I, Andrew J Connor, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Classics.

It is entitled:
Temples as Economic Agents in Early Roman Egypt: The Case of Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos

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Abstract

Temples are at the heart of most attempts to understand Roman policy in Egypt after Octavian annexed the province in 30 BC. This dissertation examines the evidence for the temples as economic agents in the early Roman period. Through a close reading of a crucial text (P.Tebt. 2.302), I demonstrate that the current scholarly consensus, formed around the assumption that the Roman state aggressively targeted Egyptian religion through the confiscation of temple property, cannot be correct. A new examination, building on our understanding of the economic activities of the temples in the Pharaonic, Persian, and Ptolemaic periods, shows that the temples maintained sometimes substantial estates in the Roman period, and engaged in other economic activities, including agricultural industries and religious services (e.g., mummification). I take the temples of two Fayum villages, Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos, as case studies. Through a careful study of these temples, I illustrate the role that their economic activities played in creating networks of overlapping religious, economic, social, and political interests. These networks allowed the temples to mediate between the Roman state and the people in these villages, especially after the development of a Roman administrative infrastructure to oversee the temples. The evidence for these temples shows in addition that their economic activities were often deliberately arranged. The temple of Soknopaios in Soknopaiou Nesos, for example, oversaw a network of smaller production centers and subsidiary religious structures elsewhere in the Fayum. Roman administration of Egyptian temples was less strict than that by the Ptolemies, and fits into recognizable patterns from elsewhere in the Roman Empire. The temple administrators, whose hierarchy is also described, focused on long-term, risk-averse activities, such as long-term leases and selling certain non-administrative priestly offices (and the associated shares of temple profits). In addition, the temples were directly supported by the
Roman state through *syntaxis* payments. Despite the wide range of economic activities, temples could run into financial difficulties in the Roman period (as they did in earlier periods as well), and some of our clearest evidence for temples in trouble in the early Roman period probably relates to local disputes, such as one from Tebtunis that may stem from unpaid taxes on property. These conclusions have important implications for our understanding of Roman policy towards Egypt and religion in the eastern Mediterranean, and of social, religious, and economic history in the Roman Fayum.
For my parents
Acknowledgements

As the topic of this dissertation was first discussed in his office, it seems right to begin with Peter van Minnen. This dissertation would not have been possible without his support and advice. His open-door policy, good nature, and willingness to help students are an example to emulate. Arthur Verhoogt (University of Michigan) has been a careful reader and a perceptive editor, and it is a privilege to have him on my committee. I would also like to thank the entire Department of Classics at the University of Cincinnati, my home for the past eight years. My graduate education was particularly aided by Getzel Cohen, Holt Parker, Kathleen Lynch, and Harry Gotoff. I would also like to thank Laura Deller, Deema Maghathe, Natalie Long, Ken Gotoff, and Kelsie Murray. In addition, the Burnam Classics Library is an invaluable resource, and I am grateful for the assistance of Jacquie Riley, Michael Braunlin, Cade Stevens, and the late David Ball. This project has been made possible by the Louise Taft Semple Fellowship, the Cedric Boulter Memorial Fellowship, and the Bert Hodge Hill Fellowship at the ASCSA. In addition, Thomas Connor has provided technical assistance.

I was lucky to complement my studies at a number of other universities and research centers during my work on this dissertation. My time at the University of Michigan was greatly aided by Brendan Haug, Graham Claytor, Michael Leese, and Amy Warhaft. At the Center for the Tebtunis Papyri (University of California, Berkeley), Todd Hickey gave me access to all the papyri I needed to inspect, and ensured that my time working there was both productive and pleasant. I have been fortunate to spend a number of months as a visiting student at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, and cannot fully express my gratitude to the faculty and students there. Special thanks are due to Willy Clarysse and Mark Depauw. Sofie Remijsen, now at the Universität Mannheim, has always shown a great interest in the progress of my dissertation.
The year I spent as the Bert Hodge Hill fellow at the American School of Classical Studies at Athens was idyllic, and I am grateful for that opportunity. I would like to thank all the faculty and staff, especially Jack Davis (then director), Margie Miles, Glenn Peers, Joe Day, Leslie Day, and Guy Sanders. My development as a student of ancient history began with a number of smart, generous individuals before I came to Cincinnati, and I would not have gotten this far without their support. In particular, I would like to thank Paula Tucci (Dover High School), Allan Hood (University of Edinburgh), and Jaclyn Maxwell, Lynne Lancaster, Tom Carpenter, Ann Fidler, and the late Philip Bebb, all at Ohio University.

I am fortunate enough to be surrounded by friends who are both patient and supportive, among whom Morgan Beucler, Noah Blundo, Elizabeth Goussetis, Sharada Shreve-Price, George Jesse, Hélène Deval, Sean Carter, and Amanda Hogan deserve special mention. My time at the University of Cincinnati has been made vastly more enjoyable and productive by my fellow graduate students here, especially Sarah Lima, Lynne Kvapil, Jed Thorn, Patrick Beasom, Natalie Abell, Dana Clark, Bill Weir, Taylor Coughlan, Austin Chapman, Emilia Oddo, Kyle Helms, Mitch Brown, Mohammed Bhatti, and Aaron Wolpert. Pride of place must go to Heather Graybehl and my family. Heather has been a companion throughout nearly all of this dissertation, and has helped to make the struggles lighter and the joys richer. My family has been a constant source of encouragement, support, and none of this would have been possible without them.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

When, in 30 BC, Cleopatra VII committed suicide and her son, Caesarion, was executed by Roman troops, the nearly three hundred year history of Ptolemaic rule in Egypt came to an end. The Egypt of the Ptolemies, which had stretched from below the first cataract of the Nile to Alexandria, became a province of the Roman Empire: Aegyptus. It had earlier passed into the shadow of Rome—in 168 BC, Roman intervention was needed to save the Ptolemies in the 6th Syrian War—but the Romans had never before had to administer the region. This now required a blending of Roman practice, Ptolemaic precedents, and traditional Egyptian ways of life. The resulting blend retained an exotic air, even if Egypt fell into line, more or less, as a Roman province.\(^1\) Rome itself was also undergoing a political transformation: 30 BC likewise saw the transition from the republic to the principate. Over the next two hundred years, the Romans and Egyptians together developed a new *modus vivendi* along the Nile, one that would leave its traces in the archaeological, literary, and documentary records. One constant remained, however: life in Egypt was inextricably tied up with the worship of the Egyptian gods. For the Romans, religion would be a pressing concern. Vergil’s *Aeneid* linked the Ptolemaic dynasty (in the person of its last queen) with the gods of Egypt:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{regina in mediis patrio vocat agmina sistro,} \\
\text{necdum etiam geminos a tego respicit anguis.} \\
\text{omnigenumque deum monstra et latrator Anubis} \\
\text{contra Neptunum et Venerem contraque Minervam} \\
\text{tela tenant.}\footnote{Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.696-700.}\end{align*}
\]

\(^1\) For the exotic, see Juvenal, *Satire* 15; the uniqueness of Egypt inside the Roman Empire has provided a fertile ground for scholarly debate, which is usually referred to as the “Sonderstellung question” (vel sim.), which will be discussed briefly later in this work. For an introduction, see Lewis (1995c).
The queen calls upon her hosts with their native sistrum; not yet does she cast back a
glance at the twin snakes behind. Monstrous gods of every form and barking Anubis
wield weapons against Neptune and Venus and against Minerva.\(^3\)

After Cleopatra’s death, the adherents of barking Anubis were made part of the Roman
Empire, and had either to be tolerated or brought to heel.\(^4\)

Scholarly interest in Roman administration in the provinces is (and has been for some
time) quite high, with commensurate interest in the experience of the people living in those
provinces under Roman rule. The unique conditions in Egypt mean that we can use not only
archaeological and literary evidence, but also papyri and other organic material. For this, Egypt
gives us the best possible evidence to test our theories about the experience of Roman rule in the
provinces. Egyptian temples are a good subset of society through which to examine the effect of
Rome, and local responses to it, for two reasons. First, the temples had a large presence in the
physical, cultural, political, and economic landscape of Egypt, and remain visible in the
archaeological, literary, and documentary record. Second, religion has long been understood as a
source of resistance to occupation and domination, whether ancient or modern.\(^5\) Interactions
between Rome and Egyptian temples have for the last century (or more) largely been interpreted
through the evidence for economic activity by the temples.\(^6\) As we shall see in greater detail
below, a re-examination of the fundamental evidence used in previous studies shows that current
models are most likely incorrect, and that a new study of the evidence for temples and their
economic activities is therefore necessary.

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\(^3\) Translation Fairclough, revised by Goold. From the Loeb, 2000 edition.
\(^4\) The choices were, of course, a little more complex than this simple dichotomy, but most scholarship on this period
has largely focused on the latter category, assuming that the Romans sought to bring the temples increasingly under
their control. For this, see especially Chapter 3, for the “confiscation narrative.” For attitudes towards “Egyptian
animal worship” by Augustus and his contemporaries, see Smelik and Hemelrijk (1984) 1922-1930.
\(^5\) For ancient religion and resistance, see, for instance, Frankfurter (1998); for modern examples, see Young (2007),
The history of the period immediately following the establishment of Roman rule in Egypt has attracted quite a bit of scholarly attention recently.\(^7\) While much of the imperial administration of Egypt has been well and thoroughly explored,\(^8\) the temples have attracted less attention. Otto’s *Priester und Tempel im hellenistischen Ägypten*, now a century old, remains the standard work, not only for the Ptolemaic period, but also for the Roman period. Otto’s goal was to explore the effect of “Hellenism,” which he defined as lasting from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest,\(^9\) on the traditional Egyptian culture. For him, Egyptian culture could best be seen by looking at the temples. Thanks to the available evidence, which was primarily papyrological and literary, with a smaller amount of archaeological material, Otto’s focus was necessarily economic. The publication of large numbers of Ptolemaic or Roman-period literary texts from Egyptian temples came later,\(^10\) but huge numbers of documents in Demotic and especially Greek were flooding in from excavations and dealers throughout Egypt. These tended to relate to economic matters, and the result was a two-volume work focused almost entirely on questions of economy and administration.\(^11\) In addition, Otto’s interest in the effect of “Hellenism” on “Egyptian culture” resulted in a somewhat contrived judgment as to what was and was not Greek.\(^12\) Otto’s position here has been summarized thus: “Greek and Egyptian religions were separate entities and a deity and therefore its cult must be assigned to one or the other. The name

\(^7\) See, e.g., Capponi (2005) or Monson (2012).
\(^8\) See, for instance, Kruse (2002) for a two-volume study of the *basilikos grammateus* from 30 BC to 245 AD.
\(^9\) Otto (1905) v-vi.
\(^11\) Of the eight chapters, there are: The gods of Hellenistic Egypt, the organization of the priesthood, the priestly career, estate and income of the temple, the expenditures of the temple, the administration of worship, the social setting of the priests, and the relationship between church and state. Of these, two are explicitly economic, two others (administration of worship and the social setting of the priests) are primarily economic, and another two are administrative.
\(^12\) It is probably not accidental that Otto’s work was published soon (three years) after the release of Wissowa’s great work (Wissowa [1902]), which focused on an authentic Roman religion and the influence of “foreign” gods.
of the god provides a clue to its real identity.\textsuperscript{13} Despite serious concerns raised by Rostovtzeff,\textsuperscript{14} Otto’s work in collecting and interpreting the economic, social, and administrative aspects has not yet been matched.\textsuperscript{15}

With the publication of the second volume of Grenfell and Hunt’s \textit{Tebtunis Papyri}, and the birth of the “confiscation narrative,” which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, the economic emphasis in studies of the temples was more or less sealed for decades. While Glare (and, two decades later, Monson) attempted to revise the prevailing picture, scholarly consensus has more or less solidified around a series of assumptions: the Romans, fearing revolts started (as, supposedly, the Great Theban Revolt) by the temples and their restive priests, chose to bring the temples to heel, stripping them of their lands, forcing them to seek approval from Roman bureaucrats to appoint new priests, and generally burying them under an avalanche of paperwork, requirements, and red tape. Gravely stricken, the temples gradually drifted into insignificance and destruction. This, briefly summarized, forms the “confiscation narrative” and has proven the interpretative framework of choice for a century of scholarship on the temples.\textsuperscript{16}

Since the development of the confiscation narrative, there have been relatively few significant scholarly attempts to study the effect of Rome on the Egyptian temples. The most notable of these is Glare’s unpublished Cambridge dissertation.\textsuperscript{17} Glare examined “the role of temples and their personnel in Roman Egypt, the attitudes of the new administrators to them, and how their actions affected, deliberately or otherwise, the status of temples in the period of Roman rule.”\textsuperscript{18} In doing so, she considered not only the economic infrastructure of the temples,

\textsuperscript{13} Glare (1995) 9.
\textsuperscript{14} Rostovtzeff (1909).
\textsuperscript{15} Indeed, Rostovtzeff appears to have regarded Otto’s work as a treasure-trove (Fundgrube) rather than a historical inquiry of its own: “Lieber historisch irren, als antiquarisch verflachen!” (Rostovtzeff [1909] 642).
\textsuperscript{16} For the development of this narrative, see Ch. 3.
\textsuperscript{17} Glare (1993)
\textsuperscript{18} Glare (1993) 4.
but the imperial cult, municipalization, and a range of other topics. The extremely broad range, both in theme and geography, forced Glare to draw on evidence from across Egypt, and this therefore often lacked the necessary context. Nevertheless, she began a process, continued also Monson, of critically examining the underpinnings of our understanding of the temples of Roman Egypt.

The value of context can be seen in another set of examples. In 1983 (published in 1984), Stead proposed “a model to facilitate the study of temple administration,” that is, an attempt to “suggest the likely flow of economic activity within a temple of the Graeco-Roman period in Egypt.”¹⁹ This model, while intriguing, blends information from the earliest Ptolemaic period to the later Roman Empire. While this blending began at least as early as Otto, for whom the “Hellenistische Ägypten” in his title referred to both Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt,²⁰ its continued use by Stead means that her model is of only limited use. Evans, meanwhile, focused on the temple of Soknebtunis in Tebtunis, in the “Greco-Roman period.”²¹ In this case, while maintaining a strong geographic focus (Tebtunis), he largely glossed over differences within his chronological range.²² In large part, this meant a focus on Ptolemaic Egypt with occasional use of Roman material, while Stead dealt with the problem of change over time almost not at all, proposing a model that remained more or less static throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. This chronological blurring has two causes. First, prior to the development of the confiscation narrative as an explanatory device (as with Otto), the province of Egypt was still considered to have been administered fundamentally in the same way it was by the Ptolemy. The temples, then, continued on as they had always done, with little to separate the periods,
except perhaps for the dismantling of the royal monopoly system.\textsuperscript{23} The second possible cause for chronological blurring is the nature of the surviving evidence. We are not equally informed about all aspects of temple administration for the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.\textsuperscript{24} It is almost unavoidable to bring evidence from one period into the discussion of another. This can be done (and examples can be found occasionally throughout this work) but doing so requires caution and a clear sense of the larger chronological framework. As we shall see, there was no great overhaul in the temples with the coming of Augustus, but there also was not a steady sameness from the arrival of Alexander to the reign of Constantine. Indeed, the early years of the Ptolemies had more in common with the Persian period than with that of the Antonines. These examples have been selected not only to highlight the need for a new study of the economic infrastructure of the temples in the Roman period, but also the need for caution in approaching the evidence. Documents existed in their context, which in turn is made up of a number of contexts: geographical, chronological, social, and so on.

To understand the temples in their context, I have chosen two case studies: Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos. Both of these are villages located in the Fayum, a depression to the west of the Nile valley in Middle Egypt. The Fayum was intensively developed during the Ptolemaic period and remained an important part of the province until Late Antiquity, when, for a number of reasons, many of the villages were abandoned. Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos make interesting (and important) case studies for a number of reasons. Despite being Fayum villages (and often associated, as in an international symposium held on the two villages in 2003),\textsuperscript{25} the two were very different. Soknopaiou Nesos, located on the north shore of the Birket Qarun (the

\textsuperscript{23} Stead (1984) 1046.
\textsuperscript{24} The widespread acceptance of the confiscation narrative has also narrowed the scope for the discussion of economic activities by the temple in the Roman period.
\textsuperscript{25} Lippert and Schentuleit (2003b).
lake in the lower, northwestern part of the Fayum depression), was not surrounded by a wealth of farm fields, but rather had to draw on the other side of the lake for almost everything. In addition, the population was much more priestly than elsewhere, in that a high percentage of the residents were employed as priests at the temple of Soknopaios.\textsuperscript{26} Tebtunis, meanwhile, has been taken as more or less the model village. In contrast to Soknopaiou Nesos, the agricultural land of Tebtunis has been at the center of all discussion of the temple there, and, beyond that, the (supposed) fate of temple land in Tebtunis has applied to all other temples in Egypt in the Roman period. There are a number of other temples, located in cities and villages throughout Egypt, that would also merit close study. For this dissertation, however, Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos are logical choices. Their outsize significance in scholarship on Roman Egypt, combined with their ability to address very different aspects of their temples’ economic infrastructure, make them ideal places for close study. We will see other areas from time to time, but these villages, Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos, their immediate environs, and the networks that developed around the temples there will be the primary focus.

\textit{What were Egyptian Temples?}

An ancient visitor from Rome, accustomed to the columned porticos and anthropomorphic gods would have been taken aback by a visit to an Egyptian temple, not only by the very different religious systems but by the building itself. Egyptian religion was, in a very basic sense, devoted to the maintenance of \textit{ma’at}, that is, the proper order of things. Falling away from \textit{ma’at}, through neglect of worship or wayward rulers, could spell doom for Egypt as famine, drought, or invaders could burst into the Nile valley. The temples themselves—even in

\textsuperscript{26} For which, see Ch. 2.
the villages—served as centers for the worship of the gods, and therefore, the maintenance of *ma’at*. The largest, such as that at Karnak, could last for thousands of years, growing slowly as new buildings and features were added. Most temple complexes were somewhat more modest.

The temple tended to be surrounded by a large “enclosure wall,” many of which survive throughout Egypt. Within that wall were shops, houses, storerooms, shrines, sacred pools, and the temple itself, the building within which the god resided. As one moved deeper into the temple, the exclusivity increased, to a point at which only priests were permitted. But, the god would periodically leave the temple, borne on a barge carried by the priests, usually in order to make calls on the nearby gods.

One Egyptian word, *ḥ.t-ntr*, is usually translated as “temple” (vel sim.), and probably stood for the inner edifice, but another, *ḥtp-ntr*, sometimes translated as “divine offerings,” implied something more than simply the building in which the god resided. It instead meant “all property attached to the temple of a god and intended for the upkeep of the complex and its religious services.” This meant the temple, but also the property within the enclosure wall, the farmland outside the city (or village), shops, industries, and, in at least one case, a trading post located far into Nubia.

The income of the temple—the topic of this dissertation—was intended to support the mission of the temple, that is, the worship of the god and the maintenance of *ma’at*. This was accomplished primarily through the priests. There were many different types of religious figures associated with the temple, from *wab*-priests to the “picklers,” that is, embalmers and the men who cared for bodies interred in caves and tombs. Some of these, those generally called “priests”

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28 See, for instance, Kom Ombo or Medinet Habu, where Ptolemaic-era crenellations still survive.
29 See, for instance, the network of divine connections around Karnak, Luxor, and the Western Bank of the Nile around Thebes.
in the scholarship, served in a rotating five-part system, in which the priests were divided up into five “tribes” (phylai) which each served for a fifth of the year in turn. This ensured that the burdens of ritual purity—when on duty, the priests were expected to go about freshly washed and cleanly shaved, and wrapped in fresh linen—and the benefits of the income of “priestly days” were shared equally by all the priests. When we speak of the temples, then, we are simultaneously referring to the temple building, the other buildings inside the enclosure walls, and the other properties included in the term htp-ntr, as well as the priests, and other staff affiliated with the temple. All of this was seen as the property of the gods, who “were given the status of landed nobility, which suited some of the Egyptians’ concrete conceptions of divinity.”

Though both temples we will focus on were dedicated to Sobek, the crocodile god beloved in the Fayum, they each represented a different aspect of the god—Sobek, lord of Tunis (Soknebtunis) and Sobek, lord of the island of Pay (Soknopaios). Their shared enthusiasm for Sobek did not imply any close connection, though both were relatively high-ranking temples within the Sobek hierarchy in the Fayum.

The temples, however, were more than religious edifices. In the New Kingdom, they were critical parts of the government, gathering surpluses to guard against future need, providing officials to the government, and, at times, serving as local prisons. They benefitted from foreign wars—1500 Syrian prisoners were put to work on temple land in the reign of Thutmose III—and brought raw materials in from the deserts. The maintenance of ma’at was key to the duties of the pharaoh, and the temples formed a branch of his administration. Their centrality to

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32 For the hierarchies, see Ch. 4, concerning the New Kingdom hierarchies within the Thebaid, and Ch. 6, regarding supposed hierarchy payments.
33 See the Abott Papyrus (BM 10221) 4.3 and Peet (1997) 45 ff.
34 Haring (2013) 618.
life in Egypt was recognized by the Ptolemies, who offered payments (the *syntaxis*) to temples that stayed loyal to the kings during a serious revolt. As we shall see, the temples, through their economic and administrative systems, tied together parts of their regions, linking villages, farmsteads, and smaller shrines and creating bonds outside of, and often parallel to, the “normal” networks of civil administration.\textsuperscript{35}

*Outline of this Dissertation*

Any work of this size must necessarily select and choose which material will be discussed. I have chosen to focus on the income of the temples, and not on their expenditures. This decision is not, however, an entirely arbitrary one. While there is evidence that expenditures closely followed income, this is most likely because income was fairly predictable, and the temples took steps to increase the predictability.\textsuperscript{36} The temples were generally conservative in their economic practices, and chose long-term security over the possibility of short-term windfall or serious loss. The expenditures of the temples is an interesting topic, and a wealth of new information on the subject should be published within the next decade.\textsuperscript{37} The limited evidence of the *graphai* filed by the temples according to orders issued by the Roman government offers fascinating testimony to the varied expenses of the temples, but there is nothing like a complete accounting of a single temple’s income and expenditures, and their relation in a given year. Indeed, most *graphai* are damaged or excerpted in such a way that the section concerning

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[35] Perhaps familiar from the diocesan system in, e.g., Roman Catholicism. One minor difference: while Catholic dioceses, at least in the United States, follow state borders almost entirely—two dioceses, Wilmington (Del./Md.) and Gallup (New Mexico/Ariz.) sit across state boundaries—temple networks could, on slightly more occasions, stretch across nome boundaries, especially if they were located within sight of the border, as the seat of the archdiocese of Cincinnati is, in relation to its own boundary with Kentucky.
\item[36] For this, see Ch. 7, concerning the position of *prophetes*. In short, one could bid on the position of *prophetes*, which would get a share of the net income of the temples.
\item[37] Marie-Pierre Chauffray, pers. comm. The Demotic evidence from Soknopaiou Nesos is increasingly important for this topic.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
income is damaged or missing altogether. All this is to say that a fresh examination of the expenditures is a *desideratum*, but one that must be outside the scope of this dissertation. The divisions between the categories of expenditures and income can blur, however, as in the case of temple construction, which is discussed in Chapter 7. By focusing on the examples of Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos, we can also limit our study to what Glare terms “the traditional temples.” Though the imperial cult and “foreign” (read, Greek) gods made up an important part of the vibrant religious landscape of Egypt in the Roman period, they did not have a presence in the villages under consideration, being more or less concentrated in the cities.

This work is divided into eight chapters, of which this is the first. In the second, we will consider the geography, demography, and archaeology of two Fayum villages, Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos, discussed above. While recent work has highlighted the potential for difference between the Fayum and other parts of Egypt, Fayumic evidence, especially from Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos, continues to form the basis for much broader arguments about life, official policy, and economic behavior throughout Egypt. In the second chapter, then, we will examine the two villages, to establish their place in the wider landscape and population patterns. We will in addition consider the results of archaeological work in both villages, from which we can see the clear focus by 20th and 21st century archaeologists on the temple buildings, and the questions raised for future research by this work. Both villages have well preserved temples, which have been thoroughly excavated (and recently re-excavated) along with their immediate vicinity. While the papyri found in these excavations allow us a solid grasp of the

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38 See, for instance *P.David* 1 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 138-161 AD) or *P.Zauzich* 12 (Soknopaiou Nesos?, late 1st-early 2nd c. AD).
39 These temples also could fund themselves in different ways, such as banking, which the “traditional” temples did engage in.
temples’ economic infrastructure, the lack of excavations in the other parts of these villages or of a systematic archaeological survey of the region remains a problem. Nevertheless, the primacy of these two villages in accounts of Roman Egypt make them logical case studies, especially concerning the temples, and the critical importance of context in interpreting the evidence means that the comparative richness of our knowledge about these places allows us to avoid the blanket application of evidence to the whole of Roman Egypt.

In the third chapter, we will examine in detail the most frequently cited text concerning the temples of Roman Egypt: P.Tebt. 2.302. This document, a petition to the prefect from the priests of Soknebtunis in Tebtunis, has formed the foundation for a scholarly consensus about widespread confiscations of temple land and Roman attempts to rein in the supposedly overweening power of an Egyptian priestly caste. A close reading of the text, however, paired with a proper sense of its rhetorical and historical context, suggests that the significance of the dispute discussed by the priests in their petition was much more circumscribed (and therefore much less generalizable): probably a property dispute tied to events within Tebtunis. If P.Tebt. 2.302 concerns a local dispute, and does not point to province-wide changes, it is safe to say that the current scholarly consensus is in need of substantial change.

If we set aside the confiscation narrative as an explanatory tool, the evidence for the economic infrastructure of the temples is also in need of a fresh examination. The next four chapters (4-7) explore the evidence for temples and their economic infrastructure. The fourth chapter begins in the Pharaonic period, summarizing briefly the development of temples as economic entities in the Old, Middle, and especially New Kingdoms. The evidence of this period, especially from the lengthy lists of temple property and personnel from the New Kingdom, allows us to see something of how the temples were structured in their supposedly
golden age. The economic realities and administrative practices visible in these documents help us consider the temples in the *longue durée*, a perspective that can be difficult to achieve in the Roman period, amidst the chaos of more temporary, if well-attested, events. We can, therefore, sketch out something of a framework for how Egyptian temples functioned, even in the best of times, and this framework can be tested against our evidence for the temples in the Roman period. The second part of the fourth chapter continues the economic development of the temples, considering the Persian and Ptolemaic periods in greater detail. The example of Cambyses and his supposed attacks on the wealth of the temples highlights the problems of “one-sided history,” and the rhetorical nature of our evidence, which we will have taken up already in our study of *P.Tebt. 2.302*. In addition, we discuss a number of significant issues for Ptolemaic temples, from the expansion into the Fayum basin to the Menchis papers, the development of the *syntaxis*, and the administrative structure of the temples in this period. While the *Sonderstellung* theory of Roman Egypt, that the Romans more or less left the province alone (administratively) as a unique holdover from the Ptolemaic kingdom, has been discarded for the most part, much of the discussion of the temples in the Roman period has placed them and their economic infrastructure against the evidence of the Ptolemaic period. The questions, therefore, have largely been of how the temples changed with “the advent of Rome,” as Glare put it. The *syntaxis* and temple tenancy on crown land offer two examples of developments in the Ptolemaic period, the former from the Ptolemaic officials downwards, and the latter originating from a particular temple responding to a particular crisis. This chapter serves as a point of entry for the following three chapters, in that it considers the agricultural land, other economic interests, and administrative structure of the temples, focusing especially on their development in the Ptolemaic period up to the period around the end of the 2nd century BC, that is, the time of the
Menches papers from Kerkeosiris.

The following chapter (5) focuses particularly on the state of temple land in the Roman period. Recent work, especially that of Monson, has linked changes in the category of private and public land to that of temple land. We begin, therefore, with a review of the arguments concerning public and private land. Following that, we turn to temple land itself. As Monson’s arguments concerning temple land are quite innovative, they merit extended analysis. In the end, however, the categories he creates—“directly controlled temple land” and temple land in private hands—cannot so neatly be separated, and the entire system presupposes the confiscation of at least most of the temple land by the Romans. As we will see, however, the evidence for such confiscations is lacking. The temples instead continued to lease out their land on a long-term basis, preferring the low-risk (but low-reward) strategy common to institutions. The continued presence of these long-term leases explains the existence of a handful of documents from Tebtunis, through which various figures surrender their leases on temple land.\(^1\) While the continuation of hereditary leases in the Roman period has been questioned concerning private land, the continued use of long-term leases on temple lands seems certain.\(^2\) With these more conceptual arguments prepared, we can turn to our two particular case-studies, Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos, and can look quite closely at their temple land in the Roman period. While the temple of Soknebtunis in Tebtunis appears more or less as the standard, against which other temples in Egypt are compared or contrasted, the temple of Soknopaiou Nesos is seen as very much \textit{sui generis}. Between the village’s position on the north, largely uninhabited shore of the Birket Qarun and the majority of the village’s population being employed as priests, the example of Soknopaiou Nesos gives us a chance to see how a temple might structure its land when it

\(^1\) See, e.g., \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.310.
\(^2\) For criticism of \textit{hereditary} (that is, open-ended) leases, see Monson (2012) 17-19.
cannot follow a normal distribution. Indeed, the wide network created by Soknopaios’ land in the northern half of the Fayum serves as a strong example for the connections that were created by temple land, connections that we will see deepen in the following chapter as we turn to the other economic interests of the temples.

In this chapter (6) we review the other sources of income identified for the temples, and discuss the evidence for these activities and their implications for the social and economic influence of the temples. The evidence, especially that from Soknopaiou Nesos, allows us to reconstruct the elaborate system of smaller “processing centers” that could convert agricultural goods into finished products, as well as the flow of goods through various temple-owned (though probably leased out) industries (breweries, bakeries, etc.), transported on temple-controlled ships, and sold in temple-controlled shops. We also examine instances in which the temples (and their affiliated staff) provided services, such as embalming and care for the dead, which relied on the specialized knowledge and religious character of the temples. While our study of temple land reveals the broad strokes of the temples’ involvement in the affairs of people in a large geographic area, an examination of the other economic activities of the temple allows us to create a much richer map of those relations, and of the substantial degree to which temples could be involved in daily life, outside of the rituals, processions, and festivals with which they are normally associated.

The following chapter (7) focuses on the administrative organization of the temples, and the religious administration created by the Romans to oversee the temples. Partly because of the large number and different types of documents available, in multiple languages, it can be difficult to establish a secure sense of how the temples were run—who made decisions, for

For a “normal distribution,” see discussion of New Economic Geography in Chapter 4, and again in Chapter 5.
instance. Unlike the Ptolemaic period, which saw (for the most part) a single *lesonis* oversee the
temple, later accompanied by a financial official, the *epistes*, the temples in the Roman period
were administered by small groups of priests. The *lesonis* became a board of *lesones*, as many as
seventeen in one instance. The entire body of the priests, meanwhile, gained a voice, probably
through a *prostates*, attested in a number of papyri, and the individual *phylai* were represented by
elders (*presbyteroi*). Because they were “on duty” at any given point, the *phylai* and the
*presbyteroi* are very well represented in the available evidence, a circumstance that has perhaps
raised their prominence too much in modern scholarship. The Romans, meanwhile, constructed a
religious administrative system, in which a high priest (*archiereus*) came to serve as an
intermediate step between the temples and the prefect of Egypt (and, in turn, the emperor). The
*archiereus* was aided by an *antarchiereus*, who seems to have managed interdepartmental affairs
in the government, and by a series of *archiprophetai*, who served at the nome level. Finally, we
take the example of the *syntaxis*, and, more briefly, temple construction, as a case study of the
interacting and overlapping layers of authority affecting both the priests and the Roman
administrators in this period.

Finally, in the conclusions (chapter 8) we sum up the state of the temples economically in
the Roman period, bringing back together the agricultural land, the other economic activities, and
the administrative structures to create a new picture of the temples of Tebtunis and Soknopaiou
Nesos. In addition to summarizing points already explored (as with the confiscation of temple
land), we offer some broader conclusions concerning the economic activity of the temples and
their place in the networks that developed around them through those activities. This work, then,
focuses on the intersection of temple, society, and economy in two villages of the Roman Fayum.
We challenge the current model of the infrastructure of religion in the Roman period and offer a
new model based on a reexamination of the available evidence. By taking Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos as case-studies, we can place into much more specific context the evidence from those areas, evidence that has been taken to speak for the whole of the Roman period in the whole of Egypt.
Chapter 2: Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos

Throughout this dissertation, the villages of Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos are the primary case studies. We have already discussed the reasons for this in the previous chapter, but a few points are worth keeping in mind. First, there are a large number of published papyri related to temple activities in these villages in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. Both villages have also been the subject of recent excavations, and something can be said of their geographic and archaeological contexts. In most cases, when we speak of “the temple,” it stands metonymically for the entire associated structure—the building, but also the priests, the other staff, and so on. The temple buildings have, however, proven more enticing to excavate and reconstruct than the people who labored and worshipped within them. In this chapter, we will consider the place of the “temple” within the local landscape, the history of excavations of the temples in those villages, and the physical remains of the temples found. As we shall see, the nature of the temple, with access increasingly limited as one moved into the temple, and with the massive enclosure walls that surrounded the temple proper, led to a range of uses and habitation within the walls of what we would call the temple temenos. While we must ultimately turn to the papyri to understand economic life in the villages, these cannot in turn be properly placed within their contexts without an examination of the landscapes in which they originated, the excavated remains of the temples concerning which they were written, and the objects that were found within those temples, sometimes alongside the papyri themselves.

44 For an introduction to the priests, see Sauneron (2000).
45 While such an approach runs the risk of reducing architecture or landscape to mere context, it is also the case that the economic activities of the temple, though centered on the support of a cult practiced from within the temple itself, and described on papyri sometimes found inside the temple, do not often in large part concern the temple building.
**The Fayum**

Both Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos were located within the Fayum. The Fayum is a large depression, with some parts around the Birket Qarun as much as 45 meters below sea level.\(^{46}\) Today’s Fayum makes up the Faiyum Governate, measuring around 4550 square kilometers, though the depression itself is somewhat larger (6068.7 km\(^2\)).\(^{47}\) Of this, the largest single feature is the Birket Qarun, the large lake in the west of the Fayum. The lake currently stretches for around 250 square kilometers, though this has varied through history. The entire depression slopes downwards somewhat from the Lahun gap in the east, through which the Nile first broke 70,000 years ago, turning the Fayum from a desert hollow to a lush, oasis-like lowland.\(^{48}\) The Bahr Yusuf, the only channel carrying water from the Nile to the Birket Qarun through the Lahun gap, was further reduced by a number of natural channels. The lake, called either *Mr*-wr (“large lake”) in Egyptian or *Moeris* in Greek, served as the eventual outlet for many of the naturally occurring channels that existed in the Fayum, some of which were diverted for the long-distance canals that were built throughout the Fayum.\(^{49}\)

The Fayum was fed by the Bahr Yusuf but, unlike the Nile valley, there was not an outlet for the water.\(^{50}\) In addition to this, the Fayum generally features a high water table, thanks to a “relatively impermeable clay lens” sitting close to the surface, which today can result in standing water and an increase in salinity.\(^{51}\) This is exacerbated by the shallowness of the Fayum soils and the presence of significant salt deposits under much of the Fayum.\(^{52}\) These difficulties made the

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\(^{46}\) The lowest measured point in the Fayum is 52 meters below sea level at the bottom of the Birket Qarun. See Haug (2012) 86.

\(^{47}\) Haug (2012) 86. Of this, only 1849.64 km\(^2\) are inhabited.


\(^{49}\) See Römer (2013) for a natural channel being blocked in order to develop a long-distance canal (and the difficulties that resulted). For the construction of the irrigation system, see Thompson (1999a).

\(^{50}\) For ecology and agriculture along the Nile, see Butzer (1976), esp. chs. 3-5.

\(^{51}\) Haug (2012) 89-90.

\(^{52}\) Haug (2012) 92-94.
maintenance of the irrigation systems and constant vigilance of the waterworks a matter of great importance, a fact that is reflected in the papyrological record.\textsuperscript{53}

Politically, the Fayum was organized in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods into a single nome, a political structure inherited from the pharaohs.\textsuperscript{54} The nomes were usually named for their capital city, in this case Krokodilopolis/Ptolemais Euergetis, though the Arsinoite nome seems to have leant its name to the capital as a nickname.\textsuperscript{55} The modern name Fayum comes, eventually, from the ancient Egyptian name for the region, \textit{p3-ym} (the lake). The region was divided into three divisions (\textit{merides}). The largest was the \textit{meris} of Herakleides, to the east and north, that is, the area on the “north” shore of the Bahr Yusuf.\textsuperscript{56} The eastern and southern area of that to the “south” of the Bahr Yusuf was the \textit{meris} of Polemon, while the western area south of the Bahr Yusuf was the \textit{meris} of Themistos. If the Birket Qarun is included as a region, the Fayum more or less divides as follows: in the north, the lake; to the east, the division of Herakleides; in the south, the division of Polemon; and to the west, the division of Themistos. The one point where all there \textit{merides} met was at Krokodilopolis, which sat astride the Bahr Yusuf, giving it a literally and figuratively central role in the Fayum.\textsuperscript{57} The continuous occupation of the site of Krokodilopolis, which sat astride the Bahr Yusuf, giving it a literally and figuratively central role in the Fayum.\textsuperscript{57} The continuous occupation of the site of Krokodilopolis meant that little survives of Krokodilopolis and its papyrological record, when compared to the villages of the Fayum, which, by dint of their eventual abandonment, preserved quite a bit more.\textsuperscript{58} These villages—though the term village

\textsuperscript{53} See, for instance, Sijpesteijn (1964) or Bonneau (1993), esp. parts 2 and 3.
\textsuperscript{54} For the political development of the Ptolemaic Fayum, see, e.g., Mueller (2006).
\textsuperscript{55} Clarysse (2002).
\textsuperscript{56} Clarysse (2002). The Nile was thought to run south-north and the Bahr Yusuf east-west. The Bahr Yusuf actually runs from southeast to northwest, with the result that the “north” bank of the canal can sometimes be to the south of the “south” bank.
\textsuperscript{57} Some subsidiary canals did branch off of the Bahr Yusuf before Krokodilopolis such as the “canal of Kleon,” or the “desert canal,” which branched near Hawara and the Labyrinth—the temple and mortuary complex of Amenemhat III.
\textsuperscript{58} For the abandonment, see, e.g., van Minnen (1995).
may disguise their relatively large size—can therefore offer our best evidence for the economic activities of the temples outside of the largest cities, such as Thebes or Memphis, the temples of which were very much out of the ordinary in grandeur, power, and reach.

Figure 1: The Fayum in the Roman Period
(Image courtesy of Willy Clarysse/The Fayum Project)
Figure 2: Tebtunis in the Roman Period
(after Gallazzi 2000)
The ancient site of Tebtunis (modern Umm el-Baragat) is located in the extreme south of the Fayum depression. The excavated portions of the village lie just outside the area currently cultivated and remain exposed today. All of Egypt was crisscrossed with irrigation canals, dykes, and retaining walls, channeling and impounding the waters of the Nile as it flowed north, especially during the annual inundation. Tebtunis was no different, and even today an irrigation canal, the Bahr el-Gharaq, passes within a kilometer of the enclosure wall of the Temple of Soknebtunis, channeling water from the Bahr Yusuf to the villages in the south of the Fayum.\(^{59}\)

These canals were free-flowing, as fishing rights could be attached to plots of land alongside the canals.\(^{60}\) From these, locks and sluices could be opened to allow water into fields or subsidiary channels. In the Ptolemaic period, the Fayum was divided into three administrative districts, and Tebtunis fell into the southernmost, the “Division of Polemon.”\(^{61}\)

To the west, the nearest neighbor of the village was Talei (Talithis), located about two and a half miles away, on the southern side of the Moeris canal.\(^{62}\) Unlike the Bahr Yusuf and the largest of the irrigation channels, the Moeris canal was probably not navigable, but it would offer a more or less direct route further into the Fayum or back towards the nome capital and thence to the Nile basin.\(^{63}\)

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\(^{59}\) The canal presumably takes its name from a village, El-Kharak, mentioned by Belzoni (in Rondot (2004) 1) as being near Tebtunis (“Rawèje-Toton”) on a branch of the Bahr-Yusuf.

\(^{60}\) Fishing may have been especially popular, however, during the inundation when aquatic life could more easily move along the Fayum’s waterways, enabling seasonally available fishing in papyrus marshes, as in \textit{P.Tebt}. 2.359.5. For more, see \textit{P.Tebt}. 2.308 n. 4. For fishing more broadly in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, see Chouliara-Raïos (2003), 115-325

\(^{61}\) Tebtunis is frequently mentioned with its division association, for which, e.g., see \textit{P.Tebt}. 2.280.7. For discussion of the divisions, see Grenfell and Hunt (1907) 350-360

\(^{62}\) \textit{P.Mich}. 5.250, e.g. It is likely that Talithis also had a temple, to Thoeris, for which see \textit{P.Mich}. 2.121 R. IV.4.1, referring to the existence of a temple of Thoeris, and \textit{P.Tebt}. 3.794, with a reference to a high priest in Talithis. Nevertheless, the temple, in whatever form it took, was not discovered during the occasional excavations of the site, most recently discussed in Kirby and Rathbone (1996).

\(^{63}\) For a reminder of the effects of upstream villages on the canal system, see Römer (2013).
The Population

Attempting to estimate the population of Tebtunis is a tricky proposition. Most have followed the example of Clarysse in issuing a judgment of non liquet: “we can be certain that the village was much larger than Soknopaiou Nesos, but how much larger is impossible to tell.”

Attempting to estimate the population of Tebtunis is nevertheless a useful exercise. In the absence of census rolls, we can estimate the population of a village in a number of ways. First, we can take the total territory controlled by the village and apply to it an (estimated) average population density. Second, we can take the total surface area of the settlement itself, and compare that to other settlements for which both the surface area of the settlement and the population are known. Third, we can take the total surface area of the settlement itself, estimate the average number of houses over a certain area and the average population per house, and from there arrive at an estimated population for that settlement. With all of these methods, we must have a relatively secure fixed point of comparison.

The first method, employed by Rathbone in his influential 1990 “working paper” on the population of Greco-Roman Egypt, is impossible for Tebtunis. We simply have no sense of the total territory of the village. If we can arrive at an estimated population of the village, we might be able to work backwards to estimate an estimated total territory, but this must come later. The second method was employed by Mueller to produce an estimated population of Tebtunis in the Ptolemaic period of 1,320 people, making it (by her estimates) the eighth largest settlement in the Ptolemaic Fayum. To produce this number, Mueller gives the surface area of Tebtunis in

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64 Clarysse (2005)
65 As in Rathbone (1990).
67 As in van Minnen (1994).
the Ptolemaic period as 57 hectares.\textsuperscript{69}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Surface Area of settlement\textsuperscript{70}</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Karanis</td>
<td>80 hectares</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narmouthis</td>
<td>ca. 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tebtunis</td>
<td>57 ha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theadelphieia</td>
<td>25 ha.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soknopaiou Nesos</td>
<td>23 ha.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third method was developed by van Minnen to study the population of Karanis, using Pompeii as a point of comparison. In short, he suggests that, as in Pompeii, houses take up about 50\% of the total area of the settlement, and that in those residential areas, the density of houses would be about 100 houses per hectare. For Tebtunis, this would produce a total number of houses of around 2850. Finally, we can assume an average of (at least) 4-5 residents per house. This would give us a population for Tebtunis of 11,400 to 14,250 (compared to van Minnen’s estimate of 12,000 to 15,000 for the slightly larger Karanis.\textsuperscript{71}

In addition to these approaches, we can use a less carefully prepared estimate. Rowlandson gives a population for Tebtunis in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD of 4,000-5,000, based on a hunch.\textsuperscript{72} Bowman accepts this number, but it cannot stand.\textsuperscript{73} There is one other option to help us

\textsuperscript{69} In common with all of her estimates, however, the surface area of Tebtunis can only be measured from the Roman period. The village has not been excavated in any way that would enable us to judge its size in the Ptolemaic period. These estimates, then, require that all settlements in the Fayum followed a more or less identical development track through the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, such that their relative sizes in the late Roman period equate to their relative sizes in the mid-Ptolemaic period. In any case, the population of the Fayum grew considerably from the Ptolemaic period to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD, before dropping again due to the Antonine Plague, and we cannot take Mueller’s data for the Ptolemaic period to stand also for the Roman period.
\textsuperscript{70} Following Bowman (2013) 237; Most settlements were probably largest in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD, before the Antonine Plague.
\textsuperscript{71} Van Minnen uses a relatively conservative surface area of Karanis—60 hectares, compared to the 79-80 ha. used by most other scholars.
\textsuperscript{72} Rowlandson (1999) 147.
\textsuperscript{73} Bowman (2013) 237.
out of this demographic quagmire, however, and that requires a visit to Narmouthis, also in the south of the Fayum. We know two things about the size and population of this village in the 2nd century AD: It had a surface area of somewhere around 60 hectares, and an adult male tax-paying population of 2,099. It is probable that this does not represent all the male population of the village, however, as it only records tax-paying males. Roman citizens, priests, and anyone else who had acquired freedom from taxation would not appear as part of these 2,099. A more accurate count would probably be at least 2,400 males. Multiplied by 3.1 to account for women and children, then the population of Narmouthis would be at least 7,500 and probably more. A population of Narmouthis of at least 6,500 is discounted by Rathbone, who claimed that “the figure seems high.” We prefer to take the population of Narmouthis as a fixed point, to be adjusted slightly upwards, but not discounted for being too large. If this is the case, then, it is unlikely that the low estimates for the populations of Tebtunis (4,000-5,000) or Karanis (3,600) can be correct. Similarly, the high estimates are probably too large. This analysis is based on the assumption that sites of similar surface area should have similar populations, unless something clearly acted to restrain that population. If we correct Narmouthis (ca. 60 ha.) to a population of around 7,500 people, with around 2,500 adult males, then the population of Tebtunis was more or less the same. Karanis, with a surface area of 80 ha., would therefore have a population of around 10,000.

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74 Bresciani, the excavator, (referenced in Davoli [1998] 223) suggests that the settlement area of Narmouthis was 17.5 hectares, but Davoli (1998) 223 gives a significantly larger (and probably accurate) size of 60 hectares. This larger size (60 ha.) is still smaller than the possible size of Karanis (60-79 ha.). For the population numbers, see Rathbone (1990) 134; This estimate is made from P.Berl. inv. 16011 R which claims that there were (at least) 2,099 men in the village in the 2nd century AD. For this, see Rathbone (1990) 132.

75 Rathbone (1990) 132.

76 As in Soknopaiou Nesos. Soknopaiou Nesos is probably an outlier, in that it has a relatively large surface area but a relatively small population. This is probably due to the difficulties in reliably supplying the village with both food and water—both of which probably needed to be brought up from the other side of the lake. Resource scarcity, especially of staples like grain and drinking water, would have acted as a strong brake on population growth in Soknopaiou Nesos.
Village | Surface Area | Estimated Population
---|---|---
Karanis | 80 ha. | 10,000
Narmouthis | ca. 60 ha. | 7,500
Tebtunis | 57 ha. | 7,500
Soknopaiou Nesos | 23 ha. | 900-1100

Assuming that males were about 1 in every 3.1 people, then we can produce estimates of the adult male population of Tebtunis using the methods discussed above. In addition, we can provide a purely hypothetical estimate of the priestly population of the village, not only priests of Soknebtunis, but also of the other temples in and around the village. For the purpose of illustration, we can assume an entirely hypothetical population of 150 priests (including 50 exempted priests and 40 pastophoroi) employed in the Temple of Soknebtunis. Without a list of all priests (as we have for Soknopaiou Nesos) it is difficult to estimate. In addition, our data concerns the Temple of Soknebtunis, but there were other temples in the village. Soknebtunis was certainly the largest and most important of these temples. We might assume that the other temples and shrines in the village employed another ca. 150, though this might be too low.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population estimate</th>
<th>Adult Males</th>
<th>Estimated # of priests</th>
<th>Priests as % of males</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7,500</td>
<td>2500</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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77 Discussed below.
78 See, e.g., Rathbone (2003b).
Excavations at Tebtunis

While Tebtunis was known to Egyptology at least by Belzoni’s visit to the Fayum in 1819, the first excavations of the site were undertaken by the pair of noted English archaeologists *cum* papyrologists, Bernard Grenfell and Arthur Hunt. Both had already made a name at Oxford with their work at Oxyrhynchus when they were contracted by the Hearst Egyptian Expedition for the 1899-1900 excavation season. Their excavations in the previous year at Theadelphia had disappointed, so the combination of Hearst funding and English excavators was fortuitous. In their last publication of the excavation—a bare three pages in the *APF* in 1901—the pair note that they had ambitions to “making a find of corresponding value [to Oxyrhynchus] for the Ptolemaic period, and in particular to discover another cemetery of mummies with papyrus cartonnage like those found by Petrie at Gurob.” They began work on December 3, 1899, employing at least 100 workmen (“old hands at papyrus digging”) near the temple of Soknebtunis. As their interests were almost exclusively in papyrus-hunting, their information about the excavation itself and its findings is close to non-existent. Papyri, meanwhile, were found in abundance, especially in the large number of crocodile mummies found in the southern cemetery. It is from these crocodiles that the famous Menches papers were extracted. The large quantities of Greek language papyri were taken back to Oxford, where publication was undertaken by Grenfell and Hunt. The pair, aided by J.G. Smyly, had the first volume in the *Tebtunis Papyri* series published by 1902, with 124 papyri fully published with

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81 Grenfell and Hunt (1901) 376.
82 For Menches, see the previous chapter. For the crocodiles, see the useful and thrilling list “Classification of papyri according to crocodiles” in Grenfell and Hunt (1902) xvi-xvii.
commentaries, and another 140 described, some of which would be published in later volumes. As Grenfell and Hunt’s interests were, at least initially, in finding Ptolemaic papyri, the first volume of the Tebtunis series contains only Ptolemaic material, almost all from the period 120-110 BC, that is, the Menches papers and associated documents. The second volume of Tebtunis papyri, published with the assistance of Edgar Goodspeed in 1907, largely concerned the Roman period with documents from Tebtunis itself, rather than the Kerkeosirite focus on the Menches papers. These documents, as Grenfell and Hunt note, were “found in the houses of the town during the first month of the excavations.”

After beginning work near the temple in December of 1899, Grenfell and Hunt shifted their workmen to the cemetery south of the town by January. While their finds there were exceptional—not just papyri, but “rings and other antiquities” as the director of the Hearst Expedition called them—their total time in the vicinity of the temple was limited. It was in this area that the contents of the second volume of Tebtunis papyri were found, especially P.Tebt. 2.291-315, grouped in the publication as “The Priests of Soknebtunis.” While the temple and its outbuildings were of obvious interest, the spectacular papyrus finds from the southern cemetery captured more immediate attention. By 1902, less than two years after Grenfell and Hunt had finished their purportedly thorough excavation of the area, Otto Rubensohn opened a brief excavation, primarily back in the cemetery. While interest in Tebtunis remained high with

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83 Verhoogt (1999).
84 Ibid.
85 Recent work by O’Connell (2007) has suggested a chronological relationship with the T-numbers used by Grenfell and Hunt to label the papyri they excavated. Ryholt (2013) has raised serious questions about the greater efficacy of the T-number method, but the papyri from the priests of Soknebtunis are probably from the area of the temple regardless. The lack of excavation in the majority of the ancient village means that all papyri not found in the cemeteries probably comes from close to the temple in any case.
86 Gallazzi (2000) 6-7. For Grenfell and Hunt’s opinion on the fullness of their excavation of the site, see Reisner’s comments (with Verhoogt’s commentary) quoted in Verhoogt (1999). Rubensohn found a number of religious images of Soknebtunis, subsequently destroyed in Berlin during WWII. For a summary, see Matthews and Muller (2005), 5 or a fuller treatment in Rubensohn (1905).
the publication of the first two volumes of papyri from the site, there were no further excavations until 1929. In the meantime, the general antiquities market, along with the added presence of hundreds of thousands of Commonwealth troops during World War I, fueled the market for antiquities. In addition, the period 1902-1929 was within the later part of the boom in sebakh-digging in Egypt. Sebakh is the nitrogen-rich mixture formed primarily from “the remains of mud-brick houses and other structures of the same material,…the bricks being made of nutrient-laden Nile silt, added to which is the nitrogen-rich occupational material surviving within the buildings.”

Though Tebtunis was never exposed to the depredations of the sebakhin as much as, say, Karanis, there were significant intrusions in this period, clearly visible in an aerial photograph of the site taken in 1934.

The arrival of Italian archaeologists came in 1929, just as the sebakh-trade was being tamed by more concerted action by the Antiquities Department and the increasing availability of artificial fertilizers. Breccia, moving not for the last time in the footsteps of Grenfell and Hunt, opened up small excavations in Tebtunis in 1929, but moved on in the following year, declaring the site to be an “infamous hell,” and the concession passed first to Anti and then to Bagnani. Bagnani, who had learned hieroglyphs while working under Anti, took over the project in 1931 when Anti was called back as an administrator at the University of Padua. For the temple, however, the 1931 season, the last with both Anti and Bagnani, was to prove fruitful. During the winter of 1930/1931, the area around the temple had been targeted by local treasure-hunters. A

87 Bailey (1999) 211.
88 Reproduced in Gallazzi (2000) 131. The sebakhin in Hermopolis were aided by a local sugar company, Daira Sanieh, building two narrow-gauge railway lines directly into the heart of the site of Hermopolis in the 1880s, which stayed open until at least 1901. For this, see Bailey (1999) 212.
89 Breccia’s description of the site of Tebtunis in 1929, as quoted in Gallazi (2000) vii. In 1932, Breccia would open excavations at the Kôm Ali el-Gamman at Oxyrhynchus, for which see Houston (2007).
90 Or perhaps more accurately, the Bagnanis. Gilbert Bagnani and his wife Stewart were both quite active at Tebtunis during the excavations.
pit was sunk into “two subterranean vaulted rooms of one of the small houses standing against
the East side of the big enclosure wall of the temple.” The following season, spurred by
Rostovtzeff to explore the illegal excavation, Anti and Bagnani found a large quantity of papyri,
almost entirely in Egyptian scripts. This formed the core of what has been called the Tebtunis
temple library, also known as “the house of life,” preserving a large number of ritual and
educational texts. The large number of papyri—Bagnani records “eighteen large baskets” of
papyri being carried out, with another three baskets filled by local children searching the
excavation dump for scraps—and the mixed quality and nature of the papyri show that it cannot
have been solely the temple library represented. Indeed, van Minnen suggests that what is
represented, “found together in two subterranean store rooms in a private house on the edge of
the temple area,” is closer to a genizah than a “temple library” per se. Rather than discarding
surplus or redundant papyri, individual priests discarded them in one place—the two storage
rooms—explaining the somewhat mixed character of the documents found within.

In 1934, excavations in the so-called “cantina dei papiri” were re-commenced. The
house, a “rectangular insula on the west side of the mound at Tebtynis,” had been excavated five
years previously, presumably during Breccia’s small sondages. Below a collapsed reed floor,
however, the excavators found a wealth of documents, many of which came from three related

92 El-Aguizy (2010) 175.
93 Ibid., 175-176, quoting a letter of Rostovtzeff recounting his visit to Tebtunis and the resulting work. See also
Begg (1998) 189-191 for a letter of Bagnani’s describing the same find.
94 These, e.g., a particularly interesting Demotic cosmology published by Mark Smith, will be discussed below. The
neutral term “temple library” is preferred to “House of Life,” the reasons for which are aptly summarized by Ryholt
library.
95 See Bagnani’s letter in Begg (1998) 190.
97 Begg (2005) 26. Gilbert Bagnani noted in a letter of March 23, 1934 that during excavations in the house, he
“found a staircase & hoped to get stuff there…but the workman who was digging it remembered he had dug it 5
years ago” (cited in Begg (2005) 38).
archives: the Archive of Patron’s Descendants, the Archive of Kronion the son of Apion, and the Archive of Pakebkis’ Descendants. Despite Vogliano’s claims, the papyri were excavated in two days by workmen under Bagnani, and of such quantity that the entire dig house was made “more or less uninhabitable” by papyrus piles. Bagnani suggested that the chaotic state of the papyri suggested that the papyri had been gathered not for reading but for burning, an idea echoed by Gallazzi and van Minnen.

After the Italian excavations wrapped up after a brief final month in 1936, Tebtunis remained at the mercy of the elements and the sebakhin for the next fifty years. In 1988, excavations resumed under the auspices of the University of Milan and IFAO. Though recovering papyri was among their goals in excavating, they were primarily interested in the long history of habitation in the kôm Umm el-Baragat, as well as shedding light on the largely unpublished excavations of Anti and Bagnani.

The Temple(s) of Tebtunis

The central building, enclosure wall, and dromos of the temple of Soknebtunis were excavated fully during the Italian excavations of 1931-1935. Along with the temple, the buildings closest to the enclosure wall also benefitted from the enthusiasms of its excavators. The nearby blocks, therefore, are fully excavated, providing the quarters of the eremophylakes and a shrine of Isis-Thermouthis. In form, the temple is of a recognizably Fayumic type with

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98 For the names of archives and collections, I follow the Leuven Homepage of Papyrus Collections, part of the Trismegistos database collection (trismegistos.org/arch/index.php). The Archive of Patron’s Descendants was originally published as the Archive of Laches, but this title was corrected by Clarysse and Gallazzi (1993).
102 Rondot (2004) 3 provides a chronological map of the progress of the excavation.
103 Rondot (2004) plan 1 offers clear evidence of this. Almost all excavation in Tebtunis is within 50 meters of the temple enclosure wall or the dromos, and most abut one or the other.
two crypts under the paving stones.\textsuperscript{104} There may have been a temple on the site from the Ramesside period, reconstructed by Rondot as a small sanctuary with a wall enclosing an area of around 40 meters in length and 15 meters in width, with a temple measuring 19.15 meters in length and 13.10 meters in width, and designed on a very simple plan. The temple was reconstructed on a much grander plan during the reign of Ptolemy I, though some construction or decoration continued during the reigns of his immediate successors.\textsuperscript{105}

Rondot, the excavator, has reconstructed a timeline of temple construction. In the reign of Ptolemy I (or his immediate successors), the temple and its enclosure wall were built and decorated, and a kiosk was constructed from mud brick. By the second century BC, the mud brick kiosk had been replaced with a stone version, and a paved \textit{dromos} built, with lions alongside. At least as early as Ptolemy X Alexander I the vestibule had been erected, with decoration following by the reign of Ptolemy XII Neos Dionysos. With the arrival of the Romans, construction began anew, with a new kiosk replacing the previous stone kiosk, four new altars erected, and the \textit{dromos} completely rebuilt and freshly paved. During the second century AD, \textit{deipneteria} were built between the vestibule and the Ptolemaic kiosk, and the \textit{dromos} received a small border wall to set it off from the surroundings.\textsuperscript{106} This chronology reveals that activity in and around the temple, especially the expensive process of rebuilding structures in finished stone and decorating religious buildings, represented a continuing project of improvement in the Tebtunis area. This process is echoed by the nearby shrine of Isis-Thermouthis, built up in the later Ptolemaic period and rebuilt in stone in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} half of the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD.\textsuperscript{107} Were more of Tebtunis to be excavated and the other religious buildings known

\textsuperscript{104} Following the suggestion of Rondot (2004) 65, esp. no. 64 and n. 6.
\textsuperscript{105} Rondot (2004) 81, 190.
\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 123-124.
to be present in and around the town found, it seems likely that they too would follow this pattern. Indeed, even considering only the temple of Soknebtunis and the shrine of Isis-Thermouthis, there seems to have been religious construction projects in Tebtunis underway nearly continuously throughout the Ptolemaic period and the first two centuries of Roman rule. Though the construction of, say, altars is of a very different scale and expense than the building of the enclosure wall and pylons of the temple, there was nevertheless a continuing outlay of funds for construction throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.\textsuperscript{108} Given the size of the temple, and the number of smaller outbuildings and attached features, we need not assume a steady buzz of construction, with scaffolding (or sim.) a constant companion, but rather that this “house of a million years” would present a changing face when viewed over the \textit{longue durée}.

Grenfell and Hunt and Anti and Bagnani’s excavations in the temple region produced a large amount of material, but, especially for the former, the parlous state of excavation records and publication has seriously impacted the value of these objects. Hundreds of coins were found inside (or near) the temple of Soknebtunis during the 1899-1900 Hearst/Berkeley excavations, but all remained in Oxford for eventual publication by Hunt. Upon Hunt’s death in 1934, however, the coins remained unpublished and were taken on by Milne.\textsuperscript{109} With the excavators dead and their excavation records nonexistent or unhelpful, Milne could only give vague descriptions, such as, “the note on the lid of the box is almost effaced, but seems to read ‘444. 108 together from temple.’”\textsuperscript{110} While a fresh examination is necessary, the generally poor state of record-keeping means that the coins may not contribute significantly to our understanding of

\textsuperscript{108} Even within the enclosure wall of the temple, there seems to have been frequent building and rebuilding of outbuildings, visible on Rondot (2004) plan 2. For discussion of temple construction and its effect on the economic networks of the temples, see Ch. 7.

\textsuperscript{109} Milne (1935) 210.

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 211-212. The coins, which Milne refers to as a hoard, are not even necessarily that. His proposal that the coins represent the takings from an automated water-dispensing machine can be discarded.
the working of the temple.

The excavations not only expanded our knowledge of the temple itself, but of the other buildings inside the *temenos* as well. In addition to the temple, with its multiple courtyards and gradual process of expansion and decoration, the *temenos* was host to a range of other buildings, which generally served commercial or industrial purposes as much as (or more than) ritual. The Tebtunis temple library, which has produced some of the finest Demotic religious texts yet published, may take pride of place,111 but the excavators found, amidst statues and paintings of Sobek and other gods, two workshops. The first, discovered by Bagnani during the 1933 season, was for the production—casting, not striking—of coinage, probably dating to the end of the 3rd century AD. Bagnani suggested that the temple received the right to cast coinage during this period thanks to the larger economic crisis (*periodo di crisi economica*), but it was probably rather the temple (or its workshop) being taken over by the Roman state.112 As a large, central building already solidly built, easy to guard, and central to the village, the temple would be a logical place, and Tebtunis is far from the only place to see disused temples used for other purposes by Roman authorities. To what use the workshop was put before the late 3rd century AD is unclear, but it does point to the presence of workshop space within the *temenos*. In addition, Anti’s excavations in the *temenos* found molds and slag that he associated with the production of glass.113 A number of glass objects have come to light, without archaeological contexts, but identified with Tebtunis and the temple there, at least one of which dates to the reign of Ptolemy II.114 Glass was produced in Egypt from at least the New Kingdom and was occasionally made with molds prior to the introduction in the Roman period of blown glass. If

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111 See, e.g., Ryholt (2005) *passim*. Many of these are on the back of administrative documents in Greek.
the evidence for production does mean that a glass workshop was located inside the temenos, this certainly would provide proof for temple space being rented out for third-party industry. Very few would seriously claim that priests were working the bellows, at least in the context of their “official” job.\textsuperscript{115} It is equally unlikely that lower-ranking temple staff were producing glass solely for temple use. Rather, the workshop, if it existed, must have been rented out, possibly already fitted out for production. Given the specialized knowledge necessary for the working of glass, whether blown or cast in molds, even of simple pieces, there may have been only a few in the village who were capable,\textsuperscript{116} and the workshop presumably remained in that family or in that professional lineage from master to apprentice, for generations, even if the lease was not on a long-term basis.\textsuperscript{117} In either case, the relational contract would have ensured a close relationship between glassmaker and temple, even if the temple administrator and glassmaker might change. Within the enclosure walls, but outside of the forbidden parts of the temple itself, the temple would have represented a varied face, with wall-paintings, stelai, workshops, and so on.

\textsuperscript{115} Clarysse and Thompson (2006), 184 for official job titles and unofficial occupations.
\textsuperscript{116} See Stern (1999), esp. 444 for the development of the glassblowing industry in the Roman period.
Figure 3: Soknopaiou Nesos in the Roman Period
(after Davoli 2012)
Soknopaiou Nesos: The Island of Sobek, Lord of the Island

On almost the opposite side of the Fayum from Tebtunis, we find the village of Soknopaiou Nesos (modern Dime, Egyptian T3-m3y.t-n-Sbk-nb-Pay).\textsuperscript{118} Despite the name, Soknopaiou Nesos was not, in fact, an island, and probably never was.\textsuperscript{119} Instead, it sat on the northern shore of the Birket Qarun, the large lake that formed the largest natural feature in the entire Fayum depression. Filled by Nile water carried past the regional capital at Krokodilopolis by the main canal, the Bahr Yusuf, the lake varied in size over the years, as pharaohs first expanded the canal to fill the lake beyond its natural size and then the Ptolemies reduced it to expose the rich soil of the former lakebed and to create vast swathes of good farmland, especially when combined with the greatly expanded network of irrigation canals.\textsuperscript{120} On the south and east shores of the lake, the canals descended below the (admittedly high) groundwater level, allowing them to run year-round, a wonder in antiquity, as the water channels in the Nile basin dried during the hot season.\textsuperscript{121} On the far side of the lake, however, Soknopaiou Nesos was not as closely connected to the rest of the Nilotic world. As we shall see in a subsequent chapter, the temple of Soknopaios at Soknopaiou Nesos administered a large and far-flung agricultural, economic, and religious hierarchy, but all of this relied on the maintenance of the lines of communication. The main land route seems to have been in antiquity as it is now, running along the northeastern shoulder of the lake near Karanis, through Neilopolis, and finally to Soknopaiou Nesos.\textsuperscript{122} In addition, there is clear evidence for lacustral travel as well, probably linking

\textsuperscript{118} The modern name preserves an aspect of the Egyptian name. The “town of the island” (P-demi-t-maï) was shortened over time to “the town” (P-demi) and thus to Dime. For more, see the Trismegistos entry, s.v. “Soknopaiou Nesos.”
\textsuperscript{119} See Caton-Thompson and Gardner (1934) 153-154.
\textsuperscript{120} Haug (2012) 95-116.
\textsuperscript{121} Haug (2012) 88-90.
\textsuperscript{122} As recognized by Boak during the Michigan excavations, for which see Boak (1935) vii.
Soknopaiou Nesos with a series of ports on the south and east shores of the lake. It is probably from this lake-going perspective that the village received its name, that is, the island of Soknopaios.\(^{123}\) It can be expected that throughout the periods in question, the ridge on which the village and temple sat would stand out first from the lake-water as one approached, especially with the “low-lying ground of the West Dimai and N. Basins under basin irrigation,” as Caton-Thompson and Gardner noted, such that “the town was…to a large extent surrounded by water.”\(^{124}\) While the areas immediately surrounding the village (to the west and north, especially) were under cultivation at times, these areas were relatively small.\(^{125}\) To these areas must be added the shoreline between the ridge on which the village sat and the port of the village, some of which was also under cultivation. Nevertheless, the geographic circumstances of the village meant that it was unique among Egyptian settlements, and may represent something of an outlier.

The village itself was in the division of Herakleides, the border of which extended some distance along the coastline to the west.\(^{126}\) The settlement density around the Birket Qarun varied widely, with the largest settlements clustered around the eastern and western shoulders of the lake. As already mentioned, Soknopaiou Nesos was connected to the east to Neilopolis and Karanis, and from there to the canal networks leading south-southeast to Krokodilopolis and towards the east to Bakchias. To the west from Soknopaiou Nesos was for the most part unsettled coastline, reflecting the high bluffs bounding the Fayum, allowing very little space between the lake-water and the bluffs and desert behind—especially during the annual inundation as water levels rose higher. To reach the next western village by land, one had to

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\(^{123}\) It is clearly different than the meaning of the word for a type of land along the Nile, for which see Manning (1999) 97-98.

\(^{124}\) Caton-Thompson and Gardner (1934) 154.

\(^{125}\) For the shore-land around the village, see Hobson (1984) *passim*, esp. 90-91.

\(^{126}\) Grenfell and Hunt (1900) 10, suggest that the border must have been “at a point very little west” of Soknopaiou Nesos.
travel the entire northern shore of the lake before rounding the western shoulder and coming upon Dionysias, an area that was but rarely crossed, and then usually by the desert caravans that called in Dionysias and Soknopaiou Nesos. In short, therefore, Soknopaiou Nesos was connected to the rest of Egypt either by the eastern land route or by ships on the lake. There was a certain degree of caravan traffic moving into the village from across the desert, but this was presumably linked more to the trade in small amounts of precious goods and not a regular source of supply or communication. While it must remain speculation, the lake approach does seem to have been the primary point of arrival for the village, since a paved roadway (the “dromos”) runs from the lakeside through the village to the temple, presumably for ceremonial purposes—perhaps for the procession of the statue of Soknopaios—but no doubt of great utility for arriving merchants, residents, and visitors.

Both for lake travel and for caravans coming across the desert from the oases or from Alexandria, the gate of Soknopaiou Nesos was an important port of call. The most direct trade route between the Fayum and Alexandria ran from Soknopaiou Nesos and out across the desert—fast but not suited for large loads, which presumably made their way along the canals and up the Nile. With its place on the very edge of the irrigated parts of Egypt, Soknopaiou Nesos was an important customs-house, and a number of receipts survive recording payments made “through the gate” (διὰ πύλης) of Soknopaiou Nesos. Taxes were collected when a good entered the imperium Romanum and again when it left Egypt, which could result in high tax burdens for such goods. Within Egypt, however, internal customs duties were probably quite a

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127 Boak (1935) 28 (no. 5) records a receipt from “the gate of Dionysias” found in Soknopaiou Nesos, strongly suggesting that at least some goods traveled between these two desert’s edge settlements. The close architectural and decorative connections between the temples of Soknopaiou Nesos and Dionysias may show the effects of this caravan trade.
bit lower. A 3% tax (ρ’ καὶ ν’ νομαρχίας Αρσινότου) was peculiar to the nome and is recorded as collected in Soknopaiou Nesos, as well as Tebtunis. A second tax, the “tax for the protection of the desert route” (ἵχνους ἑρημοφυλακίας) was collected at both ends of trade routes that crossed the deserts. Though a desert-guards station has not been identified in Soknopaiou Nesos, one has been excavated in Tebtunis, to the immediate east of the temple of Soknebtunis, that is, on the southern edge of the village, facing the desert. Finally, the “tax for the harbor of Memphis” (λιμένος Μέμφεως) was collected on traffic passing between Upper and Lower Egypt. For the trade routes moving north out of the Arsinoite, the tax was collected, meaning that it is attested at Soknopaiou Nesos but not at Tebtunis, where traffic from the Fayum to the Nile valley would remain within the Heptanomia. The role of the gate of Soknopaiou Nesos as a point of control in the system of internal customs duties gave the village an official duty alongside its outsized religious position, and reinforces our sense of the village’s position (literally and figuratively) on the edge of the nome.

Soknopaiou Nesos itself sat along the spine of a ridge running north-south, with the temple located near the highest point, close to the northern end of the ridge. The temenos of the temple sat at the end of a long dromos, which no doubt formed the central road in the village, and up which most travelers would come. Papyrological sources refer to a number of roads and paths of varying size, but the length, centrality, and grandeur of the dromos must have ensured it a key place in the appearance and mental maps of the city, even leaving aside questions of ritual. In addition, it probably provided the best connection between the village and whatever

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131 Cottier (2010) 146
132 Cottier (2010) 146
133 For a deeper analysis of the customs documents from the Arsinoite, see Habermann (1990).
operations were ongoing at the water’s edge.\textsuperscript{134} Preserved customs seals and receipts attest to the commercial operations in the village, though what amount entered the gate of the city by land or by sea remains unclear.

The supply of water to the village offers another mystery. While Soknopaiou Nesos was perched on the shores of the largest lake in Egypt, the waters collected agricultural runoff from irrigated fields and probably faced problems with salinity. Recent scholarship has assumed that, compared to the extreme salinity of the modern Birket Qarun—threatening to become a “dead lake” in the coming decades—the ancient lake was freshwater. This assumption has been based on salt levels in the lake in the 1890s, and a dramatic growth in lake salinity (11\% to 31.7\% between 1906 and 1970) thanks to increased fertilizer use in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{135} It is possible, however, that the extensive development of the Fayum depression during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods—when lake levels were reduced and a maximum amount of land was under cultivation, before the collapse of the outer irrigation systems—resulted in a substantial flow of high salinity runoff into the Birket Qarun. The development of the Fayum under the Ptolemies led to serious problems with water intake and the gradual shrinking and, most likely, salinization of the Birket Qarun over time, a point that Monson has recently also argued, suggesting that the Ptolemaic and Roman Fayum suffered from serious problems with salinization.\textsuperscript{136} Nevertheless, the water supply for Soknopaiou Nesos either came from the lake, lifted up the substantial slope to the ridge-top, or by canals around the eastern shoulder of the lake. The traces of the latter have not yet been recovered, which, given the topography the canal would need to cross, makes the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{134} Haug (2012) 115 notes the effects of high or low Nile floods on the shoreline around Soknopaiou Nesos, alongside the gradually decreasing size of the lake itself.
\item \textsuperscript{135} Meshal (1977) \textit{passim}
\item \textsuperscript{136} Haug (2012) 95-116; Monson (2013)
\end{itemize}
existence of a canal somewhat unlikely, even if the salinity of the lake was an issue.\textsuperscript{137}

Aside from the cultivated land, there was little in the vicinity of Soknopaiou Nesos—save, of course, the associated lake-port and pathway up the ridge. While the village of Soknopaiou Nesos dates primarily to the Ptolemaic and Roman period, a small Middle Kingdom temple was discovered by Schweinthurth about four and a half miles to the north-east at Qasr es-Sagha.\textsuperscript{138} The temple, small and undecorated, seems to have served a small community, possibly involved in the quarrying of stone from the rocky ridges in the area, with which a Middle Kingdom cemetery was also associated.\textsuperscript{139} There is no evidence that this settlement was occupied during the Ptolemaic period, and it is likely that Soknopaiou Nesos, with its particularly religious bent (and little evidence for quarrying operations) took its place as the token settlement on the otherwise desolate north bank of the Birket Qarun.

The Population

We can estimate the population of Soknopaiou Nesos with more precision than is possible for most settlements of any size in Egypt (or, for that matter, anywhere else in the ancient world). Two population registers from the period around the end of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD

\textsuperscript{137} Caton-Thompson and Gardner (1934) 140-145 and Boak (1935) 2-3. Salinization in Egypt was generally not a problem, since the annual flood either pushed salt far enough below the surface or carried it away down the Nile valley and into the Mediterranean. For the water pouring into the Fayum, however, there was no exit. Instead, the Birket Qarun was continually refreshed by this water, replacing however much evaporated from its wide, shallow basin. As such, there would not be an outlet for saline runoff, unless it was harvested or pushed deep into the earth by the incoming water. This seems unlikely. It is possible that a study of the crops and fish resident in the lake would reveal more about the salinity of the lake in this period, but it is nevertheless a fact that the mechanisms by which the Nile Valley removed excess saline buildup were either reduced in effectiveness or, in the case of the outlet to the Mediterranean, not available. On the lack of salinization in the ancient Nile basin, see Bard (2000) 65.

