WOMEN IN EGYPT

How the status of women in Egypt changed during the Ptolemaic Period

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCING THE ISSUE

> "In 1979, H.-J. Wolff reminded us that the cultural dualism of Ptolemaic Egypt found its strongest expression in the legal domain, where Greek law and Egyptian law lived side by side without any real mutual concession."

(Bingen, 2007, p. 251)

In chapter 18 of *Hellenistic Egypt* (2007, pp. 240-253), Jean Bingen discusses the cultural interactions between the native population of Egypt and its ruling minority of Greek-Macedonians and come to the conclusion that there is not much mutual acculturation between the two. The specific aspect of society and this proposed cultural dualism of Ptolemaic Egypt that will be investigated in this dissertation is that of women and their socio-economical and legal status in society. If one briefly examines the status of women in

the individual cultures in pre-Hellenistic dates, a striking difference between them stands out.

As Joyce Tyldesley explains in *Chronicle of Egyptian Queens* (2006, p. 12), "in Egypt, men and women of equivalent social status were treated as equals in the eyes of the law." If one compares this the situation in Athens, as Sue Blundell describes in *Women in Ancient Greece* (1995p. 114), "In law an Athenian woman had no independent existence", the contrast is quite clear.

Important to remember, and something which will become obvious further on in this investigation, is that the Ptolemies, the Hellenistic rulers of Egypt, were from Macedon (modern day Macedonia)[1], and not from Greece proper. Thus the situation of women's status in Egypt is somewhat more complex, as even though Macedon was very much its own cultural entity, it still had strong traits of Hellenic culture in its national identity. As Macurdy writes, "Beloch argues from her [Berenice I, wife of Ptolemy I Soter] presence in Greece with Ptolemy in 309 BC that she must then have been only his mistress; he says "Greek commanders took their mistresses, but not their wives with them on campaigns." But Ptolemy was not a Greek general, but a Macedonian brought up in the tradition of queens on the battlefield (Macurdy, 1985 p. 105). When discussing the perhaps most famous queen of Macedon, however, a clear statement is made, "Antipater, her [Olympias'] enemy, died in 319 B.C., with a warning on his lips to his fellow countrymen never to let a woman rule them" (Macurdy, 1985, p. 39). So Macedonian women may have been somewhat more liberated than those at Athens, but the questions this dissertation will attempt to answer, or at least shed some light on, is whether it changed when they took up residence in Egypt, the foreign land across the Mediterranean.

Also important to remember, in relation to the Greek versus Macedonian cultural distinctiveness, is that it was not only Macedonians that migrated to Egypt and colonised. Greeks from other parts of both the mainland and the Aegean took up residence, and would have brought their own culture with them, just as the Macedonians did.

[1] In order to separate the two entities from each other, Macedon will be the term used in this paper for the ancient nation, and Macedonia will be the modern day country.

DEFINING THE PURPOSE AND METHOD

Now that the issue has been introduced, it needs to be defined. This dissertation will thus attempt to shed light on the question of how and if the status of women changed in Ptolemaic Egypt during the Hellenistic period. The women in question will be both of the native Egyptian population and of the Graeco-Macedonian upper class who migrated to Egypt along with the early Ptolemaic dynasty (and who continued to migrate to Egypt throughout the Hellenistic period).

The areas of status which will be dealt with will be in the socio-economic and legal spheres, looking at rights of ownership (mainly to property), rights of independent identity and action, and whether there was a difference in the legal/theoretical treatment of women and the practical one.

As always, the issue of source material is problematic when dealing with the history of women. Due to the areas this dissertation is covering, the main body of primary evidence that will be consulted is literary sources in the forms of some of the countless papyri found in Egypt dated to the Hellenistic period. The problems that reoccur are to do with the fact that most written accounts of women that is in existence today are written by men for men. In the Hellenistic period, and most notably in Egypt, accounts written by women *do* occur, but they are rare. So when examining the evidence, one must always be on the look out for the gendered and cultured bias that colours the accounts. The ancient evidence which is treated comes from both the Greek world and Egypt, and so the bias will obviously be different, depending on the culture in which it was written in. But as a researcher in today's academic world (where academics are taught already from undergraduate level to look out for others' and one's own bias), one has a slight advantage when studying ancient texts by simply being aware of the existence of bias.

Obviously the material evidence of women is perhaps more numerous than the literary. This sphere of sources, however, is in addition to the literary a far too large a group to be adequately dealt with in such a short investigation as this. It is important to note its

existence, but most of the books which appear on the bibliography will surely provide the material picture of women in Hellenistic Egypt.

BACKGROUND

In order to fully analyse the issues which this paper will be dealing with, a background is necessary to provide the reader with a basic picture of the period and concepts that are concerned. A brief discussion of the historical setting of the Ptolemaic period will be followed by an insight into the situation of women in Pre-Ptolemaic Egypt and the general Greek world along with a look at the situation in Macedon.

GENERAL HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE PTOLEMAIC PERIOD

> "When Alexander the Great entered Egypt in 332 BC he met with little resistance from the occupying Persian administration. Egypt was used to foreign domination but the oppressive Persians …were hated by the native Egyptians of the fourth century BC no less than by their descendants one thousand years later. Alexander was therefore welcomed by the Egyptians."
>
> (Bowman, 1996, p. 22)

Bowman introduces his second chapter of *Egypt after the Pharaohs* (1996) in this manner, simply and concise, explaining the early Late period before the arrival of the Macedonians and the beginning of the Hellenistic period in Egypt. As stated in the quote above, Alexander the Great, the Macedonian king, annexed Egypt into his growing empire in 332 BC. He adhered to the traditions of his newly acquired lands, following the protocol for the ascension of a new pharaoh by visiting, for example, Heliopolis (the city of the sun-god), Memphis (the traditional capital) where he sacrificed to the different Egyptians gods, and Siwa, where the oracle of Amun (to the Greeks, Zeus Ammon) proclaimed him son of Amun/Zeus (Holbl, 2001, p. 9). This usage of Egyptian customs was to be adopted later by the first Ptolemy, and by his descendants, all the way down to Cleopatra VII, the last of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

Alexander passed away in 323 BC, leaving his vast empire in the hands of his generals without naming an heir. His "feeble-minded half-brother" (Bevan, 1927, p. 18) was appointed king, as the generals were waiting for Alexander's wife to give birth to Alexander's unborn child.

Politics got the better of both Philip III (Alexander's brother) and Alexander IV (Alexander's son), and the empire fell into the hands of his generals once more. It split into several parts, Egypt being given to Ptolemy (Holbl, 2001, p. 13). The Ptolemaic dynasty was to last for three centuries, during which the great kingdoms in the east would all eventually fall to might of Rome, who was at the time growing in west.

With the ascension of Ptolemy I as pharaoh, Egypt entered an age where it was closely linked to the greater Greek world, and the capital Alexandria[2] considered to be amongst the greatest of cities in the Mediterranean; as Diodorus says, "the first city of the civilised world,

[2] Founded by Alexander in 331 BC, located in the western Delta, on the shore of the Mediterranean (Bowman, 1996, p. 204)

certainly far ahead of all the rest in elegance and extent, and riches and luxury" (cited in Bowman, 1996, p. 204).

