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Mariachiara Giorda, *Monachesimo e istituzioni ecclesiastiche in Egitto: alcuni casi di interazione e integrazione*, [Fondazione Bruno Kessler, Scienze Religiose 22], Dehoniane, Bologna 2010, 179 pp.

Mariachiara Giorda works in the History Department of the *Università degli Studi di Torino* and is a Research Assistant in the History of Christianity and the History of Religions. This is the first monographical work of the young Turinese researcher which, in fact, began as a doctoral thesis developed and written between the years 2002-2007 in the V Section of *Sciences Religieuses de la École Pratique des Hautes Études* of Paris. It deals with the first part of the doctoral thesis which consists in a general introductory overview which takes in 4th and mid-5th century monasticism and its relationship to ecclesiastical institutions. The study of this period in which monasticism flourished and spread to Egypt proves useful also for understanding the development which this promoted in the subsequent period. The overview presented is incomplete with respect to the history of monasticism in Egypt because the period which goes from the Council of Chalcedon (451) to the arrival of Islam is not included. Giorda hopes to publish the second volume, as soon as possible. It will cover that missing period.

This work adds to a number of studies which in recent years have considered the important contribution of the political, social and economic aspects when studying the development of monasticism in Egypt, studies which benefit also from the great amount of documentary material (discoveries of entire libraries) which have been preserved in this region. Giorda has above all utilized the studies of James Goehring, Arietta Papaconstantinou, and Ewa Wipszycka.

Methodologically, the range of research in the book takes in the most varied disciplines with the intention of knitting together the different aspects of the polyhydic reality of the 4th-5th centuries and, in particular, of monasticism which, at that time, developed and reached its maximal expression. Giorda's main interest is to present a profound analysis of the relationship among monks and the ecclesial world (bishops, priests and deacons) coming from a critical and attentive reading of the documentary sources. Monks, clerics and laity are called to "the dock" because they were the protagonists of the distribution of responsibilities and also of the processes of specialization and the monopolization of services and knowledge.

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The first chapter presents, by way of introduction, the plurality of the monastic phenomenon in Egypt through some reflections on the identity of monasticism and on the relationship among monks, ecclesiastical institutions and the laity. We also read in this first chapter a brief report on the *Status quaestionis* of some aspects of monasticism. The second chapter is dedicated to the celebrations which take place in the churches of the monasteries and to the topic of the participation of the monks in liturgical life. The third chapter studies the presence of a monastic cleric, his liturgical function and other services which distinguished the clerical monk from the lay monk. The fourth chapter analyses particular monastic tasks; it details the specific labors of the monks, the function of the spiritual father and that of the treasurer. The fifth chapter is a reflection on the relationship between the monk and the bishop. Some figures of bishop monks are presented. In the sixth chapter two cases of the relationship among monasticism and the institutions are presented: the biography of Shenoute and an file of papyruses dealing with the milieu of the Melecians.

Contents: Premessa. **Capitolo primo:** Monachesimo e istituzioni: cenni introduttivi. 1. « Il deserto divenne una città » (e le città si riempiono di monaci). 2. Identità monastiche. 3. Tre gruppi all'interno della « *societas cristiana* ». 4. « *Status quaestionis* » di alcune tematiche. **Capitolo secondo:** La liturgia monastica. 1. Premessa terminologica: le celebrazioni e i luoghi delle celebrazioni. 2. La pratica liturgica in Egitto. 3. La partecipazione alla liturgia eucaristica nelle fonti monastiche del IV e V secolo. **Capitolo terzo:** I monaci chierici. 1. Monaci, chierici, laici secolari: cenni di terminologia. 2. I monaci chierici. **Capitolo quarto:** Non solo monaci chierici: le funzioni monastiche. 1. La direzione spirituale. 2. Monaci responsabili dei monasteri. **Capitolo quinto:** Monaci e vescovi e monaci-vescovi. 1. I legami tra vescovi e monaci. 2. Aphu: monaco e vescovo di Ossirinco. 3. Monaci-vescovi: verso un modello? **Capitolo sesto:** Monachesimo e istituzioni: il caso di Shenoute e dei meliziani di Paieous. 1. Monaci e clero nella vita di Shenoute attribuita a Besa. 2. Un caso scismatico: i monaci meliziani e i loro rapporti con le istituzioni. Conclusioni. Fonti e bibliografia. Indice dei nomi.

ANTONIO GAYTÁN