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The rise of a capital: on the development of al-Fuṣṭāṭ's relationship with its hinterland, 18/639-132/750

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A NOTE ON TRANSCRIPTION, DATES, AND TOPONYMS

The transliteration of Arabic follows the system of the *Deutsche morgenländische Gesellschaft* except that words are transcribed in their pausal forms.

Dates are given according to both the Muslim calendar and to the common era. The Muslim year comes before that of the common era, the two being separated by a slash (/), as follows: 11/632-13/634, not 11-3/632-4. When a date is based on a dating system other than the Muslim or common era (such as indiction years or dates on the Diocletianic calendar) and refers to one year only, the date is given as follows: the second indiction year 22-3/643-4. I do not refer to years on the Muslim calendar when they predate the *hiġra* or in case of dates after c. 1800. In the former case, only the common era, preceded by 'A.D.', is given.

Throughout this thesis, I present toponyms as they are given in medieval Arabic literature from the third/ninth century or later. For example, it is Udfū and not Edfou. When an Arabic place name is known to have had a different form in the period under discussion, this different form is used. It is Iṣqūh and not Eshqawh or the like;¹ it is Šīma for the widely-used Jēme;² it is al-Ušmūn and not al-Ušmūnayn.³ Greek toponyms are given when a medieval Arabic toponym is first mentioned: Iḥmīm (Panopolis). Modern toponyms are only given for very common places, such as Alexandria (not al-Iskandariyya or variants) or Aswan (not Suwān or Uswān). Although the toponym 'al-Fuṣṭāṭ' or its Greek variant 'to Fossaton' is not documentarily attested before the end of the first/seventh century, it is assumed throughout this thesis that the place name existed. In spite of the fact that, especially in Greek and Coptic documents, 'Babylon' is used for the fortress as

¹ For the spelling of 'Iṣqūh', see P.M. Sijpesteijn, "Une nouvelle lettre de Qurra b. Šarīk", *Annales islamologiques* 45 (2011), p. 257, n. 1.

² For which, see B. Liebrecht, "Eine frühe arabische Quittung aus Oberägypten", *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 56/2 (2010), pp. 303-4, comm. to line 2.

³ Cf. Grohmann, *Geographie und Verwaltung*, pp. 34-5 and 43.

well as al-Fuṣṭāṭ,⁴ in this thesis ‘Qaṣr aš-Šam’ (Babylon) denotes the fortress and ‘al-Fuṣṭāṭ’ the settlement adjacent to it.

⁴ *P.Lond.* IV, p. xviii.

INTRODUCTION

‘... and then al-Fuṣṭāṭ.’¹

It is the end of the 270s/880s. A scholar named Aḥmad b. Abī Ya‘qūb (d. 292/905 or later), better known as al-Ya‘qūbī, writes a geography after years of extensive travelling. In order to connect the various parts of the world he treats in his book, he describes itineraries, some of which he may have used himself during his long journeys.² One such is an itinerary from Palestine to his current domicile, Egypt. Al-Fuṣṭāṭ, a flourishing town located at the southern end of the Nile delta, is the eighth stop on Egyptian soil which he mentions. In contrast to the towns that precede, however, there is reason to pay al-Fuṣṭāṭ special attention. Al-Ya‘qūbī writes:

“Amr b. al-‘Āṣ built its congregational mosque and its gubernatorial office, known as Dār ar-Raml. East of the Nile, he set up markets around the mosque and gave each tribe [that had participated in the conquest of Egypt] a watch tower and an official who distributed military pay. West of the Nile, he built the fortress of al-Ġīza, made it a fortification for the Muslims, and stationed a garrison there.”³

It is not al-Ya‘qūbī’s intention to describe al-Fuṣṭāṭ’s foundation in the early-20s/640s; his geography is a work on the world of his time. Al-Ya‘qūbī’s reference to the building of a congregational mosque and gubernatorial office as well as to the setting up of commercial, military, and administrative infrastructures is meant

¹ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, ed. T.G.J. Juynboll, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1861, p. 118.

² On al-Ya‘qūbī and the sources for his *Kitāb al-buldān*, see C. Adang, *Muslim writers on Judaism and the Hebrew Bible: from Ibn Rabbān to Ibn Hazm*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996, pp. 36-9 and the references given in the notes.

³ Al-Ya‘qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 118.

to tell his readership that in Egypt official authority radiates from this town.⁴ Al-Fuṣṭāṭ's centrality, he has his readers believe, can be traced back to the very period of the town's establishment. There is no need for details. He provides on purpose only the information absolutely necessary to make this point. 'Scholars', he writes opportunistically in the introduction to his geography, 'usually refer [...] to an abridged version of a certain book. Therefore, we wrote our book in the form of an abridgement.'⁵ But as summier as his words may be, and regardless of their historical value, al-Ya'qūbī powerfully captures, in general terms, the enormous efforts that went into the establishment of a provincial capital in an area that lacked the desired commercial, military, and administrative amenities.

1. *Al-Fuṣṭāṭ and its hinterland*

This thesis studies to what extent al-Fuṣṭāṭ functioned or was perceived as a provincial capital by looking at the development of the role the town played in the province during the first century after its foundation, that is, from the alleged beginning of the Arab conquest of the province in 18/639 until the establishment of Abbasid rule in 132/750. Whereas al-Ya'qūbī ascribes, without much nuancing, the foundation of al-Fuṣṭāṭ to the laureate general 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ (d. prob. 43/664), medieval historians present a wide variety of details of, and opinions about, events that surrounded the establishment of the town. By and large, they claim that 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ led an Arab army into Egyptian territory in late-18/639. The army pursued its conquest in the eastern Nile delta; major battles allegedly took place at al-Faramā (Pelusion), Umm Dunayn (Tendunias), and 'Ayn Šams (Heliopolis). After a siege of reportedly seven months and the arrival of a large group of reinforcements, 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ succeeded in conquering the fortress Qaṣr aš-Šam'

⁴ Z. Antrim, *Routes and realms: the power of place in the early Islamic world*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 102-7. See also A. Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusqu'au milieu du 11e siècle: géographie et géographie humaine dans la littérature arabe des origines à 1050*, Paris/La Haye: Mouton, 1967, pp. 290-2.

⁵ Al-Ya'qūbī, *Kitāb al-buldān*, p. 3.

(Babylon) at the apex of the Nile delta in the spring of 20/641.⁶ With further conquests ahead, the Arabs are said to have set up a semi-permanent camp in the unoccupied territory around Qaṣr aš-Šam'.⁷ From this camp, our medieval sources hold, the Arabs continued their campaigns in the western Nile delta and in Upper Egypt throughout the succeeding months, culminating in their victory over the Byzantine army in Alexandria in late-20/641 or 21/642.⁸ The Arabs maintained their camp and turned it into a garrison town, named al-Fuṣṭāṭ (Babylon/to Fossaton),⁹ after they had succeeded to subject most of Egypt to their rule.

⁶ For an outline of this phase of the conquest according to medieval Arabic historiography and a common interpretation of the late-first/seventh-century *Chronicle* of John of Nikiu, see principally A. Butler, *The Arab conquest of Egypt and the last thirty years of the Roman dominion*, ed. P.M. Fraser, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978 [1902]. See also V. Christides, "Miṣr, D.1: The Byzantine background, the Arab conquest and the Umayyad period 602-750", *Et*, VII, pp. 153-6; P.M. Sijpesteijn, "The Arab conquest and the beginning of Muslim rule", in R.S. Bagnal (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzantine world, 300-700*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 439-44; H. Kennedy, *The great Arab conquests: how the spread of Islam changed the world we live in*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2007, pp. 148-54. Divergent views are proposed in, a.o., F. Morelli, "Amr e Martina: la reggenza di un'imperatrice o l'amministrazione araba d'Egitto", *ZPE* 173 (2010), pp. 136-157 and P. Booth, "The Arab conquest of Egypt reconsidered", *Travaux et mémoires* 17 (2013), pp. 339-70. Cf. J. Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a world crisis: historians and histories of the Middle East in the seventh century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 187-8, who dates the fall of Qaṣr aš-Šam' to a year later.

