On 22nd June 217 BC the army led by Ptolemy IV Philopator won a major victory over the forces of Antiochos III in the Battle of Raphia. The contingent of about 20,000 men, indigenous Egyptians drafted and subsequently trained by Ptolemy’s generals in an acid-test situation bringing ultimate danger to the monarchy in the face of war, proved the decisive factor in this brilliant military success. However, the course of events in the following years in the Eastern Mediterranean developed as if it had been Antiochus III who had won the victory, and not Ptolemy. Egypt lost her overseas empire, and naval superiority in the East, which had been steadfastly held by the Ptolemies for some 100 years. Antiochus III managed to reconquer Phoenicia and Palestine; and probably only his preparations undertaken in the face of impending war with Rome and his efforts to gain the support of his allies and to neutralize his enemies saved the Lagids from catastrophe at the beginning of the 2nd century BC.

The reasons for the decline were certainly complex. However those 20,000 men stood at the centre of the problem: they played the role of a critical mass, which brought about the avalanche. Polybius gave an accurate estimate of the importance and consequences of the decision forced on the Egyptian court by the situation: φρονήματι συνθέντες (sc. Egyptians) γάρ ἐκ τοῦ περὶ Ῥαφίαν προτερήματος, οὐκέτι τὸ προστατόμενον οὕτω τε ἢσαν ὑπομένειν, ἀλλ’ ἐξήτουν ἡγεμόνα καὶ πρόσωπον, ὡς ἱκανοὶ βοηθεῖν ὄντες αὐτοῖς ὁ καὶ τέλος ἐποίησαν οὐ μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον (5, 107). The Egyptians themselves trained for war and effectively superior on the battlefield, were convinced of the weakness of their central government as
personified in the indolent and incompetent king (Polyb. 5, 107), started the rebellion which subsequently spread all over Egypt. The chronology and sequence of the events are far from clear to us. The efforts to reconstruct those events remind the modern reader of a task undertaken by someone who wants to identify and describe a physical law or laws recognizable only by their impact on the surrounding environment, but of an otherwise undefined nature. 'No continuous account is possible.'

We know demotic papyri from Thebaid dated 12 (210 BC) and 15 (207 BC) Ptolemy IV Philopator, i.e. the papyri which carry the official royal dates of the Macedonian Kings of Alexandria, and at the same time we know the date of the 14th year of Armakhis, a native self-appointed rival crowned in the South. Additionally we also know the date of the 6th year for his successor on the throne in Thebaid, Ankhmakhis; while simultaneously we learn from the royal documents of Ptolemy V Epiphanes that Ankhmakhis was defeated in Ptolemy's 19th year (186 BC). Consequently by collating all those dates we can conclude that the central government lost the South not later than 206 BC. The Rosetta Stone, dated the 9th year of Epiphanes, refers to the King's successes over the rebels who had risen up during the reign of his father, Ptolemy IV. It seems quite obvious that the rebellion must have broken out immediately after the Battle of Raphia, within several months of it at the latest. The South must have been gradually sinking in chaos, in the turmoil of the civil war which had already been going on for a decade, by the year 206 BC, the date calculated on the basis of the papyrological evidence.

The construction work in the Temple of Edfu ground to a halt in 206 BC. '...après (cela) apparut le rebelle (chef) des maudits (qui étaient) du côté de l'amort' (trans. Chassinat). In these circumstances the Temple fell into the hands of either the Nubians or Egyptian rebels. It might have been even Armakhis himself who seized the compound. The occupation of temples and their utilisation as headquarters for the rebellion must have been frequently practiced. This is attested to in the Memphitic Decree on the Rosetta Stone: '...οι ἠσσανεῖς τε τά ἱερά ...πόλιν κακά συνεστιλεσμένοι, ... καὶ τά ἱερά ἀδικησάντως ...' (II. 23, 27).

It was once suggested that Abydos was under siege in the 6th year of Epiphanes. This seems unlikely. The Alexandrian carpet-bagger boasted of his capture of Lycopeolis in the Busirite Nome, in his 8th year. This town was dangerously close to

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3 Ibid. p.529.
5 Préaux, 1936, p.532.
6 Alliot, 1951, p. 423.
7 Turner, CAH VII, 1, p.163.
8 Alliot, 1951, p.426.
9 Préaux, 1936, p.533.
Alexandria, his capital. It was eventually seized and 'all the impious in the town were massacred, as it had been in the time when Hermes and Horus, the sons of Isis and Osiris, destroyed the rebels in the same land a long time ago.'\textsuperscript{10} Military operations along the pencil-line narrow valley surrounded by thousands of square miles of desert stretching on either side had to be well prepared and carried out with caution. Minor units could have easily been trapped in an ambush and annihilated. It would have been too early to embark on an expedition and siege of Abydos two years before Lycopolis in the Delta was secured.\textsuperscript{11} Consequently not until six years after the death of Philopator was his successor Ptolemy V Epiphanes able to regain his control over the Delta following the seizure of Lycopolis.

Only in the 19\textsuperscript{th} year of Epiphanes (August 186 BC), as documented by the Second Decree of Philae, was Ankhmakhis, the rebel king of the South, 'the enemy of the gods', taken captive; his son fell in the battle; their Ethiopian soldiers were massacred.\textsuperscript{12} Ankhmakhis was naturally 'enemy of the gods' to Greeks and loyalists, while at the same time he was venerated by his own as 'the king...who lives forever, beloved of Isis, beloved of Amonrasoter, the great god.'\textsuperscript{13} The construction work in Edfu started again after an interval of twenty years. In the same year the rebel leaders in the North surrendered to Ptolemy Epiphanes and were cruelly executed in Sais. Polybius recorded their Egyptian names (XXI, 20).

About 200 BC Asekhrman came to power in Nubia and reversed the policies of his predecessor Arqaman-Ergamenes. He turned again to the pristine un-Hellenized Nubian religion and was consecrated 'king of Egypt' by the clergy of Amon in Napata. He naturally gave his support to the rebel kings of the Thebaid, whose ephemeral state stretched from Elephantine to Panopolis - Akhmim. All the time the kings of Alexandria had held the Greek garrisons in Thebes, Ombos and Syene, thanks to river communication.\textsuperscript{14}

Egypt gained a respite of 15 years of peace. However victories in civil wars never work to the good of the state. After this time Epiphanes' son Ptolemy VI Philometor, who was too young to cope with such a challenge, witnessed a humiliating mass defection of his subjects in the face of the foreign invasion by Antiochus IV Epiphanes (Liv. 45, 11, 7). The incursion, and recoil campaign by the same Syrian king next season, the devastation of the rural areas of the Delta, the pillage of the temples (P.Tebt. 781), the long-lasting consequences of the civil war, and eventually the mortal conflict between the children of the royal family (the Alexandrian mob raised Ptolemy Euergetes II to the throne) brought about famine and misery of all kinds. \textit{The Oracle of the Potter} composed roughly at this time preserved pictures of famine and fratricidal

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid. p.534; cf. Polybius, XXI. 19.
\textsuperscript{11} Jouguet might have been right when he ascribed the siege of Abydos to the 6\textsuperscript{th} year of Philometor, \textit{Le roi nubien Hurgonaphor et les révoltes de la Thébaïde}, Mélanges Navarre, 1935a, pp. 265-273.
\textsuperscript{12} Préaux. 1936, p.536; Alliot, 1951, p.435.
\textsuperscript{14} Alliot, 1951, p.433.
killings: καὶ μάχονται ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ πρὸς ἄλληλους διὰ τὸ ἕνδειξις αὐτοῦ τῶν τροφῶν (P.Oxy.2332, col.I, 21 f.); τούτου τοῦ γένους πόλεμος καὶ φόνος (?) ἀσεβής ἕσται τῶν ἀδελφῶν (ibid. col.I, 24). This lamentable state of affairs resulted in a new rebellion instigated by the high-ranking official Dionsyus Petosorapis (167 - 166 BC) (Diod. 31, 15a). Although it was the conflict originating mainly out of the inner divisions among the Egyptian Greeks, Petosorapis managed to gain the support of the native populace. A new Nubian rival king, Hurgonophor, appeared in the South. We know from Diodorus that Philometor carried out a military operation in Upper Egypt where after a longer siege he managed to take Panopolis and put down the rebellion (165/4 BC) (Diod. 31, 17b).

