

## A Coptic Epitaph for Apa Simothe of Tiloj<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** A complete Coptic (Sahidic) epitaph for an Apa Simothe of Tiloj (=Nilopolis) likely dates between the seventh and ninth centuries. The epitaph is one of a relatively small group of “litany inscriptions” that begins with an invocation to the trinity, archangels, notable biblical figures, and several saints and martyrs.

**Keywords:** Coptic – epitaph – Egypt – monks – Tiloj

مرثية قبطية لأبا سيموت أسقف تيلوج

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**المخلص:** مرثيات قبطية (صعيدية) كاملة لأبا سيموت من تيلوج (= نيلوبوليس)، والتي من المحتمل أن يعود تاريخها إلى ما بين القرنين السابع والتاسع. تُعد المرثية واحدة من مجموعة صغيرة نسبياً من "نقوش الأبرشية" التي تبدأ بالدعاء إلى الثالوث، ورؤساء الملائكة، وشخصيات بارزة من الكتاب المقدس، والعديد من القديسين والشهداء.

**الكلمات الدالة:** القبطية – المرثية – مصر – الرهبان – تيلوج.

<sup>1</sup> We would like to thank the staff at South Bay Auctions for their hospitality and help during our visit and for permitting us to publish an image of this inscription. We would also like to thank Shane Reese and Shon Hopkin for their administrative support in the initial stages of this project back in 2021. For editions of papyri and inscriptions as well as common papyrological sources we have followed the abbreviations given in the “Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca, and Tablets,” accessed June 5, 2024, <https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>.

In early 2021, the authors were apprised of a hitherto unknown Coptic stele in the estate of the late Lawrence Feinberg (d. 2009).<sup>1</sup> Feinberg, who was an antiquities collector and rare book dealer, had operated a small business out of his home in the Bronx beginning in the early 1970s buying and selling a wide variety of artifacts. According to his estate records, which were subsequently verified by recourse to the original paperwork and receipts, Feinberg acquired the stele from *Harmer, Rooke Numismatists, Ltd.* in New York, New York.<sup>2</sup> The stele is cut from limestone and contains a twenty-three-line inscription in the Sahidic dialect that commemorates the passing of an Apa Simothe. It is of the type typically termed a “litany inscription” in that it begins with an invocation to the trinity, archangels, notable biblical figures, and several saints and martyrs before the deceased is eulogized.<sup>3</sup> The text is encased within a rectangular border and is scored with horizontal lines that give the inscription a distinct grid-like appearance. The border is decorated with square blocks that each contain a four-petalled rosette with an “x” bifurcating each petal. Traces of red paint are still present in the iconography and within the cuts of certain letters; mid points punctuate the text and separate select words and phrases. The inscription is mostly complete with only a few places where the text is effaced, but in all except for one section the text can be confidently reconstructed.<sup>4</sup> The last four lines of the inscription are covered with a light blue patina that may have resulted from water damage.

The script is bilinear, clear, and may generally be described as a rounded upright script that is consistent, although mu and delta take two distinct forms: mu is written in

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<sup>1</sup> After receiving an MA from Columbia University in 1967 Feinberg was hired by the university in 1968 to curate and preserve its papyrus collection for a time. He even published a few papyri under the designation P. Feinberg: L. Feinberg, “A Papyrus Text of I Kingdoms (I Samuel) (P. Feinberg 1),” *HTR* 62.3 (1969): 349–56. Another papyrus, designated as P. Feinberg 2 that may preserve Ps 104, is presently housed in the *Museum of the Bible* (Collection ID: PAP.000501).

<sup>2</sup> According to the receipt, the stele was sold to Feinberg on April 20, 1981 for \$1,000.00. *Harmer, Rooke Numismatists, Ltd.*, from whom he purchased the piece, no longer appears to be in business; however, based on a search of this auction house, we have learned it operated from at least the early 1960s through the 1990s.

Another auction house, Christie’s, acquired other items from Feinberg’s collection and on June 13, 2012 auctioned them off. Among these were a number of Coptic papyri and parchments; the largest was a sheet of papyrus measuring 21 x 24 cm that preserved 34 lines of a Coptic text (dialect I) that had been previously published: L. T. Lefort, “Fragments d’apocryphes en copte akhmîmique,” *Le Muséon* 52 (1939): 1–10. When Lefort edited the text, he noted that it was in the possession of Erik von Sterling, who apparently sold the piece to Feinberg at some point. In correspondence with Daniel Sharp, who has done extensive work on the collection amassed by von Sterling and has examined his personal correspondence, we have not been able to find any reference to Lawrence Feinberg.

<sup>3</sup> For a useful discussion of Coptic “litany inscriptions” see M. Choat, “Narratives on Monastic Genealogy in Coptic Inscriptions,” *RRE* 1.3 (2015): 403–430 (esp. 406–415); see also B. Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae of the Byzantine and Arab Periods from Egypt* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2011), 187–88; J. van der Vliet, “Epigraphy and History in the Theban Region,” in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt: Nag Hammadi – Esna*, eds. G. Gabra and H. Takla (Cairo/New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2010), 154.

<sup>4</sup> In some places it is evident that the text was inscribed around damage to the stone that existed previously. On this phenomenon see B. Jones, “Scribes Avoiding Imperfections in their Writing Materials,” *APF* 61/2 (2015): 371–83. See notes 11–13 and 13–15 in “Notes” section below.

both an upright form (M) and occasionally in a distinctly rounded form with a low saddle (n); delta is typically written in a classical triangular form (Δ) but also appears in a “byzantine” documentary form (δ). While certain letters contain decorative flourishes (serifs and roundels: α, ρ, η, θ, π, τ, γ, φ, ψ), it is not an “ornate” script. As the lines approach the right margin the inscriber periodically employed ligatures to save space.<sup>1</sup> Other noteworthy textual and paratextual features include the use of a forked cross (+), a *nomen sacrum*, a monogram (Ⲙ), a staurogram (ⲥ), supralinear strokes, and an isopsephy (ⲙⲓⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ). Orthographically, the text is regular aside from a single interchange of Δ and τ. The overall impression left by the text is that the inscriber was competent and skilled.

