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The Fayoum, the Seila Pyramid, Fag el-Gamous and its nearby cities:

A Background

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Chapter 1

Because the excavations discussed in this volume take place in the Fayoum, and cover a time period that spans from the Old Kingdom through the Byzantine era, many readers will find it helpful to understand the history, geography, and geology of the Fayoum. Here we provide a brief outline of those subjects. This is not intended to present new information or be a definitive discussion. Rather, it is aimed at contextualizing the rest of the material presented in this volume, and thus making all of its information more accessible. The Fag el-Gamous cemetery and the Seila Pyramid are located on the eastern edge of the Fayoum, just north of the center of the Fayoum’s north/south axis.

Anciently called the “Garden of Egypt,”¹ the Fayoum sits in a large natural depression west of the Nile Valley.² The depression is about 65 kilometers across and covers about 12,000 square

¹ A. E. Boak, “Irrigation and Population in the Faiyum, the Garden of Egypt,” *Geographical Review* 16/3 (July 1926): 355; Alberto Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2003), 15; R. Neil Hewison, *The Fayoum: History and Guide* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2001), 10; William J. Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt* (London: Penguin Books, 1983), 183.

² Boak, “Irrigation and Population,” 355; Mary Ellen Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayoum* (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1985), 9; Wm. Revell Phillips, “Ancient Civilizations and Geology of the Eastern Mediterranean,” in *Excavations at Seila, Egypt*, C. Wilfred Griggs, Wm. Revell Phillips, J. Keith Rigby, Vincent A. Wood, and Russell D.

kilometers.³ While some refer to it as the largest oasis in the Western Desert,⁴ others protest that this is in fact a false classification because the Fayoum receives the majority of its water from the Nile and not an independent spring as with traditional oases.⁵ No matter how one wishes to classify this region of Egypt, it is an area of unique geography, vegetation, and wildlife, with a rich history and an abundance of archaeology.

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The landforms of the Fayoum are shaped by recent extensional tectonic activity that formed the depression,⁶ and by sediment deposition associated with Lake Moeris, or Birket el-Qarun. Active faults bound the Fayoum and have caused earthquakes in the past that may have damaged some of the archeological sites in the region, such as the Seila Pyramid. Depositional features include three lake terraces: the first and highest is the el-Lahun-Hawara terrace; the second terrace exists at about modern sea level and contains cities such as Crocodilopolis (Modern Medinet el-Fayoum);⁷ the third, and lowest, of the terraces lies in the northern part of the depression and contains little known ancient settlement.⁸ This northern portion of the depression sits below sea

Hamblin, eds. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), 17; Boak, "Irrigation and Population," 354.

³ John Baines and Jaromir Malek, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt* (Oxfordshire: Andromeda Oxford Limited, 1980), 131.

⁴ Phillips, "Ancient Civilizations and Geology," 17; Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 4.

⁵ Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 2.

⁶ Timothy M. Kusky, Talaat M. Ramadan, Mahmoud M. Hassaan and Safwat Gabr, "Structural and Tectonic Evolution of El-Faiyum Depression, North Western Desert, Egypt Based on Analysis of Landsat ETM+, and SRTM Data," *Journal of Earth Science* 22/1 (2011): 75-100.

⁷ The modern Arabic name is Medinet el-Fayoum. The Greek name used in the Graeco-Roman era was Crocodilopolis. The Egyptian name was Shedet. In this paper we will use the name that matches the time period being spoken of.

⁸ Tomasz Derda, *Arsinoites Nomos: Administration of the Fayum Under Roman Rule* (Warsaw: Faculty of Law and Administration of Warsaw University, 2006), 9.

level⁹ and is enclosed by a rocky limestone mountain range to the north.¹⁰ The northern Fayoum desert is also known for its Eocene and Oligocene fossil sites, which are some of the best preserved in the world.¹¹ These fossils are often found in the stones in which tombs were cut.

In the northwest is Birket el-Qarun, meaning “The Lake of Horns,” also known as Lake Moeris. This is a large, brackish lake sitting in the lowest area of the Fayoum depression, about 44 meters below sea level.¹² Today the lake takes up only about one-fifth of the Fayoum depression.¹³ The lake has diminished in [page 8] size due to drier climates, but once filled most of the Fayoum depression.¹⁴ In the prehistoric era, the lake was fresh water and contained many fish.¹⁵ Until the building of the Aswan Dam, Lake Moeris’ level would fluctuate depending on the flooding of the Nile, evaporation, and silt build-up in canals.¹⁶ Today and in ancient times, Lake Moeris is

⁹ Phillips, “Ancient Civilizations and Geology,” 17.

¹⁰ E. W. Gardner and G. Caton-Thompson, “The Recent Geology and Neolithic Industry of the Northern Fayoum Desert,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 56 (1926): 301; Noriyuki Shirai, Willeke Wendrich, and René Cappers, “An Archaeological Survey in the Northeastern Part of the Fayoum,” in *Proceedings of the Tenth International Congress of Egyptologists, University of the Aegean, Rhodes 22-29 May 2008*, P. Kousoulis and N. Lazaridis, eds. (Belgium: Peeters, 2015), 459; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 2; Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi el-Rayan*, 6.

¹¹ Elizabeth Bloxam and Tom Haldal, “The Industrial Landscape of the Northern Faiyum Desert as a World Heritage Site: Modelling the ‘Outstanding Universal Value’ of Third Millennium BC Stone Quarrying in Egypt,” *World Archaeology* 39/3 (Sep. 2007): 310.

¹² H. J. L. Beadnell, *The Topography and Geology of the Fayoum Province of Egypt* (Cairo: National Printing Department, 1905), 12-14; Boak, “Irrigation and Population,” 356; Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 4; Baines, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 131.

¹³ Baines, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 131.

¹⁴ Derda, *Arsinoites Nomos*, 12; Boak, “Irrigation and Population,” 356; Robert J. Wenke, Janet E. Long, and Paul E. Buck, “Epipaleolithic and Neolithic Subsistence and Settlement in the Fayoum Oasis of Egypt,” *Journal of Field Archaeology* 15/1 (Spring 1988): 34.

¹⁵ Fekri Hassan, “Holocene Lakes and Prehistoric Settlements of the Western Faiyum, Egypt,” *Journal of Archaeological Science* 13 (1986): 493.

¹⁶ James A. Harrell and Thomas M. Bown, “An Old Kingdom Basalt Quarry at Widan el-Faras and the Quarry Road to Lake Moeris,” *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 32 (1995): 83-84; Hassan, “Holocene Lakes and Prehistoric Settlements,” 493-494.

supplied with water by the Bahr Yusuf, or “the Henet of Moeris,” a canal branching away from the Nile just north of Assiut,¹⁷ cutting through the ridge Gebel el-Naqlun that separates the Fayoum from the Nile Valley.¹⁸ Entering the ridge at Lahun, it emerges near Hawara¹⁹ and continues to Medinet el-Fayoum.²⁰ Upon entering the depression, various canals take the water from Bahr Yusuf throughout the Fayoum.²¹ In addition, there is evidence in the north of about four basins and wadis that may have been filled with water when the lake was full and overflowing, creating smaller lakes around which many Epipalaeolithic and Neolithic artifacts have been found,²² and where it is clear the earliest agricultural communities in Egypt developed.²³ The domestication of animals took place here by the [page 9] mid 5th millennium

¹⁷ Gardner, “The Recent Geology and Neolithic Industry,” 301; Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 4; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 3; Derda, *Arsinoites Nomos*, 62; Belinda Bolliger, Scott Forbes, Mary Halbmeyer, Janet Parker, and Michael Wall, eds., *Egypt: Land and Lives of the Pharaohs Revealed* (Australia: Global Book Publishing, 2005), 32; Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 19; Baines, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 18.

¹⁸ Beadnell, *The Topography and Geology*, 26.

¹⁹ Derda, *Arsinoites Nomos*, 10; Caton-Thompson and E. W. Gardner, “Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris,” *The Geographical Journal* 73,/1 (1929): 27; Boak, “Irrigation and Population,” 354.

²⁰ Derda, *Arsinoites Nomos*, 10.

²¹ Boak, “Irrigation and Population,” 354. See also Bryan Kraemer, “The Meandering Identity of a Fayoum Canal: The Henet of Moeris/Dioryx Kleonos/Bahr Wardan/Abdul Wahbi,” in *Proceedings of the Twenty-Fifth International Congress of Papyrology, Ann-Arbor 2007*, Traianos Gagos, ed. (Ann Arbor: Scholarly Publishing Office, The University of Michigan, 2010), 365-376.

²² Shirai, “An Archaeological Survey,” 462-463, 469.

