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The monastic economies in late Antique Egypt and Palestine

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1 | The Monastic Economies in Late Antique Egypt and Palestine: Past, Present, and Future

LOUISE BLANKE AND JENNIFER CROMWELL

Introduction

In the late 1970s, the American artist, Stanley Roseman, undertook a project entitled *The Monastic Life*, during which he visited sixty monasteries located throughout Europe. He participated in their daily life and 'made drawings of monks and nuns at prayer, work, and study. He drew them at the communal worship in church and in meditation in the quietude of their cells.'[1] Roseman's 1979 chalk on paper drawing of Benedictine monks at the Abbaye de Solesmes in France depicts two men with shaven heads who are dressed in long hooded robes. They are bent forward with their faces anchored towards the ground. Their eyes are closed, and their hands are carefully placed on their thighs. The men stand alone: they are the focus of the artist's composition; they exist in isolation from their background; they are still, serene, frozen in perpetual worship and detached from their contemporary world. This is the essence of monastic life – the ideal – but it is not the full story.[2]

A decade prior to Roseman's study, Michel Foucault published a short piece outlining his ideas on heterotopies, which he described as 'a kind of effectively enacted utopia'.[3] According to Foucault, heterotopias operate outside of society with a timeframe that is entirely their own. They assume a system of entry and closure that both set them apart and make them accessible. 'Their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled.'[4]

Roseman's quietude and the otherness afforded by Foucault's heterotopias capture an ideal of the monastic life that was carefully constructed in Late Antiquity and has dominated our perception of monasticism to the present day (Fig. 1.1). It was St Athanasius' hugely influential fourth-century

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[1] www.stanleyroseman-monasticlife.com.

[2] Roseman's *Two Monks Bowing in Prayer* can be viewed on Washington, DC's National Gallery of Art's website www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.60782.html.

[3] Foucault and Miskowiec, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 24.

[4] Foucault and Miskowiec, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 27. Foucault's examples of heterotopias included airports, hospitals, monasteries, prisons, and schools.

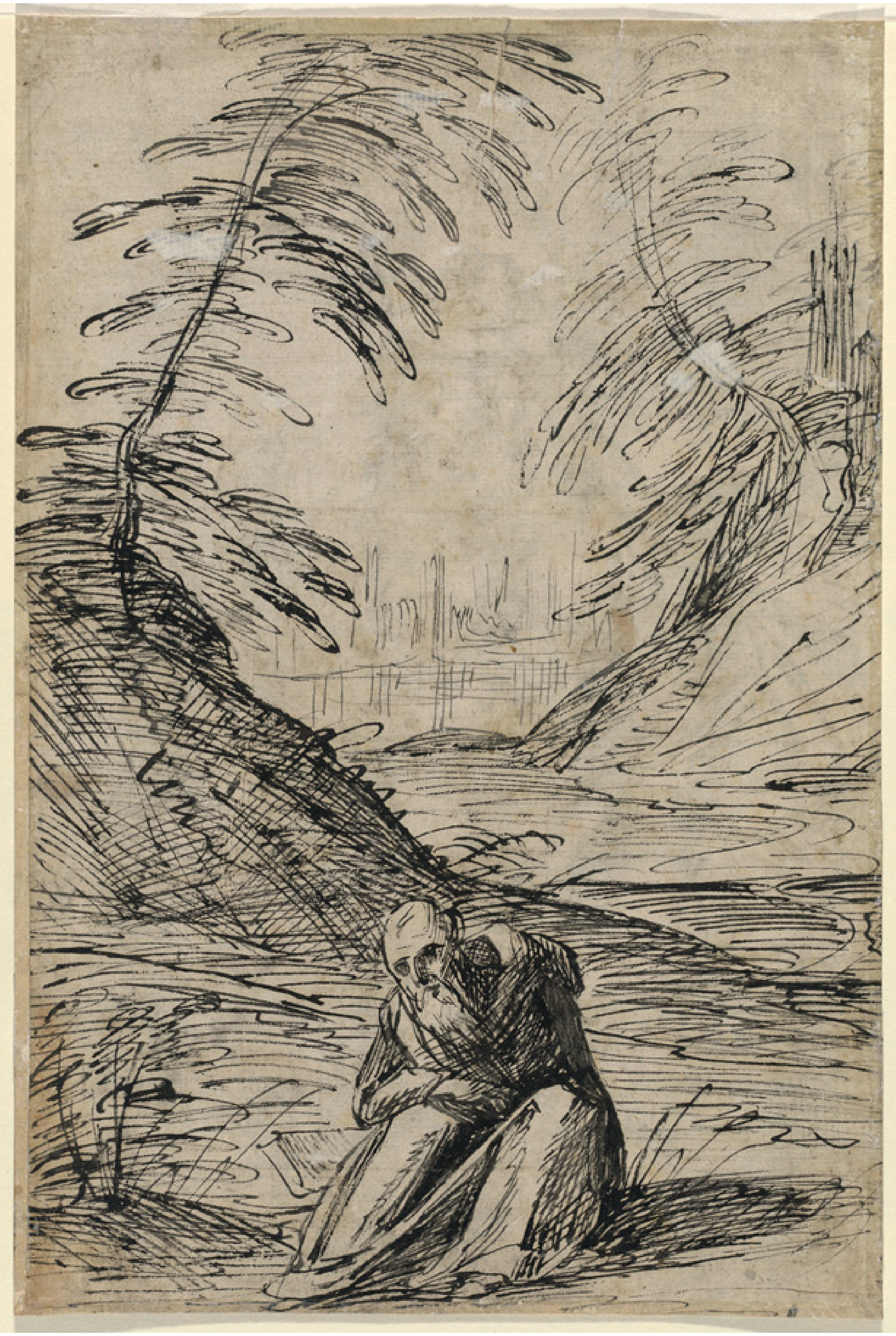

Figure 1.1. The solitary hermit has been a common theme in artistic portrayals of monastic life from Late Antiquity until the present day. This sketch shows an early modern imagination of a desert hermit: Hermann Weyer, *Desert Landscape with a Hermit (verso)*, 1615/1620, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (this image is in the public domain).

portrayal of St Antony the monk that first conveyed these ideals to an international audience.[5] Athanasius painted Antony as the exemplary Christian and advocated for a proper ascetic practice in which 'dispossession, solitude and personal austerity were paramount and in which the desert became the locus of true religion'.[6] *The Life of St Antony* gave birth to the ideal of the solitary hermit and the success of Athanasius' portrayal of Antony led to a literary *imitatio patrum*, where ascetic power was measured against the distance from urban society.[7] Literary works of fiction such as Jerome's *Life of St Paul* and the tale of Paphnoutios' meeting with the hermit Onnophrios were based on this ideal. The latter work reports how Paphnoutios travelled two weeks through the desert before he came across Onnophrios, a man so holy that he 'had become an angel on earth, and his withdrawn landscape a reflection of heaven'.[8] In Palestine, in a hagiography that mirrors the *Life of St Antony*, Jerome describes how, in the first half of the fourth century, St Hilarion retreated into the desert and eventually founded the monastic community at Gaza.[9]

Until recently, literary sources and especially hagiographies such as the influential *Apophthegmata Patrum* (for Egypt) and Cyril of Scythopolis' *Lives of the Monks of Palestine* and John Moscus' *Spiritual Meadows* (for Palestine) were used by scholars as the principal evidence for monasteries' economic circumstances. These texts portray ideal Christian lives and the miracles of holy Christian men and women. They were written for the purpose of imitation or to attract pilgrimage to specific sites and were not designed to create an accurate account of the economic lives of the saints and their associated monasteries.[10] Rather than describe work as a revenue-producing activity, the hagiographies describe it as a part of the ascetic lifestyle and as a meditative practice accompanied by prayer.[11] In these texts, monastic production included goods such as baskets and ropes that could be sold or exchanged, which in combination with charitable donations formed the basis of monastic survival.[12] Past scholarship saw monasteries as a burden on contemporary society and an economic and social drain on society's resources. This scholarly stance is perhaps best demonstrated by A. H. M. Jones in his seminal book from 1964 on the economy and social organisation of *The Later Roman Empire*, in which he described a 'huge army of clergy and monks' as 'idle mouths, living upon offerings, endowments and state subsidies'.[13] Derwas Chitty's study on the origins of Egyptian and Palestinian monasticism repeats these views, as does the early work of Peter Brown.[14]

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[5] *Vita Antonii*; translation in Vivian and Athanassakis, *The Life of Antony*.

[6] Dunn, *The Emergence of Monasticism*, p. 3. See Sheridan, 'The Development of the Concept of Poverty from Athanasius to Cassius', for a discussion of dispossession in the *Life of St Antony*.

[7] Goehring, 'The Dark Side of Landscape', p. 443. See also Endsjø, *Primordial Landscapes*.

[8] Goehring, 'The Dark Side of Landscape', pp. 443–4.

[9] Deferrari, *The Fathers of the Church*, pp. 245–86. See also Chitty, *The Desert a City*, pp. 13–14.

[10] Papaconstantinou, 'The Cult of Saints' and 'Donation and Negotiation'. See also Blanke, 'Pricing Salvation'.

[11] The *Apophthegmata Patrum* describes, for example, how Abba Lucius responded to a group of monks. He stated that 'while doing my manual work, I pray without interruption. I sit down with God soaking my reeds and plaiting my ropes . . . So, when I have spent the whole day working and praying, making thirteen pieces of money more or less, I put two pieces of money outside the door and I pay for my food with the rest of the money. He who takes the two pieces of money prays for me when I am eating and when I am sleeping; so, by the grace of God, I fulfil the precept to pray without ceasing.' Translation from Ward, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, pp. 120–1.

