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1:30–4:00 P.M., Marriott Hotel, Room Independence I

Session 20: Greco-Egyptian Religion in Light of the Demotic Sources

Franziska Naether, *University of Leipzig*, and Gil H. Renberg, *Institute for Advanced Study*, **Organizers**

This panel aims to explore aspects of religion in Greco-Roman Egypt that are best understood by studying the Greek and Demotic documents together, demonstrating the importance of employing this inclusive approach to various aspects of post-Pharaonic Egyptian culture and history. Though focusing on religion, the papers will touch on other sub-fields — including Hellenistic and Roman history, historiography, the ancient novel, epistolography, ethnicity and bilingualism, and onomastics — that likewise are illuminated by some of the 15000 edited Demotic texts.
Additionally, the panel will showcase certain new methodologies and technical applications that have uses beyond Demotic studies.

Gil H. Renberg, *Institute for Advanced Study*
Introduction (5 mins.)

1. Heinz-Josef Thissen, *University of Cologne*
Ptolemaic Decrees and the Relation between Priests and the King (15 mins.)

2. Joachim Quack, *University of Heidelberg*
The Manual of the Ideal Egyptian Temple (20 mins.)

3. Kim Ryholt, *University of Copenhagen*
Egyptian Historical Literature from the Tebtunis Temple Library (20 mins.)

4. Franziska Naether, *University of Leipzig*
Oracles, Dreams, Magical Spells: Bilingualism in Religious Texts (15 mins.)

5. Mark Depauw, *University of Leuven*
The Rise of Egyptian Religion in Roman Egypt: Two Studies in Cultural Interaction (15 mins.)

Robert Ritner, *University of Chicago/Oriental Institute*
Respondent (10 mins.)

Abstracts of Papers

Ptolemaic Decrees and the Relation between Priests and the King (Thissen)

Among the most important religious phenomena of the Ptolemaic Period in Egypt (305-30 BC) were the priestly synods, sessions of Egyptian priests, which took place mostly in Memphis or Alexandria. Although the issues they addressed varied, their main purpose was, on the one hand, to increase the honors of the king and the royal family, and on the other hand to ensure financial and economic gratification for the priests. The outcome of these synods was widely manifest, in the form of large inscriptions posted in the temples all over the country, provided in Hieroglyphic, in Demotic and in Greek versions. This paper aims to present a newly edited trilingual decree, the *Decree of Alexandria*, undertaken by Hartwig Altenmüller, Yahya el-Masry and the speaker, and to explore its position in the context of the other decrees.

The most famous of these is the "Rosetta Stone" – more properly known as the *Decree of Memphis* (196 B.C.), a name derived from the synod's meeting place – which was the key artifact leading to the decipherment of the Egyptian language by Jean-François Champollion. There are, however, several other decrees issued before and after the *Decree of Memphis*. The oldest of these is now the *Decree of Alexandria*, which was issued in the Egyptian capital in 243 B.C. and can be almost completely reconstructed from copies found near Athribis, in Assuan and in Elephantine. One noteworthy result of the study of these decrees collectively is that they have been found to have been modelled after older and contemporary Greek honorary inscriptions (Clarysse 1999, 48-50), and therefore represent a new textual genre transferred into Egypt in Ptolemaic times.

Among the foremost issues that have been the subject of scholarly debate concerning such decrees is whether their contents were dictated by the royal court or if the priests, who were drawn from the elites of the native population, were autonomous in deciding on the matters the inscriptions address. If the latter was the case, the extent of the priestly influence on religious "politics" would have been quite significant. Stefan Pfeiffer has argued for a priestly initiative (Pfeiffer 2004, 292-293), while more recently Gilles Gorre has concluded that the Egyptian priests did not play an important role at the royal court (Gorre 2009, 623-630). Going a step further, Jan Assmann even pleads for a politically powerless and degraded elite under the Ptolemies (Assmann 2010, 31-32). Drawing in part on the newly reconstructed *Decree of Alexandria*, this paper will instead argue for a rather independent position of the priestly elite – meaning that the king and the priesthood *are collaborators having equal rights* in order to grant the stability and well-being of Egypt. Since the Egyptian versions (Hieroglyphic and Demotic) contain elements which are not represented in the Greek text, this paper will also demonstrate the importance of these decrees as royal and priestly sources for the study of religion in Ptolemaic Egypt, while emphasizing the often complementary nature of documents composed in the different languages.

