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POLICING THE *CHÔRA*: LAW ENFORCEMENT IN PTOLEMAIC EGYPT

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
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In this dissertation I draw on a large body of evidence for the cultural, social and economic interactions between state and peasant to argue not only that Ptolemaic police officials enjoyed great autonomy, but also that government assistance was readily available to even the lowest levels of society when crimes were committed. Throughout the nearly 300 years of Ptolemaic rule, victims of crime in all areas of the Egyptian countryside called upon local police officials to tend to their needs. The police system that served them was efficient, effective and largely independent of central government controls.

In the Introduction (chapter 1) I lay the groundwork for the discussion that follows. In the second chapter I provide a broad overview of police powers, administrative domains and interactions between officials, focusing on three definable subsets: professional police officers (*phylakitai*), security forces (*phylakes*, *etc.*) and a handful of other officials who took part in police business. Next (chapter 3), I address the user interface aspect of policing in Ptolemaic Egypt, drawing on the evidence from petitions to law enforcement. The Ptolemaic criminal justice system provided peasants with a good deal of personal empowerment.

That the system worked and to great effect is demonstrated in chapter 4, which analyzes the most commonly attested police activities: the arrest, detention and examination of criminals. All three steps in the process demonstrate that Ptolemaic police officials were invested with considerable autonomy. In the next chapter (5) I focus on the roles of police in maintaining security and acting as “muscle” for the collection of tax arrears. The Ptolemaic

police were closely supervised when it came to the protection of the state's economic and agricultural interests. In the final chapter (6) I consider breakdowns in the law enforcement machine. It appears that police officers sometimes employed their powers for nefarious purposes. Yet the evidence for misbehavior is suspect. This calls into question the applicability of modern notions of "police brutality" and "corruption" to Ptolemaic Egypt.

To John Oates and Josh Sosin for papyri and police, respectively.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In our day-to-day lives we take for granted the existence of a police force to provide protection and assistance. The reporting of crimes, accidents and suspicious individuals is a phone call away. Uniformed police officers patrol the streets of our towns and cities on foot, horseback, bicycle and four wheels, watching for speeders, muggers and other lawbreakers. Specialized law enforcement squads perform a number of police operations, from drug busts to undercover surveillance, from crime scene investigations to autopsies. Every town has a police station and a sheriff. Some have jails. Communication between police is immediate and operations are coordinated swiftly and effectively. Identification of suspects is aided by computerized records that provide users with physical and personal data on millions of criminals. Corruption sometimes rears its ugly head, but when it does public outcry is usually loud and punishment swift.

Things were different in classical antiquity. Ancient states provided few of the law enforcement protections that we take for granted today.¹ Towns and villages in antiquity had no standing police and provided for their own protection by assembling armies when menaced by outside threats. Certain types of criminal offences, from assault to property damage, from theft to murder, were subject to punishment by state legal machinery. But in most cases it was not

¹ On law and order in Mesopotamia see (*e.g.*) Greengus (1995) 469-484; Postgate (1992) 275-291; Drapkin (1989) 15-33; and Speiser (1954) 8-15; in pharaonic Egypt (*e.g.*), Vernus (2003); Tyldesley (2000); Eyre (1984); Lorton (1977); Cerny (1973) 261-284; and Peet (1930) 15-27; in Greece (*e.g.*), Hunter (2000, 1994); Cohen (1995); and Fuks (1984); in Rome (*e.g.*), Krause (2004) 44-201; Kelly (2003); Lintott (1999); Bauman (1996); Nippel (1995); Drapkin (1989) 213-243; Davies (1977); Echols (1957-1958); and Wolff (1951) 22-48.

the responsibility of the state to round up suspects, assemble evidence and witnesses and see to it that justice was done. Rather, these tasks were entrusted to the prosecution, the victim, the party with the vested interest in procuring a favorable outcome. Satisfaction at law was possible, but a high degree of personal initiative and influence was necessary to ensure success. Organized police forces simply did not exist.

Except in Egypt. The Ptolemaic criminal justice system differed dramatically from those attested in every other ancient state. It protected towns and villages and guaranteed the inhabitants of the Egyptian countryside easy access to government redress. A wide variety of police officials patrolled the Ptolemaic *chôra*, supervising government infrastructure and tending to the day-to-day requirements of law enforcement. The police force was well-organized, communicated quickly and efficiently and was present at every geographic/administrative level, from the smallest villages to the nome *metropoleis*. Law enforcement officials sometimes followed direct orders from superiors but also regularly arrested criminals, confiscated goods and solved crimes on their own initiative. In this respect, the officers who policed the *chôra* made up the first real “police” system: an organization of officials who not only prevented wrongdoing but also stopped it when detected.

Recent scholarship on law enforcement and criminal justice in antiquity has focused on forms of social control primarily or wholly independent of state machinery.² For these scholars, social status, not institutions was the driving

² For a pair of recent treatments see Hunter (1994) on law enforcement at Athens and Nippel (1995) on policing at Rome.

force behind security and justice. The state was a passive presence that provided a handful of services upon request, but left most of the dirty work to citizens. But the Egyptian evidence reveals that such assessments tell only part of the story. In at least one ancient state institutions were of primary importance for maintaining law and order. With the *phylakitai* and others available to arrest and detain suspects, confiscate allegedly stolen goods, seal homes, examine crime scenes and other evidence, and interrogate witnesses, victims of crime in the Egyptian *chôra* were freed from the time- and resource-consuming necessity of performing the bulk of police work themselves. In this sense Ptolemaic Egypt was an exception to the rule.

That these officials often took personal initiative to tend to police business was also uncharacteristic of other ancient states. Criminals were regularly caught in the act by police officers on patrol and crimes prevented by the stationing of security guards. Police frequently appeared on the scene when violence erupted in Egyptian towns and saw to it that offenders were carted off to prisons and officials. According to the accepted model, states only gave attention to wrongdoing once offenders had been reined in and trials set by victims; and even then, the services they provided were primarily judicial and rarely police. The military men stationed in many ancient city-states could be employed for crowd control but were not autonomous officials capable of independent decision-making and effective civil policing. By contrast, Ptolemaic law enforcement officials performed a number of police functions both in response to requests from villagers and based upon their own judgment. These operations were very important for the maintenance of law and order in the Egyptian

countryside and represented the employment of personal initiative to its fullest extent.

Moreover, the Egyptian criminal justice system provided access to government redress to a full spectrum of victims: from the wealthiest Greek businessman to the poorest native Egyptian woman. Class, sex, race, ethnicity, age, economic status: on the surface, none of these was an insurmountable barrier to satisfaction at law in a Ptolemaic criminal court. The petitions demonstrate that anyone who had suffered an injustice was able to contact the neighborhood police force and seek help, and that people of all sorts regularly did. It also does not appear to have been the case that justice was regularly meted out differently to different groups. For the most part, victims were treated equally. To be sure, some degree of bias (racism, sexism, *etc.*) may occasionally have influenced the decisions of police officials who received petitions, and a certain degree of economic standing was necessary for the composition and conveyance of a letter to the police. But even the poorest Egyptians were not reluctant to write petitions demanding satisfaction at law, even if multiple appeals were sometimes required for success.

The petitions provide the clearest evidence that police were expected to take initiative to solve crimes. Petitioners knew what they wanted and told police officers precisely what to do in order to make it happen. For the most part, police followed their requests. But the petitions also reveal that Greeks and Egyptians who had suffered offenses took great personal initiative to obtain justice from law enforcement. If police did not witness an offense or were not informed of the details by someone else, it was the responsibility of the victim to file a report and

make a request for remediation. In addition, though a flexible police force was in place to tend to many of their needs, villagers were still actively involved in solving crimes and settling disputes. They gathered witnesses or listed their names in petitions to law enforcement, provided evidence to police and sometimes even hauled off accused criminals to officials or jails. The operation of the Ptolemaic criminal justice system was in effect defined by two fundamentally different concepts. It was driven by victims aware of the necessity of actively involving themselves in obtaining justice, but also was an autonomous organization that frequently took its own steps to solve crimes and resolve disputes. The combination yielded a system that was fast, flexible and to judge by the evidence, on the whole successful.

But exactly how did the system work? It seems impossible that both police and the people they served could have enjoyed the powers and protections promised by such an organization. Were both populations really so well off? On the one hand, police served as the first level of appeal in the settlements where they worked and provided a broad range of law enforcement services to villagers, often acting independently of higher authorities. For their part, victims of crime took great initiative in obtaining justice by appealing to police and making specific requests for remediation. Yet both of these groups ultimately relied upon a third entity for their empowerment: the central government. The administration in Alexandria was responsible for the unusual balance in power we see between police and the subject population. It was in the best interests of the Ptolemies to maintain both a sophisticated police force to tend to law and order in the countryside and a contented and peaceable workforce of villagers.

They achieved both of these aims by granting both groups a certain degree of empowerment: the police to serve and protect victims of crime in the *chôra*, the victims to appeal to police and request appropriate remediating measures.

The system worked because neither group was unchecked. A police force wholly independent of government controls would have rapidly degenerated into lawlessness, and a population given free reign to engage and instruct law enforcement would have severely taxed government time, resources and manpower. Instead, the Ptolemies created a dynamic balance between police and villagers. Police were held accountable for inappropriate behavior and operational mistakes and knew that reprimand would be fast and stern. The rulers of the kingdom encouraged their law enforcement officials to take considerable steps to solve crimes and settle disputes, but demanded that these officers work within a framework of reasonable behavior. Rough handling was sometimes tolerated, but only to a degree: peace and prosperity in the *chôra* was the goal, but not at all costs. For their part, villagers enjoyed relatively uncomplicated access to the police, but were aware that their claims and appeals could be dismissed if groundless, misdirected or otherwise defective. As many petitions demonstrate, sometimes these appeals were neglected (though usually only temporarily) if their contents were not considered sufficiently important to merit immediate attention. Police knew how to prioritize.

Indeed, the vast majority of police business was managed at the village level, with minimal interference from above. Police in Egyptian towns and villages received and processed complaints of crimes, generally without instruction or interference from higher authorities. They reported to their

immediate superiors when necessary and only occasionally sought the assistance of officials at higher administrative levels. Contact with the highest echelons of police power (the nome) was infrequent and initiated primarily in those cases where initial attempts at remediation had failed. For the most part, towns and villages were outfitted with the manpower and infrastructure to handle the daily business of law enforcement on their own. A broad range of officials (*phylakitai*, *phylakes* and the like) were hired in these same settlements to patrol them. Offenders, once apprehended, were placed in nearby jails. Most criminal trials probably took place in the offices of competent judicial officials or perhaps courtrooms. The criminal justice system was largely self-sufficient and unburdened by interventions from superiors.

For their part, the Ptolemies and the government administrators in Alexandria were content to allow the system to function on its own. By farming out control of law enforcement to towns and villages, the heads of state saved themselves, their officials and their criminal justice infrastructure a good deal of time and money. Greater involvement in the affairs of the countryside by Alexandria would doubtless have ensured a greater degree of accountability in Egyptian towns and villages and tighter control over daily procedure, but such increased interference was not a viable alternative to the system in place. The Ptolemies had more important things to worry about than petty theft and violence in the *chôra*. They let law enforcement handle such matters. The sophisticated police forces of the Egyptian countryside served effectively as tools of control and allowed the Ptolemies to give full attention to government business without having to endure constant complaining from villagers.

Yet to some degree the rulers of the kingdom prioritized the pacification of civilians. From the beginnings of Egyptian civilization the sovereigns were the ultimate authorities for law and order.³ The petitions, many of which were addressed to the sovereigns, demonstrate that the passage of time and changes in the ruling class did not alter this perception. These texts reveal that people trusted the government to give attention to their grievances. As far as we can tell, the majority of petitions were read and processed by police and other officials. The financial well-being of all Egypt depended in large part on the contentedness of villagers. The revenue production and transport that occupied so much state time and energy was only possible when producers and transporters were not victimized by criminals or preoccupied by personal quarrels. An efficient police system helped to ensure that things ran smoothly.

As we have said, the Ptolemaic police system was primarily a village phenomenon. Officers were hired in towns and villages to patrol these areas and tend to other law enforcement business, usually without interference from superiors at higher administrative levels. In reality, however, the independence enjoyed by the Ptolemaic police was not so absolute. In addition to protecting their jurisdictions, the police also helped to ensure that the state maintained tight control over certain aspects of daily life. Law enforcement officials not only solved crimes and caught crooks, but also provided security for financial infrastructure, acted as bailiffs at trials and furnished an armed presence at other government functions on a regular basis. When it came time for the harvest, the Ptolemaic police assisted in revenue gathering, transport, protection and

³ Tyldesley (2000) 16-33 provides a nice assessment of this conception.

extraction. For the performance of all of these duties law enforcement officials received instruction from (primarily) nome-level civil and financial officers. Though permitted to take great initiative at other times, when it was necessary to gather, ship and store grain, as well as extract public debt-payments from defaulters, the Ptolemaic police surrendered much of their autonomy. Alexandria called the shots.⁴

The occasional involvement of the Alexandrian administration in town and village law enforcement matters perhaps helps to explain the lack of evidence for corruption among the Ptolemaic police. One imagines that an organization operating as freely as the Ptolemaic law enforcement system did would be plagued by official abuses. Yet there are few indications that police corruption was a serious issue. The vast majority of officers seems to have been responsible and quick to follow orders. Villagers evidently trusted their police forces, if one is to judge from the hundreds of petitions these officials received. Reprimands to subordinates from police administrators are few, and government circulars and decrees concerning corruption are often too vague to provide firm conclusions about the extent or even types of police wrongdoing. Police were given broad autonomy to carry out police work, but were nevertheless subject to scrutiny from superiors. The same system by which they quickly and efficiently received and sent official correspondence could also be employed to report official misbehavior.

We see, then, that the Ptolemaic criminal justice system was in many ways characterized by contrasts. It shared many of the traits common to those on

⁴ It was also ultimately responsible for the payment of police: see chapter 2, pp30-33.

display in other ancient societies, where the personal initiative of victims was crucial for obtaining justice, but at the same time deployed a corps of standing police who took initiative to perform a broad range of law enforcement tasks. As was the case in other ancient states, the system guaranteed access and protections to those with the highest social standing. But it also provided the same services to the poorest of the poor, with little to no difference detectable in the quality or extent of assistance. The officials who composed the ranks of the *phylakitai* and *phylakes* in Egyptian towns and villages were empowered to tend to most of the daily business of law enforcement on their own, often without explicit instructions from superiors. But they were also ultimately government employees who could be (and regularly were) called upon to perform any of a number of tasks at the behest of the sovereigns and their administrators. In spite of these many compositional contradictions, the Ptolemaic criminal justice system appears to have functioned very well. The flexibility of the organization enabled it to serve a broad cross-section of the populace and fill many different functions.

This diverse and multifaceted institution has not attracted much attention. No synthesis of all the branches of the law enforcement system has ever been attempted, but a handful of studies have made starts. Of these perhaps the most important is Pieter Kool's dissertation (1954) on the Ptolemaic *phylakitai*, the primary police officers in the Egyptian *chôra*. Kool traces the history of these officials and their organization and furnishes a brief introduction to the subject of police in Greece and pharaonic Egypt.⁵ But the work is narrow in scope, focusing

⁵ See his introduction (1-4) for the latter.

on one branch of the criminal justice system to the exclusion of all other officials with police duties. It is also primarily a descriptive catalog of attested functions, not a history of the role(s) of law enforcement in daily life or social control under the Ptolemies.⁶ In addition, the publication of hundreds of new documents in the half-century since its appearance renders it badly out of date.

More recently, Andréas Hélmis (1986) examines the criminal court system and touches on a number of topics of interest to the present discussion, among these types of crimes in the *chôra*, crime rates and the operation of prisons and imprisonment in the Egyptian countryside. Scholarship on the Ptolemaic civil court system is extensive, but little attention has been paid to judicial process for criminal matters.⁷ Hélmis provides the criminal court system with a long-overdue assessment of its jurisdictions, procedures and officers, but does not provide a thorough discussion of how law enforcement officials worked with the criminal courts to bring offenders to justice. The processes by which offenders were apprehended, evidence gathered and crimes solved take a back seat to the acts that set the criminal justice system in motion and the acts which the system took to reprimand offenders. Hélmis is interested in crime and punishment, but not the surrounding institutions. His work is a fitting complement to, but not a substitute for the present study.

Aside from Kool and Hélmis, scholars have paid only scant attention to the Ptolemaic criminal justice system, though certain topics have received

⁶ See the review of Rees (1956) for a summary of the contents of the dissertation.

⁷ On the Ptolemaic judiciary see Wolff (2002; 1978; 1970); Allam (1991); Méléze-Modrzejewski (1984; 1977/1978; 1966); Pestman (1985); Peremans (1982/1983; 1973); Préaux (1963; 1954); and Seidl (1962).

somewhat more consideration. The *phylakes* and other private security contractors who worked in both public and private capacities in Ptolemaic Egypt have drawn some attention.⁸ But a synthesis of the security functions of *phylakitai*, *phylakes*, the Ptolemaic military and others has yet to appear. Many studies of the forms, language, writers and addressees of, requests in and responses to petitions exist.⁹ But scholars have tended to focus on petitions as a genre, not as legal documents that played crucial roles in helping police to solve crimes and victims to obtain justice. Royal decrees and notifications were sometimes aimed at police officers and their subordinates, as well. The scholarship on these documents is extensive.¹⁰ Yet no one has collected and evaluated the evidence for royal notifications to law enforcement officials. More surprisingly, an assessment of the truth content of royal *prostagmata* (that is, the degrees of reality they reflect) is lacking. Such an evaluation would provide an understanding of how the rulers of the kingdom received, interpreted and responded to reports of wrongdoing in the *chôra*, and whether or not the information presented in the decrees mirrored everyday life in the Egyptian countryside. A handful of scholars have focused on crime and criminals in Greco-Roman Egypt, in effect popularizing the papyri as a sourcebook for crime in everyday life in antiquity.¹¹ But in most cases, these studies are little more than descriptive catalogs of wrongdoing and wrongdoers, collections of juicy

⁸ See (e.g.) Hennig (2003); Cuvigny (1984); Frösén (1978); and Calderini (1924).

⁹ E.g.: Parca (1985); di Bitonto Kasser (1976, 1968, 1967); Hombert and Préaux (1942).

¹⁰ See, for example, the comments of Bagnall (1969), Lewis (1968) and Kunderewicz (1965) on *P.Hib.* II 198 (= *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 1-4, 11-16, 26, 77, 78 [?, 242-222 B.C.]), a decree outlining guidelines for police searches and investigations.

¹¹ Héliamis (1986), Davies (1973) and Baldwin (1963) provide good overviews of the material.

anecdotes with a few words on police procedure thrown in. They provide useful overviews of the perils of life in the *chôra* but little else. One final area has received a good deal of attention. The evidence for prisons and imprisonment in Ptolemaic Egypt is bountiful and has generated much discussion.¹² This perhaps reflects a more general trend. In the past few years the subject of the theory and practice of incarceration in antiquity has sparked great interest: one need only note two recent volumes to highlight this fascination.¹³

The documents that shed light on police, policing, crime and criminals in Ptolemaic Egypt consist in the main of papyri and ostraca. No fewer than 1700 texts provide information on the activities of law enforcement officials, the wrongdoers they pursued and the ins and outs of the criminal justice system. These include petitions from victims of crime, notifications from higher officials to police, records of court proceedings, royal proclamations and letters from prisoners. In addition to the papyri, a certain number of inscriptions, perhaps no more than 50, are relevant to the study of the subject. In most cases, however, the evidence from stones provides little more than prosopographical data. Aside from this, a handful of references in Polybius and Diodorus Siculus sheds a bit of light on the treatment of prisoners in Egypt and the composition of the royal court at Alexandria. But the historians are otherwise silent about the activities of police officials in the Egyptian *chôra*.

The papyri are invaluable for the insights they provide into the day-to-day business of law enforcement in the Egyptian countryside. They yield data

¹² Maffi (1999), Marcone (1999), Ambaglio (1987) and Taubenschlag (1959) are of note.

¹³ Tovar and Martin, eds. (2003) and Bertrand-Dagenbach, Chauvot, Matter and Salamito, eds. (1999).

unavailable for any other ancient state and make Ptolemaic (and later Roman) Egypt one of the best-known (and also best-documented) regions of the ancient world. But the papyri are not without their limitations. For one thing, these texts are mostly chance survivals that provide only a partial view of the people, institutions and phenomena they depict. They are often broken, smudged, riddled with holes or otherwise difficult to read and/or interpret. Some are parts of extensive archives that have survived in bulk due to the fastidiousness of their compilers. Such mass survivals weight the evidence in favor of particular time periods and particular regions. For example, thanks to the most famous archive of texts we are especially well informed about the activities of Zenon of Kaunos in the Arsinoite village of Philadelphia in the mid to late third century.¹⁴ But we know next to nothing about a man who must have been a police officer of some importance: Pleistarchos, police chief of the Pathyrite nome in 148 B.C., mentioned in only one text (*P.Lond.* VII 2188 [Philadelphia]).

Bias poses another problem. If the winners wrote the history books, it was the losers who wrote complaints to the police. And like the winners, the losers were not always interested in portraying the facts as accurately as possible. A large portion of the evidence for policing in Ptolemaic Egypt consists of petitions to law enforcement from alleged victims of crimes and abuses. Petitioners understood the importance of filling their accounts with grim details and painting their predicaments in bleak colors. They often stretched and sometimes broke the truth. There was clearly a belief among the inhabitants of the Egyptian *chôra* that reports of egregious wrongdoing received the fastest and most

¹⁴ See *Pap.Lugd.Bat.* XXI for an overview of the archive.

effective police responses. Consequently, very few petitioners mentioned minor slights without also tacking on additional, more serious offenses. Wrongdoing was routinely portrayed as one-sided; admissions of guilt are virtually non-existent. Petitions to law enforcement are one of the most important data sets for details on the operation of the Ptolemaic police, but also present some of the most serious interpretative problems.¹⁵

Petitions, however, do not monopolize interpretative difficulties. A number of royal decrees touch on matters of interest to police officials.¹⁶ On the surface, these documents seem to provide guidelines for police searches, instructions for criminal judicial procedure and penalties for misbehaving officials, among other things. But precisely how relevant were the decrees to the day-to-day functioning of the Ptolemaic police? Do they reflect law enforcement reality, or an imagined world of lawlessness conceived of by the rulers of the kingdom and their advisors and with few, if any, antecedents in the *chôra*?¹⁷ Did the sovereigns base their commandments on first-hand observations? on reports from court officials? from those further afield? As we shall see, there are indications that the decrees were primarily proscriptive, not reactive, and composed by the rulers of the kingdom and their legal scholars along generic lines. They doubtless contain a good deal of valuable information, but must be treated with caution.

¹⁵ For a more thorough discussion of petitions to police, as well as the difficulties inherent in their interpretation, see chapter 3 and chapter 6, pp180-181.

¹⁶ *E.g.*: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 34 (Oxyrhynchus, after 186 B.C.), which outlawed arbitrary imprisonment by police officials and others; 53 (Tebtynis, 118 B.C.), in which police officers were forgiven for making false tax returns; *P.Hib.* II 198 (= *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 1-4, 11-16, 26, 77, 78 [?, 242-222 B.C.]), a series of regulations for police searches and investigations.

¹⁷ A more thorough treatment of Ptolemaic decrees touching on law enforcement officials can be found in chapter 6, pp199-204.

Fortunately, not all of the source material is so problematic. But even documents as seemingly straightforward as land surveys and tax lists have limitations. Here the difficulties are primarily quantitative rather than qualitative. The information to be gleaned from tax records, receipts, land registers, accounts and other such sources is generally of primarily prosopographical value. We learn much about the wages, landholdings and tax payments of individual policemen but very little about policing. For the latter one must turn to official orders and reports to and from police. These texts provide solid evidence for the actual functions of law enforcement officials. But even these can be tricky. A nome-level police chief might command a village official to arrest an offender and seal his home, but the written order he composed likely did not preserve any indication that the subordinate followed his commands in full or even in part. A certain amount of faith in the documents and the degree of reality they reflect is necessary to arrive at even the most basic conclusions about police procedure.

Before we begin our investigation I should add a few words about what this book is not. For starters, this is not a book about policing in ancient Egypt, but specifically policing in Ptolemaic Egypt. The Ptolemaic period provides extensive documentation for the activities of police officials and the data exhibit minimal change over time. Our earliest evidence for police and policing appears in the middle of the third century, when the Ptolemaic state was in its prime and the machinery of government was still being developed. The documentation is rich and abundant up until the end, when Rome arrived and took control of Egypt. The Ptolemaic police system remained intact and essentially unchanged

for more than 300 years.¹⁸ By all indications, the reforms of Augustus reshaped the Egyptian police system he inherited into something fundamentally different: for example, under the Empire soldiers played more prominent roles in policing, serving both on patrols and as administrators.¹⁹ These favorable conditions press for a treatment of the Ptolemaic evidence separate from a consideration of the Pharaonic and Roman periods. We can see traces of rudimentary law enforcement structures under the Pharaohs.²⁰ There are indications that the Ptolemies may have inherited much, if not most of their police machinery from the previous rulers of the kingdom, but the evidence is thin and only suggestive.²¹ In the Roman period, evidence for law enforcement is plentiful. Recent scholarship has highlighted many aspects of police and policing in the province of Egypt.²²

It should also be stressed that this is only tangentially a book about individuals: police officials and criminals. Our primary focus is the operation of the police and the experiences of the offenders they pursued. In this work criminals are of interest for their interactions with police and the victims who complained about them, crimes when they were reported to or witnessed by law

¹⁸ At least one major change is visible: a shift in the judicial competencies of the *stratêgos* and the *epistatês phylakitôn* (chapter 2, pp43-46). One might also suggest that the employment of *phylakitai* as guards for grain shipments was a late development (chapter 2, pp28-29).

¹⁹ Under the Romans the centurion became the official of primary law enforcement competence: Baade (1956). Soldiers were given a more prominent role in day-to-day policing, as well: Alston (1995); Bagnall (1977). In addition, a number of police posts (*phylakes*) became liturgical: Lewis (1982).

²⁰ Vernus (2003) and Tyldesley (2000) provide the most recent treatments of the subject. Eyre (1984) focuses on adultery; Lorton (1977) considers the treatment of criminals. Cerny (1973) 261-284 and Peet (1930) 15-27 provide information on the tomb robberies of the twentieth dynasty (ca 1195-1080 B.C.).

²¹ See chapter 2, p. 33.

²² E.g.: Kelly (2003); Hennig (2002); Alston (1994); Aubert (1994); Hobson (1993); Bagnall (1977); Davies (1973); Baade (1956).

enforcement officials. I do not attempt to assess the evidence for crime rates, the socioeconomic status of criminals, the predominance of certain types of crime over others or Egyptian and/or Greek attitudes towards offenses and offenders. This is well-trodden ground.²³ Similarly, the discussion will only touch upon who police officials were (ethnicity, class, age, geographic distribution), what they gave to and received from their employers (rates and types of pay, tax contributions, allotments of land, crops sowed) and how they led their private lives. To some degree treatments of these topics have been provided by other scholars.²⁴ Again, our focus is institutions, not individuals. We are concerned with what police officials did, what types of government infrastructure they employed and how the process of catching criminals and bringing them to justice worked.

Finally, it must be stressed that this book is limited in its geographical scope. It is not a definitive treatment of police forces in all of the Ptolemaic empire, but rather that portion of Egypt outside the boundaries of Alexandria: the *chôra*. Our evidence for policing under the Ptolemies comes exclusively from the towns and villages of the Egyptian countryside. The documents provide a window into the mechanics of law enforcement and crime solving in the small, ethnically mixed settlements scattered throughout the fertile and desert regions of Egypt. We are uninformed as to how policing was carried out in the city. This is unfortunate for, but not crippling to a discussion of law enforcement in

²³ On crime and criminals in Greco-Roman Egypt see Hélmis (1986); Davies (1973); and Baldwin (1963); on violence, McGing (1997); Alston (1994); Bagnall (1989); Ambaglio (1987); Hélmis (1986); and Peremans (1978).

²⁴ See the discussion of previous scholarship on the Ptolemaic police above, pp10-13.

Ptolemaic Egypt. Alexandria was the center of the Ptolemaic government and the home of the royal court, but it was one city in a vast territory. In other ancient city-states, the majority of documentation for day-to-day life comes from the *poleis*, with little or no additional evidence from the countryside.²⁵ The reverse was true in Ptolemaic Egypt. The story of crime and punishment under the Ptolemies is told exclusively by the *chôra* but is no less rich and rewarding because of it.

Of all the tales from everyday life in the Egyptian countryside, it is perhaps those concerning the commission and reporting of crimes, the apprehension of suspects, the conducting of criminal investigations and the resolution of disputes that tell us the most about interactions between officials and the populations they supervised. Here as nowhere else the relationship between the (primarily) Egyptian villager and the (primarily) Greek governor is laid forth in bright, clear colors. The documents that shed the most light on this relationship (primarily petitions, but also a number of especially detailed reports of investigations and trials) reveal that interactions between police and citizens were often complicated. People were grateful for the fast attention police officers paid to their complaints of violence and theft, but resented the sometimes harsh treatment they received at the hands of these same officials at tax time. They appreciated the extra muscle and manpower provided by law enforcement for the investigation of reported crimes and the arrest of suspects, but likewise chafed at the necessity of performing annual liturgical work under the watchful eyes of police. They expected the police to show offenders little mercy but

²⁵ This is certainly the case with Athens, for example; see Whitehead (1986) 39-46.

reacted with indignation when they themselves committed crimes and were subsequently ill-treated.

The texts that illustrate this complex relationship between policeman and villager reveal down to the smallest detail what everyday life was like in an ancient state. The depictions are rich and fascinating. By following the events recounted in a petition to a police officer, the minutes of a court case or the report of a subordinate to a superior, one gains an appreciation for the vicissitudes of small-town life. Similar information is unavailable elsewhere in antiquity. We know much about how the Athenian court system functioned from the Attic orators. But their speeches, though remarkable, are polished literary texts and lack the immediacy of letters written to police officials moments after crimes were committed. The Roman satirists and epigrammatists give one a certain perspective on the seamier side of life at Rome. But their works are often filled with intentional and obvious exaggerations and hence are removed from an everyday authenticity. The relationships between officials and villagers that we see laid bare in the papyri are of an entirely different sort. They are vivid, visceral and real. The people who wrote about them were not commissioned poets or skilled declaimers but regular human beings who had suffered real injustices and officials asked to ease suffering by righting wrongs. At the most basic level, the evidence for law enforcement in Ptolemaic Egypt shows us humans (police) helping humans (victims). It is a picture still familiar to us today.

As stated above, the primary goal of this work is to map out the functions, interactions, successes and failings of the Ptolemaic police. We shall begin our examination of the criminal justice machine with a close study of the numerous officials who ran it. Chapter 2, “The Officer Corps: Police Administration and Hierarchy,” provides a broad overview of police powers, administrative domains and interactions between officials. The officers who manned police posts throughout the Egyptian backwater were both Greeks (generally at the higher levels) and Egyptians (generally at the lower ones) and were not only hired in Egyptian towns and villages (police and chiefs) but were also appointed by nome-level officials (mayors and commissioners). A corps of police officers proper, the *phylakitai*, handled the majority of routine police business, headed by police chiefs (*archiphylakitai*) who took orders from town and village mayors (*epistatai*) and nome-level commissioners (*epistatai phylakitôn*). A number of other government employees provided additional protection and police muscle, from security guards (*phylakes*) to paramilitary officers (*machimoi*, *machairophoroi*) to garrison commanders (*phrourarchoi*). The wide variety of officials with police powers in Ptolemaic Egypt made for a flexible and efficient law enforcement system.

Chapter 3, “Agents of Appeal: Petitions and Responses,” addresses the role of victims in the crime-solving process. Petitions to law enforcement officials provide a convenient test case. As countless petitions show, the Ptolemaic criminal justice system provided villagers with a good deal of personal empowerment. Alleged victims of crime complained about violence, theft, home invasions, shoddy workmanship and various other types of both public and

private mistreatment. They not only reported offenses to police officials, but also provided these same officers with instructions for the proper resolution of their cases, including requests for arrests, confiscations, detentions and trials. For their part, the law enforcement officials who received petitions seem generally to have followed the courses of action recommended by victims. The “wild west” of Ptolemaic Egypt did not leave the inhabitants of the countryside without options. The police system was a part of their daily lives and they knew how to use it.

That the system worked and to great effect is demonstrated in chapter 4, “Busting and Booking: Arrest, Detention, Resolution.” This chapter analyzes the most commonly attested police activities: the arrest and detention of criminals, the investigation of crimes and the resolution of disputes. All three steps in the process demonstrate that Ptolemaic police officials were invested with considerable autonomy. Though often required to perform these functions at the behest of other (usually higher) officers, police were usually empowered to tend to matters of law enforcement in Egyptian towns and villages without interference from higher levels of power. In this chapter special consideration is given to the phenomenon of prisons in Ptolemaic Egypt. Scholarly consensus suggests that non-payment of debt was the primary reason for incarceration in antiquity and that long-term detention of criminals did not take place. Yet the Egyptian evidence demonstrates that a wide variety of offenses, from assault to theft, from shoddy workmanship to disturbing the peace could lead to imprisonment, and that lengthy prison stays may have been a regular occurrence.

The next chapter (5), “The Strong Arm of the Law: Security and Muscle,” focuses on the roles of police in maintaining security, acting as “muscle” for the collection of tax arrears, preserving order at trials and auctions and a number of additional activities in which the Ptolemies had vested interests. Here we see the ties between police and fiscal officials, in particular during the annual *genêmatophylakia*, or guarding of crops. Law enforcement, specifically *archiphylakitai* and their *phylakitai*, had close interactions with a number of financial agents from whom they often received instruction on matters relating to the fiscal well-being of all Egypt. While the Ptolemaic police were invested with great autonomy for solving crimes, they were closely supervised when it came to the protection of the state’s economic and agricultural interests.

The final chapter (6), “To Serve and Protect? Police Corruption and Misbehavior,” considers the extent to which we can see breakdowns in the Ptolemaic law enforcement machine: corruption in the ranks of the Ptolemaic police. The discussion focuses on two types of alleged wrongdoing, abuses committed (primarily) against villagers and instances of insubordination. Police officers sometimes employed their considerable powers of arrest, imprisonment and confiscation for nefarious purposes. But the evidence for misbehavior and brutality, mainly petitions from victims of alleged abuse, is suspect. Police officers were often called upon to perform physically demanding, unpleasant tasks, many of which resulted in harm (physical or financial) to others. Behavior that seemed abusive to a victim may have seemed necessary to a cop. Such problems of interpretation abound in the evidence, calling into question the

validity of modern notions of “police brutality” and “corruption” when applied to Ptolemaic Egypt.

The Ptolemaic law enforcement system was a versatile and trusted institution, essential for the maintenance of peace and prosperity in the Egyptian *chôra*. Both the subject population and the sovereigns depended on police to punish offenders, assist victims and generally uphold the law. As we shall see, their trust was well-placed.

Chapter 2: The Officer Corps: Police Administration and Hierarchy

On the 9th of May, 137 B.C., the *phylakitai* of Rhodonos Nesos seized a farmer named Horion and sent him to Herakleopolis to stand trial before Komanos, the *epistatês phylakitôn*.¹ Shortly thereafter Agathinos, Philammon and other agents of Dionysios, *archiphylakitês* of Rhodonos Nesos appeared on the scene. They placed a seal on the house of a man named Ababikis, in which Horion and a certain Petesouchos (also a farmer) had been staying, and seized a number of items from the sealed home, among these two pillows and a pickled goose. After this they returned to Herakleopolis. The village scribe who composed an account of these activities charged that Agathinos, Philammon *et al.* had acted without official sanction and even without the knowledge of their superiors in making their assault upon the farmers of Rhodonos Nesos. He requested that the *archiphylakitês* detain Horion until his trial, transfer Agathinos and his co-conspirators to him (*i.e.* the scribe) for their own trials and return the stolen property. Unfortunately, we are uninformed as to what actions were ultimately taken to resolve matters.

The officers that made up the Ptolemaic police system performed a number of different functions in protecting the Egyptian *chôra*, from arresting and incarcerating offenders to seizing goods and property; from transporting defendants to tribunals to providing security for government business and infrastructure. The law enforcement officials who patrolled the Egyptian countryside came in a variety of shapes and sizes, but one can assign each of

¹ ZPE 141 (2002) 185-190 (Herakleopolite, 137 B.C.), two papyri containing the correspondence of a *kômogrammateus* to a *basilikos grammateus* and others concerning wrongdoing in the Herakleopolite nome.

them to one of two major subsets. The first group consisted of the *phylakitai*. Their ranks included the equivalent of modern beat cops (the *phylakitai* themselves), chiefs of police (*archiphylakitai*, *epistatai* and others) and police commissioners (*epistatai phylakitôn*). The *phylakitai* at all three levels of administration were the officials to whom the Egyptian populace most frequently turned for help when crimes had been committed against them. They arrested, transported and detained malefactors, investigated crime scenes, provided protection for state infrastructure and private individuals, confiscated property, sealed off the homes of those under investigation and worked in conjunction with a variety of government agents to ensure that justice was done. Of all the Ptolemaic law enforcement officials the *phylakitai* most closely resembled a modern police force.

Those officers who did not form part of the organization of the *phylakitai* but nevertheless had “police” duties of various sorts formed the second group. This collection of officials can be subdivided into two smaller groupings: the various sorts of *phylax* (*chômatophylakes*, *erêmophylakes*, *genêmatophylakes* etc.) one encounters in the documents and a variety of other officers (*chersephippoi*, *machairophoroi*, *rhabdophoroi* etc.) that occasionally had duties similar, if not identical to those of the *phylakitai* and *phylakes*. The men in both subsets functioned primarily as security guards, though certain of their number had powers comparable to those of the *phylakitai* and might be employed in conjunction with them. Most of these officials seem to have operated independently of the *phylakitai* and their superiors. But from time to time

paramilitary and security officers appear to have played key roles in policing the Egyptian countryside.

What follows is an overview of the officials in the two main subdivisions of the Ptolemaic police system outlined above. We shall consider first the *phylakitai*, then their superiors and finally the *phylakes* and other security forces with demonstrable police powers. Our goal here is to spell out hierarchy, administration and organization.² On the surface the Ptolemies appear to have distributed their police officers throughout the *chôra* according to a strict geographical scheme and to have fitted these same officials into a carefully articulated chain of command. Yet as we shall see, in reality the organization of the Ptolemaic police differed from place to place. The law enforcement system adapted to the needs of the towns and villages it served and the officials who protected those towns and villages. This flexibility made for a very successful police force.

Occupational adaptability is perhaps most observable among the ranks of the *phylakitai*, the primary police officials of Ptolemaic Egypt.³ The majority of police work under the Ptolemies concerned the palliation of victims, the apprehension of criminals and the meting out of sentences, activities in which the *phylakitai* regularly participated to varying degrees. Among the tasks most commonly assigned to a *phylakitês* was the arrest, detention or transport of an

² A more thorough discussion of specific duties is offered in chapters 3-6.

³ In addition to Kool (1954) see Thompson (1997) 965; *Chrest.Wilck.* I pp411-416; II p. 131; *P.Tebt.* I 5 pp46-47 n. on 159; p. 51 n. on 188; pp550-551; and *P.Hib.* II 198 pp97-104.

individual to an official (for trial) or jail (for detention).⁴ But *phylakitai* were not simply muscle: they were also very often the agents who performed investigations into crimes. In the course of his detective work a *phylakitês* might visit a crime scene, examine evidence, damage and witnesses at first hand and even seize property, along with those who had obtained it by illicit means.⁵

Phylakitai also played vital roles in a number of tasks that were not properly “police” duties, at least in the modern sense. For instance, they often served as security guards. *Phylakitai* provided an armed presence not only during the *genêmatophylakia*, the annual guarding of crops, but also on board ships (typically those involved with the transfer of grain) where they sometimes served as *epiplooi*.⁶ When filling this function *phylakitai* carried sealed samples of a shipment's contents on their persons.⁷ Though it does not seem to have been

⁴ E.g.: BGU VI 1248 (Syene, 137 B.C.?); P.Lille I 3 (after 241-240 B.C.?; after 216-215 B.C.?); P.Ryl. IV 570 (Philadelphia, III B.C.). For more on prisons, prisoners and prison officials see chapter 4.

⁵ Investigating crimes, e.g.: P.Petr. II 32 (198 B.C.); P.Tebt. III.2 733 (143-142 B.C.); SB XX 15001 (Krokodilopolis, 217 B.C.); visiting crime scenes, e.g.: P.Enteux. 65 (221 B.C.); PSI IV 393 (Philadelphia, 241 B.C.); SB XVIII 13160 (Myeris, 244 B.C.?; 219 B.C.?); examining evidence: P.Cair.Zen. III 59379 (?) (III B.C.); P.Enteux. 70 (221 B.C.); P.Petr. III 28 (III B.C.); seizing property, e.g.: P.Cair.Zen. IV 59620 (248-239 B.C.); P.Enteux. 28 (218 B.C.); UPZ I 5 (Memphis, after 163 B.C.). A series of third-century ordinances on police and brigandage preserved on one papyrus (P.Hib. II 198 = C.Ord.Ptol.² 1-4, 11-16, 26, 77, 78 [?, 242-222 B.C.]) suggests that there were government regulations in place for the time frames and procedures to be followed in investigations. Unfortunately, the document's poor state of preservation has obscured many of the relevant details. In one especially fragmentary segment the king seems to lay out regulations for the return of stolen items or their value (P.Hib. II 198.62-64). Elsewhere, guidelines are established for the arrest of thieves and fugitive rowers (86-92) as well as penalties for noncompliant *phylakitai* (85-86). For more on this text see chapter 4, pp110-111; chapter 5, p. 144; and chapter 6, pp203-204.

⁶ *Genêmatophylakia* / Agricultural protection, e.g.: BGU VIII 1851 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.); Chrest.Wilck. 331 (Tebtynis, 113 B.C.); P.Cair.Zen. I 59136 (256 B.C.); as *epiplooi*, guarding grain, e.g.: BGU XVIII.1 2736 (Herakleopolite, 87/6 B.C.); P.Ryl. IV 576 (? , 246-221 B.C.); P.Tebt. III.2 1035 (182-181 B.C.?; 158-157 B.C.?). On *epiplooi* see especially Gofas (1989) and Frösén (1978); also Sijpesteijn (1993) 128; Rostovtzeff (1903) 221 n. 3; P.Oxy.Hels. 20 commentary; and P.Petaus 55 introduction and the sources cited there.

⁷ E.g.: BGU XVIII.1 2737.9-11 (Herakleopolite, 86 B.C.): [ἐπιβιβασθέντων] | φυλακιδῶν κεκληρουχημέ[νων] τῶν μ[ά]λισ[τα] πίστιν ἔχόντων, οἷς καὶ τὸ δεῖγμα | κατεσφραγισμένον ἐπιτεθῆ[σεται] ἐν γείνοι[ς] ὁμοῖς ἀγγείοις].

the case that *epiplooi* were always drawn from the ranks of the *phylakitai*, where names and additional employment data are provided for *epiplooi* they are sometimes revealed to be *phylakitai*.⁸

Phylakitai were also involved to a broader extent in other agricultural activities. They sometimes assigned pasturage to and measured allotments of land for citizens, and also collected tax arrears from the Egyptian people, a duty which they did not always discharge honorably.⁹ We see them occasionally serving as gophers, asked to purchase or requisition items for their superiors and other officials who sought their assistance. They might themselves be requisitioned, as well.¹⁰ In addition, *phylakitai* were often employed as postmen, ferrying correspondence and goods between officials.¹¹ A good deal of day-to-day law enforcement business in the *chôra* involved the transfer and processing of official documents. *Phylakitai* were the police officials to whom this administrative footwork was most commonly delegated. Not every task enjoined upon the Ptolemaic police required the employment of fine-tuned crime-fighting skills.

Nevertheless, though most commonly employed as subordinates, Ptolemaic *phylakitai* were not simply lackeys. They were occasionally given

⁸ See *P.Ryl.* IV 576 (? , 246-221 B.C.), a certificate for the unloading of river boats in Alexandria that mentions a *phylakitês* acting as an *epiploos*; also *P.Tebt.* III.2 1035 (182-181 B.C.?; 158-157 B.C.), an account of grain shipments that likewise mentions *phylakitai* acting as *epiplooi* in perhaps two instances.

⁹ Granting pasture-rights: *P.Grad.* I 8 (? , 223 B.C.?); measuring allotments: *P.Hib.* I 75 (232/1 B.C.); collecting tax arrears, e.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 53 (Tebtynis, 118 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59407 (III B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 764 (185 B.C.?; 161 B.C.?). At *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 53.188-192 the sovereigns remitted penalties for *phylakitai* who had made false returns in connection with government inspections and for those who had not handed over debt payments to the crown.

¹⁰ Requisitioning: *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59610 (III B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 749 (ca 243 B.C.); requisitioned: *SB* VI 9104 (Arsinoite, 195 B.C.).

¹¹ *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59214 (254 B.C.); *P.Genova* II 55 (Arsinoite, 256 B.C.); *P.Hib.* I 54 (ca 245 B.C.).

responsibilities greater than those doled out to common grunts. For instance, they were frequently the recipients of circulars and notifications from government officials and petitions from the Egyptian population.¹² The fact that *phylakitai* received correspondence from both above and below suggests that they possessed a degree of organization and responsibility greater than that commonly associated with low-level police agents. *Phylakitai* took not only action but also initiative. References to individuals serving in positions subordinate to individual *phylakitai* confirm these suspicions. In one case, the agents of a *phylakitês* were responsible for the theft of a pig (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59312 [250 B.C.]). In another, we see that a special scribe, the *grammateus phylakitôn*, was at least partially responsible for their payment (*P.Petr.* III 64C [245-244 B.C.]).¹³ In a final example the agent of a *phylakitês* was responsible for delivering a number of letters for his superior, including one addressed to an *archiphylakitês* (*O.Oslo* 2 [?, III/II B.C.]).

Evidence for the wages and landholdings of *phylakitai* is extensive. Numerous land registers from the Ptolemaic period give many precise details about the extent and dispersal of police *klêroi*. Land grants to *phylakitai* distributed by and accountable to the government were known as *phylakitikoi*

¹² Circulars and notifications, e.g.: *P.Grenf.* II 37 (Thebaid, II/I B.C.); *P.Heid.* VI 362 (Herakleopolite, 226 B.C.); *SB XXII* 15766 (Arsinoite, 223 or 181 B.C.); petitions, e.g.: *P.Col.* IV 92 (Philadelphia, after 241 B.C.); *P.Giss.Univ.* 8 (Euhemeria, after 131 B.C.); *P.Heid.* II 217 (Kerkeosiris?, II B.C.). For more on correspondence from villagers to police see chapter 3.

¹³ Kool (1954) maintained that the *grammateus phylakitôn* was a nome-level official who assisted the *epistatês phylakitôn* and was in charge of the administration of the *phylakitai* (101). Yet as the *grammateus phylakitôn* occurs only in this text (*P.Petr.* III 64C), Kool's assertion seems unfounded.

klêroi.¹⁴ *Phylakitai* who possessed such allotments were occasionally designated as *klêrouchoi phylakitai* in land registers and appear as *keklêrouchêmenoi phylakitai* in grain transport documents.¹⁵ One Ptolemaic text mentions a *phylakitês* in the *katalochismos*, the government's land-grant register, performing liturgies. The recipient of this document was instructed to bring with him one of the *phylakitai* in the *katalochismos* who was to serve (*leitourgein*) under an *archiphylakitês* for thirty days along with some other *phylakitai* (*SB VI 9104* [Arsinoite, 195 B.C.]). It is possible that these two groups (*i.e.*, the *kleruch-phylakitai* and those in the *katalochismos*) were in fact the same and formed a separate branch of the Ptolemaic law enforcement pyramid, complete with a separate financial administration. But this remains unclear.¹⁶

A certain amount is known about police wages. *Phylakitai* were paid variously with money, wine or grain.¹⁷ Villages might incur expenses for the

¹⁴ *BGU VIII 1773.6* (Herakleopolite, 58 B.C.?); 1818.2 (Herakleopolite, 60-59 B.C.); *XIV 2439.21, 27* (?) (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); *PSI X 1098.9-10* (Tebtynis, 51 B.C.); *P.Tebt. III.2 808.3* (151 or 140 B.C.).

¹⁵ *Klêrouchoi phylakitai* in land registers: *BGU XIV 2444.4* (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); 2445.27 (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); *keklêrouchêmenoi phylakitai* accompanying grain transports, *e.g.*: *BGU VIII 1742.12-13* (Herakleopolite, 63 B.C.); *XVIII.1 2736.3* (Herakleopolite, 87/6 B.C.); *SB V 8754.12-13* (Herakleopolite?, 77 B.C.?; 48 B.C.?).

¹⁶ Kool (1954) suggested that the two groups might have been one and the same but stopped short of equating them (101). He was convinced that the *phylakitai* in the *katalochismos* "formed... a special branch organized on military lines; they could be used for police-actions on a large scale and for special services." He was likewise certain that the *keklêrouchêmenoi phylakitai* formed a special division, "as can be inferred from traces to be found in Roman times, *viz.* the taxes for the *grammateia* of the phyl. and the *epistateia* of the Phyl. [*sic*] and the *arithmetikon* of the phyl.. The existence of the first two taxes causes one to think of the possibility that these *kleruchs* – just as [*sic*] the *katoikoi* – had their own *epistatai* and *grammateis*, who need not be identified with the *ep. phyl.* of the nome and the *grammateus* of the phyl., who was in charge of the internal administration of the organization. In this connection one can even find a place for the *dekanoi* of the phyl., who would then be commanders of groups of phyl. in military squadrons." While these conclusions are certainly plausible, they are also purely speculative.

¹⁷ Money, *e.g.*: *P.Cair.Zen. II 59296.7-11, 22-24* (250 B.C.); *P.Hib. I 110.48-50* (*ca* 270 B.C.); *P.Petr. III 128.4-9* (III B.C.); wine: *P.Col. III 55.9-11* (Philadelphia, 250 B.C.); grain: *BGU XIV 2438.55* (?) (Herakleopolite, I B.C.), 2440.19-20 (?) (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); *P.Tebt. III.2 850.46* (170 B.C.); uncertain method of payment: *PSI VII 868.4-12* (?) (Philadelphia, III B.C.).

entertainment and lodging of police, as well.¹⁸ To compensate for the expenses incurred by the payment of police and support of police activities there was a police tax, the *phylakitikon*.¹⁹ Though it often appears in tax registers and other official documents with modifiers specifying the type(s) of goods subject to it, the *phylakitikon* is typically recorded without further description. In the latter case the tax was (usually) paid in kind; in the former, in money.²⁰ It was levied on various agricultural products, animals, locations and even organizations.²¹ The income from the *phylakitikon* might be used to pay the wages of the *phylakitai* and their superiors.²² The papyri preserve a great deal of information about payments to and from policemen. Tax lists record the payments of *phylakitai* to the

¹⁸ Entertainment: *P.Tebt.* I 120.55 (97 or 64 B.C.?); lodging: *BGU* III 1007.14 (? , 243 or 218 B.C.).

¹⁹ *O.Wilck.* I p. 402 is still the authority. See also *CPR* XIII introduction pp35-37; *P.Col.* X 261 p. 52 (note on “police tax”); *P.Grad.* I 6 pp45-46 n. on 6 (types of *phylakitikon*); *P.Hib.* I 105 introduction; *P.Mich.* XVIII 781 introduction; and *P.Petr.* III p. 274.

²⁰ The *phylakitikon* was collected for a broad range of goods: see *CPR* XIII pp35-36 for a summary of taxable items. It seems likely that those who paid the *phylakitikon* for specific goods did so because said goods were of the sort that required protection (*O.Wilck.* I p. 402; *CPR* XIII p. 35). *Phylakitikon* without further description, e.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 53ter.10-15 (Arsinoite, after 113 B.C.); *P.Gur.* 26.3, 5-7, 9-13, 15-17, 21 (214-211 B.C.?); *P.Hal.* 22r.ii.5 (Arsinoite, III B.C.).

²¹ Grain: *P.Lond.* VII 1996.71 (Philadelphia, ca 250-249 B.C.?); *P.Petr.* III 111.1, 10 (III B.C.); *PSI* IV 388.10-11, 20-21, 34-35 (Philadelphia, 243 B.C.); grapes: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59366.22 (243-241 B.C.); *P.Petr.* III 112C.14-17, E.v.ii.3 (ca 221-220 B.C.); barley: *P.Gur.* 29.18 (III B.C.); *ktênê*: *PSI* V 509.9-12 (Philadelphia, 256 B.C.); *leia*: *P.Grad.* 6.6, 11 (? , 223-222 B.C.); *P.Petr.* III 112A.i.11, ii.3, C.20, E.r.ii.6, F.r.5, 21 (ca 221-220 B.C.); *probata*: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59404.2-3 (III B.C.); *P.Petr.* III 109B.9-13 (250-247 B.C.); 111.8 (III B.C.); *hypozygia*: *PSI* V 509.9-13 (Philadelphia, 256 B.C.); geese: *P.Grad.* 6.22 (? , 223-222 B.C.); *P.Petr.* III 112A.ii.5 (ca 221-220 B.C.); goats: *P.Petr.* III 109B.9-13 (250-247 B.C.); pigs, e.g.: *P.Grad.* 6.6, 22-23 (? , 223-222 B.C.); *P.Lond.* VII 2008.3 (Philadelphia, 247 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.2 1061.18, 24, 31 (228-227 B.C.); rams: *P.Lond.* VII 2010.4-5 (Philadelphia, ca 244-243 B.C.); *gê*: *P.Petr.* III 112C.8, E.r.i.7, G.3, 10, 14, H.3-8 (ca 221-220 B.C.); *gê ampelikê*: *P.Petr.* III 112A.ii.6 (ca 221-220 B.C.); *ergastêria*, e.g.: *Chrest.Wilck.* 262.2-3, 9, v.i.2-4, ii.9-11 (Arsinoite, III B.C.); *CPR* XIII 2.45 (Arsinoe, III B.C.); *P.Gur.* 27.18-27 (after 238-237 B.C.); *klêroi*: *P.Hib.* I 105.4-5 (228/7 B.C.); II 269 (270-250 B.C.; no line numbers given); *PSI* IV 344.5-6, 11-12, 14-15 (Philadelphia, 255 B.C.); *poleis* (?): *P.Hal.* 22r.ii.2, 6 (Arsinoite, III B.C.); *potamoi* (?): *P.Lille* 25.56-57 (III B.C.); *ethnoi*: *Chrest.Wilck.* 262.2-3, 9, v.i.2-4, ii.9-11 (Arsinoite, III B.C.); *CPR* XIII 2.24, 28 (Arsinoe, III B.C.). A tax for the maintenance and/or protection of granaries, the *thêsaurophylakikon* (sometimes *thêsaurophylakitikon*), is attested in several texts as well (e.g.: *P.Tebt.* I 72.321 [114-113 B.C.]; 89.39 [113 B.C.]; 94.3, 10, 13 [ca 112 B.C.]).

²² *BGU* VIII 1808 (Herakleopolite, after 52/1 B.C.); *P.Hamb.* II 172 (Oxyrhynchus, 246 B.C.); *P.Petr.* III 128 (III B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 121 (94/61 B.C.); 179 (II B.C.).

government.²³ Royal proclamations freed them from certain dues from time to time.²⁴

The *phylakitai* were primarily Egyptian and Greek in their makeup, though other ethnic minorities were found among their ranks.²⁵ We find them scattered throughout the Egyptian *chôra* but never in the Greek cities of Egypt, where no evidence for police or police work survives.²⁶ They are attested throughout the Ptolemaic period and well into Roman times. A firm date for the ultimate disappearance of the Ptolemaic police force is perhaps unattainable.²⁷ Little is known about their origins, but it is possible that the *phylakitai* were adapted from a preexisting institution. The large number of Egyptian names that occur among the *phylakitai* in the earliest source material, as well as the evidence for very rudimentary security forces in Pharaonic Egypt, suggest that this may have been the case.²⁸

The *phylakitai* of Ptolemaic Egypt were officers with many functions. On one level they were essentially beat cops charged with carrying out patrols,

²³ E.g.: *BGU* XIV 2441.218-224 (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); *CPR* XIII 11.19 (Arsinoe, III B.C.); *P.Lips.* II 124.86-87 (Herakleopolite?, after 137 B.C.).

²⁴ *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 34.i.25-28 (Oxyrhynchus, after 186 B.C.), a royal decree in which the sovereigns released *pezoi*, *machimoi*, *phylakitai* and others from the tax on allotments (*klêrouchikon*).

²⁵ Greek names, e.g.: *BGU* XIV 2437.28, 33 (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); *P.Erasm.* I 1.6 (Oxyrhyncha, 148-147 B.C.); *PSI* IV 393.9, 26 (Philadelphia, 241 B.C.); Egyptian names, e.g.: *BGU* VI 1253.13 (? , II B.C.); XIV 2437.29, 31 (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); *P.Stras.* VII 662.7-8 (Oxyrhynchite, 239 B.C.). *BGU* VI 1272.22 (Arsinoite?, 173 B.C.) mentions a Jewish *phylakitês*.

²⁶ Kool (1954) believed that “[i]n the Greek towns police-work was probably entrusted to other authorities, after the example of the Greeks” (100).

