

A SELF-DEDICATION ADDRESSED TO ANUBIS¹

Divine Protection against Malevolent Forces or Forced Labor?

KIM RYHOLT

Abstract. The publication of a self-dedication addressed to Anubis is used as an opportunity to discuss the phenomenon of self-dedications which is so far only attested for the second century BC. The central element in all known self-dedications is the supplicant's agreement to pay a monthly fee in order to acquire the status of a temple servant. The fact that the vast majority of the supplicants cannot name their fathers betrays their low social status, and it is argued that the documents represent a manner by which these people might avoid compulsory labor since temple servants were apparently exempt from *corvée*.

0. INTRODUCTION

It is with great pleasure and the deepest appreciation that I dedicate this paper to Paul John Frandsen, my former teacher and colleague, my friend and mentor. Suffice to say that his impact on my own life has been profound. I hope he will be pleased to see some results of a project that was begun many years ago when he introduced me to the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection. One of my earliest projects was the large archive of self-dedications from the temple of Soknebtunis. Alas, various circumstances have delayed this project, but I offer here the edition of a self-dedication of another origin and a general discussion of the phenomenon of self-dedications from Egypt in the second century BC.

1. ORIGIN OF KNOWN SELF-DEDICATIONS

The demotic self-dedications published to date fall into four groups:

- Self-dedications from Tebtunis addressed to Soknebtunis. This is by far the largest assemblage, with more than 100 texts. The papyri can now be traced to local excavations in 1930 when the Tebtunis temple

¹ I am obliged to Cary Martin for his comments on this paper.

library was also (re-)discovered.² Only a few of the texts have so far been published.³

- Self-dedications from Euhemeria addressed to Isis-Nepherses, Osiris-Onnophrios, and Harpsenesis collectively. Two papyri, both riddled with insect holes. One was excavated by Grenfell and Hunt in 1899/1900, and the other at least several years earlier since it was published in 1895.⁴

- Self-dedication from Soknopaiou Nesos addressed to Soknopaios and Isis-Nepherses together. A single papyrus with the lower third missing.⁵

- Self-dedications of uncertain origin addressed to Anubis. Four papyri; details are provided below.

The present paper offers the publication of a fifth self-dedication addressed to Anubis and some general considerations on the nature and purpose of self-dedications.

2. THE SELF-DEDICATION P. MICH. INV. 3603

2.1. Description

Date: July 5, 182 BC. Reign of Ptolemy V.

Acquisition: Purchased from Maurice Nahman in 1925.

Measurements: 15.8 h. by 13.5+ w. cm.

Preservation: The right quarter of the document is missing as well as a fragment from its top.

² Ryholt, K., 'The Discovery and Early History of the Tebtunis Temple Library', forthcoming.

³ Thompson, H., 'Two Demotic Self-Dedications', *JEA* 26 (1940), pp. 68-78, pls. 12-13; Bresciani, E., 'Registrazioni di contratti di ierodulia', in *Papiri della Università degli studi di Milano (P. Mil. Vogliano)*, III, Milan 1965, pp. 188-194, pls. 9-10; M. Chauveau, 'Un contrat de "hiérodoule." Le P. dém. Fouad 2', *BIFAO* 91 (1991), pp. 119-127. The main parts of this assemblage are now in the British Museum and the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection (University of Copenhagen). Further parts are in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (Yale University), University of Michigan Papyrus Collection, Istituto di Papirologia dell'Università Statale Milano, and the Egyptian Museum in Cairo. A few fragments previously in the private collection of George Michaelidis have been acquired by the British Museum. The large group of papyri have been entrusted to John Tait and myself for a collaborative publication.

⁴ Migahid, A. el-G., 'Eine demotische Hierodulie-Urkunde aus dem Fajjum. P. Kairo 50018', *BIFAO* 102 (2002), pp. 299-307. A very unreliable hand-copy and translation of the second papyrus (P. Louvre E 10606) has been published by E. Revillout, *Mélanges sur la métrologie, l'économie politique et l'histoire*, Paris 1895, pp. 183-184, footnote.

⁵ Bresciani, E., *L'archivio demotico del tempio di Soknopaiou Nesos*, Milan 1975, pp. 78-79, 136, pl. 32.

2.2. Transliteration

- 1 [ḥsb.t-sp 23 (n) pr-ꜥꜣ] Ptlwm[ys sꜣ Ptlwm]ys ꜥnh ḏ.t
- 2 [ḏḏ bꜣk Inpw pꜣ] ntr ꜥꜣ .[. sꜣ ...] mw.t=f Ta-Ḥr
- 3 [ꜥnk pꜣy=k] bꜣk tꜣy pꜣ hrw ḥry šꜥ.tw ḏ.t mtw(=y) ḏ.t
- 4 [kt ... ḥr ꜣbt nb] (n) škr (n) bꜣk m-bꜣḥ Inpw pꜣ ntr ꜥꜣ
- 5 [bn-ꜣw{=y} rh ꜣ] ꜥ^{evil} i{h}s sšr wry
- 6 [rmt-ꜣw=f-(n-)ꜣmnt rmt] 'nb' (n) pꜣ tꜣ {n} ꜣry-shy n-ꜣm=s <bnr
n>=k
- 7 [tꜣy pꜣ hrw ḥry] šꜥ.tw <ḏ.t> sh ḥsb.t-sp 23 ꜣbt-2 šmw sw 1

2.3. Translation

- 1 [Regnal-year 23 of king] Ptolem[y son of Ptolem]y, living forever.
- 2 [Has said the servant of Anubis, the] great god, ..[. son of], whose mother is Tahôr:
- 3 [I am your] servant from this day onwards until eternity, and I shall give
- 4 [... kite every month] as servant fee before Anubis, the great god.
- 5 [No spiri]t, an ancient one, a demon, a great one,
- 6 [a person who is in the west], any [person] on earth [will be able] to exercise authority over her <apart from> you
- 7 [from this day onwards] until <eternity>. Written in regnal-year 23, second month of shemu, day 1.

2.4. Textual notes

The text has been restored according to the phraseology of the other known self-dedications addressed to Anubis and only a few specific comments are included here. The numerous scribal errors in the texts are listed and discussed separately below.

