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Imperial Policies and the Organization of the War Fleet in Early Islamic Egypt

Jelle Bruning

From the mid-20s AH/mid-640s CE, the empire of the Rightly Guided and Umayyad caliphs increasingly engaged in naval warfare. Initially supporting their efforts to conquer Byzantine territory and later institutionalized as yearly raids, naval expeditions were an important feature of these caliphs' *jihād* policies,¹ through which they actively sought to establish Islam's dominance beyond the empire's borders and simultaneously tried to legitimize their own rule.² Recent research shows that the period between the start of the Muslim conquests soon after Muḥammad's death in 11/632 and the establishment of empire-wide Abbasid rule in 132/750 witnessed drastic changes in the Muslim polity and administration. Mu'āwiya b. Abi Sufyān's accession to the caliphate in 41/661 and the later years of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān's reign, as well as that of his son and successor, al-Walīd, are now known to have been key moments of change. Most important in the present context, their rule witnessed waves of administrative centralization and Islamization.³

This chapter studies to what extent these developments in the Muslim empire's early polity affected the organization of its fleets and naval expeditions, with a concentration on Egypt. This province of the Muslim empire is particularly interesting in this regard because it came to hold a significant share in the organization of naval expeditions after it was conquered by Muslims in the early 20s/640s. For example, the 3rd-/9th-century historian al-Balādhurī claims (with some exaggeration) that until the 50s/670s only Egypt possessed arsenals for the Muslim empire's war fleet.⁴ Other historians record the participation of many Egyptian fleets in naval expeditions; we will come back to them later. In addition to historiography, which often remains limited to the mentioning of expeditions and a handful of arsenals, documentary sources on the organization of naval expeditions are abundantly available from Egypt and deeply enrich such historiography.⁵ When studied together, and with the changes of Sufyanid and Marwanid politics in mind,

1. Fahmy 1966a, 1966b; Eickoff 1966; and most recently Picard 2015 are the main publications for the history of the Muslim fleet in the 1st/7th and 2nd/8th centuries.
2. On *jihād* before the Abbasids and related contemporary politics, see Blankinship 1994, especially 11–35; Crone 1994; Hoyland 1997, 554–55; Heck 2004, 106–8; Bonner 2006, 119–24; and Afsaruddin 2013, especially chaps. 1 and 2.
3. Most recently, Sijpesteijn 2013, especially chaps. 2 and 3; Legendre 2014, 2016; and Bruning 2018b.
4. Al-Balādhurī 1866, 117.
5. Published in 1910, Harold I. Bell's *PLond.* 4, pp. xxxii–xliv, remains the main analysis of Egyptian papyri concerning the fleet. For more recent publications using this and other documentary material, see Kennedy 2007, especially 324–43, with attention to papyri on 341–43; Muhammad 2008; Foss 2009, 2010, 87–88; al-Qāḍī 2016, 111–21; and Wissa 2017. Documentary sources for other areas are much less available. Two Greek inscriptions mention a Muslim expedition against Cyprus

historical literature and preserved documents show a remarkable development in the organization of naval expeditions in Egypt.

1. Egypt's Fleet under the Rightly Guided Caliphs

As is well known, the first organization of a fleet under Muslim command must be ascribed to Mu'āwiya b. Abi Sufyān while he was governor of Syro-Palestine for the caliph 'Uthmān b. 'Affān (r. 23–35/644–55). With a fleet, Mu'āwiya wished to expand the Muslim conquests to overseas areas and to defend the recently conquered Syro-Palestinian coast. Whereas the caliph 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13–23/634–44) allegedly had prohibited Mu'āwiya from pursuing naval expeditions, 'Umar's successor, 'Uthmān, allowed him to do so under special conditions.⁶ From the start, Mu'āwiya involved Egypt in the realization of his plans. As in the rest of the Byzantine Empire, Egypt lacked a permanent imperial fleet at the time the Muslims conquered the province in the early 20s/640s (although minor flotillas must have existed).⁷ The infrastructure necessary to build a fleet had not disappeared, however. Alexandria, Egypt's safest and largest entry to the Mediterranean,⁸ was the province's main commercial center in the mid-1st/7th century and must have possessed shipwrights and docks for the maintenance and repair of the many commercial ships that entered the city's harbors.⁹ In Egypt, the Muslims' initial naval policies are strongly connected to their attitude toward Alexandria, especially their appointment of a Muslim garrison in the city and the implementation of 'Uthmān's decree to have this garrison stationed there on a permanent basis.¹⁰

Before 'Uthmān b. 'Affān's caliphate, Egyptian fleets had a nonmilitary character, but some supported the logistics of battles fought on land. According to the *History of the Patriarchs*, for example, 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ traveled with his army to Cyrenaica and Pentapolis in 21/642 or 22/643 while ships allegedly “containing the provisions and booty of the troops” set sail from Alexandria.¹¹ In a similar way, an Egyptian fleet that participated in 23/643 in a Muslim raid deep into Asia Minor, which eventually reached Amorion/'Ammūriya, must have been of an auxiliary nature.¹² Among such early naval projects must also be counted the organization of a fleet carrying Egyptian grain to the Ḥijāz in the first years of Muslim rule over Egypt. In order to create a waterway between the Nile and the Ḥijāz, 'Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ ordered the reexcavation and partial relocation of the *Potamos Traianos*, probably by conscripting indigenous Egyptians.¹³ This canal

in 28/649; see Des Gagniers and Tam Tinh 1985, 115–25. For Arabic inscriptions referring to expeditions against Kos and Knidos, see Imbert 2013.

6. The literature on the early history of the fleet is vast, but the information remains rather limited. For recent contributions to the discussion (in addition to the publications mentioned in the preceding footnotes), see Beihammer 2004; Borrut 1999–2000, 12–16; Humphreys 2006, 53–58; Picard 2015, 229–40; and Pryor and Jeffreys 2006, 24–25. Recently, two studies tried to locate 'Umar's prohibition in Abbasid propaganda: Keshk 2008, 27–40, who argues that the association between 'Uthmān and Mu'āwiya's maritime project in historical literature aims to discredit the Umayyads as political-religious rulers; and Picard 2010, who sees 'Umar's prohibition to sail the Mediterranean as a 3rd-/9th- and 4th-/10th-century attempt to legitimize the limits of the Abbasid empire.
7. Zuckerman 2005, 109–17; and Pryor and Jeffreys 2006, 24–25; *pace* Cosentino 2007, 577–78. In addition, there is no evidence that the annona fleet, carrying Egyptian grain from Alexandria to Constantinople, was continued after the Sasanian conquest of Egypt in 619 CE had stopped it; see McCormick 1998, 115–18.
8. Cooper 2014, 74 and 143–50.
9. For the continuity of interregional and domestic commercial activity in Alexandria throughout the 1st/7th century, see the discussion and literature referred to in Bruning 2018b, 58–86.
10. For the initial Muslim garrison in Alexandria, see Bruning 2018b, 39–45.
11. *History of the Patriarchs* 1947–59, 2:495–500 [231–36]. The booty referred to is that taken by the Muslims during their conquest of Alexandria.
12. Bouderbala 2008, 278–82.
13. For indigenous Egyptians reexcavating the canal, see John of Nikiu 1916, 195 [CXX.31], and Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 164 (line 20).

connected the Nile at Babylon/Qaṣr al-Sham' with the Red Sea near Clysmā/Qulzum and was later called "Canal of the Commander of the Faithful" (*Khalīj amīr al-mu'minīn*).¹⁴

