Slavery and Dependence in Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egypt offers rich sources of documentary evidence for the study of the experiences of dependent people, particularly enslaved persons, and how they changed over almost four millennia from the Old Kingdom to the early Islamic period. This volume, the work of a team of scholars spanning the full range of disciplines and languages involved, provides nearly three hundred primary sources in translation, arranged both chronologically and thematically, and is aimed principally at students, instructors and general readers. The documents reveal how people became and ceased to be slaves and how they were traded and exchanged in different periods. They also detail the various kinds of work slaves undertook, whether in the household, in agriculture or in mines and quarries. Introductions explain and contextualise the sources, and particularly address the problems of varying terminology in several different languages. The book shows Egypt’s place in the world history of slavery.

Jane L. Rowlandson was Reader in Ancient History at King’s College London. She was the author and editor of several monumental publications, including *Landowners and Tenants in Roman Egypt* (1996) and *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt* (1998). This current sourcebook was one of her remaining projects, and it is now dedicated to her memory.

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Slavery and Dependence in Ancient Egypt

Sources in Translation

Edited by

JANE ROWLANDSON†, ROGER S. BAGNALL, AND DOROTHY J. THOMPSON

With contributions by
Jelle Bruning, W. Graham Claytor, Jennifer Cromwell, Christopher J. Eyre, Brian P. Muhs, Sarah J. Pearce, and Christopher J. Tuplin
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Christopher J. Eyre is Professor of Egyptology at the University of Liverpool. His research has been concerned with the reading and interpretation of texts – documentary and literary – with particular focus on the uses of writing, the economy, the agricultural regime, and social relationships. Currently he has been applying a more ethnographic approach, targeting a description of behaviour in pharaonic Egypt, while holding a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship (2018–2021) to develop this project, *Peopling Ancient Egypt: An Ethnography of Pharaonic Egypt*. His publications include a study on *The Use of Documents in Pharaonic Egypt* (Oxford 2013).

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W. Graham Claytor, Jennifer Cromwell, Christopher J. Eyre, Brian P. Muhs, Sarah J. Pea

List of contributors

Persian history, editor of Pontus and the Outside World (Leiden 2004), Xenophon and His World (Stuttgart 2004), and Persian Responses: Political and Cultural Interaction within the Achaemenid Empire (Swansea 2007), and co-editor of Science and Mathematics in Ancient Greek Culture (Oxford 2002), Xenophon: Ethical Principles and Historical Enquiry (Leiden 2012), and Arsāma and His World: The Bodleian Letters in Context (Oxford 2020). His current major project is a commentary on Xenophon’s Anabasis.
Biographical notice on Jane Rowlandson

Jane Rowlandson, whose project this book originally was, sadly died before all contributions were to hand, and before her overall vision of the subject could be imprinted on its content. It is in memory of Jane, her personality and her scholarship, that her successor editors wish to record this tribute to her.

Jane L. Rowlandson (1953–2018) came from Lancashire, in the north of England, and these northern roots together with a socialist family background were central to her development both personally and as an historian. After schooling at Bolton School (Girls’ Division), Jane studied Classics (Literae Humaniores) at St Hilda’s College, Oxford, where on graduation she remained to work for her doctorate on Roman Egypt under the supervision of Geoffrey de Ste Croix and later Alan K. Bowman. Research fellowships followed, at The Queen’s College, Oxford, and Newcastle University, then teaching posts at University College, London, Christ Church, Oxford, and Birkbeck College, London. Her participation (reading Herodotus) at the Aberystwyth Summer Workshops in Greek and Latin is still remembered and appreciated by those she taught there in the 1970s. In 1989 Jane transferred to King’s College, London, first as Lecturer in Ancient History and later, from 2003, as Reader. As a university teacher, she consistently invested great care and energy in her teaching of students at all levels; having her room at a cooler temperature than most was, she claimed, a fail-safe way of keeping all involved on their toes. She was a greatly valued colleague whose dedication to her job, combined with her sense of humour, helped to keep others going when times got tough. Jane was an historian who believed in the importance of a firm grounding in the evidence and of building from this, brick by brick. She was tirelessly meticulous and never satisfied with superficial conclusions. Accuracy was of prime importance to her, and she expected the same high standards of those she taught or worked with as she applied to her own work. In 2005, as a result of worsening rheumatoid arthritis, which she consistently fought with courage and determination over many years, Jane was forced to take early retirement. She moved permanently to her much-loved home in Aberystwyth in Wales. Here, with the devoted care of her husband Michael Roberts, she retained close research links with her colleagues both at home and abroad, and continued to work right up to her death on 20 November 2018. This volume was one of her remaining projects. It is now dedicated to her memory.
A recent reviewer of three books about slavery pointed to the fundamental difficulties we face in describing just what the subject is:

