadouloun</i>	^s <i>eire en-hemhal</i> (= ^s <i>er-hemhal</i>)	being a slave/serving	Exod 6:5–6
<i>oiketes</i>	^s <i>hemhal</i>	slave	Exod 5:15–16
<i>oiketes</i>	^a <i>hemhel</i> / ^s <i>hemhal</i> / ^h <i>bôk</i>	servant	Prov 13:13
<i>paidiske</i>	^s <i>hemhal enhiome</i> / ^h <i>bôki</i>	slave (female)	Gen 16:1–6 (B only); Luke 12:45–47
<i>pais</i>	^s <i>hemhal</i> / ^h <i>bôk</i>	slave (male)	Exod 5:15–16; Luke 12:45–47
<i>therapon</i>	^s <i>hemhal</i>	servant (of God)	Exod 4:10, 14:8 (cf. n. 3)

7.3.2.2. Terminology

The following list of terms occurring in Coptic texts is based on the above examples and the passages mentioned in 7.3.3 and 7.3.4. For convenience, they are presented in their transliterated alphabetical order.

^h*bôk*; feminine ^h*bôki*: etymologically derived from earlier *bak* (feminine *baket*).⁵⁵

This is the Bohairic equivalent of Sahidic *hemhal* and is found with the same range of meaning.

^c*diakonos*: the most common application of this term in Coptic texts is in an ecclesiastic or monastic context, as ‘deacon’.⁵⁶ It is never translated by Coptic ^s*hemhal*, ^s*ka(o)yon*, or ^h*bôk*.

^c*doulos*: in both literary and documentary productions. In biblical texts, it is translated as ^s*hemhal*/^h*bôk*, but the documentary evidence shows that it could also

⁵⁵ See 2.2.1 and 3.2.1.

⁵⁶ See the extensive references in Förster 2002: 181–183.

be ^ska(o)yon.⁵⁷ It is found with the meanings of both ‘slave’ and ‘servant’. The derived term *douleia*, ‘slavery’, is rendered as ^sment-hemhal, while *douleuo*, ‘to be/act as a slave’ or ‘to serve’, is ^ser-hemhal.

^celeutheros: ‘free’ occurs only a limited number of times in the literary record (e.g. **261b**) and in two non-literary texts in connection with freedom from slavery (**265** and **266**). Otherwise, its main use occurs in documentary formulas, when requesting people suitable to act as witness to legal documents.⁵⁸

^shemhal or ^shal and ^ahemhel: etymologically derived from demotic *hm-hl* (masculine) and *hm-hl.t* (feminine).⁵⁹ The difference between this and ^ska(o)yon is hard to distinguish. Shenoute in *Then Am I Not Obligated* (**260**) uses both, suggesting that they were not entirely synonymous, but in legal documents the two terms seem to be interchangeable.⁶⁰ Two derived terms also occur: ^sment-hemhal, the abstract noun ‘slavery’, and the compound verb ^ser-hemhal, ‘to be a slave’ or ‘to serve’ (see under ^cdoulos for their Greek equivalents).

^chyperesia: there is only one example of *hyperesia*, indicating a class of servants or attendants, in Coptic documentary sources, namely an inscription of Saint George mentioning two people who bear this title (*SBKopt.* 1.397.48–49 and 52–53). It appears more frequently in literary texts, together with related terms (for example, *hyperetein*).

^ska(o)yon: the etymology of this term is unclear, but it perhaps derives from *gwa* or *gwawa*, which is connected with ‘capture’.⁶¹ It is possible that the term was originally used for chattel slavery, but its use changed over time. It occurs rarely in the Coptic New Testament (see n. 46) and in literary texts, although it does appear in the writings of Shenoute (**259** and **260**). Two derived terms also occur: ^sment-ka(o)yon, the abstract noun ‘slavery’, and the compound verb ^ser-ka(o)yon, ‘to be a slave’ or ‘to serve’.

^skooure/kaure: etymologically, this may derive from *gwr* or *kwr*, which are connected with hard labour (mostly involving carrying and travel).⁶² This term only occurs in works by Shenoute (**259** and **260**), where it is discussed together

57 In the Greek address of the Hermopolite letter *BKU* 3.332, ^ska(o)yon in the opening Coptic formula (cf. n. 43) is rendered as ^cdoulos.

58 See the references in Förster 2002: 246. Note that in the child-donation deed *PKRU* 86.19, the first party describes herself as a ‘free woman’. While this stresses that she is legally free to donate her child in this document, it also serves to highlight the difference between her status and her child’s future bondage to the monastery. For this category of document, see below.

59 See 5.5.

60 The editor of **265** (H. Satzinger) and Delattre 2005: 109 state that the terms are often synonyms.

61 See Westendorf 1977: 470.

62 See Westendorf 1977: 470.

with ^s*kaoyon* and ^s*hemhal* (^s*kaule* in these texts is probably a variant spelling). It may refer to a form of forced labour.

^s*rem-en-êi*: literally ‘man/person of the house’, this term does not occur in the texts included in this chapter. It does, however, appear in legal documents among lists of household members and is probably to be understood as a domestic servant (in contrast to family members who are denoted by kinship terms).⁶³ However, as a general collective, it can be used to refer to the entire household.⁶⁴

^s*róme*/^r*lômi*: this common term, literally ‘man’ or ‘person’, is of interest when used with the possessive article, e.g. ‘my man’, ‘his man’, indicating a subordinate relationship.

^c*soma*/^c*somatikon*: literally ‘body’ or ‘of the body’, these terms are used in the Theban and Aphrodito material in reference to slaves, conscripts, and forced labourers (see the introduction to the child-donation deeds and 272 and 273).

7.3.3. The literary evidence

7.3.3.1. *Shenoute on slaves*

Shenoute, who lived in the fourth and fifth centuries CE, was the head of the White Monastery near Akhmim. He is not only one of the most important figures of Egyptian monasticism, but is the most important author of original Coptic literature (i.e. literature not translated from Greek). His writings – referred to as his literary corpus – reflect his primary concerns to be the practical life and operation of his monastery and the moral issues affecting those under his charge.

The metaphor of slavery occurs regularly in his writings, which obscures the presence of actual slaves in the community.⁶⁵ Besides such usages, several passages also present perceptions of and attitudes towards enslaved persons.

259. Extract from Shenoute’s *Canon 5: You, God the Eternal*

Canon 5 is not dedicated to the topic of slavery, but contains detailed regulations concerning day-to-day monastic life. The following passage concerns punishing those who

63 For example, see *PKRU* 5.43–47: ‘Any time, the one who will sue you ... either me or our children or brother or sister or near or distant family or stranger or household member/servant or one on behalf of my father or on behalf of my mother ...’.

64 It occurs as such in Apa John’s *Explanation Concerning Susanna* (mentioned in 7.3.2.1). Susanna is concerned that the disgrace threatened by the men lusting after her will bring upon her the hatred of her husband and family and cause grief to all her neighbours and members of her household (fol. 68a col. 2).

65 Discussed by Luckritz Marquis 2022.

slander their fellow man. Slanderous terms include a range of physical and mental attributes, as well as undesirable occupations, among which is being a slave (^s*kayon*). The perception of a ^s*kayon* was not a good one.

If a man or woman is found among us who derisively and mockingly calls their brothers blind, or deaf, or liar, or weak, or mad,⁶⁶ or drinker, or dumb, or lame, or maimed, or forced-labourer (^s*kaule*),⁶⁷ or slave (^s*kayon*), or shoemaker, or cobbler, or any such name at all, they will be punished, just like those who do inappropriate things.

Bibliography: Emmel 2004: II, 575–576; Layton 2014: 172–173; Leipoldt 1913: 59 [#60].

260. Extract from Shenoute's *Canon 6: Then Am I Not Obligated*

As with *Canon 5* above, *Canon 6* does not focus on slavery. Part of it refers to Shenoute's illness, part concerns a broken oath, and the section from which the following passage is taken, 'Then Am I Not Obligated', contains monastic rules. This passage is especially of note as it places in direct opposition ^s*ka(o)yon* and ^s*hemhal*, showing that they are not direct synonyms – at least not for Shenoute.

If, at any time, a man is found among us calling his neighbour or his brother a stupid slave (^s*kayon*) or a labouring⁶⁸ stupid slave (^s*kayon*), he himself shall be despised before God and turned away from the angel, because he arrogantly hates his neighbour. It is not that he said woe unto a slave (^s*hemhal*) or a forced-labourer (^s*kooure*) or another, (for) he thus is like these, rather he said woe unto those who are disobedient. It is not that he said the forced-labourers or the slaves (^s*kayon*) are slaves (^s*hemhal*) of sin, rather he said those who sin are slaves (^s*hemhal*) of sin. It is not that he said those who are slaves (^s*hemhal*) or forced-labourers (^s*kaure*)⁶⁹ are in perdition, rather he said that the disobedient child is in perdition.

Bibliography: Emmel 2004: II, 576–582; Layton 2014: 206–207 [the first part of this passage is included as Rule 276]; Leipoldt 1913: 46–47 [#54].

66 The term used by Shenoute is ⲛⲟⲩⲥ (*nous*). This is the standard Coptic spelling for Greek νόος (*noos*), 'mind', etc., but is surely not what is intended here. Perhaps it is instead for νόσος (*nosos*), which refers to plague, disease, and sickness generally, but which can specifically refer to a disease of the mind, and so madness. Layton 2014: 173 translates it as 'Brain!', without commentary, perhaps understanding it as a comment against intellectuals.

67 The Coptic term here, ⲉⲁⲓⲕⲉ, is surely a variant of ⲉⲟⲟⲩⲡⲉ/ⲉⲁⲓⲡⲉ in *Then Am I Not Obligated* (260).

68 ⲉⲟⲟⲩⲡⲉ is used here as an attribute, qualifying 'stupid slave' and presumably bears connotations of hard labour. Layton 2014: 207 translates it as 'despicable', presumably reflecting the suggestion in CD 836a, in which the term is defined as 'slave or sim. as term of contempt'.

69 The spelling in this instance is ⲉⲁⲓⲡⲉ, which must be a variant of ⲉⲟⲟⲩⲡⲉ.

7.3.3.2. *Slaves and slavery in Gnostic texts*

The Nag Hammadi Gnostic Library, discovered in December 1945, consists of thirteen papyrus codices comprising forty-five distinct works. The Coptic texts were translated from Greek around the beginning of the fourth century CE, but this collection survives from later copies. None of the works have slavery as their main theme, but the standard terms for slavery are found – typically ^s*hemhal*, but also ^s*kayon* and ^c*doulos*⁷⁰ – and mostly used in a metaphorical sense or anecdotally.⁷¹ As with many other of the literary examples discussed here, while they do not provide evidence for the status and role of slaves, they are illustrative of opinions and attitudes towards them. As the *Teachings of Silvanus* (Codex VII) 88:6–7 states: ‘My son, does anyone *want* to be a slave (^s*hemhal*)?’

The extracts below from the Gospel of Philip and the Gospel of Thomas provide metaphorical and anecdotal information on slaves. As noted in the introductions to the extracts, several have New Testament parallels or allusions. The use of anecdotes and metaphors involving slaves and slavery is therefore to be understood within the broader context of biblical and early Christian writings.

261. Extracts from the Gospel of Philip

The Gospel of Philip (Nag Hammadi Codex II) comprises a collection of theological statements concerning sacraments and ethics. It is not focused on the idea of slavery; indeed, it has no overarching theme and little continuity of thought. Slaves appear several times, often in metaphors concerning sin: a slave, for instance, is a sinner who is ignorant of the inner wickedness that enslaves him. Such appearances are therefore informative for how terms for slavery (^s*hemhal*) are to be understood, including with what it is held in opposition or equated. Slaves are placed together with animals and defiled women (again, a moral affiliation), and in contrast to freemen and children (i.e. heirs); the opposition between slaves and freemen is taken from the texts of Paul the Apostle, as discussed in 7.3.2.1. Slaves are characterised by their lack of control and decision-making possibilities in their own lives, being subject instead to the will of their masters.

The three passages below highlight the key vocabulary in the gospel. Passage 72:17–20 raises other terminological differences between slaves and freemen. Slaves serve the free, and the term used (^c*hyperetein*) carries the connotation of subordination. Conversely, in the next life the free will tend (^c*diakonein*) the needs

70 ^c*doulos* appears only in *The Interpretation of Knowledge* (Codex XI) 6:20, in a severely broken part of the manuscript, such that the context is lost, except that it follows reference to ‘the great bitterness of the world’ (line 17) and mention of thieves (line 19).

71 The difference between serving as a slave and tending to the needs of others is also found. There are several instances of the use of ^s*shemshe*, normally ‘worship’ but also ‘serve’, and ^s*ref-shemshe* (servant), which appears to be the equivalent of ^c*diakonos*.

of the slaves, providing service without any implication of bondage.⁷² In the third passage, 83:25–28, *hemhal* is used to refer to captured slaves, which seems to have been the original meaning of *ka(o)yon*. Again, this highlights how the distinction in use between the two terms was not always clear.

261a. Gospel of Philip 72:17–20

In this world, the slaves (*hemhal*) serve (*er-upertei*) the free (*eleutheros*). In the kingdom of heaven, the free (*eleutheros*) will minister (*er-diakonei*) to the slaves (*hemhal*).

261b. Gospel of Philip 79:13–18

He who is a slave (*hemhal*) against his will shall be able to be free (*er-eleutheros*). He who has become free (*er-eleutheros*) by the favour of his master and sold himself into slavery (*ment-hemhal*) will no longer be able to be free (*er-eleutheros*).

261c. Gospel of Philip 83:25–28

On ‘the root of evil’: it masters us. We are its slaves (*hemhal*). It takes us prisoner, and we do what we do [not] want. What we do want, we do [not] do.

Bibliography: Layton 1988: 38–128.

262. Extracts from the Gospel of Thomas

The Gospel of Thomas (Nag Hammadi Codex II) consists of a series of sayings attributed to Jesus. Some of these contain anecdotes in which servants (*hemhal*) feature, which are best understood as domestic servants rather than slaves (especially in light of the use of the verb *shemshe* rather than *er-hemhal*). Other sayings use *hemhal* more metaphorically.

262a. From Saying 47 (41.14–17)

This passage has New Testament parallels in Luke 16:13 and Matt 6:24, ‘No one can serve two masters’, in which the verb *douleuein* is used.

Jesus said: ‘It is impossible for a man to mount two horses (or) to stretch two bows. And it is impossible for a servant (*hemhal*) to serve (*shemshe*) two masters; otherwise, he will honour one and treat the other contemptuously.’

262b. From Saying 64 (44.11–13)

This passage has New Testament parallels in Luke 14:17 (one servant) and Matt 22:3 (multiple servants), each of which uses *doulos*.

⁷² Tending, or ministering, to the needs of others as a *diakonos* appears in opposition to acting as a slave elsewhere. Being a slave entails sacrificing a greater degree of liberty in the service of others.

And when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his servant (^s*hemhal*) to invite the guests.

262c. From Saying 65 (45.1–16)

This passage has New Testament parallels in Luke 20:9–12, Matt 21:33–36, and Mark 12:1–5. In each instance, ^c*doulos* is used.

There was a good man who owned a vineyard. He leased it to tenant farmers so that they might work it and he might collect the produce from them. He sent his servant (^s*hemhal*) so that the tenants might give him the produce of the vineyard. They seized his servant and beat him, all but killing him. The servant went back and told his master. The master said, ‘Perhaps he did not recognise them.’⁷³ He sent another servant. The tenants beat this one as well.

Bibliography: Layton 1988: 131–217.