²⁷ Kool (1954) suggested that the arrival of the Romans in Egypt was largely responsible for the disappearance of the *phylakitai* (104). Yet *phylakitai* are attested in the papyri as late as the seventh century A.D., e.g.: *P.Oxy.* XVI 2056.5, 7, 8, 11 (VII A.D.); *P.Select* 8.9 (Oxyrhynchus, A.D. 421); *SB* VI 9150.17 (Arsinoite, V A.D.).

²⁸ On the ethnicity of *phylakitai* in the earliest source material see Kool (1954) 100; for police forces in Pharaonic Egypt (e.g.), Vernus (2003); Tyldesley (2000); Eyre (1984); Lorton (1977); Cerny (1973) 261-284; and Peet (1930) 15-27.

responding to emergencies, investigating crimes and hunting down criminals. But they also had a number of responsibilities for which they exercised considerable autonomy and had various obligations outside of the sphere of law enforcement. Although they represented the lowest rung in the law enforcement hierarchy, *phylakitai* were not common grunts, but a multi-purpose, largely self-sufficient and sometimes self-governing police body. We will examine many of their duties in greater detail in the following chapters.

First, however, we must turn to a consideration of the officials who supervised the *phylakitai*. At the local level (village, town, city, temple, *meris* and toparchy) *archiphylakitai* (“police chiefs”) are widely attested. *Epistatai* (“mayors”), the top administrators in the towns and villages of the *chôra*, likewise supervised police officers. Aside from these two officials a handful of other low-level officers seem to have had some degree of power over the *phylakitai*: *dekanoi phylakitôn*, *hêgemones phylakitôn*, *hoi epi tôn phylakitôn* and *prostatai phylakitôn*. The *phylakitai* were also subject to at least one nome-level official responsible for their welfare and performance: the *epistatês phylakitôn* (“police commissioner”).

We shall begin with the officials who occupied the lowest rung on the administrative ladder: *archiphylakitai*.²⁹ *Archiphylakitai* were government agents with many administrative duties who were also intimately connected to the populations they supervised. They were often required to perform many of the functions of a modern-day police officer: among these arresting and transporting

²⁹ Kool (1954) 43-66; also Handrock (1967) 118ff.; Meyer (1920) 276ff.; Lesquier (1911) 79; Engers (1909) 10, 75, 86ff.; Meyer (1906) 460 n. 1; *Chrest.Mitt.* I p. 13 n. 4; p. 21; and *P.Bürgsch.* p. 415 n. 8.

criminals.³⁰ They received petitions, generally concerned with theft, damage to person or property, or both from injured parties.³¹ The petitions draw attention to the punitive powers of this official. *Archiphylakitai* were expected to apprehend parties, carry out investigations of reported crimes and generally see to it that justice was done on the petitioner's behalf.³² In one typical case a priest wrote to an *archiphylakitês* and his *phylakitai* and detailed a series of abuses followed by a theft (*P.Tebt.* III.1 797 [II B.C.]). The victim described an attack (involving beatings on his shin and face), listed the stolen goods, asked that the *archiphylakitês* have the offenders sent to another official for punishment and requested the return of his missing property.

Archiphylakitai attended to the financial and agricultural provisioning of their underlings, enlisted men into their forces and assigned them various posts. As three texts suggest, there was a standard procedure to be followed by an applicant seeking admission into a corps of *phylakitai*.³³ The applicant wrote to the *archiphylakitês* of the region in question and declared his intention to be enrolled into the ranks of the police of the village (and associated districts) over which the *archiphylakitês* had control, in accordance with a publicly posted notice (*ektethen ekthema/programma*). He would then request that he be added

³⁰ Arresting and transporting, e.g.: *Chrest.Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.); *P.Athen.* 8 (?), 193-192 B.C.); *P.Lond.* VII 2188 (Philadelphia, 148 B.C.).

³¹ Petitions to *archiphylakitai*, e.g.: *P.Giss.Univ.* I 7 (Euhemeria, II B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 41 (105 or 90 B.C.); *SB VIII* 9674 (Euhemeria, ca 131 B.C.). For the content of petitions to *archiphylakitai* see chapter 3, pp82-86.

³² For more on the responses of *archiphylakitai* and other police officials to the written requests of villagers see chapter 3.

³³ *P.Genova* III 101 (Arsinoite, 221 B.C.?); 102 (Arsinoite, 221 B.C.?); and *SB XIV* 11860 (?), II/I B.C.).

(*prosgraphesthai*) to their ranks.³⁴ *Archiphylakitai* could not only hire *phylakitai*, but they seem also to have had the power to requisition *phylakitai* from areas outside their jurisdiction.³⁵ *Archiphylakitai* occasionally employed deputies, as well. *Hyparchiphylakitai* might appear at government auctions (*BGU* III 1222.61, 75 [Hermopolite, 144 B.C.]). We also see that they could possess *klêroi* (*P.Tebt.* III.2 1006.6-7 [II B.C.]). Unfortunately, the duties of these subordinate officials and the reasons for and nature of their appointments are unclear.

Archiphylakitai were the recipients of a good deal of official paperwork: notifications, commands and circulars from other government officials. These documents often concerned the collection, management and security of tax revenues, primarily grain but also papyrus and other products.³⁶ *Archiphylakitai* were sometimes present at state auctions of seized or forfeited goods and properties and occasionally appeared at trials and inquiries held by other officials.³⁷ They also may have been responsible for provisioning government workers in the mining trade and those involved in crown-sponsored hunting,

³⁴ *P.Genova* III 101 (Arsinoite, 221 B.C.): Διοσκουρίδει ἀρχιφ[υλα]κί[τη Κροκο]δίλων πόλεως καὶ τῶν [ca ? -σῶν] | κωμῶν παρὰ Τιμάρχο[υ τοῦ Κρ]άτητ[ος ca ?] | Σικυωνίου· ἀπογράφο[μαι] [ε]ἰς τοὺς | περὶ Κροκοδίλων πόλιν κατὰ τὸ ἐκτελεθὲν ἕκθεμα {εἰς τοὺς} φυλακίτας· | ἀξιῶ οὖν πρ[ο]σγραφήναι μέ· | L α Παχῶν κη.

³⁵ See *SB* VI 9104 (Arsinoite, 195 B.C.), a letter in which one official requested that another bring one of the *phylakitai* in the *katalochismos* over to Krokodilopolis to serve (*leitourgein*) in the quarters (*oikêsis*) of the *archiphylakitês* for thirty days. On this text see above, p. 31.

³⁶ Correspondence concerning tax revenues in general, e.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 53.138-146 (Tebtynis, 118 B.C.); *P.Gen.* III 132 (Herakleopolite?, II B.C.); *P.Lille* I 3 (241/0 B.C.?; 216/5 B.C.?); beer and natron: *P.Tebt.* I 40 (117 B.C.); grain: *P.Tebt.* III.1 708 (III B.C.); papyrus: *P.Tebt.* III.1 709 (159 B.C.); wool: *SB* XXII 15766 (Arsinoite, 223 or 181 B.C.). On the Ptolemaic papyrus monopoly see N. Lewis, *Papyrus in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford, 1974) with *Pap.Bru.* XXIII (1989).

³⁷ Present at auctions, e.g.: *P.Haun.* I 11 (Arsinoite?, 182 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.2 871 (158 B.C.); *UPZ* II 219 (Thebes, 130 B.C.); at trials: *Chrest.Mitt.* 32 (Arsinoite, 181 B.C.).

though the evidence for this duty consists of one fragmentary text (*P.Petr.* III 130 [III B.C.]).³⁸

As they needed quick and easy access to their subordinates and likewise had to be accessible to the people, *archiphylakitai* were spread out over the *chôra*. They had a number of different spheres of control. When a locale is specified for the domain of an *archiphylakitês* one encounters the name of a village (or a form of *kômê*) most frequently.³⁹ But other geographic jurisdictions for these officials are encountered in the papyri: variations on villages, the *meris*, the toparchy, the nome and even temples.⁴⁰ One might assume that a *chôra*-wide network connected *archiphylakitai* at the highest levels with those at the lowest. Yet lower-level *archiphylakitai* do not appear to have been linked to higher-ranking chiefs by a carefully articulated chain of command.⁴¹ Rather, the Ptolemaic hierarchy of

³⁸ The lower margin of the document, an expense account concerning mining, preserves the beginning of a letter from (16-17) Νίκων ἐπιστάτης φυλακτικῶν καὶ ἀρχι[φυλακίτης *ca* ?] ἱπποῖς θηροφύλαξιν (with *BL* 1.384 for reading). The document provides the only evidence that the posts of *archiphylakitês* and *epistatês phylakitôn* could be combined in the same individual in the Ptolemaic period. On the *epistatês phylakitôn* see below, pp38-46.

³⁹ *E.g.*: *BGU* VIII 1798.1 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 82.5 (221 B.C.); *P.Giss.Univ.* 7.1-2 (Euhemeria, II B.C.).

⁴⁰ Variations on villages, *e.g.*: *P.Genova* III 102.1-3 (Arsinoite, 221 B.C.): Διοσκουρίδει ἀ[ρχιφυλακίτη Κρο]κοδίων πόλεως κ[αὶ τῶν *ca* ?]ισῶν κωμῶν; *P.Tebt.* III.1 795.2-3 (II B.C.): ἀρχιφυλακίτη Κροκοδίων πόλεως | καὶ τῶν μεμερισμένων τόπων; *SB* XIV 11860.1-3 (? , II/I B.C.): Στρατονίκω | ἀρχι[φ]υλακίτη τῶν | περὶ Ἀρσινόη κ[ώ]μη[v]; *merides*, *e.g.*: *P.Bürgsch.* 22.3-4 (243 B.C.); *P.Coll.Youtie.* I 16.9-10 (? , 109 B.C.?); *P.Tebt.* III.1 731.4 (153-152 or 142-141 B.C.?); toparchies, *e.g.*: *P.Frankf.* 3.26-27 (Tholthis, after 212 B.C.); *P.Hib.* I 73.9-10 (243-242 B.C.); *UPZ* II 187.2-3 (Thebes, 127-126 B.C.); nomes: *P.Dryton* 33.14 (Thebes, 136 B.C.); *P.Gen.* III 132.4 (Herakleopolite?, II B.C.); *P.Lond.* VII 2188.91-92 (Philadelphia, 148 B.C.); temples: *UPZ* I 5.6 (Memphis, 163 B.C.); 6.6 (Memphis, 163 B.C.). The Memphite Anoubieion seems to have been a decidedly unusual temple, as it had both an *archiphylakitês* and an *epistatês* (on whom see n. 64, below). For more on the Anoubieion see Thompson (1988) 212-265 and *UPZ* I pp12-18.

⁴¹ Kool (1954) argued for a strict administrative hierarchy (101): "Down the scale we... find the archiphy. of the merides and of the toparchies and then the archiphy. of the metropoleis and villages, sometimes of the precinct of a temple such as the Anoubieion."

archiphylakitai seems to have been a hierarchy in name only: that is, the various lower-level *archiphylakitai* did not form a ranked succession of officials.

This claim is admittedly based on a lack of evidence. For instance, no correspondence between Ptolemaic *archiphylakitai* survives, which suggests that *archiphylakitai* at "lower" levels (*i.e.*, those based in villages or districts) did not receive orders from those "higher" up (*i.e.*, at the level of the toparchy, *meris* or *nome*). Further, there is no solid proof in the surviving evidence that "higher" *archiphylakitai* had more important responsibilities, garnered better wages or commanded a broader range of subordinates than the "lower" variety. The conclusion to be drawn from this lack of evidence is that the organization of Ptolemaic police chiefs was not truly based on rank. The Ptolemies do not appear to have installed *archiphylakitai* at numerous geographic levels in order to establish a linked chain of police officials from the village level all the way up through the *nome*. Rather, they seem to have dotted the *chôra* with police chiefs to provide easy public access to the police system at a variety of points. As we shall argue in the following chapters, such a system worked to great effect.

The duties of the *archiphylakitês* were quite similar to those of another police official, the *epistatês phylakitôn*.⁴² Ptolemaic papyri that mention the latter (significantly fewer in number than those that refer to *archiphylakitai*) demonstrate that they were present at government auctions, had various responsibilities in Ptolemaic courts, were involved with the collection and protection of tax revenues, received petitions from victims of crime and circulars

⁴² On the *epistatês phylakitôn* see above all Kool (1954) 67-85; also Di Bitonto Kasser (1985) 3-6; Van 't Dack (1949) 41-43; Berneker (1935) 79; and *P.Hamb.* IV 272 n. on 2. As one text demonstrates, the offices of *archiphylakitês* and *epistatês phylakitôn* could be combined in one individual: *P.Petr.* III 130.16-17 (Gurob, III B.C.); see above, n. 38.

from the government, transported offenders and carried out investigations just as *archiphylakitai* did.⁴³ But in spite of the apparent similarities in their job descriptions, relatively little has been written on the relationship between the two officers.⁴⁴ A closer examination of the duties, administrative domains and colleagues of the *archiphylakitês* and the *epistatês phylakitôn* reveals that the two officials were in fact quite different.

As we have seen, *archiphylakitai* are frequently attested taking part in arrests, investigations and various other physically demanding police activities. *Epistatai phylakitôn*, on the other hand, appear to have been primarily judicial officials and administrators. For instance, in a circular to these officials the king asked in several instances that the *epistatai phylakitôn* carry out their examinations (*anakriseis*) according to his and his ancestors' pronouncements, so as to avoid bias in their judgments, and that all who transgressed his orders be sent to the royal court for punishment (C.*Ord.Ptol.*² 30-31 [?, 183 B.C.]).⁴⁵ In a well-known episode the *kômogrammateus* of Kerkeosiris, Menches, and his brother Polemon sought protection from the sovereigns against further prosecution following their release on criminal charges (P.*Tebt.* I 43 [118 B.C.]).⁴⁶ The two had been arrested

⁴³ Present at auctions: P.*Ryl.* II 253 (Hermoupolis Magna, 142 B.C.?); in courts, e.g.: BGU VI 1252 (Arsinoite, II B.C.); P.*Ryl.* II 68 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.); SB VIII 9792 (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.); collected and protected tax revenues, e.g.: C.*Ord.Ptol.*² 53.138-146 (Tebtynis, 118 B.C.); P.*Köln* VII 313 (Oxyrhynchus?, after 186 B.C.); P.*Tebt.* III.1 793 (183 B.C.); received petitions: P.*Ryl.* II 68 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.); SB VIII 9792 (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.); circulars, e.g.: C.*Ord.Ptol.*² 62 (Memphis, 99 B.C.); P.*Gen.* III 132 (Herakleopolite?, II B.C.); SB XXII 15766 (Arsinoite, 223 or 181 B.C.); transported offenders: P.*Diosk.* 4 (Herakleopolite, 153 B.C.?); investigated crimes: P.*Tebt.* III.2 857 (after 162 B.C.).

⁴⁴ Kool (1954) 100-105; *Chrest.Wilck.* I pp411-412; P.*Hib.* I 34 p. 175 n. on 1; P.*Tebt.* I 5 pp46-47 n. on 159.

⁴⁵ For more on this text see chapter 6, pp202-203.

⁴⁶ On the trial of Menches see A.M.F.W. Verhoogt, *Pap.Lugd.Bat.* XXXIX (1998) 160-161. For more on this text see chapter 4, p. 133.

with others by an agent of the *epistatês phylakitôn* on charges of poisoning a man. They were subsequently brought before this official, a certain Aminias, who presided over their trial (along with the *basilikos grammateus* Ammeneus) and released them after they were found innocent.⁴⁷

Also like the *archiphylakitês*, the *epistatês phylakitôn* sometimes received petitions. But he was not the ideal first level of appeal. For instance, in one case a petitioner wrote to an *epistatês phylakitôn* and noted that he had previously submitted a complaint concerning a theft to the addressee as well as to a pair of *stratêgoi* (SB VIII 9792 [Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.]). Remediating action was taken, but the case was not cracked. Consequently the petitioner wrote a second time to ensure that the matter was resolved. In another case the *epistatês phylakitôn* redirected a petition sent to him. In this instance a petitioner wrote to the *oikonomos* to request that an offender be transported, presumably for examination (BGU VI 1244 [Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?]). The *oikonomos* forwarded the petition to the *epistatês phylakitôn*, who then forwarded the document again, this time to the village *epistatês*, with instructions for the apprehension and transport of the accused. As these texts suggest, the *epistatês phylakitôn* generally received complaints only after they had already been sent elsewhere and if they had not attained the goals of petitioners. He represented a higher level of appeal and provided a check on miscarriages of justice in towns and villages. But as a rule he avoided involving himself with legal matters in the Egyptian backwater when competent town or village machinery was available.

⁴⁷ For the decisive emendation of *P.Tebt.* I 43.21-22 leading to the proper interpretation of the trial's outcome see chapter 4, p. 133 n. 93.

In addition to his roles as judge and agent of appeal, the *epistatês phylakitôn* also seems to have occasionally served as a legal consultant to other government agents. In one case, an official was asked to sit in council with the *epistatês*, the *epistatês phylakitôn*, the *oikonomos* and the *basilikos grammateus* so that the group might draw up a list of men suitable to draft certain Demotic contracts (*synallagmata Aigyptia*) (P.Ryl. IV 572 [Arsinoite?, II B.C.]). Further evidence is provided by a decree of the *dioikêtês* in which the suggestion is made that the recipients of the decree sit in council with the *epistatai phylakitôn* and a number of other officials (among these *stratêgoi*, *oikonomoi* and *basilikoi grammateis*) to discuss reports of agricultural mismanagement and take the proper course of action (UPZ I 110 [164 B.C.]). The documents are not especially informative, but the consultant role of the *epistatês phylakitôn* may have had less to do with his standing as an official with judicial competency and more to do with his position as a nome-level (and therefore important) bureaucrat.

This raises the question of the administrative domain of the *epistatês phylakitôn*. Only one Ptolemaic text expressly states a geographic designation for this official: the nome.⁴⁸ It appears that this one case, as well as the fact that *epistatai phylakitôn* are frequently paired with other strictly nome-level officials in the addressee-lists of official documents, has led to the general consensus that *epistatai phylakitôn* were functionaries of the nome.⁴⁹ While this seems likely, it cannot be proven conclusively. Kool concluded that the office of *epistatês*

⁴⁸ P.Tebt. I 43.5-6 (118 B.C.): Ἀμιν[ίου] | τοῦ ἐπιστάτου τῶν φυλακῶν τοῦ αὐτοῦ νομοῦ.

⁴⁹ E.g.: C.Ord.Ptol.² 62.2-5 (Memphis, 99 B.C.), a circular from the sovereigns τῶι στρατη[γ]ῶι τοῦ Μεμφίτου κ[αὶ] τῶι φρουράρχῳ [καὶ] τῶι ἐπισ[τά]τῃ | [τ]ῶν φυλα[κ]ῶν καὶ ἀρχιφυλακίτῃ καὶ τῶι ἐπὶ [τ]ῶν προσόδ[ων] καὶ βασιλι[κ]ῶι | [γρ]αμματεῖ καὶ τοῖς ἐπιστάταις τῶν ἱερ[ῶ]ν καὶ ἀρχιερεῦσ[ι] καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς | [τ]ῶν βασιλικῶν πραγματευομένοις.

phylakitôn had been instituted above that of the *archiphylakitês* of the nome at some point during the reign of Philadelphus.⁵⁰ Yet it is impossible to state with certainty that the post of *epistatês phylakitôn* was established in this period (285-246 B.C.). Only two third-century texts mentioning this official survive.⁵¹ Neither has a fixed date and neither provides any evidence for the post of *epistatês phylakitôn* being a recent innovation. Further, only one *archiphylakitês* of nome-level competence is attested for the third century, hardly firm evidence for a *chôra*-wide distribution of these officials at the nome level.⁵² *Archiphylakitai* could certainly fill nome-level posts; but whether every nome had one of these officials is uncertain.⁵³ For now, it seems best only to assume that *archiphylakitai* were generally officials of lower standing than *epistatai phylakitôn*.

Though the two had much in common, Ptolemaic *archiphylakitai* and *epistatai phylakitôn* were officials of decidedly different types. *Archiphylakitai* provided the inhabitants of Egyptian villages with neighborhood law enforcement administrators. They performed the great majority of police work in Egyptian settlements themselves or delegated it to subordinates. They received petitions from victims of crime and tended to their complaints or sought

⁵⁰ Kool (1954) 100. He also pressed for a close professional connection between these two officials (101): "At the head of the nome is the ep. phy., assisted by an archiphy. and a grammateus of the phyl. (of the nome)." *Archiphylakitai* of nome-level provenance are attested in only four nomes: the Arsinoite (*Pros.Ptol.* 4579a), the Herakleopolite (e.g.: *Chrest.Wilck.* 166.ii.10 [Arsinoite, 218 B.C.]), the Lykopolite (*Pros.Ptol.* 4557a) and the Pathyrite (e.g.: *P.Lond.* VII 2188.91-92 [Philadelphia, 148 B.C.]). A *grammateus phylakitôn* appears in only one Ptolemaic text: *P.Petr.* III 64C.7-8 (245-244 B.C.): Ζωπύρωι | τῶι γρ(αμματεῖ) τῶν φυ(λακιδῶν).

⁵¹ *P.Petr.* III 128 and 130.

⁵² Herakleides, *archiphylakitês* of the Herakleopolite nome: *Chrest.Wilck.* 166.ii.10 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.).

⁵³ The government of Ptolemaic Egypt was rigidly organized by geography, but within its various regions there were variations. For example, Egyptian nomes were generally subdivided into toparchies, but the Arsinoite nome was divided into *merides*.

assistance from other officials. The *epistatês phylakitôn*, on the other hand, seems to have had as his chief concern the solving of problems that had not met with satisfactory resolution in Egyptian towns and villages (*i.e.* at the hands of *archiphylakitai* and others). As an official of the nome (most likely), the *epistatês phylakitôn* had a much broader administrative domain than the majority of the police chiefs scattered throughout the *chôra*. He too received complaints from villagers, but typically only after the village or district law enforcement officials had proven themselves unable to provide the proper assistance. His most important function appears to have been as a judicial official, one who carried out trials, pronounced judgments and served as an advisor for the various officers with whom he might sit in council.

But the *epistatês phylakitôn* was not the only Ptolemaic official with nome-level judicial competence. The *stratêgos* also had such powers. Here a few words need to be said concerning the judicial relationship between the two officers. The nature of this relationship is not entirely clear. Kool (1954) concluded that (1) both acted as judges in criminal trials, the *stratêgos* in the third century and the *epistatês phylakitôn* after that; (2) *stratêgoi* had the various civil *epistatai* of the villages as their contact persons, and had no direct contact with *archiphylakitai*; and (3) *epistatai phylakitôn* seem generally to have received court cases after *archiphylakitai* referred them (102). A large cache of documents reveals that the *stratêgos* was the judicial official of primary importance in the third century for criminal cases.⁵⁴ No evidence survives for the judicial domain of the *epistatês*

⁵⁴ See *P. Enteux. passim.* and Wolff (1970) 162-163; for judges in civil cases, Wolff (1970) 48-53 (*laokritai*) and 64-89 (*chrêmatistai*) and the additional sources cited there.

phylakitôn in the third century, but later documentation reveals that this official could also try these types of cases.⁵⁵

Stratêgoi had direct contact (via official correspondence, at least) with the various civil *epistatai*.⁵⁶ There is perhaps not enough evidence to speculate on the nature of the relationship between the *stratêgos* and the *archiphylakitês* in the third century. In a handful of petitions *stratêgoi* were asked to contact *archiphylakitai* to obtain justice for petitioners.⁵⁷ But in no case did the *stratêgos* write to an *archiphylakitês*. Rather, he invariably wrote to the *epistatês* of the village in question. There is, however, some support for the notion that appeals for justice in the second century and later could reach an *epistatês phylakitôn* without the *archiphylakitês* acting as a necessary intermediary. This is demonstrated by a petition to an *epistatês phylakitôn* concerning theft (SB VIII 9792 [Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.]). The petitioner had initially (and unsuccessfully) petitioned the village police, giving a report to a certain Damos (probably an *archiphylakitês*) and the *kômophylakitai*. But he did not receive satisfaction. Thus, he composed a second petition and sent it directly to the *epistatês phylakitôn*.

The few texts in which both the *stratêgos* and the *epistatês phylakitôn* appear to have acted in a cooperative manner send mixed signals about their professional relationship. A report concerning the actions of a number of *epistatai phylakitôn* suggests that they were somehow subordinate to the *stratêgos* (*P.Tebt.*

⁵⁵ See BGU VI 1252 (Arsinoite, II B.C.), a petition containing a request that a thief be transported to an *epistatês phylakitôn* for punishment; *P.Ryl.* II 68 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.), a petition to an *epistatês phylakitôn* seeking trial and punishment for the perpetrator of an assault; and SB VIII 9792 (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.), a similar petition concerning a theft.

⁵⁶ See below, pp48-49 and *P.Enteux. passim*.

⁵⁷ *P.Enteux.* 24, 50 and 82 (all 221 B.C.).

III.1 736 [143 B.C.]). The text ends with an exhortation that its recipient write to the *stratêgos* to inform him of the orders that had been given. But as we have seen, even in the second century the *stratêgos* might serve as a (higher) court of appeals.⁵⁸ The two officials might sometimes sit together on advisory boards. In one case a *stratêgos* was advised to consult with the *epistatês phylakitôn* and others about the suitability of certain men for drafting some demotic contracts (*P.Ryl.* IV 572 [Arsinoite?, II B.C.]). In another a number of officials were urged by the *dioikêtês* to sit in council with the *stratêgoi* and *epistatai phylakitôn* to attend to certain financial and agricultural issues (*UPZ* I 110 [164 B.C.]). Neither case illuminates a distinction between the offices of *epistatês phylakitôn* and *stratêgos* in terms of the duties they may have discharged when acting in an advising capacity.

Elsewhere a petitioner wrote to an *epistatês phylakitôn* and mentioned that a report of a crime had been previously filed with the *epistatês phylakitôn* and a pair of *stratêgoi* (*SB* VIII 9792 [Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.]). Unfortunately, the alleged victim offered no explanation for this action save that it was apparently *de rigueur*. The second round of petitioning (*i.e.* the new complaints detailed in the document), however, reached the *epistatês phylakitôn* alone. In another case the expected hierarchy seems to have been inverted. Here a *stratêgos* was asked to see to it that the *epistatês phylakitôn* received notification of the events detailed in the letter (*BGU* VIII 1854 [Herakleopolite, 74-73 B.C.?; 45-44 B.C.?]). The evidence is thin and only suggestive, but it seems likely that by the end of the third

⁵⁸ See *P.Tebt.* I 43.32-36 (118 B.C.), where Menches and his brother ask the sovereigns, after a trial before the *epistatês phylakitôn*, that word be sent to the *stratêgos* so as to assure that they not again face the charges of which they had been acquitted or experience any other type of harassment.

century the *epistatês phylakitôn* had obtained the primary right of holding criminal trials. It also seems to have been the case that at this time the *stratêgos* was still empowered to hear a case under special circumstances or in case of appeal. But the data are conclusive on only one point: that the *stratêgos* was the criminal judge to whom appeals were most frequently directed in the third century. Until additional evidence appears, it seems best to suggest nothing more radical than this.

Alongside the *archiphylakitês* and the *epistatês phylakitôn* a third Ptolemaic official had regular and close supervision over the *phylakitai*: the *epistatês*.⁵⁹ *Epistatai* had many duties in the realm of policing, a number of which were similar to those of the *archiphylakitês* and *phylakitai*. For instance, *epistatai* visited crime scenes, inspected evidence, sealed homes, interrogated witnesses and suspects, made arrests, transported alleged criminals for trials and prevented harrassment.⁶⁰ They received notifications from government officials and petitions from villagers, were present at government auctions, issued receipts for the payment of taxes and assisted in the collection of tax arrears.⁶¹ But *epistatai*

⁵⁹ See Lavigne (1945); also Van 't Dack (1989); (1951) 21-22, 47; (1949) 41-43; Wolff (1970) 164-166; Holleaux (1938) 412-413; and *P.Entreux*. introduction. The third-century documents published as *P.Entreux*. provide a good survey of the variety of duties, both police and civil, that an *epistatês* was required to perform. On the various official provenances of the *epistatês* see below, p. 47.

⁶⁰ Inspecting crime scenes/evidence: *P.Münch.* III.1 55 (Herakleopolite, II B.C.); *P.Stras.* II 100 (? , II B.C.); sealing homes: *SB I* 4309 (? , III B.C.?); interrogations, e.g.: *P.Heid.* VIII 416 (Herakleopolis, II B.C.); *P.Tor.Amen.* 7 (Thebes, 119-117 B.C.); *SB III* 7177 (Herakleopolite, 243 B.C.); arresting and transporting criminals, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1244 (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?); *Chrest.Mitt.* 12 (Arsinoite, ca 241 B.C.); *P.Bingen* 44 (? , I B.C.); preventing harrassment, e.g.: *P.Dion.* 11 (Hermoupolis Magna, 108 B.C.); *P.Entreux.* 87 (222 B.C.); *P.Mil.Congr.* XVII p.10 (Arsinoite, ca 143-141 B.C.).

⁶¹ Notifications, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1214 (Arsinoite, ca 185-165 B.C.); *P.Grenf.* II 37 (Thebaid, II/I B.C.); *P.Rain.Cent.* 45 (? , ca 232 B.C.); petitions, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1251 (Philadelphia, 155 B.C. or 144 B.C.); *P.Erasm.* I 4 (Oxyrhyncha, II B.C.); *P.Köln* III 140 (Arsinoite, 244-242 B.C.?; 219-217 B.C.?); present at auctions: *ÜPZ* II 219 (Thebes, 130 B.C.); 221 (Thebes, 130 B.C.); issued receipts: *O.Bodl.* I

had a number of police duties that do not seem to have been delegated to *archiphylakitai* and *phylakitai*. They delivered summonses to Ptolemaic courts, expelled squatters, sat on advisory councils with other government officials and regularly administered trials and examinations.⁶² Where reference is made to a geographic domain for the post of *epistatês* the name of a village or city is encountered most frequently.⁶³ But *epistatai* of *merides*, toparchies and nomes also occur, as well as *epistatai* of less specific geographic regions and even temples.⁶⁴

We have seen that little evidence of a professional link between *archiphylakitai* and *epistatai phylakitôn* survives. The office of *epistatês phylakitôn* was an upper-level, primarily administrative position, while that of *archiphylakitês* was a (mainly) lower-level, labor-intensive job. Consequently, the operational domains of the two positions very rarely overlapped. When one turns to a consideration of the link between *archiphylakitai* and *epistatai*, however, a considerable amount of documentation survives that demonstrates a clear

111 (Thebes, 140 B.C.); collected tax arrears, e.g.: *Chrest.Wilck.* 55 (Arsinoite, III B.C.); *P.Berl.* I 15522 (Elephantine, 323-30 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 746 (243 B.C.).

⁶² Delivering summonses, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 43 (221 B.C.); 51 (after 222 B.C.?); *P.Hib.* II 203 (246-221 B.C.); expelling squatters, e.g.: *BGU* III 1006 (? , III B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 10 (221 B.C.); 14 (222 B.C.); sitting on advisory councils: *P.Ryl.* IV 572 (Arsinoite?, II B.C.); administering trials, e.g.: *P.Mert.* I 5 (Ptolemais, 149-135 B.C.); *P.Mich.* III 173 (? , after 169 B.C.); *P.Tor.Choach.* 11bis (Thebes, 119 B.C.).

⁶³ E.g.: *BGU* III 1006.5-7 (? , III B.C.); X 1909.9-10 (Memphis?, I B.C.); *P.Dion.* 11.27-28 (Hermoupolis Magna, 108 B.C.).

⁶⁴ Themistes *meris*: *P.Köln* III 140.1-3 (Arsinoite, 244-242 B.C.?; 219-217 B.C.?); toparchies, e.g.: *O.Ashm.Shelt.* 42.1-2 (Thebes, II B.C.); *P.Lond.* VII 2188.222 (Philadelphia, 148 B.C.); *P.Tor.Amen.* 7.1-2 (Thebes, 119-117 B.C.); nomes, e.g.: *P.Giss.* 108.11-12 (Pathyris, after 134 B.C.); *P.Ross.Georg.* II 10.5-7 (Pathyris, 88 B.C.); *P.Tor.Choach.* 5.39 (Thebes?, 110 B.C.); other areas, e.g.: *P.Lond.* VII 2188.137 (Philadelphia, 148 B.C.): τοῦ [...] ἐπὶ τοῦ τόπου ἐπιστάτου; *P.Petr.* II 25 FrA.5-6 (226 B.C.): Ἀρτέμωνος | τοῦ ἐπιστάτου τῶν κατὰ τὴν χώραν; *SB* XIV 12093.8-9 (? , II B.C.): τῶν | ἐπὶ τῶν τόπων ἐπιστάτων; Memphite Anoubieion: *UPZ* I 69 verso 1-4 (Memphis, 152 B.C.); 108.1 (Memphis, 99 B.C.). The *epistatês* in charge of the Memphite Anoubieion (as well as the *archiphylakitês*; see above, p. 37 n. 40) seems to have had a decidedly police function and should not be confused with the *epistatês hierou* attested elsewhere (e.g.: *BGU* VI 1214.7-8 [Arsinoite, II B.C.]; *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 62.4 [Memphis, 99 B.C.]; *P.Eleph.* 26.2-3 [223 B.C.]) who seems to have been connected with the financial administration of the temple(s) under his authority.

hierarchical link between the offices: the *archiphylakitês* of a given region was subordinate to the same region's *epistatês*. The *epistatês* regularly received his orders from the *stratêgos* of the nome. In police matters that attracted the attention of the *stratêgos* the *epistatês* of the town or village in question was almost always the official to whom instructions to set matters right were addressed.⁶⁵

The *archiphylakitês*, however, seems never to have received instructions from the *stratêgos*. Rather, when orders had to be given to *archiphylakitai* the *epistatês* appears to have been the delegating official. For instance, in one case a lower official (perhaps a *phylakitês*) wrote to an *epistatês* concerning the insubordination of an *archiphylakitês* (*P.Hib.* I 73 [243-242 B.C.]). He noted that the *archiphylakitês* had disobeyed the recipient's direct orders (*prostagmata*) by releasing a donkey-thief. Elsewhere an *archiphylakitês* wrote to an *epistatês* concerning the search of a house and noted that another official had prevented him from carrying out the search without a letter from the *epistatês* (*SB* X 10272 [III B.C.]).⁶⁶ Even in those cases where petitioners or other officials sought out the assistance of the *stratêgos* in reprimanding or instructing an *archiphylakitês*, where evidence of remediating action survives the *stratêgos* always contacted the *epistatês*.⁶⁷ *Archiphylakitai* were primarily officials of town or village competency who supervised the activities of the *phylakitai* and were generally given ample

⁶⁵ See *P.Enteux. passim*.

⁶⁶ For the uncertain identification of the *archiphylakitês* in this text see *P.Enteux.* 24 (221 B.C.).

⁶⁷ As mentioned above, in a few of the third-century petitions from Magdola the *stratêgos* was asked to contact an *archiphylakitês* to obtain justice for a petitioner (*P.Enteux.* 24, 50 and 82 [all 221 B.C.]). But the *stratêgos* never wrote to an *archiphylakitês* but invariably to the *epistatês* of the village in question.

freedom to attend to matters of law and order at the town or village level. It is unclear precisely how or by whom *archiphylakitai* were recruited, but the surviving evidence suggests that hiring was done in Egyptian villages.⁶⁸ Thus, nome-level officials such as the *stratêgos* may not have been personally familiar with police chiefs in the *chôra*.

The *epistatês*, on the other hand, appears to have been an appointee of a nome-level official (the *stratêgos*) with a corresponding connection to this official. *Stratêgoi* were at least occasionally responsible for hiring *epistatai*, to judge from one text. In a petition to the *stratêgos* from a number of crown cultivators, the writers recalled the former's appointment of trustworthy *epistatai* to whom instructions had been given by the sovereigns to prevent extortion (*P.Tebt.* III.1 788 [II B.C.]). The *epistatês* handled those matters that involved appeals to government agents at the nome level and was responsible for supervising law enforcement in his locality, including the activities of *archiphylakitai*. But this does not imply that the *epistatês* had a direct connection to the *phylakitai*. Rather, he seems to have acted only through the *archiphylakitês*. Further, the *epistatês* does not appear to have taken much initiative in the realm of law enforcement. He generally acted only when called upon from above (through orders from the *stratêgos*) or below (via petitions from villagers). When he did act, however, he might perform many of the same tasks of the *archiphylakitês* subordinate to him.

⁶⁸ See *Chrest.Wilck.* 331 (Tebtynis, 113 B.C.), a copy of a letter from the *dioikêtês* to Hermias, *ho epi tôn prosodôn* concerning delinquencies in his work for the annual guarding of crops (*genêmatophylakia*). The document reveals that the latter official was (at least occasionally) responsible for appointing men to the position of *archiphylakitês* as well as that of *oikonomos* (21-22) and that the men to fill these posts may have come from the nearby vicinity (45-53). For further discussion of this text see chapter 5, pp149-152.

A handful of other officials appear to have had administrative duties in the Ptolemaic police system, primarily as supervisors of *phylakitai*. A *dekanos phylakitôn* is attested in two texts.⁶⁹ Elsewhere, evidence survives of a *hêgemôn phylakitôn*, a *prostatês phylakitôn* and an official with the title *ho epi tôn phylakitôn*.⁷⁰ Unfortunately, the sparse nature of the data allows few conclusions about the duties, provenances or relative ranks of these posts. But the comparative wealth of documentation for the offices of *archiphylakitês*, *epistatês* and *epistatês phylakitôn* suggests that these additional administrative positions were uncommon or extraordinary and decidedly low in the police hierarchy, with jurisdictions covering towns or villages.

Three Ptolemaic officials shouldered the main responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of law and order in the Egyptian countryside: the *archiphylakitês*, the *epistatês* and the *epistatês phylakitôn*. Each had his own delineated domains and powers, though certain of their duties overlapped from time to time. *Archiphylakitai* and *epistatai* were found throughout the *chôra* and handled most of the day-to-day police business. *Archiphylakitai* had the main responsibility for

⁶⁹ *Chrest. Wilck.* 331.31 (Tebtynis, 113 B.C.), a letter of reprimand to an official who had been censured for failure to properly instruct the *dekanoi phylakitôn*, among other things; and *SB XXII* 15767.10 (Arsinoite, II B.C.), a memorandum with instructions for an unknown official to write to a number of police officials, including a *dekanos phylakitôn*. The title occurs nowhere else, though there is mention of *dekanoi* in *P. Tebt.* I 251 (I B.C.; no line numbers given). The editors of *P. Tebt.* III.1 731 (see following note) suggested (p. 140 n. 1) that the office may have been equivalent to the equally obscure *hêgoumenos tôn phylakitôn* which occurs in that document.

⁷⁰ *Hêgemôn phylakitôn*: *P. Tebt.* III.1 731.1 (153-153 B.C.?; 142-141 B.C.?), a letter concerning some derelict *phylakitai* sent by Ἀπολ[λ]ώνιος ὁ ἡγούμενος τῶν ἐν Ἰβιδῶνι (Εἰκοσιπενταρούρων) φυλακιδῶν. Reference is made elsewhere to the *hêgemôn archaiôn phylakitôn* (*BGU XIV* 2445.iii.3 [Herakleopolite, I B.C.], a land register) and perhaps to the *hêgemonia tôn phylakitôn* (*BGU XIV* 2447.Fr15 [Herakleopolite, I B.C.], a land register: [ca ? τῶ]ν ὑπὸ τὴν Διονυσίου ἡγεμονίαν φυλακιδῶν ca ?]). *Prostatês phylakitôn*: *SB I* 4309.25 (? , III B.C.?), a fragmentary petition to the king from a prisoner who noted that a knife had been given to this official. *Ho epi tôn phylakitôn*: *SB VI* 9215.14 (Oxyrhynchus, 250 B.C.), orders from the *dioikêtês* concerning the harvesting of timber, perhaps involving the “man in charge of the *phylakitai*.”

managing and maintaining the *phylakitai* and occasionally received instructions from the *epistatai* who acted as their supervisors. *Epistatai* functioned primarily as representatives of royal authority in Egyptian towns and villages and were responsible for seeing to it that *archiphylakitai* did their jobs. But they could also perform many of the duties of the *archiphylakitês*. The office of *epistatês phylakitôn* appears to have been a nome-level post concerned primarily with the administration of justice at trial. In this way, the duties of the *epistatês phylakitôn* overlapped with those of the *stratêgos* to some degree.

Though strikingly similar in many respects, *archiphylakitai*, *epistatai* and *epistatai phylakitôn* were all necessary cogs in the Ptolemaic law enforcement machine. But these three officials were not uniformly and regularly distributed throughout the *chôra*. The degree of diversity observable in the data suggests that police hierarchy, though in theory set by the Ptolemies based on geography, was in fact more often determined by the needs of individual towns and villages and the law enforcement officials who served them. This perhaps helps to explain why official relationships between *archiphylakitai*, *epistatai* and *epistatai phylakitôn* were not always clearly defined. Each officer performed a number of functions likewise performed by the other two and did not always follow the expected chain of command when problems made communication between officials necessary. Yet in spite of these apparent departures from official protocol, breakdowns in communication seem to have been rare. Most police business was completed expeditiously and in full. In fact, the lack of rigid organization made for a much more self-sufficient, flexible police system. As we shall see, that the

phylakitai functioned so well as an efficient policing body was due mainly to the administrative acumen and adaptability of the officials who supervised them.

It would be wrong, however, to assume that all police business was managed by *phylakitai* and their superiors. At times, the duties of Ptolemaic *phylakitai* overlapped with those of another group: *phylakes*. The *phylakitai* were government-sanctioned defenders of public safety, but many *phylakes* were privately hired and managed. Several varieties of *phylax* appear in the Ptolemaic evidence, from the *paradeisophylakes* employed to guard an individual's agricultural interests to the *halônophylakes* stationed at threshing-floors; from the *nauphylakes* tending to the cargo of ships in transit to the *desmophylakes* keeping watch over prisoners. A few types of guards were regularly employed by the state, often in conjunction with *phylakitai* and their superiors, for the protection of government interests. Of these guards the *desmophylakes*, *erêmophylakes*, *genêmatophylakes*, *potamophylakes* and *thêsaurophylakes* occur with the greatest frequency. As their duties were concerned primarily with security, *phylakes* were not police officials proper. But the nature of the tasks assigned to a significant number of them, tasks with striking similarities to those enjoined upon *phylakitai*, made them police officials in all but name.

Though the term *phylax* appears in a number of compounds in the papyri and other documentary evidence from Egypt, only a few types of *phylax* occur with enough frequency and in sufficiently clear contexts to allow for certainty concerning their duties. Many *phylakes* surface in the data only once or twice. Their titles provide a suggestion of their primary activities, but no real certainty. A great many types of *phylax* were employed by private individuals in Ptolemaic

times to watch over their personal interests. These guardians of homes, gardens, vineyards and the like provided their employers with a certain amount of security and protection.⁷¹ Interestingly, most of the attestations for these types of *phylax* date to the third century and the preponderance derives from the Zenon archive. Perhaps the degree of specification seen in the titles of these *phylakes* was only necessary on an agricultural estate the size of Apollonios'.⁷² A few types of *phylax* did not have a police or military function. Some of their posts were nothing more than honorific titles, though most of them performed some sort of supervisory duty.⁷³

As with those *phylakes* that were primarily private employees, guards working in the public served a variety of needs. Many of the types of *phylax* with seemingly official duties occur only once or twice, leaving some uncertainty about the nature of their employment and the extent (both temporal and spatial) of their distribution. Some of these guards (*chômatophylakes* and *halônophylakes*, for instance) had among their primary responsibilities the protection of state

⁷¹ Etymology suggests that *aulophylakes* guarded courtyards: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59292.58 (250 B.C.); that *erganophylakes* (?) watched over (agricultural?) tools: *BGU X 1988FrB.3* (? , III B.C.); and that *nyktophylakes* served as night-watchmen: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59329.6 (249 B.C.). *Paradeisophylakes* were doubtless garden-guards: *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59690.22 (257-256 B.C.); *hydrophylakes* likely supervised irrigation-works: *P.Hib.* II 268 (ca 260 B.C.; no line numbers given). The *chalkiophylax* may have been employed to protect the heating cauldrons in a bath: *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59799.8 (254-250 B.C.). A *chortophylax* doubtless guarded hay: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59368.24 (240 B.C.).

⁷² In many respects this huge estate was a state in and of itself, owned by a high-ranking government official who acted as chief administrator and outfitted with hundreds of personnel.

⁷³ The titles *archisômatophylax* ("chief of the bodyguard") and *sômatophylax* ("bodyguard"), for instance, were aulics: see Mooren (1977) 17-73 for a discussion of attestations, relative ranks and chronology. *Bibliophylakes* and *symbolophylakes* served as record-keepers, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* I 112 (112 B.C.; no line numbers given [see p. 473]) and *P.Rev.*² x.2 (Arsinoite?, 259 B.C.). *Gazophylakes* and *chrêmatophylakes* were treasurers: *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59036.4 (257 B.C.) and (e.g.) *P.Erasm.* I 10.1-2 (Arsinoite, II B.C.). *Thesmo-* and *nomophylakes* had legal duties: the former primarily dealing with the formation of decrees and regulations (e.g.: *P.Hal.* I 1.239 [Apollonopolis Magna?, after 259 B.C.]), the latter concerning judicial matters (e.g.: *P.Hamb.* II 168FrA.3 [?, III B.C.]). *Thêrophylakes* seem to have been high-level hunters or supervisors of captive beasts, e.g.: *SB I 294.3-4* (Panopolis, 323-30 B.C.). *Syngraphophylakes* were entrusted with copies of legal agreements between parties, e.g.: *BGU VI 1271.15* (Philadelphia?, 180-145 B.C.).

agricultural and financial interests.⁷⁴ Others (*hormophylakes*, *nauphylakes* and *skeuphylakes*) had functions connected with travel and commerce on the Nile.⁷⁵ A final group (*akrophylakes*, *gerrophylakes*, *horophylakes* and *plagiophylakes*) seem to have had duties of a military nature.⁷⁶ Men serving as *phylakes* without any further distinction were occasionally employed by the Ptolemies, as well. We see them as guards of *kômai* and possibly watching over the state's agricultural interests and prisoners.⁷⁷ That the position of *phylax* was recognized as an occupation is proven by a handful of documents where the profession of *phylax* is recorded.⁷⁸

As mentioned above, five types of *phylax* occur in the Ptolemaic evidence with great frequency and deserve special treatment. These guards (*desmophylakes*, *erêmophylakes*, *genêmatophylakes*, *potamophylakes* and *thêsaurophylakes*) were all actively involved in state agricultural, financial and security interests. The

⁷⁴ *Chômatophylakes* were evidently in charge of inspecting and protecting dykes, e.g.: *P.Petr.* II 6.3 (256 B.C.). *Halônophylakes* guarded threshing-floors, and thus played an important role in the successful completion of the *genêmatophylakia*, e.g.: *P.Oxy.* XII 1465.7-8 (I B.C.).

⁷⁵ *Hormophylakes* seem to have played a role in the collection of grain and may have been responsible for protecting the harbors of the Nile, e.g.: *P.Erasm.* I 13.1-2 (Kaine, 152 B.C.). *Nauphylakes* appear to have been members of the on-board security forces of ships: *P.Tebt.* III.1 802.4-7 (135 B.C.). *Skeuphylakes* were probably guardians of baggage or cargo while in transit, e.g.: *P.Zen.Pestm.* 41.5-8 (III B.C.).

⁷⁶ One would assume that *akrophylakes* protected citadels: *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59006.5 (259 B.C.?). Analogously, *gerrophylakes* ought to have been responsible for defending wicker-work barriers of some sort, e.g.: *SB* I 1918.4 (Syene, 144-142 B.C.). *Horophylakes* seem to have been responsible for guarding frontier regions: *PSI* IV 406.8-9, 12 (Philadelphia, 260-258 B.C.). *Plagiophylakes* may have provided protection for the flanks of an army on the move: *UPZ* I 89.6 (Memphis, 159 B.C.).

⁷⁷ Village-guards: *BGU* VIII 1787.7 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.); guards for oil (?): *P.Sorb.* I 34.13-14 (Arsinoite?, 230 B.C.); guards of prisoners (?): *P.Hib.* I 147 (III B.C.; no line numbers given).

⁷⁸ *P.Tebt.* III.2 893.8 (II B.C.); IV 1136.64 (ca 114 B.C.); and 1150.2 (115-114 B.C.). In addition to *phylakes*, at least one other type of private security professional is occasionally encountered in the documents: *thyrôroi* ("doormen"), e.g.: *BGU* VI 1491.5 (Apollonopolis Magna, II/I B.C.); XIV 2428.28 (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59292.76-77 (after 250 B.C.). These men seem to have been employed for home security purposes, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1881 (Herakleopolite, 80-30 B.C.), where a man noted that he had been attacked by the *thyrôros* of a house. On *archithyrôroi* (*I.Alex.Ptol.* 43.2 [II/I B.C.]; *P.Tebt.* III.1 790.1 [127-124 B.C.]) see *I.Alex.Ptol.* 43 commentary.

documents provide a wealth of information on their duties, times and durations of service, coworkers, ethnic makeup, geographical distribution, rates of pay, landholdings and even personal lives. Each of these five officials was tightly linked to the Ptolemaic state and very often to the *phylakitai*. *Desmophylakes* worked as jailors in Ptolemaic prisons, received and released prisoners and often accepted bail payments.⁷⁹ *Erêmosthylakes* were employed in border regions and occasionally (at least) provided assistance to other officials in confiscating goods and arresting those engaging in illegal activities.⁸⁰ Though they are a common occurrence in land registers the ample surviving evidence for *erêmosthylakes* sheds little light on their official duties.⁸¹ *Genêmatophylakes* transported grain from the fields to government threshing-floors, issued receipts, watched over produce and also seem to have provided security for areas in which financial wrongdoing connected to grain had been detected.⁸² When the need arose they were

⁷⁹ Receiving prisoners, e.g.: *Chrest.Mitt.* 45 (III B.C.?); *P.Enteux.* 84 (246-205 B.C.); *SB* III 7202 (Arsinoite, 227 B.C.); receiving bail payments: *P.Lille.Dem.* I 3 (243 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 777 (II B.C.). See chapter 4, pp118-119 and 121.

⁸⁰ On *erêmosthylakes* see above all Hennig (2003); also Peremans (1972); Borkowski (1971); Rostovtzeff (1959) 669, 1482 n. 76; Wallace (1938) 272ff.; *P.Aust.Herr.* I 9 p. 40 and chapter 5, pp146-147. Arresting and confiscating: *P.Tebt.* III.1 709 (159 B.C.), a circular from the superintendent of the monopoly on papyrus addressed to a number of village police officials, including *erêmosthylakes*. The circular's recipients were instructed to provide assistance to a subcontractor by seizing smugglers and their illicit goods.

⁸¹ Land registers, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* I 63.79-87 (116-115 B.C.); 85.77, 106 (113 B.C.?); III.2 833.14-22 (II B.C.).

⁸² On *genêmatophylakes* and the *genêmatophylakia* see Rostovtzeff (1910) 52, 81; (1906) 204ff.; *P.Lille* II 1 n. on 10; *P.Mich.* XVIII 769 pp99-103; *P.Ryl.* II 90; *UPZ* I pp475-479; and chapter 5, pp148-152 and 158-166. Transporting grain: *P.Enteux.* 55 (?) (222 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.2 1057 (170-116 B.C.); issuing receipts: *P.Gen.* II 86 (Bacchias, 187 B.C.?; 163 B.C.?); *P.Tebt.* IV 1135 (112 B.C.); guarding produce, e.g.: *Chrest.Wilck.* 331 (Tebtynis, 113 B.C.); 337 (Arsinoite, 222/1 B.C.); *P.Mich.* XVIII 769 (?) (Trikomia, 200 B.C.?); providing security: *P.Tebt.* III.1 715 (?) (II B.C.), a letter in which a *kômogrammateus* wrote to an official of unknown rank and the *genêmatophylakes* concerning setting a watch (?) over a village until security for some rent was obtained.

impressed from village populations.⁸³ *Potamophylakes* provided security at and around rivers and might also be involved to some degree in the transfer of troops.⁸⁴ *Thêsaurophylakes* protected public and private granaries, received, transmitted and returned grain and issued receipts.⁸⁵ Further data on these five types of *phylax* will appear below.

In addition to *phylakitai* and *phylakes* a number of military men sometimes had police functions. For instance, the *machimoi*, a division composed primarily of native Egyptian troops, evidently served as armed attendants on government officials.⁸⁶ They seem to have occasionally received government circulars and may have been empowered to make arrests.⁸⁷ *Ephodoi* too appear to have had at least quasi-police duties from time to time.⁸⁸ We see them providing physical assistance to those in danger, accompanying police officials on raids, acting as bodyguards for bureaucrats, escorting (?) letter-carriers, receiving produce

⁸³ *P.Mich.* I 73 (Philadelphia, III B.C.), a letter to two men from an official who informed them that they had been signed up for the village *genêmatophylakia*.

⁸⁴ On *potamophylakes* see Lewis (1977) 152-153; also chapter 5, pp147-148. River security: *BGU* VIII 1784 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.); XIV 2368 (Herakleopolite, 63 B.C.); troop transfer: *BGU* VIII 1784 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.), a letter in which an official requested that certain *potamophylakes* bring up the rear-guard (*ouragia*) to another location and hand it over to another group of *potamophylakes*.

⁸⁵ On *thêsaurophylakes* see Calderini (1924); also chapter 5, pp164-166. Public *thêsaurophylakes*, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* III.2 848.1-3 (II B.C.); 862.1 (II B.C.); 957.11 (II B.C.); private *thêsaurophylakes*, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59292.155 (?) (after 250 B.C.); III 59509.11 (III B.C.); *P.Princ.* III 117.3-5 (? , 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?); receiving / returning grain: *P.Princ.* III 117 (? , 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?); *P.Tebt.* III.2 957 (II B.C.); issuing receipts: *P.Tebt.* III.2 957 (II B.C.).

⁸⁶ E.g.: *P.Tebt.* I 112.81-82 (112 B.C.); 116v.57-59 (II B.C.); 121.34-35 (94 or 61 B.C.). Scholarship on the *machimoi* is extensive. See Oates (1994) and Goudriaan (1988) 121-125 as well as *P.Yale* I pp86-90, where an especially detailed account of the attestations for and duties of as well as previous scholarship on *machimoi* is given. See also (e.g.) Clarysse and Thompson (forthcoming) vol. 2 chapter 5; Winnicki (1985) 48-52; and *CPR* XVIII pp103-104.

⁸⁷ Circulars: *P.Tebt.* III.2 903 (II B.C.); arrests (?): *SB* I 4369 (Arsinoite, III B.C.).

⁸⁸ See Clarysse and Thompson (forthcoming) vol. 2 chapter 5; *P.Hal.* 7 pp199-200; *P.Mich.* X p. 51; and *P.Tebt.* I 96 introduction and pp550-551.

earmarked for government use and involved in the collection of tax revenues.⁸⁹ Like the *machimoi* they too seem to have had superior officers (*archephodoi*) and are regularly present in Ptolemaic land registers and tax accounts, often as holders of *ephodikoi klêroi*.⁹⁰ They occasionally appear in government records alongside *phylakitai* and other police officials.⁹¹

Of all the military officials that played roles in law enforcement in the *chôra* the heads of Ptolemaic garrisons, *phrourarchoi* were by far the most important.⁹² *Phrourarchoi* were frequently involved in solving crimes and providing justice. These officials had police powers similar to those of *archiphylakitai*, though their administrative reach seems to have been limited to the immediate vicinities of the *phrouria* they commanded. *Phrourarchoi* were regularly called upon (by petitioners or higher officials) to arrest, transport and interrogate offenders.⁹³ They also seem to have had broad powers to detain suspects: no fewer than five documents provide requests for *phrourarchoi* to jail or

⁸⁹ Assisting the imperiled: *BGU* VIII 1780 (Herakleopolite, after 56 B.C.?; after 50 B.C.?); going on raids: *P.Coll. Youtie* I 16 (? , 109 B.C.); acting as bodyguards: *P.Petr.* III 128 (III B.C.); as escorts (?): *P.Hal.* 7 (Thebaid, 232 B.C.); *P.Oxy.* IV 710 (111 B.C.); collecting agricultural goods: *P.Lond.* VII 2190 (Philadelphia, 169 B.C.); collecting taxes: *P.Rev.*² x.1-xi.3 (Arsinoite?, 259 B.C.).

⁹⁰ *Archephodoi*: *BGU* VIII 1855.7-8 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.); *P.IFAO* II 4.3-4 (? , 103 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 90.i.1 (I B.C.); *archimachimoi*, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* I 120.127-128 (97 or 64 B.C.); *SB* XVI 12375.26, 110 (Arsinoite?, ca 180 B.C.); 12468.24-25 (Arsinoite?, III B.C.); *ephodikoi klêroi*, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* III.2 826.79 (172 B.C.); 830.5 (II B.C.); IV 1140.86 (115/4 B.C.).

⁹¹ Alongside *phylakitai*, e.g.: *BGU* VI 1216.73-74 (Memphis, 110 B.C.?); XIV 2437.23-31 (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); *P.Petr.* III 93.ii.6, vii.21-27 (238-237 B.C.); with other police officials, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* I 179 (II B.C.; no line numbers given); IV 1116.91-95 (134-132 B.C.); 1117.155-159 (120-119 B.C.).