Yet there was a strong difference between the newcomers and the native population. The Greeks (and Macedonians) constituted the upper classes who could climb the social ladder because they knew the important official administrative language of the new Egypt – Greek, which the Egyptians did not. So they, therefore, constituted the lower middle and lower classes.

Bingen (2007, p. 246) makes a rather interesting claim that:

> "The reason for which the two old cultures which coexisted in Egypt did not give birth to a truly mixed culture, in other words to a process of deep mutual acculturation, lies at the same time in the different structures and dynamics of the two groups and in the lack of interest of either in abandoning the fundamental cultural signs of its own group."

So despite the great splendour that Hellenistic Egypt had to show for itself to the Greeks across the ocean, it was only the *Greeks* in Egypt that could and did take part of it. The native Egyptians were quite happy, if one would read Bingen's quote literally, living their lives as they had always done and continue with their own traditions. Michel Chauveau (2000, p. 170) goes as far as describing the inhabitants of Egypt in the Hellenistic period as suffering from a "cultural schizophrenia", as the large arrival of Greeks into Egypt separated the two peoples to this extent.

Over the three centuries of Ptolemaic rule, Egypt would see both men and women on the throne of varying degrees of success. The first three Ptolemies worked hard to secure their position in the greater scheme of Mediterranean politics, and the Ptolemaic empire (if one could call it that) reached its greatest extent during Ptolemy III's reign (Holbl, 2001, p. 48).

After this period of glory, Egypt and the Ptolemaic rulers began to decline in power, importance and stability (Chauveau, 2000, pp. 11-18). The rising power of Rome began to take an interest in the politics of Egypt, and Ptolemy XII (father of the last Ptolemaic ruler, Cleopatra VIII) became "a mere pawn in the hands of the leaders of the various factions at Rome" (Chauveau, 2000, p.19).

Rome would eventually deal the fatal and final blow to the Ptolemaic dynasty, as Cleopatra VII committed suicide in 30 BC (Holbl, 2001, p. 248), in the process of being invaded by the Romans under the leadership of future emperor Augustus. She had throughout her life been in close contact with the Romans, most notably with Julius Caesar and Marcus Antonius on a very personal level.

After the death of the last queen of Egypt, the country fell into the hands of Rome and as Chauveau puts it: "His [Augustus] arrogant indifference towards the tombs of the Lagides and the sacred animals of the pharaonic deities made it clear to the Egyptians that they had truly changed masters." (Chauveau, 2000, p. 28).

GENERAL OVERVIEW OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN PRE-PTOLEMAIC EGYPT

> "In good times the queen will remain very much in the background, supporting her husband and attending to her domestic duties in an unobtrusive way. But, should bad times arise, she must be capable of independent action, of using her wits to deputize for her husband and protect her child."
>
> (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 9)

Joyce Tyldesley gives this rather telling account of the image portrayed to the women of Egypt of how a perfect wife, mother and woman they should all be. The model for this, as Tyldesley mentions, is the goddess Isis, who fulfilled this image perfectly.

She was the sister-wife of god and king Osiris, and later mother of his son Horus. Osiris had a brother, Seth, who was jealous of his brother's power, and so killed him and threw him into the Nile sealed in a lead-covered coffin. Isis, being the dutiful and loyal wife, searched day and night for his body, and awarded him a proper burial once she had found him. Seth later tore Osiris body to pieces and scattered them across Egypt, and Isis again went out to relocate her husband body and put him back together. It was after this that Isis, nine months later, gave birth to their son Horus. She raised her son who, when of age, avenged his father and claimed the throne of Egypt for himself (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 9).

RIGHT TO RULE

Egypt was, as all societies at this time, a male-dominated society. It was men who ruled, men who were dominant. And yet the Egyptians were never afraid to turn to a women should "bad times arise" and necessity call for it, compared to other societies at this time who would find this unthinkable. It was a woman's responsibility, but also her right; to stand behind her husband in wet and dry, and take over for him should he be unable to carry out his duties (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 9).

It was this small window, being able to deputize for her husband should he need her to, into the male-dominated areas of society that enabled women to climb the social ladder, and in some cases end up at the top of it. Egypt's history of regents contains quite a few women, and certainly more than anywhere else in the ancient world at this time. The New Kingdom is renowned for its abundance of powerful females, the most notable ones being Ahhotep (17^{th} dynasty) and Hatshepsut (18^{th} dynasty). As Leonard H. Lesko writes – "Indeed, that dynasty [18^{th}] has been termed "formidably feminine", and it did enjoy the twenty year of the most significant female pharaoh – Hatshepsut – and saw the chief royal wives gain more publicly acknowledged stature in both religious and public life than perhaps ever before." (Lesko, 1989, p. 101)

Both women started their life as daughters of pharaohs and eventually married the new pharaoh. Equally both gave birth to future pharaohs, and lost their husbands early in their children's life. Ahhotep was the mother of Ahmose, the pharaoh to unify Egypt after the 2nd intermediate period, and Hatshepsut was the mother of Thutmose III (Ziegler, 2008, p. 190-194).

Ahhotep ruled Egypt as official co-regent with her son as he was growing up (and in reality, she was probably more of a de facto single ruler). Tyldesley writes about Ahhotep in her *Chronicle of the Queens of Egypt*, and includes a quotation from a stele erected by Ahmose:

> "She has looked after her Egypt's soldiers, she has guarded Egypt, she has brought back her fugitives and gathered together her deserters, and she has pacified Upper Egypt and expelled her rebels." (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 84)

Tyldesley's analysis of this stele suggests that Ahmose felt a strong debt to his mother for taking care of the country for him in this way, so that he could take over a unify Egypt once he was old enough. She also proposes that, if one was to read this stele literally, Ahhotep actually took up arms against the enemy[3], thus being conceived as the rightful pharaoh. This conclusion is a possibility, but questionable.

Tyldesley also discusses in her book (2006, p. 94-109) Hatshepsut, probably the most important woman, seen from a female-power perspective, in Egyptian history. Her story is very similar to Ahhotep's, with one major difference. Once she had become co-regent with her son, after the death of her husband, Hatshepsut began to gain power, to the point that she stopped being co-ruler and became the actual pharaoh (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 97). The imagery of Hatshepsut in the form of a pharaoh changes throughout her reign (which lasted for over two decades), as the artists and sculptors were faced with something they had never come upon before – a woman on the throne. Her imagery starts off showing her as a

[3] The enemy in this case were the Hyksos, an Asiatic people who invaded in the 2nd intermediate period, were at the time in charge of the north of Egypt. Ahhotep and Ahmose were of the Theban royal family down south, who eventually drove out the foreign rules and unified Egypt, thus giving birth to the New Kingdom (Aldred, 2002, p. 141-143)

woman in a man's clothing, to towards the end of her time show her as a man with no visible female features (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 97; Ziegler, 2008, p. 198).