A canal running along the eastern shoulder of the lake was first suggested by Grenfell and Hunt. The issues Davoli (2010) 54, raises with the existence of such a canal, noting the “harshness of the desert in between, with depressions and high ledges to cross,” are convincing. When crossing other depressions, canals from this period left rather recognizable traces, even in more populated areas, for which see Römer (2013) 173 and figs. 2-3.

\textsuperscript{138} Davoli (2013), 52 found a level below that of the earlier temple (ST 18), suggesting some sort of occupancy before the Ptolemaic period, but what form this occupation took is unclear and was almost certainly modest (at best). See Davoli (2010) 73-74.

\textsuperscript{139} Caton-Thompson and Gardner (1934) 132-140. The site of Qasr es-Sagha is set into the second line of bluffs, behind the plain on which Dime/Soknopaiou Nesos sits.
record the number of men resident in Soknopaiou Nesos, as well as the number that were exempt from taxation. From late summer 178 to 209 AD, the male population listed in the registers declined by 50%. It is likely that these registers concern specifically the priests in the town, one hundred of whom held exemptions from tax. This gave, in 179 AD, a population of 169 associated with the temple in some fashion. The priests holding a tax exemption were probably those within the *synodos*, that is, those who served in rotating shifts within the temple itself. The other 69 may have been other religious figures, such as *pastophoroi*. A group of 100 is easily divided by five, while a group of 69 (or 169) is not. It seems from comparison with Tebtunis, that the *phylai* were more or less evenly divided, and thus probably divisible by five. In any case, references to the adult male, non-priestly portion of the population range from 60 (in 186-187 AD) and 135 (209 AD). This does not reflect a resurgence in the population of the village, since all other indications suggest that Soknopaiou Nesos continued to shrink during the early 3rd century AD. Rather, the 60 people mentioned in 186-187 AD are probably not the total adult male, non-priestly population, but "prominent adult males." They are described in the text as *οἱ συμπαρόντες ἀπὸ τῆς κώμης εὕσχημονες...ἄνδρες*.

While the population probably declined slightly between 187 and 209 AD, the adult male, non-priestly population was around 135 (or a little more), and not 60, during this period.

Population of Soknopaiou Nesos in the late 2nd/early 3rd century

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140 See SB 16.12816 (=SPP 22.93) (Soknopaiou Nesos, 179 AD) and SB 14.11715 (=SPP 22.67 and 167) (Soknopaiou Nesos, 209 AD). Messeri-Savorelli (1989) discusses these by their Vienna inventory numbers, 24556 + 24951 and 24923 + 25024, respectively. Van Minnen (1995) 43, estimates a decline of the total population from around 1350 in the years before 178 AD (and the arrival of the plague) to around 900 in 179 AD (the post-plague population).
141 SB 16.12816 ll. 45-47. A number of 160 is also given (PSI 8.927, Soknopaiou Nesos, 186-187 AD).
142 See Ch. 7.
143 PSI 8.927 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 186-187 AD); SB 14.11715 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 209 AD)
145 PSI 8.927, ll. 3-5.
Priests (and temple-associated men): 160-169
Other men: 135
Women and children: 596-796
Total: 900-1100

Assuming that each male was accompanied (on average) by a larger number of women and children, estimates of the population of the village after the great mortality that seems to have befallen the village around 178-179 AD range between 1000-1100 (Messeri-Savorelli)\textsuperscript{146} to 900 (van Minnen).\textsuperscript{147} In this case, priests (or at least males associated with the temple) made up between 56 and 74 percent of the total male population of the village, and between 15 and 20 percent of the total population.\textsuperscript{148} While we can tell that the priestly portion of the population in Soknopaiou Nesos was very high—almost certainly much higher than in other villages, including Tebtunis—the actual effect of this is somewhat harder to judge. We should not see the village only as a puppet of the temple: the port and the caravans coming in from the Nile delta were also key to life in the village, and to the role of the village in wider networks.\textsuperscript{149} If the 100 tax-exempt priests were those within the “college of the priests,” that is, within the phyle-system, then most of them were only part-time priests, serving their share of the five-part rotation of priestly duties.\textsuperscript{150} Their income from the priesthood may have been more than one-fifth of a living wage, but the evidence for private economic activities by the priests does suggest that there was a gap between the pay for priests and the amount needed to live (and, in Soknopaiou Nesos, to support another 500 or so dependents).

The cause of the extremely high percentage of priests and temple personnel in Soknopaiou Nesos is unclear. Admission to the priesthood would have provided a number of

\textsuperscript{146} Messeri-Savorelli (1989) 13
\textsuperscript{147} Van Minnen (1995) 43
\textsuperscript{148} These estimates are somewhat circular, since they are based on numbers for the adult male population of the village.
\textsuperscript{149} Van Minnen (1995) 43.
\textsuperscript{150} For this, see Ch. 7.
benefits, not least of which could be tax exemption and some sort of payments (even only for 1/5th of the year). The unique geographical situation of Soknopaiou Nesos placed a strain on anyone living there: it was reliant on products coming over (or out of) the lake, around the shoulder of the lake, or across the desert. If our information is correct, and the priests of Soknopaiou Nesos had 100 tax exemptions to Tebtunis’ 50, then this might be tied to the thinner margins for success (and survival) at Soknopaiou Nesos. At least for a period, Soknopaiou Nesos occupied an important place both religiously and economically. While the Romans were not interested in damaging the economic infrastructure of the temples, neither were they inclined to grant large boons for no reason. In Soknopaiou Nesos, the appearance of extra—if they were indeed extra—tax exemptions may have been, in effect, a Roman subsidy intended to support the inhabitants of the village in order to keep a functioning post on the north shore of the Birket Qarun. The reduced tax income from 50 extra priests being granted exemptions would have been offset by the payments from caravans stopping at Soknopaiou Nesos.151 While such a scenario is far from certain, there is no evidence that the temple of Soknopaios was higher ranking than that of Soknebtunis (and thus meriting additional exemptions for that reason). Given the fragmented state of evidence and the difference in years between our evidence for tax-exempt priests in Tebtunis and in Soknopaiou Nesos, the amount of exempt priests in the villages may also reflect a wider policy and not something limited (or caused) by the peculiarities of Soknopaiou Nesos itself. Nevertheless, we can safely state that the makeup of the village was heavily involved, in at

151 van Minnen (1995) 43 suggests that caravans bound for the Fayum from the Delta would have continued passing through Soknopaiou Nesos on their way around the shoulder of the lake. The presence of a functioning village—with food, water, and shelter for tired caravan drivers—would have been an encouragement to trade and thus to increased tax revenue. Were Soknopaiou Nesos abandoned (as it indeed was), the increased distance to Neilopolis or Karanis would have been a burden.
least some sort of role, with the temples. The particular effects of this—we should not assume some sort of temple dominance of local affairs—are, however, harder to judge.

The Excavations

Explorations of the northern Birket Qarun quickly located the kom of Dime and recognized it as an ancient site. Schweinfurth’s 1879 Reise through the Fayum depression brought him to Dime/Soknopaiou Nesos and Qasr es-Sagha.\textsuperscript{152} A few small excavations followed at Dime, generally of the treasure-hunting sort: “About 1890 one Farag, a dealer in antiques at Gizeh, secured permission to dig there for two successive winters… A little later, after 1894, a Copt obtained a similar concession… To these early workings and to subsequent illicit plundering by natives, such as resulted in the discovery of a lot of Ptolemaic papyri in 1900…, must be attributed the ruinous condition of the mound which met the first European excavators.”\textsuperscript{153} Those excavators were Grenfell and Hunt, who dug at Dime in the season following their time at Tebtunis, that is, December 1900 through February 1901. The papyri found during their dig and during the decades of looting/treasure-hunting ensured beyond all doubt that the site of Dime was ancient Soknopaiou Nesos.\textsuperscript{154} In addition, Grenfell and Hunt’s work, combined with the burgeoning business of European tourism in Egypt, meant that Dime/Soknopaiou Nesos quickly became an established stop on a tour of the Fayum. Harry Hall’s 1907 Handbook for Egypt and the Sudan already recommended a stop especially for “the active tourist as well as the archaeologist, if only for the sake of the interesting little voyage on the lake.” That Hall went on to advise camping on a small island nearby, “to be clear of hyenas

\textsuperscript{152} Schweinfurth (1886). For a history of visitors to the site, see Capasso and Davoli (2012) 11-15.
\textsuperscript{153} Boak (1935) vi.
\textsuperscript{154} It had previous been identified as “the city of Bacchus,” for which see Capasso and Davoli (2012) 14 and tavv. 2-3
and Arabs,” reveals both the prejudices of the day as well as the dangers remaining for those exploring the area.\textsuperscript{155} Undaunted by hyenas or Arabs, Friedrich Zucker opened trial excavations on the site in 1908, followed the next year with full excavations.\textsuperscript{156}

After a little over two decades, a team from the University of Michigan began excavations. The work at Karanis had reached a point where comparative data was called for and, Boak adds, “it was hoped that the work at Dime would yield results sufficiently important to warrant making it the scene of an independent excavation when that at [Karanis] had been brought to a conclusion.”\textsuperscript{157} As such, the 1931-1932 season was spent, with great hardship, working at Dime on the temple of Soknopaios and the surrounding village. Since any canals that would have carried water in from Neilopolis had long since disappeared back into the sand, and the waters of the Birket Qarun were down the hill and increasingly salty, water had to be brought in for the excavation in addition to food and other supplies, requiring regular trips by truck the 33 kilometers from their base camp at Karanis/Kom Aushim.\textsuperscript{158} While sturdy trucks (courtesy of Henry Ford, no less) and the use of a Decauville narrow-gauge railway helped to overcome some of the difficulties in excavating at Dime, the challenges nevertheless seem to have outweighed the benefits for Peterson, the director of Michigan’s excavations at Karanis and Soknopaiou Nesos.\textsuperscript{159} Although the excavations on the mound ceased for decades, the rich finds from the site—even after looting, treasure-hunting, and, no doubt, souvenir-picking by tourists—continued to be published and discussed. Especially valuable were the papyri, published in a range of locations. Unlike Oxyrhynchus or Tebtunis, the papyri from which were in large part

\textsuperscript{155} Hall (1907) 270.
\textsuperscript{156} Boak (1935) vi-vii.
\textsuperscript{157} Boak (1935) v.
\textsuperscript{158} Boak (1935) vii
\textsuperscript{159} Boak (1935) viii.
published in a single series—the *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* or *Tebtunis Papyri*—the papyri from Soknopaiou Nesos are more widespread.\(^{160}\) Nevertheless, the small handful of single excavation seasons provided some context for these papyri, but left the site itself incompletely explored and in need of scientific excavation.

From 2003-2010, the Università del Salento/Lecce\(^ {161}\) conducted excavations at Dime, focusing especially on the area around the temple. Like the Michigan excavations, the Salento team, led by Paola Davoli, had previously been excavating in the northeast Fayum, this time at Bakchias. Excavations *per se* were preceded by two seasons (2001-2002) of survey on the site.\(^ {162}\) In addition, a geophysical (magnetometric and electromagnetic) survey was conducted in 2006, focusing on five test areas, four of which were located on the *kom* (hill) around or in the temple itself, while a fifth (“Area 2” in the survey’s publication) explored a small crater at the eastern foot of the ridge.\(^ {163}\) Both the geophysical survey and the excavations centered on the temple itself and the area immediately south, along the dromos. While the Michigan excavations had given some attention to other finds on the site—inscriptions and coins, primarily—the Salento excavations employed a team of specialists, studying not only the papyri, ostraka, and architecture, but pottery, terracotta figurines, and wooden furniture, with the promise of other specialized studies in future volumes of the project.\(^ {164}\)

**The Temple**

The temenos of the temple of Soknopaios was a massive presence, physically and

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\(^{160}\) But see *SPP* 22 and, more recently, the *Demotische Dokumente aus Dime*, of which three volumes have thus far been published.

\(^{161}\) In 2007, the Università degli Studi di Lecce changed its name to the Università del Salento. As this change took place during the period of excavations, both names appear in print. For convenience, I shall refer to the university as the Università del Salento.

\(^{162}\) Davoli et al. (2010) 149-152.

\(^{163}\) Smekalova (2012) 115.

\(^{164}\) Dixneuf (2012), Caputo (2012), and Cervi (2012), respectively.
figuratively, in ancient Soknopaiou Nesos and remains so in the ruins of the village today.

Davoli estimates that the area within the enclosure walls of the temple makes up around 5% of the total area of the village.\footnote{Davoli (2012) 122. The proportion of the population working as priests was much more than 5% and we can expect that most priests lived in the (mostly) unexcavated residential areas elsewhere on the ridge.} A number of smaller buildings were erected against the inside of the large enclosure wall. Quite a few of them are of indeterminate purpose, but the assortment appears similar to that in other temples—three smaller shrines surround the main temple building, two shrines are built against the rear (north) wall, and a series of small buildings, probably workshops, living quarters, or storerooms, sit against the western wall. Evidence for cooking, in the form of cooking pots and carbonized bones, was found in the western area, making the identification of this area as a residence (or residence cum workshop) more secure.\footnote{Davoli (2007) 100.} A papyrus from the late 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD describes a substantial pastophorion located against the eastern wall of the temenos, suggesting that, as with many other Egyptian temples, the inner face of the enclosure wall was heavily built up with residences, storehouses, and such, even if most of them do not survive today.\footnote{Or have not yet been excavated, for which see below. For the papyrus, see \textit{P.Ryl.} 2.161 (81 AD, Soknopaiou Nesos).} In addition, a contra-temple, a small colonnaded structure of a type generally built against the back wall of a temple and offering an outlet for more popular piety outside of the rituals of the priests and the areas within the temple itself that were forbidden to the laity, was erected against the rear (northern) wall of the temple.\footnote{Davoli (2012) 122-127 is the best summary of these outbuildings, with additions from the 2010 excavation season in Davoli (2013) 51-53.} The identification of this building is based on standing architecture and comparanda, as it has not yet been excavated, but oracular questions addressed to a form of the god called “Soknopaios who listens to the prayers,” strengthen the assumption that the colonnaded structure was indeed a contra-temple.\footnote{Davoli (2013) 55-56 and Stadler (2012) 382-384.} Davoli
has further suggested that one of the three shrines (ST 19) located on the western side of the temple, may have been a mammisi, or “birth house,” a structure that became a key part of temples in the Roman period, and which can be found at most temples in this period—Edfu and Philae offer particularly well-preserved examples.\footnote{Davoli (2007) 108.}

The temple itself, that is, the one against which the contra-temple was erected, is at least the second temple on the site. The “current” temple, called ST 20 by the excavators, replaced a clearly Ptolemaic temple (ST 18). The second temple, ST 20, was built at the immediate rear of ST 18, and it appears that ST 20 was erected while ST 18 was still in operation, with the changeover only made when the new temple was complete.\footnote{Davoli (2013) 51-52. By way of modern comparison, baseball in Cincinnati was played in Riverfront Stadium while a new stadium, Great American Ballpark, was erected, the construction of which necessitated the removal of the rear wall of Riverfront Stadium.} While the decorative elements in ST 20 appear Ptolemaic, a precise dating for the second temple remains difficult.\footnote{Davoli (2013) 52.} Based on surviving descriptions of the temple decorations written in Demotic, it is probable that ST 20 was completed in the late Ptolemaic period, but remained largely undecorated until the early Roman period, when it was adorned with lightly archaizing (or Ptolemizing) decorations.\footnote{Stadler (2012) 379-381.} In any case, by the Roman period, much of the complex within the temenos probably was complete. Smaller changes—continued decorations and the erection of stelai—no doubt continued, but the temple otherwise remained as it was, architecturally, until Late Antiquity, when it was abandoned. It may have been reused briefly as a church or other Christian structure, but by the 6th or 7th centuries AD, the temple was abandoned and its blocks were being carried off.\footnote{Davoli (2013) 52-53.} Even before the building was completely abandoned, it had obviously lost its religious purpose—the building was reused as a residence cum animal pen in this period, evidently when the systems supplying

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[171] Davoli (2013) 51-52. By way of modern comparison, baseball in Cincinnati was played in Riverfront Stadium while a new stadium, Great American Ballpark, was erected, the construction of which necessitated the removal of the rear wall of Riverfront Stadium.
\item[172] Davoli (2013) 52.
\item[173] Stadler (2012) 379-381.
\item[174] Davoli (2013) 52-53.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
fresh water to the village were still more or less intact.\textsuperscript{175} Recent work inside the temenos but outside the temple building itself (that is, outside of ST 18 and 20) has located parts of the superstructure of the temple building, including limestone gutters with associated lion statues, which Davoli believes decorated the line of the gutter.\textsuperscript{176}

If the buildings scattered around the temenos are poorly understood, those inside the temple itself are no better explained. Even the best-preserved temples (e.g., Edfu) contain a multitude of small rooms, winding staircases, and other chambers. The parlous state of the temple of Soknopaios makes these identifications even more difficult.

\textit{Conclusions}

The geography of Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos differed greatly. While Tebtunis was located hard against the southern boundary of the Fayum, it was nevertheless quite a bit like the other Fayumic villages in outlook and connections. Canals brought water to it, nearby villages enlivened its social, economic, and religious interactions, and land transport brought goods and news from the nome capital (and beyond). Soknopaiou Nesos, on the other hand, must be seen in the context of its unique geographic position perched on the largely desolate northern shore of the Birket Qarun. Even if some water reached it along canals and desert caravans brought trade goods from the Delta or the oases, Soknopaiou Nesos more or less looked at the world from across the lake. As we shall see when we consider the land and industrial interests of the temple of Soknopaios in Soknopaiou Nesos, the lakeside aspect of Soknopaiou Nesos also had dramatic effects on the economic affairs of the temple.

The excavations of the temples themselves confirm our assumption that the villages were

\textsuperscript{175} Davoli (2013) 53.
\textsuperscript{176} Davoli (2013) 56. Frequent comparisons are made to the temple at Dionysias (Qasr Qarun) on the western edge of the Fayum.
both fundamentally Fayumic. While each worshipped their own localized iteration of Sobek, they shared the crocodile god (and Isis, who had a shrine near the temple in both villages).\footnote{177} The architecture and design of their temples corresponds in large part to other surviving Fayum temples, especially that of Dionysias (Qasr Qarun) in the northwest Fayum.\footnote{178} Unfortunately, large parts of the temples in both villages were excavated prior to the development of scientific archaeology and, especially the digs overseen by Grenfell and Hunt, were little more than papyrus-hunting expeditions. As such, their attention to details that might help us create a more holistic picture of the temples—even proper context for the hundreds of coins found—was lacking. The excavations of Gallazzi in Tebtunis and Davoli in Soknopaiou Nesos have helped to address these concerns, but much had already been lost. Further, even the recent excavations have focused on the temple and the associated buildings and dromoi. The houses, for instance, in which most of the priests and other residents of the villages lived have more or less been ignored in favor of more promising targets. As such, our picture of the villages is very much incomplete.

The excavations can tell us something of the state of the temples themselves—when they were built, how they were decorated, and so on—but little about the world outside the temenos walls: how, as van Minnen writes, these villages were embedded in their surroundings, in Egypt.\footnote{179} For that we must either wait for further excavations or survey projects or turn to the papyri, some of which were found in looting of other buildings and areas.

\footnote{177} It should be noted, however, that Isis was an extremely popular deity in this period, and her presence in almost any village is to be expected—indeed, her absence from an area would be much more surprising.

\footnote{178} Temples throughout the Fayum are aligned along a number of different orientations, very loosely arranged in four groups by Davoli (1998) 361-362. It is possible that they are oriented not according to nearby waterways, but towards certain stars and astronomical phenomena. For this, see Davoli (1998) 362-370.

\footnote{179} Van Minnen (2000) 206.
Chapter 3: *P.Tebt. 2.302: From Augustan Confiscations to Local Property Dispute*

“The essential question, which we therefore confront in studying any given text, is what its author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance.”

*Introduction*

To understand the economic infrastructure of the temples of Roman Egypt we must make use of all the available evidence. Some objects are so embedded in their particular place (temple architecture, e.g.), that their ability to speak for the source of a temple’s income is generally very poor. To answer questions concerning the source of a temple’s income and the organization of the temples in the Roman period, one type of evidence is especially valuable: papyri. A large number of these, such as those at the Center for the Tebtunis Papyri in Berkeley, California, were found in archaeological contexts and can therefore to a certain extent be tied to their village and disposal context, along with the evidence found in the text itself. While all levels of analysis rely on interpretation, papyri from archaeological contexts do allow us to move beyond close reading of the text and to say something, albeit often only something small, about the material world in which these papyri existed. In the case of the so-called “Tebtunis temple library,” this context was probably a *genizah* of sorts; for other papyri, their context might have been a pile of scrap set aside for burning.\(^1\) This is to say that the value of these papyri to modern researchers is very

\(^{180}\) Skinner (1969) 48-49.

\(^{181}\) There are generally four possible explanations for the temple library’s survival in the location it was found: in two scenarios, the documents were deposited there, either as a set of family papers or as a *genizah*; in the other two, the documents were dumped there, either as a waste dump (after the building fell out of use) or they were buried in the structure they were left in, that is, they were caught up in the normal process of decay within their use context.
different from their value to ancient villagers, both before and after the papyri’s documentary value to those villagers had ended.

For the modern scholar, papyri become especially significant (“valuable”) through the information preserved in the text. A particularly well preserved contract, evidence for a development not otherwise attested in the historical record, and so on: all of these can make a papyrus prominent in the scholarly record. In some instances, later scholarship on a particular text can bring out a change in perceived value. In the case of one papyrus, however, the scholarly value was immediate as soon as it was published. I will take this one document, a petition published as P.Tebt. 2.302, as a case study of the issues and opportunities available to us when studying temples and their economic activity in the Roman period. This document has assumed an outsized role in previous interpretations of Roman policy in Egypt. A close reading of the text, coupled with a critical analysis of its context, allows us to shift the debate away from widespread confiscation and Roman hostility to temple administration. In addition, we will explore the rhetorical context of the claims made by the priests as well as the development of a scholarly consensus regarding those claims that has developed over the past century. Finally, I argue that this document, the keystone of that wide-ranging scholarly consensus, probably represents a local property dispute, possibly tied to the temple’s occasional problems in paying the taxes due on its land.

Text and Commentary

The papyrus now known as P.Tebt. 2.302 was found during Grenfell and Hunt’s

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182 See the case of P.Bingen 45, which went from an interesting, if unspectacular, Ptolemaic contract to an integral part of traveling international museum exhibits, by dint of the discovery that it was a royal order and the signatory was Cleopatra VII. For more, see van Minnen (2003). For other examples, see Bagnall (1995) 33-40.
excavations at Tebtunis. The findspot was probably within the temple complex, or near it.

The document, as it exists today, measures around fourteen inches tall by nine inches wide. The papyrus is complete at the top and bottom, and to the right. Quite a bit of damage to the left side, however, has resulted in the loss of the beginnings of lines. Grenfell and Hunt have estimated that between 13 and 37 letters are lost to the left side, reflecting the irregular breaks, for a total line width of around 80 letters. The rear of the papyrus is blank, except for the T-number, applied by Grenfell and Hunt. Since its publication, the text was sent to Berkeley, where it was initially preserved in a clear plastic casing (Vinylite) before being transferred, like most of the Berkeley Tebtunis papyri, to glass decades later. In its current state, the papyrus is preserved in five fragments, of which two make up the very largest part.

As the text of this petition is of major importance for this study and for the study of Roman policy in Egypt, it is worth considering the document in toto. This text is that of Wilcken (Chrest.Wilck. 368), closely based on that of Grenfell and Hunt, emended according to those corrections published in the Berichtigungsliste, and confirmed by a personal inspection of the document itself in Berkeley.

[- ca.27 - τῷ] κυρίῳ ἡγεμόνι

[παρὰ - ca.13 - στολιστοῦ Κρό[γ]ου καί τῶν λοιπῶν ἱερέων παραδοχίμων ὁν-

[των τοῦ Σοκνεβτύνεως τοῦ καὶ Κρόνου καὶ Ἐσοδος καὶ Σαράπιδος κ[α]ὶ Ἀρποχράτου καὶ τῶν

\[183\] For these, see Ch. 2.
\[184\] See O’Connell (2007) and, more doubtfully, Ryholt (2013)
\[186\] For the T-numbers, see O’Connell (2007).
\[187\] These observations were made from photographs of the papyrus and confirmed personally during a research visit to the Center for Tebtunis Papyri.
\[188\] On line 1 (BL 7, 271); line 17 (BL 5, 147); lines 22-27 (BL 8, 491)
[συννάων θεῶν ἱεροῦ λογίμου τοῦ ὄντος ἐν κόμῃ] Τεβτύνι τῆς Π[ολ.]έμωνος μερίδος

[τοῦ Ἀρσινοίτου νομοῦ. τυχάνομεν μερισθέντας ἐκ τοῦ δήμου[ε]υ ἀντὶ συντάξεως
[περὶ τὴν αὐτὴν κόμην Τεβτύνιν . . . . .] σιτικὰς ἄροιρας φ ὑπὸ τὸ πρότερον τῶν προκι-
[μένων θεῶν ἀναληφθίας δὲ ὑπὸ Πετρωνίου] τοῦ ἡγεμονεύσαντος εἰς βασιλικὴν γῆν καὶ
[ἐκτοτε - ca.23 - πρ]ώτως δὲ τῷ ἐνεστῶτι δ (ἔτει) Όὐδεσπασιανὸ

[. . . . . .] ὁ κοιμογραμματεύς ἦξίωσε[ν] διά ἀναφορίαν προσθέειν εἰς τὸ εἰσίον ἐ(ἔτος)

[- ca.11 - ἐξ ὑπερβολῶν τοῖς προκιμένοις[ε]υ ἐξάφεσι ημὸν κριθής ἀρτάβας διακοσίας ,
[ἡ - ca.10 - ἡμείς δὲ ἐνετυχομέν σοι περὶ] τούτων, σοῦ τε τοῦ κυρίου γράψαντος αὐτῶι
[ὅτι εἰ ὁ Πετρώνιος ημῖν τὰς ἄροιρας ἀντὶ σ]υντάξεως ἐμέρισεν καὶ ἐκτοτε μέχρι τοῦ
[νῦν χρόνου ἐκτελοῦμεν τὰς καθηκούσας ἐν τοῖς ιεροῖς τῶν θεῶν λειτουργίας, ἀδικόν
[ἐστὶν ἡμᾶς ἀπαίτεισθαι - ca.12 - ἐξ ὑ]περβολῶν κριθής ἀρτάβας διακοσίας ἢ ἀφαιρε-

[θήναι - ca.12 - τοῦ δὲ κοιμογραμματέως ἀντιφωνήσαντός σοι εύρηκέναι μὲν ἐκ
[tινῶν βιβλίων σ]ιωξομένων[ν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ] δι’ ἡμῶν τῶν ἱερέων ἀναγ[ρ]αμένας τὰς
ἀροιρας διὰ σπάρου

[τοῦ . . . (ἔτος) καὶ?] γενεμῆσθαι[α] ταύτας [κατὰ] διαδοχὴν τῶν γονέων καὶ γεωργεῖν
ἀπὸ τῶν Πετρωνίου

[χρόνου ἐπὶ . . . οί]ς ἐκφορίοις [τ]οςοῦτων ἐτῶν ἱερέων ἡμῶν ὄντων <ἐν> νομῆς διὰ τὸ
μὴ ἐκ τοῦ

[δημοσίου σύνταξι]ζην ημᾶς [λ]αμβάνειν, ἀλλὰς δὲ καὶ ἰδ’ ὅν καταχωρίζομεν λόγων καθ’

ἔτος

20a σοῦ δὲ τῷ κυρίῳ γράψαντος

20 [τῷ στρατηγῷ ὑπὸ τ]ῶν ἱερέων γεωργεῖσθαι τὰ ἐδάφη ταύτα. ἔτι δὲ καὶ ἐν ο[P]

αὐτῷ δὴμὴν ἡμῖν συνεχώρησε ὅπως ἐνέκκουμεν

καταχωρίσαμεν ἐπὶ τῶν

58
[τόπων - ca.13 -]ρης[... i]ερευ[τι]κὴ λόγω πρὸς διάκρισιν ἐδηλώσαμεν τὴν τῶν προ-
[κειμένων ἐδαφῶν γεωργίαν ἡμῖν ἀναγράφ[εσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν προγεγραμμένων χρόνων,
δὸς λόγος
[σώζεται ἐν τοῖς βιβλίοις] ca.25 [-] . πρ[οκατακεχωρισμένοις εἰς τὰ καθήκοντα λο-
[γιτήρια τῷ δὲ μα] (ἐτεί) θεοῦ Καίσαρος ἀξιωσάν] τῶν τινῶν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ νόθων
γεωργῆσαι τὰς ἀροῦ-
25 [ρας ἐπι - ca.23 -] γενομέν[ο]ν ἐπιστράτηγον τῶν Ἐπτᾶ νομῶν καὶ
[Ἀρσινοίτου - ca.12 - ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ] μα (ἐτεί) ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς τοῖς νομίμοις ἱερεύς ἐπηρήσεν
[τὰς ἀροῦρας - ca.14 - ἀκολούθως οἶς ἐχομεν ὑπομνηματισμοῖς. διὸ ἄξιοθυμὲν σὲ
[βεβαιῶσαι ἡμῖν τὴν γῆν τὴν ἀντὶ συντάξεως ἡμεῖς ἐκ διαδοχῆς <τῶν> γονέων
τετηρημένην
[ - ca.18 - ἐκ πολλοῦ χρό]νου αὐτουργοῦντων ἡμῶν σὺν γυναιξὶ καὶ τέκνοις
30 [ὅπως δυνόμεθα - ca.17 -]ηναι ἐκτελοῦντες τὰς τῶν θεῶν λειτουργίας καὶ ύπηρεσίας
[ὡς τε μηδένα - ca.16 - τῶν] ἵερατικῶν ἐδαφῶν ἀντιποιεῖσθαι, ἵν' ὅμεν εὐεργετημένοι.
διευτύχει.

Based on this text, and the supplements they made, Grenfell and Hunt offered the
following translation:

To N.N., the lord prefect, from NN.NN. and the rest of the hereditary priests of the
famous temple of Soknebtunis also called Kronos, Isis, Sarapis, Harpokrates and the
associated gods, situated at the village of Tebtunis in the division of Polemon |⁵ of the
Arsinoite nome. We have had assigned to us from the state instead of a subvention 500
1/4 arouras of grain land at the said village of Tebtunis, which previously belonged to
the aforesaid gods, but was reduced to Crown land by Petronius a former prefect, and
(ever since leased by us at a rent?). For the first time in the present 4th year of
Vespasian the komogrammateus desired in a report that for the coming 5th year \(^{10}\) a
charge of 200 artabas of barley in addition should be imposed upon our aforesaid land
(or we should be deprived of it); whereupon (we petitioned you) on the subject, and
you, our lord, wrote to him that if Petronius had assigned the land to us instead of a
subvention, and that ever since up to the present time we had been performing the due
services of the gods in the temples, it was unjust to demand from us an increase of 200
artabas of barley with the alternative of being deprived of the land. \(^{15}\) The
komogrammateus answered you saying that he had discovered firstly from certain
documents preserved at the temple that the land was registered in the name of us the
priests in a list of crops of the \(.\) year, and had been possessed by us by inheritance from
our ancestors and cultivated since the time of Petronius at the (fixed?) rents, the
possession of it by us the priests for so many years being due to the circumstance that
we received no subvention from the state, and secondly that according to the yearly
reports which we make \(^{20}\) to the strategos this land was cultivated by the priests. (When
you, our lord, wrote to him, he allowed us two months in which to present our
case.) Further in the priestly list which we entered at the village for examination we
showed that the cultivation of the aforesaid land was registered in our names since the
above-mentioned period, which list is preserved among the documents that have been
previously entered at the proper offices; and in the \(.\) year, when certain bastards from
the temple asked for leave to cultivate the land before \(^{25}\) N.N., late epistrategos of the
Heptanomis and Arsinoite nome, he reserved the land for us, the legitimate priests,
according to the reports of the trial in our possession. We entreat you therefore to
guarantee to us this land which has been reserved to us instead of a subvention by
inheritance from our ancestors, and at which we have long worked with our wives and
children, thus enabling us…to perform the services and ceremonies, so that no one
can claim the priestly land, and that we may obtain relief. Farewell.

The text thus supplemented and thus translated has formed the foundation of an
interpretive framework for Roman policy in Egypt, and provided the comparison with which
other texts, such as BGU 4.1200, have themselves been supplemented, a topic we will address in
greater detail below. It is worth considering this petition as a papyrological text before we move
on to the underlying nature of the evidence and the interpretation of the document. This would,
ideally, require a new edition of the text and a new commentary, but the corrections to Grenfell
and Hunt’s published text (as separate from the supplements) have been relatively minor,189 and
a new edition would necessarily be a reductive effort, stripping away Grenfell and Hunt’s more
speculative supplements, those which have, unfortunately, provided the most alluring evidence
for the interpretation of this document. We will consider a few of the more important examples
below, but we can briefly review some problems with the text that merit discussion while not
forming part of the larger argument concerning temple land.

2 - στολιστοὶ: Grenfell and Hunt supplement the exact position of a singular stolistes on
the basis of P.Tebt. 2.298, l. 13, where, as they note, the στολισταὶ Κρόνου are listed first. This is
a thin basis upon which to assume, as they do, that the στολισταὶ were “at that time the chief
priests at Tebtunis.”190

189 For changes from the BL, see above; Wilcken left Grenfell and Hunt’s text more or less intact. For one small, but
not insignificant difference, see below re: ὑπὸ Πετρωνίου.
190 P.Tebt. 2.302, n. 2.
- **παραδοχήμων**: The term is generally taken to mean “hereditary,” though it appears only on papyri. It refers specifically to priests in every instance, though it is never explained within the text. It is (almost certainly correctly) defined in relation to **παραδοχή**, which can mean “hereditary custom.” It is unclear, however, if we should place the emphasis on the hereditary nature, or the customary nature, similar to the Roman **mos maiorum**. The word always modifies some form of **hiereus**, and all five examples come from the Arsinoite nome. The precise implication of the term is unclear, but in the case of **P.Tebt. 2.302**, the term is used in a somewhat formulaic manner, and probably fits into a larger argument concerning the priests’ rightful claim to the income of the temple, a point discussed in much more detail below.

5 - **συντάξεως**: The **syntaxis** in this case is generally taken to be the **syntaxis** of the priests, a particular payment made by the state to the temples to support the temple staff. This is possible, but not certain. The word **syntaxis** has a wider meaning of “payment,” and without specific reference to the payment as the **syntaxis** “of the priests” one cannot say with certainty that this particular payment is intended, even when the word appears in a religious context, as in **P.Tebt. 2.302**.

6 - **περὶ τὴν αὐτὴν κώμην Τεβτῦνιν**: It is clear that temples owned property not only in their home village (see, for instance, Ch. 5). The phrase used here is similar to that used in the Menches papers about a particular village, and most likely refers only to the land around Tebtunis itself (and not the 130 arouras owned by Soknebunis in Kerkeosiris, e.g.).

7 - **ἀναληφθίσας**: A problematic point, discussed in much greater detail below.

- **ὑπὸ Πετρωνίου**: In Grenfell and Hunt’s edition, this read ἐπὶ instead of ὑπὸ. In either

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191 P. Aberd. 16; P. Tebt. 2.298; P. Tebt. 2.302; P. Tebt. 2.611 descr.; and SB 6.9066.
192 As in the LSJ, s.v. **παραδοχή**, II.
193 This argument is given more fully in Ch. 7.
case, the word (and the name of Petronius) is entirely supplemented. The change was made by Wilcken and, whatever the motivation, it has the effect of making the supplemented text less neutral and more accusatory. We will point out larger problems with this supplement below, but Wilcken’s change shows the small ways in which the confiscation narrative was created and deepened.

- εἰς βασιλικὴν γῆν: This phrase is taken by Grenfell and Hunt to mean “(reduced) to crown land.” As there are exceedingly few mentions of supposed confiscations of temple land—and all are extremely tenuous—there is only one other appearance of the phrase εἰς βασιλικὴν γῆν on papyrus. It does not, however, derive from a setting related to confiscation. Instead, a papyrus described by Grenfell and Hunt in P.Fay. but not fully edited, refers to “various sums of wheat paid [εἰς] βα(σιλικὴν) γῆν.” The meaning here cannot be that Grenfell and Hunt wished for the phrase in P.Tebt. 2.302, that is, essentially “into (the category) of royal land.” Instead, the reference in P.Fay. 150, which is roughly contemporaneous with P.Tebt. 2.302, must mean “on royal land,” that is, the payments were made as rent or taxes on royal land. The remainder of the phrase in which these words appear in P.Tebt. 2.302 in no way require the meaning that Grenfell and Hunt have chosen, a meaning that has been critical in the development of the “confiscation narrative.” Indeed, given the fragmentary (and scattered) syntax in these lines, the priests could easily be referring to payments actually made on royal land, on payments made on temple land at the same rate as on royal land, or a host of other possibilities.

9 - κομογραμματεῖς: An extremely problematic reconstruction. For more, see the lengthy discussion below.

- ἤξιωσεν: This was translated by Grenfell and Hunt as “desired.” We might prefer

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194 P.Fay. 150 (Bakchias, 1st century AD).
“asked,” in that it makes more explicit that the unknown subject of the verb made an official and specific request. In so far as the entire verb, save the final nu, is reconstructed, it is not advisable to press the point too far.

- ἀναφορίου: Translated by Grenfell and Hunt as “report,” but this is unlikely. This point (and a more likely meaning) is discussed below.

- προσθεῖναι: Translated by Grenfell and Hunt as “imposed,” as in “the comogrammateus desired…that…a charge..should be imposed…” and so on, but it could be as simple as “to add.”

14 - ἡμᾶς ἄπαιτεῖσθαι: A somewhat fanciful addition, there is no reason why it should not be something much tamer, for instance, προσθεῖναι, echoing line 9.

16 - δι' ἡμῶν: Translated by Grenfell and Hunt as “in the name of us,” but there seems a clear parallel with the language of P.Oxy. 24.2410, l. 13, in which the farmers talk of land “πρῶτερον δι' ἡμῶν οὖσας.”195 There, Grenfell and Hunt suggest that it is “perhaps an extension of the sense ‘through the agency of’.”196 The subtleties of the meaning of this sentence are not entirely clear, especially given its fragmentary nature, but property (or sim.) registered “through the agency of us, the priests” is different than property registered “in the name of us, the priests.”

18 - <ἐν> νομῆ: The text as printed by Wilcken (and by Grenfell and Hunt) leaves out the preposition. While relatively uncommon in the dative without an article, with or without the preposition, when the article is added, there are some appearances, as, e.g., BGU 1.267.197 As νομῆ corresponds to the Latin possessio, this would be the equivalent of in possessione.

20a - ὅπως ἐνέκωμεν: Grenfell and Hunt translated this as “in which to present our case,” but “the case” is reconstructed, and is far from certain. The superlinear addition (l. 20a)

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195 There are a number of parallels between P.Tebt. 2.302 and P.Oxy. 24.2410, which will be discussed in greater detail below.
196 P.Oxy. 24.2410 n. 13 s.v. δι' ἡμῶν.
197 BGU 1.267.
runs more or less to the edge of the papyrus, and the following line (21) is almost entirely lost on the left side. The note could, in other words, have carried on in the space above line 21. The object of ἐνέκωμεν could be the documents that are mentioned in the nearby lines, such as the hiereutikos logos (ἱερείῳ λόγῳ) in line 20.

21 - πρὸς διάκρισιν: This is generally taken with the word that follows, ἐδηλώσαμεν, that is, “we entered for examination.” Much of the text preceding these words is lost, however, and it is difficult to determine with any certainty whether or not πρὸς διάκρισιν does in fact go with ἐδηλώσαμεν. The meaning that Grenfell and Hunt assign to διάκρισιν, “examination,” is not the only one possible: Preisigke also lists “decision,” and “judgment.”

A legal verdict, similar to that of the epistrategos mentioned a few lines below this, would have been a plausible precedent to cite for the priests. In this case, both the meaning of διάκρισιν and the relation of the phrase πρὸς διάκρισιν to the word that follows are speculative, at best.

24 - ἀξιωσάντων: The same point as in line 9 can be made here. As in that example, we have an official request, which must be acted upon by the government, possibly related to a higher bid on public land, a theory discussed in detail below.

- γεωργῆσαι: The sentence as reconstructed by Grenfell and Hunt reads that “certain bastards…asked for leave to cultivate the land…..” While the “bastards” are discussed below, it is likely that, of the circa 23 letters missing after these words, we should add something like “(for a higher rent),” that is, that they were “promising to cultivate the land (for a higher rent)…. “

For this study, we will follow a small number of important avenues of inquiry, which will establish, in a somewhat abstract sense, a further commentary on the text.

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198 Preisigke, WB, s.v. διάκρισις 2, “Aburteilung, Entscheidung.” One of the sources that Preisigke cites for the meaning “examination” (Nachprüfung) is P.Tebt. 2.302, which makes a rather circular case for the Grenfell and Hunt’s preferred translation.
The Parties

The parties sending the petition (the priests) and the intended recipient (the prefect) are rather clear. In the first line, the phrase κυρίῳ ήγεμόνι survives, no doubt preceded by the name of the prefect of Egypt at the time. The prefect was either Tiberius Julius Lupus, who is recorded as being prefect of Egypt soon after the fall of Masada, when he quelled a Jewish revolt in Alexandria, or Lucius Peducaeus Colonus. Lupus’ only definite appearance outside of Josephus dates to late February/March 73, when he was present at a foundation-festival (καθίδρυσις) for a number of gods in Karanis. If we ignore the evidence of Josephus, there is still nothing stopping Lupus from being the prefect in 71/72 AD, but neither is there positive evidence for his presence there at that time either. A certain Julius Lupus appears in a fragment of a letter from Masada (Iulió Lupó) written by a Titulanus Vindex, but it is far from certain that this Lupus is the prefect Lupus. It is equally possible that the Julii Lupi, if able to produce a prefect of Egypt, were equally able in this period to produce a soldier or commander serving during the war in Judea.

If the precise prefect intended is not yet clear and the names of the petitioners are unknown, the positions they held, on the other hand, are fairly clear. Grenfell and Hunt’s supplement of Κρο before the surviving νου in line 2 seems correct, and accords with a formula used elsewhere in this set of documents (the “priests of Soknebtunis” papers), grouped by

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199 Josephus, BJ 7.420
200 SB 8.9818 (=SEG 20.651) (Karanis, 73 AD)
201 Thomas (1976) questions most strongly the evidence for Lupus holding the prefecture in 71/72. A Lupus, possibly Tiberius Julius, appears in an undated inscription without provenance (IG 14.2421.2) recording a Lupus, prefect of Egypt (ἐπὶ Λούπου ἐπάρχων Αἰγύπτου). Another Lupus, Marcus Rutilius Lupus, also served as prefect, and is recorded as having undertaken numerous construction works, which might fit the context of the inscription better.
202 Masada 2.724.
203 For more on the debate, see Cotton (1989), Masada 2.724, p. 63, Thomas (1976), Campbell (1988), and Stein (1950).
Grenfell and Hunt in *P.Tebt.* 2.291-315. Priests from the temple of Soknebtunis, also known as Kronos (απὸ Σοκνεπτόνειως τοῦ καὶ Κρόνου) and of the other gods (καὶ τῶν συννάων θεῶν μεγίστων) appear frequently in these documents. In the case of *P.Tebt.* 2.302, the associated gods are listed individually (Isis, Sarapis, Harpocrates, and the other associated gods), as they are in *P.Tebt.* 2.298, where the gods appear in the same order and described in nearly the same way. Care in establishing who is intending to communicate with whom is important, as we shall see below. In this case, the papyrus records a petition composed by or on behalf of the priests of Tebtunis and sent or intended to be sent to the prefect of Egypt.

The Complaint

Grenfell and Hunt summarized their understanding of the text of this document, writing that it was a petition concerning the priests’ “right to cultivate 500 ¼ arourae at Tebtunis. This land had originally (i.e., in Ptolemaic times) belonged to the temple, but was converted into Crown land by a praefect, apparently in the reign of Augustus, who however allowed the priests to cultivate it as tenants of the State, a concession which is represented as taking the place of the σύνταξις or annual subvention from the government…. All went well until the 4th year of Vespasian…when some official, probably the comogrammateus, desired to raise the rent of these 500 ¼ arourae by 200 artabae of barley, threatening the priests with expulsion if they failed to comply with the demand.” This has more or less been the interpretation of the priests’ complaint for the century since the publication of the second volume of the Tebtunis papyri. Johnson, for instance, writes that “the power and influence of the temples were further curtailed by the confiscation of hieratic lands in 20 B.C. when Petronius was prefect,” going on to repeat

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204 *P.Tebt.* 2.294 (Tebtunis, 146 AD), ll. 5-6.
205 *Meγίστων* is not part of the reconstructed text in *P.Tebt.* 2.302, but it is possible that the word follows συννάων θεῶν: the phrase is supplemented.
the narrative of a choice offered between the *syntaxis* or the right to rent the confiscated land.\textsuperscript{207} Monson has recently added a wrinkle to this interpretation, suggesting that only some temple land (that which was “directly controlled”) was confiscated, while privately-controlled temple land remained on the books.\textsuperscript{208}

The priests, it seems, possessed 500 ¼ arouras of land that had formerly belonged to someone or something (or had been something, etc.). Grenfell and Hunt supplemented this lacuna as the land formerly being the possession of the god, Soknebtunis, but this is not certain, despite their suggestion that “of the gods” is “a necessary supplement.”\textsuperscript{209} It may be the likely supplement, but a distinction between likely and necessary is important to maintain, lest we offer up *a priori* readings of papyri. We should also note that the 500 ¼ arouras are by no means guaranteed to be Soknebtunis’ only land. The description of the land largely takes place in the supplements, but even if we accept the maximum interpretation (that is, as offered by Grenfell and Hunt), there is nothing in this petition (or any other) fixing the size of Soknebtunis’ land at 500 ¼ arouras. Indeed, since the god owned 130 arouras in Kerkeosiris alone, the 500 ¼ arouras here are probably not the total of Soknebtunis’ land throughout the southern Fayum.\textsuperscript{210} This is not a minor point: if the god controlled more than the 500 ¼ arouras discussed here, the confiscation narrative must suffer. If Soknebtunis possessed more than 500 ¼ arouras, and only a portion of this was confiscated by the state, a point we shall discuss below, then the state cannot have taken all land of the temple. If Soknebtunis possessed more than 500 ¼ arouras, all of which was confiscated, but only a portion of which was targeted for confiscation or tax hikes by

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{207} Johnson (1936) 639. \\
\textsuperscript{208} Monson (2012) 131-141. For more, see Ch. 5. \\
\textsuperscript{209} *P. Tebt.* 2.302, n. 6. All that survives is the end of line 6, τῶν προκι[ \\
\textsuperscript{210} This would require over a quarter of the god’s land to be in Kerkeosiris, with a presence (presumably not insignificant) in the other villages in the area, leaving the amount of land located in Tebtunis at a somewhat small amount.
\end{flushleft}
a power-hungry or acquisitive *komogrammateus* (as supplemented by Grenfell and Hunt), then we are left without the motive for his actions, and must find a different explanation. The 500 ¼ arouras have taken on an outsized significance in the study of Roman Egypt and of Tebtunis itself.\(^{211}\)

Following the mention of 500 ¼ arouras, the priests mention the prefect in some fashion—the genitive absolute ending τοῦ ἡγεμονεύσαντος must refer to the prefect, based on comparative evidence—along with public land. The phrase that survives, εἰς βασιλικὴν γῆν, appears only once elsewhere on papyrus,\(^{212}\) while the phrase Grenfell and Hunt created to resolve the line is unattested outside of supplements.\(^{213}\) This line, and the supplement offered by Grenfell and Hunt, is the key to their interpretation of the entire passage. The rest of the petition, while certainly suggestive of some legal chaos surrounding title to land and taxes upon it, does not confirm a state-ordered confiscation of temple land. Suggestions might be made, but without the supplemented words “confiscated by Petronius” (ἀναληφθίσας δὲ ὑπὸ Πετρωνίου), we are left without positive evidence for state-led confiscation or of the involvement of the prefect himself.\(^{214}\)

The following lines lay out the present cause for the petition. In the fourth year of Vespasian, that is, 71-72 AD, something happened. By Grenfell and Hunt’s reconstruction, the local *komogrammateus* ordered a rent hike on the temple’s land, an increase that was against the original deal supposedly made with Petronius, and an increase made under threat of confiscation of the land itself. In line 9, the surviving text reads, in Greek, διὰ ἀναφορίου προσθῆναι εἰς τὸ

\(^{211}\) For the latter, see, e.g., Hoffman (2012) 74.

\(^{212}\) *P. Fay* 150 (Bakchias, 1\(^{st}\) century BC).

\(^{213}\) *P. Tebt.* 2.302, n. 6.

\(^{214}\) *P. Tebt.* 2.302, l. 7, with *BL* 1.426.
εἰσιὸν ε (ἠτος). The latter part of the line is relatively straightforward, but the former is more difficult. Grenfell and Hunt translated it as, with supplement, “the komogrammateus desired in a report for the coming 5th year….” The komogrammateus, the villain of the piece, is supplemented because of the presence of an anaphorion, but this cannot be correct. An anaphorion is not a scribal report. The word generally means a petition. If we focus on the word and its meaning in Tebtunis itself, its usage becomes clearer. There are seventeen papyri from Tebtunis in which the word anaphorion appears in the surviving text. Leaving aside P.Tebt. 2.302, there are eight clear instances in which anaphorion means a bid to purchase state property or to lease land. These uses of the term with this meaning are all clustered between 95 AD and 165 AD. The other instances generally are used with the meaning of “a payment.” Of the eight instances of anaphorion meaning a bid to purchase state property or lease land, three come from the so-called Archive of Patron’s descendents. None of these refer to official reports by local officials.

If, in this case, anaphorion means a bid to purchase state property or to lease land, the awkward phrasing of Grenfell and Hunt’s supplement is resolved nicely. The subject of the sentence would therefore not be the komogrammateus, but rather another party, one lodging a bid

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215 P. Tebr. 2.302, l. 9.
216 P. Tebr. 2.302, p. 90.
217 See, for instance, Preisigke or the LSJ. The Diccionario Griego-Espanol offers both “petition” and “report.”
218 As Bloch notes, concerning the medieval French rural economy, “rural terminology is idiosyncratic in the extreme; although conditions over a wide area might be fundamentally the same, the settlements which were the centers of gossip and argument were so small and self-centered that the words men used to describe their affairs varied from region to region, even from village to village.” See Bloch (1970) 30.
219 SB 20.14314 (Tebtunis, 26 AD) includes the word in a supplement, with the meaning “an application to lease.”
220 P. Coll. Yout. 1.27; P. Hamb. 3.219; P. Mil. Vogl. 1.27; P. Mil. Vogl. 2.50; P. Mil. Vogl. 6.267; PSI 10.1124; SB 5.7599; SB 10.10527.
222 P. Mil. Vogl. 1.27, P. Mil. Vogl. 2.50, and P. Mil. Vogl. 6.267. These texts were found in the cantina dei papiri located near the temple, and also containing a number of religious texts, for which see Smolders (2005) 1. For the archaeological context of the cantina and suggestions as to the source of the documents within, see Ch. 2 and van Minnen (1998).
to purchase or rent the land in question. If this is the case, then the following line also falls into place: the bid for the land included an increase of 200 artabas of barley, that is, an increased rate of about 0.4 artabas per aroura, if the whole 500 ¼ arouras were affected by the bid. The lodging of a more competitive bid is not surprising—if the land were really royal land or confiscated land now belonging to the state, a bid would be expected.\textsuperscript{223} As we shall see, the administration of royal land allowed for a third party to make a bid, offering more attractive terms to the state, and taking over the land in question. Another papyrus, \textit{P.Oxy.} 24.2410, records another petition, this time from Oxyrhynchus. Though the addressee and the petitioner are both unknown, the formula is familiar.\textsuperscript{224} A certain amount of land has been cultivated by the petitioners “from the time of our ancestors” (ἀπὸ προγόνων) but a third party had recently outbid them for a certain amount of land, and intended to lease other crown land in addition, and intends to sublease them all. There is more to the complaint, of course, but at its most basic level, we have a group of villagers who have been outbid and are sending a petition, based on no legal grounds but rather an offended sense of fair play.

We should pause to consider one seemingly minor point: the language used to describe the supposed threat to confiscate the land from the temple if the 200 artaba increase was not paid. The priests write something about an increase, or something will be seized (ἡ ἀφαιρεθήναι).\textsuperscript{225} Grenfell and Hunt interpreted this as a threat to confiscate the land, in line with their supplement to the lines above. The word, however, is not the one commonly used to describe the confiscation of land, generally a form of ἀνάληψις. The one the priests use is instead, as Rea noted, not used for the confiscation of land, but “always means a theft of goods.”\textsuperscript{226} Especially as

\textsuperscript{223} See, e.g., Hagedorn (1985) 177-182.
\textsuperscript{224} \textit{P.Oxy.} 24.2410 (Oxyrhynchus, 120 AD).
\textsuperscript{225} \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.302, ll. 14-15.
\textsuperscript{226} \textit{P.Oxy.} 51.3611, n. 7-10.
the reference to confiscation of property followed immediately a reference to two hundred
artabas of barley, the threat of confiscation must have referred to the barley and not to the land in
question. Whether the barley was under threat as a fine for improper privatization of land, as an
increase of rent on crown land, or something else, the priests would presumably have seen
such an act, especially in the highly-charged context of a petition, as a theft of goods rather than
a more legally based act. The interpretation of this section provided significant support for
Grenfell and Hunt’s interpretation of the text, especially as this is the only example in the
unsupplemented text for any threats of confiscation. Based on their introduction, translation, and
commentary on *P.Tebt. 2.302*, it seems that Grenfell and Hunt were unaware of this distinction
and, while we, standing on their figurative shoulders, cannot blame them for not knowing
scholarship that had not been written when they published *P.Tebt. 2.302*, they may have let a
probably incorrect reading of αφαιρέ- color their supplementing of previous lines, especially the
fateful line 7.

Following the higher bid, the priests seem to have appealed to the prefect, who took the
conventional first step of a high-level administrator: he asked a subordinate to look into the
problem. In this case, it may have been the komogrammateus, but it just as easily could have
been a different figure. While much of it is missing, the prefect probably asked his subordinate
to examine three related questions: first, if the priests had been working the land under the
agreement they mentioned, second, if this was a long-standing arrangement, and third, if the
temple had maintained the rites associated, for which state aid was offered in the first place. It is
also possible, however, that the inquiry described by the priests in this petition was not precisely

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227 For these scenarios, see below.
228 The only surviving part of the name is a final omega-sigma (the former underdotted), which Grenfell and Hunt
took as the end of κωμογραμματέ]ως. There are a large number of names and official positions that end, in the
genitive, in omega-sigma, provided the omega is correct.
that made by the prefect in response to the priests’ first petition. Following the receipt of those instructions, we can assume that some sort of investigation was made. We can cautiously reconstruct all this because the following section (lines 15-20) record a response (an unnamed figure is described as “responding” (ἀντιφωνήσαντός) to the prefect’s (“you” σοι) inquiry. What survives of line 15 begins ως ἀντιφωνήσαντος, which Grenfell and Hunt supplemented as τοῦ ὕδὲ κωμογραμματέ]ως ἀντιφωνήσαντος. Whoever is responding to the prefect, he seems to have discovered some documents preserved somewhere, a location that Grenfell and Hunt supplement as “in the temple” (ἐν τοῖς ἱερῶι), proving that the priests had registered the land in the annual harvest survey. While not a logical impossibility, it is at least unlikely that both of these supplements can stand. The state was not bound to respect private documents, no matter the claim.229 Had the komogrammateus conducted a thorough examination of the village records, it is unlikely that the priests, obviously an interested party, would win their argument by appearing with the exact document in question. The small size of the second gap suggests that Grenfell and Hunt’s supplement (“in the temple”) may stand, but the former “the komogrammateus”) is far from certain. Indeed, given the size of the gap, and the inability to reconstruct the words preceding even their supplemented “the komogrammateus,” the gap could just as easily have held the name of a particular priest, that is, “Ν.Ν. τοῦ ἱερέως ἀντιφωνήσαντός.” In this scenario, then, the priests offered their own response to the prefect’s “inquiry” (in whatever form that actually took), presumably leaving out whatever official investigation was made by the local officials. If the investigation went against them, this is not surprising.

Chronology

With the priests’ response to the prefect’s first inquiry, we come to the question of

229 A point we shall explore in greater detail in the following chapter.
chronology. In other words, when did this dispute happen and why did it happen then? Much has been made of the multiple references to the prefect Petronius that appear in this text, and the confiscation of temple lands therefore located, on the testimony of this text, during Petronius’ prefecture.\(^{230}\) A careful reading shows, however, that Petronius appears only once in the preserved text (line 17) and twice in Grenfell and Hunt’s supplements (lines 7 and 12). The two appearances in the supplements are the ones in which the prefecture of Petronius is especially stressed and the supposed misdeeds of the prefect in relation to the temples are brought out. In other words: there is nothing in this papyrus to positively link any Roman confiscations, hostility, or harsh dealing to Petronius, the time of Petronius, or even the early Roman period.

The certain reference to Petronius (line 17) comes after a claim that the priests had possessed land from their ancestors (κατὰ διαδοχὴν τῶν γονέων) and farmed it since the time of Petronius (γεωργεῖν ἀπὸ τῶν Πετρωνίου χρόνων).\(^{231}\) There is nothing in the sentence to link any action on the part of Petronius with the priests of Tebtunis, however. It is likely that Petronius was being used as a chronological shorthand, similar to that in \(BGU\ 4.1198\), where the priests note that they have been doing their duties free of taxation since “all the way back in the time of the Queen” (ἐπάνωθεν καὶ τῶν τῆς βασιλίσσης χρόνων).\(^{232}\) Petronius, as the second prefect of Egypt, might seem a strange choice, certainly compared to “the Queen,” that is, Cleopatra VII. Petronius, however, followed on from the first prefect, the ill-fated Cornelius Gallus, who had been removed from office for misconduct and quickly committed suicide.\(^{233}\) There are no securely dated references on papyrus to Cornelius Gallus after the reign of Augustus. For the priests,

\(^{230}\) For the development of this idea, see below.

\(^{231}\) \(P.Tebt.\ 2.302\) ll. 17-18.

\(^{232}\) \(BGU\ 4.1198\) (Busiris, 4 BC), ll. 7-8.

\(^{233}\) Cassius Dio, 53.23. Another papyrus, \(P.Oxy.\ 12.1453\) dates to the changeover from Cleopatra to Octavian, and is notable even in this early period for the avoidance of Cleopatra’s name (or the conspicuous mention of Octavian’s), for which see lines 19-22. Using Trismegistos People to examine appearances of the prefect (Cornelius) Gallus shows that there are no securely dated references to him after the reign of Augustus.
writing decades later, Petronius, as the second prefect, but the first prefect not removed for misconduct, could serve as a sort of chronological shorthand for the beginning of Roman rule. Because of this, the reign of Petronius served, according to the confiscation narrative, as the point at which Roman persecution of Egyptian religion took form.\textsuperscript{234} If Petronius is removed from the text, except as a shorthand for \textit{in illo tempore}, then the evidence for any Egypt-wide confiscations must be removed along with it.\textsuperscript{235}

The dispute itself taking place in the fourth year of Vespasian’s rule was clearly a complicated one. Having received a petition from the priests, and having replied in some fashion, the prefect then seems, if my interpretation is correct, to have received a second petition from the priests, presumably protesting the findings of the investigation (this being the current document, \textit{P. Tebt. 2.302}). This interpretation is strengthened by the superlinear addition at line 20, which reads σοῦ δὲ τῷ κυρίῳ γράψαντος αὐτῷ διμηνον ἡμῖν συνεχώρησε ὡς ἐνέκωμεν and which Grenfell and Hunt suggested should be corrected to σοῦ δὲ τοῦ κυρίου γράψαντος αὐτῷ διμηνον ἡμῖν συνεχώρησε ὡς ἐνέκωμεν. With this correction, the line would suggest that the prefect wrote to the \textit{komogrammateus}, whose role has otherwise been called into question, and the \textit{komogrammateus} allowed a two month delay in proceedings for information gathering. The hand that wrote the superlinear addition (20a) is a cramped one, but it seems different from that writing the remainder of the text. If this is the case, then we can propose two situations. A second priest, reading the petition, wrote in another sentence to be added when the final draft was composed and sent to the prefect, or he wrote a note to the author of the text, reminding him, the author, that he had already written to the prefect, who had allowed a delay of two months. The

\textsuperscript{234} The development of this idea is discussed in greater detail below.

\textsuperscript{235} In any case, even if Petronius had been involved, and even if Petronius had ordered the confiscation of the land in question, exactly as the “confiscation narrative” would have it, there is no evidence that this prefectural order would have applied to the whole of the province.
strained grammar of the added line—either the second priest confused a fairly simple point (dative for genitive) in an otherwise normal sentence, or he transposed γράψαντος and αὐτῷ, creating a (presumably inadvertent) ABAB interlacing (σοῦ δὲ τῷ κυρίῳ γράψαντος αὐτῷ)—might suggest that the priest responsible for writing the petition was chosen for this job at least partly based on his skill in composing Greek, and that the second priest, while clearly literate and comfortable with the language, was perhaps not a stylist. The first possibility, that the prefect was reminded that he had already written to the komogrammateus, is rendered less likely by the absence of the komogrammateus elsewhere in the text. Although the prefect must have directed his initial inquiry somewhere, the freestanding αὐτῷ, if pointing to the komogrammateus, would be rather casual. It is more likely, then, that τῷ κυρίῳ and αὐτῷ refer to the same person, that is, the prefect, and that the addition of αὐτῷ might simply be a mistaken repetition. In either case, however, we are reminded that this draft text was not sent, at least in this form, and that it was a document in flux, the text and rhetoric being negotiated even after the first priest wrote the draft.

That a delay of two months was granted after the priests wrote to the prefect, in response to intervention in the case, in response to the priests’ complaint, in response to their land being assigned for the coming year to a higher bidder, likely means that the dispute had stretched close to the beginning of the 5th year of Vespasian, or possibly even into it, in which case the farmers on the land may have been working the land already, not knowing the eventual recipient of the crop.236 Those farmers may have been, in the case of P.Tebt. 2.302, priests, as they suggest in line 17, when they write that they have possessed the land from the time of their ancestors and farmed it from the time of Petronius (νενεμήσθαι ταύτας κατὰ διαδοχὴν τῶν γονέων καὶ

236 Probably similar to P.Lond. 7.2188 (Pathyrite, 148 BC), in which farmers are caught up between two temples attempting to claim the same patch of land. The farmers themselves, however, are merely caught in the middle. For a closer look at this dispute, see Ch. 5.
On the other hand, there is nothing in the text of 
P.Tebt. 2.302 that suggests that the priests as a corporate body were actually farming the land. Some of them may have tilled the soil, but not in their official duties. When they say that they farmed (γεωργεῖν) the land, it may have been as nominal tenants (that is, if the god Soknebtunis or the priests as a corporate body was listed as the tenant), and as the ones themselves individually wielding hoes and picks while they were off-duty. Indeed, how the priests would go about farming 500 ¼ arouras of land as a group is unclear, especially as there is no other evidence for priests doing so. In any case, there was nothing to be gained from admitting to the prefect that the farmers on the land would not necessarily be displaced if the priests lost their dispute. We know, of course, that the priests did lease out their land, as can be seen by two documents (P.Tebt. 2.309 and 310) concerning the surrender of leases on temple land, from 116-7 and 186 AD, respectively.

Supporting Documents

The final third of the petition (leaving aside the introduction and the request for relief which closes the document) is concerned with supporting evidence for the priests’ petition to the prefect. This takes two forms, in addition to that previously adduced in lines 16-20. First, the priests point to a “priestly report” (ἱερευτικὸς λόγος) preserved in the “proper offices” (καθήκοντα λογιστήρια). Second, the priests had in their possession the records of a trial before a certain former epistrategos of the Arsinoite nome and the Heptanomis (Middle Egypt).

The first supporting document, the “priestly report,” probably refers to a “temple declaration” (γραφὴ ἱερέων καὶ χειρισμοῦ) that the priests were required to submit at the end of

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237 P.Tebt. 2.302 ll. 17-18.
238 For the organization of the priesthood, see Ch. 7.
239 P.Tebt. 2.302, ll. 20-24.
240 P.Tebt. 2.302, ll. 24-27.
each year.241 These contained an inventory of land (and probably businesses and industries) controlled by the temple, the priests registered to the temple, and the goods located within the temple itself. Unfortunately, for our purposes, the last category is the best attested, by far.242 Though this was an official report, and could be checked by the state if they happened to be suspicious, the purpose of the document was presumably as much a check against wrongdoing by officials as a check on the temple itself. That is, a listing of the expensive goods in the temple itself was no doubt of largest value in case one went missing, in order that the priest responsible could be punished, akin to the process of euthyna in Athens.243 Were the prefect (or the official to whom he delegated a second inquiry) to investigate, the inventory would presumably list the 500 ¼ arouras as somehow under the temple’s control, whether as temple land or something else. As these inventories were submitted yearly, it is unclear to which year the hiereutikos logos referred to in P.Tebt. 2.302 belongs. The term, hiereutikos logos, appears only once elsewhere, in P.Tebt. 2.298 (ἱερευτικῶν λόγων), where it refers to “priestly accounts.”244 The reference to the “priestly accounts” is itself in a yearly declaration/γραφή, rendering the meaning additionally murky. Whatever the form, this was a document prepared by the priests and handed over to the state officials, and apparently available for inspection, probably at the local grapheion.245 If the hiereutikos logos was not synonymous with the γραφῆ ιερέων και χειρισμοῦ, it is also unclear the degree to which the logos was intended by the state as an accurate, legally verifiable register, as in the case of the γραφῆ.

Because of the lack of clear evidence on the role of the epistrategos, it is difficult to

241 For the subject, see Battaglia (1984), Montevucchi (1932) or more recently published examples, such as Eckerman (2012) and especially the very long P.Zauzich 12 with updated bibliography.
242 See, e.g., Eckerman (2012) or P.Ryl. 110 (Hermopolis, 259 AD).
243 For euthyna, see, e.g., Efstathiou (2007).
244 P.Tebt. 2.298 (Tebtunis, 108 AD), l. 62.
245 P.Tebt. 2.302, ll. 21-23.
determine the significance of the second example the priests produce, their record of a trial before a certain epistrategos concerning some “bastards from the temple” (ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ νόθων).²⁴⁶ Speaking broadly, the epistrategos decided cases concerning “protests against appointment to liturgies and archai” as well as “disputes over property or money debts.”²⁴⁷ It is likely that the priests appeared before the epistrategos concerning property, and not office, since the epistrategos does not seem to have involved himself with the improper assumption of priestly office, a topic that was by and large reserved for the idios logos.²⁴⁸ On the subject of this particular decision from the epistrategos, the priests are relatively silent, allowing only that he “reserved the land for us, the legitimate priests” (ἡμεῖν τοῖς νομίμοις ἱερεῖσι ἐτήρησεν τὰς ἀροῦρας) instead of giving it to the nothoi.²⁴⁹ While this no doubt takes the form of a property dispute, the case probably did not concern itself with the proper claim on the land, but rather on who was competent to work that claim: the priests or a rival faction at the temple. This rival faction, having (it would seem) lost their case, are called “bastards” by the priests in P.Tebt. 2.302, but precisely what made them nothoi is unclear. Clarysse and Thompson summarize the arguments concerning temple bastards, reducing them to four main options. First, bastards could be “the children of a legitimate union of a priest with a non-priestess partner, resulting in priestly ateleia without full priestly status.”²⁵⁰ This argument probably relies as much on notions of Greek citizenship and Roman priesthoods as it does on evidence from Ptolemaic or Roman Egypt itself. The second option is that the bastards are illegitimate children of priests or priestesses, that is, “bastards” in the conventional sense. Third, the bastards might be the castoffs

²⁴⁶ P.Tebt. 2.302, l. 24.
²⁴⁸ In at least one instance, the epistrategos does involve himself in priestly income, with the assistance of the antarchiereus: SB 6.9016.
²⁴⁹ Grenfell and Hunt suggest that the nothoi wish to share the land with the “legitimate priests,” but this is probably not the case, as we shall see.
from temple prostitution. This position is entirely untenable, since temple prostitution did not exist in Egypt, a point we will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 6. Fourth, “nothoi might designate in Greek those sacred servants who, in dedicating themselves to a god, record anonymous paternity in such a dedication.”251 Whoever precisely the “bastards” were—and it is important to remember that the only evidence for their bastardy is the say-so of the priests writing this petition, who were not a neutral party by any means—they clearly seem to have represented a rival faction. The priests, we can assume, do not linger long on the case before the epistrategos because its main evidentiary value for this petition was first, that the priests writing the petition were the ones empowered to speak on behalf of the temple, and second, that they had worked the land at some previous time.252 This point is stressed as early as line 2, in which the priests note that they are the legitimate/traditional priests (ἱερέων παραδοχίμων).253 While the term paradoximos is generally used formulaically,254 it does highlight the priests’ claim: they are the paradoximoi, they are nomimoi, and their legal foes are nothing but bastards.

Request for Redress

In the final lines, the priests ask for the prefect to confirm their version of events, affording them continued use of the land. They claim to themselves work the land, together with their wives and children (αὐτοὐργοῦντων ἡμῶν σὺν γυναιξὶ καὶ τέκνοις).255 Whether or not this latter claim is correct is not particularly important—the priests could just as easily have worked the land in their role as part-time private citizen/sub-tenants, and while the temples (and the priests) can hold property jointly, it must have been subdivided in some fashion. What is

252 The date of the case before the epistrategos remains unclear, despite a clear reference to date (“the 41st year”) in line 26. See Thomas (1982) 19-26, esp. 22-23.
253 For discussion of the term paradoximos, see above.
254 For a rare non-priestly example, see Yiftach-Firanko (2010) 61.
255 P.Tebt. 2.302, l. 29.
interesting is the framing that the priests put on their appeal. Rather than bemoan an injustice done, in the abstract, or argue specifically from legal arguments or juristic precedent, the priests employ a third way: they argue for the centrality of their role in the local religious and administrative landscape, explicitly tying their income from the land in question to their ability to “perform the services and ceremonies” (ἐκτελοῦντες τὰς τῶν θεῶν λειτουργίας καὶ ἕπηρεσίας). Other petitions from Tebtunis place the petitioner firmly in the power of the authority being petitioned: a petition to the epistrategos notes that the petitioner was “a defenseless woman weighted with many years and in danger of having to leave my home” (γυνὴ ὁσα ἄβοηθητος πολλοῖς ἐτεσὶ βεβαρημένη καὶ κινδυνεύουσα διὰ τοῦτο καταλείπειν τὴν ἴδιαν). While the rest of their appeal might be similar to one on a similar subject coming from a non-temple context, the priests can appeal on grounds other than the possibility of their own destruction.

Rhetorical Communication

At a basic level, all texts are forms of rhetorical communication. On a somewhat more specific level, the text recorded on P.Tebt. 2.302 was intended to make a point and to convince the recipient (the prefect). In other words, to paraphrase Skinner (quoted at the beginning of this chapter), we can ask what the priests intended to communicate by the utterance of this particular utterance. Once we consider the petition form and the rhetoric employed in this example, we can move on to a second point, the rhetoric used to construct a historical argument in the study of this topic.

256 P.Tebt. 2.302, l. 30.
257 P.Tebt. 2.327 (Tebtunis, late 2nd century).
Priestly Rhetoric and the Genre of Petitions

I have chosen the word “genre” in the heading of this section carefully, as I wish to convey something of the artfulness involved. The petition, as written in Roman Egypt, was not an off-the-cuff *cri de coeur*, written without hesitation or artifice. It was, as we can see from the draft copy we possess (that is, *P.Tebt. 2.302*), a negotiated text intended to carry its point while acting within the conventions of the petitionary genre. Kelly notes, “the people responsible for the creation of petitions had every reason either to tell outright lies, or to manipulate reality to get the better of the opponents with whom they were disputing,” before claiming that we cannot “study the fictive qualities of these documents as a way of gaining insight into the minds of the petitioners who submitted them.”

The study of these documents is further muddied by the fact that scribes “worked within a scribal culture with a long-established repertoire of stock phrases and *topoi*.” In analyzing *P.Tebt. 2.302*, we will not go as far as Kelly to claim that the priests were telling “outright lies,” but the document was constructed within a particular context. The text of a petition had to bear enough semblance to reality to impress the recipient, or at least damage the opponent’s petition more seriously.

To strengthen their case, the priests, like any good litigant sought to minimize their weaknesses and employ to full effect their strengths. If the ως in line 15 refers to a priest (as I have already argued), and not the *komogrammateus*, then the priests passed over a significant section of the legal proceedings, presumably a section that did not help their case. If the prefect wrote to a local official, requesting more information or ordering an investigation, then this need not be mentioned by the priests—it would presumably be brought up by the other party to the dispute. If, meanwhile, a priest found a supporting document in the temple records, this would

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259 Kelly (2011) 38.
make its way into the petition. This petition, *P.Tebt. 2.302*, comes partway through a dispute, and seems largely to have been motivated by two things: first, the prefect made some sort of declaration, either forbidding a local official from some sort of conduct or requesting an investigation. There are other examples in which a high-ranking official responded to a petition by simultaneously ordering an investigation and making a statement of legal guidance. This may have been what happened here, in which case either the local official either ignored the directive or the investigation ordered by the prefect and conducted by an official of unknown (to us) rank went against them, and the priests felt the need to rebut it. Second, the priests discovered in their files some sort of documents—Grenfell and Hunt supplement “certain documents” (τινων βιβλίων) but all this is lost, and the priests could have mentioned any number of different types of documents—that supported their claim.

The claim that the priests make is presumably not the opposite of the claim that their opponents made. If we correctly reconstruct the debate, then we can expect the priests’ opponent would focus on the simple legal precedent: a higher bid on state land would earn the bidder the rights to use the land. The priests do not debate this point—they don’t even address it. The answer is not to lie, but to change the terms of the debate. If the prefect’s decision was based strictly on the higher bidder criterion, the priests would see their claim fail. This document, *P.Tebt. 2.302*, represents a response to this failed tactic: having seen their initial petition to the prefect fail, the priests try again, with a different argument, one that barely touches on the higher bidder criterion. In its place, the priests appeal to *historical* not legal precedent. Since the

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261 See, for instance, P.Mich. inv. 4000, an edition of which in preparation by Connor and Coughlan, in which the dioiketes responds to a petition by restating the guiding principles for repayment on contested claims between the dioiketes and a private creditor, while also ordering the strategos to investigate further.

262 Again, this first petition can probably be reconstructed on the basis of the prefect’s intervention in the case (l. 15). It is unlikely that he was keeping an eye on the actions taken by local officials in order to catch whatever decisions kicked off this case at this moment.
Romans arrived (that is, “the time of Petronius”), the priests claim, they had worked the land, a state of affairs that happened to coincide with their legal tenure, but which they explicitly connect not to their legal terms but to their ability to perform the rites and ceremonies of the temple (lines 13 and 30). Whether as a deliberate legal strategy or as an unconscious aspect of the priestly mentalité, the priests spoke in terms familiar to previous dialogues with pharaonic officials: a happy, healthy temple is one that continues the rites and ceremonies, and therefore helps to uphold ma’at. If the temple of Soknebtunis lost (all) its land, it would be unable to perform the rites on behalf of the ruler and the safety of the realm would be at risk. A similar threat underlies the royal decree issued by Ptolemy VIII (P. Tebt. 1.6), clearly issued in response to particular temple petitions, which closes by noting that without their full income, the priests would not “be able without hindrance to pay the customary offerings to the gods on behalf of us and our children” (δύνωνται ἀνεμποδίστως ἐπιτελεῖν τὰ νομιζόμενα τοῖς θεοῖς ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν καὶ τῶν τέκνων).

