



The Great Revolt of the Egyptians (205–186 BCE)

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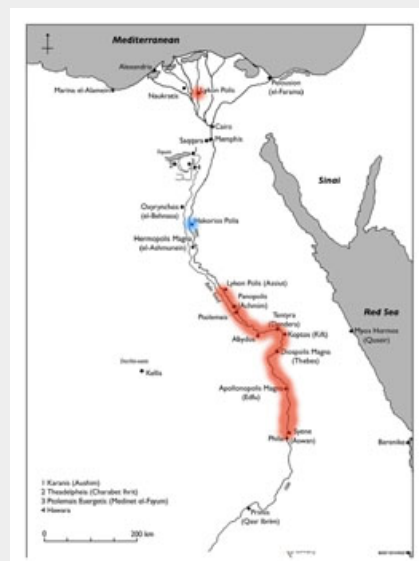
Introduction

With the invasion of Alexander the Great (333 BC) a Greek regime is established in Egypt, which will last until the Arab invasion a thousand years later (640 AD), first under the Macedonian dynasty of the Ptolemies, from 30 BC onwards under Roman and Byzantine emperors. For more than a millennium the land of the Nile is directed from the Greek city of Alexandria, situated on a peninsula before the coast of Egypt, a bit like New York before the coast of the US. The language spoken at the royal court and used by the royal administration is different from that spoken and understood by the overwhelming majority of the population.

Although the Ptolemies were officially recognized as pharaohs by the temples and even crowned by the high priest of Memphis, although they supported Egyptian religion by subsidizing the cults and building great temples (see below, text 2), they remained fundamentally a foreign dynasty. Starting from 246 BC there are several native uprisings. During the most successful of these, all **Upper Egypt** revolted against Alexandria for almost twenty years (206–186 BC) under the leadership of two native pharaohs, called Hyrgonaphor (Haronnophris) and Chaonnophris. Though no monuments have been preserved of these last native Egyptian pharaohs, we are able to reconstruct the main events and even the ideological background of the revolt on the basis of a very diverse source material, both in Greek and in Egyptian.

Here I will look at the revolt, mainly on the basis of the texts in English translation, from three different angles:

- I. The course of the revolt, the military aspect
- II. The causes of the revolt
- III. The results of the revolt or the Ptolemaic restoration



Rebel controlled areas of Egypt.
Image courtesy of Willy Clarysse.



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I. A forgotten war reconstructed

Text 1

Polybius, *Historiae* V 107.1 and XIV 107.1

The war against the Egyptians started shortly after the battle at Raphia (in 217 BC) in which Ptolemy IV by gaining an unexpected victory on the Seleucid Antiochos III managed to keep control over Palestine. By arming the Egyptians for his war against Antiochos, Ptolemy had an excellent idea for the short time, but he did not take into account the future. Priding themselves upon their victory at Raphia, the soldiers were no longer disposed to obey orders, but they sought out a leader and figure-head, in the opinion that they could come up for themselves. And shortly afterwards, they did indeed do so.

Perhaps some of my readers will wonder why elsewhere I dealt with the successive events of each year separately, in the case of Egypt alone I give on the present occasion a narrative extending over a long period. We did this for the following reasons. After the end of the war for Coele-Syria king Ptolemy Philopator entirely abandoned the path of virtue and took to a life of dissipation such as I have described above. Late in his reign he was forced by circumstances into the above-mentioned war, which, apart from the mutual savagery and lawlessness of the combatants, contained nothing worthy of note, no pitched battle, no naval battle, no siege. It therefore struck me that my narrative would be easier for me to write and for my readers to follow if I gave my account not by merely alluding every year to small events not worth serious attention, but by giving once and for all a life-like picture so to speak of the king's character.

The war against the Egyptians is one of the first historically documented guerilla wars, but at the same time it is a forgotten war because Greek historians, in the footsteps of Thucydides, considered it unfit for history; they needed clear-cut military and political turning points and this war apparently did not give these.

