

A PTOLEMAIC INSCRIPTION FROM HERMOPOLIS MAGNA

In March 1945 during the excavations, under the direction of Mr. Makramallah, of the University at Hermopolis Magna (Ashmunein) M. Barraize of the Service des Antiquités, while engaged in re-erecting the fallen columns of the great Graeco-Roman Basilica¹, found five inscribed blocks of a Doric architrave which had been re-employed in the foundations of the Basilica. I am much indebted to M. Barraize for information about their discovery and for photographs of the inscription upon them and to Mr. Makramallah for communicating the circumstances to me.

In view of the importance of the inscription and of the architectural members associated with it, it has been thought that a provisional publication here would be of service to scholars, pending the completion of the excavations and the publication of a full scientific report.

The inscription, a facsimile of which is shown in Fig. 1, reads as follows:

Βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίῳ τῷ Πτολεμαίου καὶ Ἀρσινόης
Θεῶν Ἀδελφῶν καὶ Βασιλίσση Βερενίκη τῇ ἀδελφῇ αὐτοῦ
καὶ γυναικί | Θεοῖς Εὐεργέταις καὶ Πτολεμαίῳ καὶ Ἀρ-
σινόῃ | Θεοῖς Ἀδελφοῖς τὰ ἀγάλματα καὶ τὸν ναὸν καὶ
τὰ ἄλλα ἐντὸς τοῦ τεμένους | καὶ τὴν στο[ά]ν οἱ τασσό-
μενοι ἐν τῷ Ἑρμοπολίτῃ νομῷ κάτοικοι ἱππεῖ[ι]ς εὐεργε-
σίας ἔνεκεν τῆς εἰς αὐτούς.

This can be translated thus:

"To King Ptolemy, son of Ptolemy and Arsinoe, the Brother Gods, and to Queen Berenike, his sister and wife, the Benefactor Gods, and to Ptolemy and Arsinoe, the Brother Gods, the

(1) Barraize, *Annales du Service des Antiquités* XL, p. 741 ff.; cf. Roeder, *ibid.* XXXIX, p. 745 ff.

cavalry soldiers established in the Hermopolite Nome (dedicated) the statues and the temple and the other things within the sacred enclosure and the portico in recognition of benefits to them."

The date of the inscription is clear. It was engraved during the reign of Ptolemy III, Euergetes I, and his wife Berenike, 246-221 B.C. The inscription contains two of the usual official fictions. Ptolemy III was not the son of Ptolemy III by his sister Arsinoe, but by his first wife Arsinoe the daughter of Lysimachus, King of Thrace. Berenike was not a daughter of Ptolemy II and sister of Ptolemy III, but daughter of Magas, King of Cyrene, a stepson of Ptolemy I.

The κάτοικοι who made the dedication, were Graeco-Macedonian military allotment holders established in the Hermopolite Nome and in this case cavalry. The word κάτοικος is the regular technical term for such military colonists: Both cavalry and infantry were so established in military colonies as part of the Ptolemaic regular army, and from the end of the third century B.C. the term κάτοικος replaces the older κληροίχος in this sense. (1)

The κάτοικοι were organised on a military basis, the cavalry being commanded by Hipparchs and the infantry by Chiliarchs. These military colonies had their own national Hellenic life and had a gymnasium organisation and their own πολιτεύματα or autonomous communities (2). Such military colonies were established all over Egypt, especially in the Fayum. One inscription was erected in the reign of Ptolemy VI, Philometor, by the cavalry and infantry settled in the Ombite Nome (3). In Cyprus there were similar settlements, but many of these seem to have been foreign mercenaries, such as Lycians or Cilicians (4), though Cretans, Achaeans, and other Greeks are recorded (5).

The whole question of the Ptolemaic military colonies is not yet clear, although we possess much information on the subject which cannot be discussed here in detail. It has been

(1) Bevan, *History of Egypt under the Ptolemaic Dynasty*, p. 173 f.

(2) Pauly-Wissowa, s. v. κάτοικος.

(3) Dittenberger, *O.G.I.*, No. 114.

(4) Dittenberger, *op. cit.*, No's. 146, 147, 148, 157.

(5) Dittenberger, *op. cit.*, No's. 108, 151, 153.

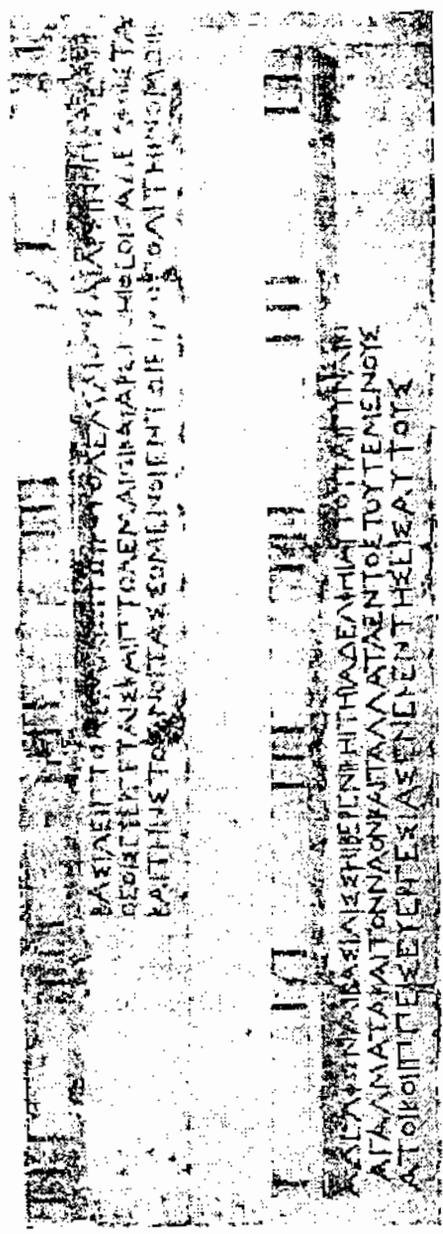


Fig. 1. --- Inscribed Architrave at Hermopolis Magna (Ashmunein).

fully treated by Oertel (1) and Bevan (2) gives a brief account of the system. Similar military colonies were established by the Seleucids and by the Attalids in Asia Minor and the information about these which is perhaps in some respects even fuller than that which we have as regards the Ptolemaic κάτοικοι has also been well discussed by Oertel (3).