In 131 BC a new deadly family conflict divided King Euergetes II and his wife Cleopatra II. It coincided with the outbreak of a new wave of armed resistance in Theaid. One Harsiesis was crowned king of Egypt in the South. Like Petosorapis, Harsiesis did not play the role of a puppet in the conflict between the king and the queen of Alexandria either. He established a third party, heading one more native movement in the South of Egypt, ‘ein national - ägyptisches Königtum.’ We know a private letter dated the same year which refers to a military expedition undertaken by Paos, an epistrategos of Egyptian descent, against the rebels concentrated in Hermontis.

The early 80’s BC brought what were effectively momentous events for Greek - Egyptian relations. Just exactly what happened cannot be satisfactorily reconstructed. After roughly three years of fighting in Theaid Ptolemy IX Soter II seized and devastated the Holy City of Thebes (Paus. 1, 9, 3). The capture of Thebes some time after November 88 BC in a way concluded the period of the military uprisings against the foreign rulers, a period lasting more than 400 years, counting from Cambyses’ invasion. The Ptolemaic chapter cannot be separated from the wider context containing the earlier anti-Persian resistance, including the rebellion of 486 BC suppressed with extreme brutality by Xerxes, the rebellion of Inaros (from 460 BC onwards), of Amyrtaios (405 BC), the wars of 385 - 3, 373, 351-50 and 343 BC. The 2nd and 1st centuries BC turned into an age of confrontation between the subdued Oriental peoples and their Greek and Macedonian overlords. This largescale Eastern Mediterranean conflict had gradually changed into a confrontation of the Orientals with Rome. ‘The Maccabean revolt was directly comparable with the Egyptian revolts. Both were inspired by a religious literature; both were fought to preserve a religion by restoring its god to his rightful throne.’ H.Fuchs successfully grasped this wide historical and geographical perspective by collecting together Iranian, Egyptian and Jewish prophetic

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15 They are fighting against one another because of the lack of food; this generation will face war and sacrilegious murder on brothers.
17 Ibid. p. 106.
18 Préaux, 1936, p.544.
and apocalyptic writings, side by side with the Greek anti-Roman historians and the war propaganda of Mithridates VI in his brilliant book *Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom*, as if personally inspired by Herodotus' historiosophic principles.\(^{20}\)

Thus we have presented a shortened version of the story of a whole series of the Egyptian anti-Greek uprisings, a story disfigured by the choppiness of the narrative. Now we are facing the question of their genesis and their deeper background. "There have been two main schools of thought in approaching the question of hellenisation in this period," write S.Cherwin-White and A.Kuhr, "First, is the old colonial British empire view (and that of German scholars), encapsulated in the work of William Tarn, who attributed to the hellenistic kings an almost missionary role as disseminators of hellenism...In his view, hellenism is a political mechanism for unifying the discrete, as well as being a blessing...The subsequent, but fundamental experience of decolonization has influenced two schools of thought represented by, for example, Préaux and Briant, who stress the colonial and exploitative character of Macedonian rule and the subject/ruler relationship, and who therefore tend to see social and cultural relations in terms of separation and segregation."\(^{21}\) This opinion reflects efforts undertaken by a number of the ancient historians to uncover the layers of indigenous, non-Hellenic and non- Classical local histories and cultures hidden under the veil of intellectually predominant Classical lore.

Let us start from a review of the status of the natives, the Egyptians of African descent in Ptolemaic Egypt, in its political, economic, social and cultural meaning. This should successively reveal the causes of the long standing and determined military resistance in Upper Egypt.

Ptolemy I Soter, followed by his immediate successors Philadelphus and Euergetes, forced the policy of Hellnization, which in the political terms amounted to the establishment of a Greek and Macedonian bureaucracy. For centuries this bureaucracy occupied a dominant position as the privileged ruling class among the indigenous Egyptian population, which was always treated as an inferior class, a conquered race.\(^{22}\) The road to rights and privileges, barred to Egyptians, went through "Greek citizenship, which was carefully controlled and limited".\(^{23}\) In fact some of the Egyptians chose this way and hellenized in order to be appointed to posts in the Greek-controlled administration.\(^{24}\) Naturally the higher-rank posts were exclusively reserved for Greeks and Macedonians.\(^{25}\) The Romans did not change this state of affairs; they simply took it for granted after their invasion of Egypt. Citizenship was a preliminary to enlistment in


\(^{24}\) Eddy, 1961, p.311.

the army. Consequently Egyptians could not serve in the legions. H.I.Bell comments that ‘the ability to enlist in the army, denied to the native Egyptians throughout the Roman period for the legions ... was a shortcut to full citizenship and a substantial privilege.’ We have already seen that it was pretty much the same in Ptolemaic Egypt. Constitutio Antoniniana, which awarded Roman citizenship to non-Romans, excluded the deditee, the unprivileged classes. In the conditions of the Nile territories this exclusion meant the natives. The Ptolemaic colonial system proved strikingly enduring.

Now we are coming to the economic status of the Africans in Egypt. Constructing his system of the economic absolutism Ptolemy I Soter resorted to the old traditions of the bureaucratic absolutism of the Oriental world. This made everything easier for him and his successors. By donations of land from the extensive crown estates to his civil servants, Ptolemy I strengthened the position of the Greek administration and based it on a firm footing. His policy focused on the Greeks in general, including the ‘non-U’s and other ranks.’ The spectacular gap between the area of land allotted to the soldiers in the 3rd century BC, namely from 25 to 100 arurai per head in the case of the Macedonians and Greeks, and 5-7 arurai for the Egyptians of African descent, offers an instructive insight into the status of Egyptians in their own country. The fellahin who were tenants of either private or state-owned land were submitted to requisitions, serfdom and forced tenancy. We read in the Revenue Laws that the tenants of the state owned land and the workers in the oil monopoly were forbidden to move to another nome, though legally they were not slaves. Tied to their nomes, they occupied the position of semi-serfs. ‘It was they (sc. the Africans) who were the porters, brickmakers, and swineherds, as Greeks almost never were, especially in the 3rd century’, writes Eddy. This situation put the Africans in a permanent state of economic and social degradation. ‘The best laborers came from the races of mankind which were neither bold enough to revolt nor too weak to work. Such a population would be ideal for the Greeks to manipulate...’ This was once written by an anonymous Greek author, Ps.-Aristotle (Econ. 5, 5; II, 1, 7). Thus we have a theoretical base for the economic system of the Ptolemies, which unfortunately proved deficient from their point of view. The system applied to Egypt lacked one of the necessary components, postulated unconditionally in Ps.-Aristotle’s conditions: the Egyptians did prove bold enough to revolt.

In this connection there is one factor from the economic history of the Ptolemies that cannot be passed by in silence. The momentous year 217 BC, the year of the Battle of Raphia, brought a fatal breakdown in the state monetary system, a slump marked by the

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26 Bell, 1922, pp.139-155, here: p.148.
27 Ibid. p.152.
30 Bell 1922, p.145.
abandonment of the silver and adoption of the copper standard. The impressive silver tetra- and decadrachms of Soter, Philopator, presented and commented upon with a numismatist’s excitement by C.Seltman in his *Greek Coins*, became the fond memory of the old good years to many in Egypt. This economic turning-point, which coincided perfectly with the beginning of the period of revolt in Egypt, must be looked upon as symptomatic.

The political and economic situation of the Africans must inevitably have had a harsh impact on their social position. The matter of intermarriage is particularly instructive. Intermarriage was banned in the Greek cities of Alexandria, Naucratis and Ptolemais. Naturally mixed marriages did occur, however their offspring had no rights to citizenship. Neither Egyptians nor half-Egyptians shared in privileges of the Greek citizens. The Romans inherited the Ptolemaic order and petrified it. The regulations of the *Privy Purse*, from the period of Augustus, throw light on the inter-racial relations as viewed from the perspective of the civil law on marriage.

'39. If a Roman man or woman is joined in marriage with an urban Greek or an Egyptian, their children follow the inferior status. (...) 45. If an urban Greek marries an Egyptian woman and dies childless, the fisc appropriates his possessions; if he has children, it confiscates two-thirds. (...) 49. Freedmen of Alexandrians may not marry Egyptian women. (...) 51. The son of a Syrian man and an urban Greek woman married an Egyptian woman, and was sentenced to a stated fine.'

