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A Reconsideration of Epokion in Byzantine Egypt

The Egyptian countryside comprised larger and smaller settlements called kōmai and epoikia. Although kōmai have continuously attracted researchers’ attention, epoikia have been only occasionally an object of enquiry. The study of their character and their evolution could be a prism, through which we could understand the social relations of the early Byzantine period. The term epoikion occurs in Byzantine papyri and inscriptions. It denotes a ktēma or a dwelling place belonging to a large

1 This article is the outcome of my involvement in the preparation of the J. Karayan-nopoulos, Λεξικό Βυζαντινής Ορολογίας. Οικονομικοί Όροι, vol. II: Δ-Ι, ed. Polymnia Katsoni - Martha Gregoriou-Ioannidou (in press).


For epigraphical abbreviations, see F. Bérard et al., Guide de l’épigraphiste. Bibliographe choisie des épitaphes antiques et médiévales [Guides et inventaires bibliographiques de la Bibliothèque de l’École normale supérieure 7], Paris 2010.
estate⁴. An *epoikion* was located in the geographical area of a *kômê* and included buildings, machinery and in some cases, churches⁵.

The editors of the papyri from ancient Tebtunis mention that "*in the Byzantine period the terms ἐποίκιον and χωρίον, which then generally takes the place of χώμη, become almost convertible*"⁶. Putting aside the term *chôrion*⁷, we notice that B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt draw the conclusion that *epoikion* and *kômê* were almost undistinguishable⁸. The German papyrologist F. Preisigke considered *epoikion* to be equivalent to *kômê*⁹. An attempt to describe *epoikion* was made by E. R. Hardy

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⁸ The technical term *kômê* is translated by scholars as “village”, whereas *epoikion* is translated as “hamlet” or “country estate”. See A. C. Johnson - L. C. West, *Byzantine Egypt 94*, 98. - R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt 151*. The same usage of the terms “village” and “hamlet” is adopted hereafter.

who considered it as a piece of property (ktēma) that was inhabited by “registered” cultivators (coloni adscripticii)\textsuperscript{10}. Further investigation was done by M. Lewuillon-Blume concerning the formation and features of epoikia in the 4th century\textsuperscript{11}. She also addresses the issue of labourers that resided in epoikia, the so-called epoikiōtai\textsuperscript{12}. She compares epoikion to the Arab izba, an Egyptian hamlet quite distinct from a village that belonged to a private owner\textsuperscript{13}. The izba included houses and other facilities and could grow into a village\textsuperscript{14}. P. Sarris suggested that each epoikion comprised a particular allotment (ktēma)\textsuperscript{15}. He also expresses the idea that epoikia were places of semi-industrial activity\textsuperscript{16}. J. Banaji notes that epoikia were a “system of labour organisation” (common labour pools) and their residents were “service tenants” with usufruct rights\textsuperscript{17}.

The arising issues concern the nature of epoikia and their social stature in Byzantine countryside\textsuperscript{18}. Attention should be paid to the liturgists and various collectives (koina) of epoikia in comparison with kômē. Furthermore, we should examine the collective fiscal responsibility of the residents of epoikia and take into consideration their status. Fairly important are the changes in ownership and administration of epoikia.

Marie Drew-Bear, Le Nome Hermopolite. Toponymes et sites [American Studies in Papyrology 21], Missoula, MT 1979, p. 175 (hereafter: M. Drew-Bear, Nome Hermopolite). A settlement called Nestou is mentioned as an epoikion and also as a kômē. See BGU II 455, 13-14 [early II]: “περί κώμη(ν) Ν[έ]στου ἐποικίον τῆς Ἁρακλείδου μερίδος [το]ῦ Ἀρ-ανοείτου νομοῦ”. A settlement called Μονύρεως was characterised both as an epoikion and as a kômē. See P. Flor. I 2. 235, 242-243 [265]: “κώμης Μονύρεως”, “κοιναρχον ἐποικίων Μονύρεως”.


\textsuperscript{11} See above note 2.


\textsuperscript{13} A comparison of epoikion to izba is also made by B. P. Grenfell and A. S. Hunt in P. Tebt. II\textsuperscript{2} App. II §3, p. 356.

\textsuperscript{14} M. Lewuillon-Blume, Problèmes 185.

\textsuperscript{15} P. Sarris, Economy 31.

\textsuperscript{16} P. Sarris, Economy 35.

\textsuperscript{17} J. Banaji, Agrarian Change 184, 185 n. 94. Cf. T. M. Hickey, Wine, Wealth 87-88.