The Rosetta stone, dated 196 BC, is contemporary with the great revolt. It is an honorary decree, in the Greek tradition, dressed up by the Egyptian priests for king Ptolemy V after his victory of another native revolt, in the Delta. The young king is honored as a savior, a victor and a god. The text shows that in the early second century BC the Ptolemies had not only lost control in the South, but even in part of the Delta, close to Alexandria. The royal victory is brought about by a long and difficult siege of the city, contradicting Polybius' statement above that there were no pitched battles nor sieges. Again this is a forgotten war: the Rosetta stone duly celebrates the royal victory in the North, but does not even mention that at this very moment the whole South was in the hands of other rebels.

Text 2

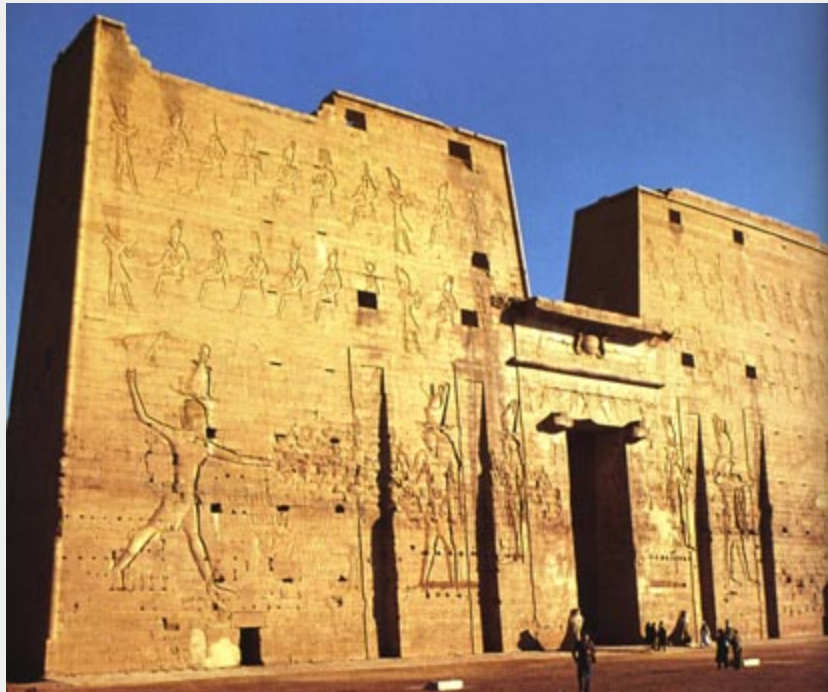
The hieroglyphic building inscriptions on the **temple of Edfu** stand on the lower register of the *naos* and the enclosure wall.

The engraving within the temple happened in a perfect manner with the protocol of his majesty, the images of the gods and goddesses and of the sacred objects of the temple. The great door wing and the gates with double wings of the temple rooms were finished in the 16th year of his majesty (= 207/206). Then trouble arose, because ignorant rebels interrupted in the South the works on the Throne-of-the-gods (= the temple of Edfu). The rebellion raged in the South until year 19 of the king of Upper and Lower Egypt, "the heir of the gods Philopatores," the son of Re "Ptolemy, loved by Ptah," now deceased, the god Epiphanes, the strong one, the king who chased disorder out of the country (= 187/186), and his name was carved (in the temple). The door wing of its great gate was erected and so were the door wings of the temple rooms (3 February 176).



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The building inscriptions, of which only a fragment is given in translation here, provide a basic chronological framework for the period 237 – 176, seen from the point of view of the Edfu temple. The first stone of the temple was laid on 23 August 237 BC, according to the text this was done by Ptolemy III himself. Exactly twenty-five years later, in 212 BC, the inner sanctuary or naos, the holy-of-holies, was finished. In year 16 of IV Philopator (207/206 BC) everything was ready to place the new gates, but as a result of the revolt it took another thirty years, until the 5th year of Ptolemy VI Philometor (176 BC), before the gates were effectively put in place. The revolt itself lasted until year 19 of Epiphanes, i.e. 186 BC.



Temple of Edfu

Photograph courtesy of Willy Clarysse.

