

Theban Tomb 65, after its pharaonic, 'pre-Christian' past, became part of an anchorite establishment, the so-called Monastery of Cyriacus.² Since the excavation season 1997, besides the pharaonic finds, Coptic archaeological and textual material also came to light from in and around the tomb, and since the 1998 season, work on the permanently found Coptic ostraca, papyri as well as the archaeological material, has been ongoing.

So far some 300 ostrakon and papyrus fragments have been unearthed by the Hungarian Mission led by Tamás Bács, with some almost complete, numerous damaged and quite a lot of badly damaged pieces with little or no information at all. As in the neighbouring reused tombs, the main writing material is pottery and limestone, the second is papyrus and only in one instance do we find some writing on a piece of wood. The walls although do not carry any major Coptic or Greek inscriptions, they bear the traces of the Coptic inhabitants: they systematically 'neutralised' the pharaonic paintings, figures on the wall which they considered to be demonic, carved out their eyes and the vulva with stones and sherds, and blurred their faces and the inscriptions with mud (Northern Front Wall), what they did not destroy, they christianised – carved (Northern Rear Wall) and drew (with carbon, on every wall) a cross on the figure; on the Southern Front Wall there are three small drawings depicting a saint on horse.

Besides the physical remains such as the loom-pits, *somas* or grain-bins, a double anchorite burial with mummies (one nearly intact), and the pottery vessels,³ the written material also gives information on the inhabitants' everyday life and also on their spiritual-intellectual interests. We shall start with the latter.

In the season 2003 two pieces of a beautiful papyrus were discovered⁴ which show that the brothers here, not surprisingly, read the Bible. The two fragments match and give out John 21,18 and 21,21-22. At this point, it is not possible to say whether it was a Gospel or a Lectionary like the one found by Winlock and Crum (P.Mon.Epiph.583).⁵

Another literary text is on an amphora, and is a Shenoute homily.⁶ It was not intact, to say the least, it came out piece by piece and the pieces were put together by the restorer, Gyula Tóth. Stephen Emmel made important observations on the text: it might safely be assumed that the present text is a continuation of a fragment published by Ariel Shisha-Halevy⁷ and is an

¹ This research was supported by the János Bolyai Research Scholarship of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

² BÁCS, T. A., "First Preliminary Report on the Work of the Hungarian Mission in Thebes in Theban Tomb N° 65 (Nebamun/Imiseba)" *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Kairo* 54 (1998) 49-64, esp.

53; BÁCS, T. A., "The so-called 'Monastery of Cyriacus' at Thebes" *Egyptian Archaeology* 17 (2000) 34-36.

³ BÁCS, T., 'The so-called 'Monastery of Cyriacus' at Thebes', *EA* 17 (2000), 34-36.; BECHTOLD, E., Reinterpretation of Coptic Looms Based on Material from TT 65, in: K. ENDREFFY, A. GULYÁS (eds.) *Proceedings of the 4th Central European Conference of Young Egyptologists, Budapest 2006* (Studia Aegyptiaca XVIII), Budapest 2007, 51-62.; BECHTOLD, E., A Monk's Decorated Shirt from Egypt, in: *KÚT* 7 (2008), 81-90.

⁴ Description, photo and an English translation by the present author, in BÁCS, T.A. – FÁBIÁN, Z.I. – SCHREIBER, G. – TÖRÖK, L. (eds.), *Hungarian Excavations in the Theban Necropolis. A Celebration of 102 Years of Fieldwork in Egypt*, Budapest 2009, No. 75 (Reg. No. 436b)

⁵ CRUM, W.E. – EVELYN WHITE, H. G., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part II. Coptic Ostraca and Papyri. Greek Ostraca and Papyri*, New York 1926

⁶ HASZNOS, A., 'A Shenute Homily Found at TT 65', *Enchoria* 30 (2006/2007); Description, photo and the English translation is published in BÁCS, T.A. – FÁBIÁN, Z.I. – SCHREIBER, G. – TÖRÖK, L. (eds.), *Hungarian Excavations in the Theban Necropolis. A Celebration of 102 Years of Fieldwork in Egypt*, Budapest 2009, No. 76 (Reg. No. 434c)

⁷ SHISHA-HALEVY, A., "Unpublished Shenoutiana in the British Library" *Enchoria* V, 1975, 53-109. Our text corresponds to the unfinished sentence on page 93.

excerpt from the discourse entitled *Righteous Art Thou, O Lord* and helps restore a lacuna therein;⁸ the writing was primarily addressed to monks by the way,⁹ instructing them how to lead a proper life, staying away from evil and sins. This excerpt, then, used independently, might have been a well-known, popular piece used on occasions on its own right. Literary texts on ostraca and vessels are relatively rare.

