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Cromwell, Jennifer (2020) Textiles in Shenoute's Writings. In: The Textile Centre Akhmin-Panopolis (Egypt) in Late Antiquity. Material Evidence for Continuity and Change in Society, Religion, Industry, and Trade. Reichert Verlag. ISBN 978-3-95490-401-3

Publisher: Reichert Verlag

Version: Accepted Version

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Textiles in Shenoute's Writings

Jennifer A. Cromwell

In stark contrast to the volume of textiles from the Akhmîm region, very few Coptic texts are known from the area. Of the ten documents attributed to Akhmîm, only one concerns textiles in any way. Yet, while wool is the topic of this ostracon, now in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, nothing is learned from it about the local textile industry.[1] Documents are not, however, the only Coptic written sources from the Panopolite nome.[2] A large volume of the writings of Shenoute, the famous fourth- and fifth-century monastic leader of the White and Red Monasteries, survives.[3] Among his works, *Canons* 6 and 8 are especially illuminative of the production of textiles within his monastic federation,[4] while passages scattered throughout the rest of his *Canons* directly present rules and regulations concerning clothing and other textiles. What follows presents the information that can be gleaned from Shenoute's writings, the range of terms found, the difficulties involved in their interpretation, and the roles textiles played in the economic life of the monastery. Focussing solely on the texts by one individual allows examination of the vocabulary employed in a single time and place, avoiding problems of regional and chronological differences in usage.

Textile terminology: Shenoute's writings

No book of rules by Shenoute survives. Rather, the rules of the federation, as set down by his predecessor Pcol and himself, have been extracted from his surviving *Canons* by Bentley Layton (as well as writings by his successor, Besa).[5] These regulations concern all aspects of daily life in his federation, for men, women, and children. In total, 33 of the collected 595 rules mention textiles or textile production in some capacity: Rule 14, 40, 47, 72, 90, 100, 101, 211, 216, 263, 278, 282, 299, 300, 301, 312, 313, 316, 343, 352, 254, 359, 376, 390, 394, 416, 423, 463, 472, 544, 557,

[1] *CPR* XXXI 1. More, instead, is learned from this text about the defrauding of coins, as witnesses provide statements declaring that the two gold coins (Coptic *holokottinos*; i. e., *solidus*) paid for the wool are not of the correct weight.
[2] This paper does not examine the Greek evidence, for which see Bogensperger's contribution to this volume.
[3] On Shenoute's *Canons* and *Discourses*, see S. Emmel, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus* (Leuven, 2004).
[4] *Canon* 6 will not be examined here for reasons of space; see the discussion in R. Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery: Egyptian Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Oxford, 2002), 46 and partial translations on p. 200 (n. 136) and 201 (nn. 142–46). Briefly, this section concerns the production of cloaks for the monks by members of the female congregation. Problems with the garments are reported, primarily that they were ill-fitting, due to the fact that the women would not allow the men to enter their congregation to get measured. For *Canon* 8, see A. Boud'hors, *Le Canon 8 de Chénoute* (Cairo, 2013): edition of the text, as preserved in an eighth century codex in the collection of the Institut français d'archéologie orientale (Ifao); the relevant passages are found in pages 63 to 68 of the codex ('My heart is not crushed').
[5] B. Layton, *The Canons of Our Fathers: The Monastic Rules of Shenoute* (Oxford, 2014); for the compilation of his rules, see especially pp. 3–5 and 35–41. All rules mentioned in this paper refer to Layton's numbering and, except for minor changes – mainly connected with textile terminology – I follow his translations.

585, ad 589.[6] Textiles – primarily garments but also furnishings – appear in many of these rules only in passing, as examples of goods subject to the stated rule, e.g., theft, personal property, covetous behaviour, and the production and sale of goods. Of all Shenoute's writings, *Canon* 8 contains the most detailed information regarding a single garment. A considerable part discusses the creation of this garment for Shenoute by members of the female community and the problems involved in the process. Seeming contradictions appear between Shenoute's ideal in his rules and the production of what seems to be a high-quality, beautiful item.

Table 1 presents all terms for textiles or connected to them within the rules and *Canon* 8. Most of the terms are Coptic, with only a small number of Greek loanwords. As already mentioned, the majority of these terms are for garments, although a smaller number are for raw materials (ⲉⲓⲁⲁⲩ 'linen', ⲥⲟⲣⲧ 'wool'), furnishings (ⲧⲙⲏ 'mat', ϣⲟⲧ 'pillow'), qualities (ⲁⲩⲁⲛ 'colour'), or processes (ⲣ̅-ϩⲱⲃ ϩⲙ̅ ⲡϩⲁⲙ ⲛⲧⲱⲡ 'worked by needle', ⲥⲱϩⲉ 'to weave', ϫⲱⲗⲕ 'to sew'). Rule 216 concerns funerary textiles, comprising sheets (ϩⲃⲟⲟⲥ) and tapes (ⲕⲉⲓⲣⲉⲁ), with which the body is to be provided.[7] Of the rest of the terms, two dominate the record: ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ (twice in *Canon* 8 and in 19 rules) and ⲡⲣⲏϣ (in 11 rules). They occur together in nine rules, and their regularity suggests that they comprised the two key garments worn by monastics.[8] Particularly illuminative in this respect is rule 312, which states that each of these items should be worn until they are worn out, by everybody living within the community. It is possibly therefore appropriate, at least in monastic (if not only Shenoutean) contexts, to translate ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ as tunic, i.e., a monk's basic garment, and ⲡⲣⲏϣ as the cowl or shawl.[9] This proposal does not diverge much from the standard understandings of each term. ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ is a generic word for garment, but in a monastic context it refers to the most common garment, the tunic, and so translating it specifically in this context is unproblematic. As for ⲡⲣⲏϣ, it is typically translated as a mantle or blanket (depending on context

