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THE POLICE IN BYZANTINE EGYPT: THE HIERARCHY IN THE PAPYRI FROM THE FOURTH TO THE SEVENTH CENTURIES

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The Roman police system in Egypt had already begun to undergo an extensive transformation in the third century, especially in connection with the administrative and economic changes which took place under the reign of several Emperors, from Philip the Arab to Justinian.¹ This article will deal with fourth century changes and the evolution of the police force until the seventh century with the help of the papyrological evidence. By 'police' I understand officials in charge of the supervision of order, excluding the φύλακες (*phylakes*), or guards and watchmen in all their varieties, and the military officers who may, up to a point have had police attributions.² I will concentrate on the interaction of a series of officers to try to establish the evolution of the hierarchy.³

1. The fourth century nome office: the *eirenarchs*

In nome administration the strategus had the duty of supervising the police service in cities and villages, but at the beginning of the fourth century the nome *eirenarch* replaced or assisted him in this function, while the *exactor* replaced him in the financial aspects of the post.⁴

The εἰρηναρχος or εἰρηναρχης (*eirenarch*), or peace-keeper,⁵ first appears in the papyri in the mid-third century⁶ and beside the *strategus*⁷ he has competence over the whole nome.⁸ The office is a state ἀρχή (*arche*), magistracy. The *eirenarchs* act in colleges (*P.Oxy.* I 80 (AD 238-244): a college of two officials) in their duty of

policing the whole nome and have a high social position⁹ (*P.Oxy.* XIV 1662 (AD 246): an *eirenarch* is presented as a deputy *prytanis*). This officer is attested in the Oxyrhynchite, the Nikioupolite and the Hermoupolite nomes. Among his functions must have been the issue of the orders to arrest,¹⁰ as in *P.Oxy.* I 80 (AD 236-244), a declaration on oath addressed to the *eirenarchs* of the Oxyrhynchite nome by the *archephdos* of the village of Senokomis, who declares that those being sought out are not in his village. Another of their tasks was perhaps the requisitioning of methods of transportation: *BGU* VII 1568 (AD 261), a donkey; *P.Oxy.* XXXI 2568 (AD 264), a boat.

In the early fourth century, the *eirenarch* as nome official of police was replaced by the ἐπόπτης εἰρήνης (*epoptes eirenes*), supervisor of peace,¹¹ and then replaced for the rest of the century by the *riparius*.¹²

2. The *riparius*

The *riparii* are known from around AD 340¹³ until the eighth century (*P.Ross.Georg.* III 3). They are also recorded outside of Egypt in the Pretorian Praefecture of the East.¹⁴ The office, whose origin is uncertain, was called ῥιπαρία (*riparia*), as in *CPR* XIV 48, *P.Oxy.* XVI 2032.50; *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67287.¹⁵ Gelzer¹⁶ thought they were 'Grenzwächter', guardians of the border, and Bell, based on *P.Lond.* 1648, that they were officials in charge of the maintenance of dikes, thus the name stems from the Latin *ripa* 'riverbank', the post later extending to an administrative capacity for public order (*P.Iand.* III 37 n. 2., *P.Mich.* XIV 683, notes, *P.Lond.* V 1648). Also Kramer and Shelton¹⁷ suggest that the *riparii* may originally have

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¹ Bagnall 1993, 57-67; Parsons 1967, 134-41; Bianchi 1983, 185-98; Lallemand 1964, 34-40.

² Davies 1973, 200-06; Bagnall 1977, 67-86, 168-69, 172-80; Alston 1994, 517-21; Alston 1995, 81-86.

³ Lallemand 1964, 162-66; Bagnall 1993, 164-65; Drecoll 1997, 158-60.

⁴ On the police function of the *strategus*, Milne 1924, 127. On the *strategus-exactor*, Gelzer 1909a, 50-54; Thomas 1960, 264-265; Thomas 1995, 230-39. On the nome *eirenarch*, Jouguet 1911a, 408-09.

⁵ Lewis 1997, 22. Outside Egypt they were mainly village policemen: see Geraci 1987, 241 n. 23.

⁶ Earlier evidence is weak: *P.Fay.* 23, II 20: with an unclear conjecture; *P.Achm.* 7: Wessely's reading is unclear; *P.Flor.* I 76, 52: shortly after AD 266. Also an inscription: *SEG* VIII 704 (AD 291). Parsons 1966, 114; Oertel 1917, 279; Geraci 1987, 239-40.

⁷ *P.Oxy.* I 118, 14: τῷ στρατηγῷ καὶ τοῖς εἰρηναρχαῖς 'to the *strategus* and the *eirenarchs*'; *P.Stras.* I 5 (AD 262), l. 18. See also Oertel 1917, 283.

⁸ Hohlwein 1907, 205-08. But they appear also in *P.Oxy.* XVII 2108 (AD 259), as *eirenarchs* of the toparchy in the Hermoupolite nome. *Cod.Theod.* XII 14, 1: *tutela provincialium*; see also Gelzer 1909a, 58; Geraci 1987, 242.

⁹ Oertel 1917, 284: We find them with the names *Aurelius* in *P.Oxy.* I 80, and *Flavius* in *P.Oxy.* VI 991, which indicate a high social position. Some were *gymnasiarchs* and *eutheniarchs*, offices of very high consideration.

¹⁰ On the orders to arrest, see Daris 1959, 58-59; Hagedorn 1979, 61-74; Drexhage 1989, 102-18; Gagos and Sijpesteijn 1996, 77-97.

