

Drytoniana

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The honorand of this volume of *SCI* is noted for her exquisite sensitivity to the language and structure of Greek tragedy. But her interest embraces the real as well as the mythical men and women of antiquity. It will therefore not be inappropriate to devote the following pages to the story of a man of Greek ancestry and his family, who lived in Egypt of the Ptolemies in the second century BC.

His name was Dryton, son of Pamphilos, a cavalry officer enrolled in the *politeuma* of the Cretans.¹ He first burst into the papyrological spotlight in 1896, with the publication of *P. Grenf. I*,² where he figures in seven or eight documents. Since then the number of papyri and ostraca relating to him and his family has grown to more than forty, a dozen of them in Demotic, the rest in Greek. Half of the Greek papyri are in London, and the rest of the documents are scattered among collections in Berlin, Cairo, Chicago, Fribourg, Giessen, Heidelberg, Mainz, Manchester, New York, Paris and Strasbourg. And it is highly likely that more will be discovered: for example, a Demotic document in Chicago, though purchased in 1920, was unrolled only in 1979, and published in 1984 (cf. also III and IV below).

Dryton's life and career continue to hold our attention both as a paradigmatic case-study in social history and as a human-interest story. His life straddled the greater part of the second century BC. and the two coexisting cultures of Ptolemaic Egypt, Greek and Egyptian. In 1986 I devoted a chapter of a book to sketching Dryton's career as it appeared from the accumulated sources then available.³ Even in the few years since then there have been two revised interpretations of long-known texts, and publications of new fragments of major importance in two significant matters. They are as follows:

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- ¹ For a brief account of the nature and function of these *politeumata*, essentially military social clubs, see N. Lewis, *Greeks in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Oxford 1986), 30-31.
 - ² The reader unfamiliar with the standard papyrological abbreviations employed in this paper will find convenient listings in E.G. Turner, *Greek Papyri. An Introduction* (Oxford 1980), 151-71, or J.F. Oates, ed., *Checklist of Editions of Greek Papyri and Ostraca* (= *BASP Suppl.* 4; a new edition is in press).
 - ³ *Op. cit.* (above, n. 1), 88-103.

I

In the accepted lore of almost the whole twentieth century, Dryton was born in Upper Egypt some time before 192 BC, and died there some eighty years later, making his an exceptionally long life in an age when the average life expectancy was something under forty years.⁴ We shall return to the date of his birth later. This first note concerns the date of his death, which has usually been placed *ca.* 113-11 BC. In *Chronique d'Égypte* 63 (1988), 141-44 R. Scholl reviews the relevant documents and arrives at “ein wahrscheinliches Todesdatum von Dryton zwischen 126 und 123/22 v. Chr.” — in other words, not long after 26 June 126, when Dryton drew up a fresh will, his third as far as we know. If Scholl's revised date is correct, it entitles us to suspect that the proximate cause of the third will was that Dryton, by now an old man after all, had been stricken with an illness which he feared — correctly, as it turned out — might be fatal.

II

Continuing his series of acuminous analyses of social and legal aspects of Ptolemaic Egypt with a paper on “les mariages mixtes dans l'Égypte hellénistique,”⁵ J. Mélèze-Modrzejewski (hereafter JM-M) naturally cites Dryton and his family among relevant examples. Regarding Dryton's life he is content to summarize the finding of earlier writers, notably J.K. Winnicki.⁶ His original contribution is in solving a textual problem in Dryton's third will — a problem that had been lying dormant since 1912, when L. Mitteis addressed it but, as we shall see in a moment, without success.

In the opening provision of his will of 126 BC, *P. Grenf.* I 21 = *M. Chr.* 302, Dryton left his worldly goods, particularly his military equipment, to his son Esthladas:

καταλείπω καὶ [δίδωμι τὰ ὑπάρχοντά μοι ἔγγαι]ά τε καὶ ἔπιπλα καὶ κτήνη ... [πάντα Ἐσθλάδῃ τῶι ἐξ ἐμ]οῦ καὶ ἐξ Σαραπιάδος ... ἢ συνήμην γυναικὶ κατὰ νόμους καὶ κατὰ διαθήκην [τὴν ἀναγεγραμμένην (?) π]αρὰ τοῦ ἐν Διοσπό(λει) τῆι μικραῖι ἀρχείου ... ἐν τῶι ζ (ἔτει) ἐπὶ τοῦ Φιλομήτορος (lines 2-5).

