

## CHAPTER 8c

### EGYPT, 146–31 B.C.

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#### I. THE LATER PTOLEMIES

In Egypt 146 B.C., the year of the destruction of Corinth and Carthage, was the last full year in the life of Ptolemy VI Philometor, who died fighting in Syria in the following autumn. Apart from a brief period of joint reign (170–164 B.C.) when Egypt had been seriously threatened by Antiochus IV and when Rome, in July 168, first actively interfered in the affairs of the Ptolemies (Vol. VIII<sup>2</sup> 342–4), the two sons of Epiphanes (Philometor and Euergetes II) had conspicuously failed to co-operate. Similar tensions within the ruling house with all the resultant conflict, upheaval and lack of direction were to be a feature of the last century of Ptolemaic rule.

In 145 the younger son of Epiphanes was summoned by the people home from Cyrene where he had ruled in semi-exile. Returning via Cyprus, whence a well-timed amnesty decree<sup>1</sup> was aimed to strengthen his acceptability, Euergetes II now took his brother's widow as his wife. Supported only by the Jews and perhaps the intellectuals of the city, Cleopatra II had earlier pressed the claims of her son Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator. The boy was speedily liquidated by his uncle, in her arms on his mother's wedding-day according to one rhetorical account; Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II then claimed the succession and consummated his marriage. His traditional coronation at Memphis in 144 was timed to coincide with the birth of his new wife's child, suitably named Memphites. Two years later, together with his wife, Euergetes II voyaged south and on 10 September 142 consecrated the great Horus temple at Edfu.<sup>2</sup> The king who had earlier relied on the Alexandrian mob was apparently searching for wider support amongst the population of Egypt.

In looking beyond the Greek capital on the Mediterranean, in recognizing the importance of the ceremonial role of the king, and in presenting himself as traditional protector of the land of Egypt and its people, Euergetes II followed the examples of his father and of his elder

<sup>1</sup> *CORdPtol* 41–2.

<sup>2</sup> *Diod.* xxxiii.13; Cauville and Devauchelle 1984 (D 178) 39.

brother. For the Egyptian population he sought the role of pharaoh. However, he was not respected by the Alexandrian Greeks or by visiting Romans who decried his monstrous paunch (he was disrespectfully known as Physcon, Pot-belly), his dress and lifestyle; his persecutions and his personal predilections resulted in a uniformly hostile reception by the classical commentators.<sup>3</sup> In c. 140 he took as a second wife his niece Cleopatra III, daughter of his first wife and of his late brother, Philometor. The jealous struggles of the two Cleopatras, mother and daughter, now began in earnest, and the attempted *coup* of Philometor's army officer Galaistes is but one sign of the simmering unrest.<sup>4</sup> The open persecution of the Greeks of Alexandria with the subsequent dispersal of the intelligentsia had probably started soon after his return to power. Such evil acts of individual rulers dominate the historiography of the period.<sup>5</sup> The evidence of the papyri, being scrappy and scattered in its survival, occasionally illuminates the scene but cannot supply the political framework which is missing from the record.

In 140/39 B.C. a Roman embassy headed by P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, together with Spurius Mummius and L. Caecilius Metellus Calvus visited Alexandria on an eastern fact-finding mission. This may have been the occasion of Polybius' visit to the country. His unattractive picture of the divisions in Alexandria – ignoring the Jews of the city he divided the population there into Egyptians, unruly mercenaries and the Greek Alexandrians – may be matched by a Stoic account of the overweight and flimsily dressed ruler who needed Scipio's arm for support. The sumptuousness of the palace and of the royal entertainment did not make a favourable impression. Escorted upriver to Memphis on the regular tourist round, the Romans admired the natural resources of the kingdom which could be so great, if only rulers worthy of it could be found.<sup>6</sup>

The later Ptolemies did not provide such leadership. Towards the end of the decade, by November 132, Euergetes' personal problems came into the open with the outbreak of a bitter civil war between the king with his second wife Cleopatra III and her mother, his first wife, Cleopatra II.<sup>7</sup> In Egypt Cleopatra II took command of the troops and introduced a new system of dating and cult titles. Euergetes, who was still minting in Alexandria in late September 131,<sup>8</sup> now fled to Cyprus

<sup>3</sup> Heinen 1983 (D 196) discusses the sources.

