

VILLAGE AND CITY: GEOGRAPHIES OF POWER IN BYZANTINE EGYPT

Roger S. BAGNALL*

Résumé – Dans quelle mesure le témoignage des papyrus permet-il de dégager une hiérarchie des villages égyptiens de l'Antiquité tardive, particulièrement dans le Fayyum ? Certes, la plupart des documents à partir du IV^e siècle proviennent de la cité d'Arsinoë. Mais il paraît clair qu'il y avait beaucoup plus de petits villages que de grands. Ces derniers étaient-ils de nature différente, il est difficile de le dire. La comparaison avec les données du nome d'Hermopolis suggère une spécialisation économique non négligeable des grands villages mais moindre qu'au Haut Empire.

At no point in the thousand years of Greek and Roman rule in Egypt does a document survive for any part of the country comparable to an-Nabulsi's description of the Fayyum described in James Keenan's paper in this volume. The evidence, rather than synoptic and synthetic, is analytic, even atomistic. Nor do we have anything remotely resembling the rich archaeological evidence available for some other parts of the Near East, especially for the limestone massif of North Syria. All the same, our textual sources for all aspects of village life in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt are incomparably richer than those for any other part of the Roman world; only Roman Asia Minor even comes close. And those sources are more abundant for the Arsinoite nome, more or less what is today called the Fayyum, than for any other part of the country. There, if anywhere, we might hope to approach some of the questions that a text like an-Nabulsi's work, concerning exactly the same region, tempts us to ask.

The reason for the Fayyum's comparatively greater approachability for matters of village life is simple: In most parts of Egypt, the major finds of papyrus documents have come from the capital cities of the nomes, the "metropoleis," as they were called. Herakleopolis, Hermopolis, and Oxyrhynchus have been the most productive, but others have also yielded texts in significant numbers. For the Arsinoite, by contrast, the papyrus finds come mainly from some of the once more important villages, located around the perimeter of the Fayyum and generally left dry after the end of antiquity. Places that no Roman or Constantinopolitan ever heard of, like Karanis, Philadelphia, Theadelphia, Bacchias, Soknopaiou Nesos, Tebtunis, and Euhemeria, have become familiar ground to those who study the history of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt.¹

After the fourth century, however, this happy (for us) situation changes dramatically. Except for the monastic site of Naqlun, no settlement of the Fayyum apart from its capital city has yielded significant numbers of published texts from the last 250 years of Roman rule, nor yet from the first century of Arab rule.² The total volume of documentation is also drastically reduced: just over 1,800 papyri for this period of 350 years, compared to

* Columbia University.

1. Papyri are cited throughout this paper according to standard papyrological abbreviations; these may be found in OATES *et al.* 2001.

2. Finds from the renewed excavations at Tebtunis have not yet been published, and I do not know if there are papyri of this period among them.

about 14,000 for the preceding 650 years.³ And these papyri come predominantly from the metropolis of the nome rather than from the villages; they were written (as far as one can tell) in the ancient Arsinoite polis, the metropolis, and found in the rubbish mounds of Kiman Fares, the site of the ancient city, early in the twentieth century before this site on the edge of Medinet el-Fayyum was destroyed. This is true even of almost all of those mentioning a village explicitly in the text and sometimes listed by scholars with the village as "provenance" (see Appendix). The exceptions are fifth century papyri coming from the latest levels at Karanis (both in the Michigan excavations and in clandestine digging) and the texts from the Polish excavations at the monastic settlement of Naqlun.⁴ The condition of the papyri from the city mounds is on the whole not very good. A rough measure is that only 15.5% can be given more or less exact dates, the remainder being dated, mainly by palaeography, only to a century. By contrast, the post-400 texts from Oxyrhynchos are almost evenly divided between those with year dates and those with only a century.⁵ The Fayyum's material is thus very scrappy, although recent years have seen combinations of some fragments previously published as separate documents, giving us fewer but more complete texts. The difficulty of the situation is compounded by the fact that a high proportion of these Fayyum papyri were published early in the development of papyrology as a discipline and to a standard of accuracy and presentation that would not be considered acceptable today, largely by the Viennese pioneer Carl Wessely. The usability and reliability of these texts is thus below average, and only a small part of them have been reedited in a modern fashion.

The situation is nonetheless far from hopeless. Although we have no possibility of writing the kind of rich descriptions of village life that are made possible (if so far only rarely realized) by the papyri of earlier centuries, nor of providing systematic data of the sort that an-Nabulsi offers, we do find many references to villages and indications particularly of their relationships to the metropolis. This is already the condition in which we usually must work for other nomes in earlier centuries, after all, and the studies of Julian KRÜGER (1990) and Jane ROWLANDSON (1996) on the Oxyrhynchite nome have shown how much of the notional geography of the nome and of the social and economic ties binding village to city can be recovered from texts found in the city.

