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**Author:** Bruning, Jelle  
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CHAPTER 2

THE COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF ALEXANDRIA AFTER THE FOUNDATION OF AL-FUSTĀṬ

“When ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ conquered Alexandria he found there twelve thousand green grocers who were selling fresh vegetables.”

When the Gaulish bishop Arculf visited Alexandria around the year 50/670 on his way from Yāfā on the coast of Palestine to Constantinople, he experienced the city as ‘a port which is, in a manner, the emporium of the whole world, for innumerable people from all parts go there for commerce’. Despite the fact that Arculf – or, perhaps better, Adomnan (d. 85/704), who penned Arculf’s travelogue – based his wording on a passage in Strabo’s Geographika (XVII 1, 13), his description was certainly not misplaced. It is true that archaeological research shows that the city gradually lost some of its classical grandeur from the A.D. fourth century onwards. But it kept enough of its splendour to impress visitors and to allow for a mass of, sometimes wondrous, descriptions of the city in medieval literature. Despite this urban transformation and in spite of changing

1 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, Futūḥ, p. 82.
2 Wright, Early travels in Palestine, pp. 10-1.
trade patterns and a decreasing number of inhabitants,\(^6\) most modern scholars agree that Alexandria possessed a thriving economy up to the late-second/eighth century.\(^7\)

This chapter addresses an aspect of the relationship between al-Fustat and Alexandria which has yet received little attention: the impact of the development of al-Fustat’s commercial role in the province on domestic and international trade in and with Alexandria. A close examination of various types of sources reveals that, regardless of al-Fustat’s gradually growing commercial centrality, Alexandria maintained its markets through their international character. Even though the city’s commerce leaned more and more towards its Egyptian hinterland, its markets’ international character distinguished Alexandria

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from markets elsewhere, such as in al-Fustat. It will be argued that this internationality allowed for much commercial continuity in the first century after the foundation of al-Fustat. Nonetheless, Alexandria relinquished some of its economic as well as political privileges to al-Fustat in the first half of the second/eighth century. This is in perfect keeping with al-Fustat’s attainment of an upper hand position during that period in its administrative relationship with Alexandria, detected in the previous chapter. Before we focus our attention on Alexandria, we start with a short overview of commercial activity involving al-Fustat in the first century and a half after the Arab conquest.

1. Al-Fustat: commercial activity in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries
In light of the distribution of ‘atāʾ among al-Fustat’s considerable Arab population, it is not surprising that the town became a commercial centre soon after its establishment. Indeed, medieval literary sources refer to commerce in the town during the first years of its existence. They claim that the town hosted a number of markets already soon after its foundation. Medieval historiographers mention alleged first/seventh-century markets named after contemporary individuals or events such as Sūq Wardān,8 Sūq Barbar,9 or Saqīfat Abī al-Ḥuṣayn.10 The historian and geographer al-Ya`qūbī, mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, writes that ‘Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ himself erected markets around his mosque in al-Fustat.11 Similar information cannot be found elsewhere. It is very likely that al-Ya`qūbī refers to a house ‘Amr b. al-ʿĀṣ built for the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Ḥaṭṭāb, in the proximity of the mosque, which the caliph is said to have donated to the Arab

8 Named after Wardān ar-Rūmī (d. 53/672), a client of ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ. See Ibn Duqmāq, al-İntisār, IV, p. 32; Yāqūt ar-Rūmī, Muḥām ad-buldān, III, p. 284.
10 Part of the house of, and named after, one Abī al-Ḥuṣayn Hayṭam b. Šufayy, who participated in the conquest. See Ibn Yūnus, Taʾriḥ, I, p. 499 [no. 1364].
11 Al-Ya`qūbī, Buldān, p. 118.
community and subsequently became a slave market.\textsuperscript{12} Although the historicity of (the date and naming of) these markets is not certain, a recently-published document from the late-first/seventh or early-second/eighth century mentions two of them in addition to a roofed market (Ar. saqīfā) in one of Al-Fustāṭ’s northern suburbs. This document implies the markets’ existence prior to the date of the document’s composition.\textsuperscript{13}

Scattered information on Al-Fustāṭ’s early-Arab community confirms commercial activity in the town soon after its establishment. The Egyptian historian Ibn Duqmāq (d. 790/1388) reports that Qays b. Sa’d b. ‘Ubāda, who headed Egypt’s governorate in 37/657, possessed a watering place for camels (Ar. munāḫ) where he had a sugar refinery (Ar. maṭbaḥ).\textsuperscript{14} The same author writes that a daughter of Maslama b. Muḥallad owned an empty plot of land (Ar. faḍāʾ) where working animals (Ar. dawābb) were sold.\textsuperscript{15} Interestingly, this seems to have pre-dated the end of the caliphate of Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (r. 41/661-60/680) when all vacant plots in Al-Fustāṭ are said to have had been built over.\textsuperscript{16} Furthermore, a son of the ṣaḥābī Ka’b b. Yasār b. Ṭūnna possessed an inn (Ar. qaysāriyya) near to the heart of the town in the early-60s/680s.\textsuperscript{17} Although such snippets of information can surely be taken to indicate that the tax money distributed among the Arabs as ‘aṭā’ was locally spent,\textsuperscript{18} they tell us hardly anything on Al-Fustāṭ’s commercial hinterland. For this, we need to turn to non-literary sources.