Research carried out over the last two decades on documentary papyri and archaeological remains has suggested a very different economic reality. Although the wealth of monasteries varied considerably, it is possible to reconstruct a picture of some monasteries as important landowners, producers and consumers of goods, as well as significant contributors to the regional economy. New research into documentary sources has shed light on economic aspects not covered by the literary record, including evidence for landholdings, work-contracts, the role of wine and animal husbandry, as well as travel and communication with external monastic and lay communities. At the same time, new archaeological projects using modern techniques and recording methods have uncovered vast built environments that required a substantial capital investment in terms of both construction and maintenance.

The chapters in this volume come together from new research that argues for a need to approach monasteries not just as religious entities in physical seclusion from society, but as the opposite – as active players in the world of Late Antiquity. The volume brings together scholars working across traditional borders of subject and geography, using both archaeology and text within Egypt and Palestine, the latter of which is defined here in the broadest sense, including chapters on Jordan and Syria (Figs 1.2 and 1.3). Our chronological range covers the period from the golden age of monasticism into and well beyond the Arab conquest (roughly fourth to tenth centuries).

Egypt and Palestine are at the forefront of current research on late antique monasticism. The twenty-first century has seen a vast increase in studies that are re-assessing our knowledge base. Scholars are revisiting the

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[12] The stance taken in, e.g., Chitty, *The Desert a City*, but also reproduced in recent scholarship; see, for example, Milewski, 'Money in the Apophthegmata Patrum'.

[13] Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, p. 993.

[14] Chitty, *The Desert a City*; Brown, 'The Rise and Function of the Holy Man', p. 83. Brown has since revised his conclusions; see especially Brown, *Treasure in Heaven*. The concept of the 'penniless' monk is also reproduced by modern scholarship relying on the Apophthegmata Patrum; see, for example, Milewski, 'Money in the Apophthegmata Patrum', p. 605.

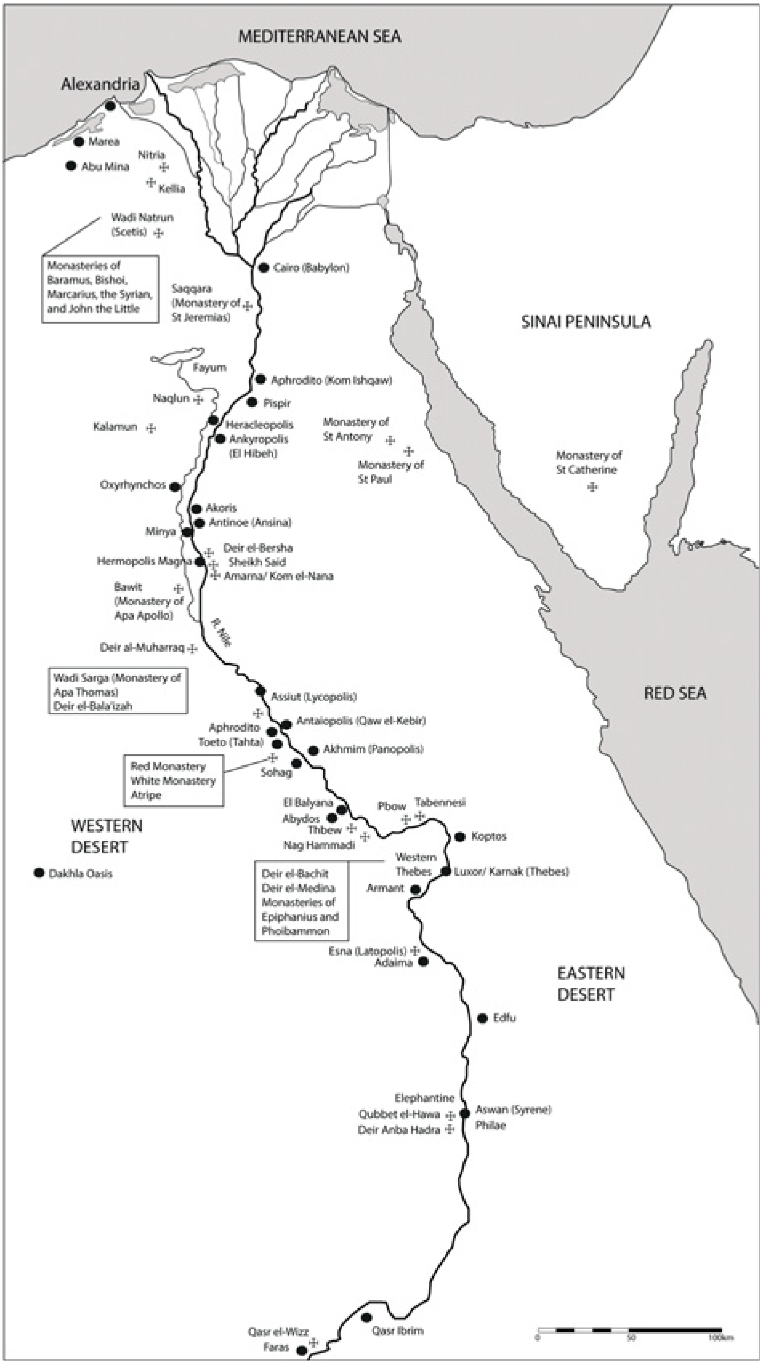
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
Alexandria
Marea
Abu Mina
Nitria
Kellia
Wadi Natrun
(Scetis)
Monasteries of
Baramus, Bishoi,
Marcarius, the Syrian,
and John the Little
Cairo (Babylon)
Saqqara
(Monastery of
St Jeremias)
SINAI PENINSULA
Fayum
Aphrodito (Kom Ishqaw)
Naqlun
Pispir
Kalamun
Heracleopolis
Ankyropolis
(El Hibeh)
Monastery of
St Antony
Monastery of
St Paul
Monastery of
St Catherine
Oxyrhynchos
Akoris
Antinoe (Ansina)
Minya
Deir el-Bersha
Hermopolis Magna
Sheikh Said
Amarna/ Kom el-Nana
Bawit
(Monastery of
Apa Apollo)
R. Nile
Deir al-Muharraq
Wadi Sarga (Monastery of
Apa Thomas)
Deir el-Bala'izah
Assiut (Lycopolis)
RED SEA
Antaiopolis (Qaw el-Kebir)
Aphrodito
Toeto (Tahta)
Akhmim (Panopolis)
Red Monastery
White Monastery
Atripe
Sohag
El Balyana
Pbow
Tabennesi
Abydos
Thbew
WESTERN
DESERT
Nag Hammadi
Koptos
Dakhla Oasis
Western
Thebes
Luxor/ Karnak (Thebes)
Deir el-Bachit
Deir el-Medina
Monasteries of
Epiphanius and
Phoibammon
Armant
Esna (Latopolis)
Adaima
EASTERN
DESERT
Edfu
Elephantine
Qubbet el-Hawa
Aswan (Syrene)
Deir Anba Hadra
Philae
Qasr Ibrim
Qasr el-Wizz
Faras
0
50
100km

Figure 1.2. Map of Egypt with key sites that are mentioned in the book. Drawn by Louise Blanke.[15]

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[15] For sites in the Fayum, see Fig. 4.1.

