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# LIVING THE END OF ANTIQUITY

## INDIVIDUAL HISTORIES FROM BYZANTINE TO ISLAMIC EGYPT

*Edited by Sabine R. Huebner, Eugenio Garosi, Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello, Matthias Müller, Stefanie Schmidt and Matthias Stern*

MILLENNIUM STUDIES

**Living the End of Antiquity**

# Millennium-Studien

**zu Kultur und Geschichte des ersten Jahrtausends n. Chr.**

# Millennium Studies

**in the culture and history of the first millennium C.E.**

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# Volume 84

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# Abbreviations of Quoted Editions

Editions of Greek papyri are quoted according to the abbreviations of John F. Oates et al., "Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic papyri, Ostraca and Tablets, 5th edition" *(Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* Suppl. 9; Oxford 2001). The up-to-date electronic version is accessible via:

http://www.papyri.info/docs/checklist.

Editions of Arabic papyri are quoted according to the abbreviations of Petra M. Sijpesteijn, John F. Oates, and Andreas Kaplony "Checklist of Arabic papyri," Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists 42 (2005) 127–166. The up-to-date electronic version is accessible via:

http://www.naher-osten.uni-muenchen.de/forschung/papyrologie/apb/index.html.

Arabic inscriptions:

*RCEA* = Étienne Combe et al. (eds.), *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe* I, Cairo 1931.

Sabaic documents:

*X.BSB* = Peter Stein, *Die altsüdarabischen Minuskelinschriften auf Holzstäbchen aus der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek in München*, 2 vols., Tübingen 2010.

Bactrian documents:

*BD* = *Bactrian documents from Northern Afghanistan*:
I = Nicholas Sims-Williams (ed.), *Legal and Economic Documents*, London 2000.
II = Nicholas Sims-Williams (ed.), *Letters and Buddhist texts*, London 2007.

Sogdian documents and texts:

Mugh = Sogdian documents from Mount Mugh, mostly edited by Vladimir A. Livshits (ed.), *Sogdian Epigraphy of Central Asia and Semirech'e. Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum. Part II: Inscriptions of the Seleucid and Parthian Periods and of Eastern Iran and Central Asia vol. III* (trad. Nicholas Sims-Williams), London 2015.
*TSP* = Emile Benveniste (ed.), *Textes Sogdiens*; édités, traduits et commentés par E. Benveniste, Paris 1940.

Islamic Numismatics:

*ASCC* = Rika Gyselen, *Arab-Sasanian Copper Coinage*, Vienna 2000.
*BMC* = John Walker (ed.), *A Catalogue of the Arab-Byzantine and Post-Reform Umayyad Coins* (A Catalogue of the Muhammadan Coins in the British Museum II), London 1956.
*CUS* = George C. Miles, *The Coinage of the Umayyads from Spain*, New York 1950.

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# List of Contributors

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Sabine R. Huebner, Eugenio Garosi, Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello,
Matthias Müller, Stefanie Schmidt, Matthias Stern

# Introduction: Individual Histories From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt

## 1 The setting

With the capture of the city of Alexandria, the cultural center of the classical world, the advancing armies of the Islamic expansion crushed the last resistance to their conquest of Egypt. In 642, nearly seven hundred years after the region had become part of the Roman Empire, it fell once again to a foreign power. However, we know little about the institutional and organizational changes the new rulers imposed once they had the chance to. Scholars agree that a considerable portion of what had been "Byzantine Egypt" survived the first decades of Muslim rule, but the extent of administrative, social, and economic change at this crucial transition period from ancient to early medieval history remains the subject of debate and continues to intrigue scholars.[1] Indeed, one could hardly expect several hundred years of (virtually) continuous Christian-Byzantine domination to fade without leaving substantial traces behind. And while switching colors on political maps is easily done, it is harder to grasp what this entailed for the local population, their daily lives, and their perceptions of one another and of their masters. How "Byzantine" was "early Islamic" Egypt still? How "Egyptian" or, if one prefers, "Coptic" was it?

The international conference *Living the End of Antiquity: Individual Histories from Byzantine to Islamic Egypt*, which took place in May 2017 at the University of Basel, gathered established and early-career scholars alike to discuss change and continuity from late antique to early Islamic Egypt through individual experiences – delving into political-administrative, economic, religious, and (other) social dynamics to explore phenomena of stability and disruption during the transition from the classical to the postclassical world. The conference formed part of the interdisciplinary three-year research project "Change and Continuities from a Christian to a Muslim Society – Egyptian Society and Economy in the 6$^{th}$ to 8$^{th}$ Centuries" directed by Sabine R. Huebner and funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation from 2016 to 2018.

As questions about change and continuity demand multilayered and nuanced answers, focusing on individual histories allowed the conference participants to capture patterns as well as to highlight what was particular. While such a close-up view

1 For contributions to the debate on change and continuities, see i.a. Berkes (2017); Bruning (2017); Delattre/Vanthieghem (2016); Mikhail (2014); Sijpesteijn (2013); Legendre (2013); Delattre/Pintaudi/Vanthieghem (2013); Papaconstantinou (2010); Foss (2009); Gonis (2009; 2004a; 2004b; 2003; 2001); Morelli (2001); Gascou (1983).

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inevitably simplifies the issues at hand, it also presents opportunities to explore the roles of agency and contingency for phenomena of change. Given the complexity of the topic, not all questions could be posed or addressed at the conference. However, the joint discussion of individual perceptions of change demonstrated that there was not one uniform Byzantine society that perceived change uniformly: common taxpayers, for instance, may have noticed politico-administrative change only when it affected the amount of tax they owed or the procedures for gathering it. Provincial power brokers, in contrast, may have faced more immediate repercussions from the conquest as they were closer to the political center. Change and continuity manifest themselves differently in different milieus, and not every region will have experienced the same phenomena: a merchant in Bubastis in the Nile Delta may, for example, have been confronted with change earlier than a tenant in the Thebaid, the southern part of Egypt. Touching upon numerous aspects of change in Egyptian society between the sixth and the eighth centuries, this volume does not aim to provide a systematic survey of the transition from Byzantine to early Arab society. Instead, it offers a mosaic of micro-narratives while at the same time embracing the potential of overarching themes, shared sources, and intertwined methodologies. The individual profiles traced in the various contributions highlight first and foremost the circumstantial character of change and continuity. By discussing synchronous phenomena of stability and disruption, the various contributions illustrate the shortcomings of holistic interpretative models.

One result of these considerations is our approach to terminology. Since each discipline has developed its own connecting ideas and technical language, the varied terminological choices taken by contributors reflect the inclusive approach of our volume. Instead of implementing a unifying parlance, we acknowledge that a label's stringency does not only depend on the inherent quality of the phenomenon or concept it applies to, but also on the extrinsic relations it unveils: "Roman" and "Byzantine," "Arab" and "Muslim" rule, "state" and "empire": each term in these binomials is used apparently interchangeably by different authors in the context of this volume, yet each opens up a different web of references and does not overlap completely with its opposite pendant. We do not view terminological eclecticism as a symptom of inconsistency, but rather embrace it as a means of accentuating different facets of complex phenomena. The multiplicity of scholarly approaches represented in this volume demonstrates not only the complexity of the field but also the opportunities for new scholars from different branches of the humanities to engage with the permeable boundaries between late antiquity and early Islam.

This introduction cannot and does not seek to discuss every aspect of change and continuity from the Byzantine to the early Islamic period. Nevertheless, a short review of illustrative discussions in the field may prove useful to readers who have thus far been unfamiliar with either Byzantine or Islamic Egypt (or both) and with what these fields of study have to offer.

## 2 Chronology and geography

At the heart of this book is the problem of transition, which naturally invites us to rethink conventional epochal boundaries. We refrain, however, from attempting to answer the elusive question of when and how antiquity in Egypt came to a close. Instead, this volume utilizes the question of the end of antiquity as a stimulus to problematize the value of established chronological boundaries based on epochal political events. While working with an orientative chronological framework stretching from the reign of Justinian I (527–565) to the end of the eighth century, our volume does not envisage a single timespan as binding or exclusively authoritative. Quite on the contrary, we recognize the ancillary value of earlier and later experiences in addressing the long shift from a Byzantine to a Muslim society. Both **Nicoletta De Troia** and **Roger Bagnall** examine archaeological and documentary evidence reaching back as far as the third and fourth centuries as they seek to address long-term trends of change in Egyptian society. And at the other end of our timeframe, **Alon Dar** and **Stefanie Schmidt** discuss accounts by Christian and Muslim historians and geographers from the ninth, tenth, and even later centuries which are key sources on antecedent macro-historical developments that documentary and archaeological sources merely hint at.

Although preceding the period of interest of the present volume, the ecumenical church council at Chalcedon (situated directly opposite Constantinople on the southern shore of the Sea of Marmara) in 451 was nevertheless a decisive landmark. During the council, the trial of the Alexandrian archbishop Dioscorus led to his deposition and exile. This in turn resulted in religious turmoil in Alexandria. The main factor, however, that led to a schism between the Eastern churches was the Chalcedonian definition of the nature of Christ: that within Christ a human and a divine nature existed independently. In opposition, the Alexandrian dogma considered both natures inseparable (hence they are called *miaphysites* or, as was common in earlier years, *monophysites*). From this date on, Christians in Egypt would be faced with the question as to whether they adhered to the Creed of Chalcedon (as championed chiefly by the Byzantine emperors, hence the derogative designation *melkite*), or not.

Our main period of interest starts with the reign of Justinian (527–565), who introduced fiscal, monetary, and administrative reforms in Egypt with his Edict XIII issued in 539. During his regency, religious disorders are recorded in Alexandria for the year 536. Justinian was followed by the emperors Justin II (565–574) and Tiberius II Constantine (574–582), whose reigns did not affect Egypt in the same way. Alexandrian revolts are reported again from the reign of Tiberius' successor Maurice (582–602). Emperor Phocas (602–610) was supported by the Egyptians but faced civic troubles against him starting from 608. Nicetas, Heraclius' cousin, came to power after bloody combat near Alexandria in late 609. The reign of Heraclius (610–641) ensued. Its latter part was marked by religious tensions over monothelitism and was interrupted in Egypt by the Sasanian occupation during the years 619–629.

In the years 639–642, the Arab armies led by ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ conquered Egypt, and the brief reconquest of Alexandria by Byzantine troops in 645–646 only deferred the inevitable. Dissatisfaction with the policies of the caliph ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān (644–656) of the Umayyad clan erupted in uprisings in different provinces of the Islamic Empire including Egypt, and it was an Egyptian rebel party that reportedly murdered the caliph in Medina in 656. ʿUthmān's assassination prompted the election of ʿAlī as the new caliph and the subsequent rebellion of Muʿāwiya, governor of Greater Syria and a relative of ʿUthmān's. In 659, a re-appointed ʿAmr gained Egypt for Muʿāwiya's side and expelled the governor installed by ʿAlī. During the renewed dynastic crisis triggered by the death of both caliph Yazīd I b. Muʿāwiya (683) and his infant son Muʿāwiya II, the contender to the caliphate ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr was able to assume control over the province. Shortly thereafter, however, troops sent by the newly elected Marwān I re-asserted Umayyad authority in the region.

While the new rulers initially retained the existing administration and thus also Greek and Coptic as its working languages (see Section 9 of this chapter below), Arabic became the official language for all state affairs and coinage in 705 – although Greek and especially Coptic maintained a key role in the bureaucratic apparatus for decades and centuries thereafter respectively. The imposition of taxes resulted in a series of tax revolts by the Egyptian population in the 720s. During the years 727–737, Arab populations from Syria were relocated into Egypt. The year 750 witnessed the capture and execution in Egypt of the fleeing Marwān II, the last ruler of the Umayyad dynasty based in Damascus, and the subsequent establishment of the Abbasid dynasty based in Baghdad.

Compared with the surveyed timeline, the geographical boundaries of Egypt seem easier to define. This volume's many portrayals of individuals operating in interregional networks bear testament, however, to Egypt's political, economic, and cultural integration in the Mediterranean basin and beyond. Egypt as a crossroads for trade between East and West is bounded by the Mediterranean Sea in the North and by the deserts east and west of the Nile Valley. The Nile did not only offer fertile land through its annual summer floods carrying water and silt onto its floodplain; it also provided efficient transport facilities from South to North connecting inner Africa with the Mediterranean world. The total population of Egypt probably remained relatively stable during the transition period. Egypt's population at the end of the Byzantine period in the sixth and seventh century is estimated at about 2.5 million people.[2]

While substantial agriculture was limited to the floodplains along the Nile, the Fayum, and the other oases in the Western Desert, the desert plains were equally important for Egypt's economy. The Eastern Desert held great raw material reserves in gold, precious gems, red porphyry and grey granite, marbles and other stones. The

**2** Charanis (1967). O'Sullivan (2006) 76 argues for a higher population count at the end of Byzantine rule.

Western Desert offered alum, the Wadi al-Natrun natron used in glassmaking. Moreover, the Nile Valley cliffs were also used for quarrying sandstone and limestone, and Aswan in the South was famous for its red granite.

The scope of some contributions embraces Egypt as a whole (**Roger Bagnall, Matthias Stern**) and some draw fruitful comparisons with contemporary sources from Syria, Mesopotamia, Central Asia, and even North Africa (**Alon Dar, Eugenio Garosi, Lucian Reinfandt**). The majority of chapters, however, offer local but vivid glimpses into a specific topic. The peripheral situation of the oases in the Western Desert occupies **Nicoletta De Troia**, **James Keenan** zones in on Antinoopolis, the capital of the Thebaid, and **Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello** and **Lucian Reinfandt** focus on individuals from the nearby city of Hermopolis. Further south, the best documented village in this transition period, Aphrodito, provides the scenery of **Loreleï Vanderheyden**'s portrait and the Theban region offers material for three contributions (**Arietta Papaconstantinou, Jennifer Cromwell, Matthias Müller**). **Anne Boud'hors** sheds light on the city of Edfu, and **Stefanie Schmidt** and to some extent also **Judith Evans Grubbs** reflect on Egypt's southern border and relationships with Nubia.

## 3 Prospects and limitations of the evidence

The well-known wealth of Egypt regarding textual sources is again impressive for the period that spans this volume. Giving figures for the number of texts documenting this specific period is, however, a delicate operation. First, not all published texts have already been entered into online databases to make them easily accessible, although the efforts of the teams behind online resources such as papyri.info and trismegistos.org are immense and continue to make scholars' lives considerably easier. Although the figures given below are therefore not exact, they may be taken as an indicator of the order of magnitude we are looking at. According to a search on papyri.info about 9,000 Greek documentary texts can be dated strictly to the period between 500 – 800 CE. The Coptic sources (mostly ostraca but also including papyri) are less numerous, with a little more than 700 texts. The recent interest in documentary papyrology in Coptic studies will certainly contribute to reducing this discrepancy over the coming decades, and the same can be said for the young discipline of Arabic papyrology, which in total numbers only about 760 edited texts dateable before 800.

Assigning texts to archives is a key element in gaining a better understanding of their content and exploiting their interconnectedness. Of more than 500 papyrological archives listed in the relevant section of trismegistos.org, about 75 belong to the period from the sixth to eighth centuries. One third of these contain fewer than ten texts, while only a dozen contain more than 50 documents. The quantity of texts cannot, of course, be the sole criterion to be taken into account, as illustrated by the two largest archives of ostraca: the Abu Mina archive (TM Arch ID 506) contains about

1,000 similar harvest receipts and the almost 200 texts forming the so-called Etmoulon archive (TM Arch ID 507; lit. "to the mill") all record the transport of grain to a mill. At the opposite end of the scale, small archives like those of Apa Antinus (TM Arch ID 457), Demetrius (TM Arch ID 309), or Philemon and Thecla (TM Arch ID 190) provide additional information supplementing the picture gained from the main archives most often referred to: those of the Apiones (TM Arch ID 15) and Dioscorus of Aphrodito (TM Arch ID 72) for the sixth century and those of Senuthius (TM Arch ID 418), Papas (TM Arch ID 170), and Basileios (TM Arch ID 124) for the post-conquest period. Further studies on these archives are already yielding fruitful results, as shown by the contributions of **Roger Bagnall, Anne Boud'hors, Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello, Matthias Müller, Lucian Reinfandt,** and **Loreleï Vanderheyden**, and more can be expected, not least from the present project.[3]

The prominent focus of the majority of this volume's contributors on textual evidence offers the opportunity for attentive reflection on the "mediality" and the transmission of written sources. Besides papyri, other materials served ancient societies as text substrates – pieces of broken pottery (ostraca), for instance, or wooden tablets were used for immediate purposes and were not expected to endure for decades or centuries. If endurability was intended, parchment or stone was used, depending on the type of text; parchment was used less widely in Egypt than across the rest of the Byzantine world.

Inscriptions intended for public display are not, however, of great significance for this volume. A certain individual perspective was expressed by visitors' graffiti of the kind that can be seen in many temples, for instance in the Isis temple in Aswan[4], but no contribution to this book covers this aspect. Tombstones can also be seen, to some extent, as witnesses to change: inscriptions on tombstones are indicative of cultural and societal change since they provide information about social stratigraphy. The first Muslim tombstone from the Islamic period found in Egypt is that of a certain ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Khayr al-Ḥajrī, who died in 652.[5] While this tombstone's origin is uncertain, the second oldest, one of a Muslim convert called ʿAbbāsa, daughter of Jurayj (Arab. "little George"), is known to originate from Aswan.[6] Although it does not bear yet the characteristic religious formula common in later periods, its profession of faith "she died … confessing that" and the reference to the "people of Islam" are indicative of social changes and may even attest the presence of a "religious expert" in this part of Upper Egypt at the end of the seventh century.[7] Due to their highly formulaic character, however, tombstones reveal personal

**3** As part of the SNSF project "Change and Continuities from a Christian to a Muslim Society – Egyptian Society and Economy in the 6th to 8th Centuries," contributions to the relevant section of trismegistos.org are in preparation for several archives of the studied period.

**4** Dijkstra (2012).

**5** El-Hawary (1930) 332, but also Schmidt (forthcoming).

**6** El-Hawary (1932) 290 – 291.

**7** Brockopp (2017) 66.

perspectives only to a limited extent and consequently are not a significant part of this volume.

Texts, whether of a documentary or a literary nature, are not unbiased vehicles of information; they are rather shaped by the interests of their issuers and reflect the cultural context of their production. Documents *stricto sensu* are not free individual creations but exist within established frameworks of formulaic, graphic, and even aesthetic norms.

**Roger Bagnall** reflects on the material from which we write social and economic history and especially on family archives as the key element from which narratives can be drawn. He recalls the characteristics of the earlier Roman period with Oxyrhynchos as an inescapable model for urban society, while documentation on rural settlements prominently comes from five villages in the Fayum. From the sixth century, however, the textual evidence is vastly dominated by the Apiones archive from Oxyrhynchos and the Dioscorus archive from Aphrodito (for which see **Loreleï Vanderheyden**). The thorny issue of redactional processes is discussed most clearly in **James Keenan**'s analysis of the so-called will of Flavius Phoibammon which unravels multiple layers of authorship and compilation. The text presents itself as having been dictated by the testator. Phoibammon's oral utterances are found mediated and diluted in the mold of the technical language and the formulaic framework prescribed by the Byzantine scribal tradition. The compiler Dioscorus' lexical choices and adaptations of the document's formal structure further reveal yet another layer of authorship.

In her look at the archive of Papas, pagarch of Edfu around 670, **Anne Boud'hors** shows that Coptic was not only used for private business and in ecclesiastical and monastic milieus. Like Bagnall, Boud'hors highlights the difficulty of classifying documents as either official or private. It is clear that language is not a useful criterion here: Greek is used, for example, for leases and accounts that pertain to the private business of Papas as a wealthy landowner, while Coptic is used not only in letters from lower ranking officials and individuals, but also in orders from "above" and from colleagues of equal status. This is supported by **Jennifer Cromwell**'s paper, which focuses on an individual named Psate, son of Pisrael, attested as a village scribe in Jeme for the period from 713/4 until 726, who wrote in both Coptic and Greek. The texts that can be connected to him deal with monastic issues or are tax receipts or private legal documents.

New types of transcultural professional bureaucrats gradually filled the ranks of the Islamic administration, and one of them is exemplified by the case of Petosiris, a Copt found serving as an Arabic scribe in the Islamic tax administration and corresponding with Arab officials as equals in an Arabic letter from eighth-century Hermopolis. The rise of a class of transcultural professional bureaucrats with multilingual expertise was instrumental to the progressive implementation of Arabic as the sole language of the imperial administration over the course of the eighth century, as **Lucian Reinfandt** points out in his chapter. Concomitantly, the employment of specialized clerks probably undermined – as Reinfandt argues – the influence and

social capital of the non-Arabicized landholding magnates that had acted as intermediaries between the Arab-Muslim ruling class and the local populations in Egypt and elsewhere in the first decades after the Arab conquest.

At the other end of the spectrum, the serial nature of formal features of documentary texts provides indicators of wider shifts in socio-cultural relations. Thus they can be utilized to trace broader developments in cultural trends and patterns of social behavior. The formulae used by the Arab-Muslim Yazīd b. Aslam in his letter to his Coptic colleague Petosiris in the eighth-century Hermopolite indicate that he considered the addressee as socially equal. Conversely, the formulae utilized in the Arabic letter sent by the governor of Egypt Mūsā b. Kaʿb to the Christian ruler of Nubia entail a claim of cultural alterity, as **Eugenio Garosi** points out in his contribution to this volume. In general, in the early Islamic period Arab-Muslim officials utilized not only a distinctive set of Arabic formulae in their correspondence, but also a distinctive layout that functioned as a social identifier compared to those used by the non-Muslim officials serving under their authority.

**Stefanie Schmidt** and **Judith Evans Grubbs** stress in their respective chapters that documentary and literary evidence demonstrates that transregional commercial exchange of goods and slaves across the borderland with Nubia continued throughout the Byzantine and early Islamic periods. A comparative analysis of the epistolary social behavior of Muslim officials towards regional elites in Egypt provided by **Eugenio Garosi** further evidences a common set of communicative strategies with the proportionally underrepresented documents from Syria, North Africa, and Central Asia.

Analyzing documentary evidence in tandem with literary sources furthermore provides a broader context for imperial policies seen at play in Egypt. The resentment towards the culturally "defensive" military settlement policy Muslim sources attribute to ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb in Egypt, for instance, finds parallels in accounts pertaining to Mesopotamia and Greater Syria, as **Alon Dar** stresses in his chapter. Similarly, **Lucian Reinfandt**'s case study on the emergence of cultural brokers in early Islamic Egypt is complemented by literary accounts of individuals operating in similar capacities in other provinces of the early Islamic Empire.

## 4 Politics and administration

The question as to when a Muslim state came into being has been frequently engaged with in recent years, and the Egyptian papyri have, again, been at the forefront of this debate.[8] The idea that Byzantine Egypt gradually evolved into early Islamic Egypt and was integrated into an Islamic empire is to some extent misleading;

**8** For a comprehensive account of these discussions, see recently Legendre (2016) 3–6 with the relevant literature.

there is good reason to assume that an "Islamic empire" into which Egypt could be integrated did not yet exist when Egypt fell to the Islamic conquest. Egypt's early Islamic period is not so much a story of adaptation to Arab imperial customs as the history of one of the (many) places where an Islamic empire was formed, as illustrated by **Alon Dar, Eugenio Garosi,** and **Lucian Reinfandt**.

For particular regions, however, turning the question around may yield interesting results. To what degree did the comparatively bureaucratic and socially hierarchized Byzantine Egypt influence the emergence of an Islamic empire and its set of legal institutions? One evident phenomenon concerns the administration of the country, and at this point, two aspects of Egyptian "provincial" administration, the role of the *duces* and that of the pagarchs, may serve as an introduction to the problems and prospects of research on this topic. In 539, nearly exactly a century before the Muslim armies reached Egypt, Emperor Justinian had issued his Edict XIII, through which he had abolished the position of the Augustalian prefect to whom the entire Egyptian diocese would have been subject.[9] Instead, the provinces Aegyptus (I and II), the Thebaid (Inferior and Superior), and probably also Augustamnica (I and II) were now each controlled by a *dux et Augustalis* who held civilian and military authority once again in one hand and to whom a civilian *praeses* was subordinated. The province of Arcadia remained undivided and was subject only to a *praeses*, although there is evidence that the *dux* of the Thebaid held authority over Arcadia at least temporarily as well.[10] Responsible to the *dux* were the pagarchs, the leading officials of the approximately ten subdivisions (*civitates* or, to use a more traditional term, *nomoi*) within each province. This basic structure appears to have transformed well into the early Islamic period, albeit with a *dux et Augustalis Arcadiae* appearing as early as 636, during the short episode of renewed Byzantine reign (629 – 639) between the Persian and Islamic occupations.[11]

This last point illustrates an important problem when it comes to administrative change from Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: some phenomena that were once viewed as clear evidence for such change have in recent decades been exposed as, in fact, innovations from the late Byzantine period, perhaps provoked by or even falling within the short intermezzo of the Persian occupation (619 – 629). It is most regrettable, in this regard, that we lack sufficient evidence from this brief period to discern exactly what was going on.[12] The *duces* are one instance of potential Persian or Byzantine rearrangements, but one layer below, at the level of the individual cities and their hinterlands, the pagarchs are another. At some point during the Persian occupation or after the Byzantine reconquest, the pagarchs of the Fayum ceased to bear the title "pagarch of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis" and were styled only as "pagarch of Arsinoe," even though the "Theodosiopolite nome" continued to feature in other con-

**9** On this and the following, see Palme (2013a) with further literature.

**10** Morelli (2008).

**11** Palme (2013b); Palme (2013c).

**12** For a good discussion of what can be said so far for this period, see Sänger (2011).

texts. The precise moment from which the pagarchs became so dominant that the term for their official authority, *pagarchia*, turned into a territorialized rendering of the entire nome is also unclear – the phenomenon is found immediately after the conquest, but not beforehand. Whether these changes were innovative or simply acknowledged already well-established administrative practice is, however, something that the fragile documentation of the mid-seventh century does not allow us to discern. In any case, these examples illustrate our lack of knowledge of this crucial period of late antique history, a difficulty further compounded by the problem that administrative history has, to some extent, to build on different types of documents from the Byzantine and early Islamic periods, as discussed by **Roger Bagnall, Anne Bourd'hors,** and **Matthias Stern**. New documents emerging from this period will refine our understanding in the future.

We would give much to have the papers of Byzantine governors or pagarchs at this time. From later on, we have the archive of Papas (second half of the seventh century), which is explored in depth by **Anne Boud'hors**, and that of of Basileios and Qurra (from the early eighth century), which have contributed much to what we know about early Islamic administration and particularly about how the various administrative layers interacted with one another.[13] One genuine innovation of the new rulers concerns the administrative layer immediately above the old Byzantine provinces: above the *duces* now ranked the *symboulos* (Arab. *wālī*), who held absolute civil and military authority and was directly appointed by the caliph.[14] The *symboulos* was installed by the end of the 640s and took up residence not in the traditional center of political power in Egypt, Alexandria, but in Fusṭāṭ (Old Cairo), which rapidly grew into its new role as the capital of the country.[15] And while requisitions of all sorts of goods for supplying the army had not been unprecedented in Byzantine Egypt, the frequency and regularity with which they appear to have been conducted in the early Islamic period certainly was.[16] The *amīrs* ("commanders") who frequently appear in this context were also an innovation in Egypt, albeit this time clearly drawn from a preexisting structure of the Arab military administration; their precise role, however, is still debated.[17] Under the *symboulos* and amid the amirs, the *duces*

**13** See Foss (2009) for a discussion of the Papas archive and Papaconstantinou (2015) for insights into the Basileios archive with regard to the subject of this conference.

**14** Despite being frequently referred to as *wālī* in Arabic literary sources, Muslim governors of Egypt invariably bear the title of office of *amīr* in seventh- and eighth-century Arabic papyrus documents, coinage, and inscriptions. On other officials labelled "amirs" in early Islamic Greek and Coptic documents, see *infra*.

**15** However, some scholars (e. g., Power [2012] 96) have suggested that the Arab government also acknowledged the "conceptual duality" of Egypt, dividing it into Fusṭāṭ with the Nile Delta (Hawf) and Upper Egypt (Saʿīd). On the early history of al-Fusṭāṭ, see now Bruning (2018). Alexandria was seen as too vulnerable to Byzantine naval attacks, a fear that proved true when Byzantine briefly recaptured and held the city in 645–646.

**16** Legendre (2015) 237–238.

**17** Morelli (2010).

now lost their military authority, although security forces were still at their disposal, as is visible in the numerous documents concerned with the capture and redistribution of fugitives, the *duces*' competence to organize statute labor (*corvée*), and their authority to levy taxes.

However, the *duces* were still the superiors of the various pagarchs in their provinces. **Anne Boud'hors**'s contribution highlights the at times uncomfortable situation the pagarch Papas may have found himself in, caught between village communities and the demands of his superiors. At the beginning of the eighth century, however, in the archive of Basileios, pagarch and *dioikētēs* ("administrator"), the *symboulos* Qurra interacts directly with local authorities.[18] This development seems to be in line with the rise of the *epikeimenos* (lit. "president") and the *ʿāmil* (lit. "agent"). Originally a kind of envoys of the *symboulos* in the countryside, these men increasingly drew many tasks under their authority that originally had been in the purview of the *dux* and the pagarch, and these latter titles disappeared: the *dux* at the beginning of the eighth century (the last one attested is ʿAṭiyya b. Juʿayd, who held office until 703 or 712) and the pagarch around the mid-eighth century.[19]

## 5 Social hierarchies

This brief institutional overview leads us directly to those who kept the machinery of this system running. It has been frequently highlighted that in the politico-administrative system outlined above, the main figures of political power in early Islamic Egypt were Muslims from the start. The Islamic army, through its amirs, was an occupying force, and the absolute authority in the country, the *symboulos*, was directly appointed by the caliph. At the next lower level, the *duces* and pagarchs that we know of were, as far as we can tell, still Christians in the first decades of Muslim rule, and their social backgrounds point more or less to the same milieus that their Byzantine predecessors came from: a generally local landholding elite bearing high honors, or on their way thereto, through distinct bureaucratic service. Around the turn to the eighth century, however, two prominent individuals appear to start a tradition of Muslim outsiders occupying these positions: Flavius Atias, son of Goedos (or ʿAṭiyya b. Juʿayd in Arabic), pagarch and later *dux*, and Nājid b. Muslim, successively pagarch of two different pagarchies, not long before the rise of the *epikeimenoi*.[20] As **Matthias Stern** argues, however, the careers of (at least some) Byzantine pagarchs may well not have been all that different from the careers of ʿAṭiyya and Nājid; whether this is a sign of continuity or of two coinciding but distinct patterns

**18** On this particular relation, see Papaconstantinou (2015).

**19** Legendre (2016) 14–16.

**20** For a brilliant study of Nājid, however, within a much larger context that may serve as an overall introduction to these decades, see Sijpesteijn (2013).

is elusive. In any case, the traditional notion of the pagarchs as a generally insubordinate local elite should be reconsidered. Generally, historians today are more nuanced in characterizing the relationships between the Byzantine provincial aristocracy and the imperial center than they were maybe two generations ago, when the state of affairs in late Byzantine Egypt seemed to be one of permanent turmoil and of disintegrating public authority in the province.

Coming from another direction, **Alon Dar** discusses the general prohibition on obtaining landed estates in the Egyptian countryside which applied to the Muslim administrative and military elite in the early decades after the Arab conquest. The second caliph, ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb, is credited with having prohibited the distribution of conquered land among the Arab fighting forces. Literary accounts suggest that ʿUmar's policies engendered dissatisfaction not only among the Arab soldiers but also on the part of some of his senior advisors. Ultimately, ʿUmar stood firm in his resolve, as is corroborated by the absence of documentary evidence for Muslim landowning in Egypt prior to the mid-eighth century. In the long run, **Alon Dar** argues, the decision to leave conquered lands in the hands of the local population was instrumental to ensuring stable and perpetual tax revenues and preventing the cultural assimilation of the Arab minority. It was also a fundamental step in the transformation of tribally organized, nomadic troops into a permanent professional army and a smart move, which forestalled the rise of a landowning Muslim aristocracy with local powerbases.

Other contributions focus on the men at lower levels – "levels" that are naturally deeply intertwined. **James Keenan**'s contribution presents a thriving provincial capital to us, together with a representative of the highly educated literary elite that kept the administrative machinery running: Dioscorus of Aphrodito, who worked for some years as a notary in Antinoopolis. Beforehand, Dioscorus had been an important village administrator, and **Loreleï Vanderheyden**'s contribution expands this picture by presenting the various roles that Dioscorus' father Apollos played in the village of Aphrodito. We see, again, a vibrant community which contrasts starkly with the apocalyptic images that Dioscorus' petitions paint of the Byzantine village and its relation to superior authorities. The strong links of an urban middle class to the countryside around their respective cities are also very evident in the small new archive from Hermopolis presented by **Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello**. Some mechanisms through which these locals adapted to the new cultural and political conditions presented by Arab rule are highlighted by **Lucian Reinfandt,** whose study on "Arabicized" multicultural local bureaucrats may raise the question to what degree the increasing numbers of the "Arab-Muslim" elites were swelled by such individuals from within local communities rather than by outsiders alone. **Eugenio Garosi** pursues a similar argument, although dealing with different material, in his analysis of formal and formulaic aspects of the early Islamic evidence, and demonstrates how lower-level administrative staff themselves were trying to bridge the gap to their rulers, as it were, by translating Arab-Muslim concepts into a context familiar to the local Coptic population. Finally, **Judith Evans Grubbs** explores in her contribution

what papyri transmit about members of the lowest social hierarchical level – slaves. Due to the scarce evidence of only four slave sale contracts dating from between the fifth and seventh centuries a fully comprehensive study on slavery and possible changes from the Byzantine to the Islamic period is difficult to conduct. However, although we have no personal testimony from a slave, sources like for instance testaments regulating manumission, the laws of Justinian concerning child slavery, or *paramonē* contracts, offer individual narratives told by or about people held in slavery or slave-like conditions. This "micro-historical" approach illustrates how permeable the borders between free and unfree status may have been in late antiquity. The threshold of entering slavery or slave-like working conditions was often very low depending on individual socio-economic conditions. In early Islamic times we see some changes in the supply of the slave market. From the middle of the seventh century onwards, the *baqṭ*, an agreement between Muslim Egypt and Nubia, determined a yearly influx of at least 300 slaves from Nubia to Egypt. The impact of this growth for the labor market can, however, not be determined since it is unclear whether these slaves remained in Egypt or were brought to other parts of the Islamic Empire.

## 6 Law and legal practice

Tracing the development of distinctive Muslim legal practices is rightly considered one of the thorniest issues of the transition from Byzantine to Islamic rule in Egypt. On the one hand, Muslim historical sources maintain that the early caliphs designated experts responsible for passing judgments (Arab. *quḍāt*, sing. *qāḍī* "judge") in the conquered provinces, implying that a system of Islamic jurisprudence was a cornerstone of the early Muslim community since its inception.[21] At the other end of the spectrum, tangible documentary evidence for Muslim courts are not mentioned in the papyri from Egypt until the ninth and tenth centuries.[22] The earliest surviving manuscript evidence for jurisprudential *œuvres* similarly lacks traces of a class of legal scholars in Egypt prior to the late eighth/early ninth century.[23]

Conversely, seventh- and eighth-century documentary evidence offers only sparse glimpses of the formative process of Islamic legal practices. *Juridical* documents (mostly acknowledgments of debts) in Arabic appear within the Muslim minority community as early as the seventh century.[24] Unique among these is the bilin-

**21** For the first *qāḍī* of Fusṭāṭ, Sulaym b. ʿItr al-Tujībī (in office from 40/660-661 to 60/679-680), mentioned by historiographic sources, cf. Tillier (2012) 59. The first *qāḍī* mentioned in documentary sources is probably in *P.HindsNubia* (Qaṣr Ibrīm; 758) r, 46. It is noteworthy that the *qāḍī* mentioned there issues a verdict that pertains to the affairs of a non-Muslim country.

**22** E. g. *P.GrohmannUrkunden* 7 (Ushmūn/Hermopolis; IX); *Chrest.Khoury* I 78, 82, and 83 (all from Ushmūn/Hermopolis; IX–X).

**23** Brockopp (2011) and *id.* (2017).

**24** See the list of documents in Tillier/Vanthieghem (2019) 148 – 149.

gual Arabic/Greek *P.Ness*. 56, which records a settlement between a Christian and a Muslim. The presence of two separate lists of (respectively Muslim and Christian) witnesses and the different legal formularies of the Greek and the Arabic versions possibly hint at parallel but separate Muslim and Christian legal communities in seventh-century Syria. It has been suggested that members of the earliest Muslim community operated within the traditional body of norms based on common practice referred to as *sunna*[25] and mentioned in several seventh-century Arabic legal documents. Both the reading of the term and its interpretation, however, are matters of debate.[26] In parallel, documentary evidence suggests that early converts continued to adhere to pre-Islamic legal practices.[27]

More generally, the formulaic and terminological features of Arabic legal documents from early Islamic Egypt and Syria differ markedly from their coeval Greek and Coptic counterparts. Arabic legal formularies display formal and terminological affinities to a conceptually "Semitic" legal culture which has its strongest examples in Hebrew and Aramaic but also features in Sabaic and Nabatean legal documents.[28]

At the outset of the eighth century, the first evidence for the involvement of Muslim authorities in *judicial* issues emerges. A handful of missives by the governor Qurra b. Sharīk (in office 709–714) to Basileios, pagarch of Aphrodito, pertain to the adjudication of disputes brought to the governor's attention by the local population. Such letters contain detailed instructions regarding the collection of evidence and the reaching of a verdict.[29] While the plaintiffs are Christian villagers and most of the correspondence between Qurra and Basileios is in Greek, all the letters of legal relevance in the dossier are redacted in Arabic. Further, the language of the missives echoes procedures and terminology of Qur'anic ascendancy.[30] This signalizes not only a centralization of the judicial apparatus at the provincial level, but also a transition from Byzantine procedures towards legal practices with an Islamic coloring. Corroborative evidence hints at a broader context. Some of the phraseology and technical terminology of Qurra's letters of judicial character find parallels in a fragmentary papyrus missive[31] dated to approximately one generation earlier. The letter was possibly addressed by the governor ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿUtba al-Fihrī or his successor in office ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān to a pagarch of Ushmūn.[32] Finally, the same

**25** Bruning (2015), particularly 366–374.

**26** The Arabic morpheme *snh* can stand both for *sunna* "practice, normative precedent" and *sana* "year." On the pros and contras of each reading, see Bruning (2015) and Shaddel (2018) and Tillier/Vanthieghem (2019) respectively.

**27** See, e.g., the eighth-century Coptic rent contract on O.Louvre AF 12678 published by Richter (2012) and involving at least one but possibly two Muslim converts.

**28** Khan (1994a) 364–368; *id.* (1994b); and *id.* (2008). Cf. Crone/Silverstein (2010).

**29** Tillier (2013a) 28–29 and *id.* (2013b) 145–146.

**30** Tillier (2013a) 26–28 and *id.* (2013b) 143–145. Cf. Donner (2011) 86.

**31** *P.DiemGouverneur* (Ushmūn/Hermopolis?; 684–685).

**32** Diem (1983).

judicial technical terminology occurs in a coeval papyrus from the Syrian town of Khirbat al-Mird.[33]

One distinctive feature of Islamic legal practice manifests itself early on during Muslim rule in Egypt: discrimination between Muslims and non-Muslims in the application of taxation law. The papyri of the early seventh century reveal that a tax called *diagraphon* or *andrismos* was levied among non-Muslim subjects. The majority of scholars perceive this tax as religiously motivated and thus as one of the rare examples of distinctively Islamic innovation seen at an early stage.[34] Fiscal distinctions between Muslims and non-Muslims are also perceptible in the area of trade (**Stefanie Schmidt**). Islamic legal sources drafted outside of Egypt describe different tax rates to be applied to merchandise depending on the merchant's religion and relationship to Islam. Those who lived outside the Muslim empire, for instance, had to pay the full 10% tax (*ʿushr*) *ad valorem* when they traded in a Muslim country. *Dhimmī*[35] merchants, non-Muslims who lived in a Muslim ruled country, paid half the *ʿushr*, except when trading in wine or pork, which was liable to the full amount.[36]

## 7 Religion

According to a tradition first recorded by Eusebius of Caesarea in the early fourth century, it was Mark the Evangelist who launched a missionary journey to the city of Alexandria and founded a Christian community there. The recently published *Historia Episcopatus Alexandriae*, a medieval Ethiopian version of a Greek composition from the late fourth century, builds upon this tradition.[37] Since neither *Acts*[38] nor Clement of Alexandria nor Origenes mention anything at all about Mark visiting Egypt, the story may be an entirely fabricated one from the early fourth century, a time when the Alexandrian church was competing with Rome, Jerusalem, Constantinople, and Antioch for supreme status and authority and therefore might have seen claiming apostolic foundation as rather expedient.

While Alexandria was the seat of a Christian community from around the middle of the first century, Christianity seems to have taken hold in the Egyptian hinterland only in the first half of the third century. During the Decian and Valerian persecutions in the 250s, many Alexandrian clerics were deported to the Libyan desert or to Upper Egypt, and these persecutions probably had the unintended effect of

**33** *P.Mird* 31 (Khirbat al-Mird; VII/VIII).
**34** Sijpesteijn (2007); Morelli (2001), but cf. also Papaconstantinou (2010).
**35** Cahen (2012).
**36** Yaḥyā b. Ādam (Shemesh) nos. 39, 121, 219, 213, 214–216, 221–222, and 639. Abū Yūsuf (Fagnan) p. 187–188 and 204–213; Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (Nyazee) nos. 1655–1692.
**37** Euseb. Hist.Eccl. 2.16; Bausi/Camplani (2017) *HepA* §§ 1–5.
**38** Acts 18.24–28.

spreading Christianity further.[39] Only from the late third century and increasingly into the fourth century do we find growing evidence in the papyri of Christian names, Christian forms of greeting, *nomina sacra*, and indications of ranks within the Christian community such as catechumen, baptized person, or member of the clergy.

In his recent *Early Christian Books in Egypt*, Roger Bagnall estimates the proportion of Christians in the entire population of Egypt at the start of the tenure of the Alexandrian bishop Demetrius (189 – 232) at a mere one in a thousand. Despite steady growth during Demetrius' episcopate, Bagnall argues that Christians comprised only one percent of the entire population by Demetrius' death in 232 and merely two percent by around the middle of the century.[40] Then a rapid expansion of Christianity occurred. Mark Depauw and Willy Clarysse, expanding Roger Bagnall's study from 1982, have recently argued that up to 15 – 20 % of the Egyptian population were Christians by 300 and that Egypt was home to a largely Christian society at the end of the fourth century.[41]

The major theological controversies dominating literary accounts of Christian Egypt between the fourth and eighth centuries and culminating in the formation of the miaphysite Coptic Church receive little or no mention in the papyri.[42] The reasons for this lie to some extent in the nature of the source material; text types such as purchase agreements, tax lists, or inventories do not generally deal with the finer points of theology. In addition, most of the sources we have at our disposal were produced in Middle and Upper Egypt – areas that were far from the channels of theological and intellectual exchange centering on Alexandria, where papyrological sources have not survived due to the climate.[43] Ewa Wipszycka has argued that Chalcedonian ecclesiastical structures and monasteries could have existed mainly in Egypt's administrative centers, which were more immediately connected to Byzantine central authority, while their influence might not have pervaded rural areas in the same way, allowing for the spread of the miaphysite church in the countryside from the reign of Justinian I on.[44] A Chalcedonian resurgence in the early seventh century was apparently mainly due to charismatic ecclesiastical leadership.[45] Heraclius' reconquest of Egypt after the period of Persian dominion gave further prominence to

**39** See Huebner (2019) chapters 1 and 2 for the spread of Christianity in Egypt and a discussion of a Christian community in the Fayum in the first half of the third century CE.

**40** Bagnall (1982) 105 – 124; Wipszycka (1986); Bagnall (1987); Wipszycka (1988); Bagnall (1993) 279 n. 113; Bagnall (2009) 20. Also see Hopkins (1998).

**41** Depauw/Clarysse (2013); for a critical discussion, cf. Frankfurter (2014). Frankfurter in his recent study (2018) focuses on holy men (or rather local prophets) and their appeal to a populace in perpetual crisis.

**42** Frend (1972); Davis (2008).

**43** Cf. Schmelz (2002) 319.

**44** Wipszycka (2007) 345 – 346. Seeing that we do not possess plenty of source material related to church matters from these centers of administration, our perception might be additionally biased.

**45** Mikhail (2014) 55 – 56.

the Chalcedonian faction and saw the appointment of a Chalcedonian patriarch in Alexandria.[46] The Arab conquest apparently reversed the situation again, and the miaphysite party gained even more prominence.[47]

Recent years have seen studies devoted to many aspects of monastic life. The economy of Egyptian monasteries has been studied by Ewa Wipszycka, providing an indispensable basis for all further work.[48] Historical aspects of the church as displayed by the evidence of documentary texts have been at the center of Georg Schmelz' book,[49] while Renate Dekker has recently examined the networks of Theban clerics in the seventh century. **Loreleï Vanderheyden**'s contribution to this volume offers a glimpse into who the founders of small monasteries in the countryside could have been. There were various styles of monastic life in Egypt: besides anchorites and coenobitic monasteries, many places also had congregations of anchorites living close or even next to each other in their *laura*, i.e., more independent dwelling places. The Western Theban area is a prime example for all of these: in addition to the coenobitic Monastery of St. Phoibammon at Dayr el-Bahri[50] and the Monastery of Paul at Dayr el-Bakhit,[51] the *laura*-style "Monastery" of Epiphanius[52] and many individual anchorite dwellings were all sited in an area of just a few square kilometers.[53] While the monks of these monasteries definitely were miaphysites, there may also have been a monastery of monks devoted to the Chalcedonian creed: the Dayr al-Rūmī in the Valley of the Queens in Western Thebes, as **Matthias Müller** discusses in his contribution.

Compared to the detail and density of information provided by ninth- and tenth-century literary accounts, contemporary evidence for Islamic practices in the eighth and especially the seventh centuries is notoriously scant. The ubiquitous religious invocations in seventh-century papyri, inscriptions, and coins issued by the Arab authorities in different languages and the titles "God's Servant" (Arab. *ʿabd allāh*) and "Commander of the Believers" (Arab. *amīr al-muʾminīn*) claimed by the Umayyad caliphs reveal that religion was a crucial source of political legitimation and social charisma. Similar religious figures of speech did not exclude other monotheistic believers *per se*, as they did not feature specifically Islamic content. But the awareness of a new religious community that was at least to some degree distinct from the other Abrahamic creeds can be inferred from documentary sources from Egypt and elsewhere.

**46** Kaegi (1998).
**47** Mikhail (2014); Sijpesteijn (2013) 56–58.
**48** Wipszycka (2009); *id.* (2011).
**49** Schmelz (2002).
**50** Godlewski (1986); O'Connell (2007) 254–259.
**51** Beckh (2016); Hodak (2016).
**52** Winlock/Crum (1926).
**53** See, e.g., Boud'hors/Heurtel (2010); Hasznos (2013); Underwood/Behlmer (2016); Müller (2017).

In papyri and in inscriptions in Greek and Syriac, the offspring of conquerors are referred to as *moagaritai*/*mhaggrayē*, a derivative of Arabic *muhājirūn*[54] "emigrants." In turn, the scant seventh-century Arabic documents use the new collective name of *muʾminūn*, "believers," to refer to adherents of the incipient religious community led by a "Commander of the Believers."[55] Furthermore, even the earliest extant specimens of Arabic writing are dated according to the Muslim calendar and era. Greek, Coptic, and Syriac papyri and inscriptions refer to the new era as "the year of the Arabs" or "Saracens" or as the "year of the rule of the Arabs," further suggesting the perception (and self-perception) of the conquerors as a distinctive community.

Modern research into the beginnings of Islam has struggled to explain the virtually total lack of references to the charismatic figure of the Prophet Muḥammad in the documentary record prior to the years of the second Muslim civil war (680–692). To explain this conspicuous absence, more skeptical scholars have denied that a historical charismatic figure by the name of Muḥammad even existed and proposed that he was, rather, an invention of later centuries.[56] A less radical approach is supported by coinage minted in Iraq and Iran by governors siding with Ibn al-Zubayr's rebellion on which Muḥammad was proclaimed the "Messenger of God." The clearest testament to the effectiveness of this move is the decision by the now victorious Umayyads to assimilate this tactic and triumphantly proclaim Muḥammad's role as prophet on aniconic coinage, in bilingual papyrus protocols, and in the mosaic inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock (691–692). It may be added that seventh-century Christian accounts ascribe Muḥammad a leading role in the early Muslim community despite the silence of coeval Arabic sources on this point.[57]

A need for stricter articulation of the boundaries of Islam perceived by broad strata of society is visible from an early stage in Egypt. The Muslim profession of faith that appears on the tombstone of one ʿAbbāsa bt. Jurayj in Aswan as early as 690–691 is not only the earliest attestation of a version of the Muslim *shahāda* (the Muslim "testimony" of faith) in the Arabic language, but also the first declaration of the Islamic creed which has been found outside an official context. At the same time, ʿAbbāsa's tombstone illustrates the still-fluid boundaries of Islam: this

**54** See in particular Lindstedt (2015). On the meaning of the root *h-j-r*, see Crone (1994).

**55** See Donner (2002–2003), who holds that the first Believers movement could include Christians and Jews sharing common notions of righteousness and piety.

**56** Luxemberg (2000), Nevo/Koren (2003), and Popp (2010) for instance all defend the view that *muḥammad*, "blessed," is nothing more than an anthropomorphized epithet that originally referred to Jesus.

**57** See for instance the annotation dated 637 on a Gospel manuscript registering an incursion of the "Arabs of Muhammad" (Hoyland [1997] 116–117 and Penn [2015] 22–24) or the passage of the Armenian history attributed to the bishop Sebeos (*floruit* ca. 660s) in which the author reports that Muhammad established the basic dietary and ethical norms of the early Muslim community (Hoyland [1997] 131).

version of the profession of faith notably diverges in wording and composition from the official "vulgate(s)" of the Dome of the Rock and Arab-Sasanian coinage.[58]

More generally, the Egyptian evidence attests to a rising interest by men of knowledge for crafting and transmitting narratives of an Islamic past. A possibly seventh-century Arabic fragment on papyrus containing a list of Qur'anic prophets,[59] for instance, compliments another specimen from the Syrian town of Khirbat al-Mird that preserves a list of participants in the battle at Badr.[60] More elaborate examples of incipient literary narratives of an Islamic past appear at the end of the eighth century, as attested by papyrus fragments of the lost *History of the Caliphs* by Ibn Isḥāq[61] and of the Prophet Muḥammad's campaigns.[62]

The papyri also shed some light on the rituals and dues associated with the practice of Islam in early Islamic Egypt. In a fragmentary Arabic letter paleographically assigned to the seventh century, a tradesman mentions to his business partner his garment for the *Ḥajj*, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. The centrality of the pilgrimage in its duality as both a spiritual and a social collective ritual is further highlighted in a letter by the Umayyad prince Sahl b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān to the deputy governor ʿUqba b. Muslim al-Tujibī[63] in which the addressee is instructed to join the caliph's caravan to the Holy City. The letter by the pagarch of the Fayum Nājid b. Muslim instructing his subordinate ʿAbd Allāh b. Asʿad on collecting the *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa*[64] from Muslim villagers[65] implies an institutionalization of the Qur'anic command concerning the alms tax.

Widespread conversion from Christianity to Islam did not take place immediately after the Arab conquest of Egypt.[66] Even though religious conversion has been recognized as probably the most important factor lending momentum to change, its timing is still a matter of debate. Two waves of mass conversion have been suggested for the early eighth and above all the fourteenth centuries that resulted in Coptic Christians constituting merely – as today – a tenth of the total population of Egypt.[67]

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**58** Bacharach/Anwar (2012).

**59** *P.Mil.Vogl.* 1 (Egypt; VIII). The mention of the prophet Shuʿayb alongside the pan-Abrahamic figures of Ilyās (= Elias), Nūḥ (=Noah), and Ibrahīm (=Abraham) indicates a Qur'anic referential dimension.

**60** *P.Mird.* 71 (Khirbat al-Mird; early VIII).

**61** *P.AbbottLiteraryPapyri* 6 (Egypt; late VIII). Cf., however, the critical remarks on its authorship by Brockopp (2017).

**62** *P.AbbottLiteraryPapyri* 5 (Egypt; late VIII).

**63** *P.SijpesteijnInvitation* (Egypt; 705 – 717).

**64** For the seemingly interchangeable use of the terms *zakāt* and *ṣadaqa* in early Islamic papyri, see Sijpesteijn (2013) 181 – 189 and cf. *ibid.* n. 365.

**65** *P.MuslimState* 8 (Fayum; ca. 730 – 750).

**66** Sijpesteijn (2013) 165 – 172 and 193 – 195.

**67** Wiet (1913 – 1936); Perlmann (1942); Little (1976); O'Sullivan (2006); Werthmuller (2010) 75 – 102; but see also El-Leithy (2004), who argues for a decisive conversion wave only in the fourteenth century triggered by a census and tax reform that promised converts exemption from the poll tax (Dennett [1988]; El-Leithy [2004]). Conversion from Christianity to Islam happened considerably faster in

## 8 Economy

Egypt was of vital importance for the Byzantine Empire due to its exports of grain and other essential commodities as well as its function as a trade hub with the East, with trade relations stretching as far as India. In decline theories like the long endorsed "Pirenne thesis," the Arab conquest of the Levant and Northern Africa in the seventh century brought about a collapse of this complex economic system of Mediterranean countries.[68] While scholarship, in particular due to seminal studies in Islamic archaeology and Greek and Arabic papyrology, has accumulate convincing evidence against this model,[69] it remains largely unclear how the conquest affected the conquered countries in economic terms. Since economic performance is to a large extent rooted in local sources, traditions, and industry, a study of the micro-level of a country's economy is indispensable before any valuable conclusions about the economic impact of the Arab conquest can be drawn for a Mediterranean, or even global, economy.

Kharga Oasis provides a good example for change before the Arab conquest. **Nicoletta De Troia** surveys the archaeological evidence for signs of human life in the oases in the Western Desert throughout the Byzantine and early Islamic period in tandem with literary accounts. The archaeological record contracts after the fifth century with forts and churches in the area falling into disuse, possibly as a consequence of nomadic incursions. Yet reports by Arab geographers of the ninth and tenth centuries indicate that life at Kharga continued into the Islamic period and that the oasis maintained and indeed considerably extended its role as a borderland integrated into commercial trans-Saharan trade routes.

A sound economy and unimpeded trade were crucial for the new rulers and required favorable conditions for the production and distribution of goods and tight organization of financial and economic activity. **Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello** highlights the main characteristics of the dozen texts forming the sixth-century archive of Silbanos, a soldier from Hermopolis, and his sons. While Silbanos' activities as a soldier are not documented, his family business can partially be reconstructed from a disagreement with his sister over a lease contract with one of his sons, Petros, as landlord, and from a sale contract copying a model used by Georgios, another son of Silbanos'. This archive provides a glimpse of what could be a middle-class family business, with Petros writing a receipt and account on behalf of his so-called "illiterate father," who was in fact more of a "slow writer" – someone who could clumsily write his name but preferred to delegate this tiresome activity. Silbanos and Georgios

other parts of the empire, such as Iran, where the major wave of conversions occurred in the early eighth century (Bulliet [1979] 31; El-Leithy [2004] 21–22).

**68** Hodges/Whitehouse (1983).

**69** E. g., Bessard (2013); Sijpesteijn (2013); *id.* (2007); Papaconstantinou (2010); Gonis (2009); *id.* (2004a-b); *id.* (2003); *id.* (2001); Walmsley (2000); Morelli (2001); Gascou (1983).

invested money in sales of wine and wheat for future deliveries, landholdings, and money loans in Hermopolis and several neighboring villages. Silbanos' archive thus serves as evidence for middle-class investments in various lucrative activities in order to secure continuing prosperity for the next generation.

Archaeological findings of Egyptian pottery sherds in Nubia show that the large-scale exchange that took place in the Byzantine period was still at a high level in the eighth and ninth centuries. As **Stefanie Schmidt** sets out in her chapter in this volume, continuous cross-border trade was indeed favored and secured by the Muslim administration, as is demonstrated by an Arabic letter from 758. In this letter, the Muslim governor of Egypt accuses the Nubian king of not respecting the terms of the *baqṭ*, a diplomatic agreement between Egypt and Nubia to exchange commodities and slaves, and of violating the regulations pertaining to the free and unimpeded commercial border trade carried out by merchants. By securing protection for merchants, the state provided favorable conditions for cross-border trade and thus also boosted its own income, with the stimulation of trade impacting favorably on revenue from customs and trade taxes. The *baqṭ* and the legal background to commercial exchanges certainly benefited local industry and dependent economic actors, but they were also a suitable means of generating state revenue.

**Arietta Papaconstantinou** discusses patronage and the binding system of personal commitment by credit taking as another form of dependency. Particularly in letters by women, this dependency is clearly expressed and seems to be indicative of helpless female "voices of the seventh century." Adhering to socially expected gender roles and using certain gendered vocabulary, this female behavior is more indicative of patriarchal structures in communities than of poverty. When economic distress strikes suddenly, women turn to men, often to members of the church, to seek financial help. The portrayal of hardship in these documents is intensified by a certain form of literary genre rhetoric, but also by the women taking on the socially expected weak role in which they are not entitled to act without male protection.

**Anne Boud'hors**'s contribution focuses on the archive of Papas, the pagarch of modern Edfu, and explores the integration of former Byzantine elites into the new regime and its fiscal system. Both the Greek and the as-yet unpublished Coptic papyri shed light on the extent to which these elites were involved in tax collection, forced acquisitions, and requisitions for the Muslim army.

Tax receipts do not only show how Muslims took over former methods of state financing. These documents can, moreover, also testify to how the officials who wrote the receipts adjusted gradually to the new conditions. Using the example of the village of Jeme, **Jennifer Cromwell** shows that technical knowledge – including the names of different taxes, the differences in Greek and Coptic formulae, and abbreviation conventions – had to be learned by the scribes. At the beginning of the eighth century, a new generation of scribes can be recognized who were well versed in the new scribal practices and are thus indicative of the formation of a well-functioning fiscal organization.

**Matthias Müller**'s contribution discusses small-scale local business activities of a man living in the eighth century who either became a monk later in his life or deposited his documents inside a monastery. The sums and activities fit neatly into the picture generally gained from sources of that time.[70]

## 9 Language, literature, and education

The majority of the country's inhabitants spoke Coptic, the latest form the Egyptian language, but, being illiterate, most of them never wrote anything themselves. In the Byzantine period, Coptic was used in writing by the church to reach out to the native Egyptian flock. In addition, Coptic served as the natural form of communication in private correspondence. Greek, on the other hand, had been the primary language of the administrative and legal realm (supplemented by Latin only to a very limited extent) and of the Alexandrian clergy; it was increasingly supplanted by Coptic and Arabic after the Islamic conquest. Finally, Arabic was initially used only by the new ruling elite. Not unexpectedly, each foreign ruling group introduced superstratal, politically hegemonic cultural identifiers in Egypt and in the process also created a complex socio-linguistic framework. Few interactions between distinctive linguo-cultural milieus are more clearly feasible than the practice of bi- and multilingualism and/or multigraphism, as some of this volume's papers show.

Although the conquest of Alexander the Great had established Greek as the dominant language of the administration, Greek never completely supplanted Egyptian. **Loreleï Vanderheyden** discusses the question of the acquisition of literacy and writing proficiency in Greek and Coptic by analyzing the documents pertaining to the village headman and estate administrator Apollos in sixth-century Aphrodito. Apollos' Coptic handwriting indicates a higher degree of proficiency in Coptic than in Greek. Conversely, his use of Greek is principally circumscribed to recurring technical terms and betrays his limited mastery of Greek syntax. In this regard, Apollos is probably representative of the majority of local elites in the Byzantine-Egyptian countryside.

Language choice is unquestionably one of the more readily accessible indicators of cultural trends. Even so, the use of either Greek or Coptic is not an unambiguous marker of either ethnicity or status, given the deep intertwinement of both cultural spheres. **Anne Boud'hors**'s analysis of new documents from the archive of Papas, pagarch of Edfu, shows a striking absence of Arabic, for instance. Furthermore, the use of Greek and Coptic by individuals belonging to Papas' familiar and professional social networks alike does not reveal a clear functional or status-related pattern.

**70** Papaconstantinou (2016).

Greek retained a key role in Egypt's administration throughout the Byzantine period and even in the first century after the Islamic conquest. The use of Arabic in official chanceries during the early decades of Muslim rule over Egypt was essentially superimposed over the use of Greek and – at a lower administrative level – Coptic. This situation of "social trilingualism"[71] in the provincial administration offered an avenue for forms of cultural interference that were not strictly linguistic. Arab-Muslim officials signaled their social standing by transposing a version of the distinctively Arabic epistolary prescript into their Greek and Coptic correspondence with Christian subordinates. At the other end of the spectrum, Byzantine-Egyptian value systems found an echo in the social behavior of the Arab-Muslim ruling class *vis-à-vis* its subjects throughout the seventh and early eighth centuries. **Eugenio Garosi** provides a comparative analysis of the lexical, formulaic, and visual features of Muslim officials' missives addressed to Christian officials. These reveal a mitigation of distinctive Arab-Muslim cultural identifiers in the shift from Arabic to Greek and Coptic and a propensity towards culturally ambiguous parameters of epistolary politesse and inclusively monotheistic figures of speech.

