

Remembering Abraham of Farshut: History, Hagiography, and the
Fate of the Pachomian Tradition

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<abs>Evidence preserved in three panegyrics on Abraham of Farshut, the last Coptic orthodox archimandrite of the Pachomian Koinonia, indicates that ideological divisions within the federation brought on by the Council of Chalcedon led to its decline and ultimate failure within Egypt. During the reign of Justinian I, pro-Chalcedonian elements within the Koinonia gained complete control, forcing Abraham and the other Coptic orthodox monks to depart. When Egypt remained non-Chalcedonian, the latter-day pro-Chalcedonian Pachomian movement became irrelevant and lost its place in history. While Byzantium and the West continued to trace the history of coenobitic monasticism back from their own northern Mediterranean ascetic heroes to the early Pachomians, the Coptic church tracked its development from the early Pachomians through Shenoute and his White Monastery federation to the present. As a result, Shenoute came to eclipse Pachomius within the Coptic tradition, while he remained virtually unknown in Byzantium and the West. </abs>

The limited and fragmentary sources on the life of Abraham of Farshut, the last Coptic orthodox archimandrite of the central Pachomian Monastery of Pbow, offer a fascinating glimpse into the historical and literary processes that shaped the memory of the Upper Egyptian coenobitic movement within the Coptic community following the divisions wrought by the Council of Chalcedon. While knowledge of the Egyptian movement in the Byzantine Empire and the West became frozen in its focus on the untainted heroes of