

## The *Damnatio Memoriae* of Arsinoë III

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### I. Attested events in Arsinoë III's life:

#### **I.1 Ascension to the throne and marriage:**

“Just about the same time, by the death of Euergetes, Ptolemy Philopator succeeded to the throne of Egypt... in the 139th Olympiad.” (224-220 BCE). (Polyb. 2.71.3)

The date in Polybios is corroborated by papyri *BGU* 6.1275, *BGU* 6.1278, which begin with the dating protocol:

βασιλευόντος Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Πτολεμαίου καὶ Βερενίκης θεῶν Εὐεργετῶν...

In the reign of Ptolemy [IV], son of Ptolemy [III] and Berenike [II], the Benefactor Gods ...

Marriage the following year demonstrated by papyrus, *PDem. Vatic.* 2037B, and others, including the two cited above, where Ptolemy IV and Arsinoë III are listed jointly as the *Theoi Philopatores* (The Father-loving Gods; θεῶν Φιλοπατόρων).

#### **I.2 The dedication of a lock of her hair:**

##### **277. ΔΑΜΑΓΗΤΟΥ.**

Ἄρτεμι, τόξα λαχοῦσα καὶ ἀλκήμεντας δίστους,  
σοὶ πλόκον οἰκείας τόνδε λέλοιπε κόμης  
Ἀρσινόη θυόεν παρ' ἀνάκτορον, ἡ Πτολεμαίου  
παρθένος, ἡμερτοῦ χειραμένη πλοκάμου.

##### **277. DAMAGETÆ.**

Diana, arcus quæ-sortita-es et validas sagittas,  
tibi annulum de propria huncce reliquit coma  
Arsinoe odoratum prope sacrarium, Ptolemæi  
filia-uirgo, ab-amabili illum sibi-detondens cincinnæ.

“To you Artemis, wielder of bow and painful arrows, Arsinoë, the maiden daughter of Ptolemy, shorn of her lovely tress, grants this lock of her own hair in your fragrant shrine” (Damag. *Epigr.* 1= *Anth. Pal.* 6.277)

#### **I.3 Her presence at Raphia:**

“When a bitter fight resulted, and matters were turning out rather in favor of Antiochus, Arsinoë went to the troops with wailing and tears, her locks all disheveled, and exhorted them to defend themselves and their children and wives bravely, promising to give them each two minas of gold if they won the battle.” (3 *Macc.* 1.4; she is also briefly mentioned at 1.1)

“The armies having been drawn up in this fashion, both the kings rode along the line accompanied by their officers and friends, and addressed their soldiers. As they relied chiefly

on the phalanx, it was to these troops that they made the most earnest appeal, Ptolemy being supported by Andromachus, Sosibius and his sister Arsinoë...” (Polyb. 5.83.1-3, 84.1, 87.6)

Corroborated by the Raphia Decree, preserved on the Memphis Stele (CG 31088) and the Pithom Stele, No. II (CG 50048).

#### **I.4 Birth of an heir:**

βασιλεύοντος Πτολεμαίου τοῦ Πτολεμαίου καὶ Βερενίκης θεῶν Εὐεργετῶν καὶ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ υἱοῦ

In the reign of Ptolemy [IV], son of Ptolemy [III] and Berenike [II], the Benefactor Gods, and Ptolemy [V], his son... (*P. Gurob.* 12, dated to 209 BCE)

βασιλεὺς Πτολεμαῖος αἰωνόβιος, ἡγαπημένος ὑπὸ τοῦ Φθᾶ, θεὸς Ἐπιφανῆς Εὐχάριστος, ὁ ἐγ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσσης Ἀρσινόης, θεῶν Φιλοπατόρων...