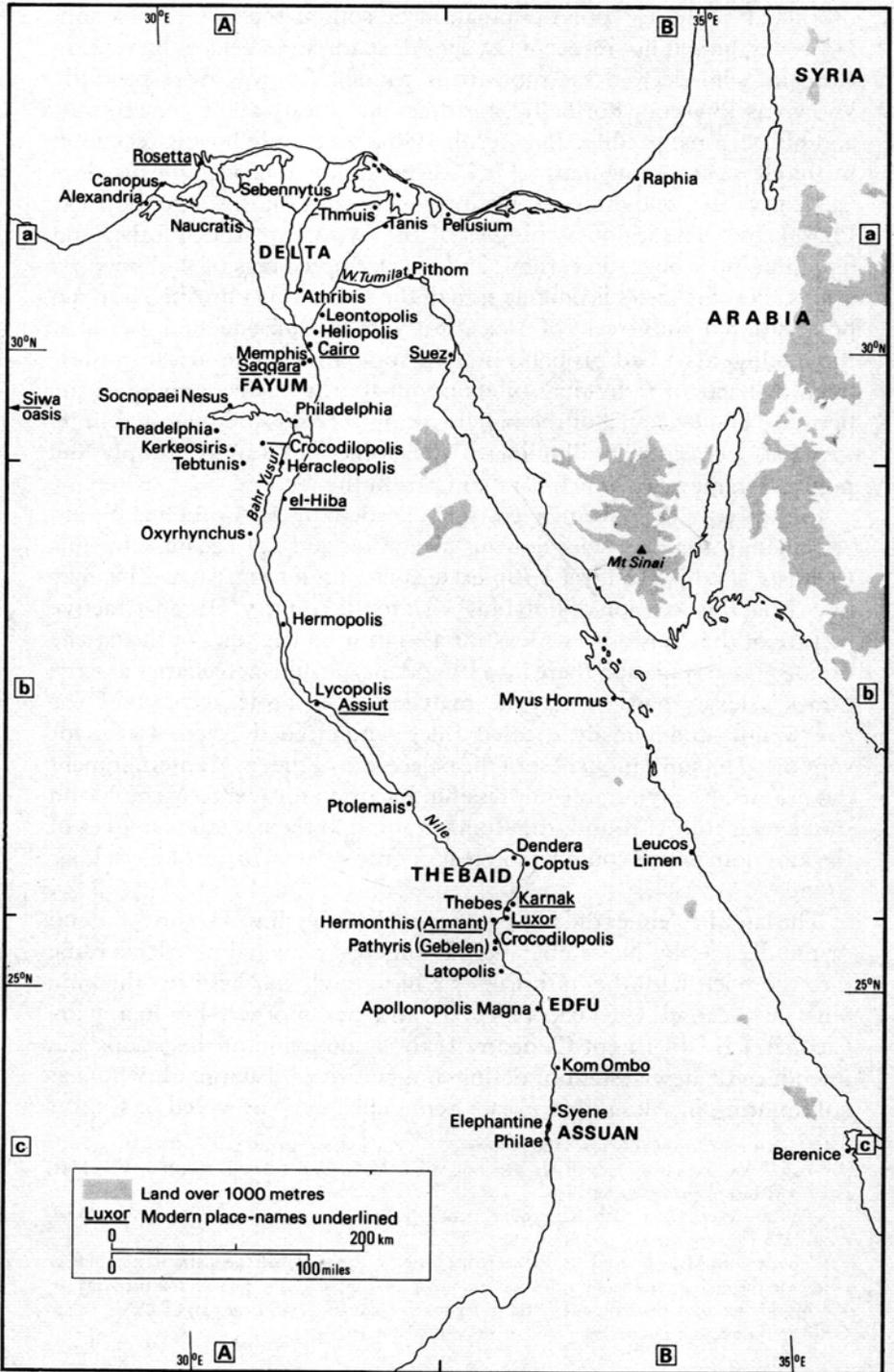
<sup>4</sup> Diod. xxxiii.20, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Polyb. xxxiv.14.6–8; Jac. *FGrH* 270 F 9, Meneclous of Barca; Diod. xxxiii.6; Val. Max. ix.2.ext.5; Just. *Epit.* xxxviii.8.2–4.

<sup>6</sup> Polyb. xxxiv.14.1–5; Ath. xii.549d–e, probably Panaetius rather than Posidonius; Diod. xxxiii.28b.1–3.

<sup>7</sup> The demotic Malcolm papyrus, *PLond* 10384 (11 Nov. 132 B.C.), had Cleopatra III without her mother in the dating formula (information from C. J. Martin, who is to publish this papyrus).

<sup>8</sup> Mørkholm 1975 (B 207) 10–11; still in Egypt in October 131, *PLeid* 373 a + *UPZ* 128 (30 October 131 B.C.), in Lüddeckens 1960 (D 208) 93–5 Urk. 37.



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where he had murdered Memphites, his son by Cleopatra II. These troubles (*ameixia*) are used as a key point in the later land surveys of Kerkeosiris in the South Fayum and in the Heracleopolite *nomos*; land grants were divided into those made up to Year 39 (132/1 B.C.) and those from Year 40 (131/30 B.C.).<sup>9</sup> In her husband's absence the papyri suggest that Cleopatra enjoyed some success even as far south as the Thebaid, but Euergetes II soon returned to reside in the old Egyptian capital of Memphis. With an Egyptian military leader, Paos, in the Thebaid, the king seems largely to have relied on native support. As so often when trouble broke out in Alexandria, elsewhere in Egypt the age-old rivalries surfaced in many forms. The conflicts which resulted from the instability of Ptolemaic rule might show racial, regional, religious and economic aspects. The breakaway tendency of Thebes and the south may be seen in the person of Harsiesis, a native ruler of short duration who profited from royal unrest to establish partial control in Thebes, the home of Amon.<sup>10</sup> 'The Potter's Oracle', an apocalyptic work in Greek most probably based on a demotic original, may date from these years. Following a period of assorted disasters – famine, murder, the collapse of the moral order, oppression and civil war – all would again be well with the Greek power finally destroyed. The Egyptian gods would be restored to Memphis; the city on the coast would be deserted.<sup>11</sup>

By April 129 Euergetes was once again sufficiently in control to begin to settle his Egyptian troops. In the forty-first year of his reign (130/29) the South Fayum village of Kerkeosiris received the first settlement there of Egyptian troops – eight cavalrymen (one with 30 *arourai* (7.5 hectares) and seven with 20 *arourai* (5 hectares)) and thirty infantrymen with 7 *arourai* (1.75 hectares). In close connexion with these military land grants 130 *arourai* of good cultivable land were dedicated to Soknebtunis (the local crocodile-god Souchos, lord of Tebtunis, a neighbouring town). Troops were thus rewarded, native cults encouraged and royal control upheld. This native settlement was made on land earlier belonging to substantial Greek cleruchs; immigrants were giving way to Egyptians.

Yet in the south the whole decade is marked by sporadic violence and banditry. The small-scale raids on the local dykes of Crocodilopolis by villagers from the neighbouring area of Hermonthis at the time of the Nile flood in September 123 typify this unrest. The priests of Souchos complained to a local official that the land has gone unsown; both their temple and the royal interest suffer.<sup>12</sup> How far such local disputes, the

<sup>9</sup> *PTebt* 60.67, 90; *BGU* 2441.119.

<sup>10</sup> Koenen 1959 (D 199).

