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## LAND-MISTRESSES IN GRAECO-ROMAN EGYPT

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### ABSTRACT

*Women during the Graeco-Roman Period held many important positions and had many types of occupations. Agricultural occupations were among the most significance works of women. She works at the field as a labour as well as she owns the field as the land-mistress. This paper aims to highlight the role of women as land mistress in Graeco-Roman Egypt through displaying examples of successful land-mistress, explaining their land management and clarifying their economical impact during Greek and Roman periods in Egypt. This study depends on analyzing methodology of documents from family archives and other documentary sources. Results of this study reveals the women had economic impact as a landowner and this impact varied through time because she lost a lot of her legal rights during the Roman Period.*

**KEYWORDS:** Land-mistress; female owners; Greek and Roman Periods; Egypt.

### INTRODUCTION

Women through ages were very important element in the development of countries. She was the major key in forming domestic and public life. Queens played a very important role in peace and in war. The non-royal women had many occupations of daily life such as dancers, musicians, weavers, servants, brewers, nurses and others. They also played important roles in the temple rituals. She was also honored in the Ancient Egyptian literature and art as a mother and wife. She held many administrative titles but evidently not as much as men<sup>1</sup>. Elite women participated in the economy of Ptolemaic Egypt greater than any other Greek society. The documentary evidences of the papyri tell us far more about the economic

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<sup>1</sup> El-Kilany, E., 2007, Scenes Depicting Female Occupations in Ancient Egypt at the private tombs from the Old Kingdom till the End of the New Kingdom, Unpublished PhD theses, Minia University, Egypt, p.5.

impact of the agricultural lives of women than we can deduce from any literary evidence.<sup>2</sup>

The household in an economic term includes the property, both productive resources and the home itself. Household management refers to many activities such as sowing fields, dealing with tenants, selling animals, purchasing land and the other domestic house work such as cleaning, washing, cooking, children car, etc....<sup>3</sup>

This paper aims to highlight the role of women as land mistress in Graeco-Roman Egypt through displaying examples of successful land-mistress, explaining their land management, exploring their activities and clarifying their economical impact during Greek and Roman periods in Egypt. This study depends on analyzing methodology of documents such as contracts, wills, sale, and letters. Many of these documents come from family archives.

### **WOMEN IN GRAECO- ROMAN EGYPT**

Egyptian women in ancient Egyptian traditions had a strong legal position. They could engage in business transactions without a guardian, they inherited from their father (even real estate), they had to give their approval to marriage, and during their marriage they keep full rights to their properties. Greek women in the classical period had hardly any legal independency and were under the protection of a male guardian or *kyrios*: their father, their husband after their marriage, or another relative when they were widow.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the Ptolemaic kings respected the Egyptian culture and traditions. People, whether Greek or Egyptian, could choose between Greek and Demotic contracts. These Demotic contracts continued Egyptian traditions, so women did not need a guardian, but Greek contracts continued Greek traditions as women had to be supported by a male guardian.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Pomeroy, S. B., 1984, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt, from Alexander to Cleopatra*, New York, p. 163

<sup>3</sup> Bagnal, R.S and Cribior, R., *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300B.C-800 AD*, Michigan Press, 2008, p. 79

<sup>4</sup> Gould, J. 1980. *Law, Custom and Myth: Aspects of the Social Position of Women in Classical Athens*. *JHS* 100: 38-59.

<sup>5</sup> Vandorpe, K. 2002. *Apollonia, a Businesswoman in a Multicultural Society (Pathyris, 2nd–1st centuries BC)*. In *Le rôle et le statut de la femme en Égypte hellénistique, romaine et byzantine*. *StudHell* 37, eds. H. Melaerts and L. Mooren, 325-336.

Unfortunately the ancient Egyptian women who had in Pharaonic times a comfortable legal position are the losers during the Roman period<sup>6</sup>. As the domination of the Greek language had already begun under Ptolemaic rule, the Romans chose to keep only the Greek administration on all levels. As for the legal position of local women, Roman policy led to the disappearance of Egyptian written contracts and Egyptian traditions, and to a stronger Hellenization, including the preservation of Greek guardianship<sup>7</sup>.