What is slavery? In the period since the Second World War, as the study of slavery has moved towards the centre of academic discourse in Britain and America, the answer to this basic question has never been resolved. Some scholars have held that slavery is at root a matter of power: it amounts to the purest form of human domination. Some have maintained that in truth slavery describes a property relation: it is the ownership of one person by another. Other scholars have observed that slavery consists in an irresolvable tension: it is the attempt, which is ultimately impossible, to define and treat persons as things.¹

Part of the problem in talking about slavery lies in the assumption that a single definition that is valid across differences of time and place is either possible or desirable. This book embodies the view that this is not the case. It presents sources for slavery in Egypt over a period of several thousand years of historic change. It responds, we hope, to the challenge recently put forward by Kostas Vlassopoulos, who urges a tripartite approach, taking account of property, status, and modalities of slaving.² In Chapter 1 we discuss this standpoint and how it can be pursued with the available documentation for ancient Egypt. With the words ‘and dependence’ in our title, which go back to Jane Rowlandson’s original vision for the volume, we acknowledge the fuzziness of the concept of slavery and of the set of behaviours that can legitimately bear that name, even with the suppleness of Vlassopoulos’s historicising approach.

The period covered in this book extends over four millennia and multiple languages: Egyptian throughout its various historical phases, ending in Coptic; Aramaic; Hebrew; Greek; Latin; and Arabic. The nature of the sources available in these languages and for these different periods is very heterogeneous, just as is the scholarly culture of the various disciplines involved. Partly for these reasons

¹ Harpham 2022.
² Vlassopoulos 2021.
we have not tried to make the different chapters all fit a standard pattern. In some the texts could readily be divided into subtopics, in others not. Chapter 4 in particular, dealing with Jewish literary sources, is very different from the rest, but given the wide knowledge of the representation of slavery in the Bible, it seemed impossible not to include the tradition of the Hebrew Bible and works derived from or in dialogue with it. The social history aspect is more in the foreground in some chapters than others, and the highly developed intellectual superstructure of Roman law gives chapters 6 and 7 a more administrative and legal aspect.

We hope that despite these differences the reader will be able to see how variable relationships of dependence were from period to period, how they reflect the political, social, and economic structures of the societies in which they were embedded, and how contingent our very concept of slavery is. These multiple types of diversity should give pause to any thought that it is possible to generalise about slavery across time and place, a point we explore in more detail in Chapter 1. That diversity extends to the fundamental difference from period to period of which subjects have enough evidence to be explored in any depth. For each period, there are topics of importance on which we are wholly ignorant. One of the purposes of a sourcebook like this one is to bring out the contours of our ignorance and, at the same time, to encourage readers to find their own way in the evidence and bring their own questions to it.

When Jane Rowlandson conceived this book in 2011 and then the following year drafted a formal proposal, she hoped that its writing would take no more than a year or so once contracts were signed. Her precarious health dictated otherwise, and at her premature death on 20 November 2018 only a few sections were in draft. Fortunately, her commissioning editor, Michael Sharp, was also Jane’s long-time friend and a fellow ancient historian, and he was determined to rescue the project and the work already done. We accepted his invitation to bring the volume to completion, both out of a conviction that it could be an important contribution and out of our own affection and admiration for Jane. But neither of us has the depth of knowledge of the subject that she had, and we ask readers’ indulgence for places in which we may not have realised her vision in its entirety.

We thank Michael Roberts, Jane’s husband, for welcoming us into our editorial role, and Michael Sharp, along with his assistant Katie Idle, for their support of our efforts throughout.

Jane had planned to do all of the sections on the Greek and Latin texts herself, and she had drawn up lists of desired texts along with many comments and much bibliography. These have in varying degrees served as the basis for the work we have collectively undertaken in chapters 5, 6, and 7, as well as the Introduction (Chapter 1), of which an extensive though rough draft, mixing text, bibliography, and open questions, existed, updated to 25 September 2017. We have not tried to
distinguish our hands in Chapter 1 or the Greek section of Chapter 7, but the fact that her name stands first on the title page reflects this large contribution. We are responsible for the final form, of course.

We thank above all the contributors to this volume for the thought and commitment they have brought to their work and their responsiveness to our many communications. We thank also colleagues who have helped us at various points in our work on bringing this book to completion. We are also grateful to the four referees for Cambridge University Press, who all contributed to shaping the final form of the volume and making it more accessible to a range of readers, and to Alwyn Harrison and Liz Davey for shepherding the volume through copy-editing and production.
Abbreviations

For papyrological abbreviations, including reference works, see the Checklist of Editions of Greek, Latin, Demotic, and Coptic Papyri, Ostraca, and Tablets (https://papyri.info/docs/checklist) and the Arabic Papyrology Bibliography (https://www.apd.gwi.uni-muenchen.de/apd/editionsprint.jsp).

ATNS  J. B. Segal, Aramaic Texts from North Saqqâra (London, 1983).