Overall, the scions of Arab conquerors were confronted with a culturally self-aware local elite. The fear of cultural assimilation of the tiny, if militarily hegemonic, minority of conquerors was one of the motors behind the army policies implemented by the Muslims in Egypt in the early decades after the conquest. As **Alon Dar** describes in his contribution, Muslim tradition ascribes to ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb the controversial decision to prohibit Arab "fighting men" from possessing land and to instruct them to settle in the garrison city (Arab. *miṣr*) of al-Fusṭāṭ, thus hindering them from becoming scattered throughout the countryside and acculturated to the ways of the native population.

Finally, implementing centralizing administrative reforms over the course of the eighth century was an important catalyst for acculturating the Byzantine-Egyptian population. **Jennifer Cromwell**'s chapter elucidates how the scribe Psate's increasing involvement in documents pertaining to taxation in his later career in early eighth-century Jeme is reflected in his shift from Coptic to Greek signatures and modification of his Greek script's features. As far as written media are concerned, language and script choices do not depend on decisions made instinctively, but rather reflect broader cultural trends. For tax receipts, Psate introduced a variant of the Greek script that shows affinities with documentary hands from other regions of Egypt. This development alerts us to a change in scribal training and suggests that the central administration had become more involved in (or had gained more influence over) the training of local administrators and the collection of taxes. It also prefigures more closely regulated scribal practices in the decades that were to come.

**Lucian Reinfandt** presents us a representative of this subsequent generation, which saw the rise of a class of native Egyptian professional bureaucrats who

**71** Richter (2010) 215.

acted as bi- and trilingual scribes for their Arab-Muslim superiors. The expertise of these specialized clerks transcended mastery of multiple languages and scripts *stricto sensu* and included the adoption of cultural traits like Arabic names, mastery of Arabic scribal conventions, and conversion to Islam. These allowed them to cross cultural boundaries and act as bridges between different value systems. The ambiguous cultural profile of these individuals not only made them valuable resources for their Arab-Muslim superiors both within and outside the administration, but also represented a pathway towards higher social standing, legal security, and economic benefits. Conversely, the appropriation of elite cultural identifiers weakened these transcultural bureaucrats' ties with their (conjecturally Coptic) native cultural milieus, which resulted in stronger dependency on the rulers. Gradually, this class of professional clerks was instrumental in reforming the mechanics of Egypt's administrative hierarchy, prompting the gradual replacement of local non-Arabicized elites more loosely integrated in the Arab-Muslim imperial system.

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# 1 Servants to the Rulers, Masters of the Land: Governors, Provincial Authorities, and Great Landowners

Matthias Stern

# Local Magnates, but Mobile: Elite Dynamics in Byzantine Provinces

## "Local magnates" and "bureaucrats"

The official elites of early Islamic Egypt are usually thought to have fundamentally differed – at least since the latter part of the seventh century – from the old local landowning aristocrats who had filled the ranks of the Byzantine provincial administration.[1] Pagarchs – officials who were most notably responsible for the collection of taxes in the nomes of Byzantine and early Islamic Egypt – frequently serve as a prime illustration for this argument.[2] In this conception, pagarchs were powerful local landowners who were largely independent from the Byzantine central authority, but became subject to a stricter hierarchy and more formal control after the Islamic conquest. Finally, it has been argued that the new government increasingly replaced these Christian magnates[3] with a more bureaucratic Muslim elite who did not possess any landholdings in their areas of responsibility and whose tenures as pagarchs were part of their official *cursus*. In short: "their loyalty lay with their Arab Muslim colleagues, not with a local agricultural estate."[4] A notable representative

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**2** On the pagarchs generally, see Mazza (1995) with further literature on p. 169 n. 1, and more recently Liebeschuetz (2001) 188–189, Banaji (2007) Chapters 4–6 *passim*, and Ruffini (2008) 187–195. The Egyptian nomes are generally viewed as having undergone a process of "municipalization" in the course of the Roman period, during which they legally became Roman cities (*civitates* or *poleis*) with their surrounding territories; see Maresch (2007) and Bagnall (1993) 54–62. In the early Islamic period, this administrative entity would have been called a *pagarchia* (e.g., in *P.Lond.* IV 1461.16, 22, etc.), which, in the Byzantine period, generally referred to the office of the pagarch and its official authority (e.g., in *P.Oxy.* XVI 1829.3). Throughout this paper, I shall employ the latter meaning for "pagarchy."

**3** E.g., the pagarch Flavius Papas, who was a local landowner in the second half of the seventh century and whose father Flavius Liberios had already been a pagarch; see Foss (2009).

**4** Sijpesteijn (2013) 210. I cite this work as the most recent comprehensive treatment of several aspects linked to this question; see also Papaconstantinou (2015). The more general argument of a more "efficient" government in the early Islamic period goes back to the earliest days of papyrology: prominent instances include Harold I. Bell in *P.Lond.* IV, p. xxiii, xxxv–xxxvii and Grohmann (1964)

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of these later pagarchs is ʿAṭiyya b. Juʿayd a.k.a. Flavius Atias, son of Goedos, who was pagarch of Arsinoe at least from 694 to 697 and was subsequently appointed *dux* of the province of Arcadia until 703 or 712 and at times even also covered the province of the Thebaid. Another example is Nājid b. Muslim, who was pagarch of Herakleopolis at least from 728 to 730 before being appointed pagarch of Arsinoe for some time between 730 and 750.[5]

The evidence concerning pagarchs from early Islamic Egypt – particularly the archives of the pagarchs Flavius Papas (second half of the seventh century) and Flavius Basileios (early eighth century) – is admittedly replete with internal administrative letters that pagarchs received from their superiors, while hardly any such communications have survived from the Byzantine period.[6] But this fact alone hardly proves that pagarchs were now more directly subordinate to their superiors. Here, the state of the evidence may be deceiving: the archives of Papas and Basileios comprise their own official papers, whereas the Byzantine pagarchs have left us nothing from their official bureaus. Instead, the Byzantine evidence on the pagarchs stems from other layers of administration – either from the village level, as in the case of the Dioscorus archive, or from the estates of landowners who happened to be pagarchs or wield pagarchic authority, as in the Oxyrhynchite and the Fayyūm.

This paper does not seek to call into doubt the elaborate integration of the pagarchs into the administration of the evolving Islamic empire, but to turn the question around: can the model elaborated from the more abundant early Islamic evidence on the pagarchs help us identify similar patterns in the sparser Byzantine material that would render the watershed supposedly marked by ʿAṭiyya/Atias as perhaps less striking than it has often been taken to be? Naturally, within the context of the present volume, this article can only offer a preliminary treatment of this question, but rereading the relevant documents reveals various modes of integrating provincial elites – in patterns that seem remarkably close to those of the post-conquest period. To demonstrate this, I will tackle two aspects of the question posed above: what was the primary orientation of the ambitions and actions of these elites, and how mobile were they? Accordingly, this paper is organized around two well-known nuclei of documentation for Byzantine Egypt: first, the Apiones archive

132–134. For a "Byzantine version" of this argument, stressing the importance of agricultural production to these large landholders, see Sarris (2006).

**5** On ʿAṭiyya, or Flavius Atias, see Sijpesteijn (2013) 201 n. 454, also pointing out that it is not certain whether ʿAṭiyya was actually a Muslim; also Cromwell (2013) and Morelli (2014) 97 n. 2. See also Sijpesteijn (2013) 88 n. 286 on the lack of evidence for any landholdings in ʿAṭiyya's possession. On Nājid, see Sijpesteijn (2013) 124–125 and *passim*. Cf., however, *CPR* XXIV 33, a receipt dating to 653 and addressed to an unknown individual who was possibly *dux* of Arcadia and pagarch of Arsinoe at the same time; see ll. 4–5: [Φλ(αουίῳ) – ca.? – τῷ εὐκλεεστάτῳ δουκὶ τῆς Ἀρκάδω]ν ἐπαρχίας καὶ παγάρχ(ῳ) ταύτη[ς τῆς | Ἀρσινοϊτῶν πόλεως. If this restoration holds – and alternatives seem less likely – one should, however, possibly rather read δουκὶ ταύτης τῆς instead of τῆς only; cf., e.g., *CPR* XIV 32.5–6 and *P.Prag.* I 64.6–7.

**6** See Foss (2009) on the archive of Papas, and Richter (2010) on the archive of Basileios.

and the papyri of the Fayyūm elites, and second, the archive of Dioscorus from the village of Aphrodito in the Antaiopolite nome. While the former presents us with pagarchs from the uppermost stratum of the Byzantine aristocracy, the latter yields far more instances of lower-ranking pagarchs.[7]

## Imperial and regional focus among Arcadian elites

Of all the Byzantine Egyptian aristocrats, the Flavii Apiones of Oxyrhynchos have long served as prototypical examples of large landowners "infiltrating" the local administration and working toward personal (or dynastic) enrichment and local power at the expense of the state.[8] But in recent decades, scholars have increasingly pointed to these elites' cooperation in matters of public concern, for instance, their assumption of official responsibilities through their *oikoi* (i. e., institutionalized "houses").[9] Furthermore, their horizon was clearly broader than their landholdings – and continuously focused toward the imperial center. The Apiones were most probably from Egypt, but they took up residence in Constantinople when they rose to high imperial honors during the course of the fifth century.[10] Flavius Apion II, for instance, was granted the extraordinary honor of *consul ordinarius* in 539 – at a point when he was between a mere 10 and 21 years of age.[11] He regularly bore the most-distinguished epithets *hyperphyestatos* and *paneuphēmos* and later was even granted the title of *patricius*, which made him part of the top social stratum of the empire.[12] In the Oxyrhynchite papyri, Apion II figures as a *geouchōn* in control of a local estate as early as 543, but these texts regularly feature an institutionalized formula of representation suggesting his absence.[13] Nothing, in fact, indicates that Apion ever discharged

**7** There is a wide spectrum of ranks among the pagarchs (see Gascou [1972] 69), and one finds most of the higher-ranking epithets attached to them: *lamprotatos* (Lat. *clarissimus*), *peribleptos* (Lat. *spectabilis*), *megaloprepestatos* (Lat. *magnificentissimus*), *endoxotatos* (Lat. *gloriosissimus*), *hyperphyestatos* (Lat. *excellentissimus*), *paneuphēmos* (Lat. *famosissimus*). This is not the place to engage more deeply with the Byzantine aristocratic hierarchy; on that topic, still see Koch (1903) and Hornickel (1930), both in need of major revision.

**8** E. g., Gelzer (1909) and Hardy (1931).

**9** This interpretation has most prominently been advanced by Rémondon (1974) and Gascou (1985); see Hickey (2012) for the most recent elaborate defense of this model, particularly in response to Sarris (2006).

**10** On the Apiones (and their "numbering"), see recently Hickey (2012) 8 – 18 and Mazza (2013) with further literature.

**11** E. g., *P.Oxy.* I 133.4 (Oxyrhynchos; 550).

**12** *PSI* III 191.1 – 2 (Oxyrhynchos; 565).

**13** E. g., *P.Oxy.* I 133.5 – 7: διὰ Μηνᾶ οἰκέτου τοῦ ἐπερωτῶντος | καὶ προσπορίζοντος τῷ ἰδίῳ δεσπότῃ τῷ αὐτῷ πανευφήμῳ ἀνδρὶ τὴν ἀγωγὴν καὶ | ἐνοχήν. See Ruffini (2008) 51 n. 52 for the debate about the significance of this formula. Its use as a "legal fiction" in cases of absence is advanced by Sarris (2006) 161 with n. 44. Other *oiketai* than Menas appear in connection with the Oxyrhynchite Apiones in *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4390.4 – 5 (Oxyrhynchos; 469), *P.Oxy.* LXXXII 5332.4 – 6 (Oxyrhynchos; 480), and *P.Oxy.*

any office in Egypt. His pagarchic authority, then, is only indirectly attested: it is not part of his titulature, but it was added later in three documents concerning individuals hailing from a village that was "pagarchically administered" (*pagarchoumenē*) by Apion or by his "glorious house," the *endoxos oikos*.[14] This illustrates that Apion was not a pagarch, but that his *oikos* had to bear a village-based "pagarchic responsibility" even in his absence.[15] His father Strategios II and the later Apion III follow this pattern closely, and it is therefore probably misleading to conceive of the Apiones as pagarchs focused on their local powerbase. Quite the opposite was the case: the "pagarchic responsibility" served as a means to make these imperial magnates responsible for the imperial cause at the local level.[16]

Another prominent figure in Byzantine Egypt was Flavius Strategios Paneuphemos, who was pagarch of the Fayyūm and who, like Apion II, regularly bore the distinguished epithets *hyperphyestatos* and *paneuphēmos*.[17] Strategios also rose to the rank of *patricius*. In contrast to Apion II, however, Strategios is indeed personally addressed as pagarch in many legal documents dating from between 600 and 612, and their distribution suggests that he held the pagarchy continuously throughout this period, and possibly also earlier or later.[18] As he is never represented in legal docu-

LXXXII 5337.5–6 (Oxyrhynchos; 493). Notable uses of this formula from other nomes include *CPR* XXIV 25.7–9 (Herakleopolis; 598), which concerns a Strategios (probably Strategios Paneuphemos, who will be discussed below) and his *meizoteros*, and *P.Stras.* IV 229.4–6 (Panopolites; 502), which concerns a *singularis* of the *dux* and his slave (*pais*).

**14** *P.Oxy.* I 133.7–8 (Oxyrhynchos; 550): τῆς κώμης Τάκονα (...) παγαρχουμένη[ς ὑ]πὸ τοῦ οἴκου τῆς ὑμῶν ἐνδοξότητος; cf. *P.Lond.* III 776.5–7 (Oxyrhynchos; 552) and *P.Oxy.* LXX 4787.9–10 (Oxyrhynchos; 564). In the last case, ὑπό should be supplied for παρά in the lacuna since the latter is a later variant.

**15** The relationship of the expression κώμη παγαρχουμένη to the pagarchy of Oxyrhynchos is more complicated than outlined here, but this is not the place to delve further into this issue. For our purposes, it is sufficient to equate both institutions, given their potential to tie elites to local administrative responsibilities; see Stern (2015) 142–143.

**16** See also the regulations of Justinian's Edict XIII (539), which made the pagarchs (of Aegyptus and the Thebaid; the passages for Augustamnica and Arcadia are lost) subordinate to the *duces et Augustales* while the emperor retained the final verdict over their tenure – and, for that matter, over their *ousiai* (Chapters 12 and 25). This attests not only to the significance of the pagarchs' official responsibilities but also to their links to the central government.

**17** On this man, see Palme (2016) 216–217 with further literature. Scholarship has added Strategios' most-reputable epithet to his name in order to distinguish him from the numerous other Byzantine Egyptian aristocrats called "Strategios," not least in the Apion family. The links of Strategios Paneuphemos (and those of another Apion, who was pagarch, *stratēlatēs*, and honorary consul) to the Oxyrhynchite Apiones, once unquestioned, have come under scrutiny in recent decades (see *P.Oxy.* LXX, p. 93) and are still far from clear.

**18** E.g., *SB* XXIV 16288.5–6 (Arsinoe; 600). According to *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67002.10–11 (see also *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67283.2–3), the tenure of the Antaiopolite pagarch Menas, who will be discussed below, started with the inception of the indiction year. Counting in indiction years, Strategios is attested as pagarch in the years 3, 4, 9, 11, 13, and 15 of the indiction cycle of 597/598–612/613, leaving little, if any, room for a break in his tenure.

ments the way the Apiones are, he appears to have been based in Egypt and to have formally conducted his public and private business himself. Strategios would clearly serve as one of Emperor Heraclius' right-hand men in Egypt – a role that even a passage in the chronicle of Michael the Syrian attests to. There, Strategios is involved, by imperial directive, in mediating at a meeting between the Alexandrian and Antiochean churches at Alexandria in 617.[19]

A more pointed local focus was adopted by Flavius Menas, the *endoxotatos stratēlatēs* who succeeded Strategios Paneuphemos as pagarch.[20] His landholdings are attested exclusively from the Fayyūm and his pagarchy there extended at least from 616 to 622. This means that his tenure witnessed the Persian occupation of Egypt from 619 to 629, which is particularly interesting since Menas, as *endoxotatos stratēlatēs*, was in a position occupied by very few people in Egypt at this time.[21] It is remarkable to find someone as high in rank still in office after the Persian conquest, and it suggests that Menas found it worthwhile to save his regional standing rather than to flee. It has been proposed that this would have had serious consequences for him once Egypt fell back to the Byzantine empire in 629.[22] But two documents most probably dating from after the reconquest still reference Menas' estate as an administrative unit under his name, and Menas is still granted the exceptional dignity of *stratēlatēs*, so his reputation cannot have taken much damage.[23] But why was Menas not punished after 629 if he had collaborated with the Persian invaders? This case may illustrate, on the one hand, that Menas contented himself with a

**19** See Van Loon (2017) 128–129 with further discussion and also Gascou (1985) 71 with n. 391. The date of this meeting, on which see Allen (2013) 197–198, is especially interesting because a new papyrus, published in Van Loon's article, shows Menas, the *endoxotatos stratēlatēs* – who will also be discussed below – as pagarch of the Fayyūm as early as 20 February 616. Since the new text has Strategios still alive, it is very likely that the latter was no longer pagarch at that time, and I would suppose that it is not a coincidence that Strategios acted as the emperor's delegate after he had laid down (or was deprived of) his pagarchy, which would underscore his personal involvement in regional official business. Though not impossible, it so far seems unlikely that Menas and Strategios were in office at the same time: the available spans (if they acted continuously during these periods, as is highly likely) for Strategios' and Menas' tenures are so clearly spread (600–612 vs. 616–622, adopting the closest possible dates for the relevant documents) that it would seem daring to assume that their tenures overlapped even for a short period. Moreover, the example of the Antaiopolite pagarchs Ioannes and Serenos appears to suggest that pagarchs in general jointly took office and also jointly stepped down; see Fournet (2000) 247.

**20** On Menas, see Van Loon (2017) 128 with further literature.

**21** See *CPR* XXIV, p. 178.

**22** *CPR* XXIV, p. 180.

**23** *SPP* III$^2$ 153.1–2 (11 April 629 or 644): [ὑ]ποδέκτ(ης) οὐσί(ας) Μηνᾶ τοῦ [ἐν]δ̣ο̣ξ̣(ο)τ̣(άτου) | στρ[ατ]ηλ̣ά̣του, where Menas is apparently still alive, and *SPP* III 344.1–2 (643 or 658): βουκελλάριος οὐσίας τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις Μηνᾶ γενωμένου (read γενομένου) στρ[ατηλάτου] | τῆς Ἀρσινοιτῶν πόλεως. The editor of *SPP* III$^2$ 72 A identifies the late *endoxotatos stratēlatēs* in this text, whose name is lost, with Menas, but as Sophie Kovarik has informed me, this text is far more likely to be from the end of the seventh century and the *endoxotatos stratēlatēs* may well be the Stephanos from *P.Ross.Georg.* III 53.

strong position in the province, but it also suggests that such conduct was of minor significance for the central administration. For the role of the pagarchy was precisely a local one, and this apparently easy transition to a new regime indicates the pagarchs' firm place within the apparatus of local public administration.[24]

## Mobile bureaucrats in the Thebaid

The Dioscorus archive features a strikingly different sort of pagarch, and the most famous of them is probably another Menas (the name was common), who may serve to exemplify a more mobile kind of bureaucrat.[25] In 553, this Flavius Menas, a *lamprotatos scriniarius*, was pagarch of Antaiopolis as part of a collegium, although he was apparently not pagarch in his own right, but rather acting as a deputy for the *endoxotatē* Patrikia.[26] He then held the pagarchy a second time starting from the beginning of the year 566/567 when he was still *lamprotatos scriniarius*, though there is no longer any reference to Patrikia.[27] It is during this second tenure that the petitions of the poet-notary Dioscorus made Menas a notorious example of a class of large landowners aggressively repressing the late Roman peasantry.[28] The last document to mention Menas dates to March 570 and does not attribute a pagarchy to him.[29] Instead, this papyrus refers to him as "*lamprotatos* and *peribleptos* lord Menas, *scriniarius* of the noble ducal bureau of the Lower Thebaid."[30] The epithet *peribleptos* is notable

**24** See also the example of Flavius Theodorakios, who was pagarch of Arsinoe before and after the Islamic conquest, his tenure being so far narrowed down by *W.Chr.* 8 (639/640) and *CPR* XXIV 32 (4 May 651).

**25** See Keenan (2001) 66–68 and 70; for a similar pattern in the province of Arcadia, see p. 72–73. On Menas, see Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Menas 13. His local connections within the village of Aphrodito are analyzed by Ruffini (2008) 191–194. See also Loreleï Vanderheyden's contribution to the present volume: Menas makes some appearances in Dioscorus' unpublished Coptic letters.

**26** Cf. *P.Lond.* V 1661.5–6 (Aphrodito; 24 July 553): Φλ(αουίῳ) Ἰουλιανῷ τῷ μεγαλοπρεπεστάτῳ ἀπὸ ἀρχόντων καὶ Μηνᾶ λαμπροτάτῳ | σκριναρίῳ καὶ παγάρχαις τῆς Ἀνταιοπολιτῶν and *P.Lond.* V 1660.5–8 (Antaiopolites; ca. 553): τῶν μ]ε[γ]αλοπρεπεστάτων κοινῶν | δεσποτῶν παγάρχων Ἰουλιανο(ῦ) τοῦ μεγαλοπρεστάτου (read μεγαλοπρεπεστάτου) ἀπὸ ἀρχ[όν]τ[ων] | καὶ τῆς ἐνδοξοτάτης Πατρικίας δ(ιὰ) τοῦ λαμπρο(τάτου) κυρίου Μηνᾶ αὐτῆς διοικητοῦ καὶ | παγάρχ(ου). On Ioulianos, see below.

**27** *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 col. I 6 and 9–11 (Antinoopolis; May–July 567). In view of the small overall number of texts, Patrikia's "absence" does not, however, necessarily have to mean anything.

**28** See, e.g., Gelzer (1909) esp. 92–96, Bell (1917) 99–100, Hardy (1931) 137–138, and MacCoull (1988) *passim*. The episode features in *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002, *P.Aphrod.Lit.* IV 3, *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67021, *P.Lond.* V 1674, and *P.Lond.* V 1677.

**29** *P.Lond.* V 1714 (Antinoopolis; 14 March 570). Menas is only mentioned in a patronymic reference, which is generally not expected to provide his full titulature. The apparently active association with the ducal bureau certainly precluded him, however, from actively exercising the pagarchy in Antaiopolis.

**30** *P.Lond.* V 1714.12–13: τοῦ λαμπροτάτου καὶ περιβλέπτου κυρίου | Μηνᾶ σκρινιαρίου τῆς κατὰ Θηβαΐδα λαμπρᾶς δουκικῆς τάξεως.

here, as it indicates a rank higher than that of a simple *lamprotatos*, and the fact that Menas now works for the provincial government in Antinoopolis indicates that Dioscorus' petitions cannot have got him into too much trouble.[31] The same text attests to Menas' son Flavius Theodoros, "the *lamprotatos exceptor* of the same ducal bureau, hailing from Antaiopolis, where he is also a landlord (*geouchōn*)."[32] It is highly uncommon for *lamprotatoi* to be referred to by their origin, and in this case the reason is probably that Theodoros was not from the city where he held his post: Theodoros hailed from Antaiopolis, where his father Menas had been pagarch. In this light, Menas emerges as a career bureaucrat who drew on his education as a *scriniarius* in order to attain a position otherwise out of his reach – the Antaiopolite pagarchy. By exercising this post, he recommended himself for higher positions and apparently also paved the way for his son's career.

As is apparent from the aforementioned text, many connections linked Antinoopolis, the capital of the Thebaid, with Antaiopolis, revealing a mobile elite with supralocal interests. In addition to the example of Menas, this is also illustrated by the pagarch Kollouthos.[33] In one of his poems, Dioscorus hails Kollouthos as *comes* and pagarch, as an Antinoopolite councilor, and as a "leader of cities" who "saved" Antinoopolis, where Dioscorus was dwelling at that time.[34] He goes on to identify Kollouthos as the brother of Kallinikos and Dorotheos, whom we know as high-ranking staff in the ducal bureau of the Thebaid under the *dux* Athanasios. Kollouthos' father, Apa Dios, is hailed as a "protector of cities" and, like his son, as a "leader of cities" who "saved" Antinoopolis.[35] Certainly this family would have been based in the provincial capital. But in the same poem, Dioscorus also hails Kollouthos as an "eagle of the whole land of Aphrodito" who has "come to us to take pity on the whole land of Aphrodito, which suffers from lamentable troubles at the hands of your unjust predecessors."[36] If this relates to the villagers' conflicts with the pagarch Menas, then the text may indicate that Kollouthos was pagarch

**31** For "rehabilitations" of Menas, see Rémondon (1961) 86 and Geraci (1979). For a reading of this episode with regard to Menas' role in imperial policy, see Stern (forthcoming).

**32** *P.Lond*. V 1714.12–15: Φλαυΐῳ Θεοδώρῳ (...) | τῷ λαμπροτάτῳ ἐξκέπτορι τῆς αὐτῆς τάξεως ὁρμωμένῳ | ἀπὸ τῆς Ἀνταιοπολιτῶν ἐφ' ἧς καὶ γευχοῦντι.

**33** Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Kollouthos 36.

**34** *P.Aphrod.Lit*. IV 14 (Antinoopolis; 567 or end of 568–573) heading: εἰς τὸν Κολλοῦθον τὸν πάγαρχον; ll. 1–2: ὦ παντάριστε τῷ λόγῳ πρυτάνεων | βουλῆς γερόντων; 33–34: κυβερνητῆρε πολήων | καὶ πτόλιν ἐξεσάωσαν ἐύκτιτον Ἀντινοῆος. *P.Aphrod.Lit*. IV 28 (Aphrodito?; 542/543 or 547/550?) also refers to him but does not contain any further information on his status. In the following, I have adapted the English translations found in MacCoull (1988) 96–97 and 100–101 according to Jean-Luc Fournet's reedition in *P.Aphrod.Lit*.

**35** *P.Aphrod.Lit*. IV 14.33–34 and 44–45; Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Kallinikos 17, Dorotheos 12, and Apa Dios 1.

**36** *P.Aphrod.Lit*. IV 14.25 and 35–36. Dioskoros employs poetic aliases for the village of Aphrodito in both instances.

of Antaiopolis, and, even more precisely, that he was Menas' successor.[37] And indeed, in a petition to the *dux*, a woman from Aphrodito writes that "my master, the *lamprotatos* lord Kollouthos, the *cancellarius* and pagarch, ordered that I be released [from prison]."[38] Since Aphrodito was situated in the Antaiopolite nome, the authority displayed here certainly implies that Kollouthos was pagarch of Antaiopolis, although we have no evidence that Kollouthos owned estates in the village of Aphrodito or anywhere else in the Antaiopolite.[39] In any case, he apparently moved up the Nile to personally exercise the pagarchy there. An alternative explanation could be that Kollouthos was or had been pagarch not of Antaiopolis but of Antinoopolis and that he came to Aphrodito in another capacity (which "predecessors" would then only vaguely relate to), possibly as a delegate of the *dux*.[40]

In contrast to Menas, the *scriniarius*, the pagarch Flavius Ioulianos shares the rather high-ranking background of the three aforementioned members of the Arcadian elite.[41] He is a *megaloprepestatos* and *endoxotatos* pagarch, and he is additionally honored as a former *praeses* and *illoustrios*.[42] He thus found himself at the upper end of the Thebaid aristocracy, owned estates in the Antaiopolite, and appears to have been personally involved in the performance of the Antaiopolite pagarchy in the

**37** For this hypothesis, see also Harold I. Bell in *P.Lond*. V, p. 147.

**38** *P.Cair.Masp*. I 67005.19 (Antinoopolis; 567 or 568): ἐκέλευσεν ὁ δεσπ(ότης) μου ὁ λαμπρ(ότατος) κύριος Κόλλουθος ὁ καγκελλάριος κ(αὶ) παγάρχης ἀπολυθῆναί με.

**39** A possible match could be Ruffini's Kollouthos 8 (Ruffini [2011] *s.n.*), who was a landowner, but this man could equally well be Kollouthos 27, a *scriniarius* and landholder in Aphrodito whose filiation renders an identification with the pagarch Kollouthos of *P.Aphrod.Lit*. IV 14 impossible.

**40** Cf. *P.Leid.Inst*. 72 (Antinoopolis; VI): Φλ(άουιος) Κολλοῦθος ἐξκ(έπτωρ) (καὶ) πάγαρχ(ος) Ἀντι(νόου), but the name is common. See Fournet (1993) 234 n. 42 on the link and other possible but inconclusive identifications with various Thebaid provincial bureaucrats named Kollouthos. Also Mazza (1995) 204–205 with n. 110 refers to this discussion and hesitates to identify both Kollouthoi. Gelzer (1913) 361 and Liebeschuetz (1974) 163 n. 10 both assumed that Kollouthos was pagarch of Antaiopolis, but that was still before *P.Leid.Inst*. 72 had been published. Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Kollouthos 36 does not consider this text. For the possibility that Kollouthos came to Aphrodito in a different capacity than that of a pagarch, see *P.Aphrod.Lit*. IV 14.32: κυβερνητῆρε πολήων, "leader of cities," which Dioscorus elsewhere employs to refer to the *dux* (see the commentary). There is no evidence of a Byzantine pagarch holding pagarchies in two different nomes (the case of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis is an exception due to the latter's territory being carved out of the Arsinoite nome), so this should not be the preferred reading of the Kollouthos dossier.

**41** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Ioulianos 2. Ruffini's Ioulianos 2 is possibly identical to his Ioulianos 1, an *endoxotatos apo eparchōn* (former prefect) who owned an estate in the vicinity of Aphrodito (*P.Cair.Masp*. I 67060) and who exercised a certain fiscal authority in the Antaiopolite nome (*P.Cair.Masp*. I 67285; *P.Lond*. V 1674.37–38). Yet the estimate of Constantin Zuckerman (in *P.Aphrod.Reg.*, p. 221–222) that this Ioulianos owned about two-thirds of Aphrodito's lands is likely to overstate the case; for a more cautious approach, see Ruffini (2008) 149, following Bagnall (2008) 188–189.

**42** Both documents that refer to Ioulianos as an *apo archontōn* (*P.Lond*. V 1660.6 and *P.Lond*. V 1661.5) do not call him an *illoustrios*, which begs the question of whether the titles possibly share a comparable reputation.

late 540s and early 550s.[43] So it seems remarkable, at the least, that this man was not a local or even from the Thebaid at all, as is apparent from the draft of an imperial rescript that has come down to us in three different manuscripts. In two of them, Ioulianos is referred to by the surname "the Arsinoite."[44] This passing remark illustrates a lingering problem: it is only by chance that we are able to identify such aristocratic outsiders at all, since writers did not (need to) refer to them by their origin when using the more distinctive titles and epithets. Are cases like Menas' son Theodoros – referred to as a *geouchōn* in Antaiopolis in a document from Antinoopolis[45] – the rule or the exception? Could there possibly have been more outsiders among the "local" aristocracy who simply escape our notice and represent further "known unknowns"?[46] Ioulianos' relocation to the Thebaid may have been due to his position of *praeses* – if this was not simply an honorary attribution – or because he was granted extensive landed estates there as some sort of imperial reward for earlier service that then rendered him eligible or obligated to hold the pagarchy there.[47] In the case of Ioulianos, this may be speculation, but we will see below that a probable precedent exists.

## A literary precedent?

A pagarch also appears in the *Life of Aaron*, a late antique Coptic hagiographical work examined in depth by Jitse Dijkstra in his 2008 monograph.[48] In one passage, Aaron tells the story of Makedonios, the future first bishop of Philae, who explains to Aaron how he originally came to the region of the First Cataract: "For he said to me: 'When I was still a notable, and started to become rich, I went south, because I was

**43** *PSI* IV 283, with Lemaire (2010), attests to Ioulianos' estates and seems to imply (the papyrus is damaged here) that he changed residence because of his holding the pagarchy, and in *P.Lond.* V 1660, Ioulianos – in contrast to the *endoxotatē* Patrikia – has no representative. His conflicts with the villagers of Aphrodito would also appear to attest to his personal involvement.

**44** *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024 recto: Ἰοὐλιανόν, παγάρχην τῆς Ἀνταιοπολιτῶν; *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024 verso: Ἰουλιανὸν τὸν ἐπίκλην Ἀρσενοΐτην καὶ παγάρχην τῆς Ἀνταιοπολ(ίτων); *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67025: Ἰουλιανὸν τὸν ἐπίκλην Ἀρσενοΐτην, παγάρχην τῆς Ἀνταιοπολιτῶν (all l. 31). None of these drafts were supposed to be the final document brought to Constantinople. For a reconstruction of the significance and procedures of petition and rescript, see Zuckerman (2004), especially p. 82–83 and 88–90.

**45** *P.Lond.* V 1714; see above.

**46** James G. Keenan, "'Known unknowns': Thoughts on lost (papyrus) evidence", paper given at the 5th international conference of the research network *Imperium and Officium:* "Governing ancient empires," Vienna, 5–7 November 2014.

**47** Cf. Jairus Banaji's model of a new bureaucratic elite claiming economically powerful local positions based on accomplished imperial service; see Banaji (2007) 101–170, especially p. 128.

**48** Dijkstra (2008). See now Dijkstra/Van der Vliet (2020) for a new critical edition with translation and line-by-line commentary.

pagarch over these cities.'"[49] It is striking that the text deploys the pagarchy in order to describe Makedonios' motivation for coming to Philae: for the audience of the *Life of Aaron*, it must have been perfectly plausible that a pagarch could be appointed in a region to which he apparently had little, if any, connection. This is all the more striking since Coptic hagiographic sources only rarely specify public offices,[50] so the use of the pagarchy must be a significant factor in rendering the narration plausible here.

As we have seen at the beginning of this article, one would not be surprised to find an outsider appointed as pagarch in the Islamic period. It is highly probable, however, that the passage about Makedonios' motives was addressed to a Byzantine audience.[51] The text of the work has come down to us via a complete tenth-century paper codex, but there is another manuscript only preserved in some small and heavily damaged fragments assigned to the sixth or seventh century on paleographical grounds.[52] Regarding its overall content, particularly the construction of a Christian identity and the connection to the temple of Isis at Philae, Dijkstra makes a compelling case that the *Life of Aaron* addresses a sixth-century audience.[53] The story supposedly takes place in the fourth century and at the beginning of the fifth, yet the image of the pagarch presented here is considerably different from that of the fourth-century officials who held the same title. While the latter were municipal liturgists, each responsible for only fractions of a nome,[54] the pagarchs from at least the sixth century onward were responsible for the entire rural part of a particular nome. Dijkstra convincingly argues that the compiler of the *Life of Aaron* drew on an anachronism here in order to explain Makedonios' presence in Philae.[55]

In our context, however, it may still appear conceivable that the pagarchy was attributed to Makedonios only retrospectively after the Islamic conquest, especially

**49** ⲁϥϫⲟⲟⲥ ⲅⲁⲣ [ⲛⲁⲓ ϫⲉⲉⲧ]ⲓ ⲉⲓⲟ ⲛⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ ⲉⲁⲓϫⲓⲁⲣⲭⲏ ⲛⲧⲙ[ⲛⲧⲡ]ⲗⲟⲩⲥⲓⲟⲥ ⲁⲓⲉⲓ ⲉⲣⲏⲥ ⲉⲓⲡⲁⲅⲁⲣⲭⲏ ⲉ[ϫ]ⲛ ⲛⲉⲓⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ. For text and translation, see Dijkstra (2008) 255 and Dijkstra (2007) 193 – 194. In this literary context, ⲡⲟⲗⲓⲥ certainly has to be taken with a grain of salt, referring to "towns," i. e., larger settlements, rather than "cities" (*civitates*) in a legal sense.

**50** Dijkstra (2008) 261.

**51** It is notable that this would make the *Life of Aaron* one of the earliest Coptic sources to attest a pagarch at all; see the attestations of the Greek loanword in Coptic documentary texts in Förster (2002) 599 – 600, *s.v.* παγαρχία and πάγαρχος. This must, however, be seen in the context of documentary habits that only later led to the use of Coptic in administrative and official contexts; see Fournet (2009) 430 – 441, Clackson (2010) 89 – 104, and Van der Vliet (2013). For another early Coptic testimony of pagarchs, see Johnson (1976) with fragment 2 recto, col. a, ll. 15 – 24 of the *Coptic Ecclesiastical History* (on which in general see Orlandi [2007] 3 – 25), which is inconceivable in any context other than a Byzantine one; see López (2013) 145 n. 20.

**52** The fragments have first been edited in Dijkstra/Van der Vliet (2015); for their paleography, see p. 373 – 374.

**53** Dijkstra (2008) 329 – 333.

**54** See, e. g., *P.Oxy.* XVII 2110 (Oxyrhynchos; 370). For other early occurrences of πάγαρχος/παγάρχης and its cognates, see Stern (2015) 144 n. 107.

**55** Dijkstra (2008) 262.

if such works are to be considered "living literature": a later audience could possibly no longer relate to the text's original reasoning, so the pagarchy would have been added in order to make Makedonios' move plausible again.[56] Nevertheless, two observations about this passage suggest that it does indeed deal with an essentially Byzantine conception of the pagarchy: first, as Dijkstra notes, the pagarchy in this text is linked to the idea of being rich, which the text conveys through the Greek loanword *plousios*. This coheres with the liturgical traits of the Byzantine pagarchy,[57] and since the term is not common in Coptic,[58] it must be an important feature in rendering Makedonios' link to the pagarchy plausible. And second, to describe Makedonios' position, the Coptic text does not simply attribute the title of pagarch to him but instead draws on the Greek verb *pagarchein* ("to be pagarch"), which does not occur after the Persian conquest and is thus unlikely to have been inserted at a later date.[59] So the point stands that a Byzantine audience of the sixth (or early seventh) century seemingly saw nothing odd about a pagarch moving to an obscure remote place in order to exercise the pagarchy there.

## Conclusion

Change is, naturally, ubiquitous. This contribution does not seek to deny that Egypt's administration changed profoundly during the course of the seventh and eighth centuries, nor to imply that pagarchs of Ioulianos' kind "inspired" pagarchs like ʿAṭiyya b. Juʿayd or Nājid b. Muslim. Yet the results draw attention to the manifold faces of the Byzantine pagarchy and its incumbent pagarchs. The individual histories outlined here demonstrate a variety of career patterns: not only were these pagarchs

**56** This objection becomes to some degree plausible if the historical Makedonios really held a Roman military function, as hypothesized by Dijkstra (2008) 262. If this was the case, then this would have presumably supplied the original motive for him to come to Philae, but this reasoning would possibly not have been easily understood after the Islamic conquest. On the concept of "living literature," see Dijkstra/Van der Vliet (2015) 385–386.

**57** On the liturgical aspects, see Mazza (1995) 196 and 201–202.

**58** Dijkstra (2008) 261 with n. 31; the word even lacks an entry in Förster (2002).

**59** Dijkstra (2008) 255 n. 8 takes ⲉⲓⲡⲁⲅⲁⲣⲭⲏ to be read either as ⲉⲓⲡⲁⲅⲁⲣⲭⲟⲥ, with the Greek noun acting as a verb (the alternative form παγάρχης is not attested in Coptic), or as ⲉⲓⲡⲁⲅⲁⲣⲭⲉⲓ. The latter possibility, assuming iotacism, seems the more natural solution. Placed after the more general noun ⲁⲣⲭⲱⲛ, the verbal expression was possibly chosen for the sake of literary variety. The Greek verb παγαρχεῖν occurs as early as the fourth century; see *C.Th.* VIII 15.1 (316/317?): τῶ τόπῳ ἐκείνῳ οὐκ ἐπαγάρχει and *CIG* 3989.12 (early IV): παγαρχή(σας), where the context requires a participle, not the noun παγάρχης. Later instances include Justinian's Edict XIII, Chapter 25 (539): παγαρχούντων and the aforementioned Oxyrhynchite cases of the passive participle relating to villages, the κώμαι παγαρχούμεναι (attested 493–612). Since the formula is mainly attested with the "glorious house" (*endoxos oikos*) of the Apiones, whose last head in the Oxyrhynchite, Apion III, died in the course of the Persian conquest or shortly afterward, its disappearance may have been due to administrative rearrangements under the Persians.

firmly integrated into the Byzantine provincial administration, they were also far from being a coherent elite who focused exclusively on their local power base. Some even appear to have been highly mobile career bureaucrats. From this perspective, the Byzantine pagarchy looks less like a concession that a disintegrating state yielded to its aristocracy. Rather, it takes the shape of a deliberate instrument aimed at curbing, channeling, and exploiting aristocratic ambition on various levels – a conception that is also strikingly present in the deliberately anachronistic use of the pagarchy as a literary device in the Coptic *Life of Aaron*. The claim that the Byzantine pagarchy was fundamentally different from its namesake of the later seventh and eighth centuries further suffers from the accident of preservation[60] that has left us rather dissimilar types of documents from these periods; these differences render the aspects where the models nonetheless match all the more intriguing.

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**60** This is not to say that the preservation of papyri is entirely random, but simply that the picture might be different if we had access to, for instance, the papers that the pagarch Ioulianos or others kept for their own use.

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Alon Dar*

# "...So that the Descendants of the Descendants [of the Muslims] May Profit by It": ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, the Muslim Army and the Decision not to Divide the Lands of Alexandria

In a letter to the caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ announced the conquest of Alexandria (641) in the following manner: "I have conquered a city in which there are four thousand luxuries with four thousand baths and forty thousand Jews."[1] In the eyes of rulers and commanders, this was a remarkable achievement, but that was not how the soldiers saw it: they were not very happy with the terms of ending the fighting. ʿAmr's soldiers demanded to be given "a fair share of the booty," i.e. for the spoils and lands to be distributed among them. They cited the precedent set by Muhammad in Khaybar in support of their claims. In Khaybar, Muhammad had divided the booty into five equal parts, taking one-fifth to himself and distributing the rest among the Muslim community.[2] Considering the soldiers' discontent, ʿAmr consulted ʿUmar to ask how he should respond. ʿUmar advised him against heeding the soldiers' wishes and instructed him to leave the land in the hands of the local population.[3]

The decision not to distribute land had a significant effect on several social groups: the Muslim army, the caliph in Medina, the nascent Muslim community and the conquered population. The case symbolizes a noteworthy stage in the evolution of the mentality of early Islam – the shift from *maghāzī* (raids) to *futūḥ* (conquests). According to the traditional early Islamic view, the conquerors' strategy shifted under ʿUmar, from tribal raids to state conquest, from short-term interests to long-term considerations. ʿUmar understood that the scale had changed, so that he needed to plan ahead for years to come rather than for the next few months, and, more importantly, that he now needed to consider the needs of hundreds of thousands of people. To facilitate this, a bureaucratic state apparatus needed to be put in place along with state institutions and even hierarchies. Under ʿUmar, a series

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1 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 68 [81], transl. Hilloowala. In another version, a messenger is sent to Medina instead of a written letter, see Yaʿqūbī, 786 [2377], transl. Gordon, Robinson, Rowson, and Fishbein.

2 This custom had pre-Islamic roots, see Løkkegaard (2012).

3 Balādhurī, 422 [265–266], transl. Ḥitti; Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 81 [68], transl. Hilloowala.

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of actions along these lines were taken: new roles and offices such as the *dīwān al-jund* (the army and salaries chamber) emerged, new cities were established, land was surveyed, and a tax system was instituted. This period was the formative stage of the Muslim empire.[4] But the most significant change of all was a major shift in the conception of the roles of the army; it was important for the soldiers and their leaders to understand they were not raiding to satisfy their own immediate needs, but for the sake of the common good in a still-to-come-and distant future.

The connection between lands and state-building in early Islam has received growing attention in recent years.[5] Using documentary, material, and literary sources, scholars of the field have recently attempted to reconstruct this connection. The question of land tenure, who owns and attend the lands may in fact tell us somethings about the process of state-building in early Islam and the nature of its development: did the conquerors take the land for themselves? What happened to the inhabitants of the lands and the local elites who owned it? How did the conquerors perceive themselves: as new regional and local aristocrats, or as rulers of a vast empire? The aim of this contribution is to examine the way early Muslim historians saw, understood, and told the story of the conquest of Alexandria and the following decision of the first caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb not to divide its lands among his soldiers. It focuses on the social and political forces that partake in and were influenced by this decision. The focus of this contribution is the expectations, motives, and actions of two main groups: the caliphal court and the soldiers of the conquering army. It argues that although the specific details of this case are not completely clear, we can still see the main line of events as reliable, i.e that there was a decision not to divide the lands. The questions, then, are why the Muslims opted for this, what did the process of decision-making look like, and what does it tell us about the sociopolitical development of the Muslim empire.

In order to understand the construction of state institutions, the challenges and the various interests encountered by ʿUmar,[6] I will focus on one single decision, the above-mentioned instruction not to distribute land among the soldiers who had fought to conquer it. This particular case study will allow us to read into the needs and interests of ʿUmar as the leader of vast territories and diverse populations. Analyzing the steps and compromises involved has the power to reveal how nomadic Arab tribes shifted to a new mindset, one now required for the government of an extensive and sedentary empire. It will also shed light on the various ways in which

**4** Donner (1981) 3–5.

**5** See, for example, Sijpesteijn (2009), Legendre (2018), Campopiano (2018), Frantz-Murphy (2007), and Kennedy (2014).

**6** It should be noted here that I see ʿUmar as the head of the leading elite of the newly born political entity. As such, when using his name I refer to him and the political center around him. As I argue below, even the decisions and actions that ascribed to him came after struggles and consultations within the caliphal court. I opted to use his name, as encompassing a much complex sociopolitical structure, for the sake of convenience.

different groups experienced this change, the implications of this shift on the ground, and the manner of its implementation. This is not to say, of course, that the Muslim empire functioned as a unified and centralized empire by ʿUmar's time; such historical changes and processes take time and are achieved gradually,[7] and here I would like to emphasize one of the historical events that helped to achieve these later developments. Scholars debate the centralization of power and the systemized nature of the institutions and apparatuses set by the ruling elite in Medina. It is usually suggested that it is not before the Umayyad period, and mainly under the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 685–705), that the Muslims empire became centralized. They point to processes such as Arabization of the administration and coinage minting.[8] Focusing on other manifestations of power and centralization, however, supports a different account. Political power and implementation of new policies has led Petra Sijpesteijn to the conclusion that: "The system that the Muslims installed in Egypt was remarkably lean and centralized."[9] This contribution will argue that the process of centralization in later periods did not occur *ex nihilo*, and we can see its beginnings already in the times of the early conquests, when the caliphal court was able to implement its policies.

When addressing the events, the process, and the unfolding of early Islam, one encounters several problems, one of them being sources: in the absence of relevant archaeological and documented historical sources, most of the available sources are Muslim chronicles. These texts rely heavily on oral history and were probably first put into writing at least two hundred years *post factum*. Scholars have indicated that the narratives described are problematic since they reflect later (ninth century and onwards) ideologies, concepts, and interests.[10] While this may be true, this article draws on various chronicles that were written in different times and at different places. As such, they most probably reflect different interests and should not be considered as belonging to a single monolithic corpus in which all texts serve the same ends. Maged Mikhail has asserted that the sources on the conquest of Egypt contain various competing political narratives, side by side.[11] This implies that there was a motive for writers and transmitters to omit or play down events that would call their favored narratives into question. In fact, the early Muslim historians were honest about the fact that contradicting accounts and stories relating to the same events appear. The case of not dividing the land is cited by early Muslim historians as evidence for contradictory views and narratives. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam cites the same story as part of two contradictory narratives: first in the section that claims Egypt was con-

**7** For a survey of the question of the centralization of Muslim empire, see Legendre (2016) 4–7.
**8** See the different opinions of Johns (2003) and Hoyland (2006) on that matter. Also consult Foss' (2009) two-parts article.
**9** Sijpesteijn (2013) 85.
**10** See discussions in Crone/Cook (1977) 3, 89, and 139; Robinson (2003); Donner (1998) 1–25; Noth (1994); Hoyland (2015) 1–7; Shoshan (2012) 1–12.
**11** Mikhail (2014) 29–34.

quered by force, and then in the section depicting Egypt's conquest by treaty.[12] We can thus surmise that the story – if not its interpretation – was most probably consensus in later periods, albeit with different interpretations. Moreover, the fact that the chronicles were written later and reflect later principles and anachronistic perceptions does not necessarily cast doubt on the data they contain, which may still be genuine and valuable and reflect real issues faced by early Muslim society.[13] Moreover, they were very candid about confrontations. The story the chronicles tell us is far from being an ideal story of clean historical process, but rather shows us how much this process was complex and debatable, within the caliph's close circles, and also the need to convince the soldiers themselves. Medieval Muslim scholars elaborated and discussed the conquests and military expeditions in considerable depth. The emphasis placed by early Muslim historians on the question of how lands were attained is at least partly explained by the interest of later generations in questions of taxation. This has led Gladys Frantz-Murphy to the conclusion that "all traditions that date the definition of the legal status of conquered land to the time of their initial conquest are suspect."[14] However, land discussions were not limited to historical genres and subsequent debates. The sources contain various stories and narratives that cannot be explained solely by such later motives.[15] There was a real need to decide how land was owned and by whom, to determine how to deal with local inhabitants, and to decide how land should be taxed. The case study analyzed here therefore seems to reflect genuine historical concerns.[16] Another problem one faces is that multiple narratives yield a great number of diverging accounts of events. This, in turn, gives rise to another possible methodological problem: are we dealing with a topos here? As we shall later see, there are enough variations in the responses to the decision not to divide the land in the cases from Syria, the Sawād region, and Egypt to suggest that this is not a topos. Lastly, the status of the conquered lands was disputed between different ranks in the Muslim community, and this seemed to justify classification of the lands into different categories.[17] How are we to analyze our case study, then? While Kennedy accepts its historical authenticity, Marie Legendre argued very recently that it was a later addition put in the literary sources in order to glorify ʿUmar's name.[18] She based this argument on similar claim made by Tayeb el-Hibri in regard to ʿUmar's religious actions, and by pointing to neglected accounts in Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam's work that tell us of Arab tribes settling in the Egyptian hinterland.[19] These accounts, however, are not yet sufficient to exclude altogeth-

12 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 71 [84] and 75 [88], transl. Hilloowala.
13 Noth (1994) 46–47; Morony (1984) 14.
14 Frantz-Murphy (2007) 111.
15 Kennedy (1986) 355; Donner (1998) 1–25.
16 Kennedy (2014) 160–161.
17 Duri (2011) 97–98.
18 Kennedy (2014) 160; Legendre (2018) 399.
19 el-Hibri (2010) 78; Legendre (2018) 399.

er the main line of the story, as they still do not contradict the bigger pattern of the conquerors settling in the land. Indeed, the papyrus evidence suggests that a large-scale Muslim landownership before the Umayyad period did not occur, and that instead they settled in urban areas.[20] In this context, and in the absence of any other evidence, we may conclude that there was, in fact, a policy to avoid dividing land and distributing it to soldiers. This gives at least some credibility to our case study. I will analyze this case here not for its specific details and use of rhetoric, but rather to extract the themes and concerns raised by the sources. The matter in dispute was who should own the land. Should it belong to the conquering soldiers, the Arab-Muslim elite, the entire Muslim community, or the local population? While some soldiers and companions wanted to own the lands, ʿUmar (supported by ʿAlī) decided to leave them in the hands of the local population. ʿUmar is said to have faced this dilemma directly in the field after the conquests of Alexandria and the Sawād region. Since no concrete precedent prevailed in Muslim history, he brought the matter to his companions and sought their counsel.[21] In all three cases, we are told that the caliph opted to leave most of the land in the hands of the local population.[22] Indeed, the papyri suggest that there were no Muslim landowners before the 8th century.[23] In this context, and in the absence of any other evidence, we may conclude that there was, in fact, a policy to avoid dividing land and distributing it to soldiers. This gives credibility to our case study. ʿUmar's actions and words reveal his interest in extracting tax revenues from the conquered lands. In one account, his reply to ʿAmr is recorded as follows:

> The people disagreed with ʿAmr about their shares. Most of the people wanted a share of Alexandria. ʿAmr said, 'I cannot decide on their shares until I write to the Commander of the Faithful.' He wrote to him telling him of its conquest and its situation, and he told him that the Muslims sought a share of it. ʿUmar wrote to him: 'Do not divide Alexandria, leave it alone and the *kharaj* will be a *fayʾ* (state land) for the Muslims and a force for them in the Jihad of their enemy.'[24]

This account presents ʿUmar as an agent of change. He has already adopted the mentality of an empire ruler (rather than of a tribal chief) with his preference for long-term tax revenues over immediate gains. The account points to the development of a taxation system as a replacement for booty raiding. Booty raiding describes one-off actions in which raiders take everything they can get their hands on and distribute it among themselves. Taxation, on the other hand, is a mechanism in which the

**20** Sijpesteijn (2009) 123–125.

**21** Shaban (1971) 46–48.

**22** Other lands were kept in the hands of the Muslim state, in accordance to special categories applied. See Balādhurī, 357 [227], Ibn Sallām, 83, and also Dennett (1950) 22–23 and Duri (2011) 97–98.

**23** Sijpesteijn (2013) gives an overview of these documents in n. 395 on p. 105, and also discusses the issue on p. 115–116. See also the discussion on landownership in Egypt in Bruning (2015).

**24** Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 69 [82], transl. Hilloowala.

state determines the amounts levied and then collects this revenue and distributes it according to fixed criteria and its needs. Unlike raiding, it provides the state with a reliable long-term income, allowing it to develop and to supply multiple needs. The definition of the land as *fayʾ* meant that it remained in the hands of the local population, who now paid their taxes to the new polity.

However, this decision entailed yet another consequence: collecting taxes required a large apparatus to be built up so that land surveys and censuses could be carried out and tax-collectors and administrators could perform their work. ʿUmar's decision to shift from booty raiding to taxation is evidence of a new mindset in the evolving Muslim state, one of thinking ahead and of constructing the apparatus of statehood. ʿUmar's long-term perspective is again attested to in the reason he gives for preserving the land as a source of revenue: "so that the descendants of the descendants [of the Muslims] may profit by it."[25] In addition, ʿUmar wanted to keep the local inhabitants in place to forestall possible discontent. This also assured better cultivation of the land by those familiar with the land and its crops. In other words, ʿUmar chose income in perpetuity for the good of the whole Muslim community. The revenues from the provinces helped to support and finance institutions that changed the Muslim army from raiding tribes to an organized and professional force composed of full-time soldiers.

ʿUmar's decision to keep land in the hands of the local population was linked to changes in the way the army was perceived and the roles soldiers were to hold. The caliphal court moved to establish a more professional army fitting to the new status of a ruling empire. This was achieved in a series of actions and decisions aimed at adjusting the Muslim army to new circumstances.

To form an army more fitting to the new status of the Muslims, the state established the *dīwān* in ʿUmar's time. This ensured that soldiers had an income to sustain them so they could afford to serve as full-time, professional soldiers. Moreover, through the ban on holding lands, the caliphal court tried to cement the soldiers' dependence on their state stipends and to block alternative, competing sources of income.[26] For the same reason, the cultivation of land by soldiers was also banned.[27] Owning land, and needing to tend to it, would distract them from their military obligations and campaigns. Indeed, ʿUmar cites his preference that the soldiers would be dependent on state stipends rather than on landowning as a direct reason for leaving conquered lands in the hands of the locals in one case (in the Sawād): "As for the land and camels, leave them in the hands of those men who work them, so that they may be included in the stipends [pensions] of the Muslims. If thou dividest them among those present, nothing will be left for those who come after them."[28] This action was meant to achieve a shift in practice, as the Muslim sol-

**25** Balādhurī, 343 [218], transl. Ḥitti.
**26** Kennedy (2013) 59.
**27** Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 165 [161], transl. Hilloowala.
**28** Baladhuri, 422 [266], transl. Ḥitti.

diers were now dependent on the income from the empire's treasury, rather than on their own lands and livestock.[29]

Instead of giving the soldiers land of their own and dispersing them, they were housed in newly founded garrison cities (*amṣār*). These cities were crucial to the rule of the provinces: they allowed the Muslims to maintain a military presence in the provinces and to oversee their administrative activity.[30] What is more, they also ensured soldiers were present as units in one centralized location, and this made it easier both to control the army and to mobilize it in case of need. This latter reason led ʿUmar to prefer Fusṭāṭ over Alexandria as a place to settle the army. It is said that ʿAmr first wanted to occupy Alexandria and to use it as his hub in Egypt. ʿUmar rejected the plan, allegedly because he wanted no source of water to stand between the new settlement and Medina. This point was also stressed in the case of the earlier foundations of Baṣra and Kūfa. While it is possible that this reflected a genuine concern of the caliph, since the Muslims had not yet developed maritime expertise, it is also possible that this is a topos from a later period. Kubiak, however, points to the probability of this story. Whether true or not, the fact remains that all three cities were built with no bodies of water separating them from Medina. Fusṭāṭ's geographical location at the crossroads between Lower and Upper Egypt made it a perfect place to establish a garrison city from which the newly shaped army could quickly reach most of the country in case of need.

The decision not to occupy conquered cities, but rather to establish new ones, also had to do with cultural fears and with the desire to keep the army unified. Since they were in the minority in the conquered territories, the Muslims were worried that mixing with other cultures and religions might cause them to lose their own. ʿUmar is said to have stated this directly. After sending reinforcements to ʿAmr, he is reported to have said: "I have sent four leaders to you and on the basis of what I knew about them I told you that they are equal to one thousand, unless they have been changed by what changed the others." ʿUmar is clearly worried here that the conquered lands and the new experiences the Muslims are having are ruining and corrupting the soldiers. This suggests that cultural and religious fears were also part of the set of considerations and concerns over the army's function that the Muslims took into account in reaching the decision to settle soldiers in garrison cities.[31] In this way, they were able to separate soldiers from the locals, perhaps acting under a policy of segregation and disintegration.

Yet another important action was the structural reorganization of the army into a new kind of units. Some tribes were numerous while others only had a few members, and this had led to irregularly sized units emerging. In this light, ʿUmar decided to divide tribes into military and administrative units of uniform size, *daʾwa*. This divi-

**29** Kennedy (2002) 161.

**30** Kubiak (1982) 89 – 92.

**31** See on this question Kennedy (2013) 7.

sion allowed for more convenient administrative control over money transfers, tax collection, and land division. In addition, it enhanced the power to transport and use units as part of the military effort entailed in extensive conquests. This reorganization cannot have been easily achieved. It is another example for the changes wrought in the army by ʿUmar and their complexities: we can only imagine the difficulties encountered by administrators and army commanders intent on changing the old social order. We must assume that past animosities and grudges had to be taken into account and strenuous efforts made to match compatible tribes. And indeed, specialists in genealogy were involved in the process of military reform.[32] It is quite clear that this step was not taken without due care, requiring as it did a thorough evaluation by the executive. The fact that the caliphal court brought about these changes in the army despite the scale of the challenge shows how important this step was considered to be.

ʿUmar's actions and wishes did not completely coincide with those of the soldiers. The activities of the soldiers are often overlooked in modern scholarship, and their actions have yet to receive sufficient representation in it. Perhaps the fact that no violent mutiny broke out made it easier to overlook this group of people. Here, we shall see how they perceived the change, and what their expectations during the conquests were.

Booty was a major incentive for soldiers to join military campaigns.[33] In several cases, soldiers cite it directly as the reason for their participation in battles. In one case, they even complain about a commander who refrained from battle, accusing him of denying them their due spoils. In the battles that preceded the conquest of Alexandria, soldiers became accustomed to collecting booty and, after sending a certain share of it back to Medina, of dividing it among themselves.[34]

In Alexandria, too, soldiers are said to have urged ʿAmr into battle while he negotiated peace with the people of Alexandria: "We will not give them anything of the arbitration nor the *jizya* until God conquers for us, so that all the land would become ours as plunder and booty, as the fortress and what was in it became ours."[35] Here, ʿAmr is put in a precarious position. And here, too, he serves as ʿUmar's agent, rebuffing the soldiers' demands by citing the wish of the Commander of the Faithful. In this case, however, he also mentions the flooding of the Nile as a reason not to fight, arguing that it would make a military effort impossible.[36] Since we can assume that the soldiers were aware of the floods, it is not inconceivable that ʿAmr was using a strategy of mediation to appease them.

Muslim soldiers were not passive in response to the new policy by the caliph. In Syria, soldiers discontented with the distribution of booty by their military leader,

**32** Ṭabarī, vol. XIII, 76 [2495], transl. Juynball.

**33** For a legal discussion on how booty should have been divided among soldiers, see Abū Yūsūf, 58.

**34** Ṭabarī, vol. XII, 30 [2451], transl. Friedman.

**35** Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 52 [69 – 70], transl. Hilloowala.

**36** Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 52 [69 – 70], transl. Hilloowala.

Abū ʿUbayda, asked the renowned military leader Khālid ibn al-Walīd to intercede in the affair. He agreed to act as their representative and to present their request to Abū ʿUbayda. However, the latter refused to revoke the decision.[37] This indicates that soldiers had opportunities to express their resentment. They were able to band together and had ways of expressing their feelings to senior commanders. Although they did not succeed in changing the outcome in this case, we are not told of any violent mutiny they engaged in.