⁹² On *phrourarchoi* and *phrouria* in the Ptolemaic period see especially *P.Diosk.* pp2-15. See also (e.g.) Maehler (1970); Wolff (1970) 94, 172 n. 46; Kortenbeutel (1936) 292-295; and Lesquier (1911) 72, 83, 332ff.

⁹³ Arresting: *BGU* 1844 (Herakleopolite, 50-49 B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 7 (Herakleopolite, ca 153 B.C.); transporting people: *BGU* VIII 1844 (Herakleopolite, 50-49 B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 12 (Herakleopolite?, II B.C.); *P.Tor.Choach.* 8 (Thebes, 126 B.C.); interrogating and investigating: *P.Diosk.* 7 (ca 153 B.C.); *P.Hib.* II 233 (?) (ca 250 B.C.).

keep watch over offenders.⁹⁴ This is not surprising, as Ptolemaic *phrouria* doubtless contained cells for temporary detention, and may even have housed full-fledged prisons.⁹⁵ Also like *archiphylakitai*, *phourarchoi* were present at government auctions and trials and received and archived petitions and government circulars.⁹⁶

But unlike *archiphylakitai*, *phourarchoi* do not appear to have had any connection to the ranks of the *phylakitai*. The handful of texts that mention subordinates of the *phourarchos* doing police work provide no clues as to the official designation of these underlings. Though they performed tasks similar to those carried out by *phylakitai*, one assumes that the agents of the *phourarchos* were not police officers but rather military officials of some sort.⁹⁷ But the evidence is inconclusive. The documents are more helpful when considering those officials from whom *phourarchoi* took orders. They suggest that

⁹⁴ *P.Diosk.* 3 (Herakleopolite, 153 B.C.?); 4 (153 B.C.?); 5 (146 B.C.?); 8 (II B.C.); and 9 (II B.C.). In *P.Diosk.* 6 (146 B.C.), a copy of a petition to the *stratêgos* forwarded by the petitioners to the *phourarchos*, the writers asked that the *phourarchos* give heed to their complaints. The original petition contained a request that the *stratêgos* detain certain wrongdoers until a trial could take place.

⁹⁵ Of the six examples cited in the previous note, one (*P.Diosk.* 9) mentions a specific place of detention. In this text, a woman requested that the *phourarchos* Dioskourides detain a runaway slave in the *phylakê*. Though the document is not conclusive, given the administrative domain of the *phourarchos* it seems likely that the garrison over which he had sway (namely that in Herakleopolis) contained a prison complex. For more on prisons and imprisonment see chapter 4, pp114-126.

⁹⁶ Present at auctions, e.g.: *BGU* VI 1219 (Hermopolite, II B.C.); *Chrest.Wilck.* 162 (Hermonthis, 186 B.C.); *P.Haun.* I 11 (Arsinoite?, 182 B.C.); at trials: *Chrest.Mitt.* 32 (Arsinoite, 181 B.C.); received petitions, e.g.: *P.Diosk.* 1 (154 B.C.?); 2 (154 B.C.?); 3 (153 B.C.?); circulars, e.g.: *P.Gen.* III 132 (Herakleopolite?, II B.C.); *P.Rain.Cent.* 45 (? , ca 232 B.C.); 46 (? , III B.C.).

⁹⁷ In *P.Diosk.* 1 (154 B.C.?) an agent of the *phourarchos* (Ἡρακλείδου τοῦ παρὰ σοῦ, 23-24) arrested a pair of fighting men. In *P.Diosk.* 5 (146 B.C.?) two tax farmers reported that they had handed over a smuggler and his wares to the *phourarchos* and two of his agents (Ἀπολλωνίωι καὶ Ἐπιμάχωι | τοῖς παρὰ σοῦ, 10-11). Finally, in *P.Diosk.* 6 (146 B.C.) petitioners noted that some offenders had been handed over to an agent of the *phourarchos* (Ἐπιμάχωι τῶι παρὰ τοῦ φρ[α]ουράρχου, 28).

phourarchoi answered to *stratēgoi*, though perhaps only indirectly.⁹⁸ A number of government circulars in which the *phourarchos* is listed after the *stratēgos* reveals that the former was an official of a lower, but not dramatically lower rank than the latter.⁹⁹ The two officers may also occasionally have worked together.¹⁰⁰

A handful of officials with titles suggesting armed police or military duties are also attested for the Ptolemaic period. Five texts mention *mastigophoroi*, "whip-bearers."¹⁰¹ Aside from the fact that they evidently provided floggings for those who had done wrong and served as attendants on officials little is known about them.¹⁰² The same can be said of the *rhabdophoroi*, or "club-bearers".¹⁰³ They

⁹⁸ In *BGU VIII 1844* (Herakleopolite, 50-49 B.C.) a petitioner requested that the *stratēgos* write to the *phourarchos* to summon an offender; the *stratēgos*, however, ordered certain *grammateis* to write to the *phourarchos*. In *P.Diosk. 6* (Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.) complainants asked that the *phourarchos* give heed to the contents of their petition, a document that had initially been sent to the *stratēgos*. Finally, in *P.Diosk. 4* (153 B.C.?) a government agent with the title ἡγεμόνος τῶν ἔξω τάξε[ω]ς καὶ γραμματέως τῆς Νικάδα τρ(ημιολίας) μισ(θοφόρου) (2-3) asked that the *phourarchos* detain certain men. It is perhaps impossible to determine whether the document contains an order from a higher official (the author or another) or a polite request from a lower one.

⁹⁹ E.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 47.1-3 (Tebtynis, 140-139 B.C.): [βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος καὶ βασίλισσα Κλεοπάτρα ἡ ἀδελφὴ καὶ βασίλισσα | [Κλεοπάτρα ἡ γυνὴ τοῖς στρατη]γοῖς καὶ τοῖς φρουράρχοις καὶ τοῖς | [ἐπιστάταις τῶν φυλακῶν καὶ] ἀρχιφυλακίταις, etc.; 62.1-3 (Memphis, 99 B.C.): [β]ασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος ὁ ἐπικαλούμενος Ἀλέξαν[δ]ρος καὶ βασ[ί]λισσα Βερενί[κ]η | ἡ ἀδελφὴ τῶι στρατη[γ]ῶι τοῦ Μεμφίτου καὶ τῶι φρουράρχωι [καὶ τ]ῶι ἐπισ[τά]τῃ | [τ]ῶν φυλα[κ]ῶν καὶ ἀρχιφυλακίτηι, etc.; *P.Gen. III 132.1-5* (Herakleopolite?, II B.C.): [ca 5]ῆς τῶι στρατηγῶ[ι] τοῦ Ἡρακλεοπολίτου καὶ τῶι φρουράρχωι καὶ τῶι ἐπιστάτῃ | [τῶν φυ]λακῶν καὶ τῶι ν[ο]μάρχῃ καὶ τῶι ἐπὶ τῶν προσόδων καὶ τῶι οἰκονόμωι | [καὶ τῶι βασιλικῶι γραμμα]τεῖ καὶ τῶι ἀντιγραφεῖ καὶ τοῖς τοπάρχαις | καὶ τοπογραμ[μα]τεῦσι καὶ κομάρχαις καὶ κομογραμ[μα]τεῦσι καὶ τῶι ἀρχιφυλακίτῃ καὶ φυλακίταις | [καὶ γεωργοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἀ]λλοῖς τὰ βασιλικά πραγματευομένοις χαίρειν.

¹⁰⁰ See *P.Hib. II 233* (ca 250 B.C.), in which mention is made of a *prostagma* for the *stratēgos* and the *phourarchos* that will aid them in an investigation of certain matters.

¹⁰¹ *BGU XIV 2433.70* (Herakleopolite, ca 150 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen. I 59080.4* (257 B.C.); *P.Tebt. I 121.58* (94 or 61 B.C.); 179 (II B.C.; no line numbers given); and *SB XVI 12375.7, 17, 25, 94, 101-102* and 109 (Arsinoite?, ca 180 B.C.).

¹⁰² Providing whippings: *P.Cair.Zen. I 59080* (257 B.C.); serving as attendants: *SB XVI 12375* (Arsinoite?, ca 180 B.C.).

¹⁰³ Only four Ptolemaic texts mention *rhabdophoroi*: *P.Cair.Zen. IV 59753.73* (III B.C.); *PSI IV 332.11* (Philadelphia, 257 B.C.); *SB VI 9556.iii.9, 11* (245 B.C.); and *UPZ II 157.18* (Thebes, 241 B.C.). *Rhabdophoroi* may also appear in *P.Mich. XVIII 773* (Oxyrhyncha / Krokodilopolis, ca 194 B.C.) and 774 (Oxyrhyncha, ca 194/3 B.C.); see *P.Mich. XVIII p. 127 n. on 11-12*.

provided motivation for those performing liturgical work or perhaps served as urban or harbor security (?) forces.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, almost nothing is known about the posts of *chersanippos*, *chersephippos* and *logchophoros*.¹⁰⁵ Etymology suggests that the first two patrolled the desert (without and with horses, respectively) and that the third carried a spear. Significantly more data survives for a final group of armed quasi-police officials, the *machairophoroi* ("sword-bearers").¹⁰⁶ The post designated an agent who served as an armed attendant for an official.¹⁰⁷ We see *machairophoroi* providing muscle in a pinch, assisting in making arrests, transporting goods, acting as security guards and seeing to it that government regulations were followed.¹⁰⁸ These officials also had a certain degree of organization in their ranks: they had their own chief officers and even priests.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ Supervising liturgists (?): *UPZ* II 157 (Thebes, 241 B.C.); urban security (?): *PSI* IV 332 (Philadelphia, 257 B.C.); harbor security (?): *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59753 (III B.C.).

¹⁰⁵ *Chersanippoi* appear in only two texts: *PSI* IV 399.1-2 (244/3 B.C.) and an unedited third-century Petrie papyrus from Berenikis. *Chersephippoi* appear in ten documents, all from the second century, all from Tebtynis: *P.Tebt.* I 60.21 (118 B.C.); 62.34 (119-118 B.C.); 63.36-37 (116-115 B.C.); 64.18 (116-115 B.C.); 84.174-175, 181-182 (118 B.C.); 89.63, 67 (113 B.C.); IV 1110.39-40 (116-115 B.C.); 1114.12-14 (113-112 B.C.); 1116.91-92 (134-132 B.C.?); and 1118.148-149 (117-116 B.C.). See Hennig (2003) 145-165; also *P.Tebt.* I pp550-551 and chapter 5, p. 148. *Logchophoroi* appear in six texts: *BGU* VIII 1778.1-2 (Herakleopolis, 64-44 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.2 838.7-8 (139 B.C.); 986.5 (139 B.C.); 988.4-5 (139 B.C.); 992 (139 B.C.; no line numbers given); and *I.Prose* 38.5-6 (Euhemeria, 69 B.C.). The designation may have been a title (*cf. machairophoros*, below).

¹⁰⁶ See (*e.g.*) Oertel (1965) 412; Mitford (1939) 24, 36; Harper (1934); Strack (1906) 129-130; Wenger (1903) 505 n. 3; Meyer (1900) 95; and Jouguet (1896) 188-189.

¹⁰⁷ For the king: *BGU* IV 1190.2-4 (Herakleopolite, after 80 B.C.); for the *dioikêtês*, *e.g.*: *BGU* XVIII.1 2737.13-14 (Herakleopolite, 86 B.C.); 2738.14-16 (Herakleopolite, 86 B.C.); *SB* V 8754.19-20 (Herakleopolite?, 77 B.C.?; 48 B.C.?); for the *stratêgos*: *BGU* VIII 1780.13-14 (Herakleopolite, after 56 B.C.?; after 50 B.C.?); *P.Tebt.* I 105.1-2, 11-12 (103 B.C.); for the *basilikos grammateus* (?): *P.Tebt.* I 112.85 (112 B.C.); for the *kômarchês*: *P.Tebt.* I 251 (I B.C.; no line numbers given).

¹⁰⁸ Assisting the imperiled: *BGU* VIII 1780 (Herakleopolite, after 56 B.C.?; after 50 B.C.?); making arrests: *P.Tebt.* I 39 (114 B.C.); transporting goods: *P.Ross.Georg.* II 10 (Pathyris, 88 B.C.); providing security: *P.Tebt.* III.2 962 (II B.C.); enforcing government regulations: *P.Tebt.* I 35 (111 B.C.).

¹⁰⁹ *Prostatês machairophorôn*: *SB* I 624.2-3 (Arsinoite, ?); *hiereus machairophorôn*: *SB* I 624.2-3 (Arsinoite, ?); V 8929.5-6 (Memphis, 176, 165 or 112 B.C.); *archiereus machairophorôn*: *BGU* VIII 1770.2 (Herakleopolite, 63 B.C.).

Though not as crucial as the *phylakitai* for the day-to-day maintenance of law and order in the Ptolemaic kingdom, professional security guards (*phylakes*) and several paramilitary officers nevertheless played important roles in the policing of the Egyptian countryside, roles which often included duties sometimes assigned to *phylakitai*. These officials were entrusted with the protection of government infrastructure and finances, the transportation of state manpower and the defense of the Egyptian population: tasks which were all, to varying degrees, within the administrative sphere of the Ptolemaic police proper. Though their duties were generally those of low-level subordinates, some of these same officers (*erêmophylakes*, *machairophoroi*, etc.) were occasionally empowered to arrest criminals, confiscate goods and the like. Some of them (*phrourarchoi*) even performed a full spectrum of police duties. But the parts they played in the defense of Greek Egypt were their most important roles. As we have seen, security in Egyptian towns and villages was often entrusted to special battalions of officials stationed in these areas. As we shall see, in most cases police forces with such security details took their orders from higher (*i.e.* not village or district) authorities. Such a high degree of government involvement in the affairs of the *chôra* was lacking for most other police business. The Ptolemaic police, though largely autonomous when it came to enforcing law and order on their home turf, were nevertheless still government agents with important ties and obligations to the administration in Alexandria.

The majority of policing in the Ptolemaic *chôra* was carried out by the *phylakitai* and their superiors. These officials performed a broad spectrum of police functions. They arrested, detained and transported offenders, investigated

reports of crimes, seized property, sealed homes and received petitions from villagers and notifications from the government. Systems for policing and defense in Ptolemaic Egypt, though put in place by the Ptolemies and in theory strictly organized by geography, were in practice flexible and differed greatly from place to place. The amount of autonomy granted to police officials seems to have depended in large part on the nature of the work being done. While police work in the towns and villages of the *chôra* was of little concern to the rulers of the kingdom, matters of security were closely supervised and tightly controlled.

In the realm of police activity, nome-level officers (*epistatai phylakitôn, stratêgoi, etc.*) were responsible for lower-level administrators (*archiphylakitai, epistatai, etc.*) throughout the *chôra*. The latter, in turn, supervised the lowest level officers (*phylakitai*) who attended to most routine police business. But this system was by no means rigidly fixed. For one thing, hierarchy differed throughout the different subdivisions of the kingdom. Certain places had police administrators that were not found elsewhere. Overall, variation was the rule. In addition, the official chain of command does not seem to have functioned as a means for the upper levels of power to keep tabs on the lowest-level officers. *Phylakitai* sometimes acted without specific instructions from commanding officials and occasionally even usurped the duties of these same supervisors. Police chiefs in the *chôra* generally do not seem to have informed nome-level police of most of their decisions. Nome-level officials seem to have involved themselves in town or village law enforcement matters only in cases of appeal or where administrative mismanagement had been detected. For the most part, police at the lowest levels of power were permitted to resolve police issues without

interference from above. This system, in which a high degree of autonomy was granted to police officials in Egyptian towns and villages, proved very effective. The Ptolemies were doubtless perfectly happy to entrust the detection, investigation and prevention of crime in the *chôra* to town and village police forces.

The difference when one turns to a consideration of security is striking. As we have seen, a broad spectrum of officials with demonstrable police powers filled posts crucial to the safety of the Egyptian *chôra*. These officers patrolled desert regions, roads and waterways, stood guard over agricultural produce at various points in its journey from the fields to state granaries and sometimes arrested and detained those who violated financial regulations. *Phylakes* and a number of paramilitary officials provided the bulk of the manpower for these tasks, but we occasionally see *phylakitai* and *archiphylakitai* filling similar if not identical functions. Though police could expect broad leeway when attending to crime and criminals, in the realm of physical and financial security police autonomy was minimal. The Ptolemies were determined to maintain their grip on power, the safety of their borders and the continued flow of revenue into their coffers. Security guards and police with similar duties were given specific positions to fill and tasks to execute. If they were also granted administrative competence, it was narrowly defined. For the most part, the limits to self-determination that the government imposed in the realm of security do not seem to have been called into question by the officials so limited. The state knew what it wanted and expected its officers to provide aid in obtaining it. The officers

recognized their duty to the king and his administration and (generally) did what they were told.

The Ptolemaic system of law and order benefited from a wide variety of both specialized and unskilled labor. The system found articulation at all geographical and administrative levels: from the village to the nome, from *phylakitai* to *epistatai phylakitôn*. Officials from various professional spheres (police agents, security guards and the military) performed a full array of police and non-police duties: from making arrests to sealing homes; from protecting crops to delivering mail; from serving summonses to presiding over trials. The law enforcement officials of Ptolemaic Egypt were granted broad autonomy to tend to police matters but were kept on a considerably shorter chain when it came to financial and security issues. The system was thus both highly regulated and self-governing. In the ensuing chapters, we will examine a number of the duties performed by the Ptolemaic police in greater detail, beginning with an investigation into the petitioning process.

Chapter 3: Agents of Appeal: Petitions and Responses

On May 5, 218 B.C. a Greek man named Herakleides made a trip into the village of Psya on personal business. While he was passing through, an Egyptian woman named Psenobastis poured urine on him from her home and soaked his clothes clean through. Naturally, Herakleides was upset. He rebuked Psenobastis only to be met with additional mistreatment: she grabbed the top of the cloak he was wearing and ripped it to shreds, baring his chest, and then spat in his face in the presence of many witnesses. When the latter upbraided her, she retired to her home. In the aftermath of his trip Herakleides submitted a petition to the king.¹ In his account of the events he swore that Psenobastis had acted with hubris and bore full responsibility for what had happened. He stressed not only that he had been a stranger in the village where the assaults had been committed but also that he, a Greek man, had been wronged by an Egyptian woman. In conclusion he asked that the king have the *stratêgos* write to the village *epistatês* to have Psenobastis sent to the *stratêgos* for trial. Herakleides requested that, if the events detailed in his petition should prove true, Psenobastis be made to suffer whatever punishment the *stratêgos* decided upon. Unfortunately, we know nothing more of this case. Similar petitions with surviving dockets suggest that it is likely that the *stratêgos* commanded the *epistatês* to look into the matter, attempt a resolution and then send the disputants to him should a trial have been deemed necessary.

¹ *P. Enteux*. 79.

The submission of a petition to law enforcement was a determined act of self-empowerment. Herakleides' case, as well as those presented in the hundreds of Ptolemaic petitions that survive, illuminates a world that stands in stark contrast to much of the rest of classical antiquity. Elsewhere in the ancient Mediterranean people were often unable to gain access to government redress at the local level without considerable difficulty.² Those who had been wronged sometimes resorted to vigilantism, whether sanctioned by the state or not, rather than working within the framework of a government whose structures and officials were unfamiliar or inaccessible to them.³ For the most part the poor and uneducated masses had little defense in the face of persecution and abuse and had to rely on favors from family members or influential citizens when it came to obtaining justice.⁴

Ptolemaic Egypt was different. As the petitions demonstrate, people living in the towns, villages, districts and territories of the Egyptian *chôra* had regular and easy access to government redress. Petitioners spearheaded efforts to right wrongs committed against them by seeking out police officials in the vicinity. Victims of crime knew precisely whom to contact for specific forms of remediation and in many of the towns and villages in the Egyptian countryside could seek justice from any one of a number of police officers. In those cases where the official with the appropriate powers was unknown, petitioners

² See Todd (1993) 94-97 on the inequalities inherent in the Athenian court system and 201-231 on family relations and the position of women at law; also Carey (1997) 7-9 on the importance of citizenship for full access to the legal system. See Nippel (1995) 30-46 on self-help and personal justice in Rome and the inherent social inequalities.

³ Vigilantism was essential to many forms of self-help and a cornerstone of ancient justice: chapter 1, pp1-3.

⁴ For crime and victims of crime in Greece see (*e.g.*) Hunter (2000, 1994); Cohen (1995); and Fuks (1984); for Rome (*e.g.*) Lintott (1999); Nippel (1995); Gregory (1983); and Davies (1977, 1968).

regularly asked that the right man be contacted. While vigilante justice did occur in Ptolemaic Egypt, it did not provide the assurances and protections of a state-sanctioned response to crime. As countless petitions reveal, the government was seen as the final arbiter for disputes and the ultimate authority for punishment and reparation. The Egyptian people, unlike many of their peers throughout the ancient Mediterranean, were by no means helpless.

The petitions also reveal that the rulers of the kingdom considered justice in Egyptian towns and villages a high priority. The Ptolemies, with their extensive agricultural interests, had a decided interest in maintaining the well-being of their revenue-generating population. But they did not exert firm control over the workings of law enforcement in order to assure this. Rather, they entrusted the resolution of disputes in towns and villages to regional authorities who generally had little to no contact with the higher levels of power. The petitions demonstrate that this system, in which authority was farmed out to officials in the *chôra*, operated smoothly and efficiently. Petitioners complained to neighborhood police officers about crimes committed against them. These officials then took the necessary steps to see to it that justice was served. Higher officials were only involved in cases of appeal or in those instances where breakdowns in official machinery at the town or village level occurred. Both were rare. A dynamic balance between petitioners and police ensured both groups a certain degree of empowerment but likewise kept each somewhat in check. Petitioners were aware of the importance of providing information to law enforcement officials quickly and in full and also realized that their appeals could be rejected or ignored if somehow deficient. For their part, police realized

that reports of operational failures and abuses on their watch reflected badly on them and consequently took steps to ensure that problems were thoroughly and speedily resolved. The heads of state had more important things to worry about than stolen donkeys and assaults on grandmothers. Nevertheless, when things in the *chôra* got out of hand, an appeal for justice to a nome-level (or higher) official usually met with swift resolution.

This chapter will focus on several aspects of the phenomenon of petitions to law enforcement officials in Ptolemaic Egypt. Petitions were a fast and effective way for the Egyptian people to get the attention of the police, arrange for judicial proceedings and effect arrests, confiscations, investigations, evictions and returns of stolen property. People from all walks of life, races, sexes and religions wrote to the police and requested a variety of services. Various government officials received petitions. Agents with police powers were generally the officers of choice for criminal charges, but military, financial and other officials also received complaints from victims of crime. Once received, an appeal might be forwarded repeatedly, eventually receiving an official response that was sometimes appended to its bottom. Though petitions were sometimes mishandled in the course of police processing and justice consequently miscarried, such instances were rare. In most cases, some government official would ultimately take responsibility for investigating and acting on the written claims of an alleged victim. In what follows, we will examine each of the aspects of the petitioning process in greater detail.

First, however, a few words about terminology. What, exactly, constitutes a "petition"? For the purposes of this study I define a "petition" as a letter written

by a private citizen (or an official in his capacity as a private citizen) to a government agent with (perceived) power to see to the righting of certain alleged wrongs. As we shall see below, petitioners labeled their appeals for justice with a variety of common Greek words selected to inform petitioned officials of the content contained in the bodies of their complaints. Yet though there appear to have been specific genres of appeals to law enforcement, each with its own characteristics, the large amount of overlap in content suggests that it would be best to consider them as a whole. Though petitioners took different routes in composing their appeals, they uniformly sought aid in solving crimes and procuring justice.⁵

Let us begin our examination of the petitioning process with a consideration of why the inhabitants of Ptolemaic Egypt wrote petitions to police officers. The simple answer is that they believed (or alleged) that crimes had been committed against them and they wanted revenge, restitution or some other form of justice. As is generally still true today, after any criminal activity it was the responsibility of the injured party to contact local law enforcement, make an official report of the incident, provide relevant details and start the wheels of justice rolling. In Ptolemaic Egypt these steps were combined in an epistolary appeals procedure. Victims of crime sought out a scribe, told their stories and sped their written accounts and requests for action to a village police official (an *archiphylakitês* or *epistatês*, for instance) or higher (generally nome-level) authority

⁵ The subject of Ptolemaic petitions has received a good deal of scholarly attention. See especially Parca (1985); di Bitonto Kasser (1976, 1968, 1967); and Hombert/Préaux (1942); also Wolff (1970) 163, 175 n. 58; Berneker (1930) 36ff.; Semeka (1913) I 277; *P. Enteux*. pp. xxii-xcii; *P. Hib.* II 198 pp. 96-97 n. on iv. 52-84; *P. Köln* V 216 pp. 107-111; VI 272 pp. 213-214; *P. Lille* I 6 pp. 56-57; and *P. Yale* I 53 pp. 156-161.

(the *epistatês phylakitôn*, *stratêgos* or even the king). Once they had been received by the addressee's office petitions were read, sometimes catalogued or copied and often forwarded to other officials for further processing. After an administrator had reached a decision the police took action. In many cases, the official response to an appeal was recorded at the bottom of the document. Though certainly not on a par with the 911 telephone alert system, the procedure outlined above appears to have been surprisingly fast.⁶ It allowed petitioners to present the details of crimes in a thorough fashion and permitted the police to carry out efficient investigations into wrongdoing.

The crimes that petitioners detailed in their letters to law enforcement can be divided into two main categories. The first of these includes assaults on person, property and individual rights. Victims complained about theft, personal violence, breaking and entering, destruction of property, wrongful confiscation, extortion, illegal habitation of property and wrongful arrest or imprisonment.⁷ But as crimes are very rarely characterized by single offenses, petitions regularly contained multiple complaints. In one especially detailed example, two men

⁶ It is easy to forget that for most of recorded history mankind has been without a means for immediately alerting local authorities of law enforcement issues. The United Kingdom was the first nation to implement a telephone alert system for emergencies (the 999 alert system), but only as recently as 1937. A scholarly treatment of the development of such alert systems around the world is lacking. A detailed timeline of the steps in the development of the 911 emergency contact system in the United States (implemented for the first time in 1968) can be found at the following url: http://www.911dispatch.com/911_file/history/911history.html.

⁷ Theft, e.g.: *BGU* VI 1254 (Arsinoite, 154 B.C.?; 143 B.C.?); VIII 1832 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59145 (before 256 B.C.); personal violence, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 72 (218 B.C.); *P.Ryl.* II 68 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 39 (114 B.C.); breaking and entering, e.g.: *BGU* III 1007 (?; 243 or 218 B.C.); VIII 1855 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.); *UPZ* I 5 (Memphis, after 163 B.C.); destruction of property, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 60 (218 B.C.); *P.Mich.* XV 688 (Soknopaiou Nesos, II/I B.C.); *SB* XVI 12524 (Thegonis, 40/39 B.C.?; 17 B.C.?; 26/7 A.D.?); wrongful confiscation, e.g.: *BGU* III 1012 (Arsinoite, 170 B.C.); VIII 1836 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 83 (221 B.C.); extortion, e.g.: *P.Coll.Youtie* I 16 (?; 109 B.C.?); *P.Hib.* II 238 (?) (Oxyrhynchite?, 246-221 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 786 (ca 138 B.C.); illegal habitation, e.g.: *BGU* III 1006 (?; III B.C.); VIII 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.); *P.Tor.Choach.* 11 (Thebes?, 119 B.C.); wrongful arrest/imprisonment, e.g.: *P.Petr.* II 19 (III B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 777 (II B.C.); *SB* I 4309 (?; III B.C.?).

complained to the *stratêgos* about a series of assaults. The petitioners were making their way to the harbor of Herakleopolis when one of them was attacked. The victim rebuked his attacker and the two made their way back inside the city-gates. Here they were attacked again, this time by people brandishing whips, bricks and stones, as well as hands, feet and teeth. A crowd gathered and the offenders were arrested, but the petitioners were not yet out of the woods. Next a woman named Ammonia mangled their himations, and soon thereafter a new group of attackers set upon them. Relief only came when a number of bystanders hustled them inside a house.

The second group of complaints tended to focus more on the personal shortcomings of petitioners and the failure of others to perform the actions required or expected of them. Those who wrote petitions of this sort displayed a keen interest in evoking the pity of the police. They cited their inability to pay taxes or perform liturgical work, sought relief from debts and unfair prosecution or persecution, detailed the offenses or inaction of officials, expressed concern about future harassment or persecution for past events and in by far the greatest number of cases asked for aid in resolving contractual or business issues.⁸ Such situations could lead to violence or other mistreatment. For instance, a second-century petition to the sovereigns details the travails of a royal cultivator who had entered into a rental agreement with a *phylakitês* (*P.Erasm.* I 1 [Oxyrhyncha,

⁸ Impossibility of tax payment or liturgy performance: *BGU* VIII 1822 (Herakleopolite, 60-55 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59451 (III B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 787 (ca 138 B.C.); debt relief, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1833 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59626 (III B.C.); *PSI Congr.* XXI 6 (?) (?), 116-107 B.C.); unfair prosecution/persecution: *P.Tebt.* III.1 785 (ca 138 B.C.); *UPZ* I 124 (Memphis, 175 B.C.?; 165 B.C.?); official abuses, e.g.: *P.Hib.* I 34 (243-242 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 803 (II B.C.); *P.Tor.Choach.* 4 (Thebes?, 111 B.C.); requests for protection: *P.Tebt.* I 43 (118 B.C.); III.1 790 (127-124 B.C.); *UPZ* I 107 (Memphis, 99 B.C.); contractual/business issues, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1844 (Herakleopolite, 50-49 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 50 (221 B.C.); *UPZ* I 123 (Memphis, ca 157/6 B.C.).

148-147 B.C.]). The lessor had asked the cultivator to pay rent in advance, although he had already paid it. The lessor had then invaded the cultivator's home with the village *archiphylakitês* and prevented him from taking the agreed-upon produce unless he agreed to give the lessor a letter that permitted the placement of the rent supposedly due in storage. When the cultivator had later attempted to protest, the lessor and the *archiphylakitês* returned to his home and took pledges with the goal once again of extracting the rent supposedly due.

A petition allowed a victim of crime to assemble the relevant details of an offense and present his or her case in a clear and concise manner for the perusal of law enforcement. Of course, there were certainly quicker ways to obtain justice than by submitting a written record of criminal events hours, days or even weeks after a crime had been committed. Victims doubtless took the law into their own hands some of the time, though there is admittedly no explicit evidence for vigilantism in the papyri. Petitioners did not acknowledge personal wrongdoing in their appeals to law enforcement. They knew full well that to admit to even partial responsibility for the commission of a crime was tantamount to opening the door to failure at law. But it seems only natural that, as is still true today, many of the offenses committed against those who chose to contact the police were, in fact, committed in retaliation for previous offenses. Another alternative to petitioning was to personally seek out a law enforcement officer and inform him of the details of the case or bring him to a crime scene.⁹ But both vigilantism and direct contact with police could be problematic. In the latter case the

⁹ Personal contact with police, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59224 (253 B.C.), in which a victim noted that he had pointed out a robber to an *archiphylakitês*; *P.Tebt.* I 264 (II B.C.), where a farmer mentioned that he had taken some *phylakitai* to a house to make an arrest; *SB XVIII* 13840 (Mouchis, 224-218 B.C.), where a man related that he had shown some property (?) damage to an *epistatês*.

language barrier between the predominantly Egyptian underclasses and their Greek governors might occasionally have been a major impediment. An Egyptian petitioner would doubtless have had little trouble, however, in locating a bilingual scribe in the village to record the details of his or her case in formal (if not always case-perfect) Greek for perusal by the police.¹⁰

Vigilantism and direct contact with the police were also less desirable alternatives for victims of crime because they did not necessarily produce written records of criminal events and their outcomes. Petitions provided the inhabitants of a traditionally litigious and bureaucratic civilization with detailed accounts of the offenses committed against them. These records were essential for court cases, among other things.¹¹ Litigants with detailed files on the specifics of their individual cases had clear advantages at trials held before travelling judicial officials. Those without written materials to back them up had to rely on the weakness of their opponent's case, the strength of their witnesses and/or the favor of the presiding officer. Further, vigilante justice, though in theory quicker to produce the desired results, could lead to consequences from the system it attempted to sidestep. A victim of crime who took the law into his or her own hands to punish an offender might very well have ended up the subject of a petition from the criminal he or she had sought to reprimand. Without a formal,

¹⁰ On bilingualism in Ptolemaic Egypt see Peremans (1983, 1982) and Rémondon (1964). Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt remains a hot topic. Goudriaan (1988) is still the authority. For a few recent studies see (*e.g.*) Thompson (2001); Clarysse (1998); Delia (1996); Colin (1994); La'da (1994); and Bilde (1992).

¹¹ See for example *P. Enteux*. 4 (219-218 B.C.), a petition whose recto preserves an order to an *epistatês* to carry out an investigation and whose verso contains the minutes of an attempted mediation by this official; *P. Diosk.* 6 (Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.), a petition to a *phrourarchos* in which the writers requested that their complaint be sent to a pair of judicial officials; and *SB VI* 9065 (Herakleopolite, 50/49 B.C.), a petition in which the complainant asked that her appeal be sent to the regional *chrêmatistai*.

written record of an initial offense on file with the police it was one man's (or woman's) word against another's. If the offender-turned-victim took the initiative to file a report of the act of revenge, however, he had the opportunity to portray the incident(s) in a decidedly different light and turn the tables on the original victim. In such a case seeking personal justice would have proven a decidedly lesser alternative to writing a petition.

One does not find explicit evidence of this phenomenon in the documents. As mentioned above, petitioners uniformly portrayed themselves as free of fault or offence when relating the details of criminal acts perpetrated against them. Naturally, many petitioners must have covered up relevant details about their relative guilt in (for instance) the failure of a business transaction or a dispute over pasture-rights. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, in his petition to the king Herakleides detailed a series of seemingly unprovoked outrages perpetrated against him by an Egyptian woman. But we hear only his side of the story. Though Herakleides maintained his innocence and it seems likely that Psenobastis (the offender) was indeed guilty of (accidentally?) emptying her bed pan on the Greek man's head, the former was probably reacting to a perceived slight (left out of Herakleides' partisan account of the incident) when she (allegedly) carried out the ensuing attack and was not seeking to assault the Greek businessman out of envy or spite. Unfortunately she chose to vent her anger violently instead of complaining to the police.

The most important motivations to consider when examining the reasons why victims of crime decided to write petitions to law enforcement are the basic desires for self-preservation and the enjoyment of property and rights. Though

the Egyptian populace was materially poor and poorly educated, they had homes, families, possessions and livelihoods that were linked to their contentedness, prosperity and survival. Though many of the crimes detailed in petitions seem trivial to modern minds (and may have often seemed minor to ancient law enforcement, as well) to victims of crime even seemingly minor offenses against seemingly unimportant possessions could be a major blow. Petitions provided the people of Egypt with the opportunity to strike back, to remedy their newly disadvantaged situations and to pursue criminals without endangering their own rights and lives. Personal responses to crimes in Ptolemaic Egypt could take many forms. To ensure the greatest degree of satisfaction, however, with little chance of additional complications the choice was obvious: write a petition.

Villagers clearly knew how to do this. One of the first things a petitioner did after a crime had been committed against them was to travel to the office of the village scribe, where a record of the theft, assault or other incident would be composed for official perusal. Petitions were known by a variety of names in Greek Egypt. *Enteuxeis*, *hypomnêmata* and *prosangelmata* are among the designations most commonly encountered in the documents themselves.¹² Clear-cut differences of style among the different types of official notification are often difficult for the modern scholar to detect. It seems clear, however, that *enteuxeis* and *hypomnêmata* generally contained specific requests for decisive action to

¹² Petitions described as *enteuxeis*, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59145.3-4 (256 B.C.); *P.Erasm.* I 1.31, 38 (Oxyrhyncha, 148-147 B.C.); *SB* VI 9065.20-21, 24 (Herakleopolite, 50/49 B.C.); as *hypomnêmata*, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1761.1 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.); *P.Amh.* II 35.36 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 132 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59475.1 (III B.C.); as *prosangelmata*, e.g.: *BGU* VI 1252.31 (*prosangellein*) (Arsinoite, II B.C.); *P.Hib.* I 144 (230-228 B.C.; no line numbers given); *P.Oxy.* XII 1465.10 (*prosangellein*) (I B.C.).

solve crimes in addition to details on the crimes committed and the criminals involved, while *prosangelmata* often omitted requests for redress and focused more on the specifics of the goods damaged or stolen and on the types of abuse suffered by victims.¹³ While the former two generally had a longer, narrative format the latter was often terse.¹⁴

A thorough reevaluation of the style, structure, grammar and syntax of petitions to Ptolemaic law enforcement is beyond the scope of this study.¹⁵ Here it will suffice to outline the general characteristics of the documents. Petitioners typically listed the addressee first, followed by an oftentimes very specific description of their own name, complete with ethnicity, parentage, employment, title and/or provenance.¹⁶ They employed such high specificity doubtless so as to ensure the greatest degree of accuracy in the solving of crimes and to avoid confusion with homonymous villagers. Next came a brief statement in which the petitioner made his or her accusation and identified the accused, often employing the same degree of precision as that with which he or she had

¹³ Di Bitonto Kasser distinguishes between petitions to the king, or *enteuxeis* (1967) and those addressed to other officials, *hypomnēmata* and *prosangelmata* (1968).

¹⁴ In fact, *prosangelmata* were occasionally written out in duplicate within the same amount of space consumed by an average-sized *hypomnēma* or *enteuxis*: *P.Hib.* I 36 (229/8 B.C.); 37 (235-234 B.C.); *P.Mich.* I 34 (Philadelphia, 254 B.C.).

¹⁵ For a detailed look at the *formulae* most commonly employed in Ptolemaic petitions the reader is referred to Di Bitonto Kasser (1976, 1968 and 1967).

¹⁶ Addressees and addressors, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1828.1-5 (Herakleopolite, 52/1 B.C.): Σελεύκωι συγγενεῖ καὶ στρατηγῶ[ι] | καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν προσόδων | παρὰ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Ἐπινίκου | δεσμοφύλακος τοῦ ἐν Φνεβειῖ δεσμοωτηρίου; *P.Amh.* II 33.1-6 (Soknoraίου Nesos, ca 157 B.C.): βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίωι καὶ βασ[ιλί]σσηι Κλεοπ[άτ]ρ[αι] τῆι ἀδελφῆι | θεοῖς Φιλομήτορσι χαίρ[ειν] | Μαρεπάθ[ι]ς Σισούχου καὶ Π[α]τκῶς Ὀνώφ[ρι]ος καὶ Τ[ε]σενοῦφ[ι]ς | Μάρρεως καὶ Φατρῆς Θεο[το]ῆτος καὶ Ἄρπ[ca 5 Ἄμα]ράντου | βασιλικοὶ γεωργοὶ τῶν [ἀπὸ τ]ῆς Σοκνοπ[αίου Ν]ήσου τῆς | Ἡρακλείδο[υ] μερίδος τ[οῦ] Ἄρσινοίτου νο[μοῦ]; *P.Mich.* I 34.3-6 (Philadelphia, 254 B.C.): προσάγγελμα Ἀλεξάνδρῳι | ἀρχιφυλακίτη παρὰ Ἄντιγένους Μακεδόνο[ς] τῶν Νικάνορος κληρούχου[ς].

identified him- or herself.¹⁷ The *dénouement* of the crime generally followed immediately on the heels of the accusation and could extend over many lines of text depending on the extent of the wrongdoing, the type of crime and the petitioner's desire to appear as pitiful as possible. Then as now, melodrama was an asset. It is so pervasive in the documents that it can oftentimes be difficult to discern true *pathos* from invented suffering.¹⁸

Along with the details of the crime came a description of the extent or nature of the damages suffered by the victim. In the case of a theft, for instance, the petition might be accompanied by a list of the missing or damaged items, often with monetary, qualitative or quantitative valuations appended, perhaps for purposes of remuneration in case the perpetrator of the theft was caught and was unable to return the victim's belongings.¹⁹ When a petitioner had been attacked, a description of the assault with the names of the offending parties and witnesses given in full (where possible) was also commonplace, as well as an

¹⁷ Identification of criminals, e.g.: *P.Enteux*. 48.1-2 (218 B.C.): ἀδικούμαι ὑπὸ Ἀριστοκράτου, Ἰ Θραικός, (ἐκατονταρούρου) τῆς α ἰπ(παρχίας), τῶν κατοικούντων ἐν Αὐτοδί[κη]; *P.Grenf*. I 38.3-6 (Thebaid, 170 B.C.): ἀδικούμαι ἰ ὑπὸ Πελαίου πασθοφόρο[ο] τῶν ἐκ Ἰ Κορκοδίλων πόλει το[ῦ] Παθυρίτου Ἰ Σούχου ἴ[ρ]ου (read ἱερώς) (with *BL* 1.182 for reading); *P.Tebt*. III.2 952.4-7 (ca 155 B.C.): ἀδικούμε[ο]ς ὑπὸ [Ζ]ωπύρου τοῦ Ἰ Μελεάγρου τῶν Ἰ Ἀπ[ολλωνίου] τῆς Ἰ γ ἰπ(παρχίας) (ἐκατονταρούρου) τῶν ἐκ τ[ῆς] ἀυ[τῆς] Ἰ κώμης.

¹⁸ The Zenon archive contains some of the best examples of *pathos* in petitions, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen*. III 59495.1-3 (III B.C.): δεόμεθα ἰ οὖν σου, ἐλέησον ἡμᾶς· ὦν γὰρ ἡμάρτομεν τ[ε] τιμωρήμεθα· οὐτεῖς γὰρ ἀναμάρτητός ἐστιν; 59509.9-14 (III B.C.): καὶ εἰ δυνατ[όν] ἐστιν, προσκατασκευάσον θησαυρόν· ἰ [ὁ γὰρ ὑ]πάρχων οὐχ ἰκαν[ός] ἐστι χωρεῖν τὸν σίτον τὸν ἐνιαυτὸν ἰ [τοῦ]τον. φυλάσσω δὲ καὶ τ[ὸν] τηνεῖ θησαυρόν λαμβάνων οὐθέν, ἰ [οἱ δ] ἐκ Φιλαδελφείας δίδ[ου]σ[ί] μοι πυ(ροῦ) ἀρτ(άβας) α Ἰ. οὐχ ἰκανὸν οὖν ἰ [ἐστ]ιν οὐδὲ τὰ παιδάρια [διαβό]σκειν, εἰ μὴ αὐτός τι προσεργάζοι[μαι]; *P.Mich*. I 87.5-9 (III B.C.): δέομαί σου καὶ ἰκετέω, μὴ περιίδης μῆ (read με) ἐν τῷ δεζμωτηρίῳ. ἰκανῶς ἰ βέβλαμαι ἀφ' οὐ ἀπέργμαι (read ἀπήγμαι) ἀπ(ὸ) τοῦ κλήρου ο[ἱ] ἐ]μισθωσάμην ἐπὶ σοὶ πεποιθώς. ο(ὐ)κ ἰλία (read ὀλίγα) βέβλαμαι ἀφ' οὐ ἀπέργμαι, καὶ τὰ προβάτια ἄ περιπεποίημαι ἀφ' οὐ ἐλίλυθα πρὸς ὑμᾶς διέρπακται ὑπὸ τῶν ποιμένων ἀφ' οὐ ἀπέργμαι. εἰ δέ τι σῶι φαίνεται, καταλίψω τὴν γυναικα ἐν ἰ τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ περὶ ἐμοῦ, ἕως ἂν ἐπισκέψη περὶ ὧν μοι ἐνκαλοῦσι.

¹⁹ Lists of stolen goods with amounts/values attached, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1832.9-10 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.); *P.Tebt*. III.1 796.6-13 (185 B.C.); *SB XVIII* 13160.10-13 (Myeris, 244 B.C.?; 219 B.C.?).

often quite detailed and dramatic depiction of the damage inflicted and regularly a complete list of specific bodily regions that had been wounded.²⁰ Sometimes a victim of crime mentioned that there had been previous interventions by the police. In one case a petitioner noted that he had shown a window broken in the course of a home invasion/robbery to the *archiphylakitês* (*P.Frankf.* I 3 [Tholthis, after 212 B.C.]). In another a petitioner related that an *epistatês* had made an arrest but had not yet transported an offender for trial (*P.Princ.* III 117 [?, 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?]).

Next a petitioner requested some sort of decisive action from the addressee. As was mentioned above some appeals did not include requests but simply presented the details of a crime for the benefit of the petitioned official (who would then use his own discretion to follow through).²¹ In the greatest number of cases, however, a petitioner knew exactly what it was that (in his or her opinion, at least) needed to be done and asked that the appropriate steps be taken. Victims expected law enforcement to carry out investigations by themselves or to contact the proper people. Once a petitioner had made his request he typically concluded his appeal with one of a number of identifiable *formulae* designed to portray him as a victim of unfair persecution in order to

²⁰ Detailed assaults, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1855 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 6 (Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 79 (218 B.C.); petitions alluding to witnesses, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 74 (221 B.C.); *P.Giss.Univ.* I 9 (Euhemeria, after 131 B.C.); *P.Grenf.* I 38 (Thebaid, 170 B.C.). Individuals might also submit witness testimony to a police officer: *P.Enteux.* 43 (221 B.C.), a petition to the king requesting that he have an *epistatês* summon two witnesses and have their testimony sent to the *stratêgos*; *P.Hamb.* I 105 (Philadelphia, 236 B.C.), witness testimony submitted to an *archiphylakitês*; *P.Heid.* VIII 416 (Herakleopolis, before 172 B.C.), testimony presented to a *stratêgos*; *P.Petr.* II 32 (197-173 B.C.), a petition to an unknown official concerning violence in which the writers noted that they had given witness testimony of the events to the petitioned official and a *phylakitês*. For more on witnesses and witness testimony see chapter 4, p. 131.

²¹ This seems to have been primarily a third-century phenomenon, e.g.: *P.Hib.* I 36 (229/8 B.C.); 37 (235-234 B.C.); *P.Köln* V 216 (Moithymis, 209 B.C.).

appeal to the addressee's compassion or ability to provide help or justice.²² A certain degree of variation is visible in these formulas over time and throughout the different administrative regions. Yet specific stock phrases do not appear to have been customary in the conclusions to petitions of specific types. That is, one did not address an official in one way when complaining about a theft but in another manner when detailing an assault. Rather, it was the epistolary style at a given time and in a given place that seems to have dictated how victims closed their appeals.²³ Regardless of how a concluding wish was expressed, once it had been made there remained to be written only the traditional "farewell" and (sometimes) a date. After this, the petition was sent on its way.

It appears that petitions to the primarily Greek law enforcement officials of Ptolemaic Egypt were written primarily in Greek. Few traces of Demotic

²² Petitioner as disadvantaged sufferer, e.g.: *BGU VIII* 1847.18-21 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.?, 50-49 B.C.): νυνεί τε κατὰ τὴν εἰρκτὴν | [ὄ]ντες καὶ παραπολλύμενοι ἐν τοῖς | [ἀ]ναγκαίοις δεόμεθα καὶ ἀξιούμεν | [ἰ]κανὸν χρόνον καταφθαμένοι; *Chrest.Mitt.* 12.16-19 (Arsinoite, ca 241 B.C.): τούτου γὰρ γενομένου | οὐ τὸν πλείω χρόνον | καταφθαρησόμεθα; *P.Coll. Youtie I* 12.19-20 (Hermoupolis Magna, ca 139 B.C.): ἵνα [οὖν μ]ὴ καταφθεῖ[μ]ρωμαι ἐν τῇ [φυλακῆ] ἀλογοῦμενος | παρ[ὰ πάν]τα τὰ καλῶς ἔχοντ[α]; addressee as compassionate/benevolent, e.g.: *Chrest.Mitt.* 12.20-21 (Arsinoite, ca 241 B.C.): διὰ σὲ τῆς πάσης φιλαν[θρωπίας τευξόμεθα]; *P.Diosk.* 12.15-17 (Herakleopolite?, II B.C.): τ[ού]του γενομένου τεύξομαι τῶν εὐγνωμό[νων]; *UPZ I* 108.36 (Memphis, 99 B.C.): τούτου γὰρ γενομένου ἔσομαι περιλανθρω(πημένος); as provider of justice, e.g.: *BGU VIII* 1824.30-31 (Herakleopolite, 60-55 B.C.): ἴν' ὦ τετευχῶς τῆς σῆς δικαιοσύνης; *X* 1903.8-9 (? , III B.C.): τούτου γὰρ γενομένου ἔσομαι | [ca ?] τετευχῶ[ς] τοῦ δικαίου; *P.Mich.* XVIII 778.37-38 (Mouchis, after 193/2 B.C.): τούτου δέ γενομένου, ἔσομαι τετευχῶς τῶν | δικαίων; as helper, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1244.32-33 (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?, 160 B.C.): τούτου γενομένου [ὦ τε]τευχυ[τ]ι[α] τ[ῆ]ς βοηθείας; VIII 1836.25-26 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.): ἵνα μηθὲν ἐλ..... | γείνηται τυχῶν τῆς σῆς ἀντιλήψ[εως]; *Chrest.Mitt.* 5.33 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.): ἵνα τῆς σωτηρίας τύχω.

²³ For instance, petitions belonging to a large cache of third-century documents from Magdola (*P.Enteux.*) regularly concluded with a future more vivid conditional sentence consisting of a genitive absolute (e.g.: τούτου γὰρ γενομένου) or mention of a specific action to be carried out in the protasis and then a variation on the phrase τεύξομαι τοῦ δικαίου in the apodosis. But a number of petitioners to Herakleopolite *stratēgoi* in the first century (*BGU VIII*) appended purpose clauses (indicating the type of satisfaction the petitioner hoped to receive) to the request sections of their conclusions, e.g.: 1824.30-31 (60-55 B.C.): ἴν' ὦ τετευχῶς τῆς σῆς δικαιοσύνης; 1829.10-11 (51 B.C.): ἴν' ὦμεν τετευχότες | τῆς παρὰ σου βοηθείας; 1836.25-26 (51-50 B.C.): ἵνα μηθὲν ἐλ..... | γείνηται τυχῶν τῆς σῆς ἀντιλήψ[εως].

appeals survive. The Greek and Demotic elements of the archive of Hor (*O.Hor*) cannot be considered fragments of a proper petition, as many of the texts that comprise the archive are dream-texts and oracles and thus of questionable value.²⁴ A fragmentary Demotic version of a Greek petition that survives elsewhere in two copies demonstrates only that an Egyptian petitioner may have wished to keep a private copy of a complaint to law enforcement written in his own tongue (*UPZ I 6a* [Memphis, 163 B.C.]).²⁵ Aside from these texts, we only occasionally see Egyptians writing in Egyptian to Egyptian police officials, and then only to arrange for bail payments.²⁶ That petitioners generally appealed to police officials in Greek should not surprise us. Though the Greek administration of the Ptolemies acknowledged Egyptian contracts and records from legal proceedings (as such documents were kept in the private possession of the parties concerned and would not have required government authorization or approval), petitions were usually sent to primarily Greek officials who probably would not have had the time or patience to obtain translators. Consequently, a petition in Greek was a necessity for possible satisfaction at law.

The sheer number of petitions that have survived from all periods of Ptolemaic rule, the varieties observable in the sex, ethnicity, age, social status and professions of petitioners and the numerous clichés that characterize the medium suggest that Egyptians from all segments of society knew how to construct appeals to law enforcement, or to hire those who did, and that they did so when

²⁴ See *O.Hor* pp121-124.

²⁵ The petition concerns the same events detailed in *UPZ I 5* and *6* (Memphis, 163 B.C.). For more on this text see Clarysse (1986) who provides a translation and commentary.

²⁶ E.g.: *P.Bürgsch.* 16 (Memphis, 169 B.C.); 22 (243 B.C.); *P.LilleDem.* I 4 (247 B.C.), letters to *archiphylakitai* (?) from villagers seeking to post bail for prisoners.

necessary. Petitioners knew what to expect and what details they would need to supply when they visited a village scribe. They also knew how to employ rhetoric in their accounts. We see in these documents an understanding among victims of the importance of filling their appeals with genuine *pathos* and/or invented melodrama. Ironically these appeals, documents in which victims regularly portrayed themselves as helpless and resourceless, were a very popular means of self-empowerment at law among the Egyptian people.

We have seen why and how appeals to law enforcement were composed; now we shall determine precisely who had them composed. Not only were people at all levels of Ptolemaic society victims of crimes, but individuals from all walks of life took the initiative to write letters to the police after attacks, thefts or other outrages. Ptolemaic Egypt was different from Athens, Rome and other ancient states.²⁷ Not only did all segments of the population have access to the police system, but they made use of it regularly and effectively. Even those with the lowest social statuses (orphans and widows, for example) were effective petitioners. As we have seen, a plea for pity was a common ingredient in a petition. Evidently there was a popular belief that the more abject the petitioner appeared, the more effective his or her appeal would be.

Petitions written by a wide variety of Egyptians, Greeks and foreigners survive.²⁸ As one might suspect the number of petitions from each segment of

²⁷ On law and order elsewhere in antiquity see the introduction (chapter 1).

²⁸ A thorough study of the ethnic makeup of petitioners to Ptolemaic law enforcement officials is outside of the scope of this work. Greeks and Egyptians seem to have made up the majority of petitioners. But it is difficult to determine which of these two segments of the population wrote the bulk of appeals to the police. For example, petitioners with Greek names were not necessarily Greeks.

society depended on the size of the segment.²⁹ A large number of petitioners were Egyptian or Greek men who worked as government cultivators.³⁰ Another sizeable subset of Ptolemaic petitions came from priests, soldiers and other government officials.³¹ Professionals and skilled laborers also wrote appeals to law enforcement, often concerning matters that directly impacted on their business.³² Often a petitioner did not provide an indication of his social status other than the fact that he was a member of a disadvantaged group. Among the most common of these were prisoners and orphans.³³ As has already been noted women, too, wrote petitions.³⁴ Appeals from female petitioners were frequently concerned with issues that had arisen after a husband's death. Widows were evidently favorite targets of the unscrupulous.³⁵

Petitioners were not limited to any one socioeconomic subset of Ptolemaic society. A similar conclusion can be reached about addressees. A broad range of officials in law enforcement, financial administration, the civil sphere and the

²⁹ On the population of Greco-Roman Egypt see Thompson (forthcoming) and Rathbone (1990).

³⁰ Royal cultivators, e.g.: *BGU* III 1007 (? , 243 or 218 B.C.); VIII 1822 (Herakleopolite, 60-55 B.C.); *P.Amh.* II 33 (Soknopaiou Nesos, ca 157 B.C.).

³¹ Priests, e.g.: *P.Amh.* II 35 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 132 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 54 (218 B.C.); *P.Tor.Choach.* 4 (Thebes?, 111 B.C.); soldiers, e.g.: *BGU* VI 1254 (Arsinoite, 154 B.C.?; 143 B.C.?); VIII 1832 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 55 (222 B.C.); government officials, e.g.: *BGU* IV 1190 (Herakleopolite, after 80 B.C.), from a *grammateus*; *Chrest.Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.), from the subordinate of a grain-transporting official with the title *ho pros tēi exagôgēi tou sitou*; *P.Diosk.* 5 (Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.?), from two tax collectors.

³² Businessmen and laborers, e.g.: *BGU* III 1012 (Arsinoite, 170 B.C.), from an *emporos*; VIII 1828 (Herakleopolite, 52/1 B.C.), from a *desmophylax*; *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59080 (257 B.C.), from a weaver.

³³ Prisoners, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59492 (III B.C.); *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12 (Tebtynis, 177 B.C.); *P.Polit.Iud.* 2 (Herakleopolite, ca 135 B.C.); orphans, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 9 (218 B.C.); *P.Lond.* III 683 (?) (Pathyrite, II B.C.); *SB* VIII 9790 (Herakleopolite, I B.C.). On orphans in Ptolemaic Egypt see Criscuolo (1981) and Montevicchi (1981); on prisoners, chapter 4, pp121-124.

³⁴ Petitions from women, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 81 (221 B.C.); *P.Giss.Univ.* I 8 (Euhemeria, after 131 B.C.); *P.Princ.* III 117 (? , 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?).

³⁵ Petitions from widows, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1833 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 22 (218 B.C.); *SB* XXIV 16285 (Arsinoite, 202 B.C.).

military received complaints from the people of Egypt. Any well-known, connected Greek in the Egyptian countryside might have been seen as a suitable target for petitioning. As a rule victims of crime sought help from the people who seemed most likely to be willing and able to provide aid in a given situation. Thus, while a victim of breaking and entering might have lodged a complaint with the village *archiphylakitês*, a tax collector experiencing difficulties in the execution of his duties might have appealed to a financial official (the *dioikêtês*, *epimelêtês* or *oikonomos*, for instance), a soldier who had not been paid for a certain period of time might have written to a high-ranking military officer and a plaintiff having difficulty securing a court date might have directed a petition to a panel of *chrêmatistai*.³⁶

We are concerned here, of course, with those petitions that concerned crime and criminals. The bulk of these reached officials with police powers.³⁷ In a great many cases petitioners appealed to the closest law enforcement official

³⁶ Petitions to the *dioikêtês*, e.g.: *P.Gen.* III 128 (Herakleopolite, 163-156 B.C.?); *P.Mich.* XVIII 778 (Mouchis, after 193/2 B.C.); *SB XX* 14708 (Theadelphia, 171 B.C.); to the *epimelêtês*, e.g.: *Chrest.Mitt.* 5 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.); *P.Petr.* III 36 (III B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 782 (ca 153 B.C.); to the *oikonomos*, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1244 (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?); *Chrest.Wilck.* 262 (Arsinoite, III B.C.); *SB XX* 14999 (Krokodilopolis?, 217 B.C.); to military officers, e.g.: *BGU IV* 1190 (Herakleopolite, after 80 B.C.); *P.Hamb.* IV 238 (Herakleopolite?, 159 B.C.); *P.Mil.Congr.* XVII pg5/6 (Arsinoite, 142 B.C.); to *chrêmatistai*: *BGU VIII* 1758 (Herakleopolite, 60-57 B.C.); *SB VI* 9556 (245 B.C.); *XXII* 15542 (Oxyrhyncha, II B.C.).