### **WOMEN AS PROPERTY OWNERS IN GRAECO-ROMAN EGYPT**

During Graeco-Roman Period, land ownership is very important in a country such as Egypt that is based on an agricultural economy. Land owners are privileged people. As Egypt being an agricultural economy, ownership of land was the base to a significant and powerful role in society. The degree to which women were land-mistresses, and the freedom with which they could use and dispose of any land, or indeed any property, they owned would give some suggestion of the status of women in Egyptian society, their place in their families, and their abilities and powers within the economy, especially in relation to those of men.<sup>8</sup>

It is hard to find out whether the role of women as property owners is merely a mask for the economic activities of the men in their households, or whether women really did function in their own capacities and in their own financial interests. In fact women were able to receive property from their families through dowry and inheritance, but were not legally responsible to the poll tax nor to the same range of liturgical functions as men, their ability to obtain property would seem to have been in theory at least as great as that of men, while their possible liabilities may well have

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<sup>6</sup> Vandorpe, K and Waebens, S., 2010, Women and Gender in Roman Egypt The Impact of Roman Rule, in *Tradition and Transformation: Egypt under Roman Rule*, , 415-435.

<sup>7</sup> Méléze-Modrzejewski, J. 1988. "La loi des Égyptiens": le droit grec dans l'Égypte romaine". In *Proceedings of the XVIII International Congress of Papyrology*, Athens, 25- 31 May 1986. Vol. II. Greek Papyrological Society, ed. B.G. Mandilaras, 383- 399. Athens.

<sup>8</sup> O'Brien, A.,1999. *Egyptian Women in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt*, The Economic and Legal Activities of Women in Demotic Texts, Chicago University.

been considerably fewer<sup>9</sup>. It has been documented that women owned, houses, lands, grain stocks, camels, Flocks of Sheep and Goats.<sup>10</sup>

### **LAND- MISTRESS IN PTOLEMAIC EGYPT**

The early Ptolemaic kings were responsible for chief agricultural developments in Egypt, producing better strains of wheat and vine, and extending and improving the quality of the agricultural land. Women's participation in these developments, and access to the possession of agricultural land in their own right, was limited by the conditional system of land tenure. Much land was owed in temporary grants to groups who performed certain important functions within the state: thus, soldiers received allotments (kleroi) of kleruchic land.<sup>11</sup>

Although it would be difficult to keep that many women had "careers" in the modern sense of the term, except in a very few specialized areas, the evidence from Egypt suggests that women's agricultural activities were not restricted to circumstances in which they were either working as slaves or working because they needed to do so in order to survive. They must also have supplied much routine labour in contexts which do not find description in the written evidence.<sup>12</sup>

During the Ptolemaic period, Upper Egypt remained a chiefly Egyptian location despite some Greek influence from military units. Egyptian women are found throughout the Ptolemaic period possessing arable land in their own right, and women are regularly documented in Egyptian, and later also Greek, contracts, buying or selling, inheriting, and leasing arable land<sup>13</sup>. Even in Lower Egypt, not only queens,<sup>11</sup> but also non-royal women possess vineyards.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hobson, D., 1983, *Women as Property Owners in Roman Egypt*, in *Transactions of the American Philological Association*, Vol. 113 (1983), pp. 311-321, Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press, : <https://www.jstor.org/ accessed 20.2.2019>

<sup>10</sup> Shawky, L., 2010, "Female Occupations in Egypt during the Greek and Roman periods, Unpublished MA thesis, Minia University, Egypt, , pp.54-46.

<sup>11</sup> Rowlandson, J., 1995, *Beyond the Polis: Women and Economic Opportunity in early Ptolemaic Egypt*, in A.Powell (ed.), *The Greek World*, London, , pp. 301-322.

<sup>12</sup> Rowlandson, J., 1996, "Landowners and Tenants in Roman Egypt: the Social Relations of Agriculture in the Oxyrhynchite Nome, Oxford, pp. 193-200.

<sup>13</sup> Rowlandson, J., 1989, "Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt", in *A Sourcebook*. Cambridge. pp.219-220

<sup>14</sup> Pomeroy, S. B., 1984, "Women in Hellenistic Egypt, from Alexander to Cleoptra", New York, p. 104.