In accordance with Muslim historical tradition on the chronology of maritime warfare in early Islam, Egyptian participation in real naval battles is recorded from the caliphate of 'Uthmān onward. In 28/649 and with caliphal permission, Mu'āwiya organized a large Syrian-Egyptian expedition against Cyprus.¹⁵ The early 3rd-/9th-century Dionysios of Tell-Mahrē maintains that Mu'āwiya enjoyed much operational freedom and writes that he "conveyed to the general at Alexandria that he, too, should send ships and a large army from Egypt. As soon as he received the letter from Mu'āwiya, he [i.e., the Alexandrian general] dispatched the ships."¹⁶ Egyptian participation in a second raid against Cyprus in 33/653 is not recorded. A year later, in 34/654–55, Mu'āwiya led a major assault on Constantinople.¹⁷ A fleet of warships departed from Alexandria under the command of the Egyptian governor 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd b. Abi Sarḥ and equipped, according to the 1st-/7th-century pseudo-Sebeos, with "mangonels, and machines to throw fire, and machines to hurl stones, archers and slingers."¹⁸ A second fleet, consisting of small maneuverable ships, was organized on the Syrian coast at Tripoli while Mu'āwiya himself led a land expedition advancing toward the Byzantine capital.¹⁹ Whereas the Armenian pseudo-Sebeos describes the Muslim fleet's complete destruction near Constantinople by a storm,²⁰ Christian and Muslim sources from the Near East dedicate most of their attention to an early stage in the assault: the so-called Battle of the Masts (*Dhū al-Ṣawārī*) on the southern Anatolian coast near Phoinix,²¹ where the Muslim fleet defeated that of the Byzantines and the Byzantine emperor was forced to flee in secret.²²

2. The Sufyanid Fleet

Following the First Civil War (36–41/656–61) during which territorial expansion on the empire's frontiers had largely stopped and, instead, the Muslim community was occupied by internal strife surrounding questions of religious and political legitimacy,²³ the reign of the first Umayyad caliph, Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41–60/661–80), formed a period of major development

14. The 3rd-/9th-century Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam (1922, 162–64) and al-Ya'qūbī (1883, 2:176–77) connect the reexcavation of the canal with the so-called Year of the Drought (*Ām al-ramāda*) of late 17/638 and 18/639–40, during which a severe famine struck the Ḥijāz (al-Ya'qūbī 1883, 2:171; and al-Ṭabarī 1879–1901, 1/5:2573–74). Al-Balādhuri (1866, 216), however, dates the reexcavation to the year 21/641–42, and al-Kindī, writing in the 4th/10th century, even dates it to 23/643–44 (in his now-lost *al-Jund al-gharbi*, cited in Ibn Duqmāq 1893, 4:120; and al-Maqrīzī 2002–3, 3:474). Archaeology confirms the early date of the reexcavation of the canal and, in addition, shows that it included a relocation of the canal's entrance from Babylon/Qaṣr al-Sham' to al-Ḥamrā' al-Quṣwā, a northern suburb of Fuṣṭāṭ. See Sheehan 2010, 51–53, 85–86, and 89–90. On the canal, see also Cooper 2014, 95–99; and Kubiak 1987, 118–20.
15. On this expedition, see Beihammer 2004 with bibliography on 47n1. See Kyrris 1984, 149n1, for the hypothesis that the Egyptian participation was a retaliation for the Byzantine attack on Alexandria in 25/646, staged from Cyprus.
16. Hoyland 2011, 131 with n. 315. The emphasis on Alexandrians on pp. 131 and 132 is striking and makes one wonder to what extent the Alexandrian *amīr* operated independently from Egypt's governor at that time ('Abd Allāh b. Sa'd b. Abi Sarḥ). Note that the 4th-/10th-century Egyptian historians Ibn Yūnus (2000, 1:269 [no. 737]) and al-Kindī (1912, 12–13) do not include an expedition against Cyprus among the expeditions organized by this governor.
17. For this assault, see Hoyland 2011, 141n340; Stratos 1980, 229–47; O'Sullivan 2004, 67–88; Zuckerman 2005; and Cosen-tino 2007, 586–93.
18. Pseudo-Sebeos 1999, 144–45, with the commentary on 274–76.
19. Dionysios of Tell-Mahrē in Palmer 1993, 179; Theophanes Confessor 1997, 482; Elias of Nisibis 1910, 86–87.
20. Pseudo-Sebeos 1999, 145–46.
21. Cf. Fahmy 1966b, 86.
22. Dionysios of Tell-Mahrē in Palmer 1993, 179 (who adds that after its victory near Phoinix the Muslim fleet sailed on to Rhodes and then returned home); Theophanes Confessor 1997, 482; Michael the Syrian 1899–1905, 2:445–46; Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 189–91; Khalifa b. Khayyāṭ 1985, 168; al-Kindī 1912, 13.
23. The best overview of the First Civil War remains Djaīt 1989.

for the Muslim polity. Showing simultaneously the caliph's political acumen and the organizational vitality of his empire,²⁴ Mu'āwīya's rule radically departed from that of the Rightly Guided caliphs before him. With his headquarters in Damascus rather than Medina, Mu'āwīya headed a centralized polity, and his rule witnessed administrative, legal, and military reforms throughout the empire.²⁵ Mu'āwīya also revived a combative *jihād* policy that formed part of the religious legitimacy of his caliphate, as it had done for his predecessors.²⁶ Monumental inscriptions, papyrus protocols, and coins as well as architectural changes also propagated this religious legitimacy and publicly displayed his rule over the Muslim community of "believers."²⁷ His imperial policies laid the foundations of the infrastructure of the Umayyad fleet.

Among the many changes during Mu'āwīya b. Abī Sufyān's caliphate were reforms of military administration. Some of these reforms were part of Mu'āwīya's early policies, implemented soon after he emerged victorious from the First Civil War, and aimed to secure his power. From the governorate of 'Utba b. Abī Sufyān (in office 43–44/664–65), for example, Egyptian governors more actively than before engaged in the administration of Alexandria's garrison, thereby securing its loyalty to the Sufyanid authorities. From 44/665 onward, governors are known to have visited the city soon after their assumption of power to command the soldiers stationed in Alexandria.²⁸ Two historical accounts preserved in Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam's 3rd-/9th-century *Futūḥ Miṣr* confirm Mu'āwīya's early interest in the defense of Egypt's Mediterranean littoral. They state that Mu'āwīya increased Alexandria's garrison from 12,000 soldiers to either 20,000 or 27,000 soldiers during 'Utba b. Abī Sufyān's governorate by sending non-Egyptian regiments to the city.²⁹

Other changes date from the long governorate of Maslama b. Mukhallad (47–62/667–82), an Egyptian governor famous for organizing many land and seaborne expeditions.³⁰ Al-Balādhurī writes that Mu'āwīya increased the number of arsenals in his empire around 49/669–70 to protect the coasts against Byzantine invasions.³¹ Possibly in reaction to a Byzantine attack on the Egyptian coastal town of Parallos/Burullus in 53/672–73,³² Maslama b. Mukhallad had a new arsenal constructed on the island opposite Fuṣṭāṭ (now called al-Rawḍa) in 54/673–74.³³ Part of this imperial policy was probably also the conquest and subsequent fortification of the strategically located island of Rhodes in 52/671–72 and 53/672–73.³⁴ This new infrastructure allowed for the organization of maritime expeditions on a larger scale than before. At an unspecified date during his governorate, for instance, Maslama b. Mukhallad decided to increase the number of soldiers participating in naval expeditions (*ba'th al-baḥr*).³⁵ Also the number of expeditions increased (we return to them later). Directly related to this intensification of maritime warfare is the appearance of a new military rank in sources on the Sufyanid period: the *ṣāḥib al-baḥr*, "fleet commander." Although admirals had commanded entire military fleets under the Rightly

24. This is especially argued for in Foss 2010 and Hoyland 2006, 395–416.

25. In addition to the literature referred to in the preceding footnote, see Legendre 2016, 10–13; and Bruning 2018a, 2018b.

26. Blankinship 1994, 24. See also Heck 2004, 106–8; Bonner 2006, 120–24; and Foss 2010, 88.

27. For inscriptions and protocols, see Hoyland 2006, 399. For architectural innovations, see Bruning 2018b, 49–51. See also Howard-Johnston 2010, 178; and Hoyland 2015, 136–37, for the religious implications of the ceremony of Mu'āwīya's receiving the *bay'a* in Jerusalem.

28. See the discussion in Bruning 2018b, 49–57.

29. Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 192 (partially copied in al-Suyūṭī 1967, 1:163). See also al-Kindī 1912, 36 (copied in al-Maqrīzī 2002–3, 2:46); and Ibn 'Asākir 1995–2000, 38:268, where it is said that 'Utba b. Abī Sufyān himself traveled to Alexandria to support the city's garrison.