³⁷ Civil officials sometimes received petitions regarding criminal matters as well. In villages such complaints were occasionally directed to *kômachai*. For instance, in *P.Gur.* 5 (ca 215 B.C.) a petitioner complained to the *kômachês* that the former *kômachês* had stolen grain. In *P.Tebt.* III.1 796 (185 B.C.), a petition to an *archiphylakitês* concerning an instance of breaking and entering, the victims noted that they had given a similar report to the *kômachês*. We have few clues as to what actions *kômachai* took (if any) to resolve criminal matters. For more on *kômachai* see especially *P.Yale* I pp156-161; also Hélmis (1986) 110; Wolff (1970) 163, 175 n. 58; and Berneker (1935) 127-130. Two second-century Herakleopolite petitions (*P.Polit.Iud.* 1 [135 B.C.] and 2 [ca 135 B.C.]) suggest that the residents of the Jewish *politeuma* there could submit complaints concerning crimes to a judicial body of *archontes* headed by a *politarchês*; see *P.Polit.Iud.* pp10-18 and the additional sources cited there. In addition, Zenon regularly received petitions, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59520 (III B.C.); *P.Mich.* I 87 (Philadelphia, III B.C.); *PSI IV* 419 (Philadelphia, III B.C.). His important position under Apollonios seems to have made him a natural agent of appeal.

with administrative power and a connection to higher authorities. *Archiphylakitai*, *epistatai*, *phrourarchoi* and occasionally even *phylakitai* were the recipients of appeals of this sort.³⁸ Petitions to *epistatai* are most common, followed by those to *archiphylakitai*, *phrourarchoi* and *phylakitai*, respectively. The requests preserved in the petitions that these officials received suggest that the power of town and village authorities to prosecute malefactors was great. As we shall see, officials in Egyptian settlements were invested with a wide variety of powers for solving crimes.

Although the town or village police could usually be counted on to resolve problems in the immediate vicinity, there nevertheless were occasions when a petitioner might address an appeal to a higher civil or police authority such as the *epistatês phylakitôn*, *stratêgos* or even the king and queen.³⁹ This higher official would then delegate responsibility to the appropriate village subordinate (typically an *epistatês*). *Stratêgoi* received petitions throughout the Ptolemaic period. Appeals addressed to the sovereigns seem to have been primarily a third-century phenomenon.⁴⁰ Only two petitions to *epistatai phylakitôn* survive.⁴¹ Often a failure in police function at the town or village level spurred a petitioner to

³⁸ Petitions to *archiphylakitai*, e.g.: *P.Mich.* I 34 (Philadelphia, 254 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 41 (105 or 90 B.C.); III.1 796 (185 B.C.); to *epistatai*, e.g.: *P.Köln* III 140 (Arsinoite, 244-242 B.C.?; 219-217 B.C.?); *P.Mich.* III 173 (? , after 169 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* II 283 (after 93 or after 60 B.C.); to *phrourarchoi*, e.g.: *P.Diosk.* 1 (Herakleopolite, 154 B.C.?); 2 (154 B.C.?); *SB* V 8009 (? , I B.C.); to *phylakitai*, e.g.: *P.Hib.* I 36 (229/8 B.C.); 37 (235/4 B.C.); 144 (230-228 B.C.). Petitions to *phylakitai* seem to have been a third-century phenomenon.

³⁹ Petitions to *epistatai phylakitôn*: *P.Ryl.* II 68 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.); *SB* VIII 9792 (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.); to *stratêgoi*, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1822 (Herakleopolite, 60-55 B.C.); *Chrest.Mitt.* 12 (Arsinoite, ca 241 B.C.); *P.Coll.Youtie* I 16 (? , 109 B.C.?); to the sovereigns, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 49 (221 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 43 (118 B.C.); *SB* VI 9065 (Herakleopolite, 50/49 B.C.).

⁴⁰ See *P.Enteux. passim*. It should be noted that though formally addressed to the sovereigns, petitions of this sort were actually delivered by the petitioner to the office of the *stratêgos*: *P.Enteux.* ppxxi-xl.

⁴¹ *P.Ryl.* II 68 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.); *SB* VIII 9792 (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.).

seek out a higher official. In such cases the higher official acted effectively as an agent of appeal. For example, in a second-century letter to an *epistatês phylakitôn* a petitioner noted that he had initially appealed to a certain Dannos and the *kômophylakitai* concerning the theft of two donkeys and certain other goods (SB VIII 9792 [Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.]). Consequently, a police agent was dispatched to find the thieves. The petitioner had subsequently discovered one of his donkeys in the possession of a fellow villager. He asked in his petition that the *epistatês phylakitôn* place this man under guard so that an investigation could be carried out.

Occasionally a petition to a higher official met with an unsatisfactory (or no) response, prompting the petitioner to appeal to a lower official. For instance, in a second-century letter to a *stratêgos* some petitioners noted that they had previously written to the sovereigns concerning a series of crimes (*P.Tebt.* III.1 790 [127-124 B.C.]). The king and queen had then ordered the previous *stratêgos* to provide them with the requisite protection. Now the petitioners were writing to the current *stratêgos* to ensure that the royal order was observed. Sometimes victims of crime sent copies of an appeal to more than one official at the same time.⁴² This may have occurred because a petitioner was ignorant of the proper person to contact for his or her problem, or simply from a belief that the more petitions one wrote, the greater the success one would have. In by far the greatest number of cases, however, petitioners seem to have directed their complaints to

⁴² E.g.: *P.Hib.* 34 and 73 (243-242 B.C.), two reports on the misbehavior of an *archiphylakitês*, the former addressed to the king, the latter to the village *epistatês*; *UPZ* I 5, 6 and 6a (Memphis, 163 B.C.), three petitions concerning an illegal search, the first addressed to the *stratêgos*, the second to the sovereigns and the third to an unknown official; *ZPE* 127 (1999) 136-140 (Arsinoite, ca 140/39 B.C.), three petitions concerning an abduction, addressed to an *archisômatophylax* (without further title), an unknown official and a *stratêgos*, respectively.

high-ranking government agents in the belief that an appeal to the official with the broadest geographic and/or administrative competency would receive the swiftest, most satisfactory response. Those who sought the aid of high-ranking officials frequently requested that addressees give an order to an appropriate town or village agent to see that justice was done. For instance, in a second-century petition to a *stratêgos* a petitioner asked that the *stratêgos* command an *epistatês* to make an arrest (*P.Ryl.* IV 577 [Arsinoite, 146 or 135 B.C.]). The terse docket to the document preserves an order from the former official to the *epistatês* to summon the accused.

The ubiquity of the petitioning process proves that the inhabitants of Ptolemaic Egypt were not resourceless when crimes were committed against them. They were well aware of the variety of officials who could provide them with government redress and did not hesitate to seek them out. That petitioners appealed for justice to a great number of officers in all areas of Ptolemaic administration suggests that they also knew, in many cases, to whom to direct complaints about specific issues. This hypothesis is borne out by the small number of surviving petitions that relate failures after initial pleas for help. For the most part, people knew to whom to write for assistance. When the process stalled, they knew how to get it started again.

One assumes that petitions were generally delivered to the offices of the addressees specified by petitioners. Indeed, the large number of appeals with appended dockets that survive attests that many were eventually processed by

recipients.⁴³ Yet while the presence of a command to make an arrest, write to a subordinate or perform some other follow-up action, usually written in a second hand and placed in the upper or lower margin of a petition, is a clear indication that a complaint had been processed by the Ptolemaic law enforcement system, it is not a guarantee that an appeal had been read and digested by the intended addressee. A delegating official very rarely identified himself in the typically terse docket to a petition and where identification of a forwarding official is offered by an editor it is often based on conjecture or assumption.⁴⁴ While it is probably safe to assume that in most cases a petitioned official read and replied to his own mail, it is nevertheless probable that a subordinate (a *hypostratêgos* or *hyparchiphylakitês*, for instance) or some other government officer was responsible for sending the instructions of the addressee on to a lower official, with or without the addressee's nod of approval.⁴⁵ The documents are inconclusive.

Complaints to high-ranking law enforcement officials did not always reach the offices of their intended destinations. It seems to have occasionally been the case that petitions were addressed to one official but delivered to another.⁴⁶ In a great number of cases petitions were forwarded to other, generally

⁴³ Docketed petitions, e.g.: *BGU VIII* 1832 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 64 (221 B.C.); *P.Tor.Choach.* 4 (Thebes?, 111 B.C.).

⁴⁴ For instance, in *P.Hamb.* IV 238 (Herakleopolite?, 159 B.C.), a petition to an official occupying the post of *ho pros tais syntaxesi*, an unidentified official followed the petitioner's instructions and forwarded the petition to an *epistatês* (32-35). The *epistatês* wrote back to the addressee once he had carried out the instructions (36-44). One would assume that the original addressee had been responsible for forwarding the petition to the *epistatês*, but this cannot be proven conclusively.

⁴⁵ As one might expect, petitions to officials who were clear subordinates of other officials are rare. Aside from *phylakitai* (see above, n. 38) only the *hypodioikêtês* seems to have regularly received complaints: Di Bitonto Kasser (1968) 61.

⁴⁶ As mentioned above, a great number of third-century petitions addressed to the king and queen were actually delivered to the office of the *stratêgos* (see *P.Enteux.* pp xxxi-xl). The lack of

lower officials by their original recipients. Most documents of this sort contain brief instructions from the forwarding official to the forwarder to give heed to the contents of the document and either follow the petitioner's instructions and carry out a specific action or simply see that the victim found justice.⁴⁷ The regular agreement between the wishes of petitioners expressed in the request sections of appeals and the commandments given out to subordinates by forwarding officials is striking. It suggests either that Ptolemaic police officials were especially obliging or (more likely) that petitioners knew what sorts of police responses to expect in certain situations and tailored their requests accordingly.

It was generally officials of high rank (the king, *stratêgoi* and upper-level *epistatai*) who forwarded petitions to lower-level officers throughout the *chôra*. In most cases higher-level government officers seem to have forwarded petitions concerning crimes in Egyptian towns and villages to the *epistatai* in these settlements.⁴⁸ As the highest-ranking administrators in the towns and villages of the Egyptian countryside and direct appointees of nome-level officials, *epistatai* were natural points of contact for the central government. There is some evidence that *archiphylakitai* might occasionally have received petitions forwarded by the *epistatai* who supervised them or by other town or village officials. Yet though victims of crime occasionally instructed a higher official to

forwarding formulary demonstrate that these petitions were not forwarded to the office of the *stratêgos* by the sovereigns.

⁴⁷ Forwarded petitions with instructions to follow a petitioner's request, e.g.: *BGU* VI 1244 (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?); VIII 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.); *P.enteux.* 8 (221 B.C.); with instructions to see that justice was carried out, e.g.: *P.enteux.* 48 (218 B.C.); *SB XVIII* 13840 (Mouchis, 224-218 B.C.); *UPZ I* 7 (Memphis, 163 B.C.).

⁴⁸ *Epistatai* as recipients of forwarded petitions, e.g.: *P.Hamb.* IV 238 (Herakleopolite?, 159 B.C.); *P.Tor.Choach.* 4 (Thebes?, 111 B.C.); *SB XVIII* 13837 (Mouchis, 224-218 B.C.).

forward a petition to an *archiphylakitês*, there is no evidence that such forwarding ever occurred.⁴⁹ Other officials, too, sometimes received petitions forwarded by higher-ranking officers.⁵⁰ It should also be noted that petitions to the sovereigns were occasionally copied and distributed to multiple police, military and civil officials as circulars.⁵¹

The forwarding of petitions was not always from top to bottom. Often a petitioner asked a lower-level law enforcement official to send his or her appeal on to a superior. Sometimes a lower-level official did so of his own accord. The papyri preserve instances of petitions being sent up to *stratêgoi* and other officials, primarily those with judicial powers.⁵² Occasionally the transfer of petitions from one sphere of government to another or between officials within a certain branch of the administration without direct supervisory connections to each other took place. For instance, in one case a petitioner had written initially to an *oikonomos* with a request that the *oikonomos* write to the *epistatês* of

⁴⁹ In one instance (*P.Mich.* XVIII 788 [Mouchis, after 193/2 B.C.]) a petitioner asked the *dioikêtês* that his petition be forwarded to an *archiphylakitês*. But the petition does not have a subscription, leaving it in doubt whether or not the document ever reached the *archiphylakitês*. In three other cases (*P.Enteux.* 24, 50 and 82 [all 221 B.C.]) petitioners requested that the *stratêgos* write to a village *archiphylakitês*. In each case the *stratêgos* wrote to the village *epistatês* instead.

⁵⁰ For instance, *P.Enteux.* 70 and 74 (both 221 B.C.), petitions to the king, were forwarded by *stratêgoi* to *epistatai*. In *P.Tor.Choach.* 8 (Thebes, 126 B.C.) and *SB VI 9065* (Herakleopolite, 50/49 B.C.), petitions to the sovereigns, petitioners requested that the king and queen send their appeals to certain *chrêmatistai*.

⁵¹ E.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 62.2-5 (Memphis, 99 B.C.), a petition to the sovereigns from the chief of embalmers which was copied, supplemented with official instructions and forwarded τῶι στρατη[γ]ῶι τοῦ Μεμφίτου κ[αὶ] τῶι φρουράρχῳ [καὶ] τῶι ἐπισ[τά]τῃ | [τ]ῶν φυλα[κ]ιτῶν καὶ ἀρχιφυλακίτῃ καὶ τῶι ἐπὶ [τ]ῶν προσόδ[ων] καὶ βασιλι[κ]ῶι | [γρ]αμματεῖ καὶ τοῖς ἐπιστάταις τῶν ἱερ[ῶ]ν καὶ ἀρχιερεῦσ[ι] καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς | [τ]ῶν βασιλικῶν πραγματευομένοις.

⁵² Petitions forwarded by lower officials to *stratêgoi*: *BGU III 1012* (Arsinoite, 170 B.C.); VIII 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.); *P.Hib.* I 72 (241/0 B.C.); to other judicial higher-ups: *P.Diosk.* 6 (?) (Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.), where petitioners requested that their petition be sent up to a certain Nikanor and a certain Archianax. If the editor's conjecture (p. 63) is correct, these two men were court officials with the titles *hoi pros tais anakrisesin* and *epi tou en têi aulêi kritêriou* (cf. *P.Lond.* VII 2188.88-91 [Philadelphia, 148 B.C.]).

Phnebieus (*BGU VI 1244* [Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?]). The *oikonomos*, however, rerouted the petition through the office of the *epistatês phylakitôn*. The latter official saw to it that the petition reached its intended destination. In another case a petitioner wrote to an official with the title *ho pros tais syntaxesi* (*P.Hamb. IV 238* [Herakleopolite?, 159 B.C.]).⁵³ The petitioner asked that the addressee write to an *epistatês* to make an arrest and have an offending party sent to the addressee. The addressee forwarded the petition to the *epistatês*, who then returned the petition to the addressee with news that the request had been carried out.⁵⁴

The frequent transfer of appeals for justice between different departments of the administration demonstrates not only that the bureaucracy of Ptolemaic Egypt was organized and efficient but also that it felt a surprising degree of responsibility towards its subjects. Instead of summarily dismissing as a waste of time and resources complaints of the most trivial nature (those regarding minor thefts and scrapes, for example) petitioned officials of high status contacted the appropriate town or village officials in order to secure justice. When the petitioning process failed to yield the desired results an effective appeals process provided additional assistance. The success of a victim of crime and his or her petition often depended not only upon the merits of the case in question but also upon his or her own resolve.

The success of a petition can also be gauged by the official action taken in response to the petitioner's request. Thus, it is reasonable to ask what petitioners

⁵³ On the title *ho pros tais syntaxesi* see Geraci, *ACTS XVI* (1981) 267-276.

⁵⁴ But see above, p. 87 n. 44. The papyri also preserve instances of petitions being forwarded from *epimelêtai* to *epistatai* (*P.Tebt. III.1 782* [ca 153 B.C.]) and from *dioikêtai* to *stratêgoi* (*BGU VIII 1761* [Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.]).

expected from the officials they petitioned and what these officials did. As we have seen, the crimes committed against the inhabitants of Ptolemaic Egypt varied. By contrast, the requests made of the police by petitioners did not. In most cases victims sought specific remediating actions. They seem to have realized, however, that the recipients of their appeals were often not the officials who would carry out their requests. Victims often asked that the recipient of a complaint forward it to another official or that someone other than a petition's addressee be informed in writing of the charges being brought. The papyri preserve instances of requests for lower officials to write to their superiors, for higher officials to contact subordinates, for an addressee to communicate with the proper officials and for an official in one administrative sphere to write to one in another.⁵⁵ Petitioners who requested communication with another official typically supplied an additional request for this officer.

In addition to a request for one official to write to another, or independent of such a request, a petitioner typically asked that some decisive action be taken to solve a crime. Requests for arrests of suspected criminals, deliveries of summonses and the transport of a suspect to another official for trial or

⁵⁵ Communication with a superior, e.g.: *BGU* III 1012 (Arsinoite, 170 B.C.); *P.Hib.* I 72 (241/40 B.C.); *P.Stras.* VIII 781 (Herakleopolite, II B.C.), petitions to *epistatai* requesting that they write to *stratêgoi*; with subordinates, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1828 (Herakleopolite, 52/1 B.C.), where a petitioner requested that the *stratêgos* write to a *meridarchês*; X 1903 (? , III B.C.), a letter in which the author asked that the king write to the *stratêgos*; *P.Dion.* I 11 (Hermoupolis Magna, 108 B.C.), where a petitioner requested that the *stratêgos* write to an *epistatês*; with the appropriate officials, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 6 (222 B.C.); *P.Rain.Cent.* 50 (?) (Phthemphouth, I B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 264 (II B.C.); with government agents outside of the administrative sphere of the addressee: *BGU* VI 1244 (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.? 160 B.C.?), a petition to an *oikonomos* asking him to write to an *epistatês*; *BGU* VIII 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.), a letter to the *dioikêtês* with a request that he write to the *stratêgos*; *Chrest.Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.), an appeal to the *epimelêtês* with a request that he write to an *archiphylakitês*.

examination are most common.⁵⁶ Occasionally petitioners asked that they themselves be summoned.⁵⁷ Sometimes they asked that someone be imprisoned, that they or another person be removed from jail or that certain goods be kept under watch.⁵⁸ Requests for the eviction of squatters are common.⁵⁹ Frequently a petitioner asked that an addressee carry out an investigation of his or her complaints, a process which usually involved the interrogation of a witness or suspect, or that he view damage to person and/or property.⁶⁰ In many cases victims requested that stolen or owed property be returned, that they be reimbursed for the value of stolen or damaged goods or that they be compensated for pain and suffering.⁶¹ Requests for an end to harassment, whether official or private, sometimes occur as well as requests that a standing

⁵⁶ Arrest or summons of a suspect and/or transport to an official or tribunal, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1244 (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?); *VIII* 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59224 (253 B.C.).

⁵⁷ Summons of the petitioner or petitioner and accused, e.g.: *Chrest.Mitt.* 12 (Arsinoite, ca 241 B.C.); *P.Mert.* 5 (Ptolemais, 149-135 B.C.); *P.Polit.Iud.* 2 (Herakleopolite, ca 135 B.C.).

⁵⁸ Imprisonment of a suspect, e.g.: *BGU VIII* 1824 (Herakleopolite, 60-55 B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 3 (Herakleopolite, 153 B.C.?); *P.Enteux.* 3 (222 B.C.); of a third party, e.g.: *Chrest.Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.); *PSI V* 532 (Philadelphia, III B.C.); *ZPE* 127 (1999) 138-139 (Arsinoite, ca 140/39 B.C.); release from prison, e.g.: *Chrest.Mitt.* 5 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.); *P.Polit.Iud.* 2 (Herakleopolite, ca 135 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 777 (II B.C.); supervision of goods, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1253 (? , II B.C.), a petition to a *phylakitês* with a request that he guard some *ktênê*; *VIII* 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.), a petition to the *dioikêtês* with a request that he secure the petitioner's *genêmata*; *P.Diosk.* 5 (Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.?), a petition to a *phourarchos* with a request that he watch over some smuggled donkey hides.

⁵⁹ E.g.: *BGU III* 1006 (? , III B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 14 (222 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 780 (171 B.C.).

⁶⁰ Investigations/interrogations, e.g.: *P.Diosk.* 7 (Herakleopolite, ca 153 B.C.?); *P.Enteux.* 3 (222 B.C.); *UPZ II* 151 (Thebaid?, after 259 B.C.); inspections, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1253 (? , II B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59080 (257 B.C.); *SB XVIII* 13312 (224-218 B.C.).

⁶¹ Return of stolen items or goods/ money owed, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59145 (before 256 B.C.); *P.Dion.* 11 (Hermoupolis Magna, 108 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 41 (105 or 90 B.C.); compensation for damaged or stolen goods or for pain and suffering, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1253 (? , II B.C.); *VIII* 1824 (Herakleopolite, 60-55 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 72 (218 B.C.); return of items or suitable payment: *BGU VIII* 1832 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 35 (222 B.C.); *P.Hib.* II 202 (ca 250-240 B.C.).

decree or judgment be obeyed.⁶² Petitioners to the king and queen occasionally asked that their petitions be displayed in prominent public areas or that orders for protection be publicly posted, especially if the matters contained in their complaints were of concern to a broad cross-section of the population.⁶³ Appeals sometimes contained the request that a copy of the document be kept on file in the office of the addressee or some other regional official.⁶⁴ Petitioners often simply asked that justice be done, leaving the petitioned official to decide how best to proceed.⁶⁵

Of course, not every appeal concluded with a simple request. In many instances petitioners made multiple demands of the officials to whom they wrote. Often they detailed a series of steps they deemed appropriate for the successful resolution of an issue. For instance, in one case a petitioner requested that the recipient of his appeal come to his home, view a wound his *phylax* had received in the course of an attack, place a watch over his livestock, send two offenders to the appropriate officials and force the guilty parties to compensate him for the damages he had suffered (*BGU* VI 1253 [?, II B.C.]). Victims sometimes presented the recipients of their complaints with a variety of options for response, as well. These multiple possible procedural pathways were

⁶² Harassment, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1828 (Herakleopolite, 52/1 B.C.); *P.Dion.* I 9 (Hermoupolis Magna, ca 139 B.C.); *P.Petr.* II 1 (III B.C.); standing decrees or judgements, e.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 62 (Memphis, 99 B.C.), a petition to the sovereigns in which there is a request that a circular be sent out to guarantee the safety of the petitioners; *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59451 (III B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 43 (118 B.C.).

⁶³ Inscribing or posting of petitions, e.g.: *I.Prose* 38 (Euhemeria, 69 B.C.); *P.Mil.Congr.* XVIII pg10 (Arsinoite, ca 143-141 B.C.), in which there is reference to a previous petition having been inscribed; *UPZ* I 108 (Memphis, 99 B.C.).

⁶⁴ E.g.: *P.Amh.* II 35 (Soknopaïou Nesos, 132 B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 1 (Herakleopolite, 154 B.C.?); *SB* XIV 11626 (Lykopolis, 125 B.C.).

⁶⁵ E.g.: *P.Enteux.* 29 (218 B.C.); *SB* VI 9556 (245 B.C.); *UPZ* I 7 (Memphis, 163 B.C.).

generally based on the availability or cooperation of the accused and the whims of the addressee. For example, a second-century petition to a *stratêgos* preserves a request for the addressee to write to a subordinate and force certain individuals to do the petitioner justice; but if the wrongdoers continued to cause trouble, they were to be sent to the *stratêgos* so that he might pronounce stern judgment on them (*UPZ I 7* [Memphis, 163 B.C.]).

As has been mentioned, in those petitions that contain dockets the orders of police officials to their subordinates without fail ask either that the latter follow the requests of petitioners to the letter or that they carry out investigations personally. The only time a petitioned official might not strictly observe the wishes of a victim of crime was when a request was made to write to another official. The addressee would certainly have contacted another government agent. Yet as we have seen, a petitioned official might forward an appeal or write a letter of instruction to an official other than the one specified by a petitioner. Sometimes this occurred because of the ignorance of the victim regarding the competency of a certain official to attend to a certain issue. In these cases the petitioned official sent word to an officer with the power to tend to the request.⁶⁶ Other times, addressees saw to it that appeals eventually reached their requested destinations, though indirectly.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Petitions or communication directed to officials other than those specified by petitioners, e.g.: *P. Enteux*. I 24 and 50 (both 221 B.C.), petitions to the sovereigns including instructions for the *stratêgos* to write to village *archiphylakitai*; in both cases, the *stratêgos* wrote to an *epistatês* instead; *UPZ I 20* (Memphis, 163 B.C.), a petition to the sovereigns requesting that they write to the *stratêgos* Dionysios; they wrote to a certain Asklepiades (without title) who subsequently wrote to a certain Sarapion (also without title).

⁶⁷ Petitions that made intermediate stops between their initial addressees and the destinations requested by petitioners, e.g.: *BGU VI 1244* (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?), a petition addressed to an *oikonomos* with a request that it be forwarded to an *epistatês*; it reached the *epistatês* only after being sent to the *epistatês phylakitôn*; *VIII 1844* (Herakleopolite, 50-49 B.C.), a petition to a *stratêgos*

Once a petition had been digested by its addressee or had been forwarded to and read by a secondary official some sort of action was usually taken to provide assistance to the petitioner. Yet though the petitions reveal that people expected certain actions from the police after crimes had been committed, they generally do not provide evidence that decisive action was taken. The requests of petitioners and the commands of petitioned officials to their subordinates to carry out these requests provide the lion's share of the evidence that the Ptolemaic police took action in the solving of crimes. One must generally look elsewhere, however, for proof that the police did provide the services requested of them. Other types of documents, among these official reports and government correspondence, demonstrate that the police responded to the requests of victims of crime.⁶⁸ There is also ample evidence of (previous) police responses to requests for aid in the narrative sections of petitions.⁶⁹ An appeal might even be annotated by the responding parties with details of the steps taken to solve a crime and the results obtained.⁷⁰

with instructions that he write to a *phourarchos*; the document contains a subscription instructing some *grammateis* to write to the *phourarchos*; *P.Hib.* II 201 (250-240 B.C.), a petition to the king in which he was asked to write to a certain Aristion; the docket reveals that it was a certain Dorion who wrote to Aristion.

⁶⁸ E.g.: *P.Hib.* I 73 (243-242 B.C.), an appeal to an *epistatês* in which the writer detailed the release of a prisoner by an *archiphylakitês*; *UPZ* II 185 (Thebes, 152-146 or 141-132 B.C.), a record of proceedings before the *epistatês* of the Pathyrite nome; *ZPE* 141 (2002) 189-190 (Herakleopolite, 137 B.C.), an official letter to a *basilikos grammateus* in which an arrest by some *phylakitai* was described.

⁶⁹ E.g.: *Chrest. Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.), a petition to an *epimelêtês*, concerns an *archiphylakitês*' previous arrest of some shipbuilders; *P.Frankf.* 3 (Tholthis, after 212 B.C.), part of a register of correspondence to various officials, preserves a petitioner's note that he had shown a window broken in the course of a robbery to an *archiphylakitês*; *P.Mert.* I 5 (Ptolemais, 149-135 B.C.), a petition to a *stratêgos*, contains a description of the outcome of a trial before a village *epistatês*.

⁷⁰ *P.Hamb.* IV 238 (Herakleopolite?, 159 B.C.), a petition to an official with the title *ho pros tais syntaxesi* in which the petitioner requested that the addressee write to an *epistatês* to have a man sent for examination. The petition records the addressee's order to the *epistatês* as well as a

A note here on the speed of police responses to petitions. As has been stressed from the outset, appeals regularly received rapid responses from their addressees. Just how fast is "fast?" Petitions that contain both dates and dated dockets show that turnaround was very quick, indeed: a response within a day of a petition's composition was the norm.⁷¹ Naturally, such speedy redress was not always the case. Longer periods of time (weeks, months) occasionally elapsed between the delivery of an appeal and a police response.⁷² Yet it seems to have been the case that petitions very rarely sat unattended in an official's office for more than a few days. The same was not always true of petitioners. A number of appeals from prisoners reveal that justice was sometimes delayed for months at a time.⁷³

The act of writing of a petition to law enforcement was a self-empowering one. The request sections of these documents provide additional evidence that victims of crime were far from resourceless. Petitioners not only sought out the police after crimes and detailed the offenses committed against them but

response from the latter signifying that the requested summons had been served. On this text see above, p. 87 n. 44 and p. 90.

⁷¹ E.g.: *BGU VIII* 1832 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.), a petition to a *stratêgos* concerning the events of June 20 that was forwarded to a lower official on the 21st; *P. Enteux.* 8 (221 B.C.), a petition delivered to the office of the *stratêgos* on February 27 and forwarded to an *epistatês* on the same day; *UPZ I* 7 (Memphis, 163 B.C.), a petition presented to a *stratêgos* on November 19 and passed along to a lower official on the 20th.

⁷² E.g.: *BGU VIII* 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.), a petition dated to February 12 but only forwarded to a *stratêgos* on March 16; *P. Enteux.* 12 (244 B.C.), a petition to the king received by the office of the *stratêgos* on August 28 and forwarded to a subordinate on September 27; *SB XVI* 12468 (Arsinoite, III B.C.?), a petition to an unknown official in which the petitioner noted that he had previously petitioned the same addressee and had not received a response.

⁷³ E.g.: *Chrest. Mitt.* 5 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.), a petition to an *epimelêtês* from a prisoner who stated that he had written to the addressee several times previously and had been sitting in jail for ten months; *P. Cair. Zen.* III 59496 (248-241 B.C.), a petition to Zenon from a prisoner who noted that he had written to Zenon many times before but remained in jail; *P. Coll. Youtie I* 12 (Tebtynis, 177 B.C.), a petition to an unknown official from a man who had been imprisoned for three years. For more on prisoners and imprisonment in Ptolemaic Egypt see chapter 4, pp114-126.

generally went a step further, specifying exact measures to be taken for the solving of their cases. Surprisingly, the police officials who received appeals for justice seem generally to have passed the requests of petitioners on to their subordinates with little to no alteration in content. This demonstrates not only that a petition was a powerful tool in the hands of an aggrieved party but that police were receptive to the demands of their subject populations.

As we have shown, petitions to police officials during the Ptolemaic period were marked by many similarities. Aggrieved parties detailed acts of violence against their possessions or persons, named offenders, provided lists of damaged goods and assembled the various other details of their individual cases into written documents designed to elicit some sort of response from the police. Petitioners seem to have expected different responses from one group of police officials to the next. *Archiphylakitai*, *epistatai* and other lower-level police agents often represented the initial level of appeal and were usually responsible for providing remediating measures (if any were taken). These officials, often with jurisdictions that covered no more than the boundaries of a village, were sought out for immediate responses to crimes that had occurred on their turf. Higher officials such as *epistatai phylakitôn*, *stratêgoi* and even the king and queen occupied a loftier position in the petitioning hierarchy. They were often addressed when an initial appeal to an *archiphylakitês* or *epistatês* had failed to yield the desired results but likewise were the recipients of many first-time complaints that were immediately forwarded to the town or village police. It was the latter who were expected, with or without the assistance of their subordinates, to solve crimes.

The petitions demonstrate that the Egyptian masses were invested with a high degree of personal empowerment. They were not resourceless in the aftermath of criminal activity but rather had access to a uniform, universal and relatively simple process of drafting written requests for aid from the police. They did not shrink from directing petitions to officials in all spheres of government and at all levels, from the village *archiphylakitês* to the *stratêgos* of the nome and even the king and queen, and were not loath to draft additional appeals if an initial effort proved unsuccessful. Petitioners knew what they wanted from the appeals process and what sorts of responses to expect from individual law enforcement officials. They regularly told the police what they needed, where to find it and how to go about getting it.

Modern scholarship has paid little heed to this phenomenon of villager self-empowerment in Ptolemaic Egypt. A survey of recent work on the Ptolemaic state suggests that the notion of self-determination among the underclasses has not made much headway against the prevailing view that villagers were subjugated and lived wretched lives.⁷⁴ The most recent history of the Ptolemies says nothing of the autonomy of the Ptolemaic populace.⁷⁵ The same is true to varying degrees for other historical surveys of Greek Egypt, case studies on aspects of the Ptolemaic administration and daily life and sourcebooks on the Hellenistic world.⁷⁶ The evidence provided by the petitions suggests that it is time to reevaluate this prevailing belief in the resourcelessness of the common

⁷⁴ See, for example, Lewis (2001) 59-68; Chauveau (2000) 87-90; and Hölbl (1994) 273-275.

⁷⁵ Huß (2001).

⁷⁶ Among these Bagnall and Derow (2004); Burnet (2003); Chamoux (2003); Ogden (2002); Lewis (2001); Chauveau (2000); Mooren (2000); Cartledge, Garnsey and Gruen (1997); Hölbl (1994); Green (1993, 1990); and Husson and Valbelle (1992).

people. As has been demonstrated above, people living in the Egyptian countryside were not simply cogs in the Ptolemaic revenue-producing machine. This was especially true of victims of crime. Injustices spurred the people of Egypt to take personal action to right perceived wrongs. This action typically took the form of petitions to law enforcement officials. Petitioners sought swift and specific remediation and did not tolerate failures in the administrative system. Here as nowhere else the Ptolemaic populace demonstrated a striking degree of autonomy.

In addition to a reevaluation of the position of the common people in Ptolemaic Egypt, a new look at the state itself is likewise in order. Scholars have long maintained that the massive bureaucracy of Ptolemaic Egypt was dedicated to extracting the greatest amount of revenue from the subject population. On this view the Ptolemies were obsessed with agricultural production and territorial acquisition and generally not concerned with the suffering of the people they subjugated, both at home and abroad.⁷⁷ That the Ptolemies were indeed interested in maintaining and extending their empire and filling their coffers is indisputable. Yet it seems ridiculous to suggest that they were completely unconcerned with the plight of their subjects. As the petitions demonstrate, the Ptolemaic law enforcement pyramid kept a very close watch over the subject population and was quick to respond to appeals for help. When wrongdoing, official or otherwise, was reported swift action was generally taken to ensure that complaints were investigated and administrative malfunctions repaired. The

⁷⁷ See Manning (2003) 3-4 and the sources cited there.

administration and its officers had a high degree of interest in the maintenance of law and order in the Egyptian *chôra*.

But why was it so important that stolen goods were returned and damages paid? As we have seen, the heavily organized Ptolemaic law enforcement bureaucracy relied on the interaction and cooperation of a number of officials with differing competencies, domains and responsibilities. An efficient system of official communication made contact between superiors and subordinates regular and reliable. The system likewise made it easy for reports of wrongdoing, duty-shirking and dissatisfaction to find their way to high-ranking officials. It was perhaps this fact more than anything else that spurred the police officials scattered throughout the Egyptian *chôra* to respond to requests from superiors and the subject population with the alacrity and thoroughness exhibited in the petitions. While a desire to fulfill the duties of their offices meticulously and honorably no doubt compelled many Ptolemaic police agents to handle the complaints of the people with care, fear of official censure or reprimand was perhaps more compelling. Inattention to the needs of villagers might very well lead to unpleasant situations, both for the officers in question and for the locals. Neither group wanted a mess on its hands.⁷⁸

This was not true only of the villagers, townspeople, chiefs of police and other law enforcement officials in the Egyptian backwater. The highest rungs of the Ptolemaic administration were concerned with these issues as well. In order

⁷⁸ In *P.Tebt.* III.1 703.257-280 (ca 210 B.C.), a set of instructions to a newly-appointed subordinate of a *dioikêtês*, great stress is laid on the importance of proper conduct in carrying out official duties and avoiding causes for reproach. This text demonstrates that the avoidance of blame and ill-repute was a real concern to the administrators of Ptolemaic Egypt. The existence of Hellenistic treatises on kingship (see Delia [1993] 200) suggests that such issues were of concern to the sovereigns as well.

for grain to keep rolling in and taxes to continue to be paid the Ptolemies had to maintain law and order throughout the countryside. Unsolved crimes could lead to frustration on the part of villagers and distrust of and lack of confidence in the government. Unchecked lawlessness in the towns and villages of the Egyptian *chôra* made life unpleasant for the people on whom the prosperity of all Egypt depended and likewise called into question the government's power to maintain control in Egyptian settlements. Mistreatment or persecution at the hands of town or village officials might drive people to flee their homes and economic responsibilities. For all these reasons and more it was in the Ptolemies' best interests to see to it that their subjects were contented. The Ptolemies may not have guaranteed happiness or even comfortable subsistence, but they did provide for the punishment of wrongdoers and the satisfaction of those who had been wronged.

They did so by means of an epistolary appeals process unparalleled elsewhere in the ancient world for its scope and speed. The system enabled victims of crime to quickly present both simple reports and detailed narratives to police officials and make specific requests for remediation. It ensured that law enforcement officers received a wealth of information crucial for capturing criminals and solving crimes. As the phenomenon of forwarded petitions indicates, it also enhanced communication between police at all geographic levels. In addition, the system guaranteed a certain degree of police accountability and allowed the Ptolemies to keep tabs on criminal justice matters in the towns and villages of the Egyptian countryside. Above all, it helped guarantee a certain degree of protection under the law for the Egyptian people

and a steady income for the rulers of the kingdom. As the petitions reveal, the system worked very well.

Chapter 4: Seizing and Settling: Arrest, Detention, Resolution

On October 31, 89 B.C. a woman from Hermoupolis Magna named Tereus petitioned the *epistatês phylakitôn* concerning an assault that had recently taken place.¹ Another woman, a certain Tetearmais, had started a quarrel with Tereus near the *dikastêrion*. Words quickly turned to blows and Tereus, five months pregnant, had been seriously injured and was now in danger of her life. She therefore asked the *epistatês phylakitôn* to take a number of steps to resolve the matter: arrest Tetearmais, detain her and arrange for an examination of the two women and their claims within a set period of time. In closing, Tereus asked that if she herself should die, Tetearmais be punished according to the law, but that if she should live, she receive justice from her attacker as was fitting. Unfortunately, we know nothing more about this case.

Tereus' petition serves as a convenient starting point for a discussion of the arrest of criminals, investigation of crimes and resolution of disputes in Ptolemaic Egypt. The Ptolemaic police system regularly processed criminals in an efficient and effective manner. They apprehended and detained suspects, investigated reported crimes and even meted out justice. Responses to appeals for government assistance were fast and well organized, took a variety of forms and regularly involved officials scattered throughout the Egyptian countryside: not only those at work in the small settlements of the *chôra*, but also those supervising the nome capitals. The Ptolemies entrusted a variety of police officers in the towns and villages of the Egyptian *chôra* with crime-solving tasks

¹ *P.Ryl.* II 68.

and exercised a very limited degree of control over law enforcement machinery. One might suppose that such lax supervision occasionally led to chaos and confusion, but this was rarely the case. The Ptolemaic criminal justice system was a smoothly functioning machine that provided a number of options to victims of crime and allowed its officers to exercise considerable autonomy.

As was the case with petitions to law enforcement, the busting and booking process in Ptolemaic Egypt was quite different from that encountered elsewhere in the ancient world. Criminals in the *chôra* were generally not apprehended by private citizens seeking justice (as at Athens, for example) but rather by organized police forces usually (but not always) under orders from higher powers. The number of officials with the power to arrest criminals was great. As was also the case with petitions to law enforcement, it was generally village officials who tended to village problems. But nome-level agents (or even higher) of the crown also performed these essential police tasks from time to time. No one level of police administration held a monopoly when it came to apprehending and processing wrongdoers. The central government delegated responsibility for regional law enforcement issues to officials in Egyptian towns and villages but reserved the right to interfere in cases of appeal or administrative malfunction. It had a decided interest in the well-being of the Egyptian population but perhaps also realized that village matters were best handled in villages and that too much involvement in the affairs of Egyptian settlements was a waste of government time and resources.

Once a crime had been reported, a police investigation was usually opened. Such investigations often began with, and sometimes included nothing

more than the arrest of a suspect, followed by a trial. In many cases, however, it was necessary to take a number of additional steps before resolution was possible. Police often confiscated personal property, sealed off the homes of those under suspicion, paid visits to crime scenes to examine traces of criminal activity, received itemized lists from those who had suffered property theft or damage and interrogated witnesses. Unlike the specialized detectives and crime scene investigators who perform a good deal of modern police work, it was generally the *phylakitai* and their immediate superiors who filled these many diverse functions, often acting on their own authority. This high degree of autonomy among the lowest-level officers of the Ptolemaic criminal justice system was a natural consequence of minimal involvement from the Alexandria in the law-enforcement affairs of the *chôra*. But it also reflects the desire of the Ptolemaic administration to provide efficient policing at all administrative levels.

The same sort of autonomy observable in the processes of arrest, detention and investigation can also be seen in operation at Ptolemaic criminal trials.² Such trials, essentially formal audiences before town or village police officials, effectively bypassed the established Ptolemaic (civil) court system. The presiding officers summoned both offender and accuser, examined evidence, heard witnesses or read their testimony and pronounced judgment, all without any interference from higher levels of government. Decisions were binding on the disputing parties and it was expected that the word of the judge would be followed. When problems arose, cases might be referred to nome-level officials

² On criminal trials see Wolff (1970) 113-193 and the many additional sources he cites.

such as the *stratêgos* or *epistatês phylakitôn* for resolution; but in general, village justice was in the hands of the village police.

In addition to the wealth of details they provide on the processes of arresting and prosecuting criminals, the documents also shed a great deal of light on prisons and imprisonment in Ptolemaic Egypt, a subject that has received little scholarly attention to date.³ Prisons existed throughout the *chôra* and through all periods of Ptolemaic rule. They were often outfitted with professional jailors and regularly served as places of temporary detention where those on their way to trial were placed under surveillance until transport to a courtroom could be arranged. In this sense they were simply holding cells, much like the *desmôtêrion* at Athens, and were not intended to serve as places of punishment for criminals.⁴

Yet Ptolemaic prisons occasionally housed inmates for very lengthy periods of time. Many petitions detail the sufferings, real or alleged, of prisoners who complained that they had been forgotten by their friends, families and employers or that they were being detained unjustly and/or at the whims of prejudiced officials. Prisoners often expressed the fear they had fallen through the cracks of the legal system or that, lacking the proper resources, they would die of starvation in jail. Indeed, for the most part, prisoners were expected to take

³ On prisons, prisoners and detention in Ptolemaic Egypt see Marcone (1999); Hêlmis (1986) 171-176; Taubenschlag (1959); and Lewald (1910) 30ff.; also Maffi (1999); Baldwin (1963); and von Woess (1923) 126; in antiquity, e.g.: Tovar and Martín, eds. (2003); Bertrand-Dagenbach, Chauvot, Matter and Salamito, eds. (1999); and Krause (1996).

⁴ On the Athenian *desmôtêrion* see (e.g.) Hunter and Edmondson (2000) 8-9 n. 15; 19-20 n. 34; 21; Hunter (1997); (1994) 136-138; 171-184; 240 n. 32; 242 n. 48; Todd (1993) 140; Camp (1986) 113-116; Koumanoudis (1984); Vanderpool (1980; 1976) and Harrison (1971) 241-244. It is generally agreed that the notion of prison as punishment only developed in the modern era. Foucault (1975) 300 notes a number of key nineteenth-century dates in the development of the modern prison as a place of punishment.

care of themselves. In addition, the Ptolemies do not seem to have made allowances for prisoners for whom no bail was posted or for whom no trial arrangements were made.⁵ They doubtless realized that such detentions occasionally took place but did little to prevent them. This phenomenon of long-term detention occurs nowhere else in the ancient world and provides a striking contrast to the treatment of victims of crime under the Ptolemies. Those who had been harmed could count on easy access to government redress and a thorough investigation of their claims. For those who had done wrong, however, the government offered next to nothing.⁶

Among the first steps in the process of solving a crime is the apprehension of accused criminals. The Ptolemaic police regularly led suspects up (*anagein*) or off (*apagein*) to a prison or official, stood (*apokathistanai*, *kathistanai*) accused individuals before other officers and sometimes received (*epilambanein*, *paralambanein*) guilty parties from private citizens who had previously apprehended them so as to hand them over (*paradidonai*) to the police.⁷ Ptolemaic

⁵ Aside from letters from prisoners depicting starvation in prison (on which see the previous chapter, p. 82 n. 33 and below, pp121-122) see *SB XVI* 12468 (Arsinoite?, III B.C.), a petition from a man whose donkey had been confiscated by a *phylakitês* while the petitioner had been en route to the Krokodilopolis jail to bring bread to a prisoner.

⁶ One wonders what would have happened to victims of crime in those cases where accused criminals were detained in jail indefinitely. That is, could a victim obtain justice if an accused was unavailable for trial? The evidence for indefinite detention consists mainly of petitions from prisoners unjustly arrested (or so they alleged) and thus provides no clues (see below, pp121-122). At civil trials, when one party failed to appear the other usually won by default (e.g.: *BGU VIII* 1826 [Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.]; *P.Mich.* I 39 [Philadelphia, 254 B.C.]; *P.Petr.* III 21 [226 B.C.]).

⁷ *Anagein*, e.g.: *P.Athen.* 8.22 (? , 193-192 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 82.8 (221 B.C.); *P.Ryl.* II 68.18 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.); *apagein*, e.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 55.11 (Tebtynis, II B.C.); *Chrest.Mitt.* 5.6 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59368.18 (240 B.C.); *apokathistanai*, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59224.8 (253 B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 4.14 (Herakleopolite, 153 B.C.?); *P.Tebt.* III.1 709.16 (159 B.C.); *kathistanai*, e.g.: *BGU VIII* 1778.7 (Herakleopolis, 64-44 B.C.); *P.Amh.* II 35.40-41 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 132 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59369.1 (241 B.C.); *paradidonai*, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1252.26 (Arsinoite, II B.C.); VIII 1780.18 (Herakleopolite, after 56 B.C.?; after 50 B.C.?); X 1912.3 (Arsinoite?, ca 250 B.C.); *epilambanein*, e.g.: *P.Coll.Youtie* I 16.14 (? , 109 B.C.?); *PSI IV* 366.4 (Philadelphia, 250 B.C.);

police officers seem to have carried out arrests for three basic reasons: they were asked to arrest by civilians, they were ordered to do so by higher officials or they had witnessed wrongdoing first-hand.⁸ The motivations behind arrests ran the gamut from stolen goods to unprovoked violence, from failure to render services to illegal habitation. These types of crimes have been discussed in detail above.⁹ In each case the mechanics of an arrest were different. If an arrest had been planned in advance, an official, with or without subordinates or companions, simply approached and seized the offending party (or parties).¹⁰ For instance, in one case a traveler was attacked while en route to Philadelphia (*P.Cair.Zen.* II 59224 [253 B.C.]). He later located the man responsible for the assault, pointed him out to the village *archiphylakitês* and asked Zenon to instruct the *archiphylakitês* to make the arrest and transport the offender for punishment. In another an *epistatês* commanded a police official (perhaps a *phylakitês*) to arrest a

P.Zen.Pestm. 24.5-6 (257 B.C.); *paralambanein*, e.g.: *BGU VIII* 1774.17 (Herakleopolite, I B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 4.16 (Herakleopolite, 153 B.C.?); *SB XIV* 11966.3, 15 (Euhemeria, 170-116 B.C.).

⁸ For requests for arrests from petitioners see the previous chapter, pp91-92. Orders to arrest from higher officials, e.g.: *BGU VIII* 1832 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.), a letter to the *stratêgos* in which a petitioner requested the arrest of certain offenders and to which the *stratêgos* (presumably) added a command for a subordinate to execute the arrest; *P.Heid.* VI 362 (Herakleopolite, 226 B.C.), orders from an *oikonomos* to the Herakleopolite *archiphylakitai* and *phylakitai* not to allow anyone to remove cows from the nome and to arrest those that attempted to do so; *P.Mich.* XVIII 778 (Mouchis, after 193/2 B.C.), where a petitioner requested that the *dioikêtês* write to an *archiphylakitês* so that the latter could mobilize his *phylakitai* to arrest an *oikonomos*; spontaneous arrests, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59475 (III B.C.), a petition to Zenon concerning the arrest of the petitioner's brother-in-law and a *phylakitês* by another *phylakitês*; *P.Hels.* 2 (Arsinoite, ca 195-192 B.C.), a petition to an *archiphylakitês* concerning an assault and the arrest of the petitioner by some *phylakitai* who had appeared at the scene of the crime; *P.Tebt.* III.1 733 (143-142 B.C.), a letter to an *epimelêtês* concerning the seizure of a man who had been discovered stealing clothing by a tax collector's son and a *phylakitês*.

⁹ See the previous chapter, pp69-72.

¹⁰ Arrests planned in advance, e.g.: *P.Coll.Youtie* I 16 (? , 109 B.C.), where a victim complained about a premeditated workshop invasion and an unjust (?) arrest carried out by an *archiphylakitês* with the aid of accomplices; *P.Princ.* III 117 (55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.), in which a man noted that the *stratêgos* had previously ordered an *epistatês* to arrest someone (and the *epistatês* had then done so); *SB I* 4369B.52-58 (Arsinoite, III B.C.), a work order in which the sender noted that a *machimos* had been instructed to arrest the recipient if record-keeping inconsistencies came to light.

donkey thief and then discovered that an *archiphylakitês* had subsequently and incorrectly released the offender (*P.Hib.* I 34 and 73 [243-242 B.C.]).

In the case of a spontaneous arrest things were naturally much less organized, though the mechanics were basically the same: the official or officials with power to arrest grabbed the guilty party (or parties) with or without the assistance of others.¹¹ A broad spectrum of officials had the power to do this, from the highest administrator to the lowest subordinate. In the vast majority of cases, however, it was village officials who carried out such arrests, most frequently *phylakitai*. In one instance a grain transport official reported that some Arsinoite shipbuilders had been arrested by a Herakleopolite *archiphylakitês* when they had entered into the latter's jurisdiction (*Chrest.Wilck.* 166 [Arsinoite, 218 B.C.]). In another an official of unknown rank noted that the son of a tax collector had been patrolling certain reservoirs (*hypodocheia*) accompanied by a *phylakitês* when the two had stumbled upon a man who had stolen two himations and a chiton (*P.Tebt.* III.1 733 [143-142 B.C.]). That a pair of officials engaged in inspecting agricultural infrastructure was empowered to arrest a clothing thief may seem surprising. But as this and other evidence demonstrates, the Ptolemaic police had broad powers of arrest.

The latter example also suggests that non-police officers and even private citizens sometimes provided assistance in arresting offenders. Many non-police officials seized wrongdoers by themselves, as well. Financial officers were among

¹¹ For example, in *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59475 (III B.C.) a victim reported that some *phylakitai* had seized and penned up a runaway mare and that subsequently a single *phylakitês* had arrested his brother-in-law and another *phylakitês* after the two had regained possession of the horse. In *P.Hels.* 2 (Arsinoite, ca 195-192 B.C.) a petitioner noted that he had been assaulted by a soldier and then handed over by the offender and his accomplices to some *phylakitai* who had appeared on the scene.

those who most commonly executed arrests, often with police backing.¹² For instance, in one case two tax officials reported that they had handed over a hide-smuggler and his wares to two agents of the *phrouarchos* (*P.Diosk.* 5 [Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.?]). An official report details the arrest of an offender by an oil dealer while an *epistatês*, a *phylakitês* and a *desmophylax* were present (*SB* III 7202 [Arsinoite, after 227 B.C.]). Though police presence was always a plus, sometimes a citizen might carry out an arrest by him- or herself. In such cases, the apprehended criminal was handed over to the police to complete the process.¹³ In a petition concerning hunting rights, for example, the authors noted that they had handed a man over to two *phylakitai* whom they had brought along for the purpose (*BGU* VI 1252 [Arsinoite, II B.C.]). In a letter to the king concerning intentional scalding in a bath, the writer related that she had apprehended an offender and handed him over to the village *archiphylakitês* (*P.Enteux.* 82 [221 B.C.]).

A series of third-century ordinances on police and brigandage preserved on one papyrus suggests that there were government regulations in place for the time frames and procedures to be followed in the course of investigations leading to arrests (*P.Hib.* II 198 = *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 1-4, 11-16, 26, 77, 78 [?, 242-222

¹² E.g.: *BGU* VIII 1821 (Herakleopolite, 57-56 B.C.), a letter from a man who had been arrested by a tax collector and the *hypêretai* of the *nomarchês*; *P.Mich.* XVIII 774 (Oxyrhyncha, ca 194/3 B.C.), a petition from a goldsmith who had been wrongly arrested by a tax farmer accompanied by a *rhabdophoros* (?); *P.Tebt.* III.1 772 (236 B.C.), a letter from an *apomoira*-contractor who noted that he had previously arrested a vineyard owner and brought him before the *stratêgos*.

¹³ E.g.: *BGU* VIII 1847 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.?; 50-49 B.C.?), a petition from some prisoners who had been arrested (?) by certain shepherds; *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59499 (III B.C.), a memorandum concerning a stonecutter who had been arrested by Zenon because of a debt; *PSI* V 529 (Philadelphia, III B.C.), a petition from a man arrested by a private citizen for a debt of 62 drachmas.

B.C.]).¹⁴ Unfortunately, the document's poor state of preservation has obscured many of the relevant details. Nevertheless, a few important points are clear. In one especially well-preserved section, guidelines are established for arrests and penalties specified for noncompliant *phylakitai* as well as those caught harboring fugitives. Police officers who did not arrest those who had stolen from the crown were made liable to the same penalties as the thieves themselves (*P.Hib.* II 198.85-86). Similar punishments were assigned to anyone who gave protection to rowers who had run away from the royal fleet, other criminals or those who interfered with police procedure (86-99).¹⁵

Though arresting officers most commonly targeted individuals who had committed crimes against private citizens or had been charged with having done so, other types of arrests took place, as well.¹⁶ For instance, crimes against the state, chief among these infringements upon government monopolies, were considered offences worthy of arrest. In such cases regional police were often notified in advance that they were to assist the appropriate government agents in the successful completion of state business. They were typically asked to seize both traffickers in illegal goods as well as their wares and to hand both over to

¹⁴ On this important text see Bagnall (1969); Lewis (1968); and Kunderewicz (1965); also chapter 5, p. 144; chapter 6, pp203-204; and below, p. 127.

¹⁵ The rowers may have been slaves, though there does not appear to be consensus on the matter: *P.Hib.* II 198 pp98-99 n. on 86 with Bagnall (1969) 85-88 and Kunderewicz (1965) 140.

¹⁶ Arrests of private citizens charged with crimes, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1832 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.), a petition to the *stratēgos* requesting that he arrest some *ephodoi* and donkey-drivers who had absconded with feed; *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59369 (241 B.C.), a letter containing a report from a trial concerning a property dispute between a petitioner and his father-in-law at which the former was arrested after the latter accused him of being a slave; *P.Diosk.* 1 (Herakleopolite, 154 B.C.?), a petition concerning the arrest of two men after a drunken brawl.

the appropriate officials.¹⁷ Debtors to the crown were likewise often arrested, though very few descriptions of arrests of this sort are preserved in the documents. That such seizures regularly took place is evident from the great number of petitions from prisoners incarcerated for fiscal malfeasance.¹⁸

As was mentioned above, a number of different police officials carried out arrests. No one officer had the primary right of apprehending criminals. Agents from the village *phylakitai* to the nome-level *epistatai phylakitôn* were empowered to do so, though their powers to arrest seem to have varied. Police officials with administrative powers (*archiphylakitai*, *epistatai* and *phourarchoi*) typically acted of their own volition.¹⁹ These same officers might also be ordered by higher officials to carry out arrests.²⁰ Nome-level police officials were empowered to make arrests as well and did so without need for instruction or sanction from a commanding officer. *Epistatai phylakitôn* evidently performed this function, though only a few documents show these officials apprehending criminals or being petitioned by private citizens to do so.²¹ The *stratêgos*, too, could carry out

¹⁷ Arrests of bootleggers and black marketeers, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* I 38 (113 B.C.), a *kômogrammateus'* report on a sting operation carried out to nab an oil smuggler; III.1 709 (159 B.C.), a letter to the police officials of Tali asking for their assistance in bringing in sellers of illicit papyrus and their wares; *SB XII 11078* (Arsinoite, ca 100 B.C.), a letter from three papyrus sellers to the police officials of Tebtynis requesting that the latter aid the collector of the papyrus tax for the region in his activities by arresting those operating illegally.

¹⁸ On debtors in Ptolemaic prisons see below, pp114-115.

¹⁹ *Archiphylakitai*, e.g.: *Chrest. Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 230 (II B.C.); III.1 797 (II B.C.); *epistatai*, e.g.: *P.Köln* III 140 (Arsinoite, 244-242 B.C.?; 219-217 B.C.?); *P.Tebt.* I 38 (113 B.C.); *UPZ* I 124 (Memphis, 175 B.C.?; 165 B.C.?); *phourarchoi*, e.g.: *P.Diosk.* 4 (Herakleopolite, 153 B.C.?); 7 (ca 153 B.C.?); 9 (II B.C.).

