

## *Introduction*

*Jelle Bruning, Janneke H. M. de Jong, and Petra M. Sijpesteijn*

Herodotus' (fifth century BCE) famous assertion that Egyptians are the "opposite to other men in almost all matters" (2.83) has set the tone for analyses of Egypt ever since. On the one hand, Egypt's incomparably rich documentary record, preserved in the papyri and other material remains, has attracted extraordinary scholarly attention. On the other hand, Egypt's unusual geography and the specialized kinds of agricultural and social organization has given rise to it being seen as non-representative. Moreover, a scholarly view that tends to look from the imperial center outward sees Egypt on the margins, leading to a characterization of its historical developments – not always explicitly acknowledged – as at once exceptional and peripheral.

This volume explores Egypt's integration into interregional political structures, commercial networks, and cultural constellations between 500 and 1000 CE, roughly from the beginning of the Byzantine emperor Justinian's reign in 527 until the end of the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969. The volume's contributors study Egypt's role in interactions that crossed the Mediterranean and tied the Nile Valley and Delta to the Near East and beyond in the late antique and early Islamic periods. It also explores how Egypt functioned in the empires of Byzantine and Islamic rulers based in Constantinople, Medina, Damascus, and Baghdad, taking into account continuities and changes in administrative organization, economic activities, social arrangement, and cultural composition, both within the province and vis-à-vis these imperial centers.

The long period reviewed here is chosen purposefully. Prompted by the spectacular growth of the field of late antique and early medieval archaeology and material culture, historians of the economic and social history of the Mediterranean and Near East have convincingly argued that the political changes, economic developments, and cultural transformations that took place during this period cannot be fully understood without

assessing their embeddedness in long-term historical processes.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, scholars have pointed out that focusing on the Roman, Persian, or Muslim rulers stands in the way of a fuller understanding of societal changes, as this ignores large parts of the population, especially more marginal non-elite groups and minorities.<sup>2</sup> Finally, scholars have turned from studying empires as the sum of edicts, people, and cultural practices originating from the capital and either rejected or accepted in the provinces, to emphasizing the constant interaction between the center (or multiple centers) and its hinterland.<sup>3</sup> Conferences and publications on Egypt have started to take into account recent scholarly works advocating a “long” late antiquity, focusing on how regional processes interacted with central developments and including population groups not belonging to the governing minority. Examining developments across the chronological limits of the Byzantine and Islamic empires and traversing the community boundaries and geographical divisions that these political hierarchies put in place in an integrated way, however, is rare. More typical is a single stand-alone chapter on pre-Islamic Egypt or Islamic Egypt in works on the Muslim or Roman period respectively.<sup>4</sup> This book, in contrast, brings together various disciplinary points of view, aiming to track the mechanisms and structures through which Egypt connected economically, politically, and culturally to the world surrounding it and taking into account the different population groups throughout.

<sup>1</sup> Chris Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) and Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300–900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) are perhaps the best-known monographs in this respect.

<sup>2</sup> See esp. also Jack Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018).

<sup>3</sup> Annliese Nef and Mathieu Tillier, “Introduction: les voies de l’innovation dans un empire islamique polycentrique,” *Annales islamologiques* 45 (2011), 1–19. Cf. Stefan Heidemann’s research project “The Early Islamic Empire at Work: The View from the Regions towards the Center,” which was funded by the European Research Council.

<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., Walter Kaegi, “Egypt under Roman Rule: The Legacy of Ancient Egypt” as well as Terry G. Wilfong, “The Non-Muslim Communities: The Christian Communities” and Norman A. Stillman, “The Non-Muslim Communities: The Jewish Community,” all in *The Cambridge History of Egypt*, vol. 1: *Islamic Egypt, 640–1517*, ed. Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 34–61, 175–97, and 198–210 respectively; Petra M. Sijpesteijn, “The Arab Conquest of Egypt and the Beginning of Muslim Rule,” in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 437–59. Elisabeth R. O’Connell (ed.), *Egypt in the First Millennium AD: Perspectives from New Fieldwork* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014) offers such a long-term approach from an archaeological perspective. Similarly, Federico Morelli, *I prezzi dei materiali e prodotti artigianali nei documenti tardoatichi del primo periodo arabo (IV ex.–VII d.C.)* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2019) studies developments in prizes of artisanal products from the Roman through the Islamic periods.

