



Research Project

Living in a man's world: Reading the lives of women in the private correspondence from a Roman fort in Egypt's Eastern Desert

Third-party funded project

Project title Living in a man's world: Reading the lives of women in the private correspondence from a Roman fort in Egypt's Eastern Desert

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Status Active

As surprising as it may seem, the Roman forts (praesidia) in the Eastern Desert of Egypt were not only occupied by men. Of course, the main population was made up of soldiers and male civilians, but the documents found there tell us about the presence of women alongside them. The Krokodilô fort, excavated between 1996 and 1997, provides us a particularly rich documentation on the subject. Indeed, many ostraca

(inscribed sherd ; it is the preferred writing medium in the desert, as it is cheaper than papyrus and easy to obtain) are letters written in Greek and addressed or related to women. The research project consists in deciphering and editing for the first time a set of 129 unedited documents from Krokodilô, dated at the beginning of the 2nd century A.D., and in analyzing the data that will come from it in order to have a better understanding of the existence that these women could lead, as wives, mothers, sisters or daughters of the men in the camp, or sometimes as prostitutes, but also as proper individuals. These documents will provide new evidences of the roles and positions they could hold, of their occupations, of the relations they had with the men of the fort and with those of the other praesidia, but also with each other, in short of the daily life of the women of the Roman camps of the Egyptian Eastern Desert at the beginning of the 2nd century.

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