Travel in Coptic Documentary Texts

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Introduction

This article seeks to provide a brief overview of the evidence for travel in Coptic documentary texts in late antique and early Islamic Egypt.¹ To be able to form a representative source base for research on travelling it was necessary to read across all the published material, which amounted to over 7,800 texts.² Of the 486 texts that I was able to collect from the sources that contain information about different aspects of travel, the earliest date is from the fourth century C.E., the latest from the ninth century.³ As is usual with the surviving Coptic material, most documents belong to the seventh and eighth centuries C.E. From the beginning it was clear that letters would be the best source to find out about the journeys people made. In fact, without these letters we would not—to a very significant degree—know that these journeys had been undertaken at all. Various reasons existed why one would mention a journey in a letter, including letting the addressee know that someone was on his or her way, or bidding the addressee pray for the traveler, etc. Often the addressee was asked to come or to send somebody. Problems encountered en route were also reported in letters, and in quite a number of them the writer announces that he has to cancel the planned journey.

In all, 88% of the data was drawn from letters, and the rest from other kinds of documents. The relative lack of documents dealing with journeys is due to the loss of relevant material (shipping contracts, etc.). What does

1 This article is based upon my master's thesis: *Reisetätigkeit nach den koptischen dokumentarischen Texten*, University of Vienna, 2006.

2 Since October 2005 there exists an online database of Coptic documentary texts, from which this estimate has been drawn (currently the number of documents is given to be more than 8,000). See <http://dev.ulb.ac.be/philo/bad/copte/base.php?page=rechercher.php> (25-08-2014).

3 Taken into account were all texts about private journeys written in Coptic. Since the range of dates runs to the ninth century, a few texts are included which are written in Coptic presumably by Muslims and/or people with Arabic names. E.g. *CPR* II 228 (8th century) where a certain Jazīd writes to someone called Abū 'Alī.

survive tends to deal principally—and this is the case with most of them—with some other subject. Sometimes, however, we can learn from the signatures of witnesses why a particular person signed the document including the reasons for making a journey.⁴ In the case of letters, certain information that can tell us about travelling has not been transmitted or has been lost altogether. This includes, in particular, the address. Place names for the addressee are also rarely mentioned in the body of the text since this was information both the addressee and recipient would have known anyway. The duration of a journey is also hardly ever given. Similarly, the mode of transport is seldom thought worthy of mention. Nevertheless, even if some details are missing, these texts offer a broad view across time of the nature of—and changes in—the experience of the Coptic-speaking part of Egypt's population as seen through their access to resources and freedom of movement.

The most common motives for travel in this period were, not surprisingly, trade and the dispatch of goods. However, I have excluded texts that treat mainly these subjects from the text corpus and have concentrated instead on private journeys, since these bring us closer to the personal priorities, motivations and day-to-day experience of Copts at this time. Also, we find a mass of texts among the Coptic documentary material, mainly letters, which deal with the transportation of goods, mostly requests for goods to be sent. But these texts hardly ever tell us anything about travel routes taken or the distances covered, so they have been excluded because of their low informational value. The large quantity of these (mostly short) texts, which number some thousand, was another reason for their exclusion. Of course, there are also texts in which a person travels and takes a small amount of goods with him. In these cases the text was taken into account because it documented the journey of a specific person, and therefore does not have the impersonality that one dealing with an unidentified messenger would have.⁵ For Coptic documentary texts dealing with trade and the dispatch of goods, a separate study is necessary, which would illustrate the economic aspects of trade in Egypt.

Besides the strictly private motivations for travel (journeys made on one's own initiative), I have also taken into account texts that document trips by agents on behalf of officials, clerics, estate owners or other employers.

4 E.g. *P.KRU* 65 (second half of the 7th century), in which Pekosch writes that he had just come to the monastery to visit the father Jacob.

5 Texts that treat the transportation of wheat and corn in general have not been taken into account.

Reasons for Travel

Travel was, in many ways, integral to life in Egypt. One common reason to undertake a journey was to deliver tax payments and such journeys could even stretch from Upper Egypt (e.g. Balā'izah, Ishqūh/Aphroditō) to Babylon.⁶ Other reasons for travelling were the collection of money and also moving to another place,⁷ as is attested in the documents. The clergy were especially mobile since they tended to visit fellow monks and sometimes had to travel to celebrate masses for other villages.⁸ The bishops also regularly sent their staff on tours to inspect church personnel.⁹

A well-documented group concerns trips made to attend a feast. Nineteen texts¹⁰ give us information about the different feasts attended, including feasts of martyrs, divine services, Easter, as well as other feasts whose nature we cannot precisely determine.¹¹ One especially interesting example is an invitation to a feast from the ninth century, written on the verso of an earlier Arabic text.¹²

- 6 In *P.Bal.* 240 (dating to between 675 and 775, like all other texts from Balā'izah), for example, the trip starts at Ishqūh/Aphroditō and ends in Babylon, a distance of about 410 km. Two other examples of long journeys are *P.Lond.* IV 1628 (beginning of the 8th century), where the same destinations are documented, and *CPR* II 228 (8th century), which attests a journey from Fayyūm/Arsinoe to Babylon (about 135 km).
- 7 The letters *O.Crum* 385, 386 (both undated), *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* II 27 (beginning of the 7th century), and most likely *O.Crum* VC 67 (dating to between 619 and 629). Cf. also the letters concerning Frange discussed below. In documents e.g. *P.Lond.Copt.* I 449, 452 (both undated), etc.
- 8 E.g. *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* II 22 (beginning of the 7th century), *P.Mon.Epiph.* 154 (7th century), *O.Crum* 53 (dating to about 600), etc. For further texts relating to this topic, see Schmelz, *Kirchliche* 79–83.
- 9 Krause, *Die ägyptischen Klöster* 225–236.
- 10 *SB Kopt.* II 897 (= *P.Pisentius* 71, undated); *P.Mon.Apollo* 52 (6th–7th centuries); *P.Ryl.Copt.* 390 (9th century); *O.Vind.Copt.* 214 (7th–8th centuries); *SB Kopt.* II 814 (8th century); *P.Sarga* 94 (7th century?); *O.Vind.Copt.* 266 (7th–8th centuries); *P.Mon.Epiph.* 105; 131; 245 (all three 7th century); *O.Crum* VC 53; *P.Lond.Copt.* I 547; *O.Crum* ST 243 (all three undated); *O.Ashm.Copt.* 17 (7th–8th centuries); *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* II 22 (beginning of the 7th century); *P.MoscowCopt.* 55; 59; *O.Crum* VC 88; *SB Kopt.* II 893 (all undated).
- 11 Interestingly, pilgrimage travel is a notable blank spot in the documents (see below). For this, inscriptions, archaeological sources and Greek papyri have instead to be brought into play.
- 12 *P.Ryl.Copt.* 390. Crum states: "Recto: an Arabic text (earlier), showing the name Naṣr, كتاب إلى نصر." We do not know the further content of the text on the recto or whether the texts on recto and verso are related. Could "Naṣr" be the sender of the invitation, or is the text