⁷ For possible archaeological evidence of this camp, see R.-P. Gayraud et al., "Iṣṭabl 'Antar (Fostat) 1987-1989: rapport de fouilles", *Annales islamologiques* 25 (1991), pp. 63-4. For the occupation of the territory around Qaṣr aš-Šam' at the time of the Arab conquest, see W.B. Kubiak, *Al-Fustat: its foundation and early urban development*, Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1987, pp. 50-7.

⁸ Butler, *The Arab conquest of Egypt*, pp. 275-98; Sijpesteijn, "The Arab conquest", p. 441; Kennedy, *The great Arab conquests*, pp. 149-50, 159. Cf. Booth, "The Arab conquest".

⁹ For the etymology of the toponym (from the Greek φουσαῖτον, meaning 'a camp (surrounded by a moat)'), see Butler, *The Arab conquest of Egypt*, pp. 339-40. See now also J. Kramer, "fossatum im Lateinischen, Griechischen und Romanischen", *Wiener Studien* 109 (1996), pp. 231-42 and *idem.*, *Von der Papyrologie zur Romanistik*, Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2011, pp. 353-63. Cf. P. Sheehan, *Babylon of Egypt: the archaeology of old Cairo and the origins of the city*, Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2010, p. 151, n. 6. For different medieval spellings or pronunciations of 'al-Fuṣṭāṭ', see al-Maqrīzī, *al-Mawā'iz wa-l-i'tibār fī ḍikr al-ḥiṭaṭ wa-l-āṭār*, ed. A.F. Sayyid, 4 vols + index, London: Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 2002-3, II, p. 32; al-Qalqaṣandī, *Ṣubḥ al-ašā fī šinā' at al-inšā'*, ed. M.Q. al-Baqlī, 14 vols, Cairo: al-Maṭba'a al-amīriyya, 1913-1919, III, p. 329; Yāqūt ar-Rūmī, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, 6 vols, Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1866-73, IV, p. 263. Interestingly, the toponym 'al-Fuṣṭāṭ' or its Greek equivalent 'to Fossaton' are absent from documentary sources dating from the first fifty or so years after the conquest. Documents from that period refer to the town by the Greek name of the near-by fortress, Babylon (Βαβυλών). The toponym al-Fuṣṭāṭ (both in the Arabic and Greek forms) appears in documents at the end of the first/seventh century. The Greek form first appears in *P.Apoll.* 6 (Udfū; c. 55/675 [see J. Gascou & K.A. Worp, "Problèmes de documentation apollinopolite", *ZPE* 49 (1982), p. 89]), the Arabic in documents from the archive of Basileios, e.g. *P.Cair.Arab.* III 147 and *P.Heid.Arab.* I 2 (both from Iṣqūh; both from 91/710).

Even though we cannot take medieval historiography at face value,¹⁰ Qaşr aš-Šam‘’s strategic location doubtlessly influenced the Arabs’ choice for the location of their camp and future capital. The fortress enclosed the mouth of the *Potamos Traianos*, a canal that connected the Nile with the Red Sea near al-Qulzum (Clysma).¹¹ Further, the two pontoon bridges that connected Qaşr aš-Šam‘ with the Nile’s west bank allowed for strict control over fluvial traffic between the Nile delta and valley.¹² But beside a strategic location, al-Fuṣṭāṭ inherited little from Qaşr aš-Šam‘. The fortress is not known to have had strong enough ties with the rest of Egypt in order to provide al-Fuṣṭāṭ with an immediate central role in, *e.g.*, the province’s administration or economy.¹³ The little information on the fortress that exists for the half century that preceded the Arab conquests indicates that it was a strategically-located military stronghold,¹⁴ that it played a certain but undefined and probably minor or geographically limited role in the collection of taxes,¹⁵ and that the fortress was a regular stop on itineraries, probably a toll point.¹⁶ Consequently, and withstanding al-Ya‘qūbī’s reference to the setting up of various infrastructures, al-Fuṣṭāṭ acquired its role as provincial capital *ex novo*.¹⁷ In

¹⁰ See below, pages 11-3.

¹¹ Although the mouth of the *Potamos Traianos* had probably silted up at the time of the conquest, the Arabs cleared it within few years after the establishment of their rule. See Sheehan, *Babylon of Egypt*, p. 52; Sijpesteijn, “The Arab conquest of Egypt”, p. 447.

¹² On the Arabs’ rebuilding of the bridges after the conquest, see John of Nikiu, *The chronicle of John, bishop of Nikiu: translated from Zotenberg’s Ethiopic text*, tr. R.H. Charles, London/Oxford: Williams & Norgate, 1916, pp. 181-2 [CXIII.3]. Unless stated otherwise, all references to John of Nikiu’s *Chronicle* in this thesis are to Charles’s translation. See also *P.Lond.* V 1754 (al-Fuṣṭāṭ; first/seventh or second/eighth c.), a document recording customs levied from persons passing al-Fuṣṭāṭ.

¹³ Pace J.R. Aja Sánchez, “Babilonia (de Egipto), de puerto fluvial heliopolitano a fortaleza tardorromana: historia, toponimia, documentación”, *Ktema* 33 (2008), p. 399. The sources presented there are silent on the late A.D. sixth and early-first/seventh century.

¹⁴ See *e.g.* R. Altheim-Stiehl, “The Sasanians in Egypt: some evidence of historical interest”, *BSAC* 31 (1992), esp. p. 92; the centrality of the fortress in accounts of the Arab conquest are possibly due to the centrality of later al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Cf. J. Maspero, *Organisation militaire de l’Égypte byzantine*, Paris: Champion, 1912, p. 32.

¹⁵ *CPR* X 14 (Manf [Memphis]; A.D. 610) and possibly *P.Haun.* III 52 (poss. Fayyūm (Arsinoitēs); A.D. sixth or seventh c.); see also *SPP* VIII 1130 (Fayyūm; A.D. sixth c.).

¹⁶ *P.Oxy.* LVI 3872 (al-Bahnasā [Oxyrhynchos]; late A.D. sixth or first/seventh c.); *SB* XX 14449 (prov. unknown; first/seventh c.).

¹⁷ This thesis uses the word ‘capital’ in a sense broader than ‘the seat of political authority’ and recognizes as well economic, religious, and cultural capitals (which are not mutually exclusive terms). Although considering the identity of mostly modern capital cities, B.M. Milroy, “Commentary: what is a

order to understand how and under which circumstances al-Fuṣṭāṭ developed from a garrison town into a provincial capital, one must analyze and contextualize (the development of) the town's relationship with the rest of Egypt. Understanding this relationship is central to the present thesis.

Neither the establishment of Arab dominion nor the foundation of al-Fuṣṭāṭ marked a watershed in the history of late-antique Egypt. The Arab authorities' initial policy preferred continuity of existing (administrative) practices rather than prescribing large-scale reforms. At the time of the conquest, the Nile valley and delta had been divided into four eparchies, in theory independent provinces of the Byzantine empire.¹⁸ In practice, the Melkite patriarch, seated in Alexandria, may have had far-reaching authority over the officials who headed these eparchies.¹⁹ After the conquest, the Melkite patriarch appears to have lost considerable authority. Moreover, his office remained unoccupied for most of the Umayyad period.²⁰ While maintaining a good relationship with the Coptic patriarch,²¹ also seated in Alexandria, the Arab authorities in al-Fuṣṭāṭ mostly restricted their supervision to the heads of the

capital?", in J. Taylor, J.G. Lengellé & C. Andrew (eds), *Capital cities: international perspectives*, Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1993, pp. 85-91 and S. Campbell, "The enduring importance of national capital cities in the global era", *Urban and regional research collaborative working paper* (University of Michigan), 2003 (available online via

http://sitemaker.umich.edu/urrcworkingpapers/all_urrc_working_papers [September 2013])

present thoughts on capital city as a concept that are also useful for scholars working on pre-modern times.