Line 2. The clear writing of 'his mother' (*mw.t=f*) and '(male) servant' (*bꜣk*) suggests that the self-dedication was written for a man, while the incorrect third person feminine pronoun in line 6 (*n-ꜣm=s*) suggests a woman. The confusion in pronouns is also attested in P. Freib. 72 and P. Freib. 73 which are both written for women; each employs the masculine possessive article (*pꜣy=k*), the former also writes the noun 'servant' in the masculine form (*bꜣk*), and the latter also writes 'his mother' (*mw.t=f*). Assuming that it was written for a man, I have restored *sꜣ* and *pꜣy=k* instead of *ta* and *tꜣy=k*.

Line 3. The conjunctive may be read either *mtw=w* or *mtw(=y)*. I have given the scribe the benefit of a doubt and read the latter, although it

cannot be excluded that the former was intended, in which case it would represent yet another error.

Line 4. I have restored this line after P. Freib. 73 since there is not room for the redundant dative $n=k$ found in P. Freib. 72 ($mtw=y d\dot{i}.t n=k kt \dots$).

Line 6. $rmt-iw=f-(n-)imnt$ has been restored after P. Freib. 72 and P. Freib. Add. 1.

2.5. Self-Dedications addressed to Anubis

The Michigan papyrus belongs to another group of four self-dedications addressed to Anubis and published by Thissen in 1986.⁶ They consist of two intact papyri in Freiburg and two fragments in Berlin. Clarysse was shortly afterwards able to join a further fragment in Freiburg directly to one of those in Berlin.⁷ For the convenience of the reader, I provide an overview of these four texts and the fifth one in Michigan edited here.⁸

Supplicant	Father	Mother	Date	Fee
P. Freiburg inv. 76 VIIIa [=P. Freib. 72]				
<i>Ta-hny</i>	<i>Dd-hr</i>	<i>Ir. f=s-r-r=w</i> (?)	Year 13	2½ kite
P. Freiburg inv. 76 VIIIb [=P. Freib. 73]				
<i>Ta-Wsir</i>	<i>P3-d1-Wsir</i>	<i>Ms-Is.t</i>	Year 14	2½ kite
P. Berlin P 15791 [=P. Freib. Add. 1] + P. Freiburg inv. 76 IIIa				
<i>Wn-nfr</i> alias <i>Nptlm[s]</i>	<i>Srtps</i>	<i>Hr-chnh</i>	Year 14, IV <i>Peret</i> [...]	[lost]
P. Michigan inv. 3603				
[lost]	[lost]	<i>Ta-Hr</i>	Year 23, II <i>Shemu</i> 1	[lost]

⁶ Thissen, H. J., in Daniel, R.W., Gronewald, M. and Thissen, H.J. (eds.), *Griechische und demotische Papyri der Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg*, Bonn 1986, pp. 80-87, pls. XIII-XIV.

⁷ Clarysse, W., 'A demotic self-dedication to Anubis', *Enchoria* 16 (1988), pp. 7-10, pl. 1.

⁸ I read the date in P. Freib. 72 as the 13th rather than the 14th regnal-year. This alternative was already noted by Thissen, in *Griechische und demotische Papyri*, p. 83, n. 1.

P. Berlin P 23742 [=P. Freib. Add. 2]				
<i>Nht-w-s p³ ʿ3</i>	[lost]	<i>Ta-mr-wr</i>	[lost]	[lost]

Table 1. Self-Dedications addressed to Anubis

2.6. Date

All five self-dedications are dated to the reign of ‘king Ptolemy son of Ptolemy, living forever’. This formula usually refers to Ptolemy II, and Thissen accordingly equated the 14th regnal-year in the Berlin/Freiburg texts with 270/69 BC. Clarysse subsequently argued convincingly that the corpus of self-dedications, with their monthly fees ranging from 1¼ to 10 kite, must be dated to the period after the replacement of the silver currency with the copper currency in 211 BC, and that the dating formula may in principle be applied to any Ptolemaic ruler after Ptolemy I. On this basis he concludes that the 14th regnal-year should be attributed to Ptolemy IV, 209/8 BC, or Ptolemy V, 192/1 BC.

The Michigan text allows us to narrow down the date further. The 23rd regnal-year effectively rules out the reign of Ptolemy IV since he did not rule this long. The most likely date is, therefore, July 5, 182 BC, of the reign of Ptolemy V. A further argument in favor of this date, though not a decisive one in itself, is the fact that this date falls within the date range of the self-dedications from the Tebtunis temple, i.e. 196-138 BC (cf. below).

Owing to the palaeographical, orthographical and formulaic similarities between the Michigan papyrus and the papyri in Freiburg and Berlin, it seems not unreasonable to assume that the 13th and 14th regnal-years in the latter pertain to the same reign, i.e. 193/2 and 192/1 BC. They are unlikely to refer to the succeeding reign since the 13th and 14th regnal-years of Ptolemy VI fall within his seven-year co-regency with his siblings Ptolemy VIII and Cleopatra II, which was dated independently, so that his 12th through 18th regnal-years are referred to as the 1st through 7th regnal-year of the co-regency.

2.7. Provenance

The self-dedications addressed to Anubis have no recorded archaeological context and the papyri provide little clue in themselves as to their provenance, apart from the identity of the god. Unfortunately the divine name is written without an epithet which could have helped to determine with which temple of Anubis we are dealing. It is also not possible at present to ascribe the palaeography to any particular site.

Thissen suggested that the papyri may derive from Saqqara/Memphis,⁹ whereas Clarysse has argued that the supplicant Onnophris alias Neoptolemos, son of Stratippos and Haÿnchis, might be a descendant of Neoptolemos son of Stratippos, the owner of several vineyards in the Aphroditopolite nome.¹⁰ He notes that the son of this Neoptolemos ‘apparently received a new kleros in the neighbourhood of Philadelphieia’ and that a ‘cult of Anubis in Philadelphieia is attested by the only Greek inscription found at that site’. The cult of Anubis at Philadelphia is also mentioned in a demotic lease (P BM EA 10560, line 10).¹¹ However, the other argument is somewhat tenuous. The names Onnophris and Haÿnchis are not attested in relation to the owner of the vineyards, and so the only other point of similarity is the combination of the name Neoptolemos and the patronymic Stratippos. It would represent a remarkable case of chance survival if Onnophris, attested in a self-dedication from one location, should happen to be a descendant of a family known from papyri found at another location. The identification of Onnophris as a descendant of a wealthy land-owner would further imply a reversal in fortune, since the individuals for whom self-dedications were drawn up in general seem to have had a very low social standing and since they, at least in the case of Tebtunis, in principle signed over all their possessions to the god.