RIGHT TO OWN PROPERTY AND RUN A BUSINESS

Theoretically, women were equal to men in the eyes of the law. Women had every right to own, buy, sell and inherit property, appear in court as any other individual, and they could stand in for the husband was he unable to carry out his duties or work (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 12). Yet, as was perhaps hinted at above, life was not at all as liberal as we might induce, given these theoretical facts. Women were still expected to live their life indoors, taking care of the household, while the man, the dominant of the two, would go out and work and earn money for the family. This duality of freedom and restriction may confuse the modern human, but as Bernadette Menu puts it in *Women's Earliest Records*, "it seems that women had a full *capacity* of rights, but that in daily life they often left to their husband the *exercise* of those rights" (Lesko, 1989, p. 205).

What needs to be emphasised, however, is that women *had* the right to own property, etc. They, if they needed to or if the family needed to, could be the matriarch (rather than having a patriarch) of the household, or run a business should the family need food and housing. Compared to other contemporary ancient societies, this is quite remarkable (e.g. Schaps' explanation of the situation in Athens and Delos (Schaps, 1979)).

Women's ownership of property was recognised in the law courts (and so by Egyptians official law), to the point where women as individuals were liable to taxes and rent of their property (Lesko, 1989, p. 133). Schafik Allam (in *Women's Earliest* Records) even makes the claim that "Egyptian society recognised women's rights in immovables [e.g. property and land] to as great a degree as men's" (Lesko, 1989, p. 133).s

Tyldesley makes a rather interesting point when saying that the household was supposed to be taken care of first, as it was the most important part of a woman's life to manage the house of her husband. After that, however, she was free to do what she pleased (if she was able to, that is). This included working or even running a business, in order to generate an income in addition to that of the man's (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 13).

An equally interesting point Tyldesley makes has to do with the depiction of married couples in ancient Egyptian sculptures: “Married couples supported each other but, while the man, the dominant partner, played the more obvious wage-earning role, it was the woman who, in 3000 years of dynastic sculpture, was consistently shown physically supporting her husband with an arm placed firmly around his waist or shoulder.” (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 13). One could derive from this the important part (and in some ways, the *equal* part) a woman played in the marriage and in a family. The sculptures give the impression of the married couple as a union, with the woman having her arms around her husband and the size difference between the two not being very significant.

As can be seen in this short overview of women’s place in pharaonic Egypt, the status of women was quite different to other Mediterranean civilisations at the time. A wife not only supported her husband in tending to the house, the children and conducting the general management of the home. She could also support her husband with income from a job or if she had her own business, or even from renting out property/land which she owned.
Yet one must not be dazzled by the apparent theoretical rights women appear to have had. It is important to remember that pharaonic Egypt *was* a man’s world, and women were only a necessary evil occasionally employed.

GENERAL OVERVIEW ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE GREEK WORLD AND MACEDON

“In law an Athenian woman had no independent existence.”

(Blundell, 1995, p. 114)

This short statement from Sue Blundell's *Women in Ancient Greece* sums up the general status of women in most parts of mainland Greece quite well. The degree of socio-economic and legal freedom of women varied from polis to polis, with the occasional 'deviant' society (such as Sparta and Macedon, which will be discussed later on in more detail), but generally this rather "repressive" treatment of women was fairly widespread (Carney, 2000, p. 3).

A problem which must be addressed concerning this section has to do with the scarcity of sources dealing with women. This section focuses on Athenian and Macedonian women specifically due to the fact that the evidence that is available is only substantial enough to provide a holistic enough picture in these areas (and even in these there is a lack of evidence of a lot of things).

Particularly Greece and Athens has this problem. Athens is the one place in Greece (except for Sparta, but seeing as this dissertation is assessing the status of women in Egypt, where Sparta had no role, this state will be overlooked) where there is any substantial accounts of the lives of women. Yet important to remember is that Athens cannot answer for all of Greece. It will be dealt with, only to provide a general picture of how women were *most likely* treated.

RIGHT TO RULE

GREECE AND ATHENS

By looking at the quote at the top, and at Elizabeth Carney's *Women and Monarchy in Macedonia* (2000), it becomes quite obvious that the mere possibility of female rulers was completely unthinkable in ancient Greece.

> "Women were excluded from political power in the classical Greek polis, or city-state. Political and cultural ideology, particularly in Athens, divided life between the private world of the family, in which women had an important role, and the public world of the polis, in which women had little place, except in the area of religion." (Carney, 2000, p. 3).

Thus, the situation for women in Greece was completely different to that of the Egyptian women. Whereas in Egypt there are accounts of several female rulers, there is no such evidence for anywhere in the Greek world.

MACEDON

The situation in Macedon was different from Athens and the rest of Greece. Generally throughout Grace Macurdy's *Hellenistic Queens*, she gives the view that Macedonian women or women with a Macedonian heritage were "strong minded" and "fierce", from a "strong northern race" (Macurdy, 1985). Macurdy's book deals with the *Hellenistic* queens, and she argues that it was this strong, northern fierceness that allowed for the women in the Hellenistic kingdoms (and especially Egypt under the Ptolemies) to be more powerful and have greater freedom than their predecessors.

This is perhaps a rather dated view of the women in Macedon. Carney defines the difference between Greece and Macedon by drawing attention to that division of society into rulers and followers took place at a hereditary social level in Macedon, compared to the division of space which separated society in Greece:

> "In Macedonia things were different. Monarchy, not the polis, was the dominant political structure… In this ancient kingdom, *dunasteia* (power, dominion) was truly synonymous with dynasty. The sexual and political dichotomies of southern Greece could not apply: in a personal monarchy, drawing a hard line between private and public matters was impossible…"
>
> (Carney, 2000, p. 3)

So one could argue that in the ancient political systems, women were better off in a monarchy, as in Macedon, where their status as a royal woman, gave them power. Whereas in a democracy, where the only full-fledged citizens with voting rights were men, women would naturally be left out of political life completely.

One should not go as far as saying that women in Macedon were powerful in their own right. It is important to remember that no woman officially sat on the throne of ancient

Macedon. Macurdy writes biographies to the famous queens on the early Hellenistic period, amongst them Olympias, the mother of Alexander the Great, who rose to power in quite a significant way (Macurdy, 1985, p. 22-48). But attention must be drawn to an important sentence: “Antipater, her [Olympias] enemy, died in 319 B.C., with a warning on his lips to his fellow countrymen never to let a woman rule them.” (Macurdy, 1985, p. 39)
So there is still this concept of a woman not belonging on the throne, and that bad things would happen if she was.

RIGHT TO OWN PROPERTY

ATHENS

The quote at the top represents not only a woman’s status in law, but also in areas such as ownership of property and social status. Schaps, in his *Economic Rights of Women in Ancient Greece*, discusses ownership of properties and how women could not partake in this. An important concept to discuss when talking about property is the *kyrios*, which was effectively the head of the family. The family property belonged to the kyrios, which would in practice be the father of the primary family that inhabited the property. He explains the relation between ownership and woman in the following quote: “In so far as the first ‘family’ concept of ownership held sway, property could never legally belong to a woman unless she was a kyria of a family. There is no evidence that such a thing was possible at Athens; the only mention of such a woman in literature is rhetorical and self-contradictory.” (Schaps, 1979, p. 4).

