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in Honor of
Richard A. Parker

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Janet H. Johnson

The Role of the Egyptian Priesthood in Ptolemaic Egypt

This preliminary study of aspects of the economic and social role of the Egyptian priesthood in Ptolemaic Egypt, based largely on Demotic materials, is here presented as a small token of esteem to Richard A. Parker, one of the leading demotists of our day, whose careful study and publication of Demotic texts has helped make studies such as this possible.

Most of the comprehensive studies of Ptolemaic Egypt, including the monumental works on the Ptolemaic economy by Préaux¹ and Rostovtzeff,² have been based almost entirely on Greek documentation. This is understandable since the Greek documents are much easier to read than the Egyptian (whether in hieroglyphs or Demotic) and thus many more of the Greek documents have been published. But such a reliance can lead to a distorted picture of life in Ptolemaic Egypt, especially since by the end of the second century the mass immigration of Greeks had stopped and Egyptians played an even more visible role in the life of the country. As noted by Clarysse:

With Alexander the Great and the Ptolemies the rise of a Greek administration and colonisation marks for us a break in the history of Egypt. This is, I think, mainly due to the sudden appearance of a mass of Greek papyri and inscriptions, which have attracted the attention of classical scholars to this period.

From the Egyptian point of view, however, the break is not really all

¹Claire Préaux, *L'économie royale des Lagides* (Brussels: Fondation Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth, 1939).

²Michael Rostovtzeff, *A Large Estate in Egypt in the Third Century B.C.: A Study in Economic History*, University of Wisconsin Studies in the Social Sciences and History, no. 6 (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1922); idem, *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1941). The same is true of Dorothy J. Crawford, *Kerkeosiris, an Egyptian Village in the Ptolemaic Period*, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge: University Press, 1971).

IV/22. [²Iw=f r] hpr hn md.t ṛiw=s ṛhp, “[He will] happen into a thing which is hidden (or ‘secret’).” The words are clear enough, but not the import.

IV/23. Compare n rn (n) hm.t n-g³ [šr mtw=f], “because of a wife or [a child of his],” with similar phrases in I/6 and III/3.

ADDENDUM

Dr. Mark J. Smith has pointed out to me that P. Vindob. D. 6614 (E. A. E. Reymond, *From the Contents of the Libraries of the Suchos Temples in the Fayyum. II: From Ancient Egyptian Hermetic Writings* [Wien, 1977], pl. VI) is also an astrological text. Belatedly we have made out what we believe to be the pattern of it from what is preserved. It apparently gives predictions for p³y-ms=w mtw=f n intr.t, “one who was born, moreover, in (the house) ‘Goddess’” (a/4). For the mtw=f, “moreover,” see the note above on I/3. In a/4 it is the sun (p³ r^c) which must be understood to be in the horoscopic house “Goddess,” although mention of its name was not felt to be necessary or is now lost with the forepart of the line. In a/8 it is when “the moon is in ‘Goddess.’” Presumably thereafter the remaining five planets would have been taken up in order, each in the same tenth horoscopic house, “Goddess,” at points such as a/12 (“it being in ‘Goddess’”), b/1 (“[he who was] born”), and b/9 (“he who was born”). There is only one instance known to me in Demotic in which the tenth horoscopic house, the meridian, is called not only “The Lake of the Sky” as is usual but also pr ntr.t, “the house ‘Goddess.’” That is in the Strassburg ostrakon referred to in the note above on II/1, part of which was published by Thompson and part by Spiegelberg and which is O.3 (see lines 6 and 21) in Neugebauer, “Demotic Horoscopes,” 116–17.

In any case, certain phrases occur in P. Vindob. 6614 which are almost clichés in P. Berlin 8345. Besides p³y-ms=w, “he who was born,” already mentioned, there are, for example, hpr n=f, “occurs for him,” at a/7, 8, 19; iw=f s[b]q n ms, “when he is young,” at b/3; and h³t=f nfr, “his heart is happy,” at c/3. Also, in a/18 there is ir wpe(.t) n šw[t], “do work of a merchant, merchandise,” which would appear to require the reading of P. Berlin 8345, I/10 as bq (n) sh wpe(.t) n šw^t n-g³, “work of a scribe or business of a merchant,” and of IV/7 as iw[=f] hpr hn wpe(.t) iw=f shny hn[=s], “[he] comes to be in business, he chances into [it].” The evil determinative of the wpe(.t) in both texts, what looks like the three-stroke s as in ss(.t) both times in the Berlin text, and the context in IV/7 make one hesitate, but perhaps wpe(.t) with a pejorative determinative means “business, trade, trafficking” even when it is not followed by šw^t and stands in contrast to bq=bk, the “profession” of scribe. See the note above on I/10.

that important. The Egyptians were used to foreign domination since several generations and the replacement of the Persian ruler by a Macedonian king did not necessitate a change in their attitude. Under the Ptolemies . . . the life of the common people hardly changed except for a few regions such as Alexandria and the Fayum.