¹¹ This one did not last very long and there are few testimonies: for example *P.Oxy.* VI 991 (AD 341). See below under nome *riparii*.

¹² *P.Cair.Isid.* 130: ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς εἰρήνης (*epi tes eirenes*), the supervisor of peace, gives orders to village officials and is himself *pagus* or nome official (Lewis 1997, 22). But this papyrus is an exception if compared to *PSI* III 184 and 222: sent to the δεκάδαρχος ἐπὶ εἰρήνης Ἡρακλεοπόλιτου (*decadarch*) for peace of the Heracleopolite nome, in which the *epi tes eirenes* does not seem to have anything to do with the municipal liturgist, but is a military official, a *decadarch*. See Geraci 1987, 235-38: the *epi tes eirenes*' competence never surpassed the limits of the village. The Cairo papyrus (*P.Cair.Isid.* 130) must refer to the *decadarch*, since it is an isolated case of the *epi tes eirenes* as a nome official.

¹³ Or perhaps even before: see below n. 21.

¹⁴ Feissel and Kaygusuz 1985, 415-16.

¹⁵ See *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67281, 3: ῥιπαρεύειν τῆς εἰρημένης κώμης 'to act as a *riparius* by policing the mentioned village'.

¹⁶ Gelzer 1909b, 357 n. 2; Bell 1924, 214.

¹⁷ Kramer et al. 1987, 95 n. 21.

had the function of the χωματεπέικτης (*chomatepeiktēs*) (*SB XVI 12384*)¹⁸ with the irrigation guards subordinate to them.¹⁹ But we find a similar title, the *riparienses*, in the Imperial legislation (*Cod.Theod.* 7, 1, 18; 7, 4, 14), for the troops stationed on the bank of a river. The *riparius* can also have a military origin.

The liturgy was considered dangerous, severe and onerous, as stated in *P.Oxy.* VI 904: ἀπαραίτητον καὶ φορτικωτάτην λειτουργίαν 'an inevitable and burdensome service'. It consisted mainly of the maintenance of order (παραφυλακὴ τῆς πόλεως) and supervision of certain affairs, such as delivery of goods or prisoners (*P.Lond.* V 1650), or recruitment and nomination of subordinates: the *nyctostrategoi* (*P.Oxy.* VIII 1033) and other guards (*P.Lond.* V 1648); and protection of individuals (*P.Herm.* 19). In their responsibility as police officers, they received various petitions including cases of burglary and theft (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67091, in which Apollos, *riparius* of Aphrodito, is asked to take the suspects into custody, until they were to be sent for trial, or *P.Gron.Amst.* 1²⁰), broken marriage contracts (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67092) or assault (*P.Harr.* II 218). They also issue the orders to arrest (*P.Amh.* II 146 to the village *eirenarchs*). They are in charge of some economic matters, for example the payment to the guild of saddlers (*CPR XIV 32*), and the purchase of hay (*BGU XII 2198*), perhaps affairs for the community, and not personal to these *riparii*. They appear acting as witnesses in marriage contracts (*CPR I 30*) and also received the ἐγγύαι, or deeds of surety (*P.Cair.Masp.* II 67252, III 67296, 67297, 67328, *P.Flor.* III 284).

The *riparius* had a number of helpers: οἰκέτης (*oiketēs*), σύμμαχος (*symmachos*) (*P.Oxy.* I 154; VI 904; XVI 1920), and ἀρχιυπηρέτης ῥιπαρίου (*archiuperetes*) (*Stud.Pal.* III 2, 1).²¹

All these functions appear to differ according to whether the *riparii* had a nome, city, or village office. I have chosen to make a distinction between nome and city *riparii*, although their functions are very similar, for two reasons: they have a different title in the documents and

their attributions are somewhat extended when they are city officials.

3. The nome *riparii*

The nome *riparii* are almost without exception the only *riparii* mentioned in the fourth century. They appear around AD 340²² and they mostly act in pairs, although sometimes they act individually.²³ They are attested for the Oxyrhynchite, the Hermoupolite and the Arsinoite nomes. They disappear in the fifth century: there are only two occurrences of the office in *P.Select.* 8 (AD 421) and *P.Rain.Cent.* 99 (AD 451) for the whole century. They seem to have replaced the nome *eirenarchs* with the transition of the ἐπόπτης εἰρήνης (*epoptēs eirenes*), who appears in very few papyri of AD 341-2.²⁴ Their subordinates in the police hierarchy were the village *eirenarchs*, and the *nyctostrategoi* in the cities.

The nome *riparii* receive petitions concerning different matters, all happening in villages of the nome over which they have competence, such as problems with land boundaries and taxes (*P.Oxy.* XIX 2235 and XLVIII 3393), abuse (*P.Harr.* II 218), and assault (*P.Good.Cair.* 15). They submitted orders to arrest to the police officials of the villages: to the κεφαλιωτῆς εἰρηναρχῶν (*kephaliotes eirenarchon*), head of the peace keepers (*P.Oxy.* XIX 2233, *P.Oxy.* XIX 2229, *P.Oxy.* VI 897) and the *eirenarchs* themselves (*P.Amh.* II 146), and they are in charge of the implementation of the liturgies, that is, the liturgical policing of the irrigation system (*SB XVI 12384 + 11350*²⁵) and liturgical policing of rural labours (*P.Lond.* V 1648 and 1649). In *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4377 (AD 369), they act as intermediaries between the prefect and the accused in a judicial case.

