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The City Solution? Theodosiopolis and the System of Joint Administration in the Late Antique Fayyum*

The city of Nova Theodosiopolis in the province of Arcadia has sparked attention as a “new” city in late antique Egypt.¹ Founded or renamed by, or in honor of, Theodosius I (r. 379–395) or Theodosius II (r. 408–450), the city and its district, the Theodosiopolite nome (νομός) are frequently mentioned as individuals’ place of origin, suggesting that they formed a Roman city (*civitas*; πόλις) comprising the urban center and its hinterland

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¹ For summaries of the topic, see *P. Bastianini*, pp. 158–159; T. M. Hickey, *Down and Out in Late Antique Tebtunis?*, in: S. Lippert, M. Schentuleit (eds.), *Graeco-Roman Fayum: Texts and Archaeology*, Wiesbaden 2008, 135–142; T. Derda, *Ἀρσινοίτης νομός: Administration of the Fayum under Roman Rule* (JJP Supplements 7), Warsaw 2006, 113–114; and W. Clarysse, *The Name of the Fayum Province*, in: W. Clarysse (ed.), *The Fayum Project* (2003): https://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/gen_name.php of the Trismegistos (*TM*) website. Older discussions and literature are collected in S. Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten in arabischer Zeit*, vol. VI (Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients 41/6), Wiesbaden 1992, 2630–2632. This Arcadian Theodosiopolis (*TM* Geo 2375) should not be confused with its namesake in the Thebaid (*TM* Geo 3383) whose territory constituted a fraction of the original Hermopolite nome; on this latter city, see *P. Bastianini*, pp. 158–159 (including potential traces of a more obscure third Theodosiopolis in the Nile Delta) and n. 6; *CPR* XXX, pp. 110–117; Hickey, *op. cit.*, 135 n. 3; *P. Sijp.*, p. 221; Derda, *op. cit.*, 113 n. 151 and the earlier literature referenced there (add N. Gonis, *Hermopolite Localities and Splinter Names*, *ZPE* 142 [2003] 176–184, at 176–179; M. Drew-Bear, *Deux documents byzantins de Moyenne Égypte*, *CdÉ* 54 [1979] 285–303, at 299–303; and Timm, *op. cit.*, 2454–2460); and *P. Oxy.* LI, p. 99, discussing the relevant documents. In the undated *P. Bastianini* 25.2–3 from Narmouthis (in the region of the former Polemon district in the Fayyum) the Arcadian Theodosiopolis is referred to as “New Theodosiopolis”: ἀπὸ τῆς Νέας Θεωδοῦσιουπόλεως — — — | — — — Νέας Θεωδοῦσιουπόλεως (*sic*). Throughout the present article, references to Theodosiopolis and its nome always concern the Fayyum location unless indicated otherwise. All papyri cited in this article are from the Fayyum unless indicated otherwise; the *PN* (*Papyrological Navigator*: <https://www.papyri.info/search>) in most cases renders this Theodosiopolite provenance as “Arsinoites.”

(*territorium*; ἐνορία).² The Theodosiopolite nome, first securely attested in 447 CE, was apparently carved out of the much larger Arsinoite nome in the Fayyum Oasis and may have survived the Islamic conquest until at least 644, a development that I discuss later.³ The exact location of Theodosiopolis and the city's proper place within the administration of the Fayyum, however, are still subject to debate. Reevaluating the relevant texts, I argue that Theodosiopolis appears to have been a *civitas* unlike others; it had a peculiar administrative status, being formally a city but in most respects dependent on, if not administratively annexed to, its big sister, Arsinoite Polis, or Arsinoe for short. I also argue that the pagarchs "of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis" (τῆς Ἀρσινόων καὶ Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν) who appear during most of this period are not indicative of one united administrative district comprising two cities. Instead, this title reflects a practice whereby Arsinoite officials were responsible for the administration of the Theodosiopolite nome. Finally, this hypothesis of a system of joint administration in the Fayyum aligns with other indicators that cast doubt on the repeated suggestion that Theodosiopolis should be identified with the town of Tebtynis.

The Theodosiopolite nome and its settlements

To date, we know the names of seven villages (κῶμαι) and three hamlets (ἐποίκια) that were at some point allocated to an administrative district in the Fayyum known as the Theodosiopolite nome:⁴

² In late antiquity, the old nome μητροπόλεις rose to *civitas* status, adapting to Roman civic organization throughout the empire; see K. Maresch, *Vom Gau zur Civitas: Verwaltungsreformen in Ägypten zur Zeit der Ersten Tetrarchie im Spiegel der Papyri*, in: R. Haensch, J. Heinrichs (eds.), *Herrschen und Verwalten: Der Alltag der römischen Administration in der Hohen Kaiserzeit* (Kölner historische Abhandlungen 46), Cologne 2007, 427–437. The papyri, however, still frequently use the term νομός, for instance, to refer to settlements in the hinterland of the cities.

³ Commonly, *P.Prag.* II 131 (September 21, 455) is thought to be the earliest evidence, but *P.Rain.Cent.* 97 from about December 3, 447 can also be shown to relate to the Theodosiopolite nome in the Fayyum — a topic I shall discuss elsewhere. Some plausible arguments have been made for dating *P.Oxy.* LI 3636, where the Theodosiopolite nome occurs, to the earlier part of the fifth century (cf. *P.Oxy.* LI, pp. 72–77 and *BL* XIII 163), but it remains impossible to be certain. Note that Theodosiopolis is referred to as "New Theodosiopolis" in *P.Bastianini* 25 (V–VI), which may suggest that its foundation postdates that of its Thebaid namesake (see n. 1); in the case of the only other city known as Nova Theodosiopolis, Apros in Thrace, the renaming more probably dates to the reign of Theodosius II; see A. H. M. Jones et al., *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, Oxford ²1971, 380 n. 36 (cf. *P.Bastianini*, p. 158 n. 3) and Honigsmann's note on Hierocl. *Synecd.* 634.2. The last document with a fixed date to mention the Arcadian Theodosiopolite nome is *BGU* I 320 (February 9, 644).

⁴ One or two other settlements are mentioned as parts of the Theodosiopolite nome, but their names are not clearly legible. A new entry (see n. 3) seems to be the ἐποίκιον in *P.Rain.Cent.* 97.4 (the recto is dated December 3, 447): . . . πινολυλα . . . αβι. The ἐποίκιον of the verso text is the same, although its name is not given; see the information that both texts provide about Makarios, son of Aion (the reading of the patronymic follows *BL* XII 165). A village (old or new) of the, probably Arcadian, Theodosiopolite nome is mentioned in a lacuna in *SB* I 4715.2–3 (V–VII): ἀπὸ κώμης [— —] τοῦ | Θεοδοσι[ουπολίτου νομοῦ]. For the date of this text, see *P.Gascou*, p. 562, where Willy Clarysse assigned it to the Arcadian Theodosiopolite nome (see the reference

Date	Village	Evidence
September 21, 455	Psint(h)eo	<i>P.Prag.</i> II 131
May 23, 487	(Ibion) Eikosipentarouron	<i>SPP</i> XX 128
September 12, 504	Tristomon	<i>P.Ross.Georg.</i> III 32
VI	Ibion kai Magdola(?) ⁵	<i>SB</i> I 5139
VI–VII	Eleusis	<i>SPP</i> III ² 32
VI–VII ⁶	Theogenis (i.e., Theogonis?)	<i>BGU</i> I 311
February 9, 644	Theaxenis (i.e., Theoxenis?)	<i>BGU</i> I 320

Table 1: Known villages (κῶμαι) in the Theodosiopolite nome.

Date	Hamlet	Evidence
VI	Tin	<i>SPP</i> III ² 135
August 28, 584	Strategiou	<i>CPR</i> X 127
October 2, 620 ⁷	Koueisan ⁸	<i>P.Lond.</i> I 113.6C

Table 2: Known hamlets (ἐποικία) in the Theodosiopolite nome.

to *P.Prag.* II 131 in the notes), contrary to the *PN*'s (n. 1) and *TM*'s (n. 1 above) locating it in the Hermopolite. While it is highlighted in *BL* VIII 313 that the papyrus *might possibly* be from the Hermopolite instead of the Fayyum (which was given by the *editio princeps*), the latter still seems the more convincing choice: the reconstruction of ll. 6–7 ([μ]ακαρ(ίου) Κοσμ[ᾱ] ἀπὸ τῆς | Ἀρσινό[ι]τῶ[ν] π[ό]λε[ως] — — —) seems probable and the name Kosmas (*TM* Nam 3712, see the *attestations*) has a distribution rate of 227 to 30 in favor of the Fayyum over the Hermopolite nome (including both *TM*'s “Hermopolites” and *TM*'s “Hermopolis”) for the fifth to seventh centuries. This difference is significant as, for context, the *PN* yields 2,113 : 1,545 results for Arsinoite versus Hermopolite documents from an open “strict search” for 400–701 CE (“loose search,” 3,102 : 2,141). Derda, *Ἀρσινόιτης νομός* (n. 1) 113, referring to *SB* I 4669 (613/614 CE), adds Penne, but this is a Hermopolite village, and thus belongs to the southern Theodosiopolite nome.

⁵ This was apparently one single village; see *SB* I 5139.1: ἀπὸ κώμης Ἰβίωνος καὶ Μαγδόλων (read Μαγδόλων?) and *SPP* X 111.3–4 (V–VI): οἱ ἀπὸ | κώμης Ἰβίωνος (καὶ) Μαγδόλων. On current evidence the most likely explanation seems to be that the administrations of Ibion Eikosipentarouron and Magdola merged at some point, given their apparent proximity in other documents; cf. B. Haug, *Watering the Desert: Environment, Irrigation, and Society in the Premodern Fayyum, Egypt*, doctoral dissertation, Berkeley 2012, 177. One cannot, however, exclude the possibility that other places called Ibion or Magdol-, such as Ibion Argaiou or Magdolon Palaali (if the latter is not identical with Magdola anyway; but cf. Haug, *op. cit.*, 165), or as-yet unknown settlements are behind this name. For discussion, see the relevant pages of the *Fayum Project* website by Bart van Beek (2003), which also provide further sources and literature: <https://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/882.php> and /885, /1284, and /1286, respectively. These can alternatively be accessed via *TM* Places.

⁶ For the date, see *BL* XIII 19.

⁷ On the date, see N. Gonis, *Notes on the Aristocracy of Byzantine Fayum*, *ZPE* 166 (2008) 203–210, at 206–207.

⁸ *P.Lond.* I 113.6C.9–11 has ἀπὸ ἐποικίου | Κουεῖσαν τοῦ Θεοδοσ(ίου) πολίτου νομοῦ. The editor Frederic Kenyon comments: “W. κωεῖσαν; the papyrus is much rubbed, but there seems to be a υ before the ε, preceded by another letter” (“W.” stands for Wessely). Uncertain letters were not marked in *P.Lond.* I. The online image is rather blurry, but while ου exhibits different forms throughout the text, the one from οὐσίας (l. 4) looks very similar; ου, on the other hand, always features an ascending connecting stroke that is absent here. Therefore, to my mind, the now well-attested Κουεῖσαν is the better reading; cf. *TM* (n. 1) Geo 1167.

