ARCHIPHYLAKITAI IN PTOLEMAIC EGYPT:
A HIERARCHY OF EQUALS?

JOHN BAUSCHATZ

Abstract: Since Pieter Kool’s dissertation on police in Greco-Roman Egypt, scholars have subscribed to the view that police administration was uniform across the kingdom and that police chiefs (archiphylakitai) in villages were connected to nome-level chiefs by a lengthy chain of command. This paper argues that neither was the case: that administrative structures varied from nome to nome, and that the hierarchy of archiphylakitai was flat. Chiefs answered to civil, financial, and other police officials, not to higher archiphylakitai. The “hierarchy” of police chiefs, unlike similar hierarchies in other spheres of government, was easily accessible, surprisingly flexible, and efficient.*

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 epistatēs phylakitōn.¹ Shortly thereafter, Agathinos, Philammon, and other agents of Dionysios, archiphylakitēs, 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. The royal scribe who received the village scribe’s report requested that the archiphylakites detain the stolen goods until the trial, make arrangements for their return, and transfer Agathinos and his co-conspirators for examination. Unfortunately, we are uninformed as to what actions were ultimately taken to resolve matters.

As this example and dozens of others like it suggest, law enforcement was a priority for the Greek rulers of Egypt. Policing the chôra required the coordination of a variety of specialized officials from a number of different spheres. The most important group consisted of the phylakitai. These were the government agents to whom the Egyptian populace most frequently turned for help in the aftermath of criminal activity. They arrested, detained, and transported malefactors; investigated crimes, often visiting crime scenes and examining evidence; sealed off the homes of those under investigation; provided protection for state infrastructure and agriculture as well as private individuals; confiscated property and collected tax arrears; and worked in conjunction with a broad spectrum of other officials to ensure that justice was done.

2 On law enforcement in Ptolemaic Egypt, see Bausschatz; also Lesquier 260–64; Bouché-Leclercq IV 56–62; Kool; Helmis; and Thompson (1997).


4 Arrest, detention, and transport, e.g.: BGU VI 1248 (Syene, 137 b.c.); P. Lille I 3 (Magdola, after 216–215 b.c.); P. RyL. IV 570 (Krokodilopolis, ca 254–251 b.c.); investigating crimes, e.g.: P. Petr. II 32 (2a) (Arsinoite, 217 b.c.); P. Tebt. III 1733 (Tebynis, 143–142 b.c.); SB XX 15001 (Krokodilopolis, 217 b.c.); visiting crime scenes, e.g.: P. Enteux. 65 (Magdola, 221 b.c.); PSI IV 393 (Philadelphia, 241 b.c.); SB XVIII 13160 (Moeris, 244 or 219 b.c.); examining evidence: P. Cair. Zén. III 59379 (i) (Philadelphia, ca 254–251 b.c.); P. Enteux. 70 (Magdola, 221 b.c.); P. Petr. III 28e (Sebennytos; 224–218 b.c.); sealing homes (and other buildings), e.g.: PMich. XVIII 779 (Mouchis, after 192 b.c.); SB XIV 12089 (Herakleopolite, 130 b.c.); ZPE 141 (2002): 185–90 (Herakleopolite, 137 b.c.); protecting agriculture, e.g.: BGU VIII 32 (Arsinoite, 181 b.c.).

ARCHIPHYLAKITAI

Duties

A number of administrators supervised the phylakitai. At the town and village level, archiphylakitai, or police chiefs, are widely attested. As agents of the central government, archiphylakitai processed a good deal of official paperwork, including notifications and circulars from other government officials concerning the collection, management, and security of tax revenues. They were sometimes present at state auctions of seized or forfeited goods and properties and occasionally appeared at trials and inquiries held by other officials. Police chiefs were responsible for enlisting men into their forces and likewise had the power to require correspondence concerning tax revenues in general, e.g.: C. Ord. Ptol. 53.138–46 (Kerkeosiris, 118 b.c.); P. Gen. III 132 (Herakleopolite, II b.c.); P. Lille 13 (Magdola, after 216–215 b.c.); beer and natron: P. Tebt. I 40 (Kerkeosiris, 117 b.c.); grain: P. Tebt. III 1 708 (Tebynis, III b.c.); papyrus: P. Tebt. III 1 709 (Tebynis, 159 b.c.); wool: SB XXII 15766 (Arsinoite, 218 or 181 b.c.); On the Ptolemaic papyrus monopoly see Lewis 1974 and 1989.

5 Present at auctions, e.g.: P. Haun. I 11 (Diospolis Magna, 182 b.c.); P. Tebt. III 2 871 (Krokodilopolis, 158 b.c.); UPZ II 219 (Thebes, 130 b.c.); at trials: Chrest. Mitt. 32 (Arsinoite, 181 b.c.).
sition policemen from areas outside their jurisdiction. They assigned their men to various posts, occasionally employed deputies (known as hyparchiphylakitai), and may even have been partially responsible for the agricultural and financial provisioning of their subordinates. Surprisingly, their rank as administrators did not grant them immunity from performing many of the functions of a modern-day police officer, among these making arrests, detaining offenders, and transporting people and property.

8 As three texts suggest, there was a standard procedure to be followed by an applicant seeking admission into a corps of phylakai (P.Genova III 101 [Arsinoite, 221 b.c.]; 102 [Arsinoite, 221 b.c.]; SB XIV 11860 Arsinote, II–I b.c.). The applicant wrote to the archiphylakitai of the region in question and declared his intention to be enrolled into the ranks of the police of the village (and associated districts, if applicable) over which the archiphylakia had control, in accordance with a publicly posted notice (ekteten ektema / programma). He would then request that he be added (prosgraphesthai) to their ranks. See (e.g.) P.Genova III 101: Δοκουκυδείς ἀρχιφυλακίας τῆς Κροκοδίλων πόλεως καὶ τῶν [ca ? - tôn] | κοιμίων παρὰ Τιμάρχον τοῦ Κράτητος [ca ?] | Σύκηων ἀρχιφυλακίας | εἰς τούς | περὶ Κροκοδίλων πόλεως κατὰ τὸ ἔκτημα ἔκθεμα [εἰς τό ἐκτήμα] φυλακίας: | ἐξ ὑπὸ τῆς προσγραφαγμόν: μέ | L a Παγων κτ. Requisitioning: see SB VI 9104 (Arsinoite, 195 b.c.), a letter in which an official requests that another official bring one of the phylakai in the katalochismos over to Krokokodilopolis to serve (leitourgein) in the quarters (oikētai) of the archiphylakia for thirty days. On this text see Bauschatz 31.

9 Assigning men to posts, e.g.: Chrest.Wilck. 331.iii.68—69 (Kerkeosiris, 113 b.c.), where archiphylakiai are to ensure that the phylakai appointed for the annual guarding of grain (genematophylakia) perform their duties correctly; P.Hib. II 198.117—20 (Arsinoite, after 242 b.c.), a list of royal ordinances concerning police in which archiphylakia are instructed to provide armed escorts (phylakai) for river travelers; P.Mich. XVIII 778 (Mouchis, after 193–192 b.c.), a petition from a victim of extortion who requests that the dioikētai either arrange a trial for him or instruct the archiphylakai to send word to the village phylakiai to arrest an offender; hyparchiphylakiai: these officials might appear at government auctions (BGU III 1222.61, 75 [Hermopolite, 144 b.c.]) and could possess klēroi (P.Tebt. III.2 1006.6–7 [Tebtynis, II b.c.]), but their duties and the reasons for and nature of their appointments are unclear: provisioning; P.Per. III 130 (1) (Arsinoite, III b.c.), a curious document containing a list of expenses for copper miners (chalkērychōn) and the transport of castor oil as well as part of a letter from an archiphylakai who had held the post of epistatēs phylakion to some men involved in crown-sponsored hunting (16–17: [1 ca ?] ΠΡΩΤΟΣ ΘΕΟΦΟΛΑΣΑΥ).