The provenance of the stele is unknown;<sup>2</sup> nevertheless, two potential places of origin appear most probable based on internal features. The first of these is the city of Tiloj (Nilopolis) in the Herakleopolite Nome. Near the end of the litany, the inscription commemorates the passing of one “Apa Simothe, the resident of Tiloj.” Since the epitaph is dedicated to this individual one could naturally suppose that the provenance of the stele could be linked to his place of residence. Two additional features of the inscription that may lend additional support to this supposition are: (1) in line 9 there is another reference to Tiloj via “the martyrs of Tiloj”;<sup>3</sup> (2) in line 16 an abbot from “Ahnas” (Herakleopolis Magna) is also commemorated.<sup>4</sup> The clustering of three geographic references to the Herakleopolite Nome could suggest an affinity to this region given their distinctive uses. If such is the case, then this would be the first extant Christian epitaph from Tiloj.<sup>5</sup>

The other possibility is that the stele comes from Bawit. In addition to the three geographic references just mentioned, there is a fourth and final geographic reference in lines 8–9 to an abbot and martyrs from “Shmoun” (Hermopolis) that might suggest some connection to this region. A more compelling argument for Bawit provenance, however, is that the inscription shares various textual parallels with inscriptions from Bawit—or at least believed to have come from Bawit.<sup>6</sup> For example, the first six lines of the inscription are near verbatim to SB Kopt. 1.473.1–6 that broadly dates to the sixth

<sup>1</sup> 3. ⲙⲓ in ⲧⲛⲙⲁⲗϣ; 5. ⲙⲙⲓ in ⲙⲙ ⲙⲁⲣⲧϣⲣⲟⲥ; 6. ⲙⲙ in ⲫⲟⲓⲃⲁⲙⲙⲟⲩ; ⲙⲙⲓ in ⲙⲙⲙⲁ; 8. ⲙⲙⲓ in ⲙⲙ ⲙⲁⲣⲧϣⲣⲟⲥ; 9. ⲙⲙⲓ and ⲙⲙ in ⲙⲙ ⲛⲉϥⲥⲛⲛϣ; 13. ⲙⲙ in ⲙⲙ; 14. ⲙⲙⲓ in ⲙⲙ ⲛⲉϥⲥⲛⲛϣ; 16. ⲙⲙ in ⲉⲛⲛⲥ; ⲙⲣ in ⲧⲛⲣⲟϥ; 18. ⲙⲙ in ⲙⲙⲟϥ; ⲙⲙ in ⲙⲛⲧⲥⲛⲟⲩⲟⲩ; 22. ⲙⲙ in ⲙⲙ.

<sup>2</sup> Choat, “Narratives on Monastic Genealogy,” 407–08 notes the wide geographic provenance of such “litany inscriptions.”

<sup>3</sup> These martyrs are known from a single literary source; on the “martyrs of Tiloj” see note no. 9 in “Notes” section below.

<sup>4</sup> Ahnas was located about 20 km SW of Tiloj.

<sup>5</sup> We have not been able to locate a single Christian epitaph from Tiloj. Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae*, 51 notes (as of 2011) that no Christian funerary stelae are known to come from Herakleopolis Magna or its environs. Furthermore, none of the nine epigraphic supplements “Christian Inscriptions from Egypt and Nubia 1” (CIEN) published in *BASP* beginning in 2013 by A. Delattre, J. Dijkstra, and J. van der Vliet mention any Christian inscriptions from Tiloj or even the larger Herakleopolite Nome.

<sup>6</sup> M. Choat, “Narratives of Monastic Genealogy,” 408 notes, “Many stelae bearing genealogical texts have come through the antiquities trade with no indication of provenance, though the formulae contained in many of these demonstrate that they are from Saqqara or Bawit.”

to eighth centuries and comes from Bawit.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, there are additional parallels at various junctures throughout the inscription to another inscription recently reedited and dated to the sixth through ninth centuries and believed to have come from Bawit.<sup>2</sup> More generally, it is quite similar, with periodic textual parallels, to both SB Kopt. 1.792 (VI–IX AD)<sup>3</sup> and SB Kopt. 1.793 (VI–IX AD)<sup>4</sup> that are most likely from Bawit. On strictly textual grounds, therefore, the closest parallels are found in inscriptions from Bawit.<sup>5</sup>

While the evidence outlined above suggests the stele could have originally come from either Tiloj or Bawit, of these two locations we are inclined to the former as the more likely of the two. The textual parallels between the present text and certain texts from Bawit are noteworthy, but other textual parallels, albeit not as pronounced, can also be found in inscriptions from Saqqara, Wadi Sarga, Esna, Aphrodito, and Abydos. Furthermore, as most, but not all, litany inscriptions come from Bawit, and to date no litany inscription—let alone any Christian inscription—comes from Tiloj, the parallels between the present text and texts from Bawit may not be as determinative for the provenance of the piece. Additionally, as there is evidence for close commercial and economic ties between Bawit and Tiloj, it is conceivable that there could have been shared epigraphic habits between the two locales.<sup>6</sup> Finally, and perhaps most important for the matter of the provenance of the piece, is the fact that the Apa Simothe for whom the epitaph is dedicated is mentioned as a resident of Tiloj. Since there is no evidence at present that he was revered elsewhere—and in fact he is not otherwise known—this is probably the best indicator for the origin of the stele even if it is not definitive.

A date for the inscription cannot be established with precision. The reference to the indiction year does provide what year in the fifteen-year cycle the text was inscribed, yet it is not very helpful in narrowing the date. Likewise, none of the references to the martyrs or abbots mentioned in the text suggest a specific period, and the use of various Christian symbols, vocabulary, or phraseology do little to hone the date beyond establishing for certain that the text could not have been composed before the fifth

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<sup>1</sup> Most recently on the date and provenance of this inscription see G. Schenke, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity*, E01302, accessed on May 16, 2024, <http://csa.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01302>. On the parallel see note no. 1–6 in “Notes” section below.