Most villages that are known to have been part of the Theodosiopolite nome are located in the area of the old Polemon district (Πολέμωνος μερίς), one of the three former subdivisions of the Fayyum. It has therefore been conclusively argued that the Theodosiopolite nome was a fraction of the Arsinoite nome in the southwest that was more or less congruent with the Polemon district.⁹ This argument should only be taken so far, however. For instance, Theaxenis, although very close to the Polemon district, was situated in the area of the old Themistos district.¹⁰ On the other hand, if we turn the case of Theaxenis around, it is conceivable that there were Polemon settlements that were not part of the Theodosiopolite nome.¹¹ This may give the impression of a “patch-work nome” with localities scattered throughout a larger part of the Fayyum, but the village of Eikosipentarouron is described as being situated in the ἐνορία of Theodosiopolis, which suggests an enclosed area attached to an urban center.¹²

We can only speculate about other adscriptions to the Theodosiopolite nome. A short list of toponyms, *SB* I 5336, may be useful here, since it is ordered alphabetically from Α to Φ and so is probably mostly complete.¹³ The document does not include a heading or description. A total of twelve out of twenty-seven places in this list cannot be securely located, but twelve are in the Polemon district, two in the Themistos district, and one in the Herakleides district.¹⁴ We do not know what the intended purpose of this document was, but since it lists the villages next to monetary amounts it may, for instance, be a record of certain settlements’ arrears. The comparatively small sample and the predominance of places from the Polemon district within that sample would appear to support the hypothesis that this list only contains Theodosiopolite villages, though certainly not all of them.¹⁵ However, if the Theodosiopolite nome did indeed

⁹ C. Wessely, *Topographie des Faijûm (Arsinoites Nomus) in griechischer Zeit* (Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse 50/1), Vienna 1904, 23–24, later restated by Georgina Fantoni in *CPR* XIV, pp. 46–47. Owing to its unusually large size, the Arsinoite nome was divided into three subdistricts (μερίδες) during the Ptolemaic and parts of the Roman period, which I will use here simply as regional markers; see Derda, *Ἀρσινοΐτης νομός* (n. 1) 61–112.

¹⁰ Hickey, *Down and Out* (n. 1) 136 n. 5 and L. Berkes, B. Haug, *Villages, Requisitions, and Tax Districts: Two Greek Lists from the Eighth-Century Fayyûm*, *BASP* 53 (2016) 189–222, at 202–203.

¹¹ Hickey, *Down and Out* (n. 1) 136 n. 5 points to Kaminoi, a Polemon village that is part of the Arsinoite in *W.Chr.* 8 (639/640 CE), but this is an ambiguous example that will be discussed further below.

¹² *SPP* XX 128.4–5: κώμης Εἰκοσιπενταρούρων τῆς | Θε[ο]δοσιουπ[ολ]ιτικῆς ἐνορίας. See also *P.Lond.* I 113.1.1–3: τὸ μὲν ἐπὶ τῆςδε τῆς | Ἀρσι[v]ρειτῶν [πόλεως, τὸ δὲ ἐν π]ρῶταστῶν καὶ ἐν τῇ ταύτῃ | περιουκείδι .[— — — τ]ῆς Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν.

¹³ Because of the late occurrence of most of these toponyms, Willy Clarysse assigns the document to the sixth or seventh century: <https://www.trismegistos.org/text/34010>.

¹⁴ Cf. the description at <https://berlpap.smb.museum/01107/>. On the potential reading [Ἀμπελί]ο(ν) in l. 6, see *BL* XIII 194.

¹⁵ The ratio “unknown location : Polemon : Themistos : Herakleides” is 12 : 12 : 2 : 1. In the comparable list *SB* I 5340 (VI–VII; see <https://www.trismegistos.org/text/34014>), this ratio (11 : 3 : 1 : 0) does not tell us very much, but it may be significant that with the exception of

comprise a contiguous area, a place like Alexandrou (Nesos?), which appears in *SB* I 5336, seems relatively far away from the Polemon district.¹⁶

It is a peculiar feature of some Theodosiopolite settlements that they are known as part of the Arsinoite nome even during the period from 447, the *terminus ante quem* for the foundation of the Theodosiopolite nome, to around 644, the date of the nome's last occurrence in a document. This observation may concern four localities:¹⁷

Eikosipentarouron

- *SPP* XX 128 (May 23, 487): Theodosiopolites
- *SPP* III² 72bis (second half of VII): Arsinoites¹⁸

Eleusis

- *SB* VI 9596 (July 29, 579): Arsinoites
- *SPP* III² 32 (VI–VII): Theodosiopolites
- *P.Naqlun* II 22 (August 8, 623): Arsinoites
- *BGU* II 366 (August 3, 645/660): Arsinoites

Tin

- *SPP* III² 135 (VI): Theodosiopolites
- *SB* XVI 12945 (VII): Arsinoites

Tristomon¹⁹

- *P.Ross.Georg.* III 32 (September 12, 504): Theodosiopolites
- *CPR* XIX 14 + P.Vindob. G 21029 + P.Vindob. G 25638 (September 7, 590): Arsinoites²⁰

Τετρα . . . — which is perhaps to be restored either as Τετραθύρων (cf. *SB* VI 9583 frg. 4.9; second half of VIII) or as Τετρακομία (cf. *SPP* X 138 col. II 7; early VII) — all places from *SB* I 5340 resurface in *SB* I 5336. Another sample, though relatively small, is *SPP* X 143 (0 : 7 : 0 : 0) from the sixth century.

¹⁶ See *TM* (n. 1) Geo 105 and the linked *Fayum project* page; Haug, *Watering* (n. 5) 156 and 158–159; and Derda, *Ἀρσινοίτης νομός* (n. 1) 21. It is of course possible that there were two or more homonymous places in different regions of the Fayyum.

¹⁷ In *P.Dubl.* 34.1 (511 CE), the village Theagenis (*sic*) is mentioned without a nome attribution, while the subsequent line features a second village that is indeed part of the Arsinoite nome (it cannot be established in what subdistrict of the Fayyum this village was situated). It is therefore not certain that Theagenis here would have been understood as also belonging to the Arsinoite nome; if the hypothesis about the system of joint administration that is developed below is correct, this differentiation would not have been very relevant for the writer.

¹⁸ *SPP* III² 72bis.2 begins: [τ]οῦ Ἀρσινόϊτου νομοῦ. Although there is no diaeresis on the papyrus, there does not seem to be sufficient space to restore the Theodosiopolite nome here. The date follows S. Kovarik, *Kat.-Nr. 63: Quittung für Fett*, in: B. Palme (ed.), *Halbmond über dem Nil: Wie aus dem byzantinischen das arabische Ägypten wurde* (Nilus 26), Vienna 2022, 132–133, at 132.

¹⁹ The Theodosiopolite nome could theoretically be restored instead of the Arsinoite in *SB* I 4859.1 (undated): [Τρι]στόμου τοῦ Ἀρσινόϊτου νομοῦ — —].

²⁰ The new fragments were found by Sophie Kovarik, who established the reading of l. 7 as [ἀπὸ κ]όμης Τριστόμου τοῦ Ἀρσιν[ο]ῦ νομοῦ. See <https://data.onb.ac.at/rec/RZ00000254>.

Did the administrative classification of the four settlements listed above simply shift over time?²¹ Of the papyri that show these villages as parts of the Arsinoite nome, *SPP* III² 72bis, *BGU* II 366, and *SB* XVI 12945 may in fact be from a time when the Theodosiopolite nome no longer existed (see the discussion below), which leaves us only with Eleusis and Tristomon as clear evidence of a change in the nome attribution. In the case of Eleusis, the undated Theodosiopolite attestation may fall before, after, or right in between the Arsinoite testimonies, so a change in either direction is possible, whereas Tristomon switched from the Theodosiopolite to the Arsinoite. Based on *CPR* XIX 14 + P.Vindob. G 21029 + P.Vindob. G 25638, Sophie Kovarik argues in her unpublished dissertation that Tristomon, in the Theodosiopolite nome, might have been described equally well as part of the Arsinoite nome.²² Another revealing detail can be cited to support this hypothesis: *P.Ross.Georg.* III 32, which mentions Tristomon as part of the Theodosiopolite nome, is a land lease undertaken by a man from Tristomon, and the leased land is located “in the plain (πεδῖον) of our village.”²³ The landowner to whose holdings (οὐσία) this plot belonged, however, was a certain Flavius Barios. He bears the rank epithets μεγαλοπρεπέστατος and ἐνδοξότατος, and is further described as “hailing from Memphis, landowner also in Arsinoe,” not as “(...) landowner also in Theodosiopolis.”²⁴ This is notable since these markers of landownership always refer to the nome the document centers on. While aristocrats of the ranks of ἐνδοξότατος and μεγαλοπρεπέστατος are not normally identified by their origin, they sometimes are when they originate from a nome that is different from the place where the transaction is being conducted.²⁵ Therefore, the word “also” (καί) in the reference to Arsinoe functions as a contrast not to Theodosiopolis, but to Memphis, and “landowner in Arsinoe” apparently was, for the purpose of the lease, considered sufficient, or even appropriate, to describe Barios’s capacity as a landowner in a Theodosiopolite village. This seeming paradox in the papyrus about the “Theodosiopolite” text *P.Ross.Georg.* III 32 thus supports Kovarik’s hypothesis regarding the “Arsinoite” document *CPR* XIX 14 + P.Vindob. G 21029 + P.Vindob. G 25638: Tristomon was part of the Theodosiopolite nome, but could equally well be conceived of as part of the Arsinoite nome. This would also provide a convenient explanation for the varying nome attributions of Eleusis.

However, the hypothesis that the Theodosiopolite nome was regarded as part of the Arsinoite nome in a legal document seems difficult to reconcile with the role of the

²¹ Given the many examples of villages changing their toparchy or *pagus*, and even cities changing their nome allocation, this would hardly be surprising.

²² S. Kovarik, *Das spätantike Notariat: Kanzlei- und Archivpraxis des 4.–8. Jh. n. u. Z. am Beispiel Arsinoites (Mittelägypten)*, doctoral dissertation, Vienna 2014, 214 n. 12.

²³ *P.Ross.Georg.* III 32.5–6 (see *P.Gen.* IV, pp. 354–356): ἐν πεδίῳ | [τῆς ἡμε]τε[ρ]ῆς κώμῃ[ς]. The term πεδῖον refers to the whole of the arable land that was administratively part of the village outside the core residential center.

²⁴ *P.Ross.Georg.* III 32.3: [ἀπὸ τῆς Μ]εμφιτῶν πόλεως, γεουχοῦντι καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς Ἀρσινοειτῶν πόλεως.

²⁵ Doubts about the restoration of ἀπὸ τῆς in the first lacuna of *P.Ross.Georg.* III 32.3 (*BL* XI 187–188) are therefore unfounded. Moreover, as Fabian Reiter (*P.Köln* XI, p. 242 n. 15) notes, there is not enough space for the suggested alternative πρωτεύοντι τῆς.

former as a fiscal entity. In *P.Oxy.* LI 3636 (Oxyrhynchos; V), the Theodosiopolite is listed as one of the nine nomes of the province of Arcadia paying for the “account of flat-bottomed boats.”²⁶ To what extent were the Arsinoite and Theodosiopolite nomes considered distinct entities with their own territorial boundaries? We may hypothesize that Theodosiopolite villages could be labeled as Arsinoite villages only in documents concerning private transactions; however, the current evidence is too limited and inconclusive to confirm or refute this.²⁷

The magnitude of the contributions listed in *P.Oxy.* LI 3636 may shed some light on the matter. The comparably modest amount attributed to the Theodosiopolite nome in this document may reflect its comparatively limited economic potential and the limited size of its territory. It is also notable that the document lists the nomes downstream, from south to north, except for the Arsinoite and Theodosiopolite nomes, which appear at the end of the list.²⁸ The most natural explanation for this deviation is that both these nomes were situated at some distance from the Nile valley, warranting separate treatment. Still, the more northern Arsinoite precedes the Theodosiopolite nome, which runs counter to the general order in the list and may indicate some exalted position of the former over the latter. We shall see that this apparent contradiction — a distinct administrative entity in a somewhat subordinate position — presents us with only one plausible conclusion.