²³ Annelies Koopman, Sjoerd Kluiving, Willeke Wendrich, Simon Holdaway, “Late Quaternary Climate Change and Egypt’s Earliest Pre-Pharaonic Farmers, Fayoum Basin, Egypt,” in *Landscape Archaeology. Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Berlin, 6th – 8th June 2012*, Wiebke Bebermeier, Robert Hebenstreit, Elke Kaiser, Jan Krause, eds. (Berlin: Exzellenzcluster, 2012), as in *eTopoi* 3 (2012): 63-69. Also Willeke Wendrich, R. E. Taylor, and J. Southon, “Dating stratified settlement sites at Kom K and Kom W: Fifth millennium BCE radiocarbon ages for the Fayoum Neolithic,” *Nuclear Instruments and Methods in Physics Research B* 268 (2010): 999-1002.

BC.²⁴ While it is clear that changing lake levels affected these early civilizations, we are still in the process of refining exactly how and when.²⁵

The geography changes towards the south where there are basins associated with the Fayoum, but of different origin. The Gharaq Basin in the southern area of the Fayoum is separated by a ridge, but was likely formed by a different body of water independent of Lake Moeris.²⁶ To the south-west of the Fayoum, also separated by a ridge from both the Fayoum depression and the Gharaq basin, is Wadi el-Rayan.²⁷ This area consists of two lakes—an upper lake called Qaret el-Buqairat, and a lower lake called El Midauwara—which were artificially created in the 1960s and 1970s when the Aswan Dam caused Lake Moeris to overflow.²⁸ In addition, there are four springs south of Wadi el-Rayan, which along with its lakes, provide water to this area.²⁹

The eastern edge of the Fayoum is where the Seila Pyramid and Fag el-Gamous cemetery are located. The eastern border of this area is known as Gebel el-Rus, the ridge on which the Seila

²⁴ Veerle Linseele, Wim Van Neer, Sofie Thys, Rebecca Phillipps, René Cappers, Willeke Wendrich, Simon Holdaway, “New Archaeozoological Data from the Fayoum ‘Neolithic’ with a Critical Assessment of the Evidence for Early Stock Keeping in Egypt,” *PLoS ONE* 9(10): e108517. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0108517. Also Veerle Linseele, Simon J. Holdaway, and Willeke Wendrich, “The earliest phase of introduction of Southwest Asian domesticated animals into Africa. New Evidence from the Fayoum Oasis in Egypt and its implications,” *Quaternary International* 412 (2016): 11-21.

²⁵ Rebecca Phillipps, Simon Holdaway, Rebecca Ramsay, Joshua Emmitt, Willeke Wendrich, and Veerle Linseele, “Lake Level Changes, Lake Edge Basins and the Paleoenvironment of the Fayoum North Shore, Egypt, during the Early to Mid-Holocene,” *Open Quaternary* 2/2 (2016): 1-12.

²⁶ Beadnell, *The Topography and Geology*, 23.; Derda, *Arsinoites Nomos*, 9.

²⁷ Beadnell, *The Topography and Geology*, 16-23.

²⁸ Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 29-30; C. Wilfred Griggs, “Excavating a Christian Cemetery Near Seila, in the Fayoum Region of Egypt,” in *Excavations at Seila, Egypt*, C. Wilfred Griggs, Wm. Revell Phillips, J. Keith Rigby, Vincent A. Wood, and Russell D. Hamblin, eds. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center Brigham Young University, 1988), 75; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 3.

²⁹ Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 41; Phillips, “Ancient Civilizations and Geology,” 17.

Pyramid sits. This ridge exposes Tertiary rocks and is about 8 square kilometers in size.³⁰ This escarpment rises [page 10] from 20 m above sea level to 125 m at its highest point.³¹ It shows Eocene and Pliocene strata.³² Gebel el-Rus exhibits “an angular unconformity between Eocene and Pliocene beds, Pliocene paleochannels filled with debris-flow deposits, a variety of sedimentary structures, trace fossils, and distinctive faunas.”³³ Water was carried to the area by a large canal that branched off the main water vein feeding the Fayoum. During the Ptolemaic era this canal was known as the “Canal of Kleon” in Greek. In Demotic, the Egyptian writing system most common at that time, it seems to have just been referred to as “the canal” (*ts hnt*).³⁴ In the Medieval Period it would come to be known by the name it still carries: “bahr Wardan,”³⁵ also sometimes called the “bahr Abdallah Wahbi,”³⁶ though in truth the Bahr Wahbi really refers to the modern canal that parallels the ancient canal, often running in exactly the same course. Before receiving the name Bahr Wahbi, a moniker that it received from the name of the engineer who plotted out the course of the modern re-digging of the canal, the ancient canal was often called Bahr Seilah.³⁷ It is this ancient branch that fed the areas around the cemetery in antiquity and continues to do so today, though it was re-dug and rerouted somewhat in the early 20th century.³⁸ It continues to be dredged and cemented even today.³⁹ This canal forms the western

³⁰ Russell Dee Hamblin, “Stratigraphy and Depositional Environments of the Gebel el-Rus Area, Eastern Faiyum, Egypt” (MA diss., Brigham Young University, 1985), 61-62.

³¹ Ibid., 61

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 62

³⁴ Kraemer, “The Meandering Identity of a Fayum Canal,” 367.

³⁵ Ibid., 368. This is also sometimes called Bahr Wadan.

³⁶ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

³⁷ Kraemer, “The Meandering Identity of a Fayum Canal,” 367-69.

³⁸ Ibid., 369.

³⁹ Personal observation. 2013 is when we observed new dredging and cementing in of portions of the canal. The work has continued until the time of writing this, in 2018.

boundary of the cemetery. The arable land was west and downhill of the canal, where irrigation happened most easily. The land uphill from the canal, where irrigation would require pumping, remained barren and was reserved for the use of the dead.

Due to the abundance of water and the milder climate (compared to the Nile Valley), the Fayoum was and is lush in vegetation, home to a variety of animals and birds, and the only substantial area of farmland outside of the Nile Valley.⁴⁰ Anciently, many plants and crops were grown in its fertile soil including grapes, olives, figs, wheat, barley, flax, onions, sesame, indigo, cabbage, sugar cane, and turnips.⁴¹ Along with its agricultural resources, the Fayoum [page 11] also contains quarries, such as those for limestone, which were used in at least the construction of the Seila pyramid,⁴² basalt, mined at Widan el-Faras during the Old Kingdom,⁴³ and gypsum, mined at the quarries of Umm es-Sawan.⁴⁴

Early on, before Egypt's pharaohs began construction here, the Fayoum was a lush marshland,⁴⁵ experiencing great fluctuations in lake level.⁴⁶ Archaeology in this specific area suggests this

⁴⁰ Phillips, "Ancient Civilizations and Geology," 17.

⁴¹ Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 18.

⁴² Keith J. Rigby, "Potential for Geologic and Interdisciplinary Research in and Around the Fayoum Depression in Egypt," in *Excavations at Seila, Egypt*, C. Wilfred Griggs, Wm. Revell Phillips, J. Keith Rigby, Vincent A. Wood, and Russell D. Hamblin, eds. (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1988), 23.

⁴³ Elizabeth Bloxam and Per Storemyr, "Old Kingdom Basalt Quarrying Activities at Widan el-Faras, Northern Faiyum Desert," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 88, (2002): 23, 26; Harrell, "An Old Kingdom Basalt Quarry," 171-91; Bloxam, "The Industrial Landscape," 306, 311.

⁴⁴ G. Caton-Thompson and E. W. Gardner, *The Desert Fayoum* (London: Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1934), 103-123; Bloxam, "The Industrial Landscape," 306-313.

⁴⁵ Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 4; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 18.

⁴⁶ Wenke, "Epipaleolithic and Neolithic Subsistence and Settlement," 34.

region has been inhabited since Paleolithic and Neolithic times, though evidence is limited.⁴⁷ In fact, the Fayoum contains some of the earliest known Neolithic sites in Egypt.⁴⁸ In general, these settlements and sites have been grouped into Fayoum A and Fayoum B (also referred to as Qarunian). Fayoum B or Qarunian sites, which are often dated to around the 7th to 8th millennia BC,⁴⁹ have been unearthed north and west of the modern lake. Evidence suggests that these groups were hunter-gatherers, moving around the lake, relying on the natural resources of the oasis.⁵⁰ Caton-Thompson dated these sites to the Mesolithic; however, often they are assigned to the Epipaleolithic phase.⁵¹

Fayoum A, or Faiyumian, flourished around the lake during the Neolithic period, though the exact dates [page 12] are debated. In general, these suggested dates are somewhere around the 6th to 5th millennia BC.⁵² Sites for this period have been discovered along the north and north-eastern ancient shorelines of Lake Moeris.⁵³

⁴⁷ Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 16; Lane, *The Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayoum*, 10; Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 19.

⁴⁸ Kathryn A. Bard, “The Emergence of the Egyptian State (c. 3200-2686 BC),” *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Ian Shaw, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 57.