CG in document headings: Catalogue général (of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo).


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<th>Description</th>
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<td>LXX</td>
<td>Septuagint.</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRSV</td>
<td>New Revised Standard Version of the Bible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TM Arch</td>
<td>Trismegistos Archives (<a href="https://www.trismegistos.org/arch/">https://www.trismegistos.org/arch/</a>).</td>
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The ancient texts translated in this volume come from a variety of ancient languages. The scholarly disciplines that study these texts use different systems of representing these, both in their original writing systems and in transliteration into English. Transliterations are given here only when, in the author's view, the ancient word is critical to understanding what is being said, particularly where there are multiple words that might have the same English rendering; or when the exact meaning of the word is not known, as is the case with many physical objects mentioned in Egyptian texts. Egyptologists often use specific systems of transcription into roman characters that allow a reader to know exactly what Egyptian sounds are meant and to find words in Egyptian dictionaries. These technical systems are not used in this book, where we have preferred a phonetic rendering with vowels, even if these are in some cases arbitrary.

Texts are also in many cases incompletely preserved. The standard sign to represent places where a text breaks off or where the translated text has been restored by a scholar, usually from parallels, is square brackets. These are often omitted where the gap is small and the restoration is certain; authors have used their own judgement in this matter. Double brackets indicate an erasure of text.
### 1. Chronological table

**BCE**

- **Predynastic Period**: to 3000
- **Early Dynastic Period**: c. 3000–2686
- **Old Kingdom**: c. 2686–2155
- **First Intermediate Period**: c. 2160–2055
- **Middle Kingdom**: c. 2055–1650
- **Second Intermediate Period**: c. 1650–1550
- **New Kingdom**: c. 1550–1069
- **Third Intermediate Period**: c. 1069–664
- **Late Period**: 664–332

#### Dynasty 26 (Saite)

- Psammetichus I: 664–610
- Foundation of Naukratis: c. 630/570
- Necho II: 610–595
- Psammetichus II: 595–589
- Apries: 589–570
- Amasis: 570–526
- Psammetichus III: 526–525

#### Dynasty 27 (1st Persian occupation)

- Cambyses: 526–522
- Darius I: 522–486
- Xerxes: 486–465

#### Dynasty 28

- Amyrtaios: 404–399

#### Dynasty 29

- Hakoris: 393–380

#### Dynasty 30

- Nektanebo I: 380–362
- Nektanebo II: 360–343
- Tachos: 361/360–359/358

**2nd Persian occupation**

- Artaxerxes III: 343–338
- Darius III: 336–332

#### Macedonian dynasty

- Alexander the Great: 336–323
- Foundation of Alexandria: 331
- Philip III Arrhidaios: 323–317
- Alexander IV (d. 310): 323–306/305
- Ptolemy son of Lagos, satrap of Egypt: 323–306

#### Ptolemaic dynasty

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2. Calendars

The Egyptians used a calendar consisting of twelve months of thirty days each, subdivided into ten-day periods (‘weeks’). Historically, the Egyptians reckoned the twelve months as being divided into three seasons of four months each: akhet (inundation), peret (emergence of crops), and shemu (harvest), and dates by this system are found in some of the Egyptian-language texts in this volume. The calendar did not make provision for leap years; its beginning thus shifted when reckoned against the modern modified Julian calendar. In post-pharaonic times, the months have names. The year began with the month of Thoth and ended with Mesore (to give the forms used in Greek texts), with an ‘epagomenal’ (added) festival period of five days at the end, named in pharaonic texts as the birthdays of specific gods. In the early Ptolemaic period, Macedonian month names were sometimes used, but increasingly Egyptian month names (written in Greek) predominated. Kings dated their reigns from their accession to power to the end of the current year, however short a period that might be, then their year 2 as starting with Thoth 1 following. Documents do not always give the name of the current king or emperor; it is therefore sometimes impossible to convert the ancient dates into modern equivalents. Augustus ended the migration of the year’s start caused by the year being approximately 365 1/4 days in length, by adding a leap year every four years; Thoth 1 was thus frozen on 29 August (30 August in leap years).

As regnal dating became more complex from Diocletian on, with multiple concurrent emperors who had different regnal counts, the imperial government pushed the use of consular dating, a system long used in the rest of the empire. Consuls – the two annual magistrates of the Roman state – were inherently problematic as a means of dating in a far-flung empire, because their names had to be disseminated over great distances every year and remembered by thousands of scribes to whom they were unfamiliar. Nonetheless, from 293 CE on consuls’ names are widely used to date Greek documents.