And also connected to the sphere of reading, education and theology: is a beautiful Greek-Coptic glossary.¹⁰ On both sides of the ostrakon, the first word is left without a Coptic equivalent. On the recto it is Η ΚΑΤΗΧ[ΗCΙ]C, on the verso Ο ΒΛΑΠΤΙCΘΕΙC. It seems very probable that these two words indicate the topic of the words to be listed in Greek and Coptic, they act as a kind of title, as indeed on the recto the words are in connection with 'catechesis' and on the verso all are related to 'baptism; being baptized'.¹¹ Greek-Coptic glossaries like that are rather rare, especially in Western Thebes.¹² Parallels from elsewhere are a Greek-Coptic glossary by the hand of Dioscorus of Aphrodito (late 6th century) published by Bell-Crum,¹³ and another glossary to Hosea and Amos from the British Museum (no provenance or date known) published by Bell-Thompson.¹⁴

Besides our finds, Winlock and Crum, when working on the neighbouring Monastery of Epiphanius, found some Coptic and Greek texts in and above Tomb 65 ('above TT65 in an unfinished tomb' that is now TT-NN-24-) which they published.¹⁵ Among their finds from TT 65, the Coptic texts are basically letters, only one fragmentary piece, text 38, seems to be part of a literary text, as Crum put it: "Phrases reminiscent of biblical passages".¹⁶ From the ten letters found, four are addressed to (Apa) Cyriacus, the others are without an addressee, but two have the usual 'your fathership' in the opening formula which stands usually together with Cyriacus so these too may be letters to him. The four **Greek** texts found by them, are different: only one of them may be a letter, although the piece is very fragmentary, one is a list of the Coptic months on wood; the other two are literary texts: (P.Mon.Epiph. 583) fragments of a once papyrus codex containing parts of the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of John, the codex was possibly a lectionary, the other one (P.Mon.Epiph.594) is a hymn to an ascete or martyr.

⁸ EMMEL, S., *Shenoute's Literary Corpus*, CSCO 600, Subs.112, vol.2, p.635

⁹ loc.cit.

¹⁰ HASZNOS, A., 'A Greek-Coptic Glossary Found at TT 65' in: BECHTOLD, E. – GULYÁS, A. – HASZNOS, A. (eds.), *From Illahun to Djeme. Studies Presented to Professor Ulrich Luft*, Oxford: Archaeopress BAR International Series 2311, 2011, 81-87

¹¹ Baptism is a highly important sacrament in Christianity; it is the rebirth, the enlightenment when the new person is born, all the sins are erased and forgiven. As *Vorbilder* in the Old Testament one might recite Moses in Ex 17,6 and Ex 14, 21-22 referring to that is 1 Cor 10,1-2.

¹² P.Mon.Epiph. 621 might have been a Greek-Coptic glossary: bird names can be read there in Greek, the right side is broken off, where the Coptic equivalents might have been. According to Winlock-Crum, there is a small papyrus fragment (Papyrus Nr. 21) with Greek-Coptic, double column in the Ferdinandeum at Innsbruck probably from Thebes (CRUM, W.E. – EVELYN WHITE, H. G., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part II. Coptic Ostraca and Papyri. Greek Ostraca and Papyri*, New York 1926, 207/fn.6), however, when I contacted the Ferdinandeum and tried to get some more information (possibly a photo) about it, I was informed that they do not know of its existence.

