

Elinor Mullett Husselman

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Elinor Mullett Husselman was a Copticist and Papyrologist who studied and worked for many years at the University of Michigan. Over a long career at both the University of Michigan Library and the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, she combined her interests in editing Greek and Coptic papyri with her work on the archaeology of Graeco-Roman sites in Egypt. Elinor Mullett Husselman produced an impressive array of text editions and participated in many aspects of the study and publication of the University of Michigan excavations at Karanis. Her work remains essential to the study of the archaeology and papyri of Graeco-Roman Egypt.

Elinor Mullett was born on 4 April 1900 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She grew up in Ann Arbor and, given the importance of the University of Michigan to that community, it is not surprising that she stayed there for college and, subsequently, graduate school. Elinor Mullett began her studies at the University of Michigan in 1918 and earned the degrees of A.B. in 1921 and A.M. in 1925, while working as a cataloguer in the University Library. During these years, she met and married John Henry Husselman, with whom she ultimately had two children.

Although she began as a student of Classical philology, Elinor's student years were a period in which papyrology and the study of Graeco-Roman Egypt came to be of great importance at the University of Michigan and she ultimately came to specialize in these areas. The massive collection of Greek papyri amassed by Francis Willey Kelsey for Michigan was supplemented by extensive purchases of Graeco-Roman antiquities from Egypt.

Moreover, Kelsey initiated the excavation of a Graeco-Roman site in Egypt, to provide an archaeological context in which to study the papyri and artifacts he had purchased. After extensive surveys in the papyrus-rich region of the Fayum, Kelsey selected the site of Karanis (modern Kom Aushim) for excavations beginning in 1924. Abandoned as unpromising by earlier excavators, Karanis yielded such remarkable finds of artifacts and papyri in a well-preserved context that Michigan continued excavations there well after Kelsey's death in 1927--the final season of the Michigan expedition to Karanis ended in 1935.

The University of Michigan also excavated at the Graeco-Roman sites of Soknopaiou Nesos and Terenouthis (in 1931 and 1934-35 respectively) as a complement to the Karanis excavations. The papyri, artifacts and records from the Michigan excavations were coming back to Ann Arbor throughout Elinor Mullett Husselman's graduate studies, and provided the raw materials for her future work.

Elinor Mullett Husselman continued her graduate education beyond her master's degree: she wrote a doctoral dissertation on contract subscriptions in Tebtunis papyri (later published as part of the introduction to *P.Mich. V*), and was awarded a Ph.D. by the University of Michigan in 1932. She studied papyrology with J. G. Winter and A. E. R. Boak, and came to be especially interested in the study of Coptic with William H. Worrell. Indeed, the study of Coptic attracted a large group of women to Michigan, many of whom went on to make significant contributions in this field: Elizabeth Stefanski, Louise Shier and Winifred Kammerer, in addition to Elinor herself.

There is some indication that women in this period tended to be directed into Coptic studies, away from such areas of study as Greek papyrology. Of the women who studied Coptic with Worrell, only Elinor went on to work with both Greek and Coptic texts. She had ample opportunity to work on such material in her joint appointments in 1925 as Curator of Manuscripts and Papyri at the University of Michigan Library and Curator at the Museum of Archaeology (later renamed after F. W. Kelsey); Elinor would hold both of these positions for some forty years afterwards until her retirement in 1965. In her curatorial roles, she was instrumental in assisting the work of the papyrologists, archaeologists and art historians at the University of Michigan and beyond in their work on the Graeco-Roman materials from Egypt in Ann Arbor. While doing so, she also pursued a very active research program of her own, which resulted in an impressive array of publications. In addition, Elinor was actively involved in a number of professional organizations, most notably the American Philological Association, in whose Transactions she published many articles. She was also an active and enthusiastic member of the University of Michigan Women's Research Club, an important intellectual and social network for women faculty and staff in Ann Arbor.

Elinor Mullett Husselman devoted much of her energy to the study and publication of Coptic texts at the University of Michigan. She contributed an introductory survey of the Michigan collection and text editions to the volume Coptic Texts in the University of Michigan, edited by William H. Worrell; she also edited numerous Michigan Coptic papyri in various articles. Her work on Coptic was characterized by her willingness to tackle difficult and neglected texts, and also by the great range of texts she edited. Her involvement with Greek papyri made the study of Coptic documentary texts especially interesting, but her training and work with literary manuscripts gave her great ability in handling literary works in Coptic as well. Her most important Coptic text publication must be her edition of the Michigan papyrus codex that contained one of the rare attestations of the Gospel of John in the Fayumic dialect of Coptic. In addition to editing Coptic texts, Elinor participated in a major bibliographical project on Coptic that originated among the group of women who studied Coptic with Worrell and went on to work for the University of Michigan Library. Along with Louise A. Shier, Husselman collaborated with Winifred Kammerer on the compilation of the Coptic Bibliography, an annotated bibliography of all-important scholarship on the subject up to 1950 when it was published. The Coptic Bibliography remains an essential tool for the researcher because of its extensive coverage of earlier scholarship and its detailed annotations and cross-referencing.

Elinor did not focus exclusively on Coptic texts, but also devoted considerable attention to the study and editing of Greek and Latin texts. Some of her earliest publications concern literary manuscripts in these languages, which she continued to study throughout her career, but her main focus came to be on Greek documentary papyri. She was coeditor, with Arthur E. R. Boak and William F. Edgerton of Papyri from Tebtunis, Part II, the fifth volume in the Michigan Papyri series, into which parts of her dissertation were incorporated.