Especially on the life of the temples and on all that was connected with them, that is to say, most of native cultural life, the “changes of dynasties, the wars and invasions had remarkably little effect.”³

Bothmer, in his study of Egyptian sculpture of the Late Period, came to the following conclusion:

Even if the temples—Dendara, Esna, and Edfu to name only a few of the great monuments of the Ptolemaic Period—had not survived to testify to the splendor and wealth of the country under the successors of Alexander the Great, the vast number of hard-stone sculptures made for the Egyptian upper classes would alone furnish ample proof that the native aristocracy of administrators, officers, and priests, of well-to-do families firmly entrenched in long-established local positions, enjoyed great freedom in pursuing a way of life and worship established by their forefathers.⁴

Even in the Greek sources, the Egyptian temples are seen to be a major factor in the Ptolemaic economy—their land holdings are large, and they and their priests receive special concessions (such as partial or total exemption from certain taxes) and dispensations (for example, temple monopolies and permission to produce such commodities as oil, which were otherwise strictly limited). As noted by Préaux, “Rien ne dit qu’un temple offert au dieu par un roi soit entièrement et réellement payé par lui. Les fidèles font construire des temples ou des chapelles ou font ajouter à leurs frais des ailes nouvelles aux temples anciens et les dédient au nom du roi.”⁵ Quaegebeur concludes: “L’idée que la construction d’un grand temple doit être payée essentiellement avec les revenus du temple—rendement des terres sacrées et différents types de taxes et de revenus—justifie, à mon avis, la conclusion que les temples et le sacerdoce constituaient une grande force économique.”⁶ Therefore, as a beginning toward redressing the imbalance in use be-

³Willy Clarysse, “Prosopography and the Dating of Egyptian Monuments of the Ptolemaic Period,” in *Das ptolemäische Ägypten, Akten des internationalen Symposions 27.–29. September 1976 in Berlin*, ed. Herwig Maehler and Volker Michael Strocka (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1978), 239. The quotation is from Bernard V. Bothmer’s introduction to *ESLP*, xxxii.

⁴*ESLP*, 152.

⁵*L’économie royale*, 51.

⁶Jan Quaegebeur, “Documents égyptiens et rôle économique du clergé en Egypte hellénistique,” in *State and Temple Economy in the Ancient Near East, Proceedings of the International Conference organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 10th to the 14th of April 1978*, vol. 2, ed. Edward Lipiński, *Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*, no. 6 (Leuven: Oriental Department, 1979), 715.

tween Greek and Egyptian documentation (Quaegebeur's "lack of equilibrium"⁷), this study will examine the Egyptian sources for information on the role of the Egyptian priesthood—not their religious functions, which are rarely, if ever, discussed, but their position in society, especially their economic role. The comments made here are those of a traditional Egyptologist, not of an economic historian. But the model suggested at the end of this article may be pertinent.

One of the first notable characteristics of the mass of Egyptian material is that the majority was produced by or for people with priestly titles or people associated with temples.⁸ There is a problem of definition here: because the titles used in hieroglyphic inscriptions are often old ones, it is sometimes impossible to determine exactly what function goes with what title or whether some title is merely honorific. But the range of titles used in Demotic contracts is more limited and seems to be more directly related to function. Even when the exact import is unclear (such as *b3k* DN [divine name], "servant of DN"), it is evident that the title is a statement of some relationship to a god or temple. The percentage of Egyptian men who were priests or who worked for a temple is impossible to calculate, but it would have been quite small, even among the urban population.

One possible indication of the relatively high status and wealth of priests is the fact that most private statuary and funerary stelae were made for such people.⁹ However, since priests had a vested interest in the temples and in the preservation of this aspect of Egyptian culture, this evidence should not be stressed without independent evidence of the priests' wealth and status.

One index of wealth in Ptolemaic Egyptian society is the making of a so-called marriage contract, an essentially economic document guaranteeing that the man will support the wife and that her children will inherit his property.¹⁰ The man pledges all his property (both current and future possessions); he becomes legally unable to alienate any of his property without the permission of his wife or children. It is generally assumed that such documents were made when a man had enough property to make it worthwhile for the wife to bind him and it to her support and the support of her family; that is, presumably among the relatively wealthy. There is no evidence from Pharaonic or Ptolemaic

⁷ *Ibid.*, 709.

⁸ See the comments by, among others, Quaegebeur, "Documents," 707–29, and Willy Clarysse, "Egyptian Estate-Holders in the Ptolemaic Period," in *State and Temple Economy*, 731–43.

⁹ See *ESLP* and Peter Munro, *Die spätägyptischen Totenstelen*, *Äg. For.* 25 (1973).