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[6] I do not include here the term ⲥⲭⲏⲙⲁ (which occurs in rule 125), which refers to monastic garb rather than specific textiles and can be used metaphorically. The number of passages that deal with clothing stands in contrast to the single rule in the Pachomian regulations, rule 81: 'This is their equipment: two linen tunics plus the one already worn, a long scarf for the neck and shoulders, a goat skin hanging from the shoulder, shoes, two hoods, a belt, and a staff'; translation from A. Veileux, *Pachomian Koinonia. Volume Two: Pachomian Chronicles and Rules* (Oxford, 1981), 159–60. Unfortunately, no Coptic version of this rule survives, against which the terminology in Shenoute's texts could be compared.

[7] Layton erroneously translated ⲕⲉⲣⲉⲁ / κερία as 'candle' (which should rather be κηρός); for this correction, see J. Cromwell, 'The Threads that Bind Us: Aspects of Textile Production in Late Antique Thebes,' in C. Di Biase-Dyson and L. Donovan (eds), *The Cultural Manifestations of Religious Experience. Studies in Honour of Boyo G. Ockinga* (Münster, 2017), 214. These tapes are only used in a funerary context; Cromwell, in Di Biase-Dyson *et al*. (eds), *Cultural Manifestations* examines the production of sheets and tapes for burials in western Thebes.

[8] Rules 72, 312, 313, 354, 390, 423, 472, 585, and 589.

[9] A cowl from the monastery of the Archangel Gabriel in Naqlûn, belonging to a certain Papa Kolthi (i.e., Colluthos) and measuring 78 cm (height) by 66 cm (width) is now part of the Louvre's collection (E26799); see M. Durand and F. Saragoza, *Égypte, la traume de l'Histoire. Textiles pharaoniques, coptes et islamiques* (Paris, 2002), 129–30 (#95); C. Fluck, G. Helmecke, and E. R. O'Connell (eds), *Egypt: Faith After the Pharaohs* (London, 2015), 115 (fig. 128); J. van der Vliet, 'A Naqlûn Monk Brought Home. On the Provenance of Louvre inv. E. 26798–26799,' *BSAC* 39 (2000), 239–44. However, a note of caution is required in using this as an example for the appearance of cowls in Shenoute's federation: in addition to being from the Fayum, it is dated to the 10th / 11th centuries.

of use), but 'cowl' or 'shawl' (with the former incorporating a hood element) provide greater specificity, again within this context (note that I use 'cowl' throughout for the sake of simplicity).[10] The term is derived from the verb ⲡⲱⲣϣ 'to spread' and so refers to something spread; the long length of the cowl, with its pointed hood, or shawl fits this description (as opposed to a separate hood that covers just the head, the ⲕⲗⲁϥⲧ or ⲕⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲗⲗⲓⲟⲛ, discussed below).

The only rules in which ⲡⲣⲏϣ occurs without ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ are 40 and 263. In these two rules, it is more likely that garments are not intended but coverings: in rule 40, the ⲡⲣⲏϣ is mentioned after a pillow, as part of a number of items that can be given in times of sickness, while in rule 263 it occurs in conjunction with a bed and sleeping quarter.[11] This duel use of a single word reflects the problems inherent in dealing with textile terminology, which will be discussed in the following section. However, context is key, especially when the context is clear.

In her study of clothing terms in Coptic non-literary texts, Anne Boud'hors notes that the terms ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ and ϣⲧⲏⲛ can be used interchangeably.[12] The use of the two terms in the rules makes it difficult to determine if this is the case, as the latter term only occurs once: rule 301 forbids the hem of the ϣⲧⲏⲛ-garment's sleeve from covering the palms during the Eucharist.[13] That the two terms never appear together in the rules may indicate that they were synonymous. However, *Canon* 8 provides a slightly different picture. Here, ϣⲧⲏⲛ appears together with ⲡⲣⲏϣ (page 66), but otherwise ϣⲧⲏⲛ and ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ appear in contexts in which they could mean either 'tunic' or more generally 'clothes' (e.g., page 65: ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ϩⲉⲛϣⲧⲏ(ⲛ) ⲉⲧⲁⲁⲩ ϩⲓⲱⲱⲧ 'concerning garments to wear'[14]). Just as a consistent pattern seems to appear within the works of one individual, things become less so. However, while this stands as a cautionary tale about how to approach the written sources, it does not detract from the wealth of evidence available.

Table 1: Textile Terminology in Shenoute's Rules and *Canon* 8

Term	Language	Translation	Source
ⲁⲩⲁⲛ	Coptic	colour	Canon 8.63
– ⲁⲩⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲥⲟⲧⲡ		exquisite colour	Canon 8.64

[10] W. E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford, 1939), 269b–71b.