²⁰ *Archiphylakitai* ordered to arrest, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 82 (221 B.C.); *P.Heid.* VII 393 (Arsinoite / Memphite, III B.C.); *SB VI 9108* (Aphroditopolite, 173-169 B.C.); *epistatai*, e.g.: *BGU VI 1244* (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?); *P.Enteux.* 28 (218 B.C.); *P.Princ.* III 117 (?; 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?); *phourarchoi*, e.g.: *BGU VIII 1844* (Herakleopolite, 50-49 B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 6 (Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.); *P.Tor.Choach.* 8 (Thebes, 126 B.C.).

²¹ Arresting: *P.Diosk.* 4 (Herakleopolite, 153 B.C.?); *P.Ryl.* II 68 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.); *SB VIII 9792* (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.); ordering arrests: *BGU VI 1244* (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?;

arrests, though more often than not he delegated this activity to a subordinate (generally an *epistatês*).²²

Most of the time, however, it was the *phylakitai* who carried out arrests, even if a superior had been instructed to do so. *Phylakitai* could seize offenders with the sanction of their supervisors, but likewise did so on their own initiative.²³ At least one document suggests that they might be stationed in problem areas to make future arrests: the minutes of a trial at which it was noted that *phylakitai* had been posted at the gates of the *pastophorion* of Aphrodite in Memphis to prevent people from sleeping there and to arrest those who were caught doing so (UPZ I 119 [Memphis, 156 B.C.]). We see here additional evidence that *phylakitai* were far from non-thinking cogs in the Ptolemaic criminal justice machine. Rather, they were a surprisingly autonomous body and an effective arresting corps.

That officials at all levels of the administration, from the smallest villages to the nome *metropoleis*, not only received orders to arrest and were asked to do so by petitioners, but also did so when they themselves deemed it necessary suggests that the Ptolemaic law enforcement system was designed to provide rapid and decisive responses to allegations of wrongdoing throughout the *chôra*. The Ptolemies allowed Egyptian towns and villages great autonomy in

160 B.C.?), a petition to an *oikonomos* forwarded to an *epistatês phylakitôn* who then commanded an *epistatês* to make an arrest.

²² Arresting, e.g.: C.Ord.Ptol.² 34 (Oxyrhynchus?, after 186 B.C.); 53 (Tebtynis, 118 B.C.); UPZ I 5 (Memphis, after 163 B.C.); delegating, e.g.: P.Entreux. 28 (218 B.C.); P.Princ. III 117 (? , 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?); SB VIII 9792 (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.).

²³ *Phylakitai* ordered to arrest, e.g.: BGU X 1912 (Arsinoite?, ca 250 B.C.); P.Mich. XVIII 778 (Mouchis, after 193/2 B.C.); SB XX 14708 (Theadelphia, 151 B.C.); arresting of their own volition, e.g.: BGU VI 1252 (Arsinoite, II B.C.); P.Mich. I 85 (Philadelphia, III B.C.); ZPE 141 (2002) 185-190 (Herakleopolite, 137 B.C.).

determining and managing their law enforcement machinery. As a consequence, a great number of officials were granted or assumed the power to apprehend offenders. This made the effecting of an arrest quite easy for a victim of crime. A broad spectrum of police agents empowered to haul in criminals in any given place improved the odds that a suspect would not escape the charges against him or her. The Ptolemies took lawbreaking seriously and favored swift resolution for reported offenses. From brawlers to thieves to tax cheats, criminals of every stripe were liable to sudden seizure by the Ptolemaic police.

Once an offender had been arrested, a period of temporary detention was commonplace before transport to another official for trial or punishment.²⁴ In most instances police officials detained (*katechesthai*, *synechesthai*) or secured (*asphalizesthai*) criminals or possessions in some sort of lock-up.²⁵ Taubenschlag asserted that offenders in Greek and Roman Egypt were placed in prison for two major reasons: they owed debts or had committed misdemeanors.²⁶ A survey of the evidence lends support to his views. Debts of both a public and a private

²⁴ On imprisonment in the Ptolemaic period see especially Marcone (1999); Ambaglio (1987) 153-155; Hélmis (1986) 171-185; and Taubenschlag (1959); also von Woess (1923) 126.

²⁵ *Katechesthai*, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* V 59819.9 (254 B.C.); *P.Mich.* I 85.2-3 (Philadelphia, III B.C.); *UPZ* I 7.16 (Memphis, 163 B.C.); *synechesthai*, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1854.17 (Herakleopolite, 74-73 B.C.?.; 45-44 B.C.?.); *Chrest.Wilck.* 166.i.10-11 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.); *P.Polit.Iud.* 2.4 (Herakleopolite, ca 135 B.C.); *asphalizesthai*, e.g.: *P.Hels.* 2.23 (Arsinoite, ca 195-192 B.C.); *P.Lips.* II 126.13 (? , II/I B.C.); *P.Ryl.* II 68.19 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.). Hélmis (1986) argues that *asphalizesthai* is to be understood to mean “demand bail” (“exiger caution”, 167) for a wrongdoer. But as *P.Diosk.* 9.6-15 (Herakleopolite, II B.C.) demonstrates, the verb can refer to detention in a location: ἐπειλημμένης μου τῆς ὑπαρχούσης μοι παιδίσκης ἢ Θερμούθιος τῆς καὶ Ἀφροδισίας ἀποδιδρασκούσης ἢ ταύτην τε βουλομένης ἢ μου διὰ σοῦ ἀσφαλισθῆναι ἢ ἐν τῇ φυλακῇ μέγχι τοῦ παραγενόμενον Πηλέα ἢ τὸν ἄνδρα μου καὶ παραί[λαβό]ν[τα α.]ὑτήν. Petitioners sometimes requested that stolen produce and/or livestock be guarded (*asphalizesthai*) as well: *BGU* VI 1253.15 (? , II B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 53.29 (110 B.C.).

²⁶ Taubenschlag (1959) 362. Hélmis (1986) argues that imprisonment regularly took place for debts and occasionally in criminal cases where an arrested individual was considered a flight risk (177-178). He does not elaborate on the circumstances of the latter, citing a lack of evidence.

nature were met with the same penalty: incarceration until repayment.²⁷ Of 101 references to incarceration in the Ptolemaic period, in as many as 37 cases the offenses justifying imprisonment are known. Of these, 18 seem to refer to prison stays for debts. Yet half of these are dubious and may not even concern imprisonment for debt.²⁸ Given the predominance of this type of incarceration in other ancient Mediterranean states (especially at Athens) evidence for the practice in Ptolemaic Egypt is not surprising.²⁹

What is surprising, however, is the fact that perhaps 15 additional texts detail detentions carried out for crimes ranging from assault to theft, from poor workmanship to disturbing the peace.³⁰ For example, in one instance a man was

²⁷ Where debtors and debts are mentioned in the papyri, the surrounding circumstances are often vague. The nature of a debt (*i.e.*, whether it was public or private) must generally be determined from other evidence in the text. This is often a difficult task. The following examples seem to provide instances of imprisonment for debts owed to the state, *e.g.*: *BGU VIII* 1821 (Herakleopolite, 57-56 B.C.); *P.Col.* IV 103 (Philadelphia, III B.C.); *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12 (Tebtynis, 177 B.C.). *Contra* H elmis (1986) 181-182 it appears as though imprisonment for private debts also occurred, *e.g.*: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 34 (Oxyrhynchus?, after 186 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59520 (III B.C.); *SB XX* 14708 (Theadelphia, 151 B.C.).

²⁸ *BGU VIII* 1773 (Herakleopolite, 58 B.C.?); 1821 (Herakleopolite, 57-56 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59492 (?) (III B.C.), a petition in which an arresting official seems to have imprisoned the writer, who complained of his pennilessness, after attempting to extract a payment from him; 59519 (III B.C.); 59520 (III B.C.); IV 59626 (III B.C.); *P.Col.* III 18 (?) (Philadelphia, ca 257 B.C.), where a prisoner asserted that he had been unjustly arrested and could produce guarantors; IV 103 (?) (Philadelphia, III B.C.), where a freshly-released prisoner reported that he had been met by an official who then extracted a tax payment; *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12 (?) (Tebtynis, 177 B.C.), a petition detailing two separate detentions, the first of which seems to have involved the writer and his guarantors; *P.Heid.* VI 378 (Pelousion?, III B.C.); *P.Mil.Congr.* XVII pg21/22 (?) (Arsinoite, 142/1 B.C.), a petition that seems to concern a false record of debt which led eventually to a prison stay; *PSI V* 529 (Philadelphia, III B.C.); 532 (?) (Philadelphia, III B.C.), where a petitioner noted that he had measured an amount of grain for a granary and consequently sought the release of his sons; *P.Tebt.* I 34 (?) (ca 100 B.C.), an official letter in which the recipient was asked to see the *k omogrammateus* and the *prakt or* to release a man who had been arrested; *SB III* 7202 (?) (Arsinoite, after 227 B.C.), where there is mention of imprisonment followed immediately by an arrest for debt; XIV 11639 (Philadelphia, 247 B.C.); 12000 (?) (Krokodilopolis, II B.C.), a bribe offering money for a tax payment in return for a release; XX 14708 (Theadelphia, 151 B.C.).

²⁹ On imprisonment or other punishments for debt in antiquity see Lintott (1999); Maffi (1999); M el eze-Modrzejewski (1962); and Taubenschlag (1959); at Athens see also Allen (1997); Hunter (1997); and Barkan (1936).

³⁰ Assault: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59369 (?) (241 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 15 (114 B.C.); theft: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59275 (?) (251 B.C.); *P.Hib.* I 34 and 73 (243-242 B.C.); *PSI IV* 367 (?) (Philadelphia, 250 B.C.); 380 (?)

placed in the *heirkê* after assaulting an *epistatês* (*P.Tebt.* I 15 [114 B.C.]). In another, a man was sent to the *desmôtêrion* after misplacing a number of records with which he had been entrusted (*P.Enteux.* 84 [246-205 B.C.]). In a third a group of people was placed in the *phylakê* for public drunkenness (*P.Eleph.* 12 [222 B.C.]). Ptolemaic holding-cells were employed for far more than tax cheats. This suggests that the administrators of the towns and villages of Greek Egypt were very concerned about matters of personal security and empowered their police to incarcerate those considered threats to the maintenance of civic order. The degree to which the Ptolemies encouraged such types of imprisonment is unclear and perhaps unknowable. As we have seen, for the most part law enforcement matters in the *chôra* were left to officials in Egyptian towns and villages. Higher levels of power were involved only when necessary. Yet it seems perfectly natural that the Ptolemies would have supported any crime-prevention measures intended to ensure peace and prosperity in the Egyptian countryside. Disturbances were not conducive to productivity; troublemakers needed to be removed.

Taubenschlag argued that private offenders were imprisoned in *desmôtêria* and fiscal offenders in *praktoreia* or *logistêria*.³¹ Yet in the majority of cases the offenses for which individuals were imprisoned in *desmôtêria* are unclear.³²

(Philadelphia, 249 B.C.); substandard work: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59484 (III B.C.); IV 59639 (III B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 84 (246-205 B.C.); *P.Petr.* II 10 (?) (III B.C.); 19 (?) (III B.C.); public disturbances: *P.Eleph.* 12 (222 B.C.); *PSI* IV 406 (?) (Philadelphia, 260-258 B.C.). In *P.Diosk.* 9 (Herakleopolite, II B.C.) a petitioner asked a *phourarchos* to detain a runaway slave in the *phylakê* for a few days.

³¹ Taubenschlag (1959) 364-365.

³² Of the 27 Ptolemaic texts that mention detention in *desmôtêria*, only 10 specify the reasons for imprisonment. Of these 10 instances, only three can be demonstrated irrefutably to have been debt-related.

Further, private offenders were also regularly placed in *phylakai*.³³ As for fiscal offenders, we know of only one public debtor incarcerated in a *praktoreion* and none imprisoned in a *logistêrion*.³⁴ But three texts describe incarceration in *heirktai* for offenses against the state, and a handful of royal decrees specifically prohibit detention for private violations *en heirktei*.³⁵ Another text mentions detention in the *synochê* for a debt to the crown.³⁶ Regulations for the incarceration of suspects may have been more flexible than has previously been allowed.

In addition, the names given to Ptolemaic prisons by those who wrote about them were not necessarily technical terms: one man's *desmôtêrion* may have been another man's *heirkte*. Of the various names for prisons that occur in the evidence, *phylakai* and *desmôtêria* appear with by far the greatest frequency: *phylakai* in 67 texts, *desmôtêria* in 32. *Heirkte* is mentioned in 7 documents.³⁷ A variety of other names for prisons was employed from time to time, as well.³⁸

³³ See below, pp117-121.

³⁴ See *P.Heid.* VIII 417 (Herakleopolis, 190 or 189 B.C.), a receipt for a payment of grain in which the recipient agreed to allow a debtor to be released from the *praktoreion*; also *SB XIV* 11639 (Philadelphia, 247 B.C.), where a man was reported to the *logistêrion* for an outstanding debt but detained in the *desmôtêrion*.

³⁵ Detention in *heirktai* for offenses against the state: *BGU VIII* 1773 (Herakleopolite, 58 B.C.), a record of proceedings concerning a land dispute in which it was noted that one of the litigants had spent some time in the *heirkte*; *P.Mil.Congr.* XVII pg21/22 (Arsinoite, 142/1 B.C.), a petition from a man who had been wronged by a *kômogrammateus* and had been locked up (?) in the *basilikê heirkte*; *P.Tebt.* I 15 (114 B.C.), a report of an assault on an *epistatês* and the subsequent imprisonment of one of the attackers in the *heirkte*; decrees: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 34.ii.10-20 (Oxyrhynchus?, after 186 B.C.); 53.255-264 (Tebtynis, 118 B.C.); 55.10-13 (Tebtynis, II B.C.).

³⁶ *BGU VIII* 1821 (Herakleopolite, 57-56 B.C.), a petition from a man who had been unjustly (?) arrested by a *logeutês* and some accomplices and placed in the *synochê*.

³⁷ *BGU VIII* 1773.8 (Herakleopolite, 58 B.C.); 1847.18 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.; 50-49 B.C.); *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 34.ii.20 (Oxyrhynchus?, after 186 B.C.); 53.260 (Tebtynis, 118 B.C.); 55.13 (Tebtynis, II B.C.); *P.Mil.Congr.* XVII pg21/22.11 (Arsinoite, 142/1 B.C.); and *P.Tebt.* I 15.13 (114 B.C.). *Heirktai* are attested for Bousiris (?) (*BGU VIII* 1773), Oxyrhyncha (?) (*P.Mil.Congr.* XVII pg21/22), Tebtynis (*P.Tebt.* I 15) and the Herakleopolite nome (*BGU VIII* 1847).

³⁸ One Ptolemaic text mentions the existence of a *desmophylakion* in Oxyrhyncha that held prisoners: *P.Tebt.* III.2 904.6-7, 14 (115 B.C.). Another features a *drapetagôgion* as a place of detention: *BGU VIII* 1881.7 (Herakleopolite, 80-30 B.C.). Two texts describe detention in

Unfortunately, the fragmentary evidence for imprisonment in Ptolemaic times does not permit firm conclusions about whether or not offenders of specific types were regularly placed in prisons with specific names and functions. Yet enough evidence survives to suggest that at least two of the terms employed for prisons in Ptolemaic Egypt, *phylakê* and *desmôtêrion*, were in fact meaningful and designated different types of jails.

Of these two types of prison *phylakai* occur over the broadest geographical expanse.³⁹ The documents generally do not specify individual officers in charge of *phylakai* but demonstrate that a number of financial and police officials worked there, among these *desmophylakes*.⁴⁰ Given the variety of government employees that passed through these versatile buildings, it is not surprising that *phylakai*

ephêmereutêria: *P.Petr.* II 10.13-14 (III B.C.) concerning the *ephêmereutêrion* in Paue, and *SB XXIV* 16285.13-15 (Arsinoite, 202 B.C.) concerning that in Krokodilopolis. *Ochyromata* occasionally contained prisoners (*desmôtai*) as well: *P.Petr.* II 13.Fr3.2 (255 B.C.), a report concerning the *ochyroma* in Krokodilopolis. As mentioned above, *praktoreia* were evidently outfitted with cells for debtors: *P.Heid.* VIII 417.24 (Herakleopolis, 190 or 189 B.C.?); see *P.Heid.* VIII pp216-217. Finally, a lock-up known as the *synochê* occurs in a first-century petition to a *stratêgos*: *BGU VIII* 1821.21, 28 (Herakleopolite, 57-56 B.C.).

³⁹ *Phylakai* are attested for Alexandria (*P.Hib.* I 110.22-23 [ca 270 B.C.]), Aphroditopolis (e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59753.22-29 [III B.C.]), Arsinoe (*P.Köln X* 411A.i.4 [Arsinoite, 178 B.C.?]), Boubastos (?) (*P.Cair.Zen.* I 59044.3 [before 257 B.C.]), Elephantine (*P.Eleph.* 12.2 [222 B.C.]), Herakleopolis (*P.Diosk.* 9.12 [Herakleopolite, II B.C.]), Hermoupolis Magna (?) (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59392.1-4 [III B.C.]), Krokodilopolis (e.g.: *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12.9-10 [Tebtynis, 177 B.C.]), Memphis (e.g.: *UPZ* I 125.36-37 [Memphis, 89 B.C.]), Oxyrhyncha (e.g.: *ZPE* 127 [1999] 138-139.7-9 [Arsinoite, ca 140/39 B.C.]), Pelousion (?) (*P.Heid.* VI 378.15-23 [Pelousion?, III B.C.]), Philadelphia (e.g.: *P.Mich.* I 85.3-4 [Philadelphia, III B.C.]), Schedia (*P.Hib.* I 110.24-25 [ca 270 B.C.]), Speos Artemidos (?) (*P.Hib.* II 198.125-131 [242-222 B.C.]), Tebetny (e.g.: *P.Polit.Iud.* 17.14 [Herakleopolite, 143 B.C.]), Tektho (or Techtho) (?) (*P.Hib.* II 198.125-128 [242-222 B.C.]) and the Kynopolite nome (?) (*P.Hib.* II 198.125-129 [242-222 B.C.]).

⁴⁰ *Desmophylakes* in *phylakai*: *PSI XIII* 1315.4 (Tebtynis, 127 B.C.) where multiple *desmophylakes* received wine for the *phylakê*; *P.Tebt.* III.1 777.5 (II B.C.); *SB III* 7202.17, 35 (Arsinoite, after 227 B.C.); see also chapter 2, p. 55. A number of other officers also appear to have been employed in and around Ptolemaic *phylakai*. *Hoi pros tais phylakais*: *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59031.14-15 (258 B.C.); *P.Wurzb.* 7.2.7-8 (Diopolite Major, II B.C.); *hoi epi tês phylakês*: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59392.3-4 (III B.C.) (= *hoi epi tou phylakeiou* [?]; *P.Zen.Pestm.* 61.2 [246 B.C.?; 245 B.C.?]); *hoi [.]estêkotes tôn phylakôn*: *P.Hib.* II 198.89-90 (242-222 B.C.). It is probably safe to assume that the official with the title *ho hêgoumenos tês phylakês*, found in a handful of second-century grain loading orders from the Arsinoite nome, was not connected to a given *phylakê* but was rather an on-board security guard: *P.Erasm.* II 23.7; 24.4; 25.12 (all 152 B.C.); 35.7 (II B.C.). On this official see *P.Erasm.* II p. 96.

served multiple functions.⁴¹ In addition to serving as places of detention they also functioned as guard posts and stations for the collection of tolls.⁴² *Desmôtêria*, on the other hand, seem to have served exclusively as prisons.⁴³ They were usually supervised by a *desmophylax*. While a number of officials were empowered to deliver criminals to the *desmôtêrion* or order their release, most of the transactions that took place there, including the receipt of payments for bail, seem to have been carried out through the *desmophylax*.⁴⁴

Though *phylakai* and *desmôtêria* seem to have been distinctly different sorts of complexes, it is not possible to form firm conclusions about the types of offenders that were detained in each of them or indeed whether there was a difference at all. A comparison of the types of offenses that landed prisoners in each is enough to show that both were employed for a variety of public and

⁴¹ The editors of *P.Hib.* II 198 (242-222 B.C.) distinguished between two types of *phylakai*: those that functioned as guard posts and those that served as toll stations (p. 99 n. on 89). Wilcken, too, was unsure whether all *phylakai* served the same purpose (*UPZ* I 125 [Memphis, 89 B.C.] introduction, p. 590).

⁴² Guard posts: *Chrest.Wilck.* 1.i.7, ii.17-18 (Arsinoite, ca 246 B.C.); toll stations, e.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 53.24 (Tebtynis, 118 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59289.10, 21 (250 B.C.); *P.Lond.* VII 1945.4 (Philadelphia, before 257 B.C.). Private contracts might also be drawn up at *phylakai*: *UPZ* I 125.7, 36-37 (Memphis, 89 B.C.). Though the word often refers to police stations, *phylakê* can also simply mean "protection" or "guarding", whether of objects (e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59362.35-36 [243 B.C.]: τὴν ἰ [τῶ]ν ἀγ[ρί]ων βοῶν φυλακὴν) or people (as in the phrase *meta phylakês*, "under guard", e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1761.13 [Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.]). The term can also have a temporal signification: *Chrest.Wilck.* 1.i.7, ii.17-18 (Arsinoite, ca 246 B.C.): πρώτης ἰ φυλακῆς (17-18); *SB* IV 7351.9-10 (Philadelphia, after 200 B.C.?; after 176 B.C.): περὶ πρώτην φυλακὴν ἰ τῆς νυκτός.

⁴³ *Desmôtêria* are attested for Akanthon polis (?) (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59520.2-6 [III B.C.]), Aphroditopolis (?) (e.g.: *P.Hib.* II 241.1-2 [ca 250 B.C.]), Bousiris (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59368.23-25 [240 B.C.]), Kerkesoucha (*P.Enteux.* 84.10-14 [246-205 B.C.]), Krokodilopolis (e.g.: *P.Petr.* II 4.vii.4 [ca 256/5 B.C.]), Philadelphia (e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59296.12-13, 25-26, 34-37 [250 B.C.]), Phnebieus (*BGU* VIII 1828.4-5 [Herakleopolite, 52/1 B.C.]), Sinary (*P.Hib.* I 34.1-3, 4 and 73.8-9, 9-11 [243-242 B.C.]), Takona (?) (*P.Hib.* II 248Fr3.6-7 [ca 250 B.C.]), Taskry (*PSI* IV 380.1-12 [249 B.C.]) and the Koite nome (?) (*P.Hib.* II 203.14-19 [246-221 B.C.]).

⁴⁴ For the duties of *desmophylakes* see above, n. 40 and chapter 2, p. 55. *Desmophylakes* in *desmôtêria* receiving bail payments: *P.LilleDem.* I 3 (243 B.C.); receiving prisoners: *Chrest.Mitt.* 45 (III B.C.?).

private transgressions.⁴⁵ This suggests that any prison, regardless of name, could serve as a place of detention for any malefactor arrested on any jailable offense. As it appears generally to have been the case that wrongdoers were arrested and taken to the nearest available place of detention, this seems perfectly reasonable. Yet the evidence is not sufficient to provide certainty.

A number of locales seem to have had multiple places of detention.⁴⁶ Of course, some of the villages that appear to have had more than one jail may in fact not have, owing to the flexible nomenclature of Ptolemaic prisons. Yet if we accept a fundamental, meaningful difference between *phylakai* and *desmôtêria*, at least three villages in the Ptolemaic *chôra* possessed at least one of each.⁴⁷ The reasons for this are not easily explained, though it is perhaps most likely that multiple prisons were established in direct response to the needs of subject populations. Areas of higher population and/or crime would naturally have required extra places of detention. Smaller, less-populated areas would not have needed an extensive penitentiary system. Areas of heavy traffic along the Nile, where the passage of ships would have necessitated greater security measures and where the collection of shipping fees would have been regular, were

⁴⁵ Offenses leading to imprisonment in *desmôtêria*: assault (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59369 [?] [241 B.C.]); debt (e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59626 [III B.C.]); substandard work (e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 84 [246-205 B.C.]); theft (e.g.: *P.Hib.* I 34 and 73 [243-242 B.C.]); in *phylakai*: assault (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59369 [241 B.C.]); debt (e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59496 [248-241 B.C.]); public disturbances (e.g.: *P.Eleph.* 12 [222 B.C.]); theft (*PSI* IV 367 [?] [Philadelphia, 250 B.C.]).

⁴⁶ For instance, the documents contain references to both a *desmophylakion* (*P.Tebt.* III.2 904.6-7, 14 [115 B.C.]) and a *phylakê* (e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 83.1-7 [221 B.C.]) in Oxyrhyncha and a *desmôtêrion* (e.g.: *P.Petr.* II 4.vii.4 [ca 256/5 B.C.]), an *ephêmereutêrion* (*SB* XXIV 16285.13-15 [Arsinoite, 202 B.C.]), an *ochyrôma* that contained *desmôtai* (*P.Petr.* II 13.Fr3.2 [255 B.C.]) and a *phylakê* (e.g.: *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12.9-10 [Tebtynis, 177 B.C.]) in Krokodilopolis.

⁴⁷ Aphroditopolis (*desmôtêrion*, e.g.: *P.Hib.* II 241.1-2 [?] [ca 250 B.C.]; *phylakê*, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59753.22-29 [III B.C.]), Krokodilopolis (*desmôtêrion*, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 84.17-19 [246-205 B.C.]; *phylakê*, e.g.: *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12.9-10 [Tebtynis, 177 B.C.]) and Philadelphia (*desmôtêrion*, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59296.12-13, 25-26, 34-37 [250 B.C.]; *phylakê*, e.g.: *P.Mich.* I 85.3-4 [Philadelphia, III B.C.]).

equipped with *phylakai* that served as headquarters for many different government agents and in which seized goods and individuals were held. As we have seen, such complexes might also function as guard posts, both along the Nile and elsewhere. These outposts contained a bevy of police and financial officials. In the smaller villages of the *chôra*, however, extensive, multi-purpose police buildings would not have been crucial. Most Egyptian towns and villages were provided with simple lock-ups for the detention of offenders.⁴⁸ Such prisons were most commonly called *desmôtêria*.⁴⁹ Though the data are not conclusive, it seems likely that *desmophylakes* ran these rural prisons under the supervision of the town or village police.⁵⁰

Though types of prison may have differed throughout the *chôra*, the treatment of prisoners apparently did not. The letters of prisoners to the outside world demonstrate that the prison experience was inextricably connected with isolation, poverty and the threat of death.⁵¹ Prisoners were sometimes bound, occasionally sent out on work details and generally expected to provide for their

⁴⁸ Villages with *desmôtêria*: see above, n. 43; with *heirktoi*: above, n. 37; with other places of detention: above, n. 38.

⁴⁹ See above, pp117-118.

⁵⁰ Two texts suggest professional links between *desmophylakes* and other police officials. In *P.Entreux*. 84 (246-205 B.C.) a petitioner noted that a *phylakitês* had been asked to detain him and had handed him over to the village *desmophylax* with specific instructions for his release. In *SB III* 7202.15-20 (Arsinoite, after 227 B.C.) it was reported that an offender had been arrested by an oil dealer while an *epistatês*, a *phylakitês* and a *desmophylax* were present.

⁵¹ Prisoners in dire straits, e.g.: *BGU VIII* 1847.18-22 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.?; 50-49 B.C.): νυνεί τε κατὰ τὴν εἰρκτὴν | [ὄ]ντες καὶ παραπολλύμενοι ἐν τοῖς | [ἀ]ναγκαίοις δεόμεθα καὶ ἀξιοῦμεν | [ἰ]κανὸν χρόνον κατεφθαρμένοι; *Chrest.Mitt.* 5.1-6 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.): πολλάκις | σοι γέγραφα, διότι καταδεδυναστεύομαι ἐν τῇ φυλ[α]κῇ | λιμῶι παραπολλύμενος, μῆνές | εἰσιν δέκα, παραγ με | ἀδίκως ἀπηγμένον; *P.Polit.Iud.* 2.6-12 (Herakleopolite, ca 135 B.C.): τυγχάνωι καταξίως | νενουθετημένος, | καὶ πείραν φυλακῆς | εἰληφὼς ἰκανῶς τε | ἡμέρας κατεφθαρημένος ὧν ἐπὶ ξένης, | κούκ ἔχων τὰ ἀναγκαῖα.

own sustenance while locked up.⁵² For example, in one case a prisoner noted that during his detention he had lost everything and was in need of the necessities of life (*P.Lond.* VII 2045 [Philadelphia, III B.C.]). He therefore asked Zenon, his only hope (4: οὐκ ἔχομεν βοηθὸν ἄλλον οὐθένεα ἀλλὰ σέ), for assistance. Given the grim conditions of the typical Ptolemaic prison, it is unsurprising that release (*apoluein, diienai, exagein*) was the most common request from inmates.⁵³

One assumes that in most cases a criminal was apprehended by police, the proper officials notified of the developments and a trial arranged within a few days or weeks. Yet periods of detention in Ptolemaic jails were flexible, as previous scholars have indicated.⁵⁴ Unfortunately, the documents rarely provide precise indications of the lengths of prison stays. Out of a total of 111 texts detailing 113 separate imprisonments, only 21 documents provide some indication of the amount of time prisoners had been locked up. Fourteen of these detail imprisonments of less than a month, 11 of which may have lasted for a

⁵² Bound prisoners: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59368.24-25 (240 B.C.); *PSI* IV 347.8-10 (Philadelphia, 255 B.C.?; 254 B.C.?); 406.22-24 (Philadelphia, 260-258 B.C.); work details, e.g.: *P.Eleph.Wagner* I (299/8 or 279/8 B.C.); *P.LilleDem.* I 5 (?) (245 B.C.); *PSI* IV 423 (Philadelphia, III B.C.); also Diodorus 3.12-14 for a detailed description of prisoners condemned to Egyptian mines and Frasier (1972) 176 and 543; lack of sustenance, e.g.: *P.Petr.* II 19 (III B.C.), where a prisoner noted his lack of the necessities of life while in the *phylakê*; *PSI* IV 419 (Philadelphia, III B.C.), in which three prisoners requested help so that they would not die of hunger in the *desmôtêrion*; *SB* XVI 12468 (Arsinoite?, III B.C.), a petition in which the victim noted that he had been bringing bread to a prisoner in the Krokodilopolis *phylakê* when his donkey had been confiscated by a *phylakitês*. In *PSI* XIII 1315 (Tebtynis, 127 B.C.) and *UPZ* I 149.11-12 (Memphis, before 211/0 B.C.), wine is delivered to *phylakai*, but it is likely that it was intended for the officials assigned to the *phylakai* and not the prisoners.

⁵³ *Apoluein*, e.g.: *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12.2, 4 (Tebtynis, 177 B.C.); *SB* I 4309.4 (? , III B.C.?); V 8299.14 (Memphis?, 196 B.C.); *diiienai*, e.g.: *Chrest.Wilck.* 166.i.14, ii.10 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 777.17 (II B.C.); *SB* XX 14708.42 (Theadelphia, 151 B.C.); *exagein*, e.g.: *P.Hib.* I 73.11 (243-242 B.C.); *P.Petr.* II 4.vii.5 (ca 256/5 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 15.13 (114 B.C.).

⁵⁴ See Matter (1999) 102 and Taubenschlag (1959) 365.

week or less.⁵⁵ As bail was a regular option for prisoners, it is not surprising that a good many were freed after only a few days in detention.⁵⁶

At least 7 texts describe detentions lasting longer than a month, one of these as long as three years.⁵⁷ This startling split in the evidence and the oft-repeated fear of prolonged suffering in jail, even death, that we find expressed in letters from inmates suggests that very lengthy stays in the lock-up may have been a regular occurrence.⁵⁸ This is odd, given that prolonged detentions would not have been in the government's best (that is, financial) interest. Prisoners did not tend allotments, harvest crops or deliver grain. The Ptolemaic system of law and order was a smoothly functioning machine with a keen eye for details and loose ends. The written records kept by police officials generally prevented the sorts of slip-ups that allowed prisoners to fall through cracks in the legal system. Nevertheless, mistakes were sometimes made. Official abuses and administrative disputes were also occasionally responsible for arbitrary imprisonment or denial

⁵⁵ *P.Cair.Zen.* I 59044 (before 257 B.C.), 26 days or more; III 59495 (III B.C.), 3 days; 59519 (III B.C.), 3 days; 59520 (III B.C.), 22 days; V 59819 (254 B.C.), 3 days; *P.Coll.Youtie* I 16 (? , 109 B.C.?), less than 1 day; *P.Diosk.* 5 (Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.?), 2 days; 6 (146 B.C.), 1 day (?); *P.Enteux.* 83 (221 B.C.), 4 days; *P.Mich.* XVIII 773 (Oxyrhyncha/Krokodilopolis, ca 194 B.C.), less than 1 day; *PSI* IV 406 (Philadelphia, 260-258 B.C.), 7 days; *P.Tebt.* I 15 (114 B.C.), 2 days; III.1 701 (235 B.C.?, 210 B.C.?), a fraction of a month; *SB* XVIII 13119 (? , 255 B.C.?, 254 B.C.?), 1 to 8 days.

⁵⁶ *E.g.*: *Chrest.Mitt.* 45 (III B.C.?), a register of court cases and outcomes detailing offenses committed and bail payments received; *P.Bürgsch.* 16 (Memphis, 159 B.C.), a letter to an *archiphylakitês* (?) from a man who had written previously to arrange a bail payment for a prisoner; *P.Tebt.* III.1 777 (II B.C.), where a prisoner complained that a bail payment to a *desmophylax* had failed to secure his release. Accused persons were sometimes able to avoid imprisonment by supplying guarantors for their eventual appearance at an inquiry (*paramonê*), *e.g.*: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 27.7 (Philadelphia, 237 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59421.4 (III B.C.); *P.Hib.* I 41.5-6 (ca 261 B.C.); see also Hélmis (1986) 184-185 and Préaux (1937) 40.

⁵⁷ *BGU* VIII 1773 (Herakleopolite, 58 B.C.?), approximately 11 months; *Chrest.Mitt.* 5 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.), 10 months; *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59368 (240 B.C.), 8 months; *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12 (Tebtynis, 177 B.C.), 3 years; *P.Lond.* VII 2045 (Philadelphia, III B.C.), 5 months; *PSI* IV 347 (Philadelphia, 255 B.C.?, 254 B.C.?), almost 1 year; *P.Tebt.* III.1 777 (II B.C.), 8 months.

⁵⁸ Fear of prolonged suffering, *e.g.*: *BGU* VIII 1847 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.?, 50-49 B.C.?), *Chrest.Mitt.* 5 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.); *P.Polit.Iud.* 2 (Herakleopolite, ca 135 B.C.).

of release.⁵⁹ It seems likely, however, that in most cases where an offender was kept in jail for an excessive period of time, the prolonged detention was due to a lack of outside resources. The criminal justice system provided prisoners with the possibility of trials, but this did not always mean freedom if innocence was unproven or debts unpaid. Without support from friends, family and funds, even the least dangerous offender might be kept locked up indefinitely.

As many of the texts encountered thus far have made plain, *archiphylakitai*, *epistatai* and *phrourarchoi* had the power to detain suspects in crimes as well as release them.⁶⁰ These were the police officers who most frequently carried out detentions.⁶¹ Nome-level police officials (*epistatai phylakitôn* and *stratêgoi*) rarely detained prisoners and perhaps only did so when town or village officials had not performed this function and an individual or other officer asked for assistance.⁶² It is likely that in most cases they commanded subordinates to make

⁵⁹ See *Chrest.Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.), where it was revealed that an *archiphylakitês* had arrested a number of shipbuilders and refused to release them (after having been ordered to do so by the *oikonomos*) unless he received orders from the *epimelêtês*; *P.Hib.* I 34 and 73 (243-242 B.C.), in which a police official complained about the illegal release of a prisoner by an *archiphylakitês* acting against the orders of his commanding *epistatês*; and *P.Tebt.* III.1 777 (II B.C.), where a prisoner noted that he had given a bail payment to a *desmophylax* to be released from prison but had not been freed due to the greed of the *desmophylax*. For more on arbitrary arrest and imprisonment see chapter 6, pp185-186.

⁶⁰ *Archiphylakitai* detaining, e.g.: *Chrest.Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.); *P.Hels.* 2 (Arsinoite, ca 195-192 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 156 (91 B.C.); *epistatai*, e.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 34 (Oxyrhynchus?, after 186 B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 3 (222 B.C.); *P.Princ.* III 117 (? , 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?); *phrourarchoi*, e.g.: *P.Diosk.* 3 (Herakleopolite, 153 B.C.?); 4 (153 B.C.?); 5 (146 B.C.?).

⁶¹ Officials in other areas of Ptolemaic administration could occasionally detain individuals as well. For instance, in *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12 (Tebtynis, 177 B.C.) a prisoner noted that he had been detained for three years after being arrested and incarcerated by the *epimelêtês*. In *P.Gur.* 20 (III B.C.) the writer reported that the *toparchês* had detained a number of farmers for debts. In *P.Polit.Iud.* 2 (Herakleopolite, ca 135 B.C.) a prisoner asked the *politarchês* of the *politeuma* of the Jews to release him.

⁶² For instance, in *SB VIII 9792* (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.) the writer requested that the *epistatês phylakitôn* place an individual under surveillance. It is clear from the petition, however, that the petitioner had initially failed to obtain justice in the village (probably from an *archiphylakitês*) before submitting his complaint to the *epistatês phylakitôn*.

releases once a trial had been held or a case had been otherwise settled.⁶³ Yet they also freed wrongdoers judicially. That is, a person might be released from prison after an *epistatês phylakitôn*, *stratêgos* or other high official had ruled that they had been wrongly jailed.⁶⁴ In such cases the official ordering the release effectively bypassed the criminal court system.⁶⁵

Phylakitai, too, were empowered to imprison suspects, as one text demonstrates. In this case a *phylakitês* was asked to detain a man and fulfilled his duty by handing the wrongdoer over to a *desmophylax*, along with instructions for the prisoner's release (*P.Entreux*. 84 [246-205 B.C.]). Unfortunately, it is not known whether the individual who requested the detention was an official and therefore whether the *phylakitês* acted on his own initiative or at the behest of a commanding officer.⁶⁶ Additional evidence for the latter is provided by a fragment of a letter to Zenon which seems to contain a request that he instruct the *phylakitai* to free some *kleruchs* (*P.Col.* IV 115 [?, 260 B.C.?; 250 B.C.?; 242

⁶³ Commands to subordinates: *Chrest.Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.), a letter to an *epimelêtês* requesting that he command an *archiphylakitês* to release some prisoners; *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59368 (240 B.C.), in which there is an account of the arrest of some beekeepers by an *oikonomos* and their eventual release after the intervention of a third party and because of fear of reprimand (?) from the *dioikêtês* or *hypodioikêtês*; *SB* IV 7285 (Philadelphia, 237 B.C.), a petition to a *nomarchês* in which he was asked to write to another (subordinate) official (without title) so that a prisoner might be freed. The subordinate then wrote to a third official, ostensibly with instructions to free the prisoner.

⁶⁴ "Judicial" release: *Chrest.Mitt.* 5 (Alexandria?, 218 B.C.), where a prisoner appealed to the *epimelêtês* because of his ability to provide justice for those who had been arrested and asked that a trial be arranged for him before the *dioikêtês*; *P.Coll.Youtie* I 12 (Tebtynis, 177 B.C.), a petition from a prisoner who had been in jail for three years in spite of the fact that he had been released from the charges against him by the king, queen and *dioikêtês*; *SB* V 8299 (Memphis?, 196 B.C.), a priestly decree honoring the king for releasing from their faults and the accusations against them those who had been hauled off to prison.

⁶⁵ Zenon was often asked to release prisoners, too. For example, in *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59369 (241 B.C.) a prisoner requested that Zenon write to the *stratêgos* to free him from prison, as he had been unjustly jailed in the aftermath of a trial. In *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59482 (III B.C.) Zenon was asked to have a petitioner's wife removed from the *desmôtêrion*. In *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59496 (248-241 B.C.) a prisoner requested that Zenon write to the *oikonomos* and have him freed.

⁶⁶ For more on this text see chapter 6, pp195-196.

B.C.?). Unfortunately, the text is too fragmentary to permit certainty.⁶⁷ In another case a petitioner requested that a *phylakitês* guard some animals (BGU VI 1253 [?, II B.C.]). This text suggests that *phylakitai* could on occasion detain property without a nod of assent from a superior.⁶⁸

Detention took place for a variety of public and private offenses throughout all periods of Ptolemaic rule. A wide array of prisons for the temporary incarceration of offenders of every sort was found in the various towns and villages of the Egyptian countryside. Imprisonment was immediate and short-term, as even criminals were seen by the rulers of the kingdom as potentially productive (that is, grain-producing) members of society. Prisoners were processed quickly and efficiently by police forces unhindered by higher officials. Variations observable throughout the *chôra* in types of holding cells and detaining officers were perhaps likewise due to minimal government regulation of the prison system, but also in part to the diversity of the settlements in which prisons occurred. As was mentioned at the outset, confinement in jail was never a specifically punitive measure, but rather a step taken to prevent flight from justice and to secure the presence of suspects at trials. Nevertheless, the misery, poverty and potential loss of life associated with a stay in the slammer were in many cases powerful, if unintentional forms of punishment for offenders. While the Ptolemies took great pains to tend to the complaints of victims of crime, they paid little heed to the needs of criminals.

⁶⁷ Fragment F: [ca ? Ζήνωνι] χείρειν. σύνταξον τοῖς φυ[λακίταις ca ?] | [ca ? τοὺς κλ]ηρούχους ἐξαγαγέσθαι ν. [ca ?] | [ca ?] καὶ δείγματα ἐκάστωι τοῦ πο. [ca ?] | [ca ?]ρ Ἄσκληπιόδοτον κι[ca ?].

⁶⁸ For more on detention of property see below, pp127-129.

Once an offender had been arrested and detained, or even before any such steps were taken, an investigation into the claims of an injured party was often opened. These investigations could take a number of forms and encompassed a broad range of detective activities. A papyrus preserving a series of third-century royal ordinances suggests that there were specific guidelines for procedures to be followed in police searches (*P.Hib.* II 198 = *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 1-4, 11-16, 26, 77, 78 [?, 242-222 B.C.]).⁶⁹ Unfortunately, the document is fragmentary and only provides the barest of details on the characteristics and time frames of police searches.⁷⁰ Yet as we have seen, town and village police, *phylakitai* and their superiors, were generally responsible for performing examinations of people, places and other evidence. As was the case with arrests and detention, the amount of autonomy these officials exercised in their investigations was great.

In addition to seizing offenders, police also confiscated the possessions of private individuals, whether because they had been stolen or were necessary for a police investigation. Items of all sorts were seized as evidence: agricultural produce, animals, clothing, money and other goods.⁷¹ A police official might

⁶⁹ For bibliography and additional information on this text see above, n. 14.

⁷⁰ In one segment, the king seems to lay out regulations for the return of stolen items or their value (*P.Hib.* II 198.62-64): καὶ ἐπ[ιδ]ειξάν[των ca ?] σαντες | οἱ φυλ[α]κίται [ca ? ἀπο]λωλότα | ἢ τῆ[ν ἀ]ξίαν. Elsewhere, there appear to be notes on the personnel employed for searches (101-105): μὴ [ἐκ]λυτέω μηθεις ἀντοὺς ἢ ἔν[οχος ἔστω ca ?] | δ' ἔ[ρε]υναν ποιείσθωσαν παραλαβόν[τες ca ?] | ἐπ[ισ]τάτου καὶ τὸν φῶρα τὸν βασ[ιλικὸν ca ?] | [..] ρωί ἐστίν [..] καὶ [ἄ]νευ τουτ[οῦ ca ?] | [..] ι· νυκτὸς δὲ μ[ηθ]εῖς βαδιζ[έτω ca ?].

⁷¹ Agricultural goods, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.), where a petitioner requested that the *stratêgos* confiscate a certain amount of stolen *genêmata*; *PSI* IV 396 (Philadelphia, 241 B.C.), a letter to a *phylakitês* concerning a theft of wine; *SB* XIV 12089 (Herakleopolite, 130 B.C.), a report concerning the seizure of some stolen *pyros* by the *phylakitai*; animals, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* III.1 793.viii.6-10 (183 B.C.), a notification that the *phylakitai* had received a report of a stolen beast of burden; *SB* VIII 9792 (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.), a petition to an *epistatês phylakitôn* requesting the return of a stolen donkey; *ZPE* 146 (2004) 168 (Oxyrhyncha, 154/3 or 143/2 B.C.), a notification to an *archiphylakitês* and his *phylakitai* that some cattle had been stolen; clothing, e.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59145 (before 256 B.C.), in which Zenon was asked to write to

receive a list of stolen or damaged items from a victim of crime to assist his investigation. Often these lists had monetary values appended, perhaps to offer a fair market value in case the pilfered items were unable to be recovered.⁷² Sometimes the names and identities of offenders were presented in this fashion, as well.⁷³

Homes might also be sealed and guarded by the police.⁷⁴ For instance, in one case the agents of an *archiphylakitês* sealed the home of a royal cultivator without the knowledge of the *kômogrammateus* and made off with a number of household items (ZPE 141 [2002] 185-190 [Herakleopolite, 137 B.C.]). Seals could be applied by police to other types of buildings, as well. In another case a police official and his *phylakitai* discovered a certain amount of pilfered produce at a village threshing-floor (SB XIV 12089 [Herakleopolite, 130 B.C.]). They then sealed off the building and transferred the grain to the royal granary. Officials in other administrative areas also had the power to apply seals.⁷⁵ In one instance a man

an *archiphylakitês* to return two cloaks and some wool that had been stolen; *P. Enteux*. 83 (221 B.C.), in which a petitioner detailed his imprisonment by a *komarchês* and the confiscation of a necklace; *P. Hib.* II 202 (ca 250-240 B.C.), where the king was asked to write to a pair of *epistatai* to return a stolen himation; money, e.g.: *P. Coll. Youtie* I 16 (? , 109 B.C.?), a letter concerning the theft of 4 silver drachmas and 1300 bronze drachmas by an *archiphylakitês* and his henchmen; *P. Mich.* XVIII 774 (Oxyrhyncha, ca 194/3 B.C.), a petition concerning the confiscation of an amount of silver by a tax farmer and a *rhabdophoros* (?); *P. Tebt.* III.1 797 (II B.C.), a notification to an *archiphylakitês* and his *phylakitai* from a priest requesting that some thieves be sent to the *epistatês phylakitôn* and a certain number of stolen items (including 228 bronze drachmas) be returned; household goods, e.g.: *P. Cair. Zen.* IV 59620 (248-239 B.C.), a letter noting that some *phylakitai* had taken possession of a number of household goods; ZPE 141 (2002) 185-190 (Herakleopolite, 137 B.C.), three texts detailing a home invasion by agents of an *archiphylakitês* who made off with (among other things) a pickled goose and two pillows.

⁷² Lists of stolen goods, e.g.: *Chrest. Wilck.* 244 (Arsinoite, 224/3 B.C.); *P. Dion.* 10 (Hermoupolis Magna, 109 B.C.); *PSI* XIV 1514 (? , II/I B.C.).

⁷³ *BGU* VIII 1818 (Herakleopolite, 60-59 B.C.); *P. Cair. Zen.* III 59379 (III B.C.).

⁷⁴ *SB* I 4309 (? , III B.C.?), a letter to the king detailing the sealing of a home by an *epistatês* and a *kômogrammateus*.

⁷⁵ E.g.: *P. Gen.* III 133 (Herakleopolite, II B.C.), where an official of unknown rank informed the *laokritai* that he had sealed a home as requested; *P. Giss. Univ.* I 10 (? , 145-116 B.C.), a report (?)

complained that a number of tax officials had barged into his home, confiscated his meat and carried him off to the *phylakê* (*P.Cair.Zen.* II 59275 [251 B.C.]).

Sometimes visits to homes and crime scenes were carried out not to seize goods or cordon off buildings, but rather to inspect damage inflicted in the course of a home invasion, robbery or other such offense.⁷⁶ For instance, in a report of a robbery a petitioner noted that he had shown a window broken in the course of a home invasion to the *archiphylakitês* (*P.Frankf.* 3 [Tholthis, after 212 B.C.]). In a letter to the *oikonomos*, petitioners reported that the cattle of another had grazed on their castor plants and that they had specimens of the destroyed crop to show authorities (*P.Petr.* III 32 [198 B.C.]). Police were also called upon to come and bear witness to the identities of accused criminals.⁷⁷ In one case a victim pointed out to the *epistatês* certain individuals responsible for ravaging his construction site (*P.Stras.* II 100 [?, II B.C.]). Occasionally police conducted searches for stolen property or illegal goods. Such searches were occasionally seen as arbitrary by villagers.⁷⁸

concerning the sealing of a house and the transfer of its contents (?) to an official of unknown rank; *P.Mich.* XVIII 779 (Mouchis, 192 B.C.), where a petitioner requested that an agent of the *dioikêtês* seal an offender's home.

⁷⁶ Inspecting damage, e.g.: *BGU* VI 1253 (?, II B.C.) in which a victim requested that a *phylakitês* come and inspect a wound; *P.Enteux.* 65 (221 B.C.), where a petitioner noted that he had shown crop damage to the *komarchês*, the *phylakitai* and many others; *SB* XVIII 13160 (Myeris, 244 B.C.?; 219 B.C.), a petition to a *phylakitês* in which the writer noted that he had shown evidence of a theft to some other *phylakitai*.

⁷⁷ *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59379 (III B.C.), where a petitioner noted that he had shown a pig thief to the *phylakitai*; *P.Eleph.* 12 (222 B.C.), in which an official of unknown rank was asked to show a number of drunks to be incarcerated to a *phylakitês*.

⁷⁸ *P.Giss.Univ.* 10 (?, 145-116 B.C.), a report (to a *phylakitês*?) of the sealing of a home to which was appended a list of items discovered in the search of the house; *UPZ* I 5, 6 and 6a (Memphis, 163 B.C.), petitions concerning an (allegedly) illegal search for weapons in the Memphite Sarapieion carried out by an agent of the temple *archiphylakitês* and his *phylakitai*.

Once an investigation had reached its conclusion, a criminal was usually transported (*-agein, -pempain, -stellein*) so as to be stood before (*-kathistanai*) a judicial official or tribunal for an examination of some sort.⁷⁹ An alternative to escort under arms (*meta phylakês*) was the serving of a summons (*-angellein, -kalein*).⁸⁰ *Archiphylakitai, epistatai, phrourarchoi, phylakitai* and other low-level police officials were regularly responsible for the transfer of wrongdoers.⁸¹ Upper-level officials (*epistatai phylakitôn, stratêgoi etc.*) also occasionally transported individuals, but more often than not gave orders to subordinates to do so.⁸² At this point some sort of trial would take place. The papyri provide an abundance of details on the nature of Ptolemaic trials.⁸³ The vocabulary

⁷⁹ *Anagein, e.g.: P.Athen.* 8.22 (? , 193-192 B.C.); *P.Bingen* 34.7 (Herakleopolite?, III/II B.C.); *P.Ryl.* II 68.18 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.); *metapempain, e.g.: BGU VIII* 1780.5 (Herakleopolite, after 56 B.C.?; after 50 B.C.?); *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59140.5 (256 B.C.); *P.Dion.* 9.29 (Hermoupolis Magna, ca 139 B.C.); *pempain, e.g.: P.Cair.Zen.* III 59368.5 (240 B.C.); *P.Hib.* I 127.3 (ca 250 B.C.); *SB XIV* 16295.41 (Arsinoite, 199 B.C.); *apostellein, e.g.: BGU VI* 1244.29 (Arsinoite, 160 B.C.?; 184 B.C.?); VIII 1780.19 (Herakleopolite, after 56 B.C.?; after 50 B.C.?); *P.Enteux.* 50.10 (221 B.C.); *exapostellein, e.g.: BGU VIII* 1761.13 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.); *P.Lond.* VII 2188.14, 92 (Philadelphia, 148 B.C.); *PSI V* 542.24-25 (Philadelphia, II B.C.); *apokathistanai, kathistanai*: see above, n. 7.

⁸⁰ *Meta phylakês*: see above, n. 42; *parangellein, e.g.: BGU VI* 1248.3 (Syene, 137 B.C.?); VIII 1761.17 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.); *Chrest.Mitt.* 30.24 (Arsinoite?, 228 B.C.?); *anakalein, e.g.: BGU VIII* 1847.16 (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.?; 50-49 B.C.?); *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59626.11 (III B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 12.11 (Herakleopolite?, II B.C.); *proskalein, e.g.: BGU VIII* 1774.13-14 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.); *P.Mich.* III 173.34 (? , after 169 B.C.); *P.Polit.Iud.* 12.24-25 (Herakleopolite, 135 B.C.).

⁸¹ *Archiphylakitai, e.g.: P.Enteux.* 24 (221 B.C.); *P.Heid.* VII 393 (Arsinoite/Memphite, III B.C.); *P.Lond.* VII 2188 (Philadelphia, 148 B.C.); *epistatai, e.g.: P.Bingen* 44 (? , I B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.2 961 (150 B.C.?; 139 B.C.?); *SB XVIII* 13842 (Mouchis, 223-218 B.C.); *phrourarchoi, e.g.: BGU VIII* 1844 (Herakleopolite, 50-49 B.C.); *P.Diosk.* 7 (Herakleopolite, ca 153 B.C.?); *P.Tor.Choach.* 8 (Thebes, 126 B.C.); *phylakitai, e.g.: BGU VI* 1253 (? , II B.C.); X 1912 (Arsinoite?, ca 250 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 797 (II B.C.).

⁸² *Epistatai phylakitôn: BGU VI* 1244 (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?), ordering an *epistatês* to transport; *P.Diosk.* 4 (Herakleopolite, 153 B.C.?), transporting; *P.Ryl.* II 68 (Hermoupolis Magna, 89 B.C.), asked to transport; *stratêgoi, e.g.: BGU VIII* 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.), asked to transport; *SB XVIII* 13842 (Mouchis, 223-218 B.C.), asked to order an *epistatês* to transport; *UPZ I* 124 (Memphis, 175 B.C.?; 165 B.C.?), a *hypostratêgos* asked to transport; the king and queen, *e.g.: PSI VII* 816 (Aphroditopolis, II B.C.), asked to order an *epistatês* to transport; *P.Yale I* 46 (? , 246-221 B.C.), asked to order an *epistatês* to transport; *SB VI* 9556 (245 B.C.), asked to have someone summoned (?).

⁸³ On the Ptolemaic judiciary see Wolff (2002; 1978; 1970); Allam (1991); Méléze-Modrzejewski (1984; 1977/1978; 1966); Pestman (1985); Peremans (1982/1983; 1973); Préaux (1963; 1954); and Seidl (1962).

employed to describe them demonstrates that official examinations for criminal matters could take a number of forms, based upon the type(s) of wrongdoing committed and the desires of the litigants. Details on the protocol followed at Ptolemaic criminal trials are few, but it appears to have been the case that hearings of this type generally took place before small official audiences.⁸⁴ Yet *episkepseis* by town and village police officials nevertheless featured a number of elements common to more formal courtroom settings. For instance, in addition to the accused and the presiding official or officials, the accuser was generally present at an *episkepsis*.⁸⁵ Witnesses to the crime, often listed in petitions to law enforcement, were regularly summoned to *episkepseis* or their testimony presented in case they were unable to attend.⁸⁶ Other forms of evidence were also introduced at these hearings, among these copies of petitions sent to law

⁸⁴ The documents generally only indicate that an official settling a dispute did precisely that. Occasionally more than one official carried out an examination. For example, in *P.Hib.* II 202 (ca 250-240 B.C.) the *stratêgos* ordered two *epistatai* to look into a petitioner's claims. In *P.Tebt.* I 43 (118 B.C.) the *epistatês phylakitôn* presided over an *episkepsis* while the *basilikos grammateus* was present.

⁸⁵ E.g.: *Chrest.Mitt.* 12 (Arsinoite, ca 241 B.C.), where a *stratêgos* was asked to summon both accusers and accused for an *episkepsis*; *P.Athen.* 8 (? , 193-192 B.C.), a letter concerning the transport of an man bringing an accusation of assault to a trial before an *archiphylakitês*; *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59140 (256 B.C.), in which a man declared that a number of accusations against him were false and that he was prepared to stand trial against his accuser.

