

## 8 | Early Arabic Decrees on Papyrus from the Abbasid Period

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A large number of Arabic decrees (*sijill*, *manshūr* or *marsūm*) from the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk periods have been preserved in Christian, Jewish and Muslim caches. They belong to a well identified genre that has been the subject of various studies.<sup>1</sup> Besides original pieces, dozens of documents that are now lost have survived through copies made in chancery manuals.<sup>2</sup> Various people, among whom are Samuel M. Stern, Donald S. Richards and David P. Little, thoroughly studied Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk decrees. Although Samuel M. Stern and more recently Marina Rustow have sought to find continuities between the Fatimid decrees and their Abbasid forerunners, so far there is very little concrete evidence and, above all, no identified decree for the Abbasid period.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I argue, confirming what both Stern and Rustow suspected, that this genre

All the papyrological editions are quoted according to the International Society for Arabic Papyrology (ISAP) checklist available online at: [www.naher-osten.uni-muenchen.de/isap/isap\\_checklist/index.html](http://www.naher-osten.uni-muenchen.de/isap/isap_checklist/index.html) (updated list), initially published as Petra M. Sijpesteijn, John F. Oates and Andreas Kaplony, "Checklist of Arabic papyri," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 42 (2005): 127–66 and the Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets (<https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>). I would like to thank Marina Rustow and Luke Yarbrough, who made very inspiring comments on a first draft of this paper. Luke Yarbrough also improved my poor English text. All remaining mistakes are mine.

<sup>1</sup> See among others Samuel M. Stern, *Fāṭimid Decrees. Originals from the Fāṭimid Chancery* (London: Faber & Faber, 1964) and Ernst Hans, *Die Mamlukischen Sultansurkunden des Sinai-Klosters* (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1960) as well as Donald S. Richards, "A Fāṭimid petition and 'small decree' from Sinai," *Israel Oriental Studies* 3 (1973): 140–58; Donald S. Richards, "A Mamluk emir's 'square' decree," *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies* 54 (1991): 63–67; and Donald P. Little, "Five petitions and consequential decrees from late fourteenth century Jerusalem," *al-Majallat al-ʿarabiyya li-l-ʿulūm al-insāniyya* 14 no. 54 (1996): 348–96.

<sup>2</sup> See among others ʿAbd al-Tawwāb ʿAbd al-Rahmān, "Deux investitures du calife abbasside al-Mustanjid Billāh Abūl Muẓaffar Yūsuf," *Annales Islamologiques* 11 (1972): 153–62; and S. M. Imamuddin, "Diwan al-inshā (chancery in later medieval Egypt), with special reference to later Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk decrees dated 528–894 H./1134–1489 A.C.," *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society* 28 (1980): 63–77. On the value of *inshāʾ* literature for the study of documents, see Frédéric Bauden, "Like father, like son. The chancery manual (Qalāʾid al-jumān) of al-Qalqaṣandī's son and its value for the study of Mamluk diplomatics (ninth/fifteenth century) (Studia diplomatia islamica, I)," *Eurasian Studies* 11 (2013): 181–228.

<sup>3</sup> Stern, *Fāṭimid decrees*, 113, n. 1 mentions only once a possible similarity between Abbasid decrees and later decrees. See also Marina Rustow, *The Lost Archive. Traces of a Caliphate in a Cairo Synagogue* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), 209–10.

was not born *ex nihilo* in Fatimid times. The Fatimid decree had forerunners, as can be proved by five decrees dating to the eighth–tenth centuries, which I have recently identified. Three of them were already published but were not identified as such; two remained unpublished until now. Below I give a list of them according to their dating:

- (1) P. Louvre Inv. E 7066 (4): undated but which can probably be dated to the first half of the eighth century on palaeographical grounds.
- (2) P. London UCL Inv. Arsinoe 60: dated *Rabi<sup>c</sup> al-ākhir* or *Jumāda al-ākhirā* of the year 182 (May–June or July–August 798).
- (3) P. Stras. Inv. Ar. 431 (published here as number 3): dated *Dhū al-qa<sup>c</sup>da* of the year 194 (August–September 810).
- (4) *P.Cair.Arab.* III 171: undated but can be dated to 242–47 (856–61) on prosopographical grounds.
- (5) *P.Ryl.Arab.* I, I 1: undated but can probably be dated to the tenth century on palaeographical grounds.

## Formulary and Structure

The formulary and structure of these documents can be well identified (see Table 8.1). After the *basmala*, the prescript consists of the words *hādhā kitāb min* (“This is a document from”) followed by an internal address, that is, the name of the sender introduced by the preposition *min* and the name of the addressee(s), beginning with the preposition *ilā/li-*. Unlike private and business letters from this period, the prescript does not contain greetings or any religious formulas. Abbasid decrees found on papyri are usually lacking any *expositio* part (*matn*) where the issuer would be expected to explain the reasons which prompted him to issue the document. Only one document seems to have contained an *expositio* beginning with the particle *inna*.<sup>4</sup>

All the decrees contain a *dispositio* part (*ḥukm* or *marsūm*), viz. the content of the decree, always introduced by the trigger *innī/innanā amartu/amarnā* (“I/We ordered”). After this, one finds final injunctions that anyone to whom the decree is read should take due notice of it and not infringe on it. These final injunctions always start with the words *fa-man qurī’a ‘alayhi kitābī hādhā min ... fa-l-ya<sup>c</sup>lim dhālika* (“Whoever may be read this document of mine from among ... let him know that”)<sup>5</sup> and continues with

<sup>4</sup> See doc. 5, 2–5.

<sup>5</sup> See doc. 5, 7–8 *fa-man qurī’a ‘alayhi kitābī hādhā min al-ḥurrās wa-l-a<sup>c</sup>wān | wa-ahl ḍay<sup>c</sup>a wa-ghayrihim fa-l-ya<sup>c</sup>lim dhālika* (“Whoever may be read this document of mine from among the guards, the policemen, the people of the estate, and others shall know it”).

Table 8.1 *Abbasid papyrus decree structure and formulae*

Part	Trigger
Invocation	<i>Basmala</i>
Prescript	<i>hādhā kitāb min ... ilā/li-</i> (“This is a document from ... to”)
<i>Expositio</i>	–
<i>Dispositio</i>	<i>innī/innanā amartu/amarnā</i> (“I/We ordered”)
Final injunctions	<i>fa-man qurī’a ‘alayhi kitābi hādhā min ... fa-l-ya’lim dhālika</i> (“Whoever may be read this document from among ... let him know that”)
Date	<i>wa-kutiba</i> (“It was written in ...”)

the expression *wa-lā yaj’al ‘alā nafsīhi (fihā) sabīlan* (“and he shall not give, concerning it, against himself any reason [to be admonished]”)<sup>6</sup> or the extended *wa-lā yaj’al ‘alā nafsīhi fī ta’addī dhālika wa-mukhālafatihi sabīlan* (“and he shall not give against himself any reason [to be admonished] by infringing or trespassing it”).<sup>7</sup> The *dispositio* ends always with the religious formula *in shā’a allāh* (“God willing”). The decrees are most of the time dated:<sup>8</sup> sometimes only the month is given introduced by the verb *wa-kutiba* (“and [it] was written ...”),<sup>9</sup> but the year could also be mentioned.<sup>10</sup>

The structural similarities between Abbasid decrees and later decrees are obvious, even if Abbasid decrees preserved on papyrus usually lack the *expositio* part. However, the similarities are more striking on the formulaic level. The *dispositio* is indeed regularly introduced by the words *fa-amara* which can be found in Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk decrees,<sup>11</sup> and the final injunctions contain expressions or formulas, such as *fa-man qara’ahu*

<sup>6</sup> See doc. 2, 11 [*wa-lā yaj’al*] *‘alā nafsīhi sabīlan* (“and he shall not give against himself any reason [to be admonished]”). The same phrasing is also attested in the administrative school exercise *PHeid.Arab.* II 1 verso, 6 and in *PAF* 4, 12–13; on this expression, see the comment in the edition p. 17 as well as Werner Diem, “Philologisches zu den arabischen Aphrodito-Papyri,” *Der Islam* 61 (1984): 247.

<sup>7</sup> See doc. C, 7–8 *wa-lā yaj’al ‘alā nafsīhi fī ta’addī dhālik wa-mukhālafatihi sabīlan* (“and he shall not give against himself any reason [to be admonished] by infringing or trespassing it”) and E, 8–9 *wa-lā yaj’al ‘alā nafsīhi fī ta’addīhi | sabīlan* (“and he shall not give against himself any reason [to be admonished] by infringing it”).

