

A Corpus of Ptolemaic Inscriptions

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P.M. Fraser in Alexandria, examining a painted funerary stele in an Antiquities dealership



Kyriakos Savvopoulos inspecting a dedication to Ptolemy VIII, Kleopatra II, their children, and the gods of Elephantine (*I.Thèbes à Syène* 243; *SEG* XLV 2037)



Base of a cult statue of Arsinoe II, with inscription in hieroglyphic and Greek (P. M. Fraser, *Berytus* XIII, 1959/60, 133-134 no. 2; E. Teeter, *Egypt* (Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2003), 105-106 no. 54)



Dedication to Sarapis, Isis, the Nile, Ptolemy III Euergetes and Berenike II by Kallikrates son of Antipatros (*Coll. Froehner* 197; *I.Delta* 235-236 no. 6)

Introduction

The Corpus of Ptolemaic Inscriptions (CPI) project (<http://cpi.csad.ox.ac.uk>) aims to create an up-to-date publication of the epigraphical documentary evidence from Ptolemaic Egypt and the Ptolemaic overseas empire (c. 323-305 BCE), making use of the material collected by the late P.M. Fraser FBA (1918-2007), the leading authority in the 20th century on the history and epigraphy of Ptolemaic Egypt. The CPI project is based at the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents in Oxford (CSAD: www.csad.ox.ac.uk), under the direction of Professor Alan Bowman, with an editorial team consisting of Professor Simon Hornblower and Dr Charles Crowther and project researchers Dr Rachel Mairs (for bilingual and trilingual inscriptions) and Dr Kyriakos Savvopoulos. Research support has been provided by Maggy Sasanow, and the project has also benefited from an Erasmus exchange studentship held by Irene Nicolino (Università di Bologna). The CPI project is supported by awards from the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council and the University of Oxford's John Fell Fund.

The first phase of the project, to compile a Corpus of Greek, bilingual (with demotic) and trilingual (with demotic and hieroglyphic) inscriptions on stone from Egypt itself, is now nearing completion and a first selection of texts will be published on the project site at the beginning of the Congress.

Peter Fraser

When Peter Fraser was elected to a Research Fellowship at All Souls in 1953, his principal research project was to compile a corpus of the Greek inscriptions of the Ptolemaic Empire, both Egypt and the overseas possessions; a second book project on Ptolemaic Alexandria emerged as ancillary to this. In the end it was the subsidiary book that was written, on a

vast scale - published in 1972 by Oxford University Press as the three-volume *Ptolemaic Alexandria*. Fraser set aside the corpus of Ptolemaic inscriptions (although he continued to work on it intermittently until at least the 1970s), and the mixture of handwritten and typed-up drafts, as well as squeezes and photographs, produced during his years of research for the Corpus, covering Egypt itself (346 inscriptions) and the Ptolemaic overseas territories (a further 225 texts), was eventually deposited in the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents. It is this material that forms the core of the CPI project.

A Corpus of Ptolemaic Inscriptions from Egypt (CPI I)

Fraser's draft corpus of the Ptolemaic inscriptions of Egypt has been brought up to date for CPI with the addition of a further 230 texts, and editions of hieroglyphic and demotic texts of trilingual and bilingual inscriptions prepared by Rachel Mairs. An unexpected lacuna in Fraser's collection was the complete omission of verse inscriptions. These have now been collected and edited for the Corpus by Simon Hornblower, a total of 52 texts.

The new Corpus will offer for the first time a full picture of the Greek epigraphy of the Ptolemaic period, giving proper weight to the importance of public and private documentation on stone, which, for Egypt, has tended to be overshadowed by the volume of papyrological evidence. By illustrating the ways in which epigraphical modes of public pronouncement and display became important in what was originally a language culture alien to the Greeks, not merely in Greek cities such as Alexandria, Ptolemais and Naukratis, but also in indigenous Egyptian towns, we hope that the Corpus will enable a deeper understanding

of the history, culture and society of Ptolemaic Egypt. In revising and bringing up to date Fraser's draft, which was itself the result of personal examination of the great majority of the surviving inscriptions, the CPI team has revisited wherever necessary originals in museum collections and in situ; the project researcher Dr Savvopoulos has carried out extensive field work in Egypt. CPI has undertaken or commissioned new photography where appropriate - Fraser's own photographs, unlike his excellent squeezes, are of variable quality - including Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) scanning of inscriptions in museum collections and a full set of RTI and optical 3D scans of the Philae obelisk (described below). The Corpus is now nearing completion. Individual text editions are being encoded in EpiDoc xml, and a first sample of texts will be published online for the beginning of the Congress. An online publication of the full Corpus will follow, using the database foundation developed by Dr Jonathan Prag for the I.Sicily project (sicily.classics.ox.ac.uk). The full Corpus will also be published as a book in two volumes by Oxford University Press.

The Philae Obelisk

The Philae obelisk, with its Greek (*OGIS* 137-139; *I.Philae* I 19) and Egyptian hieroglyphic inscriptions, has stood in the grounds of Kingston Lacy estate in Dorset, exposed to the elements, since the 1830s, when it was brought to England by William John Banks. By 1887, when he visited Kingston Lacy, Ulrich Wilcken, noted regretfully that the painted Greek inscriptions on the upper register of the obelisk plinth were no longer visible and had fallen victim to the rigours of the English climate. In 2014 we re-examined the obelisk and its inscriptions in the hope of recovering traces of the lost texts, using two new technologies, Reflectance Transformation Imaging RTI and optical 3D scanning,

which would at the same time create digital models of the obelisk for future preservation. The results of our investigation, which coincided with the landing of the European Space Agency's Philae spacecraft on Comet 67P/ Churyumov-Gerasimenko in November 2014, have been published separately in a booklet edited by Dr Jane Masséglia: *The Philae Obelisk. Tales from Egypt, Dorset and Outer Space* (2015: ISBN: 978-0-9576356-2-3).

Inscriptions from the Ptolemaic Empire (CPI II)

A second phase of the CPI project, to extend the Corpus to encompass the inscriptions from the Ptolemaic overseas empire, will begin in 2018, under the direction of Professor Andrew Meadows. Fraser had catalogued, by the mid-1970s when he ceased to collect Ptolemaic inscriptions systematically, c. 225 inscriptions from the Greek mainland, the Aegean islands, Rhodes, the coastal regions of Asia Minor, from Mysia and the Propontis, through the Troad, Aeolis, Ionia, Caria, and along the southern coast to Lycia and Pamphylia, from Cyprus, the Levant (Phoenicia), and Cyrenaica (Libya) in North Africa. The number of inscriptions to be included in a comprehensive corpus has increased considerably in the last 40 years, partly because of new discoveries, not least in Lycia and Cyprus, but also because our sense of what a Ptolemaic corpus should comprise has changed as a result of work on the corpus of Ptolemaic inscriptions from Egypt. This second part of the CPI project will run in parallel with numismatic research on the Ptolemaic empire; its publication online will take advantage of developments in Linked Open Data to bring together for the first time for any ancient imperial space a unified corpus of material pertaining to the economic, political and administrative structures of empire.



The Philae Obelisk: from right to left: its original location in front of the First Great Pylon (gateway) of the temple complex at Philae; its present location, in the grounds of the Kingston Lacy estate in Dorset; the Greek inscription (OGIS 139) on the base of the obelisk; an optical 3D scan of the inscription.

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