

### 3 | Monastic Estates in Transition from Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Evidence from Aphrodito

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#### Introduction

A wide variety of religious institutions are attested in late antique Egypt, from small local shrines that occur only once in the documentation to wealthy, densely populated establishments that still function today. Papyri often offer a snapshot of the situation in a given time, but opportunities are rare to examine the economic role, follow the evolution, and compare the fate of several monasteries in a specific place over more than a hundred years. Aphrodito's papyri provide one of these exceptional sets of data.

If the village of Aphrodito, modern Kom Ishqaw (located between Assiut and Sohag), has become famous among scholars of late antique Egypt, it is due to the huge volume of papyri found there in the first half of the twentieth century, written mostly in Greek, but also in Coptic and Arabic.<sup>1</sup> These papyri can be divided into two distinct groups, which differ in terms of their date and also their content. The Byzantine group is the most famous: it covers the sixth and early seventh centuries, comprises more than 600 texts, mostly private papers, and is often referred to as the 'Dioscorus archive', after the individual who features most prominently in the corpus.<sup>2</sup> The Umayyad group is limited to a shorter span of time, the end of the seventh to the beginning of the eighth century, and gathers the professional papers, about 400 texts, of the village administrator, Basileios.<sup>3</sup> Both groups constitute the largest archives of their time and offer a remarkable source of evidence on the Egyptian countryside,

Preliminary remarks on the transformation of monastic estates in Aphrodito were included in my doctoral dissertation, Marthot, 'Un village égyptien' (the publication of which is forthcoming), which were further developed as part of the project 'Change and Continuities from a Christian to a Muslim Society – Egyptian Society and Economy in the 6th to 8th Centuries' (SNSF-sponsored project 162963), Basel University. An online database on Aphrodito papyri ([aphrodito.info](http://aphrodito.info)) is in preparation.

<sup>1</sup> More than a thousand documents have been found. The papyri were discovered by villagers in at least three different finds; for detail, see Marthot, 'La toponymie d'un village', 161–2.

<sup>2</sup> For a list of the papyri from the Dioscorus archive, see Fournet, *Les archives de Dioscore*, pp. 307–43. For the presence of several sub-archives, in addition to the one strictly belonging to Dioscorus, see Fournet, 'Sur les premiers documents juridiques coptes (2)'.

<sup>3</sup> The earliest stage of Basileios' archive is formed by papers related to his predecessors, among whom is Epimachos; see, e.g., *P.Lond.* IV 1512.5 (709). A list of these papyri, divided by language, is available in Richter, 'Language Choice', pp. 197–208.

with a unique level of detail and from the rare point of view of a village (Greek *kome*) and not a city (Greek *polis*). Although a large part of the Aphrodito papyri were published more than a century ago, it is only in recent decades that several major works have provided a better understanding of the Byzantine component. The evidence for several monasteries taking part in the rural economy, both distant and local, as well as the existence of a pious foundation by the father of Dioscorus himself, has attracted the attention of editors and historians, producing a large bibliography upon which the present research draws.<sup>4</sup> The Umayyad papyri are, however, more difficult to interpret, and have thus not been exploited to the same extent.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, there have been very few attempts to bring together the two sets of information and compare the picture of the countryside that they offer before and after the Islamic conquest.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, these documents illustrate changes in the status of monasteries in the early eighth century whose scale can only be evaluated by taking into account the available evidence from the previous centuries. To understand the evolution of monasteries in Aphrodito, this paper focuses on the key element of their landholdings, specifically on which monasteries (local and distant, recent and well-established) owned what land in the village in the Byzantine period, and what picture can be drawn from the available data about monastic estates in the eighth century that can contribute to the study of this period of transition.

## Methodological Approach

Getting an overview of the massive amount of data from Aphrodito can be difficult. To search for religious institutions attested in Aphrodito, geographical repertories such as Stefan Timm's monumental work or thematic syntheses such as the one produced by Arietta Papaconstantinou that focus on the worship of saints are useful. Regarding Aphrodito, the figures given by Timm (thirty churches, thirty-eight monasteries, and twenty-six *topoi*)<sup>7</sup> and Papaconstantinou (twenty-six religious establishments dedicated to saints,

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the short presentation in Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés*, pp. 87–8.

<sup>5</sup> See, however, the following works by Janneke de Jong: the edition of P. Würzb. inv. 122–129 in P. Würzb. II; de Jong, 'A Summary Tax Assessment'; and de Jong, 'Who Did What'. I would like to thank Janneke for her invaluable comments on a preliminary version of the present paper.

<sup>6</sup> An exception is H. I. Bell, who edited papyri from both groups in P. Lond. IV and V, and enriched his commentary with diachronic remarks; another rare and inspiring example is Rémondon, 'P. Hamb. 56'. Despite its title, Ruffini, *Life in an Egyptian Village*, is focused on the documentation from the sixth and early seventh centuries and only alludes to the eighth century texts in the first chapter and conclusion.

<sup>7</sup> Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, pp. 1443–55 (s.v. Kōm Iṣqāw).

excluding the institutions named after their founders)<sup>8</sup> are all too high for the number of institutions in a single village. Papaconstantinou underlined two parameters that could explain this abundance: first, the establishments are not all mentioned during the entire period and therefore may not have functioned simultaneously; second, some may have been located outside the village itself. These are indeed elements to bear in mind, but more generally it should be emphasised that these authors and their predecessors adopted an inclusive approach, collecting any possible mention that may refer to a religious institution. Therefore, their lists contain institutions that are mentioned in the Aphrodito papyri but cannot be proved to be located in the village itself or even in the village's territory. Among the monasteries attested in the Aphrodito papyri, several, as will be seen, were clearly located in other nomes.

The main reason for this overestimation is, however, of another nature: it comes from an ambiguity in the definition of the object. These lists include not only institutions that are explicitly designated as *monasterion* but also proper names qualifying the desert (*oros*) and even the vague word for 'place' (*topos*). A discussion on these terms and a revised list of the religious institutions that were in Aphrodito's territory, necessitating a thorough examination of each reference in the texts, is currently in preparation. For the current purpose, I consider only the monasteries that can confidently be identified as landowners in the village, whether they were located in the village territory or acted from other nomes. This study is limited to monasteries and thus excludes other religious institutions, such as churches, 'holy places', *martyria*, and hospices (*xeneon*, *xenodocheion*). The study of these institutions would be fruitful as well, since some also owned land in the village, and a glimpse of their evolution in the eighth century can be caught, but it goes beyond the scope of the present discussion.<sup>9</sup>

### Landowning Monasteries in Sixth-Century Aphrodito

In dealing with the Dioscorus archive, it should always be borne in mind that it is a private, family archive. Therefore, if a landowner appears several times, it does not necessarily mean that he was important at the village level, only that he had strong business relations with Dioscorus' family.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints*, pp. 296–8.

<sup>9</sup> For an example of a study that includes all the types of religious institutions, see MacCoull, 'Monastic and Church Landholding'.

<sup>10</sup> The Dioscorus archive is the object of network analysis in Ruffini, *Social Networks*, especially pp. 152–60 on Dioscorus' circle.