It is difficult to avoid the reflection that this document was the outcome of a developed and well established system of racial segregation. Augustus certainly had no intention to stage a social revolution in Egypt. His aims were narrow, purely economic. He simply preserved the inherited state of affairs. 'The lot of the humble and the poor was not enviable anywhere in the Roman Empire - is it ever? - but the population of Egypt appears to have been singled out for exceptionally harsh treatment. Roman policy toward Egyptians conveys to us a quality of repression suggestive of vindictiveness,' N.Lewis comments appositely.

Let us turn to another sphere of Greek-Egyptian relations, intercultural communication. I would like to emphasizing some psychological and emotional aspects of these relations. Much has been written about the standard, stereotyped view of the Orientals. Because of the necessary limits dictated by the subject of this paper I refer to this only briefly. Polybius calls the Alexandrian Greeks µυγόδες (a mongrel race) (Strabo 797=Polyb.XXXIV, 14,6). Livy follows his view writing that in the course of time they degenerated into Egyptians (Liv. XXXVIII, 17,11). Polybius tells us about a savage murder committed by the infuriated Alexandrian mob on Philopator’s favourite Agathocles and members of his family after the King’s death (XV, 33, 9). His story is

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33 Ibid. I, p.72.
marked by abhorrent details of human bestiality. Δεινή γάρ τις ἢ περὶ τοὺς θυμούς ὀμάτης γίνεται τῶν κατὰ τὴν Αἰγύπτου ἀνθρώπων (For the inhabitants of Egypt are capable of terrible violence). Fraser adds: ‘It cannot be doubted that he means the native Egyptians.’ Fraser mentions other stories of this genre, as for example the murder of Hypatia, or a graphic story about one Roman who had killed a cat and was nearly lynched by angry Egyptians for this (Diod. I, 83, 8). This last story reminded him of the great medical papyrus of the 18th dynasty, which contains remedies against human bites and concludes by calling the Egyptians an ‘almost anthropophagous mob’. The image of extreme savagery and bestial instincts in both Semitic as well as African races was deeply rooted in the popular mind and the belles lettres of the Greeks and Romans. It belongs to one of the cherished theories of Classical historiography. Reality was quite different. I do not want to say that the Egyptians were innocent and harmless homines minime mali, like Homer’s Lotus-Eaters, and thereby substituting one myth for another and letting myself be carried away, as R. MacMullen once stated ‘beyond the bounds of common experience into the realms of theory, where the flesh and blood of the past are somehow transformed into long words.’ The civil war in Egypt was bloody and fought with extreme brutality and cruelty on both government and rebel sides. But it was no less cruel than any other civil war, to mention only the Wars of the Roses, the French Revolution, the Russian Revolution of this century, the Jacquerie, the German Bauernkrieg, or the civil war in Poland of the late 1940’s. Neither the Greeks nor the Romans were any less cruel in their acts of blind vindictiveness. Suffice it to recall the fate of Seianus, his innocent family, his relatives and clients, when all of them were ‘delivered together into the hands of the mob’- to apply to this story the stylistics used by Polybius in his story of Agathocles (Polyb. XV 33, 9). The treatment of the bodies of Heliogabalus and his family by the representatives of Western civilization may be recorded as yet another similar case. Let’s not play dumb, because of our love for the Classical letters. It was Greeks and Romans who played the role of intruders and invaders in Egypt, not the other way round. After the Assyrian and Persian occupation, the Macedonian was only yet another one. In order to put aside the convenient but deceptive stereotypes before proceeding with my further analysis of the civil war in Egypt, I would like to recall Posidonius and his portrayal of the Seleucids. He presented them and their subjects as ‘degenerate weaklings calling the moral and physical fibre to fight’. This is no more than a propaganda slogan, ‘a representation of the defeated created by the victors, who felt the need to propagate such images for their own purposes.’

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35 Fraser 1972, I, p.82.
36 Ibid.
38 Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, p.228.
39 Ibid. p.229.
until 129 BC, when after a hard-fought battle with the Parthians in which some 3,000 men fell on the Seleucid side, they were compelled to abandon the eastern part of their kingdom. For five centuries the Romans with their superior military organization and their cult of military power as a political instrument, proved unable to break through the impervious boundary of the Upper Euphrates. They were unable to take over the heritage of the Persians as the Seleucids had done.

In everyday life the Europeans expressed their contempt of the African fellahin. ‘Perhaps, my brothers, you are thinking me a barbarian or an inhuman Egyptian, but I claim that this is not so,’ we read in a letter by an anonymous author of the 3rd century BC.\(^\text{40}\) It will not be anachronistic to recall in the present context an extract from the police instruction issued in the reign of Caracalla, in order to help the police authorities distinguish the Egyptians illegally working in Alexandria from Greek Alexandrians. This document says that the Egyptians (by the way described in their own country as οἱ ξένοι) can easily be identified by their way of speaking (φωνή). They allegedly differed from others by their different appearance, racial characteristics and way of behavior.\(^\text{41}\)

We find hardly any allusion to the Egyptian landscape in the Alexandrian poetry. It is Sicily and Cos that inspired Theocritus. Callimachus who collected a vast body of legends, failed to notice the Egyptian lore, so abundant in the local impressive fairy tales. ‘Les Grecs ne s’intéressent sérieusement qu’à eux-mêmes.’\(^\text{42}\) The Africans who did not assimilate saw the Europeans as intruders. The picture painted by Herodotus two centuries earlier is by no means anachronistic here. No Egyptian, either man or woman, could kiss a Greek, or use his knife or any of his eating utensils. The Egyptians thought the Greeks unclean, and sold them the heads of the sacrificed animals that had been ritually cursed as scapegoats (Hdt. II, 35-41, 91, 158, 196). The Demotic Chronicle, dated the early Ptolemaic period, labelled the Greeks as ‘dogs’, in line with the older Egyptian tradition of cursing the foreigners.\(^\text{43}\) Hatred of foreign rule was still a powerful emotion in many Egyptians, and it certainly lay behind all the literature. It seems to have affected all social classes...\(^\text{44}\)

One point has to be cleared up in this connection. The intellectually predominant and more attractive Greek arts and sciences relegated the alternative Egyptian culture to the sphere of shadow. However the native culture in fact developed alongside the Greek, with its literature circulating in Demotic, its original religious art, and its phenomenal Late Antique Coptic revival. A comparison of its achievements in the Graeco-Roman period to its New Kingdom creativeness, would be out of place in context of a country already ruled for many centuries by foreign powers, Assyrians, Persians, Macedonians, Greeks and Romans successively. Bell wrote that ‘Coptic literature is dull enough in all

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\(^{40}\) Bell 1922, p.149.
\(^{42}\) Jouguet 1935b, p.100.
\(^{43}\) Eddy 1961, p.296.
\(^{44}\) Ibid. p.295.
conscience, and betrays an essential puerility in Egyptian mind.  

This opinion may be perhaps justified to a certain degree only by the date of his paper, a couple of decades before the sensational discovery of the Coptic library in the region of Nag Hammadi.

We may try to adduce different arguments for and against the Greek presence in Egypt. There is however one fact, perhaps the most debunking of all: the average life expectancy, which for Graeco-Roman Egypt was roughly ten years less than for the Roman world as a whole.  

It is one of the best indices showing the degree of exploitation. 'This is a population in which the rate of infant mortality was enormous, through disease or the dangers of childbirth (half of thirty-four infant skeletons found in a recent necropolis excavation were less than one year old); ...in which half the males and probably less than half the females who survived to adulthood (which can arbitrarily be set at fourteen, the age at which they became liable to pay taxes) could not expect to live beyond the age of thirty,' writes Bowman in his recent brilliant book *Egypt after the Pharaohs.* The languages spoken in Egypt and literacy are another question. We will restrict the discussion only to the essential points dictated by the narrow needs of this paper: the background of the civil war. Only a very limited group of the Europeans in Egypt could speak Egyptian. The situation was better with the other party, since access to privileges led through the Greek language. Many Egyptians of African or mixed descent must have been bilingual. Egyptians outnumbered Europeans, and consequently statistically, although not culturally, the Egyptian language was prevalent in Graeco-Roman Egypt.