Text 3

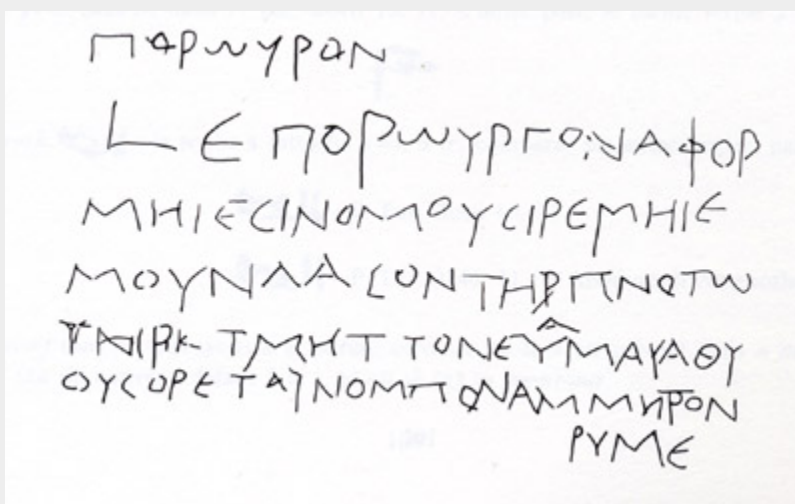
Egyptian graffito in Greek letters in the mortuary temple of Seti I at Abydos; best edition in P.W. Pestman, J. Quaegebeur, R. L. Vos, *Recueil de textes démotiques et bilingues* (Leiden: 1977): 11.

*Year 5 of pharaoh Hyrgonaphor
loved by Isis and Osiris, loved by A-
mon-Re king of the gods, the great god*

This graffito, written in the Egyptian language but in the Greek alphabet, is carved in the door opening of the Osiris chapel in the mortuary temple of Seti I at Abydos. In the same temple a Greek graffito was found in which a certain Philokles of Troizen (a city in the Peloponnesos) honors the local god Sarapis (Osiris). Philokles took part in the

siege of Abydos in 199 BC on the side of Ptolemy V, whereas the Egyptian graffito was certainly carved by a partisan of Hyrgonaphor/Haronnophris. In the fifth year of Haronnophris (189/188 BC) the revolt had apparently reached Middle Egypt.

This is the oldest Egyptian text written in the Greek alphabet. It shows how Egyptian was pronounced more than 400 years before the language was systematically transliterated by means of Greek letters, the alphabet and language known as Coptic. Until then the hieroglyphic script—and also its cursive form, demotic—noted only the consonantal skeleton of the words, and even that only partially, because many signs were ideograms, i.e. pictures (cf. our signposts for traffic or our use of @ in e-mail addresses). Thus the word pharaoh, written in hieroglyphs with the signs for "house" and "great," is here rendered by PORW, later in Coptic as PRRO. In this text, as in the demotic act prescripts, the native pharaohs are put under the protection of Isis, Osiris and especially *Amon-Ra-sonter*, "Amon-Re king of the gods," whose main temple was that in Karnak.



Egyptian graffito in Greek letters in the mortuary temple of Seti I at Abydos.

In P.W. Pestman, J. Quaegebeur, R. L. Vos, *Recueil de textes démotiques et bilingues* (Leiden: 1977): 11.

Text 4

SB XXIV 15972 (Greek papyrus, Trinity College Dublin, Pap. Gr. 274)

-- of Lykon polis -- found to be in the margin of error --- [in addition to the survey carried out] by Herakleides and his staff -- 22 1/32 arouras which were discovered, i.e. 1/3 1/8 part of -- of Ophiertaios, 228 1/2 1/4 1/8 1/32 arouras, 15 1/2 1/8 1/32 arouras, -- which have not been overlooked -- for confiscation by the officials of the land-tax so that the entire surface of the land in the nome is measured. From the time of the revolt of Chaonnophris it happened that most of the farmers were killed and the land has gone dry. When, therefore, as is customary, the land which did not have owners was registered among the "ownerless land," some of the survivors encroached upon the land bordering their own and got hold of more than was allowed. Their names are unknown since nobody pays taxes for this land to the treasury. But of the cultivated area nothing has been overlooked, because the land-measurement of what is sown has taken place each year, and the taxes are being executed ---

In this report on problems with the tax collection on agricultural land about 186 BC, the revolt, which seems to be over by that time, plays an important role. The rebels have apparently penetrated northwards until the area of Assiut.