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By not only focusing on long-term dynamics but also addressing regional interconnectedness, this volume also tries to rescue Egypt from its somewhat isolated position in current historical debates, especially among historians of Islamic history. To be sure, the last few decades have seen the publication of studies that greatly contribute to our understanding of, for example, Egypt's late antique and early Islamic military, fiscal and legal administration, economy, material culture, and literary production. These studies attest to the availability of a large variety of sources for the region's history, from archaeological material to documentary and literary texts in Arabic, Coptic, and Greek. But they often show little concern for Egypt's role and distinctiveness in and beyond the Mediterranean. This volume, by contrast, approaches these sources as functions of a polycentric world of reciprocal relationships between Egypt and larger political, economic, and cultural configurations.<sup>5</sup> Focusing on Egypt's connections to and exchanges with the empires it formed a part of, as well as the regions or networks extending beyond such political boundaries, makes clear that the province should not be relegated to its own self-contained corner. Egypt fully participated in larger networks, often playing an important hinge function in connecting regions. Moreover, it participated in historical processes in the Byzantine and Islamic empires, the Mediterranean, and Near East, and should be studied within such larger currents, while conditions within Egypt can be used to shed light on developments in other regions.

This volume approaches Egypt's transregional connectedness from three perspectives. A first group of chapters studies Egypt's political and administrative links across regional boundaries, such as imperial and provincial administration under the Byzantines and the circulation of Egyptian tax revenues beyond the province's borders, the establishment of Muslim rule and early Islamic diplomatic relations, the Umayyad caliphs' programmes of legal harmonization and the employment of client networks to establish the authority of Samarran elites under the ninth-century Tulunids. Bringing together a large variety of archaeological and other material, a second group of chapters maps Egypt's interregional economic connections and the impact of changing geopolitics on commercial networks. The third and final group of chapters discusses Egypt's social and cultural connectedness, from its participation in transregional literary discourses to the impact of imperial policies and political changes on the use of Coptic and Greek in documentary production and administrative terminology. The following pages synthesize some of these chapters' main findings.

<sup>5</sup> Nef and Tillier, "Introduction."

### Political and Administrative Connections

Of prime importance for Egypt's integration into political and administrative configurations was the imperial authorities' capacity to exercise their rule in the province. Centralized military and hierarchical administrative infrastructures enabled imperial rulers to control the use of Egypt's vast resources and to counter successfully domestic attempts to monopolize some of the province's wealth. In the sixth and early seventh centuries, for example, militias maintained by large landholders with administrative responsibilities made it unnecessary for Byzantine imperial authorities to appoint garrisons in much of the Nile Delta and Valley to secure their control.<sup>6</sup> Nonetheless, the archaeological and papyrological sources studied by Stefanie Schmidt point to the existence of significant fortifications on the Egyptian–Nubian frontier around the First Cataract near Aswān to defend Egypt against Nubian and Blemmyan attacks. Tellingly, the highest military commander (and administrative official) in the Thebaid, the *dux et augustalis*, had been directly responsible to the emperor in Constantinople since Justinian (r. 527–65).<sup>7</sup> He supervised the recruitment of soldiers in and near Aswān and commissioned local building programs to make the area more accessible and easier to defend.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, and like the Sasanians who briefly ruled over Egypt between 619 and 629,<sup>9</sup> the Muslim conquerors too relied on military presence in order to enforce and maintain their power in Egypt. Several recent studies have pointed to the militarized character of the first decades of Muslim rule, mainly in the form of the demilitarization of the Byzantine administration and supervision of the collection and transportation of tax revenues by Muslim garrisons.<sup>10</sup> Of central importance was the foundation of Fustāt. The establishment of this

<sup>6</sup> James G. Keenan, "Egypt," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 14: *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425–600*, ed. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 612–37, at 624; Constantin Zuckerman, *Du village à l'empire: autour du registre fiscal d'Aphroditè (525/526)* (Paris: De Boccard, 2004), 170–76.