⁴⁹ R. J. Wenke, P. Buck, J. R. Hanley, M. E. Lane, J. Long and R. R. Redding, “The Fayoum Archaeological Project: Preliminary report of the 1981 season,” *American Research Center in Egypt Newsletter* 122, (1983): 25; Wenke, “Epipaleolithic and Neolithic Subsistence and Settlement,” 32.

⁵⁰ Bolliger, *Egypt*, 33.

⁵¹ Stan Hendrickx and Pierre Vermeersch, “Prehistory: From the Palaeolithic to the Badarian Culture (c.700,000-4000 BC),” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Ian Shaw, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 35-36; Bolliger, *Egypt*, 32.

⁵² Wenke, “The Fayoum Archaeological Project,” 25; Wenke, “Epipaleolithic and Neolithic Subsistence and Settlement,” 32; Hendrickx and Vermeersch, “Prehistory,” 37; Bolliger, *Egypt*, 32; Bruce Trigger, “The rise of Egyptian Civilization,” in *Ancient Egypt: A Social History*, B. G. Trigger, B. J. Kemp, D. O’Connor, and A. B. Lloyd, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 6.

⁵³ Trigger, “The rise of Egyptian Civilization,” 21; Caton-Thompson, *The Desert Fayoum*, 22-41, 54-59, 71-87; G. Caton-Thompson, “Explorations in the Northern Fayoum,” *Antiquity* 1/3 (1927):

It appears that the level of the lake rose during the Old Kingdom and then again during the Middle Kingdom, and finally began declining during the Ptolemaic era until it reached its modern size.⁵⁴

Many have believed that in the Old Kingdom, the area was used mostly by royal members of society as hunting and fishing grounds and as a source of natural resources.⁵⁵ It is true that there were lush marshlands that quickly became associated with the crocodile god Sobek, remaining the center of his worship into the Roman era.⁵⁶ Undoubtedly the area around the Seila Pyramid was once more of an aquatic environment. Seashells are found in the sand deposits, and elderly farmers recount finding crocodile bones when they plowed their fields.⁵⁷ Additionally, many hold that there were not any large permanent settlements in the Fayoum until the Middle Kingdom.⁵⁸ This seems to be an increasingly inaccurate and less accepted view.⁵⁹ What we do know of the use of the Fayoum during the Old Kingdom is largely from its northern areas.⁶⁰ The Seila Pyramid and nearby cemetery (just north of the center of the Fayoum, on its eastern side), the temple at Qasr el-Sagha (though its date is [page 13] debated, is surely no later than the

331-340; Shirai, "An Archaeological Survey," 459; Gardner, "The Recent Geology and Neolithic Industry," 310-314; Wenke, "Epipaleolithic and Neolithic Subsistence and Settlement," 44.

⁵⁴ Hassan, "Holocene Lakes and Prehistoric Settlements," 494, 498.

⁵⁵ Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 18; Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 16-17.

⁵⁶ Elaine K. Gazda, ed., *Karanis, An Egyptian Town in Roman Times: Discoveries of the University of Michigan Expedition to Egypt (1924-1935)* (Ann Arbor: Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, The University of Michigan, 1983), 32; Toby A. H. Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 295; Lane, *The Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 26; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 18.

⁵⁷ Personal communication with the local inhabitants in February, 2018.

⁵⁸ Wenke, "Epipaleolithic and Neolithic Subsistence and Settlement," 47.

⁵⁹ Miroslav Barta, "Location of the Old Kingdom Pyramids in Egypt," *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 15/2 (2005): 181.

⁶⁰ Caton-Thompson, "Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris," 42.

Middle Kingdom),⁶¹ tombs at Kom Ruqqaia, mines at Widan el-Faras (along with its quarry road and quarrymen's camp),⁶² and Shedet (or Crocodilopolis, the cult center of Sobek worship),⁶³ and an early Old Kingdom settlement near Kom Umm al-Atl (also known as Bacchias)⁶⁴ all date to this period. It appears that there were at least three power centers in the Fayoum during the Old Kingdom, namely Shedet, Seila, and Birket Qarun.⁶⁵ Ćwiek marshals evidence including archaeological structures, cemeteries, quarries, and titles of officials in order to demonstrate that the Fayoum was a larger and more important center during the Old Kingdom than has been previously thought.⁶⁶

It was during this era, at the dawn of the Fourth Dynasty, that the Seila Pyramid was built by Snefru. The discovery of this pyramid and the identification of its owner has been part of what has caused some to believe that the Fayoum was of greater importance during the Old Kingdom than was originally thought.⁶⁷ Additionally, Grenfell and Hunt found a small Old Kingdom cemetery near the village of Seila (not far from the pyramid),⁶⁸ and two small Old Kingdom

⁶¹ Ibid., 27; Caton-Thompson, *The Desert Fayum*, 132-138; Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 184; Harrell, "An Old Kingdom Basalt Quarry," 73.

⁶² Bloxam, "Old Kingdom Basalt Quarrying Activities," 23-36; Harrell, "An Old Kingdom Basalt Quarry," 71-91.

⁶³ Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 12-13. Also Pyr. 416 and 1564.

⁶⁴ Caton-Thompson, *The Desert Fayum*, 101.

⁶⁵ Andrzej Ćwiek, "Fayum in the Old Kingdom," *Göttinger Miszellen* 160 (1997): 18. Also Barta, "Location of the Old Kingdom Pyramids," 181.

⁶⁶ Ćwiek, "Fayum in the Old Kingdom," 17-22.

⁶⁷ See Ćwiek, "Fayum in the Old Kingdom," 17.

⁶⁸ Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum and at El Hibeh," in *Archaeological Report: 1901-1902*, F. Ll. Griffith, ed. (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1902), 2. See also Jean Yoyotte, "Études Géographiques II. Les Localités Méridionales de la Région Memphite et 'le Pehou d'Héracléopolis,'" *Revue d'Égyptologie* 15 (1963): 98.

statues were found near the pyramid, or perhaps in the cemetery.⁶⁹ [page 14] Yoyotte postulated that the area near Seila had become an important administrative mirror to the Meidum area.⁷⁰ Dreyer and Kaiser concluded that it had become a seat of royal power and administration.⁷¹ They were followed in this conclusion by Stadelmann⁷² and then Ówiek.⁷³ Ówiek later argued that Seila may have been *the* administrative capital of the Fayoum at the time that region was growing in population and importance.⁷⁴ Zecchi points out that the statues of officials found near

⁶⁹ Ludwig Borchardt, *Statuen und Statuetten von Königen und Privatleuten im Museum von Kairo, Nr. 1-1294, Teil 1. Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire.* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1911), 6-7, plate 2, and Figures 5 and 6. Borchardt does not give anything for the provenance other than "Sile." Andrzej Ówiek, "Date and Function of the So-Called Minor Step Pyramids," *Göttinger Miszellen* 162 (1998): 43 fn 24, stated that these statues came from a cemetery rather than the pyramid. For this he cited Grenfell and Hunt's report of work in 1900-1901. See Grenfell and Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum," in *Archaeological Report: 1900-1901*, F. Ll. Griffith, ed. (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1901), 4-7. However, the cemetery he spoke of was reported in Bernard P. Grenfell and Arthur S. Hunt, "Graeco-Roman Branch: Excavations in the Fayum and at El Hibeh," in *Archaeological Report: 1901-1902*, 2-5. While Grenfell and Hunt speak of finding a cemetery there they felt came from the Old Kingdom, they do not speak of any finds in the report, nor anywhere else we have searched in their records. They do not record anything about finding these two statues. Therefore we conclude it is best to rely on Borchardt's publication saying these were from Seila, possibly from the cemetery, though they could also have been from the pyramid, which is where Borchardt worked. It is worth noting that in another publication, See Andrzej Ówiek, "Fayum in the Old Kingdom," *Göttinger Miszellen* 160 (1997): 21, Ówiek says that the statues "may come" from the necropolis. The exact location of the Seila necropolis cannot currently be identified.

⁷⁰ Jean Yoyotte, "Études Géographiques," 98.

⁷¹ Günter Dreyer and Werner Kaiser, "Zu den kleinen Stufenpyramiden Ober-und Mittelägyptens," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo* 36 (1980): 56-57. See also Werner Kaiser, Günter Dreyer, Peter Grossmann, Wolfgang Meyer, and Stephan Johannes Seidlmayer. "Stadt Und Tempel Von Elephantine: Achter Grabungsbericht." *Mitteilungen Des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts. Abteilung Kairo*, 36 (1980/1981): 279.

⁷² Rainer Stadelmann, "Snofru - Builder and Unique Creator of Pyramids of Seila and Meidum," in *Echoes of Eternity. Studies Presented to Gaballa Aly Gaballa, Ola El-Aguizy and Mohamed Sherif Ali*, eds. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 35.

