

Brother-Sister Marriage and Inheritance Strategies in Greco-Roman Egypt

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I INTRODUCTION

Sabine Huebner has recently brought new impetus to the long-standing debate on how to explain the well-documented practice of full brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt, a practice which apparently contravenes mankind's most fundamental and universal taboo on incest between immediate kin. These marriages were, she argues, actually made between adopted rather than biological siblings, and thus fall into the same pattern widely attested in the Greek East, whereby families without natural heirs adopted a son (often from the wider circle of relatives) to marry their daughter and thus preserve the family line.¹ Huebner has drawn attention to important and hitherto neglected peculiarities of the papyrological documentation from Egypt, particularly the rarity of explicit references to adoption. Her suggestion that the papyri may conceal a much wider real extent of 'silent' adoptions is attractive, and deserves fuller investigation within the specific context of Roman Egypt's demographic and inheritance patterns. She also raises further doubts about the overall reliability of the demographic information provided in the census returns (which supply much of our clearest evidence for brother-sister marriage), pointing to the unlikelihood that of the fifty-six recorded men aged over fifty, approaching 90 per cent had biological sons living in their households.²

A few returns throw up specific anomalies which could well be explained in terms of a 'silent' adoption. Huebner cites one case, not involving brother-sister marriage, where copies (of copies) of two consecutive census returns, in which the siblings Anikos and Thamistis are clearly recorded as sharing both parents, are followed on the same papyrus by a statement by Anikos that she is his sister only on the maternal side, her father being unknown. This obvious discrepancy indicates that some families 'tidied up' their family trees for the official census returns, while remembering the true relationships when it came to inheritance.³ In another instance, which does involve a sibling marriage, the omission of

¹ S. Huebner, "Brother-sister" marriage in Roman Egypt: A curiosity of Humankind or a widespread family strategy?, *JRS* 97 (2007), 21–49. Her article has already provoked one response: S. Remijsen and W. Clarysse, 'Incest or adoption? Brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt revisited', *JRS* 98 (2008), 53–61. Neither is mentioned by P. J. Frandsen, *Incestuous and Close-kin Marriage in Ancient Egypt and Persia: an Examination of the Evidence* (2009), which appeared just in time for us to take account of it. These three works are subsequently cited by authors' surnames only, as also are the following: R. S. Bagnall and B. W. Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt* (1994; with revisions and supplements in the 2nd edn, 2006); S. Bussi, 'Mariages endogames en Égypte', *Revue Historique de Droit Français et Étranger* 80 (2002), 1–22; E. Lüddeckens, *Ägyptische Eheverträge* (1960).

² Huebner, 36–7. Her argument from the over-representation of twins (37–8) is less compelling. The incidence of coevals explicitly described as 'twins' (four cases, out of several hundred) accords with biological expectation, and the larger group of cases where siblings are recorded with the same age (at least eight cases) are adequately explained by Bagnall and Frier (43–4) as the result of imprecise reporting (understandable especially in several cases where the coevals are not the declarant's own children, or are mature adults). Their seminal analysis of the census returns, despite its methodological care and caution, had already prompted other reservations (e.g. Tim Parkin's review in *BMCRCR* 95.03.20, or W. Scheidel, *Death on the Nile: Disease and the Demography of Roman Egypt* (2001), 118–80).

³ Huebner, 38, referring to Bagnall and Frier *catt.*, Pr-131-1, Pr-145-1 (P.Lond. II 324, pp. 63–4 = W.Chr. 208, dated A.D. 161). This text incidentally shows that individuals could produce past census declarations as evidence of their relationships, but its exact purpose is unclear. If Anikos were trying to contest Thamistis' claim to his paternal inheritance, as Huebner suggests, the census extracts would have had the opposite of the desired effect, undermining his case. Since the tone of Anikos' covering letter seems more supportive than antagonistic, his purpose was perhaps to further her claim to some inheritance on the maternal side (not actually from their mother, who was probably long dead, being absent from the return of A.D. 145).

the daughter Dioskoros from the Theognostos family's census return of A.D. 187 initially looks like evidence for her later adoption by the family to become Theognostos' wife.⁴

However, 'silent' adoption does not provide a convincing explanation for the vast majority of cases of putative brother-sister marriage, both those recorded in the census returns and those in the *epikrisis* texts (which include lengthy and full family trees to support claims to hereditary privileged status) and a range of other evidence (these last much more extensive than the 'handful' mentioned by Huebner).⁵ In their recent response to Huebner, Remijsen and Clarysse (see note 1) have already given several reasons why her explanation cannot be sustained: first, contemporary Greek and Roman commentators were clear that the inhabitants of Egypt did practise full brother-sister marriage, uniquely among the peoples of the Roman Empire; second, the papyrological evidence conflicts with her hypothesis because neither the family structures (notably the number of sons) nor the patterns of nomenclature in families where sibling marriage is recorded meet the expectations demanded by her hypothesis.

We would add a further reason for rejecting Huebner's explanation, which goes to the heart of her case. Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt differed significantly in both family structure and inheritance patterns from the parts of the Greek world where adoption was widely practised as an inheritance strategy. A key aspect of this difference lay in the legal and social position of women, and their capacity to inherit and own property in their own right even when they had brothers. This not only rendered it unnecessary for families without sons to adopt their sons-in-law, but fundamentally affected the relationship of daughters and sons within the household in ways that made brother-sister marriage an attractive option. We hope to justify these rather sweeping claims in detail in the second half of this article. But first we need to address the question of scholarly *aporia* when faced with the difficulty of explaining the Greco-Egyptians' departure from the universal human 'incest taboo'.

Huebner offers her explanation in light of the scholarly consensus that: 'There were no specific and compelling economic circumstances in Roman Egypt that could have induced wide swaths of the population to consider marrying their children to one another, against Greek, Roman, and Egyptian cultural prohibitions. ... In other words, everyone agrees that it is difficult to explain brother-sister marriage as a peculiar local tradition.'⁶ But is the problem really as intractable as this suggests?⁷ Perhaps where scholars go wrong is in looking for a single, exclusive and conclusive explanation. What we need to find is not one particular feature of Greco-Roman Egypt that uniquely led to the spread of brother-sister marriage amongst the population, but a distinctive conjuncture of several circumstances, which individually may not be unique, or adequate as explanations in themselves. Our main intention here is to demonstrate that Ptolemaic, and particularly Roman, Egypt produced just such a distinctive conjuncture of circumstances which made brother-sister marriage both morally acceptable to its inhabitants and an attractive strategy for some of

⁴ Huebner, 43, on Bagnall and Frier, 127 n. 63, with Hm-187-1, Hm-215-1, Hm-215-2, Hm-229-1. But the rest of the family's archive shows her inheriting from her childless uncle along with her brothers (though apparently not directly from her father), and becoming involved in family property transactions in ways that strongly imply that she was born to the family: P. J. Sijpesteijn, 'Theognostos alias Moros and his family', *ZPE* 76 (1989), 213–18. The A.D. 187 census data are taken from an unpublished, long and extremely fragmentary gymnasial *epikrisis* document, and may be incomplete; cf. P. van Minnen, 'ΑΙ ΑΠΟ ΓΥΜΝΑΣΙΟΥ: "Greek" women and the Greek "elite" in the metropoleis of Roman Egypt', in H. Melaerts and L. Mooren (eds), *Le rôle et le statut de la femme en Égypte hellénistique, romaine et byzantine. Actes du colloque international, Bruxelles-Leuven 27–29 Novembre 1997* (2002), 337–53, at 345. The census returns anyway systematically under-register girls aged under five: Bagnall and Frier, 81.

⁵ We list all cases known to us, from the census returns and all other evidence, in the Appendix.

⁶ Huebner, 26; the preceding pages summarize the main theories put forward hitherto, and the reasons for rejecting them.

⁷ cf. Huebner, 22: 'one of the most intractable problems in the social history of Graeco-Roman Egypt', and Frandsen, 129: 'Without any new compelling evidence, there is still no reasonable explanation for the lack of an incest taboo among the Persians and to some extent among the "Egyptians".'

them to adopt in practice. There is little about our explanation that is wholly new, but through the combination of different elements, and greater precision in assessing the evidence, we hope to present a more conclusive case.

To be convincing, any explanation for brother-sister marriage in Greco-Roman Egypt needs to achieve two things: firstly, to show how a practice regarded as incestuous allegedly by all other human societies could be seen as morally acceptable in Egypt; and secondly, to provide reasons why the practice should have become widespread among the population, at least for several generations in the Roman period. Earlier explanations in terms of economic interest or inheritance strategy have foundered because, although not wholly without force, they are not in themselves strong enough to counter the moral argument: the Egyptians were not so uniquely beset by the problems of property fragmentation through inheritance that this alone adequately explains their lack of moral repugnance at the very idea of marriage between full brother and sister. In the next two sections, we therefore first review the question of how and why the practice of sibling marriage became morally acceptable to the people of Egypt, before turning to look more closely at the evidence from Roman Egypt, and the examples which illustrate how brother-sister marriage fits into the prevailing family and inheritance structures.

II INCEST AND THE GREEKS

Many scholars, including Huebner, routinely apply the terms ‘incest’ and ‘incestuous’ to the phenomenon of brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt. By our own cultural standards (both the Western Judaeo-Christian and Japanese traditions), and those of contemporary Roman observers, these unions were of course incestuous; but in using the term so freely we risk importing the unconscious assumption that ‘incest’ has an absolute and universal definition, grounded in biology or in the fundamental structures of human society. This is particularly unhelpful in view of the weighty conceptual baggage which incest carries in anthropological and socio-biological scholarship, and in effect concedes that the phenomenon defies normal explanation before the argument has even started.⁸ Endogamy certainly has some biological risks, but the fact that societies patently differ in defining what counts as incest shows that the ‘incest taboo’, like all taboos, owes more to culture than to biology.⁹ Even studies which argue for the biological foundation of incest aversion propose that the key factor is not genetic relatedness as such but length of co-residence (the ‘Westermarck hypothesis’); thus adopted siblings brought up together should be expected to show as much aversion to one another as biological siblings.¹⁰

It is important to observe that what we have to explain is not the complete absence of an ‘incest taboo’ in Roman Egypt, but rather why the boundary between permitted and

⁸ K. Hopkins, ‘Brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22 (1980), 303–54, at 304–7, summarizes the main anthropological approaches. Whereas for Lévi-Strauss, the incest taboo marks the crucial step in the transition from nature to culture, distinguishing mankind from animals, other scholars use the fact that some animals, including mammals, avoid mating with close kin to argue an evolutionary explanation for human incest avoidance.

⁹ As S. L. Ager, ‘Familiarity breeds: incest and the Ptolemaic dynasty’, *JHS* 125 (2005), 1–34 notes (11–12), studies seem often to lack scholarly impartiality, failing to allow for socio-economic and other factors in their eagerness to confirm the expectation that incest causes genetic damage; cf. Frandsen, especially 18. And the studies suggest that at worst, half the offspring of endogamous unions would show no deleterious genetic effects. See also W. Scheidel, ‘The biology of brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt: an interdisciplinary approach’, in W. Scheidel, *Measuring Sex, Age and Death in the Roman Empire* (1996), 9–51.

¹⁰ D. Lieberman, J. Tooby and L. Cosmides, ‘Does morality have a biological basis? An empirical test of the factors governing moral sentiments related to incest’, *Proceedings of the Royal Society of London B* 270 (2003), 819–26 usefully sets out the issues and gives further references, although their attempt to refute the view that incest aversion is culturally rather than biologically grounded is unconvincing both because their model of cultural transmission is too crude, and their data pool (182 Santa Barbara undergraduates) lacks significant cultural diversity. See also the works cited in Huebner, n. 1.

prohibited unions was drawn to allow marriage of full brother and sister, which other societies prohibit.¹¹ There are, so far as we are aware, no unions of parents and children attested throughout the papyri and the other voluminous evidence from Roman Egypt; and the one papyrological reference to incest in the period before the *Constitutio Antoniniana* imposed Roman legal norms on the Egyptian population relates to an alleged union of father and daughter.¹² And the scarcity of evidence for uncle-niece marriage perhaps suggests a more general inhibition about close-kin inter-generational marriage, even though it was explicitly permitted in Roman law (and not uncommon in Greek cities).¹³

Shaw has usefully drawn attention to the fact that, until after the period under discussion here, Greek lacked any single term for ‘incest’, equivalent to Latin ‘incestum’, instead using periphrastic expressions which refer to each relationship, as we find, for instance, in *Lysias* 14.41: οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ αὐτῶν ἡταιρήκασι, οἱ δ’ ἀδελφαῖς συγγεγόνασιν, τοῖς δ’ ἐκ θυγατέρων παῖδες γεγόνασιν (‘many of them have taken mistresses, others have lain with their sisters, and others have fathered children by their daughters’). This difference, as Shaw remarks, ‘indicates, in itself, a different attitude towards close-kin marriages’.¹⁴ Nevertheless, he asserts that in the Greek city-states, full brother-sister marriage ‘evoked feelings of deep revulsion’, and attitudes to half-sibling marriage were at least ambivalent. The evidence repays more detailed consideration, especially for Classical Athens, which is the only well-documented case and, moreover, formed the model for much Alexandrian law.¹⁵

Philo famously asserted that Solon at Athens had permitted marriage between half-siblings on the father’s side, but prohibited it for those of the same mother, while the Spartan lawgiver ordained the precise opposite.¹⁶ Despite the suspicious symmetry of this contrast (elaborated further by the antithesis between the licence accorded to the Egyptians and Moses’ total prohibition of sibling unions), Athenian evidence from the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. confirms that Philo is correct about Athenian law. Most significant, because of its context supporting his claim to citizenship, is the statement of Euxitheus in *Demosthenes* 57.21: ‘For my grandfather married his sister, not on the mother’s side’ (ἀδελφὴν γὰρ ὁ πάππος οὐμὸς ἔγημεν οὐχ ὁμομητρίαν). This point, which is mentioned only here in the speech, was clearly not a key issue in the attack on Euxitheus, as we might

¹¹ cf. R. Alston, ‘Searching for the Romano-Egyptian family’, in M. George (ed.), *The Roman Family in the Empire: Rome, Italy, and Beyond* (2005), 129–57, at 139.

¹² P.Oxy. II 237 col. vii 26: *thugatromeixia*. The context (col. vii 19–28) makes clear that this was illegal; it is one of the incidental allegations brought by a man in a dispute with his father-in-law (held before the prefect on 2 June A.D. 128), cited as a precedent in the celebrated ‘petition of Dionysia’ concerning the right of Egyptian fathers to dissolve a daughter’s marriage against her will. The father-in-law, in the words of his advocate, ‘refusing to tolerate this *hybris*, used the power allowed to him by the laws’, and retaliated with a counter-charge of *bia* against his son-in-law. Father-daughter marriage is attested for 18th Dynasty pharaohs: B. M. Bryan, ‘The eighteenth dynasty before the Amarna period (c. 1550–1352 BC)’, in I. Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (2000), 218–71, especially 267. A possible father-daughter (or alternatively half-sibling) marriage proposed by E. Young, ‘A possible consanguineous marriage in the time of Philip Arrhidaeus’, *JARCE* 4 (1965), 69–71, was rejected by E. J. Sherman in ‘Djedhor the Saviour: statue base OI 10589’, *JEA* 67 (1981), 82–102, but Frandsen (40–1) regards it as a possible adoption of Persian practice by a collaborator during the Second Persian Period.

¹³ *Gnomon of the Idios Logos* 23, translated in n. 47 below. Note the strongly negative interpretation of a woman’s dream of having sex with her son given by an Egyptian dream-book of the second century A.D., P.Carlsberg 13; see Frandsen, 43.

¹⁴ B. D. Shaw, ‘Explaining incest: brother-sister marriage in Graeco-Roman Egypt’, *Man* n.s. 27 (1992), 267–99, at 270. The term *porneia* included incest: Bussi, 6–7. Further discussion and examples of the vocabulary are given by E. Karabélias, ‘Inceste, mariage, et stratégies matrimoniales dans l’Athènes classique’, in G. Thür (ed.), *Symposion 1985: Vorträge zur griechischen und hellenistischen Rechtsgeschichte* (Ringberg, 14.–26. Juli 1985) (1989), 233–51.

¹⁵ P. M. Fraser, *Ptolemaic Alexandria* (1972), I, 110–11.