¹⁸ B. Palme, "The imperial presence: government and army", in R.S. Bagnal (ed.), *Egypt in the Byzantine world, 300-700*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 246, 248-9 and 264-5. For Barqa (Cyrenaica) and Anṭābulus (Pentapolis), see A. Grohmann, *Studien zur historischen Geographie und Verwaltung des frühmittelalterlichen Ägypten*, Vienna: Rudolf M. Rohrer, 1959, pp. 10-1.

¹⁹ Palme, "The imperial presence", p. 265.

²⁰ Before the appointment of Cosmas I in c. 124/742, the last Melkite patriarch who held office under Arab rule died in 31/651-2. See the discussion in S.H. Skreslet, *The Greeks in medieval Egypt: a Melkite dhimmī community under the patriarch of Alexandria (640-1095)*, Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1987, pp. 59 (n. 141) and 106-11.

²¹ For the Arab authorities' favourable attitude towards the Coptic patriarch Benjamin and his successors, see P.M. Sijpesteijn, "New rule over old structures: Egypt after the Muslim conquest", in H. Crawford (ed.), *Regime change in the ancient Near East and Egypt*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 188-9.

eparchies.²² Lower administrative officials remained in place. By thus connecting Egypt's existing administration to that of their own in al-Fuṣṭāṭ, the Arabs were able to control, and to extract revenues from, a province in which they formed a minority.²³ This polity, together with Islam's undifferentiated or inclusive character vis-à-vis other religions at that time,²⁴ created no need for those cooperating with the Arab administration to (religiously or otherwise) assimilate with their new Arab rulers.²⁵ The background of local notables as well as much of their social standing and authority initially remained as it had been under Byzantine rule.²⁶

²² See John of Nikiu, *Chronicle*, pp. 194-5 [CXX.29] for the administration of the Arab governor in al-Fuṣṭāṭ appointing local notables over Egypt's four eparchies or reaffirming others who had held that position during the conquest. These officials stood in close contact with al-Fuṣṭāṭ and must have derived part of their authority from the acknowledgement of their office by the central Arab administration. See, e.g., SB VIII 9749 (Ihnās; 18.2-3.21/26.1-2.642), a document that records that the *dux* of Arcadia acknowledged that a local administrator delivered to the granaries of Qaṣr aš-Šam' all the tax wheat requested from that eparchy after having checked the delivered amount against a 'declaration' (Gr. ἀπόδειξις) drawn up by a deputy of the absent Arab governor.

²³ A. Papaconstantinou, "Administering the early Islamic empire: insights from the papyri", in J.F. Haldon (ed.), *Money, power and politics in early Islamic Syria: a review of current debates*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010, p. 65 and P.M. Sijpesteijn, "Landholding patterns in early Islamic Egypt", *Journal of agrarian change* 9/1 (2009), pp. 125-6. See also Sijpesteijn, "New rule over old structures", pp. 183-200.

²⁴ This thesis is best known from F.M. Donner, "From believers to Muslims: confessional self-identity in the early Islamic community", *Al-Abhath* 50-1 (2002-3), pp. 9-53 and is elaborated upon in *idem.*, *Muhammad and the believers: at the origins of Islam*, Cambridge, MA/London: Harvard University Press, 2010. For a critical discussion of Donner's works, see A. Elad, "Community of believers of 'holy men' and 'saints' or community of Muslims? The rise and development of early Muslim historiography", *JSS* 47/1 (2002), esp. pp. 246-9 and P. Crone's non-specialist review of Donner's book in her "Among the believers: a new look at the origins of Islam describes a tolerant world that may not have existed", *Tablet* (2010), available online at <<http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/42023/among-the-believers>> [December 2013]. On Islam's undifferentiated character, see also A. Papaconstantinou, "Between *umma* and *dhimma*: the Christians of the Middle East under the Umayyads", *Annales islamologiques* 42 (2008), pp. 134-9.

²⁵ Documents emanating from the administration of officials of local origin implicitly refer to a perceived dichotomy between the Egyptian population and the newly-arrived Arabs (C. Décobert, *Le mendiant et le combattant: l'institution de l'islam*, Paris: Seuil, 1991, p. 84; see also R.G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as others saw it: a survey and evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian writings on early Islam*, Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1997, p. 548). Conversion to Islam among the formerly Byzantine notables or administrators is not recorded for the initial decades of Arab rule (Sijpesteijn, "New rule", pp. 188 and 195; but cf. P. Crone, "Mawlā", *EI*², VI, p. 876).

²⁶ A. Grohmann, "Der Beamtenstab der arabischen Finanzverwaltung in Ägypten in frühislamischer Zeit", in H. Braunert (ed.), *Studien zur Papyrologie und antiken Wirtschaftsgeschichte: Friedrich Oertel zum 80. Geburtstag gewidmet*, Bonn: Habelt, 1964, pp. 129-30; G. Schmelz, *Kirchliche Amtsträger im spätantiken Ägypten nach den Aussagen der griechischen und koptischen Papyri und Ostraka*, München/Leipzig: K.G. Saur,

Although the foundation of al-Fuṣṭāṭ as the Arabs' political headquarters may at first have had limited impact beyond the level of the top of local administrations, the town's gradually increasing influence in the rest of the province – its acquirement of province-wide centrality – brought about changes in existing social and administrative structures. Connections developed which did not yet exist; existing ones intensified. Politics must have significantly influenced such developments. Imperial and provincial policies under the Sufyanids and Marwanids set in motion, or stimulated, processes of assimilation and integration between indigenous Egyptians and Arab new-comers. As we will see in detail in the subsequent chapters, policies under the Sufyanids predominantly affected matters related to the government of the province. The policies of their Marwanid successors not only included administrative reforms but also changed, for example, legal and fiscal practices. Other changes highly relevant to the position of al-Fuṣṭāṭ – such as the development of commercial relations or local conversion to Islam – are best understood as (often local or individual) reactions to developments in society and/or official policies and are only indirectly the result of the agency of Arab administrators.

Modern scholarship approaches al-Fuṣṭāṭ and its role in the province from predominantly two angles. One of these is that of the early-Arab administration. The idea that al-Fuṣṭāṭ played a central role in Egypt's (fiscal) administration from soon after its establishment permeates modern scholarship on the town's connections with the rest of the province. This is the result of the nature of much of our source material. Many medieval histories of Egypt focus on the top of the province's administration in al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Further, our better known documentary sources stem from administrative circles limited to a few regions in Upper Egypt (the Nile valley south of the delta), especially the Fayyūm (Arsinoitēs), al-Uṣmūn (Hermopolis), Iṣqūh (Aphroditō), and Udfū (Apollonōpolis Anō). On the basis of (some of) these sources, such early-modern historians of

2002, pp. 289-318; Sijpesteijn, "New rule", p. 188; Sijpesteijn, "Landholding patterns", p. 122; A. Steinwenter, *Studien zu den koptischen Rechtsurkunden aus Oberägypten*, Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1967, pp. 6-25.