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During a battle there most inhabitants (*laoi* is an indication for the native population) of an unknown village have been killed. This massacre, however, is only an aside for the writer of the letter. Both he and his correspondent are royal officials, and they want to make sure that part of the village land, which is now cultivated by other farmers, who are not officially registered as owners and do not therefore pay taxes to the crown, is brought into account for the fisc. Clearly the administration is working hard to recover its hold on the land after the revolt, which is called here *tarache*, i.e. a period of confusion.

The fragmentary state of the first two lines of the text does not allow to see how the different figures relate to one another, but 229 arouras or 63 hectares is quite a large amount of land, and the administrative control goes down to small areas up to 1/32 aroura, less than 100 m².



Report on problems with the tax collection on agricultural land about 186 BC (*SB XXIV 15972*).

Photograph courtesy of Willy Clarysse.

Act protocols

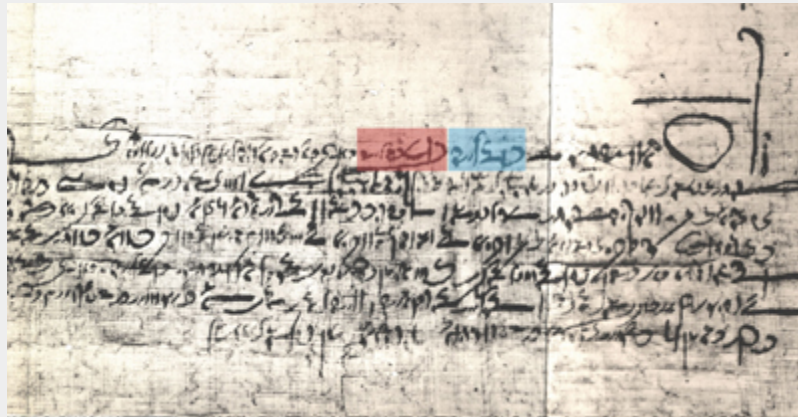
The dating formulae in notarial documents show how the revolt spread in the South, and especially in Thebes. Whenever the Ptolemies are master, the Greek and Egyptian notaries date according to the regnal years of the Ptolemies (and the eponymous priests of Alexander the Great in Alexandria), when the rebels take over the Greek notaries disappear and their Egyptian colleagues date according to the years of the rebel kings Har-wennefer (Haronnophris) and Ach-wennefer (Chaonnophris). During the twenty-year period 206–186 BC there are in



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Thebes several changes of regime; the notaries (and the temples) seem to have adapted rather easily to the change of masters. On the basis of the dates in notarial contracts and the receipts of taxes paid to the Ptolemies a tentative reconstruction of the events becomes possible:

- 207/206: beginning of the revolt in Edfu
- 207 September: last tax receipt dated to a regnal year of Ptolemy IV
- 205: Haronnophris is crowned pharaoh in Thebes
- 200–199: counter-offensive of the Ptolemies and death of Haronnophris
- 199: Chaonnophris is recognized as pharaoh in Thebes
- 199: second counter offensive? Ptolemaios V is again recognized in Thebes; perhaps Chaonnophris goes north to Lycopolis and cuts off the Greek troops in the South
- 194: Chaonnophris is recognized as pharaoh in Thebes
- 191 September: Thebes is again Ptolemaic; beginning of public sales of land; Chaonnophris flees south, perhaps to Nubia
- 186: final defeat of Chaonnophris by the general Komanos



A Theban act prescript with *Pharaoh* (in blue) *Anch-wen-nefer* (in red), i.e. Chaonnophris, in the dating formula.
L'Archivio demotico da Deir el-Medineh, ed. G. Botti (Florence 196): 2, pl. 3.