<sup>8</sup> Doc. 1 seems not to have been dated, but this can only be assumed from the restitutions I propose (see the commentary to the edition below).

<sup>9</sup> See doc. 5, 9 *wa-kutiba fī Dhī l-ḥijja* (“written in Dhū al-ḥijja”).

<sup>10</sup> See doc. 2, 11–12 [*wa-kutiba fī Rabi’/Jumādā | al-ā*] *khīr sanat* [ρ]πβ (“written in Rabi’/Jumādā al-ākhir of the year 182”) and 3, 8–9 *wa-kutiba fī Dhī al-qa’da | sanat arba’ wa-tis’in wa-mi’a* (“written in Dhū al-qa’da of the year one hundred ninety-four”).

<sup>11</sup> See Stern, *Fātimid decrees*, 111–12 and *P.Fatimid* 1, 22.

or *fa-man quriʿa ʿalayhi min ...*, close or identical to the ones to be found in the Abbasid decrees.<sup>12</sup>

## Script and Layout

Arabic decrees from the Abbasid era seem to be following precise prescriptions concerning the script and layout as if there were already in this period some well-established chancery practices that had spread all over Egypt. All documents are written across the fibres of papyrus maintaining broad margins. The text is carefully executed in an elegant formal script with wide interlinear spacing (Fig. 8.1). Over time, features of cursiveness and *Verschleifung* typical of the ninth and tenth centuries appear (Fig. 8.2).

The transition between each new part of the decree (i.e. the *basmala*, the prescript, the *dispositio* and the final injunctions) was sometimes marked by graphical means (see doc. 1, 3, and 5). That is to say, the scribe could leave a blank space between each new paragraph (Fig. 8.3).

One document (2) at least still has its imprinted seal attached, but one may assume that all the Abbasid decrees were sealed so everyone could check their authenticity.<sup>13</sup>

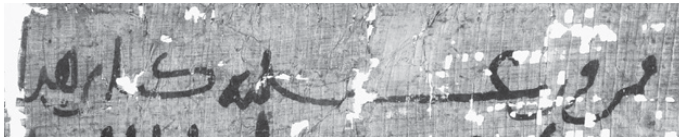


Figure 8.1 The formula *fa-man quriʿa ʿalayhi kitābi hādhā* in doc. 3.

<sup>12</sup> See e.g. *P.Fatimid* 5, 26–29 (1135) *fa-man qaraʿahu aw quriʿa ʿalayhi min kāfat | al-umarāʿ al-wulāt sallamahu Allāh wa-ḥafizahum | wa-l-mustakhdamīn fa-l-yaʿlim | hādhā min al-amr* (“Let all the amirs, the governors – may God give them peace and preserve them – and the officials who read it, or to whom this is read, take cognizance of this order”) and *P.Fatimid* 7, 13–15 (1154) *fa-man qaraʿahu aw quriʿa ʿalayhi | min al-umarāʿ al-wulāt bi-l-Sharqiyya wa-madinat al-Faramā adāma allāh tamkinahum wa-mutawallī | al-ḥarb bi-l-Ṭūr adāma allāh salāmatahu fa-l-yaʿlim dhālika min al-amr* (“Let the amīrs, the governors in the Sharqiyya province and the city of al-Faramā – may God prolong their safe establishment – and the military governor of al-Ṭūr – may God prolong his welfare! –, who read this, or to whom this is read, take cognizance of this order”).

<sup>13</sup> On seals in Arabic documents, see Petra M. Sijpesteijn, “Seals and papyri from early Islamic Egypt,” in *Seals and Sealing Practices in the Near East: Developments in Administration and Magic from Prehistory to the Islamic Period. Proceedings from an International Workshop at the Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo on December 2–3, 2009*, eds. Ilona Regulski, Kim Duistermaat and Peter Verkinderen (Leuven: Peeters, 2012): 163–74.

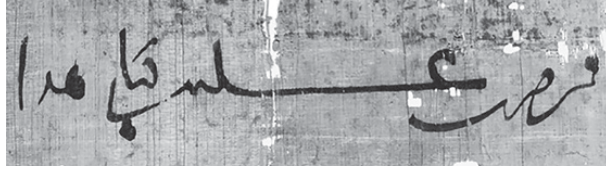


Figure 8.2 The formula *fa-man qurī'a 'alayhi kitābi hādihā* in doc. 5.

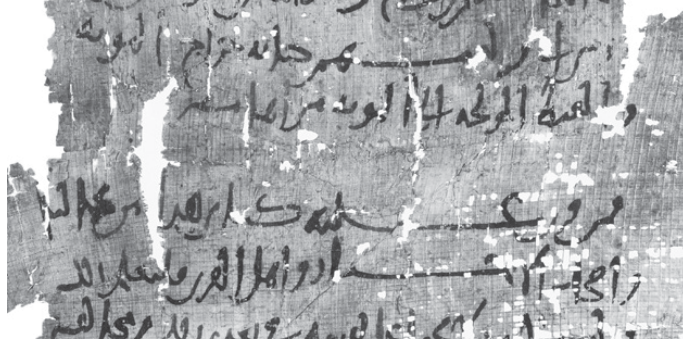


Figure 8.3 Example of a *vacat* left between the *dispositio* and the final injunctions in doc. 3.

## Content, Sender, Addressees and Audience

Three of the Arabic decrees from the Abbasid period I am discussing in this chapter are related to tax collection.<sup>14</sup> Another one was granted in favour of somebody to prevent anyone from hindering or annoying him.<sup>15</sup> The content of the last decree is not obvious, but it seems related to criminals and thieves acting in tenth-century Egypt. The decrees seem to have always been sent by lower officials such as one,<sup>16</sup> or both,<sup>17</sup> of the two provincial

<sup>14</sup> See doc. 1, 6 *mā 'alayhim min* (“what is incumbent on them of ...”); doc. 2, 7 [*ma*]n *yalzamuhum dhālika min ahl al-qu[r]ā* (“who is obligated by this ...”), and doc. 3, 4–5 *jibāyat kharāj al-Nūba* || *wa-l-Qibt* (“collecting the taxes of the Nubians and the Copts”).

<sup>15</sup> See doc. 4.

<sup>16</sup> See doc. 2, 2–4 [*hādihā kitāb min fulān b. Zur'a 'āmil al-amīr Ḥuwayy b. Ḥuwayy* | [*a*]ṣḥāhu *allāh 'alā kharāj kū[rat al-Fayyūm]* (“This is a document of from so-and-so son of Zur'a the agent of the Governor Ḥuwayy b. Ḥuwayy in charge of the taxes of the pagarchy of the Fayyūm ...”) and 3, 2–3 [*hādihā kitāb*] *min 'Alī b. [fulān al-'āmil 'alā kharāj kūrat Aswān | wa-a' mālihā]* (“This is a document from 'Alī b. so-and-so, the agent in charge of the taxes of pagarchy of Aswān and its districts”).

<sup>17</sup> See doc. 1, 2–4 *hādihā kitāb [min fulān b. fulān] | wa-Yaḥyā b. Khālid [āmilay al-amīr 'alā kharāj kūrat] | al-Fayyūm wa-sā'ir a[ mālihā]* (“This is a document of from so-and-so son of so-and-so and Yaḥyā b. Khālid, the two agents of the governor in charge of the taxes of the pagarchy of the Fayyūm and all its districts”).

financial directors (‘*āmil*, pl. ‘*ummāl*)<sup>18</sup> in charge of collecting the taxes in a given pagarchy (*kūra*, pl. *kuwar*), or a deputy of the financial director of Egypt.<sup>19</sup> The only problematic case is doc. 5, where the official function of the sender cannot be established. As for the addressees mentioned in the prescript of the decrees, we do not know much about their functions and powers, since almost none of them bear a title. In one document, the addressee is given the title *al-sammāk* (pl. *al-samāmika*), borrowed from the Greek *σύμμαχος*, which was given to people in charge of the tax collection.<sup>20</sup> In two other documents, one might assume the addressees are also tax collectors since the decrees are related to tax collection problems.<sup>21</sup> In the last two decrees that I have identified so far, the identification is problematic. One of them is addressed to a Christian Egyptian called Qulta b. Buqaym about whom we can only say that he was living in an estate belonging to al-Faḥ b. Khāqān, who was financial director, and later governor, of Egypt.<sup>22</sup> As for the last decree, it is addressed to a man called ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf, about whom we learn nothing, even if the eulogy following his name (l. 3) suggests he was a person of importance.<sup>23</sup>

P. M. Sijpesteijn recently demonstrated that some letters sent by the pagarch Nājīd b. Muslim to his subordinate ‘Abd Allāh b. As‘ad were designed for a much broader audience than just ‘Abd Allāh.<sup>24</sup> This is, for example, the case for *P.MuslimState* 8, a letter related to the collection of the *ṣadaqa*. Nājīd’s extensive argumentation in this letter, giving theological reasons for the collection of this tax, could not be understood if the letter was not meant to be read by or to a broader audience. The formula *fa-man quri’a ‘alayhi kitābī hādihā* (“Whoever may be read this document of mine from among ... let him know that”) that occurs at the end of all the decrees

<sup>18</sup> The word ‘*āmil* has several meanings in Arabic documents: it can apply to the governor (see *P.DiemFrühe Urkunden* 7, 2), the financial director of Egypt (see *P.Ryl.Arab.* I, II 1, 3 and my corrections in Vanthieghem, “Un surintendant des finances”) as well as to one of the two provincial finance directors (see *P.Berl.Arab.* II 26, 3–4). See also Adolf Grohmann, “Aperçu de papyrologie arabe,” *Études de papyrologie* 1 (1932): 55, n. 2, and Petra M. Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State. The World of a Mid-Eighth-Century Egyptian Official* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 137–44.

