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Egypt in the Hellenistic era

At the death of Alexander the Great, his empire comprised Macedonia, a large part of Asia Minor, the eastern shores of the Mediterranean, and Egypt, extending into Asia to the east as far as the Punjab. After his death in -323, three dynasties founded by three of his generals were already well established to control the empire: the Antigonids in Macedonia, the Seleucids in Asia in what had been the Persian empire, and the Ptolemies in Egypt.

The Ptolemies reigned over Egypt for three centuries, initiating a period that was very different from preceding periods in the country's history.

A new type of state in Egypt

Under rather more than a dozen Ptolemies, Egypt was initially strongly marked by the stamp of the foreign rulers and the demands of the new policy, with subsequent slow assimilation, as before, of the new masters of the Delta.

The forward defence of the capital, which, probably from the time of Ptolemy II onwards, was situated on the sea coast for the first time in Egypt's history, in Alexandria, necessitated military and naval ascendancy in the eastern Mediterranean. To ensure an adequate supply of timber for shipbuilding it was necessary to limit construction work in Egypt, to develop royal plantations in the Nile Valley and to import timber from the Aegean and the islands. The most spectacular aspect of this maritime development was the establishment of bases for elephant-hunting all along the African coast as far as Somalia, and the construction, at enormous expense, of ships designed for transporting the beasts. Hippalus' discovery, in the reign of Ptolemy III, of the pattern of the monsoons shortened the journey to India and made it less dangerous and less expensive. Trade relations with Asia naturally increased. The Ptolemies spared no effort to improve relations between the Red Sea and the Delta. The canal dug by Darius I from the eastern arm of the Nile towards the Bitter Lakes was deepened in the reign of Ptolemy II and made more easily navigable by large vessels. He also established a route between Coptos in the Thebaid and Berenice on the Red Sea.

The foreign policy of the Ptolemies involved them in heavy expenditure, which had to be balanced by a very large income going into the royal coffers. A partial solution to the problem was provided by strict control over the economy and by the

supervision of exports, some of which were systematically developed under royal monopoly. Increased production of exportable commodities led to a systematic policy of bringing virgin soil under cultivation at royal expense, but the ruler remained indifferent to the welfare of the Egyptian farmers.

Another way of meeting the vast cost of armaments and imports was the export to the Mediterranean of African products: ivory, gold, ostrich feathers and ostrich eggs were bought in places to the south of Egypt and in the Horn of Africa, for resale in the Mediterranean. Other merchandise was brought from the Indian Ocean; rare woods, dyes, silks and precious stones were re-exported to Greece and the whole of the eastern Mediterranean.

The processing industry was well developed in the Delta and the region of Alexandria. A special effort was made to obtain wool and to introduce Arab and Milesian sheep. Alexandria had the monopoly of the manufacture of papyrus. The art of glass-making reached a very high degree of refinement, new methods being perfected under the Ptolemies. For centuries Alexandria was renowned as a centre for the making of glassware. Alexandria also possessed great skill in the working of metals such as gold, silver and bronze, its inlaid vases being highly valued.

In order to deal with Egypt's financial problems, a strong currency was needed. To expand trade with the rest of the Hellenistic world, the currency had to be tied to that world's monetary standards, which were alien to Egypt. A complete, new financial system was therefore built up. A central state bank was set up in Alexandria, with branches in the capitals of the nomes and sub-branches in the major villages. There were also private banks, which had a secondary role in the country's economic life.

Foreigners were socially, politically and economically in a very different position from that of the native population and had far greater advantages. The high officials of the palace and the members of the government were foreigners, as were also the army officers and the soldiers. In agriculture, foreigners had a better chance than Egyptians of becoming landowners.

The Greeks, when they first came, had their own gods and their own religious beliefs, which were very different from those of the Egyptians. Very soon, however, there grew up a tendency to associate certain Greek gods with certain Egyptian gods, and a new trinity was created, consisting of Serapis as the father-god, Isis as the mother-goddess, and Harpocrates as the son-god. The focal point of this new religion was the Serapeion of Alexandria, which was erected to the west of the city. We have very little information about the appearance of this temple, but we know from Roman historians that it stood on a high platform reached by a stairway of a hundred steps. As early as the third century before the Christian era, the cult of Serapis was rapidly spreading on the islands of the Aegean Sea. By the first century, people every where were invoking Serapis and Isis as saviours. Worship of them spread far afield, the cult of Isis reaching Uruk in Babylonia and that of Serapis reaching India.