[11] Rule 40: ϣⲁϩⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲩϣⲟⲧ ⲙⲛ ⲟⲩⲡⲣⲏϣ ⲙⲛ ⲟⲩⲡⲟⲓ ⲙⲛ ⲟⲩϩⲛⲃⲥ ϩⲙ ⲡⲉⲩϣⲱⲙⲉ 'even a pillow or cover or bench or lamp in the time of their sickness'. Rule 268: ⲉⲧⲣⲉϥϯ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛⲟⲩⲡⲣⲏϣ ⲛϩⲟⲩⲟ ⲏ ⲟⲩⲃⲗⲟⲃ ⲏ ⲟⲩⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲩⲛⲕⲟⲧⲕ ⲛϩⲏⲧϥ 'to give them an extra cover, or a bed, or a sleeping place'; the rule follows with mention of foodstuffs. Note that for each rule, I have modified Layton's translation (see n. 5), as he offered two readings of ⲡⲣⲏϣ in each instance.

[12] A. Boud'hors, 'Vêtements et textiles à usages divers: terms coptes,' *GRAFMA* 1 (1997), 23, notes the interchangeable nature of the two terms, especially in *P.Ryl.Copt*. 244; Boud'hors' observations are discussed further below.

[13] On the use of ⲧⲟⲡ as 'hem' rather than 'border' (as translated by Layton), see the discussion below on rule 299.

[14] Here, the pronoun makes it clear that the clothes are Shenoute's, literally 'to put on me', and it may refer to many items of clothing.

ϵιααγ	Coptic	linen	Rule 316
κερεα / κειρία	Greek	tape, bandage	Rule 216
κλαϥτ	Coptic	hood, cowl	Rule 72, 585, 589
κογκογλλιον / κουκούλιον	Greek	hood	Rule 299, 300
λοογ	Coptic	tassel	Canon 8.65, 66, 67, 68
μογϲ – μογϲ ντοογϵ	Coptic	belt, girdle sandal-thong	Rule 90, 585 Rule 589
μοϫϩ	Coptic	belt, girdle	Rule 14
πρηϣ	Coptic	cowl?	Rule 40, 72, 263, 312, 313, 354, 390, 423, 472, 585, 589
ρϣων – ρϣων ⲛ̄ϣορπ	Coptic	cloak special cloak	Canon 8.63, 66, 67, 68; Rule 72, 472 Canon 8.65
ϲωκ	Coptic	draw in	Rule 463
ϲϧιηϵ	Coptic	form	Canon 8.63
ϲωπϵ	Coptic	edge, fringe	Canon 8.67
ϲορτ	Coptic	wool	Rule 211
ϲωτ; ϲητ	Coptic	to spin / spun	Rule 299
ϲωϩϵ	Coptic	to weave	Rule 282
τϧη	Coptic	mat	Rule 278
τⲁⲛ	Coptic	uncertain; furnishing?	Rule 359
τοπ – τοπ ⲛϩοειτϵ	Coptic	hem, border, edge garment border or hem	Rule 301, 463; Canon 8.64 Canon 8.67, 68
τω(ω)τϵ	Coptic	fringe	Canon 8.65, 66, 67, 68; Rule 299
τοογϵ	Coptic	shoes	Rule 14, 72, 354, 585
ωϭρ	Coptic	tuck in	Rule 463
ϣααρ – ϣααρ ⲛϵϲοογ – ρϵϥρ-ϩωϐ ϵϣααρ	Coptic	skin, apron (?) fleece leather worker	Rule 14, 359 Rule 359 Rule 376
ϣοτ	Coptic	pillow	Rule 359
ϣτηⲛ	Coptic	garment, tunic (?)	Canon 8.65, 66, 69; Rule 301

ϩⲃⲥⲱ – ϩⲃⲟⲟⲥ	Coptic	covering, garment sheet	Rule 90, 472, 544 Rule 216
ϩⲁⲙ – ⲣ̅-ϩⲱⲃ ϩⲙ̅ ⲡϩⲁⲙ ⲛⲧⲱⲡ	Coptic	needle worked by needle	 Canon 8.64
ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ – ⲣⲉϥⲣ-ϩⲱⲃ ⲉϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ	Coptic	garment; tunic in monastic (Shenoutean) context seamster	Canon 8.67, 68; Rule 14, 47, 72, 100, 101, 312, 313, 343, 352, 254, 290, 294, 416, 423, 463, 472, 557, 585, 589 Rule 376
ϩⲩⲡⲟⲇⲏⲙⲁ / ὑπόδημα	Greek	sandal	Rule 544
ϩⲱⲥ	Coptic	cord	Rule 90, 299, 300, 585, 589
ϫⲟⲕ	Coptic	hair-cloth	Rule 316
ϫⲱⲗⲕ	Coptic	to sew	Canon 8.64; Rule 376
ϭⲟⲟⲗⲉⲥ	Coptic	veil	Canon 8.66
ϭⲁϭⲓⲧⲱⲛ	Coptic	coarse garment	Rule 352