That the priests are prepared to shift the terms of their dispute, and to mention as little as possible the original cause of that dispute calls attention to a second part of the construction of this document. As we have already mentioned, the priests cite three pieces of evidence: the document found in their records-room (if we choose the supplement ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ in line 16, over κωμογραμματέως in line 15), the hiereutikos logos they filed, and the record of a trial before the epistrategos concerning the nothoi. Of these, two (the first document and the trial record) were held by the priests themselves, presumably both within the temple records-room. The other, the hiereutikos logos, they made available for inspection (πρὸς διάκρισιν ἔδηλωσαμεν), possibly by

263 P. Tebt. 1.6, ll. 48-49.
filing it at the village grapheion, if we accept Grenfell and Hunt’s interpretation of this line.\textsuperscript{264} These are almost certainly not the only documents bearing on the dispute, but rather emphasize the priests’ current historical argument. The priests, having determined their argument, have selected those documents which bear positively on their argument that they had been on the land in question for a lengthy period. Despite the imprecision of “certain documents” for the first example, the second and third examples (the hiereutikos logos and the report of the epistrategos) may have been quite carefully chosen: the latter represents evidence created within the Roman legal system, while the former is a class of evidence (if the hiereutikos logos is equivalent to the γραφὴ ἱερέων καὶ χειρισμοῦ) the creation of which was done by order of the Romans. While employing documents they “control” (and certainly may have selectively excerpted to make their case), the priests used the systems, if not the language, of the Roman state.

The use of non-round numbers, especially of fractions, has been argued elsewhere to be an indicator of authentic information, especially concerning land tenure, as the records could be easily checked against the petitioner’s claim.\textsuperscript{265} In this example, we are simultaneously comforted and alarmed. The priests refer to a very specific amount of land—500 ¼ arouras—but the amount of the increase mentioned was, at 200 artabas, a conveniently round number, at least for an increase per aroura. If the increase were assessed per aroura, it would be an (irregular) fractional increase of 2/5 artaba per aroura, were the rent or other payments on the entire 500 ¼ arouras. Two-fifths, as a fraction, would be represented in Egyptian fractional thinking as “1/3 + 1/15,” both of which are somewhat outside the conventional fractions derived from powers of two (2, 4, 8, and so on).\textsuperscript{266} While 500 ¼ arouras might be an accurate measure of the land

\textsuperscript{264} P. Tebt. 2.302, l. 21. For problems with the reconstruction and translation of this line (and especially the phrase πρὸς διάκρισιν) see above.
\textsuperscript{265} Kelly (2011) 53-55.
\textsuperscript{266} See, for instance, the Rhind Mathematical Papyrus 2/n table.
actually affected by this case, a theory we present in greater detail below, we should also note that a large round-number increase would fit with what we know of practice in Roman Egypt: Not, however, for rent or tax increases, but for bids on land. This accords with our suggestion that what we have in *P.Tebt.* 2.302 is not a complaint about government confiscation but a local property dispute on leased land.

We can, in any case, put forward a suggestion to further resolve the tension between the specific land amount and the artaba increase. It has heretofore been assumed that the 500 ¼ (φ δ’) arouras mentioned by the priests refers to their total land, and that this entire land was threatened by the proposed (and supposed) confiscation. Knowing, as we do, that the temple possessed land throughout the southern Fayum, including 130 arouras at Kerkeosiris, it is possible that the tension between the land amount and the artaba increase can be found at one precise point: a different perception between priests, prefect, and modern historians, about the amount of land in question. If *P.Tebt.* 2.302 does represent a local property dispute, a point we will consider in greater detail below, there is very little in the text that compels us to believe that this dispute concerned the entire 500 ¼ arouras. If the dispute sprang up, for the sake of argument, concerning a 100 aroura slice of temple land (or “temple land” confiscated for, e.g., non-payment of taxes) and a bid that was higher by 2 artabas per aroura that had been lodged, the prefect (and the Roman administration) would presumably consider this dispute to concern 100 arouras. For the priests, however, who were trained and educated to see the temple estates as inviolable, the problem of the land in question may not have been so simple at all. A diminution of temple land, even if it was at best “temple land,” would still necessarily threaten the status of the remaining temple land, at least conceptually. For the priests, then, the dispute would not concern 100 arouras alone, but the entire amount of land under temple control, that is, 500 ¼
arouras. If this suggestion is correct, it would highlight the tension inherent in the petition form, between the worldview of the petitioner and that of the recipient of the petition. Despite Kelly’s claim that we cannot “study the fictive qualities of these documents as a way of gaining insight into the minds of the petitioners who submitted them,” a close examination of the claims in the priests’ petition may reveal something of the competing *mentalités* of the Roman administrators and of the Egyptian priests in the southern Fayum.

To construct their argument, then, the priests employ a number of tactics. First, they change the focus of the dispute, from the legal right of tenancy to the historical fact of tenancy. Second, they adduce only evidence produced by themselves or in their possession, picking out those that support their claims while seemingly ignoring the existence of others. Third, they stand on a larger point, connecting the removal of some of their land (if our suggestion is correct) with a threat to all of their land. These three threads are woven together throughout the document, appearing and disappearing as needed. The petition was artfully created and represents, as we have already seen, not a hastily composed *cri de coeur* but rather a carefully prepared rhetorical work, one written with full awareness of traditional Egyptian religious language (and arguments), of Ptolemaic legal precedents, and of the Roman administrative system within which the new dispute had arisen.

The Rhetoric of Evidence: The Development of a Modern Interpretive Consensus

As the modern field of historical enquiry developed, certain trends came to the fore. In the 19th century, a reaction against the ancient literary texts manifested in an attempt to separate out the consciously artful, and thus seemingly inauthentic, literature and the evidence being

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267 This sense is strengthened by Grenfell and Hunt’s supplement of προκιμένος, discussed above. As noted, this is far from certain.
discovered more and more through archaeological excavations—coins, statues, and so on. As early as the 17th century and the great flourishing of modern Pyrrhonism, Spannheim could write “If there is any certain historical evidence, it lies in coins and sculptures.”²⁶⁸ The emphasis on less artificially constructed sources of evidence—“traces” rather than “texts”—inspired scholars to find and more fully use non-literary sources of evidence. The discovery and publication of large numbers of documentary papyri, then, offered these scholars a chance to escape the literary evidence, with all its attendant problems of accurate interpretation, and to find what Jacob Burckhardt called the *primum gradum certitudinis*.²⁶⁹ If documentary papyri represented the unvarnished “truth,” in contrast to the deliberately constructed literary texts, their value as sources would be inestimable. The authoritative tone of certainty can be found in the original publication of *P.Tebt*. 2.302, in which Grenfell and Hunt describe the events—not the papyrus—saying concerning the land of Soknebtunis: “This land had originally (i.e., in Ptolemaic times) belonged to the temple, but was converted into Crown land, apparently in the reign of Augustus” and so on in this vein.²⁷⁰ The tone—certainty of interpretation and total confidence in the text (and supplements)—was influential. We have already seen the issues with Grenfell and Hunt’s interpretation of the evidence, but our interest in this section is the process by which scholarly suggestions (that is, supplements) became scholarly consensus. The petition *P.Tebt*. 2.302 was published in 1907. Schubart published two other influential documents, *BGU* 4.1198 and 1200, in 1912, having been clearly inspired by the publication of *P.Tebt*. 2.302.²⁷¹ The change in scholarly opinion occasioned by the publication of these documents was great. Erman’s handbook of Egyptian religion, published in German in 1904 and reissued in English in 1907—

²⁷¹ For this, see Appendix 1.
the year of *P. Tebt. 2.302*’s publication—depicts the Roman period as a continuation of the policy of the Ptolemies, with little to separate the two, at least until the arrival of Christianity.\textsuperscript{272} Otto’s magisterial *Priester und Tempel im hellenistischen Ägypten* was published in two volumes, the first in 1905 and the second in 1908, bracketing the publication of *P. Tebt. 2.302*. In many ways, however, Otto’s work represents one of the last major works prior to the confiscation narrative. Texts from the second volume of the *Tebtunis Papyri* are rarely cited—*P. Tebt. 2.298* being perhaps the biggest exception—and almost always as footnotes. Our text, *P. Tebt. 2.302*, appears a handful of times, and always in footnotes.\textsuperscript{273} It seems clear that the text of Otto’s second volume was more or less set when Grenfell and Hunt brought out the second volume of *Tebtunis Papyri*, and it is reasonable to expect that, had Otto written five or ten years later, the influence of *P. Tebt. 2.302* on his text would have been much greater.

Milne’s *History of Egypt under Roman Rule* demonstrates the shift in scholarly opinion quite clearly. The first and second editions, published in 1899 and 1913, respectively, do not discuss Roman land confiscations. The third edition, “Revised and Enlarged,” of 1924, however, contains a series of appendices, the third of which, “Ecclesiastical Reorganisation under Augustus,” presents one of the first thoroughgoing discussions of the confiscation narrative in a general history of Roman Egypt. Milne’s account is certainly a product of its times—he spends almost as long discussing somewhat obscure religious reforms of the Anglican Church by William IV and Victoria as he does the Augustan period—but the basic thrust of the argument is thus: Augustus himself ordained that “the government took over the management of temple property, and in lieu of the income formerly derived by each temple from its estates paid a fixed

\textsuperscript{272} Erman (1907) 203-238.
\textsuperscript{273} Otto (1908) 405 contains the list, though for 290\textsuperscript{3}, read rather 290\textsuperscript{2}. The total number of references can be counted on two hands.
subvention, the σύνταξις.” 274 Milne’s picture of Augustan machinations is embellished by his description of the clueless priests, missing the removal of their land behind “a skillfully contrived veil of apparent benefits for the temples, such as the stabilization of their income under a State guarantee, the transfer of the burden of estate-management from the priests to the Civil Service, and the restoration to ecclesiastical uses of the revenues appropriated by the Ptolemies.” 275 The priests, who “probably…did not realize that their corporate position was being weakened,” gradually fell into ruin and subservience to the state. 276 This description probably has more to do with colonial attitudes towards the native populations of Britain’s various overseas territories 277 than it does with Roman Egypt, based as it is on extremely confident readings of papyrological supplements and fanciful speculations into the mindset of an arch-plotter Augustus. Nevertheless, it does capture the rapidly crystalizing “confiscation narrative” in one of its earliest states.

By the time Rostovtzeff wrote his Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire in 1926, this new narrative had taken hold. Augustus, Rostovtzeff writes, undertook a “thorough secularization of the land property of the priests, a nationalization of the church as had been already attempted and almost carried out by Ptolemy Philadelphus….The result of Augustus’ reorganization was that the temples and priests, while left unhampered in their religious activities, were entirely deprived of their economic grip over the population.” 278 These reforms were necessary, since “the clergy were arrogant but unproductive, living as they did on the work of peasants and enslaved artisans” which left “rich and influential temples with a numerous

274 Milne (1924) 286.
275 Milne (1924) 289.
276 Milne (1924) 289.
277 As also seen in this period with the extremely strong support for Christian missionaries.
278 Rostovtzeff (1926) 264-265.
clergy and under them an enormous mass of natives." While the questions being asked by Erman and Rostovtzeff were very different, the passing of nineteen years also occasioned a dramatic change in the narrative of Roman policy towards Egyptian religion. The empiricist trappings of the interpretation—this, the text of P.Tebt. 2.302, as supplemented by Grenfell and Hunt, is what actually happened—allowed a secondary stage, already visible in Rostovtzeff’s writing. The confiscation of land in Tebtunis is now a broad Roman policy, designed by Augustus himself to free the Egyptians from the “economic grip” of “arrogant and unproductive” priests. This step, implied as early as 1907 and certainly in Schubart’s use of P.Tebt. 2.302 to interpret his own documents in BGU 4.1198 and 1200, was easily taken and slipped into a scholarly consensus. Johnson’s survey of the economic state of Roman Egypt stated, without qualification, that “the power and influence of the temples were further curtailed by the confiscation of hieratic lands in 20 B.C., when Petronius was prefect.” We will examine more recent scholarship on this document in a later chapter, but it is clear that by 1936, the assumption that the Romans, in a plan drawn up by Augustus and executed by Petronius in 20 BC, seized all the land of the temples across Egypt, and replaced them with a system of syntaxis or the right to rent back the land in question from the state, was universal. Key to this was the language of empiricism. The documentary text was a true record, in this school of thought, and the interpretation was nothing so much as a scraping away the sands of the abandoned village to reveal the truth. That the text in question was a petition and that we, as modern scholars, were not bound to take the petitioners at their word is a point not seemingly taken. Documentary papyri were seen as a counterweight to the literary texts that had defined early scholarship on the

279 Rostovtzeff (1926) 264. Compare to depictions of the Russian clergy before the Revolution (or, the rhetoric of the Bolsheviks themselves concerning the clergy).

ancient world, but the tools of historical analysis, as would be applied by the *Annales* School, for instance, to archival material from medieval France with such dramatic results in the 1930s and onwards, were not applied to texts on papyrus. Instead, the claims contained in *P.Tebt. 2.302* were seen as facts, to be picked out and applied to the construction of a larger argument, rather than a historical source, one to which the tools of historical criticism had to be applied. The petition certainly contains quite a bit of what Marwick calls “unwitting testimony,” that is, the unintentional information carried within the text, but the main interpretation of the document has rested largely on the use of the “witting testimony” of the petition, by and large without the standard skepticism with which historians greet such testimony.\(^{281}\)

The development of an interpretative consensus took place against a backdrop of growing British presence in Egypt. Since the Urabi Revolt in 1882, the British had been effectively an occupying power, supporting the khedivate. After the Ottoman declaration of war against the Allied powers in 1914, the British deposed the khedive and assumed total control of Egypt, at which time they established a puppet kingdom under Fuad. In any case, the entrance of British troops and British administrators into Egypt after 1882 was accompanied by major changes in economic and political structures. Grenfell, born in 1869, and Hunt, born in 1871, came of age in a period when British gunboats and soldiers were fundamentally overhauling political and economic realities along the Nile.\(^{282}\) Even if unconsciously, events in British Egypt seem to have influenced early 20th century interpretations of Roman action in Egypt, supporting the narrative of a strong outside power moving into Egypt and reforming a corrupt or broken system in the

\(^{281}\) For an example of the use of “unwitting testimony” from *P.Tebt. 2.302*, see Thomas (1982), 22-23. For Marwick, see Marwick (2001).

\(^{282}\) The second volume of the Tebtunis papyri was published soon after the Denshawai incident highlighted the strain placed on Egyptian society by the frequently heavy-handed presence of British administrators.
grasp of decadent religious figures. As Trouillot writes, “is it really inconsequential that the history of America is being written in the same world where few little boys want to be Indians?” Evelyn Baring, the Earl of Cromer, long-time consul-general of Egypt, described the state of Egypt in 1882 as he saw it, writing of “the universality of corruption,” the “failure [of Islam] as a social system,” the need for European intervention, and so on. That this picture more or less maps onto early 20th century descriptions of the problems facing Roman administrators taking over Egypt is, to borrow Trouillot’s phrasing, probably not inconsequential. While Baring’s arguments are an attempt at justification after the fact—the primary cause of British intervention was to protect British investments under threat in an Egyptian financial crisis—these justifications were also fit more neatly into the self-presentation of empire in Britain. In this context, then, Grenfell and Hunt’s (and subsequent scholars’) assumption that the dispute discussed in P.Tebt. 2.302 must apply universally to Egyptian temples and must reflect an Augustan period attempt to overhaul dramatically the state of affairs is less surprising, albeit probably no more correct.

A Different Interpretation

If P.Tebt. 2.302 does not contain evidence for an Egypt-wide confiscation of temple land, as we have already argued, then we must ask what it does describe. The easiest answer, of course, is that we do not know. The priests were probably not inventing the entire dispute out of whole cloth, but the nature of the evidence makes it difficult to step much past the priestly rhetoric, especially without other evidence that might shine light on the problem from a different

283 Orientalism, not restricted to 1882-1952 or to Egypt alone, also plays a role in early scholarship on Egypt. For this, see Said (1994).
285 Baring (1908), volume 2, vii-xiv.
position. Based on our reading of *P.Tebt. 2.302* and the other information available concerning the period, we can offer a different suggestion for what may have happened in Tebtunis in the early 2nd century AD.

In the recorded history of Egypt, from the Old Kingdom to the end of the Byzantine period, there are very few instances of Egypt-wide reorganizations of property, especially those of the temples—Akhenaten’s fame would be much diluted were his actions fairly common, and he did not in actual fact attack the land of all the temples in any case.\(^{287}\) In the Roman Empire, there are no instances of wholesale removals of property from an entire group.\(^{288}\) What was relatively common throughout Pharaonic, Persian, Ptolemaic, and Roman Egypt and also throughout the Roman Empire, were property disputes concerning local issues. Our best source for this is the great amount of papyri already published, and texts concerning local property disputes form a significant portion of the documentary papyri in existence. Even if we take Grenfell and Hunt’s supplements as correct, and the resulting interpretations of the text as accurate, it is still quite a bit more likely that the dispute the priests describe is a local one. This can only be an argument from probability, but in the absence of compelling reasons to make the issues described in this document universal, it is safer not to do so.

The context of the petition is not unique. Petitions to the prefect were, as we have seen, quite common. A re-examination of the text of the petition shows that there was no direct involvement by the prefect in removing temple land. Indeed, the prefect appears to act in an entirely routine fashion—he receives a petition and delegates the investigation to a lower-ranking official. The name or title of the official to whom this task was delegated does not, unfortunately,

\(^{287}\) For Akhenaten, see the following chapter.

\(^{288}\) Gratian’s supposed confiscation of all property belonging to the pagan temples (see, e.g., Ambrose, *Epistulae* 17) is extremely problematic, and in great need of a reexamination.
survive. We might assume, on the other hand, that a petition to the prefect seeking to overturn a century-old imperial policy completely restructuring the funding situation for religion in Egypt might resemble in format more ordinary petitions, but we should apply here Occam’s Razor, that is, when faced with differing explanations for a phenomenon, the simplest hypothesis is most likely the correct one. A seemingly routine petition sent to the prefect—no doubt with the understanding that he would delegate it to a lower-ranking official—concerning a patch of land caught up in a local property dispute accords with the general patterns available to us from our study of papyrus documents, while a priestly attempt to overturn a century-old prefectural order (sometimes said to originate with Augustus himself) completely changing the financing of religion in Roman Egypt would require, for us to accept it as the most satisfactory explanation, quite a few unsupported assumptions.

If we consider the evidence cited (and not cited) by the priests, the sense that we are seeing a part of a local property dispute becomes stronger. The priests, writing their petition with the aim of convincing a prefect to uphold their claim on land, mention three pieces of evidence, all of which appear to be created or controlled by them. What they do not cite is the actual decree of the prefect Petronius, the one that—according to the supplements made by Grenfell and Hunt and the related “confiscation model”—would allow them either a syntaxis or the right to rent the land. Despite the fact that this, much more than a report from an epistrategos or a hiereutikos logos, would strengthen their case against a greedy komogrammateus,²⁸⁹ the priests do not mention it, relying at most on partial paraphrases of the supposed decree. Instead of this, the priests are forced to turn, as we have seen, to historical claims on the land, the sort we see elsewhere in local property disputes. An illustrative example is no doubt P.Oxy. 24.2410, a

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²⁸⁹ We have here reinserted the presence of this official for the sake of representing the “confiscation model” accurately, despite our notes above concerning the lack of evidence for his presence in this context.
petition from an unknown group of farmers in Oxyrhynchus who have been outbid for a parcel of crown land near Oxyrhynchus. The petition in *P. Oxy.* 24.2410 is quite a bit more scattered—the farmers seem to have thrown in as many accusations as they could, in hopes that something would stick—but the argumentation and situation are familiar. The irrigation equipment in the village had been available for the use of the farmers “from the time of our ancestors” (ἀπὸ προγόνων) and the land had been “formerly administered by us” (πρότερον ὤν οὖσας).

The interloper, a certain Horion, has the legal right to work the land, but not the historic or moral right, the petitioners’ argument goes. The farmers ask for nothing less than an exception to the higher bidder rules, suggesting that Horion’s legal rights should be subordinated to the farmers’ desire “to remain in our own place” (ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ συμμένειν).

A local property dispute could take a number of forms, but the example of the Nestnephis trial is illustrative. This dispute, discussed in greater detail in Ch. 5, concerned a man, Satabous, who purchased land from a certain Chairemon. After some time, a third party, Nestnephis, challenged Satabous’ claim to the land, arguing that it was state-owned land that had been illegally cordoned off and privatized. In this case, we know that Nestnephis’ claim was upheld, and that Satabous was forced to pay a large fine. What makes this dispute particularly memorable, however, is that both Satabous and Nestnephis were, in their own ways, correct. Chairemon, it seems, had illegally privatized the land, and Satabous had been given legal assurances by Chairemon that he, Chairemon, would protect Satabous in court if anyone

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290 *P. Oxy.* 24.2410 (Oxyrhynchus, 140 AD). The farmers refer to a “village irrigator,” the use of which they are being denied, suggesting that this situation concerns a village in the Oxyrhynchite nome, but not in Oxyrhynchus itself.

291 *P. Oxy.* 24.2410, ll. 5, 13.

292 *P. Oxy.* 24.2410, ll. 24-25.

293 On the dispute, see Schentuleit (2007) passim.
questioned it. Satabous had not done, in his own mind, anything wrong. Whatever went on with the land of Soknebtunis, both the priests and the other party may have both believed themselves to be in the right. Indeed, had only a petition from other party survived, we presumably would have quite a different impression of the case at hand.

The examples of *P.Oxy.* 24.2410 and the Nestnephis trial are useful to keep in mind when we consider *P.Tebt.* 2.302. We can now offer a tentative suggestion for the sort of local event that might lie behind this papyrus. We have already discussed the possibility that the 500 ¼ arouras mentioned in l. 6 were not equivalent to the land under threat in this dispute, but that the priests were referring to their property throughout the region. In this case, we would suggest that a smaller portion of their total property had, perhaps, been donated, purchased, or even exchanged, in a single unit. While evidence for these processes is rather sparse, we know that donations and probably purchases, at least, did take place. One document, *P.Amh.* 2.40, from the 2nd century BC, discusses the fate of forty-six arouras that were given jointly to the temple of Soknopaios in Soknopaiou Nesos and to a certain Arius, with the understanding that the land would be split more or less evenly (we assume) between them. While this case is Ptolemaic, a similar situation would be possible for the Roman period. In the case of *P.Amh.* 2.40, another figure intervened to rework the terms of the distribution between Arius and the temple. In the

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294 Roman law, as does modern law, did not allow someone in possession of stolen property (Chairemon) to convey greater rights to the property than he himself possessed. For a modern perspective on good faith purchases of stolen property, see Schwartz and Scott (2012) *passim.* In some countries (e.g., Switzerland) the good-faith purchaser must be compensated, which does not seem to have been the case in Roman Egypt.

295 Compare with *P.Amh.* 2.40, for which see below. A petition from Arius after the reorganization of the land would no doubt present a very different view of the dispute, to wit, that his land, having been rightfully distributed between himself and the temple with the consent of the priests, and confirmed by the authorities, had been unfairly overturned at the last moment.

296 Though there is not much evidence for wholesale land swaps in the Ptolemaic or Roman period temples, comparative evidence, such as the large estate controlled by the medieval monastery at Cluny, does contain many examples of land swaps designed to create a more regular or more easily managed distribution of property. For the effect of geographic distribution, see Ch. 4, re: New Economic Geography. For Cluny, see Rosenwein (1989).
case of the land in question here, the temple may have acquired the land in some fashion only to
discover that the title to that land was less secure than they had expected. We might reconstruct
something like the following scenario: After a period of time, someone—and the nature of
village life means that any number of minor feuds, perhaps unrelated to the temple *per se*, but
rather to a particular priest or priests—claimed, as Nestnephis did, to the authorities that the land
in question had illegally been removed from public control. If the authorities found against the
temple, whatever the size of the land, the fine may have been 200 artabas of barley, which the
state would have seen fit to seize if the priests refused
to pay.297 In this scenario, the reference to
“conversion” εἰς βασιλικὴν γῆν by the prefect would have probably been the reclassification by
the state of the formerly “privatized” land back onto the public rolls. A scenario in which
improperly “privatized” land was removed from temple control and returned to the state would
perhaps explain the turn to arguments from history, rather than legal precedent. If an improper
privatization took place, according to the report of the government inspector, at a certain point,
the priests may have replied with recourse to evidence that supported their claim to have been in
possession of the land prior to that date.

We can consider a second possibility. The temple was required to pay taxes on temple
land, taxes that the state had an obvious interest in collecting. We know in addition that the
temple of Soknebtunis was occasionally unable to pay the taxes on its land, and had to resort to
offering long-term leases to tenants on the condition that they, the tenants, pay the back taxes due
to the government.298 We can expect that the government would not suffer a series of excuses
and non-payments forever. If the temple was unable to find a tenant willing to pay off the back
taxes, there is no compelling reason why the state would not seize that land. In the Roman

297 Thus the appearance of ἄφαιρεθηνα (or sim.) in lines 14-15.
298 See, e.g., *P.Cairo.dem. 2.30631* (86/85 BC)
period, confiscated land was no longer sold off to private individuals, as was done in the Ptolemaic period, but was kept as royal land.\textsuperscript{299} If some portion of the temple land of Soknebtunis was seized for non-payment of taxes, it would be converted into royal land (l. 7 εἰς βασιλικὴν γῆν). The priests, we can expect, would protest this. While this scenario does not solve all of the problems with the text, much of it does fit together. The back taxes owed might have been the 200 artabas of barley supposedly (according to the priests) levied “in addition,” and a continued failure to pay them would have led either to the confiscation of the land or to the seizure of the temple’s crops to remove the extra amount owed (ll. 14-15 ἀφαιρεθῆναι). This scenario can also explain the occasional mentions of the \textit{syntaxis}, provided that the appearances of this word in \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.302 mean specifically the \textit{syntaxis} of the priests.\textsuperscript{300} If these references do point to the \textit{syntaxis} of the priests, this may have been another tool employed by the government to force repayment of back taxes—if the priests do pay, or find someone to pay, the state could withhold the \textit{syntaxis} payments to that temple in an amount equal to the value (of goods, in this case) owed by the temple. If some part of the temple’s land was seized or somehow encumbered by the state to compel repayment, this might explain the appearance in the heretofore mysterious “royal sacred land” or “public sacred land” (βασιλικὴ ἱερευτικὴ γῆ or δημοσία ἱερευτική) that appears in a handful of 2\textsuperscript{nd} century papyri from Tebtunis. One document, \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.311, dated to 134 AD, is particularly interesting in this context. As Grenfell and Hunt note, the land appears equivalent to royal land, with taxes (the δημόσια, e.g.) paid as were paid on royal land. The association with the temple (it is, after all, called ἱερευτικῆ) is less clear—the land does not seem to carry the rights associated with temple land. As the land had been given to the god, it would have been difficult—especially for an image-conscious Roman administrator—

\textsuperscript{299} See Ch. 5 and Swarney (1970) 72.

\textsuperscript{300} For this, see above or Ch. 7.
to sever completely that ownership, even if the temple’s rights had, in this particular case, been more or less removed. The state, then, could administer the property and receive rents equivalent to royal land, but the association with Soknebtunis would remain. It is worth pointing out that the references to “royal temple land” in the case of Tebtunis do also derive from the “priests of Soknebtunis,” that is, the papyri found within the temple complex and associated by Grenfell and Hunt with the operations of the temple.\textsuperscript{301} We might expect, of all the people in the village, the priests would keep most prominently the memory that the land belonged to the god. Of the two clearest examples of the use of the term “royal temple land,” one is written by a priest of Soknebtunis, and the author of the other is unknown.\textsuperscript{302}

If a certain amount of temple land was seized—or partly seized—by the state for non-payment of taxes, and subsequently treated as royal land, then the higher bidder policy would come into effect, perhaps explaining the clear similarities we see between \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.302 and, say, \textit{P.Oxy} 24.2410. As the case appears to have been raging already for some time before 71/72 AD and the composition of \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.302, it may be that the land had been taken, but no other steps had, up to that point, been taken. In that year, a third party may have lodged a bid to work the land, and that bid set in motion the current document. This second scenario, in which a certain amount of temple land was endangered for non-payment of taxes and a bid was subsequently made to work that land (l. 9, \textit{διὰ ἀναφορίου}),\textsuperscript{303} would consequently not represent something occurring across Egypt, unless we are to expect that the temples were suddenly and universally unable to pay their taxes.

The two scenarios presented here are far from certain, each for different reasons.

\textsuperscript{301} See Ch. 3 or \textit{P.Tebt.} 2, p. 54.
\textsuperscript{302} \textit{P.Tebt.} 3.111, l. 6-8.
\textsuperscript{303} The \textit{anaphorion} here keeping its usual meaning in the Arsinoite nome as a bid on state property (and not, as per Grenfell and Hunt, a scribal report).
Nevertheless, they accord with the evidence of *P.Tebt. 2.302*, as preserved on the papyrus and with the more solidly grounded supplements, at least as well (or better) than does the “confiscation narrative” and certainly fit better with our understanding of the greater context of Roman policy towards religion in the Egypt (and in the eastern Mediterranean more broadly) and towards property rights.

**Conclusions**

A close examination of the text of *P.Tebt. 2.302*, the supplements made to the text by Grenfell and Hunt, and the century of scholarship built up around that text, those supplements, and their interpretation by the original editors, shows that we in all likelihood know less than we previously thought. Many of the supplements made, especially those that carry the key interpretative passages, are speculative and others, especially the references to the confiscation of 200 artabas of barley, run directly counter to the “confiscation narrative.” Indeed, the evidence points, albeit hesitantly, towards *P.Tebt. 2.302* representing part of a local property dispute and not a (belated) reaction to an Egypt-wide confiscation of temple land by the Roman state. If we interpret the petition on *P.Tebt. 2.302* not as a “primary source” to be mined and trusted as an eyewitness to history, but as a carefully, artfully crafted legal document designed from beginning to end to convince the recipient of a particular point, one that may have been counter to the law or facts as understood by the Roman government, we see the value of *P.Tebt. 2.302* as a key for unlocking broad Roman policy initiatives diminish greatly. Without the burden of supporting such a sweeping model on thin foundations, the petition can instead speak to local conditions in Tebtunis, a point to which we will return in coming chapters. If the “confiscation narrative” is removed as an explanatory device for understanding the state of Egyptian temples under Rome, then a fresh examination of the evidence for this period is merited and, indeed, necessary. In the
coming chapters, we will track the development of temple land and “businesses,” that is, the non-agricultural sources of income, from the Pharaonic period to the Ptolemaic, and the state of (and changes to) temple land, temple “businesses,” and temple administration in the first two centuries of Roman power in Egypt.
Chapter 4: The Temples under the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies

Introduction

We have seen in the previous chapter that the existing model for explaining the state of temples in Roman Egypt, what I have termed the “confiscation narrative,” is unsatisfactory. One failing of the model was that, if shorn of its foundation (P.Tebt. 2.302 especially), it does not accord with what we know of temples in the Roman period. In order to build up a new model, then, we must take into consideration the development of the Egyptian temples up to that point, through the pharaonic, Persian, and Ptolemaic periods. Such an approach will also allow us to see developments in a longer perspective. This chapter, then, first addresses the development of temples as economic entities in pharaonic Egypt, focusing especially on the New Kingdom. By considering the economic support for temples in the New Kingdom, we can identify a series of administrative practices (and economic realities) underlying the actions of those administering the temples. These can be followed into the Third Intermediate and Late Periods, especially under the Persians. The second half of the chapter offers an examination of economic activity by the temples under the Ptolemies through the end of the 2nd century BC. While the range of evidence for the temples in the Ptolemaic period is much more substantial than can be addressed here, it is useful to discuss a number of aspects of this period, especially the expansion into the Fayum, the evidence of the Menches papers, and the changing official policy towards temples and their economic realities. Finally, we come to the sometimes complicated administrative structure of the temples and their relation to the state administration.

304 For which see especially Otto (1905-1908), which, though outdated now, remains a valuable and as-yet unmatched resource.
This chapter serves as a sort of *prolegomenon* to the following three chapters. Here, we establish the development of the Egyptian temples and their state at the end of the 2nd century BC. In the following chapters, we will study temple land, sources of income other than agricultural land, and the administration of temples and religion in Roman Egypt. In doing so, we will see much that has been portrayed as Roman-era innovation (or depredation) but which is rooted in the Ptolemaic, Persian, or even the Pharaonic periods. We will also from time to time refer to the methodological discussion featured in this chapter. Having pulled together these topics over the course of this chapter, we will have the freedom to discuss each more closely as they relate to the Roman period over the coming chapters. First, though, we should start with the development of the temples under the pharaohs.

*Egyptian Temples under the Pharaohs*

Over the centuries, Egyptian temples can appear more or less the same. They encouraged the development of an “Egyptian mirage,” a picture of constancy across hundreds of generations without any real changes.\(^{305}\) Documents such as the Famine Stele, inscribed in the Ptolemaic period, record grants of temple estates and perquisites dating back to the Old Kingdom. That these documents are Ptolemaic-period forgeries—a point we will return to—should not obscure their ability to illustrate the fundamental retrospective role of religious discourse in Egypt. By the Middle Kingdom, Snefru, famed as much in antiquity for the foundation of the Old Kingdom as for his many and innovative pyramids, had been firmly shifted into “primeval time.”\(^{306}\) The Middle Kingdom, in turn, was seen by later dynasties as itself *in illo tempore.*\(^{307}\) The inescapable retrospect of Egyptian culture was seen in other ways as well, but the result of all this was the

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\(^{305}\) For this mirage in the Persian period, see Moyer (2002).

\(^{306}\) Wildung (2003), 75.

\(^{307}\) Ibid., pp. 62-65.
creation of a deceptive sameness from Narmer to Nectanebo. This sameness—often portrayed by modern scholars as a deliberate tendency, “immobilism”\textsuperscript{308}—can obscure, to our detriment, the development of these temples over the centuries. A focus on immobilism can, in addition, blind us to problems, such as the long-term instability of temple endowments, which might otherwise offer important clues to the thinking and circumstances underlying action by temple authorities. Before we can turn to the temples as they existed in the Ptolemaic or Roman period, then, we must briefly examine their development under the earlier pharaohs, from Narmer to Nectanebo.

**Egyptian Temples in the Old and Middle Kingdoms**

Ancient Egypt is commonly interpreted along an axis of religion and government. On one side are the viziers and governors and on the other, the priests and prophets. Though the pharaoh sat at the head of both religion and government, modern scholarship tends to study one or the other.\textsuperscript{309} Though this is as often a case of deliberately limited projects—a study of the entire pharaonic administrative apparatus would no doubt be the work of a lifetime (or more)—it creates a fragmented picture not in accord with the realities of the time. For the pharaoh, the maintenance of *ma'at* (the balance of all things, human and especially divine) was a leadership priority more important than a large army or a good harvest.\textsuperscript{310} Indeed, all good things, whether martial prowess or a bountiful harvest, flowed from the successful integration of ritual into daily life. Many of those holding high “political” offices also held titles in the religious hierarchy.\textsuperscript{311} Though a gap between administrative and religious life did open in much later periods, the initial

\textsuperscript{308} See, e.g., Eliade (1978) 86.

\textsuperscript{309} Cf., e.g., Strudwick (1985) or Spencer (1984), where numerous parts of the temple complex are deliberately not analyzed due to their similarity with secular spaces, criterion explained at Spender (1984) 63: about this see also Shubert (1988). The clearest example of this pattern concerning the Old Kingdom is probably Goedicke (1979), 113-131.

\textsuperscript{310} As with most important concepts, *ma'at* can be quite complicated, and was inextricably tied up with both a strong army and a good harvest, both of which would be absent if *ma'at* were imperiled.

\textsuperscript{311} Cf. Strudwick (1985), 185, 206-207, 283, and especially 315-316.
distinction in religious life lay rather between royal and local practice. Throughout most of the Old Kingdom period, most temples were simple mud-brick affairs designed on an open plan without decoration.\textsuperscript{312} By the end of the Old Kingdom, the rhetoric of national religion won out, causing the disappearance of the open, regional temple form and the integration of “disparate centers into a more unified religious framework.”\textsuperscript{313}

What records survive from the Old Kingdom period are quite clear on the role of temple construction in the formation of royal identity. The foundation of a temple would involve the expense of building a temple, furnishings, decoration, and so on, but it would also require the gift of an economic package—farmlands, orchards, businesses, or rights to economic exploitation of raw materials, etc.—sufficient to support the staff assigned to the temple in perpetuity.\textsuperscript{314} An endowment from the sixth year of Userkaf, for instance, records a gift of a pedestal for a temple and 54 arouras of arable land for “the gods of the house of Djebaut” ($\textit{ntywr pr Dbywt}$).\textsuperscript{315} At this time, the temples were less intricately intertwined into economic life along the Nile than they would come to be in later periods. The Old Kingdom temples were smaller, both in size and in responsibility.\textsuperscript{316} The scattering of royal gifts across the kingdom sufficed most likely to fund the permanent staff of the temples, “a small priestly contingent.”\textsuperscript{317} During the later phases of the Old Kingdom, Goedicke argues, the pharaohs gave away increasingly large shares of their holdings as temple endowments, creating a runaway religious power entirely out of the control of the “secular” state.\textsuperscript{318} Though we might, following Papazian, take issue with a sharp division

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Wilkinson (1999), 303-305.
\item Wilkinson (1990), 264 and 303-305. Papazian (2010) 22-23, notes that the state “appears to have assigned a cult place in a given town or several towns, to a significant number of deities connected with early kingship…in an attempt at formalizing the national cults” fairly early in the New Kingdom.
\item Or rather, in what they expected to be perpetuity, a period that, as we shall see, lasted into the centuries.
\item Palermo Stone v.II.2; Wilkinson 2000, 153-158.
\item Papazian (2010) 42.
\item Papazian (2010) 48.
\item Goedicke (1979) 128-131.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
between “state” and “religion,” we should also see the resemblance in Goedicke’s account with much later troubles between the palace and the temples.319 While we do see a handful of famous endowments datable to the end of the Old Kingdom, and we think we can see economic disaster surrounding the Sixth through Eighth Dynasties, we can also see (as in the New Kingdom) the frequent reallocation of resources from temple to temple, showing that these endowments rarely were perpetual in practice.320

The donations of Neferirkare, which Goedicke sees as the moment when temple endowments reached a tipping point on their way to excess, are represented in a number of different ways, especially on the Palermo Stone and in the famous papyrus archive found at Abusir (near Saqqara) in the funerary complex of Neferirkare.321 Though it was initially believed that the spectacular finds at the mortuary temple were sui generis, clues within the texts themselves enabled archaeologists to discover a second mortuary complex, of Neferirkare’s son, Raneferef.322 The documents in both cases are largely concerned with the temples, their possessions, and their operations. This has led many, including Goedicke, to posit a dramatically increasing importance of temple endowments from Neferirkare onwards. As the archives were created by the mortuary temples of the pharaohs and their staff, and, indeed, were probably reduced to their semi-ruined condition as much by the priests themselves as by the ravages of time, their interpretation requires a certain degree of caution.323 The nature of our evidence is indeed a major issue. To put it plainly, documents are not found entirely by chance. The documents found in the mortuary complexes of Neferirkare and Raneferef were selected by the

320 On economic disaster, see, for instance, Stanley et al. (2003).
321 The second oldest published papyrus archives, after the Gebelein Papyri.
322 For the tale, see Posener-Krieger, Verner, and Vymazalová, 20-23.
323 For internal documents, see for instance ibid., 211-214. On the priests role in their destruction, see Verner’s suggestion in ibid., 23.
priests, no doubt to support their claims to funding from the pharaoh or his successors, and the
dramatic increase of endowments under Neferirkare corresponds to a dramatic increase in
endowments attested. Similarly, the notable piety of Neferirkare no doubt reflects our possession
of a substantial store of documents written by priests who owed their living to the endowments
of Neferirkare. If we had a mortuary temple archive from, say, the reign of Userkaf, we might
see him as a pious-hearted king offering up countless lands to the gods.

With our understanding of the period hampered by a relative lack of evidence, it seems
likely that the Old Kingdom endowments, especially in the Fifth Dynasty, far from creating a
runaway state, reflect a growing number of funerary establishments springing up and fading
away, while still operating in a very real sense, under the umbrella of the pharaoh and within an
intricate series of economic, religious, and political hierarchies.\textsuperscript{324} The number may have
increased, in real numbers, over time, but this probably reflected the growth of Egypt and the
strength of the central government, rather than a disproportionate growth in temples and their
endowments in particular.

Egyptian Temples in the New Kingdom

By the New Kingdom period in Egypt, the economic conditions of the temples are quite a
bit clearer. The temples remained an integral part of the Egyptian state, such that temples could
function as “repositories for the revenues from the empire,” and act as “just a branch of
government administration.”\textsuperscript{325} Though a large number of sources exist for the Old and Middle
Kingdoms, a much greater number of papyri, inscriptions, and temples survive from the New
Kingdom. The most useful of these are the Wilbour Papyrus and the Great Harris Papyrus. The

\textsuperscript{324} See Posener-Kriéger (1979), 137, who suggests that the establishments of Neferirkare are exemplary of a
generally similar style throughout the later Old Kingdom.

\textsuperscript{325} For the first, D.B. Redford, quoted in Janssen (1979), 509, and the second, Janssen (1979), 509.
latter is a lengthy register of property (mostly in the Thebaid) issued on the accession of Ramesses IV to the throne. It should not be taken as an accurate property listing for those regions discussed, but instead as a theocentric record of the interconnected system of land-holding of temples of the area at the time the document was collated. The former is also a land list, albeit less theocentric, concerning land from the Bahr Yusuf to the area of modern el-Minya, and dating to the fourth year of Ramesses V. Taken together, the Great Harris Papyrus and the Wilbour Papyrus give us a detailed picture of temple landholding in the period around 1150 BC in Middle and Upper Egypt. It is indeed worth considering in detail the information conveyed in these two fundamental texts. From the Great Harris Papyrus we are able to see the huge amounts of land changing hands in Ramesses III’s endowments. Haring calculates that the total amount of land reassigned—1,071,780 aroura, or nearly 3,000 square kilometers—equaled about 15% of the total agricultural land available in Egypt at the time. This land obviously cannot have been created out of thin air, but was taken from other endowments across Egypt.

For the families working the majority of the fields that were being reassigned by various pharaohs to successive temples, the largest changes from these reassignments would have been the destination of the rent payments. Lands that were farmed by tenants who paid a rent to the temple are known as “apportioning” fields in the papyri. The rent paid out to the owners of the

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326 Haring 157-161 provides a concise introduction, especially concerning the role of this document, which measured a quite out of the ordinary 42 meters in length.
327 Roughly equidistant between Hermopolis and Oxyrhynchus.
328 Haring (1997) 179. Butzer (1976) 81-98, esp. table 4 offers a total of 22,400 square kilometers of cultivable land in Egypt—Nile valley, Fayum, and Delta—in 1250 BC, less than century before the reign of Ramesses III. This makes the reassigned land a little more than 13% of the total cultivable land in Egypt. Taking into account temporarily unsuitable land, Haring’s estimate of 15% is probably accurate. If we assume that the majority of land was reassigned closer to the major sacred sites associated with Ramesses III, especially the temple at Medinet Habu, then the percentage of land reassigned in the Nile valley (especially in Upper Egypt) must have been higher.
330 Contra Baer, who sees this as private land, owned at an intermediate level between the temples and land-tenants. The greater question of why crops were still owed to the temples remains under his model. In any case, reassignments would have happened infrequently, so that an average farmer would have experienced such a change once, at most, in his lifetime. See Katary (2013) 726.
land was perhaps less than 1.5 sacks/aroura. While the temples derived some income from the apportioning fields—which usually made up the largest part of their holdings—their lack of hands-on involvement with these lands made them particularly prone to appropriation by later pharaohs. The Wilbour Papyrus records a “much lower frequency of apportioning estates” ascribed to the Ramesseum of Ramesses II than to the endowments of later pharaohs. The other type of property, the “non-apportioning” fields were directly controlled by the temple and operated by temple personnel (who were, in at least one case, greatly aided by over a thousand Syrian prisoners given to the temple). The Harris Papyrus shows that the temple endowments were intended to provide income nearly equal to the whole of a temple’s routine expenses, and that the sources of these funds could be quite diverse. Grain, of course, flowed in by the sackful, but the temples also cooperated with each other on more ambitious plans. The temples of Amun, Ra, and Ramesses III in the Thebaid sent out joint gold-mining expeditions into the Eastern Desert that brought in more than ten kilograms a year, by Haring’s estimations.

The Wilbour Papyrus adds to our understanding of land classification. It records a land

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331 Haring (1997), 178; Katary (1989), 11-18. The capacity of a sack (Egyptian khar) as unit of measure varied over time. In the New Kingdom, the volume shrank from 20 heqat to 16, that is, from 97.8 liters to 78.2 (for which see Dilke (1987) 24). With an artaba measuring 38.808 liters, a rent of one and a half sacks per aroura would be a little more than three artabas per aroura. For artaba capacity, see Foxhall and Forbes (1982).

332 Katary (1989), 253. Katary notes that the Ramesseum was not the only temple whose property was reassigned. It is possible, of course, that the larger size of its holdings allowed it to survive longer compared to its less well-endowed colleagues.

333 Haring (1997), 178. For slaves, see Haring (2013) 618.

334 One-time expenses, such as the creation of a statue, a new temple, or sim., seem to have been funded by one-time donations, either by “private” individuals (who could and often were high-ranking government officials) or by the pharaoh himself. The Harris Papyrus has two lists of income: List B presents the portion of each temple’s yearly income spent on temple expenses while List C records the much smaller amounts of rare and luxury goods donated by the pharaoh himself to the temples over the course of his life. See Haring (1997) 179-185.

335 Haring (1997), 180-181 and 250-252. Although the temples seem to have held equal shares and equal honorific rights in the expeditions, the temple of Amun served as the base of operations when the expeditions returned. For this see an unnumbered papyrus in the IFAO collection, recording ten expeditions to the Eastern Desert during the reign of a 20th Dynasty pharaoh, most recently discussed in Koenig (1979 and 1983). The expedition also returned a larger, if less valuable amount of galena, useful for the production of kohl, among other things. For the religious implications of operations in and across the desert, see Gilli, passim. For a technical examination of the gold-mining sites and infrastructure in the eastern desert, see Klemm and Klemm (2013).
survey undertaken in Middle Egypt during the reign of Ramesses V, at the height of the annual inundation. As it only captured those lands on the higher edges of the Nile basin, then, “the total surface of the fields recorded cannot have been more than a few per cent of the total cultivable area in the region covered by the survey.”

Even so, the organization of the entries by the anonymous surveyors reveals something of the administrative structure of the temple lands, at least as it was perceived by the state surveyors. As we might expect, the non-apportioning domains had a hierarchy of overseers. In some of the far-flung holdings, however, a land-agent might represent multiple institutions. As with the mining expeditions, the temples were willing to combine resources when it made financial or administrative sense. Institutions also cooperated, perhaps more fundamentally, in a particular type of non-apportioning field, the posh fields. These were fields, the produce from which more than one institution had a claim on.

In the tables of the Wilbour Papyrus, this relationship is represented by the current owner (party A) subtracting a share of the produce for another institution (party B). Whether the posh obligations reflect the rent of temple workers from the first party by the second for the cultivation of these lands (and thus, a temporary category), as Gardiner and Menu each argued, or if they represent a rent by the second party from the first, as Haring suggests, they are proof of the dense economic network linking temples and other royal institutions in this area. It is possible that posh land also eased the removal of land from a particular temple, land that was intended for a new endowment.

As our information represents but a single moment in the reign of Ramesses V,

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337 Ibid., 289-290.
339 While the removal of land from a temple would decrease that temple’s income, temporary posh payments might allow the temple to continue operating while it reduced expenses, staff, etc., perhaps in the case of staff through attrition. This might be similar to the process in many soccer leagues by which a team relegated to a lower division is given “parachute payments” for a few years to allow it to reduce staff without going bankrupt in the meantime. They (and, in this scenario, posh land) are intended as a temporary stopgap and not as a permanent income source.
we are unable to describe the duration of most posh-obligations, but the non-temple institutions are always in the role of Party A, that is, paying shares, and never being paid. For temples, reliant on the produce of their apportioning domains especially, the removal of these lands would no doubt have been devastating, and the payment of a small share by the new owner may have kept temple staff from starvation and ensured the continuation of rituals, at least temporarily.

The Wilbour papyrus lists the uses to which the land was put in addition to its owners. Particularly intriguing is the relationship between the crop and the identity of the owner. To a certain extent, Katary writes, “the deity or king of the temples or funerary foundations” could affect the use of the land.\textsuperscript{340} Temples associated with the temple of Amun at Karnak, for instance, represent over half of the fields grown in fodder for cattle, while those associated with the temple of Ptah at Memphis account for a bare 11%. The other usages of fields are likewise unevenly distributed across the temple groups. At the same time, however, 99% of all šmw pš entries—a subset of the posh class\textsuperscript{341}—are not associated with any of the three large temple groupings, but instead a large number of them are connected to one particular temple, which drew its entire support from fields of this category.\textsuperscript{342} Without further information, it is difficult, if not impossible, to answer the questions raised by this evidence, but it does provide a cautionary reminder of the power not only of regional variations but of the potential for variation even within Egyptian religious and administrative practice.

Unfortunately, however, our sources tend to concentrate on the areas in which we might expect the temples to be strongest—the funerary establishments to the west of Thebes, as well as

\textsuperscript{340} Ibid., 249.
\textsuperscript{341} These may have been ṕš lands that produced grain. While šmw can refer to the season of Harvest (the summer season preceding the flood, during which flood-plain crops were harvested), the term can also refer to grain revenues more generally, for which see Katary (2013) 747-748.
\textsuperscript{342} Ibid., 122-123, 125.
the massive complex at Karnak that required a level of support beyond that of the religious establishments of other regions. As we might expect from the piecemeal way in which temple endowments were established as far back as the Old Kingdom, there does not appear to be a clear distribution of temple lands diminishing in number or size as they move away from the center, that is, the temple itself. This irregular distribution would likely continue as new endowments would be drawn from the oldest surviving endowed lands, producing a sort of cycle of endowments and reassignments, rather than a sweeping ordering or reordering of endowments. By the New Kingdom, some areas may have been tied economically to a faraway temple, supporting the cult of a long-dead ruler or unfamiliar deity. The temples had the resources and, more importantly, the institutional continuity to oversee and, as much as possible, safeguard the lands entrusted to them, even if these lands were widely separated or marginal. The temples possessed vast resources—in addition to lands, they had transport ships, granaries, treasuries, workshops, skilled and experienced administrators, and extensive records. If Haring is correct to place the Wilbour survey at the very height of the inundation, the overwhelming presence of the temples as landholders may relate to their ability to absorb lower returns from land near the desert thanks to other holdings closer in, and the infrastructure (and religious motivation) to do so. The high percentage of temple land represented in the Wilbour survey might, in other words, not hold for the whole of the Nile basin but rather reflect a greater presence for the temples in the marginal lands left exposed (and thus uncovered by the rich alluvial silt) during the annual flood, a presence the temples could maintain thanks to an

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343 For daily life in the religious sphere, see McDowell (1999), esp. 92-97 and chapter 7.
344 Katary (1989), 94.
345 Janssen (1979), 508.
346 For some troubles the temples had with their ships, see Spalinger (1991) 34.
347 See, e.g., the speech of Ramesses II to Nebwenenef, recorded in the latter’s tomb near Thebes (KRI 3.283.8-9), and Haring (2013) 611-612.
348 Haring (2013) 628
administrative structure that reduced costs for the processing of raw materials.

As this example suggests, the temples operated in many fields of the Egyptian economy beyond their extensive landholdings. In the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, the temples controlled a number of industries, properties, and other economic interests that often dovetailed with their own particular geographic and agricultural circumstances.\(^{349}\) The surviving evidence for the New Kingdom suggests that this was also the case then. As we have already seen, the temples were active in mining expeditions into the desert. They also maintained large fleets, which could operate together when necessary. On a more mundane level, two papyri from the 18\(^{th}\) Dynasty record the presence of food vendors operating within the temple hierarchy.\(^{350}\) Whatever the decisions made at the uppermost levels, the fact remained that the temples were a critical, if generally non-partisan player in the economy of everyday life in Egypt. Nearly every possible occupation was at some point or another attached to the temples—“stewards, gardeners, farmers, brewers, bakers, fishermen, craftsmen, weavers, and scribes,” for instance, as well as a staff of full-time gold washers.\(^{351}\) Other sources record such professions as chief confectioner, draftsman, butcher, sandal-maker, beekeeper\(^{352}\), charioteer, coppersmith, and even commercial agent. While this selection does give a sense of the range of possible roles within the temple’s economic portfolio, it is also drawn from surviving evidence, which privileges those with at least modest means. Many of the names and professions of temple personnel from this period are found on funerary cones, stelae, and statues, which all require some investment to create. The majority of temple personnel are probably not represented through such sources, since the

\(^{349}\) See Ch. 6.
\(^{350}\) Pap.Cairo 58070 (Papyrus Boulaq 11) and 58081, though see Janssen (1979), 515 and n. 28 for commentary and caveats.
\(^{351}\) Spencer, 270-271. The gold-washers were an endowment of Sety I at his temple in Abydos, though they themselves were not based there.
\(^{352}\) Sebeknekheth, also attached to a temple of Ramesses III. See Haring, 454.
expense of even a modest inscribed funerary cone was beyond their means. Indeed, the number of personnel mentioned in the Harris Papyrus working in the Thebaid alone makes this clear: the document claims that 86,486 people worked for the temple, probably taking into account not only agricultural workers but industrial workers, artists, transportation crews, and so on.\(^\text{353}\)

It is likely that the temples could act as their own suppliers and consumers in the production chain: a farm could provide grain to the brewer or the baker who could in turn provide beer and bread to the food vendor. All of this activity no doubt gave the temple industries an advantage, whether they were directly controlled by the temples or, as in the Roman period, rented out to individuals who then paid rent. In either case, the availability of both a known supply source and purchaser of one’s finished goods would be a substantial advantage when competing with private industries.\(^\text{354}\) The temples could also profit from their close collaboration with the government. The Nauri Decree, issued by Seti I, concerns trade moving out of the Sudan and past the fortress of Nauri, near the 3\textsuperscript{rd} Cataract. Seti had endowed a new temple of Amun and Osisis in Abydos with property in the Sudan, which entailed not only the agricultural produce, but trade goods, probably acquired by temple traders in the south.\(^\text{355}\) These traders operated out of Egyptian colonial towns, and brought back “gold, [ivory, ebony?], leopard and other animal skins, giraffes’ tails, giraffes’ hides, etc.,” that is, “any goods of Kush which are brought as revenue to the Temple.”\(^\text{356}\) Seti I, realizing the risk to passing traders by extralegal collections, ordered the various parts of his government to leave the temple trade ships

\(^{353}\) Haring (1997), 174-179.

\(^{354}\) The information costs for, say, a baker just to identify a source of grain—whether with the farmer directly or purchased off the open market—would be substantial, and would place his business at risk during times of scarcity when a farmer might prefer to sell his crop for the highest possibly price.

\(^{355}\) Gifts to temples involving distant property were not uncommon. Thutmose III donated three villages in Canaan (as well as 1500 Syrian prisoners and cows taken from the Levant and Nubia) to the temple of Amun at Karnak. For this, see Haring (2013) 618-619.

sailing north from the Sudan inviolate. While “the tradition of decrees to protect individual institutions from the exactions of others goes back to the Old Kingdom,” there is no evidence that such protections were extended to private trade, in whatever form that took. Temple goods from Kush, therefore, would be de facto more lucrative, since they would escape the high cost of official and unofficial duties levied on trade as early as the 3rd Cataract (and presumably again and again as the trade fleet passed the Nile fortresses).

We can reconstruct a certain amount of the economic and political practice of the temples in the New Kingdom from the surviving evidence. That the temples, especially the biggest ones, controlled large, sometimes geographically distant economic activities is clear, and these activities seem to have been vertically integrated, or at least to have aimed at a simple vertical integration. It also seems apparent that the temples were very much a part of the government itself, benefitting the pharaoh in addition to their ritual roles by keeping large parts of the Egyptian countryside reliably in cultivation without the need for extensive (and expensive) oversight by the pharaoh’s men. This is perhaps most forcefully stated by Janssen, who called the temples “a branch of the government with its own function,” but always “at the disposal of Pharaoh.” Their often voluminous storehouses held the surplus of the pharaoh, as well as the products of fields, mines, and trading posts across the whole of Upper and Lower Egypt.

The “Redistributive Economy” and Its Critics

With the end of the New Kingdom, we can break into the chronological sequence of this

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358 See, for instance, Papyrus Amiens 5.4, recording the transport of temple grain on temple ships to temple granaries.
359 Janssen (1979), 509.
360 Or, perhaps, more securely. The temples themselves were enclosed with substantial walls which no doubt complicated temple-breaking in addition to the round-the-clock guards. For more, see Posener-Krieger (1976) 27-46 and Spencer (2010) 272.
chapter for some theoretical considerations, especially as so many relate to the economic
instability of temples, a point which becomes especially clear in this period. The largest problem
in analyzing the Pharaonic economy is the sharp divide in our evidence between ideology and
practice. An influential group of scholars, inspired by Karl Polanyi’s analysis of Mesopotamian
economies, focused on the art and royal proclamations of the time. In studying the texts from
ancient Mesopotamia, Polanyi—who more famously studied the emergence of the modern
economy from the early 19th century—sought evidence for the sort of features that characterize
that “modern economy.” A key feature of a modern economy, he argued, was the prevalence
of the market for setting prices and determining behavior. The existence of individual markets,
say, of a grain market connecting the provinces of the Roman Empire, would, if they were of
primary importance, lead to a “market economy,” which Polanyi saw as thoroughly modern.
The absence of a market, therefore, was for Polanyi evidence enough that Babylonian economy
was not “modern,” and could not therefore be analyzed with the tools of modern economic
inquiry. The reasons for this absence, in his mind, could be tied into a line of thinking first put
forward by Max Weber (and subsequently championed by Moses Finley): the Mesopotamians
were a different breed from “us.” It was “the unique characteristics of ancient culture
which…made all the difference.” It was an attempt by Polanyi to reformulate the Bücher-

361 See especially Polanyi (1957), 12-26.
362 His most famous work, The Great Transformation, published in 1944, correlated the market economy and the
rise of the modern state.
363 By market, he (and economists) did not mean individual marketplaces, which abounded, but an abstract market,
defined by the nature of the goods or services being sold rather than by where they are sold, acted upon by the
forces of supply and demand on a regional (or greater) level, and conducted at least partly through anonymous
exchange, that is, ones in which there are “stated or posted prices that are available to any customers that come by.”
For this, see Temin (2012) 10-14.
364 For the market economy, see Temin (2012) 11.
365 Polanyi (1957), 16. “Babylonia, as a matter of fact, possessed neither market places nor a functioning market
system of any description.” For a discussion of the market places in Babylonia, see Jursa (2010) 780-783.
366 Ibid., 8.
Meyer controversy and thus to step outside of the modernist-primitivist debate and to offer different terms by which to debate.\textsuperscript{367} Polanyi’s suggestion was the redistributive economy.

The redistributive economy sees the central state as all-powerful and all-encompassing. Goods and services are taken in by the central government, often in the form of taxes in kind, and redistributed back out to secure subsistence for all the people under the umbrella of the state, allowing for specialization of labor outside of agriculture.\textsuperscript{368} This theory requires an extremely powerful central bureaucracy, which tallied with Polanyi’s reading of ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean states.\textsuperscript{369} The lack of markets (and “the market”) reflects a system in which the profit-seeking motive is absent. Instead of trading to make a profit, trading is done under regulated terms—“equivalencies”—in which the ratio of a given commodity is arranged. As long as the two parties have objects the other is interested in, there is nothing barring a successful exchange.\textsuperscript{370} The income of the middlemen derives not from the difference between purchase and sale price but from a share of the goods transported and successfully vended.\textsuperscript{371}

Just as the students of Moses Finley did in their study of Greek and Roman economies, however, the proponents of a redistributive palace economy for New Kingdom Egypt fall into a simple trap.\textsuperscript{372} The evidence selected (and surviving) tends to represent not actual economic practice on any realistic or recurring level, but rather religious propaganda reflecting, at best, a

\textsuperscript{367} For the Bücher-Meyer controversy, see Reibig (2001).
\textsuperscript{368} “All large-scale economies in kind were run with the help of the principle of redistribution.” Polanyi (1964), 51.
\textsuperscript{369} Polanyi was not alone in enthusiasm for powerful government in the 1950s. See also Wittfogel’s highly influential \textit{Oriental Despotism}, which saw organized bureaucracies controlling corvéé labor on waterworks as a major cause in the development of the East as fundamentally different from the West. For a recent application of new evidence and modern theory to the economy (and related topics) of Babylonia in the first millennium BC, see Jursa (2010). See also Stolper (1985) for Babylonia in the Persian period.
\textsuperscript{370} On equivalencies and Polanyi, see Halperin, 121-142.
\textsuperscript{371} Warden, 81.
\textsuperscript{372} See, for instance, Finley’s \textit{Ancient Economy}, as well as the lengthy battle between Finley and Andrea Carandini over archaeological evidence, which Finley disregarded, preferring literary evidence.
snapshot of a singular event.\textsuperscript{373} As Bleiberg notes, many of the documents we have already discussed are not unbiased reflections of the Egyptian economy. They have been curated prior to their appearance in whatever form we see them now—carved into a wall, written on a very large papyrus, and so on—and chosen for preservation for particular reasons, none of which were usefulness to future economic historians.\textsuperscript{374} Indeed, Bleiberg goes further, suggesting that “the texts considered through the lens of Polanyi’s theories lead to a good description of Egyptian ideology rather than analysis of economic reality.”\textsuperscript{375} While Polanyi has been accused of “distorting historical evidence” when it did not suit his interpretation, and his ideas have been “thoroughly refuted…as dogmatic misconceptions,” the allure of the redistributive system remains.\textsuperscript{376} If we are to make anything of the temples, it will be necessary to separate the economic reality of day-to-day operations (the “nitty gritty”) from the upper-level decision making that could affect temple holdings and the financial security of the temple quite seriously, if rarely.\textsuperscript{377}

Temple Endowments in Decline

A survey of temple documents and literature from among the earliest to the latest reveals a significant point: The temples were almost always individually on the decline. This decline might not have been visible from day to day or year to year, but the temples, as built and endowed, were not built for the ages but rather for a long term on the human scale.\textsuperscript{378} This is partly a function of the evidence available—archaeological excavations tend to find evidence for

\textsuperscript{373} There are multiple levels of propaganda, in which the actions and statements by the pharaoh were rephrased and recontextualized by the priests and then only some were chosen for preservation by those priests.
\textsuperscript{374} Bleiberg (2007), 177-178.
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid., 178.
\textsuperscript{376} Michael Smith (2004) 76.
\textsuperscript{377} Michael Smith (2004), 75-76.
\textsuperscript{378} That is, a few hundred years perhaps, in some cases, but only with vary rare exceptions (and these required frequent additional gifts) never for centuries or millennia.
the end-state of a place. While a temple-archive was active, for example, the inflow and outflow of documents and funds is nearly impossible to track in the absence of a ledger, except from occasional documents that were discarded. What we have, however, from the mortuary temple of Neferirkare, to choose an early example, is an ancient building abandoned at the end of a long process of decline. The priests working at the temple dutifully recorded the increasingly battered state of the furniture and the growing interval between deliveries of supplies, but the earlier, halcyon days after the death of Nefirirkare are less well represented. 379 Although the sense of circling gloom in these records is perhaps more vivid than in most other archives, the combination of archaeology and papyrology offer other examples of failing temples. The mortuary complex of Raneferef was in steep decline by the Sixth Dynasty and, by the time of Pepi I, was mostly buried under sand and half-abandoned—this only 100 to 150 years after the death of Raneferef. 380 Though these examples are close geographically and chronologically, the trend continued long after the demise of the Old Kingdom. By the fourth year of the reign of Ramesses V—that is, the date of the Wilbour Papyrus—the stringing-out of religious endowments along the Nile through Middle Egypt had been well and truly underway for centuries. From the holdings of the temples at the time of the Wilbour Papyrus, one can see the ravages of time on once-great temple estates. A temple of the Eighteenth Dynasty, now around two centuries old, was reduced to almost nothing—receiving “almost negligible” income solely from apportioning fields, without any surviving central administration. 381 If this temple was close to insolvency, the Ramesseum of Ramesses II, somewhat more recent and dedicated to the memory of the greatest ruler the New Kingdom produced, was already seriously weakened.

379 Posener-Kriéger and de Cenival (1968), xvi.
380 Posener-Kriéger, Verner, and Vymazalová, 331.
381 Haring (1997), 310. “No central administration is recorded for this temple because it had no domains of the non-apportioning type.”
Almost all of its surviving holdings were apportioning, with “only one tiny non-apportioning domain.”\textsuperscript{382} With one exception, the age of a temple directly corresponds with its poverty.\textsuperscript{383}

The slow decline of these temples can be traced to a number of different causes. While the problem was rarely as bad as the priests insisted—much of their lamenting the glory-filled days of old was fueled by rhetoric and ungrounded nostalgia—the temples were clearly at risk and could easily fail, a fact attested to by the large number of temples found in excavations that were abandoned prior to the Roman period.\textsuperscript{384} Much of it must have been rhetoric, but an archive of legal documents from the late New Kingdom attests to the underlying reality of at least some claims—investigations and trials resulting from the theft of temple goods, grain, and land.\textsuperscript{385} Even priests could be complicit in looting their own temple for short-term gain, such as a bit of grain or an ox to bribe a supervisor.\textsuperscript{386} Again, we can propose some explanations for the diminution of temple property. First, temple property was, as we have seen, not a perpetual endowment in anything but rhetoric. It could be arranged and re-arranged by successive pharaohs to ensure the (temporary) prosperity of their own endowments.\textsuperscript{387} As the links between any particular deceased pharaoh and the sitting ruler weakened over time, land that was not the property of current supporters or aides of the pharaoh or part of recent endowments was particularly at risk for appropriation. There were also periodic upheavals in the order of things. Rather than making smaller shifts in endowments from aging temples to new constructions, a

\textsuperscript{382} Ibid., 310.
\textsuperscript{383} Ibid., 310-311. The temple of Ramesses III at Medinet Habu defies this trend, though Haring’s suggestion that it may have begun at a very high level of endowment, such that the removal of endowed land left its holdings similar to those of other temples and thus apparently untouched, is attractive.
\textsuperscript{384} To offer a few examples, the mortuary temples near the Giza pyramids were completely buried by the New Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom temple at Qasr es-Sagha (see Ch. 2) was abandoned, probably by the end of the Middle Kingdom, and a temple at Bubastis was abandoned probably in the late Ptolemaic or very early Roman, for which see Mamedow (2013) 403-405.
\textsuperscript{385} Kemp (2006) 313.
\textsuperscript{386} P.\textit{BM.} 10053; Kemp (2006) 314.
\textsuperscript{387} Katary, 66-67.
handful of pharaohs undertook sweeping revisions of the temple endowments across Egypt. The most famous of these are no doubt those of Akhenaten and Tutankhamun. Akhenaten’s wholesale re-ordering of the religious landscape was short-lived, though the details are scanty. The most controversial figure in the New Kingdom, Akhenaten was attacked fiercely and immediately, as can be seen in the Restoration Stele of Tutankhamun. A fairly obvious piece of propaganda, the stele claims that the temples of the gods were lying abandoned and the gods were forsaking Egypt, with the entire country on the brink of disaster.\footnote{Bennett, 9.} While it does not describe in concrete terms the steps Tutankhamun (or his advisors) undertook to restructure the temple endowments in the wake of Akhenaten, we do also have the testimony of his chief treasurer, Maya, who was ordered to travel the length of the country in preparation for a revision of temple finances.\footnote{Spalinger, 27, though any taxation of “the entire land” as it concerns the temples should be read carefully in light of Janssen (1979), 509-510.} In any case, both pharaohs had the opportunity to substantially remake the landscape of religion, as did a number of other powerful, if less controversial, pharaohs.\footnote{Spalinger, 38-39.} Despite his claims, we might assume Tutankhamun’s endowments and re-endowments were changes as much as restorations.

On less spectacular terms, however, we can propose some causes for temple decline. First, we can look to the Nile River. At least prior to the construction of the Aswan High Dam, the Nile was at risk to shift its path during the yearly inundation.\footnote{Or more slowly, as the Nile has been moving away from Memphis since antiquity, despite a developed waterfront that served to canalize the channel. For a map showing this shift, see Thompson (2012), fig. 3 (pp. 12-13). The sudden change of river-course, known as avulsion, would have created serious complications for property rights in the aftermath. This is a topic much discussed in law, both ancient and modern.} In addition, particularly high or low floods could dry or waterlog fields, broken dikes could leave fields underwater or under-watered, and a field on the banks of the Nile, the Birket Qarun, or any number of canals could be
eroded away. In these cases, whether a field washed away with the floodwater or slowly dried out, within a few years it could be rendered completely unproductive and could thus fall quickly and permanently out of use, especially as irrigation canals filled up and dikes decayed. Second, as discussed above, bureaucratic action from above, whether from the pharaoh or some other official, could strip land from a temple’s endowment. Third, temple administrators could, in theory, alienate territory from the endowments under their care legally, that is, with the consent and awareness of the temple hierarchy. Examples of this type would include sales of temple land, and land swaps, in which temples (or other land-holding bodies) could switch far-flung fields to consolidate (or more rationally diversify) their holdings. Fourth, the records that secured a claim on property in ancient Egypt were by their nature fragile. The destruction of document archives, by accident or on purpose, could cause significant upheaval, as in the Ptolemaic period. Finally, a temple administrator or a tenant could take extralegal action, that is, against the policies or without the consent of the temple hierarchy. In this case, priests might convert temple lands to personal holdings, for instance, costing the temple income, or a powerful government official who also served as a high priest might use his powerful position to force a change. There is also the possibility that land that was leased out to private individuals could slowly be privatized, as happened in republican Rome with the *ager publicus*. If the actor was sufficiently powerful or the rest of the temple administration was overwhelmed or turned a blind

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392 *P.Amh*. 2.40 records a 2nd century example from Soknopaiou Nesos, in which a Greek, Arius, entrusted to divide up a gift between himself and the temple gave himself the best land and the temple the worst, at least until a concerted program of bribery from a temple-associated grandee caused a redistribution.

393 Evidence for this type of behavior in the New Kingdom is lacking, but, given the relatively small amount of information surviving and the unknown legal form such trades or transfers might take, it is impossible to gauge the significance of this absence.

394 In the early Third Intermediate Period, the strength of the temples in Upper Egypt may have ensured a more smooth continuity, but Lower Egypt, which saw more upheaval—the siege of Memphis during the Persian period being only one example—would have been at higher risk for destruction or loss of archives.

395 See, for instance, *P.Amh*. 2.35, also from 2nd century BC Soknopaiou Nesos, in which a *lesonis* “goes rogue” and attempts to embezzle hundreds of artabas of wheat from the temple lands.
eye, the newly-converted territory could be severed from the temple endowment without leaving a paper trail for archaeologists or papyrologists to find. Such a scenario is based more on later records than on a cynical outlook on officialdom: there is some evidence from later periods that temple administrators strengthened their personal property at the cost of the temple.  

The inevitable decline of endowments over time freed up not only productive land (and industries) but also the physical locations of ritual. Whatever endowment and staff had been set up to care for the large tomb, named Thunabounoun, of Nebwenenef, a high priest of Amun in Thebes under Ramesses II, they had long ceased by the 2nd century BC, when the Theban choachytes employed the spacious tomb as a depository for the corpses under their care. Though the choice of Thunabounoun in particular probably had religious significance for the choachytes and those hiring the choachytes, the use of a large New Kingdom tomb was also an economic one—occupying a chamber is much easier than carving one out—and offers a stark reminder of the failings of the much smaller temples. Nebwenenef’s mortuary temple, a great honor about which he bragged on his tomb inscriptions, was long gone. The offerings at his tomb had long since ended. By the 2nd century BC, his stately tomb was a convenient, if meaning-filled, place to store the bodies of the Theban dead.

From year to year or decade to decade, fields and buildings could pass from the control of a temple. The removal of land from the portfolio of a particular temple would have been a serious threat, but a host of other perils faced the temple endowments as well. Marginal land could be lost to the desert, productive land could be lost to the river, and one’s claim to a particular property was generally only as good as the documents one had at hand (or could forge)

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396 See, e.g., the lesonis of Soknopaios in Soknopaiou Nesos, discussed in Ch. 4.
397 Webnenef was a powerful figure: aside from being the high priest of Amun he held a number of other titles, and was allowed to create his own mortuary temple near Thebes. For the tomb, see Pestman (1993), 451-454 and Bell (1973).
and the rhetoric one could muster in support.\textsuperscript{398} In addition, there were the thousands of minor diminutions done by men, sometimes even the temple staff. Thefts of temple property, especially cattle, for instance, were not uncommon and must have been a drain on temple finances.\textsuperscript{399}

The confusion and chaos of transitional periods, especially of the later 3\textsuperscript{rd} Intermediate Period and of the Late Period may have driven a real and conceptual withdrawal into smaller economic units, with a resultant effect on temple endowments.\textsuperscript{400} In a less politically interconnected Nile valley, temple revenues could drop for two reasons. First, most temples needed tenants to take on the farming of temple land—the apportioning fields were much more numerous than non-apportioning fields in temple endowments, and these apportioning fields were worked by tenant farmers, not temple staff. If other types of available farmland with a smaller rent were nearly all already rented, the market for leases on temple land would be favorable to the temples and would thus have been more profitable, with more marginal lands brought into cultivation. In a compartmentalized Nile valley, with power split between regional centers without a central authority, temple land would be less in demand and temples would have seen less productive land and smaller profits. Second, and perhaps more importantly, a withdrawal into smaller units might hasten the diminution of temple property, for any number of the reasons mentioned above. If the borders of Herihor’s power stopped at the Thebaid, the temples that owned property now located in perhaps a number of individual kingdoms and theocracies would have more difficulty effectively supervising production and title claims on their lands. In addition, royal or elite households focused inwards, as happened at the

\textsuperscript{398} For an example from the Ptolemaic period, see the lengthy suit of Hermias, also concerning the Theban Choachytes, for which see Pestman (1993), 375-384.  
\textsuperscript{399} See Haring, 245-246 and 254-256. For a lengthy discussion of the problem, see Goebs, 29-37.  
\textsuperscript{400} Trade between the two major kingdoms in Egypt and with the rest of the Mediterranean seems to have continued mostly intact, though on a smaller scale after the collapse of the eastern Mediterranean trading network, especially the Mycenaeans and Hittites.
disintegration of the New Kingdom and the collapse of power from Tanis, are significantly less supportive of collective establishments, such as temples. In addition, the status of temple endowments at this period may have been affected by the very strong retrospective stance especially of the 25th and 26th dynasties. As Assmann notes, the production of extremely accurate copies of older buildings and documents became almost a mania, and while our best evidence concerns ritual documents and architectural fragments, we might assume that age-worn endowment documents, in whatever form they might have taken, were also found and re-copied (or forged). Between the risk of forged documents claiming great antiquity for usurped endowments and the risk of property having changed hands (perhaps many times) since a temple’s original endowment, a flood of “re-discovered” endowment documents could dramatically rearrange the landscape of religious property, if the state was persuaded by the claimant’s rhetoric and evidence, accurate or not.