Tax receipts

There are no tax receipts on ostraca in the South for the period 205–186, neither in Greek, nor in demotic. There are no indications that the native pharaohs ever set up an administration capable of collecting taxes on a regular basis, as did the Ptolemies. This may show that their rule was never established long and securely enough to organize properly the conquered territories.



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Text 5

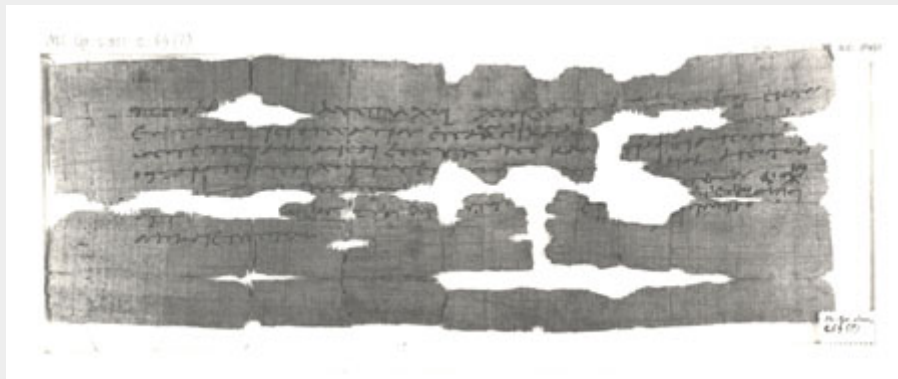
SB VI 9367 (papyri in the Bodleian Library, Oxford)

The Greek papyri published in 1952 constitute a small archive of official correspondence dated between 30 May and 26 August 187. We here present one text, as an example of the whole group.

Antiochos to Apollonios, greetings. As was ordered by Protarchos the governor of the Thebaid and Harendotes the royal scribe, we have loaded from the granary in the Pathyrites in order to transport it to the granary in Syene for rations of the soldiers at this place, into the Hakoris-boat of Hare[---], on which Harmiysis is captain and which has a capacity of 700 artabas, from the harvest of the 18th year, 600 artabas of clean wheat, measured with the measure of 29 choinikes, which is calibrated to the bronze measure -- Help in receiving all this and write to Lysimachos, the head of the granary.

Farewell, Year 18, Pachon 22.

This text, together with more than twenty similar papyri of the same find, illustrates the provisioning of Ptolemaic troops towards the end of the revolt. They are receipts by the director of the granary at Syene (Aswan) for large amounts of grain, which were sent to him by boats from several nomes of Upper Egypt (Dendera, Koptos, Thebes, Pathyris) "for the provisioning of the soldiers." Only a tiny part of this archive is preserved (as is clear from the many fragments that cannot be placed), but what is preserved proves that in three months' time at least 12,000 artabas, i.e. 500,000 liters, of grain were shipped in this operation. If the monthly allowance of a soldier is estimated, roughly, at 1 artaba (ca. 40 liters) this would allow the upkeep of 4,000 soldiers during three months. It is in fact not unlikely that the garrison on the island of Elephantine, opposite Aswan, held out all along and that the Ptolemies never lost control over the Nile during the revolt.



Text illustrating the provisioning of Ptolemaic troops towards the end of the revolt (SB VI 9367).

Image courtesy of Willy Clarysse.



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Text 6

Second decree of Philae: demotic and hieroglyphic text on the outside wall of the *mammisi* (temple of royal birth) at **Philae**. The best edition is that of W.M. Müller, *Egyptological Researches III. The bilingual decrees of Philae* (Washington 1920), pp. 59–88.



Temple at Philae.

Photograph courtesy of Willy Clarysse.

Decree passed by the high priests, the prophets, the priests who perform in the temple the clothing of the gods, the scribes of sacred books, the scribes of the House of Life and the other priests of the temples in Upper and Lower Egypt, who have assembled in the fortress of Alexander (= Alexandria).