It is probable that they supervised problems occurring in the city, which were in the hands of their subordinate νυκτοστράτηγοι (*nyctostrategoi*), or night-strategoi.²⁶ There is evidence that the nome *riparii* were not also city *riparii*, and although living in the city, they were in charge of problems occurring outside the city in the land and the villages of the nome.²⁷ In the late fourth century the

¹⁸ See Lallemand 1964, 167: the *chomatepeiktai* acted in pairs and took care of the irrigation and maintenance of channels and dikes with the ὑδροφύλακες (*hydrophylakes*, irrigation guards) as their subordinates, whom they appointed from the nomination of the comarchs. The χωματεκεβολία (*chomatekbolia*) was the supervision of the dikes: *P.Petaus* 88, *P.Ryl.* II 90, *P.Mich.* XI 618. The αἰγιαλοφύλαξ was in charge of the regulation of the irrigation and supervision of the works concerned with it. There was one for each nome (*P.Fay.* 222 AD III). On the *riparii* in the supervision of irrigation works, see Bonneau 1970, 56-57.

¹⁹ The *hydrophylakes*, or irrigation guards, known from AD 70 (*P.Oxy.* XLIX 3508) to 345 (*P.Lond.* III 1246). It was a liturgy in AD 183 (*P.Wisc.* I 9). They were appointed for one year, and in some cases for five days (*PSI* III 219). See Youtie 1940, 628-31; Sijpesteijn 1972, 146-51.

²⁰ Worp 1996, 235-42.

²¹ Strassi 1997, 65. For the ἀρχιυπηρέτης or head-helper of an *eirenarch*, see *CPR XIV 34*. See also *Eirene* 34, 1998, 203.

²² *PNYU* 4, from 324/339 seems to be the first occurrence, but has been redated to AD 353/362 (*BL VII 124*). The next occurrence is *P.Freib.* 11, 11 = *SB III 6294*, AD 336 (Bell, *JEA* 6 1920, 131 n. 12, reads ῥιπαρίων).

²³ If the Eulogius of *P.Oxy.* XIX 2229 is the same as the one in *P.Oxy.* V 897 and XIX 2235, then he is a nome *riparius* acting independently. Also *P.Harr.* II 218.

²⁴ *P.Oxy.* VI 991, *P.Oxy.* XII 1559, *P.Oxy.* L 3575-3576, 3578, *P.Oxy.* LV 3794 (AD 340), and probably *P.Harr.* I 65. Oertel (1917, 283) identifies him with the nome *eirenarch*, and Jouguet (1911b, 111), supposes he replaces the *eirenarch* and precedes the *riparius*. In this intermediate period, the *epoptēs eirenes* was in charge of the nome, while there was an *eirenarch* for each *pagus* (*P.Thead.* 24 and 25/ *P.Sakaon* 45 and 45a). See also Lallemand 1964, 163; Geraci 1987, 243.

²⁵ Worp 1980, 306-07.

²⁶ This subordination is illustrated by *P.Oxy.* VII 1033 (AD 392), where two *nyctostrategoi* complain to the *riparii* about the danger of their duties.

²⁷ *P.Lips.* 37 (AD 389): Αὐρηλίω Ζηνοδότῳ προπολιτευομένῳ Ἐρμοῦ πόλεως ... ῥιπαρίῳ νομοῦ Ἐρμουπολίτου 'to Aurelius Zenodotus,

riparius saw his competence extended and supervised problems taking place in the villages and the city, without the mediation of the *nyctostrategoi*. This is what I call the city *riparius*, as I will discuss below.

The office of the nome *riparius* had a high social position. For example, it was undertaken by a *bouleutes*, or former *logistes* in *P.Oxy.* XIX 2235 (AD 346). The *riparius* often appeared with a double liturgy, and was also πολιτευόμενος (*politeuomenos*), city magistrate²⁸ (*P.Lond.* V 1648 (AD 373), *P.Lips.* 37 (AD 389), *P.Herm.* 19 (AD 392), *P.Köln.* V 234 (AD 431), *P.Flor.* III 313 (AD 449), etc.). These seem to have been burdensome liturgies, so the *politeuomenos* had a substitute for the liturgy of *riparius* in *P.Oxy.* VI 904.²⁹

4. The *nyctostrategoi*, city officials

The νυκτοστράτηγος (*nyctostrategos*), or night-strategus, appears in the papyri in the second century, although testimonies are not abundant, and are most prominent in the fourth century, when these officials have the duty of policing the city, under the nome *riparii*.³⁰ There are earlier mentions, if Strabo's νυκτερινὸς στρατηγός (*nycterinos strategus*), or night strategus (XVII I 12 p. 797), is a different name for the same official. This is one of the ἀρχαί, or magistracies, at Alexandria. Strabo's *nycterinos strategus* appears as a more important official than the *nyctostrategos* of the papyri, but it is difficult to establish if this is the same official.

There is no reason to think the *nyctostrategoi* existed anywhere except for the Greek poleis, and before the third century they appear only in Antinoupolis. The first occurrence is *P.Fam.Tebt.* 41, which speaks of a *nyctostrategos* who receives a position in the city for policing the Tetrastylus of Antinous.³¹

The next occurrence of the term is *Stud.Pal.* V 103, a third century papyrus from Hermoupolis,³² and due to the relationship of this city with Antinoupolis, it can be presumed that this office has an Antinopolitan origin. At the end of the third century the *nyctostrategoi* appeared also in Panopolis (*P.Panop.Beatty.* 1, lines 195, 213 and 342).

magistrate of the city of Hermoupolis and *riparius* of the Hermoupolite nome'.