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G. Gorre, *Les relations du clergé égyptien et des Lagides d'après les sources privées*, Studia Hellenistica 45, 2009.

S. Pfeiffer, *Das Dekret von Kanopus (238 v. Chr.). Kommentar und historische Auswertung eines dreisprachigen Synodaldekretes der ägyptischen Priester zu Ehren Ptolemaios' III. und seiner Familie*, AP Beiheft 18, München – Leipzig 2004.

The Manual of the Ideal Egyptian Temple (Quack)

Recent discoveries of late hieratic and demotic Egyptian papyrus fragments from the 1st-2nd cents. C.E. have brought to light an important manual for the ideal Egyptian temple. It is attested also in one Greek manuscript from Oxyrhynchus which proves that at least parts of the composition were translated in a milieu which was still culturally attached to the Egyptian religion but preferred a different language. Up to now only preliminary information is available (e.g. Quack 2000; Quack 2004; Quack 2009), but practically nothing is published in English. The aim of this presentation will be to make this important source more accessible, since it can claim relevance beyond the narrow circles of Egyptology.

The text contains a historical introduction which uses the motif of seven lean years (like the biblical story of Joseph) as an explanation of how the text came about. Supposedly, the Egyptian king Neferkasokar – in reality, a very obscure figure of the early dynastic period – was ordered in a dream to restore all temples, and issued a decree to that effect. This decree was supposedly rediscovered by the famous prince Hardjedef during the reign of pharaoh Kheops. While clearly pseudepigraphic, this setting is itself of relevance, as it served the purpose of investing the document with great authority.

The main part of the text begins by treating the architectural layout of the temple. It is not a technical manual in the strict sense, given that it provides hardly any precise measurements, and not one illustrative sketch. What counts is the articulation of space in a topological perspective.

The second part of the text focuses on priests, with a general section at the beginning, followed by detailed descriptions of the individual rights and duties of all classes of temple employees. A much-debated passage is the one covered by the Greek fragments, which might shed new light on one of the most famous Egyptian works. This Greek portion contains oath formulae to be sworn on the occasion of the consecration of a high-ranking priest. Given their similarities with the "negative confession" attested in the *Book of the Dead*, chapter 125, some scholars have proposed that the Egyptian funerary text goes back to a priestly ritual (Grieshammer 1974; Assmann 1990; 140-149; Gee 1998), while others have rejected the idea that a Greek text of the Roman period could be relevant for understanding a much older Egyptian composition (Griffiths 1991: 218-224; Lichtheim 1992: 127). The discovery of the Egyptian original and its context will help to propose a solution which, while recognising a relation between the manual of the temple and the *Book of the Dead*, does not derive the one from the other. Rather, the funerary composition should be seen as deriving from a manual of civil administration, given that the royal court is the crucial element in it.

The sections devoted to priests' individual duties are highly detailed, covering the amount of staff assigned for each specific job, the rank, the question of right for erecting statues and being put in the embalming workshop after death. Altogether, this composition is certainly one of the most detailed descriptions of priestly life transmitted from antiquity and thus of worthy of an interdisciplinary audience.

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Egyptian historical literature from the Tebtunis temple library (Ryholt)

Ancient Egypt was home to numerous temple libraries long before the Library of Alexandria or even the advent of Greek literacy. There are many references to these institutional libraries, and smaller groups of texts and isolated texts can be ascribed with varying degrees of certainty to some of them. However, only a single large-scale library has survived: the Tebtunis Temple library, which was abandoned around AD 200 and whose contents span c. AD 50-200 (Ryholt 2005, 2010a, in press/a). In addition to much religious, medical and scientific literature, this library included a substantial collection of narrative literature. The present paper will use the latter group of material as a case-study showing how Egyptian papyri from the Greco-Roman era may be relevant to the study of Greek literature and historical writing.

