



Women of Jeme: Lives in a Coptic Town in Late Antique Egypt (New Texts from Ancient Cultures)

Terry Wilfong

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Get to know the women of Jeme, a Christian enclave in Egypt that existed from 600 to 800 C.E. Using texts documenting the women's activities, the physical remains of their possessions, and the writings of the local religious leaders, T. G. Wilfong traces the lives and careers of individual women and, through them, arrives at an understanding of the reality of women's lives in this place and time.

Contrary to the submissive, demure ideals for women proposed by the religious writers of Christian Egypt, the evidence from Jeme points to a more complex, dynamic situation. Women were active in the home, but some also played important and visible parts in the religious and economic life of their community. A bishop's attempts to monitor the behavior of the women in his district, the intricate inheritance dispute between an aunt and her niece, one woman's pious donations of murals to a church, three women's agonized decisions to give up their children to the local monastery, and the transactions of a family of women moneylenders--all these episodes paint a vivid picture of life in a Coptic town.

Although the remains of Jeme have long been known to scholars, little synthetic work has been done on this rich source for social history in Egypt before and after the Muslim conquests. *The Women of Jeme* is the first book-length study of the evidence. It will be of interest to Egyptologists and papyrologists, as well as to scholars of Coptic studies, early Christianity, social history and women's studies. The book assumes no prior knowledge of the subject, and the author has taken care to make it accessible to anyone with an interest in the ancient world.

T. G. Wilfong is Assistant Professor of Egyptology and Assistant Curator for Greco-Roman Egypt, University of Michigan.

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