²⁸ See Geremek 1981, 231 and Worp 1999, 124-32.

²⁹ Lallemand 1964, 164; Oertel 1917, 286.

³⁰ Outside Egypt, the *nyctostrategoi* are attested in Caria (Robert 1937, 323; *IGR* IV 860): στρατηγήσαντα διὰ νυκτὸς νομίμως 'watching during the night according to custom'. Hirschfeld 1891, 868; Levi 1899, 283 n. 6. *BCH* 1928: 408 n. 3: Dedication to Trajan (AD 116-7); *BCH* 1885: 346-348, *Epigraphical Journey* 1888: 25; Robert 1937, 339-40. In the imperial legislation: *Dig.* 50, 4, 18, 12.

³¹ Thomas (1969, 348) sees in *P.Fam.Tebt.* VI 41 a private agreement for the performance of the ὀφίλιον by a substitute.

³² Thomas (1969, 349) dates it to the third century AD; Wilcken (1923, 102 n. 3) places it in the second. In the second column l. 6, the name of an Antinoite deme can be read. Since Antinoians were exempt from undertaking liturgies until the mid-third century (Lewis 1964, 73-75), then this papyrus must be dated to the third century.

It is a difficult question if the *nyctostrategos* only supervised the guards or served himself and stood as watch. In the centre of this discussion there is a third century papyrus, *P.Oxy.* VI 933, a letter from Diogenes to Apollinarius: I. 23 ἐποίησα δὲ καὶ τὸν νυκτοστράτηγον φύλακα κοιμᾶσθαι πρὸς τῇ οἰκίᾳ 'I made the night-strategus sleep on guard at the house'. Sijpesteijn assumes with Grenfell and Hunt that the *nyctostrategos* in this papyrus himself served, but Wilcken³³ felt strongly that personal service was impossible. *P.Fam.Tebt.* VI 41 speaks of a *nyctostrategos* who receives a position in the city for policing the Tetrastylus of Antinous. It is thus not odd that a *nyctostrategos* had to do the service personally. In his oath of undertaking the duty the *nyctostrategos* in this papyrus says: φυλάξω διὰ νυκτὸς ἀμέμπτως 'I will watch during the night irreproachably'. That means that he will do the job himself, and not through guards.

In other third century papyri, the *nyctostrategoi* helped in the search for wanted men throughout the city (*P.Oxy.* L 3571), and received a petition concerning a case of insolence in a slave (*P.Oxy.Hels* 26). Their competence governs the city and the crimes happening within it.

The testimony for the fourth century gives a more complete view of their functions. They may have acted in colleges, like the nome *riparii*, who acted in pairs, although we do not know the number of *nyctostrategoi* who formed these colleges. They were assigned to the whole city, but later on in the sixth century, are in charge of only parts of it (ἄμφοδα or μέρη). They were in charge of the παραφυλακὴ τῆς πόλεως 'policing of the city' (*P.Oxy.* VII 1033), and in this regard, received petitions concerning cases of assault (*P.Oxy.* LI 3620; *P.Lips.* 39) and theft (*P.Stras.* VIII 713; *P.Herm.* 52 and 53) in the city. They also had the duty of arresting suspects (*P.Oxy.* VII 1033: περὶ τῆς παραστάσεως τῶν ζητουμένων προσώπων 'the arrest of the searched-for persons').³⁴ In addition there is a forensic report from a physician sent to a *nyctostrategos* (*P.Lips.* 42). As previously stated, they were the immediate subordinates to the nome officials, first the *strategus* (*P.Panop.Beatty* 1 (AD 298), ll. 195, 213, 342), then to the ἐποπιτεῖς εἰρενεῖς (*P.Münch.* III 1 69), and then the *riparii*, after their appearance around 340. *P.Oxy.* VII 1033 illustrates this hierarchy: the *nyctostrategoi* of Oxyrhynchus complain to the nome *riparii* about the danger of their duty and request proper assistance: τὴν βοήθειαν εἶτ' οὖν τοὺς δημοσίους καὶ τοὺς ἐφοδεύτας πολλάκις... 'the assistance, either *demosioi* and *ephodeutai*...'. They probably selected their assistants (*P.Lips.* 65-66), which also included the φύλαξ

³³ Sijpesteijn 1968, 131; Grenfell and Hunt 1908, 299-300; Wilcken 1909, 271.

³⁴ To date, there are no orders to arrest addressed to the *nyctostrategos*. In the fourth century they were addressed to the *comarchs* (*P.Oxy.* I 64 and 65, *P.Cair.Isid.* 129 and 130), *archephodos* (*P.Mich.* X 590), *eirenarch* (*P.Oxy.* XII 1506 and 1505), *demosios* (*P.Cair.Isid.* 129 and 130) and *epistates eirenes* (*P.Mich.Mchl.* 6, *P.Oxy.* I 64).

(*phylax*) and the νυκτοφύλαξ (*nyctophylax*), guard and night-guard.