\textsuperscript{13} Sijpesteijn, “A seventh/eighth-century list of companions”, p. 372, lines 4, 7, and 9. Interestingly, this document tells that at the time of its composition Sūq Barbar was known as (the more logical) Sūq al-Barbar, ‘the Berbers’ market’ (see Sijpesteijn, “A seventh/eighth-century list”, p. 374, commentary at line 4).
\textsuperscript{14} Ibn Duqmāq, al-Intiṣār, IV, p. 34. One al-Muṭṭalib b. ‘Abd Allāh, Qays b. Sa’d’s ‘partner’ (Ar. ṣāḥīb), was in charge of the watering place. The term maṭbaḥ is generally used for a sugar refinery (see Dénoix, Décrire le Caire, p. 87), but Ibn Sa’īd (al-Muqrīb fi ḫulā al-Muqrīb), eds Z.M. Hasan, Š. Dayf & S.I. Kāṣif, 2 vols, Cairo: Maṭbaʿat Ğāmiʿat Fuʿād al-Awwal, 1953, I, p. 11) writes about a maṭbaḥ producing soap (Ar. ṣābūn).
\textsuperscript{15} Ibn Duqmāq, al-Intiṣār, IV, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, Futūḥ, p. 136; Ibn Duqmāq, al-Intiṣār, IV, p. 39.
\textsuperscript{18} Cf. C. Wickham, Framing the early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400-800, Oxford: Oxford University press, 2005, p. 140 but cf. p. 769.
Non-literary source material for trade in or with al-Fustāṭ confirm that the town possessed an active albeit restricted market during most of the first/seventh century. Recent archaeological research reveals that al-Fustāṭ’s first/seventh-century market for bone and ivory objects greatly attracted Alexandrian artisans.\(^\text{19}\) This seems not, however, to have influenced the manufacture of such objects in Alexandria itself.\(^\text{20}\) Further useful information can be gleaned from pottery found in Umayyad strata at Istabl ʿ Antar in al-Fustāṭ. As we will see in more detail below, the almost total absence of foreign wares there suggests, in harmony with the study of bone and ivory findings, that the town largely drew on commercial relationships with its Egyptian hinterland and, hence, that al-Fustāṭ only very limitedly consumed imported products.\(^\text{21}\) Glass wares of that period, too, are of local rather than foreign origin.\(^\text{22}\) This sharply contrasts the abundance of foreign wares found in Alexandria on which we will elaborate below. However, a coin minted in Constantinople between 40/660 and 48/668\(^\text{23}\) and a first/seventh-century imitation of a Byzantine coin of possibly Syro-Palestinian origin,\(^\text{24}\) both excavated in al-Fustāṭ in first/seventh-century layers, indicate that the town was not entirely cut off from other Mediterranean regions.


Sources for commerce in or with al-Fustat, be they archaeological, papyrological or literary, testify to a drastic increase of the extent of al-Fustat’s commercial position at the end of the first/seventh century. Marwanid building projects, especially those commissioned by the governor ‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. Marwan (in office 65/685-86/705), represent this trend in literary sources. Although, as we have seen above, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz b. Marwan was not the first governor said to have built or owned commercial complexes in the town, his projects certainly outnumbered those of his predecessors. Among those buildings he commissioned were a guesthouse (Ar. dār al-adyāf), inns and/or markets. What is more, he did not limit his building projects to Egypt’s Arab capital; he reportedly also invested in the economic infrastructures of Alexandria and Ḥulwān. After him, the caliphs al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 86/705-96/715) and his brother Hišām (r. 105/724-125/743) as well as the governor Qurra b. Šarīk (in office 90/709-96/714) are reported to have patronized the construction of buildings used for commercial purposes. The commissioning of such projects was, in part at least, politically motivated.

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28 The History of the patriarchs (III, p. 42 [p. 296]) has it that ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s building projects included ‘every town on the river from Miṣr [i.e. al-Fustat] to Alexandria’. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz did not built markets or inns in Ḥulwān (pace Kubiak, “‘Abd al-‘Aziz ibn Marwan”, p. 17). He is said to have added to the new town’s agricultural amenities by investing in the surrounding country’s irrigation (see, e.g., History of the patriarchs, III, pp. 42-3 [pp. 296-7]; Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, Futūḥ, p. 236 [copied in Maqrizī, Ḥiṣāt, I, p. 568]; al-Kindī, al-Wulā wa-l-ḥudā, p. 50). Note that, except for the passage from the History of the patriarchs quoted at the beginning of this note, the sources only mention al-Fustat, Ḥulwān, and Alexandria as the locales of ‘Abd al-‘Aziz’s building projects, that is, towns of considerable political importance.

29 Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, Futūḥ, p. 137.


32 And it did not stop with the end of the Umayyad dynasty. Ibn Duqmāq (al-ʿIntiṣār, IV, p. 40) writes that Ḥuwayy b. Ḥuwayy, governor in 181/797 (see al-Maqrīzī, al-Ｍuqaffāʾ, II, p. 708), constructed a roofed market.
The Marwanids are well known for their use of architecture to promote and maintain their rule. But it is often forgotten that their architectural policy had Sufyanid precursors. In Mecca, for example, Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān acquired a remarkably high number of courts and houses. He is said to be the first to have dug wells and to have planted orchards in the city. Most significantly for the present discussion, this appears to have been a very lucrative enterprise.33 Taken together with his reconstruction of a public bath in southern Palestine,34 his building of a complex that has been interpreted as resembling the later Marwanid *qusur*,35 the dams he constructed at aṭ-Ṭā‘if and al-Madīna on the Arabian Peninsula,36 and especially his rebuilding of mosques and *dār al-imāras* discussed in the previous chapter, Mu‘āwiya’s were not *ad hoc* building projects. They are examples of early imperial architecture.37 Beside the rebuilding of the Mosque of ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ in al-Fustāt and the building or designating of gubernatorial offices in al-Fustāt and Alexandria, however, there is no record of Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān’s architectural policies being executed in Egypt. An important reason for this must be sought in al-Fustāt’s restricted economic position during Mu‘āwiya’s caliphate, discussed above.

The Marwanids could make use of an economic situation not yet present in Mu‘āwiya’s time. As is well known, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Marwān’s building projects share their socio-political and/or socio-economic context with other Marwanid commercial complexes such as those excavated in Tadmur (Palmyra), Ruṣāfa, and Baysān in Syro-Palestine.38 Beside serving as a tool to propagate authority,

33 M.J. Kister, “Some reports concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam”, *JESHO* 15/1-2 (1972), pp. 84-6 and 89-90.
whether or not via inscriptions, recent scholarship argues that the just-mentioned market complexes were constructed in order to provide the Marwanid cause with, a.o., long-term income. This directly reminds us of Muʿāwiya’s lucrative wells and orchards in Mecca. Indeed, the idea combines well with such late-first/seventh-century or early-second/eighth-century changes as the modification of the fiscal status of agricultural lands, the transformation of ‘atā from a pension to a salary, and the use of ṣadaqa to extract tax money from Muslims, all meant to financially support the Marwanids. In this line of thought, the building projects in al-Fusṭāṭ of Ḥabīl al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān cum sui not only facilitated commerce in that town but also took advantage of it. Implicitly then, they testify to the existence of sound commercial circumstances at the beginning of the second/eighth century at the latest.