<sup>7</sup> Bernhard Palme, "The Imperial Presence: Government and Army," in *Egypt in the Byzantine World, 300–700*, ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 244–70, at 248.

<sup>8</sup> P. Münch. 2 (trans. in Bezalel Porten et al., *The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change* [Leiden/New York/Cologne: Brill, 1996], 477–79) shows the *dux's* involvement in recruiting soldiers. For inscriptions commemorating (re)construction programs see Jacques van der Vliet, "Contested Frontiers: Southern Egypt and Northern Nubia, AD 300–1500: The Evidence of the Inscriptions," in *Christianity and Monasticism in Aswan and Nubia*, ed. Gawdat Gabra and Hany N. Takla (Cairo/New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2013), 63–77, at 71–72.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick Sängier, "The Administration of Sasanian Egypt: New Masters and Byzantine Continuity," *Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies* 51 (2011), 653–65, at 661–62.

<sup>10</sup> Jelle Bruning, *The Rise of a Capital: Al-Fustāt and Its Hinterland, 18/639–132/750* (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2018), 45–49, 111–12; Federico Morelli, *L'archivio di Senouthios Anystes e testi connessi: lettere*

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town was part of the Muslims' general conquest tactics and had direct parallels in other towns initially founded as frontier outposts (such as Kūfa and Baṣra in Iraq and, somewhat later, Qayrawān in North Africa). From these garrison towns the Muslim authorities could expand their realm while keeping their soldiers safely secluded from the local population. The establishment of this new Islamic center in Fuṣṭāṭ involved a reuse and adjustment of Byzantine architecture. By assigning the city the status of capital, the new rulers also broke with the most recent principles of Byzantine political organization (albeit not necessarily with its practice), by which no Egyptian city was singled out as the province's capital. Peter Sheehan and Alison L. Gascoigne study how the Muslim conquerors partially dismantled the Byzantine fortress of Babylon (Qaṣr al-Sham'), around which Fuṣṭāṭ was built, in order to incorporate it into their ceremonial and administrative center around the Mosque of 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ. Contemporary papyrus documents also show how local administrators as far south as the Middle Egyptian town of Hermopolis/Ushmūn(ayn) sent workmen and building materials to Fuṣṭāṭ. These documents illustrate how the new provincial rulers mobilized local administrations in order to achieve their goals.<sup>11</sup> Such provincial projects can be seen as part of a larger, empire-wide infrastructure of conquest (both resulting from and facilitating further expansion). Matthew S. Gordon shows how, more than two centuries later, the Abbasid empire's military elite in Samarra in Iraq similarly exercised control over the key positions in Egypt's administration, effectively countered local rebellions, and ensured access to agricultural domains.

With political authority secured against foreign and domestic threats, imperial rulers successfully appropriated and redistributed much of Egypt's agricultural surplus. In fact, Peter Sarris argues that Justinian's ability to command the distribution of Egypt's tax revenues over vast distances, while locally regulating the use of gold in financial transactions, shows that Egypt was fully integrated into the Byzantine fiscal system. Sarris also notes that fiscal demands must not be seen as the main force that led to interregional integration. Egypt's huge agricultural productivity made it self-sustaining, which meant that the province was less dependent on the fiscal system than were other regions. Yaacov Lev similarly argues that the shipment of Egyptian grain to the mid-seventh-century Hijāz, at that time both the political and religious

*e documenti per la costruzione di una capitale* (Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2010), 16–18; Arietta Papaconstantinou, "Administering the Early Islamic Empire: Insights from the Papyri," in *Money, Power and Politics in Early Islamic Syria: A Review of Current Debates*, ed. John Haldon (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 57–74, at 65–67; Petra M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State: The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 64, 71–72, 82.