## **EXAMPLES OF LAND- MISTRESS IN PTOLEMAIC EGYPT**

### **EIRENE DAUGHTER OF ORPHEUS**

Eirene daughter of Orpheus is the most striking example as she possessed a vineyard and garden on royal and gift estate land in the Arsinoite "model-town" of Philadelphia. She is one of few female land-mistress from the Ptolemaic period whose activities are known from more than one text<sup>15</sup>. By 185/184 B.C., Eirene was in possession of the crown land and gift-estate, consisting of vineyards, orchard and garden land. In 183/ 182, she leased the crops of the orchard to Leontiskos and his partners in return for their paying the state dues on this land. Eirene seems to have been a well-to-do woman, who may be educated and appears to manage her own business actively, hiring labourers to work on the vintage, and keeping detailed accounts.<sup>16</sup>

### **APOLLONIA WIFE OF DRYTON**

Apollonia, also called Senmonthis, lived in Pathyris.<sup>17</sup> When a garrison was established at Pathyris, around 150 B.C., Apollonia married a cavalry officer named Dryton. (Soldiers were attractive as husbands, for they constituted a privileged class). He immediately wrote a short will (P.Bad. II 5), now fragmentary, in which he named Apollonia and his son by a former marriage as his beneficiaries.<sup>18</sup> Apollonia was a lender— as far as the extant documents indicate — and never a borrower. The archives include a few papyri recording Apollonia's financial transactions. In 136 B.C., she leased 35 arouras (or a portion thereof) of land belonging to a temple of Hathor (P.Giss. II 37). Two documents that must be dated before 135 B.C. indicate that she planted grain. One (P.Heid. dem. 739a = P.Heid. N.F. IV 25) records her loan of grain to a veteran, and another (P. Grenf. I 15, 16 verso) is an account of Senmonthis concerning barely. Four years later, she made a loan of 35 artabs of wheat to her sister Heraïs and her brother-in-law Apollonius (P.Grenf. I 18).<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> P. Mich. III, 182.

<sup>16</sup> Rostovtzeff, M., 1922, "A Large Estate in Egypt in The Third Century B.C"., Madison, pp. 8-16

<sup>17</sup> Vandorpe, K., Apollonia: A Business Woman in Multicultural Society, in: Henri M./ Mooren, L.,(eds.) *La Role et La Statue de La Femme en Egypte Héllenistique, Romaine et Byzantine*, Paris, 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Pomeroy, S. B., *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, pp. 103-105.

<sup>19</sup> Preaux, C., 1978, 'Le Monde Hellénistique: La Grèce et L'Orient', vol. 2, Paris, p. 364

### **TATEHATHYRIS WIFE OF TATOES**

The documents relating to Tatehathyris were preserved with the family archive of her husband Tatoes, discovered in two pots at Deir el Medina in 1905. Tatehathyris (born 129 B.C.) married Totoes early in 109 B.C. her father Psenminis had died the previous autumn, and on 8 May, she and her brother Pikos (born 136-134 B.C.) drew up a division of their father's land. Pikos received two-thirds of the paternal inheritance, the double portion accorded to an eldest son by Egyptian custom, assuming responsibility for organizing their father's funeral arrangements and for two-thirds of the cost. Tatehathyris' share of the inheritance was the 7 ½ arouras known as the "point". Tatehathyris rent it out for two years. However, on 20 October 109, another rent was made for the same land by Totoes to a different tenant, a woman, without any indication that the land belonged to his wife, not to himself! The next year Tatehathyris leased the land, along with other property, to her brother.<sup>20</sup>

### **RHODOKLEIA, THE DAUGHTER OF A CAVALRY KLERUCH**

In Herakleopolite nome, mid-first century B.C., a petition to the strategos by Rhodokleia,<sup>21</sup> the daughter of a cavalry kleruch, in which, refers to her succession to her father's property, including his kleros, demonstrates that before the end of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt a daughter's succession to her father's kleros in the absence of male heirs was officially permitted.<sup>22</sup>

### **LAND-MISTRESS IN ROMAN EGYPT**

Women in the Roman period could play an active role in agriculture. Women are documented responsible for different types of agricultural work for wages. Women often let their land out to strong male tenants from the village. In contrast, it apparently remained extremely rare for women to undertake a tenancy of agricultural land. Although leasing of land by women to male tenants was not uncommon.<sup>23</sup> The Roman administration faced a dilemma in its policy towards land-mistress. Male landlords were required to cultivate, or at least to pay the taxes on, unproductive public land. Women were officially exempted from this burden on the grounds of their weakness and unsuitability to agricultural tasks; yet some women evidently did not find agricultural management

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<sup>20</sup> Pestman, W., 1978, "The Land "The Point" in the Domain of Pesenmenophi, Texts grecs, démotiques, et bilingues (Pap. Lugd.Bat. XXI), Leiden, pp. 193- 205

<sup>21</sup> SB VIII 9790

<sup>22</sup> Rowlandson, J., *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, p. 230.