A renowned capital on the coast 'beside Egypt'

It was during the reign of the Ptolemies that Alexandria was founded, a city so prosperous that it became not only the capital of Egypt, but also the most important

city of the Hellenistic world. It must be stressed that Egypt, which had suffered military defeat and been politically incorporated into the Macedonian empire, exerted a matchless fascination on Alexander, who wanted to make it the site of one of his most renowned urban schemes and perhaps thought of establishing the capital of his empire there. Furthermore, Egyptian learning was held in such esteem that the scholars of the empire soon began coming to live in Alexandria. Under the Ptolemies, Alexandria may be regarded as the intellectual capital of the Mediterranean world.

The site of the new city had been chosen by Alexander the Great while on his way from Memphis to the oasis of Ammonium (Siwa) to consult the famous oracle at the temple of Ammon in -331. He had been struck by the excellent position of the strip of land lying between the Mediterranean to the north and Lake Mareotis to the south, well away from the marshes of the Delta and yet close to the Canopic branch of the Nile. The site was occupied by a small village called Rhacotis, well protected from the waves and storms by the island of Pharos.

The architect Dinocrates devised a plan to connect the island of Pharos with the mainland by means of a wide mole called the Heptastadion because it was seven stadia (approximately 1,200 metres) long. This mole has now disappeared beneath the alluvial deposits that have built up from both sides.

The building of the Heptastadion resulted.in the formation of two harbours: the one to the east - the 'Portus Magnus' - being larger than the one on the west side, which was called 'Portus Eunostos' or the port of safe return. There was also a third harbour on Lake Mareotis for inland trade.

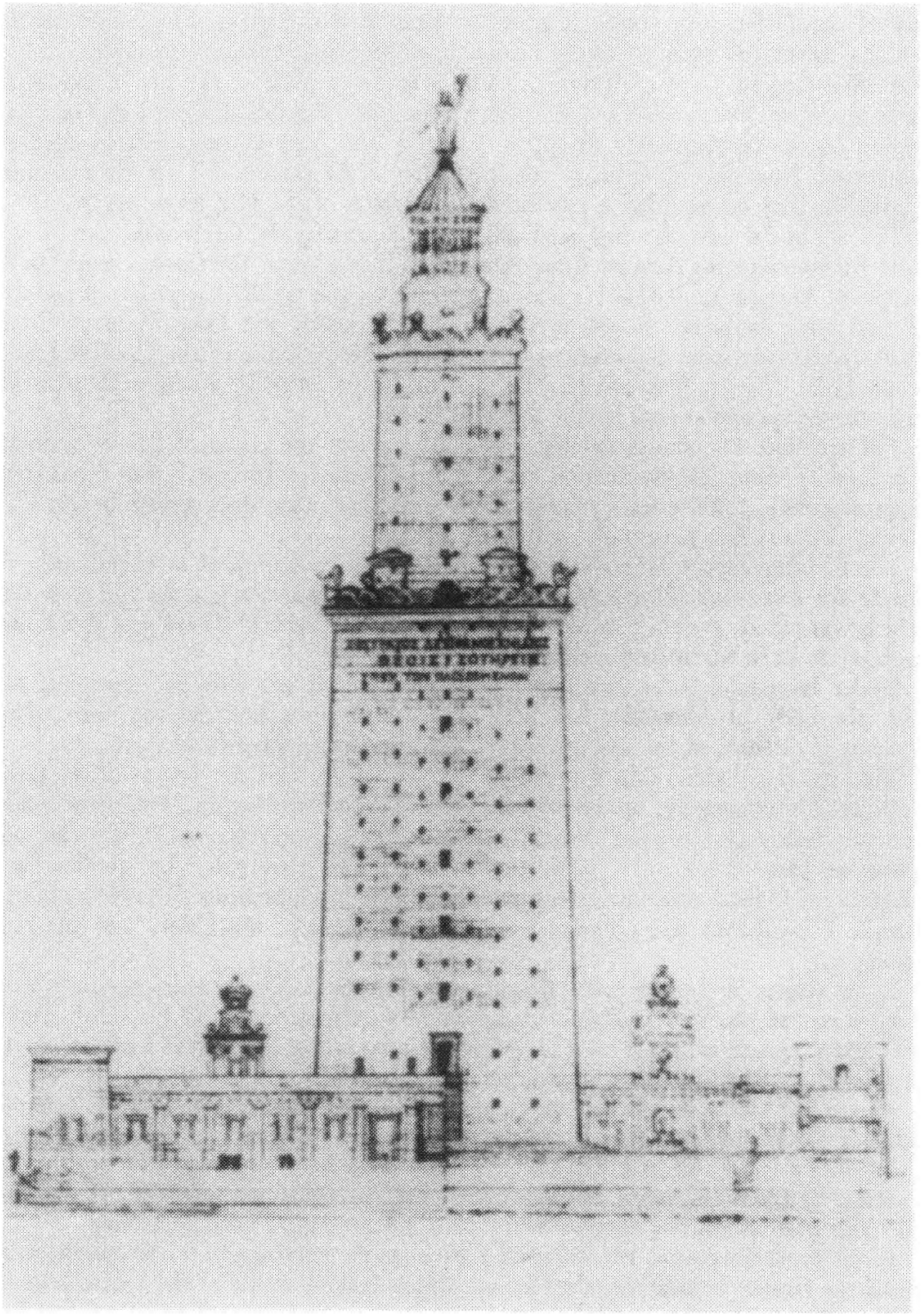
Under Ptolemy I Soter, the major political role was still held by Memphis, but, after the body of Alexander had been transported (it is said) to the new capital, Ptolemy II established the seat of power of the dynasty permanently there.