<sup>19</sup> See doc. 3 [*hādihā kitāb*] *min Muḥammad b. Muḥammad wakīl al-amīr* (“This a document from Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, the deputy of the financial director”).

<sup>20</sup> See doc. B. On the word *sammāk*, see Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*: 131–32 and Stefanie Schmidt “Messengers in Byzantine and early Muslim Egypt – small cogs, but systemically relevant. With some remarks on the dossier of Menas, *stratiōtēs*” in this volume.

<sup>21</sup> See docs. A and C.

<sup>22</sup> See doc. D.

<sup>23</sup> See doc. E.

<sup>24</sup> See Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, 247–57.



suggests that they were probably designed in the same spirit and targeted a larger audience than the single addressees mentioned therein. The content of decrees was intended not only for agents, policemen, soldiers or guards but also for simple villagers. However, we can only speculate how this worked in practice and which processes assured that all people were made aware of the information that the letters contained. In a Greek letter, where he gives instructions on how to deal with the fugitives, the governor of Egypt Qurra b. Sharik (in office 709–14) tells Basilios the administrator of Aphroditô: “when you receive this letter, gather the chiefs and the guards of the villages of your district and read them the letter in detail ordering them to make copies of it for each village so it can be read to the inhabitants of all the villages, and to publish the copies in their churches so they can read it and be aware (of its content).”<sup>25</sup> It would be tempting to assume that our decrees were in the same way read publicly to the agents of the provinces as well as to the headmen, policemen and soldiers of the villages, who in turn had to make copies so the villagers could become aware of their content too.

### An Egyptian or an Empire-Wide Genre?

As in the case of historians of the Graeco-Roman world using Greek and Latin papyri to study Hellenistic or Roman history,<sup>26</sup> one always has to wonder how far the information deriving from Arabic documents from Egypt can be transposed to the rest of the Islamic empire. The same question should apply when dealing with typologies of documents. There is indeed clear evidence of regional trends in the Arabic documentation, for example, in the case of Egyptian tax receipts whose formulary could differ from region to region.<sup>27</sup> At the same time, some formularies seem to have

<sup>25</sup> See *P.Lond.* IV 1384, 14–18 [δεχόμενος οὖν] | τὰ παρ’όντα γράμματα σὺν’αξ[ον] τῷ[ς] μείζονας] | καὶ φύλακας’ τῶν χωρ[ίων] τῆς δι[οικήσεώς] σου] | καὶ ὑπαναγνώση’ αὐτοῖς’ τὰ γρ’άμμ[ατα] κελεύω] | αὐτοὺς’ μεταγ’ράψαι τὸ ἴσ[ον] ἐκάστῳ χωρίῳ] | ἐφ’ ᾧ ἀν’αγ’νωσθῆναι’ αὐτὰ τοῖς τῶν ἰδίων χωρίων] | βαλόν’τες ἐν’ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις αὐτῶν [πρὸς τὸ] | [ἀ]ναγινώσκειν’ αὐτοὺς καὶ γιν[ώ]σκειν].

<sup>26</sup> See e.g. Roger S. Bagnall, “Egypt and the concept of the Mediterranean,” in *Rethinking the Mediterranean. Papers from a Conference Organized by the Columbia University for the Ancient Mediterranean, September 21–22, 2001*, ed. William V. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University press, 2005): 339–47 and Denis P. Kehoe, “The management of estates in Roman Egypt and Italy,” *Proceedings of the XIXth International Congress of Papyrology* (Cairo: Ain Shams University, Center of Papyrological Studies, 1992), vol. 2: 91–102.

<sup>27</sup> For example, the Abbasid receipts issued in the Fayyūm start with the words *bara’a li-* (“Quittance [issued] for ...”) while the ones issued in the rest of Egypt begin with the verb *addā* (“He

been in use in the entire empire, such as those in use for Arabic petitions.<sup>28</sup> If one comes to the Abbasid decrees on papyrus that are studied in this chapter, one might also raise the question of whether they were an Egyptian specificity or whether this genre flourished throughout the empire.

A decree transmitted by the *faqīh* al-Rāfi‘ī (d. 623/1226), who wrote many biographies of Sunnī jurists,<sup>29</sup> helps to answer this question. In the biography that he devotes to the *faqīh* Samayda‘ b. Muḥammad in his *Kitāb al-tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn*, also known as *Kitāb al-tadwīn fī dhikr ahl al-‘ilm bi-Qazwīn*,<sup>30</sup> al-Rāfi‘ī transmits a decree sent by the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 786–809) in favour of the people of the Persian city of Qazwīn. The decree reads as shown in Table 8.2.

The decree sent by Hārūn al-Rashīd to the people of Qazwīn is much longer than the Abbasid decrees preserved on papyrus and, unlike most of them, it contains an *expositio* part where the caliph explains the reasons that prompted him to send a decree. It however displays striking similarities with the Egyptian decrees: the *dispositio* part is indeed introduced by the words *wa-amara* (“and he orders”) while the final injunctions contain the formulae *fa-man qurī’a ‘alayhi kitāb amīr al-mu’minīn hādhā min ‘ummālihi fa-li- ... wa-lā yaj’al ‘alā nafsīhi mukhālafat amīr al-mu’minīn sabīlan* (“Whoever may be read this document of the caliph from among his agents shall ... And he shall not give against himself any reason [to be admonished] by trespassing the [order] of the caliph”).

Another decree attributed to the prophet Muḥammad, even though it was probably forged in the Abbasid or already in the Umayyad period,

paid ...”); see Frantz–Murphy Gladys, *Arabic Agricultural Leases and Tax Receipts from Egypt* (Vienna: Hollinek, 2001), 93; Werner Diem, *Arabische Steuerquittungen des 8. bis 11. Jahrhunderts aus der Heidelberger Papyrussammlung und anderen Sammlungen* (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2008) and Boris Liebrecht, “Eine frühe arabische Quittung aus Oberägypten,” *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 56 (2010): 302–303. Recently I happened upon the archive of a Coptic taxpayer who lived in the region of Akhmīm around 876–92. His tax receipts (hosted in the British Library, the Louvre, the Austrian National Library and the Museum of Ismailia) all start with the verb *dafa’a* (“He paid ...”).

<sup>28</sup> Geoffrey Khan in his seminal article “The historical development of the structure of medieval Arabic petitions,” *Bulletin of the School of African and Oriental Studies* 53 (1990): 8–30, shows clear continuities between pre-Fatimid petitions written in Egypt and the only surviving example written on papyrus coming from Sogdia. On the latter, see I. J. Kračkovskij and V. A. Kračkovskij, “Drevnejšij arabskij dokument iz Srednej Azii,” in *Izbrannye sočinenija*, ed. I. J. Kračkovskij (Moscow, 1955), vol. 1: 182–212.

<sup>29</sup> See Angelo Arioli, “al-Rāfi‘ī,” in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition*, ed. Peri Bearman, Thierry Bianquis, Clifford E. Bosworth, Emeri van Donzel and Wolfhart P. Heinrichs (Leiden: Brill, 1954–2005), vol. VIII: 389.

<sup>30</sup> See Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (Leiden: Brill, 1937–42), vol. 1: 393, and *Suppl.* I: 678.