Elinor went on to edit many Greek papyri individually and in small groups; given her situation at Michigan, it is not surprising that most of these came from the Karanis excavations or related Graeco-Roman sites. From her dissertation onwards, she had a special interest in the administrative procedures as documented in papyri from Roman Egypt, and frequently returned to different aspects of this subject as her career progressed. She was a frequent reviewer of editions of Greek papyri for various journals. Elinor was an active early member of the American Society of Papyrologists, and gave papers at a number of its early meetings, abstracts of which were published in its Bulletin.

It is for her work on the site of Karanis that Elinor Mullett Husselman perhaps, is best known to archaeologists. Her work derives much of its strength from her involvement with both

artifactual and textual remains from the site. In her capacity of Curator at the Kelsey Museum, Elinor assisted the work of other scholars on the Karanis material, most notably that of Louise A. Shier in her corpus of Karanis lamps. Elinor undertook more direct work on the Karanis archaeological material through her edition and revision of the dissertation of Rolfe A. Haatvedt on the coins of Karanis. This massive work had already passed through the hands of Enoch E. Peterson, but Husselman was responsible for the final shape of the book—one of the largest corpora of coins with archaeological provenance from the Roman world. As curator of papyri in the University Library, Elinor helped catalogue the vast collection of documents from Karanis, while editing and publishing specific pieces of interest.

A significant feature of her work on the Karanis papyri is her interest in the archaeological context of the texts; indeed, she can be seen as a pioneer of the "text in context" approach to papyrology that is of such interest at present. But her more original contributions came through her work attempting to integrate both papyrological and archaeological sources into a synthetic whole. In particular, her studies of the granaries and dovecotes of Karanis are examples of what could be accomplished by studying the papyrological sources in their physical contexts: significant in themselves, these studies also indicate the possibilities for dealing with evidence from archaeological sites with extensive textual remains.

From the outlines of her bibliography, Elinor Mullett Husselman's career at the University of Michigan would seem like a highly successful and productive one. Certainly, she did accomplish and publish much important work during her time in Ann Arbor. However, she was also uncomfortably aware that her professional development was limited in a way that it would not have been if she were a man. A faculty position with potential for professorial rank was not an option for her as it had been for most of her male colleagues. As the years passed, Elinor felt increasingly frustrated at the lack of advancement in her career and ultimately resentful about the opportunities denied to her.

In the latter part of her years at the University of Michigan, she gained a reputation of being difficult to deal with, even obstructive with regard to access to materials in her keeping. Seen in the context of her specific situation and the problems faced by women in papyrology and Classics in general, such behavior would be understandable. However, it is likely that much of Elinor's reputation for difficulty may have come from her colleagues' discomfort at her self-assertion in the context of her jobs as curator of both papyri and museum collections. By all accounts, she was fiercely protective of the physical condition of the material in her care at a time when conservation was not always a high priority. Elinor's "activist" style of curation must have shaken up scholars used to more compliant curators.

Elinor Mullett Husselman ended her formal employment at the University of Michigan in 1965 through mandatory retirement at age 65, but continued her research and publication activities. In her retirement, she turned her attention to two major projects relating to the Karanis excavations. For some time, Elinor had been collecting material for a volume of Greek papyri from Karanis and, after her retirement, she was finally able to see into print. Ultimately, her edition was to include 55 papyri from the Karanis excavations, all documentary texts that included letters, petitions, legal contracts and lists. Many years in the making, this volume of papyri was finally published as the ninth volume of the Michigan Papyri series in 1971.

As in her earlier work, she devoted much consideration to the archaeological context of the texts she was editing; many of the pieces in this volume were associated with Karanis structure C123—one of the granaries she had studied earlier. The other major project of Elinor's retirement was her most important and lasting contributions to the study of Karanis: the reworking and publication of Enoch E. Peterson's massive report of the topography and architecture of Karanis from the 1928-1935 seasons. Peterson's report, completed sometime in

the 1950's, was an enormous work on such a scale as to be prohibitively expensive to publish. Elinor's final task for the Karanis effort was to edit and reshape Peterson's massive work into manageable form. In doing so, she respected the intentions of Peterson, while also incorporating the results of her own research; the end result of this effort appeared in 1979. Elinor moved to a retirement home in Tucson, Arizona shortly after this volume was published. She continued to work on papyri from Michigan while in Arizona, her last publication being an edition of some Michigan Coptic texts that appeared in Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists in 1982. Elinor Mullett Husselman died in Tucson at the age of 96 on 6 May 1996.

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Information on Elinor Mullett Husselman does not yet appear in any of the standard references for Coptic Studies, Papyrology or Classics. The information for this article comes from the anonymous obituary in the 8 May 1996 edition of the Ann Arbor Observer, records from various sources at the University of Michigan and published references to Husselman in the work of other scholars.

I have greatly benefited from the personal reminiscences of Ann Ellis Hanson and others, along with the archival assistance of Robin Meador-Woodruff, Archivist, Registrar and unofficial "institutional memory" for the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, and the bibliographical expertise of Charles E. Jones, Archivist and Bibliographer for the Oriental Institute Research Archives. This article is an expanded version of the short obituary notice I contributed to Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists, which also included a complete bibliography of Elinor Mullett Husselman's published work.

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