Paul E. Kahle discussed elsewhere that the opening phrase (ΤΗΡΗΝΗ ΝΑΚ) indicates that a text is probably written by a Muslim,¹³ as we find in *P.Bal.* 256 (end of 7th/8th century) at the end of the text (line 5): ΑΥΩ ΤΗΡΗΝΗ ΝΑΚ. This is also how the ninth-century invitation starts. Also the lack of the usual cross, instead of which two diagonal lines appear, indicates that the text was possibly not written by a Christian or that the addressee was a Muslim.¹⁴ If we accept that one party was a Muslim, we can determine that the feast was certainly not a Christian religious one. The word ΝΑΚ can stand for various feasts, most of them religious. But it was also used for birthdays,¹⁵ so maybe this text represents an invitation to a birthday party. Since the text itself is an invitation to a feast, which takes place the same day as the addressee receives the letter, the sender and the addressee must have lived relatively near to one other. ΕΙ ΕΞΡΑΙ means “come north” or “come south.” As the practice in Upper Egypt was to use ΕΞΡΑΙ by itself,¹⁶ we cannot be sure whether coming up or down is meant, and hence whether the traveler was going north or south. Walter Crum, the editor, could not interpret the words at the end of the text. Through a comparison of the formulary used in other texts, however, a plausible reading can be found. *P.Mon.Apollo* 16 (7th century) contains a parallel formula in line 10: ΜΠΡΩ ΝΑΤΕΙ ΕΡΗΣ, meaning: “Stay not longer without coming south” (better expressed by “do not delay to come south”). This gives us the sentence, “Stay not longer without coming” (i.e. “do not delay to come”). So the writer of the ninth-century invitation again asks the addressee to come in any case!

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of the recto earlier, as Crum states, and therefore not relevant? Due to renovation work in the past in John Rylands Library in Manchester, the text was not accessible.

- 13 As Kahle writes in the introduction to the letter *P.Bal.* 256: “the greeting at the end of the letter is ‘peace unto you’ which is the normal phrase found in letters written by Muslims.”
- 14 See for this complicated and not yet completely satisfactorily solved question: Richter, *Spätkoptische* 213–230, especially 223 ff.
- 15 This meaning e.g. in *P.Mon.Epiph.* 253.13 (7th century).
- 16 It is interesting that ΕΙ ΕΠΕΣΗΤ (which actually means to come down) is used only five times in three texts: *P.Lond.Copt.* 1 547, provenance Fayyūm; 1128 and 1124, both originating from Hermopolis, all undated. Whereas *P.Lond.Copt.* 1 1124 remains undated, it can be said that *P.Lond.Copt.* 1 1128 is to be dated sometime after the Arab conquest (here also the two strokes are used, and the name is Arabic. Here we also find the rendering ΤΗΡΗΝΗ ΝΑΚ). Due to the limited sources we cannot determine why ΕΙ ΕΠΕΣΗΤ was used only very seldomly. The reason could be of a geographical nature: it seems that in Lower Egypt to Hermopolis it was used even though not often, whereas up till now from Hermopolis to Aswan explicitly ΕΙ ΕΞΡΑΙ (in connection with travel) was applied.

Another important Coptic stimulus to travel was the settling of arguments.¹⁷ As a first step one party would invite his opponent to come and try to settle the quarrel. In cases where an arrangement could not be reached the matter was then referred, either via a letter or in person, for example to a senior cleric who would be asked to adjudicate.¹⁸ *O.Vind.Copt.* 258 (7th–8th centuries), in which a certain Anup and a woman are engaged in a dispute, is a good example of this procedure. To make his case, Anup travels south to report the details of the disagreement to a person who is addressed as “your fatherhood”—presumably a high-ranking cleric, most likely to be the abbot of a monastery. Reacting to Anup’s testimony and to present her side of the story, the woman then writes a letter to the cleric. As well as cases such as this, we have instances of divorces and the dissolution of marriages precipitating similar journeys.¹⁹

A well-represented group of texts shows that travelling to find work or to get to a place of work was an important inducement to travel in late antique Egypt. The texts show that for this reason larger distances were also covered. *P.Mon.Epiph.* 296 (7th century²⁰) gives, for example, a distance of 40km that had to be covered first by the messenger and then by the baker, who was asked to come from Koptos to Thebes to make bread and butter for the monastery. Of course, there must also have been a considerable number of official trips, but these are not so well attested in the Coptic documentary texts.

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- 17 *P.Köln.Ägypt.* 17 (provenance unknown); *P.Mon.Epiph.* 96; 189; 262; 267; 300 (Thebes, monastery of Epiphanius); 438 (all 7th century); *O.Vind.Copt.* 212; 218; 258 (all three 7th–8th centuries); *O.CrumST* 181 (provenance unknown, end of 6th–7th centuries); *BKU* III 338 (during Persian occupation); 403 (undated); *O.Crum* 48 (dating to about 600); *O.Crum Ad.* 46 (undated).
- 18 E.g. *P.Mon.Epiph.* 189 (7th century). For the role of monks and clerics in settlement of arguments, see Schmelz, *Kirchliche* 272–288.
- 19 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 161 (7th century). To litigation see further: Allam, *Civil jurisdiction* 4.
- 20 Peel (Dayr Epiphanius 800–802) assumed (according to Crum and Winlock) that all texts from the so-called Monastery of Epiphanius date between 580 and 640. That this is not the case could be shown through the excavation of TT 29 (see page 89), which makes clear that Frange lived there in the eighth century. And since Frange is corresponding with members of the monastery, they are contemporaneous, and therefore the monastery still existed at least in the eighth century. All texts, in which Frange is mentioned, are therefore to be redated to the eighth century. Of course, also other texts from the monastery might be from a later date.

Modes of Transport

The mode of transport, where it is known or can be inferred, also offers important insights, but, surprisingly, only a few texts give us clear information on this. This is because in most texts—as seen in the case of *P.Ryl.Copt.* 390 above—only vague co-ordinates, such as “to go north” and “to go south,” are given, even in the case of journeys between the Nile Valley and the oases, since this was the primary axis of geographical orientation for Egyptians.²¹ In Old Egyptian the usual words for going north and south were determined by the sign of a ship. But the Coptic expression offers no clues as to whether these trips were made by ship, camel or donkey. Indeed none of the texts surveyed using the phrase explains the employed method. Here only the distance or the time span needed for the trip—if known—can help to determine what is more likely. From the reading of the texts in which no remarks about the time required or the distance covered have been made, the cumulative impression is that most of the documented trips were made on foot.