It is regrettable that we have virtually no details about the acquisition of the self-dedications, since this might have provided useful information about their origin. However, it is known that the Freiburg papyrus collection mainly derives from the *Deutsche Papyruskartell*.¹² The *Großherzogliche Universitätsbibliothek Freiburg* entered the *Kartell* on November 22, 1909, and was a member until it was dissolved at the outbreak of the First World War.¹³ Hence the papyri are likely to have been acquired between 1909 and 1914. The papyri in Berlin presumably also derive from the *Kartell* of which it was a founding

⁹ Thissen, in *Griechische und demotische Papyri*, p. 86.

¹⁰ Clarysse, *Enchoria* 16 (1988), p. 10.

¹¹ Edited by Martin, C., ‘A Demotic Land Lease from Philadelphia: P. BM 10560’, *JEA* 72 (1986), pp. 159-73, pls. 13-14.

¹² Cf. Aly, W. and Gelzer, M., *Mitteilung aus der Freiburger Papyrussammlung*, Heidelberg 1914, p. 3, and also Hagenmaier, W. and Karasch, A., ‘Kurzbeschreibung der Sammlung’, available at www.ub.uni-freiburg.de/histsamm/papyri.html.

¹³ For the history of the *Deutsche Papyruskartell*, see Primavesi, O., ‘Zur Geschichte des Deutschen Papyruskartells’, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 114 (1996), pp. 173-187.

member in 1902, but the inventory offers no specific information.¹⁴ Whether the self-dedications were excavated or purchased, and where they may have been acquired, is therefore presently uncertain. In view of Clarysse's suggestion that the papyri might have come from Philadelphia, it is noteworthy that the *Kartell* conducted excavations at this site (sc. Darb Gerze) in 1908/09, but it is perhaps questionable whether Freiburg will have received papyri from a season that took place prior to its membership. The following season, 1909/10, saw excavations at Medinat Madi, where there was also a cult of Anubis in the temple. An unspecified number of demotic papyri were found here,¹⁵ and accordingly this remains another possible origin of the papyri. I would also not rule out Thissen's suggestion that they may have come from Memphis.

2.8. An archive of self-dedications?

The similarities between the four Berlin/Freiburg papyri and the likelihood that they were acquired together bring us to the question of whether they might also have been found together as a group. In view of the fact that the numerous self-dedications addressed to Soknebtunis were found together and therefore apparently had been kept as an archive, it seems likely that this too was the case for the Anubis self-dedications. Since the Michigan papyrus was acquired at a later date, it cannot be excluded that it might have come from a different archive or been an isolated discovery. However, its slightly later date is not an obstacle to its having been part of the same group, since the archive of Soknebtunis self-dedications covers a period of sixty years.

2.9. Size of the documents

It may be worth adding a brief comment on the size of the self-dedications addressed to Anubis. P. Freib. 72, P. Freib. 73, and P. Mich. inv. 3603 are all *c.* 15½ cm tall. This is not likely to be simply coincidence, but rather represents a deliberate and careful halving of a full-size roll into square pieces of papyrus appropriate for these contracts. P. Freib. Add 1 is *c.* 31 cm tall, so a full-size roll. All five Anubis self-dedications were, moreover, written on fresh papyrus. This

¹⁴ I am grateful to Myriam Krutsch for providing me with this information (personal communication 10 July, 2010). No acquisition details have been entered for P. Berlin P 15791, and P. Berlin P 23742 is merely said to come from 'Umschlag 47'.

¹⁵ Cf. the excavation diaries by F. Zucker and W. Schubart which have been published by Müller, W., 'Die berliner Papyrusgrabungen in Dîme und Medînet Mâdi 1909/10', *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 21 (1971), pp. 25, 28, 34, 38, 44.

is significant insofar as the majority of the Soknebtunis self-dedications are written on random-sized pieces of papyrus and many of them represent reused documents. In some cases new self-dedications have simply been added in the free space of older documents, while in others an original document has been erased first.

2.10. Malevolent forces

Four of the five self-dedications addressed to Anubis preserve entirely or partially a list of potentially malevolent forces. The list indicates a pattern with three couples: ‘demon’ (*sšr*) and ‘great one’ (*wry*), ‘spirit’ (*ih*) and ‘ancient one’ (*is*), and ‘person who is in the West’ (*rmt iw=f n imnt*) and ‘any person on Earth’ (*rmt nb n pʿ tʿ*) – the last pair representing any person living or dead.¹⁶ One text replaces ‘person who is in the West’ with the synonymous ‘person of the Underworld’ (*rmt n twʿ*).

The coupling of ‘demon’ and ‘great one’ is also very frequent in the Soknebtunis documents, but the coupling of ‘spirit’ and ‘ancient one’ and that of ‘person who is in the west’ and ‘any person on earth’ is not. In fact ‘ancient one’ and ‘person of the underworld’ do not seem to be attested at all, and ‘person on earth’ is exceptional. Absent in the Anubis documents, by contrast, is ‘person who is sleeping’, a designation attested in the majority of the Soknebtunis texts, mostly coupled with ‘person who is in the west’. Also a number of other forces attested in the Soknebtunis documents are absent.¹⁷

P. Freiburg inv. 76 VIIIa [=P. Freib. 72]		
1st pair	Demon Great one	<i>sšr</i> <i>wry</i>
2nd pair	Spirit Ancient one	<i>ih</i> <i>is</i>

¹⁶ Thissen translates *is* with ‘ein schädlicher Einfluß’ and Clarysse with ‘evil force’. The supposed connection with *šy* listed by Thompson, *JEA* 26 (1940), p. 77, no. 3, is unlikely; the latter should rather be read *šhy*, ‘spirit’. I therefore prefer to interpret the designation as *is*, ‘old’, in the sense ‘ancient one’ (*Wb.* I 128), with a contextual determinative. One may also compare *is.w*, ‘the evil ones’ (*Wb.* I 129).

¹⁷ A list may be found in Thompson, *JEA* 26 (1940), pp. 76-78. It may be noted that some of the designations listed there have been misread or misinterpreted, and some of the less well-attested ones are not included.