<sup>2</sup> M. Capozzo, “Matériaux coptes dans les Musées du Vatican,” in *Études coptes XII. Quatorzième journée d’études*, eds. A. Boud’hors and C. Louis (Paris: De Boccard, 2013): 56–57, Fig. 7. A facsimile, translation, and commentary of this inscription was first published in M. A. Murray, “Coptic Stela of Apa Telemē,” *Ancient Egypt* 1 (1914): 156–58. For a discussion of this inscription see also A. Delattre, J. Dijkstra and J. van der Vliet, “Christian Inscriptions from Egypt and Nubia 1 (2013),” *BASP* 51 (2014): 205–06.

<sup>3</sup> Most recently on the date and provenance of this inscription see G. Schenke, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity*, E01251, accessed on May 16, 2024, <http://csa.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01251>.

<sup>4</sup> Most recently on the date and provenance of this inscription see G. Schenke, *The Cult of Saints in Late Antiquity*, E01252, accessed on May 16, 2024, <http://csa.history.ox.ac.uk/record.php?recid=E01252>.

<sup>5</sup> For specific textual parallels to texts from Bawit (as well as elsewhere) see discussion in *Notes* section below.

<sup>6</sup> In P. Mon. Apollo 1.14 (VII/VIII AD), a Tithe collection contract, it shows that one important source of wine for the Bawit monastery was Tiloj (see l. 2 of text); see also O. Bawit 35 (VI–VIII AD), an order for wine from Tiloj, and also O. Bawit 75 (VI–VIII AD). On the connection between Tiloj and Bawit see P. Brux. Bawit, p. 86 and P. Mon. Apollo p. 22.



ⲟⲩ ⲕⲉⲁⲓ ⲁⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲱⲓⲛⲁ ⲁⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲕⲗⲉⲁⲓ ⲁⲓⲛⲁ ⲥⲟⲩⲣⲟⲩⲥⲁ ⲁ-  
ⲛⲁ ⲛⲓⲧⲁⲓ ⲁⲓⲛⲁ ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲛⲟⲩⲣⲉⲓ ⲁⲓⲛⲁ ⲛⲁⲛⲛⲟⲩⲩⲧⲉⲓ

1. inscr. ⲛⲉⲛⲓⲱⲧⲁ | Grk. πνεῦμα 4. Grk. πατριάρχης 4–5. Grk. προφήτης 5. Grk. ἀπόστολος | μάρτυρος  
8. I. τιμοῦε | Grk. μάρτυρος 9. inscr. ⲛⲉⲛⲓⲱⲧⲁ | Grk. μάρτυρος | 12. inscr. ⲁⲛⲕⲗⲟⲩⲛⲁ | 16. inscr. ⲧⲏⲣⲗⲟⲩⲧⲁ 18–  
19. I. ⲙⲏⲧⲥⲛⲟⲩⲣⲉⲓ 19. Grk. εἰρήνη | ἀμήν | inscr. ⲙⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁⲩⲁ | Grk. ἰνδικτίωνος

## Translation:

“The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; our father Michael, our father Gabriel, our mother Mary, our father Adam, our mother Zoe [Eve]; our fathers the patriarchs, the prophets, the apostles, and the martyrs: Apa Victor, Apa Phoibammon, Apa Mena, Apa George, Apa Kyriakos, Apa Hor, Apa Paul, Apa Timothe with all the martyrs of Shmoun [Hermopolis]; Apa Petsire with his brothers the martyrs of Tiloj [Nilopolis], Apa Pousi, Apa Lilamon, Apa Gerontse; our fathers the great men Apa Apollo, Apa Anoup, Apa Phib, Apa Patermoute, Apa Prous, Apa Makare with his son, Apa Moses with his brethren, Apa Jeremias, Apa Enoch, Apa Apollo the Luminary, Apa Pamoun the man of Ahnas, and all the saints by name. Remember Apa Simothe, the resident of Tiloj! He went to his rest on the twelfth day of Thoth, in peace, amen, of the first indiction. Remember also my brother Simothe the Less and his son, with my brother ... of God! Watch over them! Amen. Apa Pshoi, Apa Paul, Apa Sourous, Apa Pita, Apa Ounophre, Apa Papnoute.”

## Notes:

1–6 the first six lines of this inscription are almost a verbatim parallel with the first six lines of SB Kopt. 1.473 (Bawit; VI–VIII AD): + ⲛⲱⲧⲁ ⲛⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲓⲱⲧⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲓⲱⲧⲁ ⲙⲓⲕⲁⲛⲗ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲕⲁⲃⲣⲓⲛⲗ ⲧⲉⲙⲁⲁⲩⲱ ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲓⲱⲧⲁ ⲁⲁⲁⲙ ⲧⲉⲙⲁⲁⲩⲱ ⲕⲱⲛⲛⲉ ⲙⲓⲛⲁⲧⲣⲓⲁⲣⲕⲏⲥ ⲛⲉⲛⲣⲟⲩⲩⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲁⲛⲟⲥⲧⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲙⲁⲣⲧⲏⲣⲟⲥ ⲁⲓⲛⲁ ⲕⲓⲕⲧⲱⲣ ⲁⲓⲛⲁ | ⲕⲟⲓⲃⲁⲙⲱⲛ ⲁⲓⲛⲁ ⲕⲉⲱⲣⲩⲣⲉ ⲁⲓⲛⲁ ⲙⲏⲛⲁ. Additionally, the first three lines are nearly identical with another inscription that is thought to be from Bawit: M. Capozzo, “Matériaux coptes dans les Musées du Vatican,” in *Études coptes XII. Quatorzième journée d’études*, eds. A. Boud’hors and C. Louis (Paris: De Boccard, 2013), 56–57 (VI–IX AD): ⲛⲱⲧⲁ ⲛⲱⲛⲣⲉ ⲛⲉⲛⲓⲱⲧⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲓⲱⲧⲁ ⲙⲓⲕⲁⲛⲗ ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲓⲱⲧⲁ ⲕⲁⲃⲣⲓⲛⲗ ⲧⲉⲛⲕⲱⲓⲥ ⲙⲁⲁⲩⲱ | ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲓⲱⲧⲁ ⲁⲁⲁⲙ ⲧⲉⲙⲁⲁⲩⲱ ⲕⲱⲛⲛⲉ.

