Egypt in the period from the reign of the emperor Constantine to the Arab conquest was both a vital part of the late Roman and Byzantine world, participating fully in the culture of its wider Mediterranean society, and a distinctive milieu, launched on a path to developing the Coptic Christian culture that we see fully only after the end of Byzantine rule. This book is the first comprehensive survey of Egypt to treat this entire period including the first half-century of Arab rule. Twenty-one renowned specialists present the history, society, economy, culture, religious institutions, art, and architecture of the period. Topics covered range from elite literature to mummification and from monks to Alexandrian scholars. A full range of Egypt's uniquely rich source materials – literature, papyrus documents, letters, and archaeological remains – gives exceptional depth and vividness to this portrait of a society, and recent archaeological discoveries are described and illustrated.

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EGYPT IN THE BYZANTINE WORLD, 300–700

EDITED BY

ROGER S. BAGNALL
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Preface

This book began life as the papers given at the annual Byzantine Studies Symposium of Dumbarton Oaks in spring 2004. In planning the symposium, which was the first at Dumbarton Oaks devoted specifically to Egypt, I aimed to bring together speakers who could give the audience a survey of current research and views on as wide a variety of topics as possible. Inevitably, considerations of the symposium’s schedule, balance, and budget prevented the inclusion of some topics or speakers. Some – but not all – of the resulting gaps have been remedied in this volume, and I am particularly grateful to those who agreed on relatively short notice to write these chapters. But it was the symposium that furnished the occasion and brought together most of the contents, and I must thank particularly the Director (Edward Keenan) and Senior Fellows of Dumbarton Oaks for entrusting me with the symposiarch’s office for the year and subsequently allowing me free rein in shaping the resulting publication; Alice-Mary Talbot for her unfailing help and guidance in my discharge of that task; and Caitlin McGurk for her efficient and unobtrusive work in making a complicated event a pleasure for the participants. The learned audience asked many incisive questions and pointed us in directions we had not thought of, and they too deserve some of the credit for the result.

Much of the reading and reflection that went into writing the introduction took place during the fall semester 2004, during which I taught a course on Egypt from 300 to 700 while serving as visiting professor of Coptic Studies at the American University in Cairo. I thank my colleagues there, particularly Salima Ikram, for this stimulating opportunity. Most of the editing of the volume and the actual writing of the introduction were done during early 2005, when I was in the Dakhla Oasis directing Columbia University’s fieldwork there as part of the Dakhleh Oasis Project. The suggestions of the Press’s referees have been helpful at many points in shaping the book. The editorial work, then and subsequently, especially on regularizing the bibliographies, owes much to my graduate assistants, Jason Governale and Giovanni Ruffini.
Abbreviations

*Papyri and papyrological series and journals are cited according to Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets, ed. J. Oates et al., 5th edn. (BASP Supplement 9, 2001) (also available online at: http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html); abbreviations for journals otherwise follow the usage of L’Année Philologique.

AE L’Année Épigraphique (Paris 1888–).
CAH Cambridge Ancient History. 2nd edn. (Cambridge 1961–).
CIL Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum (Berlin 1862–).

Coptic Encyclopedia

CSCO Corpus scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium.
OCA Orientalia Christiana analecta (Rome 1923–).
List of abbreviations


PO Patrologia Orientalis (Paris 1907–).


SEG Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum (Leiden 1923–).