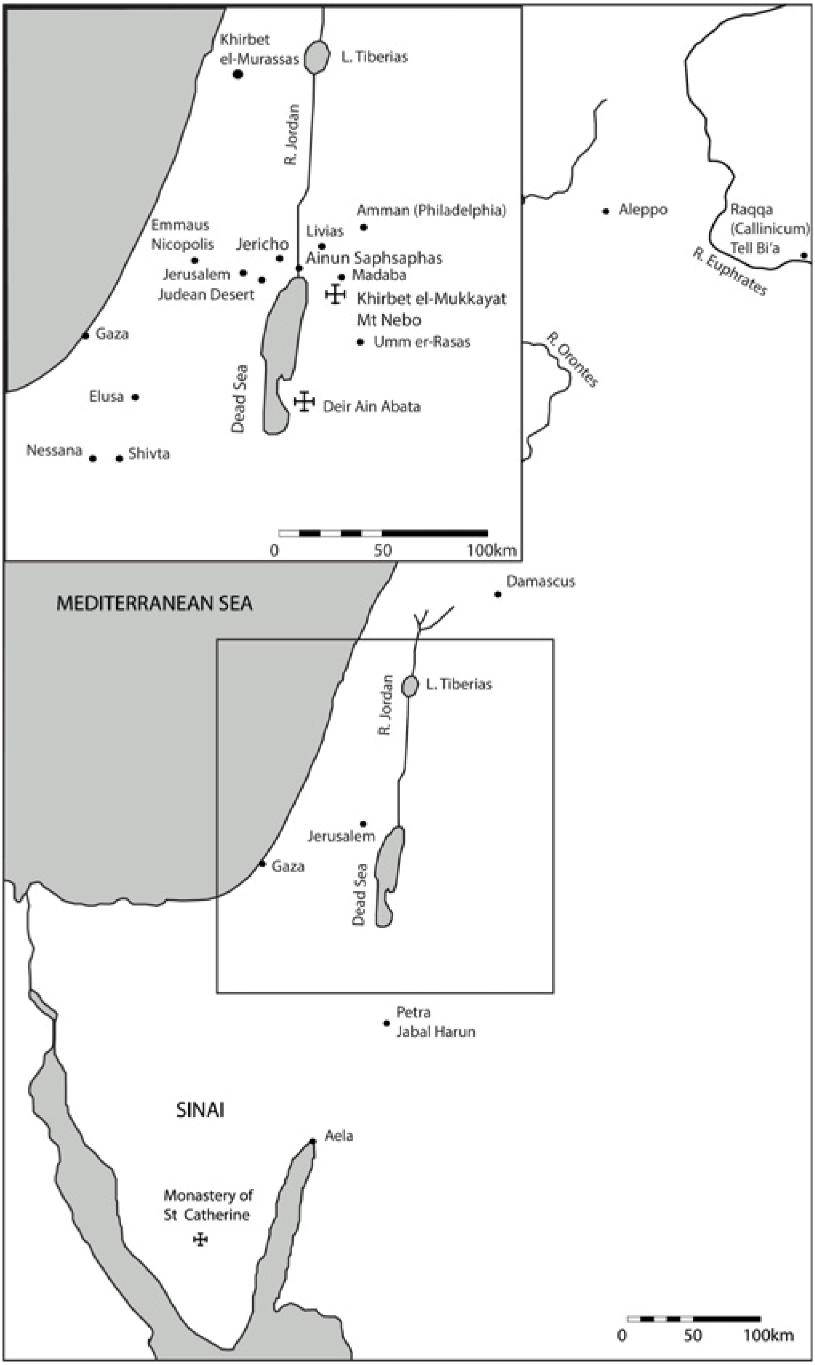
Khirbet el-Murassas
L. Tiberias
R. Jordan
Amman (Philadelphia)
Aleppo
Raqqa (Callinicum) Tell Bi'a
R. Euphrates
Emmaus Nicopolis
Jericho
Livias
Ainun Saphsaphas
Madaba
Jerusalem
Judean Desert
Khirbet el-Mukkayat
Mt Nebo
Umm er-Rasas
Gaza
R. Orontes
Elusa
Dead Sea
Deir Ain Abata
Nessana
Shivta
0
50
100km
Damascus
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
L. Tiberias
R. Jordan
Jerusalem
Gaza
Dead Sea
Petra
Jabal Harun
SINAI
Aela
Monastery of St Catherine
0
50
100km

Figure 1.3. Map of Palestine and surrounding area with key sites that are mentioned in the book. Drawn by Louise Blanke.[16]

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[16] For detailed map of the Jordan Valley, see Fig. 2.1, and for the Mt Nebo area, see Fig. 12.5.

literary sources, asking different questions and extracting new meanings from well-known material, publishing large corpora of documentary papyri, and undertaking archaeological projects that allow us to challenge established ideas and move beyond past biases on monumental church architecture. Egypt and Palestine are unique in this respect, as both regions are unusually rich in historical (textual and material) evidence, which allows us to move beyond stereotypical images derived from the literary sources and to begin to form a more nuanced picture of the complexities of late antique monastic economies. It is our hope that these chapters will inspire scholars of monasticism and help to reshape the agenda for monastic studies in other parts of the late antique world.[17]

As well as being excellent locations to study the evidence for monasticism, bringing together Egypt and Palestine allows broader trends in economic practices to be identified. Our comparative approach enables new questions to be asked of the material in each region and permits us to identify similarities and differences in the organisation of monasteries and their interaction with contemporary society. The authors in this volume identify practices that point towards long-distance networks through which traditions and customs were transmitted from one region to another, while also finding monastic organisation that developed in response to specific local conditions.

At first glance, the economic organisation of monasteries in Egypt and Palestine varies enormously. The proximity to Jerusalem and the association with biblical stories greatly influenced the development of monastic communities at sites in the Holy Land. In Syria and northern Jordan, the remains of stylite pillars and towers and the monastic complexes and pilgrimage sites that surround them testify to a type of ascetism that is not found in Egypt. Indeed, the size and wealth of Egypt's coenobitic federations stand in stark contrast to the smaller communities found near villages throughout Palestine; at Kellia in Egypt's Western Desert, the desert was truly transformed into a city on a scale not found elsewhere in the late antique world.

However, a closer reading of the textual and material remains suggests that, although monasteries and their economic organisation differed enormously, there are also many similarities between our two regions. A disproportionate preservation of textual sources in Egypt and a longer tradition of archaeological research of late antique Palestine have informed our understanding of the monastic landscape in both regions. As demonstrated by the contributions to this volume, only by bringing all available evidence together can we begin to reconstruct a fuller picture of the monasteries' economic organisation.

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[17] This approach is reflected in recent studies on monasticism in other areas. Notably, chapters in Beach and Cochelin, *Cambridge History of Medieval Monasticism in the Latin West*, include both textual and archaeological approaches to the study of monasticism and take a critical view on the portrayal of monastic life that is found in the literary sources.

This volume is organised into three sections, each of which represents a key area connected to the economic realities of monastic life, with case studies from both Egypt and Palestine. Section I, 'The Monastic Estate', addresses monastic organisation, landownership, and economic engagement with contemporary society. Section II, 'Production and Consumption of Food and Material Goods', examines revenue-producing activities such as book and wine production, while also re-thinking significant, but less well studied, aspects of the monastic household, such as cooking and baking. Section III, 'Monastic Encounters: Travel, Pilgrimage, and Donations', considers the economic importance of engagements with external communities. Common for all chapters is an insistence on drawing on all relevant sources and a desire to understand the ways in which the monastic economies were embedded within local and regional exchange networks. The following sections discuss the individual contributions within the wider context of monastic studies. Afterwards, the conclusion offers some thoughts on future directions in the study of monastic economies.

The Monastic Estate

The study of Egypt's economy in the Roman and late antique periods has flourished over recent decades. The focus has been directed, in particular, on the great estates, such as that of Aurelius Appianus in the third century and the later Apion estate in the fifth to the early seventh centuries.[18] The nature of these estates, their level of economic sophistication, and their relationship with the public sphere have been the topic of numerous studies. The Apion estate, with its associated archive, has always been at the forefront of discussions of the economy, society, and administration of Late Antiquity, and the volume of publications concerning it has been extensive. Since the turn of the century alone, no less than five monographs dedicated to it, exclusively or in part, have been published.[19]

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[18] For the estate of Aurelius Appianus, see Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism*.

[19] Mazza, *L'archivio degli Apioni*; Sarris, *Economy and Society*; Banaji, *Agrarian Change*; Ruffini, *Social Networks*; Hickey, *Wine, Wealth, and the State*.

This scholarly focus has been driven by the fortuitous discoveries of archives of Greek papyri, including not only those from the great estates but also the impressive volume of material found in Oxyrhynchus.[20] However, this has created a somewhat one-sided approach to Egypt's economy. Alongside the great estates existed the church (as an institution) – the economic position of which has been studied extensively by Ewa Wipszycka[21] – and then we have the monasteries that were scattered throughout Egypt's urban and rural communities, but are best known from the fringes of the desert along the Nile Valley. The (predominantly) Coptic written material associated with these monasteries has traditionally received less attention than the Greek papyrological evidence for the 'Great Estates' (in part due to the frequently inaccessible nature of their text editions and in part due the lack of translations and commentaries).[22] This situation has created an imbalance, in which the many Christian monasteries have not been properly integrated into past scholarly treatment of the wider economic system of late antique Egypt. Although some aspects of their economy have been studied by scholars, their position in relation to the great estates, the church, and late antique society at large remains mostly unstudied.

The study of the monastic economies has been somewhat slower in the outset, mainly because of the rich corpus of literary sources that were copied through the centuries and constituted the bulk of monastic collections. These texts reflect the religious and intellectual interests of the communities, and they have long defined the key concerns of monastic textual scholarship.[23] Meanwhile, the focus on much past archaeological research has been on monumental architecture and especially on churches, with little attention paid to the infrastructure and productive facilities found within the physical remains of the monasteries.[24] An additional problem, especially in Egypt, is the focus of nineteenth- and early twentieth–century scholars working on pre-Christian remains, to the detriment of our understanding of the monasteries' built environment and their estates.

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[20] On Oxyrhynchus, see, for example, the collected papers in Bowman *et al.*, *Oxyrhynchus*.

[21] Most recently, Wipszycka, *The Alexandrian Church*.

[22] Many century-old Coptic text editions have no translations (e.g., *O.CrumVC*) or only partial ones (e.g., *O.Crum*, *P.Lond.Copt.* I).

[23] As a case in point, see the volume of scholarship on the literary production of Shenoute, abbot of the White Monastery federation. While editions of Shenoute's texts have been published since the nineteenth century, the past couple of decades have witnessed considerable activity in this area. For example, see Emmel, *Shenoute's Literary Corpus*; Boud'hors, *Le canon 8 de Chénouté*; Layton, *The Canons of Our Fathers*; Brakke and Crislip, *Selected Discourses of Shenoute the Great*. On the library of the White Monastery, see, for example, Orlandi, 'The Library of the Monastery of Saint Shenoute'.

[24] An early exception is the outstanding publication of the monastery of Epiphanius in western Thebes by Winlock and Crum, *The Monastery of Epiphanius*.