Fortunately, two documents provide descriptive, though incomplete, data on the village, its landlords, and its taxpayers. The first one was written around 524 and is a land register, a ‘cadastre’, recording all the land in the village territory for which landlords had to pay taxes called *astika* to the nearby city of Antaiopolis, the capital of the nome in which Aphrodito was located.<sup>11</sup> Each entry contains the name of the landlord, the tenant(s), and the surface area owned, divided into four land categories (arable, reed, orchard, vineyard), but not necessarily the location of the plot.<sup>12</sup> A summary at the end of the document shows that the total for the land taxed with *astika* was 1,375 arouras, which corresponded to a quarter of the total taxable surface of the village (5,200 arouras), the three remaining quarters being the object of the *kometika* tax that was directed to the village treasury.<sup>13</sup> According to which criteria land was assigned to *astika* or *kometika* tax is still debated; it would be too simplistic to schematise that the *astika* tax was paid by landlords living in the city and the *kometika* by the village landlords, as we will see with monasteries.<sup>14</sup> This document mentions eight monasteries as landowners.<sup>15</sup> Leslie MacCoull closely examined the figures concerning all the religious institutions, and noted that some land was in co-ownership with people who seemed to be ‘well-off, well-educated’.<sup>16</sup> As for the tenants, she underlined how the same individuals often cultivated land for several institutions and other landowners. Joanna Wegner has provided an even more thorough examination of the social interaction between monasteries and lay people attested in the document.<sup>17</sup>

On the question of landownership repartition, the editor, Jean Gascou, underlined that the seven richest monasteries owned one-third of the total of

<sup>11</sup> SB XX 14669, reedited in Gascou, *Fiscalité et société*, pp. 247–305, and MacCoull, ‘Why and How’.

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed study of the legal ground of these entries, see Mirković, ‘Count Ammonios’.

<sup>13</sup> Gascou, *Fiscalité et société*, p. 257. The actual size of Aphrodito’s territory has been questioned by Zuckerman, *Du village à l’Empire*, pp. 221–2, who collected evidence for a Great House of a former prefect that could have represented nearly three-fifths of the taxable land of Aphrodito. This issue is too large to be discussed here, but see the grounds for reservation in Bagnall, ‘Village Landholding’, p. 188.

<sup>14</sup> Gascou, *Fiscalité et société*, p. 258.

<sup>15</sup> Other monasteries are mentioned in the text, but not as landowners: a monk of the monastery of Apa Psemnouthes is a tenant (line 222), and payments are made for the *topos* of the monastery of Psintase (line 247).

<sup>16</sup> MacCoull, ‘Monastic and Church Landholding’, p. 245. I would advise caution, however, in MacCoull’s link between the presence of reed land and economical specialisation in rope-making, or the existence of vineyards leading to the sale of surplus. These land categories can be detached from the reality of how they were used, and evidence is lacking concerning monastic production.

<sup>17</sup> Wegner, ‘Monastic Communities’, pp. 77–87.

the recorded arable land, i.e., the land subject to the *astika* tax.<sup>18</sup> The cadastre attests, however, considerable variation in the size and division of monastic holdings, highlighting several profiles of monastic institutions (see Table 3.1).

The four most important landowning monasteries are known from other sources to be one local institution (Apa Sourous) and three Panopolite establishments (Apa Zenobios, Smine, and Apa Shenoute), while the other four are more difficult to characterise. Among all of them, the monastery of Apa Sourous stands out as being registered as having 300 arouras of arable land, twice the amount owned by all the other monasteries combined. Corresponding to 22 per cent of the total amount of land registered in the entire cadastre, this figure makes it the largest landowner in the whole document.<sup>19</sup> It can certainly be identified as a local institution due to the fact that, in 565, two Aphroditan villagers are known to be the descendants of

Table 3.1: *Monastic holdings according to the Aphrodito Cadastre.*

Landowning monastery	Amount of aroura possessed	Percentage of the total amount <sup>20</sup>	Number of entries <sup>21</sup>	Average quantity of aroura per entry <sup>22</sup>
Apa Sourous	300	22	42	7.14
Apa Zenobios	67	5	15	4.46
Smine	33	2.5	9	3.66
Apa Shenoute	19.5	1.5	2	9.75
Porbis	12	1	3	4
Ama Termouthia	3.25	0.25	1	3.25
Oasites	5 (in co-ownership with Apa Sourous)	0.35	1	5
Tarouthis	1 (in co-ownership with Dioscorus' father)	0.05	1	1

<sup>18</sup> See Gascou, *Fiscalité et société*, pp. 258–60 for the three other categories. It may be relevant to keep in mind that an unknown number of entries is missing at the beginning of the document; see Gascou, *Fiscalité et société*, p. 251. The comparison between the amounts preserved and the final recapitulation indicates that these entries correspond to approximately 110 arouras, among which a portion may have belonged to monasteries.

<sup>19</sup> Ruffini, 'Aphrodito before Dioscorus', pp. 228–30. The most recent text on this monastery is published in Stolk, 'A Byzantine Business Letter'.

<sup>20</sup> Rounded figures; the total of *astika* land is the aforementioned 1,375 arouras, among which the detail for 110 arouras is lost; see n. 18.

<sup>21</sup> The total number of preserved entries is 186, documenting 1,265 arouras; see n. 18.

<sup>22</sup> The average quantity of aroura per entry for the preserved part of the document is 6.8 (see previous note and n. 18).

its founder.<sup>23</sup> Ruffini reconstructed the history of the family and made the hypothesis that Sourous was likely born in the first half of the fifth century.<sup>24</sup> The monastery not only owned the most arouras, it occupied forty-two entries, with an average of 7.14 arouras per entry.<sup>25</sup> These entries do not necessarily mean that it owned forty-two separate plots of land, but proves that its landholding was not managed as one estate but was split into medium-size parcels (or shares) in the hands of numerous tenants.

Next in size are the three monasteries located in the Panopolite nome, which have much smaller holdings: Apa Zenobios is registered for 67 arouras (5 per cent of the total),<sup>26</sup> Smine for half that amount, 33 arouras (2.5 per cent),<sup>27</sup> and Apa Shenoute, the White Monastery near Sohag, for 19.5 arouras (1.5 per cent).<sup>28</sup> The latter only occurs in two entries, giving an average of 9.75 arouras per entry. This amount suggests holdings of only a couple of properties, but properties that would have been important in size, as opposed to the two other Panopolite monasteries that, with an average of 4.46 and 3.66 arouras per entry, more likely possessed a rather high number of small parcels.

Two other monasteries do not occur elsewhere in the Aphrodito papyri: Porbis, probably an institution located in another nome, maybe the Hermopolite or the Apollonopolis Minor nome, is registered for modest possessions (twelve arouras in three entries),<sup>29</sup> whereas nothing is known about Ama Termouthia (the reading of which is unsure), registered for only 3.25 arouras (line 76). The last two could also be local establishments:

<sup>23</sup> See *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67110.27.

