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978-1-107-01441-1 - From the Ptolemies to the Romans: Political and Economic Change in Egypt

Andrew Monson

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FROM THE PTOLEMIES TO THE ROMANS

This book gives a structured account of Egypt's transition from Ptolemaic to Roman rule by identifying key relationships between ecology, land tenure, taxation, administration, and politics. It introduces theoretical perspectives from the social sciences and subjects them to empirical scrutiny using data from Greek and Demotic papyri as well as comparative evidence. Although building on recent scholarship, it offers some provocative arguments that challenge prevailing views. For example, patterns of land ownership are linked to population density and are seen as one aspect of continuity between the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. Fiscal reform, by contrast, emerges as a significant mechanism of change not only in the agrarian economy but also in the administrative system and the whole social structure. Anyone seeking to understand the impact of Roman rule in the Hellenistic east must consider the well-attested processes in Egypt that this book seeks to explain.

ANDREW MONSON is Assistant Professor in the Department of Classics, New York University. He has published or presented aspects of his research in journals and conferences devoted to dialogue between history and the social sciences; he is currently working on an edition of a land survey from early Ptolemaic Egypt and a project comparing fiscal regimes in the Hellenistic world.

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Preface

This book is an expanded and revised version of my Ph.D. dissertation defended at Stanford University in June 2008. My deepest thanks go to my advisor Joseph Manning for introducing me to Ptolemaic history and for guiding me into the profession. In formulating my own arguments, his scholarship and our many exhilarating discussions played an essential role. Walter Scheidel has been a perpetual source of provocative ideas and advice, which have encouraged me to build and expand on the original concept of my dissertation. Besides being an inspiring teacher, Ian Morris indelibly influenced my thinking about the aims and methods of history writing. He and Walter Scheidel organized graduate seminars and conferences on empires and state formation that made me appreciate the value of cross-cultural comparisons. The whole Stanford community furnished an extraordinarily creative and stimulating environment for graduate study in ancient history. Along with those already mentioned, another key contributor to Stanford's intellectual life, Josiah Ober, gave me insightful comments on several chapters of the dissertation. To these four members of my Ph.D. committee and to Stephen Haber, who served on my defense committee, I extend my sincere gratitude.

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Since 2008 I have had gracious colleagues in the Classics department at New York University, who have shielded me from burdensome duties and created a convivial atmosphere. Above all I would like to single out Markus Asper, Joy Connolly, David Levene, and Michael Peachin for their support and encouragement. The Classics department at Tel Aviv University kindly hosted me as a visiting scholar in summer 2009 thanks to Jonathan Price, who helped make the arrangements. Moreover, I wish to acknowledge the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation along with my hosts, Andrea Jördens and Joachim Quack, for a fellowship in Heidelberg to begin a new project growing out of this book, which has enabled me to insert a few final corrections.

The generosity of my friends and colleagues has been indispensable. Roger Bagnall read the entire dissertation after it had been submitted and provided several pages of valuable feedback. In response to his remarks many sections of the book were expanded and rearranged, which has enhanced the clarity of its core argument. I would also like to thank my copy editor Andrew Dyck and the two anonymous reviewers for Cambridge University Press, who read the earlier drafts meticulously, made helpful suggestions, and saved me from a number of errors. Charikleia Armoni, Philip Brown, Daniel Hoyer, Dominic Rathbone, and Dorothy Thompson read earlier versions of certain sections and gave me useful comments. Others shared with me information and forthcoming work, in particular, Katherine Blouin, Ruey-Lin Chang, Thorolf Christensen, Roger Flower, Saskia Hin, Michael Jursa, Brian Muhs, Wolfgang Wegner, and Uri Yiftach-Firanko. To acknowledge by name the numerous people with whom I had the pleasure of discussing my work and from whom I received assistance would be impossible, but they should know that I am grateful.

There are three individuals who deserve extraordinary recognition. In writing this book I owe an enormous debt to Christelle Fischer-Bovet. She has generously shared the fruits of her own hard work and her expertise in Ptolemaic military and social history. We read and translated a number of relevant Greek papyri and inscriptions together in the course of our research. I benefited from conversations with her about virtually every issue and problem discussed here. My wife Carolin Arlt has read each chapter at least once and given me valuable suggestions. She is gifted when it comes to spotting my mistakes and improving my obscure passages. Her

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greatest contribution to this book was the precious time that we spent together while it was being written in San Francisco, New York, Tel Aviv, and Würzburg. Most of all, I would like to thank my mother Debra Phelps for supporting me in countless ways before and throughout my studies. To her this book is dedicated.