In late 313 or early 314, yet another form of chronological reckoning appears, the indiction. The indiction cycle contained fifteen years and was counted from 312; a new cycle thus began in 327, 342, and so on, and the same year number would recur at intervals of fifteen years. A document dated only by indiction number, therefore, while perfectly clear in its original context, cannot be given an exact date now except by other information such as prosopography. Complicating matters further is the start date of the indiction year, which was not standardised: coinciding with the civil year (Thoth 1) in the Oxyrhynchite, beginning two months earlier in the Arsinoite, and starting two months earlier still (Pachon 1) in the Thebaid and many other areas.
Although regnal dating virtually disappeared after Constantine, it was reintroduced two centuries later under Justinian, but now reckoned from the exact date of accession to the throne. An era from the accession of Diocletian also appears in the last third of the fourth century, but it is not used to date papyrus documents until after the Arab conquest; in the fourth century it appears principally in horoscopes and Christian texts. The era of Diocletian and the indiction cycle survived the end of Roman rule in Egypt, while consuls and imperial reigns vanished. The Arab conquerors in their turn introduced dating by the years of the era of the Hijra, Mohamed’s flight from Mecca to Medina in 622. The Muslim calendar has twelve months of twenty-nine or thirty days, totalling 354 or 355 days. The Hijra year thus shifts against the Julian calendar by around eleven days each year.

In this book, 367/8 denotes a regnal, indiction, or Hijra year beginning in Julian 367 and ending in 368; 367–369 refers to a period beginning in 367 and ending in 369.

3. Money and measures

Many monetary systems were in use during the long period covered in this book. The Egyptians used terms based on silver weights, the deben and the qite, and the shat (or seniu) of 1/12 deben. During the Late and Ptolemaic periods, the weight or quality of silver is sometimes specified to be that of the treasury of a temple. In the period when Greek soldiers were in the employ of Egyptian kings, the use of Greek or Greek-style coinage for their pay led to wider use of coined money in the country and (from the 30th Dynasty) the minting of coins in Egypt; Persian coins also circulated.

Large-scale minting in Egypt began with the Ptolemies, first under Ptolemy son of Lagos as satrap for the heirs of Alexander the Great, and after his accession as king, as royal money. Ptolemaic coinage was struck on a Greek model, but using a lighter weight for the silver drachma than the widely used Athenian standard. Gold and bronze coins also were minted, but amounts of money were quoted in the silver currency, in which 6 obols equalled one drachma and 6,000 drachmas one talent. Starting in the later third century, the practice of mixing copper into silver led to a drop in the purchasing power of a nominal drachma; continued debasement led to a complex monetary situation in which prices might be quoted in (debased) silver currency or in bronze.

From Augustus to Diocletian, Egypt remained an isolated currency zone, supplied by the mint in Alexandria with a coinage unique to the province. The standard imperial coinage in three metals in use in most of the rest of the empire is found only in small amounts in Egypt. The monetary unit was still the drachma,
in official reckoning equated to the Roman *sestertius*, and the tetradrachm, a 4 drachma piece, equated to the *denarius*. In papyri of the Roman period, however, the *denarius* is virtually absent (apart from military texts); instead, the drachma appears, and for large amounts the talent (6,000 drachmas). The tetradrachm, minted in billon, was the main medium of payment for larger amounts. Its silver content was reduced, particularly starting in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, and the quality of imperial coinage deteriorated through the third century.

All this changed with Diocletian’s currency reform of 296, in which Egypt was integrated with the rest of the empire. Egypt was provided with a three-part currency: gold coins (*aurei*, or *solidi*), of about 5.45 g; silver coins (*argentei*), of about 3.4 g each; and three denominations of billon coins, the largest (at about 10 g) tariffed at 12.5 *denarii*, doubled in 300 CE to 25 *denarii*. The minting of silver soon ceased, but gold and billon coinage continued, although the gold was minted outside Egypt. Constantine reduced the weight of the gold *solidus* to about 4.5 g, where it remained throughout the Byzantine period. The billon coinage underwent a long and complex history of weight reductions, coupled with changes in its percentage of silver, leading ultimately (under Valentinian) to a standard coin (referred to in the sources as *nummus*), which had only a trace of silver, probably an amount below what ancient technology was capable of detecting.

At any given time, gold coins, which were effectively pure, could be purchased openly for billon coinage. The amount of billon necessary to buy gold depended on two factors: the amount of silver and bronze in the coins, and the relative values of gold, silver, and bronze at that moment. Because the government announced the value of coins, the effect of reducing the size or silver content of a coin without changing its stated value was to increase the nominal value of gold stated in units of account, that is, *denarii*. The results are visible in the papyri chiefly in the vast numbers appearing as the prices of goods and services as the fourth century draws on, stated in drachmas or *denarii*. After 350, gold increasingly became the means of making major purchases, lending money, and fixing future obligations of other sorts; it was, rather anomalously, both money and commodity.

The following abbreviations are used for units of currency in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods: den. (*denarius*), dr. (*drachma*), sol. (*solidus*), and tal. or T. (*talent*).

