

In 1993 my short article on “Papyrology and Byzantine Historiography” sketched the prevailing scholarly approaches to the history of Byzantine Egypt to date. It concentrated on the long dominant views of H. I. Bell on Egypt’s legally and socially restricted “servile state.” It also considered J. Gasco’s model of “fiscal shares” as an alternative to Bell’s “feudal model” while proposing its own notion of a dual model, part Oxyrhynchite (with its large estates), part Aphroditan (with its mid-scale landowners and clever entrepreneurs).

In the years since 1993, and especially in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in addition to significant additions to the pool of edited documents (especially in the *CPR* and *P.Oxy.* series), there has been a surprising explosion of scholarly literature on Byzantine Egyptian history. This includes books by J.-L. Fournet (1999), J. Banaji (2001), R. Mazza (2001), C. Zuckerman (2004), P. Sarris (2006), J. Dijkstra (2008) and G. Ruffini (2008); T. Hickey’s University of Chicago dissertation (2001); R. S. Bagnall’s edited volume of studies on Byzantine Egypt (2007); the collected articles of I. F. Fikhman (2006) and J. Gasco (2008); and an especially important article by T. Hickey in *BASP* 45 (2008).

The amount of activity has obviously been considerable; but while there has also been some “dialogue” among these contributions, other opportunities have been missed. While the books have been reviewed, they have been reviewed almost exclusively as *separata*. There has as yet been no summation of what all this has brought to the direction of studies on Byzantine Egypt and not much in the way of general assessment of the new paths that have recently been laid out but not yet fully appreciated. This paper aims to present a personal view of the main issues of contention, as simply and clearly as possible, within its allotted time.