5. The village chief of police

The *eirenarchs*, who appear at the beginning of the fourth century as village officials (*P.Oxy.* XXXI 2562/ LIV 3767 (AD 329-330)) or perhaps even *pagus* officials (*P.Sakaon* 45 / *P.Thead.* 24 and 25, (both AD 334)), are recorded until the seventh century (the last dated evidence we have is AD 613: *P.Oxy.* XVI 1979). This office was abolished by a *constitutio* of AD 409 (*CodTheod* XII 14, 1), but this did not apply to Egypt.³⁵ They replaced the village ἀρχεφωδος (*archephodos*),³⁶ who had almost disappeared by then, according to Jouguet, perhaps as a consequence of the creation of the village *eirenarchs*.³⁷ This replacement did not happen suddenly: the *archephodos* still existed in Philadelphia in 359, while in the village of Hermoupolis (ἐν κώμῃ Ἑρμοῦ πόλι) he had been replaced by the *eirenarch* in AD 346 (*P.Gen.* I 47), in AD 350 in Ibiou (*P.Amh.* II 139), and about the same date in Karanis (*P.Gen.* I 54), and so on. There was perhaps a transitional period, during which the ἐπιστάτης εἰρήνης (*epistates eirenes*), supervisor of peace, replaced the *archephodos*,³⁸ with very few pieces of evidence for this.³⁹ The *epistates eirenes* did not appear at the same time as the *eirenarch*, as Hohlwein suggests, but before, and disappeared as soon as the *eirenarch* appeared. The status of the *eirenarch* was undoubtedly reduced by the end of the third or beginning of the fourth century, though Hunt (ad *P.Oxy.* XVII 2107) does not agree.⁴⁰ This may have happened at the same time as the new reorganisation of the nome into *pagi*.

The village *eirenarchs* were subordinate first to the *strategus* of the nome, before 310: illustrated by *P.Turner* 46 (early fourth century), an order to arrest from the *strategus* to the *eirenarch* and the *demosioi*. When the *exactor* replaces the *strategus* in some of his duties, we find orders like *P.Stras.* V 309, from the *exactor* to the *eirenarch* of Soknopaios. Later, in the mid-fourth century they are subordinate to the nome *riparius* (*P.Oxy.* XIX 2233 (AD 350); *P.Lond.* V 1649 (AD 373)) and to the *praepositus pagi*, head of the *pagus*, who appeared at the beginning of the century (AD 310): *P.VindSijp* 5 (AD 340); *P.Oxy.* XII 1506 (fourth century), an order to arrest; and *SB* V 8753/*P.Stras.* III 149, a report from the *comarchs*

and the *eirenarch* of Sesoncha, to the *praepositus pagi*, swearing that some wanted men are not in their village.⁴¹

The *eirenarchs* were organised in guilds, under the κεφαλαιωτῆς εἰρηναρχῶν, the chief *eirenarch*,⁴² and were appointed by the *praepositus pagi* after the nomination made by the *comarchs*: *P.Amh.* II 139 (AD 350) is the return of two *comarchs* of the village of Ibiou to the *praepositus* of the XII *pagus*; it is the appointment of an *eirenarch*.

It seems that their most common function was the arrest of suspected criminals,⁴³ as it had been the principal duty of the *archephodos* in the second and third centuries. They are also in charge of requisitions (*BGU* III 899 (fourth century): a donkey). Inspection of crime scenes is another duty recorded (*P.Sakaon* 45/*P.Thead.* 24 (AD 334)). In addition, they were in charge of the recruiting for liturgies concerning policing (*P.Lond.* V 1649 (AD 373): addressed to the nome *riparii*). In *P.Col.* VIII 242, they are described assisting the tax collector.⁴⁴ In *P.Oxy.* LXIII 4369 (AD 345), they are in charge of the transport of money to Alexandria. They were paid locally (*SB* VI 9563 (fourth century)).

They are assisted in their duties by the ληστοπιαστής (*lestopiastes*), or criminal-hunter,⁴⁵ and the φύλακες (*phylakes*). The *lestopiastes* was probably subordinated to the village chief of police. Very few papyri illustrate the existence of these officials. They first appeared in the late second century and disappeared in the fourth.⁴⁶ They are attested in the Arsinoite, Hermoupolite and Oxyrhynchite nomes. They were nominated for the liturgy and, when necessary, they were mobilised,⁴⁷ as in *BGU* I 325, where the threats of the *strategus* show that the peasants were not willing to fulfil this duty of bringing criminals to justice, probably to the metropolis. It seems clear from this papyrus that they do not belong to the village *demosioi*, or village officials (παραγγέλεται τοῖς ὑπογεγραμμένοις ληστοπιασταῖς προσελθεῖν τοῖς τῆς κώμης δημοσίοις 'the below-listed *lestopiastai* are required to assist the *demosioi* of the village'. Jouguet saw them as intermediaries between the village *demosioi* and the *strategus*, and subordinated to the latter, as in the Berlin

³⁵ On the circumstances of this *constitutio*, Lewin 1993, 381-82. For *eirenarchs* outside Egypt in the rest of the Empire, see Hirschfeld 1891, 868-72.

³⁶ On the *archephodoi*, see Lewis 1997, 15; Browne 1970, 51; Jouguet 1911a, 397, 408, 465; Milne 1924, 139; Drecoll 1997, 158-63.

³⁷ Jouguet 1911b, 110. As Hohlwein (1907, 207) noted, *BGU* III 909 (AD 359) mentions an *archephodos* in Philadelphia, while *BGU* III 899 attests the existence of an *eirenarch* in the same village for the fourth century.

