

Egypt under Mu‘āwiya Part II: Middle Egypt, Fustāṭ and Alexandria

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Abstract

The first part of this paper discussed a large collection of documents from Upper Egypt illustrative of society and economy in the time of Mu‘āwiya. Here, further papyri, of pagarchs of Arsinoe, present supplementary information about grain production, taxation, great estates, the postal service and the role of the church in the local economy. Information about Fustāṭ and Alexandria depends on literary sources and archaeology. Fustāṭ, which started as a camp, became more organized and controlled under Mu‘āwiya’s governors when the main shipyard was moved there. Alexandria, despite romantic descriptions, was at least partly ruined. Like Fustāṭ, it was the seat of a major garrison. Taken together, the evidence from Egypt shows much administrative continuity from Byzantine times, but with important new taxes and requisitions and a tighter central control. It suggests that Mu‘āwiya ran a sophisticated and effective state.

Middle Egypt: Fl. Johannes and Fl. Petterios of Arsinoe and related documents

Documents relating to two pagarchs of Arsinoe in Middle Egypt have survived on a much smaller scale than those of Papas, but are sufficiently well dated to provide valuable supplementary information.¹ Flavius Johannes was pagarch in the 650s and 660s (his earliest document is of 653, the latest of 666). He evidently had a more distinguished career than Papas, rising to the very high rank of *endoxotatos illoustrios*, but nothing is known of his life or circumstances.²

One of Johannes’ documents (CPR XIV 1, of 666) deals with what had traditionally been Egypt’s most important tax, the *aisia embolē*. It employs the term carried over from Byzantine times, the “auspicious transport” or *felix embola*. Before the Arab conquest, this denoted the shipment of grain to Constantinople, one of the main functions of the Egyptian economy; but now, the grain fed Muslims, being sent either to storehouses in Babylon to supply the 40,000 troops

1 This discussion excludes the following documents, too fragmentary to provide any useful information: BGU III 737 (a *plērōtikē apodeixis*, “receipt for full payment” to the pagarch Johannes) of 662/3 and the following which, even though precisely dated, consist of headings only: SB I 4665 (9.ii.663), SB I 4797 (663/673); CPR X 134 (4.xii.671); SB I 4716 (17.iv.677).

2 For his documents and their dating, see B. Palme in CPR XXIV 199 f.

stationed here, or shipped to Arabia for the population of the Holy Cities.³ This document reveals the mechanism of collection: Aurelius Phoibammon, *meizōn* or headman of the village Boubastos, promises to collect grain for the *aisia embolē* of this year without deficit and specifies the stiff fine he will have to pay if there is any shortage – one gold nomisma per missing measure.⁴

From Antiquity, the government of Egypt collected taxes for everything. The *naulon* ensured that the cost of transporting the grain, whether to Constantinople or Babylon, fell on the taxpayers, not the state.⁵ This is illustrated by P. Prag. II 152, datable to 653, a receipt to the villagers of Ampelion for the five *nomismata*, 6½ *keratia* they paid for the *naulon embolēs*.⁶ The *zygostatēs* Elias handled the money, writing a *pittakion* for it. A *chartoularios*, Dorotheus, wrote the receipt; he was evidently an official of the pagarch's staff. The "*pittakion* of a *zygostatēs*" (here named Phoibammon) appears also in SPP VIII.1192b of 666, a receipt issued to the villagers of Alexandrou for 68 *rupara nomismata*, their payment for the first instalment (*katabolē*) of the taxes (*dēmosia*), money paid in by the deacon George.⁷ The *zygostatēs*, as seen in the Papis documents, was the financial officer who received the taxes from the actual collectors, and turned them in to the pagarch's office; the *pittakion*, sometimes translated "chit", was a credit note, the equivalent of a cheque.⁸

The other substantial document of this administration, BGU II 366 of 660, gives details of production of *gonakhia*. In it, a villager named Aurelios Johannes son of Menas swears to the *endoxotatos illoustrios* pagarch Fl. Johannes to make and prepare in his own village the goods requisitioned for the account of the Saracens: one *gonakhion* and three blankets, or *strōmata*, according to the measure of the same Saracens. His obligation was serious, for if he failed to provide the goods, he promised to pay out of his own pocket six gold nomismata for each *gonakhion* and three for each *strōma*, indicating that these were very expensive goods indeed. The document does not reveal whether Aur. Johannes would be paid for the goods, or whether this is simply an obligation imposed on him. Since he willingly undertakes the job, however, it seems that the pagarch is farming out an obligation imposed on the

3 P. Lond XXXI, 1335 &c, P. Prag. II. 2, p. 82.

4 For the *meizōn* in the Byzantine period, see Germaine Rouillard, *L'administration civile de l'Égypte byzantine* (Paris 1928; henceforth Rouillard), 69 f. and CPR XXIV p. 150, and for its continuation after the conquest, Adolf Grohmann, "Der Beamtenstab der arabischen Finanzverwaltung in Ägypten in frühislamischer Zeit", *Studien zur Papyrologie und antiken Wirtschaftsgeschichte; Friedrich Oertel zum achtzigsten Geburtstag gewidmet* (Bonn, 1964), 129 f. The present text was written by a *notarios*; the editor suggests that it may be the earliest attestation of the term in the meaning of "notary".

5 This was a regular item of the Byzantine tax system: Rouillard 143–8.

6 Strictly speaking, this document dates to the reign of the caliph ʿUthmān (644–656), but is included here since it forms part of the dossier of Fl. Johannes.

7 For the *rupara nomismata*, a term peculiar to Arsinoe and denoting nomismata of 23 (rather than 24) carats or their equivalent in copper, see B. Palme's discussion of P. Harrauer 60, p. 238. Another receipt, BGU III 737 of 663, is too fragmentary to provide any useful information.

8 See Nikolaos Gonis, "Five tax receipts from early Islamic Egypt", *ZPE* 143, 2003 149–57 at 150, and for the meaning of *pittakion*, Peter Sarris, *Economy and Society in the Age of Justinian* (Cambridge, 2006), 92 f.

pagarchy and that the maker will be compensated for what was presumably skilled and important work, or at least supplied with the raw materials.⁹

Like Papas, Johannes had a whole staff working for him, including one official who does not appear in the Apollonos documents. Although SB I 4666 does not name Johannes, it is securely dated to 11xii 659, and thus falls within his term as pagarch. It is a fragmentary promise (without further context) by a certain Aurelius Anoup to the *lamprotatos* Anphou, *riparios* of Arsinoe. In Byzantine times, the *riparios* was head of the local police, whether in city or village; he presumably retained this function after the conquest.¹⁰

Other documents from Arsinoe, dated with varying degrees of certainty, may also be products of the chancery of Johannes, even though they do not name him. A note (SPP III 344) written by Anoup to the *symmachos* Apollo in October 658 (or 643) guarantees a loan. Anoup is qualified as *boukellarios* of the estate of the late pagarch Menas, indicating the continuing existence of these officers, what ever their exact duties may have been.¹¹ The notary Elias issued three surviving credit notes (*pittakia*) for taxes paid that give more incidental information. In SPP VIII 846 of September 660 (or 645), the villagers of Magais paid 24 *rupara nomismata* (a substantial sum, presumably a payment for the whole village) through Johannes, *grammateus*, or headman, of the *epoikion* of Mouei. In the sixth century, *epoikion* denoted an outlying settlement owned by the landlord but worked by tenants who were also employed on the landlord's directly managed estates.¹² The implications of its continued use of this term in the mid-seventh century have not been determined. SPP III 592 (ii 662 or 647) acknowledges payment of 14½ *keratia* for the second *kanōn*, evidently the tax of an individual, while P. Rainer Cent. 144 (663 or 648) is a receipt for a dyer (*bapheus*) for the taxes of the new *diagraphon*. A document of 665 mentions another local occupation: Aur. Georgios, a *tarsikarios* or weaver of fine linen, took out a loan for his own use (SB I 4664 = 4834).