<sup>11</sup> Koenen 1970 (D 201); Lloyd 1982 (D 206); cf Johnson 1984 (D 197) 116–21; Tait 1977 (D 234) 45–8 for a (later) demotic version. <sup>12</sup> *WChrest* 11.

replay of age-old rivalries, derive directly from the political instability of the period is unknown. What is clear is that when political control from Alexandria was weak, all forms of abuse flourished. When on 28 April 118 the royal rulers, Euergetes II and his two queens, Cleopatras II and III, uneasily reconciled since 124, issued a decree of amnesty, its scope was far-reaching.<sup>13</sup> With the aim of restoring peace those who had fled were encouraged to return home. Royal generosity was coupled with an attempt to control the abuse of official power. Debts to the crown and all forms of arrears were remitted, whilst crown farmers, revenue-workers, beekeepers and textile-workers were protected in their professions. What had become the regular concessions were made to the temples and to their priests. The rights of military settlers (cleruchs) were increased. The summary arrest and imprisonment of individuals was limited and at all levels officials were restrained and controlled: no illegal levies at the customs-posts (or elsewhere), no bribes and requisitioning. Billeting was severely constrained and, following the troubles, the reconstruction of both temples and private housing was endorsed; planting and agriculture were encouraged. Such decrees of beneficence and bounty were well known in Egypt though this is the most comprehensive of all that survive. However practices prohibited in its provisions are likely to have continued and the extent of its coverage serves only to document the extent of the prevailing disorder.

The uneasy reconciliation of Euergetes II and his two wives was soon ended by his death in the summer of 116, in the fifty-fourth year of his reign. The succession was not clear and once again conflict in the ruling house, between the two Cleopatras, had economic repercussions. The state of agriculture in the years following Euergetes' death suggests the new rulers experienced some difficulty in establishing their control over the country. At Kerkeosiris in the South Fayum only 24 per cent of the cleruchic land of the military settlers was sown with wheat in 116/15 compared with 43 per cent in 119/18, and the derelict land rose from 24 per cent to 58 per cent of the area. By 113/12 however a noticeable improvement had taken place with only 34 per cent of this land registered as derelict and 34 per cent under wheat, the major crop of the country.<sup>14</sup> Such detailed records of change, preserved on waste papyrus used to wrap the sacred crocodiles, may of course simply reflect local conditions that are otherwise unknown, but often they can be shown to be the product of the political state of the country where lack of central control carried direct consequences for agriculture.

The actual succession following the death of Euergetes II is variously recorded; the different versions well illustrate the problem of sources for this period which lacks a coherent narrative. Of the classical authors the

<sup>13</sup> *PTebt* 5 = *COrdPtol.* 53 (118 B.C.) with Bingen 1984 (D 174) 926–32.

<sup>14</sup> *PTebt* 1 and iv.

main source for the alternating reigns of the two surviving sons of Euergetes II, Ptolemy IX Soter II and Ptolemy X Alexander, is Pausanias' guide to the monuments of Greece which comments on the statues of the Ptolemies at the entrance to the Odeum in Athens. For Pausanias, as for the later writers Justin and Eusebius, the story is one of jealousy and scandal, of plots and intrigues, of dastardly deeds of murder and the comings and goings of kings.<sup>15</sup> With a strong overlay of moral disapproval, classical authors ascribe full responsibility for the downfall of the Ptolemaic kingdom to these later kings and queens.<sup>16</sup> And following the death of Euergetes II, her uncle-husband, it is Cleopatra III who dominates the scene, scheming for the succession of the younger son Alexander. Egyptian sources however, especially the hieroglyphs on the temple walls at Edfu, have been seen as suggesting a somewhat different course of events. Contrary to the picture of the classical sources, Soter II and Alexander were perhaps only half-brothers, the sons respectively of the two wives of Euergetes II, Cleopatra II and her daughter Cleopatra III, and as competitors for the throne each was championed by his mother who, during her lifetime, ruled together with him.<sup>17</sup> All interpretations agree in stressing queenly power in these years; this reached an extreme in 105/4 when Cleopatra III replaced the regular male priest of the dynastic cult in Alexandria (*Sammelbuch* 10763). From a Pathyrite demotic contract (*PRyldem.* III 20) it is clear that at least for a brief period following the death of Euergetes II on 28 June 116 the two Cleopatras reigned together with Ptolemy IX Soter II; the queen who then shared the throne with Soter II was probably Cleopatra III. The king's younger brother Alexander was meanwhile based in Cyprus. By the end of October 107 Ptolemy X Alexander had supplanted his elder brother on the throne, whilst Soter II in turn sought refuge in Cyprus.<sup>18</sup> The joint reign of Cleopatra III and her son continued until her death in 101; she was now replaced on the throne by Alexander's wife Cleopatra Berenice, the daughter of Soter II. According to Pausanias, in a tale of murder and revenge, Alexander was personally responsible for his mother's death. Since her husband's death her position had not been altogether secure, and already in 103 it was perhaps a sense of insecurity that led her to send away to Cos her 'grandsons' (in fact two sons of Soter II and one of Alexander) accompanied by the royal treasure. The

<sup>15</sup> Paus. 1.9.1-3; Just. *Epit.* xxxix.3.1-2; 4.1-6; 5.1-3; Porph. *FGrH* 260 F 32 = Euseb. *Chron.* 1.163-4 (Schoene).

<sup>16</sup> E.g. Ath. xii.550 b, Ptolemy X Alexander rivalled his father in obesity; his agility in after-dinner dancing was remarkable, whilst to relieve himself he needed two to support him.

<sup>17</sup> Cauville and Devauchelle 1984 (D 178) 47-50, disagreeing with Otto and Bengtson 1938 (D 216) 112-93, Volkmann 1959 (D 242) 1738-48 and Musti 1960 (D 214); in arguing that Cleopatra II continued as queen until 107 B.C. they fail to take account of contemporary Greek inscriptions, especially *OGIS* 739, and the cumulative evidence of demotic protocols, especially those from Thebes.