Let us turn to the Battle of Raphia once again. Here in a dazzling flash of lightening we can learn much about the relations between the Greek government and its Egyptian subjects, when in the critical hour before the battle King Ptolemy Philopator, the military commander turned to his soldiers in order to encourage them to fight and die for him and his kingdom, and did this through interpreters so that he might be understood in the native language (Polyb. V, 83, 7). This happened some hundred years after the Ptolemies had established themselves on the throne of Egypt. Only the last of the Lagids, and ironically a young woman, Cleopatra VII, used to communicate with her subjects in their own numerous native tongues, Egyptian, Nubian and Arabic included. Her royal predecessors on the Egyptian throne could not speak even good Macedonian with its proper accentuation, as Plutarch remarked both ironically and contemptuously (*Ant.* 27, 4-5). Summing up, we may quote Sherwin-White and Kuhrt who speak of 'the social, economic, political and cultural cleavage characteristic of colonialism.'

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45 Bell 1922, p.153.
49 Bowman 1990, p.122, 129.
50 Sherwin-White, Kuhrt 1993, p.144.
Referring to the Roman Empire, MacMullen discussed the role played in the history by the ‘backlands’, what he called ‘the mixed, retarded cultures prevailing in southern areas of the African provinces ... where Greek and Roman ways were little known ...’.51 ‘Certain areas naturally favored crime,’ he added, ‘certain forms of society resisted civilization. Moorish and Arab nomads etc. ..., or whatever tribe it might be retained their ancient constitution, their traditional lawlessness ...’.52 A particular natural environment may exert an impact on the traditional ways of human behavior. Préaux mentioned the inclination of the Egyptians to radical reactions against social, economic or religious problems, which could take form of ἀνοχώρησις, whether in a Pagan or Christian form. The age-old recourse to escape into the desert wilderness accompanied by abandonment of farmland, if practiced on a large scale could bring about serious civil disorder, widespread banditry or even a civil war. The natural environment of Upper Egypt offered this particular local temptation of liberation from excessive social or economic burdens, even if it had always meant Hobson’s choice of extremely demanding conditions of survival. The same phenomenon has often come to light in the modern history of the mountainous regions of the Caucasus, Tibet and Afghanistan. Thus the Greek administration in Egypt faced ancient patterns of defiance in a provincial populace accustomed to the African geographical realities. The Greeks also inherited the old Egyptian internal conflicts, like the feud between North and South, between Memphis and Thebes, with the traditional ties of the latter to Nubia. Moreover they soon had to face an emerging problem, the religious rivalry between Memphis and Alexandria, which is documented by the Oracle of the Potter.

Every analysis of the native anti-Greek revolts in Upper Egypt points, not surprisingly, to religion as a key factor. Nationalism is another word frequently applied to the description of the origins of the Egyptian rebellions.53 This term, if employed at all, must be treated with caution. ‘This feeling (in its modern secular usage) did not exist in the ancient world, for peoples then thought a great deal less in purely secular terms,’ writes Eddy and adds, ‘the rebellions were much more manifestations of religious passion than of national aspiration.’54 His above cited comparison of the Egyptian revolts to the Maccabean guerilla war seems fully justified.55 It was thus a holy war. Consequently the term ‘separatism’ or ‘isolationism’ may be regarded as more legitimate in this connection, to avoid the modern connotations of the term ‘nationalism’.

51 MacMullen 1966, p.207.
52 ibid. p.193.
54 Eddy 1961, p.296.
55 cf. n.19.
Both the Classical as well as royal Egyptian sources tell us very little about the ideological background of the movement, for some obvious reasons, to which we will return later on. However the apocalyptic and prophetic literature circulating in the period of struggle for independence from foreign rule, whether Persian or Greek, offers a unique chance to retrieve some facts about the motivation behind the militant movements. We have at our disposal a number of writings documented mainly in the papyri of a later Imperial date, which were copied and translated either from Ptolemaic or even earlier originals: *The Oracle of the Lamb of Bocchoris*, already known to Manetho,\(^{56}\) a narrative the *Life of Alexander* (3\(^{rd}\) century BC), the *Dream of Nectanebo* (mid 2\(^{nd}\) century BC),\(^{57}\) the *Demotic Chronicle* (early 3\(^{rd}\) century BC),\(^{58}\) the *Oracle of the Potter* (2\(^{nd}\) century BC),\(^{59}\) and its direct descendant *Asclepius,* the apocryphal from the *Corpus Hermeticum* (late 3\(^{rd}\) century AD).\(^{60}\) *The Oracle of the Potter,* coinciding with the period of revolts, both because of its content and its date, is the most important of all these texts for our present needs. *Asclepius,* which contains many parallel motifs, also has a special value for us, because we know its Egyptian indigenous version. We discuss the problem of the native movements, whose ardent militants and sympathizers spoke Egyptian. *The Oracle of the Potter* has come down to us only in its Greek version; judging by its style, this was a translation from the Egyptian original.

The oracles comprised a genre in its own right in the Egyptian literature, with their own conventions and imagery. One must be cautious in an analysis of the recurrent motifs, many of them of old standing. The older compositions were simply reused and readapted to the changing historical context. *The Oracle of Neferti* dated 18\(^{th}\) dynasty and the *Oracle of the Potter,* which show numerous parallels, are illustrative of this.\(^{61}\) Does the latter text refer to the contemporary 2\(^{nd}\)-century events, and if so to which? And how exactly? This is our opening question. 'This difficult, allusive poetry'- to borrow a descriptive phrase from S.West's paper on Lycophron's *Alexandra,*\(^{62}\) makes one always hesitant as regards the matter of the historical events alluded to. To Wilcken

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\(^{57}\) Fraser I, pp.682 ff.; McCown 1925, pp.401 ff.


it was just a translation from the Egyptian original of the New Kingdom period.\textsuperscript{63} Reitzenstein was probably right when he ascribed it to the period of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.\textsuperscript{64} ‘The king ... he will come down from Syria, who will be abhorrent to all the people ...’ (\textit{P.Rain.} Col.I, 16 f.) is probably the only exact reference to a historical event in what is historically hardly an accessible text. This obscurity is, by the way, symptomatic of the oracular and prophetic literature. However, to tell the truth, even this particular reference is not entirely certain. Six Syrian wars must have created an atmosphere in Egypt of constant threat of Syrian invasion. Consequently, why could this not mean Antioch III (223-187 BC)? Koenen allegedly identified numerous allusions to the historical events concentrated around a focus of 130 BC. He was certainly right that there are allusions to the foundation of Alexandria and the establishment of the cult of Serapis.\textsuperscript{65} Unfortunately this brings us only to a date \textit{post quem}, still allowing for various equally justified speculations.

The hint about the self-annihilation of the Girdle-Wearers may be either interpreted as referring to the deadly conflicts within the royal family or to the divisions among their Greek subjects in Alexandria, or even generally to the politically divided Greek world of the Hellenistic epoch (\textit{P.Oxy.2332}, Col. II, 49ff.). I do not think that the obscure wording of \textit{P.Rain.} 14ff. (\textit{P.Oxy. 2332}, 27 ff.) may refer exactly to the escape of Euergetes II, and subsequently to his return, his expedition to the South and the siege of Panopolis. Harsiesis, the self-appointed rival king of the South (131 - 129 BC) could not have been labelled ‘impious’ by the anti-Greek author of the Oracle (\textit{P.Rain.} Col. I, 17 f.).\textsuperscript{66} ‘...the one of the 55 years will be our king who will bring evil to the Greeks’ (\textit{P.Oxy.2332}, Col. II, 32 ff.). According to Koenen this is allegedly an allusion to Euergetes II, who died in 116 BC, after 54 years of ruling over Egypt. Koenen argues that it must have been an interpolation introduced to the Oracle soon after 116 BC.\textsuperscript{67} The following words ά Βαχάρει άπηγγειλεν ά αμινός perhaps points to a mythical figure of a saviour king, who was expected to come in the future and liberate the Egyptians. ο δε τά δύο ετη ήμετέρος ... (\textit{P.Rain.} Col. I, 20). This might have referred to Harsiesis, however not necessarily so. Harsiesis was labelled the impious. Consequently it does not fit Harsiesis, the native king. Two versions of the prophecy significantly differ on this point and each of them offers only a blurred picture.