Mitteis (*Chr.* p. 341 n. 1) suggested deleting the καὶ near the end of line 4 as “irrig eingefügt”. But this counsel of despair, while purporting to remove a

⁴ See, e.g., my *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford 1983), 54; more recently and extensively, R. Sallares, *The Ecology of the Ancient Greek World* (Ithaca, NY 1991): see index p. 582.

⁵ *Aux origines de l'Hellénisme: La Crète et la Grèce. Hommage à Henri van Effenterre présenté par le Centre G. Glotz* (Publications de la Sorbonne. *Histoire ancienne et médiévale* 15), 353-76. Dryton figures on pp. 365-66, 374-76.

⁶ *Eos* 60 (1972), 343-53.

“Verbindung grammatisch nicht möglich”, leaves behind an even greater problem: κατὰ διαθήκην is now presumably tied to καταλείπω καὶ [δίδωμι] (what else is there?), which produces a contresens. Those present-tense verbs can only express the dispositions of the present will of 126 BC, not those of the earlier will of the sixth year of Philometor (more on this in IV below).

Tacitly recognizing that Mitteis’ error was in taking the Greek *au pied de la lettre* (a common philological impediment in the early decades when Hellenists first confronted the newly discovered masses of documentary papyri with their less-than-elegant, non-literary texts), JM-M explains, “la conjonction ‘et’ (καί), qui suit cette formule [i.e. κατὰ νόμους] et qui incite à la considérer, avec la mention du premier testament, comme qualifiant la disposition en faveur du fils, serait alors due à une maladresse du rédacteur de ce texte”. Accordingly, he translates, “Sarapias ... qui fut ma femme(.) selon le droit et conformément au testament qui avait été rédigé,” etc.⁷

Arriving at the same conclusion, I was prepared to explain the matter in the following terms: Especially as the rest of the document displays no such careless errors as an intrusive καί, the wisest course is not to tamper with the text, and to explain ἢ| συνήμην ... διαθήκην as a loose or compressed expression for “with whom I lived as (man and) wife in accordance with law(s) and (the provisions of) the will” recorded in the sixth year of Ptolemy Philometor.

As my explanation was only in typescript when a reprint of JM-M’s article reached me, I am happy to see that our views coincide, and to award the palm of priority to my friend at the Sorbonne.

III

It has been apparent practically *ab initio* that the widower Dryton remarried *ca.* 150 BC. His young bride, the daughter of an Egyptian soldier, bore the Greek name Apollonia and the Egyptian name Senmonthis. On this occasion he drafted a second will, which is preserved in large part in *SB I 4637 + P. Grenf. I 12*. A few years ago W. Clarysse discovered in Cairo and published in *Chronique d’Égypte* 61 (1986), 99-103, a small fragment which gives us the exact date of the marriage:

ἐγενήθη ὁ γάμος Ἀ[πολλωνίας] πρὸς Δρύτωνα ἐν Λάτ[ων πόλει] ἐπὶ
Πτολεμαίου ἀγορανόμου (ἔτους) λα Μεχεῖρ ς = 3 March 150.

⁷ *Loc. cit.* (above, n. 5), p. 375 and n. 3.

IV

The above are the *hors d'oeuvres*. Now for the *pièce de résistance*.

Brilliant is the word for G. Messeri Savorelli (hereafter GMS) in detecting the import of fourteen non-contiguous fragments (the biggest 6.6 x 2.0 cm, the smallest 1.1 x 0.9) and reconstructing from them parts of Dryton's first will: see *Papyrologica Florentina* 19 (1991), 429-36.

Only fragment 1 contains as many as 64 legible letters. At the other extreme is a fragment with only six letters, but those six letters are enough to tie these fragments to the earlier (first) will referred to in Dryton's third will (cf. II above). In the past most commentators⁸ have taken this sixth year of Philometor to be 176/5 BC, but GMS has reconstructed from fragments 1-3, with only three to eight letters preserved per line, part of the dating formula of 165/4; and, despite the exiguity of the remains, the reconstruction appears to be ineluctible.⁹

This ascertainment of the date of Dryton's first will is like a small acorn that germinates into a great oak. The date throws a new light on some old questions, and in turn raises some new questions.