After the Arab conquest, Byzantine money remained in wide circulation in Egypt, but gradually we encounter the new regime’s coins, the *dinar* and *dirham*. 
4. The nomes

Egypt had from early times been organised in geographical units described in Greek as *nomoi*, called nomes in English. The list of the nomes, fixed at an early date, is transmitted unchanged in temple texts thereafter. Over several millennia, however, their numbers, names, and boundaries were altered repeatedly. Those that appear in our texts can be seen on the maps from the presence of their chief cities.
ʿabd: male slave (Arabic).
ʿabodah: slave labour, but also more broadly ‘work’, ‘service’, ‘service of God’ (Hebrew).
actuarius: an official responsible for record-keeping concerning military provisions (Latin).
ʿadon: master (Hebrew).
adscripticus, -a: enrolled worker (Latin).
agonanomion: record office (Greek).
agonanemos: civic magistrate responsible for supervision of markets and notarial records (Greek).
ama: female slave (Arabic).
ʿamah: female slave (Hebrew); cf. Aramaic ʿmh.
andrapodon: slave (Greek, lit. ‘man-footed creature’).
apeleutheros: freedman (Greek).
Apellaios: second month of the Macedonian Calendar.
agentes:standard Roman silver coin introduced in Diocletian’s reign.
aroura: unit of measurement of land area used in Egypt, about two-thirds of an acre or 0.27 hectares.
artaba:Persian grain measure used in Egypt, originally about 30 litres; in the Roman period most commonly corresponding to about 39 litres in volume and 25 kg in weight.
Artemisios: seventh month of the Macedonian Calendar.
Audnaios: third month of the Macedonian Calendar.
aureus: standard Roman gold coin, replaced by the solidus in the early fourth century.
Babylonian exile: the forced displacement of people from Jerusalem and Judah, following the fall of Judah to Babylon in 597 BCE.
ʿbd (pl. ʿbdn): slave (Aramaic).
billon: mixture of bronze and silver used in some coin issues.
bōk, -i: Bohairic Coptic term for slave or servant.
Canaan: a name for the region approximately representing the land of Israel in Mesopotamian and Egyptian sources; in biblical sources, the land of Israel prior to the Israelite settlement.
carat: unit of weight, one-sixth of a Roman gram (Greek keration), used for 1/24 of a solidus.
centenarius: a measure nominally of 100 Roman pounds.
choachyte: mortuary priest, funerary worker.
Choiak: fourth month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.
colonus: farmer, mostly used for farmers attached to a particular estate.
comes: ‘count’, title applied to various officials in Byzantine Egypt.
corvé: French term used for compulsory labour required by the state.
Daisios: eighth month of the Macedonian calendar.
Dead Sea Scrolls: a collection of textual finds from the Judaean desert, mainly second century BCE through the first century CE, most of which are from Qumran caves 1–11. These include multiple fragmentary copies of biblical texts, in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, as well as other Jewish texts from outside the Bible.
deben: an Egyptian weight measure of about 91 grams, equivalent to 10 qite or 12 shat. It also served as a measure of value when applied to copper, gold, or especially silver.
deme: a subdivision of a Greek city.
Demotic: ‘popular’, term used to refer to an Egyptian cursive script and language phase.
denarius: coin worth 4 drachmas in Roman Egypt.
despotes: master (Greek).
diakonos: servant (Greek).
Dinar: gold coin in Islamic Egypt, containing c. 4.5 g gold, rough equivalent of Roman solidus.
Diodorus Siculus: a Sicilian historian of the first century BCE who wrote a universal history from mythological times to his own; Book 1 is mainly concerned with Egypt.
dioiketes: ‘manager’, Greek term used to refer to the Ptolemaic chief royal minister, in charge particularly of finances; in Coptic used for the manager of the castrum of Djeme.
dipla: ‘double’ wine jars (Greek).
dirham: silver coin in Islamic Egypt.
djet: collective Egyptian term for the subordinate personnel of an individual; also djet and nedjet used to refer to individual subordinates.
doulagia: enslavement, slavery (Greek).
doulos, -e: slave (Greek).

drachma: Greek unit of weight and basic unit of coinage; it had different weights in various local standards.

Dystros: fifth month of the Macedonian calendar.

'ebed (pl. 'abadim): slave, servant, connected to the Hebrew verb 'abad, ‘to work’.

eleutheros, -e/a: Greek term meaning ‘free person’.

enapographos georgos: a ‘farmer of enrolled status’; the Greek equivalent of the Latin adscriptius colonus.

enkatochos: someone ‘held’ by a god (Greek; see also katochos).

epagomenal days: the five (or in leap years, six) days that follow at the end of the Egyptian year, after the twelve months of thirty days each.

epaphe: ‘defect’ in a slave, the meaning of which is debated; most likely refers to liability to seizure by a third party (see note to 270).