10 Arresting and detaining, e.g.: Chrest.Wilck. 166 (Arsinoite, 218 b.c.); P.Athen. 8 (Arsinoite, 193–192 b.c.); P.Heid. VII 393 (Arsinoite or Memphis, III b.c.); transporting, e.g.: P.Enteux. 24 (Magdola, 221 b.c.); 50 (Magdola, 221 b.c.); P.Lond. VII 2188 (Hermonthis, 148 b.c.).

Though on the one hand government agents with many administrative duties, Ptolemaic archiphylakiai were also intimately connected to their local populations. They received petitions, generally concerned with theft, damage to person or property, or both from injured parties. The petitions draw attention to the punitive powers of these officials. Archiphylakiai were expected to arrest accused parties, carry out investigations of reported crimes, and generally see to it that justice was done on the petitioners’ behalf. In one typical case a priest wrote to an archiphylakētis and his phylakai and detailed a series of abuses followed by a theft (P.Tebt. III.1 797 [Berenikis Thesphephorou, II b.c.]). The victim described an attack (involving beatings on his shin and face), listed the stolen goods, asked that the archiphylakiai have the offenders sent to another official for punishment, and requested the return of his missing property. Though empowered to tend to most routine police matters on their own, archiphylakiai also on occasion worked in conjunction with a number of other government officials to maintain law and order throughout the countryside. Victims of crime in Ptolemaic Egypt had a number of options when it came to reporting grievances. The documents show that archiphylakiai were the most common and
Bauschatz: Archiphylakitai in Ptolemaic Egypt

convenient point of access to the law enforcement pyramid for those living in the Egyptian backwater.\(^{14}\)

Distribution

In his dissertation on the organization and function of the *phylakitai*, Pieter Kool argued that the pattern of Ptolemaic police organization was always the same: that a regular structure applied throughout the Egyptian countryside (101). Other scholars have expressed the same view, though discussions of the organization of the *phylakitai* have been few and brief.\(^{15}\) But the papyrological evidence makes it quite clear that the geographical domains of *archiphylakitai* were varied and that the pattern of local organization was not always the same. In fact, the distribution of police chiefs throughout the Egyptian countryside displayed a good deal of variation and a decided lack of uniformity. A brief consideration of the evidence for the distribution of *archiphylakitai* will bear out these assertions.

Let us begin with the highest geographic level for which police competence is attested: the nome. Certainty regarding the number of nomes into which Egypt was divided at any given point in the Ptolemaic period is perhaps impossible. During the Pharaonic period, Egypt was divided into forty-two nomes (twenty-two in Upper Egypt, twenty in Lower Egypt), and by the third century A.D. the number had grown to near sixty (*OCD* s.v. “nomos (1)”). Strikingly, *archiphylakitai* of the Arsinoite, Herakleopolite, Memphite, and Pathyrite nomes are the only ones attested throughout the entire three hundred-year reign of the Ptolemies.\(^{16}\) The evidence for these nome-level officials demonstrates only that they carried out the same tasks as lower-level chiefs. For instance, Herakleides, an *archiphylakētēs* of the Herakleopolite nome, is seen making an arrest (*Chrest.*Wilck. 166.1.i.10–11 [Arsinoite, 218 B.C.]); Pleistarchos, a Pathyrite *archiphylakētēs*, transports litigants to trial (*Plond.* VII 2188.91–92 [Hermomithis, 148 B.C.]). Neither appears to have had any special administrative powers connected to his high title or any obligation to supervise lower-level *archiphylakitai*. Each simply served a broader geographic region than the chief of a village (*kōmê* or district (*topos*)).

Certain nomes had geographic subdivisions between nome and village. Evidently, the Ptolemies saw fit to install police supervision at these levels, as *archiphylakitai* of a few Herakleopolite, Oxyrychnite, and Pathyrite toparchies and certain Arsinoite *merides* occur in the papyri. The number of attestations for these officials is slightly higher than that for police chiefs of nome-level competence.\(^{18}\) Here again, there is no convenient point of access to the law enforcement pyramid for those living in the Egyptian backwater.

\(^{14}\) See, for instance, Lesquier 261–62; Bouche–Leclercq 58-59; and Bevan 163–65.

\(^{15}\) In assessing this statement the reader should keep in mind that documentary evidence from Graeco-Roman Egypt has survived in a very uneven state. For the Ptolemaic period, Arsinoite and Herakleopolite papyri are especially well-represented: Arsinoite texts predominate in the third and second centuries B.C., Herakleopolite texts in the first. Papyri from the other nomes are significantly rarer. In addition, virtually nothing has survived from the Delta region, which includes Alexandria, the administrative and cultural center of the Ptolemaic state. For a more detailed discussion of the chronological and geographic variations in the papyrus evidence from the third century B.C. to the eighth century A.D. see Habermann’s survey. Arsinoite *archiphylakitai*: Herakleides, *Bür.Ürgsch.* 23.4, 4–5, 15–16, 17–18 (Ghoran, 243 B.C.); [ — ] *sijgenes* (*Pros.Ptol. 4542*), *P.LilleDem.* 1.4.int.3, ext.6 (Ghoran, 247 B.C.); Herakleopolite: Herakleides (*Pros. Ptol. 4577* with add.), *Chrest.* Wilck. 166.i.10 (Arsinoite, 218 B.C.); office of the Herakleopolite *archiphylakētēs* mentioned at *P.Gen.* III 132.4 (Herakleopolite, II B.C.); Memphite: office mentioned at *C.Ord.Pol.* 3.62.3 (Memphis, 99 B.C.); Pathyrite: Herakleides (*Pros. Ptol. 4578*), *P.Dryton* 33.14 (?), 136 B.C.; Pleistarchos (*Pros. Ptol. 4595* with add.), *Plond.* VII 2188.91–92 (Hermomithis, 148 B.C.);

\(^{16}\) For a brief discussion of alternatives to the petitioning process in Ptolemaic Egypt, see Bauschatz 72–75.

\(^{17}\) Of the other nome-level *archiphylakitai* mentioned in the preceding note, none is recorded as performing any special tasks. One Herakleides (*Bür.Gebch.* 23) arranged for a man to be imprisoned; another (*Pros. Ptol. 4578*) received a petition from a number of women concerning an inheritance. [ — ] *sijgenes* received an application for bail. *C.Ord.Pol.* 3.62 and *P.Gen.* III 132 are circulars addressed to a number of nome-level officials and their subordinates, the first requesting protection for an embalmer, the second concerning the appointment of a tax collector.

indication that archiphylakitai of toparchies and merides held positions of greater importance in the Ptolemaic criminal justice system than their counterparts in the towns and villages of the Egyptian countryside. Theodoros, archiphylakitês of the Kato toparchy (of the Oxyrhynchite nome), for example, inspected a window broken in the course of a robbery (P.Frankf. I 3 [Thothlis, 212 B.C.]); Philoxenos, archiphylakitês of the Themistes meris, received applications for bail (P.Bürgch. 22 [Ghoran, 243 B.C.] and P.LilleDem. I 4 [Ghoran, 247 B.C.]). Similarly, there is also no proof that archiphylakitai of merides or toparchies were subservient to nome archiphylakitai.