Egypt as H.I. Bell, C.H. Becker and, somewhat later, A. Grohmann studied al-Fuṣṭāṭ's relationship with the rest of Egypt in light of the province's administrative hierarchy. Their studies allowed them to conclude that the (often not defined or properly nuanced) "early-Islamic period" saw, in Bell's words, 'an almost excessive centralization' around al-Fuṣṭāṭ.²⁷ The subsequent publication of new documents, the thorough papyrological studies, and the in-depth inquiries into medieval historiography on al-Fuṣṭāṭ by the hands of K. Morimoto, F. Morelli, P.M. Sijpesteijn, and S. Bouderbala – to name just a few – have greatly contributed to, and nuanced, our understanding of the development of al-Fuṣṭāṭ's administrative relationship with the rest of Egypt.²⁸ It is now clear that this relationship was not static and drastically changed throughout the first century of Arab rule under the pressure of increasing state expenses combined with lessening tax revenues and because of changing religious ideologies and social as well as demographic circumstances. The early-Marwanid period was a turning point in the history of this relationship; from c. 80/700, the town's administrative influence over the province increased considerably. Changes in al-Fuṣṭāṭ's role in the province took the shape of new administrative structures. By replacing indigenous heads of administrative districts by Arabs (who lacked a local power base), for instance, the Marwanid authorities seated in al-Fuṣṭāṭ secured for themselves more control over local administrations and, hence, over the districts' tax revenues.²⁹ It is in the same period that we have the first records of monks being subjected to taxes,³⁰ that unoccupied agricultural land was assigned to villagers in order to generate tax

²⁷ E.g., *P.Lond.* IV, pp. xvii-xxv, xxxv-xli; C.H. Becker, "Historische Studien über das Londoner Aphroditowerk", *Der Islam* 2 (1911), pp. 359-71; Grohmann, "Der Beamtenstab". For the cited words, see H.I. Bell, "The administration of Egypt under the Umayyad khalifs", *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 28 (1928), p. 279.

²⁸ E.g., K. Morimoto, *The fiscal administration of Egypt in the early Islamic period*, Kyoto: Dohosha, 1981; F. Morelli, "Legname, palazzi e moschee: P.Vindob. G 31 e il contributo dell'Egitto alla prima architettura islamica", *Tyche* 13 (1998), pp. 165-90; *idem.*, "Agri deserti (mawāt), fuggitivi, fisco: una κλήρωσις in più in SPP VIII 1183", *ZPE* 129 (2000), pp. 167-78; *CPR* XXX; P.M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim state: papyri related to a mid-eighth-century Egyptian official*, forthcoming; S. Bouderbala, *Čund Miṣr: étude de l'administration militaire dans l'Égypte des débuts de l'Islam, 21/642-218/833*, Ph.D. thesis: Université de Paris 1/Panthéon-Sorbonne, 2008.

²⁹ Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim state*, pp. 201-11.

³⁰ Morimoto, *The fiscal administration*, pp. 114-9.

revenues,³¹ and that the number of preserved safe conducts, meant to control the movement of fiscally liable persons and issued by the central administration, sharply increases.³² In al-Fuṣṭāṭ, too, contemporary administrative changes increased the authorities' power over the town's Arab populace.³³ On the basis of these and other changes, modern scholarship has been able to connect al-Fuṣṭāṭ's changing position in the province to developments at the level of the caliphate; we will briefly return to this below.

Since the mid-twentieth century, al-Fuṣṭāṭ has also received ample archaeological interest.³⁴ From 1964 until 1980, an archaeological team of the American Research Centre in Egypt (ARCE), under the supervision of G.T. Scanlon, conducted excavations to the north-east of the Mosque of 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ. Their publications largely consist of archaeological reports and catalogues.³⁵ A team of the Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (IFAO), headed by R.-P. Gayraud, excavated between 1985 and 2003 an area to the south-east of the mosque, known as Iṣṭabl 'Antar. In addition to the archaeological reports and studies, the IFAO is currently publishing the finds of its excavations there.³⁶ Together, the reports, catalogues, and studies of the American and French excavations map with great chronological precision the architectural and morphological development of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, which can be traced back to the period of its establishment.³⁷ Their detailed

³¹ See Morelli, "Agri deserti".

³² See, e.g., Y. Rāḡib, "Sauf conduits d'Égypte omeyyade et abbasside", *Annales islamologiques* 31 (1997), esp. pp. 143-9. For more literature on the safe conduct, see p. 123, n. 161.

³³ Bouderbala, *Ġund Miṣr*, pp. 210-36.

³⁴ In addition to being mostly relevant to the Fatimid period, excavations led by A. Bahgat Bey in the 1910s and early-1920s (reports are published in A. Bahgat Bey & A. Gabriel, *Les fouilles d'al Foustāt*, Paris: E. de Boccard, 1921) do not conform to modern archaeological standards and are, therefore, not considered in this thesis. For a short overview of other, but minor, excavations conducted before the mid-twentieth century, see G.T. Scanlon, "Preliminary report: excavations at Fustat", *JARCE* 4 (1965), p. 9.

³⁵ For an overview of their publications, see W.B. Kubiak & G.T. Scanlon, *Fuṣṭāṭ expedition final report*, II: *Fustat-C*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989, pp. ix-x. Add G.T. Scanlon, & R. Pinder-Wilson, *Fustat glass of the early Islamic period: finds excavated by the American Research Center in Egypt, 1964-1980*, London: Altajir World of Islam Trust, 2001.

³⁶ S. Denoix, "Les fouilles d'Iṣṭabl 'Antar à Fustāt", preface of E. Rodziewicz, *Bone carvings from Fustat-Iṣṭabl 'Antar*, Cairo: IFAO, 2012, pp. xii-xiii.

³⁷ For syntheses of the finds of the American and French excavations related to the first century of Arab rule, see G.T. Scanlon, "Al-Fuṣṭāṭ: the riddle of the earliest settlement", in G.R.D. King & A. Cameron

documentation of al-Fuṣṭāṭ's material culture is an important source for studies into the economy of the town and on the town's connections with the rest of the province and the Mediterranean region at large. In addition to the American and French teams, archaeologists of three Japanese institutions, together led by M. Kawatoko, have excavated between 1978 and 1985 and are excavating again since 1998 an area east of the Mosque of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ which was part of the town's central quarter and housed Arab notables. Most of the reports of their excavations are published in Japanese.³⁸ The team is currently publishing their finds in catalogues; one in English has appeared so far.³⁹ Furthermore, another team of the ARCE, led by P. Sheehan, has subjected the fortress Qaṣr aš-Šam' to thorough archaeological excavations between 2000 and 2006. The results of their finds, conveniently published in an easily readable monograph,⁴⁰ reveal amongst others how the Arabs adjusted the fortress to their needs and connected it, by building a road, to the Mosque of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ at the centre of al-Fuṣṭāṭ.

Whereas archaeological and philological scholarship on al-Fuṣṭāṭ and the town's involvement in the provincial administration is abundantly available, modern studies only seldom discuss the town's role in the province outside the fiscal-administrative realm or study al-Fuṣṭāṭ's relationship with areas which are not the provenance of the bulk of our documentary sources. Building on what has previously been written on the town, the present thesis maps and analyses the form and strength of al-Fuṣṭāṭ's ties with a number of understudied areas and/or at levels that have yet received little attention. This is done on the basis of four case studies to each of which one chapter is devoted. Two case studies deal with

(eds), *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East, II: Land use and settlement patterns*, Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, 1994, pp. 171-179; R.-P. Gayraud, "Fostat: évolution d'une capitale arabe du VIIe au XIIe siècle d'après les fouilles d'Istabl 'Antar", in R.-P. Gayraud (ed.), *Colloque international d'archéologie islamique*, Cairo: IFAO, 1998, pp. 435-60.

³⁸ For an overview of the publications, see the bibliography to M. Kawatoko, "Multi-disciplinary approaches to the Islamic period in Egypt and the Red Sea coast", *Antiquity* 79 (2005), pp. 844-57. See also the following note.

³⁹ M. Kawatoko & Y. Shindo, *Artifacts of the medieval Islamic period, excavated in al-Fuṣṭāṭ, Egypt*, Tokyo: Organization for Islamic Area Studies, Waseda University, 2010 [*non vide*]. See also Kawatoko, "Multi-disciplinary approaches", p. 848.