3rd pair	Person who is in the West Any person on Earth	<i>rmt iw=f (n) imnt</i> <i>rmt nb (n) p³ t³</i>
P. Berlin P 15791 [=P. Freib. Add. 1] + P. Freiburg inv. 76 IIIa		
1st pair	Demon [Great one?]	<i>sšr</i> [...]
2nd pair	Spirit Ancient one	<i>ih</i> <i>is</i>
3rd pair	Person who is in the West [Any person on Earth?]	<i>rmt iw=f (n) [imnt]</i> [...]
P. Michigan inv. 3603		
1st pair	Spirit Ancient one	<i>ih</i> <i>i{h}s</i>
2nd pair	Demon Great one	<i>sšr</i> <i>wry</i>
3rd pair	[Person who is in the West?] [Any person on] Earth	[...] <i>[rmt nb (n)] p³ t³</i>
P. Freiburg inv. 76 VIIIb [=P. Freib. 73]		
1st pair	Spirit Ancient one	<i>ih</i> <i>i{h}s</i>
2nd pair	Demon Great one	<i>sšr</i> <i>wry</i>
3rd pair	Any person on Earth Person of the Underworld	<i>rmt nb n p³ t³</i> <i>rmt (n) tw³.t</i>

Table 2. The lists of potentially malevolent forces in the self-dedications addressed to Anubis.

2.11. Scribal errors

The self-dedications addressed to Anubis abound in errors. The same is true for those addressed to Soknebtunis. This indicates that the scribes were poorly trained, very careless, or – perhaps more likely – that the details simply did not matter. It is not unlikely that the main elements of importance were the identity of the supplicant and the date. In the case of the Soknebtunis documents even the date is mostly omitted.

I provide here a list of the errors detected in the five Anubis self-dedications:

Confusion of elements

- Masculine possessive article $p^3=k$ $b^3k.t$ for female supplicant (P. Freib. 73).
- Masculine possessive article $p^3y=k.t$ b^3k for female supplicant; note the bizarre attempt to make the article feminine by addition of the feminine ending $-t$ (P. Freib. 72).
- Masculine $mw.t=f$, 'his mother', for female supplicant (P. Freib. 73).
- Faulty third person $n-îm=s$ for third person $n-îm=y$ (P. Mich. inv. 3603).
- Redundant dative $n=k$ before $m-b^3h$ $Inpw$ (P. Freib. 72).
- Faulty writing of $îhs$ for $îs$. This presumably represents a conflation of $îhy$, 'spirit', and $îs$, 'ancient one' (P. Freib. 73, P. Mich. inv. 3603).

Omission of signs and words

- Omission of $hsb.t-sp$ in sh $hsb.t-sp$ (P. Freib. 72).
- Omission of $d.t$ in t^3y p^3 hrw hry $š^c$ $d.t$ (P. Mich. inv. 3603).
- Omission of bnr n in $îr-shy$ $n-îm=y$ bnr $n=k$ (P. Mich. inv. 3603).
- Omission of p^3 in p^3 hrw (twice in P. Freib. 72).

Faulty writings

- Obtrusive suffix $=w$ between dd and b^3k (P. Freib. 72).
- Obtrusive n between p^3 t^3 and $îry$ shy (P. Mich. inv. 3603).
- Obtrusive n between $Inpw$ and p^3 ntr $ç^3$ (P. Freib. Add. 2).
- Faulty writing of shy in $îr-shy$ (P. Freib. 72, P. Freib. 73, P. Freib. Add. 1) with different orthographies in each document. The omission of the initial s in two texts may indicate that s and $š$, at least in some regions, had coalesced. Note also the consistent writing of $îr$ as $îry$ (all documents). Perhaps there existed a form that was pronounced something like $eriši$. The word is rare in Coptic and survives only in a few examples in the Bohairic dialect as ⲉⲣⲱⲩⲱⲓ (Crum, *Coptic Dictionary*, 59b).
- Faulty writing of $bn-îw=y$ for $bn-îw$ (P. Freib. 72, P. Freib. Add. 1); so often also Tebtunis self-dedications. Perhaps the group for the negation of the future with nominal subject (Ⲛⲏⲉ) sounded very similar to the group for the negation of the first person (Ⲛⲏⲁ).
- Faulty writing of $š^c$ as $š^c.tw$ as if it were the base of a Temporal Clause ($š^c.tw < š^c-mtw$).

- Evil determinative for *škr* is unusual, but it is perhaps used contextually (P. Mich. inv. 3603).

- Evil determinative for *shy* is unusual, but it is perhaps used contextually (P. Freib. 72, P. Freib. Add. 1, P. Mich. inv. 3603).

2.12. Comparison between the self-dedications addressed to Anubis and Soknebtunis

The self-dedications addressed to Anubis and Soknebtunis differ in certain respects, some of which might be significant. Yet some caution must be exercised, since the five Anubis documents cannot be considered a statistically representative sample. If we look within the much more substantial group of Soknebtunis documents, it is immediately clear that there is also some variation here. Many of these texts can be attributed to specific scribes and it is clear that much of the variation depends on the scribes in charge. This suggests that we are dealing with personal preferences and idiosyncrasies on behalf of the scribes rather than actual variations in practice. It is therefore possible that some of the differences between the Anubis and Soknebtunis documents listed below are also the result of mere scribal habits.

- Fresh papyrus. The five Anubis self-dedications are all written on fresh papyrus with one document on each. The Soknebtunis documents are often written on re-used papyrus.

- Double dated. Two of the three Anubis documents that preserve both the top and bottom parts of the document include a brief form of the date at the top (regnal-year and name of the ruling king) and a more precise date at the bottom (regnal-year, month and day). Just one example of this type of double dating has to date been identified among the Soknebtunis documents.¹⁸ The rest of the documents contain either a single date or no date at all; when present the date is written either at the top (sometimes with the name of the king and eponymous priests) or bottom (never with the name of the king).

- The Anubis texts do not have a clause about not being free again, while virtually all the Soknebtunis documents do.

- The Anubis texts do not have a clause about children also being bound by the contract, while virtually all the Soknebtunis documents do, as do the two from Euhemeria and the one from Soknopaiou Nesos.

- The Anubis texts do not have a clause about the possessions of the supplicant, both present and future, also being signed over to the god.