There is evidence, however, that many of these mid-range police chiefs may have considered themselves above the law. At least three seem to have been brought up on criminal charges: Patron, archiphylakitês of the Kato toparchy (of the Oxyrhynchite nome), was accused of disobeying official orders (P.Hib. I 34 [Oxyrhynchite, 243 B.C.] and 73 [Oxyrhynchite, 244–243 B.C.]); Philippos, archiphylakitês of the Koite toparchy (of the Herakleopolite nome), was charged with illegal arrest (P.Hib. II 203 [?, 246–221 B.C.]); and Philon, archiphylakitês of the Polemon meris, was accused of tax evasion (ZPE 152 [2005]: 191 [Arsinoite, 196–195 B.C.]).

What is unusual, though, is that evidence for corruption at the nome level is lacking. This, however, may simply be a function of chance and not an indication that men of the highest moral purity filled the top levels of police administration.

The greatest number of attestations for archiphylakitai are for those officials with village-level jobs: no fewer than twenty-seven named Egyptian towns and villages spread throughout the countryside, and countless anonymous ones, had archiphylakitai in the Ptolemaic period.21 This is not at all surprising. The Ptolemyes filled the towns and villages of their empire with various types of government officials. The titles these officials bore reveal the narrowness of their jurisdictions. For example, a kômogrammateus was the scribe (grammateus) of a village (kôma) and a tôparchês was the governor (-archês) of a region (topos). The archiphylakitês of a village was one of a number of officials (among these the kômarchês, kômogrammateus, and epistatês) who had jurisdiction in that area and

21 The following villages are known to have had archiphylakitai in the Ptolemaic period. The nine marked with a (?) are uncertain cases and have not been included in the total of twenty-seven cited above: Alabanthis (P.Enteux. 24.7 [Magdala, 221 B.C.]); Aphrodite Berenike (?)(P.Tebt. III 2.902.2–4 [Arsinoite, II b.C.]); Arsinoe (e.g.: SB XVI 12813.2–3 [Arsinoite, II b.C.]); Berenikes (Aigialou) (SB III 7203.6 [Arsinoite, 247 B.C.]); Berenikes Thesmorphorou (e.g.: P.Tebt. III 1.797.1–2 [Berenikes Thesmorphorou, II b.C.]); Diospolis Magna (?) (P.Tor.Chnach. 11.36–37 [Thebais, 119 B.C.]); Euhemeria (e.g.: P.Giss. Univ. I 7.1–2 [Euhemeria, II b.C.]); Hermopolis Magna (?) (SB VIII 9792.14–15, 19–21 [Hermopolis Magna, 162 B.C.]); Kerkeosiris (e.g.: P.Heid. II 217.1–3 [Kerkeosiris?, II b.C.]); Kirkà (?) (P.Dion. 10.1 [Hermopolis, 109 B.C.]); Koma (BGU VIII 1808.7 [Herakleopolite, after 52–51 B.C.]); Krokodiapolis (e.g.: P.Cair.Zen. V 59819.8–9 [Krokodiapolis, 254 B.C.]); Moithymis (e.g.: P.Heid. VII 394.1–3 [Moithymis, 214 B.C.]); Omon (BGU VIII 1808.11 [Herakleopolite, after 52–51 B.C.]); Oxyrhyncha (e.g.: P.Einasm. I 1.18–19 [Oxyrhyncha, 148–147 B.C.]); Pathyris (e.g.: P.Gref. II 37.1 [Pathyris, 108 B.C.]); Petachor (BGU VIII 1808.19 [Herakleopolite, after 52–51 B.C.]); Philadelphia (e.g.: BGU III 1012.4–5 [Philadelphia, 170 B.C.]); Philià (?) (P.Stras. I 101.9–10 [?, I b.C.]); Philipòres (P.Enteux. 50.4–5 [Magdala, 221 B.C.]); Phneiuses (e.g.: BGUVII 1798.1 [Herakleopolite, 64–44 B.C.]); Pías (e.g.: P.Bürgch. 23.2–3, 13–15 [Ghoran, 243 B.C.]); Ptois (P.Tebt. III 2.857.1–2 [Herakleopolite, 162 B.C.]); Rhidonos Neos (?) (e.g.: ZPE 141 [2002]: 186–3–7 [Herakleopolite, 137 B.C.]); Sêbennytos (P.Perr. III 28e.13–14 [Sêbennytos?, 224–218 B.C.]); Soknopaiou Neos (P.Mich. XV 688.1–2 [Soknopaiou Neos, II–I b.C.]); Syene (P.Stiut. 10591 verso ii.9–10, iii.11–12 [Syene, 170 B.C.]); Syron Kome (P.Cair.Zen. Ill 59404.7–8 [Philadelphia, II b.C.]); Tachenephrë (?)(P.UPII 2 124.19–20 [Memphis, 175 B.C.]); Telepé (P.Tebt. III 1.709.2–3 [Telepé, 159 B.C.]); Tani (P.Petrie ined. 201 b.c.); Telepé (P.Petrie ined. 201 b.c.); Telepé (P.ZPE 1107.8 [Arsinoite, ca 100 B.C.]); Tekeni (e.g.: BGUVII 1808.2 [Herakleopolite, after 52–51 B.C.]); Thedalpea (e.g.: SEG XXXIII 1359.3–4 [Thedalpea, 107–101 B.C.]); Tînithës (e.g.: P.Heid. IX 422.14–16 [Tînithës, 158 B.C.]); Trikômia (P.Enteux. 82.5 [Trikômia, 221 B.C.]).
worked together to keep the peace. However, unlike other local officials, chiefs of police at the village level could have very specific sub-designations unparalleled elsewhere in Ptolemaic bureaucracy. We see chiefs of multiple villages, as well as chiefs of those living around villages, chiefs of villages and the associated or neighboring areas, and chiefs of these areas (or topoi) alone. This high degree of geographic specification suggests a desire to provide broad access to the criminal justice system at all levels of habitation. Such organization ensured police protection not only to the inhabitants of Egyptian towns and villages, but also to those living in sparsely settled outlying areas. In such places there might well have been greater need for an archiphylakítês and his subordinates to protect against wrongdoing. The papyri are filled with references to travelers waylaid by brigands. In many cases, victims appealed for help to the phylakítês and their supervisors.

Geographic specification in circumscription was not limited to police chiefs working in the boondocks, however. Temples, too, had archiphylakítai. The temple of Anoubis in Memphis provides the best example of this phenomenon. The Anoubieion was a decidedly strange place. It was a large complex that served multiple purposes and in which a number of people lived and worked. It required a degree of organization and supervision unnecessary elsewhere and, as such, was outfitted with a police station, officers, and an archiphylakítês. Other evidence suggests that archiphylakítai may have been stationed in more traditional temples, as well, though the data are admittedly hard to interpret. A police force patrolled the temple of Aphrodite in Memphis as well as a temple of Isis in the Oxyrhynchite nome. Supervision for these officials would have been necessary, and an archiphylakítês may have been the man responsible. It is also possible that an archiphylakítês supervised the temple of Serapis in Hermoupolis Magna, though it is perhaps more likely that the official with jurisdiction over the Serapieion was actually the police chief of Hermopolis itself.