The city was divided into five districts, called by the first five letters of the Greek alphabet. Unfortunately, we know very little about these districts. The royal quarter occupied nearly one-third of the city adjoining the eastern harbour. It was the most attractive part of the city, with the royal palaces surrounded by gardens with magnificent fountains and cages containing animals brought from all over the known world. This district also contained the famous museum, the library and the royal cemetery.

In the streets of the city many languages were spoken; Greek in its various dialects was, of course, the most widespread. Egyptian was the language of the inhabitants of the native quarters, while in the Jewish quarter Aramaic and Hebrew were the prevailing tongues and other Semitic languages might also be heard.

Alexandria was particularly famous for certain monuments whose location is now difficult to determine. Some of the most important parts of the Hellenistic city are today below sea-level, and the rest is buried deep below the modern city. When speaking of the monuments of the ancient city, therefore, we often rely as much on the description of ancient authors as on what archaeologists have uncovered.

In the southern part of the island of Pharos, at the entrance to the eastern harbour, stood the famous lighthouse (the *Pharos),* which ranked as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The Alexandrian lighthouse gave its name and its basic form to all the lighthouses of antiquity.



6.1 *Lighthouse at Alexandria (Thieresch,* Der Pharos Antike Islam und Occident)

This lighthouse was completely destroyed in the fourteenth century, so that our knowledge of its shape and arrangement is derived from a few classical references and some descriptions by Arab historians.

Ancient coins and representations on mosaics give us an idea of its shape. It was designed by Sostratus of Cnidus in about -280 in the reign of Ptolemy II. It was about 135 metres high and was constructed chiefly of limestone. The friezes and ornamental work were partly in marble and partly in bronze.

The museum, with its enormous library, was by far the most important achievement of the Ptolemies in Alexandria. It was started by Ptolemy I Soter on the advice of an Athenian refugee, Demetrius of Phaleron. The buildings have been described by Strabo as follows: 'The royal palaces also comprise the Museum, which contains a walk, an exedra and a vast hall in which the Museum's philologists take their meals together. There are also general funds for the maintenance of the college and a priest set over the Museum by kings, or, at the present time, by Caesar.' Scientists and men of letters lived in this institution. They were housed and fed and were able to give themselves up entirely to their research and studies, with no menial duties to perform.