In the Sawād, some soldiers pushed for the division of the lands, but the majority of the warriors rejected it, and even assisted in the efforts of Muslim officials to implement the new custom.[38] Although we are not informed of the reasons for their support, we may deduce that they regarded it to be in their favor. This shows that "soldiers" is by no means a monolithic category (or body of people); even within the Muslim army, people reacted to changing realities in different ways. Moreover, it may also suggest that soldiers were not deprived of historical agency: they assessed the situation, and they acted upon what they thought served them better. In this case, they seemed to prefer the possibility of future earnings as serving soldiers in the Muslim army over the prospect of receiving land. The *dīwān* system, once it was in place, guaranteed the soldiers a fixed income, and this may explain why they did not protest angrily against ʿUmar's decision: they probably understood it as an act which benefitted them.

The fact that they did not receive land did not, however, prevent some soldiers from looking for additional sources of income. We are told that ʿAmr ordered that the dwellings provided for the Muslim conquerors by the locals as part of the covenant's provisions would be used only for a short period of time. Muslims were not allowed to own dwellings or rent them out for money, suggesting that ʿAmr acted against existing practice.[39] Furthermore, shortly after the conquest of Alexandria, ʿUmar banned the cultivation of land by Muslims. This appears to indicate that soldiers had sufficient money – from previous conquests or stipends – to purchase land in Egypt. In one case, ʿAmr even threatened to execute a soldier who disobeyed this order, but eventually ʿUmar agreed to pardon him after he apologized.[40]

ʿUmar's new approach towards the army, soldiers, and landowning did not go uncontested. As has become clear, soldiers and military leaders were not always keen on adopting the new policy, but ʿUmar also encountered resistance in the close circle of councilors around him.[41] Interestingly, the early Muslim historian Balādhurī (d. 892) mentions that ʿUmar's decision was made after taking the advice

**37** Wāqidī, 368–370, transl. Sulaymān al-Kindī.
**38** Ṭabarī, vol. XIII, 48, transl. Juynball.
**39** Balādhurī, 349 [229], transl. Ḥitti.
**40** Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 165 [161], transl. Hilloowala.
**41** Friedmann discussed this matter based on the accounts given by Ṭabarī, in: Ṭabarī, vol. XII, xx–xxi, transl. Friedmann.

of ʿAlī over that of other companions.[42] This indicates that there were tensions even within the caliphal court and among the *ṣaḥāba*. Among those opposed to ʿUmar in this matter, we find notable early companions such as the first *muʾadhdhin* Bilāl ibn Rabāḥ. It seems that in at least some cases, consent was bought. A case in point may be that of yet another companion and military chief, al-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām. It is reported that al-Zubayr led a force of 12,000 men in the military effort to conquer Egypt (ʿAmr reportedly entered Egypt with about 3,500 or 4,000 soldiers). Indeed, he was the only man who eventually received land in Egypt following the conquest of Alexandria, and he is said to have retired there peacefully. One tradition even asserts that al-Zubayr was given estates in Egypt to "keep him quiet."[43] This was probably done since he was a very powerful individual who could have mustered strong opposition to the caliph – as he later did, indeed, when he fought against the fourth caliph, ʿAlī. This method of negotiation, i. e. giving powerful figures a share of land or booty, was also adopted by ʿUmar in another case in the Sawād, where he asked the tribe of Bajīla to restore lands they had received after the battle of Qādisiyyah (636), promising compensation. While most of them agreed to the terms, one woman was unwilling to give up the share of the booty she was entitled to by inheritance. Eventually, ʿUmar paid her a large sum of gold for her land.[44]

Bilāl and al-Zubayr seem to have had good reason for objecting to the new policy: Bilāl had already owned land in Syria given to him by Abū Bakr, and al-Zubayr was given land after the battle of Khaybar.[45] Thus, it is clear that notable companions expected to receive more land and achieve greater wealth. In this case, it was undeniably in the interest of the elite to preserve the previous custom, and the fact that the new system of controlling the land was finally implemented shows that the caliph and his supporters were able to withstand the opposition in the court, suggesting high levels of political power and diplomatic expertise consistent with the centralization of power. In another case, in 637, after the conquest of Jalūlāʾ in the Sawād, ʿUmar summoned a *shūrā* to deal with the land question there. He accepted ʿAlī's view and ordered Saʿd ibn Abī Waqqās to leave the lands for future Muslim generations, i.e to prefer the long-term tax revenues. The narration is cited by Balādhurī: "'ʿUmar took the advice of the Prophet's companions, and ʿAlī said, 'Leave them that they may become a source of revenue and aid for the Moslems.' Accordingly, ʿUmar sent ʿUthmān ibn-Ḥunaif al-Anṣāri who assessed on each man 48, 24, or 12 [*dirhams*]."[46]

We are not informed regarding the identity of the participants of the consulting committee. Nonetheless, ʿUmar's siding with ʿAlī suggests that the decision was not

**42** Balādhurī, 423 [266], transl. Ḥitti.

**43** Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 76 [88], transl. Hilloowala.

**44** Balādhurī, 424 [267], transl. Ḥitti; a similar case appears in Dāʾūdī, 60 – 61. Interestingly, ʿUmar is said to complain about having to "buy off" the soldiers instead of doing what he thought to be right.

**45** Balādhurī, 424, transl. Ḥitti; Waqidi, 395, transl. Sulaymān al-Kindī.

**46** Balādhurī, 423 [265 – 266], transl. Ḥitti.

unanimous and was reached only after some discussion. This seems to fit with the notion that ʿUmar served as a representative of a group within the companions, and also that the companions had different approaches to the way they should handle and govern the newly conquered lands. This narrative also confirms the shift in mindset of the Muslims to one based on a long-term perspective: ʿAlī's suggestion to preserve the lands as a source of revenue is based on an understanding of their potential to generate future revenue. This shows that notable individuals within the caliphal court understood the new context and circumstances and adapted rather quickly to both, dealing well with their new status as an evolving empire. The Muslims were able to secure future revenue and establish a new social order in conquered territories.

## Conclusions

Although the exact story and its details are not clear, we can surmise that the caliphal policy not to divide the land exposes prevailing tensions between different groups and individuals regarding the change in their own and the land's status. It places the spotlight on ʿUmar and members of the ruling elite in Medina as agents of change implementing new ideas and practices in the army. This change did not come without opposition within this group, as some notable companions objected to the new policy, perhaps due to the fact that they possessed estates and land and feared for their own status and wealth. ʿUmar and his side, however, were able to overcome their resistance with the support of other important companions, such as ʿAlī. Although they did not actively endorse the change, the soldiers also opted not to publicly oppose the caliph and either subsisted as best they could with their stipends or sought out additional sources of income. The governors' role was to mediate between the caliph and the soldiers, and it is hard to imagine the implementation of this new policy without their support. The case study discussed in this article presents the caliph as a strong, authoritative figure with an involvement in the affairs of the provinces. While this depiction could be a later addition, its authenticity at least in relation to the land question is corroborated by a lack of evidence for Muslim landowning in the seventh century, which does indeed appear to have been the result of a deliberate policy decision by the new rulers of the lands. The caliphal court led by ʿUmar introduced various institutions and elements of state apparatus to the Muslims. These acts, when put together, suggests that already in this early stage the caliphal court has had long-term policies and the power and authority to implement them.

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Anne Boud'hors

# Situating the Figure of Papas, Pagarch of Edfu at the End of the Seventh Century: The Contribution of the Coptic Documents

In 1953, the French papyrologist Roger Rémondon published a hundred Greek documents from excavations in the vicinity of the Pharaonic temple of Edfu carried out in 1921–1922 by the archaeologist Henri Henne.[1] These documents, known as *P.Apoll.*, constitute the archive of Papas, pagarch of Apollonopolis (Magna), the modern Edfu. Papas was the administrator of the city and the surrounding district in the last part of the seventh century. These papyri had been preserved in a jar, but during the transport of the jar from Edfu to the IFAO in Cairo, all of them disintegrated into fragments.[2] Under these conditions, the work of reconstruction and interpretation of the Greek texts carried out by Rémondon deserves our admiration. However, the jar also contained Coptic papyri, on which Rémondon, without publishing any of them, passed the following judgment:

> As I have said above, there were also Coptic papyri in this jar. They are less numerous than the Greek, and equally badly preserved. Reading them as thoroughly and attentively as possible has shown that they are usually private letters, often written by priests or monks. Whether they are Greek or Coptic, all the documents concern the same person, named Papas, so the jar did not contain the archive of a family, but of one single individual.[3]

This archive was assigned to the beginning of the eighth century by Rémondon, but that date was later revised by Jean Gascou and Klaas Worp,[4] who assigned the papyri convincingly to the 670s, making the archive a very important body of material for the study of the administration of Egypt at that time. Some years later, Leslie MacCoull began to reconsider a number of the Coptic papyri, questioning the idea that

**1** Rémondon (1953).

**2** See Rémondon (1953) V. On the jar and the way in which the papyri were kept inside, see Marchand (2013). In addition, some pieces were apparently diverted at the very moment of their discovery and sold on the antiquities market; these are *PSI* XII 1266 (= *P.Apoll.* 9), 1267 (= *P.Apoll.* 24), XIII 1345, and XV 1570, kept at the Istituto papirologico "G.Vitelli" in Florence, *P.Princ.* III 140 (= *SB* XX 14282), *P.Merton* I 49, P.Mil. inv. 70.19 (= *SB* XXIV 16316) and inv. 89 (= *SB* XXIV 16317), as well as *SB Kopt.* I 242 (on which see below § 2.1).

**3** Rémondon (1953) VI (Introduction): "Comme je l'ai dit plus haut, il y avait aussi dans cette jarre des papyrus coptes: ils sont moins nombreux que les grecs et tout aussi mal conservés. Une lecture aussi complète et attentive que possible m'a permis de constater qu'il s'agit généralement de lettres privées, souvent écrites par des prêtres ou des moines. Qu'ils soient grecs ou qu'ils soient coptes, tous les documents concernent le même personnage, nommé Papas, en sorte que la jarre ne renfermait pas les archives d'une famille, mais d'un seul individu."

**4** Gascou/Worp (1982).

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110683554-007

Coptic documents would necessarily be private and showing that they concern the same "official" subjects as the Greek documents.[5] The data provided both by the publication of *P.Apoll.* and by MacCoull's study has been used in an enlightening article by Clive Foss that gives a general picture of Papas' responsibilities, activities and relationships with various administrative levels.[6] Since MacCoull's article, the Coptic papyri have remained unpublished. In the early 2000s, Geneviève Favrelle, an independent French researcher, proceeded to reconstruct and transcribe many texts, but the magnitude of the task did not allow her to publish anything before her death. In 2015, Alain Delattre, who is now in charge of the IFAO dossier, agreed to launch a collective project on the Coptic papyri in this archive. A team of about ten people is now working more or less systematically on these texts.[7] We have been able to carry out two week-long studies at the IFAO (January 2016 and April 2017). A first batch of documents has been published in the *BIFAO*.[8]

Considering once again Rémondon's remarks on the Coptic papyri in light of our preliminary work, we can already qualify them: (1) the Coptic papyri were not less numerous than the Greek ones, as the fragments probably come from more than 150 documents; (2) although there are some Coptic letters written by priests and monks, the majority of the Coptic documents cannot simply be characterized as "private," and the concept of "privacy" requires further interrogation; (3) the claim that all the documents refer to Papas may be contradicted by some of the Coptic documents, although this point has yet to be securely established.[9] The aim of this paper is thus to take this discussion forward by a step or two and to present some of the progress we have made on understanding the figure of Papas, especially through consideration of the respective statuses of the Greek and Coptic papyri from the jar.

**5** MacCoull (1988).

**6** Foss (2009).

**7** The team includes, in addition to Alain Delattre and myself, Lajos Berkes, Ruey-Lin Chang, Jean-Luc Fournet, Esther Garel, Jean Gascou, Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello, Grzegorz Ochała, and Naïm Vanthieghem. I would like to thank Alain Delattre and Lajos Berkes for reading and commenting on a draft of this article, as well as Korshi Dosoo, who in addition has taken the trouble of revising the English.

**8** Boud'hors/Delattre (2017). The team is also revisiting a number of the Greek papyri from the archive.

**9** If *SB Kopt.* I 242 was once part of the material kept in the jar (see above n. 2 and below § 2.1.), this provides a clue that the archive does not concern only Papas, but also his father Liberios. *P. Apoll.* 74 could also belong to an earlier period (see below § 1.1.), as could a Greek fragment that Ruey-Lin Chang published in the BIFAO collective article mentioned above if the fragment in question is indeed from the jar, as it has been thought to be up to now.

# 1 Private documents

## 1.1 The Coptic side of *P.Apoll.* 74

*P.Apoll.* may fairly be reproached for failing in every case to mention the presence of Coptic texts on the back of Greek documents. There are several cases of reused papyri, as evidenced by the work carried out over the last two years. Among them, *P.Apoll.* 74 is especially noteworthy, as it may provide the basis of Rémondon's impression of the nature of the Coptic texts. One of the longest Coptic texts is preserved on the back of this "list of *onomata*."[10] It consists of a rough draft of an arbitration report and is very interesting in many respects. The object of the dispute is the inheritance of a half-cell or half-chamber. A large number of people are called to testify, including Abdias, priest of (the church of?) Perpé, and another priest from the same place (maybe also named Papas), as well as Iohannes, deacon of the holy *topos* of Epiphanios, and Tsina, daughter of the priest Souai, who are called to declare under oath what they know before the bishop. A certain Markos, described as *eulabestatos*, and therefore probably also an ecclesiastical figure, is one of the parties, as the deceased owner owed him some money.

This text makes no direct mention of the pagarch Papas and may have been written before Papas took office and perhaps even before the conquest. It cannot have escaped Rémondon's attention, and it probably contributed to his perception of the Coptic papyri as having been written mainly by clerics and monks. This Coptic draft was obviously reused to write the Greek account. This document thus makes it possible to understand why Rémondon seems to have perceived the Coptic material as "private": this text is indeed private, but it is part of Papas' archives only by accident, because Papas or a member of his staff reused it to copy the Greek account.

## 1.2 An example of a letter issuing from a monastic milieu

Another text that Rémondon might have had in mind is P.IFAO Edfou Jarre inv. 19.[11] It is the lower part of a letter, clearly addressed by monks to a civil authority. Since the title *megaloprepestatos* ("most magnificent") is given to this authority, the addressee was most likely the pagarch. The leaders of a monastery ask for help, using rhetoric that refers to the well-known Byzantine patterns of relationships between great landowners and the monasteries of which they were the benefactors.[12] As such a landowner, Papas is likely to have played this role:[13]

**10** The Coptic text has been published by A. Boud'hors and A. Delattre while E. Garel and J. Gascou reedited the Greek portion: Boud'hors/Delattre (2018) 2–24.

**11** Marthot-Santaniello in: Boud'hors/Delattre (2017) 107–109.

**12** See for instance Rémondon (1972) and Papaconstantinou (2012).

> So be kind enough to make an effort to [...] agree with them about the two acacias, so that God will bring you our prayers and our blessings in abundance, in exchange for the deeds you do for the holy monastery. The main thing is that I greet your filial Greatness [...] I pray to the measure of my humility that the Lord God will bring our prayers [...] to you and all of yours and grant you a reward for the deeds you do for the holy monastery, in this place and in the next (= in this world and in the world to come). [Greeting in the] Holy Trinity!

Apart from these two texts, which can be regarded as private and show Papas' relationships with the religious institutions belonging to his pagarchy, and a few others which likewise testify to his role as a benefactor, very few texts concern priests and monks. Before going any further into other texts, I would like to offer some reflections and questions on the meaning of "privacy" in an archive of this kind.

# 2 Privacy: modes and manifestations

## 2.1 What is private in Papas' archive?

Obviously, the opposition that concerns us here is not between family life and professional life, as the entire correspondence of Papas concerns his professional life. We learn very little about the members of his family from the Greek or the Coptic documents. We should note also that the use of the term "brother" in several types of relationships tends to confuse matters.

None of the Coptic documents kept at the IFAO, to the best of my knowledge, mentions Papas' father, Liberios, who was pagarch of Edfu before his son, nor Papas' wife Sara, nor his children. The only Coptic document concerned with Liberios as a pagarch, namely *SB Kopt*. I 242, does not mention Papas. It is a declaration (*homologia*) addressed to Liberios, pagarch of Edfu, by various corporations, attesting the receipt of quantities of pepper that were to be redistributed by each corporation head within his corporation and paid for.[14] As for his brother Iohannes, who is called *kyros* Iohannes in the Greek texts, further investigation is still needed, as there are several occurrences of a *kyros* Iohannes in the Coptic documents, but both the name and the title are very common and could refer to several different people.

As in many other archives or groups of documents, the texts fall into two large groups, one group dealing with the management of public affairs, which basically consisted of receiving the various orders of taxation and requisitions and apportioning them to citizens, and another dealing with the management of Papas' affairs as a landowner and local notable. The texts in the latter category include lease or loan contracts, income or expenditure accounts (which are frequent among the Greek

**13** Foss (2009) 7 observes that "the majority of the expenses in this account [*P.Apoll.* 98] went to the church."

**14** Edited in Crum (1925). On the significance of this document in the interpretation of the content of the jar, see above n. 9.

texts, but virtually non-existent in the Coptic texts), arbitration of local conflicts,[15] and relationships with religious institutions.

However, the dividing line between the two categories is not always clear.[16] The fiscal pressure of the Arab administration had repercussions for the daily lives of Papas' citizens and people. As a pagarch, Papas was responsible, on the one hand, for the organization of the payment of taxes, requisitions, etc., and on the other hand responsible for maintaining a degree of equity in the population and supporting the weakest members of society. The Coptic documents provide a particularly good perspective on this uncomfortable position as an intermediary.

## 2.2 The status of deacons and their role in public affairs

In Papas' archive, as again in many other documents, especially after the Arab conquest, deacons are often mentioned as intermediaries in public affairs not specifically linked to the Church.[17] Therefore, this title should not lead us to any hasty conclusions about the nature of a text.

## 2.3 The importance of paleography

The two ostensibly private documents mentioned above (*P.Apoll* 74 recto and P.IFAO Edfou Jarre inv. 19) are written in a bilinear majuscule typical of private Coptic documents. On the other hand, a large number of other Coptic documents are written in professional cursives close to those of the Greek documents. Moreover, their addresses are often in Greek. Obviously, these documents, whatever their language, were issued by the same circles and offices.

We shall now examine some examples of the various categories of administrative documents the Coptic documents can be assigned to.

**15** See for instance *P.Apoll.* 61, a Greek letter from Liberios to Papas to exhort him to reconcile a mother and her son, and the Coptic arbitration *P.Apoll.* 74 recto described above in l. 1.

**16** This phenomenon is well known for Egypt in Late Antiquity and had been dealt with by several authors; see for instance Tost (2012).

**17** See *P.Apoll.* 10, 37, and several Coptic papyri (Jarre inv. 21 [deacon Severos] and 25 [deacon Severos, perhaps the same individual]). This increasing presence of deacons in Coptic documents outside the ecclesiastical sphere has been recently emphasized by Garel (2017).

# 3 Different types of Coptic documents related with "official" affairs

## 3.1 Orders from "above"

Even at the highest level, that is to say in the orders transmitted by officials in the Arab administration, Coptic seems to be used at times. A convincing example is provided by P.IFAO Edfou Jarre inv. 205,[18] a letter concerning the requisition of equipment for the fleet, in which the final greeting, ϯⲣⲏⲛⲏ ⲛⲁⲕ ("peace be upon you"), suggests that this document comes from an official in the Arab administration. This is probably not the only example of such a document, as this final salutation has been identified in two or three other Coptic fragments. This letter refers to an *amīr* (Coptic ⲁⲙⲓⲣⲁ or ⲁⲙⲉⲣⲁ), as do several other Coptic and Greek documents. Rémondon suggested that the word *amīr* refers to the duke of Thebaid. However, according to a recent article by Federico Morelli, this title corresponds to a title of "commander", whose origins were military, but whose function and place in the hierarchy remain rather vague.[19]

## 3.2 Between people of the same rank

A large number of the Coptic documents preserve greeting formulas or addresses in which Papas is designated by his most common titles, *peribleptos*, *theophylaktos*, or *megaloprepestatos*. The addresses are similar to those of Greek documents ("To give to the illustrious brother, the *kyrios* protected by God (...) from ..."). These letters seem to come either from the secretaries (*notarioi*) of the ducal office, or from colleagues (other pagarchs?). As emphasized by Clive Foss, such secretaries (*notarioi*) are omnipresent in the archive.[20] They belong to the same class as Papas. They therefore transmit orders, but address Papas with stereotypical formulas showing that they are equals or colleagues. The Greek letters of the archive have preserved the names of several of them: Helladios, Theodoros, Elias, Kollouthos. As for the Coptic papyri, no name has been securely identified at this point. However, two examples show the possible variations and nuances in these relationships.

The first one is a letter, where the formulas and tone recall some Greek letters written to Papas by Elias, notary of the *topotērētēs* (who is the assistant of the *dux*):[21]

**18** The text was first analyzed by MacCoull (1988) 142. It has been reconstructed and studied by Lajos Berkes, in Boud'hors/Delattre (2017) 90 – 93.

**19** Morelli (2016).

**20** Foss (2009) 8.

**21** P.IFAO Edfou Jarre inv. 21+34, see Garel in Boud'hors/Delattre (2017) 93 – 98.

> Here are the two lists I have sent to your brotherly Illustriousness, those for which the deacon Seuēros has vouched ...

The second example is another letter addressed to Papas:[22]

> † Before all (things) I greet your (pl.) illustrious (*peribleptos*) lord and brother. For indeed, it has been a long time since we were not worthy of (receiving) your precious letter. When the esteemed (*endoxotēs*) brother Mata needed a small (amount) of wool, black or color, I met our brother the lord Saleh. He went to the south and I annulled his affair. I requested him and I sent him to you (pl.), so that you (pl.) come to agreement with him and so that he take them (i.e. the wool) and bring them to me as well as all that you (pl.) will find a garment of good quality, take it (and) send them [sic] to me through him ...

The sender is at least Papas' equal. The individual named Mata bears the title of *endoxotēs*, which seems reserved in this archive to the *topotērētēs* or to the *chartularius* of the pagarch. He could be an Arab and apparently someone of importance, since the sender sends a man on purpose, namely the lord Saleh, after canceling his previous task, in order to procure Mata a little wool. On this occasion, Papas and his correspondent probably had to collaborate to satisfy the wish coming from above as quickly as possible.

## 3.3 Complaints and requests from "below"

These letters are often characterized by more deferential politeness formulas, and by long complaints, partly rhetorical, but also revealing of the distress caused by the weight of the requisitions. A nice illustration is offered by a long letter addressed to Papas by an individual who had to execute a requisition at the local level, and struggled to do so:[23]

> ... As for the workmen about whom you have written and threatened me, here is ... May the deacon complete (the requisition?), either sailors, workers or *pistikoi* ... But do not let me bear the accusation of eating bread that is yours, to give a carat that is yours, (for I will then have no other choice) otherwise (than) to become servant/slave to your city, serving on your boats (as) less than a *pistikos*, or to go to Babylon in the condition of servant/slave ... By pushing these things to an end, I am forming the thought of becoming a caulker (?) ... for your city ... Above all I weep and beg the *antidux* ... Shenoute stood up and said: "If you leave in secret, I will send for your wife and take her to Babylon." And ... she was taken away and hidden (?) ... In addition to these things, I embrace the footstool of your feet until I see you. With God. And above all I greet ... and your blessed house. Hail in the power of the Holy Trinity. The Lord be with you.

**22** P.IFAO Edfou Jarre inv. 11, see Ochała in Boud'hors/Delattre (2017) 98–102.

**23** P.IFAO Edfou Jarre inv. 25, edition in preparation.

Particularly interesting here is the use of the term *antidux*, for which we have another attestation in the Coptic texts of the archive, and an occurrence outside the archive in *P.Gascou* 25, a document related to the monastery of Saint Jeremiah in Saqqara. In his recent article "Duchi ed emiri", Federico Morelli pointed out that the *dux* is almost entirely absent from *P.Apoll.* (with the exception of *P.Apoll.* 9). The *topotērētēs* seems to be the person with whom the *amīr* liaises, much more than the *dux*. Is it possible to hypothesize a temporary vacancy or interim period, during which the *topotērētēs* was acting and playing the role of the *dux?*[24] On the other hand, since the word *topotērētēs* has not apparently been attested in Coptic documents before this period, could the Coptic *antidux* be equivalent to *topotērētēs?* All these questions cannot yet be answered. It seems, for instance, that the *dux* appears in at least three Coptic documents. Things are probably more complicated.

## 3.4 Papas' network and the use of languages

The network of correspondents, of which Papas is the center, can be essentially represented by the diagram below:[25]

Governor of Egypt (Greek *symboulos*) [Fusṭāṭ]
↓ **(*Greek*)**
Duke of Thebaid (Greek *doux*) [Antinoupolis?] / Various *amīr* (Greek *amira*)
↓ **(*Greek*)**
[intermediaries: *topotērētēs*, clerks, secretaries]
↓ ***(Greek and Coptic)***

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Colleagues<br>***(Greek, Coptic)*** | → | PAPAS<br>pagarch of Apollonopolis Anō [Edfu] | ← | family [father Liberios, wife Sara, children, brother Iōhannes<br>**(*Greek*, and *Coptic?*)** |

↑ **(*Coptic*)**
lower-ranking colleagues
village and local elites
individuals

As I hope to have shown, the Coptic texts obviously allow us to situate the figure of Papas as a member of a bilingual Christian elite, but not in a simple division between public and private. The Greek and Coptic texts in the official sphere complement

**24** Morelli (2016) 281.

**25** This diagram is inspired by the table provided in Richter (2010) 215. The main difference is that there are no Arabic letters addressed to Papas, but this is unsurprising, since such letters in the Qurra dossier are probably a consequence of the reforms of the late seventh century, which aimed, *inter alia*, at increasing the Arabization of the administration.

each other. The modalities of this complementarity remain to be defined, and this will be one of the ongoing tasks of the team now working on this archive.

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Eugenio Garosi

# Cross-Cultural Parameters of Scribal Politesse in the Correspondence of Arab-Muslim Officials from Early Islamic Egypt*

## Arabic writings and their cognates in early Islamic Egypt

In an often quoted papyrus letter palaeographically assigned to the ninth century (*P.AnawatiPapyrusChrétien*), the abbess Maryam wrote to her correspondents in Fusṭāṭ asking questions about their recent journey. This missive stands out for its many figures of Christian religious speech. The writer further marked her religious affiliation by drawing a cross next to the religiously unbiased opening invocation *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*. The letter is one of the first attestations of Arabic being used in an inner-Christian milieu[1] and forms one of a handful of specimens of its kind datable to the first millennium.[2] These documents herald the slow development of Arabic into a *lingua franca* for short and long-term exchanges across religious boundaries.[3]

At the time when Maryam was writing, about two hundred years had passed since the first Muslim armies had set foot in Egypt.[4] From the mid-seventh to the early eighth centuries, Arabic writing and writings had remained an easily monopolizable prerogative of the slim, hegemonic Arab-Muslim transregional elite operating at the highest echelons of the administration. Lower administrative functions were, in principle, delegated to members of the subordinate and still largely non-Islamized and non-Arabized local elites who functioned as intermediate bodies in the relationship between the Arab-Muslim ruling group and its subjects.[5] This binary system entailed the need for institutionalized vertical communication between individuals belonging to different ethnic and cultural groups and between users of separate

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1 The earliest paleographically datable Arabic Christian letters are *P.Mird* 45 and 46 (Khirbat al-Mird; VIII).

2 For a survey of first millennium Arabic letters ascribable to a Christian milieu, see Potthast (2019).

3 For Egypt, Richter (2009 and 2008) has suggested that the shift from Coptic to Arabic reached its turning point in the eleventh century.

4 On the Muslim conquest of Egypt, see Schmidt's and Dar's contributions in this volume.

5 On the systemic conflict of loyalties that this administrative structure entailed, see Papaconstantinou (2015).

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languages. Sitting at this cultural cleavage are two overlapping but distinct scribal cultures of early Islamic Egypt. The Arab-Muslim military elite employed Arabic in everyday written communication.[6] Arabic also began to take primacy in public promulgations although versions in local languages continued to be provided. The graphic distinctiveness and exclusivity of Arabic public texts entailed a symbolic articulation of the social difference between the milieu of the transregional Arab-Muslim imperial elite and that of the Greek-Byzantine Christian, Middle Persian Zoroastrian etc. regional elites.[7] Arabic scribal culture was characterized not only by its distinctive script and the political prestige of its practitioners, but also by the fact that Arabic writing was practiced within a framework of recognizable formulaic and aesthetic conventions. These had deep roots in a "Semitic" tradition of the pre-Islamic Near and Middle East and were not derivatives from the politically dominant official scribal cultures of the lands the Arabs conquered.[8] Whereas the public use of Arabic functioned as a symbolic demonstration of power, Arab-Muslim functionaries in Egypt and elsewhere continued to engage in more pragmatic top-down communication with local representatives in the official languages of the former Sasanian and Byzantine bureaucracy and even in local vernaculars (Greek and Coptic respectively in the case of Egypt).[9] Though issued in a different language, these documents mimic the formal structure, the phraseology, and elements of the layout of coeval Arabic documents. A comparison of these "Arab-style" testimonies with their Arabic counterparts reveals that Muslim officials adapted and transformed Arabic formulaic elements in the shift from one language to another or, more precisely, from one readership to another.[10]

**6** Webb (2016) has called into question the linguistic homogeneity of the conquerors, suggesting that the garrisoned Arabs, though probably able to understand each other, used quite different Arabic dialects in spoken communication.

**7** On the use of the Arabic script as a visual symbol of authority, see Bierman (1998) 31–48, Edwards (1991), and Ettinghausen (1974).

**8** On the origins and formal features of early Islamic documents, see Khan (1994), *id*. (2008), Diem (2008) 853–861, Grob (2010) 39–83, Sijpesteijn (2013) 222–229, Reinfandt (2015) 282–286, and Kaplony (2018) 316 and 344–354.

**9** The functional interplay between Arabic, Greek, and Coptic in the chanceries of early Islamic Egypt is described by Richter (2013 and 2010); cf. Sijpesteijn (2010).

**10** Not discussed in this article are bilingual Arabic/Greek protocols (see Grohmann [1924]) and documents displaying an Arab-style invocation and/or dated according to the Muslim era but otherwise not displaying formal Arabic influences e. g. Muʿāwiya I's Greek inscriptions at Hammat Gader and the Syriac graffiti at Kamed.

## Formulaic features of "Arab-style" Greek epistolography

Early Islamic Arabic official writs first became tangible through the papyrus findings in Egypt and Syria. The structure of the oldest exemplars, dating back to the seventh and eighth centuries, is characterized by a distinctive prescript.

Virtually all Arab-Muslim[11] letters open with (**A 1**)[12] the invocation *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* (so-called *basmala*) usually translated as "In the name of God the Merciful, the Compassionate." The full invocation contains both *allāh* and *al-raḥmān*, two common theonyms for a monotheistic God in pre-Islamic late antiquity in Arabia.[13] *Al-raḥīm* is possibly a further explicative apposition of *al-raḥmān*.[14] The invocation is followed by (**A 2**) the address following the format *min fulān ilā fulān* "from N.N. to N.N." and (**A 3**) the salutation *salām ʿalay-ka/-kum* "peace be upon you," which is omitted if the letter is addressed to Christians.[15] The salutation is followed by the benediction consisting of (**A 4a 1**) the *ḥamdala* (a paraphrase of Qur'an 1:2) *aḥmadu ilay-ka allāh* ... "I praise God for your sake ..." and (**A 4a 2**) the first segment of the *shahāda*, the Muslim proclamation of faith (Q 59:22–23) ... *alladhī lā ilāh illā huwa* "... there is no god but He." Arabic letters addressed to Christians drop (**A 4b**) the *ilay-ka* from the benediction. The Arabic prescript ends with (**A 5**) the transition formula *ammā baʿd* "as for after" opening the main body of the letter. Arabic letters usually end with (**A 6a**) the valediction *wa-l-salām ʿalay-ka/ʿalay-kum* (Q 6:54; 7:46; 13:24; 16:32; 28:55; 39:73) *wa-raḥmat allāh* (Q 11:73) "peace and God's compassion be upon you" when addressed to Muslims or with (**A 6b**) *al-salām ʿalā man ittabaʿa al-hudā* (Q 20:47) "peace be upon who follows the Guidance" in the case of Christian addressees. Finally, official letters contain a (**A 7**) scribal note following the format *wa-kataba* "has written" followed by the scribe's name and a date according to the Muslim era.

Christian civil officials serving under the aegis of Muslim rule in the seventh century continued to issue documents according to Byzantine conventions and their cor-

**11** Arabic documents from the ninth century or later, written by Christians and Jews, open with a modified version of the *basmala* e.g. *bi-sm al-āb al-ibn wa-rūḥ al-quds* "In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"; see Almbladh (2010) and Potthast (2019).

**12** Abbreviated capital letters indicate a document's typology, Arabic Epistolography (A), Arabic Coinage (AC), and Arab-style documents (AS) respectively. Letters following the hyphen indicate the language of Arab-style documents, Greek (Gr.), Sogdian (Sg.), Middle Persian (MP), Bactrian (Bc.), and Latin (Lt.) respectively. Arabic numerals indicate the relative position of a formula.

**13** On theonyms in the Qur'an, see Böwering (2002) 316a–319a, *s.v.* "God and His attributes" and Kaplony (2018) 321–323. On *al-raḥmān* (South Arabic *rḥmnn*) in particular, see Robin (2015) 153–171, Nebes (2010) 35–40, and Kaplony (2018) 321; cf. Crone (2010) 166–169.

**14** Ambros/Procházka (2004) 305.

**15** Cf. below **AS-Gr. 4** and n. 27.

respondence lacks the distinctive features of coeval Arabic documents.[16] But the Greek and bilingual letters sent by Muslim officials to their Christian subordinates in seventh- and eighth-century Syria and Egypt – whether alone or accompanied by Arabic versions[17] – are quite different: their writers adhered closely to the formal typology of official Arabic letters. They open with (**AS-Gr. 1a**) the invocation *en onomati tou theou* "in God's name" or (**AS-Gr. 1b**) *en onomati tou theou tou pantokratoros*[18] "in the name of God, the Almighty." Both invocations are used in documents issued by the chanceries of governors or dukes. Documents issued by the chanceries of pagarchs customarily use the invocation *syn theō* "with God" instead.[19] The invocation is followed by the (**AS-Gr. 2**) address in the format N.N. to N.N., (**AS-Gr. 3**) the salutation *eirēnē soi*[20] or *hymin*[21] "peace to you" (**AS-Gr. 4**) the benediction *eucharistoumen* or *eucharistō tō theō* "we/I thank God" and (**AS-Gr. 5a**) the transition element *kai meta tauta* (in Egypt) or (**AS-Gr. 5b**) *epeita* (in Syria) "and afterwards." At the closing, (**AS-Gr. 6a**) the greeting *eirēnē soi*/*hymin*[22] is repeated and in some letters expanded with (**AS-Gr. 6b**) the addition *apo tou theou*[23] which is probably intended to reflect the Arabic *wa-raḥmat allāh*.[24] The salutation and valediction, in particular, are invariably omitted from the Arab-style letters in Greek sent by the governor of Egypt Qurra b. Sharīk (in office 709 – 714) to the pagarch Basileios between 709 and 711. Greek Arab-style letters often contain the (**AS-Gr. 7**) scribal note *egraphē* "it was written" and a date according to the indiction year or both the indiction year and the Hijrī year.[25]

**16** Luiselli (2008) 696. For a collection of early Islamic Greek letters by Christian officials lacking the Arab-style prescript, see Luiselli (2008) n. 127.

**17** It is generally assumed that Greek letters dispatched to Christian officials were paired with a more "representative" Arabic copy. This was first hypothesized by Bell (1910) XLII, who also suggested a number of pairs (*P.Lond*. IV 1349 and *P.Heid.Arab*. I 1, *P.Lond*. IV 1359 or 1345 and *P.BeckerPAF* 3, and *P.Lond*. IV and *P.BeckerPAF* 3 frag. 4). The Greek and Arabic missives, however, differ markedly in wording; see Richter (2010) 214.

**18** *P.Ness*. 63.5 (Nessana; 675); *P.Ness*. 71.r 1 (Nessana; late VII); *P.Ness*. 72.1 (Nessana; 684); *P.Ness*.73.1 (Nessana; 683) (restored by the editor); *P.Ross.Georg*. V 11.r 1 (origin unknown/Egypt; VIII) (Fr. 1 *pantogradoros*), *PSI* XV 1570 (Edfu; 712).

**19** Morelli (2001) 53 – 54.

**20** *SB* I 4826.r 1 (Fayyūm; VII); *SB* VIII 9748.r 1 (Fayyūm; VII); *SB* VIII 9752.r 1 (Fayyūm; VII) (reconstructed by the editor).

**21** *PSI* XV 1570.r 3 (Edfu; 712).

**22** *P.Apoll*. 5.3 (Edfu; VII–VIII) (*eirēnē hymin*); *P.Apoll*. 8.r 5 (Edfu; VII–VIII) (*eirēnē soi)*; *P.Ness*. 70.r 9 (Nessana; 685) (*eirēnē soi*); *P.Ness*. 74.r 10 (Nessana; 685) (*eirēnē soi*); *PSI* XV 1570.r 13 (Edfu; 712) (*eirēnē hymin*).

**23** *P.Apoll*. 7.r 4 (Edfu; VII–VIII); *P.Lond*. V 1892; *P.Ness*. 68.r 6 (Nessana; 680); *SB* VIII 9748.r 5 (Fayyūm; VII); a further unpublished letter (P.Vind. inv. G 44498) only contains the segment *apo tou theou*; see Morelli (2010a) 42.

**24** Luiselli (2008) 699.

**25** For an (incomplete) survey of Greek and Coptic documents dated according to the Muslim era, see Worp (1985) 109 – 113. An integration of the list is provided by Bagnall/Worp (2004) 300 n. 1.

As the prescript and closing of Arab-style Greek letters are unparalleled in pre-Islamic Greek epistolography,[26] both can be considered as innovations brought by the Arabs.[27] Upon comparison, the Arabic and Arab-style Greek formularies are not identical. The Greek invocation (**AS-Gr. 1a** and **b**) is shortened and substitutes the binomial *allāh* and *al-raḥmān* (**A 1**) with the standard Greek term for the monotheistic God, *theos*. The variant *en onomati tou theou tou pantokratoros* (**AS-Gr. 1b**) further introduces an element absent from the Arabic model.[28] The concept of an omnipotent god is common to all Abrahamic religions and is neither specifically Muslim nor specifically Christian. The corresponding Arabic expression to the Greek *pantokratōr*, *allāh ʿalā kull shayʾ qadīr* – though not encountered in early Islamic documentary sources – is in fact a phrase that occurs frequently in the Qur'an (e. g. Q 2:107). Given the language and the intended readership of the documents at issue, however, the immediate horizon of reference of the *pantokratōr* invocation would certainly have been quite different, as the epithet *pantokratōr* is recurrently used in the Greek versions of both the Old and New Testaments.[29] The Arab-style Greek *pantokratōr* invocation thus introduces a term rooted in the Christian tradition but hidden behind the façade of Muslim administrative jargon.[30]

The Greek salutation *eirēnē soi/hymin* (**AS-Gr. 3**) is closely modelled on the Arabic *salām ʿalay-ka/ʿalay-kum* (**A 3**). It is noteworthy, however, that *Arabic* letters addressed to Christians omit the salutation, whereas it is occasionally found in seventh-century Arab-style *Greek* letters.[31]

The Greek benediction (**AS-Gr. 4**) is shortened and religiously neutralized as it lacks the Muslim proclamation of faith (**A 4a2**). The omission of the only element of the formulary *explicitly* hinting at the Muslim – or at least strictly monotheistic – identity of the sender sites the Arab-style Greek formulary in a non-definitional-monotheistic rather than in a specifically Islamic religious milieu.

Equally remarkable is the Greek valediction: whether in the short form *eirēnē soi/hymin* (**AS-Gr. 6a**) or in the longer variant *eirēnē soi/hymin apo tou theou* (**AS-Gr. 6b**), the Greek valediction[32] is clearly modelled on the Arabic *wa-l-salām ʿalay-ka* (**A 6a**) rather than on the variant reserved for Christian addressees *wa-l-salām ʿalā man it-*

**26** Luiselli (2008) 692–697.

**27** A handful of seventh- and eigth-century Coptic letters also display formal characteristics that can be traced back to Arabic formal influences. These include the invocation *hm p-ran m-p-noute* "in the name of God," the salutation *t-irēnē na-k/nē-tn* "peace to you" or *t-irēnē m-p-noute na-k* "God's peace to you," the transition element *mnsa nai* "after this," and the valediction *t-irēnē na-k/nē-tn* "peace to you"; see Richter (2008) 763.

**28** I owe to Johannes Thomann (Zurich) the ingenious suggestion that the Greek *en onomati tou theou tou pantokratoros* may have been intended to recreate the metrical effect of the Arabic *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*.

**29** On *pantokratōr*, see Montevecchi (1956) particularly 418–430.

**30** Luiselli (2008) 698.

**31** See above n. 21 and 22.

**32** See above n. 23 and 24.

*tabaʿa al-hudā* (**A 6b**) despite all Arab-style Greek letters being addressed to Christians. The difference between the two greetings lies not so much in their religious associative potential (both wordings transcend religious affiliations in principle) but in the cultural difference between the (Muslim) sender and the (Christian) addressee which is accentuated by the Arabic formulation. This holds true for (**A 6c**) the variant of the formula encountered in the letter addressed by the governor Mūsā b. Kaʿb (in office 758–759) to the ruler of Nubia (*P.HindsNubia* [Qasr Ibrim; 758])[33] *salām ʿalā awliyāʾ allāh wa-ahl ṭāʿati-hi* "peace be upon the friends of God and those who obey Him." The (**A 6d**) valediction on a letter sent by the governor Qurra b. Sharīk to the pagarch of Ihnās concerning Qusta "the *qusṭāl*"[34] (*P.GrohmannQorra-Brief* [Fayyūm; 709]) *wa-l-salām ʿalā muḥammad al-nabiy wa-raḥmat allāh* "Peace and God's Mercy be upon the Prophet Muḥammad" has, in contrast, an explicitly Muslim connotation.[35]

In other words, while the formulaic structure of early Islamic Arabic letters to Christian officials tends to stress cultural diversity between the Muslim sender and the Christian addressee, the Arab-style Greek letters do not do so. Upon comparison, Arab-style Greek letters are, in fact, closer in formulary to Arabic missives between Arab Muslims than they are to Arabic missives dispatched to Christians. Accordingly, the religious tone of Arab-style Greek letters is non-denominational. The anti-Trinitarian *shahāda* (**A 4a2**) is omitted and the vocabulary is culturally neutralized. The dichotomy *allāh* and *al-raḥmān* (**A 1**) which is only meaningful in an "Arabian" cultural background is eliminated from the Greek invocation and substituted with the biblical/Abrahamic terms *theos* and *pantokratōr* (**AS-Gr. 1a** and **b**).

Arab-style Greek letters also differ from their Arabic counterparts in their appearance. Arabic official epistolography before 800 is characterized by a distinctive layout using *alineae* and *vacats*[36] to divide the documents' formulaic components into graphically separate layout blocks.[37] Arab-style Greek letters, on the contrary, are organized in a single continuous text block. The same difference is apparent in bilingual Arabic/Greek demand notes framed as short letters from Egypt (the so-called *entagia*). The Arabic invocation is separated from the rest of the text by an *alinea*, but the Greek one is not graphically set apart from the main body of the document. Specimens from Syria-Palestine show a closer correspondence between the layout of

**33** *P.HindsNubia* is discussed in greater detail in Schmidt's contribution to the present volume.

**34** On the office of the *qusṭāl*, see Grohmann (1964) 276–277. On the etymology of the term < Gr. *augoustalis*, see Kaplony *apud* Richter (2010) 209.

**35** I would like to thank Daniel Potthast (LMU) for calling the two formulas to my attention.

**36** On the graphic arrangement of Arabic papyrus letters, see Grob (2010) 187–200.

**37** In official Arabic epistolography (1) the *basmala*, (2) the address and the salutation, (3) the benediction, and (4) the transition formula and the main body of the text are typically singled out on the layout level. In some specimens (most notably in Qurra letters), the indented last line builds a further layout block. A comprehensive study of the layout and graphic features of Arabic documents on papyrus and paper is being undertaken by the Arabic Papyrology Database research group (Munich). I am indebted to the project's members for giving me access to internal data.

the Arabic and Greek texts, with the invocation forming a separate layout block in both.[38] The same layout is apparent only in two examples we have from Egypt.[39]

Arab-style Greek missives from Muslim officials furthermore employ crosses (☩) as beginning and end markers.[40] On eighth-century documents, crosses are frequently replaced by two oblique strokes (//) or, less frequently, by the two symbols ϵ and ϡ. These are commonly used in Arabic letters and in Greek and Coptic documents issued by Muslims. Richter, however, has convincingly shown that the use of these symbols transcended religious affiliation. They were, rather, components of an epistolary etiquette also employed by Christians when addressing Muslims and even, albeit rarely, in missives between (arguably) Christian correspondents.[41] The meaning of the two strokes is unknown, though they might have an antecedent in a similar item (\//)[42] used as a paragraph and end marker in Sabaic legal documents.[43] The symbol // is not used consistently, however, and Greek tax demands issued by Muslim officials continue to display crosses and Christograms well into the eighth century.[44] In sum, though typologically discernible from the correspondence of Christian officials, Arab-style Greek chancery writings issued in the name of Muslim administrators generally maintained the overall appearance of Byzantine documents.[45] Explicit cultural affiliation with the Arab-Muslim milieu could be expressed by secondary visual markers like symbols or by the omission of crosses. This was, however, neither a mandatory nor a universal practice.

## Arab officials, Roman honorifics

One particular aspect of how Arab-style Greek documents differed from the canons of Arabic epistolography pertains to the way Arab-Muslim officials are introduced and addressed in their Greek missives. On Arabic documents, the sender is common-

**38** *P.Ness.* 60 – 67 (Nessana; all dated between 674 and 690).

**39** *P.Heid.Arab.* I h and *P.Heid.Arab.* I f = *SB* I 5649 (Ishqawh; 709 – 710).

**40** As indicative examples, see *SB* XX 14443 (Ahnās; 643) issued in the name of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, *CPR* VIII 78 (origin unknown/Egypt; VII–VIII) issued in the name of ʿAṭiya b. Juʿayd and *P.StoezerSteuerquittung* (Ushmūn/Hermopolis; 694 or 709) issued in the name of Sufyān b. Ghunaym.

**41** Richter (2003) 223 – 230.

**42** On this symbol, see Stein (2010) 31.

**43** The three slanting strokes used as paragraph marker in *P.Cair.Arab.* 39.27 (Egypt; 878), for instance, are strikingly resemblant of the one used in Sabaic documents; cf. e. g. *X.BSB* 107 (origin unknown; V).

**44** Examples of eighth-century Greek documents issued in the name of Arab officials and displaying crosses and/or Christograms are *CPR* XIX 27 (Fayyūm; 730 – 750) from the chancery of Nājid b. Muslim (in office c. 730 – 750) and *SPP* III 260 (Medīnat al-Fayyūm; 753) from the chancery of Yaḥyā b. Hilāl (in office 745 – 761?). On Nājid, see in particular Sijpesteijn (2013) 124 – 136. On Yaḥyā, see Gonis (2004) 189 – 192 and Worp (1984) 103 – 107.

**45** This is not peculiar to papyrological documents. The Greek inscription of Muʿāwiya I mentioned above also opens with a cross; see di Segni (1997) n. 54.

ly introduced by name and patronymic and his official function is mentioned only rarely.[46] In Arab-style Greek letters, in contrast, senders often give their names and titles (as was customary in the Byzantine tradition) or their names, patronymics, and titles.[47]

Titles borne by Arab officials in Greek and Coptic documents from Egypt can be borrowed from the Arabic e. g. *amira*/*amiras*[48] or translated from Arabic e. g. *epikeimenos pagarchias* (< Arab. *ṣāḥib al-kūra*).[49] Some others are newly coined terms such as in the case of the Greek title of the Islamic governors, *symboulos*.[50] Many more, however, have deeper roots in local practices. Noteworthy in this regard is the resilience of Roman honorifics in Greek and Coptic documents issued under Islamic rule, although they were now used more abitrarily than in the Byzantine period.[51] The most blatant such example is the adoption of the Roman *gentilitium* turned honorific "Flavius."[52] The two Arab officials Flavius Atias, son of Goedos (ʿAtiya b. Juʿayd),[53] and Flavius Ioseph, son of Abeid (Yūsuf b. ʿUbayd), are known to bear it in Greek and Coptic documents issued by their respective chanceries. Other indirect evidence for the use of the same *gentilitium* by Arab officials comes from two Coptic documents mentioning one Flavius Saal, son of Abdella (Sahl b. ʿAbd Allāh).[54] The adoption of a Roman *gentilitium* by Arab Muslims allows us to infer that the connotations of Byzantine usages had survived despite their original referential dimension having disappeared. The different use of titles in Arabic and Arab-style documents also bears witness to the existence of a janiform system of social etiquette: translations and borrowings of Roman honorifics are never found in coeval Arabic letters. Only when writing in Greek (and/or Coptic) did Muslim officials "pose" as Byzantine aristocrats.[55] A close parallel is provided by the use of the title *pērōz* "victorious" on

**46** Notable exceptions to this rule are the *entagia* of the governor ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān in which the issuing authority is introduced by name and patronym as well as by title both in the Arabic (*ʿabd al-ʿazīz b. marwān al-amīr*) and Greek (*abdelaziz uios marouan symboulos*) versions. A survey of the *entagia* issued in the name of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz is provided by Delattre *et al.* (2013) 364 – 365 and Delattre/Vanthieghem (2016) 119.

**47** This discrepancy is already apparent in the Arabic and Greek versions of the pre-Islamic bilingual inscription of Ḥarrān, see Kaplony (2016) 391.

**48** On the use of *amira*/*amiras* in Greek and Coptic documents, see Morelli (2010b) 161 – 162 and Sijpesteijn (2013) 117 – 120.

**49** Gonis (2004) 190.

**50** On *symboulos* and its origin, see Morelli (2010b) *passim*.

**51** Papaconstantinou (2009) 452 – 454.

**52** On the use of Flavius as a Roman-Byzantine honorific, see Keenan (1973) and Keenan (1974).

**53** On "Flavius Atias" and his archive, see Sijpesteijn/Worp (1983) 189 – 197, Cromwell (2013), Sijpesteijn (2013) 201 – 202, and Legendre (2016) 11 – 15.

**54** On the use of Flavius in Islamic times, see Sijpesteijn (2013) 202; Papaconstantinou (2009) 453 – 454, and Gonis/Morelli (2000) 194.

**55** This does not apply to the caliph, who is only incidentally referred to with a Greek title (*prōtosymboulos*) in one papyrus (*CPR* VIII 82) and – *pace* Crone/Hinds (1986) – is otherwise always mentioned

Arab-Sasanian[56] coins minted in the former Sasanian territories. In the Sasanian ceremonial, the title *pērōz* was reserved for the Sasanian Kings of Kings; it is attested in the coinage of Kavād II and Visthām. But on coins minted in Islamic times, *perōz* is used in an attributive sense for Arab governors.[57]At the other end of the spectrum, non-Arabs could also be addressed with figures of speech usually reserved for Muslims. When the Muslim official Yazīd b. Aslam sent a letter (*CPR* XVI 4 [Ihnās; VIII]) to his colleague, the scribe Petosiris[58], he employed a hybrid formulary. In this missive, the benediction lacks the *ilay-ka* (**A 4b**) which was customary in letters addressed to Christians.[59] Yet unlike standard Arabic missives to Christian addressees, Yazīd's letter contains the salutation and the valediction generally reserved for Muslims (**A 3** and **A 6a**). A similar case is attested by *P.Jahn* 12 = *Chrest.Khoury* I 98 (Fayyūm; VIII) in which one Umm al-Ḥakam writes to the Copt Mēnas Pekosh. Here, again, the benediction drops the *ilay-ka*, but the salutation and valediction generally reserved for Muslims (*al-salām ʿalay-ka*) are used. It seems that unlike the pagarch Basileios, who had not yet mastered Arabic upon receiving Qurra's Arabic letters, the late eighth-century Copts Petosiris and Mēnas had gained mastery of the language of dominion and consequently enjoyed higher social recognition.

## Parallel epistolographic traditions: The "Arabic" letters from Sogdiana

Evidence from other regions can help us contextualise these results in a broader framework. Outside Egypt and Syria, substantial bodies of documents issued by the Muslim authorities in languages other than Arabic are exceedingly rare. A precious exception is the Sogdian letter sent by the *amīr* ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ṣubḥ to the self-styled "king of Sogdia" Dēwāshtīch (706–722) and excavated in the Mount Mugh fortress in Tajikistan: Mugh 1.l (Zarafshān; 722–723).[60] The formal structure of this letter closely resembles that of Arab-style Greek epistolography. The missive

with his Arabic title whether in Arabic or Greek: Arab. *ʿabd allāh amīr al-muʾminīn* /Gr. *abdella amir-almouminin*.

**56** The designation "Arab-Sasanian" was introduced by Walker (1941). On the definition, see Album/Goodwin (2002) 1.

**57** Gyselen (2002) 94–95. For the possible use of *pērōz* as a personal name in Arab-Sasanian numismatics, see Gyselen (2002) 72.

**58** On the figure of Petosiris and on phenomena of cultural brokerage in early Islamic Egypt, see Reinfandt's contribution in this volume.

**59** See above (**A 4b).**

**60** On the archaeological context of the discovery and the edition history of the document, see Livshits (2015) 15–16 and Yakubovich (2002) 232–234.

opens with (**AS-Sg. 1**) the invocation "in the Name of God, the centre of creation"[61] followed by the address (**AS-Sg. 2**) and the (**AS-Sg. 3**) benediction "honor/thanks to God" rendering the Arabic *basmala* (**A 1**) and *ḥamdala* (**A 4a**) respectively. Unlike its Greek counterparts, the Sogdian letter contains no transition formula linking the prescript to the body of the letter, and the loss of the lower part makes it impossible to ascertain the presence of the valediction and scribal note. Significantly, Mugh 1.l's formal structure differs markedly from that of the other Sogdian letters from the same archive which do not display an introductory invocation and open with an address and an endophoric reference to the type of the missive (e.g. "a report/a message" etc.).[62]

As regards the phraseology, a tendency towards the employment of non-denominational figures of religious speech with a connection to the local tradition can be noticed. The invocation "in the name of god, the creator"[63] (*prnʾm βyy*[64] *δʾmδnʾk*) (**AS-Sg. 1**) distances itself from the Arabic *basmala* (**A 1**). The epithet *δʾmδnʾk* "creator," "centre of creation" in particular, corresponds to the Middle Persian *dādār*[65] "creator," one of the most recurrent attributes and theonyms of Ahura Mazdā in Zoroastrian literature.[66] The Middle Persian invocation *pad nām ī dādār* "in the name of the creator" is, in fact, a recurrent opening formula in Zoroastrian texts preserved in Middle Persian.[67] Due to the omission of the Muslim *shahāda* (**A 4a2**), the religious constellation of the formulary remains, moreover, vaguely monotheistic. In contrast to most Arab-style Greek letters, Mugh 1.l is clearly influenced by Arabic epistolography in its layout. In most specimens of Sogdian letters from Dēwāshtīch's archive, the text appears in a continuous rectangular layout block. In four exemplars,[68] the second part of the address and the following line are inset so that they are visually distinguishable from the opening of the missive. In Mugh 1.l, on the contrary, the initial invocation builds a layout block graphically separate from the main body of the letter.[69] Another Sogdian letter from the same archive issued in the name of Saʿīd b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, governor (*xmʾyr* < Arab. *amīr*) of Khurāsān from 720 to 721, and ad-

**61** The translation is based on the latest reedition of the text by Sims-Williams *apud* Livshits (2015); cf. Henning (1965).

**62** For the other documents belonging to Dēwāshtīch's archive, see Livshits (2015) 52–53.

**63** Translation according to Yakubovich (2002); see also Henning (1965) 249.

**64** On the use of *βy-*, lit. "lord," as a theonym in Sogdian documents, see Henning (1965). Cf. Bailey *et al.* (1989) 401a–403b, *s.v.* "*Baga*."

**65** Cf. also Bud. Sog. *δʾmδʾrʾk* "creator," "master of creation" used as a eulogy in Sogdian Buddhist texts; see *TSP* 8: 61, 71, 75, and 190 and *TSP* 8 *bis:* 5 and 9.

**66** Boyce (1985) 685a and Nyberg (1974) 60, *s.v.* "*dātār*"; cf. Kellens (1989).

**67** Nyberg (1964) 1 and 18. The rarer variant *pad nām ī dādār weh abzōnīg* "in the name of the Creator, the Beneficent, the Bountiful" is probably a rendering of the complete Arabic invocation *bi-sm allāh al-raḥmām al-raḥīm*; see Nyberg (1974) 26.

**68** Mugh A-14; Mugh Nov. 2; Mugh B-16 and Mugh B-15 (all undated).

**69** Livshit (2015) 90, fig. 24.

dressed to one *wxshw*-(...),[70] the "chief priest of Samarkand," also opens with the invocation *prnʾm βyy δʾmδnʾk*.[71] The first line of the missive is broken by a lacuna after the invocation, but the remaining part of the address on the second line suggests that the invocation and address were separated by an *alinea* as in Mugh 1.l. The document was used to line a dagger's scabbard, and it is in a very poor state of preservation. The many lacunae hinder attempts to ascertain the presence or absence of other Arab-style formulaic features as well as further consideration of the document's layout.

A few years beforehand, the same Dēwāshtīch had addressed an Arabic petition (*P.Krachiovsky* [Zarafshān/717–719]) to the *amīr* Jarrāḥ b. ʿAbd Allāh (in office 717–719).[72] The phraseology reveals some divergences from the Sogdian Arab-style missive described above. Unlike in Mugh 1.l, Dēwāshtīch is not introduced with his royal title "King of Sogdia and ruler of Samarkand" but styles himself "*mawlā* (lit. "client") of the *amīr*" instead. More notably, in *P.Krachiovsky,* the benediction includes the Muslim proclamation of faith (lines 4–5) signalizing Dēwāshtīch's recognition – at least *de iure* – of Islam.[73] This indicates that the omission of the *shahāda* in Mugh 1.l does not mark a religious parameter *stricto sensu* but is an element of epistolary civility. Conversely, by issuing a petition in Arabic and adopting a Muslim *habitus*, Dēwāshtīch placed himself – albeit in a lower position[74] – in the same cultural milieu as his patron Jarrāḥ, whose favors he was beseeching.

## Parallel scribal traditions: numismatics

### A) Pre-reform coinage (632–696)

Officially sponsored Arab-style textual sources from outside Egypt are almost entirely supplied by the field of numismatics. For the first 60 years of Islamic rule, Arab numismatics mimicked Byzantine and Sasanian traditions, following their formal conventions and general appearance and using the official languages of the Byzantine and Sasanian bureaucracies.[75] From 651 onwards, Arabic legends are encoun-

**70** The second part of the name is unreadable.

**71** The text is edited by Livshit (1962) 221. An image of the document is provided by Livshit (2015) 204–205.

**72** On Dēwāshtīch's political manoeuvering, see Yakubovich (2002).

**73** It is worth mentioning that Sogdian coins issued in Panjikent during Dēwāshtīch's rule contain invocations of the local goddess "Nana, Lady of Panj." Grenet (1989) 176 and n. 34. For the interpretation of Nana as a goddess, see Henning (1965) 252 and n. 67 and 68.

**74** The lower social standing of Dēwāshtīch in *P.Krachiovsky* is indicated not only by the generally rather humble tone of the missive and the qualification "client of the *amīr*" but also by the positioning of the sender's name after the addressee's one (line 2).

**75** For a synoptic overview of the main phases of early Islamic numismatics, see Album/Goodwin (2002) 4–34 and 77–98 and Heidemann (2009) 151–169.

tered with increasing frequency on Arab-Sasanian coinage both as validating marks concerning the quality of the coin, and in short religious invocations. Here, Arabic and Pahlavi legends build two independent components of the coins' formulary and are not mutual translations. From the 660s–670s on, Arab-Byzantine copper coinage minted in Greater Syria (so-called "Umayyad imperial coinage")[76] displays bilingual Arabic/Greek legends consisting of validating marks and mint-names. When more elaborate Arabic invocations appear, they are not accompanied by Greek translations.[77]

A Middle Persian rendering of the *basmala* in Pahlavi characters *pad nām ī yazdt* "in the name of God" (**AS-MP. 1**) can be seen on a bilingual Arabic/Middle Persian weight[78] and possibly on standing-caliph[79] coppers from the mint of Susa.[80] The same invocation is attested in a number of eighth-century Middle Persian documents from the so-called "Pahlavi archive"[81] as well as in an early Islamic Middle Persian letter on papyrus.[82] The Bactrian equivalent of the formula *pido namo iezid-aso* "In the name of God" (**AS-Bc. 1**)[83] is used in *BD* I Y (Balkh; 771–772)[84] a Bactrian edict from the bilingual Bactrian-Arabic archive of family of Bēk[85] issued by a local Turkish ruler. The Middle Persian and Bactrian rendering of the *basmala* parallels the Greek *en onomati tou theou* (**AS-Gr. 1a**) in that it expunges the distinctive binomial *allāh*/*al-*

**76** For the definition of "Umayyad imperial coinage," see Album/Goodwin (2002) 74–75 and Goodwin (2012) 186. For an overview of the divergent terminology used by scholars to refer to the different phases of Islamic transitional coinage, see Schulze/Oddy (2012) 187–193.