Table 8.2 Decree sent by Hārūn al-Rashīd to the people of Qazwīn in Kitāb al-Tadwīn fī akhbār Qazwīn

Part	Text
Invocation	بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم
	In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate
Prescript	هذا كتاب من عبد الله هارون الرشيد لأهل قزوين
	This is a document from the servant of God, Hārūn al-Rashīd to the people of Qazwīn.
Expositio	إنكم رفعتم إلى أمير المؤمنين مكان ثغركم وقربه من العدو، وما ينالكم من المؤنة، في إعداد الأسلحة وارتباط الخيل وجهاد من باز انكم من أعداء الله الديلم وأن أمير المؤمنين قد أقر ما في أيديكم من الأراضي والبساتين وغيرهما، ومما يجري عليه الخراج فرفع عنكم ذلك وسألتم أمير المؤمنين إنفاذ ذلك لكم والاسجال لكم
	You have petitioned the caliph [saying] that, [because] your city is on the border and close to the enemies, you are continuously forced to maintain the weapons, to keep the horses as well as to stay on the brink of war against the enemies of God, the people of Daylam, who are in front of you. The caliph had already guaranteed the lands and gardens, and so on that are in your hands. As for the taxes that are incumbent on the city, you have been exempted from them. [Now], you asked the caliph that this order be sent and written for you.
Dispositio	فأجابكم إليه لو أية في الاحسان إليكم والتقوية لكم على جهاد عدوكم وأمر عماله عليكم أن لا يتعرضوا لكم
	Thus he gives in to your request wishing to safeguard his goodness to you and to strengthen you in your fight against your enemies and he orders his agents in charge of you not to hinder you.
Final injunctions	فمن قرأ كتاب أمير المؤمنين هذا عليه من عماله فلينفذه إلى غيره، ولا يجعل على نفسه في مخالفة أمير المؤمنين سبيلاً
	Whoever of the tax-officials may be read this document from the caliph, let him send it to the others. And he shall not give any reason against himself [to be admonished] by trespassing the [order] of the caliph.
Date	وكتب إسماعيل بن صبيح في انسلاخ ذي القعدة سنة تسع وثمانين ومائة
	Written by Ismā‘īl son of Ṣubayḥ at the end of Dhū al-Qa‘da of the year one hundred eighty-nine.

displays similarities with Egyptian decrees. In his *Usd al-ghāba fī ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥāba*, the historian Ibn al-Athīr (d. 630/1233) appends the decree shown in Table 8.3 to the short biographical note devoted to ‘Ubāda b. al-Ashyab. The prophet allegedly addressed ‘Ubāda in this decree when the latter converted to Islam.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-ghāba fī ma‘rifat al-ṣaḥāba* (Beirut: Dār Ibn Ḥazm, 2012): 629.

Table 8.3 Decree attributed to Muḥammad in *Usd al-ghāba fī maʿrifat al-ṣaḥāba*

Part	Text
Invocation	بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
	In the name of God, the Merciful and Compassionate
Prescript	مِن نَّبِيِّ اللَّهِ لِعِبَادَةِ بْنِ الْأَشْيَبِ الْعَنْزِيِّ
	From the prophet of God to ʿUbāda b. al-Ashyab al-ʿAnazī.
Dispositio	إِنِّي أَمَرْتُكَ عَلَى قَوْمِكَ، مِمَّنْ جَرَى عَلَيْهِ عَمَالِي وَعَمَلُ بَنِي أَبِيكَ
	I ordered you to be in charge of your tribe, of my agents who are in charge of it and of the district of the sons of your father.
Final injunctions	فَمَنْ قَرَأَ عَلَيْهِ كِتَابِي هَذَا فَلَمْ يَطْعَ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَعُونٌ
	Whoever may be read this document of mine and does not obey will not get help from God.

Again, even if the content and the context of this decree attributed to the prophet Muḥammad are far from the concerns that can be found in Egyptian decrees, one will notice the strong structural and formulaic similarities: indeed, after the *basmala* and the prescript, the decree begins *ex abrupto* with the *dispositio* part, whose trigger is in the words *innī amartu* (“I ordered”), as is the case for the decrees on papyrus, and the final injunctions contain the formula *fa-man qurīʿa ʿalayhi kitābi hādihā ...* (“Whoever may be read this document of mine ...”). The fact that this letter attributed to the prophet Muḥammad displays similarities with Abbasid decrees from Egypt should be seen as a confirmation that it was forged in the Abbasid period as it fits with the written culture of that time as opposed to earlier documents dating from (or directly following) the time of the Prophet.

The close formulaic and structural kinship of those two decrees that have been written in the Umayyad or Abbasid period and copied in twelfth/thirteenth-century works written in various parts of the Islamic empire, with the Egyptian Abbasid decrees published below, suggest that this specific genre of the decree flourished and spread all over the Islamic empire and was not confined to Egypt.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Arabic chronicles have also kept circular letters whose prescript *min fulān b. fulān ilā man qurīʿa kitābi hādihā min al-muʿminīn wa-l-muslimīn* or *salām ilā man yuqraʿ kitābi hādihā min al-muʿminīn wa-l-muslimīn* (“From so-and-so to whoever may be read this document from among the believers and muslims”) reminds some of the content of the final injunctions present in the decrees I discussed earlier. See e.g. Şafwat A. Zakī, *Jamharat rasāʾil al-ʿarab fī ʿuṣūr al-ʿarabiyya al-zāhira* (Cairo: Sharikat wa-maktabat wa-maṭbaʿat Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī wa-awlādihi bi-Miṣr, 1937), vol. 1: 451.

## Edition of Five Arabic Decrees

### 1. Decree Related to the Taxes that Are Incumbent on the Friends (*awliyā'*)

In this decree (Fig. 8.4), the two provincial financial directors (*'āmilān*) of the pagarchy (*kūra*) of the Fayyūm write to an unknown subordinate informing him that they ordered the taxes of the people called the *awliyā'* to be collected (ll. 1–7). The decree goes on with the final injunctions typical of this genre (ll. 8–9). The exact provenance of the text is unknown, but since it refers to the fiscal agents of the Fayyūm and since the Louvre hosts many documents coming from Madīnat al-Fayyūm,<sup>33</sup> it is not unlikely that it comes from Madīnat al-Fayyūm itself.

P. Louvre Inv. E 7066 (4)  
25.8 × 7.5 cm

Fayyūm  
eighth century

Brown papyrus written across the fibres. The right margin as well as the top and bottom margins have been preserved, but much of the left part of the papyrus has disappeared, resulting in the loss of more than half of the text. There are very small lacunae that have caused some damage to the text. No folding lines are visible either on the recto or on the back of the papyrus. The document is written in a flowing but quite angular chancery hand in black ink. Parallel scripts can be found in *CPR XVI 1* and *P.Ryl.Arab. I, II 1* that have been issued by Arabic chanceries. Diacritical dots occur three times but rather than serving to differentiate homographs they mark vowels, a system that recalls a usage in early Qur'anic manuscripts.<sup>34</sup>

بسم الله الرحـ[من الرحيم] ↓  
هذا كتاب [من فلان بن فلان]  
ويحيى بن خالد عـ[املي الامير على خراج كورة]  
الفيوم وسائر [اعمالها لفلان بن فلان]  
5 انا امرنا الا[وليا] [

<sup>33</sup> See *P.Marchands I*, p. ix–xi and Naïm Vanthieghem, “Les archives des marchands d’étoffes du Fayoum revisitées I. Un nouveau *dhikr ḥaqq* du marchand Abū Hurayra,” *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 60 (2014): 406–407. The inventory of the Louvre states that the document was bought from Rev. John Greville Chester in 1880: “Par décision du Ministre en date du ... [illegible] 1879 rendue en suite d’un avis conforme du Conservatoire (Comité consultatif séances du 26 juin et 10 juillet 1879), le Musée égyptien a acquis de M. Chester les papyrus suivants au prix de 2500 francs.” I would like to thank Florence Calament for giving me this information.

<sup>34</sup> See Adam Gacek, *Arabic Manuscripts. A Vademecum for Readers* (Leiden: Brill, 2009): 288–89 and Alain Delattre and Naïm Vanthieghem, “Un ensemble archivistique trilingue d’époque arabe à Strasbourg (*P. Gascon* 27–28),” in *Mélanges Jean Gascon. Textes et études papyrologiques* (*P. Gascon*) (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2016): 121.



Figure 8.4 Decree related to the taxes that are incumbent on the friends (*awliyā'*).  
Credit: P. Louvre Inv. E 7066 [4].

[ ما عليهم مـ ]  
[ الامير ابقاه الـ ]  
(*vacat*)

فمن قرى عليه كـ [تابنا هذا من عمالنا فليعلم]  
ما على اوليانا [ولا يجعل على نفسه سبيلا ان شا الله]

1 pap. 5 pap. 6 عليهم pap.