⁴⁰ P. Sheehan, *Babylon of Egypt: the archaeology of old Cairo and the origins of the city*, Cairo: American University of Cairo Press, 2010.

the development of al-Fuṣṭāṭ's relationship with Alexandria at a military, administrative, and commercial level (chapters 1 and 2). The remaining two studies deal with the town's relationship with Upper Egypt, with much emphasis on the region around Aswan, at a military-administrative and judicial level (chapters 3 and 4). Areas such as the eastern Nile delta or Barqa (Cyrenaica) are not considered because of the unavailability of (enough) source material. The four case studies analyze al-Fuṣṭāṭ from the view point of the town's hinterland rather than that of al-Fuṣṭāṭ itself and, unlike much previous scholarship, connect al-Fuṣṭāṭ with Egypt's extreme north and south.

It is now widely acknowledged that any study into the first century of Arab rule should, by preference, not solely rely on the preserved Arabic literary source material. The oral tradition that dominated the transmission of knowledge among the Arabs of the first two Islamic centuries has resulted in an almost total lack of contemporary literature.⁴¹ This is certainly true for first/seventh- and second/eighth-century scholarship from Egypt on the history of the province since the establishment of Arab dominion. There is, indeed, very little evidence of the production of scholarly writings in Arabic in Egypt during the first/seventh century.⁴² By the mid-second/eighth century, Egypt had produced a considerable number of historians of whom some may have written local histories.⁴³ Among the first recorded is one Ḥuyayy b. Hānī' al-Ma'āfirī (d. 128/745), a participant in the conquest of Rhodes of 52/672 and reported author of a *Kitāb futūḥ Miṣr*.⁴⁴ Except in the form of citations in writings of the third/ninth century or later,⁴⁵ copies of

⁴¹ On the correlation between the oral tradition and the use of written sources, see principally G. Schoeler, "Die Frage der schriftlichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung der Wissenschaften im frühen Islam", *Der Islam* 62 (1985), pp. 201-30 and *idem.*, "Weiteres zur Frage der schriftlichen oder mündlichen Überlieferung der Wissenschaften im Islam", *Der Islam* 66 (1989), pp. 38-67.

⁴² Y. Rāḡib, "Les plus anciens papyrus arabes", *Annales islamologiques* 30 (1996), pp. 1-19. Cf. *P.Mil.Vogl.* 1 (prov. unknown), a fragment of a literary text palaeographically dated to the first/seventh century.

⁴³ F.M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic origins: the beginnings of Islamic historical writing*, Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, 1998, pp. 224-5. See also H. Kennedy, "Egypt as a province in the Islamic caliphate, 641-868", *CHE*, I, pp. 63-4.

⁴⁴ GAS, I, p. 341. On Ḥuyayy b. Hānī' al-Ma'āfirī, see further Bouderbala, *Ġund Miṣr*, pp. 29-32.

⁴⁵ Except for a few fragments of earlier texts, the earliest works preserved today date from the late-second/eighth or early-third/ninth century. See Rāḡib, "Les plus anciens papyrus arabes", pp. 2-5. For the late-medieval date and context of *Kitāb futūḥ Miṣr wa-l-Iskandariyya* (ed. H.A. Hamaker, Leiden: S. & J.

(parts of) the works of Ḥuyayy b. Hānī' al-Ma'āfirī and his colleagues have not been preserved. Modern scholars have long showed that this considerable span of time that separates the events from their recording in enduring form allowed for the intrusion of biased or even non-historical reports. Since the 1970s, some scholars even argued that it is no longer possible to sift the historical information from the non-historical and that future research, therefore, needs to be based on sources that lay outside the Arabic literary tradition.⁴⁶ Literary sources (originally) composed in Coptic and Greek, however, present problems similar to those of the Arabic sources.⁴⁷

For this reason, the present thesis's case studies use these problematic literary sources only after, or in combination with, a careful examination of the available documentary source material: documents (on papyrus, potsherds, etc.; written in Arabic, Coptic, and Greek), inscriptions, coins, *exagīa*, and (especially in chapter 2) archaeology. Although there are limits to the objectivity of such non-literary sources,⁴⁸ they constitute an invaluable source of information. They are

Luchtman, 1825) and *Kitāb futūḥ al-Bahnasā* (tr. É. Galtier, Cairo: IFAO, 1909), erroneously ascribed to the well-known Medinan historian Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī (d. 207/822), see C. Décobert, "La prise de Maryūt par les Arabes: conquête et conversion religieuse", in J.-Y. Empereur & C. Décobert (eds), *Alexandrie médiévale* 3, Cairo: IFAO, 2008, esp. pp. 146-50 (pace the discussion in J. Jarry, "La conquête du Fayoum par les Musulmans d'après le Futūḥ al-Bahnasā", *Annales islamologiques* 9 (1970), pp. 15-8). This thesis makes no use of these two books.

⁴⁶ For an overview of approaches towards historical scholarship on early Islam, see Donner, *Narratives of Islamic origins*, pp. 1-25.

⁴⁷ See now especially Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a world crisis*.

⁴⁸ Especially enlightening is A. Papalexandrou, "Echoes of orality in the monumental inscriptions of Byzantium", in L. James (ed.), *Art and text in Byzantine culture*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, pp. 161-87 on inscriptions; her discussion is also applicable to other types of documentary sources. On coins, see further S. Heidemann, "The evolving representation of the early Islamic empire and its religion on coin imagery", in A. Neuwirth, N. Sinai & M. Marx (eds), *The Qur'ān in context: historical and literary investigations into the Qur'ānic milieu*, Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp. 149-95. On architecture and archaeology, see e.g. F.B. Flood, *The Great Mosque of Damascus: studies on the makings of an Umayyad visual culture*, Leiden: Brill, 2001, pp. 213-36 and H. Taragan, "Constructing a visual rhetoric: images of craftsmen and builders in the Umayyad palace at Qusayr 'Amra", *Al-Masāq* 20/2 (2008), pp. 141-60. As to funerary stelae, add to Papalexandrou's discussion W. Diem, *The living and the dead in Islam: studies in Arabic epitaphs*, I: *Epitaphs as texts*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004, pp. 9-114, 118-9, 211. Documents, too, are not immune to coloured or stereotyped descriptions of events and may even contain narrative elements. For the early-Islamic period, this is perhaps best illustrated by the Coptic child donation documents from second/eighth-century Šīma and environs. See T.S. Richter, "What's in a story? Cultural narratology and Coptic child donation documents", *JJP* 35 (2005), esp. pp. 242-3 and

not only the sole contemporary sources available, they also preserve details of social, administrative, and economic structures that have been lost in our literary sources' heavy focus on the top of the Arab administration in al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Quite some material is available from al-Fuṣṭāṭ itself. A considerable number of documentary sources excavated in the town and kept in the archives of institutes and private collections have been made available through scholarly publications.⁴⁹ Most of such sources, however, come from other parts of the province, making them especially useful for the present thesis.

