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Ewa Wipszycka, *Moines et communautés monastiques en Égypte (IVe-VIIIe siècles)*. *Journal of Juristic Papyrology, Supplements* 11. Warszawa: Faculty of Law and Administration and Institute of Archaeology and Fundacja im. Rafała Taubenschlaga 2009. xxiii + 687 pages + 1 folding plate. ISBN 978-83-925919-0-0.

Ewa Wipszycka (W.) offers here the first handbook on early Egyptian monasticism. Although she leaves the “spiritual” dimension largely out of consideration, everything readers of *BASP* need to know to understand the realities of monastic life in late antique Egypt is discussed somewhere between the covers of her book. Since there is no index of subjects, readers should pay close attention to the table of contents (pp. vii-ix) to familiarize themselves with the structure of the book. There are copious indexes of sources, persons, and places, and those who want to consult the handbook merely for a specific detail can easily find their way around. A number of earlier contributions by W. have been incorporated into the book (they are listed on pp. 5-6, n. 1), which is a kind of *summa* of her thinking and publishing on the topic over the past 25 years.¹

As expected in a real handbook, W. opens with a lengthy review of the sources. Pride of place goes to the literary sources (chapter 1, pp. 9-67), which are not in short supply: to understand the realities of monastic life, we need a coherent picture first, before we can put the fragmentary evidence in its proper context. We happen to have a large number of literary texts, some written to provide foreigners with an idea of monastic life in Egypt (e.g. the *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*), some prescriptive to regulate life in monasteries, especially those of the Pachomian type.² W. stresses the obvious limitations of such evidence: the former will exaggerate features of Egyptian monasticism their authors are particularly keen on “selling” to their audiences; the latter will aim at an ideal to which reality did not always correspond – and the realities of monastic life in Egypt is W.’s subject, not its ideals, let alone its imitations in other cultures. Although W. comes to the subject as a papyrologist, she acknowledges that, apart from some “archives,” papyri (and even more so inscriptions) are a limited source of information (chapter 2, pp. 69-106), often hard to contextualize, locate, or even date. She expects more from ongo-

¹ Earlier, her *Études sur le christianisme dans l’Égypte de l’Antiquité tardive* (Roma 1996) had provided such a *summa* of her work on Christianity written between 1970 and 1995.

² Rousseau’s book on Pachomius (mentioned on p. 47, footnote 39) was re-issued with a new preface in 1999.

ing archaeological projects, which in recent years have indeed thrown much light on the various types of Egyptian monasticism, including some less well represented in the literary sources.

One of the great features of W.'s handbook are the archaeological illustrations in the text, especially in the geographical chapter (chapter 3, pp. 107-225), the largest in the book. I single out the maps of monastic complexes (such as Bawit; the fold-out map, "un document sans précédent dans l'histoire de l'archéologie du monachisme égyptien" [p. 147], is based on the latest geophysical research by T. Herbig and not only corrects the older maps in many places, but also gives us for the first time a sense of the site as a whole), the plans of monastic buildings, and the photos (some in color; especially striking is the one of Deir el-Balaizah on p. 159) of the visible remains of, and of objects retrieved in, monastic sites. Many illustrations come with a lengthy caption, which often tells a story worth reading on its own. Most are taken from other sources, but quite a few were specifically made for this handbook (e.g. the ones illustrating the outfit of the monks according to Evagrius, John Cassian, and iconographical sources respectively on pp. 376-378, provided by M. Mossakowska-Gaubert), and readers should be especially grateful to W. for having extracted as yet unpublished materials (e.g. on the latrine for 40 visitors at Shenoute's "White Monastery"; see p. 164) from a variety of scholars. Inclusion of such materials allows the handbook to last for years, before it is outdated as far as the archaeological sources are concerned (this is even less of a problem with the papyrological, let alone the literary, sources). Only occasionally one would have liked an illustration to have been printed at a larger size (e.g., the fold-out map of Bawit).