22 Multiple villages: Dioskourides: PGenova III 95 verso 1 (Arsinoite, 216 B.C.); 100.1–3 (Arsinoite, 221 B.C.); 102.1–3 (Arsinoite, 221 B.C.); Dioskourides áρχοψυλακήτης Κροκόκων πόλεως καὶ τῶν εἰς τὴν κώμην; 121.1–2 (Arsinoite, III B.C.); perimeters of villages: Stratonicos, SB XIV 11860.1–3 (Arsinoite, II–I B.C.): Στράτωνικος (I) | ἄρχοψυλακήτης τῶν | περί τούς ἄρρητους κόσμους; 121.1–2 (Arsinoite, II–I B.C.); Stratomaticos (?), SB XVI 12528.3 (II–I B.C.): | ca τοις κώμοις τῶν μειρωνισμένων τόπων; Aristoboulos (I), SB IV 1997.1–3 (Tebtynis, II B.C.): Διοκοκὼν καὶ ἄρχοψυλακήτης Κροκόκων πόλεως | καὶ τῶν μειρωνισμένων τόπων; just topos: Aristoboulos (I, 1955 with add.), SB VI 9108.1–18 (Aphroditeopolite, 173–169 B.C.); | ἄρχοψυλακήτης; Dionysodorus (I, 1954 with add.), SB I 4309.3–4 (Arsinoite, III B.C.): τοῦ Διονυσοῦδορος [τοῦ ἄρχοψυλακτητοῦ τῶν ἐν τῷ πάσαν].

23 E.g.: P.Cair.Zen. II 59224 (Arsinoite, 253 B.C.), a petition from a man who had been attacked by a robber (λῃστής) while traveling to Philadelphia and had pointed out the offender to an archiphylakítês; BMil. II 30 (Lykopolis, II B.C.), a fragmentary official letter concerning highway robbery (λῃστεύει), specifically the theft of a himation, and the response (?) of the phylakítai; SB VIII 9792 (Hermopolis Magna, 162 B.C.), a petition from a man who had been attacked by a band of thieves (λῃστέριον) while away from home and robbed of two donkeys, his clothing, and other goods. He had subsequently made an official report to the village phylakítai. For more on bandits and brigandage in Graeco-Roman Egypt see McGing.


25 Archiphylakítai of the Anoubieion: Heriobubastis (Pros. Ptol. 4571), e.g.: P.Bürgch. 16 verso 1 (Memphis, 159 B.C.); Barkaido/Ammonios (?), UPZI 64.1 (Memphis, 156 B.C.; see UPZ I pp316–19); post mentioned at UPZ I 5.6 and 6.6 (Memphis, 163 B.C.). The Anoubieion also had an epistates: on this official and the other administrators of the Memphite Sarapieion see UPZ I pp. 44–45. The epistates of the Anoubieion (as well as the epistates of each of the other temples in the Serapieion complex) seems to have had a decidedly police function and should not be confused with the epistates hierou attested elsewhere (e.g.: BGU VI 1214.7–8 [Arsinoite, ca 185–165 B.C.]; PParamone IV 7.8–9 [Antaoutopolis, II B.C.]; Pyl IV 572.44 [Arsinoite, II B.C.]) who seem to have been connected with the financial administration of the temple(s) under his authority.


27 Archiphylakítai of Hermopolite Serapieion (or of Hermopolis Magna) (?): Dannos, SB VIII 9792.14–15 (Hermopolis Magna, 162 B.C.): Δάννος (sc. ἄρχοψυλακήτης | καὶ τῶν κοιμοψυλακτικῶν). Dannos may have been an archiphylakítês, though since he appears only here and without title, one cannot be certain. In fact, one cannot even be certain that Hermopolis Magna had a police chief. One additional text suggests that chiefs operated in the city, but does not prove that one was stationed there: BGU VI 1222.61 (Hermopolite, 144 B.C.), Beòtides (Pros. Ptol. 4558); and 74–75, Anaxagoras (Pros. Ptol. 4548). Neither Beòtides nor Anaxagoras is given a circumscription.
HIERARCHY?

The documents make it clear that archiphylakitai were found in a variety of locations. As we have seen, chiefs of police at lower levels were not obviously subordinate to those with more elevated posts. Yet this was generally not the case with other government positions that were arranged geographically. Government scribes, for example, were arranged in a strict succession of rank. Village and district scribes (kómo- and topogrammateis, respectively) were subordinate to those of royal rank (the basilikoi grammateis).28 That the scribal hierarchy was meaningful is illuminated by a second-century letter from a basilikos grammateus (P.Tebt. I 10 [Ptolemais Euergetis?, 119 B.C.]). In this document, the basilikos grammateus (Asklepiades, 1) writes to a topogrammateus (Marres, 1 and 9) requesting that the latter official supply “the papers of his office” (tα της χεις γράμματα, 6) to a newly appointed kómoogrammateus (the well-known Menches) and see to it that the kómoogrammateus fulfill the obligations of his office.29 The chain of command is clear: the basilikos grammateus provided instruction to the various topogrammateis, who in turn were responsible for instructing the kómoogrammateis below them. Yet surprisingly, the evidence seems to indicate that the Ptolemaic hierarchy of archiphylakitai was a hierarchy of equals: that is, that the various lower-level chiefs did not form a ranked succession of officials. There is no evidence that lower-ranking archiphylakitai within a given nome ever reported to higher-ranking ones. In fact, not a single piece of correspondence between Ptolemaic police chiefs survives. This is especially striking, given the great amount of correspondence that has survived from other areas of Ptolemaic administration (the scribal hierarchy, for instance).30 It suggests that archiphylakitai within the nome operated entirely independently of one another. The Ptolemies seem to have installed archiphylakitai at numerous geographic levels so as to provide easy public access to the police system at a variety of points and to ensure protection for the inhabitants of even the remotest settlements. They do not appear to have intended to establish a system of checks and balances between archiphylakitai in different positions. Higher-level police chiefs may have been superior in terms of titular prestige, but there is no solid proof that chiefs of nomes, toparchies, and merides had more important responsibilities, garnered better wages, or commanded a broader range of subordinates than those in towns, villages, and districts.

Nor is there any evidence that lower-level archiphylakitai could gain promotion to higher-level posts. To be sure, the documents demonstrate that archiphylakitai might hold other positions in the Ptolemaic administration after (or even concurrent with) their tenure as chiefs. For instance, a man named Aniketos was archiphylaktikēs and epistatēs of Euhemeria; a Theodotos was archiphylaktikēs and oikonomos; and a certain Heliodoros filled the posts of archiphylaktikēs, epistatēs, and kómoogrammateus (though not necessarily all at the same time), probably in Theadelphia.31 The reasons behind these dual (and even triple) appointments are unclear, but it seems probable that many archiphylakitai who held additional posts were enabled to do so because they worked in less densely-populated

---


29 On this letter and the three scribes it concerns, see Verhoogt 60 with notes 42 and 43.

30 Archives provide our best window on Ptolemaic officials and their circles of correspondence. See Verhoogt for detailed information on the archive of Menches, kómogrammateus of Kerkeosiris in the late second century B.C.; P.Diosk. for the archive of Dioskourides, plounarchos of Herakleopolis, which covers the years 154–145 B.C.; P.Enteux. for a collection of documents addressed to and concerning epistatēi and stratēgoi; and Pestman for a guide to the best known archive from the Ptolemaic period, the correspondence of Zenon (manager of the great estate of the dioskētēs, Apollonios, at Philadelphia), which covers the years 261–229/8 B.C.

lated areas of the *chôra* and thus had fewer demands on their time than chiefs of more populous regions. But though they might occasionally assume additional government posts in their vicinity, men serving as *archiphylaktai* seem never to have changed their geographical domains or to have attained a higher-ranking police position within a given area. That is, there are no cases where, for example, the chief of one village turns up later as chief of another. Similarly, there are no cases of a village *archiphylaktês* eventually attaining the position of police chief of the *merîs*, toparchy, or nome in which his village was located. Though a man might have expected a fairly long career as a chief of police, he evidently would not have expected opportunities for horizontal or vertical movement within the ranks of the *archiphylaktai*.