Scholarly interest in such a multidisciplinary approach towards the study of early-Arab Egypt – an approach combining documentary sources written in Arabic, Coptic, and Greek as well as, a.o., epigraphic and numismatic sources – has considerably increased over the past years. Beside organizing workshops and summer schools dedicated to the study of Arabic documents, the International Society for Arabic Papyrology (ISAP), founded in 2002, stimulates the collaboration of scholars from different fields by organizing multidisciplinary conferences.⁵⁰ Various research projects, most of them involving a number of leading institutions, have recently followed the ISAP's lead.⁵¹ That the project 'The

254-61. See also L. Sundelin, "Introduction: papyrology and the study of early Islamic Egypt", in P.M. Sijpesteijn & L. Sundelin (eds), *Papyrology and the history of early Islamic Egypt*, Leiden: Brill, 2004, pp. 14-5.
⁴⁹ E.g., S. Denoix, "Les ostraca de Iṣṭabl 'Antar, 1985", *Annales islamologiques* 22 (1986), pp. 27-33; W.B. Kubiak & G.T. Scanlon, *Fuṣṭāṭ expedition final report, II: Fustat-C*, Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989; M. Kawatoko, "On the coins found at al-Fuṣṭāṭ", *SENRI ethnological studies* 55 (2001), pp. 55-71; the studies in J.L. Bacharach (ed.), *Fustat finds: beads, coins, medical instruments, textiles and other artifacts from the Awad collection*, Cairo: AUC Press, 2002; P.M. Sijpesteijn, "A seventh/eighth-century list of companions from Fuṣṭāṭ", in C. Hoogendijk, B.P. Muhs & M. Bakker (eds), *Sixty-five papyrological texts: presented to Klaas A. Worp on the occasion of his 65th birthday*, Leiden: Brill, 2008, pp. 369-77. See P.Khalili I, pp. 23-4 for the possibility that papyri in the Nasser D. Khalili collection come from al-Fuṣṭāṭ. See also A. Grohmann, *Einführung und Chrestomathie zur arabischen Papyruskunde, I: Einführung*, Prague: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1954, pp. 27-8.

⁵⁰ See <http://www.aoi.uzh.ch/islamwissenschaft/forschung/isap.html>.

⁵¹ The project 'Late Antiquity and early Islam' (Leiden University, Princeton University, University of Oxford, CNRS-UMR 8167) ran from 2010 to 2012 and organized three conferences which proceedings are in press (<http://hum.leiden.edu/lias/formation-of-islam/related-projects/late-antiquity-and-early-islam.html>). The project 'Province et empire. L'Égypte islamique dans le monde antique: mutations administratives, sociétés plurielles et mémoires concurrentes' (Leiden University, New York University, CNRS-UMR 8167) started in 2013 and includes four international conferences, with proceedings, to be organized before 2017 (<http://www.ifao.egnet.net/axes-2012/transition-croisements-culturels/2012-provinces-empires>).

formation of Islam: the view from below', as part of which the present thesis was written, could count on funding by the European Research Council shows perhaps most clearly that the value of a multidisciplinary approach has gained wide recognition.

On the basis of this source material, the case studies in the present thesis reveal three stages in the development of al-Fuṣṭāṭ as Egypt's capital before 132/750. These stages largely coincide with dynastic changes or empire-wide reforms and suggest a strong relationship between the chronology of the development of al-Fuṣṭāṭ's role in Egypt and events at the level of the caliphate. The first stage begins with the traditional date of the beginning of the Arab conquest of Egypt, 18/639, and ends with Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān's accession to the caliphate in 40/661. During this twenty-year period, the Arabs subdued Egypt to their rule, established their headquarters at al-Fuṣṭāṭ, and instituted changes in the existing military and administrative organization in order to maintain their rule in the province. The second stage starts in 40/661, the date of the empire-wide recognition of Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān's caliphate after the first civil war⁵² and the relocation of the imperial administration from al-Madīna on the Arabian Peninsula to Damascus in Syria. The many reforms of the early-Sufyanid period, of which some were doubtlessly related to Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān's coming to power, increased al-Fuṣṭāṭ's relations with the rest of Egypt to such an extent that they signify the beginning of a new stage in the town's history. This thesis, therefore, joins in the modern scholarly debate on the extent to which the caliphate was a centralized state under Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān.⁵³ It addresses this question from a provincial (Egyptian) point of view and by considering the effects of this (de)centralized nature of the caliphate on the relations between the provincial capital and its hinterland. Conversely, scholars widely recognize the caliphate to

⁵² See the discussion in K. Keshk, "When did Mu'āwiya become caliph?", *JNES* 69/1 (2010), pp. 31-42.

⁵³ See, e.g., the discussions in J. Johns, "Archaeology and the history of early Islam: the first seventy years", *JESHO* 46/4 (2003), pp. 411-36; C.F. Robinson, "The rise of Islam, 600-705", *NCHI*, I, pp. 208-15; R.G. Hoyland, "New documentary texts and the early Islamic state", *BSOAS* 69/3 (2006), pp. 395-416; C. Foss, "Mu'āwiya's state", in J. Haldon (ed.), *Money, power and politics in early Islamic Syria: a review of current debates*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2010, pp. 75-96.

have been (or become) a centralized state during the reigns of the Marwanid caliphs.⁵⁴ Fully in accordance with modern scholarship on the town's administrative relationship with its hinterland, referred to above, the sources used in this thesis show that the empire-wide and centralizing reforms of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65/685-86/705) and his successors caused al-Fuṣṭāṭ's ties with the rest of the province to strengthen considerably. The Marwanid period, and predominantly the half century after the defeat of the rival caliph 'Abd Allāh b. az-Zubayr in 73/692, after which most reforms were implemented, forms a third stage in the development of al-Fuṣṭāṭ's role in the province. This thesis's chapters follow this three-stepped chronology.

2. *Al-Fuṣṭāṭ, 18/639-132/750: a short historical overview*

Before we study al-Fuṣṭāṭ's relationships with the rest of the province, it is useful to briefly discuss the development of the town al-Fuṣṭāṭ itself. After the conquest, the majority of the Arab conquerors settled in al-Fuṣṭāṭ; small groups also settled, mainly on a temporary basis, in Alexandria and the rest of Egypt. Around Qaṣr aṣ-Ṣam' and the congregational mosque which 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ erected just north of it, the Arab authorities endorsed the distribution of, or redistributed, pieces of land (Ar. sg. *ḥiṭṭa*) among the tribes that had participated in the conquest.⁵⁵ In order to prevent the newly-arrived Arabs from assimilating with the local populations and, hence, the Arab authorities from losing military back-up for their control over the province and for future conquests, the Arab tribesmen were not allowed to settle outside their garrison town and to engage in agriculture or large-scale

⁵⁴ F.M. Donner, "The formation of the Islamic State", *JAOS* 106/2 (1986), pp. 283-96; C.F. Robinson, "The rise of Islam, 600-705", pp. 215-21; Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim state*, pp. 91-111.

⁵⁵ Much has been written on the land allotment (Ar. *taḥṭīṭ*) and early settlement of al-Fuṣṭāṭ. To date, the primary study remains Kubiak, *Al-Fustat*. Other seminal studies are S. Denoix, *Fuṣṭāṭ-Miṣr d'après Ibn Duqmāq et Maqrīzī: l'histoire d'une partie de la ville du Caire d'après deux historiens égyptiens des XIVE-XVE siècles*, Cairo: IFAO, 1992; G.T. Scanlon, "Al-Fuṣṭāṭ: the riddle of the earliest settlement", in G.R.D. King & A. Cameron (eds), *The Byzantine and early Islamic Near East, II: Land use and settlement patterns*, Princeton, N.J.: The Darwin Press, 1994, pp. 171-179; R.-P. Gayraud, "Fostat: évolution d'une capitale arabe du VIIe au XIe siècle d'après les fouilles d'Istabl 'Antar", in R.-P. Gayraud (ed.), *Colloque international d'archéologie islamique*, Cairo: IFAO, 1998, pp. 437-9; Bouderbala, *Ġund Miṣr*; D. Withcomb, "An Umayyad legacy for the early Islamic city: Fuṣṭāṭ and the experience of Egypt", in A. Borrut & P.M. Cobb (eds), *Umayyad legacies: medieval memories from Syria and Spain*, Leiden: Brill, 2010, pp. 403-16.

pastoralism.⁵⁶ Instead, the Arab authorities set up military pay registers (Ar. sg. *dīwān*) in al-Fuṣṭāṭ⁵⁷ and distributed pay (Ar. *‘aṭā*), of a hight depending on one’s socio-religious standing, among those tribesmen registered.⁵⁸