The monastery of Apa Phoibammon (seventh–eighth centuries), built upon the New Kingdom mortuary temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri on the west bank of Thebes in the south of Egypt, is a case in point. The monastery's economic activities were first known from a number of papyri, acquired in the mid-nineteenth century. These legal texts include donations of palm trees and livestock to the monastery, as well as the testaments of its early superiors.[25] Despite scholarly interest in this material, when Edouard Naville began working at Deir el-Bahri in 1894, he and his team removed the monasteries' mudbrick architecture without adequate recording in order to expose the remains of the Pharaonic period. Our knowledge of these features therefore relies entirely on photographs taken by Howard Carter, who was part of the team, and earlier drawings by visitors to the site.[26] During this clearance, a large body of ostraca, primarily in Coptic, were found, the majority of which are now in the British Museum.[27] Subsequent work at the site by the Metropolitan Museum of Art (1920s) and the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology (since the 1960s) has uncovered more material from the monastery.[28]

This situation is not unique to the monastery of Apa Phoibammon, and similar cases are encountered at monastic sites throughout Egypt.[29]

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[25] The earliest publications of this material appeared already in the 1850s and 1860s; see Goodwin, 'Curiosities of Law' and 'Account of Three Coptic Papyri'. For the testaments, see now Garel and Nowak, 'Monastic Wills', and Garel, *Héritage et transmission*.

[26] This material is collected in Godlewski, *Le monastère de St. Phoibammon*. For the early history of the monastery under its founder Apa Abraham, see Krause, 'Apa Abraham von Hermonthis' – despite subsequent work at the site, this study remains a core reference work, almost seventy years later. See also Garel, *Héritage et transmission*, chapter 3.

[27] The principal publication of the Deir el-Bahri texts is *O.Crum* (published 1902), but see the list of texts in Godlewski, *Le monastère de St. Phoibammon*, pp. 153–63, for texts from or concerning the monastery. However, this list is increasingly in need of an update, with new editions of texts from the site regularly occurring, as the next note indicates.

[28] Many of the ostraca found by the MMA excavations are still unpublished, but see O'Connell, 'Ostraca from Western Thebes' for their archival history, and also sporadic publications of ostraca, including most recently Cromwell, 'Forgive Me, Because I Could Not Find Papyrus', and Dekker, 'Coptic Ostraca Relating to Bishop Abraham'. For texts resulting from the Polish mission, see, for example, Markiewicz, 'Five Coptic Ostraca' and 'New Fragmentary Coptic Texts'.

[29] For example, the monastic complex at Wadi Sarga was excavated in a single season in 1913/14, resulting in the discovery of a considerable body of objects and texts. Almost 400 texts were published in 1922 (*O.Sarga*), many of which deal with the administration of food and wine. Yet, despite this material it has largely not been included in studies on monastic economies, except for one study on wine (Bacot, 'La circulation du vin'). Work has resumed recently on the material and excavation records from the site, but no new excavations are possible as the wadi is

It is therefore frequently difficult to reconstruct the size of monastic estates, in terms of the extent of both their buildings and landholdings. However, several notable publications have addressed this issue, establishing the foundation for future work. In addition to studies focusing broadly on monastic economies, Ewa Wipszycka has produced two substantial volumes in the past decade that bring together archaeology and texts in the study of the life of monastic communities.[30] As well as discussing the physical remains and structure of such institutions, Wipszycka highlights costs involved in their foundation and upkeep, costs that often have to be inferred from the size and quality of what remains, as well as literary allusions, rather than texts that explicitly address this point.[31]

Other studies have focused instead on a single monastery. Over the past two decades, five volumes of editions of Coptic and Greek texts from the monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit have appeared.[32] In total, over 700 texts have now been published from the site, which date to the seventh and eighth centuries (with a small number of Greek texts dated to the sixth century) and primarily address economic concerns.[33] Many of these texts document the management of the monastery's landholdings and buildings, including sales and leases. A comprehensive synthesis of the monastery's estate is still wanting.[34] However, the monastery of Apa Apollo was clearly a significant landholder in the Hermopolite nome (see also Section II below).[35] Additionally, the texts from the monastery provide evidence for

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part of a military zone. On recent work, see especially Faiers, 'Wadi Sarga Revisited', O'Connell, 'R. Campbell Thompson's 1913/14 Excavation of Wadi Sarga' and 'Wadi Sarga at the British Museum', and Cromwell, 'Writing Exercises from Wadi Sarga'.

[30] Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques*; *The Second Gift of the Nile*; and 'Resources and Economic Activities'.

[31] For example, concerning Kellia, Wipszycka reflects in particular on the 'high quality wall paintings' and the hermitages' elaborate layouts, which indicate that 'their inhabitants had substantial material means at their disposal . . . given that they could afford to hire highly skilled specialists for constructing and decorating their dwellings' (Wipszycka, *The Second Gift of the Nile*, p. 308). While Wipszycka does not discuss Wadi Sarga in her works, one particular text gives a sense of such costs. *O.Sarga* 161 is a contract between the monastery and a carpenter to undertake repairs in the monastery, for which he is paid in wheat, barley, wine, and garments.

[32] *O.BawitIFAO*, *P.Bawit Clackson*, *P.Brux.Bawit*, *P.Louvre Bawit*, *P.Mon.Apollo*.

[33] The most comprehensive list of texts from the monastery of Apa Apollo is available as an annex to *P.Louvre Bawit*.

[34] Wegner, 'The Bawit Monastery of Apa Apollo', p. 174. The difficulties involved in locating toponyms in the monastery's documents severely hinders a comprehensive synthesis of its estate. However, as increasing attention is given to toponyms, the picture may become clearer in the future. For an example of such work, see Marthot, 'Un village égyptien et sa campagne', as well as her contribution to the current volume (Marthot-Santaniello, Chapter 3).

[35] Detailed discussions of the monastery's estate and economic concerns are provided by Alain Delattre in his substantial introduction to *P.Brux Bawit*, and Wegner, 'The Bawit Monastery of Apa Apollo'. While Wegner is primarily concerned with the monastery's relations with the

a range of fiscal obligations for which it was liable, as well as the role of individual monks as creditors.[36]

The past decade or so has also seen several archaeological studies that are addressing the physical remains of the monasteries' built environment, examining in depth not only their layout and organisation, but also patterns of production and consumption and how these reflect on the monasteries' economic health and their interaction with extramural society.[37]

Darlene Brooks Hedstrom's archaeological reconstruction of Egypt's monastic landscapes tackles, among other subjects, the misconceptions of Egyptian monasticism arising from nineteenth- and early twentieth–century European engagement with Egypt's past (as described above in relation to the monastery of Apa Phoibammon).[38] She summarises the key textual sources and examines the location of monasteries: from purpose-built settlements the size of large villages, such as Apa Jeremias, which were embedded within economic networks with non-monastic communities, to the monastic reuse of abandoned or unclaimed sites such as quarries, tombs, temples and natural cavities.[39]

Louise Blanke's study of the White Monastery federation analyses the archaeological remains of the three monasteries that were under joint leadership from the time of Shenoute (r. 385–466).[40] The study focuses on the long Late Antiquity but traces the monasteries' activities from their foundation until the present day. The White Monastery (the leading partner of the three federated communities) was an economic powerhouse: textual sources suggest landholdings amounting to 50 km² in the fifth century, while the archaeological remains showcase a richly built environment with an intramural space of 75,000 m², which places the White Monastery among the largest in Egypt.[41] The archaeological remains

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extramural world, as the majority of these relationships are directly connected to its economy, her study represents the most important work on this aspect of the monastery's life.

[36] On the monastery's fiscal obligations (including land tax and various other taxes introduced after the Arab conquest), see Wegner, 'The Bawit Monastery of Apa Apollo', pp. 189–212. For the monks as creditors, see Papaconstantinou, 'A Preliminary Prosopography of Moneylenders', pp. 634, 638–9, and 646; Wegner, 'The Bawit Monastery of Apa Apollo', pp. 229–42.

[37] Lukas Schachner's doctoral dissertation, 'Economic Production', represents a significant contribution to our understanding of the monastic economies in Egypt and Palestine, but it remains unpublished.

[38] Brooks Hedstrom, *The Monastic Landscape*. See also Brooks Hedstrom, 'Treading on Antiquity'.

[39] See also Brooks Hedstrom, 'Divine Architects'.

[40] Blanke, *An Archaeology of Egyptian Monasticism*.

[41] Only Bawit surpasses the White Monastery in size, with an intramural space of 400,000 m².

further show that oil was produced at a scale far beyond what was consumed within the monastery itself.

The climate of Palestine does not lend itself well to the preservation of papyri. Although rich in literary sources, documents relevant to the economy of monastic complexes survive from only three sites: the main church in the city of Petra, Khirbet Mird near Qumran, and the Sergios-Bakkhos monastery at the village of Nessana in the Negev Desert.[42] The presence of documentary papyri at these three sites suggests that they were commonly found in monastic complexes. However, an abundance of literary sources has largely informed our understanding of Palestinian monasticism,[43] while papyri and archaeological remains have only recently begun to be integrated fully in the study of the monasteries' economic life.[44]

In 1992, Yizhar Hirschfeld published one of the first extensive studies of monastic communities, which attempted to integrate archaeology and literary sources.[45] Building on surveys of the sixty-five monasteries of the Judean Desert, Hirschfeld examined the layout and infrastructure of these settlements, while also studying their daily life and economy. The monasteries varied in size but averaged some twenty monks. From literary sources, Hirschfeld concluded that the monasteries' main source of income was donations in the form of material gifts, bequests, money, and land, while the architectural remains further suggested that the production of oil and wine also contributed to their upkeep.[46]

Hirschfeld's study was ambitious and thorough, but has since been criticised by, for example, Daniel Reynolds for relying too heavily on hagiographical literature in its historical reconstruction, while also seeing the destructive effects of the Sassanian occupation (614–28) and the Arab conquest (638) as the primary causes for the monasteries' gradual abandonment.[47] These criticisms are relevant for most older studies of Palestinian monasticism, and it is only within the past decade or so that scholars have begun to rely less on the explanatory models provided by the hagiographical literature and engage more critically with the monasteries' material remains.