Fl. Petterios, pagarch of Arsinoe for a few years in the late 660s, is a slightly less shadowy figure than Johannes. Documents that show him holding office are dated from 667 to 669 (he evidently succeeded Johannes); another that names him as deceased is of 672 or possibly 687.¹³ In any case, another pagarch, Zacharias, was ruling Arsinoe in 674.¹⁴ Petterios was a landowner, *ktētōr*, married to Flavia Marous, daughter of Fl. Menas, who had been pagarch in the 620s and early 630s.¹⁵

- 9 Compare the fragmentary BGU II 403 which employs the same language about the fine for failure to produce the goods (in this case by the *meizōn* Menas son of Nephers): see the discussion of Federico Morelli, "Gonachia e kaunakai nei papiri", *JPP* 32, 2002, 68–71.
- 10 Rouillard 163 f.; cf. P. Harrauer 58, with further discussion and bibliography. The same *riparios* appears in CPR XIV 32 of 653, which is addressed to Flavius Iohannes *euklestatos doux* of Arcadia. It was tempting to identify him with the pagarch Johannes, but chronology poses an insuperable obstacle: see the discussion in CPR XXIV, p. 205.
- 11 For Menas' estate, see below, 263 f.
- 12 See the numerous references in Sarris, *Economy and Society*, index, s.v. especially 38 f., 48, 115.
- 13 Listed and discussed by Worp in CPR X, p. 153.
- 14 *Ibid.*, 154.
- 15 For his chronology and career, with discussion of the relevant papyri, see B. Palme, "Excurs V: Der Pagarch Flavius Menas" in CPR XXIV 177–81.

Two key documents establish the chronology of Petterios, as well as that of the whole Papis archive. On 29 December 668 (a firm date, determined by the year of Diocletian as well as the indiction), a gardener (*pōmarites*) named Aurelios Abraamios leased an orchard from the *endoxotatos pagarchos* Petterios, with a local priest, Neilion son of Menas, standing guarantor for the terms.¹⁶ The lease included not only trees but a half-share in a cistern, a waterwheel and associated apparatus with two oxen to operate it. Abraamios took responsibility for paying the tax (*dēmosion*) of $8 \frac{2}{3}$ *nomismata* on the harvest for the coming indiction XIII and providing unspecified services for the pagarch. If Petterios chose to end the lease, Abraamios promised to return the land in the condition he received it. Another Petterios, with the title of *lamprotatos*, served as the pagarch's *notarios*.

The other document is a requisition issued by Petterios on 22 October 669 to the people of the village of Straton, ordering them to provide salt and seasoning to Abu Neli[...], director of the local stable, for the stable of their village, according to the order (*epistalma*) of Jordanes.¹⁷ The *stablītēs* of another village, Psenyris, brought the order. The document was signed by the notary Elias. In this case, the dux issued the general order to the pagarch, who passed on the specific request to the villagers. Jordanes is evidently the dux of Arcadia; he also appears in P. Apoll. 9 (quoted in Part I), issuing threatening orders about refugee caulkers to all the pagarchs of the Thebaid. This has been taken to indicate that Thebais and Arcadia were united under one administration, as they certainly were under Fl. Atias a generation later.¹⁸ Significant also is the mention of the *stablōn*, which reflects the functioning of an organized state postal service now run by Muslims, as well as a permanent Arab presence in the countryside.¹⁹

16 Published by P. J. Sijpesteijn, "Der Pagarch Petterios", *JÖB* 30, 1981, 57–61 (= SB XVI 12481); note the corrections of N. Gonis in *Tyche* 19, 2004, 257.

17 P. Mert. II.100, first published by H. I. Bell, "A requisitioning order for taxes in kind", *Aegyptus* 31, 1951, 307–12, with the correction of J. G. Keenan, "Two notes on P. Merton II 100", *ZPE* 16, 1975, 43–6.

18 There has been much discussion about the dukes of Arcadia: see most recently CPR XXIV pp. 203–05, with reference to earlier literature, and the list of the dukes of the Thebaid in J. Gasco and K. A. Worp, "Problèmes de documentation apollinopolite", *ZPE* 49, 1982, 89–91. The title seems to disappear from the record for about a century until 636 when Theodosius is named with the titles *stratelates*, *dux* and *Augustalius* – i.e. a combination of civil and military powers, a change perhaps introduced with the Byzantine reoccupation of 630. Theodosius was killed fighting the Arabs in 640; his successor, Philoxenos, installed by the conquerors, is only *doux* in 642 – that is, the post was now purely civilian, as it remained. His colleague Senouthios in the Thebaid is likewise *doux*. Damianos (649) and Fl. Johannes (655) are also only *doukes* (of Thebais and Arcadia respectively), but Jordanes appears both as *doux* of Thebais and of Arcadia (though the present document does not give his title). This has been taken to indicate that the two provinces were then united but, strictly speaking, Jordanes could have held these posts in succession, as perhaps suggested by P. Apoll. 9, where he addresses the pagarchs of Thebais (not Arcadia). Joseph (683) is also attested as *doux* in Arsinoe, without his jurisdiction being specified. The first certain evidence of Arcadia and the Thebaid being united comes from 699, when Fl. Atias (an Arab) is attested as *doux* of both provinces. Just to complicate matters, an anonymous *doux* of Arcadia was at the same time pagarch of Arsinoe in 653: CPR XXIV 33.

19 See Petra Sijpesteijn, "New rule over old structures: Egypt after the Muslim Conquest", in Harriet Crawford (ed.), *Regime Change in the Ancient Near East and Egypt: from Sargon of Agade to Saddam Hussein* (Oxford, 2007), 183. In 643, soon after the

Three other requisitions survive. The first (SPP III 254), of 26 October 667, requests barley according to the *epistalma* of Seit; it was brought by Apa Ioulios and signed by the notary Elias.²⁰ Its mention of Babylon (in a fragmentary context) indicates involvement of the central government. The second (SPP III 253), a demand to the villagers of Melasippo for 90 *knidia* of wine of Boubastos, written by the notarios Petterios, is dated 7 October 668. The date is missing from the third (SPP VIII 1085) which orders the goods (whose nature is missing) to be turned over to the men of Thman ('Uthmān?) b. Yazīd according to the *epistalma* of . . . b. 'Abd al-Rahman.²¹ SPP VIII 1078 of indiction VIII, apparently a receipt for taxes, that names Fl. Petterios (titles and context missing) can probably be assigned to the pagarch and to 664.

Two further requisitions were issued by the *ktētōr* Fl. Petterios, who is most likely our pagarch. One of them (SPP VIII 1079), dated to an indiction III (presumably 659 or 674) orders villagers to deliver grain to a *kamelitēs* for his pay; the other (SPP VIII 1188) is too fragmentary to interpret. These demands, issued by a landowner evidently on his own authority (and in his private capacity), may reflect the arrangements noted above, by which owners of estates collected taxes from their own peasants, as in the Byzantine autopract system which apparently had not yet entirely disappeared.²²

Petterios was married to Fl. Marous; their names appear together, as *endoxotatoi*, in a text that mentions the taxes of the first *kanōn*, to be paid from the revenues of their estate (*ousia*): SPP VIII 869.²³ Marous was the daughter of Menas, pagarch (usually called *stratelatēs*) of Antinoe during the Persian occupation: the two securely dated documents that name him are of 622.²⁴ He apparently died by 643 (or 658) when he appears in a document as *en hagiois* ("among the Saints", i.e. deceased). The *endoxotatē* Fl. Marous is identified as the daughter of Menas *endoxou mnēmēs* ("of glorious memory") in SB I 4659 (apparently of 653), the guarantee of a lease. Since this makes no mention of Petterios, she was probably not yet married to him, but was evidently in control of her father's estate whose *boukellarious* is mentioned in a document of 643 or 658 (SPP III 344).

conquest, the post was still manned by Christians: see P. Ross. Georg. III 50, a receipt for fodder from Aur. Kosmas, *stabilitiēs* of an *allagē* in a suburb of Arsinoe. The system for rapid communication, however, is so important that it would normally be put in trusted hands very soon after any change of regime: note the case of the Persian occupation where Persians seem to have been in charge of the post, at least at the highest levels: see C. Foss, "The *Sellarioi* and other officers of Persian Egypt", *ZPE* 138, 2002, 169–72.