Epieiph: the eleventh month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.

epigone: in the Ptolemaic period those ‘of the epigone’ were descendants of immigrant soldiers not yet fully integrated into the army. See also Persian.

epistates: supervisor or overseer of some function or group (Greek).

epistrategos: governor of a district of Egypt, under the prefect (Greek).

ergodioktes: taskmaster, supervisor (Greek).

exegetes: a civic official connected to the gymnasium, with various responsibilities including record-keeping and managing the baths (Greek).


fata: Arabic term for ‘boy’, often used for a slave.

Fayyum: district in central Egypt to west of Nile Valley, source of large numbers of papyri; the ancient ‘Lake’ or Arsinoite nome.

gay: type of Egyptian vessel.

gbr (pl. gbrn): Iranian term used in Aramaic for ‘man’, often as property.


georgos: ‘farmworker’, a term encompassing both tenants and waged labourers (Greek).

ger: a resident alien, temporary resident living with or alongside Israelites (Hebrew).

Germanikeios: Greek name of the later ancient Egyptian/Coptic month Pachon.

ghulam: lit. ‘boy’, slave (Arabic).

Gnomon (of the Idios Logos): set of laws and rules governing the work of the head of the idios logos, largely concerning status.

grd: worker (Aramaic).
Glossary of technical terms xxxv

Greek Bible: a body of translations of books of the Hebrew Bible into Greek and original compositions in Greek, including the Septuagint.
gymnasiarch: office holder in a Greek city responsible for management of the gymnasium and in particular of its supply of oil.
hallur: 0.025 shekels or 1/40 shekel.
Hathy: third month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.
Hebrew Bible: refers to what Christians term the Old Testament (not including the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha).
hel: servant (Coptic).
hem, -et (pl. hemu, -t): ‘slave’ or ‘servant’ (Egyptian).
hemhal: primary Sahidic Coptic term for slave.
hem-nesu: ‘king’s-slave’, not clearly distinguished from simple hem, used essentially of rural workers, and not actually connected in any obvious practical way to the king.
Hieratic: an Egyptian script.
hierodoulos: lit. ‘sacred slave’ (Greek).
Hieroglyphic: the classic formal Egyptian script using stylised pictures.
hin: an ancient Egyptian volume measure equivalent to about 0.5 litre, usually applied to liquids.
holokottinos: see solidus.
hypomnematographos: record-keeping magistrates in Alexandria, in charge of the examination of slave status (Greek).
idios logos: the ‘private account’ (Greek) for non-recurring income such as fines and confiscations; the title of the Roman official in charge of it.
indiction: tax year, generally in fifteen-year cycles beginning in 312 CE.
jařiya: female slave (Arabic).
Josephus, Flavius: Jewish historian (37–c. 100 CE); author of The Jewish War (a history of the Jewish war against Rome, 66–74 CE); The Jewish Antiquities (a history of the Jews from the creation of the world to the beginning of the Jewish war against Rome, 66 CE); the Life (an autobiography); and Against Apion (a defence of Jewish history and culture and refutation of sources hostile to Judaism).
Judaea: Roman term for territory of Judah.
Judah: the territory of southern Israel; in the monarchic period, part of the united kingdom until the death of King Solomon, when the kingdom was divided into two – the kingdom of Judah in the south (capital Jerusalem), the kingdom of Israel in the north.
ka: soul of sustenance (Egyptian).
kadion: Greek measure of liquid.
ka(o)yon (also kooyon): slave or servant (Coptic).

capsakion: Greek measure of liquid, perhaps equivalent to roughly 2 litres.

kars: Persian unit of weight, properly = 83.3 g, but practically treated as 10 shekels.

katoche: the state of being ‘held’ by a god, detention (Greek).

katochos: Greek for someone ‘held’ by a god (see also enkatochos).

ketatria: see carat.

khādim: servant or eunuch (Arabic).

khar: standard sack of grain.

khēbsa: ploughed field.

khel, -et: lit. ‘male child’, ‘female child’; servant or maidservant (Egyptian).

khem-khel, -et: lit. ‘young man’, ‘young woman’; male or female servant (Egyptian).

knidion: a wine measure named after the city of Knidos.

korasion: young slave girl (Greek).

kosmetes: civic official with responsibility for the city’s young men in training.

kotyle: ‘cup’, a liquid measure c. 0.27 litre.

laoi: ‘people’, the Greek term used for the native Egyptian people in contrast to immigrants.

lashane: a village official (Egyptian).


libertus: Latin term for freedman.

liturgy: compulsory service in public offices in Roman Egypt (as opposed to physical labour, see corvée).

Loios: tenth month of the Macedonian calendar.

lōmi: lit. ‘man’ or ‘person’, Fayumic Coptic dialect term sometimes used for slave (cf. rōme).

LXX: standard term for the Septuagint (after the legend of seventy translators of the Greek Torah).