About forty documents in the corpus relate to ships, ferries and sailors, but as the texts show, the use of ships was largely restricted to the transportation of goods, whereas private journeys by boat are not often attested. The most important role for the use of a ship was the transportation of goods, especially corn. That the ship was not the first choice for private individuals is indicated by the much higher price paid for boat travel than transportation by donkey or camel, or on foot. An additional reason for this result is probably the nature of the source material, which, for the most part, deals with journeys that covered a distance of less than one day’s travel. The texts also speak of the Arab naval fleet, for which Egyptians from all parts of Egypt were recruited.²²

Only three texts speak of the use of a ferry, and from them we see that crossing the Nile was relatively cheap.²³ This shows on the other hand what a limited view the extant corpus gives us, since ferries were naturally very important in Egypt. Therefore, it can be inferred that a receipt was not issued for every crossing, and for this reason we mostly get information—as is the case of *P.Bal.* 291 (end of seventh-eighth centuries)—only if a receipt was needed for

21 See Alcock and Funk in *P.Kellis* v, p. 13: “The oasis dwellers regarded themselves as separate from Egypt, which was conceived as a north-south axis stretching from the area where the trade routes reached the valley.”

22 See for these texts, *P.Lond.* iv.

23 *P.Bal.* 291 (end of the 7th century-beginning of the 8th century); *P.Ryl.Copt.* 334 (8th century); *SB Kopt.* 11 889 (9th century).

the account books of a monastery, or as a bill for a business partner or employer. After all, most of the texts in the corpus are letters, in which a mention of having taken a ferry would not be especially important, except perhaps for business reasons.

The best source we have for travelling by boat is *O.Medin.HabuCopt.* 82 (seventh–eighth centuries), which documents the 390 km journey from Thebes to Antinoe. This shipping contract is unique among the Coptic documentary texts for the large amount of information it contains, including the journey's starting point and destination, the names of the people involved, the costs and even the means of travel. Such a quantity of data is a result of its nature as a document, since letters tend only to transmit information that is necessary and not yet known by the addressee.²⁴ Steve Vinson comments as follows: "This text is a short shipping contract, in which a captain agrees to charter his vessel for the hauling of an unspecified cargo. It appears as though the arrangement actually makes the captain and charterer into temporary partners. After the captain has collected his freight fee ($\frac{3}{4}$ solidus), any additional revenues from passengers and any operational expenses incurred en route are to be shared on a 50–50 basis. The upshot is that, at least from the Graeco-Roman period into the early Arab period, vessel income seems often to have been split on a 50–50 basis by the owner and crew."²⁵

Attestations of the use of camels and donkeys are also not often found in the letters.²⁶ But since most of the distances covered are rather small (less than a day's travelling), it is very likely that most of the small-scale travel was done by camel, donkey or on foot. Even larger distances were covered that way. As texts show, monasteries hold a key position in such travel, since they had their own camels and donkeys along with camel drivers. Often monks from other monasteries, and perhaps private people too, borrowed an animal to go on a trip. In this way camels played a critical role in long-distance travel, especially from an oasis to the Nile Valley. For journeys from an oasis to the Nile Valley, the most important sources are the texts from Kellis in the Dakhla Oasis, where a Manichaean community had its base. Although the distance was long—130 km,

²⁴ See below, for the edition and translation.

²⁵ Vinson, *The Nile* 75–76.

²⁶ At least with regard to travel by those whose main priority is not the transportation of goods. Examples of texts in which donkeys and camels appear are *O.CrumVC* 68, *O.Theb.* 27 (both 7th–8th centuries, see for this text also *P.Mon.Epiph.* 1, p. 182), very likely *P.Lond.Copt.* 1 590 (undated, paper), and 529 (Arab period). In Spiegelberg, *Besprechung* 68–69 we find a text in which it is stated that the journey fails because no donkey could be found (the translation was corrected by Crum in Winlock and Crum, *The monastery* 182).

and one would have needed six to ten days with a donkey and less with a camel,²⁷ which was preferred—it seems to be the case that travel, and in turn communication, occurred regularly between the oases and the Nile Valley.

Travel Difficulties

However one travelled, making trips in Egypt was never entirely easy. Generally in the texts it is considered to be difficult, wearying and often demanding significant effort and sacrifice. This attitude tends to be reflected in the often-used phrase, “be so kind and trouble yourself to come,” or its variants, “find a way to come,” “find an opportunity to come,” and so on.²⁸ It was not only the Copts who conceived of trips in this way, as Greek texts in which the sender asks the addressee likewise to “trouble himself to go somewhere” revealed.²⁹ That this phrase was not only used as a courtesy is also shown in some texts in which the writer explicitly says that complications on the journey, especially the roads, prevented him from getting somewhere.³⁰ The text *O.Crum Ad.* 59 (dating from between 578 and 605) even demonstrates that a whole monastery was shifted from a somewhat inaccessible site in the desert behind Jeme for this reason. The order was given by the patriarch Damianos (in office 578–605) himself to improve the accessibility for the messengers who had to deliver the festal epistle throughout the whole country every year.³¹

Illness

Another major thematic group of texts reveals planned trips that had to be cancelled due to illness. In 12 instances the letter-writer says he cannot make a journey because he has become ill.³² Among these illnesses we find problems

27 *P.Kellis* v, 12.

28 E.g. like *P.MoscowCopt.* 55 (undated), v. 20–22 ἀρί ταγάπη | ἡβωκ πεσκύλμος ἡτετῆ|ει ..., or *P.Pisentius* 48 (end of the 6th century or beginning of the 7th century), 27 ἡγῶν ὅε νβωκ, or a construction with ἡν τυπος, etc.

29 E.g. *P.Oxy.* i 123, 10 (3rd–4th centuries) σκυλῆναι πρὸς Τιμόθεον “trouble yourself to go to Timotheos.”

30 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 473 (7th century) and *O.Crum* 253 (provenance unknown, undated).