²⁶ *P.Oxy.* LI 3636.1: λόγον [π]λατυπήϊων. Cf. *P.Oxy.* LI 3635 (Oxyrhynchos; V), a tax account in which the Theodosiopolite nome is missing. There are, however, only six nomes listed explicitly, and the amounts attributed to these nomes appear to be still due. The missing individual figures for the Oxyrhynchite, Theodosiopolite, and Neilopolite nomes were certainly included in the amount mentioned in l. 3.

²⁷ Sven Tost (*Die Unterscheidung zwischen öffentlicher und privatgeschäftlicher Sphäre am Beispiel des Amts der riparii*, in: *PapCongr.* XXVI, pp. 773–780) has compellingly shown how even in legal documents the wording of the official title of the *riparii* could change depending on whether the document’s content relates to an “official,” “internal administrative,” or “private” sphere of activity. The analogous hypothesis would be that in documents concerning official and internal administrative business, Theodosiopolite villages had to be marked as such, while in ones concerning private business, they *could* alternatively be marked as Arsinoite villages. We have only *SB* VI 9596, *P.Ross.Georg.* III 32, and *CPR* XIX 14 + *P.Vindob.* G 21029 + *P.Vindob.* G 25638 to test this hypothesis — that is, documents that fall in the period when the Theodosiopolite nome is attested, and in which parts of this nome are understood as belonging to the Arsinoite. But even here the hypothesis only works if we assume that the (fragmentary) deed of surety issued to a pagarch (*CPR* XIX 14 + *P.Vindob.* G 21029 + *P.Vindob.* G 25638) pertains to private business. Finally, it should be noted that this distinction between official, internal administrative, and private business does not affect the use of the title “pagarch of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis,” on which see the next section.

²⁸ The order is: Kynopolite, Oxyrhynchite, Herakleopolite, Neilopolite, Aphroditopolite, Memphite, Letopolite, Arsinoite, Theodosiopolite (*P.Oxy.* LI 3636.2).

The status of Theodosiopolis

The fiscal role of the Theodosiopolite nome can be confirmed by taking a closer look at its urban center, which was certainly a settlement with the formal status of a *civitas*. Three sources signal this status: (1) *SPP* VIII 1091 (August 24, 590/605) mentions the city in connection with the transport of its tax grain, which was due in a ninth indiction. Here, Theodosiopolis is an official fiscal unit whose shares were partitioned among the Great Houses (οἶκοι) of the region — a system we see more clearly at work at Oxyrhynchos.²⁹ The transport is arranged as a *munus* by the magnates Sophia and Theophania, individuals who owned considerable landholdings in the Theodosiopolite nome but were deeply rooted in the Arsinoite aristocracy.³⁰ (2) The “grammarian” Hierocles, in his *Synecdemus* (c. 527–535 CE), lists Theodosiopolis as one of the nine cities (πόλεις) of the province of Arcadia, under a *praeses*.³¹ Hierocles’s catalog has the same south-to-north ordering as *P.Oxy.* LI 3636, but in contrast places both Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis in the center, as is geographically correct. Still, the more southern Theodosiopolis appears only after Arsinoe — as if merely an afterthought. (3) George of Cyprus, finally, provides us with a very similarly arranged list in his *Descriptio orbis Romani* (early VII), in which Theodosiopolis again appears as one of the Arcadian cities.³² Both (2) and (3) disprove the hypothesis, cautiously advanced by the editors of *P.Tebt.* II, that Theodosiopolis may have been an alternative name for Arsinoe.³³ At the same time, the instances (2), (3), and *P.Oxy.* LI 3636, mentioned in the previous section, suggest that Theodosiopolis and its nome were not an administrative subdivision of the Arsinoite.

One important factor in this discussion is the institution of the pagarchy, which was the central fiscal authority in the countryside surrounding the Roman-Egyptian cities in late antiquity, with incumbent pagarchs acting alone or in a collegium for one particular

²⁹ For a brief account of this “model of fiscal shares,” “model of fiscal participation,” or “Gascou model,” see T. M. Hickey, *Wine, Wealth, and State in Late Antique Egypt: The House of Apion at Oxyrhynchus* (New Texts from Ancient Cultures 3), Ann Arbor 2012, 5–7, who discusses the basic positions.

³⁰ On *SPP* VIII 1091, its prosopography, and its connections to the model of fiscal shares, see Gonis, *Notes* (n. 7) 204–206.

³¹ Hierocl. *Synecd.* 729.1–730.4 (ed. Honigmann). The order (with regularized spellings and differences from *P.Oxy.* LI 3636 marked in italics) is: Kynopolis, Oxyrhynchos, Herakleopolis, *Arsinoe*, *Theodosiopolis*, Neilopolis, Aphroditopolis, Memphis, Letopolis. On this text and the following one, see N. Gonis, *A View of Arcadia in the Seventh Century*, Tyche 37 (2022) 109–112, at 111; *P.Oxy.* LI, pp. 78–79 and 98–99; and *CPR* XIV, p. 46. Since both Hierocles and George of Cyprus (on the latter, see the following note) were working from earlier lists, it is difficult to attribute a fixed date to these catalogs; see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602: A Social, Economic, and Administrative Survey*, 3 vols., Oxford 1964, 712–713 and Jones et al., *The Cities* (n. 3) 514–521.

³² Georg. Cyp. 744–751a (ed. Honigmann); on the date, see the preceding note. George is obviously drawing on Hierocles’s list. The order here (with differences from Hierocles marked in italics) is: Oxyrhynchos, Herakleopolis, *Kynopolis* (possibly a later addition), *Neilopolis*, *Arsinoites*, *Theodosiopolis*, *Aphroditopolis*, Memphis, Letopolis.

³³ *P.Tebt.* II, pp. 363–365, followed by Jones et al., *The Cities* (n. 3) 343.

civitas from the latter part of the fifth century onward.³⁴ Documents from 556 through 622 CE, however, seem to suggest the existence of a “double pagarchy” — a phenomenon otherwise unattested in Byzantine Egypt — as they consistently address pagarchs in the Fayyum as *πάγαρχος/παγάρχης τῆς Ἀρσινωιτῶν καὶ Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν*.³⁵ Many scholars have taken this reference to mean that, during these years, the Theodosiopolite was unified with the Arsinoite nome and formed a single fiscal administrative district, henceforth known as *Ἀρσινωιτῶν καὶ Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν*.³⁶ This formula is obviously elliptical, but for the missing noun that would relate to the feminine singular article τῆς we can look to the pagarchs of Antaiopolis in the Thebaid, who are often titled τῆς Ἀνταιοπολιτῶν, which strongly suggests πόλεως to complete the formula.³⁷ Georgina Fantoni, however, notices that Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis are both attested as *civitates* during 556–622 CE; she therefore rejects πόλεως and instead suggests *παγαρχία*,³⁸ but this territorial meaning of *παγαρχία* is not prevalent before the Islamic conquest.³⁹ Roberta Mazza favors πόλεως and suggests that the formula may be understood as τῆς Ἀρσινωιτῶν (πόλεως) καὶ (τῆς) Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν (πόλεως).⁴⁰ However, she bases this argument on formulaic comparisons with evidence that is not contemporary with those

³⁴ See M. Stern, *Taxes and Authority in the Late Antique Countryside: The Reach of the State and the Pagarchs of Byzantine Egypt (284–642 CE)* (APF-Beihefte 55), Berlin 2025.

³⁵ In *CPR* XIV, p. 42 and Derda, *Ἀρσινωίτης νομός* (n. 1) 114, the year 566 appears to be a typo for 556, which features throughout the rest of the first text; the year 556 is based on *BGU* I 305, from a fourth indiction. The latest published text to attest this title is *CPR* XIX 32 from December 29, 622.

³⁶ *CPR* XIV, p. 45: “These facts suggest that Ἀρσινωιτῶν καὶ Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν was the official title of a pagarchy in Arcadia.” The author takes “pagarchy” to mean a territory, not the institution. The editor of *SPP* III² 32 apparently follows this lead when he notes: “Unter Justinian waren der Arsinoites und der Theodosiopolites zur Verwaltungseinheit einer einzigen Pagarchie verschmolzen worden” (*SPP* III², pt. I, p. 54). Similarly, Clarysse, *Name* (n. 1) holds that the Theodosiopolite is called a nome only before and after “the administrative unit (pagarchy?) of the Arsinoitai and Theodosiopolitai” (parentheses in the original) is attested. But the Theodosiopolite is in fact referred to as a nome during this period, too: *CPR* X 127 (August 28, 584) is the only text to contain a fixed date, yet there are others that may well fall into the same period. Cf. *CPR* XXIV, p. 176 n. 1 for a more careful phrasing: “die Verwaltungsbereiche Ἀρσινωιτῶν καὶ Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν (scil., Polis), die [...] in einer Pagarchie vereinigt waren” (parentheses in the original), alluding to a potential distinction between the *civitates* and the purview of the pagarch over both of these cities’ fiscal administration.

³⁷ *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 col. I 6; *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67024.31; *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67094.4; *P.Lond.* V 1661.6. There are numerous examples of other officials’ titles being written out in the form τῆς -ιτῶν πόλεως.

³⁸ *CPR* XIV, p. 45. She also raises the possibility of πολιτείας, but immediately rejects it.

³⁹ In Byzantine documents, *παγαρχία* generally refers to the office, although there are indications of a territorial sense in *P.Cair.Masp.* I 67002 col. III 20 (Antaiopolis; May–July 567) and *P.Rain.Cent.* 81 (Hermopolis; VI–VII). These are exceptions, however, and still ambiguous. The use of *παγαρχία* as a synonym for the whole νομός is not attested before the Islamic conquest; see below.

⁴⁰ R. Mazza, *Ricerche sul pagarca nell’Egitto tardoantico e bizantino*, *Aegyptus* 75 (1995) 169–242, at 183–184.

documents that link the pagarchy to the Theodosiopolite nome.⁴¹ Two observations do still support her understanding of the formula with regard to the pre-623 era. First, as mentioned, there is no Byzantine evidence of a territorial sense of “pagarchy” that would have comprised the entire nome; instead, at least in the mid-sixth century, the pagarchy was responsible for the hinterland, the ἐνορία of the city, and some parts of the countryside were — at least formally — not subject to the pagarchs’ fiscal authority.⁴² Another argument comes from an occasional variation in the formula, which reads τῆς τε (!) Ἀρσινειτῶν καὶ Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν and is used in the titulatures of the pagarchs Apion and Strategios Paneuphemos.⁴³ In this construction, τε implies that the article τῆς is used for both the nouns that follow, rather than referring to one single noun that governs both Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis.⁴⁴ The reconstruction τῆς Ἀρσινειτῶν (πόλεως) καὶ (τῆς) Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν (πόλεως), therefore, seems to be the only plausible option. Although πόλις as part of a toponym does not prove that this place was a *civitas* proper, the pattern for places that appear in the form -ιτῶν πόλις is strong and in virtually all cases these towns can be confirmed to be *civitates*.⁴⁵ Consequently, the form of the pagarchs’ title in the Fayyum does not refer to a single administrative district that was “created” or “united” at some point, but — quite the opposite — is another strong indication that Theodosiopolis was considered to be a Roman city in its own right alongside Arsinoe.