**77** Such is the case e. g. of the *al-wafā' li-l-lāh* "obeisance belongs to God" coins. On these coins, see Foss (2008) 35 and Milstein (1988–1989).

**78** Curiel/Gignoux (1976) 165–169.

**79** On the definition "standing-caliph," see Album/Goodwin (2002) 74 and Schulze/Oddy (2012) 193.

**80** Gyselen (2000) 98, *ASCC* 40, and Treadwell (2008) 360 and n. 113. Based on the readings of Humbach (1966) 60 and (1967) 47 and *contra* Göbl (1967), the Pahlavi legends of a number (n. 211–216 and 244) of early Islamic Hunnic coin-emissions also feature the invocation *PWN SHM' ZY yazdt = pat nām ī yazdt* "In the name of God," influenced by the Arabic *bi-sm allāh*. The readings are, however, doubtful.

**81** Weber (2008).

**82** Weber (2005).

**83** The invocation *pido namo iezid-aso* is not used in any other document from the same archive whether of legal, private, or literary pertinence; it reflects, rather, the influence of the Arabic *basmala*; see Sims-Williams (2007) 217, *s.v. iezid-*.

**84** On the era used in the Bactrian documents (starting point 223 CE) from the archive, see de Blois (2006) and Sims-Williams/de Blois (2018).

**85** The circumstances of the finding and acquisition of the Bēk family archive are obscure. From internal references, one can deduce that the archive was located in the area of Balkh. On this topic, see Sims-Williams/de Blois (2018) 12–13 and Khan (2007) 14–19. The Bactrian materials (about 150 documents/*BD* I and II) are mostly private legal documents and letters, plus a number of accounts and a handful of Buddhist literary texts. The oldest dated items reach as far back as the fourth century, while the most recent ones stretch into the late eighth century. The Arabic documents (33 documents/*P.Khurasan* and Khan [2008] fig. 7.2) fall into the timespan 755–777 and are (mostly) tax receipts and assorted legal documents.

*raḥmān* (**A 1**) of the Arabic original in favor of the more locally rooted *yazd* "god."[86] Furthermore, the Middle Persian translation of the *basmala* is reminiscent of the formula *pad nām ī yazdān* "in the name of the gods" encountered in the third century Mazdean Middle Persian inscription of Paikuli[87] and in the fourth-century Zoroastrian inscription of Meshkinshahr.[88] The resemblance between the two legends induced Gignoux to postulate a Persian origin of the Muslim invocation.[89] In the light of the evidence shown in this paper, one can tentatively assume that precisely the opposite is the case: that the Persian translation of the Arabic *basmala* may have been modelled to resemble formulaic usages rooted in local tradition.[90]

## B) Post-reform coinage

The reform of the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik in the year 77/696–697 gave Islamic numismatics its definitive form alongside its standard formulary consisting of Qur'anic paraphrases. The obverse side of reformed gold coinage displays the full proclamation of faith embracing the central legend (**AC 1**) *lā ilāh illā allāh waḥda-hu lā sharīk la-hu* "there is no god but God alone, He has no associate" and the marginal legend (**AC 2**) *muḥammad rasūl allāh* (Q 48:9) *arsala-hu bi-l-hudā wa-dīn al-ḥaqq li-yuẓhira-hu ʿalā al-dīn kulli-hi* (Q 48:28) "Muḥammad is God's Messenger, He has sent Him with the guidance and the religion of truth so that He may proclaim it above all religions."[91] The reverse displays (**AC 3**) the text of Sura *al-Ikhlāṣ* (Q 112) in the central legend *allāh aḥad allāh al-ṣamad lam yalid wa-lam yūlad* "God, One, the Eternal He does not beget nor was begotten" and the executive marginal legend (**AC 4**) *bi-sm allāh ḍuriba hādhā al-dīnār bi-kadhā fī sanat kadhā* "in the name of God this *dīnār* was minted in so-and-so in the year so-and-so."

Ironically, the first recorded use of this distinctive "Arab" formulary on coinage is not found on Arabic coins. In 72/691–692, when the Second Islamic Civil War was reaching its close, the Zubayrid[92] governor of Sijistān, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmīr, minted Middle Persian coins featuring the Muslim *shahāda* in Pahlavi script:

**86** For some examples of the use of *yazd* in Sasanian epigraphy, see the references in Gignoux (1972) *s.v. yazd*.

**87** For the text of the Paikuli inscription, see Humbach/Skjærvø (1983).

**88** For the text of the Meshkinshahr inscription, see Frye/Skjærvø (1996).

**89** Gignoux (1979) and Gignoux/Algar (1990) 172a.

**90** The *basmala* more probably reflects Judeo-Christian influences; see Shaked (1992) 152–153.

**91** On reformed dirhams, this legend is displayed on the reverse side and encompasses the extra bit *wa-law kariha al-mushrikūn* "... even if the 'associators' hate it." For the determination of the reverse side on silver reformed coinage, see Bacharach (2010) 16.

**92** On the strategies of Zubayrid propaganda, see Lynch (2014) and Foss (2013); cf. Treadwell (2012).

| | |
|---|---|
| *dōaftād* | "Seventy-two |
| *yazd-ew bē oy* | One God but He |
| *any yazd nēst* | Another God does not exist |
| *Muḥammad paygāmbar ī yazd* | Muhammad (is) the Messenger of God |
| *SK* | SK (= Sagastān)[93]" |

These coins not only feature an *ante litteram*[94] transposition of the complete *shahāda* but also embrace the all-epigraphic layout of the future reformed coinage. Even the disposition of the legends heralds the layout of the all-epigraphic coinage whereby the administrative information encloses the field legend.

Gradually, the new all-epigraphic Arabic coins supplanted Arab-Byzantine and Arab-Sasanian emissions throughout the empire. Latin coins minted at the western edge of the Muslim Empire in North Africa and Spain between c. 698 and 716 are exceptional in this respect, as they organically combine translations of the Arab formulary with elements of pre-reform coinage. This hybrid nature is apparent already on visual grounds: gold emissions minted at the newly established main North African mint[95] are entirely epigraphic, following the model of the reformed Syrian series. The mint of the old Byzantine regional capital of Carthage, on the contrary, minted image-based gold coins with Byzantine iconography.[96]

Arab-Byzantine Latin coinage has a few remarkable features. The arrangement of the legends is distinctive, to begin with: in Arabic reformed coinage, the *basmala* and *shahāda* are not part of the same legend, but on Muslim Latin coinage, they often appear together. As regards the legends themselves, renderings of the *basmala* (**A 1**) range from relatively faithful ones like (**AS-Lt. 1a**):

*in nomine domini misericordis*
"In the name of the Merciful Lord/In the name of the Lord, the Merciful"

to unparalleled reformulations such as (**AS-Lt. 1b**):

*in nomine tuo deus vivificans et misericors*
"In Thy name, o life-giving and merciful God"

**93** The first specimen of this kind was published by Mochiri (1981) from whom I reproduce both the Middle Persian text and the translation; Mochiri (1981) translates "doesn't."

**94** The Pahlavi epigraphic issues of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿĀmīr postdate by a year the earliest attestation of (a version of) the profession of faith found on a Arabic tombstone from Aswan, and are contemporary to the versions of the *shahāda* included in the Arabic legends of imitative Byzantine *solidi* and on the so-called "standing-caliph" gold coinage minted in Damascus, as well as in the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. On the earliest versions of the *shahāda*, see Bacharach/Anwar (2012).

**95** It is debated whether the main North African mint was an urban one or an itinerant mint; see Jonson (2015) 219.

**96** Bates (1995) 13.

The same holds true for renderings of the *shahāda*. Some adhere very closely to the Arabic model, among them the legend (**AS-Lt. 2a**):

*non est deus nisi ipse solus cui socius non est*
"There is no God but He (Himself) alone, Who has no associate"

or slight variations thereof. Parallel, freer reformulations of the profession of faith, however, are also very common such as (**AS-Lt. 2b**):

*non deus nisi deus omnium creator*
"There is no God but God, the Creator of all things"

Finally, some of the Latin phraseology is almost entirely unrelated in wording to the original Arabic model. This is the case in invocations like (**AS-Lt. 0a**):

*deus eternus deus magnus omnium creator*
"God the Eternal, God the Great, the Creator of all things"

or (**AS-Lt. 0b**):

*deus dominus noster magnus eternus omnia noscens*
"God our Lord, the Wise, the Great, the Eternal, the All-knowing"

and (**AS-Lt. 0c**):

*Deus tuus Deus*
"Your god is God"

The array of theonyms and divine attributes used on Arab-Byzantine Latin coinage has parallels in both biblical and Qur'anic usage.[97] For cultural and linguistic reasons, however, biblical vocabulary would have been much more recognizable to local users of the coins. Furthermore, biblical references go beyond terminological affinities. In fact, some of the Latin invocations which have no parallel in the Arabic model phraseology echo passages of the Latin Vulgata. The invocation *in nomine tuo* for instance is found in several passages in the Old and New Testaments,[98] but has only extra-Qur'anic Arabic parallels and never occurs on Arabic coinage.[99] *Deus tuus Deus* (**AS-Lt. 0c**) echoes Deuteronomy 7:9 *Deus tuus ipse est Deus*. One of the legends in particular, (**AS-Lt. 0d**) *Dominus quis tibi similis,* is a verbatim quote from the

**97** A list of the Qur'anic parallels to the theonyms and attributes used in Islamic Latin coinage is provided by Walker (1956) C.

**98** E. g. in Ps 43:9, Ps 53:3, Ps 88:17, Ps 115:17, etc., and in Mt 7:22 etc.

**99** The reported text of the treaty of Ḥudaybiya opens with the invocation *bi-smi-ka allāhumma* "in Thy name, oh God." On Muslim traditions pertaining to the treaty, see Wensinck (1927) 102a–b, *s.v.* "Ḥudaibiya."

Psalms.[100] In addition, the second part of the *shahāda* proclaiming Muḥammad's prophetic mission (**AC 2**) and the markedly anti-Christian Sura *al-Ikhlāṣ* (**AC 3**) are the only legends of the Arabic formulary which are never once referenced in the Latin version(s).[101]

Commenting on the Islamic Latin coinage from North Africa, Bates discusses "the difficulty that these provincial early Muslims had in composing an adequate version of the Muslim *shahāda*" and ascribes these difficulties to the remoteness of the region from the imperial capital in Damascus.[102] While a comprehensive explanation for the high degree of variations in the Latin formulary of Islamic coins from the Maghreb is yet to be provided, the adaptations of Muslim phraseology must be contextualized within the broader trend attested in different regions of the Islamic Empire. Like other corpora of Arab-style documents, Latin adaptations of the *shahāda* (**AS-Lt. 2a** and **b**) and *basmala* (**AS-Lt. 1a** and **b**) use the omission or re-elaboration of explicitly Muslim-Arab elements to create an ambiguous or rather ambivalent transcultural non-definitional monotheistic framework.

## Concluding remarks

The shifting parameters of social behavior evidenced in this contribution place themselves at the confluence of the Arab-Muslim elite's need to stress its exclusive cultural traits, on the one hand, and to deploy effective communicative strategies, on the other. Much like their Arabic counterparts, Arab-style documents were the prerogative of Arab-Muslim officials and used their formal structure and, to a lesser extent, their aesthetic appearance to convey an impression of authority to their recipients. Whereas the Arabic writings of Arab-Muslim officials from early Islamic Egypt stressed specific Arab-Muslim cultural traits by means of language, formulary, and even layout, their Arab-style Greek correspondence shares not only a common language but also a common non-denominational *religious* language and common parameters of scribal politesse with pre-Islamic Greek epistolography. This institutionalized practice of cultural ambivalence is not to be read as a statement of cultural identity but as a form of negotiation and communicative civility. The comparison with documents from Syria, North Africa, and Khurāsān further reveals that, despite adjustments to the specific regional contexts, the social behavior of the Arab-Muslim ruling group towards the local Christian elite in Egypt aligned with a more general attitude towards the non-Muslim regional elites of the empire. For members of the Arab-Muslim imperial elite confronted with a largely non-Arabicized and non-Islamicized social environment, negotiating the most divisive aspects of their cultural iden-

**100** Ps 44:10, Ps 70:19, Ps 82:2, and Ps 88:9.

**101** In bilingual Latin-Arabic issues minted between 716 and 719, the Muḥammad formula is only in the Arabic text, see Bates (1992); *BMC* II n. 184-J. 6; Miles (1950) n. 1 (a–f).

**102** Bates (1995) 15.

tity to create more fluid channels of cross-cultural communication seems to have been an acceptable and maybe even a necessary compromise.

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# II Village Authorities and Leading Families at the Intersection of State and Society

Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello

# An Important Family in Sixth-Century Hermopolis: New Insights from the Basel Papyrus Collection*

In 1989, Pieter J. Sijpesteijn published an article entitled "An Important Family in VI$^{th}$ Century Hermupolis" describing a family archive in the British Library collection, that of Flavius Silbanos son of Phoibammōn, soldier in Hermopolis, and his son Flavius Geōrgios.[1] Sijpesteijn had spotted four texts related to Silbanos and five concerning his son. He managed to reconstruct some key elements of their lives and offered a stemma of the family.[2] During the 20$^{th}$ International Congress of Papyrology, James Keenan showed how this documentation completes the picture of soldiers acting as "moderate landowners" and businessmen in the Hermopolite nome in the fifth and sixth centuries.[3] The most recent contribution on this documentation is from Nico Kruit, who added two more papyri to this archive, one concerning Silbanos and the other Geōrgios, while studying "sales of wine for future delivery" documents.[4]

Until now, all the papyri forming this archive were in the British Library collection, most of them purchased in 1901.[5] Among the papyri belonging to the University of Basel, acquired in the winter 1899 – 1900,[6] the small fragment P.Bas. inv. 42 bears on the verso the name "Silbanos son of Phoibammōn." It could be joined with *P.Lond*. III 1013 descr., a lease published in 1986 as *SB* XVIII 13584 that had not yet been identified as part of this archive.[7] The (re-)edition of the whole text will be included in the forthcoming second volume of the Basel papyri as *P.Bas*. II 53.

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**1** Sijpesteijn (1989) 381 – 383.

**2** Silbanos: *P.Lond*. III 992, 999 (later united with 998 = *SB* XVI 12488), 1051, 1316b (= *SB* XX 14457); Geōrgios: *P.Lond*. III 1000, 1001, 1020, *P.Lond*. V 1766 and 1872. For a discussion on the date of these texts, see below.

**3** Keenan (1994) 449 – 450 and n. 46 adding one datum to Sijpesteijn's stemma. See fig. 1 in this chapter for an updated stemma.

**4** Kruit (1994) 83 n. 65 identified Silbanos in *P.Lond*. III 1052a (= *SB* XX 14465) and Geōrgios in *P.Lond*. III 997 = *SB* XXII 15597. An updated list of texts is given in the appendix at the end of this article.

**5** The papyri from this archive which are described or published in *P.Lond*. III belong to a lot acquired by the British Museum from the Reverend Chauncey Murch which comprised Papyri 884 – 1178. I am thankful to Peter Toth for this information. *P.Lond*. V 1766 and 1872 descr. were purchased in 1906.

**6** See the forthcoming introduction of *P.Bas*. II by S. Huebner.

**7** Parássoglou (1986). Nikolaos Gonis had also noticed the affiliation of this text with Silbanos' archive.

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It rounds out our knowledge of this family and its business activities, specifically in relation to transactions between family members. More pieces of the archive are very likely to be identified among the London papyri: *P.Lond*. III 1021 descr. p. LIII, described as a "short account presented by Silvanus son of Phoebammon, for the tenth indiction" refers to "our" Silbanos and has just been published.[8] *P.Lond*. III 1053 descr., also due to be published in the near future,[9] has been identified as the end of *SB* XVI 12488, which had previously been spotted as part of Silbanos' archive. Extensive work on the London collection to reconstruct this archive will surely bring more texts to light, but this task is, however, beyond the scope of the present paper, which aims to sum up the currently available data from the archive to show how Silbanos kept closely in touch with the sons that helped him to run his multifaceted business.

When Silbanos first appears in our documentation, he is already a soldier in the unit (*arithmos*, the equivalent of *numerus)* of the *Mauri* in Hermopolis.[10] The oldest securely dated text from this archive is a famous *compromissum*, *P.Lond*. III 992 (507),[11] which gives important information about his family: it deals with a dispute Silbanos and his brothers had with their sister. One of his brothers, Sarapiōn, is also a Flavius and serves as a soldier in the same *numerus*. Another, named Isakos, is an Aurelius and represents the heirs of the late third brother, Tyrannos. The opposite party is formed by the sister, named Aurelia Archontia, and her husband Flavius Bēsnikōn, another soldier in the same unit. It is expressly stated that they are all from Hermopolis. We do not know much about the object of the dispute. Keenan has described the *compromissum* as follows: "Its participants agree to abide by an arbitration ruling to be made by two *scholastici* of the forum of the Thebaid in a division of family property. Significant, of course, is that the family had property to divide (though details are not given)."[12] In fact, the text does not mention real property but states that the dispute is "about certain capital sums."[13] The parties involved, i. e. all the brothers on one side and the married sister on the other, may be an indication that the dispute was about the paternal inheritance. Phoibammōn's belongings may first have been (or were intended to be) left undivided among his five children (and their heirs) and managed by the elder brother. Whether Aurelia Archontia was already married at the time of her father's death or married later, she could have de-

**8** Gonis (2019) 237–241. I am thankful to the author for a preview. In his note 24 on page 241, Nikolaos Gonis refers to a possible mention of Geōrgios in *P.Lond*. III 1304b descr. line 4 (Γεωρ]γίῳ υἱῷ Σιλβανοῦ), a legal agreement of 566/567. A future edition may ascertain the belonging of this text to the archive.

**9** The publication will be part of my study on the notary Mēnas' dossier.

**10** For the most recently published text (probably) concerning this unit, see *P.Gascou* 21.4–5 (Hermopolis (?), 514) and the bibliography gathered in the note p. 61–62, with explicit reference to Silbanos' archive.

**11** Reprinted in *Chrest.Mitt*. 365; *Sel.Pap*. I 61 and *FIRA* III 182.

**12** Keenan (1994) 449.

**13** Line 11: περὶ φανερῶν κεφαλαίων (translation from *Sel.Pap*. I 61).

sired – or been pressured – to separate her share from her brothers' so that her husband could manage it.[14] The modalities of the division would have generated the family dispute, with the possible existence of a dowry as an additional complicating factor.[15] Nevertheless, this text shows that Silbanos came from a Hermopolite family that was already of some means. No other text mentions Silbanos' brothers and sister or his brother-in-law.[16]

We are currently aware of only two other documents that refer to Silbanos during his time as an active soldier. *P.Lond.* III 1021 is an account where Silbanos appears in the heading with his sons and associated with an *optio*. It is drawn in the eleventh indiction for the surplus of the tenth. Nikolaos Gonis has argued on monetary and prosopographical reasons that the eleventh indiction corresponds more likely to 502/503, thus making this text the oldest of the archive, although 517/518 cannot be excluded.[17] The second text is *SB* XX 14465, a list registering amounts of money and labeled "of the soldier Silbanos." It is unclear whether the sums mentioned were paid or received by Silbanos. The only hint comes in line 5, where the amount is apparently for a garment, which would point to the document being a list of expenses.[18] The seven entries for which the day of the month is indicated, lines 4 to 10, were all made within less than 30 days, from 18 Thōth to 13 Phaōphi, and they come to a total of 24,400 talents.[19] This suggests that Silbanos was already running some kind of business or had substantial sums that he could spend or invest on various transactions. *SB* XX 14465 has been of interest to scholars since it may show how talents could be converted to *solidi* (even if the *editor princeps* doubted this), but otherwise it does not contain elements which could date it firmly. Jean Gascou has dem-

**14** Huebner (2014) 102 on evidence from Roman Egypt: "Sisters in Roman Egypt usually joined their brothers in their efforts to keep the paternal estate undivided. However, if the sister was already married and lived elsewhere, some division of property became necessary."

**15** Huebner (2014) 104: "Dowries were unknown in Egypt in Pharaonic times [...]. However, in Hellenistic times the practice of endowing a daughter became more widespread in Egypt also. In Roman Egypt, we then find a combination of practices: daughters usually received a dowry but also held a right to a share in the parental inheritance, including houses and land. Dowries and inheritances complemented each other: the value of the dowry, consisting mainly of female goods, was subtracted from the later share in the parental property."

**16** A Fl. Isakos son of Phoibammōn is a witness in *P.Lond.* III 1001 concerning Geōrgios. Sijpesteijn, in his article from 1989, p. 382 n. 8, says that he may be the same person as Silbanos' brother, without addressing the question of the change of status designation between Flavius and Aurelius. Kruit, in his article from 1994, p. 83 n. 65, seems to accept the idea that this Isakos is Geōrgios' uncle, but he rejected his identification with the contractor in *P.Stras.* V 493, 10, as suggested by the editor of the Strasbourg papyrus.

**17** Gonis (2019) 237 and 241 (discussion on the dating).

**18** The editor reads an erroneous form of *cheiridion*, usually "a glove for rubbing the body" but also maybe a diminutive of *cheiris*, "a loose sleeve as worn by Persians, Gauls, and tragedians"; see *P.Mich.* XV 752.42n.

**19** For comparison, the delivery of two suckling-pigs, one worth 6,000 talents and the other 5,000, is included in the rent agreement *SB* IV 7369.17 and 26 (Hermopolis; 512).

onstrated that the last attestation of the *Mauri* as being active is from 528 and that they had already been replaced by the *Numides* by 533/534 at the latest; that provides us with a *terminus ante quem* for this text.[20] We do not know when Silbanos started his soldierly career. It could have been a couple of years before the *compromissum*, and thus this list could theoretically have been written before 507. Constantin Zuckerman even suggested dating it to before 504 for monetary reasons.[21] However, according to Kruit, "the handwriting of this papyrus looks identical to that of *P.Lond*. III 1316b," a text whose writer happens to be known from another document.[22]

*P.Lond*. III 1316b, now *SB* XX 14457, is indeed a receipt delivered by Silbanos, "former soldier," and expressly written by his son Petros because Silbanos "does not know the letters."[23] It acknowledges the payment in money of a rent for the crops of a fifth indiction by Biktōr, a farmer from the village of Senilais. *P.Lond*. III 1051 is a similar receipt, issued by Silbanos to Biktōr for the crops of a twelfth indiction, for a slightly higher amount.[24] This time, Silbanos signed himself, in a very illiterate hand. There is no mention of whether he is still an active soldier or already a veteran. Dating these two texts thus depends on evidence from the other texts in the archive and its interpretation.

Thanks to preserved consular dates in three documents, some key elements of Silbanos' life can be established firmly: in *SB* XVI 12488.4–5, from December 538, Silbanos, while making an advance payment for wine to a deacon (*diakonos*) of the village of Enseu,[25] is designated as a "former soldier of the *numerus* of the *Mauri* that used to be in Hermopolis." *P.Lond*. V 1766, from January 559, refers to Geōrgios as being "the son *of the late* Silbanos," whereas in *P.Lond*. V 1872 from November 548, he is just said to be "the son of Silbanos." Therefore, Silbanos must have died some time between the end of 548 and the beginning of 559.

Relying on the fact that Silbanos retired from active service in 538 and died at the latest in 559, Sijpesteijn argued that *SB* XX 14457, the receipt from a fifth indiction where Silbanos is said to be a "former soldier" who "does not know the letters" must be dated to 541/542 or 556/557. Sijpesteijn then assumed that the other receipt, *P.Lond*. III 1051 from the twelfth indiction, signed by Silbanos with a hesitant hand, is posterior since "Silvanus seems at least to have learned to sign the receipts he issues."[26] He thus excludes the possibility of dating it to 534 but dates it to 549 without

**20** Gascou (2008) 314–315.

**21** Zuckerman (2004) 61 n. 18: Observing that a *solidus* minus 4 carats is equivalent to 23,400 talents, and that in *SB* XVI 12378 (504) and *CPR* VII 43 (513) the *solidus* is already minus 5 carats, Zuckerman suggests *SB* XX 14465 predates these two texts.

**22** Kruit (1994) 83 n. 65.

**23** *SB* XX 14457.7–9.

**24** *SB* XX 14457.5: 17 carats; *P.Lond*. III 1051.4–5: one *solidus* minus 6 ¼ carats = 17 ¾ carats.

**25** For deacons' activities without obvious links to the Church a century later, see Anne Boud'hors's contribution to this volume, Section 2.2 and n. 17.

**26** Sijpesteijn (1989) 382.

coming back to his previous alternative date for *SB* XX 14457, 556/557, which would not match his logic anymore.

The text that has been pieced back together again through the link made between the London and Basel collections adds a new element to this discussion: it is dated to a second indiction, and to a consular year which corresponds to October 538. It is thus anterior to *SB* XX 14457 (from a fifth indiction) but bears Silbanos' subscription, as broad and clumsy as in *P.Lond*. III 1051. This proves that Silbanos would have been able to sign the rent receipt *SB* XX 14457 but, probably for convenience, asked his son Petros to subscribe for him. This is an interesting case of semi-literacy which complements the well-known case of Petaus, the scribe who could not write, and other similar cases.[27] It reminds us not to take assessments that a certain person "does not know the letters" too literally; in some cases, like that of Silbanos, a person apparently did[28] but preferred to delegate tasks to more skilled writers.[29] Now that *P.Lond*. III 1051 does not have to be posterior to *SB* XX 14457 anymore, the possibility of dating it to 534 can no longer be excluded.

*P.Bas*. II 53 is interesting not only because it bears Silbanos' signature and can be dated, but also because it shows the former soldier leasing land from his own son, Petros. Furthermore, the land is said to be owned in common with Petros' two other brothers, the well-known Geōrgios and the as-yet unknown Phoibammōn. The latter thus bears, as was often the case, the same name as his paternal grand-father, which may indicate that he was the first-born male child.[30] The provenance of the leased land is lost in the lacuna, but it is tempting to think of a maternal inheritance shared

**27** Youtie (1973) 677; Kraus (2000) 334 – 338; for a recent overview of literacy in Roman Egypt, see Huebner (2018) 164 – 166.

**28** Kraus (2000) 325 – 328 and 340 distinguishes between formulas expressing that a person "does not know the letters" (type A), "is illiterate" (type B), or is a "slow writer" (type C), but he never considers the possibility that these expressions may not reflect reality, nor comments on the fact that type C seems to disappear after the fourth century. For a more nuanced view, see Wipszycka (1996) 115 n. 10: "Il n'est cependant pas toujours certain que ceux qui ne signent pas un document, mais autorisent quelqu'un d'autre à le faire pour eux, soient des analphabètes" and the case of Athanasios from eighth-century Jeme who uses an *hypographeus* although he could write with elegance. Wipszycka (1996) 132 about a doctor (*iatros*) qualified to be "illiterate" (*agrammatos*): "Dans le cas de ce médecin qui est dit ἀγράμματος, de même que dans d'autres cas similaires, je soupçonne qu'il peut s'agir, non pas d'un analphabète, mais d'une personne qui n'est pas en mesure d'écrire dans la situation donnée. [...] Il est vrai qu'on s'attendrait à trouver, dans des cas pareils [circumstantial incapacities to write], des formules différentes de celles que nous lisons (ἀγραμμάτου ὄντος ou bien γράμματα μὴ εἰδότος). Mais on peut penser que les notaires se servaient de formules stéréotypées, sans chercher à les adapter à la situation concrète. Certainement il vaudrait la peine d'étudier, dans l'ensemble des documents grecs d'Égypte, pour toutes les époques, tous les cas où ces formules traditionnelles paraissent suspectes."

**29** Kraus (2000) 326 – 328 on the importance of the *hypographeus*, the person writing on behalf of others.

**30** Delattre (2014) 155: "le premier enfant mâle porte traditionnellement le nom de son grand-père paternel."

between the three children. Since it is explicitly itself a quarter of a previous lot, a further hypothesis would be that the mother had herself equally shared a parental inheritance with three siblings.[31] The properties leased by Petros to his father are scattered in three different locations in the territory of Enseu. Hence, this new text provides background to *SB* XVI 12488, drawn up only two months later: while taking care of Petros' land in Enseu, Silbanos established the connexions he needed to invest some of his money in an advance sale of wine in the same village. Besides, the join between *SB* XVI 12488 and *P.Lond.* III 1053 descr. shows that the contract of sale was written by Mēnas, the same notary who wrote *P.Bas.* II 53, another connection that probably eased the drafting of the contract. Another text played a part in the genesis of *SB* XVI 12488: Nico Kruit showed that *SB* XXII 15597 from October 537, which is also a sale of wine for future delivery, but this time with Geōrgios as the purchaser, was subsequently used as a model by Silbanos for his own similar contract. The names of the notary and the village are lost, but some technical clauses, not found in any other document, prove the close business collaboration that Silbanos had with his son Geōrgios.

What kind of relationship did Silbanos have with his other sons? Phoibammōn is not attested elsewhere but, regarding Petros, it has already been mentioned that he helped his father run his business by writing at least one rent receipt and a money account for him. But if Silbanos had a good relationship with Petros, why would he have needed to draw up a contract with his own son to cultivate his land? There are still lacunas in the lease, but it does indeed contain specific clauses that make it unusually favorable for the lessee, i. e. Silbanos. The lease is for as long as the lessee, not the lessor, desires. Petros seems to temporarily waive his ownership and complete lawful possession of his share of the land in favor of his father (for example, he cannot decide to sell the land while it is leased out) and there is an unparalleled wording stating that all income (*pantoias prosodou*) from the land will go to Silbanos. These specificities suggest that thanks to this lease, Silbanos could use this land almost as freely as if he owned it. If the land was indeed first owned by Silbanos' wife, Silbanos, as the husband, was likely to have managed it. Through this contract, he is assured to be able to continue in the future, at least as far as Petros' share is concerned.

Was this a specific arrangement Silbanos made only with Petros, or were there two similar contracts through which Silbanos also leased the shares of his two other sons? It is not possible to give a definitive answer to this question, but one could argue that if one or both of the other sons had agreed similar terms, the simpler solution would have been to draw up only one contract mentioning several les-

**31** This hypothesis does not consider a possible reduction of her share resulting from the deduction of a previous dowry, see n. 19 above. For an example of an equal share between two brothers and a sister, even if the sister has a child, see Huebner (2014) 106 – 107.

sors. Nothing is known about Phoibammōn, but Geōrgios was already an active businessman in his own right by that time.

Keenan pointed out that Geōrgios probably inherited his father's papers.[32] As already seen, the similarity between the two advance sales of wine showed that he had a close business relationship with Silbanos in the years 537–538. In November 538, he wrote *P.Lond*. III 1000, the draft of a petition to an official requesting the enforcement of the payment of a debt he had failed to recover. *P.Lond*. III 1001, from February 539, is an advance purchase agreement for wheat and wine that he contracted with a winemaker, once again in Enseu. In most of the texts that relate to him, Geōrgios is called Flavius,[33] but, in this text only, he is referred to as "Flavius Geōrgios, son of Silbanos, former soldier from Hermopolis." Keenan simply mentions that Geōrgios was "also a soldier,"[34] but Kruit closely examines this point. After admitting that Geōrgios could have been a veteran of the *Mauri*, like his father, or have served in the unit of the *Numides* which replaced them, he underlined that Geōrgios' military status should show up in more than one text and does not fit with the honorific title *thaumasiōtatos* used twice about him.[35] He rejected Sijpesteijn's idea that the "former soldier" referred to Silbanos and not Geōrgios on the ground that "it would be unnatural to read the address of *P.Lond*. III 1001 in this way."[36] He sums up the discussion by saying that he does not think that any conclusion can be reached.[37] It seems, however, more likely that if Geōrgios had been a soldier, he would have mentioned it in more documents, and especially in the draft of petition *P.Lond*. III 1000. Taking the whole archive into consideration, it is more plausible that Geōrgios was a young businessman rather than already a veteran in 539, since his activities are still documented twenty years later.[38]

After a gap of almost ten years, in 548, Geōrgios reappears in the documentation as the owner of a house which he rents to a villager from Nagōgis in *P.Lond*. V 1872 descr. With another inhabitant of this same village, Geōrgios subsequently draws up *P.Lond*. V 1766 in 559, an agreement on payment of arrears for the rent of his property.[39] A final text, *P.Lond*. III 1020 (p. 272) is from a fifth indiction, but evidence that could determine the precise year concerned is lacking. The text depicts Silbanos' son as "brother Geōrgios" receiving an acknowledgement of rent payment from another inhabitant of Hermopolis, Basileidēs son of Phoibammōn. Sijpesteijn and Keenan,

**32** Keenan (1994) 450.

**33** The use of Aurelius in *P.Lond*. V 1872.4 is probably due to scribe confusion.

**34** Keenan (1994) 450.

**35** Kruit (1994) 84–85.

**36** Kruit (1994) 86 n. 72.

**37** Kruit (1994) 86.

**38** Gonis (2019) 237 and n. 4.

**39** The same lessee, Aur. Kollouthos son of Kyriakos from Nagōgis, appears in another lease, *P.Lond*. III 1006 (p. 260) from 555, whose lessor Aur. Petros son of Pinoutiōn from the same village is also attested in *SB* XX 14455, a tax receipt. There is not enough evidence to suggest that these two papers had found their way into Geōrgios' archive.

following the editor, respectively consider Geōrgios to be "the representative of Cyrilla and Maria, a nun"[40] or "acting in behalf of two nuns,"[41] but the situation is rather unusual: two women named Kyrilla and Maria seem to have already passed away (*makariai*) and Geōrgios pays "their" rent to Basileidēs, a rent that is described as one-sixth of the two women's produce (*ekphoria*) in Hermopolis and in the village where they were nuns (or at least Maria was a nun). The exact relationship between all these people is not specified. Evidence is too thin to speculate that Geōrgios became a monk at the end of his life and was called "brother" for that reason. It is also unlikely that he had changed the nature of his activities from landlord to tenant, cultivating land that two nuns used to cultivate (or sub-let) before him. An interpretation that fits the general picture of Geōrgios better would be that "brother" was here merely a respectful appellation, not referring to any monastic status, and that Geōrgios was either a sub-tenant or the person in charge of managing the business and the legacy of the two women rather than the person who actually worked the land. This text thus shows another aspect of his entrepreneurial activities.[42] It is possible that this text is the most recent one, and the fifth indiction could then correspond to 571/572, but 541/542 or 556/557 cannot be excluded.

What about the next generation? It has been mentioned that the last firmly dated texts referring to Geōrgios illustrate his activities as the landlord of a house and a property in Nagōgis. Another Basel papyrus also makes reference to this same village: in *P.Bas*. II 66,[43] a villager rents irrigation equipment from a Hermopolite resident, Phoibammōn son of the blessed Georgiōs, whom it is tempting to see as Silbanos' grandson. An Aurelius bearing this name and patronymic is attested in two leases from *P.Lond*. III dated from 576 and 583; this would nicely add a more recent chapter to the family chronology, but at the moment, this is still mere speculation.[44]

In conclusion, this archive of a dozen texts yields very little information on Silbanos' life as a soldier but sheds rather more light on his family and on his business affairs. This is consistent with Keenan's conclusion that "the *Mauri* do at any rate seem to have been citizen soldiers, leading, like the soldiers of the Patermuthis archive, active family lives; full-time professional soldiering may only have come to Hermopolis with the introduction of the *Numidae Iustiniani* in the mid-sixth century."[45] Silbanos, at least, leased out land and bought wine in advance. His son Geōr-

**40** Sijpesteijn (1989) 382.

**41** Keenan (1994) 450.

**42** I am grateful to Joanna Wegner for discussing the possible interpretations of this document with me.

**43** Forthcoming reedition of *P.Bas.Copt*. I 1 (*SB Kopt*. IV 1805).

**44** *P.Lond*. III 1326a = *SB* XVI 12865 (576) and *P.Lond*. III 1326b = *SB* XVI 12866.4 – 5 (583). The second text fits well with *P.Bas* II 66. Phoibammōn is the tenant (and is said to be *geōrgos*) in the first text but the landlord is a *comes*, so it could be a case of subleasing. The Hermopolite *origo* is restored in the lacuna.

**45** Keenan (1994) 451.

gios is attested in more various activities: besides agricultural leasing, he also granted loans of money, leased out a house and bought wheat as well as wine in advance from producers. The collaboration between Silbanos and his sons was probably a key factor in creating this prosperity.

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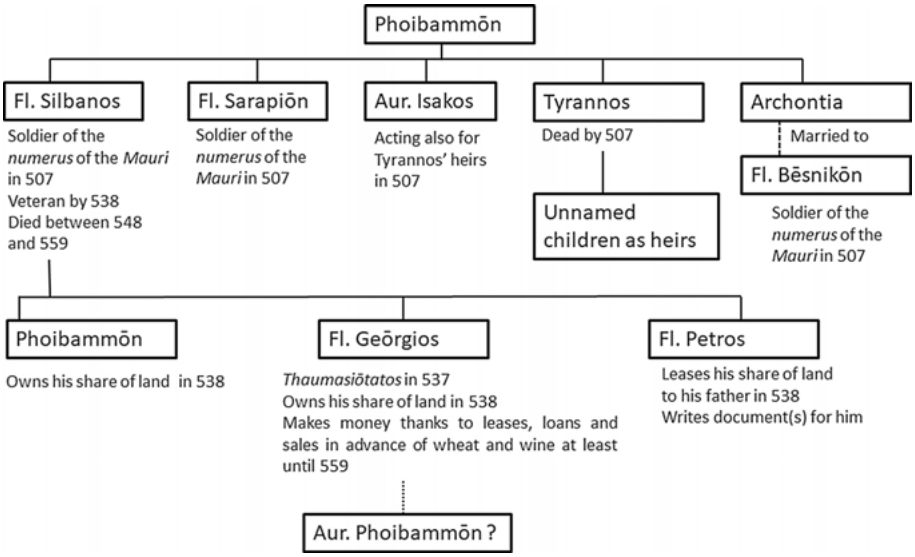


**Fig. 1:** Family tree of Phoibammōn

Appendix: Overview of the archive[46]

| Publication | Inventory | Date | Type of document | People mentioned |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gonis (2019) | P.Lond. III 1021 descr. | 11th ind. 502/3 (or 517/8) ? | Account (money) | Silbanos s. Phoibammōn and his sons |
| *P.Lond.* III 992 (p. 253) | P.Lond. III 992 | July 507 | *Compromissum* | Fl. Silbanos s. Phoibammōn, soldier of the *numerus* of *Mauri*<br>Fl. Sarapiōn, soldier in the same unit<br>Aur. Isakos<br>Tyrannos †<br>Aur. Archontia, married to Bēsnikōn, soldier in the same unit |
| *SB* XX 14465 | P.Lond. III 1052a | 507 – 533/534 | Account (money) | Silbanos soldier<br>Hand identified as Petros' |
| *SB* XXII 15597 | P.Lond. III 997 descr. | 12.10.537 | Sale of wine for future delivery | Fl. Geōrgios, son of Silbanos<br>Aur. Apollos s. NN and Adora, wine dresser (*ampelourgos*) |

**46** The present appendix does not include the texts the belonging of which to the archive is doubtful. For them, see above n. 8 and 44 as well as the TM Archive 468 on trismegistos.org.

Appendix: Overview of the archive *(Continued)*

| Publication | Inventory | Date | Type of document | People mentioned |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *P.Bas.* II 53 | P.Bas. 42 + P.Lond. III 1013 | 8.10.538 | Lease of land in Enseu | Fl. Silbanos s. Phoibammōn<br>Fl. Petros, Phoibammōn and Geōrgios, his sons. |
| *P.Lond.* III 1000 (p. 250) | P.Lond. III 1000 | 28.11.538 | Petition (*libelli*) to some official about the payment of a debt | Fl. Geōrgios s. Silbanos from Hermopolis<br>Phibis called Patah from Hermopolis and maybe another debtor? |
| *SB* XVI 12488 + P.Lond. III 1053 (forth.) | P.Lond. III 998–999 | 2.12.538 | Advance payment of 80 measures of wine | Iōannēs s. Kollouthos and Archontia, *diakonos* of the village of Enseu<br>Fl. Silbanos s. Phoibammōn, ex-soldier of the *numerus* of the *Mauri* |
| *P.Lond.* III 1001 (p. 270) | P.Lond. III 1001 | 14.02.539 | Sale of wheat and wine in advance | Fl. Geōrgios s. Silbanos, ex-soldier in Hermopolis<br>Aur. Kollouthos s. Lythios and Tsa-, winedresser from Enseu. |
| *SB* XX 14457 | P.Lond. III 1316b descr. | 5th ind. 541/2 (or 556/7) | Receipt of rent for 17 carats | From Silbanos ex-soldier to Biktōr s. Pinēs, *geōrgos* of Senilais; written by Fl. Petros, his son. |
| *P.Lond.* V 1872 descr. | 1689 | 4.11.548 | Lease of house property to a villager | Aur. Geōrgios s. Silbanos from Hermopolis<br>Aur. Pkylis s. Kopreous and Anna from the village of Nagōgis |
| *P.Lond.* III 1051 (p. 273) | P.Lond. III 1051 | Epeiph, 13th ind. July 549 (or 534) | Receipt of rent in money, 1 *solidus* minus 6 ¼ carats | From Silbanos s. Phoibammōn to Biktōr s. Pinēs, *geōrgos* from the village of Senilais. Illiterate subscription from Silbanos. |
| *P.Lond.* V 1766 | 1682 | 14.01.559 | Agreement on arrear payment of rent owed on a lease | Fl. Geōrgios s. late Silbanos<br>Aur. Kollouthos s. Kyriakos from Nagōgis |
| *P.Lond.* III 1020 (p. 272) | P.Lond. III 1020 | 5th ind. 571/2 (or 541/2 or 556/7) | Receipt for the rent of late Kyrilla and Maria, nuns | Brother Geōrgios s. Silbanos paying to Basileidēs s. Phoibammōn from Hermopolis |

James G. Keenan

# The Will of Flavius Phoibammon

In the course of his seven or so years of "exile" in Antinoopolis, the provincial capital of the Thebaid, Dioscorus of Aphrodito, in addition to other writings, generated numerous documents pertinent to Roman private law. Although scholars have studied some of these as individual specimens, his full legal *oeuvre* from this period of his life – from the late 560s into the early 570s – has never been examined in depth for all it can reveal about his scribal and lawyerly practices.[1] *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151 is an important example of his work. Although its legal technicalities are more complicated than this would suggest, it has been conveniently labeled as "the will of Flavius Phoibammon." By its most important terms, and in a complex dispersal of properties and rights, Phoibammon installs his underage sons as heirs (lines 73 – 101); leaves by legacy one aroura of vineland with its operating equipment to a monastery (lines 101 – 160); provides in detail for his own burial (lines 160 – 168); reaffirms his wife's title to his gifts to her at marriage while insisting that she receive nothing from the estate proper (lines 169 – 182); turns over control of his charitable hospital to his brother (lines 182 – 195); disinherits other family members (lines 202 – 222); provides a legal guardian for his sons (lines 225 – 260); asks an aunt to sell off property in payment of a loan while entitling her to any profits from the transaction (lines 261 – 274); bequeaths, by a second legacy, to the same monastery, a boat that he has acquired through purchase (lines 275 – 285); arranges to pay off a debt (lines 285 – 293); and – finally – provides by a third legacy, until his maturity, annual provisions for a mysterious foster child (lines 294 – 301).

In *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151, Phoibammon's will, with its introductory material and final confirmation, takes over three hundred lines to spell out these dispositions. It is a document for which its editor, Jean Maspero, provided, by his standards, an unusually long introduction and a more than usually detailed commentary, both of which, despite some remaining problems, provide excellent reference points for entering into and understanding the text. That, of course, was more than a century ago. Much more recently, Leslie MacCoull's rhetorical analysis in her famous book on Dioscorus, 1988, and Joëlle Beaucamp's consideration of its legal features in an article dating to 2001 are additional guides.[2] Apart from these discussions, the extraction of one of its legacies as *FIRA* III 66 and identification of another passage as referencing *Novella* 87 on the revocability of bequests, Phoibammon's will has over time not drawn the attention it deserves, perhaps because, as Peter van Minnen once observed, most of Dioscorus's legal compositions had not received full and careful

**1** For an elegant survey, however, see van Minnen (2003). See also the studies of Urbanik (2010) and (2012).

**2** MacCoull (1988) 50 – 54; Beaucamp (2001), at 2 – 7.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110683554-010

translation into a modern vernacular language.[3] This is no longer the case with *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151, thanks to Maria Nowak's 2015 book on *Wills in the Roman Empire*, where the text is reproduced along with a reliable translation.[4] This notwithstanding, Phoibammon's will still seems an ideal candidate for testing the rhetorical question posed in my conference abstract:

> What better aim for a papyrologist than to recreate as richly as possible, for those expert and not, using all possible clues, the dramatic moment at which the papyrus as a form of paper became a document that entered, however grandly or humbly, the consciousness of history?[5]

In pursuit of that objective, instead of refocusing on the will's terms, as just sketched, I will mainly look to events surrounding its commitment to writing. The procedure will at times employ Robin G. Collingwood's practice of "interpolation," which I interpret to mean, for present purposes, the imaginative construction of what must have happened as this is implied by the fixed nodes of fact provided by the document itself.[6] In attempting this I will refrain from good Buddhist practice that would insist on going back to the plant itself, that life form which, after human intervention, would give to Phoibammon's will its material substratum. It is enough to say that papyrus was one of the mediums named in Justinian's *Institutes* (2.10.12) as approved for receiving the texts of wills: "it does not matter [says the *Institutes*] whether a will is made on tablets or papyri or parchments or some other material."[7] Obviously, Phoibammon's will as written on *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151 fulfills this loose requirement at the same time as it raises questions about how Dioscorus acquired blank papyrus for his office use, at what cost, and how this influenced what these days would be called the "transaction costs" of his business with Phoibammon and his other clients – if clients is not too anachronistic a term for those who sought his services. He presumably kept records of office expenses, now lost, with entries for the purchase of papyrus rolls for use in drafting documents, some of them later reused for some of his poems.[8]

An immediate complication is that Phoibammon's will survives in two copies. The already mentioned *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151 measures nearly 14 feet in length by a bit over a foot in width, or 31.5 cm to be more exact; its near twin, 67152, is not quite eight feet long and again, just a bit over a foot wide, or 30.3 cm to be more

**3** Legacy: *FIRA* III 66, reproducing lines 101–160, with Latin translation; *Novella* 87: Amelotti/Migliardi Zingale (1985$^2$) 67–68 (no. 22), reproducing lines 124–130; need for translations: van Minnen (2003) 125.

**4** Nowak (2015): text, p. 420–427; translation, p. 427–433.

**5** This question is also at the core of Keenan (forthcoming b).

**6** Collingwood (1994) 231–249.

**7** *Nihil autem interest, testamentum in tabulis an in chartis membranisve vel in alia materia fiat.* This freedom of choice had a long history; cf. *P.Oxy.* XXXVIII 2857.21–24 of 134 CE ("tablets, codicils, papyrus, or any other medium").

**8** Oblique backing for such a presumption: Haensch (2015).

exact. Both widths correspond to the standard roll widths of the period, but differ enough to show they are not from the same roll.[9] Maspero's silence on the matter suggests that their versos are blank, which seems strangely wasteful if these rolls with their fully inscribed rectos were brought to Aphrodito from Antinoopolis for Dioscorus's later use.[10] Possibly explanatory is that Phoibammon's will, dated 15 November 570, is the last datable document attributed to Dioscorus, 67152, the last one assignable to his hand. Perhaps he never got around to using their empty sides.[11]

Returning to that 15 November 570 date, we can try to enter the space where the will was drafted and imagine the drama surrounding its composition, the moment when the message, the text of Phoibammon's will, met its medium, in the form of the smaller of the two grand sheets of papyrus (67152). The evidence is slight but suggestive. In its own words, the will claims to have been composed in a *dēmosios kai praktikos topos*, perhaps best translated generically as "a public place of business."[12] Maspero himself was certain the phrase indicated the office of the civil governor (*praeses*) of the (Lower) Thebaid.[13] Presumably this was in or near "the *forum* of the Thebaid" (*phoron Thēbaidos*), evidenced in other documents, the hub of provincial legal activity in Antinoopolis, an obvious place of convergence for lawyers (*scholastici, synēgoroi*) and bureaucrats.[14] Note also, unless this is just a figure of speech, that Phoibammon himself speaks of his own active life in terms of "walking in the *agora*," the Greek equivalent of the Latin *forum*.[15]

Under ordinary circumstances, we would expect an effort on the part of the testator to effect on this occasion a dramaturgical as well as a legal success, the latter mostly dependent on his legal advisor, the former on himself.[16] The very existence of the will assures the presence of at least two parties: first, of course, the testator, Phoibammon; second, Dioscorus himself.

To take Phoibammon first: he was a salaried chief doctor, presumably therefore in charge of other doctors. The son and successor to a chief doctor now deceased, he was an overseer and owner of a charity hospital inherited from his father. A property owner both by inheritance and personal acquisition, his holdings included agricultural land together with ownership of the capital equipment needed to work it. He was a speaker of Greek, with a claim to literacy, at least as far as signature literacy

**9** *CPR* XXX introd., 31–40.

**10** In any case, the versos were never photographed by Adam Bülow-Jacobsen during his work at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, and it looks as if *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67152 was pasted to cardboard before being glassed (observation thanks to Jean-Luc Fournet, email 10 July 2017).

**11** Though still alive in 573: *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67096.7–9.

**12** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.50–51: ἐν δημοσίῳ καὶ | πρακτικῷ τόπῳ.

**13** "sans doute": *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151 introd., p. 85.

**14** *Forum* of the Thebaid: *P.Ant.* II 104.1; *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67312.7; *P.Lond.* III 992.13; *P.Lond.* V 1707.6; *P.Stras.* I 40.6. Convergence: cf. *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4394.19–31 and 4398.6–11.

**15** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.29–30: καθ' ὅσον ζῶ καὶ ὑγιαίνω καὶ | ἐπ' ἀγορᾶς βαδίζω. In *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4398.7 the *forum* seems rather to have been a part of the *agora*.

**16** Goffman (1959).

is concerned, and probably beyond.[17] He was presently sound of mind and body but contemplating death's inevitability in sententious terms. As the will's preamble proclaims, "The end of all things, including the race of mortals, is death, and this it is utterly impossible to escape; but for those who are thoughtful, to think ahead and prepare for it is the most blessed of all things."[18] Thoughtful and responsible, Phoibammon had married a virgin bride, now his "most nobly born" wife,[19] who had borne him sons, to an uncertain number. They are much loved,[20] and very young,[21] young enough to require a guardian should their father die prematurely. Phoibammon and his wife may therefore themselves have been relatively young in 570. And finally, if some of the will's language can be taken as meaningful, that is, not just formulaic, he was a man of religious sentiment and conviction, concerned for his soul's salvation; he was, in any case, actively and provably involved with the local monastery and its leading monks.

The other principal to Phoibammon's will, Dioscorus, was probably in his mid-forties if not pushing fifty. In addition to other documents credited to him as a legal expert, he is generally considered the "author" of Phoibammon's will – but the issue is not quite so simple. This is because a third party, an anonymous, comes into play, he being the one responsible for the more complete, and fully edited, of the two surviving versions, the one now numbered 67151. The unedited version numbered 67152, Maspero assigned "nearly certainly" ("presque certainement") to the hand of Dioscorus, based on its similarity to that on page 3 of *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002, part of the grand but infuriating complaint to the duke of the Thebaid, framed in the first person plural in behalf of the aggrieved villagers of Aphrodito.[22] Because the abbreviations in 67152 are resolved in 67151, and because the superlinear and marginal insertions of 67152 are copied properly into and onto the lines of 67151, 67152 is accepted as the (incomplete) draft version of the will; 67151, despite various minor mistakes, is the fair copy.

The online images reveal that the anonymous's hand is after all – though perhaps only to my eye – the more elegant of the two, closer to the ideals of the Byzantine chancery style, while the survival of a protocol at the start of the roll on which 67151 was written would seem to clinch its claim to be the authoritative or definitive text. This conclusion, however, is undercut by Maspero's suspicions that this protocol was cut away from another document and glued to the top of 67151, a practice

**17** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.7–8: ἐξῆς ὑπογράφων | ἰδίοις αὐτοῦ (sic) γράμμασι.

**18** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.17–20: Πέρας μὲν πάντων | καὶ βροτησίου γένους ὁ θάνατος, καὶ τοῦτον ἀδύνατόν ἐστιν | ἐκφυγεῖν παντελῶς, τοῖς δὲ καλῶς φρονοῦσι τοῦτο προμαθεῖν | καὶ εὐλαβεῖσθαι πάντων εὐτυχέστερον.

**19** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.169–170: εὐγενεστάτην.

**20** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.61: φιλαιτάτοις; 76: προσφιλεστάτους; 160, 229: ποθεινούς.

**21** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.211: νηπίοις; 212: ἀφήλιξι.

**22** Keenan (2008).

described in *Novella* 44.2 as a troublesome source of forgeries.[23] In any case, I think we can conclude that the anonymous need not have been present at the drafting of Phoibammon's will. He copied it later on, laboriously moving from eye to hand and back, rather than from dictation. Whether he was responsible for the pasting on of the alien protocol is indeterminable.

As far as copies are concerned, observe that Justinian in his *Institutes* (2.10.13) approves the making of extra ones for wills, as long as they all follow the rules, noting especially the case of the testator about to travel by sea ("*navigaturus*") and wanting to have copies both with him on his travels and safely preserved back home. "But [continues the emperor, in the Birks-McLeod translation] all kinds of pressures can suggest the same precautions."[24] I take this passage as implying the dangers of travel by sea, the transprovincial scope of Roman law, and the chance of a will's having more than one authoritative written version.

Returning to Dioscorus's "office," we see that, according to the custom of the times, Dioscorus on 15 November 570 and the anonymous later on used their rolls *transversa charta*, rotating them 90 degrees clockwise and writing top down from the former left edges of their rolls. The practice, though requiring that writing proceed across the fibers, was certainly advantageous from planning and layout points of view, and possibly also from the economic. The results, as here, can be texts of many lines, each, however, being relatively short in terms of word count because Byzantine documentary writing tends to be so large.

Phoibammon presents himself as having dictated his will "in Greek words" and as having ordered it to be written down "in [Greek] letters,"[25] a claim seemingly at odds with MacCoull's presentation of Dioscorus as having in Phoibammon's will "produced *his* longest and most elaborate prose composition" (my stress).[26] I say this because Phoibammon after all is the legal actor, a fact that gives him a claim to be, or at least *deemed* to be, the author of his own will. This is a claim reinforced by the use of what philosopher John L. Austin classified as "performative present tenses," notable, for Phoibammon's will, in the first person singular verbs that start in line 8 with τίθημι καὶ ποιοῦμαι.[27] These are verbs through which "[t]he issuing

**23** καὶ τοῦτο τὸ πρωτόκολλον μὴ ἀποτέμνειν, ἀλλ' ἐγκείμενον ἐᾶν. ἴσμεν γὰρ πολλὰς παραποιήσεις ἐκ τῶν τοιούτων χαρτῶν ἐλεγχθείσας πρότερόν τε καὶ νῦν, κτλ. / *et ut protocollum non incidant, sed insertum relinquant. Novimus enim multas falsitates ex talibus chartis ostensas et prius et nunc, etc*. See Migliardi Zingale (1982) 1–25 (12–14 for *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151). In general on forgery in the papyri: Fournet (2016).

**24** *Sed et unum testamentum pluribus codicibus conficere quis potest, secundum optinentem tamen observationem omnibus factis. Quod interdum et necessarium est, si quis navigaturus et secum ferre et domi relinquere iudiciorum suorum contestationem velit, vel propter alias innumerabiles causas, quae humanis necessitatibus imminent.*

**25** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.49–50: ἥνπερ διαθήκην ὑπηγόρευσα ἑλληνικοῖς ῥήμασί τε καὶ γράμμασι γραφῆναι ἐπέταξα. The polyptoton, γράμμασι γραφῆναι, is noteworthy.

**26** MacCoull (1988) 50.

**27** Austin (1962$^2$) passim.

of the utterance is [equivalent to] the performing of an action," verbs, that is, which invest a document with performative power, as last wills and testaments traditionally do.[28]

The process of putting into written form an oral act like Phoibammon's will must have been cumbersome, complicated, and time-consuming. And now, as presented here, it emerges, not as the product of a single author, but as a collaborative effort with dual voices – the testator's and the legal expert's. To these we might add a third by crediting the prolix "byzantinische Urkundenstil" itself with contributing to the formulation of the text, or even a fourth because of its inclusion of verbatim references to Justinian's legal works, or even a fifth if the preamble on human mortality (lines 17–20) was drawn from a collection of such preambles.[29] Dioscorus' personal voice, proof of his compositional literacy, can perhaps be seen in his adaptations of the testamentary template and in his creative diction, his use of words that Phoibammon himself might not have understood, like the *hapax legomenon* πολιτικοπραιτωρίαν, misconstrued by MacCoull as signifying the will's conformation "to the requirements of the city *praetorium*," but rightly seen by Maspero, Beaucamp, and Nowak as signifying the melding of *ius civile* (πολιτικο-, civil law) and *ius honorarium* (-πραιτωρίαν, magistrates' – or praetorian – law) in Justinian's law of succession.[30] Phoibammon's own voice can perhaps be distinguished in his repeatedly expressed preemptive concerns for possible challenges to the interests of his heirs, his beloved underage sons; his claims of modest means despite landed interests in two locations and a 60-*solidus* annual salary; and the clearly stated religious motivation behind some of his testamentary arrangements. He of course must be the one supplying the "metadata" for incorporation into the documentary template, but in this regard three blank spaces catch the eye. In ascending order of importance, they are to be found at:

1. Line 153, where the number of the coming (μελλούσης) indiction and the word for indiction itself are lacking though the will's dating clause, lines 3–4, firmly places it in "the present fourth *epinemēsis*" (τῆς παρούσης | τετάρτης ἐπινεμήσεως).[31]
2. Lines 261–274, which give business instructions to the apparent financial benefit of an aunt whose name is left blank in line 261.[32]
3. Lines 76–77, which appoint Phoibammon's sons as heirs without naming them.[33]

**28** Austin (1962[2]) 6–7 (quote); Tiersma (2010) esp. 36–40.

**29** Fournet (2013) 143–144.

**30** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.44; MacCoull (1988) 50; Maspero, note *ad loc.*; Beaucamp (2001) 3; Nowak (2015) 420–433; Just. *Inst.* 2.10.2–3: *coepit in unam consonantiam ius civile et praetorium iungi.*

**31** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.153: κανόνος τῆς σὺν Θεῷ μελλούσης *vacat*.

**32** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.261: [τ]ὴν ἐμὴν θείαν, ὀνόματι *vacat*.

**33** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.76–77: κληρονόμους τοὺς προσφιλεστάτους μου υἱοὺς *vacat* | *vacat*.

The first two blanks resist certain explanation, but the reason for the third, as has been pointed out,[34] may be provided by Justinian's *Institutes*, expressing a rule insisting, in accordance with an imperial constitution of 531, that to guarantee the "sincerity" (*sinceritas*) of a will and prevent fraud, heirs' names must be entered either by the hand of the testator himself or his witnesses.[35] Presumably the witnesses would perform this function only if the testator himself was illiterate or otherwise incapable.

Toward the beginning, Phoibammon indicates he will subscribe in his own letters, but his signature is lacking at the end.[36] Likewise missing are the signatures of the witnesses although they are introduced in precise legal form as having been summoned, seven in number, "Roman citizens and ephebes, ... coming together at one meeting and time, with no other business intervening," and ready to sign.[37] Contrary to MacCoull, who treats *ephēboi* as indicating "those of the gymnasium," the Latin equivalents from the *Institutes* (2.10.1) and *Code* (*CJ* 6.23.21) show that these citizens, simply put, are *puberes*, i. e., of legal age. The question then is not, as MacCoull would have had it, about sixth-century "analogues" to the classical gymnasium, but the content of Roman citizenship three and a half centuries after the Antonine Constitution.[38]

It was of course the testator's responsibility to convoke (*rogare*) his witnesses – a gathering of men – but it seems this never happened in Phoibammon's case. The absence of their names is a serious loss for what they might have told about society in Antinoopolis in 570 and the "network" within which Phoibammon functioned, probably filled with members of the middling "Flaviate," perhaps with useful prosopographical links and further elaboration on what is already known about Dioscorus's own networks in the provincial capital.[39] Not only did the witnesses not sign; they never affixed their seals, a point doubly made in the text, which claims itself to be both ἀσήμαντρον (line 10) and ἀνυποσφράγιδα (line 11), sealing according to the *Institutes* (2.10.3) being a requirement of the *ius honorarium*, not of the *ius civile*.[40]

Without signatures or seals, it is impossible to prove that the witnesses were present when Phoibammon dictated his will, and so it appears from this and other signs that neither 67151 nor 67152 can be considered an authoritative or definitive version.

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**34** Beaucamp (2001) 6.

**35** Just. *Inst.* 2.10.4, cf. *CJ* 6.23.29.pr: *Sed his omnibus ex nostra constitutione propter testamentorum sinceritatem, ut nulla fraus adhibeatur, hoc additum est, ut per manum testatoris vel testium nomen heredis exprimatur et omnia secundum illius constitutionis tenorem procedant.*

**36** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.7–8. See above with n. 17.

**37** *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151.44–49.

**38** MacCoull (1988) 50: "ἔφηβοι (i. e., 'those of the gymnasium' or their sixth-century analogues)." But see, e. g., Just. *Inst.* 2.10.1: *civibus Romanis puberibus*, and *CJ* 6.23.21: [*rogatis testibus*] *septem numero, civibus Romanis, puberibus.* Maspero had from the start gotten this right: "majeures" (*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151 introd., p. 85).