7.3.3.3. *Hagiographies and encomia*

Slaves figure, normally within incidental detail, in a number of saints’ biographies (hagiographies) and martyrdoms. One of the most famous slaves in monastic literature is Moses the Black who, in his early life, was sent away by his master for acts of immorality and thievery, but went on to become one of the greatest of the elders at the community in Scetis. While many of the *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (*Apophthegmata Patrum*) concerning him survive in Coptic (including his violent death, which he had predicted as a result of his earlier crimes), his biography survives only in Palladius’ *The Lausiak History* 22, a history of the monks of Egypt.

Two texts that do survive in Coptic concern Victor, the son of the Roman governor Romanus, who miraculously survived death three times before being martyred during the persecution of Diocletian. While slaves appear only as incidental detail in his *Life*, the *Encomium* written by Celestinus provides one of the pivotal stories concerning child donations and slavery that are echoed in the later child and adult donation texts from Thebes (272 and 273).⁷⁴

263. *Life of Victor the General*

The *Life* was originally composed circa the fifth century CE, but the British Library codex (Or. 7022) in which it survives is a later copy from the tenth century. Victor is held up as a bastion of Coptic orthodoxy during a time of persecution and pagan worship under the

73 The New Testament parallels do not have an equivalent to this sentence. The logic of the passage suggests it should read ‘perhaps they did not recognise him’, but the Coptic has the reverse, as printed here.

74 On Victor in the Coptic tradition, see van Esbroeck 1991.

emperor Diocletian. Victor is the owner of a number of slaves, whom he treated well – so well that, when he is later banished, they weep for him. As background to the following extract, Victor's father, Romanus, arranges a marriage between him and the daughter of the general Basileites. The marriage gift includes male and female slaves (*hemhal*), which are listed together with other goods. The numbers noted are excessive in most instances and a feature of literary hyperbole, but the text remains an example of people treated as commodities.

Fol. 3a

His father troubled him, saying, 'I will accept for you the daughter of Basileites the general', for they had arranged it together (i.e. Romanus and Basileites), for 200 *centenaria* of gold, excluding gifts, and 400 *centenaria* of silver; 10 male slaves (*hemhal en-hoout*) and ten-hundred [i.e. 1,000] female slaves (*hemhal en-shime*) wearing gold necklaces; 400 horses, ten-hundred mules, and ten-hundred camels; ten-hundred tilled farms; ten-hundred seaworthy ships; 10 houses, each with 10 fields. And (all this) not including what his father would give to him, (and?) a large number of workers (*hyperesia*) were his on (i.e. to work) the land.

Bibliography: Budge 1914b: xxiii–xxvi, 1–45, 253–298.

264. *Encomium for Saint Victor*

The *Encomium* by Celestinus (bishop of Rome, 422–432) written in the same codex as the *Life*, is one of a number of encomia that present a series of stories showing miracles performed by Saint Victor. One of these, that included here, provides a connection with the Theban child donations (below, 272–273): a barren couple pray to Victor to help them conceive and they have a child, whom they name Victor in the saint's honour. As he grows, they decide not to donate him, because he is such a beautiful boy. Instead, they seek the expert advice of a slave trader regarding the cost of such a male child, and having been told the price – the extraordinarily high sum of 40 *holokottinoi* (*solidi*), which is surely literary hyperbole – they donate this sum to the saint. However, the money itself is not an appropriate substitution, regardless of how high the figure. As a punishment for transgressing their vow, the child Victor is killed, whereupon his grieving parents take him to the *martyrion* (martyr shrine) of Saint Victor. They promise Saint Victor their eternal servitude, in exchange for which the boy is brought back to life and they all enter the shrine's service. As in the *Life*, the term used throughout is *hemhal*. This text shows that this category of person could be bought and sold, and also provides evidence for the existence of professional slave traders in Egyptian cities.

Fols. 29b–31b

There was a man in this city called Alexander. He was a very wealthy man in gold and silver, but had a barren wife. She had never had a child and there was

great sadness in their hearts because of this, because they had no successor to their property. They heard about great deeds and miracles that had happened in the *martyrion* of Saint Apa Victor. Together, they got up and went to the holy place and placed their gifts in the *martyrion* on the Lord's day. Afterwards, they made a vow, saying, 'Hear us, today, beseeching you! If your mercy reaches us and provides us with offspring, we will give him to your *martyrion* until the day of his death.'

[The couple begets a son and calls him Victor, but, in the face of his beauty, decides to renege on their vow to God.]

Then, the father, the small boy, and his mother spoke together, saying, 'Look, our hearts did not allow us to give the small boy to the place, as we had vowed. Let us call a man in the city who buys slaves (*hemhal*) and he can provide the value for a small child, and we can give his price (instead) to the place, so that the *martyrion* will not be angry with us.' Then they arose and called a merchant in the city that bought slaves (*hemhal*) and he, having sold (slaves) his entire life,⁷⁵ set the small child's value at 40 *holokottinoi*. And they took the gold and gave it to the place of the martyr. They did not consider what was written, that if you make a vow with the Lord, your God, you must keep it.

[The child, Victor, is killed by a falling stone. In grief, his parents take the body to the *martyrion*.]

His father was seized by a steadfast belief and picked up his little son in his arms, as his mother and his slaves (*hemhal*) followed him. They placed him in the *martyrion* of Saint Victor and set him down before the altar. He cried out, saying, 'Saint Victor! I know that you are omnipotent, and you are the one who granted me this little boy. Do not do this because of my senseless behaviour! But have pity for my tears and return the soul of the little boy to him again, and we, with him, will serve (*er-hemhal*) you until the day of our death.'

[Victor's soul is returned and the family dedicate themselves to the *martyrion*. When he reaches adulthood, Victor becomes a presbyter of great acclaim.]

Bibliography: Budge 1914b: xxxvi–xlv, 46–101, 299–355; Schenke 2016: 513.

75 Budge 1914b: 306: 'And they rose up and called a merchant in the city who bought slaves, and Alexander set before him all the slave children which he had on his estate, and the merchant valued the child at forty *holokottinoi*'. Budge has attempted to make sense of the Coptic here, which is much briefer than his translation, but has missed the point, which is that the slave trader is drawing upon a wealth of experience in setting the value of their son, Victor.

7.3.4. The non-literary evidence

7.3.4.1. *Female slaves in Nubian communities*

Thirteen documents in Greek (e.g. **250**) and Coptic from Gebelein (Pathyris) record the affairs of Nubian (Blemmyan) peoples living in the area in the sixth century. This community lived under the authority of their king in Nubia (see **266**), who governed through local intermediaries. While some Christian elements are evident in the documents, including names, phrases, and Christian symbols, this is a largely non-Christian group. Despite living in Egypt, in a socially mixed environment, the two following texts are not indicative of wider practice in the country, but of the existence of slavery practices among contemporary non-Egyptian peoples in the Nile Valley.

265. Emancipation of two female slaves

BKU 3.350

TM 81896

Written and found (?): Gebelein

Date: sixth century (perhaps the second half; cf. *Stud.Pal.* 3², pp. xxvii–xxviii, which is based on the Greek texts in the corpus)

Material: leather

Location: Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, P. 22041

This document records two separate legal activities. First, there is the gift of the slave (^s*kayon*) Apehsêt from Charaftik to his mother Mahanat. In the second part of the text, it is stated that Charaftik had two daughters with Apehsêt while she was a slave within his mother's house. Mahanat frees her granddaughters (but apparently not their mother) from her service, making them free women (^e*eleutheros*). However, while she notes that they will become her legitimate children, Mahanat also states that they are to remain in her house and serve her.⁷⁶ While this document is brief and does not elaborate on the new terms of service, it may be possible to understand the resulting situation as similar to that found in the *paramone* documents discussed in **84** and in **5.3** (especially **163a**) and **7.2.4**. That is, while the two women are legally no longer slaves, they provide free employment in exchange for maintenance within Mahanat's house. At the end of the document, in addition to Charaftik and his brothers, tribal leaders (local representatives of the king) witness the document, indicating the significance of the actions recorded.

In addition to the hereditary nature of slavery (despite their father being a free man, his daughters inherit their status from their mother),⁷⁷ this text is interesting for its use of

⁷⁶ The lack of a separate Coptic word for grandchild produces ambiguity between 'children' and 'grandchildren', although this point may not be important: the fact that they become lawfully free is the key aspect.

⁷⁷ For such an instance of inherited status in much earlier periods, see the Adoption Papyrus discussed by Eyre in this volume (**51**).

both ^s*kayon* and ^s*hemhal* in reference to the same individual, Apehsêt. In the first part of the document, Charaftik refers to her as a ^s*kayon*, whereas Mahanat refers to her in the second part as a ^s*hemhal*. In the first part, Apehsêt is referred to as both Charaftik's slave, whom he brought down from the mountain, and as his mother's slave, while in the second Apehsêt is named only in the second capacity. The two terms are not used to refer to her as a slave under son and mother, respectively, but are distinguished only by the person who uses them. Unless ^s*kayon* is used to refer to her as a captive (as the term is translated by Pierce)⁷⁸ and ^s*hemhal* as a domestic slave, there is no distinction in their use.

I, Charaftik the son of [...]aen, write to my beloved Ma[hanat]. Here is my slave (^s*kayo(n)*), Apehsêt, whom I brought down from the mountain⁷⁹ before I married. I have given her to you, in death and in life, and she is your slave (^s*kayon*).

I, Mahanat, write to Sentekhainis and Munkôkhnehiw the daughters of my son Charaftik. Since you (i.e. Charaftik) gave Apehsêt to me as a slave (^s*hemhal*), while she was in my house you have had two daughters with her, namely Sentekhainis and Mounkôkhnehiw. I release you (Sentekhainis and Mounkôkhnehiw) so that you can remain in my house and serve me (lit: 'do my service [^c*hypourgia*'] as free women (^c*eleutheros*).⁸⁰ Moreover, only the King [...]⁸¹ and no one forces you, ever, either on the mountain or in the water,⁸² but you will be my lawful and free children.

[*witness statements*]

Written by me, Sansnos, on Thoth 29, indiction 9.

Bibliography: Eide et al. 1998: 1203–1205 (*Fontes historiae Nubiorum* no. 331); *BKU* 3.2, p. 226 (corrections to ed. pr.).

78 In Eide et al. 1998.

79 R. H. Pierce in Eide et al. 1998: 1204: 'whom I took on the mountain'. The verb used is certainly 'to bring' (ⲓⲧⲏ from ⲉⲓⲛⲉ). In later, Islamic times, the term 'mountain' or 'rock' people was often used to describe peoples who can be enslaved (Eide et al. 1998: 1204 n. 860). It is possible that the reference to the mountain here is used in the same manner, albeit in an earlier period and different context. Alternatively, the term may refer to desert regions, and so people from beyond the Nile Valley; the same connotations may still apply.

80 As Mahanat addresses Sentekhainis and Mounkôkhnehiw directly, this freedom seems not to apply also to their mother, Apehsêt. The Coptic expression used is 'to make free' (^c*eleutheros*).

81 The verb is lost in lacuna, and while the sense is something like 'And [except for] the King only, no one has ...', as translated by Pierce in Eide et al. 1998: 1204, Coptic syntactic order does not support this.

82 'Either on the mountain or in the water' sounds formulaic (especially as in Coptic the two terms rhyme, *toou* and *moou*), but this is without parallel. The reference to a 'mountain' may refer specifically to Apehsêt's origin. Alternatively, the Coptic term *toou* may refer more generically to mountain and desert regions, and so 'desert and water' (which could refer to the Nile Valley) refers to the totality of the known world.

266. Emancipation of a woman*P.Köln Ägypt* 13

TM 36282

Written and found (?): Gebelein

Date: sixth century, probably second half (see **265** above)

Material: leather

Location: Cologne, Papyrussammlung, P. 10212

The Blemmyan king Barachia issues a decree emancipating the woman Amnas (who at some point had converted to Christianity and received the name Sophia after baptism). She is not described as a slave, but she is to become free, *‘eleutheros*, which, as discussed in **7.3.2**, is the opposite of being a slave/servant. It can be inferred that she had been in such a condition previously. Although a short text, there are several points of confusion, including the use of the term *‘komerkion* (from Latin *commercium*), which etymologically would seem to refer to a marketplace or other centre of trade or customs.⁸³ As this is also where the elders of the community were to be found, the location must have had a broader function and, as a result, it is left untranslated here (in its Latin form). The situation appears to be that Barachia, upon becoming king, emancipates Amnas. The reasons for this are not given, but the formulae employed emphasise his right to do so.

+ Barachia, King of the nation of the Blemmyes, writes to Amnas, whose Christian name is Sophia.

I order you to stay in the *commercium*, with the elders, in the same way as everybody, and to be free (*‘eleutheros*). It is not permitted for anybody to transgress you⁸⁴ ever, because I have ascended the throne in the enclosure of King Charachen,⁸⁵ and I myself have ordered you to be in the *commercium* in a town,⁸⁶ (and) because no one shall hinder you. And I consent to the document. Because I ordered Agathon the scribe, he wrote the document.

[*witness statements*]

⁸³ On the use of the term in Byzantine Greek, see Eide et al. 1998: 1212.

⁸⁴ The Coptic, here and later, has *mmau*, ‘there’, where *mmo*, the direct object marker with feminine suffix pronoun, is required. Second person feminine suffix pronouns show a marked degree of variation, and it is entirely possible that *mmau* should be read as such here, which would also improve the understanding of this clause (*contra* Pierce in Eide et al. 1998: 1213: ‘It is not permitted for anyone to pass by there ever’ and the ed. pr., which does not translate it).

⁸⁵ R. H. Pierce’s translation in Eide et al. 1998: 1213 is different: ‘for when I ascended the throne after King Karakhen’. There are two difficulties in this passage. The first concerns the grammatical construction of ‘ascended’, which is understood here as the second perfect rather than the temporal, as translated by Pierce. Second, what Pierce translates as a simple preposition (‘after’) is a more complex prepositional phrase that uses an Akhmimic noun that is not otherwise attested, for which see n. 10 in the commentary to the ed. pr.

⁸⁶ Alternatively, ‘in a town’ could be translated ‘as a penalty’, if *timê* is read as a Greek rather than a Coptic noun (as in the ed. pr.). However, the sense of the text appears rather that Barachia, after becoming king, issued this order to release Amnas/Sophia, rather than reversing his previous decision.

+ (Greek) Written on Phamenoth 15, indiction 2. Written by me, Agathon the scribe, according to the command of the most glorious King Barachia. +

Bibliography: Eide et al. 1998: 1212–1214 (*Fontes historiae Nubiorum* no. 339); *P.Köln Ägypt.* pl. xi; SB 18.13633 (Greek subscription only).

7.3.4.2. *Personal and household servants*

Evidence for personal or household servants is fleeting at best, typically being restricted to passing references in which the context is often ambiguous, and the precise status of the individual, in terms of their degree of dependency, is not clear. The following passages are taken from Edfu, Thebes, and the Fayyum. This geographic spread demonstrates how ambiguity in terminology was widespread throughout Egypt and its dialects. As noted in 7.3.2, identifying such dependents in letters and short texts is exacerbated due to the metaphorical use of these terms, especially when writing to superiors. For this reason, none of the Her-mopolite texts that employ the formula ‘It is your servant N.N. who dares to write ...’ (see n. 44) are included here.

267. Wine for a female servant

SB Kopt. 4.1809 (= *O.Edfou IFAO* 40)

TM 130749

Written and found: Tell Edfu

Date: mid-seventh century

Material: ceramic ostrakon

Location: Cairo, IFAO

This short text concerning wine is remarkable only for its rare mention of a female ^s*kayon*, Mariam. Though the text is brief, the meaning appears to be that Johannes sent Severos the wine specifically for her.⁸⁷ Two other Coptic ostraca from Edfu record the provisioning of servants, ^s*kayon* in each instance, with goods. In *O.Edfou IFAO* 55.2, the servant Johannes is provided with barley (the exact amount is lost) and unnamed servants are provided with wine in *O.Edfou IFAO* 38. In the Edfu archive of the official Papas (*P.Apoll.*), ^c*doulos* is used for salaried staff. The term in this context does not indicate true bondage, and it is likely that ^s*kayon* here is used in the same way.