The texts pertaining to the *City* of Theodosius therefore support the apparently paradoxical notion, drawn from the evidence on the Theodosiopolite *nome*, of a city that functioned as a distinct fiscal entity while occupying a subordinate role vis-à-vis

⁴¹ Mazza draws on Oxyrhynchite and Arsinoite documents that refer to pagarchs ταύτης (!) τῆς Ὀξυρυγχιτῶν πόλεως and ταύτης (!) τῆς Ἀρσινειτῶν πόλεως, respectively. But since these texts are all dated later than 622 CE, they may reflect later conceptions of the pagarchy.

⁴² See n. 39 and Stern, *Taxes* (n. 34) 24–25 and 62–66.

⁴³ Apion: *CPR* XIV 10 (556–579) includes τε, whereas it is omitted in *BGU* I 305 (June 13, 556). Strategios: *SB* XXIV 16288 (June 2, 600), *CPR* XXIV 27 (January 8, 610), *BGU* XXI 2893 (c. 604–616), and *CPR* X 131 (February 5, 612) all include τε, whereas it is omitted in *CPR* XIV 9 (July–November 607). Seven instances have been restored: In *CPR* XXIV 24 (before 600; see *P.Eirene* IV, p. 206) the restoration in l. 4 seems fairly long even without τε; cf. the lacunae in ll. 6 and 7. *SB* I 5253.2–3 (after 603 CE) reads (see *BL* XI 196): [Φλ(αού)ω] Στρατηγίω τῷ ὑπερφουεστ]άτω πανευφήμω π[ατρικίω | παγάρχῳ τῆς τε Ἀρσινειτῶν] καὶ Θεοδοσιουπολιτ[ῶν — — —]; without τε, the text in the first lacuna of l. 3 would probably be too short. The situation is similar at the beginning of ll. 6 and 7 in *CPR* XXIV 28 (September 4, 611). The cases of *P.Bodl.* I 53, *P.Eirene* IV 40, *P.Messeri* 44, and *SB* I 4781 (*CPR* XIV, pp. 42–43 gives the date as 556–622, but with Strategios Paneuphemos as pagarch it must fall to the late sixth or early seventh century) must remain open owing to their fragmentary preservation.

⁴⁴ This coordination is evident in *SB* XX 15367.1–2 (Oxyrhynchos; 535): Ἰ[ω]άννη ἀπὸ ἐποικ(ίου) Λέοντος γέωργ(ῶ) τῆς τε μηχ(ανῆς) καλουμ(ένης) | Μικρ(οῦ) Πέσω καὶ τῆς μηχ(ανῆς) Πάθ(ου); Ioannes, from the hamlet (ἐποίκιον) Leontos, was, as γεωργός, associated with two distinct farms (μηχαναί). Another close comparison is *P.Oxy.* LV 3804.247 (Oxyrhynchos; 566): τῆς γεουχικ(ῆς) αὐτουργί(ας) τῆς τε Πάθ Ταμπεμοῦ καὶ Νοτί(νης) Παρορίου.

⁴⁵ *O.Trim.* I, pp. 46–47 and J. H. F. Dijkstra, K. A. Worp, *The Administrative Position of Ombai and Syene in Late Antiquity*, *ZPE* 155 (2006) 183–187, at 184–186. A dynastic name, by contrast, does not appear to unequivocally imply city status; see A. H. M. Jones, *The Greek City from Alexander to Justinian*, Oxford 1940, 86.

her larger, neighboring sister. This situation becomes significant when we note that evidence of Theodosiopolite officials is entirely lacking.⁴⁶ Wherever we look for administrative or socioeconomic bonds, we see people from the Theodosiopolite nome addressing Arsinoite authorities, either officials or landowners.⁴⁷ *P.Prag.* II 131 (September 21, 455) is a deed of surety from a Theodosiopolite villager for another Theodosiopolite villager, witnessed by two μεσίται, officials who dealt with the storage of tax grain. Since the deed concerns “the (grain) loading of Arsinoe”⁴⁸ — that is, public business — the addressed πολίτευόμενος is certainly from Arsinoe. Similarly, *SPP* XX 128 (May 23, 487) concerns the tax grain of a village in the Theodosiopolite ἐνορία; an Arsinoite μεσίτης stands surety for an Arsinoite σιτομέτρης who is going to deliver the grain of the village to an Arsinoite πρωτεύων. The aforementioned *P.Ross.Georg.* III 32 (September 12, 504) should also be included; here, a Theodosiopolite villager leases land situated “in the plain of our village” from a magnate who is referred to as a landowner in Arsinoe.⁴⁹ In *CPR* X 127 (August 28, 584), authorities from a Theodosiopolite hamlet (ἐποίκιον) address four Arsinoite πρωτευούσαι in a deed of surety for several inhabitants of the same hamlet.⁵⁰ In *SB* I 5139 (VI), a Theodosiopolite villager leases land in the fields of his village from an Arsinoite Aurelius. Finally, in *P.Lond.* I 113.6C (October 3/2, 620/635), a Theodosiopolite inhabitant of an ἐποίκιον takes a loan from a χαρτουλάριος of the estate (οὐσία) of the well-known Arsinoite ἐνδοξότατος στρατηλάτης Theodosios, no doubt because the hamlet was part of this estate.

This pronounced focus by individuals from the Theodosiopolite nome on Arsinoite authorities and Arsinoite civic administration — and the presence of strong socioeconomic bonds — is hardly coincidental, particularly if we take into account the conspicuous absence of any magistrates from Theodosiopolis and the fact that the city does not appear anywhere as an independent actor. The possibility that Theodosiopolis was simply a theoretical fiscal unit without any actual settlement behind it is excluded by the mounting evidence of the city’s physical existence. In addition to the aforementioned papyrus that refers to a Theodosiopolite ἐνορία, two contracts state that

⁴⁶ In the writing exercise *P.Rain.Unterricht* 99.7 (unknown origin; VI), the editor reads βονθ(οῦ) πόλε(ως) θ[---] and considers the restoration Θ[εοδοσιουπολιτῶν]. Even if this were correct, however, it would be just as likely that this refers to the city in the Thebaid (see n. 1). Moreover, the function of a βονθός need not refer to a civic magistrate. Assuming the existence of a system of joint administration, it is conceivable that this man, as a βονθός, acted for Theodosiopolis in a capacity analogous to that of a village official and was answerable to Arsinoite authorities.

⁴⁷ Since it is possible that affiliation to the Theodosiopolite nome was subject to change, the following discussion does not include texts that mention these villages *without* a nome attribution, although some would support the argument. See, for example, *SPP* XX 112 (575 CE), in which a σιτομέτρης of Eikosipentarouron borrows money from an ἐπιστάτης of the σιτομέτραι of Arsinoe (see *SPP* III², pt. II, pp. 12–13 on the identification of the ἐπιστάτης).

⁴⁸ *P.Prag.* II 131.13–15: πληρώσαι | εἰς[βο]λ[ήν] τῆς Ἀρσινω|ειτῶν πόλεως.

⁴⁹ See p. 194.

⁵⁰ For the restoration, see *BL* X 51.

the parties hail from the actual city, not just from some village or hamlet in the nome.⁵¹ The city is also mentioned as a destination in an Oxyrhynchite papyrus.⁵²

All of this suggests that Theodosiopolis never developed a role in public administration equal to that of other cities and that the affairs of its nome were managed by the Arsinoite authorities. We encounter the somewhat peculiar scenario that there appear to have been two distinct *civitates*, with one city administering the other, yet the latter continued to function both as a fiscal unit and as a local designation. In other words, individuals could claim to originate from the Theodosiopolite nome and have their fiscal obligations registered there, but when dealing with matters at the city level, people addressed officials based in the city of Arsinoe. The system of joint administration is also, to my mind, the only convenient way of explaining why Theodosiopolis can figure in provincial accounts as an official fiscal unit along with Arsinoe but still be viewed as somehow subordinate. It also explains why Theodosiopolite villages could — at least in private contexts — be regarded as Arsinoite villages, as if the new nome were merely an annex or a subdistrict. It might even be possible that the joint administration was institutionalized to such a degree that Arsinoite officials (and the pagarchs) performed their tasks (and collected taxes) as if the Fayyum were still one single nome, and distinguished between the Arsinoite and Theodosiopolite shares for accounting purposes only.⁵³ The writer of *CPR* XIX 32 (December 29, 622) neatly illustrates this system of joint administration by starting the pagarch's title as if referring to the city of Arsinoe alone, but then correcting himself and continuing with

⁵¹ *SB* XXX 17584 (March 27, 473), probably found in Tebtynis, and *P.Bastianini* 25 (V–VI; cf. n. 1), found in Narmouthis. The parties to the former contract both bear the status designation of Flavius, which in late antiquity refers to, as Hickey puts it, “a member [...] of the military and administrative hierarchy — crudely put, someone from the upper class” (p. 139). The fact that two Flavii are identified as hailing from Theodosiopolis, but not as holding any offices there, may be another, albeit vague, indication supporting the hypothesis of a joint administration.

⁵² *P.Oxy.* XVI 1921 (561 or 621 CE). Toward the end of the extant text, the document lists travel destinations for slaves or agents of the οἶκος. The Thebaid is listed as a whole (l. 15), followed by Krommydion (l. 16), a possibly Oxyrhynchite village (see A. Benaissa, *Rural Settlements of the Oxyrhynchite Nome: A Papyrological Survey* [Trismegistos Online Publications 4], 32021, 160: <https://www.trismegistos.org/top/>), and then Theodosiopolis (l. 17), followed by “the Arsinoite” (l. 18), leaving little doubt that the Arcadian Theodosiopolis is meant here.

⁵³ *SPP* VIII 1091 (see above) would appear to indicate that taxes were separately collected and transferred. However, that case concerns the fiscal shares of the large landowners, which must be distinguished from the institution of the pagarchy. The γεουχοῦσα Sophia would have collected the grain from her estate property throughout the Fayyum and from the places that were part of her fiscal share, and then have a certain amount transported in accordance with her Theodosiopolite share (presumably different from her Arsinoite share). *SPP* X 249 (c. 620 CE; see Gonis, *Notes* [n. 7] 206–208) may be comparable here: the text lists a number of Polemon localities alongside others, although obviously clustered. Either this is an all-Theodosiopolite list, or, if not, it may suggest that Arsinoite and Theodosiopolite contributions were collected as a whole and only later accounted for separately. It is unlikely that *SPP* X 249 originates from a time when the Theodosiopolite nome no longer existed, since the text features the Fayyum aristocrat Kyrillos on his own and apparently alive (see l. 10 and, by contrast, the “heirs of Eustochios” in l. 11): Kyrillos was alive on July 21, 618 (*BGU* III 725), but dead by 623/624 (*SPP* VIII 1228).

the appropriate title containing both *civitates*.⁵⁴ The dominant role of Arsinoe is further underscored when the writer later refers back to Arsinoe by simply writing “the said city,” thereby entirely ignoring Theodosiopolis, which was also part of the pagarch’s title.⁵⁵

It is doubtful whether Theodosiopolis, under the system of joint administration, ever had a city council (*curia*; βουλή) or a councilor class (*curiales*; πολιτευόμενοι). Throughout the empire, evidence for both institutions becomes increasingly rare from the fifth century onward, as social power in the cities became divided among the “municipal notables”: aristocratic landowners, current and former imperial office-holders, and the clergy.⁵⁶ But the councilor class was by no means extinct. For one, at least some of these new notables can be traced back to curial origins, and the councilor class seems to have continued in many places as a recruiting pool for lower administrative positions such as tax collectors or central accountants.⁵⁷ This scenario, however, appears to be unlikely in the case of Theodosiopolis, given that even comparatively low-ranking posts such as that of the σιτομέτραι seem to have been subject to the system of joint administration and were filled by Arsinoite personnel.⁵⁸ Perhaps from the fifth century onward, new cities no longer necessarily established a councilor class.⁵⁹ It is, for instance, difficult to imagine how the establishment of a new elite, different from the Arsinoite one, would have taken place in practice in the sixth century when the institutionalized large estates (οἰκοί) had come to pervade the entire Fayyum, including the region of the new nome. However, in the early fifth century, around which time

⁵⁴ CPR XIX 32.5–6: παγάρχῃ τῆς Ἀρσινοϊτῶν [π] καὶ | Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν, with the erased π presumably intended as the beginning of πόλεως.