Al-Fuṣṭāṭ rapidly grew from a conglomeration of tribal units to a large-sized town. A group of recently-published administrative documents from the early-20s/640s which record a high demand for building material in Qaṣr aš-Šam’ evidences al-Fuṣṭāṭ’s early transition from a camp to a town.⁵⁹ Archaeological research confirms the early construction of stone buildings over a vast area and, further, shows a considerable population density almost immediately after the foundation of the town.⁶⁰ Literary sources, indeed, tell us that the number of Arabs registered for military pay – initially some 15,000 men – almost tripled within forty years.⁶¹ Whereas at first al-Fuṣṭāṭ must have been inhabited by mostly Arab emigrants (Ar. *muhāğirūn*) belonging to so-called “southern” tribes,⁶² the building of churches in or near the town soon after the conquest suggests an early, but

⁵⁶ For Egypt, see Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr wa-aḥbāruhā*, ed. C.C. Torrey, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1922, p. 162 (copied in as-Suyūṭī, *Ḥuṣn al-muhādāra fī ta’rīḥ Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, 2 vols, ed. M.A.F. Ibrāhīm, Cairo: Dār iḥyā’ al-kutub al-‘arabiyya, 1387/1967, I, p. 155). For similar policies in the other provinces, see F.M. Donner, *The early Islamic conquests*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981, pp. 245-50.

⁵⁷ G.-R. Puin, *Der Dīwān von ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb: ein Beitrag zur frühislamischen Verwaltungsgeschichte*, Bonn: n.i., 1970 is still the main study on the *dīwān*. For the setting up of the Egyptian *dīwān*, see (a.o.) K. Morimoto, “The *dīwāns* as registers of the Arab stipendiaries in early Islamic Egypt”, in R. Curiel & R. Gyselen (eds), *Itinéraires d’orient: hommages à Claude Cahen*, Bures-sur-Yvette: Groupe pour l’étude de la civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1994, pp. 353-4 and H.L. Gottschalk, “Dīwān: (ii) Egypt”, *EI*², II, p. 327.

⁵⁸ H. Kennedy, *The armies of the caliphs: military and society in the early Islamic state*, London/New York: Routledge, 2001, pp. 61-3.

⁵⁹ CPR XXX (see esp. the discussion on pp. 75-8).

⁶⁰ Scanlon, “Al-Fuṣṭāṭ: the riddle”, pp. 175-6; Gayraud, “Fostat: évolution d’une capitale”, pp. 438 and 441.

⁶¹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, p. 102.

⁶² J.-C. Vadet, “L’‘acculturation’ des sud-arabiques de Fuṣṭāṭ au lendemain de la conquête arabe”, *Bulletin d’études orientales* 22 (1969), pp. 7-14. For the possibly North Arabian origin of the so-called “southern” tribes, see S. Bashear, “Yemen in early Islam: an examination of non-tribal traditions”, *Arabica* 36 (1989), esp. pp. 334-7 and Y.D. Nevo & J. Koren, *Crossroads to Islam: the origins of the Arab religion and the Arab state*, Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2003, pp. 100-2. Cf. the Byzantine and Persian contingents that participated in the conquest and settled on the outskirts of al-Fuṣṭāṭ, mentioned in Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, pp. 125, 129.

probably modest, influx of non-Arabs.⁶³ The town's population continued to grow throughout the period under consideration. Archaeologists explain changes in building techniques that appear around 80/700 as the result of an ever increasing population density combined with a limited area available for habitation.⁶⁴ The enlargements of the town's congregational mosque, recorded in medieval historiographical sources, can be interpreted as indicative of the continuous growing of al-Fuṣṭāṭ's population.⁶⁵ Before the end of the first/seventh century, the Mosque of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ twice needed enlargement: under Maslama b. Muḥallad as early as 53/672-3 and under 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān in 77/696-7.⁶⁶ Two further enlargements are recorded for the second/eighth century.⁶⁷

Al-Fuṣṭāṭ housed the top of the province's administrative authorities and formed the heart of the Arab-Muslim community in Egypt. Nonetheless, the town may temporarily have lost its role as capital in the closing decades of the first/seventh century to the town of Ḥulwān, located about twenty kilometers south of al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Even though the governorate of 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān (65/685-86/705), who founded Ḥulwān, is among the best documented governorates of the first century of Muslim rule over Egypt, the role of Ḥulwān in that period remains enigmatic. Medieval sources do not agree on the date of, and reason for, the foundation of Ḥulwān. The most common report has it that 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān moved there in an attempt to escape an outbreak of the plague in al-Fuṣṭāṭ in 70/689-90.⁶⁸ But other sources claim that he founded Ḥulwān when he was appointed governor (which would be in line with the tradition of new Arab

⁶³ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (*Futūḥ*, p. 132) dates the building of 'the first church in al-Fuṣṭāṭ', situated just outside (!) the town, to the governorate of Maslama b. Muḥallad (47/667-62/682). But in Qaṣr aš-Šam', archaeologists have found the remains of a church which was built within few years after the conquest (Sheehan, *Babylon of Egypt*, pp. 88-92). See also Kubiak, *Al-Fustat*, pp. 80-1 and 106-7.

⁶⁴ Gayraud, "Fostat: évolution d'une capitale arabe", pp. 439-40.

⁶⁵ See also Sijpesteijn, "The Arab conquests", pp. 451-2.

⁶⁶ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, p. 131; al-Kindī, *Kitāb al-wulā wa-kitāb al-quḍā*, ed. R. Guest, Leiden: E.J. Brill, pp. 38-9, 51.

⁶⁷ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, pp. 131-2; al-Kindī, *al-Wulā wa-l-quḍā*, pp. 65, 134.

⁶⁸ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, pp. 236-7; al-Kindī, *al-Wulā wa-l-quḍā*, pp. 49-50.

dynasties)⁶⁹ or that physicians advised him to reside there after he had fallen ill.⁷⁰ It is equally uncertain to what extent Ḥulwān actually was a capital and not merely the governor's place of residence.⁷¹ The alleged minting of dinars in Ḥulwān, 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān's reported building of a nilometer there, and the town's alleged housing of (the top of?) the *ḡund* may support the idea that Ḥulwān was an administrative capital.⁷² That 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān is said to have ordered 'notables [Ar. *arāḥina*] from Upper Egypt and the other administrative districts' to build in Ḥulwān residences for themselves may also point in this direction.⁷³ A late source asserts that the governor aspired to depopulate al-Fuṣṭāṭ and to have Ḥulwān replace al-Fuṣṭāṭ as the region's main commercial centre,⁷⁴ but this contradicts 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān's well-known building projects in al-Fuṣṭāṭ on which more will be said in chapter 2. Whether or not Ḥulwān replaced al-Fuṣṭāṭ as Egypt's capital, the latter's position was restored under 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān's successors; the temporary change seems to have had little impact on the relationships between al-Fuṣṭāṭ and the rest of Egypt.

Significant changes occurred in the mid-second/eighth century. Although al-Fuṣṭāṭ continued to flourish for centuries thereafter, a deliberately ignited fire that raged through the town in 132/750 marked the end of an epoch. During the Abbasids' tumultuous assumption of power, the last Umayyad caliph Marwān b. Muḥammad (r. 127/744-132/750) fled from northern Syria via Palestine to al-

⁶⁹ Yāqūt ar-Rūmī, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, II, p. 321. Cf. Ibn Taḡrī Birdī, *an-Nuḡūm az-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, 16 vols, Cairo: Dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya, 1929-1972, I, p. 179, who dates the outbreak of the plague to 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān's first year as governor. See also Kubiak, *Al-Fustat*, p. 11.