87 The ed. pr. translates this as a simple perfect tense: ‘You have given them for Mariam the servant’ (‘Tu les as donnés pour Mariham la servante’), which necessitates reading *ntaktaau* as an emphatic construction (a second tense) rather than a relative construction. This would emphasise strongly that the wine was intended for Mariam alone, but this seems excessive in this type of document.

+ For you, Johannes, here are 12 *magarika* (5 litres) of wine from Tekourzis.⁸⁸ They have come to me, which you gave for Mariam the servant (^s*kayon*). Total: 12 *magarika* only. Hathyr 15, indiction 2. Severus consents.

Bibliography: Bacot 2006: 68; Bacot 2009: 33–34; Delattre and Fournet 2011: 86–87.

268. Personal couriers

P.Fay.Copt. 25 (= *P.Lond.Copt.* 1.557)

TM 85779

Written and found: Deir el-Hammam (Fayyum)

Date: unknown

Material: papyrus

Location: British Library, Or. 5300/11

One Cosma writes to the archimandrite (head of a monastery) Apa Georgios concerning an item of clothing. While Cosma is not given a title in the text, his use of imperatives throughout indicates that he is not the archimandrite's subordinate. His use of ^f*hel*, 'servant' is therefore metaphorical, showing deference on his part. In the main letter, Cosma refers to his servant, literally 'my man' (^f*lōmī*), who is responsible for delivering money to Apa Georgios.

The use of 'man' in this capacity is found in other texts too – both literary and non-literary. As an example of the former, see for example The Act of Peter (*P.Berol.* 4) 137:18–138:2: 'He commanded his servants (^s*rōme*) to lead him and bring him to me.' From Thebes, the letter from Mark (of Theban Tomb 29, for which see **269**) to the priest Moïse and to Psate concerning a book asks, 'Please give it to his servant (^s*rōme*).'⁸⁹ Other texts use ^s*hemhal* in the same capacity, e.g. *O.Frangé* 89.19, 'and give the letter (lit: ostrakon) to Papa the servant (^s*hemhal*);' and perhaps *O.CrumST* 239.13–14, 'Here is Paham, the servant (^s*hemhal*) of the church, I have sent him to you.' It is possible that such individuals are to be understood in the same capacity as Mariam in **267** (i.e. as paid servants, rather than slaves).

Before everything, I greet and kiss the dust at the feet of my Patron, Lord, and Father, and all orthodox people. According to what you said to me in the Fayyum⁹⁰ about the cloak that it is good and useful for you. Look, I sent the *holokottinos* to you with my servant (^f*lōmī*), Prau, in the end.⁹¹ Take it and send it (i.e. the cloak)

88 This toponym, which may denote a vineyard, is not otherwise known; see also the discussion in Delattre and Fournet 2011: 86–87.

89 Ostrakon O.292024+2368, for which see Heurtel 2007: 738–739.

90 The text is damaged here, but it is possible to restore [Π]ΙΔΜ for Fayyum.

91 'In the end' is a suggestion for 2ΔΝΧΚ, which the ed. pr. does not translate.

to me, and give me the *smia*-wine for two days.⁹² Then, any answer that your Fathership may command, command it of your son and servant (*hel*). I am ready.

Give it to my Patron (and) Father, Apa Georgios, the archimandrite. [From] Cosma.

269. Dependents' personal property

O.Frangé 201

TM 219745

Written and found: Sheikh Abd al-Gurna (Thebes west)

Date: early eighth century

Material: limestone ostrakon

Location: Luxor ('magasin Carter'), inv. O. 292430

Frangé, the early eighth-century monk who lived in Tomb 29 (TT 29) on the Theban west bank, was originally from Petemout, approximately 10 km to the north on the east bank. Many texts in his large dossier are requests for assistance from various people, among which *hemhal* appears three times: *O.Frangé* 89.19 (see **268**), 139.11, and here. He does not use the term metaphorically, that is, 'your humble servant', but in respect of people rendering actual services. Here, the house of the *hemhal* Jonas is mentioned, but no further information is provided. *CPR* 4.180.12, a Hermopolite text recording a property division, also refers to the house of the servants/slaves (there *kaoyon*) in reference to other property in question. From the late eighth-century Theban child-donation deeds (**7.3.4.3**), it is clear that individuals (also termed *hemhal* or *kaoyon*) who were donated to serve the monastery in perpetuity could also own personal property. This implies two possible situations: *hemhal* may be individuals in permanent bondage who can own personal property, or they may be non-bondage salaried staff (as in the Edfu texts, see the introduction to **267**).

+ I, Frangé from Petemout, who live in the mount of Djeme, write in my own hand. Please, act according to God and show this man the house of Jonas the servant (*hemhal*) from Petemout, since this is absolutely essential. Greetings in the Lord. Holy Trinity! +

270. Paying 'slave' wages

P.Lond. 4.1632

TM 39846

Written and found: Aphrodito

Date: 700–725 CE

Material: limestone ostrakon

⁹² 'Wine' is restored, on the basis of the commentary in the ed. pr., which left the following word untranslated, but it must qualify the wine, if that reading is correct.

Location: British Library, Or. 6224/30

This text records a list of expenses incurred by Basil, possibly the well-known pagarch of Aphroditō (on whom see 7.3.4.4),⁹³ over an unstipulated period of time. The *ḥkayon* Phoibammon appears three times in the list, twice with that designation, and a *ḥkayon* Basil occurs once. The way in which the expenses are set out makes it difficult to understand how the entries are connected, if at all – for example, whether Phoibammon's expenses are connected to the journey north, or are unrelated. No indication of the function of the *ḥkayon* is provided. However, if the expenditure is for their wages, rather than maintenance, this cannot represent chattel slavery, but the term *ḥkayon* may be used in the same way as in the texts discussed above. Several entries start with the preposition 'through' (i.e. by the agency of) and it is unclear if these are expenses required for or paid by the person subsequently named.

The list of what Basil required:

The time he was sailing north:	5 <i>nomismata</i>
Phoibammon the servant (<i>ḥkayon</i>):	1/2 <i>nomismata</i>
Kolluthos the notary of Assyut:	1/3 <i>nomismata</i> [...]
The time that he came south:	3 <i>nomismata</i>
For the matter of my first fine, through Shabour:	5 <i>nomismata</i>
Likewise, again through Shabour:	20 <i>nomismata</i>
Likewise, again through Basil and Phoibammon, the servants (<i>ḥkayon</i>):	12 <i>nomismata</i>
What I paid to Phoibammon:	1 <i>nomismata</i>
Through Mena the assistant (<i>ḥsymmachos</i>):	5 <i>nomismata</i>
Leas the most humble (?) joining me:	3 <i>nomismata</i>
Through Basil:	6 <i>nomismata</i>
Through [...]:	[...]
That which he needed (for) my wife:	12 1/2 <i>nomismata</i>
Total: 80 1/3 ⁹⁴ <i>nomismata</i> and ...	

271. 'Like a servant'

O.Crum Add. 46

TM 83443

Written and found: Deir el-Bahri (Thebes west)

93 The original editor preferred to identify this Basil with the shipmaster Basil son of Apa Cyrus who also occurs in *PLond.* 4.1433 (*passim*) and 1448.2, without providing reasons in favour of one or the other. Given the high costs incurred, and the number and type of personnel involved, perhaps it is better to identify him as the pagarch.

94 The total of the surviving amounts is 73 1/3 *nomismata*, and it is possible that the erased penultimate entry was for 7 *nomismata*. This would produce the correct total and indicate that the entry was deleted after the total was counted.

Date: early seventh century?

Material: limestone ostrakon

Location: Strasbourg, Bibliothèque nationale et universitaire de Strasbourg, inv. K. 26

^s*Kooyon* (for ^s*kaoyon*) in this ostrakon, which perhaps is to be connected to the monastery of Apa Phoibammon (see 7.3.4.3), is used metaphorically. However, the analogy drawn is important for the additional information it presents about this class of person. The sender of the letter (whose name is not preserved) refers to himself as a ^s*kooyon*, guarding the house while his master is absent but unable to give orders concerning any matter that may arise. This restriction of power in a subordinate relationship is of note.

When your Brotherhood wrote to us the first time, saying, ‘Send me the loom,’ I replied, saying, ‘I am unable to do so,’ but if your Brotherhood consents to the agreements that we made with you, we are ready to act accordingly in every way. Then, you again wrote to us, in madness, another time, saying ‘Send me the loom.’ Do not think, dear Brother, that I am able to do anything of the sort. For I am in the house of the [...] like a servant (^s*kooyon*) who guards the house of his master, not neglecting it, lest [it be ...] and pillaged by robbers. Indeed. I have no authority to issue commands on any matter.

7.3.4.3. *Monastic slaves: donations of children and adults*

The monastery of Apa Phoibammon at Deir el-Bahri (western Thebes), built upon the remains of the mortuary temple of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut, held an archive of documents of a kind not attested elsewhere in Egypt: donations of children and adults to the monastery.⁹⁵ Most of the documents date between the 750s and 780s.⁹⁶ The donated persons are referred to as both ^s*hemhal* and ^s*ka(o)yon*, which appear to be synonymous in this corpus and are used interchangeably not only between texts but, more significantly, within the same text, by the same scribe. The formulae of these texts, together with other passages, show that the donated boys and men were considered to be property of the monastery, which it was to hold in perpetuity. Three texts, including 273 below, use the phrase ‘like a slave bought for money’ (^s*hemhal* in 273 and ^s*kayon* in *P.KRU* 82.16 and 97.19). The punishment clause of *P.KRU* 95.29–30 states that anyone who might transgress the document (i.e. by removing the child from the monastery) must pay a fine of one man – ‘he pays one bodily (^s*somatikon*) man’ – thereby replacing what

95 On this topic, see, for example, Papaconstantinou 2002a and 2002b; Richter 2005; and Schenke 2016.

96 For the history of the monastery and its archive, see Godlewski 1986.

he has taken from the monastery. From this, it can be inferred that the practice of purchasing people was at least familiar, if not common.

Children donated to the monastery were to fulfil menial tasks, including sweeping, ‘sprinkling’ (which perhaps means washing the floors), and taking care of the altar lamp, all of which are attested in **272**. As *P.KRU* 81.36 states, he will be ‘in the labours of his hands and the bondage (**ment-kayon*) of his body’. Donated children could leave the monastery, as is implied in *P.KRU* 99.13–18, in which two conditions are set for the two donated boys. If they want to stay in the monastery, they will fulfil every command of the superior, but if they decide to leave, they will pay their tax to the monastery and must contribute to the upkeep of the offering and the altar lamp. Even if they leave, they become financially rather than physically bound to the monastery. Similar conditions also occur in *P.KRU* 80, which also notes that – as an adult – whatever the donated individual produces through other means belongs to it.

Once donated, these children become property of the monastery for perpetuity. Many texts state that the child will be in and serve the monastery for ‘all the days/the rest of his life’ or simply ‘forever’. Even if a donated child should one day leave the monastery, anything that he produces will belong to it, and his children will inherit his status: ‘And if it happens that he gets married – may it not happen! – the children whom he will beget will be servants to the holy shrine of Apa Phoibammon’ (*P.KRU* 95.31–34). This is one of the few clear examples of hereditary bondage.⁹⁷

272. Dedication of a boy to a monastery, and his escape to Cairo

P.KRU 93 (= *P.RevilloutCopt.* 5; *SB* 1.5603)

TM 23223

Written (?) and found: Deir el-Bahri (monastery of Apa Phoibammon), Thebes

Date: 770–780 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: Cairo, Coptic Museum, CG 8732

The boy Shenoute is donated by his father, Johannes, to the monastery of Apa Phoibammon. Johannes acts alone, but refers to his wife in passing (‘We repeatedly entreated God’, etc.). It is not unusual to find single parents (including mothers) donating their child, but there are also examples in which the parents are named together as the donating party.⁹⁸ The family, together with the witnesses, hails from the village of Apotei in the nome of Armant (Hermonthis), approximately 15 km south of Thebes. This is one of a number of

⁹⁷ On individual monks owning slaves, see **245**.

⁹⁸ Wilfong 2002: 99–104.

donations made by people outside Thebes, in an area stretching roughly from Armant as far north as Coptos.

The narrative contains many features common to the body of child donations as a whole, notably the sickness of the child and justification of the act of donation by divine mandate.⁹⁹ Less common features include the enumeration of the child's responsibilities, both within the monastery and elsewhere, and the stating of the hereditary status of his bondage. One unique feature of this text is that the child flees Thebes rather than be forced into servitude, travelling to Babylon (either the Roman fort in what is today Old Cairo or Fustāt, the early Arab settlement). Not only must Shenoute have been old enough to travel there alone (there are no statements as to his age, and no indication of the age of donated children in the other documents), he clearly viewed his looming bondage as a bad thing. His flight is reminiscent of 274 and 277 below and the escape from other duties.

+ I, Johannes the son of the late Zacharias from the village of Apotei in the nome of Armant, write to the holy monastery of the victorious and the commander, the holy Apa Phoibammon of the mount of the *castrum* Djeme, through you, the most pious Sauros, the deacon and superior of this monastery, and through everyone who will succeed you, forever. Greetings.

The laws of God command and encourage everybody to do charity, and no authority hinders anybody from doing what he wants with what is his. After Shenoute my beloved son was born, God decreed and he fell physically sick, such that we often thought of him that he had died. Then, I vowed to the God of the holy Phoibammon that if he granted him healing, I would give him to this holy monastery, as a slave (*ḥkayon*), forever, and he would be subject to the authority of that place. Then, God granted him healing.

When he (i.e. the boy) learned (of this), he fled, secretly. He left the nome, (going) northwards, from place (to place) until he reached Babylon and I had no news of him for many years. We repeatedly entreated God that should he return to us, I would complete my vow to the holy place. Afterwards, God returned him, by God's command, and look, I have ceded Shenoute my beloved son to the holy monastery of Apa Phoibammon of the mount of the *castrum* Djeme, and every son that he will beget will be a slave (*ḥkayon*) himself, forever.

As the surety, then, for the holy place, I have drawn up this donation deed, which I have agreed to, desiring and complying without any compulsion, fear, violence, deceit, and artifice, and there being no constraint against me, but by my own free will I swear by God Almighty and the health of our ruling Lords. I declare and I donate Shenoute, my beloved son to that holy monastery, and it

99 On the common narrative of child donations, see Richter 2005.

commands and is master of Shenoute my son, forever, and it acquires and reacquires him, manages him, administers him. (In turn), he sweeps, sprinkles, and monitors the water of the basins and maintenance of the altar lamp, and monitors the bread for passing strangers, and every internal and external need of the monastery, whether inside the monastery or outside throughout Egypt, or anything that the superior will command of him.

It is not possible for me, or my wife's family, or any of my children's family, or my heirs to sue the holy monastery, ever, over Shenoute my beloved son, or to draw up any complaint regarding him before any ruler or authority, small or great. He who will desire to sue the holy *topos* [monastery] over him will be subject to the judgement of my vow and the fearsome judgement seat of God, and I will receive judgement with him, because he wanted to destroy my offering and my vow to God. Afterwards, the then current authority will compel him and he will enter into and comply with every force of this donation deed that I have drawn up. As a surety for the holy monastery, it is secure and authoritative in every place that it may be produced. It was read out to me, Johannes his father, it pleased me and I consented to it. I provided witnesses for it and I executed it. +

[*witness statements*]

+ Written by me, Papas son of Kleonikos the deacon. +

Bibliography: Crum 1902: 149–150; Till 1964: 173–175.