As matters now stand, Dryton is known to have executed three wills, in 164, in 150, and in 126 BC. As the second of these provides for "children to come", it was obviously drawn up on the occasion of Dryton's marriage to Apollonia-Senmonthis, and before the birth of any of the five daughters that were in time born of that marriage. It was therefore reasonable to suppose that his first will was occasioned by his marriage to his first wife, Sarapias by name.¹⁰ This remains a reasonable supposition; but now other considerations and complications arise.

For example, as already mentioned, according to the hitherto accepted reckoning Dryton was born some time before 192. This would make him about thirty years old when he contracted the marriage and executed the will of 164, and it would hardly have been in keeping with contemporary mores for him — *a fortiori* for a cavalry officer — to have remained so long unmarried. There are three possible ways out of this inconcinnity. One is to suppose that when he married Sarapias in 164 she was his second wife, not his first.¹¹ We may note in this connection that he married again only a few years after Sarapias died. On the other hand, the Dryton "archive" of documents contains no hint of an earlier marriage. A second possible interpretation is to suppose that the marriage to Sarapias had taken place some years earlier, e.g. *ca.* 170, with the will of 164 occasioned not by that marriage but by the birth, actual or imminent, of Esth-

⁸ Most recently Winnicki, *Eos* 60 (1972), 348; Lewis, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), 99.

⁹ It is assured, for example, by such tiny details as the tau of]ΤΟΥ[in line 3 and the ευχ of line 8.

¹⁰ So most commentators, following the 1907 lead of A. Bouché-Leclercq.

¹¹ Cf. N. Lewis, *Chronique d'Égypte* 57 (1982), 317-18. If there was a prior marriage, it produced no surviving offspring.

ladas (cf. below), or by the internal hostilities then wracking Egypt, and in which Dryton had been, or might be, called to active service.¹² The third and, I now think, the best solution is to recognize that Dryton's generally assumed birth date, *viz.* some time before 192 B.C., rests upon a single piece of evidence that is far from compelling.¹³ Once we free our thinking from that shackle, nothing stands in the way, and much speaks now in favor, of concluding that Dryton was a young man of normal marriageable age when he married his first wife, Sarapias.

Then there is the son Esthladas, the only recorded offspring of Dryton and Sarapias. In a document of 123 BC he is described as being $\omega\varsigma$ ($\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omega\nu$) $\lambda\epsilon$, which would place his birth *ca.* 158. This adds weight to the view that the will of 164 was occasioned by his parents' marriage in that year. The interval between 164 and 158 could be accounted for in either (or both) of two ways. Esthladas may not have been their first-born; given the high infant-mortality rate of antiquity, he could easily have been preceded by one or more offspring that did not survive. Alternatively, since it has long been apparent that age approximations in the papyri are loose and often expressed in round numbers,¹⁴ $\omega\varsigma$ ($\acute{\epsilon}\tau\omega\nu$) $\lambda\epsilon$ does not perforce place Esthladas' birth in 158: it might easily have been 160, or even 163.

V

To sum up: Although perplexing questions remain, significant details of Dryton's life have been clarified in the last few years, almost a hundred years after he first appeared in the papyri. As for the Dryton-Sarapias marriage, the following now appears to be the most satisfactory scenario:

1. That marriage took place in 164 BC.
2. If Dryton was born before 192 BC this was probably his second marriage. But there is no hard evidence for that generally accepted birth date. If, as I now think, he was born some years later, this would have been his first marriage.

¹² The years 167-163 BC were years of turmoil in Egypt. The troubles, initiated by the dynastic squabbles and intrigues of Ptolemy VI Philometor and his younger brother (later Ptolemy VIII Euergetes II), were compounded by a widespread revolt of the peasantry against intolerable economic conditions: cf., e.g., C. Préaux, *Le monde hellénistique* (Paris 1978), 393-97.

¹³ See Lewis, *op. cit.* (above, n. 1), 88-89.

¹⁴ As A. E. Hanson has recently reminded us, "distortions i[n] age-reporting ... and the tendency to round ages are characteristic of populations in which illiteracy rates are high" — *Literacy in the Roman World* (= *JRA Supplementary Series* 3, 1991), 183-84. Cf. also *P. Cair. Isid.* p. 4 and the table on p. 394, which shows discrepancies of up to nine years in age designations.

3. He executed the will of 164 to provide for his bride and (as in the second will of 150) for the children to come. This is the will referred to in the third will of 126.

4. In the years immediately following, the marriage produced a son, Esth-ladas. Whether other children were born of this union is indeterminable; but there is no record of any others, which suggests that if there were any they did not long survive, or that Sarapias herself did not long survive.

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