¹⁰ See Erich Lüddeckens, *Ägyptische Eheverträge*, *Äg. Abh.* 1 (1960); and Pieter Willem Pestman, *Marriage and Matrimonial Property in Ancient Egypt* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1961), chap. 1. The standard phraseology states that "all the children you *have* born me and all the children you will bear me" will be heirs.

Egypt of any religious ceremony or underpinning of marriage which would have made members of the priesthood more likely than members of any other occupation to compose such documents.¹¹ Thus the priests who made such documents were probably doing so for the same reason as other Egyptian men—to provide guaranteed support for their families. As summarized by Malinine, “il ressort . . . que le chef de famille n'est qu'un administrateur temporaire du patrimoine qui retourne aux membres survivants du foyer familial après sa disparition.”¹²

The 52 marriage contracts from the Ptolemaic Period collected by Lüddeckens¹³ and another 7 recently published and easily accessible¹⁴ provide the following data: 27 of the 59 (46 percent) were made by priests; 18 (30 percent) were made by people associated with a temple; and 14 (24 percent) were made by people with other titles or no title; of these 14, 9 (15 percent of the total) had military titles, 2 had administrative titles, 1 was a merchant, and 1 was the son of a priest.

The high percentage of priests and people associated with temples making so-called marriage contracts probably indicates that these men were relatively wealthy members of Egyptian society. But one could argue that this behavior was due to the priests' cultural position, not to their wealth. For this reason, it is necessary to examine a wider range of documents to determine how often priests and others associated with temples appear. The documents used are papyri from the Theban area and include leases, sale documents, loans, and various other agreements about economic matters, as well as marriage contracts. The mass of ostraca, which are usually tax receipts, lists, or accounts, was ignored. Only easily accessible major archives were tabulated: the material from the area of western Thebes called Deir el-Medîna;¹⁵ the material from the town near the temple of Karnak which is now in University Museum, Philadelphia;¹⁶ the British Museum archive of material from the same town;¹⁷ the material from the bilingual archive in Turin, recently published by Pestman;¹⁸ and the Berlin documents published by Gru-

¹¹ See especially Pestman, *Marriage*, 6–7.

¹² Michel Malinine, “Partage testamentaire d'une propriété familiale,” *RdE* 19 (1967): 68.

¹³ See note 10.

¹⁴ Published by Giuseppe Botti, *L'archivio demotico da Deir el-Medineh*, Catalogo del Museo Egizio di Torino, Serie Prima—Monumenti e Testi, vol. 1 (Florence: Felice le Monnier, 1967); and P. W. Pestman, *L'archivio di Amenotes figlio di Horos (P. Tor. Amenotes)*, Catalogo del Museo Egizio di Torino, Serie Prima—Monumenti e Testi, vol. 5 (Milan: Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino—La Goliardica, 1981).

¹⁵ Published by Botti, *Deir el-Medineh*.

¹⁶ Published by Mustafa el-Amir, *A Family Archive from Thebes* (Cairo: General Organization for Government Printing Offices, 1959).

¹⁷ Published by S. R. K. Glanville, *A Theban Archive of the Reign of Ptolemy I, Soter*, Catalogue of Demotic Papyri in the British Museum, vol. 1 (Oxford: University Press, 1939).

¹⁸ *L'archivio di Amenotes*.

nert.¹⁹ Since the latter two groups contain few documents, they have been combined in the tables under the category "other." These four archives yield 122 documents in which the names and titles, if given, of all the parties involved are preserved. The documents were sorted into four categories: A, in which both parties were priests; B, in which one party or several parties on one side were priests but the other party or parties were not; C, in which one or both sides involved people associated with a temple, but not priests (some texts fall into both B and C); and D, in which neither party consisted of priests or others associated with temples. Table 1 summarizes the percentage of documents in each category.

Not all the documents involve two parties; some are unilateral, and some involve three or more people. In the 128 Theban documents there are 258 contracting parties, including 75 women. The women appear not only in the marriage contracts (of which there are relatively few) but also in all other kinds of documents. Thus it seemed useful to calculate the percentage of people who appear in the documents who were priests or associated with a temple and, in addition, the percentage of men who appear who are priests or associated with a temple. The percentages for priests may be low since in at least two cases, involving seven men, no title is given in the contract but it is known from other evidence that these men were priests (at the time of the contract). Other cases have not been checked, so it is possible that the percentage of priests could be even higher. Table 2 summarizes the results of these calculations. Here the percentage of men who are priests or are associated with a temple is exceedingly high; especially striking is the percentage of men who are priests. But since these documents all come from Thebes and Thebes is an old religious center, it is possible that Theban texts may show a bias toward priests.