Non-literary sources confirm al-Fusṭāṭ’s increased second/eighth-century commercial position. From the end of the first/seventh century on, documents record Egyptian merchants, Arab and non-Arab, travelling to al-Fusṭāṭ for commercial purposes. The earliest safe-conduct allowing a non-Arab Egyptian to...

travel to al-Fuṣṭāṭ ‘in order to acquit himself of the poll tax and to obtain his subsistence’ dates from 116/734. Archaeology confirms the second/eighth-century growth of al-Fuṣṭāṭ’s position on the Egyptian and international market in comparison with the preceding half century. The appearance of Egyptian building techniques in the first half of the second/eighth century has been interpreted as a sign of an increased population of Egyptian, as opposed to Arab, origin. These architectural changes coincide with the appearance of foreign products, indicating the town’s increase of commercial contact with areas beyond the provincial borders. From the late-first/seventh century come the first examples of imported glass wares. Such imports become more regular in the course of the second/eighth century. Scholars hold imports from Iran or even the Far East in al-Fuṣṭāṭ responsible for changes in local glass production dating to the second half of the second/eighth century. Products made of bone or ivory, the latter material imported in al-Fuṣṭāṭ from the mid-second/eighth century at the
earliest, also show influences of Iranian motifs from the second half of the second/eighth century. Recent chemical analyses of contemporary lead glazed pottery confirm the possibility of contact with Iran and, hence, the existence of commercial connections on such a scale.

2. Alexandria in domestic trade: the papyrological evidence

Al-Fustāṭ’s commercial rise around the turn of the second/eighth century had limited effects on the development of Alexandria’s commercial position. As we will see in what follows, unabated continuity characterized commerce in or with Alexandria in the second half of the first/seventh century, mirroring the little commercial impact which the foundation of al-Fustāṭ seems to have made throughout that period. Even when al-Fustāṭ’s commercial importance increased at the end of the first/seventh century or during the first half of the second/eighth century, only a few changes are visible in Alexandria’s commercial position. Papyri, studied on the following pages, mostly attest to continuity and only very little to change.

Egyptian traders continued to visit Alexandria throughout the chronological scope of this thesis. Papyri from the first/seventh century report about indigenous Egyptians travelling to Alexandria for commercial purposes. In the wake of political reforms that stimulated their involvement in trade, Arabs appear in documents from the early-second/eighth century on. The sender of a

51 Rodziewicz, Bone carvings from Fustat-Istabl ʿAntar, p. 253 [no. 443].
52 Rodziewicz, Bone carvings from Fustat-Istabl ʿAntar, pp. 51-3.
54 CPR VIII 70 (Fayyūm; A.D. sixth-seventh c.); O.CrumST 390 (Theban area; first/seventh c.); P.Fouad I 85 (unknown prov.; A.D. sixth-seventh c.); P.Louvre II 161 (prov. unknown; A.D. sixth-second/eighth c.); P.Oxy. XVI 1846 (al-Bahnasā; A.D. sixth-seventh c.); SB Kopt. II 844 (poss. Anṣinā; first/seventh c.); and possibly CPR IV 52 (prov. unknown; first/seventh c.).
55 Sijpesteijn, Shaping a Muslim state, ch. 1.
56 Y. Rāḡib, “Lettres arabes”, II, Annales islamologiques 16 (1980), no. 12 (prov. unknown; second/eighth c.). Rāḡib dates the document to the third/ninth century (p. 12), but the presence of the names of the sender and addressees after the basmala as well as the handwriting (cf. P.Khalili I, pp. 126-7) allows to date this document to the second/eighth century. Similar to most of the collection of Arabic papyri in the Louvre, where this document is kept, its most probable provenance is the Fayyūm (Grohmann,
second/eighth-century document of uncertain provenance, for instance, a certain Ḥadīd b. Salama, writes that a companion of his, named Rāṣid, was to pay back on his return to Alexandria a debt of a dinar to two persons he had met in the city on a previous visit.57 Another document, from the Fayyūm and dated to 117/735, shows a merchant on his way to Alexandria who passed through al-Fustāṭ, stayed there for only one night in order to observe the new moon, and then travelled on to Alexandria. After his arrival, he waited for a week for the prices to rise before he displayed his goods for sale.58 Vice versa, the protocols of the documents CPR III 124 (Šīma), dated 140/757-8, and CPR III 139 (Fayyūm), dated 170/786-7, which state that these papyrus sheets were produced in Alexandria, provide rare but unmistakable papyrological evidence of Alexandrian products finding a market in the Nile valley in the second/eighth century.59

But whereas these documents record a continuity of Alexandria’s commerce well into the Abbasid period, others show that from the early-second/eighth century Alexandria’s position in domestic commerce changed under the influence of al-Fustāṭ’s growing commercial and political centrality. In papyri, this commercial redirection from Alexandria towards al-Fustāṭ is most directly visible in the passing into disuse of the Alexandrian gold standard and the appearance of the standard of the central treasury in al-Fustāṭ. We will study this more closely in what follows.

2.1. The Alexandrian gold standard

A corpus of mainly Greek and some Coptic documents in which prices are reckoned ‘according to the Alexandrian gold standard’ (Gr. ζυγῷ Ἀλεξανδρείας; C. ἥψις πρᾶκτος) indicate that Alexandria continued to be a reference point for monetary transactions throughout the rest of Egypt after the foundation of al-

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Fusṭāt. As coins circulated in different stages of abrusion, using one weight standard in transactions allowed the different coins to be valued with a common denominator. After the Arab conquest, the Alexandrian gold standard predominantly appears in fiscal contexts, but it can also be found in documents recording financial transactions of a private nature.

