

In this paper, I examine one aspect of the power relations between invaders and a subject population by looking at the integration of indigenous soldiers, usually called *machimoi*, into the army in Egypt. I propose a new interpretation of the changing role of the *machimoi* within Egyptian society. By contrasting Herodotus' account with later documentary sources revealing the Ptolemaic policy concerning indigenous soldiers, I illuminate the strong integration of Egyptian soldiers into the army from the second century onwards and its impact on Egyptian society.

My argument has three components and is based on a holistic approach to the sources including Greek literary sources, Egyptian papyri from the Late Period (664-332 BCE), Greek and Demotic papyri from Hellenistic Egypt (323-30 BCE), and Greek inscriptions. First, I propose a new interpretation of the passage of Herodotus concerning the *machimoi* (II 164-167) and the organization of Egyptian society into seven classes. Second, I suggest that the Ptolemaic *machimoi* were not directly related to the so-called *machimoi* of the Late Period. Third, I argue that the *machimoi* were not at the bottom of the social ladder of Ptolemaic society as is commonly thought. A survey of recent scholarship on the *machimoi* (Winnicki 1992; Goudriaan 1988; Thissen 1994; Vittmann 1998) and of the different ways to understand Herodotus' account and Ptolemaic sources enables me to question some assumptions and to propose these new interpretations.

First, I argue that the documentary sources from the Late Period show that the term *machimoi* cannot designate all the members of the Egyptian army, as Herodotus suggests it, and as is generally accepted by historians (e.g., Lloyd 1988). Moreover, Herodotus' statements on the number of these so-called *machimoi* and his description of soldiers' land tenure can be refined by information from earlier hieratic papyri. Second, though Greek literary sources attest that Egyptians were already employed in the Ptolemaic army in the late fourth and third centuries, they do not refer to these soldiers as *machimoi*; in the papyri of the third century BC *machimoi* have most often guard duties (rather than regular army duties). Consequently there can be no identification of Herodotus' *machimoi* with Ptolemaic *machimoi*. The only connection to be found is between the *Kalasiries* – who constitute more than half of Herodotus' *machimoi* and are equivalent to Egyptian *gl-šr.w* with high police functions in the Late Period – and the Egyptian *gl-šr.w* or Greek *phylakitai* (policemen) appearing in Demotic and Greek census lists of the third century (Clarysse and Thompson 2006). In the second half of the third century positive evidence appears for *machimoi* granted with land, and the category seems largely, though not exclusively, composed of Egyptians, with army functions that are well attested from the reign of Ptolemy V (204-180 BC). Finally, a survey of the possessions of *machimoi* reveals that their socio-economic status was probably better than usually thought, since the image of the poor *machimoi* is mainly based on a petition (UPZ I 110) and a group of texts from Kerkeosiris (Crawford: 1971); both pieces of evidence stem from periods of crisis that affected the entire population.

This paper offers a new perspective on the impact of indigenous soldiers on Egyptian society. My analysis of the full range of ancient sources illuminates the changing role of the *machimoi* according to political contexts, the fluctuations in their socio-economic position, and finally the integration of Egyptian soldiers into the Ptolemaic army.