⁸⁶ Witnesses listed, e.g.: *BGU VI* 1470 (Elephantine, before 190 B.C.), a petition to the *stratêgos* concerning an offense committed in a marketplace and containing the names of no fewer than 16 witnesses; *P.Enteux.* 74 (221 B.C.), a petition to the king from a man who had been assaulted and claimed to have a number of witnesses; *SB X* 10271 (231 B.C.?; 206 B.C.?), a notification to the *epistatês* from a woman who had been attacked in the presence of four bystanders, all named; witnesses to appear: *P.Enteux.* 79 (218 B.C.), a letter to the king from a man who had been assaulted and had arranged for witnesses to the assault to appear on his behalf; *P.Giss.Univ.* I 9 (Euhemeria, after 131 B.C.), a petition to an *epistatês* concerning an assault and the culling of witnesses from those present at the scene; *P.Grenf.* I 38 (Thebaid, 170 B.C.), a letter to the *stratêgos* concerning an assault and garment-tearing for which the petitioner had procured witnesses; written testimonials: *P.Enteux.* 43 (221 B.C.), a petition to the king requesting that he have an *epistatês* summon two witnesses and have their testimony sent to the *stratêgos*; *P.Hamb.* I 105 (Philadelphia, 236 B.C.), written witness testimony concerning an assault for a trial before an *archiphylakitês*; *P.Heid.* VIII 416 (Herakleopolis, before 172 B.C.?), written witness testimony presented to a *stratêgos* concerning violence at a hayloft.

enforcement detailing the various offenses for which the accused was being examined.⁸⁷

Epistatai were usually in charge of investigations of and trials for crimes committed in Egyptian towns and villages, though other police officials performed these functions as well.⁸⁸ If the alleged wrongdoing was tied to a certain sphere of administration, an official with competency in the area in question was commonly called upon to preside over the proceedings.⁸⁹ In cases where the village machinery was ill-equipped to provide resolution, matters might be referred to higher authorities. *Episkepseis* were sometimes arranged before an official of nome-level competency (an *epistatês phylakitôn* or *stratêgos*, for instance) or even the king and queen, often even without initial recourse to lower-level officials.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ E.g.: *P.Diosk.* 6 (Herakleopolite, 146 B.C.), a petition to a *stratêgos* concerning a series of assaults with a request that the document be sent to a pair of judicial officials so that an examination could be arranged; *P.Tebt.* I 264 (II B.C.), a petition to an unknown official concerning the arrest of an offender with a request that the recipient write to the appropriate officials and that the document be added to the official record; *P.Tebt.* III.1 796 (185 B.C.), a petition to an *archiphylakitês* concerning a home invasion and theft with a request that the recipient see to it that a copy of the document was available at a hearing before the *komarchês*.

⁸⁸ *Archiphylakitai*: *P.Athen.* 8 (? , 193-192 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59145 (before 256 B.C.); *SB X 10272* (?) (III B.C.); *ÛPZ* II 187 (Thebes, 127/6 B.C.); *epistatai*, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 3 (222 B.C.); *P.Hib.* II 202 (ca 250-240 B.C.); *UPZ* II 151 (Thebaid?, after 259 B.C.); *phourarchoi*: *P.Diosk.* 7 (Herakleopolite, ca 153 B.C.); *P.Hib.* II 233 (ca 250 B.C.).

⁸⁹ In *BGU VI 1244* (Arsinoite, 184 B.C.?; 160 B.C.?), for instance, a petitioner requested that a woman be examined by an *oikonomos*. In *P.Petr.* II 10 (III B.C.) an *oikonomos* was asked to send a petition to the *logistêrion* for examination. In *P.Meyer* 1 (Arsinoite, before 144 B.C.) a petitioner noted that the *dioikêtês* had previously carried out an investigation. In *SB XXII 15546* (Theadelphia, II B.C.) an *epimelêtês* commanded an official with the title *ho epi tais episkepsisin* to make an investigation.

⁹⁰ *Epistatai phylakitôn*: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 30-31 (? , 183 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 43 (118 B.C.); III.1 797 (II B.C.); *SB VIII 9792* (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.); *stratêgoi*, e.g.: *P.Enteux.* 37 (222 B.C.); 82 (221 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 780 (171 B.C.); the sovereigns: *P.Lond.* VII 2188 (?) (Philadelphia, 148 B.C.). Evidently, Zenon occasionally held *episkepseis*, as well: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59495 (III B.C.); *P.Mich.* I 87 (Philadelphia, III B.C.); *PSI IV 353* (Philadelphia, 254 B.C.).

The trial of Menches, *kômogrammateus* of Kerkeosiris, provides a glimpse into the workings of a village criminal trial in Ptolemaic times.⁹¹ Our details for this trial come from a letter Menches wrote to the sovereigns seeking protection against further prosecution following his release from some criminal charges that had been brought against him (*P.Tebt.* I 43 [118 B.C.]). Menches and his brother, Polemon, had been arrested on charges of poisoning a man by an agent of the *epistatês phylakitôn* in company with a number of other police and civil officials.⁹² Two days later they were brought before the *epistatês phylakitôn* and the *basilikos grammateus* for trial. Justice was swift in this case: the two were released after proving their innocence.⁹³ Yet in spite of his legal victory, Menches remained nervous about future prosecution on the same charges. He appealed, therefore, to the king and queen for additional support in the form of protection from the *stratêgos* (30-42).

Indeed, of the higher authorities empowered to make legal judgments in criminal cases, *stratêgoi* seem to have administered trials most often. A large cache of documents from Magdola reveals that the *stratêgos* was the judicial official of primary importance in the third century and had direct contact, via official correspondence, with *epistatai* in the towns and villages of the Egyptian

⁹¹ On the trial of Menches see also chapter 2, pp39-40.

⁹² 8-10: σὺν τῷ τῆς κόμης κομάρχῳ [καί] τινῶν (read τισι) τῶν πρεσβυτέρων τῶν | [γ]εωργῶν καὶ Δημητρίῳ τῷ διεξάγοντι τὰ κατὰ τὴν ἐπιστατείαν | καὶ ἀρχιφυλακτεῖαν τῆς αὐτῆς καὶ ἄλλοις.

⁹³ The reasons behind their release were misunderstood by the original editors of the text, who read παραχρήμα ἀπελύθημεν διὰ τὸ ἀντίους | [ἀ]φανῆσαι at 21-22, a reconstruction which implied a victory by default, not innocence. As Crönert demonstrated (*BL* 7.269), however, the proper reading of the last two words is ἀν(αι)τίους φανῆναι, and the brothers were not guilty by reason of innocence.

chôra.⁹⁴ As these documents show, *stratêgoi* frequently delegated judicial functions to *epistatai* and only involved themselves when an *epistatês* was unable to reach a verdict. *Epistatai phylakitôn* likewise administered criminal trials, though little evidence for their judicial functions survives, aside from that provided by the trial of Menches (*P.Tebt.* I 43 [118 B.C.]; see above). A copy of a circular to the *epistatai phylakitôn* from the king outlines various measures to be taken to curb bias in (their) legal judgments (*C.Ord.Ptol.*² 30-31 [?, 183 B.C.]). The king asked in several instances that these officials carry out examinations (*anakriseis*) according to his and his ancestors' pronouncements, and that all who transgressed his orders be sent to the royal court for punishment (31.10-14).

As was the case with many other areas of police administration, no one official, or small cadre of officials, had a monopoly on organizing police investigations or dispensing criminal justice in Ptolemaic Egypt. A wide range of police officers in the towns and villages of the Egyptian *chôra* performed the detective work necessary to resolve disputes. Investigations into crimes involved a number of specialized, often complicated tasks that were regularly entrusted to the lowest-ranking officials in the law enforcement pyramid. We see here again evidence that the farming out of police duties to officials in Egyptian settlements proved effective and efficient. At criminal trials, the various circumstances of the case in question and the nature of the offense determined the government body competent to pronounce judgment. Numerous officials were empowered by the

⁹⁴ See chapter 2, pp43-46 and *P.Enteux.* introduction, ppxliv-lxxii. The *stratêgos* was the judicial official of "primary" importance in the third century in the sense that he had the "primary right of refusal." As *P.Enteux.* demonstrates, the *stratêgos* rarely involved himself in the machinery of criminal trials, preferring instead to instruct the competent *epistatês* to handle such matters. *Epistatai phylakitôn* do not seem to have delegated in a similar manner.

king to settle disagreements between individuals and often did so at the behest of petitioners. Here, too, an overall desire for village matters to be settled in the village was predominant. The Ptolemies doubtless sought to try as few time- and resource-consuming cases as possible at the highest levels of the justice system. As a consequence, courts in the *chôra* were empowered and encouraged to take great strides in settling disputes. The Ptolemaic criminal court system permitted its administrators to exercise considerable autonomy in making their decisions and provided litigants with fast access to legal redress in their immediate vicinity.

This chapter has focused on three distinct steps in the processing of criminals and the solving of crimes by Ptolemaic officials: arrest, detention and resolution. These terms effectively summarize the response of the Ptolemaic criminal justice system to most reported crimes. Police agents initially responded to a cry for help by rounding up suspects and evidence. Then, while an investigation was carried out and arrangements were being made for the resolution of the issue at hand, confiscated materials (goods and people) were detained. Finally, these same materials were sent along for processing by a competent official. It was of course not the rule that all wrongdoers in Ptolemaic times were arrested, detained and transported for trial. Nevertheless, the frequency with which all three steps occurred argues against a separate discussion of their individual characteristics. Let us briefly reconsider what we have said above about these procedures.

Arrests were usually carried out by those officials most closely connected to the administrative or geographic sphere in which malfeasance was detected. A

broad range of police professionals at all levels of organization could perform the basic and essential functions of collecting the people (and things) necessary for an investigation. One should not be surprised that in a state as well-organized and restrictive as Ptolemaic Egypt, agents in all administrative areas and at all points in the law enforcement hierarchy were empowered to seize those suspected of wrongdoing. These officials helped to ensure the smooth and proper functioning of the great revenue-producing machine of the Ptolemies. As we have seen, arrests were carried out in response to requests from petitioners, by order of superiors or based upon on-site assessments by officials. A wide variety of crimes merited arrests. In fact, it appears that any illegal action might have been met with seizure or confiscation by police officers. In most cases, victims sought to have criminals arrested so as to effect the return of stolen items, to obtain remuneration for damage incurred or to see to it that an offender was appropriately punished. The Ptolemies in turn sanctioned arrests because of a desire for order within the ranks of their workforce and peaceful productivity in the *chôra*. A contented populace was a revenue-generating populace, and unchecked crime led to discontent.

Detention, too, seems to have been motivated by a desire to maintain a certain level of control over the subject population. Imprisonment was never the consequence of a court or official judgment (that is, the notion of incarceration as punishment did not exist in Ptolemaic Egypt), but it did shame, frighten and/or demoralize wrongdoers. Debtors and other felons were imprisoned for indefinite periods of time in various sorts of jails. As petitions from prisoners reveal, the incarcerated were effectively cut off from the outside world and sometimes

deprived of food and the other necessities of life. The only hope for release was assistance from friends, family or other well-connected people who could post bail, speak to police officials or arrange for trials. The nature of imprisonment in Ptolemaic times was such that the populace might very well have viewed it as a form of punishment, if only in terms of the temporary elimination of several personal freedoms it entailed. In the government's eyes, prisons provided an effective method of bringing criminal activity to a halt while at the same time not permanently removing wrongdoers from the workforce. As the horrors of imprisonment were very real and indefinite detention was always a possibility for those who took no initiative, an individual in the lock-up usually took steps to procure a release as soon as possible.

The transfer of apprehended criminals to trials was delegated to officials in a similar fashion as the execution of arrests: that is, any of a number of government agents were employed, at various times and in various places, to ferry suspects to officials and tribunals. For the most part, police agents in Egyptian towns and villages, or their subordinates, escorted criminals to places of justice, generally at the behest of a superior. Higher-ranking officers occasionally intervened to transfer offenders to the appropriate place(s). Once transport had taken place, a number of different officials with judicial powers tended to the legal needs of the populace. Criminal trials were usually simple audiences before a presiding official and a few others. Though they featured a number of elements common to civil trials (presentation of evidence, witness testimony *etc.*) they were distinctly different. Justice was decisive, fast and legally binding on the litigants. Criminal trials provide additional evidence that the

Ptolemaic criminal justice system was designed to ensure broad access to remediation for victims of wrongdoing throughout the *chôra*. They likewise demonstrate that the Ptolemies were keen to provide resolution for village issues in Egyptian villages. Trials that took place in the settlements of the Egyptian countryside consumed few government resources and helped reduce congestion at the higher levels of the judicial system.

Taken as a whole, the evidence for arrests, detention and resolution in Ptolemaic Egypt paints a clear picture of a criminal justice system that was carefully articulated at every administrative and geographic level, provided individuals with access to government redress at multiple points and empowered its officers to carry out a broad range of tasks. Two points deserve special attention. For one, the system was user-friendly for the police officers who ran it. Officials from all administrative areas were empowered to arrest wrongdoers, often at the request of private individuals. Prisons of many sorts existed throughout the countryside for the temporary detention of those arrested. Investigations into criminal activity were carried out by various town and village officials soon after reports of wrongdoing were received. Final resolution often came at the hands of the same administrators, acting independently of higher government agents. The Ptolemaic criminal justice system was not a slave to inflexible procedure and bureaucracy, but rather multifaceted and elastic, providing a full range of police services in all areas.

The system was also surprisingly self-governing. Though the Ptolemies sometimes spoke out against corruption in the ranks of the police and specified guidelines for police searches, arrests and imprisonment (among other things),

the administration of criminal justice was essentially left to the law enforcement officials in the towns and villages of the Egyptian *chôra*. These officers, *phylakitai* chief among them, played major roles in bringing criminals to justice. They regularly acted without supervision or explicit instructions from their superiors. That such a high degree of autonomy was permitted to the lowest-level law enforcement officers in a state as controlling as Ptolemaic Egypt is initially surprising. Yet direct government supervision of arrests, detentions and prosecution of accused criminals, if guaranteeing a certain degree of administrative uniformity and control, was nevertheless costly and time-consuming. The Ptolemies realized that village matters needed village attention and that empowering village officials to arrest, detain and prosecute village offenders was the only logical solution to the problem of crime in the *chôra*. That the system worked so well must have surprised even the rulers of the kingdom.

Chapter 5: The Strong Arm of the Law: Security and Muscle

In 159 B.C. an official named Soknopis, in charge of the distribution and sale of papyrus, wrote a letter to a number of police and civil officials in the village of Tali, including the *epistatês*, *archiphylakitês*, *phylakitai* and *erêmophylakes* (P.Tebt. III.1 709). The letter concerned the appointment of a man named Petous as a deputy in the same village. Petous had been empowered to receive oaths from the village notaries (*monographoi*) that they would employ only state papyrus for royal business and would avoid the wares of smugglers, purchasing their writing materials from the state alone. The police officials addressed in the document were asked to perform a number of duties to assist Petous, should a need for their involvement arise: they were to place themselves at his disposal and take into custody illegal sellers and smugglers of papyrus, along with their wares, and transfer them to the *epimelêtês* for the appropriate punishment.

The Ptolemaic police were sometimes called on by the central government to provide backup and assistance to civil officials at the village level. We have seen how the populace of Ptolemaic Egypt made use of police forces as tools of self-empowerment for securing justice and solving crimes. Here we shall examine how the Ptolemies deployed their town and village police forces from above. The picture that emerges suggests that the strong arm of the law not only provided a financial security force and a means of crowd control for the Ptolemies (who specified, validated and even encouraged the occasionally questionable behavior of police), but also regularly reached deep into the pockets of the subject population to satisfy its needs and those of its employers. Here more than anywhere else we see proof that the administration in Alexandria had

a vested interest in the operation of and control over police in the Egyptian backwater. Law enforcement officials in the *chôra* may have solved crimes and caught criminals, but they also worked full-time extracting revenue and keeping the peace for the Alexandrian administration.

One of the most important areas in which police officials flexed their government-sanctioned muscles was the realm of security. As we have already seen, the Ptolemaic police filled important roles in the annual guarding of crops, the *genêmatophylakia*.¹ *Archiphylakitai* supervised the process at the town and village level, while *phylakitai* and a contingent of *phylakes* (most importantly the aptly-named *genêmatophylakes*) provided the manpower to assure that revenue was not lost. Police officers who gathered, transported and watched over grain often received direct instructions from financial officials (most commonly *oikonomoi* and *epimelêtai*). The latter served as an effective link between village labor and higher officials and made sure that the *genêmatophylakia* proceeded according to schedule. The village law enforcement officers employed for the same task provided a stern and intimidating presence for the workers. Ptolemaic police are seen acting as security forces in other situations, as well. *Phylakitai* stood guard on ships and were expected to protect items that had been seized in police searches or raids. *Phylakes* of various sorts served in public and private capacities as protectors of villages, buildings, homes and a wide variety of agricultural interests. Even police officials with administrative functions (*archiphylakitai*, *epistatai phylakitôn*, etc.) seem to have been involved with the recruitment and mobilization of security forces. Security was one of the main

¹ See chapter 2, pp28-29.

concerns of the Ptolemaic police and the Ptolemies realized that investing village law enforcement officials with the protection of village interests was good policy.

The protection of these interests sometimes involved coercion. *Phylakitai*, often accompanied by or under the command of *archiphylakitai*, were regularly responsible for extracting overdue rent from the subject population. Many petitions testify to this process and to the persistence (occasionally to the point of oppression) of the police officials employed for these operations. Law enforcement agents also provided muscle in other official settings, attending civil trials (where they effectively served as bailiffs) and appearing at government auctions of seized or forfeited properties. But at such proceedings police officials rarely took an active role. Their presence was intended, it seems, as an armed recommendation to private citizens to stay in line, wait their turn, follow the rules and cooperate fully. They acted not only as security but also as symbols of law and order. Their presence also doubtless helped put a local face on central government activities in the settlements of the *chôra*.

We shall begin our discussion of police as security forces with a look at the fringes of the kingdom: the rivers and desert areas that bounded the arable sections of Egypt. In any large state security forces are necessary in border zones and those regions where civil strife has broken out. In Ptolemaic Egypt, the army generally provided such security.² For the most part police forces do not appear to have been dispatched to tend to riots or other civil disturbances. The security measures enjoined upon members of the Ptolemaic law enforcement system were

² On the Ptolemaic army as a security force during and after revolts see especially Préaux (1936); also McGing (1997); Van't Dack (1988) 18-19; 65; 247-271; 341; 372; and Peremans (1978).

connected with agricultural production and transport and usually involved well-defined, specific tasks. Yet various Ptolemaic police officials and guards (*phylakitai* and *phylakes*) occasionally played roles similar to the riot police and private security contractors of today. While these roles were certainly minor in comparison to the remainder of their police duties, they were nevertheless crucial for the safety and well-being of Ptolemaic Egypt and its interests.

To begin with, it appears that *phylakitai* had a regular and important task of serving as guards on board ships.³ In the first century (and perhaps earlier) they accompanied state grain shipments on a regular basis. A handful of Herakleopolite grain transport documents provides details on the nature of this aspect of their employment.⁴ *Phylakitai* selected for this task were required to submit oaths of office before receiving sealed samples (*deigmata*) of their ship's cargo, which they carried on their persons.⁵ *Phylakitai* also occasionally served as *epiploi*, or cargo supervisors on board ships.⁶ River-faring *phylakitai* might watch over a wide variety of items. In one private letter the writer asked the addressee to send him a flute player, a dancer, a goat, cheeses, a pot, vegetables, and

³ Four second-century Arsinoite loading orders suggest that an official known as the *hégoumenos phylakês* might serve as a ship guard instead of a *phylakitês*: *P.Erasm.* II 23; 24; 25 (all 152 B.C.); and 35 (II B.C.). See also chapter 2, p. 28 n. 6.

⁴ *BGU VIII* 1742 (63 B.C.); *XVIII.1* 2736 (87/6 B.C.); 2737; 2738 (both 86 B.C.); 2739 (I B.C.); 2740 (87/6 B.C.?); 2755; 2756; 2759 (all I B.C.); *P.Berl.Salmen.* 17 (Herakleopolis, 77 B.C.); *SB V* 8754 (Herakleopolite?, 77 B.C.?; 48 B.C.?); *P.Tebt.* III.1 824 (171 B.C.?) is the sole non-Herakleopolite Ptolemaic grain freight receipt that mentions the presence of a *phylakitês*. It is also the only non first-century text that attests to this function of the Ptolemaic police.

⁵ *BGU XVIII.1* 2740.10-12 (see previous note): ἐπιβιβασθέντ[ω]ν φυλακितῶν κεκληρουχημένων τῶν καὶ μάλιστα πίστιν ἔχόντων οἷς κ[α]τὰ τὸ δείγμα ἢ κατεσ[φραγισμέν]ον ἐπιτεθήσεται ἐν γείνοις [ὠ]μοῖς ἀγγείοις.

⁶ See *P.Ryl.* IV 576 (? , 246-221 B.C.), a series of deembarkation certificates, and *P.Tebt.* III.2 1035 (182-181 B.C.?; 158-157 B.C.?), an account of wheat shipments. On *epiploi* in general see Gofas (1985).

condiments, and to hand his requests over to the *phylakitai* who were to accompany the ship (*P.Hib.* I 54 [ca 245 B.C.]).

Phylakitai and their supervisors were also responsible for the safety of river travellers, judging from a text that preserves a series of third-century ordinances primarily concerned with policing (*P.Hib.* II 198 = *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 1-4, 11-16, 26, 77, 78 [?, 242-222 B.C.]).⁷ In one segment of this document the sovereigns lay out a series of regulations for those seeking to travel on the Nile, noting the appropriate places for anchorage both day and night (*P.Hib.* II 198.110-112), the procedure to follow for mooring in storms (114-117) and the circumstances under which police were to provide both protection and escorts for ships and their crews (117-122).⁸ Details are few, but these fragmentary guidelines suggest that the Ptolemaic police played an important role in assuring safety in the harbors and along the banks of the Nile.

Little evidence survives for the activities of upper-level police officials in protective roles, but what does survive suggests that they were occasionally responsible for delegating various sorts of security details to lower-level officers. For example, a pair of official orders to *archiphylakitai* and their subordinates demonstrates that police were occasionally instructed to carry out security measures of a preventive nature. In one, an official ordered an *archiphylakitês* to

⁷ For more on this text see chapter 4, pp110-111, 127 and chapter 6, pp203-204.

⁸ Anchorage, 110-112: [τοὺς δὲ] | πλείον[τας κατὰ π]οταμὸν ὀρμίζεσθαι πρὸ τ[ca ?] | ἐν τοῖς ἀ[ποδεδει]γμένοις τ[ό]ποις· νυκτὸς δὲ μ[ca 11]; mooring in storms, 114-117: ἐὰν δέ τι[νες ὑπὸ] χεῖμῶνος [...] κληθέντες [ca ?] | ἐπ' ἀκτῆς ὀ[ρμισ]θῆναι παρελθόντ[ε]ς ἐπὶ τ[ἄ ca ?] | συγκύρον[τα] προσαγγελλέτωσαν τοῖς φυ[λακίταις τήν] | τε αἰτίαν κ[α]ὶ τὸν τόπον ἐν ᾧ ὀρμίσθησαν; police protection/escorts, 117-122: [καὶ τοῖς προσ]αγγείλασιν συναποστελλέτω ὁ ἀρχιφυλακ[ίτης φυλακὴν] | ἰκανὴν οἵτινες φυλάξουσιν τοὺς ὀρμοῦντα[ς ὅπως μηθὲν] | βίαιον γένηται· καὶ ἐάν τινες παρὰ τοῦ [βασιλέως ἀπεσ]ταλμένοι κατὰ σπουδὴν πλείωσιν καὶ βούλ[ωνται πλεῖν] | νυκτὸς, συμπρ[ο]πεμπέτωσαν τούτους.

prevent anyone from laying hands on some grain (*P.Genova* III 95 [Arsinoite, 216 B.C.?]). In the other, the *oikonomos* instructed the *archiphylakitês* and *phylakitai* of the nome not to allow beekeepers to remove beehives from the nome and to prevent anyone from removing cattle as well (*P.Heid.* VI 362 [Herakleopolite, 226 B.C.]). One fragmentary text seems to suggest that upper-level police officials might also have taken a more active role in security patrols along certain pathways into the nome (*P.Tebt.* III.1 736 [143 B.C.]). At one point in the document it appears that some *epistatai phylakitôn* and others were responsible for transferring a battalion of Arabs who were then forced to stand guard at a mountain.⁹ A badly fragmentary regulation concerning the security of embankments may suggest that the *epistatês phylakitôn* had some sort of supervisory position with reference to *toparchai* and *komarchai* for the protection of dykes (*P.Tebt.* III.1 706 [171 B.C.]).¹⁰ Unfortunately, the document's poor state of preservation prevents further conclusions.

The officials who composed the ranks of the *phylakitai* in Ptolemaic Egypt had a number of vital responsibilities when it came to the protection of the assets

⁹ 29-38: τοῦ διαδεξαμέ[νου τὴν ἐπιστατείαν] | τῶν φυλακῶν καὶ Τιμοθέου ἰδιώ[του] κα[ὶ] τῶν | ἄλλων ἐπιστατῶν τῶν φυ[λακῶν] | μεταλαβόντων, μετεπέμψαν[το δὲ τοὺς] | ἐκ Πτολεμαίδος Ἀράβων Ἄραβε[ς οἱ καὶ] | συνηνεγκάσθησαν παρεδρ[εῦειν] | ἐπὶ τοῦ ὄρους τὴν τήρησιν ἄ[γοντες?] | ἐπὶ δὲ τοῦ λαβυρίνθου ἀνλίζ[εσθαι] | καθ' ἡμέραν πρὸς τὸ μὴ ἀποσπᾶ[σθαι] | ἀπὸ τῶν τόπων. On this text see Hennig (2003) 165-168.

¹⁰ It should be noted that the title of the *epistatês phylakitôn* in this text is partially restored (3-9): κ[α] | [λῶς οὖν ca 10 ποιήσει]ς ἐὰν φαίνεται συντάξι[αι] | [ca 15 τοῖς] ἐπιστάταις τῶν δηλουμ[έ] | [νων φυλακῶν ἐὰν τινα εἰ]ρίσκωσιν ἀφιστάμενο[ν] | [ca 5 τοὺς τοπάρχας καὶ κ]ωμάρχας απ[] | οἱ [] | [ca 8 διὰ νυκτ]ὸς καὶ ἡμέρας ποιεῖσθαι τὴν τήρη[σιν] | [τῶν κωμάτων ca 9]φ[] | []ς ὑπὸ χεῖρα. The title *ἐπιστάτης τῶν δηλουμένων φυλακῶν* occurs nowhere else, though forms of *δηλούμενος* occur with both *κώμη* (*P.Tebt.* III.2 852.29 [ca 174 B.C.]) and *τόπος* (*BGU* IV 1187.33 [Herakleopolite, ca 78-77 B.C.?; 49-48 B.C.?]; VIII 1761.6 [Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.], *τόπος* restored). As *epistatai* often administered such districts, it perhaps makes more sense to restore *τόπων* or *κωμῶν* in the lacuna in line 6 instead of *φυλακῶν*.

of the Egyptian *chôra* and the people living in it. As we have already mentioned, a variety of military and paramilitary officers also provided security in the countryside. Among these were a number of guards (*phylakes*) who served in both private and public capacities.¹¹ While most *phylakes* did little more than provide a specific form of protection (*i.e.*, whether for a garden, a threshing-floor, or something similar) for their employers, a handful of government *phylakes* held positions that involved occasional low-level police business. Some were empowered to arrest malefactors; others worked closely with branches of the *phylakitai* to supervise government agricultural activities and protect assets and infrastructure.

Desert was neither asset nor infrastructure, but Egypt had a lot of it. To protect it the Ptolemies relied on *erêmosphylakes*.¹² The bulk of the evidence for these “desert guards” concerns their landholdings in the Arsinoite nome in the late second century.¹³ The preponderance of names that occur are Egyptian, which suggests that the *erêmosphylakes* were composed predominantly of Egyptians.¹⁴ Occasionally, we see *erêmosphylakes* elevated to the *katoikia*, which demonstrates that, like the position of *phylakitês*, that of *erêmosphylax* might occasionally lead to social promotion.¹⁵ Evidence for their day-to-day activities is

¹¹ For more on the myriad *phylakes* that defended the homes, gardens, rivers and other assets of Ptolemaic Egypt see chapter 2, pp52-56.

¹² See also chapter 2, p. 55.

¹³ *E.g.*: *P.Tebt.* I 61B.6-7 (118-117 B.C.); III.2 833.14-22 (II B.C.); IV 1108.12-15, 39-44 (124-121 B.C.).

¹⁴ *E.g.*: *P.Tebt.* III.2 833.14-22 (II B.C.), a list of landholders and their holdings: ἐρημοφυλάκων · Ἰ Ἀρθρόως Φεμορήριος ἄρ(ο)υ(ραι) κε, Ἰ Ἰμούθης Φθαῦτος ἄρ(ο)υ(ραι) ιε, Ἰ Παγκράτης Παχράτου ἄρ(ο)υ(ραι) ιε, Ἰ Ἀρμιῦσις Πετοσίριος ἄρ(ο)υ(ραι) ιε, Ἰ Ἀρμιῦσις Ἀρμιῦσιος ἄρ(ο)υ(ραι) κε, Ἰ Ἀμεννεὺς Ὠρου Μαρρείου ἄρ(ο)υ(ραι) ιε, Ἰ Φανῆς Πετεύριος ἄρ(ο)υ(ραι) ι, Ἰ Φαῶνις Πετεσοῦχου ἄρ(ο)υ(ραι) ε.

¹⁵ *P.Tebt.* I 61B.6-8 (118-117 B.C.); 85.106 (113 B.C.?) ; IV 1117.155-156 (120-119 B.C.).

decidedly scarce. Their title would suggest that they were commonly employed in border regions. Troops of *erêmphylakes* seem to be attested for the Memphite region and part of the Oxyrhynchite nome.¹⁶ A handful of government circulars addressed in part to *erêmphylakes* suggests that they often worked in conjunction with town and village police officials (among these *archiphylakitai* and *phylakitai*) to see that government business ran smoothly.¹⁷ Details as to what their activities would have been in these contexts are vague, but it appears that they may have had some police powers: as we saw, Soknopis' instructions to arrest smugglers and confiscate their goods went not only to police officials proper (the *epistatês*, *archiphylakitês* and *phylakitai*) but also to *erêmphylakes* (*P.Tebt.* III.1 709; see above, p. 140). The recipients were asked to perform these very functions and then hand the offenders and their contraband over to the *epimelêtês*.

We know less about *potamophylakes*, who appear to have been charged primarily with border security, specifically at and around rivers, where they protected fords and bridges.¹⁸ One text suggests that they also might have been involved with the transfer of troops (*BGU* VIII 1784 [Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.]).¹⁹

¹⁶ Memphite: *P.Yale* I 50.2-3 (? , II B.C.): τῶν ὑπὲρ Μέμφιν ὄντων | [ca ? ἐρ]ημοφυλάκων;
 Oxyrhynchite (?): *SB* X 10448.2-10 (III B.C.): τ[]νων καὶ πη[ca ? τοῦ] | Ὀξυρρυχίτου [νομοῦ? ca ?] |
 βουλομένοις [ca ?] | τῆς ἐκ τῆ[ς ? ca ?] | ἐρημοφυλάκ[ca ?] | καλῶς ποιήσ[εις? ca ?] | παραλειφθῆι π[ca ?] | εἰς
 ἐκάστην τ[ca ?] | ἐρημοφύλα[κ]α [ca ?].

¹⁷ *P.Tebt.* III.1 709 (159 B.C.); III.2 903 (II B.C.); and 904 (115 B.C.).

¹⁸ *BGU* XIV 2368.3-5 (Herakleopolite, 63 B.C.), an order for payment (?) of τοῖς ἀποτεταγμένοις | π[ρὸς τῆι τ]ηρήσει τῶν κατὰ ποταμὸν [πόρω]ν | [ποτα]μοφύλαξι. On *potamophylakes* see Lewis (1977) 152-153 and chapter 2, p. 56.

¹⁹ In this text an official of unknown rank noted that he had written to the *potamophylakes* of the Ptolemaikos river and requested that they transfer the rear guard (*ouragia*) to Hiera Nesos and hand it over to the *potamophylakes* of the Troite, who were then to travel to Chie in the Kynopolite nome to meet up with the letter's recipient. The letter concludes with an exhortation for the recipient to tell his men to take courage and work hard.

Most *potamophylakes* were probably native Egyptians.²⁰ Unfortunately, further information and a connection to the *phylakitai* is lacking. A similar lack of evidence surrounds the posts of *chersanippos* and *chersephippos*.²¹ All one can conclude about these officials is that the latter rode a horse over desert regions and the former did not. Both perhaps had protective roles. At least one scholar has suggested that the *chersephippos* may have belonged to a special desert cavalry corps composed of Egyptians or, more likely, served in the same capacity as the *erêmphylakes*.²² A handful of land registers mention *chersephippoi* alongside *erêmphylakes* as well as *phylakitai*, which could reflect a close association.²³ Unfortunately, the evidence provides absolutely no indication of the nature of the employment of either the *chersanippos* or the *chersephippos*.

Though the evidence is thin for the government-mandated security roles played by the Ptolemaic police throughout the border regions of the *chôra*, an abundance of data survives for the activities of police officials in providing agricultural protection for arable land. One of the most important tasks of an *archiphylakitês* and his *phylakitai* was managing the *genêmatophylakia*, the annual guarding of crops. The papyri illustrate a number of duties associated with this yearly duty. An *archiphylakitês* was expected to enlist men, by means of written oaths, to act as *genêmatophylakes* for a harvest season, carry out inspections

²⁰ E.g.: BGU XIV 2437, 2440 and 2441 (all Herakleopolite, all I B.C.). *Potamophylakes* listed: BGU XIV 2437: Σεμθέως τοῦ Ἀρφεκοίπιος (10); Πετοσίρις (46); 2440: Ὀννώφ[ρι]ος τοῦ Ὀννώφριος (51); Πενεβείος τοῦ Ἀφύγχιος (52); Πανετβε[ύ]ιος τοῦ Ὀννώφριος (53); Πενναχρος (55); Ποήριος (56); Πετβάστιος (57); 2441: Ἡρακλείδου τοῦ Ἀρατομένου (225); Ἡρακλείδου τοῦ Θεοχάριδος (227).

²¹ For attestations of *chersanippoi* and *chersephippoi* see chapter 2, p. 60 n. 105.

²² Hennig (2003) 146-65. See also *P.Tebt.* I p. 550.

²³ *Chersephippoi* and *phylakitai*: *P.Tebt.* I 84 (118 B.C.); *chersephippoi*, *erêmphylakes* and *phylakitai*: *P.Tebt.* I 60 (118 B.C.); 62 (119-118 B.C.); 63 (116-115 B.C.); 64 (116-115 B.C.); 89 (113 B.C.); IV 1110 (116-115 B.C.); 1114 (113-112 B.C.); 1118 (117-116 B.C.).

(probably with the aid of underlings) of sown land and/or produce and was perhaps aided in the performance of both of these duties by a sowing schedule.²⁴ One especially detailed text provides a number of crucial insights into the workings and elements of the *genêmatophylakia*. The document, a copy of a letter of censure written to one Hermias, *ho epì tôn prosodôn*, concerns a number of delinquencies in his administration of various aspects of the process (*Chrest.Wilck.* 331 [Tebtynis, 113 B.C.]). We learn that Hermias had not been careful to select men of good repute for the position of *archiphylakitês*, but had rather employed less-respectable individuals for the job (37-41). He had also been remiss in collecting royal oaths (*basilika horka*), two per person, not only from those involved in crop guarding (with the approval of the *archiphylakitês*), but also from their supervisors, the *archiphylakitai* themselves (45-54). As for the content of these oaths, those serving as *genêmatophylakes* were required to swear that they would allow none of the cultivators of crown land or land *en aphesei* to lay their hands upon green or secondary crops, with a few exceptions (54-59).²⁵ They were also required to swear that they would see to it that summer agricultural preparations went smoothly, that produce was transported to the proper places and that none of the crops was released (back to the farmers?) until

²⁴ Enlisting: *Chrest.Wilck.* 331 (Tebtynis, 113 B.C.), on which see below; *P.Mich.* I 73 (?) (Philadelphia, III B.C.), a notification to two men informing them that they had been signed up as *genêmatophylakes* by a certain Noumenios (perhaps a *phylakitês*: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59475 [III B.C.]); *P.Tebt.* III.1 731 (153-152 B.C.?; 142-141 B.C.?), where an official with the title *ho hêgoumenos phylakitôn* noted that four *phylakitai* assigned to the *genêmatophylakia* by the *archiphylakitês* of the *meris* had failed to appear; inspecting: *P.Tebt.* III.2 927 (ca 140 B.C.), a fragmentary statement concerning crops mentioning a number of *genêmatophylakes* and an *archiphylakitês*; sowing schedules: *P.Yale* I 36 (? , before 190 B.C.), an official letter with instructions that a crop-sowing schedule be sent to the *archiphylakitês*.

²⁵ On the possible meaning of the phrase τὴν ἐν ἀφέσει γῆν (55) see *P.Tebt.* IV pp2-4 and the additional sources cited there.

the state had had its agricultural demands met (60-64). The *archiphylakitai* were required to swear that they would ensure that the *genêmatophylakes* followed these instructions carefully (68-69).

The letter to Hermias is of great importance for the information it provides on the position of the *archiphylakitês*. To begin with, it yields the only surviving evidence for the appointment of this official. As we have already seen, villagers aspiring to the position of *phylakitês* were able to gain employment by contacting the *archiphylakitês* of their town or village and requesting that they be hired.²⁶ *Epistatai* were at least occasionally installed in their administrative domains by the *stratêgos*.²⁷ Though no evidence survives for the appointment of nome-level police, it seems likely that these men were hired by the *stratêgos* of the nome in question (or one of his subordinates) or even the sovereigns themselves. The fact that a village *archiphylakitês* was not appointed by a higher-ranking police official is surprising. Even more so is the fact that the official who did hire the *archiphylakitês* (in this case, at least) worked in the financial sphere. It seems odd that the rulers of the kingdom would have desired that their village police chiefs, agents who also arrested wrongdoers and solved crimes, be direct appointees of fiscal bureaucrats.

Yet the evidence for such a practice (this one text) is admittedly thin. Much hinges upon the interpretation of the verb *chrêsthai* (39). It was perhaps the case that Hermias “employed” or “used” *archiphylakitai* to act as overseers for the

²⁶ See chapter 2, pp35-36.

²⁷ See *P. Tebt.* III.1 788 (II B.C.), where the *kômarchês* and the farmers in Oxyrhyncha noted that the *stratêgos* had been sent to them to rectify certain abuses, make inspections and appoint trustworthy *epistatai*.

genêmatophylakes, but did not, in fact, “hire” them. The use of the verb here is perhaps analogous to that observable in relationships between bankers and clients in Athens. In these contexts the verb often implies a business relationship as well as a degree of social familiarity.²⁸ Clients “used” bankers they knew and trusted when the need arose, but not necessarily at all times. The verb implies a temporary employment. If we extend this meaning to our present situation, then Hermias may have been ordered to “use” trustworthy *archiphylakitai* as supervisors for the *genêmatophylakia*, but only as seasonal hires. This seems likely, but it should be stressed that it cannot be conclusively proven.

Regardless of the meaning of *chrêsthai* in the letter to Hermias, there still remains the puzzling problem of how and why a financial official would be empowered to appoint police officers. Yet the recruitment process for *archiphylakitai* suggested by the letter to Hermias was perhaps not so strange. In fact, in many respects it even seems reasonable. The *archiphylakitês* was a police official who also had important administrative duties in the financial sphere. Such a position would have necessitated close ties to agents in other areas of government. The letter highlights this connection and further reveals that the post of *archiphylakitês* could in fact be held alongside that of a financial officer. As we have seen, one could hold the offices of *archiphylakitês* and village *epistatês* concurrently.²⁹ This combination seems reasonable, given that both posts

²⁸ See Cohen (1992) 65-66 and the sources cited there.

²⁹ Aniketos was both *epistates* and *archiphylakites* of Euhemeria: *P.Giss.Univ.* I 7.1-2 (II B.C.); 8.1-2 (131 B.C.); *SB VIII 9674.1-2* (ca 131 B.C.), *epistates* restored; *Pros.Ptol.* I 643 and addenda at VIII 643, to which add *SB XIV 11883.1, 8* (170-116 B.C.); Demetrios held both posts in Soknopaiou Nesos: *P.Mich.* XV 688.1-2 (II/I B.C.); another Demetrios held both at Tebtynis: *P.Tebt.* I 43.9-10 (118 B.C.), as did Herakleides: *P.Tebt.* I 230 (II B.C.), no line numbers given; also Heliodoros from an undetermined village in the Fayyum: *SEG XXXIII 1359.3-4* [*cf. I.Fay.* III 209] (107-101 B.C.).

involved a variety of often overlapping police duties. Yet as the *dioikêtês* noted at the beginning of his letter to Hermias, previous orders concerning the *genêmatophylakia* had been given to an official named Theodotos with the title ὁ πρὸς τῇ οἰκονομίαι καὶ ἀρχιφυλακιτεΐαι (9). Theodotos had been charged with summoning the *dekanoi tôn phylakitôn* in the villages to a meeting at which, with his approval, the season's *genêmatophylakes* would be sworn in.³⁰ The combination of titles seen in Theodotos is unparalleled but the close connection between the two posts he held is not. The relationship between the *archiphylakitês* and the *oikonomos* was often very close.

Oikonomoi occasionally gave instructions to *archiphylakitai* and other police officials in their administrative districts to attend to financial and agricultural malfeasance. As we saw above, in one case the Herakleopolite *oikonomos* forwarded instructions concerning the prevention of smuggling of beehives and cows to the *archiphylakitai* and *phylakitai* of the Herakleopolite nome (*P.Heid.* VI 362 [Herakleopolite, 226 B.C.]).³¹ The *oikonomos* asked that the recipients of the notification not allow any of the beekeepers to remove hives from the nome without his authorization. The second half of the circular is fragmentary, but it is likely that the *oikonomos* made a similar request of the *archiphylakitai* and *phylakitai* with regard to a number of cowherds. Those caught rustling cattle may have been arrested, transported under guard (*meta phylakês*) to Herakleopolis and

³⁰ On the *dekanos tôn phylakitôn* see chapter 2, p. 50 n. 69.

³¹ On Herakleides, *oikonomos* (without title in this document) see *Pros.Ptol.* 1047 and *P.Heid.* VI p. 9 n. on 2.

tried.³² The *oikonomos* did not have police powers, but he did have the authority to coopt *archiphylakitai* and their subordinates to enforce laws that bore directly on his own sphere of competence, the economy.

Sometimes the relationship between the *oikonomos* and the police was complicated by issues of hierarchy and administrative domain. In one instance an official in charge of the export of grain reported that the *archiphylakitês* of the Herakleopolite nome had arrested some Arsinoite shipbuilders (*Chrest.Wilck.* 166 [Arsinoite, 218 B.C.]). The *archiphylakitês* had also ignored the commands of the Arsinoite *oikonomos* to release them, insisting that he would only answer to the *epimelêtês* or *dioikêtês*.³³ Was this simple negligence or was the *archiphylakitês* insisting on a point of jurisdiction? Could an Arsinoite official give orders to one from the Herakleopolite? Another text, containing an order to arrest from the Arsinoite *oikonomos* addressed to a Moithymite *archiphylakitês*, seems to suggest that he could (*P.Heid.* VII 393 [Arsinoite/Memphite, III B.C.]).³⁴ In this case, however, the fact that the two officials were from different nomes was not necessarily a barrier to the chain of command.³⁵ Unfortunately, we are

³² 34-41, from the text of a letter sent originally to the *oikonomos* and forwarded to *archiphylakitai* and *phylakitai*: προσδιασαφήσας δ' αὐτοῖς ἐά[ν τινες] | τῶν τοπογραμματοῦν παραδεικν[ύωσί] | τινας [ἐξάγ]οντ[ας μ]όσχους θύοντ[ας ca ?] | παρὰ [ca 11 φ]υλακ[ς] διὰ τῆ[ς ἐντο]λῆς [] καὶ σφ[ραγισα]μένους μείζονα[ς τῶν] | γαλα[θ]ηνῶν [] ἐν ... ἀτὰ κάθισ[τάναι] | εἰς Ἡ[ρ]ακλέους πόλιν μετὰ φυλακῆ[ς ca ?] | ... αὐτοὺς διατηρεῖν.

³³ The Ptolemaic *epimelêtês* was an upper-level official who had authority in certain areas of financial administration. As we shall see, he sometimes gave orders to police officials. Berneker (1935) 90-94 remains the authority for this post. On the *dioikêtês*, one of the chief civil and financial officials in Ptolemaic Egypt, see Thomas (1978) 188-192.

³⁴ Neither the *oikonomos*, Zephyros, nor the *archiphylakitês*, Dikaios, is given a title in the document. For the identification of Zephyros see *Pros.Ptol.* 1041a and *P.Heid.* VII pp43-44; for Dikaios, *Pros.Ptol.* 4562.

³⁵ Moithymis was apparently part of an area (including regions of the Aphroditopolite, Arsinoite, Herakleopolite and Memphite nomes) in which inter-nome official overlap sometimes occurred: *P.Heid.* VII pp45-46 n. on 1.

uninformed as to what action (if any) the *archiphylakitês* took in response to the *oikonomos*' strict order to arrest a bath-attendant.³⁶ Consequently the question of the administrative domain of the *oikonomos* must remain open.

The issue of hierarchy between the *oikonomos* and the *archiphylakitês* has received some scholarly consideration and consensus seems to have been reached. The editors of *P.Tebt.* I suggested that in the third century the *oikonomos* was the most important financial official in the nome, but that by some point in the second he had become less so as the *epimelêtês* and the *stratêgos* gained greater fiscal responsibility.³⁷ Such a weakening in the position of the *oikonomos* is suggested by the documents. As we have already seen, three third-century texts demonstrate that *oikonomoi* might give orders to *archiphylakitai*.³⁸ A handful of government circulars likewise suggests that *oikonomoi* had higher standing than *archiphylakitai* in the third century. In one case, a number of officials including *archiphylakitai* received word from a higher (unknown) source of certain regulations from the office of the *oikonomos* concerning the royal bank.³⁹ In perhaps as many as four additional instances, *oikonomoi* were listed before *archiphylakitai* among the addressees of official memoranda.⁴⁰ An auction receipt

³⁶ 4-7: κατὰσθησον | ἐφ' ἡμᾶς· καὶ μὴ ἄλλως | ποιήσεις (read ποιήσεις)· εἰ δὲ μή, | ἀδικήσεις.

³⁷ *P.Tebt.* I 5 pp46-47 n. on 159.

³⁸ *Chrest.Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.); *P.Heid.* VI 362 (Herakleopolite, 226 B.C.); and VII 393 (Arsinoite/Memphite, III B.C.).

³⁹ *P.Rain.Cent.* 46.1-7 (? , III B.C.): [ca ? τοῖς κ]ατὰ κόμην ἐπιστάτ[αις] | [τῶν ca ?] τόπων καὶ φρουράρχοις | [καὶ τοῖς ἀρχιφυλ]ακί[ταις] καὶ φυλακίταις καὶ | [τῶι ca 6]ι τραπεζί[τ]η καὶ τοῖς σιτολόγοις | [καὶ τοπάρχ]αις καὶ κωμάρχαις καὶ κωμογραμμ[ματεῦσι] καὶ τοῖς γραμματεῦσι τῶν γεωργῶν | [καὶ τοῖς γε]ωργοῖς καὶ τοῖς ὑποτελέσι.

⁴⁰ *BGU VI* 1242.5-7 (Oxyrhynchite, III/II B.C.), an *entolê* from some tax-farmers addressed ἐπιστάτῃ [ο]ικονόμοι τοπογραμματαῦσι κωμογραμματεῦσι [ἀ]ρχιφυλακίταις φυλακίταις; *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 18.1-4 (Arsinoite?, 259 B.C.), a commandment concerning payment of the *apomoira* sent [τοῖς στρατηγοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἱπάρχαις] | [κα]ὶ τοῖς ἡγεμόσι καὶ τοῖς νομάρχαις καὶ τοῖς τοπάρχαις καὶ τοῖς |

from the early second century provides perhaps the latest piece of evidence that the *oikonomos* held a position higher than that of the *archiphylakitês* (*P.Haun.* I 11 [Arsinoite?, 182 B.C.]). In this text the *oikonomos*, the official who drew up the *diagraphê* for a government sale of a house executed by Ptolemaios, τοῦ ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ τὴν Θηβαΐδα (exterior ii.5) and the *basilikos grammateus*, is listed first among the additional officials present at the proceedings, among these an *archiphylakitês*.⁴¹

By 140 B.C. the *archiphylakitês* appears to have gained ground on the *oikonomos*. This is suggested by two royal decrees in which *archiphylakitai* are listed before *oikonomoi* in the lists of addressees. In the first of these documents, the sovereigns addressed the complaints of a group of priests and requested that a number of officials guarantee the security of certain priestly revenues (*C.Ord.Ptol.*² 47 [Tebtynis, 140-139 B.C.]).⁴² The title of *oikonomos* was restored in the addressee-section of this document by the original editors based on the second decree, an ordinance outlawing extortion among officials in which *archiphylakitai* and *oikonomoi* were addressed in that order (*C.Ord.Ptol.*² 53.138-143

[οἰκ]ονόμοις καὶ τοῖς ἀντιγραφεῦσι καὶ τοῖς βασιλ[ικοῖς γραμμ]ατεῦσι | [κ]αὶ τοῖς λιβυάρχεις καὶ τοῖς ἀρχιφυλακίται[ις πᾶσι]; *P.Lille* 3.71-72 (after 241-240 B.C.?; after 216-215 B.C.?), a letter concerning a defaulting *topogrammateus* addressed τοῖς παρὰ Μητροδώρου τοῦ οἰκ[ο]νόμου | καὶ τοῖς κωμογρ[αμματεῦσι] καὶ ἀρχιφυ[λακίταις] καὶ φυλακ[ίταις] (with *BL* 1.201 for reading); *P.Tebt.* III.1 708.2-6 (III B.C.), a circular concerning the upcoming visit of a tax-collector sent τοῖς νομάρχεις καὶ τοῖς οἰκ[ο]νόμοις καὶ τοῖς βασιλ[ικοῖς γραμ]ματεῦσιν τ[ο]ῦ Ἀφροδιτοπολίτου καὶ Ἡρακλε[οπο]λίτου καὶ Ὀξ[υ]ρυγχ[ίτου] καὶ Κ[υ]νοπολίτου καὶ τοῖς ἀρχιφυ[λακίταις] | καὶ φυ[λακίταις].

⁴¹ Those present for the sale included (exterior ii.6-iii.1) καὶ αὐτοῦ Διονυσίου καὶ Ἀρνούφιος τοῦ τοπογραμματέως καὶ Ἰμούθου κωμογρ[αμματέως], | Μεγισθένους φρουράρχου, Λίχα ἀρχιφυλακίτου, Ἀριστογένους τῶν μεθ' Ἰπάλου ἡγεμόνων, Ἰασίβιος ἐπιστάτου ἱππαρχίας καὶ ἄλλων πλειόνων. Dionysios is identified as *oikonomos* in exterior i.3.

⁴² The decree was addressed to the following officials (2-5): [τοῖς στρατη]γοῖς καὶ τοῖς φρουράρχοις καὶ τοῖς ἐπιστάταις τῶν φυλακῶν καὶ ἀρχιφυλακίταις καὶ ἐπιμεληταῖς | [καὶ οἰκονόμοις καὶ βασιλικοῖς γραμματεῦσι καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς | τὰ βασιλικά πραγματευομένοις].

= 155-161 [Tebtynis, 118 B.C.]).⁴³ Only two additional documents feature interactions between *archiphylakitai* and *oikonomoi*. In the first a man named Peteminis complained to the *dioikêtês* that the *oikonomos* had extorted a sum of money from him and asked that the former either arrange for a trial before the *chrêmatistai* or have an *archiphylakitês* mobilize his forces (the *phylakitai*) to bring the offender in (*P.Mich.* XVIII 778 [Mouchis, after 193/2 B.C.]). Matters did not improve. The *oikonomos* was not arrested, so Peteminis appealed to an agent of the *dioikêtês* to have the *phylakitai* deployed (*P.Mich.* XVIII 779 [Mouchis, 192 B.C.]).

As the power of the *oikonomos* waned, that of the *epimelêtês* increased, at least *vis-à-vis* the *archiphylakitês*. As we have already seen, as early as the third century an *archiphylakitês* refused to obey the orders of an *oikonomos*, requiring instead that he receive instruction from the *epimelêtês* (*Chrest.Wilck.* 166; see above, p. 153). Elsewhere an *epimelêtês* was asked to write to the *archiphylakitês* (and one other official, lost in lacuna) to provide protection for a petitioner (*P.Petr.* II 1 [III B.C.]). The *epimelêtês* had regular contact with *archiphylakitai* and had supervisory jurisdiction over them: *archiphylakitai* may have answered to *epimelêtai* for personnel problems during the *genêmatophylakia*. In one case a police officer informed another official (without title) that certain *genêmatophylakes* appointed by the *archiphylakitês* of the *meris* had failed to appear (*P.Tebt.* III.1 731 [153-153 B.C.?; 142-141 B.C.?]). The information was to be passed

⁴³ 155-161: μηθένα δὲ λογεύειν μηθὲν παρὰ τῶν γεω(ργῶν) | καὶ τῶν ὑποτελῶν καὶ τῶν ἐπιπεπλεγμένων ταῖς προσόδοις καὶ μελ{ε}ισσουργῶν | καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὥστε τοῖς στρατηγοῖς | καὶ ἐπιστάταις τῶν φυ(λακιδῶν) ἢ ἀρχιφυ(λακίταις) ἢ οἰκο(νόμοις) ἢ τοῖς | παρ' αὐτῶν ἢ τοῖς ἄλλοις τοῖς πρὸς ταῖς | πραγματεία(ι)ς καθ' ὄντινῶν τρόπον.

on to the *epimelêtês* for administrative processing.⁴⁴ *Archiphylakitai* and other police agents were expected to hand over smugglers and their wares to this official (*P.Tebt.* III.1 709; see above, p. 140). The *epimelêtês* seems also to have acted upon financial crimes reported by *archiphylakitai*. In one case the *archiphylakitês* of the village of Pois discovered someone breaking into a granary. Subsequently, an investigation into the crime was opened by the *basilikos grammateus*, an agent of the *epimelêtês*, and the *epistatês phylakitôn* (*P.Tebt.* III.2 857 [after 162 B.C.]). A final example preserves a direct order from an *epimelêtês* to an *archiphylakitês* not to harass certain individuals until the former arrived to examine their statements (*P.Tebt.* III.1 741 [187-186 B.C.]). The original matter had concerned a debt of grain.

This digression on the offices of the *archiphylakitês*, *oikonomos* and *epimelêtês* has demonstrated that all three officials were actively involved in state financial business. The *archiphylakitês* seems to have served as a tool for the enforcement of economic ordinances and the protection of crown assets. The *epimelêtês* appears to have become a direct superior of the *archiphylakitês* in matters of financial security while the *archiphylakitês* and *oikonomos* worked in close contact with each other, their official relationship changing in nature over time as the post of *oikonomos* became less and less important. As both the *archiphylakitês* and the *oikonomos* often worked at the village level, it seems perfectly natural that the two offices might occasionally have been held by one individual, as we saw was the case in the letter to Hermias. Such a combination would perhaps have

⁴⁴ At least, this appears to be what the text suggests (8-10): ὄμεθα δεῖν γράψα[ν] ἵν', ἐὰν φαίνεται, ἀν[ενέγκης πρὸς ca 6] | τῶν διαδόχων καὶ ἐπι[ε]μελητὴν περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ λόγος τῶν [ca 15] | πρὸς αὐτὸν γένηται.

demonstrated an acknowledgement of a certain degree of overlap between the two posts. An official with both titles would have proven a great asset for the annual guarding of crops, combining financial acumen with police powers of protection and persuasion.

Such qualities were doubtless crucial for the performance of the additional duties of the *archiphylakitês* connected to the *genêmatophylakia*, among these agricultural transport, record keeping and the detection and prevention of criminal activity. *Archiphylakitai* inspected village granaries and threshing-floors and authorized the transfer of produce from one farmer's allotment to another's.⁴⁵ They also may have been responsible for carrying out on-site agricultural inspections, to judge from a fragmentary report of the *grammateus geôrgôn* including a list of names (*P.Tebt.* III.2 927 [145-116 B.C.]). A number of officials are named, including an *archiphylakitês*, agents of the *epimelêtês* and the *basilikos grammateus* and a number of *genêmatophylakes*. The document seems to have concerned investigations to be carried out on a certain class of land by the aforementioned officials. At bottom the farmers note the necessity of leaving behind a number of people to serve as guards in the village (22-24).

The *archiphylakitês* was the primary Ptolemaic police official with administrative powers involved in the activities of the *genêmatophylakia*. Evidence that *epistatai phylakitôn* were likewise engaged is thin and only suggestive. As we saw above, a second-century regulation concerning the security of embankments

⁴⁵ Inspecting granaries and threshing-floors: *P.Genova* III 95 (Arsinoite, 216 B.C.?), where an *archiphylakitês* received word that an itemized list of village threshing-floors had been sent to him; *SB XVI* 12813 (Arsinoite, II B.C.), in which an *archiphylakitês* and some *epistatai* learned that some government grain had been plundered; authorizing produce-transfer: *P.Köln* VI 274 (? , III B.C.), where an *archiphylakitês* was permitted to transfer fodder between allotments.

may suggest that the *epistatês phylakitôn* had a role in supplying protection for agricultural infrastructure prior to and/or during the *genêmatophylakia* (*P.Tebt.* III.1 706; see above, p. 145). But the text is too fragmentary to permit further conclusions. The only additional support for a possible connection between this official and the annual guarding of crops comes from a register of official correspondence from the second century (*P.Tebt.* III.1 793.iv.1-5 [183 B.C.]). The document seems to contain a request that the *epistatês phylakitôn* be present for grain measurement.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, specifics on the possible involvement of the *epistatês phylakitôn* in this activity are lacking due to the lacunose nature of the text.