πόλεμος τε καὶ φόνος ἐσται, ὡς καὶ τοὺς ἄδελφους καὶ τὰς γαμήτας ἀνελεῖ (\textit{P.Rain.} Col. I, 11f.). Koenen argues that in view of their conflict the assassination of either Cleopatra II or Euergetes II could have been naturally expected by the contemporary observers around the year 130 BC. They did expect this, but in fact it never happened. This is the manner in which Koenen interprets the literary

\textsuperscript{65} Koenen 1968, p.187.
\textsuperscript{66} Koenen 1968, p.188; similarly Dunand 1977, p.63.
\textsuperscript{67} Koenen 1984.
evidence. The Ptolemies’ history of family murder invites speculation. The quoted words might just as well refer to the murder of either Berenike II, Cleopatra II or Cleopatra IV, or to the crimes of infanticide committed on Ptolemy VII (145 BC) and Ptolemy, the son of Cleopatra II (132 BC). The motif of reversal of the moral order is a commonplace in the Egyptian apocalyptic literature. Although the explanations adduced by Koenen are so impressive, this still does not mean, that the author of the Oracle was indisputably historically correct in so many details. If he had been deliberately as accurate as a historian, would his work still have been treated as an oracle? I do not think that the Oracle of the Potter is a sort of well-coded history of the 2nd century with references to exact dates, persons and events. Yet it cannot be denied that the Oracle refers generally and probably in one or another instance exactly to the period of political, economic and moral decline of the Ptolemaic monarchy in the 2nd century BC and probably to the first half of the 1st century BC. Moreover, judging by the text of the Oracle, it is not history which is of the main concern to the author and his readers, but the natural phenomena, a subject of prime interest to the Egyptian farmer.

The renaissance of the Egyptian prophetic and apocalyptic literature which coincided with the native rebellions highlights the religious inspiration of the latter in the best possible way. And even if political motifs were the immediate and most conspicuous purpose of those writings - they express hostility towards the Greeks and Macedonians, they prophesy their downfall, they complain about the everyday hardship and misery and mirror the images of poverty - the political interests are nevertheless always pervaded by strong religious feelings and religious interpretation. According to this interpretation the foreign rulers, i.e. the Ptolemies, lapsed in the observance of the sacred rituals and in the worship of the gods. Consequently, along the lines of this interpretation, the economic decline, misery and exploitation resulted from religious negligence: it was a punishment wrought by the gods. Thus, again according to this logic, the foreign rulers should be expelled, and then naturally everything will return to normal. And this is ‘the hidden divine purpose in history’, as expressed by S. West.

There are three main motifs behind the insurrections: religion, “nationalism” (or more precisely Egyptian separatism), and poverty. Let us turn to some details. The foreigners (Τουάντοι, the Sons of the Devil) are casting their own new gods (P.Oxy.2332, Col. I, 2ff.). The sacred processions (των ιερων προσοδοι) are almost neglected (P.Oxy.2332, Col. I, 5ff.). The natural disasters result from the negligence of the divine worship due to the abandoned gods. At the end of time, on the eschatological day of judgement ο ‘Αγαθός Δαμίαν will abandon the newly founded city (of Alexandria) and return to the ancient city of Memphis (P.Oxy. 2332, Col. II, 50ff.). Kephis will follow suit and the town will be depopulated (P.Rain. Col. II, 36). The long since removed images of the gods will again return to Egypt (P.Oxy.2332, Col. II, 57ff.).

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68 Dunand 1977, p. 68; καὶ τὰ ἀρσενικὰ παιδία βιώσεις (κατ’)ήχοις θύσονται (P.Oxy.2332, 48 ff.).
ideology reflects the Egyptians’ feeling of humiliation in their most vulnerable psychological sphere: religion. In his Politics Aristotle pointed to the problem of offended dignity as an incentive for revolt and the breakdown of political systems.

There are impressive parallel images of the impending Götterdämmerung in Asclepius. Let us allow the Egyptians to speak for themselves: Ἑώῳ Ἐἴρην 
Κητὼς Χαῖς Ἤννη Οὐχιέτε (Cod. VI, 8, 70, 19-21). ‘And Egypt will be widowed; it will be abandoned by the gods.’

‘The Egyptians will be prohibited from worshipping God.’ The new gods of the foreigners appear also in Asclepius. Ἑώῳ ὡρίζεσθαι Ναγών 
Εὐρώπην Ἔκρισις Οὐκ Ἔος Ἐποκ: Ντόκ ὡ (Π)ΜΝΚῆμε Ἄγχος τῆς Ἐκκόμας (ibid. 24-26). ‘The barbarian will be better than you, O Egyptian, in his religion…’

Also Egypt the native land makes its appearance in these writings, as an expression of patriotic feelings: τάλαμος Αἰγυπτίως Κακοκοσμήμα (P. Rain. Col. I, 4). This lamentation over Egypt is paralleled in the invocations of Asclepius (Cod. VI, 8, 70, 23; 70, 36).

Alexandria was a natural focus for the Egyptians’ anti-Greek feelings. The city (of Alexandria) newly founded by the Sons of the Devil (P. Oxy. 2332, Col. I, 2ff.) will be abandoned by both its inhabitants, the Girdle-Wearers (P. Oxy. 2332, Col. II, 44; 60) and the gods as well (ibid. 50ff.), because of the lawlessness the Girdle-Wearers have perpetrated in Egypt (P. Rain. Col. I/II, 33). At the end of the bad time they will perish and fall like the leaves from the trees (ibid. Col. I, 31-32), and the stench of corpses deprived of burial, will reach the gates of the city (of Alexandria) (P. Oxy. 2332, Col. I, 6f.). The foreign invaders are portrayed in a similar way in the Asclepius: Ναλαοψύς Χαρὰ Ἐβούν Ἐκεῖμε Ἀχέρ Χαῖς Ἐποκ Κητῶς (Cod. VI, 8, 70, 21-23). ‘For foreigners will come into Egypt, and they will rule it. Egypt!’ We also find in the Asclepius a parallel image of unburied bodies: Ἐνα τὸ Εἰκαῦζ οὐχὶ Ἐννη Ἐννη Οὐχιέτε Ἐνα τὸ Εἰκαῦζ οὐχὶ Ἐννη Ἐννη Οὐχιέτε (ibid. 71, 35-36). ‘Neither will it be full of gods, but (it will be full of) corpses.’ To the Egyptian traditionalists Alexandria, the centre of the Greek administration and culture, was a hotbed of moral depravity calling for divine intervention, and the embodiment of luxurious easy living based on the exploitation of the countryside. The capture of Alexandria and her eventual desolation must have been a recurrent motif in the unfilled dreams of all the dissident Egyptian traditionalists, whether clergymen or guerilla leaders in the South.

However it was the reestablishment of a native king, in agreement with the ‘theology of divine kingship,’ which comprised the main political slogan of the insurgents. This

70 Trans. Parrott 1979, also the following translations of the Egyptian Asclepius.
ideal had been present in the prophetic writings for a long time, as attested by the *Oracle of the Lamb* and the *Demotic Chronicle*. Our king, the one of 55 years, will come and do evil to the Greeks, as was prophesied by the Lamb of Bocchoris (*P.Oxy.2332*, Coll. II, 32ff.). This gracious king (εὕμενης ὑπάρχων), the dispenser of wealth (ἄγαθον δοτήρ) established on the throne by Isis (*P.Rain. Col. II*, 39ff.) will arrive from the Sun. This ambiguous reference may relate either to Heliopolis or to the South. The passage could in fact express the pro-Nubian sympathies of either the traditionalist religious or secular circles in the South. Personally I do not think that this was what the author intended, and in particular that it was an allusion to the rebel king Harsiesis. The more so that the saviour king *ex oriente* was one of the most cherished ideas of the Orientals in the period of their struggle with the Macedonians, Greeks and Rome. The same idea was also expressed by the militant royalist Jews and Iranians. It embellished the success of Mithridates VI, and probably inspired Cleopatra VII, who named her son Alexander Helios, which referred to the saviour king from the popular ideology. The same Oriental image of the king who will crush the enemies and restore justice is also attested in the *Asclepius*. In a word the concept is symbolic of the ideology of ardent royalism. The saviour king was believed to bring relief to the poor: now in Egypt the crops were very poor and there were bloody riots caused by hunger (διὰ το ἐνδεχόμενον εἶναι αὐτοὺς τῶν τροφῶν, *P.Oxy.2332*, Col. I, 21f.); there were peasants who abandoned their land and took refuge in the desert (ἄλλος θερίως ἀποχωρήσει, ibid. Col. I, 23; Col. III, 36ff.). Many people were leaving their native land forever looking for their chance of survival in foreign countries (ibid. Col. II, 37f.).

But the day of salvation would come and οἱ δοῦλοι ἐλευθερωθήσονται καὶ οἱ κύριοι αὐτῶν βίου δεηθήσονται (*P.Oxy.2332*, Col. II, 45ff.). ‘The slaves will be liberated and their lords will cease to live.’