⁷³ Ówiek, "Fayum in the Old Kingdom," 21.

⁷⁴ Ówiek, "Date and Function of the So-Called Minor Step Pyramids," 42.

the Seila Pyramid indicate that there must have been a somewhat regular presence of officials in the area, meaning that the area was a large enough administrative center to host royal representatives.⁷⁵ One would presume that for agriculture and population, and even the building of a pyramid, to succeed, that Bahr Seila, known from Ptolemaic times, would already have existed by the Fourth Dynasty. It is not possible to tell if this is the case, but it seems an inevitable conclusion based on the needs for water.

Barta believes that the substantial population center at Seila would have helped supply the manpower for building both the Meidum and Seila Pyramids,⁷⁶ which are 10 km apart. He also suggests that the shape and location of the Meidum cemetery indicate a close connection with the nearby Gerza cemetery (in the Fayoum), because they stretch towards each other. The [page 15] Gerza cemetery was in turn associated with an old and traditional trade route that connected the Nile Valley to the Fayoum.⁷⁷ This road runs right through the Fag el-Gamous cemetery and just below the Seila Pyramid, coming almost to the town of Seila (it may have come to it in earlier eras).

In some ways, the geography of the area dictates that the Seila area would have been an important part of the Fayoum. It is on the eastern-most edge of the Fayoum, meaning that it is closer to the Nile Valley than anywhere else in the Fayoum. Any road that cut across the desert from the Nile Valley in this eastern-most area would have run into the Gebel el-Rus ridge, whose extremely steep hills would have barred passage. The ridge suddenly ends just north of Seila, at the exact place the canal bends towards the east for a short distance. This is exactly where a road coming from the Nile Valley area of Meidum would enter the Fayoum, making this road the most direct route between the fertile depression and the concentration of population and culture that was next to the Nile. The Seila Pyramid sits at the southern and eastern end of the ridge, looking down on where the ancient road would have run and intersected with the canal. The need for transportation and trade, the ability to guard the way in and out of the Fayoum, and the ability

⁷⁵ Marco Zecchi, *Geografia Religiosa del Fayyum* (Bologna: University of Bologna, 2001), 90-91.

⁷⁶ Barta, "Location of the Old Kingdom Pyramids," 182.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

to control and tax trade at such a transportation bottleneck, almost demanded that the Seila area become an important center. In many ways the Seila area was the gateway to the Fayoum, and the pyramid sat astride that entrance.

The Fag el-Gamous cemetery derives its name from the descendant of such a road. Literally meaning “the way of the water buffalo,” the cemetery was so named because in more modern times the Fayoum was connected to the Nile Valley railroad tracks by an overland road on which water buffalo and other goods traveled. Geography dictated the road be located here, just as we have noted it would have in the past. Such a road combined with a canal (Bahr Seila) that was part of a larger canal system would create a transportation nexus that may partially explain why Seila seems to have become something of a population center in the Old Kingdom, and would be part of why the Seila Pyramid would have been built there, though surely there were other reasons as well. The inhabitants of Seila would have been able to support the cultic functions of the pyramid,⁷⁸ though the priests themselves may have lived in the foothills near the pyramid rather than in the village itself.⁷⁹ This depends somewhat on [page 16] the frequency of the rituals that were performed at the pyramid.⁸⁰ If weekly rituals, something unusual, were performed, then perhaps priests could travel from the village to the pyramid to perform the rituals. If daily rituals occurred, it is unlikely that the priests would have traveled such a distance. To date, searches for domestic structures for priests near the pyramid have not been fruitful.

Dreyer and Kaiser concluded that royal residences must have been near the minor pyramids, including Seila in that conclusion.⁸¹ Ćwiek postulates the same thing.⁸² He does so based on the

⁷⁸ See the two articles on the pyramid in this volume for more on these cultic activities. Also see Kerry Muhlestein, “Transitions in Pyramid Orientation: new evidence from the Seila Pyramid,” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, 44/1 (2015): 249-258, tables 37-38.

⁷⁹ Ćwiek, “Fayoum in the Old Kingdom,” 21.

⁸⁰ See the article on ritual objects at the Seila Pyramid found in this article.

⁸¹ Dreyer and Kaiser, “Zu den kleinen Stufenpyramiden Ober-und Mittelägyptens,” 56-57. See also Kaiser, Dreyer, Grossmann, Mayer, and Seidlmayer, “Stadt und Tempel von Elephantine. Achter Grabungsbericht,” 279.

⁸² Ćwiek, “Fayoum in the Old Kingdom,” 21; Ćwiek, “Date and Function of the So-Called Minor Step Pyramids,” 44.

idea that the king would have had such a residence near all of his pyramids. This does not make it clear whether the residence demanded a pyramid be built, or vice versa. Additionally, we are not convinced that the Seila Pyramid is fully similar to the minor step pyramids, though it is often included as one of them.⁸³ Even if it is essentially different from minor step pyramids, that does not mean it did not hold important things in common with them, such as being in administrative centers and near royal residences. Furthermore, it makes some sense that the king would take some personal interest in a project as large as building a pyramid, even one that was only eight stories tall, such as the Seila Pyramid. It follows that his personal attention would be best accommodated if there were some kind of royal residence nearby. Still, the most we can really say is that the town of Seila seems to have been substantial during the Fourth Dynasty, being large enough to support the building and maintenance of a pyramid and its cult, and that it certainly received royal attention and visits, with perhaps a royal residence being constructed there.

It is clear that there is much more to be learned about the history of the Fayoum during the Old Kingdom, particularly in the Fourth Dynasty. Further studies of cemeteries, titles and histories from the Old Kingdom, archaeological work in places such as Seila, and administrative texts are necessary to better flesh out the roles and activities of the Fayoum during this era. It is also clear that the Seila pyramid both informs and is informed by our understanding of the Fayoum and Meidum areas during this era.

In the Middle Kingdom the Fayoum witnessed more extensive growth and development. Pharaohs of the 12th Dynasty began major construction projects [page 17] in the area, which included land reclamation and water control.⁸⁴ Amenemhat I began efforts to cultivate and control water flow in the Fayoum, even moving the capital closer to the Fayoum at *Amenemhat-*

⁸³ See the article on the excavation of the Seila Pyramid in this volume.

⁸⁴ Caton-Thompson, "Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris," 43; Bruce G. Trigger, *Early Civilizations: Ancient Egypt in Context* (Cairo, Egypt: The American University in Cairo Press, 1993), 33; Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 19; Baines, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 18; Wenke, "The Fayyum Archaeological Project," 25.

itj-tawy, probably near Lisht.⁸⁵ He may have built flood gates near Lahun.⁸⁶ This focus on the Fayoum reached new heights during the reign of Senusret II (son of Amenemhat II). In order to control the waters of Lake Moeris, Senusret II implemented a new irrigation system, including a dam and canals, thereby lowering the water levels and creating cultivatable land in the rich soil revealed by the receding shoreline.⁸⁷ Senusret II even built his own pyramid at Lahun.⁸⁸ It may also have been during his reign that the temple at Qasr es-Sagha in the northeastern part of the Fayoum was built.⁸⁹ However some argue that this temple was built in the Old Kingdom and was maintained throughout the Middle Kingdom, a view supported by Caton-Thompson and Gardner.⁹⁰ Amenemhat III built his second pyramid at Hawara along with a mortuary temple called the “labyrinth” by Herodotus, and two 18 m tall statues.⁹¹ Amenemhat III also appears to have lead a land reclamation and irrigation project in the area to provide large amounts of land for agricultural use.⁹² He was even worshipped later as the god of the Fayoum, Poremnres.⁹³

⁸⁵ Caton-Thompson, “Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris,” 26; Miroslav Verner, *The Pyramids: The Mystery, Culture, and Science of Egypt’s Greatest Monuments* (New York: Grove Press, 2001), 384; Gae Callender, “The Middle Kingdom Renaissance,” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Ian Shaw, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 148, 158; Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 181; Harrell, “An Old Kingdom Basalt Quarry,” 89.

⁸⁶ Boak, “Irrigation and Population,” 358.

⁸⁷ Verner, *The Pyramids*, 386; Callender, “The Middle Kingdom Renaissance,” 164.

⁸⁸ Caton-Thompson, “Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris,” 43.

⁸⁹ Callender, “The Middle Kingdom Renaissance,” 164.

⁹⁰ Caton-Thompson, “Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris,” 45-46.

⁹¹ Caton-Thompson, “Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris,” 43-44.

⁹² Boak, “Irrigation and Population,” 358; Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 14; Callender, “The Middle Kingdom Renaissance,” 169; Harrell, “An Old Kingdom Basalt Quarry,” 89.

