NOW that the so-called "legal code of Hermopolis" has been published, we can eventually assess some aspects of ancient Egyptian jurisprudence\(^1\). This text, however, does not particularly provide illumination on female citizens as property owners. It is therefore indispensable to tackle the subject by working our way through the mass of documents published to date, such as private agreements and official records. In so doing, we shall actually be better off, since we will be brought into direct contact with situations primarily concerning everyday undertakings; thus we shall be given more insight into the daily affairs of the people. Nevertheless, I will consider in my paper neither marriage settlements, nor documents relating to inheritance, both categories being adequately discussed in the literature\(^2\)). The ultimate aim of my study is rather focus on other texts, the bulk of which is written in demotic, with only a few in cur-

\(^{1}\) Cf. my "Réflexions sur le 'Code légal' d'Hermopolis dans l'Égypte ancienne"", in: CEF vol. 61, 1986, p. 50 ff.

sive hieratic; the series of documents under review are largely self-explanatory).

Upon looking at our sources, which derive essentially from private archives, we are left with the impression that women used to play a considerable part when agreements about property rights were to be negotiated by individuals. In such agreements women could be accorded not only a passive role, receiving items of property for example, but could also themselves confer property rights on others. Here I should like to stress that comparison with men’s rights is not intended, as it is beyond the scope of the present study to establish the extent of feminine activities in society or to investigate the question of how extensively Egyptian society may have been “feminized”.

3) In contrast to my brief survey an analytic study has already appeared: S. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt: From Alexander to Cleopatra*, 1984. The author is a papyrologist, hence is working essentially with Greek records and therefore focusing on Greek women or Hellenized Egyptians. She views the historical elements primarily in a context of Greek *mores*; for her the most natural points of comparison are with women of Classical Greece and eventually in contemporaneous Hellenistic societies. She stresses notably the fact that Hellenistic society was different in many respects from any earlier Greek society and that the status of women in Ptolemaic Egypt was higher than that of women in Classical Greece; in their new environment Greek women had indeed increased opportunities and freedom so that they could *inter alia* participate in the economy to a greater extent than can be documented for any other Greek society. But the author is not taking into account the Egyptian cultural components that very likely helped Greek women in Egypt avail themselves of their new status. For other recent studies *vide infra*, n. 121.

4) It seems useful to calculate the percentage of people who appear in our records. In a recent study (J. Johnson, in: *Egyptological Studies in Honor of R. Parker*, 1986, p. 74 f.) it has been observed that 160 sale contracts (K.-Th. Zauzich, *Die ägyptische Schreibtradition in Aufbau, Sprache und Schrift der demotischen Kaufverträge aus ptolomäischer Zeit*, 1968) including 361 parties involve 128 women (both as buyers and as sellers of property), and in 128 Theban documents with 258 contracting parties there are 75 women.

5) With respect to the part played by women the demotic material hitherto published is rather overwhelming. I am supporting my present survey with only a selection of examples. Also, I shall refer in brief notes to the main sources; for details and further references regarding the study of individual documents the reader is advised to consult the entries in *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*, vol. IV (s.v. Papyri, kursivhieratische + demotische).