<sup>24</sup> Ruffini, 'Aphrodito before Dioscorus', p. 229. It could even be earlier, since Ruffini based his argument on the use of the word *progonos* for Sourous combined with the fact that this word was used in another case, possibly for the maternal grandfather, who would thus be the nearest possible kin. The word could, however, refer also to another ancestor, e.g., a maternal great-grandfather. On the paternal side, the closest available candidate is a great-great-grandfather: the father of the anonymous father of Biktor. See Ruffini, 'Aphrodito before Dioscorus', p. 229: 'Biktor and his anonymous father certainly date to the mid-fifth century, if not earlier.' Sourous cannot have been the anonymous father of Biktor, since the end of the name in the genitive is clearly *-ou* in *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67110.10.

<sup>25</sup> See *SB XVI* 14669.4 and commentary to this line on p. 282. Twenty-six of these entries give the name of the place (*topos*) in question.

<sup>26</sup> Lines 44, 51, 54, 67, 167, 215, 219, 233–5, 244–5, 252, 265, 275, and 289; seven place names are mentioned. For the bibliography on this monastery, see the commentary to line 44 on p. 283.

<sup>27</sup> Lines 45, 81, 88, 121, 128, 135, 152, and 249–51. Five place names are preserved. Five of these entries are with the same tenant, Palos son of Patais, who also worked for other landlords, among which there is a church; see Ruffini, *A Prosopography*, p. 403 s.v. Palos 4, likely to be identical to Palos 6 (Palos *georgos*), who is recorded as paying on behalf of this monastery in the fiscal register *P.Aphrod.Reg.* 208.

<sup>28</sup> Lines 49 and 144. No place name is mentioned in these entries.

<sup>29</sup> Lines 12 (see the commentary on p. 282), 282, and 290.

Tarouthis appears in five entries in which it has the unexpected position as the tenant, except for a small plot of a little less than one aroura for which it is both co-landlord and co-tenant (lines 105–7).<sup>30</sup> Tar(r)outhis is known as a village in the Hermopolite nome, and I have argued elsewhere that there is no evidence for a homonymic village in the Antaiopolite nome and that it should not be confused with the well-attested village of Terythis.<sup>31</sup> The mention in the cadastre could, however, refer not to a village but to a local monastery that is not otherwise attested, at least under this name, in the rest of the Byzantine documentation on Aphrodito, but it does reappear in the eighth century, as will be seen.<sup>32</sup> Finally, the monastery of the Oasites is mentioned only once in the cadastre (line 55), for a small plot in co-ownership with Apa Sourous. It is present in a second text in which it owns one-third of an oil press in the village.<sup>33</sup> This monastery is also mentioned once in the eighth-century papyri, in an unusual context from which it is unclear whether it still owned land in the village or not.<sup>34</sup> It is more likely that it was not a local institution, but rather an absentee landowner.<sup>35</sup> Since monasteries are prominent characters in the cadastre, owning one-third of the *astika* land, it would be logical that they were similarly notable among *kometika* taxpayers. However, no similar register survives that lists the *kometika* land. There is, though, evidence that the monasteries, as landlords, were liable for *kometika* taxes, but not in the expected proportion.

The second document in which an overview of wealth distribution in the village can be found provides the opportunity to complete the cadastre: a fiscal register recording the payment of the *kometika* taxes in gold to the village treasury.<sup>36</sup> The document was made soon after the cadastre, and it is complete, except for minor damage. It offers a different picture. Only three monasteries feature among the taxpayers. Two are Panopolite establishments also present in the cadastre: Apa Zenobios appears in seven entries

<sup>30</sup> The monastery is the tenant in lines 97, 99–101, 102–3, and 104. No place name is preserved.

<sup>31</sup> Marthot, 'Homonyms Causing Confusion', pp. 489–90.

<sup>32</sup> It is all the more surprising that there is no other mention of this monastery in the archive, since the cadastre indicates that it was in a business relationship with Dioscorus' father. One would therefore expect to find it mentioned in the family's private accounts.

<sup>33</sup> *P.Flor.* III 285.4 (552). <sup>34</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1419.1255. This point is developed further below.

<sup>35</sup> In support of this status is *P.Flor.* III 285.4 (552), in which this monastery is not said to be 'located' (*diakeimenos*) but 'possessing' (*kektemenos*) in Aphrodito's territory; for this argument concerning another religious institution, see Fournet, 'Quittances de loyer', p. 47. Another argument, as we will see, is that this monastery is not among the five main institutions of the village in the eighth-century documentation. If it is, indeed, a local institution, it must have been of humble size.

<sup>36</sup> Published in Zuckerman, *Du village à l'Empire* (see p. 37 for the nature of the document).

and pays a total of 5.5 *solidi*, while Smine occupies nine entries but pays only 4.5 *solidi*. The last monastery is recorded only once (and the amount is lost), under the name Treges, which is known from another text to be a microtoponym.<sup>37</sup> This suggests that this monastery was a local establishment that disappeared soon after the tax register was drawn, or was usually called by another name. Regarding the share of monasteries in the register, its editor stresses: ‘Ces sommes les placent, certes, parmi les grands propriétaires des *kometika*, mais elles ne représentent, ensemble, que 3% des impôts fonciers inscrits au Registre.’<sup>38</sup> This is a large discrepancy with the situation drawn from the cadastre, but it is mainly the result of the absence of the Apa Sourous monastery. This absence led the editor of the register to conclude that all the landholdings of this monastery had been inscribed as *astika* land when the cadastre was compiled.<sup>39</sup> The second most important monastery in the cadastre, Apa Zenobios, owns, as we have seen, about 5 per cent of the *astika* land, which is more in line with its share in the register: important but not unequalled. Roger Bagnall analysed the figures in the register and calculated that ‘the total tax yield for the village comes to the equivalent of about . . . 1.4 *solidi* per individual’, which means that the two Panopolite monasteries paid three to almost four times the average amount.<sup>40</sup> He also used the data of the register to address, among other issues, the question of the ‘institutional ownership by religious foundations’ and established that ‘ecclesiastical establishments own just 6.3 per cent of the land in the category of the *kometika* . . . far less than their percentage of land in the account of the *astika*, which is about thirty-eight per cent, although it remains a significant total’.<sup>41</sup> The two Panopolite monasteries represent 40 per cent of the contributions by religious institutions, the rest (3.7 per cent of the total) is formed by nine churches and one or more oratories. Bagnall draws a comparison with Temseu Skordon, a Hermopolite village from which a sixth-century tax register has also survived: in this text, only one religious institution is mentioned, the Holy Church, but it owned a greater proportion of land (more than

<sup>37</sup> *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67239.5 (summer 546 or 553), an agricultural lease in which Treges is the name of a *kleros* in which the rented field is located. For the meaning of *kleros* as a subdivision of the countryside, see Marthot, ‘La toponymie d’un village’, p. 164.

<sup>38</sup> Zuckerman, *Du village à l’Empire*, p. 228.