<sup>23</sup> Bagnall, R., 1993, "Egypt in Late Antiquity:", Percento University press, p. 121.

beyond their capabilities, and particularly by the third and fourth centuries A.D., there were women who clearly derived enormous wealth from agriculture and associated activities.<sup>24</sup>

### **EXAMPLES OF LAND-MISTRESS IN ROMAN EGYPT**

#### **HERO SISTER OF LYSIMCHOS**

It is transference of a vineyard by Lysimchos to his sister Hero,<sup>25</sup> Tebtynis, 38 A.D. This text, preserved in an archive from the Tebtynis record office from the mid-first century A.D. Hero daughter of Lysimachos had five brothers, and was married to one of them, Didymos the younger in 35- 36 A.D. Didymos transferred to Hero some arable land in return for a price which included part of the dowry which the couple had received from their father.<sup>26</sup>

#### **AURELIA CHARITE**

Charite daughter of Amazonios was among the wealthiest landowners in fourth-century Hermopolis, with estates of around 500 arouras. Several of her tenants were by no means peasants themselves, but were either councillors of Hermopolis, or soldiers from a local military unit. Charite was literate and also possessed the right to dispense with a guardian<sup>27</sup>

#### **PTOLEMAIS DAUGHTER OF AGENOR**

She bids to buy confiscated property on behalf of her daughter in P.Turner 24, Oxyrhynchus, 148-154 A.D. Ptolemais daughter of Agenor applies to the Strategos to purchase sixteen arouras of confiscated katoikic land on behalf of her daughter, Claudia Areia. A motive for this purchase appears to be consolidation of their property; either mother or daughter already owns the neighboring land on all sides. But the purchase may be made in the name of her daughter as a means of the girl's provision for a future marriage.<sup>28</sup>

**SARA DAUGHTER OF MENIAS:**<sup>29</sup> A Jewish woman in Egypt, A landowner of vineyards, 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.D. In P.Tebt. 838 fr. 1. 1. 3 = CP Jud. I. 41.

### **LETTERS DISPLAYING LAND MISTRESS MANAGEMENT TO THEIR LANDS**

<sup>24</sup> Rowlandson, J., *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, p. 221

<sup>25</sup> P. Mich. V 266.

<sup>26</sup> P. Mich. V 262

<sup>27</sup> Bagnall, R., *Egypt in Late Antiquity*, p. 247

<sup>28</sup> Rowlandson, J., *Landowners and Tenants in Roman Egypt: The Social Relations of Agriculture in the Oxyrhynchite Nome*, pp. 193-200

<sup>29</sup> مصطفى كمال عبد العليم، اليهود في مصر في عصر البطالمة والرومان، كلية الآداب، جامعة القاهرة ١٩٦٨، ص ٣٣٥.

In Roman Egypt women may have been a fifth of landowners, perhaps as many a third in some localities. They supervised the management of their own estates and gave orders to their caretakers. Seven letters (from five different female land-mistresses) are identifiably addressed to such managers, including instructions regarding the management of their properties. In (P.Oxy. 14.1758), Diogenis tells her manager to take care of unsettled business and keep a renter away from fertilizer. In (PSI 1.95), a land-mistress sends a letter to her manager to inquire whether or not he received wheat or a pledge and to find out what places are ready for sowing. Women also showed more direct action in estate management.<sup>30</sup>

A letter of Arsione to Sarapias about rent-collecting from Oxyrhynchos, second-third century A.D., in P.Oxy 33.2680, Arsinoe tells her sister Sarapias that she will try to collect her rents if the roads are safe. This letter was from one woman to a close relative or friend. It is worthy to suggest that a land-mistress might go in person to collect rent from a tenant.<sup>31</sup>

A letter of Klematia, the land-mistress, manager at Sadalou, for whom Papnouthis worked, we can see women involved in the details of economic affairs and agricultural management. It might be dated to the mid-fourth century A.D. 53 Another letter from Thais the land-mistress to a male estate manager Thais writes to a male friend or relative, or more probably her estate manager, in (P.Oxy. 6.932) Oxyrhynchus, late second century A.D., she gives instructions about various agricultural matters to her manager, including measuring out grain for taxes and an order not to sell the piglets without her<sup>32</sup>.