<sup>18</sup> For the date see Boswinkel and Pestman 1982 (D 177) 67-9.

alienation overseas of royal wealth was to become standard practice in the first century B.C.; on this first occasion the immediate beneficiary was Mithridates VI of Pontus who in 88 took both the island and the princes.<sup>19</sup>

With Soter II ruling in Cyprus as an independent king, the wealth and unity of the country were divided. Soon the division became tripartite when Soter II, retaining Cyprus alone, was replaced as king in Cyrene by Ptolemy Apion. Justin (xxxix.5.2) tells that Apion, a bastard son of Euergetes II, received this inheritance from his father in 116 B.C. If so, inscriptions show his father's will was long ignored with Soter II ousted from Cyrene only after his loss of the Egyptian throne. Whether Rome had exercised influence on the will of Euergetes II cannot be known. The extent however of unofficial Roman penetration may be seen in two Latin graffiti from Philae in Upper Egypt that are contemporary with the king's death and dated by the consuls of that year. And when a member of the Senate visited in 112 official arrangements preceded his tour of the sights.<sup>20</sup> In any event, a further blow to Ptolemaic power was sustained when, as a recognized alternative to prolonging dynastic discord, on his death in 96 Ptolemy Apion left Cyrene to Rome. Rome's lack of immediate intervention is of less interest here than the act of legacy itself. Ptolemy X Alexander followed suit, leaving what remained of the Ptolemaic kingdom, both Cyprus and Egypt, to Rome.<sup>21</sup> Again Rome was to be slow in claiming her legacy but there is no clearer indication of her pre-eminence in Mediterranean politics than her recurrent nomination as territorial legatee.

Alexander survived on the Egyptian throne until 88 when the Alexandrians ejected him. Soter II now returned to take Alexandria, defeating Alexander in the countryside. The younger brother then fled to Myra in Lycia and from there towards Cyprus; the Edfu temple simply records a voyage to Punt, the archetypal 'foreign parts'. Caught at sea he was defeated and killed.<sup>22</sup> The elder brother, Soter II, in control of Alexandria still faced the problem of renewed revolt in the Thebaid. It took three years finally to crush the home of Amon and 'he did such damage that there was nothing left to remind the Thebans of their former prosperity'.<sup>23</sup>

This bare and somewhat confused outline of events may be supplemented by documents and inscriptions from Egypt. There had been

<sup>19</sup> App. *Mith.* 4.23.

<sup>20</sup> *SEG* xxviii.1485; cf *PTebt* 33 = *WChest* 3 (112 B.C.). Full discussion in van 't Dack 1980 (D 184) and 1983 (D 186).

<sup>21</sup> Badian 1967 (D 169) argues convincingly for this identification rather than with Alexander II.

<sup>22</sup> Euseb. *Chron* 1.164 (Schoene) is the main source (cf Porphy. *FGrH* 260 F 32.8–9). Using the numismatic evidence Morkholm 1975 (B 207) 14–15 modifies the discussion of Samuel 1965 (D 230); see Zauzich 1977 (D 249) 193 for Year 26 = 29 of the king outside Egypt. <sup>23</sup> Paus. 1.9.3.

unrest in the Thebaid for some years. In 90 B.C. rebels had attacked the Latopolite and Pathyrite *nomoi*, and in the *stasis* of 88 Platon, as *epistrategos* of the Thebaid, had at least one native commander (Nechthyris) under him. A mosaic of local rivalries emerges with Pathyris supporting Platon, its priests loyal to Soter II against the neighbouring temples of Thebes; here it was Hathor opposing Amon.<sup>24</sup> Indeed during both phases of his reign Ptolemy IX Soter II, who through the name Lathyrus, Chick-pea, was made an object of ridicule to the Greeks, appears to have been well aware of Egyptian sensitivities and, especially, cults. Early in his reign, together with his mother he had made concessions to the priests of Chnoum at Elephantine<sup>25</sup> and, born in the same year as an Apis bull, he showed consistent concern for this particular cult. In contrast, under his brother Alexander sacred bulls tended to suffer. At Hermonthis in Upper Egypt the Buchis bull born in April 101 B.C., with Alexander on the throne, was not installed until April 82, after the restoration of Soter II; it survived only five years more. And in Memphis the Apis bull which had died in his brother's reign (sometime after June 96) was only given a proper burial in the eleventh year of its successor. This was in 87/6 when the Apis burial probably accompanied the second coronation of Soter II, now *wḥm-ḥ*<sup>s</sup>, 'repeating the diadem' in his celebration at Memphis of a thirty-year Séd-festival, a renewal of power in the old Egyptian style.<sup>26</sup> In his long-drawn-out struggle with Thebes Memphis had served as base for Soter II and the cults of Lower Egypt had supported this sovereign when faced with the defection of the south.

Internal dissension was only one of Egypt's problems; there was Rome too. At Edfu the great pylon had been started in 116 B.C. An inscription on the temple enclosure wall from around 88 records its decoration with inscriptions and all of the ritual scenes designed to repel strangers.<sup>27</sup> Yet it was in vain that the Egyptians sought for divine protection. In 87/6 whilst fighting was continuing in the Thebaid a group of Romans came to Alexandria. Sulla's quaestor L. Licinius Lucullus was looking for ships to build up a Sullan fleet. His encounter in Alexandria with the newly restored Ptolemy IX Soter II typifies the different modes of Rome and eastern kings. Met by the entire Egyptian fleet Lucullus was offered unprecedented hospitality within the royal palace. An entertainment allowance four times the norm was made and rich gifts offered him to the value of eighty talents; the statutory tourist visit upriver was arranged. Treated as an equal by an oriental king the

<sup>24</sup> *P Berl dem* 13.608 (90 B.C.); *Sammelbuch* 6300; 6644; *WChest* 12 (88 B.C.). On the identification of those involved see Thomas 1975 (D 237) 117–19. <sup>25</sup> *OGIS* 168.

<sup>26</sup> Crawford 1980 (D 182) 12–14; Traunecker 1979 (D 241) 429–31.

<sup>27</sup> Cauville and Devauchelle 1984 (D 178) 43.

Roman quaestor was doubtless expected to reciprocate at some time in the future. As others were to learn, this was not the Roman way. Lucullus rejected both tour and gifts; he left without the ships he sought.<sup>28</sup>

From Lucullus Sulla will have received a firsthand report on the wealth of Egypt. So on the death of Soter late in 81, although to date Rome had taken no action on his younger brother's will, now that the Alexandrians lacked a king and Ptolemy X Alexander's widow was on the throne, Sulla sent out as king and consort the son of Ptolemy X, her stepson, Ptolemy XI Alexander II. Captured on Cos by Mithridates VI in 88, Alexander II had in 84 escaped from Pontus to Sulla and through him to Rome. Exiled from Egypt for the past twenty-three years, the new king did not care for his stepmother-wife whom he speedily had murdered. After only three weeks on the throne he in turn perished, at the hands of the Alexandrians who resented both the interference of Rome and the excesses of Sulla's nominee. These royal internecine conflicts, the people of Alexandria, and the power of Rome interacted to hasten the collapse of Ptolemaic Egypt.