As a check for this, the same calculations were done for the collection of sale contracts studied by Zauzich.²⁰ An Egyptian sale contract consisted of two parts: a money-transfer document which said that party A had received money from party B for such and such property, with a description of the property, and a cession document, ceding all rights to the property. In a regular sale, both documents were made at the same time; for a loan or mortgage, the money-transfer document was made at the time of the loan; if the loan was *not* repaid, the cession document was made. Zauzich studied 95 transfer documents and 65 cessions from various sections of the country, including Memphis, the

¹⁹ Stefan Grunert, *Thebanische Kaufverträge des 3. und 2. Jahrhundert v. u. Z.*, Demotische Papyri aus den Staatlichen Museum zu Berlin, vol. 2 (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1981).

²⁰ Karl-Theodor Zauzich, *Die ägyptische Schreibertradition in Aufbau, Sprache und Schrift der demotischen Kaufverträge aus Ptolemäischer Zeit*, Äg. Abh. 19 (1968).

TABLE 1. Percentage of Theban Documents Involving Priests or Others Associated with a Temple

Category	Deir el-Medina	Karnak	Other	Total
A	33%	21%	16%	25%
B	35	49	66	48
A + B	69	69	81	72
C	4	26	3	11
A + B + C	73	82	81	78
D	27	18	19	22

TABLE 2. Percentage of Theban Documents Involving People Who Were Priests or Were Associated with a Temple

Category	Deir el-Medina	Karnak	Other	Total
Priests : People	48	47	48	48
Associated : People	2	16	1	6
Priests + Associated : People	50	63	49	53
Priests : Men	62	72	73	67
Associated : Men	2	26	2	8
Priests + Associated : Men	64	98	75	75

Fayum, the Theban area, and south to Edfu. The only areas with a sufficient number of documents for statistical analysis are Thebes, the traditional religious center; Edfu; and Gebelein, which was basically a military center. The rest of Zauzich's examples are combined under the category "other." The documents were sorted into the same four categories as the collection from the Theban area. Table 3 shows the percentage of sale documents in each category.

Zauzich's 160 contracts involve 361 parties, including 128 women (both as buyers and as sellers of property). Thus, in accordance with the logic outlined above, table 4 presents the percentage of people who were priests or were associated with a temple and the percentage of men who were priests or were associated with a temple. The figures for Gebelein, which was primarily a military settlement, are especially interesting. The results indicate that throughout the country, priests and others associated with temples were more likely than other men to be involved in buying and selling property and that therefore it is legitimate to see them as members of the wealthier class of society.

Given the strong likelihood that priests and those associated with temples were among the wealthier members of Ptolemaic Egyptian society, it is appropriate to examine the Demotic documents to try to determine the type and amount of wealth involved.

One traditional type of wealth is land—real estate. Greek documents contain references to people who owned huge estates of 10,000 arouras [an aroura is approximately two-thirds of an acre] and to payments in land to cavalymen and infantrymen, the size of the allotment depend-

TABLE 3. Percentage of Sale Documents Involving Priests and Others Associated with a Temple

Category	Thebes	Gebelein	Edfu	Other	Total
<i>Money-transfer documents</i>					
A	26%	13%	—	14%	19%
B	47	27	—	36	37
A + B	73	40	—	50	56
C	7	20	91%	21	21
A + B + C	76	53	91	64	73
D	24	47	9	36	27
<i>Cession documents</i>					
A	16	—	—	38	17
B	51	33	—	46	40
A + B	68	33	—	85	57
C	22	33	92	8	32
A + B + C	78	67	92	85	82
D	22	33	8	15	18
<i>Total sale documents</i>					
A	22	11	—	26	18
B	49	28	—	41	38
A + B	71	39	—	67	56
C	13	22	91	15	26
A + B + C	77	56	91	74	76
D	23	44	9	26	24

ing on military rank. It has been suggested that a Greek owning 100 or more arouras would qualify as “rich,” while those owning 10–100 arouras (the latter the amount a Greek cavalryman was allotted in the third century B.C.) could be called “middle class.”²¹

There is some evidence that wealthy Egyptians also had very large estates. A few Egyptian texts refer to *ḥn 1000* or *ḥn 10,000*, “the great (man) of 1000/10,000.”²² Although these terms resemble military titles such as *ḥn 10*, “commander of ten men,” it seems quite unlikely that in the third and second century B.C. an Egyptian would have been high enough in the Ptolemaic army to have controlled such a large number of men.²³ For this reason, the title has also been seen as corresponding to the Greek *μυριάροισι*, “owners of 10,000 arouras.”²⁴ The most famous of the Greek *μυριάροισι* was Appollonios, whose 10,000 arouras in the Fayum were a gift from Ptolemy II and whose agent was Zenon. The archive of the latter is a major source of information about early Ptolemaic Egypt.²⁵ But of the five *μυριάροισι* whose names are given in Greek documents, three have Egyptian names. All seem to have had lands in the area of the Fayum, where major Ptolemaic land reclamation took place.

²¹ So Clarysse, “Egyptian Estate-Holders,” 735.

²² *Ibid.*, 736.

²³ *Ibid.*, 736–37.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 737–39.