32 Indeed, of all the *archiphylaktai* who held multiple appointments during their careers (cited in the previous note), only one worked in a city (polis), not a village (*kômé*): Sisinnios, *archiphylaktês* and *epistates* of Syene.

33 In a handful of cases *archiphylaktai* with the same given name are found in different locations but at the same administrative level within a twenty-five-year period. For example, a Herakleides was *archiphylaktês* of the Arsinoite nome in 243 B.C. (*P.Bürgch. 23.4, 4–5, 15–16, 17–18 [Ghoran]) while another was *archiphylaktês* of the Herakleopolite in 218 B.C. (*Chrest. Wîlc. 166.ii.10 [Arsinoite]). Unfortunately, the prosopographical data for this case (and others like it) does not prove that one man held both posts.

34 There are no instances in which *archiphylaktai* with the same first name are found at different levels of police administration within a given nome and within a twenty-five-year period. Thus, if vertical movement among *archiphylaktai* took place, it may have entailed a switch of nomes. For example, a man named Dionysios appears to have been *archiphylaktês* of Rhodonos Neso (a Herakleopolite village) in 137 B.C. (*P. Genova; Pros. Ptol. III 102.2–3): Sisinnios, *archiphylaktês* of Moithymis (*Pros. Ptol. 166.ii.10 [Arsinoite]). Yet aside from the name they share there is no firm proof that these two men were actually one and the same.

35 Careers for *archiphylaktai* could be fairly long. At least a few men held their posts for more than five years. Dikaios, *archiphylaktês* of Moithymis (*Pros. Ptol. 4562 with add.*), may have been chief of police for six years or more: compare *P.Heid. VII 394 (214 B.C.) and *PKôla* V 216 (209 B.C.). This may also have been the case with Dioskourides, *archiphylaktês* of Krokoûlopolis *καὶ τῶν εἰς Ἰσραηλίαν* (*PGovan III 102.2–3: PGoven III 102 (221 B.C.) and 95 (216 B.C.). Patron, *archiphylaktês* of the Kato toparchy of the Oxyrhynchite nome (*Pros. Ptol. 4592 with add.* = 4711 with add.), may have been in office more than eight years: *P.Teb. III 2 939 (242 B.C.). Philon, *archiphylaktês* of the Polemon *merîs* (*Pros. Ptol. 321.8–9: 337.1 (Pathyris, 108 B.C.)). Yet though room for advancement may have been limited, in other respects the organization of *archiphylaktai* was quite flexible. Petitioners seem to have been aware of this. Police chiefs were the most common recipients of appeals for justice in Egyptian villages, but it does not seem to have been the case that appeals necessarily began with chiefs at the town or village level. For example, in a second-century petition, a group of sisters living in the village of Pathyris noted that they had previously submitted a petition to the *archiphylaktês* of the Pathyrite nome (*P.Dryton 33 [? 136 B.C.]). Yet in doing so, they bypassed the *archiphylaktês* of the village of Pathyris, ostensibly the first level of appeal for troubled townsfolk. Similarly, a pair of bail agreements in Egyptian Demotic illustrates that someone attempting to post bail for a prisoner did not necessarily have to contact the *archiphylaktês* of the locale in which the offender was being detained (*P.Bürgch. 22 and 23 [Ghoran, 243 B.C.]). In both applications (each of which concerns a separate case) bail was arranged for a prisoner in the village of Pirais in the Thebmites *merîs* of the Arsinoite nome. Yet while one of the documents was addressed to the *archiphylaktês* of Pirais (*P.Bürgch. 23*), the other was sent to the *archiphylaktês* of the Thebmites *merîs* (*P.Bürgch. 22*). Such seemingly misdirected appeals suggest that villagers exploited the elasticity of the police system to receive the best possible outcome for their complaints. Not limited to appealing to strictly local officials, victims of crime in Ptolemaic Egypt might very well direct their petitions to government agents with broader geographical competencies in the hopes of ensuring a faster and perhaps more satisfactory resolution to their complaints.
Superiors

Epistatai

We have seen that the hierarchy of Ptolemaic police chiefs was flat. To whom did archiphylakitai turn for instruction? The evidence demonstrates that chiefs of police at all levels of administration within the nome regularly reported not to another chief or military officer, but rather to a civil official appointed by the central government. In the small settlements of the Egyptian countryside, epistatai were the officials to whom archiphylakitai most commonly turned for instruction.39 Epistatai had many duties in the realm of policing, a number of which were similar to those of the archiphylakitai and phylakitai. They visited crime scenes, inspected evidence, sealed homes, interrogated witnesses and suspects, made arrests, transported alleged criminals for trials, and prevented harassment.40 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.41 But they also performed a number of additional functions that archiphylakitai did not, among these delivering summonses to Ptolemaic courts, expelling squatters, and sitting on advisory councils with other government officials.42 Perhaps the most important of their duties was the administration of trials and examinations in Egyptian towns and villages. Dozens of documents reveal that epistatai meted out justice at the behest of both petitioners and higher government officials.43

Epistatai in Egyptian villages, towns, and districts also commonly handed out instructions to archiphylakitai at the same level. A third-century letter to an epistates concerning the premature release of a donkey thief by an archiphylaktis and his failure to return the donkey to its owner makes it clear that the orders of the epistates were binding on the archiphylaktis and his failure to return the donkey to its owner makes it clear that the orders of the epistates were binding on the archiphylaktis (P.Hib. I 73 [Oxyrhynchite, 244–243 B.C.]).44 The writer lays the blame for the failed transaction squarely upon the shoulders of the chief and notes that he had disobeyed direct orders (prostagma) from the epistates. Another third-century document suggests that an archiphylaktis might occasionally be prevented from taking action unless he had first received written permission from the epistates (SB X 10272 [Magdola, III B.C.]). In this text, an archiphylaktis seeks a letter from an epistates authorizing him to inspect a house.45 As both of these

39 On epistatai see Lavigne; also Van’t Dack (1949) 39–44, (1951) 20–23 and 46–47, and 1989; and Wolff 171–76. The third-century documents published as P.Euste: provide a good survey of the variety of duties, both police and civil, that an epistates was required to perform; see the introduction.

40 Inspecting crime scenes/evidence: P.Münch. III.1 55 (Heraakleopolite, II B.C.); P.Stras. II 100 (?, II B.C.); sealing homes: SB I 4309 (Arsinoite, III I.B.C.); interrogations, e.g.: P.Heid. VIII 416 (Heraakleopolite, II B.C.); P.Tor.Amen. 7 (Thebes, 119–117 B.C.); SB III 7177 (Heraakleopolite, 243 B.C.); arresting and transporting criminals, e.g.: BGU VI 1244 (Heraakleopolite, 225 B.C.); Chrest.Mitt. 12 (Arsinoite, 244–222 B.C.); P.Bingen 44 (? 1 B.C.); preventing harassment, e.g.: PDion. 11 (Hermopolite, 108 B.C.); P.Euste. 87 (Alabanthis, 222 B.C.); P.Mil.Congr.XVII pg21/22 (Arsinoite, after 142–141 B.C.).