¹⁸ I.e. P. Mil. Vogl. 43 + P. BM EA 10625 (unpublished).

Most of the Soknebtunis documents include this clause, but not the ones from Euhemeria and Soknopaïou Nesos.

- The Anubis texts do not have a clause about a financial penalty in the case of delayed payment, while the majority of the Soknebtunis documents do, as do the two from Euhemeria.

- In the three Anubis documents where the patronymic is preserved, the name of the father is known. This is relatively uncommon in the Soknebtunis documents where less than 10% of the supplicants can name their fathers. However, again it should be stressed that the few surviving Anubis documents do not represent a statistically significant sample.

- The selection of potentially malevolent forces differs between the two groups (as described above), and those from Euhemeria seem to follow yet a third pattern.

3. THE PURPOSE OF SELF-DEDICATIONS

All the known self-dedications share three formulaic features:

- The supplicant states before the god that he or she will become a servant of the god in question.

- The supplicant will pay a fixed monthly fee.

- The supplicant states that no potentially malevolent forces shall have authority over him or her, or, less commonly, asks directly for protection against such forces.

At first sight it is perhaps difficult to grasp the sense of anyone paying to become a servant and other explanations have been sought.¹⁹ To Clarysse the purpose of the self-dedications was really one of protection against illnesses: ‘*My hypothesis is that this was a kind of insurance against all kinds of illnesses (illnesses were of course caused by demons!); by paying a small monthly sum to the temple the dedicants received the protection of the god. In practice this may very well have meant that they received medical treatment in the temple.*’²⁰ A very

¹⁹ The question of the possible relation between self-dedications and *katochoi* lies beyond the scope of the present paper, but seems worth exploring in view of the many similarities. It is touched upon by Dunand, F. and Zivie-Coche, C., *Hommes et dieux en Égypte*, Paris 2006, pp. 389-391 = ead., *Gods and Men in Egypt 3000 BCE to 395 CE*, tr. D. Lorton, Ithaca and London 2004, pp. 306-310. Cf. also Legras, B., *Les reclus grecs du Sarapieion de Memphis* (=Studia Hellenistica 49), Leuven 2011, pp. 162-165, but note that this discussion concentrates on a papyrus which has some similarities with the self-dedications, but which also differs in several respects. I am grateful to Cary Martin for drawing my attention to these publications.

²⁰ W. Clarysse, ‘Some Greeks in Egypt’, in Johnson, J.H. (ed.), *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society* (=SAOC 51) Chicago 1992, p. 53.

similar interpretation was also made by Pestman who argues that the self-dedications did not really concern individuals entering into servitude, but rather divine protection through the payment of a monthly fee to the temple.²¹

In my view these suggestions overlook the emphasis placed on servitude and loss of freedom in the self-dedications, as well as their clear relation to the so-called Servitude Documents. The texts are explicitly designated as ‘documents of servitude’ (*sh n b3k*)²² and the monthly fee to be paid is designated ‘fee of servitude’ (*škr n b3k*). It would seem natural to assume that the key-word used by the ancient scribes – ‘servitude’ – would reflect the primary function of the texts in question and not a secondary one. Moreover, the first statement by the supplicant is consistently to the effect that he, from this day onwards, is to be the servant (*b3k*) of the god. The Soknebtunis documents mostly conclude with a complementary statement to the effect that the supplicant henceforth will not be able to act as a free person (*rmt nmh*) again. These circumstances mark a crucial contrast to the earlier and well-attested group of protective texts known as *Oracular Amuletic Decrees*.²³ Had the self-dedications primarily concerned protection, one would expect that this aspect would have been brought to the fore and that the documents and the fee would have been designated as documents of protection and fee for protection.

The obvious relation between the Self-dedications and the Servitude Documents is also highly significant. The latter group of texts would in fact be more accurately referred to as Self-servitude Documents since they too represent a first-person submission (apparently necessitated by debt). Only a few examples of these documents survive, all from the 6th century BC, but this is likely to be the result of mere chances of survival.²⁴ The similarities between the two types of documents are so

²¹ P. W. Pestman, *Les papyrus démotiques de Tsenhor*, *Studia Demotica* 4, Leuven, 1994, p. 61, n. 3, ‘À mon avis, ces textes ne concernent pas des personnes qui se donnent en esclavage, mais des gens qui s’assurent de la protection d’une divinité contre paiement d’une somme d’argent mensuelle.’ Cf. also Lippert, S., *Einführung in die altägyptische Rechtsgeschichte* (=Einführungen und Quellentexte zur Ägyptologie 5), Berlin 2008, p. 165.

²² The designation is attested in two of the Anubis self-dedications, as well as both of those from Euhemeria and at least three of the ones from Tebtunis.

²³ The main corpus is Edwards, I.E.S., *Oracular Amuletic Decrees of the Late New Kingdom*, London 1960.

²⁴ Translations of the documents and bibliography may be found in Menu, B., ‘Cessions de services et engagements pour dette sous les rois kouchites et saïtes’, *RdE* 36 (1985), pp. 73-87, esp. pp. 81-86; cf. also Lippert, *Einführung in die altägyptische Rechtsgeschichte*, pp. 164-165.

striking that we can conclude without much doubt that the Self-dedications borrow all the main elements of their formal terminology from the Servitude Documents.

- Both are designated ‘Document of Servitude’ (*sh n b3k*).
- The primary statement by the supplicant is the phrase ‘I am your servant’ (*ink p3y=k b3k*).
- The supplicant frequently signs over himself along with his children and grandchildren as well as his present and future possessions.
- The term of servitude is usually said to be ‘forever’ (*šc d.t*). Some of the Soknebtunis self-dedications substitute this term by that of 99 years. Both expressions are clearly designed to convey the notion of a life-time and are therefore effectively used in a synonymous sense.
- In both type of documents, it is usually stated that no one else – no third party – shall be able exercise authority (*ir-shy*) of the supplicant except the (new) master. In the Servitude Documents where the master is a human, the third party is also a human agent, while in the Self-dedications where the master is a god, the third party is various types of supernatural forces.
- It is often stated that the supplicant shall no longer be ‘free’ (*nmh*) in respect to his new master, viz. his human master in the Servitude Documents and his divine master, represented by the temple estate, in the Self-dedications. This formula is used in all the Servitude Documents and it is exceedingly common in the Self-dedications from Tebtunis, but it is not used in the extant examples for Anubis and from Euhemeria.