This paper is then a preliminary attempt to look at this fragmented and fragmentary documentation from the later centuries in the Arsinoite, in order to see what can be recovered about the village geography of this period. I shall ask a series of questions, knowing that none can be answered in even close to adequate fashion, but hoping that the confrontation of questions and evidence may nonetheless be revealing. Among these

3. These numbers, and others given later in this paper, derive from the *Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis der griechischen Papyrusurkunden Ägyptens* (Stand: 1.1.2000), on the CD-ROM *Subsidia Papyrologica* 1.0 (Brussels 2000). I count a total of 1857 hits with exact date after 400 or century after the 4th, compared to 14,067 for the period down to the end of the 4th century. But the numbers for "precisely" dated texts are somewhat misleading, as some texts are entered more than once because there are alternate dates available.

4. Another possibility deserves mention here as well. It is conceivable that clandestine digging in parts of Tebtunis not touched by the British and Italian excavations produced papyri of a later period (the officially-excavated documentation does not go past the third century). The heavy representation of the old Polemon district, later Theodosiopolite, of which Tebtunis may have been the capital in the Byzantine period, in the Fayyum papyri could just possibly reflect such findings. On the whole, however, I believe that it is more likely that all of the material was found at Medinet el-Fayyum, particularly because most of it was acquired before any digging at Tebtunis had taken place.

5. To be precise, 465 (49.2%) with more or less exact dates vs. 480 with only assigned centuries.

questions are the following: Can we distinguish multiple levels of importance among villages – that is, can we identify a hierarchy of localities below the level of the metropolis? Is such a hierarchy reflected in political and ecclesiastical structures? Can we identify central production facilities in more important places? Were some goods and services available in more important villages but not elsewhere? I hope in particular to establish some basis for looking at the data on some of these points from an-Nabulsi's description of the Fayyum, and thus in conjunction with Professor Keenan to think a bit about change from late antiquity to the 13th century.

The importance of these questions goes well beyond an interest in the villages themselves, because the character of the Byzantine villages of Egypt is an important part of assessing the state of the cities and the relationships of villages and cities in this period. Richard Alston (2001) has recently argued for a profound shift, albeit at an indefinable date, of economic power from the cities to the countryside. Alston tended to emphasize monasteries and other church institutions, rather than villages, as the most important locus of this change, but he also claimed an "increased density of settlement in rural areas in the Roman and Byzantine period" (ALSTON 2001, 2002).

We would certainly expect the existence of a hierarchy of villages. The most valuable single document for this question is a summary tax register from the Hermopolite nome, dating to about 325.⁶ It covers obligations for military uniforms to be supplied by villages, that is, effectively a form of taxation proportional to the productive land of those villages, and about two-thirds of the nome is covered in the surviving part. There are 70 village units listed, with dues ranging from 1 to 15 garments. Those supplying from 1 to 5.5 garments make up 80 percent of the villages, but supply only 49 percent of the garments. The largest 14 villages, or 20 percent, provide the remaining 51 percent. For the most part, each of the administrative subdivisions of the nome, the *pagi*, has one or more of the larger villages, those providing 6 or more garments. What is striking, however, is that of the 10 *pagi* represented, as many have multiple large villages as have only one – 4 in each group – while two *pagi* have no large villages at all. Clearly the *pagus* system was not constructed as straightforwardly around a single large capital village for each district and a cluster of smaller ones as one might be tempted to guess. The Fayyum does not preserve any document capable of providing similar data, but it is reasonable to suppose that such a hierarchy of villages did exist.⁷ Unfortunately, we have neither from archaeology nor from a document like an-Nabulsi's description any sources allowing us to calculate the number of churches in any village of the Fayyum in late antiquity,⁸ a figure that might serve as a proxy for size. It would be somewhat surprising, however, to find a village (as opposed to a hamlet) with no church at all, even if proving a negative were possible. The church's network was very well developed in this period. Attestation of a church in a village, then, will normally not contribute anything to our quest; it is only what we would expect. If we had a large number of localizable church inventories, of course, relative wealth could be estimated; the impressive list of the property of the church of Apa Psoios in Ibion (*P.Grenf.* II 111) is unfortunately, if not a rarity, hardly capable of real contextualization.⁹

6. *P.Col.* IX 247, published by Jennifer SHERIDAN.

7. Such stratification of village size is of course attested elsewhere, including the North Syrian limestone massif and the Hauran; cf., e.g., GATIER 1994, p. 27.