While higher police officials did not actively engage in agricultural security activities, *phylakitai* did.⁴⁷ We see *phylakitai* asked by villagers and officials to provide protection for animals and produce. In one case, a tax collector requested that the *phylakitai* watch over certain payments for the *stephanos*-tax until they had been transferred to the crown (*BGU* VIII 1851 [Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.]). In another, a *praktôr* asked that a subordinate obtain a receipt for some fodder and command the *phylakitai* to provide protection for a number of *ktênê* (*P.Cair.Zen.* I 59136 [256 B.C.]).⁴⁸ *Phylakitai* also provided security

⁴⁶ It should be noted that the title of the *epistatês phylakitôn* is partially restored (iv.1-5):
 [ἀ]ξιούμέν σε ἐπισχεῖν καὶ ὑ [ca 8] | [γρ]άψαι Ἀλεξάνδρῳ τῷ π[] ρός [τῆ] συντάξει ἀπο|[στ]εῖλαι
 ἡμῖν Σέλευκον τὸν ἐπ(ιστάτην) τῶν [φυλακιστῶν] | [ἴν] ἐκείνου παρόντος [] ε [... ἀνα]|[μ]ετρήσει. A
 reference to *phylakitai* a bit further down in the document (iv.16) may justify the restoration.

⁴⁷ See chapter 2, pp28-29.

⁴⁸ See also *BGU* VI 1253 (? , II B.C.), where a *phylakitês* was asked to guard some *ktênê*; VIII 1818 (Herakleopolite, 60-59 B.C.), in which an unknown official was asked to have the *phylakitai* protect crops; and *PSI* IV 344 (Philadelphia, 255 B.C.), official correspondence concerning collection of the *chômatikon* and *phylakitikon* and *phylakitai* standing guard over pasturage and crops. In *P.Cair.Zen.* IV 59610 (III B.C.) officials of unknown rank seem to suggest that a *phylakitês* was unwilling to

for agricultural infrastructure. A regulation for the security of embankments mentions the stationing of *phylakitai*. The police officials seem to have been appointed for guard-duty both day and night, but the document is too fragmentary to provide more specific information.⁴⁹ Such details might prove useful for the successful completion of other police business. For example, in one instance a tax collector and a *phylakitês* patrolling some reservoirs (*hypodocheia*) came upon and arrested a thief (*P.Tebt.* III.1 733 [143-142 B.C.]).⁵⁰ *Phylakitai* were also occasionally employed in land-measurement, to judge from one text, a notification to the *phylakitai* from an *archiphylakitês* (*P.Hib.* I 75 [232-231 B.C.]). The *phylakitai* were to take the *kômogrammateus* and measure an allotment, making sure that no more land had been released to a cultivator than had been authorized.

As mentioned above, when it came time for grain to be harvested, transported, measured, and stored, the *phylakitai* and other individuals selected for the various elements of the *genêmatophylakia* were required to submit written oaths of office. These oaths were intended to ensure that Ptolemaic agricultural machinery ran smoothly. A surviving *cheirographia phylakitikê* provides an idea of what one of these oaths may have looked like. The applicant swore that he had received a certain amount of material to be guarded, that he would not release

supply them with the Egyptian *phylakes* necessary for the guarding of some vineyards. For more on the detaining activities of *phylakitai* see chapter 4, pp125-126.

⁴⁹ *P.Tebt.* III.1 706.15-18 (171 B.C.): [ἀ]ποτάξας φυλακίτας συνοπ[τ . .] | [ca 14]ης οἷς ἐπιμελὲς ἔσται ἐπισκοπ[εῖν] | [ca 14]σε δι' ἔτους διὰ νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέ[ρας] | [ca 9 καὶ ἐ]άν τινες ἀφίστωνται, διασημα[ίν . .]. The end of the document reveals that the text concerned the protection of dykes (28): [ca ?] περὶ τῆς τῶν χω(μάτων) ἀσφαλείας.

⁵⁰ For *phylakitai* protecting agricultural infrastructure see also *PSI* IV 344 (Philadelphia, 255 B.C.), where a tax collector was urged to involve the *phylakitai* in the safeguarding (?) of irrigation implements.

any of it to anyone without written instructions to do so and that he would provide the best possible protection for the allotments of others so as to ensure the year's agricultural revenue.⁵¹

Alongside the *phylakitai*, crop-guards, or *genêmatophylakes*, provided a large portion of the labor base for the *genêmatophylakia*.⁵² A number of documents shed light on the activities of these officials. Unlike *phylakitai*, who applied for their posts, it appears that *genêmatophylakes* were not only recruited but also impressed on a seasonal basis from Egyptian settlements. As we have seen, lists of potential “candidates” for the job of *genêmatophylax* were drawn up: in the letter to Hermias, the *dioikêtês* requested such a list (*Chrest.Wilck.* 331.12-16; see above, pp149-152). The nominees were then notified of their appointment, perhaps generally by letter, as suggested by a notification to two men who had been assigned to work as *genêmatophylakes* on the *klêroi* around the village of Kolonoura (*P.Mich.* I 73 [Philadelphia, III B.C.]). Many, if not most of these men were native Egyptians.⁵³ This was perhaps the result of a government policy designed to decrease friction between the primarily native cultivators and the government representatives who received their grain. It was doubtless less unpleasant for Egyptians to hand over their crops to officials who bore a physical

⁵¹ *P.Tebt.* II 282A.3-10 (II B.C.): εἶ μὴ(ν) παρελιηφέναι τὰ ὑπογεγραμμένα | πλήθη καὶ μηθενὶ καταπροήσασθαι | μηθὲν κατὰ μηδεμίαν παρεύρεσιν νι | [τοὺς καρποὺς ἀπενέγκασθαι τῷ ὑπογεγραμμένῳ] | ἔάν μὴ πρῶτον λάβ[ω]μεν γράμμ[α]τὰ καὶ ἐπισταλῆ ἡμ[ε]ῖν τοῖς ὡς καθήκει ... | [...] καὶ φυ(λακὴν) ἀλλοτρίων κλή(ρων) συντηρήσιν | ἀπὸ τ[ο]ῦ βελτί(σ)του καὶ τ ... ἄλλους πα[ρ]μασί(κ) | πρὸς τε τὰ ἐπέτεια καὶ τοῖς [] μ ... [] .

⁵² For more on *genêmatophylakes* see chapter 2, pp55-56.

⁵³ Of the 24 *genêmatophylakes* listed in the *Pros.Ptol.* (nos. 4903-4926) at least 16 have Egyptian names. See (e.g.) *P.Tebt.* III.2 927.10-15 (ca 140 B.C.), which lists the following *genêmatophylakes*: Πάσιτος [ca ?] | Πετεσοῦχου τοῦ Κολύλιος, Πκᾶμις | Νεχθενίβιος, ὦρος Πετοσίριος, ὦρ[ος] | Ψενθώτου, Τοθοῆς ὦρου, Πᾶσις | Μαρρέου, Ἀρβήχης ὦρου, Πᾶσις Πετ[ca ?], ὦρος Πάσιτος, Εὐνῶου τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου.

resemblance to them as opposed to foreign representatives of the occupation government.⁵⁴ Sometimes *phylakitai* were assigned to the post of *genêmatophylax* for a period of time. In one case, four *phylakitai* assigned to the *genêmatophylakia* by the *archiphylakitês* of the *meris* did not show up for duty, in spite of having taken their oaths of office. Consequently, a police official, fearing that the remaining *genêmatophylakes* would abandon their posts when they saw that the offenders had not been punished, suggested to a tax official (?) that the *epimelêtês* be notified.⁵⁵

Once they were ready to guard grain *genêmatophylakes* were required to submit written oaths of office.⁵⁶ When they assumed their posts, there were a set number of activities they might be required to conduct. First, they collected and transported grain to state threshing-floors. In performing this task they sometimes had the help of other town or village officials: an agricultural report highlights an instance in which a *komarchês*, *kômogrammateus* and some *genêmatophylakes* had transported unsifted sesame to a threshing-floor (*P.Tebt.* III.2 1057 [170-116 B.C.]).⁵⁷ To aid them in the collection of grain, *genêmatophylakes* might employ written records. In one case, a *komarchês* and some

⁵⁴ The same sort of policy may also have applied to *thésaurophylakes*: see below, pp164-166.

⁵⁵ *P.Tebt.* III.1 731.7-10 (153-152 B.C.?; 142-141 B.C.): ἐπεὶ οὖν προ[ο]ρώμεθα μήποτε καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι ἐγλίπωσιν τῆν τήρησιν μηδεμιᾶς | ἐπιστροφῆς γινομένης, ὅμεθα δεῖν γράψα[γ]ι ἴν', ἐὰν φαίνηται, ἀν[ενέγκης πρὸς ca 6] | τῶν διαδόχων καὶ ἐπι[ε]μελητῆν περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ λόγος τῶν [ca 15] | πρὸς αὐτὸν γένηται. The recipient of the report, a certain Mestasytmis, is perhaps to be identified with the man of the same name in *P.Tebt.* III.1 733.6-7 (143-142 B.C.). The latter Mestasytmis was the stepson (*progonos*) of a tax official with the title τοῦ [ἐ]ξειληφότος τῆ[ν δ]ι[α]θ[ε]σιν τοῦ ρ[...] (4).

⁵⁶ *Chrest.Wilck.* 331.52-54 (Tebtynis, 113 B.C.), where the necessity of duplicate oaths from *genêmatophylakes* was specified; *P.Tebt.* II 282 (II B.C.), an oath of a *phylakitês* for the protection of crops; III.1 731 (153-152 B.C.?; 142-141 B.C.), a report concerning dereliction of duty by four *phylakitai* who had sworn oaths to serve as *genêmatophylakes*. See also above, pp148-150.

⁵⁷ See also *Chrest.Wilck.* 337 (Arsinoite, 222/1 B.C.), in which petitioners mentioned that some *genêmatophylakes* had transferred their grain and were guarding it in a temple.

genêmatophylakes notified the *kômogrammateus* that they had received a report on the crops and a list of landholders (*P.Tebt.* III.2 922 [II B.C.]). Second, they issued receipts to taxpayers. Again, other officials sometimes participated in this process. One case demonstrates that the *komarchês* could assist *genêmatophylakes* in performing this task (*P.Tebt.* IV 1135 [112 B.C.]).⁵⁸ After this, the *genêmatophylakes* guarded the grain until the financial needs of the government had been met. They may have been necessary not only to watch over grain at threshing-floors but also to supervise other harvest activities.⁵⁹

Aside from their main duties, *genêmatophylakes* might occasionally be called upon to provide security for areas in which financial wrongdoing connected to grain had been detected. In one case, the *genêmatophylakes* were informed of the activities of a defaulting *kômarchês* and perhaps ordered to keep an eye on him.⁶⁰ In another, a *kômogrammateus* seems to have requested that the *genêmatophylakes* make an arrest or confiscate something before security for rent

⁵⁸ See also *P.Gen.* II 86C (Bacchias, 187 B.C.?; 163 B.C.?), a receipt from a *genêmatophylax* for payment (in grain) of the statue tax (*eikonôn eisphora*).

⁵⁹ *PSI V* 490.6-10 (Philadelphia, 257 B.C.): [Ἀπολλωνίωι. ἔγραψά σοι καὶ] πρότερον ὅτι οἱ γεωργοὶ τὸν σῖτον θερίζουσιν ἤδη καὶ ὅτι [γεννηματοφυλάκων χρεια ἐστὶν] οἱ διατηρήσουσιν τὸν τε ἀμητὸν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν ἀλώνων | [τὸν ἤδη συναχθέντα (?) σῖτο]ν· καὶ νῦν, ἐάν σοι φαίνεται, γραφήτω εἰ δεῖ καταστήσαι | [ca ?] αὐτοῖς δυνατοὶ εἰσὶν ἐπερκέσαι εἰς τὰ καθ' ἡμέραν δέοντα | [ca ?] ὑποῦς ἵνα μὴ διαφορήσωσιν τὸν σῖτον (with *BL* 4.88 for reading). See also *P.Mich.* XVIII 769 (Trikomia, 200 B.C.?), a letter instructing the recipient, a certain Horos, to attend the shaking of sesame on a certain allotment and to guard the produce. Horos was probably a *genêmatophylax*: *P.Mich.* XVIII pp99-100 and p. 103 n. on 12.

⁶⁰ *P.Tebt.* III.1 711.2-19 (ca 125 B.C.): κατ[έλαβον] | διὰ π[λ]ειόνων Πετῶν το[υ] ... [] | κωμάρχην τῆς κόμης λειποτελή [όντα] | καὶ ἀποποῦντα, μεγάλως δὲ καθυστηρηκότα ἐν [τῶι] | διεσταμένωι πρὸς αὐτὸν κεφαλαίωι ο [δεῖ] | δοθῆναι ἀπὸ προχειρισμοῦ σίτ[ο]υ [] | καὶ διειλικυκότα ἕως τῆς κ το[υ] [] | ἀπολ[ε]λοιπένα πλείω τοῦ ἡμίσεος. ὅθ[εν] | ἀναδραμόντες τατ[ca ?] | γενέσθαι ἐν τούτοις [ca ?] | καὶ ἐν τοῖς πρότερον [ca ?] | τὰ τῆς χρείας ἐκπλη[ρ ca ? ἵνα] | μηθὲν ἐλάσσωμα [ca ? τῶι] | προγεγραμμένοι γέ[νηται ca ?] | [γ]ενόμενοι ἐπιδ... [ca ?] | εἰς τὸ μδ [L] μόνον τὰ δ[ca ?] | παραδοθῆναι ἐπακ[ολουθ ca ?] | δεῖξαμε[ν] τυγχανε[ca ?].

was obtained from a village.⁶¹ *Genêmatophylakes* may not always have embraced the duties of their profession with honor and enthusiasm. In one case there was a suggestion that the previous *genêmatophylakes* had shirked their duties and left the cultivators with worm-eaten grain.⁶² In another it was reported that four *phylakitai* who had sworn oaths to serve as *genêmatophylakes* had failed to show up for duty (*P.Tebt.* III.1 731; see above, pp156-157). Instances of dereliction of duty among *genêmatophylakes* are not surprising, given what must have been the limited availability of labor during the harvest season. The lack of documentation for payment of *genêmatophylakes* suggests that the post was liturgical and thus may have created economic hardship for those appointed to it.

Thêsaurophylakes, the protectors of granaries, also had important roles to play in the successful execution of the annual *genêmatophylakia*.⁶³ Much of what we know about this group derives from tax-rolls, accounts and population lists. Three tax-rolls list *thêsaurophylakes* among the taxpaying inhabitants of certain Arsinoite villages.⁶⁴ Two texts document payment of *thêsaurophylakes*.⁶⁵ These officials seem to have been employed for more than just protecting *thêsauroi*,

⁶¹ *P.Tebt.* III.1 715.2-5 (II B.C.): μεταλαβὼν περὶ τοῦ μεταφέρεσθαι τὸν περὶ τὴν κόμην κάλαμον Ἑλληνικὸν εἰς ε[ca 9] | πρὸ τοῦ λαβεῖν ἡμᾶς τὴν καθήκουσαν ἀσφάλειαν τῶν ἐκφορίων κ αφεῖ[ca ?] | πλεοναζούση[ς] τῆς ἐπιγραφῆς, ἅμα τῶι λα[β]εῖν τὴν ἐπιστολὴν καταστήσαντες τὴν [..]ε [.. τῆ]ς κόμ[ης] ca 7] | μέχρι τοῦ λαβεῖν παρὰ τῶν [κ]υρίων τὴν ἀσφάλειαν.

⁶² At least, this appears to be the proper interpretation of the end of the document (*PSI V* 490.13-15 [Philadelphia, 257 B.C.]): ἀφιδόντες δὲ | [ca ?] τὴν γενομένην σκωληκόβρωτον ἀποκεχωρήκασιν ἐγκαί[ταλείποντες τοὺς γεωργῶν]τας τὴν γῆν. The document is a forwarded copy of letter περὶ γενηματοφυλάκων (1).

⁶³ See also chapter 2, p. 56.

⁶⁴ *CPR XIII* 5.41-42 and 11.20 (both Krokodilopolis, both III B.C.) and *P.Tebt.* I 90.40 (I B.C.).

⁶⁵ *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59292.155 (after 250 B.C.) and *P.Tebt.* III.2 850.53 (170 B.C.).

though this task must have been chief among their regularly-assigned duties, as suggested by a letter to Zenon (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59509 [III B.C.]). In this instance a granary guard urged Zenon, his boss, to obtain an additional granary, as the one Zenon possessed was not large enough to contain the year's grain. This case, and one other, highlights an important fact: that not all *thêsauroi* (or, accordingly, *thêsaurophylakes*) belonged to the government.⁶⁶ As was the case with a number of other types of *phylax*, *thêsaurophylakes* might serve in a private capacity as protectors of personal property. But private and public *thêsaurophylakes* were distinctly different. While the latter was a specific official with state-sanctioned responsibility for the reception, protection and transmission of grain, the former might be any private employee charged with the supervision of a storage shed filled with *genêmata*. The flexibility of the Greek language allowed both men to use the same title.⁶⁷

The activities of government *thêsaurophylakes* generally concerned the reception, transmission and return of grain. A taxpayer might deliver his produce to a *thêsaurophylax* who would then provide the depositor with a receipt.⁶⁸ In advance of grain payments, the *thêsaurophylax* might be the recipient of a detailed list of grain that had been assessed or collected from taxpayers.⁶⁹ The prosopography suggests that most *thêsaurophylakes* were native Egyptians

⁶⁶ See also *P.Princ.* III 117 (? , 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?), in which a petitioner noted that she had made a deposit of grain with the *thêsaurophylax* of the *idiôtikos thêsauros* of a certain Antiphilos.

⁶⁷ For other types of privately-hired *phylakes* see chapter 2, pp52-53.

⁶⁸ See *P.Tebt.* III.2 957 (II B.C.), in which petitioners noted that they had deposited grain with a *thêsaurophylax* and had been issued a receipt. For private granaries, at least, terms of return might be worked out after a deposit was made: *P.Princ.* III 117 (? , 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?), a petition to a *stratêgos* concerning a deposit of grain with the *thêsaurophylax* of an *idiôtikos thêsauros* and a violation of the terms of release.

⁶⁹ *P.Tebt.* III.2 862 (II B.C.), a grain account sent to a *thêsaurophylax*.

and there is evidence that the position might be combined with other posts, generally those held by Egyptians.⁷⁰ The practice of entrusting the protection of state granaries to predominantly Egyptian officials was perhaps a carefully-calculated policy, as may also have been the case with the selection of *genêmatophylakes*.⁷¹

The Ptolemies employed police and other security forces for protective details throughout the Egyptian countryside. The *phylakitai*, *phylakes* and other officials who carried out these security duties performed a broad range of functions, from defending border regions and insecure roads to watching over waterways and infrastructure. We see here the desire of the Ptolemies for security in Egyptian towns and villages to be managed by officials in these same settlements. The recruitment of special forces, among these *erêmatophylakes*, for security details also demonstrates just how seriously these duties were taken. The most crucial protective roles played by the Ptolemaic police were in the fertile areas along the Nile where they served as the supervisors of the *genêmatophylakia*. Police were entrusted with a number of important tasks crucial to the financial well-being of the state. Here as nowhere else do we see the active involvement of the Alexandrian administration in Egyptian towns and villages. Through their ties to the *archiphylakitês*, financial officials (among these the

⁷⁰ Ethnicity of *thêsaurophylakes*: CPR XIII pp87-89, especially the list of officeholders on p. 89; combination of posts: *P.Tebt.* III.1 848.1-3 (II B.C.), a list of grain received at the top of which the four *thêsaurophylakes* for Nilopolis are listed, the first three of whom had additional titles (*kômogrammateus*, *komarchês* and *grammateus geôrgôn*, respectively). Based upon these three officials, the editors suggested that the *thêsaurophylakes* “were a small board on which the regular village officials were strongly represented” (p. 52 n. on 1-3), but also stressed “that there was a φύλαξ proper permanently stationed at the granary... and that the name of θησαυροφύλαξ was generally applied to him alone” (p. 52 n. on 1-3).

⁷¹ See above, pp161-162.

oikonomos and *epimelêtês*) relayed orders to the *phylakitai* and *phylakes* in charge of collecting grain in Egyptian villages. The same officers who enjoyed great autonomy in arresting criminals and solving crimes became carefully-supervised tools of the state at harvest time.

In addition to executing arrests, protecting crops and investigating crimes, Ptolemaic police were also engaged to carry out a number of other tasks for which coercion and force might be necessary. As we shall see, police officers regularly appeared at public events, among these government auctions and trials, where their presence was intended to keep crowds under control and help maintain order. Law enforcement officials were also among those notified (via *entolai* from other government agents) of appointments to office and developments in the financial sphere and encouraged to assist tax farmers and other government operatives. Perhaps the most important coercive function performed by the Ptolemaic police was in the area of tax collection. Here the *phylakitai* (and their direct superiors, *archiphylakitai*) were crucial. They often made personal visits to the homes of those with outstanding debts to the government to exact payment. They also sometimes extracted payment themselves. Though they were at the disposal of locals for crime prevention and solving, the Ptolemaic police were also the officials most commonly called upon by the central government to exert pressure upon the Egyptian people to obey and behave.

Security and order are of prime importance at public events where money and goods change hands. It was no different in Ptolemaic Egypt. The Ptolemies regularly held auctions of confiscated or forfeited properties and other goods.

Archiphylakitai, *epistatai*, *epistatai phylakitôn* and *phrourarchoi* all appeared at these events, though in no case do we know the specific functions they filled.⁷² Sometimes more than one police official was present at a government auction.⁷³ Police officials occasionally served as bailiffs at civil trials. The minutes of a Krokodilopolite trial over a boundary dispute note that an *archiphylakitês* and a *phrourarchos* had been present at a previous official examination (not held by either) and that the same officials were present at a subsequent trial (*Chrest.Mitt.* 32 [Arsinoite, 181 B.C.]). The *archiphylakitês* had been assigned the task of administering an oath, though the context of the oath is unclear.⁷⁴

While the evidence for the activities of the Ptolemaic police at trials and auctions provides few indications of what they actually did, the data for their duties as collectors of tax arrears paint a much clearer picture. Government circulars (*entolai*) and notifications from tax collectors and other financial officials to law enforcement and civil administrators on matters connected to the fiscal well-being of the state demonstrate that the enforcement of economic regulations

⁷² *Archiphylakitai*: *BGU* VI 1219.50 (Hermopolite, II B.C.); 1222.61, 74-75 (Hermopolite, after 144 B.C.); *P.Haun.* I 11 exterior ii.7 (Arsinoite?, 182 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.2 871.5-6 (158 B.C.) and 1071.6 (after 158 B.C.), both from the same original; *UPZ* II 219.15 (Thebes, 130 B.C.); *epistatai*: *UPZ* II 219.15 and 221.i.10 (both Thebes, both 130 B.C.); *epistatai phylakitôn*: *P.Ryl.* II 253 verso ii.5 (Hermoupolis Magna, 142 B.C.); *phrourarchoi*: *BGU* VI 1219.50-51 (Hermopolite, II B.C.); *Chrest.Wilck.* 162.i.11 (Hermonthis, 186 B.C.); *P.Haun.* I 11.ii.7 (Arsinoite?, 182 B.C.). In *P.Lond.* III 1200 (Diospolis Major, 209 B.C.) it was noted that a tax payment, most likely for the sale or mortgage of a house, had been carried out in accordance with the orders (*diagraphê*) of an *archiphylakitês*. No other evidence for a similar duty among other Ptolemaic police officials survives.

⁷³ For instance, in *BGU* VI 1219.50-51 (Hermopolite, II B.C.) an *archiphylakitês* and a *phrourarchos* were present for a government sale of property. In *BGU* VI 1222.61, 74-75 (Hermopolite, after 144 B.C.) an *archiphylakitês* and a *hyparchiphylakitês* were present at two separate sales of property. In *UPZ* II 219.15 (Thebes, 130 B.C.) an *archiphylakitês* and an *epistatês* were recorded as being present for the auction of a forfeited Asklepieion.

⁷⁴ 1-5: [το]ῦ δ' ὄρκου γρα[φ]έντος | [ca 20]ν ὄντος δὲ καὶ παρὰ το[ῦ] κωμο[γ]ραμματέως, καὶ προσταχ[θ]έντος Ἐρ[μο]κράτει τῶι ἀ[ρχ]ιφυλακίτηι, τὸν ὄρκον ἐπιτελεσθῆναι, τοῦ δὲ χρόνου ἐν ᾧ | [τὸν ὄρκον ἔδει ἐπιτελεῖσθαι μήπ[ω] ἐνεστηκότος. For the activities of police officials at criminal trials see the previous chapter, pp130-135.

was among the most important duties of the Ptolemaic police. For the most part, these documents addressed important changes in the administration of the state's finances or changes in official appointments. *Archiphylakitai*, *epistatai*, *epistatai phylakitôn*, *erêmophylakes*, *phourarchoi* and *phylakitai* received such notifications.⁷⁵ Circulars of this sort were usually copied and distributed to multiple officials and served a number of functions.⁷⁶ *Entolai* informed their recipients of the names of tax collectors and other financial officials, specified new fiscal regulations and occasionally addressed reports of specific problems with agricultural and economic issues in the vicinity.⁷⁷ The officials who sent *entolai* generally asked the recipients to provide assistance to government officials in the performance of their duties. Where tax revenues were concerned, this assistance might involve the apprehension and transmission to the proper authorities of those who had been caught violating the exclusive rights of the tax collector to

⁷⁵ *Archiphylakitai*, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* III.1 708 (III B.C.); 709 (159 B.C.); *SB XII 11078* (Arsinoite, ca 100 B.C.); *epistatai*, e.g.: *P.Grenf.* II 37 (Thebaid, II/I B.C.); *P.Tebt.* I 35 (111 B.C.); *SB XXII 15766* (Arsinoite, 223 or 181 B.C.); *epistatai phylakitôn*, e.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 47 (Tebtynis, 140-139 B.C.); *P.Gen.* III 132 (Herakleopolite?, II B.C.); *SB XXII 15767* (Arsinoite, II B.C.), a memo requesting that an *entolê* be sent; *erêmophylakes*: *P.Tebt.* III.1 709 (159 B.C.); III.2 903 (II B.C.); 904 (115 B.C.); *phourarchoi*, e.g.: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 47 (Tebtynis, 140-139 B.C.); 62 (Memphis, 99 B.C.); *P.Rain.Cent.* 45 (? 232 B.C.); *phylakitai*, e.g.: *P.Rain.Cent.* 46 (? III B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 708 (III B.C.); *SB XXII 15766* (Arsinoite, 223 or 181 B.C.).

⁷⁶ For instance, *P.Tebt.* III.2 903 (II B.C.), a circular from a contractor concerning unproductive land, was addressed to the *archiphylakitai*, *epistatai*, *erêmophylakes*, *machimoi* and other officials in Berenikis Thesmophorou.

⁷⁷ Officials named, e.g.: *P.Tebt.* I 40 (117 B.C.), a letter to a *basilikos grammateus* from a collector of the beer and natron tax asking that the former write an *entolê* to a number of Kerkeosirite officials; *P.Tebt.* III.1 708 (III B.C.), an *entolê* to officials in four nomes concerning a man who was being sent out to collect owed revenue (?); *SB XII 11078* (Arsinoite, ca 100 B.C.), a letter to a number of Tebtynite officials requesting assistance for an agent dispatched to collect the papyrus tax; regulations: *P.Tebt.* I 35 (111 B.C.), a circular regulating the price of myrrh in the Polemon *meris*; trouble, e.g.: *P.Heid.* VI 362 (Herakleopolite, 226 B.C.), a pair of letters from the *oikonomos* to the Herakleopolite *archiphylakitai* and *phylakitai* concerning the illegal migration of bees, beekeepers and cows out of the nome; *P.Lille* 3.71-85 (after 241-240 B.C.; after 216-215 B.C.), an *entolê* from the *oikonomos* concerning a debtor *topogrammateus* who had fled; *SB XXII 15767* (Arsinoite, II B.C.), a memo requesting that an unnamed official write to a number of police agents concerning reports of people in arrears with tax payments.

gather his income; but much of the time police were simply asked to use their clout to help out.⁷⁸

Occasionally, circulars were employed to inform police of the necessity of protecting individuals or their financial contributions to the crown. For example, in one case the king and queen asked that *stratêgoi*, *phrouarchoi*, *epistatai phylakitôn*, *archiphylakitai* and others (in that order) provide protection for some priests and their revenues from embezzlement (*C.Ord.Ptol.*² 47; see above, pp155-156). In another instance the sovereigns forwarded a copy of a petition they had received from the chief of an embalmer's guild with instructions for the recipients, the *stratêgos*, *phrouarchos*, *epistatês phylakitôn*, *archiphylakitês* and other Memphite officials, to see to it that the petitioner and his home be protected from those who had been harassing him (*C.Ord.Ptol.*² 62 [Memphis, 99 B.C.]). The protection of revenue was a high priority for the Ptolemies and threats to its generation were not taken lightly. When necessary, a broad spectrum of police officials was engaged to ensure that profits rolled in.

The Ptolemaic police performed a number of functions in the realm of collecting and managing overdue taxes. The *phylakitai* and their superiors had important roles in ensuring that the Ptolemies received the revenues due them. Kool minimized this function.⁷⁹ He seems to have underestimated its importance. A number of texts feature *phylakitai* serving as collectors of tax arrears. In one

⁷⁸ E.g.: *P.Mich.* XVIII 770 (Trikomia, 197 B.C.?), an *entolê* to *phylakitai* (among others, lost in lacuna) concerning a tax collector and asking that the recipients provide him with the requisite aid; *SB XII* 11078 (Arsinoite, ca 100 B.C.), a letter to a number of Tebtynite officials requesting that they arrest those trafficking in contraband papyrus; 15766 (Arsinoite, 223 or 181 B.C.), a circular concerning the appointment of a collector for the wool tax and asking that the letter's recipients aid him in his activities.

⁷⁹ Kool (1954) 103.

case we see that *phylakitai* collected for the grain tax (*P.Cair.Zen.* II 59232.1-5 [253 B.C.]). In another they collected for the tax on beer (*P.Cair.Zen.* II 59297.20-21 [250 B.C.?]). Elsewhere a sailor noted that the agents of an *archiphylakitês* (probably *phylakitai*) had seized his ship's crew and demanded a tax payment (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59343 [ca 246 B.C.]).⁸⁰ Sometimes the *phylakitai* employed as debt collectors by the state submitted fraudulent returns. The problem had become sufficiently widespread by the end of the second century to merit a royal decree releasing from punishment those *phylakitai* who had cheated the state, as well as those who had run away for fear of retribution (*C.Ord.Ptol.*² 53.188-192 [Tebtynis, 118 B.C.]). The decree demonstrates not only that the Ptolemies did not always receive all that they thought they should, but also that the *phylakitai* were essential cogs in the debt collecting machine.⁸¹

Of all the police officials involved in financial matters, the Ptolemaic *archiphylakitês* perhaps had the most important tasks to perform. The collection of tax arrears from the subject population was one of the chief tasks of an *archiphylakitês*. The earliest piece of evidence for the association of this official with financial matters comes from the revenue laws of Ptolemy Philadelphus, which contain a commandment addressed to a long list of officials, ending with *archiphylakitai*, the only town or village police agents mentioned (*C.Ord.Ptol.*² 18

⁸⁰ The tax in question was that for a year 39. As the document is undated, it is uncertain whether the fee was past or currently due. The *archiphylakitês*, a certain Alexandros, is not given a title in the text. For the identification of this official (= *Pros.Ptol.* 4545) see *P.Mich.* I 34 (Philadelphia, 254 B.C.).

⁸¹ See also *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59407 (III B.C.), where rent was to be transmitted to the crown by the *oikonomos* and a *phylakitês*; and *P.Tebt.* III.2 1067 (205-180 B.C.), a fragmentary list of fines, two of which appear to have been extracted by a *phylakitês*.

[Arsinoite?, 259 B.C.]).⁸² The commandment states that these officials had received an edict regarding the assessment of the sixth (*hektê*). They were then asked to make sure that written statements concerning the amounts and types of produce paid and received, respectively, in the past were collected from the owners of orchards and vineyards, as well as from the priests who received crop payments from these cultivators (9-19).

Villagers frequently complained about the aggressive debt-extracting practices of *archiphylakitai*. In one case, a petitioner grumbled that he was being pressed for payment of the *phylakitikon* by an *archiphylakitês* and was also being compelled to draw up a contractual agreement regarding some grain (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59404 [III B.C.]). In another, a man related that an *archiphylakitês*, apparently working with two other *phylakitai*, had purloined his taxable livestock (*BGU* III 1012.7-8 [Arsinoite, 170 B.C.]: ὑποτελῆ λείαν ἢ πρόβατα []ε). Higher officials took notice of the complaints of citizens concerning harassment from tax collectors. An *epimelêtês* ordered an *archiphylakitês* not to trouble certain individuals over tax payments still owed until he (the *epimelêtês*) could make a personal inquiry into the matter (*P.Tebt.* III.1 741; see above, p.157).⁸³ The *archiphylakitês* could also act in an official capacity to force tenants to pay a landowner's rent. At a court in Herakleopolis the prosecution asserted that a plot of land had been sowed and harvested by an outsider while the owner had been imprisoned (*BGU* VIII 1773

⁸² The list of addressees runs as follows (2-5): βασιλεῦς Πτολεμαῖος [τοῖς στ]ρατηγοῖς καὶ τοῖς ἑπάρχουσιν ἢ [καὶ] τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν καὶ τοῖς νομάρχουσιν καὶ τοῖς ἐπάρχουσιν καὶ τοῖς οἰκονόμοις καὶ τοῖς ἀντιγραφείοις καὶ τοῖς βασιλικοῖς γραμματέουσιν ἢ [καὶ] τοῖς λιβυάρχουσιν καὶ τοῖς ἀρχιφυλακίταις πᾶσι χαίρειν.

⁸³ See also *BGU* VIII 1798 (64-44 B.C.) for a similar order to cease and desist.

[Herakleopolite, 58 B.C.?]). The landowner had previously asked the *stratêgos* to write to the *archiphylakitês* to force the outsider to pay his rent.⁸⁴

The officers of the Ptolemaic law enforcement system had a number of duties the successful execution of which depended in large part upon the application of coercion and force: in short, muscle. As we have seen, police officers appeared at government auctions and trials, where they may have ensured that crowds stayed under control and that government business was transacted without complication. Circulars to police officials sought this same sort of security and ease of operation for economic matters. In these documents, police were asked to aid financial agents in the successful discharge of their offices, generally by applying pressure when and where specified. Though in many cases they were expected to use the same police powers they employed for the apprehension of criminals (arresting, detaining, confiscating, *etc.*), much of the time they were simply asked to put their powers of persuasion and coercion at the disposal of other government agents. This was also true for the collection of tax arrears, where the involvement of the Ptolemaic police was regular and active. *Phylakitai* and *archiphylakitai* gathered revenue, made inquiries into financial matters, confiscated overdue rents and perhaps even issued receipts to taxpayers. In the performance of these duties police depended upon the cooperation of the populace. When cooperation was in short supply law enforcement officials were not above arm-twisting to get what they needed. The

⁸⁴ In addition to the examples cited above, three first-century petitions of Herakleopolite provenance highlight *archiphylakitai* collecting arrears: *BGU* VIII 1798 (64-44 B.C.); 1822 (60-55 B.C.); and 1836 (51-50 B.C.).

rulers of the kingdom were determined to extract their due and employed the police as the muscle necessary to do so.

Previous chapters have demonstrated how the Ptolemaic police system functioned as a strikingly autonomous body which was often at the disposal of the populations it served. Though nominally agents of the central government, most Ptolemaic police officers dealt with village issues and had little to no contact with higher levels of power. Yet as we have seen, these same officials were in fact closely connected to the administration in Alexandria. Town and village policemen provided state-sanctioned and -organized security, a controlling presence at state-run village events and an effective means of gathering and transporting produce. Such activities were crucial to the well-being of the Ptolemaic state. Their proper functioning depended in large part upon a strong physical presence and a command of respect, assets provided by police officers.

Security in the *chôra* was a major issue for the Ptolemies. Various branches of the army generally prevented incursions of hostile forces, manned garrisons in strategically important places and quelled civil strife. Police officials and other agents with police powers likewise protected the countryside. As we have seen, a handful of paramilitary officers (*erêmophylakes*, *potamophylakes*, etc.) provided protection at strategically important points along the state's borders and occasionally performed certain police duties, among these arresting smugglers and black marketeers. Officials from within the ranks of the *phylakitai* also provided security on occasion. For the most part their jurisdictions surrounded sensitive pieces of agricultural infrastructure (dykes, fields, etc.) within inhabited

regions and not border areas. These work details were generally managed at the town or village level but assigned by higher government agents.

Ptolemaic police forces had their most important security roles during the *genêmatophylakia*. Both the Ptolemaic police proper (*phylakitai* and their commanding officers) and a few types of security guard (*genêmatophylakes*, *thêsaurophylakes*, etc.) had crucial parts to play in the guarding of crops. *Archiphylakitai* were in charge of recruiting labor and seeing to it that preparations and operations ran smoothly; *phylakitai* and a number of additional officials, many of them seasonal hires (such as the *genêmatophylakes*) followed orders. Though police administrators acted as supervisors, higher government (financial) officials sent out the instructions for how the gathering and transport of crops were to proceed. The possibility of lost revenue meant the active involvement of the Alexandrian administration in town and village affairs. Policemen served the state's interests by capturing crooks, imprisoning offenders and solving crimes with minimal interference from above. During the *genêmatophylakia*, they ran the show in the *chôra* but received their orders from higher-ups.

The collection of tax arrears by *phylakitai* and *archiphylakitai* is a variation on the latter theme. Here, too we see village police machinery involved in village business, but under orders from higher officials; here, too police officers enjoyed broad autonomy in action, but an autonomy clearly mandated by a higher authority and for the performance of a specific task. The collection of overdue taxes was of paramount importance for the fiscal health of the Ptolemaic state. That close scrutiny and supervision of this process by nome-level and higher

officials took place is not surprising. But the involvement of town and village police in matters of great importance to Alexandria was not limited to the collection of tax arrears. Police served as bailiffs at civil trials and appeared at government auctions. They were employed at both to keep private citizens in line and ensure full cooperation with the government officials in charge. Police not only provided security at these events but also helped reinforce the authority of the royal house.

The Ptolemaic police throughout the *chôra* had close ties to the administration in Alexandria. The *phylakitai*, their superiors and a number of other officers with police functions were highly autonomous officials, generally with town or village jurisdictions. Nevertheless, they often had important duties for which they answered to higher authorities. This division of law enforcement labor was unparalleled in antiquity and suggests that the Ptolemies understood the importance of limited control over life in the *chôra*. As long as the countryside remained safe and peaceful and the grain kept rolling in, the rulers of the kingdom were only too happy to distance themselves from the minutiae of daily village life.

Chapter 6: To Serve and Protect? Police Corruption and Misbehavior

On September 14, 109 B.C., a *machimos* and cobbler from Oxyrhynchus named Petermouthis wrote a petition to the *stratêgos* Ptolemaios (*P.Coll.Youtie* I 16). His letter concerned a brazen instance of official abuse: Dionysios, *archiphylakitês* of the Polemon *meris*, had arrived in the village with a number of accomplices, among them an *eisangeleus* and a number of *ephodoi*, and set upon Petermouthis' workshop. The offenders grabbed the cobbler and dragged him through the streets of the village with great cruelty (15-16: μετὰ τοῦ παντός | σκυλμοῦ καὶ ὕβρεως καὶ πληγῶν), only releasing him after they had taken from him 4 silver drachmas, 1300 bronze drachmas and the shirt off his back (30a: ἀπενεγκόμενοι ἃ εἶχον ἐγδόσιμα ἰμά(τια)). They also compelled another *machimos* to arrange an additional payment of 44 silver drachmas (in Petermouthis' name) at the village bank. Not wanting these foul acts to go unpunished, Petermouthis asked Ptolemaios that the offenders be transported to another official, probably for reprimand. At this point in the narrative the document breaks off, along with our knowledge of this case.

As Petermouthis' petition shows, rough handling by police sometimes took place in the Ptolemaic countryside. Official abuses of various sorts occurred among police officers of both high and low rank. Petitioners alleged unnecessary violence in searches, seizures and investigations, illegal arrests, unauthorized requisitions of goods, and mistreatment at tax-time. Official correspondence is dotted with reports of police wrongdoing, instructions for improving performance and reprimands for disobedience. Royal proclamations suggest that

the ranks of the *phylakitai* and other branches of the law enforcement pyramid contained corrupt officers who unjustly arrested, imprisoned and extorted the populace. Perhaps inevitably, the broad autonomy granted to the Ptolemaic police had the side-effect of occasional official wrongdoing. The relationship between law enforcement officials and the populations they supervised was often shaky. The story is much the same today.

In this chapter we will examine and assess the evidence for police corruption in Ptolemaic Egypt. Our task will be to determine exactly how pervasive and serious official crimes were. For the purposes of our discussion we shall understand “corruption” to encompass those instances in which police officers employed their considerable powers of searching, seizing, arresting and imprisoning to break the law, as well as those occasions on which police took no heed of official orders or deliberately disobeyed them. At first glance there appear to be many indications that corruption of both types was widespread. Yet as we shall see, the evidence for police wrongdoing is in fact very limited.

Given the size of the Ptolemaic police system and the great autonomy of its officers, this is very surprising. As we have seen, law enforcement machinery extended throughout the *chôra* and was present at every administrative level, from the village to the nome. The roadblocks to the successful completion of police business naturally occurring in such a wide-ranging system ought to have created an environment in which certain types of corruption could flourish. Breakdowns in communication between officers in remote regions should have been responsible for much of this. Police orders were generally written out on pieces of papyrus and sent, via desert roads connecting small settlements,

through the agency of letter-carriers or police officers, to officials in other administrative areas. Recipients were often not addressed by title and were sometimes only identified by their first name and perhaps a patronymic. Given these constraints, we might naturally expect delays and errors. In addition, time was of the essence both for the completion of police business and the delivery of commands. On the surface the Ptolemaic system of official correspondence, though perhaps quite expedient for its time, seems prohibitively slow. Yet in spite of the many hindrances to effective communication, it appears that the Ptolemaic law enforcement machine functioned very well. Problems with inter-official communication were certainly responsible for occasional delays in police work, but they never seem to have been sufficiently extensive to permit a culture of insubordination to take root among the officer corps. For the most part, police performed as best they could given the information and manpower at their disposal.

That the system functioned so well is also surprising in light of the broad powers enjoyed by police officers. By empowering their law enforcement officials to confiscate goods, collect tax arrears, provide crowd control and arrest and detain offenders, the Ptolemies effectively granted them a kind of monopoly on violence. Brutality between villagers was not tolerated and was generally brought to a halt when police were alerted and involved. Villager assaults on officials were usually met with immediate arrest and imprisonment, but the same was not generally the case when roles were reversed. The reasons for this are not difficult to imagine. Police work often necessitated a physical element. The degree to which intimidation and force were employed by police officials

depended in large part on the nature of the operation being carried out and the level of cooperation provided by the offending party. We have already seen many cases in which police took decisive, physical action to solve crimes.¹ Without a doubt, sometimes the behavior of Ptolemaic law enforcement officials could very well be characterized as “abuse.” But from whose point of view?

The majority of allegations of police abuses and misbehavior comes from petitions. As we have seen, petitions provided the masses with a fast and reliable method of contacting police officers and seeking justice for perceived wrongs.² They demonstrate that the Ptolemaic populace had easy access to law enforcement and are our best source for the mechanics of Ptolemaic policing. But one must handle the petitions with care. By nature a petition to law enforcement was a one-sided document. In theory, a victim of crime writing to an *archiphylakitês* to complain about an instance of breaking and entering provided a detailed, fact-based account of the incident and aftermath, furnishing all the data relevant to the solving of the case. In reality, however, petitioners tailored complaints so as to receive the best possible responses. The victim of a home invasion by a neighbor would not have informed the *archiphylakitês* that on the previous day he had stolen his neighbor’s donkey.

The one-sided nature of the data from petitions requires caution in their use as evidence for police corruption. As mentioned above, petitioners sometimes complained about rough handling by law enforcement officials and generally portrayed this treatment as one-sided and arbitrary. To be sure, this

¹ See especially chapter 4.

² Chapter 3.

sort of unprovoked abuse occasionally occurred in the *chôra*. Yet many, if not most of the complaints about such practices should be taken with a grain of salt. As we have seen, numerous official reports show police officials conducting fully sanctioned activities that involved subduing and taking hold of hostile parties, breaking into homes and other buildings and forcefully extracting money, produce, livestock and other goods.³ The job of a Ptolemaic police officer often involved practices that might seem abusive to us, might have seemed so then, or might be portrayed as such whether excessive or not.

The petitions pose another problem. Victims sometimes complained about the very same class of officials as those to whom their appeals were sent. No subset of the police hierarchy was immune from accusation: officials from the lowliest *phylakitês* to the nome-level *epistatês phylakitôn* drew complaints. Nevertheless, villagers did not cease to file grievances about police wrongdoing with the police. Consequently, one must question the public's overall confidence in the reliability and integrity of their law enforcement officials. Does it make sense that abuses among police were widespread if the people they served, and sometimes mistreated, continued to appeal to them for help? On the contrary, there appears to have been confidence that the system was not corrupt. Crooked police were the exception, not the rule.

The alleged police corruption encountered in the documents can be broken down into two major groups. The first includes applications of police powers with illegal aims: unjust arrests and imprisonments (and any connected physical abuse), unwarranted confiscation of goods or property (including tax

³ Chapter 4.

revenues illegally obtained by law enforcement officials) and unauthorized raids on and sealing of homes and other properties. Police sometimes engaged in such activities for personal gain, and generally did so at the expense of villagers, what we might call “brutality.” There were also cases in which police officials disobeyed, ignored or were slow to act on direct orders from superiors or made incorrect or unlawful decisions, in a word, “insubordination.”

Brutality first. Police officers were occasionally accused of theft and confiscation. Law enforcement officials at all administrative levels allegedly misappropriated money, produce (generally for rent), animals and other consumer goods.⁴ Most of our evidence for these sorts of abuses comes from petitions and official letters. For instance, in one case an official reported that a *hypostratêgos* had been extorting wine (ZPE 141 [2002] 182-184 [Herakleopolite, 138 B.C.]). The offender was to be arrested and tried. Elsewhere a swineherd who had been detained by an *archiphylakitês* on his way home reported to Zenon that the policeman had confiscated some of Zenon’s pigs (P.Cair.Zen. V 59819 [254 B.C.]). One man complained that his grain had been stolen from a pair of

⁴ Produce, e.g.: P.Enteux. 55 (222 B.C.), where a petitioner alleged that an offender acting in conjunction with a *genêmatophylax* had illegally sown his allotment and subsequently confiscated the produce; P.Erasm. I 1 (Oxyrhyncha, 148-147 B.C.), in which a man complained of extortion of rent by a *phylakitês* and an *archiphylakitês*; P.Princ. III 117 (? , 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?), a *hypomnêma* concerning a grain-deposit disagreement between a petitioner and a *thésaurophylax*; animals, e.g.: BGU III 1012 (Arsinoite, 170 B.C.), where a man charged that an *archiphylakitês* had confiscated a number of *probata* without cause; P.Cair.Zen. III 59312 (250 B.C.), a list of pigs with a note that the agents of a *phylakitês* had stolen one; SB XVI 12468 (Arsinoite?, III B.C.), in which a man accused a *phylakitês* of confiscating a donkey laden with sacks of grain and bread; other goods, e.g.: UPZ I 5, 6 and 6a (Memphis, after 163 B.C.), three accounts of a series of raids on a temple by an agent of the *archieureus* and (in one instance) a subordinate of the *epistatês*; ZPE 141 (2002) 185-190 (Herakleopolite, 137 B.C.), official correspondence concerning a raid, arrest, home sealing and confiscation of a pickled goose and two pillows, among other things, by the agents of an *archiphylakitês* acting without official sanction.

threshing-floors (*P.Oxy.* XII 1465 [I B.C.]). He asked the recipient to arrest a *halônophylax* and his associates as suspects in the theft.

Another charge sometimes brought against the Ptolemaic police was wrongful arrest and/or imprisonment. In perhaps as many as 16 cases villagers claimed that police and other officials had made unjust arrests and carried out unwarranted detentions.⁵ The petitions show that the populace often depicted arrest and imprisonment as arbitrary. As one might expect, petitioners regularly maintained their innocence in letters to officials complaining of these practices.⁶ One petitioner requested an investigation into charges that an *archiphylakitês* had wrongly arrested one of his slaves (*P.Hib.* II 203 [246-221 B.C.]). In another case a victim complained that some *phylakitai* had confiscated his filly and that another *phylakitês* had wrongly arrested his brother-in-law, who had gone to retrieve the animal (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59475 [III B.C.]). Unjust arrests could involve physical abuse, often outlined in grim detail by petitioners. In a fragmentary letter to Zenon, for example, a prisoner complained of the unjust arrest he had suffered at the hands of the Kerkesouchan *phylakitai*, who had acted with *bia* and *hybris* (*P.Ryl.* IV 570 [III B.C.]). According to another petition, when a launderer disputed payment by an *epistatês* for a himation the launderer had been asked to

⁵ *BGU VIII 1847* (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.?; 50-49 B.C.?); *Chrest.Mitt.* 5 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.); *P.Cair.Zen.* III 69492 (?) (III B.C.); *P.Enteux.* 83 (221 B.C.); *P.Gur.* 10 (?) (III B.C.); *P.Heid.* VI 378 (?) (Pelousion?, III B.C.); *P.Hib.* II 203 (246-221 B.C.); *P.Lond.* VII 2045 (Philadelphia, III B.C.); *P.Mich.* XVIII 773 (Oxyrhyncha/Krokodilopolis, ca 194 B.C.); *P.Ryl.* IV 570 (?) (Philadelphia, III B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 772 (236 B.C.); *SB XIV 12093* (?; II B.C.); *XX 14708* (Theadelphia, 151 B.C.); *XXII 15762* (?) (Krokodilopolis, 210 B.C.); *XXIV 16285* (Arsinoite, 202 B.C.); *ZPE 127* (1999) 138-139 (Arsinoite, ca 140/39 B.C.).

⁶ *E.g.*: *BGU VIII 1847* (Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.?; 50-49 B.C.?); *P.Hib.* II 203 (246-221 B.C.); *SB XIV 12093* (?; II B.C.). Nevertheless, detainees sometimes admitted that they had erred and sought official forgiveness: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59495 (III B.C.); *P.Polit.Iud.* 2 (Herakleopolite, ca 135 B.C.).

wash, the *epistatês* beat him, stomped him and handed him over to the village *phylakitai* (SB XX 15001 [Krokodilopolis, 217 B.C.]).

Occasionally police officers carried out complex, multifaceted sting operations to get what they wanted. These offensives against homes and possessions were often perceived as unjust. Though only a handful of documents provide details on these activities, police raids seem to have followed a predictable series of steps. An invasion of a house or other building typically came first, followed by an assault on the inhabitants, a search for valuables and then departure, generally with goods and/or people in tow. The account of the cobbler above provides a good example of this phenomenon (*P.Coll.Youtie* I 16; see p. 177). In a similar incident a number of *phylakitai* arrested some farmers, sealed a home, confiscated some items and departed, all without official sanction (*ZPE* 141 [2002] 185-190 [Herakleopolite, 137 B.C.]). Three petitions from a detainee in the Memphite Sarapieion (*UPZ* I 5, 6 and 6a [Memphis, after 163 B.C.]) will furnish a final example. The petitioner described an illegal search of the temple carried out by an agent of the temple *archiphylakitês* and a number of *phylakitai* for weapons allegedly hidden there. Finding nothing, the police officials left the temple, but an accomplice returned later, accompanied by an agent of the *epistatês*, for additional searching and confiscation.⁷

On the surface at least, the evidence for police brutality from petitions seems damning. But is it conclusive? To begin with, procedures employed in

⁷ See also *BGU* VIII 1855 (Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.), a petition concerning an instance of breaking-and-entering by a group of men including an *archephodos*. The raiders broke down the door to the petitioner's house, mistreated his mother and took a dovecote. The petitioner characterized the invasion and assault as violent ($\beta\acute{\iota}\alpha\iota\omicron\nu$, 18) and requested that the activities of the offending officials be brought to a halt, but never indicated that there was no justification for the raid. (For more on this text see below, pp187-188.)

“illegal” confiscations and those sanctioned by the government for the payment of tax arrears are similar. For example, in one case a petitioner complained to an *epistatês* that an *archiphylakitês* had confiscated a number of his taxable livestock and enclosed them in the home of one of his *phylakitai* (BGU III 1012 [Arsinoite, 170 B.C.]). Elsewhere a petitioner noted that he was being hounded by an *archiphylakitês* for the return of some government seed as well as his crops, which had been wrongly confiscated by another official (BGU VIII 1836 [Herakleopolite, 51-50 B.C.]). We have already seen that *archiphylakitai* and *phylakitai* were regularly employed for the collection of debts to the crown.⁸ The extraction of state debts from debtors unwilling or unable to pay must occasionally have involved unpleasant consequences for debtors and must sometimes have spurred them to complain via petitions. One wonders how many petitions containing accounts of wrongful confiscation by police officials were written out of spite or resentment at a perfectly legal (though perhaps violent) seizure of assets by the government. The evidence does not permit firm conclusions. To a subsistence farmer the line between just and unjust extraction could be blurry.

Similar doubts arise when we turn to a reconsideration of those cases in which villagers complained of unfair arrests or imprisonments. As we have seen, while a wide variety of crimes (theft, poor workmanship, assault, *etc.*) could lead to imprisonment in Ptolemaic Egypt, incarceration was often the result of debts.⁹ Indeed, petitioners seem to have been aware that this offense might land them in jail. Sometimes alleged victims noted that they had been hauled off, dragged

⁸ Chapter 5, pp170-173.

⁹ Chapter 4, pp114-115.

away or locked up even though they owed no debt, had paid their taxes or were otherwise not liable. For instance, in one case a prisoner complained that he had been arrested by a *logeutês* and some *hypêretai* of the *nomarchês* even though he owed nothing to the crown (*BGU VIII 1821* [Herakleopolite, 57-56 B.C.]). In another, a man asked for Zenon's help in securing release from prison, where he had been sent unjustly on a charge of debt (*P.Cair.Zen. III 59496* [248-241 B.C.]). As he explained, he had already paid the crown its due and deserved to be released. We saw above that the extraction of money from debtors to the state could sometimes have unpleasant consequences for the defaulters. Imprisonment might necessitate violence by the arresting officer when offenders were unwilling. In order for a complaint about such an arrest to be successful, a petitioner necessarily had to demonstrate not only that he had suffered undue harm at the hands of police officials, but also that he was not liable to arrest. The simplest solution was to specify that he had been violently arrested for a debt that did not exist or that had already been paid. Unfortunately the evidence does not generally permit certainty about the veracity of such claims. As a consequence petitions containing them must be handled with caution.

The evidence for police raids provides both the best examples of alleged police brutality as well as some of the best examples of dedication to police work. Without question these operations could involve violence against people and property: breaking down doors, roughing up and arresting individuals, and confiscating personal belongings and other goods. Yet as we have just seen, matters of routine police business involved the very same sorts of activities: debts and debtors were subject to seizure by law enforcement officials and their

associates. The Ptolemies were determined to have their financial needs met and were willing to go to great lengths to accomplish their goals. If this meant an organized police raid on a house, so be it. Petitioners who complained of such raids had no trouble summoning graphic accounts of the events that had transpired. But though they often proclaimed their innocence, petitioners rarely demonstrated conclusively that they were without fault or blame. In one case a petitioner claimed that a group of men, including an *archepodos*, had broken down the door to his house, mistreated his mother and seized a dovecote (BGU VIII 1855 [Herakleopolite, 64-44 B.C.]). The writer requested that the petitioned official stand and pass judgment on the offenders, so as to assure that they attempted nothing violent in the future and would receive the proper punishment from their superiors (15-19).

But do we have the full story? The details of the raid are puzzling. Why would so many officials have carried out such a brutal operation solely for the purpose of stealing a birdhouse and beating up an old lady? The petitioner seems to have withheld some information. It is perhaps more likely that the raid was a government-sanctioned operation designed to obtain payment for a debt or a suitable substitute. Or, perhaps someone had accused the petitioner's mother of having stolen the dovecote, thereby necessitating a police investigation and confiscation of the allegedly stolen goods.¹⁰ Could the dovecote have been

¹⁰ Requests for confiscation of stolen/borrowed property, e.g.: BGU VIII 1761 (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.), in which a man detailed the illegal occupation of his house and confiscation of his crops by an offender and requested that the stolen produce be impounded; *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59145 (before 256 B.C.), where a woman who had been robbed asked Zenon to have an *archiphylakitês* investigate and return the stolen items, which had been found; *P.Enteux* 42 (221 B.C.), in which a man complained that a villager had not returned the hoes and money he had borrowed and asked that the *epistatês* compel the accused to hand them over.

stolen by someone else and deposited in the petitioner's house for safekeeping?¹¹ In addition, it seems likely that government agents bent on extortion would probably have taken much more than an extra-large birdhouse. Would such a prize really have merited the time and effort to assemble and coordinate a team of officials? The evidence not supplied in this case, and in a handful of other, similar cases, is more compelling than the "facts" furnished by the petitioner.¹² It suggests that not all police raids were the actions of corrupt officials. Many, if not most, were likely legitimate, if sometimes violent, police operations designed to obtain missing, owed or stolen property.