3.1. Protection or ownership?

The term *ir-shy*, which the Self-dedications and the Servitude Documents have in common, requires a few comments, since it also has a bearing on the purpose of the listing of supernatural forces in the Self-dedications. Within the context of the latter documents, the formula that no supernatural forces shall be able to ‘exercise authority’ over the supplicant seems generally to have been regarded as a clause of protection. However, the term *ir-shy* is mostly used in sense of having the right to exercise authority over an object, whether inanimate or living. This is how it is used in the Servitude Documents, as well as the much more common Documents of Sale and Documents of Cession.²⁵ It is therefore rather a term concerning right of control. Since *ir-shy* is by

²⁵ Cf. Zauzich, K.-Th., *Die ägyptische Schreibertradition in Aufbau, Sprache und Schrift der demotischen Kaufverträge aus ptolemäischer Zeit* (=ÄA 19), Wiesbaden 1968, pp. 131, 150.

far the most common term used in relation to supernatural forces in the Self-dedications, it may accordingly be argued that the majority of them do not directly offer protection *per se* for the supplicant, but merely state that no other supernatural forces than the god in question shall be able to exercise authority over them.

Self-dedications that offer explicit protection of the supplicant are relatively few in number. In these texts the god is asked to protect the supplicant against various supernatural forces through a selection of the verbs ‘strengthen’ (*nḥt*), ‘guard’ (*hrh*), ‘let prosper, cause to be safe’ (*dī.t wḏ*), ‘save’ (*nḥm*), and ‘protect’ (*sw*). I have found nine examples among the Soknebtunis documents, representing c. 10% of the total, and all the dated ones are confined to the last twenty years of the sixty-year time span of the archive. The dates in question are: 157, 156, 153, 149, 144, and 138 BC. In view of the dates, it is possible that the direct request for protection was a secondary development.²⁶

3.2. Social background of supplicants

The social background of the supplicants is evidently relevant to an understanding of the nature of the self-dedications. In terms of statistics, the most representative material is the Tebtunis archive where we find 91 preserved patronyms, according to my most recent count. It emerges from these that only 8 individuals can actually name their fathers, while the remaining 83 substitute the name of the father with the phrase ‘I do not know his name’ (*bw-īr-rḥ=y-rn=f*, var. *bw-rḥ=y-rn=f*). In other words, a little more than 90% of the supplicants have unknown paternity.

As far as Tebtunis is concerned, it is also noteworthy that the birth status of the individuals was felt important and was recorded in virtually all the documents. The vast majority are recorded as *ms ḥ-pr* or *ms ḥn pr*.²⁷ Neither designation is otherwise attested. While the latter is easily translated as ‘borne within the estate’, the former is more problematic. Thompson misinterpreted it as *ms ḥ-nmḥ* and took it to mean ‘free-born’, i.e. a status opposite to being born within the temple precinct, but the word following *ms* clearly consists of *ḥ* followed by the house-sign.²⁸ This allows for two readings, either *ḥ(t)-pr* or *ḥ(t)* with the


²⁶ This, in turn, may indicate that the two self-dedications from Euhemeria which also use these formulae similarly date around the middle of the second century BC.

²⁷ I know at least 41 examples of *ms ḥ-pr* and 32 of *ms ḥn pr*.

²⁸ Thompson, *JEA* 26 (1940), pp. 68, 72. The misinterpretation is carried into Bresciani, *P. Mil. Vogliano*, III, p. 190, who states that certain individuals are designated *ms nmḥ*, and it renders the discussion of the term and its implications by Scholl, R.,

house determinative. The former translates ‘staff of the estate’, i.e. household, whereas the latter would represent a more or less direct



transcription of hieroglyphic  *h.t.*, ‘temple’ (*Wb.* III 358), attested in contemporary inscriptions. This leaves us with two possible interpretations, either ‘borne of the household’ or ‘borne in the temple’. In either case, it is not clear what distinguishes this designation from ‘borne within the estate’; both seem to refer to birth associated with the temple.

Whether the situation at Tebtunis is generally representative cannot be established with certainty since we have so few self-dedications from other sites. The term *ms hn pr* is also used in the single Soknopaiou Nesos document, whereas neither term is used in the Anubis and Euhemeria documents. The paternity is known in the case of the three Anubis documents that preserve the patronymic, and also in the Soknopaiou Nesos document. The two Euhemeria documents are too damaged to determine whether the fathers are known. One of the latter seems to have been drawn up for five individuals collectively, and their names are apparently only followed by that of a single parent, but this could in principle be that of the mother since they are all damaged.

The low social status indicated by the unknown paternity in the majority of self-dedications from Tebtunis might be a factor in the careless manner in which many of them were drawn up (incorrect grammar, omission of words, lack of date, etc.) and the fact that many of them were written on any handy piece of papyrus (such as older self-dedications and discarded documents), while others were entered into whole registers, either with several individuals named in a single self-dedication or a whole group of self-dedications in a single papyrus.

The unnaturally high percentage of unknown paternity in the case of the Soknebtunis self-dedications led Thompson to state that ‘it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that a system of temple prostitution existed at the Sobek temple.’²⁹ The suggestion that the mothers may have been prostitutes is attractive since an overwhelming number of the supplicants are unable to name their fathers. However, two recent studies both conclude that there is no positive evidence of organized prostitution in relation to temples at any point during Egyptian history,

‘IEΠOΔOYΛOΣ im griechisch-römischen Ägypten’, *Historia* 34 (1985), pp. 490-491, obsolete. Cf. also Chauveau, *BIFAO* 91 (1991), p. 161, and Lippert, *Einführung in die altägyptische Rechtsgeschichte*, p. 165.

²⁹ Thompson, *JEA* 26 (1940), p. 68.

including the Greco-Roman period.³⁰ Neither study includes the self-dedications in the discussion, but the apparent absence of other indications is noteworthy. If we are in fact dealing with prostitution in the case of the self-dedications, it might in principle have taken place outside the domain of temples. Yet this seems an unlikely solution to the problem since the majority of the supplicants at the temple of Soknebtunis are explicitly said to be ‘borne within the estate’ or ‘borne of the household (or: in the temple)’. This is the *crux* of the discussion; the fact that this many people with unknown paternity were apparently born in direct association with the temple. Unfortunately the possible difference in meaning between the two terms has not yet been established and might be significant. In any case we seem faced with two possibilities. Either some form of prostitution – not necessarily a widespread phenomenon – was in fact connected with the temple of Soknebtunis or we must seek an entirely different cause for the numerous children without known paternity, such as victims of rape.