⁷⁰ Sa'īd b. Baṭrīq, *Annales*, 2 vols, ed. L. Cheikho, Beirut: E typographeo catholico, 1906-9, II, p. 369 (after, and copied in, Abū Ṣāliḥ (attr.), *The churches and monasteries of Egypt*, ed. and trans. B.T.A. Evetts, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895, p. 155 (English), 67 (Arabic) [fol. 52b]).

⁷¹ Cf. al-Qalqaṣandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'ṣā*, III, p. 335, who reports, without chronological precision, that 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān resided in al-Fuṣṭāṭ in the large palace known as *dār al-muḏahhaba*. Was this prior to 70/689-90?

⁷² Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ*, p. 16 [copied in al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭat*, I, pp. 150-1]; Yāqūt ar-Rūmī, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, II, p. 321; al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭat*, I, p. 569.

⁷³ *History of the patriarchs*, ed. and tr. B. Evetts, *Patrologia orientalis* 1/2, 1/4, 5/1, 10/5 (1947-59), III, p. 24 [278]. Unless stated otherwise, all references to the *History of the patriarchs* are to Evetts's edition.

⁷⁴ Abū Ṣāliḥ (attr.), *Churches and monasteries*, p. 155 (English), 67 (Arabic) [fol. 52b]. For the date and author of this text, see the overview in J. den Heijer, "Coptic historiography in the Fāṭimid, Ayyūbid and early Mamlūk periods", *Medieval encounters* 2/1 (1996), pp. 77-81.

Fuṣṭāṭ in 132/750, hoping to reach North African supporters via the Egyptian oases.⁷⁵ In an attempt to halt his Abbasid persecutors, Marwān b. Muḥammad ordered that al-Fuṣṭāṭ be set on fire and the pontoon bridges that connected the town with al-Ġīza on the west bank be cut loose and burnt as well.⁷⁶ The *History of the patriarchs* writes that the town burnt ‘from south to north’, that the *dīwāns* went up in flames, and that the Mosque of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ only nearly survived the fire. It reports that there was an immediate shortage of food among the town’s surviving population as well as that of al-Ġīza because the Umayyad caliph had burnt al-Fuṣṭāṭ’s granaries and people had fled across the Nile *en masse*.⁷⁷ Although few other sources describe al-Fuṣṭāṭ’s burning in such detail,⁷⁸ archaeology fully confirms its devastating effects, especially for the town’s southern quarters.⁷⁹ But to Marwān b. Muḥammad the fire was of no avail: Abbasid armies eventually caught and killed him in Būṣīr (Bousiris) in northern Upper Egypt.⁸⁰ At the end of Muḥarram 133/August 750, Egypt’s first Abbasid governor, Ṣāliḥ b. ‘Alī, victoriously entered al-Fuṣṭāṭ.⁸¹

Possibly as a result of the fire’s destruction of al-Fuṣṭāṭ’s administrative heart,⁸² the new Abbasid government relocated Egypt’s administrative headquarters to al-‘Askar (‘the cantonment’).⁸³ Initially a garrison town, this new military and administrative district was located on the site of al-Ḥamrā’ al-Quswā, a former northern suburb of al-Fuṣṭāṭ that was largely depopulated at the time of

⁷⁵ Al-Mas‘ūdī, *Kitāb at-tanbīh wa-l-iṣrāf*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1894, p. 331.

⁷⁶ Al-Kindī, *al-Wulā wa-l-quḍā*, p. 95; aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīḥ ar-rusul wa-l-mulūk*, 16 vols, ed. M.J. de Goeje et al., Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1879-1901, III/1, p. 49; al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, II, p. 55.

⁷⁷ *History of the patriarchs*, III, pp. 168 [422], 181 [435], and 188 [442].

⁷⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, II, p. 55 and al-Qalqaṣandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a’šā*, III, p. 335 write that the *dār al-muḍahhaba* (cf. n. 71 above) was lost in the fire.

⁷⁹ Gayraud, “Fostat: évolution d’une capitale”, pp. 439 and 441.

⁸⁰ aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīḥ*, III/1, pp. 46, 49; al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, II, p. 55.

⁸¹ Al-Kindī, *al-Wulā wa-l-quḍā*, p. 97.

⁸² Cf. S.J. Staffa, *Conquest and fusion: the social evolution of Cairo, A.D. 642-1850*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977, p. 28; A.F. Sayyid, *La capitale de l’Égypte jusqu’à l’époque fatimide, al-Qāhira et al-Fuṣṭāṭ: essai de reconstitution topographique*, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1998, pp. 28-9.

⁸³ P. Wheatley, *The places where men pray together: cities in Islamic lands, seventh through the tenth centuries*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001, p. 281. As to the name, cf. Sayyid, *La capitale de l’Égypte*, p. 29.

the Abbasid take-over.⁸⁴ Throughout the second half of the second/eighth century, the authorities tried to keep their new headquarters separated from the habitation areas of al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Contact between the administration in al-‘Askar and the (Arab) population of al-Fuṣṭāṭ went primarily via delegatory visits of the latter’s notables.⁸⁵ To be sure, markets that sprung up around al-‘Askar’s congregational mosque, built by the governor al-Faḍl b. Ṣāliḥ in 169/785-6,⁸⁶ took from the district its purely administrative and military character.⁸⁷ But the authorities prohibited the large-scale construction of private buildings there before 200-1/816.⁸⁸ Even though the fourth/tenth-century historian al-Kindī reports that in 146/763-4 the caliph al-Manṣūr sent a letter to Yazīd b. Ḥātim, governor of Egypt, ordering him for unknown reasons to relocate the administrative headquarters from al-‘Askar back to al-Fuṣṭāṭ and to transfer the *dīwāns* to the churches of Qaṣr aṣ-Ṣam‘,⁸⁹ al-‘Askar remained the seat of the administration until the Tulunid period (254/868-292/905).⁹⁰

Regardless of the close proximity between al-‘Askar and al-Fuṣṭāṭ,⁹¹ the forceful separation of the new Abbasid administrative district from al-Fuṣṭāṭ ended the latter’s position as administrative capital of the province. The relationship between al-Fuṣṭāṭ and al-‘Askar, summarily outlined above, and the impact of the creation of al-‘Askar on al-Fuṣṭāṭ’s relationship with its hinterland is beyond the scope of the present thesis. For this reason, the following chapters largely concentrate on al-Fuṣṭāṭ’s relationships with its hinterland before the arrival of Abbasid rule.

⁸⁴ See the remarks in Kubiak, *Al-Fustat*, pp. 86-7.

⁸⁵ Al-Kindī, *al-Wulā wa-l-quḍā*, p. 107.

⁸⁶ Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, IV/1, p. 55. Prior to 169/785-6, the Mosque of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ in al-Fuṣṭāṭ continued to be the urban conglomeration’s religious centre. See Sayyid, *La capitale de l’Égypte*, pp. 30-1.

⁸⁷ Staffa, *Conquest and fusion*, p. 28.

⁸⁸ Al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, II, p. 56.

⁸⁹ Al-Kindī, *al-Wulā wa-l-quḍā*, p. 115 (copied in al-Maqrīzī, *Ḥiṭaṭ*, II, p. 62).

⁹⁰ Cf. al-Maqrīzī’s long list of governors residing in al-‘Askar (*Ḥiṭaṭ*, II, pp. 59-80). A third/ninth-century document (Rāḡīb, “Lettres arabes”, II, no. 13 [prov. unknown], line 11) probably establishes a connection between al-‘Askar (but cf. comm.) and the authority who was charged with receiving of the oath of allegiance from the people (Ar. *al-qāyim bi-yamin an-nās*) after the death of an unnamed caliph.

⁹¹ Cf. Kubiak, *Al-Fustat*, p. 11, where he argues that al-‘Askar was ‘nothing but the name of a quarter within the urban agglomeration’.