²⁵ For these documents, see now P. W. Pestman et al., *A Guide to the Zenon Archive*, *Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava*, vol. 21 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1981).

TABLE 4. Percentage of People in Sale Documents Who Were Priests or Were Associated with a Temple

Type of Document	Thebes	Gebelein	Edfu	Other	Total
<i>Money-Transfer documents</i>					
Priests : People	48%	26%	0%	20%	33%
Associated : People	4	10	74	9	13
Priests + Associated : People	53	35	74	28	47
Priests : Men	74	30	0	47	52
Associated : Men	7	11	94	21	21
Priests + Associated : Men	81	41	94	68	73
<i>Cession documents</i>					
Priests : People	41	12.5	0	43	33
Associated : People	12	37.5	80	3	23
Priests + Associated : People	53	50	80	46	56
Priests : Men	67	20	0	70	51
Associated : Men	20	60	95	4	35
Priests + Associated : Men	87	80	95	74	85
<i>Total sale documents</i>					
Priests : People	45.5	22	0	30	33
Associated : People	7	15	77	6	17
Priests + Associated : People	53	37	77	36	50
Priests : Men	72	28	0	60	52
Associated : Men	12	19	95	12	26
Priests + Associated : Men	83	47	95	71	78

Most Egyptians rich in land seem to fall into the "middle class," owning more than 10 but less than 100 arouras of land. The richest was perhaps the cavalryman Heti (Year 13 of Ptolemy XII), who owned approximately 100 arouras (the same amount as a Greek cavalryman).²⁶ The lady Tsenompous is recorded in the second century B.C. as owning 80 arouras, and several papyri or archives deal with holdings in the neighborhood of 30–50 arouras. The example published by Parker is typical: Hor, a shrine-opener of Hathor, in giving his property to his eldest son, includes an inventory showing that his property consists of five houses, one of them with a palm grove attached, and eight plots of land amounting to more than 40 arouras.²⁷ It was common for an Egyptian's landed property to consist of several small plots; even the 100 arouras of the cavalryman Heti mentioned above came in seven different parcels. Such division into small plots is presumably a reflection of Egyptian inheritance patterns, by which property was normally divided equally among all the children, although the eldest son frequently received an extra share as recompense for bearing the funerary expenses of the parents.

One of the most famous, or infamous, Egyptian families in Ptolemaic Egypt is that of the lector priest and scribe of the divine rolls

²⁶ His will was published by Malinine, *RdE* 19 (1967): 67–85.

²⁷ Richard A. Parker, "A Demotic Property Settlement from Deir el-Ballas," *JARCE* 3 (1964): 89–103. See also Clarysse, "Egyptian Estate-Holders," 734 (although note that Tsenompous is actually PP IV 11796; it is her husband who is PP IV 11623).

Patiatum of Siut. He divided his extensive property among his four children, a son and a daughter by each of two successive wives. The daughters got their dowry, one-fourth of a house and land, and possibly additional property not mentioned in the documents. The elder and younger sons split eighteen parcels of property, receiving two-thirds and one-third, respectively. These parcels included three houses with lands, two areas called gardens (used for vineyards and date palms), and several storehouses, but only ten arouras of "high land in the divine endowment of Wepwawet" (the god of Siut). This land the sons, who were also priests, alternately farmed themselves and leased to various Greek army men to farm.²⁸

It is somewhat surprising that Patiatum possessed so little real estate. The Theban documents discussed above also involve a relatively small amount of land. Although in more than a third of the documents the property is or includes a house, houses, or a fraction of a house, none of the transactions involves more than ten arouras.

The Egyptian documents reveal clearly that landed property represented a relatively small percentage of the wealth which Egyptians possessed. More frequently mentioned, and thus presumably more important, is income from various priestly offices. There is extensive buying, selling, and even leasing of *hrw n s'nh*, "days of endowment," by which the buyer or lessee agrees to fulfill whatever liturgical responsibilities there are in exchange for the income which goes with it. The income is sometimes expressed in days per month, sometimes as a percentage of the total number of days. Thus Patiatum of Siut held the job and income of lector priest of the necropolis of Siut, a quarter share of the job and income of lector priest of the nearby necropolis of Shashotep, and one-twelfth share of the job and income of scribe of the divine books of the necropolis of Siut. Among his eighteen parcels of property divided between his two sons were these three jobs, daily bread rations from two temples, and monthly meat and oil rations.

Some of the Theban documents make it clear that days of endowment were considered mainly as sources of income. P. Turin Suppl. 6081 recto²⁹ is a money-transfer document for, among other things,

my 1/2 of two days of endowment, making one day, making two days of endowment again, every month (may it occur) in the shrine of Isis of Djeme [Medinet Habu in Western Thebes] of which my 1/2 share makes one day of endowment every month (may it occur) together with their income [*šty*] and their property and everything which comes from them and everything which has been received at them and

²⁸The archive was published by Sir Herbert Thompson, *A Family Archive from Siut from Papyri in the British Museum* (Oxford: University Press, 1934).