¹³ BELL, H. I. – CRUM, W. E., "A Greek-Coptic Glossary" *Aegyptus* 5 (1925) 177-226

¹⁴ BELL, H. I. – THOMPSON, H., "A Greek-Coptic Glossary to Hosea and Amos" *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* XI (1925) 241-246

¹⁵ CRUM, W.E. – EVELYN WHITE, H. G., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part II. Coptic Ostraca and Papyri. Greek Ostraca and Papyri*, New York 1926, texts (P.Mon.Epiph.) 38, 121, 151, 236, 242, 257, 266, 387, 413, 457, and 480 are Coptic; P.Mon.Epiph.583, 594, 617, and 628 are Greek.

¹⁶ op.cit., 7

In the literary picture of Sheik abd el-Gurna¹⁷ the following works and authors are present, based on the sites where literary texts have been found (and are known to me) i.e. Epiphanius,¹⁸ TT29 (Frange),¹⁹ TT95,²⁰ TT99,²¹ Pit 1152:²² Coptic and Greek biblical and liturgical texts, both OT and NT with Psalms being very frequent, hymns – also a Greek-Coptic bilingual hymn-book – and patristic works from Athanasius, Cyrill, and Damian patriarchs of Alexandria, Shenoute, Severus of Antioch, Basil of Caesarea, Eusebius (the table shows only the actual finds):

TT 65	Epiphanius	TT 29	TT 95	TT 99	Pit 1152
Gospel of John, Matthew and John (lect)	OT (C,G): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Chronicles, Kingdoms, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Habakuk,	OT: Psalms (G)	OT, NT names Psalms (G, C)		OT: Isaiah, Psalms
hymn	NT (C,G): Romans, Ephesians liturgical texts Patristic (C,G): Shenoute Athanasius Basil of Caesarea Damian Patr Severus of Antiochia	NT: 2 Timothy (C) Romans (C) Liturgical texts (C, G)	Lord's Prayer Creed Nicene Creed (G)		apocr. Acts of Peter
Shenoute-hom.	Cyrill Eusebius	Shenoute	Life of Pachom	Severus of Antioch Life of S.Synclctica	Pisentius (encomium on) Basil of Caesarea
	Menander, Homer (exercise)	Menander (exercise)			

Listing the texts shows that the literary interest was similar in the anchorite establishments. Besides the Bible, the most favourite authors seem to have been Athanasius and Cyrill; Severus of Antioch is also popular here, as Heike Behlmer put it in connection with the TT99 find: „ein weiteres Zeugnis für die Verbreitung der Werke des Severus von Antiochia unter den Mönchen der Gegend“²³ ; another is Shenoute, whose sermons circulated in the Western Theban region.²⁴ Walter Ewing Crum gives a masterful description of the Western Theban

¹⁷ Focussing here solely on Sheik Abd el-Gourna and leaving out the neighbouring sites of for example TT233 on Dra Abuel-Naga, Deir el-Bakhit, Gournet Mourai, the Ramesseum, etc.

¹⁸ WINLOCK, H. E. – CRUM, W. E., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part I*, New York 1926; CRUM, W.E. – EVELYN WHITE, H. G., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part II. Coptic Ostraca and Papyri. Greek Ostraca and Papyri*, New York 1926

¹⁹ BOUD'HORS, A. – HEURTEL, CH., *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29 Autour du moine Frangé*, Études d'archéologie thébaine 3, Bruxelles, 2010

²⁰ The information on the text finds are from Heike Behlmer's talk 'Coptic Documents from TT 95' at the Tenth International Congress of Coptic Studies (Rome, September 17-22, 2012)

²¹ BEHLMER, H., „Streiflichter auf die christliche Besiedlung Thebens – Koptische Ostraka aus dem Grab des Senneferi (TT 99)“, in: Beltz, W. (ed.), *Die koptische Kirche in den ersten drei islamischen Jahrhunderten*, Hallesche Beiträge zur Orientwissenschaft 36 (2003), Halle (Saale), 2003, 11 – 27.