⁵⁵ CPR XIX 32.8: τῆς αὐτῆς πόλεως. See also *P.Eirene* IV 40.6 (October 5, 614–October 4, 615): τῆς ἁγίας ἐκκλησίας ταύτης τῆς πόλ[ε]ως or *BGU* XXI 2893.8 (c. 604–616): ἀπὸ τῆς αὐτῆς πόλεως, both following an address to a “pagarch of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis.”

⁵⁶ See, for instance, J. H. W. G. Liebeschuetz, *Decline and Fall of the Roman City*, Oxford 2001, 104–120.

⁵⁷ The evidence has been collected and discussed by A. Laniado, *Recherches sur les notables municipaux dans l'Empire protobyzantin* (T&MByz Monographies 13), Paris 2002, 71–129. Alongside a decline in the evidence, we also have to acknowledge changes in documentary practices, which lead to the title of πολιτευόμενος no longer being prominently used — particularly when the person also held an official position or higher-ranking honorary titles. This shift may potentially have resulted in a large number of “hidden *curiales*.”

⁵⁸ See p. 199 on *SPP* XX 128.

⁵⁹ Emperor Leo I could conceive of a city without curial magistrates, but this did not mean a complete absence of city-level officials (*C.J.* VIII 53.30 from 459 CE: “whether the said city has any *magistratus* or not, or only a *defensor* resides there”; on the role of the *defensor*, cf. also Ch. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800*, Oxford 2005, 599). The Justinian legislation suggests that by the early sixth century the formation of a city council was no longer a necessary part of city foundations, or even a privilege that was sought after; see D. Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt im 6. Jahrhundert* (Byzantinisches Archiv 13), Munich 1969, 111 and 151–155. In the fourth century, the establishment of a council and councilor class had still been an essential point in promoting a settlement to city status, as exemplified in the imperial rhetoric surrounding the promotion of Tymandus to city rank; for the sources, see Jones et al., *The Cities* (n. 3) 141; Jones, *The Greek City* (n. 45) 93–94; and Claude, *op. cit.*, 151. On late antique city foundations outside Egypt in general, see below.

Theodosiopolis must have been founded, the οἰκοί were just *beginning* to take a hold of the hinterland of the cities. Therefore, they might not have been the primary reason behind the establishment of the system of joint administration. Alternatively, in Theodosiopolis the councilor class may have been reduced to a ceremonial and possibly somewhat privileged status with little governmental significance.

One wonders what the point of Theodosiopolis's city status was if it had no administrative elite of its own: were certain towns honored with a status that was largely ceremonial, with no special obligations or higher career opportunities for their social elites?⁶⁰ If so, it is conceivable that there may have been others among the many cities from the less densely documented corners of late antique Egypt that were also mere "nominal cities."⁶¹ Yet perhaps the administration by the city of Arsinoe only pertained to affairs of the Theodosiopolite nome, and Theodosiopolis's internal business was handled by municipal institutions that elude us.

Inception and abolition of the system of joint administration

The second text to attest the Theodosiopolite nome indicates that the system of joint administration already existed in 455 CE, which is close enough to the reigns of the Theodosii that we can safely assume that this arrangement had been in place since the establishment of the new nome.⁶² By comparison, the pagarchs "of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis" seem somewhat obscure, since they first appear a century later, in 556 CE.⁶³ This discrepancy is, however, probably an illusion created by the evidence that happens to have survived, as no papyrus has yet been found of pagarchs in the Fayyum before that year. In the fourth and early fifth centuries, the term *παγαρχία* referred to the office of the *praepositus pagi*, but the office rose to the *civitas* level toward the end of the fifth century.⁶⁴ Since this development surely postdates the foundation of the Theodosiopolite nome, for which 447 CE is now the *terminus ante quem*, it seems plausible that once the pagarchy was installed at the city level, it simply adapted to the

⁶⁰ It is conceivable, however, that the citizens of Theodosiopolis were granted certain privileges relative to ordinary villagers, but we know too little about these citizens to tell; cf., for example, n. 51.

⁶¹ The example of the village of Aphrodite may then possibly form the opposite pattern: it had perhaps once been a city (cf. U. Wilcken in the introduction to *P.Brem.* 42 and I. Marthot, *Homonyms Causing Confusion in Toponymy: Examples from Aphrodito and the Antaiopolite Nome*, in: *PapCongr.* XXVI, pp. 487–490, at 487–489), but despite having lost its nominal city status, the village (κώμη) was granted certain privileges in many respects, for example, the payment of taxes directly to the provincial authorities (αὐτοπραγία) and the maintenance of certain officials who would in other circumstances act at the city level, such as the *riparii*.

⁶² *P.Prag.* II 131 (September 21, 455). See p. 199.

⁶³ *BGU* I 305 (June 13, 556). I do not see how, according to *CPR* XIV, p. 47, the papyrus *SB* I 5175 = *P.Dubl.* 33 (513 CE) is supposed to provide us with a *terminus post quem* for this phenomenon. Apparently, the author is referring to the occurrence of Arsinoe without Theodosiopolis in a document with a fixed date, but since the explicit connection of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis is only attested for the pagarchs, whom *P.Dubl.* 33 does not mention, the text cannot serve as an argument. See Mazza, *Ricerche* (n. 40) 184 n. 47 for similar doubts.

⁶⁴ Stern, *Taxes* (n. 34) 35–57.

local custom of joint administration, and the pagarchs of Arsinoe regularly served *ex officio* as pagarchs of Theodosiopolis.⁶⁵ This chronology can also explain why the joint titling of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis occurs exclusively with respect to the pagarchy and is not attested in connection with other institutions: there had, quite simply, never been any pagarchs of Arsinoe before.⁶⁶ There was, therefore, never a territorial entity called “the pagarchy of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis” that was “created” or “united” at any point.⁶⁷ Whether or not *the office* was regarded as one *παγαρχία* and named accordingly is a different issue. In view of the separate accounting of Theodosiopolite contributions⁶⁸ and the joint administration, it is likely that the pagarchy — the office, that is — simply adapted to the local custom once it was installed at the city level: there were not one but two (institutional) pagarchies in the Fayyum, and the pagarch of Arsinoe regularly also held the pagarchy of Theodosiopolis.

This arrangement appears to have remained in place until around the mid-seventh century. Theodosiopolis no longer appears in a papyrus listing the cities of Arcadia that was assigned to the mid or later seventh century.⁶⁹ A list of localities in alphabetical order from the seventh or eighth century shows Theodosiopolite villages and hamlets placed indiscriminately alongside Arsinoite ones and may suggest that, at some point, the Theodosiopolite was indeed reincorporated into the Arsinoite nome.⁷⁰ Theodosiopolis may resurface in an as yet unpublished papyrus from the Islamic

⁶⁵ The scribal confusion about one or two cities in the pagarchs’ title presented above (see n. 54) probably illustrates these precise circumstances.

⁶⁶ Consequently, the title of pagarch can be supplied whenever the formula appears in a fragmentary document. Therefore, *P.Prag.* III 219.1 (second half of VI–early VII) should be restored as *παγάρχῳ τῇ[ς] Ἀρσινωιτῶν καὶ Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν*; cf. Kovarik, *Das spätantike Notariat* (n. 22) Chapter 3, xxiii and Stern, *Taxes* (n. 34) 285 n. 8. For *CPR* X 131.2–3, see *BL* XI 71. On the other hand, *SPP* III 392.1 and *SPP* III 421.1 both have *ταύτης τῆς*, which is never found with the united title; therefore, *πῶλεως* must be supplied in the lacunae after *Ἀρσινωιτῶν* and these texts must date to after 622 CE. — Alternatively, the status of both cities as fiscal units played a role here, and the two cities were included in the pagarchs’ title because of their fiscal responsibility, but this seems less compelling to me.

⁶⁷ See n. 36.

⁶⁸ See pp. 195 and 196.

⁶⁹ *SB* I 5337; for the date and context, see Gonis, *A View of Arcadia* (n. 31).

⁷⁰ *SPP* XX 229, which is a list of *χωρία*; parts of the N–Ω lemmata and some additions have survived (see J. G. Keenan, *Fayyum Villages in SPP XX 229*, in: *PapCongr.* XXIV, pp. 487–496). The document mentions the Theodosiopolite hamlets Tin and Strategiou as well as the Theodosiopolite village of Psinteo alongside localities from the former Herakleides and Themistos regions. Since the lower ends of the columns are incompletely preserved, we can safely assume that the other Theodosiopolite village in this range of the alphabet, Tristomon, was included in column II (cf. Keenan, *op. cit.*, 492). The list in *SB* VI 9583 (VIII) includes the Theodosiopolite villages Psinteo, Theaxenis, and Tristomon, and probably the hamlet Koueisan (frg. 5.9), but also, for instance, the village Phanou, which was situated in the northern Fayyum (Keenan, *op. cit.*, 495); nonetheless, the localities are clustered around certain individuals in something approaching a geographic distribution.

period⁷¹ and if this is the case, then it would appear that the city was not destroyed, abandoned, or renamed as a result of the conquests. What happened? The expression “pagarch of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis” appears to be in conventional use even under Persian occupation, its latest attestation dating to 622 CE.⁷² Then there is a gap in our evidence until 639/640, during the critical months of the Islamic conquest of Egypt, when *W.Chr.* 8 addresses Flavius Theodorakios as pagarch of Arsinoe only.⁷³ This papyrus locates the village of Kaminoi in the Arsinoite nome, although this place is known to have been situated in the area of the old Polemon district where we suspect the Theodosiopolite nome to have been located.⁷⁴ Was the nome dissolved in the intervening period?