²⁹Botti, *Deir el-Medineh*, no. 4.

everything which has been added to them and everything which will be added to them in field, temple, or the town, everywhere, together with their portion of the five epagomenal days and their share of the date palms, the sycamores, and all the rest of the trees which grow therein together with their share of the open plots of land which are around it and their share of the "lands in relinquishment" and the royal lands.

The cult functions and cult duties seem almost to be added as an afterthought.

In contrast to the small number of documents mentioning landed property, more than one-fourth of the Theban documents involve transfers of such days of endowment. But there is yet another source of liturgical income mentioned in Theban texts: lector priests, who were responsible for the burial of members of the community, received income from performing the burial rites. But they also received remuneration from servicing the communal funerary chapels maintained on behalf of wealthier Egyptian families. A number of documents involve the sale of a tomb chapel with its attendant responsibilities and, more especially, its attendant income. Again the wording of the documents makes it clear that the major economic function of such transfers was access to the income from the tomb chapels. P. Philadelphia 13, for example, is a money-transfer document for, among other things, "my tombs which are in the necropolis of Djeme and their income, their property, and everything which comes from them and everything which has been received from them and which will be added to them in field, temple, or the town."³⁰ P. Berlin P. 3112 is a copy of a money-transfer document for, among many other things, the income and property of almost ninety tombs on the necropolis of Western Thebes, which in one section is specifically stated to be "the income and the property of the people who are buried in them, the ones who rest in them, and the income and the property of the tombs of the praised ones (i.e., the dead)."³¹

That the practice of paying a priest to maintain a communal family funerary chapel is not unique to the Theban area is clear from a series of documents from the Memphite area involving men with the title "sealbearer of the god." They too are responsible for burying the dead and they too derive income from maintaining family chapels. One very clear example is P. Leiden 374, in which four "sealbearers of the god" cede to five men with the same title an *ṣ.wy n šty*, "house of revenue," of a wine and oil merchant.³² This *ṣ.wy* is an abbreviation for *ṣ.wy n htp*,

³⁰ Published by el-Amir, *A Family Archive from Thebes*.

³¹ Published by Grunert, *Thebanische Kaufverträge*.

³² Published by P. W. Pestman, "Les documents juridiques des 'Chanceliers du Dieu' de Memphis à l'époque ptolémaïque," *OMRO* 44 (1963): 8-23.

“house of repose,” that is, “tomb chapel.”³³ What the four men are actually ceding is not so much the structure (which may be used only for future burials of members of the oil merchant’s family) but the rights to the burials of members of the family and the income derived therefrom, as is clear from the wording: “The person among them [the family of the oil merchant] who will die and be brought to us at a *k3r*, *hw.t* or *m3c*³⁴ belonging to us on the necropolis of Memphis, we shall give him to you within four days without having caused you to give money or anything for him. . . . If we don’t give him to you within the above [-mentioned] four days, we shall give you five *dbn* of silver in silver. . . .”

Perhaps the longest contract preserved in Demotic is a cession by such a “sealbearer of the god,” on behalf of his half sister, of property inherited from their mother (the widow of another “sealbearer of the god”).³⁵ Another document of the same year cedes any interest he might have had in property she had inherited from her father, whereas she is said to have ceded to him rights to chapels, endowments, liturgies, and everything he inherited through his father. Thus the long document summarized below is far from the sealbearer’s total wealth. The property actually ceded includes one-fourth of three funerary chapels, one-fourth of three enclosures around them, and one-fourth of three storehouses enclosed thereby; one-third of the shed enclosed therein; shares of tombs; and shares of [income and] endowment. The tombs include not only a one-third share in the tomb chapels of the shrine-openers, the astronomers, the porters, the singers, and the seers (without further specification) but also a one-third to one-half share of 100 *‘.wy n rmt*, “house (of repose) of a man,” together with all their relatives, five separate types of revenue, and everything and everyone associated with it, added to it, or given in their names. The shares of [income and] endowment include two one-third shares of the office of shrine-opener of Ptah. But the majority of the wealth being ceded consists of the income from various towns and their inhabitants. As an example, one may note that the “sealbearer of the god” cedes one-third (and retains for himself the other two-thirds) of the income and endowments of the water-carrier PN (his great-great-grandfather) on the necropolis of Memphis, which is specified as:

$\frac{1}{3}$ of the income of the revenue-towns and people of two towns in the vicinity of Memphis

$\frac{1}{3}$ of the *w^cb*-priests of Thoth, the great god, and the scribes of the temples of these two towns

³³ At least four other names are also used for “tomb chapel”: *k3r*, *hw.t*, *s.t*, and *m3c*. Presumably these indicate differences in size, construction, or other characteristics.