<sup>11</sup> These documents have been published and discussed by Morelli in *L'archivio di Senouthios*.

heartland of the caliphate, is indicative of the early Islamic caliphs' ability to exploit Egypt's agricultural surplus and of their skill at using existing commercial infrastructures for their own ends. Equally, in their discussion of the mid-seventh-century relocation of the Nile entrance to Trajan's Canal (later renamed Canal of the Commander of the Faithful), Peter Sheehan and Alison L. Gascoigne show the early Islamic authorities' concern for maintaining the canal and Fustāt's connection with the Red Sea and beyond. These views fit the reports in the seventh-century *Chronicle* by John of Nikiu. This bishop, who wrote one of the earliest literary accounts on the Islamic conquest of Egypt, reports that indigenous conscripts reexcavated the canal because it had silted up. Muslim historiography links this early reexcavation to the transportation of grain supplies to the Hijāz.<sup>12</sup> Petra M. Sijpesteijn looks at papyrological evidence dating to the end of the seventh century that confirms that wheat was shipped through the Red Sea port at Clysma, presumably via Trajan's Canal.

Umayyad and Abbasid policies gradually centralized power in the hands of caliphs and their provincial representatives, but also led to localized forms of these policies' implementation. Well known are the large-scale reforms of caliphs belonging to the Marwanid branch of the Umayyad family, who ruled in Damascus between 684 and 750. Most of these reforms date to the first decades after the second Marwanid caliph, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 685–705), defeated the rival caliph 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr in 692. In Egypt the reforms included fiscal changes, increased administrative supervision, new (coercive) methods to secure tax payments, and patronage of Islam in the form of, amongst others, the building or renovation of mosques, the appointment of Muslim (rather than Christian) administrative personnel, and occasional anti-Christian policies.<sup>13</sup>

In this volume four contributions illustrate the local impact of and response to these and other Marwanid policies. Jennifer Cromwell studies the unprecedented use of Coptic for writing tax-demand notes from the late seventh century on. She notes that administrators did not use Coptic for this purpose before the reign of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and that the pagarchs who issued the documents can all be identified as Muslims. She argues that this use of Coptic must be seen in the light of the Marwanids' contemporary attempts to increase the

<sup>12</sup> John of Nikiu, *The Chronicle of John, Bishop of Nikiu: Translated from Zotenberg's Ethiopic Text*, trans. Robert H. Charles (London/Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1916), 195 [CXX.31]. For Muslim historiography see John P. Cooper, *The Medieval Nile: Route, Navigation, and Landscape in Islamic Egypt* (Cairo/New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2014), 95–99.

<sup>13</sup> Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, 91–111.

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efficacy of the fiscal system. Similarly pointing at changes in administrative personnel, Janneke H. M. de Jong argues that the use of Greek declined simultaneously with the rise of Coptic in administrative circles. Likewise, Peter Sheehan and Alison L. Gascoigne show that a major development in Fustāt's townscape took place around this time. The late seventh-century archaeology of a church and possible patriarchal see confirms Muslim and non-Muslim historiography on the contemporary Muslim governor's intensified interaction with the Coptic patriarch, recently interpreted as a means to further Muslim rule over Egypt's predominantly anti-Chalcedonian population as part of centralization and Islamization policies.<sup>14</sup> Lastly, the first decades of the eighth century witnessed attempts at the homogenization of legal practices throughout the Umayyad caliphate – imperial intervention reminiscent of Justinian's legal policies (see below). Mathieu Tillier traces the development of Egypt's seventh- and eighth-century Muslim communities' gradual integration in an empire-wide legal tradition. Whereas the first generations of Muslims in Egypt had developed their own legal practice, his analysis of historical and legal sources demonstrates that Marwanid caliphs, notably 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (r. 717–20) and Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 724–43), successfully homogenized law in their realm by actively introducing a legal convention inspired by Medinan procedural law. Importantly, they did so after local administrators of justice (governors, *qādīs*) asked them for legal advice, which indicates that these administrators were receptive of and even actively sought such changes.<sup>15</sup>

## Economic Connections

Regime change, notably the establishment of Sasanian and Muslim rule in the first half of the seventh century, and the implementation of new policies, such as those described above, had a limited effect on Egypt's

<sup>14</sup> Maged S. A. Mikhail, *From Byzantine to Islamic Egypt: Religion, Identity and Politics after the Arab Conquest* (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2014), 39–44. See also Audrey Dridi, "Christians of Fustat in the First Three Centuries of Islam: The Making of a New Society," in *A Cosmopolitan City: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Old Cairo*, ed. Tasha Vorderstrasse and Tanya Treptow (Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2015), 33–40, at 39; and Joshua Mabra, *Princely Authority in the Early Marwanid State: The Life of 'Abd al-'Aziz ibn Marwān (d. 86/70s)* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2017), 141–53.