For the moment Rome exercised restraint. The two sons of Soter II, sent like their cousin to safety on Cos in 103 and captured by Mithridates, now returned from Syria to their home. As Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos the elder took the throne in Egypt, the younger brother made do with Cyprus for his rule. The (interrupted) thirty years of the reign of Ptolemy XII, more commonly called Auletes, the Fluteplayer, were fatal for the independence of the country. Popillius Laenas' ultimatum at Eleusis in 168 B.C. (Vol. VIII<sup>2</sup>, pp. 344–5) and the testament of Ptolemy X Alexander were earlier stages in a process which was to culminate in the annexation of Egypt by Augustus. Under Auletes Egypt became subordinate to political issues and personalities in Rome as the king struggled to retain his control. His position at home was not unchallenged and in 75 two sons of Cleopatra Selene (by one of the Seleucid dynasty) came to Rome in quest of the Egyptian throne. They stayed just over a year before returning empty-handed, and the young Antiochus who returned via Sicily had bad experiences at the hands of its governor Verres. Meanwhile in Egypt Auletes hung on, cultivating good relations with the Egyptian hierarchy and sponsoring widespread temple-building. The great Horos temple at Edfu was finished in his reign and he built on to temples at Karnak, Deir el Medina and Medinet Habu in Thebes, Dendera, Kom Ombo, Philae, Dabod, Athribis, Medamud, Hermonthis and on Bigga Island. As always such gifts to the gods demanded some recognition in return and under Auletes there appears a significant development in the divinity of the king himself. Auletes was the first of

<sup>28</sup> Plut. *Luc.* 2.5–3.1.

the Ptolemies to call himself god, *theos*, without the use of his name, and in Memphis the high priest Psenptais was appointed his personal priest.<sup>29</sup>

To be pharaoh however was no longer sufficient and finally in 59 in return for 6,000 talents made over to Caesar and Pompey, the king was officially declared 'friend and ally' of the Roman people. Even before this, the independence of his kingdom was under threat. In 65 when M. Licinius Crassus as censor proposed making Egypt tributary to Rome he was vigorously opposed by his colleague Q. Lutatius Catulus. In 64/3 Pompey was in the East and extended Roman rule right up to the eastern border of Egypt. He did not, however, enter Egypt although the country was at variance with its king and the king himself invited him, sending him gifts, riches and clothing for his entire army. It was unclear, Appian records, whether he feared the strength of the kingdom which still enjoyed prosperity or the jealousy of his opponents, whether it was oracles which stopped him or some other reason. Strabo recorded a crown worth 4,000 gold pieces sent to Pompey in Damascus and the wealth of Egypt was becoming even better known at Rome.<sup>30</sup> When in 63 Cicero spoke out against the Rullan agrarian proposals (ch. 9 below, pp. 349–51) he stressed the prosperity of the country, the bounty of its fields.<sup>31</sup>

Soon after his recognition in Rome Auletes was driven from his kingdom by a populace enraged by his passivity. For Cyprus was being annexed by Rome and lost to Egypt. Probably with a view to paying for his new free corn distribution of 58, P. Clodius had proposed realizing the king's assets in Cyprus. M. Porcius Cato was sent out to put the proposal into effect and by 56 Cyprus was added to the province of Cilicia. As in 75/4 when Cyrene was at last settled by Rome and P. Lentulus Marcellinus successfully reorganized the royal lands which provided an income for Rome, so now Cyprus was to benefit the people of Rome, to the detriment of Egypt.<sup>32</sup> Ptolemy, the brother of Auletes, committed suicide rather than submit. Auletes himself, showing no opposition to the final dismemberment of his kingdom, was forced to flee to Rome where Pompey provided him with credit and temporary accommodation. In Egypt Auletes was replaced on the throne by his daughter Berenice IV, at first with her sister Cleopatra Tryphaena and later her new husband Archelaus, a son of Mithridates. Rome took notice. A counter-embassy from Alexandria appeared a threat to Auletes' safety in Rome and he again departed eastwards, to Ephesus

<sup>29</sup> Porter and Moss 1927- (D 221) for temple-building; *OGIS* 186.8–10 (14 May 62 B.C.) 'kyrios basileus Theos Neos Dionysos Philopator kai Philadelphos'; cf. the stele *BM* 886.4 'first prophet of the lord of two lands' (ed. Reymond 1981 (D 227) 147).

<sup>30</sup> *App. Mith.* 17.114; Strabo in Joseph. *AJ* xiv.35.

<sup>31</sup> *Cic. Leg. Agr.* 11.43.

<sup>32</sup> Badian 1965 (C 162). For the Roman side of these events see ch. 10 below, p. 379.

where he found greater security living under the protection of Artemis within her temple. Egypt and the fate of the Egyptian king was now a Roman issue with Pompey and his opponents vying for an Egyptian command. In 57 the consul P. Lentulus Spinther was charged with the restoration of the Egyptian king, but the Sibylline books prevented the deployment of an army. Events however overtook political decisions and in the spring of 55 Aulus Gabinius, the proconsul in Syria, illegally left his province and escorted Auletes back to Alexandria. Cicero records Gabinius' fear of the fleet of Archelaus and the growing number of pirates in the Mediterranean.<sup>33</sup> The promises of 10,000 talents from the king cannot have been entirely unconnected. Mark Antony went to Alexandria as Gabinius' cavalry commander and in Gabinius' entourage was Antipater, the Idumaeen councillor of Hyrcanus II, high priest of Jerusalem and father of Herod the Great. The Jews of Egypt might be a significant element in support of a particular sovereign and later, in 47, both Antipater and Hyrcanus were to be influential in gaining support for Caesar in the overthrow of Auletes' heirs. Many of the invading troops, the *Gabiniani*, who came to range themselves in support of the Ptolemaic dynasty, stayed on in Egypt – the first Roman troops of occupation.