‘lym, -ḥ: servant (Aramaic).

mamlūk (pl. mamlāḵ): lit. ‘person who is owned’, slave (Arabic).

Manichaeism/Manichaeans: a dualistic religion founded by Mani, viewed by some Christians as a heresy.

manumission: the setting free of a slave by their owner. Manumissio vindicta is the formal procedure for freeing a slave in the presence of a Roman magistrate.

mariannu: a military class among settled captives in Egypt.

martyrion: shrine to a martyr (Greek).

Masoretic Text: the Hebrew text of the Bible, established by the Masoretes, a succession of scribal scholars in the early medieval period.
mawla (pl. mawālī): Arabic term used for both patron and client (e.g. an ex-master and an emancipated slave, respectively).

Mecheir: sixth month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.

Medjay: nomadic Nubians of the Eastern desert.

Menander: Greek dramatist (c. 341–290 BCE).

Merenptah Stele: Egyptian stele including the earliest reference to Israel outside the Bible; honours the conquests of Pharaoh Merenptah (c. 1200 BCE) in the Canaanite region.

meret: collective term for a subordinate workforce, either agricultural or temple staff (Egyptian).

Meshwesh: a Libyan people.

Mesore: twelfth month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.

metronymic: mother’s name, used in identification.

’nḥ: female slave, handmaiden (Aramaic).

djed: ‘little-man’, used of persons not integrated into formal client dependence on a great man or institution (Egyptian).

nedjet: see djet.

nemeh, -et: free or independent man/woman (Egyptian); the plural nemehu (n pa ta en peraa), literally ‘orphans (of the land of Pharaoh)’, is used of persons not integrated into formal client dependence on an individual or institution and is translated here as ‘independent people’.

N.N.: nomen nescio; cf. PN.
	nome: geographical and administrative subdivision of Egypt.

nomisma: ‘coin’ in Greek, used from the fourth century on to refer to the solidus.

obol: 1/6 of a drachma.

oiketes: lit. ‘inhabitant’, household slave (Greek).

oikogeneia: declaration of a house-born slave (Greek).

oikogenes: house-born slave (Greek).

oikonomos: a Ptolemaic official with responsibility for economic matters (Greek).

oipe: Egyptian measure of volume, roughly 19 litres.

ostracon: potsherd or stone fragment used for writing.

Pachon(s): the ninth month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.

pagarch: official in charge of (usually) a nome in Byzantine Egypt.

paidarion: diminutive of pais, lit. ‘small boy’, sometimes used to mean slave.

paidiske: female servant, slave; most widespread term for female slave in the Ptolemaic period (Greek).

pais: lit. ‘boy’, slave; most widespread term for slave in the Ptolemaic period (Greek).

Panemos: ninth month of the Macedonian calendar.
Glossary of technical terms

papyrology: the study of ancient texts written on papyrus and other everyday materials.

paramonarios: a worker tied to his place of work for the duration of the contract (Greek).

paramone, ‘remaining with’: in the Ptolemaic period, used in the context of delayed grants of freedom; more generally referring to an obligation, often imposed on a debtor, to remain with a creditor (Greek).

patriarchs: the founding male ancestors of Israel: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob.

patronymic: father’s name, used for identification.

pauni: tenth month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.

peculium: sum of money or property provided to a slave by the master, typically to enable them to operate businesses for the master, or earned directly by a slave through work (Latin).

pekher: an Egyptian type of land.

Pentateuch: Greek term for the Hebrew Torah.

per-aa: pharaoh (lit. ‘great house’).


Peritios: fourth month of the Macedonian calendar.

Persian of the descent (epigone): in the Hellenistic period, a status referring to Greeks; in the Roman period, the term refers to contractual parties in a disadvantageous position.

Pesach (Passover): biblical and post-biblical Jewish festival commemorating the Israelites’ departure from Egypt.

Phamenoth: seventh month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.

Phaophi: second month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.

Pharmouthi: eighth month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.

Philo of Alexandria: Jewish scholar, author of multiple commentaries on the Greek Torah, and of treatises on philosophical and historical topics; led a delegation of Alexandrian Jews to the emperor Gaius (Caligula) (38/9 CE) to address the recent persecution of Jews by Greek opponents in Alexandria.

phollos: form occurring in Coptic texts for follis, a small coin.

PN: ‘personal name’, used to indicate a lost name.

politeuma: a civic-style organisation in Ptolemaic Egypt, usually on an ethnic basis.

pound, Roman: about 323 g.

praefectus: prefect, the governor of Egypt or commander of a military unit.

presbyteros: ‘elder’, presbyter; term used both for village elders and (later) for Christian priests.
qite: an ancient Egyptian weight measure of about 9.1 grams, equivalent to 1/10 of a deben. It also served as a measure of value when applied to copper, gold, or especially silver.

recto: front of a text or coin.

reverse: back of a coin.

rôme: lit. ‘man’ or ‘person’, Sahidic Coptic dialect term sometimes used for slave (cf. lômi).

sakir: hired labourer (Hebrew).

