


ECONOMIC RELATIONS OF THE  
WHITE MONASTERY  
AND ITS SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES



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*In the last years, scholars of Egyptian monasticism have started to comment on the economic role of the various monastic establishments. Nowadays, it is widely accepted that monasteries were in constant interaction with surrounding communities, lay or monastic. Monasteries and villages were mutually dependent and could not have survived and thrived without their ongoing dealings. This paper will explore the extent to which the White Monastery fits into this model. It will concentrate on edited works of Shenute and Besa and look at the economic affairs of their establishments. Were these communities as self-sufficient as their leaders would have liked? How much did they depend on each other and, more importantly, on laymen for their every day activities? Equally, this study will attempt to determine how the White Monastery and its leaders influenced the economic life of surrounding villages and towns. What could the advantages have been of living close by to a large monastic community?*

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