273. Self-dedication of an adult to a monastery

P.KRU 104 (= *P.Lond.Copt.* 1.379)

TM 86005

Written and found: Deir el-Bahri (monastery of Apa Phoibammon), Thebes

Date: 771–772 CE

Material: papyrus

Location: British Library, Papyrus 80

This document is the only known self-dedication by an adult to the monastery. Petronios son of Georgios dedicates himself, having received healing through the hands of its superior. The duties that Petronios will undertake in the monastery are not enumerated but, as in the child donations, the monastery will be master (or owner) of his body and he will be a slave (*hemhal*) of it, 'just like a slave bought with money'. At the end of the document, Petronios refers to the donation of the prophet Samuel to the temple by his mother Hannah (1 Samuel 1:5–28). Hannah, who was barren, prayed to the Lord for a son, promising to dedicate him to the Lord 'for all the days of his life' (1 Samuel 1:11).

After Samuel was weaned, Hannah took him to the temple, fulfilling her vow. *PKRU* 89, 96, and 100 also reference this model for child donations.¹⁰⁰

[...] I agree, obeying the laws which the royal lords commanded, that it is possible for each person to do what he wants with what is his. I, myself, have acted in conformity with the laws that the lords commanded from the beginning. I have proceeded to write to the judicial board of the holy monastery of the prize-bearing, victory-bearing holy Apa Phoibammon the martyr, which is situated in the mount of Djeme in the nome of the city of Armant.

In this time, this 10th indiction, God willing, by the desire of God, God – the good and the one of miraculous judgements¹⁰¹ – brought upon me a great illness. I was wind-blighted and beaten such that I would die. Some faithful men said to me, ‘Beseech the God of the holy Apa Phoibammon. He will have mercy on you.’ I fixed myself with a sober mind and faithful desire and sent to the holy monastery of the holy Apa Phoibammon. I took water from the holy basin that was before the altar, from the holy hands of that steward. They came and poured it upon me and immediately the Lord heard my crying and groaning, and he granted me healing. I rested from the great sickness and a great joy came upon me. I said to myself that it is fitting and right for me to donate my body to it (i.e. the monastery), because health has reached me through its intercessions.

Now, through God’s desire, from today no man shall be master of my body except for the holy monastery of the holy Apa Phoibammon, the great martyr, which is situated in the holy mount of Djeme, which I have mentioned from the beginning, so that I will be a slave (*hemhal*) to it, contributing to it just like a slave (*hemhal*) bought with money.

He who dares to sue the holy monastery, attempting an attack on this offering, namely my body that I have donated, first, he shall never benefit but will be subject to the true judgement of God Almighty, the true Creator, and the holy Apa Phoibammon will exact vengeance against him on the fearsome judgement seat of God. Afterwards, he will be estranged from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Further, I urge every authority into whose hands this document will come, to establish it, in good order, so that God may bless him, because it is a charity of God. Still further, you all know, my brothers, that it is not right for one to offer a gift and then to say, ‘I shall not bring it.’ O my brothers, do not be like those who

¹⁰⁰ See de Jong 1996: 1, 8, 170; Richter 2005: 246–248 and 254–256.

¹⁰¹ MacCoull 2009: 163 translates ‘the good, who judges and works miracles’. However, the Coptic cannot be made to yield this sense, as it contains no verbs and ‘miracle, wonder’ is used in an attributive relationship to ‘judgement’.

steal the promises of the Lord, and do not inherit their dwelling places,¹⁰² because this matter did not happen because of us, but because of Samuel the prophet, who was donated to the temple of the Lord.¹⁰³

This matter stands because we have drawn up this donation deed, while Apa Sauros, the deacon, was superior over the holy monastery of the holy Apa Phoibammon, which is situated in the mount of Djeme, and while the great administrator and curator lord Psemo, the great ruler, was *dioiketes* of the *castrum* Djeme.

I, Petronios the son of Georgios, drew up the donation deed for the holy monastery. I requested the notary and other trustworthy, credible witnesses, and they witnessed it, according to the power of the laws. It was read aloud to us, we recognised its validity, we consented and approved, and we were resolute about it. I executed it, by God's desire.

Bibliography: MacCoull 2009: 163–165; Steinwenter 1921: 202–205; Till 1964: 186–188.

7.3.4.4. *Conscription: building works and navy*

Aphrodito (Coptic Jkôw, modern Kom Ishqaw), has produced a large corpus of documents, in Greek, Coptic, and Arabic dating to the period 698–722. Most of these belonged to the archive of the pagarch Basil, who is mentioned in a large number of them, and the majority come from an even smaller period of time, 709–711 and the beginning of the tenure of Qurra ibn Sharîk as governor of Egypt.¹⁰⁴ Much of this material records Qurra's principal preoccupation: taxes. He also wanted men – construction workers, shipbuilders, and sailors. While these men were paid labourers (their wages are also requisitioned), this conscription was certainly a hardship and one viewed negatively by the Egyptians. It is to be understood as forced labour, an imposed duty. High penalties were imposed on towns in situations in which men avoided the duty and, as the texts below demonstrate, physical labour was more desirable for the government than money. Neither *hemhal* nor *skayon* appears in texts concerning conscription (although they do appear elsewhere in the Aphrodito corpus; see 277), but other terms are

102 The Coptic uses the negative imperative again 'do not inherit!', but a result clause is required, stating what will happen if promises made to the Lord are broken.

103 MacCoull 2009: 165 translates this as 'Samuel the prophet, who donated himself to the temple', interpreting this passage as Petronios modifying the biblical story to justify his self-dedication. The passive construction is clear in the Coptic; the passage was not modified in this way.

104 A short yet excellent overview of the Aphrodito material is available in Wickham 2005: 133–140, and see now Ruffini 2018 (which deals almost exclusively with life in Aphrodito before the Islamic conquest). See also the introduction to *PLond.* 4.

used that echo the language of the child-donation deeds, for example *somatikon* in 275 and 276 (as discussed above in the introduction to 7.3.4.3).

274. Provision and behaviour of naval conscripts

P.Lond. 4.1494

TM 19920

Written and found: Aphrodito

Date: 8 April 709

Material: papyrus

Location: British Library, Or. 6205 + 6230/103

The officials of Three Fields, west of Aphrodito, declare themselves responsible for the production and behaviour of three men for the naval duty of the following year.¹⁰⁵ Should any of the sailors flee, the officials will be subject to whatever penalty is imposed upon them; the exact amount is not stipulated in the text. The provision against flight indicates that there was a good chance that this would happen, and had in the past, from which it can be inferred that such requisitions were hated by those involved (compare 272). In order that there should be no confusion, the names of the three sailors and the officials who act as guarantors are provided twice, once in Coptic and again in list-form in Greek.

+ We, Apa Cyrus son of the late Samuel the *lashane*,¹⁰⁶ Apollo son of Heraklios the tax collector, David son of Johannes, and Phoibammon son of Georgios, from the Three Fields, west of Jkôw, we write to the public treasury, namely our lord, the all-famous Qurra, the most wonderful governor, through you, the most glorious lord, Lord Basil, by God's will, the famous pagarch of Jkôw, and its villages and fields.

Greetings. We declare, are willing, guarantee, are responsible for, act as surety for, and are liable for the persons of these sailors from our fields, whose names we provide at the bottom of this guarantee declaration. We sent them north as sailors of the light ships (*karabia*) in this year, the 7th indiction, for the naval duty of the 8th indiction, so that they could complete their expedition as light-ship sailors in the naval duty of Egypt, for the second time, so that they can complete their expedition, without fleeing. If one of them flees, we are prepared to undertake any penalty that our Lord, the all-famous governor, will set for us, because we willed and took responsibility for them before we¹⁰⁷ sent them.

¹⁰⁵ The naval duty (*curson*) was the annual raid of the Arab fleet, which required construction workers as well as sailors (rowers and helmsmen, for example). Arabs and converts formed the military part of these crews (not as marines, but as troops transported to enemy coastal regions).

¹⁰⁶ The *lashane* was a senior village official, the equivalent of the Greek *meizon*, which is used in the list (written in Greek) at the end of the document.

¹⁰⁷ The Coptic has 'before you sent them'. Unless this means before the governor sends them to their station, the text appears to contain an error. Note that later in the text 'we sent them' is written.

As a surety, then, for the public treasury through our most glorious lordship (i.e. Basil), we have drawn up this guarantee declaration for you, being responsible to you with all our being about this matter. We swear by the name of God Almighty and the health of (our) ruling lords, to preserve and observe (this guarantee declaration), in accordance with what we have already written. We were asked and we agreed. +

List:

Pnei son of Djidjoi from Three Fields of *kome* Aphrodito. 1 sailor.

Georgios son of Dionysios from the same. 1 sailor.

Apollo son of David from the same. 1 sailor.

Total: 3 sailors.

We, Apa Cyrus son of Samuel the *lashane*, Apollo son of Heraklios the tax collector, David son of Johannes, and Phoibammon son of Georgios, from the Three Fields west of the town Jkôw, consent to the guarantee declaration, by its authority, and we declare we act as sureties and are liable for the persons of the sailors that we sent north, namely, Pnei son of Djidjoi, Georgios son of Dionysios, and Apollo son of David, so they can complete their expedition, without fleeing. If they flee, we will undertake any penalty that your lordship will set for us. They asked me, Georgios son of the late Psate, and I have written for them because they cannot. +

[*witness statements*]

List of guarantors:

Apa Cyrus son of Samuel, *meizon*. Apollo son of Heraklios, tax officer.

David son of Johannes. Phoibammon son of Georgios.

Total: 4 people.

+ By me, Theodore, God willing, notary. +

Bibliography: Till 1958: 88–190 (*Pap.Bürgsch.Copt.* 32).

275 + 276. Money sent in lieu of conscripts

P.Lond. 4.1508

TM 19925

P.Lond. 4.1509

TM 39813

Written and found: Aphrodito

Date: 709–714

Material: papyrus

Location: British Library, Or. 6220/1+6224/28 (*PLond.* 4.1508) and Or. 6209 (*PLond.* 4.1509)

Both of these texts concern men conscripted for building works in the palace in Babylon (see 272). Neither is complete, but in combination they provide a more complete view of the situation. In each instance, the officials originally send money in lieu of the conscripted workmen. The value of this in *PLond.* 4.1508 is high: five-sixths of a *holokottinos* is noted as the monthly contribution. Such a sum was equal to the annual poll-tax payment owed by a typical taxpayer. However, when the senior local Arab official – Garrah in both documents – discovers that this action has been undertaken, he refuses to accept the money and insists on the presentation of the men instead. This is not voluntary service. Two terms are used to refer to the men in question: *ergates* and *somation*. These are not used synonymously but refer to the men in different capacities. *Ergates* refers to a skilled labourer, or at least a man serving in the capacity of a workman, while *somation* indicates the individual as a conscript (on this term see also the introduction to 7.3.4.3).

275. *PLond.* 4.1508

[+ I, Athanasios son of the late] Isaac, the *lashane* of the village Nisekate in [... I] write to the public treasury, namely, our Lord Qurra [...] through you, the most glorious lord, Lord [Basil], the famous pagarch of the town of Jkôw and all its villages. Greetings.

Since half a workman (*ergates*) was brought [...] so we can give the man (*somation*) to [work on?] the palace [of the governor?] being built in Babylon this year. [...] man (*somation*), namely his contribution, i.e. half [a *holokottinos* and a *tremis*] monthly. After we came, then, we requested [...] man (*somation*) [...] You received the contribution [for this] matter and gave it to Theodosios, the tax officer [... in] Shôtep, who is also our tax officer. You reached an agreement [...] gave] them for the particular workmen (*ergates*).

When the Saracen (i.e. Garrah) [came] north to us, he enquired through you [...] and] discovered that you had sent their contribution north. He opposed it [saying ‘I do not accept] it (?) except the man (*somation*).’ He compelled us [...] We therefore came and made a request to you about the contribution [and you wrote to] Shôtep, to Theodosios the tax officer, and you refunded [...] you] delivered it to us, duly.

I declare, [I, Athanasios], that half a *holokottinos* and the *tremis* of gold [came to me, without the] loss of even a single *phollos*. I have nothing else [that I] could sue you over, ever [...] because what I gave has come back to me, in full.

276. *PLond.* 4.1509

When the Saracen (i.e. Garrah) [came north], he asked about this (i.e. the provision of a workman) and discovered that you had sent [their contribution]

north (instead). He opposed you, Garrah the Saracen, saying: 'I do not accept contribution for such things, but the man (^csomation) himself.' After compelling us, [we] went and hired such workmen (^cergates). We therefore came and made a request to you about the contribution that we gave, and you wrote to Shôtep, to Thediosios the tax officer to whom you had given the gold, because he is in Shôtep and because he is the tax officer there. Once he had refunded the sum of money for the workmen (^cergates) to you, you delivered it into our hands.

Now, I declare that here are one *tremis* and two carats. They have come to me in their (correct) weight, and so I cannot sue you, neither I nor my heirs, nor anyone at all. He who will dare (do so) pays three *holokottinoi* as the fine concerning the matter. As a surety, then, for the public treasury, through your most glorious lordship, I have drawn up this agreement and I consent to it, being liable to you, with all my being, concerning this matter.

Bibliography (*PLond.* 4.1509): Till 1958: 192–193 (*Pap.Bürgsch.Copt.* 39).

277. Detaining fugitives

PLond. 4.1528

TM 39819

Written and found: Aphrodito

Date: early eighth century

Material: papyrus

Location: British Library, Or. 6230/20

In this fragment of a longer document, Pnei son of Georgios (*lashane* of the Five Fields, east of Aphrodito) declares to the public treasury that he will not allow anyone to escape or any dependent (^skayon) – about which any further information that may have been provided is now lost – to seek refuge on his land. Instead, he will imprison all such people. If he fails to do so, he will be subject to a substantial penalty. This is reminiscent of 274 and the risk of flight of conscripts, and both are part of a larger body of documents dealing with fugitives and flight from duty, whether of labour or taxes in gold.

... and a great penalty [... and] any[thing else for?] the public treasury that you will command of me, in the day [... and I will show no?] negligence and because I shall not allow anyone to escape [...] instead I will imprison him and [any] dependent (^skayon) [...] or any other, in any way, who seeks refuge in my fields, I will detain [him] without hiding him.

As a surety for the public treasury and your most glorious lordship, I consented to it through my subscriber, and I submit with all my being. I swear [by God] and the health of our rulers to preserve and observe (it) and to act in accordance with what I have already written. + I, the above-mentioned Pnei son of the late Georgios, consent.

Bibliography: Till 1958: 179–180 (*Pap.Bürgsch.Copt.* 16).

7.4. Arabic documents for slavery in early Islamic Egypt

JELLE BRUNING

7.4.1. Introduction

Arabic documents from the first and second centuries AH/seventh and eighth centuries CE frequently refer to slaves and freedmen, attesting to the widespread use of forced labour within Egypt's early Islamic communities. These documents provide glimpses of the lives of ordinary Egyptians and thereby supplement our narrative historical sources, which generally concentrate on Egypt's religious and political elites. Some of these documents show slaves working for the province's early Islamic administration as scribes, official messengers, and skilled artisans.¹⁰⁸ More frequently, however, they show enslaved persons performing tasks for their masters as domestic servants, errand boys, and business agents.¹⁰⁹ It is on these latter slaves that this section focuses. Arabic documents provide information on how they entered households, on the work assigned to them and their integration in society, and on how their experience of slavery shaped their lives after emancipation. The following sections concentrate on these topics.