Finally, it must be said that, despite the large number of changes across the centuries, Egypt and the Egyptian economy was strongly path-dependent. Path-dependence as a concept forms part of New Institutional Economics, a method of economic inquiry that focuses especially on transaction costs for institutions. Since the cost of acquiring information and making institutional changes can be significant, one can over time invest so much into the development of a system, process, or technology that a switch to a more productive model would prove too costly. At the same time, however, the structure provided by a path-dependent system also reduces information costs, allowing more (and more profitable) development along the existing paths. After a point, path dependence might become identified as tradition and deliberately (and

401 Sahlins (1972), 101.
403 A number of scholars have recently explored the application of New Institutional Economics to the study of ancient Egypt, especially J.G. Manning. See, e.g., Manning (2003).
sometimes vociferously) preserved. Considered from this standpoint, the survival for hundreds of years of a system that required continual “topping-up” to keep its religious institutions out of destitution is unsurprising. By the first millennium BC, however, Egyptian culture was seeking for more glorious causes, perhaps best represented by the famous Famine Stele found on Sehel Island just below the First Cataract. The stele purports to record an account of Djoser learning in a dream the cause of a prolonged series of Nile flood failures as well as the solution, viz., restoring and supporting the worship of Khnum on Elephantine Island. While this text is most likely a forgery dating to the reign of Ptolemy V, it does represent an ontological interest in the coming into being of the temple estates of Khnum at Elephantine. The path-dependent course of temple development became, therefore, a way to connect with an essentially mythological deep past.

The Third Intermediate Period and Foreign Occupation

In the first millennium BC, Egypt and Egyptian culture both changed, sometimes drastically, with lasting effects on the religious landscape. Within a century of the Wilbour and Harris papyri, the strong central government was in decline. Assmann captures some of the chaos of the period, noting that “at the end of the New Kingdom and in the Third Intermediate Period, Egypt changed from a territorial state to a pluricentric agglomeration of small states. The cities were either fortified or else put up citadels for the citizens to repair to in the face of danger. The open country no longer provided any safety.” The last king of the New Kingdom, Ramesses XI, was unable to stop Thebes, and the powerful temple of Amun there, from breaking away and forming a temple-state encompassing much of Upper Egypt. In the north, meanwhile, power

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404 For the Famine Stele in general, see Barguet (1953) *passim*. For dating, see ibid., 33-37.
405 Loprieno (2003), 148-151. See also Eliade (1971) *passim*.
406 Assmann (2002), 293.
passed to Tanis, in the northeast corner of the Delta, where the ruling dynasty, as that in Thebes, based their claims to power on their position as High Priest of Amun. The interplay between high government office and religious titles was not, of course, anything new, but the focus shifted from rulers as priests to priests as rulers. Rather than themselves being gods, in other words, the priest-kings of Thebes, for instance, derived power from a special closeness to the gods. Even in the north, where a number of minor kingdoms sprouted in the fertile soil of the Delta, the connections between temple and palace were altered. These new kingdoms, especially those tied to priest-kings, could not but have changed the fundamental relationship of donor to temple land. It was the fragmented state of power along the Nile valley, and not out of control temples, however, that doomed the kingdoms and left a weakened Egypt unable to fend off invasion from the east.

The intervention of Assyria into Egyptian affairs ended the “Nubian dynasty,” which had united Egypt and encouraged traditionally Egyptian forms of expression and art, despite a capital located south of the traditional border, in Meroë. The Assyrians established the Saite (26th) dynasty, operating out of the western Delta, though the Saite kings later established their own independence amidst the collapse of Assyrian power in the Fertile Crescent. Although the Saite rulers made concrete attempts to strengthen the country, including the settling of a Greek trade colony at Naukratis, they were unable to prevent the Persian army, under Cambyses, from capturing the White Fortress at Memphis and the pharaoh, along with it, in 525. The short time Cambyses spent ruling Egypt (525-522) is extremely controversial and important for shaping the way that Greeks (and by extension, Romans and eventually, modern scholars) thought about Egyptian religion and foreign occupation. For much of this, we have Herodotus, or, perhaps,
his overly credulous acceptance of a hostile tradition among his informants, Egyptian priests, to thank. Herodotus describes the worsening outrages of Cambyses against Egyptian religion, beginning with the exhumation, flogging, and burning of a former pharaoh, Amasis, and continuing on to whipping priests and slaying the Apis bull.\footnote{Herodotus 3.16 and 3.28.} While the tale is a bravura piece of story-telling, it has been effectively disproved.\footnote{See, for instance, Briant, 55-61 for a history of the debate.} Increased analysis of Herodotus, especially \textit{Quellenforschung} methods, helped to make clear the relationship between Herodotus’ credibility and the accuracy of his sources, priests from the temples of Ptah and Ra in Memphis and Heliopolis, respectively.\footnote{Herodotus 2.3.1.} The discovery of the Apis bull necropolis at Saqqara and the naophoric statue of Udjahorresnet, now in the Vatican Museums, cast serious doubt on the story of Cambyses’ hostility towards Egyptian religion.\footnote{On the Apis-Cambyses debacle, see Depuydt (1995), Malinine et al. (1968), or Yamauchi (1996). Lloyd (1982) offers a valuable caveat concerning the reliability of Udjahorresnet as a source.} While Herodotus had claimed that the Apis bull was murdered by Cambyses in a fit of rage, excavations in Saqqara unearthed the bull in question, along with a large stele recording the lavish ceremonies and gifts laid on by Cambyses in his role as pharaoh.\footnote{See Posener (1934) 171-175.} In addition, Herodotus claims that the Apis bull murder took place during the celebration of the appearance of a new bull. The bull born at this time died a natural death in the fourth year of Darius’ rule.\footnote{Posener (1934) 174-175.} Herodotus’ account is further challenged by the life of the priest Udjahorresnet, recorded on his naophoric statue. He notes that, while there was chaos in Egypt and in the temples during and following the Persian invasion, Cambyses restored the temples to their previous strength and acted in every way the ideal pharaoh towards the temple of Neith in Sais, where Udjahorresnet served as a priest. While Udjahorresnet did serve in the Persian government following the invasion, his claims, focused as they are on the worship of
Neith, have the ring of at least partial truth. In light of these discoveries, we must ask from where, therefore, the hostility of the priests towards Cambyses originated.

The so-called Demotic Chronicle (P.Chronik = Bibl.Nat. Paris Dem. 215) offers a clue. The verso of this text preserves a purported series of decrees issued by Cambyses concerning the temples. Though written in the early Ptolemaic period, the documents on the verso of the Demotic Chronicle largely concern the Persian period. One column offers a series of formulaic restrictions: wood, cows, birds, coinage, grains, and “all the other things given to the sanctuaries of the gods in the past.” While the Demotic Chronicle is an obviously biased source, it does seem to contain a kernel of truth. As Pharaoh, it should have been within Cambyses’ power to reorganize the financial structure of the temples. This reorganization may have been in favor of Neith, favored in Sais and particularly supported by Udjahorresnet, and to the detriment of Ptah of Memphis. Though this seems clear evidence that the power of a pharaoh in controlling temple lands was exercised quickly and decisively under the Persians, the fact of Cambyses’ foreignness allowed the priests recourse to polemic not traditionally available to them when confronting “native” pharaohs. Indeed, it was in the Persian period that Egyptian literature fully embraced what has been called “the Chaosbeschreibung tradition,” which is best known to

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416 For the original publication, with transcription, see Spiegelberg.
417 For the dating, see Devauchelle (1995), 73.
418 A subject is introduced in relation to its traditional practice, such as those concerning cows, “which were traditionally given to the sanctuaries of the gods previously in the time of the Pharaoh Amasis, life, prosperity, health,” before noting that “about these, Cambyses ordains thus.” I have followed Devauchelle (1995) on textual matters. See Devauchelle, 74-75 for his translation, or Spiegelberg, 32 for a transcription of the Demotic. See especially D 12-13 for a summary of the restrictions. From the damaged sections in lines 16 and 17, it appears that there were also restrictions on aromatics, firewood, papyrus, construction wood, and other material.
420 Echoed today, as in Winnicki (1994) 158-159, who notes that “no records exist for any seizure of Egyptian gods during the period of Persian occupation. Nevertheless, there is every reason to believe that statues were carried off from Egypt at that time.”
Western literature through Herodotus.\textsuperscript{421} In a series of texts written in this period, the Egyptians looked for a native king to rise up, throw off the foreign occupation, and restore proper worship in the temples. The foreign occupier is usually described in particularly religious terms—“the invader will then descend upon Egypt, humiliate the priests, open the temples, and slaughter sacred animals,” as Dillery puts it.\textsuperscript{422} While the temples and Egyptian religion had long served metonymically for Egypt itself, the special emphasis on priests and temples here also reflects the priests’ new status as the surviving native literary and cultural power. The embrace of the *Chaosbeschreibung* tradition affected more than Egyptian literature and the account handed down to Herodotus. This view of Egypt as a land defiled, with everything that made it special in ruins, also appears in documentary texts, reflecting the degree to which this outlook pervaded the thinking of the priests, even in non-literary matters, and offering a caution to any overly destructive views of later relations between the temples and foreign rulers.\textsuperscript{423}

It was indeed in this period when the priesthood increasingly became a self-defined counterweight—an indigenous “social and intellectual elite”—to the Persian government.\textsuperscript{424} How much of this was accomplished in this period and how much it was a development from the New Kingdom is unclear. Assmann argues that the Third Intermediate Period saw the rise of a more monopolistic definition of priesthood, deliberately set apart both physically and behaviorally from the everyday Egyptian, accomplished by priests living within the temples themselves and adhering to “specific rules for the conduct of life.”\textsuperscript{425} As the façade of Egyptian

\textsuperscript{421} Dillery’s 2005 article is the best introduction to the *Chaosbeschreibung* tradition, as well as my source for the phrase.
\textsuperscript{422} Dillery (2005), 390.
\textsuperscript{423} For the relations between Rome and Egypt, see Ch. 7. For priestly rhetoric, see also Ch. 3.
\textsuperscript{424} Assmann (2010), 414.
\textsuperscript{425} Assmann (2010), 411-412. While there is clear evidence that priests were living inside the temple complex at Karnak in the late New Kingdom, by later periods, the temples were densely packed with residences, and not just those of priests.
government was replaced by Persian dominance (and officials, at least in important positions), the priests turned further within themselves and their history. The codification, under Darius, of all the laws of pharaonic Egypt, including temple law, supplied by priests, curated by priests, and archived by priests, allowed the religious community to define the history of their people, and to channel it along the course they wished it to go. Assmann’s larger point, that the priesthood in this period came to be an exclusive “way of life,” unlike those of “other Egyptians,” is complicated by another fact: the great majority of priests were not full-time employees, but rather served only a fourth (later, a fifth) of the year. Outside of the very largest temples, the number of full-time administrators was probably very small indeed, and priests could not withdraw from daily life and still make a living. The temple walls might now contain “not only the performance of a cult but also a specific form of human cohabitation,” but we cannot forget the vibrant (and sometimes chaotic) personal lives of priests.

Just as the Egyptian priesthood retreated within themselves during the Persian period, turning towards messianic legends and increasing scholasticism, less and less evidence becomes available for relations between the palace and the temple—if they can indeed be separated even at this late a juncture. Herodotus remains a source as important and charming as he is credulous. The literary construction of “Xerxes” bears little relation to the real king in many of these descriptions, becoming a sort of bogeyman haunting religious expression throughout the

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426 Briant (2002), 481-484.
429 For an example, see the deceased Psenephmous, who joined the revolt against the Ptolemies at the end of the 3rd century BC and was killed in battle, setting off the long-running legal dispute described in P.Tarich.
430 See Krebsbach, 97-98, for an ultimately unconvincing argument drawn from the paucity of available sources for Persian religious intent in Egypt. For relations between lower-ranking Persians and Egyptians in the religious sphere, see the suggestion of H.S. Smith (1992), 299, that “intercommunal penetration” was more thorough-going than previously suspected.
vast Persian Empire, and rendering Egypt even worse than before.\textsuperscript{431} We are unable to say much about Persian administration of the temple lands, though attempts by Inarus in his ill-fated rebellion against Persia to recruit the aid of the Athenian Empire by offering land may show him acting, overly optimistically, in the manner of a pharaoh, reassigning lands either from the palace portfolio or from the temples.\textsuperscript{432} Whether or not Darius seriously altered the fundamentals of the temple endowments, it does seem clear that he, too, acted in the guise of a traditional pharaoh, that is, by establishing or encouraging certain pious foundations, no doubt at the cost of others.\textsuperscript{433}

The chaos that surrounded the end of Persian control in Egypt and the arrival of Alexander, his generals, and his new city produced a series of important changes. Memphis, which had long been the political center of Egypt—even under the Persians, the White Walls protected the satrapal seat against rebellion and marauding Athenians alike—remained a major stop along the Nile Valley, but the Hellenistic period saw the nexuses of power shift southwards and northwards, towards Thebes in the south and off the Nile completely to Alexandria in the north. While the Persian period is most often treated as an afterthought, coming too late for those focusing on the New Kingdom, and as, at best, a pantomime villain for many studies of the Ptolemaic period, it is clear that the Persian period rather served as Egypt’s first real introduction to outside control. The negotiation of identity within a much larger, more powerful empire would continue under the Ptolemites and Romans, of course, but it began and had its first real struggles under Cambyses, Darius, and the rest. The Persian kings set the precedent of foreign rulers acting

\textsuperscript{431} Herodotus 7.7. Briant’s careful demolition of this passage and others like it is necessary reading. See Briant, 543-549.
\textsuperscript{432} Diodorus Siculus 11.71.4.
\textsuperscript{433} Ibid., 480-481. Much is made of a supposed (or implied) contrast between Cambyses and Darius found in section C of the Demotic Chronicle verso, in which Darius is said to have made someone or some group of people subject to him on account of the greatness of his heart. The combination of this supposition with surviving reliefs of Darius offering fields to temples is not sufficient evidence to support the claim of fundamental changes in the relationship between temple authorities and the palace, especially given the disparity in duration of reigns between Cambyses and Darius. For more, see especially Devauchelle (1995), 73-77.
as pharaohs, including, in the religious sphere, endowing and re-assigning temple lands unilaterally, appearing in the traditional pharaonic guise in art, and serving at the head of the (increasingly inward-looking) religious hierarchy. In this light, then, the Ptolemies followed, like so much of Alexander’s empire, the example of the Persians.

*Egyptian Temples under the Ptolemies*

The increasingly rich stores of evidence for the Ptolemaic period in Egypt have tempted students of the period to create a strong division between the Ptolemaic system and those previous periods. During the reign of Ptolemy I, first as satrap and then as self-defined monarch, a new capital city was created on the Mediterranean coast and a massive settlement project began in the Fayum basin. At the same time, however, the Ptolemies presented an Egyptian (or Egyptianizing) face to their people, the vast majority of whom were not Greek. Like the Persian kings, the Ptolemies used the opportunity of Egyptian religious festivals and events to express the continuity of rule. As Cambyses and Darius did during their reigns, Ptolemy I Soter led the highly ritualized (and expensive) burial of the Apis bull. In a more concrete sense, he and his successors poured money into temple construction and repair, seen most notably at the Temple of Horus at Edfu which was literally reoriented during its Ptolemaic reconstruction. In addition, the Ptolemaic period saw some theological reorientation as well. The family of the

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434 As early as the reign of Cambyses, a stamp seal (Golénischeff 922) records (in Egyptian hieroglyphs) the titulature of Cambyses as pharaoh—“King of Upper and Lower Egypt, Cambyses, beloved of Wadjet....” For commentary, see Kuhrt (2007) 127.

435 See, for instance, Sherwin-White (1987), 6. Depauw suggests the co-option of the transfer tax on tombs for a state official (and not the chief of the necropolis) may have begun under the Persians. P.BM 10528 (291 BC) offers the earliest evidence for this practice, which is very early in the Ptolemaic period for such a relatively significant innovation. The priests’ view of the continuity of rule in Egypt can be seen from the walls themselves of the Temple of Edfu. While a Ptolemaic construction, the temple contains on its walls the text of a donation by Nectanebo, apparently still seen as valid and governing in the 2nd century BC. For more, see especially Clarysse (2003) 20.

436 Contra Thompson (2012) 107 who sees the Ptolemaic attention to Egyptian religion as an innovation for a population in need of reconciliation “to the fact of foreign rule.”

437 Diodorus Siculus 1.84.8

kings was inserted into the Egyptian pantheon, most notably, with special prominence given to the royal women.\textsuperscript{439} While we know quite a bit about the high-level religious decision-making under the Ptolemies—the temple construction, the divine honors, and so on—we are also provided, especially by papyri and synod decrees, with a sense of the development of the temple economies at the time.

As we have seen, the temples of dynastic and Persian Egypt possessed fairly diverse economic portfolios. While most of their wealth was tied up in farmland, they sponsored mining expeditions, industry and workshops—generally centered on the conversion of raw materials they produced to finished goods, such as barley beer or bread—as well as other forms of agriculture, such as orchards.\textsuperscript{440} In addition, the temples could acquire funds from quite different sources. The archive of Teos and Thabis, from Thebes, records payments made to the temples as part of property transfers. This “temple levy,” as Depauw calls it, could vary over time, but generally represented around a 5-10% sales tax paid by the purchaser on the purchase price, part of which was taken by the Ptolemaic state after the third century.\textsuperscript{441} From the evidence of one note written on the back of a temple levy receipt, it appears that the funds themselves could be divided up across a number of interested parties.\textsuperscript{442}

“Temple land” came in a large number of forms, and could be managed in a number of ways. In the area of Thebes, where the Ptolemaic funerary business is well represented, one document (\textit{P.BM.Andrews} 2) records the sale of a tomb-site on the west bank along with the

\textsuperscript{439} For an effect of this focus on the royal women, see Ch. 6, concerning \textit{aphrodisia}.
\textsuperscript{440} A Demotic land sale contract from 181 BC in Thebes gives a sense of the wide range of temple-affiliated workers. See P.BM 10722+10723+10679B and notes in Andrews (1990) 44.
\textsuperscript{441} Depauw (2000) 58-63.
\textsuperscript{442} \textit{P.BM.Glanville} pp. 43-45, no. 10529 (=P.BM. EA 10529) (Thebes, 276 BC). The 6 \textit{kite} paid as the 10% tax on property sales was divided three ways, though the reason for the division is not given. For similar payments, though without listing of share recipients, see \textit{P.BM.Glanville} pp. 39-45 (=P.BM. EA 10537, 10530, 10536, 10535, and 10529 respectively).
body to be interred within.\footnote{P.BM.\textit{Andrews} 2 = P.BM. 10388 (223 BC, Thebes)} That the body—“Petenephotes, son of Pais, the saint”—was sold for commercial and not purely religious grounds is clear by the note setting down the date on which the purchaser gained the rights to offerings made at the tomb, which was yet to be built.\footnote{P.BM. Andrews 2, R l. 4.} This is choachyte business: the seller, Espmethis, a pastophoros of the temple of Amun in Luxor, offers up his family as choachytes if he should violate the contract. What is especially interesting, however, is from where Espmethis claims that he acquired the land in question. Though the amount is small—200 square cubits—Espmethis notes that he purchased them “for silver from Amun.”\footnote{P.BM. Andrews 2, R l. 3.}

That the temples were at all willing to sell land is nevertheless surprising, as we tend to picture the temples as zealous guardians of their endowments, interested in expansion but not contraction, in the long-term rather than the short-term. In this case, though, there is a difference between selling parts of the “Upper Necropolis” on the Theban west bank and selling agricultural land: the land in the Upper Necropolis was never going to be productive farmland. It may be that the temple took possession of a stretch of land in this area and sold it off, piece by piece, to choachytes, providing an occasional income without diminishing the agricultural endowment in any way. It is also possible that the temple could function as land speculator, purchasing or acquiring lots on the agriculturally useless rocky stretches of the west bank, while also themselves driving the market. The priests of Amun, we might imagine, would have a role in determining which places would be opened for use as tombs, allowing them to sell the land at a premium. There is no surviving evidence of a sale of agricultural land, but this is not surprising, as such land could provide a reliable, regular income. If temples rearranged their estates through...
sale or trade to cluster their fields or industries more closely or rationally, the evidence is not yet available. A papyrus from the archive of Djekhy and Son, dating to around 542 BC, suggests that land could be given by the temples, perhaps to curry favor with the pharaoh or his inner circle, as the recipient of this particular gift was the wet-nurse of the pharaoh.

Priests as Private Citizens and Ptolemaic Officials

The interpretation of the temples and their economic practice is made more difficult by the sometimes confused relationship between temples and their staff. The temples and their personnel were active players in the economic and legal records of the day, but we cannot take one for the other. The temples owned large estates, but did not, in many cases, directly farm them. Rather, they operated as something much closer to the New Kingdom apportioning fields. As Manning notes, “there was…nothing to prevent individuals without temple status from holding land within the temple estate….” As in the New Kingdom, much of the temple lands were let out, in other words, with a lower rate of return on the land accepted by the temple in exchange for a certain level of insulation from the risks of agriculture in the Nile watershed. The priests, too, would share in the benefices from these fields and from the other profitable activities of the temple industries. The records of a family squabble over an inheritance in Asyut from the mid-second century BC show the various sources that made up the salary of a Ptolemaic priest: bread from the temple bakeries, oil and meat, and shares of the profits from temple income.

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446 Cf. the medieval example of the monastery at Cluny, for which see Rosenwein (1989) 78-108. An examination of the endowment of Soknopaioi, not just in Soknopaioi Nesos, but throughout the Fayum, suggests some underlying rationality in the distribution of resources, but the village is very much out of the ordinary (for which, see Ch. 2). In most other villages, the distribution of property would cluster more logically, thanks to simple geography. In any case, the rationality could easily have been imparted in the original endowment. The distribution of land to the temple discussed in P.Amih. 2.40 suggests a process of negotiation, even for the land of Soknopaioi, which would result in a relatively orderly distribution. This process—analyzed with the tools provided by New Economic Geography—is discussed more fully in Ch. 5.

447 Donker van Heel (2012), 128. This interpretation is not certain, but in either case, the land passed from the temple’s control for the benefit either of the wet-nurse or her funerary cult.

including from the temple storehouses. These proceeds, such as one-third of a share of the revenue from the storehouses in or around Asyut, were probably not heritable apart from the priestly position, but in any case only formed a small part of the portfolio of an Egyptian holding a priesthood.

The fact that one man might have offices in the bureaucracy and in a temple, and simultaneously operate a complex private portfolio has resulted in some confusion. Priests frequently appear in contracts, disputes, and other documents related to the economies of Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt. In the majority of these, however, they are functioning as private citizens who happen to hold priestly office. We might suspect that the priestly office is mentioned primarily as an identifier, in point of fact, and not as a sign that the priests are acting in their official role. As Clarysse and Thompson note, “in Egypt, only one occupation was officially allowed,” and that therefore, “the different priestly categories are likely to include many for whom this role was only part-time.” A part-time priest, however, would still gain the social and financial benefits from registering and describing himself as a priest in official documents. While this complicates our attempts to understand the Ptolemaic priests, it does keep us closer to the documents themselves. The fact that these men could hold offices in the administration both of the temples and of the Ptolemaic state—there being little distance between these two at times—also contributed to the longevity and success of the temples in the Ptolemaic

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450 Priestly positions could be heritable (or at least were often expected to pass down through family lines, a position made more official in the Roman period), and the listing rather a list of the income that accompanied his position. It is probably not accidental in this context that the document begins with a listing of the positions held by the priest, a certain Petetum, son of Tuot, who was the lector of Siut (see P.Siut 1 col. 8.8-10).
451 For which, see Table 10 in Manning (2003).
452 See, for instance, P.Brux. 8252 (327/6 BC) in which a Thotroisis, son of Horos, goldsmith of the Temple of Amun in Thebes, purchases property, as well as Depauw (2000) 84.
period, a topic discussed in more detail below. For this study, then, we must be able to
differentiate between priests acting as agents of the temple and priests acting for their own
benefit. As we have seen, men with priestly titles often had diversified portfolios, of which their
religious perquisites formed only a part.

The question of temple auctions offers a cautionary example of this theme. Manning,
writing on land auctions, claims that temple land was acquired by priests at auction, and cites as
evidence “a group of sixteen herdsmen, all with the title ‘servant of Horus of Edfu,’ a status title
associating them with the temple estate.” Though his argumentation is circular, he seems to be
referring primarily to P.Eleph. 14, a text from the Milon archive from Elephantine in 223/222
BC. Milon, the praktor of the temple of Edfu (not Elephantine), was the final holder of this
position—a temporary role when a temple had fallen on hard times—and the archive contains
documents not only from his tenure but from those of his predecessors as well. Despite
Manning’s note elsewhere that “the real property involved in the affair was the family’s personal
property, not property belong to the temple estate,” he nevertheless adduces the Milon auctions
as proof that temple land was up for auction. It seems more likely that in this case, the temple’s
claim itself to the land was not being sold, but the subletting of it, that is, the role of tenant on the
land. If state auctions were indeed most popular immediately following the failed Thebaid
revolution, it seems logical given the large role that temples played in that revolt that some of
their land might have been confiscated in retribution or that their claims were muddled or lost in
the ensuing chaos. Priests could also participate in the revolt as private citizens, and their

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456 See p. 90, n. 134 and p. 161, n. 139. In general, however, his footnotes in these two sections point towards each
other, without citing primary evidence for these claims.
457 For the Milon archive, see Clarysse (2003). For the praktor and the other offices, temporary or permanent, see
below.
458 For the high point of auctions after the Theban revolt, see Manning (2003), 161 and 171.
property or rights to income could for that reason be seized by the government. In one case from Philadelphiea in the Arsinoite nome, a priest entitled to the income from embalmed bodies, was killed in battle against the Ptolemaic state, setting off a long-running legal dispute for control of the income (4000 drachmas a year for at least nineteen years). In addition, the destruction of records that followed the revolt is a familiar part of agricultural uprisings around the world and likely created huge amounts of chaos. In this case, it seems probable that, following a destruction of any government records offices, out of all landowners, the temples could prove their own claims most effectively. Religious documents were stored within the temples themselves, with evidence for at least two such “libraries” (archives, stricto sensu, and not actually libraries) from the Ptolemaic period. It is no large stretch to assume that particularly important title documents and age-worn endowments would also be preserved within the temple, if not on the walls of the building itself.

In the less rebellious north, confusion could also govern. The interplay of priests, temple authorities, and private portfolios can lead to misleading transactions in Lower Egypt as easily as Upper Egypt, and it seems that temples and records-houses were attacked in the north as well. One document from Soknopaiou Nesos explicitly describes rebel activity, possibly associated with the Great Theban Revolt. One man was forced to bring his property records out and to burn them in front of the rebels, leading to a long-running dispute over the title to that land between

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459 For the payment, known as the γέρας ταριχείας, see P.Tarich. pp. 17-23.
461 Manning (2003) 171; Scott (1976), e.g. 125. Sarah James (pers. comm.) has suggested that the destruction of tax and property archives may have formed a critical part of the “destruction” of cities in classical and Hellenistic Greece.
462 The Ptolemaic temple at Edfu also features a small document room inside the pronaos and extensive records on the walls of the temple itself, reciting the endowments offered upon the foundation of the temple, among other things, for which see the ongoing work of Dieter Kurth et al.
two temple employees.\textsuperscript{463} Indeed, in the realm of chaotic mismanagement, the temple at Soknopaiou Nesos stands out. Even leaving aside the problems of burned records, other documents from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century also from the Amherst collection paint a picture of a lesonis on the take and beleaguered priests and friends of the temple scrambling to keep the temple in business. A letter from 132 describes a lesonis waiting until the priests were occupied with another piece of business and covertly collecting and subsequently pocketing hundreds of artabas of wheat from the temple lands.\textsuperscript{464} Another lesonis, meanwhile, is described as doing nothing to help the temple during a land division gone wrong. Forty-six arouras of land, it would seem, were given en masse to a handful of recipients, with the understanding that a man named Arius would make an equitable division. Instead, the 21 best arouras were given to Greeks, while the temple was given the remaining 25 arouras of the worst quality.\textsuperscript{465} The value of the land and the degree to which the local administration could prove pliable are both illustrated by the efforts that the author, a friend of the temple named Epiodorus, took to recover the land: payments—bribes?—of 8 staters to the topogrammateus, the komogrammateus, and to unnamed others were enough to force Arius off the land and to cause a re-division of the 46 arouras.\textsuperscript{466} In all of these examples, the transactions only enter the documentary record when they were challenged, whether by Epiodorus or by the priests of Soknopaiou Nesos themselves, and we might assume that for every challenged transfer that survives, quite a few others were lost.

The \textit{Syntaxis} of the Priests

The Ptolemaic period saw the creation of a new source of funding for the temples: the

\textsuperscript{463}\textit{P.Amh.} 2.30.28-36. While Greek property may have been particularly targeted elsewhere in the revolt, there is nothing to support the editor’s suggestion that this record destruction was ethnically motivated.

\textsuperscript{464}\textit{P.Amh.} 2.35.

\textsuperscript{465}\textit{P.Amh.} 2.40 (2\textsuperscript{nd} century). For more on this case, see Connor (2013).

\textsuperscript{466}\textit{P.Amh.} 2.40.18-23.
syntaxis. While direct payments to the temples may have been made before the Ptolemaic period, there is no evidence for such a system, and certainly not on the scale that it reached under the Ptolemies. The system of payments, the syntaxis, appears to have been designed to support the staff of the temples. Perhaps the clearest indication that the syntaxis system did not predate the Ptolemies can be found in references to the payments in Demotic. The term employed is simply a transliteration of the Greek: \textit{t3 snks} or some variation thereof. The term as applied to the temples is a particular form of the more common syntaxis, referring to payments, tribute, or salary. In this case, the syntaxis-system has been reconstructed as a series of payments, coming first to the temple and ending up with some or all of the Egyptian priests.

Three points in particular stand out in the study of the syntaxis: who, precisely, created it, why was it created, and what was its extent? We will turn to the first, the question of its creator. The precise point of creation remains unclear—Clarysse writes that it was in effect “from the late third century BC onwards until the third century AD”—and the question is further complicated by the fact that one of the earliest secure references to the system is found on the Rosetta Stone. Here, the syntaxis appears amidst a list of payments to the temples that were to remain just as they were under Ptolemy IV, the father of the issuer of the Rosetta Decree, Ptolemy V.

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467 Such systems of direct governmental payments to temples were not found elsewhere in the Persian or Alexandrian kingdoms. For Babylonia, see Jursa (2010) 660-681, though there was some overlap between the roles of government and temples, especially as their administrators were frequently the same people (Jursa [2010] 29).


469 The term syntaxis appears prior to this in Greek and Demotic, but (contra Clarysse (1987) 30, no. 79) the only Demotic reference (\textit{P.Cairo 2.31219} = \textit{P.Bürgsch} p. 607, n. 2) appears not to refer to a priestly contract. Similarly the frequent appearances of the term in Greek documents (see, e.g., \textit{P.Enteux} 47). The Pithom Stele refers to payments made to “all the temples of Upper and Lower Egypt for the gods” but this is probably not the syntaxis, since it does not use the transliterated name, which Clarysse has shown to be present from the earliest attestations. In addition, the amounts that are specifically listed as paid “on every first day of the year” are fairly small and oriented on fruit—“very good fruits,” juice, good wine from Syria, sweet wine, and honey. For the text of the Pithom stele, see Thiers (2007) 56-57. See also Mueller (2006) 192-199.

470 \textit{OGIS} 1.90.14-16. προσέταξε δὲ καὶ τὰς προσόδους τὸν ἱερὸν καὶ τὰς διδομένας εἰς αὐτὰ κατ’ ἕναντον συντάξεων σιτικὰς τε καὶ ἅρπυρικὰς, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ τὰς καθηκούσας ἀπομοίρας τῶν θεῶν ἀπὸ τὴν ἄμπελιτιδος γῆς καὶ τῶν παραδείσων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων τῶν ὑπαρξάντων τῶν θεῶς ἐπὶ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ μένειν.
The earliest reference, then, to the system of payments to the temple grouped under the term *syntaxis* points to the reign of Ptolemy IV. While the documentary record is comparatively thin for the period corresponding to the reigns of the first Ptolemies, we might expect some reference to a vast expansion of the government’s role in the financing of religion had it been undertaken prior to the reign of Ptolemy IV.

The reasons for the creation of the *syntaxis* system are equally unclear. Some scholarship, focusing on the Roman *syntaxis*, assumed that the payments were created to compensate the temples for the loss of their land, which the Roman state confiscated under Petronius. As we can see, however, the payments date at least as far back as the last quarter of the 3rd century BC, though they are, as Clarysse writes, “usually interpreted as a compensation for the growing state intervention in the economic life of the temples, though proof of this is rather scanty.” While this scenario does make some sense if the *syntaxis* dated to the early Roman period and if the Romans had actually confiscated all the temple land in Egypt, it becomes more difficult to find evidence for the onerous interventions in the end of the 3rd century BC. The largest intervention in the 3rd century was most likely the expansion of the *apomoira*, but this was hardly a negative intervention, such that the temples would need state payments. Indeed, the expanded *apomoira*-payments were state payments. As Clarysse and Vandorpe have convincingly shown, the new *apomoira* was not levied on temple lands—the previous *apomoira* continued in force there—but on “all categories of land except temple land.” The increased *apomoira* payments would go, eventually, to the temples to support the worship of the Ptolemies, that is, the *sunnaoi theoi*. The

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471 For the supposed confiscations under Petronius (and problems with that interpretation) see Ch. 3.
472 Clarysse (2010) 283. Wallace (1938) 239 claims that the *syntaxis* “assured to the priests a steady annual income which compensated, in part, for the loss of revenues suffered when the administration of their endowments and tithes was appropriated by the government,” a situation which decisively did not occur in the period during which the *syntaxis* seems to have been created.
payments were routed through the state before passing on to the temples, and the temple phylai were increased from four to five, but these are hardly heavy burdens in any case.\textsuperscript{474} Furthermore, the apomoira was overhauled in 263 BC, while Ptolemy IV reigned from 221-204 BC. It is possible that the syntaxis started earlier, or that its creation was a belated recognition of some damage done by the new apomoira payments to the financial fabric of the temples. What seems more likely, however, is that the syntaxis relates more directly to events near the end of the reign of Ptolemy IV than than those in the middle of the reign of Ptolemy II.

One likely candidate is the Great Theban Revolt, which broke out by the final year (or even months) of the reign of Ptolemy IV, and which lasted almost the length of Ptolemy V’s reign. The final years of Ptolemy IV’s reign are poorly documented and therefore poorly understood, creating a confusion that reigned in antiquity as much as today: Justin, for instance, claimed that Ptolemy IV’s death was kept secret for a long time after \textit{(mors eius...diu occultata fuit)}.\textsuperscript{475} His death, in the middle of 204 BC, meant that the rebellion had been raging for around two years.\textsuperscript{476} The period after the revolt began, with a rebel pharaoh crowned in Thebes and the Ptolemaic dynasty facing an existential threat, was presumably a chaotic and fearful one. It seems clear that temples formed part of the ideological battlefield. The Second Philae Decree, for instance, describes the rebel king as an “enemy of the gods” \textit{(ḥfty ntrw)}.\textsuperscript{477} He later goes on to profane the temples, to abuse the priests, and to prevent the customary rituals there.\textsuperscript{478} All this fits neatly into the \textit{Chaosbeschreibung} tradition, and Ptolemy IV fulfills his role as “good pharaoh,” stepping in to protect the temples, in this case by stationing Greek troops—probably

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\textsuperscript{474} Clarysse and Vandorpe (1998) 13-14.
\textsuperscript{475} Justin 30.2.6
\textsuperscript{476} Depauw (2006) 103-104.
\textsuperscript{477} Second Philae Decree, l. 5a (hieroglyphic). See Müller (1920) 57-88.
\textsuperscript{478} Second Philae Decree, l. 9a-9e (hieroglyphic)
\end{flushright}
mercenaries—in the temples to prevent their looting, and setting aside a large sum of gold and silver, for unclear purposes. The hieroglyphic text claims that the money was expended for mercenaries, in return for the taxes of the nomes (or temples). Müller himself was tempted “to correct the ω-bird into the hawk,” that is, to write “temples” rather than “nomes.” In any case, we can see from this that the struggle was being cast in religious terms, or at least was being cast as such in religious contexts. At the same time, some temples seem to have supported the rebel king, if reports of auctions of temple land are correct. Indeed, nearly every instance of “the auction of pharaoh,” dates, as Manning writes, “to the post-Theban revolt era when the Ptolemies made a special effort to reassert control of the Thebaid.” While the “auction of Pharaoh” is attested in the 3rd century BC, and is in any case of Greek-Macedonian origin, the widespread application of this process to temple land in the post-Theban Revolt period seems likely to be tied to something other than confiscations of ownerless land. While the *syntaxis* could be extended to all loyal temples immediately, the confiscation of rebel temples’ land was something like the Emancipation Proclamation—their effect, materially, could only be felt after troops recovered the areas lost in rebellion, but they both carried important ideological or symbolic weight. In the case of Egyptian temple lands, Ptolemies IV and V could act in the guise of the pharaoh, using the old-accustomed tool of sacred land reorganization. While the stick of land removal from rebellious temples could necessarily be only a short-term phenomenon, the *syntaxis* as carrot would be much harder to unwind after the revolt ended.

If the creation of the *syntaxis*-system for temples can be linked to the period at the

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479 Second Philae Decree, ll. 10e-11e (hieroglyphic)
480 Müller (1920) 73 n. 11.
481 Manning (1999a) 282.
482 As the archive of the *taricheutai* of Tanis shows, however, even something as relatively easy as confiscating the property of dead rebels could create a long-running legal dispute.
beginning of the Great Theban Revolt, we can offer a tentative reconstruction. With southern parts of the kingdom breaking away,\textsuperscript{483} and the various messianic yearnings for a native Egyptian to overthrow the power of foreign kings and to restore a truly Egyptian kingdom, it was no doubt a particular priority of Ptolemy IV (and then Ptolemy V) to keep as many of the temples on the Ptolemaic side as possible. The famous wealth of the Ptolemies, in other words, could support the military effort through the hiring of mercenaries and equipping of local troops, but it could also fight with soft power. If reports of auctions of temple land are correct, then the Ptolemies may have employed a sort of carrot and stick approach to temples during the revolt—they rewarded the ones that stayed loyal by offering payments (the syntaxis, albeit probably in a more rudimentary form) and punished the rebel temples by stripping them of land or other privileges. After twenty years of war, however, the syntaxis-system that had developed had taken the form of a permanent operation and not a one-off payment. The removal of the syntaxis at war’s end would have seemed a punishment, especially to the priests, who tended to guard zealously whatever privileges they were granted, however temporary. After the amnesties of 186 BC, it may have been difficult to reconcile offering the syntaxis to loyal temples but not to the previously rebellious temples.\textsuperscript{484} The result, then, would have been the extension of the syntaxis-system to all of the Egyptian temples, stemming from a system designed not to comfort temples for greater state intervention in their affairs but to buy (or reward) their loyalty during a massive breakdown of state control along the Nile valley.

We know that this system of payments was called the syntaxis, and that this name was

\textsuperscript{483} But not all: Elephantine and the border garrisons stayed under Ptolemaic control.
\textsuperscript{484} \textit{P. Köln. 7.313 (=P.Kroll)}. We might assume that the administrators of many of the “rebellious temples” pleaded political necessity, that is, that they were threatened when the area in which they were located passed into rebel control. The ease with which areas moved between Ptolemaic regnal dating and that of the rebel pharaohs does suggest that the rebellious spirit was not deeply planted in all the people of the rebellious areas, perhaps similar to the equal division among loyalists, rebels, and neutral parties among the colonial population in the American revolution. For examples of the fluidity of dating in the Theban revolt, see Pestman (1995) \textit{passim}. 
simply reproduced in Demotic (*t3 sntks*). We can ask, however, why the system would be so called, if it originated as a loyalty payment to temples siding with the Ptolemies during the Great Theban Revolt. The word, *syntaxis*, can mean arrangement or system, but it also comes to refer to a tax, required payment, or, along the lines of the *syntaxis* of the priests, payments for the support of a group or individuals. While the collection of taxes or required payments to the state does seem to be the earlier meaning, already by the 4th century BC, the word *syntaxis* was being used to refer to payments by the state, in particular to third parties in time of war (or threat of war).\(^{485}\) The term as used concerning the temples probably stems from this meaning—a payment made from the royal treasury to a third party. The use of the term *sntks* in Demotic shows clearly that the priests simply echoed the language of the Ptolemies, who would have referred to it as such. When they spoke to the government, in addition, they clearly would have used the government’s language (*syntaxis*) especially if they did not have a different term for such a system of payments. In this way, then, the meaning of *syntaxis* could go from a tax paid to the state to payments made by the state, and then from internal language used by the Ptolemies to terms borrowed by the priests receiving those payments.

Finally, then, we can turn to the actual *syntaxis*-system. This somewhat unwieldy term, *syntaxis*-system, reflects the multistep process better than simply *syntaxis*, which tends to focus only on the payments by the state to the temples. The first step in the *syntaxis*-system was the payment of a certain amount—the formula for calculating the amount, if such a thing existed, is as yet unknown—to the temple. From there, payments were made to the priests themselves. Préaux claimed that the *syntaxis* was limited to those priests with “the right to sale” (apparently

\(^{485}\) Aeschines, *Against Ctesiphon* 96, ἄλλους τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὀὖς βούλεσθαι κοινωνεῖν τῆς συντάξεως. The sentences immediately preceding make clear that those contributing were cities themselves (such as Megara).
of sacred days), but without evidence to support this claim. There is a general consensus among scholars that the *syntaxis* was “paid in a lump sum to the temple, and then distributed to the individual priests,” though the evidence for this stage is scanty at best.

The survival of the *syntaxis*-system after the Theban Revolt allowed scholars to fit it into a pre-conceived narrative (the Ptolemaic precursor to the confiscation narrative) in which the temples grew fat on the wealth they could extort from the supposedly weak Ptolemies. The Romans, then, could come in, confiscate the land and use the *syntaxis* “as a means of controlling the clergy.” While all of this belongs more properly in the field of barely grounded speculation, the surviving evidence does allow us to see the creation of a system of direct payments from the state to the temples and then, probably, to the individual priests, a system that may have been created not to make up for the state seizing temple property or meddling in temple affairs but as a sweetener to keep the temples on the side of the Ptolemies during an existential crisis in the late 3rd/early 2nd centuries BC.

**Temple Administration in the Ptolemaic Period**

The continued economic success of the temples was reliant on the goodwill of the rulers, as we have seen. While the establishment of the Ptolemaic dynasty necessarily involved changes to the political structure, those who ended up in the inner circles of power could benefit. A papyrus found in Theadelphia dating to 124 BC records a note from a tax-farmer requesting payment of an additional tax to provide a crown for a court official. While court favorites could benefit directly, whether from (mandatory) presents or royal gifts, they also formed the

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486 Préaux (1939) 481, and n. 4. For the sale of sacred days, see PSI 9.1016.
488 For the clearest summation of this argument, see Stead (1984) 1047, where the argument is presented entirely without supporting evidence or footnotes.
490 P.Fay. 14.
administrative core of the Ptolemaic state. The goodwill of high-ranking officials could prove quite a powerful resource and was actively sought by private citizens and priests alike. A letter from Tebtunis notes that a certain official named Posidonius had received a priestly delegation and would, in turn, work on their behalf if asked.

Connections between the priests, their temples, and the Ptolemaic administrators could be closer than simply the reception of delegations. In the eyes of the Ptolemaic state, the temples were another branch of the government. They could prove restive, but they could also serve as a valuable counterweight to the power of local administrators—a strategos, for instance—especially since high-ranking temple officials could, in many cases, be drawn from the king’s courtiers. Strengthening the temples, to a point, deepened Ptolemaic control in the nomes, and helped to reconcile the countryside with the new rulers. In addition, the temples could provide more direct benefits to the state. Clarysse and Vandorpe’s examination of the Ptolemaic apomoira highlights a number of instances in which the apomoira funds collected were diverted for other, state-driven purposes: payment to “the guards,” to a tax-collector, or to the soldiers in a camp in Theogonis, near Tebtunis. While these examples are drawn from collections around Philadelphiea for the new apomoira funding devotion to Arsinoe Philadelphos, a series of Ptolemaic decrees make it clear that the apomoira due to the temples was also being diverted. In addition, funds diverted from the Arsinoe-apomoira were funds diverted from the temples, since the cult of the sunnaoi theoi was established within the temples.

491 The sanctuary of Khnum, for instance, on Elephantine Island, was the site of frequent visits and dedications by court officials and military commanders in the Ptolemaic period. For this, see Maehler (1992) 209-213.
492 P.Tebt. 1.59 (99 BC).
493 See Quaegebeur (1979) 722, esp. n. 67.
494 P.Col.Zen. 1.55 (250 BC, Philadelphiea)
495 P.Zen.Pestm. 34 (248-240 BC, Philadelphiea)
496 P.Cair.Zen. 5.59834 (241, Philadelphiea). For all examples, see Clarysse and Vandorpe (1998) 14-16.
Greek and Egyptian, and was accompanied by a fundamental change in the organization of the Egyptian temples, that is, the creation of a fifth *phyle*. In any case, the fluidity with which a tax intended for the temples was sometimes intercepted for governmental use reminds us of the porous (or non-existent) border between “religion” and “state.” As officials moved up (or down) the ranks of the Ptolemaic administrative hierarchy, a different set of officials with a different chain of command were also at work in the religious hierarchy. The connections between “temple” and “state” are both deepened and complicated by Dietze’s suggestion that temples in Upper Egypt housed soldiers in the Ptolemaic period, explaining at once the absence of military camps on the Nubian border in this period, an interest by the Ptolemies’ Greek troops in gifts to Egyptian temples, and heavy damage to temples throughout the border region after rebellions and Nubian invasions. While the priests were presumably not also military commanders, the quartering of Ptolemaic forces in the outer courtyards of the temple would have clearly indicated, not only for the priests and soldiers, but for the people of the region, the close connections between the various branches of the Ptolemaic government.

The close relationship between temple officials and other aspects of the state is visible as far back as the Old Kingdom. The boastful inscription of Weni records his claim to have gone out against “Asiatic sand-dwellers” at the head of pharaoh’s army, with smaller units commanded by various officials, including a number of high priests. Based on the evidence of

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498 The *apomoira* for Arsinoe was collected from lands that had not previously been liable for the *apomoira* benefitting the temples. After the creation of the Arsinoe-*apomoira*, however, the diversion of this money would have harmed the temples, as the creation of a fifth *phyle* and the additional rites for the *sunnai theoi* carried significant costs.

499 While this no doubt grew up organically, it did add a level of control for the ruler, and a check to the power of regional administrators. Given the hard lessons that both the Persian Empire and Alexander’s failed state learned about breakaway satraps, Ptolemy—himself a breakaway satrap—must have appreciated as many checks on his subordinates as possible, especially those in control of military units.


501 For the text, see Sethe, *Urk.* 1.2, 98-109. For the context of Weni’s stele, see Richards (2002), *passim*.
a so-called priestly family from Memphis, “religious” and “secular” titles could still overlap significantly in the Ptolemaic period. One man, Petubastis (Petubastis II in Reymond’s reckoning), served as a prophet of Ptah, a priest within the citadel of the White Walls, scribe of the book recording the endowments of Ptah in “every area” (šḥḥbp p3 ḫtp-ntr Pth n ryt nḥt), and many other titles while also being a grandson of Ptolemy IX.502 Other members of the family served as prophets in Tehne and Memphis as well as royal scribes, and possibly as secretaries to the Ptolemies in Alexandria.503 In this context, then, governmental decrees that would otherwise sound aggressive, such as the registration of the contents of temple treasuries, appear at least a little less harsh when the same man who prepares the account might be the same man who receives the account.504 If the same individuals filled most of the administrative roles for the worship of Ptah in Memphis and also were secretaries and close relatives to the kings, the supposed antagonism between priests and kings takes on a decidedly different appearance.

The arrival of Greek bureaucrats and soldiers in Egypt did not fundamentally change the economic basis of the Egyptian “well-to-do class,” as Clarysse terms them.505 Like Weni and Petubastis, these men could combine political and religious titles, but they could also hold substantial private estates. Horos, a relatively low-ranking temple official—he served as pastophoros for Hathor at Deir el-Ballas, a site south of Dendara—nevertheless bequeathed five houses, a palm-grove, and 40 arouras of agricultural land.506 This property was his own, separate from his duties at the temple, though he did increase his holdings with a “purchase” of 36 arouras of temple land at auction.507 This picture may have been different in the Fayum, where Ptolemaic

503 Ibid., 79-82 (=BM Stele 375) and 53.
504 Ibid., 130, 134.
505 Clarysse (1979) 732.
506 Clarysse (1979) 733. For Deir el-Ballas, see Lacovara (1990).
507 Clarysse (1979) 733.
engineering works opened a large new area to settlement and expansion. In the meris of Herakleides, settlement predated the Ptolemaic expansion, which meant that villages there were generally larger and the Egyptian population more established than in the villages of the other merides of the Arsinoite nome, especially the meris of Themistos, which relied on the new canals. The role of Greek military settlers should not be overstated—even in Krokodilopolis, the capital and largest city of the nome, only something like 15% (560 out of 4000) were military settlers, and there would have been even fewer in the smaller villages. Outside of Krokodilopolis, temple staff, by dint of their education and role in the temple, could have had a substantial role in managing the villages.

Temple officials could have an important role outside of the temple, but the structure of power within the temple remained of great significance. During the Ptolemaic period, some changes in how the temples governed themselves and how the ruler oversaw the temples were made. The temple priests—that is, particularly the priests and not the temple-associated employees who are often lumped in with them—met as a body to deliberate and to elect, once a year, a new leader. This position, mr-šn in Egyptian and lesonis in Greek, was essentially that of a chief priest and security for the temple’s financial obligations. As Clarysse notes, this would prevent the collective punishment of the temple, and instead focus responsibility on the one in

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509 Clarysse and Thompson (2006), v. 2, 100.
510 Clarysse and Thompson (2006), v. 2, 97. Many of the professions tied to Greek identity—athletic coaches, actors, and cleruchs—were mostly represented in the capital, with only a small number scattered throughout the rest of the Arsinoite.
511 I am grateful to Andrew Monson for sharing a draft of a papyrus from the Tebtunis cartonnage that records a bid for the position of lesonis, offering a certain amount of money to the temple, in exchange for the payments due to the lesonis. The document is addressed to the “councilor priests,” (bouleis iereis) who did not necessarily form among themselves the voting body, but probably were able to sway opinions. For this, see Monson, “A Demotic Proposal to Become Chief Priests of Harsaphes” (forthcoming). The degree to which the bid for the position was an official part of the process or instead represented unofficial, if presumably regular, electioneering is unclear.
command. As much of the temple property was of what previously had been the “apportioning” type, stripping temple property would have required evicting huge numbers of smaller tenants. Instead, with the lesonis made singly responsible for the collective indebtedness of the temple, a bad harvest or “investment” could have serious effects on the person and not the temple, as can be seen from the archive of Milon, in which a family perhaps more successful in the lesionial elections than in their business adventures ended the year 225 as much as 3 talents, 1260 drachmas behind in payments to the state. In ordinary cases, then, the administration of the temple was conducted by the lesonis acting for the board of priests. It is this administration that is protected by royal decrees, recorded in P.Tebt. 1.5 and 1.6, ensuring the rights of the priests to administer and work their own lands. In addition to the lesonis and the board of priests, they not surprisingly employed agents, or acted as agents of the temple themselves, who, in either case, do not seem to have been popular. A decree of Ptolemy VIII Physkon from 140-139 BC explicitly forbade anyone to hinder the agents of the priests when they were collecting the income from temple lands.

In some cases, however, the lesonis-priestly board system broke down. As mentioned, the Temple of Horus at Edfu appears to have been in the throes either of serious financial difficulties or of grave mismanagement in the mid-3rd century BC. In this case, then, the state, which had accepted guarantees from the lesonis personally, could step in and appoint an outside supervisor—the prakto—presumably with overarching powers to reform the temple in question. Our best evidence for the prakto’s work comes from the archive of Milon, found nearly intact in

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512 The ideological risks of civil officials stripping property from a temple that, nominally, at least, belongs to a god should be considered, though need not be the primary concern. See Clarysse (2003) 21-22.
514 Ibid., 22, though Clarysse is not confident in Sethe’s reconstruction. Whatever the exact amount, the family was deeply in debt.
515 P. Tebt. 1.5.60-61 and 1.6.40-46.
the course of excavations at Elephantine. Following Clarysse, it seems that the praktor’s office was a temporary one, a sort of troubleshooter for temples in trouble. Despite the title of πράκτωρ τῶν ἱερῶν, the official may have been concerned with a single temple at a time, at least as far as the Milon archive suggests.\textsuperscript{517} That Edfu was not unique in its financial difficulties can be seen from the presence of at least one other praktor—Euphronios—serving simultaneously with Milon.\textsuperscript{518} Though the praktor was a temporary position, the holder of the office could wield a significant amount of power locally and (perhaps consequently) prove quite unpopular. Milon, for instance, was attacked in the streets, presumably of Edfu.\textsuperscript{519}

The basic administrative structure of Egyptian temples under the Ptolemies was of the lesonis-priestly board type, the lesonis was selected by the priests and he oversaw temple affairs for the year. In the early days of the Ptolemaic period, however, another routine official was added to the roster, that of the “controller” (nty-šn) or “director” (ἔπιστάτης).\textsuperscript{520} The epistates was, at least initially, no doubt envisioned as a state check on temple expenditures.\textsuperscript{521} The incorporation of the epistates into the temple hierarchy, as well as their long-term embedding in the religious and cultural sphere, seems to have created a strong tendency towards Egyptian or Egyptianizing controllers. By the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century, the controllers at Edfu no longer have Greek names, but are now decisively Egyptian.\textsuperscript{522} In addition to the epistatai of particular temples,

\textsuperscript{517} The Milon archive concerns itself with the Edfu temple, though it is possible that the collection policy that created the archive selected out documents related to Milon’s work elsewhere. One papyrus in the archive (\textit{P.Eleph.Gr. 9}) records an order from his superiors for Milon to hasten from Syene to Edfu and could possibly represent work on another temple.
\textsuperscript{519} \textit{P.Eleph.Gr. 12} (April 14, 222 BC). Euphronios writes, probably from his office at Diospolis Magna. A letter sent out the following day (April 15) from Euphronios certainly was written in Diospolis.
\textsuperscript{520} This position, more specifically, the epistates hierou should not be conflated with the many other types of epistatai in Ptolemaic Egypt. For this, see Bauschatz (2013) 106-107, n. 19. Other epistatai could be stationed in or near temples, as at the Memphite Anoubeion, but probably, as Bauschatz notes, had a police function independent of the temple.
there are at least three references to *epistatai* of larger areas, usually a nome. These too have Egyptian names, such as Harbesis, *epistates* of the Thebaid temples (Αρβήσιος τοῦ ἐπιστάτου τῶν ἐν τῇ Θηβαίδι ιερῶν)\(^{523}\) or Pasis, *epistates* of the Arsinoite temples (Πάσιτος τοῦ ἐπιστάτου τῶν ἐν τῷ νομῷ ιερῶν).\(^{524}\) It is unclear to what degree the *epistatai* formed their own hierarchy, but a receipt for a syntaxis payment from 2\(^{nd}\) century BC Antaioupolis notes that the payment was made by a certain Horos, the representative of Harbesis, the previously mentioned *epistates* of the Thebaid temples (παρὰ Ὡροῦ τοῦ Νεχθύριος τοῦ παρ’ Αρβήσιος...).\(^{525}\) In addition to *epistatai* of individual temples and of individual nomes, one document from the archive of the *praktor* Milon from 225 BC suggests that there may have been a level beyond that, echoing the traditional division of Egypt into Upper and Lower Egypt. The high priest, a term sometimes used in place of *lesonis* but describing the same office, had failed to pay more than three talents of grain owed by the temple to the state, for which he was condemned by Estphiemensis, son of Peteharsiesis, the “*epistates* of the temples of the South” (nty- šn r n3 irpy-w n n3 lyny p3 t3-rsj).\(^{526}\) The term “of the South” (p3 t3-rsj) refers to Upper Egypt.\(^{527}\) While this degree of hierarchy is not otherwise attested, it does seem to fit into a Ptolemaic system of control that gave the temples their own hierarchy. As Clarysse notes, “here, as in other respects, the temple administration is not so different from the civil administration.”\(^{528}\) Not so different, but separate. While the temples had a certain degree of freedom in their activities, especially if they weren’t late in tax or rent payments, there were higher-ups they reported to, all of which led to the system of control the Ptolemies no doubt envisioned when they paired the civil *epistatai* with separate,

\(^{523}\) *P. Paramone 7* (Antaiopolis, 2\(^{nd}\) century BC), ll. 8-9.

\(^{524}\) BGU 6.1214 (*meris* of Herakleides, 2\(^{nd}\) century BC), l. 7.

\(^{525}\) *P. Paramone 7* (Antaiopolis, 2\(^{nd}\) century BC), ll. 7-8.

\(^{526}\) *P. Bürgsch*. 14 (Edfu, 225 BC), l. 18.

\(^{527}\) *P. Bürgsch*. p. 361, n. 31b.

but equally important, temple *epistatai*. That the people filling the position of temple *epistates* (or even *epistates* of the temples of a nome or greater region) were Egyptian might speak to a reclaiming of the position, but it probably rather points to an internalization of the hierarchy imposed by the Ptolemies.

*Egyptian Temples in the Landscape of the Ptolemaic Period*

In this section, we will consider three particular areas and their temples in the Ptolemaic period. From Memphis, the former capital (and major religious site) and its massive temples, we will turn to the development of the Fayum economically and religiously under the Ptolemies, and finally, the nitty-gritty evidence for temple land tenure in the small village of Kerkeosiris, in the southern Fayum, in the last decades of the 2nd century BC.

**Memphis: Temples in the Former Capital**

In his comparison of the Fayumic evidence with that from the Thebaid, Manning offers a strong corrective to our tendency to assemble a broad narrative and structures from incomplete or insufficiently broad evidence. What is clear, however, is that variation did not stop at the edge of the Thebaid or the Bahr Yusuf, but that each area of Egypt might have a significant variability. Memphis, as the capital of the country under the pharaohs and in the initial years of Ptolemy’s kingship, featured an array of religious institutions. Even as the “second city” of Egypt after the foundation of Alexandria, Memphis remained a dynamic, diverse city with a substantial administrative, commercial, and cultural role. The famous “white walls,” which often stood metonymically for the city itself, protected the palaces and quarters of the city, but in many places, the walls and enclosures of the temples encircled administrative, residential,
commercial structures.\textsuperscript{529} Thompson notes that the Temple of Imhotep (known by the Greeks as the Asklepieion) contained in addition to temple buildings and the supposed tomb of Imhotep, residences for barbers and embalmers.\textsuperscript{530} Evidence from other Memphite temples confirms that the temples contained and most likely controlled an array of administrative, cultural, and economic activity. The Temple of Anubis, located in the necropolis region about 3-4 kilometers northwest of the palaces and wharves, had within its walls a representative of nearly every part of Egyptian life: the grapheion, the strategos, temple priests, embalmers, “potters, shepherds, barbers, grain merchants, water carriers, cloth merchants, doctors, and dream interpreters.”\textsuperscript{531} In addition, all walks of life were joined in death, and all—at least all who could afford it—could become a source of income for the funerary workers. Evidence from the Memphite necropolis shows a wide, if formulaic, range of professions and groups that were interred there (and thus provided income): not only priests, scribes, and temple officials, but also brewers, farmers, soldiers, along with the husbands, wives, parents-in-law, siblings, children, servants, and so on.\textsuperscript{532}

Within the urban area of Memphis itself, commercial and industrial activities might have been more prominent, but the Memphite temples nevertheless controlled large agricultural estates. Thompson suggests that Memphite temple lands accounted for something around 25 square kilometers of agricultural land by the arrival of Alexander.\textsuperscript{533} This number, however, is based on the Harris papyrus and the confidence that nothing significant could have affected temple holdings between the 12\textsuperscript{th} century BC and the 4\textsuperscript{th}. As we have seen, temple land (and the

\textsuperscript{529} See Thompson (2012) 14 n. 37 for suggestions concerning the walls of Memphis and their composition.
\textsuperscript{530} Thompson (2012), 22.
\textsuperscript{531} Thompson (2012), 23.
\textsuperscript{532} \textit{P. Dem.Memphis} 8A.2-3
\textsuperscript{533} Thompson (2012), 100.
allocation of it) was a powerful weapon in any pharaoh’s arsenal and, given the upheaval that affected Egypt throughout the Third Intermediate, Saite, and Persian periods, the assumption that lands under the Memphite temples remained more or less static seems highly unlikely.

For a city like Memphis, which chose to collaborate with the Ptolemaic kings rather than risk destruction in a failed revolt, the benefits from the Ptolemaic state could be significant. These benefits were accompanied by more state surveillance of their operations. The temples received an additional level of oversight, the *epistates*, though this could, in many examples, represent a “dotted-line boss” or an additional title for one already in the temple hierarchy.\(^{534}\)

Even the production of their day to day needs could be regulated. The so-called “Revenue Laws”—perhaps better called the Revenue Decrees—of Ptolemy II Philadelphus record the fundamentals of the oil—primarily sesame, castor, and flaxseed, not olive—monopoly created by the Ptolemies.\(^{535}\) As their income from letting out the oil monopoly was necessarily connected to the value of oil in the Egyptian markets, the kings took a series of steps to ensure that the value remained high. First, they punished production outside the monopoly in Egypt. Second, they closed the borders to the trade in oil, keeping Egyptian oil free from competition. Third, they carefully regulated the production of oil for and by the temples. The temples required a certain amount of oil in their rituals, and were accustomed to producing it themselves with their own presses, if the text of the Revenue Law is any indication.\(^{536}\)

Following the promulgation of the decree, the temples were ordered to bring their presses to the state-licensed oil factories and there to produce only a certain amount of oil, equal to whatever needs they previously had officially

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\(^{534}\) Preaux (1939) 480 and Thompson (2012) 104, esp. nn. 32 and 33. For the hierarchy of temples in the Ptolemaic period in more detail, see below.

\(^{535}\) For the production of oils in Ptolemaic Egypt, especially in relation to the Revenue Laws, see Sandy (1989).

\(^{536}\) *P.Revenue* II. 50.20-52.3
In addition to the oil monopoly, the temples were affected by the Ptolemaic weaving monopoly and, as Préaux suggests, perhaps the monopoly on papyrus production as well. While these are couched in the language of prohibition, it is difficult, if not impossible, to tell how much the creation of state monopolies may have cost the temples. It is possible, perhaps likely, that the monopolies had little practical effect on the temples. Many temple personnel had varied economic holdings, of both temple land and non-temple land, and could have attempted to secure a role in the new monopolies. In addition, the temples could still sell whatever produce they had surplus to their own needs to the new producers. Finally, the evidence for any sort of large-scale oil or weaving activity in the temples, such that their banning would impact temple funds, immediately prior to or during the early Ptolemaic period, is lacking.

While it seems that the production of byssus-cloth, required for temple rituals, was taxed by the state, the rate of taxation need not have been great. It was specifically mentioned in the decree of Ptolemy V recorded on the Rosetta Stone, but its inclusion may have been on a point of pride and not economic necessity. The imposition of a new tax (or re-imposition of a lapsed one), however minor, may rankle more than the continued levying of a larger tax. While the

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537 P. Revenue II. 50.20-52.3 for the regulation. Stead argues that the temples were not able to produce oil equal to their needs, but offers no evidence on which to base her claim. As her argument runs directly counter to the text of the Revenue Laws itself, it seems rather to fit into the generally alarmist tone of her article, for which see Stead (1984) 1046.

538 Préaux (1939) 190-191. For the weaving monopoly and the temples, see Préaux (1939) 96-99 and 102-104

539 Cf. Bingen (2007) 171 who argues that the regulations concerning oil in the Revenue Laws primarily belong in “the area of taxation of a widely used product and not in that of a thought-through redesign of production, and not above all in that of a deliberate policy of concerted pressure on the economic situation.”

540 That is, olives to the oil presses, for instance. Not controlling the whole means of production obviously reduces one’s profits but does not destroy them outright.

541 There is certainly evidence for weaving, for instance, at temples—see above for temple weavers in the New Kingdom—it is likely that they were providing for the well-known needs for linen for priests and statues.

542 Rosetta stone, ll. 17-18. The willingness of the Ptolemaic negotiators to forgo two-thirds of the byssus-tax may point to the small economic impact of the tax. Byssus production also took place within “the house of Pharaoh Ptolemy” (pr Pr.-³ Pthmys), for which see the stele of Petubastis, for which see Reymond (1981) 118-135.
Greek text is ambiguous, the Demotic and Hieroglyphic texts of the Rosetta decree suggest that the tax was not paid in coin, but was instead payable in the cloth itself.\(^5\)

Religious Development in the Ptolemaic Fayum

The Ptolemies chose to develop the Fayum depression, which had previously been settled somewhat more sparsely and which was largely known as the hunting retreat of the Pharaoh.\(^4\) By assigning land in the Fayum to their military veterans on lifelong leases, the Ptolemies avoided the problem of land availability along the Nile. Gifts of land to veterans and government favorites along the Nile or, less probably, in the western oases\(^5\) would have required removing that land from whomever then held the claim, while the Fayum lands reclaimed from Lake Moeris were more or less *terra nullius*.\(^6\) While rearranging the owners of Nile-side property would no doubt leave the small land-holders fundamentally unchanged in many places, it was an unsatisfactory option. The two best sources for land for the king along the Nile were royal land and temple land.\(^7\) The acquisition of mercenary soldiers and the payment of salaries of both mercenaries and local Greek forces required large amounts of ready cash, and the royal lands were an important source of these funds. The temple lands, meanwhile, posed a different problem. The rapid transition of the Fayum from a marshy basin to an intensively farmed

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\(^5\) In Demotic, *tr m pqt*. While there may have been a small market for byssus-fabric, the priests also drove the market, creating high demand for byssus-cloth for ritual and funerary use.

\(^4\) Butzer (1976), 92-93, estimates only 400 square kilometers were cultivable in the New Kingdom Fayum—down from 450 in the Middle Kingdom but up quite a bit from 100 in the Old Kingdom. By the mid-2nd century BC, meanwhile, Butzer estimates around 1300 square kilometers were cultivable. See also Butzer (2012) 2-3.

\(^5\) Although it has been assumed that Ptolemaic activity in the western oases was fairly small, recent archaeological work has shown a continuity of occupation from the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic, with evidence for local industry and a strong connection to the Nile valley. For more, see Gill (2012) 231, 239-240.

\(^6\) There was settlement in the Fayum, of course, on a much smaller scale, but large areas of the basin were underwater at the advent of the Ptolemaic period.

\(^7\) There were substantial family estates along the Nile already in the hands of Egyptian families. See Clarysse (1979) 742.
economic powerhouse required quite a bit of investment. Without having access to Ptolemy I Soter’s private thoughts or the minutes of his advisors’ meetings, it may well be that removing lands currently assigned to temples along the Nile and re-assigning them to settlers, while well within the powers claimed and practiced by the Ptolemies, would have seriously damaged their popularity with the temples at a dangerous time in the establishment of the kingdom. Settling so many veterans and friends would either have required the removal of land from a huge swath of religious institutions, ensuring the uniform hostility of the religious institutions or the removal of land disproportionally from the most well-endowed temples, ensuring the enmity of the most powerful institutions while maintaining the goodwill of the less important—unless Ptolemy was prepared to offer a substantial new source of income in place of these lands, which he clearly was not. Despite Manning’s belief that Ptolemaic settlement in the Fayum displaced farmers, there is no clear evidence that this was the case. Though the towns were new, they were nevertheless recognizably Egyptian, also religiously. Theadelphia, a Ptolemaic settlement laid out in the 3rd century BC, “had no fewer than seven Egyptian temples.” It is reasonable to expect that, as with older cities in Egypt, the reach of the newer temples extended even into the mental mapping of the towns themselves by their citizens. Indeed, we might wonder what role the Egyptian temples played in the surge of settlement in the Ptolemaic Fayum. Recent

548 See, for instance, SB 5.8243+P.Mich.inv. 3098 discussed in Manning (2003) 105 and Clarysse (1988) passim. This was no doubt the cause for the requirement that grants of land to Greek military settlers, primarily in the Fayum, be to be reclaimed from the undeveloped Fayum basin, for which see Clarysse (1979) 742.

549 Manning (2003) 108-109 cites P.Cair.Zen 2.59245 (252 BC) for this claim. The papyrus in question, recording a letter from Kollouthes to the well-known Zenon, merely says that the tenant farmers of the land measured out to the soldiers (τοὺς γεωργοὺς ἐκ τῆς καταμετρημένης γῆς τοῖς στρατιώταις) had run off to the Temple of Isis, a not insignificant trip from the Fayum. We need not expect that the land given to the settlers was farmed only by them, and flights to a nearby temple were an occasional bargaining technique for the peasants, for which see, e.g., P.Tebt. 1.27.


551 See, for instance, P.Brit.Mus. 4.1, esp. n. 25 for the orientation of Thebes around two temples (and the possibility of a fluid relationship between those directions.)
excavations in the temple of Soknopaios which dominated the village of Soknopaiou Nesos, have suggested that the complex was first built in the Ptolemaic period.\textsuperscript{552} The settlement of new territory was uncommon (though not unheard of) in Egypt, especially throughout the Late Period as the kingdom reconciled its ambitions to its means, and the temples and temple-centered religion were at the heart of the Egyptian experience.\textsuperscript{553} The creation or expansion of cities and villages in the Fayum during the early Ptolemaic period had an effect not only on the towns themselves but on the hierarchy of the landscape. Bird’s suggestion that a city is the “canonized form of center at the apex of a hierarchy,” can apply as well to the temples, and we can see the effect of the creation of new religious centers in the Ptolemaic period on the Fayumic landscape, as the hierarchy was restructured.\textsuperscript{554} Even if some small settlements were scattered around the former shores of the Birket Qarun, the decline in lake size and development of irrigation systems would require a reorganization of space. The creation of new towns and cities rearranged the theoretical landscape in the basin as well, as land now had to be seen in relation to newly created villages, storehouses, and so on.

The creation or substantial expansion of temples in the Fayum in the Ptolemaic period was a part of this reordering of space. As can be seen even from a plan of Tebtunis (see fig. 2 in Ch. 2), the temple dominates the space when viewed from above, and this locus of control radiated out from the temple across the nearby land. In Soknopaiou Nesos, the ridge overlooking the Birket Qarun became a major regional religious site, maintaining the religious associations of

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[552] Davoli et al. (2010), 154. The change in dating from Late Ptolemaic/Early Roman to Ptolemaic is on stylistic grounds. See also Davoli (2005) 34-35, for other aspects of a clearly post-Alexander dating for temple outbuildings. For the temple and a possible pre-Ptolemaic level, see Ch. 2.
\item[553] Though the project carried settlement into new areas of the Fayum, it should not be thought that the entire basin was empty previously. The temple at Medinet Madi, for instance, dates to the 12\textsuperscript{th} dynasty, though it did see substantial renovation and expansion under the Ptolemies. For a summary of this, see Bresciani and Giammarusti (2012), 15, with supporting evidence in the following chapters.
\item[554] Bird, quoted in Smith (1987) 50.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
the Middle Kingdom site at Qasr es-Sagha, but reoriented towards the center of the Fayum and not, as Qasr es-Sagha, towards the desert, which Qasr es-Sagha, as a quarry site, may have been conceptually part of. J.Z. Smith’s work on the mental organization of the entire land of the Israelites via the Jerusalem Temple points to the value of religion in effecting a conceptual picture of place.\textsuperscript{555} For the religious authorities in Egypt, the creation and expansion of temples in the Fayum kept the area recognizably Egyptian, despite the large number of Greeks being settled on the land, or at least being given claims to the land in the Fayum.\textsuperscript{556} Unlike Alexandria, which was conceptually severed from the rest of Egypt, the Fayum had been incorporated, even if lightly, into the Pharaonic kingdom, and the collaboration between the Ptolemies and the temples as both expanded into the new area ensured that it remained thus. The efforts to fix the temples and Egyptian religion as the central features of the Fayum can be seen in the so-called “Book of the Fayum,” probably written in the Ptolemaic period and frequently recopied in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods.\textsuperscript{557} In this document, the Fayum is presented as a thoroughly religious, myth-rich place, tied to the rest of the Nile through such descriptions as “She moved from Abydos into the region of Ta-wer. She then founded a temple….”\textsuperscript{558} The Book of the Fayum not only tied the Fayum to the rest of Egypt conceptually through religion, but also staked a forceful claim for the centrality of the temples in controlling the Fayum and defining a particularly Egyptian identity for the newly expanded territory.