³⁴ See Pestman, “Les documents juridiques,” 17.

³⁵ Published by Françoise de Cenival, “Un acte de renonciation consécutif à un partage de revenus liturgiques memphites (P. Louvre E. 3266),” *BIFAO* 71 (1972): 11–65.

- 1/3 of their servants of the ibis and of the falcon
- 1/3 of their soldiers and farmers
- 1/3 of their brewers³⁶ and merchants
- 1/3 of their singers, dancers, and Anubis-men
- 1/3 of the bodies [. . .] of all inhabitants who are in the two towns
- 1/3 of every man who will be added to them
- 1/3 of every man who will come in their names
- 1/3 of their husbands, wives, children, brothers, in-laws, wet-nurses, retainers, youths, and servants
- 1/3 of the *hwht*-revenue, *šmꜣ*-revenue, and undivided revenue
- 1/3 of every man who will come in their names
- 1/3 of all property which will be added to them
- 1/3 of its income [*šty*] and property
- 1/3 of everything which came from it
- 1/3 of everything which will be added to it
- 1/3 of everything which will come in its name
- 1/3 of everything received of it

Clearly the wealth of this individual consists of his regular income from temples, including funerary chapels. Thus, although the wealthier Egyptians in Ptolemaic Egypt may have been “middle class” in terms of land holdings, they had immense amounts of disposable wealth.

This form of concentration of wealth might account for the fact that a large number of Egyptians with high military and administrative titles (both under Ptolemy I and after Ptolemy V) also had religious titles. As Clarysse has noted, the well-to-do classes of Egyptian society were “closely connected with the temples. It is surely not by accident that the native governors or generals (*mr mšꜣ*) simultaneously held important priestly offices.”³⁷ In addition to the temple’s importance as the place of education and the center of science, art and religion, as noted by Clarysse, it is likely that control of priestly offices produced a direct increase in wealth and that wealthy families therefore tried to control such offices. In turn, such families could extend their power to other sectors of Ptolemaic Egypt. Thus from the end of the Ptolemaic period the family of the High Priest of Ptah at Memphis had high titles from the world of finance and close ties with the ruling family.³⁸ From this same period there were also several *στρατηγοι* (a term which by then referred to a civil administrator in charge of a district, at the nome level or above) who were Egyptians, including some who were put or

³⁶Reading and translation by Richard L. Jasnow.

³⁷“Egyptian Estate-Holders,” 732.

³⁸See especially Jan Quaegebeur, “Contribution à la prosopographie des prêtres memphites à l’époque ptolémaïque,” *Ancient Society* 3 (1972): 77–109, and “The Genealogy of the Memphite High Priest Family in the Hellenistic Period,” in *Studies on Ptolemaic Memphis*, *Studia Hellenistica*, vol. 24 (Louvain, n.d.), 47–81.

left in control of the Thebaid during periods of rebellion against the Ptolemaic dynasty.³⁹ Peremans, in his study of high-ranking military men with nonmilitary titles, has found that they were usually Egyptians and that the other titles were usually religious ones.⁴⁰ In some cases the military titles seem more important; in others, the religious are. A good example is Korax, whose titles included such honorifics as “only beloved friend of the king and great prince in front of the people”; military titles such as “great commander of the army, commander of the chariotry, leader of troops, and chief of recruits”; and who was further distinguished as “priest of Isis” in several of her forms in both Dendara and Edfu and as priest of Hathor in Dendara and of Horus in Edfu.

It is useful to apply a model to try to explain such a situation. Janssen has recently published several studies of the New Kingdom Egyptian economy, based on material from the workmen’s village at Deir el-Medîna, in which he argues that the Egyptian economy is largely redistributive, with only limited amounts of reciprocity (gift-giving) and market exchange.⁴¹ In his view,

Egypt’s economic structure as a whole can best be described as organized on the principle of redistribution, which means that the surplus of the peasant households was collected by the authorities, state and temple, in order to be redistributed among particular sections of the society: officials, priests, the army, necropolis workmen, and so on. This redistribution system, which was probably concentrated in the cities and towns, rested as a superstructure upon a ‘peasant society’, consisting of households that were largely self-sufficient as far as the necessities of life were concerned. Those goods which they did not produce themselves . . . or which did not come to them through redistribution, they acquired either by direct barter from their neighbors or, to a minor extent, on the market.⁴²

Although market exchange clearly played a more important role in Ptolemaic Egypt than in earlier periods, and although money was used in some transactions not merely as a standard but as a means of pay-

³⁹See H. de Meulenaere, “Les stratèges indigènes du nome tentyrite à la fin de l’époque ptolémaïque et au début de l’occupation romaine,” *RSO* 24 (1959): 1–25; and Leon Mooren, “The Governors General of the Thebaid in the Second Century B.C. (II),” *Ancient Society* 5 (1974): 137–52.