²² Information on the website of the *Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw* (PCMA): <http://www.pcma.uw.edu.pl> ; also Antoniak, in: GABRA, G. – TAKLA, H., *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper-Egypt, vol. 2, Nag Hammadi-Esna*, American University in Cairo Press 2010, 1-6; Dekker, in: GABRA, G. – TAKLA, H., *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper-Egypt, vol. 2, Nag Hammadi-Esna*, American University in Cairo Press 2010, 21-31

²³ BEHLMER, H., „Streiflichter auf die christliche Besiedlung Thebens – Koptische Ostraka aus dem Grab des Senneferi (TT 99)“, in: Beltz, W. (ed.), *Die koptische Kirche in den ersten drei islamischen Jahrhunderten*, Hallesche Beiträge zur Orientwissenschaft 36 (2003), Halle (Saale), 2003, 24.

²⁴ As attested by the amphora text from TT 65, Frange's Shenoute-quotation in texts 216 and 217 (Shenoute's writings appear as something they quote, maybe they know it by heart), Epiphanius texts (P.Mon.Epiph.56, 57, 58, 65, 66 ?), in CO (CRUM, W. E., *Coptic Ostraca from the Collections of the Egypt Exploration Fund, the Cairo Museum and others*, London 1902) in text 459 a Shenoute Catechesis is listed with Biblical books in a list of books (and other things as well), and by the inventory of a monastic library from Thebes, 7-8th cent (Coquin,

literary environment, where he relies on the actual remains, book lists and books mentioned in letters.²⁵ That shows naturally, that much more books and works were in circulation and read on the 'holy mountain of Jeme' than what the actual text remains show, however, some of these are further confirmed by the book-lists and references. The TT65 material is so far rather modest, however, it is also valuable as it adds two rarities to the picture: the limestone glossary and the Shenoute-homily on amphora.

Let us see now in what ways these texts were used in the communities, if not as books:²⁶

- the amphora with homily in TT65 was certainly not meant to be sent as a 'letter'²⁷ since it is a large vessel and the text has no introductory or closing formula. That is a difference to the Frange-archive where the Shenoute-quotation is inserted into a letter (texts 216 and 217) with the aim of teaching, but in our case it is the text in itself – it was most probably kept in the monastery to be visible at all times for the monks living there. They could read it while working or preparing food, and its topic is something that should be borne in mind daily: to keep away from bad, ungodly men, especially pagans and heretics, and refrain from sins and impurity. The role of such an inscription on a household vessel must have been of a beneficial and protective one; the analogy of this can be found in the decoration of Greco-Egyptian and Coptic textiles and vessels where motifs from Greek mythology and Christian symbols are depicted and believed to protect the vessel or garment and its user.²⁸

- Now, the glossary seems more intriguing:

1. it might have been written by a Greek monk in the monastery who was trying to learn Coptic and for that he wrote down word lists to study. From the monastic literature we know that Greek-speaking visitors and monks did come to monasteries to stay or to visit, and in the *Vita Prima* (c.94)²⁹ of Pachom for example, a monk named Theodore, who could speak Greek only, arrived at the monastery and he was lodged in with a monk who mastered both languages until Theodore was able to speak Coptic: *καὶ οὕτως ὑποδεξάμενος αὐτὸν ἐποίησεν εἶναι ἐν οἰκίᾳ παρὰ τινι ἀρχαίῳ ἀδελφῶ εἰδοῦτι τὴν ἐλληνικὴν γλῶσσαν εἰς παραμυθίαν ἕως μάθη ἀκοῦσαι καὶ τὴν θηβαικὴν.*³⁰

2. Or it might have been written by a Coptic monk, learning Greek. Similarly to Dioscorus of Aphrodito (late 6th century in Aphrodito), whose Greek-Coptic glossary was published by

BIFAO 75, 1975 as referenced by BOUD'HORS, A. – HEURTEL, CH., *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29 Autour du moine Frangé*, Études d'archéologie thébaine 3, Bruxelles, 2010, 173), which mentions several of his sermons and also those of Athanasius.

²⁵ WINLOCK, H. E. – CRUM, W. E., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part I*, New York 1926, 196-208.