¹⁶ *Spec. leg.* 3.22–4. Other sources do not explicitly attribute the law to Solon: Schol. to *Ar.*, *Clouds* 1371; *Nepos*, *Cimon* 1.2; *Seneca*, *Apocolocyntosis* 8; *Minucius Felix*, *Oct.* 31.3. The main reason for rejecting the attribution is that Plutarch does not mention it in his extensive account of Solon’s legislation concerning women and marriage (including the law which permitted heiresses to marry their husband’s next of kin if their husbands had proved impotent: *Solon* 20).

have expected if there were any doubt about the legality of such marriages, or even a universal repugnance for them. But the emphasis on οὐχ ὁμομητρίαν indicates that this was important to the validity of the marriage, and confirms that the law of Classical Athens allowed the marriage of paternal, but not uterine, half-siblings. Whether or not the law should literally be ascribed to Solon makes no difference for its existence in the Classical period. The marriage between Themistocles' son Archeptolis and his daughter Mnesiptolema by a different mother was therefore legal, as perhaps also was Cimon's marriage to his (half?)-sister Elpinice.¹⁷ The allegations of incest against Cimon form part of the political slander and infighting between the families of Callias, Cimon and Alcibiades, like the accusations against the younger Alcibiades used to justify Hipponikos' divorce from his sister.¹⁸ They do not provide evidence that the Athenians in general disapproved of brother-sister marriage even between paternal half-siblings.

Much of the other contemporary evidence cited for a general disapproval of sibling marriage in Classical Athens relates to a particular context in drama. In the *Clouds* (1371–2), Strepsiades' indignation at his son's moral impropriety in reciting from Euripides' *Aeolus* specifically alludes to uterine sibling marriage:

ὁ δ' εὐθὺς ἦσ' Εὐριπίδου ῥήσιν τιν' ὡς ἐκίνει
ἀδελφός, ὠλεξίκακε, τὴν ὁμομητρίαν ἀδελφήν.

And at once he began one of Euripides' tales, how a brother — God forbid — was screwing his sister of the same mother.

This play, dealing with the union of Aeolus' son and daughter, Macareus and Canace, evidently raised issues which more traditionally-minded Athenians found disturbing (Aristophanes brings it up again in more general terms in *Frogs* 850, 1081), precisely because they lay at the interface between written and unwritten law and popular morality.¹⁹ But this does not tell us how widespread disapproval was, and whether it extended to unions between paternal half-siblings; indeed, Aristophanes' stress on the uterine relationship (Macareus and Canace were of course full siblings) helps to confirm the popular acceptability of marriage between half-siblings on the father's side.

No written law was needed to prohibit parent-child unions at Athens (or, it seems, other Greek cities); the moral repugnance they inspired was enshrined as one of the unwritten laws ordained by the gods.²⁰ In contrast, there was a written law, attributed to Solon, specifically permitting marriage between paternal siblings but prohibiting those of uterine brother and sister. The fact that this written clarification was necessary indicates that some people were practising sibling marriage, and the outcome looks rather like a compromise designed to satisfy the interests of those fathers who wished to consolidate their family line produced from serial marriages while appeasing the moral disapproval of

¹⁷ Plutarch, *Themistocles* 32: οὐκ ὦν ὁμομήτριος. Nepos, *Cimon* 1, defended the legitimacy of Cimon's marriage, but another tradition, traceable back to Eupolis, made them full siblings and incestuous: see J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (1971), 302–3 (cf. Plutarch, *Cimon* 4; [Andocides] 4.33; Athenaeus, *Deipn.* 13.589e).

¹⁸ Lysias 14.28–9; see C. A. Cox, 'Incest, inheritance and the political forum in fifth-century Athens', *CJ* 85 (1989), 34–46, especially 40–1. For David Gribble, the allegations of incest against the elder Alcibiades exploited its association with aristocratic excess, the feminine and barbarian: *Alcibiades and Athens: A Study in Literary Presentation* (1999), 76.

¹⁹ C. Mülke, 'Ποίῳν δὲ κακῶν οὐκ αἰτιός ἐστι; Euripides' *Aiolos* und der Geschwisterinzest im klassischen Athen', *ZPE* 114 (1996), 37–55; cf. K. Dover (ed.), *Aristophanes*, *Frogs* (1993), line 850 commentary, with p. 18. Plato's allusion at *Laws* 838c must also be specifically to this play. The *Aeolus* was not popular reading in Roman Egypt: we have just one papyrus, containing the argument of the play (P.Oxy. XXVII 2457).

²⁰ Plato, *Laws* 838a–839a, Xenophon, *Mem.* 4.4.19–23, discussed by Karabélias, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 236–7. Plato had tightened his views on sexual relationships since *Republic* 461b–c, where he banned all unions of ascendants and descendants, but saw no objection to the marriage of brother and sister (his definition of brother and sister is admittedly so broad that it would be difficult to find marriage partners otherwise). But his condemnation of brother-sister unions in the *Laws* must be seen alongside his rejection also of homosexual and adulterous relationships, which were certainly practised widely in contemporary Athens.

sexual unions of children born from the same womb. Cox, however, doubts that the prohibition on uterine half-sibling marriage should be seen specifically as an incest taboo.²¹ Given the limited circumstances in which paternal half-sibling marriage could occur (the need to have a son and daughter by two different marriages), and the relative paucity of our evidence for Athenian marriage, it is hardly surprising that we know of so few attested cases. But the close analysis of the evidence has, we hope, shown both how strong the evidence is for the existence of the Solonian law, and that there is in fact little sign of moral reservation about marriages which conformed to this law; Euxitheus attracted no odium in the law courts for his grandparents' union.

Philo's assertion that Sparta permitted marriage of uterine half-siblings is not corroborated by any other source, and could be an invention to make up his symmetrical pattern. But our evidence for Spartan marriages is exiguous apart from the royal houses, which produce several cases of other close-kin marriages, notably between uncle and niece and aunt and nephew. And Polybius records that adelphic polyandry, with three, four or even more brothers sharing one wife, was an ancestral and prevalent Spartan custom (12.6b.8). Hodkinson sees all these practices as designed to preserve family inheritances intact.²² Although there is little evidence from other Greek cities, Plutarch makes a general contrast between Greeks and Romans in the formers' preference for endogamy. It thus seems reasonable to follow Modrzejewski in seeing the practice of full brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt as merely the extreme case of a general tendency towards endogamy in the Greek world.²³ It may be significant that not until Diodorus, writing within the orbit of the Roman world, do Classical writers start to remark on the Egyptian practice.²⁴

The marriage of Ptolemy Keraunos to his half-sister Arsinoe would have been legal at Athens. We do not know whether it infringed Macedonian practice, for which our only clear evidence is Pausanias' statement that in falling in love with his full sister Arsinoe, Ptolemy II was in no way acting according to Macedonian customs, but following those of his Egyptian subjects (1.7.1). It is now time to turn to the Egyptian context of this marriage.

III THE ORIGINS OF FULL SIBLING MARRIAGE IN EGYPT

Despite the explicit statements of Diodorus, Philo and Pausanias (and Memnon, *FGrH* 434.8.7, Dio 42.35.4, in addition to the other authors listed by Remijsen and Clarysse), the modern consensus is that marriage between full siblings was not a genuine Egyptian

²¹ C. A. Cox, *Household Interests. Property, Marriage Strategies and Family Dynamics in Ancient Athens* (1998), 116 n. 42; see also her discussion of endogamy among the wider kin-group, 31–7.

²² S. Hodkinson, 'Female property ownership and empowerment in Classical and Hellenistic Sparta', in T. J. Figueira (ed.), *Spartan Society* (2004), 103–36, at 115–16.

²³ *Roman Questions*, 108. J. Modrzejewski, 'Die Geschwisterehe in der hellenistischen Praxis und nach römischem Recht', *ZRG* 81 (1964), 52–82, especially 59–60, particularly his point that, once the Hellenistic legal *koine* had assimilated both paternal and uterine half-sibling marriage, the acceptance of full sibling marriage was a small step; cf. Heubner, 26, Remijsen and Clarysse, 61, and Frandsen, 57. The marriage of Dion of Syracuse's son and daughter (by different mothers; Plutarch, *Dion* 6) and those within the Hekatomid dynasty of Caria (S. Hornblower, *Mausolus* (1982), 358–63) may not reflect the practice of the non-royal populations. But epigraphic evidence provides several apparent non-royal instances: from Lycia, Paphlagonia, perhaps Macedonia (all refs in Bussi, 3), and Tlos (*TAM* II 2, 593; see R. van Bremen, *The Limits of Participation* (1996), 255 n. 63). Van Bremen (*ibid.*, 258) also cites numerous cases of first cousin and other close-kin marriages. See also F. Cumont, 'Les unions entre proches à Doura et chez les Perses', *CRAI* (1924), 53–62, and J. Johnson, *Dura Studies* (1932), II 31.

²⁴ 1.27.1; see below. We cannot, of course, be sure that Polybius never mentioned the custom, since his text is incomplete. One might also expect Herodotus to have listed it among the Egyptian reversals of normal human practice (2.35–6), if brother-sister marriage were already common in fifth-century Egypt, especially in view of his interest in Mambyses' marriages to his two sisters (3.31), but it perhaps did not seem so contrary to Greek and Carian customs. Note, too, its absence from Strabo's discussion of Egyptian customs (17.2.5), a passage which seems to owe more to his literary sources than to his own observation.

tradition. Even in the families of the pharaohs, there are no undisputed instances of marriage between full brother and sister, although consanguineous marriages at times became common, especially in the 18th Dynasty.²⁵ Černý's classic study of the evidence for non-royal families (which includes both private stelae and fragmentary lists of quarrymen's households at Deir el Medina) could find no certain case of full brother-sister marriage throughout the Pharaonic period, and at most six marriages between half-siblings, of which three are very doubtful. It must, however, be remembered that as with the evidence from the Ptolemaic period which we will consider shortly, the names of both parents are rarely preserved.²⁶ Černý's strongest case is the stela of a high priest of Ptah of the 22nd Dynasty (945–715 B.C.), whose parents were both described as offspring of 'the high priest of Me, Takelot'. His remaining two instances each describe a woman as the sister of her husband in stelae from the Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 B.C.), well before this became standard, metaphorical, usage in the reign of Tuthmosis III (1479–1425 B.C.).²⁷

To these few cases, Frandsen adds a handful more: a half-sibling marriage of the Middle Kingdom, a marriage of full siblings in a Deir el Medina family (Dyn. 20), and two successive full sibling marriages in a family of high priests in the Bahriya Oasis (Dyn. 26, 664–525 B.C.).²⁸ But of greater significance is Frandsen's general point that the Egyptian concept *bwt*, which is closely equivalent to our 'taboo', did not cover 'any regulation of sexual practice and marriage among the members of the nuclear family. Simply put, in ancient Egypt, incest is not subsumed into the category of things *bwt* — evil, chaos, things "taboo" — and thus must be assumed to have had a different ontological status in this ancient culture'.²⁹ His book does not go on to pursue what its ontological status may have been, or, indeed, whether the Egyptians can meaningfully be said to have had a concept of 'incest' at all.

Work on Egyptian kinship and its terminology brings out further points which may be relevant. The Egyptian repertoire of terms for kin was unusually restricted, and although they could be combined to express exact relationships ('son's son' etc.), the simple terms commonly have an extended meaning covering several different biological (and marital) relationships, thus:

<i>jt</i>	father, paternal/maternal grandfather, father-in-law (male ascendant)
<i>mwt</i>	mother, mother's mother, mother-in-law (female ascendant)
<i>s3</i>	son, grandson, great-grandson, son-in-law (male descendant)
<i>s3t</i>	daughter, grand-daughter, daughter-in-law (female descendant)
<i>sn</i>	brother, mother's brother, father's brother, father's brother's son, mother's sister's son, brother's son, sister's son, brother-in-law (male collateral); husband (from Dyn. 18)
<i>snt</i>	sister, mother's sister, father's sister, mother's sister's daughter, sister's daughter, brother's daughter, sister-in-law (female collateral); wife (from Dyn. 18)

²⁵ Bryan, *op. cit.* (n. 12), 228, but cf. A. H. Gardiner, *Egypt of the Pharaohs* (1961), 172–3. Since the pharaohs were polygamous, it can be uncertain to us which wife had borne their various offspring.

²⁶ J. Černý, 'Consanguineous marriages in pharaonic Egypt', *JEA* 40 (1954), 23–9. Of 490 marriages recorded on 358 stelae between c. 2160 and c. 1550 B.C., only 4 name both parents of both husband and wife; all are different (thus excluding full sibling marriage); 97 cases name only their mothers, of which 95 exclude full sibling marriage but leave a theoretical possibility of paternal half-sibling marriage. In the remaining two cases, the mothers of both partners have identical, but very common, names, making consanguinity possible but not certain. Of 68 quarrymen's households (22 providing evidence of parentage), 11 give the parentage of both married partners, all different; 10 more name only the fathers, excluding full sibling marriage; in the final instance, the mothers of both partners seem to have the same name, but again are not necessarily the same person (the fathers are certainly different). This detailed summary of Černý's findings has been given to show the difficulty of definitively proving or excluding the occurrence of full sibling marriage even where the evidence seems at first sight extensive.

²⁷ Černý, *op. cit.* (n. 26); one of his Middle Kingdom cases (Berlin 13675) is the same as that identified in G. Robins, 'The relationships specified by Egyptian kinship terms of the Middle and New Kingdoms', *Cd'E* 54 (1979) 197–217, at 205 n. 8; cf. 207 n. 2.

²⁸ Frandsen, 38–9.

²⁹ Frandsen, 9.

These extended meanings could also occur in compounds; thus *sn jt* included both father's brother and father's mother's brother.³⁰ Moreover, as Černý notes, 'Nor did the language feel an urgent need of adding to this stock, and we find the series augmented in Coptic only by the masculine *šōm* and feminine *šōme* for in-laws'.³¹ Thus the Egyptian language of the Ptolemaic and Roman periods continued to employ an unusually small range of kinship vocabulary, which did not necessarily distinguish, for instance, brothers from uncles or sisters from first cousins. This suggests the absence of a sharp conceptual boundary, which may have facilitated the move from marrying cousins to marrying siblings.

Černý connects the restricted kinship terminology with the practice of married couples forming a new household rather than living in either parental home, again citing the Deir el Medina household lists for the predominance of nuclear families. While this isolated community of craftsmen building the royal tombs may not be entirely typical, and other evidence indicates a broader perception of the family unit, it offers a pertinent parallel to the later Ptolemaic and Roman census data discussed below.³²

From ninety-two Egyptian marriage documents (spanning the ninth century B.C. to the first century A.D., but mostly Ptolemaic), Pestman identified only one likely consanguineous marriage, of paternal half-siblings; there are, however, other possible instances.³³ Paradoxically, marriage documents may under-represent the actual extent of sibling marriages; during the Roman period, their incidence in both marriage and divorce documents is markedly less than in both the census and *epikrisis* records.³⁴ The fact is that the existing evidence does not allow us either to prove or to disprove that full sibling marriage was practised in pre-Ptolemaic Egypt, and likewise that half-sibling marriages were more than extremely rare, and we should remain agnostic.

Since he is the earliest extant Classical writer to mention brother-sister marriage, as a practice ordained by Egyptian law and contrary to normal human custom, Diodorus' testimony and its possible origin deserve particular scrutiny. Scholars agree that, apart from a few eye-witness touches taken from his visit in 59 B.C., his account of Egypt is based closely

³⁰ This list is adapted from Robins, *op. cit.* (n. 27), 204 in light of L. Meskell, *Private Life in New Kingdom Egypt* (2002), 54–5, which is based on a wider range of studies.

³¹ J. Černý, 'A note on the ancient Egyptian family', in *Studi in onore di Aristide Calderini e Roberto Paribeni II* (1957), 51–5, at 52: the terms, covering both father- and son-in-law, and both mother- and daughter-in-law respectively, already existed in the Middle Kingdom (*š(3)m* and *š(3)mt*), see Robins, *op. cit.* (n. 27), 209, but were extremely rare. The words *s3* and *s3t* were gradually superseded in Later Egyptian by new words with the same sense (Coptic *šēre* and *šēere*).

³² Černý, *op. cit.* (n. 31), 53. The fragmentary household list is still not published, but sections are discussed and translated in A. G. McDowell, *Village Life in Ancient Egypt: Laundry Lists and Love Songs* (1999), 51–2. See also Meskell, *op. cit.* (n. 30), 52–5 for larger family groups.

