This study captures the dynamics of the everyday family life of the common people in Roman Egypt, a social stratum that constituted the vast majority of any ancient society but rarely figures in ancient sources or in modern scholarship. The private letters and the census returns that survive among the rich papyrological evidence from Graeco-Roman Egypt provide us with a wealth of information on these people not available for any other period or region of the ancient Mediterranean. The book discusses such things as family composition; the differences between urban and rural families; obligations of parents and children; choice of spouse; postmarital residence patterns; widowhood, divorce, and remarriage; the role of the daughter-in-law; adoption and fosterage; and provision for old age. The study analyses what can be ascribed to cultural patterns, economic considerations, and/or individual preferences by setting Roman Egypt into context with other traditional patriarchal societies where families adopted such strategies to deal with similar exigencies of their daily lives.

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Map
Roman Egypt.