⁹³ Callender, “The Middle Kingdom Renaissance,” 169.

Evidence for occupation and activity during the Second Intermediate Period is limited, but there are three small cemeteries—Maiyana, Abusir el-Melek, and Gurob—near the entrance to the oasis that contain burials dated to this time.⁹⁴

[page 18] There is little Fayoumic evidence from the New Kingdom or Late Period. A site just north and east of Harageh (near el-Lahun) near the cemetery at Gurob, seems to have been founded in the 18th Dynasty and lasted until the 23rd. It was about 200 meters square.⁹⁵ Little else is known from in the Fayoum from these dynasties. Towards the end of the 23rd Dynasty and just afterwards, as early as the 7th or 8th centuries BC, land in Egypt, including in the Fayoum, was granted to Greek and Macedonian veterans as a reward for successful military service,⁹⁶ though, as will be noted below, this practice greatly increased in the Ptolemaic era. Both Herodotus (ca 484-425 BC) and Strabo (ca 63 BC – 24 AD) visited the Fayoum and wrote highly of its natural resources and prosperity, indicating that it was flourishing before, during, and after the Ptolemies.⁹⁷ In addition, hundreds of papyri fragments have been discovered in the Fayoum from these eras.⁹⁸ In fact, it has been suggested that nearly one third of the documentation amassed for Egypt was discovered in the Fayoum.⁹⁹

The Ptolemaic and Roman periods saw great improvements in irrigation and agriculture in the Fayoum.¹⁰⁰ Land grants in the region increased at this time, especially during the rule of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (ca 284 – 246 BC) who promoted policies designed to enhance Greek

⁹⁴ Janine Bourriau, “The Second Intermediate period (c. 1650-1550 BC),” in *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Ian Shaw, ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 199.

⁹⁵ Reginald Engelbach, *Harageh* (London: British School of Archaeology in Egypt, 1923) 17-18; Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 15-16.

⁹⁶ Marjorie Vent, “Two Early Corinthian Alabastra in Alexandria,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* (Egypt Exploration Society) 71 (1985): 186.

⁹⁷ Caton-Thompson, “Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris,” 20-21; Boak, “Irrigation and Population,” 353.

⁹⁸ Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 17.

⁹⁹ Derda, *Arsinoites Nomos*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 18.

colonization and reclaim more land for arable use.¹⁰¹ The Fayoumic lands given to soldiers by Ptolemy II and his successors created a population boom and an area of great ethnic diversity.¹⁰² Ptolemy II also renamed the area, calling it the Arsinoite Nome after his sister Arsinoe II. Due to a need for more cultivatable land, he reduced the size of Lake Moeris,¹⁰³ and witnessed dramatic increases in agricultural production. Such projects to reclaim and maintain land for cultivation continued throughout the reign of the Ptolemies and during this time the amount of land used for cultivation reached its peak.¹⁰⁴ The Fayoum became one of Egypt's [page 19] most prosperous and populated areas.¹⁰⁵ As a result, many people migrated to the lush Fayoum depression, including Syrians, Jews, Persians, Greeks, Macedonians, and Samaritans.¹⁰⁶

During this time the settlement of the Fayoum reached its greatest height both in terms of population and agricultural output.¹⁰⁷ For example, just before the Ptolemaic expansion, Fayoum population is estimated to be 60-80 people per square kilometer.¹⁰⁸ By the Roman era the towns of the Fayoum had about 120 people per square km.¹⁰⁹ Many of the known cities in the Fayoum

¹⁰¹ Richard Alston, *The City in Roman and Byzantine Egypt* (New York, 2002), 58.

¹⁰² Boak, "Irrigation and Population," 361; Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 18; Baines, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 131.

¹⁰³ Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 26.

¹⁰⁴ Caton-Thompson, "Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris," 49-50; Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 19, 47.

¹⁰⁵ Baines, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 18.

¹⁰⁶ Kerry Muhlestein and Courtney Innes, "Synagogues and Cemeteries: Evidence for a Jewish Presence in the Fayoum," *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 4/2 (2012): 55-57.

¹⁰⁷ Wenke, "The Fayyum Archaeological Project," 25.

¹⁰⁸ D.W. Rathbone, "Villages, Land and Population in Graeco-Roman Egypt," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society* 36 (1990): 132.

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Monson, "Communal Agriculture in the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayyum," in *Graeco-Roman Fayum – Texts and Archaeology*, Sandra Lippert and Maren Schentuleit, eds. (Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz Verlag: 2008), 178.

were founded or expanded during the Ptolemaic period,¹¹⁰ including Karanis, Philadelphia, Bacchias, Philoteris, and Dionysias.¹¹¹ After a small decline near the end of the reign of the Ptolemies, the Fayoum once again became a point of interest and prosperity under the Romans,¹¹² as is seen in the revival of Karanis during this period.¹¹³ During its time under Roman rule, the Fayoum became a considerable source of grain for the empire.¹¹⁴ However, it appears that many (possibly all) of the towns and cities established or flourishing during this era were in serious decline or even abandoned by the 4th or 5th century AD.¹¹⁵ These include Karanis,¹¹⁶ Bacchias,¹¹⁷ Dimayh,¹¹⁸ Tebtunis,¹¹⁹ [page 20] Philadelphia,¹²⁰ Theadelphia,¹²¹ and

¹¹⁰ Baines, *Cultural Atlas of Ancient Egypt*, 131.

¹¹¹ Phillips, "Ancient Civilizations and Geology," 18; For Philoteris, see Bernard P. Grenfell, Arthur S. Hunt, and David G. Hogarth, *Fayum Towns and their Papyri* (London: Egypt Exploration Fund, 1900), 62-63.

¹¹² Boak, "Irrigation and Population," 362.

¹¹³ Gazda, *Karanis*, 9.

¹¹⁴ Derda, *Arsinoites Nomos*, 281.

¹¹⁵ Kraemer, "The Meandering Identity of a Fayum Canal," 367; Boak, "Irrigation and Population," 362; Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 25.

¹¹⁶ D. G. Hogarth and B. P. Grenfell, "Cities of the Faiyum: Karanis and Bacchias," *Archaeological Report (Egypt Exploration Fund)* (1895-1896): 14-19; Gazda, *Karanis*, 32; Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 40; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 21, 71.

¹¹⁷ Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 50; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 21, 96.

¹¹⁸ Caton-Thompson, *The Desert Fayum*, 153-158; Caton-Thompson, "Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris," 27, 48-49; Boak, "Irrigation and Population," 364; Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 59; Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 184; Harrell, "An Old Kingdom Basalt Quarry," 73.

¹¹⁹ Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 80; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 21.

¹²⁰ Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 21.

¹²¹ Grenfell, *Fayum Towns and their Papyri*, 51-53; Boak, "Irrigation and Population," 364.

Dionysias.¹²² The ruins of Crocodilopolis, the cult center of Sobek which was often the capital of the Fayoum,¹²³ are spread over four square kilometers from this time period. Among the predominately Graeco-Roman ruins lie a Middle Kingdom temple.¹²⁴ Karanis (Kom Aushim),¹²⁵ which lies on the northern edge of the Fayoum, was one of the largest cities in the Fayoum during the Graeco-Roman period¹²⁶ and contains two temples dedicated to various forms of the crocodile god.¹²⁷ Bacchias (Kom Umm al-Atl) is the site of a Graeco-Roman village, including a temple to Sobek, that flourished during the 3rd century AD.¹²⁸ Tebtunis (Umm al-Burigat) is another of the Fayoum's largest sites.¹²⁹ Dionysias (Qasr Qarun) contains two temples from the Late Period and was the starting point of an ancient caravan route.¹³⁰

The Fayoum continued to be inhabited into the Byzantine period, when there were about 198 towns and 300,000 people living in the region.¹³¹ It was an important populated area in early Islamic Egypt as well.¹³² It is during the pre-Islamic eras that the cities and villages whose citizens were buried in the Fag el-Gamous cemetery flourished.

¹²² Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 21.

¹²³ Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 21; Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 12-13, 61-62; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 38-41; Wilkinson, *Early Dynastic Egypt*, 295.

¹²⁴ Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 185.

¹²⁵ Grenfell, *Fayum Towns and their Papyri*, 27-34, 40-42; Hogarth, "Cities of the Faiyum," 14-19.

¹²⁶ Boak, "Irrigation and Population," 354; Siliotti, *The Fayoum and Wadi El-Rayan*, 23; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 69-71.

¹²⁷ Gazda, *Karanis*, 32; Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 183.

¹²⁸ Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 69, 95-96; Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 50.

¹²⁹ Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 80; Hewison, *The Fayoum*, 69, 83-86.

¹³⁰ Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 185.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹³² Wenke, "The Fayyum Archaeological Project," 25.