41 Notifications, e.g.: BGUVI I 1214 (Arsinoite, ca 185–165 B.C.); P.Grenf. II 37 (Pa- thyris, 108 B.C.); P.Rain.Cent. 45 (197–190 B.C.); petitions, e.g.: BGU VI 1251 (Philadelphia, 155 or 144 B.C.); P.Euste. I 4 (Oxyrhynchite, II B.C.); P.Kolin III 140 (Arsinoite, 244–242 or 219–217 B.C.); present at auctions: UPZ II 219 and 221 (Thebes, 130 B.C.); issued receipts: O.Bodl. I 111 (Thebes), 140 B.C.; collected tax arrears, e.g.: Chrest.Wick: 55 (Psenyris, III B.C.); P.Berl.Dem. I 15522 (Elephantine, III–I B.C.); P.Tebt. III.1 746 (Tebtynis, 243 B.C.).

42 Delivering summonses, e.g.: P.Euste. 43 (Magdola, 222 B.C.); 51 (Magdola, after 222 B.C.); P.Hib. II 203 (?, 246–221 B.C.); expelling squatters: BGUVI III 1006 (?, III B.C.); P.Euste. 10 (Magdola, 221 B.C.); 14 (Magdola, 222 B.C.); advisory councils: P.Ryl. IV 572 (Arsinoite, II II B.C.).


44 See also P.Hib. I 34 (Oxyrhynchite, 243 B.C.) on this same incident. The archiphylaktis in question is Patron, archiphylaktis of the Kato toparchy of the Oxyrhynchite nome (see above, note 19).

45 The writer of this letter, a certain Pasis, is not given a title in the document; but it is likely that he is to be identified with Pasis, archiphylaktis of Alabanthis (Pros. Ptol. 4591).
documents demonstrate, the chief of police in a given area answered to the local epistatés and received his instructions from that official. Had he also been responsible to a higher-ranking chief, there would have been potential for conflict between the epistatés (the head man on the scene) and the commanding archiphylakités (who would not necessarily have been a local or fully informed of local events). By establishing a hierarchy of equals among archiphylakitai, the Ptolemies not only ensured fast access to law enforcement for the inhabitants of the chôra, but also simplified the official chain of command.

Stratégoi

Epistatai gave orders to archiphylakitai and received their own orders from the de facto governors of the nomes, the stratégoi.46 Though it is clear that epistatai had close connections to the stratégos, the archiphylakités seems never to have received instructions from him. Even in those cases where petitioners or other officials sought out the assistance of the stratégos in reprimanding or instructing an archiphylakités, the stratégos always contacted the epistatés in charge of the region in question. Three third-century petitions addressed to the king and queen make this quite clear (P.Enteux. 24, 50 [Magdola, 221 B.C.], and 82 [Trikomia, 221 B.C.]).47 In each case, a petitioner requested that the stratégos contact the archiphylakités of his (that is, the petitioner’s) town or village to perform the same duty: transfer an accused for trial. But in none of these cases did the stratégos write to the archiphylakités; instead, he invariably wrote to the epistatés of the village in question.48 The reasons for this are perhaps not difficult to fathom. Archiphylakitai were primarily officials of town or village competence who supervised the activities of the phylakitai and were generally given ample freedom to attend to matters of law and order in their communities. It is unclear precisely how or by whom archiphylakitai were recruited, but the surviving evidence suggests that hiring was done in Egyptian villages.49 Thus, nome-level officials such as the stratégos may not have been personally familiar with archiphylakitai in the chôra.

Such officials were clearly familiar with epistatai, however. In fact, stratégoi were at least occasionally responsible for hiring epistatai, to judge from one text, a petition to the stratégos from a number of crown cultivators (P.Têbt. III.1 788 [Oxyrhyncha, 143 B.C.]). In their petition, the writers recall the former’s appointment of trustworthy epistatai to whom instructions had been given by the sovereigns to prevent extortion. As this document demonstrates, the epistatés served as a representative of nome-level government at the village level. He was an intermediary between the local population and the central government but was also responsible for supervising law enforcement in his locality, including archiphylakitai. For the most part, however, it was only through the town or village police chief that the epistatés had a connection to the phylakitai. The epistatés 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 stratégos) or below (via petitions from villagers), and often simply delegated to the local archiphylakités and his men. When he did act, however, the epistatés might perform many of the same tasks of the archiphylakités below him.

Epistatai Phylakitôn

Epistatai were the geographically closest, but not the only officials who supervised police chiefs. At the nome level, epistatai phylakitôn, the police commissioners of the Ptolemaic empire, were responsible for tying up

---

46 On the Ptolemaic stratégos see above all Bengtson III and Hohlwein; also Mooren and Van ’t Dack (1948). P.Enteux. reveals that the stratégos was the judicial official of primary importance in the third century for criminal cases; see also Wolff 162–63. (For judges in civil cases, see Wolff 48–53 [laokritai] and 64–89 [chrêmatistai].) As P.Enteux. demonstrates, stratégoi had direct contact (via official correspondence; at least) with the various civil epistatai.

47 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 stratégos. P.Enteux. ppxxi-xl.

48 A fourth petition addressed to the sovereigns and requesting that the stratégos have an archiphylakités transfer an accused for trial survives but its subscription is almost entirely lost (P.Enteux. 77 [Magdola, 221 B.C.]).

49 See Chest. Wik. 331 (Kerkeosiris, 113 B.C.), a copy of a letter from the dioikêtês to Hermias, ho epi tôn prôsodôn, 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 Bauschatz 149–52.
administrative loose ends left dangling by *archiphylakitai*.\(^{50}\) The documents reveal that *epistatai phyλakítōn* had a number of functions similar to those of *archiphylakitai*. They were present at auctions and in courts, collected and protected tax revenues, received petitions and circulars, transported offenders, and investigated crimes.\(^{51}\) A second-century petition addressed to an *epistatēs phyλakítōn* makes it clear that this official was an appropriate appeals court for issues that had not received satisfactory resolution at the hands of the local police (SB VIII 9792 [Hermopolis Magna, 162 b.c.]). The petitioner noted that he had filed an initial complaint of theft with the local *phyλakítai*. Remedying action was taken, but the case was not cracked. Consequently, the petitioner appealed to the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* in the hopes that the involvement of the higher authority might speed the wheels of justice.\(^{52}\) In another second-century petition a priest requested that a village *archiphylakítai* send some men who had perpetrated an assault to the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* (P'Tebt. III.1 797 [Berenikis Thesmophorou, II b.c.]). The petitioner seems to have understood that higher-level police chiefs in the nome (in this case *archiphylakítai* of the Polemon meris or the Arsinoite nome itself) were

\(^{50}\) On the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* see above all Kool 67–85; also Berneker 78–79; Van ’t Dack (1949) 40–44; and di Bitonto Kasert (1985) 3–5; on the relationship of the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* and the *archiphylakítai*, Kool 100–104; Chrest. Wilck. I pp411–12; PHib. I 34 p. 175 n. on 1; and P’Tebt. I 5 pp. 46–47 n. on 159.