³³ P. W. Pestman, *Marriage and Matrimonial Property in Ancient Egypt: a Contribution to Establishing the Legal Position of the Woman* (1961), 3–4; P.Or.Inst. 17481 (now = P.Chic.Haw. 1, 365/4 B.C.); see also our Appendix below, items ii (with E. Cruz-Urbe, 'A 30th Dynasty document of renunciation from Edfu', *Enchoria* 13 (1985), 41–9, at 48–9), iv and viii. We must discount P.Hamburg dem. 7 (item vii), cited by Modrzejewski, *op. cit.* (n. 23), 56 n. 9 (based on Erichsen's preliminary translation which made the husband's parents full siblings, and the divorcing pair first cousins). Although the full publication in P.Haw.Lüddeckens 13 gives the husband's filiation in lines 5–6 as identical to his wife's (11–12), this is clearly a scribal error; other texts confirm that they were second cousins, see B. Muhs, 'Fractions of houses in Ptolemaic Hawara', in S. Lippert and M. Schentuleit (eds), *Graeco-Roman Fayum — Texts and Archaeology* (2008), 187–97, especially 194.

³⁴ U. Yiftach-Firanko, *Marriage and Marital Arrangements: A History of the Greek Marriage Document in Egypt. 4th century BCE–4th century CE* (2003), 98–102: written marriage documents were not essential for a valid marriage, but were drawn up (often many years after the couple began living as man and wife) when thought necessary to secure the financial or other material arrangements. Close-kin marriages could more frequently dispense with documentation, because family peer pressure provided effective security. While siblings comprise 22.5 per cent of marriages in the Arsinoite census returns, they are less than 4 per cent among the Roman Arsinoite marriage documents (2 of 56; or less than 6 per cent including a further half-sibling marriage): *ibid.*, 99; even adding the restored M.Chr. 312 = CPR I 28, the proportion is only 7.1 per cent. These four Arsinoite cases are the only brother-sister marriages among 106 marriage documents from Roman Egypt as a whole listed by Yiftach-Firanko (*ibid.*, 26; under 5 per cent). Divorce: one sibling marriage in twenty divorce documents from Roman Egypt (to c. A.D. 212) listed by Yiftach-Firanko, *ibid.*, 35 n. 41. For the *epikrisis* records, see n. 62 below.

on earlier writers, especially Hecataeus of Abdera, although they differ about the scale of his reliance on this one author and on how far Diodorus has manipulated his source material.³⁵ Huebner attributes Diodorus' statement about brother-sister marriage to Hecataeus and Manetho: 'It is thus not going too far to assume that these court historians sought historical cover for the incestuous dynastic marriage of Ptolemy II and his full sister Arsinoe II, an act known to have scandalized the Greek world, by seeking refuge in an ancient Egyptian "law" permitting brother-sister marriage.'³⁶ Hecataeus can be dismissed on this point; it is unlikely that he wrote late enough to reflect the response to Ptolemy and Arsinoe's marriage c. 278 B.C., and in any case, he is not regarded as the source for this particular section of Diodorus' account (26.6–27.6).³⁷ Manetho would fit the chronology better, and has already been suggested as the source, perhaps indirect, of ch. 26.³⁸ At any rate, the source for 27.1–2 was someone interested in Egyptian law, and specifically marriage law (it refers to the terms of Egyptian marriage contracts), which Diodorus seems to have patchworked into material drawn from praises of Isis.³⁹

Just how deeply Ptolemy's marriage to his full sister scandalized the Greek world is unclear, since Sotades' jibe is our only contemporary evidence.⁴⁰ Other poets leapt in with a positive 'spin', likening the marriage to the divine union of Zeus and Hera (Theocritus 17.128–34; cf. Herodas 1.30), and any opposition quickly died down, partly at least because of the widespread affection which the charismatic Arsinoe inspired.⁴¹ The deification of the couple (in 272/1 B.C., while both were still alive) with the title *Theoi Adelfhoi* evoked the exemplary marriage of the Egyptian divine pair Isis and Osiris, rooting the dynasty in Egyptian tradition through a myth also familiar to the Greeks.⁴² By the next reign, the union of royal siblings had become such a lynchpin of Ptolemaic monarchy that Ptolemy III's wife Berenice II was represented as his sister even though merely his half-cousin (his biological sister Berenice had been married off to Antiochus II).⁴³ The marriage of Ptolemy IV and his sister, the first sibling marriage in the dynasty to produce a child, provoked no recorded disapproval, even from the hostile Polybius; similarly, the marriage to his sister is not one of the charges levelled against the odious Ptolemy Physcon (Euergetes II).⁴⁴

But it was not only their royal and divine status that reconciled public opinion to the Ptolemies' incestuous marriages. There are many cross-cultural parallels for the practice of incest within royal or noble families, serving to elevate and differentiate them from

³⁵ The extremes are represented by O. Murray, 'Hecataeus of Abdera and Pharaonic kingship', *JEA* 56 (1970), 141–71, and A. Burton, *Diodorus Siculus I: A Commentary* (1972), 1–34.

³⁶ Huebner, 24; cf. Remijnsen and Clarysse's argument against her case here, 55.

³⁷ Murray, op. cit. (n. 35), 146, with 149 n. 3; cf. Jacoby, *FGH* 264 F25. The evidence clearly places Hecataeus' work in the reign of Ptolemy I, and probably before the end of the fourth century: see S. A. Stephens, *Seeing Double: Intercultural Poetics in Ptolemaic Alexandria* (2003), 32, with further references.

³⁸ Burton, op. cit. (n. 35), 18.

³⁹ cf. Burton, op. cit. (n. 35), comm. ad loc.; but she offers no opinion on 27.1–2.

⁴⁰ Against the assumption that Sotades represented a more widespread Greek abhorrence, see E. D. Carney, 'The reappearance of royal sibling marriage in Ptolemaic Egypt', *Parola del Passato* 42 (1987), 420–39, at 428–9, and G. Weber, 'The Hellenistic rulers and their poets: silencing dangerous critics', *Anc. Soc.* 29 (1998/9), 147–74, especially 165.

⁴¹ Fraser, op. cit. (n. 15), 117–18. The lack of offspring from this marriage is unsurprising, and need not reflect any worry about consummating the incestuous union: Arsinoe was already aged about forty at the time of the marriage (eight years older than her brother). Further, Ptolemy already had three sons and a daughter by his first wife, Arsinoe I (who were now adopted by their step-mother), and would not want his chosen heir to face a contested succession as his own had been (on which see G. Hölbl, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire* (2001), 36).

⁴² Hölbl, op. cit. (n. 41), 112.

⁴³ See e.g. I.Herm.Mag. 1; I.Philae I 2.

⁴⁴ Ager, op. cit. (n. 9), 26. As she notes, it was Ptolemy IV's extra-marital liaisons, not his marriage, which aroused criticism. Ager's connection of sibling marriage with the motif of *truphe* (opulence) in the projection of the dynasty makes good sense (*ibid.*, 22–7).

ordinary people.⁴⁵ It is therefore very striking that Diodorus, Philo and other Classical sources present Egyptian brother-sister marriage not as the exclusive prerogative of the royal house, but a practice sanctioned by law for the Egyptian people as a whole.⁴⁶ Further, as Remijsen and Clarysse have already pointed out, the fact that the Roman governors of Egypt were willing to condone a practice so contrary to their own laws on incest suggests that they found brother-sister marriage explicitly sanctioned by law, not merely by custom.⁴⁷ The obvious context for such a law is Ptolemy Philadelphos' marriage to his full sister. To deflect potential hostility by making all his subjects complicit in his uncustomary marriage, it seems that Ptolemy issued a *prostagma* making such marriages legal for the whole population, including both Greeks and Egyptians of the *chora* and the citizen body of Alexandria (and presumably also the other Greek cities, Naukratis and Ptolemais).⁴⁸

But this still does not explain Diodorus' and Philo's explicit references to the promulgation of an Egyptian lawgiver, unless the Ptolemaic royal law was itself presented as having an Egyptian precedent. Despite the doubts of Remijsen and Clarysse⁴⁹ that a precedent in Egyptian law could effectively justify the marriage to Greek opinion, the evidence seems clear that this was how the Ptolemaic law was publicised. There were certainly manuals of Egyptian law available in the reign of Philadelphos, of which the best known is the so-called 'Demotic Legal Code of Hermopolis West'; this was translated into Greek in the early Ptolemaic period, although the only extant copy dates from the second century A.D. (P.Oxy. XLVI 3285).⁵⁰ In the same way as they assisted in the development of the cult of Sarapis and the projection of the new dynasty in iconography, ritual and text, the king's Egyptian advisers (men just such as Manetho) could be relied upon to produce something from their legal books amenable to the desired interpretation, perhaps simply repackaging the absence of any prohibition of incestuous marriage as a positive approbation of its practice.

However strong the current scholarly consensus against there being any actual pre-Ptolemaic Egyptian precedent for full brother-sister marriage, what matters here is less the actual practice of Pharaonic Egypt, than what was believed to be traditional Egyptian practice by Ptolemy's contemporaries and by subsequent generations (though perhaps we should not be too confident that our information is better than theirs). It also seems clear that the Egyptians held no strong revulsion against marriage within the immediate family,

⁴⁵ cf. Hopkins, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 307: 'by its open violation of a taboo, it heightens the royal family's status and reinforces the taboo observed by the common folk'. The 18th Dynasty royal marriages fit this pattern; see nn. 12 and 25 above.

⁴⁶ cf. Remijsen and Clarysse, 55, against Huebner, 23.

⁴⁷ Remijsen and Clarysse, 55–6, referring to *Gnomon of the Idios Logos* #23: 'It is not permitted to Romans to marry their sisters or their aunts (*tethidas*), but marriage with their siblings' daughters has been conceded. Pardalas, however, confiscated the property of siblings who married.' The *Gnomon* goes back to Augustus, with subsequent additions and alterations (see *Preamble*), and classifies the population into Romans, Alexandrians or *astoi/astai* (citizens of all the Greek *poleis* of Egypt, including Alexandria), and *Aiguptioi* (everyone else, including the hellenized élites of the *chora*), all of whom except Romans could therefore legitimately marry their sisters (the *Gnomon* does not concern itself with the Jewish population, who were prohibited from endogamy by their own law). A. K. Strong, 'Incest laws and absent taboos in Roman Egypt', *AHB* 19 (2005), 31–41, at 37 suggests that Pardalas' penalty did not make incestuous marriages between Roman citizens in Egypt invalid (the standard penalty in Roman law; Gaius, *Inst.* 1.64); but his penalty of confiscation may have been additional to invalidating the marriage. For corroborative evidence that Alexandrian law permitted full sibling marriage, see especially P.Oxy. III 477.

⁴⁸ cf. P.Fay. 22, a very fragmentary copy of Ptolemaic royal laws on marriage.

⁴⁹ Remijsen and Clarysse, 55.

⁵⁰ G. Mattha and G. Hughes, *The Demotic Legal Code of Hermopolis West* (1975), with improved edition by K. Donker van Heel, *The Legal Manual of Hermopolis [P. Mattha]: Text and Translation* (1990). On the probable date of the Greek translation, see M. Depauw, *A Companion to Demotic Studies* (1997), 113–14. For other copies of Egyptian legal manuals, see S. L. Lippert, *Ein demotisches juristisches Lehrbuch* (2004), especially 147–73, and eadem, 'Fragmente demotischer juristischer Bücher (pBerlin 23890 a-b, d-g rto und pCarlsberg 628)', in F. Hoffmann and H. J. Thissen (eds), *Res Severa rerum gaudium: Festschrift für Karl-Theodor Zauzich zum 65. Geburtstag am 8 Juni 2004* (2004), 389–405.

even if they rarely put it into practice. It is best to remain open between the three possibilities: (i) that by the start of the Ptolemaic period, the Egyptians practised brother-sister marriage more widely than our evidence has so far revealed, (ii) that Ptolemy and his advisers genuinely but incorrectly believed that the practice had been ordained by an earlier lawgiver, or (iii) that the precedent was consciously invented and publicised to justify Ptolemy's marriage. Ptolemy would not be the only ruler in history to invent a convenient precedent for his actions.

But it does seem certain that there was a Ptolemaic royal law permitting full brother-sister marriage, which was generally believed to derive from earlier Egyptian law and practice. This, added to the precedent set by the royal house, the familiarity with half-sibling and other close-kin marriages elsewhere in the Greek world, and the fact that it was not regarded as *bwt* by the Egyptians, was surely sufficient to dispel whatever moral scruples people may have felt about adopting the practice.⁵¹

Still, Ptolemy's subjects appear to have been slow to avail themselves of the opportunity afforded by the law. Among the 814 married couples attested in the early Ptolemaic census lists, none are very likely to be even half-siblings, although the pattern of nomenclature suggests that marriage within the wider family was common among the Egyptian population, as shown also by Egyptian private archives of the period, which again provide only a couple of dubious half-siblings (see Appendix).⁵² The wealth of detailed genealogical information in these archives is certainly sufficient to exclude the widespread practice of brother-sister marriage among these Ptolemaic communities, many of them mortuary or other low-grade priests.

The first convincing case is a late second-century letter by one Dionysius to a banker about a tax payment for Euterpe daughter of Dionysius, 'my sister and wife'.⁵³ A first-century Greek contract supplies another doubtful case, and marriages of half-siblings may be attested by two late Ptolemaic Egyptian texts.⁵⁴ An Egyptian story surviving in a late Ptolemaic manuscript also suggests that people were pondering the pros and cons of brother-sister marriage, especially between an only son and daughter.⁵⁵ These few

⁵¹ It should also be borne in mind that close-kin marriages of only one or two degrees less proximity (uncle-niece, first cousins) have been widely practised in human societies, despite their potential biological risks. Furthermore, it is now acknowledged that sexual relationships between family members occur quite commonly even where they are illegal, and may escape notice unless identified as involving child abuse; see D. Willner, 'Definition and violation: incest and the incest taboos', *Man* n.s.18 (1983), 134–59. She cites a study which found 'twenty sibling pairs discovered living as husband and wife in one state of the United States and, furthermore, raising children and keeping to a middle-class life style. One couple were children of a previous sibling pair' (*ibid.*, 140). This example seems to provide a close parallel for the practice of Roman Egypt, differing only in the fact that the American couples were breaking the law.

⁵² W. Clarysse and D. J. Thompson, *Counting the People in Hellenistic Egypt* (2006), vol. II, 332, citing the Hawara Embalmers' archives as a parallel; cf. Muhs, *op. cit.* (n. 33). For other archives, see Depauw, *op. cit.* (n. 50), 155–8, B. Muhs, 'The girls next door. Marriage patterns among the mortuary priests in early Ptolemaic Thebes', *JJP* 35 (2005), 169–94.

⁵³ P. Tebt. III.1 766 (c. 136 B.C.); Dionysius (named after his father?) was not certainly Euterpe's full brother. Two other cases are very doubtful: a fragmentary marriage contract may refer to a niece, not sister (SB XII 11053, 267? B.C.), and in P. Grenf. II 26 (103 B.C.), the wife and sister may be distinct people.

⁵⁴ BGU VIII 1731 line 13 (the reading of the whole line is quite doubtful); Lüddeckens, no. 10D (P. Bibl. Nat. 224: 68 B.C.); BM stela 184; see D. J. Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies* (1988), 141 (this case in the family of the High Priests of Ptah is secure, since the genealogy is well-documented); also possibly the earlier P. Hausw.² 14 = Lüddeckens no. 26.

⁵⁵ From the first Setne story (P. Cairo 30646), translated by W. J. Tait in J. Rowlandson (ed.), *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook* (1998), 334: 'Pharaoh said "Ahwere, was it you who had them come to me on this foolish errand, asking to marry [Naneferkaptah your] elder brother?" I said to him "Let me marry the son of a general, and let him too marry the daughter of another general, so that our family will increase". I laughed, and Pharaoh laughed [...] Pharaoh said "Steward, let Ahwere be taken to the house of Naneferkaptah tonight, and let absolutely everything splendid be taken with her". I was taken as a wife to the house of Naneferkaptah [...] Pharaoh had gifts of silver and of gold brought to me, and all the royal household had (gifts) brought to me. He slept with me that night, and he found me [...], and he did not [...] me ever again, and each of us loved the other.'

swallows do not make an entire summer, but they at least indicate that brother-sister marriage among the population of Egypt was not a phenomenon entirely confined to the Roman period. The fact that the Romans made no attempt to stamp it out, as they did for any Egyptians who acquired Roman citizenship (which meant the whole population after A.D. 212), may also suggest that they found the practice more prevalent than appears from our surviving evidence.