The Persians occupied Egypt from 619 to 629 CE. The natural assumption might be that the new rulers imposed administrative changes after 622 — and we do see administrative adjustments, particularly at the provincial level.⁷⁵ At the same time, if we permit a truism, change and continuity are not mutually exclusive. One illustrative example is Flavius Menas, the last known pagarch to bear the title “pagarch of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis.” Menas appears as pagarch in various documents from the time of the Persian occupation, but a recently published papyrus shows him as pagarch of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis as early as 616 CE.⁷⁶ There is no evidence for Menas after 622, and it has been assumed that he was punished for his collaboration with the invaders after the Byzantine reconquest of 629; at this point the (hypothetical) territorial *παγαρχία* τῆς Ἀρσινοϊτῶν καὶ Θεοδοσιουπολιτῶν would have been divided again, with each part under its own pagarch.⁷⁷ The system of joint administration of the Theodosiopolite nome by Arsinoite authorities makes this hypothesis unlikely, however. If Theodosiopolis had suddenly acquired autonomy, it would have had to establish its own administrative apparatus; no evidence of such officials — or of

⁷¹ See G. A. J. C. van Loon, *An Orchard Lease from the Reign of Heraclius*, BASP 54 (2017) 127–142, at 134 n. 22; but cf. *CPR* XXXVI, p. 5 n. 7. Cf. *P.Bastianini*, p. 159 for a potential trace in the *History of the Patriarchs* for the early eighth century.

⁷² See n. 35.

⁷³ *W.Chr.* 8.5: Φλ(αουίω) Θεοδορακίω τῷ μεγαλοπρεπεστάτῳ παγάρχῳ ταύτης τῆς Ἀρσινοϊτῶν πό]λεω[ς; the reading]λεω[is certain. Federico Morelli (*ʿAmr e Martina: La reggenza di un'imperatrice o l'amministrazione araba d'egitto*, ZPE 173 [2010] 136–157, at 155 n. 65) suggests that this text might date from the time when Kyros, the patriarch of Alexandria (l. 14), acted as de facto supreme authority in Egypt and had recognized the Arab rule. See also J. Gascou, *De Byzance à l'Islam: Les impôts en Égypte après la conquête arabe*, JESHO 26 (1983) 97–109, at 98–99; revised in: J. Gascou (ed.), *Fiscalité et société en Égypte byzantine* (Association des amis du Centre d'histoire et civilisation de Byzance — Bilans de recherche 4), Paris 2008, 99–112, at 100–101. But even in that event it is unlikely that the abolition of the Theodosiopolite nome would have been initiated by the invaders at that early point.

⁷⁴ *CPR* XIX 20 (VI) also implies proximity to Psintheo, which was a Theodosiopolite village in 455 CE (*P.Prag.* II 131).

⁷⁵ See P. A. Sängér, *The Administration of Sasanian Egypt: New Masters and Byzantine Continuity*, GRBS 51 (2011) 653–665.

⁷⁶ *P.Vindob.* G 26585 (ed. van Loon, *An Orchard Lease* [n. 71]).

⁷⁷ *CPR* XXIV, pp. 179–180.

notables assuming local offices — has yet been found, however.⁷⁸ The Theodosiopolite nome resurfaces as the location of a village as late as 644 CE, that is, after the Arab conquest and after the pagarchs of the Fayyum suppressed Theodosiopolis from their title.⁷⁹ Consequently, there are two alternatives: either (1) the Theodosiopolite nome as a fiscal entity was reincorporated into the Arsinoite at some point between 622 and 639 CE and the papyrus from 644 is using an anachronistic local reference — just as the term νομός was, by that point, a centuries-old anachronism — or (2) at some point between 622 and 639, the title of the pagarchs in the Fayyum was adapted in order to mirror all other offices at the *civitas* level, whereas the system of joint administration continued until the new Arab administration abolished the Theodosiopolite nome not long after 644.⁸⁰

The location of Theodosiopolis

The hypothesis of a system of joint administration has consequences for the possible location of Theodosiopolis, which is commonly identified with the well-known and comparatively large village of Tebtynis.⁸¹ The main arguments for this identification are that Tebtynis's size and importance would have ensured an adequate administrative infrastructure and that evidence for this town is difficult to come by for the period from the fifth through the early seventh centuries, during which Theodosiopolis is attested.⁸²

⁷⁸ It also seems doubtful that Menas suffered retributions for this collaboration; see M. Stern, *Local Magnates, but Mobile: Elite Dynamics in Byzantine Provinces*, in: S. R. Huebner et al. (eds.), *Living the End of Antiquity: Individual Histories from Byzantine to Islamic Egypt* (Millennium Studies 84), Berlin 2020, 33–48, at 37–38.

⁷⁹ BGU I 320 (February 9, 644), which is dated based on the indiction, the absence of the imperial dating formula, and the reference to the pagarch Flavius Theodorakios. It is a receipt from a Theodosiopolite villager (ll. 10–11: [ἀπὸ κώ]μης Θεαξενίδο(ς) τοῦ Θεοδοσι[ο]πολίτου (read Θεοδοσιοπολίτου) νομοῦ) and it is addressed Φλ(αυνίω) Θεοδωρακίω τῷ ἐνδωξωτάτῳ (read ἐνδοξοτάτῳ) | στρατηλάτῃ καὶ παγάρχῳ ταύτης | τῆς Ἀρσιναιοτοπόλεως (ll. 6–8). The certain reading Ἀρσιναιοτοπόλις is a *hapax*, but I do not see any significance in this context; rather, the writer seems prone to “variations” in ο/ω spellings, and it seems that the standard ταύτης τῆς Ἀρσιναιτῶν πόλεως was intended. See n. 71 for more potential sources on Theodosiopolis from the Islamic period.

⁸⁰ It is possible, however, that lists such as those published in Berkes–Haug, *Villages* (n. 10) reveal the Theodosiopolite nome living on as an administrative subdistrict of the Arsinoite as late as the eighth century; see especially pp. 190–191. Although the name does not appear in these documents, their internal structure may indicate a continuing administrative tradition.

⁸¹ See CPR XIV, pp. 46–47, supported by Hickey, *Down and Out* (n. 1) 136–139 and followed, for instance, by Derda, *Ἀρσινόιτης νομός* (n. 1) 111 and Clarysse, *Name* (n. 1). Hickey based his cautious support on the likelihood that SB XXX 17584 was found in Tebtynis (pp. 138–139). He admitted, however, that the findspot is not certain, and he did not have access to the later-published *P. Bastianini* 25, which mentions Theodosiopolis but was found in Narmouthis; see n. 51. — For obsolete identifications, see n. 33 and J. Krall, *Aus einer koptischen Klosterbibliothek II*, Mittheilungen aus der Sammlung der Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer 2+3 (1887) 43–73, at 59 (for the latter, cf. H. Gelzer, *Georgii Cyprii Descriptio orbis Romani*, Leipzig 1890, 129).

⁸² See also J. G. Keenan, *Deserted Villages: From the Ancient to the Medieval Fayyum*, BASP 40 (2003) 119–139, at 129–131, referring to the general chronological distribution of texts that mention Tebtynis.

But Tebtynis is mentioned in two papyri from this period, the first of which, *SPP* III 328,⁸³ has been assigned to the sixth century on paleographical grounds. The word order κώμη(ς) Θεαγενίδος also suggests a date before the fiscal-administrative use of the term χωρίον became regular, a process that began as early as 643.⁸⁴ Moreover, the way in which the “brilliant city” (Alexandria) is mentioned suggests that it is the sole πόλις in this document. The second papyrus to mention Tebtynis during that period, *SPP* X 138, has been convincingly assigned to the beginning of the seventh century by Bernhard Palme.⁸⁵ In this papyrus, Tebtynis appears in a list of “villages” (κῶμαι),⁸⁶ which rules out an identification with the *civitas* (πόλις) of Theodosiopolis. Both documents also undermine the otherwise plausible hypothesis that the old name for the town was used occasionally, as is attested in other cases for the Egyptian and Greco-Roman names of a particular town.⁸⁷ Tebtynis remained a village, and we therefore have to discount it as a candidate for the site of Theodosiopolis.

Where, then, was Theodosiopolis? Todd Hickey notes in passing that he once “hypothesized that Theodosiopolis was ‘almost a city in name only,’ that it lacked many of the urban ‘structures’ that characterized Arsinoe, Oxyrhynchus, and other cities in Byzantine Egypt.”⁸⁸ It appears that the system of joint administration provides the missing link here, since it means that Theodosiopolis would no longer require a city-like level of infrastructure. In fact, it turns the original argument for the identification with Tebtynis on its head, because the system of joint administration can be used to argue that Theodosiopolis probably *lacked* an elaborate administrative infrastructure.⁸⁹

⁸³ *SPP* III 328.3–5: ἀπὸ Τεπτόν(εως) σοὶ τῷ θαυμασιωτάτῳ Ἡλίας (read Ἡλία) ἀπὸ | κώμη(ς) Θεαγενίδος ὑπὲρ τροφίμ(ου) τῆς [λαμπ]ρᾶς πόλεως ἀπ[ὸ] | καρπ(ὸν) κτλ.

⁸⁴ See the parallel κώμη Θεαξένιδος (or Θεο-), which after 644 (*BGU* I 320.10, likely during a transition period) appears only in the order (χωρίον) Θεαξένιδος κώμης. This was presumably the case for (χωρίον) Θεαγενίδος κώμης as well. On the introduction of the fiscal χωρία, see the literature assembled in l. 9n in A. Bernini, *P.Got.* 29, digital edition on *papyri.info* (ddbdp.2015.2). See, by contrast, the discussion of the date in *CPR* XIV, p. 47 n. 12.

⁸⁵ B. Palme, *Die domus gloriosa des Flavius Strategius Paneuphemos*, *Chiron* 27 (1997) 95–125, at 103 (esp. n. 15) and 112.

⁸⁶ *SPP* X 138.1: γνῶσι(ς) κωμ(ῶν) and 9: Τεπτόνις; see Palme, *Die domus gloriosa* (n. 84) 112 and 116, published after *CPR* XIV. See also Gonis, *Notes* (n. 7) 208–209.

⁸⁷ This was hypothesized by Hickey, *Down and Out* (n. 1) 136 n. 9. Peter van Minnen (*Boorish or Bookish? Literature in Egyptian Villages in the Fayum in the Graeco-Roman Period*, *JJP* 28 [1998] 99–184, at 179) tentatively suggests that the site of Tebtynis may have been abandoned in the late third century and resettled in the fifth. That would be an intriguing explanation for a new name, but this scenario is also ruled out by the fact that the two papyri mentioned above treat Tebtynis as a village.

⁸⁸ Hickey, *Down and Out* (n. 1) 137 n. 15.

⁸⁹ This argument also discounts places such as Oxyrhyncha and Mouchis, both of which were relatively important villages and conveniently close to Arsinoe. Furthermore, both also appear under these names during our period — in *SPP* X 138 and *SPP* X 249, respectively; see Hickey, *Down and Out* (n. 1) 137 n. 16. The lack of an elaborate administrative infrastructure would also serve to conveniently explain another problem Hickey found in *SB* XXX 17584: “The poor quality of this legal instrument makes one wonder why it was not executed through a *tabellio*; access to such services should not have been an issue in an administrative center like Theodosiopolis”; see Hickey, *Down and Out* (n. 1) 139.

Hickey's speculation, therefore, appears to be correct, which leaves us with no convincing identification of the site of the New City of Theodosius. Ultimately, it is unlikely to have been a city built *ex novo* but rather a preexisting settlement in the former Polemon district that was elevated in status.⁹⁰

Potential parallel cases of joint civic administration

Identifying other examples of this specific form of joint administration of cities in late antique Egypt is challenging. As demonstrated, Theodosiopolis provides positive evidence for such a system, preserved in contract formulas as well as in written evidence of administrative and social practices.⁹¹ By contrast, the mere absence of attested city-level officials for a place known to be a *πόλις* cannot serve as an argument, as that could always be attributed to an accident of preservation.