\(^{51}\) At auctions: P'Ryl. II 253 (Hermopolis Magna, 142 b.c.); in courts, e.g.: BGUVI 1252 (Arsinoite, II b.c.); P'Ryl. II 68 (Hermopolis Magna, 89 b.c.); SB VIII 9792 (Hermopolis Magna, 162 b.c.); collecting/ protecting revenue, e.g.: C.Ord.Ptol. 2 53,138–46 (Kerkeosiris, 118 b.c.); P.König VII 313A.1–6, 25–27 (Oxyrhynchos?, 186 b.c.); P’Tebt. III.1 793.iV.1–6 (Berenikis Thesmophorou, 183 b.c.); petitions to: P'Ryl. II 68 (Hermopolis Magna, 89 b.c.); SB VIII 9792 (Hermopolis Magna, 162 b.c.); circulars to, e.g.: C.Ord.Ptol. 2 52 (Memphis, 99 b.c.); C.Gen. III 132 (Herakleopolite, II b.c.); SB XXII 15766 (Arsinoite, 223 or 181 b.c.); transporting offenders: P'Diok. 4 (Herakleopolite, 153 b.c.); ZPE 141 (2002) 187–89 (?); P'Heid. IX, “Anhang zu 423”, p. 44 n. on 20–21; investigating crimes, e.g.: P'Heid. IX 423.18–22 (Tebetny, 158 b.c.); 425 (Herakleopolis, 158 b.c.); P’Tebt. III.2 857 (Herakleopolite, 162 b.c.).

\(^{52}\) An *epistatēs phyλakítōn* might also redirect a petition sent to him. In one instance a petitioner wrote to the *oikonomos* to request that an offender be transported, presumably for examination (BGUVI 1244 [Herakleopolite, 225 b.c.]). The *oikonomos* forwarded the petition to the *epistatēs phyλakítōn*, who then forwarded the document again, this time to the village *epistatēs*, with instructions for the apprehension and transport of the accused.

not the natural points of contact for the village chief.\(^{53}\) He also may have realized that even an *archiphylakítēs* with a geographical competency broader than the bounds of his village would not guarantee the same level of satisfaction as a nome-level agent of the central government. The petition mentioned above suggests that an *archiphylakítēs* might contact an *epistatēs phyλakítōn*, or at least arrange for news or detainee s to reach him. Our information on the relationship between these two officials is unfortunately quite limited, in spite of the fact that we know quite a bit about the government agents with whom the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* might associate. He crossed paths with officials from a number of different areas. Correspondence between *epistatai phyλakítōn* and basilikoi grammateis, *epistatai, oikonomoi, stratēgoi*, and *thērophylakes* survives.\(^{54}\) We have examples of officials sending men to the *epistatēs phyλakítōn*, as well as the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* being sent to other officials.\(^{55}\) We also have examples of the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* sitting in council, performing investigations, and serving on a panel of judges with other

\(^{53}\) *Archiphylakítai* of the Polemon meris: see above, note 18; of the Arsinoite nome: note 16.

\(^{54}\) The archive of the basilikos grammateus Dionysios (P'Heid. IX) contains a number of documents forwarded by Dionysios (or one of his subordinates) to the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* with instructions for action: 423 (Tebetny, 158 b.c.); 425 (Herakleopolis, 158 b.c.); 426 (?) (Herakleopolis, 158 b.c.); 430 (?) (Herakleopolis, 161–155 b.c.); and 434 (?) (Herakleopolite, 161–155 b.c.). It also may contain a petition to the basilikos grammateus in which the writer requests that the recipient write to the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* to carry out an investigation: 432 (Herakleopolite, 161–155 b.c.). In addition, in ZPE 141 (2002) 188 verso 20 (Herakleopolite, 137 b.c.), a basilikos grammateus begins a draft of a letter to an *epistatēs phyλakítōn*. BGUVI 1244 (Herakleopolite, 225 b.c.) consists of a petition originally sent to the *oikonomos* who forwarded it to the *epistatēs phyλakítōn*, who in turn forwarded it to an *epistatēs*. In another petition (BGUVIII 1854 [Herakleopolite, 74–73 or 45–44 a.c.2]), the writer requests that the recipient, a stratēgos, contact the *epistatēs phyλakítōn*. Finally, PPet. III 130.16–17 (Arsinoite, III b.c.) preserves the beginning of a letter from an *epistatēs phyλakítōn* (who was also an *archiphylakítēs*) to a number of officials lost in lacuna (?), as well as the [ — ] _ippoi_ and _thērophylakes_.

\(^{55}\) In P'Diok. 4 (Herakleopolite, 153 b.c.?), a scribe informs the phrourarchos Dioskourides that the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* is on his way to take custody of a pair of men who will then be sent to the dioikētēs. In P’Tebt. III.1 793.iV.1–6 (Berenikis Thesmophorou, 183 b.c.), petitioners ask an *epistatēs* that he write to an official with the title ho _pros tēs_ _synukset_ so that the latter will send the *epistatēs phyλakítōn* to be present for the measurement of some grain (?).
officials. Yet only two documents shed any real light on the official relationship between the archiphylakítês and the epistatès philakítôn. The first of these, a petition to an archiphylakítês in which the chief is asked to send some offenders to the epistatès philakítôn (P.Tebt. III.1 797, mentioned above), makes it clear that an archiphylakítês might transport people to an epistatès philakítôn, or at least that a petitioner might assume that a chief could perform this task. The second text seems to suggest that an archiphylakítês might serve as an agent of an epistatès philakítôn (P.Hamb. II 172 [Oxyrhynchite, 246 b.c.]). This document, an official letter, preserves an order from a man named Apollodotos to a man named Nikanor instructing Nikanor to pay Apollodotos’ agent Theophiles a certain amount of money to cover the back-wages of some archiphylakítai. Based on the circumstances, the editors of Pros. Ptol. VIII suggested that Apollodotos (Pros. Ptol. 4524a) was an epistatès philakítôn and that Theophiles (Pros. Ptol. 4543a) was an archiphylakítês. These identifications are far from certain, however; and, in addition, we find references in other texts to agents of the epistatès philakítôn, but in no case is a subordinate given a police title. It seems premature, therefore, to conclude that there was a close relationship between archiphylakítai and epistatíti philakítôn, and ultimately it must remain uncertain whether epistatíti philakítôn ever contacted the police chiefs in their nomes.

Financial Officials

Oikonomoi

We have seen that chiefs were in close contact with the civil epistatíti in the towns and villages of the Egyptian chôra and received many of their orders from these officials, and also that chiefs sometimes answered to the epistatès philakítôn, a nome-level representative of the philakítai. Yet police chiefs did not receive instruction from these two officers exclusively. From time to time, officials charged with economic oversight gave orders to archiphylakítai. The papyri reveal that oikonomoi occasionally gave instructions to archiphylakítai and other police officials in their administrative districts to attend to financial and agricultural malfeasance. In one case the Herakleopolite oikonomos forwarded instructions concerning the prevention of smuggling of beehives and cows to the archiphylakítai and philakítai of the Herakleopolite nome (P.Heid. VI 362 [Herakleopolite, 226 b.c.]). The oikonomoi 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 oikonomoi made a similar request of the archiphylakítai and philakítai with regard to a number of cowherds. Those caught rustling cattle may have been arrested, transported under guard (meta philakê) to Herakleopolis, and tried. The oikonomoi did not have police powers, but he did have the authority to co-opt archiphylakítai 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 archiphylakítês was more complicated. In one instance an official in charge of the export of grain reported that the archiphylakítês of the Herak-
leopoleite nome had arrested some Arsinoite shipbuilders (Chrest. Wilck. 166 [Arsinoite, 218 B.C.]). The chief had also ignored the commands of the Arsinoite oikonomoi to release them, insisting that he would only answer to the epimelētes or dioikētes.61 Was this simple negligence or was the archiphylaktēs 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 oikonomoi addressed to a Memphite archiphylaktēs, seems to suggest that he could (P.Heid. VII 393 [Arsinoite/Memphite, III b.c.]).62 In this case, however, the fact that the two officials were from different nomes was not necessarily a barrier to the chain of command.63 Unfortunately, we are uninformed as to what action (if any) the police chief took in response to the oikonomoi’ strict order to arrest a bath attendant.64 Consequently the question of the administrative domain of the oikonomoi must remain open.