[<sup>1</sup> In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate. |<sup>2</sup> This is a document from so-and-so |<sup>3</sup> and Yaḥyā b. Khālid, the two agents of the governor in charge of the taxes of the pagarchy |<sup>4</sup> of the Fayyūm and all its districts to so-and-so. |<sup>5</sup> We ordered the *awliyā'* ... |<sup>6</sup> what is incumbent on them of ... |<sup>7</sup> the governor – may God preserve him ... |<sup>8</sup> To whomever from among our agents this document of ours may be read, let him know |<sup>9</sup> what is incumbent on our *awliyā'*, and he shall not give against himself any reason [to be admonished], God willing.

- 2–4 For the reconstruction, see *Chrest.Khoury* II 26, 2–3 *hādḥā kitāb min al-Ṣabāḥ mawlā al-amīr Mūsā b. ʿIsā ḥafīzahū allāh ʿalā kharāj | kūrāt al-Fayyūm wa-jamīʿ aʿmāliḥā* (Fayyūm, 796), *Chrest.Khoury* I 66, 4–5 *hādḥā kitāb min ʿUṭmān b. Yazīd ʿāmil al-amīr | Yaḥyā b. Mūsā aṣḥāḥū allāh ʿalā kharāj kūrāt al-Fayyūm wa-jamīʿ aʿmāliḥā* (Fayyūm, 796), and *P.GrohmannProbleme* 18, 2–3 *hādḥā kitāb barāʿa min Yūnus b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān ʿāmil al-amīr ʿAbbād b. Muḥammad abqāhu allāh | ʿalā kharāj kūrāt al-Fayyūm wa-maʿūnatihā wa- jamīʿ aʿmāliḥā* (Fayyūm, 812). The ʿāmil Yaḥyā b. Khālid is so far unattested in the documents. The word ʿamal (pl. *aʿmāl*), which probably is a synonym for the word ḥayyiz, designates in this period one of the districts that were part of the pagarchy. Each ʿamal consisted of several villages and was managed by an ʿāmil (pl. *ʿummāl*). For a discussion on the terms ʿamal and ḥayyiz, see Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*: 137–44.
- 5 *al-a[wliyaʿ]* The reconstruction is based on the final injunctions which state “to whomever from among our agents this document of ours will be read ... let him know what is incumbent on our friends (*fa-man qurīʿa ʿalayhi kitābunā hādḥā min ʿummālinā fa-l-yaʿlim dhālika wa|-mā ʿalā awliyaʿinā*)”. The word *walī* (pl. *awliyaʿ*) is polysemic in nature. The meaning of the word in our document is not obvious, but it might be related to a fiscal category.
- 9 The lacuna seems too short to restore any date at the end of the line.

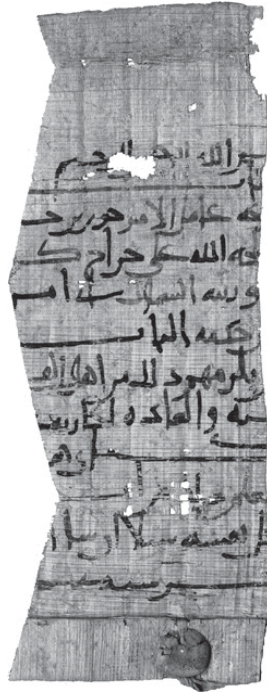
## 2. Decree Issued by a Pagarch of the Fayyūm and Agent of the Governor Ḥuwayy b. Ḥuwayy

The pagarch of the Fayyūm province, named so-and-so son of Zurʿa, orders one of his assistants, named *Tawrina*, to let the people of the Fayyūm villages know that the taxes will be collected according to the custom that prevails.<sup>35</sup>

The general nature of the decree’s content (Fig. 8.5), which does not specify when and how taxes will be levied, raises the question of whether the decree was written by a newly appointed pagarch who wanted to reaffirm the willingness of the Abbasid authorities to levy taxes in a fair manner.<sup>36</sup> The papyrus is dated to Rabīʿ II of the year 182, which corresponds to March–April 798.

<sup>35</sup> I am grateful to Nikolaos Gonis for providing me with an image of this papyrus.

<sup>36</sup> A good parallel is offered by Qurra’s dossier, whose earliest letters sent in Arabic adopt a general tone perspective and insist on the importance of collecting the appropriate amount of money in a fair manner; see recently Naïm Vanthieghem, “La correspondance de Qurra b. Šarik et de Basileios revisitée II. À propos de *P. Becker PAF* 3 (P. Lond. Inv. Or. 6233 [1–4]),” *Chronique d’Égypte* 92 (2017): 419–24.



**Figure 8.5** Decree issued by a pagarch of the Fayyūm and agent of the governor Ḥuwayy b. Ḥuwayy (ed. by Khaled Younes, *P.YounesGovernors 2*). Credit: P.Lond. UCL Inv. Petrie Ars. 60.

The document was found in Madinat al-Fayyūm by Flinders Petrie in 1888, probably while he was digging the *temenos* of the temple of Arsinoe.<sup>37</sup> It was recently edited by Khaled Younes in a study on newly identified Egyptian governors.<sup>38</sup> I propose here a new edition of the text with an improvement in the reading.

P.Lond. UCL Inv. Petrie Ars. 60 (*P.YounesGovernors 2*)                      Fayyūm  
11.3 × 4.7 cm    March–April 798

Light brown papyrus, of which only the central part is kept. The upper and lower margins are preserved as well as the seal bearing the name of the official who issued the document. The original cutting lines have partially been preserved on the top and the bottom. The text was written in black ink by a skilled hand. Diacritical dots are only used once (l. 7).

<sup>37</sup> On this excavation, see W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Hawara, Biahmu and Arsinoe* (London: The Leadenhall Press, 1889), 56–59.

<sup>38</sup> Khaled Younes, “New governors identified in Arabic papyri,” in *Authority and Control in the Countryside: From antiquity to Islam in the Mediterranean and Near East (6th–10th Century)*, eds. Alain Delattre, Marie Legendre and Petra M. Sijpesteijn (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 20–24.



↓

[ب]سم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
 [هذا ك]تاب [من فلان]  
 [بن ز]رعة عامل الامير حوي بن ح[وي]  
 [اصد]لحه الله على خراج كو[رة الفيوم]  
 [لتد]ورينة السماك اني امر[ت الذي] 5  
 [م]ن خدمة الباب [الجباية]<sup>١</sup>  
 [مم]ن يلزمهم ذلك من اهل الق[ر]ى [على]  
 [الس]نة والعادة الجارية عد[ل]يهم فمن قرى  
 [عليه] كتابي هذا [من عمالي]  
 [فلي]علم ذلك من ام[ري ولا]  
 10 [يجعل] على نفسه سبيلا ان شا[الله وكتب في]  
 [ربيع الا]خر سنة πβ[ρ]

[<sup>1</sup> In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful. <sup>2</sup> This is a document from so-and-so <sup>3</sup> son of Zur'a, agent of the governor Ḥuwayy son of Ḥuwayy <sup>4</sup> – may God make him prosper! – over the finance of the district of the Fayyūm <sup>5</sup> to Tawrīna, the *symmachos*. I ordered those who <sup>6</sup> serve the tax collection to collect the taxes <sup>7</sup> of those who are liable among the people of the villages according <sup>8</sup> to the usage and the custom that prevails among them. Whoever may be read <sup>9</sup> this document of mine from among my agents, <sup>10</sup> let him know this order of mine. And he shall not <sup>11</sup> give against himself any reason [to be admonished], God willing. Written in <sup>12</sup> Rabi' II of the year 182.

- 2–3 [min fulān] | b. Zur'a 'āmil al-amīr Ḥuwayy b. Ḥuwayy The reading of the official's patronym is tentative. The 'ayn and hā' of Zur'a are well visible at the beginning of this line as is the lower part of the rā'. On Ḥuwayy b. Ḥuwayy, who was governor probably between Ramaḍān 181/October 797 and Shawwāl 182/November 798, see the recent contribution Younes, "New Governors," 24–29.
- 5 Tawrīna al-sammāk The word sammāk (pl. samāmika) renders the Greek σύμμαχος, which refers to people who acted as messengers for high-ranking officials working in Fustat or in the countryside and were involved in the tax collection; see P.Apoll., p. 200, and Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*, 131–32. See also the contribution by Stefanie Schmidt in this volume. Tawrīna is the Arabic form of the Graeco-Coptic name *Taurinos* or *Taurine* (TM People 6130). The equivalence can be deduced from P.Heid.Arab. I app. F, where the toponym μοναστήριον Ταυρίνου (l. 7) is transcribed munyat Ṭawrīna (l. 3).
- 6 innī amar[*tu alladhī?*] | min khidmat al-bāb The word bāb (pl. abwāb) literally refers to a "category" or "class" (Lane, *Lexicon*, I, p. 273 and Dozy, *Supplément*, I, p. 125 a). This is an ellipse for *abwāb al-māl* (cf. P.Prag.Arab. Beilage VI, 7 as well as P.Kurrah 5, 4), which literally refers to "categories of ordinary taxes (levied) in cash"; on this question, see Sijpesteijn, "Une nouvelle lettre," 266.