There were a few villages near Fag el-Gamous. Their inhabitants must have been the primary users of the huge necropolis. Tanis, also known as Manashinshana (also referred to as Kom 2 by Petrie), was the closest settlement.¹³³ Seila lies due east of the southern edge of the cemetery, and further south lies Bandiq. Somewhere close to these sites, but with a location not fully identified, [page 21] was Alabanthis.¹³⁴ Even further south is Hawara. Not far to the north is Philadelphia with Roda and Farqus further to the west. As was noted above, this area was partially settled by mercenaries. The presence of axe wounds on several Fag el-Gamous skeletal remains accords with the idea of a mercenary population within the cemetery. Such a population would have inhabited the region with diverse ethnic backgrounds. In some measure this accounts for the full range of hair color encountered in the cemetery and indicates that the cemetery probably has a multi-racial population. Philadelphia and Tanis are the two closest settlements to the cemetery, with Seila being nearly as close. Unfortunately, we know little about the Graeco-Roman settlement there, though it seems to have borne the same name.¹³⁵ Thus Seila may have been an ancient contributor to the cemetery as well, but if so we are hampered in our ability to use textual evidence about that site.

¹³³ On the identification of these locales, see the article on Mummy Portraits in this volume. It is not universally agreed that these are the same sites. For example, Kraemer, “The Meandering Identity of a Fayum Canal,” figure 1, lists Manashinshana and Tel Shinshana as different sites.

¹³⁴ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/97.php?geo_id=97. In using papyrological information we will often refer to the sources made available by www.Trismegistos.org. See M. Depauw and T. Gheldof, “Trismegistos. An Interdisciplinary Platform for Ancient World Texts and Related Information,” in *Theory and Practice of Digital Libraries – TPD 2013 Selected Workshops*, Ł. Bolikowski, V. Casarosa, P. Goodale, N. Houssos, P. Manghi, and J. Schirrwagen, eds. (Cham: Springer, 2014), 40-52; and *Papyrus Collections World Wide*, W. Clarysse and H. Verreth, eds. (Brussels: KVAB, 2000).

¹³⁵ www.trismegistos.org/place/2108

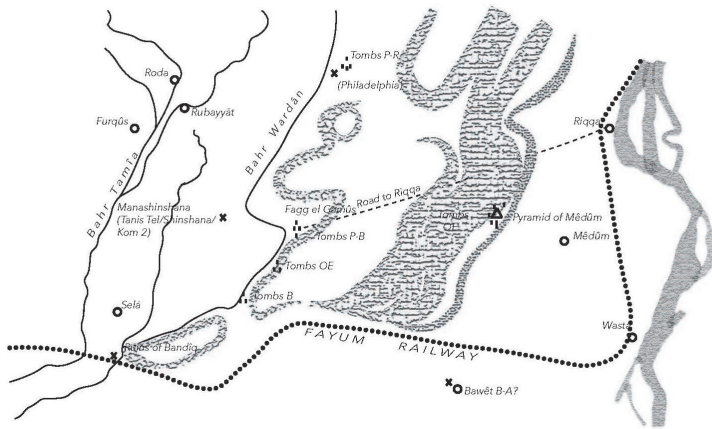


Figure 1: Map of Fag el-Gamous and surrounding areas, based on a map by Grenfell and Hunt. Map made by Aimee Maddox.

[page 22] We assume this area was similar to the rest of the Fayoum in that the majority of land was owned privately rather than by temples or the state.¹³⁶ At the same time, there was probably a higher proportion of public land in the Fayoum than elsewhere in Egypt, and this public land was likely more communal than in the rest of Egypt on the whole.¹³⁷ All the towns and villages near the Fag el-Gamous cemetery were serviced by and made fertile because of the nearby canal, Canal Kleon (Bahr Wardan/Bahr Seila). Tanis was close to the incoming water source, and Philadelphia received its water from Tanis.¹³⁸ Besides the importance of the canal, Philadelphia and the nearby villages Tanis and Seila were important locations because of their position by the main road that led from the Nile Valley to the Fayoum. This is the same route that made Seila an important center in the Old Kingdom. This vital artery of travel gave life to the towns and villages on the eastern edge of the Fayoum, and the death of their inhabitants created the Fag el-Gamous cemetery.

¹³⁶ Monson, “Communal Agriculture in the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayyom,” 180-182.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 180-83 and 186.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

As was noted above, the inhabitants of Seila were probably buried at the Fag el-Gamous cemetery. Yet we know so little of Seila from this time period. Its name is attested in Greek and Demotic in papyri from the 1st century BC through the 8th century AD. Still all these references tell us is that it was a village (*epoikion*; *chorion*), in the *meris* of Herakleides, and that it was considered to be under the jurisdiction of the undertaker's guild that was centered in that *meris*.¹³⁹ Thus our discussion will focus on what we learn about the inhabitants of the cemetery from the population centers of Tanis and Philadelphia.

As we try to paint a picture of the settlements whose inhabitants were interred at Fag el-Gamous, some attention can be paid to changes over time, but for the most part our evidence for each era is so fragmentary that we may gain [page 23] a better overall picture by assuming that if some industries or establishments were present at one time, they were likely present for much of the life of the town or village. While this creates a picture with only broad brush strokes, such a picture can give an impressionistic view of life that is useful.

Tanis is attested in papyri from the mid 3rd century BC to the 7th or 8th century AD.¹⁴⁰ The inhabitants of Tanis were known as Tanitai.¹⁴¹ We know that at least some of them were given land in Tanis as a reward for their military service in Memphis.¹⁴² Residents of a village like

¹³⁹ It is attested in regard to the necropolis, written in Demotic in the 1st century BC, in four papyri, P. Hawara 16a/TM 41469 (www.trismegistos.org/text/41469), P. Hawara 16b/TM 41470 (www.trismegistos.org/text/41470), P. Hawara 17a/TM 41471 (www.trismegistos.org/text/41471), and P. Hawara 17b/TM 41472 (www.trismegistos.org/text/41472) where it is written with an “r” instead of an “i” in Demotic. All of these attestations list it as part of the necropoleis guild of Ptolemais Hormou, Syron, Hormou, Syron Kome, Kerkesoucha, Orous, Psinharyo, Seila, and Alabanthis. See https://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/747.php?geo_id=747. It is also mentioned in several other texts in Greek from the 6th through the 8th centuries AD. See for example P. Baden 4 90/TM 31143 (www.trismegistos.org/text/31143); or P. Lond. 2/TM 37002 (www.trismegistos.org/text/37002). See also Herbert Verreth, *Toponyms in Demotic and Abnormal Hieratic Texts from the 8th Century BC till the 5th Century AD*, *Trismegistos Online Publications vol. 5*, Willy Clarysse, Mark Depauw, and Heinz-Jozef Thissen, eds. (Köln/Leuven: Trismegistos, 2011), 577-78.

¹⁴⁰ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

¹⁴¹ P. Mich. X 593 and http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

¹⁴² P. Cairo Zen. II 59297 and http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

Tanis would likely have been preponderantly farmers, with many of them farming communal public lands (such as lands owned by the state or temples) as divided out by village elders.¹⁴³ Often this took the shape of lands farmed by groups of families working together.¹⁴⁴ Such farmers were thought of as rent paying tenants.¹⁴⁵ Some leased lands in both Tanis and Philadelphia.¹⁴⁶ Payments were sometimes, perhaps often, made in harvest of grain rather than monetary reimbursement.¹⁴⁷

We know from the Zenon papyri cache, found in nearby Philadelphia, that a number of inhabitants of Tanis leased land for agricultural use that was administered by inhabitants of Philadelphia.¹⁴⁸ This is not surprising since Tanis fell under Philadelphia's administrative jurisdiction, and many administrators and wealthy landholders resided there. During the Roman era the area was known for its vineyards,¹⁴⁹ suggesting that many of the villagers would have been involved in viticulture. Fruit and olive trees were also cultivated there in at least some periods.¹⁵⁰ The presence of an oil seller¹⁵¹ suggests that at least some of the olives were used to create oil locally. Today the area produces wheat abundantly.¹⁵² That, combined with a papyrus

¹⁴³ Monson, "Communal Agriculture in the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayyum," 183.

¹⁴⁴ J. Rowlandson, "The Organisation of Public Land in Roman Egypt," in *L'agriculture institutionnelle en Égypte ancienne: état de la question et perspectives interdisciplinaires*, CRIPEL 25, (2005): 173-96.

¹⁴⁵ Monson, "Communal Agriculture in the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayyum," 183.

¹⁴⁶ See in Katelijin Vandorpe, Willy Clarysse, and Herbert Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum, Collectanea Hellenistica – KVAB, VI* (Peeters: Leuven, 2015), 162-63.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

¹⁴⁹ Caton-Thompson, "Recent Work on the Problem of Lake Moeris," 49.