A concept discussed by Blundell and Schaps respectively (Blundell, 1995, p. 114; Schaps, 1979, p. 52) is that of the ‘medimnos of barley’. It is a measure of currency which could provide a family with food for five to six days (Schaps, 1979, p. 52), and was all that an Athenian woman could have in her possession (Blundell, 1995, p. 114). It was an Athenian law that laid down specific regulations upon economic transactions: “*For the law explicitly provides that a child is not to be capable of performing a transaction, nor a woman beyond (the value of) a medimnos of barley*.” (Schaps, 1979, p. 52).

MACEDON

As was equally noticed in Macedon concerning the right rule, ownership of property was probably permitted to women in a certain part of society. Carney mentions this, and even though "the evidence is somewhat indirect… it seems clear that they could own, or at the very least control, considerable property" (2000, p. 30). She precedes this by claiming that women were somewhat in control of the domestic side of the family, the taking care of the household and the family matters. Women also appear to not have had a male guardian, as was common in the rest of the Greek world, but there is evidence of men acting on behalf of their female relatives in marriage arrangements (e.g. Phillip II acting on behalf of his daughters, and Alexander III arranging his sister's marriage) (Carney, 2000, p. 30).
Important to remember it that Carney's book deals with royal women in Macedon, a very small group of women in society. The situation for the non-royal women was probably different.

In conclusion, the situation for women in the Greek world was remarkably different to that of women in Egypt. They had no particular rights concerning anything, and nowhere is it documented that a woman ever ruled a Greek state or kingdom. The Macedonians were not as harsh in their treatment of women, although nowhere near as liberal as the Egyptians.
Again, the account of women's treatment in Athens cannot speak on behalf of all of Greece, but due to a constantly reoccurring problem within ancient history, there is simply no evidence from most of the rest of Greece. Athens is notably today considered to have been particularly repressive in their attitude towards women, and the situation elsewhere might have been different. It is perhaps safe to say, however, that women were generally restricted from owning property, managing a business and most definitely socially forbidden to participate in any political activities regarding the management of a state.

WOMEN IN HELLENISTIC EGYPT

As was briefly discussed in the Background section of this investigation, Egypt during the Ptolemaic period was a divided society. Two very different cultures came to live and coexist in a land governed by a dynasty which rather shrewdly appeased both cultures by portraying themselves both the traditional Egyptian way of the pharaohs and the Greek model for a ruling family.

HELLENISTIC LEGAL PRACTICE IN EGYPT CONCERNING WOMEN

THE KYRIOS

The cultural division mentioned briefly above penetrated all layers and all groups of society, including that of women, whether lower or upper class. A concept where this becomes very clear is that of the kyrios. As was explained in the Background section of this investigation (see *General Overview on the Status of Women in the Greek World and Macedon*), a Greek woman had no independent official existence of her own, and was for her entire life subject to her male guardian, her kyrios. Before marriage she belonged to the patriarch of her family (in most cases, her father), and after marriage she was the property of her husband. A Greek woman rarely had any possessions of her own, and in most cases what she owned belonged to her kyrios.

The situation for Egyptian women, as was also discussed in the Background section (see *General Overview of the Status of Women in Pre-Ptolemaic Egypt*), was very different. In the eyes of the law, she was an equal individual to a man, and so thus had rights to her own life. In extension thereby, she had rights over her own personal belongings and over property that might belong to her.

So the concept of the kyrios did not exist in pre-Ptolemaic Egypt, but made its entrance when the country fell into Macedonian hands.

A papyrus dated to 218 BC shows that the practice of the kyrios is still in use during the height of the Ptolemaic period, after roughly 100 years of Macedonian rule. In *P.Enteux. 2*

(Bagnall & Derow, 2004, p. 240)[4] a request is sent to the government on behalf of one Nikaia, who is without a kyrios and wishes to have her sister-in-law's husband designated as her male guardian.

MARRIAGE

Jane Rowlandson makes a rather interesting point in her article published in *Women's Influence on Classical Civilization* (McHardy & Marshall, 2004, p. 152), that the inhabitants of Ptolemaic Egypt could choose between the two legal systems that co-existed in Egypt at the time. Egyptian law was more protective of women's rights than the Greek, and so Rowlandson suggests that the Graeco-Egyptians would "exploit" whatever law was best suited for their particular issue (i.e. women would be more inclined to use the Egyptian legal system when it came to marriage contracts, which provided more adequate protection than the Greek (Lewis, 1986, p. 105)).

Dominic Montserrat in *Sex and Society in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (1996, p. 80) identified marriage as one of the areas of life in which these differences of this "pluralist culture of Graeco-Roman Egypt" could be seen the best.

Looking at a marriage contract, *P.Eleph. 1*, from 311 BC (Bagnall & Derow, 2004 p. 238-239)[5], issued between two newly settled Greeks in Egypt, the use of Greek customs by Greeks is quite clear. Demetria is being given to Herakleides in marriage by her father, and the contract lists a number of things that both parties must abide by throughout the course of their marriage. Mainly they deal with the conduct of Demetria, how she must not shame her husband in anyway, but does state that Herakleides is not allowed to take another wife, nor have any relations with another woman that will produce offspring.

This is a contract from very early on in the Ptolemaic period, and Ptolemy I is still spoken about as Alexander IV's satrap (so Ptolemy is not yet king and pharaoh of Egypt), and so it is perhaps understandable that it is a very Greek contract. Lewis, in *Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt*, however, suggests that the part where Herakleides vows to not take another wife "may allude to current Egyptian practice." (Lewis, 1986, p. 93). Being among the first in a new a

[4] See Appendix 2

[5] See Appendix 1

foreign country, perhaps it was seen as prudent to abide by certain cultural practices in order to not stand out and cause trouble. Montserrat also makes the point that "deprived of the cultural framework provided by their home city, there was a gradual tendency for settlers to conform to local customs." (Montserrat, 1996, p. 80)

Rowlandson's proposal that Graeco-Egyptians chose between what legal system to use, especially with women-related issues, can perhaps be illustrated with another marriage contract, this one far later in the Ptolemaic period.

P.Geiss. 2 (Montserrat, 1996, pp. 92-93; Yiftach-Firanko, 2003, p. 44) was issued between Olympias and Antaeus in Crocodopolis, in 173 BC. The contract has aspects of both legal systems, mostly Greek ones (such as men being the only witnesses, the limitations put upon both parties, especially Olympias), but has one significant point which alludes to an adaptation of Egyptian practice – Olympias "gives herself in marriage" to Antaeus, which was not a part of Greek marital practice. This point is quite significant, because it suggests that a woman was an individual that could "give themselves" to someone, rather than be given by someone else who had control over them. To relate it to Egyptian practice, the woman was her own individual, and needed no kyrios to conduct her business for her. She was recognised as an active member of society by the Egyptian law, in contrast to the Greek.