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[42] For the documents from Petra and Nessana, see respectively *P.Petra* I–V and *P.Ness*. III. It is worth noting that only a few of the Petra papyri contain references to the monastery. *P.Petra* V 55, a will dated to 573, for example, makes reference to 'The house of the High Priest Aaron' as a beneficiary; see the discussion in Frösén, 'The Petra Papyri'. The papyri from Khirbet Mird have yet to be fully published, but a project based at KU Leuven is currently in the process of documenting and conserving the papyri (starting date: 2018). Publications of the papyri include Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri from Khirbet el-Mird*; Malik, 'Une inscription et une lettre'; Van Haelst, *Catalogue des Papyrus Littéraires* and 'Cinq textes provenant de Khirbet Mird'; and Verhelst, 'Les fragments de Castellion'.

[43] See especially Chitty, *The Desert a City*, but also Binns, *Ascetics and Ambassadors*; Dauphin, *La Palestine byzantine*, and Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries*.

[44] Reynolds, 'Monasticism in Early Islamic Palestine', p. 343, but see the contributions by Hamarneh and Caner in this volume.

[45] Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries*.

[46] Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries*, pp. 102–11.

This approach has been most successful in rural areas that are not associated with biblical sites or home to saints or famous monastic leaders about whom hagiographies were later written. Recent archaeological studies of monasteries in, for example, the Limestone Massif (Syria) and Western Galilee (Palestine) have examined the connection between monastic communities and village sites.[48] With few or no textual sources to guide the scholarly interpretations, the usage of, for example, archaeological landscape survey and the mapping of settlement patterns have proved effective in establishing the close contact between monastic and village communities. Monasteries were often attached to villages – built near or even within village settlements – sometimes with shared facilities for agricultural production, such as oil and wine presses, and evidence suggests that certain significant religious events such as baptism would take place within the monastic churches.[49]

Further reassessment of Palestine's monastic landscapes has been done by, for example, Itamar Taxel, who has examined the variety of monastic settlements and the range of geographical areas in which they are found.[50] Khirbet es-Suyyagh (seventh century) – a farmstead converted into a monastery in the northern Judean foothills – is an example of an agricultural monastery. The farmstead was equipped with oil and wine presses, which were continuously utilised by the monastic settlement. Leah Di Segni has argued that such farmsteads were donated to the church by

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[47] Reynolds 'Monasticism in Early Islamic Palestine'.

[48] For the Limestone Massif, see Hull, 'The Archaeology of Monasticism' and 'A Spatial and Morphological Analysis of Monastic Sites'. For Western Galilee, see Ashkenazi and Aviam, 'Monasteries, Monks and Villages' and 'Monasteries and Villages'.

[49] Ashkenazi and Aviam, 'Monasteries, Monks, and Villages', especially pp. 289–93. The interdependence of village and monastery is also explored for Deir Ain Abata (Jordan) by Politis, 'The Monastery of Aghios Lot', and for Petra/Jabal Harun (Jordan) by Kouki, 'The Hinterland of a City'.

[50] Taxel's categories include 'urban monasteries of the communal/*coenobion* type (built within or near the borders of large towns and cities); desert monasteries belonging to either the *coenobion* or eremitical/*laura* type; pilgrimage monasteries – *coenobia* built at countryside pilgrim destinations and along pilgrimage routs; and agricultural monasteries – *coenobia* built either independently of villages or on their margins, common in the sown regions and desert fringes'. Taxel acknowledges that there were also hybrid monasteries; Taxel, 'Reassessing the Monastic Phase of Khirbet es-Suyyagh', p. 181; see also Taxel, 'Rural Monasticism' and *Khirbet es-Suyyagh*.

Christian landowners following the Samaritan revolt of 529–30, which left the farm abandoned, but still liable to paying tax.[51]

In this volume, Basema Hamarneh's study on the 'Monastic Estates in Byzantine *Arabia* and *Palaestina* (Fourth–Ninth Centuries)' combines literary, documentary and archaeological sources to reconstruct the complex monastic economies in and around the Holy Land. Hamarneh outlines some of the many ways in which monasteries were organised in the provinces of *Arabia* and *Palaestina*, showing a wide variety in the scale of landownership and monastic possessions, as well as in the personal wealth of monks. Through the use of literary sources (especially hagiographies) and documentary sources (such as the Nessana papyri), she outlines the development of the monastic landscape, showing its range from individual ascetics to large-scale coenobitic communities that flourished especially in the sixth and seventh centuries. The archaeological remains provide further evidence for the significance of monastic sites in the late antique Holy Land, showing that almost every village in the study area supported at least one monastery.

In Egypt, the relationship between villages and monasteries is less well understood. While monasteries are often preserved in the archaeological record due to their location in the dry desert fringe, either villages have not been preserved or the focus of archaeological research has been elsewhere. The archive found in the village of Aphrodito therefore offers a rare opportunity to follow the development of the economic circumstances of several monastic communities over the course of almost two centuries. A sixth-century family archive and administrative documents from an eighth-century village inform Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello's examination of monastic landownership in and near the village of Aphrodito. Land registers reveal that, in the sixth century, seven monasteries owned a substantial amount of all recorded arable land. The monastery of Apa Sourous (known only from textual sources) stands out for its wealth, but monasteries from the region of Panopolis (some 50 km south) also feature as landholders. In the eighth century, almost 100 years after the Arab conquest, the tax records mention new foundations, while other monasteries appear to have maintained their possessions. Other monasteries have disappeared altogether from the records. Interestingly, the monastery of Apa Sourous transitioned to a new status as a large estate.

At Naqlun in Egypt's Fayum Oasis, some 100 hermitages have been excavated by a Polish archaeological mission revealing not only a rich built environment, but also documentary papyri and ostraca that provide insights into the economic dealings of the desert fathers. Tomasz Derda and Joanna Wegner show how some of the inhabitants at Naqlun had private financial means at their disposal and engaged in business either for themselves or on behalf of the community. The documents reveal how the monks organised both land and sea transport, leant money to laypeople, and invested in wine production. They also offer insights into the significance of kinship in establishing business relations.[52] A collection of miniature vessels found in a storage pit – perhaps intended as souvenirs – suggests an engagement with the pilgrimage industry in which the vessels were exchanged for offerings.

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[51] Di Segni, 'On the Contribution of Epigraphy', pp. 187–8.

Production and Consumption of Food and Material Goods

As the previous section has demonstrated, the built environment and land holdings of monasteries provide evidence for many economic practices, including the facilities and raw material required for the production and consumption of commodities needed within the communities and exchanged with external groups. The papers in this section focus specifically on these goods and address topics that have been examined in previous studies, revising current knowledge (Dzierzbicka on wine; Achi on books), as well as venturing into newer areas of study (kitchens by Brooks Hedstrom and Kalla; fuel by El Dorry). The abundant textual and archaeological evidence for food and material goods within monasteries provides multiple routes of enquiry, and recent studies that focus on archaeological evidence in particular demonstrate how much potential there is for diverse approaches into the study of production and consumption.[53]

The physical remains of what may be storerooms and ceramic sherds from transport containers, as well as texts referring to commodities, attest to the large number of vessels that must have filled these monasteries, being delivered to and taken away from them, handled by monks and laymen alike. Yet, for a long time, the study of ceramic wares did not receive the level of attention that it requires. As a case in point, the pottery from the monastery of Apa Thomas at Wadi Sarga received its first preliminary study a century after the site's excavation.[54] This neglect means that questions essential to monastic daily life, and to the monasteries' wider connections, cannot be tackled. As Alain Delattre notes for the monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, a large quantity of pottery was required for the monks' needs, but, while it is likely that they were making vessels on site, there is no archaeological evidence for this being the case.[55] A similar situation is found at Kom el-Nana (Amarna) (fifth to seventh centuries). In her study of the glassware and pottery from the site, Jane Faiers notes that there is no evidence for manufacturing during the period in question, and the wares instead are indicative of both short- and long-distance trade.[56] The Egyptian wares show similarities with local wares produced at the city of Hermopolis, suggesting that the monastery was purchasing what it needed for its monastics from here. Other sherds were not local, showing long-distance trade within Egypt (e.g., Aswan and the Fayum), North Africa (Tunisia), as well as the Black Sea region and the eastern Mediterranean. These ceramics therefore provide evidence for connections with a broad geographic range that is not evident from the textual sources.

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[52] The importance of kinship in monasteries is studied by Schroeder, *Children and Family*, especially pp. 160–90. See also Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery*, pp. 161–75.

[53] The chapters in this section address the monastic production and consumption of material goods and do not engage with monastic work and labour, which is a recurring theme in the literary sources. For a recent discussion of these subjects, see Brown, *Treasure in Heaven*.