He includes the remains they found, texts in collections with secured Theban provenience, a list on ostrakon published by Bouriant (BOURIANT, U., *Recueil de travaux*, Paris 1883, XI 132), which is the longest ever. Book lists from Epiphanius: P.Mon.Epiph. 554, 556, 557; CRUM, W. E., *Coptic Ostraca from the Collections of the Egypt Exploration Fund, the Cairo Museum and others*, London 1902, Ad.23 is also a book list; exchange of books is also the subject of texts from Pit 1152, Antoniak, in: GABRA, G. – TAKLA, H., *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper-Egypt, vol. 2, Nag Hammadi-Esna*, American University in Cairo Press 2010, 5.

²⁶ The papyrus fragment with John used to belong to a codex and was obviously used accordingly, monks read it.

²⁷ Also in Epiphanius the texts are on limestone or pottery ostraca but seem not to be inserted in a letter but stand in themselves, just the literary text (56 sermon, 58 extracts from several works of Sh) there is also an ostrakon in the Berlin Museum (publ: BKU= Berlin Koptische Urkunden...?) BKU i, no.180 with a Shenoute-sermon. These were read as texts and written down as spiritual and writing practice.

²⁸ TÖRÖK, L., *After the Pharaohs. Treasures of Coptic Art from Egyptian Collections. Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest 18 March – 18 May 2005*, Budapest 2005, pages 87 and 223.

²⁹ HALKIN, F. (ed.), *Sancti Pachomii Vitae Graecae*, Subsidia Hagiographica 19, Brussels 1932, 1-96

³⁰ Also on Pachomian community and Greek speaking monks present, see GOEHRING, J.E., *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism*, Berlin – New York: DeGruyter, 1985, esp. 4-7, 17, 28-29.

Bell-Crum;³¹ where we can see Dioscorus working on extending his Greek vocabulary.³² The writer of our glossary was evidently interested in theological matters when putting these words on 'limestone'.

These first two possibilities imply some kind of self-study, education in some form within the community, which is very possible.³³ There is another possible explanation as well, which would better account for the strongly thematic character of the glossary:

3. it might be connected to translation activities. The glossary might have been written after translating several texts and then sorting out the words thematically. Of course, it is a possibility that we see the translation process of 1 particular text on the glossary, and the text itself was about catechesis and baptism.

And at this point it is worth wandering down the hill a little, to the monastery of Epiphanius, and see what other functions the texts in Western Theban communities had, and we also find some connection to our glossary. Leslie MacCoull draws attention to the layout and nature of texts in that monastery.³⁴ Visitors would come to visit the revered father Epiphanius, and there was an approach space through which the visitors would be led to the 'chamber' of Epiphanius; in this 'approach space' they were not only led inside, but were introduced into the belief of the inhabitant monks: the walls are filled with Coptic and Greek inscriptions on miaphysite and anti-Chalcedonian Christology, focussing strongly on the nature of Christ and the Holy Trinity, with the help of authors like Cyrill of Alexandria, Athanasius, Damian Patriarch, and Severus of Antioch. As MacCoull put it: "This impressively textualized space layout amounted to a way of giving the visitor to Epiphanius' room a crash course in Monophysite theology."³⁵

In the **TT65** glossary also: in the first part, the catechesis, we find 'unmixed' ἀσύγχυτον - αἰτωζ and 'unaltered' ἀναλλοίωτος – αἰψιβε which may well refer to the nature of Christ, which is naturally a very significant topic in Christianity, and in Coptic Christianity in particular; the catechumens were most probably given teaching on that, so the text or texts that gave the base for the glossary might similarly have conveyed miaphysite doctrine.

The glossary and fragments of Greek texts from TT 65, as well as all the Greek and bilingual texts and the school pieces from Sheik abd el-Gurna, show well the importance of knowing Greek also in such anchorite establishments. The fact that the language used in private letters is Coptic shows that the language of everyday life was Coptic rather than Greek, in which only official or semi-official letters were written besides the literary texts mentioned above. This is not surprising as the language of administration in 6-7th century Egypt was Greek but in Upper Egypt it most probably never replaced the Egyptian tongue as the spoken idiom. But "to some extent, Greek was still employed among the hermits",³⁶ the liturgy, the service might

³¹ BELL, H. I. – CRUM, W. E., "A Greek-Coptic Glossary" *Aegyptus* 5 (1925) 177-226

³² op.cit., 180-181. He came from a family with Coptic origins, and we have writings by him both in Greek and in Coptic, so he might have been bilingual and in this case we might have a proof that he was working on extending his Greek vocabulary: he glossed the Greek items, they come first in the glossary, the Greek word occurs once but Coptic words occur more than once on occasions as the Greek synonyms are given by one and the same Coptic equivalent. He was probably working from several texts, most of them literary, only some words come from ordinary life.