30. Al-Kindī 1912, 38; Ibn Taghri Birdī 1992, 1:175; al-Maqrīzī 2002–3, 2:46.

31. Al-Balādhurī 1866, 117.

32. E.g., Fahmy 1966a, 35–36; and Sayyid 1998, 77; and their references.

33. Al-Kindī, cited in al-Qalqashandī 1913–19, 3:339; al-Maqrīzī 2002–3, 3:570 (similar information in 3:622); and al-Suyūṭī 1967, 2:378. Cf. Jankowiak 2013, 280.

34. Al-Ṭabari 1879–1901, 2/1:157.

35. Nu'aym b. Ḥammād 2002, 26 [no. 69].

Guided caliphs—the governor ‘Abd Allāh b. Sa‘d b. Abī Sarḥ’s command over the Egyptian fleet attacking Constantinople in 34/654–55 was mentioned previously—all the Egyptian *aṣḥāb al-baḥr* of the Sufyanid period were appointed by, and were therefore subordinate to, the governor in Fuṣṭāṭ.³⁶ Not only Egyptian fleets were commanded by a *ṣāḥib al-baḥr*; the rank/office also appears during Mu‘āwīya’s reign in sources on the military organization of the Syro-Palestinian coast.³⁷

Papyri dating from Mu‘āwīya b. Abī Sufyān’s caliphate and documenting the organization of (a) maritime fleet(s) agree with an increased interest in maritime warfare in the 40s/660s and 50s/670s. Papyri from the previous two decades record the Muslim authorities’ interest in riverine traffic only and thus imply the (geographically or otherwise) limited scale of the organization of expeditions during these years.³⁸ By contrast, documents from the Sufyanid period show how the governor in Fuṣṭāṭ and his bureau mobilized the entire administration to organize naval expeditions.³⁹ These papyri belong to the archive of Papas, pagarch of the Upper Egyptian pagarchy of Apollōnopolis Anō/Udfū in the 40s/660s and 50s/670s.⁴⁰ According to these documents, the governor in Fuṣṭāṭ instructed the *dux* of the Thebaid on the number of workmen and sailors as well as the amount and type of materials his eparchy had to supply. The *dux* divided the requisitions among the pagarchies and had the notaries of his bureau inform the pagarchs by letter of what he had allotted to them. One such letter is *P.Apoll.* 29 (probably from a 4th indiction year, i.e., 55–56/675–76), in which the notary Elias informs Papas that he has to provide three specialized workmen for “the workshops of Babylon,” probably the arsenal on al-Rawḍa. Another letter from the bureau of the *dux*, *P.Apoll. Copt.* 5, demands unskilled workmen, masts for boats, sailors, and their foodstuffs (bread and wine). Other materials demanded are boiled wine and vinegar, acacia and cypress wood, anchor cables, and fighting equipment.⁴¹ Such demands were not always easy to meet. In *P.Apoll.* 38, for example, Plato, head of the neighboring pagarchy of Latopolis/Isnā, informs Papas that the *dux* had instructed him to send five ship caulkers for service in Babylon/Qaṣr al-Sham’s arsenals. Because three of the five caulkers he sent were rejected and no other caulkers could be found in his pagarchy, he asks Papas to lend him some caulkers from the pagarchy of Apollōnos Anō/Udfū.

For the pagarch, these requisitions were to a large extent fiscal-administrative affairs, costs that could be deducted from the tax quota.⁴² Among the local population, however, the papyri

36. For a discussion on Egypt’s *ṣāḥib al-baḥr*, see Bouderbala 2008, 277–91, and the overview on 328.

37. Mikati 2013, 43–54, especially 45.

38. The well-known *P.World*, 113–15 (Heracleopolis/Ihnās, 22/643; for the Greek part, see also *SB* 6.9576) describes the *amīr* ‘Abd Allāh b. Jābir’s garrison as “his boatmen (*aṣḥāb sufūnihi*), cavalry and heavily-armed soldiers.” Reference to “sailors of the ships of Babylon’s postal/relay station (*allage*)” is made in the mid-1st-/7th-century *P.Vind.Tand.* 31 (Memphis/Manf); for the interpretation, cf. *CPR* 22.6, commentary to line 3. *CPR* 30.11 (Hermopolis/Ushmūn, early 20s/640s) describes how *muḥājirūn* demanded ships from the local population; cf. John of Nikiu 1916, 181 [CXIII.1], who writes that ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ ordered Apa Kyros, probably the pagarch of Hermopolis/Ushmūn known from papyri, to deliver ships to the Muslim troops after their conquest of the Arsinoite/Fayyūm. *CPR* 30.14 (Hermopolis/Ushmūn; early 20s/640s) is an official demand for cushions for sailors on *paktonaria*; for this type of fluvial ship, see *CPR* 30, pp. 78–84. The only document known to me that possibly concerns the organization of a military fleet before the Sufyanid period is *CPR* 24.31 (Arsinoite/Fayyūm or Herkleopolis/Ihnās). This is a fragment of a letter that is paleographically dated to the second half of the 1st/7th century (the editor argues that a mid-1st/7th date is likely; see *CPR* 24, p. 186) and uses a terminology typical of the Muslim period (Berkes 2017, 8 with n. 27). The letter’s sender demands the quick delivery of no fewer than 130 sails and ropes.

39. For a useful overview of the documents on the fleet from the archive of Papas, see Foss 2009, 18–22.

40. For the date of these documents, see Gasco and Worp 1982, 88–89. Recently, Jankowiak 2013, 299, has proposed to date *P.Apoll.* 83, from an 11th indiction year, to 48–49/668–69. Reference to the arsenal on the island of al-Rawḍa in *P.Apoll.* 9 and 29 rules out for these two documents a date before 54/673–74, the year in which that arsenal was built.

41. See Foss 2009, 18–22; and Morelli 1998, 169–73.

42. See, for example, *P.Apoll.* 28: an official letter from the bureau of the *dux* saying that sailors were to be paid from the *demosia chrysika*; *P.Apoll.* 30: a fragmentary letter stating that something should be registered “on the account of the *karaboi*”; *P.Apoll.* 52: a fragment of a letter stating that something needs either be paid from the price of wheat, from the

show that there was much resentment against conscription for work in the arsenals or as sailors on the (war)ships.⁴³ Some conscripted persons preferred to pay a money composition (*adaeratio*) so that the authorities could hire someone else or directly paid others to go in their stead.⁴⁴ Hoping to escape conscription, others fled from their pagarchy—an amply documented phenomenon in late antiquity not limited to forced labor.⁴⁵ Documents from the Papas archive show that the authorities responded quite aggressively to this phenomenon. *P.Apoll.* 9 contains a copy of a circular letter sent by an *amir*, who probably had his office in Fuṣṭāṭ, via the *dux* to all the pagarchs in the Thebaid.⁴⁶ It states that the caulkers working on the ships on the island opposite Fuṣṭāṭ had fled and summons the pagarchs to send back to Babylon/Qaṣr al-Shamʿ each caulker, “in shackles,” who appears in their pagarchies. In another, urgent letter, a notary informs Papas that the governor in Fuṣṭāṭ had ordered him to send sailors with their equipment and supplies “by every means.”⁴⁷ In *P.Apoll.* 13, a representative of the *dux* orders Papas to keep a list of all “strangers” in his pagarchy, possibly including persons who had tried to escape conscription for service on the fleet, and to give them a fine of 3 solidi.⁴⁸ When compared to the methods of the Marwanid authorities, however, those used under the Sufyanids were rudimentary.