\textsuperscript{18} For epoikia as “private” property see, M. Lewuillon-Blume, Problèmes 179: “Γ’ ἐποικίων ἀπαράθετον ἦν καλεῖται καὶ ὡς ἐν τῇ ὑπόταξιν καὶ τῇ ἐπιτηδείᾳ, ἐν τῇ τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τῆς ἀνθρώπου ζωῆς ἀπαντήσει”.}
Epoikia and kōmai

According to M. Lewuillon-Blume, *epoikia* had the same functionaries as did *kōmai*. The liturgists of *kōmai* are well attested. In regard to the functionaries of *epoikia*, there is limited information. Two papyri from the Hermopolite nome comprise nominations of liturgic functionaries. *Kōmarchai* of the *epoikia* Monyreōs and Damaratou submit and report the names of persons eligible for compulsory duties. *Kōmarchai* of *epoikion* Patelkiou nominate men for the duty of "ὄδροφυλακία". In a 4th century receipt from the Hermopolite nome an "ἀχυράριος" received ropes from *kōmarchai* of the *epoikion* Achilleōs. Another receipt from Karanis mentions a liturgist called "ἀποδέκτης ἀχύρου" working for the *epoikion* Leukogiou. The tax collectors from Karanis delivered an amount of chaff to the *apodektēs*. The "ἀπ[αί]τη[τ]αι διατυπώσεως καὶ πάντων ειδῶν" from the *epoikion*...
Kalou issue a receipt for chaff, fares and various taxes\(^{26}\). The aforementioned examples suggest that kômarches, apodektês and apaitêtês apart from being liturgical functionaries of kômai\(^{27}\), they were also liturgical functionaries of epoikia.

Collective fiscal responsibility might be a second common characteristic that kômai and epoikia shared. Although the collective fiscal responsibility of kômai is a well established fact, it is not clearly demonstrated for epoikia\(^{28}\). The accounts of the Apion estates offer information that may lead to the conclusion, that collective fiscal responsibility was effective for the inhabitants of epoikia. The Apions collected various taxes from their epoikia; among them, papyri mention taxes for abandoned lands. In several cases, collective fiscal responsibility is implied. In a 6\(^{th}\) century account from Oxyrhynchus, farmers of an epoikion, probably called Tillonos, paid dues for apotakta chôria\(^{29}\). Likewise, papyrological texts mention other cases, such as the epoikion Nekôntheos, which is being also taxed for apotakta chôria\(^{30}\) and the farmers and winegrowers, probably from the epoikion Chenetôrios, paying the Apions the same taxes\(^{31}\). It is my belief that the inhabitants of epoikia, as well as inhabitants of kômai, were collectively responsible for paying the taxes for abandoned lands.

Furthermore, fiscal documents, such as receipts for levies, offer more information and strengthen our position concerning collective fiscal responsibility. Dwellers of epoikion Petrok(i) from the Oxyrhynchite nome paid dues in kind, military garments, to an “ἐπιμελητής”, probably

\(^{26}\) P. Cair. Isid. 60. 3-4 [319]: “ἀπ[αί]τητ[αι] διατυπώσεως καὶ πάντων εἰδῶν ἐπ[οικίου] Κάλου”. See M. Lewuillon-Blume, Problèmes 177, n. 2. Apaitêtês was a general collector of various taxes in cash or kind. See F. Preisigke, Fachwörter s.v. ἀπαιτητής.

\(^{27}\) A. C. Johnson - L. C. West, Byzantine Egypt 328. - N. Lewis, Public Services s.v. ἀπαιτητής, ἀπαιτητής. - J. Karayannopoulos, ΛΕΒΟ s.v. ἀπαιτητής.

\(^{28}\) J. Karayannopoulos, Die kollektive Steuerverantwortung in der frühbyzantinischen Zeit, Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte 43 (1956) 289-322.

\(^{29}\) P. Oxy. 2195. 18 [576-577]: “π(αρά) τοῦ Κοιν(οῦ) γεωρ(γὸν) ἐποικ(ίου) […] ὑπὲρ ἀποτάξι(ων) χωρίων”. Apotaktôn chôria was formerly cultivated land that was abandoned. Cultivators of a kômê were charged with the fiscal responsibilities of the apotakta chôria. See J. Karayannopoulos, ΛΕΒΟ s.v. ἀπόταξιτον (χωρίων).

\(^{30}\) P. Oxy. 998 [575-599]: “τοῖς ἀπὸ Νεκώνθεως ὑπ(πέρ) ἀποτάξιπ(ων) χωρ(ίων)”. The people “ἀπὸ Νεκώνθεως”, that are mentioned in P. Oxy. 998, were cultivators located at the epoikion Nekôntheos. See P. Oxy. 2195. 20 [576-577].