Huebner is entirely right to stress that the expansion of evidence for brother-sister marriage in the Roman period is largely the result of new types of documentation, and need not accurately reflect the real spread of the practice. Nevertheless, there are grounds for thinking that the practice did actually spread; and even that (very paradoxically, given Roman views on incest) Roman policies played a substantial part in encouraging this spread, for both socio-economic and cultural reasons. Firstly, the Roman emphasis on status distinctions and on private inherited property prompted families to use every legal means at their disposal to consolidate and perpetuate their wealth, and endogamy formed part of the available armoury of devices to achieve this aim. Secondly, the Roman dispensation for Egyptians to practise a form of endogamy legally prohibited to others made brother-sister marriage a means by which Egyptians could assert a distinctive identity within the Babel of the Roman Empire. Our modern preoccupation with the negative connotations of Egypt in Classical, especially Latin, literature makes it easy to under-estimate the extent to which Egyptians might actually be proud of their heritage, and wish to perpetuate what they believed to be its traditional customs. And the more the rest of the Greco-Roman world grew fascinated by Egypt's bizarre customs, the more central these became to Egyptian identity. But before filling out these themes in detail, we need first to reconsider some features of the papyrological evidence.

IV THE PROFILE OF CENSUS, *EPIKRISIS* AND OTHER EVIDENCE FROM THE ROMAN PERIOD

The census returns, as previous scholars such as Bagnall and Frier or Scheidel have already stressed, are a very small sample of evidence, and one that is neither random nor fully representative. The publication of archives or composite rolls has created 'hot-spots' or concentrations of texts which distort the randomness of the overall picture, despite their value in providing evidence for parts of Egypt that are not otherwise well-documented, notably the Apollonopolite Heptakomia in Middle Egypt and the Prosopite nome in the south-western Delta.⁵⁶ In other respects, too, there are significant differences of detail between the profile of the census returns and of papyrus survival (or rather publication) more generally. In particular, even though Oxyrhynchus is the second largest source of census returns, with forty-five cases (thirty containing household data), this is an under-representation compared to the overall evidence from Oxyrhynchus over the first three centuries A.D.⁵⁷ Further, many of the Oxyrhynchite returns are fragmentary or otherwise of poor quality, including many of the twelve in the A.D. 131 group written on a single roll

⁵⁶ There are four main clusters (listed in Bagnall and Frier, 8 n. 19, with Supp. 2006): 10 declarations from Tanyaitis (Apoll. Hept.) for A.D. 117, from the papers of Apollonios the strategos; the Brussels roll with 18 Prosopite declarations for the A.D. 173 census, including 16 from the village of Thelbonthon Siphtha; PSI I 53, with 12 Oxyrhynchus returns for A.D. 131 (many fragmentary); and a group from Arsinoe for A.D. 187, with 15 cases (i.e., 54 of 333 in total: 300 in Bagnall and Frier, 8, plus those added on 309–12, and on 314–23 of the 2006 edition). The 63 households from Lykopolis can be considered a further cluster: R. S. Bagnall, B. W. Frier and I. C. Rutherford, *The Census Register P.Oxy. 984: The Reverse of Pindar's Paeans* (1997).

⁵⁷ W. Habermann, 'Zur chronologischen Verteilung der papyrologischen Zeugnisse', *ZPE* 122 (1998), 144–60 (figs 1 and 3, 147–8; the latter does not give the exact number of texts), gives approximate totals of 7,500 Arsinoite and 2,800 Oxyrhynchite published documents from a grand total of 16,793 documents over the first three centuries A.D., that is, 44.7 per cent and 16.7 per cent respectively. For the census returns, the corresponding percentages are 61.3 and 15.0 (184 and 45 of 300: Bagnall and Frier, 8 table 1.2; later additions do not significantly affect the proportions). Thus the Oxyrhynchite nome is under-represented, and the Arsinoite vastly over-represented.

(PSI I 53). This is sufficient to explain why at most one possible sibling marriage appears in the Oxyrhynchus returns, whereas other types of evidence clearly attest the practice there.⁵⁸ Conversely, the preponderance of Arsinoite evidence among the census returns (over 60 per cent of the total) exceeds the general rate of papyrus survival from this nome, and this is even more true of the Arsinoite metropolis itself.⁵⁹ This may contribute to over-representation of the frequency of brother-sister marriage in this area, although it cannot be the whole explanation.⁶⁰

The Arsinoite evidence requires further comment. Scheidel has shown that in the census returns from Arsinoe, the incidence of brother-sister marriage is almost the maximum theoretically possible, given the demographic parameters and the social norm that a younger brother only very exceptionally married an older sister.⁶¹ The data set is admittedly not large (forty-nine marriages, of which 34.7% are between siblings; all from the second century A.D.), but if it comes anywhere near to the actual incidence, it would remarkably, as Scheidel points out, suggest that at this period, sibling marriage became the rule where possible for the population of Arsinoe. Is this plausible? While counter-examples of exogamous marriages from Arsinoe are easily found in other kinds of document, the proportion of consanguinous marriages in *epikrisis* returns is not out of line with the census data.⁶² We must remember that the sibling marriages were a conscious choice (of the partners themselves, their parents, or probably both together), in which personal preference as well as other considerations all played a part.⁶³ Nevertheless, there seems no reason to doubt that for at least a century, sibling marriage became extremely fashionable in the Arsinoite metropolis, perhaps encouraged by the historical connection of the city and its nome with the endogamous Ptolemies, and particularly with Arsinoe Philadelphos. And even if the actual incidence of sibling marriage has been exaggerated somewhat in the census returns through the 'tidying up' of family relationships, this still suggests a positive approval of the practice both among the local population and the officials who received the information.

Scheidel has also taken issue with Bagnall and Frier's suggestion that the evidence for brother-sister marriage is consistent with its spread during the early Roman Empire from north to south in Egypt, and out from the metropoleis to the villages.⁶⁴ While Scheidel seems right that the evidence is inadequate to support the hypothesis of a progressive spread from north to south, or metropolis to village, some cautious observations on the distribution of the evidence are not unreasonable, even if they 'rest on shaky statistical foundations'.⁶⁵ Documents other than census returns provide valuable extra information for this, particularly the *epikrisis* returns, which attest twelve brother-sister marriages in nine documents; birth declarations and a notification of an error in the records add a further five instances (see Appendix, section C). These conclusively confirm that sibling marriage was practised not only among the urban élites (the gymnasial class and payers of reduced poll-tax) of the Nile valley nome capitals Oxyrhynchus and Hermopolis, but also

⁵⁸ 75-Ox-I: see Bagnall and Frier, 130 n. 71.

⁵⁹ Bagnall and Frier, 6.

⁶⁰ cf. Bagnall and Frier, 50.

⁶¹ W. Scheidel, 'Incest revisited: Three notes on the demography of sibling marriage in Roman Egypt', *BASP* 32 (1995), 143–55, at 143–50. Subsequent publications do not significantly alter the proportions.

⁶² Of eleven usable *epikrisis* returns (i.e. omitting slaves, Romans, and fragmentary cases), three include brother-sister marriages: P.Ryl. II 103, P.Tebt. II 320 (two instances), SB XII 10890 (the other returns are: BGU I 109, P.Ryl. II 279, P.Grenf. II 49 (could be cousins, or half-siblings), P.Gen.² I 19, SB XXII 15212, P.Gen.² I 18, SB XIV 11270, CPR XV 23). Counter-examples include: BGU I 252, CPR I 24 (marriage documents), SB VIII 9470 (divorce), P.Fam.Tebt. *passim* (only the first records the couples' relative ages).

⁶³ Thus in PSI X 1115 (from Tebtunis), 27-year-old Tephorsais married her 20-year-old brother Kronios, not her elder brother Sarapammon. cf. Scheidel, *op. cit.* (n. 61), 149.

⁶⁴ Bagnall and Frier, 130; Scheidel, *op. cit.* (n. 61), 153–5.

⁶⁵ Scheidel, *op. cit.* (n. 61), 153; his dismissal of the non-census evidence (*ibid.*, 154: 'there would be little point in throwing in the small number of (often ambiguous) references to sibling marriage from papyri which are not census returns ...') is too pessimistic: historians must make do with whatever evidence is available.

by the citizen body of Alexandria. They also confirm the census evidence in showing that the practice extended to the élite group of *katoikoi* in the Arsinoite nome (the equivalent of the gymnasial class elsewhere).⁶⁶ The extensive non-census evidence (Appendix, sections C and D) also provides instances stretching back to the first half of the first century A.D., demonstrating that even if the practice was at its most popular in the second century, it had antecedents earlier in the Roman period. And although one must of course be cautious in extrapolating from the increase of evidence to an actual spread of the practice, the overwhelming concentration of evidence in the second century, far exceeding the increase in general papyrological documentation from first to second century, surely does suggest a chronological development peaking in the second century, and ending abruptly when the *Constitutio Antoniniana* made it illegal.

Taken together, the evidence seems to justify the following generalizations about the geographical incidence of sibling marriage during its second-century heyday.⁶⁷ Firstly, the practice was particularly prevalent in the Arsinoite nome, and especially in Arsinoe itself, perhaps for the reason given above. However, while the incidence in census returns for Arsinoite villages is less than half that for the metropolis, this balance is reversed in other types of document (bearing in mind that *epikrisis* returns by definition are biased towards the metropolis).⁶⁸ It is unjustified, therefore, to hypothesize any significant overall difference in incidence between the villages and metropolis of this nome. Secondly, sufficient evidence (mostly non-census) survives from the Heptanomia (the northern Nile valley nomes) to suggest that sibling marriage was more than exceptional in this area. Given the vast documentation from Oxyrhynchus, the small smattering of cases from that town might indicate that the practice was less prevalent there than in the Arsinoite nome; but this could have more to do with the types of text surviving from the two areas. The fact that, except for one census return from the Herakleopolite village of Machor, all cases from the Heptanomia are urban is likely to be a product of the overwhelmingly urban origin of the evidence from this region. We should be extremely cautious about suggesting any significant overall divergence between town and village in the relative popularity of consanguinous marriage.

Thirdly, although the Delta (including Alexandria) produces rather more evidence than might be expected given its generally poor documentation, this yields frustratingly ambiguous results. The Prosopite nome, attesting at least two and up to five sibling unions among twenty-four current and former marriages, is situated in the south-western corner of the Delta, and thus might in principle reflect the spread of the practice from the Fayum and Nile valley rather than the situation in the Delta as a whole.⁶⁹ The example from the Athribite nome (in the south-east Delta) and two Alexandrian cases at least show that the Prosopite village of Thelbonthon Siphtha was not a totally exceptional enclave of endogamy in the Delta region, but it would be very rash to extrapolate from these isolated cases

⁶⁶ Some scholars have stressed the advantage of brother-sister marriage in demonstrating the required ancestry to maintain these restricted statuses: M. Hombert and C. Préaux, 'Les mariages consanguins dans l'Égypte romaine', in *Hommages à Joseph Bidez et à Franz Cumont* (1949), 140; J. Modrzejewski, 'Entre la cité et le fisc: Le statut grec dans l'Égypte romaine', in *Symposion 1982. Actes du V^e Colloque international d'histoire de droit grec et hellénistique* (Santander, 1-4 septembre 1982), (1985), 275-6 (reprinted in his *Droit impérial et traditions locales* (1990), ch. 1); Bussi, 19; Frandsen, 55. But this does not explain why the practice also extended to non-élite families.

⁶⁷ See the Appendix for details of the evidence.

⁶⁸ There are, however, some *epikrisis* (and birth) declarations for village priests, none attesting consanguinous marriage: C. A. Nelson, *Status Declarations in Roman Egypt* (1979), 60-1.

⁶⁹ Bagnall and Frier, 130 n. 74 (but 131-Pr-1 records four, not three, current marriages, all non-kin). All sibling marriages are from one village, Thelbonthon Siphtha. Scheidel, *op. cit.* (n. 61), 153 n. 26, cites 25 per cent siblings among twelve Prosopite couples; but the twelve current marriages include only two pairs of siblings. We count two secure sibling unions among thirteen current marriages (including 173-Pr-15, like Bagnall and Frier, although Areia is not described as a wife), plus two likely and one possible sibling unions in eleven probable former marriages (for which see Appendix section E).

to the whole Delta.⁷⁰ Yet it would make a big difference to our understanding of the phenomenon (and of the reaction of outside observers to it) to know whether brother-sister marriage was rare or common throughout this region.

Finally, although papyrological documentation from the Thebaid is not as good for the Roman period as earlier, the complete absence of any secure cases of sibling marriage there surely suggests that the practice was rarer here than further north. While the absence of cases from the ten Apollonopolite A.D. 117 census returns could easily be chance, more telling is the Upper Egyptian census register of A.D. 89/90, which attests at most one dubious instance from sixty-three households (thirty-six effectively complete).⁷¹ Thus, although it exceeds the evidence to speak of a progressive spread from north to south, it seems more justified to hypothesize a regional divergence, roughly coinciding with the administrative boundary between the Thebaid and the Heptanomia at the south of the Hermopolite nome.

Any explanation for brother-sister marriage must take account not only of its geographical spread but also of the fact that its incidence spans all social classes and sections of the population, except, of course, Roman citizens and Jews, for whom it was prohibited. This precludes both Shaw's argument that the practice stemmed from the colonial racism of the Greek settlers and the opposite view that it was predominantly confined to the more Egyptian families.⁷² Our evidence includes priests, both from the privileged metropolite class of Oxyrhynchus and the remote and very Egyptian village of Soknopaiou Nesos.⁷³ A case from Karanis, a large village favoured by veterans, occurs in a household with military connections.⁷⁴ As we have seen, there are gymnasial families from the social élite, but not all the urban residents should be regarded as wealthy: several were not house-owners, but rented or lodged in the house they occupied, or are recorded with manual occupations such as donkey-drivers, (tenant) farmers, and weavers.⁷⁵ Conversely, village residents could own land on a significant scale, and have the influence to pursue a legal dispute before the imperial procurator.⁷⁶ Thus the supposed distinction between metropoleis and villages in the incidence of sibling marriage, as well as being statistically dubious, breaks down as an indicator of relative wealth, social standing, and to a degree even of Hellenic as opposed to Egyptian culture. The motivation for undertaking brother-sister marriage was something shared by families from very different social and economic conditions across much, if not all, of northern Egypt.

Before moving towards an explanation, two further features of the evidence deserve attention. First is the tendency to run in families. Of the twenty-four families in the census

⁷⁰ Athribite: SPP XXII 60 (found at Soknopaiou Nesos); Alexandria: P.Oxy. III 477, I.Alex. 66 (the dubious BGU IV 1126, 9 B.C., might be another case, if the reference had been erased because the writer was unsure whether sibling marriage had become illegal at the start of Roman rule).

⁷¹ Bagnall, Frier and Rutherford, *op. cit.* (n. 56), especially 108; originally attributed to Ptolemais, but now thought more likely from Lykopolis (Asyut). It should, however, be remembered that few sibling marriages are attested even further north before the end of the first century A.D.

⁷² Shaw, *op. cit.* (n. 14); Frandsen (52–9) seems curiously drawn to Shaw's view. The incentive towards endogamy among the Hellenized élite families is in any case less likely to stem from racist mentality than the strict rules of heredity required for the élite classes under Roman rule: see n. 66 above.

⁷³ P.Oxy. LXVII 4584; P.Amh. II 74; P.Flor. III 301. Bussi, 17–18 also stresses the social diversity of those practising brother-sister marriage.

⁷⁴ BGU II 447 (173-Ar-9); the exact relationship between the two soldiers mentioned and the declarant's family is obscure. There are other possible cases where illicit consanguineous marriages in military or other Roman families may be concealed; see Appendix section F, especially P.Mich. VIII 465–6.

⁷⁵ Renters: P.Lond. II 476a (103-Ar-5), P.Corn. 16 (117-Ar-1/131-Ar-3; both same individuals), P.Lips. II 144 (salt-merchant), P.Tebt. II 322 (187-Ar-22, donkey-drivers); lodgers: PSI IX 1062 (103-Ar-1); farmers: BGU I 117 (187-Ar-8); linen-weaver: BGU I 128ii (187-Ar-16, probable siblings).

⁷⁶ P.Tebt. II 317: Thenheraklia's elder brother/husband Herakleus owned at least 38 arouras, subject to a legal dispute which they anticipated might be held before the strategos, epistrategos, or imperial procurator. Although described as 'from the village of Tebtunis', it seems she had links with Alexandria, and addressed her application to one of the chief officials of Alexandria.

returns practising sibling marriage, at least seven (eight if we include 173-Pr-10) attest more than one case, most commonly in two successive generations, although once both sets of parents of an unrelated married couple were recorded as siblings (145-Ar-23). In the most extreme case, a large complex household totalling twenty-seven individuals included four sibling married couples: the parents, two of their children (they had a further four sons and two daughters, of whom only one son was married, exogamously), a co-resident nephew and niece, and two lodgers (187-Ar-4). The *epikrisis* returns notably record a gymnasia family of Hermopolis practising sibling marriage over three successive generations, starting in the mid-first century, plus a further instance (from Arsinoe) of two generations.⁷⁷ This tendency for families to repeat endogamous marriages shows clearly that they had produced no obvious birth defects, nor had they found any other reason to regret marrying a sibling.⁷⁸ On the contrary, the successful marriage of sibling parents would provide a role model for their children, encouraging the practice to persist and spread.