20 His subscription was corrected by Keenan, "Two notes", 44.

21 SPP VIII 1190, which names the pagarch Fl. Petterios, is even more fragmentary; it appears to belong to this group. Of SB XVI 12482 only the address to the *endoxotatos* Fl. Petterios survives: see Sijpesteijn, "Der Pagarch Petterios", 60 f.

22 For another example of a *ktētōr* issuing a requisition, see SPP VIII 1191 of Heracleopolis. On autopract domains, see above, Part I, p. 15.

23 The fragmentary SPP VIII 877 mentions the same couple. In both cases, the taxes were to be paid to the priest Phoibammon.

24 For his chronology and career, with discussion of the relevant papyri, see B. Palme, in CPR XXIV 177–81.

Fl. Marous herself is the subject of a small archive. These fragmentary documents, which give Marous the title *endoxotatē*, include two that are apparently requisitions, one addressed to the villagers of Kieratou, another written by a notary Kalomenas. A third text that mentions a vineyard (*ampelikon chōrion*) is dated Ind. II, apparently 673/4.²⁵ Others refer to a steward (*pronoētēs*) and an *allagē*, to suggest that Marous was involved in the operation of the local posting station, and of the estate.²⁶ Like the documents of her husband, these also indicate a certain autonomy, by which the landowners could request taxes in her own name. Since they are undated, it is not possible to tell whether Marous was administering the estate she inherited from her father, or whether, as widow of Petterios, she was in charge of his lands also.

In a fifteenth indiction, most probably 672, the donkey-drivers (*onēlatai*) Apa Ioulios and Menas, son of Cosmas, acknowledged receiving from the archdeacon George, son of Petterios pagarch of Arsinoe *endoxou mnēmēs*, one nomisma each for the indiction's work as *onēlatai* of his animals. Two deacons served as witnesses.²⁷ In this case, it appears that the late pagarch's son, otherwise unknown, continued to assume responsibility for the post station, showing once again the importance of heredity in this closely-knit society. They also reflect the continuing stability of an aristocracy where one family retained high office – and their land – under Byzantine, Persian and Arab rule.

This complex of documents casts further light on the *barīd*. The order of the amīr Jordanes, passed on by the pagarch Petterios, requisitioning supplies for the local stable reflects the interest of the government in the smooth functioning of the post, and indicates that the director of the local operation was an Arab. There were evidently stables in several villages, presumably staging-posts along the road. Local Christian magnates were also involved, for one of the documents of Fl. Marous mentions an *allagē* or station for changing horses, and her son George appears to have taken charge of it, or at least of organizing its animals. It is possible that Arabs ran the highest levels and that practical matters like supplying animals and goods formed an obligation imposed on the local pagarchs and their subordinates.²⁸

A fragmentary papyrus, P. Bodl. I 77, securely dated to 671, may have been a product of Petterios' time.²⁹ It is addressed to the *endoxotatos kankellarios* Philoxenos, a high-ranking civil official, probably in the administration of the *doux* of Arcadia, but its content is lost.

A few documents survive from the successors of Petterios. A contract, P. Ross. Georg. III 53, addressed to the *endoxotatos stratēlatēs* Stephanos, dated to 673/4,

25 SPP III 247, 246, 250. Kalomenas also appears in SPP III 252. SPP III 248 bears only Marous' name without context.

26 SPP III 251 and 249, both fragmentary and undated. For the post as a liturgy on large landowners in the Byzantine period (a situation perhaps represented here), see Jean Gascou, "Les grands domaines, la cité et l'état en Egypte byzantine", *Travaux et mémoires* 9, 1985, 1–90 at 52–9.

27 SPP III 324, with the corrections of K. A. Worp in *ZPE* 28, 1978, 238. The date, 672 rather than 687, is suggested by the presence of Apa Ioulios, possibly the same man who delivered the governor's *epistalma* in 667.

28 The inner workings of the *barīd* are poorly known: see Adam Silverstein, *Postal Systems in the Pre-Modern Islamic World* (Cambridge, 2007), 50–59.

29 See Nikolaos Gonis and K. A. Worp, "P. Bodl. I 77: The King of Kings in Arsinoe under Arab Rule", *ZPE* 141, 2002, 173–6.

is the most informative. First, it gives Stephanos the anomalous title *stratēlatēs*, which originally denoted a military function, but by the sixth century was purely honorary, and in the seventh had generally fallen out of use.³⁰ In this document, the head of the guild of fishermen (*kephalaiōtēs tōn halieōn*) promises to deliver 220 bundles of fish to the stratelates, at the risk (if he fails) to himself and his fishermen.³¹ This appears to be a contract for future delivery, though oddly it makes no mention of payment, and seems more to resemble a promise of payment of a debt. The witnesses were John, deacon and *kollektarios* or money changer, and the banker (*trapezitēs*) George. Their presence indicates financial activity in Arsinoe, while that of the *kephalaiōtēs* shows the continuing organization of economic activity in guilds, as already implied in the documents of Papas.

Stephanos' successor, the *endoxotatos pagarchos* Fl. Zacharias, is named in a fragmentary receipt (P. Ross. Georg. III 52) from a *meizōn* Aur. Sotas, dated securely to 3. x. 674. A fragmentary contract of the same year (CPR XIV 16) names a *tarsikarios*, Ouenaphrios son of Apa Hol, who also appears in SPP VIII 707 of indiction IV, probably 675, which unusually mentions the *diagraphton tōn Sarakēnōn* – the poll tax, here specified as “of the Saracens” – and in SB I 4668 of 19. i. 678, an incomplete list of names of people somehow involved with a *nosokomeion* (a charitable institution for the sick, aged or poor), perhaps as donors.³²

A few documents survive from the years immediately after Mu'āwiya, prior to the second Arab civil war. On 4 July 681, a villager, George son of Apollos, leased five *arourai* of land for sowing from the deacon Sergios son of Paul of Arsinoe.³³ The term was three years; the rent 1/3 *nomisma*, to be paid annually. The document was issued by the notary Kallinikos, who also signed another small-scale lease (the rent was only 8 carats), which is probably to be dated March/April 672 (BGU III 841).³⁴ The last datable document of this period was issued on 16 January 683, when the cowherd (*boēlatēs*) Aurelius Kosmas leased a vegetable garden with palm and mulberry trees from the *megaloprepestatos* Paul, son of the late pagarch Stephanos (CPR VIII 71).³⁵ The land was part of the 10 ½ *arourai* belonging to Paul, on whom Kosmas, who describes himself as “your cowherd”, was evidently dependent.

The evidence from other cities is extremely scanty, with Oxyrhynchus and Heracleopolis represented by only one datable document each.³⁶ On 22 March 669, the vintner (*ampelourgos*) Aurelius Serne acknowledged receipt of 2½

30 See the discussion of the editor, p. 228.

31 For the “bundles” of fish (*opsaria hormathia*) note that the Greek term can denote things hanging together, like beads on a necklace. It presumably means here dried fish strung together into bundles.

32 For *nosokomia* and similar institutions (like the *hospitium* of P. Apoll. 46), usually run by the church.

33 P. Eirene II 10, with extensive commentary and reference to related texts.

34 Other documents, mostly fragmentary, that bear the name of Kallinikos, probably also belong to this period: see the list in P. Eirene II 10, p. 83 f.