King Ptolemy [V], Ever-Living Beloved of Ptah, the God Manifest (and) Beneficent, he born of King Ptolemy [IV] and Queen Arsinoe [III], the Father-Loving Gods... (*OGIS* 90)

#### **I.5 Her death:**

“Sosibius, the pretended guardian of Ptolemy [V], appears to have been a dexterous instrument of evil ... He first of all compassed the death of Lysimachus, who was Ptolemy [II]'s son by Arsinoë [I] the daughter of Lysimachus, next that of Magas, son of Ptolemy [III] and Berenice, daughter of Magas, thirdly that of Berenice, mother of Ptolemy [IV] Philopator, fourthly that of Cleomenes of Sparta, and fifthly that of Arsinoë, the daughter of Berenice.” (Polyb. 15.25.1-2)

“Now the real circumstances of Arsinoë's fate became manifest to all. For on her death being made known, everyone began to inquire how she had perished. As there was no other cause assigned when the true report began to reach people's ears, though doubt still subsisted, the truth was impressed on the minds of all, and the people were much stirred in consequence. As for the king, no one cared, but concerning Arsinoë, when some recalled her orphanhood and others the insults and outrages inflicted on her during her whole life, and finally her unhappy death, the people fell into such a state of distraction and affliction that the town was full of groans, tears, and ceaseless lamentation...” (Polyb. 15.25.7-9)

The death of Arsinoe's murderers: “All of them were delivered into the hands of the mob, and now some began to bite them with their teeth, some to stab them and others to dig out their eyes. Whenever one of them fell they tore the body from limb to limb until they had thus mutilated them all. For terrible is the cruelty of the Egyptians when their anger is aroused. At the same time some young girls who had been Arsinoë's close companions, hearing that Philammon, who had directed the queen's murder, had arrived from Cyrene three days before, rushed to his house and forcing an entrance killed Philammon with clubs and stones; strangled his son who was no longer a child, and dragging out his wife naked into the square slew her. (Polyb. 15.33.9-12)

## II. Supplementary evidence of her life, which demonstrates more active rulership:

### **II.1 Treatise by Eratosthenes:**

ὁ Πλούταρχος «Κατὰ τὸ ὅμοιον, ἔφη, καὶ ἐν Ἀλεξανδρείᾳ τῇ ἐμῇ Λαγυνοφόρια ἑορτὴ τις ἦγετο, περὶ ἧς ἱστορεῖ Ἐρατοσθένης ἐν τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ συγγράμματι Ἀρσινόη.

Plutarch said: “To cite a similar case, there used to be celebrated in my native Alexandria also a festival named Flagon-bearing, of which Eratosthenes gives an account in the treatise entitled *Arsinoë*.” (Athen. 7.276A-C; *FGrHist.* 241 F16).

### **II.2 Inscriptions dedicated by private individuals:**

Within Egypt, examples include: *OGIS* I.82, 83, 85, 86, 87, 88; *SEG* 2.827, 20.198; *I.Lindos* 139

*OGIS* 82: Dedicated to king Ptolemaios and queen Arsinoë, the gods Philopatores, and to Sarapis and Isis, by Lichas of Acarnania, the son of Pyrrhos, when he was sent as commander of elephant hunting for the second time.

βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίῳ καὶ βασιλίσση Ἀρσινόῃ, θεοῖς Φιλοπάτορσι, καὶ Σαράπιδι καὶ Ἴσιδι  
Λίχας Πύρρου Ἀκαρνάν, στρατηγὸς ἀποσταλεὶς ἐπὶ τὴν θήραν τῶν ἐλεφάντων τὸ δεύτερον.

*OGIS* 86: On behalf of king Ptolemaios and queen Arsinoë and their son Ptolemaios, the gods Philopatores, the offspring of Ptolemaios and Berenike the gods Euergetai, this was dedicated to Ares Nikephoros Euagros by Alexandros of Oroanda, the son of Syndaios, who was sent as successor to the strategos Charimortos for the hunting of elephants, and by Apoasis of Etenna, the son of Miorbollos, the commander and the soldiers serving under him.