The second point is the tendency for sibling marriages to occur in relatively large families. This has already been noted by Remijsen and Clarysse as telling against Huebner's hypothesis that the married 'siblings' were actually adopted, normally to provide heirs in the absence of natural heirs. Remijsen and Clarysse show that a large majority of brother-sister marriages in the census returns (fourteen out of nineteen) occur in families with at least one son other than the one married to a sibling, mostly with two or more. The average size of endogamous families is over four (2.53 sons and 1.63 daughters: these are minima, counting only those offspring still resident in the family home), and the same pattern is found in the other kinds of evidence.⁷⁹ Our explanation for endogamy must take account of this tendency for it to be chosen by families with many rather than few offspring. One recalls here the considerations of Pharaoh in the fictional Setne story, who preferred to marry his only son and daughter into other important families, 'so that our family will increase'.⁸⁰ The families who chose consanguineous marriage tended also to have further offspring who could extend the family group by marrying outside.

It is notable that marriage to close kin other than full or half-siblings is relatively rare in the census returns; only two marriages are documented between first cousins.⁸¹ The large household mentioned above as attesting four brother-sister marriages included two pairs of co-resident cousins well-suited in age to marry one another, but they had not done so.⁸² It thus seems that in the Roman period, marriage of brother and sister essentially replaced, rather than supplemented, marriages within the wider circle of relatives, which had been common earlier in Egypt (and remains common in some communities today). The advantages of endogamy in terms of consolidation of the family unit and particularly its property are basically similar whether the marriage partners are first cousins or brother and sister.

⁷⁷ P.Amh. II 75, P.Tebt. II 320; see also the two sibling marriages in the Kronion family. Also perhaps P.Mil.Vogl. IV 229 and two generations of sibling marriage from an unpublished papyrus noted by Bussi, 20 (Bodl. MS class. B 24 (P), after A.D. 43).

⁷⁸ On the absence of genetic defects and fertility of the consanguineous marriages attested in the papyri, see Scheidel, *op. cit.* (n. 9), 14–15; cf. Hombert and Préaux, *op. cit.* (n. 66), 141; H. Thierfelder, *Die Geschwisterehe im hellenistisch-römischen Ägypten* (1960), 95–6.

⁷⁹ Remijsen and Clarysse, 57–8; cf. in other types of document P.Mich. V 262/266, P.Select. 23, P.Oxy. IV 713, P.Kron., P.Tebt. II 379, SB VI 9317A/B, PSI X 1115, P.Tebt. II 317 — a long list, given that non-census documents would not necessarily record the existence of brothers.

⁸⁰ See note 55 above. This emphasis on increasing the family through incorporation of a circle of in-laws seems subtly different from how a Roman aristocrat might perceive a marriage, as cementing a link with a political ally.

⁸¹ Bagnall and Frier, 128 n. 67. First-cousin marriages also occur rarely in other kinds of text (e.g. P.Oxy. III 494), although admittedly they are often not easy to identify.

⁸² 187-Ar-4: Apion aged 24 and Herakleides aged 19 and their cousins the daughter of Herodes aged 23 and her sister Thaisarion aged 17.

V INHERITANCE, DEMOGRAPHY, AND FAMILY DYNAMICS

Previous scholars have rejected explanations for brother-sister marriage in terms of the inheritance system on two grounds, firstly that there was nothing so unique about the partible inheritance pattern of Roman Egypt that could explain why the population adopted a practice so abhorrent to the rest of mankind, and secondly that brother-sister marriage does not in any case entirely solve the problems of fragmentation resulting from the division of property among all children of a family.⁸³ However, a case can be made that aspects of the inheritance and family structure of Egypt, as it evolved under the impact of first Greek and then Roman influence, differ significantly from other parts of the Greek and Roman world (and most other societies which stress private property ownership), and would have encouraged the spread of brother-sister marriage, even if not in themselves amounting to 'specific and compelling' reasons for the initial adoption of the practice. This distinctive inheritance regime and family structure, with its unusual emphasis on women's role in property ownership and management, was the legacy of ancient Egyptian custom; but its assimilation into new structural systems based on Greek and Roman norms introduced problems which had not been so evident in earlier Egyptian society. The advantages of brother-sister marriage as one (among several) ways of mitigating these problems need consideration in detail.

Egyptian inheritance practice divided parental property equally among all offspring, male and female.⁸⁴ A wife's personal property, as opposed to the dowry which was intended to support her upkeep, remained separate from that of her husband throughout the marriage, and passed separately to the children.⁸⁵ Thus even an only child (of a non-sibling marriage) was likely to inherit at least two distinct properties, and the large scale devolution of property to daughters as well as sons necessitated greater division of the parental property than was normal in the Greek world.⁸⁶ A daughter's marriage was often the occasion for transferring to her substantial property in land or slaves as an addition to the dowry proper, rather than waiting until the parents' deaths, or even buying more for her.⁸⁷ The constant division over generations resulted in an astounding degree of property

⁸³ As well as Huebner, Thierfelder, *op. cit.* (n. 78), 93–4, Hopkins, *op. cit.* (n. 8), Alston, *op. cit.* (n. 11), 134, Bussi and Frandsen all play down or reject the economic benefits of sibling marriage. Yet many other scholars accept its economic advantages: Hombert and Préaux, *op. cit.* (n. 66), 140; R. Middleton, 'Brother-sister and father-daughter marriage in ancient Egypt', *American Sociological Review* 27 (1962), 610; N. Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (1983), 44; D. Hobson, 'House and household in Roman Egypt', *YCIS* 28 (1985), 224; R. Lane Fox, 'Aspects of inheritance in the Greek world', in P. A. Cartledge and D. Harvey (eds), *CRUX: Essays presented to G.E.M. de Ste. Croix on his 75th Birthday* (1985), 219; S. Pomeroy, 'Women in Roman Egypt', *ANRW* II 10.1 (1988), 722; J. Goody, *The Oriental, the Ancient, and Primitive: Systems of Marriage and Family in the Pre-Industrial Society of Eurasia* (1990), 332–9; Shaw, *op. cit.* (n. 14), 291; Bagnall and Frier, 130f.; A. K. Bowman, 'Egypt', in *CAH* 2 X (1996), 697.

⁸⁴ See the *Legal Manual of Hermopolis* col. VIII 30–IX 26, especially IX 2 in Donker van Heel, *op. cit.* (n. 50). However, the eldest son was in some respects advantaged: he discharged any obligations, organized the distribution among his siblings, obtaining the shares of any who later died without issue (IX 3–4), and in some circumstances received an extra share on his own account (IX 10–11). A double share also went to the eldest daughter in the absence of sons, but she did not take the shares of deceased siblings (IX 15–17).

⁸⁵ In New Kingdom Deir el-Medina, at the end of a marriage the wife obtained only one third of the joint property acquired during the marriage (McDowell, *op. cit.* (n. 32), 40), but this was no longer the case by the Roman period, when property acquired during marriage was legally owned individually by whichever partner had bought or otherwise acquired it; see particularly the case of the Kronion family discussed below.

⁸⁶ For Greek practice generally, see van Bremen, *op. cit.* (n. 23), especially 270. Roman intestate inheritance also assigned equal property to sons and daughters (unless the latter had married *cum manu*), but attempts were made in law (the *Lex Voconia* of 169 B.C.) and by individual testators to limit the amount of property devolving to females: R. P. Saller, *Patriarchy, Property and Death in the Roman Family* (1994), 163–7. Some testators in Roman Egypt adopted similar strategies, reflecting the same structural tension between the principle of equal division and the desire for consolidation: J. Rowlandson, *Landowners and Tenants in Roman Egypt* (1996), 168–71; Bussi, 9–16.

⁸⁷ Yiftach-Firanko, *op. cit.* (n. 34), 164–73; J. Rowlandson, 'Sales of land in their social context', *Proceedings of the XVI International Congress of Papyrologists* (1981), 371–8; Rowlandson, *op. cit.* (n. 86), 336–7. See P.Oxy. IV 713 and other examples discussed below.

fragmentation, as the surviving documents show.⁸⁸ This mattered little if the property consisted of rights to temple revenue ('holy days'), or houses; agricultural land was more of a problem. Although some fragmentation of landholding was beneficial in spreading the risk of flood or other crop failure, it was not practical to farm minute areas of land, and if the number of owners increased beyond a handful, even joint management would require an impossible degree of co-operation. Thus, as private landownership increased during the Ptolemaic period, and was boosted further at the inception of Roman rule, the consequences of property fragmentation through Egyptian inheritance patterns became more serious.

The introduction of the register of real property (*bibliothēke enktēseōn*) in the later first century A.D. highlighted the problem further. While the Roman legal system was familiar with the concept of joint ownership, and Roman administrators of Egypt accommodated Egyptian inheritance custom by allowing the registration of the liens (*katochai*) of wives or children over their husbands' and parents' property, the idea that the ownership of a small plot or house could be divided into forty-eight, fifty-six, or even ninety-six shares did not fit comfortably with the Roman notion of clearly-defined ownership presupposed by the property register.⁸⁹ Egyptian property owners who wished to benefit from the legal protection afforded by the register needed to consider every possible means of avoiding excessive fragmentation, and while brother-sister marriage did not increase the size of the share inherited by each child in large families, it did reduce the scale of fragmentation resulting from transmission over generations.⁹⁰

Family size has a major impact on the consequences of property devolution: there is no difference between primogeniture and partible inheritance for a family with only one child. Greek observers commented on the large population of Egypt, and its unusual practice of rearing all children born.⁹¹ There is certainly some evidence for infant exposure in Roman Egypt, but it is also clear that families regularly raised several daughters, and as many sons as possible, without any obvious attempt to restrict family size to the extent that was normal elsewhere in the Greek and Roman world.⁹² The predilection for children seems to be one of the genuine continuities from Pharaonic to modern Egypt. Bagnall and Frier follow Rathbone in assuming an essentially stable population for early Roman Egypt, with progressive but modest growth until the Antonine plague of the 160s brought a sudden drop followed by recovery, but it seems possible that parts of this period saw more rapid population growth, as economic prosperity encouraged people to 'increase their

⁸⁸ See especially the disposition (written in Greek, but following Egyptian custom) made in 116 B.C. by Tathotis to her daughter Kobahetesis: in addition to a dowry and a half-aroura plot, a one-seventh share of fourteen further items (agricultural and building land and houses), many of which were themselves one-eighth shares which Tathotis owned jointly with her siblings; P. W. Pestman, 'A Greek testament from Pathyris', *JEA* 55 (1969), 129–60 = P.Lond. VII 2191. Tathotis also had two sons, but we do not know what property they received. Muhs, *op. cit.* (n. 52), sees the radical partible inheritance of houses and mummy-revenues (as opposed to priestly office, inherited by the eldest son) as already a problem for the mortuary priests of early Ptolemaic Thebes, which they mitigated partly by marrying neighbours and within the occupational group.

⁸⁹ On property registration, see the Edict of Mettius Rufus (A.D. 89), Sel.Pap. II 219, with P.Col. X 251 introduction for discussion and bibliography. For the persistence of fragmentation in the Roman period, see P.Vindob.Worp 5.

⁹⁰ L. E. Tacoma, *Fragile Hierarchies: The Urban Elites of Third-Century Roman Egypt* (2006), 209–16 models the effects of radical partible inheritance over successive generations. Significantly, 'fragmentation proceeds independent of the number of children' (213) — unless, that is, the parents owned shared or adjacent properties because they were related. See also the case studies below.

⁹¹ Diodorus 1.80; Strabo 17.2.5; cf. 15.1.22.

⁹² Bagnall and Frier, 147–55 argue for some attempt to restrict family size, especially through prolonged breastfeeding, and say 'large numbers of surviving children are infrequent' (*ibid.*, 147), but cite thirteen examples of five or more siblings. Other examples of large families can be seen in the family trees of P.Fam.Tebt. and P.Mich. V. On infant exposure, see Bagnall and Frier, 152; and the well-known papyrus letter P.Oxy. IV 744 (= Sel.Pap. I 105).

families'.⁹³ One consequence of brother-sister marriage is to enhance overall marital fertility by increasing choice of partners and reducing average age at marriage.⁹⁴

Household structure adds another element to the specific demographic pattern of Roman Egypt. It appears that newly married couples now often moved in with the groom's family in preference to the earlier Egyptian practice of starting a new household. In the Thebaid, where simple conjugal households remained the norm, sibling marriage was also rare or absent.⁹⁵ Virilocal marriage disadvantaged daughters by forcing them to move from the parental home while their married brothers stayed put, cutting them off from their natal family and its property, in which they nevertheless held an important stake through inheritance. We should also take account of the bonds of affection between daughters and their parents. Given that it was almost unknown for daughters to remain unmarried and look after their parents (a frequent option in later European communities), brother-sister marriage provided the only means for a daughter to remain in the parental household and to continue to play a central role in its management.

In several respects, therefore, Roman Egypt was unusual in the ancient world in the role of daughters within the family. The Egyptians did not merely refrain from exposing their daughters at birth; they then endowed them at marriage with both dowries and unusually generous inheritances, including real property. Small wonder if, when it became common for married sons to stay in the parental home, parents wanted to keep their daughters equally close by marrying them to their own brothers. Through a series of concrete examples, we can see how brother-sister marriage brought practical advantages within the particular family and inheritance regime of Roman Egypt. This involves not only the distribution and transmission of property ownership, but also the way married daughters interacted with their natal families in the management of family wealth.⁹⁶

The earliest certain case of brother-sister marriage in the Roman period involves a first-century Tebtunis family documented from the *grapheion* archive.⁹⁷ A sale contract, P.Mich. V 262 (A.D. 34–36), reveals that Didymos the younger sold his sister/wife Hero ten arouras of land, part of the stated price being the value of dowry which Hero had brought, namely 6½ minas of gold.⁹⁸ The contract further stipulates that Hero would not accuse Didymos of embezzling her dowry thereafter, nor Didymos accuse Hero concerning the

⁹³ Bagnall and Frier, 56; on economic prosperity, D. W. Rathbone, 'Roman Egypt', in W. Scheidel, I. Morris and R. P. Saller (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (2007), 698–719.

⁹⁴ Bagnall and Frier, 133.

⁹⁵ See n. 32 above, with Bagnall and Frier, especially 61, and Clarysse and Thompson, op. cit. (n. 52), especially 259. The Ptolemaic census evidence analysed by Clarysse and Thompson is unhelpful in pinpointing the origin of this change: the larger average size of Greek households is mainly accounted for by slaves and other non-kin, but the Egyptian preponderance of multiple families is produced by a single text (ibid., 254). The similarity of the Lykopolite Ptolemaic census text and the Lykopolite Roman register (ibid., 257–8) in their overwhelming majority of simple conjugal households (like the much earlier Deir el-Medina list: n. 32 above), might imply a long-standing regional difference of household structure between southern and northern Egypt. However, virilocal marriage was apparently the norm in Ptolemaic Thebes (Muhs, op. cit. (n. 52), 188) and there are some possible cases of half-sibling marriage from Ptolemaic and pre-Ptolemaic Upper Egypt: see Appendix. The long-term history of Egyptian household structure would repay systematic investigation.

⁹⁶ Some of the discussion below (as well as the Appendix) is based closely on R. Takahashi, 'Brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt', *Shigaku-Zasshi* 115-2 (2006), 35–59 (in Japanese), especially 45–7. Bussi, 9–16, also discusses several of the same cases, but ultimately rejects an explanation for brother-sister marriage in terms of family inheritance strategy. She is right that testamentary freedom could be much more effective than consanguineous marriage in reducing property fragmentation, but perhaps does not allow for the familial pressure to distribute property broadly according to impartible inheritance rules. And her discussion of the fragmentary CPR I 28 (Bussi, 10), focusing on the sibling couple's property disposition to their children, overlooks the possible benefits of property consolidation in their own inheritance from their parents. The considerations affecting the transmission of property within a family would change from generation to generation.

⁹⁷ P.Mich. V pp. 16–18; Rowlandson, op. cit. (n. 87), 377–8; Rowlandson, op. cit. (n. 55), 230–1; Bussi, 12; A. Verhoogt, 'Family relations in early Roman Tebtunis', *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 1,3 (2004) 21–5 (<http://www.palarch.nl/Archaeology/htm> [accessed February 2009], order code egt-2004-1-3).