Many rules simply list garments, and all the key items of monastic garb appear, including, in addition to the tunic and cowl, sandals, a belt, a fleece, and a leather apron.[15] While this can help deduce what the most common (or essential) items were, little is otherwise learned. A few rules go beyond simple lists, though, and give information about specific items. Rules 299 and 300, for example, are restrictions concerning the appearance of hoods (here ⲕⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲗⲗⲓⲟⲛ, elsewhere ⲕⲗⲁϥⲧ).[16] Rule 299 states:[17]

'No person among us shall attach a fringe/border (ⲧⲱⲧⲉ) spun (ⲥⲏⲧ) down from the cord (ϩⲱⲥ) of his hood (ⲕⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲗⲗⲓⲟⲛ). If someone is found to have attached more than two digits spun (ⲥⲏⲧ) down after the sewing (ϫⲱⲗⲕ) with which the cord (ϩⲱⲥ) is attached to its fellows, he shall be

[15] It is possible that ϣⲁⲁⲣ by itself also means fleece, rather than a leather apron; however, both elements appear in the artistic record (and see Fluck's paper in the current volume for such leather aprons in the archaeological record). All these elements occur in the Pachomium clothing regulations (see n. 6), which, as P. Rousseau, *Pachomius. The Making of a Community in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley, 1985), 120 states, 'can only be described as adequate and simple.'

[16] These two rules are the only ones in which the Greek designation, κουκούλιον, is used for hood. In the three other instances, Coptic ⲕⲗⲁϥⲧ is used. It may be significant that two of these occurrences (rules 585 and 589) were written by Besa; the use of terminology may be affected by the author of the rules. On the authorship of the rules, see Layton, *Canons*, 39–41.

[17] The relevant section of rule 300: 'no person among us shall wear a hood (ⲕⲟⲩⲕⲟⲩⲗⲗⲓⲟⲛ) without sewing (ϫⲱⲗⲕ) its cord (ϩⲱⲥ) into its fellows.'

censured like a person who has sinned against his soul in the desire of his heart. And he shall be treated according to his iniquity.'

Actual monks' hoods have survived in the archaeological record, yet understanding what is meant here is not easy. A hood, allegedly found in a grave in Esna and now in Berlin, has two short ties, the cords (ϩⲱⲥ) mentioned in the text.[18] As for the first element mentioned, which Layton translates as 'fringe/border', in this instance it may rather indicate a tassel, i.e., gathered yarn at the end of the cord, and so a decorative element, the length of which was restricted in order to limit the garment's ostentatiousness (on the meaning of ⲧⲱ(ⲱ)ⲧⲉ, see the following section).
Rule 463 stipulates how the tunic (ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ) is to be worn. The primary concern is that the elbows should be covered at all times and that its edges should not be rolled up or attached to the shoulders, with few exceptions (for example, should it be dangerous not to do so in certain working environments). If the sleeves are slightly long, it does not matter, as long as they cover the elbows.

'Therefore, no persons among us shall tuck in (ⲱϭⲣ) or draw in (ⲥⲱⲕ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ) the borders (ⲧⲟⲡ) of their garments (ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ) tied to their shoulders, for the sake of propriety. Rather, except for dire necessity when they are working with mud or some other job, the borders (ⲧⲟⲡ) of their garments (ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ) shall be covering their arms down to their elbows. If they cover an extra finger's width or two or if they are small or a bit full, because of the measure of the poor, cheap garments (ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ), it does not matter so long as they cover (ϩⲱⲃⲥ) their elbows.'

Here, in Layton's translation, ⲧⲟⲡ is translated as 'border', although perhaps it is best understood in this particular instance as 'hem', i.e., the end of the garment's sleeves.[19] This example raises the point that, when used in specific contexts, the general (or standard dictionary) meaning of words needs to be considered accordingly. How to understand ⲉⲩⲙⲏⲣ ϫⲁ ⲛⲉϥⲛⲁϩϩⲃ, which Layton translates 'tied to their neck/shoulders', is also important. Surely what is meant is that the sleeves are rolled or pushed up until they reach the shoulders, perhaps being tied somehow in place at this point (as ⲙⲏⲣ, from ⲙⲟⲩⲣ 'to bind, tie', would imply), and therefore revealing the elbows. This description of the length of the sleeves can be compared to images of monks in the restored

[18] Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst inv. 9924, see Fluck in the current volume. For what may be another hood, see Fluck, Helmecke, and O'Connell, *Faith after the Pharaohs*, 115 (fig. 127) and references therein.
[19] ⲧⲟⲡ generally means 'edge, end, border' (Crum, *Dictionary*, 422a–b); one issue with 'border' as a translation is that it suggests decoration.

paintings within the Red Monastery, in which sleeves are typically long (to the wrist, but gathering further up the forearm when the arm is raised).[20]

Beyond such examples as these, in which identification of the garment-type in question seems certain – especially as the context in which they were worn is known, it is often difficult to understand distinctions between terms and what item of clothing is meant. These problems are dealt with in the following section. Before turning to such issues, one final aspect in which the rules are clear will be discussed first.