The resolution of ⲙⲓⲕⲁⲛⲗ in line 2 is based on the parallel in SB Kopt. 1.473.2 (Bawit; VI–VIII AD) as well as the fact that ⲕⲁⲃⲣⲓⲛⲗ frequently appears in tandem with ⲙⲓⲕⲁⲛⲗ in Coptic epitaphs, especially following an invocation to the Trinity: SB Kopt. 1.790.4–5 (Saqqara; VIII/IX AD); 793.1–2 (Bawit; VI–IX AD); I. Sarga 29.2–4 (Wadi Sarga; VII/VIII AD). While referring to the archangels ⲙⲓⲕⲁⲛⲗ and ⲕⲁⲃⲣⲓⲛⲗ as “fathers” (ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲓⲱⲧⲁ) may appear unusual, this paternal designation also appears in SB Kopt. 1.473 (Bawit; VI–VIII AD), 793 (Bawit; VI–IX AD), SB Kopt. 2.1124.3–4 (provenance?; date?), 1130.3–4 (provenance?; date?) SB Kopt. 3.1610.4–5 (Saqqara; date?), SB Kopt. 4.2001.2–4 (Abydos or Bawit; VII–IX AD), and I. Sarga 29 (Wadi Sarga; VII/VIII AD). For discussion see H. Rochard, “Le culte des archanges en Égypte byzantine et au début de l’époque arabe: le témoignage des peintures de Baouît,” in *Études coptes XV. Dix-septième journée d’études*, eds. A. Boud’hors and C. Louis (Paris: De Boccard, 2018), 117–35.

The invocation to  $\mu\alpha\rho\iota\alpha$ ,  $\alpha\lambda\lambda\alpha\mu$ , and  $ζω\eta$  in lines 2–3 finds exact parallels in SB Kopt. 1.473.2–3 (Bawit; VI–VIII AD) and 792.2–3 (Bawit?; VI–IX AD). These three are mentioned together in other inscriptions but the order is changed or the epithets employed are different: SB Kopt. 1.422.4 (Assiut; date?); 790.6–9 (Saqqara; VIII/IX AD); 793.2–3 (Bawit; VI–IX AD); SB Kopt. 2.1130.4–5, 7–9 (provenance?; date?); SB Kopt. 3.1607.5–6 (Saqqara; date?); SB Kopt. 4.1841.1 (Esna; VI/VII AD); 2004.3–7 (provenance?; date?).

Besides appearing in SB Kopt. 1.473.4–5 (Bawit; VI–VIII AD), the litany of  $\mu\alpha\tau\rho\iota\alpha\rho\chi\eta\varsigma$ ,  $\mu\alpha\rho\phi\eta\tau\eta\varsigma$ ,  $\alpha\pi\sigma\tau\omicron\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ , and  $\mu\alpha\rho\tau\eta\rho\omicron\varsigma$  also appears in SB Kopt. 2.1114.4–6 (provenance?; date?). When this litany appears in SB Kopt. 1.792.4–6 (Bawit?; VI–IX AD) “confessors” ( $\eta\zeta\omicron\mu\omicron\lambda\omicron\gamma\iota\tau\eta\varsigma$ ) is added and in SB Kopt. 2.1142.9–14 (Saqqara; VI–IX AD?) “elders” ( $\mu\eta\pi\rho\epsilon\varsigma\upsilon\gamma\tau\epsilon\rho\omicron\varsigma$ ) is added.

5–7  $\eta\mu\ \mu\alpha\rho\tau\gamma\rho\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\pi\lambda\ \beta\iota\kappa\tau\omega\rho\ \alpha\pi\alpha\ \phi\omicron\iota\beta\alpha\mu\mu\omega\eta\ \alpha\pi\alpha\ \mu\eta\eta\alpha\ |\ \alpha\pi\alpha\ \gamma\epsilon\omega\rho\gamma\epsilon\ \alpha\pi\alpha\ \kappa\upsilon\rho\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\varsigma\ \alpha\pi\alpha\ \gamma\omega[r]$ . Victor, Phoibammon, Mena, George, and Kyriakos were five principal martyrs who frequently appeared together in various inscriptions with a wide geographic provenance; see B. Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae of the Byzantine and Arab Periods from Egypt* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2011), 189 and C. Wietheger, *Das Jeremias Kloster zu Saqqara unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Inschriften* (Altenberge: Oros Verlag, 1992): 223. The six names included here also appear together in this order in SB Kopt. 5.2350.6–8 (Bawit or Saqqara; VII–IX AD), although an  $\alpha\pi\alpha\ \phi\iota\lambda\omicron\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  is added and included before  $\alpha\pi\alpha\ \gamma\omega\rho$ . In J. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1908-9, 1909-10): The Monastery of Apa Jeremias* (Cairo: Impr. de l’Institute Français de l’Archéologie Orientale, 1912), no. 203.8–10 it includes all the names but  $\alpha\pi\alpha\ \gamma\omega\rho$  and instead has  $\alpha\pi\alpha\ \phi\iota\lambda\omicron\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ ; the same is also the case in SB Kopt. 4.2002.1–4 (Bawit; VII–IX AD).

For a discussion of these names in Egyptian hagiography see A. Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte des Byzantins aux Abbassides. L’apport des inscriptions et des papyrus grecs et coptes* (Paris: CNRS Editions, 2001), 62–68 (Victor), 204–14 (Phoibammon), 146–54 (Mena), 69–72 (George), 132–34 (Kyriakos), 221 (Hor).