\(^{31}\) P. Oxy. 1912. 81 [bef. 566]: “π(αρά) τῶν αἵ(τῶν) γεωρ(γὸν) καὶ ἀμπελοῦσι(γὸν) ὑπ(ἐρ) ἀποτάξιπ(ου) χωρ(ίου)” [bef. 566]. We know that the farmers and winegrowers were actually from Chenetôrios because it is mentioned in the same papyrus. See P. Oxy. 1912. 43; 79.
the ἐπιμελητής ἑσθήτος. The usage of the phrase “οἱ ἀπὸ ἐποικίων” may indicate that they paid the taxes en bloc. A list of arrears of clothing comprised two columns; the first registers κόμαι or epoikia (e.g. “Θώλλεως, Δωσιθέου, ἐποικίων Γεροντά”) and the second registers owed garments (e.g. “στιχάριον, πάλλιον”). One should notice that this is a distinctive register per κόμη or epoikion (e.g. “ἐποικίων Γεροντά, ἐποικίων Σαραπά”) The tax for the procurement of military equipment, canone, was probably paid collectively by residents of epoikia, as well as by residents of κόμαι.

The third characteristic, I believe, κόμαι and epoikia shared, was that both their inhabitants formed collectives of the wealthiest villagers (“κοινὸν κόμης”, “κοινὸν εποικίου”) or guilds of certain occupations (e.g. “κοινὸν γεωργῆς”, “κοινὸν αμπελουργῆς”, “κοινὸν πλινθευτῶν”, “κοινὸν ποιμένων”) .

Collectives of κόμαι, as well as, collectives of epoikia are well attested in papyri. Two papyri from the Oxyrhynchite and the Hermopolite nome dating from the middle of the 6th century mention collectives of

32. P. Oslo III 119. 1-5 [319]: “Π[αρ]ήνεγκαν ἀπὸ τῆς πάλλεως . . . θ(ήκης) (?) οἱ ἄπιοι ἐποικίου (ιου) Πετρικ(ς) ἣν πάγου δι(α) X[ . . . ἀπαί(τητο) καὶ κοινὸν(ον) ὑπ(ερ) παλ(λίου) ζοἱ ἵναι(νος) ὡς πόλεως καὶ ἑταῖρες τα[ν] 〚ποικίου κοινόν ἐποικίων 〛ποικίου Γεροντά”

33. P. Oslo III 119. 2; 9 [319].

34. P. Oxy. 1448. 10 ff [318]. Pallion was a mantle and sticharion was a tunic. See E. A. Sophocles, Greek Lexicon of the Roman and Byzantine Periods (from B.C. 146 to A.D. 1100), vol. I-II, New York 1957 (orig. Cambridge, MA 1870 and 1887), s.v. πάλλων, στιχάριον.

35. P. Oxy. 1448. 10-13 [318].

36. For κόμαι paying collectively taxes in kind (e.g. garments), see P. Michael. 21. 9 [285]. - P. Mich. 957. 3 [298].


The koinon epoikiou appears in a tax register from kômē Tenseu Skordôn and topos Dêmeou (Hermopolite nome). There is no certainty concerning the nature of the document (public or private). The frequent appearance of a kômē (eight times) and a topos (five times) and the absence of functionaries of large estates indicate that it is a public document. In this supposedly public document, fiscal obligations of a koinon epoikiou are mentioned among fiscal obligations of a koinon kômēs. The second appearance of koinon epoikiou comes from a private account of Apiones. The collective of epoikion Skytalitidos from the Oxyrhynchite nome had leased a dovecote and paid the corresponding rent. It would be valid to support that the most prominent inhabitants of epoikia formed collectives, as the inhabitants of kômai did.

Apart from koina of prominent inhabitants, papyri also report koina of various trades as guilds of kômai and epoikia. Regarding the guilds of kômai, it would suffice to consider a papyrus from kômē Aphroditō. The koinon of shepherds and field guards of Aphroditō ("κοινὸν τῶν ποιμένων καὶ ἀγροφυλάκων τῆς αὐτῆς κώμης Αφροδίτης") enters a contract and agrees to guard fields, cattle and tools. The trade guilds of epoikia are reported in private accounts from the Oxyrhynchite nome. Two accounts of rents and parcels of land mention "κοινὸν τῶν γεωργῶν τοῦ εποικίου Νέ[ντν]ήου" and the "κοινὸν τῶν γεωργῶν καὶ αμπελοφυών τὸν εποικίον Συνταλίτιδος". These guilds of farmers paid rents for landed properties. The guild of farmers of the epoikia