This utopian image of social revolution is not unique in the ideologies of the ancient popular movements. The African *circumcelliones* ‘freed slaves ... tossed men out of carriages and bade their servants to ride.’ ‘By their judgement and command the condition of master and slave was reversed,’ wrote Optatus Milevitanus (3,4). The Keltic Bagaudae set free the people who had been confined in prisons and expropriated the landowners. ‘You can do anything you like among them,’ (ibi totum licet), wrote the author of the comedy *Querolus*. Exuperantius crushed the revolt of the Bagaudae to stop the inhabitants from becoming the slaves of their own slaves (Rutilius I, 216). This odd composition of traditionalism, conservativism and royalism mixed with liberation ideologies is symptomatic of the movements of the lowest social strata of Antiquity. MacMullen noticed something which may have the value of a general

72 30S, 652: ἂν ἀειλίον θεός πέμψει βασιλῆα; H.Fuchs, *Der geistige Widerstand gegen Rom*, Berlin 1938.
72 MacMullen 1966, p. 201.
75 Ibid. p.18.
statement and which may also be applied to Ptolemaic Egypt: 'What was characteristic of the outsiders was not necessarily opposed to Roman civilization in its entirety. Simultaneous conflict on all planes of life is rather an invention of the modern world, where warring peoples arm themselves at every point material and ideological, devise new salutes and flags, canonize new saints and scripture, exhume dead languages or bury living religions lest any taint or trace of the enemy remain among them. The fabric of Roman civilization was never ripped apart by such methodical hatreds, in part because the purpose of the rulers was more limited.'

The impact of prophetic literature has exerted on the course of political history is not unknown, and should not be underrated. 'It is a man of Heracleopolis who will rule after the Ionians.' This passage from the Demotic Chronicle (II, 25) was in all likelihood responsible for the revolt in Heracleopolis in 58 BC. We have already mentioned Alexander Helios, so named by his mother to satisfy the popular expectations nourished by the prophetic writings. We also know about the role played by the prophetic scriptures in the propaganda war of Mithridates VI against Rome, as well as the influence of such writings on the successive anti-Roman Jewish uprisings. As recalled recently by S. West, Augustus 'ordered the incineration of more than two thousand prophetic books (Suet. Aug. 31), a measure which indicates that he and his advisers took such writing seriously.'

The circulating defeatist prophecies, based on casual analyses of contemporary events projected according to the personal invention of a self-appointed exegete also relied on the prophetic passages of the Holy Scripture (here Dan. II, 31-40), and may well have contributed to the fall of Stilicho. This fatal event proved momentous for the political and military history of the Empire. The role played in this affair by St. Jerome was particularly unfortunate. His attack on Stilicho and with other sympathizers of Anthemius bandying about the slogan of the Romanization of the army - a utopian programme indeed in the years of the Alaric's and Radagais' invasions - was a proof not only of the great writer's suicidal illiteracy in politics, but also of the impact exerted by mythical thinking on the general course of human history as well.

Now we are coming to a review of certain patterns symptomatic of civil war. I would like to approach this problem from a number of different perspectives: historiographic, military, sociological and political.

Let us begin with the guerilla war and its historiography. 'As for the rebels' aims, it is an exasperating but a far from unexpected fact that in the literature of Western Europe in the third, fourth, and fifth centuries only a single sentence, a line of unpoetical poetry, a mere pentameter tells us of these,' complains the historian of the Bagaudae, a movement which shows many parallels with the traditionalist trends in

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77 West 1997, p.10.
Egypt. We have already mentioned the scarcity of historical sources, which amount to a royal decree, one or two general commentaries in the Classical histories, or incidental information of secondary importance dispersed in the official or private papyri. An air of contempt and alienation is conspicuous in both the royal Egyptian and the Classical sources. Ankhmakhis was cursed by a demotic royal decree (Philense II) as the enemy, enemy of the gods, rioter, rebel, head of the sedition, instigator of the civil war. The insurgents of Maternus would be labelled ‘a numerous band of rascals.’ The Bagaudae were called ‘yokes’ by Eutropius, ‘bandits’ by Victor, and ‘ignorant farmers’ by yet another Classical author. ‘Mighty rulers always use the term latrones in speaking of those whom they slay...’ The situation is always the same when uncontrolled social forces unexpectedly and seriously challenge the central government and the superior position of the ruling class. Thompson, author of the cited paper on the Bagaudae, observed that ‘all our authorities belonged to a greater or lesser extent to the propertied classes of the Empire.’ What in fact do we know about the Egyptian rebellions of Firmicus or the revolt of the bukoloi under Marcus Aurelius? Or about the anti-Roman Greek rebellion in Achaea roughly at the same time? Practically next to nothing.

When the educated take part in any historical events, even if of no primary importance, there is a chance that sooner or later we will acquire more or less exact historical accounts. And to the contrary: if we witness a popular movement, even if actually of momentous importance, and of long lasting consequences, as happened in the Egypt of the Ptolemies, a movement which engages the lower, illiterate, poor levels of society, then we may expect no literary evidence, no document of a historical value. It receives no media coverage. Thucydides resorted to analogy, folk tradition and poets, in the face of paucity of sources for his analysis of the remote Aegean past. The authors who undertook the effort to reconstruct as exactly as possible the course of events in Egypt and their background, whose observations have contributed so many pieces of the jigsaw in this study, follow the same pattern in their writings on the history of the provincial populace in 2nd-century Egypt as Thucydides. Koenen refers to the phenomenon of the prophetic writings circulating in Europe occupied by Nazi Germany, Préaux to the Polish Revolution of 1830, as a parallel to the Egyptian rebellion which broke out after the Battle of Raphia, Dunand in his search for analogies to the prophetic literature in Graeco-Roman Egypt turned to the results of the

80 Alliot 1951, p.437.
81 Thompson 1952, p.12; HA Marc., 21, 7.
82 Eutr. IX, 25.3; Victor, Caes. XXXIX, 17; Paneg.Lat. X(II), 4, 3.
84 Thompson 1952, p.11.
85 Milne 1928, p. 231; C.P. Jones, Culture and Society in Lucian, Harvard 1986, p. 125;
86 R.M.Cook, Thukydidès as Archaeologist, BSA 50, 1955, pp.266ff.
88 Préaux 1936, p.528.
survey carried out by Lanterna on the messianic and apocalyptic movements in the modern history of the colonial world of Africa and both Americas.  

The Polish modern history knows two guerilla wars: the first in 1939-1944, mirrored by the vast body of still accumulating documentary materials collected by the professional politicians and high rank military officers in the archives of London which offered a chance of independent scholarly scrutiny in exile; and the second guerilla war which gathered momentum as the first was grinding to a gruesome halt. This second war was just beginning as the Allied was receiving their medals to celebrate the VE Day. This guerilla war which was, borrowing the phraseology of Eddy, ‘astonishingly long-lived, widespread and determined,’ was only one more ‘peasant war’, one more war of the provincial populace in the history of Man. This war failed to catch the attention of the university professors; only exiguous number of the professional military officers volunteered; a few chaplains joined the ranks but were soon captured and executed. This war recruited its leaders from the lower classes, its soldiers were frequently semi-literate. They fought under the inspiration of their own understanding of the Catholic faith, honour and family traditions. One could call all the men from all those wars xenophobic, illiterate, conservative, backward or uneducated. However, one could never deny that all the movements were popular, strongly motivated religiously and patriologically. This Polish war I am referring to also had no history, and even now it still does not have much of a recorded story, because it had no literate witnesses, no historians: just one another episode in the long history of the silent minorities, which are the subject of this paper. It might be concluded that in a way we may have very different versions of the evidence - different histories and historians of the same nation or society. Similarly in the period under discussion we are confronted with two different histories of Ptolemaic Egypt. Perhaps even more than two, if we included the Egyptian Jews. MacMullen characterizes the position of the historian of the militant movements in Gaeco-Roman Egypt in the following way: ‘The motives and loyalties that interest us are badly reported in the evidence. One must rake through a bewildering variety of events and sources for a small return. A few facts emerge.’ Referring to the attitudes of the three literate groups in Ptolemaic Egypt (the Greeks, the Jews and the Hellenized Egyptians), MacMullen adds: ‘All three groups had always been to some extent alien, uprooted. They looked outside of Egypt, to Jerusalem or Athens, for leadership in tastes and worships, scorned or disliked the peasants of the soil, and wished to hold themselves aloof.’