8–9  $\alpha\pi\alpha\ \Delta\iota\mu\omicron\theta\epsilon\ \eta\mu\ \mu\alpha\rho\tau\gamma\rho\omicron\varsigma\ [\eta]\varphi\lambda\mu\omicron\gamma\eta$ . The phonetic interchange  $\tau > \Delta$  see P.Bal. 1 pp. 130–131. Same spelling of the name can also be found in SB Kopt. 2.918.1 (= CPR 4.21; Saqqara; VII AD); 1039.22 (Saqqara; VI/VII AD); and SB Kopt. 5.2224.3 (Hermopolis; VI/VII AD).

Given the reference to the martyrs of Shmoun, the Apa Timothe mentioned here is to be identified with the martyr bearing this name and whose martyrdom is narrated in the *Martyrdom of Apa Timotheos and his Daughter Martyria*; see W. C. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Martyrlegenden* (2 vols.; Rome: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1935–36): 1.111–25 and 2.137; S. Uljas, “The Paris Leaves of the Martyrdom of SS Timothy and Martyria,” *Le Muséon* 130.3–4 (2017): 255–77.

The toponym  $\varphi\mu\omicron\gamma\eta$  (Hermopolis; TM Geo 816) was located about 20 km SW of Tiloj (mentioned in lines 9 and 18).

9  $\alpha\pi\alpha\ \mu\epsilon\tau\varsigma\iota\rho\epsilon\ \mu\eta\ \mu\epsilon\varphi\varsigma\eta\eta\gamma\ \mu(\alpha)\rho(\tau\gamma\rho\omicron\varsigma)\ \eta\tau\lambda\omicron\chi$ . Persons bearing the title and name Apa Petsire (*vel sim.*), an Egyptian name that means “he who was given by Osiris” (NB Dem. 298–99, 527), are rare. One noteworthy instance occurs in a Coptic

litany from the hermitage at Esna where mention is made of an ἀπα πετσερε μ(α)ρ(τυρος), who despite the different spelling, is likely to be the same person. For this text see S. Sauneron and J. Jacquet, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d'Esna, I: Archeologie et inscriptions* (Fouilles de l'IFAO, 29/1; Le Caire, 1972), inscription no. 4 (l. x +16). On this figure see also discussion in S. Sauneron, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d'Esna, I: Essai d'histoire* (Fouilles de l'IFAO, 29/4; Le Caire, 1972), 68.

A passing reference in the *Martyrdom of Apa Epima* sheds some light on this martyr saint and his brothers mentioned in the present inscription. In the martyrdom, it is reported that when Epima was brought before the prefect in Alexandria that a man by the name of Petsire, who is explicitly identified as a resident of Tiloj, and a group from the same region already had an audience before the governor: πετσίρε πρῆτλαδ μῆ κεμνηθε ἰχρηστιανος ἦτε πτοω ετῆμαγ ("Petsire a man from Tiloj and also a crowd of Christians of that region"; T. Mina, *Le Martyre D'Apa Epima* [Le Caire, 1937], 31). See also Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 178.

Tiløj [τῖλοχ] (Grk. Τίλωθις [a.k.a. Νείλου πόλις by the first century AD]; modern el-Dalās), was located in the Herakleopolite Nome some 20 km NE of Herakleopolis and some 5 or 7 km W of the Nile. This toponym appears a few times in texts from Bawit in the context of the wine trade; see footnote no. 6 on p. 32 above. On this toponym generally see M. R. Falivene, *The Herakleopolite Nome* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 224–26; S. Timm (ed.), *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit: Eine Sammlung christlicher Stätten in Ägypten in arabischer Zeit unter Ausschluss von Alexandria, Kairo, des Apa-Mena-Klosters (Der Abu Mina), der Sketis (Wadi n-Natrun) und der Sinai-Region* (Wiesbaden: Reichert Verlag, 1984–1992), 2.499; TM Geo 2427. The toponym is mentioned again in the inscription, albeit in reference to another saint, in line 18; see n. 17–18 below. Additionally, Ahnas [χνης] (Herakleopolis Magna), is also mentioned in the inscription in line 16; see n. 16 below.

10 ἀπα πογci' ἀπα λιλामων' ἀπα γεροντ|ce'. These three abbots appear together in this order in Sauneron and Jacquet, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d'Esna, I: Archeologie et inscriptions*, inscription no. 4 (l. x + 15): ἀπα πγceῖ λιλामων κερoτce, see also inscription nos. 47 (l. 32), 69 (l. 1), and 89 (l. 8). For a discussion of these three abbots see Sauneron, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d'Esna, I: Essai d'histoire*, 70 and Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 180–81. Additionally, they appear together in SB Kopt. 4.1841.4–5 (Esna; VI/VII AD) despite some variant spellings: ἀπα πογci' λילוγ κερωντci'. Also, they seem to appear together in SB Kopt. 1.473.7 (Bawit; VI–VIII AD) where the reading given is: ἀπα πογ . . νιλामων κερωνce; we believe this transcription should be corrected to: ἀπα πογ[ci] λιλामων κερωνce.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The SB. Kopt. reading is taken from a transcription given in the *ed. pr.* by M. G. Maspero, "Notes sur différents points de grammaire et d'histoire," *Mélanges d'Arch. égypt. et assyr.* 1 (1873): 109 (no. 6). In the description of line 7 Maspero notes (pp. 109–110): "ἀπα πογ . . νιλामων a perdu deux lettres; à la troisième, où une seule lettre a disparu, quelques traces encore visibles semblent indiquer un Δ." Maspero reports seeing the traces of what appears to be a Δ but then inserts an ν, hence νιλामων, supposing the second vertical of ν was effaced and presumably because it formed a recognizable name; Διλामων would make no sense. The traces of what looked like a Δ were actually a λ, hence λιλामων. We have examined an online digital image of this inscription from the Louvre <<https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010001448>>; the text is badly effaced in this section, but the