40. P. Lond. Copt. 1075 fol. 25 r. 9 [546-547 ?]: "κοιν(ὸν) ἐποικ(ίου) κ(εράτια) θὸ τάλαντα Ψ". Topos was an administrative subdivision of a nome. See F. Preisigke, Fachwörter s.v. τόπος.
41. "Epoikion Skytalitidos" is not specifically mentioned in l. 5 (just "Skytalitidos"), but the following lines (l. 8; 15; 19; 22) clearly mention "epoikion Skytalitidos". See PSI VIII 954. 5; 8; 15; 19; 22 [VI].
42. PSI VIII 954. 5 [VI]: "π(αρά) τοῦ κοινοῦ... Συνταλίτιδος (ὑπὲρ) φόρον περισπεργούς". The three underdots indicate an uncertain reading. The editor suggests that the three underdots stand for "τῇ ζ". Consequently, the text is restored as "κοινὸν τῆς Συνταλίτιδος". See PSI VIII 954 notes on l. 5. The word phoros signifies a rent or a tax. F. Preisigke, Fachwörter s.v. φόρος. – A. C. Johnson - L. C. West, Byzantine Egypt 62. Cf. J. Gascou, Les grands domaines, la cité et l’état en Égypte byzantine, Travaux et Mémoires 9 (1985) 1-90, p. 12 ff. (hereafter: J. Gascou, Grands domaines).
43. P. Cairo. Masp. 67001. 4-5 [514]. For the koina and their corporate fiscal responsibility, see C. Zuckerman, Du village à l’Empire. Autour du registre fiscal d’Aphroditō (525/526) [Centre de Recherche d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, Monographies 16], Paris 2004, p. 224 ff. (hereafter: C. Zuckerman, Registre fiscal). For other guilds of various trades, see P. Cairo. Masp. 67283. 16 ff. [547].
44. P. Princ. 136. 15-16 [IV] (= P. Col. VIII 238). For the "κοινὸν τῶν γεωργῶν", see A. C. Johnson - L. C. West, Byzantine Egypt 152.
45. PSI VIII 954. 21-22 [VI].
Tarousebt and the guild of farmers and winegrowers of an unknown *epoikion* paid Apiones rents for land and a dovecote. Additionally, trade guilds of *epoikia* are mentioned in papyri concerning tax exemption. The guild of winegrowers from the *epoikion* Opiōn submitted a petition requesting a tax reduction. It would be fair to assume that a trade guild may have been more efficient than individual cultivators. In an account of remissions from Oxyrhynchus, the guild of farmers from the *epoikion* Perouen is being exempted for a remote parcel of land that was not flooded. It may be that these lands were not properly watered due to proximity to the desert. The guild of farmers was responsible for the cultivation of a land that probably was not always irrigated.

*Kómai* and *epoikia* shared some common characteristics, which are depicted above. The same litourgic functionaries appear to be serving in *epoikia* and *kómai*. The residents of *epoikia* and *kómai* probably paid collectively taxes for *apotakta chória* and the *canon vestium*. Furthermore, residents of *epoikia* and *kómai* were organised in collectives and various guilds. These indicate that *epoikia* functioned, were taxed and were organised in a similar way to independent *kómai*. It may be that the large estates found in the organisation of *kómai* a functioning model.

### Possession status and social mobility of *epoikia*

Pointing out some similarities between *epoikia* and *kómai* would be futile, if it was not accompanied by an effort to view *epoikia* as a dynamic institution. Papyri mention *epoikia* that changed ownership or at least changed the manager that was fiscally responsible. *Ktēma* Monimou (also mentioned as an *epoikion*) is attested in an early 6th century

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46. *P. Oxy.* 1911. 53, 55, 63 ff. [557] (= *SB* 16324). We know that Tarousebt was also an *epoikion* from other papyri, e.g. *P. Oxy.* 2025. 20 [VI-VII]: “ἐποικ(ίου) Ταρουσέβτ”.

47. *SB* 12554. 7-10; 15 [V-VI]: “πάλιν συνχώρησον ὑμᾶς τὴν μεγαλοπρέπεια τῆς σῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τὰς πάντας ἱμῶν κατὰ τὴν κέλευσιν ἱμῶν τᾶς ἐκατῶν [[πεντήκοντα]] διπλὰ τῇ ἄρουρᾷ;” τὸ κοινὸν τῶν ἀμπελουργῶν ἀπὸ ἐποικίου Ὀπίων ἐπιδεδώκαμεν”.


lease from Oxyrhynchus as part of the Apion holdings\(^5\). A tax account also from Oxyrhynchus mentions the same hamlet as part of the divine house\(^5\). As N. Gonis suggested it may be that *epoikion* Monimou changed ownership or at least administrator\(^5\). In a similar situation, *epoikion* Kineas\(^5\) in the 6\(^{th}\) century appears to be an Apion holding\(^5\), but in two orders for payment it is included in the divine house's estates\(^5\). As J. Gascou suggests, the Apions either rented the *epoikion* or they were commissioned to manage its activities\(^5\). The third example comes also from the Oxyrhynchite nome. Pempo was described in an account as imperial land and it was probably administered by the Apions\(^5\). *Epoikion* Pempo belonged to the imperial property (*θείος οίκος*), but the Apions, at least for a short period, were responsible for its exploitation. Lastly, in a 6\(^{th}\) century account of Apion estates, an *epoikion* Patrimonial(ia)\(^5\) is attested among other hamlets. The name Patrimonial(ia) has led scholars to believe that this particular *epoikion* had been imperial property\(^5\) that was transferred to the Apions\(^6\). The aforementioned cases