When it was announced to his Majesty through the mouth of a friend of his Majesty, who loves the king, by the chief of the cavalry Aristonikos son of Aristonikos, concerning Komanos, who is one of the first friends of his Majesty: "A battle took place in the South in the area of Thebes with the impious man, the fiend of the gods Hr-wnf and the troops of the Ethiopians, who had united with him, slaying them, seizing as captive this wicked men alive,

[follows a section on the benefactions of king Ptolemy V to the temples and the gods]

The rebel against the gods, Hr-wnf, he who had made war in Egypt, gathering insolent people from all districts on account of their crimes, they did terrible things to the governors of the nomes, they desecrated (?) the temples, they



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damaged (?) the divine statues, they molested (?) the priests and suppressed (?) the offerings on the altars and in the shrines. They sacked (?) the towns and their population, women and children included, committing all kinds of crimes in the time of anarchy. They stole the taxes of the nomes, they damaged the irrigation works.

The king of Upper and Lower Egypt Ptolemy, loved by Ptah, has given many orders and showed considerable care for protecting the temples. He stationed Greek troops and soldiers of people who had come to Egypt, who obeyed his orders, being joined with him and being like people born with him. They did not allow the rebels, who had instigated war against him and against his father, to approach (?). His Majesty caused that great quantities of silver and gold came to the land to bring troops to Egypt, money from the taxes of the nomes, in order to protect the temples of Egypt against the impious men who violated them.

On the 3rd of Mesore it was announced to his Majesty: Hr-wnf has been captured alive in the battle against him in year 19, on 24 Epeiph. His son was killed, the commander of the army of impious men, together with the leaders of the Ethiopians who fought on his side. He was brought to the place where the king was. He was punished by death for the crimes, which he had committed, and so were the other criminals, those who had rebelled in the sedition, which they had made.

This priestly decree, dated 186 BC is preserved in demotic and hieroglyphic script on the wall of the *mammisi* (temple of royal birth) in Philae, and on an unpublished stela in the Cairo Museum. But the texts in Philae are heavily damaged because in the later second century the wall was decorated again, with new scenes, which were cut through the old texts. Our translation combines demotic and hieroglyphic fragments and the **name of the rebel** has suffered "defamatory baptism": the meaningful Chaonnophris ("may Onnophris live," see below) is truncated into the meaningless Char-wenef. A similar fate is suffered by the tomb robbers in the Ramesside period (cf. P.Vernus, *Affairs and Scandals in Ancient Egypt*). The final defeat of Chaonnophris by Komanos takes place "in the land of the South in the district of Thebes," on 27 August and a mere ten days later the news is already known in Alexandria, nearly a thousand km north.



Hr-wnf twice truncated and followed by the prisoner determinative.

E. Bernard, Inscriptions grecques et latines d'Akoris, Bibliothèque d'étude 103 (Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire, 1988), pl. 12.



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II. Causes of the revolt

Polybius (see text 1 above) adduces the debauched way of life of king Ptolemy IV as a reason for the problems of the Ptolemaic kingdom. This moral approach to history is typical of both ancient and modern historians up to the present day, though it is clear that the morality of the king and his court has no direct influence on the well-being of the state.

More important is the military explanation given in the same passage at the time of the battle of Raphia in 217, when Egypt was threatened by an invasion of Antiochos III, the king of Syria, native Egyptians were armed and trained in order to fight in the Macedonian phalanx. They became self-confident and, when they found a leader, they revolted.

Modern historians have looked for economic reasons. They noticed the devaluations of the Egyptian silver coinage at exactly this period and guessed that the high costs of the war against Antiochos (thousands of mercenaries were hired in Greece) lead to rising taxation and monetary problems and finally to revolt on a large scale.

A long-standing discussion (recently taken up again by Werner Huss) opposed these social and economic motives to nationalistic, anti-colonial feelings amongst the Egyptians. Texts such as *Oracle of the Potter* show that anti-Greek (or anti-Alexandrian) feelings did indeed play a role, but probably the privileged status of the Greeks from a social and economic point of view was more important.

The Rosetta stone and the Philae decree are written by Egyptian priests and stress that the rebels destroyed the temples. The reality of this is confirmed by the fact that no temple building by the native pharaohs is attested and by some papyri, which explicitly mention that temples have been robbed. Let us not forget that the major temples played a role in the administration of the land both before and after the revolt: they were simply part of the system. Where the Ptolemies ruled, the temples participated in the royal cult of the Ptolemaic family. The temples received their land, the priests received their privileges and wages from the government. Therefore the large temples automatically collaborated with the Ptolemaic regime.