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Abbreviations and notes on the text

The editions of Greek and Demotic papyri and ostraka are abbreviated according to the conventions in the *Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca and Tablets*, Web Edition (<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/papyrus/texts/clist.html>). An equal (=) sign is usually used to indicate new editions: for example, P. Eleph. Dem. 6 = P. Bürgsch. 14. Those documents not included in the checklist are cited using an inventory number or conventional designation followed by a reference to the publication: for example, P. Haun. inv. 407 = Christensen (2002). For convenience, the date and provenance have often been given in parentheses alongside references in the footnotes of this book. Sometimes both the village or city and the name of the nome or administrative division (typically ending in -ite) are given: for example, P. Bour. 42 (166/167 CE; Hieria Nesos, Arsinoite). If the village or city is uncertain or irrelevant, only the name of the nome is given. For example, P. Tebt. I 5 (118 BCE; Arsinoite). *PP* is the abbreviation used for the *Prosopographia Ptolemaica*, a multi-volume reference work edited by W. Peremans, E. van 't Dack, and others, and published in Leuven as part of the series *Studia Hellenistica*.

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Greek and Egyptian words

In many instances the arguments in this book depend on the interpretation of terms used in the ancient sources. To make it easier for non-specialist readers, it seemed preferable to use an English translation wherever possible and to provide the original word or phrase only in parentheses. There are a few exceptional terms that needed to be incorporated into the main text because their English renderings are too misleading, but these are then thoroughly defined and discussed. Examples include the Greek term *katoikos* (plural *katoikoi*), which indicates a special status of military settlers and the Grecized Egyptian term *lesonis* (plural *lesones*), which refers to a temple official. Latin transliteration has been consistently adopted to facilitate pronunciation and a macron has been added to distinguish long vowels occurring in the last syllable. Only in a few longer quotations in the footnotes did the use of the Greek script seem warranted.

A further note on pronunciation may be helpful for readers who are unfamiliar with the Egyptian language. Diacritical marks and special signs are needed to represent particular sounds. The aleph (ʕ) and ayin (ʕ) are usually simplified in English as an *a*-sound and the *y* and yod (*i*) as an *ee*-sound, while the *š* represents a *sh*-sound and the *ṯ* a *ch*-sound. Other diacritical marks are used to signify aspirated or guttural consonants. Because neither the hieroglyphic nor the Demotic writing system employed vowels, these do not show up in the transliteration. When articulating the words, however, it is conventional to insert an *e*-sound between consonants in order to make them pronounceable. For instance, the Egyptian word for a temple estate *ḥtp-nṯr* can be read out loud as *hetep-necher*. Such transliterations reproduce the Egyptian scribes' historical orthographies, which do not necessarily correspond to the spoken language of the Greco-Roman period anyway; hence the discrepancy, for example, between the Egyptian temple official *mr-šn* or *mer-shen* and its pronunciation in Greek as *lesonis*.

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Greek and Egyptian money		Capacity and area	
obol	8 chalkoi	artaba	38.78 liters
drachma	6 obols	aroura	2,756 m ²
talent	6000 drachmas		
deben	20 drachmas		