One obvious candidate for comparison is another Egyptian Theodosiopolis, located in the Thebaid. This place, formerly known as the village of Touo, is listed as a *πόλις* in both Hierocles's and George of Cyprus's catalogs, too; its nome is well documented and appears to have been carved out of the Hermopolite.⁹² Interestingly, although both lists arrange cities in the Thebaid from north to south, Theodosiopolis appears after Hermopolis in each of them, despite its being located further to the north.⁹³ Like its Arcadian counterpart, the Thebaid Theodosiopolis appears to have been a modestly sized "city"; it is, in contrast, attested as the seat of a bishop.⁹⁴ While no city-level

⁹⁰ If it is the case that Theodosiopolis's *internal* affairs were also managed by Arsinoite officials — and not by its own rudimentary municipal or de facto village institutions — this system of joint administration would suggest that the New City of Theodosius was relatively close to Arsinoe. This possibility may appear to be at odds with *SB* XXX 17584, in which two Theodosiopolitans seemingly lack access to a professional notary, which would seem unusual if they were close to Arsinoe. However, as Hickey discusses in *Down and Out* (n. 1) 139, it is quite possible that there were other reasons not to approach a *tabellio* to prepare this particular document.

⁹¹ See pp. 194–196 (villages can be part of both the Arsinoite and the Theodosiopolite; Arsinoe always precedes Theodosiopolis in lists) and p. 199 (Theodosiopolite villagers consistently address Arsinoite authorities regarding both private and official business).

⁹² See n. 1.

⁹³ Hierocl. *Synecd.* 730.6–9 (ed. Honigmann): Hermopolis, Theodosiopolis, Antinoopolis, Koussai, etc.; Georg.Cypr. 761–764 (ed. Honigmann): Antinoopolis (George puts the provincial capitals first), Hermopolis, Theodosiopolis, Koussai, etc. The geographical order, from north to south, would be Theodosiopolis, Antinoopolis, Hermopolis, Koussai, etc. — as for instance in *P.Bas.* II 69 (unknown origin; 619–629 CE). On the location and extension of the southern Theodosiopolite nome, see *CPR* XXX, pp. 110–111 and 116.

⁹⁴ Size: see Gonis, *Hermopolite Localities* (n. 1) 178, although he cautions that the underlying interpretation of *P.Bal.* 355 is not certain. Bishop: see *P.Oxy.* LXXXVII 5361.6 with more sources and literature in the commentary. The Arcadian Theodosiopolis is sometimes connected to a bishop's seat (for instance, in <https://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2375.php>), but this is probably due to the fact that Hierocles's and George of Cyprus's catalogs, in which both cities appear, have come down to us because they had been mistaken for episcopal *notitiae* during the Middle Ages (for instance, the references in *P.Bastianini*, p. 158 to "Georg. Cypr. *Descr.* 749" and "*Notitia I episcopatum* 749 Gelzer" are actually to the same text). See the

officials are attested for this Theodosiopolis,⁹⁵ there is no *positive* evidence for a system of joint administration — unless the ordering in Hierocles's and George's catalogs is considered indicative. The Theodosiopolite nome in the Thebaid remained an administrative division through the mid-seventh century and is attested as a pagarchy in the early eighth century.⁹⁶ There is still no evidence of officials at the nome level, but given the limited number of relevant documents we have, this is hardly a decisive argument.⁹⁷

Better-known instances that provide comparative evidence are Oxyrhynchite officials presiding over the Small Oasis and the Kynopolite nome during the Roman period, which place the Theodosiopolite model within a broader tradition.⁹⁸ These and

discussion in Jones et al., *The Cities* (n. 3) 514–521. Another potential piece of evidence for a bishop's seat in the Arcadian Theodosiopolis is rejected by Gelzer, *Georgii Cyprii Descriptio* (n. 81) 129.

⁹⁵ The obscure abbreviation εἰξ() βονθ() in *P.Sipp.* 34 no doubt refers to an administrative institution (see the editor's introduction). The papyrus is dated June 29, 455, and was written "in Theodosiopolis" (l. 5). Since it was apparently found in a tomb near Antinoopolis, it is associated with the southern Theodosiopolis, although it seems notable to me that a dating formula using ἀρχ(ῆ) (l. 4) appears as late as Epeiph in the Thebaid. In any case, it is uncertain whether these — hypothetical — officials belong to the city; alternatively, they might be provincial envoys. Cf. also n. 46.

⁹⁶ See *CPR* XXX, pp. 110–111 and *CPR* XXXVI 3 (Hermopolites; March 29, 644), concerning the Senouthios archive, and *P.Lond.* IV 1460.103 (Aphrodito; c. 709 CE) from the Basileios archive.

⁹⁷ Curious in that context is *CPR* XXXVI 3.1–2 (March 29, 644), in which the Hermopolite pagarch Athanasios is shown to have some responsibility for οἱ πρωτοκ(ωμῆ)τ(αι) καὶ οἱ [γν]ωστῆρες (that is, officials from the village level) τοῦ Θεοδοσιουπολ(ί)τ(ου) | καὶ τοῦ Λυκ(ο)π(ολί)του). While this authority may only pertain to the officials' journey to Antinoopolis as discussed in the document, it remains puzzling (see the editor's discussion; Lykopolis is not adjacent to Hermopolis). The situation is vaguely reminiscent of the joint appearance of the Theodosiopolite and Lykopolite nomes in the fragmentary writing exercise *SB* XXVIII 17212 (unknown origin; VIII), as well as payments (ὑπὲρ) παγαρχ(ίας?) Λύκ(ων) by an Antinoopolite authority, possibly to be identified with a pagarch of Antinoopolis, in *P.Ant.* III 206.11 (Antinoopolis; VI) (see Stern, *Taxes* [n. 34] 331; the new reading was suggested by N. Gonis, *Abbreviations in Late Documents Resolved III*, *APF* 70/1 [2024] 141–149, at 142–143). However, this remains highly conjectural and does not provide sufficient evidence to assume a system of joint administration to be at work in these documents.

⁹⁸ See Th. Kruse, *Der Königliche Schreiber und die Gauverwaltung: Untersuchungen zur Verwaltungsgeschichte Ägyptens in der Zeit von Augustus bis Philippus Arabs (30 v. Chr.–245 n. Chr.)* (APF-Beihefte 11), 2 vols., Munich 2002, 30 (Small Oasis) and 26–29 (Kynopolite nome) with further literature and discussion. On the case of the Small Oasis, see now also *O.BirShawish*, p. 161. On separate accounting in connection with administrative subordination (see pp. 195–196) in the case of the Small Oasis, see esp. D. Hagedorn, *Quittung eines Reiters über den Empfang von Gerste: P.Köln inv. 265*, *ZPE* 1 (1967) 133–142, at 134. Kynopolite fiscal obligations were also accounted separately by Oxyrhynchite authorities. In late antiquity, Kynopolis was apparently under the permanent administrative purview of the ἐνδοξος οἶκος of the Apiones, but still seems to have had its own officials, such as an ἔκδικος in 464 CE; see *P.Oxy.* VI 902 and cf. *P.Oxy.* XVI 1860. See also *P.Oxy.* LV 3797 (Oxyrhynchos; 624), from the time of the Persian occupation, in which the two nomes' fiscal obligations are processed jointly (though they are still accounted separately), and Hickey, *Wine* (n. 29) 19 n. 124.

comparable cases appear to have been temporary or ad hoc measures, however, and unlike in the case of Theodosiopolis, writers acknowledge the official titles pertaining to each nome whenever required by the administrative and documentary context.⁹⁹

In early Islamic Egypt, we can observe the phenomenon of two cities and their respective nomes being united in one pagarchy — with *παγαρχία* now being conceived of as a territory that was administered by a single pagarch. For instance, in the early eighth century, the cities of Antaiopolis and Apollonopolis Heptakomias formed a single pagarchy.¹⁰⁰ Both cities continue to be used individually as markers of location or origin, but their city status is difficult to determine, since there are no officials of either city (or the combined pagarchy) attested in the early eighth century.¹⁰¹ Two papyri mention ἀστικά taxes from Antaiopolis during these years, but this may also be a simple shorthand for the combined fiscal unit of the two cities.¹⁰² Another pagarch of two nomes is attested in a Coptic papyrus, most likely from the Islamic period. The document features a “Lord Theode, pagarch of Arabia and Jioubastin, and his whole household,” certainly referring to the two adjoining nomes of Arabia and Boubastis in the Nile Delta.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, the construction of the text leaves it unclear whether what we have here is two pagarchies under the same pagarch or a united fiscal unit named “Arabia and Jioubastin.”¹⁰⁴

Outside Egypt, other cities named “Theodosiopolis” offer no useful hints,¹⁰⁵ and the foundation of the Arcadian Theodosiopolis generally does not seem to align with the

⁹⁹ See, for instance, Kruse, *Der Königliche Schreiber* (n. 98) 24–26 and Gonis, *A View of Arcadia* (n. 31) 109–110.

¹⁰⁰ *P.Bal.* II 182; *P.Lond.* IV 1347; 1435; 1460; 1461; 1540; *P.Sijp.* 25. Although this expression is not attested with an actual pagarch’s title, it is clear from *P.Lond.* IV 1435.116: λ(ό)γ(ω) τ(ών) συμ(μ)άχ(ων) καὶ στρ(ατιωτῶν?) τ(οῦ) πα(γ)άρχ(ου) that only one pagarch was responsible for this pagarchy; cf. l. 84: π[αγ(αρχ)]χ(ίας) Ἀντ(αίου) (καὶ) Ἀπόλλων(ος).

¹⁰¹ It must remain unclear whether texts such as *SB* X 14550.3–4 (Aphrodite; VI–VII): τοῖς | β ἐκδ(ίκοις) Ἀνταίου καὶ Ἀπόλλωνος mean that Apollonopolis was under Antaiopolite administration in the Byzantine period; for a discussion, see Stern, *Taxes* (n. 34) 333–334. Even if that were the case and Antaiopolite elites filled the administrative ranks of Apollonopolis, the phrase certainly refers to one ἑκδικος in either city, not to two ἑκδικοί of an administratively united territory, so Apollonopolis would formally still have its own ἑκδικος.

¹⁰² *SB* XX 15099.11 and 273; *P.Lond.* IV 1419.439, 826, 1357, and 1362.

¹⁰³ *P.Mich. inv.* 1525 (ed. R. J. Heisler, *Coptic Documents from the Michigan Collection*, ZPE 57 [1984] 125–129, no. 4), ll. 4–5: κγρ(ι)οϥ θεοδε παγαρχ(οϥ) νταρβια μν πχιουβαστν μν πεβνη τηρϥ.

¹⁰⁴ I am grateful to Matthias Müller for discussing this text with me.