8. As one can do for North Syria, cf. GATIER 1994, p. 25-26.

9 The commentary to *P.Prag.* II 178, by R. DOSTÁLOVÁ, lists the parallels and the literature (p. 137-139).

More difficult is the question of the existence of forms of local organization and institutions. Finding local officials like headmen and tax collectors tells us little, because these were part of a governance structure imposed centrally and universally present (although with constant change in details of organization) in Egyptian villages throughout the millennium from the coming of the Ptolemies to the end of Byzantine rule (and before and after these periods, too).¹⁰ Even local organizations described as a union or community (*koinon*, most typically) are hard to categorize appropriately: Are they artificially imposed bodies with an essentially fiscal purpose, as they certainly are in some cases,¹¹ or genuine manifestations of local community and initiative? There is room for disagreement on this matter.¹² This is an area deserving further investigation. The villages of course continued to supply requisitioned labor for official projects, but this again hardly contributed to local community or to village differentiation.¹³

Almost equally thorny is the question of non-agricultural economic activity. Many of the documents show the well-known patterns of dependency, like village residents leasing land from urban residents who are landowners in the village,¹⁴ or villagers supplying agricultural products to urbanites, from whom typically they have obtained their short-term financing.¹⁵ Can the larger and more important villages be distinguished from the smaller ones not only in size but in economic character? Did they have a range of craft production, food processing, service, and exchange activities resembling those of cities, or were they just overgrown conglomerations of farmers? This question has not been easy to answer from archaeology, as the studies of North Syria have shown, with Tchalenko's identifications of workshops, markets, and inns giving way under Tate's skeptical reexamination and more detailed investigations. Today's orthodoxy about these limestone villages seems to view them as almost entirely agricultural, apart from primary food

10. These officials figure in Gattier's discussion of Syrian villages (GATTIER 1994, p. 38-40). He signals their virtual disappearance after the 4th century from the epigraphy of the Hauran. But it is hard to tell how far this is a matter of change in the epigraphical record; nor is it self-evident how far these officials were really evidence of "autonomy" with respect to neighboring cities. It is true that some of these offices resemble those of the Egyptian cities of the 4th century, but even there some of the officials were appointed from outside and testify more to devolved management than to real autonomy. The existence of physical facilities devoted to community, rather than private, purposes has also been controversial; more recent studies have been very doubtful about the existence of public buildings.

11. For example, *P.Lond.* I 113 (10) (p. 222), in which the *koinon* of the villagers of Kaminoi is the agent for the village in collecting or acquiring goods to be delivered to the government against reimbursement and in receiving that reimbursement. (It perhaps also needs to be said that it is not possible to assume that the goods mentioned were produced in the village, or even available there.) The *koinon* of Sebennytyos appears as a collective debtor of hay in *P.Ross.Georg.* III 57.

12. See GAGOS and VAN MINNEN 1992, taking the communitarian side against the fiscal interpretation of D. Bonneau, which I supported in BAGNALL 1993, p. 137-138. Their arguments seem to me to read too much into the evidence.

13. See, e.g., *P.Ross.Georg.* III 20.

14. Examples: *SB* VI 9461 and 9596 are both leases in which the lessor is in the city, the lessees in the villages (Boubastos and Eleusis); the leases are concluded in the city. Similarly, *BGU* I 311 (Theogenis and Arsinoiton polis), *CPR* VI 79 (Nilopolis and Herakleopolis).

15. In *CPR* XIV 5, a farmer and a *presbyteros* (priest) are to supply flax to a *sippourgios* (tow-worker) who is a resident of the city. In *CPR* XIV 4, a vineyard worker ([*ampelourgios*]) of Alexandrou Nesos receives a loan of money for repayment in wine; the lender is a deacon of Arsinoiton polis.

processing.¹⁶ I have argued elsewhere that by the fourth century the large villages of the Fayyum show little sign of having diversified economic bases,¹⁷ as they perhaps did in earlier centuries.¹⁸ Can this view be tested from the later centuries?

There is, regrettably, not much evidence for public facilities or offices. In *CPR* XIV 17, a *symmachos* (courier) is described as being from the city but living in Epoikion Kroustou, a hamlet; he becomes a surety for a man from another hamlet. Couriers were certainly needed for communication even between unimportant hamlets and the city, and this man's village residence hardly gives us much information about the degree even of centrally-imposed local administration. More tantalizing are *CPR* XIV 19-29, receipts for payments in wheat, the editor of which suggests that they were found bundled together in the village archives in Tamaus, the village they concern. She thinks that otherwise they would not have been found together. But this is most unlikely. There is no evidence that any excavations have been conducted at Tamaus, the location of which is not certainly known.¹⁹ Moreover, at least four scribes are involved in the production of these receipts, judging by the hands. Such a supply of scribes is far more likely in the city than in a village. Although it might be possible to collect further evidence on this subject, in general, I believe that the available data do not give us much reason for optimism about our ability to understand the political character of the different villages in this period.