Another marriage contract from the early 2nd century that shows signs of an adaptation of Egyptian practices is *P.Tebt. I* 104 (Pomeroy, 1984, p. 87-89)[6], issued between a Philiscus and an Apollonia. Even though it follows the general formula of a Greek marriage contract, with Apollonia's guardian stated and how she will remain with Philiscus as his lawful wife, etc., there are still certain points that show Egyptian influence. Among the most obvious is the phrase "owning their property in common", as if suggesting that they have an equal share and right to the property (i.e. it is not just the man's property, it is the woman's as well). Another point is that of what Philiscus is not allowed to do. He is not allowed other women (concubines or other wives, and it is the former that is a rather un-Greek notion) apart from Apollonia and that he is not allowed "to dwell another house over which Apollonia has no rights", which ties in with what was said about sharing their property, and

[6] See Appendix 3

having equal right to it. The fact that Apollonia has any rights is good enough evidence that this contract has a more diverse cultural make-up than simply Greek.

Despite this evidence that would suggest otherwise, academics such as H.-J. Wolff, through Jean Bingen, still claims that "Greek law and Egyptian law lived side by side without any real mutual concession" (Bingen, 2007, p. 251).

Jean Bingen makes a strong case in *Hellenistic Egypt* of how Egyptian and Greek culture co-existed together without showing any signs of acculturation. He puts it down to the fact that both cultures were old and traditionally established in themselves, and that there was a "lack on interest of either in abandoning the fundamental cultural signs of its own group." (Bingen 2007, p. 246). But when looking at the evidence provided above, it is difficult to agree with Bingen on his claims, as two of the marriage contracts show a definite adaptation by the Greeks of current Egyptian practice.

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY

Another area in which this cultural division of having a kyrios or not comes into play is in ownership of properties (and other immovables). In order to officially own something, one needs to be a legally independent individual. And seeing as Greek women were considered not to be legally independent (or capable), obviously they were not permitted to be the official owner of a property. But (as has been said before) Egyptian women *were* legally independent, and could thus be the owner of a property.

Rowlandson gives evidence of this cultural division in her *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, where she illustrates how in villages inhabited by Greek colonists there are no women recorded as being owners of any properties, whereas in the older Egyptian villages, there are evidence of women having houses put down in their name (Rowlandson, 1988, p. 218-219).

Ben Witherington makes a similar suggestion, when he says that "there are many examples in the papyri of women in Egypt who were buyers, sellers, borrowers, lenders... it is likely that in most cases it is the affairs of native Egyptian women that are being recorded." (Witherington, 1988, p. 15).

An example of these papyri that Witherington speak of (not necessarily the ones that he specifically has in mind, but an example nonetheless) belongs to a family archive discussed by P.W. Pestman. In *P.BM 10523*, dated to 295 BC, a woman pledges her property as a security for a loan. The woman in a widow, as the marriage contract (dated to 315 BC) between her and her husband was a part of the archive as well. The house turns up again in another papyrus, where it changes hand between another widow and an unmarried woman (in P.Ryl 12 and 13). The unmarried woman is also recorded paying tax on this property (Pestman, 1961, p. 87-88).

To continue the argument against Bingen and his theory of cultural co-existence rather than acculturation, a change over time is recorded by Glenn Bugh by looking at demotic property contracts belonging to an Egyptian family in the Memphite nome (Bugh, 2006, p. 106). Bugh identifies the change as going towards a greater use of double names and application of Greek law. The complication, regarding women, in choosing between what legal system to use lies in what has been said again and again – Egyptian women had no male guardians, and so could inherit property alongside their male relatives. Bugh relates the greater use of Greek law to a possible new law concerning inheritance rights (Bugh, 2006, p. 106). This would suggest, seeing as Greek law is a lot more restrictive with women's rights to inheritance, that this new law restricted certain groups from inheriting property (e.g. women), and thus it must have seemed more appropriate to use the Greek legal system when dealing with inheritance.

As with marriage, ownership rights produce a complicated issue, and forces the academic to join one of two camps – the one supporting Bingen and those who claim that Egyptian and Greek culture lived side by side and mixed as little as they could, or the one that agrees with that the culture *did* rub off on each other, and that gradually Greek practices were adopted to fit in with the overall changes that the Ptolemaic dynasty brought about.

WOMEN'S SOCIAL STATUS

To move away from the juridical realm, women's social status will now be discussed. The social status of women is always hard to tap into without moving into highly biased

territory. What is lucky about the Hellenistic period (and with Egypt in general) are the large amounts (in relation to the rest of the Mediterranean world at least) of written accounts produce *by* women.

A concept which was discussed in the Background of this investigation (see *General Overview of the Status of Women in Pre-Ptolemaic Egypt*) is that of the Ideal Wife. As was said earlier, the image portrayed of Isis as she assisted and stood by her husband Osiris during his death, the childhood of her son and the time after constituted the way an ideal wife should conduct herself – be submissive and loyal when her husband was well and active, but be strong and capable to deputize for him should he be unable to fulfil his duties.

Markus Barth (through Witherington) discusses the cult of Isis briefly, by saying: "With the spread of the Isis cult... went the fact (and eventually the right) that women gathered for worship without the men." (Witherington, 1988, p. 14) Witherington then follows this with the analysis: "Here was a deity who understood the plight of women, for Isis had been both wife and mother, and had suffered loss." (Witherington, 1988, p. 14).
So Isis was a goddess for women that both men and women could understand. She understood the troubles that women had and perhaps gave them strength in their hour of need. To the men she was the perfect wife – loyal and submissive yet powerful and able-bodied.

This concept of having a deputy in the form of your wife was originally an Egyptian concept. But by looking at evidence provided in letters from Roger S. Bagnall's book *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt* (2009), one can spot this deputizing also in the homes of colonial Greeks.
P.Bad. 4.48[7] is a letter from a Dionysia to her husband Theon, who is away. She is writing to tell him of what has transpired at home and urges him to write back and tell her that he is alright (Bagnall, 2009, p. 107). In another letter, UPZ 1.59[8], Isias is writing to her husband Hephaistion that it is time to come home (Bagnall, 2009, p. 111):

[7] See Appendix 4
[8] See Appendix 5

> "...but about your not coming home, when all the others who had been detained there [the Sarapieion in Memphis] have come, I am ill-pleased, because after having piloted myself and your child though such bad times and been driven to every extremity owing to the price of wheat, I thought that now at least, once you got home, I would enjoy some rest."

In a third letter, BGU 4.1205 cols. ii-iii[9], an Isidora is writing to her husband Asklepiades (whom she calls by the nickname Asklas) with an update on the situation at home, and also instructs him to carry out business transactions that she has set up. Bagnall, in his quick note on the letter puts it in simple terms: "Isidora does not hesitate to tell Asklepiades in brusque tones that he is wrong about this or that item." (Bagnall, 2009, p. 116):

> "It's nice of you to try to make me responsible for the lentils and the peas. For you are not even consistent with yourself, since you have written to Paniskos that we sold (them). For we have not sold them; but do as you wish."

This last letter lies just out of the Ptolemaic period, and in the very beginning of the Roman period, as it is dated to 28 BC (the Roman period officially began with the suicide of Cleopatra VII in 30 BC). But it is doubtful that social practice changed to a very noticeable degree during the two years between the Ptolemies' fall and when this letter was written.