\(^{51}\) P. Oxy. 2020. 13-14 [VI]: "διά τοῦ θείου οίκου κριθ(...) ... ύπέρ τοῦ κτήμ(ατος) Μονίμου". The divine house (*θείος οίκος*) was an administrative institution composed of imperial estates. See A. C. Johnson - L. C. West, *Byzantine Egypt* 36. - J. Gascou, Grands domaines 4.

\(^{52}\) P. Oxy. 4615 [505] notes on l. 7.

\(^{53}\) A. Calderini - S. Daris, *Dizionario* s.v. Κινέας.

\(^{54}\) P. Oxy. 2479. 2 [VI]. See J. Gascou, Grands domaines 77.


\(^{56}\) J. Gascou, Grands domaines 77.

\(^{57}\) P. Oxy. 1915. 1-3 and Intr. [560]: "ἀ]πο τοῦ κτήμ(ατος) Πεμπώ τοῦ θείου(άτου) οίκ(ης) δι[[- ca. 18 -] τ ... [. . .]β]. [. . .] τῷ ὑπερφυσι(ατω) ὑπάτῳ ὀρθονομ(ω) Ἀχιώνος". See J. Gascou, Grands domaines 77. - T. M. Hickey, *Wine, Wealth* 51-52. Also, see A. Calderini - S. Daris, *Dizionario* s.v. Πεμπώ.

\(^{58}\) P. Iand. III 51. 7 [VI]. The term *epoikion* is not explicitly mentioned, but other localities ("Λεωνίδου", "Ασπιδά", "Σκυταλίτιδος", “Μεγάλης Παρορίου”) that are mentioned in *P. Iand. III* 51 were *epoikia*. We have knowledge of that, from references to other papyri, e.g. *P. Oxy*. 2244 R. 3, 5, 25 [VI]: “ἐποίκιον Λεωνίδου”, *P. Oxy*. 4755. 10 [586]: “ἐποίκιον Ασπιδά”, *P. Oxy*. 2025. 28 [VI-VII]: “ἐποίκιον Σκυταλίτιδος”, *P. Oxy*. 2244 R. 1, 18 [VI]: “ἐποίκιον Μεγάλης Παρορίου”. Also see A. Calderini - S. Daris, *Dizionario* s.v. Πεμπώνιαλά.

\(^{59}\) The Latin adjective “*patrimonialis*” in Roman law is related to the imperial property (e.g. fundi patrimoniales, comitiva sacri patrimoni). For the term *patrimonium* and imperial property, see R. Delmaire, *Largesses sacrées et res privata. L’aerarium impérial*
indicate that *epoikia* could change owner or administrator for a certain period of time.

The dynamic character of *epoikia* is also emanated by examples of *epoikia* that evolved into *kômai* and in some cases vice versa\(^6^1\). The *epoikion* Pisæïs located in the Arsinoite nome is attested in two papyri from the 2\(^{\text{nd}}\) and 3\(^{\text{rd}}\) century\(^6^2\). During the Byzantine period a *kômê* Pisæi is mentioned in a loan of wheat and in a list of villages both from the Arsinoite nome\(^6^3\). Presumably Pisæi had evolved at least from the early Byzantine times into a *kômê*\(^6^4\). A village named Tryphonos appears in an account of private property from Oxyrhynchus\(^6^5\). The editor identifies *kômê* Tryphonos with the homonymic *epoikion* mentioned in a census register\(^6^6\). The scribe of the census uses the genitive “*Τρύφωνος*”, which indicates that the hamlet, before becoming a village, was private property of someone named “*Τρύφων*”. An *epoikion* Nilou is attested in southern Oxyrhynchite nome in the 4\(^{\text{th}}\) century and a hamlet with the same name is mentioned in a porphyry tablet from the Hermopolite nome\(^6^7\). In the 6\(^{\text{th}}\) century a *kômê* Nilou is mentioned in a list of payments to soldiers serving in Hermopolite nome\(^6^8\). According to D. Bonneau the presumably three different settlements may well be the

\(^{60}\) The idea that hamlets evolved into villages is briefly expressed by D. Rathbone and R. S. Bagnall. See D. Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism* 180. – R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt 218*.