⁹⁸ Eight pairs of bracelets (4 minas) and a necklace (2½ minas).

sold land, and that the marriage would continue. Didymos and his brothers were in deep financial trouble: in A.D. 36, Didymos, two of his brothers and three minor nephews (sons of a deceased brother) defaulted on a huge debt of 2 talents 1,200 drachmas with interest, giving up to their creditors a total of eighty-two arouras of land inherited from their father.⁹⁹ Two years later, their brother Lysimachos agreed to transfer to Hero without remuneration a small vineyard, which Lysimachos had himself bought from Didymos, Hero's husband (P.Mich. V 266). Although the precise rationale of this series of land transactions remains opaque, their result was clearly to make Hero accumulate land formerly owned by her brothers and which had probably formed part of their patrimony, apparently in return for informal financial assistance. Would Hero have played such a pivotal role in rescuing her brothers from their financial distress if she had not married one of them? The wives of other brothers (who had married into other substantial Tebtunis families) were more concerned to protect their immediate interests.¹⁰⁰

Our second case demonstrates clearly the advantages of brother-sister marriage in limiting property fragmentation. In A.D. 51, an unrelated couple from Oxyrhynchus married. The names in both families are predominantly Greek, but they followed Egyptian custom by including in their marriage contract a clause which settled on the joint issue of the marriage all the property of each of them after their respective deaths.¹⁰¹ After producing three children, the husband died, and each child (two sons and a daughter) inherited one third of his estate. Later, the eldest son, Diodoros (named after his father and grandfather) married the daughter, Thais, and their marriage contract included a clause confirming their right to one third each of their mother's property; specifically, each received four arouras of a nine-and-a-half aroura plot at the village of Nesla. Our surviving document is the official registration by the younger son (Leonides, named after his maternal grandfather) of his lien (*katoche*) on his mother's remaining property, notably the one-and-a-half arouras of the Nesla plot plus a parcel of two-and-a-half arouras at Peenno (which lay several miles away from Nesla, in a different direction from Oxyrhynchus). No specific details of the father's property survive, but it will be seen that, while the marriage of brother and sister did not completely eliminate the further fragmentation of the parents' property, the allocation of land was devised to keep as much as possible as a consolidated chunk, in the eight arouras in total possessed by the two married siblings (it would have been fairer for each child to receive one third of each plot).

This case also shows how different the whole context of inheritance practice in Roman Egypt was from that of other parts of the Greek world, and it provides a strong counter-example to Huebner's suggestion that apparent sibling marriages are the result of silent adoption. First, the names strongly suggest that both sons were the parents' biological offspring, with Diodoros the first-born.¹⁰² And since the parents certainly had in Leonides at least one male heir, what would be the rationale for adopting another? It is also difficult to see any indication that the daughter was adopted. If it is suggested that she was an orphaned relative or family friend on whom they had taken pity, a key objection still remains. If either of the married siblings was an adoptee, Leonides would have strong grounds for objecting to the adoptee inheriting on an equal basis to the other two children, since he would thereby be deprived of a third of his expected share (in receiving two plots rather than one from his mother, he may in any case have got the short straw in the deal). While the birth of additional half-siblings after second marriages was (and still is) a frequent cause of resentment and dispute amongst heirs, it seems very improbable that

⁹⁹ P.Mich. V 232; a fifth brother, Haryotes, was not involved in this debt. He and at least two other brothers (the deceased Galates and Lysimachos) had married into other substantial Tebtunis families.

¹⁰⁰ Thus Lysimachos' father-in-law Herakleides gave consent to the vineyard transfer, no doubt because it was security for his daughter's dowry.

¹⁰¹ P.Oxy. IV 713, A.D. 97: Diodoros son of Diodoros son of Agathinos, and Saraeus daughter of Leonides son of Alexander, her mother being Isidora daughter of Kalas.

¹⁰² cf. Remijsen and Clarysse, 57–60.

parents would go out of their way to invite such problems through adopting additional children when they already had ample biological heirs.¹⁰³

A probable parallel case where two married siblings each inherited in their own right along with a third sibling comes from the registration of a jointly-owned slave. A woman and her husband, who was also her paternal half-brother, owned a two-thirds share in the slave, while the remaining third belonged to their two nephews and niece, who had presumably succeeded to it on the death of their mother or father (P.Oxy. LXVII 4584).

Another straightforward case comes from a pair of property declarations made in A.D. 148 (SB VI 9317A/B). In the first, Petenephotēs registered ownership of a two-fifths share of vacant ground devolving by intestate inheritance from his mother (and apportioned to her by her father through her marriage contract in A.D. 113); his three younger siblings each received a one-fifth share. In the second, it emerges that Petenephotēs had married his sister Diogenis; their only child, also called Diogenis, registered the one-fifth share of the same property devolving to her (again by intestate inheritance) from her deceased mother. The benefit of consanguineous marriage in minimizing property fragmentation seems clear, particularly in conjunction with the double portion traditionally received by the eldest son; despite the division of the property among four children, three-fifths remained effectively consolidated.¹⁰⁴

A more complex inheritance disposition involving married siblings comes from Soknopaiou Nesos. In the marriage document of Horos and his full sister Herieus (drawn up long after they starting living together, following Egyptian custom; they already had a son aged twenty-two), their mother Satabous made a disposition of her property to them and the rest of her descendants: her other son Stotoetis and daughter Soueris, and two grandsons by a deceased son, Stotoetis and Horos junior. Her son Stotoetis alone received a house and court, a quarter share of another (the house formerly of Psentapiamis), and three-tenths of yet another. The married siblings received in joint and equal shares part of a new house and court and its contents and a quarter share of the house of Psentapiamis, while Horos alone got some further property. Horos and Stotoetis were also to share a vacant lot within the perimeter of the temple and a Theban mill with its appurtenances. In addition to the property shared with her husband, Herieus received a feminine trousseau, while her sister Soueris received the remaining half of the house of Psentapiamis. The two grandsons received the token sum of eight drachmas each.¹⁰⁵ Satabous here seems systematically rather more generous to her sons than her daughters, and she takes the opportunity to minimize fragmentation by allocating property jointly to her married son and daughter. It is clear that each child is treated as a full heir, with no ground for thinking that any was adopted.

Finally, much the clearest case study concerns the two pairs of married siblings in the Kronion family from the village of Tebtunis, well-known through the survival of a substantial archive of their family papers.¹⁰⁶ At first sight, this family might seem amenable to Huebner's hypothesis of silent adoption, since it has always puzzled scholars why only the daughters of the family appear as landowners in our documents; the sons only rent

¹⁰³ Compare the case discussed by Tacoma (op. cit. (n. 90), 201–2) of an Alexandrian citizen who adopted a son in addition to his only biological issue, a daughter; but he bequeathed her 11/12 of his property, only 1/12 going to the adopted son (P.Lips. I 240). As Tacoma comments, this 'strongly implies that adopted children did not have the same status as own children'.

¹⁰⁴ Bussi (11) regards the fact that Petenephotēs' mother's property was not absorbed into that of her husband as more significant than the endogamous marriage in guarding against fragmentation.

¹⁰⁵ M.Chr. 313 (= BGU I 183), A.D. 85; cf. Bussi, 9–10. This disposition modified one made four years earlier (BGU I 251), which awarded the two grandsons the quarter of the house of Psentapiamis here given to Horos and Herieus. A loan by Satabous of 800 drachmas is also mentioned, but we do not understand how this relates to the disposition to the grandsons.

¹⁰⁶ Published as P.Kronion, and extensively discussed, e.g. in Lewis, op. cit. (n. 83), 69–73; Rowlandson, op. cit. (n. 55), 125–33; R. Takahashi, *Family, Economy and Society in Second-Century AD Tebtunis: A Rural Society in Roman Egypt*, PhD thesis, King's College London (2007).

from or work for others. Further, Kronion the younger was divorced from his sister/wife Taorsenouphis and excluded from his father's will. But closer consideration of this will shows that the adoption hypothesis cannot be sustained. Kronion the father drew up his will aged about seventy-five on 13 June A.D. 138, some weeks before his son and daughter's divorce (P.Kron. 50, 52). In it, he appointed as his three heirs his two other sons, Harmiysis and Harphaesis, and his grand-daughter Tephorsais, daughter of Kronion and Taorsenouphis (but not their sons Sasopis and Pakebkis, mentioned in the divorce agreement, but not the will). Kronion the younger was cut off with a small legacy of forty drachmas 'because of the fact that he has been wronged by him in many matters over the course of his lifetime', while Taorsenouphis and her sister Tephorsais the elder (married to Harphaesis) were given sums of money (the figure is lost), in addition to the dowries of gold and silver jewellery and clothing that they had already received. The bulk of the father Kronion's estate is not listed in detail, but no land is mentioned.¹⁰⁷ We cannot guess how much wealth would be left to the heirs after they had paid out the legacies, outstanding debts, and for Kronion's funeral and mummification, and how this compared with the daughters' dowries. Taorsenouphis' dowry, listed in the divorce document, was substantial, consisting of gold jewellery weighing one mina and ten quarters, and twenty-eight staters' weight of uncoined silver; all this had been converted into cash and spent by her husband Kronion, who at the divorce faced the difficulty of finding the means to pay it back.

Amid all this detailed evidence, there is not the slightest sign that adoption might have played any part in constituting the family. The eldest pair of children possessed traditional family names, Kronion after his father, Taorsenouphis after her paternal grandmother. Kronion the father was by no means short of heirs, even after falling out with his eldest son. On the contrary, further investigation of the family's organization and activities will show the positive advantages to the family of the two endogamous unions, even after one of them ended in divorce.

Harmiysis, the third brother, does not figure elsewhere in the archive, and seems to have lived away.¹⁰⁸ While we lack explicit evidence for the family's living arrangements, the rest of the family seems to have formed a single, three-generation, household, and it certainly operated together as an economic unit (even the disgraced younger Kronion reappears some years later). In this family business, the two married daughters and their personal property played a crucial role. Their land appears in our documents only intermittently, when it is used to obtain credit through mortgage or prodomatic lease (where the rent is paid in advance), and neither the total area, nor how and when it was acquired, is known for certain. For the reasons given above, it is very unlikely that either daughter inherited any land from their father, but some could have come from their mother; since although Taorsenouphis already owned at least five and a half arouras in A.D. 116, when it seems her mother was still alive, Egyptian parents sometimes gave land to their daughters before or at their marriage.¹⁰⁹ The specific wording of the divorce document, excluding Kronion from any claim 'in regard to any property she has bought, in consideration of the fact that she has paid its price from her own funds', however, strongly suggests that Taorsenouphis owned property which she had bought with her own money during the course of her marriage (P.Kron. 52). By A.D. 145, she also owned a different plot, of four arouras (P.Kron. 17).

¹⁰⁷ He seems also to have rented, not owned, the family house; P.Kron. 53.

¹⁰⁸ Harmiysis was named after his great-grandfather in the paternal line. Judging by the order in which the heirs are listed in Kronion's will, he was older than Harphaesis and thus might in principle have married Tephorsais instead of his younger brother, contra Rowlandson, *op. cit.* (n. 55), 125–6. This example again shows that, whatever the advantages in terms of family strategy, personal choice also contributed to the decision to marry a sibling.

¹⁰⁹ P.Kron. 10; see above, n. 87. The loan repayment P.Kron. 11 suggests that the elder Kronion's wife was still alive in A.D. 121 (Taorsenouphis was born c. A.D. 88/9, her husband some five years older, and her sister Tephorsais born c. A.D. 105).

Throughout the period of our documentation, the family regularly took out loans, but it seems that around the time of Kronion's divorce, their finances took a sudden turn for the worse.¹¹⁰ A document dated a few months after his divorce shows that Kronion the younger owed a local landowner for whom he worked a substantial sum plus interest outstanding from the estate accounts.¹¹¹ This seems to have badly dented the family's 'credit rating'; thereafter, it seems that only the daughters could get credit, secured on the land they owned. Thus in A.D. 140, Taorsenouphis and Tephorsais together borrowed 372 drachmas at interest, secured on the usufruct of half a plot of four arouras owned by Tephorsais; the loan was initially made for one year, but the plot was still mortgaged three years later.¹¹² Later, Tephorsais obtained further loans from a different creditor in return for the usufruct of a further parcel.¹¹³ Meanwhile, Taorsenouphis was using another plot that she owned to obtain a total of seventeen years' rent in advance.¹¹⁴ During these years (and unlike the period before A.D. 138), the men of the family appear in the loan documents not as contracting parties but only as guardians of the two sisters, although Harphaesis and Sasopis appear independently in other contemporary documents as tenants of land.

In sum, the land owned by the two Kronion daughters played a crucial role in the family's attempt to overcome its economic setback. Although it is always difficult to infer from legal documents how decisions were actually made, it also looks as though the women were more than nominal owners, but had personally acquired this land through their financial prudence, and were then willing to use it to benefit the family as a whole. It seems unlikely that even the most socially advantageous marriages outside the family could have produced wives for Kronion and Harphaesis who would bring the family greater economic benefit and good management.

As Hopkins stressed, the brother-sister marriages of Roman Egypt were real marriages, and like other marriages, sometimes broke down in divorce. Importantly, however, the Kronion case shows that divorce as such did not negate the advantages of the endogamous marriage in keeping the daughter and her property within her natal family; these were negated only if she subsequently left the family to remarry.¹¹⁵ A regrettably fragmentary papyrus recording a legal dispute between married siblings may help to confirm that the advantage of a consanguinous marriage was perceived to be the preservation of property inherited by a daughter within her natal family: Diogenes complained to the *archidikastes* that not only was his estranged sister-wife making off with property that he held in her name, but also that their daughter Ptolema, who was apparently also married to her brother, by seeking a divorce was carrying off and dissipating her father's property.¹¹⁶ Diogenes apparently thought that, by marrying his daughter to her brother, he could keep control over the property she acquired on marriage.

¹¹⁰ For the details, and particularly the argument that the family's economic decline was not progressive but sudden, see Takahashi, *op. cit.* (n. 106), 303–19.

¹¹¹ P.Kron. 16, originally read as 1800 dr., but Sijpesteijn and Worp have suggested that 600 dr. is palaeographically better: BL VII 73. Either sum is much larger than the family's other debts, and it had not accumulated gradually, but was incurred at the start of his employment (either as a loan or perhaps theft).

¹¹² P.Kron. 17, 18.

¹¹³ P.Kron. 20; the 16% arouras here owned by Tephorsais was close to, and perhaps partly identical with, the plot owned by her sister in A.D. 116.

¹¹⁴ P.Kron. 19, 19a.

¹¹⁵ Contra Hopkins, *op. cit.* (n. 8), 323. P.Berl.Leihg. I 17, P.Flor. III 301 attest other divorced siblings still resident in the family home: D. C. Barker, 'The place of residence of the divorced wife in Roman Egypt', in *Akten des 21. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses, Berlin, 13.–19.8.1995* (1997), 59–66.

¹¹⁶ P.Mil.Vogl. V 229; contrary to the editor's introduction, this wrangle lends no support to the argument against endogamy being aimed at keeping family property intact: marriages are entered into on the assumption that they will succeed.

VI CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The preceding examples have added to Remijsen and Clarysse's arguments that the phenomenon of brother-sister marriage in Roman Egypt cannot be explained by 'silent' adoption. The inheritance dispositions involving married siblings demonstrate that they always inherited as the actual, not adopted, children of their parents; they further show the real advantages of the practice in minimizing the fragmentation of property through inheritance. Equally important, in a regime of virilocal, complex households, it provided the only way for an adult daughter to remain in the parental home like her brothers, bringing both personal and economic benefits through keeping her dowry and inheritance within the family unit, and through the daughter's active involvement in managing the family finances. Although marriages within the wider family or social group, which were certainly practised in Ptolemaic and earlier Egypt (as in some communities today) but which in Roman Egypt seem to have been largely replaced by full brother-sister marriage, carry similar benefits in terms of consolidating the family's property and identity (although deferred by a generation or more), only sibling marriage enabled a married daughter to remain in the parental home along with her brothers.

The case of Diogenes discussed above seems to support the common association of endogamy with close parental (essentially paternal) control over a daughter's marriage. This also fits with the pattern noted by Bagnall and Frier¹¹⁷ that sibling marriage partners were typically younger than average, and thus more likely to be subject to parental influence. However, this did not necessarily imply the women's continued subordination as they matured; and while Ptolema asserted her independence from her father Diogenes by rejecting her family and endogamous marriage, other endogamous women, such as Hero and the Kronion sisters, were enabled to take a pivotal role in their natal family's fortunes which would have been impossible had they married outside.