35 This is probably the Paul mentioned in undated documents as pagarch of Arsinoe: see CPR X p. 155, with note 23. If so, the present papyrus may reflect a time when he had not yet assumed office.

36 This does not reflect a lack of documents from these places, only that very few can be dated specifically to this period.

nomismata against which he pledged himself to deliver 168 *chymata* of wine to Aurelios Sergios of Oxyrhynchus, promising to replace any found defective (T. Varie 8). This is a contract for future delivery of an accustomed kind.³⁷ A tax receipt (SB XVIII 13771 = PERF 573) from Heracleopolis, acknowledging payment of 118 1/6 *arithmia nomismata*, specified as equivalent to 108 + 17 carats *ekhonta nomismata*, may be datable to 677.³⁸ It was issued by two Arabs, ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Awf and ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Shurayh in both Greek and Arabic. If the dating is correct, it is the only bilingual document of this period from Egypt, though there are contemporary parallels from Nessana in southern Palestine. As such, it may mark the first step towards the introduction, then domination, of Arabic in these texts.

Accidents of survival have meant that virtually all the documents considered so far have dealt with the civil administration. Only a few papyri of this period give a dim and inadequate reflection of the power and wealth of the church, which remained enormously important in the life of Egypt. They all come from Arsinoe. On 16 July 663, a contrite thief made a solemn promise to the bishop Abba Petros (P. Berl. Zill. 8). Aurelius Serapion, a tenant of the bishop (he describes himself as *hymeteros geōrgos*) acknowledged that he had been caught stealing grain of the crop of the sixth indiction from the granary of the bishop’s land which he farmed, and that the bishop had prosecuted him. After receiving petitions from the thief and others, however, Abba Petros showed mercy and forgave him this one time, on the condition that Serapion give the present written guarantee, solemnly swearing that if he were caught secretly or openly stealing grain again, he would pay a fine and turn himself over to the prison (*endoxon praitōrion*). This papyrus gives the only hint of the church being one of the great landowners of Egypt, with the bishop playing the major role in the administration of the ecclesiastical estates, which were worked by tenants, and exercising jurisdiction in matters related to them.

The same bishop Petros appears in a series of texts that have to do with food production.³⁹ These 32 receipts, probably datable to 661–665, show that seventeen villages delivered grain to the bishop, to *mesitai* (middlemen, often in charge of a granary, from which grain collected as taxes was distributed under their supervision) or to a *hypodektēs*, or receiver (usually of taxes). They turned it over to the bakers Elias the deacon, and Paeitos, who actually produced the bread. Although some aspects of this system remain obscure, it appears that the bakery was a private operation, with a deacon playing a major role in its operation, and that a substantial part of its production was destined for civil and military authorities (through the *mesitai* and *hypodektai* respectively) and

37 See H. Harrauer and P. J. Sijpesteijn, “Verkauf von Wein gegen Vorauszahlung”, *CE* 57, 1982, 296–302; cf. Niko Kruit, “Three Byzantine sales for future delivery”, *Tyche* 9, 1994, 67–88.

38 SB XVIII 13771; see the discussion of W. F. G. J. Stoetzer and K. A. Worp in “Zwei Steuerquittungen aus London und Wien”, *Tyche* 1, 1986, 197–202; for the date, Kruit “Three Byzantine sales”, 72 n. 32. ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Abi Awf also issued SPP VIII 1198, perhaps of 664 or 679 (though, like the main text, it could also be of the early eighth century).

39 See the new edition of SPP III: *Griechische Papyrusurkunden kleinerer Formats Neuedition*, ed. Fritz Mitthof (Vienna, 2007), 209–36, with the introduction xxxi–xxxvi.

for the needs of the Church. In other words, the grain and the bread were associated with a system of state-run taxation, production and distribution.

The notary Kallinikos of Arsinoe, active in the 670s and 680s, signed a curious document, SB I 4658 (date missing). In it, four men of the village Philoxenos of the *nomos* of Arsinoe give a formal guarantee to the bishop, who is also *grammateus* and *epistatēs* of Arsinoe.⁴⁰ They promise to ensure the good behaviour of their fellow villager Aurelius Ammon, whom they have taken from the bishop's custody, and to ensure that he will be reconciled with his wife Maria and treat her kindly, "as is suitable for free women", openly and henceforth. If they fail, they will return him to imprisonment, and if they fail to do this, will give the priest a full account of the reasons. One of the witnesses was the *grammateus*, or headman, George. This text reflects both the central role of the church in maintaining social equilibrium, and the kind of pressure it and fellow villagers could bring to bear on an individual whose behaviour (he may have been a sufficiently notorious wife-beater or trouble maker) was so unacceptable as to merit imprisonment.

The last document to be considered here, P. Grenf. II 100, is a fragmentary receipt for payment from Aurelius Kosmas, *paratouras tōn presbeuterōn*, apparently secretary (the word is unattested elsewhere) of the priests to Victor, *ek prosōpou* of the *eukleestatos doux* Joseph – that is the duke's representative, more familiar as the topoteretes. It is dated 16 January 684, but most of its content has been lost.

If the church is only dimly revealed by these documents, the military is virtually invisible. Most Muslim troops were stationed in Fustāṭ and in Alexandria, but a later text suggests that detachments were posted throughout the country. In this Arabic letter of 709 (P. Cair. Arab. III 150), the governor Qurra b. Sharik requests Basilios, the administrator of Aphrodito, to find out about the registration of soldiers in the villages of his district. Some of the military had told him that they had been registered by forms (*kitba*) in the villages for the last forty years, but he could find no trace of them. Even if "forty" represents a vaguely large number, the text suggests that such forms could have been issued in the time of Mu'āwiya, who thus perhaps regulated the settlement of Arab soldiers in the countryside. Alternatively, the registration may have involved assigning the support of particular military contingents to specified villages, or listing soldiers who would have been used to support the collection of taxes.⁴¹

New and old capitals

So far, this discussion has been based on contemporary documents preserved on papyrus. For the great cities, however, it must depend on literary sources, most of them compiled more than a century after the events they describe, and thus often of doubtful reliability. Wherever possible, the evidence of archaeology

40 The editors restored the recipient's office as priest, but the honorific terms by which he is addressed (*tē hymetera hagiosynē*) and the respectful tone suggest rather that he was the bishop.

41 See the discussion of Fred Donner, "The formation of the Islamic state", *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106, 1986, 283–96 at 286.

has also been adduced to provide a perhaps more reliable image, though one that remains very fragmentary.

By the middle of the seventh century, Egypt's capital Fustāṭ was a vast sprawling place that was taking on the characteristics of a city. The Arab forces, under 'Amr ibn al-ʿAṣ, had captured it after a long siege in April 641. They then advanced on Alexandria which finally surrendered in September 642. According to one tradition, 'Amr wanted to make Alexandria his capital, but the caliph 'Umar overruled him on the grounds that there must be no water intervening between him and his army.⁴² Therefore Fustāṭ was chosen, a place with a strategic location on the right bank of the Nile, at the edge of the desert and at the head of the Delta, suitable for dominating both Upper and Lower Egypt. The tribes who composed the army were granted allotments (*khitta*, plural *khitat*) widely scattered over a vast area stretching five or six kilometres along the river and one or two inland from it. Most important were the Ahl al-Raya, the People of the Banner, consisting of 'Amr's guard, the Quraysh (the Prophet's tribe), and tribes from Medina. The centre of their encampment was the mosque built by 'Amr and the administrative buildings and markets that grew up around it. This lay to the north-east of the original pre-Islamic settlement, the heavily fortified town of Babylon, which remained Christian (though with a Muslim garrison) and was the centre for the experienced scribes and record keepers who would prove essential for running the new administration.⁴³ North of all these settlements lay the entrance of the canal that connected Fustāṭ with the port of Clysma on the Red Sea. Near its mouth were the granaries that stored the wheat sent in as tribute from the whole country. Mu'āwiya resumed the shipment of food and oil to support the Muslims of Medina; this had begun in the caliphate of 'Umar and had involved excavating the ancient canal of Trajan from Babylon to the Red Sea, and a significant reorientation of Egypt's economy, with much of the grain that had been sent as *embole* to Constantinople now going to Arabia.⁴⁴

Fustāṭ was originally a camp where the Muslim warriors, numbering at first some 15,000, stayed in tents or huts of mud and reeds. Its establishment as capital of an enormously rich province brought growth and wealth. Settlers poured in: when 'Amr was reappointed as governor in 658 he brought a large army, and in 673 more men were sent in from Basra in Iraq, where Mu'āwiya's governor Ziyad was bringing the turbulent tribal element under control.⁴⁵ According to one report, the number of fighters had risen to 40,000 by Mu'āwiya's time.⁴⁶ Mu'āwiya, in an apparent effort to conduct a census and thus to control the

42 For what follows, see Wladyslaw Kubiak, *Al-Fustāṭ, Its Foundation and Early Urban Development* (Cairo, 1987, henceforth "Kubiak"), especially 58–131.