ὑπὲρ βασιλέως Πτολεμαίου καὶ βασιλίσης Ἀρσινόης καὶ Πτολεμαίου τοῦ υἱοῦ, θεῶν  
Φιλοπατόρων, τῶν ἐκ Πτολεμαίου καὶ Βερενίκης θεῶν Εὐεργετῶν, Ἄρηι Νικηφόρῳ Εὐάγρῳ  
Ἀλέξανδρος Συνδαίου Ὀροαννεύς, ὁ συναποσταλεὶς διάδοχος Χαριμόρτῳ τῷ στρατηγῷ ἐπὶ  
τὴν θήραν τῶν ἐλεφάντων, καὶ Ἀπόασις Μιορβόλλου Ἐτεννεὺς ἡγεμῶν καὶ οἱ ὑπ’ αὐτὸν  
τεταγμένοι στρατιῶται.

Examples from Egyptian held territories: *SEG* 18.732 (Cyrene), *OGIS* 84 (Cyprus), *IG* XII 3.1389 and *I. Cret.* III.IV.18 (Thera), *IG* XII *Suppl.* 122 (Lesbos)

*OGIS* 84: The city honours Myrsine daughter of Hyperbassas, the wife of Pelops, son of Pelops, the general of the island, on account of the goodwill which Pelops continually has towards king Ptolemaios and his sister queen Arsinoë, the gods Philopatores, and towards the city of Paphos.

Examples of dedicatory inscriptions outside of Egypt: *IG VII.298* (Boeotia), *SEG 33.674* and *43.561* (Kos), *IG IX.1<sup>2</sup>.202* (Delphi), *IG XII 5.482* (Siphnos), *I. Ephesos II.199* (Ephesus)

*I. Ephesos II.199*: To King Ptolemy [IV] and Queen Arsinoe [III], and to Sarapis and Isis. [...] and the commanders and the soldiers serving on the acropolis, have dedicated the altar for the sacrifices celebrated to them.

Βασιλεῖ Πτολεμαίωι καὶ βασιλίσσηι Ἀρσινόηι καὶ Σαράπιδι καὶ Εἷσιδ[ι.....] καὶ οἱ ἡγεμόνες καὶ οἱ στρατιῶται οἱ τε ταγμένοι ἐπὶ τῇ ἄκραι τὸν βωμὸν ἀνέθηκαν ἐπὶ ταῖς συντελοῦμέναις αὐτοῖς θυσίαις.

Letters at Thespieae- *SEG 46.539*  
P. Roesch, “Les Inscriptions de Thespies,” (2007-2009), vol. IV, nos. 152, 153.

Letter from Arsinoe III, as transcribed by Roesch, shown here →

	[				κατὰ πεν]-
	ταετηρ[ί]δα ἀλλητῶν κ[α]ὶ τραγωιδ[ῶν] κα[ὶ] κωμωδῶ[ν]				
	καὶ συν[ί]στ[η]μι Θε[ο] . . . . . οἱ Συρακοσίωι π[ε]μπομέ[νωι]				
	ὑπὸ τ[οῦ ἀ]δελ[φοῦ				Ε.Σ.
					Ε.Σ.
4	το . . . . . ΤΗΝΑΓ		ο	ν	Ε ΕΙΣ
	Δα[μ]αρ[ε]το				
	πρεσβ[ε]υ[τ] ----- ca. 16 ----- προ[α]ίρεσίν μου δη-				
	λῶσαι . Ι . . . . . ΣΝ . ΕΠ . . . . Α [ε]ἰς τὸ [λ]οιπὸ[ν]				
8	καὶ ὑμῖν καὶ τοῖς [ἄ]λλοις [Ἑ]λ[λ]ήσιν [τ]οῖς Τ . . . Π . . . τοῖ				
	. . . ἡμῶν εὐνο[ι] - -				ΝΗ . ΩΣ συντη-
	ροῦσι φανερὰν ποιεῖν [				Ἑρρω]σθε. vac.

### II. 3 Raphia Decree:

Text from the Decree describing the Raphia Donative “... he [Ptolemy IV] had already taken on huge expense for his military expedition, giving golden wreaths to his army to the amount of 300,000 gold pieces.”

The victory credited to the phalanx by Polybius (5.86.1): “Ptolemy having thus obtained a decisive victory by his phalanx...”

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