31 Krause, *Die ägyptischen Kloster* 204.

32 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 162; 168; 277 (all three 7th century); *O.CrumVC* 38 (undated), *P.Sarga* 93 (7th century?); *P.Bal.* 245 (end of the 7th century, 8th century); *P.Mich.Copt.* 13 (8th century?); *P.Ryl.Copt.* 273 (4th–5th century); *SB Kopt.* 11 893; *O.CrumST* 363; *P.MoscowCopt.* 59; *SB Kopt.* 11 854 (all undated).

with the feet³³ and in *SB Kopt.* II 854 (undated) the sender complains that he has been seriously ill for two weeks with fever. Two texts inform us that the parties have become ill during the journey.³⁴ *O.CrumVC* 35 (undated) even tells us about the death of a man's business partner during a trip that had led them north. The text is an oath in which the man had to swear that he did not conceal any of the deceased's belongings from his heirs. Unfortunately, we do not learn what happened to the dead man's body. Many of these texts show that it was important for the one who fell ill to have a cleric pray for him so that God might relieve him of his illness.³⁵

Crime

Brigandage and robbery were also persistent concerns for travelers. *O.CrumST* 390 (undated) seems to indicate an example of mugging. In this short and enigmatic text, a monk recounts to a fellow monk an episode on the road to Alexandria in which he was waylaid by six "devils" and only in the last moment managed to escape. The monk takes no chances: "I ran," he says. That he must have survived the incident is, of course, shown by the fact that he was writing at all. But how the story ends we do not know, since the letter is unfortunately broken and the end is missing.³⁶

Three other letters document the dangers of leaving home.³⁷ In these the writers declare their wish to go on a journey, but claim they cannot do so for fear that their homes and belongings would be robbed in their absence. That only four texts among the Coptic letters deal with criminality of this type does not mean, of course, that crimes did not occur more often. In fact, the opposite seems to be the case: "Zieht man die bereits im 7. Jh. herrschenden Verhältnisse in Betracht, wofür belegt ist, daß viele Menschen durch Überfälle herumstreichender Banden (im 8. Jh. auch durch hohe Steuerlasten) in Not gerieten,"³⁸ we can assume that a lot of incidents of mugging took place.

33 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 277 (7th century); *O.CrumVC* 38 (undated).

34 *P.MoscowCopt.* II (4th–5th century); *P.Mon.Epiph.* 249 (7th century).

35 E.g. *O.CrumVC* 38 (undated), *P.Ryl.Copt.* 273 (4th–5th century), 4–5 (τῆνοϥ ὡληλ ἐχῶει | ἡτεππ[οϥτε τῆ] ὡν ἡλῆ τῆνοϥ ὡαρὸκ: "now pray for me that god gives me strength that I come to you"), and *O.CrumST* 186 (undated). About illness among the Copts, cf. *P.Harrauer* 213–222.

36 See below for the edition and translation.

37 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 222 (7th century), *O.CrumVC* 98, and *O.Crum Ad.* 46 (both undated).

38 *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* II 27.

Travel across Time

Pre-Conquest Egypt

From the fourth and fifth centuries only a few texts have survived, leaving us with a limited picture of travel in this period.³⁹ The most important group comprises the letters and documents from the Manichean community in Kellis in the Dakhla Oasis, which date from the fourth century.⁴⁰ The texts—mostly letters—document the correspondence between family members who had stayed behind in Kellis and the men who were in the Nile Valley. They show us journeys made from Kellis to Antinoe, Hermopolis and Assiut, and the trips made by the men while they were in the Valley, again mostly from Antinoe to Hermopolis and to Assiut.⁴¹ As well as this, the letters inform us about the small-scale journeys between the different villages of the oasis. Especially interesting, because of his frequent travels in the Nile Valley, is the person called “the master” (ⲡⲕⲁⲗ). We hear, for example, of him taking Piene, who joins his entourage, with him to learn Latin,⁴² and in another letter we find out where their journey led, namely Alexandria.⁴³ Yet another letter tells us that Piene and the master left Antinoe, so we know that the trip went from Antinoe to Alexandria.⁴⁴ That Piene and the master arrived in Alexandria, and that Piene continued to live there safely, is reported again in another letter, which reports that fellow brothers come from Alexandria to the south bringing news and a letter from him. We also hear that Piene intends to come south again.⁴⁵

Just as is the case for the fourth and fifth centuries, only a few Coptic papyri have survived from the sixth century. An additional problem is the uncertain dating, which concerns above all the placing of the texts between the fifth and the sixth centuries. Judging from those few and often not exactly dated texts, it seems that travelling was equally possible as before this age and that no significant changes or restrictions took place.

39 E.g. *P.MoscowCopt.* 11 (4th–5th century); *P.Ryl.Copt.* 273 (4th–5th century).

40 From the 45 letters and documents published in *P.Kell.* v, 11 texts deliver information on travelling, which are: 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 28, 29, 31, 39, 40, 50.

41 The most important group of letters in respect of travelling is those of Makarios (staying in the Nile Valley) who writes to Maria in Kellis.

42 *P.Kellis* v 20.

43 *P.Kellis* v 29.

44 *P.Kellis* v 25.

45 *P.Kellis* v 24.

The next period which is closely defined again and about which several papyri give us valuable information is the Persian occupation.⁴⁶ Under Persian rule the relative good mobility of the people in Egypt seems to have been somewhat curtailed. As some texts make fairly clear, during the occupation finding transport and undertaking journeys could be complicated. Document *SB Kopt.* 136 informs us that a woman with the name Thekla, having sold part of her house in Edfu, made preparations to leave the city. The text reports that she wanted to travel by ship, but could not find one anywhere, and so was forced to go instead by foot. Given that her final destination was a village named Great Beschin (today's al-Fashn) 32km north of Oxyrhynchos, she would have had to have walked an extraordinary 472km, which would have taken her at least 15 and a half days. The letter *P.Mon.Epiph.* 324 raises the question of whether travel restrictions were imposed on the population, since the writer reports to a monk that he has asked someone to write a letter to "the Persian" in Thebes in order to let him go south to fetch some corn. This person indeed wrote the letter to the Persian official. But because the letter is very short—a part of it seems to be missing—we do not know the relationship of the man to the Persian.

O.CrumVC 67 from the Persian period shows clearly—and the background of another text makes it likely—that at this time there were problems with the food supply in Upper Egypt. The man reports in a letter that he travelled north because, with no corn coming south, he could not feed his children. So a trip was made to keep the family alive. Furthermore, we get indications from the sources that there had been riots directed against the Persians. A text confirming this is *BKU* III 338, in which someone, presumably a bishop, tries to find a way to settle a quarrel between the Persians and the leaders of the riots, which had already resulted in the partial destruction of the city of Hermopolis. That the bishop was not totally free in his decisions is shown by the fact that the Persians told him they would take his son as a hostage until the matter was resolved. The texts from the Monastery of Epiphanius show that the invasion was remembered so well by the people that an incident that had happened before the invasion and was reported somewhat later was referred to as "before the Persians came south."⁴⁷

46 For a compilation of the Greek, Coptic and Persian documents which date from the time of the Persian occupation, see MacCoull, *Coptic Egypt* 307–313. The Coptic sources can be found on page 312. To these have to be added *O.CrumVC* 67 and *SB Kopt.* 11 846.