Further evidence for the unreliability of reports of police brutality in petitions comes from the fact that alleged victims sometimes complained about police officials to other police officers, often those with supervisory powers over the offending parties. As we saw above, in one case a petitioner wrote to an *epistatês* to complain that an *archiphylakitês* had wrongly confiscated some of his flocks and handed them over to one of his *phylakitai* (BGU III 1012; see above, p. 185). *Archiphylakitai* regularly answered to *epistatai*; consequently, it seems reasonable that the victim would complain to the offender's superior.¹³ Some petitions went over the heads of the town or village police. In one instance a petitioner wrote to a *stratêgos* to report a series of raids on a temple by an agent of an *archiphylakitês*, an agent of an *epistatês*, some *phylakitai* and others (UPZ I 5;

¹¹ Harboring of stolen goods, e.g.: *P.Hib.* I 34 and 73 (243-242 B.C.), where an *archiphylakitês* illegally (?) held a stolen donkey in his home; II 198.86-92 (? , 242-222 B.C.), a royal decree specifying that those who harbored rowers who had run away from the royal fleet were to be penalized; *SB VIII 9792* (Hermoupolis Magna, 162 B.C.), in which a petitioner related that one of his stolen donkeys had been discovered in a temple along with the thief (?) and asked that the thief be detained and the animal returned.

¹² See above, pp186-187.

¹³ Chapter 2, pp47-48.

see above, p. 184). The petitioner may have had no recourse for his complaint in the immediate vicinity and been obliged to contact a nome-level official. Elsewhere, a petitioner wrote to the *stratêgos* to complain that he had been cheated by a *genêmatophylax* and another man (*P. Enteux*. 55 [222 B.C.]). The victim asked that the *epistatês* send the accused for examination before the *stratêgos*. These three examples suggest that even when law enforcement officials misbehaved, other law enforcement officials could still be counted on to provide justice.¹⁴ Petitioners understood this. They would not have complained to police officers about the abuses of other police officers unless they had confidence in the system.

Petitioners might also report police brutality to civil or financial officials. For example, in one case a fuller complained to the *oikonomos* that he had been beaten by an *epistatês* when he had sought payment for cleaning the *epistatês'* himation (*SB XX 14999* [Krokodilopolis?, 217 B.C.]). Sometimes they addressed their complaints to other important people. One man informed Zenon that a *phylakitês* had wrongly arrested his brother-in-law and another *phylakitês* when the two had gone to retrieve a runaway horse (*P. Cair. Zen.* III 59475; see above, p. 183). Elsewhere a farmer complained to the king and queen that an *archiphylakitês* and a *phylakitês* had attempted to extract rent from him illegally on two separate instances (*P. Erasm.* I 1 [Oxyrhyncha, 148-147 B.C.]). The petitioner asked that the sovereigns contact the village *epistatês* to arrange a trial.¹⁵

¹⁴ See also *P. Coll. Youtie* I 16 (see above, p. 177), a petition from a *machimos* and cobbler to the *stratêgos* concerning the violent extortion of an *archiphylakitês*.

¹⁵ See also (e.g.) *P. Cair. Zen.* V 59819 (254 B.C.), a letter from a swineherd to Zenon in which the former detailed his 3-day detention by an *archiphylakitês* and the resulting loss of three of Zenon's pigs; *P. Ryf.* IV 570 (Philadelphia, III B.C.), a petition to Zenon from a man who alleged that he had

The evidence does not indicate the existence of an accepted appeals procedure to be followed in cases of police brutality. Petitioners seem to have contacted whichever source they assumed would guarantee the fullest, fastest satisfaction, be it police, civil, financial or other. The fact that petitioners bothered to submit such grievances to government agents suggests that villagers believed that they would receive justice from the king or one of his many subordinates. That even a handful of complaints of police brutality found their way to law enforcement officials suggests that the police force, though surely containing a few bad seeds, nevertheless for the most part upheld the law reliably. People endured abuses at the hands of the policemen who served them but not on a regular basis.

Yet corruption in the ranks of the Ptolemaic police was not limited to instances of brutality directed at villagers. As is the case with any large organization, operational mistakes were inevitably made from time to time. Breakdowns in the administrative machinery of law and order in Ptolemaic Egypt sometimes occurred. Miscommunication was occasionally a problem, leading to delayed or denied justice for victims of crime. Police officers sometimes failed to act when required or expected and even disobeyed the commands of their superiors. Such instances make one wonder to what degree the orders of a superior were binding on a subordinate, and also who was

been unjustly arrested by the *phylakitai* of Kerkesoucha; *SB* XX 15001 (Krokodilopolis, 217 B.C.), an appeal to the king concerning abuses suffered at the hands of an *epistatês* and his accomplices. In a number of cases, the addressees to whom petitioners addressed complaints of police brutality are unknown, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1855 (see above, pp187-188), a petition from a man who claimed that a group of men, including an *archephodos*, had broken down the door to his house, mistreated his mother and taken a dovecote; *P.Hib.* II 203 (246-221 B.C.), a memorandum in which a victim complained that an *archiphylakitês* had illegally arrested one of his slaves; *P.Oxy.* XII 1465 (I B.C.), a petition concerning a *thêsaurophylax* suspected of stealing some grain.

empowered to give orders, and to whom. It seems to have been the case that even the highly organized and efficient Ptolemaic police system was not immune to communication breakdowns and insubordination.

In a few cases police were slow to act on official orders or took no action whatsoever. In one instance a superior took an *archiphylakitês* to task for failing to act expediently on orders concerning a quantity of timber (*P.Tebt.* III.1 747 [243 B.C.]).¹⁶ In another a petitioner noted that the recipient, a *stratêgos*, had previously ordered an *epistatês* to transport an offender for trial (*SB XXIV* 16295 [Arsinoite, 199 B.C.]). The *epistatês*, however, had taken no action, so the petitioner requested that the *stratêgos* give the order to send the accused a second time and in a more forceful manner. A final example preserves an instance of multiple counts of official inaction (*SB XVI* 12648 [Arsinoite?, III B.C.]). A man en route to visit a prisoner had had his donkey confiscated by a *phylakitês*. He had submitted a petition to a police official about the theft but did not receive a summons, so he went subsequently to an *archimachimos* for redress. Yet not even this had produced satisfactory results, and the victim was compelled to write again to the official originally petitioned to urge the *archimachimos* to return his property.¹⁷

¹⁶ The *archiphylakitês*, Patron, is not given a title in this text, but the identification is secure. See below, p. 197 n. 28.

¹⁷ See also (e.g.) *P.Enteux.* 85 (221 B.C.), where a petitioner noted that he had previously submitted a complaint to the *stratêgos* concerning the distribution of some grain, and that the *stratêgos* had subsequently ordered the competent *epistatês* to take action but the *epistatês* had done nothing; *P.Mich.* XVIII 779 (Mouchis, 192 B.C.), in which a petitioner related that after a previous petition to an agent of the *dioikêtês* concerning extortion an *archiphylakitês* had been instructed to bring in an offender but had not done so; *P.Princ.* III 117 (? , 55-54 B.C.?; 4-3 B.C.?), where a woman noted that after she had been cheated by a *thêsaurophylax* she had submitted a petition to the addressee (a *stratêgos*) who in turn ordered the village *epistatês* to bring in the accused. The *epistatês* had arrested the *thêsaurophylax* but had taken no steps to transport him.

Police inaction and slow response seem to have been serious issues. Government agents occasionally ended their instructions to subordinates with threats of punishment for inaction or improper action. For instance, in one case an official was ordered to bring a policeman into another administrative district and told not to do otherwise (*SB VI 9104* [Arsinoite, 195 B.C.]). In another an *oikonomos* commanded an *archiphylakitês* to make an arrest and assured him that he would be doing wrong if he did not follow orders (*P.Heid.* VII 393 [Arsinoite/Memphite, III B.C.]).¹⁸ Elsewhere an unknown official forwarded instructions concerning the harvesting of trees for the king, in which he exhorted the “man in charge of the police” not to be heedless of the orders, but to make their execution a priority (*SB VI 9215* [Oxyrhynchus, 250 B.C.]). In a final case an official was asked to prevent a *phylakitês* from becoming entangled in unnecessary business and to compel him to remain sober, in so far as the recipient was able (*BGU III 1011.iii.4-13* [?, II B.C.]). Police were not immune from bad behavior or the bad reputations connected with it.¹⁹

We are especially well informed about the activities of a certain police official known only as Ptolemaios.²⁰ Ptolemaios was regularly reminded that he was to follow orders and not foul up. He is given a title in none of the texts in which he appears, but the scope of his duties (extracting rent payments, running

¹⁸ For identifications of the *oikonomos* and *archiphylakitês* in this text see chapter 5, p. 153 n. 34.

¹⁹ It was not exclusively their superiors who developed bad impressions of undisciplined police officials. Sometimes an unpopular policeman might find himself the object of ridicule: *P.Köln IX 367.2* (?, II B.C.): ὁ κεκολλοπευκῶς Διονύσιος ὁ ἀρχ(ι)φ[υ(λακίτης)].

²⁰ *P.Hib.* I 51 (245/4 B.C.); 52 (*ca* 245 B.C.); 53 (246 B.C.); 54 (*ca* 245 B.C.); 57 (247 B.C.); 58 (245-243 B.C.); 59 (*ca* 245 B.C.); 60 (*ca* 245 B.C.); 61 (245/4 B.C.); 62 (245/4 B.C.); 130 (*ca* 247 B.C.); 167 (*ca* 245 B.C.); 168 (*ca* 245 B.C.); II 240 (*ca* 250-245 B.C.); *P.Yale I 34* (250 B.C.); and 35 (249 B.C.). For a discussion of these papyri see *P.Yale I* pp94-95.

errands, transporting people) and the officials from whom he received instruction (including an *archiphylakitês* and an *oikonomos*) led the editors of *P.Hib.* I (p. 194) to suggest that he was a *phylakitês*.²¹ The official instructions that reached him regularly included forceful language. We see him threatened with having to pay for any inaccuracies detected in the agricultural accounts entrusted to him, told not to drag his feet in accomplishing business, scolded for harassing a taxpayer, encouraged not to do other than as he was instructed and, in one instance, upbraided for poor conduct in the village and threatened with punishment for his activities.²² Unfortunately, the evidence that Ptolemaios was not the most responsible of police officers, though overwhelming, is nevertheless completely circumstantial. It may in fact provide more information about the management style of commanding officers than the poor work habits of subordinates.

The reasons behind instances of official inaction are usually impossible to determine, but one can occasionally offer sensible explanations. For example, as we saw above, in one instance a number of *phylakitai* whom an *archiphylakitiês*

²¹ The editors of *P. Yale* I later suggested that Ptolemaios was most likely a *kômogrammateus*, citing as compelling indicators Ptolemaios' attested police and financial duties and his contact with the *oikonomos* (pp94-95). Yet as we have seen, the Ptolemaic police had a number of financial duties in their villages and maintained regular contact with the *oikonomos* (chapter 5, pp152-158). Certainty is perhaps impossible, but it seems more likely that Ptolemaios was a police, rather than a civil official. Extracting payments: *P.Hib.* I 51; 52; 53; 130; 167 (?); *P. Yale* I 35; errands: *P.Hib.* I 54; 58; arrests: *P.Hib.* I 57; 59; 60; 61; 62; 168; *P. Yale* I 34. Ptolemaios received a reprimand from Patron, *archiphylakitês* in *P. Yale* I 35 (see *P. Yale* I pp95-97 for the identification of Patron). He was contacted by Zenodoros, *oikonomos* and *toparchês* in *P.Hib.* I 59 and 60 and wrote to Zenodoros in *P.Hib.* II 240 (see *P.Hib.* II p. 154 and *Pros.Ptol.* 553a for the identification of Zenodoros).

²² Inaccuracies: *P.Hib.* I 53.3-4: πειρῶ οὖν ἀσφαλῶς διεγυρᾶν ὡς πρὸς σὲ | τοῦ λό[γ]ου ἔσομένου; foot-dragging: *P. Yale* I 34.4-6: ἐὰν δὲ | βραδύτερον ποιῆς σαυτὸν βλάβηις, [ο]ὐ γὰρ σχολάζω μένειν πλείονα | χρ[όν]ον; scolding: *P. Yale* I 35.7-8: σὺ οὖν μὴ ἐνόηλαι [α]ὐτόν; told to follow instructions: *P.Hib.* I 58.11-12: μὴ οὖν ἄλλως | ποιήσηις; 60.8-9: ὅπως | μὴ ἄλλως ποιήσεις; 62.16: [ὄ]πῳ[ς] μὴ ἄλλως ἔσται; threatened: *P.Hib.* I 59.9-12: [κ]αὶ εἰ μὴ | παύσει κ[α]κοπο(ι)ῶν | ἐν τῇ κόμη[ι] μεταμειλή[σ]ει σοι.

had selected to serve as *genêmatophylakes* failed to appear for duty, in spite of having sworn their oaths of office (*P.Tebt.* III.1 731 [153-152 B.C.?, 142-141 B.C.?]). Perhaps the post of *genêmatophylax* was compulsory and an unwelcome burden on the native Egyptians who were generally recruited to fill it at precisely the worst time of the year.²³ In a number of other cases miscommunication seems to have been a factor. Communication between police was sometimes a complex and drawn-out process. It is reasonable to think that in some instances reprimands for not following previous orders were delivered to officials who had never received the original orders in the first place. In such cases, police inaction would have been an unavoidable consequence of miscommunication. As one might expect, evidence that such miscommunication occurred does not survive.

Inaction and slow response were not the only types of insubordination that occurred. Sometimes police officials made misinformed, biased or illegal decisions. In one case a dispossessed man related that the village *epistatês* had wrongly expelled him and his horse from his home, which had then been occupied by another (*P.Enteux.* 14 [222 B.C.]). Elsewhere a number of liturgy-exempt *hierodouloi* complained that the village *archiphylakitês* had forced them to work at the harvest and to make bricks (*P.Cair.Zen.* III 59451 [III B.C.]). The petitioners had been released from liturgical work first by the king, and then by the *dioikêtês*. In a final example a prisoner complained of unfair treatment at the hands of a *desmophylax* (*P.Tebt.* III.1 777 [II B.C.]). He had given a bail payment to the jailer but the jailer had been dissatisfied with it and had declined to release

²³ Chapter 5, pp161-162.

the prisoner. Bias was sometimes a problem. When necessary the sovereigns took steps to prevent it.²⁴

Law enforcement officials deliberately disobeyed the commands of their superiors and others from time to time.²⁵ In a handful of cases police officers seem to have taken actions directly contrary to what they had been told to do, and in each case the motivations for doing so seem to have been different. But in no case is the argument for insubordination irrefutable. It is not clear that the problem of police disobedience was much of a problem at all.

In the first instance, a prisoner wrote to the king to report that he had been handed over to a *phylakitês* by a relative for misplacing a number of records (βυβλόρια, 7) with which he had been entrusted (*P. Enteux.* 84 [246-205 B.C.]). The *phylakitês* had in turn handed the petitioner over to a *desmophylax* for detention until the relative ordered his release. The orders had since come, but the release had not. Instead, the petitioner had been accused by the *desmophylax* of being a criminal (κακουργόν, 20-21) and was moved to another prison in another village. Our understanding of the mechanics of this situation is complicated by our uncertainty about the position of the petitioner's kinsman. He is nowhere given a title. Was he an official with powers of arrest, or simply an angry relation? It seems odd that the petitioner would have neglected to stress that the offending jailer had disobeyed direct orders from an agent of the crown in a letter to the king seeking release from prison, if indeed his relative was an official. We cannot be certain, but it seems likely that in this case the state's interests in detaining a

²⁴ See below, pp199-204.

²⁵ *Chrest. Wilck.* 166 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.); *P. Enteux.* 84 (246-205 B.C.); and *P. Hib.* I 34 and 73 (243-242 B.C.).

suspected criminal trumped those of his kin. Though the victim forgave the offender's transgression and requested his release, his intervention was insufficient to halt the police machinery already in motion. It is also possible that the petitioner had indeed been cleared of the charges brought against him by his relative, but that additional unmentioned charges had since been brought so that continued detention was necessary. In either case, what we have here may not be an instance of insubordination, but rather proper job performance. The jailer was right to expect instruction from a superior and to ignore the prisoner's kin.

In the second case, a police official (without title, but probably a *phylakitês*) complained that, though he had arrested and imprisoned a donkey thief, an *archiphylakitês*, acting against commands from the village *epistatês*, had released the offender before the donkey could be returned to its rightful owner (*P.Hib.* I 34 and 73 [243-242 B.C.]). The *epistatês* had issued a *prostagma* stating that the thief was to be forced either to return the donkey to its owner or to furnish the price of the animal, 20 drachmas. But the *archiphylakitês* had freed the crook without taking any account of these instructions (*P.Hib.* 34.4: οὐθένα λόγον ποιησάμενος) and removed the donkey to his own home, where he was keeping it. As a result, the *prostagma* of the *epistatês* had come to nothing and the *praktôr idiôtikôn* had to be called on to extract payment from the thief.²⁶ Here the case for insubordination is much stronger, though questions remain. We are nowhere informed that the *archiphylakitês* had received or read the *prostagma* of the *epistatês*. It seems likely that the *archiphylakitês* would have received word of the

²⁶ The *praktôr idiôtikôn* is attested in only three Ptolemaic texts: *P.Col.* III 54.47-48 (Philadelphia, 250 B.C.); *P.Hib.* I 34.7 (243-242 B.C.); and *P.Mich.* I 71.1 (Philadelphia, 246-222 B.C.). He was charged with the extraction of certain types of debt, though little more can be concluded about his post. See *P.Hib.* I p. 176 n. on 7 and *P.Col.* III p. 150 n. on 1.

specifics of the case in question, given the close administrative ties between *archiphylakitai* and *epistatai*.²⁷ Yet the documents reveal only that the complaining official had knowledge of the *epistatês*' instructions.

Further, in this case the *archiphylakitês* may in fact have been unaware of the *prostagma*. This official, the well-known Patron, was *archiphylakitês* of the entire lower toparchy of the Oxyrhynchite nome.²⁸ The jailing and freeing of the donkey thief had taken place in Sinary, a village in this toparchy. No indication of the administrative domain of the *epistatês* who issued the *prostagma* is provided, but given the localized nature of his orders it seems likely that he was in charge of just the village.²⁹ As a consequence, his orders were perhaps only distributed to the police officials in Sinary, including the complainant, and did not reach (and in any event would not have been binding on) higher officials, including the *archiphylakitês* of the toparchy. Perhaps Patron had discovered the thief imprisoned with no record of the reasons behind his imprisonment and made the decision to free him. It may have been the case that the arresting officer did not reveal his intentions to any other officials (other than the commanding *epistatês*, that is).³⁰ The subsequent detention of the stolen donkey can also be explained away as proper police procedure. As we have seen, police officials

²⁷ Chapter 2, pp47-49.

²⁸ On Patron, *archiphylakitês* see *Pros.Ptol.* 4592 and 4711 and *P.Yale* I 35 introduction pp95-97. He appears in no fewer than 13 texts: *P.Hib.* I 34 and 73 (both 243-242 B.C.); II 236 (Oxyrhynchite, ca 250-240 B.C.); *P.Tebt.* III.1 744 and 745 (both 245 B.C.); 746 and 747 (both 243 B.C.); 748; 749; III.2 937 (all ca 243 B.C.); 938 (243 B.C.); 939 (242 B.C.); and *P.Yale* I 35 (249 B.C.). He may also be mentioned in *P.Tebt.* III.1 794 (III B.C.).

²⁹ The *epistatês*, a certain Dorion, occurs only in *P.Hib.* I 34 and 73. He is given no title other than *epistatês* in either text. *Pros.Ptol.* 663 designates him as *epistatês* of Sinary.

³⁰ If the restoration is right, the petitioner explained that the thief had been arrested quietly (*P.Hib.* I 73.6-7: [ἡσν]|χῆτι).

sometimes temporarily detained goods and animals in their homes and elsewhere after confiscation and before transport to the proper officials.³¹ As it also seems unlikely that the criminal would have explained the details of his guilt to the *archiphylakitês*, the entire episode can thus be explained as an instance of failure to communicate. Insubordination was perhaps not a factor in the events.

In the last example, an official involved in state transport of grain reported to the *epimelêtês* that an *archiphylakitês* had arrested a number of shipbuilders and had ignored an order from the *oikonomos* to release them, insisting that he hear first from the *dioikêtês* or *epimelêtês* (*Chrest.Wilck.* 166 [Arsinoite, 218 B.C.]). We have already devoted some attention to this episode, as well as to the nature of the relationship between the *archiphylakitês*, the *oikonomos* and the *epimelêtês*.³² Here the question of insubordination is complicated by issues of geographic and administrative domain. Was the chain of command bound by geography? Could an *epistatês* in the Hermopolite nome give orders to an *archiphylakitês* in the Oxyrhynchite? It seems likely that in this case, at least, the orders of the Arsinoite *oikonomos* were not binding on the Herakleopolite *archiphylakitês* due to their different operational spheres, in spite of the fact that *oikonomoi* were accustomed to giving orders to *archiphylakitai*. This episode therefore may provide a perfect example of a policeman following the regular chain of command and does not

³¹ E.g.: *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59475 (III B.C.), in which a number of *phylakitai* found and locked up a runaway mare; *P.Petr.* III 32G (198 B.C.), where cowherds attempted to drive off to the *phylakitai* some cows found grazing on their pasturage; *P.Tebt.* III.1 729 (II B.C.), in which an official (?) of unknown rank gathered a number of cows and sheep, handed them over to the village *phylakitai* and then enclosed them in a temple.

³² Chapter 5, pp153-158.

furnish evidence for insubordination or corruption among law enforcement officials.

The examples cited above do not provide conclusive proof that disobedience was widespread among the Ptolemaic police, but they do raise important questions about the nature of communication among these officials. We have seen that higher officers communicated with police in the villages of the Egyptian *chôra* through letters and official notifications. Police doubtless relayed commands to one another verbally, as well. Such communication was more than sufficient for managing a good deal of police work but could prove problematic from time to time. As the incident of the donkey theft reveals, it was important to make sure to inform as broad a spectrum of law enforcement officials as possible when carrying out police business, so as to avoid conflict with officials who had not been briefed on regional procedure. We see, too that it was essential to respect the bounds of one's occupational domain when giving orders to subordinates, as well as to know precisely who these subordinates were. It was pointless for an administrator in one location to expect compliance from lower-level officials in a different village, toparchy or nome. The police in a given region had their own regional superiors.

Thus far we have focused on individual instances of alleged police misbehavior, primarily those contained in petitions. Our investigation has revealed that corruption was minimal, at best. We shall now consider a handful of decrees and circulars from the sovereigns that also suggest that police officials occasionally misbehaved. Yet as was the case with petitions from alleged victims of police brutality, one should not be too quick to conclude that royal edicts

necessarily reflected confirmed instances of law enforcement wrongdoing. Though they routinely visited the *chôra* for rounds of inspection and the dispensation of justice, the king and queen remained for the most part in Alexandria, leaving the administration of the Ptolemaic countryside to government agents scattered throughout the *chôra*.³³ The decrees they issued on matters of police abuses and corruption were likely formulated from data contained in reports and petitions received by officials as opposed to eyewitness testimony from the officers themselves. The net result was a decidedly incomplete view of life in the *chôra*, at two full removes from reality. In this respect, at least, the data for police corruption provided by the decrees is even more suspect than that rendered by petitions.

But it was not necessarily the case that the king and queen issued decrees as responses to reports of corruption. The sovereigns may have sought to be proscriptive, so as to stem the tide of potential wrongdoing by outlawing those behaviors considered most likely to occur or most deleterious to the functioning of the state.³⁴ Yet on this view, too the decrees reflect a hypothetical society of government lawbreakers, not real life in the *chôra*. Though proclamations of this sort probably reflect a certain degree of truth, the amount of legal fiction they

³³ Sovereigns in the countryside, e.g.: *PSI* IV 354 (Philadelphia, 254 B.C.), instructions for preparations for an impending visit from the king; *P.Tebt.* I 116 verso 56-60 (II B.C.), a record of payments made to the *machimoi* of the *basilikos grammateus* at the time of the king's visit; *UPZ* I 109 (Memphis, 98 B.C.), in which a man noted that a certain Simon had attended an audience of the king.

³⁴ It is impossible to tell from the documents themselves whether they accurately reflected the state of life in Ptolemaic Egypt at the time of their composition and likewise whether they addressed contemporary problems. Many ancient royal proclamations, from the Laws of Hammurabi (ca 1750 B.C.) to the Digest of Justinian (A.D. 530-534), were little more than collections of court decisions and inherited legal knowledge. The legal scholars who composed them generally aimed for completeness, often at the expense of relevance and contemporaneity. One must not overlook the possibility that the same was true of much of the Ptolemaic material.

contain is impossible to determine. It seems best to accept that these documents provide a certain degree of valuable information on official misbehavior but that they are imperfect indicators of police crime in Ptolemaic Egypt.

A first example suggests that financial malfeasance was occasionally a problem among *phylakitai* and their superiors. In this decree (*C.Ord.Ptol.*² 53 [Tebtynis, 118 B.C.]) the sovereigns forbade illegal searches at *phylakai* (22-27), the confiscation of revenues for personal profit (by *archiphylakitai*, *epistatai phylakitôn* and others, 138-146) and outlawed arrests by any officials for personal reasons (255-264). In the same document they also remitted the penalties previously assigned to *phylakitai* who had perpetrated fraud in conjunction with the annual *genêmatophylakia* (188-192). The text suggests that among the most common abuses of police officials were the submission of fraudulent grain accounts, the theft of government produce and revenue and arbitrary arrest. Petitions, as well as additional decrees, show that allegations of such misbehavior were sometimes leveled against police officers.³⁵ But decrees of this sort, especially those containing royal amnesties, were issued regularly at the beginning of new reigns or after periods of strife throughout the Ptolemaic period.³⁶ How much faith can one place in what appears to be, for the most part, a formulaic document? Without additional evidence one cannot conclude that the text was prepared as a

³⁵ Chapter 4, pp121-122 and above, pp182-184. Decrees: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 55.10-14 (Tebtynis, II B.C.), a decree that prohibited a broad spectrum of officials from carrying out arbitrary imprisonments; *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 34 (Oxyrhynchus, after 186 B.C.), which released *phylakitai* (as well as *archiphylakitai* and *epistatai phylakitôn*) from punishment for the confiscation of crown assets (A.25-27) and forbade officials (among these *epistatai*) from making personal arrests (B.10-20).

³⁶ See *P.Kôln* VII p. 64 n. 7 for a list of Ptolemaic amnesty-decrees and Smith (1968) on pharaonic antecedents. Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II (170-116 B.C.) seems to have issued a number of such edicts: *C.Ord.Ptol.*² 41, 42 and 43 (145/4 B.C.); 53, 53bis and 53ter (121/0-118 B.C.); 54 (122/1-118/7 B.C.); and 55 (ca 118 B.C.).

response to reports of widespread wrongdoing. The slim additional evidence from petitions and other sources for crooked police in the *chôra* provides little further support.

A second decree presents interpretive difficulties. Here the sovereigns aimed at a higher target, ordering *epistatai phylakitôn* to avoid arbitrariness in their judicial decisions and prescribing guidelines for handling specific types of cases (*C.Ord.Ptol.*² 30-31 [?, 183 B.C.]). In one section, *epistatai phylakitôn* were told to use their own judgment when punishing those who brought suits without legal basis, but to send those who sued because of a desire for personal profit to the sovereigns immediately (31.11-14). Noncompliant *epistatai phylakitôn* were to be subject to royal punishment (30.3-6). Official abuses were not limited to the lowest rungs of the police hierarchy, or at least that the king and queen understood the importance of including police administrators in their prohibitions. But how realistic are the document's mandates? Would an *epistatês phylakitôn* receiving this decree really have been able to differentiate between litigants who made groundless claims (31.11-12: τοὺς μὲν | εἰκῆι κ[α]ὶ ἀπροσκέπτως ἀνάγοντάς τινας) and those suing for profit (31.13: τ[οὺ]ς δὲ διαφορᾶς ἢ σεισμοῦ χάριτι)? Was there a clear difference? The impression one gets is that the decree was intended to prevent frivolous lawsuits from tying up the royal court. Yet the language of the document does not permit certainty.³⁷ *Epistatai phylakitôn* were advised to take one type of action with regard to litigants making accusations in name, but to send those who brought suits based on suspicions to the

³⁷ The remainder of the decree contains additional provisions that are difficult to understand owing to lacunae.

sovereigns.³⁸ If a quarrel arose against certain individuals who were not present, the individuals (or the quarrelers?) were to be transported (?) by the *epistatês phylakitôn* so that no wrongdoing might occur before the trial.³⁹

A third decree sheds some light on punishments assigned to derelict *phylakitai*. We have already considered this document, a third-century collection of police regulations, at some length (*P.Hib.* II 198 [?, 242-222 B.C.]).⁴⁰ A policeman who did not arrest a thief was subject to the same fine as the thief and was perhaps to be judged by the same judges.⁴¹ If a *phylakitês* neglected to hand over a runaway rower from the royal fleet, he was to be sent to the ships (86-92). The language of the decree and its penalties are clear. The circumstances of its promulgation, however, are not. By contrast to the previous two examples, there is no indication that the document was issued as a government response to reports of widespread lawlessness. The talionic punishment specified for certain wrongdoers suggests that the decree was, in fact, a set of guidelines for dealing with hypothetical future offenses based on accumulated legal knowledge. It

³⁸ 31.14-17: τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον καὶ | [τοὺς ἐπ'] ὄνομα[τ]ος τὰς προσαγγελίας ποιουμένους τῶν | [ca 11 τ]ῶν δὲ [κ]αθ' ὑ[πό]νοιαν διδόντων ποιείσθε | [καταπομπὴν πα]ραχρη[μ]α.

³⁹ 31.19-21: ἐὰν δ' εἷς τινὰς μὴ παρόντας ὀρισμὸς | γένητ[αι]]ε τοὺς ἀνθρώπο[υ]ς, ἴνα μὴ πρὸ κρίσεως | [ca 15] κακοῦργ[ί]α[ς] γένωνται.

⁴⁰ Chapter 4, pp110-111, 127; chapter 5, p. 144.

⁴¹ *P.Hib.* II 198.92-100: ἀγώγ[ιμοι] | δ' ἔστωσαν οἱ τε ληισταὶ καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ | κ]ακοῦργοι καὶ οἱ βασιλι[κοὶ] | ναῦται πανταχόθεν καὶ μηθεὶ[ς] αὐ]τοὺς ἀφαιρείσθω | ἢ ἐν[ο]χος ἔστω αὐτ[ὸς] ὁ κωλύ[ων] ἢ ὁ [..]μένος τοῖ[ς] αὐτοῖς | ἐπιτ[ί]μοις οἷς καὶ ὁ ληισ[τ]ῆς καὶ ὁ τή[ν] να]ῦν λελο[ι]π[ώ]ς · κατὰ | τὰ α[ὐ]τὰ δὲ καὶ οἱ ὑποδεχόμενοι | τὰς λει[ά]ς παρὰ τ[ῶν] | ληισ[τ]ῶν ἢ κακούργου ἢ αὐτοὺς ὑπ[ο]δεχόμε]νοι ἐν[ο]χοι ἔσ]τω[σα]ν τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐπιτίμοι[ς] | κ]αθάπερ ca ? | γέγ[ρα]πται. The immediately preceding section (86-92), in which *phylakitai* are singled out as those responsible for bringing in fugitive rowers, reveals that the police were the intended audience of the commandment.

perhaps does not provide evidence of police misbehavior, but rather of the suspicion that such misbehavior might occur.⁴²

Corruption among police officials does not appear to have been endemic or even occasionally a serious issue. In fact, according to one calculation only 4% of all petitions to Ptolemaic officials concerned instances of police wrongdoing or inaction.⁴³ That so little evidence of insubordination and unwarranted brutality survives suggests that for the most part, police officers performed as instructed. A similar conclusion emerges when one turns to a consideration of the evidence for corruption among bureaucrats in other administrative areas. Thanks in part to the hundreds of official documents that survive, we are well informed as to the forms that abuses in the civil, financial and military spheres might take. As white-collar criminals in Ptolemaic Egypt sometimes made use of police officers as accomplices in their wrongdoing, and the victims of their abuses regularly appealed to police for help, a brief consideration of corruption among civil, financial and military officials is in order.

A recently published document provides an especially detailed account of the depths to which the worst forms of corruption might sink. A certain Harmais, a farmer from Theadelphia, petitioned Dioskourides, the *dioikêtês*, alleging that the *komarchês*, Mesthasythmis, had committed a series of extortions and abuses extending back over a period of four years (*SB* XX 14708 [Theadelphia, 151 B.C.]).

⁴² A final decree (*P.Mil.Congr.* XVII pg29.10-13 [?, after 103/2 B.C.]) seems to suggest that *potamophylakes* had been misbehaving, but the nature of their abuses is obscured by lacuna: προ[στετάχασι δὲ *ca* ?] | ποταμοφύλακας καὶ τοὺς ἄλλου[ς *ca* ?] | .. ντας ἕως τοῦ νῦν ἀσυκ[οφαντήτους καὶ ἀκατηγορήτους καὶ ἀνεπι]λήμπτους εἶναι.

⁴³ A search of the Heidelberger Gesamtverzeichnis (<http://www.rzuser.uni-heidelberg.de/~gv0/gvz.html>) for “eingabe” in the Ptolemaic period yields a total of 589 hits, only 23 of which concern police wrongdoing.

Harmais had been an unwilling participant in many of the illicit activities that had taken place in Theadelphia under Mesthasythmis' tenure. He had managed to tolerate the abuses for a long time. But things had eventually reached such a degree of lawlessness that Harmais had been driven from his allotment out of fear for his own safety and had appealed to Dioskourides' mercy. Mesthasythmis had placed Harmais in charge of the village farmers and had put him to work shaking them down. In the second year of these activities someone had complained to a certain Seleukos and stood as a witness against Mesthasythmis on charges of extortion. The informant, perhaps fearing that he knew too much, fled to the village Sarapieion and the charges came to nothing.

The extortions continued. In the fourth (!) year of wrongdoing Harmais' employment by the *kômarshês* came to an end. Soon thereafter, Mesthasythmis, knavish by nature (40: τῆι φύσει μοχθηρὸς ν), set upon Harmais and placed him in the Krokodilopolis *phylakê*. He was detained there until he agreed to cede Mesthasythmis his allotment and seed (42-45). Harmais then appealed to the king and queen. In the meantime, Mesthasythmis had taken some *phylakitai* and *episkopoi* and was watching the roads, seeking to arrest and imprison Harmais once again so as to prevent him from sailing into the city to bear witness to the litany of Mesthasythmis' abuses.⁴⁴ At the conclusion of his petition, Harmais

⁴⁴ Though the editor reads φυλακίται[ς] | καὶ ἐ[πισκόπους] at 52-53, it seems more reasonable to supplement ἐ[φόδους]. Mesthasythmis employed his police agents to watch the roads (ὁδοῦς, 53) and *ephodoi* are known to have had such areas within their occupational spheres: chapter 2, pp56-57. *Episkopoi* occur in only three additional texts: *Chrest.Mitt.* 5.17 (Alexandria?, ca 218 B.C.); *P.Petr.* II 39D.3 (III B.C.); and *P.Tebt.* III.1 769.22 (237-236 B.C.?; 212-211 B.C.?). The nature of their employment is unclear, though in *Chrest.Mitt.* 5.11-19 they seem to have a judicial function: ἐὰν δέ τινες τοῖ[ς] ἐν | [Ἀλ]εξανδρεῖαι ἢ ἐν τῆι χώραι [....] ἀρχ[εῖοις] | ἢ τοῖς τούτων ὑπηρεταῖς ἢ [τ]οῖς ἄλλοις | τοῖς πραγματευομένοις τι [..... α.] τ[ῶν] | βασιλικῶν ἐγκαλέσωσιν, τ[ὸ] δίκαιο[ν] | δώσουσιν καὶ λήψονταῖ
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asked that the *dioikêtês* have his agents destroy his previous witness testimony given on behalf of Mesthasythmis. At the bottom of the document an instruction in a second hand provides an indication that witness testimony of the events detailed in Harmais' petition was to be sent somewhere. Unfortunately, nothing more is known of this case.

As was the case with instances of police corruption, petitions from alleged victims provide the bulk of the evidence for abuses committed by civil, military and financial officials. The complaints lodged against these bureaucrats run the gamut from *hybris* to arbitrary imprisonment, from small thefts of personal property to the sort of large-scale extortion of which Petermouthis complained in his letter to the *stratêgos*.⁴⁵ Police were occasionally brought along as extra muscle when these officials misbehaved. In one case a goldsmith complained to an *epimelêtês* that a tax-farmer had employed a *rhabdophoros* as an accomplice to arrest him on a false charge of debt (*P.Mich.* XVIII 774 [Oxyrhynchus, ca 194/3 B.C.]).⁴⁶ In another, a petitioner noted that the *phylakitai* of Kerkesoucha had

ἐπ[ί] τῶν ἀποδεδειγμένων ἐπισκόπων, [οἱ]ς ἄ[ν] | ὁ διοικητῆς συντάσσει ἢ δεήσει | συντελεῖσθαι τὰ κατὰ τὸ [κρίμα] (with *BL* 1.381 and 3.145 for readings).

⁴⁵ Violence, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1834 (?) (Herakleopolite, 50 B.C.), where a religious official complained to the *stratêgos* that he had been attacked by a man involved with the collection of harbor-dues; *P.Mich.* XVIII 773 (Oxyrhyncha/Krokodilopolis, ca 194 B.C.), a complaint concerning an allegedly unjust arrest by a tax collector followed by whipping; *P.Tebt.* I 41 (105 or 90 B.C.), in which a petitioner appealed to an *archiphylakitês* and accused a *topogrammateus* of violent extortion; arbitrary imprisonment, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1821 (Herakleopolite, 57-56 B.C.), a petition to a *stratêgos* from a man who claimed to have been unjustly arrested and imprisoned and who had had his seed confiscated; *P.Cair.Zen.* II 59275 (251 B.C.), in which a prisoner complained that he had been arrested and imprisoned by some tax officials and that his home had been sealed; *SB* XXIV 16285 (Arsinoite, 202 B.C.), where a widow accused a honey-seller and one of the *hypêretai* of the *stratêgos* of unjust arrest; wrongful confiscation, e.g.: *BGU* VIII 1832 (Herakleopolite, 51 B.C.), a letter from a man who had suffered a theft of fodder and accused certain *ephodoi* and donkey-drivers of the crime; *P.Amh.* II 33 (Soknopaiou Nesos, ca 157 B.C.), a petition concerning an upcoming trial against a *komarchês* accused of extortion; *P.Cair.Zen.* III 59379 (III B.C.), in which a swineherd complained that a *komarchês* had confiscated a pig.

⁴⁶ The *rhabdophoros*, a certain Menelaos, is given only the title *ho kata polin*. This designation is applied to a *rhabdophoros* in *PSI* IV 332.11 (Philadelphia, 257 B.C.).

unjustly hauled him off to the *nomarchês* of Krokodilopolis, perhaps on allegations that he had committed a theft (*P.Ryl.* IV 570 [Philadelphia, III B.C.]). In a final case, a man complained to the *kômomisthôtês* that the *kômarchês*, *kômogrammateus* and a *genêmatophylax* had taken too much of his produce when he had presented it at the royal *thêsauros* (*P.Tebt.* I 183 [II B.C.]).⁴⁷ The offenders may even have forced the petitioner to give up his landholdings.⁴⁸

As these examples indicate, reports of detected wrongdoing by civil, financial and military officials were regularly sent to higher officers.⁴⁹ Police often received such complaints. In one case a *kômarchês* and a number of cultivators reported to an *archiphylakitês* that a *topogrammateus* had been regularly descending upon the village accompanied by many armed officials (5: σὸν ἄλλοις πλείοσι ἐν μαχαίραις) to seize the men and their wives and extort money from them (*P.Tebt.* I 41 [105 or 90 B.C.]). In another an unknown official detailed for an unknown superior a series of abuses committed by a group of officials never precisely named (*P.Tebt.* I 24 [117 B.C.]). In spite of the uncertainty concerning the identities of the perpetrators we can surmise a great deal about their wrongdoing. Their illegal activities included the submission of false grain-returns and a number of previous (unspecified) indiscretions.⁵⁰ The author of the

⁴⁷ The editors of *P.Tebt.* I suggest that the *kômomisthôtês* was in charge of the *misthêseis* of crown land: p. 526.

⁴⁸ The first half of the text is not transcribed. My summary is based on the comments of the editors (p. 526).

⁴⁹ *E.g.*: *Chrest.Wilck.* 262 (Arsinoite, III B.C.), a letter of complaint from a tax collector addressed to the *oikonomos* and concerning the insubordination of a co-worker; *P.Tebt.* III.1 739 (163 B.C.?; 145 B.C.?), a report containing mention of a previous report that detailed the extortion activities of an official; *UPZ* I 110 (Memphis, 164 B.C.), a copy of official orders to a *hypodioikêtês* containing a report of agricultural mismanagement by *oikonomoi* and others.

⁵⁰ The editors of the text suggested (pp95-96) that the officials in question were most likely *phylakitai* and *archiphylakitai*, given the numerous other posts they were reputed to have held and

report noted that many had also managed to obtain additional offices, among these those of *oikonomos*, *toparchês*, *sitologos* and *kômarchês* (60-64), that nepotism was endemic among them (63-66) and that many of them had been appointed to positions with supervisory powers (66-72).

The involvement of police in the wrongdoing of civil, financial and military officials seems to have been very limited. As we saw in the petition of Harmais (above, pp204-206), police officers were sometimes employed as subordinates by higher officials bent on breaking the law. But the law enforcement officials so used seem generally to have been low-level officers obliged to follow the instructions of their corrupt superiors. Further, there are few indications that the *phylakitai*, *phylakes* and other police so appropriated knew that the activities for which they were being employed were somehow unjust or unwarranted (if indeed these activities were unjust). All one can conclude is that the Ptolemaic police performed as their superiors requested and that officers in the civil, financial and military spheres were not above the law. Police were empowered and expected to bring in rogue officers of every stripe and that petitioners trusted them to do so.

Overall, the data do not provide strong indications that police misbehavior was pervasive. Law enforcement officials occasionally employed violence in the execution of police business, but the rough handling that sometimes occurred was not always unwarranted. True, police were occasionally slow to act on official orders, even to the point of inaction. This was clearly an

the documentation for the involvement of *phylakitai* and *archiphylakitai* in financial mischief (see above, pp201-202).

issue of concern to supervisors, as suggested by the fact that commanding officers sometimes added exhortations and threats to the ends of their written instructions as a preventative measure intended to ensure that police business got done in a timely manner. But there was only so much that could be done to ensure that offenders were arrested, debts collected and crimes solved as quickly as possible. The law enforcement machinery of Ptolemaic Egypt was slowed by the inevitable delays involved in relaying instructions from one official to the next. A lot depended on the expeditious writing, delivery and processing of small scraps of papyrus. In spite of these roadblocks, much (if not most) police business seems to have been completed in a timely and satisfactory manner.

Though they seem rarely to have opposed direct orders from their superiors, police officers nevertheless did break the law from time to time. Abuses ranging from violence and extortion to arbitrary arrest and detention to judicial bias and the like occurred. Punishment was occasionally administered by commanding officers in those cases where proof of wrongdoing was offered. For their part, the Ptolemies may have responded to reports of misbehavior with decrees banning illegal acts among police. These were stopgap measures, to be sure, but also the strongest steps the state could take. In order for the police system to function at a basic level, the Ptolemies had to farm out control of village law enforcement to village authorities. In so doing they removed themselves and their agents from the immediate supervision of these authorities. That the police sometimes misbehaved should thus not come as a surprise. If power corrupts, then the high degree of autonomy invested in the Ptolemaic

police by their superiors would naturally have been responsible for some degree of official wrongdoing.

The question is how much. In determining the extent of this wrongdoing it should be kept in mind that the bulk of the evidence for the misbehavior of police officials comes from personal accounts, and usually from people who had axes to grind. What appeared to one man as an act of abuse may very well and very legitimately have appeared to another as a necessary element of his job. Home invasions and confiscations were accepted procedure for the recovery of government debts, as was imprisonment. These operations occasionally involved violence against uncooperative villagers and could easily be portrayed by “victims” as instances of abuse or arbitrary behavior. As with so much of the papyrological evidence for life in Ptolemaic Egypt, interpretation of the sources is of the utmost importance. Without the benefit of defense materials from the police officials under attack, it seems unwise to conclude that every instance of police abuse detailed in petitions to government officials was necessarily genuine. A clear picture of the extent of the problem of police abuse of the subject population is thus perhaps unattainable.

Taken as a whole, the evidence for corruption among the Ptolemaic police demonstrates only that corruption did exist. But who would have thought otherwise? In the previous chapters we have seen that the law enforcement machinery of Ptolemaic Egypt was effective, efficient and reliable. Villagers made use of the services it provided and it served the same villagers very well. Though they sometimes complained of rough handling by police and other unfair practices, the overwhelming impression is that the Ptolemaic populace

trusted the police system. In light of this, it is impossible to conclude that police corruption was widespread. A few bad apples did not ruin the bunch.

Chapter 7: Epilogue

The primary goal of this dissertation has been to detail the functions of the Ptolemaic police and the institutions by which the Ptolemies exerted social control over the *chôra*. We have examined the hierarchy of law enforcement, the petitioning process, the mechanics of arrest, detention and resolution, the role of police as security and muscle and the extent of police corruption in the Ptolemaic countryside. In antiquity, victims of crime were responsible for performing the majority of the work necessary for the successful resolution of disputes: arresting suspects, gathering witnesses and evidence, confiscating property and preparing and arranging court cases. Personal and financial resources, official connections and a strong will to prevail were all prerequisites to success at law. Those lacking these qualities were marginalized and in effect denied full access to justice. Security was likewise the responsibility of private citizens. Though ancient states assembled armies when outside forces threatened, they took few steps to protect their populations from themselves. Organized civil police forces that patrolled city streets, kept watch in trouble areas and arrested wrongdoers did not exist. In sum, policing in the ancient world was the domain of individuals, not institutions.

As we have seen, this was not the case in Ptolemaic Egypt. The story of crime, criminals, police and policing in the Egyptian *chôra* is one primarily of government organizations and officials. The rulers of the kingdom established an extensive network of interconnected police officers in the towns and villages of the countryside to monitor the subject population. They carried out arrests, detained suspects, launched investigations, visited crime scenes, compiled

evidence, sealed homes, confiscated goods and even held trials, often without instruction from superiors. Supervision of these officials extended from the smallest settlements of the Egyptian backwater all the way up to the seat of the central administration in Alexandria. Police occupied all points in the geographic/administrative hierarchy (village, toparchy, *meris*, nome) and inter-official communication was evidently swift and effective. Officers at the highest levels of power made sure that the police and their supervisors in the countryside followed orders and that government business was carried out promptly and in full.

Ptolemaic Egypt provides a well-documented exception to the rule of ancient criminal justice. Why have classicists neglected it for so long? Perhaps for the same reason why Egypt is so often rejected as a model for ancient social or cultural phenomena: the belief that Egypt was fundamentally different from the rest of the ancient world. In many respects the Egypt of the Ptolemies was quite unlike anything else in classical antiquity. The rulers of the kingdom were transplanted Greeks who adopted pharaonic titulature, dress and airs. Like their predecessors, they subjugated the populace and demanded compulsory labor to fill the state's coffers. The royal court at Alexandria attracted the best and brightest scholars, poets and philosophers of the day. It was an outpost of Greek culture and quite unlike any other settlement in the state. In the extensive countryside to the south of the royal base of operations, Greeks and Egyptians lived side-by-side, conducted business with each other, paid taxes, intermarried, toiled for the government in a variety of roles and generally coexisted, sometimes uneasily.

Ptolemaic Egypt was clearly not a microcosm of Greece. But just how different was it from Athens or Macedon? Behind the royal costume, the tolerance and cultivation of Egyptian gods, the adoption of native customs and the other necessary adjustments to life in the Egyptian *chôra*, Ptolemaic Egypt was a Greek state. Even in the countryside, where a uniform Egyptian culture had existed for millennia, the rulers of the kingdom exerted a great deal of influence. Towns and villages in the *chôra* retained certain aspects of the traditional Egyptian infrastructure (scribal offices and temples, for instance) but made room for a massive number of buildings and institutions with decidedly Greek origins: courtrooms (*dikastêria*, *kritêria*), prisons (*desmôtêria*), offices (*logistêria*), archives (*dêmosia*) and countless others. Officials with Greek titles (judges [*dikastai*, *kritai*], tax collectors [*telônai*], soldiers [*stratiôtai*, *hippeis*, *pezoi*], heralds [*kêrukes*], *etc.*), many themselves Greeks, populated these public places. Greek political philosophy, infrastructure and bureaucracy was inescapable even in the smallest Egyptian settlements.

But it was not just the machinery of public life that took on a new appearance under the Ptolemies. Even the smallest facets of day-to-day existence were altered by the new regime. Business, especially, became dominated by Greeks. Though many Egyptian measures were retained for convenience, sums were calculated and expressed in Greek numbers and bills paid and purchases made with Greek currency (drachmas and obols). Private transactions between Egyptians were still carried out in the native language, but contracts with the state, as well as private deals involving at least one Greek participant, were recorded in Attic Greek and reflect what is often more than a basic

understanding of Greek economic practice. Even without additional evidence, the regular and effective employment of Greek not only by the governing class but also by the native population demonstrates that Greek influence on Egyptian society was powerful.

A pervasive “Greekness” is likewise detectable when we turn to the ranks of the Ptolemaic police. Though the ranks of the primary law enforcement officials under the Ptolemies (*phylakitai*), as well as the *phylakes* and other civil and military officials who sometimes performed police functions, were filled with Egyptians, their overseers were primarily Greeks. The Ptolemaic police worked for a Greek administration and communicated in Greek with a broad spectrum of officials in other spheres of government, many (if not most) of whom were Greeks. Law enforcement officials employed an epistolary communications system that depended on the fast and reliable composition and transport of correspondence in Greek. Petitioners, too, the majority of whom were Egyptians, used the language in their appeals to police officers. They realized that for the best chance of satisfaction at law, petitions to police officers had to be comprehensible. Bilingualism was certainly not uncommon, but it seems unlikely that a policeman would have gone out of his way to translate a request scribbled in an undecipherable Demotic on a scrap of papyrus. Greek was a must.

So Ptolemaic Egypt was perhaps not the “other” many have long maintained it to be. The Ptolemies inherited a rigidly structured social and political system. They allowed most aspects of Egyptian culture and society to remain intact and unchanged, supplemented others with Greek flourishes and

transformed still others along Greek lines. Whatever sort of entity it was, Ptolemaic Egypt was not simply the land of the pharaohs, but dressed up in Greek clothing. It was a thoroughly Greek state. We cannot simply dismiss the Ptolemaic evidence out of hand. The ample documentation for Greek Egypt is potentially of great value for scholars of Greece, Rome and elsewhere. For if we admit the possibility that Ptolemaic Egypt was not fundamentally different from every other ancient state, we also must admit that the Ptolemaic evidence may reveal a great deal about these same states. For our purposes, this could provide a number of revelations about criminal justice systems in antiquity.

Accepting the “Greekness” of Ptolemaic Egypt also raises a number of questions. To begin with, where did the Ptolemaic police system come from? Did the Ptolemies modify an existing system, or create their own police and employ an ethnically mixed bag of officials for the sake of convenience or to ensure greater compliance from villagers? The former was perhaps the case, though the makeup of the police forces doubtless owes something to the latter. We have seen that the criminal justice system contained both Egyptians and Greeks. In Ptolemaic Egypt a *chôra*-wide organization of primarily Egyptian officials (at least among the lowest-level police, the *phylakitai* and *phylakes*) served primarily Egyptian villagers but worked within a Greek infrastructure, answered to Greek administrators and carried out inter-official communication exclusively in Greek. The rulers of the kingdom filled the highest levels of police organization with Greeks for administrative efficiency but continued to employ Egyptians for much day-to-day police work. This is suggestive. Perhaps the Ptolemies adapted a preexisting system trusted by and familiar to the native population and allowed

it to continue to operate as it always had. The Greeks, like the pharaonic administrations before them, ran the show from above but granted the settlements of the *chôra* a great deal of law enforcement self-governance.

At present a connection between the pharaonic system of law and order and that of the Ptolemies is uncertain. Only a careful reconsideration of the evidence for police forces in pharaonic Egypt will reveal to what degree the Ptolemies inherited their law enforcement mechanisms from their predecessors.¹ The data, however, suggest few connections between the two systems. Security was one of the primary concerns of the pharaohs and the Ptolemies, and both employed police to provide it. But security is a major issue for any state and that this was true in Egypt is not surprising. Police officials in pharaonic Egypt were employed primarily for the protection of the state's assets, as were the Ptolemaic police. But Ptolemaic law enforcement officials had much smaller roles to play in this area than their pharaonic counterparts, who seem frequently to have served as little more than security guards. The pharaonic criminal justice system had a strong, central authority for the effective administration of justice and supervision of lower civil authorities (the vizier); a powerful military presence for the guarantee of security along borders and in sparsely-populated areas (the army and the Medjay); and a general policy of *laissez-faire* with regard to the personal problems of the Egyptian people, who were expected to bring law enforcement issues to the attention of village or higher administration.²

¹ For scholarship on law enforcement in pharaonic Egypt see the introduction, p. 1 n. 1.

² On the legal powers of the pharaoh, see Bedell (1974) 17-34; on the vizier's office, van den Boorn (1988). See also Tyldesley (2000) 31-47; Bedell (1974) 34-42; and Posener (1970) 301-302; on the Medjay, especially McDowell (1990) 51-54; also Tyldesley (2000) 48-50; Bedell (1974) 62-65; Cerny (1973) 261-284; and Posener (1970) 228.

Admittedly, these were all characteristics of the Ptolemaic criminal justice system, as well. But centralized power, border patrols and government indifference to the suffering of the subject population were far from uncommon in other ancient civilizations. One cannot conclude that the Ptolemies inherited these traits from their predecessors simply because they are expressed in the evidence.

Though the pharaonic state seems to have had a strong interest in punishing state offenders, it took little notice of private wrongdoing. Village machinery was in place for the resolution of village disputes, but an organized police system seems never to have been fully developed. On the other hand, in Ptolemaic Egypt an empowered police system saw to the needs of the rulers of the kingdom but also prioritized law and order in Egyptian towns and villages and ensured that most people could lead safe and productive lives. Though many similarities exist, on the whole the pharaonic and Ptolemaic criminal justice systems seem to have been different sorts of organizations. For the most part, in the realm of Egyptian law enforcement the Ptolemies seem to have been innovators rather than adopters. Nevertheless, a more thorough comparison of the Ptolemaic and pharaonic criminal justice systems will shed welcome light on the antecedents to the Greek organization and the connections between the two systems.

On a related note, one might also ask what eventually happened to the Ptolemaic police system. How was the Greek law enforcement organization adapted and ultimately eliminated by the Romans? In the Roman period there is an increase in documentation and correspondingly in the evidence for law

enforcement structures. Augustus instituted a number of changes in the Ptolemaic police system. Subsequent emperors made additional modifications. Over time, we see soldiers playing more prominent roles as police, the centurion assuming the position of primary law enforcement competence, a number of police posts becoming liturgical and many additional changes.³ There is an abundance of scholarship on police and policing in the province of Egypt, but no synthesis of the material currently exists.⁴ When the necessary work has been done we will perhaps finally be able to trace the decline and eventual disappearance of the Ptolemaic police forces.

Finally, one wonders to what degree the law enforcement infrastructure visible in Ptolemaic Egypt is applicable to other ancient states. The Egyptian police system existed and flourished in small, rural settlements scattered throughout the Ptolemaic countryside. But the preponderance of documentation for the rest of classical antiquity describes the operation of law and order in primarily urban settings. If there is one thing we can say for certain about criminal justice systems in antiquity, it is that nowhere do we have the full story. Outside of Egypt, abundant source materials provide valuable information on how ancient law enforcement operated. We are well-informed as to how court procedure was carried out in both Greece and Rome, how the military was sometimes employed for crowd control, how individuals took steps to obtain justice from offenders and how punishment was meted out to those found guilty

³ Introduction, pp16-17.

⁴ See the introduction, p. 17 n. 22, for selected scholarship.

of committing crimes.⁵ But the sources that provide this information are primarily literary and detail the functioning of primarily urban systems. They tell us a great deal about the privileged classes in the Greek *poleis* and the involvement of state structures in criminal justice, but reveal next to nothing about how law enforcement was carried out in the *chôrai* and provinces of ancient states, where contact with the central government was not always close, frequent or even possible. The story of day-to-day existence in the rural areas of the ancient Mediterranean, and more specifically that of crime and punishment, has not been told in full. Perhaps the Egyptian evidence serves as the other side of the coin.

But this is a topic for another book. The present study has focused on a short period in the history of local law enforcement, the story of police and villagers, wrongdoing and punishment in the backwater of one of the world's great empires. The story is a rich and fascinating one, quite unlike any other known from the ancient world. With any luck, however, classical antiquity still has many similar stories left to tell.

⁵ See the introduction, pp1-3.

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