43 Kubiak, 51–7, 106–08.

44 Baladhuri, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), 216, translated as *The Origins of the Islamic State* by P. K. Hitti (New York, 1916), 341.

45 Maqrizi, *Kitāb al-mawā'iz wa-l-ītibār fī dhikr al-khīṭat wa-l-āthār* (Bulaq, AH 1270=1853), 178. This was a frequent policy of Mu'āwiya: see Baladhuri, *Kitāb Futūh al-Buldān*, 119 (translation 180) where he transplants Persian troops who had joined Islam from Iraq and inland Syria to the Mediterranean coast, and 280 (trans. 441) where he orders Ziyad to move Persians to Syria.

46 Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, ed. Charles Torrey (New Haven, 1922), 102.

number of people on the *dīwan*, appointed a man over every tribe to go around each morning and record all births during the night.⁴⁷ There were also numerous workers and servants of all kinds, Muslim as well as Christian, for the Arab fighters were purely military, doing no other kind of work. Christians settled in the northern part of the city, where the governor Maslama ibn Mukhallad allowed them to build a church over the objections of the Arab troops – he silenced them by pointing out that the Christians, not they, owned the land in question.⁴⁸

By this time, the open spaces between the original *khīṭaṭ* had been filled in and the city spread over a vast area. Literary sources record mosques, baths, markets and administrative buildings, as well as some quite grand houses.⁴⁹ One of these was built by order of Mu'āwiya for his daughter Ramla while he was still governor of Syria, but he subsequently gave it to the community. Mu'āwiya also ordered his governor 'Uqba ibn Āmir (665–667) to turn some centrally located property over to his son Yazīd. Maslama ibn Mukhallad seems to have presided over much of the expansion of Fuṣṭāṭ. In 673, he enlarged the mosque of 'Amr, by adding minarets in the form of four corner towers (and prominently displaying his own name on the building), and brought at least some religious order to the city by requiring that everyone pray at the same time, whereas the tribes had often been erratic in choosing their hours of prayer.⁵⁰ This regime also saw the greatest addition to Fuṣṭāṭ's military and administrative importance when the main shipyard was transferred there from Alexandria in 674, as a result of continuing Byzantine raids on the vulnerable Mediterranean coast. It was established on the island in the Nile, al-Jazira, now called Roda, an area that had already been fortified and apparently controlled by the military in Byzantine times. It was connected to the main settlement by a bridge of boats.⁵¹

The Arab tribes settled in the garrison cities of Iraq were notoriously turbulent and difficult to control. Those in Fuṣṭāṭ seem to have been less troublesome, but they could cause problems for the government on occasion.⁵² Maslama ibn Mukhallad paid salaries in cash and in kind to the men on the *dīwan*, as well as to the scribes and for the transport of grain to the Hejaz. When he sent the surplus of 600,000 dinars to Mu'āwiya, however, one of the fighters objected that the money should not leave the country and stood by the mosque asking everyone whether they had received their full salaries.⁵³ He was disgusted to

47 *Ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*, 132.

49 Houses: Kubiak, 123–8.

50 Mosque, enlargement and minaret: K. A. Creswell, *Early Muslim Architecture I* (Oxford, 1969), 36 ff., 58 f. See also al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-wulāh wa kitāb al-quḍāh*, ed. R. Guest (Leiden, 1912), 38 f.; cf. M. van Berchem (ed.), *Matériaux pour un Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum. Première partie, Egypte II* (Cairo, 1930), 1–5 and Eutychius, *Gli annali*, tr. Bartolomeo Pirone (Cairo, 1987), 358. Prayer time: Kubiak, 92.

51 For the island see Kubiak, 104–06, and for the arsenal Aly Mohamed Fahmy, *Muslim Naval Organisation in the Eastern Mediterranean* (Cairo, 1966), 35–42 with further references. The prime source seems to be the laconic statement of Maqrīzi, *Kitāb al-mawā'iz*, 178 who gives the date but not the circumstances.

52 For the following accounts, see Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 101 f.

53 If this sum represents the fifth of revenues traditionally due to the caliph, it would imply a total tax income of three million *dinars*, consonant with the attested taxes of two million

find out they had. Likewise, as noted above, the troops objected when Maslama allowed the Christians to build a church. Finally, when Mu'āwiya gave land in the Fayyum to his son Yazīd, the troops raised such an outcry that he was forced to restore the land to the tax rolls, for its revenue had gone to support the army. It may have been reasons like these that impelled Maslama eventually to leave Fustāṭ for Alexandria.

The great growth that the texts mention is vividly confirmed by archaeology, even though only a very small part of Fustāṭ has been uncovered. Some excavations suggest that this may have been a time when more order was brought to the site by the construction of two or three main thoroughfares that converged on the centre, linking various parts of the city together.⁵⁴ Most striking are the results of the excavation of Istabl Antar in the southern part of Fustāṭ, where the earliest level, on virgin soil, consisted of postholes for tents, huts and enclosures for animals – that is, traces of the original camp. These were rapidly succeeded by more substantial buildings, of a surprisingly high quality. Rectangular houses with attached courtyards that contained gardens were built with foundations and lower courses of cut stone and a superstructure of adobe or baked brick; interior walls were plastered. Fragmentary remains from other parts of the site indicate that some houses had stone floors and even marble revetment.⁵⁵ The new settlers evidently got rich fast, but adapted quickly to their new environment, for the pottery that they long continued to use in their daily lives, whether for eating, cooking or storage, was virtually indistinguishable from the Byzantine, implying a substantial continuity of manufacturing techniques and probably eating habits. At the same time, beginning in the mid-seventh century, imported pottery seems to disappear from the district, to suggest that Egypt was becoming remarkably self-sufficient, making its own material goods and producing the oil and wine that had previously arrived from the Mediterranean.⁵⁶

under 'Amr at the beginning of the occupation and the four million raised by his successor 'Abd Allah ibn Sa'd (648–658), a sum considered excessive: see Baladhuri, *Kitāb Futūḥ al-Buldān*, 216, 218 (trans. 340, 342).