³³ See how Bucking puts the archaeological finds in contexts and writes about the functions, among others school room, of the different parts of the Epiphanius monastery in his BUCKING, S., "Scribes and Schoolmasters? On Contextualizing Coptic and Greek Ostraca Excavated at the Monastery of Epiphanius" *Journal of Coptic Studies* 9 (2007) 21-47

³⁴ MACCOULL, L.S.B., 'Prophethood, Texts, and Artifacts: The Monastery of Epiphanius', *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 39.3 (1998), 307-324

³⁵ op.cit., 312

³⁶ WINLOCK, H. E. – CRUM, W. E., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part I*, New York 1926, 254

have been partly in Greek. "The survival of Greek is (...) the result of a conservative sentiment".³⁷ Speaking about the Coptic versions of literary texts originally composed in Greek, Crum says: "The question as to how translation of such texts and of the occasional ecclesiastical documents sent southward was provided has not so far been investigated. In an earlier age (c.450), at the White Monastery, we find the monastic authorities charged with the duty of themselves issuing a translation of a patriarchal rescript."³⁸ Our glossary might be evidence for the translation activity on such dogmatic/theological texts!

School pieces, writing exercises on Homer and Menander (Epiphanius, Frange, etc.) also indicate that learning to write (and read) in Greek, knowing the numbers, letters, was part of the communities' education. In the monastic and anchorite establishments here, the background was basically Coptic but possibly there were always Greek-speaking monks or visitors, and there were monks who could translate. Based on the text material from Western Thebes, Greek was used in the liturgical sphere in the 6-8th centuries, and it was probably part of the education and religious-spiritual readings of these communities. Let us not forget that monasteries were responsible for most of the education in the Western Theban region.³⁹

The question as to who exactly was writing those Greek pieces must for now remain unanswered: was it the monks of Greek *or* of Egyptian origin? Was there an *elite* among the anchorites who were able to read, write and translate Greek while others had other responsibilities? Were there *teacher* monks? If so, they probably had a more thorough education.

The other, bigger group of texts from TT65 is naturally the letters of monks; below are the names present so far in that written material:

- 1) sender: Arsen(ius) patron (?), Sarapion, Johannes and Enias (*lashanes*), Theodorus; Hello; Thana[el];
- 2) recipient: Apa Abraham, Cyriacus, Apa Cyriacus (the last two are probably one person); Apa Joseph;
- 3) included in the subject matter of the letter: Thanael and Onophrius
- 4) or without any context: Mathias; Isac; Phoibam(mon); Apa Athanasius; Abraham, son of Mariam; Cyrillus (probably sender); Epiphanius; Abra(h)am, the deacon; Apa Phoibammon; Macarius (name or attribute?); Johannes; (...) and Daniel sons of Shain-Antonius (?)

For the persons in this community and their possible relations to those of the neighbouring communities, i.e the prosopographical issues and what conclusions might be drawn therefrom, see my forthcoming publication of the Coptic ostraca of TT 65.⁴⁰

A few events and habits of the anchorites' everyday life may be discerned from the letters. Already based on the archaeological finds – loompits, sowama – it is obvious that they did weaving, prepared textiles and also food; now, one letter provides concrete evidence that they used animals' hair, too: the recto goes (Inv.No. 07/ID/07):

1. *We greet with respect*
2. *your fathersip.*
3. *Be so good and send another*
4. *little bit of **goat's hair***
5. *to us, verily, ours was not*
6. *enough for us.*

³⁷ WINLOCK, H. E. – CRUM, W. E., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part I*, New York 1926, 255

³⁸ WINLOCK, H. E. – CRUM, W. E., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part I*, New York 1926, 256

³⁹ WILFONG, T.G., *Women of Djeme. Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt*, The University of Michigan Press 2002, 21; 75

⁴⁰ HASZNOS, A., *Coptic Texts from the 'Monastery of Cyriacus' (TT 65) with an Archaeological Introduction by TAMÁSA BÁCÁS*, vol.I, *Studia Aegyptiaca* XX (2013)

sacks of goat's (or camel's) hair are mentioned in the texts from Western Thebes,⁴¹ so our anchorites must have used it for such purposes.