<sup>39</sup> Zuckerman, *Du village à l’Empire*, p. 228: ‘À peine deux ans avant le Registre, la totalité des terres appartenant alors au monastère d’apa Sourous a été classée par le *censtor* Iôannès parmi les ἀστικά; nous ignorons si c’était le souhait des moines ou si l’établissement est devenu trop important pour être géré, sur le plan fiscal, par le Trésor villageois. Pour des raisons que nous ne connaissons pas non plus, Iôannès était moins rigide à l’égard des propriétés d’apa Zénobe et de Smin.’

<sup>40</sup> Bagnall, ‘Village Landholding’, p. 183. <sup>41</sup> Bagnall, ‘Village Landholding’, p. 184.

15 per cent). As Bagnall states, ‘individual priests, however, play a more important part in land ownership at Aphrodito ... than at Temseu Skordon’.<sup>42</sup>

This was the situation in the years 524–5, and for the rest of the sixth and the entire seventh century, evidence is scattered in letters and petitions, accounts, land leases, and rent-receipts.<sup>43</sup> The main event to be tracked is the foundation of a monastery by Apollos, the father of Dioscorus. Ewa Wipszycka studied this dossier,<sup>44</sup> and the forthcoming editions of Coptic letters and reeditions of Greek documents will improve our understanding of the monastery’s organisation.<sup>45</sup> Wipszycka declares: ‘Tout comme la plupart des monastères de l’époque, le monastère d’Apa Apollôs vivait de la terre. Au début de son existence, il possédait la terre donnée par le fondateur; plus tard, il reçut des parcelles d’autres donateurs.’<sup>46</sup> The landholdings that the monastery certainly had are less visible in the archive than one would expect. In addition to possible building extensions inside the monastery itself,<sup>47</sup> it owned a farm building (*epaulis*) in the southern part of the village,<sup>48</sup> and, according to a petition, it received six arouras, the locations of which are not specified other than that they were next to small plots (*gedia*) already belonging to the monastery.<sup>49</sup> P.Cair. gr. inv. 1668 (dated between 567 and 573) is a damaged petition written by Dioscorus in his function as administrator of his father’s monastery. It probably also

<sup>42</sup> In Aphrodito, fourteen priests owned 11 per cent of the property, while five accounts (one of which is not certainly related to a church title) take up 6.5 per cent at Temseu Skordon. In both cases, they own more than their *per capita* share of the property, but in Aphrodito there is one cleric per 16 landowners, in Temseu Skordon only one per 72 landowners’ (Bagnall, ‘Village Landholding’, p. 185).

<sup>43</sup> A first overview of ‘Monastery-owned land’ was given in Keenan, ‘Notes on Absentee Landlordism’, pp. 157–9.

<sup>44</sup> Wipszycka, ‘Le monastère d’Apa Apollôs’.

<sup>45</sup> See the twenty-one Coptic letters in PhD dissertation of Vanderheyden, ‘Les lettres coptes’, the publication of which is forthcoming (among the twenty-one, P.Louvain Lefort.Copt. 20b could be related to irrigation work to be undertaken for the benefit of the monastery), and the (re) editions by Jean-Luc Fournet mentioned in the following notes.

<sup>46</sup> Wipszycka, ‘Le monastère d’Apa Apollôs’, p. 263. She follows by saying: ‘Les parcelles appartenant à la communauté monastique de Pharouo étaient prises à bail par des membres de l’élite du village, qui les sous-louaient à des paysans.’ This assumption is not based on direct textual evidence but on comparison with other monasteries. SB XX 14626 (forthcoming reedition by Jean-Luc Fournet) attests that the monastery had sheep and a *ktetor* (owner) status, but no information on specific landholdings can be drawn from the text.

<sup>47</sup> P.Cair.Masp. I 67096 (573) and commentary in Wipszycka, ‘Le monastère d’Apa Apollôs’, pp. 268–70.

<sup>48</sup> P.Cair. SR 3733 (3) dated 563, edited in Fournet, ‘Un document inédit’.

<sup>49</sup> P.Cair.Masp. I 67003.15, dated 567 (forthcoming reedition by Jean-Luc Fournet).

mentions the monastery's holdings, both buildings and fields, but more specific information is not provided, given its state of preservation.<sup>50</sup>

Turning to Apa Sourous, the largest landowner in the cadastre is also the best represented by stray documents: a letter shows that the monastery could benefit from help and support from the powerful landlord Count (*comes*) Ammonios when it encountered issues with its tenants.<sup>51</sup> The estate accounts of the same Ammonios keep track of one financial transaction of obscure nature with or related to the monastery.<sup>52</sup> Leases and rent-receipts attest that the monastery owned, in addition to a pottery workshop,<sup>53</sup> several kinds of landholdings in different parts of the village territory (*pedias*):<sup>54</sup> a naked field without irrigation equipment (mere *arourai*)<sup>55</sup> and a large agricultural exploitation including a vineyard (*ktema*),<sup>56</sup> both in the western *pedias*, one smaller property qualified as *organon* in the northern *pedias*, and another (if not identical) referred to as *georgion*.<sup>57</sup> Concerning this last landholding, there is only one indication of its size: the rent is ninety-two artabas of wheat, which suggests a property of around twenty arouras.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Forthcoming publication by Jean-Luc Fournet.

<sup>51</sup> P.Oslo inv. 523 (sixth century) edited in Stolk, 'A Byzantine Business Letter': Count Ammonios writes this letter to help the Apa Sourous monastery resolve a conflict with the tenants of one of its properties, which included a vineyard.

<sup>52</sup> *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67139 VI v° 3 (dated 542–6) mentions an important money payment (two *solidi* minus four *carats*) in favour of Apa Sourous' barley to Artemidoros *singularis*, who is known from other documents to be the administrator of the monastery; see below n. 55. For a discussion of the hypothesis developed in Thomas, *Private Religious Foundations*, p. 73, that this payment may have been somehow related to 'the institution's tax obligations', see Wegner, 'Monastic Communities', pp. 56–8.

<sup>53</sup> *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67110 (dated 565).

<sup>54</sup> On the organisation of the Aphrodito countryside and the vocabulary referring to its components, see Marthot, 'La toponymie d'un village', pp. 163–7.

<sup>55</sup> *P.Lond.* V 1704 (sixth century): the name of the monastery is lost but can be restored based on the mention of the administrator Artemidoros, line 4, as Φλ(αίου) Ἀρτεμιδώρου σ[ι] γ(γουλάριου), 'Flavius Artemidoros *singularis*'; see Gasco, 'Les Pachômiens', p. 278.

<sup>56</sup> *P.Mich.* XIII 667 (dated 565).

<sup>57</sup> Both are rented by Dioscorus: for the *organon*, see *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67087 (543) and Keenan, 'Village Shepherds'; for the *georgion*, see *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67133 (542). For *organon* and *georgion* used to qualify the same property, see *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67307 (539) line 4 ([τ]οῦ ὑπὸ σὲ τῆς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας ὀργάνου, 'the *organon* of the holy church in your hands') and 8 (τοῦ αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ σὲ γεωργίου, 'the said *georgion* in your hands').