11–13      ἀπα ἀπολλω | ἀπα ἀνογι· ἀπα φιβ· ἀπα πατερμογι|τε· ἀπα προογ·. The “Bawit triad” of Apa Apollo, Apa Anoup, and Apa Phib is a well attested cluster; see Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae*, 190–91; S. J. Clackson *Coptic Texts Relating to the Hermopolite Monastery of Apa Apollo* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 2000), 6. Clackson notes that while this triad is widely attested in texts from the Hermopolite area, they also appear in texts from Dayr al-Bala’yza, Dayr al-Ganadla, Dayr al-Gabrawi, Memphis-Saqqara, Wadi Sarga, and areas between Abydos and Latopolis. The exact phrase found in lines 11–12 of the present inscription (ⲛⲉⲛⲉⲓⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛⲟⲥ ⲛⲣⲱⲙⲉ ἀπα ἀπολλω ἀπα ἀνογι ἀπα φιβ) also appears in lines 12–15 of M. Capozzo, “Matériaux coptes dans les Musées du Vatican,” 56–57.

The mention of Apa Patermoute and Apa Prous alongside the “Bawit triad” also appears in an inscription in the Cairo Museum: R. Engelbach, “The Coptic Stela of Leontce (Leontios),” *ASAE* 39 (1939): 314 in lines 7–8: ἀπα ἀπολλω ἀπα ἀνογι ἀπ[α] | φιβ ἀπα πατερμογιτε ἀπα προογ. In the article, it is believed the inscription came from Bawit. On Patermoute and Prous respectively see Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 168–70 and Wietheger, *Das Jeremias Kloster zu Saqqara*, 235.

In line 12 between ἀπα and φιβ, there is a damaged section on the stone that was deliberately written around; though there is a significant gap between these two word no text is lost. Similarly, in line 13 the name προογ is written around this damaged section so that it is inscribed πρ    οογ. See footnote no. 4 on p. 30 above.

13–15 ἀπα μακαρε ⲙⲛ̅ | ⲛⲉϥⲱⲛⲣⲉ ἀπα ⲙⲱⲓϥⲏⲥ· ⲙⲛ̅ ⲛⲉϥⲥⲛⲛⲩⲩⲩ ἀπα ⲓⲉⲣⲓⲙⲓⲁⲥ· ἀπα ⲉⲛⲟϥ·. An exact parallel appears in SB Kopt. 4.2002.10–12 (Bawit; VII–IX AD) and in lines 15–17 of M. Capozzo, “Matériaux coptes dans les Musées du Vatican,” 56–57. An exact parallel for ἀπα μακαρε ⲙⲛ̅ ⲛⲉϥⲱⲛⲣⲉ ἀπα ⲙⲱⲓϥⲏⲥ ⲙⲛ̅ ⲛⲉϥⲥⲛⲛⲩⲩⲩ appears in SB Kopt. 1.473.10–11 (Bawit; VI–VIII AD); SB Kopt. 5.2350.3–5 (Bawit or Saqqara; VII–IX AD); and Sauneron and Jacquet, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d’Esna, I: Archeologie et inscriptions*, inscription no. 89 (ll. 11–12).

On Apa Makare see Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 140. On the names ⲓⲉⲣⲓⲙⲓⲁⲥ and ⲉⲛⲟϥ in collocation see Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae*, 189–90. On Apa Jeremias and Apa Enoch see respectively Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 103–05 and 78–79.

In line 14 the ἀπα in Apa Moses is written around a damaged portion of the stone so that it is inscribed α    πα. See discussion of this damage in n. 11–13 directly above.

15–16      ἀπα ἀπολλω πογολειν·. This abbot is attested in inscriptions from Saqqara, Bawit, and Esna; see Wietheger, *Das Jeremias Kloster zu Saqqara*, 222 and Sauneron, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d’Esna, I: Essai d’histoire*, 57.

16      ἀπα παμογν ⲡⲣ̅ⲙ Ϸⲛⲏⲥ·. While this saint is attested at Esna (Sauneron and Jacquet, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d’Esna, I: Archeologie et inscriptions*,

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extant traces fit two adjoining obliques, thus λ. When this text was reprinted in a subsequent issue of the journal it was mistakenly printed with three dots instead of two; see M. E. Revillout, “Mélanges d’épigraphie et de linguistique égyptienne” *Mélanges d’Arch. égypt. et assyr.* 2 (1873–76): 175 (no. 4): ἀπα πογ . . . ⲛⲓⲗⲁⲙⲱⲛ ⲕⲉⲣⲱⲛⲥⲉ.

inscription nos. 4 [ll. 6–7], 29 [l. 15], and 84 [l. 1]), Saqqara (Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara [1908-9, 1909-10]*, no. 266.2–3), and Wadi Sarga (P. Sarga 66.3–4; VII/VIII AD). most attestations come from Bawit: J. Clédat, *Le Monastère et la nécropole de Baouît* (MIFAO 39; Le Caire: IFAO, 1904), 44: ἀπα παμοῦν πρῶμε νης; J. Maspero, *Fouilles exécutées à Baouît* (MIFAO 59.1; Le Caire, IFAO, 1931): no. 448.1: παμο[γ]ν πρεμεζν[c]; on a beam from Bawit in the Egyptian Museum: ἀπα παμοῦν πρεμενης (see M. G. Biondi, “Inscriptions Coptes,” *ASAE* 8 [1907]:177 [77.3]). In two ninth-century contracts from Bawit a monastery (or a church) of ἀπα παμοῦν πρῶμ ζηης is mentioned and seems to highlight a sense of special devotion to this saint at Bawit (in B.L. Ms.Or. 6206. l.x.847, line 8 and B.L. Ms. Or. 6202. 12.ix.849, line 23, both published in L. S. B. MacCoull, “The Bawit Contracts: Texts and Translations,” *BASP* 31 [1994]: 149 and 153). Finally, on the western wall of chapel 56 at Bawit there is a portrait (with accompanying inscription) of ἀπα παμοῦν ἡζηνς; see J. Clédat, *Le monastère et la nécropole de Baouit. Notes mises en oeuvre et éditées par Dominique Bénazeth et Marie-Hélène Rutschowskaya. Avec des contributions de Anne Boud’hors, René-Georges Coquin (†), Éliane Gaillard* (MIFAO 111; Le Caire: IFAO, 1999), 162 fig. 37. On this saint see also discussions in Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae*, 188; Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, 3.1162–63; and Sauneron, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d’Esna, I: Essai d’histoire*, 65.

