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BETWEEN PERSIA AND MACEDONIA: EGYPT IN THE FOURTH CENTURY BC¹

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The dissertation covers the period between 404 BC and 305 BC. In 404 BC Persia lost control of Egypt and the period of the last Independence of Egypt began with native rulers in power. The second date is marked by the coronation of Ptolemy I, the beginning of a new dynasty and the symbolic end of the Empire of Alexander the Great. Many publications about the Ptolemaic Period are readily available, as opposed to the earlier times. Surprising as it may sound, no monographic publication of the history of Egypt in the fourth century BC has been written in any language so far and in other publications only selected issues concerning internal policy, religion, art or numismatic are covered.

History of Egypt in the fourth century BC can be divided into three distinct parts: the last Independence of Egypt with native rulers in power, the Second Persian Domination, and the Macedonian Rule. History of the Mediterranean in the fourth century BC, including Egypt, is known from a vast array of sources. Nevertheless, modern articles and books are based, in most cases, only on selected historical records. In my dissertation I undertook to peruse all surviving historical records. First of all there are works of Greek and Latin authors. Leaving aside Aristotle, few come from the fourth century BC; most of them are much later, but ultimately based on fourth century BC records. Fragments of earlier works survive in quotations by Byzantine and Christian authors. None of these historical records originates from Egypt, as opposed to the second group of

¹ What follows is a summary of the doctoral dissertation successfully presented at the Institute of History of the University of Wrocław on 1 July 2008. It was written under the supervision of Professor Krzysztof Nawotka (University of Wrocław); the reviewers appointed by the University were Professor Adam Łukaszewicz (University of Warsaw) and Dr. Gościwit Malinowski (University of Wrocław). I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Professor Nawotka for his guidance and support, and to the reviewers for their friendly criticism and perceptive remarks on my work.

sources, papyri. We have three types of papyri: Egyptian (demotic and hieratic), Aramaic and Greek. The first group is by far the biggest and contains about 120 demotic and about 20 hieratic papyri. Having examined all kinds of sources we can see the difference between Greek and Egyptian records. Works of Greek and Latin authors are concentrated on foreign policy, warfare, frequently glorifying Greek mercenaries and their generals. Classical authors assumed that neither side was able to win a war unassisted by Greek mercenary force. Greek literature of the fourth century BC circulates the *topoi* of Greek courage and manliness and Persian effeminacy and weakness caused by living in debilitating luxury, thus creating an unreal picture of the Persian Empire. In my dissertation I follow these modern scholars who have shown that Greek mercenaries were but a part of Persian and Egyptian armies. In the first case the main fighting force was Iranian cavalry, while fourth century pharaohs fielded, beside Greek mercenaries, numerous native contingents called *machimoi*. Sources show that the reign of the XXX dynasty was the time of the most active foreign policy in fourth century history of Egypt.

Egyptian papyri and a few inscriptions tell us about Egyptian economy and everyday life almost undisturbed by warfare. More than a half of all papyri of this period are administrative documents like sale or marriage contracts, tax documents and so on. We have also religious, medical and literary papyri. Although they originate from many places in Egypt, the greatest concentration of papyri from the first half of the fourth century BC is in some Upper Egyptian places, like Edfu and Elephantine. We can assume that the South of Egypt was at that time developing more intensively than the North which was constantly exposed to Persian attacks. On the other hand, we always have to remember that more papyri might survive in Upper Egypt because of better natural conditions.