**39** For now, see Worp (2008).

**40** *ex edicto praetoris signacula testamentis imponerentur.*

They are a draft (67152), perhaps even a "pre-draft," and its copy (67151) that were never put to use, among the scrap paper Dioscorus brought home from Antinoopolis after clearing out his office – a puzzling waste and a serious obstacle to the project of reconstruction this paper announced at its start. We can only presume that Phoibammon himself took his own authoritative copy away from Dioscorus's office with blanks filled and signatures entered. This authoritative version would accordingly fall into the category of what I have elsewhere called "known unknowns," lost documents whose existence can be conjectured or assumed, whose form and contents can be imagined and reconstructed, sometimes, as here, nearly word for word.[41]

Meanwhile, *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151 and 67152, whatever their statuses, if we combine MacCoull's and Beaucamp's presentations of them, suggest a provincial Egyptian capital alert to and respectful of Roman imperial law, immersed in the rhetoric of its day, stable in its secular institutions, devout in its Christianity, free from the disruptions evidenced for the village to which Dioscorus was about to return – in sum, and ironically, a highly cultured environment with no hint of the regime change looming three generations hence.[42] The process of that change, owing to the current high interest in Late Antiquity and advances in Coptic and Arabic papyrology, has become a central problem of historical papyrology, a problem to whose timely treatment this conference has been commendably dedicated.

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**41** Keenan (forthcoming a).

**42** For law in particular, see Beaucamp (2007). In general, I here in essence reproduce the sentiments of MacCoull (1988).

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Loreleï Vanderheyden

# The Figure of Apollos, Father of Dioscorus, in the Light of Coptic Letters From Sixth-Century Aphrodito

The village of Aphrodito in Middle Egypt, today known as Kom Ishgaw, was the location of several important papyrological discoveries which yielded many texts from the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries that provide important information about daily life in a village of the Thebaid before and after the Arab conquest. The bilingual archive from Byzantine Aphrodito is made up of slightly more than 700 literary, semi-literary, and documentary texts including 75 Coptic texts (44 of them now edited, while 31 still remain unpublished).[1] The documentary texts, which are of particular interest here, include many texts relating to the administration of the village of Aphrodito during the sixth century. The village's leadership in this century included the well-known figure of Dioscorus and, before him, his father Apollos.[2] This archive is commonly known as the "Dioscorus archive" as Dioscorus, a notable of the village, landowner, notary and poet of his time, was originally considered to be its central figure. However, much of the documentation from the beginning of the sixth century actually relates to his father, Apollos. Until recently, Apollos' leadership upon the village as *prōtokōmētēs*, his travel to Constantinople, and his entrepreneurial activities in the countryside were based on Greek texts, and a synthesis of Apollos' life has been proposed by James Keenan.[3]

The archive's texts were written in Greek and Coptic by multiple individuals including Dioscorus himself, and some of them wrote texts in both languages. The letters, which constitute the bulk of the Coptic proportion of this bilingual archive, were long neglected (with the exception of MacCoull's transcriptions),[4] but they have recently been rediscovered by a new generation of scholars. As part of ongoing research on the Coptic letters from Byzantine Aphrodito, I have recently reedited, or in some cases edited for the first time, many of these letters.[5] Seven letters from this corpus give us additional information about Apollos' activities.[6]

**1** Amongst others, see Bell (1944) for an introduction and Fournet (2008b) for more on the precise composition of this archive. In 2005, a colloquium in Strasbourg was dedicated to Dioscorus, and the resulting volume (Fournet/Magdelaine [2008]) provides an excellent overview of the Aphrodito archive from several perspectives.

**2** The chronological extent of the Greek record ranges from 27 July 506 (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67100) to 587/588 (P.Strasb. gr. inv. 1633; *ed. pr.* Fournet [2008a] 22–25).

**3** Keenan (1984).

**4** Mainly in MacCoull (1992) and (1993).

**5** Vanderheyden (2015).

**6** P.Coptic Museum inv. 4057; Pap.Berlin P. 11932; P.Ismailia inv. 2241; P.Cair.S.R. 3733.10, 17, 40a, and 40c (texts 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10 in Vanderheyden [2015] II 8–35 and 58–101).

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The first half of the sixth century saw Apollos occupying, sometimes concurrently, several different functions. He is first attested in 514, and probably died thirty-two years later, in 546/547.[7] In addition to his well-known activities as a landowner and entrepreneur in Aphrodito and its surroundings, mainly attested in the Greek texts and studied by Keenan,[8] he also occupied the function of village headman (prōtokōmētēs, πρωτοκωμήτης). In the second half of his life, he was also the administrator (dioikētēs, διοικητής) of a large estate, and finally also the founder of his own monastery, as will be discussed below. During this period, it is possible to trace Apollos' life through its three distinct phases and map out his career on the basis of the Greek and Coptic sources. In a more private dimension, one of the Coptic letters also offers us a glimpse of his personality and of his life as a family man who cared about his children and other family members. In what follows, these different aspects of his career as well as aspects of his character will be presented. This will be followed by a brief examination of his handwritten Coptic texts, which not only provide the most vivid testimony from his life, but also represent a good starting point for considering the nature of his bilingualism.

## Apollos as Village Headman (*prōtokōmētēs*)

Apollos is first attested as *prōtokōmētēs* in 514 (*P.Flor.* III 280). The Greek documentation shows that he continued to occupy this position alternately with his elder brother Besarion[9] in the 520s and up to 530.[10] In the early 530s, it seems that neither Apollos nor Besarion were involved with the village's administration. He appears as an ordinary individual in 532 (*P.Lond.* V 1691). In 536[11] and 537[12], Apollos was no more than a "contributory" (*syntelestēs*, συντελεστής). He probably assumed his status as *prōtokōmētēs* around 538 with Aurelius Charisios[13] and Bottos[14].[15] His son, Senouthes[16], seems to have joined him in this position in 540.[17] Apollos' return to his function as *prōtokōmētēs* may possibly have arisen as a result of the additional prestige that he gained after founding his monastery. Deferential language used to

**7** See Bell (1944) 26 and n. 21; Rémondon (1971) 775; Gascou (1977) 361; Keenan (1984) 957; introductions to the *P.Vat.Aphrod.* 7.33–34 and *P.Vat.Aphrod.* 10.4n and 43.
**8** See Keenan (1984) 960–962.
**9** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Besarion 1 (p. 95–96).
**10** *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67329 (May–June 524); *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67125 (14 July 525); *P.Lond.* V 1690 (30 August 527); *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67301 (20 August 530).
**11** *P.Flor.* III 283.
**12** *P.Ross.Georg.* III 36.
**13** See Ruffini (2011) s.n. Charisios 4 (p. 140–141).
**14** See Ruffini (2011) s.n. Bottos 5 (p. 136–137).
**15** *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67052 (538); 67053 (538); II 67199 (ca. 538); 67264 (524/525 or 539/540).
**16** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Senouthes 1 (p. 533–534).
**17** *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67323.5 (540 in *BL* XI 53).

address him after this point, for example "most worshipful (*sebasmiōtatos,* σεβασμιώτατος) Apa Apollos," supports such a suggestion,[18] but we should also consider the influence of Count Ammonios,[19] for whom Apollos worked, as Zuckerman explains.[20] The sources also indicate that he certainly was *prōtokōmētēs* again in 543, along with his son Senouthes and his nephew, the priest Victor[21], who was a son of Besarion's.[22] In September 544, these three *prōtokōmētai* signed an acknowledgment of debt together.[23]

His visit to Constantinople as a *prōtokōmētēs* in the early 540s (probably in the winter of 540/541) was also a notable event in his life. It was highly unusual for a member of the rural elite of a small Egyptian village to travel to the imperial capital. Documented in *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67126, this journey is believed to be connected with Aphrodito's privileged tax status (*autopragia*), considering the stronghold Apollos' family had on the area in the 540s, thanks to Ammonios' authority. As suggested by Keenan, this could also have been a religious pilgrimage connected to the foundation of his monastery several years beforehand; Apollos traveled in the company of his nephew, the priest Victor, Besarion's son. However, neither hypothesis can currently be confirmed.[24]

Three Coptic letters addressed to Apollos could be added as new sources for the study of his status as *prōtokōmētēs:* P.Coptic Museum inv. 4057, Pap.Berlin P. 11932 and P.Ismailia inv. 2241.[25] These three Coptic letters are addressed to Apollos and provide evidence for his role as *prōtokōmētēs* and, above all, as a mediator in three difficult cases that all seem to have been resolved at the local level. The first letter deals with the mediation of a conflict between two butchers. The second is a settlement in an affair involving an individual who appears to have been considered untrustworthy, perhaps concerning a loan. The third deals with fiscal and monastic problems. While the first text contains no indicators narrowing its dates down further than to what we know to have been the years of Apollos' activity (514–546/547), the second and third letters can be dated to between 538 and 546 on the basis of their use of the title "Apa" for Apollos.

**18** *PSI* VIII 933.
**19** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Ammonios 1 (p. 17–19).
**20** See Zuckerman (2004a) 48 about the *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67323.
**21** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Biktor 8 (p. 105–106).
**22** *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67286.
**23** *P.Mich.* XIII 669.
**24** See Keenan (1984) 958.
**25** See Vanderheyden (2015) II, texts 1, 2, and 3 (p. 8–35).

## Apollos as the Founder of his own Monastery and a Secular Apa

The monastery founded and endowed by Apollos (probably ca. 537–538) is attested in many texts from Aphrodito. Dedicated to the "Holy Christ-bearing Apostles," it was often referred to in the Byzantine period by the name of its founder, but some formulations combine both designations, such as "the recently founded monastery of the Holy Christ-bearing Apostles, named the Monastery of Apa Apollos,"[26] "Monastery of the Christ-bearing Apostles called Pharoou/Pharau/Pharaous,"[27] or more simply "Monastery of Pharoou," probably due to its location on the outskirts of Pharoou, which is identified with the village of Minyat Farūh in the Arabic sources, although the precise localization of the monastery is still uncertain.[28]

Was Apollos a monk? The question arises from the titles he bears in various documents, and mostly from the title Apa, usually used during the Byzantine period to accompany names of clerics or monks. The attestation of Apollos as Apa Apollos, *prōtokōmētēs* in *PSI* VIII 933, dated in 538 brings into question his double status. This text indicates that Apollos had already founded his monastery while he was still exercising the function of *prōtokōmētēs:* he bears the honorific epithet of "very pious" (*sebasmiōtatos*) Apa Apollos. Similarly, in a grazing lease (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67112), the shepherd-tenant calls Apollos, the owner, "your reverence" (l. 8) and later "your holiness" (l. 17).[29] Keenan considered it possible that Apollos had been able to hold the two positions of monk and *prōtokōmētēs* simultaneously.[30] Wipszycka has taken a contrary view and argues that the title Apa was no longer a marker of religious prestige at this time, but rather a more general marker of high social status.[31] Wipszycka roundly rejects the possibility that Apollos could have been a monk and *prōtokōmētēs* at the same time,[32] mostly because it would have been inappropriate given the asceticism expected of monks.[33]

In this light, the main contribution of the Coptic texts is to confirm that Apollos did indeed perform the functions of monastery founder and village headman concurrently. As a matter of fact, the address on the verso of the Coptic letter P.Ismailia inv. 2241 bears the name Apollos with the titles of Apa and *prōtokōmētēs* ⲁⲡⲁ ⲁⲡⲟⲗⲗⲱ ⲡⲣⲱⲧⲟⲕⲱⲙ[ⲏⲧⲏⲥ]. The body of the text refers to Apollos using monastic titles,

**26** See *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67096.4–5 (573) and Wipszycka (2008) 262.
**27** See *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67003.5 (567).
**28** Timm (1984–1992) IV (1988), *s.v.* Minyat Farūh, 1658–1659.
**29** *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67112.
**30** See Keenan (1984) 958–959.
**31** See Derda/Wipszycka (1994) 41–44.
**32** Rejecting the belief shared by Maspero (comment on *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67064), MacCoull (1993) 24–25, and Keenan (1984). Cf. Wipszycka (2008) 265 and Vanderheyden (2015) 125–126.
**33** See Derda/Wipszycka (1994) 42–44 and Wipszycka (2008) 266.

which indicates that he had already founded his monastery at this stage: "honorable brother" (ⲥⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲧⲁⲉⲓⲛⲩ, l. 17) and "honorable and pious lord brother" (ϫⲟⲉⲓⲥ ⲛ̄ⲥⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲧⲁⲉⲓⲛⲩ̣ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛ̄ⲙⲁⲓⲛ[ⲟⲩⲧⲉ], l. 18). Moreover, in P.Cair.S.R. 3733.10.36, Apollos gives himself the title of "their humble father" (ⲡⲉⲩ̈ⲱⲧ ⲙⲉⲗⲁϫⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ[34]) in the 540s, which could be an indication of his role as the founder of the monastery of Pharau, but he never bears the titles *proestos* or *archimandritēs* used for those at the top of the monastic hierarchy.

It seems likely, then, that Apollos was neither a monk nor a senior cleric or abbot, but rather a secular Apa, as Wipszycka argues: he was undoubtedly a founder, a benefactor, and perhaps even a resident of the monastery, but also, in his worldly life, one of the village headmen and the administrator of a large estate. This exceptional status is at present a unique case in the documentation concerning Egyptian monasticism.[35]

## Apollos as Administrator (*dioikētēs*) of a large Landowner

For a century, scholars have labored to determine the identity of two homonymous characters attested in the archive of Aphrodito on the basis of the Greek documentation: Apollos the *dioikētēs* and Apollos the *hypodektēs*, both of whom worked for Count Ammonios. Both were identified at various times with Apollos, the son of Dioscorus and *prōtokōmētēs* of Aphrodito.[36] Zuckerman was finally able to confirm the identification of Apollos, *prōtokōmētēs* of Aphrodito, with Ammonios' administrator (*dioikētēs)*.[37] The Coptic texts provide a more precise view of the daily functions of Apollos as a *dioikētēs*.

Four Coptic letters written by Apollos himself survive (P.Cair.S.R. 3733.10, 17, 40a, and 40c). These can be dated to July 545 because of a date explicitly mentioned in P.Cair.S.R. 3733.10.[38] This date coincides with the dating of the accounting documents of Ammonios, which date from between 541 and 546.[39] These four unpublished Cop-

**34** See Vanderheyden (2015) II, text 7 (p. 63–80).

**35** See Wipszycka (2008) 266 and Wegner (2017) 76 n. 5.

**36** Maspero in the introduction of *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67138 (p. 23 and 26); Bell (1944) 24 n. 7; Rémondon (1971) 774–775; and Wegner (2017) 51, 60, and 62 argued that Apollos, the son of Dioscorus, was the Count's *hypodektēs*. Whereas Gascou (2008) 309–349 and Fournet (2001) 481–482 separately and subsequently in a joint article, Gascou/Fournet (2002) 28, demonstrated the opposite and proved that Apollos could not be the *hypodektēs* of Count Ammonios, but was rather his *dioikētēs*. Zuckerman (2004a) 48, 51, and note 56 identified the Count's *hypodektēs* with Apollos, son of Ioseph.

**37** See Zuckerman (2004b) 77.

**38** Line 34 provides a date, the 4th of Epiphi of the ninth indiction, i. e., 11 July, probably during the year 545.

**39** See among others *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67138 and 67139.

tic letters supplement the information provided by the Greek documents about Apollos' official functions. They are addressed to two people whose names are now lost, but who clearly had links to the properties of Count Ammonios: the letters repeatedly mention Ammonios' clients and some of his properties, designated by their toponyms. It is clear that Apollos had received training in the production of accounts: he writes an abbreviated account summary on the verso of letter P.Cair.S.R. 3733.40a and he quotes an extract from the cadaster of Phthla in P.Cair.S.R. 3733.10 (l. 10). These three letters do not concern the taxation process, which is well known from the Greek administrative documents, but rather contain instructions for the day-to-day management of properties. For instance, Apollos orders the recipients to go to various places and to meet certain people, to write letters, to collect rents, to "purify" (perhaps winnowing?) the corn and to collect tax receipts, to send food items or even to send a donkey![40]

## Apollos as a Family Man

In the Coptic letter P.Cair.S.R. 3733.40c, Apollos reproaches his addressees for not giving him any news. After the usual salutations, Apollos asks for the health of a certain Tekrompe[41], whom Apollos calls "my daughter," but who is in fact his niece (she is known in the Greek texts under the double name of Anastasia-Tekrompe). Two of Apollos' sons, Dioscorus[42] and Menas[43], are also mentioned. Tekrompe is well known because she married Phoibammon[44], son of Triadelphos. In fact, their wedding was a great occasion and reunited two families from the local village elite. One could explain Apollos' strong attachment to Tekrompe (calling her "my daughter") by the fact that she was in his custody. Indeed, *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67026 mentions that Dioscorus, his siblings, his cousins Dioscorus[45], and Tekrompe were all raised by Apollos in the same house. In fact, when Apollos' sister died, Dioscorus' cousins remained in the care of their uncle, who continued to manage their property together with his own and probably raised them as his own children.

## Apollos' Coptic Handwriting

As his only surviving physical trace, Apollos' writing allows us to observe him directly, almost 1,500 years after his death. Regarding his Greek handwriting, Keenan notes

**40** See Vanderheyden (2015) II, texts 7, 8, and 9 (p. 63–97).
**41** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Anastasia 1 (p. 21).
**42** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Dioskoros 3 (p. 159–167).
**43** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Menas 43 (p. 377).
**44** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Phoibammon 1 (p. 447–449).
**45** See Ruffini (2011) *s.n.* Dioskoros 31 (p. 170).

that his literacy in Greek was not very good.[46] The accounts that he wrote for Ammonios' properties show that he was able to write in Greek as well. However, Apollos was far from illiterate: the four letters that he wrote himself in Coptic had simply not been identified. In fact, these four letters enable a sufficiently precise identification of his Coptic style, on the basis of a comparison with his Greek style.

His Coptic writing is rather regular, straight, small, and bilinear. Few ligatures are employed, and systematic use is made of word separators. Apollos was able to write in Coptic and also to switch to Greek language and codes, as in the case of the Greek account embedded in Coptic syntax in P.Cair.S.R. 3733.40c verso. In fact, elements of his Greek hand (abbreviations, figures and fractions in particular) are identical with those which we find in the Coptic letters. Fig. 2 compares samples of his writing in different documents in Greek and Coptic. These elements establish that these two styles were produced by the same hand.

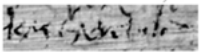
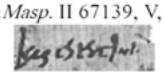
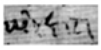
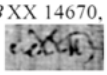
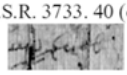
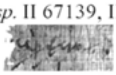
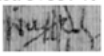
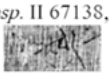
| | Coptic letters | Greek accounts |
|---|---|---|
| κλ(ηρονόμοι) Ἐλευσινίου | P.Cair.S.R.3733. 10, 12 :  | *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67139, V, v°, 5 :  |
| ἀδεσπ(ότα) | P.Cair.S.R.3733. 10, 11 :  | *SB* XX 14670, 8 :  |
| ἀφ'(ὧν) ἐδόθ(η) | P.Cair.S.R. 3733. 40 (c), 20 :  | *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67139, III, r°, 21 :  |
| νό(μισμα) α π(αρὰ) δ ς | P.Cair.S.R. 3733. 40 (c), 20 :  | *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67138, I, v°, 6 :  |
| Ligature of κουρ (in κουράτωρ) | P.Cair.S.R.3733. 10, 15 :  | *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67138, I, r°, 2 :  |

**Fig. 2:** Samples of his writing in different documents in Greek and Coptic

## Apollos' Bilingualism

The mother tongue of Apollos' family was clearly Coptic. This fact has been established since the beginning of the twentieth century, primarily by Bell and Crum, albeit initially on the basis of now-obsolete ethnic criteria.[47] Recently, Papaconstantinou

**46** See Keenan (1988) 165.

**47** See Bell/Crum (1925) 180 – 181 and Bell (1944) 24.

advanced the hypothesis, based on one reedition of a Coptic letter, that Apollos probably received a Greek education.[48] The newly available documentation and the reinterpretation of P.Coptic Museum inv. 4057 invalidates this suggestion. Presuming (incorrectly) that Apollos was the sender of this letter (and not the addressee), Papaconstantinou concluded that Apollos was not able to use Coptic anymore. But Apollos was actually the addressee of this letter, as the text's rediscovery and his endorsement confirm. The verso of this letter preserves a clear Greek endorsement: ἐπ̣ί̣δ̣(ος) τ̣ῷ̣ θ̣α̣υ̣μ̣α̣(σιωτάτῳ) <Ἀ>πολλῶτι πρωτοκ(ωμήτῃ) Ἀφροδ(ίτης) "Deliver to the very admirable Apollos, prōtokōmētēs of Aphrodito".[49] Consequently, the very non-standard coloration of the letter cannot be attributed to his incompetence in Coptic. In fact, Apollos probably received an elementary education in Greek and Coptic, since he was able to write in each language. He was able to read the letters in Greek that he received,[50] but his skills in Greek were not as good as his Coptic, which is both correct and very fluent.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Apollos is, for the moment, the only example in our Byzantine evidence of a multifaceted individual involved in politics, monasticism, and local village management. Apollos was, in fact, simultaneously *prōtokōmētēs*, an administrator of Ammonios' belongings, and the founder of a monastery for the last ten years of his life (537–546/7). The Coptic texts presented here shed light on concrete aspects of Apollos' day-to-day tasks. Moreover, his Coptic letters provide additional information concerning the bilingualism of the village elite and offer us a rare example of a paleographic case study that exhibits specific traits for each language (particularly Greek-Coptic bigraphism). Apollos was probably more fluent in Coptic, his mother tongue, than in Greek, which he used mostly for business and administrative purposes but not for personal matters or in his daily life.

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**48** See Papaconstantinou (2008) 79.

**49** See Vanderheyden (2015) text 1 (p. 8–14).

**50** He is the addressee of *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67064, probably of *P.Lond.* V 1684, and possibly of *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67065, *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67290, *P.Lond.* V 1681, and *SB* XX 14119. He is also among the addressees of *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67061 and probably *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67063, *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67199, and *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67323.

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Jennifer Cromwell

# A Village Scribe on the Eve of Change

For the study of individual histories in late antique Egypt, few sites offer better opportunities than Western Thebes, for both secular and monastic lives. While archaeological traces of this period have suffered in favour of the earlier, famous pharaonic remains,[1] one of the greatest gifts of the Theban region is the huge volume of written material that has survived from late antiquity.[2] Written primarily in Coptic and dating to the seventh and eighth centuries, the textual sources document the day-to-day reality of men and women living at a time of great political change in the country, from the Byzantine-Persian struggles for control of the land to the Arab conquest and the subsequent integration of Egypt into the new and expanding Muslim empire.[3] A number of studies have focussed on known individuals, including townspeople,[4] monks,[5] and bishops.[6] Rather than focus on the people whose affairs are recorded in the non-literary record, it is possible to look beyond these parties to the scribes who wrote the documents. Even though the role of these men (only men worked as professional scribes at this time) was to document the affairs of others, focusing on what and how they wrote instead reflects administrative changes introduced and implemented during the late seventh and early eighth century.

Many legal documents from the village Jeme[7] were signed by the scribes who wrote them. The best attested of these scribes is Aristophanes son of Johannes, whose dossier amounts to over 140 texts, comprising mainly legal documents and

**1** On the late antique reuse of the Theban pharaonic monumental landscape, see O'Connell (2007).
**2** The online papyrological database trismegistos.org includes almost 2,500 documents from Western Thebes from the seventh and eighth centuries (as of July 2017), which constitutes almost twenty percent of all documents from Egypt in the same period. This number is probably a conservative one, as many texts of uncertain or unknown provenance likely also derived from Thebes.
**3** For the transition to new rule, see Sijpesteijn (2007a) and (2007b), while Kennedy (1998) provides a concise chronology of the post-conquest centuries.
**4** This is especially true of women, notably the female moneylender Koloje and her family, see Wilfong (1990) and (2002) chapter 5, and the families of Elizabeth and Abigaia, see Schiller (1953) and Wilfong (2002) chapter 2. For the archive of Daniel son of Pachom, see Cromwell (2014), and for the family of Germanos, see Cromwell (2013).
**5** See *O.Frange* for the monk Frange, who resided in Theban Tomb 29 (TT 29).
**6** Much of the documentation from the monastery of Apa Phoibammon at Deir el-Bahri (the ancient mortuary temple of Hatshepsut) concerns the affairs of its founder, Abraham, bishop of Armant (Greek Hermonthis); see Krause (1956) and Godlewski (1986). As a result of the Persian occupation, many individuals fled from northern Upper Egypt to Western Thebes. Of particular note is Pisenthius, bishop of Coptos, known by a dossier of letters written to and by him, as well as hagiographies and *encomia* dedicated to him; for the letters, see most recently Dekker (2011) and references therein.
**7** Jeme, built in and around the mortuary temple of Ramesses III (Medinet Habu), is the only non-monastic settlement in Western Thebes whose location and physical remains have been discovered; see Hölscher (1954) and the general introduction in Wilfong (2002) 1–22.

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tax receipts.[8] Providentially, three of these documents are dated absolutely and provide the chronological framework for his other texts: *P.Bal*. 130 Appendix A is dated by the *hegira* and the indiction year to January 724 while *P.KRU* 14 and 15 are dated via the reign of Diocletian to April and November 756 respectively. Aristophanes' timeline falls into two main phases: a short yet intensive phase in the 720s during which time he produced documents connected with taxation (in addition to tax receipts, this includes *P.CLT* 3, a request for a travel permit for three monks in which it is noted that they have paid their taxes for the year, and *P.CLT* 6, an agreement between seventeen men concerning the naval duty), and a longer phase from the 730s until the 750s during which time he produced private, legal documents. Aristophanes represents new scribal practices in Western Thebes, in linguistic and supralinguistic (e. g. palaeography) terms. In order to recognise these new practices and to begin to address why they occurred, it is necessary to look at his predecessors in the village and identify the ways in which they differ.

The most prolific of Aristophanes' predecessors is Psate son of Pisrael, whose dossier in terms of sheer numbers rivals if not exceeds Aristophanes' own. However, this numerical observation obscures the types of documents involved: Psate wrote far fewer legal documents (or, at least, fewer have survived) but more tax receipts. The following brief overview of his textual output is in chronological order. In each instance, the individuals involved in the texts and the dates on which they were written are key, as well as Psate's signature (i. e., the principal means to attribute documents to him).

Psate's earliest document is *P.CLT* 1, which concerns money donated to the monastery of Apa Paul (most likely to be identified with the complex at Deir el-Bachit[9]).[10] The first party is Moses son Plouj, a monk in the monastery, and the second party comprises the superiors of the monastery, Apa Daniel, Apa Jacob, and Apa Athanasius. The date is given simply as Thoth 16 (= 13 September) of a twelfth indication year. Additionally, the bilingual Greek-Arabic protocol at the head of the papyrus records the name of Egypt's governor at the time the roll was manufactured: 'Abd al-Azīz b. Marwan. 'Abd al-Azīz's tenure as governor of Egypt spanned 684 – 705, during which period there is only one year that corresponds with the twelfth year of an indiction cycle: 698. However, it cannot be discounted that the roll was produced toward the end of 'Abd al-Azīz's tenure and was not used until 713. Psate wrote his signature in Coptic:

> ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲯⲁⲧⲉ ⲡϫⲏⲣⲉ ⲛ̄ⲡⲓⲛⲁⲕ(ⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ) ⲡⲓⲥⲣⲁⲏⲗ ⲁⲙⲱⲩⲥⲏⲥ ⲡⲉⲓⲗ(ⲁ)ϧ(ⲓⲥⲧⲟⲥ) ⲙⲛⲟⲛ(ⲁ)ϧ(ⲟⲥ) ⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ⲙⲟⲓ ⲁⲓⲥⲙⲏ ⲡⲉⲓⲉⲅⲅⲣⲁⲫ(ⲟⲛ) ⲛ̄ⲣⲙⲛⲕⲏⲙⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲥⲓϧ

**8** Aristophanes' work is the subject of Cromwell (2017a), which provides details of his dossier.

**9** A growing body of literature is available now for this complex, which has been excavated since the beginning of the current century; see most recently Beckh (2016), Hodak (2016), and Polz *et al*. (2012) 127 – 134.

**10** Translations available in MacCoull (2009) 42 – 47 and Till (1964) 22 – 27.

> The humblest monk Moses asked me, Psate the son of the late Pisrael, and I wrote this document in Egyptian by my hand (lines 141–142).[11]

In *P.CLT* 5, the two *lashneu* (village headmen, plural of *lashane*) of Jeme represent the monastery of Apa Phoibammon in a dispute with the monastery of Apa Paul over a large sum of money.[12] Unfortunately, the beginning of the document is damaged and any absolute dating criterion that may have been written there is lost (e. g., the year from Diocletian, which is included in some documents). However, the current indiction year is mentioned on lines 79–80 ("in this current tenth year" ϩⲛ ⲧⲉⲓⲣⲟⲙⲡⲉ ⲇⲉⲕⲁⲧⲏ ⲉⲧⲱⲟⲟⲡ ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ) and the date is written in full on line 152, before the witness statements: Hathor 29, indiction year 10 (ⲙⲏⲛⲓ ⲁⲑⲩⲣ ⲕⲑ ⲓⲛⲇ(ⲓⲕⲧⲓⲱⲛⲟⲥ) ⲇⲉⲕⲁⲧⲏ). Even though Walter Till in his dating of the Theban documents overlooked the full date, he did note the indiction year.[13] Based on the chronology of the superiors of the monastery of Apa Paul in *P.CLT* 1, 2, 4, and 5, Walter Till placed this document as the last in the sequence, and so dated it to 711. Till's date can now be corrected to 25 November 711, incorporating the dating information that he overlooked. Psate's final notation is the longest in all his documents:

> ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲫⲁⲧⲉ ⲡⲱⲛϩⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲛⲁⲕⲁⲣ(ⲓⲟⲥ) ⲡⲓⲥⲣⲁⲏⲗ ⲁⲓⲥⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲓⲉⲅⲅⲣⲁⲫⲟⲛ ⲛ̄ϩⲟⲙⲟⲗⲟⲅⲓⲁ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲥⲓⲍ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧϩⲙⲟⲟⲥ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲛ̄ⲑⲁⲩⲛⲁⲥⲓⲱⲧⲁⲧ(ⲟⲥ) ⲑⲱⲙⲁⲥ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲕⲟⲙⲉⲥ ⲛ̄ⲗⲁⲫ(ⲙⲏⲩ) ⲙⲡⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲧⲁⲡⲁⲗⲗⲁⲅⲏ ⲱⲱⲡⲉ ϩⲙ̄ ⲧⲙⲏⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲥⲛⲏⲩ ⲙⲛⲁⲓⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ ⲁⲡⲁ ⲃⲓⲕⲧⲱⲣ ⲡⲉⲡⲣⲉ(ⲥⲃⲩⲧⲉⲣⲟⲥ) ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲕⲉⲗⲉⲩⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲓⲥⲙ̄ⲛ̄ⲧ̀ⲫ ⲡⲣⲟⲥ ⲧⲉⲩⲕⲉⲗⲉⲩⲥⲓⲥ
>
> I, Psate the son of the late Pisrael, wrote this document of agreement by my hand. I am present with the esteemed *lashneu* Thomas and Comes at the moment that the discharge occurred between the God-loving brethren and the priest Apa Victor, and I was ordered and drew it up at their command (lines 168–171).

For over a decade, Psate issued tax receipts to Jeme's inhabitants, for a range of impositions among which the poll tax (*diagraphon* at Thebes) is the most common.[14] His known receipts are dated to the twelfth, fifteenth, and first through ninth indiction years, equating to 713/4 to 726.[15] Of these, 123 receipts bear his signature, while a further 69 can be attributed to him on formulaic, orthographic, and palaeographic grounds.[16] He wrote receipts in both Coptic (142 receipts) and Greek (50 receipts), al-

**11** An image of this papyrus is available on the Metropolitan Museum of Art's online catalogue (inv. 24.2.3a–c).

**12** Translations available in MacCoull (2009) 54–59 and Till (1964) 30–34.

**13** Till (1962) 43–44.

**14** Delattre/Fournet (2014) 214–222 discuss the different impositions recorded in Jeme's receipts.

**15** Until recently, his highest year was the eighth indiction year, leading Kahle (1974) to propose that Psate died in 725. However, *P.Stras.Copt*. 41, 52, and 60 are dated to the ninth year and have extended his dates to April 726.

**16** These numbers include unpublished tax receipts in various collections that are being prepared for publication by Nikolaos Gonis and the ostraca in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, Ann Arbor that I am currently editing (Wilfong [2004] discusses the Kelsey tax receipts, but focuses on

though the reasons for language choice from one receipt to the next is not obvious. In these receipts, Psate employed three different notations: (1) a short Coptic version, ϯατε ⲡⲓⲥⲣⲁⲏⲗ ⲁⲓⲥⲙⲛ ⲡⲉⲓⲉⲛⲧⲁⲅⲓⲟⲛ "(I) Psate (son of) Pisrael wrote this receipt";[17] (2) a long Coptic version, ϯατε ⲡⲓⲥⲣⲁⲏⲗ ⲁϥⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ ⲙⲙⲟⲓ ⲁⲓⲥⲙⲛ ⲡⲉⲓⲉⲛⲧⲁⲅⲓⲟⲛ "He asked me, Psate (son of) Pisrael, and I wrote this receipt";[18] (3) a short Greek version, Ψάτη Πισραηλ ἔγραψα "Psate (son of) Pisrael wrote".[19] Further research on these receipts is required to determine if there are any chronological patterns in the use of these three notations, or if their use was dictated by practical issues (space restrictions), or if they were used freely by Psate. The language of the receipt itself did not always influence Psate in his choice of notation: Greek notations appear on Coptic receipts and vice versa.[20] Psate also signed three safe-conduct passes, the so-called *logos mpnoute* texts: *P.Schutzbriefe* 5, 44, and 64. In each instance, he wrote the short Coptic version of his notation, albeit with ⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ not ⲉⲛⲧⲁⲅⲓⲟⲛ. The last of these texts combines a tax receipt with the pass. It is likely that more of the passes, most of which are unsigned, should be attributed to Psate.[21]

Two settlement of dispute documents, *P.KRU* 36 and 37, concern the affairs of the lady Elizabeth daughter of Epiphanius (see n. 4). The first text records action taken against Elizabeth by her niece, two nephews, and their father over moveable property,[22] while the second records a settlement written for Elizabeth by her son Georgios who wanted to secure his future claims over her property after his step-father was made her sole-heir.[23] Both documents were written in the same seventh indiction year. *P.KRU* 36 was written on Paone 10 (= 4 June 724), but the precise date of *P.KRU* 37 is not known as the beginning of the document where the date was written is lost. However, reference is made in the document to "this seventh year" (lines 10–11) and so it dates to 724/5. Psate's signature in both documents is markedly dif-

those written by Johannes son of Lazarus). Delattre/Fournet (2014) 231–234 discuss some of the features that are characteristic of Psate's receipts.

**17** For example, *O.Cambr.* 116 (Delattre/Vanthieghem [2014] 90–91), *P.Stras.Copt.* 35, 51, 57, 62, *SB Kopt.* III 1427.

**18** For example, O.Col. inv. 950 (Cromwell [2017b] 151–153), *P.Stras.Copt.* 29, 47, 54, *SB Kopt.* II 1019. In the *P.Stras.Copt.* examples, the editors read ⲁϫⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ not ⲁϥⲁⲓⲧⲉⲓ (the third plural rather than third masculine singular, creating the passive "I was asked"). The published images of these texts are of insufficient quality to check if this is a variant or if all examples should be corrected to the active "He asked me".

**19** For example, *O.Medin.HabuCopt.* 366, 377, 378, and *P.Stras.Copt.* 38, 40, 41, 42, 60.

**20** For example, *O.Cambr.* 116 (see n. 18), *O.Medin.HabuCopt.* 389, and *P.Stras.Copt.* 35 are Greek receipts with Coptic notations, while *O.Medin.HabuCopt.* 260 and 283 are Coptic receipts with Greek notations.

**21** *P.Schutzbriefe* 61 and 63 also combine a tax receipt and pass and exhibit features particular to Psate, notably ⲉⲓⲥⲥ for ⲉⲓⲥ. Examination of the original texts is required to assign unsigned texts from the corpus to Psate.

**22** Translations available in MacCoull (2009) 99–102, Till (1954) 115–117, and Wilfong (2002) 62–63.

**23** Translations available in MacCoull (2009) 103–106, Till (1954) 118–121, and Wilfong (2002) 64–65.

ferent from that in his earlier legal texts, as he now signs entirely in Greek: δι᾽ ἐμοῦ Ψάτε Πισραήλ ἐγράφ(η) (*P.KRU* 36) and δι᾽ ἐμοῦ Ψάτη Πισραηλίου ἐγρ(ά)φ(η) (*P.KRU* 37) "Written by me, Psate son of Pisrael".[24]

The final dated document that Psate wrote is *P.KRU* 44, which records arbitration between married sisters and their husbands over the division of their paternal estate.[25] Once again, the date is lost at the beginning of the document, but an oath recorded at the end of the text, before Psate's signature, includes the date: Thoth 13 (= 10 September) indiction year 12. On prosopographic and formulaic grounds, this indiction year 12 can be equated to 728 rather than 713.[26] Psate's notation is in Greek and, as in *P.KRU* 37, his patronymic is in its genitival form, but his use of γίγνομαι (rather than γράφω) is new: δι᾽ ἐμοῦ Ψάτε Πισραηλίου ἐγένετο.

Two documents that Psate signed, *O.CrumVC* 8 and 9, concern the same matter and are dated only by their indiction cycle: Mechir 30 (= 24/25 February) indiction year 11.[27] Walter Till suggested they should be dated to either February 698 or 728, rejecting the intermediate indiction cycle (i.e., 713) on prosopographic grounds.[28] The two documents are protective promises issued by the *lashanes* Severus and Johannes to brethren of an unnamed monastery (or perhaps two different monasteries). It is possible that both texts concern the monastery of Apa Paul, which was the second party in *P.CLT* 1 and 5 that Psate wrote, but without further details this identification is difficult to confirm. Concerning their date, Till argued that a 713 date was impossible, based on the *lashanes*, as in 711/12 different men held this post (Thomas and Comes in *P.CLT* 5, mentioned above). However, Thomas and Comes served in the position in the previous year and, as the office was held for only one year, there are no other impediments to dating *O.CrumVC* 8 and 9 to 713. One other dating criterion is perhaps important here. Psate wrote his notation in Coptic in each text: "(I,) Psate (son) of Pisrael was commanded and I drew up this assurance" ⲫⲁⲧⲉ ⲙⲡⲓⲥⲣⲁⲏⲗ ⲁⲩⲉⲡⲓⲧⲣⲓⲡⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲓⲥϧ̄ⲛ̄ ⲡⲓⲗⲟⲅⲟⲥ (*O.CrumVC* 8) and "I, Psate the son of the late Pisrael, was commanded [...]" ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲫⲁⲧⲉ ⲡⲱⲙⲣⲉ ⲙⲡⲙⲁⲕ(ⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ) ⲡⲓⲥⲣⲁⲏⲗ ⲁⲩⲕⲉⲗⲉⲩⲉ [...] (*O.CrumVC* 9).[29] In his legal texts of the 720s, Psate signed in Greek and his use of Coptic may represent an earlier practice. Hence, the two texts should be dated to either early 698, in which case they would be our earliest texts for Psate, or to 713.

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**24** Psate's signature in *P.KRU* 37 is very faint and I rely on the *editio princeps* for the reading of the genitive of Pisrael here. It is difficult to compare it to the clear writing of the genitival form in *P.KRU* 44. Concerning the writing of the name of Psate's father in his receipts, the declension (or lack thereof) of patronymics is a topic that requires further analysis and discussion; this point is beyond the scope of the current study.

**25** Translations available in MacCoull (2009) 131–134 and Till (1954) 136–140.

**26** Till (1962) 24.

**27** Translations available with the *editio princeps* and in Till (1964) 235–236.

**28** Till (1962) 47–48.

**29** I understand Psate's use of the Greek verbs ἐπιτρέπω and κελεύω to be synonymous; alternatively, ἐπιτρέπω may carry the meaning 'entrusted' or 'authorised'.

Finally, an unsigned document, *P.KRU* 23, is attributed to Psate on the basis of its palaeography.[30] The document records a sale of part of a house[31] and both the beginning (with the date) and end (with the scribe's notation) are lost. As the three documents that Psate wrote between villagers, *P.KRU* 36, 37, and 38, date 724–728, it is tempting to date *P.KRU* 23 to this same period.

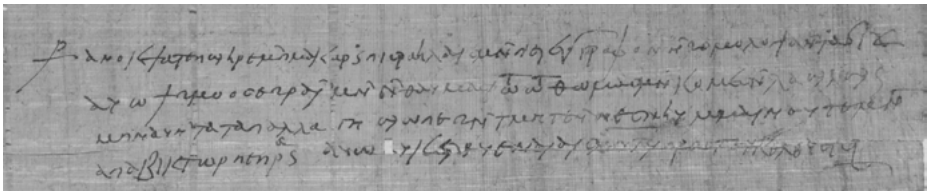

**Fig. 3:** Psate's signature in *P.CLT* 5.168–171 © The British Library Board (Or. 9525/1)

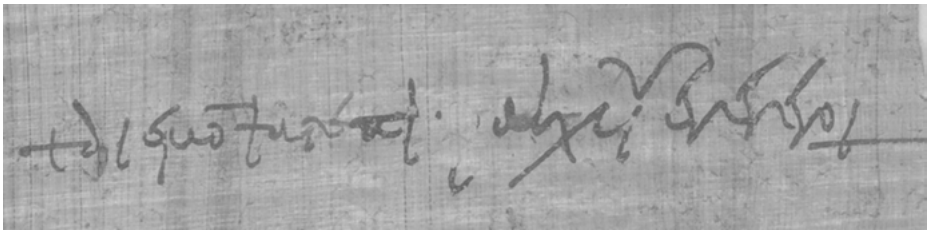

**Fig. 4:** Psate's signature *P.KRU* 44.154 © The British Library Board (Or. 4884)

With his documents laid out, a broad trend is observable in which his texts can be divided into three groups: (1) texts involving monasteries; (2) tax receipts; (3) private legal documents. During the years in which he wrote tax receipts, Psate changed his signature, from a long Coptic notation to a shorter Greek one. As well as a language shift, his Greek signatures are also written in a modified script, marked by greater ligaturing and modification of letter forms (Figures 3 and 4). This form of bigraphism is a characteristic feature of the next generation of scribes in Jeme, beginning with Aristophanes.[32] There are no indications of bigraphism in Psate's earliest documents. The pivotal moment seems to be his involvement with taxation and the decade that he spent issuing receipts from the mid-710s to mid-720s.

**30** Till (1962) 185: "nur nach der Handschrift bestimmt".

**31** Translation available in Krall (1888) and accompanying its edition in *CPR* IV 27. Note that in the description to its edition in *SB Kopt*. IV 1800, the text's origin is erroneously given as Hermopolis. An image of the papyrus is available via the online catalogue of the Austrian National Library.

**32** Cromwell (2010) discusses Aristophanes' graphic variation between Coptic and Greek. Note that bigraphism does occur in other texts from elsewhere in Egypt at different dates, but specifically in Jeme it is a practice that only develops from the early eighth century (see, e.g., the discussion also in Cromwell [2017a], chapter 6).

While Psate's later documents exhibit some use of two scripts, neither his Coptic nor his Greek script resemble those of Aristophanes. Figure 5 compares the handwriting of each man, from approximately parallel formulae and with common words highlighted in each for comparison. Aristophanes' hand is cursive, highly ligatured, and with tendencies towards unevenness, while Psate's hand is square and even with few ligatures. The two men do not belong to the same school of practice; Aristophanes' style is a new introduction to Thebes and has greater similarities with documents produced in Hermopolis and Aphrodito.[33]

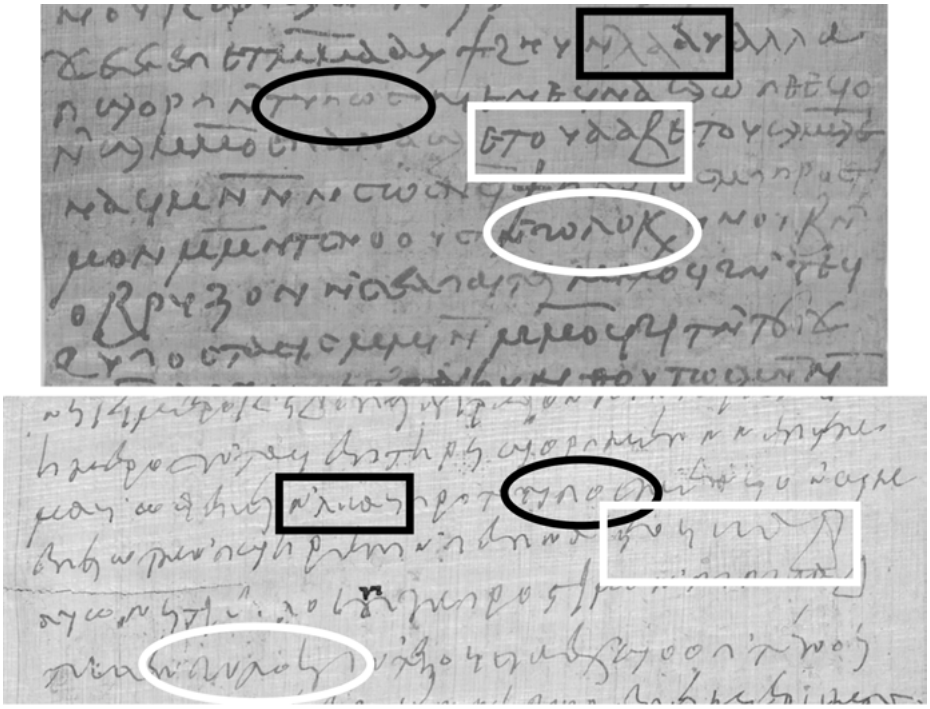

**Fig. 5:** Comparison of handwriting of Psate (top, *P.KRU* 44.104–109) and Aristophanes (bottom, *P.KRU* 39.63–67) © The British Library Board (Or. 4884 and Papyrus CIV)

Aristophanes, as well as the scribe Cyriacus son of Petros,[34] first wrote documents concerning taxation and then wrote legal documents for Jeme's inhabitants. Psate also follows this pattern, more or less (there are a couple of years of overlap

**33** These similarities extend to linguistic features, notably the use of ⲡⲫⲥⲱⲧⲙ̄, which is characteristic of texts from Middle Egypt and is only used by Aristophanes in Thebes; for more on this construction, see Richter (2017).

**34** Cyriacus wrote tax receipts only in the eleventh indiction year, for taxes of the ninth; see Delattre/Fournet (2014) 236–237. He is also the scribe responsible for *P.KRU* 28 (perhaps dated to the 730s) and 50 (August 739).

from 724, but there is no evidence that Psate did anything except issue tax receipts for the previous eleven years). One significant difference between the scribes is that Aristophanes had no connections with monastic communities. *P.CLT* 3 (dated 728) concerns monks of the monastery of Apa Paul, but it was written by the *lashneu* of Jeme to a local Arab official (presumably pagarch) requesting official documentation (a travel pass) and giving confirmation that the monks have paid their annual taxes. Aristophanes' latest documents include three child donation texts, in which the monastery of Apa Phoibammon is the second party, *P.KRU* 87, 101 + 95, and 103.[35] However, in each of these instances he wrote for the first party, the parents of the child being donated. Therefore, while both the monasteries of Apa Paul and Apa Phoibammon appear in documents that he wrote, there is no evidence that Aristophanes had any direct involvement with them. Psate's relationship with the monastery of Apa Paul seems to be more direct: the first party of *P.CLT* 1 is a monk at the monastery of Apa Paul and while the first party of *P.CLT* 5 are *lashanes* they represent the monastery of Apa Phoibammon; the monastery of Apa Paul is the second party in each instance.

At the beginning of this chapter, I said that in order to understand and appreciate the differences introduced in the 720s by Aristophanes and others (e. g., Cyriacus son of Petros, mentioned above), it is necessary to look back at the previous generation of scribes. The question, then, is what these differences, in styles and the level of direct contact with Thebes' monasteries, signify. The clear differences indicate that these men received different scribal training. Are generational changes enough to account for these changes – 26 years separate the writing of Psate's earliest document in 698 and Aristophanes' first text in 724? Where people in Jeme learned to write is difficult to identify. Despite the huge number of ostraca found in the village, there are only three identifiable writing exercises and nothing that has been identified as an elementary school piece.[36] Instead, all school texts/exercises from Western Thebes are associated with individual monks and monasteries.[37]

The absence of school material from Jeme cannot be a coincidence, given the quantity that survives from elsewhere in the area. This point therefore leads to the

**35** *P.KRU* 101 and 95 are in fact part of the same donation, preserving different sections of the text (Aristophanes' signature is on *P.KRU* 95); see further Cromwell (2017a).

**36** *O.Medin.HabuCopt.* 160 (a short note mentioning a large quantity of money, assumed to be an exercise by the editors based on this sum); *O.Medin.HabuCopt.* 175 (the practice of epistolary formulae); *O.Medin.HabuCopt.* 212 (repetition of greeting formulae with different names and corrections). Two ostraca of unknown provenance, typically assigned to Thebes, provide evidence for the payment of basic instruction in reading and writing, but without secure provenance it cannot be used as proof of teaching within the village; see the re-edition of and discussion on the ostraca in Boud'hors (2016).

**37** Cromwell (forthcoming a) discusses the evidence for school texts across Thebes. Cribiore (2007) is a preliminary introduction to a group of ca. 150 school texts in Columbia University (currently being prepared for publication), the monastic milieu of which is certain: they were found during the Metropolitan Museum of Art's excavations at the monastery of Epiphanius (TT 103) and Deir el-Bahri.

question of where people from the village went to learn to write. The current state of research on the palaeography of Theban texts is such that it is difficult to draw firm conclusions on this point. Nevertheless, broad strokes can be made and the following points are key: Aristophanes (and subsequent scribes[38]) wrote in a completely different style that shows strong similarities with contemporary scribal practices elsewhere in Egypt;[39] Psate wrote in a mostly-square majuscule Coptic hand that is standard in Theban texts of the seventh century and it is possible that he was trained by a local monk,[40] but he introduced a new variant Greek script after he began to produce tax receipts. The implication of these points is that there was a break in tradition in the 720s.

In the greater picture of early eighth-century Egypt, the changes that appear in Jeme can be viewed as part of the greater centralization of administrative practices in the country, in order to manage the collection of the poll tax and other impositions.[41] Rather than impose external administrators upon the village, local scribes were used to issue receipts and collect taxes. At the beginning of this process, existing scribes – in this case, Psate – were utilized and taught how to produce such receipts. Once the next generation of scribes had been trained – i. e., Aristophanes and Cyriacus – they took over these duties. In each case, this scenario necessitates the involvement of scribes from other sites (or perhaps part of the local pagarch's staff), who had the requisite expertise, in the transfer of this knowledge to the village. This technical knowledge included: the names of the different taxes, the payment periods (the *katabolē*), and the correct formulae in Coptic and Greek, including the repetition of the amount of taxes in an abbreviated notation.

While Aristophanes presents the strongest ties with practices occurring beyond both Jeme and Western Thebes, Psate represents a period of transition. He had been working as a scribe for at least 15 years before he wrote his first tax receipt and was a highly skilled writer in the village. As such, he was an excellent candidate to train in new administrative processes. Psate wrote the largest proportion of the known corpus of tax receipts and he wrote them for the longest period of time. Even though we know little about the man himself, following the progress of his activities over three decades reveals how local scribes were integrated into the larger administrative framework of Egypt, as a response to the increasing output of paper-

**38** Including Cyriacus son of Petros, David son of Psate, and Souai son of Philotheos. Cromwell (2012) discusses the generational distinctions between scribes who, on onomastic grounds, may be father-and-son scribes.

**39** Aristophanes' similarities with scribal practices elsewhere in Egypt are discussed in Cromwell (2017a) chapter 6.

**40** Given Psate's involvement with the monastery of Apa Paul, it is tempting to identify it as the source of his education. A considerable number of school texts have recently been found at Deir el-Bachit (59 ostraca included on the online database of the texts, koptolys.gwi.uni-muenchen.de, are labelled school texts). However, there is no evidence to confirm such a hypothesis.

**41** The role of Coptic within these changes is discussed in Cromwell (forthcoming b).

work connected with the management of tax collection. Living half-a-century after the conquest, Psate son of Pisrael worked on the eve of change, when Egypt's rulers were strengthening central control and his working life is evidence of how this control reached down the Nile Valley.

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Lucian Reinfandt

# Petosiris the Scribe

Sometime in the early eighth century, a certain Petosiris in the Middle Egyptian town of Heracleopolis received a letter in Arabic (*CPR* XVI 4).[1] The sender was a Muslim Arab with the name Yazīd ibn Aslam. The letter is written *in Arabic* and deals with the taxes to be levied in the nome of Herakleopolis Magna (in Arabic Ihnās) and with an additional personal concern about forwarding a single *dīnār* to the letter writer. The mix of official and personal concerns in a single letter may be an indicator of a certain intimacy between the correspondents. From details in the letter, we learn that both were colleagues in the local Arab-Muslim tax administration, and the familiar tone of the language used suggests that both worked on much the same hierarchical level. The tax-related content of the letter reveals that the correspondents are members of the Muslim administration, as does Petosiris' epithet "the scribe" (*al-kātib*). One would not assume that Yazīd ibn Aslam, the Arab correspondent, would normally take the trouble to read Coptic, so Petosiris should presumably have written back in Arabic, too. Petosiris was a Copt and a professional chancery scribe treated as an equal partner by his Muslim colleague and he was able to read, and presumably also to write, refined official letters in Arabic at this rather early point in Muslim rule.

In papyri from the early Islamic period, we encounter individuals crossing borders that divided linguistic and social milieus but not necessarily also ethnic or religious milieus. Such cases provide us with important empirical data for tackling larger, and more controversial, questions such as the coexistence of and the relationships between ethnic and religious groups in the early Islamic period. The simultaneous appearance of languages in written documents is often indicative of an interrelatedness of social and technical aspects. These may concern multiple addressees belonging to different milieus, while others concern the context of usage, types of documents, their functions and needs. What we have here, however, is a proponent of a multilingual society in the true sense of the word. Petosiris the scribe was at home in more than one linguistic and social milieu and could switch between languages instantly when the need presented itself. Who was this early bilingual border

**1** The *Arabic Papyrology Database*, which is of intrinsic usefulness for any work with Arabic papyri, also formed the basis for the research of this study: www.naher-osten.lmu.de/apd (accessed 18 February 2020). Arabic quotations are given in transcription, as are personal names and toponyms (unless well known in the English language). Years of events are given according to the Common Era, as are years of documents except when explicitly dated by the Hijra, in which case both the Hijra year and the year of the Common Era (AH/CE) are given. I am immensely grateful to the anonymous proofreader for ameliorating my English and for enhancing my text with important suggestions.

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crosser, and how representative was he for the rest of the society of early eighth-century Egypt?[2]

Only sparse biographical details can be gleaned from the document, but placing it in the context of parallel texts allows a clearer picture to emerge. The following investigation will (1) identify a first generation of "cultural brokers" between Arabs and locals in Egypt; (2) touch upon the historical framework underlying this phenomenon; (3) identify the individual socio-economic backgrounds of members of the new transcultural elite; and (4) assess motives for cultural assimilation and for collaborating with the Arab authorities as an indicator for the character of early Muslim rule.[3]

## 1 Cultural brokers in early Islamic Egypt

Petosiris was not a unique phenomenon; there were other crossers of social and linguistic borders in the early eighth century. A Coptic letter has been found in the Fayum (*P.Gascou* 24) that bears a single additional address line in Arabic (*ʾilā ʾabū ʿalī*). The writer of this Coptic letter was a certain Yazīd, who seems to have been an agent of the addressee, himself a certain Abū ʿAlī and some kind of agricultural landlord or entrepreneur in the Fayum. Yazīd writes that he had been traveling to al-Fusṭāṭ on the order of Abū ʿAlī and he is now reporting back to Abū ʿAlī about business transactions (wine sales on a large scale, more than 2,000 litres). In the letter, Yazīd also asks his superior to intercede on behalf of and assist a certain Maryam, who was a resident of al-Fusṭāṭ, and asks about a certain Abū ʿAlī's shop, which was located in al-Fusṭāṭ as well. The correspondents of this letter were local businessmen, but as they had access to the military postal service (*barīd*) for transporting the letter (cf. the Arabic address line!), it can be concluded that they had positions as officials as well, which was common enough at the time.[4]

**2** The intricate matter of religious conversion in early Islam is dealt with in Fournet (2009) based on Clackson (2000) 23: in a Greek graffito from Bāwīṭ from the beginning of the eighth century, a certain Georgios son of Sergios calls himself a *mawlā* of an Arab, which apparently means that a Christian in this early period could be a client of a Muslim without being a manumitted slave or a converted neo-Muslim. Other names of Christian scribes in the service of the early Muslim administration are attested in Arabic papyri, such as ʿĪsā (*P.BeckerPAF* 4; Ishqāw, 710) or Yaḥyā (*P.Dienstschreiben* d; Egypt, 102/720). A famous example known from Arabic literature is that of Sarjūn ibn Manṣūr, the client (*mawlā*) of caliph Muʿāwiya I and possibly the father of John of Damascus; cf. Fournet (2009) 146 citing Crone (2003) 237 n. 358 and Sourdel/Bosch Vila (1988) 20. For more details on conversions from Islam to Christianity in early Islam, cf. Sahner (2016) and Simonsohn (2011).

**3** For the concept of cultural brokers as intermediaries between groups, cf. Reimitz (2013).

**4** The wine trade is a remarkable fact, since it was traditionally in the hands of the Coptic population. The Arabic writing correspondents in a ninth-century letter about the same business (*P.ReinfandtWeingutbesitzer*) may have been Arabicized Copts as well. This minor facet notwithstanding, there was a general tendency towards an accumulation of professions among earlier Arabs settling

Yazīd, the letter writer, had initially been a Copt, but he had assimilated into Arab culture and society. He may also have converted to Islam, as has been suggested by Anne Boud'hors, because typical symbols of Christianity seem to be avoided deliberately in the letter.[5] His continued use of the Coptic language for family purposes, however, even after his assumed conversion, may indicate that the letter writer had changed religion without having achieved a full command of the Arabic language, as Sebastian Richter has mentioned in this context.[6] Or he perhaps had to adapt to a situation where the rest of the family did not command Arabic as he did. It is most likely, though, that Yazīd knew both languages but used them on different *functional* occasions, as has already been pointed out by Naïm Vanthieghem: for the purpose at hand, there may have been a need to use Arabic in the address line (the postal service) but the letter itself was naturally written in his first language and to an addressee who was also a Copt.[7]

Another case is an unpublished Greek and Arabic bilingual writing exercise (P.Vindob. G 39752).[8] A Greek address line is practiced and reads "+ With God. Almugelêd son of Rabê, to you, Apa Iulios son of Johannes, from the village of Peensamoi from the pagarchy [of Herakleopolis]." Interestingly, the Arabic line beneath is a direct translation of the Greek but with the slight cultural adaptation of changing the personal names into their Arabic pendants: "In the name of God the merciful and compassionate! From al-Mujālid son of Rāfiʿ to ʿAbdallāh son of Muslim." Both parts are written by the same hand, as can be assumed from the ink and from the similar pen strokes. Who could this scribe have been? Was he a Christian Egyptian who shifted back and forth from Greek to Arabic? The Arabic is remarkably well written but may have been a bit more unfamiliar to the hand, as there is a minor writing mistake in the first version of al-Mujālid. Nevertheless, the text shows a certain mastery of both Greek and Arabic in their written forms.

## 2 Languages in the caliphal provincial administration

To understand the character of individual processes of cultural assimilation, one has to look at the wider historical framework. It is important to keep in mind that most of what happened in the wake of the Arab conquest can be explained by the largely

in the Egyptian *chōra*, and not a few of them were merchants and administrative clerks on the same time; cf. Sijpesteijn (2013).

**5** Boud'hors (2016) 74.

**6** Richter (2008) 753 cited in Boud'hors (2016) 77.

**7** Vanthieghem in Boud'hors (2016) 77.

**8** The papyrus was part of the first Fayum finds and was found in Herakleopolis/Ihnās. It is described and translated in Karabacek, *PERF* no. 594 and dealt with in Jahn (1937) 175; Grohman (1952) 72 and 227 n. 231; Grohmann (1924) 235; Vanthieghem (2014) 402 n. 4.