This is not to say, however, that all monasteries acquired their ceramic wares from external sources. At the monastery of Apa Jeremias, a pottery workshop containing six kilns with two additional kilns found nearby testifies to a large-scale ceramic production. Ceramic wasters found near the kilns inform us of a wide variety of pots produced here, including plates and dishes (tableware), large heavy basins, jugs, as well as *qaddus* pots designed to be used with a water wheel (*saqiyya*).[57]

Though some communities would have to acquire most of the commodities that they consumed from external suppliers (including the vessels required for transportation), other monasteries produced their own goods. While wine seems primarily to be purchased or produced on monastic lands, albeit not by monks (as Dzierbicka's paper demonstrates), evidence for wine presses survives from some sites in Egypt, and they are more commonly found at monasteries in Palestine.[58] This difference most likely results from the mode of production, which entails that grapes are pressed into wine at the estates that grow the vines. The pattern of land ownership in Egypt shows how monasteries, such as the White Monastery, often owned a patchwork of agricultural properties, sometimes as much as 70 km from the main site, while monasteries in Palestine, and especially those that had been converted from farmsteads, would have had their agricultural land holdings within their immediate vicinity.[59] More commonly attested in the archaeological record in both Egypt and Palestine are oil presses, with various vegetable oils (olive, sesame, castor) forming part of the monastic diet, as well as being used in lamps.[60] Recent work in particular has brought to light the extent and range of these economic installations.[61]

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[54] Faiers, 'Wadi Sarga Revisited'.

[55] *P.Brux.Bawit* p. 92. Most of the wares studied at the site are Egyptian (Late Roman Amphora 7), with imported wares accounting for only approximately 10 per cent of the total (Van Neer *et al.*, 'Salted Fish Products', p. 149; see also Dixneuf, 'Un lot d'amphores').

[56] Faiers, *Late Roman Glassware and Pottery from Amarna*, p. 9.

[57] Ghaly, 'Pottery Workshops', p. 165; see also Ballet, 'L'approvisionnement des monastères'. Kilns were also identified at Deir el-Dik, at Deir Mari Girgis, at the monastery of St Antony, and at the White Monastery. See the summary of ceramic production at monasteries in Wipszycka, 'Resources and Economic Activities', pp. 183–6, and for St Antony specifically, see Bild *et al.*, 'Excavations at the Monastery of St Antony'.

The study of monastic dietary habits is on the rise. Literary sources, such as monastic rules and hagiographies, provide good insights into the ascetic ideal of the consumption of food, while documentary sources report on the purchase and sale of agricultural production, but less so on the foodstuff consumed within the monasteries.[62] Archaeobotanical and archaeozoological remains, often contained within vessels but also scattered across sites, comprise another relatively recent area of study, providing an important addition to the textual sources for monastic diet. At Bawit, for example, the texts mention calves, sheep, and poultry, and animals were also used for other purposes, providing commodities (e.g., wool) and labour (e.g., transportation). Yet, the excavation reports from the site do not indicate the presence of animal bones.[63] The lack of published animal bones is in stark contrast to the volume of fish bones and evidence for fishing found in Egypt (with the Nile providing a ready supply of fresh fish, which could be salted for later consumption).[64] In addition to consumption, ingredients were also required for medicinal use and need to be considered in discussions of the procurement and use of goods. Opium poppy seeds found at Kom el-Nana are most likely to be understood as indicating the costs incurred in the medical care of both monks and laymen.[65]

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[58] Hand presses survive from Egypt at the monastery of John the Little in the Wadi Natrun and medieval monasteries, including the thirteenth-century monastery of Abu Maqqar (El Dorry, ‘Wine Production in Medieval Egypt’, p. 58). For an overview of monastic wine production in Palestine, specifically that linked to the export of Gaza wine, see Decker, ‘The End of the Holy Land Wine Trade’.

[59] Future comparative studies of the production and sale of wine could begin to shed light on how well-embedded monasteries were in the Mediterranean economy, drawing upon recent studies in the socio-cultural and economic role of wine in the eastern Mediterranean. See, in particular, Dodd, *Roman and Late Antique Wine Production*, which examines the viticultural practices at Antiochia ad Cragnum (in Anatolia) and Delos in the fifth to seventh centuries.

[60] On oil for lamps, see Mossakowska, ‘Les huiles utilisées pour l’éclairage en Égypte’.

[61] See Krastel, Olschok, and Richter’s Chapter 11 on Anba Hadra in this volume; see also Blanke, *An Archaeology of Egyptian Monasticism*, pp. 133–7. Crushing basins are found, among other sites, at the monasteries of St Paul and St Antony by the Red Sea (personal observation), as well as at monasteries in the Wadi Natrun. For a comprehensive study of oil and wine presses in Palestine, see Frankel, *Wine and Oil Production*.

[62] For discussion of monastic diets as perceived through the literary sources see, for example, Layton, ‘Social Structure and Food Consumption’, and Robinson, ‘Shenoute’s Feast’ and *Food, Virtue, and the Shaping of Early Christianity*.

A final example of recent trends is the study of textile production, from flax cultivation to spinning and weaving of textiles, to the final production of garments.[66] Monasteries were involved in all stages of production, as attested by texts, loom installations and dye shops, and the remains of textiles, worn during life and used for funerary purposes after death, from both Egypt and Palestine.[67] This material introduces gendered aspects to monastic economy. Female monastics are far less well-represented in the written sources, but they played a pivotal role in garment production in the White Monastery federation, as attested by the literary evidence and the existence of dye shops at the women's monastery at Athribis.[68] The presence of Egyptian and Nubian textiles, dating to the ninth century, at the monastery of John the Baptist at Qasr el-Yahud in Jordan possibly indicates a hospital presence at the site, providing further evidence of the economic impact of monasteries as hospitals, as well as of long-distance pilgrimage and networks across Egypt and Palestine (discussed further in the next section).[69]

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[63] *P.Brux.Bawit* pp. 82–3. Similarly, while animal bones were excavated at Kom el-Nana, they are in considerably smaller quantities than fish bones; see Luff, 'Monastic Diet in Late Antique Egypt'.

[64] For fish at Bawit, see Van Neer *et al.*, 'Salted Fish Products'. A single papyrus, dating to the seventh century and likely from the Assiut area, attests to monastic involvement in fishing, published in Delattre and Vanthieghem, 'Un contrat de location de droit de pêche'. For a comparative example from Palestine, the animal bones from Deir Ain Abata have been exhaustively published and suggest that meat was consumed at the monastery in large quantities; see Beech, 'The Mammal Bones', Beech and Prance, 'The Fish Bones', and Rielly and Beech, 'The Bird Bones'. However, similar to the Egyptian examples, the animal bones from Jabal Harun (Petra, Jordan) suggest that, here, fish were predominant in the monastic diet; see Studer, 'Archaeozoology of Jabal Harun'.

[65] Smith, *Archaeobotanical Investigations*, p. 80. For medical provisions within monasteries, see Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital*.

[66] Ancient textiles has been a particularly prolific recent field of study, with evidence from monasteries appearing in Mossakowska-Gaubert, *Egyptian Textiles and their Production*, and El-Sayed and Fluck, *The Textile Centre Akhmim-Panopolis (Egypt) in Late Antiquity*. For Palestinian textiles, see for example those found in monks' tombs at Nessana (Shamir, 'Cotton Textiles', §16).

[67] A summary of the evidence from seventh- and eighth-century western Thebes is provided in Cromwell, 'The Threads that Bind Us'. For loom installations at several Egyptian sites, see Sigl, 'Pits with Cross-Bars' and 'Weaving Copts in Amarna'.

[68] The literary evidence is discussed in detail in Krawiec, *Shenoute and the Women of the White Monastery*, pp. 31–50. See Blanke, *An Archaeology of Egyptian Monasticism*, pp. 176–7 for the dye shops.

As these brief case studies demonstrate, commodities provide plentiful avenues of enquiry into the economic lives of monasteries. While the literary record strongly promotes the ideal of personal poverty, the documentary sources, small finds, and economic installations attest to the range of goods that were produced, bought, and traded, sometimes over long distances, within and between regions. The papers in this section highlight the range of approaches that can be adopted to study this evidence, generating new insights into well-known material and paving the way for entirely new understandings of the economic reality of day-to-day life.

Dorota Dzierzbicka examines the production and consumption of wine in Egyptian monasteries from the sixth to the eighth century, based on information obtained from documentary papyri, inscriptions, and archaeological evidence. Dzierzbicka demonstrates the complexity of wine procurement and its importance for a number of functions within the monastic communities. These included, but were not limited to, religious worship, pious gifts, payment in kind, and monastic consumption. A case study of the documentary papyri from the monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit suggests a change in the monastery's procurement from the sixth to the eighth century. In the sixth century, vineyards became a part of the monastic estate through donation or bequeathment, and the production was subsidised by wine purchased in large quantities. The seventh and eighth centuries saw a change in the monastery's productive capacity as more vineyards were acquired and the monastery was transformed into a wine-producing estate of some significance.

The consumption of food within ascetic communities was a contested issue, which provoked anxiety among the monastics, encouraged the writing of rules to be followed, and promoted literary ideals to be imitated. The textual focus is often on the consumption of food and the procurement of ingredients, while its production is rarely mentioned. Darlene L. Brooks Hedstrom redresses this imbalance by applying ethnoarchaeological observations and theoretical principles retrieved from household archaeology to a study of the archaeological remains of kitchens, bakeries, storerooms, and dining spaces in Egyptian monasteries. These spaces are often found empty within the archaeological record. Brooks Hedstrom argues that in order to fully appreciate their centrality within the monastic communities, we should imagine them re-cluttered with objects and re-peopled with their ancient users.

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[69] For these textiles, see for example Shamir, 'Tunics from Kasr al-Yahud' and 'Egyptian and Nubian Textiles from Qasr el-Yahud'.