As noted previously, when compared to the period of the Rightly Guided caliphs, the number of naval expeditions in which Egypt was involved drastically increased during the first 15 years of Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān’s rule. Especially between 47/667–68 and 56/675–76, such expeditions took place almost every year. In 47/667–68, five years after the earliest known naval expedition organized under Muʿāwiya,⁴⁹ the former Egyptian governor and now *ṣāhib al-baḥr* ʿUqba b. ʿĀmir al-Juhānī is recorded as having departed from Alexandria to attack Rhodes.⁵⁰ The next year, 48/668–69, Muʿāwiya’s son Yazīd led a large-scale attack on Constantinople. The same ʿUqba b. ʿĀmir reportedly led the Egyptian naval contingent among Yazīd’s forces.⁵¹ A passage in al-Ṭabarī’s *Taʾrikh* concerning that year tells that ʿUqba b. ʿĀmir’s fleet was part of a joint Egyptian-Medinese fleet under the command of Khālīd b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, a grandson of the famous conqueror Khālīd b. al-Walīd (d. 21/642).⁵² In 48/668–69 or 49/669–70, an Egyptian fleet organized in Alexandria also attacked Sicily and took captives and booty there. The expedition may have been organized in reaction to political instability in the Byzantine Empire caused by the Muslim attack on Constantinople of 48/668–69.⁵³ This expedition may have been the one led by the *ṣāhib al-baḥr* ʿUqba b. Nāfiʿ al-Fihri that reportedly took place in the winter of 49/669–70.⁵⁴ Sources mention no naval expeditions organized in Egypt for the year 50/670–71. In that or the preceding year, they tell, Egypt’s military efforts concentrated on the conquest of the Byzantine province of Africa.⁵⁵ In 51/671–72, the governor Maslama b. Mukhallad made Khālīd b. Thābit al-Fahmī *ṣāhib al-baḥr*. Where his fleet was heading remains unknown.⁵⁶ Faḍāla b. ʿUbayd al-Anṣārī, a Syrian general who headed many naval expeditions, was allegedly

logisimon, or from the *dapane* of the *nautokaraboi*; *P.Apoll.* 83; a register stating money paid to a deacon to buy bread for *nautokaraboi*.

43. On the conscription of the local non-Muslim population, see Muhammad 2008; al-Qāḍī 2016, 111–21; Trombley 2004, 199–226; and Wissa 2017.

44. See *P.Apoll.* 28.

45. On fugitives in early Islamic Egypt, see Sijpesteijn 2013, 96–102.

46. Morelli 2016, 267–82. Cf. Legendre 2016, 12, who argues that the *dux* and the *amir* are the same person.

47. *SB* 14.11917.

48. *P.Apoll.* 13, introduction; possibly also *P.Apoll.* 14.

49. This is a naval expedition led by N.N. b. Marwān or Busr b. Abī Artāt in 42/662–63; see Agapius of Manbij 1912, 349.

50. Al-Kindi 1912, 37–38. Al-Ṭabarī 1879–1901, 2/1:85 (followed by Ibn Kathīr 1998, 8:30) dates this expedition to 48/668–69.

51. For this attack and its date (not 54–60/673–79), see Jankowiak 2013.

52. Al-Ṭabarī 1879–1901, 2/1:85.

53. *History of the Patriarchs* 1947–59, 3:4–5 [258–59]; and the discussion in Jankowiak 2013, 313–14.

54. Al-Ṭabarī 1879–1901, 2/1:86; Ibn Taghri Birdi 1992, 1:181.

55. Khalīfa b. Khayyāt 1985, 210–11; Ibn Taghri Birdi 1992, 1:182. See also Kaegi 2004, 21–43.

56. Ibn Yūnus 2000, 1:148 [no. 385].

appointed Egypt's *ṣāhib al-baḥr* under Mu'āwiya before his death in 53/672–73.⁵⁷ The *ṣāhib al-baḥr* Khālīd b. Thābit al-Fahmī raided North Africa in 54/673–74.⁵⁸ Two years later, in 56/675–76, Maslama b. Mukhallad appointed 'Ābis b. Sa'īd al-Murādī to command the Egyptian fleet, which, in a joint Syrian-Egyptian expedition headed by one Mālik b. 'Abd Allāh al-Khath'amī, raided a place or region in North Africa.⁵⁹ Mu'āwiya's military momentum decreased in the remaining five years of his caliphate. Although some land and seaborne expeditions continued to be organized,⁶⁰ sources record no such expeditions as having been organized in Egypt. A number of sources explicitly state that in 59/678–79 "no naval expedition took place."⁶¹ A fleet that carried grain to the Muslim garrison of Rhodes in 60/679–80 is the last Egyptian fleet under Mu'āwiya mentioned by Muslim historians.⁶² It is uncertain if fleets were organized during the caliphate of Mu'āwiya's son and successor, Yazīd (r. 60–64/680–83).⁶³

3. The Marwanid Fleet

During the Second Civil War that followed the death of Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya in 64/683, fleets did not attack Byzantine territory. The Muslim community was again occupied with internal strife: 'Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr ruled as caliph from Iraq to Sijistān and in parts of Syria and the Ḥijāz, there were pro-Alid and Kharijite rebellions in Kūfa and Baṣra, and the Marwanids claimed entitlement to the caliphate in Damascus and Palestine. The civil war immediately affected the organization of Egypt's fleet. Doubtlessly on the initiative of opponents of Ibn al-Zubayr, Egypt's grain fleet to the Ḥijāz was discontinued after Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya's death.⁶⁴ Furthermore, to concentrate on fighting rival claimants to the caliphate, the second leader of the Marwanids, 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān, concluded two peace treaties with the Byzantines between 66/685 and 71/690.⁶⁵ Egypt's little naval activity during the Second Civil War recorded in the sources indeed aimed to fight the troops of rival caliphs rather than to attack Byzantine territory.⁶⁶

The Marwanids established their rule in Egypt in Jumādā I 65/November–December 684 and defeated Ibn al-Zubayr in 72/692.⁶⁷ In the first years that followed the breach of the second peace treaty in 73/692,⁶⁸ the Marwanids dedicated most of their military efforts in the

57. Ibn Yūnus 2000, 1:395 [no. 1068].

58. Khalīfa b. Khayyāt 1985, 223; Ibn Yūnus 2000, 1:148 [no. 385].

59. Al-Kindī 1912, 39; Ibn 'Asākir 1995–2000, 11:298; Yāqūt 1866–73, 1:211. Note that Ibn Taghri Birdī (1992, 1:185) presents an entirely different story and maintains that Maslama b. Mukhallad sent 'Ābis b. Sa'īd with a fleet to Constantinople in 49/669–70.

60. See the overview in Jankowiak 2013, 268–69.

61. Al-Ṭabari 1879–1901, 2/1:188; Khalīfa b. Khayyāt 1985, 226; al-Ya'qūbī 1883, 2:286.

62. Khalīfa b. Khayyāt 1985, 229.

63. In an anachronistic anecdote, the *History of the Patriarchs* (1947–59, 3:5 [259], also found in 4:372–73 [486–87]), mentions that an Alexandrian *augustalis* named Theodore was able to obtain independence from the governor of Egypt from the caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya during the papacy of Agathon, who held office under Mu'āwiya only (40–57/661–77). This Theodore allegedly ordered the pope to pay for the sailors of the fleet. Jankowiak 2013, 254–56, has convincingly argued that there is no historical basis for Mu'āwiya's alleged 30-year peace treaty with Constantine IV of 58/677–78 or 59/678–79.

64. Al-Balādhurī 1866, 216.

65. Kaplony 1996, 99–126.

66. Ibn Jaḥdam, Egypt's governor for Ibn al-Zubayr in 64–65/684–85, sent a fleet to fight Marwanid troops heading for Egypt (al-Kindī 1912, 43); Egypt's governor 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān organized a fleet in 72/691 to attack Ibn al-Zubayr in the Ḥijāz (al-Kindī 1912, 51).

67. See Rotter 1982, 153–58, for the Marwanid conquest of Egypt.

68. For sources based on Theophilus of Edessa, see Hoyland 2011, 185–87. Muslim historians of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries do not mention Justinian II's breach of the treaty but do refer to 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān's attack on Sebastopolis on the Black Sea in 73/692; see Khalīfa b. Khayyāt 1985, 270; and al-Ṭabari 1879–1901, 2/2:853. See also Howard-Johnston 2010, 499–500.