On the economic side, things are not at first glance much brighter. In *P.Prag.* II 136, a 7th century fragment of an account with amounts of money, grouped by village, there is a mention of a baker (*artokopos*) in the entry for Perkethaut. That must be set against the fact that no occupations are recorded for the other 27 persons in the ledger. Bakers are in any case one of the occupations one would most expect to be found in every village. Similarly, in *P.Prag.* II 159 we find a lease of a *muloartokopion* – the sole occurrence of this word, which means a bakery with a mill – in the hamlet of Aninou. The editors cite other examples of bakeries equipped with mills, but it is certainly important to note that even here, in the case of an apparently rather unimportant hamlet,²⁰ the baker's work did

16. GATIER 1994, p. 30-36, concluding that in general the villages seem to consist of peasant houses without specialized quarters, shops, and workshops; but he notes that where we have papyri, at Nessana, the picture is somewhat different, with construction specialists, bankers, and jewellers appearing.

17. BAGNALL 1993, p. 127-130, arguing that the nome capitals had tended by this point to centralize functions more widely present in the villages earlier in the Roman period. Cf. GAGOS and VAN MINNEN 1992 for a different view.

18. Cf. ALSTON 2001, p. 163, citing ALSTON and ALSTON 1997; the evidence cited in the latter article all comes from the pre-Diocletianic period, however, and ALSTON 2001 does not offer any support for his view that this "third level of settlement" still existed among the villages of late antiquity.

19. "These receipts cannot have been distributed to the individual taxpayers for, were this the case, the receipts would have been scattered throughout the farms around the village, and, consequently, would not have survived on this scale. Rather, they must have been kept in the village archives as in the case of the 4th century Michigan receipts [*P.Mich.*] II 399-411, which were found tied [at Karanis] together in a bundle and cancelled by crossing through" (G. FANTONI, *CPR* XIV, p. 63). But of course the excavations at Karanis are well known, and none at Tamaus are attested; not even its location is secure. It is known to have been in the Herakleides division. The toponym has been identified with Tamiya ever since GRENFELL and HUNT, but S. TIMM 1992, p. 2477, shows that this is uncertain.

20. Not to say that it was trivial; if the 920.5 artabas of wheat mentioned in *CPR* VIII 75 (ca. 698) were its total grain revenues to the state, it was small rather than tiny.

not depend on having wheat milled into flour elsewhere. This much of the basic food processing work thus remained at the village level rather than being centralized. By the same token, however, it does not appear that the presence of a flour mill can serve as a means of distinguishing more important from less important villages. Even more predictable is a hay-barn (*P.Prag.* II 157) in Boubastos.

Other occupational titles occur from time to time in contexts linked to rural locations. *P.Ross.Georg.* V 71 lists a tow-worker (flax processor, that is) and a potter. *P.Ross.Georg.* V 50 shows baked bricks being purchased in To Skelos and presumably made there. More problematic is *BGU* I 319, a contract in which the purchaser is the honorable (*aidesimos*²¹) Menas son of Pousi, *chartoprates*, restored by the editor as being [from the same village]. If true, this document would attest the presence of a supplier of papyrus in the village of Alexandrou Nesos. But it is not obvious that this restoration is necessary; one could as well restore [from Arsinoiton polis], no doubt with some abbreviation, or [from the same city], if the phrase "in Arsinoe" was already included at the end of the dating formula in line 3, as seems perfectly possible. This document is therefore not secure evidence for the *chartoprates* in the village. No more can we associate the *scholasticus* mentioned in *P.Prag.* II 151 in a receipt for taxes for Aninou (the reading is not secure) with that hamlet, where in all likelihood he only owned land. Again, a thorough search will undoubtedly produce a few more occupational titles for the Arsinoite villages, but it does not look as if the data are numerous enough to allow structural conclusions or to get beyond the fairly obvious and basic: food processing and storage, a scribe or two, pottery-making, the basic building trades, and similar occupations. The counterparts to an-Nabulsi's sugar mills just do not seem to be identifiable on any scale sufficient to give us a significant picture.

A different approach to the question of the presence of specialized facilities and staff in the countryside is to ask about the operations of the estates of wealthy landowners, who normally had substantial holdings in multiple locations. The Arsinoite is far poorer in the large accounts that help us understand such enterprises than is the Oxyrhynchite, but there are some useful sources. One interesting point that emerges from the sixth-century account of hay (or fodder) (*P.Iand.inv.* 653 = *SB* VIII 9920) is that the large estate to which this account belonged, located at a place called To Skelos, drew hay provisions also from at least seven other places, apparently in the same part of the Fayyum (the southwest, probably in this period called the Theodosiopolite) where the same owner had properties. To this degree, at least, the links ran from village to village, and not only from the villages to the city.