The Alexandrian standard probably came into existence in the A.D. 540s as a result of Alexandria’s favourable economic position between its Egyptian hinterland and other Mediterranean countries. The standard was based on the Byzantine solidus, which weighed approximately 4.55 grams. On the Alexandrian standard, a full-weight Byzantine solidus contained 23 carats of 0.1957 grams. At least two documents from the mid-first/seventh century confirm that this was the case when the Arabs came to rule Egypt. Although other Egyptian standards are

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60 Dated documents: e.g., P.Lond. I 116/a [p. 221] (Fayyūm; 25/645), SB I 5133 (Fayyūm; 24/645), SPP VIII 820 (Fayyūm; c. 31-2/652-3), SPP VIII 1085 (Fayyūm; between 47/667 and 54/674). Documents datable to the first/seventh or second/eighth century: e.g., O.Leid. 368-9 (prov. unknown), P.Laur. IV 182 (Fayyūm), SB XXIV 16018 (Upper Egypt), SPP III 642 (Fayyūm), SPP III 699 (Fayyūm), SPP VIII 1086 (prov. unknown), SPP XX 163 (prob. Fayyūm). Documents datable to the second/eighth century: e.g., P.Prág. I 75 (Fayyūm), P.Ross.Georg. V 46/7 (prov. unknown), SB I 4900 (Fayyūm), SPP III 648 (prov. unknown; cf. CPR XXII 16, comm. to line 3 [p. 84] for the date of this document), SPP VIII 818 (Fayyūm), SPP XX 188 (Fayyūm).

61 Documents datable to the first/seventh or second/eighth century: e.g., BGU II 550 (Fayyūm), O.Vind.Copt. 140 (prov. unknown), P.Ryl.Copt. 191 (al-Ušmūn), SPP III 266 and 269 (Fayyūm), SPP VIII 787-8 (Fayyūm). Documents datable to the second/eighth century: e.g., P.Ross.Georg. V 46/3 (prov. unknown).


63 For the weight of this Egyptian carat, see G.C. Miles, “On the varieties and accuracy of eighth century Arab coin weights”, Eretz-Israel 7 (1963), p. 84.

64 P.Flor. I 70 (al-Ušmūn; 6/627 or 21/642) and SB VIII 9750 (Ihnās; 21/642 or 36/657) describe a solidus of 23 carats on the Alexandrian standard as ὀβρυζα or ὀβρυζια, ‘of full purity and weight’ (the interpretation of these terms follows that of J. Banaji, “Discounts, weight standards, and the exchange-rate between gold an copper: insights into the monetary process of the sixth century”, in Atti dell’Accademia romanistica Constantinianna: XII convegno internazionale sotto l’altro patronato del presidente della Repubblica in onore di Manlio Sargenti, Napels: Edizioni scientifiche italiane, 1995, p. 189 but see Maresch, Nomisma und Nomismatia, pp. 26-7 for a more precise one). CPR VII 47 (Ihnās; c. 24/645) also defines a full-weight solidus as ‘of 23 carats’ (probably according to the Alexandrian standard, see Banaji, “Discounts, weight standards, and the exchange-rate”, p. 189). BGU II 367 (Fayyūm), often seen as another indication that the Alexandrian standard contained 23 carats to the Byzantine solidus in early-Arab times, most likely dates from the A.D. sixth century. See J.M. Diethart & K.A. Worp, Notarunterschriften im byzantinischen Ägypten, Vienna: Hollinek, 1986, p. 41.
well attested to as late as the mid-second/eighth century, the Alexandrian gold standard became the most prevalent standard in Egypt in the course of the first/seventh century. Because documents that mention the Alexandrian standard are often only dated by indiction years, it is difficult to tell with any accuracy until when the standard remained in use. The latest document datable with some precision is SPP VIII 1085 (Fayyūm), composed between 47/667 and 54/674. But documents provisionally dated to the second/eighth century on the basis of their script and style make it very likely that the standard continued to be used in that century. Two documents support this idea.

An anomalous reference to the Alexandrian standard in the Coptic documents P.Ryl.Copt. 158 and 191 (al-Ušmūn), without much precision dated to the first/seventh or second/eighth century, confirms the standard’s survival of metrological reforms of the late-first/seventh and early-second/eighth century. Instead of 23 carats, these documents claim that a full-weight solidus contained 22 1/2 carats according to the Alexandrian standard. The reason for this must be sought in a change of the weight of the carat under the Marwanids. By the early-

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65 SB VI 8986 (Udfū; 20/641) and 8988 (Udfū; 26/647) still mention a standard of Udfū. T.Varie 8 (al-Bahnasā; 49/669) mentions a ‘standard of the lowly people’ (line 5: παγανικῷ ζυγῷ). For the interpretation of paganikos, see CPR XXII 1, comm. at line 7; cf. C. Zuckermann, Du village à l’empire: autour du registre fiscal d’Aphroditō (525/526), Paris: AACHCB, 2004, p. 78. Pace J. Banaji, “Discounts, weight standards, and the exchange-rate”, pp. 191-2. A standard of Šīma occurs as late as 143/760 in CPR IV 26 (Šīma) and can be found in many other documents from the first/seventh or the first half of the second/eighth century (e.g., P.KRU 1-6, 9-12, 14-5, 18, 28, 35, 38 (Theban area; all documents are dated, or datable to, the first half of the second/eighth c.), O.Medin.HabuCopt. 82 (Theban area; first/seventh-eighth c.) and SB Kopt. II 943 (Theban area; early-second/eighth c.) and 946 (Thebes; 104/722). O.Medin.HabuCopt 146 (Theban area; first/seventh-second/eighth c.) orders the addressee to ‘take two solidi […], they being full weight on the standard of this district’ (lines 5-7). Although this document probably also refers to the standard of Šīma, one of the kūra of Armant (Hermonthis), to which the Theban area belonged, cannot be excluded. A recently-edited papyrus from the second/eighth century documents the ‘standard of the monastery at Bawīt’ (A. Delattre, “Trois papyrus du monastère de Bawīt”, BIFAO 112 (2012), p. 104 [Bawīt]; see the comm. to line 6 for other standards in the region of the monastery). See David-Weill, “Papyrus arabes du Louvre”, II, no. 16 (prov. unknown; 156/773) for ‘dinars from the district of al-Bahnasā’ (lines 4-5: danānīr min kūrat al-Bahnasā), possibly testifying to a distinct metrological system in al-Bahnasā in the 150s/770s.