- 54 See George Scanlon "Al-Fustat: the riddle of the earliest settlement", *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East: III Land Use and Settlement Patterns* (Princeton, 1994), 171–9, where he dates this activity to c. 700 on the basis of coin finds. Elsewhere, he and his colleagues specify that the excavators found more than forty relevant coins, which they describe as imitations of Byzantine *dodecanummia*: see Th. Bianquis, G. T. Scanlon and A. Watson, "Numismatics and the dating of early Islamic pottery in Egypt", in Dikran Kouymjian (ed.), *Studies in Honour of G. C. Miles* (Beirut, 1974), 163–73. Unfortunately, their one illustration of these coins, plate 3 p. 167, actually shows two reverses (one printed upside-down) of a type struck by Heraclius in 629–641 (DOC 193–196). If most of the coins were in fact imitations of Byzantine issues, they could have been struck at any time in the first twenty years or so of the life of the city, perhaps indicating a mid-seventh century date for the streets.
- 55 R.-P. Gayraud, "Istabl Antar (Fostat) 1987–1989. Rapport des fouilles", *Annales islamologiques* 25, 1991, 57–87 at 63–66; cf. B. Mathieu, "Travaux de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale en 1999–2000", *BIFAO* 100, 2000, 443–575 at 524–6.
- 56 See Christine Vogt, "Les céramiques omeyyades et abbasides d'Istabl' Antar–Fostat: traditions méditerranéennes et influences orientales", in *La céramique médiévale en Méditerranée, Actes du VIe congrès de l'AIECEM* (Aix-en-Provence, 1997), 243–60.

The new capital Fuṣṭāṭ was beginning to surpass the ancient metropolis of Alexandria, which at this time was probably the greatest city in the entire Muslim realm. It certainly impressed its Arab conquerors.⁵⁷ ‘Amr ibn al-‘Aṣ is supposed to have written back to the caliph ‘Umar that “I have taken a city of which I can but say that it contains 4000 palaces, 4000 baths, 400 theatres, 12000 sellers of green vegetables, and 40000 tributary Jews”, while a later writer claimed that “the moonlight reflected from the white marble made the city so bright that a tailor could see to thread his needle without a lamp”. The city still had broad colonnaded streets and, most astonishing of all, its miraculous lighthouse, the Pharos, still standing to its full height of over 400 feet, and still containing a mysterious mirror in its topmost chamber.⁵⁸ According to a contemporary visitor, the pilgrim Arculf, who was in Alexandria in 680–81, it took most of the day to walk across the city, which had a powerful circuit of walls; outside them stood the church where Saint Mark was buried.⁵⁹ These walls apparently surrounded the city while smaller circuits protected special areas within, notably the walls built by Justinian to protect the harbour where grain was stored for shipment to Constantinople.⁶⁰

Alexandria may have seemed enormous and spectacular, but texts and archaeology alike reveal that parts of it were in a sorry state.⁶¹ Entire districts had been abandoned, and much of the rest was desolate or squalid, with classical levels buried under piles of debris. Very limited excavations have revealed houses with walled courtyards of the eighth century built over dismantled Byzantine buildings, along with small shops that lined the still-existing classical street pattern.⁶² The city’s cathedral, built into the ancient Caesareum, still functioned, but some churches were turned into mosques. ‘Amr built a mosque in Alexandria and others were added, but none has been located. For most of the seventh century, Alexandria remained a centre of trade, but substantial changes took place late in the period. Excavations have revealed that Alexandria, like Fuṣṭāṭ, imported oil and wine from the Mediterranean, and that contacts with Cyprus were close, for much Cypriot tableware was excavated there.⁶³

57 For what follows, see Christopher Haas, *Alexandria in Late Antiquity* (Baltimore, 1997), 337–51 and P. M. Fraser, “Alexandria, Christian and medieval”, in *Coptic Encyclopedia* I, 88–92.

58 See the passages quoted in Alfred J. Butler, *The Arab Conquest of Egypt*, 2nd edition, ed. Peter Fraser (Oxford, 1978), 368 f., and the whole chapter (368–400) for the remains of ancient Alexandria.

59 See *Adamnan’s De Locis Sanctis*, ed. Denis Meehan (Dublin, 1958), II, 30, pp. 98–105. Note that most of the description of Alexandria was lifted from an earlier writer, pseudo-Hegesippus, but the section about the walls and church was by Arculf himself. For the dates of his visit, see *ibid.*, 9–11. Note, though, that Pseudo-Severus, *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church*, *Patrologia orientalis* V, 18, recounts that Saint Mark’s was rebuilt by the patriarch John (681–689) in a work that took three years.

60 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 42, Procopius, *Buildings*. VI, i, 1–6.

61 See especially P. M. Fraser, “Byzantine Alexandria: decline and fall”, *Bulletin de la Société archéologique d’Alexandrie* 45, 1993, 91–106.

62 See M. Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie III, Les habitations romaines tardives d’Alexandrie* (Warsaw, 1984), 336–47.

63 See M. Rodziewicz, *Alexandrie I, La céramique romaine tardive d’Alexandrie* (Warsaw, 1975), and the convenient summary of the Egyptian material in Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, Oxford, 2005, 759–65.

Alexandria evidently remained in closer relations with the Mediterranean than Fustāṭ through the seventh century at a time when local Egyptian products were generally replacing the imports. By the end of the century, however, Egyptian pottery becomes dominant everywhere, attesting to increased isolation of the country as Alexandria was transformed from a trading to a raiding centre, yet showing that economically the entire country, from Alexandria to Aswan, was closely tied together.

Alexandria was of considerable interest to the Muslim regime. The governor went there every year, to be met by the patriarch and to receive the city's taxes which in 685 were calculated at 1,000 dirhams a day.⁶⁴ It was not only Alexandria's size and wealth that attracted the caliph's attention, but also the danger of revolt by its traditionally turbulent Greek population. The caliph ʿUmar (634–644) stationed troops who were posted from Fustāṭ and rotated every six months. Muʿāwiya's brother, the governor ʿUtba ibn Abi Sufyan (664–655), effected a major reorganization, by which a permanent garrison of 12,000 was stationed in the city under the command of Alqama ibn Yazīd. When Alqama subsequently complained that his troops were insufficient to control the city, Muʿāwiya more than doubled their number by sending in 15,000 men from Syria and Medina.⁶⁵ New mosques in Alexandria would reflect the distribution of these forces, who were not allotted *khiṭaṭ*, but were settled in available houses.

Under the Byzantines, Alexandria had been the centre of power. Its patriarch headed the entire church of Egypt while, by an edict of Justinian, its governor, the Augustal Prefect, had both civil and military powers over the whole western Delta. He also organized the all-important shipment of grain to Constantinople. Although both patriarch and governor (a post filled by Christians with the Augustal title well into the eighth century) continued to have considerable prestige and influence, they lost their special powers – the Prefect no longer commanded any troops – and both were definitely subordinated to Fustāṭ and ultimately to the caliph.⁶⁶

The patriarch Agathon (665–681) presided in a peaceful and prosperous time when it was possible to ordain bishops and priests and build churches.⁶⁷ The church had sufficient resources that Agathon, not long after assuming office, could organize the ransom of many captives whom the Arabs brought back when they raided Sicily.⁶⁸ He had problems, however, with the Augustal Prefect, a Christian named

64 *History of the Patriarchs*, PO V, 13.

65 There are varying traditions about the origin of the troops and the length of their posting: see Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, 191 f. Increased garrison: according to another version, Muʿāwiya sent 4,000 men from Medina and ordered another 4,000 to remain on alert in Palestine, ready to be sent to Egypt: *ibid.*, 192.

66 Augustal prefect: for the Byzantine period, see Rouillard 27–36, and for later survivals, Paul Kahle, “Zur Geschichte des mittelalterlichen Alexandria”, *Der Islam* 12, 1922, 29–83 at 30 f.

67 For this and the following events, see Agathon's biography in *History of the Patriarchs*, PO V, 3–10. Note the correct dates of Agathon as established by Adolf Jülicher, “Die Liste der alexandrinischen Patriarchen im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert”, *Festgabe Karl Müller* (Tübingen, 1922), 7–23.

68 This attack apparently took place in 669: see Alexander Beihammer, *Nachrichten zum byzantinischen Urkundenwesen in arabischen Quellen (565–811)* (Bonn, 2000), 325.