<sup>15</sup> See Frederick Naerebout's discussion on centrally organized attempts at homogenization being locally experienced as divergence: Frederick Naerebout, "Convergence and Divergence: One Empire, Many Cultures," in *Integration in Rome and in the Roman World: Proceedings of the Tenth Workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Lille, June 23–25, 2011)*, ed. Gerda de Kleijn and Stéphane Benoist (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2014), 263–81, at 276–77.

regional economic integration, which was based on transregional commercial networks connecting the Mediterranean with Africa, Arabia, and South Asia on the one hand and Persia, Central, and East Asia on the other. And while the Mediterranean's economy in the last century-and-a-half of Byzantine rule increasingly gained a more localized character and decreased in complexity, Egypt maintained its internal prosperity.<sup>16</sup> The archaeological material Joanita Vroom studies and the historical and papyrological material from Egypt discussed by Petra M. Sijpesteijn indicate that the establishment of Muslim rule in the Near East and much of North Africa had little effect on cross-Mediterranean trade networks involving Egypt. The establishment of the rule of the Rightly Guided caliphs in Egypt around 640 or, little more than a century later, that of the Abbasids, as Joanita Vroom shows, did not affect the production and distribution of Egyptian amphorae throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Likewise, Gideon Avni argues for the continued export of Palestinian products, especially oil, to Egypt when the Near East transitioned from Byzantine to Islamic rule. The establishment of a vast politically unified realm under Islam, in fact, may have contributed to increased economic activity and more complex commercial interaction centered on the eastern Mediterranean. It is only in the ninth century with the development of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean routes that significant shifts in trade activities can be observed, as Yaacov Lev and Petra M. Sijpesteijn argue.

Despite the economic centrality enjoyed by major cities such as Alexandria and Fuṣṭāṭ, these economic networks that connected Egypt to the wider Mediterranean basin reached deep into the province. In the sixth century, for instance, Egypt's integration in the Byzantine economy did not rest on urban mercantile activity but fully involved the province's rural areas. In fact, Peter Sarris argues that distinguishing between a rural and an urban economy in sixth-century Egypt disregards the high degree of intraregional economic integration. The economy of villages such as Aphrodito/Ishqūh and Jeme in southern Egypt, or that of large estates such as those owned by the Apion family around Oxyrhynchus/Bahnasā, was highly commercialized. The Apion estates generated such profits that the Apion family must be counted among the richest of their time. Sarris's

<sup>16</sup> Bryan Ward-Perkins, "Specialized Production and Exchange," in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 14: *Late Antiquity: Empire and Successors, AD 425–600*, ed. Averil Cameron, Bryan Ward-Perkins, and Michael Whitby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 346–91, at 352–54; Petra M. Sijpesteijn, "The Rise and Fall of Empires in the Islamic Mediterranean (600–1600 CE): Political Change, the Economy and Material Culture," in *The Routledge Handbook of Archaeology and Globalization*, ed. Tamar Hodos (London/New York: Routledge, 2017), 652–68, at 654.

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argument for intraregional economic integration confirms recently published ideas on the important role the peasantry played in the late antique economy at large.<sup>17</sup> In fact, Joanita Vroom's discussion of the distribution of Egyptian amphorae produced between the seventh and tenth centuries shows the existence of mercantile connections between workshops in the Nile Delta, Middle Egypt, and Aswān on the one hand and markets in Asia Minor, the Near East, North Africa, Crete, and Nubia on the other. Her analysis of ceramic material excavated in Fustāt in layers dated to the Umayyad and early Abbasid periods further indicates that, despite the presence of some non-Egyptian flasks and amphorae, Fustāt's ceramics market mostly drew on local production centers and does not show the interregional connectivity of contemporary workshops elsewhere in Egypt. In other words, the town seems to have formed a vibrant market for its Egyptian hinterland.<sup>18</sup>

Market forces as well as the policies and effective authority of imperial rulers shaped such connections.<sup>19</sup> The ceramics Joanita Vroom and Gideon Avni study in their contributions show, for example, that pottery workshops located in Egypt's wine-producing areas attracted seasonal migrant workers and that in Palestine there was enough demand for foreign products (notably wine, fish products, and natron) to attract Egyptian merchants.