- 7 [mimma]n yalzamuhum dhālika min ahl al-qu[r]ā. The *alif maqṣūra* of *al-qurā* extends backwards and touches the *lām* of the word *ahl*. One would expect [mimma]n yalzamuhu dhālika instead of [mimma]n yalzamuhum dhālika, but the relative pronoun *man* is sometimes treated as a plural in Middle Arabic. On this phenomenon, see Hopkins, *Studies in the Grammar*, 244, § 296.
- 7-8 [‘alā | al-su]nna wa-l-‘āda al-jāriya The phrase *al-‘āda al-jāriya* is attested in *P.Ardabil* 12, 12; *P.St.Catherine* I 1, 45 and *P.St.Catherine* I 2, 51 following the preposition ‘alā. The word before *al-‘āda* was not read by the first editor. Immediately after the break, a tooth followed by a *hā*<sup>3</sup> or a *tā*<sup>3</sup> *marbūṭa* can be seen. The word being connected with the conjunction *wa-* to the idiom *al-‘āda al-jāriya*, it must have a meaning close to, if not identical to, *al-‘āda*. I therefore suggest reconstructing as [‘alā | al-su]nna wa-l-‘āda al-jāriya. A similar phrase appears in *P.Samarrai Mamluk Document*, 14 ‘alā sunanihim al-jāriya wa-‘ādatihim al-mutawāliya.

### 3. Decree Related to the Taxes of Coptic and Nubian Fugitives

In this decree (Fig. 8.6), a provincial financial director (‘āmil) of the pagarchy (*kūra*) of Aswān writes to three of his subordinates informing them that he ordered the taxes of the Copts and Nubians fleeing from Egypt to Nubia to be collected (ll. 1–5). The decree goes on with the final injunctions typical of this genre (ll. 6–9) and ends with a precise date (ll. 9–10). The provenance of the text is not clear, but since it refers to fugitives going to Nubia probably in order to avoid paying taxes to the Egyptian administration, it is likely to come from the province of Aswān, which was the most southern of the Egyptian provinces and the necessary crossing point for whomever wanted to cross the border between Nubia and Egypt. This document is noteworthy as it is the second text referring to fugitives fleeing from Egypt into Nubia. The other one is the famous Arabic letter found in Qasr Ibrīm and sent by the governor Mūsā b. Ka‘b to a Nubian king.<sup>39</sup> However, unlike our document that apparently refers to free people, this letter mentions slaves who have fled and were not returned by the Nubians to the Egyptian authorities.<sup>40</sup>

P.Stras. Inv. Ar. 431

Southern Egypt

15.8 × 21 cm

August–September 810

Medium-brown papyrus written across the fibres. The right and left margins as well as the bottom one have been preserved, but the top of the

<sup>39</sup> On this letter, see Martin Plumley, “An eighth century Arabic letter,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 61 (1975): 241–45; as well as Martin Hinds and Hamdi Sakkout, “A letter from the governor of Egypt,” in *Studia Arabica et Islamica. Festschrift for Ihsan Abbas*, ed. Wadād al-Qāḍi (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981), 209–29.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. *P.Hinds Sakkout Nubia*, 19–20 *wa-lā taraddūn min abaq | ilaykum min ariqqā’ihi* (“and they do not return those of the slaves who run away to you”).

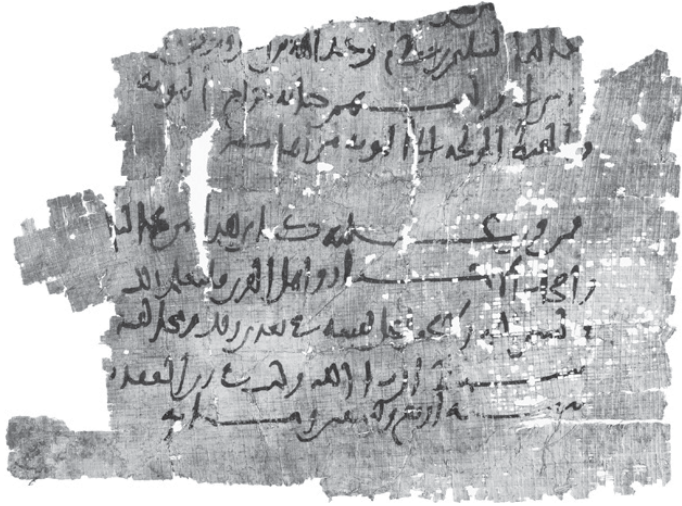


Figure 8.6 Decree related to the taxes of Coptic and Nubian fugitives. Credit: P.Stras. Inv. Ar. 431.

papyrus has disappeared, resulting in the loss of two lines. All over the papyrus there are small wormholes and lacunae, especially in the right part of the document, that have caused some damage to the text. Traces of folding lines on the back of the document suggest that it was folded horizontally five times. The document is written in a flowing chancery hand in black ink. Parallel scripts can be found in *P.GrohmannUrkunden* 18 and *CPR XVI* 7, which have been composed in an administrative milieu. Diacritical dots occur only three times.

[بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم] ↓

[هذا كتاب] من علي [ب] بن [فلان] عامل على خراج كورة اسوان

[وا] عمالها لسليمن بن سلام و عبد الله بن اسحق وموفق بن

[م]وسى اني قد امرتهم جباية خراج النوبة

والقيط المولجة الى النوبة من اهل مصر 5

(vacat)

فمن قرى عليه كتابي هذا من عماننا

واصحاب الاجناد واهل القرى وليعلم ذلك

وليبتغي اليه ولا يجعل على نفسه في تعدي ذلك ومخالفته

سبيلا ان شا الله وكتب في ذي القعدة

سنة اربع وتسعين ومائة 10

4 pap. حراج 6 pap. كتابي

“<sup>1</sup>In the name of God the Merciful and Compassionate. <sup>2</sup>This is a document from ‘Alī b. so-and-so, agent in charge of the taxes of the pagarchy of Aswān <sup>3</sup> and its districts, to Sulaymān b. Salām, ‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq and Muwaffaq b. <sup>4</sup>Mūsā. I ordered them to collect the taxes of the Nubians and <sup>5</sup>the Copts who are leaving Egypt to enter Nubia. <sup>6</sup>Whoever may be read this document of mine from among our agents, <sup>7</sup>the chiefs of the soldiers or the people of the villages, let him know that <sup>8</sup>and be obligated by it. And he shall not give against himself any reason [to be admonished] by infringing or trespassing it, <sup>9</sup>God willing. Written in Dhū al-Qa‘da of the year one hundred ninety-four.”

2–3 [al-‘āmil ‘alā kūrat Aswān] | [wa-a]‘mālihā For the reconstruction, see above.

3–4 Sulaymān b. Salām wa-‘Abd Allāh b. Ishāq wa-Muwaffaq b. | Mūsā The function of those three people is not clear, but they could be ‘ummāl, that is, agents who were managing the district of the pagarchy of Aswān.

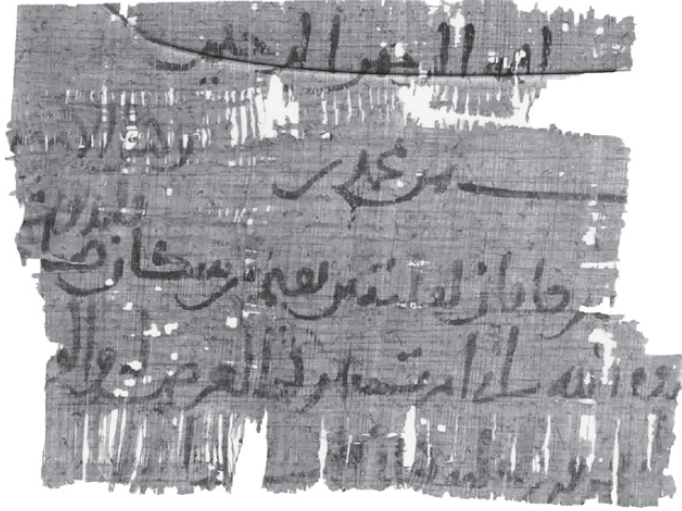
5 al-mūlija The 4th form of the root w-l-j means “to enter” (Lane, *Dict.*, III, p. 2965; Kazimirski, *Dict.*, II, p. 1601a), but the document probably refers to a case of *anachôrêsis*, that is, of people who are fleeing from their fiscal district and crossing the border in order to avoid paying taxes.