\(^{61}\) The idea that hamlets evolved into villages is briefly expressed by D. Rathbone and R. S. Bagnall. See D. Rathbone, *Economic Rationalism* 180. – R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt 218*.


\(^{63}\) *SB* 15286. 13 [362]: “ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ[ἀ] ἰμι Πισαεί”. – *SPP* X 78. 8 [VII]: “ἐν τ(ῶν) ἀπό χ(ῶμες) Πισαεί”.


\(^{65}\) *BGU* VII 1619. 18 [II]: “Τρύφωνος ἐποίκ(ῶς)”. See *BGU* VII 1619. 18 [II]: “Τρύφωνος ἐποίκ(ῶς)”. See *Oxy* 2195. 38 [VI] notes on 1. 38.


same *epoikion* that evolved into a *kōmē*. In the Fayum, the *epoikion* Nestou is attested in papyri dated until the 2nd century. In early 3rd century and later, Nestou is mentioned as a *kōmē*. Furthermore, in the Hermopolite nome, the *epoikion* Monyris is mentioned in an account of military provisions and in a register, both dating from the 3rd century. In a lease of land from late 4th century, Monyris appears as a *kōmē*. It would be reasonable to assume that the Roman *epoikia* Nestos and Monyris later became *kōmai*. These are only few of many examples of *epoikia* that probably had evolved into *kōmai*. Unlike the aforementioned examples, papyri report a reverse process, in which *kōmē* Chenetōrios, attested in early 4th century, is later mentioned as *epoikion* Chenetōrios. This reverse process could be also attested in two papyri from Arsinoite nome. The *kōmē* Kerkēsōs that is mentioned in a 7th century papyrus appears one century later in an Arabic papyrus as *epoikion*.

The aforementioned examples of *epoikia* that changed owners or at least administrators combined with the cases of *epoikia* that presumably had acquired the status of *kōmai*, in my opinion, allude a social mobility in the rural sphere that was already surmised by scholars.

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73. *P. Lips*. I 20. 7 [381].

74. Nestou is present in a sale of a barn from the early 2nd century, but it is peculiarly designated as an *epoikion* and as a *kōmē*. See *BGU* II 455. 13-14 [early II]: “περί κομη(ν) Ν[έ]στου ἐποίκιον”. The case of Monyris is identical. In a nomination of liturgies, Monyris is mentioned as an *epoikion* and as a *kōmē*. *P. Flor*. I 2. 235, 242-243 [265]. Cf. *P. Tebt. II* App. II §3, p. 356.


77. *SB* 9402. 2 [VII]. – *SB* 9583. 7-8 [VIII]. For a different interpretation concerning the names of the Fayum hamlets and villages, see J. Banaji, *Agrarian Change* 175-176.

Landed property in epoikia and beyond

While attempting to characterise epoikia we should define their territorial status. The surrounding area of an epoikion, unlike the territory of a kômê, is rarely mentioned in papyri. Did all the land around an epoikion belong to a sole proprietor? Were the residents of an epoikion able to possess land elsewhere? Papyri might offer some assistance answering these questions. We will present three cases of cultivators coming from epoikia that presumably rented lands outside their territory. We will also examine whether foreigners, residents of kômai, could obtain land of epoikia.

A papyrus from the archive of Dioscorus mentions two peasants from epoikion Sakkou renting a piece of land that was part of Aphrodito’s communal property. This particular field was “ἐν τῷ ἀπόρῳ”, which probably means that it was “ἀπορον τῆς κώμης”. The field was part of Aphrodito’s property and at some point, its owners abandoned it. Then, the abandoned land was leased to the residents of Sakkou. In another text from the same archive, Aurelios Abraamios coming from epoikion Psinsou leased a farm for the duration of three years. This land is also situated in the area surrounding kômê Aphrodito, but it was privately owned. Leasing foreign land may also be the case of a papyrus from Apollônopolite nome. Aurelius Ioannês from epoikion Bespaïom leased arable and uncultivated lands from the monastery of Abbot Patoïs. The lease is emphyteutic, meaning perpetual lease with an obligation of improving the land. Assuming that Ioannês was somehow working for the owner of that epoikion (since he resided there), he also could lease the monastery’s land. Furthermore, we should note that