Economic decline, on the other hand, in neighboring regions or areas further away affected Egypt directly as it participated in a well-connected commercial exchange network that, at times, can be rightly called "global." The waning power of the Abbasid caliphs in Baghdad from the ninth century impacted Egypt's position in the caliphate in different ways. Matthew S. Gordon argues that the collapse of the Abbasids' authority enabled military elites in Samarra to create a foothold in Egypt and appropriate agricultural domains. Egyptian semi-independent dynasties such as the Tulunids and Ikhshidids benefited from the local power vacuum. Petra M. Sijpesteijn sees the rise in Egypt's economy as a stark contrast to that of Iraq. Commercial hubs on the Red Sea coast started to flourish and economic migrants from Iraq settled in Egypt.

<sup>17</sup> Mark Whittow, "How Much Trade Was Local, Regional and Inter-Regional? A Comparative Perspective on the Late Antique Economy," in *Local Economies? Production and Exchange of Inland Regions in Late Antiquity*, ed. Luke Lavan (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), 133–65.

<sup>18</sup> See also Bruning, *The Rise of a Capital*, 60–67.

<sup>19</sup> For the existence of a late antique market economy see Jean-Michel Carrié, "Were Late Roman and Byzantine Economies Market Economies? A Comparative Look at Historiography," in *Trade and Markets in Byzantium*, ed. Cécile Morrisson (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2012), 13–26.

Contributions to this volume also illustrate the impact of the policies of Byzantine emperors and Muslim caliphs on agriculture and trade in Egypt. We saw an example of how political authorities facilitated commerce by creating and maintaining infrastructures in the partial relocation and reexcavation of Trajan's Canal soon after the Muslim conquest. Peter Sarris provides a further example of the influence of regimes on agriculture and trade as well as Egypt's interregional economic ties. He writes that the creation of the legal institution of the *adscripticiate* in the sixth century gave Byzantine large landholders, such as the Apion family in Oxyrhynchus/Bahnasā, more control over their workforce. Gideon Avni, in addition, points to the indirect impact of the Umayyad caliphs' foundation of military settlements on the Palestinian coast on local economic ties with Egypt. Petra M. Sijpesteijn discusses how political events such as the deployment of armies and the appointment of officials, but also the movement of people, goods, and ideas as a result of pilgrimage, tourism, education, trade, and migration, affected local commercial production and material culture, further contributing to Egypt's integration into the caliphate.

But arguably more essential was the ordinary security of person and property that the Byzantine and early Islamic regimes provided. It created a level of (commercial) confidence that was needed to sustain local and (inter)regional economic exchange.<sup>20</sup> A well-known and central task was to ensure safe and honest trade at markets, for example. The official weights bearing the names of Umayyad and early Abbasid authorities, excavated in a commercial quarter of Fuṣṭāṭ, and an official's seal stamped on an amphora stopper found in Bawīt, to which Joanita Vroom refers, illustrate well the central authorities' (delegated) supervision of commerce at markets or checkpoints and their regulation of local prices. For this, Muslim authorities in the seventh and eighth centuries used the existing metrological tradition and, interestingly, did not attempt to homogenize metrology throughout their realm, as Eugenio Garosi argues. Like market supervision, upholding a legal system that secured one's rights was one of the activities with which regimes contributed to that essential level of confidence. Peter Sarris points at laws introduced by Justinian that made it more difficult to forge legal documents; and Mathieu Tillier discusses how Egyptian governors and *qāḍīs* who were unsure how to solve certain disputes could solicit legal advice from the caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz

<sup>20</sup> Whittow, "How Much Trade Was Local, Regional and Inter-Regional?" 157–59; Jessica L. Goldberg, *Trade and Institutions in the Medieval Mediterranean: The Geniza Merchants and their Business World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 164–77.