Temple Lands: The View from Kerkeosiris

One of our best sources for nearly every aspect of local administration in the Ptolemaic

\textsuperscript{555} See esp. Smith (1987) 47-73. See also Tait (2003).
\textsuperscript{556} Reflected also in toponyms in the Fayum. Clarysse (2007b) has shown that Fayum was (probably not deliberately) “constructed as a miniature Egypt: Delta cities in the north (Herakleidou meris), Nile valley cities in the south (Polemon meris) and Alexandrian demes in the east (Themistou meris).” For this, see esp. p. 81.
\textsuperscript{557} Examples being found, e.g., in Tebtunis or Deir el-Medina. See Beinlich (1991) 15.
\textsuperscript{558} Beinlich (1991) 242-243, l. 1041.
period is what Arthur Verhoogt has called “the Menches papers.” Menches served as the village scribe in Kerkeosiris, located in the south of the Fayum, near Tebtunis, from at least 119 until at least 113, though in all likelihood his service began earlier and continued later than these dates. Though his chief responsibility was “to account for the Crown revenues in kind from his village lands,” he also oversaw the survey in his area, which included registers of temple and shrine property. Thanks to a short-lived enthusiasm in the nearby village of Tebtunis for stuffing the mummies of their sacred crocodiles with scrap paper (and the discovery of this habit by fortuitous mummy-smashing), the documentary record for Menches and the village he recorded is much better than the comparable record for other villages, whether within or without the Fayum. Though a practice dating back at least to the New Kingdom, the land survey was enthusiastically adopted by the Ptolemies and practiced with something approaching precision. These records do allow impressive feats of reconstruction, such as Crawford’s mapping of large parts of the village fields, but their richness must not be taken for completeness. The surveys record with right angles a land defined as much by the curves of the land and by the rising and falling of water levels in (and out of) the dikes. The surveyors used a number of methods to reduce the error inherent in this system, but error remained and was in fact compounded by systematic corruption in the office of the komogrammateus prior to Menches. As such, we can

560 Ibid., 54-69. Verhoogt suggests that Menches’ service prior to his re-appointment in 119 may have been as “trainee village scribe.”
561 Ibid., 109.
562 P.Tebt. preface, vi.
563 Crawford (1971) 5-9. For the survey, see also Vidal-Naquet (1967), Cuvigny (1985), and Keenan and Shelton’s introduction to P.Tebt. volume 4 (pp. 2-15).
564 For these maps, see Crawford (1971) 160-161. An attempt to bring together all the land surveys to recreate, as much as possible, the changing Kerkeosirite landscape over time remains a desideratum.
565 For correctives to land measurement errors, see Crawford (1971) 12-13. For corrupt officials in Kerkeosiris, see Verhoogt (1998) 25-27. In other villages, these errors may have been compounded by a failed general strike of the komogrammatei of the Arsinoite nome in 118-117, for which see Verhoogt (1998) 149-161.
take the Kerkeosiris surveys (and associated documents) as representative of a time (the late 2nd century) and a place (the southern end of the Division of Polemon) and can, with caution, look to compare the Kerkeosirite situation to that of different places or different times.\textsuperscript{566}

The registers of religious institutions in Kerkeosiris do give us a sense of the richness of the religious landscape even in the small conurbations. While the village was host to a number of shrines of its own, temples and gods from other cities and villages also had a presence. Orsenouphis, from the nearby village of Magdola, was joined by Soknebtunis, from Tebtunis, as well as Souchos from Ptolemais Euergetis (the nome capital also known as Krokodilopolis and, informally, Arsinoe).\textsuperscript{567} While some sort of financial guidelines were being imposed from above, as we have seen, in the Ptolemaic period, the management of these temples and shrines was clearly not of a uniform style or ambition. Crawford’s suggestion that the overseers of Soknebtunis were particularly active in seeking out tenants is a good one, while the problem of the relative inactivity of the fields of Petesouchos, especially the 5 3/8 arouras that were not farmed for a period during the 110s BC, remains vexing.\textsuperscript{568} The land registers from Kerkeosiris make it clear in addition that crown land and temple property were sometimes overlapping categories. The aforementioned shrine of Petesouchos in Kerkeosiris straddled this line, standing out in the crowded religious landscape of the area largely through an innovative (or desperate) financial strategy. As the land belonging to the shrine appears to have been out of cultivation for a number of years, the priests took on the farming of royal lands.\textsuperscript{569} Despite the interpretation of the original editors of \textit{P.Tebt.} 1.93, the document should not be read as an endorsement of royal

\textsuperscript{566} See Criscuolo (1978) 3-101 for an example of reliance on evidence from Menches to support much broader conclusions.

\textsuperscript{567} See pages 12 and 13 in Keenan and Shelton’s introduction \textit{P.Tebt.} vol. 4 for their discussion of Souchos and his potential homes. For Krokodilopolis, see Ch. 2

\textsuperscript{568} Crawford (1971) 96; See also \textit{P.Tebt.} 4, introduction 14. Much of the following discussion is drawn from Connor (2013).

\textsuperscript{569} \textit{P.Tebt.} 1.93.55-70.
management of temple property.\textsuperscript{570} Instead, the shrine of Petesouchos leased royal land in at least four places, while the tenants on the land, that is, the actual farmers, probably remained the same, perhaps with a different middleman than before.\textsuperscript{571} As royal farmers, their lands were subject to a number of taxes not necessarily incumbent on temple land, such as the repayment of seed loans or the θησαυροφυλακτικόν.\textsuperscript{572}

The decision (or necessity) for these temples to take on royal land and the extremely high tax rates that accompanied it suggests that temples in Kerkeosiris may not have had another choice. If we accept Crawford’s rate of return of around 10 artabas per aroura in Kerkeosiris, and an average taxation rate on royal land of around 33%, the royal farmer saw around a $6 \frac{2}{3}$ artaba/aroura return after taxes. By contrast, temple land would pay at least 6.25% taxation, that is, 0.5 artaba/aroura on the basic rate. While we have a fairly accurate picture, however, of the intricate network of payments required of a royal farmer or cleruch, we are much less informed about additional payments required from temple lands, whether extracted by the temples or the royal treasury directly. The village possessed, apparently communally, a very large (10 arouras) threshing floor which allowed for rents, taxes, and payments to be taken out directly, and may have served in addition for the temple harvests.\textsuperscript{573} Aside from the payment of the 0.5 artaba tax to the royal treasury out of the temple harvests, which has long been recognized, we might reconsider the division of the remaining produce. If, on average, 9.5 artabas were left over at the threshing floor at the payment of the 0.5 artaba tax, the payment made to the temple, whatever

\textsuperscript{570} P.Tebt. vol. 1, 412-413. Shelton (1976) 121-124 provides a complete and convincing dismantling of this argument.
\textsuperscript{571} Some of the men listed as paying rent on behalf of the god are listed elsewhere as paying rent on their own behalf.
\textsuperscript{572} For an overview of fees and taxes, see Préaux (1939) 131-133. For the seed loan, see P.Revenue ll. 43.3-19 and Grenfell (1896) 136-138.
\textsuperscript{573} Crawford (1971), 47. As discussed above, temples were forced to bring their oil-presses to state-controlled oil factories for observation during their operation, and we might suspect that threshing was no different, especially since the state was expected to take payment from the grain thus prepared.
size that payment was, served, in effect, as an additional tax or rent.\textsuperscript{574}

One other factor in the taking on of royal land by the temple of Petesouchos may have been a simple question of scarcity. By the time of Menches, the great Ptolemaic project in the Fayum had become a success and the scattered villages had expanded. By the end of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC, there were quite a few temples and residents in the Fayum, and the available land was not significantly increasing. With the large number of temples in even the smaller Fayum villages, there may not have been other land to cushion the loss of temple land while it was brought back into cultivation.\textsuperscript{575} If we combine this with our proposed average rate of return on royal land, we are left with a situation in which tenants of royal land occupy a distinctly lower tier, paying more taxes on often worse land.\textsuperscript{576} There is little direct evidence to explain why Petesouchos took on royal land, but the most likely scenario is directly related to the scarcity of land in Kerkeosiris and the small size of the god’s land. The 5 3/8 arouras of Petesouchos are listed as productive in 119-118 BC and again in 112.\textsuperscript{577} Between those years, however, the land seems to have fallen out of use. In 116-115 BC, the entire parcel was listed as ἄσπορος, suggesting it was one section of land and not a patchwork of smaller fields.\textsuperscript{578} All of the securely dated examples of crown tenancy by Petesouchos are between 119 and 112, and it is likely that they represent a temporary solution to a serious problem.\textsuperscript{579} In the short period covered by the Menches papers there are a number of examples of natural events taking moderately sized amounts of land out of production—a dike collapse in Theogonis in 117 BC, for instance,

\textsuperscript{574} For temple land operated by temple personnel \textit{ex officio}, this would not apply. For land closer to the New Kingdom apportioning land, however, the temple would have to leave enough to the farmer to provide his subsistence.
\textsuperscript{575} There were, in addition, problems with the administrative framework and land registration related to political and criminal activity in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century, for which see also the following chapter.
\textsuperscript{576} Royal land was often encumbered with the requirement to farm land that was, at best, marginal.
\textsuperscript{577} Crawford (1971) 99.
\textsuperscript{578} \textit{P. Tebt.} 1.63, ll. 25-26.
\textsuperscript{579} Connor (2013).
affected land in Kerkeosiris, and this sort of breakdown was not unique.\footnote{580} If the land was under cultivation in 119 and again in 112, we might assume that the land was not “distinctly poor,” as Shelton calls it, but probably suffering from some sort of local catastrophe, one that took a few years to repair.\footnote{581}

Based on the periods during which the land of Petesouchos was under cultivation and during which it was ἄσπορος, the most likely explanation for the crown tenancy of Petesouchos is that the small patch of sacred land belonging to the god was rendered, by some natural or manmade event, unfit for cultivation during the period 117-112 BC. While the priests or others labored to bring the fields back into cultivation, the temple turned to crown land as a way to bridge the gap, taking on a much larger amount of crown land, with its lower rate of return, to offset the smaller amount of sacred land that was out of service. When in 112 the fields of the god were fit for cultivation again, the temple could give up its crown lands, lands which imposed a much higher administrative burden relative to the return.\footnote{582} In this reconstruction, then, Petesouchos’ crown tenancy enabled the temple and the priests to survive the temporary loss of their land. Despite the high degree of path dependency present in temple administration, the crisis facing the temple of Petesouchos required thinking “outside of the box,” and in the increasingly crowded Fayum basin, crown tenancy allowed the temple to survive for the better part of a decade until the crisis had passed.\footnote{583}

Conclusions

\footnote{580}{Connor (2013).}
\footnote{581}{Shelton (1976) 121-122. If the recovery of the land was undertaken only by the temple, their limited resources may have slowed the process.}
\footnote{582}{The crown land involved multiple parcels of land with multiple tenants, land that may have been spread throughout the region of Kerkeosiris rather than concentrated in one place, in addition to the higher administrative burden imposed by crown tenancy itself.}
\footnote{583}{See the previous chapter for a possible example of temple crown tenancy in the Roman period, though almost certainly for a different reason.}
We have now sketched out the development of the temples from the Pharaonic through the late Ptolemaic period. Scholars have, from time to time, attempted to cite statistics from the New Kingdom to suggest the size of temple estates in the Ptolemaic period, a method that does not stand up to close scrutiny, even for rough estimates. Rather, what can be productively taken away from the New Kingdom (and earlier) is the package of administrative options open to the Pharaoh as he interacted with the temples, and the failure of the temples’ economic operations in the longue durée without intervention. The administrative package was used periodically in the Third Intermediate and Late Periods, most notably by Cambyses after the Persian conquest of Egypt. While an improved picture of Persian Egypt remains a desideratum,\textsuperscript{584} it seems likely that much of Persian administrative practice was taken over mostly intact by the Ptolemies, at least initially and adapted over the next centuries.

Both the kings and temples of the Ptolemaic period inherited a set of expected behaviors in relation to each other. Through such behavior, the often conflicting demands of temple, royal government, and local administration were generally able to find a modus cooperandi. Over the course of the Ptolemaic period, some income sources that had traditionally been available to the temples, including mining and manufacture of goods, were absorbed into the state itself, often in need of ready cash and eager to farm its tax collection. Nevertheless, surviving decrees, especially the so-called “Revenue Laws” of Ptolemy II, do not necessarily prove that temples were large-scale producers of goods prior to a Ptolemaic confiscation, but rather that the temples retained the right to produce quantities sufficient to their own needs, despite the royal monopolies being established. One area in which the Ptolemies set themselves apart was through

\textsuperscript{584} Ruzicka’s recent book (2012) offers, despite its title, primarily a history of Persian wars with Egypt drawn from Greek sources, and not on life and administration under the Persians.
the development of the Fayum basin, turning it from a lightly-populated marshland to a dense collection of town, villages, and hamlets scattered amidst an array of irrigation channels and lakes. Their use of mercenaries to settle the area did not prevent the (possibly pre-existing) indigenous religious institutions from flourishing, as can be seen from the spate of new temple construction, as well as the frequent mentions of temple estates on papyrus and stone.\textsuperscript{585}

Some changes were perhaps inevitable. While priests still frequently held political office (and vice versa), the previously semi-hereditary priestly orders no longer held the highest offices of the land, as they could boast in the New Kingdom and for much of the Late Period. Nevertheless, on at least the nome level, priests and public officials, at least those drawn from the Egyptian population, could find their interests moving in similar directions, if not directly overlapping. This close relationship of goals manifested in Upper Egypt in the form of the Great Theban Revolt, which, while born primarily not on religious grounds, was carried forward most strongly by those who happened also to hold religious offices. Indeed, the subject of holders of religious office acting not in their official duties has created a substantial confusion in modern scholarship. Individual temple officials or associations of temple officials appear frequently in texts, and have almost as frequently been taken as official agents of the temples, though, in most cases, this is clearly not the case.\textsuperscript{586}

By the end of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC, Rome already occupied a position of power in and around Egypt. We have largely confined our discussion in this chapter to periods before the beginning of the 1\textsuperscript{st} century, a stopping point which coincides both with some of our best evidence (e.g., Menches) and with the arrival of Rome in a more meaningful position within Egypt itself. In the following three chapters, we will explore the effects of the arrival of Rome

\textsuperscript{585} For the development of the temples in two Fayum villages, see Ch. 2.
\textsuperscript{586} E.g., \textit{P.Hauswaldt 17 (P.Berlin 11339)}.
and its subsequent administration on Egypt, beginning with the state of temple land in particular, a subject that has, as we have already seen in the case of *P.Tebt. 2.302*, provoked particular interest over the past century, evolving (more or less) into a scholarly consensus on Roman confiscations. Having removed the “confiscation narrative” as an explanatory device, we must examine again the temple land, to pick out, where possible, what changes occurred upon the arrival of Roman power in Egypt and what developed over the course of the 1st century BC through the 2nd century AD. Following this, we will turn to economic activities beyond agricultural production, that is, other than fields and orchards, to see how the temples continued to control agricultural industries, shops, religious services, and so on, giving them a powerful role in the community beyond that afforded by their ritual and mythological place. Finally, we will examine the administrative structure of the temples in the Roman period, as well as the Roman administrative structure developed to manage the temples of Egypt. These chapters, then, will offer a fresh study of the temples of Roman Egypt as economic actors with historical and social context.
Chapter 5: Temple Land in the Late Ptolemaic and Early Roman Periods

Introduction

Land made up the bulk of an Egyptian temple’s sources of income. We have seen in the previous chapter the development of temple land from the pharaonic period to the 2nd century BC. We can offer a general picture of temple land in the late Ptolemaic period: Temples controlled sometimes vast swathes of land, which they leased to tenants, and from which they drew rent. From a notional yield of ten artabas per aroura, one artaba in tax (generally) was paid to the state, a certain amount was paid as rent to the temple, and the remainder was kept by the tenant. In some cases, the tenant could be part of the temple staff, although the cultivation was undertaken in a private capacity, and not as part of their temple duties per se. Whatever grain accrued to the temple would be divided up among the priests and temple staff, with each share (save the lesonis and epistates, and possibly a small number of other unique positions) divided five ways among the five phylai of priests. The temples drew income from other sources, which we will discuss in the subsequent chapter, and these combined with the income from land generally sufficed to pay the staff. In addition, it seems that there were occasional grants (or separate funds) set aside to pay for festivals. The day to day operations of the temple, that is, the daily rites of the priests, the staffing of various offices, and so on, were funded by the income from land, from commercial operations, and from the syntaxis of the priests, along with some other smaller sources of income.

In the early Roman period, the priests continued to lease out their land, to receive the

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587 See, e.g., the Canopus Decree’s clarity on the establishment and funding of festivals for members of the Ptolemaic dynasty.
588 For the syntaxeis, see Ch. 7. Some payments, e.g., the lesoneia also redistributed money within the priestly ranks, generally from bottom to top of the hierarchy.
syntaxis in some fashion, and to participate in legal institutions forced upon them by a new provincial administration. If the Romans attacked temple income in Egypt and thus caused the eventual end of those temples, as many scholars claim, the evidence from the Augustan period does not show this. The Romans made a number of broad policy changes to bring the province into line with their own legal system and administrative inclinations. They did not, however, deliberately dismantle temple land to any large degree, at least temple land that was dedicated to the Egyptian gods of old.

In this chapter, we examine changes in the status of land from the Ptolemaic to the Roman period, considering royal land, the office of the idios logos, private land, and finally, temple land. Changes made in the early Roman period made royal land less attractive to tenants, while private land became much more popular. Royal land and private land stood at opposite ends of the spectrum of property rights in Roman Egypt, and we must understand as clearly as we can the status of those two types of land before we can attempt to place temple land on that spectrum. When we turn to temple land, we can in addition examine two recent suggestions concerning temple land in the Roman period; first, Andrew Monson’s dichotomy of directly controlled temple land and private temple land, and second, the idea that a dramatic overhaul of the status of temple land was a goal of the Roman bureaucracy in the province. With these in mind, we take Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos as case studies. As we have already seen, temple land around these two villages is especially controversial, in the former case thanks to P. Tebt. 2.302, and in the latter, thanks to the village’s place on the north, relatively arid, shore of the Birket Qarun. In the end, then, we can more accurately position temple land in the Roman

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589 For this, see Chs. 3 and 7, especially.
590 As we will see with the example of the epibole, however, these categories could overlap.
period, not as an offshoot of private or public land, but as a unique category, clearly in existence and generally held by tenants on long-term leases.

Changes in Policy Regarding Land between the Ptolemaic and Roman Periods

As Egypt passed from the rule of Cleopatra VII to provincial status in the Roman empire,\(^{591}\) we can expect that any changes in policies regarding land at this time would stem from one of three causes: first, fundamental differences between Ptolemaic and Roman law concerning property and the state’s role in overseeing property and taxation; second, personal policy goals pursued by members of the Roman bureaucracy sent to Egypt to oversee its incorporation into the empire; or third, changes that had been happening concurrent with, but unrelated to, the changes taking place on the larger scale. In this section, we will consider changes in land status from (or continuities with) the Ptolemaic regime to the Roman, as best as these can be separated from changes already ongoing in the late Ptolemaic period that found full expression in the Roman period.

Royal Land

Royal land in the last decades of Ptolemaic rule could fall into a number of types. Leaving aside the *doreai* and other more exotic category of land, the primary type of purely royal land was found, not surprisingly, in the *basilike ge*, worked by *basilikoi georgoi*. Within this category, however, there could be quite a bit of variation, as Monson notes, ranging “from customary leaseholds (with only limited rights of alienation), to fixed-term leases, to the first-hand involvement of officials in organizing production.”\(^{592}\) There are a number of reasons for this. First among them, however, was the slow shift during the entire Ptolemaic period from a

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\(^{591}\) For this, see Geraci (1983).

\(^{592}\) Monson (2012), 149.
more absolutist conception of royal land rights by Ptolemaic officials to a more nuanced one.

Cleruchic land (klerouchike ge) was a gift (and payment) to the mercenaries who swelled the ranks of the Ptolemaic army. This land was intended, initially, as a lifetime grant, akin to the Spartan kleros, to be taken back at the death of the soldier and passed to another soldier in turn, but with the development of the Fayum and a natural inclination among holders to greater rather than lesser property rights, a “limited set of alienable rights began to emerge” in the late 3rd century, continuing through the Ptolemaic period. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the higher-ranking soldiers and commanders were extended greater rights, which solidified under the blanket term “katoikic land” (katoikike ge).

The close observation of sowings and harvests in the Ptolemaic period was replaced in the Roman period by a system that placed the burden on the tax-payer, not the tax-collector. Rather than having officials patrolling the countryside, the Roman system relied on tenants taking the initiative to correct what they felt were unfair taxations, bringing the issue before government officials for examination (episkepsis). While this system could represent a new burden for the tax-paying tenants of the Roman period, it also eased the administrative burden of the Roman bureaucracy quite a bit. Replacing the taxation-survey with the correction-through-episkepsis created a new problem for the Romans, however: the regularly-updated property records of the Ptolemaic period were a thing of the past. This may have contributed to the chaos described by Mettius Rufus, the prefect of Egypt in 89 AD, who noted (with prompting by the

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594 On the cleruchs and especially katoikic land, see Uebel (1968) passim. Katoikic land could only be transferred within the katoikia, creating a market for this class of land separate from the royal redistributive network (and later, the idios logos) or the private land market.
596 While the burden of appealing an unfavorable assessment might have been roughly similar in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, we might assume that the vigorous Ptolemaic surveys would reduce the rate of erroneous assessments and thus represent, statistically, a lesser burden on the average tax-paying tenant.
governor of the Oxyrhynchite nome) that “for many years the abstracts in the property record-office have not been kept in the manner required” and furthermore mandated a wholesale re-registration of property across Egypt.597 While the administrators of Ptolemaic Egypt encouraged the production of more valuable crops, for consumption within their own borders (thus strengthening the state), and for exportation, providing a valuable source of funds, the Roman administration did not need to resort to such occasionally unsubtle measures.

Between each region or nome in Egypt, variations in land tenure could be dramatic. Speaking broadly, the Nile valley is thought to have had more land in private hands, proportionally, than the Fayum, while Upper Egypt, especially around Thebes, had a larger percentage of temple land, perhaps especially tied to Karnak.598 The “regionalism of land tenure,” as Monson has called it, can be significant. Two cases, both from 119/118 BC, are illustrative. Based on information from an unpublished land survey of the Apollonopolite nome, Monson has suggested that 72% of land in the nome was classified as private, with another 25% lying derelict.599 The area around Kerkeosiris, by contrast, saw no private land, only 4% derelict land, 34% cleruchic land, and 52% royal land.600 While these two areas appear completely opposite, neither source is without its own problems. For Kerkeosiris, the data is built on reports compiled by Menches (and colleagues) with a direct interest in royal land, making the mention of other land-holders incidental. In this way, the lack of any private land whatsoever is somewhat...

597 *P.Oxy.* 2.237, column 8, ll. 27-43 (186 AD, Oxyrhynchus). Rufus’ decree appears within a much longer petition to the prefect in 186, Pomponius Faustinianus.
598 The findings, for which Manning (2003) is the best introduction, may be less dramatic than has lately been argued, if we take into account the sometimes drastic differences in types of evidence available for assessing land tenure in the Thebaid versus the Fayum or Middle Egypt. Indeed, while Manning rightly points out the unique nature of the Fayum, it is also important to keep in mind the uncharacteristically small amount of available land in Upper Egypt, compared to the broader plains of Middle Egypt, the vast expanses of the Delta—for which very little evidence survives—and the Fayum basin.
600 Ibid., 92.
suspect, even given the unique conditions of development and exploitation in the Fayum. For the Apollonopolite nome, meanwhile, a lack of comparative data for the language used in the land survey means that final conclusions must await the publication of the papyrus and of Christensen’s interpretation. While the scale can be debated, it does seem clear that there were significant differences in the ubiquity of royal land, not only between the Nile valley and the Fayum, but even between areas within the Nile valley. When taken in conjunction with the range of categories and subcategories of land tenure, it is perhaps understandable that the Romans attempted, upon taking control of Egypt, to standardize the terminology they employed.

The traditional model of Roman behavior on their arrival in Egypt is in need of revision, as we have already seen. Nevertheless, some effort was required by Roman administrators to bring the province into line with their expectations and with Roman law. As Rowlandson has noted, the retention of royal land (and its conversion to ager publicus) was not preordained, and ran against “a latent discomfort with the whole notion of publicly-owned land” in the Roman mind. While the decision to keep the royal land as a government possession was perhaps the most significant decision made by Roman administrators concerning the royal land, one other

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601 See chapter 4 for Menches and the papers associated with him. Cleruchic land was, of course, on its way down the public-private spectrum in this period. In addition, as I have examined elsewhere, for which see Connor (2013), a strict categorization of land can sometimes obscure the real status of the land, as with the royal land taken on by the Temple of Petesouchos in Kerkeosiris.
602 P.Haun inv. 407 and Christensen (2002), respectively.
603 The differences between Tanis and Kerkeosiris presented by Monson (2012) 89-93, are relatively minor, as he notes (“there are strong similarities between the land in the village of Kerkeosiris in the late second century BCE and land surveyed in the village of Tanis in the mid-third century BCE.”) and, to a large part, amount to a small shift in proportion between cleruchic and royal land, and a switch from an 8% representation of “rent land” (šmw = “the harvest tax on private land”) in Tanis to 6% temple land in Kerkeosiris. Like the Menches papers, the Tanite land survey (240/239 BC) originated in the office of the village scribe and shares the strong focus on royal and cleruchic land. It is probable that there was temple land in Tanis, perhaps at a similar proportion to Kerkeosiris.
604 Monson (2008) 173 argues against the “interpretation of ancient legal terms according to Roman or civil law categories, which risks imposing rigid categories on social relations that have little explanatory power.” This is true on the lower levels, but when discussing broad-based administrative shifts on the imperial or prefectural level, we must admit that the ancient legal categories were in the mind of those making the decisions. See Rathbone (2003) for the development of the ager publicus in Rome.
605 Rowlandson (2005) 175.
development came to affect royal land in a significant way. Following a series of changes in tax policy, discussed below, private land became much more attractive (and available) to investors in land. As such, public land became less attractive and, as Rowlandson has shown, was leased in large parcels by a relatively small group of well-to-do private individuals, who were able to bear the higher effective rate of rent (4-5 art./ar.) and the commensurate lower rate of return for the owner. As the attractiveness of royal land (and the associated status as basilikos georgos) declined, more radical steps could be taken to keep marginal royal land in cultivation. The “Roman encouragement of private landownership and urban development of the nome capitals” meant that the farmers who might have eked out a living on Ptolemaic royal land were now purchasing private land or were living in the nome capitals, and, in some cases, royal land had to be forced onto unwilling landowners. The most interesting of these compulsory steps was the epibole, by which a hereditary title to public land was attached to a plot of private land. Here we can see the difficulties with the public-private dichotomy. While a clear separation between ager publicus and ager privatus may have worked for legal textbooks and broad statements, the land was often something a bit closer to what is known, in physics, as quantum superposition, that is, a particular object existing in a number of states simultaneously. Land attached by epibole to private land and passing by inheritance or sale just like the private land to which it was attached was public land only in name and tax rate. While it has been suggested that the Romans undertook to more clearly delineate between public and private land, the evidence of the epibole and similar instruments suggests that this drive may not have extended much beyond the rhetoric.

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606 Rowlandson (2005) 193-194. Note that the return for the farmer, whether on royal land or leasing private land, would probably have been relatively similar. The income a private landowner received from the land he leased out to a third party was presumably fixed, and this share would most likely be larger if the share taken out by the state was smaller. That is, if the farmer received half the produce, whether the state took a 10% or a 40% share would make quite a difference for the land-owner or original lessee of crown land.

607 Rowlandson (2005), 193.

608 Lewis (1968) s.v. ἐπιβάλλειν, ἐπιβολή. An epibole could be applied to houses as well as agricultural land.
of the administration. When one turns to the realia of Roman Egypt, one quickly sees the problem of overlapping categories.

Between Public and Private: The Idios Logos and Land Confiscation

Public land could also originate from confiscations. Confiscated property was, from the first century BC, placed under the control of the idios logos, a special branch of the Ptolemaic administration. The mechanism for confiscation had, of course, existed previously, but the development of the idios logos meant that, even when the position was held simultaneously with that of the dioiketes, a particular part of the government was now tasked with managing (and disposing of) confiscated land that had passed into government control. The development of a separate idios logos corresponded to a growth in the types and amounts of land being confiscated and, importantly, resold. Public land held through the idios logos was only very temporarily public. While land could enter the accounts of the idios logos through the confiscation of gift estates or of cleruchic land—in one particularly cruel case, from soldiers captured in battle—a valuable source of land (and thus, funds) for the Ptolemies in the 2nd and 1st centuries was the seizure of abandoned lands. Ownerless land may simply have been land that was “producing no revenue for the crown”—the exact terms of abandonment may have been up to a bureaucrat,

See, e.g., Monson (2012) 131-132 and 138-140 for an example with temple land, which we will discuss in greater detail below.

The resulting murkiness would additionally complicate attempts to cleanly separate supposed sub-categories of temple land, a point which we will discuss below.


Previously, confiscated land passed directly into the basilikon, as BGU 992 (162 BC). As Swarney notes in his commentary on this text (1970, 7-10), “the property was purchased from the basilikon through…the regular bureaucracy” and that “most of the officials in the document can be accounted for as agents of the regular administration.”


P. Petrie 2.29. It is possible that the Ptolemies also settled soldiers they had captured on cleruchies as well. Thus Crawford (1971) 55, interprets Diodoros Siculus 19.85.4, though this is not certain from the Greek.

For the military and political strife in this period, and the effect on land-holding and administration of the temples, see Chs. 3 and 7. We should consider the effect of these proposed confiscations on the private land-holding patterns described by Manning (2003) especially.
but the process remains unclear.\textsuperscript{616} The wars and rumors of wars that convulsed Egypt caused many landowners to flee their lands and that land to be classified as adespota, ownerless, and thus on the books of the \textit{idios logos}.\textsuperscript{617} The growth of the \textit{idios logos} as a separate branch of the Ptolemaic administration is likely to be related to the increasing number of rebellions, causing a commensurate rise in the confiscation of land left abandoned by refugees or taken from rebels as punishment.\textsuperscript{618} In any case, were the government seizing land in this fashion in much greater amounts, it would explain the increase in types of land seized—no longer would gift estates and cleruchies taken back from recently deceased loyalists make up the bulk, but rather the various (and mixed) holdings of refugees and rebels. While the property was intended to be sold on, even the temporary possession and administration of it would require upkeep and, presumably, attention in order to maximize profits for the state.\textsuperscript{619} Based on evidence from the late Ptolemaic and early Roman period, it is clear that some property only entered the realm of the \textit{idios logos} more or less retroactively, that is, after a prosecution for illegal occupation of land that should have been ruled adespotos.\textsuperscript{620}

By the early Roman period, the \textit{idios logos}’ role in collecting and disposing of property was solidified. The nature of the land being sold, however, changed. As Swarney notes, “the apparent practice of returning property confiscated from private individuals back to private ownership through sale by the idios logos during the late Ptolemaic period was brought to an

\textsuperscript{616} Swarney (1970) 31.
\textsuperscript{617} Swarney (1970) 26-31 and SB 5.7657 (ca. 160 BC).
\textsuperscript{618} As in \textit{P.Tarich}.
\textsuperscript{619} While the state’s prevailing interest was in getting the land back into private hands (and thus back onto the tax rolls), we can assume that officials (and potential buyers) were aware of the condition of the property, and that this affected the price.
\textsuperscript{620} See especially the “Nestnephis trial,” summarized by Swarney (1970) 41-49, in which the defendant, Satabous, was fined and forced to purchase from the \textit{idios logos} land he was already occupying, having purchased it from a third party, Chairemon, who sold what did not belong to him. For this, see also Ch. 3 and below.
abrupt halt by Augustus.” Confiscated land now entered the rolls as royal land, to support the imperial accounts or to be assigned to imperial supporters, and only land that could not be otherwise rented or given away was sold. Ownerless land, adespota, still fell under the idios logos, but now positions in government and temples did as well. The sale of priestly offices, which would develop into a much greater business, was overseen by the idios logos, if the evidence of P.Vindob.Bosw. 1 (recording a dispute between a royal scribe and a group of priests seeking transferability for their titles) is anything to go by. The logical basis for these sales, that a priesthood was only transferrable if that right had been purchased and that, legally speaking, “an unoccupied priesthood may be considered…adespotos,” raises serious questions concerning the interrelation between temple and state in Roman Egypt.

Private Land

If royal land stood at one end of the spectrum of property rights in Roman Egypt, private land stood at the other. With royal land placed in its historical and legal context, we can now consider private land, a category of land that changed more than any other in the Roman period. As discussed in the previous chapter, the term “private” creates an expectation not necessarily met by “private land” in Ptolemaic Egypt. This dichotomy is rooted in studies of the Roman legal system, with sacred land as a category added on only after the Romans moved into the Greek-speaking eastern half of the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, there was a continuing slide of public land into private hands. Even in Italy, the gradual passing of public land into the private

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622 SEG 18.646 (=Kayser I.Alex.Imp. 25) and see Fraser and Nicholas (1958 and 1962). See Swarney (1970) 57-59 for his interpretation. See also P.Tarich in which the state became involved in assigning the rights to the geras taricheias after the previous holder was killed fighting against the Ptolemies.
623 Swarney (1970) 75. For the idios logos in the hierarchy of Roman Egypt, see ch. 7.
624 For the legal structure, see Duncan-Jones (1990) 120-127. Carlsen (1994) questions the absence of sacred land in the west, taking especially the example of Sulla’s donation of land to a temple of Diana-Tifatina in Campania.
control of large land-owners occasioned one of the more significant bursts of conflict in the 2nd century BC, as the Gracchi sought to pull land back into public control. With their deaths and the *Lex Agraria* of 111 BC, what had been an extralegal *fait accompli* was given the imprimatur of the senate, and a vast amount of land officially converted to private ownership. For the rest of the empire, private and public land could co-exist happily. These structures were largely kept in place by the Romans after their gradual acquisition of the Greek East, and confiscations generally followed only after a city or leader fought Rome or sided with an opponent of Rome. In any case, these confiscations generally fell more heavily on public finances and land than on private possessions.

Our picture of the development of private land in Roman Egypt has been substantially challenged by Monson in a recent monograph. In brief, he suggests that the arrival of Roman administration did mark a break with the Ptolemaic (and earlier) systems, but that the cause of the change is not any of the usual suspects. Instead, he finds the first cause in a shift of tax policy on private land. By reducing the tax on private land generally to a flat rate of one artaba per aroura, the Roman government made private land more attractive as a source of wealth than taking on the rental of public land, with its associated burdens. This change, Monson claims, set off a series of shifts, allowing the “emergence of a provincial landowning elite and for landowners’ political and economic dominance in the countryside.” This elite, in turn, took on the duties of lower-level administration outside the cities, taking the opportunity, in time-honored fashion, to defend and increase their economic power against those above and below.

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625 I have consulted Crawford’s text, for which see Crawford (1996) vol. 1, 113-180.
626 Hellenistic monarchs, for instance, could possess huge tracts of land, and numerous inscriptions attest to their ability to carve out parcels to give as gifts, i.e., to convert to private land, to loyal supporters or family members. For an example, see *OGIS* 221 (ca. 275 BC) for a donation of land by Antiochus I to a supporter, Aristodicides of Assos, with the land to be attached either to Ilion or to Skepsis.
627 His chapter 5 takes up the issue at length, for which see Monson (2012) 159-208.
them. That the development of a countryside organized around private landowning and an inflexible, albeit generally low, tax rate represented a loss both for the traditional power structure and for the peasantry should not be surprising. The imposition of modern capitalist models on the traditional agricultural schemes in Indochina was far from popular with those doing the farming, resulting in a rash of unsuccessful, but generally bloody, insurrections. Scott has suggested that a higher, but flexible tax rate is preferable to the peasantry, as it reduces the risk of disaster. A flexible rate of taxation also reduces or eliminates the possibility of particularly successful harvests for the farmer, but the risk of occasional sub-prime return is preferable to the risk of occasional starvation. While we do hear about occasional rebellions in Roman Egypt—the revolt of the boukoloi described by Dio Cassius, for instance—we are unfortunately without their manifestos. As temples and their staff had for a long time formed part of the local elite in villages throughout Egypt, the development of a strong counterweight to the established power structure in the countryside would have some clear repercussions for them as well.

The greater development of private land did bring some benefits for those who could acquire such land. This can be demonstrated through the security of tenure on private land versus that on public land. The relational contract, an analytical tool developed as part of New Institutional Economics, helps to demonstrate the conceptual and real value of stability in tenancy. In short, the relational contract is a term used to reflect the increasing investment of two parties in their relationship, especially in that certain terms and obligations are left initially vague in order to allow flexibility in the face of changing conditions. A landlord, for example, might

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629 Scott (1976) esp. chapter 2.  
630 Dio Cassius 72.4  
631 Frankfurter (1998) 208 struggles hard to make greater points about Egyptian priests under Rome out of the boukoloi rebellion. Priests as leaders and agitators were very much not new to Egypt by the Roman period. Lewis (1995) 142 has argued that Strabo’s description of a revolt near Thebes (17.1.53) must have resulted from an increase in their taxes or from an improved, and thus more effective, collection mechanism.  
632 Kehoe (2007) 97-101 offers a summary of the relational contract, especially as it concerns Roman tenancy.
allow a certain leeway to established tenants who were a bit behind on their rent, a freedom he might not extend to a stranger in the first months of a lease, or which the state would not extend to its crowds of crown tenants. The substantial costs of information—anticipating future events and reaching an agreement on how to address them, for instance—can be lowered and the expectation of continuity would encourage a long-term approach to the land by both the owner and the tenant.633 This economic rationale, which for purposes of analysis is termed “the relational contract,” would encourage landowners to maintain for a longer time the same tenants, tenants who might otherwise lack the sort of legal guarantees of tenancy that would encourage long-term development and exploitation of the land.634 On royal land, the relational contract was less valuable, since tenancy was limited. Since much of the local day-to-day was conducted by bureaucrats, themselves without long-term job security,635 the impetus was not to encourage long-term care and cultivation but to maximize income from the land being let out that year. Though the state could compel farmers to become tenants, as with the *epibole*, the tenant of state land had little recourse if another farmer outbid him for a particularly valuable plot. In early 2nd century AD Oxyrhynchus, a group of villagers was reduced (at least rhetorically) to starvation when the fields they traditionally leased on an imperial estate (the Nikanorian estates) were instead let out to strangers (*ζένοις*).636 While this was seen as a violation of a time-honored *mos maiorum*—an irrigation device used by the villagers since their ancestors (*ἀπὸ προγόνων*) is invoked—it was, as Rowlandson notes, “to the advantage of both the Imperial account and the head-lessees themselves.”637

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633 Rowlandson (1996) notes that, even with relatively short-term leases of private land, lease renewal, whether written or (less well attested) tacit, was relatively common. For this, see Rowlandson (1996) 252-259, esp. 254-255.
634 Ibid., 96-97.
635 Cf. Menches’ time in office, albeit in the late 2nd century BC.
636 *P. Oxy.* 24.2410
637 Rowlandson (1996) 58-59. The head-lesse, here, are the “strangers.”
One additional risk faced by buyers or cultivators of private land was the insecurity of title in Egypt (and the rest of the ancient world). Though the Romans attempted to establish a central register of transactions, etc., this push was hampered by administrative chaos and the difficulties inherent in the bureaucracy of the day. Though some of it might be hyperbolic, the proclamation of Mettius Rufus discussed above nevertheless shows the limitations of the Roman move towards a centralized records center. This system was developed imperfectly at best, and there were ample opportunities for confused or unethical land deals. The *idios logos* was called to adjudicate issues resulting from this, when neighbor might inform on neighbor out of jealousy, for an inflamed sense of justice, or for any other causes. The “Nestnephis trial,” a prolonged legal battle over title to land in the first quarter of the 1st century AD, illustrates the risks.\(^{638}\) While the ins and outs of the case are discussed in Chapter 3, the final result was that Satabous was found guilty in the course of an investigation by the *idios logos*. Chairemon, who had promised to defend him and his claim to any challengers was, it would seem, unable to offer any help whatsoever, not entirely surprising since it seems that he, Chairemon, may have been the one to expropriate royal land in the first place.\(^{639}\) We might see his sale to Satabous not as a cynical cash-in of a gullible colleague but rather in light of the substantial chaos that seems to have raged in the Fayum during the late Ptolemaic period.\(^{640}\) Chairemon almost certainly was not the only one attempting to turn royal land, which he had perhaps farmed for a long period, into private land, which he could then pass on to a third party (in this case Satabous), earning more for the sale of supposedly private land than he would for the sale of the rights to a long-term

\(^{639}\) The contract of sale appears in a Greek version (*P.Lond.* 2.262) and Demotic version (*DDD* 3.5) but the guarantee of protection only appears in the Demotic (sections 6–7). For Nestnephis’ denunciation, see *SB* 5236 and 5237 and *Chrest.Mitt.* 68.2–7; for his attack on Satabous, see *SB* 5238.10. 
\(^{640}\) This ancient confusion between the long-term lease (and the sale of those rights, perhaps) and a real sale of property is sometimes echoed in the modern sources.
lease on the same amount of royal land. In the absence of a secure, accessible property register, therefore, the movement towards private property in the Roman period carried with it a very real amount of risk. The ability of an aggrieved contracting party, such as Satabous, to recover damages was far from absolute, especially when Satabous was forced to pay a heavy penalty—366% of the purchase price, by Swarney’s calculation—and would still have had to track down the one who wronged him.

One final example illustrates the risks of public land compared to private land, but also the danger in seeing “private land” where it was not. Monson lists a number of examples of more or less hereditary tenure on royal land as evidence for the shift towards private land. One example, from Talei, but found in the Tebtunis grapheion, records a lease of 12 arouras of public land held hereditarily for a period of 93 years. This lease, however, is in fact a sublease, as the current tenant, Polemon, sublets the 12 arouras to a third party, Polemis, for 93 years, while Polemis promises to pay the taxes on the land to Polemon, who remained responsible for them to the government. The claims that one might make in a contract between private parties were in no way guaranteed by the state and, in any case, the stipulation of a hereditary lease most likely served to bind Polemis and his heirs and not Polemon who, after all, offers no proof that he (and his heirs) can hold onto the royal land for that period. Once established on private land, therefore, a tenant might feel more secure in the contract he was

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641 There was most likely nothing keeping him from offering a long-term sublease of royal land, akin to the aforementioned Polemon, but the sale of property with clear title offered an immediate return, instead of a steady income for one’s grandchildren or great-grandchildren.
642 Swarney (1970) 47.
643 Presumably easier in Soknopaiou Nesos than most anywhere else in Egypt. Similar cases elsewhere in the province would have more difficulty catching fugitives from justice. We might assume that the relative ease with which Habrocomes is repeatedly recaptured in Books 3 and 4 of Xenophon of Ephesus’ Anthia and Habrocomes requires at least a little literary exaggeration.
645 P. Bingen 59 (33 AD).
establishing. While Polemis and Polemon would, over time, build up a relational contract of their own, this would be effectively meaningless if the government reassigned the rights to the land to a new bidder.646

Temple Land

We have now fixed both ends of our spectrum of property rights: at one end, royal land; at the other, private land. Given the prevalence of these two categories in studies of Egypt, it has been conventional to consider temple land as it relates to the rights and responsibilities of state and private land. Temple land was, as we have seen, a category all its own. While it does appear to have features of both state and private land, this is no doubt due to the relatively limited number of options available in the “bundle” of property rights. In this section, we summarize the status quaestionis concerning temple land in the late Ptolemaic and early Roman period, before considering two recent theories in detail. Finally, we can turn to the evidence from Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos themselves, to see how temple land looked (and functioned) in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.

For the Romans, sacred land was a concept they were acquainted with primarily from the east, not from Italy, but by the Battle of Actium, Roman law and Roman administrators had at least a century of experience with sacred land in Roman provinces. The changes in private and public land had effects on sacred land, but these effects tended to be indirect. The conventional description of temple land (and land categories) in Ptolemaic Egypt focuses on two categories of land, γῆ ἁνερομένη and γῆ ἱερά. The former, as Evans writes, “designates land which is

646 Polemon could, to be fair, attempt to take on a lease of other land and, having built up a relationship with Polemis over time, attempt to bring him along to work the land. This sort of arrangement, in which a subcontractor or supplier becomes more or less exclusive with a contracting company is not uncommon in modern business (as per George Jesse, pers. comm.).
dedicated to the gods by some individual for piety’s sake” while the latter is “the Hellenistic equivalent of the Pharaonic temple endowments,” that is, “leased to the god by the king,” unable to be sold, and liable to taxation. These categories were introduced by Rostovtzeff in his 1909 article cum review of Walter Otto, in which Rostovtzeff attacked Otto’s claim that temple land was controlled by the temples. To Rostovtzeff, the evidence that the Ptolemaic temples could sell or lease their own land, or directly control the sale or leasing of their land was lacking or inferred from Roman-period evidence. It must, therefore, be controlled instead by the state, just like other land. In this interpretation, land must either be controlled completely by the king or completely by the temple. As we have seen, however, pharaohs and kings from the New Kingdom through the Persian period maintained an interest in temple land without overseeing the management of it and could reallocate this property, though not without complaints from those losing land. While Rostovtzeff’s interpretation proved popular, it has not been borne out by recent scholarship on the subject. The strict division between state and “private” (here, temple) management that Rostovtzeff expects was more useful in his later work.

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647 Evans (1961) 240
648 Ibid., 242
649 Rostovtzeff (1909) 621-2.
650 Ibid., 622
651 Ibid., 622-3. After criticizing Otto for relying on documents from the Roman period or documents that incompletely prove his arguments, Rostovtzeff cites P.Eleph. 14,” the interpretation of which is “ziemlich klar,” as proof that the state could buy and sell temple land. While P.Eleph. 14 is an important document—see its inclusion in Hunt and Edgar’s Select Papyri or Bagnall and Derow’s Hellenistic Period sourcebook—its reference to temples focuses primarily on temple offices (offering information on the price τὸν μὲν γὰρ ἄλλον). Whatever the tenor of P.Eleph. 14, it tells us something about the idios logos and the sale of priestly offices, but it tells us very little about legal categories of land. For Rostovtzeff to use it as a counterpoint to Otto’s examples is unconvincing. The underwhelming nature of the arguments mustered is reinforced by a reference to P.Amth. 40, intended to be convincing. We will discuss this document below, concerning Soknopaiou Nesos, but in short, Rostovtzeff has dramatically misinterpreted the text. That the government made a donation of land in the Fayum intended to be split between settlers and the local temple is not surprising, and says nothing about state management of land belonging to the temples.
652 Rostovtzeff (1909) 623
653 See Ch. 4 concerning Akhenaten or especially Cambyses. Rostovtzeff recognizes this, admitting at the very least that the king might be restricted by conscience, but nevertheless attributes near-absolute control to the king except where conceded, temporarily, to the temple. We might see something rather the opposite, that is, temples exercising general control with particular points conceded to the king, and not without complaining.
on gift estates than concerning the temples. The divisions that Rostovtzeff plays up to separate γη ἄνερωμένη and γη ἱερά are not as meaningful as he suggests and we can more profitably wonder if the two terms are not one and the same. In addition, there is no evidence that seed loans, one of the clearest indicators of royal land, were also given for temple land. Tenants on royal land were given loans of seed, which they were expected to repay out of their harvest.

There are no references in Ptolemaic or Roman Egypt to the payment of seed loans by the temple or the repayment of those loans by tenants on temple land. If these are lacking, then temple land cannot be equated with royal land in any meaningful sense.

Setting aside this question of terminology, it has widely been assumed that the most significant change facing sacred land at the dawn of the Roman period was a wholesale confiscation of temple land by the Romans, accompanied by an offer to lease it back to them or to offer syntaxis payments in lieu of land. Much of this argument is based on P.Tebt. 2.302, which we have already discussed in a previous chapter, and on an overly credulous reading of literary sources. From at least as early as Virgil’s Aeneid, the argument runs, the Romans expressed a deep hostility to Egyptian culture and, particularly, Egyptian religion. While this argument has found favor over the years, it has also come under attack in the previous two decades, most notably by Glare and subsequently by Monson. Glare approached the whole of Egypt together, which resulted in some overly broad strokes of analysis. Nevertheless, she took a number of important steps to dismantle the model of hostile Romans launching a wholesale

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654 For which see Rostovtzeff (1922)
655 For instance in Johnson (1935) 639-640. Monson (2012) 131 n. 128 provides a more complete list. This system would have required the compilation of elaborate lists of temple property preferences. The Romans did maintain some sort of lists, as can be seen from P.Stras. 8.707, but the much simpler assumption, that the Romans kept track of temple land because the temples owned land and paid taxes on it, seems preferable to the Romans maintaining an elaborate system of payments or rental land, with the temples free to switch back and forth from one category to another.
656 See, for instance, Virgil’s description of the Battle of Actium in Aeneid VIII.
657 And continues to find favor in very recent scholarship, e.g., O’Neill (2011) 112 and Bussi (2013).
attack on temple land. In place of a program of harsh confiscations, Glare proposed rather a “reclassification of land” without intent for a “wholesale confiscation.” In addition, she raised the question of regional or local experiences, noting that “what we might be seeing is the response of individual areas to the problems and changes brought about by the Roman attitude to landholding generally.” This suggestion, that our best evidence might represent local conditions and must be interpreted in its own local contexts has not as yet been taken up, even by Glare herself. In all, Glare suggests three points against the traditional model of Roman hostility that nevertheless leave the final outcome, the eventual (and inarguable) impoverishment of the temples intact: first, that “state interference in sacred land was no innovation,” a point we have already explored at length in the previous chapter; second, that temples did not directly control most of their land in any case, so confiscation of what land they did directly control was less significant than supposed, an interesting point, but one that depends on the existence of “directly-controlled” temple land; and third, that the Romans were aware of and maintained the religious connection with the land by leasing the same land back to the temples. We have already seen the serious problems with the confiscation narrative, and in any case, one document of decidedly mixed implications from the southern Fayum does not prove a widespread Roman program. In one area of temple land, the arrival of the Romans may have had a real effect, with ambivalent evidence for the maintenance of some sort of long-term memory of its sacredness in the documentary record.

Glare was correct to note that there is nothing new in government confiscation of sacred

658 Glare (1993) 76.
659 Glare (1993) 76.
660 A point I hope to address, for which see discussion of Soknopaiou Nesos and Tebtunis below, and Ch. 3.
661 Glare (1993) 76-77
662 For this, see Ch. 3.
land in some form or another. As we have already seen, every ruler of Egypt quickly accepted the power to reassign sacred land as part of their administrative toolkit, with substantial support from previous actions. The power of confiscation was probably not, however, inherently tied to the sacred status of the land. Rather, the pharaoh or king retained an original claim to all the land of Egypt, which, in the Ptolemaic period, could be exercised on abandoned private land as easily as on temple land. This raises the question of the nature of the temple land generally being confiscated. With the exception of the large-scale reorganizations of temple land (as with Akhenaten or Cambyses, e.g.) the great number of minor reassignments, usually in support of a new endowment, seem to have drawn their land from older temples. Whether the sacred land thus confiscated was effectively abandoned before the royal confiscation or vice versa is a question that cannot be answered with the evidence currently available. Nevertheless, by the Roman acquisition of Egypt, royal confiscation of land, including sacred land, was certainly understood to be part of the acceptable exercise of royal power.

Directly-Administered Temple Land

Building on Glare’s work, Monson has further challenged the confiscation-syntaxis-decline model. He suggests that “the effect of Augustus’ reform was to recognize the private ownership of temple land and to turn into public land only what the temples administered directly,” which was, from the evidence available, a much smaller amount. In analyzing the directly controlled sacred land, Monson points to a dispute between the priests of Montu in Hermonthis and some priests of Souchos and Hathor in Pathyris. In short, land belonging to

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663 For which see the previous chapter concerning the evidence from the Wilbour and Harris papyri, especially as interpreted by Katary.
Bouchis, a bull-god associated with Montu, was given to the priests of Montu to administer.\textsuperscript{666}

While the close mythological association between Bouchis and Montu probably explains the passing of administration to priests of Montu,\textsuperscript{667} any more information about why the land passed to them for administration is currently lacking. In any case, the priests in Pathyris challenged the legality of the transfer (which had been ensured by a government order, a \textit{diagraphe})\textsuperscript{668} and from there the current complaint originated. In time-honored fashion, the priests from Pathyris pursued in tandem a legal strategy and a more hands-on strategy, attacking the farmers working the land (an “island”) and beating them.\textsuperscript{669} The surviving documents appear to be from the Hermonthite priests, appealing to the state for protection and confirmation of their management, while the Pathyrite priests’ request to invalidate the previous \textit{diagraphe} survives only in references. Nevertheless, the recorded dispute is an extremely valuable document for our current question, even though it dates to the mid-2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC, and the dispute had been building for at least some years prior. Monson takes it as an example of the value of direct control of sacred land, suggesting that “the priesthood that owned the land chose its own cultivators. The latter therefore also had a stake in the outcome and came to blows with cultivators from the other temple over the right to work the land.”\textsuperscript{670} While the picture of rival bands of farmers fighting it out has a certain vividness, the text itself does not mention a war-

\begin{footnotes}
\item[666] There seems to have been a temple of Bouchis in the nome, given the place name Chefeteh-\textit{n-Bouchis} (Dromos of Bouchos), possibly the dromos of the temple itself, attested in Demotic (\textit{Ḫh-n-Bḥ}) in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC, for which see Kaplony-Heckel (1998) 215, l. 2. The administration of land for one god by another is not unheard of in early periods. See, for instance, \textit{P.Amiens} (discussed by Katary 1989, 184-192) dating to the New Kingdom, for the domain of Khen-Min near Panopolis being under the control of a temple of Amun.
\item[667] Clarysse (1983) 37. Bouchis was “the holy bull of Montou in Hermonthis” (Clarysse (1983) 29), though the Pathyrite priests of Hathor may have also felt some claim based on a possible mythological connection between the Bouchis bull and the cow-god, for which see Clarysse (1983) 37 n. 58.
\item[668] \textit{P.Lond} 7.2188 ll. 47-51.
\item[669] While the precise location on the Nile is not known, and the exact shape of the river 2000 years ago cannot be reconstructed, it is likely that this was not in fact an island, but rather land alongside the Nile, frequently called island land in the Greek texts.
\end{footnotes}
band of Pathyrite farmers. Instead, the unknown “they”—the text picks up immediately after a break—are probably the Pathyrite priests themselves, or some group made up of temple staff, the same “they” as in the rest of the petition. It seems much more likely, I would argue, that the Pathyrite priests attacked the tenants not to dispute the claim of those particular tenants to work the land, but rather to drive them off and thus prevent their work benefitting their rivals in Hermonthis. Had the Ptolemaic government given the administration to the Pathyrite priests the next day, we might assume that they would welcome back those same tenants. The issue, in short, was not who was farming the land, but to whom the produce was going. Like aggrieved claimants throughout the Greco-Roman period, the Pathyrite priests chose to support their legal argument (the invalidity of the diagraphe) with an attack on the object in question. In any case, we come to the question of the farmers themselves.

Monson believes that the farmers were hand-chosen by the priests, while Skeat, the editor of the text, suggests that the priests kept on a certain staff of γεωργοί from whom they selected a few to take charge of cultivation on the “island.” Both scenarios imply quite a bit of direct control over the island property by the temple administrators. Neither scenario, however, is required by the text itself, and I would propose a third option. Lines 143-144 state that security is to be paid παρά τε τῶν ιερείων καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ τούτων προχειρισθεισμένων and there are a handful of other references to those who have been chosen by the priests. What, I believe, is happening is not the hand-picking of farmers—a sort of selection committee reviewing applications—but simple legal language. If the farmers were working sacred land, they presumably were also

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671 P. Lond. 7.2188, ll. 81-84.
672 The step taken by the royal court, “to impound the produce from the disputed land until the King’s Court had decided the question of ownership” (Skeat [1974] 292, n. 124), demonstrates that the issue was not in any significant way about the farmers themselves but about the produce of their farming.
674 E.g., P. Lond. 7.2188 ll. 132-133.
675 Akin to the Roman notion of intercessio or the modern concept of delegation.
legally the delegatee of the temple’s responsibility for tax payments on that land. In a petition to the Ptolemaic government, then, the priests were quick to mention that the farmers were not, in fact, there as just other members of the temple retinue, but that they were contracting parties to whom the temple had a legal obligation, an obligation which the legal suits and physical assaults of the Pathyrites were endangering.

We can adduce additional examples of temple land not in private hands in the Roman period. Though it was incompletely published, *P.Harris* 1.138 descr. (92 AD) preserves “portions of three columns of a roll of official abstracts…in the Oxyrhynchite villages Peeno, Senepta, and Pacerce, during the months Phaophi to Choiac.” Near the end of the first column, we find a reference to sacred land rented (μεμισθ. on a hereditary basis (εἰς τὰ πάτρια). While Monson, discussing this document, focuses especially on the hereditary nature of the lease, I find the critical section to be the one making it clear that the land in question is rented. We find again an extremely long-term lease, and we find further that the land is being sublet. It is likely that a long-term lease would involve numerous generations, and that not all of these might feel the same about working the land they have leased. We are unfortunately not informed as to the temple owning the land in question—further reinforcing the idea that we have a sub-leasing contract—but that the land is being rented on a long-term contract is clear. Similar language can be found in *P.Petaus* 44 (185 AD), a record of grain-tax receipts. Here, at least two types of

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676 This is not always the case in the Roman period: see *O.Petr.* 190 (1st century AD) where a *prostates* acknowledges the receipt of the *ekphorion* on land of the great god Heracles, which the farmer has paid to the temple (and thus not directly to the state).

677 Dated more precisely by Whitehorne, for which see *BL* VIII, 148, who dates the ᾱβ to the 12th year of Domitian, i.e., 92 AD.

678 Enoch Powell, introduction to *P.Harris* 1.138, p. 99.

679 *P.Harris* 1.138, l. 24.

680 Monson (2012) 18, n. 63

681 For the long-term lease from a legal perspective, see Taubenschlag (1959). For a similar suggestion concerning long-term leases of ships in the Roman period, see Rathbone (2007) 592.
temple land are mentioned: those ἀπὸ κατεργασίας and those rented on a hereditary basis. While the document is certainly a confusing one, the temple land is not treated as normal katoikic, i.e., private, land. In two places in the listing of temple land, payments were bracketed, brackets which were not used for other katoikic land registered in this document. Those brackets, the editors write, signify that the payments were notional, and beyond the scope of the information enclosed with the document.682

The example of P.Berl.Leihg. 1.5 (158/159) is no more clear. Monson adduces it as further evidence for a division between private and directly-controlled temple land, but the picture is quite a bit more complicated.683 The document, two columns of a report on grain transport of which only the first column survives in substantial form, originated with the komogrammateus of Theadelphia for the 22nd year of Antoninus Pius, that is, 158/159 AD. What survives of the text is broken up, more or less, into two groups. The first records the payments in grain—whether these were actually made in grain or if grain was serving, as it often did, as a unit of convenience—made by public farmers (διὰ δημοσίων γεωργῶν) and the second, those by cleruchs (διὰ κληρούχων). In both categories, payments are also made on sacred land liable for the ekphorion (ἱερατικῶν τῶν ἐν ἐκφορίῳ).684 In another place, Monson argues that the ekphorion was a tax assessed on agricultural production by the Ptolemaic state on land regardless of tenure.685 In any case, the distinction between ekphorion-land and kathekonta-land cannot be as clear as Monson suggests.686 In presenting his argument, he suggests that “privately owned temple land” paid fixed taxes (kathekonta) and “public temple land” paid rents (ekphoria). In the

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682 P.Petaus 44, ll. 10, 15-18. See especially the commentary for ll. 9-10. Hagedorn et al. suggest that the payments concerning this temple land is reported in a separate document.
683 Monson (2012) 139-140.
684 Monson (2013b).
685 Monson (2012) 167
case of *P.Berl.Leihg*. 1.5, however, farmers on public land pay taxes on temple land liable for the *ekphorion* (ἱερατικῶν τῶν ἐν ἐκφορίῳ),\(^{687}\) and farmers on private land also pay taxes on temple land liable for the *ekphorion*.\(^{688}\) In this case, then, and for the similar case of *P.Petaus* 44, discussed elsewhere, we cannot lean so easily on a public-private distinction. Instead, if we turn to the nature of the documents themselves, we find a clue. The document at hand, *P.Berl.Leihg*. 1.5 is a report from the state granary in Theadelphia concerning the transport (ἐπισπουδασμοῦ) of sheaves and sacks of produce. The count, when listed, does not break down the amount of artabas from each separate category, but instead the total amount brought in, and the amount of land on which the tax was paid, listed by category. What I suggest is that the farmers, in bringing in their grain, could very well be farming a variety of types of field. That is, the same public farmer could also have a few arouras of sacred land he was working, and on which he was required to pay taxes to the state. When he brought in his grain, therefore, it was collected together—so many artabas of grain—and recorded as such. The report of transport, however, was presumably intended for those higher up in the bureaucracy, and a complete listing was unnecessary, especially when thousands of arouras were concerned. If the official receiving this account wished to check further, those documents could be produced. In a report of the state granary, it is not surprising that the public farmers and the cleruchs control the vast majority of their land in royal land and private land, respectively (without fractions of arouras, 2805 and 2161 out of the 5283 total arouras reported). The report in question, further, concerns the payment of three particular taxes: the ἐπισποουδαμοῦ φορέτρων δραγματηγίας καὶ σακκηγίας. Of these, the δραγματηγία (transport of sheaves) was charged for “the use of the government’s pack-animals,” certainly by farmers of public land without their own pack-animals and possibly

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\(^{687}\) *P.Berl.Leihg*. 1.5, l. 10

\(^{688}\) *P.Berl.Leihg*. 1.5, l. 15.
by those on private land, and the σακκηγία was charged for “the use of the government pack-trains” to take the grain from the threshing floor to the state granaries. The ἐπισπουδαμόδοφορέτρων, meanwhile, was charged on the transport of grain from the granaries to the nearest harbor. We do not have a complete listing of all tenants in the area, but rather of those who had to pay for the use of government donkeys and ships to haul their tax payments (made in grain) from field to threshing floor, from threshing floor to granary, and thence to the harbor. These services were available (for a cost, naturally) primarily to tenants on state land, and probably only to those on private land if there were sufficient animals and handlers. Tenants on temple land, then, would not have been the primary group paying these taxes, especially if the temples maintained their own pack-animals. In this case, then, the payment on temple land would have been incidental, related, as I already have suggested, to tenants hauling their goods off away with government donkeys. It is logical that a farmer, paying for the use of state-owned donkeys on his state land, would not go to the trouble of hiring a different set of donkeys to haul off the grain owed to the state on his temple land. This document, P.Berl.Leihg. 1.5, does not, therefore, reveal much about the administrative reclassification of temple land in the 2nd century AD, but rather shows us, yet again, how farmers might assemble farms out of varied categories of land—state, private, and temple—and how state-owned transportation services affected the payment of taxes.

We should consider the larger question: if, as Monson proposes, the Romans confiscated directly-controlled temple land, leaving only those that were being worked by private

689 Wallace (1938) 33-34.
690 Wallace (1938) 34.
691 Wallace (1938) 42-44.
692 For both payments made by state and private farmers, however, temple land makes an exceedingly small amount—62 ½ and 3 arouras, respectively, out of 5283.
individuals, what evidence is there in the Ptolemaic period for the existence of directly-controlled temple land? As we have seen above, the dispute between the Hermonthite and Pathyrite priests cannot be taken as evidence for direct temple control of the land. Rather, it shows a concern by temple administrators with fulfilling the terms of their contracts with tenants by ensuring their access to the land. Further, we can consider another document from the Pathyrite nome produced as evidence for direct temple control of land. The document, written in Greek from Pathyris dating to 116 BC, records the property and possessions of a certain Tathiotis, leaving her property to her daughter. Included among the possessions was 1/7th of 1/8th of a property called Tmonarei, which bordered on two different plots of sacred land, one “of Aphrodite” (ἀπηλώτου <ιερά> γη τῆς Ἀφροδίτης) and the other of “the temple in Pathyris (ιερὰ γη τοῦ ἐν Παθύρει ιεροῦ). While Pestman does offer quite a bit to chew on concerning these lines, suggesting by comparison to a related Demotic account that the latter property (“the temple in Pathyris”) was dedicated to Harsemtheus, another beloved figure of the Pathyrite triad, he does not offer, despite Monson’s claim to the contrary, any clear evidence for direct temple management, noting instead that “the texts show us that private persons are able, quite freely, to buy and lease such land and that they are able to act fully as owners of it regardless of the question as to whether or not the land is part of the temple domain.” He also mentions offhand a point I shall wish to develop below, writing that “it is remarkable that most of the cases concerning sacred land belonging to the temple which are mentioned in the previous paragraph refer to unreclaimed or uncultivated land.”

693 P.Lond. 7.2191 (=Pestman 1969).
694 P.Lond. 7.2191 l. 30.
695 Pestman (1969) 147. For a brief discussion of the Pathyrite triad, see also Pestman (1990) 29.
696 Pestman (1969) 148. We would note, however, that the purchase is of the rights for long-term cultivation and not absolute freehold.
697 Ibid., 148.
We can move quickly through a handful of other examples of “direct management” of temple land. A papyrus from the Thebaid, for instance, written in 100 BC, records a cession of sacred land by a certain Psen enumoupis to a Harsiesis, priest of Souchos and Hathor at Pathyris. What strikes the reader is that the priest is not controlling or directing the cultivation of the land at all, but is acting in a private capacity to sublet the land from Psenenumoupis, who himself, along with his business partners (σῶν Πακοίβι Σχότου καὶ τοῖς μετόχοις) had rented the land for a decade from “the priests.” The document notes that the grain-bearing land is called “of Nechtharaus” (γῆς σιτοφόρου λεγομένης Νεχθαραῦτι θεοῦ μεγάλου). The inclusion of “land so-called” (γῆς…λεγομένης) probably points to the original owner, Nechtharaus (“he is strong against them,” a by-name for Souchos) from whom Psenenumoupis and associates first leased the land. In any case, a priest sub-letting land from a group of men who themselves leased it from the temple is not particularly surprising. The fact that a group of business partners had been leasing temple land makes it seem possible, if not likely, that there was no real hands-on management from the temple. If this is the evidence for “direct management,” then we might reasonably fear that almost all of the sacred land in Egypt would have been caught up in the confiscation of land falling into such a broad category—or none of it. One final example, offered by Crawford, is worth considering. In Kerkeosiris, the god Petesouchos had a minor shrine, possessing only 5 3/8 arouras. It is nevertheless recorded as the crown tenant (Petesouchos theos) for another 18 ¾ arouras in the survey of 113 BC. Though Crawford notes that this “is

698 P. Grenf. 2.33.
699 P. Grenf. 2.33 l. 5-6. The particular temple is unclear, though it could be Souchos and Hathor, the affiliation of Harsiesis, though given the prominence of those gods in the Pathyrite nome, this reveals little at all.
700 For the name, see the Demotisches Namenbuch, s.v., n3-nht=f-r.r=w. Clarysse and Winnicki (1989) 45-46, note that the name Nechtharaus refers “to the apotropaic character of the crocodile god Souchos,” perhaps explaining their appearance together, as at the temple of Kom Ombo. On the god, see also Quaegebeur (1984) 162.
701 P. Tebt. 1.63 (116-115 BC)
702 P. Tebt. 1.93 (113 BC). Crawford notes that in 118 (P. Tebt. 1.84) 11½ arouras are rented, but we are unable to say if these are the same or additional land, though I suspect the former.
not true sacred land though connected with the god,” she also suggests that this association may have come through the cultivators being priests and that the land may have entered the Roman period as βασιλικὴ ἱερευτικὴ γῆ. In the first instance, the land is connected with the god not because priests were farming it—priests had an extremely broad range of economic activities, probably necessary to support themselves since the temple income, however lucrative, was split five ways—but because the god, i.e., the temple, had stepped in as a crown tenant. The land was not sacred land per se, but the proceeds presumably did go towards supporting the priests. Second, it is unlikely that this land entered the Roman conception of temple land at all, as it is likely to have reverted to ordinary royal land as soon as the temple ceased being the active tenant. The temple of Petesouchos was an exceedingly minor one, and its sacred land, all 5 3/8 arouras, seems to have been forced out of cultivation for a period of years, during which time Petesouchos served as a crown tenant. While we have very little to compare with the richness of the Menches papers for other places or times in the Ptolemaic period, the leasing by Petesouchos of crown land at the same terms as other royal farmers remains a hapax. While it seems to have continued for at least a few years (118-113 BC), this experiment was, as far as we can tell, limited to the region around Kerkeosiris during the 110s BC. It is, therefore, unlikely to have merited an administrative category in the Roman mind.

After all this, we might wonder if the issue of direct and indirect temple management of land in the Ptolemaic period is not rather a mirage. There were clearly different types of tenure on sacred land in the Ptolemaic period. The one point tying them together, though, is that all

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703 Crawford (1971) 100.
704 Discussed more fully in Connor (2013).
705 Monson (forthcoming) has located another example of a temple leasing crown land, this in Demotic from the early Ptolemaic period, but in that example the temple seems have been given a series of concessions and favorable terms, while in Kerkeosiris, the temple pays the taxes and shares the restrictions of all other tenants, as far as we can tell.
were in the form of leases, some for extremely long terms. That some of these long-term leaseholds functioned essentially as private property is, in some ways, true.\textsuperscript{706} The claims were heritable and, given the nature of the relational contract, it was in most cases probably in the interest of both sides to continue that relationship.\textsuperscript{707} Nevertheless, in every case, the temple administrators must have approved of the cultivators, as we see from \textit{P.Lond.} 7.2188. Many of those farming the land might have been priests themselves, but we should not think that their farming of this land was inherently connected with their duties as priests.\textsuperscript{708} If we accept that the apparent differences in sacred land are not their have been managed directly or indirectly by the temple, but something closer to the length of their lease, we can explain some of the differences that do appear. While we see very long-term leases, we also see, as in \textit{P.Grenf.} 2.33, decade-long leases. The three papyri we have just discussed at length (\textit{P.Grenf.} 2.33, \textit{P.Lond.} 7.2188, and \textit{P.Lond.} 7.2191) all come from the Pathyrite nome, so the variations between types are unlikely to be regional in nature.

Where we do see something like direct temple control, the reason for the difference is (following Pestman’s suggestion) probably this: unreclaimed or uncultivated land. If the temple

\textsuperscript{706} They were not, however, private property as other sacred land became private property, a point which must be borne constantly in mind. In Asia Minor, it is possible to see sacred land become true private property, but that is generally through the action of banking, something we do not see in Egypt. The thiasitae of Dionysus, for instance, discussed in \textit{RDGE} 61, had lost property, probably when, as Dignas writes (2002: 124), they “were pressed by hardship and decided to pledge the sanctuary when they received a loan by Lysias.” There is no evidence from Ptolemaic or Roman Egypt for a temple \textit{qua} temple taking out a loan—again, the actions of priests as private individuals must be set aside—and the use of the temple itself as collateral on a loan would be extremely surprising. The temples of Asia Minor, meanwhile, were heavily involved in banking, and the passage of property into and out of a temple’s control through defaulted loans is unsurprising. Since the lesonis was made singly responsible for the yearly debts of the temple, whatever hardships were faced by that temple would have to be addressed by the lesonis himself, without recourse to pawnning the entire temple.

\textsuperscript{707} For examples of these, see Monson (2012) 18, n. 63.

\textsuperscript{708} For priests farming, see \textit{P.Grenf.} 2.33, already mentioned, or \textit{P.Cair.} dem. 2.30631. As Clarysse and Thompson (2006) 184, note, one could in the eyes of the law only register a single profession, and priesthood carried with it a number of privileges that made it attractive as that “official profession.” That most of these held their priesthoods as, at most, part-time jobs, meant that they had plenty of time for farming or other work to supplement their income from the temple. That they might choose to farm temple land is perhaps not surprising, since they knew the land and the land managers. They did, however, frequently choose non-sacred land as well, perhaps reflecting the needs of geography, etc.
was given gifts of unreclaimed or otherwise unproductive land, it would obviously be in their interests to bring that land into cultivation quickly.\textsuperscript{709} A long-term lease, with the guarantee of heritability, would encourage tenants to take on that land and to develop it, since it would remove the risk that they might labor to bring it into production through the sweat of their brow only to have a third party outbid them for the rights to the land in a few years.\textsuperscript{710} In the same way, unproductive land, no matter the cause of that unproductivity, could also be taken under temple control, just as royal land. We may see a temple encouraging the development of its unproductive land in the Roman period, when the author of \textit{P.Petaus 44} discusses sacred land \textit{ἀπὸ κατεργασίας}, which the editors argue reflects the reclamation of uncultivated land (“die Wiederurbarmachung unebauten Landes”) that had fallen out of use, perhaps from lack of water, and had now been put back into cultivation.\textsuperscript{711} The management of temple lands, in this case, would largely consist of seeking new tenants. We would therefore replace a vague notion of “directly-controlled land” and their attendant flocks of farmers on retainer with behavior similar to that of the Ptolemaic \textit{idios logos}. In the same way as the \textit{idios logos} attempted to put unproductive land back into cultivation (and onto the tax rolls) as quickly as possible, the priests no doubt sought to minimize the (“directly controlled”) land they held out of cultivation. In this case, even if a confiscation of “directly controlled” temple land had occurred, the amount of land seized would have been relatively small, and would not have affected at all those temples without land lying dormant at that time.

One further point must be taken into consideration. The confiscation narrative argues that...

\textsuperscript{709} \textit{P.Amh. 2.40} (2\textsuperscript{nd} century) reflects an uneven property transfer, as a temple \textit{lesonis} took the least productive land out of a gift to be split between the temple and some Greeks.

\textsuperscript{710} Royal land, which generally was leased with contracts not stipulating duration, had exceptions to protect farmers who were either bringing fields into cultivation, with all the attending risks, or planting a specific crop, and thus requiring a longer-term tenancy. For this, see Monson (2012) 144, esp. n. 202.

\textsuperscript{711} \textit{P.Petaus 44}, n. 9
whatever confiscations were being made, they were made under the prefecture of Petronius, early in Augustus’ reign. If we follow Monson, these confiscations were therefore a direct encouragement to the private “ownership” of sacred land, accomplished by stripping away huge amounts of sacred land and privatizing it. It was, in other words, a massive policy of privatization of religious landholding undertaken. An inscription found in Cyme in Asia (and now in Leiden) points rather to the opposite trend in that area in the early imperial period. The inscription (RDGE 61) records a consular decree by Augustus and Agrippa, noting that property belonging to cities and temples had passed into private hands and ordering that this property be returned immediately to its proper owners. As Sherk notes, “Augustus (and Agrippa) intended public and sacred places to remain in the possession of the city and the gods, and if for any reason they had come into the possession of private individuals they were to be returned to the city and the gods.” While we cannot say how broadly this decree was directed, it nevertheless demonstrates clearly that Augustus intended to strengthen, not weaken, temple land-holding in Asia, and instead of pushing private ownership of temple land, instead deprived private individuals of it. While circumstances might differ in Egypt, it seems unlikely that Augustus would intend a radically different, even opposite policy for that province, especially since the Romans tended to follow in Egypt what policies they had practiced in Asia Minor.

Turning again to Egypt, the blurred lines between temple land and private land stand out in at least one instance. A land sale from the vicinity of Oxyrhynchus in 77 AD shows the priests taking a more conciliatory approach than their colleagues in Asia Minor. Where the priests of Cyme had sought an imperial decree ordering the removal of those who had illegally privatized

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713 A point seconded by Orlin (2008) who suggests that Augustus’ attitude to Egyptian cults was far more nuanced than assumed, and that his actions in Rome itself probably had more to do with Roman religious practice than Egyptian.
sacred land, the priests—probably of Serapis—instead chose to purchase the land back.\(^{714}\) We are unable to trace the exact process by which this land became private, but it changed hands at least once, when the seller, a woman named Thermouthion, purchased it from another woman, Dionysia. While the text itself is not explicit on this point, it is more likely than not that this land was not privately-held land from old. The land is said to lie already “in the Serapeum of Oxyrhynchus” (ἐπὶ τοῦ πρὸς Ὀξυρύγχων πόλεως Σαραπείου), hard against the enclosure walls of the temple itself.\(^{715}\) While it is possible that Dionysia, the previous occupant, legally owned property located entirely within the land of the Serapeum, it is more likely that it had passed from temple control into private hands, possibly during the upheaval in the 1\(^{st}\) century BC. As such, the sale, “perhaps for a notional price,” may have been a sop to Thermouthion—a less lucrative outcome for the woman than sale on the open market, but something preferable to simple state-aided confiscation by the temple.\(^{716}\) This is reinforced by the terms of the contract mandating that the land be used only to support the god (and not to earn a profit) and that the land not be sold. While the non-profit status of the land would be excessively difficult to police, the inclusion of these terms is significant and suggests that the priests did not simply purchase the land on the open market. In any case, the Oxyrhynchite priests cause us to question again the notion of state hostility towards temple-owned land (or “directly-controlled land” vel sim.). In 77 AD, after a century of Roman control and supposed confiscation of these lands, we find private land decreasing and temples acquiring (or, more likely, re-acquiring) land in the name of the god.