Theodore who followed the Byzantine Chalcedonian sect rather than the Monophysite that prevailed in Egypt. In 680 or 681, Theodore bribed Mu'āwiya's son and successor Yazīd to give him full authority over the taxes of Alexandria, independent of the governor in Fuṣṭāṭ. He ruled Alexandria, Maryut and all the neighbouring districts.⁶⁹ Theodore thereupon demanded extraordinary amounts from Agathon – not only the normal 36 dinar poll tax for the bishop and his disciples, but an enormous sum for the sailors of the fleet. Theodore requested 7,000 dinars, which may represent the cost of outfitting a naval expedition. When Agathon could not pay it, Theodore put him under house arrest. According to another version of the same story, Theodore forced Agathon to build ships for the fleet and to hand over the church's gold and silver vessels, so they could be transported to the treasury of the caliph.⁷⁰ Whether this means that the caliph was intervening directly into the affairs of Alexandria in order to increase his revenue, or simply that Theodore was using the goods to bribe Yazīd, is not clear. In any case, the church was being forced to subsidize construction and operation of the war fleet. Mention of shipbuilding suggests that an arsenal was still functioning in Alexandria which in any case remained the caliphate's major naval base, for it was from here that the frequent raids and naval expeditions set out against Byzantium. These anecdotes also suggest that the city, and especially the church, still commanded considerable resources.

Not long after these events, Agathon collaborated with a local magnate, Isaac, to overcome the hated Theodore. Isaac then took over the province. That may have been a temporary victory, for when Agathon died in 681, Theodore confiscated all his wealth, then died a horrible death of dropsy. He was succeeded as prefect by his son who was of a completely different character, becoming very close to Agathon's successor John (681–689).⁷¹ An instance of the role of the church in supporting civil authority came during the administration of Maslama ibn Mukhallad, when the inhabitants of the district Sakha attacked some government employees (perhaps tax collectors?) with fire. The governor sent in seven bishops to help the governor Isaac resolve the situation. All this indicates that the civil administration of the city and province (whose history in this period is virtually unknown) maintained continuity under Christian officials, and that the patriarch still possessed considerable influence, but that ultimate decisions about the fate of Alexandria were made in Damascus.

Continuity and change

The available evidence illuminates the social, economic and political organization of Egypt in the generation after the conquest, when the new Arab rulers had developed an organized regime. It preserved many features of the Byzantine, but with some important innovations that made it a much more

69 This was apparently an extraordinary command, for Mareotis, on the edge of the desert west of Alexandria, had been assigned to Libya in the reforms of Justinian and shortly after Agathon's time, had a governor (*ra'is*) of its own (*History of the Patriarchs*, PO V, 18).

70 *Ibid.*, X, 372 f.

71 *Ibid.*, V, 10; it is hard to reconcile the two versions of Theodore's fate or of the name of his successor.

authoritarian, tightly controlled and centralized government. In Egypt, Mu‘āwiya presided over a sophisticated system that supported his aggressive foreign policy; the whole country could be as effectively exploited by Damascus as it had been by Constantinople.

The documentary evidence, of course, has important limits and deficiencies. It comes overwhelmingly from Upper Egypt, with some supplements from the Fayyum region. It tells about the capital, Fustāt, only by implication, and reveals virtually nothing about the greatest city, Alexandria. Except for superficial accounts of the governors, it is silent about the new ruling class, and about the Muslims in general. It offers very little specific information about the caliph’s government or its relations with Egypt. It is even remarkably uninformative about the Church, whose important role in the life of the people is only dimly revealed. Historical texts and archaeology offer only a limited supplement. On the other hand, the papyri reveal a great deal about the level of government that impinged most directly on the lives of the people – the provincial administration of the pagarchs. They provide considerable insight into fiscal and economic activity, and with it the workings of society.

At first sight, continuity seems the dominant factor. So many institutions and practices survived from Byzantium that it would seem little had changed. The same officials collected the same vast array of taxes, with the pagarch presiding over the operation of a complex, highly hierarchic bureaucracy whose members maintained the pompous ranks and titles of their Byzantine predecessors. Its leaders had evidently received the traditional classical education that enabled them to communicate with each other in the familiarly florid language of courtly politeness. Below them were the usual range of administrators in city and country. The vast fiscal apparatus kept the same detailed records that Egyptians had known for centuries, keeping track of every individual and piece of land and ensuring that taxes were suitably assessed and collected. The government paid attention to even the most trivial local matters. Legal systems, contracts, leases and loans all took familiar forms. The pagarch still had some powers of local jurisdiction.

The society, too, would have been familiar to a Byzantine of the sixth century. At its apex were the great landlords whose estates and privileges seem to have been surprisingly unchanged, and who continued to dominate local politics. Papas had estates with varied economic activities and employees, some who called themselves his slaves, and others who really were. He and his fellows (most obvious in the case of Petterios and his wife) apparently still collected the taxes on their own estates, maintaining some aspects of the Byzantine *auto-pragia*. The majority of the population, the peasants, seem to have been (at least formally) free and salaried, but often show their state of dependence in the way they addressed the landowners, who included bishops, for the church, however dimly represented in these documents, still played an important role in the economy, with some of its clergy, as always, practising secular trades. The population was classified as *capita* for the purposes of taxation as it had been since Diocletian. Artisans and non-agricultural producers were organized into guilds, whose headmen dealt with the higher authorities and which collectively were assessed for taxation. A great range of occupations are attested, with bankers, linen weavers, dyers, fishermen, potters and bath attendants all reflecting a continuing variety of economic activity in addition to agriculture.

To some extent, the image of continuity is misleading, for profound changes had taken place that affected everyone. The *aisia embolē*, for example, bears the name of the Byzantine system of exploiting Egypt's grain supply for the benefit of the imperial capital. But now the grain was going to feed Arabia's holy cities, or the Arab troops stationed in Fustāt and Alexandria. Here is a central change: the Christian population, and its leaders, had lost all role in the military, except for local policing duties. Egypt was firmly controlled by a foreign army maintained at high strength and concentrated in bases from which it could move easily. This was a country under occupation, not yet arrived at a point when there was any assimilation between the new conquering forces and the local population. When *muhajirūn* or Saracens appear in these documents, it is clear that they have uncontestable authority.

Likewise, the continuing power of the pagarchs is deceptive. They may still have estates and prestige – they even have *boukellarioi* (whatever their function may have been) – but they are now cogs in a vast apparatus over which they have no control. They follow the orders of the amīr or his representative and, however little they may like the orders, they have no choice but to obey. Detailed tax records are kept and maintained by the higher authorities, collection is carefully supervised, and the old independence that allowed the landlords to exploit and dominate their neighbours, and to keep much revenue for themselves, has gone forever. Most of their real power went to the amīr or dour, who issued assessments and demands but himself only followed the orders of the governor in Fustāt, a remote figure who rarely appears in these documents, for the papyri are narrowly focused, revealing activities at a local level and reflecting the point of view of the officials who were concerned with collecting the taxes and forwarding them on to their superiors.

The taxes may look familiarly Byzantine, but they include a major, and oppressive, addition, the *andrismos* or poll tax, introduced at the time of the conquest and imposed on all males over fourteen. In general, the tax burden seems to have been heavier and its collection more rigorously enforced than in Byzantine times, with detailed land surveys an important element in assessment. Another new burden was the system of military requisitions, the *rizq*, by which a variety of products could be demanded, including the expensive cloaks called *gonakhia*. Peasants and workers could only flee and become refugees, whom the government was determined to hunt down. Some fled from taxes, others from forced labour.

Conscription of people to work on public projects had always been a burden on the Egyptian population, but now it had a new, unpleasant, aspect – the fleet. Workers were conscripted to build ships in the arsenal of Fustāt, an unpopular obligation from which they fled, presumably because it meant staying far from home – or even worse, they had to serve as sailors, for this was the time of the *jihad* against Byzantium. When Mu'āwiya was governor of Syria, and culminating during his caliphate, the Islamic regime organized Egypt as the main source of men and material for its vast and endless naval expeditions. These were necessarily planned by the centre (first Medina, then Damascus) whose orders were passed down to the governor, then the amīr, then (often through the *topoteretes*) to the pagarch where these documents show their effects. The naval effort involved enormous demands: ships, men to make and man them, military equipment, supplies of all kinds, and food – as well as

money to pay the sailors. The archive of Papas gives some hint of what was involved and shows that these efforts were affecting Egypt long before they are far better attested in the Aphrodito papyri.