66 Nikolaos Gonis, personal communication, October 2010.

67 For an elaborate discussion of this document, see pp. 145-7.

68 See the documents listed in nn. 60 and 61 above.

69 See possibly also SPP VIII 1310 (Fayyūm; first/seventh or second/eighth c.).
second/eighth century, metrological reforms that started with ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān’s of the 70s/690s had replaced the existing Egyptian carat of 0.1957 grams with a slightly heavier one, weighing 0.2015 grams. On the basis of the reformed carat, 22 1/2 carats weighed almost exactly as much as 23 pre-reform carats and, therefore, equalled the weight of a Byzantine solidus. P.Ryl.Copt. 158 and 191 show, for this reason, that the Alexandrian standard remained in use after the Marwanid metrological reforms and continued to refer to the Byzantine solidus.

Because references to the Alexandrian standard are absent from documents from the third/ninth century, the standard must have stopped being used at some point during the second/eighth century. Interestingly, it disappears from our documentation when ‘the standard of the central treasury’ (Ar. ważn bayt al-māl) in al-Fustāṭ comes to the fore. This standard appears for the first time in the early-second/eighth-century P.Cair.Arab. III 149, a document from the archive of Basileios, pagarch of Iṣqūh during the governorate of Qurra b. Šarīk (90/709-96/714). In this document, the governor urges Basileios to send a requested amount of poll tax (Ar. ġizya) money only in accordance with the standard of the central treasury. SB XX 15102, dated Rabī’ II 3, 90/February 19, 709, tells us that the pagarch, on a probably earlier occasion, sent tax money in badly-minted coins that were too heavy and that, as a result, the central fiscal administration was unable

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72 This interpretation of the references to the Alexandrian standard in P.Ryl.Copt. 158 and 191 and possibly SPP VIII 1310 (see n. 69 above) establishes an early-second/eighth century or later date for these documents.

73 A. Grohmann’s dating of this text to the period 90-1/708-10 seems to be on no grounds. It must probably be dated after SB XX 15102 (Iṣqūh; Rabī’ II 3, 90/February 19, 709) which will be discussed shortly. For other second/eighth-century examples of the standard of the central treasury, see Chrest.Khoury I 66 (Fayyūm; 179/796); CPR XXI 4 (Fayyūm; 179-80/796); Diem, “Einige frühe amtliche Urkunden”, nos 3 (Fayyūm; 162/779) and 4 (Fayyūm; 177/793-4 or 178/794-5).
to verify his tax quotas. During Qurra b. Šarīk’s governorate, the central administration preferred coins in accordance with the gold standard of the central treasury in al-Fustāṭ.

The central treasury did not adopt the Alexandrian standard. The metrology of the gold standard of the treasury has yet seen little study. But since its appearance around the turn of the second/eighth century coincides with the first issues of reformed exagia and the first evidence of the central authorities’ direct involvement in the regulation of prices, a relationship between that standard and the Marwanid monetary and metrological reforms is most likely. A rare, official exagium for the weight of a Byzantine solidus, issued during Qurra b. Šarīk’s governorate, indicates that the Arab authorities still endorsed, albeit on a much reduced scale, pre-reform metrology at the beginning of the second/eighth century. This concords with the appearance of the Alexandrian standard in a fiscal


context in second/eighth-century documents. The standard of the central treasury in al-Fustāṭ must gradually have replaced that of Alexandria during the second/eighth century. Although it bears directly on Alexandria’s position in domestic trade, this development is clearly related to the increasing political and administrative centrality of al-Fustāṭ during the first half of the second/eighth century which we saw in chapter 1.

3. Alexandria and international trade

The Alexandrian gold standard’s passing into disuetude had no implications on the city’s general commercial position. In spite of al-Fustāṭ’s growing centrality on a commercial level, the unique character of the city’s markets continued to attract Egyptian merchants. A document from the early-second/eighth-century archive of ʿAbd Allāh b. Asʿad, an administrative official in the Fayyūm, for example, tells us that Alexandria’s markets differed from those elsewhere. The document records that this official had an associate in Alexandria who notified him about the price of sheep. As sheep were no rare commodity in the Fayyūm, it is most likely that the Alexandrian (sheep) market was attractive itself and only to a limited extent vied with markets in the Fayyūm. In a similar vein, an unpublished document, palaeographically datable to the late-second/eighth or early-third/ninth century, mentions ‘Alexandria’s barley’ (line 5: šaʿīr al-Iskandariyya) and perhaps implies the difference of Alexandria’s barley market from markets elsewhere. The city’s markets derived their unique character from Alexandria’s central position on international trade routes – something directly referred to in Arculf’s travalogue

78 Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim state*, no. 32 (Fayyūm; first half of the second/eighth c.).
80 Unpublished document without inventory number in the collection of T. Bernhardt. For a digital image, see <http://papyri.tripod.com/ArabicPapyri/arabicpap1.html> [February 2012]. The document’s provenance is not known, but it most likely comes from Upper Egypt. A similar reason may lie behind the appearance of Alexandria in the third/ninth-century archive of the Banū ʿAbd al-Muʿmin. This merchant family from the Fayyūm mostly traded with al-Fustāṭ, but some of their documents record that, without giving explicitly reasons, they chose to sell their goods in Alexandria (e.g., *P.Marchands* II 36, 38; *P.Marchands* III 33).
cited at the beginning of this chapter.\textsuperscript{81} Ceramology and literary sources, studied in what follows, provide not only clear evidence of Alexandria’s internationality, but also of the difference of al-Fuṣṭāṭ’s markets from those in Alexandria.

3.1. The ceramological evidence

In the first/seventh century, Egypt imported foreign products on a regular basis. Among foreign amphorae, two types dominate Egypt’s imports in that century: the Carthage types \textit{Late Roman Amphora} (\textit{LRA}) 1 and 4.\textsuperscript{82} The first, \textit{LRA} 1, most probably contained wine\textsuperscript{83} and the principle places of its production in the A.D. sixth and seventh centuries are the coastal towns of Cilicia and Cyprus.\textsuperscript{84} \textit{LRA} 1 is found in small quantities in archaeological strata of the second half of the first/seventh century in Alexandria.\textsuperscript{85} The mass of \textit{Cypriot Red Slip} (\textit{CRS}) tableware found in Alexandria in seventh-century contexts, however, evidences Alexandria’s close commercial ties with Cyprus in that century.\textsuperscript{86} \textit{LRA} 4, used in the transport of

\textsuperscript{81} See also Ibn Hawqal, \textit{Kitāb ṣūrat al-ard}, I, p. 70 and Ibn Riḍwān cited in Müller-Wodarg, “Die Landwirtschaft Ägyptens”, III, p. 156. Papyri that possibly bear direct testimony to this have not yet been published; cf. J. von Karabacek, \textit{Führer durch die Ausstellung}, Vienna: [n.i.] 1894, p. 168 [PERF 642].

