7.3. The Coptic evidence[42]

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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.

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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

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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*bôk* 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 *bôki* (the feminine form of *bôk*).[47] ᴮ*Bôki* 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

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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 shêm* (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 ᴮ*bôk*.[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*douleuein*; 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

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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 (ᴬ*hemhel*) after Böhlig 1958: 64.

slave: ˢ*hemhal enhiome*) and ᴮ*bôk* (female slave: ᴮ*bôki*).[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 ᴳ*doulos*, in the Greek, for 'slave', which is translated as ˢ*hemhal* and ᴮ*bôk*. In this context, to be a ᴳ*doulos*/ˢ*hemhal*/ᴮ*bôk* 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 ᴳ*doulos* for slave and ᴳ*eleutheros* for freeman, which the Coptic translates as ˢ*hemhal*/ᴮ*bôk* and ˢᴮ*remhe*, respectively.[53] Being a ˢ*hemhal*/ᴮ*bôk* 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 ᴬ*hemhel* for slave and ᴳ*eleutheros* for freeman, rather than a Coptic equivalent. Beyond literary works, a Greek–Coptic lexicon preserved on a limestone ostracon 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 (*eleutheria*) | ΤΜ̄Ν̄ΤΡΜ̄ϨΗ (*t-ment-remhê*) | freedom |
| [δο]υλία (*doulia*) | ΤΜ̄Ν̄ΤϨΜϨⲀⲖ (*t-ment-hemhal*) | slavery |

Two points arise here: ˢ*hemhal* is the opposite of a free person and is the equivalent of ᴳ*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
abra	ˢ*hemhal*	maid	Exod 2:5, 6
diakonos	ˢ*diakonos*/ᴮ*diakon*	servant	Matt 20:26–27
douleuein	ˢ*er-hemhal*	being a slave/serving	Exod 14:12
douleia	ˢ*ment-hemhal*	slavery	Exod 6:5–6, 13:3; *SB Kopt.* 3.1656.6
doulos	ˢ*hemhal*/ᴮ*bôk*	slave	Gal 3:28; Matt 20:26–27
doulos	ˢ*hemhal*/ᴮ*bôk*	servant	Luke 12:45–47
eleutheros	ˢᴮ*remhe*	freeman	Gal 3:28
eleutheria	ˢ*ment-remhe*	freedom	*SB Kopt.* 3.1656.5
katadouloun	ˢ*eire en-hemhal* (= ˢ*er-hemhal*)	being a slave/serving	Exod 6:5–6
oiketes	ˢ*hemhal*	slave	Exod 5:15–16
oiketes	ᴬ*hemhel*/ˢ*hemhal*/ ᴮ*bôk*	servant	Prov 13:13
paidiske	ˢ*hemhal enhiome*/ ᴮ*bôki*	slave (female)	Gen 16:1–6 (B only); Luke 12:45–47
pais	ˢ*hemhal*/ᴮ*bôk*	slave (male)	Exod 5:15–16; Luke 12:45–47
therapon	ˢ*hemhal*	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.

ᴮ*bôk*; feminine ᴮ*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.

ᴳ*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 ᴮ*bôk*.

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

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55   See **2.2.1** and **3.2.1**.
56   See the extensive references in Förster 2002: 181–183.

be ˢ*ka(o)yon*.[57] It is found with the meanings of both 'slave' and 'servant'. The derived term *douleia*, 'slavery', is rendered as ˢ*ment-hemhal*, while *douleuo*, 'to be/act as a slave' or 'to serve', is ˢ*er-hemhal*.

ᶜ*eleutheros*: '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]

ˢ*hemhal* or ˢ*hal* and ᴬ*hemhel*: etymologically derived from demotic *ḥm-ḫl* (masculine) and *ḥm-ḫl.t* (feminine).[59] The difference between this and ˢ*ka(o)yon* is hard to distinguish. Shenoute in *Then Am I Not Obliged* (**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: ˢ*ment-hemhal*, the abstract noun 'slavery', and the compound verb ˢ*er-hemhal*, 'to be a slave' or 'to serve' (see under ᶜ*doulos* for their Greek equivalents).

ᶜ*hyperesia*: 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*).

ˢ*ka(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: ˢ*ment-ka(o)yon*, the abstract noun 'slavery', and the compound verb ˢ*er-ka(o)yon*, 'to be a slave' or 'to serve'.

ˢ*kooure/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

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57 In the Greek address of the Hermopolite letter *BKU* 3.332, ˢ*ka(o)yon* in the opening Coptic formula (cf. n. 43) is rendered as ᶜ*doulos*.

58 See the references in Förster 2002: 246. Note that in the child-donation deed *P.KRU* 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*rôme*/ᶠ*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

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63 For example, see *P.KRU* 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 Obliged*

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 Obliged', 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 labouring[68] 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].

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66   The term used by Shenoute is ⲚⲞⲨⳭ (*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, ϭⲁⲨⲗⲉ, is surely a variant of ϭⲞⲞⲨⲡⲉ/ϭⲁⲨⲡⲉ in *Then Am I Not Obliged* (**260**).

68   ϭⲞⲞⲨⲡⲉ 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 ϭⲁⲨⲡⲉ, which must be a variant of ϭⲞⲞⲨⲡⲉ.

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 writngs.

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

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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, ˢ*hemhal* is used to refer to captured slaves, which seems to have been the original meaning of ˢ*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 (ˢ*hemhal*) serve (ˢ*er-ᶜupêrtei*) the free (ᶜ*eleutheros*). In the kingdom of heaven, the free (ᶜ*eleutheros*) will minister (ˢ*er–ᶜdiakonei*) to the slaves (ˢ*hemhal*).