<sup>58</sup> See *P.Michael.* 43 from 526 in which a twenty-eight-aroura property (*georgion*) has an annual rent of five artabas (2/3 wheat and 1/3 barley) per aroura, and see commentary by Keenan, 'Aurelius Phoibammon', p. 147 and note 7. The rate is similar twenty years later: in *P.Hamb.* I 68 from 548, the rent of the arable land is four artabas of wheat and one artaba of barley per aroura. In order to avoid converting one artaba of barley into wheat, a general order of magnitude can be reached as follows: at a rate of four artabas of wheat per aroura (i.e., barley is negligible), ninety-two artabas correspond to twenty-three arouras; at a rate of five artabas per aroura (i.e., barley counts like wheat), the said ninety-two artabas correspond to 18.4 arouras.

It could even be bigger, since the receipt does not specify, as is usually the case, that the payment is for the full rent. The lease of the larger exploitation (*kteima*) is in fact an agreement on changes in contract terms: the tenant, Phoibammon, Dioscorus' cousin, is already exploiting the *kteima*,<sup>59</sup> and he agrees to pay all the taxes of any kind rather than the monastery. No exact amount is given; there is only a reference made to the codex of the *censitor* Ioannes. There is, however, no obvious link with a property mentioned in the cadastre, which is also considered to be an abstract of Ioannes' codex.<sup>60</sup> The tenant also has to provide a fixed complementary rent: twenty artabas of wheat and fifty *aggeia* of wine (of six *sextarii* each), which seems a small amount for such a property.<sup>61</sup> The contract includes the provision that the amphorae have to be provided by the monastery, which, as we have already seen, happened to own a pottery workshop. While not unparalleled, this type of renting agreement is rare.<sup>62</sup>

Although it can be demonstrated from the cadastre and the tax register that the monastery of Apa Zenobios was an important landowner, no further text documenting its properties is known.<sup>63</sup> This is not the case for the two other Panopolite institutions. The monastery of Smine appears in two unusual situations: first, in 527, Apollos, Dioscorus' father, rented a property (*georgion*) that belongs to a count (whose name is lost) but was 'in the hands of the holy monastery for a long and impossible to remember time'.<sup>64</sup> It is thus an example of a sub-lease. It is, however, possible that the landholding was not in Aphrodito but in the neighbouring village of

<sup>59</sup> *P.Mich.* XIII 667.3 (dated 565), read ὑπ' ἐμὲ κτῆ[ματος τ]οῦ αὐτοῦ ἁγίου μοναστηρίου, 'the *kteima* of the said holy monastery in my hands' instead of ὑπ[ο]γ[ε] [γρ(αμμένου)] κ[τ]ῆ[ματος το]ῦ αὐτοῦ ἁγίου μοναστηρίου, 'the *kteima* described below of the said holy monastery' (forthcoming publication by Florence Lemaire).

<sup>60</sup> Gascou, *Fiscalité et société*, pp. 249–50.

<sup>61</sup> For a comparison with another vineyard lease from Aphrodito, see *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67104.12 (dated 530), in which the annual rent is 120 *aggeia* of 7 *sextarii* per aroura.

<sup>62</sup> Among the corpus of about a hundred leases and rent-receipts from the Dioscorus archive gathered by Florence Lemaire for her PhD thesis, the only similar agreements are *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67300 (dated 527) and *P.Lond.* V 1695 (dated 530), two successive leases for the same *kteima*, owned in common by two sisters, Sibylla and Heraeis daughters of Mousaios, who are both said to be 'most well-born' (*eugenestate*). *P.Lond.* V 1841 (dated 536), also being edited by Florence Lemaire, is the lease of a *kteima*: the rent consists of the payment of all the taxes only in the absence of flood; otherwise, an equal share of the crops is planned.

<sup>63</sup> The Coptic letter *P.Cair.S.R.* 3733.5bis is addressed to Apa Termoute, the superior of the Apa Zenobios monastery, but it is not concerned with landholdings; see Vanderheyden, 'Les lettres coptes', text 4. *P.Hamb.* I 68 (dated 548) is the lease of a *kteima* located in the *kleros* Pherko and belonging to a monastery whose name is lost, but which could be Apa Zenobios, as the cadastre (line 265) records a landholding in Pherko. However, this is a fragile hypothesis.

<sup>64</sup> *P.Lond.* V 1690 + *P.Heid.* V 353.8–9; forthcoming reedition by Florence Lemaire. See also Gascou, 'Les Pachômiens', p. 280 and n. 15.

Pakerke in the Panopolite nome.<sup>65</sup> The second text relates to Aphrodito: in 565, Dioscorus sold to the monastery three arouras of unirrigated land, which are said to be included in a ‘big’ *georgion* belonging to the monastery and located in the *kleros* Hieras in the southern *pedias*.<sup>66</sup> The price of the sale is the payment of the *astika* taxes on fourteen arouras that Dioscorus owned in the *pedias* of the neighbouring village of Phthla. How Dioscorus happened to acquire this small plot in the first place is unclear: had he bought it from the monastery and later sold it back or was it the result of a shared inheritance? It is also intriguing that no duration date for the payment of the taxes in Phthla is mentioned: it would not be a satisfactory deal for the monastery if it were unlimited. Was it understood that the agreement would end with Dioscorus’ death? The document is silent about this.

The monastery of Apa Shenoute is further attested as a landowner not in Aphrodito but in the neighbouring villages: unirrigated land (*arourai*) leased to Dioscorus’ cousin, Phoibammon, in Phthla,<sup>67</sup> and an equipped property (*ktema*) in Thmonechte.<sup>68</sup> About this last landholding, it is mentioned in the lease that the previous tenant was the father of the current tenant.

One last monastery is attested as a landowner in Byzantine Aphrodito, the monastery of Genealios, which appears in the lease *P.Hamb.* I 68 (548): the object of the lease is located next to its property (*ktema*) in the *kleros* Pherko in the southern *pedias*. This establishment is attested only one other time: it is registered in an undated list of taxpayers, *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67288 VI v° 4. It may have been located outside Aphrodito’s territory.

Thus, the Byzantine documentation from Aphrodito attests a small dozen of landowner monasteries with several profiles, from long-distant institutions owning a couple of plots in the village and the neighbourhood, to one humble, newly founded establishment. Compared to the others, Apa Sourous’ monastery stands out by its wealth, which made it a major actor of the village economy. Even in this last case, the monastic estate looks

<sup>65</sup> Florence Lemaire suggests, at line 11: διακειμένου ἐπ[1 π]εδ[ιδ(ος) κώμης Πα]κερκ[ήτος], ‘located in the *pedias* of the village of Pakerke’.

<sup>66</sup> *P.Lond.* V 1686 (dated 565).

<sup>67</sup> *P.Ross.Georg.* III 48 is a rent-receipt for the eighth indiction (dated by Florence Lemaire to summer 544). It acknowledges that the rent in wheat and barley has been paid in full, without further information. *Pap.Lond. inv.* 2836 (dated to 539 or 542 by Florence Lemaire) is likely to be another receipt for the same landholding: four artabas of wheat and four artabas of barley have been paid, which would point to a very modest property, although there is no indication that this amount was the full rent.