\textsuperscript{82} For a description of \textit{LRA} 1 and 4, see D.M. Bailey, \textit{Excavations at el-Ushmunein}, V: Pottery, lamps and glass: the late Roman and early Arab periods, London: British Museum Press, 1998, pp. 121-2 and 123-4. Other types of amphorae are also found, be it in lesser quantities, such as the Aegean \textit{LRA} 2 and the Cypriot \textit{LRA} 13.


\textsuperscript{85} Majcherek, “The late Roman ceramics”, pp. 116-7 [\textit{LRA} 1 = Kellia 164 and 169].

\textsuperscript{86} Rodziewicz, \textit{La céramique romaine tardive}, p. 68 [group D]; Majcherek, “The late Roman ceramics”, p. 87. According to the latter, \textit{CRS} tableware forms 25.6 percent of all tableware found in three auditoria at Kawm ad-Dikka. The auditoria ceased to function around the middle of the first/seventh century and the Muslim cemetery that arose in their place dates to the late first/seventh or early second/eighth century (E. Promińska, \textit{Investigations on the population of Muslim Alexandria: anthropological-demographic study}, Warsaw: PWN-Éditions scientifiques de Pologne, 1972, p. 48). Between these dates the pottery was deposited (Majcherek, “The late Roman ceramics”, pp. 82-3).
wines and oils, is usually thought to originate from Ġazza in Palestine although production centres in the eastern part of the Nile delta cannot be excluded. Throughout the first/seventh century, the majority of imported amphorae found in Alexandria belongs to this type. The heavy import of LRA 4 at the end of the first/seventh century suggests that its import continued for at least some decades in the second/eighth century.

Amphorae of the types LRA 1 and 4 are found with some regularity in the Nile delta and the northern Sinai, but had a much more limited distribution in Middle and Upper Egypt, and gradually stopped being imported in the second half of the first/seventh century. Egyptian wares replaced those from abroad from the early-second/eighth century on. The situation in Alexandria was different, for the import of LRA 4 seems to have lasted longer there than throughout the rest of Egypt. But also in Alexandria, the market for Egyptian wares gradually increased. This development set in about fifty years before the Arab conquest and continued without interruption during the two centuries that followed until Egyptian wares dominated Alexandria’s market in the second half of the second/eighth or in the third/ninth century.

89 Majcherek, “The late Roman ceramics”, pp. 116-7 [compare tables 1 and 2: 70 percent of all amphorae in the mid-first/seventh century and 76 percent at the end of that century; LRA 4 = Kellia 182].
90 Vogt, “La céramique de Tell el-Fadda”, p. 5; Marchand & Marangou, “Conclusion”, pp. 761-2. At al-Uṣmūn, examples of LRA 1 have been found in layers that might date to the second/eighth century (see Bailey, Excavations, p. 122 [esp. T50, but also T29-34, T34 bis ter, and T35-9]).
Whereas in Alexandria foreign pottery remained doubtlessly imported up to the end of the first/seventh century and probably even during the first half of the second/eighth century, there is hardly evidence that such imports reached al-Fusṭāṭ. At present, one piece of Cypriot tableware and some fragments of Palestinian amphorae of the type LRA 5/6, probably used for the transport of wine, have been found during excavations at Istabl ‘ Antar in strata belonging to the Umayyad and Abbasid periods.93 The contrast between al-Fusṭāṭ and Alexandria as concerns their dependency on the international market could hardly be more visible.94 Intriguingly though, in the first/seventh and even early-second/eighth century, foreign wares, amongst which LRA 5/6, did reach places in Middle and Upper Egypt95 (probably via al-Fusṭāṭ) and may be expected to be found in Alexandria as well.96 Whereas Egypt continued to import products from Palestine,
foreign products shipped in amphorae and imported tableware were not regularly consumed in al-Fustāṭ. The absence of tableware may be explained by the availability of such pottery from the town’s own workshops or those in its direct vicinity, which presence is likely although no trace of them has yet been found before the third/ninth century. The absence of foreign wares used for transport strongly suggests a heavy commercial dependence on its Egyptian hinterland. The dominance of Egyptian wares in al-Fustāṭ may also be related to the proliferation of those wares on markets throughout Egypt from the early-first/seventh century on, referred to in the previous paragraph.

Although the import of foreign wares may have lessened, Egypt doubtlessly continued to export products transported in amphorae as well as tableware in the second/eighth century. The main Egyptian amphora for long-distance trade was LRA 7. Amphorae of this type, used for the transport of wine, are known to have been produced near lake Maryūṭ and, a.o., at al-Bahnasā (Oxyrhynchos), al-Ušmūn (Hermopolis), Anṣinā (Antinoopolis), Isnā (Latopolis) and Udfū. Around the middle of the first/seventh century, examples of LRA 7 are found throughout the Mediterranean basin. The export of LRA 7 lessened

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98 A petrographic study into late-first/seventh- or second/eighth-century ceramics found in al-Fustāṭ similarly suggests that al-Fustāṭ in that period did not produce its own pottery but imported pottery from elsewhere in Egypt. See R.B. Mason & E.J. Keall, “Petrography of Islamic pottery from Fustat”, JARCE 27 (1990), pp. 171-2.

99 Bailey, Excavations, pp. 129-30. For a description of LRA 7, see Bailey, Excavations, p. 129.


considerably in the second/eighth century. In the eastern Mediterranean, LRA 7 is still attested, a.o., in Bayrūt and on Crete and, to a lesser extent, in southern Turkey. But at other places in the Near East this type of amphora disappears from the archaeological record in that century. Due to changes in late-Antique trade patterns, export to western Mediterranean places, such as Marseille, stopped in the latter half of the first/seventh century. In sum, contrasting Egypt’s import of products transported in amphorae, Egypt’s export of such products continued in the second/eighth century albeit on a geographically-reduced scale.