Rule 312, already mentioned above, states that everybody dwelling in the congregations 'shall wear their tunics (ϩοειτε) and their cowls (πρηϣ) until they are worn out.' Rule 298 is broader, including all manner of goods within the community, but expresses the same sentiment. From the other perspective, several rules warn against desiring beautiful objects: rule 72, which emphasises the need for equality for all; rule 390, which prevents senior members of the community from embellishing their garments (compare similarly rule 299 mentioned above); and rule 544, which is against members beautifying themselves, as this is a form of boasting.

The events recorded in *Canon* 8 are therefore all the more surprising. A conflict arose between Shenoute and the women's community concerning a special cloak (ϥϣωⲛ ⲛ̄ϣορπ) that the women had made for him, of exquisite colour (ⲁⲅⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲥⲟⲧⲡ) and with embellishments (ⲧⲱⲱⲧⲉ and ⲗⲟⲟⲩ). Shenoute had neglected the cloak (or it had been eaten by moths, as he instead claimed) and required a new one. This replacement cloak was of inferior quality, in Shenoute's opinion, but his protests are derided as being excessive. While on the one hand this conflict provides insights into life in the monastery, it serves a more serious function, as an introduction to other issues, including an increase in expulsions from the monastery and an evaluation of Shenoute's own leadership.[21]

Textile Terminology: Difficulties of Interpretation

The problems with understanding clothing terminology in Coptic is well-known, to the extent that Layton stated clearly that he would not attempt to provide exact translations of the terms that occur in the rules.[22] In her study of clothing and textile terminology in Coptic non-literary texts, Anne Boud'hors made several observations:

- There is a large number of Greek loanwords.
- It is often difficult to precisely translate terms and to know to what they refer.

[20] See, for example, images in E. S. Bolman (ed.) *The Red Monastery Church: Beauty and Asceticism in Upper Egypt* (New Haven, 2016), XXVI (fig. 1.4: Shenoute = Fluck, fig. *** in this volume), 10 (fig. 2.1: Pshoi, founder of the Red Monastery), 14 (fig. 2.3: Besa, Shenoute's successor). Shenoute's statement is slightly different to that presented by John Cassian in *De institutis* 1.4, in which the sleeves of the tunic barely reach the elbows.

[21] A more detailed discussion of this aspect of *Canon* 8 is available in Krawiec, *Shenoute*, 47–9.

[22] Layton, *Canons*, 97 n. 4: 'Because the exact distinctions among Coptic garment names are uncertain, these words have mostly been left untranslated.'

- Some terms may be used interchangeably.
- As a result of the literary and iconographic sources, monastic clothing is better understood than that of laity and in non-literary sources, especially lists, distinguishing between the two is not always easy.[23]

One way in which Shenoute's texts differ in comparison to the non-literary texts that Boud'hors studied is the low number of Greek loanwords. There are only three Greek terms within the corpus under study here: κειρία 'tape', κουκούλιον 'hood', and ὑπόδημα 'sandal'. A Coptic synonym only appears in the corpus for the second term (ⲕⲗⲁⲕⲧ), as discussed above. The problem of dealing with synonyms in multiple languages is therefore not an issue. As Boud'hors also notes, the topic of monastic clothing has the advantage of a wider range of complementary evidence (literary sources, art, textile remains). The issues of precision in understanding and the interchangeability of terms are relevant, though.

The need for context-specific consideration of terms has already been discussed above, in the case of ⲧⲟⲡ as 'hem' rather than 'border'. The term also occurs in *Canon* 8.67, when Shenoute is justifying his request for decoration of his cloak: 'If the Scriptures ordain that tassels (ⲧⲱⲱⲧⲉ) and fringes (ⲗⲟⲟⲩ) are on the hems(?) (ⲧⲟⲡ) of garments (ⲣⲟⲩⲧⲉ) of those who carefully pay attention to their deeds …'[24] Does ⲧⲟⲡ also mean 'hem' in this instance, or any part of the garment? *Canon* 8's editor, Anne Boud'hors, translates this passage as 'Si les Écritures ordonnent qu'il y ait des franges et des houppes aux pans des vêtements de ceux qui prêtent attention à leurs paroles avec assiduité': 'pans des vêtements' refers to a piece or section of the garment. Examination of surviving decorated tunics might help clarify the terminology.

The other terms within this short passage also require consideration. Whereas in the rules ⲣⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ seems to be used consistently for tunics, in this passage it is rather a general designation, as already mentioned. As Boud'hors notes, 'Ce terme a un sens assez générique' and it is typically translated simply as 'garment'.[25] Shortly after this passage, on page 68, ⲣⲟⲩⲧⲉ appears in opposition to ⲣⲱⲱⲛ (ⲛ̄ⲧⲱⲱⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲣⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲉⲣⲱⲱ(ⲛ̄) 'tassels of garments/tunics or cloaks'), while on page 66 ⲱⲧⲏⲛ and ⲣⲱⲱⲛ are both described as being twisted or plaited (ⲣⲱⲗⲕ). It is tempting to therefore to differentiate ⲣⲟⲩⲧⲉ and ⲱⲏⲧⲛ in that the first is dissimilar to cloaks and the latter is similar, but this may be reading more into the use of the terms in this text than was intended. After all, the use of 'sweater', 'jumper', 'pullover', and 'sweatshirt' in English all refer to basically the same item, and their use typically reflects British or American English, while modifiers such as 'crewneck' and 'turtleneck' reflect relatively minor differences (here, in neckline), and 'Aran', 'Fair Isle', and

[23] Boud'hors, *GRAFMA* 1, 27–8.
[24] An allusion to Num. 15:38 and the adornment of garments with tassels, with a blue cord on each tassel; could the two terms in the Coptic, in this instance, be Shenoute's attempt to refer to both the tassels and the cord?
[25] Boud'hors, *GRAFMA* 1, 23; Crum, *Dictionary*, 720b.

