

A NOTARY OF ANCIENT THEBES

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IN the important collection of Demotic papyri recently discovered by the Museum's Expedition at Thebes, there is one document which throws an interesting side light indirectly upon a famous murder committed in the year 311 B. C. It was the murder of the young King Alexander IV, surviving son of Alexander the Great.

During the sixteen years that had intervened since the death of Alexander the Great, the members of his family had been assassinated one after another until the boy Alexander, only twelve years of age, and his mother Roxana, the last survivors, were strangled in the fortress at Amphypolis. As the last son of the great Alexander he was the rightful King of Macedonia and the real Pharaoh of Egypt.

When the news of this murder reached Alexandria from Greece the people were thrown into a panic, especially the Greeks and the Jews who, under the protection of Alexander's line, were the privileged peoples of the Egyptian capital. The founder of the City had granted these two peoples entire freedom in religion and other matters, which his family continued to guarantee. They were therefore naturally much concerned over the murder of the young Alexander. Egyptians had not yet come to live in the new capital. It really belonged to the Greeks and the Jews.

In the meantime until the young Alexander should come of age at fourteen, he was represented in Egypt by Ptolemy, his Satrap, an able administrator who made Alexandria the centre of the learned world. He brought there the most famous philosophers and poets and men of science among whom were Hippocrates, the father of medicine, and Herophilos, the father of anatomy and surgery, who was permitted by law to vivisect not only animals but human beings—criminals condemned to death—in the course of his investigations. Among the mathematicians Euclid resided at Alexandria during this time. Amid these brilliant surroundings and in this remarkable gathering, was founded the famous Museum which was in fact the greatest University of ancient times and perhaps of all time. It was a University in the original meaning of such a foundation—

not a place for teaching but for research and the promotion of human knowledge.

Meanwhile, away up the Nile at the ancient capital, Thebes, there lived a man named Peteshe, a notary. Thebes still retained much of its ancient splendour as the oldtime residence of the Pharaohs. To this notary Peteshe came two men of Thebes, one a locksmith named Pani and the other a soldier named Paret. The locksmith was selling his house to the soldier and they brought their sixteen witnesses before the notary to have the deed of sale executed in the proper form. The notary got ready to draw up the document. He laid out a sheet of papyrus measuring 90 by 15 inches. Beside this he placed his writing materials consisting of a palette for mixing his black ink and a reed pen. While the two principals to the sale of the house together with the witnesses looked on, the notary proceeded to write in the date. He explained that as he had not been officially informed of the murder of Alexander, he would ignore it altogether and date the document in the tenth year of the reign of Alexander IV. He gave as a second reason for this that Ptolemy, the Satrap, continued rebuilding part of the great Temple of Amon-Ra in Thebes in the name of the Pharaoh Alexander; and a third circumstance which made him doubt the truth of the story was that Ptolemy had ordered to be erected the great granite statue of Alexander. Moreover, he continued, if the story were actually true and Alexander had in fact been murdered, he would not know how to date the document at all because the only method of dating the document which he knew was to write the year of the reigning Pharaoh, counting the years from the beginning of his reign. Therefore, in order to date the document at all, it was necessary for him to assume that Alexander was still the Pharaoh. Therefore, the notary began writing on his papyrus which lay upon his knees, as follows.

In the month Tybi of the tenth year of Pharaoh Alexander, son of Alexander [March 307 B. C.]:

The locksmith of Thebes, Pani, son of Pamun, his mother being Tremubaste

Says unto Paret, the soldier of Thebes, the son of Panufi, his mother being Taret, as follows:

Thou hast caused my heart to agree concerning the price of my house which is built with stones and roofed and which stands in the northern quarter of Thebes at the western place of the wall.

Its neighbors are:

South: thy house which is built and roofed and thy house which is waste.

North: the house of Peteharpre, son of Puokh, which is built and roofed, and which is occupied by his children, the King's street lying between them.

West: thy house which is built and roofed and thy courtyard which is on his entrance.

East: the rest of the house named above which is $2\frac{1}{2}$ cubits of land i. e. 250 cubits of area (square cubits) i. e. $2\frac{1}{2}$ cubits of land again which I sold to Khenseu, son of Uzehor.

Such are the properties adjacent to the whole house.

I have given it to thee.

Thine it is, thy house it is.

I have no claim on earth against thee in its name.

No man in the land, nor I likewise, shall be able to exercise authority over it except thee from today onward.

He that shall come unto thee on account of it in my name or in the name of any man in the land, I will cause him to remove from thee.

And I will purge it for thee from every right, every patent, every claim in the land at any time.

Thine are its patents in every place.

Every writing that has been made concerning it and every writing that has been made for me concerning it and all writings in the name of which I am entitled to it are thine and the rights conferred thereby. Thine is all that to which I am entitled in its name.

The oath, the proof that shall be demanded of thee in the court of justice, in the name of the right conferred by the above writing which I have made unto thee, to cause me to make it: I will make it without citing any patent nor any claim in the land against thee.

Wrote it Peteshe, son of Yeturoz.

Then turning the papyrus upside down, the notary handed the reed pen to the sixteen witnesses each of whom signed in turn.

This papyrus, now in the University Museum together with many others found with it, forms the whole archive of a family which lived between 318 and 217 B. C. Some of the persons mentioned in this document figure in other documents as well. The whole collection throws an interesting light on politics and the private affairs of certain families in Thebes. For the moment, however, the interesting point to which I wish to call special attention is that the notary in dating his document as he did establishes

the fact that although King Alexander IV was murdered in 311 B. C., business and official documents were dated as of his reign as late as 307 B. C.

This papyrus, therefore, besides its importance for other facts of history, forms a new proof that Ptolemy I Soter continued to rule in Egypt as Satrap in the name of the murdered King Alexander IV. It would seem that he officially concealed the murder of his overlord until he became Pharaoh of Egypt himself.

The house mentioned in the document plays an interesting part in the later dated papyri. Its possession goes from one to the other of the family, sometimes by inheritance, sometimes by debts, sometimes by sale.