#### 4. Decree in Favour of a Christian Egyptian Working on an Estate Belonging to amīr al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān

The deputy (*wakīl*) of the *amīr* al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān (in office 856–61) writes a decree in favour of a Christian Egyptian called Qulta b. Buqaym forbidding anyone to prevent him from trading and working on his estate (ll. 1–4). The document goes on with the final injunctions typical of this genre (l. 5) but is broken off at the end (Fig. 8.7). Since Qulta b. Buqaym is said to live in Qalandūn, the document was probably discovered in Qalandūn itself or in the region of al-Ushmūnayn. The document was first edited by A. Grohmann (as *P.Cair.Arab.* III 171), who identified it as an official letter, but because he was not able to identify to which genre it belongs, the editor did not understand the exact meaning of the document.<sup>41</sup> The text is not dated but, since it mentions al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān, it must be from the period he was active in Egypt. The title “al-amīr” which he bears in the document does not help to narrow down the dating since it was used to designate the financial director of Egypt as well as the governor,<sup>42</sup> two functions that al-Faṭḥ fulfilled between 232/847 and 246/861.

<sup>41</sup> See *P.Cair.Arab.* III: 165: “Unfortunately not enough remains to inform us of the essential matter of the instruction to the subordinate person addressed thereby.”

<sup>42</sup> See Sijpesteijn, *Shaping a Muslim State*: 117–24.



**Figure 8.7** Decree in favour of a Christian Egyptian working on an estate belonging to amīr al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān. P.Cair.Arab. Inv. 100 (ed. by Adolf Grohmann, *P.Cair.Arab.* III 171). Credit: Egyptian National Library.

P.Cair.Arab. Inv. 100 (*P.Cair.Arab.* III 171)      region of al-Ushmūnayn  
11.5 × 16 cm      847–61

Light-brown papyrus written across the fibres. Only the upper margin has been preserved. The document is broken on the right and on the left but only a few letters are missing. The lower part is lost, resulting in the loss of a part the final injunctions of the decree as well as the date. There are small wormholes and lacunae all over the papyrus that have caused some damage to the text. The document is written in a flowing chancery hand in black ink that can be compared to *P.Cair.Arab.* III 172 and *P.Khalili* II 120. Diacritical dots occurs infrequently and are especially used for marking the proper names.

[بسم] الله الرحمن الرحيم ↓  
[هذا كتاب من محمد بن (vacat) وكيل الامير  
[الوزير الفتاح بن خاقان لقنته بن بقيم من سكان قلندون] [من ضيا]ع  
[الامير] ايده الله اني امرت بترك العرض له والو[فا]'  
5 [فم-ن] قرى عليه كتابي هذا [من عمالنا فليعلم ذلك]

1 pap. 3 الرحيم pap. 3-4 *m[in] ḏiyā[ʿ]* | [*al-amīr a]yyadahu allāh: m[in] ḏiyā[ʿ] al-amīr | a]yyadahu allāh* ed.pr. 4 امرت pap.5 *fa-ma[n] quri'a 'alayhi kitābi hādḥā [min 'ummālinā fa-li-ya'lim dhālika]: ba[ʿda] quri'a 'alayhi kitābi hādḥā ...* ed.pr.

“<sup>1</sup>In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate. <sup>2</sup>This is a document from Muḥammad b. (*vacat*), the deputy of the *amīr* <sup>3</sup> and vizier al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān in favour of Qulta b. Buqaym, who lives in Qalandūn, one of the <sup>4</sup>*amīr*'s estates – may God support him! I ordered that he [*scil.* Qulta b. Buqaym] be allowed to trade and to fulfill? ... <sup>5</sup>... Whoever may be read this document of mine from among our agents shall know it ...”

- 2 *Muḥammad b. (vacat) wakīl al-amīr* Instead of a patronym, there is a blank space appearing immediately after the word *b.*, as if the scribe omitted the name of the deputy's father on purpose.
- 3 *al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān* This financial director was an Abbasid diplomat, poet and scholar belonging to a family of courtiers living at the court of Samarra. According to several medieval sources he was the most influential of caliph al-Mutawakkil's (r. 232–47/847–61) advisors.<sup>43</sup> He was twice assigned duties in Egypt: he was appointed financial director in 847–48 and was also appointed as governor between 856 and 861 (see the commentary in *P.Cair.Arab.* III, pp. 106–107). He was killed in December 861 together with al-Mutawakkil.
- 3-4 *ḍiyā*[<sup>ç</sup>] | [*al-amīr a]yyadahu allāh* Adolf Grohmann edited the line as *ḍiyā*[<sup>ç</sup> *al-amīr*] | [*a]yyadahu allāh* but this reconstruction does not fill the lacuna properly on l. 4. Land holdings in Egypt belonging to al-Faṭḥ b. Khāqān are also mentioned in *Chrest.Khoury* II 9, 3.

*Qulta b. Buqaym* Qulta is the transcription of the Graeco-Coptic name  $\kappa\omicron\lambda\omicron\epsilon$ , a variant of the name  $\kappa\omicron\lambda\lambda\omicron\upsilon\theta\omicron\omicron\varsigma$ . The Coptic name Buqaym occurs in several Arabic documents. Grohmann read the patronym as Baqīm, in which he saw a transcription of the Egyptian name Πακηνις whereas this name had disappeared by the end of the third century. I propose to understand it as an Arabic diminutive of the very common Coptic name Baqām (= Pachomius) in the same way Arabic built the diminutive Jurayj for the Coptic name Jirja (= George).

*Qalandūn* The village is mentioned in two other Arabic documents (*P.Ryl.Arab.* I VIII 12 verso, 8 and 13, 4) as well as in the Arabic geographical literature (see the commentary in *P.Cair.Arab.* II, p. 82). It might be identified, as suggested by Grohmann and Timm, with the medieval toponyms Qalandiyūn and Qalandīmūn quoted in Arabic documents and in the Arabic geographical literature, and it might correspond to the modern village of Qalandūl, which is located to the west of Anṣīnā. See the commentary in *P.Cair.Arab.* II, p. 82 and Timm, *Das christlich-koptische Ägypten*, vol. 5, 2094–95.

- 4 *innī amartu bi-tark al-<sup>ç</sup>araḍ lahu wa-l-wa[<sup>ç</sup>fā?]* Adolf Grohmann translated the sentence as “Verily, I ordered that there be yielded up to him compensation (?) and the ...” I wonder whether the text refers to trade, in which case one might understand “I ordered that he be allowed to trade and to fulfill? ....” The decree would thus have forbidden anyone to impede Qulta b. Buqaym in his trading activity.

<sup>43</sup> Gordon, “The Khāqānid families,” 239–41.



### 5. Decree Related to Local Economic Matters

This papyrus was first described and published by David S. Margoliouth, who considered this decree to relate to disorder caused by criminals and thieves in an unknown province of Egypt (Fig. 8.8).<sup>44</sup> A new reading of this text suggests the document was actually related to economic matters. A man called al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz writes to his subordinate, ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf, to inform him that his representative in charge of a village is helping to restore the state of something, and later mentions people, living in the islets and riverbanks, who are helping him. Al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz orders these people to stay away from the people living in the nearby city and from their goats as well as the skins of the goats that have been slaughtered. The document is dated to the month of Dhū al-ḥijja of an unknown year. Based on its palaeographic characteristics, especially on the extreme cursiveness of the writing, the document must date from the end of the third/ninth century or the beginning of the following century.