The study of the production and consumption of foodstuffs is furthered by Gábor Kalla in Chapter 7 on the refectory and the kitchen at the monastery of Tell Bi’a in Syria. The monastery forms a closed complex of circa fifty rooms with the church, kitchen, and refectory holding a prominent central location. The remains of ovens show how the monastery produced different types of bread, while textual sources and the archaeological remains of storage facilities point towards a monastic engagement with agricultural production. A series of circular benches were excavated in the refectory of Tell Bi’a. These are unique features within Syrian–Palestinian monasticism, linking the site to monasteries in Egypt. Based on the size and layout of the benches, Kalla concludes that the monastery would have been inhabited by forty-eight to sixty-four monastics during its latest phase of use.

In a truly unique contribution to the study of monastic economies, Mennat-Allah El Dorry examines the use of animal dung for fuel in Egyptian monasteries. Animal dung has several significant economic uses, including as fertiliser, building material, and tempering for ceramic production. In agricultural areas where wood is scarce, it further serves as an important source of fuel. Although this function is known from the Pharaonic period to pre-modern Egypt, very little work has been done on its use within the context of monastic settlements. El Dorry draws on inscriptions and titles found in textual sources, as well as archaeobotanical remains, to identify the extent of its usage. El Dorry concludes that dung was an important source of fuel at the two monasteries that have seen adequate archaeobotanical examinations, while the full extent of its usage awaits examination at other monastic sites.

Finally, the ninth- and tenth-century group of illuminated Coptic manuscripts known as the St Michael Collection offers a unique insight into the book culture of medieval Fayum in Egypt. These richly decorated and leather-bound manuscripts represent a costly investment of time and money. Andrea Myers Achi calculates the economics of book production in a detailed study of the materials and labour involved. Achi considers the full range of production from livestock (and their upkeep) required for the parchment, to the use of a skilled workforce and the exchange network of monasteries, scribes, painters, binders, and doners involved in producing and storing the collection. Contemporary papyri offer comparative pricelists, but do not express the spiritual and community value of the monastic ‘brand’, which would have made the books worth more than their actual monetary costs.

Monastic Encounters: Travel, Pilgrimage, and Donations

The first two sections deal with what are perhaps the most obvious forms of economic interactions in the late antique world. A key question engaging both past and present scholarship concerns the extent to which the wealth of monasteries was dependent on such means (i.e., agricultural and artisanal production and trade) compared to donations and lay gifts. Beat Brenk has argued that late antique monasteries (in Egypt and Palestine) would not have been able to prosper without the financial support of wealthy patrons, and that neither craft production nor agriculture would have sufficed to support the monastic lifestyle.[70] On the contrary, and as already touched upon above, Ewa Wipszycka has argued that documentary sources reveal that the main income of monasteries (in Egypt) was based on the production of cash-crops for sale in local markets.[71] Whether through patronage or trade, it is clear from textual and archaeological sources that engagement with both monastic and lay communities played an important role in the lives of most late antique monasteries.

The traditional scholarly view saw Palestinian monasticism as dependent on wealthy patrons and especially the Christian aristocratic elite. This view has its origins in Eusebius' account of Constantine the Great's (r. 306–37), and his mother Helena's, patronage of churches at Biblical sites, while the empress Eudokia (r. 421–50) and the Emperors Zeno (r. 476–91) and Justinian I (r. 527–65) are also associated with patronage of churches and pilgrimage sites.[72] The influential accounts of aristocratic pilgrims who founded monasteries in and near Jerusalem, such as Melania the Elder, Melania the Younger, and Paula (fourth and early fifth centuries), further shaped this scholarly perception.[73] Similarly, the main interest among scholars studying the material culture of pilgrimage has until recently been on the sites that attracted long-distance travellers (such as Abu Mena in Egypt and Qal'at Sim'an in Syria) and on the flasks and tokens that the pilgrims brought back as religious souvenirs.[74]

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[70] Brenk, 'Monasteries as Rural Settlements', especially pp. 472–3.

[71] Wipszycka, 'Resources and Economic Activities', p. 172.

[72] Eusebius, *Life of Constantine* (edition and translation: Winkelmann in Pietri and Rondeau, *Vie de Constantin*); John Moscus, *Spiritual Meadows* (translation: Wortley, *The Spiritual Meadow*); Procopius records that Justinian restored ten monasteries in Palestine and added cisterns to another six (*On Buildings*, 5.9.1–20; translation: Dewing and Downey, *Procopius*). See also Klein, 'Do Good in Thy Good Pleasure unto Zion'; Kosinski, 'The Emperor Zeno's Church Donations'; Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*, p. 111.

[73] Recent discussions of the hagiographical accounts of these women include Chin and Schroeder, *Melania*; Whiting, 'Asceticism and Hospitality'. See also Falcasantos, 'Wandering Wombs, Inspired Intellects'.

According to this traditional view, the international network of wealthy Christian donors collapsed in the early seventh century as a result of, first, the Sassanian occupation (614–28) and, second, the Arab conquest (638). However, refined typologies of especially ceramic evidence and the inclusion of epigraphy from churches are starting to paint a different picture of Christian patronage in the seventh century and later, which suggests that monasteries thrived well beyond the Arab conquest.[75] At the same time, the documentary evidence, especially from Nessana, and the archaeological evidence, for example from Western Galilee, has increased our awareness of the importance of local networks and the embeddedness of monastic communities, not only within long-distance elite networks, but, much more importantly, within their immediate surroundings and their local communities.

In Egypt, the increasing popularity of pilgrimage is attested in writings from the fifth century, when the church father Shenoute famously expressed his disgust at the contemporary Christian obsession with the veneration of martyrs' bones. He condemned the practice of placing their physical remains in churches and chapels and raged against worship associated with shrines. In Shenoute's view, this was the work of demons, as it included singing, feasting, and drinking to a point that led to fornication and even to murder.[76] Ironically, it is well attested that, after his death, Shenoute himself became the object of veneration and an attraction that drew pilgrims to the White Monastery.[77] In light of the many revered figures whose shrines attracted visitors, it is perhaps not surprising that hagiographies describe the roads of Egypt as transformed into rivers, such was the volume of pilgrims travelling the length of the country.[78]

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[74] See, for example, Anderson, 'An Archaeology of Late Antique Pilgrim Flasks', and Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art*. Recent studies have begun to challenge this situation; see, for example, Rosenthal-Heginbottom, 'Pilgrim Mementoes'; Collar and Kristensen, *Pilgrimage and Economy*; Kristensen and Friese, *Excavating Pilgrimage*.

[75] Reynolds, 'Monasticism in Early Islamic Palestine', p. 350.

[76] Timbie, 'Once More into the Desert' (on Shenoute's sermon BN 68). See Bitton-Ashkelony, *Encountering the Sacred*, and Yasin, *Saints and Church Spaces*, pp. 15–26, for attitudes towards pilgrimage in the fourth and fifth centuries. See also *Vita Antonii* 1.38 (translation: Vivian and Athanassakis, *The Life of Antony*) for an earlier attestation of this view.

[77] For a summary of pilgrimage to the White Monastery, see Blanke, 'The Allure of the Saint'.

[78] Anonymous travelogues, such as *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, are particularly vivid in their description of Egypt's Christian landscape.

Elsewhere in Egypt, the archaeological evidence testifies to the significant contribution made to monastic economies by the steady growth in the provision of religious services. The archaeological remains of the hermitages at Kom 39 and 40 at Qusur Hegeila (Kellia) show that the physical and spiritual needs of visitors were increasingly recognised and catered for from the fifth century onwards.[79] Some monasteries, such as Deir el-Bala'izah (sixth to eighth centuries), were equipped with an extramural guesthouse for visitors.[80] Guesthouses continued to be important centuries later, as attested at Deir Anba Hadra (tenth century), where a large section of the monastery was set aside for visitors. Non-monastics would arrive through a separate entrance in the monastery's east wall and have access to accommodation, kitchens, and the monastery's facilities for worship and prayer (see Krastel, Olschok, and Richter in this volume).

In Palestine, guesthouses were a common feature from the fourth century onwards. They were often connected with pilgrimage routes or sites, since they are frequently found at monasteries that were located on the routes leading to locations associated with saints or biblical stories.[81] A case in point is the monastery of Martyrius in the Judean Desert, which was laid out with an external wing for visitors that comprised accommodation and stables.[82] The monastery's layout suggests that visitors would also have had access to its main church, a tomb (dedicated perhaps to a church father or patron saint), as well as the refectory and bathhouse. An enclosure, about one-third of the size of the total monastery, was set aside for the private use of the monastics.[83]

While the textual and archaeological evidence clearly shows that, in Late Antiquity, monastics and monasteries were hosts and organisers of pilgrimage, they also became the destination of the pilgrims themselves. However, although the presence of visitors is articulated in the archaeological remains of monasteries, it is much more difficult to identify the economic exchanges that were generated by their visits. The interaction was centred on the monasteries' ability to provide services at the critical stages of life and in the mediation between God and the average Christian.[84] The pricing of these services (such as prayers, baptisms, and burials) is not easily quantifiable, and payment was often made via means other than monetary transactions.[85] Similarly, Achi (Chapter 9) has emphasised the perceived added value that objects produced in monasteries or by monastics may have had compared to those produced in non-monastic settings. We will probably never be able to quantify the value of monasteries' spiritual economy, but the combined literary, documentary, and archaeological evidence shows a clear trend in which the offering of religious services to lay communities became increasingly more prominent throughout and beyond Late Antiquity.