*defensive* character of Arab rule during the first two or three generations. No one knew whether the territorial gains could be retained on a long-term basis, and a culturally advanced local society reminded the Arab-Muslim elite of its own minority status. Conceptions of a gradual process of Arabization and the shaping of an Islamic (not necessarily Muslim) society are teleologically motivated and influenced by later knowledge; they do not reflect contemporary perspectives.[9]

This can explain why it took up to three generations until the first moves towards self-assertion were made on the Arab side. An Islamic dogma of strict distinction from other religious communities did not come into use and the Quran was not displayed in public before the end of the seventh century. Then, for the first time, Islam found expression in specific buildings (the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem), in the minting of new coins, and perhaps also in the issuing of bilingual Arabic-Greek official texts on papyrus.[10] The need to unify the administration of the provinces under one general chancery language, which was to be Arabic, also became pressing only around this time. This major move was made by the Umayyad caliph ʿAbdalmalik ibn Marwān with his famous decree from c. 705 ordering the provincial chanceries to change their languages from Greek to Arabic (in Syria and Egypt) and from Pahlavi to Arabic (as in Mesopotamia).[11]

We can gain an impression of the tremendous impact this had on contemporaneous society by seeing how Arabic literature in later centuries distilled these events into pithy anecdotes. The following one may serve an example: "At that time (i. e. 75/694) there were still two *dīwāns* in Kūfa and Basra, one in Arabic to count the men and their pay (this was the one established by ʿUmar), and the other in Persian for financial matters. The same applied in Syria, where one was in Greek and the other in Arabic. So it continued until the days of ʿAbdalmalik ibn Marwān."[12] In what follows, a charismatic yet unknown hero enters the scene, a certain Abū l-Walīd Ṣāliḥ ibn ʿAbdarraḥmān who promises the governor of Iraq, the famous al-Ḥajjāj, that he would be able to translate the opaque terminology of the Persian tax administration

**9** Noth (1987) 291.

**10** Johns (2003). Between 693 and about 720, there had been a transitional phase of the so-called protocol texts using a bilingual Greek-Arabic formulary until it switched entirely to a monolingual form after 732. The first dated Greek-Arabic bilingual protocol text known so far is from 74/693 (*CPR* III 1) and the latest dated example of a bilingual Greek-Arabic bilingual protocol is from 102/720 (*CPR* III 71), whereas the earliest dated example of a monolingual Arabic protocol thus far known is from 114/732 (*CPR* III 108); cf. Grohmann (1924) c–ci.

**11** Wüstenfeld (1875–76) 34–45 with reference to Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, Maqrīzi, Ibn Taghrībirdī, and Suyūṭī (about Egypt); and Sprengling (1939–1940) (about Mesopotamia).

**12** *wa-lam yazal bi-l-kūfati wa-l-baṣrati dīwānāni ʾaḥaduhumā bi-l-ʿarabiyyati li-ʾiḥṣāʾi n-nāsi wa-ʾuʿṭiyyātihim wa-hādhā lladhī kāna ʿumaru qad rasamahu wa-l-ʾākharu li-wujūhi l-ʾamwāli bi-l-fārisiyyati wa-kāna bi-sh-shaʾmi mithla dhālika ʾaḥaduhumā bi-r-rūmiyyati wa-l-ʾākharu bi-l-ʿarabiyyati fa-jarā l-ʾamru ʿalā dhālika ʾilā ʾayyāmi ʿabdi l-maliki bni marwāna*. The quotation is taken from a tenth-century manual of administrative practice: al-Jaḥshiyārī, *K. al-Wuzarāʾ wa-l-kuttāb*, ed. by M. as-Saqqāʾ *et al.*, Cairo 1938, p. 38–40; engl. transl. by Lewis (1974) 191.

into Arabic in two days. To the surprise of all, he keeps his promise and makes this core business of imperial politics accessible to Arab rulers. In so doing, he breaks the monopoly of an entire class of local Persians who had been keeping the social capital of bureaucratic knowledge inside families for generations.

Similar episodes are recounted for Syria, but in this case with Greek changing to Arabic in the chanceries.[13] The charismatic role of these heroic linguists and the literary topos of the two-day deadline for translating the directives should raise our suspicions, however: the changeover of languages in the chanceries was not a smooth process at all. The papyri show that, in Egypt at least, it took the administration decades to implement ʿAbdalmalik's decree in practice, and one can only guess at the tremendous social consequences the changeover had for at least some social groups.

A typology has been developed by Sven Tost and the author on the basis of large numbers of texts from the Vienna collection. It identifies four types of documents that make evident the trend of bringing different languages into one administration and making them subject to the primacy of one Arabic standard.[14] From the first decades of Arab rule, quite a few exemplars of a somewhat natural kind of (1) *translated* bilingual documents have been preserved. These consist of Arabic writing that was subsequently, and on the same papyrus, translated into Greek. Famous examples are P.Vindob. G 39726 from 643 but also the bilingual receipts *SB* XVI 13018 and XVIII 13771 from 677, the Nessana papyri, the *entagia* and perhaps even the "double letters" from Qurra ibn Sharīk's chancery of the early eighth century. The Arabic and Greek parts of these documents are of similar length, but they were written by different hands and for different addressees and had a hierarchically descending direction (i. e. the Arabic part had primacy over the Greek).

Over time, however, the languages in the documents became more interwoven, and this seems to indicate closer relations between formerly separate parts of the administration. The result was the appearance of a new type of (2) *complementary* documents that are written mainly in one language but contain later addenda in another. In these cases, both parts differ in length and addressees and have a hierarchically ascending direction: the main text ranks lower than the subsequent addenda. An example is *CPR* XXII 15 from the eighth century: this is a Greek document that refers to taxes in grain, with an additional docket indicating the total sum in Arabic. Another example is P.Vind. inv. A.P. 738 (*PERF* 628) from the eighth century; this is a register *in Coptic* containing the names of Arabic taxpayers and their individual amounts due signed *in Arabic* by a certain Ibn Ṣāliḥ; the verso bears what looks like a writing exercise probably written by the same hand, or at least with the

**13** Jaḥshiyārī *op. cit.*, 39 – 40. Cf. also the account given in al-Balādhurī's *K. Futūḥ al-buldān*, transl. Hitti, vol. I, p. 465 – 466 [300 – 301] with more details about the actual terminology of accounting numbers and similar administrative matters.

**14** Reinfandt/Tost (2017).

same stylus, as the Arabic on the recto.[15] A final development is the appearance of (3) *integrated* documents, where different languages were used in the same document by the same hand and intended for the same addressee, as is the case in P.Vind. inv. A.P. 50 and 8386.[16] Here, also, a fourth type of (4) *reused* writings becomes relevant in those cases where two or more texts are written in different languages on the same papyrus and are connected contextually or at least prosopographically connected. All these are examples of an endpoint of the inclusion of bilingual writers in the true sense of the word, and Petosiris and his like are good representatives of this trend.[17]

## 3 The social background of a new transcultural elite

Taken together, the topoi in literary anecdotes and the real people we encounter in the papyri suggest that the scribe Petosiris and his like were early representatives of a new trend: local non-Arabs had started entering the Arab-Muslim administration. In

**15** Karabacek (1894) 164, now published as *CPR* XXXIV 22.

**16** P.Vind. inv. A.P. 50 is the fragment of a Greek contract with subsequent witness attestations in Arabic. P.Vind. inv. A.P. 8386 has a fragmentary letter in Arabic plus an insertion of one or two lines in Greek rotated 180° on its one side as well as the Arabic address of the letter, but several lines in Greek and an additional Arabic section on the other. There is every indication that the Arabic letter had been written first. Soon after, a second hand may have contributed the Greek text, also rotated 180° on its backside the back and mentioning tax districts (*choria*) in alphabetical order. It was probably also the latter hand that had added the Greek line or lines on the other side. Finally, someone supplemented the second section in Arabic that was written below the Greek text on the backside and that seems to have made a reference to the content of the Arabic letter. Similarly to the aforementioned writing exercise, analogies of ink and stroke width suggest that at least the Greek parts and the supplement written in Arabic originate from one and the same hand. It would indicate that in some way or the other, all these texts were kind of interrelated in one way or another.

**17** More examples of "unexpected language use" are *P.BerkesTrilingualScribe* = *CPR* XXII 17, publ. by Berkes/Younes (2012) (Arsinoites/Fayum; 789–790) with an Arabic part ("scribal exercise") on the verso seemingly written by the same hand as the Greek–Coptic part on the recto, a fiscal register listing entries about different payments from the inhabitants of a village; *SB* I 4790 (Arsinoites; VIII); *MPER* XVII 37a (findplace unknown; VIII); *MPER* XVIII 307 (Fayum; VIII or later). An example from the ninth century is *P.DelattreEntagion*. Evidence for language interference in the papyri is found in the use of Arabic addresses on Coptic letters (but *nota bene P.Gascou* 24 is the only example known so far where both a Coptic *and* an Arabic address line appear): *P.Lond.Copt*. 580 (letter in Fayumic Coptic written by ʿAlī to Aḥmad, with an Arabic address line written by a third party for the postal service); *P.Lond.Copt*. 584 (letter in Fayumic Coptic written by Muḥammad ibn Abū Yaḥyā); *P.Ryl.Copt*. 376 (letter from Severus "his brother" to N.N., *min ʾakhi(!)hi sawīrus*); *P.Ryl.Copt*. 377 (the end of an Arabic docket, written perhaps by the same hand as the Coptic part); *SB Kopt*. II 884; *BKU* III 458. Arabic letters may also contain address lines in Coptic or Greek: *CPR* XVI 34 (Egypt; IX) and *P.Heid.Arab.* III 27 (Hūr; 1004/1005) in Coptic; *P.ArfaHaendler* 2 (al-Fusṭāṭ?; IX–X) in Greek.

Egypt and Iraq alike, "cultural brokers" appeared on the scene who had the skills to tie together the spheres of Greek or Persian financial specialists and those of Arab military elites.[18]

They were a new phenomenon in society, at least insofar as we can tell from the documentary evidence. There had been Arabic scribes before, such as the famous Ibn Ḥadīdō already mentioned in the bilingual P.Vindob. G 39726 from 643, and others are mentioned in documents from subsequent decades in the seventh century.[19] From historiography, a certain Wardān is known; he was of slave origin and eventually became the scribe of the first Muslim governor of Egypt, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ in al-Fusṭāṭ.[20] These were translators, however, in the strict sense of the word and essentially belonged to the Arab sphere of administration. It can be seen from the Qurra dossier that in the pagarch's office in Aphrodito an "Arabic" notary (*arabikos notarios*) had a social status different from his Greek-writing fellow next to him.[21] We can only guess at whether this "Arabic" notary was still one of the earlier "translators" or already an example of a bilingual local financial specialist with a bilingual qualification jumping on the train of Arabization, but with the appearance of Petosiris and his like in the early eighth century, we can definitively observe for the first time such local specialists *de facto* making their entry to the Arab sphere of administration.

On the documentary level, the first tax lists drafted in Arabic and with a chancery quality (support, ductus, and layout) do not appear before the mid-eighth century.[22] Most of them still remain unpublished, but their digital images are increasing-

**18** Reimitz (2013) 268, defining, with reference to E. Wolf and C. Geertz, "cultural brokers" as "cultural intermediaries who stand guard over the crucial junctures of synapses of relationships." Cf. also Richter (1988) 41 cited in Reimitz (2013): "As simultaneous members of two or more interacting networks (kin groups, political factions, communities, or other formal or informal coalitions), brokers provide nodes of communication with respect to a community's relation to the outside world (...). Their intermediate position, one step removed from final responsibility in decision making, occasionally allows brokers to promise more than they can deliver. The resulting manoeuvring room allows skillful mediators to promote the aims of one group while protecting the interests of another – and thus to become nearly indispensable to all sides." On the larger context of cultural brokers in early Islam, cf. Zaborowski (2008) and Kaplony (2016) for Egypt and Sprengling (1939 – 1940) for Iraq.

**19** Ibn Ḥadīd(ō) in 22/643 (*P.World*, p. 113 = *SB* VI 9577); Abū Saʿīd in 54 – 57/674 – 677 (*P.Ness.* 60 and 66); Ḥamīd (or Ḥumayd) in 55/675 (*P.Ness.* 63); Khālid in 55/675 (*P.Ness.* 62), Juhaym in 56/677 (*P.StoetzerSteuerquittungen* 2); Khālid in 61 – 62/680 – 682 (cf. Abbott [1965] 22); Abān (or Iyās) b. N.N. in 65/684 – 685 (*P.DiemGouverneur*); Saʿīd in 75/694 (*P.StoetzerSteuerquittung*); ʿAbdallāh ibn Jarīr in 87/706 (*P.BeckerPAF* 16 = *P.Cair.Arab.* 286); al-Ḥārith in the seventh century (P.Berol. inv. 10601); Mūsā in the seventh/eighth century (*P.Giss.Arab.* 6).

**20** Cf. Rāġib (1996) 9 citing Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh* (ed. De Goeje), I:2589; Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ* (ed. Cairo 1331 – 1338/1913 – 1919), XIII:324; Ibn Taghrībirdī, Nujūm (ed. Cairo 1348 – 1392/1929 – 1972), I:25; A. Z. Ṣafwat, *Jamharat rasāʾil al-ʿarab* (Cairo 1356/1937), I:208, no. 164.

**21** Cf. Richter (2010) 211 – 213 and, summarizing, Berkes/Younes (2012) 99.

**22** Examples are P.Vind. inv. A.P. 8339 (Medinet el-Fayum; VIII/IX); 8409 (Medinet el-Fayum; VIII/IX); 11233 (*PERF* 675; Ihnās, VIII/IX); P.Vind. inv. A.P. 11329 (*PERF* 686; Egypt, VIII), dated by Karabacek

ly becoming accessible through an ongoing digitization project in the Vienna collection.[23] It is important to point out that these early Arabic tax lists are monolingual and not bound to the former bilingual procedure of translation as a link between separate spheres of administration. Scribes with specialist knowledge *and* multilingual competence (such as Petosiris) effectively took over from the former Greek administration and introduced the Arabic language into the documents. Their collaboration was presumably linked with social advancement upwards even as it enabled the Arabic language to reach ever lower and more local administrative levels.[24] This created the necessary links between different spheres and paved the way for a consolidation of the Arab-Muslim presence in Egypt. A direct consequence was the "lifting of the ban" of a previously rather defensive mentality of defensiveness among the Arabs (see above n. 9).

In social terms, the emergence of a new generation of multilingual scribal experts can be explained against the background of a Weberian typology of administrative personnel in Egypt which can be established on the basis of the data provided by the papyri. An important type is the *household official* who is a member of a transregional elite and lacks local family ties. He has an ethos of obedience and loyalty towards the ruler. Non-Arab Muslims initially made their careers mainly in the service of their patrons, but their education, skills and large number was such that they rapidly achieved positions of influence in their own right. Another type is the *aristocrat* who is a member of a local elite and who has a tribal or landholding background and an ethos of rank (*Standesbewusstsein*). Influential groups of non-Muslim landholding elites kept their influence under Muslim rule, such as the pagarchs in Egypt and the *dihqān*s in Persia. Their loyalty to their overlords tended to be low, and the government continuously had to negotiate with this type of official. A third type is the *expert*. He is a specialized clerk and tends to be lower ranking yet is indispensable for the smooth running of the administrative machine. His uniquely combined characteristic is a local background and a sought-after technical knowledge.

Of these three types, the expert seems to be most strongly represented in the papyri. Specialists served in the middle and lower ranks of the hierarchy but could rise to top consultant positions in provincial centers as well, thereby emancipating themselves from local aristocracies' influence. An example is the Christian Sergios ibn Manṣūr "whose family had long been prominent in the administration of Damascus"[25] and who himself became a leading administrator in Syrian affairs under the caliph Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān. Other specialists had a more transregion-

(1894) 179 into the ninth century, but for palaeographical reasons may be dated up to a century earlier.

**23** *Papyri from the Early Arab Period Online* (funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation), www.onb.ac.at (accessed 23 February 2020).

**24** Cf. the detailed study by Kaplony (2016).

**25** Foss (2010) 83.

al background, such as the Christian financial expert from Edessa, Athanasios bar Gumoye. When the underage brother of Caliph ʿAbdalmalik became governor of Egypt, Athanasios escorted him and served as the effective Umayyad governor of the province.[26] Most of these transregional specialists in the service of the Umayyads were non-Muslims and had Greek, Coptic, or Middle Persian as their native languages.[27] A serious moment was the change of chancery languages under ʿAbdalmalik and his son al-Walīd, as a consequence of which the expert clerks now had to adapt to Arabic. During the first half of the eighth century, non-Arabs occasionally converted to Islam and became clients (*mawālī*) in the ranks of the administration;[28] this gave them the *de facto* status of household officials. Increasing centralization and professionalization in the middle layers of administration during the later Umayyad period attracted more expert administrators, who now show up without client status in the papyri. Their social capital was the family, and administrative positions were transmitted within families together with the requisite administrative expertise. An accumulation of client status and expertise, however, continued to play a key role, as the status of household official became even more important the higher an expert administrator rose in the hierarchy.

## 4 Motives for collaboration and assimilation

What motivated a first and second-generation transcultural elite to collaborate with the Arab authorities? The mid-680s saw a handover of centralized power from the Sufyanid to the Marwanid branches of the Umayyad family that brought along a change in the social composition of administrators in Egypt. Local non-Muslim aristocrats who had acted as traditional intermediaries between the Arab authorities and their subjects were replaced by household officials that were more directly responsible to the caliph and his governor but had no local support (and needed cultural brokers, that is, local clerks). A centralization of administrative structures was expected to augment caliphal power and provincial productivity at the expense of local landholding elites. At the same time, a first generation of Arab landholders appears in the sources. And finally, a relatively large group of expert clerks with aspirations to enter royal households as clients existed.

In all of this, there were two principal driving forces at work. One of them was the generation of income by participation in the economic value created. The other one was legal security attained through improving one's personal legal status. The sources related to administrative practice in Umayyad Egypt create an impression that both economic participation and legal security were the main motives

**26** Donner (2012) xx.
**27** Hawting (2000) 62.
**28** Hawting (2000) 64.

for collaboration with imperial power at local level. Old elites may have worried about the protection of their vested interests, while new elites benefitted from prospects for social mobility that exceeded the conventional limitations of group and class. Such was the conglomerate of conflicting interests that determined territorial cohesion at the provincial level.

The transition in Egypt from Byzantine to Muslim rule took place first and foremost in the administration of the territory and its inhabitants. The ways in which local elites were integrated or replaced are indicative for the character and "quality" of Muslim domination at this time. Administrative papyri provide details of the tax administration and the dispensation of justice, but also of the individuals who produced the papyri. Quite a few of the earlier Arabic papyri must have been written by scribes with a different mother tongue. Here we are witnesses to an early process of cultural adaptation and assimilation which is usually, and perhaps imprecisely, subsumed under the headings of Arabization and Islamization. With Petosiris and his like, a first generation of multilingual specialists in the administration can be identified. But are they representatives of a multilingual society in the true sense of the word? It seems more likely that we are looking at interconnected but separate social and linguistic milieus. The full change to Arabic as the language of public life was to happen later.

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# III Patterns of Daily Life in a Time of Change

Roger S. Bagnall

# Family Archives in Pre-Transition Egypt

The first two words of my title may have given too many hostages to fortune; I shall begin by saying how I am using them. First, "archives." There is a long discussion of the term "archive" in papyrological discourse, which I do not need to recount. I am adopting the broad understanding used by Trismegistos archives and justified in Bart Van Beek's paper at the Helsinki papyrological congress, drawing in its turn on the typology established by Andrea Jördens.[1] The actual circumstances and characteristics of individual archives, however, are of some interest for the questions I shall be discussing.

"Family" is no simpler. Van Beek apparently equates "family" and "private," whereas Katelijn Vandorpe has noted the distinction to be made between "personal" and "family," the latter requiring more than one generation to fit the definition.[2] Trismegistos has not adopted this distinction in any significant way; only one archive, that of Leon from the Ptolemaic period, is actually called "personal" in Trismegistos. I have not been able to discover any consistent principle for usage of "family" and "private" in the TM records, although "private" does include business archives, apparently distinguished from family archives. Here, too, I have adopted a broad definition: I have chosen to include a number of the so-called private archives in my discussion wherever they did not seem limited to extrafamilial business.[3]

The central question that interests me here is the way in which we write the social and economic history of Egypt in Late Antiquity, using that term here in a broader sense that spans the period from Diocletian to the Arab conquest rather than in the narrower way I did in my book on the subject a quarter-century ago.[4] Although that history is inevitably at times quantitative and analytic, it is also narrative, and archives have been central to the storytelling that papyrologists do about the society of Roman Egypt.

Everyone needs stories to make sense of the world, whether of today or of a millennium and a half ago; we are all constantly fashioning our lives into narratives, even if only for ourselves. But storytelling is, I believe, even more necessary for historians using papyrological evidence than for other people. This need is the result of the sketchy evidence we possess combined with the human interest inherent in what

**1** Van Beek (2007) 1033–1037, citing Jördens (2001) as well as earlier discussions by Pestman (1990) and Martin (1994). For TM Archives see http://www.trismegistos.org/arch/index.php.

**2** Van Beek (2007) 1039; Vandorpe (2009) 233–234.

**3** The TM archive numbers are given for each archive at first mention in the detailed analysis below. An asterisk indicates that a more developed discussion of the archive is provided in TM. Because TM gives a bibliography for each archive, I have omitted detailed bibliographical references except for newer work not reflected there as of the date of writing.

**4** Bagnall (1993); cf. also Bagnall (2003) on issues of periodization.

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material we do have. The most obvious example of our narrative habits is the way the upper-middle class residents of Oxyrhynchos – almost like us, we imagine – tend to dominate the picture of urban life in Roman Egypt. Sometimes this is purposeful, as in Peter Parsons's elegant *City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish*, deliberately and explicitly about Oxyrhynchos;[5] sometimes it is more implicit, as in Naphtali Lewis's *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule*, where Oxyrhynchos has more lines in the index than any place except Alexandria.[6] It is our type-city, and to the extent that it may not in fact have been typical, centering our accounts on it runs some risks of presenting a distorted picture.

With villages, matters are not so straightforward. There is no one village that dominates our picture of rural Egypt in the Roman period. Once again, Lewis's index can give a snapshot: for Karanis, 14 references; for Soknopaiou Nesos, 11; for Philadelphia and Tebtynis, 6 each; Theadelphia, 4. Given the unusual nature of Soknopaiou Nesos as temple community, pilgrimage destination, and customs post, it can hardly serve as a type-site for papyrological storytelling, and it is in fact Karanis and Tebtynis that are our richest sites for the human dimensions of the papyri, as well as providing the richest archaeological contexts for the documents. It is thus perhaps all the odder that Karanis lacks a proper village history, the closest equivalent being Hanna Geremek's short monograph, focused largely on administrative matters.[7]

For a later period, the tremendous growth in the study of the archives of the Apiones and of the family of Dioscorus of Aphrodito in the intervening period has brought into the foreground the centrality of archives in shaping the questions we can and do ask about particular times and our dependence on the nature of these archives for how we approach the subject.[8] The contrast between the Oxyrhynchos of the Apiones and the Aphrodito of Dioscorus has given rise to quite a bit of rewarding discussion, both of substance and of method, about what kind of a society sixth-century Egypt was, and to what extent our picture of that society has been dictated by the character of these archives.[9]

That we would ask this question in just this way is in part a reflection of how few other substantial archives we have from the period after the middle of the fifth century, and that relative poverty leads me to look back at the span from Diocletian to the first half of the fifth century and the contrast that it presents in its relative abundance of archives, which certainly had a profound impact on how I approached the task of describing that period. In particular, the central role of the Karanis family archives is hard to escape. I shall therefore look at the archival picture of the whole late

**5** Parsons (2007).
**6** Lewis (1983).
**7** Geremek (1969).
**8** The bibliography on both archives is vast, and its essential elements may be found in Trismegistos. I would call attention here particularly to Fournet/Magdelaine (2008) for the Dioscorus archive.
**9** See, for example, Hickey (2007), Keenan (2007), and Ruffini (2008).

antique period and think about the reasons why it looks as it does and about its impact on our history-writing.[10]

The fourth century does in fact seem in retrospect like a golden age for family archives. We find them coming from both village and city settings. It is probable that all of them come from excavations, whether scientific or (mostly) clandestine, of settlement areas rather than that they were found in external dumps. The core archives here are those of Isidoros (TM Arch ID 34*), Aion and Valerius (250*), and Tetoueis (30*), all from Karanis; of Pamour (508), from Kellis; of Serenos, from Trimithis (not included in Trismegistos; see *O.Trim.* I and II); of the *nekrotaphoi* of Kysis (147), bridging the period from the 230s to 314 (now reedited in *P.Nekr.*); the multigenerational archive of Charite, Adelphios, Asklepiades (28) from Hermopolis; and the archives of Ammon *scholastikos* (31*) and Alopex (317*) from Panopolis.

For some of these we know quite a bit about the circumstances of discovery. The Kellis papyri were all found in controlled excavations, and in particular of fourth-century houses in Area A. Probably none of the papers of the inhabitants of these houses were found in a primary use context, as pieces were found scattered across more than one house and even outside them. But if the material was all discarded at least it was thrown away more or less where used. The ostraka of Serenos from Trimithis were found on occupation floors in both his house and in the adjoining stables and storage building. The papers of the *nekrotaphoi* were acquired on the antiquities market, but local informants many decades later told Françoise Dunand that they had come from a house in the necropolis, plausible even if hardly certain. Ammon and Alopex are both archives acquired on the antiquities market, and although a certain amount of the acquisition history can be traced, Trismegistos can report no information on the original circumstances of discovery.

The situation with Karanis is more complicated. The published papyri of the three connected family archives that I mentioned come more or less entirely from purchases on the antiquities market, mainly in the 1920s. But there are papyri in the Michigan collection coming from the Karanis excavations of the 1920s and 1930s that are parts of these archives; little of this material has been published so far. A project initiated by Graham Claytor, and involving also Rodney Ast, Jennifer Sheridan Moss, and me, aims to publish all of this material and to look closely at the find context information for the excavated pieces to try to push forward knowledge of the findplaces of these archives. It is a reasonable surmise that they come, like some other Karanis archives, from storage or dump sites within the village settlement rather than from primary domestic use locations.

About the Hermopolitan family archives, perhaps best described (with Fritz Mitthof) as the archive of Asklepiades and his parents and grandmother – i. e., Demetria alias Ammonia, Charite, and Adelphios – nothing is known of the find circumstan-

**10** On writing history from the papyri, see my reflections in Bagnall (1993) 3 – 14 and more generally Bagnall (1995, 2nd ed. 2019).

ces. Klaas Worp established that the Viennese component of this archive came as a single acquisition, probably in 1886; he surmises that the Cairo parts of the archive were acquired around the same time.[11]

The absence of Oxyrhynchos from this list is striking. The entire third- to fourth-century span yields only four private archives: Diogenis alias Tourbiaina (29), Serenus (38), Apia (53), and Sarapion alias Apollonianos and his sons (210). These are mostly small, with Diogenis having just 4 texts, Apia having only 18 texts scattered across 8 collections, and Serenus just 10 texts, all in *P.Oxy.* The only larger instance is the classic case of Sarapion alias Apollonianos, which should be called a family archive, as it includes multiple generations; but its 58 texts are very scattered, across 16 collections. The common thread in the Oxyrhynchite picture is probably an archaeological phenomenon: all of these were really found in dumps, whether by Grenfell and Hunt, by the Italian mission, or by private excavation, and not in domestic contexts (or even in contexts of domestic discarding). Of course Oxyrhynchos totally dominates discussion of public institutions in the fourth century, because of the masses of official documents found in the dump, covering the period down to the 370s very richly.[12] The contrast between the public and the private sides of the Oxyrhynchite documentation is striking.

It is no surprise that the fifth century is less rich in family archives, as it is in almost all respects in our documentation.[13] The most striking aspect apart from small numbers is that none come from villages. The three family archives from urban settings were all apparently deposited in the sixth or seventh century, thus lasting for generations. One of them, of course, is the massive Apiones archive, which gets its start in the fifth century. But it is not clear that it should properly be classified as a family archive; the papers in fact reflect a business office operating in the nome capital on behalf of the family rather than of family affairs per se. Also from Oxyrynchos is the small archive concerning Flavius Eulogios and his sons Aphous and Martyrios (82*), similarly composed of business papers that could have come from such an office, although that of a lesser magnate than the Apiones or Anastasia. Most of the 14 certain texts were found in the first season of the Oxyrhynchos excavations, three more from a return to the same mound in the sixth season, and one acquired through the papyrus cartel of Bell, probably a clandestine find from the same mound.

From Hermopolis we have the substantial true family archive of Taurinos and his descendants, which is much more like the fourth-century family archives in its char-

**11** *P.Charite*, p. 1; *CPR* XVII A, p. 7. On the unity of the archive, see Martin (1994) 576–577; on the nature and ownership of the archive, F. Mitthof, *P.Kramer*, p. 134–138. Mitthof also raises the possibility (136–137 n. 10) that Asklepiades was not the last holder, and that the papers of the two *Nearchidai* from the second half of the fourth century are part of the same find.

**12** Most richly represented in *P.Oxy.* LIV, where Revel Coles gathered texts relevant to the office of *logistēs* (*curator civitatis*).

**13** See already Bagnall/Worp (1980), and from a statistical point of view, Habermann (1998).

acter than are the Oxyrhynchite archives (259*). Its 56 certain, perhaps as many as 75, texts, all in Berlin, were mostly found by Rubensohn in 1905 in the excavation of a dump, and a few less precisely documented may come from the same find. It seems in fact to be rather a sprawling assemblage of documents reflecting several families. For the most part the documents are characteristic of patrimonial management of a wealthy urban family, with a military background, but not of the class of magnates. Similar but much smaller is the Hermopolite archive of Flavius Silvanus and his son Flavius Georgios; Silvanus was also a soldier, but as with Taurinos the archive focuses on family business activities – leasing and lending, particularly. Unfortunately, the detailed circumstances of finding seem to be irretrievable, as all of the known texts of this archive come from purchases in the antiquities market.[14] Finally, the earliest document of the Patermouthis archive from Syene belongs to the fifth century, but as it is an outlier in a group otherwise belonging to the later sixth and early seventh century, it can be left out of account for the moment.

The sixth-century documentation is dominated by the Apiones and the Aphrodito archives of Dioscorus (72) and Phoibammon (193), the first found in 1905 in a single place in Kom Ishqaw, the second discovered only in the 1940s and reaching the market in very dispersed fashion, without reliable provenance information.[15] It is not doubtful, however, that both were found in the settlement context of Aphrodito. The Oxyrhynchite offers also from this century the rest of the documents concerning Eulogios's sons Apphous and Martyrios and the papers of another magnate, Anastasia (11). The small (11 texts) bilingual archive of contracts involving the purple-dealer Pachymios (36*) continues into the seventh century. It was discovered in the nineteenth century, but nothing seems to be known of the find circumstances. The activities of Pachymios and his family spanned Panopolis and This.

The more substantial archive of Patermouthis of Syene (37*), with more than 50 texts in Greek and Coptic, also spans the centuries. It was acquired by purchase, with some texts divided in the process between London and Munich. It has been shown by Jitse Dijkstra that this archive was found, by clandestine excavations, in the ruins of Aswan, north of the Cataract Hotel, and thus belongs to an urban milieu.[16] Dijkstra concludes that it is likely that Patermouthis lived in this part of the town, and that "the papyri would then have been disposed of after his death in or near his house."[17]

The seventh century brings the endings of some archives already mentioned, but not a lot new. From Aphrodito, Trismegistos lists the archive of the sons of Christophoros (429), but it attributes zero texts to it citing a forthcoming study by Jean-Luc Fournet as having established that this is in fact part of the archive of Phoibammon –

**14** See the chapter of Isabelle Marthot-Santaniello in this volume.

**15** Fournet/Magdelaine (2008) 18–19, promising a detailed study of the find circumstances of the first archive.

**16** Dijkstra (2007) 196–209.

**17** Dijkstra (2007) 208.

a ghost-archive, as it were.[18] At Edfu we get the handful of texts of Philemon and Thekla (190), basically the massive Budge Papyrus in Coptic and three Greek texts in London surrounding it, all concerning a house. These were, as Schiller reports, "seemingly unearthed by sebakh diggers in the early years" of the twentieth century – probably in a house on the tell of Edfu, as Wilcken surmised.[19] Finally, the small archive or dossier of another magnate with fiscal responsibilities, Sophia *patricia*, and perhaps the mother of Theodosios (490), Theodosiopolite in content, was found at Arsinoe as part of the great mass of documents that came onto the market from that site in the late nineteenth century, although it is impossible to say where at Kiman Fares they were found.[20] Eighth-century archives, beyond the scope of this paper, are mainly monastic or official in character, with limited family content; the business papers on ostraka of Koloje and her family are perhaps the most salient family papers of this era, probably going back as far as Koloje's grandmother Katharon, as Seÿna Bacot has argued, and were found in the town of Jeme.[21]

How are we to interpret these data? If one looked at this list quantitatively, it might appear to comfort theories of decline. But of course it does little more than track the overall pattern of documentation in this period, so the decline in family archives is probably not in itself of significance. The same can be said for the almost total domination of city archives rather than village, with Aphrodito the only village to provide family archives after the fourth century and before the Arab conquest. But again, the same is essentially true of the documentation generally, with only minor exceptions. This is not a characteristic distinctive to archives.

These two points argue for what I would call an archaeological interpretation: contingent factors have led to few excavations of city and village sites from the last centuries of Roman rule, and monasteries do not yield family archives. The numbers of family archives thus do not have any special significance. Indeed, I would suggest that instead their importance lies in their very existence and the types of documents included. Village elites, urban artisans, and metropolitan landowners, the creators of these archives, are merely the latest representatives of social groups well known from earlier centuries, accumulating the documentation of their acquisition and management of land, defense of rights, creation and dissolution of family relationships, payment of taxes, borrowing and lending of money, and so on with documents of types which we are familiar. This phenomenon points to a stability both of substance and of documentation across a period that certainly saw many other changes.

The number of archives that close shortly before the Persian invasion might lead one to ask if this stability breaks down at that time. On the whole, the Philemon and Thekla papers, along with the later parts of the Phoibammon archive, would lead one

**18** This study has now appeared as Fournet (2016).
**19** Schiller (1968) 79, citing Wilcken (1953) 120-22.
**20** Gonis (2008) 204–206.
**21** Wilfong (1990) and (2002); Bacot (1999).

to say that not a great deal changed in this respect. But of course there is a substantial shift in this period toward the use of Coptic for true legal documents, a subject most recently and comprehensively treated in Jean-Luc Fournet's Rostovtzeff Lectures at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World (New York University) in spring 2017.[22] Despite that, the continuity in documentation practices and in the normal activities of the propertied parts of society, both rural and urban, seem to me more striking than the changes.

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Nicoletta De Troia

# On the Edge of the Empire at the End of the Late Roman Period: The Khārga Oasis Sites as a Case Study

The Western Oases in Egypt's Western Desert sit at the edge of both the Mediterranean and Egyptian worlds. From north to south, the major oases (Sīwa, Baḥriyya, Farāfra, Khārga and Dākhla) map out an arch of cultivated and inhabited areas surrounded by a sandy and barren desert plateau. The presence of natural springs (supported by artesian-water sandstone)[1] and the fertility of the soil allowed sedentary life to grow and develop in this eastern portion of the Sahara.[2] However, even though water is obviously a necessary condition for the formation of oases, it is not a sufficient one:[3] the development and maintenance of an oasis requires a complex equilibrium between environmental, historical, political, and social factors.[4] The history of the occupation of the Western Oases dates back to the early Old Kingdom and lasted almost continuously for about three millennia until the Late Roman period. Prosperous, linked with the Nile Valley and set deep in the desert, the Egyptian oases "provoke a range of reactions from peoples inhabiting the core [sc. Nile Valley] – concern, indifference, inclusion, exclusion, fear, and/or curiosity"[5] – the relevant passages in the writings of classical historians and geographers reveal them all.[6] Without speculating on the lack of detailed descriptions of the oases during the period between Olympiodorus' account and al-Yaʿqūbī's,[7] however, from the last decades of the fourth century on, the oases of Egypt's desert seem to be mostly mentioned as places of exile/banishment sometimes plundered by barbarians.[8] The association between the place named with the greek word *ὄασις* (often without any further specification) and exile or banishment seems to have become firmer in

**1** Sampsell (2014).

**2** For a concise history of the human occupation of Egypt's Western Desert, see Dunand/Lichtenberg (2008) 59 – 60 and Sampsell (2014) 148 – 149.

**3** Battesti (2005) 12; see also Garcier/Bravard (2014) 24 – 36.

**4** Lavie/Marshall (2017).

**5** Boozer (2013) 278.

**6** Wagner (1987) 113 – 120; Ibrahim (1992). On banishment, see Schwartz (1966) and Vallejo Girvéz (2004).

**7** The two accounts have many points in common, such as the description of flourishing soil in the oases; the abundance of water; the distinction between an "inner" and an "outer" (cf. *infra*). For Olympiodorus (*floruit* 412 – 425), see *FHG* 4.64.33; for al-Yaʿqūbī (*floruit* second half of the 9th century), see *BGA* 7, 332.

**8** See *infra*.

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the texts of Christian writers,[9] even though deportations to the oasis had most likely been a well-established penalty in Egypt ever since the time of the Roman jurist Ulpian (who died in 228).[10] The association between the so called *ὄασις* and exile is reflected in the *topos* of the oases as a remote and isolated land; in some cases, however, correctly identifying the relevant oasis proved impossible, as in the *Passio S. Artemii* of John Monacus (probably John of Damascus)[11] and the *Martyrium S. Artemii* of the Byzantine hagiographer Symeon Metaphrastes,[12] who both placed the oasis where Eugenius and Macarius were exiled in Arabia. Archaeological evidence suggests that from the beginning of the fifth century, the settlements in the oases gradually became more sparsely populated. The waterwheel system ceased to be maintained, and often there are no signs of abandoned buildings being reused.

Early Arabic geographers shed some light on the history of the oases and constitute our main source of information for the early Islamic period. We can have recourse to quite a substantial body of data from both archaeological excavations and literary sources for information on life in the oases in late antiquity. The aim of my paper is to review the main archaeological and literary evidence we currently have on life in the Egyptian oases as the Byzantine era ended and the Islamic one began. Can it be said that life in the oases changed drastically during this period of transition, or did it fundamentally continue as it had been before? I have focused my analysis on the Oasis of Khārga as a representative case study.

**9** See e. g. on the exile of Athanasius of Alexandria and some of his followers (c. 357): Athan. *Ap. ad Const.* 32.25; *Id.*, *De fuga* 7.8; Socrat. *Hist.Eccl.* 2.28 (*PG* 67.273); Theodoret. *Hist. Eccl.* 2.14; on the exile of two priests, Eugenius and Macarius (362): John of Damascus, *PG* 96.1288 – 9; Symeon Metaphastes, *PG* 115, 1187 – 8; Bidez (1981), 171; on Timasius, the general of Emperor Theodosius I, exiled in the oasis in 396, see Zos. 5.9, Sozomen. *Hist.Eccl.* 8.7; on the exile of the philosopher Heron: Greg.Naz. *Or.* 25.14 (*PG* 35.1217). About Nestorius, patriarch of Constantinople from 428 to 431 and banished in 435, see Evagr. *Hist.Eccl.* 1.7, Socrat. *Hist.Eccl.* 7.34 (*PG* 67.816), Zonar. 13.22, and Nicephor. 14.35 – 36 (*PG* 146.1173). Banishment to the oasis is also attested in Theophanes' *Chronographia:* Theoph. *Chron. ad a.m.* 5982 (Calandion of Antioch in c. 489); Theoph. *Chron. ad a.m.* 6002 (Dorotheus, monk of Alexandria in c. 509 – 510); Theoph. *Chron. ad a.m.* 6005.

**10** *Dig.* 48.22.7.5; Ulp. *De off. proc.* 10. On the juridical texts, see *infra*.

**11** *PG* 96.1288: *πέμπει αὐτοὺς* [sc. Eugenius e Macarius] ἐν Ὀάσει τῆς Ἀραβίας. Δύο δέ εἰσι χωρία οὕτω καλούμενα, Ὄασις μικρὰ καὶ μεγάλη; see also the *Martyrdom of Artemius* reported in Appendix III of Bidez's critical edition of Philostorgius: Bidez (1981) 166 – 175. That text seems to be independent of Philostorgius and was probably used by the author of the *Passio S. Artemii*. On the mention of "oasis," see particularly Bidez (1981) 171, ll. 11 – 12 and the notes.

**12** *PG* 115.1187 – 8.

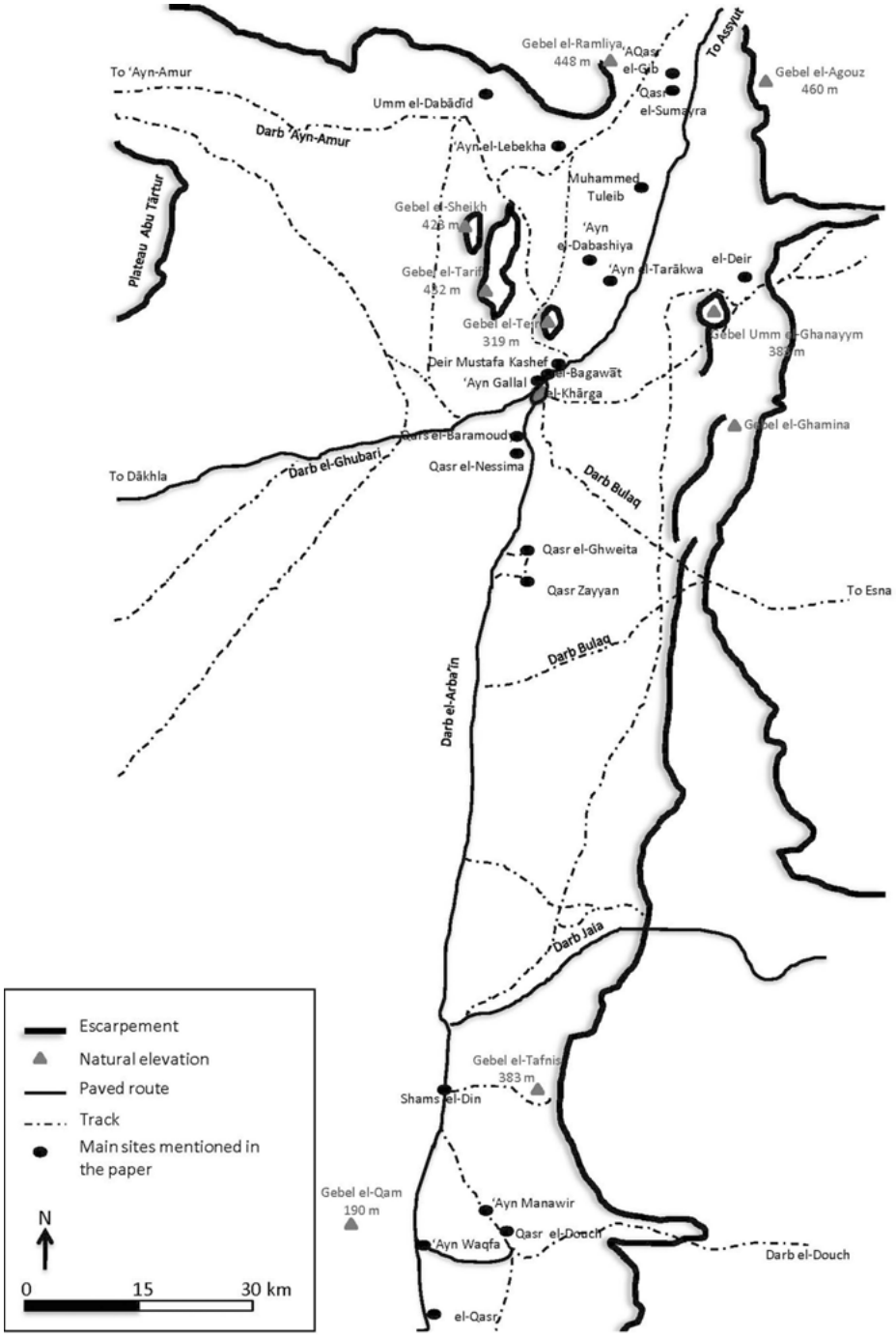


**Fig. 6:** Map of Kharga Oasis (De Troia).

## The main archaeological features of the Khārga Oasis

Among the oases of the Western Desert, the Oasis of Khārga is the southernmost and the largest one: its elongated depression measures about 180 km along the north-south axis and ranges from 15 to 25 km in width, resembling, as Wagner wrote, "une véritable vallée parallèle à la Vallée du Nil."[13] Due to its geographical position, the Oasis of Khārga naturally played a key role in the affairs of the Western Desert.[14] As the nearest oasis to the Nile Valley, it was likely a privileged point of arrival and departure for the routes towards the Nile.[15] Relatively close to and with good connections to the Oasis of Dākhla,[16] sited further into the desert, Khārga had also been a convenient stop for travelers along the Dākhla-Nile Valley axis.[17] From an archaeological point of view, two main features characterized the Oasis of Khārga: an extensive waterwheel system and a chain of late Roman forts. Depending on the geo-morphological characteristics of the oasis depression, two main types of irrigated landscapes were found. The first, at Tell Dūsh, ʿAyn Manāwir, Umm al-Dabādīb, ʿAyn Gib, ʿAyn al-Lebekha, and Qaṣr al-Zayyān relied on *qanawāt*.[18] The second was based on the artesian wells, such as at Al-Deir, Hībis, and its surrounding area, as per the list of the wells of Hībis.[19] The existence and the maintenance of the waterwheel system made the development of agriculture possible. The cultivation

**13** Wagner (1987) 141.

**14** For the Graeco-Roman era, the analysis in Wagner (1987) 141–154 is still valid; Leclant (1950) focused on the routes around Sīwa. The debate on the itineraries along the famous Darb al-Arbaʿīn (the "forty days route") that crosses the Oasis of Khārga from north to south and reaches the land beyond Egypt is still open; see Morkot (1996), Roe (2005/2006), and Ikram (2012).

**15** The Darb al-Dūsh runs between Khārga and the Nile Valley and linked Dūsh (the ancient Kysis) to Esna and Edfu (the ancient Latopolis and Apollonopolis Magna); see Gascou *et al.* (1980) 291. On the desert trails between Dūsh and Aswan (Syene) via the station of Kurkur, see Jackson (2002) 163; on the road between Al-Deir (north-eastern Khārga) to Farshūṭ and Asyut, see Jackson (2002) 156.

**16** There were two routes between Khārga and Dākhla, the Darb al-Ghubārī and the Darb ʿAyn-Amūr. The former, 10 km longer but easier, was probably preferred by most ancient travelers; see Rossi/Ikram (2013) 276–277; that route was long at about four days and four nights of walking in a waterless desert, according to a papyrus (*M.Chr.* 78.5–7) reported in Wagner (1987) 144.

**17** Traveling via the Oasis of Khārga allows the difficult path across the arid and waterless Libyan plateau to be avoided. There is only one direct link between the Oasis of Dākhla and the Nile Valley; that route is named Darb al-Ṭawīl (literally "the Long Route"); see Vivian (2000) 108–113.

**18** For a general description of the *qanawāt* water management system, see Goblot (1979); for its diffusion in Northern Africa and Egypt, see De Angeli/Finocchi (2010). In the Oasis of Khārga, the use of the *qanawāt*'s sloping tunnels and vertical shafts seems to date back to the Persian period and persist into the Roman era; see Tallet *et al.* (2011), Wuttmann (2001), Schacht (2003), Gonon (2005), Rossi/Ikram (2006), and Rossi *et al.* (forthcoming).

**19** Parsons (1971).

of wheat[20] as well as of barley,[21] cotton,[22] and sesame[23] in the Oasis of Khārga is thoroughly documented.

The entire Khārga depression is punctuated by several generally well-preserved forts and fortresses. Dated to the Late Roman period and still in use at least until the end of the fourth century, these structures belonged to a larger complex of installations made up of relatively large settlements, cemeteries of various sizes, small industrial areas, and extensive agricultural land.

In the northernmost part of Khārga, one finds the minor forts of Qaṣr al-Gib and Qaṣr al-Sumayra. Very similar in shape and architectural features,[24] the two forts occupy different positions. The former is on a rocky outcrop, whereas the latter is constructed on flat terrain at the end of a line of *qanawāt* that begins in the vicinity of Qaṣr al-Gib. Domestic settlements were located to the south and to the south-west of the Qaṣr al-Sumayra fort, but there were none in the vicinity of Qaṣr al-Gib. The extensive Gib/Sumayra underground water system covered an area of at least 8.5 km by 3 km, making it similar in size to the underground water systems at Umm al-Dabādīb and Dūsh. Further to the south, a similar fort exists at Muhammed Tuleib,[25] now partially covered by sand. In the north-western part of the depression, two rather large installations dated to the fourth century have been found. A gridded settlement surrounds at least three sides (south, west, and north) of what appears to be a square fort at ʿAyn al-Lebekha.[26] Two springs, one to the north and one to the south, together with four lines of *qanawāt* provided water to these Roman installations.[27] The fort

**20** *O.Douch* I 38.4; 39.3; *O.Douch* I 2.5; and in the church of Shams al-Dīn ostraca where some quantities of grain are mentioned in *O.Chams el-Din* 1, 2, and 4; 3.1–3.

**21** *O.Douch* I 43.3–4; *O.Chams el-Din* 2.4; 4.2–3.

**22** *P.Iand* VII 142 and *O.Douch* II 83, strictly linked to each other, as was noted in Wagner (1987) 292. See also the recent Tallet *et al.* (2012a).

**23** *O.Douch* III 353.4; *O.Chams el-Din* 3.4–6.

**24** The forts of Qaṣr al-Gib and Qaṣr al-Sumayra are 2 km apart. The first occupies an area of 16x16 m, the latter 11x11 m. Both forts are made up of mud-brick for the most part and consist of a thick enclosure wall with a single entrance to the south. There are buttresses at the four corners and stairs left of the entrance. Hidden by the upper part of the wall, a passage runs right around each fort; see Ikram/Rossi (2004).

**25** Ikram/Rossi (2002–2003).

**26** The ʿAyn al-Lebekha fort has a central court surrounded by vaulted rooms similar to the ones of Umm al-Dabādīb and Qaṣr al-Gib. Narrow passages reach the chambers at the four corners. While no traces of a staircase have survived at ʿAyn al-Lebekha, it is likely that stairs were placed in a vertical space north of the gate. On the east side of the fort, no substantial remains of buildings were found during the survey; see Rossi/Ikram (2010).

**27** At ʿAyn al-Lebekha, as well as at Umm al-Dabādīb, Qaṣr al-Gib and Qaṣr al-Sumayra, dating the *qanawāt* system is not easy without an extensive excavation. The possibility that the underground aqueducts date back to the Persian period cannot be ruled out. However, no evidence of a large-scale Persian settlement was discovered during the surveys. As such, for the moment it seems acceptable to date the *qanawāt* tunnels to the Roman period.

at Umm al-Dabādīb[28] is surrounded by a large built up area (c. 100x100 m) enclosed by a thin mud-brick perimeter wall. The walls are c. 4 m high and one mud-brick thick.[29] At Umm al-Dabādīb, two other settlements have been registered, one to the north and a smaller eastern one. The first measures about 150 m east-west and 400 m north-south, and the latter approximately 75 m east-west and 125 m north-south. Both are north-south oriented and have their own lines of underground aqueducts. The two fortified structures at Qaṣr al-Nessima and Qaṣr al-Baramūdī,[30] in the central part of Khārga, are very similar. The legionary fortress of Al-Deir[31] is located in the eastern part of Khārga. The mud-brick structure is almost square (59x58 m) and features rounded towers at the corners and, less prominently, also along the curtain walls. This type of structure corresponds to the architecture of the forts at Qarat al-Ṭūb in the Oasis of Baḥriyya and at Al-Qaṣr in the Oasis of Dākhla. In the central part of Khārga, three more sites belonging to the Roman period exist: the walled temple of Nadura, on a hill in the vicinity of Hībis,[32] Qaṣr al-Ghuwayṭa, and Qaṣr al-Zayyān, which all consist of mud-brick enclosures surrounding stone temples. The southern part of the Khārga depression is dominated by a large quadrangular building known as the "fort" of Dūsh. Dūsh is a large and stratified site, probably occupied during the Persian period and still inhabited at the middle of the fifth century. As per the results of the French excavation, "la vie de Douch s'explique essentiellement par la mise en valeur d'un terroir riche en potentialités agricoles."[33] Military units were garrisoned at Dūsh only from the fourth century onwards.[34]

The reuse of the mud-brick enclosure walls for the purposes of garrisoning troops dates back to the same time. Originally, these walls were probably built to protect the religious complex of Dūsh.[35] To summarize, as reported by Reddé, Dūsh "ont pu servir de points d'appui à un maillage défensive de l'oasis [sc. Khārga], au Bas-Empire, mais sans constituer pour autant de véritables forteresses construites par or pour l'armée."[36] The presence of military units, at least during the fourth century,

**28** The fort has a square plane (c. 15x15 m) with two rectangular towers on the southern side. The entrance is from the south and the doorway consists of a stone lintel inserted under a mud-brick arch as in the forts of Qaṣr al-Gib and Qaṣr al-Lebekha; see Rossi/Ikram (2006).

**29** Rossi/Ikram (2006); for the fort and fortified settlement, see Rossi (2000).

**30** The two forts of Qaṣr al-Nessima and Qaṣr al-Baramūdī have not yet been studied, but in terms of their general layout, they strongly resemble Qaṣr al-Lebekha and Umm al-Dabādīb with their central buildings surrounded by gridded settlements; see Rossi/Magli (2019).

**31** Brones/Duvette (2007).

**32** The temple of Nadura measures approximately 12x21 m. The entrance is on the east side, and there are remains of bastions to the north of the gateway. The site was described by Naumann (1939) 10–13.

**33** Reddé (1996) 77–78.

**34** During the Principate, the garrisons have been not documented in Dūsh. The earliest mention of soldiers at Dūsh dates to 302 (*P.Grenf.* 74); see Reddé (2007) 428.

**35** Reddé *et al.* (2004).

**36** Reddé (1999) 382.

was also established at Hībis. The *Notitia Dignitatum*[37] mentions a cavalry unit (*ala I Abasgorum*) in the Great Oasis at Hībis. Furthermore, some ostraca from Dūsh mention an ἐπιμελιτὴς κάστρων Ἴβεως.[38] The *castrum* was probably located on the hill of Nadura (only 2 km south-east of Hībis).[39] The mud-brick enclosure walls of the temple, while originally not built for military purposes, could have functioned as a fort.

The function of the forts and fortresses of Khārga is still the subject of scholarly debate. Even though the presence of military units is attested in Khārga during the late Roman Period, it appears to have been modest in size.[40]

Judging by the main road axes that spanned the depression, the forts seem to have been located taking the obligatory routes into and out of Khārga into consideration. The role the forts played was most likely to have been that of governance, as well as protection of the settlements, aqueducts, cultivated crops, and crossroads. The forts were not isolated structures, but part of a far more complex permanently populated settlement. Khārga most likely functioned not only as a military outpost, but also as a borderland.

The well-documented presence of Christian communities in Khārga yields up even more detail on the life in the oasis. Christian worship[41] began to spread in Khārga during the third century and was well-established there from the fourth to the sixth centuries, as John Moschus relates.[42] The results of Cruz-Uribe's studies on the Christian archaeological evidence unearthed in Khārga show that Christian churches were built in the same areas as the ancient pagan temples of the early Byzantine period. The fourth-century church at Hībis, for instance, was built adjacent to the temple of Seth and attached to the temple wall, with doors side by side. Similarly, at ʿAyn al-Tarākwa, a church also dated to the fourth century was sited just ahead of the entrance to the temple's sanctuary.[43] Moreover, at Dūsh, Umm al-Dabādīb, and Al-Deir, the Christian churches seem to represent the only differentiated public spaces in the urban area of the settlement. Evidence of Christian communities, mostly dated to the fourth or fifth centuries, was also found at ʿAyn al-Ṭurba, only 500 m north of Hībis. Buildings which have been identified as monasteries have been found at Deir al-Bagawāt, Deir Muṣṭafā Kāshif, [44] and ʿAyn Gallāl (c. 1.5 km south). Hermitages were located at Gebel al-Ṭayr and in the vicinity of Umm al-Dabādīb. The Greek

**37** *Not.Dig.Or.* 31.55.

**38** *O.Douch* III 216.6; III 220.2–3; IV 397.

**39** Bagnall (2001).

**40** Reddé (1991); see also recently Tallet *et al.* (2012b) and Rossi (2013).

**41** Ghica (2012) 191–195.

**42** John Moschus, *Pratum spirituale* 123 = *PG* 87.1975–2978. The Byzantine author mentions the presence of a group of monks who inhabited the oasis during the second half of the sixth century and suffered some raids no later than the time of Emperor Tiberius II (578–582).

**43** Ikram/Rossi (2007) 169–172 and plan p. 173.

**44** A five-story building (c. 24x28 m) with a high wall was found at the Deir Muṣṭafā Kāshif site. It was built around a rock tomb located in the lower level. The tomb was interpreted by Müller-Wiener (1963) as an old tomb reused as the dwelling-place of a hermit.

ostraca of ʿAyn Waqfa[45] and the Greek graffiti of Shams al-Dīn[46] confirm the existence of flourishing Christian communities in both of these settlements.

## From Olympiodorus' account to the descriptions of the early Arabic geographers

The account of Olympiodorus, now known only in the abridged form compiled in the ninth century by the lexicographer Photius, describes the great prosperity of the place known as ὄασις; moreover, it shows that the author knows more oasis. Photius in fact reports that according to Olympiodorus the oases are three in number: "two big, one outer than one (τὴν μὲν ἐξωτέρω), the other inner (τὴν δὲ ἐσωτέρω), facing each other and separated by 100 miles – and a smaller third one, much more distant from the two."[47]

The place known as ὄασις is described as extremely flourishing. Due to the skills of their inhabitants as well-diggers, the water supply system took in some very deep wells (200 or 300 cubits in depth, or maybe even 500) that enhanced the productivity of the soil: "The trees are full of fruit, the wheat is of the best quality and whiter than snow; barley is even sown twice a year and millet is always sown three times."[48] According to Olympiodorus the oasis was originally an island surrounded by the sea, as seems to be confirmed by the great quantity of sand and the numerous fossil shells found in the mountain between ὄασις and the Thebais.[49] The link between ὄασις and the Thebais seems to suggest that so-called ἡ ὄασις can be likely identified with the Oasis of Khārga.[50]

In Olympiodorus' account, there is no reference to banishments to the oases, but from some juridical texts, it is possible to infer that that form of punishment had been well-established at least since the time of the Roman jurist Ulpian (died 228),

**45** Three Christian priests (Psillis, Mousaios, and Chrèstos) are known from the ostraca and named as taxpayers or intermediaries (for Psillis, see *O.Waqfa* 3.1–2; 46.1; 19.1; for Mousaios, *O.Waqfa* 19.6–7; for Chrèstos, *O.Waqfa* 28.2–3; 41.2).

**46** *Graff.Chams el-Din* 1–67 were published in Wagner (1987) 26–44; see in particular the graffiti of Flavius Makarios, the Christian soldier of the *Maurii Scutarii* (*Graff.Chams el-Din* 11) and the one inscribed by order of the *princeps* of Mounesis (ancient toponym of Shams al-Dīn) and of the chief of *curiales* for Kyros son of Guanēs, his son Eudoxios (soldier of the legion of Hermopolis), his wife, and his children – all of them are Christians (*Graff.Chams el-Din* 49).

**47** *FHG* 4.64.33: Τρεῖς γάρ φησιν Ὀάσεις καὶ αὐτὸς εἶναι, δύο μεγάλας, τὴν μὲν ἐξωτέρω, τὴν δὲ ἐσωτέρω, καταντικρὺ κειμένας ἀλλήλαις, συντείνοντος εἰς ἑκατὸν σημεῖα τοῦ μεταξὺ διαστήματος. Ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἄλλη τρίτη μικρά, πολλῷ διαστήματι τῶν δύο κεχωρισμένη.

**48** *Ibid.:* Καὶ ὅτι αἱ ὀπῶραι ἀεὶ τοῖς δένδρεσι φέρονται, καὶ ὅτι ὁ σῖτος παντὸς κρείττων σίτου καὶ χιόνος λευκότερος, καὶ ὅτι ἔσθ' ὅτε δὶς τοῦ ἔτους σπείρεται ἡ κριθή, τρὶς δὲ ἀεὶ ἡ κέγχρος.

**49** *Ibid.:* Τεκμηριοῖ δὲ νῆσον αὐτὴν γεγονέναι ἔκ τε τοῦ ὄστρακα θαλάσσια καὶ ὀστρέα λίθοις τοῦ ὄρους προσπεπλασμένα εὑρίσκεσθαι τοῦ ἐπὶ τὴν Ὄασιν ἀπὸ τῆς Θηβαΐδος φέροντος.

**50** Henry (1959) 180 n. 3.

who mentioned *relegatio in oasin*; that was a particular kind of *relegatio in insulam* used in the *provincia* of Egypt.[51] In a law dating to 409, another form of banishment to the oasis is mentioned, the *oasena deportatio*; that particular form of *exilium* was to be imposed on the accomlices to damage of the Nile levees.[52] Moreover, a later law dated 529 regulated two kinds of ἐξορία (exile), the ἐξορία εἰς Γύψον (exile to Gypso) and εἰς Ὄασιν (exile to the oasis). Both were conceived of as a temporary form of exile (from six months to one year) and the law decreed that only the authorities of Alexandria and the Thebais could impose those penalties.[53] In spite of the differences between the *relegatio in oasin* and *oasena deportatio,*[54] both forms of punishment represent very specific Egyptian penalties. Christianity seems to emphasize the role of the oasis of Hibis (often called just ὄασις) as a place of banishment,[55] and between the beginning of the fifth and the eighth centuries, as far as is known, ecclesiastical writers and Byzantine historians mention the Egyptian oasis almost as a place of exile.

Moreover, from the beginning of the fifth century, there are fewer and fewer signs of the Khārga sites being occupied. Excluding the possibility of our failure to recognize later settlements archaeologically (no evidence suggesting our perception was flawed could be detected), the contraction and gradual abandonment of Khārga is still the subject of debate; if the population moved out, it is still not clear where they went.