3.4. Designation of supplicants with known paternity

A second point worth exploring in relation to Tebtunis is the designation of those relatively few individuals who are actually able to name their fathers. It is preserved in seven cases, and it is here noteworthy that five of them in fact seem to be related directly to the temple through the designations ‘borne within the estate’ or ‘borne of the household (or: in the temple)’. Also the individual attested in the single self-dedication from Soknopaiou Nesos has known paternity and is said to be ‘borne within the estate’. Of the two remaining individuals with known paternity, one is simply designated ‘female servant’.

The last case with known paternity, perhaps the most noteworthy, is a man designated ‘Greek borne in Egypt’ (*wynn ms n kmy*).³¹ As it is now known, this designation had come to mark an official status rather than ethnic origin by the second century BC.³² This self-dedication is remarkable not just in view of the different social standing of the

³⁰ Quack, J.F., ‘Herodot, Strabo und die Pallakide von Theben’, in Scheer, T.S. (ed.), *Tempelprostitution im Altertum*, Berlin 2009, pp. 154-182, and Scholl, R., ‘Tempelprostitution im griechisch-römischen Ägypten? Hierodouloi als Tempelsklaven und Tempelprostituierte?’, *ibid.*, pp. 183-197.

³¹ P. BM EA 10618b (unpublished). Might the life of this individual within the temple precinct be compared to that of the *katochoi* Ptolemaios and Apollonios at the Serapeion (cf. [note 19](#))?

³² See most recently Vandorpe, K., ‘Persian soldiers and Persians of the Epigone. Social mobility of soldiers-herdsmen in Upper Egypt’, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 54 (2008), pp. 87-108.

individual in question, but also because it is unique in another respect; the servitude is explicitly limited to a period of fifteen years. If, as argued below, the self-dedications were aimed at avoiding *corvée*, it is possible that this specific length of time was intended to secure the individual until he might reach an age where he would no longer be eligible for such service.

3.5. The designations *bʒk* and *hl*

A noteworthy detail concerning the designation of the supplicants is the fact that they seem to be divided into two groups. Prior to making the dedicatory statement, all supplicants are designated as either *bʒk* or *hl* (with the exception of the single individual designated *wynn ms n Kmy*). There seems to be a pattern since every single one of those with unknown paternity are designated *hl*, while most of those with known paternity are designated *bʒk*. There are, however, two exceptions where the paternity is known and the supplicants are nonetheless designated *hl*.

The pattern might be an illusion since all the examples of *hl n hwʒ* and *hl n shm.t* derive from the Soknebtunis documents. In principle we might therefore be dealing with a regional preference where the Tebtunis scribes use *hl* as a synonym for *bʒk*. However, the Tebtunis documents in fact use both terms in the majority of self-dedications and it therefore seems unlikely that they can have been entirely synonymous.³³ Again it should be kept in mind that we have only half-a-dozen self-dedications from sites other than Tebtunis where the paternity status is preserved, and hence the material cannot be said to be statistically representative; perhaps it is nothing but a mere coincidence that *hl* is not found in the few self-dedications from other sites.

This merits a closer look at *hl* itself. The term in itself is ambiguous; depending on the context it can mean either ‘youth’ or ‘servant’ (cf. similarly Greek *παῖς*). Are we dealing specifically or predominantly with young people? This could be a reason to choose the term *hl* over *bʒk* which carries no such connotations. Several of the Soknebtunis documents are in fact written jointly for a mother and child or for a pair of siblings and would therefore seem to involve youths. The other documents provide no obvious indication of age.

Another more attractive possibility is that *hl* is used to designate individuals with some restrictions in their legal capacity or status, such

³³ The term *bʒk* is consistently used in the phrase *inky pʒy=k bʒk*, in the designation of the fee and the documents as *skr n bʒk* and *sh n bʒk*, and also as the designation of at least three individuals with known paternity.

as we might expect in the case of children, orphans, and servants. I have suggested the same in the case of the compound designation *hm-hl* which is based on the same noun.³⁴

Before leaving the question of terminology, it may be relevant to point out the fact that *hl* itself is a common term and consistently used with gender specification as *hl n hwt* and *hl n shm.t* in the self-dedications. The demotic dictionaries provide no other references to these compound designations than these documents, and hence they were not common. I have only come across a few other examples. In a nursing contract from Tebtunis dated to 232 BC, an infant – and therefore hardly a servant – is designated *hl n hwt*.³⁵ The designations do, moreover, survive in Fayumic Coptic as **ⲉⲗⲏⲛⲁⲟⲩⲧ** and **ⲉⲗⲏⲛⲥⲓⲙⲓ**, where they are used in the sense of male and female servants.³⁶ It is perhaps nothing but a coincidence that all the known examples, whether demotic or Coptic, derive from the Fayum.

3.6. Temple servants not eligible for corvée

The key to the understanding of the self-dedications is perhaps provided by a document from the Zenon archive (P. Cairo CG 59451) which indicates that individuals serving as temple servants (*hieroduloi*) throughout the land, by decision of the king, were not subject to corvée duty.³⁷ In view of this and the low social status of the majority of supplicants, it may be argued that the self-dedications were the legal instruments of a symbiotic relationship. On one hand, certain people able to pay a monthly fee could exploit the law by acquiring the status of temple servants in order to avoid compulsory labor, this apparently being considered the lesser of two evils. On the other, temples could in turn exploit this circumstance and generate both a modest income and enjoy the benefits of an expanded workforce. In effect the temples thus

³⁴ Ryholt, K., *Narrative Literature from the Tebtunis Temple Library*, in press, pp. 58-59.

³⁵ Thissen, H.-J., 'Der demotische Ammenvertrag aus Tebtynis', in Thissen, H.-J. and Zauzich, K.-Th. (eds.), *Grammata demotika. Festschrift für Erich Lüdeckens*, Würzburg 1984, pp. 235-244, pls. 32-4; M. C. Betrò, 'Contratto demotico con nota di registrazione greca', in Masciadri, M. and Montevicchi, O. (eds.), *I contratti di baliatico*, edited by, Milan 1984, pp. 39-49, pl. 1.