In *P.Coll.Youtie* II 95, an account in money assigned by its editor to the seventh century, there are entries concerning both the "city" (that is, Arsinoiton polis) and a village: "from Alexandrou Nesos." In this account a number of specializations are mentioned, including a wine-merchant, *tarsikarioi* (specialized weavers), a poulterer, a carpenter, donkey drivers, and a *chartularius* (a clerical and financial employee). The difficulty with this text is that we do not know the location of any of these people. It would, of course, be unsurprising to find a poulterer on a rural estate, and carpenters and donkey drivers are also perfectly consistent with a minimalist view of the rural economy. The village of Alexandrou Nesos is mentioned in the part of the account recording income, not under expenditures. We are thus left in the dark about the location of the *chartularius* and the specialized weavers, as well as the wine-merchant.

21. "Reverend" might be a more precise translation, but in English this term inevitably suggests a clergyman, whereas *aidesimos* is applied only to secular officials in the documents.

Perhaps more helpful is the group of orders addressed to Sambas the oilworker (*elaiourgos*).²² As in the account of hay, several places appear, including in common with the hay account Mouchis and To Skelos. The location of the writer of the orders, Theon, is not known, nor is that of Sambas himself. Because the texts were probably found in the nome capital, Sambas could have been located there or his accumulated orders could eventually have been returned to the city for checking against central records. The estate possessed at least one oil factory apart from that of Sambas. Payments are recorded for an interesting range of occupations, many of them connected with construction (carpenters, stone-transporters, painter, sawyers, masons), some security or communications personnel (soldiers, *buccellarii*, *symmachoi*), a potter, estate managers, a staffer of a magistrate, and an entertainer (*kitharodos*). As the editors remark, agricultural personnel are entirely lacking from the list, whether because they were lessees and did not receive oil rations or because they were otherwise supplied. One may hazard the suggestion that many of these construction craftsmen were not permanently based in the villages where they were working, and it is precisely their temporary assignment that leads to their being provisioned in this fashion from a central store.²³ The need, for example, to construct a pigeon-house in Herakleon (*BGU* III 962 = no. 3) would surely not require permanent assignment of construction staff to the estate's unit in Herakleon. The payment of a month's oil on Pauni 1 of the 14th indiction may have been enough for the assignment. A few years later, it seems (*SB* XIV 12125 = no. 5), on Pachon 23 of indiction 2, a payment for construction of a third pigeon-house in Herakleon is mentioned. If the view is correct that specialists were dispatched to particular locations for limited periods as needed, even this considerable list of occupations does not significantly alter the picture of villages, with occupational specialization limited to basic construction, food processing, transportation and communications, and pottery. Regrettably, there is no evidence to my knowledge for the existence of periodic fairs, which will have helped remedy the lack of specialist craftsmen and merchants in the villages. These are, as Keenan notes, attested in an-Nabulsi for the 13th century, and they certainly existed in the Roman world (MACMULLEN 1970).

So far, then, we have not found much basis for stratification of settlements, despite the superficially numerous papyri. A more promising approach, I think, lies in collecting all of the amounts paid by villages for taxes in the numerous receipts preserved in the papyri of the late Byzantine and early Arabic periods. These numbers are problematic in many ways, particularly in that we almost never know what part of the total tax liability of a village is represented. Nonetheless, some of them are large enough that they certainly represent more than the dues from an individual, and they help to provide a minimum level of village tax burden. As we also do not have a good grasp of the total tax burden per person or per unit of land, especially since the dates of some of these texts are vague, no precise conversion of the amounts into population or (more promisingly) land areas cultivated is possible. Even with all of these reservations, such data seem interesting, not least because they may help us get a sense of both absolute and relative sizes. That is only a tiny fragment of what we would like to know, but it is at least something.

Some examples, the first three of them from the archive of Flavius Atias, at the end of the 7th century, will show the possibilities. Aninou appears to have owed at least 920.5 artabas of wheat to the state, according to *CPR* VIII 75 (ca. 698), where 50 of them are to

22. For this archive see MITHOFF and PAPATHOMAS 1994.

23. This view does not contradict the editors' point (p. 62) that the workers are for the most part long-term employees, rather than temporary ones. They could still be transferred from one location to another as needed and thus be centrally managed and provisioned.

