PhD Thesis

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FORMAL AND INFORMAL SOCIAL CONTROL IN THE SOCIETY OF PTOLEMAIC EGYPT

i.   RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The goal of the present doctoral thesis is to investigate and examine the way people dealt with the judicial system, whether it was inclusive or exclusive and by what other means people could resolve their interpersonal disputes in the society of Ptolemaic Egypt through the lens of papyrology, and specifically: petitions, official correspondence and reports of court proceedings. These questions will lead to important insights into the society of Hellenistic Egypt as regards to the distribution of power, whether other networks -such as family, religion, work and age hierarchies-imposed social control on the people's lives and which was the place of the poor, the peasants and women in the legal system and further within the community.

ii.   METHODOLOGY

The approach that will be used departs from Benjamin Kelly's marvelous *"Petitions, Litigation and Social control in Roman Egypt"*[1]. In the words of Kelly this approach can be named 'social control' approach, because it seeks to define the place of the legal system into various systems of social control that are formal as well as informal. It does not merely answer how the legal system resolved the disputes, as the 'dispute-resolution' approach[2].

Benjamin Kelly draws from James Chriss, who defines 'social control' as *"all those resources available by which members of society attempt to assure the norm-conforming behavior of others"*[3]. Concerning the society of Ptolemaic Egypt, these resources are informal control and legal control.

Legal control is the criminal justice system and its three main 'subsystems': police, courts and law and correctional procedures and institutions. Informal control is the mechanisms and practices of everyday life that impose the group's will on the will and the behavior of the individual[4]. These mechanisms are systems as the family, religion, age and work hierarchies as well as ideological systems. In a few words, informal control is comprised of the practices that these institutions and ideological systems use in order to control the deviant behavior of their members and avoid violent and destructive conflicts*"*[5].

All in all, I will examine the mechanisms of social control that existed in Ptolemaic Egypt. As stated above, these mechanisms vary from formal (viz. petitioning and litigation) to informal ones (viz. family, religion, working and age hierarchies) and I will shed light on various aspects of this society's everyday life.

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[1]Kelly B. *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt*. Oxford University Press; 2011.
[2]Kelly 2011, p. 16
[3]Chris 2007, p. 41
[4]ibid., p. 44-5
[5]Kelly 2011, p. 17

iii.   THE THESIS' STRUCTURE

A. INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER 1: The time limits of papyrology, papyri in Greek, introductory facts concerning the field of papyrology[6].

CHAPTER 2: The chronological and geographical span of our investigation. The documents that will be used.

CHAPTER 3: Status Quaestionis (=the state of the investigation). Imposing modern questions on ancient material[7], juristic papyrology and its contribution in the examination of Ptolemaic society.

CHAPTER 4: Methodological tools that will be used. Methodological challenges.

B. FORMAL CONTROL

CHAPTER 1 – The administrational system and the legal procedures in Ptolemaic Egypt
In this chapter, I will analyze the administrational system and the legal procedures of Ptolemaic Egypt. Some of the questions that I will answer are: Who were the representatives of the state? Which role did they play and what kind of matters did they address? How are they linked with the judicial system? Were they or not in direct contract with the king? To whom they gave account? Were they easily accessible by the people or not?

CHAPTER 2 – The efficiency of the legal system and its impact on the people's lives
Questions to be answered: Did the complaints filed to the authorities eventually came before a court? Did the petitions end in firm judgments which were then successfully imposed? Was the criminal justice system efficient? Did the people trust in it and tend to use it or was it the last refuge when all the other means of resolving disputes had proved
inefficient? The answer in these questions would definitely lead us to examine the distribution of power in these societies, whether the judicial system was efficient or other social networks (e.g. the family, religion, working and age hierarchies) tended to exercise social control on the people's lives.

CHAPTER 3 – The profile of the petitioners and litigants
Questions to be answered: which crimes did they perform and whether the language of their petition depicts their social and economic status

Sub-chapter a: Who were the petitioners and litigants? Were they come from, their origin, ethnicity and economic status. Is any ethnic or economic group over- or underrepresented?

Sub-chapter b: Are the litigants' profile real or many of the details they give for themselves are made up? Do their stories depict what actually happened or are they a narration constructed for the sake of the judges?

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[6]For extended introduction on papyrology viz. Παπαθωμάς 2016 and Turner 1968
[7]Viz. Bagnall 1995

gender, civic statuses, occupations, land tenure, domiciles and details about their previous engagement with the justice system are largely accurate while the narratives concerning the motivations, the circumstances of the wrong and the values assigned to property are likely to be inaccurate[8]. We shall see if the same is true for Ptolemaic Egypt.

Sub-chapter c: What do the litigants complain about? Is there a strong linkage between the type of complain with the litigant's social status and gender?

Sub-chapter d: The language of the papyri. Does the language used by those having the same background share some common characteristics? Is the language used by the poor, the peasants and women essentially different from those representing the higher social and economic strata?

CHAPTER 4 – <u>The rhetoric of the papyri as a means of perpetuating the Ptolemaic ideology</u>
What certain phrases and the way the speeches are structured can reveal us about the state's concern to impose social control on the individuals?

C. INFORMAL CONTROL

CHAPTER 5– <u>Social control imposed by informal networks</u>
Some people submitted petitions not in an attempt to resolve their private matters but on behalf of groups of which they were a part. Did this practice help to reinforce the solidarity among these groups and thus resolve the interpersonal disputes? Could we support that this was a way to maintain and perpetuate the established social order?

CHAPTER 6 – <u>The informal network's functionality and effectiveness</u>
Do the social networks mentioned above function as the catalysts of resolving disputes? Is the legal system the last refuge when the social networks could not address the problem? Can we support that by going to the law, there were better chances of a problem to be solved within the social networks?

D. CONCLUSION & COMPARISON

CHAPTER 7 – <u>Conclusions</u>

CHAPTER 8 – <u>Social control in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt: similarities and differences</u>

Comparison of my conclusions about social control in Ptolemaic Egypt with Kelly's conclusions. Is distribution of power and the role of formal and informal control essentially the same in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt or are there any differences? How does this affect the everyday life of the people?

   iv.   **TIMELINE**

1st year: Research on and gathering of the papyrological material that will be used as primary sources.
2nd year-3rd year: Research on the secondary literature concerning the combined study of papyrology with modern social theory. Writing of the thesis.

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[8] Kelly 2011, p. 38

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