Not all Egyptians took part in the revolt. In the city of Tenis Hakoris, an Egyptian notable, clearly took the side of the Ptolemies, advertising his choice in a large Greek inscription high up on the rock-temple of Isis. At that time (196 BC) his province constituted probably the southern frontier of Ptolemaic rule. Later his son Euphron is given a Greek name and becomes a member of the hellenized upper class.

Sometimes the opposition between the two old Egyptian capitals Memphis and Thebes is adduced: Hyrgonaphor is "loved by Amon-Re, king of the gods" (see text 3 above), whereas the Ptolemies stressed their link with Ptah, they were crowned in Memphis in his temple and stood in close relationship with the Memphite high priests. The notaries of Thebes side with whatever regime is in power and do not seem to be particularly interested in politics.

Ancient nationalism did exist, but it is usually colored by a religious inspiration. In our opinion the names of the Egyptian pharaohs were well-chosen to present a messianic message to the native population. This point of view needs some further explanation.

"Hor" (which becomes Har- in compounds and receives a nominative ending Hor-os in Greek) is the archetypical royal god. He is often represented with the white and red crown as king of the whole of Egypt. Of the five official names of the traditional pharaoh, the very first one identifies him with the god Hor. **In the first dynasties** this was in fact the only name of the king. In mythology Horos is the son of Osiris, the last god-on-earth, who was killed by his wicked brother Seth. Seth cut up his brother's body into pieces and buried these all over Egypt, but Isis

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succeeded in puzzling together the body of her husband Osiris and to receive a son from her dead husband. This son, Har-po-chrates or "Horus-the-child" was hidden in the Delta marshes and threatened by Seth, but in the end he vanquished his bad uncle and inherited the kingdom of his father Osiris, succeeding his divine father as the first human king on earth. Osiris himself became king of the underworld.



Stelae depicting the Horus-name of King Den (Dynasty 1?)

The story is well-known but one important detail should be added: when Osiris is presented as the divine king on earth, he is often addressed with his second name *Wn-nfr*, "the good being," rendered in Greek as Onnophris. In the Late Period, when Persians and Greeks have taken over the throne of pharaoh, the name ***Wn-nfr*** is often written in a royal cartouche, as if the priests wanted to say: our real king is not Xerxes, Alexander or Ptolemy, but it is the divine king Osiris. It is this divine name that the rebel pharaohs used as their throne name: Hor-*onnophris* is at the same time Horos and Osiris, Cha-*onnophris* renders Egyptian Ankh-wen-nefer "Onnophris is (still) alive" or "(long) live Onnophris." In short the names of the rebel pharaohs contained a Messianic program of a return to the golden age, at the same time when other peoples in the Mediterranean were also expecting their delivery through a Messiah: not only the Jews, who eagerly waited for a king, but also the Romans, as is clear from Vergil's fourth Eclogue, celebrating the birth of a child and the *Saturnia aetas*, the golden era. Egypt belonged to the same world, where nationalistic feelings were expressed through religious imagery.



Wn-nfr written in a royal cartouche.



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III. Consequences of the revolt

Text 7

SB XX 14659 (= R.Scholl, *Corpus der ptolemäischen Sklaventexte* [Stuttgart 1990], 9).

7 January 197 BC

Athenodoros to the notaries, greetings. Below you will find a copy of the memorandum of Pyrrhos the praktor. Register therefore, in accordance with this, for Thaubastis the purchase of a female slave for Thaubastis. To the minister of finances Athenodoros from Pyrrhos.