be paid. Dikaiou is ordered in *CPR* VIII 74 (698) to make a payment of 150 artabas of wheat as part-payment of total of 1,264 art. (the basis of the total is uncertain). Pantikou allage is recorded in *CPR* VIII 73 (694) as paying 20 solidi of gold as the 5th installment of money taxes for the 7th indiction. If the fifth was the last, and the installments all the same size, the total taxes in money for this village would have come to 100 solidi, or about 1 1/3 pound of gold. At a normal equivalence of 10 artabas of wheat per solidus, the 100 solidi are the equivalent of 1000 artabas. In all three cases, we can be certain that the figures we have reveal only part of the total tax assessment of the village, but whether it is perhaps half of the total or a smaller fraction, we cannot say. An account concerning tax wheat from the village of Hermoupolis (not to be confused with the city of that name) delivered to the storehouses shows a total of 619 art., followed by an amount of 80 art. and another missing amount. The total of 700 + artabas is in the same general size-range as the three villages occurring in the Atias documents. On the most conservative assessment, these would appear to be villages with cultivable land somewhere in the 500 to 1,000 aroura range: hardly large, but not tiny hamlets of a few houses, either. They are perhaps the Arsinoite equivalents of those Hermopolite villages contributing one or two garments to the assessment of 325. It remains to be seen if a complete search can identify Arsinoite counterparts to the much larger villages of the fourth-century Hermopolite or of an-Nabulsi's description.

Traces of such a distinction may be identifiable in a fragmentary papyrus assigned on palaeographic grounds to the 7th century (*SPP* X 62). It seems to be the end of a listing of villages with names beginning in beta, followed by a total. The latter is only partly preserved, but seems to indicate 2,177 solidi paid in half-solidus coins, and 186 solidi paid in tremisses. There was presumably a figure for amounts paid in full solidi preceding in the part lost at left, probably the largest of the numbers. The three surviving village names are the choria of Bebruchon, Berenikis, and Belou. They are indicated as paying respectively 48, 36, and 752 solidi. These are probably all in the old Polemon division, later Theodosiopolite. Berenikis (earlier in its history called Berenikis Thesmophorou) was once a substantial village, adjacent to Kerkeosiris, but here has a very low quota. Bebruchon is less well known. Belou does not appear in the record until the 5th century, but here it has a quota twenty times that of Berenikis. We do not, of course, know what purpose these payments served, but that of Belou is very large, the equivalent of 7,520 artabas of wheat, and it is difficult to imagine that the payments do not concern the principal taxes on land. Here, then, we have clear signs of significant stratification of village size.²⁴

It is possible that something similar may be concluded from *SPP* X 162, a list of arrears for a number of villages, with amounts due of 4, 4, 5, 14, 14, 16, 16, 16, 45, and 50 solidi. Because we do not know the original amounts due except in the case of the arrears of 5 sol. (where 12 was the original obligation), we cannot treat these as direct reflections of size. Nonetheless, the scaling looks as if it reflects some considerable range, of at least an order of magnitude, between small and large. The principle of selection, however, remains unknown.

The relative importance of Belou in *SPP* X 62 may find some confirmation from a list of amounts of money and equivalents in wine (at 15 knidia: 1 solidus) in *SPP* X 254:

24. It is regrettable that *SPP* X 40 does not preserve amounts, because it is a longer list (with the alpha section and most of beta), probably of the same district; Beruchon and Berenikis appear there in the same order as in *SPP* X 62, just before the papyrus breaks off.

Place	Solidi	Knidia of wine
name lost	12	180
Mouchis	72 $\frac{2}{3}$	1,090
Tebetnu	20	300
Psineuris	40	600
Phanamet	46 $\frac{2}{3}$	700
Themen (?) ²⁵	10	150
Pisaei	10	150
Belou	46 $\frac{2}{3}$	700
Sebennytyos	2 $\frac{2}{3}$	40

Here again it is unclear exactly what the basis of inclusion and assessment are, and the number for Sebennytyos may be too low; the 27:1 ratio between Mouchis and Sebennytyos seems extreme. These cannot represent more than a fraction of the wine production in these villages. Still, a high degree of stratification is once again present.

Despite the fragmentary and limited character of the texts I have cited, it seems reasonably clear that the situation we observe in the 4th century Hermopolite and in an-Nabulsi did prevail in the late antique Fayyum. The number of very small settlements was considerable, each with perhaps a few hundred inhabitants and a similar number of arouras of arable land. Along with them were smaller numbers of larger villages, a few of them very large indeed, rivalling the big villages of the Roman period like Karanis and Tebtunis in scale. What remains unclear is still whether those big villages were significantly different in type from the small ones and possessed important public facilities that the hamlets lacked. The evidence is almost certainly never going to be sufficient to allow this question to be answered for the Fayyum in a quantitative fashion unless some major new discoveries are made. It is possible, however, that documents from other parts of Egypt and even some from the Fayyum will allow a qualitative approach. Proving a negative is very difficult, with the papyri as with archaeology, and an occasional counterexample may be tempting to the microhistorian. Moreover, there must have been institutions and habits that simply escape all of our documentation. But at present both the comparative evidence of Syria and the papyri themselves seem to point to a relatively low level of functional differentiation among the Fayyum villages of the Byzantine and early Arab periods.