'Fisherman's' indicate decorative styles. Searching for significant and consistent distinctions may be a futile effort, and understanding subtleties in ancient texts is no easier.

The two other terms in this passage, ⲧⲱⲱⲧⲉ and ⲗⲟⲟⲩ refer to embellishments to the garment. In my English translation above, I translate them respectively as 'tassels' and 'fringes', following from the discussion of ⲧⲱⲱⲧⲉ on hoods. Alternatively, Anne Boud'hors, in her edition of *Canon* 8, translates them as 'ses franges and ses houppes', i.e., fringes and tassels, and so inverting the translations. In her earlier study of clothing and textile terminology, Boud'hors offers the translation 'vêtement à franges?' for the use of ⲗⲟⲟⲩ in *P.Ryl.Copt*. 244 (a list of garments).[26] As the two terms occur together, they must be distinct from one another, but how great is the difference between the two?

Besides its use with textiles, ⲗⲟⲟⲩ, can be used for hair curls (whether on the head or beard), rings or links in chains, and bunches or clusters of dates.[27] Translating ⲗⲟⲟⲩ as fringe is therefore appropriate, especially as the word is inherently connected with curls and loops. On the other hand, ⲧⲱ(ⲱ)ⲧⲉ, is connected with borders.[28] One wonders whether it could be derived from the verb ⲧⲟⲟⲩⲧⲉ, 'to gather, collect' or 'to be gathered, collected', and so maybe several lengths of material gathered together.[29] Perhaps the important distinction is the presence of loops, and so the designation could simply be 'looped-fringes' and 'straight-fringes'.[30]

Textiles and Engagement with External Communities

As monasteries grew in size, their economic impact as well as their religious impact on surrounding communities increased. The sale of textiles between monks and to the lay population is discussed in several rules. Rule 14 prohibits members from stealthily making items and selling them, whether books, tunics (ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ), shoes (ⲧⲟⲟⲩⲉ), aprons (ϣⲁⲁⲣ), or girdles (ⲙⲟϫϩ). Similarly, rule 376 states that no members with skills in a range of crafts will be able to produce goods for sale, including a seamster (ⲣⲉϥⲣ-ϩⲱⲃ ⲉϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ). Both of these rules place a prohibition on individual

[26] *O.Ryl.Copt*. 244.10: ⲟⲩⲗⲟⲟⲩ ⲙⲡⲁⲗⲙⲉⲛⲏⲛ ⲛⲁⲓⲣⲓⲟⲛ, which its editor, Walter Crum, translated as 'A palm-embroidered garment of goat's hair' ('palm-embroidered' is Crum's suggestion for πάλμενος, which is otherwise unattested). In this translation, Crum simply translates ⲗⲟⲟⲩ as a garment of unspecified type, yet it is possible that it has been written (or read by Crum) for the similar word ⲗⲁⲁⲩ (Crum, *Dictionary*, 145b–6a), used either for a specific raw material or a finished textile.

[27] Crum, *Dictionary*, 147b.

[28] Crum, *Dictionary*, 439b.

[29] Crum, *Dictionary*, 447b–8b.

[30] A. Boud'hors and M. Durand, 'Les terms du textile en langue copte,' in M. Durand and F. Saragoza (eds), *Égypte, la trame de l'Histoire. Textiles pharaoniques, coptes et islamiques* (Paris, 2002), 106 stated that the context confirms the translation for different textile terms that appear, using the example ϣⲧⲏⲛ ⲉⲥϫⲓ ⲧⲟⲧⲉ ⲙⲡⲥⲁ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ, which they translate as 'tunique ayant des franges de chaque côté'. However, rather than having fringes on each side, ⲧⲟⲧⲉ could refer to borders along each side: the context does not confirm the precise form of decoration involved. Note: the authors do not provide a reference for this passage, which is cited in Crum 1939, 439b; it comes from *The Repose of Saint John the Evangelist and Apostle*, British Library Or. 6782 fol. 6 col. 1, that is, page 9 of the codex; see the edition in E. A. W. Budge, *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London, 1913), 55.

brothers selling goods, but this must only mean for their own gain. Rule 316 makes it clear that the monastery did sell goods and stipulates conditions under which they could be sold; 'all things of every craft' (ϩωв ⲛⲓⲙ ϩⲛ ⲧⲉⲭⲛⲏ ⲛⲓⲙ) includes linen (ⲉⲓⲁⲁϒ) and hair-cloth (ϫⲟⲕ):

'And they shall not sell any of them until they are of good quality, and until those who construct them show clearly that those to whom we sell them shall not despise the name of God on our account, and that we are not going to charge a reduced or bad price for them. And if we happen to sell some things that have only partially been finished, we shall sell them for what they are worth, and shall inform the buyers that they come from the siblings who are learning.'