Mediterranean basin to the reconquest of North Africa, which had fallen into the hands of Byzantine and Berber rulers.⁶⁹ But also in the eastern Mediterranean the new rulers soon started to organize naval expeditions. In agreement with the Marwanids' preaching of a combative *jihād* from 74/693–94,⁷⁰ an *entagion* issued by the Egyptian governor 'Abd al-'Aziz b. Marwān records that as early as 74/694 Egypt contributed sailors to a fleet organized in Syro-Palestine.⁷¹ The Marwanids organized Egyptian expeditions as well, as appears from another *entagion*, dated to 79/698, demanding supplies for Egyptian warships participating in an expedition the following year.⁷² Despite Egypt's participation in naval expeditions soon after the end of the Second Civil War, however, most of the published documentary as well as literary sources refer to a more frequent organization of naval expeditions in Egypt from approximately the caliphate of al-Walīd (86–96/705–15) onward.

Papyri that are more or less contemporary with al-Walīd's caliphate and belong to the archive of Basileios, chief administrator of the Upper Egyptian pagarchy of Aphroditō/Ishqūh, form the main source of information on Egypt's Marwanid fleet.⁷³ Because contributions to the fleet formed a large part of the central authorities' fiscal demands—in some years, even Basileios's relatively small pagarchy had to supply as many as 90 sailors⁷⁴—the fleet is a prominent theme in these documents. By contrast, literary sources present only the barest outlines of naval warfare in this period (with the exception of a few major events that are treated in some detail, such as the caliph Sulaymān's attack on Constantinople in 98–99/716–18).⁷⁵ These papyri show that Marwanid Egypt was well integrated in the empire and contributed to the financing and/or supplying of annual expeditions organized in North Africa and Syro-Palestine besides naval expeditions being organized in the province itself. For example, in *P.Lond.* 4.1350, an official letter dated 91/710, the governor Qurra b. Sharik (in office 90–96/709–14) writes about an expedition led by the *ṣāhib al-baḥr* 'Aṭā' b. Rāfi 'al-Zulayqī and organized in North Africa by the local governor Mūsā b. Nuṣayr with Egyptian support.⁷⁶ The expedition is well-known from historical sources, which inform us that it aimed to conquer Sicily or Sardinia in 85/704 but was unsuccessful because the fleet shipwrecked in a storm.⁷⁷ This is the earliest naval expedition mentioned in papyri from the archive of Basileios. Other expeditions are recorded for almost every year covered by the archive. According to a Greek account book dated to Dhū al-Ḥijja 87/November 706, for example, the Upper Egyptian pagarchy of Aphroditō/Ishqūh contributed to the financing of an expedition organized in Syro-Palestine,⁷⁸ where Laodikeia/Lādhīqiyya appears to have been the

69. Hoyland 2015, 142–46; Kennedy 2007, 215–22.

70. See Robinson 2005, 84–86, for poetry and pre-reform coins depicting 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān as a dedicated warrior. For a more detailed analysis of the coins, see Heidemann 2010, 174–76.

71. Delattre, Pintaudi, and Vanthieghem 2013. In addition, sailors are demanded in *PGascou* 28 (poss. Antinoopolis/Anṣ inā), dated to 76/695; it remains uncertain if they are to participate in an expedition (cf. the commentary to lines 3–4).

72. Diem 1984, no. 1.

73. For a description of the fleet on the basis of these documents, see *P.Lond.* 4, pp. xxxii–xliv.

74. Al-Qāḍi 2016, 115–16.

75. For sources belonging to the Byzantine historical tradition, see Hoyland 2011, 209–15, with the references in 209n580. For a synthesis on the basis of Muslim sources, see Brooks 1899, 19–31.

76. Note that 'Aṭā' b. Rāfi is the first Marwanid *ṣāhib al-baḥr* known from historical sources; see Bouderbala 2008, 328. In light of the expeditions organized during Mu'āwiya b. Abi Sufyan's caliphate discussed previously, Harold I. Bell's claim (1908, 114; repeated in Fahmy 1966a, 87; and Māhir 1967, 87) that 'Aṭā' b. Rāfi's ill-fated expedition of 85/704 was the first of the yearly naval expeditions organized by the Umayyads can no longer be accepted. Bell based this claim on a partially faulty reading of a discussion on early Islamic naval warfare in North Africa in Michele Amari's *Storia dei musulmani di Sicilia*. The passage in Amari's *Storia* (1854–72) can be found at I:124 and refers explicitly to "l'infestazione del Mediterraneo occidentale" (my italics). *P.Ness.* 74 (dated to ca. 66/685) refers to a fleet (*stolos*) in line 7, but the character of this fleet remains unclear.

77. E.g., Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 237; Ibn Yūnus 2000, I:344 [no. 944]; al-Dhahabī 1990, 6:18; and Ibn Kathīr 1998, 12:345. For discussions on this expedition, see Eickoff 1966, 28–29; and Fahmy 1966b, 120–21.

78. *P.Lond.* 4.1441.52.

main maritime center at that time.⁷⁹ Another account book records that on Rabī' I 20/February 28 of the following year, 88/707, a *pistikos* named Athanasios collected 20 artabas of bread for an expedition organized in Egypt itself.⁸⁰ These and other documents show that the Marwanid fleet and its administration differed much from their Sufyanid counterparts.

Papyri from the 70s/690s and later show this difference most clearly in their use of terminology previously unattested in Egypt. In contrast to documents from the Sufyanid period, Greek and Coptic papyri from the Marwanid period systematically refer to a naval expedition with the word *kourson*, “raid.”⁸¹ And although the (exclusively Muslim) soldiers participating in these *koursa* (often specified as being *muhājirūn* and *mawālī*⁸²) are in most documents simply called *machoi*, “soldiers,”⁸³ the term *prokoursarioi*, “raiders” or “corsairs,” appears in an Egyptian context for the first time in contemporary documents.⁸⁴ Another terminological change that occurred in the same period concerns the composition of the fleet. Documents from the Sufyanid period refer to the use of *karaboi*, two-banked galleys.⁸⁵ According to papyri from around the turn of the 2nd/8th century, the Marwanid fleet was more diverse and made use of *akatenaria* (one-banked auxiliary vessels) and *dromonaria* (large two-banked galleys) in addition to *karaboi*.⁸⁶ Although the names of these ships are derived from the names of Byzantine ships, neither the *akatenarion* nor the *dromonarion* is known to have been used in pre-Marwanid Egypt.⁸⁷ Finally, it is in documents from the Marwanid period that we find a tax called *nautikon*—a tax for the costs of sailors (occasionally also artisans) and their maintenance.⁸⁸

79. *P.Lond.* 4, p. xviii; cf. Borrut 1999–2000, 17–18.

80. *P.Lond.* 4.1433.46.