16–17      νετογααβ τηρογ | κατὰ νεγραν ἀριπμεεγε. This phrase is attested in a few other Coptic epitaphs: SB Kopt. 2.1142.22–24 (Saqqara; VI–IX AD?); SB Kopt. 3.1605.4–6 (Saqqara; VI–IX AD?); J. van der Vliet, “Coptic Epitaphs from Abydos,” *JCoptS* 22 (2020): 222 (Abydos; VI–VIII AD), lines 16–18. Cf. O.Frange 268.6–8 (Thebes; c. AD 700–750): ἐνετογααβ τηρογ ζν πλοεic κατὰ νεγραν.

According to Tudor (*Christian Funerary Stelae*, 151), phrases that include either μμνήσκομαι or ἀριπμεεγε in Christian epitaphs, which are widely distributed in Egypt, may ultimately be based on Luke 23:42: καὶ ἔλεγεν Ἰησοῦ, μνήσθητί μου ....

17–18      ναπα cιμοεε | πῆμ ἴλοχ. The name cιμοεε (*vel. sim.*) is derived from the Egyptian *s3-mwt* (Samut) (“Son of Mut”; see H. Ranke, *Die Ägyptischen Personennamen, Bd. 1: Verzeichnis der Namen* [Glückstadt: Verlag von J. J. Augustin, 1935]: 309.3 and TM Nam 27465). It is not well attested, and at present it has less than ten occurrences in Coptic. While it is attested at Wadi Sarga (P.Sarga 64.5 [date?: cιμοεε]), Deir el-Bahari (O.Brit.Mus.Copt. 1 p. 52 4.2–3 [date?: ἱcακ νcεμωεε]), and Abydos (J. van der Vliet, “Coptic Epitaphs from Abydos,” 221 lines 12–13: ἀπα cιμοτne), the majority of the attestations come from Bawit: P.Bawit Clackson 39.2 (AD VIII): cιμοεε; P.Bawit Clackson 40.1 (VIII AD): ἀπα cιμοεῖ; cf. P.Mon. Apollo 3.12–13 (VIII AD): c[.].θεε πωτ ντιακωνια ἡα[π]α; J. Clédat, *Le Monastère et la nécropole de Baouît* (MIFAO 12; Le Caire: IFAO, 1904), 114 (no. 55): Ἰπαcον cιμ[ο]θεε πογαρυ ὡ; C. Palanque, “Rapport sur les recherches effectuées à Baouit en 1903 [avec 17 planches],” *BIFAO* 5 (1905): 18: cιμοεε παφαζῳ. A cιμοεε πῆμ ἴλοχ is otherwise unattested. On the toponym of ἴλοχ see discussion in n. 9 above.

18–19      αqῆτον μῆοq νcογ μῆτcно|ογo νερογт. The phrase μτον μμοz is widespread in Coptic epitaphs and most often serves to introduce the date of death. The phrase is roughly equivalent to the Greek ἀναπαύομαι (Lat. *requievit*) and is not merely a euphemism for death but is thought to express hope for a future resurrection: J. van

der Vliet, “‘What is Man?’ The Nubian Tradition of Coptic Funerary Inscriptions,” in *Nubian Voices: Studies in Christian Nubian Culture*, eds. A. Łajtar and J. van der Vliet (Warsaw: Journal of Juristic Papyrology Supplements, 2011), 195–97. Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae*, 196 notes that the formula is “supraregional.”

19 ρη οὔρηνη ραμνη. This formula is widespread in Coptic epitaphs and appears throughout Egypt. See Tudor, *Christian Funerary Stelae*, 175. In the context of finding “peace” in the grave LXX Isa. 57:2 is noteworthy: ἔσται ἐν εἰρήνῃ ἡ ταφὴ αὐτοῦ.

20 ἀριπμέεγε ον μπασον σιμοθε κοι περωμερε. On the use of ἀριπμέεγε see n. 16–17 above. For the name σιμοθε see n. 17–18 above. A σιμοθε κοι is not otherwise attested. The adjective κοι can mean “small” or “little” in terms of physical appearance, “young” in terms of age, or even “inexperienced” in a monastic context. See J. Wegner, “Monks and Monasteries in Egypt between Household and Estate: A Case Study from Bawit,” *JJP* 51 (2021): 98–99.

21–22 μη πασον . . . . . ον ντε πνογτε ροεις ερολογ ρθ. Only a few slight traces can be seen in the lacuna and no parallels immediately lend themselves to a restoration; cf. SB Kopt. 4.1964.16–19 (Saqqara; VII AD): ἀρι πμμεογε ντεπνογ|τε ροεις ερον | [ἀρι πμμ]εογε ντεπνογτε + | ροεις ερον.

The isopsephic spelling ρθ signifies “amen”: 99 = α (=1) + η (=40) + η (=8) + η (=50). On this isopsephy see L. H. Blumell, *Lettered Christians: Christian Letters and Late Antique Oxyrhynchus* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 47.