Auletes celebrated his return with his daughter's death and other murders. His ability to fulfil his financial promises seems to have been somewhat limited. In Rome Gabinius was tried, fined the sum which had been promised him and went bankrupt. In Egypt Rabirius Postumus was appointed by the king to the chief financial post of the country, that of *dioiketes*, but in spite of abandoning his toga and adopting Greek dress he failed to recover the money owed to Pompey and other Romans; he was driven ignominiously from the country. The Alexandrians who earlier had shown 'all zeal in looking after those visiting from Italy, keen, in their fear, to give no cause for complaint or war' now had little time for Roman interference. Two sons of Bibulus, now governor of Syria, who in 50 were sent to recall the *Gabiniani* from the attractions of Alexandria in order to fight the Parthians were summarily put to death in the city.<sup>34</sup> Slaughter in the streets and in the gymnasium had become regular features of life in the capital city.

Auletes was not long to enjoy his position as king. He died in 51 leaving his kingdom to his elder son, Ptolemy XIII now aged ten, and to his daughter, Cleopatra VII aged seventeen; the news of his death reached Rome by the end of June.<sup>35</sup> The Roman people was named as witness to his will and a copy sent to Rome for deposit in the *aerarium* somehow ended up in Pompey's hands. Whatever the facts, the will of

<sup>33</sup> Cic. *Rab. Post.* 8.20.

<sup>34</sup> Caes. *BCiv.* III.110; Val. Max. IV.1.15.

<sup>35</sup> Cic. *Fam.* VIII.4.5.

Auletes made open recognition of the overriding power of Rome to control the future of Egypt. Any succession to the Egyptian throne now took place under Roman protection.

Cleopatra VII however was primarily an Egyptian queen, the first of her family to speak the language of the country she ruled.<sup>36</sup> Ignoring her brother she sought support within her kingdom. Barely a month after her accession she travelled upriver to Hermonthis to be present in person at the installation of the Buchis bull on 22 March 51; she was later to build a small birth-temple to the god at Hermonthis.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, when in the third year of her reign the Apis died, she herself met part of the cult expenses, endowing a table of offerings and providing daily rations for those involved in the rites of burial. Earlier Ptolemies had provided cash; the detail of Cleopatra's endowment is new and suggests some level of personal involvement in the bull cults of Egypt which had come to represent the essence of native religion. As the goddess Cleopatra the younger, *philopator*, 'father-loving', and *philopatris*, 'patriotic' (BGU 2376.1 (36/5 B.C.)), she was indeed queen of Egypt.

In Rome however civil war intervened and the uncertainty of the outcome can only have increased the dynastic tensions in Alexandria where, as regents, the eunuch Potheinus and general Achillas supported the cause of Ptolemy XIII against his elder sister. After Pharsalus Pompey fled in hope to Egypt where he was beheaded at Pelusium. The deed was not welcomed by Caesar when he reached Alexandria three days later. The Alexandrian War ensued, fought over the winter of 48/7. The rest of the story is well known (see below pp. 433–4). Re-established as queen by Caesar at first with Ptolemy XIII as her husband, and later in March 47 with her even younger brother Ptolemy XIV, Cleopatra VII used her scheming intelligence to the full. Cyprus was restored by Caesar to the crown of Egypt; it had served again as a haven for endangered Ptolemies when, together with his sister Arsinoe, the younger son of Auletes was sent there briefly before being summoned to the throne and marriage with his elder sister. Caesar dallied shortly, but then he left. Caesarion was born in 47, and in 46 Cleopatra and her son followed Caesar to Rome. She left in 44, soon after the Ides of March. In 41 Antony first formed a liaison with the queen, which he was to resume five years later. It lasted until after Actium and the capture of Alexandria by Octavian on 3 August 30 (Vol. x<sup>2</sup>, ch. 1). Soon after, the queen died, a self-inflicted royal death at the bite of an asp, and Octavian was left to manage the inheritance of the Ptolemies.

<sup>36</sup> Plut. *Ant.* 27.3–4.

<sup>37</sup> Mond and Myers 1934 (D 213) II 12; Tarn 1936 (D 235) 187–9; Bloedow 1963 (D 175) 91–2; cf. Skeat 1934 (D 233) 40–1 for a more sceptical interpretation.

## II. EGYPT: SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

What of the Egypt that Octavian was to inherit for Rome? The dynastic struggles of the last century of Ptolemaic control with constant changes of ruler, significant overseas expenditure by Auletes and, latterly, the absence of Cleopatra in Rome, had had their effect on the economy of Egypt. Normally Egypt was a rich country. In cash terms, even under the poor government of Auletes, Strabo (quoting Cicero) records that the annual income of the country was 12,500 talents. Auletes however had been extravagant in the alienation of this wealth: gifts, gold and provisions for Pompey in 63 B.C., 6,000 talents to Caesar and Pompey in 59 and 10,000 to Gabinius in 55; and the Alexandrian envoys opposing the king had equally brought their gold to Rome. The gold sarcophagus of Alexander the Great was even melted down to finance the king's expenditure and as *dioiketes* Rabirius had tried unsuccessfully to collect the debts owed to individual Romans.<sup>38</sup> On arrival in Alexandria in 48 Caesar was still owed almost 3,000 talents of which just over sixteen talents were paid towards his army costs; the rest was remitted.<sup>39</sup> Even Ptolemaic wealth was running low. The tetradrachm silver coinage which had maintained a high degree of fineness throughout the Ptolemaic period began to deteriorate under Auletes, dropping sharply in silver content in the years after his restoration.<sup>40</sup> This decline in the quality of the silver coinage is a more reliable reflection of the difficulties of Ptolemy XII and Cleopatra VII than the vagaries of the copper drachmae used as units of account within the written documents.<sup>41</sup>

Agriculture however – the *pulcherrimi agri*, the *agrorum bonitas* so envied in Rome – formed the constant basis of Egyptian wealth and well-being. And agriculture, besides needing regular supervision with a close control of the irrigation system, might suffer also from low Niles. The effects of both man-made and natural disaster on the cereal production of the country shows clearly in a group of Heracleopolite papyri now in Berlin.<sup>42</sup> The secession of Thebes and the south soon after the restoration of Soter II (pp. 316–17 above) figures also in Middle Egypt as a time of interruption of communications (*ameixia*) which in 84/3, in the Heracleopolite *nomos*, resulted in flight from the land and the loss of taxes to the state.<sup>43</sup> In the troubled middle years of the century unsettled conditions regularly interfered with corn-production and transport. Ship-contractors, *naukleroi*, might now be grouped in corporations and armed

<sup>38</sup> Strab. xvii.1.13; App. *Mith.* 17.114; Cic. *Rab. Post.* 3.6 with Suet. *Caes.* 54.3; Cic. *Pis.* 21.48–50; Plut. *Ant.* 3.2; Strab. xvii.1.8 for the sarcophagus, assuming Pareasactus, the son of Kokke, is Auletes; Dio xxxix.13.2. <sup>39</sup> Plut. *Caes.* 48.4. <sup>40</sup> Walker 1976 (B 236) 150–2.