The narratives from the temple library all have in common that they concern historical persons or events. They are, in other words, historical narratives; there is not a single example of the type of folk-tales about anonymous or fictitious protagonists known from other social contexts. It therefore seems likely that these narratives were selected and preserved as a form of historical records (cf. Ryholt 2004: 505-6, 2006: 18, 2010a: 716). This paper will single out three aspects of these records for discussion.

(1) The first concerns collective historical consciousness and more specifically how national traumas were treated in the narrative literature. Egypt was subject to a number of highly traumatic events, which left a long-lasting memory, during the first millennium BCE. Two types of events are particularly well-attested and generated what could be described as an existential crisis on a national level. One is represented by the civil wars and foreign invasions. In the historical narratives these events are portrayed as the direct consequence of the king's failure to carry out fundamental religious obligations, and it is explicitly described as the will of the gods that Egypt should suffer hardship (Ryholt in press/b: 79-81). One of the examples which will be presented concerns the Persian invasion of Egypt in the reign of Nectanebo II, which is recounted both in Egyptian and Greek versions (*Nectanebo's Dream* and the *Alexander Romance*; Ryholt 2002). The other trauma was caused by the large-scale abduction of divine images and other *materia sacra* from Egyptian temples by the Assyrians and Persians (Ryholt 2004: 500, 501; 2009: 308, 309; in press/b: 150, for literary examples; Winnicki 1994, for Ptolemaic policy). The removal of its gods and the impossibility of carrying out their cult effectively left the country impotent.

(2) The second aspect concerns historical narratives that exist both in Egyptian and Greek versions. It is particularly noteworthy that some of these found their way into the historical accounts by Herodotus, Manetho and Diodorus. The examples that will be presented concern kings Sesostris (Hdt. 2.102-3, 106-10; Diod. 1.53-58) (Widmer 2002; Ryholt 2010b, cf. also 2010a: 713) and generically named 'Pheros,' i.e. "Pharaoh" (Hdt. 2.111; Diod. 1.59) (Ryholt 2006: 13, 31-44, cf. also 2010a: 715-6).

(3) The final aspect is the extensive use of the *imitatio* device in Egyptian narrative literature, i.e. the modeling of events and circumstances by one party on those of another. Most common in the historical narratives of the Greco-Roman period is *imitatio Alexandri*, i.e. the imitation of Alexander the Great (Lloyd 1982: 37-39; Ryholt 2010a: 716, and esp. forthcoming). The discussion of this aspect will focus on its use in relation to kings Sesostris and Ramesses, which helps explain the anachronistic details provided about these kings in both Egyptian and Greek sources from the Hellenistic era onwards.

The present paper merely scratches the surface of the library's holdings, which also include stories about ancient sages to whom scientific works were ascribed – among them Petesis, according to Greek tradition Plato's Egyptian instructor in astrology (P. Amherst 63) (Quack 2002; Ryholt 2006: 13-16). A brief survey of these will provide further fodder for discussion.

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Oracles, Dreams, Magical Rituals: Bilingualism in Egyptian Divinatory Texts (Naether)

In a newly re-edited bilingual letter from Ptolemaic Egypt (Naether/Renberg 2010), the correspondent states in Greek that "… it also seemed good to me that I should fully inform you about my dream, so that you would know in what way the gods know you. I have written below in Egyptian so that you would know precisely. When I was about to go to sleep, …" and soon after a break in the papyrus proceeds with a dream-narrative in Demotic. Divination by dreams was a common mantic practice in Egypt and is therefore attested in all periods and languages, but rarely do we get so clear-cut a source for a bilingual individual – and thus one influenced by both native and foreign traditions – expressing any sort of religious experience in two languages. This paper aims to examine a selection of Graeco-Roman sources from Egypt which feature bilingualism or represent divinatory practices attested in both Demotic and Greek. This includes "ticket" oracles, lot oracles (*sortes*), hemerologies, and horoscopes (for a recent overview on these genres, see Naether 2010), and especially the *Papyri Graecae (et Demoticae) Magicae* (Betz 1992, with references). It will be argued from multiple examples that these genres cannot be properly evaluated by taking into consideration monolingual material alone: a full picture is only possible if both Greek and Demotic materials are examined. This counts not only for bilingual texts, but also for genres being attested in several languages such as the "ticket" oracles bearing evidence in Demotic and Greek, as well as Hieratic and Coptic. In addition to bilingual texts, bilingual archives will be addressed, most notably the dossier of the *Sarapieion* "recluse" Ptolemaios, son of Glaukias (whose bilingual milieu at Saqqâra is most recently discussed in Legras 2007 and Veïsse 2007).