47 *P.Mon.Epiph.* 300.9 (ⲉⲗⲁⲛ ⲉⲁⲣ ⲙⲡⲁⲧⲉⲙⲡⲉⲣⲥⲟⲥ ⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲛⲥ). In *P.Mon.Epiph.* 433 the arrival of the Persians in Thebes is imminent.

The impact of the Persian occupation on Egyptians' mobility and prosperity provides a useful model against which to assess the effect of the Muslim conquest. How did the new order under which Egypt's Christians found themselves affect their access to resources and freedom of movement? Did the nature of travel change?

Travel under the Arabs

One of the most significant Muslim innovations affecting the flow of people was the introduction in the eighth century of the so-called *sigillion* (στυλλίον),⁴⁸ or, in Arabic, *sijill* (سجل)⁴⁹ or *kitāb* (كتاب).⁵⁰ This was a sort of passport or permit that authorised someone to leave his or her tax district.⁵¹ The best evidence we have that the *sigillion* cannot be underestimated as an obstacle to mobility comes from *P.CLT* 3 (728/729 or 743/744), which deals with a group of Theban monks who wanted to go on a business trip to the Fayyūm to sell their ropes and wares, but could not do so without having first been equipped with a passport.⁵² As an Arabic source informs us,⁵³ getting such a document could take up to two months, for the applicant had to meet various requirements beforehand. First, he had to prove (through a tax receipt) that he had no tax liabilities. Then he had to nominate, for the future tax that would accrue during his absence, someone who would be willing to sign a document guaranteeing his tax payments. "Diese Bürgschaftsurkunde mußte dem Pagarchen (Amīr) vorgelegt werden, dann konnte der Reisepaß unter Mitwirkung der Ortsbehörde beantragt werden und durch den Pagarchen (Amīr) ausgestellt werden."⁵⁴ This procedure had to be strictly followed. To date, no evidence has been found that suggests the idea of a passport had existed before the beginning of the eighth century.

48 For all documents with a *sigillion* in the meaning of "passport," see Förster, *Wörterbuch* 726.

49 Term used by Sāwīrus ibn al-Muqaffa', *History* 69, 70.

50 Schaten, *Reiseformalitäten* 93 n. 11.

51 Rāḡib, *Sauf-conduits* 145–146 favours the translation 'permit' because "il ne permettait au porteur que de se rendre en un lieu désigné du pays et d'y séjourner pour y travailler pendant une période déterminée, alors que le passport appelé ḡawāz ou barā'a lui conférait le droit de franchir les frontières."

52 The excavation of Deir el-Bachit in Dra' Abu el Naga, ongoing since 2004, of the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich could identify the site as the monastery of Apa Paulos, from where the monks mentioned in this text, came from.

53 Sawīrus ibn al-Muqaffa', *History* 69–70.

54 Schaten, *Reiseformalitäten* 93.

During the excavations of the Mission archéologique dans la nécropole thébaine (MANT)⁵⁵ a number of Coptic papyri were found in Theban tomb TT 29. This old Egyptian tomb of the vizier Amenemope was inhabited in the first half of the eighth century by the semi-anachorite and monk Frange. The texts found in TT 29 shed more light on the circumstances of travel in the Theban region. In a clay-basin, in the hall of this tomb (in layer 159), more than a dozen fragmentary papyri were discovered—some with preserved seal—that Frange had used to stuff book covers. One of the papyri is completely preserved and shows that the documents contained in them were short and businesslike: “N’empêche pas Papas et Theodorake de se rendre à Djémé, car c’est pour leur travail (?) qu’ils y vont. Mois d’Athy, le 3. 3e (année de) l’indiction. A remettre à Halakotsé, de la part de Pha ...”.⁵⁶ While the exact circumstances in which these documents were issued is not known yet, it is likely that they had something to do with taxes comparable with the above mentioned permits. Whereas the Arabic safe-conducts⁵⁷ are very precise concerning the time and place that they covered, these Coptic “permits” in the form of short requests for passage are not. Nevertheless we should probably follow Rāgib in understanding these texts as the Coptic equivalence of the Arabic *jawāz* or *barā’a*, that is to say passports, which allow the population to cross frontiers.⁵⁸ Boud’hors assumes that there must have been a certain road check (or toll station) around Jeme.⁵⁹ Since the documents were written on papyrus and were sealed, their character was certainly official. They were written—in a number of cases the name of the addressee is preserved—to an official named Halakotse, obviously the person in charge of the checkpoint allowing people into Jeme and/or to go on a trip to the south. The writer of the letters must have been an official, too, who forwarded the request ensuring that the person or persons mentioned in these documents could go to the places they wanted, to Halakotse. Some of the letters mention a reason for those travels, like work or the need to pay taxes. In one text (P.TT 29 inv. 295028), it is stated that Halakotse allowed Schenute to go home to the south, since he was living in the nome of Hermonth. Since these letters were of short use (after processing the request, the letter was not important anymore), Halakotse

55 Under the auspices of the universities of Brussels and Liège. See <http://www.ulb.ac.be/rech/inventaire/projets/4/PR3344.html> and <http://www.egyptology.ac.be/necropole.htm>.

56 Boud’hors, L’apport de papyrus 120 (P.TT 29 inv. 291972).

57 For the safe-conducts written in Arabic, see Rāgib, *Sauf-conduits* 143–168.

58 For the passport, see above note 51.

59 Boud’hors, L’apport de papyrus 123.

gave or sold the papyri at some point to Frange, who then applied them in making book covers.⁶⁰

Another late phenomenon is the *logos* (λόγος,⁶¹ “*Schutzbrief*”) in the Coptic documentary texts, which functions as a guarantee of unimpeded passage.⁶² Most of these documents were written to ensure that those whose freedom was in some danger—for example, a debtor or opponent in a quarrel or a leader of a riot—could return safely to their home villages. Sometimes, in the case of debtors, the debts were even forgiven; in other cases, a reduction of the debt or postponement of payment was granted. The purpose of these *logoi* was to prevent members of a community’s tax-paying population being lost, since the tax burden of the person who had fled would then fall on the village. In Greek texts, the *logoi* (λόγοι), which are related to the *logoi asylias* (λόγοι ἀσυλίας), also appear rather late, although earlier than their Coptic equivalent—sometime in the middle of the sixth century.⁶³ The Greek documents, by contrast, were only issued by officials.