An important part of my dissertation is the study of coins minted and used in Egypt. In my Numismatic Annex I collect all coins minted and found in Egypt or coins originating in Egypt but found in other countries. Many publications about Egyptian coinage refer to the times of Ptolemy I and to the third century BC, while fourth century BC coinage is barely mentioned. Even if far less coins are attested in Egypt than in contemporaneous Greece, we still know quite a lot about coinage in fourth century BC Egypt. First of all quite numerous coin hoards have been uncovered hidden across the land in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. They contain Egyptian, Greek and other coins. The number of hoards deposited under Alexander the Great and his successors increased markedly as compared to preceding periods. A very large category of fourth century Egyptian coins are local imitations of Athenian drachms minted in Memphis and in Syene where also dies have been found. In all probability these coins were minted to satisfy the needs of Greek mercenaries hired by the thousand by the pharaohs of the XXX dynasty. Comparatively rare coins bearing the names and/or hieroglyphic inscriptions of Tachos and Nectanebo II attest to Egyptian coinage produced for

native users. Coins minted during the Second Persian Domination take special place in Egyptian coinage. In this period not only satraps produced coins with their names, but also the Great King (Artaxerxes III) had his name and the title “pharaoh” inscribed in coins in demotic script. At that time this script was commonly employed in papyri, so a demotic coin inscription was certainly meant to make them, and the minting power, more palpable to the Egyptians. It is also evidence that these coins were minted for the local market and hence they indirectly testify to the increasing monetisation of Egyptian economy. Different types of silver and bronze coins of the last Persian satraps of Egypt Sabaces and Mazaces bear their names in Aramaic script. For all this archeologically attested growth in number of coins in circulation, fourth century Egyptian papyri give a much different picture of Egyptian economy, as in commercial transactions Egyptians still used local units of weight of metal (measure of Ptah, deben, kite, shekel) or barter.

In the period of its last independence Egypt became one of the richest and most influential countries in the eastern Mediterranean, especially during the reigns of Nectanebo I and Nectanebo II. Archeological records collected in two catalogues (of fourth century buildings and of objects found in Egypt) show that Nectanebo I and Nectanebo II built, rebuilt or restored a stunning number of temples and commissioned innumerable objects such as statues and steles. Location, size and quality of their building projects testify to the wish of the pharaohs of the XXX dynasty to rekindle the splendor of the XXVI (Sais) dynasty. XXX dynasty pharaohs conducted vigorous internal and foreign policy, while profuse coinage and substantial investment in monumental architecture (mostly in temples) attest to booming economy. This in turn allowed them to assist other countries in their fight with the Persian Empire. Kings of Persia wanted to restore their power over Egypt and turn it again into a satrapy. Egyptian rulers succeeded on more than one occasion to force the enemy back not because of insufficient Persian military resources, but mostly thanks to remarkable economic and military strength of fourth century Egypt.

Nectanebo II, the last pharaoh of the XXX dynasty was defeated in 343 BC by Artaxerxes III. This time Artaxerxes III did not want to repeat the Persian mistakes of the past: the war was prepared in utmost detail and the Great King led his troops in person. Good knowledge of topography of Egypt exhibited by the Persian staff and skilful selection of the most appropriate troops resulted in re-conquest of Egypt. Unfortunately we do not have many historical records from the years following the invasion of Artaxerxes III, but a few preserved papyri suggest a comparative stabilization and undisturbed life in Egypt during the Second Persian Rule. The best known political event of this period is a revolt of Khababash, a native ruler who reigned in parts of Egypt in 338–336 BC.

In 332 BC Alexander the Great conquered Egypt. Classical authors tell us only about the sojourn of Alexander in Egypt with virtually no information about

next years of his and his successors' reign in Egypt in the fourth century BC. Fortunately we have many (mostly) Egyptian documents and quite a few monuments dated to the Macedonian Period. Almost all documents come from Tehna and Thebes where two big archives were found. Archives are quite important for us, because they contain papyri belonging to one family, so we can follow their lives and businesses. In this period first Greek papyri are attested, although only a few of them survive from the last decades of the fourth century BC. Most fourth century papyri of the Macedonian times were written under Alexander IV which testifies to prosperity and political stability of this period. Since the conquest of 332 the Macedonian rulers tried to accommodate to the Egyptian tradition and in local sources they are always called "pharaohs of Egypt" with most elements of traditional royal titlature. The same applies to the ideological aspect of their building policy which begins with Alexander the Great who endeavoured to build and rebuild the same amount of temples as pharaohs of the XXIX dynasty, Nephertites I and Tachos.

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