Demetrius of Phaleron had advised Ptolemy Soter to create a library which would bring together the whole of contemporary culture by means of the purchase and systematic copying of manuscripts, and very soon more than 200,000 volumes had been collected. The management of this cultural repository was entrusted to illustrious specialists of the contemporary Greek world. There was also a smaller library in the Serapeion holding 45,000 volumes. No institution like the museum of Alexandria existed anywhere else in the Hellenistic world. The only library that could compete with that of Alexandria was the one at Pergamon. We are largely indebted to the library of Alexandria for the survival of the tragedies of Aeschylus, the comedies of Aristophanes, the odes of Pindar and Bacchylides and the histories of Herodotus and Thucydides.

Certain poets acted both as secretaries and as courtiers. Callimachus composed his famous elegy, *The Lock of Berenice,* there, as well as many other works. In the elegy Berenice, the wife of Ptolemy III Euergetes, vows to give the gods a lock of her hair if he returns safely from the war in Syria. On his return, the queen fulfils her vow. On the following day the royal lock was vanished from the temple: At that time, Conon, the astronomer, had just discovered a new constellation and so he christened it 'Berenice's Hair' and invented the myth that the gods themselves had carried off the lock from the temple and placed it in the heavens. The constellation still bears the name Coma Berenices to this day. Callimachus honoured the astronomer's courtly tribute in an elegy which we possess only in the Latin translation by Catullus *(c.* - 84 to -54).

Geographers, cosmographers and astronomers played a large part in Alexandrian scientific development. We shall see, however, that they owed certain discoveries of theirs essentially to Egypt and not only to the library of Alexandria.

Eratosthenes, the father of scientific geography, was born at Cyrene in about -285. In about - 245, Ptolemy offered him the post of librarian, which he had until his death. His most remarkable achievement was his attempt to measure the circumference of the earth, basing his calculations on the relationship between the shadow cast

at the summer solstice on the sundial at Alexandria and the absence of shadow at Syene (Aswan). He concluded that the circumference of the entire earth was 252,000 stadia (i.e. 46,695 kilometres), which is greater by one-seventh than the actual circumference (40,008 kilometres). It was also Eratosthenes who catalogued 675 stars.

The geographer Strabo (r. -63 to + 24), to whom we owe the oldest systematic account of the geography of Egypt, was born in Cappadocia, spent most of his life in Rome and Asia Minor, and finally settled in Alexandria. Although Strabo belongs to the Roman period, the core of his work was Hellenistic. His treatise on geography comprises seventeen volumes, with his description of Egypt taking up nearly two-thirds of the final volume.

Geography and astronomy presuppose a very advanced knowledge of mathematics. Among the museum's eminent men was the famous mathematician Euclid (-330 to - 275), who was the first to be given charge of the mathematics department and wrote an important work on astronomy (the *Phaenomena)* as well as the famous treatise on geometry (the *Elements),* which remained the basic work on the subject and was translated into Latin and Arabic. Archimedes of Syracuse (-287 to -212), one of the greatest mathematicians of Euclid's school, discovered the relationship between diameter and circumference, the theory of the spiral and the law of gravity. His most important contribution to mathematics and mechanics, however, was his invention known as the Archimedean screw, a device still used in Egypt for raising water.

Apollonius of Perga, the great geometrician, came to Alexandria from Palmyra in about - 240 to work in the mathematics-school of Alexandria, and owes his renown to his work on conic section. He was the founder of trigonometry.

From the third century on, the mathematics school at Alexandria took on its own distinctive characteristics and became the principal focus of Greek mathematics.

Theophrastus, who lived at the time of Ptolemy I, is regarded, on account of his work on the history and physiology of plants, as the founder of scientific botany.

Diodorus Siculus, the historian, visited Egypt in -59. The first book of his historical work *Library of History,* written in Greek, is given over to an account of the myths, kings and customs of Egypt. According to Diodorus, the first appearance of man on earth took place in Egypt. He says (I, 10): 'At the beginning of the world, man first came into existence in Egypt, both because of the favourable climate of the country and because of the nature of the Nile.'

Physicians, too, came to work at the museum and at the library, the intellectual freedom which reigned there enabling them to make progress in the study of anatomy by dissecting corpses.

Herophilus of Asia Minor, who came to Egypt in the first half of the third century before the Christian era, was the first to discover the connection between the heartbeat and the pulse and to distinguish between arteries and veins. Some of the names he gave to the parts of the body are still in use today, e.g. the duodenum and the torcula herophili.