81. Cf. Bell 1908, 115, who notes that *kourson* may indicate the making of a raid. In three bilingual documents, this word is used in the Greek where the Arabic has *jaysh*, “expedition” (Delattre, Pintaudi, and Vanthieghem 2013, 367 [74/694], lines 5–6 and 15; Becker 1907, no. 9 [90/709–10], lines 7 and 14; and Becker 1908, 150 [95/714], lines 4 and 11). For the meaning of *jaysh* in these documents, see also Becker 1907, 90. The correspondence between *kourson* and *jaysh* is also visible in a more or less fixed expression that in *P.Heid.Arab.* 1.1 = *P.World*, 124–25 = *Chrest.Khoury* 1.90 (91/710) takes the form of *ḥaḍara 'atā' al-jund* | *wa- 'iyālihim wa-khurūj al-juyūsh* (lines 8–9), “[the time for the payment of] the *'atā'* of the *jund* and their families and the departure of the expeditions has arrived.” Lines 7–9 of *P.Lond.* 4.1394, dated to 89/708–9, give the closest parallel in Greek: κατέλαβεν ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ λαβεῖν τοὺς Μωαχαρίτας τοῦ Φοσσάτου τὰς ρόγας αὐτῶν καὶ ἐξελεῖν εἰς τὰ κ[ο]ῦρσα, “now has arrived the time for the *muhājirūn* of Fustāt to receive their allowances and to go out to the *koursa*” (trans. Bell 1911b, 382, slightly adapted). Another parallel can be found in lines 15–16 of *P.Lond.* 4.1349 (91/710): ἐπέφθασεν ὁ καιρὸς τῆς ρόγας τῶν Μωαχαρίτων τοῦ Φοσσάτου καὶ τῶν κούρσων, “now has arrived the time for the allowance to the *muhājirūn* of Fustāt and for the *koursa*” (trans. Bell 1911a, 278, slightly adapted), leaving out a word denoting “going out/departing/etc.” The use of a *maṣḍar* (*ghazw*) rather than a substantive (*ghazwa*) in an Arabic parallel in *P.Cair.Arab.* 3.148 (90/709 or 91/709–10), lines 5–6 and 8–10, also indicates that the making of a raid is meant: *fa-innaka qad 'alimta alladhī katabtu ilayka bihi . . . wa-'lladhī qad ḥaḍara min 'atā' al-jund* | *wa- 'iyālihim wa-ghazw al-nās*, “for you know about what I wrote to you . . . and [about the time for the payment of] what of the *'atā'* of the *jund*, their families, and the raiding of the men has arrived.” Two inscriptions from Knidos and Kos, dated 98/716–17 and 99/717–18, respectively, attest to the use of the substantive (*ghazwa*) for an actual “expedition”; see Imbert 2013, 734 [C1] and 746 [K1]. Note that on the *verso* of Rāḡib 1981, no. 1 (probably 91/710), there is no correspondence between the Arabic *fi arzāq al-juyūsh*, “concerning the allowance of the soldiers,” and the Greek λ(ό)γ(ω) | ῥ(ο)υ | κ(ο)ῦ | μωαχα(ρι)τῶν, “on the account of the allowance of the *muhājirūn*”; see Gascou 2011, 270, with discussion on p. 271.

82. Fahmy 1966a, 103–6.

83. *CPR* 22.53 *verso* (ca. 95–97/714–16), commentary to line 14. Rāḡib 1981, no. 1 (probably 91/710), the only Arabic document that explicitly refers to soldiers on “the ships of [the people of] Egypt and the ships of the people of Syria,” uses *muqātīla*, the Arabic equivalent to *machoi*. See also Christides 1993, 72.

84. *CPR* 22.53 *verso*, line 14; *P.Lond.* 4.1392 (92/711), lines 1 and 4; and *P.Lond.* 4.1397 (ca. 90/709), line 6. See also Abū Ṣafīyya 2004, 106–7. The terms *kourson* and *prokoursarios* were not new terms. They were used in Byzantine regions on the eve of the Muslim conquests; see, e.g., the use of *prokourson* in the early 1st-/7th-century *Chronicon Paschale* (translated as “advance guard” by *Chronicon Paschale* 1989, 171).

85. *P.Apoll.* 9, 29, 30, and 45; *P.Apoll.Copt.* 5. Sailors on this type of ship (*nautokaraboi*) are mentioned in *P.Apoll.* 28, 52, and 83.

86. Fahmy 1966a, 125–27. See Morelli 1998, 167n4, for the reading *akatenarion* instead of *akation* (preferred by Harold I. Bell in *P.Lond.* 4).

87. Casson 1971, 153–54; Pryor and Jeffreys 2006, 164–65.

88. See *CPR* 22.44, commentary to line 7.

Papyri from Basileios's archive also attest to an increase of naval bases under the Marwanids. After successful territorial expansion in North Africa and the conquest of Carthage in 78/697–98, for example, the abovementioned caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 65–86/685–705) ordered his brother and governor in Egypt, 'Abd al-'Azīz b. Marwān, to build an arsenal in Tūnis, a garrison town established on the site of an ancient settlement in the year 80/699–700. The Egyptian governor subsequently sent 1,000 Egyptians to build a fleet of 100 warships.⁸⁹ This fleet was not built for defensive purposes only. The caliph gave his brother the explicit order "to fight the Byzantines on land and sea and to invade their coasts."⁹⁰ It took some years before the fleet actually was put in action; 'Aṭā' b. Rāfi's 85/704 fleet reportedly was the first to set sail from Tūnis.⁹¹

Importantly, the enlargement of the fleet took place not only in recently conquered areas but also in areas where Muslim rule had existed for over 50 years. In Egypt, for instance, Tamiathis/Dimyāṭ (Damietta) is first mentioned in the late 1st/early 8th century as a naval center in addition to Alexandria, Fuṣṭāṭ, and Clysmā/Qulzum. In *P.Lond.* 4.1354, written in 91/710, Tamiathis/Dimyāṭ is the destination of food supplies for a naval expedition; the supplies were to be collected in the pagarchy of Aphroditō/Ishqūh. The account book *P.Lond.* 4.1449, dated to after 92/711, records that such supplies had been sent to Tamiathis/Dimyāṭ for an expedition in a 10th indiction year.⁹² Historical sources confirm the town's recently acquired military importance. The first Byzantine attack on the town allegedly took place in 90/708–9 (the town's *ṣāhib al-baḥr* Khālīd b. Kaysān was reportedly captured during this attack);⁹³ a second attack occurred in 121/738–39.⁹⁴ The establishment of such naval centers as Tamiathis/Dimyāṭ under the Marwanids may well have been part of caliphal policies to defend their Mediterranean shores against such Byzantine attacks. Various Marwanid caliphs, including 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān and al-Walīd, are recorded as having contributed to the (re)fortification of the Syro-Palestinian coast and the establishment of a *ribāṭ* network.⁹⁵ It stands to reason that these policies affected Egypt's Mediterranean coast as well. In addition to Tamiathis/Dimyāṭ, for example, Rashīd (Rosetta) came to house soldiers under the Marwanids, probably in addition to the soldiers who protected the mouth of the Nile at nearby Bolbythinē and were equipped with castellated ships according to two documents from Basileios's archive.⁹⁶ During the caliphate of Marwān b. Muḥammad (127–32/744–50), Rashīd reportedly had its own military commander.⁹⁷

The coincidence of these changes indicates that the Muslim fleet in Egypt, as visible in the papyri, developed considerably in the wake of the Second Civil War and that this development must be considered directly related to the better-known Marwanid reforms. The impact of these reforms on the organization of the fleet can perhaps best be seen in the distribution of pay and supplies to the soldiers and sailors of the expeditions. In the Sufyanid period, pagarchs were

89. Al-Bakrī 1992, 2:695. In this regard, see also *P.Lond.* 4.1438 + 1484, dated to ca. 85–86/704–5. This fragment of an account book records (line 10) the collection of wages of skilled workmen sent to North Africa.

90. Al-Bakrī 1992, 2:695; al-Ḥimyarī 1975, 266; see also Muhammad 2008, 4–5. On other frontiers of the empire 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān initiated campaigns as well; see Robinson 2005, 69.

91. Eickoff 1966, 15; Pryor and Jeffreys 2006, 28.

92. See also Fahmy 1966a, 30–31.

93. Al-Ṭabarī 1879–1901, 2/2:1201; al-Maqrīzī 2002–3, 1:582.

94. Al-Maqrīzī 2002–3, 1:582.

95. Masarwa 2011, 161–67.

96. *P.Lond.* 4.1414.59 and 136 (first half of the 2nd/8th century); *P.Lond.* 4.1449.62 and 65 (92/711 or later). For castellated ships, see Casson 1971, 154. For soldiers stationed at the mouths of the Nile, see F. Morelli's references and discussion in *CPR* 22.44, commentary to line 8. The source (Wüstenfeld 1875, 1:30) for the observation made there that coastal guards were already appointed during the governorship of Maslama b. Mukhallad (47–62/667–82) is now known to be incorrect: Wüstenfeld mistook a *ṣāhib al-baḥr* for a coastal guard (see Bouderbala 2008, 328). Nonetheless, the conclusion is confirmed by a passage in al-Kindī's *Kitāb al-wulāt* (al-Kindī 1912, 38), which refers to soldiers stationed at Paralos/Burullus in the early 50s/670s; see also Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam 1922, 124.