Scholars have hypothesized that the oasis may have been abandoned due to either climatic change or to an increasing lack of security. As for climatic change, the desertification of an arid environment is a lengthy process, and a sudden dramatic decrease in the water supply seems unlikely. Sudden natural disasters can be exclud-

**51** The second-century Roman jurist speaking about *relegatio in insulam* said that *est quoddam genus quasi in insulam relegationis in provincia Aegypto in oasin relegare* (*Dig.* 48.22.7.5; Ulp. *De off.proc.* 10).

**52** *Cod.Th.* 9.32.1 (409): "*Impp. Honorius et Theodosius aa. Anthemio praefecto praetorio. Si quis posthac per Aegyptum intra duodecimum cubitum fluminis Nili ulla fluenta de propriis ac vetustis usibus praeter fas praeterque morem antiquitatis usurpaverit, flammis eo loco consumatur, in quo vetustatis reverentiam et propemodum ipsius imperii adpetierit securitatem: consciis et consortibus eius oasenae deportationi constringendis, ita ut numquam supplicandi eis vel recipiendi civitatem vel dignitatem vel substantiam licentia tribuatur. Dat. x kal. octob. Constantinopoli Honorio VIII et Theodosio III aa. conss*".

If the penalty imposed to accessories to the damage of the Nile levees was exile, the one for the harbor robbers was even more severe, they in fact shall be burned to death.

**53** *Cod.Just.* 9.47.26 (*Basilica* 60.51.63 and *schol.*); cf. *Cod.Just.* 9.47.26.5: Τοὺς δὲ ἄρχοντας Ἀλεξανδρείας καὶ Θηβαΐδος κελεύει μόνους εἰς Γύψον καὶ εἰς Ὄασιν ἐκπέμπειν αὐτοὺς ἢ ἕως ἓξ μηνῶν ἢ τὸ μήκιστον ἕως ἐνιαυτοῦ. Εἰ δὲ διηνεκής ἐστιν ἡ ἐξορία, μήτε εἰς Γύψον πεμπέτωσαν μήτε εἰς Ὄασιν μήτε εἰς φυλακὴν ἑτέρας ἐπαρχίας, ἀλλ' ὡς εἴρηται εἰς τελείαν ἐπαρχίαν ἐπὶ τῷ εἴ τι πταίσουσιν ἢ παρεξέλθωσι τὰς κελεύσεις τῶν πεμψάντων αὐτοὺς ἀρχόντων, εἰς ἔσχατον τιμωρηθῆναι. A possible interpretation could be that the authorities of Alexandria and the Thebais shall impose respectively the exile εἰς Γύψον and the exile εἰς Ὄασιν.

**54** See Sánchez-Moreno Ellart (2013) on the difference between *deportatio* and *relegatio*.

**55** See the aforementioned Schwartz (1966) and Vallejo Girvéz (2004).

ed, as there is no archaeological evidence of any sort of violent event. It seems that the inhabitants abandoned their homes over a period of time. Nomadic attacks against the oasis seem to have become more frequent and more challenging, for instance the attack on the capital of the Khārga Oasis in 373[56] or the incursion in 450,[57] when Hībis was partially sacked and destroyed. Judging these nomadic incursions by their apparent objectives, they are perhaps best defined as raids, rather than as directly targeted attacks on the oasis and its population. While these nomadic attacks tended to be brief and sudden, they could have complicated the management of the area. Moreover, the above-mentioned Byzantine author John Moschus reported that a group of monks who lived in Khārga were taken prisoner by some marauders called Mazikes.[58] The episode was recorded at the time of Tiberius II Constantius (578 – 582), when Moschus journeyed to the Oasis of Kharga and met Abba Leo. The old monk told Moschus about the marauds of Mazikes, which probably had occurred during his youth. It is not possible to know exactly how often such episodes happened, but John Moschus' account likely sheds light on a general perception of growing insecurity in the Oasis of Kharga;[59] similarly also the rest of Egypt's Western Desert seems to have become even more frightening from the fifth century. Monasteries, such as that of Sketis, suffered continued sacks,[60] and a northern oasis not far from Oxyrhynchos – probably the oasis of Baḥriyya – became known as the oasis inhabited by Mazikes,[61] often desbribed as violent and rude people.[62]

However, taking into consideration reports by Arabic geographers, it would seem that life in the oases did not completely disappear at the end of the Byzantine era. As far as we know, the earliest mention of *al-wāḥa* (Arabic for "the oasis") is in a passage of al-Fazārī's work (from the end of the eighth century), which was cited in Al-Masʿūdī's *Book of Golden Meadows*.[63] The context is a list of countries and al-Fazārī's words comprise only the toponym *al-wāḥa* and the dimension of the place named, 60 x 40 *parasanges* (c. 360 x 240 km). No further details are offered, and the location of the place called *al-wāḥa* remains uncertain.[64] More detailed information is found in al-Yaʿqūbī's *Kitāb al-Buldān*,[65] dating back to the second half of the ninth century. The early Arabic historian and geographer combines political and administrative aspects, ethnographic notes, and itinerary descriptions. The Egyptian place called *al-*

**56** Wagner (1987) 396 – 397.
**57** Winlock (1936) 48 – 9; Wagner (1987) 399.
**58** *PG* 87.3, coll. 2976 – 8.
**59** Bagnall (2001).
**60** See the studies of Evelyn White (1932) 154 – 167 and more recently Wipszycka (2009) 624 – 627.
**61** *PL* 73, col. 1010; see also Pall., *Dial. de vita Joh.Chrys.* 20.
**62** See e. g. Cass. *Conl.* 2.6.1 – 3; *PL* 73, col. 841.
**63** Al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies d'Or* 4.62, ed. Barbier De Meynard (1914), 39. For more on the Arabic astronomer al-Fazārī, see Samsó (2007).
**64** Décobert (1982) 97.
**65** *BGA* 7, 332.

*wāḥāt*[66] (literally "the oases") can be reached, al-Yaʿqūbī reports, after a six-day journey along a desert and mountain route starting from Abshāya (Abydos). *Al-wāḥat* consists of two parts: *al-wāḥa al-khārija* ("the exterior oasis"), characterized by the presence of fortifications, cultivated fields, an abundance of water, palm trees and other types of fruitful trees, vines, and rice fields, and *al-wāḥa al-dākhila* ("the interior oasis"), which also includes the oasis of Farāfra.[67] The two expressions *al-wāḥa al-khārija* and *al-wāḥa al-dākhila* recall the Greek expressions ὄασις ἡ ἐξωτέρω and *ὄασις ἡ ἐσωτέρω*, reported by Photius as having been used by Olympiodorus. We can compare the detailed account by Olympiodorus of the ὄασις with Yaʿqūbī's description of *al-wāḥa al-khārija*. In both passages, the oasis seems to be rich in water, fertile, and connected to the rest of Egypt by a route running in an east-west direction where the presence of human life is well marked. The new element arising in Yaʿqūbī's account is the presence of fortifications.[68]

More than ten years later, a further mention of the Egyptian oases occurs in Ibn al-Faqīh's *Kitāb al-Buldān*, survived only in abridged form. The passage relating to the oasis.[69] Is part of a description of an itinerary from the country of Ghāna[70] (depicted as a region where gold grows in the sand like carrots and is plucked at sunrise[71]) to the land of Egypt. Along that itinerary, the first three stops are identified with the names of the peoples who lived in the regions along the way, the Kawkaw, the Maranda, and the Marāwa.[72] After this, and before reaching Egypt proper, comes a stop named *wāḥāt miṣr* at Malsāna, identified with the Gilf Kabir plateau. The jux-

**66** The occurrence *al-wāḥāt* is attested only in that passage of Yaʿqūbī's *Kitāb al-Buldān*. Referring to a very specific place, Décobert (1982) 98 argued that Yaʿqūbī used the name *al-wāḥāt* as a toponym.

**67** "From Abshāya, you travel to the oases through desert wastes and rugged mountains for six stages. Then you proceed to the Outer Oasis. It is a country with forts, cultivated fields, bubbling springs, flowing water, date palms, different varieties of trees, vines, rice fields, and more; then to the Inner Oasis. It has a city called Al-Farfarūn with a mixed population of Egyptians and others" – English translation Gordon *et al.* (2017) 170.

The city of Al-Farfarūn is probably the modern village Al-Qaṣr in the oasis of Farāfra, see Cornu (1985) 100. The oasis of Farāfra in the account of the early Arabic Geographers is usually reckoned as part of Dākhla Oasis; see Graefe (1927).

**68** As far as we know, the Greek and Latin authors did not refer to the presence of any kind of fortified structures in Khārga nor in the other oases. An exception seems to be a passage by Malalas, even though there is no explicit mention of the oases proper. The sixth-century author mentions that Emperor Diocletian "built fortresses on the *limes* from Egypt to the Persian borders and stationed *limitanei* in them and he appointed *duces* for each province to be stationed further back from the fortresses with a large force to ensure their security" (*Chronographia* 12.40).

**69** *BGA* 5, 68.

**70** Cornevin (1965a); Triaud (1999).

**71** *BGA* 5, 87: "In the country of Ghāna gold grows in the sand as carrots do, and is plucked at sunrise." As far as we know, it seems that that is the first occurrence of that metaphor; English translation and commentary Levtzion/Hopkins (1981) 26.

**72** The name *Kawkaw* is used to refer to Gao; see Cornevin (1965b). The name *Maranda* seem to refers to the people of Arinda, who inhabited the Air, and the people of *Marāwa* have not yet been firmly identified; see also Décobert (1982) 101.

taposing of the two toponyms "oases" and "Egypt" in the expression *wāḥāt miṣr* (from grammatical point of view an iḍāfa) evidences the strong tie between the two. As the first "Egyptian" stop of the trans-Saharan itinerary between Ghāna and Egypt, the *wāhāt miṣr* is both part of Egypt and on its borderland, and functions as a sort of gateway.[73] *Al-wāḥāt* was also described as a borderland by Al-Iṣṭakhrī. The tenth-century Arabic geographer reports that the journey between the oases and Upper Egypt takes three days and that a desert plain links the oases to Nubia.[74]

In comparison with al-Yaʿqūbī's description of the products of *al-wāhāt*, the account of Al-Iṣṭakhrī seems to show a rather different picture. Al-Iṣṭakhrī narrates that all signs of human presence have completely disappeared from *al-wāḥāt* and adds also that once the region named *al-wāḥāt* was cultivated and was rich in water, fruit trees, and villages, but that by his time, even though the fruit continued to be copious, the animals were running wild.[75] Is such great change plausible in the only approximately fifty years between Al-Iṣṭakhrī's description and al-Yaʿqūbī's?

According to Décobert, a description of *al-wāhāt* in these terms is plausible only if matched with the definition of the western frontier of Egypt given by al-Iṣṭakhrī. The western frontier of Egypt runs from the region of Barqa and Alexandria across a desert plain, then it reaches *al-wāḥāt* and finally terminates in Nubia.[76] In Al-Iṣṭakhrī's account, the place named *al-wāḥāt* is a borderland between Egypt and the land beyond. Being a frontier, *al-wāḥāt* may be logically considered a "wild" land.

Moreover, Al-Masʿūdī[77] reports that the oases were under the rule of a king of the oases, a man from the Lawāta tribe, in 943/944.[78] Politically speaking, Al-Masʿūdī describes the oases as falling within Egypt's district, but equipped with a certain degree of independence, as signified by the existence of a "king of the oases." Independence here can be intended to signify at least a degree of self-sufficiency from a military and economic point of view. The relations between the Egyptian governors and the people of Lawāta could not always have been peaceful, and this ambivalence, Décobert believed,[79] can be perceived in the description of *al-wāḥāt* as uninhabited and wild land or as the ultimate flourishing and inhabited part of Egypt. Ibn Ḥawqal's account of the oases dates to the end of the tenth century[80] and recalls both al-Yaʿqūbī's and Olympiodorus' descriptions above. Ibn Ḥawqal describes the oases as divided into two parts, the interior and the exterior (in three-days distance from each other). Furthermore, the oases appear to be uninhabited and under the control of the Lawāta tribe (as in Al-Masʿūdī's account).

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**73** Décobert (1982) 104–105.
**74** *BGA* $1^2$, 10–11.
**75** *BGA* $1^2$, 52.
**76** *Ibid*.
**77** Al-Masʿūdī, *Les Prairies d'Or* 3.33, ed. Barbier De Meynard/Courteille de (1917), 50–52.
**78** Lewicki (1986).
**79** Décobert (1982) 111.
**80** *BGA* $2^2$, 153–156.

The tenth-century author reports some new information regarding the routes that pass through the oases. These routes across the desert link *al-wāḥāt* to the Maghreb and the land of the black people. Crossing the desert frontier of Egypt, another itinerary starts from Upper Egypt and reaches the oases, and then finally the region of Nubia. Moreover, the author specified that the route between Egypt and Ghāna was not in use at this time.

Ibn Ḥawqal's description of all these routes, included the one from Egypt to Ghāna not yet in use, can possibly echo the importance that the trans-Saharan routes were acquiring during the entire early Islamic period. Due to the geographical position it occupied and its proximity to the Nile Valley, *al-wāḥāt* played both the role of Egypt's borderland and that of a gateway to Egypt for travelers along the trans-Saharan desert itineraries.

Comparing the network of routes across the desert between the Byzantine and the early Islamic period, the scale seems to have drastically shifted. The presence of trans-Saharan routes is not documented for the periods before the Islamic era. However, in both Byzantine and early Islamic Egypt, the oases were a borderland considered as the last Egyptian stage. The Oasis of Khārga, the "exterior oasis" both in Greek and in Arabic, seems to at least maintain continuity from an onomastic point of view. This can be thought of as a *trait d'union* between the Byzantine and the Islamic era.

## Abbreviated non-papyrological sources

*BGA* = Michael J. De Goeje (ed.), *Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, Leiden 1890–1894.
*FHG* = Karl Müller, Theodor Müller, and Victor Langlois (eds.), *Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum*, Paris 1841–1873.
*FGrH* = Felix Jacoby (ed.), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker,* 15 vols., Berlin, Leiden 1923–1958.
*PG* = Jacques P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Graeca,* 161 vols., Paris 1856–1866.
*PL* = Jacques P. Migne (ed.), Patrologiae Cursus Completus Series Latina, 221 vols., Paris, 1844-1855.

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Judith Evans Grubbs

# Slave and Free at the End of Antiquity

Among the thousands of Egyptian papyri dating from the mid-fifth through the mid-seventh century, those explicitly mentioning enslavement or (legally) enslaved people make up a tiny percentage. Documents of slave sales can be counted on the fingers of one hand; the same is true of acts of manumission. This does not necessarily mean that slavery, or the use of slave labor, underwent a precipitous decline in late antique Egypt; it is not possible to use the number of extant documents attesting slavery as evidence for any kind of quantitative study on slavery in late antique Egypt.[1] In addition to the paucity of textual sources, moreover, it is often difficult to know whether certain words refer to enslaved people or free workers.[2] Even in texts of the classical period there can be ambiguity about whether *pais*, or a variation of *pais* like *paidion*, refers to a child or a slave (the same goes for the Latin word *puer*). Context is not always clear: for instance, in a fifth-century letter, a man named Timios tells his wife Sophia that he has been detained in Alexandria by Plouseios, to whom he owes money, and is "under much anxiety and pressure" to pay him. "Hurry therefore to put our little *paidion* Artemidoros under hypothec, and, God willing, when I find a boat I will come to you quickly," Timios urges.[3] Artemidoros was certainly a child, as the adjective "little" (*mikron*) indicates, but was he a slavewoman's child or the couple's own offspring? Slaves could be mortgaged or used as a pledge for a loan, as seen in a fragmentary papyrus from the first half of the seventh century, where the same slave is pledged, redeemed, and then sold to pay a debt.[4] But there are also cases from this period of the use of a child as a pledge for their parent's debt. Even if a slave, "our" little Artemidoros probably had a personal relationship with Timios and Sophia.[5]

**1** Bagnall (2011) 61–74.

**2** Fikhman (1974) 119–120; (1991) 8. More generally on terminology, see Rotman (2009) 82–93.

**3** *P.Amh.* II 144 (provenance unknown); Bagnall (1993) 227.

**4** *P.Apoll.* 66 (Apollonopolis Magna, c. 650–699); Papaconstantinou (2016) 625 and 628. Here the slave is called an *andrapodon*, the word used in Greek papyri of the Islamic period to describe chattel slaves, often those of the governor or the state: e. g., *P.Lond.* IV 1433.17, 147, 154, and 243; 1435.39; 1438.9; 1441.65; 1447.172 (all from late VII or early VIII). Note also *P.Apoll.* 37 (c. 708–709), where *andrapoda* are the subject of a legal dispute; and 51 (c. 703–715), where Christian *andrapoda* of two deceased men are to be arrested and sent to Babylon, presumably being confiscated by the state. See MacCoull (1993) 143–144.

**5** In a mortgage (*hypothēkē*), the object (here, Artemidoros) would remain with the borrower, whereas a pledge would be in the possession of the lender until the loan was repaid: see Rupprecht (2014) 249–252. For children as pledges for parental debt, see n. 52 below.

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Sixth-century papyri from the large estates frequently refer to *paidaria*, whose legal status in the Roman as well as the Byzantine period has been much debated.[6] They are usually mentioned as a group, receiving supplies (wine or oil) and are evidently of "an unfree, servile condition" who "lived, and perhaps were employed, in family units."[7] The opportunity to maintain family links is an advantage not enjoyed by many slaves in antiquity. Female *paidiskai* occasionally appear, and their status is even more ambiguous: in a document of the early seventh century, the *paidiskē* Eupraxia appears as the borrowing party in a loan agreement along with her husband, a free man (the bird-keeper on an estate). She is identified by a patronymic and her master's name.[8] Another *paidiskē*, employed on the Apion estate, identifies herself by both her father and her mother's names in an agreement to rent a house from another woman in Oxyrhynchos.[9] On balance, one would say that these women were not "slaves" comparable to the *douloi* and *oiketai* recorded in documents of sale or manumission.[10] Even more ambiguous, and relevant to a much larger debate on changes in the labor force in late antiquity, is the status of registered agricultural workers (*enapographoi geōrgoi* = *coloni adscripticii*) on large estates.[11]

Given these problems of source survival and terminology, a wide-ranging investigation into slavery in the last centuries of Roman/Byzantine rule may well be impossible. On the other hand, a "micro-historical" approach that examines a few interesting cases is feasible, although one cannot know if these cases are representative of the period. Those documents that do survive are often longer and more informative than earlier examples, and provide insight into the actions and even the intentions of the owners of the enslaved people – although, as is almost always the case in premodern sources, the enslaved themselves do not speak. Moreover, there is considerable evidence for slippage between slave and free status, particularly in the case of freeborn children. This phenomenon is not new in late

**6** Sarris (2006) 40 considers them slaves, but Banaji (2001) 272 is doubtful, and Hickey (2012) 130–133 agrees with Banaji. For the Roman period, cf. Rathbone (1991) 89–91: *paidaria* on mid-third-century Appian estate "were not chattel slaves" (91) and Bagnall (1993) 231 (referring to *P.Lips.* 97 of 338): "the identification of the *paidaria* as slaves seems to me certain." Harper (2011) 173–175 follows Bagnall.

**7** Sarris (2006) 40. Some examples: *P.Oxy.* LXVIII 4683 (426); *PSI* VIII 953 (567–568) (Gothic *paidaria*, with women/wives) *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3960 (621) (Egyptian *paidaria*); *P.Oxy.* LIX 4008 (VI/VII); cf. also a *pais* at *P.Oxy.* LXVIII 4699 (504). All of these are receipts for supplies (wine, oil) given to *paidaria*.

**8** *BGU* III 725 (Arsinoe; 618). Her husband is Aurelius Sambas, so a free man; her master is the "most distinguished" *stratēlatēs* Kyrillos (on the meaning of *stratēlatēs*, see Banaji [2001] 160–161).

**9** *PSI* VI 709 (Oxyrhynchos; 566). Note also *PSI* VIII 957 (Oxyrhynchos; 504), where "land-holding *paidiskai*" receive payment. In *P.Oxy.* LXVIII 4680 (419), a *pediskē* (sic) receives oil rations.

**10** See Beaucamp (1992) 58 n. 38 for these and other *paidiskai* as free women. Fikhman (1995) 166 suggests that the *paidiskē* of *PSI* VI 709 was a freeborn child sold by her parents; cf. below on Menas at n. 31.

**11** Bibliography on the *enapographoi geōrgoi* is vast; see Banaji (2001), Sarris (2006), Hickey (2012) 81–89, and Haug (2014) 430–441. They are found only in the Oxyrhynchite nome, especially the Apion estates.

antiquity, of course, or unique to Egypt. What is new is the extended narratives of such slippage, which not only show how easy it was for economically or socially marginal people to fall into slavery but also shed light on the motives and even the emotional state of free people who are complicit in the enslavement. This paper examines how one entered (and, occasionally, left) slavery in late antique Egypt, and focuses on the individual narratives told by or about those held in bondage, whether legal or illegal.

Only four slave sale contracts survive from the fifth, sixth, and seventh centuries. One of these is too fragmentary to provide information, apart from the fact that the person being sold is a male.[12] Another contract, also incomplete but with more information, was drawn up by the well-known notary Dioscorus of Aphrodito, around 567 or 568, for a sale taking place in Antinoopolis.[13] It records the sale of two homeborn (*oikogeneis*) females, Eulogia and her daughter Rhodous. The purchaser is "the most illustrious (*lamprotatos*) Ioannes," who was an administrator of some sort.[14] The name of the seller and the women's ages and price are not preserved. Sales of enslaved mothers along with one or more children are also known from earlier Roman Egypt, and Rhodous may have been still an infant whose separation from her mother was inadvisable.[15] Nothing is said about Rhodous' father, whose identity was irrelevant because according to Roman law, slaves had no father. He may have been another household slave, or the owner, or another free man. Nor is there any indication of the circumstances surrounding the sale, or whether the two females would be the only slaves in Ioannes' household.

The two other sale contracts are more complete, and share several similarities. Both are from Hermopolis, though separated by more than a century, and both record sales of twelve-year-old children. Both children had already been sold once before, and had been completely ripped from their natal home. Under the reign of Anastasius (491–518), a boy named Nepheros was sold to the "most marvelous" (*thaumasiōtatos*) Menas by two soldiers Ophis and Josephis, who had previously bought him from Epiphanios Makarios, the former *actuarius* of the regiment of the Mauri in Hermopolis.[16] Both sales of this young boy therefore took place in a military context. Purchase of slaves, both male and female, by military men was not uncommon in the earlier centuries of the Roman Empire, and sometimes, as here, the enslaved

**12** *P.Princ.* II 85 (provenance unknown). For dating to sixth or seventh century, see Bagnall/Worp (2003) 11–12 n. 5.

**13** *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67120; see Urbanik (2010).

**14** The contract is actually addressed to "*you* (pl.), those around the illustrious buyer Ioannes ... and *your* heirs and successors and possessors after you."

**15** Earlier sales of mothers with children: *P.Oxy.* II 375 des. (79); *SB* XXIV 16002 (Ptolemais Euergetis; 186–190); *P.Worp.* 21 (Soknopaios Nesos; 198/199?); *P.Ammon* II 48 (Alexandria; 348; a group of slaves including mother and child).

**16** *SB* XXIV 15969; see Hoogendijk (1996).

were quite young.[17] They might be used for performing routine chores around the camp, or as sex slaves.[18] When their owners tired of them or needed money, they could be sold on to a comrade in arms, as Nepheros was.

Nepheros was sold for the rather substantial sum of eight gold *solidi*. The contract describes him as "black-skinned" (*melanochrōn*). He may have been a Moor (*Maurus*) from northwestern Africa; Procopius, writing about the Vandal wars not long after the date of Nepheros' sale, uses the same word to describe the Moors.[19] On the other hand, Nepheros could be Nubian, from south of Hermopolis Magna. This was the case for the enslaved girl in the fourth known slave sale contract from late antique Egypt a little more than a century later, shortly before the Arab conquest. Aurelia Isidora, a "well-born" (*eugenestatē*) woman of Hermopolis Magna, bought a 12-year-old girl, described as *Maura*, which in this case must denote skin-tone rather than origin.[20] The girl's name was Atalous, but her new owner renamed her Eutychia, "Lucky," a not uncommon name bestowed upon enslaved children.[21] She was originally from the Ethiopian kingdom of Alodia, and was sold for four gold *solidi* (half the price of Nepheros a century earlier). Aurelia Isidora bought her from two men, who had themselves bought her from "slavetraders of the Ethiopians," which means that either the sellers themselves were Ethiopian, or their human merchandise was, or both.[22] This is the last slave sale contract in Greek from Egypt, and by far the longest. It details all the many things that Aurelia Isidora, like any slaveowner, may do with her new property: "to possess and to control … to sell, to put up as security, to give away, to exchange as dowry and … to give to your children and descendants, … and in general to do and perform with her all such acts

**17** Cf. *SB* III 6304 = *CPL* 193 (II), a *puella Marmaria* bought by a soldier of the fleet at Ravenna; *P.Lond*. II 229 = *CPL* 120 (166), seven-year-old *natione Transfluminianum* exchanged between members of the fleet stationed at Tigris; *P.Oxy*. XLI 2951 (267), Arabian female bought by a soldier at the winter quarters of the *Legio II Traiana* in Nicopolis; *BGU* I 316 (Ascalon; 359), a "white-skinned" 14-year-old boy from Gaul bought by a soldier.

**18** On soldiers' use of slaves as sexual partners, see Phang (2001) 231–244. Her study focuses on the Principate, however (when soldiers were forbidden to marry) and she discusses female slaves only. In late antiquity soldiers were able to marry and have legitimate children, but many may have preferred casual sex with slaves.

**19** See Conant (2012) 269, citing Procopius, *De bello Vandalico* 2.13.29 and 1.479. Nepheros' previous owner Epiphanios Makarios was from the regiment of the Mauri; however, at this date, the use of ethnic names for regiments does not necessarily denote origin.

**20** See Isidore of Seville, *Etymologiae* 9.2.122 on Greek *mauros/a* as a synonym for Latin *niger, nigra*; Conant (2012) 269–270.

**21** Like the six-year-old girl named Tyche (*P.Mich*. V 278.30), the runaway Eutychia (*P.Cair.Preis*. 1 [147–150]), the *puella* Fortunata (reign of Hadrian; see Tomlin [2003]), the *puer natione Transfluminianum* Abbas who was renamed Eutyches (*P.Lond*. II 229.166), the 30-year-old Eutyches (*P.Mich*. XV 707, post-185), and the enslaved Eutychios at *P.Herm*. 18 (323?).

**22** *SB* XVIII 13173; see Pierce (1995). Pierce dated it to the late sixth century, but it is now dated to (perhaps) 629; see Keenan *et al*. (2014) 444–445. See Burstein (2009) 123–154 for the historical context (though he goes by the older dating).

as the laws enjoin upon absolute owners to do with their own property … from now forever."[23]

Atalous' contract is clear evidence for a trafficking in slaves from Nubia into Egypt in the early seventh century. Certainly even before late antiquity there was a trade in souls from sub-Saharan Africa into the Roman Empire, although it was not one of the most important external sources of supply.[24] But in the centuries after the Arab conquest, the Sudan became perhaps the major source of slaves in Egypt until the later Middle Ages. Much of this was due to a treaty made in 652 between the Muslim Arabs and the Christian Nubians, known as the *baqṭ* (from Greek *pakton* = Latin *pactum*). Under the *baqṭ*, the Nubians sent at least 300 slaves a year to Egypt, and received grains and textiles in exchange.[25] In a collection of eleven Arabic slave sale contracts from ninth- and tenth-century Egypt, seven are of people described as either "Black" or "Nubian"; of the others, one is a Garamantian, another a Berber, another described as "yellow," and the origin of the other is missing. All are female, except for two documents for the sale of the same "Black" family: a grandmother, her daughter, and her daughter's son (whose age is not specified, but who is presumably quite young).[26] The documents of the Jewish communities of Fatimid Egypt preserved in the Cairo Geniza show a similar demographic profile.[27]

Contracts of sale offer a snapshot of a particular – and traumatic – point in the enslaved person's life. They cannot tell us what happened to the slave after sale. For the homeborn Eulogia and her daughter Rhodous, their future in the household of Ioannes may have been a frightening prospect, or it may have been a relief. Perhaps Ioannes had particular feelings for them; he may even have been Rhodous' father. Nepheros, the "black-skinned" boy, and Atalous the Nubian girl must have hoped that this sale was the final one, and that they would not continue to be passed on to other buyers. Aurelia Isidora, the woman who bought Atalous, was a widow and evidently well-off. She may have wanted Atalous, now called Eutychia, as a companion and support for her old age – probably the best future the young girl could hope for.

Perhaps at the end of her life, Aurelia Isidora freed Eutychia in her will. Testamentary manumission was a common way of liberating slaves in the Roman period, easy for the manumittor who, once dead, would no longer need the slave's services.

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**23** *SB* XVIII 13173.54–67; transl. Pierce (1995) 160.

**24** Pierce (1995) 150–152; Fentress (2011); Harper (2011) 86–91; Bradley (2012).

**25** On the *baqṭ*: Vantini (1976); Burstein (2009) 149–154 (sources); Power (2012) 141–142; Perry (2014) 32–33. The slaves brought to Egypt under the *baqṭ* were not usually Nubian, but captives taken by the Nubians in raids of other peoples: Vantini (1976) 16.

**26** Ragib (2002) I–XI. The earliest are of the woman whose origin is missing (dated 257/871); the "yellow" woman named Bunana (261/875); and the Berber woman (280/893). Note also a ninth-century letter from a merchant in al-Fusṭāṭ (Cairo), who notes in a margin that he has bought a Slavic female slave, whose owner sold her on the condition that she be taken out of al-Fusṭāṭ: Diem (1993) 19.

**27** Perry (2014) 38–42 with his Appendix, 225–230. He notes (39) that Nubia was "by far the most common recorded source of slaves" whose origin is specified; again, most are female.

There are very few examples from Byzantine Egypt. The best known is the will of Flavius Theodoros, an *exceptor* in the office of the Duke of the Thebaid, which was drawn up in Antinoopolis in 567 by Dioscorus of Aphrodito.[28] Theodoros named as heirs his grandmother, who received a plot of land, and two monasteries, who got virtually all of his remaining properties. He evidently had no other family; he was a widower and no mention is made of children. He freed all his male and female slaves (*doulous kai doulidas*) and gave them their *peculium*, the "pocket-money" that slaves often had, as well as six *solidi* each.

Theodoros' will does not reveal how many slaves he had in total, nor does it give their names; since they all were manumitted, perhaps there was no need to list them individually. In contrast, the will does single out the old nurse of his mother, Tadelphe, and her daughter Leontia: the head of one of the monasteries is to give them an annual pension of twelve *solidi*. Tadelphe and Leontia are free, but Tadelphe was probably a former slave who had been manumitted by Theodore's mother, perhaps in her will. Tadelphe and her daughter may have continued living in Theodorus' household, as freedmen and women often did.

Another testator, Flavius Abraam, a former *praepositus*, made out a gift in view of his death (*donatio mortis causa*) in which he freed all his slaves (here called *andrapoda*), male and female. He too gave half of the rest of his property to the church, with the other half going to his wife. As in the will of Flavius Theodorus, none of the slaves are mentioned by name, nor do we know how many there were.[29]

For Flavius Theodorus and Flavius Abraam, manumission was an act of piety, as was the naming of ecclesiastical institutions as heirs; they do not seem to have had a personal relationship with their slaves. However, closer ties between master and slave are suggested by an act of manumission, drawn up in Apollonopolis Heptakomias in 589 by a monk of Apa Macrobius named Victor, son of Cornelius.[30] This was not a will, though Victor may have been nearing the end of his life: he declares that he is freeing his *oiketēs* Menas in order "to find mercy at the time of my death at the awful tribunal of our master Jesus Christ" and to obtain forgiveness of his sins.

Menas is said to be "son of Victor, his mother being Eirene." This is rather odd: by law, slaves did not have fathers. The papyrus' editor offers two explanations: either this is an erroneous use of a patronymic to refer to slave parentage, or Menas was freeborn and had become enslaved for debt or other reasons.[31] Both are plausible, but there is another possibility: Menas may actually be Victor's own illegitimate

**28** *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67312 (31 March 567), actually a draft of the will, since the precise plot of land that Theodore bequeathes to his grandmother has been left blank, to be filled in the final copy. See Keenan (2000) 618 – 625.

**29** *P.Gron.* 10 (provenance unknown; VI?).

**30** *P.Köln* III 157 (14 July 589); see also *P.Köln* IV 157 Addendum for the end, especially the witnesses' signatures. Melluso (2000) 218 – 222 summarizes the text and commentary.

**31** Dieter Hagedorn in *P.Köln* III 157 (159). Cf. the *paidiskai* with patronymics (n. 10) – although they seem to be free. For enslavement for debt, see below on the case of Prokla.

son by an enslaved woman named Eirene. Eirene was not freed in the will; probably she was already dead. She may have been an affair from Victor's younger, non-celibate life before he became a monk. (This would also explain Victor's anxiety to obtain absolution from his sins.) If she had been Victor's slave, then her son would be also, and would have had the same man as father and master.

Masters very often had children by female slaves, sometimes (though not always) in a long-term concubinage.[32] In an interesting bilingual (Coptic and Greek) document of about 500 from a community of Blemmyes in southern Egypt, a man gave his mother a female slave whom he had acquired by capture and used as a concubine. The mother then freed the children born to her son by the enslaved concubine, and declared them her "legitimate children and free persons."[33] She did not free the concubine, however, who presumably remained a slave in the household of her children's grandmother (unless she was sold).

In his act of manumission, the monk Victor declared that Menas was "free from every yoke of slavery from now for all time" and stressed that no one could later enslave him. Victor's heirs (who are not named) were to be fined an ounce of gold if they tried to force Menas back into slavery, and the document was signed by at least four witnesses.[34] Perhaps Menas was living with Victor at Apa Macrobius, and Victor was afraid that after his death the monastery, to whom he was probably leaving his other possessions, would claim that Menas was part of the legacy. Now Menas had a document to prove his free status.[35]

Such documents were necessary, because even freeborn people could fall into slavery, due to their own poverty and the greed of employers or creditors. This is illustrated by a remarkable document found in the archive of Dioscorus of Aphrodito, though it was not written by him. The document actually survives in two partial, but overlapping, drafts, neither of which would have been the final copy. It is sometimes inaccurately described as a manumission. But to manumit a person is to admit that they had once been enslaved, whereas the narrator of this document is most emphat-

**32** The status of the children of such unions and their inheritance rights was a subject of great concern to late Roman emperors and there are many laws on the subject from Constantine to Justinian; see Evans Grubbs (2014).

**33** *BKU* III 350 in Eide *et al.* (1998) 1203–1205. The main body of the document is in Coptic, and the witnesses' signatures are in Greek. It is not clear if the gift of the slave woman and the manumission of her children took place at the same time. The date of this document and others from the same community (on the island of Gebelen, south of Thebes) is disputed, but they evidently were c. 500.

**34** The end of document with witnesses' signatures is in *P.Köln* IV 241–242. For anxiety that heirs would attempt to reclaim a manumitted slave, cf. *P.Edmonstone* D1 = *M.Chr.* 361 (355), and below.

**35** The practice of freeing personal slaves by will continued in the Islamic period. In 721, a woman (evidently on hajj) writes a will on board ship, manumitting her slavewoman and leaving her a house and vineyard. See Hanafi (2010).

ically declaring that a certain woman of his household, named Martha, is not, never has been, and never should be, a slave.[36]

Unfortunately the narrator's name is missing; presumably it was stated in the document's final draft (which does not survive). He speaks in the first person, explaining how it was that Martha's status came into question. Her grandparents, Jacob and Sophia (now deceased), had come from Antaiopolis to work in the household of the narrator's family (which presumably was in Aphrodito). They had cared for the narrator's father, now also deceased, for some time. But, the narrator stresses, he had never found any evidence that Jacob and Sophia were slaves (*douloi*) "from any legal title whatever." The couple had children, Leah, Rachel, and Rebecca; Leah and Rebecca had children of their own, but Rachel chose a monastic life. Leah had two children (we are not told who the father was), one of whom died, as did Leah. Leah's other child, named Sophia after her grandmother, had at least four children (three of whom are named) by a free man (*eleutheros*) – again, we are not told who. Evidently these were not legal marriages, and the children were illegitimate, but under Roman law, as the narrator knows, the child's status in nonmarital unions followed that of the mother. Leah was free, and so was her daughter Sophia, and so were Sophia's children. But now some people – again, our narrator does not give names – were "dragging" Sophia and her children into slavery (*douleia*). Apparently our narrator can do nothing about Sophia and her children, except to declare that the enslavers will have to answer to "the most fearful tribunal of a Higher Power" after they die. They may have been claimed as slaves by the family of the man who fathered Sophia's children, or by the man himself, whose name our narrator for some reason does not want to reveal, perhaps because he was a relative or a very powerful person.[37] Martha is Sophia's cousin, the daughter of Rebecca. Martha had a sister, Eulogia, who also chose the monastic life; this was a way to escape slavery, since the legislation of Justinian allowed a slave who wished to pursue a religious life to do so.[38] (This leaves open the question of whether Eulogia and Rachel had seen themselves as slaves, or had entered the monastery on the assumption they were free.) But Martha was still in the narrator's household, apparently working there. She had, says the narrator, some "capital" (*kephalaion*), and when questioned about it, had said, "I am not free." She may have been coerced into a false admission that she was a slave by someone who wanted her "capital," or she may not have known her own legal status.[39]

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**36** *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67089+*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67294 (= *SB* XVIII 13274). See Wenger (1922), MacCoull (1992), Fikhman (1995) 179–183, Melluso (2000) 226–230, and Rotman (2014) 467–469 with translation and genealogy.

**37** Fikhman (1995) 181 concludes that the enslavers (and presumably Sophia's free partner) were members of the narrator's family, whom he did not wish to call out by name.

**38** Rotman (2009) 144–146.

**39** Roman law was familiar with the possibility of free people mistakenly saying they were slaves: several third-century imperial rescripts concern cases where people said they were enslaved when

Although our narrator never says who it was who was trying to enslave Martha, scholars think that it was in fact his son and heir, Victor. The narrator insists that Victor, described as "most learned" (*logiōtatos*), has given his consent to the declaration, but there is an implication that Victor was not altogether willing. Leslie MacCoull detected what she called a "Cinderella story": she suggested that the narrator was actually in love with Martha and intended to marry her, and was paving the way by formally declaring that she was of free birth. One could understand why Victor might not be too happy about such a marriage and the possibility of another heir, but in fact there is nothing in the document to suggest that the narrator has romantic motives. It is more likely that he is an old man, anticipating the end of his life and his judgment before the "fearful tribunal" of God. He wants to put the record straight for the good of his soul.[40]

How did Martha and her extended family come to be in a servile situation in the first place? It appears that her grandparents, Jacob and Sophia, entered a *paramonē* arrangement with the narrator's father, by which they agreed to "remain by" (*paramenein*) their employer, living with him and caring for his needs. Such arrangements have an ancient history in Egypt and have been much studied, particularly for the earlier Roman period.[41] Those willing to enter *paramonē* did so under economic necessity, often to pay off a debt owed to the person with whom they remained. There is evidence for the use of *paramonē* agreements on the Apion estates to secure agricultural labor, usually in the form of deeds of surety by third parties guaranteeing that the laborer will indeed "remain."[42] Sometimes the agreement was for a limited period of time, but often the labor of the person in *paramonē* only paid off the interest on the debt and could go on indefinitely. This was the case, for instance, in an agreement dated 418 from Oxyrhynchos, whereby Aurelia Asenath put herself into *paramonē* to Aurelius Chairemon for two gold *solidi*; if she ever wanted to leave, she had to repay the amount in full.[43] Thus *paramonē* could become permanent quasi-slavery. This seems to be what happened to Jacob and Sophia, and after their deaths, their children and children's children had continued to live with and work for the narrator's family for decades. At least they stayed together as a family. In most cases, the person entering service was alone, and often that person was a child,

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they were actually of free status: e. g., *C.J.* 7.16.6 (Valerian and Gallienus); 7.16.10; 7.16.22; 7.16.24; 7.16.34 (all Tetrarchic); Evans Grubbs (2013) 49. The fact that these were all included in the *Code of Justinian* means that the situation was still relevant in the sixth century.

**40** Cf. *P.Köln* III 157 (n. 30 – 31), where the monk Victor frees Menas "wishing to find mercy at my death at the awful tribunal of our master Jesus Christ."

**41** See Claytor *et al.* (2016), with bibliography to earlier studies.

**42** E. g., *P.Stras.* I 40 (569; see below); *P.Oxy.* I 135 (579); *P.Oxy.* XXVII 2478 (595), on which see Keenan *et al.* (2014) 438 – 440; *PSI* I 62 (613).

**43** *P.Köln* II 102 (418); transl. in Rowlandson (1998) 264 – 265. Also from Oxyrhynchos is *P.Oxy.*VIII 1122 (407).

who had been put into service as a pledge for their parent's debt. And that could have very sad results, as the following narrative demonstrates.

This is in the form of a loan agreement between another Martha, a seller of salted fish, and the "most illustrious" (*lamprotatos*) Flavius Helladius, secretary on the staff of the Duke of the Thebaid, drawn up in Antinoopolis by the notary Dioscorus of Aphrodito in 569.[44] In a detailed narrative, Martha explains that some years before, her father Menas, a bath attendant who had "fallen into the most extreme poverty," had pledged Martha's younger sister, Prokla, to the *lamprotatos* Nonnus, in exchange for one gold *solidus*. This does not seem to have been a contract of *paramone*, but simply the use of a child as a guarantee for her father's debt. However, Menas died without having repaid the debt, and Prokla remained in quasi-slavery, being, as Martha says, "exhausted" (*kataponoumenē*) by her service to Nonnus. Martha, a widow, had managed to save half a *solidus* from her slender earnings and pay off half the debt to Nonnus. (Apparently Prokla's labor for Nonnus had not reduced the debt at all.) Desperate to redeem her sister, Martha was now borrowing money from Helladius in order to repay the rest of her father's debt to Nonnus.[45] We do not know how old Prokla was when she first entered Nonnus' household, but she was only fifteen at the time of the agreement between Martha and Flavius Helladius, after she had been serving Nonnus for some years. In all likelihood, she was less than ten years old when her service began.

In order to get the new loan from Flavius Helladius and pay off the loan from Nonnus, Martha had to give a pledge. For this she used the only thing of value she had: her sister Prokla. So Prokla, having been rescued from the abusive Nonnus, was now going to the home of Flavius Helladius, where she was to serve him "with all slavish (*doulikois*) and useful services, inescapably, freely (*eleutherikos*[!]), and in an orderly and obedient manner …"[46] The agreement continues with language familiar from slave sale contracts of the period, and it is clear that Prokla will be, in effect, the slave of Flavius Helladius until Martha can come up with the money to repay him. But if Martha cannot earn the money or even falls into debt herself (which is not unlikely), then Prokla will remain in slavery, and any children she may have in the future will be assumed to be slaves, and they will meet the same fate as the grandchildren of Jacob and Sophia.

Seemingly more fortunate was the situation of Aurelius Kollouthos of Antaiopolis, who entered a service agreement (also dated 569) with the *scholasticus* Flavius Phoibammon, promising to "remain" (*parameinai*) with Phoibammon for four years in order to pay off a debt. Interestingly, Kollouthos' contract, like Martha's, makes lavish use of the vocabulary of slavery to describe his service: he promises

**44** *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67023+*P.Fitzhugh* (= *P.Coll.Youtie* II 92). The second half of the contract was not known until the publication of *P.Fitzhugh* by J. W. B. Barns in *P.Coll.Youtie* in 1976. See also Fikhman (1995) 177–179; Keenan *et al.* (2014) 271–274 and 417–419 (which give different interpretations).

**45** Nine carats of gold (by the public standard of Antinoopolis), equivalent to half a *solidus*.

**46** *P.Coll.Youtie* II 92.32–34.

to be Phoibammon's "steadfast *familiaris* slave (*katadoulos*)" and to perform his duty "in a slavish way (*doulikē*)."[47] The verbal parallels with Martha's contract with Flavius Helladius no doubt owe much to the fact that both documents were composed by Dioscorus of Aphrodito. But they also underline the similarities between service agreements (open-ended in Prokla's case; limited in Kollouthos') and actual slavery.

Thirteen years earlier, the emperor Justinian had enacted a law explicitly against the practice of creditors taking the children of their debtors into "slavish service" (*doulikē hyperēsia*, *servile ministerium*). He ruled that not only should the debt be cancelled, but the creditor should give to the child or their parents the amount that was still owed, and further should be afflicted with corporal punishment (presumably whipping) by the local magistrate, "because he presumed to hold or rent or take as a pledge a free person for a debt."[48] This was part of a longer law aimed at abuses of power by provincial officials (civil and military), in response to reports the emperor had received.[49] Martha and Prokla would not have known about this law, but given their administrative and legal background, the *lamprotatoi* Nonnus and Flavius Helladius would have, and chose to ignore it.[50]

The use of children as debt pledges by their parents was not new in the time of Justinian, and had been condemned already by third-century emperors.[51] But papyri show that children continued to be used as debt pledges, and were either forcibly seized by creditors or given up by insolvent family members.[52] Prokla was not the only girl to be pledged by a sibling: in another fragmentary papryus from the sixth century, someone (whose name is lost) pledges a sister named Tamina to an *illustris* to perform "slavish" service in return for two *nomismata*.[53] I am not aware of evidence for use of free children as debt pledges in post-Byzantine Egypt, although a document of the late seventh century from Nessana in Palestine apparently refers to a son's release from such service.[54] But in Egypt, a different sort of servitude of free children has been discerned in the eighth-century Coptic child donations to

**47** *P.Stras.* I 40 (Antaiopolis, 569). Kollouthos also calls himself a *pais* of Phoibammon. *Familiaris* is a direct transliteration from Latin, describing a member of the *familia* (household).

**48** Justinian *Novel* 134.7 (to the urban prefect Musonius, 556).

**49** Preface to *Novel* 134. Egypt is not specifically mentioned, but could have been the source of some reports.

**50** Justinian's attempt to end the debt slavery of a debtor's children was no more successful than a similar attempt some years before to prevent the enslavement of abandoned newborns: *Novel* 153 (541), reiterating the earlier *C.J.* 8.51.3 (529), which had been flouted in Thessalonica.

**51** *C.J.* 8.16.1 (Septimius Severus and Caracalla; 197); *C.J.* 8.16.6 (Tetrarchy; 293); *CJ* 4.43.1 (Tetrarchy; 294); Vuolanto (2003).

**52** *P.Lond.* VI 1915 – 1916 (330s), letter regarding seizure of a man's children by creditors; *P.Herm.* 7 (after 381), father gives his children as pledges to money-lender; *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4393 (late V), petition from Aurelia Aeu to the *pater civitatis*, says that she is recorded as having pledged her daughter to pay the *chrysargyron* tax.

**53** *P.Iand.* IV 62 (provenance unknown). The language is similar to that of *P.Coll.Youtie* II 92.

**54** *P.Ness.* 56 (687) in Greek and Arabic; Falenciak (1948); Papaconstantinou (2016) 638.

the monastery of St. Phoibammon.[55] The narratives that record such donations have been extensively studied, particularly by Arietta Papaconstantinou. Ostensibly they record the voluntary gift of male children to the monastery by parents who were thankful that their prayers to God to conceive or to preserve their child were answered. But a more cynical view is that the monastery was extorting the children from their parents by playing on their piety and their fears that the children would otherwise be taken by a vengeful God. A recent interpretation, in fact, argues that these transactions were "sales contracts disguised as donations."[56] Certainly these children were not oblates, and would not become monks at St. Phoibammon. Rather, they were to perform menial tasks around the monastery sweeping, baking, and filling the lamps with oil, like "a bought slave" or a "slave of old." This service is for the rest of their lives; in some cases, a boy may work outside St. Phoibammon but still owes all his earnings to the monastery.

Whatever the number of slaves in late antique Egypt, the phenomenon of bound labor continued. Estates, households, and monasteries needed workers, and used whatever means they could to get them. Financially pressed men and women needed loans, and used whatever collateral they could to get them, usually their own or their children's bodies. There were also many people whose status was labile and vulnerable to attack, and this instability, both social and legal, was a significant feature of life in Egypt at the end of antiquity.

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**55** MacCoull (1979); Papaconstantinou (2002a) and (2002b); Richter (2005).

**56** Römer (2014) 128.

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Arietta Papaconstantinou

# Women in Need: Debt-Related Requests from Early Medieval Egypt[1]

In the pre-industrial rural world, micro-credit and agricultural credit were a structural element of everyday life, and have been studied for decades by historians and anthropologists, often offering very interesting insights on the respective societies they study. Debt as a social phenomenon, and its capacity to alter and structure social relations and hierarchies, has been noted by historians, sociologists, and anthropologists alike. Although the most common and obvious line of thought sees debt – rightly – as the first step into a downward spiral of impoverishment, much work has also emphasised the reverse aspect: its function as a safety net for the economically weak, a last-resort attempt to avoid being ejected from the social system. In *L'économie morale: pauvreté, crédit et confiance dans l'Europe préindustrielle* (2008), Laurence Fontaine broke new ground by linking the history of poverty and that of trust and social cohesion to the history of credit and the understanding of the hierarchies and networks that it both created and sustained.[2] By seeing credit as a control mechanism of the economically powerful over the economically weak, but at the same time bringing out its role as a tool in the hands of those among the weak who were still trusted enough to borrow, Fontaine brought to light the double function of credit and debt as vectors of social bonds, but bonds that are necessarily unequal.

Building on this line of historiography, François Lerouxel's *Le marché du crédit dans le monde romain (Egypte et Campanie)* conducts a systematic study of credit in Roman Egypt.[3] One of the things Lerouxel highlights is the importance of private credit and micro-credit alongside the institutional and large-scale operations studied until then, and their pervasive presence within communities and between individuals of all social levels. Contrary to the image given by literary texts, papyri unsurprisingly show that just like in pre-industrial Europe, rural society and agricultural practice were largely dependent on credit. The much higher proportion of women taking part in the private credit market has also been brought to light by Lerouxel.[4]

In early medieval Egypt these characteristics remained to a large extent unchanged. On the whole, the obvious common impression that credit is a form of exploitation, and debt a path to poverty are corroborated by the evidence from the period.[5] Things however, are not as straightforward: the credit economy also functioned

**1** The research for this article was generously funded by a Forschungsstipendium from the Gerda Henkel Stiftung, as part of a larger project on debt and dependence in late antique Egypt and Palestine.

**2** Fontaine (2008); see also Fontaine (2001) and Fontaine (2010).

**3** Lerouxel (2016).

**4** Lerouxel (2006); for the later period, see Wilfong (1990); (2002); Papaconstantinou (2016b).

**5** See the overview in Papaconstantinou (2016a).

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for some as a system of social inclusion which ultimately prolonged for them the ability of maintaining a social identity and a place within the community, which they would have lost without the possibility to borrow. This possibility, however, was not a given: it depended on the prospective borrower's capacity to command trust or offer some other form of guarantee, which meant mobilising networks of support. Thus, even the most miserable borrower was still better off than someone who could not borrow – but this came at the price of a relation of patronage and the resulting long-lasting dependence.

Several elements in the papyri show this mobilisation of networks in action. Perhaps the most obvious, which I have described elsewhere, was the practice of using guarantors to secure a loan.[6] This was a relatively common practice: for the lender it could function as any other security, by making it possible to recover the debt at the end of the agreed period; for the borrower, however, it had an important – if short-term – advantage, as it represented a security against losing a field, a house, or precious objects, because in case of default the guarantor would pay, and he simply became debtor to a new creditor. We see this for example with a certain Severus, son of Bane, who had borrowed 40 *solidi*/dinars from Anthony, son of Herakleides, headman of How (Diospolis Parva) and a deacon. In a document drawn up in Coptic and Arabic, Anthony agreed to make no further claims on Severus, because Muslim b. Bashshār of the city of Shmun (Hermopolis) had paid the sum for him. The document was intended as a security for the guarantor.[7] This is also found in cases with much smaller sums, and there are indications that this could be prolonged with a second and even a third guarantor.[8]

Obtaining guarantors involved asking for a favour, and in documentary terms, one must assume that an informal letter requesting said favour preceded such a transaction – although the request may well have been oral in a number of cases. What one does find are letters written by patrons on behalf of prospective borrowers, asking that X should lend them money, and implicitly at least guaranteeing that loan. Thus in *O.CrumVC* 71, a certain Paipous asks a 'holy, pious father' to lend something to Paul, an act which he calls 'charity'. It is obvious from the letter that it is at least the second year in a row when this 'charity' is being made, and Paipous undertakes to repay the 'pious father' back for his advance.[9]

Networks were also useful at later stages of the credit cycle, namely once a debt had been contracted and one of the parties was in some form of difficulty. For instance, creditors would petition the authorities for help with the recovery of unpaid debts. More commonly, however, the requests for help come from debtors, and they are addressed to much lower levels of authority, in documents that are less formal than petitions.

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**6** Papaconstantinou (2016a) 626–629.

**7** *P.Ryl.Copt.* 214 (first half of VIII)

**8** Papaconstantinou (2016a) 627–628.

**9** See the discussion in Papaconstantinou (2016a) 627.

From the sixth century onwards, official petitions – i.e. documents drawn up by a lawyer on behalf of third parties and addressed to the secular authority of the area – had been evolving in ways that Jean-Luc Fournet's work on the archive of Dioscorus has highlighted and clarified.[10] In particular, the *prooimion* (preamble) had developed quite extensively; it was structurally followed by a *narratio* or exposition of the facts, and then the request proper. Fournet has also shown that there was a clear perception of a distinction, in that period, between petitions and other documentary genres, to the point that a petition was not only written in a different way on the papyrus, but the papyrus piece itself was cut differently. Petitions were written parallel to the fibres, in long lines and careful writing, following the material form of literary texts, and to some extent letters, rather than legal and administrative documents.

In what follows I will take a closer look at five letters of request by five different women in the seventh- and eighth-century Theban region. All five are addressed to clerics, whose help is requested in solving a debt-related problem. What strikes one immediately when looking at these letters is that they lie on a continuum with the official petitions, but also from formal to informal: at one end, we have structured texts showing that there was a perceived irregularity making it conceivable for the petitioner to use 'the law' in support of a claim; at the other end are letters that ask very straightforwardly for a favour. In all five cases, the addressee is asked to intervene because of exceptional circumstances that have disrupted the author's life and capacity to pay off (or recover) the debt. The latter persuasion technique is, of course, also common in formal petitions, so that often what distinguishes letters asking non-official figures for favours and petitions to the authorities is the context in which they are used.

The first letter dates from ca. 630, immediately after the Persian occupation of the country, and it is written on both sides of an ostrakon, with two lines added on the bottom edge formed by the break of the sherd:[11]

> First I embrace the sweetness of the holy feet of your truly God-loving fatherliness, which intercedes for us before God; and you are the one who beseeches God for the entire people and whom God has appointed true high priest to make petition for the whole people before God; and you are our patron who intercedes for us before God and men.
> I am this wretched one, miserable beyond (all) men on earth, and greatly weighed down with grief and sadness, and heartbroken for my husband who is dead, and for my son whom the Persians beat (?) ... and my cattle which the Persians carried off.
> Now, I beg you of your holy fatherliness to send and bring the headman of Jeme and Amos, and ask them to leave me in my house and not to have me wander abroad. For they said to me, "You are liable for the field."
> The son, also, whom I had was heartbroken and took to flight.
> And also the pair of cattle which were left from the Persians – the moneylender came forth and

**10** See especially Fournet (2004), but also Fournet (1993); (1994); (2003).

**11** *SBKopt*. I 295; transl. Bagnall/Cribiore (2006) 242. See also the *ed. pr.* in Drescher (1944).

> carried them off and sold them on account of his loan which I borrowed for the tax.
> Be so kind to me as for me to be settled in my house.
> *Verso* – Give it to my lord father the holy [bishop] Pesente, from this poor wretched wife of the deceased Pesente.

The author remains nameless. She is a widow who had most of her cattle stolen by the Persians during their occupation of Egypt (619 – 629). The few animals they left behind were later taken by 'the moneylender'. Her son has fled, after being beaten by the Persians. She is writing to the bishop ('high priest') Pesente, asking him to intervene with the headman of Jeme so that she can keep her house, which is most probably mortgaged because of a loan she has taken to pay her taxes.

The addressee is almost certainly Pisenthios of Koptos/Qift, bishop from 599 – 632. He came from the Theban region and had close links with the monasteries of the area. From what we know, he fled to the mountains above Jeme during the Persian occupation and waited until it ended before returning to his see. Part of his correspondence is preserved, and in course of re-publication.[12] Apparently found at his place of refuge, it shows that he enjoyed quite some prestige in the area, as the biography written after his death also shows. Nothing makes this identity absolutely certain, but the request is not a simple one, since it involves property of some value, and therefore a relatively high potential loss for the lender: presumably only a prestigious individual could pull off such an intervention successfully.

The widow herself is not quite of the destitute sort: this was a family with sizeable cattle, and possessing a house. She is in this situation due to unforeseen circumstances: the death of her husband and the Persian invasion. She uses the pathos of her disenfranchisement – a reasonably established woman having suddenly, and through no fault of her own, found herself in dire circumstances – to solicit a favour which is clearly expressed as such. Nowhere does she hint that it is her right to obtain this, nor does she blame anyone in particular.

Despite being written on an ostrakon and presented as a letter, this is a very elaborate text with many of the characteristics of a formal petition. The length and style of the introductory statement are reminiscent of the long, flattering version of the *prooimion* familiar from sixth-century petitions. The rest of the text follows the model of a petition as well, albeit in a very summary way: the address and preamble are followed by a *narratio* or exposition of the facts, and then by the request itself. The bishop, however, is only addressed as an intercessor 'before God and men', not as a decision-maker: It is the headman of the village who will have the final say.[13]

**12** Dekker (2011); see also van der Vliet (2002); (in press).

**13** See the discussion in Papaconstantinou (in press); on intercession as a social practice in the Middle Ages, see the papers in Moeglin (2004).

The second text is much less elaborate, and sent to a less elevated cleric. The author, Thello, is another widow in the same region, and she is writing to the monk Epiphanios in a monastic establishment of the Theban area.[14]

> ... your [father]liness (?), and I embrace the prints of the feet of your God-lovingness, my lord father. I, this servant (and) widow, Thello, (widow) of the deceased Peter, son of Plos, in the congregation of Ptene, inform your paternity – for it is you whom God has appointed to inquire concerning the affairs of the poor – for before the Persians came south, my deceased husband gave some grain to the priest of Apa Shenetom and Sakau, (son) of Joui, and they sowed it in the plain. They have not paid me anything for it until now. And look, I have paid them many a visit, saying "Write me (a note) for it, until the place is at peace and you can pay me a little yearly." They went to law, one with another, and it was decided that each one should write down his share. Look ...

The letter was written during the Persian occupation, as it describes the Persians having already come south, but the place not yet 'at peace'. Thello, who lives in a small village, is asking the head of a monastic community to ensure that the priest of a local shrine and another man will pay her back for the grain her late husband had lent them. This is an operation of much smaller scale, involving a loan in kind. The nature of the repayment is unclear, but even if it is money, the sum involved was not of the same level as that dealt with by Pesente. Thello's own social standing is clearly lower than that of Pesente's widow. Ironically, however, she is the lender, not the borrower, and not about to lose her house.

This letter also follows – much more loosely – the conventions of a petition: a short *prooimion* praising the recipient, followed by a *narratio* with the facts. The request proper certainly followed, but it is lost – although its content is not hard to guess. It is made to a monk with some local authority because he would certainly have had more weight and fewer inhibitions in dealing with shrine personnel.

The third letter is also from a woman to a monk. It raises yet a different problem – one that is not entirely clear because the document is damaged.[15]

> I, Taouaou the daughter of Joachim, write to my father Zacharias:
> At the time when Joachim came to settle, he received a pair of coverlets and a half-trimesion from Georgios. He deposited the ... as a pledge with him. Well, for two years he caught pigeons (there?). The first year, he caught 60 pair (?), the second year he caught 70 pair. He filled a ... I don't know how many he took. The third year, which is the current one, he came and took 10 pair. Be so kind as to ask him (?). If he does not ..., let him divide it with me, for I need it for my work.

I understand that Georgios lent a half-trimesion and some textiles to Joachim, who deposited a pledge for them. This pledge seems to have involved the right to use pigeons from Joachim's *peristereōnas* – pigeon farm. Taouaou clearly thinks he is abus-

**14** *O.Mon.Epiph.* 300; transl. Bagnall/Cribiore (2006) 249.

**15** *O.Vind.Copt.* 257 = *O.CrumST* 378; transl. Bagnall/Cribiore (2006) 311.

ing this right of access, and asks Zacharias to do something so that they can come to a settlement. The precise circumstances are not clear, but they are less important here than the approach taken. The document is organised much more like a letter – in particular it has a typical epistolary address, then describes the facts without preliminary statements about the qualities of the recipient, and moves on to a request introduced with 'be so kind', a very characteristic request formula in letters. It is unclear why Joachim does not take this action himself: he may be absent – or possibly deceased, but then he would probably have been described as 'the late Joachim'. Again, a request for mediation is addressed to a monk. This can be pure coincidence, but can plausibly be explained by the higher authority a monk would have carried at the village level, especially compared to other individuals Taouaou might have asked.

