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Monachesimo e istituzioni ecclesiastiche in Egitto. Alcuni casi di interazione e integrazione.

By Mariachiara Giorda. (Scienze Religiose. New Ser., 22.) Pp. 179. Bologna:

Edizioni Dehoniane Bologna, 2010. €12.60 (paper). 978 88 10 41516 0

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This short book achieves exactly what its title promises: the presentation and detailed discussion of ‘some cases of interaction and integration’ between monasteries and church institutions in Egypt until *c.* 451. A second volume covering the subsequent two centuries until the Arab invasions is promised. Based on the author’s 2007 doctoral dissertation in Paris, the book is particularly valuable because of its detailed lexical study of relevant terms and praiseworthy for its exhaustive bibliography. The starting point of the investigation is the issue of the monk-bishop first identified as such by Philip Rousseau in 1971. The question of the relation between ecclesiastical authority and charismatic abilities in late antiquity has gained greater currency in monographs of recent years (Sterk, Rapp, Demacopoulos). Giorda, however, is not interested in the charisma of outstanding holy men, but in the personal and institutional connections between organised monastic communities and the Church. She applies the magnifying glass to Egypt, where monastic literature, ecclesiastical texts and papyrus documents provide rich evidence for the interaction between monks, clerics and laymen during the first two centuries after the emergence of the monastic movement. In a series of six well-paced chapters, she elucidates the liturgical practices (eucharist, baptism, prayer times; with the notable omission of burial) that would necessitate the presence of clergy in a monastery, then shows how certain monks acted as priests within their communities. The monasteries of the Pachomian *koinonia* provide especially rich evidence for these patterns. A key issue addressed in chapter iv that deserves to be highlighted (and would merit further study within a wider framework) is the role of monks, priests and monk-priests in the process of spiritual direction, disclosure of sins and the administration of penance for their brethren. This is the context in which the potential tension between charismatic and institutional authority was most acutely experienced and played out. Two further chapters offer case studies of Aphu, who was bishop and monk in Oxyrhynchus, of Shenoute, whose White Monastery was home to a number of monk-clerics, and of Paieous, the leader of a Melitian community which, despite its schismatic status, followed the same organisational model as its orthodox counterparts. Giorda concludes that the interaction between monks and clergy was marked by ‘relations of mutual interest, points of contact, and overlap of roles, along with the maintenance of independent competence specific to each side’ (p. 142). The book should be of interest to anyone involved in the study of late antique Christian Egypt or in the growth of the institutional Church.

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