The issue of hierarchy between the oikonomoi and the archiphylaktēs 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 oikonomoi was the most important financial official in the nome, but that by some point in the second he had become less so as the epimelētes and the stratēgōs gained greater fiscal responsibility (P.Tebt. I 5 pp. 46–47 n. on 159). Such a weakening in the position of the oikonomoi is suggested by the documents. As we have already seen, three third-century texts demonstrate that oikonomoi might give orders to archiphylaktaī.65

A handful of government circulars likewise suggests that oikonomoi had higher standing than archiphylaktaī in the third century. In perhaps as many as four instances, oikonomoi were listed before archiphylaktaī among the addressess of official memoranda.66 Two government documents from the second century provide perhaps the latest evidence for the superiority of the oikonomoi. In the first, a record of a government auction, the oikonomoi is listed first among the additional officials present at the proceedings, among these an archiphylaktēs.67 In the second, a circular, a number of officials including archiphylaktaī received word from a higher (unknown) source of certain regulations from the office of the oikonomoi concerning the royal bank.68 By 140 B.C. the archiphylaktaī appears to have gained ground on the oikonomoi. This is suggested by two royal decrees in which archiphylaktaī are listed before oikonomoi in the lists of addressess.

61 The Ptolemaic epimelētes was an upper-level official who had authority in certain areas of financial administration. Berneker 90–94 remains the authority for this post. On the dioikētes, one of the chief civil and financial officials in Ptolemaic Egypt, see Berneker 80–89 and Thomas.

62 Neither the oikonomoi, Zephyros, nor the archiphylaktēs, Dikaios, is given a title in the document. For the identification of Zephyros see Pros. Pol. 1041a and P.Heid. VII pp42–44; for Dikaios, Pros. Pol. 4562 with add.

63 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.

64 4–7: κατάστρωσαν | έφ’ ήρμης και μη ἄλλως | ποιήσασεν | εῦ δὲ μης | ἀδικήσεις.

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

As the power of the oikonomos waned, that of the epimelētai increased, at least vis-à-vis the archiphylakitai. We have already seen that as early as the third century a chief refused to obey the orders of an oikonomos, requiring instead that he receive instruction from the epimelētai (Chrest. Wilck. 166; see above). Elsewhere an epimelētai was asked to write to the archiphylakitai (and one other official, lost in lacuna) to provide protection for a petitioner (P.Petr. II 1 [Arsinoite, III b.c.]). These texts reveal that the epimelētai had regular contact with chiefs. He also had supervisory jurisdiction over them. In fact, archiphylakitai may have answered to epimelētai for personnel problems during the genēmatophylakia.70 In one case a police officer informed another official (without title) that certain genēmatophylakes appointed by the police chief of the meris had failed to appear (P.Tebt. III.1 731 [Tebtynis/IBion Eikosipentarouron, 153–152 or 142–141 b.c.]). The information was to be passed on to the epimelētai for administrative problems.71 Archiphylakitai and other police agents were expected to hand over smugglers and their wares to the village of Pois discovered someone breaking into a granary (P.Tebt. III.2 857 [Herakleopolite, 162 b.c.]). Subsequently, an investigation into the crime was opened by the basilikos grammateus, an agent of the epimelētai, and the epistatē phylakiton. A final example preserves a direct order from an epimelētai to an archiphylakitai not to harass certain individuals until the former arrived to examine their statements (P.Tebt. III.1 741 [Tebtynis, 187–186 b.c.]). The original matter had concerned a debt of grain.

The archiphylakitai, oikonomos, and epimelētai were all actively involved in state financial business and the administrative ties that bound them were crucial to the state’s financial well-being. The connection between the three highlights once again the flexibility of the Ptolemaic police system. Archiphylakitai and their subordinates received requests from villagers and commands from civil and police officials concerning matters of law and order, but also provided an available source of muscle and manpower for the regulation of state finances at the town or village level. Chiefs received instruction from three different sets of government officials (epistatai, epistatē phylakiton, and oikonomoi epimelētai) from three different spheres of government (civil, police, and financial). The stationing of police chiefs throughout the chōra provided fast and reliable access to victims of crime, but also enabled the central government to ensure the protection of its resources—both human and financial—at all points. Those charged with supervising the economy could rest assured that in practically every corner of the Egyptian countryside there was an archiphylakitai on the ground with a contingent of phylakitai to enforce financial regulations. Chiefs of police and their subordinates were the natural choice for the safeguarding of crown assets.

Conclusions

As the most immediate level of judicial appeal, archiphylakitai were intimately connected to their local populations and served as the first line of defense against crime in the towns and villages of the Egyptian

---

70 On the genēmatophylakia see, for example, Bauschatz 148–52, 158–66; P.Mich. XVIII 769 pp99–103 with notes; and P.Tebt. I 27 with notes.

71 At least, this appears to be what the text suggests (8–10): ἢ ἔμεθα δὲν γράψομαι [ἐν] ἑαυτῷ ἡ διακονίας καὶ ἐπέπληξην περὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπὶ ἑαυτὸν γένηται. See P.Tebt. III.1 709, 1–3 (Tebtynis, 159 b.c.), where an official with the title ὁ πρὸς τὴν διαδικασίαν τῶν βασιλίκων χαρτῶν informs a number of village officials in Talei (among these the epistatēs, the archiphylakitai, and the phylakitai) that they are to hand over both papyrus smugglers and their contraband to the epimelētai.
chôra. They filled positions at the various administrative levels of the nome, but do not appear to have communicated directly with one another, instead receiving instruction from a handful of civil, police, and financial officials. The hierarchy of chiefs was flat and their widespread occurrence was designed to provide petitioners with fast and relatively direct access to government redress in even the most distant and sparsely settled areas, as well as to protect the state’s financial interests throughout Egypt. These are important and surprising revelations, when one considers the long-held view of Ptolemaic bureaucracy: that it was a regular, rigidly structured system based on a generally lengthy, and correspondingly slow, chain of command.73 The Ptolemaic system of law and order was an exception to the rule: a surprisingly diverse and efficient entity. Archiphylakitai, who occupied the lowest administrative rung on the law enforcement ladder, were its most flexible and functional cogs.

Department of Classics
The University of Arizona
1512 E. First St., #203
PO Box 210105
Tucson, AZ 85721-0105
jbausch1@email.arizona.edu

73 Manning 3–4 assails this traditional, but increasingly unpopular “strong state model” (his quotes) for Ptolemaic Egypt; see his notes 2 and 3 for a handful of its proponents; also Rostovzeff 267–74 and Finley 154–55 on the rigidity of the Ptolemaic economic system (and Hellenistic economic systems in general); Bevan 132–39 and Hölbl 58–61 for the Ptolemaic bureaucracy (in Hölbl’s case, that of Ptolemy I, II, and III); and Chauveau 87–90 on the status of native Egyptians under the Ptolemies.

WORKS CITED