<sup>68</sup> *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67242 descr. (dated 547), forthcoming edition by Florence Lemaire.

fragmented, made of little bits of land that were most likely acquired by donations and without visible attempts to rationalise the management. There are, however, rare hints of entrepreneurial attitudes, but they happen to come from another institution, the Smine monastery. One example of a sub-lease and another of purchase may indicate economical strategies, although the latter relates to land located inside a property already belonging to the institution, so it reflects rationalism rather than expansion. To have their land cultivated, monasteries do not seem afraid to conclude special agreements, specifically in relation with the payment of taxes, nor to hire the children of previous tenants. For a distant landlord, perpetuating business agreements with trustworthy local families through the generations is common sense. For the villagers, the prospect of stable work relations, which would not be jeopardised by personal difficulties or succession problems, may have been a motive to prefer monasteries to individuals as landlords. Otherwise, no specific interest in cultivating monastic land can easily be spotted: as with any absentee landlord, the question of transporting the rent to the landlord's place can be an issue worth negotiating in the lease, since, for example, Apa Shenoute is located a little more than fifty kilometres south of Aphrodito. Texts documenting Aphrodito in the seventh century are rare, and when the sources start again to be extensive, the situation for landowner monasteries has evolved.

### Aphrodito in the Eighth Century

The eighth-century papyri from Aphrodito are administrative documents that were most likely kept in the office of the village administrator. They do not contain leases, receipts, private letters, or drafts of petitions like Dioscorus' papers.<sup>69</sup> They provide, however, information on the fiscal organisation of the village, which reveals major changes from the Byzantine period. At this time, the village was no longer under the authority of the pagarch of the Antaiopolite nome (which had been joined with the Apollonopolite Minor nome). Neither did it become the head of a nome with its own pagarch and authority over surrounding villages. Ruled by an official called 'administrator' (*dioiketes*), who was directly accountable to the governor's office in the new capital Fustat, the village kept the same territory and became an independent administrative unit.<sup>70</sup> Its territory

<sup>69</sup> See Marthot and Vanderheyden, 'Désigner et nommer', pp. 218–20.

<sup>70</sup> See Marthot, 'Un village égyptien', pp. 187–212. Coptic texts refer to the administrator of Aphrodito (Coptic Djkoou) by borrowing the Greek word *pagarchos* and never *dioiketes*.

became divided into fiscal units called *choria*:<sup>71</sup> the village itself, three ‘campaigns’ (*pediades*), eight ‘hamlets’ (*epoikia*), and five monasteries.<sup>72</sup> This last category comprises five establishments: Abba Hermauos, Pharoou, Tarou, Barbarou, and Hagia Maria (Saint Mary).

Among these five monasteries, two clearly recall establishments encountered in the Byzantine documentation: Pharoou is the institution founded by Dioscorus’ father, and Tarou, sometimes spelled Tarout(-),<sup>73</sup> may be identified with the Tarouthis monastery mentioned in the cadastre. Nothing is known of a Byzantine past for Barbarou (sometimes spelled Barbariou)<sup>74</sup> and Hagia Maria.<sup>75</sup> The last monastery, Abba Hermauos, however, appeared discretely in the Dioscorus archive through a mention of an *eukterion* (oratory) of Apa Hermauos in a list of taxpayers<sup>76</sup> and two references to priests. In a famous petition from the inhabitants of Aphrodito to the empress Theodosia, Palos, a priest and *oikonomos* of Saint [Apa] Hermauos, signs with the help of a monk named Ioannes.<sup>77</sup> In Count Ammonios’ accounts, an unnamed ‘priest of Apa Hermauos’ occurs twice, immediately after entries related to inhabitants from Peto,<sup>78</sup> and a third instance may refer to the same priest Palos.<sup>79</sup> There is, thus, a possibility that the mention of a ‘monastery of Peto’ in the same text refers to the same institution as Apa Hermauos.<sup>80</sup>

However, whereas a pagarch rules over a city and villages, the Coptic formula is ‘pagarch of Djkoou, its hamlets and its campaigns’; see, for example, *P.Lond.* IV 1494.8 (dated 709).

<sup>71</sup> On this new fiscal unit, see Gascou, ‘Arabic Taxation’, pp. 672–3.

<sup>72</sup> Besides these territory divisions, there were two fiscal groups called ‘the men who are in Babylon’ (*P.Lond.* IV p. XV) and ‘the men of Saint Mary’, who were ‘clearly distinct’ from Saint Mary’s monastery (*P.Lond.* IV p. XVI). As such, they are not included in the present study.

<sup>73</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1419.639,1144,1150,1153 (dated 716/17); see also Talou at line 1299.

<sup>74</sup> *Chrest. Wilck.* 256, 1 and 3 (dated 709).

<sup>75</sup> There was at least one church in the village dedicated to the Virgin Mary; see Papaconstantinou, ‘Les sanctuaires’, pp. 86–7, numbers 13–14. The question whether there were one or two monasteries in the eighth century is not as simple as it appears in Cadell, ‘Nouveaux fragments’, p. 155 (5) and deserves a more detailed treatment.

<sup>76</sup> *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67288 VI v° 5 (sixth century).

<sup>77</sup> *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67283 III 21 (before 547). On this text, see *P.Mich.Aphrod.*, pp. 10–15 and Ruffini, *Social Networks*, pp. 177–9. Note that all the other ecclesiastical individuals mentioned in this document are priests of churches and *hagioi topoi* (holy places): they occur together in a previous section (II 1–10) and are all literate enough to sign for themselves. This could be a hint that Apa Hermauos was a humble institution.

<sup>78</sup> *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67138 III v° 11 and 67139 V v° 25 (dated 541–6).

<sup>79</sup> In *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67139 V v° 4, δ(ι)ὸ Π[.....]. πρε(σβυτέρου) εἴπα Ἐρμαῶτος, it is very tempting to read Π[ε]λ[ω]τος], especially as an Apa Palos occurs on the recto of this account (V r° 20) in relation with a cistern (*lakkos*) of Pekusios, while a ‘cistern of Peto’ occurs in *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67138 II r° 28, and a Pekusios, along with his son Pous, is a known inhabitant of Peto; see *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67139 V v° 5. Palos 15, 16, and 19 in Ruffini, *A Prosopography*, could be the same priest from Peto.

<sup>80</sup> *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67138 II v° 19 and 67139 II v° 14. On the importance of Peto for Count Ammonios, see Ruffini, *Social Networks*, p. 175.