One source of information that might help confirm or disprove the picture offered above is a codex in the British Library (Oriental MSS, Papyrus 1075), containing a register of tax payments in money. It is not yet published, and I owe my text of it to Leslie MacCoull, who hopes to publish it. The codex records payments of taxes in money for the Hermopolite village of Temseu Skordon for a 10th indiction that Dr. MacCoull argues was 546/7. The taxes are land-based taxes. There are some 313 taxpayers recorded, of whom 295 are male.

Temseu Skordon was an important village in the early fourth century, when it was the largest in its pagus, with nearly 23% of the tax liability of the pagus, and the seventh-largest in the two-thirds of the Hermopolite nome for which we have the listings for the *vestis militaris* in a papyrus codex.²⁶ It was responsible for 3.37% of the total taxes in that codex; we might extrapolate from this that it was liable for about 2.25% of the total taxes

25. Cf. *BL* 8.459, citing TIMM's suggestion.

26. *P.Col.* IX 247; see p. 110-113; I am using the weighted figures, but the difference using unweighted figures is trivial (3.43% vs. 3.37%).

of the nome at that date. It should thus be an example of a relatively large village, and here if anywhere we should be finding diversity of occupations.²⁷

In fact, we do not find such a diversity, at least by the standards of the large villages of the earlier Roman period.²⁸ Omitting church titles (most of which probably did not represent full-time employment) and government titles, the picture is as shown in the following table: 37 or slightly more individuals, or 12.5% of the males listed. The fields represented are exactly what our more scattered Arsinoite evidence suggested: agriculture and the processing of foodstuffs, basic construction, pottery-making and smithing, provision of clothing, and a few basic services. In fact, despite clear evidence that flax was being produced locally, there is no unambiguous mention of any flax processors in the village.

Agriculture and food processing

Vineyard workers (<i>ampelourgoi</i>)	4
Bakers (<i>katharourgoi</i> , <i>artokopoi</i>)	5
Oilmaker (<i>elaiourgos</i>)	1
Butcher (<i>mageiros</i>)	2
<i>Subtotal</i>	12

Construction

Masons (<i>oikodomoi</i>)	2
Stonecutter (<i>laxoos</i>)	1
Carpenters (<i>tektones</i>)	6
Caulker (<i>kalaphates</i>)	1
Laborer (<i>ergates</i>)	1
<i>Subtotal</i>	11

Clothing

Cobblers (<i>skyteis</i>)	2+ ²⁹
Tailors (<i>rhaptai</i>)	2
Fuller (<i>gnapheus</i>)	1
<i>Subtotal</i>	5+

Crafts

Potter (<i>kerameus</i>)	1
Pitch-man (<i>pessourgos</i>)	1
Smiths (<i>chalkeis</i>)	4
<i>Subtotal</i>	6

Services

Scribe or teacher (<i>gramm()</i>)	1
Doctor (<i>iatros</i>)	1
Grain-measurer (<i>sitometres</i>)	1
<i>Subtotal</i>	3

***Total* 37+**

27. The 311 individual taxpayers listed, if they formed also 2.25% of the taxpayers in the Hermopolite, would point to a total of roughly 13,822 payers of taxes on land in the nome. That is on the same order of magnitude as the 7,400 that I used in the abstract model of the nome that I built in BAGNALL 1992, p. 138, but rather higher. Certainly Temseu Skordon would not give any comfort to the notion that the number of small landowners had diminished in the previous two hundred years. I have not yet computed a Gini coefficient for this population.

28. Some members of the audience at the Paris Congress, used to working in areas where no documentation comparable to the papyri is available, found the list more impressive than I am inclined to.

29. The cobblers are listed with the plural noun but no names; it is thus impossible to know how many there were except that it was two or more.

I conclude, then, that the evidence of this codex, although supporting the view that a hierarchy of village size continued to be as present in the early Byzantine period as in earlier centuries, suggests that this hierarchy did not translate itself into a level of distinction in the character of the rural economy comparable to that observable for some of the largest villages earlier in the Roman period. And, as far as we can see, this is true also for the operations of the large estates. As for the monasteries, the notion that they survived by selling the products of craft industries operated by the monks has been decisively refuted by WIPSZYCKA 1996. It seems to me therefore most unlikely that the urban decline assessed by ALSTON (2001) can be connected to a migration of non-agricultural activities from the cities to the countryside. Because this decline cannot in any case be dated more precisely than ca. 550-750 on the basis of the evidence Alston has gathered, there is no substantial basis for looking for its causes or mechanisms in the papyri of any particular period. In sum, the papyrological evidence for the period down to the early years after the Arab conquest give us no warrant for thinking that any great changes had occurred in the character of the villages since the transformations of the third century.