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[79] See Makowiecka, 'Monastic Pilgrimage Centre at Kellia' for a detailed description of this development. See also Descaeudres, 'Mönche als Pilger und als Pilgerziel'.

[80] The textual and archaeological evidence for guesthouses is summarised in Schachner, 'Economic Production', pp. 285–308.

[81] For travelling (monastics and pilgrims) in late antique Palestine, see Delouis *et al.*, *Les mobilités monastiques*; Dietz, *Wandering Monks*; Whiting, 'Travel in the Late Antique Levant' and 'Monastery Hostels'.

[82] Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries*, pp. 42–6. See also Whiting, 'The Architecture of Monastic Hospitality'.

[83] Guesthouses are also found at major pilgrimage sites such as Qal'at Sim'an, Syria, where monastics were responsible for the upkeep of the site and the provision of food and accommodation for visitors. See Jensen, 'Housing Pilgrims'.

The chapters in Section III examine some of the many ways in which monasteries engaged with the extramural world. Caner studies how monasteries managed the gifts and donations received by laymen, while Bianchi (Mt Nebo, Jordan) and Krastel, Olschok, and Richter (Deir Anba Hadra, Egypt) reconstruct from archaeology and text the roles of pilgrimage and agricultural production in sustaining the monasteries. The section concludes with a study by Tutty of how monastics ventured beyond their communities for the purposes of trade and religious tourism.

An archive of circa 200 documentary papyri from the village of Nessana in the Negev Desert represents one of the largest bodies of papyri that survives outside of Egypt. Among the different topics dealt with in this corpus, a number of texts concern monastic life (and are also discussed in Hamarneh's Chapter 2). One account in particular offers a rare insight into monastic recordkeeping outside of Egypt. The early seventh–century *P. Ness*. III 79 contains a list of gifts and their donors to an unnamed monastery, which is organised in two categories, *prosphorai* (offerings) and *eulogiai* (blessings). Dan Caner argues that the two categories describe very different types of gifts: *prosphorai* were given for specific purposes and came with obligations, whereas the monastics were free to use *eulogiai* as they saw fit (that is, they represent 'restricted' and 'unrestricted' gifts). This document is especially of note in contrast to the Egyptian papyri recording donations, in which *eulogiai* appear less frequently, allowing Caner not only to address the importance of this account for knowledge of early Byzantine monasticism but also our understanding of the practice in Egypt.

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[84] For a summary of some of these exchanges, see Blanke, 'Pricing Salvation'. See also Brown, *Treasure in Heaven*, p. xiv.

[85] The hagiographical literature supports the idea that some form of payment was expected for the services provided by the pilgrimage sites. See, for example, Papaconstantinou, 'Donation and Negotiation', p. 75.

Lena Sophie Krastel, Sebastian Olschok, and Tonio Sebastian Richter report on recent examinations of a monastery near the ancient city of Syene (modern Aswan). From the fourth century onwards, Syene comprised a rich Christian landscape with numerous religious institutions, of which Deir Anba Hadra is the best explored. Looking at the archaeological remains of food- and oil-producing facilities, the authors suggest that the monastery's production appears to have been largely designed for its own consumption with little or no engagement in local or regional trade. The epigraphic evidence, however, tells a different story. It reveals how the monastery, through extramural landholdings, provided for the poor while also attesting to an active engagement with visitation in which the monastery capitalised on the provision of spiritual commodities by, for example, encouraging visitors' inscriptions on the monastery walls.

The economic reality of life in this southern Egyptian monastery finds many common features with the community at Mt Nebo in the province of Arabia. Davide Bianchi summarises the economic circumstances of the monastery of the Memorial of Moses, which – similarly to the monastery of Anba Hadra – was largely self-sufficient in agricultural goods, such as bread and wine, but was not involved in surplus production for financial gain. Instead, the monastery engaged in a spiritual economy and relied to an extent on the donations made by pilgrims, local laypeople, and clergy. The monastery was part of a wider network of sites linked with biblical figures of the Old and New Testament and was visited by famous travellers, such as Egeria (fourth century), Peter the Iberian (fifth century), and the Piacenza pilgrim (sixth century).

Drawing on two letter collections (the archive of Nepheros and the Nag Hammadi Codices), as well as several other literary sources, Paula Tutty examines the patterns of travel among fourth-century monastics from these communities in Middle Egypt. Tutty identifies several reasons for travel. Monastics would travel to tend to agricultural land holdings well beyond the monastery and to trade and exchange goods. Senior monastics would visit other monasteries, and at times, individuals or groups of monastics would perform what Tutty describes as *religious tourism* as a part of their monastic training – including travel between Palestine and Egypt (and thereby helping create and maintain the long-distance networks mentioned previously). Depending on the purpose and duration of the journey, monastics would travel by land or on the Nile by boat, with several sources attesting that larger monasteries owned their own boats or barges used for transporting goods as far away as Alexandria. The different methods used and the extent to which monastics travelled also highlights the need to incorporate such communities into broader studies of life in late antique Egypt, with monks representing an important group of travellers that are often overlooked in studies of this period.

Conclusions and Future Perspectives

Together, the chapters in this volume demonstrate the potential of approaching the economies of monasteries in Egypt and Palestine as deeply embedded within the world of Late Antiquity. They show the many ways in which monasteries secured their existence and, in some cases, grew to become major actors in both local and regional economies. Monasteries were not only places that offered opportunities for seclusion from the world; they were also centres of religious power, and the formation and accumulation of their wealth were dependent on their ability to attract monastics and to secure the support of local communities through patronage, pilgrimage, and trade. The patchwork of properties owned by monasteries in Egypt, as illustrated in the Aphrodito archives, reflects not only how land was obtained in the first place, but also the complexities involved in managing the monastic estate. This volume securely displays the level of connectivity that was experienced by both monasteries and monastics through trade, communication, travel, and pilgrimage. Our chapters draw out networks of monastic book production and show how travelling monks contributed to establishing both religious and economic networks. Some monks even travelled as craftsmen, leaving their name in churches in different parts of Egypt.

In this introductory chapter, we have brought together just a small number of examples, from Egypt and Palestine, in order to demonstrate some current trends in studies of monastic economies and to emphasise just how much is still available for future study – both new material being discovered through archaeological fieldwork or archival research and evidence long-known but in need of being revisited. Many questions remain to be answered. The studies in this volume primarily focus on communal monasticism, unsurprisingly so given the abundance of evidence deriving from such communities. One potential direction for future work is the economy of solitary monasticism. While the literary record provides multiple examples of ascetics surviving through divine providence in remote locations (e.g., the inner desert), the archaeological and documentary sources reveal individuals much more closely bound to the world around them, through multiple economic transactions. Perhaps the best-known such monk to come to light in recent decades is Frange, who resided in a cell (a reused ancient tomb) in Sheikh Abd el-Qurna in western Thebes. Through the course of excavating the tomb in the early 2000s, hundreds of Coptic ostraca were found, many of which record Frange's interactions with the world around him (*O.Frangé*). This corpus demonstrates how he procured commodities for his daily needs and the work that he did (textile and book production), as well as his networks that spread throughout western Thebes and across the Nile, which were facilitated through the use of messengers. While several studies of aspects of his life and work have been published, there remains considerable scope for further work, with Frange potentially serving as a model for the economy of hermitic lifestyles.[86]

A firmer integration of monasticism within landscape studies is an important future trajectory. Geography is a significant variable within and between the two regions discussed in this volume. Settlement patterns were formed by local topography and by the availability of raw material. Within Egypt's desert climate, Brooks Hedstrom has demonstrated the variation in monastic settlements based on natural topography and previous site usage.[87] These variations could help illuminate questions that are key to the monastic economies, such as administrative complexity, on-site production, and the relationship with the extramural world, including the extent to which monastics had to travel. Finally, the economy of produce (such as ceramics, oil, and wine) allows for comparisons with non-monastic economies across the late antique Mediterranean world, locating the impact of monastic economies in broader contexts.

Exciting new fieldwork in Egypt and Palestine will also shape future work on monastic economies. Some of this is already noted in the chapters in the current volume, but many projects are underway, including what may, according to the excavators, be the earliest archaeologically attested monastery in Egypt in the Bahariya Oasis.[88] A further possibility for future work involves extending the geographic scope beyond Egypt's southern border, to the Christian kingdoms of Nubia. The study of monasticism in Nubia is still in its infancy, compared to its northern neighbour, but increasing scholarly attention in this area is already providing material that highlights the economic reality of monastic communities along this region of the Nile Valley.[89] Ultimately, this volume has set out not to create a model that fits all, but to emphasise the variety of the monastic economies and the significance of treating them in their rightful place within the world of Late Antiquity.

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[86] Select publications include Boud'hors, 'Copie et circulation des livres' (Achi in Chapter 9 in the current volume also discusses Frange's book production activities); Cromwell, 'The Threads that Bind Us'; Heurtel, 'Le petit monde de Frangé'. See also the introduction to *O.Frangé*.

[87] Brooks Hedstrom, 'Divine Architects'.

[88] At the time of writing, only initial announcements of the work at the site have appeared, and it remains too soon to confirm either the nature or date of this site, Tell Ganub Qasr el-Aguz.

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[89] See especially Obłuski, *The Monasteries and Monks of Nubia*, as well as the collected papers in Gabla and Takla, *Christianity and Monasticism in Aswan and Nubia*.

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