³⁶ Crum, W. E., *A Coptic Dictionary*, Oxford, 1939, p. 665a.

³⁷ A recent translation of the letter may be found in Budin, S., 'Strabo's Hierodules: Corinth, Comana, and Eryz', in Scheer, T. S. (ed.), *Tempelprostitution im Altertum*, Berlin 2009, pp. 200-201; see also the discussion in Scholl, *Historia* 34 (1985), pp. 469-472.

came to provide a form of asylum – against payment! – for individuals that might be subjected to hard forced labor.³⁸

This interpretation could easily apply to all the individuals of low status, which is the majority if not virtually all of them, but it does not preclude the possibility that some people might have decided to acquire the status of temple servant for other reasons. A single individual that stands out is the above-mentioned man designated ‘Greek borne in Egypt’; was the purpose of his self-dedication asylum? And in that case asylum against what? It is regrettable that the size of his monthly fee is not preserved in the damaged document.

3.7. Different fees

The monthly fees display a relative large variation. An instructive example is offered by two self-dedications drawn up for women in 138 BC, one at Tebtunis with a monthly fee of 1¼ kite, and the other at Soknopaiou Nesos with a fee of 10 kite, i.e. no less than eight times as much! Both are designated ‘female servant’ (*b3k.t s3m.t*) and have a known paternity, and hence there is nothing to indicate a difference in status. Might the substantially different fees be based on ability to make smaller or larger payments? Or might there be some special conditions at Soknopaiou Nesos that would make it attractive to pay so much more?

The latter is hardly the answer since even within the archive of self-dedications from Tebtunis do we find very large variations, with monthly fees ranging from 1 to 10 kite. However, the most common fee is 2½ and I have found only a single example of 10 kite. For what it is worth, it may be noted that 2½ kite is also the fee in those two Anubis self-dedications where it is preserved, while it is 10 kite in the only self-dedication from Soknopaiou Nesos, and apparently 5 and 7½ kite respectively per person in the two self-dedications from Euhemeria.

3.8. Why divine protection?

If the self-dedications were primarily an instrument for circumventing corvée proscription, on a mutual benefit basis for the individuals and the temples, it remains to be explained why they include a paragraph about

³⁸ Dunand, F., ‘Droit d’asile et refuge dans les temples en Égypte lagide’, *Hommages à la mémoire de Serge Sauneron*, II (=BdÉ 82), Cairo 1979, pp. 91-92, and Dunand, F. and Zivie-Coche, C., *Hommes et dieux en Égypte*, Paris, 2006, pp. 389-390 = ead., *Gods and Men in Egypt 3000 BCE to 395 CE*, tr. D. Lorton, Ithaca and London 2004, pp. 307-308, similarly interpret the self-dedications along the lines of some form of asylum, but not in relation to compulsory labor.

direct or indirect divine protection. Two likely circumstances come to mind. It would seem reasonable to assume that temple servants by their personal affiliation to one specific deity could expect to be afforded with special protection by this deity. At the same time, the clauses in question might represent a technical feature through which the documents were formally drawn up to provide protection against malevolent forces, thus disguising the fact that the individuals were in reality acquiring the status of temple servants in order to avoid compulsory labor.

3.9. Date Range of Self-Dedications

The earliest and latest dated self-dedications are both from the Tebtunis archive and were drawn up in 196 BC and 138 BC respectively.³⁹ None of the other known self-dedications falls outside this sixty year date range.⁴⁰

3.10. How to become a Temple Servant?

The limited date-range of the self-dedications might just reflect the chances of the archaeological record, not least because the existence of temple servants – designated *b3k* followed by the name of a deity or *hierodulos* in the Greek documentation – is well-attested both before and after this period.⁴¹ Yet if the purpose of actually drawing up formal documents recording the registration of people as temple servants is in fact connected with the circumstances discussed above, it is possible that these written records and this particular practice was confined to a limited time and space. Such an interpretation would be compatible with the fact that the documentation displays a limited chronological and geographical distribution. Fewer people eligible for corvée meant fewer state resources in terms of manpower. Whether the theoretical loss caused by people acquiring the status of temple servant was in any way

³⁹ By coincidence these happen to be the two self-dedications that were singled out for publication by Thompson (cf. [note 3](#)); P. BM EA 10623 is dated to September/November 196 BC, while P. BM EA 10622 is dated to 18 November 138 BC. The self-dedication from Soknopaiou Nesos (cf. [note 5](#)) is dated just half a year prior to the latter, viz. 7 March 138 BC.

⁴⁰ Migahid, *BIFAO* 102 (2002), p. 300, cautiously suggests that P. Cairo CG 50018 dates to ‘Späte Ptolemäerzeit zwischen 80-58 v.Chr. (?)’, but it is rather dated to the reign of Ptolemy VI or Ptolemy VIII, i.e. the second century. The epithet after the name of Cleopatra should, in my view, be read (*n3*) *ntr.w [nty pr]* rather than *‘dd’ [..tn=s]*.

⁴¹ The demotic documentation is discussed by Manning, J., ‘Land and Status in Ptolemaic Egypt: The Status Designation “Occupation Title + *B3K* + Divine Name”’, in Allam, S. (ed.), *Grund und Boden in Altägypten*, Tübingen 1994, pp. 147-75, esp. pp. 148-9, and the Greek by Scholl, *Historia* 34 (1985), pp. 466-492; cf. also Scholl, in *Tempelprostitution im Altertum*, pp. 183-197, and Budin, *ibid.*, pp. 200-203.

significant is difficult to determine, but it cannot be excluded that the cessation of these documents might have been connected with a political decision that put a stop to this practice – perhaps even around the time when the Soknebtunis archive was abandoned. According to these considerations, it may be argued as a final point that the self-dedications do not provide a general answer to how individuals entered service as temple servants, but only one manner in which this might come about under specific circumstances.

PS: Five further self-dedications addressed to Soknebtunis were excavated by the Franco-Italian Mission at Tebtunis in 2009 and 2010 and are now kept at the Ali Radwan Storage Museum in Karanis (personal observation 2011). I am grateful to Claudio Gallazzi for the opportunity to study this material.