Far from reflecting a strategy of adoption in the absence of natural heirs, the practice of brother-sister marriage seems to have been largely, and perhaps entirely, confined to families with at least two sons and a daughter (often more). Large families faced the effects of radical partible inheritance most acutely, but they also had the luxury of being able to enjoy the advantages of family consolidation brought by consanguinous marriage without foregoing the opportunity to 'extend the family' (as the Setne story put it) through exogamous marriages of the remaining children.¹¹⁸ In any society where close-kin marriage is socially and legally possible, families are faced with maintaining a balance between consolidating the family's existing property and identity through in-marriage and forging new links with other families which will bring in a wider circle of relatives. The Ptolemaic family archives show how the communities of mortuary priests maintained this balance through marriages beyond the immediate family, but within the occupational group, and often to neighbours who were related more remotely and thus shared inherited property.¹¹⁹ What deterred them from marrying their immediate relatives was probably not any horror of incest, but the fact that it would have made their families much too introverted, without the important links to other neighbourhood families that gave the wider community its solidarity.

Brother-sister marriage was not included in the Egyptian category of *bwt*, things forbidden, and it seems certain that a Ptolemaic royal law (presumably promulgated by Ptolemy II) specifically legitimated the practice as ordained by an ancient Egyptian law, even if the historical basis of this claim is distinctly uncertain and may be the invention of Ptolemy's advisers. From Diodorus onwards, observers from elsewhere in the Greco-Roman world were convinced that full brother-sister marriage was a long-standing

¹¹⁷ Bagnall and Frier, 133.

¹¹⁸ cf. Frandsen, 50, 126. This undermines Alston's suggestion, *op. cit.* (n. 11), that sibling marriage reflected a feeling of insecurity about the wider, hostile, world.

¹¹⁹ See especially Muhs, *op. cit.* (n. 33), and *op. cit.* (n. 52).

Egyptian tradition, instituted by some venerable Egyptian lawgiver. The same conviction induced even the hard-headed Roman administrators of Egypt to confirm the legality of the practice for Egyptians and Alexandrians, insisting only that Roman citizens should conform to Roman law on incest.

The huge increase in attestations of brother-sister marriage in the Roman period reflects more than merely changes in documentation. Although it is true that some types of document specific to the Roman period (the census and *epikrisis* returns) make family relationships particularly explicit, enough genealogical information is available from other kinds of text spanning the whole Greco-Roman period (especially inheritance and marriage documents) to show a real change of practice. Despite hints that this practice may already have been starting to spread before the end of Ptolemaic rule, what we have to explain is essentially a phenomenon of the Roman period, becoming increasingly established over the first century A.D., and reaching its peak in the second (although still only in northern Egypt), until banned as a result of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* early in the third.

One can certainly identify structural features of Roman rule in Egypt that would have helped to persuade the more fecund families to marry some of their sons and daughters to one another, while their other offspring's marriages linked them to the wider community. The creation of status groups requiring written demonstration of hereditary rights (which applied to Egyptian priests as well as the *metropolitai*, gymnasial group, Arsinoite *katoikoi* and Alexandrians) may be a contributory factor, but does not explain why villagers with no hereditary privileges also chose consanguineous marriage. Much more important was the emphasis on private ownership of property, particularly agricultural land, as the fundamental basis of this social structure, and the increasing pressure to register individual property ownership in the state archives. This made the inheritance of tiny theoretical fractions of shares in a house or land even more inconvenient than it had been in the Ptolemaic period, and any means of reducing this fragmentation would be welcomed. Although marriage within the wider kin group also helped to reconsolidate fragmented inheritances, the effects of sibling marriage were stronger and more immediate, allowing some inherited properties to remain in shared ownership between husband and wife, so passing down to their children as a unit. The Roman emphasis on wealth as private property especially highlighted the potential problems when daughters inherited substantial amounts of real property in addition to cash dowries; although in theory the wealth taken out of the family by an out-marrying daughter would have been compensated for by that brought in by the son's wife, the case of the Kronion family shows how both the daughters themselves and their families may have preferred them to remain at home to contribute their wealth and management skills to the joint family enterprise.

We can thus build up a picture of why, in the Roman period, brother-sister marriage made very good sense for some families, helping to confirm and maintain their social status, wealth, and the contribution of daughters to the household. Nevertheless, scholars can be forgiven for remaining sceptical that this in itself amounts to a wholly sufficient explanation for why a practice so unusual in world-historical terms, but which had actually been legal in Egypt at least since the early Ptolemaic period, only during the Roman period suddenly began to spread and became so prevalent. Was something more than this involved?¹²⁰

Whereas the Ptolemaic law applied to the entire kingdom (apart from the Jews, prohibited by their own law), the Roman reaffirmation of this law created a boundary between the *Aigyptioi* and Alexandrians, to whom brother-sister marriage was permitted, and Romans, for whom it was incestuous and illegal. What was not right for Romans, or indeed for Greeks outside Egypt, had been sanctioned by an ancient lawgiver as entirely proper for the Egyptians (meant here in the inclusive sense of the whole province except

¹²⁰ Persian marriages within the immediate family, which also attracted the interest of Greek and Roman writers (and in Late Antiquity, the condemnation of imperial law), have a quite separate chronological trajectory and explanation, in Zoroastrianism; see now Frandsen, 60–124.

for Roman citizens and Jews, not the divisive sense opposing Egyptians to Greeks in Egypt).¹²¹ By thus making brother-sister marriage a distinctive feature of Egyptian provincial identity within the Roman Empire, the Romans seem inadvertently to have sparked off a fashion.

The Egyptians duly confirmed the expectations of their Roman rulers by putting on documentary record that they did indeed marry their sisters. In both census returns and other documents, the phrases recording consanguinous marriages do more than leave 'little room for ambiguity', flaunting these relationships with an explicitness that goes beyond practical need.¹²² No anthropologist could ask for clearer responses from his informants. And this suggests less the reluctant conformity of submissive subjects to an imperial power than a positive exuberance and pride in their distinctively Egyptian heritage.

The fascination of Greek and Latin authors with Egyptian brother-sister marriage shows essentially the same chronological incidence as does the papyrological evidence for the practice, starting in the late Hellenistic period and extending through to the early third century A.D. The natural assumption is that this literature, part of the wider discourse about Egypt which arose from its incorporation into the Roman Empire, is a straightforward reflection of the realities of Roman Egypt.¹²³ But the relationship may actually have been more complex than this, if we see the literary comments as articulating a more general Greco-Roman consensus which influenced as much as reacted to Egyptian practice. This mutually reinforcing dialectic was fuelled not only by the Egyptian educated élite's direct acquaintance with the works of Diodorus and his successors but even more by the progressive exchange and dissemination of ideas by Alexandrians and Egyptians travelling abroad and by Roman administrators, businessmen and other visitors to Egypt. There thus developed a common, mutually supportive but dynamic interpretation of Egyptian identity and its ancient heritage, shared between the provincials themselves and the wider Greco-Roman world, which included the idea that Egyptians had always married their brothers and sisters.

Even the stars (according to the Greco-Egyptian astrological tradition, which spread across the Empire) confirmed that it was natural for Egyptians to marry their siblings. According to Ptolemy, the inhabitants of the quarter of the world including Egypt 'have many wives and many husbands and are libidinous, marrying even their sisters, and the men are potent in begetting and the women in conceiving, in the same way as their land is productive' (*Tetrabiblos* 2.3.72). To be married to one's sister and produce children by her was predicted by a horoscope as a blessing comparable to courage, physical stature, and material wealth.¹²⁴ Thus insofar as such texts allow us to glimpse the mental framework of the Greco-Egyptians, they saw brother-sister marriage as unequivocally positive, associated with moral and physical virtue, sexual potency and fertility, and economic prosperity.

¹²¹ For the Greeks, see Artemidorus, *Oneirokritika* 5.24: intercourse with a sister infringed the *nomoi* set down in common for the Greeks.

¹²² Hopkins, op. cit. (n. 8), 321. The usual phrase in census returns (e.g. P.Lips. II 144, 15–16: τὴν τοῦτου γυναῖκα οὐσαν αὐτοῦ [όμομ(ήτριον) καὶ ὁμοπ(άτριον) ἀδελφὴν Θαυβάριον]) is longer than simply repeating the wife's filiation. And did it really matter when reporting the manumission of a slave that the manumittor's wife was also his sister? (M.Chr. 204).

¹²³ Interestingly, sibling marriage did not normally figure in the hostile Roman literary stereotype of Egypt: B. Isaac, *The Invention of Racism in Classical Antiquity* (2004), 352–70 (note only Propertius 3.11.39: 'incesti meretrix regina Canopi', 'harlot queen of incestuous Canopus'). For more complex understanding of Roman responses to Egypt, see C. Vout, 'Embracing Egypt', in C. Edwards and G. Woolf (eds), *Rome the Cosmopolis* (2003), 177–202, or R. Alston, 'Conquest by text: Juvenal and Plutarch on Egypt', in J. Webster and N. Cooper (eds), *Roman Imperialism: Post-Colonial Perspectives* (1996), 99–109.

¹²⁴ W. Gundel, 'Neue astrologische Texte des Hermes Trismegistos', *Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften (Phil.-hist. Abt.)*, 12 (1936), 99, lines 39–41 (quoted in Hopkins, op. cit. (n. 8), 303); cf. P.Oxy. LXVI 4505 frag. 1 (Anoubion of Diospolis, *Elegiacs*), *Manethoniana* 4.407, Firmicus Maternus, *Math.* 6.30.20.

The Egyptians under Roman rule thus started to believe (sharing the common consensus of the Greco-Roman world) that to practise brother-sister marriage was not only likely to make them wealthier but also fulfilled their destiny as Egyptians. It was this conviction that finally made it increasingly fashionable to put into literal practice the authentically ancient Egyptian ideal of assimilating fraternal and marital love, just as Isis had shown for her brother Osiris.¹²⁵

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¹²⁵ cf. Hopkins' suggestive discussion of Egyptian attitudes to love, op. cit. (n. 8), 343–8.

APPENDIX: PROBABLE AND POSSIBLE CASES OF BROTHER-SISTER MARRIAGE

FOURTH CENTURY B.C. AND PTOLEMAIC PERIOD

(All possible cases are included; only those marked with asterisk are reasonably probable)

No.	SOURCE	DATE OF TEXT	PROVENANCE	HUSBAND	WIFE	STATUS	RELATIONSHIP OF SIBLINGS	TYPE OF DOCUMENT AND OTHER NOTES
i*	P.Chic.Haw. I (Lüddeckens 1D)	365/4 B.C.	Hawara	'nh-mr-wr	Pst	undertaker	half, paternal	Marriage document. Father of both is 'god's sealer and embalmer 'nh-Hp alias P ₃ -ti-W'sir'; different mothers.
ii*	P.Lonsdorfer I (Lüddeckens 8)	364/3 B.C.	Edfu	W'sir-tn	Ta-b ₃ s.t		half, paternal	Marriage document. Father of both is Ns-hnsw; different mothers. The scribe is probably another brother.
iii	SB XII 11053	267? B.C.	Tholthis (Oxyrhynchite)	Praxidamas	Sosios	Greek soldier	sister, or niece?	Marriage contract, extremely fragmentary.
iv	P.Hausw. ² 14 (Lüddeckens 26)	208 B.C.	Edfu	Hor the elder	Ta-mnt	herdsman	half, maternal	Marriage document. Mother of both is Ta-lhw; different fathers.
v*	P.Tebrt. III 766	147 or 136 B.C.?	Tebrunis (Arsinoite)	Dionysios	Euterpe		'my sister and wife'	Order to bank.
vi	P.Grenf. II 26 line 14	103 B.C.	Pathyris					Loan repayment. 'Wife and sister' may refer to different persons.
vii	P.Haw. Lüddeckens 13 (P.Hamburg dem. 7)	99 B.C.	Hawara	Marephaues	Terobastis	God's sealer and embalmer	second cousins (half-siblings by scribal error)	Divorce. See note 33 above. W. Erichsen in <i>Proc. IX Internat. Congr. Papyrology</i> (1961) esp. 324-6, read Marephaues' parents as full siblings.
viii	P.Bibl. Nat. 224-5 (Lüddeckens 10D & 10Z)	68 B.C.	Memphis	Hericus	Senamounis	undertaker	half, maternal	Marriage documents. Mother of both is Taues; different fathers.
ix	BGU VIII 1731	68/7 B.C.	Herakleopolis	Thersander	Herakleia	Macedonian of catoicic cavalry	'husband and (brother?)'	Transfer of cleruchic land. 'Brother' is almost entirely restored.
x*	BM stela 184 ¹	married c. 50/49 B.C.	Memphis	Psenamounis c. 75-39 B.C.	Tnepheros 62-24 B.C.	high priest of Prah	half, maternal	Biographical stela of Tnepheros.

¹ ed. E. A. E. Reymond, *From the Records of a Priestly Family from Memphis I* (1981), 223-31; cf. D. J. Thompson, *Memphis under the Ptolemies* (1988), 128-9, 141.

ROMAN PERIOD

A. Current marriages attested in census returns (N=25)

No.	SOURCE ¹	DATE OF TEXT	DATE OF MARRIAGE ²	PROVENANCE	HUSBAND ³	WIFE ³	STATUS ⁴	RELATIONSHIP OF SIBLINGS	NOTES
1	PSI IX 1062 (103-Ar-1)	104		Arsinoe	NN	[]arion 35	M?	full	Lodgers
2	P.Corn. 16.1-1 3 (103-Ar-3)	104/5	c. 82	Arsinoe	NN 46	NN 43	M	full	
3	P.Lond. II 476a (103-Ar-5)	105?		Arsinoe	Leontas 21	Thaisas 18	M	full	Renters: see Bagnall and Frier, 190
4a	P.Corn. 16.21-38 (117-Ar-1)	119		Arsinoe	Sokrates 32	Aphrodous 28	M	full	
4b	P.Corn. 16.39-58 (131-Ar-3)	133		Arsinoe	Sokrates 46	Aphrodous 42	M	full	
5	P.Bon. I 18, col. ii (131-He-4)	133	c. 116	Machor (Herakleopolite)	Psois 31	Thaptemounis 29	V	half, paternal	
6	P.Meyer 9 (145-Ar-9)	147	c. 123	Arsinoe	Chares 63?	Herois 41	K	half, paternal	Parents of no. 7
7	P.Meyer 9 (145-Ar-9)	147		Arsinoe	Ararias 21	Athenarion 13	K	full	Children of no. 6
8	P.Berl. Leihg. III 52B (145-Ar-19)	147		Philagris (Arsinoite)	Hatres 22	Heras 14	V	full? or half, maternal?	Husband and wife are both <i>apatores</i>
9	P.Amh. II 74 (145-Ar-20)	147		Soknopaiou Nesos (Arsinoite)	Panephremmis 32	Thases 2[?]	VP	full	
10	P.Lond. II 182b (159-Ar-11)	160/1	c. 118	Karanis (Arsinoite)	Petheus 73	Dideis [?]	V	half, paternal	Parents of no. 11
11	P.Lond. II 182b (159-Ar-11)	160/1	c. 156	Karanis (Arsinoite)	Isidoros 40	Taonnophris [?]	V	full	Children of no. 10
12	P.Fay. 319=SB XX 14111, 13-19 (159-Ar-26)	161	c. 135	Arsinoe	NN [?]	NN [?]	K	full	Phrase plausibly restored; cf. <i>BASP</i> 30 (1993), 38-40. Bagnall and Frier reverse the line references for this and 145-Ar-22.
13	BGU II 447 = I 26 (173-Ar-9)	174		Karanis (Arsinoite)	Ptollas 48	Ptolemis 38	V	full	

14	P. Brux. I 5 (173-Pr-5)	174	Thebonthon Siphtha (Prosopite)	Phabis 21	Thermouthis 13	V	full	
15	P. Brux. I 10 (173-Pr-10)	174	Thebonthon Siphtha (Prosopite)	Tithoennesis 44	Serathes 40	V	full	
16	BGU I 115 I (187-Ar-4)	189	Arsinoe	Herodes 5[?]	Eirene 54	M	full	Parents of no. 17
17	BGU I 115 I (187-Ar-4)	189	Arsinoe	Heron 29	Neillaiina [?]	M	full	Children of no. 16
18	BGU I 115 I (187-Ar-4)	189	Arsinoe	Heron 34	Thaisarion 17	M	full	Niece and nephew of no. 16; cousins of no. 17
19	BGU I 115 I (187-Ar-4)	189	Arsinoe	Neilos 44	Eirene 52	M	full	Lodgers (and remote kin?) of nos 16-18. Wife is older than husband.
20	BGU I 117 (187-Ar-8)	189	Arsinoe	Satornilos [?]	Harpokratiaina [?]	M	half, paternal	
21	BGU I 120 (187-Ar-12)	189	Arsinoe	Didymos 21	Thermoutharion [?]	M	full	
22	P. Tebt. II 322 (187-Ar-22)	189	Arsinoe	Euryches 30	Tapesouris 18	M	half, paternal	Renters
23	P. Tebt. II 504 (187-Ar-23)	189	Arsinoite	Heliodoros [?]	Aretina [?]	?	full	
24	P. Lips. II 144	188/9	Arsinoe	NN [?]	Thaubarion 24	M	full	Renters; husband is a salt- merchant. Two other brothers co-habit.
25	P. Lond. III 935-6 (215-Hm-1-2)	217	Hermopolis	Theognostos/ Motos 36	Dioskoros 30	MG/R	full	For their gymnasial status, see van Minnen, op. cit. (n. 4 above), 345.