The phenomenon of this historical schizophrenia, present also in the Polish contemporary modern historiography, reflects a more general pattern, which may be legitimately applied to Graeco-Roman Egypt. We have at our disposal the historiography of the elites, or of ‘the propertied classes’, to call them as Thompson

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89 Dunand 1977, n.79, p.65.
90 Eddy 1961, p.296.
91 MacMullen 1964, p.187.
92 Ibid. p.190.
prefers; and another, just as selective historiography of the lower classes, of no interest to the former, and itself not caring at all what was being read or written at the Universities of Alexandria or Athens; all the more so this popular tradition under discussion was based on the original African lore and also on languages of a different stock than the Indo-Aryan tongues. The educated tended to look at the illiterate or semi-literate societies as one looks at a primitive mob. ‘The illiterates’, however, had their own history, political, social or religious, although they were sometimes deprived of a historiography, or of a fairly comprehensive store of it. The Egyptian traditionalist movements cannot be compared to the French Revolution, to the Dutch Uprising of the mid-16th century, or the German Revolution in 1918-1919. They show more analogies with the Bagaudae, the Vendéens of the late 18th century, or with the Polish guerilla war of the late 1940’s.

All these movements originated in provincial territories in social environments characterized by MacMullen as ‘relatively backward ... living remote from the center (of the Empire),’ and - as regards the ancient components of the historical pattern -in a milieu of ‘preclassical cultures ...’ which remained ‘little changed and little challenged (by the Classical culture) in the rural parts.’

In an important passage Polybius gives a characteristic of the war conducted by Philopator against his own subjects. In his words it was a war which χωρίς της εις ἀιλήλους ὀμότητος καὶ παρανομίας οὔτε παράταξιν οὔτε νομαρχίαν οὔτε πολορρίαν οὐδέ έτερον οὐδέν ἔχει μνήμης ἀξιόν (V, 107) (except for the mutual cruelty and lawlessness was conspicuous for its lack of any battle with army in array, any naval battle, a siege, or anything worthy of memory). We are thus not amazed when we find a similar commentary by Ammianus Marcellinus, in his description of the tactics used by the Bagaudae during the reign of Valentinian I (364-75): ‘many other battles (i.e. other than those fought against the barbarians) less worthy of description were fought throughout various regions of Gaul, which it is superfluous to narrate both because their outcome resulted in nothing worth speaking of and because it is unbecoming to prolong a History with ignoble details.’ These two accounts refer to one of the most essential properties defining a guerilla war. Relying on small and fast-moving units, whether in Egypt or in Gaul or Spain, guerilla leader would force the government generals to disperse their armies in order to use them in time consuming mopping-up operations. ‘The raiders would split up into a number of small bands, which were more easily fed than one large host, and would carry on a war of ambushes, surprises, feints, diversions, and skirmishes rather than of set battles.’ The insurgents were not dangerous on battlefields, but when operating in the guerilla war manner in their surprise-attack groups they could prove formidable adversaries.

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94 Ibid. p.233.
95 Trans. Thompson 1952, p.17; Amm.Marc.XXVII, 2, 11.
96 Thompson 1952, p.17.
The enforcement of their tactics upon the Roman or Greek officers may be regarded as a rebel success.

'Peasants raided temples, guardposts, and the offices and officials of the government.'\(^{97}\) A police officer in a report written at the end of the 3\(^{rd}\) century BC tells us about an attack by Egyptian rebels on the fortified police post in a village.\(^{98}\) On this occasion the attack was repelled. The rebels withdrew, probably to their camps in the desert. They were attacking from the inaccessible waste land stretching along the entire Nile Valley. The Bagaudae of Armorica ran to the forests. MacMullen commented upon the manner of combat used by the Numidians in the period of Valerian and Gallienus in the following way: 'Their whole pattern explains itself. Whenever Rome was divided and weak, her enemies to the south of Numidia and Mauretania descended on her like jackals. They were never fully incorporated into her empire nor fully pacified. Pillage and the Berber language, the breaking of treaties and the venerating of their kings, belonged equally and imremediably to their way of life.'\(^{99}\)

We also learn about the rebel attacks on the temples. The king complained that they were pillaging even the major sanctuaries, destroying their property, removing the sacred objects, with the statues of the gods included.\(^{100}\) *P.Tebtynis* 781 tells us about the devastation committed in one of the Egyptian sanctuaries in Fayum by the Egyptian rebels.\(^{101}\) I do not think Préaux is right when she argues in this connection that 'ce pillage dont les fauteurs ne distinguent plus entre Egyptien et Grec, fait déjà soupçonner le caractere social des révoltes.'\(^{102}\) I also doubt whether her commentary regarding the acts of destruction of the official archives is valid. It was the Egyptians who suffered from this, she concludes. Consequently she cannot see any nationalist motivation behind it. 'This is typical of the social movements directed against the well-to-do and the established social order.'\(^{103}\) As regards the attacks on temples one must remember about certain circumstances, of both a general as well as a specifically Egyptian nature. Eddy was right when he noticed that 'there was a long period of guerilla war against Lagid troops, and it eventually degenerated into a savage and lawless conflict.'\(^{104}\) Throughout history, as we have already stressed, those who challenged the ruling class or régime had been invariably called bandits, brigands or latrones; they have been always regarded as such by those historians who followed and swallowed the extant pieces of evidence, which naturally could not have called them anything else. However we are bound to distinguish between true banditry, criminal looting etc., which itself may be a real plague in times of war, and most of all during a civil war - and the insurgents, even

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\(^{97}\) Eddy 1961, p.300.
\(^{98}\) *Berliner Griechische Urkunden* 1215; Préaux 1936, p.529f.
\(^{99}\) MacMullen 1966, p.204.
\(^{101}\) Préaux 1936, p.540.
\(^{102}\) Ibid.
\(^{103}\) Ibid.
\(^{104}\) Eddy 1961, p.297.
if they have no ‘official’ history of their own. Bandits do not volunteer en masse from among the shepherd or farmer populations. They do not form military units; neither they offer resolute resistance against regular military units. We are bound to make this difference even if we concede that the course of events in every civil war irresistibly leads to acts of injustice, violence or robbery, to which the guerrillas may either be compelled in order to survive or to which they gradually become accustomed. Referring to the revolt of Maternus, the deserters’ war, Thompson noticed that ‘this was an organization which operated from Gallia Lugdunensis down to Spain for a number of years,’ only to add that ‘the character of their movement must be sharply distinguished from the mere routine brigandage which could be found in all corners of the Empire at that time ... the ordinary brigands were scarcely concerned to win control of large tracts of the provinces and to expropriate the landowners.’ Those ‘bandits’ in Egypt had their kings crowned by the priests of Amon, and were recognized at least by one foreign government, the government of Nubia. The priests themselves were divided. The Egyptian clergy, conservative by principle, generally took a cautious attitude towards the native rebellions, as documented by the Rosetta Stone. We will return to this point later on. To make the picture more complete, Egypt had been in a state of inveterate conflicts between the worshippers of the different divinities venerated in different nomes. Those conflicts could even take the shape of violent confrontation, as attested by the war between the inhabitants of Hermouthis and Crocodilopolis in 123 BC.

It would be useless to try to build up any social theories or speculate on the basis of the destruction of the official archives. This is simply one of the usual forms of conduct of any rebels who have ever intended to bring about as much confusion in the state structures as possible. We know that the circumcelliones did the same in Roman Africa.

The continuity of military resistance despite dearth of technical resources on the part of guerrillas is another phenomenon of all guerrilla wars. An Egyptian prefect, writing some time between AD 210 and 214, hit the nail on the head when he noticed that ‘it is impossible to root out robbers apart from those who shelter them, some, partners of their plunderings, some innocent’ (*P.Oxy. 1408*). A similar opinion was expressed by Ulpian: ‘brigands cannot escape destruction for long unless they have support from the population among which they are active.’ These records testify that the mechanisms behind the phenomenon of guerrilla war were clear at least to some individuals on the government side. It is estimated that about hundred men and women were needed to actively support one of the armed guerrillas operating on the outskirts of the Polish forests in the decade from 1939 to 1949. Otherwise their activities would have been

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107 Wilcken II, p.18.
109 Ibid. p.194.
110 Digest I, 18, 13 pr.
impossible. Different forms of passive resistance by the fellahin which had always been effective in the Graeco-Roman Egypt, as noticed by Milne,\textsuperscript{111} as ἀμῖξα (non-intercourse), ταραχή (disturbance), and ἀποχώρησις, as they were labelled by the 2nd century Egyptian functionaries, all of them amounting to mass refusal to work, prove the sense of a common cause with the insurgents on the part of the country folk.