The brethren certainly had the facilities to produce commodities on site, and the networks within which to sell them to external communities.[31] Missing are the letters, contracts, and receipts that provide the evidence for their price or the services for which they were used as payments.
In this respect, non-literary sources from other monasteries provide evidence for the economic importance of textiles. In the neighbouring Antaiopolite nome, from the monastic complex of Apa Thomas built within Wadi Sarga, hundreds of short documents were discovered that document its day-to-day operations, especially its economic administration.[32] Garments are named among various items as payment for different services in work contracts. In one contract between the monastery and a carpenter (*O.Sarga* 161), the carpenter receives payment in grain, fodder, wine, and three items of clothing: a sleeveless or short-sleeved tunic or outer-garment (ϫⲱⲃⲓⲧⲱⲛ; Greek λεβίτων[33]), sandals (ⲥⲁⲛⲧⲁⲗⲉ; Greek σάνδαλον), and a coarse garment made from sackcloth

[31] For the economic involvement of Pachomius' monasteries with local communities, see J. E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society, and the Desert. Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg, PA, 1999), 47–8.
[32] Dating the Wadi Sarga corpus is difficult, as no document contains an absolute date; its main period of activity was probably the 6th and 7th centuries, although fragments of Arabic documents and evidence for taxation indicate that it was also active in the 8th century. For the monastery, see E. R. O'Connell, 'R. Campbell Thompson's 1913/14 excavation of Wadi Sarga and other sites,' *BMSAES* 21 (2014), 121–92, and E. R. O'Connell, 'Wadi Sarga at the British Museum: Sources for study (with annotated bibliography),' in P. Buzi, A. Complani, and F. Contardi (eds), *Coptic society, literature and religion from Late Antiquity to modern times: Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies, Rome, September 17th–22nd, 2012, and plenary reports of the Ninth International Congress of Coptic Studies, September 15th–19th, 2008* (Leuven, 2016), 1547–66.
[33] For other attestations of λεβίτων in Coptic documentary texts, see H. Förster, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Wörter in den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten* (Berlin, 2002), 466, who translates it as a sleeveless outer-garment ('ärmelloses Obergewand'). However, it is possible that at Wadi Sarga this indicated the standard monastic tunic (the term is standard in Pachomian texts). K. Innemée, *Ecclesiastical Dress in the Monastic Near East* (Leiden, 1992), 116 addresses the issue of whether or not this tunic (referred to also as a κολόβιον) had sleeves, in his catalogue of Antonian monastic vestment terms: 'We should consider the possibility that in earlier periods there was no uniformity in monastic dress in Lower Egypt, and that tunics with long, short or no sleeves were worn.' He notes that depictions of St Antony wearing a tunic with sleeves are late in date (13th century). However, the Red Monastery depictions (see n. 20) are consistent in showing long sleeves, indicating that this was the norm, at least for monasteries in the Akhmîm region.

(ϭοογⲛⲉ[34]). Another work contract, this time between the monastery and a salt merchant, also involves payment with the same short-sleeved tunic (here written ⲗⲉⲃⲓⲧⲟⲩ) and footwear (the exact type is lost in lacuna, but it is described as being of a 'single sole': ⲡⲉⲗⲙⲁ [πέλμα] ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲧ). In order to be economically viable, only garments that the monastery produced or of which it had a surplus would be used as payment. The monastery was well-known as a producer of ropes and similar items,[35] and it is not improbable that it also produced other items (especially sandals and coarse garments).

One notable aspect concerning textile terminology in the Wadi Sarga texts is the dearth of textile types. Of the common terms found in Shenoute's rules, only ⲡⲣⲏⲩ occurs – not even the generic ⲉⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ is attested. In the lacunose *O.Sarga* 145, it appears in a list of goods (primarily metal objects, but a net is also mentioned). A letter from the monastery's steward (*oikonomos*; οἰκονόμος), *O.Sarga* 88, tells the letter's recipient Pcol that the brethren will clothe him, as a result of Pcol himself saying 'I do not leave without a ⲡⲣⲏⲩ' (ⲙⲁⲓⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲧⲁⲟⲩⲡⲣⲏⲩ). In understanding whether ⲡⲣⲏⲩ is a cowl or shawl at Wadi Sarga, it is important to bear in mind the possibility of different uses of terms over time and in different areas: the evidence from Wadi Sarga is one to two centuries later than Shenoute's writings.[36]

Summary: A Question of Specificity and Generalisation

In the examination of textile terminology – here in Coptic, but also in Greek – one faces the problem of distinguishing between a plurality of terms, many of which seem to be used synonymously. René Coquin made several important observations in this respect, in his analysis of a small number of terms in different literary works of the 4th and 5th centuries.[37] It is especially problematic to be precise when terms evolve in their use over time, 'parfois, le terme désignant le vêtement a changé, indiquant une modification de la forme, d'autres fois, le mot est resté, quoique

[34] Crum, *Dictionary*, 836a; while it cannot be excluded that a sack is intended here (as is the case in the following Wadi Sarga texts, in which it refers to food containers, *O.Sarga* 88, 92, 138, 139, 140, 187, and 189), the occurrence of the term with clothing in this document suggests that a garment is intended.