Although Coptic *logoi* texts are quite numerous, they only offer limited information about travelling. We can infer that someone fled and possibly returned, but the distances they travelled and the places in which they sought refuge remain unknown. Only one related pair of texts, *P.Schutzbrieife* 53 b and 53 c (= *O.Vind.Copt.* 65 (7th–8th centuries)), supplies the information that the addressee of the *logos* is permitted to come south to the people of the island of Ombos.

Most of the *logoi* tell the addressee to come home without fear. But two texts use an identical and special form of request. *O.Brit.Mus.Copt.* I s. 99, 2 [5894] (7th–8th century), v. 2–3, says: ⲛⲓⲃⲱⲕ ⲁⲛⲉⲛⲧ | ⲛⲓⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲣⲏⲥ, which means: “you may go north, you may go south.”⁶⁴ Since other texts use this phrase as well in a similar wording, its meaning is fairly clear. The person who requests an official or cleric to write a *logos* promise wants to indicate by this phrasing that the debtor or the like is free to go wherever he wishes.

60 Both texts, and excavated material of the TT 29, prove that Frange not only produced textiles and ropes, but also made bookbindings and bookcovers (*O.Frangé* 19–20).

61 For documents of this kind, see Förster, *Wörterbuch* 478–479.

62 The Coptic *logoi* texts (*Schutzbrieife*) range from the seventh to the ninth centuries. *SB Kopt.* 11 914 is dated to the first half of the seventh century. See on the *Schutzbrieife*, Delattre, Les “lettres de protection” 173–178 and lately Selander, *Die koptischen*.

63 Palme, *Asyl und Schutzbrief* 229.

64 The other text is also a *Schutzbrief*: *O.Crum* 108 (= *P.Schutzbrieife* 40, undated) lines 3–4 say: ⲛⲓⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲛⲉⲛⲧ | [ⲛ]ⲓⲃⲱⲕ ⲉⲣⲏⲥ.

Remarks on Time and Place in the Texts

Nomenclature is often not as helpful in fixing places as one might hope. Typically people are identified by their father's name and only occasionally by their place of origin. For determining the route of a journey, this practice has to be treated very cautiously since it means that a person's current whereabouts, and especially the starting point of a trip he is undertaking, cannot be inferred from his name alone. In the case of the man named Frange, who says he is "the man from Medamoud" (ⲡⲣⲓⲡⲉⲧⲉⲙⲟⲩⲧ) but now residing in an old Egyptian tomb on the hill of Jeme,⁶⁵ the place of origin and place of residence are not far away from each other. But from deeds, for which an individual's personal data were more relevant, we know that the place of origin and the current whereabouts could differ enormously.⁶⁶

About some aspects of travel in the Coptic period we are, however, only scarcely enlightened by the Coptic documentary texts, or not at all. For example, this is the case with journeys which led the travelers abroad. Here only a single mention has been found. The above mentioned Frange is known to have travelled to Jerusalem. From the text *O.Frangé* 20 we learn that Frange wanted to go to Jerusalem, which was forbidden by the Elders. We also hear that Frange had planned to travel together with the correspondent of the letter on this far trip. When Frange was stopped from going, he writes the addressee that he too should stay home this year. That Frange was able to travel to Jerusalem at some other point we learn through the text *O.Frangé* 51, where he states that the addressee David should send him two things that Frange had brought earlier from Jerusalem. We do not know exactly why Frange was not allowed to go to Jerusalem in the first context. Boud'hors and Heurtel assume that either an administrative reason (leaving the tax district) might have prevented Frange from leaving or that the religious authorities prohibited it. We can only assume that his trip to the Holy City was a pilgrimage, but as we learn from the latter text Frange also brought home useful devices.

The Coptic term ⲩⲙⲙⲟ, translated with 'abroad' or 'foreign,' does not, however, necessarily mean a place outside Egypt. Rather, it generally denotes a place that is unknown to the traveler but that is located within Egypt. Even a

65 For Frange, see e.g. Heurtel, *Que fait Frange* 177–204 and *O.Frangé*. And for his designation of origin and current whereabouts, see Heurtel, *Que fait Frange* 187: O. 29840, and *O.Frangé* 10–12.

66 E.g. *PLond.* IV 1628 (beginning of the 8th century), where two witnesses have Aphrodito as place of origin, but sign the document in Babylon; *SB Kopt.* I 242 (Edfu, 649 C.E.), where the sailor is after all from Edfu and signs a receipt in Esna, etc.

place or region in the vicinity of a well-known city but with which the traveler or city-dweller was unfamiliar could be described as *οὔμο*. 'Abroad' was also used when someone went into the desert to live as a hermit.

About a tenth of the texts surveyed specify the time at which the sender of the letter intends to visit the addressee. Sometimes even the main purpose of the letter was to transmit this information. Mostly we find announcements of what time somebody will come, or requests that the addressee should meet the writer of the letter on a certain day or at a certain time. We also find statements that somebody plans to go to a certain place to inform the other party that he will not be at home for a certain period of time. Not that often we find the statement that somebody should have come at a certain time, but could not come and now writes when he will come instead. At last we find letters where the writer tells the addressee when he went to a certain place.

For these texts, where the writers speak of coming to the addressee on the following day, we can determine that the duration of the journey cannot have been longer than one day and therefore a short distance was covered. In some texts, in which a specific date is mentioned, this is usually because it is a date on which an agreement has been made to start work. Five texts even document that the journey would be undertaken at night if the circumstances made it necessary.⁶⁷

Comparison to Greek Texts

To get additional information about travelling in Roman and late antique Egypt it would also be necessary to undertake a thorough study of the Greek texts related to travel.⁶⁸ This has still to be done. But from Chrisi Kotsifou's work⁶⁹ it can already be seen that certain aspects, which are not to be found in the Coptic text corpus, are present in the Greek texts. In the Greek texts we find information about the travels of athletes and entertainers, travels whose goal was tourism, holidaying, escaping the hot weather (*P.Oxy.* XXXIV 2727, 3rd–4th centuries) or oracle-questioning, and travels abroad. We also find prayers that a trip will take place and will be safe, information about the weather and sailing conditions (favourable winds, Nile level), information that sailing at night was

67 *P.Lond.Copt.* 1 529 (Arab period); *O.Mich.Copt.* 7 (7th century); 9 (6th century?); *P.Pisentius* 5 (end of the 6th century or beginning of the 7th century); *P.Mon.Epiph.* 134 (7th century).