There are two long inscriptions from Hermopolis Magna with long lists of names dating from the second and first centuries B.C., the latter from the reign of Ptolemy XI (4). These probably record some of the κάτοικοι of later date and it is interesting that among them in the later inscription one or two Egyptian names occur. Perhaps these were the sons of Greek fathers and Egyptian mothers.

This new inscription from Hermopolis Magna records the erection and the dedication to Ptolemy III and Berenike and to the Brother Gods (Ptolemy II and Arsinoe) of statues, a temple, and other offerings within the sacred enclosure, and also of a stoa. It is not clear whether the latter was within or without the sacred enclosure.

The temple to which this inscribed architrave belonged is presumably the temple mentioned. Since we have in all so far twenty six blocks of the architrave we can form some idea of its character. Two of the corner blocks seem to be missing. It was a peripteral temple with six Doric columns at each end and ten probably along the sides. No capitals have yet been unearthed, but there are one or two fragments of Doric columns, a corner of a pediment, and one or two pieces of the upper part of the triglyph frieze and of the cornice. The whole was gaily painted in red and blue on stucco applied to the nummulitic limestone (5) which is the material employed for this and all the other Ptolemaic architecture to be mentioned below. A few fragments of Ionic capitals suggest that the interior columns were Ionic. There are no signs of the statues and it is too much to hope that they will be found.

(1) In Pauly-Wissowa *s. v.*

(2) *Op. cit.*, p. 167 ff.

(3) In Pauly-Wissowa *loc. cit.* See also Rostovtzeff in *C.A.H.* VII, p. 117 ff.

(4) Breccia, *Alexandria Cat., Iscrizioni Greche e Latine*, No. 44 a; Milne, *Cair Cat., Greek Inscriptions*, No. 9296.

(5) This stone was quarried in the hills in the desert a little to the north of the necropolis of Hermopolis, Tuna el Gebel.

This temple was presumably the centre of the Ptolemaic sacred enclosure which lay beneath the Graeco-Roman Basilica. Of this enclosure the southern wall of mud brick seems to have been laid bare in its complete length. The western wall which has been traced from the southwest angle of the enclosure for a considerable distance northwards, but not yet to the northwestern angle, is broken, presumably at its middle, by the ruins of an Ionic Propylon which lie above a flight of steps, apparently later in date. Against this west wall outside is a series of small rooms of later date, probably shops, in one of which a group of bronze vessels was found.

Within the sacred enclosure along the inside of the southern wall run the foundations of a Doric stoa, with a stone (nummulitic limestone) stylobate on a base of mud brick. Whether this is the stoa of the inscription or not we cannot yet say. Within the sacred enclosure in the southwestern corner are the mud brick foundations of small buildings and a large circular brick space, perhaps a sacred pool or tank, the date of which is uncertain.

The site of the Ptolemaic Doric temple has so far not been found. It has not yet been identified in the ruins between the Ionic Propylon and the west front of the Basilica. Perhaps it lies on the axis of the Propylon beneath the nave of the Basilica itself.

Between the west front of the Basilica and the Propylon lies at a much lower level a mud brick building which had been filled in with sand. Probably it was abandoned and filled in when the Ptolemaic sacred enclosure was being laid out at a higher level. It should therefore be pre-Ptolemaic and belong to a yet earlier sanctuary.

In addition to the architectural remains already mentioned there are many pieces of a Corinthian building of the same nummulitic limestone coated with stucco and painted. These include many column drums, capitals, and bases of an Attic Ionic type, a scotia between two tori. The capitals were painted in violet for the ground, orange brown for the stalks, and blue and red for the leaves and flowers. The angle volutes were broken off when the building to which they belonged was dismantled and the capitals were packed together in the foundations of the Basilica. Of this Corinthian structure several blocks combining architrave and frieze are preserved. The architrave has three

horizontal divisions and the frieze was decorated with a design, not yet clear, in blue on a red ground. The foundations of this Corinthian building have not yet come to light and it remains for study of the architrave blocks to determine its plan and show whether it was a temple, a stoa, or some other structure. All this Corinthian architecture is well executed and of good early Hellenistic style and apparently contemporary with the Doric temple.

In these remains we thus have for the first time in Egypt from one site a considerable body of purely Greek architecture of the Ptolemaic period. Nothing similar is yet known from Alexandria, the Fayum, or elsewhere. We have here fortunately preserved for us beneath the floor of the Graeco-Roman Basilica, which is almost certainly not earlier than Hadrian, a large part of a Ptolemaic sanctuary with its temples, its porticoes, and other buildings of the second half of the third century B.C. This is of great value not merely for the history of Ptolemaic culture in Egypt, but for the development of Hellenistic architecture as a whole both in Greece and within the bounds of Alexander's empire.

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