## **DISCUSSION**

Women in the Graeco-Roman Egypt seemed to enjoy owing different types of properties such as houses, lands, crops and animals. The most significant and documented of them were the houses and agricultural lands. The documentary evidence of papyri either, wills, contracts or letters gives us many data about the relation between economy and the agricultural activities of women during that period.<sup>33</sup> Women owned a significant portion of the land, may have been a fifth of landowners, perhaps as many

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<sup>30</sup> Bagnall, R.S. / Criore, R., *Women's Letters From Ancient Egypt, 300 B.C.-800 A.D.*, p. 80.

<sup>31</sup> Rowlandson, J., *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, pp. 235- 236.

<sup>32</sup> *Op.cit*, pp. 235- 236.

<sup>33</sup> Pomeroy, S., *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, p. 163

a third in some localities. Land-mistresses were handling the management of their own estates and gave orders to their caretakers.<sup>34</sup>

This study displayed more than fifteen documents highlights many examples of land-mistresses during the Graeco-Roman Egypt. It also clarifies the different aspects of the land management by their female owners. Documents in Ptolemaic period such as the arrangement for the management of garden land belonging to Eirene daughter of Orpheus, the will of soldier Dryton in which he named Apollonia and his son as his beneficiaries, Apollonia's financial transactions, the paternal inheritance of Tatehathyris and the land "The Point", West Thebes (Memnoneia) and her rental contracts to others, a Sale of arable land by three women, a petition to the Strategos by Rhodokleia, the daughter of a cavalry kleruch, in which, refers to her succession to her father's property. While in the Roman period the documents were for example a conveyance of a vineyard by Lysimchos to his sister Hero, a woman bids to purchase confiscated property on behalf of her daughter, letters from different land-mistresses are addressed to their managers, including instructions regarding the maintenance of their lands.

Analyzing the previous documents of land mistresses revealed certain facts concerning this topic. Although there were different cultures and traditions concerning the legal rights of women during the Graeco-Roman Egypt, the Ptolemaic role respected the Egyptian culture and traditions. Greek or Egyptian could choose between Greek and Demotic contracts as Demotic contracts continued Egyptian traditions, so women did not need a guardian.<sup>35</sup> While During the Roman period women lost many of her previous rights.

Most of land-mistresses of the ruling class like Apollonia preferred to use Demotic in their contracts, because of the position of women in Egyptian law. The Greek law required that women act with a male as *kyrios* (guardian) or (keeper judicial). Egyptian law regarded women as capable of acting in their own behalf. Some women who were not members of the ruling class adopted the legal disabilities of Greek women as part of the process of assimilation. Thus, Jewish women living in Egypt acted with *kyrios*, although Jewish law, which they were permitted to use in Egypt,

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<sup>34</sup> Bagnall, R.S./ Crihiore, R., *Women's Letters From Ancient Egypt, 300 B.C.-800 A.D.*, p. 80.

<sup>35</sup> 11 Demotic contracts had to be registered in a Greek registration office from about 145 BC onwards, see Pestman 1985, 17-25. 12 However, husbands may have been involved in transactions by Egyptian women who went to the temple notary, see Pestman 1995, 79-87.

did not require women over the age of twelve to employ guardians'<sup>36</sup>. In Greek contracts, for example, Tatehathyris appears with a male guardian as the law required. In Egyptian legal transactions, women needed no guardian; some scholars have shown that in reality a male was sometimes present. It appears that before her marriage, or in transactions with other family members, Tatehathyris herself was formally a contracting party, even if she was actually accompanied or represented by a man, while after her marriage with Totoes often simply acted in her stead in dealings with outsiders.<sup>37</sup>