¹⁵⁰ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

¹⁵¹ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

¹⁵² Personal observation, 2008-2018.

that mentions a tax on [page 24] grain,¹⁵³ along with the presence of barley in some of the ancient tombs,¹⁵⁴ suggests that village inhabitants would have also been involved in harvesting barley. At least some of this came from royal lands.¹⁵⁵ The high quality and quantity of textiles found in the cemetery¹⁵⁶ also suggests that the weaving industry may have been an important part of the local economy. Spinning seems to have been solely performed by women,¹⁵⁷ and weaving was almost the same way.¹⁵⁸ Splicing and spinning flax roughens the skin, and thus a number of women in the area probably had very rough hands.¹⁵⁹ Papyrological evidence also indicates that there were shops and shopkeepers in Tanis,¹⁶⁰ such as some who sold soup.¹⁶¹ There was also a bathhouse.¹⁶² There were professional dancers and those who employed them.¹⁶³

By the Roman period there was a high number of soldiers, including some from the cavalry, many of them having Roman names. Yet there were also a number of inhabitants with Egyptian

¹⁵³ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251 and P. Hamb. III 212.

¹⁵⁴ See the botanical report in this volume.

¹⁵⁵ SB IV 7474 and http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

¹⁵⁶ See the article on textiles and jewelry as well as the article on the death of common people in this volume.

¹⁵⁷ See Christina Riggs, *Unwrapping Ancient Egypt* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic: 2014), 115.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 116.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁶⁰ P. Cairo Zen. III 59450. See also http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

¹⁶¹ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

names.¹⁶⁴ At least one priest lived in the village,¹⁶⁵ and possibly more when considering the fact that the neighboring town of Philadelphia had at least eleven operating temples within its borders.

Villages typically consisted mostly of houses made of sun-dried mudbrick.¹⁶⁶ In Tanis there were probably also granaries and wine presses, and perhaps even buildings committed to weaving, though this may have taken place largely in houses and their courtyards instead. Homes typically had their own grinding stones. Most rural villages of the day also had dovecotes.¹⁶⁷ It is very [page 25] likely that the villagers engaged in other kinds of animal husbandry. Pigs, cows, and sheep are specifically mentioned in papyri.¹⁶⁸ Based on pottery found at the cemetery it is likely that besides having access to professionally made ceramic vessels made in a pottery factory we know existed in the village,¹⁶⁹ some villagers were seemingly very adept at making their own local variations as well.¹⁷⁰ They clearly also accessed jewelry made of metal, ceramics, glass and shells. Some of these items seem to have been locally made.¹⁷¹ Villagers were also engaged in quarrying and brickmaking,¹⁷² with at least some of the bricks making their way into the

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ P. Bodl. I 150

¹⁶⁶ Roger S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 111-112.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 113.

¹⁶⁸ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ See the article on pottery with kill holes in this volume.

¹⁷¹ See the article on textiles and jewelry in this volume.

¹⁷² http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

cemetery. Furniture in the village was probably made of wood.¹⁷³ Based on finds from the cemetery we assume tunics were commonly worn and at least a number of women used wooden or ivory/bone hairpins in their hair.

Life in Tanis would have centered on families. Based on the demographics of the cemetery, Tanis and its surrounding villages probably experienced a juvenile mortality rate of about 33%, which means that their children had about twice as much chance of surviving to adulthood as did most children in Egypt.¹⁷⁴ While we do not know why this is the case, it is probably at least partially due to the quality and quantity of food available in the highly arable land in which they lived and grew crops.

Philadelphia (Kom el-Hammam) was the largest nearby town to the Fag el-Gamous cemetery.¹⁷⁵ At its height it was just under 120 people per square kilometer, making it about as densely populated as Theadelphia and Karanis, two of the larger towns of the Fayoum,¹⁷⁶ though considerably smaller than [page 26] Arsinoe.¹⁷⁷ Estimations place the size of the city at 60

¹⁷³ Suzana Hodak, "Archaeological Remains of Everyday Life in the Fayoum," in *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis*, Gawdat Gabra, ed. (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 217.

¹⁷⁴ R. Paul and Kerry Muhlestein, "Death of a Child: The Demographic and Preparation Trends of Child Burials in the Greco-Roman Fayoum of Egypt," in Lesly Beaumont, Matthew Dillon, and Nicola Harrington, eds. *Handbook of Children of Antiquity* (Routledge, forthcoming). While paleodemographic studies have limitations that mean the demographic results are always tentative, this is equally, perhaps more, true for papyrological demographic studies. Thus it is worth comparing and contrasting the results of such studies.

¹⁷⁵ For more on Philadelphia, see John Gee in this volume.

¹⁷⁶ Monson, "Communal Agriculture in the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayyum," 178.

¹⁷⁷ Bagnal, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 111.

hectares at its height.¹⁷⁸ It was at various times described as a *kome* (town) or *polis* (city), even with neighborhoods (*vici*) within its precincts.¹⁷⁹

It has its own sizable necropolis nearby, and is often thought to have also used Rubayyat as a necropolis, where many mummy portraits were discovered.¹⁸⁰ Thus, Fag el-Gamous may not have received many burials from this population center, though the fact that Fag el-Gamous is larger than the necropolis of this, the largest town in the area, suggests that perhaps some residents of Philadelphia may have used Fag el-Gamous for their interment. In fact, the northern end of Fag el-Gamous is just as close to Philadelphia as is Rubayyat, possibly signifying that the residents of this city may very well have used both cemeteries, perhaps being a major contributor to the large cemetery population. This idea is somewhat strengthened by the fact that for a substantial period of time the rights for embalming and burying the people of Tanis were owned by people who lived in Philadelphia.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, while both Tanis and Philadelphia were inhabited throughout the Ptolemaic period, very few burials in Fag el-Gamous come from that era. One thing that may account for this is the theory that the cemeteries often associated with Philadelphia were filling up by the Roman era and they had to expand into Fag el-Gamous. All things considered, the likelihood that many Philadelphia inhabitants were buried at Fag el-Gamous makes it worth trying to extrapolate information from Philadelphia as we try to understand the growth of Fag el-Gamous and the lives of those who rest in death within it.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ Gregory Marouard, “‘Completamente distrutte’ Réévaluation archéologique de Philadelphie du Fayoum, Égypte,” in *Essays for the Library of Seshat: Studies Presented to Janet H. Johnson on the Occasion of Her 70th Birthday*, SAOC vol. 70, Robert K. Ritner, ed. (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 2017), 132.

¹⁷⁹ <http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/detail.php?tm=1760>

¹⁸⁰ Lane, *Guide to the Antiquities of the Fayyum*, 52; Murnane, *The Penguin Guide to Ancient Egypt*, 185.

¹⁸¹ Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 432.

¹⁸² On the excavation of Philadelphia, see Paul Viereck, *Philadelphieia: Die Gründung einer hellenistischen Militärkolonie in Ägypten* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1928).

As with Seila, there are geographical reasons for the settlement of Philadelphia. It too sat at the place where the local hills first allowed access from the Nile Valley to the depression of the Fayoum and a canal system. Thus, Philadelphia sat ideally positioned to aid in trade, to protect the Fayoum, and to collect taxes and distribute goods.¹⁸³ Being near an existing canal allowed inhabitants [page 27] to take advantage of both a venue for transportation and to properly exploit the fertile possibilities of the area.

Large amounts of papyri have been unearthed from the town, as have wax tablets and ostraca.¹⁸⁴ Combining that with papyri found elsewhere that mention the city allows us to say that the town seems to have been founded and settled early in the Ptolemaic era,¹⁸⁵ and flourished at least from the middle of the 3rd century BC until end of the 4th century AD.¹⁸⁶ The establishment of a military fortress at the beginning of the 4th century indicates it was still flourishing then, but the end of the use of that fortress about 100 years later suggests that the heyday of Philadelphia was ending.¹⁸⁷ Other records mention the town until the 8th century AD, though the last few centuries were probably a slow decline after the area had steeply descended from its apex, reached just before the time of Hadrian.¹⁸⁸ This larger span roughly matches the dates of the burials at Fag el-Gamous.

¹⁸³ This conclusion was independently reached by Marouard, "Completamente distrutte," 122, 146.

¹⁸⁴ P. Viereck and F. Zucker, *Papyri, Ostraka und Wachstafeln aus Philadelphia im Fayûm*, Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin, Griechische Urkunden, VII (Berlin, 1926).

¹⁸⁵ Probably during the reign of Ptolemy II. See Marouard, 121-22.

¹⁸⁶ See the article on Philadelphia in this volume.

¹⁸⁷ Marouard, "Completamente distrutte," 147.

¹⁸⁸ See the article on Philadelphia in this volume; also Marouard, "Completamente distrutte," 122-123.