The fleet raises a question that is central to discussion of this period: how far did Mu‘āwiya actually control Egypt? It is often supposed that the governors operated with virtual autonomy, with very little interference from Damascus, and that most of the tax revenue stayed in Egypt. At first sight, the papyri support such notions, for they give no indication of money being sent to Damascus, nor do they reveal any intrusion by the caliph’s government in local affairs, or even suggest that it had any direct control. To some extent, though, this is misleading for, as already noted, the papyri are intensely local documents that deal in most cases with the concerns of a pagarch and his relations with the next level of government, the provincial amīr. The pagarch had to make sure the taxes were collected, but was not concerned with where they went or how they were spent. Under the circumstances, it is no surprise that the papyri do not reflect the activities of the central government.

Yet the papyri do provide evidence for interference and control from the centre. The letter from Plato of Latopolis to Papas, 37, reflects his anger at the inflexibility of the “Saracens of the Commander of the Faithful” who evidently had considerable power. Who were they? Obviously employees of the caliph, and most likely agents of the post, which was also used as a kind of spy service, to investigate local conditions and bring back intelligence to the caliph. The post was an important means for supervising and controlling the local officials.⁷² On a larger scale, the elaborate preparations for the fleet, which involved the mobilization of workers and sailors, organization of building materials and supplies, and vast expenditure, could only be the work of the central government, for it involved Syria as well as Egypt, and no local governor had authority over another. Only the caliph could command action that involved more than one province. As the contemporary Armenian historian Sebeos explained, the “king of Ismael” gave orders to “Mu‘āwiya the prince” to prepare the grand expedition of 655 against Constantinople. That is, the caliph (‘Uthmān) was giving orders to his subordinate in Damascus, as well as to authorities all over the empire.⁷³

Mu‘āwiya appears to have strengthened the administration of Egypt by at least beginning to carry out a detailed land survey [73] which could lead to more effective tax collection, and by establishing or reorganizing the *barīd*, the fast courier service. His order to count births in Fustāṭ (mentioned in a text, not a papyrus) could also have been preliminary to a census, this time of the Arab fighters and their families.

The literary sources, though not contemporary and, unlike the papyri, subject to the vagaries of long transmission, are even more explicit. They make it clear, for example, that the caliph appointed the governor and could remove him at will. The example of the hated prefect Theodore of Alexandria further indicates

72 In addition to Silverstein, *Postal Systems*, see Henri Lammens, *Etudes sur le règne du Calife Omayyade Mo‘awiya Ier* (Paris, 1908), 33, cf. 64, the fear of even the most powerful of Mu‘āwiya’s governors, Ziyad of Iraq, on hearing the arrival of the caliph’s courier.

73 *The Armenian History Attributed to Sebeos*, tr. R. W. Thomson (Liverpool, 1999), sec. 169.

that the caliph could undermine the governor's authority by appointing administrators independent of him, who would raise funds for the caliph's own use. The sources show that revenue was indeed sent to the caliph – 600,000 dinars a year in the time of Maslama ibn Mukhallad. But the centre did not need all Egypt's revenue, for it could order the way the money was spent, not just on the fleet but also on sending food to the Holy Cities of Arabia, and on paying the salaries of the troops. The governor may have commanded the garrisons, but it was Mu'āwiya who determined their numbers and distribution, by sending in reinforcements to both Fustāṭ and Alexandria. These were drawn from Arabia and Iraq, further evidence of the caliph's ultimate control of the empire's armed forces.

Mu'āwiya, of course, was not a dictator, for even he had to compromise with the arrogant Arab fighters who tried unsuccessfully to stop funds being sent to him from Egypt, but who did succeed in preventing him from taking a district in the Fayyum that he wanted to give his son Yazīd off the tax rolls that supported the army. Yet the caliph could oblige the governor to turn property over to him for his family's use.

In sum, Mu'āwiya's Egypt was very different from, say, Justinian's. It was an occupied country whose vastly effective fiscal system was subordinated to the needs and desires of the new regime. Military power was entirely in the hands of the ruling "Saracens". Although the traditional officials maintained wealth and prestige, they were strictly subordinated to higher authority and the taxes they collected carefully supervised. However much the tax system looks unchanged, it included important new elements that increased the burden and could cause hardship at all levels. Perhaps most important were the demands of the fleet which affected everyone and reveal, however indirectly, the power of remote central government to make Egypt (and other regions) serve its will.

Papyrological abbreviations

BL: *Berichtungsliste der griechischen Papyrusurkunden aus Ägypten*. Berlin and Leipzig 1922–9; Leiden 1958–.

BGU: *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen (later Staatlichen) Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden*. Berlin 1895–.

CO: *Coptic Ostraca from the Collections of the Egypt Exploration Fund, the Cairo Museum and Others*, ed. W. E. Crum. London 1902.

CPR: *Corpus Papyrorum Raineri*. Vienna 1895–.

P. Berl. Zill.: *Vierzehn Berliner griechische Papyri*, ed. H. Zilliacus. Helsingfors 1941.

P. Cair. Arab.: A. Grohmann, *Arabic Papyri in the Egyptian Library*. Cairo, 1934–62.

P. Eirene II: *Studia Graeca et Latina (Papyrologica)*, ed. J. Bazant et al. Prague 2004. (=Eirene 40 (2004) 1–193.)

P. Grenf. II: *New Classical Fragments and Other Greek and Latin Papyri*, ed. B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt. Oxford 1897.

P. Harrauer: *Wiener Papyri als Festgabe zum 60. Geburtstag von Hermann Harrauer*, ed. B. Palme. Vienna 2001.

P. Lond. IV: H. I. Bell, *Greek Papyri in the British Museum. Catalogue with Texts. Vol. IV, The Aphrodito Papyri*. London 1910.

- P. Mert. II: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Greek Papyri in the Collection of Wilfred Merton*, II, ed. B. R. Rees, H. I. Bell, J. W. B. Barns. Dublin 1959.
- P. Prag. II: Papyri Graecae Wessely Pragenses*, ed. R. Pintaudi, R. Dostálová and L. Vidman. Florence 1995.
- P. Ross. Georg.:* G. Zereteli and P. Jernstedt, *Papyri russischer und georgischer Sammlungen. Spättrömische und byzantinische Texte*. Tiflis 1930.
- PERF: Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer, Führer durch die Ausstellung*. Vienna 1894.
- PSI: Papiri greci e latini*. (Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana per la ricerca dei papiri greci e latini in Egitto.) Florence 1912–1979.
- PSI Congr. XI: Dai papiri della Società Italiana: Omaggio all'XI Congresso Internazionale di Papirologia*. Florence 1965.
- SB: Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Aegypten*, ed. F. Preisigke et al. Strassburg and Göttingen 1915–.
- SPP III, VIII: C. Wessely, Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde. Griechische Papyrusurkunden kleineren Formats*. Leipzig 1904, 1908.
- SPP XIX: Studien zu den koptischen Rechtsurkunden aus Oberägypten*, ed. A. Steinwenter. Vienna 1920.
- SPP XX: Catalogus Papyrorum Raineri. Series Graeca. Pars I. Textus Graeci papyrorum, qui in libro "Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer–Führer durch die Ausstellung Wien 1894" descripti sunt*, ed. C. Wessely. Vienna 1921.
- T. Varie: Tavolette lignee e cerate da varie collezioni*, ed. R. Pintaudi, P. J. Sijpesteijn et al. Florence 1989.