68 For transportation in general, see e.g. Bagnall, *Egypt* 34–40.

69 Kotsifou, Papyrological evidence 57–64.

prohibited and that attacks from pirates were taking place. For the lack of such references in the Coptic documentary texts various reasons can be assumed. For example, change in religious practice accounts for the absence of questions to oracles. The almost complete absence of references to pilgrimages though is harder to explain, since pilgrimage was an important reason for undertaking a journey, and one would expect this to be reflected more strongly in the letters. But we probably have to assume a simple gap in the record, remembering that about six times as many Greek than Coptic documentary texts have been published to date.

Conclusion

Travel has been essential for the economic and social life of Egypt from pharaonic times⁷⁰ up until the present day. We can say that most of the conditions of travel, such as the available means of transport, did not change much (technically) from the pharaonic period up to and including the pre-modern age. Only in the more industrialised conditions of our own age have the speed, ease and cost of travel significantly changed. In the time span covered here it can be said that although travelling was somewhat arduous, since no official transport system existed for the rural and non-élite populations of Egypt, it is noteworthy that people were to a great extent mobile. For the common citizen, who did not have access to the transport system controlled and supported by the state, travelling meant taking responsibility for his or her own arrangements, including finding suitable donkeys or a ship's captain willing to take on passengers (and in this case, concluding the necessary contract).

Another possibility for those not able to afford a ship's passage or not needing one—since only longer distances were covered this way due to the expense—was to hire a transport animal from a monastery. The church and the monasteries had their own stock of animals—including camels and ships⁷¹—which could be rented. These were needed to fulfill their many pastoral duties, including, for example, distributing the annual festal epistle of the archbishop of Alexandria across the breadth of Egypt, a significant operation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the clergy and monks were especially mobile. Only monks had to ask for allowance before they wanted to travel from their superiors in the monastery. For small-scale journeys—and in some cases also for long

⁷⁰ Köpp-Junk, *Reisen*.

⁷¹ For ships in the property of churches and monasteries, see Bagnall, *Egypt* 37 with footnote 157.

distances if no other mode of transport was available or affordable—common Egyptians went by foot. The exact amount of travelling done with each mode of transport remains unfortunately unclear in most of the Coptic documentary texts. Also, the duration of a single trip is hardly ever stated in the texts.

The reason for our poor knowledge of the respective usage of different modes of transport and the duration of journeys lies in the nature of the source material, which consists mostly of letters. In letters, people in antiquity tended to transmit only the most necessary information to the addressee, making it necessary, for example, for the receiving party to know when the traveler would reach his destination but not how long the whole trip would last. Also, the mode of transport would not be of special interest to the reader of a letter. What we are very well informed about, however, was why people undertook their journeys.

Whereas the overall conditions of travelling stayed pretty much constant during the whole of antiquity, it is especially interesting to see what impact the changing governments of Egypt had on the conditions of travel.⁷² As we already have seen, the Persian period is marked by the shortages in the supply of ships. At this time the supply of food also ceases to be regular in southern Egypt, leading people to want to leave Upper Egypt. The situation becomes so critical people are forced to walk if they want to reach their destination. As some texts suggest, there also seems to have been restrictions on travelling.

After the Arab invasion of Egypt there is another period of reduced mobility. The worsening of the economic situation in the seventh and eighth centuries can be seen in the increasing number of fugitives attempting to escape the increasing tax load. The *logoi*, although already starting to be issued in the first half of the seventh century, become more common after the Arab invasion. In order to better control the flow of people—rural exodus has been a long-standing problem in Egypt since Ptolemaic times—the Arab government introduced the permit or passport. Whereas the necessary papers could be put together with the help of local officials and were written in Coptic, the actual passport document could only be issued in the office of the *pagarch* and was therefore only in Arabic. This meant, of course, undertaking a journey required considerable expenditure. Such passports were restricted in time span, most often to three months, and had to be kept during the whole time of the journey, since losing the document could have severe consequences. They include the names of the issuing official of the *amīr* (*pagarch*), the name of the passport-

72 The Coptic material does not give enough information to be able to say if the transport infrastructure (e.g. quality of the roads, frequency of way-stations, control of brigandage, etc.) improved or deteriorated in the Arab period. For this dimension official documents are more likely to be revealing.

holder, a physical description, the reason for travel (usually for the bearer to be able to earn his living and hence pay the next poll-tax), and the areas in which he was permitted to travel. At the end followed a statement that no harm should be done to him during the document's specified span of validity.⁷³ But whereas the time span granted for a journey was restricted, the distances a traveler was allowed to cover were obviously not. As we see in *P.CLT* 3 (728/729 or 743/44), the monks wanting to travel from Thebes to Fayyūm had already been recommended by the local authorities, which suggests that the officials of the *amīr* would most likely have agreed to issue the passport. Although the passport system gave the government absolute control over (legal) travel, its aim was more to ensure the tax-payment of the population of Egypt. Less formal laissez-passers in Coptic, found in an ancient Egyptian tomb, seem to have functioned at a very local level and were used to allow the population from Jeme free passage in the early eighth century.

In the seventh century gangs roaming the countryside became an increasing danger. At times in the Muslim period too there seem to have been shortages in the supply of donkeys or at least an increase in the *amīrs'* request for donkeys to be provided by the people for official use.⁷⁴ Consequently, people were afraid of losing their animals for certain periods, which meant, of course, economic discomfort. Taking all this together, it seems to be clear that travelling in the seventh and eighth centuries was even more difficult than in the times before.

The example of the passport also shows the necessity of combining sources of different languages to be able to draw a more complete picture of travel in late antiquity. The Greek material serves above all to illuminate the earlier period, whereas the Coptic material is somewhat scarce, and the inclusion of Arab sources is necessary to gain greater insight into the official issuing of documents and state policy. This is also true for the earlier Greek documents, since they too give us insight into official policy. Coptic texts only start to overtake Greek documents in quantity in the seventh and eighth centuries, when all kinds of documents are issued in Coptic. Through the Coptic material we also gain additional information about church affairs and the organisation and daily management of the monasteries. At this time it can be said that the vast majority of people was speaking Coptic, and Coptic therefore offers the best window onto the daily life and experiences of ordinary Egyptians.

73 See Rāgib, *Sauf-conduits* and also Diem, *Einige frühe* 141 ff., and, especially for the usual formulary for a passport, 144.

74 As a special levy? That the *amīr* is looking for donkeys is stated in *P.Lond.Copt.* 1 529.5–6. The writer George gives careful instructions how to bring the donkey (not to go on the road, to go at night, not to tell anybody in the monastery) to avoid being seen by anyone.