The geographic distribution of temples and their property raises another issue with the supposed confiscation of directly-controlled temple land. The temples did not have regularly

\(^{714}\) P.Oxy. 2.242. Contra Rowlandson et al. (1999) 65-66 who interpret this as the creation of a new endowment.
\(^{715}\) P.Oxy. 2.242 l. 14 (ἀπὸ βορράτος Σαράπιδος θεοῦ μεγίστου περιβόλου).
\(^{716}\) This would not be the reverse of the confiscation narrative, but state confiscation of illegally seized property, as was also done on private land.
arranged property, acquiring much of it instead piecemeal, through gift and sale, and losing it just the same, through localized confiscations, sale, or theft.\textsuperscript{717} We can expect, however, a temple’s assets to cluster in its proximity. Clustering does not, however, imply that there would not be some outliers, as we can see in the case of the particularly large temples in the Harris and Wilbour Papyri from the New Kingdom, in which temples owned land outside of their own nomes. Nevertheless, the density of temple land should, in the absence of other interference, decrease directly in proportion to the distance from the temple itself. The endowments that might accompany their creation or expansion were, presumably, clustered close to the temple. To better analyze the geographic distribution of temple estates, we can use theories derived from New Economic Geography (an offshoot of New Institutional Economics), which attempts to explain the unequal distribution of economic activity, especially in the clustering of that activity, through transaction costs. In brief, there are major transaction costs involved in the physical geography in which an economy operates which tend to encourage a clustering of economic activity in areas offering ready consumers, access to inexpensive transport, or skilled and knowledgeable employees. At the same time, a scattering of activity counter to the expected clustering offers a clue that something out of the ordinary is happening, as with the widely scattered holdings of the temple of Soknopaios occasioned by the paucity of good land near Soknopaiou Nesos itself.\textsuperscript{718}

Even the temple of Soknebtunis, despite its large holdings in and around Tebtunis, seems to have had interests in most of the surrounding villages, such as Ptolemais Melissourgon.\textsuperscript{719} While these networks of landholding allowed the temples to assume significance beyond their home village,

\textsuperscript{717} See the previous chapter for some ways in which temple land might fall out of temple control. Even in instances when the temple was given a large amount of land upon its creation, that land was generally drawn from other sources (as we can see from the New Kingdom) and would not have formed a regular distribution around the temple itself.

\textsuperscript{718} See Ch. 2.

\textsuperscript{719} P.Mich. 5.244-245 (30-31 AD) and P.Mich. 5.256 (29-30 AD) both record transactions of sacred land around Tebtunis (the former in Ptolemais Melissourgon).
If confiscations of temple land did take place, and these confiscations were of “directly-controlled” temple land, as Monson has argued, we can expect that the clustering (or lack of clustering) of the temple’s economic activity would be even more surprising. Land that was administered directly by the temple, with temple employees directly overseeing, should logically be located relatively close to the temple itself.\footnote{721} If that was converted into public land, and the apportioning estates left in temple control, the result would be a patchwork of sacred land fanning out across the region—appearing as a sort of donut-hole on a map of the temple’s property—and the influence of the temple on land and civic affairs in its own home town would have been weakened. The resulting shift towards the local elites and imperial officials would have been notable. If, in this scenario, temples were to maintain their economic importance in their own region, it would have to be through their remaining indirectly-controlled estates or through their commercial or industrial interests.\footnote{722} This is, of course, predicated on two assumptions: first, that confiscations of temple land did take place upon the arrival of the Romans and second, that these confiscations were of land directly administered by the temples, in whatever form that took. As we have seen in our discussion of \textit{P.Tebt. 2.302}, neither of these assumptions are supported by the available evidence, and it is indeed more likely that any confiscations were for local phenomena, back taxes, and so on. The grouping of land around the temples in the Roman period does not exhibit what we might call a donut-hole, with the inner,

\footnote{720} Some of the larger temples could even take on land (and thus significance) in more than one nome, e.g., Karnak.\footnote{721} This tendency is not limited to temples, of course, but applies to the activities of most economic agents. Certain figures, such as the Roman emperor, who could not only act on the market but could define the institutions as well, would naturally show a markedly different pattern of land-holding.\footnote{722} For this, see the following chapter.
“directly controlled” areas removed, and the far-flung private sacred land retained. Indeed, we can see from *P.Oxy.* 2.242, discussed above, that land hard against the walls of the temple itself was *not* public land, as we might expect from Monson’s theory. The land had instead been converted, probably illegally, into private land, and was now passing back into the hands of the priests through the mechanism of a sale, perhaps for a nominal value.

Sacred land could also have an *epibole* assigned to it, which Monson takes as further evidence that sacred land had been privatized in the Roman period.\(^{723}\) It is important to remember, however, that an *epibole* did not in actual practice convey ownership of the land, but a sort of compulsory long-term responsibility. An *epibole* on private land was not a confirmation of the private status of the land, so much as that it was not state land. Private land and temple land were not the same—they were after all two different categories of land, treated differently by the state—but both were not state land, and thus no doubt liable for an *epibole*. It is likely that the *epibole* would be applied not to the tenant but to the temple land itself, and the temples simply pushed the burden of the *epibole* onto their tenants. There is evidence for *epibole* plots assigned to temple land in the Fayum from the early 1\(^{st}\) century AD to the end of the 2\(^{nd}\) century, from Tebtunis and Karanis.\(^{724}\) The *epibole* as an institution does not generally appear outside of the Fayum, and there consequently is no evidence for the *epibole* on temple land along the Nile.\(^{725}\) The willingness of the Roman government to apply an *epibole* to temple land shows clearly that it was not in fact state land (as the confiscation narrative would have it) but it also does not mean that temple land had been privatized.

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\(^{723}\) Monson (2005) 87-88.

\(^{724}\) The prevalence of Tebtunis and Karanis is probably due to the large number of papyri published from these sites rather than any unique circumstances in those villages. For examples, see *P.Mich.* 7.254-5, *BGU* 11.2023, and *O.Mich.* 1.24.

\(^{725}\) See Wallace (1952) 68; Rowlandson (1996) 88-90 suggests that the Oxyrhynchite *georgia* might be similar to the Arsinoite *epibole*.
Bureaucratic Aspects of the Roman Administration of Temple Land

The creation of the confiscation narrative, even as amended by Monson, requires a reason for the confiscations. The Romans were content with the existence of sacred land elsewhere in the empire. What was it about Egyptian land that would have motivated a massive program of confiscation? Even if non-apportioning land made up only a small part of the temple property, an Egypt-wide confiscation would have still involved the transfer of huge amounts of land, the creation or re-organization and management of the syntaxis system, and a host of other bureaucratic maneuvers. The most common explanation for Roman behavior, a sort of unquestioned (and thus unexplained) Roman hostility to Egyptian religion and to the supposedly threatening social position of the priests, is unsatisfactory. To answer the question of motivation, Jördens has suggested a sort of grand strategy for the Augustan occupation of Egypt, of which the strengthening of the local elite (and the resulting debt of gratitude for their increased position now owed to Rome) was a part: “die Teilprivatisierung vormals heiligen Landes sei insoweit in einer Linie mit der Stärkung der lokalen Eliten zu sehen, denen letztlich auch die Priester zugezählt wurden.”\footnote{Jördens (2009) 343. Jördens bases her analysis of sacred land confiscation on Monson (2005). For the role of priests in local administration from the Ptolemaic to Roman period, see Ch. 7.} The question of the level at which this strategy of separating local elites from their traditional power bases but increasing their relative strength in their area was pursued is a vexed one. As Jördens notes, it is improbable to think it originated at the level of Augustus himself, the man often given credit for leading an anti-Egyptian push.\footnote{Jördens (2009) 343.} Given the turnover rate in the office of prefect, it may be that this effort, in whatever form it took, originated at the prefectural level but persisted, on and off, as a sort of organizational tendency, appearing more or less strongly in different nomes or villages at different times based on the inclination of the local
authorities or the prefect in office. That Roman administration was far from a smooth, routine experience from leader to leader can be seen from the record of prefectural decrees themselves.\textsuperscript{728} The province-wide confiscation of sacred land (or non-apportioning sacred land, at least) that the confiscation narrative requires would have been conducted on the initiative and orders of the prefect—supposedly Petronius, following \textit{P.Tebt. 2.302}, an untenable assumption, as we have already argued—and no direct record exists. It was not cited in later prefectural decisions that survive, no copies have been found, even in the numerous temples that have been excavated to date. This means very little for the potential existence of such a decree—there are no doubt hundreds, or possibly thousands, of prefectural decrees that are now lost—but it does complicate our efforts to understand the changes in the status of temple land in the early Roman period. What is much more damning to the confiscation narrative than the absence of Petronius (or anyone else’s) confiscation decree is the amount of evidence suggesting that the current theories are insufficient to explain the state of temple land in the Roman period. This means, to echo Glare, we must focus on the circumstances of the individual or local response to greater events in Roman Egypt. We must contextualize our understanding of the evidence available not only in the broader picture of temple life, but within the villages and regions from which the evidence originated.\textsuperscript{729}

Two Case Studies: Temple Land in Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos in the Early Roman Period

We have considered broadly the state of land reform in the early Roman empire, and the more specifically the status of temple land in this period. From a more general discussion, we can now turn to two specific examples. Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos are, as we have already

\textsuperscript{728} The decree of Mettius Rufus (\textit{P.Oxy. 2.237}) discussed above, for instance, or the decree of Tuscus, probably C. Caecina Tuscus, requiring the registration of temple property (issued under Nero, but cited in \textit{P.Oxy. 49.3472}; 149 AD).

\textsuperscript{729} For two attempts to accomplish this, see below concerning Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos.
seen, two villages on opposite sides of the Fayum, that have been connected in the scholarly imagination largely by the wealth of their papyrological representation, especially as it concerns the temples. With these in-depth, site-specific studies we can help to fulfill Glare’s call for greater contextualization, especially of our texts, and check the growing conclusions we have reached from the rest of province. Finally, the two villages, especially Soknopaiou Nesos, offer us the opportunity (and mandate) to apply the rich Demotic evidence.

Temple Land in Tebtunis in the Early Roman Period

The scholarship on temple land around Tebtunis in the Roman period has been relatively sparse. The single study dedicated to the temple of Soknebtunis, Evans’ “Temple of Soknebtunis,” dedicates three short paragraphs to the Roman land, two of which discuss P.Tebt. 2.302, and merely rehearses the confiscation narrative. Evans writes that “a resettlement took place under the Roman prefect C. Petronius…who confiscated the ἱερὰ γῆ at Tebtunis, but allowed the priests to lease back 500 ¼ arourai in lieu of a syntaxis.” Evans’ study, which takes the Ptolemaic and Roman phases of the Soknebtunis temple together, offers some interesting insights, but his treatment of the Roman temple land cannot stand. He separates temple land into two categories—ἱερὰ γῆ ἐπὶ καθήκουσι and ἱερὰ γῆ ἐν ἐκφορίῳ—in which the former is land confiscated from the temple and leased back as per P.Tebt. 2.302 while the latter is “confiscated temple land…leased like ordinary domain land in the Roman period.” It bears repetition: the evidence for such confiscations is not available, and our study of the evidence from Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos suggests that the terms ἱερὰ γῆ ἐπὶ καθήκουσι and ἱερὰ γῆ ἐν ἐκφορίῳ should not be taken as fixed legal categories. The latter, land ἐν ἐκφορίῳ means that the land, of

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730 See, e.g., Lippert and Schentuleit (2005).
731 For the importance of this, see Lippert (2010) passim.
732 Evans (1961) 243
whatever type, was liable for the *ekphorion* tax, as Monson suggests, but the precise meaning of the *ekphorion* is not so clear as to allow the sort of precision Evans claims. In addition, the use of ἐπὶ καθήκουσι when referring to temple land is uncommon in the Roman period, and two of the best examples both come from the end of the 2nd century AD in the Mendesian nome, suggesting that it might reflect local terminology rather than Roman definitions.733

In any case, these two categories (ἱερὰ γῆ ἐπὶ καθήκουσι and ἱερὰ γῆ ἐν ἐκφορίῳ) are closely tied conceptually to the supposed categories of sacred land in the Ptolemaic period, γῆ ἀνιερωμένη and γῆ ἱερά. The example of Soknebtunis’ 130 arouras in Kerkeosiris is illustrative. In two papyri both dating to 118 BC, the temple of Soknebtunis is listed as possessing 130 arouras of sacred land around Kerkeosiris. In one document, however, the land is listed as γῆ ἀνιερωμένη734 while the other lists the land as γῆ ἱερά.735 To Evans, then, since these arouras are almost certainly the same ones, the changing terms used show that the legal classification of the land changed, and an explanation must be found. This he does in the decree of Ptolemy VIII Physcon (*P.Tebt.* 1.5) which exempts land donated to the gods (τῶν ἀνιερωμένων τοῖς θεοῖς) from three specific taxes, the *stephanos*-tax, the *artabieia*, and the κοινωνικά.736 Evans thus suggests that, between the two papyri mentioned above, the Ptolemaic government, seeing the exemptions by the king for γῆ ἀνιερωμένη, converted the 130 arouras in Kerkeosiris to γῆ ἱερά, presumably without consulting the *lesonis* at the time.737 While Evans admits the possibility that the apparent shift in status was a clerical error, he sees the work of the komogrammateus behind the supposed change.738 We have already seen that Rostovtzeff’s dichotomy between these types

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733 *SPP* 17 pp. 13-29 (Thmuis, end of the 2nd century AD); *P.Ryl*. 2.426 (Thmuis, end of the 2nd century AD).
734 *P.Tebt*. 1.60, l. 10
735 *P.Tebt*. 1.61b, l. 324
736 *P.Tebt*. 1.5.59-61
737 Evans (1961) 242-3
738 Evans (1961) 242-3
of land is most likely untenable. With this in mind, then, we can absolve Menches’ predecessor of guilt. Setting aside the larger problem of the categories, Evans’ conspiracy theory about the 130 arouras misses the point. If we consider just the artabietas-tax alone, a covert re-classification by the komogrammateus would have meant that the temple had to pay 130 more artabas a year, no small sum. As much as one gets the sense that Menches’ predecessors were less than reliable, the sort of maneuver Evans describes would likely have been immediately overturned, if Rostovtzeff’s categories existed and were legally enforced. With this in mind, then, we can absolve Menches’ predecessor of guilt.

This is only a brief survey of the terminology used by ancient and modern writers when discussing temple land, but it at least provides a grounding on which we can build. When we turn from the language used to the greater implications of the evidence from the Roman period, we find that temple land continued to operate along the lines of in the Ptolemaic period. This drives another nail into the confiscation narrative. Indeed, a close reading of the documents clearly shows sacred land in the vicinity of Tebtunis. A number of documents, e.g., P.Kron. 48 (35 AD), preserve the long-term lease of sacred land or, more specifically, the sale of the long-term lease.

5 πεπρακέναι αὐτῷ τῷ τήν ὑπάρχουσαν αὐτῶι πατρικὴν εἰαρὰν γὴν ἁρουρας τρῖς ἣ ὅσων ἐὰν ὅσιν ἐπὶ τὸ πλῆν

In this contract, however, no mention is made of the requirements attached to the cultivation of sacred land, suggesting a separate contract, that is, the lease between the temple and the original tenant, Cheos, which the “purchaser,” Mieus, will take over. The original tenant,

739 P.Kron. 48 (=P.Mich. 5.260 and 261), ll. 5-7. Two copies exist of this document, P.Mich. 5.260 and 261, without substantial differences.
Cheos, was the father of Kronion (I), of the Kronion archive,⁷⁴⁰ and we know quite a bit more about the son than the father. In the case of the son (Kronion I) we know not only that he owned outright not a single aroura of land,⁷⁴¹ but that his family made their living by leasing a large amount of land from various figures, especially a certain Asklepiades.⁷⁴² The only members of the family described as owning land are two of Kronion I’s daughters, both of whom owned at least seven arousas near Tebtunis.⁷⁴³ One daughter’s land also included around 8 arousas of epibole land, which would almost certainly not have been productive. In any case, the land belonging to the two daughters may have been purchased by Kronion I as a gift to them upon their marriage, something we see elsewhere in this period. Other than that land, which should be seen as a special case, the Kronion family were not landowners, but instead leased land and farmed it themselves. The family seems throughout the period covered by the archive to have been only barely above subsistence and it relied on loans to survive until harvests, resulting in “a substantial burden of debt.”⁷⁴⁴ It is unlikely, therefore, though not impossible, that Kronion I’s father, Cheos, was a landowner and was able to purchase freshly privatized temple land. If the temple land discussed in P.Kron. 48 was instead temple land held on a long-term lease and subsequently subleased, the entire transaction fits much better into our understanding of the Kronion family’s way of life.

Another “sale” in the Michigan collection, P.Mich. 5.254⁷⁴⁵ (30-31 AD), shows that we are dealing with long-term leases. Though the language is in terms of a sale (ὁμολογῶν ἐπερακέναι) it must be a transfer of a long-term lease. In lines 6-7, reference is made to the

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⁷⁴⁰ For a survey of the texts and issues (albeit with some oversights, discussed in Smolders 2011) see P.Kron.
⁷⁴¹ P.Kron. 50 (Tebtunis, 138 AD)
⁷⁴² Kehoe (1992) 150-158.
⁷⁴³ Kehoe (1992) 149.
⁷⁴⁵ P.Mich. 5.255 is a more or less complete copy of 254.
responsibility of the new tenant for the payment of what remained on the year’s lease (μηνούσης τῶν γεωργῶν τῆς τοῦ σωτοῦ ἐτοὺς μισθώσεως). Kronion, the seller, confirms in the contract that he has paid the rent for all previous years of the lease, but from the current year (the 16th of Tiberius) the rent payments are the responsibility of Didymos, the purchaser. This is not the language of a sale, but of a lease. Through this, Didymos protected himself from the temple attacking him for non-payment. This contract was meant to be understood in relation to the original lease signed by Kronion (or a predecessor) with the temple. This can be seen in the delineation of the boundaries of the land, in which the northern boundary is “the land that formerly belonged to Petermouthis but which now belongs to Herakles” (πρότερον Πετερμούθεως γῆ νυνεὶ δὲ Ἡρακλείου γῆ). It is likely that when the long-term lease was signed between the temple and Kronion (or his predecessor) that the boundaries were listed as, to the north, the land of Petermouthis, requiring this addendum to the current sale of rights in order to avoid challenges. There are a number of other documents found in Tebtunis, generally published as sales or cessions of sacred land, but all functioning instead as sales of rights.

With the help of a Demotic document, we can trace long-term leases of temple land back to the Ptolemaic period. This agreement, P.Cairo.dem. 2.30613, dated to 94/3 BC, records a lease of an unknown amount of land. It is clearly a lease, certainly of the land of Soknebtunis, and located in the vicinity of Tebtunis itself (t3 št T3-nb.t-Tn). The text is unfortunately not completely preserved, and we are left without the names of the contracting parties, though Spiegelberg believed they were the same as P.Cairo.dem. 2.30615, another lease of temple land.

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746 Legal documents in Egypt, whether Greek or Demotic, reflect serious concerns over third parties lodging claims against one or both contracting parties.
747 Aside from those already mentioned, see P.Mich. 5.256 (29-30 AD) or P.Mich. 5.263 (35-36 AD), e.g.
748 The amount is almost certainly moderate, at the very least, given the amounts of grain paid for the land.
749 P.Cairo.dem. 2.30613 l. 8
from a few years earlier (98/7 BC) in which the lessor seems to be a priest. Here then, in the language of the priests, we find an example of the original lease with the temple, rather than the sub-lease, of which we have more evidence. One other document, *P.Cairo.dem. 2.30631*, also dating to the first quarter of the first century BC, reveals a particularly interesting innovation on this leasing model. Here, the priests of Soknebtunis all together—after a list of names, we also have the *lesonis* for the given year, and the priests of all five phylae listed collectively—agree to what is probably a long-term lease of temple land to a man who has paid off the back taxes on that land. Thanks to the Demotic insistence on listing all neighbors, we are also informed that temple land surrounded this parcel on three sides, the south, east, and west. We are not, however, informed as to the physical location or condition of the land, aside from its belonging to Soknebtunis. The temple in this case could use their wealth in land to offer what amounted to a fixed-term antichretic loan to repay someone who helped them out of a tight spot. Such a solution represents a more nuanced use of the long-term lease and, as I suggest below, the document clearly demonstrates that, even when faced with a serious issue—the non-payment of taxes, probably a number of talents worth—the temple did not simply sell the land, but turned instead to a lease. Short of the destruction of the temple itself, as can be seen archaeologically at Bubastis in the eastern Delta in the early Roman period, it is hard to imagine a more serious threat to the temple than a major debt to the government, whether Ptolemaic or Roman. Nevertheless, the temple maintained its domain, offering a lease to its savior, and not an outright gift or sale of property.

750 *P.Cairo.dem. 2.30615*, contracting party A.
751 With the disappearance of Demotic leases in the Roman period, this particular type of evidence disappears.
752 *P.Cairo.dem. 2.30631 ll.16-17*.
753 For the possibility that *P.Tebt. 2.302* represents the aftermath of a failure to pay taxes due on temple land around Tebtunis, see Ch. 3.
754 For Bubastis, see Mamdeow (2013).
That leases on temple land could be inherited without the land in question becoming private land—which runs counter to supposed privatization of temple land—is made clear by another papyrus from Tebtunis, *P.Tebt. 2.309* (116-117 AD). Here, Onnophris, a priest of Soknebtunis, applies to the “ten elder priests” (τοῖς δέκα πρεσβυτέροις ἱερεῦσι) to release him from a lease that he, Onnophris, inherited from his father. Onnophris, unable for whatever reason to work his field, seeks to end his lease to allow the elders to rent the land to others (ἐτέροις μεταμισθοῦντες). Another document, *P.Tebt. 2.310* (186 AD) provides similar evidence for long-term leases. Thaubastis, daughter of Maron, confirms through her husband that she is surrendering a lease of one and a half arouras of temple land. Given the chronological spread between these two documents (116/7 to 186 AD) we should probably not see these surrenders of leases as reactions to particular events, but rather as part and parcel of land tenure in the village. The temples owned hundreds of arouras, and it is natural that a certain number of tenants would be unable to cultivate their share, thanks to personal problems or unsatisfactory land conditions. As such, surrenders of leased land would occasionally occur, and it seems either that the temple could find new tenants or that existing tenants might take on more land in order to sublease it, as we can see from *P.Tebt. 2.311* (134 AD) in which Taorseus sublets temple land from Onnophris, whom we have already seen in *P.Tebt. 2.309*. In *P.Tebt. 2.311*, the terms under which Onnophris leased two (or so) arouras from the temple must have been fairly long-term, if they include however long Taorseus has already sublet the land in addition to another nineteen years.

Another document from Tebtunis shows the range of land owned by the temple, and the

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755 *P.Tebt. 2.310*, l. 22. All but the sigma of ἔτεροις are reconstructed.
756 Grenfell and Hunt call the document “very illiterate,” and the language and spelling are indeed both very poor. There is no clear evidence to support their suggestion that Thaubastis is a priestess, unless they assumed that temple land in this period had necessarily to be worked by temple personnel, a theory that cannot be reasonably supported today.
757 *P.Tebt. 2.311*, ll. 18-22.
popularity of the lease-sublease pattern on temple land. This text, P.Mich. 121 R IV.5, represents only one document in a long list of abstracts of contracts. The entire papyrus dates to 42 AD, and probably comes from the grapheion in Tebtunis, making the appearance of temple property coincidental, and not the direct result of a documentary record found inside the temple precinct. In any case, one abstract (R IV.5), records a lease by a certain Orseus of twenty-three arouras of pasture land in Kerkesiris and Tebtunis, of which 11 arouras were temple land in Tebtunis. These 11 arouras were, according to the contract, sown with hay for “the pasturage of sheep” (γῆς ια εἰς σποράν χόρτου πασῶν εἰς καταβρώματα προβάτων). In this case, two men lease their land to Orseus, with their respective parcels listed under their names. For the temple land in Tebtunis, however, the land is not listed with one or the other of them as holding the lease, suggesting instead that they hold the lease jointly.  

It is likely, therefore, that the lease-sublease system was widely practiced in Tebtunis in the first century AD and represents the main form by which temple land was cultivated in this period. The use of the term “lease-sublease pattern” should not be taken to imply that all temple land, once leased, was then necessarily subleased. Quite a bit of temple land—probably the majority—remained with the initial lessee. Further, we must note that the odds of a sublease appearing in the surviving evidence are higher than the odds of a single long-term lease appearing. If undertaken for, say, seventy years and not amended, a long-term lease with a temple would leave a single document, and perhaps a small number of copies. As we have already seen, sub-leasing of that land was not necessarily undertaken on similarly long terms, and the occasional new sub-leases or renewals of existing sub-leasing arrangements increase the

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number of documents that could have been preserved.\textsuperscript{759}

The social and economic networks developed by the long-term lease/sub-lease pattern extended beyond just those holding leases or sub-leases. As with any agricultural undertaking, for instance, part-time labor could be essential. A receipt from Tebtunis, now in Michigan, records a payment made to a certain Marepsemis for working (ἵργασται) three arouras of sacred land near the village.\textsuperscript{760} While the receipt does provide some vague geographic information—the land is to the east of Tebtunis, near a particular canal and sluice gate—that information serves to protect both the worker and the employer by ensuring that the worker was paid (and only paid once) for each plot of land he cultivated. Marepsemis may have been from a priestly family (or have been the patriarch of a family that repeatedly married into a priestly family)\textsuperscript{761} but that is largely irrelevant for our understanding of this text (and others like it). There is no mention of priestly rank or temple involvement in this transaction, and it is likely that Marepsemis worked fields that Psuphis himself was leasing from the temple (if Psuphis himself was not sub-leasing the land from a third party).\textsuperscript{762} The involvement of part-time, seasonal labor would have spread the economic possibilities of sacred land more thoroughly throughout the area, and the temple no

\textsuperscript{759} See, e.g., \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.311 where the sublease makes its only appearance \textit{in medias res}, so to speak. Even on private land, where the lease terms were usually much shorter, renewals were common and, generally, were written out and not simply tacitly made (which we might expect from our understanding of the relational contract). For this, see Rowlandson (1996) 254. On temple land on a long-term lease, then, lease renewals would not form a particularly large group, but sub-leasing contracts (and renewals of those sub-leases) might reasonably predominate.

\textsuperscript{760} \textit{P.Mich.} 5.337

\textsuperscript{761} The grounds for such a suggestion must remain quite shaky, but are as follows: Marepsemis, son of Psuphis would have been born quite close to the birthdate of Marepsemis, father of Marepsemis (SB 12.11041). The young Marepsemis appears as the lesonis of the local temple, and possibly has relatives marrying into other high-ranking priestly families, as in \textit{P.Mich.} 5.322a (46 AD). At the very least, the name Marepsemis, which our worker bears, seems to be closely associated with the priests of Tebtunis.

\textsuperscript{762} The land is listed as sacred land (ἱερᾶς γῆς) and not as, for instance, “formerly sacred land” (such as formed the core of the confiscation narrative, for which see Ch. 3). The lack of reference to a former or current state strongly suggests that this is ordinary sacred land that survived the supposed Petronian purge (and that this is not “indirectly controlled” temple land that the state has confiscated and privatized). That the work is being paid for by a man with no priestly affiliation mentioned—an affiliation that would, if it existed, be listed even if it was of little direct relevance to the document at hand—further suggests that this is not land that the temple has leased from the state, nor is it “directly-controlled” temple land.
doubt similarly deepened its role in the social landscape of the region through these extended networks.763

It is likely that what our documents represent is not a uniform solution applied throughout the meris, the nome, and the province by Roman or Ptolemaic officials but rather a patchwork quilt assembled according to the laws in place when individual lands were donated or changed status, to decrees issued by kings or prefects while the land was in temple hands, or to any number of possible modifying factors when the land was donated. We can see a hint of this in a fragment of a will from Tebtunis.764 After a lengthy list of katoikic land, there is a brief mention of three-artaba sacred land (ἱερᾶς τριαρτάβου), of which 10 ½ arouras are being handed down.765 This term, τριαρτάβου, is unique and presumably refers to the taxation rate on this land.766 It obviously cannot be a declaration of yield, as this would vary from year to year and, in any case, yields are listed nowhere else in this document.767 For whatever reason—and our information is far too scanty to hazard a guess—these 10 ½ arouras in the vicinity of Tebtunis were taxed at a higher rate, almost certainly 3 artabas per aroura.768 This does not seem to have been part of a larger governmental tax-increase, or even a questionable action on the part of a komogrammateus, as the other sacred land in the area presumably was not taxed at the 3 artaba/aroura rate, occasioning the need here to mention the higher rate. In addition, if, by this

763 On occasional labor, see Rathbone (1991) 148-166.
764 P.Mil.Vogl. 209 + P.Mil.Vogl. 1.23 (108 AD)
765 P.Mil.Vogl. 209, col. 3, l. 16
766 SB 6.9210 features τεταρτάβους, but this is clearly a reference to quantity, that is, four artabas of Phoenician palm-leaves and not used adjectively as here.
767 Such limited yields (3 artabas/aroura) would be surprising for the 2nd century AD as, even Kerkesephis, despite its perennial flooding problems in the Ptolemaic period (see, e.g., P.Tebt. 1.56 or BGU 3.1003), seems to have addressed these issues by the Roman period, and any significantly lowered yields would be caused by particular yearly floods and thus not necessitate a re-classification that likes of which would be specifically mentioned in a will.
768 The line immediately prior (col. 3, l. 15) mentions land “around Kerkesephis” (περὶ Κερκεσήφον) but the preceding lines mention quite a number of surrounding villages, so the most we can say in safety is this land is in the greater surroundings of Tebtunis.
point sacred land in Egypt had been confiscated or converted to private land (connected only in name to the temple), the taxation rate should have been the one artaba/aroura rate that was broadly applied to private land in the Roman period.

Wills provide us with quite a bit of useful information about family property and, in some cases, remind us once again that priestly families could have healthy private finances. One lengthy division of property, *P.Mich. 5.322a* (46 AD) shares out the belongings of a certain Psuphis, also named Harpochration, and his wife Tetosiris, also called Dionysia. Among the properties being divided are a number of *pastophoria*, which we will discuss in Chapter 6, as well as 5 23/32 arouras of sacred land around Tebtunis, made up of three parcels: 3 arouras, 1 5/16 arouras “from the cutting of the vineyard,” and 1 13/32 arouras belonging specifically to Tetosiris. The sacred land “from the cutting of the vineyard” (*γῆ ἀπὸ ἐκκοπῆς ἀμπέλου*) is probably land that has been cleared of vines and plowed, but not yet put into service as ordinary farmland. This would make it akin to the three arouras of *chersokopai* sacred land also mentioned, land that has been cleared and tilled, but not yet farmed. From Psuphis’ will, we can draw two tentative conclusions. First, temple land around Tebtunis in the mid-first century AD might be highly fragmented, with very small plots of land being a common form of temple land “ownership,” that is, long-term leasing. Second, Psuphis may not have been a farmer *per se*. While his wife, Tetosiris, brought a little over 13 arouras of land into the marriage, Psuphis “owned” only a little over nine arouras. Of those nine arouras, five are given to his daughters, Tamarres and Thaubastis, probably as dowries. Psuphis may have purchased those five

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769 *P.Mich. 5.322a*, I.6
770 See the editor’s note on l. 6
771 See the editor’s note on l. 4
772 *P.Mich. 5.322a*, ll. 17-19. Three arouras have already been given to Tamarres as a dowry, and it seems more likely than not that the two arouras given to Thaubastis are intended for a similar purpose.
arouras—the only non-temple land he owns—specifically to give land to his daughters unencumbered by the long-term leases on his sacred land. Without that land, Psuphis “owned” only four arouras of sacred land alongside five houses, three courtyards, a storehouse, a watchtower, a barn, shares in five building sites, and full or partial ownership of 6 pastophoria, alongside other moveable property—slaves, cattle, furniture, etc. That all of the land owned by Psuphis (not including the 1 13/32 arouras belonging to Tetosiris) is in the process of being reclaimed—chersokopai and chersampelos—at the time of his retirement is interesting. As he does not own any other property, Psuphis may have been been “flipping” property, that is, taking on unproductive land, bringing it into cultivation (or at least a state prepared for cultivation) and selling on his rights. We are informed in this document that some of Psuphis’ property has not necessarily been in his family for generations—there are the five arouras given to his daughters, called “those of Noumenios,” as well as a house and land called “those of Pabis”—to go alongside property given to him by his father.

We can see from these documents that temple land could form part of much larger estates. In other words, temple land was taken on, perhaps less frequently than private land (at least according to the information available), but taken on nevertheless. Whether this was due to its attractive taxation rate and the availability of long-term leases, or whether this was as a hedge against changes in the private property market is unclear, but we might assume that, when such decisions were being made consciously, a mix of these factors and others (familial or personal connection to the temple, a particular patch of temple land being particularly attractive, etc.) influenced a tenant’s decision to take on temple land.

773 Psuphis and Tetosiris are not yet dead and, based on their planning, do not plan on dying in the near future. See P.Mich. 5.322a, ll. 31-33 for their retirement income. For a similar donation see SB 8.9642.5 (=Husselman 1957 no. 5).
774 See also Ch. 6 and, for a possible Pharaonic parallel, Katary (2013) 722.
Finally, we can recall the most extraordinary temple document from Tebtunis, *P.Tebt.* 2.302. This document, which we have already discussed at length above, records a petition to the prefect (probably Ti. Julius Lupus) purportedly concerning an attempt by a local official to increase the taxes they are paying on (purportedly) temple land, an increase equivalent to around 0.4 artabas per aroura if assessed on all 500 ¼ arouras. We have already seen that this document almost certainly represents a purely local phenomenon, perhaps a failure by the temple to pay taxes owed on their land. While we can leave the arguments concerning the function and meaning of the document in Ch. 3, we can consider a few of the incidental implications here.

First, even if the number represents only part of the whole,\(^{775}\) the temple of Soknebtunis owned at least 500 ¼ arouras in the southern Fayum. Without more accurate information about the location of those arouras or the total agricultural land surrounding Tebtunis, it is difficult to put those 500 ¼ arouras into context.\(^{776}\) It is true that 500 ¼ arouras is quite a bit, as most commentators have noted, but it is not in and of itself a vast complex, especially spread around a number of villages. The area is about three times the size of Vatican City, but only 1/9\(^{th}\) the size of the land around Kerkeosiris, a village much smaller than Tebtunis.\(^{777}\) As we have already discussed above, Soknebtunis controlled in 118 BC at least 130 arouras in Kerkeosiris, and may well have controlled similarly sized sections in other villages around Tebtunis. No matter the cause of the dispute, *P.Tebt.* 2.302 reminds us that the priests could struggle quite vehemently to protect what they saw as their property, a point made even more strongly by the bloodshed surrounding the Hermonthite-Pathyrite dispute discussed above.\(^{778}\) If the dispute is linked to,

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\(^{775}\) For this, see discussion in Ch. 3.

\(^{776}\) Contra Monson (2012b), 9 who assumes that the 500 ¼ arouras must be located in Tebtunis itself, and on this basis calculates its relative size in the village.

\(^{777}\) Crawford (1971) 44

\(^{778}\) *P.Lond.* 7.2188 (148 BC)
e.g., problems with tax payment, it would also highlight the amounts of risk inherent in the
dsystem, risk that existed despite the relatively large amount of land that Soknebtunis owned, and
which the temple might have tried to address through the position of the prophetes.779

Temple Land in Soknopaiou Nesos in the Early Roman Period

The village of Soknopaiou Nesos was, as we have seen, unique in its position in the
Roman Fayum. Its location on the north shore of Lake Moeris and on caravan routes entering the
Fayum from the desert meant that—even without taking into account the predominant priestly
population—the village would be out of the ordinary. The wealth of Demotic evidence (with
more forthcoming) enables us, more than any other place in Egypt, to check the biases inherent
in the Greek evidence.780

The point that stands out most immediately concerning temple land at Soknopaiou Nesos
is the absence of it, at least in the immediate vicinity of the village. The village was largely
dominated by the temple and the customs-post, and there was little other land available on the
north shore of the Birket Qarun. What land there was seems to have been extremely dependent
on a healthy inundation: a petition from 25 villagers describes flooded shore land (αἰγαλός) and
notes that the village possessed no royal land and no private land (μὴ ἔχειν τὴν κόμην µῆδε ἔι
dιοικήν γῆν µήδε ἀλλῆν εἰδέαν).781 Even if some of this claim can be
dismissed as exaggeration, it must contain a kernel of truth. The majority of arable land near the
village, however much that was, was strung out along the lake and was, at least at times, royal
land, as a letter from the public farmers in 207 AD notes.782 As a result of this, therefore, the

779 For the prophetes as a risk-reducing position, see Ch. 7.
780 A point made forcefully in Lippert (2010) and elsewhere.
781 P.Gen. 16 (=Chrest.Wilck.. 354; Sel.Pap. 2.289) (207 AD; Soknopaiou Nesos). For the land, see Hobson (1984).
782 SB 1.4284 (207 AD; Soknopaiou Nesos). The letter, from another large group of public farmers, claims that this
group of men returned from abroad to work the beach land. For another reference to the beach land, see Boak (1935)
no. 1.
Lord of the Island\textsuperscript{783} had a more varied pattern of land ownership than perhaps any other temple in Egypt. This distribution pattern would extend to other interests as well. As we shall see in the next chapter, Soknopaios owned mills and presses across the northern Fayum, presumably linked to their landholdings in those areas, but the distribution of the god’s land shows especially clearly the dramatic effect of the village’s location.

A problem that we must consider is the extraordinary nature of Soknopaiou Nesos as it concerns the question of temple land and temple businesses. There is ample evidence for temple businesses owned by Soknopaios throughout the northern Fayum, much more evidence than exists for any other temple in Egypt. It is possible that this represents the richness of the papyrological record and especially the Demotic evidence, more and more of which is being published.\textsuperscript{784} Are we much better informed about the businesses of Soknopaiou Nesos because they owned more of them, as a percentage of temple economic interests, than the other temples in the area? If so, is this a reflection of Soknopaiou Nesos’ unique geographical situation? It cannot be, as we have already seen, that the relatively sparse references to temple land reflect a Roman confiscation of that land—such a confiscation did not happen. The question of how much land Soknopaios owned could easily be answered had the relevant parts of an internal financial document from the temple been preserved in full. This document, \textit{SPP} 22.183, was written in 138 AD by someone within the temple, rendering an accounting of income, almost entirely lost, and of expenditures, largely preserved but generally unenlightening, possibly to satisfy increased Roman demands for temple accounting.\textsuperscript{785} We are missing a lot of information. The

\textsuperscript{783} Soknopaios being a transliteration into Greek of \textit{Sobek nb Pay}, or “Sobek, lord of the Island.” As mentioned previously, the island nature of Soknopaiou Nesos was most likely fictive.

\textsuperscript{784} See, e.g., the work of M-P Chauffray, forthcoming.

\textsuperscript{785} Unenlightening for our present purposes, that is. The vast majority of direct evidence for temple finances from Soknopaiou Nesos currently published or in progress concerns temple expenditures and not income. For more, see Capron (2008), and \textit{P.Louvre} 1.4 + P.Louvre inv. AF 13314 and \textit{SB} 6.9199.
contributions preserved—two pious donations—total 60 artabas of wheat, but the following line preserves the total of income in wheat, 1025 ½ artabas. It is possible that this is only wheat remaining on hand after sale, since the accounts also list substantial payments in cash. The end of the list, unfortunately where the papyrus breaks off, lists “revenue in grain from the farmers” and in the following line, “παρὰ δὲ γεωργῆς κόμης”.

One other document, P.Vindob. Tandem 25a has been taken as a sale of temple land, but it is clear that this is not in fact agricultural land. It is instead an open lot (ψειλὸν τόπον) located just to the south of the temple of Soknopaios, that is, within the village itself. While this document is interesting for its references to the organization of the temple, the sale of land described within is hard to put in context. There are other references to the sale of sacred land, and we are not informed about the amount of time that this empty lot has been under temple control. Empty lots were not uncommon in the village, and trash seems to have built up on these lots with an alarming amount of frequency. In any case, the temple probably did not own an empty lot within the village—indeed, lying directly south of the temple itself—with the intent to keep it an empty lot. The land had probably recently been donated, bought, or traded for. We cannot say if it was immediately sold or if the temple had intended to construct something on the site, but the emphasis of the property must have been not on what could be planted in the soil, but what could be built on top of it.

If we return for a moment to the Ptolemaic period, we can find clear evidence for temple land belonging to Soknopaios. A letter to the lesonis of the temple of Soknopaios, published as

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786 Some of this cash income came from other sources, discussed in the following chapter, including boats on the Birket Qarun and the rental of altars.
788 See, e.g., DDD 2.26 GH (=P.Vindob. tandem 25) (51 AD: Soknopaiou Nesos), though the trash heaps apparently obscuring the public road are not mentioned in the Demotic versions.
P.Amh. 2.40, and dating to the 2nd century BC describes efforts by the author, a certain Epiodorus, to undo a division of property that was unfavorable to the temple. The 46-aroura property, which is generally interpreted (following the original editors) as a gift intended to be divided between a certain Arius and the temple, was—if we can believe Epiodorus—instead unfairly divided by Arius, keeping for himself the 21 best arouras and leaving the 25 worst to the temple. Thanks to Epiodoros’ efforts, the preliminary division was overturned before the final demarcation of borders, and a more favorable division made. We are not informed as to the final size of the property, or its location. The land that Arius had provisionally acquired had already (and prematurely) been rented to “Greeks” (μεμισθωμένας τις τῶν Ἑλλήνων) which might point to a location outside of Soknopaiou Nesos, on the more populous southern shore of the Birket Qarun, though this can only be speculation. In any case, we can say that Soknopaios owned in the 2nd century BC around 25 arouras somewhere, most likely in the Fayum. There is a history of mismanagement by lesones in Soknopaiou Nesos, and this makes it difficult to securely explain the lesonis’ (purported) inactivity following the unfavorable division of the land grant. It is possible that, as with P.Vindob.Tandem 25a, the temple may have preferred the larger donation (25 arouras) of inferior land in hopes of using its resources to improve the land. In other words, the temple could forgo a temporary advantage (the superior state of the 21 arouras given to Arius) for a more long-term advantage (25 arouras of eventually equally productive land), resulting in an additional 4 arouras of productive land. This would be an example, then, of the temple taking advantage of its longer-term focus, though it can for the time being remain only...

789 It should be clear that this was not in and of itself illegal, as this measurements of the land and the borders could only be formally inscribed once the properties were marked and recorded. Epiodorus is quite clear that this had not taken place before his intervention. For more on this case, see Connor (2013).
790 P.Amh. 2.40, ll. 7-8.
791 The findspot of the papyrus is not helpful: the letter was addressed to the lesonis, and would therefore have had Soknopaiou Nesos as its final destination.
792 See especially P.Amh. 2.35 (132 BC; Soknopaiou Nesos)
speculation. Another document from the Ptolemaic period, *P.Amh. 2.35*, notes that the *lesonis*, having waited until the other priests were away on business, went off to Dionysias, where there was some land belonging to Soknopaios. There, he collected the payments due on that sacred land of Soknopaios in the village, carrying off 225 artabas for his own gain. The subsequent complaint by the priests is of interest, but for the moment, we can see what is presumably a typical example of the widely distributed property of Soknopaios. Assuming a very generous return on an aroura of 5 artabas, the temple must have owned at least 45 arouras in the village of Dionysias, and probably quite a few more. While most temples would have required staff to venture out to distant fields, the unique circumstances of Soknopaios’ domain may have left it more vulnerable to this sort of graft.

It is clear that Soknopaios did own land, much of it outside the village of Soknopaiou Nesos. It is difficult to say how much land the god did own, however, and what share that land formed of the income of the temple. We can expect that the Greek evidence for temple lands in Soknopaiou Nesos would indeed under-represent the amount of temple land under long-term lease. If we assume that only a very small number of copies were made of contracts, we can also assume that two copies went to the renter/buyer and to the village scribe for registration in the *grapheion*. Those two copies, for land south of the Birket Qarun, would not have gone north to Soknopaiou Nesos. The population of Soknopaiou Nesos was heavily connected with the temple and unlikely—though this is by no means impossible—to hold large properties south of the lake. Second, if the land was located south of the lake, transactions concerning it would be filed with

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793 In this scenario, Epipodo’ros’ (presumably) well-meaning intervention may have upset the temple’s own plans, or may simply have reflected differing opinions within the temple hierarchy itself for the best course of action. The question of temple factions is one we will take up in Ch. 7.

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the local *grapheion* and not that of the (better excavated) Soknopaiou Nesos, the *grapheion* of which has not been found.\(^{794}\) We must also here call to mind the one-sided nature of the documentation for the long-term lease/sub-lease model. As we have already seen, the bulk of documents concerning land leased for a long period and subsequently subleased will be generated on the side of the lessee/sub-lessee and not on that of the original lessor (that is, in this case, the temple). This all is not, I hope, to argue from silence, but to attempt to show that in this case, silence should be neither surprising nor damning. It is, I would go further, quite possible that some documents from the north and central Fayum that refer to sacred land without mentioning the name of the god concerned refer not to the local gods—of Euhemeria, for example, or Dionysias—but to land of Soknopaios scattered across the far shore of the lake, and perhaps connected to the temple itself by the god’s own lake-going fleet.

*Conclusions*

What can be said about the state of temple land as it entered the Roman era? Most of all, we can say that it looked, more or less, as it did at the end of the Ptolemaic period. Farmers still worked the fields, the surplus still flowed to the temples and their staff, and the temples continued more or less as they had. Like royal land, temple land was subjected to new regulations, but not the land and its ownership were not significantly changed. While there some major changes to private land, as Monson has described, the effects of these developments on temple land were only felt over a longer span. Despite Monson’s belief that temple land was confiscated along a dichotomy between privately owned or directly controlled land, we have seen that this does not hold up under close scrutiny of the evidence.\(^{795}\) There was no great

\(^{794}\) There is little evidence for a grapheion in Soknopaiou Nesos, but this could be the result of that area being looted for *sebakh*, for instance.

\(^{795}\) For my own suggestions concerning *P. Tebt. 2.302* and the confiscations described, see Ch. 3.
moment of outrage at the arrival of the Romans. Gallus, the first prefect, was faced with widespread trouble in the south, but this was put down quickly. In the absence of positive evidence for targeted Roman hostility at the Egyptian gods (perhaps to be separated here from the Ptolemies as gods, a point that merits further study), we can more safely assume that Augustan policy in Egypt was similar to his contemporary policy in Asia Minor—in both cases, he was confronted with gods who, at least nominally, owned large swathes of property and were intimately tied to regions that had opposed him in the recent war. Aside from localized confiscations, as in Tegea in the Peloponnese—and these confiscations tended to be of easily moved temple votives and not of land—Augustan policy was to protect, not despoil, the economic well-being of temples. In Egypt, temple land-holding served to organize the rural landscape and to ensure that large amounts of land remained in cultivation and thus paid taxes to the state. As Monson has pointed out, the Roman administration was less interested in high, but risky returns than a low, steady return from as much land as possible. The lowering and regularizing of taxes on private land went hand in hand with the safeguarding of temple land along the Nile. Temples could be counted on to manage their own property without needing a substantial Roman bureaucracy attached, and they could easily be held responsible for shortfalls in that crop, much more so than if the thousands of tenants working temple land were individually responsible. As part of this, the Romans not only installed their own legal and administrative requirements onto the country, but also brought into shape the system they inherited which had, after a few chaotic decades, grown unruly and confused. What changes the

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796 Dignas (2005) 210. Confiscations of temple goods—gold, statues, and so on—was of course a time-honored Roman pastime by this point.
797 This change is paralleled by a change in the Roman administration of temples, from more local observation under the Ptolemies (through the epistates-oriented administration) to top-down oversight under the Romans (through the archiereus of all Egypt). For this, see Ch. 7.
Romans made had more to do with bringing the province into line as a Roman holding and much less to do with any sort of *Sonderstellung* or deep-seated Roman hatred for the gods on the Nile.

In examining the temple land in two particularly interesting Fayum villages, we can see the pattern of long-term leases with sub-leases borne out. Both the Greek and Demotic evidence make it clear that, from the Ptolemaic through the Roman period, temple land was let out, and subsequently sub-let, often for long periods of time. If the temples were offering their land on fixed, long-term leases, this too in agreement with our knowledge of the risk tolerance of estate managers. For the temple officials, who could benefit greatly from successful years but suffer personally from shortfalls, the principle of individual responsibility ("the temple") for the large amount of temple land (and farmers on that land) encouraged a long-term focus that coincided with the religious framing of the temple itself ("the house of a million years"). This long-term focus generally displayed itself in a cautious management style focusing on risk-minimization, as can be seen in agricultural communities around the world.\(^{798}\) A Demotic lease of temple land from the Ptolemaic period suggests another way in which the temples might reduce their risk. The land was leased on a long-term basis, purportedly for payment of back taxes. Following the discussion of back taxes, however, it is noted in the contract that, should the temple not turn over the land or should it fail to follow the lease, it would be required to pay 1500 silver deben to the lessee.\(^{799}\) It is possible that this clause conceals the true nature of the contract, and that it rather reflects a loan of money by the lessee to the temple, presumably to pay off back taxes. The land was leased to the man as partial payment, or at least as interest while the temple gathered the money required. If this interpretation is correct, it offers further evidence for the risk-

\(^{798}\) Cf. Scott (1976) *passim*.

\(^{799}\) *P. Cairo dem.* 2.30631, l. 19; In the Ptolemaic period, 1 deben equaled 20 drachmas, making the debt 30,000 drachmas or 5 talents, as the contract itself notes. From this total 24 obols were taken out for a payment to the king.
management strategy pursued by the temple, in which the traditional economic foundation of the temple, that is, land, was leased (but never sold) to secure a loan, forgoing profits from that land for as long as it took to repay the debt, but avoiding indebtedness to the state, and all the unpleasant consequences that entailed). It is likely that the temples, more than any other landowners in Egypt, preferred such lengthy leases. The nature of the documentary record suggests that we would have ample evidence for sub-leases on that land, and we do.800 The evidence from both of our Fayum villages shows the value of looking at both Demotic and Greek evidence for these examples. Finally, our examination of Soknopaiou Nesos offers a strong example of the ingenuity or adaptability of temples to their particular circumstances, in the case of Soknopaios, its agriculturally unfavorable position on the north shore of the Birket Qarun. Indeed, the ability of the temple of Soknopaios to spread its holdings throughout the northwest Fayum reminds us, as we have seen as well at Tebtunis, that a temple was not a completely local entity. Although its staff might reside in a particular town, and the temple itself might dominate that town, religiously, visually, and economically, there were a host of other temples, bigger and smaller, with which that temple shared the heavens—as well as a temple’s own village, region, meris, and nome. A temple was not simply surrounded by its own land, but, as we have seen as far back as the New Kingdom, it could assemble a scattering of land in nearby villages—the 130 arouras of Soknebtunis in Kerkeosiris, for instance—though rarely crossing nome borders, so far as we can tell.

The temples may have struggled at times in the Roman period, but this should not be marked down to a wholesale confiscation of land. The evidence is more ambiguous than traditionally seen and the evidence for a confiscation itself in any grand sense is a supplement,
not a textual fact. As we shall see in the next chapter, the emphasis on temple land has obscured another source of temple income, that from non-agricultural land and industries. Taken as a group, the temples of the 1st and 2nd centuries AD continued for the most part to lease out their land, and that land was, at least occasionally, leased out again to third parties. The income, however, continued to accrue to the temples and their priests, often with the collaboration of an ambivalent or friendly Roman state.
Chapter 6: Temple Income not from Temple Land

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we discussed in detail the agricultural landholding of the Egyptian temples in the Roman period, but this was not the only source of income available to the temples. A temple financial document, SPP 22.183, offers a long list of outgoing cash for the temple of Soknopaios in 138 AD. It also records, in a more fragmentary sense, a list of incoming money. While some of this cash income may have stemmed from the sale of excess agricultural produce, it is clear that the temples must have had alternate sources of income, and the literary, papyrological, and epigraphic record all bears this out. In this chapter, we shall examine the range of these other sources, from the supposed temple brothels to other phenomena, such as the operation of dovecotes or the rental of religious buildings. After establishing the status quaestionis, we will briefly survey the evidence from elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean and will draw important distinctions between non-agricultural income of temples elsewhere in the Roman East and of Egyptian temples. In addition, we will discuss non-agricultural income for the temples of Egypt prior to the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. With all this done, we move through the sources of non-agricultural temple income by category, from the processing of agricultural produce (and related industries) and the leasing out of livestock to income from other, miscellaneous areas and finally income from specifically religious sources—income that would not be available to private estate managers. The combined picture, with particular emphasis on the evidence from Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos, shows a vibrant and varied economic sector that has been downplayed of late but which could sustain or at least strongly

\[801\] In addition, the sale of excess agricultural product might have taken place in temple-controlled markets.

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supplement the economic well-being of a temple, even one weak in agricultural land.

Walter Otto, in his magisterial examination of the temples of Ptolemaic Egypt, moved relatively quickly through temple landholding, but discussed at length numerous aspects of temple businesses. While Otto’s work was (and remains) fundamental—offering early interpretations of freshly-published documents and gathering evidence from a wide range of established and new sources—it dates to 1905-1908. In the slightly more than a century since Otto’s work, there has been a flood of new evidence, in Greek and Demotic, from archaeological campaigns conducted throughout Egypt, especially in the Fayum, and documents already published by Otto’s time have been reinterpreted in light of more recent discoveries, all of which adds up to a picture of temple businesses that is sometimes more confusing, certainly more complicated, but nevertheless quite a bit fuller. Since Otto, the focus has largely shifted towards agricultural land and more specific examinations of individual taxes, tax exemptions, or privileges. Evans, in his 1961 attempt to encapsulate the social and economic aspects of the temple of Soknebtunis in Tebtunis, did spend quite a bit more time on business aspects, largely because he believed, as discussed in the previous chapter, that all temple land had been confiscated by the Romans. One finds, meanwhile, as a sort of counterpart to Evans, the work of Lippert and Schentuleit on the temple of Soknopaios. They have generally focused on the Roman period, and also explore the economic underpinnings of the temple, especially the non-agricultural aspects, but largely from the side of the Demotic evidence.\footnote{Lippert and Schentuleit (2005) \textit{passim}. Evans largely ignored the Demotic evidence.} While neither can answer all of the questions we might ask, they both point to a more holistic sense of temple income in the Roman period, one that has occasionally been lost in the focus on agricultural land as the prime mover of temple finances.
Before we can turn to the nitty-gritty details of temple “businesses,” it is important to state some caveats. First, as we have already seen when dealing with temple land, the division between temple property and property owned or operated by a priest or other temple official can sometimes be unclear in our surviving evidence. Temple property could in addition be rented, and appear in the documentary record under the name of its renter, with or without mention of its divine owner. When temple property is mentioned alongside the name of a renter, one must also determine whether or not it has been privatized, as the confiscation narrative would demand. For the purposes of this chapter, we will assume that property for which a god is listed as owner, or which is directly stated to belong to a temple itself does indeed belong to that temple. Property for which a single individual who happens to be a priest is listed as owner did, in all likelihood, not belong to the temple, but rather to the priest in question, or to whomever or whatever institution from whom the priest rented it. For example, a sale of a house and building-site from Soknopaiou Nesos in 11 AD records the seller as a certain Chairemon, who was a prophet and son of a prophet—from one of the many priestly families in the village—and the purchaser as a Satabus, “lord of purity,” a priestly title associated with the village. In this case, both figures were priests but the transaction is clearly private. While this is just one of a wealth of such examples, it does serve to highlight the need for caution in interpreting, positively or negatively, temple properties. Second, though we have focused especially on evidence from Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos, there is no complete account of an Egyptian temple. This means that, from time to time, it will be necessary (and helpful) to consider evidence from elsewhere in Roman Egypt, especially Oxyrhynchus. These examples, when referenced, are

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803 Clarysse and Thompson’s point (2006, vol. 2, 184) that individuals had to choose a single occupation for tax purposes should be kept in mind.
804 DDD 3.5

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described with reference to the locations described, and offer valuable information about the breadth of the temples’ economic networks.

Temple Businesses elsewhere in the Roman World

When one turns to temple income, one primary factor separates the temples of Egypt from their cousins elsewhere in the Roman world, especially in the east. The temples of Egypt did not partake in banking, a pursuit that seems to have provided a large amount of the income for the temples of Asia Minor. Indeed, as Dignas has shown, the temples of Greece and Asia Minor were thoroughly integrated into the banking systems of the region, as gods could operate their own banks, as well as keeping accounts at “secular” banks. In connection with the large sums of money required for these operations, the temples in addition “guarded deposits and granted loans to cities and individuals, and they probably minted coins and dealt with the exchange of currencies.” Money also entered the temple accounts from other sources, such as, at Delos, port duties and taxes on trading taking place on the island. Finally, the temples of Asia Minor did also possess land, sometimes in great amount, from which they could draw an income. While the temples could have a range of economic activities, there is a key difference between those of Egypt and Asia Minor, aside from theology. The temples of Asia Minor had almost no staff costs—their administration was a part of the local government, and priests served on a more or less volunteer basis, as in Rome. The Greek temples required money for elaborate construction projects, for daily rituals, and regular festivals, and especially for the piling up of huge numbers of gifts, as those of Delphi described throughout the Histories of Herodotus.

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Where we do have evidence for temple-owned businesses beyond banking in Greece and Asia Minor, there is a clear tension, visible even in the financial records, in the system. At Delos, the best-recorded industrial operations tended to be recorded as “estates,” alongside farmland, while fishing from the sacred lake was recorded as “income from the sale of sacred objects.”

Agricultural industries, such as the milling of oil or pressing of grapes, were not generally present—only four of Delos’ estates had mills provided by the temple—while storehouses and cattle-pens were. The Temple of Delos, then, was particularly active in the production of agricultural raw materials, but seems to have left the conversion of raw materials to finished goods to private individuals, unlike the Egyptian temples. The differing developmental tracks meant that the temples of Greece and Asia Minor were also large storehouses of wealth, which allowed them to serve as bankers to governments and private citizens alike. The temples of Egypt, meanwhile, formed part of the larger state apparatus. Their wide-reaching economic networks allowed them to marshal production and tax payments from around their region.

Temple Businesses in Egypt Prior to the Roman Period

Before we turn to the evidence from the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, we should consider again the evidence for temple businesses prior to the arrival of Alexander in Egypt. As we have already seen, land was the basis of temples’ wealth, shown vividly by the Harris and Wilbour Papyri. Unfortunately, while those documents offer clear evidence for the variety and scope of sacred land-holding in Upper Egypt in the New Kingdom, they are not concerned with

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809 Kent (1948) 254.
810 Kent (1948) 294-295.
811 While the Delos material predates the Roman period in Egypt, by dint of the sacks of 88 and 69 BC, there is no indication that changes were in store for the temple estates on Delos, and there is little reason to expect that the temple would not have been path dependent in any case.
812 For which see Ch. 4.
other industries the temples might have also controlled.813 One lucrative source of income, at least for the wealthy temples of the Thebaid, was the precious metal trade. While Egypt was, to much of the rest of the Mediterranean, rich in gold, very little of that gold was found along the Nile.814 It rather had to come from Nubia (perhaps so-called from the Egyptian word for gold) or from the deserts. To this end, the temples sponsored expeditions into the desert, expeditions that could return at least as much as 10 kilograms of gold at a time, in addition to other precious metals and valuable minerals (such as galena).815 While the precious metals flowing into the temples from the deserts were no doubt profitable, the temples also seem to have managed themselves the subsequent processing of ore: a temple of Sety I at Abydos oversaw a team of gold-washers, though they weren’t based at the temple itself.816 Indeed, the temples seem to have assembled an ad hoc collection of employees, from the production of raw materials through the working of finished goods, and even the subsequent sale of those goods. Haring has assembled a list that includes “stewards, gardeners, farmers, brewers, bakers, fishermen, craftsmen, weavers, and scribes,” as well as chief confectioner817, draftsman818, butcher819, sandal-maker820, beekeeper821, charioteer822, coppersmith823, and even a commercial agent.824 In addition to the

813 A problem that continues into the Ptolemaic period, when one considers the land registers from Tebtunis. There does not seem to have been anything like a register of businesses corresponding to the frequently recorded and reproduced registers of land, a fact that no doubt skews our understanding of the temples at least somewhat.
814 See, e.g., Capellini and Caramello (2010) 30, esp. Table 1, for Egypt’s role in supplying the Eastern Mediterranean in the Amarna period.
816 Spencer (1984), 270-271
817 Samut, attached to a temple of Thutmose III. See Haring (1997), 434.
819 Resemhebsed, chief butcher of a temple of Ramesses II. See Haring (1997), 446.
820 Asakhet, attached to a temple of Ramesses III. See Haring (1997), 450.
821 Sebeknekhet, also attached to a temple of Ramesses III. See Haring (1997), 454.
822 Bakeneset, also from Ramesses III. See Haring (1997), 451.
823 Pakher and Pakemen, both from Ramesses III. See Haring (1997), 451 and 452, respectively.
824 Hat[…], from an unknown establishment. See Haring (1997), 458.
commercial agent, the temples also employed large river-going fleets.\textsuperscript{825} Producing raw materials and working them into finished goods within the temple workshops may have been standard practice, but it is difficult to speak generally about a system that could employ a chief confectioner in one place, and food vendors or counters of cattle elsewhere.\textsuperscript{826} In other words, we should not be surprised by the appearance of temple interests in economic activity throughout Egypt, whatever the industry, and we need not be surprised at the absence of temples in any area of the economy as well. As we have seen already concerning Soknopaiou Nesos (and will be reminded of below), the geographic and religious circumstances of any particular temple were the greatest determining factor for the arrangement and type of their economic practice. The temples of the New Kingdom Thebaid, closer to the auriferous desert outcroppings and Nubian trade routes, invested in the gold trade, which brought them valuable precious metals (which they themselves worked) and prestige goods. Temples in the north, meanwhile—though evidence is sparse—presumably placed a greater emphasis on agriculture, fishing, and trade with the eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamian worlds. In any case, while the concept of the temple economy—a concept developed in the study of the Ancient Near East, in which temples operated large self-contained, independent (or nearly independent), distributive economic systems that controlled their surrounding areas\textsuperscript{827}—ought not be applied to Egypt, for a number of reasons, we can see that temples took advantage of local circumstances either to fill economic niches up till then unsatisfied—as might be the case with certain butchers or sandal-makers, e.g.—or to leverage their own size and economic heft to move in on

\textsuperscript{825} See, e.g., Iufenamun, ship’s captain for a temple of Ramesses III (Haring (1997), 449) or Ipy, overseer of ships for a Theban temple of Thumosis IV (Haring (1997), 437).
\textsuperscript{826} Pap.Cairo 58070 and 58081, though see Janssen (1979), 515 and n. 28 for commentary and caveats. For the counter of cattle, see Ta, from a temple of Amenophis II, for which Haring (1997) 437.
\textsuperscript{827} This idea has been challenged even concerning the Near East. For problems in the Neo-Assyrian period, see especially Lipiński (1979).
established markets or industries, as is probably the case with the sacred fleets and the precious metal industry. The gold trade in Thebes shows what will soon appear a feature of the Roman-period temples as well: the temples tended towards vertical integration of the production process of their raw materials, from desert expeditions bringing in gold, and then to refiners and jewelers.

The Thebaid metals expeditions also reveal a second facet of the temples’ economic activities. In many cases, it is assumed that temple income was paid back out to the temple staff or to the state as tax payments. Rather than putting a dollar figure on all transactions, though, we should keep in mind the non-monetary value of certain objects. Gold, as a cursory look at the grave assemblage of Tutankhamun will show, was in great demand as a prestige object. Ten kilograms of gold, produced annually and worked into decorative objects or jewelry, would be more than sufficient to produce a healthy income and to provide gifts to high-ranking members of the pharaonic elite. Arrian mentions the Oracle of Amun at Siwa producing rock salt from the oasis, and its transport to the Nile basin for use as gifts, at least in the Persian period. While this was probably not some sort of wide-ranging priestly monopoly on the production and importation of salt (a notion that Otto rightly dismisses, but on incorrect grounds) we can see that the priests of Siwa did control the production of rock salt—a good generally unavailable inside Egypt—at the oasis, and they could thus use it as a valuable gift. Again, then, the temple, in this case the Oracle of Amun, took advantage of local circumstances (the existence of rock salt in a distant oasis) to produce value, though in this case non-monetary value. As we shall see in the next chapter, however, the ability to sway an official’s decisions was a valuable thing, and prestige objects and gifts no doubt helped in this endeavor. We would obviously not expect the rock salt industry to be a regular temple feature, just as we would not expect gold mining to be

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828 Arrian 3.4.3.
829 Otto (1905) 317.
part of the economic interests of a Delta temple. The geographic (and geologic) circumstances of
the temple’s location, the state of its location at the time of foundation, and the changing state
over the course of the temple’s existence—and we should remember that temples, throughout
Egyptian history, did slowly wither and die, but nevertheless had lifespans measured in the
centuries, for the most part—all determined the economic interests of the temples. As we
consider the economic activities of the temples of the Roman period, therefore, it is important to
remember that these particular instances might be very new or short-lived—in other words, our
evidence, for the most part, represents a snapshot and not a state continuing from the beginning
of the Roman period to the end of the temple (or even from the Ptolemaic period).

Temple Monopolies

In the Ptolemaic period, the government developed a series of monopolies on industrial
production, as on oil (discussed in the Revenue Laws decree).\footnote{830} The Roman period saw for the
most part the dismantling of the monopolies throughout Egypt, as the Romans shifted to a system
encouraging private industry, and taxing that.\footnote{831} It seems the state retained a claim to certain
natural products—mining, fishing, and so on—that had been the reserve of the pharaoh for a
long time.\footnote{832} In the case of the fishing boats of the temple of Soknopaios, an imperial claim on
the fish of the Birket Qarun, if it existed, would have required higher payments.\footnote{833} Other than
this, there is no evidence that the temples were granted any monopolies in the Roman period or

\footnote{830} For this, see Ch. 4 and below.
\footnote{831} Johnson (1936) 325
\footnote{832} Johnson (1936) 325-37, 334-335.
\footnote{833} SPP 22.183. The notion of an imperial \textit{monopoly} on fish is, it should be noted, something of a misnomer. The
government does not seem to have taken steps to restrain fishing, nor to license concessions to a single individual or
individuals, but rather to have put a higher tax on fishermen, probably for the privilege of taking a pre-stocked
good—the fishermen need only put their boats in the water, unlike, say, a farmer, who had to provide the land and
seed in order to make his harvest.
that their economic interests were curtailed by state monopolies. Whatever form the oil restrictions of the Ptolemaic period took, nothing of the sort seems to have occurred under Rome.

Processing Agricultural Produce: From Raw Materials to Finished Goods

One of the better documented aspects of temples’ sources of income in addition to agricultural land itself is that of industries directly related to agricultural production. In other words, the temples of the Roman period not only produced the raw materials, in the form of grain, barley, and so on, but also sometimes converted it into finished goods—milled grain and barley, oil (from a range of plants), beer, or perhaps even wine.

Oil Presses

The heavy equipment necessary for large-scale oil processing, whatever the oil source, tends not to survive in the Egyptian landscape, especially in areas that have been farmed nearly continuously since the Roman period. In the Fayum, where many areas were lightly settled and nevertheless brought into cultivation for a time in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, we can use papyrological evidence in combination with comparative data from elsewhere in the Roman empire. While comparative data must be used carefully, survey evidence from North Africa shows that, in regards to oil production, the need for a press at one’s own agricultural productive site generally decreases as the distance to a nearby press decreased.\(^{834}\) This is, perhaps, not surprising, but it does reinforce our perception of the networks that developed around agricultural production. The construction and fitting out of a press was an expensive undertaking, and unlikely to be performed by short-term sublessees or some long-term lessees without a strong incentive. If a neighbor owned a press, it was presumably cheaper to pay for the use of

\(^{834}\) Two surveys, one focusing on the area around the city of Thugga and the other on the countryside of northeastern Algeria, show the number of presses increases as site density decreases. For these, see De Vos (2013) esp. 154-162.
that press rather than constructing one’s own. In the absence of a suitably equipped neighbor, however, one either had to transport one’s produce to the nearest village or to build one’s own press. The canals that crisscrossed the Fayum may have made the transportation of produce to another site somewhat easier, but we can assume that the Fayum countryside (and, no doubt, that of the Nile valley as well) was well-equipped with oil presses, mostly single presses. For the larger sections of land planted in oleaginous crops, the probability of a press increases. In addition, oil could be produced from a variety of sources, and these plants were not harvested at the same time. While autumn would have been the busiest pressing season, the variety of crops would have occupied the presses for a significant part of the year.\textsuperscript{835}

For temples, the largest problem facing our attempts to study temple ownership and/or operation of presses is the paucity of information concerning temple land planted in oleaginous crops. It seems likely the grain was, throughout Egypt, the dominant crop.\textsuperscript{836} Nevertheless, oil could be produced in a number of forms: olive oil, castor oil, safflower oil, and flaxseed oil, for instance.\textsuperscript{837} Without having lists of crops produced for all the temples, we can with some certainty say that presses were not a part of every temple’s economic portfolio. For smaller temples, what crops that required pressing might have easily been processed in the village, without an investment in a specifically temple-owned press. Temple ownership of presses in the Ptolemaic period was, however, common enough to merit extended discussion in the revenue decree of Ptolemy II. There, “those who make oil in the temples” are ordered to offer up their equipment for inspection and registration, and have their production of sesame oil limited to that

\textsuperscript{835} Sandy (1989). Safflower was generally harvested in February or March, sesame was harvested in the fall, olives around October, and castor in the fall or winter, though this crop required repeated harvests and thus offered the most flexibility to oil producers.

\textsuperscript{836} Blouin (2013) 258.

\textsuperscript{837} For the production of oil in Egypt, see Sandy (1989).
necessary for their own consumption. Kiki, or castor oil, could not be produced. While the
decree covers a wide range of oleaginous plants—sesame, castor, and even croton—it does not
deal with the production of olive oil. In addition, we might see the passages concerning the
temple not as singling it out for restriction but rather protecting the temple’s production. The
establishment of an oil monopoly, the subject of the revenue decree of Ptolemy II, required
widespread restrictions on production, sale, and pricing in addition to punitive tariffs on
imports, designed to increase the value of the franchises on oil-production and sale now put up,
like many other monopolies, by the state for purchase. The revenue decree, however, did allow
an exemption from these restrictions for the temples, at least for sesame oil. What is left unclear
is the allowance for what “they would consume in a year.” While this may have referred strictly
to ritual use, it is also possible that “consumption” in this case extended to the needs of priests
and other temple staff. Given that the presses were allotted two months to run for the production
of a year’s capacity, it may be more likely than not that temple consumption included non-ritual
use by priests—as cooking fuel, for instance, and as fuel for lamps. While the effects of the
revenue decree on temple oil production are important, we can especially take away the notion
that the temples at this point were involved with oil production. The wording of the decree—
“those who make oil in the temples” (οἱ δ’ ἐλαιουργοῦντες ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς)—may not guarantee
priestly operation of the presses, but does ensure that, within the larger temple precinct, the

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838 P.Rev. 50.20-52.3.
839 Which branch of the croton family is represented is unclear, though most likely not the most famous member, Croton tiglium (Purging Croton), from which a strong purgative is derived, but which grows only in China and the Indian subcontinent.
840 Which may have been relatively low, in any case.
841 For which see, e.g., P.Petrie 2.38b (242 BC).
842 Despite Pliny NH 23.41, castor oil, to choose one type as an example, was frequently used for lighting. For this, see Sandy (1989) 53.
843 Otto (1905) 291 ff. deals at length with the topic, as does Bingen (2007).
844 P.Rev. 50.20, represented here, as published, without diacritical marks.
temple owned presses that they rented out.\textsuperscript{845} In any case, the evidence from the Ptolemaic period is sufficiently murky to prevent any strong conclusions about the state of oil-press ownership and operation. Some temples seem to have produced certain quantities of, at least, sesame oil, but we are left in the dark about olive oil, for instance.\textsuperscript{846} We certainly are lacking the grounds to support Rostovtzeff and Wilcken’s suggestions that the revenue decree represented an attempt to break a temple monopoly on oil dating to the Pharaonic period.\textsuperscript{847} Fortunately for us (and unfortunately for Otto, who was forced to draw upon later material for comparanda) we are slightly better informed about the Roman period, at least for Soknopaios.

As we have already seen,\textsuperscript{848} the peculiar geographic situation of Soknopaiou Nesos made its temple somewhat extraordinary, as far as income sources. We are nevertheless better informed about the economic infrastructure of the temple of Soknopaios there than almost any other temple in Egypt. A budget from the temple, written before 166 AD, records the payment of a tax on oil (\(\overline{\text{ὑπὲρ τέλους θυιῶν}\)) on an oil press of the god in Soknopaiou Nesos itself (\(\text{ἐλαιουργίου Σοκνοπαίου Σοκνοπαίου Νήσου}\)).\textsuperscript{849} While the comparative evidence is sparse, the amount of the tax—142 drachmas and 2 obols—led Otto to suggest that the Soknopaiou Nesos press was of medium size.\textsuperscript{850} In addition to the Soknopaiou Nesos press, the temple of Soknopaios also seems to have owned a press in the village of Pisais, attested in Demotic documents. The first of these, \textit{DDD} 2.66, dates to 89-90 AD, and refers to “a place of oil-

\textsuperscript{845} We might compare to the beer produced by monasteries in Belgium; the brewers are not always monks, as is the case with the Chimay brewery.

\textsuperscript{846} For olive oil production in the Hellenistic period, see Sandy (1989) 72-82. Olive cultivation seems to have been rather limited before the Ptolemaic period, and required a lengthy growing process before an olive grove became productive. It is unlikely, therefore, that temples were much involved in olive cultivation by the time of the Ptolemy II and the Revenue Laws decree, but their involvement may have grown over the Ptolemaic period.

\textsuperscript{847} Rostovtzeff (1909) 631-633 and Wilcken (1912) 95.

\textsuperscript{848} See Chapters 2 and 5.

\textsuperscript{849} \textit{P.Louvre}. 1.4 (before 166 AD). See Otto (1905) 295 on the \textit{telos thuion}, where he decisively shows its connection not, as per Wilcken, to the Thuja tree, but rather to the mortars (\textit{thuia}) required for pressing operations.