¹ Abbreviation in parenthesis refers to R. S. Bagnall and B. W. Frier, *The Demography of Roman Egypt* (rev. edn, 2006).

² Usually estimated from the age of the oldest known child.

³ Ages of husband and wife are given where known.

⁴ A = Alexandrian, K = Katoikoi in Arsinoite (equivalent to Gymnasial class elsewhere), M = Metropoliite, MG = Gymnasial class in Metropolis, P = priest, R = Roman, V = villager.

B. Former marriages in census returns (N=7)

No.	SOURCE	DATE OF TEXT	DATE OF MARRIAGE	PROVENANCE	HUSBAND	WIFE	STATUS	RELATIONSHIP OF SIBLINGS	NOTES
26	CPR VI p.3 (145-Ar-23)	147	c. 100	Arsinoe	Mystes	Theonis	M		Parents of Ptolemaios
27	CPR VI p.3 (145-Ar-23)	147	c. 116	Arsinoe	Dionysios	Thasion	M		Parents of Thaisas
28	P. Berl. Leihg. I 17 (159-Ar-4)	161	c. 111	Arsinoe	Philadelphos	Thermoutharion	M		parents of no. 29
29	P. Berl. Leihg. I 17 (159-Ar-4)	161	c. 150	Arsinoe	Herodes 31	Zoidous 29	M	full	children of no. 28; divorced, still co-resident
30	P. Flor. III 301 (173-Ar-2)	175		Soknopaiou Nesos (Arsinoite)	Mesoeris 22	Stoetis 26	V/P	half, maternal	Divorced; wife was older than husband, and may still be co-resident; see Barker, op. cit. (n. 115 above), 63-5.
31	BGU I 302= SB XX 14329 (173-Ar-11)	175	c. 171	Arsinoite	Tithoes	Methe	V	probably full	See <i>BASP</i> 29 (1992), 108-10 for restorations. Tithoes may be deceased, or reside elsewhere.
32	P. Strasb. VIII 768 (173-Ar-21, supp. 2006)	174/5	c. 160	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Zosimos 29	Athenarion [?]	M	full	Former wife; still lodging (?) in the house.

C. Cases in documents concerned with status examination (N=17)

No.	SOURCE	DATE OF TEXT	DATE OF MARRIAGE	PROVENANCE	HUSBAND	WIFE	STATUS	RELATIONSHIP OF SIBLINGS	TYPE OF DOCUMENT AND OTHER NOTES
33	P. Oxy. LXVII 4584	100/1		Oxyrhynchus	Thonis	NN	M/P	half, paternal	<i>Epikrisis</i> of slave owned by married siblings
34	W. Chr. 220 = BGU II 562	after 117	c. 82	Arsinoite	Teboulos	Bernike born in 67	K	full?	Correction of error in <i>epikrisis</i> records. Mother is 'father's sister'.

35	P. Oxy. XII 1452	127/8	c. 112/3	Oxyrhynchus	Sarapion	Tnephersois	MG	full	<i>Epikrisis</i> for both metropolitae and gymnasial status.
36	SB IV 7440B	132/3	c. 117/8	Hermopolis	NN	Thermouthis	M	full	<i>Epikrisis</i>
37	P. Oxy. III 477	132/3	c. 117/8	Oxyrhynchus	Ammonios	Thaubarion	A	full	<i>Epikrisis</i> of son as Alexandrian epebe. Wife is deceased.
38	P. Ryl. II 103 = Sel. Pap. II 314	134	before 89	Arsinoe	Herakleides	Tasoucharion	M	full?	<i>Epikrisis</i> . Mother is 'father's sister'.
39	P. Gen. ² I 33	155	c. 141/2	Arsinoe	Kephalas	Didyme	M	full	Birth declaration
40	SB XII 10890	156	c. 141/2	Arsinoe	Herakleides	Dioskoros	M	full	<i>Epikrisis</i> of son
41	P. Amh. II 75	161-168	c. 62	Hermopolis	Hermaios born in 35	Tereus	MG	full	Parents of no. 42.
42	P. Amh. II 75	161-168	c. 87	Hermopolis	Arcios born in 62	Thermouthis born in 65	MG	full	Children of no. 41; parents of no. 43.
43	P. Amh. II 75 line 60	161-168	c. 119	Hermopolis	Hermaios born in 87	Theus born in 88	MG	full	Children of no. 41 <i>Epikrisis</i> of their grandson for gymnasial status.
44	P. Oxy. XXXVIII 2858	171		Oxyrhynchus	Apollonios	Beris	MG	full	Birth declaration; declarant's wife's parents are siblings.
45	P. Tebt. II 320	181		Tebtnis (Arsinoite)	Heron	Thermouth -arion	M	full?	Parents of no. 46
46	P. Tebt. II 320	181	c. 156	Tebtnis (Arsinoite)	Eudaimon	Sarapias	M	full	<i>Epikrisis</i> of son. Children of no. 45, married before 20th year Antoninus Pius.
47	P. Petaus I and 2	185	c. 176/7	Ptolemais Hormou (Arsinoite)	Apychis	Tapasais	V	half, maternal	Birth declaration of daughter. Husband is <i>apator</i> ; wife's father not mentioned.
48	SB XXVI 16803	later 2nd century		Arsinoe	Sabinos	Thermion	M	full, twins	Birth declaration.
49	P. Oxy. XLIII 3096	223/4	c. 208/9	Oxyrhynchus	Aur. Diogenes/Pausirion	Aur. Tauris	MG/R	full	Correction of error in list of thirteen-year-olds

D. Cases in all other kinds of document (N=24)

No.	SOURCE	DATE OF TEXT	DATE OF MARRIAGE	PROVENANCE	HUSBAND	WIFE	STATUS	RELATIONSHIP OF SIBLINGS	TYPE OF DOCUMENT AND OTHER NOTES
50	I.Alex. 66 ¹	early Roman		Alexandria	Sarapion	Eukleia	A	'his sister and wife' full	Dedication to Hermanoubis. Sarapion is of deme Sarapideios. Conveyance of land
51a	P.Mich. V 262	34/5 or 35/6?		Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Didymos	Hero		full	Conveyance of land
51b	P.Mich. V 266	38		Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Didymos	Hero		full	Conveyance of vineyard
52	P.Select. 23 lines 16-19	end of 1st century		Oxyrhynchus	NN/Eusebes	NN	M	full	Summary of purchase of slave. There is another brother.
53	BGU I 183 = M.Chr. 313	85	c. 62	Soknopaiou Nesos (Arsinoite)	Horos 43	Herieus 35	V?	full	Marriage contract. Key phrase is partly restored.
54	P.Oxy. IV 713	97	51	Oxyrhynchus	Diodoros	Thais	M	full	Registration of property inherited by their brother.
55	P.Tebt. II 290	late 1st/early 2nd century		Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Galates	NN		paternal (at least)	Order for arrest; 'both children of Kronion'.
56	BGU IV 1048	100/1 or 110/1?		Arsinoite	S[]	NN	?	half?	Sale of land
57	BGU I 232	108		Metrodorou epoikion (Arsinoite)	Apollonios 27	Marous 20	V?	half, paternal	Dowry receipt? cf. Yiftach-Firanko, op. cit. (n. 35), 16.
58a	P.Kron. 8	109	c. 105	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Kronion 25	Taorsenouphis 22	V	full	Loan contract. For date of marriage, see P.Kron. 41.
58b	P.Kron. 11	121		Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Kronion 36	Taorsenouphis 33	V	full	Repayment of loan
58c	P.Kron. 52	138		Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Kronion 54	Taorsenouphis 50	V	full	Divorce contract. Siblings of no. 65.
59	CPR I 28 = M.Chr. 312	110		Arsinoe (?)	Apollonios	Tapcus/ Tapetosiris?	?	full? half?	Marriage contract. Key phrase restored but likely.
60	P.Stras. VI 505	107-115	c. 69-77	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Ischyron 67	Herois 64	V?	full	Sale of slave
61	P.Lond. II 299 = M.Chr. 204	128		Arsinoe	Herodes/ Pnepheros	Mar[...]	M/P	full	Property registration. Both are priest/priestess.

62	P. Tebt II 379	I 28	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Kronion/Sarapion c. 41	Artemis	?	full?	Sale of crop. There is also another brother, Maximos.
63	BGU XI 2094	I 31	Soknopaiou Nesos? (Arsinoite)	Satabous	Tabous	V		Property registration
64	P. Mil. Vogl. IV 229	c. 140	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Diogenes	Herakleia	V	full?	Petition to archidikastes about family quarrel. Their daughter, perhaps also married to her brother (9f.), wanted a divorce.
65a	P. Kron. 17	I 40	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Harphaesis 48	Tephorsais 35	V	full	Loan contract. Siblings of no. 58.
65b	P. Kron. 20	I 46	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Harphaesis 50 (sic)	Tephorsais	V	full	Loan contract
66	SB VI 9317B	I 47	Oxyrhynchus II 3	Petenephores	Diogenis	M	full	Registration of property inherited by their only child. Petenephotes was the elder (cf. 9317A).
67	BGU III 983	I 38-161	Karanis (Arsinoite)	NN/Aphrodisios	Herais	V		Petition to the epistrategos
68	PSI X III 5	I 52	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Kronios c. 20	Tephorsais c. 27	V	full	Marriage contract. Wife is older than husband. They have an elder brother, Sarapammon (c. 28).
69	P. Vindob. Worp 5 (BL VII on date)	I 68	Arsinoe	Sarapion/Maron	Ammonia	M	full	Registration of plots of vineland and two slaves given by mother as addition to dowry.
70	P. Tebt. II 317	I 74/5	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Herakleos the elder	Thenherakleia	V	full?	Application to appoint legal representative. There is another brother, Herakleos the younger.
71	SB XVIII 13958	I 93/4	Herakleopolite?	Artemidoros	Agcharous	MG?	full?	Letter of strategos
72	P. Tebt. II 351	2nd century	Tebtunis (Arsinoite)	Kronion	Eudaimonis	V?	half, maternal	Receipt for tax on marriage gift of house.
73	Stud. Pal. XXII 60	2nd/3rd century	Athribite	NN	Hephaistaron	A	full?	Purchase of slave. 'My brother and husband'.

¹ Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale (I^{er}-III^e s. apr. J.-C.)* (1994).

E. Doubtful cases in census returns (N=8)

No.	SOURCE	DATE OF TEXT	DATE OF MARRIAGE	PROVENANCE	HUSBAND	WIFE	STATUS	RELATIONSHIP OF SIBLINGS	NOTES
74	P.Oxy. II 361 desc. (75-Ox-1)	76/7		Oxyrhynchus	NN	Serallion	M	half, paternal?	Extremely doubtful; see Bagnall and Friet, 130 n. 71.
75	P.Oxy.Census (89-Pr-15)	89/90		Upper Egypt: Lykopolis?	Pounsis the elder	Thermouthis	M	half, paternal?	Both parents have father named Chemsneus; homonyms?
76	BGU I 95 (145-Ar-12)	147		Karanis (Arsinoite)	NN son of Petheus	Diodora daughter of Petheus	V	paternal?	Divorced husband of declarant's daughter may also be his son; see Huebner p. 37.
77	P.Ryl. II 111 (159-Ar-5)	161		Arsinoe	NN	NN		full	Key phrase much restored; see Bagnall, <i>BASP</i> 28 (1991), 129-33.
78	P.Brux. I 10 (173-Pr-10)	174	c. 164	Thelbonthon Siphtha (Prosopite)	Pantbeus son of Petos	Thapsathis daughter of Petos	V	half, paternal?	Declarant's father and former wife's father are homonymous (Petos).
79	P.Brux. I 13 (173-Pr-13)	174	c. 133	Thelbonthon Siphtha (Prosopite)	Hartysis	Thsonitthoes	V	half, paternal?	Homonymous fathers (Pnepherotithoes) of declarant's parents.
80	P.Brux. I 17 (173-Pr-17)	174	c. 126	Thelbonthon Siphtha (Prosopite)	Ammeneus	Smithis	V	half, paternal?	Homonymous fathers (Harnektotes) of declarant's parents.
81	BGU I 128ii (187-Ar-16)	189		Arsinoe	Herakleides	NN	M	full?	Badly damaged.

F. Other very doubtful cases previously suggested as brother-sister marriages (Bussi, 22 lists further even more doubtful cases)

No.	SOURCE	DATE OF TEXT	PROVENANCE	HUSBAND	WIFE	STATUS	NOTES
82?	BGU IV 1126	9 B.C.	Alexandria	Sen[]	Protarche	A	Work (<i>paramone</i>) contract; husband is guardian, and words ' <i>homometriou adelphou</i> ' are erased.
83?	P.Mich. VIII 464	99	Karanis	Julius Terentianus	Apollonous	R	Letter; 'sister' must be metaphorical. cf. <i>JJP</i> 5 (1951), 268.
84?	CPJud. II 436 etc.	116/17	Hermopolis	Apollonios	Aline	M(G?)	Letters; archive of Apollonios the strategos. Very unlikely to be siblings: see Rowlandson, op. cit. (n 55), 119-20.

	P. Mich. VIII 465, 466	107–8	Karanis (Arsinoite)	C. Julius Apollinaris	Julia Sarapias	M/R	
85?	P. Oxy. XLII 3059	2nd century	Oxyrhynchus	Apollonios	Didyme		Certainly siblings (P. Mich. inv. 5894); perhaps also <i>de facto</i> spouses, but prohibited from legal marriage because Apollinaris was a serving legionary, and a Roman citizen. ¹
86?	P. Oxy. III 528	2nd century	Oxyrhynchus	Serenos	Isidora		Letter from a wife to her probable husband; 'sister' must be metaphorical; cf. Hopkins, op. cit. (n. 8), 325.
87?	P. Oxy. III 528	2nd century	Oxyrhynchus	Serenos	Isidora		Letter addressed to 'my sister and lady (<i>kyria</i>)'; 'sister' may be metaphorical. cf. Thierfelder, op. cit. (n. 78), 44–6.
88?	P. Oxy. III 524	2nd century	Oxyrhynchus				Invitation to wedding feast 'of his children'.
89?	BGU II 406 col. III 1	c. 192– 200	Soknopaiou Nesos (Arsinoite)	Anchophis	Tapiomis	V	Census or similar register. The word ' <i>adelphes</i> ' is much restored.
90?	P. Stras. I 56 lines 24–5	2nd–3rd century	Unknown	Hermeinos/ Myron	Tinoutis		Dispute about a house. Relationship uncertain due to lacunae.
91?	P. Oxy. I III	3rd century	Oxyrhynchus				Invitation to wedding feast 'of her children'.
92?	P. Oxy. XIV 1681	3rd century	Oxyrhynchus	Julius	Hieronis		Letter; assuming that the terms 'brother' and 'sister' are literal, and Julius the brother is identical with Julius the husband.
93?	PSI XIII 1331 = SB V 7994	3rd century	Oxyrhynchus	Hyperephanos	Senthonis		Letter; 'sister' must be metaphorical. cf. <i>JJP</i> 7/8 (1953/4), 407–8.
94?	PSI V 457	269	Oxyrhynchus	Besarion	Koprous	MG	<i>Epkrisis</i> for gymnasial status. Montevocchi argues against Sijpesteijn that it is not possible to determine whether the omissions from the ancestry concealed a consanguineous marriage or were a simple abbreviation of the formulae. ²
95?	P. Oxy. XLIII 3137	295	Oxyrhynchus	Aur. Neilos/ NN	Aur. Artemidora	MG (R)	Application to register children in the gymnasial class paying reduced poll-tax. The mother of both is named Didyme alias Demetria; fathers' names are different.

¹ O. Montevocchi, 'Endogamia e cittadinanza romana in Egitto', *Aegyptus* 59 (1979), 137–44; at 142–4.

² O. Montevocchi, 'PSI V 457: Uno caso di endogamia o una semplificazione del formulario?' *Aegyptus* 73 (1993), 49–55; reprinted in *Scripta Selecta* (1998), 385–390.