The papyrological evidence starts quite early on in the fourth century. There are various fourth-century dossiers, consisting mainly of letters. That C. Zuckerman's identification of the John in a bilingual dossier with John of Lycopolis is widely accepted (p. 83) should be taken with a grain of salt. One of Zuckerman's props (the identification of the find) is completely arbitrary.³ On the ostraca from Theban Tomb 29 see now A. Boud'hors and C. Heurtel, *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29* (Brussels 2010). For a review of the evidence for monastic settlements in the area of the First Cataract, not given here, see J.H.F. Dijkstra, *Philae and the End of Ancient Egyptian Religion* (Leuven 2008). The chapter on Antony (chapter 4, pp. 227-280) is a kind of appendix to the geographical chapter and draws heavily on several earlier contributions by W.

³ See my remark in the *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses* (Wien 2007) 711, n. 32; on the acquisition of the dossier see now N. Gonis, *BASP* 45 (2008) 70-72.

(in *Études et Travaux* 15 [1990] 459-463, *Divitiae Aegypti* [1995] 337-348, *JJP* 27 [1997] 135-166, and *Aegyptus Christiana* [2004] 135-150).

The terminology of monastic life (cf. *JJP* 31 [2001] 147-168) is addressed in the next chapter (chapter 5, pp. 281-323). W. shows that a term like *anachoretēs* ("deserter") developed into a honorific title over time and that an early term like *apotaktikos* ("renouncing," e.g. possessions as in monasteries of the Pachomian type) by no means implied renouncing everything under the sun (pp. 315-316). As a kind of appendix to this chapter, W. discusses the role of the "Supreme Leader" in monasteries of the Pachomian type (chapter 6, pp. 325-353), as exemplified by Shenoute. The importance of succession of the leadership in the context of schisms is already apparent in *P.Lond.* 6.1913. As expected, W. pays some qualifiedly optimistic attention to the level of monastic literacy (pp. 361-365) in her chapter on monks other than the "Supreme Leader" himself (chapter 7, pp. 355-401). On the *History of the Monks of Upper Egypt* (briefly mentioned on p. 367) see now extensively Dijkstra, *Philae*, chapters 7-8.

In her discussion of the numerical strength of monasteries (chapter 8, pp. 403-436; cf. *JJP* 35 [2005] 265-309), W. consistently deflates the few numbers occasionally given in literary sources and also lowers the estimates based on archaeological remains (e.g. at the Kellia; admittedly not all of the ca. 1,500 hermitages were strictly contemporary). W. judiciously addresses the issue of the presence of clerics among the monks in chapter 9 (pp. 437-469; cf. *JJP* 26 [1996] 135-166), which would have been increasingly unavoidable.

The economic chapter (chapter 10, pp. 471-565) is the second-largest in the book. W. came to the topic of the Egyptian monasteries through her early work on the economic aspects of the Kellia (cf. *Le site monastique copte des Kellia* [1986] 117-144; cf. *JJP* 31 [2001] 169-186). Here she adds the monasteries of the Pachomian type (cf. *JJP* 26 [1996] 167-210), where evidence for joint labor is to be expected. On pp. 556-565 W. discusses the *aparche* in *P.Mon.Apoll.* as she did earlier in the 2001 article just mentioned but with an update on the criticisms of A. Delattre and T.S. Richter.

Chapter 11 (pp. 567-611) deals with female ascetics (cf. *Le rôle et le statut de la femme* [2002] 355-396). There were monasteries for women associated with one for men of the Pachomian type, such as that of Shenoute (now identified with the monastery in the temple at Wannina; see pp. 166-167). In general female ascetics appear rarely in the sources (see now M.J. Albarrán Martínez, *Studia Monastica* 52 [2010]), and even so no use here is made of *P.Paramone* 14. The last chapter (chapter 12, pp. 613-650) deals with the dangers of monas-

tic life, especially coming from desert tribes such as the Mazici, on which see also F. Colin, *Les peuples libyens de la Cyrénaïque à l'Égypte* (Brussels 2000).⁴

As is appropriate in the case of a handbook there is no formal conclusion. Papyrologists will want to consult W's handbook through the index of papyri (and inscriptions) on pp. 663-668 and especially the index of place names on pp. 668-685, because it will guide them to the geographical chapter, the core of the handbook. It deserves unqualified praise and a wide circulation.

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⁴ A curious typo on p. 633, n. 30: for "A Cult of Ibis at Philae after Justinian?" read "A Cult of Isis at Philae after Justinian?" The ibis cult had not been practiced anywhere for centuries.

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