Bilingualism in Graeco-Roman Egypt has been studied since the early days of (Greek) Papyrology and Egyptology and is still fertile ground for research and debate (see Papaconstantinou [ed.] 2010, especially the contributions of Clarysse, Dieleman and Torallas Tovar for the theme of this paper). Among the many important issues raised by the study of bilingualism in Egypt are some that are especially pertinent to this paper: that the language of administration is the language of a relatively wealthy, upper-class Greek minority; that high-decorum Demotic literary and ritual texts persisted even in the Roman period in certain contexts; and, that there were various cultural implications in the choice of language used for certain genres. Exploring such issues, this paper will present in its second part certain new methodologies, some of which can be seen in the socio-linguistic approach of Fewster 2002. This is especially true for the phenomenon of loanwords, important work on which is currently being undertaken by new online research projects (*DDGLC*). With the help of computerized databases such as *Trismegistos*, one can draw fresh conclusions concerning the ethnic milieu and background of individuals who wrote or were named in religious texts of this dynamic period. Using bilingual divinatory texts and genres as a case study, this paper will conclude with a demonstration of how these new methods can be employed in order to illustrate their usefulness for the study of religion in texts of several genres from Greco-Roman Egypt.

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The Rise of Egyptian Religion in Roman Egypt: Two Studies in Cultural Interaction (Depauw)

At least since Herodotos, the Egyptians are commonly known as an especially religious people (II.37: θεοσεβέες δὲ περισσῶς ἐόντες μάλιστα πάντων ἀνθρώπων). Their piety can be illustrated in numerous ways, not least by the presence of Egyptian gods in contexts where this is unusual in the Greek tradition, e.g. in epistolary style. In the Ptolemaic period, religious elements in Greek letters are rare, and for the most part only found in those written by priests in almost perfect Greek (Clarysse/Sijpesteijn 1995). The so-called *proskunema*, a common opening reference to an act of worship performed by the writer on behalf of the addressee, only appears in Greek letters around the beginning of Roman rule (Geraci 1971). It will be argued here that this development comes from Egyptian (Demotic) epistolary style, where in this context it was common for the sender to honor the local god (Depauw 2006). The expression προσκύνημα itself is first attested in inscriptions, and was later rendered in Egyptian as *wšt* ('worship'). This calque only became common in Demotic graffiti from the Roman period onwards (Thissen 1989). Thus not only did Egyptian practices influence Greek, but the Greek vocabulary used for these practices was in turn translated into Egyptian.

This mutual influence between Greek and Demotic is typical of the Roman period, when the cultural and linguistic exchange between 'ethnic' groups seems to have intensified. Theophoric names illustrate this in several ways. It is probably no coincidence that names referring to the god Sarapis, newly created by the Ptolemies in an effort to unify Greek and Egyptian traditions, only became popular under Roman rule (Clarysse/Paganini 2009). Mixed 'Greek-Egyptian' and 'Egyptian-Greek' names, combining Egyptian and Greek onomastic elements within a single name, also appear around the same time: a typical example is Βησίων, consisting of the Egyptian dwarf god Bes and the Greek derivational morpheme -ίων. Polytheophoric names, referring to two gods, also only become common in Greek between the 2nd and the 4th century AD, and may ultimately derive from Egyptian practice (Benaissa 2009).

As with epistolary style, these onomastic developments may have been the result of the gradual acceptance of Greek as linguistic vehicle, matters of religion included, among the native Egyptians. As more and more speakers of Egyptian started employing Greek in a variety of contexts, this led to cross-fertilization between the two traditions. One of the results seems to be the growing prominence of originally Egyptian religion. The ancient Egyptian gods and their modes of worship thus lived on, albeit often in a Greek disguise. Only Christianization would definitively steer Egypt in a different direction.

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