³⁸ Lewis 1997, 22: the first peace keeping official to appear in the villages was the ὁ ἐπὶ τῆς εἰρήνης (*epi tes eirenes*) in the second and third centuries. Geraci (1987, 244-45) thinks the *epistates eirenes* and the ἐπιτεσ εἰρενεσ are the same official.

³⁹ *P.Oxy.* I 64 (AD 256); XLII 3035; XLIV 3184; XII 1507; *SB* XII 11108.

⁴⁰ Hohlwein 1907, 206-07; Oertel 1917, 279-80; Hunt 1927, 185; ad *P.Oxy.* XVII 2107.

⁴¹ On the police functions of the *praepositus pagi*, Lewis 1948, 54-57. More orders to arrest: *SB* XX 15094, 15095, fourth century from Hermoupolis (Worp 1990, 207-10).

⁴² *P.Oxy.* XIX 2233 (AD 350); XIX 2229 (AD 346-50); LIV 3769 (AD 334); L 3576 (AD 341); LXIII 4369 (AD 345).

⁴³ *P.Abinn.* 54 (AD 346); *P.Oxy.* XII 1505, 1506, *SB* V 8753; *P.Köln.* IV 189, (all fourth century).

⁴⁴ Rea 1994, 266-72.

⁴⁵ *P.Cair.* *Isid.* 79 (fourth century); *P.Cair.* *Preis.* 6 l. 9 (fourth century); *Stud.Pal.* XX 76 (after 308).

⁴⁶ They are perhaps replacing the ἐπιτρέχοντες (*epitrechontes*), who had a similar office until the end of the second century (*P.Fay.* 107 (AD 133); *P.Berl.* *Leih.* I 6 (AD 166/7); *P.Berl.* *Leih.* II 42B (second century AD); *P.Lond.* II 179 (second century AD); *P.Oxy.* XVII 2121 (AD 209/10); *SB* XIV 12136 (AD II-III)). The ἐπιδρομή τῆς μητροπόλεως, the office of the *epitrechontes* of the metropolis, is only attested in *P.Fay.* 23 (second century). See Oertel 1917, 270, and 277-78; Youtie 1977, 293-95.

⁴⁷ Hohlwein 1902, 162.

papyrus and in *P.Flor.* I 2, where they act as couriers and bring the nominations for liturgies made by the *comarchs* to the strategus. Oertel and also Lallemand saw them as subordinate to the village officials.⁴⁸

The village *eirenarchs* are also found in other roles; one, for example, as the president of a local *synodos*, employed artists for a local festival (*P.Mil.* II 47). But their principal function was the arrest and delivery of the accused and prisoners (*P.Cair.Preis.* 6; *P.Oslo.* II 20; *BGU* I 325; *SB* I 2267).

6. Fifth century city officials

The city *riparii* first appear exceptionally in the fourth century⁴⁹ and later, in the fifth century, when the nome *riparii* disappear, only the city *riparii* and the village *riparii* are attested. They can be found in the papyri until the eighth century, although we find them from the end of the sixth century appearing only in Arsinoe.⁵⁰

The city *riparii* have the duties that the nome *riparii* had in the fourth century: they receive petitions concerning different problems happening in the villages.⁵¹ They are required for inspections of crime scenes and victims, sometimes in collaboration with other officials, like the *ταβουλάριος* (*tabularius*), secretary, in *P.Oxy.* XVI 1885. But the city *riparii* are also in charge of the policing of the city (*P.Oxy.* VI 904), which was the duty of the *nyctostrategoï* in the fourth century, who nearly disappear from the fifth century papyri.⁵²

The city *riparii* were subordinate to the *praeses*, or governor of the province (*P.Oxy.* VI 904). This new situation can be compared to the former one in *P.Oxy.* VII 1033, where the *nyctostrategoï*, in charge of the surveillance of the city, complain to the nome *riparii*. Now it is the city *riparius*, in charge of the surveillance of the city too, who complains to his superior, the *praeses* of the Thebaid. There has been a change in the hierarchical structure.

In the fifth century, the *nyctostrategoï* are still in evidence as city officials. We have nevertheless very few papyri: a deed of surety addressed to a *nyctostrategos* (*SB* XIV 1434) a fragment of a letter (*SB* XVIII 13115) and a citation (Berlin inv. 21824⁵³). In the sixth century however, they reappear with the responsibility not for the whole city,

but of parts of it: *SB* X 10287 νοτίου μέρους 'southern quarter'; *BGU* XII 2201AD 565: Κωλλαινίου μέρους 'Kollainios' quarter'.⁵⁴ They appear almost exclusively in Hermoupolis.

7. The sixth century

It is difficult to establish the hierarchy of policing officials for the sixth century. The evidence for police activity diminishes, and the officials do not seem to have the continuity from the situation we have in the previous centuries.

Village policing was still the duty of the *eirenarch*, in spite of the imperial legislation (see above § 5). He reported to the head of the *pagarchy*, *pagarch*⁵⁵ and *comes*, like in *P.Lond.* III 1309 (sixth and seventh centuries); *P.Alex.* inv. 407 (sixth century),⁵⁶ and to the *riparius*, like in *PSI* I 47 (sixth century). The last-named is an order to arrest to the *protometai*, village officials, and the *eirenarchs* of the village of Tholthis, which points to a subordination to a village *riparius*, or perhaps a city *riparius*, something which cannot be discerned from the text of this papyrus. The rest of the documents do not mention any police functions, only payments (*P.Lond.* V 1687, *BGU* XII 2198), deeds of surety (*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67328), leases (*P.Flor.* III 281) or private letters (*P.Oxy.* XVI 1854) with no useful details.