Using Arabic documents to study early Islamic slavery presents a methodological difficulty. The Arabic documents that Egypt's early Islamic communities produced use a variety of terms to designate slaves. The general word for 'slave' ('*abd* for men and '*ama* for women) or the legal term *mamlūk* ('owned') occur infrequently. Instead, the authors of the documents preferred more ambiguous terms, such as *ghulām* and *jāriya* ('boy' and 'maid'; cf. 5.1.1 on *pais* and *paidiske*) or *khādim* ('servant' or 'eunuch') – terms that were used for both freeborn and enslaved persons.¹¹⁰ As a result, the identification of slaves in the Arabic material necessarily depends to a large extent on circumstantial evidence.

When searching for slaves in Arabic documents, names can be useful dependency markers. In contrast to a free person's name, that of a slave usually lacked a lineage (mostly a father's name), which was a sign of deracination and

108 Rāḡib 1996. As seen above (7.3.4.4), Egypt's early Islamic administration also conscripted free non-Muslims to work in building projects or to serve as sailors on Egypt's fleets. Discussions of this form of forced labour can be found in Muhammad 2008; al-Qāḡī 2016: 111–121; Trombley 2004; Wissa 2017; and Legendre 2021: 139–141.

109 For slavery in Muslim communities before the third/ninth century, see Brockopp 2000: 139–158; Crone 2012: 7–11; Gilli-Elewy 2000 and 2017. See also the remarks on the current state of scholarship in Perry 2017a.

110 Rāḡib 2013: paras. 14–15. See also the use of *jāriya* in 281.

dependency.¹¹¹ When a slave's belonging needed to be given, reference to the owner sufficed. See, for instance, the man called 'Sa'd, the boy (*fatā*) of Qays ibn 'Abd Allāh' in texts **282b** and **282d** below (note that *ibn* means 'son of'). Whereas in public or official contexts a lineage was needed for identification, in private contexts such information was often redundant beyond a letter's address and is therefore usually lacking in references to third parties, whether free or slave.

In addition, also in terms of their meaning, personal names can be markers of dependent status. As in many cultures that preceded Islam, some names were often used for slaves.¹¹² Such names could reflect, for example,¹¹³ God's benevolence towards the slave (such as Maymūn, 'Lucky', or Mubārak, 'Blessed', who appear in **278** and **281**), the slave's physical or psychological characteristics (Jamīla, 'Beautiful'; Basīt, 'Easy'),¹¹⁴ and the slave's usability (Jadā', 'Profit' or 'Utility').¹¹⁵ From the late second/eighth century on, words that are pleasing to the ear are used as names for slaves, such as Jawhar ('Gem') or Sukkara ('Sugar').¹¹⁶ In the period under consideration, however, most slaves seem to have carried names that were also given to free persons.¹¹⁷

SEE FURTHER: Brockopp 2000: 128–138; Dirbas 2019; Rāḡib 2002–2006: II, 23–25, paras. 56–59 and 29–30, paras. 70–73.

7.4.2. Enslavement and the slave trade

As was true elsewhere, many of the domestic slaves in Egypt's early Muslim communities had initially been taken captive during the Muslim conquests.¹¹⁸ Two persons taken captive are well known from the historical literature on Egypt. Muslim armies are said to have enslaved one 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Balhībī (a Muslim name, therefore probably not his original name) when the village of Balhīb resisted their rule during the conquest of the Nile Delta;¹¹⁹ one Suwayd ('Little

111 Rāḡib 1996: 7; Rāḡib 2013: paras. 4 and 15.

112 For an overview, see Dirbas 2019. Some documents show that slaves' original names were not necessarily forgotten: *P.Giss.Arab.* 5 and *P.Cair.Arab.* 4.223 (both dated to the second/eighth or third/ninth century); see also the much later *P.Cair.Arab.* I.37 (393/1003).

113 For a taxonomy of slave names, see Perry 2014: 76–78 and Dirbas 2019.

114 For Jamīla, see Khan 1994: 357–359 (88/707); for Basīt, see **283**.

115 Rāḡib 1997, no. 2 (103/722).

116 Respectively Hawary et al. 1932–1942: IX, 6 [no. 3207] (186/802) and David-Weill 1965, no. 6 verso (211/827).

117 See, for instance, the first/seventh- and early second/eighth-century public slaves listed in Rāḡib 1996: 21–27 or the second/eighth- or third/ninth-century list of freedmen published as *P.Giss.Arab.* 5.

118 Lewis 1990: 9 and in particular C. F. Robinson 2017.

119 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 1922: 83; Ibn 'Asākir 1995–2000: xxxvi, 116 [no. 4002].

Black Man') was among the Nubians made captive during 'Abd Allāh ibn Sa'd ibn Abī Sarḥ's attempt to conquer Dongola in 31/652.¹²⁰ Naturally, not all war captives in Egypt were native Egyptians. Some told the scholar al-Layth ibn Sa'd (d. 175/791), for instance, that when the general Ḥassān ibn Nu'mān returned from what is now Tunisia in 78/697–698 the Egyptian governor 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Marwān 'confiscated all the captives (*sabī*) he had brought with him. Some of the slaves (*waṣā'if*) of the Berbers were the most beautiful ever seen [...] Two hundred female slaves (*jāriya*) were sold for a thousand *dinars*'.¹²¹ In addition, official raids on Byzantine territory, organised by Muslim rulers from the caliphate of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (r. 23–35/644–655), supplied Egypt's slave markets with fresh captives.¹²²

In addition to captives, medieval histories of early Islamic Egypt occasionally refer to slaving expeditions on Egyptian soil as well as beyond its borders. In the early second/eighth century, for example, Berber slavers are said to have kidnapped and enslaved a monk from the monastery of St Macarius in the Wādī al-Naṭrūn.¹²³ As in previous and later centuries, Nubia and the Eastern Desert were popular sources of slaves in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries. On the basis of a text dating from around 152/770,¹²⁴ the *History of the Patriarchs* reports that Muslims 'were in the habit of stealing Nubians and sold them (as slaves) in Egypt'.¹²⁵ Despite the peaceful relationship between Egypt and Nubia that was maintained via the so-called *baqt*, a formal exchange of gifts which included Nubian slaves (see 278),¹²⁶ Egypt's director of finance 'Ubayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥabḥāb (in office 105–116/724–734) organised 'one battle of pillage and the capture of prisoners' in Nubia.¹²⁷ As the conquests came to a halt in the first half of the second/eighth century, most second/eighth-century Egyptian slaves who were not born in the province must have been enslaved during such expeditions.

Egyptians also bought slaves from foreign slavers and/or merchants for the Egyptian market. Referring to Nubian merchants who sold enslaved compatriots (cf. section 7.3.4.1 above), the prominent jurist 'Abd Allāh ibn Lahī'a (d. 194/790)

120 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 1922: 188; Ibn Yūnus 2000: I, 509 [no. 1392]; al-Kindī 1912: 13.

121 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 1922: 201–202.

122 Evetts 1910: 4 [258].

123 Evetts 1910: 82 [336].

124 Den Heijer 1989: 8 and 145–146.

125 Evetts 1910: 145 [399]. The Arabic toponym used here (*Miṣr*) can also be read as referring to Fustāṭ, Egypt's capital at that time.

126 On the *baqt*, see Spaulding 1995. Nubian slaves given to Egypt as part of the *baqt* may appear in *P. Apoll.* 85 and 87 (c. 55/675). For a (non-critical) overview of third/ninth-century and later medieval literature on the *baqt*, see Halm 1998.

127 Al-Nuwayrī, translated in Vantini 1975: 476. Evetts 1910: 87 [341], confirms 'Ubayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥabḥāb's desire for slaves.

maintained that despite the above-mentioned *baqt*, which some considered to be like a peace treaty protecting all Nubians against Muslim aggression (including being held as slaves), ‘there is no harm in buying their slaves (*raqīq*) from them or from others’.¹²⁸ Although not all Muslim scholars agreed, this seems to have been the prevailing opinion regarding Nubian slaves in second/eighth-century Egypt.¹²⁹ Most slaves were sold in specialised slave markets in Egypt’s major cities. In fact, one of the first markets in Fustāṭ is said to have been one ‘where slaves were sold’¹³⁰ – a clear indication of the influx of enormous wealth soon after the town’s establishment in the early 20s/640s.¹³¹ In published documents from the first/seventh and second/eighth century, however, no slave markets appear. Rather, these documents record an acquisition method which greatly relied on the buyer’s personal network.¹³² Probably reflecting the increased demand for slaves in the Near East from the second half of the second/eighth century on,¹³³ a wholesale trade in slaves appears in documents starting in the third/ninth century.¹³⁴

SEE FURTHER: Bruning 2020: 685–687; McCormick 2001: 733–777; Power 2009; Rāḡib 1993; Schneider 1999: 133–146 (with Motzki 2000); Trabelsi 2012.

278. Extracts from a diplomatic letter concerning the *baqt*

Hinds and Sakkout 1981

TM 463566

Written: Fustāṭ

Found: Primis/Qaṣr Ibrīm

Date: 19 Rajab 141/25 November 758

Material: papyrus

Location: Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art, inv. 2548

Mūsā ibn Ka‘b, Egypt’s fifth Abbasid governor (in office for about eight months in 141/758–759), complains about the Nubians’ violation of the terms of the *baqt*. He has two concerns. The first is the detainment of two Egyptian merchants in Nubia. Contrary to the terms of the *baqt*, Nubian officials imprisoned these merchants and confiscated

128 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922: 188; al-Kindī 1912: 13. Al-Balādhurī 1866: 237 puts these words in the mouth of Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb (d. 128/745).

129 Al-Maqrīzī 2002–2003: I, 546.

130 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922: 92; also Kubiak 1987: 81.

131 See also text 279, introduction.

132 In addition to 279 and 280, see *P.MuslimState* 28 (Fayyum), dated to the first half of the second/eighth century, which refers in line 2 on side B to ‘the one who brought the two boys (*ṣabīyyayn*)’. For discussion, see Bruning 2020: 695–696.

133 McCormick 2001: 752–754; Power 2009: paras. 21–29.

134 Bruning 2020: 690–695.

their possessions. Mūsā ibn Ka‘b further complains that the king of Nubia and Maqurra refused to send slaves of good quality.¹³⁵ Note how he alternates between the second person singular and plural in order to distinguish the king of Nubia and Maqurra, whom he addresses, from the latter’s kingdom and its inhabitants in general. Note, too, that a slave named Maymūn (‘Lucky’) wrote the letter.

278a. Lines 1–27

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

From Mūsā ibn K[a‘b to ... the l]ord of Maqurra and Nubia. Peace be upon the friends of God and the people who obey Him. For them I praise God, beside Whom there is no god.

Further, you (sing.) know that upon which a peace agreement was made with you (pl.) and what you (pl.) took upon yourselves to fulfil. Therewith, you (pl.) safeguarded your (pl.) blood and possessions, if you (pl.) fulfil. God – praised and exalted be He – says in His Book, ‘Fulfil God’s pact, when you have made a pact. And do not break oaths after they are confirmed. You have made God your surety. God knows what you are doing indeed.’¹³⁶ And He says, ‘Fulfil My pact, so that I fulfil your pact. Fear Me.’¹³⁷ We fulfilled to you (pl.) what we took upon ourselves with regard to desisting from your (pl.) blood and possessions. You (sing.) know that you (pl.) are safe in our lands, that you (pl.) can dwell wherever you (pl.) wish, and that your (pl.) merchants can visit us frequently without being wronged or oppressed. No one of you (pl.) who is with us will be attacked or will be denied his rights. Nothing will obstruct your merchants from (reaching) what they want, being safe and at ease wherever they go in our lands, in fulfilment of our pact, in truth to our word, in faith in our Lord and in belief in our Prophet.

You (pl.), however, act differently with regard to what is between you (pl.) and us. You (pl.) do not give us what is upon you (pl.) of the *baqt*, concerning which a peace treaty was made with you (pl.). You (pl.) do not return those of our slaves (*ariqqā’*) that ran away to you (pl.).¹³⁸ Our merchants are not safe with you (pl.). You (pl.) do not hasten to send back to us our messengers. You (sing.) know that the people of all religions and those confessions that do not know a lord, do not believe in resurrection, do not hope for recompense, and do not fear punishment, do not assault a merchant and do not detain a messenger. You (sing.) show faith

¹³⁵ Perry 2017a: 134 and Bruning 2020: 685–686 argue that the *baqt* should not be seen as a sustained source of Nubian slaves in Egypt.

¹³⁶ Quran 16:91 (*al-Nahl*).

¹³⁷ Quran 2:40 (*al-Baqara*).

¹³⁸ Literally: ‘You (pl.) do not return those runaway slaves (*ubbāq*) to you (pl.) from among our slaves (*ariqqā’*).’

to the people of your (sing.) confession in Him who created the Heavens and the Earth and what lies between them. You (sing.) believe in 'Īsā son of Maryam¹³⁹ and in his book. You (sing.) show them justice and rightful action. But your (pl.) actions concerning what is between you (pl.) and us differ from what you (sing.) show.

278b. Lines 51–69

Salm (ibn Sulaymān)¹⁴⁰ sent to you (pl.) one of his messengers nine months ago, and (another) messenger four months ago. But you (pl.) detained them together with the slaves (*ariqqā'*) of the people of Islam and the people of our protection (*dhimma*) and what is upon you (pl.) of the *baqt*. He told me that you (pl.) are liable to a *baqt* of (several outstanding) years which you (pl.) did not hand over, and that what you sent of the *baqt* was not good, such as a one-eyed man, a lame man, a weak old man, or a young boy.

Look (sing.) into what I have written to you (sing.). Hasten (sing.) to send us what you (pl.) still have to pay of the *baqt* for the years in which you (pl.) withheld payment. Do (sing.) not send that in which is no good, for we will not accept it. Send (pl.) us Muḥammad ibn Zayd's merchant and his possessions. In case he has been killed, send (sing.) 1,000 *dinars* as his blood money together with his possessions. Send (sing.) us Sa'd, the merchant, who is with you (pl.). Do (sing.) not delay a single thing of this if you (pl.) wish that we fulfil to you (pl.) our pact and that we continue to treat you (pl.) justly. Hasten (sing.) to do this, and do (sing.) not delay it. If you (sing.) do not obey, I will reconsider what is between you (pl.) and me – God willing. I wished to take extraordinary pains in exhorting you and to take proof against you (pl.). Peace be upon the friends of God and the people who obey Him. Maymūn wrote (this letter) on Sunday, twelve days remaining of Rajab of the year 141.

Bibliography: Blau 2002: 57–60; Plumley 1975.

279. Buying slaves via one's personal network

P.JoySorrow 34

TM 871411

Written and found: Egypt

Date: second/eighth century

Material: papyrus

Location: Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, inv. 2655 qua

¹³⁹ I.e. Jesus son of Mary.

¹⁴⁰ Salm ibn Sulaymān was the chief administrator of the district of Aswan.

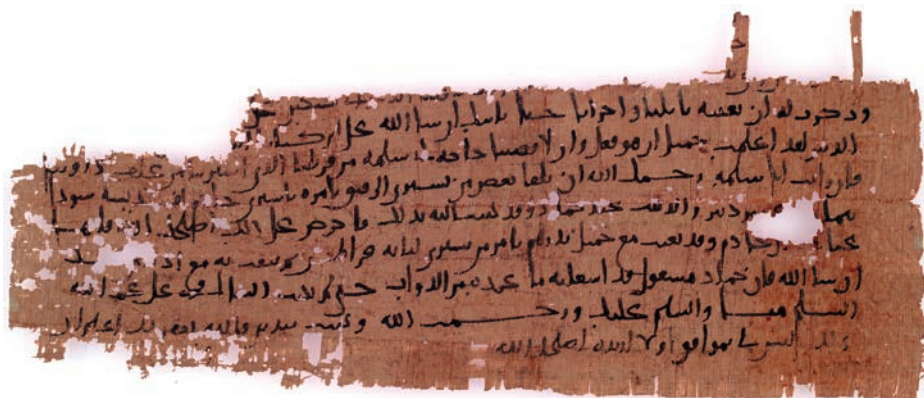


Figure 7.4 279. *P.JoySorrow* 34. Yale Papyrus Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library inv. 2655 qua.