97. Ibn Yūnus 2000, 1:119 [no. 311]. See Sijpesteijn 2004, 118–19, for the rise of Rashīd in the early 2nd/8th century.

charged with the maintenance of sailors sent on expedition, which they deducted from the tax quota. Their local treasuries provided the money with which food supplies were bought in local markets and from which wages were paid.⁹⁸ For example, SB 14.11917 (second half of the 1st/7th century), a letter sent from the bureau of the *dux* or the central administration in Fustāt, informs the pagarch Papas about the governor's order to send sailors "with their maintenance and equipment" (line 7). Because the Muslim army at that time was not yet professional, soldiers and their wages and supplies are entirely missing in these documents.⁹⁹ In Egypt, the first signs of the professionalization of the army, including the transformation of the military 'aṭā', "pay," from a pension to a salary, date from the caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān.¹⁰⁰ By the time of Qurra b. Sharīk's governorate over Egypt, the central authorities in Fustāt distributed the pay and supplies to soldiers participating in naval expeditions. In one document, Qurra orders the pagarch Basileios to collect tax money because "the time for the *muhājirūn* of Fustāt to receive their allowances and to go out to the raids (*koursa*) has now arrived."¹⁰¹ In contrast to the Sufyanid period, under the Marwanids, the central authorities often took charge of distributing supplies to sailors as well. The pagarchies had to supply the men and the requested items,¹⁰² although at times the men were sent together with their supplies.¹⁰³ In a letter probably dating from 91/710, the governor orders Basileios to quickly produce and send bread of good quality because, Qurra writes, "I have already ordered [the distribution of] the provisions (*qisma*) of the sailors of Egypt's ships and the ships of the people of Syro-Palestine and the provisions (*rizq*) of the warriors that sail on them."¹⁰⁴ In a similar way, pagarchies were now ordered to forward money for the wages of sailors to the central authorities in Fustāt instead of distributing the wages themselves.¹⁰⁵

This centralization of the administration helped the Marwanid authorities increase their grip on the province. Through censuses organized to inventory Egypt's cultivable land, livestock, and population and official demands to provide proof of having fulfilled fiscal obligations if one wanted to travel (administrative practices documented from the 80s/700s onward), for example, the authorities became more directly involved in Egypt's local administration and aimed, among other things, to secure more of the province's taxes.¹⁰⁶ Muslim pagarchs, who had stronger ties with the central authorities than their Christian colleagues did, were allowed more autonomy in their districts,¹⁰⁷ for instance, in the allocation of requisitions for the fleet among the local

98. *P.Apoll.* 52 and 83 (ca. 55/675). *P.Apoll.* 28, recording instructions by "the all-praiseworthy *amiras*" (line 3) on the payment of sailors going "to the sea" (line 6) only, suggests that this was official policy in that period. Unfortunately, the text is too fragmentary to allow for firm conclusions in this regard. On the identity of the *amiras*, see the literature mentioned in note 46 above.

99. Cf. Gascou 1979, 28 (commentary to line 5).

100. Crone 1980, 38 and 229n265; Sijpesteijn 2011, 259. On the changing of the concept of 'aṭā', see also Kennedy 2001, 76–78.

101. *P.Lond.* 4.1394 (89/708–9), lines 7–9; for more examples, see note 81 above.

102. In *P.Lond.* 4.1351 (91/710), Qurra requests that Basileios supply a messenger (*beredarios*) named Sa'īd with a boat to convey sailors and skilled workmen for an expedition to Fustāt. *P.Lond.* 4.1353 (91/710) contains an urgent demand to send supplies for the soldiers, sailors, and workmen to Alexandria. Qurra instructs Basileios in *P.Lond.* 4.1354 (91/710) to start collecting wheat and bread as supplies for an expedition and forward these to Tamiathis/Dimyāt. *P.Lond.* 4.1392 (92/710–11) contains an order to send butter to Alexandria for the *prokoursarioi*. See also SB 10.10455 (90/709); *P.Bal.* 181 (90–96/709–14); and *P.Lond.* 4.1355 (91/710), 1388 (90–96/709–14). See also Sijpesteijn 2013, 174–75.

103. Becker 1908, 149–50 [partially reprinted as SB 18.13218] (ca. 95/714): bilingual *entagion* for 2 1/2 sailors "intended for the *karaboi* and *akatenaria* of the *amir al-mu minin*," including their wages and maintenance. See also *P.Lond.* 4.1353 (91/710), 1388 (90–96/709–14) and 1464 (90–96/709–14), and the *entagion* published in Morelli 2017 (with commentary on its date).

104. Rāḡib 1981, no. 1, lines 6–10. A distinction between *qisma* and *rizq* is made on purpose. The latter designates God-given means of subsistence that is to be received only by Muslims. See Mayerson 1994, 127.

105. The register *CPR* 22.55 (87/706–7), line 12, records the costs for the maintenance of a messenger named 'Abd Allāh who had come to Aphroditō/Ishqūh for the wages of sailors participating in an expedition. See also *P.Laur.* 4.192 (90/709; with Morelli 1995, 165–71) and *P.Lond.* 4.1337 (90/709), 1374 (92/711), and 1450 (90/709).

106. Sijpesteijn 2013, 92–111, especially 94–97.

107. Sijpesteijn 2013, 89–90.

communities. It is the governor's bureau in Fuṣṭāṭ that decided on the allocation of requisitions for the fleet among the local communities in Basileios's pagarchy.¹⁰⁸ In contrast to the Christian Basileios, however, Ibrāhīm b. Yaḥyā and Nājid b. Muslim were Muslim pagarchs in the first half of the 2nd/8th century who allocated such requisitions themselves.¹⁰⁹

This rationale also lay behind Qurra b. Sharīk's instructions to Basileios to keep a record of persons sent or hired for corvée labor in the arsenals or on the ships of the fleet and to demand guarantee declarations from those leaving the pagarchy for such reasons.¹¹⁰ Registers devoted to the local production of men, money, and/or goods for the arsenals and expeditions can, indeed, be found among early 2nd-/8th-century administrative documents from various places in Egypt.¹¹¹ Guarantee declarations were demanded to forestall the evasion of corvée labor.¹¹² In these documents, third parties (sometimes entire village communities; see the Theban *PCLT* 6, dated to 105/724¹¹³) declared they would bear the costs of replacement in case a conscript deserted the tasks assigned to him.¹¹⁴ Such declarations concerning sailors and workmen in the arsenals appear in our documentary records in the Marwanid period. The majority come from Basileios's archive.¹¹⁵

Although the number of both narrative and documentary sources on Egypt's Marwanid fleet decreases toward the mid-2nd/8th century, the sources that are available give the impression that the fleet was up to some extent still active in the last years of Umayyad rule. During the governorate of 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (in office only in 132/750), ships of the fleet were furnished with a special layer preventing them from catching fire when the Byzantines used the so-called Greek Fire.¹¹⁶ Both the *History of the Patriarchs* and the 4th-/10th-century historian Ibn Yūnus know of an expedition that was organized during 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān's governorate;¹¹⁷ sources belonging to the Byzantine historical tradition, however, do not refer to an expedition after 127–28/745–46.¹¹⁸

4. Epilogue: Initial Disinterest and Regained Interest under the Early Abbasids

The Abbasids, who gained control over Egypt in 133/750, introduced a wholly different naval policy. Continuity characterized the initial years of their rule when they still had to establish

108. See *PLaur.* 4.192; *PLond.* 4.1336, 1337, 1353, 1354, and 1392; and *PRoss.Georg.* 4.5, in which Qurra b. Sharīk refers to demand notes he sent to Basileios; for examples of Qurra's actual demand notes for such requisitions, see Becker 1907, no. 8 = *PLond.* 4.1410; Becker 1907, no. 9 = *PLond.* 4.1408 = *PMudun* 32; Becker 1908, 149–50 [partially reprinted as *SB* 18.13218]; *PBal.* 181; *PLond.* 4.1348, 1371, and 1374; and *SB* 20.15100.

109. *CPR* 22.13 (Arsinoite/Fayyūm, 2nd/8th century); *SB* 8.9760 (Arsinoite/Fayyūm, 2nd/8th century); and *SPP* 8.1184 (Heracléopolis/Ihnās, 109/728).