Riparii are also attested holding this village office. They appear already in the fifth century: the first secure mention is in *P.Mich.* XIV 683, which cannot be precisely dated, a receipt addressed to the *riparius* and *meizon* of the village of Thallu of the Hermoupolite nome. We have a large number of testimonies from the village *riparius* of Aphrodito in the Antaioupolite nome, which had an exceptional regime: it was downgraded from city to village in the sixth century.⁵⁷ This may explain why their duties are more similar to those of the city *riparius* than to the village chief of police. The village *riparii* are attested also in the Oxyrhynchite nome (*PSI* I 47 (sixth century); *P.Oxy.* VIII 1147 (sixth century)). They were probably nominated by the *κοινόν*, or council, of the village, and appointed by the *praeses* or governor of the province (*P.Cair.Masp.* III 67281). Their status must have been quite high, as we find for example in *P.Oxy.* LVIII 3949 (AD 610) a combination of *riparius* and curator and assistant of the baths: τῷ αἰδεσίμῳ Ἐνώχ ῥιπαρίῳ λογιστῆ καὶ βοηθῷ τοῦ

⁴⁸ Jouguet 1911a, 264; Oertel 1917, 270; Lallemand 1964, 166.

⁴⁹ P.Lips. 49 (AD 372) for the city of Hypselis, *Chr.Wilck.* 469 (AD 369): ῥιπαρίους κατὰ πόλιν 'to the *riparii* of each city'. *P.Stras.* VIII 749 (AD 380) Hermoupolis: the *riparii* in this papyrus could be city *riparii*.

⁵⁰ Seventh century: *CPR* XIV 32 (AD 655), *SB* I 4666 (AD 659). Eighth century: *P.Ross.Georg.* 23.

⁵¹ Theft (*P.Köln.* V 234, *P.Mil.* II 45, *P.Gron.Amst.* 1, Worp 1996, 235-42); murder (*SB* XVIII 13596 and *P.Bon.* 22 / *SB* XVIII 13127); lease of land (*P.Flor.* III 281 (AD 517)).

⁵² We only have three instances in the fifth century, although we have more evidence for the sixth century.

⁵³ I thank Professor Maehler for letting me see the draft of his unpublished edition of this papyrus.

⁵⁴ Or Κωλλαινίου μέρους, as Gascou 1983, 227, who connects this name of a quarter of Hermoupolis with the colour blue of the hippodrome, cf. *P.Stras.* 287, 1 Hermoupolis (sixth century). See Sijpesteijn 1978, 233-34.

⁵⁵ On the *pagarch*, Liebeschuetz 1973, 38-46, esp. 44; Liebeschuetz 1974, 163-68.

⁵⁶ And later *P.Lond.* III 1074 (p. lvi) (seventh to eighth centuries; Sijpesteijn 1988, 73-74), an order to arrest from the *illustris* to the *eirenarchs*, if *illustris* can be interpreted as *comes* and *pagarch* (see Hornickel 1930, 17).

⁵⁷ *P.Cair.Masp.* III 67328 (AD 521); *P.Lond.* V 1687 (AD 523); *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67091 (AD 528), III 67296 (AD 535), III 67297 (AD 535), and II 67252 (AD 538); *P.Flor.* III 284 (AD 538); *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67092 and 67093, (both AD 553), and III 67281 (sixth century).

ΛΟΥΤΡΟΥ 'to Enoch, revered *riparius*, *logistes* and assistant of the baths'.

The documents involving the village *riparii* are mostly deeds of surety, and some petitions concerning theft (*P.Cair.Masp.* I 67091) or marriage legal problems (*id.* I 67092). They disappear in the seventh century, having been replaced perhaps by private officials in villages and large estates.

In the policing of the city, the *nyctostrategoi* were no longer responsible for the whole city, and now acted only in parts of it (*SB* X 10287 (AD 504); *BGU* XII 2201 (AD 565)). The city officials seem to be subordinate to the *defensor civitatis* or ἑκδικος / σύνδικος, defender of the city.⁵⁸ The *defensor* had judicial attributions and now, in addition, the supervision of the police activities.⁵⁹ From the time of Justinian, the *defensor* has, for example, the power to decide or authorise arrests and imprisonment.⁶⁰ Only a few papyri attest their police functions: *P.Mich.* XVIII 794 (late fifth century) or *P.Oxy.* XVI 1885 (AD 509), in which the *defensor* has the authority to give orders to the *tabularius* and the city *riparius* to inspect a victim. Other documents which involve police activities of the *defensor* are *BGU* II 401 (sixth century), a deed of surety, and *Stud.Pal.* X 252 (sixth century)⁶¹, a list of prisoners including their crimes and who captured them, namely the *antigeouchos*, or agent of the landlord, the *riparius* and the *ekdikos* or *defensor*.

8. Private police

By the sixth century the lack of a strong central government led to many quarrels, especially over water rights. As a result of the progressive importance and power acquired by the large estate owners from the fourth century onwards, combined with the state's loss of power, a series of changes in the administration of Egypt followed. Both prisons and police agents come under the supervision of the estate owners,⁶² in spite of legislation against this kind of practice.⁶³ This has been understood as a sort of contract between the state and the rich landowners,⁶⁴ through which the landowners were economically in charge of such necessary social functions and in return received more political power.