This document illustrates well how slaves could be acquired via one's personal network rather than by visiting a slave market. It conveys a request to buy a slave on behalf of an unnamed woman. Four persons stood between the woman and the slave trader; a fifth person was financially involved. The 18 *dinars* the woman wants to spend is probably slightly above the average price of a slave in second/eighth-century Egypt. We lack contemporary records of slave prices,¹⁴¹ but third/ninth- and fourth/tenth-century sale contracts show that merchants at this time usually sold slaves for around 15 *dinars*.¹⁴² The average price of a slave in the century and a half preceding the Muslim conquest of Egypt seems not to have differed much.¹⁴³ Slaves were costly acquisitions and were only available for the affluent. By comparison, in the early second/eighth century 18 *dinars* equalled a year's income for many types of skilled labourer hired by the administration;¹⁴⁴ for 18 *dinars*, one could easily buy a house, if not two.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ The Greek *P.Apoll.* 66 (c. 55/675) refers to the sale of a slave for 12 *solidi*. The prices mentioned for a slave in second/eighth-century Coptic child-donation documents (30–36 gold coins; Papaconstantinou 2002a: 94 with n. 56) seem to be above the average price of a slave. For these documents, see 7.3.4.3 above. According to one of the sources of Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī (d. 356/967), however, the governor 'Abd al-'Azīz ibn Marwān (in office 65–86/685–705) bought a poetically talented slave called Nuṣayb ('Little Fortune') for 30 *dinars* (Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī 1927–1974: I, 328; after Ashtor 1969: 89).

¹⁴² Based on the overview in Vanthieghem 2014: 184–186 and excluding the comparatively high prices mentioned in Richards 1991 (which has in one instance 110 *dinars* for one slave), which would raise the average price of a slave to 25 *dinars*.

¹⁴³ Harper 2010a: 230.

¹⁴⁴ Ashtor 1969: 91.

¹⁴⁵ Ashtor 1969: 87.

...] that from Abū Miskīn to [...] I told him that you will assist him and our day-workers with our camels until he comes to you immediately after we wrote [...] the *dinar*. Indeed, I would inform Jamīl if he had done so; if not, we would fulfil Abū Salama's need from our clover which we purchased as fodder for our animals. If you – may God have mercy upon you – see fit that Abū Salama meets someone who buys slaves (*raqīq*), you should order him to buy a black [...] ¹⁴⁶ (female) servant (*khādim*) for 18 *dinars*. The gold is with Ḥammād. I have already written to him about that. So exert yourself to attain that – may God keep you safe – for she is in need of a servant. I have sent Jamīl with a *dirham* so that you can order someone to purchase therewith papyrus rolls for us. Then, you should send it with [...] – God willing – because Ḥammād is busy. The animals kept him busy so that he has not written to us. Send 'Abd Allāh our greetings. Peace be upon you and God's mercy. You wrote asking me for credit. May God forgive you. Know that I do not agree to it; or, I do not want it – may God keep you safe.

280. Buying servants with future delivery

P.Berl.Arab. 2.49 recto

TM 169310

Written: unknown

Found: probably the Fayyūm (sent to Madīnat al-Fayyūm)

Date: second/eighth century

Material: papyrus

Location: Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, inv. 24086 qua

Al-Mastūr ibn Baḥr complains to one Mu'āwiya ibn Muḥammad, who lived in the Fayyūm, about his failure to deliver a number of servants (*ghilmān*), who were to be delivered at a specified time. ¹⁴⁷

The angry reminder to bring the gold, which the addressee is supposed to collect for the sender, shows that the addressee belonged to the sender's personal network and that al-Mastūr used his personal network for the acquisition of slaves rather than visiting slave traders.

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

¹⁴⁶ Due to a hole in the papyrus, the word the author wrote here can no longer be read. There is little doubt, though, that it must be understood as an ethnic reference.

¹⁴⁷ For this type of sale, see *EP*, s.v. 'Salam'.

From al-Mastūr ibn Baḥr, to Mu‘āwiya ibn Muḥammad. Peace be upon you. I praise for you God, beside Whom there is no god. Further, may God preserve us and you, and may He avert from us and you (adversities). I am writing to you in a state of good health – God be praised. You have not yet come (to us) or sent news about you while I have written to you many letters ordering you to come. If it is not easy for you to come, write me a letter. The time (for the delivery) of the servants (*ghilmān*) you owe has arrived.¹⁴⁸ You have the determined (number of servants) at your disposal, but I have not had any success (with my earlier exhortations). For I did not see you respond. So, respond to my letter – may God preserve you – and hasten to come with what is due from you. And hasten – woe to you! – (to bring) the gold that is with the wool merchants and the gold that is with Buḡtur, if you have already collected it. If you have collected it, do not delay – by God – to bring it to me so that [...]

7.4.3. Social integration

Whether imported into Egypt or born into slavery, privately owned slaves, such as those referred to in the preceding documents, were part of their owners' households. With their owners' approval they could integrate into society. The Quran may have provided a religious basis for the position of slaves in Muslim society, proclaiming religious equality between freeborn and enslaved Muslims and enjoining believers to treat their slaves fairly.¹⁴⁹ Although the holy text's impact on early Islamic slavery is difficult to determine,¹⁵⁰ some documents record that slave owners, seemingly in accordance with Quranic injunctions,¹⁵¹ took good care of their slaves. In a partially preserved second/eighth-century letter about a dispute concerning a slave woman (*ama*), for example, the sender writes: 'if the slave woman has remained with you, treat her well and do not let anyone harm her'.¹⁵² In addition, free persons actively maintained relationships with slaves. The second/eighth-century merchant who wrote *P.Horak* 85 ends his letter with a request to 'convey greetings to the two brothers – Ibrāhīm sends you greetings – and convey many greetings to all the servants (*ghilmān*)'. Private letters also contain greetings sent in the opposite direction. In an early second/eighth-century letter, a cloth merchant in Fuṣṭāṭ writes to his wife in Herakleopolis (Ihnās)

148 W. Diem offers a slightly different translation of this sentence (*P.Berl.Arab.* 2, p. 137): 'Der Termin für das, was Du seitens der Burschen schuldest, ist gekommen.'

149 Quran 4:25 (*al-Nisā'*); see also Brockopp 2000: 133–134.

150 Brockopp 2000: 158–161.

151 *EQ*, s.v. 'Slaves and Slavery', esp. pp. 59–60.

152 David-Weill and Cahen 1978, no. 25, lines 5–7.

that ‘Umm Yazīd and her female slaves (*jawārī*) send you greetings.’¹⁵³ See also **281** below.

Such expressions of amity must not obscure the social and, needless to say, legal inequality that existed between free and enslaved. A slave’s social inferiority to free persons could result in harsh treatment, occasionally even in mistreatment, and in rape. In a private letter dated to the first/seventh or second/eighth century, for instance, a man writes that his wife has complained to an arbitrator that her husband ‘beat her, made her suffer, and oppressed her in a way that does not befit a free woman (*hurra*)’.¹⁵⁴ The judge ‘Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ḥujayra al-Khawlanī (d. 83/702/3 or 85/704/5) reportedly emancipated a female slave (*ama*) after her mistress had mutilated her.¹⁵⁵ In this context, mention must also be made of concubinage. Using female slaves for sexual pleasure and, less often, for procreation, denying them any say over their bodies, gained in popularity during the first 150 years of Islamic history, when the Muslims’ military successes supplied Muslim communities with captives and cash.¹⁵⁶ Understandably, in Arabic papyri from that period, references to concubinage are rare, but they are not absent.¹⁵⁷ For example, in a badly preserved legal document concerning a dowry, dated to the late second/eighth century, a man declares that ‘the concubine (*surriyya*) (shall come) in the possession of his wife’.¹⁵⁸ Interesting, too, is a late second/eighth- or early third/ninth-century letter which ends with the request to ‘send greetings to Umm Walad and her child’.¹⁵⁹ The name Umm Walad, which means ‘mother of a child’, is in fact a legal term used for slave women who bore the acknowledged child of their master (cf. **163a**). By the mid-second/eighth century, the earliest date of our legal sources, concubines obtained better legal protection when they bore a child to their master.¹⁶⁰ Whereas some such women may have profited from childbearing to improve their legal position, **283** below shows that other slaves chose to abandon the household they had been forced into.

¹⁵³ Reinfandt 2007: 101 (= *P.Alqāb* 117), verso, lines 15–16.

¹⁵⁴ *P.JoySorrow* 2, side A, lines 10–11. As to the beating of slaves, note the implications of the legal discourse on beating free wives discussed in Marín 2003, esp. 39.

¹⁵⁵ al-Kindī 1912: 317–318. The report indicates that such practices were not tolerated but occasionally occurred.

¹⁵⁶ Robinson 2020: 92–98; Urban 2020: 111–115.

¹⁵⁷ M. Robinson 2017 argues that the absence of evidence does not mean that there was no concubinage. Tombstones for *umm walads* have survived from the late second/eighth century on. The oldest tombstone for an *umm walad* currently published dates from 185/801 (Hawary et al. 1932–1942: I, 11 [no. 12]).

¹⁵⁸ Grohmann 1935, no. 8, line 5.

¹⁵⁹ David-Weill 1965, no. 9, lines 8–9.

¹⁶⁰ For the *umm walad* in early Islamic law, see Mattson 1999: 126–182; Brockopp 2000: 192–203; and ‘Athamina 2007: 386–387 and 394–398. See Bray 2004: 133 n. 36 for literature on the *umm walad* in classical Islamic law.

When it comes to a slave's legal inferiority to free people, we must keep in mind that an Islamic legal tradition was yet to develop during much of the period covered in this section and that early Islamic legal authorities sometimes held conflicting opinions. Occasionally offering insight into actual legal practice, papyri provide a glimpse of the legal position of slaves in this period in Egypt. The second/eighth-century *P.JoySorrow* 3, for example, hints at a mixed marriage, making a distinction between the addressee's free and enslaved spouses when its author writes that he has been informed about '[the af]fair of your free wife (*sha' n imra' atika al-ḥurra*)'. Although some considered it unbefitting of a free woman to marry an enslaved man, **282** below shows that such unions also existed. Illustrating the variety of legal opinions at that time, the Egyptian jurist 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn al-Qāsim (d. 191/806) fully approved of mixed marriages, while many of his non-Egyptian colleagues seem to have disagreed.¹⁶¹ Here we may also point at a legal document recording a debt from 44/664–665. This reports that 'Wahb ibn 'Alī and Nāfi' witnessed' the legal transaction it documents.¹⁶² Because it does not provide a patronymic for the second witness, the document gives the impression that he was a slave. Whereas throughout the first/seventh century Muslim legal authorities generally allowed slaves to act as witnesses to legal transactions, something not found in Roman legal practice, they gradually came to agree on a slave's incapacity to act as a witness in court in the first half of the second/eighth century.¹⁶³

SEE FURTHER: 'Athamina 2007; Bray 2004; Brockopp 2000, esp. 128–147; Gili-Elewy 2000; Urban 2020: 119–120.

281. A slave woman's involvement in the affairs of free persons

David-Weill 1971, no. II recto¹⁶⁴

TM 169075

Written: unknown

Found: probably the Fayyum (sent to Madīnat Fayyum)

Date: second half of the second/eighth century

Material: papyrus

Location: Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. E 7049

¹⁶¹ Benkheira 2008: 282–298.

¹⁶² Bruning 2015: 359, lines 6–7.

¹⁶³ Tillier 2017: 272–274.

¹⁶⁴ The editor misread a few passages at the beginning of this letter. The translation offered below deviates from the editor's French translation.

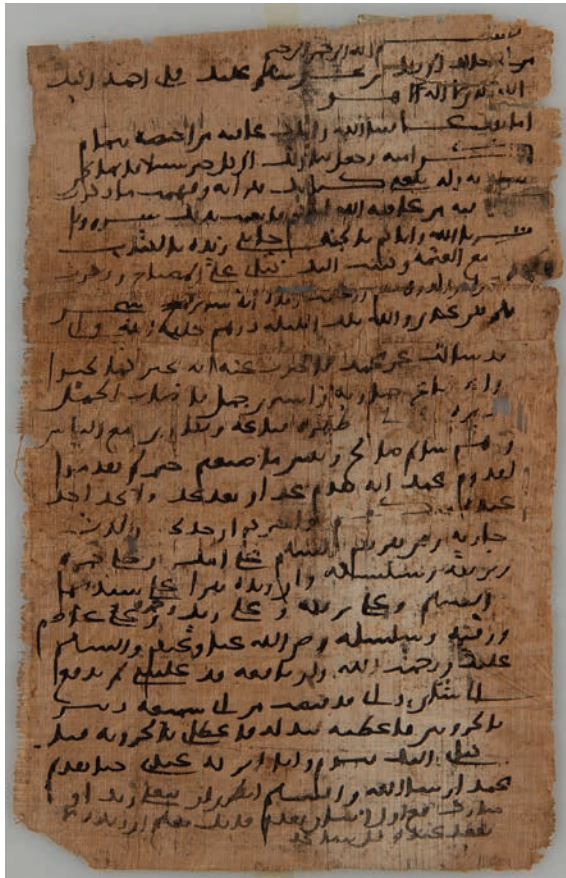


Figure 7.5 281. J. David-Weill, 'Papyrus arabes du Louvre, II', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 14 (1971), no. 11 recto. Musée du Louvre, E 7049. © RMN-Grand Palais/ArtResource, New York.

Zayda, whose slave status is inferred from the letter's reference to her mistress, acts as a trusted agent between her mistress's family and Abū Khālid, to whom she brought a letter after nightfall. At the end of the letter, Abū Khālid conveys greetings on behalf of Zayda, among others to Zayda's mistress. The letter ends with a request to send either Zayd or Mubārak ('Blessed'), whose name suggests a slave.

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

From Abū Khālid,¹⁶⁵ to Zayd ibn Yaḥyā. Peace be upon you. I praise for you God, beside Whom there is no god.

Further, may God preserve us and you in the way of someone whom He distinguishes by the perfection of his benevolence; and may He make your dwellings a path to everything that is good. For we exist through Him and belong to Him. Your letter reached me. I have read it and understood what you mentioned of

¹⁶⁵ The address on the verso shows his full name: Abū Khālid Yazīd ibn Walīd.

God preserving you in good health. By so doing, you made us very happy – may God make us happy and you with Paradise. Zayda came to me with the letter in the dark. I wrote you my letter by (the light of) a lamp. You mentioned the matter of the *dirham*. Zayda maintained that Siḥr departed (with it) at night. By God, I had no *dirham* with me that night – may God provide a (good) substitute for it. I asked after Muḥammad, and I was informed that he is well, which delighted us. He sold his donkeys and bought a camel. But the camel got [a swelling] on his back, so he sold it. Besides [the *di*]nars, a good and sound *dirham* remained [with me]. Make clear what you have done, for you did not come because of Muḥammad's arrival. He will come tomorrow or (the day) after tomorrow and will not find anyone at your house. I wish to inform you that Khadīja gave birth to a girl (*jāriya*). She sends you greetings, (and) to your son, and to Ḥamza, Burayka, and Silsila. Zayda sends greetings to her mistress (*sayyida*), and to Burayka, Zayd, Ḥamza, 'Aṣim, Ruqayya, and Silsila. May God be pleased with us and you. Peace be upon you and God's mercy. Nāfi'a disrespected me,¹⁶⁶ not giving me a thing. I took from Abū Samī'a a *dinar* and two carats. Give it to him by hand. He gave me a carat a day before I wrote this letter to you. I keep it with me until Muḥammad comes – God willing. Peace! See to it that you send Zayd or Mubārak with the first person to come. For you know that Zayd is not with him all day.