22–23 α[π]α πα[οι] ἀπα παγλε· ἀπα σογρογς· α|πα πιτα· ἀπα ογε[νοφρ]· ἀπα παπνογτεϣ. The order of Apa Pshoi, Apa Paule, and Apa Sourous appears in SB Kopt. 1.434.1–3 (provenance?; date) and Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara (1908-9, 1909-10)*, no. 240.13–14; the longer sequence of Apa Pshoi, Apa Paule, Apa Sourous, and Apa Ouenophre appears in SB Kopt. 1.792.15–16 (Bawit?; VI–IX AD). While we have not been able to locate an instance where Apa Pita is included among this specific name group, on the east wall of room 21 of the Monastery of Bawit Apa Pita it is found in conjunction with Apa Sourous and Apa Paul of Tamma; see Maspero, *Fouilles exécutées à Baouît* (MIFAO 59.1), no. 452.9: ἀπα [παγλε ντα]ῖμαξ ἀπα σογρογς ἀπα πιτα. Given that the name ordering is paralleled, one wonders whether Paul of Tamma could be intended here. Apa Pita also appears in other litany inscriptions within a different context of names: e.g. Sauneron and J. Jacquet, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d’Esna, I: Archeologie et inscriptions*, nos. 29.4, 89.15, 94.15 and EA 1623.14 (British Museum; Saqqara; date?).

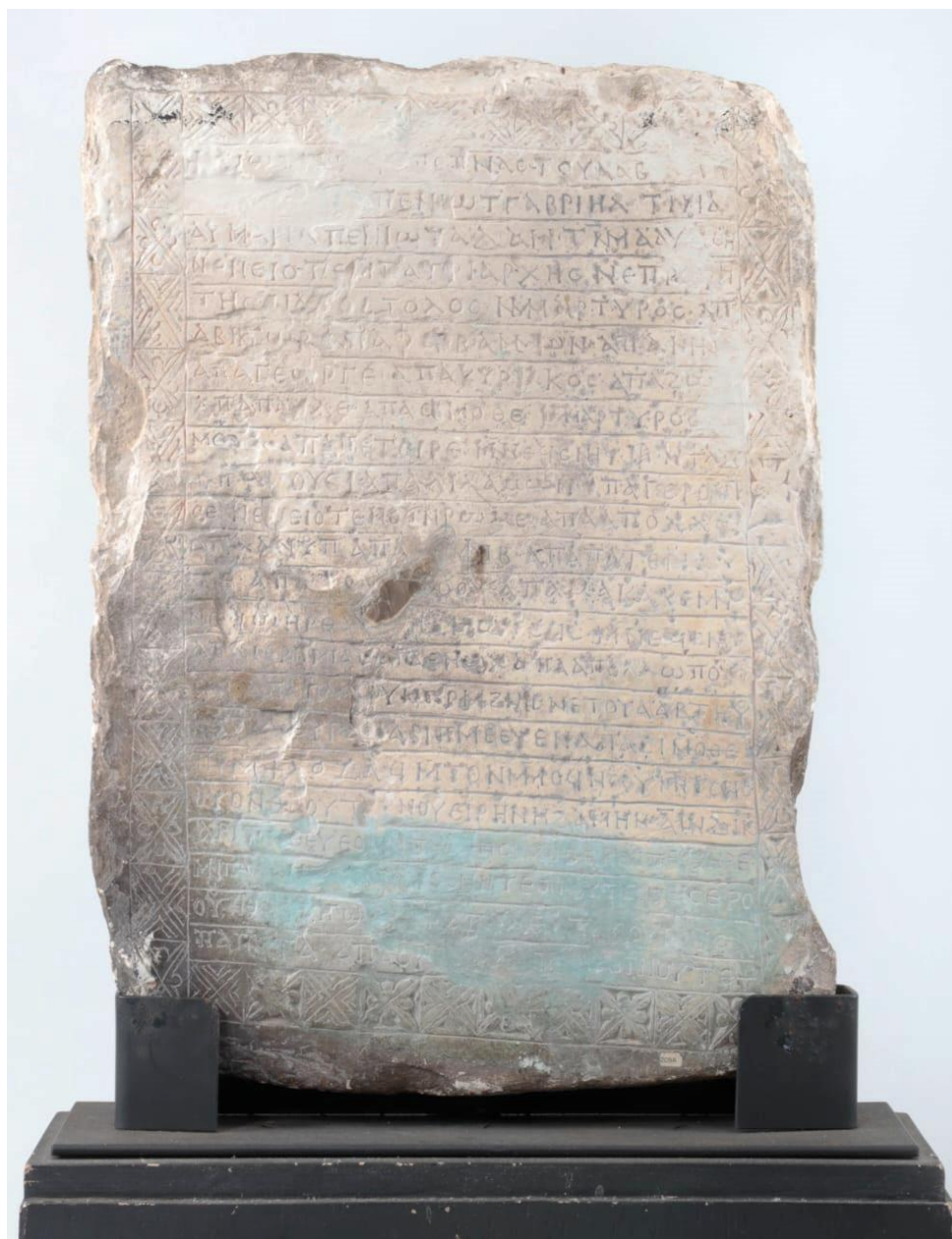
There were multiple abbots and saints who bore the name Pshoi, but the most notable of them was Pshoi of Scetis. For a discussion of the various Egyptian fathers who bore this name see most recently T. Vivian and M. S. A. Mikail, *The Life of Bishoi: The Greek, Arabic, Syriac, and Ethiopic Lives* (Cairo/New York: The American University of Cairo Press, 2022): 1–8, but also Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 220 and Wietheger, *Das Jeremias Kloster zu Saqqara*, 237. For a useful and concise discussion of (Apa) Paul (of Tamma, Thebes, etc.) in Egyptian hagiography see Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 172–73. On Apa Sourous see Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 191–92 and Wietheger, *Das Jeremias Kloster zu Saqqara*, 239. On Apa Pita see discussion in S. Sauneron, *Les ermitages chrétiens du désert d’Esna, I: Essai d’histoire*, 69, and on Apa Ouenophre see

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Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 161–62. Like many of the other abbots mentioned here, multiple figures in Egyptian hagiography bore the name Papnoute; for a useful discussion see Papaconstantinou, *Le culte des saints en Égypte*, 166–68.

## Plate



(Coptic Epitaph; Provenance: Tiloj (?); Date: VII–IX Cent. AD)

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