⁵⁸ Frakes 1994, 337-48; Kramer 1990, 305-29. They already receive petitions concerning crimes in the fourth century: for example *P.Kell.* 121 (AD 321).

⁵⁹ On police duties of the *defensor*, Rouillard 1928, 163; von Druffel 1970, 37-38.

⁶⁰ See *Cod.Just.* IX 4, 6; *Nov.Just.* 15, 6; Gascou 1985, 26; Bonini 1968, 195 n. 67; Lovato 1994, 226.

⁶¹ Wilcken 1909, 450.

⁶² *P.Lond.* III 1012, 1037, V 1765, 1769; *P.Cair.Masp.* II 67151; Johnson and West 1949, 98; Hardy 1931, 71; Torallas Tovar 1999, 50-53.

⁶³ A constitution in AD 468 banned the maintenance of *buccellarii*: *Cod.Just.* 12, 10: *omnibus per civitates et agros habendi bucellarios vel Isauros armatosque servos licentiam volumus esse praeclusam*, 'We want to abolish the permission for having *buccellarii*, *Isaurii* or armed slaves both in the cities and in the fields'. Also in Justinian's *Nov.Just.* 30, 7.

⁶⁴ Rémondon 1959, 91; Gascou 1985, 26-27, 44; Lewin 1993, 383.

The private *riparii* are to be found in the large estates like that of the Apions (*P.Oxy.* XVI 1853, LVIII 3942 (AD 606); *Stud.Pal.* III 86 (sixth century)) or Ammonius in Hermoupolis, the house of Theon (*P.Oxy.* XVI 2039), the ninth house at Heracleopolis (*CPR* I 30, l. 52 (sixth century)), and the house of Flavia Praejecta (*P.Erl.* 9, no. 67 (AD 590)). In the large estates, the landowners were in charge of the recruitment and maintenance of the *riparii*, under the supervision and official appointment of the provincial governor, as shown by *P.Flor.* III 304 (sixth century).⁶⁵

P.Cair.Masp. III 67281, another sixth century papyrus, concerns the recruitment of Apollo, son of Isaac to be *riparius* of Aphrodito. The council sends the nomination to the provincial governor who then appoints the official. The formulary of the above mentioned Florentine papyrus (*P.Flor.* III 304) is very similar to this text, although the nomination does not come from an official body, as in Aphrodito, but from the administration of a large estate. It is a private nomination, but supervised by the state.

Thus, it seems as if cooperation existed between the state and the private landowners, designed to solve the problem of security. The state could no longer afford by itself a strong force able to keep peace and order. Large estates contributed by maintaining a force of *riparii*, mostly in rural areas. *P.Oxy.* XVI 2039⁶⁶ is a calendar of the assignation of a *munus* or compulsory service: the maintenance of the *riparii*. The landowners share this obligation inherited from the landowner Theon. The *oikos* of Theon would contribute during 65 years in seven indictional cycles.⁶⁷

But this arrangement seems to apply also to other hierarchies of the police forces: *P.Bodl.* I 53 is an agreement from Arsinoe (AD 605), by which two *eirenarchs*, and three *phylakes* undertake the duties of policing the large estate of Flavius Strategius. The latter was also a *pagarch*, a fact which has been used to explain the responsibilities acquired by these landowners for the recruitment of *riparii* and the maintenance of the prisons. The Bodleian papyrus perhaps points to the existence of an organized police force with hierarchised organization in the dependencies of the private mansions. In the same situation, there are the *buccellarii*, who were originally soldiers, but in Egypt they appear as private security agents employed by the large estate owners.⁶⁸ Gascou explains their situation as a municipal need.⁶⁹ Their police functions can be seen for example in *P.Oxy.* XXVII 2480 (AD 566),

⁶⁵ Gascou 1985, 5; Rémondon 1974a, 372; Rémondon 1974b, 22-24.

⁶⁶ Rémondon 1959, 91; Bonneau 1970, 56, n. 96; Gascou 1985, 43-45.

⁶⁷ Other papyri are *P.Oxy.* XVI 1888, 3 (Gascou 1985, 47, n. 269), *CPR* I 30, 52 (Gascou 1985, 56 n. 321). See also Johnson & West 1949, 331.

⁶⁸ On the *buccellarii*, see Gascou 1976, 143-56; Maspero 1912, 66-68; Liebeschuetz 1986, 468-70; Rémondon 1974b, 24-29; Schmidt 1994, 147-74.

⁶⁹ Gascou 1976, 147-48, 150, on *P.Oxy.* I 156: ὅτι χρειαίον ἔχομεν βουκελλάρων 'that we need *buccellarii*'.

ll. 35, 55, 64, which describes their supervision of order in the hippodrome during a local festival.

The preceding discussion has surveyed the evolution of the police from the fourth to the seventh centuries within the frame of the Imperial administration. The evidence from the papyri is in many points very scarce, although further information might be gleaned from other sources, such as

epigraphy or Imperial legislation. The chart below (Fig. 1) summarizes changes in the policing hierarchy over time and across administrative levels:

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CENTURY	NOME	PAGUS	CITY	VILLAGE	PRIVATE
IV	strategus eirenarch	praepositus pagi		archepodos epistates eirenes eirenarch	
	epoptes eirenes riparius	eirenarch?	nyctostrategus		
V			riparius		
VI		pagarch?	defensor civitatis	riparius	riparius eirenarch? buccellarius

Figure 1. Police officials in Byzantine Egypt

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