Erasistratus, another eminent surgeon who was also born in Asia Minor, threw new light on the anatomy of the heart while working in Alexandria.

Here again, the renown of the medical school of Alexandria was to be long-lived.

There is an obituary verse preserved in Milan which says of the physician to whom it relates: 'Egypt the all-sublime was his fatherland.'

In the course of time, the native Egyptian element made its presence felt more and more. Manetho, an Egyptian from Samanud in the Delta, was one of the most famous scholar-priests of the beginning of the third century before the Christian era. His chief work, the *Aegyptiaca,* would have been our best source of information on the history of ancient Egypt had it reached us in its entirety. The fragments which still exist contain lists of the names of kings arranged in dynasties and mentioning the duration of each king's reign, a method adopted by modern historians.

Egyptian influence on Hellenistic culture

We have seen that the Ptolemies strove to develop relations between Egypt and the Indian Ocean. Where land exploration is concerned there is still much discussion as to whether they had a systematic policy to trace the course of the Nile and make use of the river, far to the south, as a route for penetration and commerce. It is, however, certain that exploration to the south of Egypt took place. Timosthenes, navarch of Philadelphia, visited Nubia; Aristo reconnoitred' the Arabian coasts; Satyrus followed the African coast to a point south of Cape Guardafui. The accounts of these explorations have been recorded and provide material for the work of scholars such as Agatharchides.

These explorers, furthermore, were following in illustrious footsteps. In about -500, Hecataeus of Miletus, the first Greek geographer to visit Egypt, wrote the first description of the world. Unfortunately only fragments of his geographical treatise have survived. In Egypt he travelled as far as Thebes and it seems very probable that he included a detailed description of Egypt in his treatise. Hecataeus considered the earth to be a flat disc with Greece at its centre. He divided the world into two continents, Europe and Asia, the latter consisting of Egypt and the whole of North Africa, known at that time under the name of Libya. He imagined that in the south the Nile connected with the River Oceanus, which encircled the whole world. Herodotus of Halicarnassus had visited Egypt in about - 450. He went as far south as Elephantine, which he described as the frontier between Egypt and Ethiopia. Herodotus devoted the second of the nine books of his *History* to Egypt. He was the first geographer to mention Meroe by name, having actually met Meroites at Aswan.

Herodotus also thought that the earth was flat but, unlike Hecataeus, he did not think it was circular, nor did he believe that it was encircled by the River Oceanus. He divided the world into three continents: Europe, Asia and Libya (i.e. Africa), stating that the last was surrounded on all sides by the sea except at the point where it was joined to Asia.

Diodorus Siculus described the course of the Nile in the first book of his work. He was of the opinion that the Nile rose in Ethiopia and contained a large number of islands including the one called Meroe. Diodorus devoted the whole of his third book to Ethiopia, that is, to what is now called the Sudan. Strabo, like him, referred to the Meroe region as an island and also gave details of its inhabitants.

Even more surprising was the slow absorption of the Greek milieu by the

Egyptian. It would seem that the Egyptians did not give way to cultural pressure. They kept an independent attitude towards the Ptolemies, unlike the Greeks, who displayed a striking adulation of the sovereign. Yet the Greek language at that time enjoyed international status and was easier to write than Egyptian. Officially, everyone spoke Greek. It has been noticed by archaeologists, however, that almost as many papyri are found in demotic as in Greek. Greek law was very slow to be reflected in Egyptian legal instruments, while the Egyptian calendar gradually pre vailed over the Greek. What is more, by means of the Greek language an entire Egyptian heritage became available to a world it would never have reached without the new linguistic medium which served to convey it.

Art can probably be said to be the sphere in which the Egyptian and even black African impregnation of Hellenistic culture was the most surprising and spectacular. The Greeks, lovers of the theatre as they had been in Athens, built monuments in Egypt which reflected their taste.

At first, naturally enough, artistic techniques and tastes among the Greek commu nity in Egypt were similar to those in other Greek communities of the far-flung empire. It is also true that products from the Alexandrian workshops resembled those of Greece to some extent and showed the influence of fashions foreign to Africa. There are a great many examples of this important art in the Graeco-Roman Museum at Alexandria. One of the most remarkable is the head of Alexander which belongs to the tradition of the school of Lysippus. But innovation was also taking place in Alexandria, the most important new technique being that described by archaeologists by the Italian term *sfumato,* which is a blending of light and shade on the softened contours of the facial features, not much attention being paid to the representation of hair or cheeks. The latter were usually modelled in stucco, which lends itself to the soft modelling preferred by the Alexandrian artists. When these parts were added they were usually coloured.