P.Ryl. Arab. Inv. 100 (ed. *P.Ryl. Arab.* I, I 17) Provenance unknown  
32 × 23 cm end of 3rd/9th–beginning of the fourth/tenth century

Light-brown papyrus written across the fibres. The upper and lower margins as well as the left-hand margin have been preserved. The document is broken on the right-hand side resulting in the loss of the beginning of the first six lines. The document is written in black ink in a flowing script that can be compared to *P.Ryl. Arab.* I III 5 and 6.<sup>45</sup> Diacritical dots occur only infrequently, but the *sīn* is quite systematically marked with a horizontal stroke that allows it to be differentiated from the *shīn*. The sheet of papyrus has been reused to write another document (*P.Ryl. Arab.* I I 18), described by David S. Margoliouth in his catalogue.<sup>46</sup>

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ↓

[هذا كتاب مـ] بن الحسن بن عبد العزيز لعبد الله بن يوسف

[اكرمه الله بدينه] وطاعته وان متولي القرية يعاون في اصلاح

[الـ] ب اخر الى اهل الجزا [تـ]ر والريف وبعضهم

5 [ممن لا يعاون و]بـ بعضهم ممن يعاون بما ينهى عنه الى المدينة

[فا]ني [امرتهم بمنـ]عه من اهلها واتياسهم وسلخهم

(vacat)

فمن قرى عليه كتابي هذا من الحراس والاعوان

<sup>44</sup> David S. Margoliouth, *Catalogue of Arabic Papyri in the John Rylands Library Manchester* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1933), 12.

<sup>45</sup> See the re-edition of the documents in Naïm Vanthieghem, “Le dossier fiscal de Sa’dūn b. Abū Ḥamza. Réédition de *P.Ryl. Arab.* I III, 6,” *Chronique d’Égypte* 91 (2016), 427–32.

<sup>46</sup> Margoliouth, *Catalogue*, 13.

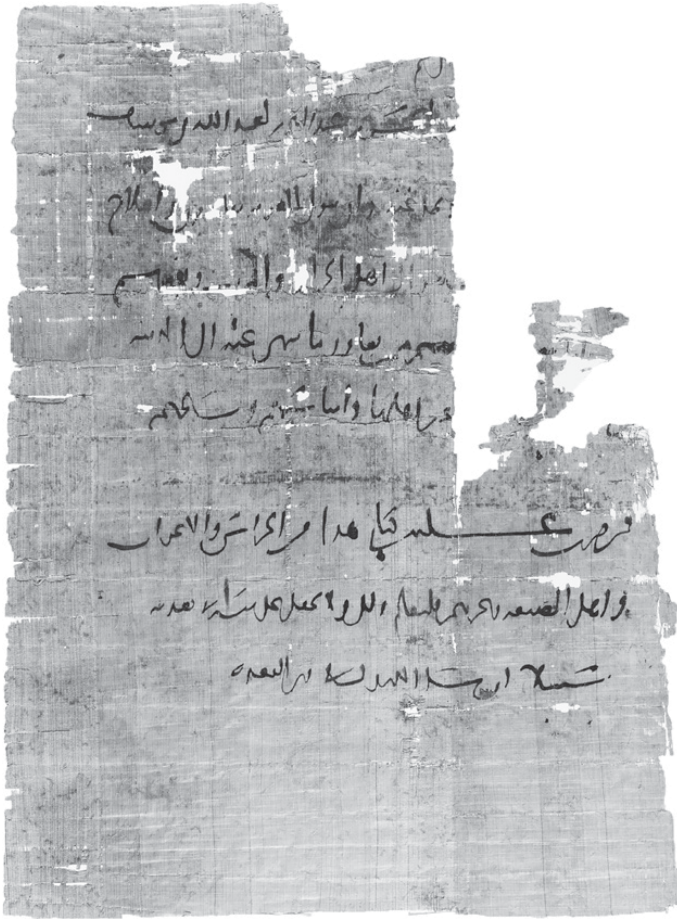


Figure 8.8 Decree related to local economic matters. P.Ryl.Arab.Inv. 100 (ed. by David. S. Margoliouth, *P.Ryl.Arab.* I I 17). Credit: University of Manchester.

واهل الضيعة وغيرهم فليعلم ذلك ولا يجعل على نفسه في تعديه  
سبيلا ان شا الله وكتب في ذي القعدة

1 [a]-*rahīm* : [al-*rah*]īm ed. pr. 2 طاعته pap.; [hādhā kitāb mi]n al-Ḥasan b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz : ] b. ʿAbd al-Qawī ed. pr. 3 [akramahu allāh bi-dīnīhi] wa-ṭāʿatihi: [ ] wa-ṭāʿatihi ed. pr.; wa-inna mutawallī al-qarya yuʿāwin fī iṣlāḥ: wa-an yatawallī al-qarya [ ] wa-iṣlāḥ ed. pr. 4 بعضهم pap.; ] . ākhar ilā ahl al-jazāʿir wa-l-rīf. ] ahl al-jarāʿim wa-l-rīb ed. pr.; wa-baʿḍuhum: yaqmaʿuhum ed. pr. 5 wa-baʿḍuhum yuʿāwin bi-mā yunhā ʿanhu ilā al-madīna: man tajāwaza mā yunhā ʿanhu ilā al-raʿīya ed. pr. 6 [fa-]innī [amartuhum bi-man]ihi min ahlihā wa-atyāsihim wa-salkhihim: ghayr ahlihā wa-abyātihim wa-salkhihim ed. pr.

“<sup>1</sup>In the name of God the Merciful the Compassionate. <sup>2</sup>This is a document from al-Ḥasan b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz to ‘Abd Allāh b. Yūsuf, <sup>3</sup> may God honour him with His faith and his obedience to Him! The representative in charge of the village is helping to restore the state of <sup>4</sup>... another to the people of the islets and the riverbanks. Some of them <sup>5</sup> are among the people helping while others are not helping in what is reported to the city. <sup>6</sup> I have ordered them to hold him back from its inhabitants (i.e. the inhabitants of the city), their billy goats, and their skins. <sup>7</sup> Whoever may be read this document of mine from among the guards, the police, <sup>8</sup> the people of the village and others shall know this and he shall not give against himself any reason (to be admonished) by infringing it, <sup>9</sup> God willing. Written in Dhū al-Qa‘da.”

- 3 [akrama-hu allāh bi-dīnihi?] wa-ṭā‘atihi The eulogy *akramahu allāh bi-ṭā‘atihi* is common in the papyri, especially in the letters sent by the famous textile merchant Abū Hurayra. See for instance *P.Marchands* II 2 recto.2, *P.Marchands* II 5.12, and *P.Marchands* II 8.2. The word which precedes *ṭā‘atihi* in our document must belong to a close semantic register. I choose to supply here *bi-dīnihi*, but other reconstructions might be considered, for instance *bi-raḥmatihī*.
- 6 [mi]n ahlihā wa-atyāsīhim wa-salkhihim The reading of the *rasm* of the second word is obvious, but its interpretation is less obvious. David Margoliouth read it as انبياتهم, but the horizontal stroke above the final letter of the root indicates it should be read as a *sīn* and not a *tā*.<sup>7</sup> The word should just be read: واناسهم. The only possible interpretation I see here is واتياسهم (“and their billy goats”). In that case, the following word *wa-salkhihim* should be understood as “their skins.”

## Conclusion

The documentary genres of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods have so far been under-studied. To date, only a few specific types of documents, such as tax receipts<sup>47</sup> or petitions,<sup>48</sup> have been studied to any great extent, but all of this falls far short of what has been done on documents from more recent periods, such as the Fatimid or Mamluk eras. Of course, developed chancellery manuals such as those from the Mamluk period are lacking for earlier periods, so it is hard to know precisely about documentary practices in use during the first three centuries after the Arab conquest of Egypt. Nevertheless, although our source base is smaller than those from the Fatimid or Mamluk periods, the wealth of papyrological material allows us to

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. Frantz–Murphy, *Arabic Agricultural Leases and Tax Receipts*.

<sup>48</sup> See the recent book Rustow, *The Lost Archive*.

undertake systematic studies of the documentary genres of the Umayyad and Abbasid periods as well.

The small corpus of papyri discussed in this chapter shows the existence in the early Abbasid period of a specific typology for decrees. This genre obviously had a specific layout that would visually structure decrees as well as a precise formulary, whose influence on later decrees should be highlighted. Copies of decrees kept in chronicles or biographical dictionaries show that, far from being an Egyptian genre, this genre was in use in the entire Islamic empire and was used by the caliph himself as well as by lower officials to communicate with their subordinates. The widespread use of common documentary genres over the entire caliphate, such as that of the decree, suggests a marked presence of the Abbasid state in all the provinces of the empire through the development of a documentary culture common to its administration and its people.

This said, it is not clear so far in what circumstances Egyptian officials or higher officials from the caliphal capital preferred to use the decree genre to communicate rather than straightforward administrative letters, of which dozens are preserved in the papyrological material. Could it be that decrees, unlike administrative epistles, were supposed to be read out publicly, or at least displayed for all to see? Or were these documents more binding than the administrative letters? It is impossible to say at this stage, but hopefully new unpublished Abbasid decrees will clarify this issue.

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