Information on monastic properties is mainly found in the codex *P. Lond.* IV 1419, of which lines 1269–311 are concerned with tax payments from the five monasteries-*choria*. Additional indications are given elsewhere in the tax registers when payments are made by individuals for a place (*topos*) in favour of a monastery: it is, then, likely that the monastery is (one of) the landlord(s) of the place. In *P. Lond.* IV 1419, the entry about Pharou occupies only one line (1292), recording a total of 111 *solidi* and 44 artabas without further detail. There is no trace elsewhere of any landholding for this monastery in the eighth century, suggesting that it had neither significantly flourished nor expanded since its foundation. No property is mentioned either for Abba Hermauos (lines 1293–8): its entry, the total of which is 189 *solidi*, 8 *keratia*, and 67 artabas, lists only payments by individuals. Two places, however, are indicated in the rest of the documentation as properties of this monastery.<sup>81</sup> Landholdings are listed for the three last monasteries: Hagia Maria, Barbarou, and Talou (for Taroou). Hagia Maria has to pay 114 *solidi* but only a small amount of wheat (twelve artabas). It owned properties in seven *topoi* (lines 1269–80). Barbarou pays 110 *solidi* but forty-six artabas for nine different *topoi* (lines 1281–91). Talou's total is lost; it is registered for ten *topoi* (lines 1299–311).

Further systematic investigations are still needed to fully understand the tax contributions of each *chorion*. The five monasteries seem nevertheless to be minor contributors to the village taxation. A first hint has been provided above, with the section of *P. Lond.* IV 1419.1269–311 dedicated to them and recording both humble and similar amounts (from 110 to 189 *solidi* with Taroou's total missing), suggesting that they were of equivalent importance. Further evidence is given by a series of *entagia* (orders of payment) preserved for the fiscal year 709/10, whose data is gathered in Table 3.2, with the monasteries noted by an asterisk.<sup>82</sup>

The two smaller monasteries are asked to pay only one per cent of what the largest *epoikion* Pakaunis paid. Even the most heavily taxed monastery, Hagia Maria, pays five times less than the said *epoikion*. A list of taxes in wheat required for a fifth indiction shows that, out of a total of 1,500 artabas, the village itself is asked for 755, but the 'monasteries'

<sup>81</sup> Payment in favour of this monastery for the *topos* Panuchatou in *P. Lond.* IV 1419.1057, and for the *topos* Neos Ktéma (the 'New Property') in *SB XX* 15099.151.

<sup>82</sup> On this group of texts, see Cadell, 'Nouveaux fragments', pp. 143–4 and 153–5.

Table 3.2: Amounts required by the central administration for the fiscal year 709/10.

Text	<i>Chorion</i>	Amount in <i>solidi</i>	Amount in artabas of wheat
SB I 5644	Pakaunis	498	128
SB I 5638	Five eastern <i>pediades</i>	461	270
SB I 5653	Three western <i>pediades</i>	400	250
SB I 5654	Two western <i>pediades</i>	253	235
SB I 5645	Emphuteuton	131	
<i>P.Cair.Arab.</i> III 160	Psrou	104	11
SB I 5650	Hagia Maria*	98	88
SB I 5655	Name lost (Sakoore ?)	98	
SB I 5652	Men of Hagia Maria	47	
SB I 5646	Bounon	47	5
<i>P.Cair.Arab.</i> III 161	Hagios Pinouton	37	
SB I 5648	Poimen	30	18
<i>P.Cair.Arab.</i> III 162	Oros of Hagia Maria in the East* <sup>83</sup>	30	
<i>P.Cair.Arab.</i> III 163	Abba Hermaous*	28	
SB I 5647	Keramiau	25	
<i>Chrest.Wilck.</i> 256	Barbariou ( <i>sic</i> )*	10	
SB I 5649	Taurinou (= Tarouou)*	5	
SB I 5651	Pharouou*	5	

(*ta monasteria*), grouped all together in one entry, have to pay only fifty artabas.<sup>84</sup>

These entries gathering all the ‘monasteries’ together led Harold Idris Bell, the editor of *P.Lond.* IV, to wonder if they may concern more institutions than the usual five monasteries-*choria*. Bell pointed out that there were at least two cases in which there are entries both for ‘*ta monasteria*’ and for each of the five monasteries-*choria*, with totals showing that the former is not the addition of the latter.<sup>85</sup> These observations suggest that other, small monasteries existed, which appear only occasionally in the rest of the documentation. There are, indeed, scattered mentions of other monasteries: Abba Charisios,<sup>86</sup> Abba/Saint Psempnouthes,<sup>87</sup> the mysterious (because otherwise

<sup>83</sup> Distinct from Hagia Maria; see n. 75. <sup>84</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1415 v° 13–17.

<sup>85</sup> *P.Lond.* IV p. XVI referring to *P.Lond.* IV 1416.72–9 (dated 732–4) and *P.Lond.* IV 1445.2–5 (eighth century).

<sup>86</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1419.1003.

<sup>87</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1419.1002 (payer) and 363 (beneficiary). As already mentioned, a monk of the monastery of Apa Psempnouthes is a tenant in the cadastre (line 222), which suggests that the institution was not far from the village.

unattested) ‘Abba Entiou’,<sup>88</sup> ‘Ken[-]riou’ (a very doubtful reading),<sup>89</sup> and Saint Psoios,<sup>90</sup> but nothing is known about these institutions.

Since the monastery of Apa Sourous was of such importance in the sixth century, we would expect it to have become a *chorion* in the new organisation of Aphrodito in the eighth century. The monastery, now called Abba Sourous, does not disappear from the documentation, but its presence is reduced to the already mentioned *P.Lond.* IV 1419, which joins with *SB XX* 15099 (dated 716/17), a long codex concerned with land taxes in which Abba Sourous is mentioned twenty times. In general in this codex, an individual is registered first for payments in his own name for a given place (*topos*) and then for payments in favour of the *ousia* of Abba Sourous for the same place.<sup>91</sup> The word *ousia*, referring to large estates in the sixth century, is rarely present in the eighth-century papyri from Aphrodito, and almost all the occurrences relate to the *ousia* of Abba Sourous.<sup>92</sup> The only element to complete this picture is *P.Lond.* IV 1416 (dated 732–4), a fragmentary register of various content, in which the ‘codices of the *ousiai* of the pagarchy’ are mentioned (line 25).<sup>93</sup> This would suggest that the *ousiai* were in different registers and were administered differently, in a type of independence from the village officer. As a possible comparison, *ousia* is used in texts from the Hermopolite monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, where it apparently refers to geographical divisions of the estate.<sup>94</sup>

The monastery of the Oasites, which owned a small plot in the cadastre and a part of an oil factory in 552, appears in *P.Lond.* IV 1419.1255 among the *adespota ktemata*, ‘properties without a landlord’ managed by the village administration. In the same section, in lines 1258 and 1260, a place (*topos*) named ‘of the Oasites’ is mentioned, probably identical to a field known from the Byzantine period in an agricultural account written by Dioscorus, *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67325 I 25 v° 5 (dated 554–61). It is unlikely that the monastery itself has become a property without a landlord; it is

<sup>88</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1419.437 and restored line 1382. I give the attested form in the genitive instead of a speculative nominative ending.

<sup>89</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1419.9 (in the genitive; see previous note).

<sup>90</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1444.3 (eighth century). <sup>91</sup> For example, *P.Lond.* IV 1419.867–8.