<sup>41</sup> Gara 1984 (D 193); on this hypothesis what is normally termed copper inflation (Reekmans 1951 (D 226)) is not a true inflation but reflects rather a change in accounting procedures.

<sup>42</sup> BGU viii and xiv. <sup>43</sup> BGU 2370.37–42.

guards accompanied the corn-ships down the Nile.<sup>44</sup> The early years of Cleopatra's reign were particularly hard in the countryside as natural disaster combined with political problems. Instructions preserved for the collection of grain from the Heracleopolite *nomos* from 51/50 have an even more urgent tone than usual; in the same year, in Hiera Nesos, the local priests complain that the royal cult has suffered from the depletion of the local population.<sup>45</sup> A failure of the harvest is similarly suggested by a royal order issued on 27 October 50 which forbade, on pain of death, the transport of grain and pulses to any destination other than Alexandria; a loan contract of the same year foresees the possibility of corn reaching a vastly inflated price.<sup>46</sup> A shortage of water, *abrochia*, in Year 3 of Cleopatra VII (50/49 B.C.) led to the desertion of the village of Tinteris by all settlers in the area; the local farmers were unable to pay their taxes. And finally Pliny's notice of the lowest flood ever in the year of Pharsalus (48 B.C.) suggests not so much the anger of the gods as the culmination of a flood failure lasting over at least three years, and maybe more.<sup>47</sup> Peasants of course always complain and official papyrus archives in their nature preserve these complaints, but the accumulation of evidence does appear to add up to a picture of widespread disaster in these years. Another first-century papyrus preserves the tantalizing words 'greed' and 'Romans' in a sentence now incomplete.<sup>48</sup> Overseas debts would appear to have combined with natural catastrophe to oppress both the population of Egypt and the Ptolemaic state. The new trade with India was hardly sufficient to replace the income lost.<sup>49</sup> All of Cleopatra's powers were needed to counteract collapse; the kingdom she ruled was very down at heel.

To function, the Ptolemaic state depended on its administrative bureaucracy and on the army. Neither was particularly successful in these years. The last Ptolemaic decree to survive is an attempt to protect farmers in the Delta who originated in Alexandria from the illegal exactions and harassment of crown officials.<sup>50</sup> There is no reason to suppose that this decree was any more successful than its predecessors; undue pressure from officials would seem one unavoidable consequence of the unsalaried bureaucracy on which the Ptolemies relied. Central control was weak and government officials looked first to their own interests. Loyalty to the Ptolemies, reinforced through the dynastic cult, was not sufficient to counteract the pressures of personal interests.

The independence of Egypt depended on its military strength which by the late second century B.C. was both depleted and as much Egyptian as immigrant. Loyalty of the troops towards the state was variously

<sup>44</sup> BGU 1741-3 + 2368; 1742 (63 B.C.). Thompson (Crawford) 1983 (D 238) 66-9.

<sup>45</sup> BGU 1760; 1835.

<sup>46</sup> *COrdPtol* 73; *PSI* 1098.28-9.

<sup>47</sup> BGU 1842; Pliny *HN* v.58.

<sup>48</sup> BGU 2430.26.

<sup>49</sup> Strab. xvii.1.13.

<sup>50</sup> *COrdPtol* 75-6 (12 April 41 B.C.).

fostered though ultimately the ability to provide pay was the decisive factor. Since the early years of the dynasty soldiers had been settled on the land as cleruchs, and rights over this land, as over housing billets, were gradually extended over the years. In 60 B.C. a royal decree records the free testamentary disposition of such holdings and it is clear that by now even women might inherit cleruchic land.<sup>51</sup> (What in such cases happened to the military obligation is not clear.) Mercenaries too, from all over the Mediterranean, played an important part in the military protection of the country. In 58 Auletes was forced to flee his home because he had no mercenary troops;<sup>52</sup> the city garrison in Alexandria and household troops had presumably joined the other side. Since the reign of Philometor mercenary garrisons and their associated civilian communities had been regularly organized in *politeumata*, normally ethnic groupings with their own elected officers, the Idumaeans for example, the Boeotians or the Cretans; the activities of these groups were social and religious.<sup>53</sup> In a country where social groupings were traditional (the guilds for instance of the mummifiers and undertakers of pre-Ptolemaic Egypt), when times were unsettled the collective instinct grew more strong. Alongside the associations of goose-herds, donkey-drivers or ship-contractors, in their corporate dealings the mercenary *politeumata* too might protect the interests of their members in relation to the state.<sup>54</sup> And here too, as within the bureaucracy, the dynastic cult had a cohesive function; temples might be dedicated by representatives of these *politeumata* on behalf of the royal family, or influential officials praised for good will towards the ruling house.

A further role of the army should be mentioned. Both through garrisons and cleruchic settlement the Ptolemaic army was one of the more important forces for the integration of immigrants within Egyptian society. The family archive from 150 to 88 B.C. of Peteharsemtheus son of Panebkhounis or that of Dryton stationed in the garrison at Gebelen (Pathyris) show how easily such soldiers intermarried with Egyptian women; their children were bilingual often with both Greek and Egyptian names. Both languages might be used in legal documents and families who once came from Crete or Cyrene were thus assimilated into the society of Egypt.<sup>55</sup>

More generally however changes were taking place in the relations between Greeks and Egyptians in the administration, for instance, where those of Greek extraction would seem at first to have predominated within its upper echelons. From the late second century B.C.