The partial continuation of Egypt’s export finds confirmation in studies into the distribution of other Egyptian wares in the eastern Mediterranean, such as an Egyptian variant of the above-mentioned LRA 5/6, Egyptian Red Slib (ERS) wares, and lead-glazed Egyptian wares. All these Egyptian wares have abundantly been found in Syro-Palestine, the first predominantly in first/seventh-century layers and the latter two also in second/eighth-century contexts. At some sites,
such as in Bayrūt and Baysān, imported ERS wares replace in the second/eighth century Cypriot or Phocaean Red Slib wares that previously dominated the market.\(^\text{107}\) Egypt’s share in the markets of these towns apparently increased during that century. Ceramologists have also noted an increase of the export of Egyptian wares to Palestine in the first/seventh and second/eighth centuries.\(^\text{108}\) From a ceramological point of view, then, Egypt’s export market increasingly leaned towards the eastern Mediterranean from the mid-first/seventh century on. A coin minted in Alexandria during the governorate of ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān (132/750) and found in Arīḥa (Jericho) attests to the existence of trade relations between Alexandria and the Near East and makes it likely that the city also played a role in the distribution of such pottery.\(^\text{109}\) Itineraries, to which we will turn in the following section, confirm Alexandria’s international commercial position.

3.2. The literary evidence: Alexandria on itineraries


maritime travel, the principle way to transport amphorae beyond Egypt, is much less present in medieval sources. Al-Muqaddasī (fl. second half of the fourth/tenth c.) gives an itinerary from al-Faramā to Alexandria, indicating direct commercial relationships between Palestine and Alexandria. Writing in the fifth/eleventh century, the North African al-Bakrī reports about a sea route ranging from Alexandria via the Syro-Palestinian coast to Anṭāliya on the south coast of Asia Minor and adds that Alexandrian ships could sail on to islands in the Aegean. The eighth/fourteenth-century al-Maqrīzī writes that, in his time, Alexandria’s harbours principally served such places as Crete, Sicily, and North Africa whereas he mentions Tinnīs, Dimyāt, and al-Faramā as the main harbours for the Near East and Asia Minor. It is uncertain, even unlikely, that al-Maqrīzī’s case also applies to the period under consideration. The following overview of persons travelling to, from, or via Alexandria gives the strong impression that Alexandria was an important stop on various trade routes, including maritime ones, that linked the city with North Africa, Palestine, and even southern Europe. As travellers mostly sailed on board of commercial ships, visitors to Alexandria may be taken to indicate the existence of commercial relations.

In 35/655, the Cretan archbishop Paul travelled to Constantinople via Alexandria. About fifteen years later, the already-mentioned bishop Arculf visited the Holy Land and travelled from Yāfā on the Palestinian coast to

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115 P. van den Ven, La légende de S. Spyridon évêque de de Trimiëntone, Louvain: Publications universitaires, 1953, p. 89.
Alexandria in forty days (!) and from there to Constantinople.\textsuperscript{116} Aṭ-Ṭabarī writes that a certain ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr, whom we probably should identify with the šahābī ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr b. Quḥāfa al-Qurašī (d. 53/672-3),\textsuperscript{117} departed from Alexandria on his way to North Africa in 47/667-8.\textsuperscript{118} The following accounts of second/eighth-century travellers suggest that Alexandria kept its position on trade routes in the second/eighth century.\textsuperscript{119}

The fifth/eleventh-century North African historian ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad al-Mālakī writes that one Ḥālid b. Abī ʿImrān (d. 125/742-3 or 129/746-7) fled from North Africa to Alexandria in order not to be appointed qāḍī.\textsuperscript{120} He also writes that the North African pious Marwān b. ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān al-Yaḥṣūbī travelled for unknown reasons from Qayrawān to Alexandria.\textsuperscript{121} Al-Mālakī gives no date for his departure, but a passage in al-Kindī’s al-Wulā wa-l-quḍā, situated in Egypt and in which al-Yaḥṣūbī appears, allows us to place it before or during the governorate of al-Walīd b. Rifāʿa (109/727-117/735).\textsuperscript{122} One other account is of uncertain interpretation.\textsuperscript{123}


\textsuperscript{117} Ibn Yūnus, Taʾrīḫ, I, p. 298 [no. 807] (with n. 5).

\textsuperscript{118} Aṭ-Ṭabarī, Taʾrīḫ, II/1, p. 84.

\textsuperscript{119} In addition, an account preserved by Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam (Futūḥ, p. 232) and Wakī (Aḥbār, III, p. 222) tells us that the qāḍī Sulaym b. Ἰτρ (d. 75/694-5) spent seven days worshipping God in a cave. Although the account’s rāwī is Sulaym himself, it has an interesting interpolation. After Sulaym’s opening words ‘I left Alexandria’, the words ‘I reckon he said “where I had arrived from the sea”’ (Ar. aḥsubuḥu qāla ḥīna qadimtu min al-bahr) follow. The account’s isnād is broken. The first transmitter mentioned after Sulaym b. Ἰτρ is the well-known Ḍālimām b. Ismāʿīl (97/715-6-185/801-2). As we have it at present, Ḍālimām b. Ismāʿīl’s is the isnād’s common link. His words are transmitted by Muḥammad b. ʿAbd as-Salām and Saʿīd b. al-Ḥakam. The latter is the Ibn Abī Maryam of Wakī’s isnād (see Ibn Yūnus, Taʾrīḫ, I, p. 204 [no. 540]). Because both Muḥammad b. ʿAbd as-Salām and Saʿīd b. al-Ḥakam transmitted the same matn, the interpolation must be Ḍālimām b. Ismāʿīl’s or of one of his unnamed informants. The interpolation, which connects Alexandria with sea travel, must therefore date from the late-first/seventh or second/eighth century.


\textsuperscript{121} Al-Mālakī, Kitāb riyyād an-nufūs, I, p. 195 [no. 81].