*Thaubastis daughter of Sokrates, a Syrian, with as guardian Apollonios, a Cretan of the company of Anthemis, staff-officer of the elite armoured troops, has declared in accordance with the decree issued in year 8, on the 2nd of Phaophi, concerning those who own Egyptian slaves as a result of the revolt in the land, Thasion, about eighteen years, of whom she says that she is an Egyptian. Thaubastis has made a payment at the bank of Philippos on the account of the king on 15 Xandikos of year 8: 500 bronze drachmas and fifty-two drachmas agio and the tax on the purchase of slaves resulting from this: 110 dr. 5 ob. Please, order that the purchase be registered on the name of Thaubastis, about thirty years, small, with honey-colored complexion, round face and a scar on the right cheek, with as guardian Apollonios son of Apollonios, about forty years, of medium stature, with honey-colored complexion, bald forehead, protruding ears and a scar on the forehead on the left side, of the street of Arsinoe Euergetis. (The purchase) concerns Thasion, eighteen years, small, with dark complexion, a round face, recognizable by several scars.
Year 8, Hathyr 26, Daisios 4.*

In 197 BC Thaubastis daughter of Sokrates declares possession of a young Egyptian slave Thasion, whom she had bought from the fisc on a public auction (through the *praktor*, a kind of bailiff), for 500 drachma, to which was added a twenty-percent purchase tax. Notwithstanding her Egyptian name Thaubastis is clearly at home in a Greek military setting; Thasion has been enslaved as a result of "the revolt in the land." The buyer Thaubastis has paid through the bank; the *praktor* informs the minister of finances that the price of purchase has been received and the ministerial offices instruct the notaries to register the purchase and make it legally valid. The legal basis of the enslavement is formed by a royal decree promulgated 198 BC. This shows that the sale was not an isolated case, but the result of a conscious policy against the rebels: both the rebels themselves and other members of their family were enslaved and sold by the government to the highest bidders.

Consequences for the temples:

In 186, immediately after the revolt was crushed, there are more than ten cases where temple land is sold by an *cy* pr^c3 = the cry of pharaoh = the public auction.

Temples are not only religious institutions for the cult of the gods, but also economic organizations and wheels in the administrative machine. There is no opposition between church and state, as with pope and emperor in Medieval Europe, but the temples were part of the organization of the state. In the South of Egypt the king collects his taxes through the temples: a large part of the land in Upper Egypt nominally belongs to the gods. The farmers who cultivate this land pay part of the produce to the local temple. Here it is used for the cult of the gods (and for the wages of the priests), but the temple itself cedes part of its produce, in grain, papyrus, fine linen etc. to the king. After the revolt things change and now a "modern" Greek administration is set up, also in the South, i.e. taxes are collected directly through the tax administration, not indirectly through the temples. But even then the temples preserve most of the land they used to have. The public auctions do not take away the land from the temples, but sell the long-term right to cultivate it to the highest bidder. The farmers cultivating temple land felt as if they were still owners of the land, under the general supervision of the temple. But in the new system they pay their rent/tax no



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longer to the temple administration, but to the royal administration. The king then passes on part of what he receives to the temples, which therefore lose part of their power in the process.

Consequences for the soldiers:

Four thousand veterans receive land in the Fayum in 186 BC. At the same time new garrisons are established in the area South of Thebes, where the mountain (*gebel*) comes close to the Nile, in Pathyris and Krokodilon polis: a military build-up against possible insurrections.

Consequences for the administration:

The administration is more closely linked to the royal court. All major officials now receive court titles, such as "body-guard, friend of the king, cousin of the king," which depend on their function. They become nominally courtiers in Alexandria and personally linked to their king: in that way they become the king's representatives in the countryside. At the same time the king is omnipresent now in the titulature of his officials.

A governor-general for Upper-Egypt is installed, a kind of super-governor with extensive military functions. The first such governor is Komanos, the man who according to the Philae decree finally crushed the revolt.

Amnesty decree of 186 (P.Kroll):

Another positive measure by the government is a general amnesty for fugitives and policemen, with a remittance of debts for farmers of royal land, for owners of vineyards, orchards and bathhouses. Abuses of officials are curbed: it is forbidden now to put a person in prison for private causes; instead the accused should be brought before the judge. This is probably the oldest form of *habeas corpus* in history. I doubt that it has much practical impact, but from a juridical point of view it was a great step forward in the direction of human rights, allowing me to finish this survey of a rather depressing period in hellenistic history with a positive note.

Bibliography

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