282. Correspondence between a slave's two sons

Rāḡib 1980, no. 9 recto and verso

TM 168947 and 169198

Written and found: Egypt

Date: first half of the second/eighth century

Material: papyrus

Location: Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. J. David-Weill 8

In their correspondence, the two brothers Ziyād and Sa'īd identify each other in their letters' external address (the address visible when the letter was folded) as 'the son of Sa'd, the boy of Qays ibn 'Abd Allāh'. The two sons were probably free because they have a patronymic. Their father was not; he is called a 'boy' (*fatā*), a common euphemism for an enslaved male. Because children born in marriage followed their mother's legal status and children born from concubinage received the master's legal status, Ziyād and Sa'īd were free and had a patronymic presumably because their mother was free. The letters attest to a slave's ability to marry (with his/her owner's consent) and to mixed marriages.

¹⁶⁶ The Arabic has *ghalabatnī*, which here seems to express transgression of the writer's social position.

Nāfi'a may have been a slave who did not obey her master's orders.

282a. Recto

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

From Ziyād ibn Saʿd, to Saʿīd ibn Saʿd and to Admāʿ. Peace be upon you (sing.). I praise for you (sing.) God, beside Whom there is no god.

Further, I want to inform you about our news. We are safe and sound, as will delight you, praise be to God, only good things. We ask God for His (preservation of us in) good health and for honour in the Hereafter. When this letter of mine has reached you, write (pl.) to us with your news and about your well-being. Muʿmina sends you (sing.) greetings. Convey greetings for me to Zayda and Ḥumayda. Peace be upon you (pl.) and the blessings [of God].

282b. Recto's exterior address (on verso)

From Ziyād ibn Saʿd, to Saʿīd ibn Saʿd, the boy of Qays ibn ʿAbd Allāh.

282c. Verso

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

From Saʿīd ibn Saʿd, to Ziyād ibn Saʿd. Peace be upon you. I praise for you God, beside Whom there is no god. Further, I want to inform you about our news. We are safe and sound, as will delight you, by God's favour towards us and His benefaction. We ask God to fulfil (His) grace upon us and you with good health in this world and honour in the Hereafter. Your mother sends you greetings. ʿImrān ibn Saʿīd sends you greetings; Muḥammad ibn Majdī (sends you) greetings; Maṣṣūr ibn Hilāl sends you greetings; and [... sends you] greetings. Saʿīd ibn Saʿd wrote (this letter).

282d. Verso's exterior address (also on verso)

From Saʿīd ibn Saʿd, to Ziyād ibn Saʿd, the boy of Qays ibn ʿAbd Allāh. May God have mercy upon him who delivers it (i.e. the letter). Amen and peace!

283. Finding a runaway slave

P.Heid.Arab. 2.24

TM 169175

Written and found: Egypt

Date: first half of the second/eighth century

Material: papyrus

Location: Heidelberg, Institut für Papyrologie, inv. Arab. 21 recto

After other matters, this letter's sender asks the addressee to return a female slave (*jāriya*) who has run away and appears now to be with the addressee, and possibly to return her veiled. Slaves who have tried to abandon their masters are found infrequently in Arabic documents from early Islamic Egypt. In **278a** above, the governor Mūsā ibn Ka'b reminds the king of Nubia and Maqurra to return slaves (Nubians by origin?) who fled across the Egyptian–Nubian border. *P.Philad.Arab.* 74 (Hermopolis), dated to the second/eighth or third/ninth century, mentions a runaway slave girl who married while in hiding.

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

From 'Alī [... t]o [...] ibn ... [...] I praise for you] God, beside Whom there is no god.

Further, I wish to inform you about our news. We have been safe and sound since you left us. However, you did not write to us how you were [...] you have promised us while you know that it is the most important [thing? ...] So, write to me about how you proceeded and which of your affairs have been successful. [Do not refrain from] writing me about your news. I have written to you that you [should buy for me] boiled juice. And I wrote to Basīṭ ('Easy') that he should keep [it ...] If you wish to receive its price from Basīṭ, do so. When [you] have sent it (i.e. the juice), we will pay its price to whomever you wish. In addition, do also your [utmost best] to send me the female slave (*jāriya*) who ran away from me and to [send] me that about which I have informed you by letter, sent with Sulaymān the [don]key driver. For, via him, I already sent you a *dinar* for this affair with which you should buy veils for her [...] Do not neglect my letter, and trust me, [...] so that [...] it to you. Write to me about what you need so that I can give it to you. Peace be upon you. Convey greetings to your family and to your household.

Bibliography: *P.Heid.Arab.* 2, pp. 123–124.

7.4.4. Slave labour

Very little of the work assigned to first/seventh- and second/eighth-century domestic slaves has been documented. Arabic papyri refer to such work only when it was necessary or worth writing about. As a result, much of the recorded work in which domestic slaves were involved concerns extra-domestic tasks. Like many of the slaves used by the authorities as official messengers,¹⁶⁷ privately owned slaves often appear as their masters' errand boys.¹⁶⁸ We have already seen a

¹⁶⁷ Rāḡib 1996: 16–17; Silverstein 2007: 67.

¹⁶⁸ In addition to the documents referred to in what follows, *P.Heid.Arab.* 2.26 (second/eighth or third/ninth century) refers in a very damaged context to a servant or eunuch (*khādīm*) delivering money.

slave woman named Zayda deliver a letter after sunset in **281**. In *P.MuslimState* 24 (first half of the second/eighth century), the sender asks the addressee to send ‘the boys (*ṣibyān*) with the fruit, for I do not have any’. Such slaves and servants lacked (full) control over their mobility. In *P.JoySorrow* 13 (second/eighth century), for example, a woman requests from one Marwān ibn Yazīd ‘that you send to me my servant (*ghulām*); his name is Ḥulbūb (“Dark Black”)’. In a similar vein, slaves could also be set to work for others. In an afterthought to a private letter concerning financial matters, the sender writes, ‘if you see fit to send us the servant (*ghulām*), do so, for I am in need of him’.¹⁶⁹ The request to send one of two slaves at the end of **281** illustrates this as well.

Much less frequently do we see slaves involved in other work – doubtless because in such contexts their slave status is often not visible. Some documents from the first two Islamic centuries show slaves accompanying their masters on business journeys. A partially preserved document dated 144/761–762, for example, records that a Jewish merchant left a mule with ‘one of his servants (*ghulām*). He (i.e. the merchant) then departed, as he told them, and sold it (i.e. the mule)’.¹⁷⁰ In addition to assisting their owners in trade, the addresses of two second/eighth-century private letters indicate that the senders had dictated these letters to servants, probably slaves.¹⁷¹ **287** shows that some slaves were set to work among hired workmen.

Bibliography: Rāḡib 1996, 2013.

284. A servant running errands

P.MuslimState 29

TM 870904

Written: unknown

Found: Fayyum

Date: second quarter of the second/eighth century

Material: papyrus

Location: Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Library, inv. 5625(1)

¹⁶⁹ Jahn 1937, no. 10 (late second/eighth century), line 10.

¹⁷⁰ Hanafi 2004, no. 3. See also Reinfandt 2007 = *P.Alqāb* 117 (Herakleopolis/Ihnās, early second/eighth century), which mentions a female slave (*jāriya*) who joined her master on a business trip to Fustāt.

¹⁷¹ *P.JoySorrow* 23 and 41 (both possibly from Fustāt). Like the public slaves who *copied* official documents in the chancellery (Rāḡib 1996: 15; Rāḡib 2013: paras. 16–18), the servants who penned these letters lacked the authority to compose letters on their owners’ behalf.

This text comes from the dossier of ‘Abd Allāh ibn As‘ad, an administrator of the Fayyum.¹⁷² The writer informs ‘Abd Allāh that he sent to him an overcoat and some money with the latter’s servant Zayd. Although the letter uses ambiguous terminology (*ghulām*, ‘servant’) to describe Zayd’s relationship with ‘Abd Allāh, Zayd has no voice and authority. In the same dossier, a courier named Zayd also occurs in *P.MuslimState* 27. The tailor who wrote this letter writes that if he had finished the veils ‘Abd Allāh had ordered, he ‘would have sent them with Zayd’.

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

From al-Ṣalt ibn al-Muhājir, to ‘Abd Allāh ibn As‘ad. Peace be upon you. I praise for you God, beside Whom there is no god.

Further – may God preserve us and you in good health in [all ma]tters through His mercy, and may He make us and you inhabitants of Paradise through His strength and His power.

I am writing you while we are, from God, in complete well-being and health. [We ask] God for His benevolence to us and you.

Your letter has reached me (in which) you mention your health, and that made me happy. You wrote to me about ... concerning ... to you and ... [... Nothing withheld me] from writing except a shortage of messengers.

You wrote me that I should buy for you a Ḥimṣī overcoat for 2 *dinars*. I have done so and sent that (coat) with your servant (*ghulām*) Zayd. You wrote me that I should send you the 10 *dinars* with Zayd. Now, he has come to me, but I have spent all (the money that was) with me. So, I could only (give) him 5 *dinars*. I sent with him 3 *dinars* and paid 2 *dinars* as the price of the coat. I will send the remaining 5 (*dinars*) to you – God willing – after gold has given me profit in Lower Egypt. Then, I will send [them] to you with Abū Zay[d ...] on your account. I surely hope that you will not coll[ect what I owe you] and order him (i.e. Zayd) to do so. For upon my life, if I did not owe them to you and you had written to me (with a request) to give you a loan, I would have given you a loan and would have pleased you. Do write me about your condition and state and about all your needs. For you are amongst those I like to cherish and have good contact with. Peace be upon you and God’s mercy.

Bibliography: Diem 2017: 21–24; Vanthieghem 2016a: 240.

285. A farmer’s or trader’s servant

Shahin 2014

TM 382593

Written: probably Fustāt

Found: Fayyum

¹⁷² Sijpesteijn 2013: 136–151, esp. 136–143.

Date: second half of the second/eighth century

Material: papyrus

Location: Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, inv. A.P. 1625 Pap

‘Unayz ibn Ḥabḥāb tells Abū ‘Atāhiya that he should have sent dates in the care of his servant, and he orders him to send through the same servant two bags, probably with dates.

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

To Abū ‘Atāhiya, from ‘Unayz ibn Ḥabḥāb.¹⁷³ Peace be upon you. I praise for you God, beside Whom there is no god.

Further – may God preserve us and you from all evil in this world and the Hereafter. Ishāq’s letter reached me (in which) he mentions that you removed their coverings¹⁷⁴ ... [... si]nce the first month the damage began. You did not have to remove their coverings except in order to send them (i.e. the dates) to me with my servant (*ghulām*). For you know (the situation of) the stock¹⁷⁵ in Fuṣṭāṭ and that it is futile to keep them there because they will benefit neither you nor us. So, when this letter of mine has reached you, keep it in your hand until you have sent me two bags with my servant (*ghulām*). May much peace reach you from me! If there is anything with us that your people need, write to me. We hope that you will do so after today. For I hold you in the highest esteem. I truly hope that I can repay you for everything that you have done for us. May God give you success in what He loves and what pleases (Him). Peace be upon you and the mercy of God.

286. An order for the delivery of honey to a slave messenger’s house

Vanthieghem 2015, no. 1

TM 397719

Written and found: possibly Fuṣṭāṭ

Date: 18 Rabī‘ I 144/26 June 761

Material: papyrus

Location: Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. E S.N. 168

This document belongs to a small dossier of orders addressed to an official referred to as ‘head of honey matters’. It has been dated to the 140s/760s and 150s/770s. Given the absence of a patronymic, the man named Sa‘īd was probably a slave. Like many enslaved persons, he was employed as a messenger. Note that Sa‘īd did not live with his master.

¹⁷³ Cf. Shahin 2014: 417.

¹⁷⁴ This refers to coverings wound around the pinnacles of date palms.

¹⁷⁵ Ar. *mu’na*; ‘provisions’ also seems a fitting interpretation.

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

To the head of honey matters.

[Further,] deliver to the house of Saʿīd, the messenger of Abū [N.N.], 1/8 *qisṭ*¹⁷⁶ of honey – God wi[lling]. It was written on Saturday, thirteen days remaining (of Rabiʿ I), Epeiph 2, of the year 144.

1/8

287. A list of day-workers including slaves

PPrag.Arab. 19 verso

TM 169363

Written and found: Egypt

Date: second/eighth or third/ninth century

Material: papyrus

Location: Prague, The Czech Academy of Sciences, Oriental Institute, inv. Arab. III 253 verso

This partially preserved list of day-workers at a village documents the use of privately owned slaves outside their household context. Calling them *mamālīk* (sing. *mamlūk*), ‘persons who are owned’, the document emphasises their legal status.

The rest of the day-workers of Balqūra¹⁷⁷ [

Guards of the Co[pts

Damūn[ah

Bahīwh [

Workme[n

Baqām [

Hū[r

The ...[

Qariyaqū[s

The ...[

...[

Slave[s (*mamālīk*)

...[

Th[e ...] ... [

¹⁷⁶ A *qisṭ*, from the Greek *xestes*, was a relatively small liquid measure. Although some historians have compared it with the pint, in reality the *qisṭ* seems to have been used for different capacities. See Vorderstrasse 2015: 209–211.

¹⁷⁷ The editor tentatively read Balqūra (see *PPrag.Arab.* 19 verso, commentary to line 1), but the village might also be identified as Balšūra near Sohag (for which, see *P.Mudun*, p. 178). In Arabic script, the medial *qāf* and *šād* can look similar.

7.4.5. Emancipation and thereafter

Only two published Arabic documents dating from the first two centuries of Muslim rule over Egypt explicitly refer to emancipation. In one, a will from 102/721, an owner states that he/she emancipated a slave for religious reasons.¹⁷⁸ For the other, see 288 below. A number of papyri document the relationship between former master and slave that resulted from emancipation. Unless emancipation was expressly unconditional for both master and slave (*tasyīb*, a legal institution abolished in the mid-second/eighth century),¹⁷⁹ it automatically resulted in *walā'*, 'patronage'. Patronage created a kinship-like relationship between the former master (now patron; *mawlā*) and the freedman (now client; also *mawlā*), that gave the emancipated slave many, but not all, of the rights enjoyed by freeborn Muslims.¹⁸⁰ *Walā'* served to affiliate non-tribal members of the Muslim community to the Muslims' tribal society, mainly regulating the payment of blood money and the distribution of inheritances.¹⁸¹

As a result, emancipation did not usually sever the social ties that existed between the former master and the freedman. Former slaves are recorded as maintaining a close relationship with their former masters and their family. In a legal document from 123/740, for example, a *mawlā* called Salām testifies to the clearance of someone's financial obligations to his former master.¹⁸² Another legal document, *Chrest.Khoury* 2.22 (second/eighth century), records that Nahāma, a female *mawlā* of one 'Ā'isha ibnat 'Awf ibn Sulaymān al-Ḥaḍramī, bought a house for two of her patron's family members. It is important to note that emancipation did not result in an egalitarian relationship between former master and slave.¹⁸³ When they worked for their patrons,¹⁸⁴ clients could perform tasks associated with low social status, including slave status.¹⁸⁵ In *Chrest.Khoury* 1.98 (second/eighth century), for instance, a woman writes that she has sent her *mawlā*

178 Hanafi 2010. See also Brockopp 2000: 143–144.

179 For *tasyīb* in early and classical Islamic law, see Mitter 2006: 339–402 (for the core of her arguments, see Mitter 2001).

180 For an overview of the development of *walā'*, see Mitter 2006: 527–536.

181 *EF*, s.v. 'Mawlā', esp. p. 876.