Samaritan Pentateuch: a text of the Torah in Hebrew used by the Samaritans, with some significant variations from the Masoretic text.

satrap: Persian provincial governor.

s.c.: senatus consultum, a decree of the Roman senate.

scholastikos: imperial legal official, lawyer (Greek).

sed: ancient festival celebrating the Pharaoh marking thirty years of rule and every three years thereafter since the 1st Dynasty.

sedjem, sedjem-ash: lit. ‘hearer’, servant.

sekoma: a wine measure, here probably equivalent to 8 sextarii.

seniu: a unit of silver probably equivalent to 5 Egyptian copper deben.

sestertius (Greek xestes): unit of liquid or solid volume (for wine, oil, etc.), about 0.54 litres.

shabti: term derived from Egyptian for ‘answerer’; figures produced for funerary purposes to represent the deceased at work in the afterlife.

shat: Egyptian measurement, 1/12 of a deben, so about 7.6 g.

shekel: Semitic unit of weight = 8.76 g.

shemu: harvest, one of the three four-month seasons of the Egyptian calendar.

Sherden: one of the ‘sea peoples’, who are documented in Egypt from the New Kingdom.

singularius: a subclerical official in the bureau of a provincial governor (Latin).

Sivan: month of the Hebrew calendar generally coinciding with May–June.

solidus: standard gold coin (from Constantine on, 1/72 of a Roman pound).

soma (pl. somata): lit. ‘body’, sometimes used for slave (Greek).

somation: diminutive of soma, lit. ‘little body’, slave.

stela: stone slab, usually with carved decoration or text.

strategos: ’general’, the governor of a nome in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods (Greek).

talent: Greek unit of weight or money, equal to 6,000 drachmas.

Tetrarchy: referring to the period 293–305, when four emperors headed by Diocletian ruled the Roman Empire.
thamasiotatos: adj. ‘most wonderful, marvellous’.
Theocritus: a Sicilian poet who wrote in Alexandria (at the Ptolemaic court) in the 270s BCE.
therapaina/therapainis: female servant, maid (Greek).
therapeutes: devoted worshipper (of a god) (Greek).
therapon: slave, courtier, servant (also of God) (Greek).
Thoth: first month of the later Egyptian calendar.
threptos, - e: slave raised in the household (Greek).
thurifer: assistant in liturgy who swings the vessel in which incense is burned.
toparchy: an administrative division of a nome.
topoteretes: deputy governor of Egypt in the sixth and seventh centuries.
Torah: traditional Hebrew term for the first five books of the Hebrew Bible.
toshab: settled or resident hired servant or slave (Hebrew).
tremis: one-third of a solidus, or eight carats.
tribe: (among other meanings) a division within the citizen body of a Greek city.
Tybi: Greek name of Tobi, the fifth month of the later Egyptian and Coptic calendars.
verna: house-born slave (Latin).
verso: back of a text or coin (cf. reverse).
vir clarissimus (v. c.): Roman imperial rank, originally denoting senatorial status but applied to lower statuses in later periods.
waab-priest: category of ‘pure’ Egyptian priests.
Xandikos: sixth month in the Macedonian calendar.
YHWH: the Hebrew name of God (YHW in Aramaic), traditionally not pronounced, represented in the Hebrew text by the vowels for adonai, ‘my Lord’; in standard English translations, represented by the word ‘Lord’.
zuz: 1/2 shekel.
Beni Hasan
Antinoopolis
Sheikh Fadl
Kynopolis?
Bahr Yusuf
Nile
Nile
Ankyronpolis
Oxyrhynchos
Kom el-Namrud
el-Minya
Deir Abu Fara
Tuna el-Gebel
Hermopolis Magna
Bawit (Monastery of Apollo)
Red Monastery
White Monastery
Lykopolis (Asyut)
Panopolis
Sohag
Bawit (Monastery of Apollo)
Sheikh Said
Tell el-Amarna
To Red Sea
Tenis/Hakoris
Deir el-Adhra
Hermopolis Magna
Deir el-Muharrar
Deir el-Gebran
Deir el-Balayza
Deir el-Izam
Apollonopolis
Aphrodity
Abydos
Naga ed-Deir
Lower and Middle Egypt
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LIBYAN DESERT
EASTERN DESERT
NUBIA
DODEKASCHOINOS
THEBAID

N
S
E W

Eileithyiaspolis (Elkab)
Apollonopolis Magna (Edfu)
Elephantine
Syene (Aswan)
Philae

01020 30 m
02040 60 km
5 Upper Egypt

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Eastern Desert
8 Nubia
10 The Aegean and Near East