It was common during that time to find women from different classes own agricultural land. Women possessing of agricultural land through different ways were such as inheritance and purchase. Another way of the gaining of agricultural land to women, that although agricultural land was not included in the core of the bride's dowry, in the Roman period it was occasionally given as a supplementary element. The desire to provide for a daughter's future marriage may also have motivated purchases of land by parents on behalf of their daughters. According to the rules of intestate inheritance, women inherited private land on the same terms as other property; and this was no doubt a major factor in explaining the extensive ownership of land by women such as the case of Hero sister of Lysimchos.<sup>38</sup>

By the first century B.C., a major change had begun to take place in the tenure of kleruchic land, which before the end of the Ptolemaic period had become heritable, not only by sons who could be expected to take over the obligations of military service associated with it, but also by daughters. It was, however, left to the Roman administration when Egypt became a Roman province in 30 B.C. to take the final step and make kleruchic land fully private property (now called katoikic land), along with certain other categories of land, for instance "bought land" (eonemene). This facilitated the wide-scale acquisition of agricultural land by women, both bought inheritance and by purchase.<sup>39</sup>

It is hard to determine whether the role of women is a mask for the economic activities of the men in their households, or whether women actually did function by their own and in their own financial interests.

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<sup>36</sup> Pomeroy, S. B., *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, p. 51

<sup>37</sup> Pestman, W., *Appearance and Reality in Written Contracts; Evidence from Bilingual Family Archives*, in Geller, M., G./ Maehler, H., (ed.), *Legal Documents of the Hellenistic world*, London, 1995, 79-87.

<sup>38</sup> Pomeroy, S. B., *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, p. 114

<sup>39</sup> Rowlandson, J., *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, pp. 228-229.

Documents indicate that women's possessions were indeed their own, and that the basis of their economic position was their right to share in the property of their families through dowry or inheritance.<sup>40</sup>

Land-mistress involved in the details of economic affairs and agricultural management. She gives instructions about various agricultural matters to her manager, including measuring out grain for taxes and an order not to sell the piglets without her.<sup>41</sup>

Egyptian and Greek contracts documented that Land-mistress were managing their land in their own right by many ways such as renting, buying, selling or inheriting. Although renting land from other were not common.<sup>42</sup>

It is significant in suggesting that a woman might go in person to collect rent from a tenant, as well as in its implication of the very extensive use of letter-writing, for communication not only between the two women, but also between them and the tenant.<sup>43</sup>

It is worthy to mention that there are many examples of educated land-mistresses such as Eirene and Charits. Eirene seems to have been a well-to-do woman, who may be educated and appears to manage her own business actively, hiring labourers to work on the vintage, and keeping detailed accounts.<sup>44</sup> Charite was literate and also possessed the right to dispense with a guardian.<sup>45</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Land-mistress in Graeco-Roman Egypt played very important role in economy as there are many documented examples of them confirm their role such as contracts, wills and letters.

Results of analyzing those documents revealed many important data concerning land-mistress in Graeco-Roman Egypt. Women were land mistress through inheritance, dowry and purchase. They had the right to buy, sell, and rent to others. Moreover, they could give their lands as a dowry or inheritance to their sons and daughters.

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<sup>40</sup> Hobson, D., *Women as Property Owners in Roman Egypt*, p 314.

<sup>41</sup> Bagnall, R. S./ Cribiore, R., *Women's Letters From Ancientgypt, 300 B.C.- 800 A.D.*, p. 80.

<sup>42</sup> Rowlandson,J., *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt*, pp.219-220

<sup>43</sup> *Op.cit*, pp. 235- 236

<sup>44</sup> Rostovtzeff, M., *A Large Estate in Egypt*, pp. 8-16

<sup>45</sup> Bagnall, R., *Egypt in Latentiquity*, p. 247

Most of land-mistresses preferred to use Demotic in their contracts, because of the position of women in Egyptian law as Demotic contracts continued Egyptian traditions, so women did not need a guardian.

Documents indicate that women's possessions were indeed their own and the economic role of land-mistresses was definitely authentic, but that it derived quite directly from the female right to share in the property of her own family by dowry and inheritance. Land-mistress involved in the details of economic affairs and agricultural management they were handling the management of their own estates and gave orders to their caretakers.

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