



EGYPT III. RELATIONS IN THE SELEUCID AND PARTHIAN PERIODS

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iii. Relations in the Seleucid and Parthian periods

This period began with the advent of the Seleucid dynasty in Syria (312 B.C.E.) and ended with the Sasanian occupation of Egypt (618/19-28 C.E.). After the successes of Alexander the Great (q.v.) in Asia Minor, Syria, and Phoenicia the Persian satrap of Egypt, Mazaces, declined to put up a strong resistance and surrendered his satrapy to the Macedonian conqueror in 332 B.C.E. (Arrian, *Anabasis* 3.1; Berve, II, pp. 245-46). Some of the Persians and Jews mentioned in documents from Ptolemaic Egypt may have been descended from the former Achaemenid occupation forces and their civilian relations (Harmatta; Bresciani, pp. 147-53; Fraser, 1972, I, p. 58; see i, above). It is certain that the speedy surrender of the Persian satrap, the bloodless occupation of Egypt by the Macedonian army, and, above all, Alexander's accession as great king of the Persian empire precluded wide-ranging retribution against the Persian garrisons in Egypt. Alexander's son (by the Iranian princess Roxane) Alexander IV and half-brother Philip III Arrhidaeus ruled jointly after Alexander's death in 323 B.C.E.; the Egyptian satrapy remained part of the empire under the Macedonian Ptolemy. Elimination of Alexander's family in



312 B.C.E. and the dismemberment of his empire opened the way for creation of separate Hellenistic states; Ptolemy assumed the title “king” in 305 B.C.E.

The Seleucid period. Traditional Egyptian hostility toward Persians and, more generally, toward invaders from the northeast revived as relations between the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids in Asia deteriorated. In a series of “Syrian” wars during the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.E. the Ptolemies suffered several defeats, but they were sometimes able to invade Seleucid territory and even to penetrate as far as Mesopotamia and Persia. In the first century B.C.E. cooperation between the Roman triumvir Mark Antony and the Ptolemaic queen Cleopatra VII culminated in a plan to establish their son Alexander Helios as ruler of Armenia, Media, and the Parthian territories (announced at Alexandria in 34 B.C.E.; cf. Plutarch, *Antony*, 54). Their defeat, first at Actium and finally at Alexandria (in 31 and 30 B.C.E. respectively), precluded realization of this scheme (for relations between Ptolemies and Seleucids in the context of Roman history, cf. Will).

Conflict with the Seleucids created a unique opportunity for cooperation between the Ptolemies and the Egyptian clergy. According to texts celebrating Ptolemaic victories, among the booty brought back to Egypt were statues and holy objects that had been carried away by the Persians (Kienitz, p. 107 n. 5; cf. W. Dittenberger, I, no. 54 [

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