\textsuperscript{122} Al-Kindī, al-Wulā wa-l-quḍā, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{123} This account tells that in c. 149-50/766-7 the Coptic patriarch Cosmas sent a monk to Rome (McCormick, Origins of the European economy, p. 874 [no. 171]). As the patriarchate had its see in Alexandria, the monk probably departed from that city.
Of special importance is a passage in the *History of the patriarchs* which records the existence of commercial relations between Alexandria and the western Mediterranean in the second/eighth century. It reports that among the city’s Andalusian population of the early-third/ninth century was ‘a very old man who had come to Alexandria in his youth’.124 Whereas the study of trade patterns on the basis of amphorae in section 3.1 suggested a sharp decline of trade relations with the western Mediterranean in the course of the first/seventh century, this passage, supported by a small number Egyptian products found in Europe,125 indicates that commercial contact between Egypt and the western Mediterranean did not disappear entirely.126

Other references for such travelling in the second/eighth century could not be found, but much seems not to have changed in the third/ninth century which, for that reason, may give us comparable information. In 200/815, pirates who originally came from Qurṭuba harboured in Alexandria to sell slaves they had caught on their raids.127 In the late-210s/820s, Venetian merchants arrived in Alexandria (allegedly by accident as there was an embargo on Byzantine trade

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124 *History of the patriarchs*, IV, p. 430 [544].
126 This finds direct confirmation in Anglo-Saxon bishop Willibald’s (d. c. 170/787) report of his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the first half of the second/eighth century in which the author mentions a ship destined for Egypt in the harbour of Naples (T. Wright, *Early travels in Palestine, comprising the narratives of Arculf, Willibald, Bernard, Saxulf, Sigurd, Benjamin of Tudela, Sir John Maundeville, De la Brocquière, and Maundrell*, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1848, p. 13). See also a first/seventh-century document from al-Bahnasā mentioning trade with North Africa (Y. Rāġib, “La plus ancienne lettre arabe de marchand”, in Y. Rāġib (ed.), *Documents de l’islam médiéval: nouvelles perspectives de recherche*, Cairo: IFAO, 1991, pp. 5-6) and, for similar information, the *History of the patriarchs*, III, pp. 190-1 [444-6].
with Egypt and did business there beside stealing the head of St Mark. Further, the late-second/eighth or third/ninth-century Epiphanios the Hagiopolite writes that from Cana in Galilee one had to travel to ‘the holy city of Alexandria’ in order to travel back to Byzantine territory. And around 257/870, Bernard the Wise travelled in thirty days from southern Italy to Alexandria on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Alexandria was certainly not the sole place on the Egyptian littoral where travellers to the Holy Land stopped, but the city does emerge as an important junction in international travel and trade routes in the first/seventh through third/ninth centuries.

4. Concluding remarks

Medieval Arabic literature preserves an interesting corpus of anecdotes that deal with the delapidation of Alexandria’s cityscape and the government’s wish to restore the city’s old glory. All anecdotes centre around the governor ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān and, thus, claim a late-first/seventh- or early-second/eighth-century context. Some of the anecdotes are doubtlessly legendary, but to others we can attach more historical value.

The History of the patriarchs presents an example of the latter type; we briefly referred to it above. It reports that ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān restored

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132 Al-Muqaddasī, Aḥsan at-taqāsīm, p. 214 mentions sea travel from Palestine via al-Faramā, Tinnīs, Dimyāṭ, al-Mahalla al-kabīra to Alexandria, a route that is fully confirmed by Bernard the Wise (The itinerary, p. 6) and in part by Epiphanios the Hagiopolite (who only mentions al-Faramā and Dimyāṭ; see Donner, “Die Palästinabeschreibung”, p. 86 [V.18-V14]).
133 Ibn al-Kindī, Faḍāʾīl Miṣr, p. 48 (copied with divergencies in al-Maqrīzī, Ḥiḍāt, I, p. 439). For the legendary nature of this anecdote, compare it with Ibn ʿAbd al-Hakam, Futūḥ, p. 42; see also Ibn Duqmāq, al- İntiṣār, V, p. 122. Yāqūt, Muʿjam al-buldān, I, p. 186. For the legendary nature of this anecdote, compare it with Al-Maqrīzī, Ḥiḍāt, I, pp. 433-4; see also al-Bakrī, Masālik, II, pp. 639-40 [no. 1068].
134 Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, Futūḥ, pp. 133-4 (copied from Ibn Yūnus in Ibn ʿAsākir, Taʾrīḥ, XXXIII, p. 417 [no. 3657]).
Alexandria’s streets (i.e., the porticoes?) which had fallen into ruins (Ar. aqāma šawārī’ahā ba’dā an saqaṭā). It also mentions that the governor ordered the canal that linked Alexandria with the Bolbitine branch of the Nile to be dredged and that he had milestones erected along that canal. This restauration most likely was part of the Marwānid building programs, discussed at the beginning of this chapter. The History of the patriarchs takes this information from a Coptic History of the church, composed by one George the Archdeacon. The History of the patriarchs mentions George the Archdeacon to have been a companion and secretary of the Coptic patriarch Simon I, who held office in 70/689-81/700. As a contempory of ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān and probably writing during his governorate, we may regard George the Archdeacon’s information as highly valuable.

Whereas Egypt’s political élite continued to build commercial complexes in al-Fuṣṭāṭ (see section 1), there is no information on similar interest in Alexandria among ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān’s successors. Although the Alexandrian canal quickly silted up again, resulting in only a seasonal navigability already during the governorate of Qurra b. Šarīk, ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān’s orders to dredge the canal are the last recorded for about a century and a half. The first deepening of the canal after him occurred, according to literary sources, in 239/853-4.

These anecdotes are examplary for the economic and political relationship between Alexandria and al-Fuṣṭāṭ at the turn of the second/eighth century and the development of this relationship thereafter. The present chapter argued for much continuity of trade with or in Alexandria, mainly due to the international character of the city’s markets, throughout and even beyond the period under discussion. The increase of trade involving al-Fuṣṭāṭ around the turn of the second/eighth century, which produced our first evidence of changes in

138 P.Lond. IV 1353 (Išqūh; 91/710).
Alexandria’s economic position, was part of a broader trend. It reflects the growth of al-Fusṭāṭ’s centrality vis-à-vis Alexandria during the first half of the second/eighth century. To this we saw administrative parallels in the previous chapter. In sum, both the previous and the present chapter show that Alexandria’s position in Egypt largely remained unchanged throughout the first/seventh century, while from the beginning of the second/eighth century al-Fusṭāṭ began to dominate its relationship with Alexandria.