So here we have three women who are doing what the ideal wife should be able to do – take care of things at home when the man is away. These women seem to not enjoy it to a great extent, but they were trusted by their husband to carry out the tasks that he normally tended to. They are expected to be the ideal wife, like Isis – subservient when he's at home and then head of the house when he is away. Isidora, for example, is not afraid to tell her husband how he should conduct their economic transactions and tell him off it he is doing something wrong, suggesting she felt comfortable in the balance of power between her and her husband.

THE NATURE OF THE QUEEN

Up until now, the women of this investigation have been so-called private individuals, i.e. not royalty. They have provided a dual image of the status of women, with the two different cultures on the greater whole treating its women slightly differently (at least regarding the juridical realm). The queens of the Ptolemaic period constitute yet another image, one

[9] See Appendix 6

which is quite different from the other two. The main areas in which one can discuss royal women of this period is within their social and political status, rather than the economic status which has been discussed regarding non-royal women.

Another point which is interesting to mention is that of the great intrigues and violence that raged in the Ptolemaic house throughout most of its existence (Tyldesley, 2006, pp. 192-200). Particularly the latter half of the period was very bloody, and the reigns were not very long. Macurdy makes a rather cutting point concerning Cleopatra I: "She brought into the rapidly degenerating Ptolemaic stock a new vigour from the more active Seleucid blood and the results of it are seen in her daughter Cleopatra II." (Macurdy, 1985, p. 145). She here makes a remark about the incestuous marriages that occurred in every generation of the Ptolemaic line, and how this must have weakened the stock. To the modern scholar it must be quite difficult to understand how these brother-sister marriages seemed reasonable, and reactions must be rather strong when these incestuous unions create offspring. But, as always with a society that is very different from your own, it is important to remember that this was way the Ptolemies thought would be best to follow in order to keep the line pure and the children that came out of this union truly royal.

THE GREAT QUEENS

As was mentioned above, a Ptolemaic queen was most often the sister (or sometimes half-sister, niece or cousin) of the king. This would have shaped their upbringing drastically, as queen were expected to be educated and fit to assist her husband in ruling the country, or in some cases be able to take over should he be unable to rule.

There are a number of queens of the Ptolemaic house that stand out in history as women of strength and resourcefulness, and who have accomplishments that rival those of their male relatives. Macurdy states in her introduction that "it has often been noted that especially among the Lagids in Egypt the queens remained vigorous and capable at a time when the kings were degenerate and worthless." (Macurdy, 1985, p. 2).

Among the more notable queens is Arsinoe II, who had a great cult in Alexandria (set up by her husband, Ptolemy II). She is one of the three great Macedonian queens, according to Macurdy (the other two are Olympias of Macedon and Cleopatra VII) and she suggests that

Arsinoe II was involved directly with the governing of Egypt all the way from the beginning of her marriage to Ptolemy II (Macurdy, 1985, p. 118).

Berenice II, who ruled Egypt for five years while her husband, Ptolemy III, was away fighting in Syria, is another of the great queens. Of the decision by Ptolemy to leave to his wife the security of the country, Tyldesley says: “When Ptolemy III had left Egypt to lend support to his sister Berenice Phernopherus, wife of Antiochus II of Syria, he looked to the old Egyptian traditions, and left his wife ruling in an absence that stretched for five years.” (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 192)

The next of the great queens is Cleopatra I, who was the first to be co-regent with her underage son until he could rule Egypt by himself. Her husband was Ptolemy V, who was killed by his generals. Of her Tyldesley says: “Cleopatra I was a skilled and experienced diplomat. While she lived, Egypt sensibly showed little interest in foreign affairs.” (Tyldesley, 2006, p. 194). Perhaps in honour of his mother, Ptolemy VI had added “Philometor” onto his name after his father had been killed.

From Cleopatra I onwards, the situation in the Ptolemaic royal house grew more and more dangerous and chaotic. Reigns changed more rapidly and death was ripe within the walls of the Alexandrian palaces. At the same time, Macurdy notices, the power and importance of the queens grew (Macurdy, 1985, p. 145). This harkens back to what she said in her introduction, of how Ptolemaic queens blossomed under weak kings, as this would have given the women chance to prove themselves equally capable at ruling the country as their husbands and brothers. Also during this part of the period, every queen at some point was either ruler during their husband’s absence or co-regent with an underage king by their side (Macurdy, 1985, pp. 145-223: Tyldesley, 2006, pp. 194-200). This had previously not happened in the dynasty, but all the way through to Cleopatra VII, there is a strong queen beside the king.

So to what culture could one attribute the nature of these powerful women? If one looks at Egypt as whole during the Ptolemaic period, the “opposing” culture to the native Egyptian one is a generally Greek one. The Greek elements in the marriage contracts previously examined can be found in marriage contracts from most places in what the modern day call

Greece. But important to remember is that the Ptolemies were Macedonian, rather than Greek. Whether how "Greek" the Macedonians were has been up for debate for a long time, and it is hard to assess exactly the level of "Greekness" in a culture.
But as can be seen in the Background (see *General Overview on the Status of Women in the Greek World and Macedon*), women from Greece and Macedon were remarkably different. Even though the private women (i.e. non-royals) lived reasonably similar lives, women in the upper class had more power, though not necessary more right (remember Antipater's warning (Macurdy, 1985, p. 39)), than their sisters in Greece. There were queens in Macedon that ruled in very much the same way as that of their later sisters in Egypt (most notably Eurydice and Olympias).

The Ptolemies, on the other hand, worked hard to comply with the traditional Egyptian image of a royal house. The kings were portrayed both as a Macedonian king (a *basileus*), and as a pharaoh, with all the royal regalia necessary. So then can their treatment and view of royal women have been able to stay completely Macedonian? Tyldesley would have us thinking otherwise, with her comment on how Ptolemy III "looked to the old Egyptian traditions" when he left Berenice II in charge while he was away fighting in Syria. And indeed, this is a traditional Egyptian practice, of having a wife strong and resourceful enough to deputize for you whilst you are away (which has been discussed in great detail above). But if one look at the cultural heritage the Ptolemies brought with them, perhaps it was a mere coincidence that some Egyptian practices fitted in with their own.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

So what has one learned after this investigation? Can one answer the question posed in the introduction – how did the status of women change during the Ptolemaic period?

Jean Bingen (Bingen, 2007, p. 242-243, 246, 251) would have us believe that nothing really changed, other than a radical change of scenery for the Greeks. His theory that the two cultures, established and secure in themselves, had no real incentive to acculturise with each other and so thus did not mix and adapt aspects of each other's traditions that suited the ever changing society they were living in. He makes a very strong case that the two cultures, in particular their legal systems, lived side by side and carried on with their daily lives as if nothing had happened.

Evidence provided in this investigation could be angled in order to support this. The two marriage contracts, as has been discussed previously, are constructed according to general Greek standards at the time, although showing some signs of adaptation of Egyptian practices. But these small nuances could be explained away as being necessary in order to abide by the social rules in the new country, rather than an actual adoption of Egyptian life. The strongest pieces of evidence for this would be the request for a guardian, *P.Enteux.* 22[10], dated to the height of the Ptolemaic period, when one would assume that the acculturisation, if it did occur, would have taken place already. Equally the marriage contracts, for example in *P.Eleph* 1[11], being from very early on in the Ptolemaic period, the only detail that would allude to Egyptian practices would be that the husband is not allowed

[10] See Appendix 2

[11] See Appendix 1

to take another wife. In the second contract, *P.Tebtunis I* 104[12], which is much later in date, the Egyptian nuances are stronger, but again, this could only be an *increased* necessity to abide by social rules.