APPENDIX

THE DOCUMENTARY BASE

Searching the Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis produces the following results:

Place	Date >399	Century >4	Total
Arsinoiton polis	172	267	439
Village in Arsinoite	19	191	210
Arsinoites	137	1071	1208
<i>Total</i>	328	1529	1857

On examination, these figures need significant modification, because in the exact date category there are many cases in which a single document is listed twice or three times because alternative dates are given. In the following table, the numbers are corrected to eliminate all duplications.

Place	Date >399	Century >4	Total
Arsinoiton polis	150	267	417
Village in Arsinoite	15	191	206
Arsinoites	115	1071	1186
<i>Total</i>	280	1529	1809

There is a second problem, however, in that texts for which the "Ort" is given as a village in the Arsinoite in many cases were neither written nor, probably, found in that village. Even though editors have often given the village as the provenance, and the HGV has given the village as the place in some cases where editors have not, in reality these villages are not the source of the papyrus in either sense. An examination of the places found with absolute dates and origins other than Arsinoiton polis (the metropolis) or an undifferentiated "Arsinoites" is revealing.

- BGU* I 319, Alexandrou nesos: One party is from the village, the other of unknown residence (but restored as being of the village); place of writing is unknown.
- CPR* XIV 1, Boubastos: Actually written in Arsinoiton polis; it is an undertaking addressed to the pagarch by the headman of the village of Boubastos.
- CPR* XIV 5, Severou epoikion: Document addressed to a flaxworker of Arsinoiton polis by two residents of this village.
- CPR* XIV 15, Epoikion Melitonos: Only the heading of the document is preserved; the village is simply the origin of the first party to the contract.
- CPR* XIV 17, Epoikion Kroustou: Actually written in Arsinoiton polis; it is a surety addressed to the ekdikos by a resident of the village.
- P.Haun.* III 58, Karanis: Sworn statement drawn up by a scribe of the village, in the presence of a numerarius of the staff of the praeses of the province of Arcadia. Place of writing is not stated.
- P.Lond.* I 113.10, Kaminoi: Receipt addressed to the pagarch from the elders of the village. Place of writing perhaps the village, but submitted to the metropolis.
- P.Prag.* I 43, Boubastos: The village is the home of the parties; it is not stated where it was drawn up.
- P.Prag.* II 131, Psintheo: The village is the home of the first party to a surety; the document is addressed to a politeuomenos, a member of the curial elite of Arsinoiton polis.
- P.Prag.* II 152, Chorion Ampeliou: Actually written in Arsinoiton polis; the village is the addressee of a receipt from the pagarch.
- SB* VI 9461, Boubastos: Actually written in Arsinoiton polis; the village is the home of the lessee.
- SB* VI 9596, Eleusis: Actually written in Arsinoiton polis; the village is the home of the lessee.
- SB* VIII 9752, Kom el-Haryane [sic]: This place is actually one of the mounds of the ancient Arsinoiton polis.³⁰
- SB* XX 14403, Eirene: This account concerns the water-lifting wheel of the chorion of Eirene. There is no indication of its place of writing.
- SPP* VIII 1192b, Alexandrou: This text is a receipt issued from the pagarch to the residents of Alexandrou.
- From the above, it can be seen that there is no document certainly written in any of the villages; *P.Haun.* III 58 and *P.Lond.* I 113.10 are the best possibilities. There is also none that was certainly found at the site of one of the villages. On the contrary, the bulk of them belong to collections (Berlin, Prague, Vienna) acquired from the major finds on the site of Arsinoiton polis (Medinet el-Fayyum) in the late 19th century.³¹

30. Haryana in the publication. See DAVOLI 1998, p. 150 (with the spelling Kom el-Shariana).

31. FOURNET and GASCOU 2001, p. 139, in editing *PSI* IX 1061, refer to "la corporation des halourgoi... d'un village dont le nom est en lacune, mais très probablement située dans le nome arsinoïte." But there is no basis for their assumption that it is a village that needs to be restored here. As the parallels they cite on p. 141 show, one expects instead the metropolis of a nome, and there is nothing to prevent restoring the name of Arsinoiton polis here. The salt-makers (or salt-merchants, cf. the remarks of FOURNET and GASCOU on p. 144) need not, therefore, be assigned to a village rather than the metropolis.

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