\textsuperscript{850} Otto (1905) 296.
production” (m3-ir-nhe), probably an established oil press. This may or may not be the μυλαῖον mentioned in P.Louvre 1.25 (113 AD) or P.Lond. 2.335 (166-167 AD) said to belong to Soknopaios, but it seems unlikely.\textsuperscript{851} That the temple owned a press in Pisais is not surprising. The site seems to have been developed not as a village but “a large farmstead of someone called Pisais at first, of which the name lived on afterwards.”\textsuperscript{852} While Pisais gradually developed into a full-fledged village over the course of the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD, we can assume that it remained something of a temple-dominated region: the only major economic activity we know of for the village—mill and treasury—were controlled by Soknopaios. Seen in this context, the position of Pisais on the Birket Qarun (and the port recorded as present in the village)\textsuperscript{853} begins to fit together with our evidence. The location of Pisais as a sort of expanded agricultural gathering point on the Birket Qarun is particularly interesting.\textsuperscript{854} We can see that Soknopaios and his priests dominated the economy of the epoikion. As a sort of enlarged farmsted, Pisais was on its way from villa to village, but no doubt retained, at least in the first century AD, its agricultural flavor. The location of Soknopaios’ oil presses in Pisais probably highlights the role that Pisais played for the surrounding area, that is, as a place where raw materials produced in the surrounding countryside were converted into finished goods—oil, milled grain, and so on. The (relatively) frequent references to the presses and the absence of references to a threshing floor may mean that the countryside was heavily planted in oleaginous crops, but this can only be a

\textsuperscript{851} The argument that this represents the oil-press and not a grain mill seems to hinge on the payments required by the renter, Ammonaphis, who has to turn over 120 silver drachmas, 20 choinices of oil, 2 chickens, and 20 small eggs. While money and oil could be seen as the produce of an oil press, it is hard to produce chickens or eggs from a press, and the oil and fowl may simply represent desiderata from the temple, especially if the grain being milled was already its own.

\textsuperscript{852} Van Beek, “Pisais.”

\textsuperscript{853} P.Berl.Leihg. 2.43 (175-199 AD)

\textsuperscript{854} It is possible that the port of Pisais was located on a branch canal that connected to the Birket Qarun, but the presence of a port suggests that, if Pisais wasn’t directly on the lake, it was nevertheless close to it.
The connection to the temple becomes clearer when we remember the port of Pisais. The temple at Soknopaiou Nesos owned a lake-going fleet on the Birket Qarun. With good weather and a fresh crew, a boat on the Birket Qarun could connect Pisais and Soknopaiou Nesos more quickly than a journey on foot could reach the villages near Pisais by land. A boat of moderate size could shift finished goods more quickly and in greater amount than by land caravan. The presses of Pisais, therefore, seem to be part of a larger economic question concerning the role of Soknopaios in the economy of the farmstead-turned-village of Pisais. It is possible that Pisais was, in no small fashion, an economic outpost of the temple of Soknopaiou Nesos, in which the surrounding countryside’s raw materials were converted to finished goods without needing a trip across the lake to the presses (or other processing equipment) in Soknopaiou Nesos itself. If Pisais functioned as a regional center for Soknopaios’ produce, goods needed in Soknopaiou Nesos and the income from the production center in Pisais could both quickly be shipped across the lake to Soknopaiou Nesos.

The situation thus described, a sort of hub-and-spoke system of production, may have been an especially prominent feature of the temple of Soknopaios. With the paucity of agricultural land around Soknopaiou Nesos, the temple was forced to manage property across the Birket Qarun. While other temples might have been able to bring products from the countryside surrounding their home village into that village, the priests of Soknopaios would have incurred high costs to transport raw materials, making the construction and maintenance of production facilities such as the presses at Pisais cost-effective. It is possible that other outposts of temple land outside a temple’s home city (or village) also functioned in this fashion. The harvest on the 130 arouras belonging to Soknebtunis in Kerkeosiris, for instance, may have been processed

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855 More clarity on the nature of the *mulaion* would go a long way towards answering this question.
856 Discussed in more detail below.
there instead of in Tebtunis. The unique circumstances of Pisais, as a farmstead slowly coalescing into a village, no doubt make the role of the temple more dominant. There may have been little, when the presses, treasury, port, and (possibly) the mill were taken into account, that was not owned and either operated or leased out by the temple.

While the temples might operate or lease out presses, especially in their own village or in more far-flung farmsteads, such as Pisais, there is also evidence that they were not in every circumstance self-sufficient. We have already seen this in the Ptolemaic revenue decree with the abolition of kiki production by the temple, but additional evidence is provided by P.Oxy. 78.5164, in which “the overseer of the temples of the Oxyrhynchite and Cynopolite nomes” (ἐπὶ τῶν ἱερῶν τοῦ Ὀξυρυχίτου καὶ Κυνοπολίτου) acknowledges the receipt of two metretai of safflower oil. At an estimated 37 liters to a metretes, this makes 74 liters of safflower oil, no small amount. Another papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, P.Oxy. 12.1453 also concerns the supply of oil to temples, in this case specifically for use in lamps. We obviously need not expect the temples to be entirely self-sufficient things. If their land was not suitable for growing a crop, or if the crop could more cheaply be had in another way, we should think the temples would not produce it themselves simply to prove a point. As we have seen and shall see further, the temples tended to be well-integrated into their local economies, which meant that they could more easily purchase raw materials or finished goods than produce them themselves, if they didn’t already produce them. With land and (probably) industries leased out on long terms, it would be difficult to insist upon a particular type of cultivation from the farmers leasing the land, and production was probably largely determined by local conditions and crop prices.

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857 P.Oxy. 78.5164 (26 or 25 BC) ll. 3-4. The title may be linked to the Ptolemaic ἐπιστάτης τῶν ἱερῶν, for which see the notes on P.Oxy. 12.1453.
858 For the conversion, see Vandorpe and Clarysse (1997) 69. P.Tebt. 3.997 (Tebtunis, 210-183 BC) gives prices of 2160 and 2500 drachmas per metretes of safflower oil.
Mills

If the μυλαῖον mentioned in *P.Louvre* 1.25 (113 AD) or *P.Lond.* 2.335 (166-167 AD) as located in Pisais and belonging to Soknopaios refers to something other than the presses, then the temple may have also operated a grain mill in the *epoikion*, which would fit with its role as a center for converting the agricultural produce of the surrounding countryside into finished goods. The presence of a grain mill in Pisais in addition to the oil press would most likely mean that the countryside around Pisais was not planted only in oleaginous crops, but probably in a more varied arrangement, one that varied from year to year.859

Bakeries

Evans noted the presence of bakers (ἀρτοκόποι) in the temple of Tebtunis, and suggested that “there was probably an oven there throughout the Greco-Roman period.”860 While this must remain speculation—especially his later suggestion that the “temple which dominated the village might run a communal oven, and might do baking on a commercial basis”861—we can find evidence that temples would at least produce bread for their own staff, again, possibly as a part of their remuneration. A document from Soknopaios (*DDD* 2.47) records the presentation of 30 artabas of grain by a certain Satabus, possibly a temple official responsible for collecting smaller offerings. That grain, the priests on duty (the first *phyle* at the moment) note, was baked by “the bakers” (*n3 n-n-stf.w*) for offerings.862 No more information is offered about these bakers, but it seems very likely that they acted within the temple structure—the grain had already been donated, collected by Satabus, and handed over to the priests of the first phyle. That it would

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859 The land around Pisais may not have been suited to widespread flax cultivation, at the very least, as flax prefers a well-drained to dry soil, which would presumably not be universal on the shores of the Birket Qarun.
860 Evans (1961) 229, citing *PSI* 1149.
861 Ibid., 229.
862 *DDD* 2.47, l. 5
leave the temple for baking, only to return for offering seems unlikely. While the priests were probably not operating a communal bread oven, it is possible that they possessed either a small oven of their own, or rented out a bakery, the occasional use of which for the preparation of special ritual bread may have been part of the terms of the lease. Situations such as this would, no doubt, have been largely dependent on the size of the temple and the amount of grain coming in, whether as donations or as rental income on temple land.863

As the example of ἄρτοκόποι of Tebtunis shows, bakers could live inside the temple environs. We also hear from the Memphis katochoi archive—admittedly Ptolemaic—that breadmakers who lived in the temple of Anubis but routinely visited that of Serapis were involved in the assault on the hapless Ptolemaios.864 While Ptolemaios and his brother were not themselves baking, Thompson’s point concerning temple industries remains valid: there were certain activities being undertaken in the temples, and two katochoi brothers were edging into them, to the detriment of the clothes-dealers and the bakers, since the katochoi were involved with the emmer wheat supply.865 This does not prove that the baking and the clothes-dealing were overseen by the temple, but, as they were operating within the temple, the temple presumably benefitted, possibly from the rental of space.866 Bakers operating inside the temple, even if only as renters, would have presented an easy destination for grain flowing in from the sacred fields. Further evidence for the production of bread for other than sacred purposes can be found in Karnak, where excavations of the “Priests’ Quarter,” discussed further below, revealed a large number of bread plates not labeled, as occurs at other sites, for ritual use. “In Karnak,”

863 There is also the question of available fuel. There is not any clear evidence for temple activity in this area. For an overview of fuel use in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, see Habermann (2009).
864 UPZ 7 (163 BC), ll. 19-22. For discussion, see Thompson (2012), 213.
866 For which, see below, under “Rental Income.”
Masson writes, “none of the dokka [bread plates] is stamped and it is very likely that the bread was mostly produced for the people living in the quarter, and not to be offered.” In sum, then, we have ample evidence that bread was baked in the temples and that some percentage of that bread was probably not intended for ritual use. We are as yet unable to say with certainty the circumstances in which the bakers operated, but bread for the personal consumption of the priests was probably produced within the temple and served as part of their priestly income. In addition, it is likely that the bakeries, when they existed as part of a temple’s property, were rented out to local bakers, with rent payments and, perhaps, a special deal on baking for the priests, rather than the priests qua priests operating the ovens.

Breweries and Beer-Shops

Bread was, of course, not the only use for grain in Egypt, though their taste for barley beer meant that crop was particularly involved. The brewing of beer and the sale of that beer were undertaken in different establishments but, as they represent two stages in the conversion of cereals to beer and thence to income, we shall consider them individually under the same heading, with some possible points of connection or cooperation within the temple infrastructure.

We know of at least one instance in which a temple owned (or was intended to own) a brewery. An inscription, found in Kafr el-Dawwar in the Menelaite nome, records the establishment of an endowment for a temple of Aphrodite. While the text is extremely fragmentary, it seems that a certain freedman had built the temple and given it shops (ἐργαστήρια). In addition to shops, however, this freedman—possibly an imperial freedman—

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867 Masson (2013) 143.
868 Just across Lake Mariotis from Alexandria, along the most direct path from the city towards Cairo and the Nile basin, as clearly shown during the Anglo-Egyptian War.
869 SB 5.8.797 (=I.Prose. 51) originally published in BCH 26 (1902), 450-451.
870 Johnson (1936) 662 claims that the shops received exemption from tax, based presumably on the final line (ορηθήναι καὶ τὸῦτο ἐλναι ἄπελεξ) but this meaning is not the only possible.
wished to endow it further with a brewery (ζυτοπώλιον), and one free from tax, “out of kindness” (ἐπεὑρεγεσία). We do not know if his request was granted, but this is likely, since he (or the temple) went to the trouble and expense of carving the request onto stone. While this temple of Aphrodite is interesting for its apparently entirely commercial endowment—no land is mentioned—the inscribed nature of the request does not necessarily mean that the freedman’s request for freedom from tax for the brewery was granted. It is possible that the freedman himself, or the manager of the temple recorded the request for the brewery, with the request for tax-freedom left on as a sort of gambit. Given the occasionally chaotic nature of government records centers, the inscription and its reference to a tax-free brewery could eventually be used as prima facie evidence of tax-freedom for a sufficiently bold individual. If government documents to the contrary were not forthcoming, the temple might acquire tax-freedom for the brewery in this fashion. In any case, the temple of Aphrodite offers us clear proof of a brewery intended to support a religious establishment, albeit one that was probably not a “traditional” temple in Glare’s terminology.

In a more clearly Egyptian context (although one with less evidence of intent), we are informed through a Demotic contract of a brewery of the god (t3 hy3.t p3 nṯr) in Soknopaiou Nesos.\(^{871}\) Given the paucity of cropland on that side of the Birket Qarun, the raw material for the brewery was presumably being brought in from across the lake, either by land caravan or by boat—perhaps the fleet of Soknopaios. Ports, such as that at Pisais, would then be critical links in the supply chain for the agricultural industries of Soknopaiou Nesos. Unlike the colonial-era mercantile system, in which raw goods were produced in the colonies, shipped back to the home country for processing, and then sold back to the colonies, there is no evidence that the beer

\(^{871}\) DDD 3.2DG and DA l. 9.
brewed in Soknopaiou Nesos from south-coast grain was being sold back across the lake. Indeed, Evans suggests that average Egyptian was more than capable of home-brewing—this being accomplished by the immersion of half-baked barley bread in water—and so the brewery most likely supplied only Soknopaios and the drinking community of Soknopaiou Nesos.

If we now turn to selling of that beer, we immediately find some indication of where the output of the “brewery of the god” might have been headed.\textsuperscript{872} A very large papyrus from Tebtunis preserves a division of property, discussed in the previous chapter, and, attached to the left-hand side of that division, the records from a beer-shop.\textsuperscript{873} Beer-shops themselves are relatively well-attested, especially that of Mouchis in the Ptolemaic period,\textsuperscript{874} but this one is noteworthy in that the financial reporting is addressed to the headman of the priestly body (προστάτης συνόδου ἱερέων). While the confusing nature of decision-making in the Roman-period temple will be addressed in the next chapter, we should note that the prostates of the priests is probably not, as Husselman suggested, comparable to the leader of a club of pastophoroi or other similar clubs. The synod of the priests was a deliberative body, and the leader of that group a logical person to address reports to, when they concerned temple property.\textsuperscript{875} The beer-shop in Tebtunis, therefore, was probably not some sort of clubhouse \textit{cum} bar, the ancient equivalent of an Elks club, but rather a beer shop owned by the temple. It is difficult to say from the document as it survives whether or not the beer shop was also operated directly by the temple or rented out, but rental seems the more likely option. The current document only records a month’s worth of sales and was no doubt a temporary document, used

\textsuperscript{872} For the beer industry and taxes on beer in the Ptolemaic period, see \textit{O.Chic.Muhs.} pp. 79-81 and \textit{P.Mich.} 18.776-780.
\textsuperscript{873} \textit{P.Mich.} 5.322B (51 AD)
\textsuperscript{874} For the beer-shop of Mouchis, see \textit{P.Mich.} 18.776-778. The beer-selling concession changed hands at least once and possibly twice in a single year.
\textsuperscript{875} While priests often issued documents in the name of the entire body of the priests, internal financial documents need not stand up to such close legal scrutiny today and certainly did not in antiquity.
in the preparation of yearly tax filings and then discarded. Whoever operated the beer store, the existence of a document such as this does suggest quite strongly that the temple paid the taxes, possibly out of their rental income—if they did not also operate the shop. On the other hand, given the evidence we have elsewhere (and which we will discuss below) for the temples’ role in collecting taxes for the businesses they rented out, they could just as easily have collected the tax payments for the beer store before forwarding it on to the state, rather than paying the taxes themselves from the rent, or expecting the renter to pay it directly to the state.

While we must look to multiple temples to assemble the evidence, we can see where temples produced the barley necessary for beer production, operated (or were intended to operate) breweries, and also sold the beer produced. We cannot prove that the beer industry in a particular place was vertically integrated, that is, that one temple controlled the entire supply chain, but we can see the temples involving themselves in multiple steps along the way. Without additional evidence, however, we cannot speak with certainty of vertical integration in this field. It is equally possible that breweries and beer shops were profitable undertakings on their own, at least when reasonably managed, and that temples might more often simply operate some part of the beer industry without needing to control the entire process.

Granaries

We have already seen how the temples were involved in the later stages of the conversion of agricultural produce to finished goods, but one intermediate step merits discussion. Though represented by only a single papyrus, it seems that temples were also active in the storage of

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876 A personal examination of the papyrus in Ann Arbor shows clearly that 322b was attached to the edge of 322a to protect the slightly older document (322a) from damage or fraying after it was rolled. The Psuphis, son of Onnophris, to whom the beer-shop report is addressed may also have been the Psuphis, son of Onnophris to whom a share of the property in 322a was given.
877 E.g., *P.Tebt.* 2.302 (71-72 AD)
878 Soknebtunis, for instance, definitely produced barley and sold beer.
produce in the early Roman period.\textsuperscript{879} Temples routinely operated granaries in the Pharaonic and into the Ptolemaic period, but by the Roman period the temple granaries’ role as tax collection center was no longer needed, having been replaced by the state granaries. A papyrus from Tebtunis, then, does not offer perfect clarity, but instead offers a snapshot from the reign of Tiberius.\textsuperscript{880} In 36 AD, the priests of Soknebtunis wrote to the strategos of the division of Polemon asking for help properly punishing the son of a granary guard. After the guard, a woman named Thenapunchis, died—following a long period renting a granary of Soknebtunis—the priests coming to reclaim the granary found the doors missing and the plastering on the inside in deplorable condition, rendering the granary unusable.\textsuperscript{881} The priests further complain that the unsuitability of the granary would make the storage of their harvest more difficult. We can take a few things away from this petition. First, the granary would appear to be another example of the long-term lease that the priests preferred. While the phrasing of the petition might give the impression that the contract was rather on a lifetime-term lease, it was probably not.\textsuperscript{882} The reference to the lease continuing “up to the present year and day” (μέχρι τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος ἔτους καὶ ἡμέρας) no doubt means that the priests discovered the neglect on the inspection at the end of the lease period, which happened to have occurred after the death of Thenapunchis, when the lease had been inherited by her son Apunchis. As the original lease was no doubt registered in the name of Thenapunchis, the references to her are, as we have seen elsewhere, probably at most legal language. Second, the priests directly refer to the granary’s role in storing their own harvest, making sure to mention, of course, the resulting inability to pay their taxes (κολάζεσθαι ἡμᾶς τοῦ μή δυνασθῆναι εἰσαγαγὴν εἰς τὸν αὐτὸν θησαυρὸν μετροῦμεν εἰς τὸ δημόσιον πυρικά.

\textsuperscript{879} P. Mich. 5.226 (Tebtunis, 37 AD)  
\textsuperscript{880} P. Mich. 5.226  
\textsuperscript{881} P. Mich. 5.226, ll. 31-35.  
\textsuperscript{882} P. Mich. 5.226, ll. 22 ff.
τε καὶ κρίθινα δημόσια). It may therefore be that the temples rented out granaries they owned, no doubt using the guaranteed business of the temple itself as a *douceur* to increase the rent paid. If this was the case, it would agree with the tendency we have already seen for the temple to prefer the regular income from a rental rather than the unknown, though possibly higher income from managing the property themselves. The cost of administration and of employing a granary guard could, in this scenario, be pushed off on Thenapunchis, at the cost of a lower rent payment, perhaps, but one that required far less overhead for the priests themselves.

While our evidence only concerns a single poorly maintained granary in Tebtunis, it is likely that this practice extended much further through Egypt. The temples had substantial granaries, a legacy of their previous role in tax collection in kind, which had lost their significance after the establishment of state granaries. There was still a need for granaries, and the temples presumably either switched their granaries to indirect control, that is, rented them out, or left a similar arrangement intact.

We do not have information on the management of the temple granaries prior to the development of state granaries, but our understanding of path dependence and information costs leads us to believe that granaries may have been rented out in the fashion described in *P.Mich. 5.226* even prior to the development of state granaries.

### Balm Manufacture

Though the evidence is slight, it is possible that a certain “Island of the Dog” (*T3-m3y(.t)-p3-whr*) was involved in the production of balm. A receipt from Soknopaiou Nesos records

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883 *P.Mich. 5.226* ll. 32-35  
884 Akin to the privatization of the penal system  
885 We might compare this to the city of Cincinnati owning the Cincinnati Southern Railway, and renting it out for around $20 million a year, rather than paying the (high) information costs to acquire staff and technical expertise to operate the system themselves, with the eventual promise of higher income per year but a high up-front cost and continuing overhead.  
886 The number (and size) of the granaries excavated at Karanis shows the demand, even outside of a major urban setting.
payment from the Island of the Dog for 35 AD. No particular undertaking is listed, just that the payment was related to the aforementioned island. The preposition that precedes the name of the island is unclear, though Lippert and Schentuleit have suggested \textit{hr} ("for"), that is, the payment for the island.\footnote{DDD 2.31 l. 4.} In another document, \textit{P.Lille dem.} 2.51, dating to late 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BC, the “Island of the Dog” (\textit{T3-m3j-n-p3-whr}) is listed as producing oil and unguents.\footnote{\textit{P.Lille dem.} 2.51 (223 BC, division of Themistos) ll. 10-11.} If the Island of the Dog was a small enough area (whether an island or not) and that area was involved in the manufacture of oil and balm in the late 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BC, it is possible that it continued in this course into the early 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD. While the chronological range is still problematic, the fact that the receipt from Soknopaiou Nesos simply mentions that payment from the island without elaborating further does suggest that the area may have been taken up by a particular industry. That industry could well have been oil and balm-manufacture, but this can only be a suggestion in the absence of more direct evidence.

If the temple Soknopaios was involved with the manufacture of oil and balms in the Roman period, it may have used the Island of the Dog (and the nearby village of Alexandrou Nesos) as another collection and processing point. Just as Pisais was located either on the Birket Qarun or a canal and thus offered quick water transport of finished goods, the area of the Island of the Dog included not only Alexandrou Nesos but Berenikis Aigialou.\footnote{Clarysse (2007)} As Soknopaiou Nesos was located across the lake, it makes sense, at the very least, that their economic operations on the other side of the Birket Qarun would feature ready access by water.

\textbf{Weaving and Washing}

The temples required for daily ritual a large amount of linen. They were probably able to...
produce this from their own flax in many cases. As with the temples’ involvement with barley production and beer brewing, the production of linen and other woven goods was probably an outgrowth of an agricultural surplus. The temples produced flax and needed linen. The degree to which the temples were connected with the weavers is unclear.\textsuperscript{890} They may have functioned something like the putting-out system in which contractors (weavers, here) collect the raw material (flax, e.g.) from their employer and finish the work at their own residence or workshop, rather than in a central factory or industrial site operated by their employer, though Droß-Krüpe suggests otherwise.\textsuperscript{891} We can find some hint of this from the papyri, in which there are a number of references to weavers or the tax on weaving, but never to a central weaving-mill (or similar). A census document later employed as a backing for a text of Pindar’s \textit{Paeans} records a number of individuals living in temples around Lykopolis in Upper Egypt.\textsuperscript{892} While most of these individuals are associated with pastophoria, one family is associated with a certain Panesneus, freedman of Apollonia, working as a weaver.\textsuperscript{893} From the array of living arrangements made by other registrants, we can assume that Panesneus and his family were not living in the temple from a lack of other options, as the Egyptian house seems at times endlessly divisible—a family that appears a few lines before made their home in a third of a house, and a youth, possibly an orphan, appearing immediately after Panesneus made his home in a sixth of a house.\textsuperscript{894} While this is not conclusive, we do have other suggestions that weavers might work in and draw their income in relation to the temple. The Ptolemaic-period \textit{katochoi} archive, already discussed above, hints at the role of weavers in daily life within the temple walls. Among the

\textsuperscript{890} Droß-Krüpe (2011) 235-238.
\textsuperscript{891} See Droß-Krüpe (2011).
\textsuperscript{892} For background, see Bagnall et al. (1997) 19-26, with a correction to the location by Montevecchi (2000). For residency as a source of temple income, see below.
\textsuperscript{893} \textit{P.Oxy.} 6.984, ll. 149-156.
\textsuperscript{894} \textit{P.Oxy.} 6.984, ll. 110-112 and 157-159. The subdivision of households was extremely common throughout Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, and probably beyond that.
crowd attacking Ptolemaios was, on one occasion, a cloak-seller, on another, a seller of winding-sheets, and on a third, a carpet weaver.\textsuperscript{895} Keeping in mind Thompson’s argument that the attacks on Ptolemaios were motivated not, as he claimed, by his Greek nationality, but rather by his intrusion into the various industries that had previously been operating inside the temple, we might reasonably suspect, at the very least, that weaving took place within the temple. If we find that temples produced flax and demanded linen, that weavers lived within the temple walls, and that weavers worked and sold their products within the temple walls, it is a simple step to assume that the weavers worked in some fashion with the temples. If Ptolemaios was able to cut into the local weavers’ business, it may be that temple weaving formed only a part of the weaver’s business, or it may be that the temples leased the right to produce woven goods with raw materials from the temples and to sell those goods on the temple grounds.\textsuperscript{896}

While the evidence for temple weaving is somewhat fragmentary, we do have other information on the temples’ role in textile production. After weaving, linen had on occasion to be washed, and could in addition be made more durable through the fulling process.\textsuperscript{897} Though linen was perhaps seen to lose something of its luster if washed, at least to those at the apex of the pampered principate, the daily needs for clean linen for the priests no doubt required regular interventions by the fuller.\textsuperscript{898} No matter the purpose, we can find a close connection between the temple of Soknopaios and at least one, probably two, fulleries on the north shore of the Birket Qarun. A Demotic receipt from 89-90 AD authorized by the priests of Soknopaios contains a fragmentary reference to income derived from “the washers of Neilopolis” (\textit{n3 rḥt.w Pr-Ḥpy}).\textsuperscript{899}

\textsuperscript{895} For a summary, see Thompson (2012) 212-214.
\textsuperscript{896} This assumes that the situation described by Ptolemaios for the mid-2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC in Memphis continued into the Roman period and was not unique to the Serapeum in Memphis.
\textsuperscript{897} Shepherd (2013) 163
\textsuperscript{898} Historia Augusta, \textit{Elagabalus} 26.1; for the priests, see also Herodotus 2.81.1.
\textsuperscript{899} \textit{DDD} 2.66 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 89-90 AD) 1.6. \textit{Pr-Ḥpy} is almost certainly Neilopolis (for which see Lippert and Schentuleit’s note on the line), Hapy being the god responsible for the annual flood.
Another document from Soknopaiou Nesos makes the picture clearer. This papyrus, *P.Lond.* 2.286, records a proposal by four fullers to lease out the washing in the villages of Neilopolis and Soknopaiou Nesos. The circumstances are unclear—they seek to rent την γναφικην from the priests for only one year, and offer 240 drachmas, paid in installments each month.\(^{900}\) Unfortunately, the precise details of this arrangement are unclear. Kenyon, the editor, suggested that either the priests were contracting out the washing of their own ritual clothing or that they controlled a monopoly on washing in these towns. The former seems improbable—the reference to Neilopolis suggests something greater than the ritual needs of the priests in Soknopaiou Nesos—while the latter may overreach. There is no other evidence for any sort of official monopoly on washing or fulling in this period in Egypt. There were, on the other hand, quite a few local monopolies, produced by the simple fact of only one person performing a certain task: If a village has only one baker, he has a *de facto* monopoly, but this is not ordained by the state, and can easily be broken, either by a new baker setting up shop or the patrons going to another village for their bread. In any case, what we find here is probably not a monopoly in any meaningful sense. Since *P.Lond.* 2.286 represents a proposal from private individuals to the temple, it does not need to be particularly specific. It is not a formal contract, but a preliminary document for negotiation. When the fullers mention την γναφικην of the two villages, it most likely points to temple ownership of a washery/fullery. There may have been similar establishments in both Soknopaiou Nesos and Neilopolis, or their relative proximity may have made it possible for one location to serve both villages. The “washers of Neilopolis” mentioned in the Demotic receipt may hint at the location of one washery, but *DDD* 2.66 seems to be a relating of income from various temple interests around the Birket Qarun, and a washery in

\(^{900}\) *P.Lond.* 2.286, ll. 10-13.
Soknopaiou Nesos would not be included, therefore, on geographic grounds.\textsuperscript{901} In any case, it does appear that Soknopaios, at least, owned a washery/fullery—the terminology is unclear and may overlap—in one, or probably two locations. It seems to have been a relatively lucrative undertaking, and was rented out in both 88 and 89-90 AD. It is further likely that this sort of operation was not unique to the temple of Soknopaios, and was instead simply one of many possible options for a temple to expand its economic portfolio.\textsuperscript{902}

Papyrus Manufacture

The manufacture of papyrus was a needed undertaking in Roman Egypt, to supply not only the voracious demand of Egypt itself but also of the rest of the Roman Empire, which was unable to supply itself.\textsuperscript{903} A number of contracts survive detailing the rental of papyrus marshes, from which this supply was met.\textsuperscript{904} Based on one document from the temple at Tebtunis, Evans (among others) argued that the temples were involved in the manufacture of papyrus sheets.\textsuperscript{905} The document, a receipt for 20,000 papyrus stalks, was given to the purchaser, a certain Petesouchos, son of Petesouchos, who was a “priest of Tebtunis” (ἱερεύς Τεπτύνεως).\textsuperscript{906} The terminology employed should give us pause: if Petesouchos was acting in his official capacity as the representative of a temple, we would expect more specificity in the god chosen. As is, Petesouchos is almost certainly acting as a private individual, who happens to be in the papyrus trade in some fashion.\textsuperscript{907} The reference to Petesouchos’ priesthood serves no doubt simply as a

\textsuperscript{901} For other appearances of this important document, see above concerning the mill in Pisais and below, concerning the temple fleet.
\textsuperscript{902} While much of Soknopaios’ economic activity seems linked to its unique agricultural circumstances, the washing (or fulling) of clothes was something that almost certainly went on throughout Egypt.
\textsuperscript{903} Bülow-Jacobsen (2009), 5 argues that papyrus cannot be made except from freshly cut stalks, rendering the majority of the Mediterranean, which did not grow papyrus in quantity, unable to produce its own papyrus.
\textsuperscript{904} BGU 4.1121 (Alexandria, 5 BC)
\textsuperscript{905} P.Tebt. 2.308 (Tebtunis, 174 AD)
\textsuperscript{906} P.Tebt. 2.302, ll. 6-7
\textsuperscript{907} Johnson’s argument (1936, p. 329) that the papyrus marshes of the Fayum were a monopoly given to Julia Augusta, on the strength of P.Mil. 1.6 (Theadelphia, 26 AD), cannot be supported by the current evidence.
specifying addition. In case there was more than one Petesouchos, son of Petesouchos, in Tebtunis, this is the one who was registered as a priest. While the temples no doubt required large amounts of papyrus, as Grenfell and Hunt note, they were far from unique in this. There is, in short, no convincing evidence that the temples in Roman Egypt were involved in the papyrus trade, and certainly not as by the special permission of the government. It is possible that some temples may have done so, but this would have been on an *ad hoc* basis only, on the strength of their local conditions. The purchase of Petesouchos probably has a lot more to do with a paper shortage in Tebtunis and a lot less to do with temple production.

**Livestock**

In addition to farmland and agricultural industries, the temples were also involved in the keeping of animals. While this could involve the sacred animals (such as sacred crocodiles), the temples were also involved with other animals not for ritual purposes but for their economic potential: meat, eggs, wool, and so on.

**Dovecotes**

As long as pigeons have co-existed with mankind, they have been at least as much a food source as an annoyance in urban open spaces. In Egypt today, dovecotes, or elaborate pigeon-houses dot the rural (and sometimes urban, as in many Delta villages) landscape. The provision of fowl was also a part of the ancient Egyptian world. The sixth dynasty mastaba of Mereruka, for instance, depicts birds being hunted for a feast. Alongside the more spectacular wildfowl, however, pigeons formed an important source of meat for the everyday Egyptian, in addition to the manure and eggs the pigeons could provide. Even though, as Husselman has noted, the

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908 *P. Tebt. 2*, p. 102
909 Johnson (1936) 330 suggests that no papyrus was produced in Tebtunis.
910 For the economic side of a poultry farm in the Roman period, see Boyaval (1965) (=*SB* 10.10270 1-58). Both eggs and birds were sold (for cooking).
dovecote would be the first part of a building to collapse, since they were usually built on roofs or other high points, numerous examples nevertheless survive from Karanis. The evidence for temple involvement with the pigeon business is more complicated, however. The clearest evidence for a temple profiting from pigeons can be found in Kerkeosiris, in the Ptolemaic period, in which the τρίτη tax on dovecotes (περιστερώνον ἀγγείων) was “dedicated” (ἀνιέρωται) to the twice-great god Soknebtunis. The difficulty here, however, is in determining the role that the temple played in all this. Elsewhere in the Ptolemaic period, the tax on dovecotes was paid to the state, and this was raised by Grenfell and Hunt as a complication. The Theban ostrakon, however, does not list the eventual recipient of the tax collection, but instead certifies that it was paid. In the land register from Kerkeosiris, meanwhile, presumably compiled for official use, the final destination of the tax would be of primary importance. This does not mean that priests, whether officially or in private, did not own or operate dovecotes, but that there is no evidence, Ptolemaic or Roman, for such an activity. It does seem, however, that a tax on dovecotes was levied in the Ptolemaic period for the benefit of the temples, but the evidence is slight, and in any case cannot be applied to the Roman period.

Sacred Flocks

In the Ptolemaic period, a flock of sacred sheep (προβάτων ἱερῶν) being tended by some farmers in Kerkeosiris were stolen by nearby farmers and carried off. Evans is probably right when he suggests that “the sacred flocks of sheep may have been, at least in part, a commercial enterprise which the state allowed the temples to engage in,” although we might emphasize the permission of the state somewhat less. In any case, we need not worry whether the wool had a

911 Husselman (1953)
912 P. Tebt. 1.84 (Tebtunis, 119-118 BC)
913 O. Wilck. 2.1228 (Ptolemaic, Thebes)
914 P. Tebt. 1.53 (Kerkeosiris, 110 BC)
ritual purpose or whether it was intended directly for the local market. In either case, the temple would be profiting, either by saving themselves the trouble of purchasing needed wool on the open market or by selling their wool on that market. The amount of sheep involved—40, a decent number to be sure, but not particularly large—and the unclear circumstances—whether the sheep formed part of a larger herd, for instance—leaves us unable to rule definitively on the sacred sheep of Kerkeosiris. They probably were not associated with the 130 arouras of Soknebtunis in the village, and we probably should not follow Evans in limiting the possible owners to either the temple in Tebtunis or Arsinoe. As we have already seen, temples of even very small size could take on larger holdings, and the flock of sheep concerned could have been the entire livestock holdings of a smaller temple. There is some evidence that the keeping of sacred flocks—separate from the tending of flocks of sacred animals, like the crocodiles of Tebtunis—continued in the Roman period. It is, on the whole, probably likely that it did continue wherever it existed in the late Ptolemaic period, as there were no legal or structural changes made in the early Roman period to discourage this. Indeed, one example points, albeit somewhat ambiguously, to the survival of sacred flocks. This document, a receipt from Soknopaiou Nesos records a payment of the cow- and goose-tax by the herdsmen of the god (p3 ²m3 p3 nṯr). While the temple’s role as tax-coll ecting middleman already suggests an economic relationship between the one paying the tax and the temple, this is made especially clear by the reference to the herdsmen’s connection to the god. Unfortunately, the receipt does not make clear where the god’s cattle were located. Given the paucity of productive land around

915 Sacred flocks were sacred in the same way that sacred land was sacred, that is, because of their connection with the temple, and not from any ritual use.
916 DDD 2.26 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 98-99 AD)
917 For tax-collection and economic relationships, see below, concerning temple-altar relations. The figure who makes the tax payment, Stothoetis, son of Satabous, is recorded as a priest, but he could have been involved with animal husbandry in his private life. This is made explicit by a second receipt for the cattle-tax, in which the payee is not listed as a priest. For this see DDD 2.27 (Soknopaiou Nesos, reign of Antoninus Pius).
Soknopaiou Nesos, it seems unlikely that a large amount would be given over to pasturage, and the herds may have been yet another example of Soknopaios’ agricultural activities on the opposite shores of the Birket Qarun.\textsuperscript{918}

\textit{Miscellaneous Income}

The development of temple involvement in the conversion of raw materials to finished goods is a natural outgrowth of their large role in the production of those raw materials. As we have seen in the case of Pisais, agricultural industries could also allow the local processing of that raw material without the need for large amounts of raw goods to be shipped back to the temple’s own town. Agriculture and the production of goods from agriculture were not the only sources of income for the temples, however. In addition to income derived from religious or ritual sources, there were a group of other activities from which the temples drew income but which defy greater categorization. While these activities seem to share very little, they do all, with the exception of possible prostitution, serve to develop and support ongoing temple activity in agriculture and agricultural industries.

\textit{Ships and Shipping}

The temples of the New Kingdom were, as we have already seen, active in the Nile shipping trade. We have little evidence that this continued in the Ptolemaic or Roman period. Long-distance river trade seems to have become the province of private individuals, who had to compete for space on the Nile with royal barges and transports. There were, however, some instances in which a temple might have enough of an incentive to maintain its own fleet. The most prominent of these is the temple of Soknopaios in Soknopaiou Nesos. The unique

\textsuperscript{918} Documents from Tebtunis make reference to newly planted land, suggesting the presence of ready pasture land, but there is not, as yet, positive evidence for temple-owned flocks around Tebtunis in the Roman period. See, e.g., \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.311 (Tebtunis, 134 AD).
circumstances of the village, and its location on the opposite side of the Birket Qarun from almost everything else in Egypt, required frequent travel by boat. The land route via Neilopolis (Pr-Hapy) was no doubt popular, but required a lengthy trip around the lake. For an outpost of temple business like Pisais, the direct route (as the crow flies) across the Birket Qarun would have been preferable. Our evidence is relatively slim, but references in Demotic documents strongly suggest that the temple itself maintained a lake-going fleet on the Birket Qarun. One document, a receipt of some sort dating to the reign of Trajan, records a payment offered by the shipmasters of the temple (n3 <<n-mre.w hw.t-ntr) to the priests. The nature of the payment to the priests, offered in wheat, is unclear. Another document from Soknopaiou Nesos records a payment from the “shipmasters of the ferry of Taawet” (n3 <<n-mr.w p3 dm-yw'r T3-3we.t). Here, the payment was made in wheat and wine. A third document, the receipt of funds from around the Birket Qarun for Soknopaios already discussed above, records a possible third mention of the god’s lake-going fleet. After a discussion of cattle, the word “ships” (dy.w) appears, immediately before the line breaks. The date of the papyrus—89 or 90 AD—is close to that of the shipmasters of the temple. In any case, we are unable to say with certainty how the temple of Soknopaios managed its fleet. From the payments in wine and wheat offered by the shipmasters of the temple and of the Taawet ferry, the temple may have received a share of goods transported. The money that the ships in DDD 2.66 apparently contribute is less clear. The

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919 Even into the modern period, the lake remained the fastest way to get from Soknopaiou Nesos to the other parts of the Fayum. Sebakhin, robbing out the center of of the village for fertilizer, loaded their harvest onto a narrow-gauge railway and took it to the lakeshore, from where boats carried it across. Even in the 1930s, with access to sturdy cargo trucks, the Michigan excavation attempted to bring in their water by lake, only being foiled by strong winds. Winds from the north may have impeded the Michigan team’s small motorboat, but a sailing ship able to sail close hauled and beating to windward would still no doubt have made much better time than a camel team or a wagon moving along the desert road. For the Michigan team, see Boak (1935) vii, 3-4.
920 DDD 2.55 (Soknopaiou Nesos, Trajanic), l. 10
921 DDD 2.54 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 9/10 AD), l. 5-6
922 DDD 2.66 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 89-90 AD), l. 5
difference may be explained if those ships operated out of a different port than Soknopaiou Nesos or if they did not transport crops. These payments could also represent tax payments, though it is unlikely that some ships would be liable for tax in kind and some in coin. In any case, in this reconstruction, the temples would own a certain number of lake-going ships. They would rent them out to would-be captains, presumably under the condition that those captains carry the goods of the temple when required. Whatever other goods the ships carried, the temple may have simply taken a percentage—thus the payments in kind. Though ample numbers of naukleros-receipts survive, detailing the shipment of grain, they tend not to discuss the prices charged for the transport of that grain. In addition, if we are not dealing with the transport of state grain, the payment situation might vary. While it can only be a suggestion, the notion that temple fleets were leased out to ship-captains who carried temple products and, with their free space, any other goods traveling across the lake, does generally agree with other information from Egypt. The amount of oil being shipped from Pisais, for instance, would vary from year to year and season to season, and the ships on the lake could supplement that by carrying rental grain, people, or wine (among other cargoes) to Soknopaiou Nesos.

The expense of construction, operation, and maintenance involved in a small fleet of shipping vessels meant that temple fleets were probably restricted only to the wealthiest temples or those without other options. Outside of Thebes or Memphis, then, Soknopaiou Nesos may perhaps offer the only example. In Tebtunis, for instance, the temple of Soknebtunis would have no need for canal boats, as they either could send their goods along the equally short land route, or could use any boats that might make their way down the canals more cheaply than if they

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923 See, e.g., Herring (1989) passim
924 See Herring (1989) 29 for ships carrying multiple loads simultaneously.

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were to acquire their own fleet.\(^{925}\) If we assume that private shipping was a cheaper option for temples in the Roman period, especially if they were small enough as not to require the use of the ships on a daily basis, then the temple of Soknopaios was probably developing its lake-going fleet just as most other temples in the Nile valley were slowly dismantling theirs on the river—perhaps by simply not replacing boats as they rotted or were lost in wrecks on the Nile, a not uncommon occurrence,\(^{926}\) even if they avoided the treacherous coastal sandbars.\(^{927}\)

In addition to transport vessels, the temple at Soknopiou Nesos seems to have operated fishing boats on the Birket Qarun, for which they registered tax payments of 685 drachmas in 138 AD.\(^{928}\) If the government viewed the produce of the lake as its sovereign property, as it had under the Persians,\(^{929}\) then the *dekanikon* and the assessment (\(\upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\ \delta\epsilon\kappa\alpha\nu\kappa\iota\omicron\omicron\) and \(\upsilon\pi\epsilon\rho\ \alpha\pi\omicron\tau\alpha\kappa\tau\omicron\omega\), respectively) would represent both the tax on income which we might normally expect, but also an additional payment for using the ruler’s fish.\(^{930}\) While the fishing boats (\(\alpha\lambda\iota\epsilon\nu\tau\iota\kappa\iota\omicron\\pi\lambda\omega\iota\omicron\nu\)) were intended for one purpose, a boat is, at the end of the day, a boat and could be employed to carry people or other goods quite easily.\(^{931}\) That payments were offered in wheat and wine suggests strongly that the ships were used for other purposes, as the *dekanikon* and similar payments were paid directly in coin, and fishermen rarely, if ever, are known to find wheat and wine in their nets.

Land flipping

The temples had an obvious interest in putting unproductive agricultural land back into

\(^{925}\) For navigable canals (\(\delta\iota\omega\rho\omega\nu\\pi\lambda\omega\tau\eta\)) see Bonneau (1993) 17-18.

\(^{926}\) Diodorus Siculus, 1.32.7-11; Whitehouse (1985) 131-132

\(^{927}\) Diodorus Siculus, 1.31.3-5

\(^{928}\) SPP 22.183, re-edited by Capron (2008).

\(^{929}\) Hdt. 3.91.2

\(^{930}\) SPP 22.183, ll. 35-39

\(^{931}\) Luke 5:1-11; Matthew 14:22-33
use, whether for produce or fodder. The will of Psuphis from Tebtunis discussed in the previous chapter probably represents some effort to bring temple land back into cultivation, undertaken by a private individual, though probably with temple incentives of some sort.932 Another document from Tebtunis, this time a lease, hints at the temple’s interest in bringing land into planting. A certain Onnophris sublets his sacred land to a Taorseus, the daughter of Kronion.933 While subleases were common, as we have seen, in this case the land is described as “the so-called newly-planted lands” (ἐν τῷ λεγομένῳ νεωφύτῳ γύῳ).934 This nickname may have been attached to the land long before 134 AD, the date of the subleasing contract, but it nevertheless offers an example of temple land coming into production after a period of unproductivity.935 The desire to turn unproductive land into productive property was not limited to agricultural land. A sale of temple land within Soknopaiou Nesos itself shows this. For whatever reason, the temple of Soknopaios possessed in the 2nd century AD an empty lot near the walls of the temple itself.936 How the temple came to possess the property is unclear, but it may have been a donation or a trade. While sales of temple land are not unheard of, the temples tended to take long-term outlooks concerning their estates, preferring, as we have seen, the long-term lease. In the case of an unproductive plot, the temples might offer lower lease payments or longer lease terms as an encouragement to prospective lessees. In the case of the empty plot (ψειλὸν τόπον), the temple may have ordered a ruinous building or a large mess to be cleared away, offering the new owner a fresh, clean building site. Trash does seem to have built up in empty lots at a rapid pace—

933 *P.Tebt.* 2.311 (Tebtunis, 134 AD).
934 Τόπος (or related forms) generally means a field or “lands,” that is, probably something more than simply γῆ.
935 The term almost certainly does not date to the initial development of the village and the fields around it, especially since the term “newly planted” would as a consequence be applied to huge amounts of land throughout the Fayum. Some form of the term appears less than a hundred times on papyri, and nearly all date to the Roman and Byzantine periods.
936 *P.Vindob.Tandem* 25a (Soknopaiou Nesos, 2nd century AD), l. 21.
whether blown by the wind or left by the people of Soknopaiou Nesos—and the temple may have inherited a filthy plot. This can only be speculation. In any case, while we can find a small number of examples, any sort of “land flipping” was probably conducted on an *ad hoc* basis, similar to the land-sellintg activities of the *idios logos*.

Glass-Working

Excavations in Tebtunis and Qasr Qarun (Dionysias) have unearthed another possible interest of the temples: the working of glass goods. At Tebtunis, by-products of the production process point to the presence of a glass workshop within the outer enclosure wall of the temple. Anti’s excavations found both molds and glass slag, both of which point strongly to the presence of such a workshop, even if it has not been positively identified. A number of goods with inlaid glass features were found within the temple area. These goods are from the Ptolemaic period, and it is unclear when the workshop went out of service. Nevertheless, the presence of material associated with the working of glass, especially glass slag, strongly indicates that a workshop was on the site, probably within the enclosure wall. A glass workshop has also been identified at Qasr Qarun, located outside the temple enclosure, but along the temple *dromos*, next to the dining rooms that are sometimes found in close association with the temples in the Fayum. If small glass goods were produced on site—and items found in the temple of Tebtunis do (as we might expect) show religious themes—then the glass workshops would probably have been under the control of the temple, but probably as workshops to lease out, rather than as directly operated industries. It is also possible, however, that the production of small glass goods was a temporary feature, related to a period of construction or embellishment,

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937 For the difference between glass-making and glass-working, see Nicholson and Henderson (2000) 204.
in which case the glass-workers might have been hired on a temporary basis, to produce the goods required by the temple, rather than being craftsmen renting a place of business. As most of the village remains unexcavated, it is difficult even to say if glass goods can be found much outside the temple area.

Prostitution

Temple prostitution is a topic that has, no doubt because of the higher than average possibility for titillation, attracted quite a bit of attention from scholars of ancient religion.\footnote{In addition, comparisons of ancient religions with modern monotheistic faiths can pick out temple prostitution as a negative comparandum. For this, see, e.g., Rosner (1998)} No matter that there is little to no evidence for temple-controlled prostitution in ancient Egypt, scholars have looked there for more evidence of this phenomenon. Egyptians were, to be sure, as willing as anyone else in the Mediterranean to pay for “a joyful hour,” as the idiom went, but there is no indication that the temples were involved. Our best (and only) evidence for temple-controlled prostitution comes from a decree of Euergetes II (\textit{P.Tebt.} 1.6). In addition to all of the other complaints that Euergetes addresses, the final concerns “the so-called \textit{aphrodisia}” (τῶν ἔπικαλουμένων ἀφροδίσιων) and the profits accruing to the temples from them. Later on, the king explains further, noting that some unnamed scoundrels were “setting up \textit{aphrodisia} without the authorization of the priests…” (καθισταμένους ἄνευ τῆς αὐτῶν γνώμης ἀφροδίσια).\footnote{\textit{P.Tebt.} 1.6 (140-139 BC), ll. 28-29 and 36-37.} Since the publication of this document, the term \textit{aphrodisia} has been interpreted as referring to brothels.\footnote{Or, as Grenfell and Hunt politely term them “pleasure-resorts.”} In their commentary on the term, Grenfell and Hunt cite the supposed temple prostitution at Corinth and Babylon. Otto, in turn, looked to this decree to argue (somewhat tentatively) for temple-controlled prostitution.\footnote{Otto (1905) 316, n. 3} Since that time, the argument has become
nearly universal. Preisigke in his *Worterbuch*, the *LSJ*, and the *Diccionario Griego-Español* all repeat the claim that *aphrodisia*, the neuter plural, means “brothels,” while the singular, *to aphrodision*, means a temple, shrine, or statue of Aphrodite. In order to understand how this argument was made and why it does not stand up to close inquiry, we must take a very close look at the goddess of love in the 2nd century BC.

The Ptolemaic period was one in which the gods of the Greek pantheon and those of the Egyptian were consciously and unconsciously brought into closer connection. Whatever links already existed in the Egyptian imagination between Isis, Hathor, and Aphrodite, they were deliberately deepened by the Ptolemaic queens, who sought to connect themselves with that collection of divines. This manifested in a variety of ways, including a syncretic statue type, the “Isis-Aphrodite” or, in Syria and the Levantine coast, “Aphrodite/Nekhbet/Astarte.” In Egypt, the linkage between Isis and Aphrodite/Venus was especially popular and long-lived, appearing in statuary throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman period. This connection was made explicit by Arsinoe II, the wife of Ptolemy II Philadelphos, when she occasioned her worship as both Isis and Aphrodite. Under Arsinoe II, then, the worship of Isis spread to the Greek population of Egypt, which seems to have led to a lasting popularity throughout the Mediterranean, while also deepening in the Egyptian population. This process began a little over a century before Ptolemy VIII Physcon/Euergetes II issued his decree. If we turn to the papyrological evidence, we can see that this process took hold quickly. A will from Krokodilopolis in the Arsinoite nome, written in 238-237 BC, makes reference to “holy house of

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945 Williams (1979) 97
946 Cheshire (2007) *passim*
947 Isis-Aphrodite was often paired with Harpocrates-Cupid, for obvious reasons.
948 Witt (1997) 126
949 Capel and Markoe (1996) 126
950 Witt (1997) 127
the Aphrodision” (οἶκος ἱερὸς τοῦ Ἁφροδίσιου) apparently located in Krokodilopolis (ἐν Κροκοδίλων πόλει τοῦ Ἀρσινοίτου). 951 By the 2nd century, temples of Aphrodite were relatively widespread. Four papyri from the 2nd century reference temples of Aphrodite, spread throughout upper Egypt—Thebes (PSI 9.1016, 129 BC); Memphis (UPZ 1.119, 156 BC); the Pathyrite nome (PSI 9.1019, 110 BC) and Elephantine (BGU 6.1496, 2nd-1st cent. BC). Three of these—Memphis, the Pathyrite, and Elephantine—are called in the papyrus an Aphrodision (ἐκ τοῦ ἐμ Μέμφει Ἀφροδίσίου, in the case of Memphis). 952 Most importantly for us, the document from the Pathyrite nome, a cession, shows some ambiguity with the term Aphrodision to refer to what we can assume is an Egyptian goddess. The connection between Aphrodite and Isis (and Hathor, to a certain extent) had grown quite close through the late 2nd and 1st centuries BC, but some were clearly not comfortable with a one to one equivalence. The writer, an Egyptian named Imouthes son of Thotsutos, a priest of Min (most probably) and thus with reason to prefer the Egyptian to the Greek despite efforts at religious syncretism, writes with an admittedly imperfect grasp of Greek gender about “everything in the temple of Aphrodite called Hathor” (πάντα ἐν ἱερῷ Ἀφροδίσιωι καλουμένῳ Αθήρ). 953

It is clear that temples or shrines existed in the 2nd century BC Egypt that were known individually as an Aphrodision. It seems in addition likely that, based on our document from an Egyptian priest, that this terminology was not uncontested, almost certainly because the term referred to a temple of an Egyptian god. Once we have established that, we can move on to the second part, that is, what stood behind the aphrodisia as mentioned by Ptolemy Physcon. We will come to the plurality of his term in a moment, but we must first pause a moment to consider

951 P.Petr. 2.1 ll. 37 and 53
952 UPZ 1.119, l. 21
953 PSI 9.1019, ll. 8-9. See also PSI 9.1022, ll. 16-17, with slightly different language.
what precedes the term as decreed. The exact phrase used initially by Ptolemy was “the so-called Aphrodisia” (τῶν ἐπικαλομένων ἀφροδισίων). The uncertainty of that term may have reinforced in the minds of Grenfell and Hunt, the original editors, the irregularity of the situation, leading to their interpretation of the phrase as “pleasure resorts,” that is, brothels. As we have seen, however, there is a second possible interpretation for Ptolemy’s ambiguous ἐπικαλομένων. If, as he no doubt did, Ptolemy issued his decree in response to particular complaints originating from a particular temple or temples, then the language used by Ptolemy might echo that used by the priests themselves in appealing to Ptolemy. If the priests, whether as the whole synod or as a particular temple, wrote to Ptolemy asking for support in restoring the revenues from aphrodisia—whatever they were, a point we will come to shortly—they may well have used the phrase “so-called aphrodisia,” echoing their discomfort with referring to a temple of Isis (or Hathor) as one of Aphrodite, a foreign god, and one representing the not always welcome Ptolemaic dynasty.

One final point remains: what were these aphrodisia? It is easy to imagine them as brothels: the priests recast as bordello operators, collecting fees, and so on. Grenfell and Hunt let their imaginations carry them as far as the supposition that the Ptolemaic temples held a monopoly on prostitutes, a monopoly that was then supplanted in the Roman period by a government monopoly. As we have already seen, however, every dictionary looks to P.Tebt. 1.6 for its definition of ta aphrodisia as brothel. In what other way, we might wonder, might the priests’ income be diluted? For this, we must turn to the nature of small shrines. We will address this topic in greater detail below, but for the time being, it must suffice to say that the temples

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954 P.Tebt. 1.6, ll. 28-29
955 Huß (1994) 129-180 suggests that Egyptian priests engaged in a low-level resistance to Ptolemaic rule, a point contested by Clarysse, as in Clarysse (2004).
956 P.Tebt. 1.6, n. 29.
operated as part of a greater religious hierarchy, and that this might spread out into the smaller parts of the Egyptian landscape. Further down the hierarchy from the temples proper was a small constellation of shrines, which the temples could rent out to interested parties. This provided the temples with a steady, if unspectacular income, while ensuring the local religious needs were met in the small villages. For the individual renting the shrine, meanwhile, the rent payments were no doubt offset either by their share of the offerings made at the shrine or by a sense of civic or religious philanthropy, or both. Even a modest shrine would supplement a lessee’s income to some degree. While religion, especially Egyptian religion, might be relatively slow to react to changes, those shifts would no doubt appear first at the lower levels of the religious hierarchy, working their way up through the shrines to the temples, and so on. In this case, I would argue that a movement encouraged from the top down, that is, the increased interest in Isis spurred by the Ptolemaic queens after Arsinoe II, manifested itself in an upswing in interest in Isis at the grassroots. For the temples, this need was probably slowly met with a growing number of shrines to Isis throughout the 2nd century BC. If the number of the officially supported shrines grew too slowly, however, to meet the similarly growing need, these shrines could easily appear outside of the traditional hierarchy. This would threaten not only the income of the temples but the very old framework of religion in Egypt, a framework that the Ptolemies counted on being able to control or at least tame. If that framework threatened to break down under the success of the Isis cult, both the Ptolemies and the priests would have a vested interest in subduing these other shrines. Seen from this perspective, Ptolemy’s guarantees of the rights of the temples to their aphrodisia and a threatened crackdown on unlicensed shrines makes sense. Ptolemy was not keeping priests in the prostitution business in P.Tebt. 1.6, he was keeping religious outsiders out of the shrine-operating business. It is clear, therefore, that we need not look for the end of temple-owned
brothels in the Roman period, since they did not, at least as far as the evidence available, ever exist, in the Ptolemaic period or otherwise.

Tax Collection

The work of Lippert and Schentuleit has brought to the fore another aspect of the temple’s economic activity. Using the temple at Soknopaiou Nesos as their example, they have illustrated the temple’s role in the collection of professional taxes. In brief, the temple seems to have collected the professional taxes from a range of industries and to have forwarded the total payment to the state. These payments were made for the washers, the weavers, and oil-press workers, in addition to a priestly payment. While the role of the temple in tax collection offers valuable information on the organization of the administration in the northern Fayum, and the temple’s role in it—a topic we will take up in the next chapter—it is difficult to see if the temple derived income from its role as middleman. It very probably derived no material benefit from this. At the same time, however, there were some non-economic benefits to be had from taking on this role. The various professionals paying their taxes to the temple would presumably see the temple as a convenience and a shield, especially if collective punishment on the profession for unpaid debts was applied. The temple would take on the role of protector, sheltering the individuals from the Roman state, presumably bolstering its credentials as bulwark of Egyptian identity. For the Romans, the temples could show their willingness to cooperate and to take from the Romans a local burden, which might be repaid in the form of grants, building projects, or a disinclination to remove temple properties. It is also probable that the temples were not tax collectors in any meaningful sense. They collected payments from weavers and washers, to be sure, but they most likely collected those payments as the owners of the weaveries and washeries

957 Lippert and Schentuleit (2005) 72-75

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that they had rented to the weavers and washers in question. The oil presses in Pisais and the
washers in Nilopolis leased their property and equipment from the temple of Soknopaios. Their
taxes, as well as any other oil-makers or washers renting from the temple, were paid to the
temple and gathered together, to be paid to the state for the assessment on the washeries or oil-
presses of the temple. While the lessee might effectively pay the tax, the state would register the
owner of the equipment, that is, the temple, and expect taxes from it, and not whoever happened
to be leasing the equipment that year. This would reduce the administrative burden on the state,
as it would not need to routinely police the countryside, looking for new tenants, nor to keep a
comprehensively updated central database of property, compiled from local registries of deeds
and contracts. In any case, while the collection of profession taxes concerns both income (for the
workers involved) and taxes, there is no evidence that the temple took a share of the tax for itself
or that it otherwise derived an economic benefit from this.

If the temple of Soknopaios did collect and (officially) pay the taxes on the properties it
leased out, we must ask to what degree this was specific to Soknopaiou Nesos. The population of
the village, the majority of whom were affiliated with the temple, was far from normal in this
respect and we can consequently expect that the temple might have played a larger role in the
village’s dealings with the Roman state than other temples did in other villages. In this case,
however, we know that taxes continued to be paid by other temples (as at Tebtunis) on their land,
and these payments must have been collected out of the produce of the fields or the rent
payments (in coin) from other industries. It is likely, therefore, that the temples there too
gathered tax payments together and paid them to the state in the name of the temple.

The ἱερατικὰ ὀναί

A small number of documents from the Roman period record payments made to
ἐπίπηρητής ἱερατικῶν ὄνον or a group of μετόχοι working together. The precise nature of the ἱερατικὰ ὄνα ἔρημος remains unclear, however. Reiter suggested that they might represent taxes originally collected for the benefit of temples that were in the Roman period instead kept by the state. Around Tebtunis, payments tend to concern the weaving trade. Another document (P.Heid. inv. 225) records a payment made through (διὰ) the representative (πραγματευτῶν) of the nomarch of the Arsinoite and perhaps relates to weaving, though the word γέρδιος is nearly entirely lost—the first three letters must be underdotted and the last three were not written. In most cases, the receipts record the work of the tax-farmers, but P.Heid. inv. 225 introduces a wrinkle in the person of the nomarch. Nomarchs were generally responsible for royal revenue, in this case by overseeing the farming of the tax, and the role of the πραγματευτῆς in this particular transaction is unclear. In a larger sense, though, the role of the ἱερατικὰ ὄνα ἔρημος remains unclear, especially since, as we have seen, temples were not being stripped of their income (as seems key to Reiter’s interpretation).

**Income from Religious Sources**

Income that accrued to the temple was, by definition, religious income. What I mean by “religious income” here, however, is income that derived from specifically ritual or religious causes. While this seems a very different thing than the lands and oil-presses, the income from all was intended for the same purpose—paying for the priests, the buildings, and the rituals of the temples. If income was derived from land or if it was derived from the sale of palm fronds, the money still entered the pockets of the priests (*qua* priests, and not private individuals) or the

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958 As at Reiter (2004) 311.
959 Reiter (2004) 291-292. This builds on previous notions that also focused on the confiscation of revenues from the temples by the state, as at Wallace (1938) 242.
960 *P. Tebt. 2.305*, 601, and 602; *P.Fam.Tebt. 46*.
961 Reiter (2004) 311 (=P.Heid. inv. 225), ll. 3-5.
accounts of the temple treasury. Donations given for specific, one-time projects, such as the construction or reconstruction of a temple are left aside, but recurring income should be taken into account. Payments from the state, whether in the form of the famous *syntaxis* or other income, are treated in the following chapter.

Subordinate Temples and Country Shrines

The temples of Egypt operated in a hierarchy or, more accurately, hierarchies, the broad framework of which we have encountered already. While this hierarchy was primarily administrative, it also carried economic costs and benefits for those higher and lower in the ranks. These hierarchies are already clear in the Harris and Wilbour Papyri from the New Kingdom Thebaid, offering essentially theologically oriented chains of command—those particularly associated with the worship of Amun, for instance. We are less able to say for the Roman period around what axis the hierarchies formed, but geography does not seem to be the primary determining factor. We do not see, in other words, what we might expect if geography were the main influence—a particularly large temple manages the local temples, and so on, such as we see in a Catholic diocese. Rather, a hierarchy might be spread piecemeal throughout the Arsinoite nome (and possibly beyond). We shall consider the administrative implications of this hierarchy in the following chapter, but as concerns temple income, we can identify at least three entities which might pay the temple or require payment from the temple: sanctuaries, chapels, and altars.

Sanctuaries

The Demotic documents from Soknopaiou Nesos allow us to reconstruct quite a bit of the religious infrastructure of the Fayum. A series of documents tell us of at least three categories of temples in the temples’ own language, the apparent largest of which was the sanctuary (*rpꜣy*). A
receipt of payment from 106 AD records a payment of 1 deben, 8 kites, and 16 obols somehow involved with the rp’y of Krokodilopolis (Hw.t-Sbk).962 There is unfortunately little other information, so we are unable to say why the money from the sanctuary in Krokodilopolis was paid to the temple of Soknopaiou Nesos. Two possible (and opposing) scenarios present themselves. First, the sanctuary in Krokodilopolis could have been offering a payment to a smaller temple, sharing the wealth from the temple in the nome capital. On the other hand, the temple of Krokodilopolis could be subordinate to that of Soknopaiou Nesos, and could be paying to Soknopaios, as we can see elsewhere—a document from Alexandria in 223/4 AD records a payment made to a temple of Ptah in Alexandria from other priests.963 We will discuss the syntaxis further in the coming chapter, but these payments from Krokodilopolis to Soknopaiou Nesos certainly represent the second scenario, in which the sanctuary in Krokodilopolis was subordinate to Soknopaiou Nesos. In this case, the payments could be made for two reasons. First, the rp’y could be a full-fledged temple, making payments to its hierarchic superior, similar to payments from a parish church to its diocesan head. On the other hand, if the rp’y does not represent a temple per se but rather something much more modest, the small amount of payment—1 deben, 8 kites, and 16 obols would be roughly equivalent to 38 2/3 drachmas,964 or slightly more than the Temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Arsinoe paid in two days for pine cones, donkey rentals, and lamp-oil to light a grove965—may be, as we have already seen with the professional taxes, a temple-controlled operation making its tax payments to the temple, from where it would be forwarded to the state.

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962 DDD 2.15
963 Chrest.Wilck 82 (Alexandria, 223/4 AD)
964 Van Minnen (2007)
965 BGU 2.362 (Arsinoe, 215 AD). On the 5th-6th (probably of Choiak), the temple spent 12 drachmas on oil, 12 drachmas on pine cones, and 12 drachmas on donkey rentals.
Chapels

A receipt from Soknopaiou Nesos dated only to the Roman period records the possible presence of a “chapel” of Isis (ᶜby.t n .getJSONObject("l.s.t")), though the location of the chapel is not clear.⁹⁶⁶ Whatever form the chapel of Isis took, it contributed 5 deben to the temple of Soknopaios.

Another receipt from Soknopaiou Nesos mentions lesones of the chapel of Isis Nephremmis (mr-šn.w t³ cby.t n GetObject("l.s.t") N³-nfr-imi).⁹⁶⁷ The chapel seems to have been a subsidiary entity to the temple of Soknopaios but, as with the ṛpy in Krokodilopolis, the amounts of money given are somewhat small (5 deben).

Altars

A third category of religious establishment speaks especially to the reach of the temples, and to what was no doubt a significant part of religion in the villages and countryside.⁹⁶⁸ Another receipt from Soknopaiou Nesos records payments from an altar to the temple of Soknopaios.

Two individuals, Teses and Pakysis, both sons of Stoetis, paid 30 deben to Soknopaios for the tax of “the altar of Pr-ḥḍ” (t³ ḫwy.t Pr-ḥḍ), elsewhere described as “the great altar” (t³ ḫwy.t c³.t). The two individuals are further listed as lesones (mr-šn.w) of the great altar, which suggests that the care of this shrine is far from a countryside lark. While we are not informed as to the size of the staff, the ability of these two men to take on a title shows that it was organized along the lines of larger establishments. The site, Pr-ḥḍ, is not conclusively identified, though Gynaikon Nesos or Pelusium has been suggested.⁹⁶⁹ The size of the payment hints either that some altars were substantial establishments or that altars were, for whatever reason, taxed more highly than

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⁹⁶⁶ DDD 2.17 (Soknopaiou Nesos, Roman)
⁹⁶⁷ DDD 2.54
⁹⁶⁸ Compare to the religious landscape of, e.g., Flanders. The Kapel van de Mosdijk, located between Ravels and Baarle in the Flemish Kempen shows the interest in smaller shrines even when quite close to larger institutions.
⁹⁶⁹ DDD 2.16, n. 9.
chapels or sanctuaries. The former is probably likely: an altar might receive fewer offerings and less income than a temple, but an altar, especially a "great altar," would still require some associated staff. If we had a wider range of shrine-payments, it is likely that the payments would not all be of the size of that made by the great altar of Pr-ḥḏ. The smaller or more crowded shrines, such as were found in such quantities even in New Kingdom Deir el-Medina, would no doubt have commanded less impressive offerings, and would have therefore paid a smaller share of their income as tax to the divine tax-aggregator Soknopaios. For a village like Gynaikon Nesos, which had a religious establishment of some sort dedicated to Isis Nephremmis equipped with four lesones (οἱ τέσσαρες λεσώνες Ἰσιδος Νεφρόμμιδος θεᾶς μεγίστης ἐν τῇ Γυναικών Νήσῳ),\(^970\) an altar similar to that in DDD 2.16 may have been the primary religious point of contact, and would have consequently commanded an attractive share of donations and offerings, and therefore paid a larger amount in taxes.

Other Aspects of the Hierarchy Tax-Payments

The range of religious establishments probably reflects local interest in religious expression or public devotion—the presentation of offerings, for instance. Frankfurter has presented evidence for the existence of a strong “local cult” to the detriment of “transregional pilgrimage cult” and “regional cult.”\(^971\) The evidence here suggests very strongly that religious expression in the countryside and the villages was instead firmly—deliberately—within the temple hierarchies. As the use of titles like lesonis by the staff of the Great Altar of Pr-ḥḏ shows, the shrines seem to have created themselves as temples on a smaller scale, in the same way that

\(^{970}\) BGU 3.916 (Arsinoite, 69-79 AD) ll. 8-10
\(^{971}\) Frankfurter (1998) 143-144. In the period covered by Frankfurter, Coptic was the dominant form of the Egyptian language, and he therefore does not take particular notice of the documentary Demotic sources. For the literary, see Frankfurter (1998) 249-250.
temples recreated the primordial space within themselves.

While the amounts of money changing hands in the payments are relatively small, there was no doubt an additional financial benefit for the temples in encouraging and strengthening a healthy array of temple properties. If the temples owned property scattered around their region—as with the property and businesses or the 130 aouras of Soknebtunis in Kerkeosiris—their ability to effectively manage that property would decrease as the distance from the temple grew. By effectively staffing the small shrines, subsidiary temples, and chapels around the countryside, the temples no doubt created a network of agents—religious and, if necessary, economic—that they could draw upon if needed. Having an agent in an area reduced dramatically the information costs for the temple, allowing them to make cheaper, better informed decisions, especially if their holdings were far-flung or, as in the case of Soknopaiou Nesos, located across a large body of water. Even down to the smallest shrines, religious personnel were employed in the performance of religion, and drew benefits from them. The payments made to the temple at Soknopaiou Nesos make clear that both the temple and those operating subsidiary religious establishments benefitted, in very real terms, from the religious hierarchy.

The income from the shrines controlled by Soknopaios was then collected and taxes paid to the state. The tax collected was called in Greek the φόρος βωμών and in Demotic the ḫtr, with the type added (ẖt3 ḫby.t n ḫs.t, for instance). The role of temple as tax collector for industry almost certainly lies with its lessor-lessee relationship with the parties paying taxes to the temple. The role of the temple as tax collector for religious establishments is probably similar. While no lease contracts for the rental of an altar or chapel survive, the nature of religion and the priestly families in Roman Egypt suggest strongly that these would have been long-term

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972 DDD 2.17 ll. X+11-12. See also DDD 2, p. 81-82.
leases, which the temples overwhelmingly preferred in any case.

Religious Paraphernalia

A visit to a religious establishment in antiquity offered an opportunity for temple personnel or enterprising locals to separate the visitor from his money. This could involve selling animals for sacrifice or, in Oxyrhynchus, the sale of θαλλοί of some sort to visitors.  

A petition to a procurator records—in extremely fragmentary fashion—a complaint by a group called the θαλλοδόται that they were being deprived of their due income, probably by the pastophoroi.  

As reconstructed by Hatzilambrou, the editor, the thalldotai offer branches to visiting laymen, who presumably pay them for the paraphernalia. It is also possible, as Hatzilambrou notes, that the “layman” (ἰδιώτης) was someone other than a priest or a pastophoros who lived in the temple, and that the thalldotai may have in turn leased the sale of branches to these laymen.  

The leasing-out of branch selling would have provided the temple with a steady income, without the need to oversee directly the shop. It is, in addition, worth mentioning that that only one figure is named as a thalldotes, and that this may have been a specific title and not a group of individuals. If this is the case, the position of thalldotes may have been established to govern the sale of these branches but, as the temple or the city grew, the demand for branches made the position an attractive one to rent. As for the laymen in the temple renting the right to sell branches, we are not informed whether they sell branches because they live in the temple and therefore are close to their place of business or if the selling of branches also carried with it a shop and living quarters within the temple. If the latter is correct, then the rental of the branch-selling concession may have been in fact a rental of property which carried with it ceremonial

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973 See Kaper (1997) 167-180 for the offering of palm ribs to the gods in the Dakleh Oasis, which may parallel the activities in Oxyrhynchus.
974 P. Oxy. 77.5111 (Oxyrhynchus, 2nd-3rd century AD).
975 P. Oxy. 77.5111, n. 14.
duties. If the thallodotes was allocated quarters within the temple, but already possessed lodging elsewhere in the city, he would readily rent out the thallodotes’ rooms, while retaining the ceremonial title. In this interpretation, the “sale of branches” is not, in fact, necessary. The fragmentary references to obols and distributions of money might instead refer to the property. The laymen, then, would be given, not sold, branches, as the thallodotes himself describes (ἔρχεται ὁ ἱδιώτης, πολλάκις θαλλοδοτείται ἀπ’ ἕμοι).\(^{976}\) If the thallodotes was, in fact, simply renting out rooms he was entitled to by dint of his position but which he did not need, \textit{P.Oxy.} 77.5111 does not represent an income source for the temple, but for the temple staff. Nevertheless, it does also show how the temple could make a burdensome ceremonial title attractive, ensuring not only that the priests were well-paid but also that the onerous ceremonial duties, such as the distribution of branches, were carried out.

**Lodging in the Temple**

The possible quartering of the thallodotes inside the temple leads us to another question. There are numerous references to various individuals, priestly and non-priestly living in the temple. This is a very different situation than the temples of Greece or Rome, which were relatively quiet for much of the year, and would certainly not have been swarming with people, as the temples of Egypt appear to have been. Excavations of the “Priests’ Quarter” at Karnak, for instance, show clearly that the area was inhabited throughout the 1\(^{st}\) millennium BC, at least into the Ptolemaic period.\(^{977}\) During the Ptolemaic period, the living quarters at Karnak were, it would seem, opened to non-priestly workmen.\(^{978}\) In addition to priests and workmen, the temples were also inhabited by the pastophoroi, who kept pastophoria in the temple, for which the

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\(^{976}\) \textit{P.Oxy.} 77.5111, l. 14.  
\(^{978}\) Masson (2013) 142.
Demotic and Greek sources both attest a busy trade. By the Roman period, then, the temples were home to priests and *pastophoroi*, weavers and branch-dealers, and quite a bit more. On the evidence of the *katochoi* archive from the Memphis Serapeum, there may have been a substantial population lodged behind the massive enclosure walls of most temples.

The rooms in which these figures stayed were probably not rented out like private houses, for which we have ample contracts. The grand scale of many temples, and the availability of rooms—Thompson suggests that the Memphite *katochoi* may have stayed in a spare storeroom—may have functioned as a sort of resource for the temple. If we assume that the income of a temple was, from year to year, more or less fixed, we can also assume that the current priests would be disinclined to increase their numbers without some growth in income to offset the dilution of their shares. The additional work performed and the prestige gained by having a larger staff would therefore be lost. For the *pastophoroi*, their income from the temple (and from the *katochoi*) would be supplemented by a lodging, however uncomfortable, in the temple. For workers, their lodgings may have been part of workshop leased out by the temple. While the *katochoi* evidence does date to the Ptolemaic period and not the Roman, it is our best first-hand account of life within the temple walls, and the fundamental circumstances probably did not change in any meaningful way between the Ptolemaic and Roman periods. What they reveal is a small community formed within the temple. The numerous small rooms and side chambers within the temple complex allowed the temples to sweeten leases they were offering or to make onerous positions, such as the *thalldotes*, more bearable or attractive to potential

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979 See, e.g., *DDD* 3.32, l. 6
980 *P.Oxy*. 49.3472 (Oxyrhynchus, 149 AD) suggests that a Roman interest in cataloguing the population resident in the temples. This should probably not be connected (*contra* the editors) with people living in the temple precinct in order to claim illegally the rights of priests.
982 Thompson (2012) 203
983 Thompson (2012) 201 and *UPZ* 6a

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holders.

Services Provided

Finally, we should mention services provided under the guise of religion. Like the sale of paraphernalia, this income would not have existed outside of the religious sphere. In addition, it is likely that the rights to this income were purchased from the temple. In this section, we will consider three particular examples that capture the breadth of the temples’ involvement in local life, and the sources of income that could be derived from that: first, fees to assume positions in the temple hierarchy; second, scribal services; and third, a brief survey of the funeral business.