Looking at the royal house, Bingen's argument becomes even more convincing, as the nature of life in Alexandria would suggest that the Greeks lived very separate lives from the Egyptian in the Nile Valley. Alexandria was one of the greatest cities in the entire Mediterranean world, renowned for its intellectual prowess and richness in architecture and culture. It was a Mediterranean capital, rather than a culturally Egyptian capital. The Ptolemies lived a life of Mediterranean luxury. Being shrewd and able-bodied rulers, they used the Egyptian ruler cult in their own favour, and were thus portrayed to their subjects as Egyptian pharaohs that would uphold *maat* (balance) and protect Egypt from chaos. A supporter of Bingen would perhaps take the stand point of the Ptolemies being very clever politicians.

A strong case can also be made in contrary to Bingen's theory – namely that the two cultures did mix and adopted a few aspects of each other's practices, and perhaps not creating a singular Graeco-Egyptian culture, but certainly Hellenised Egyptians and Egyptianised Greeks. The evidence provided in this investigation can certainly be read in the way that would lead one to argue this point. The marriage contracts show signs of being influenced by the way the Egyptians conducted their legal joining of two people, and the letters[13] from Greek wives to their husbands show a more relaxed attitude concerning who would run the house should the master be out of town.

The standpoint this investigation would argue is that it, realistically, would have been impossible for two cultures living in such close proximity to each not to rub off on each other and adopt practices that would have made co-existence easier. Using a modern analogy, foreigners that move to a new country and start a life, albeit marrying someone of their own nationality, would find it difficult to live completely according to their cultural standards. Equally, those native inhabitants who would come into contact with these

[12] See Appendix 3

[13] See Appendix 4-6

foreigners would adopt some practices (in this modern day, food would be one of the main aspects that would be adopted).

On the lower echelons of society, it would be Egyptian practices that were the main influence, seeing as this social group would live out on the country side in the Nile Valley, where Egyptian culture remained strong. Greek colonialism were weaker felt further down south, and so the Greeks that did live there would have been a minority (more so than in the big cities).

In the upper classes, however, it would have been Greek culture that would have been the stronger of the two, seeing as the top of the pyramid was ruled by a Hellenistic dynasty. Greek was the main language of administration, and so in order to climb any social ladder, the Egyptians would have had to learn Greek, and thus been influenced by Greek elite culture.

The Romans, during the reign of Cleopatra VII, came to the conclusion that the Ptolemies were (despite their Hellenic heritage) synonymous with Egypt and Egyptian culture. This probably has a lot to do with the ferocious propaganda campaign staged by Augustus in order to justify going to war with the queen (Dundas, 2002: Reinhold, 1981), but one could imagine that the Ptolemies *were* considered to be Egyptian. After all, they had occupied Egypt for about three hundred years, and one would assume that it would have been rather difficult to remain completely Macedonian after all that time.

So to relate this back to women, in order to answer the question posed in the introduction, the status of women would have ultimately changed. The view of women in Egypt would have been heavily influenced, in particular in the upper classes, by the Greek practices of handling and dealing with the women. Their rights would have been limited, and certain concepts would have entered their mental vocabulary (e.g. the *kyrios*, women not being individual owners of property, etc.). But the view on Greek women would have equally changed (as is illustrated by the letters from wives to their husbands), where the more relaxed Egyptian standpoint would have influenced the Greek men to perhaps rely on their wives a little more. Marriages would have also changed (looking specifically at *P.Tebtunis I*

104[14]), and some Greeks would have stopped (officially at least) using concubines, which was very common amongst the upper Greek echelons elsewhere in the Mediterranean.

In conclusion, the status changed in the way of limited acculturisation, where aspects of two cultures influenced the other and ultimately changed the view of women.

APPENDIX

1. *P.ELEPH.* 1

MARRIAGE CONTRACT

311 BC

In the reign of Alexander son of Alexander, in the seventh year, in the satrapship of Ptolemy in the fourteenth year, in the month of Dios. Marriage contract of Herakleides and Demetria. Herakleides (the Temnitan) takes as his lawful wife Demetria the Koan, both being freeborn, from her father Leptines, Koan, and her mother Philotis, bringing clothing and ornaments to the value of 1000 drachmas, and Herakleides shall supply Demetria all that is proper for a freeborn wife, and we shall live together wherever it seems best to Leptines and Herakleides consulting in common. If Demetria is discovered doing any evil to the shame of her husband Herakleides, she shall be deprived of all that she brought, but Herakleides shall prove whatever he alleges against Demetria before three men whom they both accept. It shall not be lawful for Herakleides to bring home another wife in insult of Demetria nor have any children by another woman nor do evil against Demetria on any pretext. If Herakleides is discovered doing any of these things and Demetria proves it before three men whom they both accept, Herakleides shall give back to Demetria the dowry of 1000 drachmas which she brought and shall moreover forfeit 1000 drachmas of the silver

[14] Which specifically states that the husband is not allowed another wife, a concubine, whether girl or boy, or to reside in a house which his wife has not right over

coinage of Alexander. Demetria and those aiding Demetria to exact payment shall have the right of execution, as derived from a legally decided action, upon the person of Herakleides and upon all the property of Herakleides both on land and on water. This contract shall be valid in ever respect, wherever Herakleides may produce it against Demetria, or Demetria and those aiding Demetria to exact payment may produce it against Herakleides, as if the agreement had been made in the place. Herakleides and Demetria shall have the right to keep the contracts severally in their own custody and to produce them against each other. Witnesses: Kleon, Gelan; Antikrates, Temnitan; Lysis, Temnitan; Dionysios, Temnitan; Aristomachos, Cyrenaean; Aristodokos, Koan.

(Taken from Bagnall & Derow, 2004, p. 239)

2. *P. ENTEUX.* 22

REQUEST FOR A GUARDIAN

218 BC

To King Ptolemy greeting from Nikaia daughter of Nikias, Persian. My husband Pausanias died in the 23rd year, leaving a will of the same year, of the months of Panemos [...in which] he designates...naios his son as my kyrios. It has now happened that he has died in the 4th year, in the month of Daisios which is Hathyr of the Egyptians, and I have no relative who can be registered as my [kyrios. Therefore, so that] the legacy to me from my husband may not be dissipated for that reason, [since I have] no kyrios with whom I can make arrangements about these things, I ask you, O king, to order Diophanes the strategos to me as kyrios Demetrios the Thracian, a hundred-aroura holder of the troop of Ptolemaios son of Eteoneus of the ...the hipparchy, to whom Pausanias married his sister, and for the strategos to make written records about these things, so that this may be in the official register; and since, being old and getting infirm, I am not able to make the trip to Crocodopolis, I have sent the aforesaid Demetrios to deliver the petition, for Diophanes to write to Dioskourides the epistates, to make a description of me and of the kyrios whom I am requesting, and to send them to Diophanes. If this is done, I shall have benefited, O king, from your kindness. Farewell.