One more element should be added to this picture. There were districts or even whole villages in Egypt, as anywhere in a similar situation, which because of some cultural, not economic patterns offered strong support to the insurgents’ cause. We read in a letter (UPZ 209) that the royal general Paos marched against Panopolis, one of the centers of the rebellion of 129 BC. The same Panopolis had played a leading role against the government in the rebellion of 164/5 BC. The city was seized and destroyed. Euergetes II revengefully rejected the petition of its inhabitants when they asked him to let them rebuild their town.\textsuperscript{112} A series of letters written by Plato, epistregos of Thebaid, allow us to calculate the capture and destruction of the Holy City of Thebes at the end of 88 BC (in particular \textit{P.Bouriant 12}, dated 1\textsuperscript{st} November 88).\textsuperscript{113} This act of blind and unnecessary vindictiveness by Ptolemy Soter II made a fatal conclusion to the history of the Macedonian domination in Egypt and documents in the best possible way the failure of Macedonian home policy.

Why was it that the insurgents met with sympathy in some districts or villages, while others remained indifferent or even hostile to their cause? This is a question of local histories, the question of Vendée, or Chechnya, or some districts in southeastern and eastern Poland in this century. After some fifty years since the anticommunist guerilla war in Poland the result of elections in some villages, which had been embroiled in that war give quite unanimous results of nearly 100% of the votes ‘for’ or ‘against’ some candidates while generally the results are divided roughly 50-to-50, in Poland as a whole, including other communities in the same regions, even adjacent villages, which returned a corresponding half-and-half vote. All those people in those regions are equally poor, most of them are Catholics, all of them poorly educated. Préaux stresses the economic background as a central factor in the Egyptian rebellions. Goudriaan suggested that the Ptolemies simply took no notice of ethnicity.\textsuperscript{114} We have seen that the economy is one, but only one of the central problems, and that the pattern emerging from the analysis appears more complex.

Préaux expresses opinion that the main forces which exerted the decisive influence on the political setup of 2\textsuperscript{nd}-century Egypt were as follows: the ambitious Greek aristocracy, the arrogant bureaucracy, the clergy with the influential priesthood of Amon of Thebes, and the Egyptian people, ‘la masse du peuple égyptien’.\textsuperscript{115} I do not

\textsuperscript{111} Milne 1928, p.230.
\textsuperscript{112} Koemen 1959, p.119.
\textsuperscript{113} Préaux 1936, p.548ff.
\textsuperscript{115} Préaux 1936, p.552.
like this approach to the historical analysis, with a ‘people’, which does or does not do something, follows or does not follow someone et cetera. This looks like a leftover of thinking about history in terms of classes, a reflection of the ominous myths of the 20th century, either the Myth of Class or the Myth of Race. May this reference to the ‘Inexorable Laws of Historical Destiny’, as it was once put by Carl Popper in his *Poverty of Historicism*, be forgiven me, one of the Central and East Europeans. In a word, different communities and individuals from the lower social levels in Egypt remained either indifferent to any cause in the war, or proved loyal to the government, or joined the rebels. This is reflected clearly enough by the papyri. Those people had their own local traditions and their own local histories, and most of all in such circumstances - their own local loyalties. These made them even more impenetrable in their conservatism. The Coptic *Apophthegmata patrum* makes an impressive treasury of Egyptian folktales, an inexhaustible source of vivid imagination and a proof of the creativity of the ancient African oral tradition. I certainly do not want to defend, elevate or idealize the ‘people’. It has already been idealized enough in this century, and for no good purpose. No civil war offers materials apt for idealization, with its destructiveness, cruelty and hostility. I only want to say that the emerging pattern does not amount merely to the hostility between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots’. Fortunately enough ‘history, as it is not one of the semi-exact, or social, sciences, does not easily accommodate theories; people, *deo gratias*, retain the right to be puzzling; but the patterns detected here seem to fit times and peoples other than Roman.  

In this way we have passed to the sociology of the civil war, to its soldiers and leaders. Much has already been said of the social basis of the rebellions. The prophetic literature itself throws some light on the social position of its readers. ‘The rather lowly social status of the readership envisaged may be inferred from the sadly subliterary style of these compositions.’ The definition of Coptism adduced by MacMullen may be legitimately extended to other traditonalist movements in Ptolemaic Egypt: ‘If it would be exaggerated to call Coptism atavistic and proletarian, at least those terms point in the right direction.

The longevity of armed resistance would have been unthinkable without its priests, certainly recruited from their traditionalist anti-Hellenic circles. All the time they stayed in the background of the militant movements. Greek names are rare in the Egyptian cults of Ptolemaic Egypt. The society of the priesthood had been a reserve of the indigenous Egyptians. The anonymous authors of the prophecies must have lived in and around the temples of the Egyptian gods. There were naturally both loyalists and revolutionaries among them. Petosiris of Hermopolis had always been a loyal servant of Ptolemy I. The eclectic Graeco-Egyptian decoration of his tomb, which once suggested even more general conclusions as to the ways and modes of the cultural changes in the

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117 West 1997, p.8; similarly Koenen 1968, p.178; Fraser I, p.684.
118 MacMullen 1966, p.236.
120 Bowman 1990, p.124.
Ptolemaic Egypt, may appear in a somewhat different light if viewed from the political angle. Pshereni-Ptah, high priest of Ptah in Memphis, boasted of his wealth awarded by the king for his loyal service. On the other hand it seems very likely that the self-appointed rebel king Harsiesis was once a priest of Amon in Thebes. The priesthoods of Egypt had something to do with organizing and leading the resistance, in both its literary and militant aspects. Only some sort of unity of plan, determination, and organization made possible the sudden, widespread outbreaks in 217 and 163 BC. It would be useful to recall here the outcomes of the popular movements which lacked the leadership and support of the propertied and educated classes, such as the Jacquerie (1358), the rebellion of Watt Tyler or the German Peasants' Revolt. On the other hand the revolt of the poor in Antwerp in 1556, which gained support from the nobles and bourgeoisie eventually brought about the war with Spain, the English intervention and the independence of the Netherlands. The priests of Amon in the South were in all likelihood at least in part responsible for the foreign intervention on behalf of the insurgents. The change on the Nubian throne about 200 BC (Ergamenes-Aqrqan was replaced by Asekhraman) was advantageous to their cause. The Philense II royal decree mentioned the Nubians among the captives. The Ptolemies reacted, gradually curtailing both the economic and political power of the priests. The Romans went even further. We are reminded of a wise conclusion by Cassius Dio: civil wars are always fatal to the noble (52, 45, 5).

We have already pointed out the far-reaching consequences of the civil war in Egypt: the victory of Raphia was proverbially wasted the day after; the civil war brought about the abandonment of the agricultural land, devastation and consequently a deepening economic crisis. The fatal decision to capture and destroy Thebes lay heavy on the relations between the Europeans and Egyptians. The Greeks remained a narrow ruling class. The Romans simply inherited this social stratification. Neither the Lagids nor the Romans proved able to draw conclusions from the heritage of Alexander the Great and build on the good experience of the Seleucid monarchy, as regards their attitude towards the Orientals. Both the Ptolemies and the Romans resorted to a strong-arm policy, leaving no room for any alternative. This narrow view of the Westerners in their administration of the Orient would eventually make things easier for militant Islam, whose soldiers reconquered the East from Western hands.

However the gradual Egyptianization of the Ptolemaic administration may be regarded as a partial success achieved by the rebels. The Egyptian culture which had lived for centuries under Graeco-Roman rule branded as a secondary, folk, or provincial culture, and actually bearing the status of an underground culture, one day resurfaced in its impressive Late Antique Coptic revival. This process was once vividly depicted in more universal terms by MacMullen: ‘...classical civilization, by whatever

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122 Koenen 1959, p.119.  
123 Eddy 1961, p.313.  
124 Alliot 1951, p.435.
secrets extended and for centuries preserved, at length receded from the periphery of its realm. Like rocks taking visible shape under the lightening waters of an ebb tide until they emerge first shiny with its colors, then dried and nakedly themselves, so native cultures to the south of the Rhine and Danube reappeared in the later Empire...