¹⁰⁵ See the index, s.v. Theodosiopolis, in Jones et al., *The Cities* (n. 3). Three possible leads are discussed here. (1) Theodosiopolis in Armenia Magna might also have been a city in name only, provided that the bishop “of the *klima* of Daranalis or Kamacha” is that of Theodosiopolis; for this identification, see Jones et al., *op. cit.*, 445 n. 15. However, archeological evidence suggests that this Theodosiopolis should rather be identified with Erzurum; see already F. H. Weißbach, *Theodosiopolis* 2, RE V A.2 (1934) 1923–1928, at 1924. (2) The town of Augaza — appearing under this name in Hierocl. *Synecd.* 659.13 (ed. Honigsmann) — was renamed Theodosiopolis and became the seat of a bishop (Jones et al., *op. cit.*, 397 n. 85). Under the name Euaza, it was described as a “miserable little town” in Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (n. 31)

typical patterns observed for late antique “new cities.” Whether genuinely newly established or simply elevated in status, these towns owed their new position to their role as military fortifications, key points along supply, trade, or pilgrimage routes, or outposts of Roman Christian identity, or to attempts to either concentrate or deconcentrate administrative and economic power; alternatively, they may have been smaller settlements that either outgrew village designation or were amalgamated.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, a conceivable practical purpose for the “foundation” of Theodosiopolis might have been to redistribute the power and responsibilities of a nearby larger *civitas*,¹⁰⁷ which Arsinoe certainly was.¹⁰⁸ However, this hypothesis is contradicted by the system of joint administration, which kept Theodosiopolis under the authority of its sister city. Indeed, the arrangement of joint administration undermines any hypothesis of an

916 and as a “small communit[y]” in Jones et al., *op. cit.*, 79), based on an anecdote about the bishop Bassianos. However, we have no evidence for its administrative situation. (3) In Cowper’s and Hallier’s translations of the Syrian *Chronicle of Edessa* (§ 35), Theodosius I “built” and “baute” Rhesaina — that is, the Mesopotamian Theodosiopolis, which appears under this name in Hierocl. *Synecd.* 714.3. Malalas (§ 38 Thurn; pp. 345–346 Dindorf) explicitly notes that this place was formerly a village (κώμην) and that it obtained city status (δίκαιον πόλεως) in 383 CE (that is, under Theodosius I, although Malalas mistakenly attributes the foundation to “Theodosius, the child of Arcadius”); see Jones et al., *op. cit.*, 444 n. 12. However, archeological research has revealed that the preexisting settlement must have been considerable in size. This Theodosiopolis was also the seat of a bishop; see Jones et al., *op. cit.*, 542.

¹⁰⁶ On typification, see the contributions in E. Rizos (ed.), *New Cities in Late Antiquity: Documents and Archaeology* (Bibliothèque de l’Antiquité Tardive 35), Turnhout 2017 (though not all the examples discussed there were cities in the legal sense) and the additional literature cited in its introduction, in particular Jones, *The Greek City* (n. 45) 85–94 and J. Arce, *La fundación de nuevas ciudades en el Imperio Romano tardío: De Diocleciano a Justiniano (s. IV–VI)*, in: J. M. Gurt, G. Ripoll (eds.), *Sedes regiae (ann. 400–800)*, Barcelona 2000, 31–62. For alternative perspectives, see the conceptual overviews by Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt* (n. 59) 203–225; I. Jacobs, *Greco-Roman Cities in the Late Antique East*, in: M. Flohr, A. Zuiderhoek (eds.), *A Companion to Cities in the Greco-Roman World*, Hoboken 2025, 525–545, at 535–537; and S. Westphalen, “Niedergang oder Wandel?” *Die spätantiken Städte in Syrien und Palästina aus archäologischer Sicht*, in: J.-U. Krause, Ch. Witschel (eds.), *Die Stadt in der Spätantike: Niedergang oder Wandel?* (Historia-Einzelschriften 190), Stuttgart 2006, 181–197, at 183–185.

¹⁰⁷ For examples, see Jones, *The Greek City* (n. 45) 91–92. One illustrative example is Helenopolis, named after Constantine’s mother, which under the name Drepanon was part of the city territory of Nicomedia until 327 CE. Here, a formal councilor class and an administrative apparatus were established in the new *civitas* by assembling elites from the larger city. On this case, which is to be seen in the context of the establishment of Constantinople, and the sources, see Arce, *La fundación* (n. 106) 44–46; Jones et al., *The Cities* (n. 3) 164–165; and Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (n. 31) 720. Note in particular Arce’s list of characteristics of this type of “new city”: “(1) Una aldea o pequeño enclave nombre local antiguo, (2) dependiente de un centro cercano mucho más importante que es el núcleo central de la región y que (3) por circunstancias diversas puede ser celebrado por el emperador con su nombre o la memoria de algunos de sus familiares, aumentando así su *dignitas* y estatuto y (4) recibe poblamiento de localidades cercanas, a fin de que reúna al menos los requisitos mínimos exigidos para poder ejercer sus funciones municipales, aunque (5) no es necesario que tenga grandes edificios públicos.” On these characteristics, see also Jones et al., *op. cit.*, 94.

¹⁰⁸ We may recall the division of the Arsinoite nome into three administrative subdistricts (μερίδες) for parts of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, owing to its exceptional size; see n. 9.

administrative rationale for the town's elevation. We should not overlook the possibility of imperial representation as a factor in this and other cases of dynastic "foundations," where small settlements of no particular importance were granted city status and named after an emperor or his relatives.¹⁰⁹

Nevertheless, the lack of more evidence leaves room for speculation. For instance, it is possible that Theodosiopolis was granted city status for its religious significance or because it was to become the seat of a bishop, and that this role has simply not yet been attested.¹¹⁰ The same problem applies to the question of the prevalence of the system of joint administration in such cases. Although there are many new cities in the Eastern Empire for which no magistrates are attested, such a lack can usually be explained by a lack of sources.¹¹¹ In the case of Theodosiopolis in Arcadia, we have positive evidence to argue that officials administering the surrounding territory — and representing the city at the provincial level — probably did not exist.¹¹² As we have no evidence that Theodosiopolis developed any significance or gained particular imperial attention, we may hypothesize that its elevation to city rank was induced by a request from the inhabitants of the (former) village and followed by certain personal privileges for the "new" citizens.¹¹³

Would the Theodosiopolitans have recognized themselves in Procopius's description of the "new" citizens of Caput Vada?

For a wall has been brought to completion, and with it a city, and the condition of a farm land is suddenly being transformed. And the rustics have put down the plow and

¹⁰⁹ On the ideological background of such "foundations," see Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt* (n. 59) 203–205; Jones, *The Greek City* (n. 45) 86; and Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (n. 31) 719–720, referencing the individual discussions in Jones et al., *The Cities* (n. 3). Claude also mentions (on p. 222, in the context of small late antique *kastra* becoming "cities") "die Fortsetzung einer ehemals wichtigen, nun aber sinnentleerten Tradition [...], die anscheinend nur dazu da war, dem mit Stadtrecht begabten Ort einen dynastischen Namen zu geben." Yet settlements of "formerly no importance" that were elevated to city rank typically develop at least some new urban structures or city walls, as for instance in Petra Pia Iustiniana in the Caucasus (Proc. BP II 17.3); see E. N. Intagliata, *Framing the Study of Late Antique Cities in Lazica and Nearby Territories (300–600 AD)*, in: A. Cortese, G. Fioratto (eds.), *Urban Space Between the Roman Age and Late Antiquity: Continuity, Discontinuity and Changes*, Regensburg 2022, 119–131.

¹¹⁰ Cf. the case of Philoxenita in Egypt (see Arce, *La fundación* [n. 106] 51–52) for an example of a religious (re)foundation under Anastasius. But even in that case, we would expect Theodosiopolis to have developed a more elaborate infrastructure, including a civic administrative apparatus.

¹¹¹ Cf. M. Sartre, *Review of E. Rizos (ed.), New Cities in Late Antiquity: Documents and Archaeology (Bibliothèque de l'Antiquité Tardive 35), Turnhout 2017*, Syria (Book reviews, online): <https://journals.openedition.org/syria/8971> (2019) § 1. For example, in the case of Drepanon (see n. 107), Procopius (*aedif.* V 2.1–5; see Claude, *Die byzantinische Stadt* [n. 59] 195) notes that under Constantine, the new city, now called Helenopolis, was essentially a city in name only. However, he mentions that under Justinian, it received proper buildings for civic officials, suggesting it must have had its own administration.

¹¹² It therefore seems possible that other "new" late antique cities were also governed by a system of joint administration, and that we do not simply lack sources on their administrative institutions.

¹¹³ See comparable cases cited by Jones, *The Greek City* (n. 45) 65 and n. 86 (p. 313).

*lead the existence of a community, no longer engaging in rural tasks but living an urban life. They spend their days in the agora and hold assemblies to deliberate on questions that concern them; and they traffic with one another, and conduct all the other activities that pertain to the dignity of a city.*¹¹⁴

In any case, the New City of Theodosius in Arcadia is an example of a specific form of “postcurial” city formation, and adds to the diversity among the new cities of late antiquity.

Summary

Nova Theodosiopolis in Arcadia, a Theodosian (re)foundation in or around the old Polemon district of the Arsinoite nome, became a *civitas* sometime between 379 and 447 CE. The new city had numerous villages allotted to its *territorium*, the Theodosiopolite nome, but occupied a rather peculiar position among the cities of late Roman Egypt. It functioned as an official fiscal unit and local point of reference but apparently did not develop an administrative apparatus that would have been capable of running the affairs of its nome. Instead, this task was performed by officials of the neighboring city of Arsinoe. It even appears that a village’s or property’s being located “in the Theodosiopolite nome” was — at least in private contexts — regarded as equivalent to its being located “in the Arsinoite nome,” as if the former were nothing more than a subdistrict of the latter. It is unknown whether under these circumstances Theodosiopolis as an urban center ever developed municipal institutions to handle even its own affairs, or whether its internal administration was closer to the village model. It is unlikely that Theodosiopolis can be identified with the village of Tebtynis, and there is no convincing alternative location.

The arrangement of joint administration was certainly in place from the time of the founding of Theodosiopolis and its nome. The pagarchs adapted to this custom when they rose to the city level in the late fifth century, but kept both *civitates* in their official title, probably because they started out as *pagus*-level officials and rose to the city level only *after* Theodosiopolis was founded. The title “pagarch of Arsinoe and Theodosiopolis” disappeared at some point between 622 and 639 CE, but it is difficult to ascertain whether this was due to the dissolution of the Theodosiopolite nome or was simply a change in nomenclature. It seems clear, however, that at some point during the mid or later seventh century this arrangement was finally abandoned, and Theodosiopolite settlements were reincorporated into the Arsinoite nome.

Parallel evidence from Egypt exists for the Roman period, although the arrangements differ in detail. Parallels for this form of administration are unknown from the rest of the empire, but this may simply be due to insufficient evidence. The foundation

¹¹⁴ Proc. *aedif.* VI 6.14–16 (translation adapted from H. Bronson): Τεῖχος τε γὰρ ἀποτετόρνευται καὶ πόλις, καὶ ἀγροῦ τύχη ἐξαπινάως ἀμείβεται. Οἱ τε ἄγροικοι τὴν ἐχέτην ἀπορριψάμενοι πολιτικῶς βιοτεύουσιν, οὐκ ἄγροικον διαίταν ἔτι, ἀλλ’ ἀστείαν διαχειρίζοντες. Ἐπεὶ καὶ ἀγοράζουσιν ἐνταῦθα διημερεύοντες, καὶ ὑπὲρ τῶν σφίσιν ἀναγκαίων ἐκκλησιάζουσι, καὶ ἀγορὰν ἀλλήλοις συμβάλλουσι, τᾶλλα τε ἅπαντα πράσσουσιν ὅσα δὴ ἐς πόλεως ἀξίωμα ἔχει.

of Theodosiopolis does not fit the typical patterns of late antique city foundations, and could tentatively be seen as a project of imperial representation.

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