<sup>92</sup> Twice it appears to refer to the estate of the Governor (*symbolous*): that of Abd el-Aziz in *P.Lond.* IV 1447.172 (dated 685–705) and one explicitly located in Damascus in *P.Lond.* IV 1414.81 and 151. Finally, *ousia* occurs three times with a name that is not attested elsewhere in the Aphrodito documentation: Prinkop(-) in *P.Lond.* IV 1419.967; Stephanaket[-] in *SB XX* 15099.267 (dated 716/17); and Kallinikos in *P.Lond.* IV 1419.1346.

<sup>93</sup> Κωδικω(ν) τῶ(ν) οὔσι(ακῶν) τῆ(ς) παγαρχ(ίας): in a note, Bell expressed his doubts about the resolution of the abbreviation and a possible reference to a fiscal category of land. Since the adjective *ousiakos* is not certainly attested after the Byzantine period, it could be *ousi(on)*.

<sup>94</sup> *P.Bru.x.Bawit* 31.

more reasonable to suspect, if not a confusion of the scribe, at least an elliptic formula meaning 'the [place which used to belong to the] monastery of the Oasites'. Evidence is too thin to decide whether this monastery was part of Aphrodito's 'small monasteries' mentioned above or a distant institution which had gradually lost its properties in the village's territory.<sup>95</sup>

The monastery of Abba Shenoute is also present in *P.Lond.* IV 1419.1328–48, in association with the rare word *orgon*, the meaning of which is unclear. It probably owned a *topos* Panouhool, which may have been located between Aphrodito and Thmonechte, a neighbouring village in which it already had landholdings in the Byzantine period.

Another Panopolite establishment reappears, without much information, in *SB XX* 15099.152, in which a payment is made in favour of the account (*onoma*) of 'Zminos', which must relate to the Smine monastery. While encountering payments for a *topos* Smine,<sup>96</sup> the question arises whether monasteries could give their names to properties they (co-) owned. There are indeed attestations of *topoi* named after three out of the five monasteries-*choria*,<sup>97</sup> but some are also named after Abba Senouthios (Apa Shenoute),<sup>98</sup> Hagios Phoibammon,<sup>99</sup> and Abba Senobios. The latter of these could be the Panopolite Apa Zenobios, especially since there is one taxpayer who is registered for this *topos* and for another, Piah Kaloou, which is probably identical to the *topos* Kalau that belonged to Apa Zenobios in the cadastre.<sup>100</sup> It is not impossible, however, that these place names may have retained the memory of former – and so not actual – landlords. There is no evidence that the Apa Zenobios monastery still owned land in eighth-century Aphrodito. In fact, evidence on this point started and stopped with the cadastre and the register, so in the years 524–5.

Thus, in the new organisation of Aphrodito, as it appears in the early eighth century, five monasteries had acquired the administrative status of *chorion*. Further investigation is needed to determine the exact implications of this new status in terms of internal hierarchical structure and of relation to the 'world outside', but its fiscal responsibilities are clear. If they were indeed an official component of the village organisation, these

<sup>95</sup> See above, n. 35.

<sup>96</sup> The same woman pays for the *topos* Zminos in *P.Lond.* IV 1420.46 (dated 706) and Tsmynos in *P.Lond.* IV 1424.14 (dated perhaps to 714).

<sup>97</sup> *Topos* Barbarou in *P.Lond.* IV 1416.33 (dated 732–4); *topos* of Abba Hermauos in *P.Lond.* IV 1419.338; *topos* Talou (for Tarou) among others in *P.Lond.* IV 1419.1314.

<sup>98</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1421.73,79,109,120 (dated 705).

<sup>99</sup> Among others, *P.Lond.* IV 1419.1305, payment by Talouou monastery.

<sup>100</sup> *P.Lond.* IV 1419.572–3 and *SB XX* 14669.235 (dated circa 524).

monasteries paid the smallest amounts of tax, showing that they were not the richest part of the village population. The short list of the landholdings that can be attributed to them confirms this modest share in the rural economy. Some distant monasteries managed to retain some properties, but, judging by the remaining evidence, the tendency would rather be of a decline or maintenance, rather than of an expansion. The only monastery that owned a significant portion of the village territory in the Byzantine period, Apa Sourous, became an estate, the taxation of which escaped the village treasury. The exact extent of this estate is, however, difficult to evaluate because of the incompleteness of the sources. The resulting image is certainly not of a village economically in the hands of various monasteries.

## Conclusion

Thanks to a large quantity of texts originating from one single village over two centuries, precise elements can be identified concerning monasteries as landowners in Aphrodito. It is, however, striking how little correspondence from the monastic properties themselves is known from the time between the two archives. A change in designation may obscure some identifications: because of an especially rich documentation, the monastery founded by Dioscorus' father can be identified, whether it is referred to as 'of the Christ-bearing Apostle', 'of Apa Apollos', or 'of Pharoou'. This shows that the same institution, in coeval texts, can receive three different designations: the name of its dedicatee, that of its founder, and that of the place where it stood. The same goes for the White Monastery, which is called Apa/Abba Senouthios/Shenoute after its founder or Tripe/ Atrep(-) after Tripheion, the former sanctuary of the goddess Triphis, on or around which it was built.<sup>101</sup> It is likely that competing designations were possible not only for the monasteries, but also for the name(s) of the properties they owned. Nevertheless, regardless of this point, there remains little evidence of properties belonging to monasteries throughout the centuries.

The comparison of the two archives clearly shows three patterns of evolution for monastic estates: distant institutions maintained a discreet presence in Aphrodito and its surroundings, the White Monastery in apparently a more stable way than the two other Panopolite establishments of Apa Zenobios and Smine, while local Tarouthis/Tarooou and the recently

<sup>101</sup> Marthot, 'Homonyms Causing Confusion', p. 489.

founded Pharou continued to be of modest size and played an active part in the new post-conquest fiscal organisation, as opposed to the other local, and more wealthy, monastery of Sourous, which acquired a different status as *ousia*. This latter transformation raises the question of whether the process of becoming an independent estate had not already started in the early sixth century when all Apa Sourous' land was liable for the *astika* and not the *kometika* tax. A better understanding of Aphrodito's landowners in general and of the specific changes visible in the eighth-century archive should, in the future, refine the picture of monasteries as landowners. Analysis of the data from the texts and archaeological remains would provide invaluable input, but only if the present restrictions imposed on surveys in this area are no longer in place.<sup>102</sup>

More generally, a close examination of Aphrodito's documentation proves that the number and importance of monasteries in and around the village has been widely overestimated so far by scholars. Impressed by the development of monastic estates founded in the third and fourth centuries and already flourishing in the sixth century, there has been a tendency to multiply what could be taken for allusions to religious institutions, reaching untenable figures for a mere village. Generalisations have also led to the spread of the idea that 'the monasteries' were prime actors in the village economy, while in fact this statement can only be applied to one specific establishment, the monastery of Apa Sourous. All the other institutions have a rather discreet role, and interest on monasteries should not overshadow the role of other components of the rural society, such as, for example, professional associations and local intermediaries of distant landowners, in this complex period of political and administrative change.

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<sup>102</sup> Present restrictions are due to military reasons.

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