(Response) To Dioskourides. Taking some of the elders of the village go to Nikaia and if_, their description, and send me a report. Year 4, Daisios 27, Hathyr 29.
(Docket) Year 4, Daisios 27, Hathyr 29. Nikaia, daughter of Nikias, Persian, about a request.

(Taken from Bagnall & Derow, 2004, p. 240)

3. *P.TEBTUNIS* I 104

MARRIAGE CONTRACT
Early 2nd century

In the twenty-second year of the reign of Ptolemy also called Alexander, the god Philometor, the priesthood of the priest of Alexander and the other priests as listed in Alexandria, the eleventh of the month Xandicus which is the eleventh of the month Mecheir at Cerceosiris in the district of Polemon in the Arsinoite nome.

Philiscus, son of Appollonius, Persian of the Apidone, acknowledges to Apollonia (also known as Cellauthis), daughter of Heraclides, Persian, with her brother Apollonius as guardian, that he has received from her 2 talents and 4000 drachmas in copper coinage as her dowry agree to by him. Apollonia is to remain with Philiscus, obeying him as a wife should her husband, owning their property in common. Philiscus is to provide everything necessary both clothing and whatever else if appropriate for a wedded wife, whether he is at home or away, according to the standard of their common resources.

It shall not be lawful for Philiscus to bring home for himself another wife in addition to Apollonia nor to maintain a female concubine nor a little boyfriend not to beget children by another woman while Apollonia is still alive, nor to dwell in another house over which

Apollonia has no rights, nor to throw her out, nor to insult her or treat her badly, nor to alienate any of their common property to defraud Apollonia. If he is shown to be doing any of these things, or not be providing her with necessities and clothing and other things as written, Philiscus is to pay the dowry of 2 talents and 4000 drachmas of copper ion full to Apollonia, immediately.

In the same way it shall not be lawful for Apollonia to be absent for a night or a day from the house of Philiscus without the knowledge of Philiscus, nor to have intercourse with another man nor to ruin the common household nor to dishonour Philiscus in whatever brings dishonour to a husband.

And if Apollonia of her own free will wishes to separate from Philiscus, Philiscus is to return the dowry unaltered within then days from the day the demand is made. If he does not return it, as written, he is to forfeit one and a half times the amount of the dowry to her immediately.

Witnesses:

Dionysius, son of Patron

Dionysius, son of Hermaïscus

Theon, son of Ptolemy

Didymus, son of Ptolemy

Dionysius, son of Dionysius

Heraclius, son of Diocles (all six Macedonians of the Epigone)

Guardian of the contract: Dionysius

Signed: I, Philiscus, son of Apollonius, Persian of the Epigone, acknowledge that I have the dowry of 2 talents and 4000 drachmas of copper as written above, and I have deposited the contract, which is valid, with Dionysius. Dionysius, son of Hermaïscus, the aforesaid, wrote for him [Philiscus] wince he is illiterate.

(Taken from Pomeroy, 1984, pp. 87-89)

4. P.BAD. 4.48

LETTER

127 BC

Location written: probably Alexandria

Location of addressee: unknown

Location found: Hipponon (Herakleopolite nome)

Greek

Dionysia to Theon

"Dionysia to Theon her lord, greeting and health. I continually keep the best remembrance of you for all good, and I pray to the gods that I may receive you healthy in many ways. Because you both rescued us from enemies and again left us and went away against enemies. Know then, as you gave instruction to carry out and sell the unnecessary goods, when I brought out the mattress, Neon laid hands on it in the agora, and with great violence seized it. It was judged for me that I had the right, since you were absent rather than

present, to petition the city governor. But when (after he had done such awful things to me) he appeared with me, it was decided that it [the mattress] should be sealed up and lie in the archeion until you are present. For he said that you were not on military duty and I was not military household, but that you had sailed upriver because of work and you were not on royal orders. I have been anxious to no ordinary degree because Marsyas sent a letter, but you have not written anything to me. You will give me pleasure even now if you write back with news of yourself, so that I may be free from worry, please. Take care of yourself, so that I may embrace you in good health. Greet Marsyas and Ammonios. Aline and her children greet you. Farewell. Year 44, Phaophi 5. Above all, I bid you remember how you left me alone like the dogs, and you did not abide by what you exhorted. Even now, then, remember us.

(Address): Deliver to Theon from Dionysia."

Location of papyrus: Heidelberg Institute fur Papyrologie, inv. G603

(Taken from Bagnall, 2009, p. 107)

5. UPZ 1.59

LETTER

186 BC

Location written: unknown

Location of addressee: Memphis, Sarapieion

Location found: Memphis, Sarapieion

Greek

Isias to Hephaistion: Time to come home!

"Isias to her brother Hephaistion, greeting. If this letter finds you well and with other things going right, it would be as I continuously pray to the gods; and I myself am well, and the child, and all those in your household, who continually remember you. When I received you letter from Horos, in which you announce you are in detention in the Sarapieion in Memphis, for the news that you are well I straightaway thanked the gods; but about your

not coming home, when all the others who had been detained there have come, I am ill-pleased, because after having piloted myself and your child though such bad times and been driven to every extremity owing to the price of wheat, I tough that now at least, once you got home, I would enjoy some rest. But you have not even thought about coming home, nor given any regard to our situation, how was want in everything even while you were still here, not to mention this long laps of time and such crises, during which you have sent us nothing. Moreover, since Horos, who delivered the letter, reported that you have been released from detention, I am thoroughly ill-pleased, nonetheless, since your mother is also distresses, please both for her sake and for ours return to the city, is nothing more pressing hold you back. You will please me by taking care of your body so as to be healthy. (second hand) Farewell. (first hand) Year 2, Epeiph 30."

Location of papyrus: London, British Library, Papyrus 42

(Taken from Bagnall, 2009, p. 111)

6. BGU 4.1205, cols. ii-iii

LETTER

28 BC

Location written: probably Herakleopolite nome

Location of addressee: probably Memphis

Location found: Abusir el-Melek (Herakleopolite nome)

Greek

Isidora to Asklepiades: instructions

"Received Year 3, Hathyr 8.

Isidora to Asklas her brother, greeting and health always, just as I pray. I have received on the 27th the letters which you had written via - . It's nice of you to try to make me responsible for the lentils and the peas. For you are not even consistent with yourself, since

you have written to Paniskos that we sold (them). For we have not sold them; but do as you wish. Only bear up bravely in the reckoning and in the collection, so that when Paniskos arrives in Memphis you don't fall into difficulties. I sent you the price of the bed rug, 140 drachmas, but you should know, if you come, who received it. It is not… Give Alexion the dyer on my account 100 drachmas for a bed rug for the child Artemas, solid, not empty. Do not detain Achilleus, but give him the two boats for he is going to Hennopolis,; and take care of yourself, so that you may be well. Farewell. Year 3. Phaophi 28."

- "Isidora does not hesitate to tell Asklepiades in brusque tones that he is wrong about this or that item."

Location of papyrus: formerly Berlin Staatliche Museum, Papyrussamlung, now in Cairo, the Egyptian Museum

(Taken from Bagnall, 2009, p. 116)

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