Appendix 1: Three Texts (with some additions and emendations)

1 *P.Ryl.Copt.* 390

- 1 // ΤΗΡΗΝΗ ΝΑΚ ΕΒΟΛ
 2 ΖΙΤΝ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΤΙΤΑΜΟ
 3 ΜΗΟΚ ΧΕ ΠΩΔ
 4 ΠΟΟΥ ΛΟΙΠΟΝ
 5 ΑΜΟΥ ΕΖΡΑΙ ΩΔΑΚ
 6 Ω ΔΑΖΤΗ ΜΠΟΥ
 7 [ΔΥΩ?] ΜΠΕΡΩ ΝΑΤΕΙ (OR ΝΑΤΙ)⁷⁵

(1) "Peace (εἰρήνη) unto thee (2) from God. I (would) inform (3) thee that the festival (4) is today. Then (λοιπόν) (5) come up/down (and) (6) stay today with me. (7) [And?] stay not (longer) without coming (= do not delay to come)."

2 *O.CrumST* 390

- 1 †π[ρ]οσκινε μ̄
 2 παμεριτ Ν
 3 CON ΧΕ ΑΪΕΙ ΕΒΟΛ
 4 ΖΙΤΟΟΤΚ ΧΕ ΕΙΝΑΒΩΚ
 5 ΕΡΑΚΑΤΕ Δ.//.ΖΙΕ
 6 ΝΖΗΤ ΔΪΕ ΕΣΟΥ Ν
 7 ΔΙΑΒΟΥΛΟΣ ΖΗ ΤΕΖΙΗ
 8 ΝΤΕΡΙΑΠΑΝΤΑ ΕΡΟΥ
 9 ΑΙΒΩΚ <ε>ΖΕ ΕΒΟΛ
 10 ΑΠΩΤ

5 for Δ. //εie (Crum) 5 read αιε ε? 9 ε changed (Crum)
 9 in edition: ΑΙΒΩΚ ΖΕ ΕΒΟΛ

(1) I greet (προσκυνέω) (2) my beloved (3) brother. When I left (4) you to go (5) to Alexandria I went (?) (6) north and met six (7) devils (διάβολος)

75 For a photograph, see *P.Ryl.Copt.* pl. 6. Unfortunately the end of line 7 is not visible on the plate. Therefore it could either read ΝΑΤΕΙ or ΝΑΤΙ (which is only an orthographic variant and does not affect the meaning).

on the road (8) and while I met (ἀπαντάω) them (9) I was about to vanish (run away) (10) and I ran [

3 *O.Medin.HabuCopt. 82*

- 1 Ⲫ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉⲥⲛⲧⲉ
- 2 ⲡⲱⲛⲥⲓⲁ ⲡⲓⲛⲩⲥ ⲡⲣⲙⲉⲗⲉⲙⲟⲩ ⲉⲙⲡⲓⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲕⲅⲧ
- 3 ⲉⲓⲥⲣⲁⲓ ⲛⲉⲛⲱⲭ ⲡⲱⲛⲡⲓⲛⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲡⲣⲙⲭⲉⲙⲁ ⲉⲙⲡⲓⲛⲟⲙⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲣ
- 4 ⲙⲟⲛⲧ ⲁⲉ ⲉⲙⲡⲟⲩⲱⲱⲉ ⲙⲡⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛⲱⲉⲧⲉⲙⲱⲥ ⲛⲧⲁ
- 5 ⲧⲁⲗⲟⲕ ⲙⲓⲛⲛⲉⲕⲥⲕⲛⲩⲩⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲅⲟⲕⲅ ⲉⲁⲛⲧⲓⲛⲟⲟⲩ
- 6 ⲙⲉⲧⲁ ⲓⲗⲟⲩ ⲭⲱⲣⲓⲥ ⲙⲉⲱⲅⲓⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲕⲓⲛⲁⲩⲩⲛⲉⲩ
- 7 ⲉ ⲉⲁⲡⲥⲧⲟⲩⲗⲁⲣⲭⲏⲥ ⲛⲕⲱⲥ ⲛⲓⲛⲕⲅⲧ ⲭⲓⲛⲛⲉⲓ
- 8 ⲉⲅⲟⲗ ⲉⲱⲅ ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲱⲱⲡⲉ ⲉⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩⲥ ⲉⲙⲡⲓⲕⲓ
- 9 ⲛⲟⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲱⲡⲧ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲓⲛⲁⲧⲁⲗⲟ
- 10 ⲛⲁⲛ ⲧⲡⲓⲱⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ ⲧⲡⲓⲱⲉ ⲉⲣⲟⲕ
- 11 ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲓⲧⲧⲙⲛⲧⲱⲙⲛⲛ ⲛⲕⲉⲣⲁⲧ
- 12 ⲥⲉ ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲅ ⲛⲁⲕ ⲛⲡⲱⲓ ⲛⲭⲉⲙⲁ
- 13 ⲉⲩⲓⲣⲁⲓ(ⲛ) ⲙⲩⲛⲟⲥ ⲭⲓⲁⲭ ⲓⲭ ⲓⲛⲧ(ⲓ)ⲕ(ⲧⲓⲟⲛⲟⲥ)
- 14 ⲓⲩ

9 r. ⲉⲟⲩⲛⲧ (Till⁷⁶) 12 r. ⲛⲁⲓ (Till) 13 ⲉⲩⲓⲣⲁⲓ/ pap. 13 ⲓⲛⲧⲕ/ pap.,
r. ⲓⲛⲟⲩ(ⲓ)ⲕ(ⲧⲓⲟⲛⲟⲥ)

(1) “I, Pesenthus, (2) son of Sia, the sailor, the man of Elemou, in the district (νομός) of Koptos, (3) write to Enoch, son of Pleine, the man of Jēme, in the district (νομός) of Ermont, (4) saying: By the will of God, I am prepared (ἑτοῖμος) (5) to take you and your chattels (σχεῦος) aboard and convey you to Antinoe (6) safely (μετὰ καλοῦ), barring an act of God (χωρίς θεοῦ βίας), and I answer (κινδυνεύω) (7) for the *stolarches* (στολάρχης) of Kos and Koptos. From the departure (8) we shall pay jointly (κοινός) every expense, (9) and every passenger that will come aboard (10) to us—half shall be for me and half for you. (11–12) And you shall pay for yourself eighteen gold carats (κεράτιον) (12) in the standard of Jēme. (13–14) Written (γράφω) on the 17th of [the month (μῆν)] Khoiakh, 13th indiction (ἰνδικτιών).”⁷⁷

76 Till, *Zu den Coptic* 151.

77 Translation according to *O.Medin.HabuCopt. 82*, p. 17, with the addition of Till's corrections and the adding of the Greek terms (and line numbers).

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