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Map of Egypt

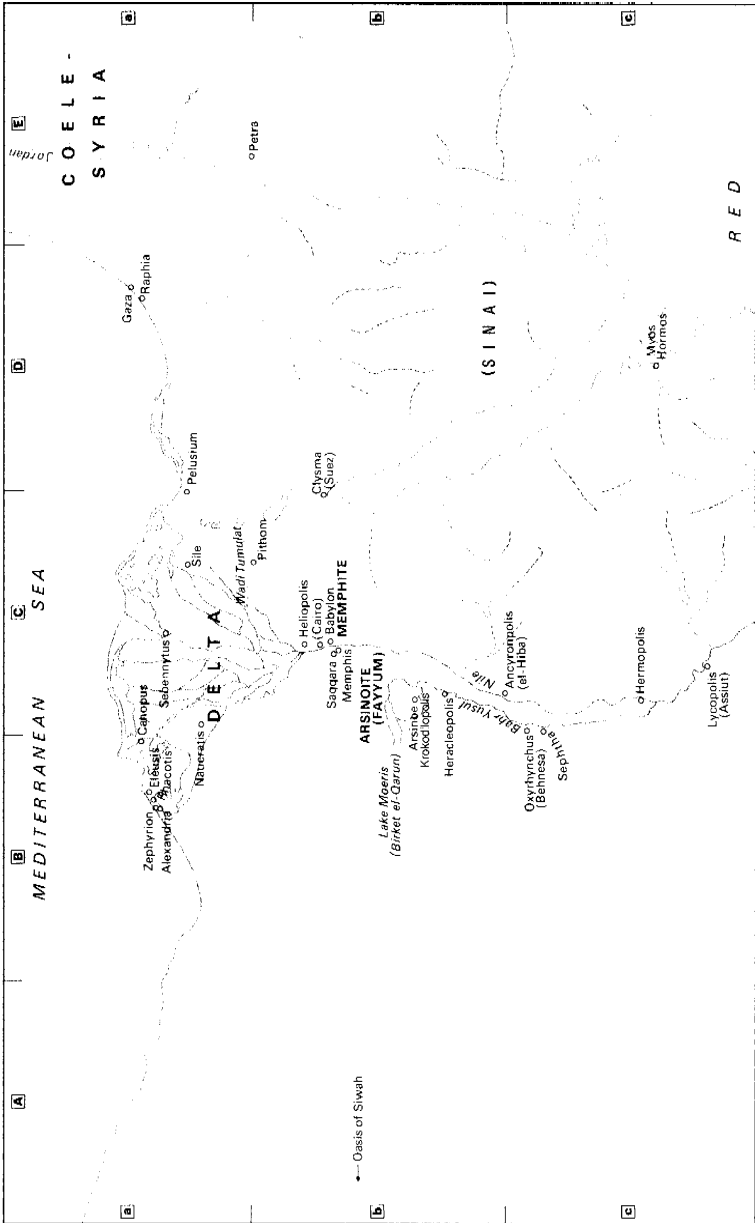
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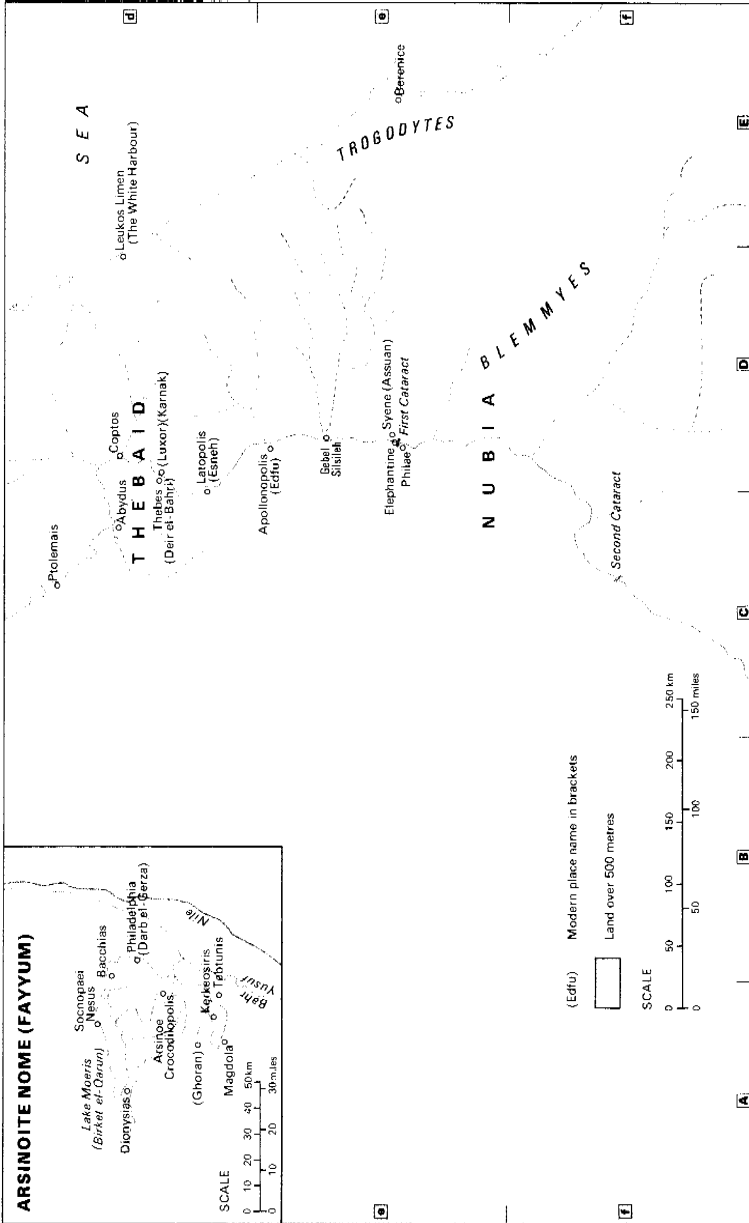
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