The city began as a place for settling mercenaries,¹⁸⁹ a pattern which continued to fuel its growth for some time.¹⁹⁰ Throughout its history many of its inhabitants had some kind of military connection.¹⁹¹ It was one of three Fayoum towns that had a large military fortress built in it at the beginning of the 4th century AD,¹⁹² ensuring a renewed military growth during that time period. The military background and ensuing sudden, imposed settlement could account for the town's orderly grid layout.¹⁹³ It is worth noting that though the first inhabitants were foreign mercenaries, the houses seem to be a syncretic combination of Greek and Egyptian styles.¹⁹⁴

In the middle of the first century AD the town had about 1000 tax paying inhabitants.¹⁹⁵ There were very low Nile floods in AD 45 and 47, which was [page 28] probably a major contributor to about a ten year economic decline during which time its tax collectors were consistently unable to bring in the taxes they were supposed to.¹⁹⁶ Eventually the town started to flourish again. It became a large and densely populated center.¹⁹⁷ Besides numerous temples, it contained buildings such as a theater, a *stoa*, a gymnasium and a palace.¹⁹⁸ The use of the surrounding

¹⁸⁹ Marouard, "Completamente distrutte," 146.

¹⁹⁰ Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, 111, and footnote 8.

¹⁹¹ Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 239-40; Marouard, 146-47.

¹⁹² Marouard, "Completamente distrutte," 146.

¹⁹³ See the article on Philadelphia in this volume. Also, P. Viereck, *Philadelphia: die Gründung einer hellenistischen Militärkolonie in Ägypten*.

¹⁹⁴ Marouard, "Completamente distrutte," 123.

¹⁹⁵ Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 257.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ See the article on Philadelphia in this volume.

¹⁹⁸ Willy Clarysse and Katelijn Vandorpe, *Zenon, un homme d'affaires grec à l'ombre des pyramides* (Leuven: Presses Universitaires de Louvain, 1995), 51.

lands includes fields of sesame and *kiki* (castor),¹⁹⁹ orchards, vineyards, fields of grain, fields of legumes, and houses for raising pigeons,²⁰⁰ as well as raising other kinds of animals, including at least donkeys, sheep and pigs.²⁰¹ Of course these activities would give rise to merchants who sold this kind of produce.²⁰² Moreover we know that a group of at least 80 weavers found the city of Philadelphia an attractive place to live,²⁰³ which is interesting given the number of high quality textiles found in the cemetery.

It is clear that there was a multi-national presence in Philadelphia.²⁰⁴ This is also true of the villages nearby, such as Tanis and Alabanthis.²⁰⁵ Some of the diversity in the area was due to the number of veterans who had settled in the area. For example, we know that for at least a time a group of Arab bowmen lived in Philadelphia, as well as Syrian cavalrymen.²⁰⁶ Intermarriages, both between racial backgrounds and between varying social classes, occurred.²⁰⁷ Many inhabitants were Roman citizens.²⁰⁸ At least some of the inhabitants that were not native to Egypt took up Egyptian religious practices to some degree.²⁰⁹ The multitude of temples in the

¹⁹⁹ Michael Rostovtzeff, *A Large Estate in Egypt in the Third Century B.C.* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1922), 56.

²⁰⁰ Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 238, 240.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 240-45, 257.

²⁰² For example, we know of wine merchants in Philadelphia. See Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 408.

²⁰³ Rostovtzeff, *A Large Estate in Egypt in the Third Century B.C.*, 69; and Marouard, "Completamente distrutte," 132.

²⁰⁴ See Muhlestein and Innes, "Synagogues and Cemeteries," 55.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.

²⁰⁶ Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 241, 244.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 244.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; and Marouard, "Completamente distrutte," 147.

²⁰⁹ Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 364.

city suggests that in the pre-Christian era there would have been many priests, and we know the names of some who held hereditary priestly offices.²¹⁰ At least one temple was dedicated [page 29] to Hathor,²¹¹ and another to Anubis, whose temple collected payments from citizens who wished to receive services from that god.²¹² There was also an Isieion and a Sarapieion that were connected by a processional route,²¹³ along with temples to other deities in the Egyptian pantheon and to Ptolemy II and Arsinoe.²¹⁴ Presumably as Christianity became more and more accepted by the inhabitants of the area there would have been Christian ecclesiastical leaders as well. There was at least one sizable police station that kept good records.²¹⁵

Philadelphia was the administrative center for the area. Many of its residents owned considerable land holdings which they rented to farmers in the surrounding villages.²¹⁶ Some leased public land in order to sub-lease it to others.²¹⁷ They also rented land for grazing to those who owned the flocks and herds of Tanis, as was mentioned above.²¹⁸ There was also royal land attached to the town, with men from as far away as the Memphite nome overseeing groups who farmed that land.²¹⁹ Additionally, land owners from places like Antinoopolis and Ptolemais Euergetis

²¹⁰ See *Ibid.*, 181-82.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*, 364.

²¹³ Marouard, "Completamente distrutte," 131.

²¹⁴ For more on the temples, see the article on Philadelphia in this volume.

²¹⁵ Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 322.

²¹⁶ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251

²¹⁷ Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 408.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 184-85.

appointed residents of Philadelphia to be agents for them in renting out their land for grain, palm or olive harvests.²²⁰

Some who lived in Philadelphia owned shops in the nearby villages.²²¹ Within the town we know of people who owned what seem to be commercial mills.²²² There were people of considerable means within the city. One example would be Aurelius Ol, who leased several sizable fields from the village leaders who made the land available to him because those who had been using it could no longer pay their taxes. Ol also loaned people money and had more than 50 sheep and goats.²²³ Another example is found in Flavius Abinnaeus, a [page 30] Syrian who was probably a Christian and who became the commander of the fortress of Dionysias and who married Nonna, a citizen of Alexandria. They owned property in Alexandria that they leased to others. They also owned property and resided in Philadelphia, where they managed land on which they grew wheat. They owned slaves and had relations with people in Philadelphia, Alexandria, and Hermopolis.²²⁴ The Zenon papyri reveal the workings of a different very large estate that oversaw considerable lands and the construction of many buildings.²²⁵ As part of this it was also involved in creating canal and irrigation systems and dykes.²²⁶ The estate included a palatial house, a court, gardens, stables for cattle, store-houses, space for servants and employees, wine cellars, baths, and more.²²⁷ It probably also included elements other estates in the city had, such

²²⁰ Ibid., 204-05.

²²¹ http://www.trismegistos.org/fayum/fayum2/2251.php?geo_id=2251.

²²² See P. Graux II; P. Michigan XII; P. Wisc. II; all as summarized in Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 80.

²²³ See P. Gen I 12, 66-70, as summarized in Vandorpe, Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 97-98.

²²⁴ Clarysse, and Verreth, *Graeco-Roman Archives from the Fayum*, 138-142.

²²⁵ Rostovtzeff, *A Large Estate in Egypt*.

²²⁶ Ibid., 57-59.

²²⁷ Ibid., 69-70.

as olive and wine presses, stables for horses, a bakery, and a large kitchen.²²⁸ Its holdings included goats, horses, cattle, and the growing of olives, grain, sesame, nut trees, and vineyards.²²⁹

The surface ruins of Philadelphia contain a number of visible granite and basalt features, indicating a degree of prosperity in the city. Based on a surface survey of pottery, and a brief initial comparison of pottery from the various parts of the city, the area near the canal seems to have been a wealthier area than other parts of the city.²³⁰ The city also seems to have contained industrial elements, as indicated by what seem to be the remains of a lime smelting kiln.²³¹ In other words, Philadelphia was a city of inhabitants from a variety of cultures, classes, and vocations. This diverse group of people potentially represent a range of possible inhabitants of the Fag el-Gamous cemetery.

Philadelphia, Tanis, and all the surrounding area went into decline in the 4th and 5th centuries AD, and largely disappear in the 7th and 8th centuries. At least some of the reason for this decline was likely the silting up and other damage to the Bahr Seila, which was the agricultural lifeblood for the communities of the northeast Fayoum.²³² Still, no one fully understands the reasons [page 31] for the steady shrinking of the Fayoum economy and population. Unsurprisingly, the Fag el-Gamous cemetery discontinues at about the same time as the nearby villages and towns also fell out of use. As the villages passed from use they also passed from history. Their stories lie largely untold, buried beneath the sand of the cities and cemeteries.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 57-70.

²³⁰ Kerry Muhlestein, Giovanni Tata, Ron Harris, Deb Harris, R. Paul Evans, Lincoln Blumell, Catherine Taylor, Brian Christensen, John Gee, Kristin South, Joyce Smith, Casey Kirkpatrick, Manal Saied Ahmed, "The Fag el-Gamous 2014 Excavation Season," *a report submitted to the Ministry of Antiquities in 2014*.

²³¹ *Ibid.*

²³² Kraemer, "The Meandering Identity of a Fayum Canal," 372.