110. *SB* 3.7241 = *PLond.* 4.1393 (91/710).

111. *CPR* 22.46 (Arsinoite/Fayyūm, 2nd/8th century) and 47 (Heracléopolis/Ihnās, 2nd/8th century); *PLond.* 4.1451 (probably 97/715–16), 1452 (90–96/709–14), and 1456 fragment A (early 2nd/8th century). The *PLond.* 4 documents come from Aphroditō/Ishqūh.

112. *PLond.* 4.1438 + 1484, dated to ca. 85–86/704–5, records that 41 conscripted sailors had evaded their duties by running away. Theophanes Confessor (1997, 546 [anno mundi 6209]) writes that in 97–98/716–17 conscripted sailors on an Egyptian fleet defected to the Byzantines. The unpopularity of this work is captured well in a passage in the *History of the Patriarchs* (1947–59, 3:70–71 [324–25]), where the *ṣāhib al-kharāj* Usāma b. Zayd (in office 96–99/714–17 and 102–4/720–23) is said to have used conscription on the fleet as a threat to force monks to pay taxes.

113. Cromwell 2017, 41–42, 58.

114. For the contents of guarantee declarations, see Till 1950–57, 188–91; and Muhammad 2008, 15–19. On *PCLT* 6, see also Berkes 2017, 171–72. *PLond.* 4.1565 (early 2nd/8th century), also a guarantee declaration, states the opposite: three village officials declare (among others) to have paid no contribution to the sailors going to Africa, at the rate of 3 solidi per sailor, because they lack the financial means thereto. See in this regard also *CPR* 4.17 = *SB Kopt.* 2.920 (Saqqara, 2nd/8th century), a legal document recording the transmission of the obligation to serve on a ship.

115. For the declarations from Basileios's archive, see Richter 2010, 205; and *P.HermitageCopt.* 18 (90/709). See also the above-mentioned *CPR* 4.17 and *PCLT* 6 and *P.Gascou* 25 (Saqqara, first half of the 2nd/8th century).

116. *History of the Patriarchs* 1947–59, 3:119 [373].

117. *History of the Patriarchs* 1947–59, 3:149 [403]; Ibn Yūnus 2000, 1:385 [no. 1051].

118. Theophanes Confessor 1997, 466 [anno mundi 6238]; Nicephorus 1990, 141 [§ 68].

their power.¹¹⁹ For their conquest of North Africa, the Abbasid military authorities had a fleet organized in Alexandria by one al-Muthannā b. Ziyād al-Ḥaḍramī in 136/754 to transport the troops to Ṭarābulus.¹²⁰ This fleet is the last one we hear of in the 2nd/8th century and was no longer used for attacks on Byzantine territory.¹²¹ Interest in Egypt's naval infrastructures seems to have vanished almost completely soon after 136/754.¹²² The Umayyad governors' traditional visit to Alexandria was not taken over by the Abbasids; no Abbasid governor is known to have visited the city before the 150s/770s.¹²³ Similarly, the last known *ṣāhib al-baḥr*, 'Ayyāsh b. 'Uqba al-Ḥaḍramī, served under the Umayyad governor 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān in 132/750.¹²⁴ The absence of references to *aṣḥāb al-baḥr* in historiography on the first decades of Abbasid rule confirms that no military fleets were organized in these years. Indeed, also (the admittedly few) papyri dated to the 130s/750s and 140s/760s lack references to an Abbasid navy. In addition to this disinterest in Egyptian naval matters, 3rd-/9th- and 4th-/10th-century sources write that the caliph al-Manṣūr (r. 136–58/754–75) had the Canal of the Commander of the Faithful blocked in 145/762–63 to quell al-Nafs al-Zakiyya's anti-Abbasid rebellion in the Ḥijāz by discontinuing Egyptian grain supplies to the region.¹²⁵ By contrast, early-Abbasid naval interest concentrated on the Syro-Palestinian coast,¹²⁶ where the caliphs al-Manṣūr and al-Mahdī (r. 158–69/775–85), in al-Balādhuri's words, “examined the forts and cities of the coast, peopled and fortified them, and rebuilt those that were in need of being rebuilt.”¹²⁷ Indeed, under the first Abbasid caliphs, *aṣḥāb al-baḥr* were appointed there as well.¹²⁸

The Abbasids regained interest in Egypt's fleet to some extent in the 150s/770s. Although the sources for this observation are few and far between, they all point again at naval activity around the same time. According to the *History of the Patriarchs*, the governor 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān (in office 152–55/769–72) forced the Coptic patriarch and “all the bishops” to work for a year in the arsenal on al-Rawḍa.¹²⁹ The Greek document CPR 22.22, a register dated to 158/774–75, is the first papyrological attestation of *muhājirūn* in Clysma/Qulzum after P.Lond. 4.1416 (from 114–16/732–34).¹³⁰ And the first Abbasid governor of Egypt to visit Alexandria (for unknown reasons) was Manṣūr b. Yazīd al-Ru'aynī in 162/779.¹³¹ In the decades that followed, military organization in Egypt had a more defensive character. Probably from ca. 164/780 on, Egypt's chief *qādī*, seated in Fuṣṭāṭ, took financial care of poor soldiers and volunteer warriors stationed on Egypt's Mediterranean littoral,¹³² and we still hear of garrison commanders (*umarā'*) in Alexandria around 199/815.¹³³ But by and large, Abbasid interest in Egypt's naval infrastructures remained minimal until the Byzantines' successful and devastating attack on Tamiathis/Dimyāṭ in 238/853, after which, as is well known, the caliph al-Mutawakkil

119. For examples showing continuity, see, e.g., Kennedy 1998, 76; Sijpesteijn 2013, 213–14; Tillier 2014, 123–24; and Bruning 2018a.

120. Al-Kindī 1912, 102–3.

121. Cf. in this regard a 2nd-/8th-century document recently published by Khaled Younes (2017, no. 3) that refers to *bu'ūth* (possibly “expeditions”) in line 14. The exact date of the document and the exact meaning of *bu'ūth* cannot be established at present.

122. See Fahmy 1966a, 106 (but cf. the following discussion on the Abbasids' regained interest in the 150s/770s); and Picard 2015, 252 and 258. Pace Kubiak 1970, 48–49, who argues for a lessened but continuous interest.

123. Bruning 2018b, 57.

124. Bouderbala 2008, 328. 'Ayyāsh b. 'Uqba's experience with organizing a fleet was needed in 136/754, when the Abbasids ordered him to collect grain for the troops sent to North Africa; see al-Kindī 1912, 103.

125. Al-Balādhuri 1866, 216; 'Alī b. al-Ḥasan Ibn Qudayd (d. 312/924), cited in both Ibn Duqmāq 1893, 4:120, and al-Maqrīzī 2002–3, 3:474. See also al-Maqrīzī 2002–3, 3:466.

126. Cf. Picard 2015, 92.

127. Al-Balādhuri 1866, 163 (trans. Hitti 1916, 251–52).

128. Mikati 2013, 53–54. See also Picard 2015, 263.

129. *History of the Patriarchs* 1947–59, 4:374 [488] and 377 [491] (see 370 [484] for the bishops).

130. An earlier reference to Clysma/Qulzum can be found in the very fragmentary SPP 10.11 (ca. 140/760).

131. Al-Kindī 1912, 121.

132. Al-Kindī 1912, 418–19, with the discussion in Bouderbala 2013, 48.

133. Al-Kindī 1912, 158.

(r. 232–47/847–61) ordered the province's coastal defense to be rebuilt or improved.¹³⁴ With the arrival of the Abbasids in the mid-2nd/8th century, then, the foundational epoch of Egypt's early Islamic fleet had come to an end.

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134. On this attack, see Fahmy 1966b, 140–44; see also the note in Rémondon 1953, 245–50. For al-Mutawakkil's reinforcement of Egypt's Mediterranean coast, see *History of the Patriarchs* 1943, 2/1:13–16; al-Kindi 1912, 202; Ibn Duqmāq 1893, 5:81; and al-Maqrīzī 2002–3. For subsequent naval policies in Abbasid Egypt, see Kubiak 1970, 58–66.

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