There is one rather interesting letter, put together from three pieces (Inv.No. 99/ID/17a-b + 1997.4) about confinement and also later accounting for money:

(unfortunately there is a lacuna here) "the young boy, you closed him in. You did not send to me, after I had looked after your property whole-heartedly for you."

The verb used here is **ΩΛ (ΑΚΟΛῆ ΕΖΟΥΝ)** which is found in several other texts from the area⁴² and might well mean 'imprison'. Winlock and Crum discuss the phenomenon of intervention-in-writing for prisoners: in the letters found in the Monastery of Epiphanius it is never prisoners of war, but persons locked up for debts or the like.⁴³ In our letter, it might also be the case. In the monasteries the confinement might happen in separate 'lock-ups' or the monk's own cell.⁴⁴ Also referring to 'imprisonment' although with a different expression (**ϸΙΝΕϸΩΗΡΕ ΝΑΙΧΜΑΛΩΤΟΣ**), is an ostrakon from TT85: here it seems that a man is in debt or other severe difficulty and his sons might be taken from him as „prisoners" due to that.⁴⁵

One other piece is also of interest as it helps us get closer to the conflicts and problems the monastic communities had to face (Inv.No. 02/ID/6). The text here mentions 'the barbarians':

I have promised that I do not go (with/to?)

the barbarians again. They

mocked me and I went (here unfortunately there is a lacuna, and then)

[...] sick

In the text a younger anchorite is writing to a superior asking for the 'father's' advice on a number of problems he has, the conflict with the barbarians seems to be one of them. The presence of the barbarians may date the text if we assume that they are the Persians: the invasion took place between 619-629, reference to which can be found in several texts and one word used for them is 'barbaros'. The bishop Pistentius foresaw the coming Persian invasion and in an epistle warns his flock to be sinless "lest God be wroth with you and give you over into the hands of the barbarians and they humble you"; "if ye repent not speedily, God will bring upon you that people (ἔθνος) without tarrying".⁴⁶ The term 'barbaros' may unfortunately be used for other peoples as well, they may be the Blemmyes and Nubians, and the Saracens.⁴⁷

Some of the questions raised here may hopefully be given answers later and they will shed more light on the life of the inhabitants of Western Thebes long after its glorious pharaonic days.

⁴¹ cf. WINLOCK, H. E. – CRUM, W. E., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part I*, New York 1926, 157

⁴² CRUM, W. E., *Short Texts from Coptic ostraca and Papyri*, Oxford University Press 1921, text 374 where a „poor person" is 'closed in'/'locked up'; and P.Mon.Epiph. 163, 5ff; 166, 10 (? Similarly to our letter where a young boy is closed in, here youths/young children are mentioned)

⁴³ WINLOCK, H. E. – CRUM, W. E., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part I*, New York 1926, 175-176

⁴⁴ cf. WINLOCK – CRUM, 176/fn. 13

⁴⁵ TT 85/117, BEHLMER, H., "Christian Use of Pharaonic Space in Western Thebes" in: DORMAN, P. F. – BRYAN, B.M., *Occasional Proceedings of the Theban Workshop. Sacred Space and Sacred Function in Ancient Thebes*, SAOC 61, Chicago: The University of Chicago 2007, 163-177, p.166. Again, boys or sons, like in W-Crum text 166, 10 – always the children are locked up for someone else's debts?

⁴⁶ BUDGE, E.A.W., *Coptic Apocrypha in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*, Oxford University Press 1913, 94;

⁴⁷ WINLOCK, H. E. – CRUM, W. E., *The Monastery of Epiphanius at Thebes, Part I*, New York 1926, 103