261b. Gospel of Philip 79:13–18

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

261c. Gospel of Philip 83:25–28

On 'the root of evil': it masters us. We are its slaves (ˢ*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 (ˢ*hemhal*) feature, which are best understood as domestic servants rather than slaves (especially in light of the use of the verb ˢ*shemshe* rather than ˢ*er-hemhal*). Other sayings use ˢ*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 ᶜ*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 (ˢ*hemhal*) to serve (ˢ*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 ᶜ*doulos*.

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72 Tending, or ministering, to the needs of others as a ᶜ*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 (ᶜ*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 (ᶜ*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 Lausiac 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

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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 (ˢ*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 (ˢ*hemhal en-hoout*) and ten-hundred [i.e. 1,000] female slaves (ˢ*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 (ᶜ*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 ˢ*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 (ˁ*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 (ˁ*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 (ˁ*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 (ˁ*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.

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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 (ᶜ*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

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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 mountain[79] 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.).

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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' (N̄T= 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, ^c*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 ^c*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 (^c*eleutheros*). It is not permitted for anybody to transgress you[84] 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 Hermopolite 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 ostracon

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.

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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*lômi*), 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*rôme*) 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*rôme*).'[89] Other texts use ˢ*hemhal* in the same capacity, e.g. *O.Frangé* 89.19, 'and give the letter (lit: ostracon) 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 Fayyum[90] about the cloak that it is good and useful for you. Look, I sent the *holokottinos* to you with my servant (ᶠ*lômi*), Prau, in the end.[91] Take it and send it (i.e. the cloak)

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

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 ˢ*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 ˢ*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 ˢ*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 ˢ*hemhal* or ˢ*kaoyon*) who were donated to serve the monastery in perpetuity could also own personal property. This implies two possible situations: ˢ*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 (ˢ*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 ostracon

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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 Aphrodito (on whom see **7.3.4.4**),[93] over an unstipulated period of time. The *ˢkayon* Phoibammon appears three times in the list, twice with that designation, and a *ˢkayon* 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 *ˢkayon* is provided. However, if the expenditure is for their wages, rather than maintenance, this cannot represent chattel slavery, but the term *ˢkayon* 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 *nomismata*
Phoibammon the servant (*ˢkayon*):	1/2 *nomismata*
Kolluthos the notary of Assyut:	1/3 *nomismata* […]
The time that he came south:	3 *nomismata*
For the matter of my first fine, through Shabour:	5 *nomismata*
Likewise, again through Shabour:	20 *nomismata*
Likewise, again through Basil and Phoibammon, the servants (*ˢkayon*):	12 *nomismata*
What I paid to Phoibammon:	1 *nomismata*
Through Mena the assistant (*ᶜsymmachos*):	5 *nomismata*
Leas the most humble (?) joining me:	3 *nomismata*
Through Basil:	6 *nomismata*
Through ⟦…⟧:	⟦…⟧
That which he needed (for) my wife:	12 1/2 *nomismata*

Total: 80 1/3[94] *nomismata* 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 *P. Lond.* 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 ostracon

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

ˢ*Kooyon* (for ˢ*kaoyon*) in this ostracon, 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 trans-gress the document (i.e. by removing the child from the monastery) must pay a fine of one man – 'he pays one bodily (ᶜ*somatikon*) man' – thereby replacing what

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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 (ˢ*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

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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 Fusṭāṭ, 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 every-one 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 (ˢ*kayon*), 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 (ˢ*kayon*) 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

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

commands and is master of Shenoute my son, forever, and it acquires and reac-
quires 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 mon-
astery, 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 of-
fering 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 author-
itative 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. Petron-
ios 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 (ʿ*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. *P.KRU* 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 judgements[101] – 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 (ˁ*hemhal*) to it, contributing to it just like a slave (ˁ*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

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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 Sharīk 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 ˢ*hemhal* nor ˢ*kayon* appears in texts concerning conscription (although they do appear elsewhere in the Aphrodito corpus; see **277**), but other terms are

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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 *P.Lond.* 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 we[107] sent them.

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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 (*P.Lond.* 4.1508) and Or. 6209 (*P.Lond.* 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 *P.Lond.* 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: *ᶜergates* and *ᶜsomation*. These are not used synonymously but refer to the men in different capacities. *ᶜErgates* refers to a skilled labourer, or at least a man serving in the capacity of a workman, while *ᶜsomation* indicates the individual as a conscript (on this term see also the introduction to **7.3.4.3**).

275. *P.Lond.* 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 (*ᶜergates*) was brought […] so we can give the man (*ᶜsomation*) to [work on?] the palace [of the governor?] being built in Babylon this year. […] man (*ᶜsomation*), namely his contribution, i.e. half [a *holokottinos* and a *tremis*] monthly. After we came, then, we requested […] man (*ᶜsomation*) […] 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 (*ᶜergates*).

    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 (*ᶜsomation*).' 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. *P.Lond.* 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 (*°somation*) himself.' After compelling us, [we] went and hired such workmen (*°ergates*). We therefore came and made a request to you about the contribution that we gave, and you wrote to Shôtep, to Thedosios 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 (*°ergates*) 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 (*P.Lond.* 4.1509): Till 1958: 192–193 (*Pap.Bürgsch.Copt.* 39).

277. Detaining fugitives

P.Lond. 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).