[35] *O.Sarga* 104: a sailor visits the monastery to acquire ropes and cables.

[36] This is not to say that the terms, as listed in Table 1, do not occur in non-literary sources. Slightly further north, in the Lycopolitan nome, the textual material from the monastery of Apa Apollo at Bala'izah includes a number of texts that concern textiles, primarily lists of various articles in which garments also occur, e.g., *P.Bal*. 263 includes ⲟⲩⲗⲉⲃⲓⲧⲟⲛ ⲟⲩⲱⲧⲏⲛ … ⲟⲩⲕⲗⲁⲧⲩ (*l*. ⲕⲗⲁⲫⲧ) 'a short-sleeved tunic, a tunic … a hood'. See also *P.Bal*. 323, 327, 328, and 330. The regularity with which ⲱⲧⲏⲛ occurs, with a wide assortment of other items (both textiles, including women's garments and non-clothing items, e.g., a blanket – ⲗⲱⲧϩ for Greek λῶδιξ in *P.Bal* 327, and metal objects), suggests that it is used as a generic term for garment. While these lists were found at the monastery, they were not necessarily written there, and it is difficult to determine their purpose. Consequently, their function as itineraries of monastic possessions needs to be treated with caution. Also, the dates of the Bala'izah corpus are similar to those of the Wadi Sarga texts, i.e., not contemporary with Shenoute.

[37] R.-G. Coquin, 'A propos des vêtements des moines egyptiens,' *BSAC* 31 (1992). The first part of his study focusses on the 4th–5th centuries, based on the Life of Antony, History of the Egyptian Monks, the writings of Evagrius and John Cassian, Palladius' Lausiac History, and the Apophthegmata Patrum. The second part of the study draws on sources over a millennium later in date.

désignant un vêtement très different.'[38] Not only can many words designate the same garment, differences are observable between Lower and Upper Egypt.[39]

One way to mitigate some of these problems – although the issue of the plurality of terms for the same thing will always be a thorn in the side – is to focus on the writings not only of a single time and place, but of a single individual. Shenoute, and the great mass of his writings, provides such an opportunity. Within his works, the frequency of terms and the combinations in which they appear allow specific functions to be assigned to certain common words, most notably ϩⲟⲉⲓⲧⲉ, which in the rules seems always to refer to the tunic and it appears most often with the ⲡⲣⲏϣ, indicating that they form the two standard elements of monastic dress. Many rules refer to garments in passing, when they occur alongside numerous commodities, as parts of rules that encompass many different crafts present in the monastery. Others focus on specific garments, stipulating how they should – or should not – appear, pointing at a strict uniformity of appearance among the members of the community.[40]

Canon 8, with Shenoute's lament over his desired cloak, contradicts this demand for conformity and the prohibition of such items. Shenoute was not above ignoring his own rules. Beyond demonstrating that variety could be found in the congregation, this codex also provides important evidence regarding the organisation of textile production.[41] Garments for the monks were made by members of the female community, not by the men.[42] Evidence from other regions is plentiful regarding monks as weavers and producers of garments, but in *Canons* 6 and 8 production is clearly presented as divided on gendered lines. One, tentative possibility, is that while the female members sewed garments for the monks, monks produced goods for external sale.

Shenoute's writings contain a large body of evidence for textile types and production in the Akhmîm region in the 5th century. How far this terminology can be extrapolated to the region at large, let alone elsewhere in Egypt, is questionable. Many of the problems inherent in the study of clothing vocabulary may be the result of idiosyncratic use by individuals, as well as regional

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[38] Coquin, *BSAC* 31, 5.

[39] Coquin, *BSAC* 31, 13. The three drawings of monastic dress presented in E. Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe–VIIIe siècles)* (Warsaw, 2009), 376–8 (Figs. 61–3) present a hypothetical evolution from the 4th to 8th centuries, based respectively on the writings of Evagrius, John Cassian, and the iconographic record. As well as presenting a single standard, it is difficult to use these drawings as evidence of evolution; not only do they attempt to compare written and iconographic sources, the writings of Evagrius and John Cassian are virtually contemporaneous, while the iconographic evidence is drawn from the end of the 5th through to the 8th century. Furthermore, it is difficult to map several items in Shenoute's written record onto the composite reconstruction based on iconographic evidence, for example there are no sandals. Furthermore, evolution in terminology and regional differences, as observed by Coquin, may also be reflected in actual clothing not only diachronically but synchronically in Egypt, depending on the community in question. It is perhaps safer to examine individual case studies, when possible, and to try to extrapolate changes in monastic dress from these.

[40] A uniformity reflected in the wall paintings of the Red Monastery. On such conformity in the Pachomian federation, see Rousseau, *Pachomius*, 119–20.

[41] In this respect, as already noted (n. 4), this passage needs to be read together with *Canon* 6.

[42] See, for example, the Theban evidence presented in Cromwell, in Di Biase-Dyson *et al*. (eds), *Cultural Manifestations*.

differences, and evolution in meaning over time. Yet, as a result of the written and artistic record, a window exists into the material textile culture of the members of the White and Red Monasteries.

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