A short incomplete letter by a certain Sarah to 'father' Ezekiel shows a very different, almost telegraphic style.[16]

> This humblest Sarah writes to her lord father Ezekiel.
> Now, I inform you that Paulos died. Although you were protecting him and my children, he still died. Look, your charity is poured out upon them until now. I inform you concerning this man that he seized me for a debt. He said, "What did you pay again ...?" Now, be so kind ... my priests ... go to the ...

Even though Ezekiel is Sarah's protector, her tone is firm and no-nonsense. Once again, a churchman is asked to intervene regarding a debt by a woman. As often in letters, the content is not very clear. A man has seized Sarah because of a debt, and it is tempting to relate this to the death of Paulos – whose relation to Sarah is not obvious, but mentioned as he is along with her children as being in Ezekiel's care, he must have been either her husband, or a member of her household or her immediate relations.

A final letter, more complete, but still not very clear, reveals another situation where a woman is in trouble because of a debt.[17]

> Thanasia writes to her lord the priest Apa Ananias and Apa Bartholomaios.
> Be so kind, since I left the village, three years ago now, the village scribe said to me, "Go north". I went. It happened that I came over to the village because I was in the vicinity. Now then, he has arrived. Be so kind as to ask him, "Why do you detain her?" Indeed, he said, "I wanted the deed of the house". I drew up the deed (?), but he did not take it, nor did he dissolve the surety. Be so kind as to ask and beg him about me. Indeed, I have paid except for a —. I gave it to you. Good health in the Lord, Ananias and Bartholomaios.

Thanasia is writing to two priests to ask for mediation with a man who has detained her, and has laid claim to her house because of a debt. She does not understand why

**16** *O.CrumST* 233; transl. Bagnall/Cribiore (2006) 201.
**17** *O.Crum* 133; transl. Bagnall/Cribiore (2006) 309.

she is still detained, since he has drawn up the requested deed (presumably renouncing the house), but for some reason it was not accepted by the creditor who, along with Thanasia herself, also kept the surety document.

* * *

With the exception of the second one, these letters are among the many that contribute to the impression I mentioned at the beginning that contracting a debt could be the first step in a downward spiral both economically and socially. The 'legal plunder', to quote Daniel Lord Smail,[18] that unpaid debts made possible could leave entire sections of the population indigent and dependent. It is true that for the economically weakest, the possibility to borrow, if only to pay the poll tax, could allow individuals to avoid incarceration by the authorities, even if this came at the price of a different form of debt, or even one's free status. The cases I chose above are rather different. Of the five women, three certainly had some property – two had houses, and a third one had at least a field with a pigeon-farm; one was affluent enough to lend seed to two different people; only 'the humblest Sarah' could have been entirely penniless. For all, including perhaps Sarah, the reason for their troubles seems to be the absence – through death or for some other reason – of a male relative. In the first case, the author is in difficulty because of the exceptional circumstances of the Persian invasion, which has entirely destroyed her otherwise rather cosy economic setup: she has lost both the assets and the labourers that could provide an income, and is therefore unable to pay a debt which in another situation could have proved straightforward. Despite the lack of detail, and the subjectivity of the letters, in the other four cases the men involved seem to be abusing their power over women who were left without male protectors. The monks and clerics to whom these women are appealing are not only figures with symbolic capital: they are also the most obvious male members of the community to whom women can go for help in such circumstances.

The weakness and helplessness implied in the self-description as a widow had long been a rhetorical *topos* in documents whose aim was to obtain justice or a favour.[19] It is implicitly present in the letters above, through the insistence on the woes suffered in the absence of a man, intended to elicit the pity of the recipient. Predictably, the first letter is the only one with a proper rhetorical flight on that theme: 'I am this wretched one, miserable beyond all people on earth, and greatly weighed down with grief and sadness, and heartbroken for my husband who is dead, and for my son…' Petitionary forms will very naturally contain affective rhetoric, which gives a strong impression of access to the individual in a way more stereotyped documents

**18** Smail (2016).

**19** Beaucamp (1985) 150 – 151.

do not. So, can we say that we can hear, with these letters, the distant voices of seventh-century Upper Egyptian women?[20]

In 2008, in an article entitled 'Tormented Voices', James Keenan discussed *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002, a long petition by Dioscorus and the 'wretched peasants' of Aphrodito to the duke of the Thebaid Athanasios, detailing in minute detail the exactions and ill-treatment they have suffered at the hands of the pagarch Menas.[21] Keenan's title was directly borrowed from Thomas Bisson's now classic *Tormented Voices: Power, Crisis and Humanity in Rural Catalonia 1140–1200*, which analyses 16 uninventoried documents from the rich archives of twelfth-century Barcelona.[22] The content of those documents is indeed highly comparable to a number of late antique petitions filed by rural inhabitants against the powerful of the region: The peasants accuse the pagarch of extorting much more money from them than he should have through torture, seizure, destruction of houses and even blocking the irrigation canals in order to force them to submit.

After a summary of the petition's contents, Keenan discusses its length, the tax terminology it contains, the consciousness of time in the narrative, and the rare, sometimes poetic terms used for some rather mundane realities. The discussion served to introduce Keenan's doubts about the paternity of the 'tormented voices': although the petition is cast in the first person plural, purporting to 'represent the communal "voice" of the afflicted villagers', it is clear that those villagers 'are "speaking" through the pen of an accomplished notary with poetic ambitions who knows all the proper formulas and then some'.[23] Keenan goes on to draw the striking parallels between *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 and Bisson's memorials of complaint: their content, the procedures by which they came to be, the social realities they imply, and, crucially, the methodological issues they raise, in particular with respect to the nature of the 'voices' we are accessing through such documents.

Recent work on petitions in the early modern and modern world shows the extent to which individual voices, even when oral and written are by the same person, will always be mediated through the filter of rhetorical and compositional models.[24] They follow what linguistic anthropologists call *genre*.[25] Like literary genre, everyday linguistic genre is what allows individuals sharing the same cultural background to recognise a given style in speech situations (or written texts), which sets in motion certain specific expectations. For example, a framing device such as 'Once upon a time' will carry with it a set of expectations concerning the further unfolding of the discourse, indexing other texts initiated by this opening formula. This cultur-

**20** The question is discussed in the introduction of Bagnall/Cribiore (2006) 6–8, but with the accent on who *wrote* the letters rather than whose words – or voice – they transmit.

**21** Keenan (2008).

**22** Bisson (1998).

**23** Keenan (2008) 178.

**24** See for instance Grama (2010); Zaret (1996); (2000).

**25** See Baumann (2000) with further references.

al/linguistic genre is what we can see at work the petitions written by Dioscorus, or by other notaries like him: whatever the improvements made to the form or vocabulary, he shared the cultural expectations of the 'voices' he mediated.

Even though the letters written by our five women do not qualify as petitions, but, as mentioned above, sit at different points of a continuum between petition and informal letter, the question can easily be transferred to them. Indeed, as Fournet has shown in some detail, these two types of document have a common foundation, a petition being, ultimately, a specific, formal, and stylised version of a letter.

Taken together, these texts, addressed to figures of authority, all use the same argumentative repertoire (need for protection, dependence on men, victimisation, helplessness), whose gendered character is evident – most explicitly in the first text.[26] Similarly to petitions, this arguably stems from a cultural expectation dictating a specific genre in the formulation of female requests. This presupposes a certain level of cultural education or, to put it in different terms, a familiarity with precedent and the norms of procedure, a knowledge of the generic forms that were the norm in similar circumstances. Whether these letters were actually written by the women themselves or by a man writing for them, those generic elements would be largely the same if adherence to cultural norms was high – and that is probably why we have so much difficulty telling the difference.

Taken separately, the texts display within the same matrix a gradation, from those placing greater insistence on the rhetorical niceties and greater generic consciousness (in the first letter and even to some extent the second one) to those exhibiting a much more direct approach (the other three letters). This gradation was a function of the nature of the document (degree of resemblance to a petition), of the nature of the relation with the recipient (more or less direct), and of the degree of competence of the individual writing the document.

On the whole, it is possible to make a number of concluding remarks. The texts analysed confirm the importance taken by relations of patronage and protection in the functioning of the credit economy, and the role churchmen could take within that system. Despite the differences in documentary form, the requests made to patrons all mobilise the same linguistic genre, albeit at different degrees of intensity. An important factor in the definition of that genre are its gendered tropes: the 'tormented voices' of these Upper Egyptian women fulfil the cultural expectation, without revealing whether they have been materially put to paper by them or by a male amanuensis. Ultimately, the appeal to churchmen in letters adopting this gendered genre was a formula for the success or at least the efficiency of the request.

**26** For formal petitions, see the analysis in Kotsifou (2012); Bagnall (2004) studies their evolution over time in late antiquity.

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Stefanie Schmidt

# Economic Conditions for Merchants and Traders at the Border Between Egypt and Nubia in Early Islamic Times*

## 1 Introduction

Tenth- and twelfth-century literary sources describe medieval Aswān as a central hub for trade coming through the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, and the border with Nubia. Masʿūdī (895 – 957), for instance, reports that huge caravans full of merchandise from Nubia were transacted in the city.[1] Arabic letters from Qaṣr Ibrīm in Lower Nubia emphasize the role of local elites like the Banū al-Kanz in organizing trade in products including spices, dyestuffs, medical substances, and textiles.[2] However, the early beginnings of this economic success story have yet to be adequately explored. Who were the economic actors and decision makers in the seventh and eighth centuries? To what extent did they draw on traditional networks, and how did production and distribution patterns in the region change over time? The following study can only provide limited insights into these questions. Nonetheless, papyri and archaeological findings dating to the transition period between the late Byzantine and early Islamic period can enhance our knowledge of commercial activity in the border region and the economic objectives pursued by early Muslim rulers.[3]

## 2 Muslim influence in Upper Egypt

The chronology of the Arab conquest of southern Egypt is still understudied and primarily based on literary sources. This explains why reliable information about early Muslim interventions in Aswān's affairs is not easy to obtain.[4] A study of the Muslim

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1 Masʿūdī, *Kitāb murūj al-dhahab* (C. Barbier de Meynard), III, chapter 33, p. 50.

2 Khan (2013) 148 – 149.

3 The author of this article is preparing a larger study on the trade networks and production and distribution patterns of Aswān between the fifth and ninth centuries.

4 The traditional view, which centers on the narrations of the Muslim historians, perceives the conquest as a single, unidirectional movement from north to south in which the conquest of Upper Egypt followed that of Babylon, cf. Butler (1902); this is followed in essence by Christides (2012); Fraser

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impact on the local economy must thus begin by outlining what we already know about early Muslim activity in southern Egypt and about the main players in the border area at the time.

The first datable evidence of Arab influence in Upper Egypt comes from a papyrus letter in the archive of Papas, pagarch of Edfū (Apollonopolis Magna). It refers to a *symboulos* ʿAbd Allāh and should probably be dated to January 648.[5] The region (*chōra*) of Qifṭ, 150 km north of Edfū, could have been under Muslim control from as early as 642/643 as Jelle Bruning pointed out in his dissertation citing epigraphic evidence.[6] Aswān could be reached from Qifṭ after a week-long journey on the Nile, depending on the vessel type, its cargo, and the experience of the crew.[7]

Although the literary sources do not provide details about Muslim activities in this part of the country, they are unanimous in their reports about a military campaign against the Nubians under the first Muslim governor of Egypt ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ (first in office 641–645) that ended disastrously for the Muslims. The dominant tradition reports that the fighting took place on Nubian soil.[8] According to some Muslim historians, however, al-Ṭabarī (838–923), for instance, the Arabs fought against the "Nubians of Egypt" (*nūbat miṣr*); this may be an allusion to Nubian settlers on Egyptian territory in the border region, a thesis that is to a certain extent supported by the archaeological evidence.[9] Frontier zones very seldom divide two nations strictly from each other; they are more usually zones of contact with often mixed populations. The First Cataract was no exception;[10] archaeological findings provide ample evidence

(1991); Kaegi (1998); and Kennedy (2008) 139–168. John of Nikiou's chronicle, however, also gives an account of an Arab army coming from the South, and this is considered the most plausible scenario by Booth (2013).

**5** *P.Apoll.* 2 (Edfū; 6 January 648), cf. *BL* VIII 10. Muslim control of Edfū at that time is also demonstrated by *SB Kopt.* I 242, a well-known Coptic document concerned with the distribution of pepper among the guilds of the town dated to 649; for Damianos, duke of the Thebaid in 649, cf. *CPR* XXX 199; Gascou/Worp (1982) 90. However, when the region was conquered is still unclear. At least Edfū could have remained under Byzantine control until January 641, depending on the dating of a regnal formula in the marriage contract *SB* VI 8986 from that town, cf. Sijpesteijn/Worp (1977) 284; Gonis (2008); Zuckerman (2010) 867–887.

**6** Bruning (2018) 92. This interpretation certainly depends on the meaning of *chōra* in this context, cf. *SB Kopt.* III 1584.14 (= Brunsch [1994] 30, no. A 14529) of which Van der Vliet (2013) 175–76 provided a new reading given in translation (*chōra* = land).

**7** Cooper (2014) 156–160.

**8** Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (Torrey) 169–170, al-Balādhurī (Ḥitti) 379 (237) and al-Yaʿqūbī (Houtsma), vol. II, 179–180 report that ʿAmr sent ʿUqba b. Nāfiʿ b. ʿAbd al-Qays al-Fihrī to conquer Nubian land (*arḍ al-nūba*). Robin Seignobos (forthcoming) 32–42 makes plausible that the common source for this tradition is Ibn Saʿd (d. 845), who again relies on Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb (d. 745), a "black Nubian" (*aswād nūbī*), whose father might have been a Nubian captive from Dongola.

**9** Al-Ṭabarī (Prym) V, 2593. For this interpretation, cf. Bruning (2018) 94; for the two different narrative chains about a campaign in Nubia or on Egyptian soil with Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb (d. 745) as a common source, cf. Seignobos (forthcoming) 36.

**10** A good study of the First Cataract as a permeable frontier zone in Islamic times is provided by Seignobos (2010).

that prestige-good networks, gift exchange, and trade in consumer goods had always generated considerable mobility of people and goods between Nubia and Upper Egypt. Aswān pottery, for instance, has been found all over Lower Nubia, and this reflects the economic exchange of local Egyptian goods in the border region throughout the Roman, Byzantine, and indeed also Islamic periods.[11] Even domestic architecture was influenced by the neighboring cultures, as archaeological investigations of houses in the area of the First Cataract have demonstrated.[12] This picture of high interconnectivity is strengthened further by recent archaeological investigations of a site called Qalʿat al-Bābayn about 20 km south of Edfū and ca. 80 km north of Aswān.[13] Findings from the site in the mountain range Jabal al-Sirāj revealed a high degree of similarity with pottery, textiles, footwear, and the architectural style of Nubian fortified enclosures in the First Cataract.[14] Instead of a hard frontier between Egyptians and Nubians, the Arabs in their advance southwards may thus have encountered a scenario with mixed populations closely connected by social and economic networks.[15]

With regard to the situation in Aswān itself, it needs to be conceded that no reliable information exists regarding either the mixed composition of the population or the city's political rulers at the time of the Arab conquest.[16] Evidence of a Byzantine army presence in the region breaks off in 613, with the last document being a papyrus from the family archive of Patermouthis (493 – 613), who was a boatman and soldier of Elephantine.[17] An analysis of what happened with the military unit under the Sa-

**11** Adams (2013); Adams (1986). For trade in textiles, cf. Wild/Wild (2014) and a current project conducted by Magdalena Wozniak (*National Science Centre* [*NCN*] in Warsaw) which analyzes textile production and consumption in medieval Nubia: http://centrumnubia.org/en/projects/nubian-textiles.

**12** See Arnold (2013), who analyzed architecture in the area of the First Cataract from the sixth to the tenth centuries.

**13** For this distance, cf. Grossmann (1991), but see also Effland (1999) 50: "14 km südlich von Edfu," and *id*. (2008) 84 with n. 3: "Die Koordinaten des Ortes lauten 24° 48′ 39″ N und 32° 54′ 51″ O."

**14** Gascoigne/Rose (2010) 46 – 47; Effland (1999) 50; Grossmann/Jaritz (1974), in which the pottery was dated to between the fifth and seventh centuries, with some pieces of eighth- or ninth-century origin. But see now Gascoigne/Rose (2010) 46 – 47 with n. 8 – 9 who re-date the mixed Egyptian and Nubian pottery to the period between the mid-seventh and the ninth centuries.

**15** Studies of the presence of Nubian material culture in southern Egypt, in particular to the north of Aswān, are still only at the beginning, but archaeologists nonetheless emphasize that the southernmost part of Egypt "was substantially penetrated by Nubian cultural influence in early Islamic times," cf. Gascoigne/Rose (2010) 47. The authors point out (p. 49 – 50) that the "uniqueness" of such sites as Qalʿat al-Bābayn could simply be due to a general lack of archaeological investigations of sites like, for instance, the complex of Abū Hība, about 20 km north of Aswān.

**16** The pottery of Aswān, which gives information about economic and intercultural influences, is currently being studied by Gregory Williams (Bonn) in his forthcoming dissertation.

**17** The soldiers of a *legio* of Syene or Elephantine appear as witnesses to documents of the archive, cf. Keenan (1990) and Porten *et al*. (1996) 398 – 402, *passim*. For the military presence in the region in Roman/Byzantine times, cf. also Dijkstra (2008) 28; Maxfield (2000) 413; Brennan (1989); Bowman (1978) and the late antique *Notitia Dignitatium orientis XXXI* 35; 64 – 65.

sanian occupation of Egypt (618/619 – 629) and, moreover, the question of who filled the vacuum in this strategic border region between the Persian retreat from Egypt in 629 and the Arab invasion of 639 is still a desideratum.[18] According to the literary sources, Aswān came under Muslim control when governor ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿd b. Abī Sarḥ (in office 645 – 656) led the second campaign against Nubia. Ibn Ḥawqal (d. after 978), recorded that ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿd conquered Aswān, Elephantine, and Philae in 652.[19]

Given the strategic value Aswān as location would have had for the Muslim campaign under ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, an earlier date is not to be excluded, but neither archaeological nor documentary textual sources provide evidence for this.[20]

# 3 Interventions in trade by central authorities

## 3.1 Fostering external trade and traders commuting to and from Nubia

After these two major campaigns in which the Muslims had failed to gain victory over Nubia, the antagonist parties finally reached a settlement that ended hostilities under the second Muslim governor of Egypt ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿd.[21] The majority of accounts report that this was achieved by a mutual agreement involving an annual exchange of Nubian slaves for Egyptian goods known as *baqṭ*.[22] Muslim historians focused on defining the legal framework underlying this treaty, for instance, whether it was a truce (*hudna*) or a peace treaty (*ṣulḥ*).[23] Comprehensive economic questions,

**18** Schmidt (forthcoming) and Seignobos (forthcoming) 27 and n. 55.

**19** Ibn Ḥawqal (Kramers, Wiet) I, 49; Vantini (1975) 153. Some scholars assume that the Arabs had to re-conquer Aswān from the Nubians at that time; cf. Jakobielski/Van der Vliet (2011) 30.

**20** The earliest possible trace of Muslim activity in the town may be an Arabic tombstone archived in the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, which commemorates the death of a certain ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaīr al-Ḥajrī. However, its origin from Aswān is disputed; cf. El-Hawary (1930); Schmidt (forthcoming).

**21** Al-Balādhurī (Ḥitti) 379 (237); Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (Torrey) 169–170. Ibn Saʿd (ʿUmar) V, 69–70; VI, 138–139, and al-Ṭabarī (Prym) V, 2593 follow two different narrative chains, but also with the common source Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb (d. 745); for a detailed discussion of the chains of narration of the *baqṭ*, cf. Seignobos (forthcoming) 59–65. See, moreover, the discussions in Christides (1992); Forand (1972); Hinds/Sakkout (1981); Zaborski, A., "Marginal notes on medieval Nubia," (typewritten essay, 3, quoted after Christides [1992] 345); for an interpretation as tribute, cf. Beshir (1975) 24; for the *ṣulḥan/anwatan* traditions of the early Islamic jurists, cf. Noth (1973).

**22** A compilation of related narrations is given in Vantini (1975) 58 (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam); 68 – 69 (Ibn al-Khordādhbeh); 74 (al-Yaʿqūbī); 80 – 82 (al-Balādhuri); 91 (Ibn al-Faqīh); 98 (al-Ṭabarī); 105 (Qudāma); 132 (al-Masʿūdī); 316 (Michael the Syrian); 346 (Yaqūt); 348 – 349 (Ibn al-Athīr); 420 (Bar Hebraeus); 476 (al-Nuwayrī); 529 and 534 – 535 (Ibn al-Furāt); 638 – 646 (al-Maqrīzī); 744 (al-Ṣuyūṭī).

**23** For *hudna*, cf. Khadduri (2012a); Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (Torrey) 188; Al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ* (Hitti, 380 – 381 [238]; for *ṣulḥ*, cf. Khadduri (2012b); Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (Harrās) 215, no. 402.

like who produced the Egyptian goods for the *baqṭ* or to what extent the economies involved benefitted from this diplomatic goods exchange, were not mentioned by the literary sources and have also not been a major focus of the academic discussion of the *baqṭ* so far.

The regulations of the *baqṭ* were in effect for several hundred years and created a basis for politically supported border trading. This is most effectively demonstrated by means of a famous Arabic papyrus found in Qaṣr Ibrīm in Lower Nubia.[24] This long letter (255 cm long and ca. 53,5 cm in width) is part of a dossier of five otherwise Coptic papyri which were stored together in a house, possibly the residence of the eparch of Qaṣr Ibrīm.[25] The dossier, which has been dated to between 758 and 759/760, not only proves the historicity of the *baqṭ*. The letters also give interesting insights into cross-border commercial activities and their legal implications for traders commuting between the countries. The sender of the Arabic letter was the Egyptian governor Mūsā b. Kaʿb (in office 758–759), who wrote to the *ṣāḥib* of Muqurra and Nubia, probably to be identified with King Cyriacus.[26] Given that there is no evidence for a royal residence in Qaṣr Ibrīm, it is assumed that the letter had been forwarded from the king to the eparch in Qaṣr Ibrīm – perhaps mentioned in the text as "your deputy" (*khalīfat-ak*) –, who stored it together with the Coptic letters for archival purposes.[27]

Written about a hundred years after the conclusion of the *baqṭ*, the letter mentions the major points of the mutual arrangement, which was still in force: the annual provision of slaves of good health and right age by the Nubians, the return of escaped slaves and criminals, the freedom of settlement Nubians enjoyed in Egypt, and finally the unimpeded movement and the protection of border-crossing merchants.[28] Mūsā blamed the Nubian *ṣāḥib* for the poor quality of the slaves recently furnished. And, moreover, he particularly denounced violations of the freedom of travel of Egyptian traders who entered Nubia for business reasons, complaining that they

**24** Hinds/Sakkout (1981) 226–229 (= *P.HindsNubia* = *P.AbuSafiyaRisalatMusa* [Qaṣr Ibrīm, 25 November 758]), also discussed in Adams (2010) 246–248; Sijpesteijn (2010) 115–116; Plumley (1975).

**25** Adams (2010) 24–25; 244–249; Plumley (1975); Plumley/Adams (1974).

**26** For this, see Hinds/Sakkout (1981) 226, commentary to line 2. For the Arabic term *ṣāḥib* and its use in inner-Egyptian administration, see Morelli (2010) 163: "*Ṣāḥib* è poi usato effettivamente come titolo amministrativo: *ṣāḥib al-shurṭa*; *ṣāḥib al-barīd*, etc.; tutti personaggi di grado elevato a livello provinciale." Sijpesteijn (2013) 103 points out that in Egypt, mostly Christian pagarchs were called *ṣāḥib*.

**27** For the archival purpose, see recently Adams (2010) 245, and 247 for the absence of a royal residence. Plumley (1975) 242 considered the option that the Coptic letters were drafts of a reply. The Coptic letters were dated to the governorship of Muḥammad b. al-Ashʿath (in office 759–760), who followed Mūsā b. Kaʿb in office; cf. Plumley (1975) 242. The Coptic documents are being studied by Joost L. Hagen in his dissertation. A rough summary is provided in Adams (2010) 245.

**28** Regarding the question of settlement, we see major differences to the conditions of the *baqṭ* as transmitted by Maqrīzī (Wiet) III.2, 290–292. Maqrīzī (1364–1442) reports that the Nubians were not allowed to settle in Egypt, but only to pass through the country. This may be an indicator that the conditions for the agreement had been altered sometime after 758.

were not being adequately protected. He refers to the case of a merchant from Aswān, Muḥammad b. Zayd, whose employee had been maltreated and robbed on Nubian territory. Mūsā calls upon the Nubians to adhere to the compact (*ʿahd*)[29] both sides were legally bound to and to provide security for the merchants.

The letter reveals, moreover, that the Egyptian governor's deputy with responsibility for Aswān (*ʿāmil ʿalā Aswān*), who was Salm b. Sulaymān at this time, was the guarantor for the security of the frontier zone on the Egyptian side.[30] Later literary sources inform us that it was the deputy residing in Aswān who was also responsible for overseeing the transactions of the *baqṭ* and the handover of the slaves. Masʿūdī, writing in the tenth century, reports that in return for his efforts, the deputy was entitled to take forty slaves annually for his own purposes. The same applied to the assisting judge (*al-ḥākim*) of the city, who could obtain five slaves, and to the twelve notaries (*shāhid ʻadūl*), who each received one for themselves.[31] Aswān's administration and legal institutions may thus have profited from the dynamics of exchange under the early Abbasids. The case of Muḥammad b. Zayd reveals, moreover, that Muslim merchants at that time had already begun to engage in regional exchange networks. By the middle of the eighth century, Aswān had become a trading place for Muslim merchants who were actively involved in the development of the town's economy. The letters from Qaṣr Ibrīm, not all of which have been published so far, impressively demonstrate how direct state intervention aimed not only to provide stable conditions for diplomatic, but also for commercial exchanges. The *baqṭ* and its accompanying conditions fostering and protecting free trade and the mobility of traders certainly had positive effects on external and on cross-border trade.

## 3.2 Taxes affecting traders

Measures which protected exporting or importing merchants worked first and foremost to the advantage of the commuting merchants. But they must also have been in the financial interests of the Muslim authorities, given that steady flows of imports

**29** For *ʿahd*, cf. Schacht (2012); see Hinds/Sakkout (1981) 214 – 216 on this issue, who assume that the kind of agreement had been altered from a simple *hudna* plus an annual exchange of goods to a more complex arrangement by the time of the early Abbasids.

**30** Salm must have been in office at least since February 758, because Mūsā mentions his earlier investigation in the case nine months before the letter was written in November; cf. Hinds/Sakkout (1981) 228, l. 51.

**31** Masʿūdī (Barbier de Meynard) III, 39 – 40, mentions 365 slaves for the treasury (*bayt al-māl*). Apart from the slaves for the deputy, the judge, and the notaries in Aswān, forty slaves were intended for the governor (*amīr*) of Egypt. Maqrīzī (Wiet) III.2, 291, mentions 360 "heads" (*raʾs*), which were to be handed over to the *wālī* in Aswān. It is possible that he relies on the lost accounts of Ibn Sulaym al-Uswānī from Aswān, who wrote between 969 and 975; cf. Hinds/Sakkout (1981) 210; for al-Aswānī, see Kheir (1989). Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (Torrey) 188. 16 to 189. 5 transmits two figures: 360 and 400 prisoners (l. 12: *raʾs min al-sabī*), of which 40 were for the *wālī*.

and exports would have generated revenue from taxes on trade. The extent to which custom duties could contribute to the state finances is impressively illustrated by what is known of Roman tariffs in the second century. The high tax of 25 percent (*tetartē*)[32] on imports from outside the Empire must have brought significant revenues to the Roman state. This is clearly demonstrated by the Indo-Roman trade of which the so-called Muziris Papyrus from the middle of the second century is a unique example.[33] The papyrus preserves a record of the goods and the monetary value of a cargo shipped from India to Egypt. The total value, which was already reduced by the amount for the quarter-tax, was 1,151 talents 5,852 *drachmae* (*dr.*) (in total: 6,911,852 *dr.*).[34] The value of the *tetartē* for this cargo alone would have been about 2,303,950 *dr.*[35]

The total amount of revenues from customs in early Islamic Egypt is not known to us, but for the time of the caliph Muʿāwiya (661–680), literary sources state that revenues from the river trade amounted to 12 million *dīnārs*.[36] Central authorities who obtained revenues on trade thus had a strong motive to secure this significant source of income and protect the movements of traders against any kind of threats and uncertainties.

The beginning of Muslim taxation on trade is often ascribed to the period of ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (634–644).[37] After he had learned that Muslim merchants had to pay the tithe (ten-percent tax) abroad, it is said that ʿUmar decided likewise to levy a sales tax on foreign merchandise. This tax is usually identified with the *ʿushr*, a tax of ten percent.[38] The Muslim legal sources, which, however, were produced outside Egypt, report that the rate of the *ʿushr* differed with regard to the religion of the payers (Muslims or *dhimmi*, non-Muslims who enjoyed protection since they acknowledged Islamic rule[39]), their occupation (merchant or cultivator), and their relationship to the Muslim community (*ḥarbī*[40] or *muʿāhid*): The full *ʿushr* of ten percent was to be levied 1) in kind on Muslim cultivators of land that was irriga-

**32** For the 25 percent at the Roman Red Sea port Leuke Kome in *PME* 19, cf. Wallace (1969) 25; Young (1997); Cottier (2010).

**33** *SB* XVIII 13167; De Romanis (2012); Morelli (2011); Rathbone (2000); Casson (1990); Thür (1987); Harrauer/Sijpesteijn (1985).

**34** Morelli (2011) 214 to line 57; the *ed. pr.* read 1,154 talents 2,852 *drachmae*.

**35** Speidel (2016) 166 pointed out that we may easily expect that one hundred of these ships may have imported goods from India per year, and surmised that the income from customs could have sufficed to cover all military expenses incurred by the Empire in the second century. Not yet included in this calculation are internal tariffs levied for passing custom borders between provinces and cities. For internal tariffs and custom borders, cf. Cottier (2010) 141–148; Jördens (2009) 355–396; Drexhage (1994); Sijpesteijn (1987) 25.

**36** Sijpesteijn (2013) 180; al-Dimashqī (Mehren) 109. For metrology, cf. Hinz (1970) 1–2.

**37** Yaḥyā b. Ādam (Shemesh) no. 638–639.

**38** Becker (1906) 53–56; Darling (2015); Sato (2012).

**39** Cahen (2012).

**40** Abel (2012). They lived outside Muslim territory, but had permission to trade in Islamic countries.

ted naturally, and 2) *ad valorem* on *ḥarbī* merchants when they crossed the border of a Muslim country (*dār al-Islām*), for instance, that between Egypt and Nubia. Half the rate of *ʿushr* (five percent) was paid by 3) Muslim cultivators of land that was irrigated artificially (water wheels, carried water, etc.) and 4) *dhimmī* merchants.[41] The latter had to pay the full *ʿushr* on the value of wine and pork when the merchant passed the station of a tax collector.[42]

In legal sources, *ʿushr* and *maks* are often used synonymously. *Mukūs* (plural) were, however, deplored as illegal impositions throughout most of the Umayyad period and only later became accepted as customs.[43] In Egypt, *maks* first appears in two papyri concerned with shortages of grain in 710. In one letter, the governor Qurra b. Sharīk ordered Basileios, the administrator of Aphrodito, to ensure that every *tājir* (dealer, merchant) in his district brought half of his stored grain (*ṭaʿām*) to Fusṭāṭ to sell it on the market.[44] The superintendent of the *maks* (*ṣāḥib al-maks*) in Fusṭāṭ should take notice of the amount of grain being imported and sold in the capital.[45] That merchants who sold their grain in the capital usually paid *maks* is revealed by another letter from Aphrodito written in the same period.[46] The unknown writer, presumably Qurra, declared that he had remitted the *maks* so that merchants could sell their grain and also make a profit.[47] Whether this *maks* was a kind of sales tax or a charge for bringing products into the Fusṭāṭ market remains unclear. The amount of taxes a merchant had to pay until his merchandise finally reached the purchaser was certainly not insignificant. There were fees and customs for entering customs districts and for using roads, bridges, and harbors. A Coptic letter from the Fayyūm concerned with the sale of wine in the eighth century gives an example of at least four different taxes due before a commodity reached Fusṭāṭ: charges at the custom barrier of Arsinoe, a fee to pass the bridge at al-Lāhūn (a village at the eastern entrance to the Fayyūm), an undefined *telos,* and custom duties at the harbor of Babylon.[48]

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**41** Yaḥyā b. Ādam (Shemesh) nos. 39; 121; 213; 214–216; 219; 221–222; 639. Abū Yūsuf (Fagnan) 187–188; 204–213; Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām (Nyazee) nos. 1655–1692.

**42** Yaḥyā b. Ādam (Shemesh) no. 222: "The tax collector has to assess the wine and the hogs, if they are for trade, and collect ten percent of their value." See also no. 37: "They are charged with it but double *ṣadaqa* is not charged on others among the *ahl al-dhimma*, except from their trade when they pass by in front of the collector (*ʿāshir*)." And nos. 215–216; 220–221; 223 (wine); 222 (wine and hogs).

**43** On the relation and nature of *maks* and *ʿushr*, cf. Forand (1966). The Arabic *maks* presumably derives from the Aramaic *makᵉṣā* (toll, tribute, impost, tax), which was translated as Greek *telos* in the bilingual toll tariff of Palmyra from 137. The decree of the city council of Palmyra is published in De Vogüé (1883) at 162, LI (Greek) and 163, LI, 3 (Aramaic). For *makᵉṣā*, cf. Fraenkel (1982) 283; Becker (1906), 53–56; Payne Smith (1903) 272.

**44** *P.Heid.Arab.* I 2.16–22 (Aphroditō; 710).

**45** *P.Heid.Arab.* I 2.24–25.

**46** *P.BeckerNPAF* 4 (Aphroditō; 710).

**47** *P.BeckerNPAF* 4.5–6.

**48** *CPR* II 228 v 7–11 (Babylon; VIII). For customs at Babylon, cf. also *P.Berl.Frisk.* 6 (= *SB* V 7520) (Aphroditō; 710); *P.Lond.* V 1754 (Babylon; VII–VIII).

Already in Roman and Byzantine times, wine had been an important Egyptian trade commodity which was also destined for an external market. This can be assumed from the significant number of Egyptian *amphorae* found in Nubia. Roman and Late Roman period *amphorae* from Aswān (R30 and W24) and the Theban region (U4) with resinated interiors have been found in domestic and tavern refuse between the First and Second Cataracts.[49] Wine continued to be produced and distributed on a considerable scale under Muslim rule. William Y. Adams' study of pottery found in Nubia revealed that the percentage of sherd composition of Aswān U2 *amphorae* constituted almost 20 percent of the pottery findings in Nubia dated to between 650 and 700.[50] With regard to the trade in wine, it is worth keeping in mind that according to Islamic regulations, a *dhimmī* was taxed double his usual tax rate when he traded in this commodity.[51] Since the tax was not levied on the sale of wine, but on the mere activity of trade, all commercial movements of wine to Nubia must have generated lucrative revenues for the Muslim authorities.

It thus seems entirely plausible to assume that Mūsā b. Kaʿb's (in office 758 – 759) efforts to facilitate continuous border trade with Nubia did not only serve diplomatic purposes. It is likely that merchants who pursued cross-border trade paid the *ʿushr* or an equivalent tax, which made external trade, particularly with non-Muslim countries, a lucrative business for the state treasury.[52]

To sum up: The border trade between Aswān and Nubia, especially the question of commuting merchants and goods traded, is fundamentally a story of continuity. Roman and Late Roman trade networks and consumption patterns persisted more than a century after the Arab conquest, as is evidenced by the trade in wine. The *baqṭ* and accompanying agreements created favorable terms for a flourishing border trade, which was fostered and secured by the Muslim authorities from the very begin-

**49** Adams (1986) 525 – 560 ("Aswān wares"). The typical red Aswān ware, which was made of pink clay, can be found all over Egypt and the Mediterranean; for Elephantine, cf. Gempeler (1992); for the early Roman period: Rodziewicz (2005); the material from Aswān is being studied i.a. by A. L. Gascoigne, G. Pyke, P. Rose, and G. Williams (dissertation forthcoming). Cf. moreover, the excavation reports in *MDAIK* 64 (2008) 305 – 356, at 344 – 356; *MDAIK* 52 (1996) 233 – 349; *MDAIK* 50 (1994) 115 – 141, at 122 – 141; for Aswān ware in Edfū, cf. Gascoigne (2005) 161; for Tell Mound (Luxor), cf. Masson *et al.* (2012) 129 – 130; for Dayr al-Bakhīt (Thebes West), cf. Beckh (2013) 16 – 17; 181 – 183; pl. 69 – 91; 114 – 115; for al-Ashmūnein, cf. Bailey (1998) 8 – 38; for al-Tōd, cf. Lecuyot/Pierrat-Bonnefois (2004) Td 136 – 150 "W" and Pierrat (1991) 149; 175 – 192; for al-Quseir: Strange Burke (2007) 81 – 86; for Alexandria, cf. Rodziewicz (1976).

**50** Adams (1986) 540 – 542 and fig. 305 Z; 545; the index figures on 630.

**51** Yaḥyā b. Ādam (Shemesh) nos. 215; 220 – 221; 223 (wine); 222 (wine and hogs).

**52** The tax of ten percent is perhaps also referred to in an Arabic letter from the Fatimid period found at Qaṣr Ibrīm; cf. Adams (2013) 251. The sender is a Muslim merchant, writing to the eparch and announcing his upcoming journey to Nubia to the king. However, if the lacuna is indeed to be completed with the ten-percent tax as the editor assumed, it would mean that the Nubians had some share in it: "Send me your letter [permitting] that group of merchants enter [the king's territory] with me; would you treat them well on account of the … [tenth? i. e. ten-percent tax on goods, possibly]", translated following E. Sartain.

nings of incipient peaceful relationships between the countries. A strong motivation for a stable border trade was certainly related to the prospect of revenues from taxes levied on goods like the wine destined to be traded or sold to Christian Nubia.

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Matthias Müller*

# Andreas, Son of Petros, and the Monastery of Dayr al-Rūmī: An Usurious Monk? or a Monastic Record Vault?

## Introduction

Among the monastic installations on the West Bank of the Nile at Thebes, few places lead a more shadowy scientific existence than the complex known today as Dayr al-Rūmī. Even though it is one of the best-preserved monastic complexes (not only) in the area still standing, the original archaeological report from the excavations at the beginning of the 20th century has never been published (even if those notes probably did not live up to the standards even of those days) and the finds made have never been properly catalogued and, in the case of the texts, edited. Re-examinations by a French team made at least a plan and parts of the textual finds accessible. In the following, the archive of an individual, probably from the eighth century, will be introduced.

## The monastery

The monasteries and the anchorite dwellings in the hills close to the cultivated area on the Western shore of the Nile opposite present-day Luxor seem to have been occupied for only about 200 years from the late sixth to the late eighth century.[1] The earliest securely dated text is still the Turin ostracon (*SB Kopt*. II 1328) mentioning a solar eclipse that can be dated to noon of the 10th of March in 601 (Gilmore/Ray [2006]). However, as Martin Krause, Sebastian Richter, and others have correctly pointed out, some texts from the Abraham dossier surely pre-date the year 600 (Krause [1969] 58–59; Krause [1985] 37; Richter [2013] 20 and 39). *P.KRU* 91, the last directly dated text, is a legal document from 164/781, but some indirectly dated texts push the dates a little further forward to 785 (Richter [2013] 20 n. 44). Re-

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1 This statement seems basically valid even even after Krueger's re-discovery of an occupation of the 6th century near Armant (see Krueger 2019).

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cent archaeological (re-)examination of the material has provided an even larger time frame running from the fifth or sixth century up until possibly the twelfth century (Beckh [2013] 55 and 69 – 73).

The monastery known as Dayr al-Rūmī ("Monastery of the Byzantine[s]")[2] is situated in the Valley of the Queens upon the slopes of a hill that divides the valley into various branches. It overlooks the plain leading towards the town of Jeme, which is about a kilometer away and hence quickly accessible. The builders took advantage of the natural geography of the site, such as a free-standing boulder or the cliffs against which parts of the monastery's buildings were built. Among the monastic installations of the Theban west-bank, this one is probably the least known so far and hence often, rather tellingly, completely or almost completely absent from overviews (Wilfong [1989]; O'Connell [2007]; O'Connell [2010]; Krause [2010]).

**Fig. 7:** Part of the monastery (Photo: author, November 2017)

Excavations were undertaken by an Italian mission headed by Ernesto Schiaparelli in 1903 – 04 (Schiaparelli [1924]), but the results (regarding the layout of the Cop-

**2** For deliberations upon the origin of such a name within an otherwise reportedly strict miaphysite environment, see Crum in Winlock/Crum (1926) 152.

tic installations and the finds) have never been published, neither the finds nor the plans. Fresh examinations of the site and the whole valley by a French mission that commenced work in 1988 yielded a more detailed plan of the monastery's buildings and structures (see figure 2) and several new texts in both Coptic and Greek.[3] According to the results of the new excavations, the monastery was founded at the end of the sixth century (Lecuyot [2016] 95 n. 14)[4] over a Roman temple and was occupied at least until the end of the seventh century (what can be pushed further into the eighth century with the help of the textual evidence, see below). It was presumably connected to anchorite cells (established in tombs from Pharaonic times in the Valley of Queens) forming the kind of loose congregation also known from other monastic sites in Western Thebes and beyond (Delattre *et al.* [2008]; Lecuyot [2016] 96).

The texts found during the Italian and French excavations are all only ostraca, mainly on potsherds. The material from the Italian mission is currently stored in the Museo Egizio in Turin[5] and numbers 76 pieces in total (all on pottery except for a single limestone ostracon). The ostraca from the French excavations come from a 2007–08 exploratory excavation in the area west of the monastery that had already proven rich in ostraca. These are being studied and prepared for publication by Alain Delattre under the heading of DRO (Deir er-Roumi Ostraca).[6] These add a further 34 potsherds to the total. A clear majority of the texts are written in Coptic, and only six are in Greek (or may be).

Little can be gathered about the monastery from the texts. The letter *SB Kopt*. IV 1750 is addressed to a presbyter Philotheos, who is asked to pay for two large loads of baggage for another man by a certain Pagapē[7]. Another presbyter appears in a piece so fragmentary that it cannot be discerned whether he was the recipient, the sender, or merely mentioned in the message (*SB Kopt*. IV 1751). A presbyter Paēre (son of) Dios, a steward (*oikonomos*) Ammônios, and a commander (*archōn*) Eleutheris sign an account relating to stones (DRO 26). Another presbyter, who goes by the typ-

**3** Pezin/Lecuyot (2007); see now *SB Kopt*. IV 1747–1757 (letters), 1789–1792 (debts), 1797–1799 (documents), 1827–1828 (lists), 1836–1839 (jar sealings), 2112–2118 (notes), 2124–2128 (numbers), and 2156 (unclear). NB: only those found at the Dayr al-Rūmī site have been listed here. For some of the Greek texts, which are partly from the earlier occupation of the site, see Wagner et al. (1990) 376–380.

**4** In earlier studies, e.g. Lecuyot (1996) 158, the foundation of the monastery was assumed to have been a century earlier. For the Roman temple, see Lecuyot/Gabolde (1998).

**5** Since 2016, the present author has been working together with Heike Behlmer (Göttingen) and Claudia Gamma (Basel) as well as Alain Delattre (Brussels) on the material stored in Turin (supported by the authorities of the Fondazione Museo Egizio in the person of Alessia Fassone). The project attempts to publish all the material transported to Turin (besides the Coptic and Greek texts, also the jar sealings, wooden boards, pottery, lime- and sandstone fragments with votive carvings, etc.) as well as the archaeological records of Schiaparelli's excavations.

**6** Transcriptions, translations, and photos of which have been kindly made available to us by Alain Delattre.

**7** Apparently so, although names with agapē are usually feminine.

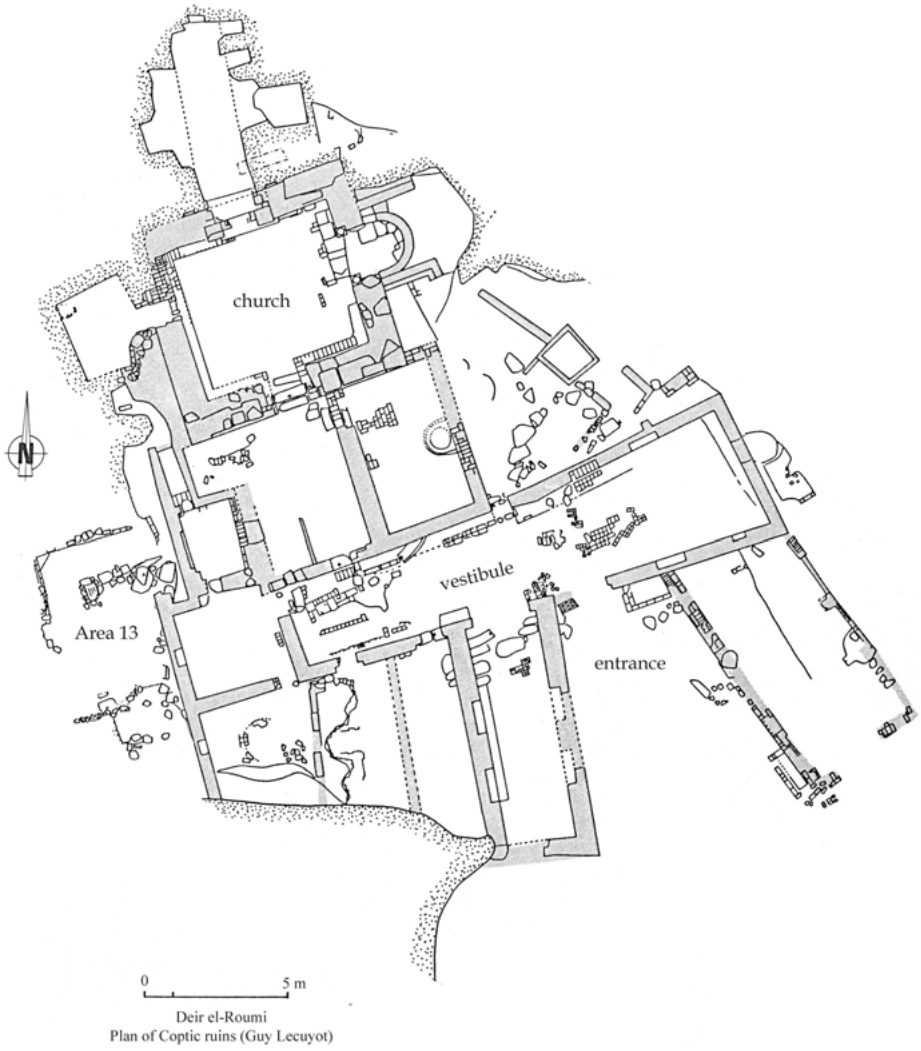


**Fig. 8:** Plan of the monastery (area 13 being the find spot of the recent ostraca finds) (printed with the kind permission of Guy Lecuyot)

ical Theban name of Hemai, appears in the Turin fragments (Torino S. 5948). He is probably the same person[8] as the author of the (as-yet unpublished) letter Torino

**8** He is probably not identical with the individuals of that name attested in the correspondence of Abbot Abraham, the bishop of Armant (*O.Crum* 29, 37, and 312, since we have no attested connections

S. 5878, which is addressed to a monastic superior and deals with some issue connected with church services:

> Before all else I greet your honourable fatherness at your feet. Be so kind as to pray for me in your holy prayers.
> Here is the measure <of> wine. God provided it for us. Behold, I have sent it to you with Jacob. Be so kind as to write to me about your well-being.
> My beloved father Zarias from Hemai, the least presbyter.
> Farewell in the Lord.

Here we find a head of the congregation attested, but we cannot be sure about the specific position he occupied in the monastery (i.e. whether the addressed Zarias was the father superior, the steward, or, given the small size of the monastery, maybe both). In addition, various other letters address people as "father" and send greetings also to the rest of the brethren, a phrase typical for letters to members of monastic communities. The title deacon is attested once in a fragmentary letter.

However, as so often with texts from the Theban monasteries, it is difficult to assign documentary texts to the private sphere or to the administration of the monastery. Working contracts such as the following (Torino S. 5877+5879+5888) could have been drawn up by the administration of the monastery or by private individuals despite the honorific title *apa* (see Derda/Wipszycka 1994) translated as "venerable" here:

> I, Johannes, am receiving these 250 tablets from the venerable Daniel. If I do not return them to their place until Pentecost, I am willing to pay a bronze *tremis*.
> Give it to Karur from Daniel. May he take care for the order. That handle-maker. You have sent bronze to the measure. I have told it to you and you brought 300 to me."

The following letter probably relates to a church issue (Torino CGT 62620):

> "Before all else I greet my beloved brother the venerable Johannes and all the brethren who are with you.
> Our father has sent south to me (saying): 'Take this papyrus from Karakos because of the altar plate/table (trapeza).' I inquired about it and he sent to me: 'I have sent it to you.' If now it arrived at your place ..., send to me. Do [not be] negligent! Be so kind [and i]f you have heard [a]bout the great ..., send to us.
> [Give it] to my brother J[ohannes][9] from P[...].

---

between the Monastery of Phoibammon and Dayr al-Rūmī in the early 7th century but only in the eighth) or the administrator (pronoētēs) in *O.CrumST* 394 = *P.Schutzbriefe* 1 (since the latter title refers to administrators of large estates). An identity with any of the additionally attested persons of that name (Hasitzka 2007, s.v. ϩⲉⲙⲁⲓ, ϩⲙⲁⲓ, ⲙⲁⲓ, and ⲩⲙⲁⲓ) seems possible but cannot be proven in the absence of any further markers of identity such as patronyms.

**9** Maybe the same person as the one mentioned in the preceding quoted text.

However, the interpretation here hinges on the understanding of the word *trapeza*, which could be "table" or "altar plate."

Noteworthy is the, so far at least, complete lack of any connections to one of the known monasteries from the areas and hence to the Theodosian networks (see Dekker 2018). It might be tempting to connect this absence of evidence with the Dayr al-Rūmī monastery having been occupied by adherents of the Chalcedonian creed while other local monastic foundations were miaphysite Christians.[10] However, since at least one deed of security (*Schutzbrief*) from the monastery is addressed to Victor (II) abbot of the Monastery of Phoibammon in the early eighth century, caution seems advisable.

Finally, none of the documents allows us to discern the ancient name of the monastery.[11] Its present-day designation Dayr al-Rūmī ("Monastery of the Byzantines") also remains a mystery, as it seems unlikely that the memory of a Chalcedonian congregation could have survived more than 1000 years in the popular consciousness of the locals.

## The town of Jeme

Stepping out of the monastery and looking south towards the cultivation zone, one still beholds the impressive remains of the former mortuary (or memorial) temple of Pharaoh Ramesses III, the so-called Madinat Habu ("Town of Habu"). In the first millennium CE, this site housed the town of Jeme.[12]

Any visitor approaching from the town's western end would have reached the monastery within a quarter of an hour or so. Since visitors had to cross the plain and approach the monastery through the narrowing valley, any vigilant lookout would have spotted visitors or approaching persons early on. The town may have once housed 2,000 – 3,000 inhabitants (Wilfong [2002]). Houses were often multistory and partly used the existing structures of the Pharaonic temple (Hölscher [1954]; Vorderstrasse [2013]). In the middle of the town, the large church of Jeme, which was built into the second courtyard of the temple, overlooked the settlement (Hölscher [1954] 51– 55 and pl. 45 with a reconstruction; Dekker [2018] 74 – 75 discussing the

**10** Possible cases of adherents to the Chalcedonian creed among the majorly miaphysite Christians in the Theban area are discussed by Dekker (2018) 81– 83.

**11** Elisabeth O'Connell (pers. comm.) has suggested that Dayr al-Rūmī might be the "Monastery of Elijah of the Rock" known from a library catalogue (*SB Kopt.* I 12). It would be a tempting identification, but so far nothing in the material from the Valley of the Queens substantiates this claim. However, it might explain the absence of certain authors among the books listed, such as Pesinthios of Quft, Severus of Antioch, Cyril of Alexandria, and other champions of the miaphysite faith (see Coquin's deliberations in Coquin [1975] 220 – 239).

**12** Still a very useful introduction is Wilfong (2002) 1– 22; for an updated but abridged version, see Cromwell (2017) 3 – 7.

**Fig. 9:** View from the monastery towards Jeme (Photo: author, November 2017)

identification). Although various designations for churches in the town appear,[13] the late sixth century *P.KRU* 105 mentions clergymen of the Church of the Twelve Apostles, the Church of the Venerable Victor, and the Church of the Virgin Mary as agreeing to the contract with the Monastery of St. Phoibammon, which lay upon its territory. There must have been further important churches in the town. These and other post-Ramesside installations within the temple proper were, alas, demolished and discarded in the second half of the nineteenth century by the 'Services des Antiquités' to clear the structure for tourists. The town was, however, not inhabited by Christians alone. Evidence shows that Arabic-speaking people dwelled there from an early stage (Vorderstrasse [2013] 413). It is not clear when and why the town was ultimately deserted. Godlewski ([1986] 77–78, also Wilfong [2002] 151–54) connected the abandonment of the monastery of Phoibammon at Dayr al-Bahri with Dihya ibn-Musab's uprising in Upper Egypt in 782.[14] The oppressive crackdown in its aftermath might have led to the abandonment of places outside direct official control, although direct evidence such as archaeological destruction horizons are lacking for the Theban area

**13** See the list of names given in Dekker (2018) 74.

**14** For the various revolts in the eighth (CE)/second (AH) century, see now Mikhail (2014) 118–127, however, without reference to the above-mentioned one. For the latter, see the references in Vorderstrasse (2013).

(Beckh [2013] 73). The archaeological situation of the houses in the town of Jeme with the wooden doors removed and the entrances walled up (Hölscher [1954] 47) points to an "orderly" abandonment rather than to a headlong flight. Recently, the focus has shifted away from the purely text-centered dating of events in the area and the possibility has been discussed that the sites continued to be inhabited, but on a smaller scale and hence without extensive administration being needed and present (van der Spek [2011] 57–64; Beckh [2013] 71–74; Vorderstrasse [2013] 413–414).

Finally, the list of monasteries and churches in the account given by Abu Salih the Armenian (Evetts/Butler [1895]) does not contain any entry for the area between Armant and Qus. This might indicate that both settlements in the area (the one at Jeme and at the temple of Sety I to the north) as well as the monasteries in the Western Theban area had ceased to exist by the twelfth century.

## Andreas, son of Petros

The name Andreas, son of Petros, is the best attested one within the documentation from the above-intorduced monastery. However, no text adds any priestly titles to this name. The only clarifying information we find is that he was from the town of Jeme (either as a place of origin or as a place of residence, see now Burchfield [2016] for the different ways of designating local affiliations in the Theban area).

We can date him into the early eighth century via the appearance of *lashneu* of Jeme in the texts from Andreas' archive: DRO 7 and 10 mention village headmen (*lashneu*)[15] of Jeme(?) (Shenute[16] and Aaron[17]), DRI 85+Torino S. 5917+5919 mention the *lashane* Mathaios,[18] and *SB Kopt*. I 46 mentions the *lashane* Abraham.[19]

A man must have approached Andreas one day and borrowed a *tremis*[20] from him. To ensure that he would get his money back with interest, the two drew up a certificate of debt in which the interest and the envisaged date of the return payment were fixed (Torino S. 5913):

> It is I, [...,] from Jeme, who writes to Andreas, son of Petros, from Jeme as well:
> I owe you a *tremissis* and this, so God will, I am ready to give you in the month of Paōne together

**15** For the office of lashane at Jeme, see now Berkes (2017) 168–200.

**16** A certain Shenute is attested as lashane of Jeme in *P.Mon.Epiph*. 163 and 216. The former is a letter addressed to Epiphanius, who was head of the congregation of the topos of the same name in the two first decades of the seventh century (Dekker [2016]). However, since the name Shenute was rather prominent even among the Theban population, he could also be an earlier namesake.

**17** Till (1962) 63 attests a lashane Aaron in various documents which he dates to the early eighth century.

**18** Attested in *O.Medin.HabuCopt*. 53.

**19** Various lashane are known by that name, not all of which resided at Jeme, however (Till [1962] 53). They seem to date into the early eighth century as well.

**20** A gold coin, equalling one-third of a holokottinos/solidus.

with its interest, i.e., a pound[?] of wheat, without any objection.
I, [..., son of ...]na, he asked me and I wrote this sherd on the [...][th] of Paape[sic] before Isac.


**Fig. 10:** O.Torino S. 5913 (© Fondazione Museo Egizio)

Our man Andreas seemingly did not only lend out money; he also rented fields from others to sow them and thus apparently increased his business takings. The following is a text puzzled together from fragments from the old Italian excavations and one sherd found during the new French excavations (*SB Kopt*. IV 1799+Torino S. 5917 +5919):

[It is I, Teulitta, the] daughter of Julitta, from Jeme, who writes to Andreas, son of Petros, from Jeme as well:
I order you to sow my share of field, i.e., the field of drawing water for ... and that has been mortgaged to me.
Since you have paid me its tribute for the year ... I agree that I am liable to you for ... be it someone from Armant or be it whoever will come out for you.
I, Teulitta, I agree to the assignment. I, Samuel, (son) of Joseph, she asked me and I wrote it on the 17th of Paope. Mathaios, the *lashane*, I am witness. Germanos, (son) of Johannes, [I am] witness. Jeremias, (son) of Sh..., I am witness. ...

Andreas seems to have a similar business already with another woman from Jeme called Julitta, who is most probably the mother of the above-mentioned woman Teulitta.[21] Unfortunately, only the upper left portion of the potsherd with the beginning of the contract is preserved (*SB Kopt*. IV 1798):

> "It is I, Julitta, who writes to Andreas, son of Petros:
> I order [you] to sow my share of field upon the ... into ....
> I agree that ... my depth ... whoever will come out for you. ...

Delattre/Lecuyot (2015) have attributed seven texts to the dossier of this Andreas, to one of which we have been able to identify matching pieces in the Turin collection. In addition, we can add three further texts in Turin (plus two possible ones) to the dossier. Since all the newly found texts come from the area west of the monastery (designated as area 13 in the plan in fig. 8) and the archaeological context has been heavily disturbed, we can assume a provenance from the monastery without being more specific.

The texts attributed to Andreas can be subdivided into four major groups:

- Promises to repay loans *to* Andreas
  - *SB Kopt*. IV 1791 [DRI 83 (#28)]: *1/2 holokottinos plus interest (8 artabas of wheat) by Eusthatios s.o. Psan, living in the village of Patubastn*[22]
  - DRO 3: 18 *bronze še by Komēs, s.o. Paham of Jeme to be paid back in the month Paōne*
- Promises to repay loans by Andreas
  - Torino S. 5913: *1* tremissis *to be paid back with interest (wheat) in the month Paōne*
  - *SB Kopt*. I 46: *1 artaba and 9 mace of grain to Joseph to be paid back in Paōne*
- Working contracts to sow fields
  - *SB Kopt*. IV 1798 [DRI 84 (#29)]: *Sowing contract from Julitta for Andreas*
  - *SB Kopt*. IV 1799 [DRI 85 (#30)]+Torino S. 5917+5919: *Sowing contract from Julitta's daughter Teulitta for Andreas*
- Field leases from Andreas
  - DRO 10: *Field lease to Matheus from Andreas*
  - DRO 7: *Field lease to David from Andreas and Germanos (both without further identification)*

The credited sums are rather low (usually just fractions of a *solidus*), which fits the picture for Thebes (Papaconstantinou [2016] 623). The money is always due in May/June, i.e., in the months preceding the inundation when the peasants might have successfully sold their harvests and would be able to service their debts. Unfortunate-

**21** For women from Jeme operating their own business, see Wilfong (2002).

**22** A place north of Jeme but probably also on the West Bank of the Nile; see Timm (1988) 1856–1858.

ly, the texts cannot be dated to specific years. However, the mention of various different *lashane* should point to a certain time span covered by the archive. Since he is renting fields from others but does not seem to let fields to others, Andreas could be from a less affluent family, but still well off enough to do business.

Some further texts also attest the name Andreas,[23] but without the patronym, it is impossible to assign them to the person highlighted in this paper.

Finally, it needs to be discussed why these texts might have ended up in the monastery. As mentioned in the introductory paragraph, nothing in the texts connects Andreas with monastic life or with this specific monastery.[24] He could have taken his vows only late in life and brought his personal documents with him. But as the monastery also yielded other documentary texts (*SB Kopt*. IV 1790, 1792, and 1797 or the unpublished DRO 21) relating to other inhabitants of Jeme, one immediately plausible interpretation seems to be that the monastery served as a depository for important legal documents for the Jeme villagers. However, Jennifer Cromwell ([2017] 60 – 62) has recently contested, with sound arguments, the common (modern) idea that the monasteries served as safe-keepers of important personal documents. Hence, the idea that Andreas might have entered the monastery and brought his archive along late in life may seem more likely after all, especially since other personal archives known from Jeme derive from houses in the town (see e. g., Cromwell [2012] 133 – 134).

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**23** A rather poignant letter by an Andreas the least to his pious(?) father the venerable Pasen mentions manifold distress caused by another man (Torino S. 5896). See also *SB Kopt*. IV 1790, 3 – 5 (Andreas, son of Tkukle) or *SB Kopt*. IV 1792, 3 – 4 (Andreas, son of Psô).

**24** The common older assumption that monks and monasteries were not allowed to loan money on interest has been proven wrong by Markiewiecz (2009) and Papaconstantinou (2016).

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