In Pharaonic Egypt, the Nile had been depicted as a fat man with breasts, bearing lotus or papyrus, the plants growing in the Nile Valley. The Greeks represented him as a strong, bearded man either seated or reclining with hippopotamuses, crocodiles or a sphinx, the symbols of Egypt. Representations of royal personages followed the same pattern. Painting, which remained very faithful to the Greek models throughout the fourth and third centuries, began in the second to include scenes that were Egyptian in style side by side with others in Greek style, as, for example, in one of the tombs of Anfushi in Alexandria. The main burial chamber is decorated from the very entrance in a mixture of Egyptian and Greek styles, both in its architecture and in its painted decoration.

Mosaics appeared first in the eastern Mediterranean and possibly in Alexandria itself. Several mosaic pavements with pictorial motifs have been discovered in and around Alexandria. The most important is inscribed with the name ‘Sophilos’ and, inside the central rectangle, shows the head of a woman with a mast and yard-arm. This head is crowned with a head-dress in the form of a ship’s prow and is thought to have been a personification of the city of Alexandria.

No doubt the most surprising aspect of Egypt’s Hellenistic production, however, in the richness of its invention and tastes, was the proliferation of humorous,

grotesque or realistic statuettes representing scenes from daily life and depicting Egyptians and black Africans. The small figurines in bronze, marble, terracotta or plaster were made for the common people, but the existence of more valuable pieces attest to the general popularity of these themes.

Egypt in the Hellenistic era: relations with Libya

Through Cyrenaica (the eastern part of Libya), certain aspects of Hellenistic civiliza tion found their way from Egypt into North Africa. This was not the first time that Greek civilization had appeared in Cyrenaica, for we know that Greeks from the Dorian island of Thera emigrated to Cyrenaica, where they founded Cyrene, their first colony, in -631. This was followed by the founding of four more colonies, the port of Cyrene (later Apollonia), Tauchira, Barca (present-day Al-Merg) and Euhesperides. These colonies, especially Cyrene, were products of Greek civilization and underwent the normal political changes that took place in every Greek city. With the founding of Cyrene began the reign of the Battiad Dynasty, which came to an end as a result of internal strife in about -440. Then followed the usual conflict between aristocracy and democracy, and Cyrenaica became a land of confusion and strife.

The whole of the ancient world was at this time on the eve of a great upheaval with the coming of Alexander the Great, who invaded Egypt in the autumn of -332 and pressed westwards to Paraetonium (present-day Marsa-Matruh) on his way to the Siwa oasis to consult the oracle of Ammon. Cyrene, and probably the other cities too (having in fact misunderstood Alexander's intentions and wishing to prevent his invasion of Cyrenaica), attempted to safeguard their independence by sending ambas sadors to meet him at Paraetonium and profess their cities' loyalty. But they would not preserve their independence for ever, for in -323 after Alexander's death, Ptolemy, while still satrap of Egypt, seized the opportunity provided by the internal struggles at Cyrene and annexed Cyrenaica, thus initiating the Hellenistic period in that country. Except for a brief period of independence (c. - 258 to - 246), the domina tion of Cyrenaica by the Ptolemies lasted from - 322 to - 96, when Ptolemy Apion (son of Ptolemy Euergetes II), who was ruling over Cyrenaica, bequeathed it to the Roman people and it was combined with Crete into a Roman province.

Under the Ptolemies, the towns were given new names, some of which were Ptolemaic dynastic names. Cyrene kept its name, but Tauchira was rechristened Arsinoe (present-day Tokra), and Barka's port was given the name of Ptolemais (present-day Tolmeta) and superseded Barka as the official city centre. Euhesperides gave way to a new city which received the name of Berenice (present-day Benghazi) in honour of Berenice, the Cyrenaean princess and wife of Ptolemy III. Cyrene's port was raised to city rank and given the name of Apollonia (present-day Susa).