182 David-Weill and Cahen 1978, no. 24 (provenance unknown).

183 Crone 1987: 43 is therefore right to see early *walā'* as a relationship of dependence. Gordon 2011: 77 makes a similar observation for third/ninth- and fourth/tenth-century Iraq.

184 This must not be understood as *paramone* (for which, see 7.2.4 above). Hallaq (1990) and Mitter (2006: 535) strongly criticised Crone's (1987: 64–76) argument that some form of *paramone* existed in early Islamic law and influenced *kitāba* (pay-off emancipation).

185 For ethnicity-based social inequality between patrons and clients, see Tillier 2011: 365–366 and Bouderbala 2014: 146–147.

as a courier.¹⁸⁶ *P.Cair.Arab.* 4.249 (second/eighth or third/ninth century) records that a certain Bukayr, the freedman of one Sufyān, worked as a servant (*ghulām*) of someone called Ibn ‘Amr. Yet, often depending on the patron’s social standing, *walā’* could also allow former slaves and their offspring to reach positions of authority.¹⁸⁷ In Arabic documents, men of slave descent are attested as governors and financial directors, and possibly as pagarchs.¹⁸⁸ Third/ninth-century and later historians record the servile background of religious authorities, such as Yazīd ibn Abī Ḥabīb (d. 128/745), whose father was a Nubian captive.¹⁸⁹

Bibliography: Bouderbala 2014; Brockopp 2000: 147–158; Juda 2005; Mitter 2001, 2006; Onimus 2005; Pipes 1981.

288. A former master’s death and the uncertain future of a freedman

P.JoySorrow 17, side A

TM 871454

Written and found: Egypt

Date: second/eighth century

Material: papyrus

Location: Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Michaelides Collection, inv. A 1355

Wusāma ibn Ṭalq informs a woman named Zaynab ibnat Abī Ziyād that her father, Abū Ziyād, has died. He describes how Abū Ziyād’s emancipated slave Muqassam (‘Beautifully Shaped’) took care of his former master and presses her to take good care of Muqassam. Because most early Islamic jurists held that a daughter did not inherit her father’s patronage rights and duties (they were transferred to his male agnates),¹⁹⁰ Zaynab’s support of Muqassam probably depended solely on her goodwill.

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

From Wusāma ibn Ṭalq, to Zaynab ibnat Abī Ziyād. [Peace] be upon you. I praise [for you] God, [beside] Whom there is no god. Further, let me inform you about our news. We are well and in good health, as will delight you – praise be

¹⁸⁶ See *P.MuslimState* 25 (first half of the second/eighth century), line 6, for another freedman doing courier work.

¹⁸⁷ For the first fifty or so years of Islam, see Gilli-Elewy 2000: 147–149; for the early Abbasid period, see Gordon 2011.

¹⁸⁸ See Abbott 1965: 25–26 for ‘Ubayd Allāh ibn al-Ḥabḥāb’s slave descent. One ‘Ḥāzim, the *mawlā* of Abū Mūsā’ and a colleague, who were ‘agents (sing. *‘āmil*) of the governor ‘Abd al-Malik ibn Yazīd over the district of Manf (Memphis)’, issued two safe conducts in 133/750–751 (Rāġib 1997: nos. 5 and 6).

¹⁸⁹ E.g. Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam 1922: 188; al-Kindī 1912: 13.

¹⁹⁰ Mitter 2002: 428–430.

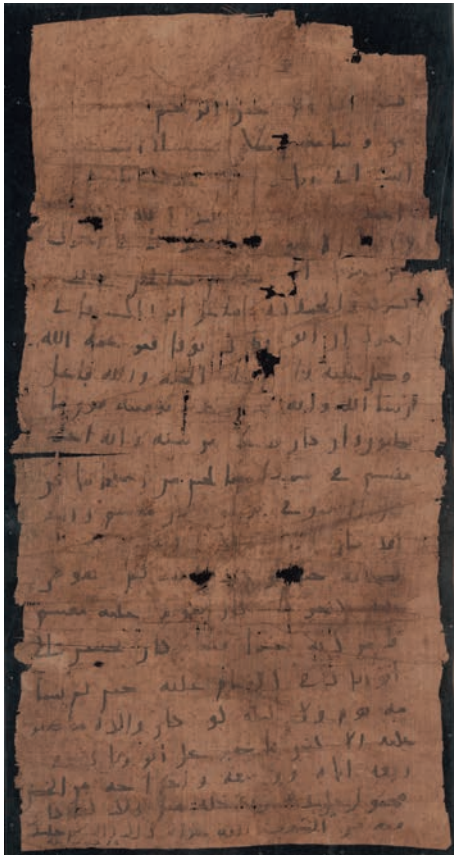


Figure 7.6 288. *P.JoySorrow* 17, side A. Cambridge University Library, Michaelides Collection inv. A 1355. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

to God. Next, I want to inform you that Abū Ziyād has died – may God have mercy upon him, bless him, and make him enter Paradise. God acts – God willing. We found his death to be beyond what you (or, they) expected even though he [...] due to his age. He eman[cipated] (*a'taqa*) Muqassam in the presence of two sound witnesses from among our companions a long time before he died. By God, Muqassam truly was [...] concerning that. He gave him good company. Ev[en] had you been there (in his place), you would not have taken care of him in the way Muqassam took care of him. Therefore, I command you to treat him well, given his good treatment of Abū Ziyād, by taking care of him even though he (i.e. Abū Ziyād) did not impose upon him (i.e. Muqassam) a day or a night (of caretaking). He would not have shown as much patience to his own father as he showed to Abū Ziyād, lifting him and putting him down, taking him out of the cottage, carried by hand, and bringing him back in in the same way when he was weak. May God reward him for that. Peace be upon you and God's mercy.

289. Using patronage to one's own end

CPR 16.9

TM 168977

Written and found: Egypt**Date:** first half of the second/eighth century**Material:** papyrus**Location:** Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, inv. A.P. 2154 verso

Suwayd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz asks his patron Abū Idrīs to help him obtain 200 *faddāns* (~ 2.2 km²) of agricultural land.¹⁹¹ The presence of Suwayd's Muslim patronymic indicates that he himself was neither a freedman nor a convert affiliated to a patron. Abū Idrīs's patronage probably originated in the emancipation of one of Suwayd's parents, probably his father.¹⁹² The document illustrates the potential of (the offspring of) a former slave for upward social mobility.

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

To my patron (*mawlā*) Abū Idrīs – may God preserve him – from his client (*mawlā*) Suwayd ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz. Peace be upon you. I praise for you God, beside Whom there is no god. Further – may God grant you health, preserve you and bestow His bounty upon you in all matters of this world and the next. I inform you – may God grant enjoyment through you – that you should write for me to your partner [...] for an allowance of 100 *faddāns* in his village, (to which I am?) entitled, and that you would treat me well by also writing for me to 'Isā ibn 'Afīf for (an allowance of) 100 *faddāns* in his village, too, so that I can ask God for my patron (*mawlā*) His beautiful preservation [...]

290. A begging letter addressed to a former mistress

P.Berl.Arab. 2.73 recto

TM 169344

Written: unknown**Found:** Hermopolis**Date:** second/eighth century**Material:** papyrus**Location:** Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, P. 24033

A woman asks her former mistress to give her some linen, putting emphasis on their patronage relationship so as to play upon the addressee's emotions. On the verso, the sender wrote an exhortation using the same strategy: '[Do not ignore, O Umm] Ḥabāb, a request from your client (*mawlā*)!'

¹⁹¹ In early Islamic Egypt, 1 *faddān* equalled 4 *arouras* or 11,025 m²; see the introduction to CPR 22.31 and Bagnall 2009b: 185–186.

¹⁹² On inheriting servile and contractual *walā'*, see Crone 1987: 38 and 40.

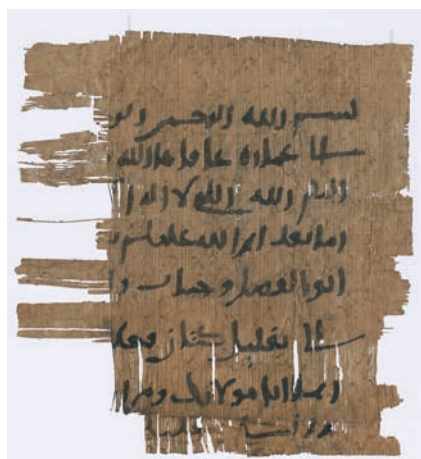


Figure 7.7 290. *P.Berl.Arab. 2.73 recto.* © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Photo: Archiv, P. 24033r.

In the name of God, Merciful and Compassionate.

To ‘Ammāra – may God preserve her – [from N.N. Peace be upon you. I praise] for you God, [beside Whom] there is no god.

Further – may God bestow [His bounty] upon you, [and may He preserve you and preserve for you] Abū al-Faḍl, Ḥabāb, and [N.N. If you see fit to send] me some linen, be so [kind to do that – God willing]. For I am your client (*mawlā*) and belong to [your people]! Peace be upon you [and God’s mercy and His blessings].

7.4.6. Epilogue: Arabic documents from the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries

Compared to the available Arabic documentary sources for slavery in the first two centuries of Muslim rule over Egypt, source material increases and diversifies in the third/ninth and succeeding centuries. Perhaps the most distinguishing feature of third/ninth- and fourth/tenth-century sources relevant to the present theme is their inclusion of legal material. Among published legal documents, records of the purchase of slaves take prime place. Seventeen such records predating the fifth/eleventh century have now been published,¹⁹³ one of which is a template document.¹⁹⁴ These documents not only record the names of the merchant and buyer, the price of the slave, and the date of the sale, but often also the slave’s name, origins, and physical condition.¹⁹⁵ In addition to documents recording slave sales, emancipation records are another type of Arabic legal document of which

¹⁹³ Rāḡib 2002–2006; Vanthieghem 2014; Bruning 2020, no. 5.

¹⁹⁴ Vanthieghem 2014, no. 2 (late third/ninth century).

¹⁹⁵ For an elaborate analysis of the contents of these documents, see Rāḡib 2002–2006, vol. 2.

we only have Egyptian examples from the third/ninth and succeeding centuries (compare from earlier periods **164, 165**). Currently, four such documents have been published. They record immediate emancipation (*‘itq*) and emancipation after the owner’s death (*tadbīr*).¹⁹⁶ In this context, reference should also be made to *P.Marchands* 5/1.21 (third/ninth century), in which a slave who has an emancipation (*kitāba*) contract asks the Egyptian governor to contribute to the financing of his emancipation. Documents from the third/ninth and fourth/tenth century also record people proceeding before legal authorities in order to procure rights for slaves and kidnapped persons,¹⁹⁷ the donation of slaves as charitable endowments,¹⁹⁸ and the bequest of slaves.¹⁹⁹ A marriage contract from 279/892 stipulates that the wife has the right to set free or sell every slave woman her husband ‘takes beside her’ – a clause meant to prevent her husband from engaging in concubinage.²⁰⁰ The availability of legal treatises and compendia dating from the end of the second/eighth century at the earliest allow for a study of the relationship between legal theory and practice.²⁰¹

There is an equal wealth of third/ninth- and fourth/tenth-century material beyond the legal sphere. A number of texts belong to private archives, which provide a context that documents from the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries often lack. Especially interesting are documents from the large private archive of the third/ninth-century Banū ‘Abd al-Mu’min, textile merchants in the Fayyum.²⁰² Other, smaller archives are equally worth investigating.²⁰³ References to slaves running errands,²⁰⁴ assisting their masters in trade,²⁰⁵ receiving harsh

196 *PRyl.Arab.* 1, para. 15.66.b (third/ninth century); Grohmann 1935, no. 7 (304/916); *PCair.Arab.* 1.37 = *PWorld*, p. 189 = *Chrest.Khoury* 1.21 (393/1003); and the template document *Chrest.Khoury* 2.34 (third/ninth century).

197 *PHeid.Arab.* 3.28 and *PVind.Arab.* 3.64, both dated to the fourth/tenth century.

198 *PCair.Arab.* 2.119 (348/960).

199 David-Weill 1965, no. 6 verso (211/827).

200 *PCair.Arab.* 1.41.

201 Examples of studies bringing together documentary and literary sources on slave law (amongst others) are Abū Šafiyya 2007 and Rāḡib 2002–2006. See now also Franz 2017.

202 For bibliographical references, see Grob 2010: 15–16; for a study of this archive, see Younes 2013.

203 Such as a late third/ninth- or early fourth/tenth-century merchant archive excavated in Edfu; see David-Weill 1931 and Rāḡib 1978b, no. 1.

204 Among many documents, see *CPR* 16.25, *PBerl.Arab.* 2.41 and 62, *PCair.Arab.* 6.388 and 404, *PGiss.Arab.* 13, *PKhalili* 1.17 (all dated to the third/ninth century); *PCair.Arab.* 5.361 and *PVind.Arab.* 2.17 (third/ninth or fourth/tenth century); Vanthieghem 2016b (341/952–953) and *PCair.Arab.* 5.300 (fourth/tenth century).

205 Rāḡib 1978a, no. 7 (third/ninth century); *PRyl.Arab.* 1, para. 6.18 = *PWorld*, 180 (third/ninth or fourth/tenth century).

treatment, or running away²⁰⁶ raise questions of long-term social patterns. Private and public texts concerning the maintenance of slaves,²⁰⁷ documenting their legal capacity to possess property,²⁰⁸ or recording their burial²⁰⁹ allow us to study their social and legal integration in more depth than we can for the preceding two centuries.

Many of these texts still await a proper analysis. Material for comparison is available, fortunately. Domestic slavery documented in the fifth/eleventh- and sixth/twelfth-century Genizah records has been studied, most recently by Frenkel and Perry.²¹⁰ Gaubert and Mouton have studied slavery in documents from the fifth/eleventh-century Fayyum.²¹¹ But above all, a study of documents from third/ninth- and fourth/tenth-century Egypt will contribute to the growing debate on slavery elsewhere in the contemporary Abbasid Near East (especially in Iraq), for which documentary sources are lacking and the available literary sources concentrate on the highest echelons of society.²¹²

206 *Chrest.Khoury* 1.80 and *PHamb.Arab.* 2.13 (both third/ninth century).

207 E.g. *P.Marchands* 5/1.23 (third/ninth century) refers to clothing a slave girl (*jāriya*; line 5). The sender of *P.Marchands* 5/1.23 (third/ninth century) wrote that he 'sent to you a bundle of fourteen pieces of cloth from the maintenance (*naḥaqa*) of Mubārak at the price of 2 *dinars*'. This Mubārak also appears in *P.Marchands* 2.2 and 13.

208 E.g. *P.Berl.Arab.* 2.29 (third/ninth century) records that a servant (*ghulām*) named Aflaḥ ('Cracked-Lipped') or Aflaj ('Gappy Teeth') was indebted for 1 *dinar*; *Chrest.Khoury* 2.28 = *CPR* 21.10 (c. 244–274/858–888) is a land lease for one 'Ḥusayn the servant (*ghulām*) of Ibrāhīm ibn 'Alī'. See also *PHamb.Arab.* 1.15 (third/ninth century) and *PPrag.Arab.* 32 (third/ninth or fourth/tenth century).

209 Tombstones from the third/ninth and fourth/tenth century document the death and burial of quite a number of slaves and freedmen. The majority of these tombstones are published in Hawary et al. 1932–1942 and 'Abd al-Tawwāb 1977–1986; older publications are republished in Combe et al. 1931–1991.

210 E.g. Frenkel 2011, 2017; C. Perry 2014, 2017b, 2020. See also Goitein 1962, Goitein 1967–1993: 1, 130–147.

211 Gaubert and Mouton 2014: 267–271.

212 The need for the inclusion of the Egyptian documentary material has been stressed a number of times, e.g. Perry 2017a: 135–136 and Gordon 2017: 2.