80. P. Cair. Masp. 67106. 8-11 [539]: “ὄμολογο(ὸ)μεν ἐξ ἀλληλεγγύης μισθώσασθαι παρ’ ὅμων ... τ’ ὅ· στρεφόμεν ἐν τῷ ἀπόρῳ γε[όρ]γιον”.
81. The “ἀπορον τῆς κώμης” was land belonging to a kômê that was abandoned by its previous owners. Residents of the kômê or foreigners were allowed lease the abandoned land. See J. Karayannopoulos, ΛΕΒΟ s.v. ἀπόρος ὅμως ἀπόρος τῆς κώμης.
84. P. Lond. II 483 [616].
85. See A. C. Johnson - L. C. West, Byzantine Egypt 72-74.
epoikion and emphyteusis appear in Arabic papyri. An “ἐποίκιον Ἐμφυτευτών” is repeatedly mentioned in 8th century papyri from Aphroditō. “Ἐμφυτευτών” is merely a name; however, it implies that the residents of epoikia in the Byzantine period held land on emphyteutic lease. To summarise, in two cases from the first half of the 6th century, cultivators coming from hamlets near Aphroditō appear to lease foreign lands. Also in early 7th century, a cultivator from a hamlet rented foreign land owned by a monastery. The exact status of these cultivators is unknown to us, but we know they resided in hamlets, which means that they already cultivated lands belonging to their owners. The point to note is, even though the inhabitants of epoikia cultivated private land, they could lease land coming from other parties.

The suggestion that residents of epoikia could lease foreign land coincides with an opposite occurrence, meaning that foreigners could obtain and exploit land of epoikia. The cadaster of Aphroditō in the 6th century reports residents of Antaiopolis that possessed lands in epoikia. Comês Damianos owned an orchard of half aroura located in the territory of an epoikion. Eudoxia, sister of comês Theoteknos owned one aroura of arable land in the hamlet Kerameós. The land was under the responsibility of a farmer (geōrgos) named Hermouēs. He probably cultivated the parcel, but we cannot define the mode of exploitation. The implication is that foreigners could possess lands in an epoikion. As noted above cultivators of epoikia were able to possess land outside the epoikion. Moreover, we have suggested the possibility of outsiders to own land of epoikia. These two suggestions imply a more complex property situation.

It is noteworthy that epoikion re-emerges again in the middle Byzantine period. The 11th century cadaster of Thēbes comprises taxpayers

86. P. Lond. 1412-1414 [VIII]; 1416 [732-733]; 1418 [706-707]; 1419 [716-717]; 1427 [732-733]; 1432-1434 [VIII]; 1436 [719]; 1442 [VIII]; 1444 [VIII]; 1449 [711]; 1451 [701-702, 716-717 ?]; 1452 [VIII]; 1459 [VIII]; 1460 [ca. 709]; 1468 [VIII]; 1488 [VIII]; 1553 [VIII]. - SB 5645 [710]. - P. Câr. Masp. 67359 [715-716].

87. The state and the church possessed the right to grand their land on emphyteutic lease. See A. C. Johnson - L. C. West, Byzantine Egypt 73-74.


89. J. Gascou - L. MacCoull, Cadastre 120 (= P. Freer 1+2, 43 [524 ?]).

90. J. Gascou - L. MacCoull, Cadastre 126 (= P. Freer 1+2, 256 [524 ?]).

91. P. Freer 1+2, 256 (524 ?): “νησίδης (ὁδός) α ... ἐν ἑωοῖς Πανουπίου γεωργίου(γαών)”. For the meaning of geōrgos see J. Banaji, Agrarian Change 190-192.
residing in Thèba and elsewhere\textsuperscript{92}, and amounts of taxes with tax alleviations\textsuperscript{93}. An “\(\acute{\alpha}γρί\textit{δ}(\iota\upsilon\nu)\ \varepsilon\piοι(\kappa\iota\omicron\nu)\)” is part of the re-imposition of taxes on previously tax-exempted lands\textsuperscript{94}. These lands (including the \textit{agridion epoikion}) were originally granted to an imperial overseer (\textit{basilikos kou-ratōr}) Leobachos\textsuperscript{95}. In the middle Byzantine period, \textit{agridion} was a small rural settlement located at a distance from a \textit{chōrion}, however, it was fiscally dependent from the \textit{chōrion}\textsuperscript{96}. Accordingly, in 11\textsuperscript{th} century Boiōtia, \textit{epoikion} denotes a small rural settlement (hamlet) that was part of a prominent family. Considering the continuity of the rural communities, as N. Svoronos suggested\textsuperscript{97}, we may surmise that \textit{epoikia}, small rural settlements continued to exist, at least until the late 11\textsuperscript{th} century, as part of independent landowning families.