⁴⁰W. Peremans, “Un groupe d’officiers dans l’armée des Lagides,” *Ancient Society* 8 (1977): 175–85.

⁴¹Jac. J. Janssen, *Commodity Prices from the Ramessid Period* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), pt. 3; idem, “Prolegomena to the Study of Egypt’s Economic History during the New Kingdom,” *SAK* 3 (1975): 127–85; idem, “The Economic System of a Single Village,” *RAIN* 15 (August 1976): 17–19; idem, “The Role of the Temple in the Egyptian Economy during the New Kingdom,” in *State and Temple Economy*, 505–15; and idem, “Gift-Giving in Ancient Egypt as an Economic Feature,” *JEA* 68 (1982): 253–58.

⁴²“Gift-Giving,” 253; see also “Role of the Temple,” 508.

ment,⁴³ many of the market exchange transactions involved fixed prices (for goods produced under monopoly circumstances) rather than prices determined by the laws of supply and demand. Thus even the sector of the economy which flowed through the marketplace cannot be described as a modern, self-regulating market.⁴⁴ In addition, taxes paid to the state, rents paid to landowners (the state, temples, or private individuals⁴⁵), fees paid to the state to practice a specific occupation, and so on, were a large factor in the Ptolemaic economy. Such payments characterize a redistributive system in which payments (in money or in kind) are recycled to support an "upper" stratum of society.

Redistribution, supplemented to a greater or lesser degree by reciprocity and market exchange, is generally taken to be the standard economic system found in peasant economies.⁴⁶ Clearly the foundation of the Ptolemaic economy is a peasant society. The specific evidence discussed here indicates that priests were among the wealthier Egyptians and that wealth redistributed through the temples was one of their major sources of income. It should also be noted that expenditures by wealthy Egyptian families on funerary chapels rather than on, for example, imported Greek luxury items, reflect adherence to traditional Egyptian values. These facts suggest that it might be appropriate to consider even the basically urban-dwelling elite of the Nile Valley⁴⁷ as participating in what was essentially a redistributive peasant economy, not a market economy.⁴⁸

⁴³ See, e.g., Karl Polanyi, "The Economy as Instituted Process," in *Trade & Market in the Early Empires*, ed. Karl Polanyi, Conrad M. Arensberg, and Harry W. Pearson (1957; reprint, Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1971), 264–66; George Dalton, "Primitive Money," in *Tribal and Peasant Economies, Readings in Economic Anthropology*, ed. George Dalton (Garden City, N.Y.: Natural History Press, 1967), 254–81 (reprinted from *American Anthropology* 67 [1965]: 44–65).

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Walter C. Neale, "The Market in Theory and History," in *Trade & Market*, 357–72.

⁴⁵ In many cases the private individual owned the land as a prebend in return for exercising a specific government office. Tax-farming, payment of salaries to government officials from tax receipts, and the like constitute another form of prebendal income. See, e.g., Eric R. Wolf, *Peasants* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1966), 51.

⁴⁶ See Wolf, *Peasants*; George Dalton, "Traditional Production in Primitive African Markets," in *Tribal and Peasant Economies*, 61–81 (reprinted from *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 76 [1962]: 360–78); Polanyi, "Economy." Working especially from the theories of Lévi-Strauss and Marx, C. A. Gregory, *Gifts and Commodities* (London: Academic Press, 1982) redefined reciprocity and redistribution as gift exchange and commodity exchange.

⁴⁷ The role of market exchange in Alexandria and other Delta cities involved in international trade was clearly far more important a factor than it was in the Nile Valley. But even in such cities much of the wealth of private individuals must be seen as coming through redistribution in the form of rents to landowners, recycling of taxes to government officials (see note 45, above), and the like.

⁴⁸ See Manning Nash, "The Organization of Economic Life," in *Tribal and Peasant Economies*, 7 (reprinted from *Horizons in Anthropology*, ed. Sol Tax [Chicago: Aldine,

The picture derived here from Egyptian documents is probably quite similar to the economic practices of Greeks living outside the major cities, especially those outside Alexandria. As Crawford concluded about “Egyptian society,” based on *Greek*, rather than Egyptian documents: “Besides being a highly centralised country with an administration organised for the maximization of the royal revenues Egypt was, and remained, a traditional peasant society in which primary social relations, those of family and friend, of patron and client, remained of supreme importance.”⁴⁹

1964], 171–80), who argues that redistributive trade takes place in societies which have some system of social stratification but are not organized for market exchange. Similarly, Gregory’s commodity exchange takes place in a class-based society while clan-based societies engage in gift-exchange (*Gifts and Commodities*, 100).

⁴⁹ Dorothy J. Crawford, “The Good Official of Ptolemaic Egypt,” in *Das ptolemäische Ägypten*, Akten des internationalen Symposions 27–29. September 1976 in Berlin (Mainz: Philipp von Zabern, 1978), 199–200.