Cyrenaica was peopled by a mixture of races. In the cities, besides the Greeks there was a non-Greek population composed of Jews and many other foreigners. Outside the cities, the rural population *(georgoi)* consisted of native Libyans and mercenary soldiers who had settled there as cleruchs.

These *georgoi* tilled the arable lands of Cyrenaica, made up of the royal lands *(gébasiliké),* the city lands *(gepolitike),* and the land left to the native Libyans. This

social structure resulted in a clash between the native Libyans and the Greek settlers.

Cyrenaica in the Hellenistic period was a country of great economic importance, being regarded as one of the granaries of the ancient world. It has been said that Cyrene sent a gift of 800,000 *medimni* of grain to the Greek cities in metropolitan Greece during the famine of -330 to -326. Much has been said about its wool, its horse-breeding, and the famous *silphium* of Cyrenaica, which was a monopoly of the Battiad kings and probably remained a monopoly of the Ptolemies.

This gift of grain is not the only evidence of the close relations existing between the Greeks of Cyrenaica and those in Greece itself. It is well known that Cyrene contributed greatly to the intellectual life of the Greeks, especially in the fourth century, through its renowned philosophers and mathematicians. As a result of its close intellectual contacts with Athens, Cyrene made it possible for philosophy and a great many branches of learning to flourish on the Cyrenaican plateau. It was here that the philosophical school known as the Cyrenaics developed. This was a minor Socratic school founded by Aristippus *(c.* -400 to -365), the grandson of the Aristippus who was friend and companion to Socrates. This intellectual activity and fertility were still evident in the Hellenistic era. We need only cite as evidence the names of Callimachus (- 305 to - 240) and Eratosthenes (- 275 to -194) who were among those to leave Cyrene for Alexandria to enrich the latter's activity in the development of the sciences and literature. At the academy, the museum and the library, they added to the sum of creative intelligence in Alexandria and enabled the city to become the main pole of intellectual attraction in the Hellenistic era.

Many statues of philosophers, poets and the nine Muses have been discovered at Cyrene. The discovery of a bust of Demosthenes, albeit a Roman copy, is very significant since it shows the high esteem in which such a great Greek orator was held by the Greek population of Cyrene.

Some fine examples of Alexandrian sculpture have been found among the numerous marble statues at Cyrene. The few original portraits from Hellenistic times show very close affinities with what is known as the Hellenistic art of Alexandria. It is not surprising that the technique used in Alexandria was copied to a certain extent at Cyrene. Another similarity between the Greek sculpture of Cyrenaica and that of Alexandria can be seen in the Cyrenaean busts. A comparison of Cyrenaean funerary busts with Egyptian mummy portraits clearly reveals the close similarity between them. Even when the pieces in question are from the Roman era, there is no denying their Ptolemaic origin.

From Cyrene came painted Hellenistic pottery and terracotta figurines. These figurines were produced in local workshops which had started by reproducing and imitating Greek terracottas, but gradually evolved their own characteristic style. Study of these figurines is rewarding as they reflect the daily lives of the inhabitants of Cyrenaica, especially in the cities.

In the sphere of religion, the dynastic Ptolemaic cult found its way to Cyrenaica, as can be seen from the large number of dedicatory inscriptions to the Ptolemaic kings and queens. The cities of Cyrenaica also adopted the cult of Serapis, and temples to Isis and Osiris have been found at Cyrene and Ptolemais.

From Cyrenaica, this Graeco-Egyptian cult probably reached Tripolitania, which

6.2 *Cleopatra VII. Source unknown*

was never ruled by the Ptolemies in pre-Roman times. The sanctuary of Serapis and of Isis was discovered at Leptis Magna, and it is interesting to note that at Sabrata the cult of Isis was combined with Isiac rites. The cults of Isis and Serapis must have extended farther west as the cult of Isis became more general and as the Serapis cult started giving the ancient world a new hope of a better life.

Much of what has been said about Hellenistic Cyrenaica concerns only the Greeks, since information concerning the native Libyans and the extent to which they were influenced by Hellenistic civilization is scarce and hard to find. We know that the native Libyans, driven away from the fertile coastal lands and contained in the interior, did not welcome the presence of the Greeks. Hellenistic civilization, never theless, owed much to this region of North Africa which enabled it to develop and flourish for three centuries.