\textit{Conclusions}

In Byzantine Egypt, the term \textit{epoikion} was used to signify a \textit{ktēma} or a rural settlement. Since \textit{epoikion} is so often mentioned in Byzantine papyri, we can identify its character and maybe understand its role in Byzantine society. A juxtaposition of \textit{epoikion} to the free village (\textit{kōmē}) reveals some common characteristics such as the functionaries of liturgies, collective fiscal responsibility and the collectives of wealthiest residents and various trades. These imply that \textit{epoikia} and independent \textit{kōmai} were parallel but similar units in the Egyptian countryside. Furthermore, Byzantine papyri indicate that \textit{epoikia} were not immutable since they could change ownership or administrator. That is not the only kind of change that occurs in Byzantine sources. \textit{Epoikia} could probably evolve into \textit{kōmai}, which is indicative of social mobility. The cases of residents of \textit{epoikia} that leased lands outside their hamlet, along with the conjecture that residents of \textit{epoikia} held land on \textit{emphyteutic} lease (\textit{epoikion Emphyteutōn}), demonstrate that employment in \textit{epoikia} was

\textsuperscript{92} Some proprietors resided in Athens, Euripos and Aulōna. See N. Svoronos, Recherches sur le cadastre byzantin et la fiscalité aux X\textsuperscript{e} et XI\textsuperscript{e} siècles: le cadastre de Thèbes, \textit{Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique} 83 (1959) 1-145, p. 142 (hereafter: N. Svoronos, Cadastre). The fact that some proprietors were non-Thēban residents is reminiscent of the proprietors from the Aphroditō cadaster (see above).

\textsuperscript{93} N. Svoronos, Cadastre 8.

\textsuperscript{94} N. Svoronos, Cadastre 15, A 83: “ο\(\nu\)\(\lambda\)ιβά\(\delta\)ι\(\nu\)ον τ\(\eta\)ς \'Αγρ\(\alpha\)(\ae\(\gamma\)) [(και\(\acute{\omicron}\)\(\delta\)) \(\acute{\alpha}γρί\textit{δ}(\iota\upsilon\nu)\) \(\varepsilon\piοι(\kappa\iota\omicron\nu)\)”.

\textsuperscript{95} N. Svoronos, Cadastre 41.

\textsuperscript{96} J. Karayannopoulos, \textit{ΛΕΒΟ} s.v. \(\acute{\alpha}γρί\textit{διον}\).

\textsuperscript{97} N. Svoronos, Cadastre 145.
not exclusive. There are also cases of residents of a ḫōmē possessing land in an epoikion.

The aforementioned characteristics of epoikia mitigate their “private” status. It is reasonable to suggest that the community of an epoikion was not part of a large estate, only the territorium of an epoikion was. Epōikia as rural settlements seem to be consistent with a remark by J. Gascou concerning large estates in Egypt: “l’opposition traditionnellement instituée entre la grande propriété privée d’une part, la cité et l’État de l’autre, me paraît revêtir peu ou pas de portée”98. Epoikia, as described above, were essential elements of the large estates and they might have been a manifestation of their “public” character.

98. J. Gascou, Grands domaines 60.
Γιώργος Κωνσταντινίδης

Η επανεξέταση του όρου ἐποίκιον στη Βυζαντινή Αίγυπτο

Ο όρος ἐποίκιον απαντά στους Βυζαντινούς παπύρους και σε ορισμένες επιγραφές με τη σημασία του αγροτήματος ή του αγροτικού συνοικισμού που ανήκε σε μια μεγάλη γαιοκτησία. Η έρευνα δεν έχει ασχοληθεί επισταμένως με τον χαρακτήρα των εποικίων και τη θέση τους στην πρώιμη Βυζαντινή οικονομία της Αιγύπτου. Οι αγροτικοί αυτοί οικισμοί παρουσιάζουν ορισμένα χαρακτηριστικά με τις ελεύθερες κώμες της Βυζαντινής υπαίθρου. Τέτοια χαρακτηριστικά είναι οι λειτουργίες, η αλληλέγγυα φορολογική ευθύνη και οι συντροφιές (κοινά). Ο δυναμικός χαρακτήρας των εποικίων τεκμαιρέται από αλλαγές στο ιδιοκτησιακό καθεστώς τους. Υπάρχουν παραδείγματα εποικίων, τα οποία άλλοτε αποτελούσαν κτήσεις του αυτοκρατορικού οίκου και άλλοτε κτήσεις ιδιωτών. Επίσης, ορισμένα εποίκια ενδεχομένως μπορούσαν να αποκτήσουν το καθεστώς της ελεύθερης κώμης. Οι κάτοικοι των εποικίων, αν και εξαρτώμενοι από τον ιδιοκτήτη της γης τους, είχαν τη δυνατότητα να μισθώνουν αλλότρια γη. Τα προαναφερθέντα χαρακτηριστικά μετριάζουν την εικόνα των εποικίων ως στατικών «ιδιωτικών» συνοικισμών. Τα εποίκια, ως δυναμικοί αγροτικοί συνοικισμοί των οίκων της Αιγύπτου, επισημαίνουν τον «δημόσιο» χαρακτήρα των γαιοκτησιών αυτών.