<sup>51</sup> *CordPtol* 71.12–15; *BGU* xiv Appendix 3.      <sup>52</sup> Dio xxxix.12.2–3.

<sup>53</sup> Thompson (Crawford) 1984 (D 239).

<sup>54</sup> *IFay* 109 (37 B.C.); *WChrest* 440 (first cent. B.C.); *BGU* 1741–3 + 2368 (63 B.C.).

<sup>55</sup> Pestman 1965 (D 218) 47–105; Winnicki 1972 (D 243); Pestman 1978 (D 220) 30–7. For intermarriage and assimilation of Cyrenaeans in the Fayum earlier see *I Fay* 2 (224–221 B.C.).

however two governor-generals of the Thebaid and a series of *nomos* governors in the south are found with Egyptian names.<sup>56</sup> Whereas the apparent family succession to high administrative office found here may primarily reflect the breakaway tendency of the south, it also shows some change of emphasis and the opening up to Egyptians of the top levels of the administration. Similarly the increasingly frequent bi- or trilingual publication of royal decrees suggests some recognition by the ruling power of the importance of the Egyptian element in society. From Saqqara near Memphis a demotic archive with a few Greek documents shows that by the first century B.C. even those from the most traditional of Egyptian occupations, the mummifiers, had begun to adapt their ways to those of the ruling race. When in 99 Ptesis, undertaker-in-chief of the Apis and Mnevis bulls, found himself and his property under attack he appealed to the king for protection. In answer to his request he was granted a wooden plaque with an official (but in the event ineffective) warning to trespassers, written in both Greek and Egyptian. When ten years later his son Chonouphis made a loan, the contract was in Greek; and when his granddaughter Thaues was also named Asklepias this was the first Greek name in a family recorded over ten generations.<sup>57</sup>

The process of reciprocal acculturation can be seen only sporadically. Whilst proceeding at different rates in different contexts it affected all levels of society. On the walls of the great temple at Edfu, Horos drags Seth around tied by his feet in a positively Homeric scene, and from the nearby cemetery of Hassaia come elaborate epitaphs in both Greek and hieroglyphs celebrating members of a family of senior military officers, who are also priests within the local cults, recorded with both Greek and Egyptian names; the same individuals are recorded in both Greek and Egyptian forms.<sup>58</sup> Both the culture of classical Greece expressed in epigrammatic form and the native culture of Egypt with all its religious overtones are there, in active intercommunication.

It was probably the gods and temples of Egypt which together remained the single most powerful force in the life of the Ptolemaic kingdom for Greek and Egyptians alike. Yet even this was a force diminished in strength. Greek cult continued for the Greeks, especially in Alexandria, yet increasingly behind Greek names Egyptian gods lurk in disguise. (Herakles Kallinikos for instance whose temple at Theadelphia was linked with that of Isis Eseremphthis may well have been Harsaphes or possibly Onouris.)<sup>59</sup> And for the Greeks too the religion of their adopted country proved strong and might be turned against

<sup>56</sup> De Meulenaere 1959 (D 211) and Shore 1979 (D 232); Thissen 1977 (D 236), Hermonthite.

<sup>57</sup> UPZ 106-9 (99-98 B.C.); 125 (89 B.C.); 118 (83 B.C.).

<sup>58</sup> Derchain 1974 (D 187) 15-19; Yoyotte 1969 (D 248); Clarysse 1985 (D 179) 62-4.

<sup>59</sup> *Sammelbuch* 6236 = IFay 114 (70 B.C.). Bonnet 1952 (D 176) 286-7.

foreign powers. Whilst Amon and the south were often in opposition to the powers of Lower Egypt, the high priesthood of Memphis remained consistently loyal to the Ptolemies and enjoyed strong personal relations with the ruling house. Ptolemies built Egyptian temples to the native gods and in return the gods of Egypt and their priesthood would support their rule. Concessions to the temples and their priests continued to form a regular element of Ptolemaic royal decrees. So in 100 B.C. when Ptolemy X Alexander I ruled with Cleopatra Berenice a royal decree was promulgated protecting sacred fish.<sup>60</sup> From the first century B.C. survives a series of decrees recording royal grants of asylum granted to village temples of Thracian, Greek and Egyptian gods, grants which recall those earlier made to the great Egyptian temples of Memphis or Bousiris, now in the troubled later years of Ptolemaic rule extended more widely.<sup>61</sup> Sometimes set up bilingually, these decrees may be seen to indicate an extension of violence in the countryside and the relative weakness of the local shrines. There are however two further respects in which they throw interesting light on the period. Firstly in these decrees, bound close to the local village cults, appears the dynastic cult of the Ptolemies, with cult images, sacrifices, libations, burnt offerings and sacred lights. Grants made to an Egyptian god like Isis Sachypsis or Isis Eseremphthis at Theadelphia might also benefit the royal gods. Secondly they illustrate the role of the army and the Greek military settlers in Egypt. These grants of asylum are regularly negotiated through senior army officers who now it seems were established as influential members of the local community. In these grants may be seen reflected the interlocking interests of priests, army and crown in the continuation and success of the Ptolemaic regime. Finally, however, through the troubled years of the first century B.C. not even the strength and power of the gods of Egypt could resist the force of Rome.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *PYale* 56.

<sup>61</sup> *Sammelbuch* 620 = *COrdPtol* 64 (96 B.C.); *IFay* 152 (95 B.C.); 112–13 (93 B.C.); 114 (70 B.C.); 135 (69 B.C.); 136 (69–68 B.C.); *COrdPtol* 702 (63 B.C.); *IFay* 116–18 (57 B.C.); *COrdPtol* 67 (46 B.C.); *BGU* 1212 (46 B.C.) with van 't Dack 1970 (D 183); Donadoni 1983 (D 188); *OGIS* 129 (47–30 B.C.) reaffirming an asylum grant for a synagogue made earlier by Euergetes II. My interpretation is at variance with that of Dunand 1979 (D 189).

<sup>62</sup> This chapter was last revised in 1986.