Payments to take up an Office

For most priestly offices in the Roman period, a candidate was required to make a certain payment, the εἰσκριτικόν, in order to take on that office. This amount could vary considerably—a feather-bearer paid 52 drachmas, for instance, while a stolistes 100 and much larger sums were required from a prophetes— but was in any case paid to the state. Pastophoroi too paid the εἰσκριτικόν to the state. One group that may have paid the temple and not the state in order to take up the role were the hierodouloi. This poorly understood group almost certainly did not include ordinary workers who happened to reside in the temple, but employees performing duties for the temple who were not priests. The ibioboskoi (ibis keepers) P.Cair.Zen. 3.59451, for instance, are clearly working for the temple. Unlike the brick-makers whose work they were forced to do—according to their complaint—the ibioboskoi/hierodouloi are temple staff. At

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984 The prophetes was probably not, however, an ordinary position. For this, see Ch. 7.
985 Seen clearly in P.Tebt. 2.296. The state in the Ptolemaic period also seems to have collected a tax (the “server tax”) on people “who derived income from performing religious services.” For this, see O.Chic.Muhs p. 55.
987 Contra Evans (1961) 199.
988 Scholl (1985) 492.
989 While this text is from the Ptolemaic period, the role of the ibioboskoi would probably not change significantly from the time of Zenon to the Roman period, and the text is therefore useful for illustrative purposes.
the same time, however, the *hierodouloi* were apparently expected to make some sort of payment to the temple in exchange for their position. The so-called self-dedications, in which *hierodouloi* commit themselves to the service of the god, mention a monthly sum (*skr*) to be paid to the temple.\(^990\) Evans argued that the money was given “in return for spiritual benefits received,” but the temple seems to have extended some sort of protection to its employees, even *hierodouloi*, and the payments no doubt encouraged this.\(^991\) In addition, if priests were expected to pay for the right to their office (and the income associated from it)—and bids attesting to this survive from both the Ptolemaic and Roman periods—then we might also expect that *hierodouloi* would pay for the income (and protection) associated with their work for the temple. While we have little evidence for the *hierodouloi* in the Roman period, they are attested and there is no compelling evidence to suggest a change in this arrangement.

**Scribal Services**

In the Ptolemaic period, there were separate courts for the Egyptian population and documents could be filed with the Ptolemaic officials in Demotic.\(^992\) Priests could certainly act as judges concerning temple affairs, and probably concerning other Egyptians unaffiliated with the temple.\(^993\) As the single largest group trained in the writing of Demotic, the priests therefore possessed a powerful skill in the Ptolemaic period. With the arrival of the Romans, however, the use of Demotic quickly decreased.\(^994\) As more Demotic documents are published, however, it has become clear that the use of Demotic, even for contracts and other binding documents, continued well into the Roman period.\(^995\) Especially in Soknopaiou Nesos, where the population was

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\(^{990}\) Evans (1961) 199.


\(^{992}\) For the courts, see Allam (1991).

\(^{993}\) Allam (1991) 120-121.

\(^{994}\) See, e.g., Lewis (1993) and Ripat (2006).

\(^{995}\) See, e.g., the Demotic documents from Soknopaiou Nesos published by Lippert and Schentuleit.
largely affiliated with the temples, priests would have produced a great number of these documents, whether in Demotic or even in Greek. Even in the case of oracular inquiries—another source of religious income to the temples—that in the Roman period were written not in Demotic but in Greek, they were nevertheless composed in Demotic and literally translated into Greek, perhaps to satisfy an order by the Roman government.\textsuperscript{996} Especially in the villages, the priests would have represented a substantial number of available scribes, even in Greek. While the priests might not oversee courts or submit officially recognized documents in Demotic, they nevertheless still contributed significantly to the preparation of documentary papyri in the Roman period. Even if work on individual documents did not benefit the temple \textit{per se}, the ability of priests to prepare contracts, oracles, etc. would have increased the value of priestly positions.

The Funeral Business

The clearest example of the religiously based sources of income is probably those surrounding the care for the dead, a particular concern in Egypt. Those performing these services were generally broken down into one of two groups: the \textit{taricheutai} (ταριχευταί) and the choachytes (χοαχυταί). The \textit{taricheutai} mummified corpses, both of men and of animals, while the choachytes concerned themselves with caring for the dead. We are better informed about the funeral business in the Ptolemaic period than the Roman, thanks largely to the archive of the Theban choachytes and the archive of the \textit{taricheutai} of Tanis (\textit{P.Tarich}). The latter gives us an impression of the value of these positions: it is claimed that the \textit{γέρας} ταριχείας, the right to embalm the dead, in the village of Philadelpheia was worth 4000 drachmas a year.\textsuperscript{997} Since the archive of the \textit{taricheutai} of Tanis was written from the perspective of two claimants who did not

\textsuperscript{996} Ripat (2006) 308-312.
\textsuperscript{997} \textit{P.Tarich}. 6 (Arsinoite, 186/185 BC) l. 23.
hold the *geras* at that time and since the dispute arose because the previous person to hold the
right was killed fighting against the Ptolemies, this archive does not offer specifics on the
temple’s role. Nearly every other position in the temple seems to have required payments either
to the state or to the temple, and it is possible that *taricheutai* too paid something to the temple,
probably in the form of a one-time fee (similar to the *εἰσκριτικόν*). As Armoni notes, the fact that
the income from the *γέρας ταριχείας* was regular (4000 drachmas a year) suggests that the temple
controlled the mummification and paid the *taricheutai* from its income from the mummification
process. In that case, then, mummifying animals or people in Philadelpheia was worth *more*
than 4000 drachmas a year, and the rest was retained by the temple.

The choachytes, meanwhile, derived their income from the tending of corpses entrusted
to them. In exchange for occasional payments, the choachytes made offerings, etc. The income
from these corpses seems to have been a long-term affair: corpses were passed down within
families of choachytes. Presumably, any rites for the dead ended when the payments from the
deceased person’s family ended. It is unclear how their income related to that of the temple. It
was expected that the rights to corpses could be passed down to family members. Since no
record of payments made directly to the choachytes survives in this archive, we might wonder if,
like the *taricheutai*, endowments for rites to be performed on behalf of the dead were paid to the
temple, and the temple in turn paid the choachytes in relation to the number of corpses they were
responsible for. The choachytes were organized into an association with a presiding officer
(called a *lesonis*) and carefully drawn-up regulations. It might also be that the temple
delegated the care of the bodies to the association at large, which then divvied them up between

998 P. Tarich. p. 22.
999 P. Choach. pp. 5-8, 444-464.
1000 P. Choach. 61 (Jeme, 109-106 BC).
the choachytes. In either case, it is easy to assume a role for the temple in the flow of money from grieving families to choachytes.

In the case both of the *taricheutai* and of the choachytes, our best evidence dates to the Ptolemaic period. As we have seen, however, this is for the most part due to a small number of archives dating to the Ptolemaic period. It is likely that the situations described in the Ptolemaic-era archives continued more or less the same in the Roman period. The people of Egypt continued dying, and their families continued to prefer some sort of mummification and rites performed on behalf of the deceased. As the offices of the *taricheutai* and choachytes only existed because of Egyptian religion (and therefore, the Egyptian temples), it is not surprising that the temples received a share of the income, as we see in the case of the *taricheutai* (and which probably also happened in some form or another for the choachytes).

In addition to the services provided by the *taricheutai* and the choachytes, the newly dead would be served by an array of painters, carpenters, and so on required to construct a coffin, to paint it, and to prepare it for the body. The decorating of coffins, masks, etc. reached a very high level in the Roman period, and managed a sophisticated synthesis of traditional and “foreign” elements. This could extend to tombs as well—House 21 at Tuna el-Gebel more or less replicates a traditional temple façade but adds a Greek pedimental design over the doorway.\(^{1001}\) While most of the dead would not receive so fine a burial as those in House 21, there would nevertheless be a substantial industry in preparing the burial context while the body was prepared by the *taricheutai*. There is, however, little information concerning how the painters, carpenters, etc. might have been affiliated with the temple, or if they were independent workmen. In any case, it was at the very least an industry reliant on the temples, their staff, and Egyptian religion.

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Finally, we can look at the funerary industry where it concerned animals, not men. An incredible number of animal mummies survive from antiquity, and their production did not stop in the Ptolemaic or early Roman periods. The Menches papers were used in the preparation of crocodile mummies in Tebtunis. Indeed, it appears that animal mummies were more popular in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods than ever before. One change in the Ptolemaic period was to shift the burial of sacred animals away from major ritual centers to local necropoleis. With a contemporary rise in the number of sacred animal breeding places—as with ibises in the Hermopolite nome—the effect was to greatly increase the value to the local economy of the sacred animal business, whether those animals were alive or dead. If we focus here on the sacred animal mummies, however, we can get a sense of the funds required from the sheer numbers of animals involved: Kessler and Nur el-Din report “hundreds of thousands, if not millions” of ibis mummies alone at Tuna al-Gebel, with “about fifteen thousand ibis mummies a year” from Hermopolitan ibis breeding-grounds. While there is not a particular sacred animal necropolis associated with Soknopaiou Nesos, Tebtunis was home not only to a crocodile necropolis but also “a cemetery of hawks and ibises linked to a chapel of Thoth.”

These examples, from the funeral business to payments for office, do not exhaust the range of income available to the temples and their staff in exchange for services, but they do show the range of these services and the degree to which they were embedded in Egyptian society. These services would not have appeared as greedy extensions of a temple’s power, but rather as natural parts of the temple’s role in daily life. Whether this took the form of a family

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1002 For a technical examination of the production of animal mummies, see McKnight (2010).
1004 Kessler and Nur el-Din (2005) 142.
1005 Kessler and Nur el-Din (2005) 155-156.
1006 Bresciani (2005) 206 n. 2.
member working as a keeper of the temple’s ibises or whether this meant paying a group of choachytes to continue offerings on behalf of a dead grandparent, the temples had a greater part to play than just as landlord or home of a god.

Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos Compared

In looking at the other economic activities of the temples, it has been necessary to bring in comparative evidence from outside Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos and to focus on Soknopaiou Nesos. This is almost certainly not due to a lack of interest in these activities on the part of the temple of Soknebtunis, but rather to the differences in evidence (and focus) for these villages. For Tebtunis, we are reliably informed of income from dovecotes and from the rental of a granary. In addition, the temple was probably involved in the baking industry. The economic activities of Soknopaios are easier to reconstruct: the temple was involved in oil pressing, milling, balm production, brewing, baking, clothes washing, and shipping. The temple also headed a religious network and received income from this. As argued already, the temple of Soknopaios probably was more involved in this kind of activities than the average temple, whether in the Fayum or on the Nile. The relative paucity of land near Soknopaiou Nesos no doubt meant that local piety (e.g., endowments) would be expressed in the form of businesses rather than farmland. Tebtunis (if we had more complete records) probably represents something closer to a “normal” temple, as far as economic activities are concerned.

If Tebtunis was an “average” temple, and an average temple would be expected to maintain a range of economic activities beyond agricultural land, we can ask why so few of them appear in the papyrological record. While there may be some quirks in the evidence for Tebtunis

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1007 This situation has been noticed before: see Evans’ attempts to apply comparative evidence from throughout Egypt and the Ptolemaic and Roman periods to address Soknebtunis’ involvement in “industries.” For this, see Evans (1961) 224-233. Differences in temples could extend to more fundamental areas, such as ritual, for which see Eaton (2013) 41-42.
as well, most of it probably reproduces (albeit incompletely) a pattern for the early Roman
period. Soknopaiou Nesos sat on the opposite side of the Birket Qarun from all of its farmland
and most of its other economic activities. It was reliant on ships, probably owned by the temple,
to bring in produce from those areas. I have already argued that the temple’s response to this
situation was a series of production centers, such as Pisais, in which crops produced near that
area could be collected and processed, with the finished goods then shipped to Soknopaiou
Nesos or elsewhere for sale or consumption. Tebtunis, like most other villages, was surrounded
by its farmland, and crops would have been brought into Tebtunis itself for processing. In some
of the other areas—such as the 130 arouras that Soknebtunis owned in Kerkeosiris—processing
may have taken place almost on the spot, but the vast majority of the harvest from Soknebtunis’
fields would probably be processed in Tebtunis’ mills, presses, and so on. The intermediate step
required for Soknopaios’ crops is, I believe, crucial. While the temple would no doubt keep fairly
accurate records about the amount of farmland it controlled and the tenants on that land, the
official receipt of payments, etc., would have taken place not in the village, but in a number of
smaller *epoikia* (such as Pisais), and the temple would in turn receive reports (and goods) from
the processing centers. Were an *epoikion* to be excavated and the records from the mills or
presses discovered, we would probably learn quite a bit more about the land of Soknopaios. As
the situation currently stands, though, we learn more from the records of Soknopaiou Nesos
about the other economic activities of the temple. The impression this creates of a temple heavily
invested in these economic activities is at least somewhat exaggerated, whereas the piecemeal
nature of our evidence for Tebtunis (and most other temples) almost certainly underplays the
various economic activities of the temples there.
Conclusions

If we survey the economic activities of the temples outside of farmland (and government payments, which we will take up in the following chapter), we rapidly find that we have not, in the end, gotten very far from the farmland. The temples certainly maintained an array of interests, but many of them were part of the vertical integration of the local economy. An area planted in barley might benefit from a brewery, just as one planted in flax might benefit from an oil-press or a weaving establishment. The temples probably built up an *ad hoc* collection of different buildings, some probably inherited from tenants who fled before the completion of their contract or ended a contract and did not renew it for whatever reason. The tendency of the temples to offer long-term leases on their holdings probably encouraged the lessees to develop small industries, and these may have reverted to the temple at the end of the lease. Unlike the temples of Asia Minor and Greece, the temples of Egypt were never involved in banking, and were instead tied closely into the agricultural rhythms of local life. Whether producing rock salt from the Siwa Oasis or fish from the Birket Qarun, the temples probably took advantage of their local conditions and developed their own economic portfolios along those lines. We have seen some examples of activities the temples did *not* participate in, most notably prostitution and banking. What activities we do see are largely tied to the conversion of temple produce to finished goods—barley to brewery to beer shop, for instance—though temples probably also derived income from the long-term rental of subsidiary religious establishments. The predominance of cereal crops throughout Egypt presumably meant that most temples might operate a bakery or brewery, while a balsam-production site would be much less common.

Soknopaiou Nesos offers simultaneously our best developed example and a clear caution. As our information concerning the economic behavior of Soknopaiou Nesos is so much better
than any other temple in Egypt, the frequent appearance of industrial activity cannot be unquestionably explained either as outlier or common arrangement. What seems most likely is that Soknopaiou Nesos was somewhere between unique and standard. The circumstances of the village’s geography and the position of the Birket Qarun meant that the temple’s property would be far-flung and that farmland would probably form a smaller proportion of the temple’s income sources. Nevertheless, Soknopaios owned land on the southern shore of the Birket Qarun, and the efforts taken to convert the produce from that land to finished goods were probably shared throughout Egypt, wherever temples also produced those goods. As such, then, we will briefly review the position of Soknopaios in the economy of the Roman Fayum. At its most basic level, the village of Soknopaiou Nesos was tied to the rest of the Fayum by land routes around the Birket Qarun, and by boats sailing across it. The fish that swam in the lake were caught by temple-owned boats, probably leased out to willing captains. The fishing boats either had to share the water with ferry-boats or to share their cargo space with passengers. In either case, goods and passengers were carried back and forth from Soknopaiou Nesos to lake ports like Pisais or Berenikis Aigialou. This and the personnel established in subsidiary altars or shrines allowed the temple to keep the information costs required to manage their possessions relatively modest.\footnote{1008 The chronic mismanagement of the temple in the Ptolemaic period seems, by the absence of priestly complaing, to have ceased by the Roman period, but would certainly have increased the difficulty of portfolio management in the Ptolemaic period by a goodly amount. Soknopaiou Nesos would probably have had higher per property management or information costs than almost any other temple in Egypt.}

While most temples probably had substantial holdings outside of their home village or city, the temple of Soknopaios was probably the most extreme outlier, with almost no land in Soknopaiou Nesos itself. As such, there was probably a greater development of industrial infrastructure, allowing, as we have seen in Pisais, regional processing centers, without the surplus having to return to the temple or its home village for processing. The various animals
from which the temple profited—cattle, most notably, but also pigeons—no doubt allowed a
degree of freedom for the marginal lands that the temple might receive back from prematurely
concluded leases, for which there is ample evidence. If a lease was given up because of bad
land conditions, the land might be suitable for the herdsmen of the god, until such time as it
could be brought into cultivation. It seems apparent from Soknopaiou Nesos and from Tebtunis
that unproductive land, admittedly without further information as to the cause of the
unproductivity, was brought back into cultivation or use. This points to a larger conclusion we
might draw from the non-farmland and non-tax income of the temples: the temple administrators
seem to have made direct steps to shore up or expand, even if gradually, their economic
portfolios in this period. While there were no widespread Roman confiscations, the temples were
gradually—almost imperceptibly at times—losing income, for reasons we have previously
discussed. Temples’ attempts at vertical integration of the production process was not new to the
Roman or even the Ptolemaic periods. Nevertheless, it became increasingly important in this
period as new endowments were not forthcoming and existing endowments were slowly slipping
away.

From bakery to brewery, and from dovecote to shipping fleet, the temples in the Roman
period had a range of economic interests beyond farmland and handouts from the state. What
united almost all of these was their role in the conversion of agricultural produce to salable
goods. Perhaps even more than the farmland, the material discussed in this chapter reveals the
degree to which the temples were integrated into the daily life of the villages. A farmstead turned
minor settlement on the Birket Qarun probably was dominated by the land, industrial buildings,
and ships of a temple on the other side of the lake. The shrines and altars that might otherwise

1009 See, e.g., P.Tebt. 2.309 and 310.
attest to popular religion outside of the temples were tightly bound up with the temples through ties of administrative hierarchy and economic interdependence. For the priests and temple staff, the activities discussed in this chapter did not simply mean more coin in their pockets on payday, but something more fundamental. Even the ships offered their payment in wine and wheat, wheat that could be baked up in the temple-controlled bakeries. The bread on their tables, the wine in their cups, and the coins in the pockets were provided not just by the sacred land, but by a range of “sacred businesses,” as we might call them for convenience. Thanks to the nature of contracts and the government’s particular interest in land tenure more than shop tenure, our evidence thus far is dominated by the sacred land. As more papyri, both in Greek and Demotic, are published, it seems reasonable to expect that more and more of the temples’ other economic interests will be revealed. If these are similar to the evidence already at hand, they will further our perception of the temples slowly, and on a decidedly *ad hoc* basis responding to the demands and opportunities of their particular economic, geographic, and social contexts to develop, when possible, vertical integration of the processing of their own raw materials, and that these industries were probably leased out, as the temples seem to have preferred, on a long-term basis.
Chapter 7: The Administration of Egyptian Temples in the Roman Period

Introduction

In the previous chapters, we have examined a range of economic activities in which the temples participated. All of these cannot, however, be considered apart from the people associated with the temple—the people who oversaw the economic activities and who benefitted from these activities. This chapter will explore who administered the temple, and how administration of the temples was done in the Roman period, both by the temple staff and by the hierarchy established by the Romans to oversee religion in the province. To do this, we will look first at the administrative structure—the “corporate hierarchy”—of the temples, along with the changes made since the Ptolemaic period, and the possibility for regional variation. Following this, we will look at the administrative business of the temples, the day to day operations so far as we can reconstruct them. Having established something of the administration of the temples, we can then examine the administrative structure erected by the Romans to manage the province and the temples. Finally, we will look at the syntaxis, the Ptolemaic version of which we have already seen in Chapter 4, as a case study. The syntaxis offers us an important example of the contact points between Roman civil administration and Egyptian temple administration, as well as representing what must have been a significant source of funds for the temples.

The Administrators of Egyptian Temples

As we saw already, the Ptolemaic temples had a fairly straightforward and uniform administrative structure.\textsuperscript{1010} A group of priests—the bouleutai hiereis—received bids,
selected (or recommended for selection) one man, the *lesonis*, who oversaw the temple for a year, assuming himself sole responsibility for the payments required from the temple to the state. This system offered the possibility of reward to a clever or lucky *lesonis* but financial ruin for the unlucky or overwhelmed.\textsuperscript{1011} Under the Ptolemies, another official, the *epistates*, was added as a sort of financial manager. While this brief sketch removes a certain degree of nuance and historical development from the temple administrations of the Ptolemaic period, it does remind us of the general character of temple governance at the time. While the *bouleutai hieris* seem to have functioned as something of a managing or advisory committee, final responsibility fell on the *lesonis*, who served singly. With this system, the “state” was able to reduce complexity in their oversight of the temples—they merely needed to know the name of the current *lesonis*, information that could be provided through the *epistates* system, with overseers serving not only at the temple level, but at that of the nome and the region (that is, Upper or Lower Egypt).\textsuperscript{1012} This system of oversight was somewhat fluid, with temporary officials (the *praktor*) appointed to arrange and repair the finances of temples that had grown unwieldy or had failed repeatedly to pay their taxes.\textsuperscript{1013} While each temple appears to have had an *epistates*, the upper levels of the *epistates* hierarchy cannot have been centered in the temples, since the temples were not organized on the nome and regional levels. While some temples—Karnak, e.g.—occupied significant positions and sat at the head of far-reaching religious hierarchies,\textsuperscript{1014} these did not map onto the state’s organization of Egypt.

The state could intervene from above, as it did by requiring representatives from each

\textsuperscript{1011} For such a hapless *lesonis*—indeed, an entire family of such hapless individuals—see Clarysse (2003).
\textsuperscript{1012} See Ch. 4.
\textsuperscript{1013} Clarysse (2003) 22.
\textsuperscript{1014} See Ch. 6
temple to attend synods held in Alexandria or Memphis. While Memphis was the former capital as well as a long-established religious center, Alexandria was relatively new and conceptually apart from the rest of Egypt. Holding synods here tied it (and the Ptolemaic government headquartered there) more closely to the rest of Egypt and the religious networks there. The example of the synods also shows the relatively dispersed nature of state oversight of the temples in the Ptolemaic period, which was organized from the bottom up through the *epistatai*, in contrast to the Roman period.

**Egyptian Temple Administration under the Romans**

In previous chapters, we saw how the arrival of the Romans initially changed very little for the economic infrastructure of the temples. In one area, however, the inclusion of Egypt within the Roman Empire did have one clear effect on temple administration. While sources for the administrative structure of the temple are fairly scarce throughout antiquity, those that survive for the Ptolemaic period all paint a fairly uniform picture, as we discussed above. So too for the Romans, but the picture differs quite a bit from the Ptolemaic. Instead of a lesonis-advisory board structure, the Roman temples speak of many lesones, giving long lists of names: a receipt from Soknopaiou Nesos lists 17 people with the title of lesonis of Soknopaios in 91/92 AD. This dramatic increase in the number of lesones is not matched by the creation of a new position at the temple level to assume sole executive power. Another document from 88 AD, also from Soknopaiou Nesos, describes a “college of lesones” (n3 šbr.w n3 mr-šn.w) of Isis-

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1015 This requirement was removed in the Roman period.
1016 For the *epistates*-system, see Chapter 4.
1017 *DDD* 2.6 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 91/2 AD).
1018 While the Roman Empire saw a great increase in the number of consuls under the principate, executive power generally rested with the emperor, allowing for supernumerary consuls and the gain in honors for them without real consequences to the running of the state.
Nephremmis. Within a little more than a century of Roman rule in Egypt, the lesonis had become an organized group of lesones. While administrative systems could be somewhat informal (see below), the shift in structure from a single lesonis, apparently with executive power and backed by an advisory council, to a college of lesones, seemingly fulfilling the executive and advisory duties at once requires explanation. There is no evidence that the Romans explicitly ordered such a shift in the course of a reorganization of religion along the Nile.

The number of lesones does not appear to have been fixed, at least according to the evidence available. While the temple of Soknopaios had at one point seventeen lesones apparently serving concurrently, the temple “of the Heart of Isis Nepherses,” also located in Soknopaiou Nesos, nowhere has more than a single lesonis listed. It is possible, of course, that the nature of the evidence—in this case, receipts issued by the temple of Soknopaios for payments made by the temple of the Heart of Isis Nepherses to that of Soknopaios—may skew our perceptions. As the entire body of lesones were unlikely to accompany routine payments made across town, a single lesonis would logically appear in the receipts whether or not there was a group of lesones serving concurrently. We cannot, therefore, say with certainty that the temple of the Heart of Isis Nepherses had only one lesonis at a time. There was a clear overlap between Isis Nepherses and Soknopaios, which manifested in the worship of both at the temple of Soknopaios, a topic we will explore in greater detail below, but the temple of the Heart of Isis Nephreses probably was a smaller establishment that was hierarchically responsible to the temple of Soknopaios. In addition, while the temple of “the Heart of Isis Nepherses” never has more

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1019 DDD 2.5 D.4 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 88 AD).
1020 This is probably unrelated to the development in the 2nd century AD of “unspecified groups of metropolite officials acting publicly under the joint title of ‘the archontes’ (magistrates),” (Bowman and Rathbone [1992] 122) especially since the archontes as a joint body developed well after we see multiple lesones appearing. For the archontes as a joint body, see Bowman and Rathbone (1992) 122-123.
1021 For Isis Nepherses, see Bricault (1998).
than a single lesonis listed, it only appears once, while various other aspects of Isis—the Chapel of Isis Nephremmis, the “Place of Isis Nepherses,” and the “End of Isis Nepherses,” for instance—all have multiple lesones listed in receipts and accounts that survive in Demotic, but this number is never static, and does not appear to follow a particular progression, whether greater or smaller, over time.1022 By the later years of Augustus’ reign, even the chapel of Isis Nephremmis (t3 ṭby.t n ḫls.t N3-nten-ḥmy) had at least four lesones.1023 The swelling and shrinking of the number of lesones of Soknopaios, meanwhile, is equally unpredictable. Two documents, albeit of different types, list twelve lesones at some point between 106 and 108 AD, and seven lesones for 108 AD.1024 Of the nineteen lesones listed between these two documents, none are double-listings. That is, from the information available, the lesones of Soknopaios in 106/7 AD were completely different from those in 108 AD. This suggests that the position of lesonis continued to be a yearly one, even in the 2nd century AD, and that the lesones may have been drawn from what amounted to a rotating pool of potential officeholders. Taking our knowledge of the priestly population of Soknopaiou Nesos in 179 AD, that is, 169 men, we can see that if population trends stayed more or less the same across the 2nd century AD, that around 7% of the priestly population of the village was serving as lesonis in 106/7 AD.

The collegial nature of temple administration extended to what appears to be the lower ranks as well. A beer-shop account, P.Mich. 5.322b, discussed already in Ch. 6, refers to a “head-man of the guild of priests” (προστάτης συνόδου ιερέων),1025 while three documents from the Roman period refer to the πληθος of priests.1026 It is likely that, in this case, the πληθος

1022 See DDD 2, pp. 17-18.
1023 DDD 2.54 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 9/10 AD).
1024 DDD 2.21 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 106-108 AD) and DDD 2.8 D+E (Soknopaiou Nesos, 108 AD). See also DDD 2, pp. 16-17 for a table of attested lesones of Soknopaios.
1025 P.Mich. 5.322b, l. 4.
1026 CPR 15.17 (Soknopaiou Nesos?, 17 AD), l. 10; P.Mert. 2.73 (163-164 AD), l. 3; P.Tebt. 2.310 (Tebtunis, 186 AD), l. 4.
(translated by Grenfell and Hunt as “corporation”) refers to the body of priests at large, and not to a particular committee within the total body of priests. The word generally refers to the “commons,” and might have been used to refer to the priests minus the leadership.\textsuperscript{1027} The makeup of the priestly synod, however, is less clear. Two instances (\textit{P.Mich.} 5.322b and \textit{P.Lips.} 2.131) refer to a head-man (προστάτης) of the synod, which the latter pairs with “the other members of the guild” (τοῖς λοιποῖς συνοδίταις).\textsuperscript{1028} This document was supposedly handed to the prostates by an \textit{epistates}, Psenkebkis (διὰ Ψενκήβκιος τοῦ Ψοίφιος ἐπιστάτου).\textsuperscript{1029} The presence of Psenkebkis, son of Psuphis, allowed the editor to date the papyrus to a period before 46 AD, when Psenkebkis, son of Psuphis is listed as dead.\textsuperscript{1030} The presence of an \textit{epistates} in this period would be unexpected. There is no other evidence that Psenkebkis, son of Psuphis, held this title, in large part because there is no evidence that \textit{anyone} held this title in the Roman period, or, at least, in the post-Augustan period. The temples would go on paying an \textit{epistatikon} tax, but there is no evidence that the position of \textit{epistates} continued after the first few years of Roman rule.\textsuperscript{1031} Whatever position Psenkebkis may have held (and the papyrus only preserves \[απο\]), it was probably not \textit{epistates}. Given how closely the family of Psuphis was connected to the temple in Tebtunis, Psenkebkis may well have held a position, but it was nevertheless probably not that of \textit{epistates}. In any case, \textit{P.Lips.} 2.131 does offer more evidence for the structure of the priestly synod.

This structure—a head-man (προστάτης) and a group of \textit{synoditai}—is somewhat complicated by \textit{P.Stras.} 5.341, a contract dated to before 85 AD, which refers to “two elders of

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1027} \textit{LSJ} s.v. πλήθος, 2b.  \\
\textsuperscript{1028} \textit{P.Lips.} 2.131 (Tebtunis, before 46 AD), ll. 4-5.  \\
\textsuperscript{1029} \textit{P.Lips.} 2.131, ll. 3-4.  \\
\textsuperscript{1030} \textit{P.Mich.} 5.322a.  \\
\textsuperscript{1031} The last appearance of the position in Greek that I am aware of is \textit{BGU} 4.1194, dated to 27 BC, and referring to someone serving as both \textit{epistates} and \textit{prophetes}.\end{flushright}
the synod of the priests of Soknopaios” (τοῖς δυσὶ πρεσβυτέροις συνόδου ἱερέων Σοκνοπαίου).\textsuperscript{1032} It is unlikely that the priests of Soknopaios adopted a dual executive, especially as we have evidence to the contrary from the village. Rather, the use of the term presbyteros may either be an informal term, signifying some sort of unofficial standing, akin to the prestige granted to a long-serving senator, or it may be a loose translation of another title. Other documents from Soknopaiou Nesos make the role of the presbyteroi more clear, and highlight the divisions within the total group of the priests. A document, probably a petition, addressed to the strategos of the Arsinoite nome by a number of priests of Soknopaios in 190 AD, refers to “the three elder priests of the first phyle” and another two of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} phyle, and later to “the five elder priests of the five phylai.”\textsuperscript{1033} The distribution of priests—3 elders in the first phyle and 2 in the third—suggests that we are not, in fact, seeing all of the presbyteroi that were on the books for the temple of twice-great Soknopaios, but rather that these five were the ones that were present in this case. Whatever the arrangement, the association of the presbyteroi with the phyle-system is probably not accidental. Most of the administrative positions that we have thus far seen, whether from the Ptolemaic or Roman periods, stood above the phyle-system. In the Ptolemaic period, there was only one lesonis, one epistates, and probably a full-time council of bouleutai hiereis.\textsuperscript{1034} While this sufficed for the management of the temple’s affairs, the day-to-day ritual needs, the sort that would be overseen by the priests of the phyle-system also required care. The presbyteroi were probably, as the name suggests, long-serving priests who, by dint of age or skill, had risen to a position of authority within their phyle. The example of P.Tebt. 2.298

\textsuperscript{1032} P.Stras. 5.341 (Soknopaiou Nesos, before 85 AD), ll. 6-7.
\textsuperscript{1033} BGU 2.433 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 190 AD), ll. 5-10.
\textsuperscript{1034} By full-time, I do not mean that their entire time was spent advising the temple, but that they served all ten months, and did not rotate on and off according to the phyle-system. The bouleutai hiereis appear from the evidence of the Canopus Decree (\textit{OGIS} 56) to have been chosen with five from each phyle.
is illustrative here. Five presbyteroi are listed (τῶν πέντε πρεσβ(υτέρων) ἱερέων ἱεροῦ λογίμου Σοκνεβτύνεως), immediately before the fifty hereditary priests. While Grenfell and Hunt’s addition of “all” to the five elders—that is, “all five elders” (emphasis mine)—is unnecessary, we do, in all likelihood, see one elder standing at the head of each phyle, making each nominally an eleven-man operation. The evidence of BGU 2.433 suggests that references to “the elders” of the temple could be ad hoc arrangements, with an uneven number speaking, perhaps for the phylai involved in that particular transaction. The appearance in P.Stras. 5.341 of “the two presbyteroi,” meanwhile, may point to their being the representatives of the serving phyle when the contract for musicians was made. The relative paucity of this type of evidence makes it difficult to say whether this arrangement is irregular. Of the phylai mentioned in BGU 2.433, one did have two presbyteroi, so the “two presbyteroi” of P.Stras. 5.341 referring to the two representatives of the serving phyle is entirely possible.

It does seem that in the Roman period, the leaders of the phylai, that is, the presbyteroi, took on more official responsibilities. Monson has argued that the presbyteroi became the “managers of temple property and revenue,” and a number of surviving documents, including some we have already discussed, do place the presbyteroi in important positions. A report of priests and revenues (P.Tebt. 2.298) is written by three stolistai and five presbyteroi, and the presbyteroi additionally sign the final document. The fragmentary nature of the document, and the fact that it was clearly not the final report (which would have been sent to the officials, and not kept with the priestly documents in the temple) make it difficult to press too much the signatures of the five presbyteroi compared to the non-signatures of the three stolistai. As the

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1035 P.Tebt. 2.298 (Tebtunis, 107-8 AD), ll. 6-11.
1037 For these, see Ch. 2.
names of the stolistai are listed first at the beginning of the document, it may be that they were more prestigious. It may also be that the presbyteroi were called upon to sign not because they were the overall managers of temple revenues, but because they were the representatives of the phylai, and thus proof that these documents were endorsed by the whole body of the priests, and not by a rogue lesonis, a problem which is well attested during the Ptolemaic period, but not for the Roman. While it is also possible that the term presbyteros, when applied to temple personnel, was an honorific or a translation or nickname for another office of which we already know, it is perhaps more likely that the presbyteroi did hold a formal position, and that this was as the representatives of the phylai and thus of the priestly body at large, perhaps as a check on the power of the lesonis, coming at the same time as the gradual development of collegial lesones also reduced the possibilities of lesonial corruption. In addition, the Demotic evidence, especially from Soknopaiou Nesos, mention priests, usually in the context of the phylai, and the lesones. The appearance of, for instance, a receipt “in the hand of the priests of the 2nd phyle” (n-dr.t n3 w²b.w p3 s3 2.nw) reaffirms the role of a particular representative of the phyle, and the presbyteroi do not appear, which we might expect if they had assumed control of the administration of the temple. That these documents originate with the temple itself and not in letters to the temple (P.Tebt. 2.309) or reports to government officials (P.Tebt. 2.298)—which thus presumably fit into a pre-determined pattern—is not necessarily convincing in and of itself.

1038 Compare to the difficulties in translating senator without our knowledge of the political context or, in a more modern example, the Dutch voorzitter.
1039 Though whoever held the responsibility for accurate, truthful book-keeping may still not have been entirely on the level in the Roman period, for which see below and P.Tebt. 2.315. Evans (1961) suggested on the basis of the Canopus Decree (OGIS 56, l. 32) that each phyle was led by a phylarch (φυλαρχος, l. 32). The term is otherwise unattested in the Ptolemaic or Roman period and cannot have been the title for the leader of a phyle. This is not because the phylai were leaderless throughout the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, but because the term phylarch was clearly not that used in daily life. The Canopus Decree, even if moderated by priestly input, was a royal decree and therefore used the language of the Ptolemaic government and not of the priests themselves.
1040 DDD 2.44 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 12 BC), l. 1.
since the temple’s record-keeping formulas may have been linguistically conservative.

Nevertheless, we find clear evidence for the role of the *lesones* in the Demotic evidence, and the Greek documentation shows that the *presbyteroi* were involved, but does not prove that they were the dominant party. We can say, however, that the role of the *presbyteroi* as representatives of the priests in their *phylai* does seem, however, to have extended to appearances in legal documents.

The presence of *presbyteroi*, often multiple ones for each *phyle*, reinforces our sense of shared authority in the Roman period, rather than a single executive. We have seen already evidence for a synod, a *plethos*, a group of seventeen *lesones*, and so on. Of those apparently holding executive power, meanwhile, we see, again, multiple *lesones*, multiple *presbyteroi* (even with their individual *phyle*), and perhaps a single *prostates*, who seems to have been the voice of the priests at large. While there is some evidence, such as his receipt of reports on the temple-run beer shop (*P.Mich. 5.322b*), of the *prostates’* involvement in the temple’s economic affairs, there is no evidence that he sat at the head of the temple, in the same way that the *lesonis* seems to have in the Ptolemaic period. In addition to this, two documents refer to a “leader of the priests” (*ἡ γούμενος ἱερέων*). A third reference has subsequently been corrected, and instead probably refers to a “leader of the farmers” (*ἡ γούμενος γεωργῶν*). In both cases, however, the papyri are damaged or incompletely published. It is probable that the so-called “leader of the priests” was a circumlocution, standing in for a particular title if the particular title was not known or if the writer wanted to highlight the priests’ ability to act on behalf of the temple.

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1041 *O.Petr. Mus.* 190 (1st century AD) records a receipt of payment of rent on temple land, and is written by an unknown *prostates* of Herakles, but the authority to issue receipts does not equal authority over temple affairs, as we shall shortly see in the case of the “duty-priest.”

1042 *CPR* 15.52 (Soknopaiou Nesos?, 201-225 AD), l. 17 and *P.Tebt.* 2.525 descr. (Tebtunis, 1 AD).

1043 *P.Lond.* 2.256d (Arsinoite, 11 AD), l. 1. For the correction, see *BL* VII, p. 83 and *P.Vindob.Tandem* 9, n. 10.
While little has been published of *P.Tebt. 2.525 descr.*, *CPR* 15.52 is an account register, recording a payment to an unnamed “leader of the priests,” suggesting that the particular person was less important than that person’s ability to deal with the leather-worker (σκυτεύς) in an official capacity.

It is difficult to construct a chart of the organizational hierarchy of the temples in Roman Egypt. The evidence is split between Greek and Egyptian, found in very different types of documents—a leatherworker’s account might require a different level of terminological precision than, say, an internal memo for priestly staff—and not written with an eye towards an etic analysis thousands of years later. From the evidence discussed above, the temples seem to have had a series of deliberative bodies of decreasing size, beginning with the largest, the total body of the priests (the *plethos* or the *synodos*), nominally managed and represented by a *prostates*, though it is not clear to what degree that was an official rather than an *ad hoc* term. The priests were simultaneously divided into five groups, the *phylai*, which served in turn, dividing the 10-month Egyptian calendar among themselves. The *phylai* oversaw day-to-day operations, as we shall see below, and had at their head the *presbyteroi*, probably priests who had served lengthy periods in the temple and were thus experienced and able to ensure correct ritual as well as whatever other minor issues might come up, including the receipt of various offerings and payments. Above the *synodos/plethos* of the priests, and above the *phylai* were the *lesones*, who now seem to have served jointly for a year at a time. Their precise role in temple operations is unclear, though they may have remained jointly responsible for the temples’ tax payments for the year. At times, a particular individual, informally called the ἡγούμενος ἱερέων, might be empowered to do business in the name of the temple, but this may have been an unofficial title of convenience. With the exception of multiple *lesones* replacing the *lesonis-epistates* system, the
system of administration described here is more or less that of the Ptolemaic period. We will
discuss the change below in greater detail, but the shift from a single lesonis to a board of
lesones is probably tied to changes that the Romans made in the administrative structure set up
by the government to interact with and manage religion in Egypt. Finally, there is no evidence
that the same group of priests administered multiple temples. In some cases, such as that of the
temple in Soknopaiou Nesos, multiple gods were worshipped within the same temple, but this
did not involve multiple temples. In examining the evidence, then, we can find clear
examples of temples interacting, probably within some sort of hierarchical structure. We do not,
however, find evidence of different temples under the control of a single priestly body. The
appearance of multiple gods within one temple is a familiar one throughout Egypt (and beyond)
and, as at Soknopaiou Nesos, one tended to dominate, and was frequently referred to without the
companion gods.

The Hierarchy of Egyptian Temples

In her study of the Egyptian temples, Glare claims that “hiereis were doubtless wealthier
and more influential than the average temple baker. After all, they had to pay various charges in
order to assume office, were often literate in Egyptian at least and regularly appear in our sources
as the owners of land and other property.” This idea is an interesting one, and rooted in
descriptions of the temples and of various professions even in antiquity, from the Middle
Kingdom “Satire of the Trades” to Herodotus and Porphyry. When applied to the
papyrological evidence, however, the suggestion that the priests were wealthier and more

1044 The priests of Soknopaiou Nesos call themselves “the priests of Soknopaios, the great god, and of Isis
Nepherses, the great goddess” (n3 w:b.w Sbk-nb-Pay p3 ntr 3 3s.t N3-nfr-s.r t3 ntr 3 t). See DDD 2.61 (Soknopaiou
Nesos, 6 BC), l. 1.
1045 Soknopaios at Soknopaiou Nesos, and Soknebtunis at Tebtunis, to cite two examples.
1047 For Porphyry, see De Abstinentia 4.6, as well as Glare (1993), 86.
influential is not well grounded. The documentary record will, by its very nature, privilege those who were able to write, and the priests are doubly privileged, since their profession was routinely noted in papyri, whereas the “average temple baker” might not be. We might also note that most professions tend to require some sort of “start-up costs.” For priests, it might be the various payments due to the state; for bakers, it might be the rental of an oven, a storefront, and fuel for the fire. Thanks to the unequal (and non-random) preservation of papyri, we tend to find a proportionately higher number of documents relating to payments for priestly offices, while payments for firewood or oven rentals are probably under-represented. It is in addition worth keeping in mind that most priests only served a fifth of the year, but were entitled to call themselves priests the entire year. While they are more likely to appear in the documentary record thanks to the frequent use of their priestly titles, unlike other professions, it is also possible that some priests could also belong to other “groups”: say, tenants on temple land or renters of temple businesses. Finally, we might wonder how to define “influence,” as Glare calls it, for priests or temple staff. If by influence, we mean the ability to affect decisions made by the temple administrators, then membership in the decision-making body would certainly increase one’s influence. Outside of the temple, though, this is less clear. The paying of large sums to the state, or the acquisition of literacy do not of themselves make one a pillar of the community, nor do they inherently endear one to the state. A priest could be a respected voice within the priestly synod, could be a beloved pillar of the community, and his word could carry great import with Roman officials, but we should not assume that any of these three was inherent to priestly rank.

If we assume that relations between various groups within the temple could be different

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1048 For these, see Chs. 5 and 6.
from time to time and place to place, then we can consider how those groups fit together.

Certainly, as Glare notes, the groups that made up the temple staff could work at cross purposes, or could form alliances against other groups within the temple.\textsuperscript{1049} We should not, however, join her in assuming that power struggles within the temple meant that “the various groups of personnel did not present a unified front to the Romans.”\textsuperscript{1050} Individual temples may have been deeply divided, but one need not look far to find organizations that were as frequently at each other’s throats as their opponents or competitors, but which nevertheless presented a unified front when needed.\textsuperscript{1051} In any case, the instances in which the Romans and a particular, individual temple would be at odds might not have been particularly frequent. In one case when the temple did presumably attempt to speak with one voice, the names of the speakers are lost.\textsuperscript{1052} The local dispute that \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.302 records was presumably of interest to the entire temple and its staff, however, and it is difficult to think of disputes in which the temple would benefit from unity in the ranks but in which arguments between different groups within the temple undermined the temple’s efforts. Other instances, in which divisions within the temple are clearly attested, do not prove that the priests could not act in unison when needed, only that the priests, like any group of people, could occasionally fall into infighting.\textsuperscript{1053}

We will discuss below changes in the government’s methods of overseeing religion, and the changes these caused in the administration of the temple, but how did the temple interact with itself? In other words, how was the temple structured below the highest ranks? As we do not have an organizational chart, it is exceedingly difficult to say. As Glare rightly notes, the picture

\textsuperscript{1049} Glare (1993), 92.
\textsuperscript{1050} Glare (1993), 93.
\textsuperscript{1051} We have more evidence for trouble within families than within business partnerships, but in the temple as in extended families, the role of mutual friends would have been a powerful tool for reconciliation. For this, see Gagos and van Minnen (1994) 90 and Ruffini (2008) 75-80 and 168-173.
\textsuperscript{1052} \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.302, for which see Ch. 3.
\textsuperscript{1053} For this, see \textit{SB} 6.9066.
can be messy, and there was probably quite a bit of close connections between the groups.\textsuperscript{1054} It is likely that the priests (\textit{hiereis, pastophoroi}, etc.) did hold a privileged position—\textit{within the temple}—compared to, say, bakers associated with the temple, though not, as we have seen, for the reasons Glare provides. Instead, the bakers probably had a contractual relationship with the temple, whereas the priests were a sort of permanent staff. It is unlikely that the temples would include on the registers of staff all the bakers, brewers, farmers, mill-workers, and so on with whom they had rental contracts. This does not mean that they were not important to the temple, that their voices were not respected within the temple, or that they might not have held a role within the priesthood, but that for the purposes of the state, the associated workers (farmers, etc.) were not of concern, and for the temple, the associated workers probably did not have a say in whatever deliberative bodies existed.

Our understanding of the administrative organization of Egyptian temples is assembled from sources concerning a number of temples from throughout Egypt (though primarily Middle Egypt and the Fayum). While it cannot currently be proven or disproven, it is almost certain that aspects of temple hierarchy varied from temple to temple. The state insisted on certain positions being filled—the \textit{lesonis} and \textit{epistates} in Ptolemaic Egypt are the best example—but the appearance of much of the rest of the hierarchy would probably have been relatively flexible from temple to temple. The most obvious point of variance would probably result from the numbers involved. For the largest temples, a number of layers of organization would be necessary. For a modest temple, like Petesouchos in Kerkeosiris, the synods, \textit{presbyteroi}, and so on would be unnecessary (and impossible to fill if they were organized as such). The differing numbers of \textit{lesones} between temples associated with Soknopaiou Nesos—discussed above—

\textsuperscript{1054} Glare (1993) 94.
show the possible amounts of administrative complexity clearly. Without a complete roster of
temple staff, it is impossible to say what positions or bodies were organized for what temples,
but the possibilities for variation, even between temples of similar size or located in nearby
areas, should not be forgotten and indeed, should be emphasized.

*Day to Day Operations in the Temple*

The nature of the evidence for temples and their organization in this period means that we
have snapshots, and not daily records. In order to get at the daily operational needs of the temple,
then, we must take these snapshots and attempt to fashion something prescriptive, and not simply
descriptive. In this section, we will focus on three aspects of temple operations: the duty-priest,
the need for book-keeping, and revenue planning by the temple. This final point will in addition
illuminate the role of the *prophetes* in the temple hierarchy.

Manning the Desk: The Duty-Priest

Egyptian temples received offerings of a number of types, in addition to other daily
business. Offerings, tax payments, and other income, whether in coin or in kind, had to be
accounted for, and the initial step in that process was its official receipt by a priest. A number of
receipts in Demotic survive from Soknopaiou Nesos, and these inform us of the process of
official receipt in the temple. In one, a (or the) *lesonis* of “the Heart of Isis Nepherses, the great
goddess” (another temple in Soknopaiou Nesos) offers 11 artabas of grain to Soknopaios, to
cover various payments for a part of the year.1055 Though the receipt is issued in the name of “the
priests of the second *phyle*” (*n3 wšt.w p3 s3 2.nw*) it was written by a certain Satabous, the
“duty-priest of the second *phyle*” (*r.sh ḫtbš...p3 wšt nty ir hny p3 s3 2.nw*).1056 The second *phyle*

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1055 For temple to temple payments, see Ch. 6.
1056 *DDD* 2.44 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 12 BC), ll. 1, 9-11. See also *DDD* 2.44, n. 10-11 for discussion of the title.
clearly was on duty at this point, and the inclusion of the duty-priest clause (nty ir hny p3 s3 2.nw) suggests that this was not an ad hoc title, but rather that, for the day or the time when the lesonis of “the Heart of Isis Nepherses” brought his offering, Satabous was the official representative of the temple for receiving that offering. The duty-priest is attested frequently in the grain offering receipts,\(^{1057}\) without other titles. It was thus probable that the duty-priest was not a lesonis, prostates, or presbyteros, but an ordinary priest who was in charge of the register-book that day (or period). Indeed, the normal formula (p3 wᶜ ḥny p3 s3) notes that the duty-priest is a wab-priest who is on duty,\(^{1058}\) without further explanation.

What precisely the duty-priest did remains unclear. The nature of the evidence means that his role in accepting offerings and issuing receipts stands out much more than whatever other duties he might have had, however more or less important or time-consuming. At the very least, the duty-priest served for an unknown period of time (a shift, a day, or the phyle’s time on duty?), officially received offerings/payments to the temple and wrote out receipts for those payments. He may further have played a particular ritual role in the acceptance of these gifts, but we should be careful in separating the acceptance of offerings/payments by the temple from a different, ritual acceptance. The acceptance of gifts by the temple and by its priests was de facto a ritual act, and no doubt involved some sort of practice other than the writing out of a receipt.

Accounting

The state required reports from the temples containing an inventory of land (and probably businesses and industries) controlled by the temple, the priests registered to the temple, and the

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\(^{1057}\) See, e.g., DDD 2.46 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 57 AD), l. 8. For the grain offering receipts, see DDD 2.44-53.

\(^{1058}\) See DDD 2.44, n. 10-11. The division between secular and religious contexts may in this case be overstressed. Lippert and Schentuleit suggest that the “duty-priest” may have played a particular role in the ritual acceptance of offerings, which is no doubt true, but this may not have been an indication of particular rank.
dedicated goods located within the temple itself.\textsuperscript{1059} This document, the γραφὴ ἱερῶν καὶ χειρισμῶν, was presumably assembled from regularly kept documents in the possession of the temple. A number of temple staff would probably have been involved in the keeping of these ledgers and other periodic documents. As we have seen, the duty-priest had a role in logging offerings as they were made to the temple. It seems that a single figure may have been responsible, at least in Tebtunis, for assembling this data and “keeping the books” for the temple. 

A papyrus from the temple documents,\textsuperscript{1060} \textit{P. Tebt.} 2.315, records a personal letter, the sender and addressee of which are both lost, warning that the “inspector of finances in the temples” (ἐξεταστὴν τῶν χειρισμῶν τῶν ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς) was making his way through that part of the Fayum.\textsuperscript{1061} It is strongly implied that the temple’s books are not up to date, but that the writer will take care of things for the priest (and the temple, presumably). We should probably not assume that this sort of lax record-keeping was common to the temples, but the letter does suggest, albeit weakly, that the temple’s financial records were the responsibility of a single person—the letter is addressed to a single person, and the inspector has “instructions to send recalcitrants under guard to the high priest” (ἐξὶ γὰρ συστατικάς ὅπως τὸν ἀπιθοῦντα μετὰ φρουρᾶς τῷ ἀρχιερῷ πέμπειν).\textsuperscript{1062} As the position of the epistates disappeared in the Roman period, it is difficult to determine whose responsibility book-keeping was.

The books may have been kept by a single individual, but the legal responsibility for reporting was presumably shared among the highest level of temple administration, the

\textsuperscript{1059} See Ch. 3 for more in-depth discussion of these reports. Gilliam (1947) suggests that the graphai only concerned temple staff and inventories, but this cannot be the case. For a well-known graphe listing temple income, see \textit{P. Tebt.} 2.298.

\textsuperscript{1060} See Ch. 2 for the finds of temple-related papyri in Tebtunis.

\textsuperscript{1061} \textit{P. Tebt.} 2.315 (Tebtunis, 2nd century), ll. 11-12. For an example of an inventory of temple goods, see \textit{P. Zauzich} 12

\textsuperscript{1062} \textit{P. Tebt.} 2.315, ll. 29-31.
lesones.\textsuperscript{1063} There was a strong incentive for accurate record-keeping, regardless of \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.315, since so much of the income of the temple would be distributed back to the priests, and their shares were, it would seem, divisible and could be rented out or used as collateral on loans.\textsuperscript{1064} While most of these divisions of income probably took place on the priests’ side and not on the temple’s, the existence of a market in shares of priestly income does mean that records were assiduously (or, at least grudgingly) kept. In Tebtunis, a bid for the office of \textit{prophetes} could report the expected income from this position of one-fifth of the revenue of the temple, that is “50 artabas of wheat, 9 5/8 artabas of lentils, and 60 drachmas of silver” (τὰς γινομένας δαπάνας (πυρὸς) (ἀρτάβαι) ν φακοῦ (ἀρτάβαι) θ < γ΄ ἀργυρίου (δραχμαί) ξ).\textsuperscript{1065} Grenfell and Hunt suggest that this represents a share of the net (and not gross) income, a position that must be correct, because the temple’s income would otherwise be quite anemic, or the prospective \textit{prophetes} would be carrying off a proportionately huge share of the temple’s income.\textsuperscript{1066}

\textbf{Budgeting Temple Incomes and Expenditures}

The example of \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.294 reveals something of the financial structure of the temples, even if we cannot speak precisely about the organizational structure. As much of the temple’s properties—both land and “businesses”—were most likely on relatively long-term leases, the income for the temple would have been fairly predictable from year to year. Many of the expenses, too, would have been predictable. The listing of accounts from the temple of Soknopaios in 138 AD (\textit{SPP} 22.183) reinforces this sense. An artaba of wheat a day was used for

\textsuperscript{1063} The \textit{presbyteroi} also assumed a reporting duty in this period, though probably as a check against the power of the \textit{lesones} and less a rise to executive power. For this, see above and, for the opposing view, Monson (2012) 225-226.

\textsuperscript{1064} See Glare (1993) 95.

\textsuperscript{1065} \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.294 (Tebtunis, 146 AD), ll. 26-28. Compare to the regular income from the \textit{geras taricheias} described in \textit{P.Tarich}.

\textsuperscript{1066} \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.294, n. 27.
the priests on duty, various festival days required certain expenditures of wheat, and so on. It may be that the expenses for various festivals, robes, etc. were budgeted for against the expected income from land, businesses, and gifts. One expense would be easily budgeted for: payments to the priests. If priests could count in advance the income from their “leiturgic days,” as in *P.Yale* 1.64, then we can assume that the temple could just as easily plan for their payments to the priests for those leiturgic days.

This planning would produce something approximating the annual income and annual expenses, which would presumably look quite a bit alike from year to year. Depending on the nature of the leases of farmland and of “businesses,” the temple would be shielded from one-time interruptions, such as drought years or, say, everyone in the village giving up beer-drinking at once. There is evidence for failed tenure on temple land, which might reflect a short-term drain on the budget until someone else could be found to take over the lease. Though the temple was probably well insulated from short-term economic upheavals, the budget could not be precisely accurate. The temple still needed to buy certain goods on the open market, for instance, and variations in the price of these goods could mean a surplus or deficit. Here, then, the example of the bid for the office of *prophetes* is useful. If the fifth-share of temple income is calculated after expenses were taken out, then we have something of a sense of the incentives for Pakebkis to make his bid. The temple seems to have made money above and beyond the base level of expenses—staff, taxes, necessary goods, etc.—and this amount might vary quite a bit

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1067 *SPP* 22.183 (Soknopaiou Nesos, 138 AD). See discussion in Johnson (1936) 655-656.
1068 *P.Yale*. 1.64 (Oxyrhynchus, 75/76 AD), ll. 12-15.
1069 *P.Tebt*. 2.309 and 310, for example.
1070 When possible, I prefer not to translate the title *prophetes* literally, that is, “prophet.” The duties of a *prophetes* in Egypt did not imply any sort of divination (or sim.).
from year to year. It seems that one could, in essence, purchase shares in the net profits of the temple. Pakebkis, in *P.Tebt.* 2.294, offered to pay about three and a half years of projected income from a fifth share (ε’ μέρος) of the temple’s net profits for that share (μέρος). This may mean that he could underpay—we might expect that permanent title for himself and his descendants (μένειν δὲ μοι καὶ ἑγγόνοις καὶ τοῖς παρ’ ἐμοῦ μεταλημψομένοις ἢ τούτον κυρεία καὶ κράτησις ἐπὶ τὸν ἄεὶ χρόνον) would last for longer than four years—based on his assumption of increased risk, if the owners of μέρη, and not the lesones, in the temple would suffer financially in case of shortfalls. Based on other bids for shares (μερή), however, it seems that the low cost of such portions of the temple’s income was based more on the potentially short term of the purchaser’s rights to such income—the ἐπὶ τὸν ἄεὶ χρόνον Pakebkis mentioned was probably never a serious expectation. Grenfell and Hunt note that another propheteia changed hands three times in short order, and we should point out in addition that the price for each short term of office was high—1500 drachmas, nearly as much as the 2200 Pakebkis offers to pay.

The purchasing of offices that offered, essentially, shares in the temple’s income, with the resulting dividends making the investment worthwhile, was overseen by the state, as it did with all vacant priestly offices in this period, but this did not put those holding these offices in the front rank of the administration. While we have been using the language of “shares” and “dividends,” the picture was probably something closer to, for example, Lloyd’s of London, in which investors, known as “Names,” stand liable for shortfalls and share profits among themselves, judged on a yearly basis. Most of the same Names return from year to year, but the

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1071 The gross income of the temple might remain more or less the same, but these numbers would be skewed by the extremely large portion of that income that was made up by taxes, staff expenses, etc. The net income may have much less predictable.
1072 *P.Tebt.* 2.294, p. 64.
1073 *P.Tebt.* 2.294, ll. 17-19.
company is technically liquidated from year to year. The Names share a financial interest in the company, and can profit, but do not directly administer the company. They do not own Lloyd’s in the same way that stockholders own the stock-issuing corporation. At least before recent financial upheavals, a position as a Lloyd’s Name carried with it something that a “shareholder” of the temple probably also received: prestige. The goodwill acquired may have had a value to those bidding for the office, in addition to the purely material returns (the grain, the coins, and so on). This goodwill came not only from the people in the village, but from the gods as well. The position of “shareholder” was, after all, that of prophetes in a fully-functioning temple, and no doubt required duties, aside from collecting payments. The value of that goodwill is completely incalculable by modern scholars, and no doubt varied from person to person and place to place. In any case, it most likely made the payment of three and a half times the annual financial return from a position that one might only hold for a year something more reasonable, leaving aside the potential to remain in that position for a longer period of time, even if not the ἐπὶ τὸν ἀεὶ χρόνον of P.Tebt. 2.294.

The sense that the position of prophetes might have more to do with monetary or reputational gain, rather than critical ritual duties or oversight of the temple, is reinforced by the knowledge that one could serve as prophetes of multiple temples. One bidder on a vacant spot as prophetes of Soknopaiou Nesos (and thus on a share of the profits) “simultaneously held the office of prophet in the temple of Akoris in the Nile Valley….” While the prophetes in this case was a position tied up with the net income of the temple, this is not necessarily the case for all prophetai in all temples. Our evidence for this sort of bidding is very limited. A similar case concerning a lesonis in Ptolemaic Egypt has recently been published, but there, the bid appears

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to be for the normal income of the office, and not for a share of the temple’s total net income, no matter how predictable that income apparently was. As more bids surface, especially with the increased pace of publication of Demotic documents, this picture may need to be revised, but it appears that, based on *P.Tebt. 2.294* and 295, that the *prophetai* in Tebtunis offered both the chance for income for the office-holder if the yearly income was as scheduled or above forecasts, while somewhat insulating the temple from bad years. This setup also offered the prestige of *propheteia* to the involved parties, who could hold that title in a number of temples throughout Egypt.

The application to purchase the office of *prophetes* in *P.Tebt. 2.294* is addressed to the *idios logos* and not to the temple, suggesting that the money paid for the office was paid to the state. The process by which religious offices were acquired remains somewhat unclear. The *idios logos* oversaw the process, but we might wonder if all the money received as a bid remained with the government. In *P.Tarich.*, the *geras taricheias* was to be sold by the government because the previous holder had taken up arms against the state. In that case, the rights were sold by the government as confiscated property. At the same time, a bid for the office of *lesonis* survives from the Ptolemaic period, and suggests that the money offered as bid remained with the priests. The evidence from Kerkeosiris is somewhat mixed, as it refers to priests purchasing priestly offices out of the revenues of the temple itself and to shares in a shrine being purchased from the state. The temples clearly did not require a set number of *prophetai*, so we might wonder why the position continued if the temples derived no benefit from it. In other words: if the state pocketed all the money paid for the office of *prophetes*, and the *prophetes* in turn took

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1076 *P.Tebt. frag. 12190-12191 recto*. I am grateful to Andrew Monson for sharing an advance copy of his edition of this text, which will be part of the forthcoming sixth volume of the *Tebtunis Papyri* series.

1077 This text is forthcoming from Andrew Monson. I am grateful to him for sharing an advance copy of the text.

1078 *P.Tebt. 1.5*, ll. 80-81; *P.Tebt. 1.88*, ll. 7-8.
one-fifth of the temple’s net income, what good was the office to the temple? What seems more likely was that there was something between an open market for μερίδες and a closed system in which the offices were handed down among the priests. Instead, the priests participated in a system in which their bids were lodged with the state, and the money perhaps split between the state (through the office of the idios logos) and the temple. It is also possible that two bids were made: the first bid would have been similar to that concerning the lesonis-ship discussed above (in which the money is paid to the temple) and would have secured priestly support for one’s candidacy, while the second bid would have been paid to the state and would have secured the position officially. This second system seems less likely than one in which a single bid was split between temple and government, but it is another possibility. It is perhaps through this process that the temple acquired the copies of bids for the office of prophetes (published as P.Tebt. 2.294 and 295).

*The Structure of the Roman Administration of Egyptian Temples*

We have thus far focused on the admittedly confusing system of groups and priesthoods that combined managed their temple’s affairs, met as a deliberative body, and carried out the rituals required of the temple. As part of their organization of the province of Egypt, however, the Romans also erected an administrative structure for overseeing the temples. This structure, and the effects it had on the temples, is the subject of the following section.

*The Archiereus*

The position of archiereus is one familiar to scholars from other parts of the Roman

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^1079 As religion is by nature conservative, a priesthood could no doubt continue even if it was a drag on a temple’s income. Nevertheless, the number or benefits to the position could probably be limited if there were no other economic benefits to the temple from that position’s existence.
In a number of provinces, the archiereus served to organize and oversee the imperial cult within that province, as also happened in the cities of Egypt. In addition to the imperial cult, however, the hierarchical nature of “traditional” religion in Egypt required some sort of framework for overseeing the traditional temples in a similar fashion to that to which they were accustomed. While the nominal head of the administrative structure was the emperor and, below him, the prefect, the Romans saw fit to delegate further, creating the position of “high priest of Alexandria and of all Egypt” (or sim.—the title varies from report to report). We will consider below the duties of the man holding this position, but we must first take up the vexed question of the date when this office was created. Some scholars have recently argued that the position was created during the Augustan period, and was thus a part of the administrative structure for the entire Roman period, but the larger share of the scholars studying this question have argued that the position was a Hadrianic creation. This is not to say that, in this theory, the position of the archiereus of Egypt did not exist prior to the reign of Hadrian, but that the extension of his power from provincial official in the imperial cult to the contact point between the Roman administration and all the temples of Egypt supposedly took place under Hadrian. For the most part, the arguments for a specifically Hadrianic creation date for the office rest on two particular points. First, there is currently no positive evidence for the archiereus acting in this role prior to the reign of Hadrian. Second, and related, the first clear evidence of a

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1080 See, e.g., Kearsley (1986) passim.
1081 As in the province of Asia (for which see Kearsley [1986]) or of Pontus, for example.
1082 For the contrast between sacred and profane in this office, see Demougin (2006) who otherwise follows the confiscation narrative quite closely.
1083 The position was probably salaried (as with a number of equestrian procurators in Egypt) with the money for the salary drawn from the provincial fiscus. For this, see Rathbone (1996) 310, 319-320.
1084 While a number of scholars repeat the claim, the key pieces of the argument were laid out by Stead (1981), Rigsby (1985), and Parássoglou (1974).
high priest in this role can be found in a communication by the prefect Titus Haterius Nepos in which the emperor Hadrian is said to have “appointed the high priest of the deified emperors, of great Sarapis, and of all the temples of Alexandria and Egypt” (καταστήσας…τῶν θεῶν Σεβαστῶν καὶ τοῦ μεγάλου Σαράπιδος ἁρχιερέα καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κατὰ Αλεξάνδρειαν καὶ κατὰ Αἴγυπτον ἱερῶν). 1085 Parássoglou notes that καταστήσας can mean both “appointed” and “instituted,” and that he himself seems to favor the latter, meaning that this papyrus marks “the creation for the first time of the office of the high priest.” 1086 It may, but the evidence at hand does not prove this, and the former (“appointed”) seems the better interpretation.

The first point, that the role of the archiereus as overseer of all temples in Egypt is not attested prior to the edict of T. Haterius Nepos, is a dangerous one. It bears repeating that the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. The evidence for the archiereus before the reign of Hadrian may be lost for reasons that we cannot currently understand, it may not have ever existed, or it may simply be that the documentation has been found but not yet published. 1087 At the same time, we would note that, while καταστήσας can mean “instituted” rather than “appointed,” it is more commonly used as “appointed,” thus requiring Parássoglou to make the point that he did. If the absence of evidence prior to the edict of Haterius Nepos is not taken as proof of a terminus post quem for the role of the archiereus as head of all religion in Egypt, then the edict of Haterius Nepos need concern us less. It is an interesting example, to be sure, but nowhere proves that Hadrian’s appointee in 120 AD was the first archiereus of Alexandria and of all Egypt, rather than just of the imperial cult. There is, on the other hand, no clear evidence that the position was created under Augustus, or that it was definitely created at some subsequent

1086 Parássoglou (1985) 34.
1087 For the “fallacy of negative evidence,” see Gee (2010) 139 ff.
point before the reign of Hadrian. All this is to say that, despite the great scholarly efforts, it is perhaps best to agree with Capponi that the question remains unsolved and to add, further, that it is somewhat unnecessary for our understanding of the temple infrastructure. As we shall see, whether the actual duties were exercised by the *archiereus*, the prefect, the *idios logos*, or some other party, the duties were almost certainly exercised, and any change in the person to whom the temples reported probably did not meaningfully change the fact that they were obliged to report, and that the creation of a Roman administration to match the temples caused (or accelerated) certain changes in the structure of the temples in the early Roman period.

The question of the *archiereus*—or the *idios logos*, or the prefect, etc.—is not, as Capponi writes, finding out “who stood as an intermediary between the traditional Egyptian temples and the Roman state under Augustus and Tiberius” (emphasis added), but *how* the person acting as the intermediary functioned. One chief concern of the state and therefore of the *archiereus* and his administration was the proper registration of priests. No doubt motivated more by the tax concessions granted to priests than by malice, the state placed tighter controls on the numbers of priests, required them to register, and created a chain of regulation that had the effect of placing the issuance of priesthoods (and the rights attached to those priesthoods) wholly in the hands of the Roman state.

The steps involved in admitting a new member to the priestly ranks are illustrated by a series of documents from Tebtunis. This was largely conducted through the ritual of circumcision, which provided an easy identifying mark as well as (we might assume) a

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1088 Capponi (2005) 42.
1089 For this, see below.
1090 Capponi (2005) 42.
memorable, if not necessarily pleasant, ritual for those involved. This process largely followed
the steps set out by Grenfell and Hunt:

“(1) Application to the strategus by the parents or other responsible persons

(2) Inquiry directed by the strategus to the local priestly college concerning the fitness of
   the candidate…

(3) Reply of the priestly college….

(4) Letter addressed to the high-priest of Egypt and given by the strategus to the
   applicant, stating the facts of the case and that the necessary conditions had been
   fulfilled….

(5) Examination before the high-priest, at which the candidate was produced and the
   letter of the strategus was read.”¹⁰⁹¹

To this we probably ought add: (6) The candidate is circumcised and joins the priestly
college in question. We might also add that the process, as reconstructed by Grenfell and Hunt,
favors those steps that required documentation. There may have been a number of intermediate
steps that were conducted out of reach of pen and paper, and therefore have passed beyond our
knowledge. Nevertheless, the evidence available does show the degree to which the admission of
new priests was a labor-intensive and tightly controlled process. All levels of the administration,
from the archiereus in Alexandria to the local officials to whom the strategos presumably
delегated his tasks, were involved. In addition, though, the local priestly college, or some part,
was brought into the process, making them collaborators with the Romans in preparing future
priests.¹⁰⁹² The priests responsible for fielding requests for more information from the strategos

¹⁰⁹¹ P.Tebt. 2.292, p. 59.
¹⁰⁹² Compare this to the current struggles over the selection of a new Dalai Lama—when the current officeholder
dies—since Tibet is under Chinese control.
are not clear, though Grenfell and Hunt assume, as we have seen, the involvement of the
“priestly college” in toto. The surviving documents do not make at all clear whether the priests at
large considered this, and the letter of the temple replying to the strategos’ request is signed only
by four people, none of whom hold particularly lofty titles.\textsuperscript{1093}

If we set aside the widespread confiscation of temple land,\textsuperscript{1094} one of the primary means
of control of temples available to the Romans was the control of the priesthoods. This was not
necessarily a punitive measure. The temple had a relatively inelastic income, especially if the
prophetes position was used, as it might have been at Tebtunis, as a way to insulate the temple
from short-term risk at the cost of the potential for larger, more sporadic gains, and any regular
increases in the number of priests on the books would have a clear negative effect on the amount
of funds available for the other priests and on the goods that were being distributed to them. We
know very little about how the syntaxis worked, but it is unlikely that, even without Roman
controls on the maximum number of priests enrolled, the payments would have scaled upwards
without limit, if the temple enrolled everyone as priests. All this is to say: the temples had very
good reasons to control the number of men entering the priesthood, and in addition, to limit it to
those from established priestly families, that is, for the current priests, their own families.
Making the priesthood a family affair, that could be (more or less) passed down would have been

\textsuperscript{1093} The highest ranking is the “deputy prophet” (διαδόχος προφητείας), a title that appears in a few other places
(e.g., SB 20.14612 = P.Prag. 61). A few other deputy priests appear as well—a deputy stolistes appears in P.Tebt.
2.313, for instance—but the idea of deputy priests has not occasioned much scholarly comment. In the case of the
prophetes, did the deputy carry out his actual duties if he was away? As we know of a single person holding
prophetes-ships in multiple nomes, it must have been impossible for them to perform their ritual duties on a regular
basis, and here the deputy prophetes must have been critical. It is perhaps too hasty to see a clear connection
between the possibility of the prophetes as a risk-spreading institution (discussed above) and the occasional
appearance of deputy prophetai detailed to carry out the ritual duties of the prophetes when he was away. The
deputy stolistes mentioned above, for instance, does muddy the water. The stolistes no doubt had more complex (or
different) duties than his job title suggests—for which see also the pterophoros, who had nothing to do with literal
feather-carrying—even if we discard Grenfell and Hunt’s assumption that the stolistes was a critical figure in the
operation of the temple (for which see their comments on P.Tebt. 2.302 and elsewhere).

\textsuperscript{1094} For which see chs. 3 and 5.
an attractive proposition for the priests. That the priests played a critical part in the process of enrolling a new priest suggests very strongly, if it does not show directly, the complicity of the priests in closing the system, more than it already was.\footnote{We should not expect that the priesthood in previous periods was open to all comers. Nevertheless, the strict controls placed on the enrolling of new priests were something new.}

The archiereus (or the idios logos, or the prefect, etc.) played a role in a number of processes in addition to the enrollment of new priests. Though the prefect would always remain the addressee for petitions, as we have seen with \textit{P.Tebt. 2.302},\footnote{For the temple and the prefect, see Jördens (2009) 338-343.} the more banal aspects of bureaucracy related to the temples probably flowed through the office of the archiereus (or the idios logos, etc.).\footnote{This is likely, but far from certain. The precise duties of Roman administrators can be somewhat difficult to nail down precisely. See, for instance, Thomas (1982) 179-183.} A number of prefectural decrees raised the burden of reporting of temple activities and personnel. At least as early as 4 BC, the prefect Turranius ordered the collection of a list of personnel associated with the temples.\footnote{\textit{BGU} 4.1199} This seems to have been out of a concern for individuals escaping duty by claiming priestly exemptions.\footnote{Priests could also claim immunity from liturgies. For this, see, e.g., \textit{P.Aberd. 16} (Arsinoite, 134 AD).} This does not, of course, imply that this was widespread or damaging, but rather that the subject had been raised in the prefect’s mind in some fashion, and Turranius may have been spurred by rumor or fear than any actual events.\footnote{Compare to, for instance, attempts to ban the implementation of sharia law in Oklahoma, which was not based on any actual instances of sharia law being used in that state.} It is possible that the much longer reports of personnel, property, etc. that the Roman administration compelled on a yearly basis from the temples grew out of this desire to monitor the staff. Whatever demands that the Romans made have been interpreted as policies targeting the power of the temples. “Turranius’s intention,” Whitehorne writes, “may have been simply to shake out any hangers-on…” or, “this decree may well be the Roman administration’s first shot
in the campaign against exemption from liturgy itself.”\textsuperscript{1101} This interpretative spirit extends to later actions as well: Whitehorne suggests that “if Tuscus was prepared to enforce pennypinching measures like this [preventing certain non-legionary veterans from claiming the privileges due only to legionary veterans] in such a sensitive area...then he is quite likely to have looked equally hard at the many priesthoods in Egypt with a view to clamping down upon any abuse of priestly privileges.”\textsuperscript{1102} The action he refers to is an order (\textit{P.Lond.} 2.359) suspending payments to someone until they explain their revenues. This is tied to the temples on the strength of a few letters (\textit{τ̣ε̣ι̣ε̣ρ̣ε̣.}) appearing three lines after the end of any legible text.\textsuperscript{1103} This might tie the entire process to the temples, but this is far from certain, and the payment of a \textit{syntaxis} is not limited to temples. The notion, therefore, that Tuscus, prefect from 62/3 to 65/6 AD, cracked down on the temples because he cracked down on fraudulent veterans is a risky one, and the further connection, that this register was an aggressively updated version of Turannius’ directive from 4 BC, ordered by Tuscus due to the “economic difficulties attested in Egypt towards the end of Nero’s reign” is equally shaky.\textsuperscript{1104}

This is not to deny the reality of Roman reporting requirements for the temples. There is ample evidence that the temples were required to compile reports of their personnel, their property, and their income sources. What is less clear, however, is the motivation for these, and much of the Roman hostility has been read into the evidence by modern scholars inspired by the confiscation narrative and \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.302. The creation of paperwork would have been a burden, but without evidence for a clear Roman policy in ratcheting tighter those policies, it is difficult to

\textsuperscript{1101} Whitehorne (1980) 220. This suggests that the Roman administration was able to keep up a low-level campaign against priestly rights over the span of two centuries, as the argument extends to 171 AD (\textit{P.Bacch.} 2).
\textsuperscript{1102} Whitehorne (1978) 323.
\textsuperscript{1103} \textit{P.Lond.} 2.359, l. 14; For the reading, see Whitehorne (1978) 324.
\textsuperscript{1104} Whitehorne (1978) 323-324.
assume that the *archiereus* oversaw an administration designed to break or even rein in the temples. The temples were active partners in the enrollment of new priests, and Turranius’ edict of 4 BC would have reinforced the concept that *legitimate* priests were indeed deserving of tax exemptions, etc. The priests seem to have eagerly embraced the language of legitimacy concerning priesthood, as can be seen in *P.Tebt. 2.302* when they complain about certain “bastards” (*nothoi*) trying to usurp their rights.

To sum up, we can echo Stead when she writes that “the High Priest of Alexandria and All Egypt appears to have taken over most of the religious, administrative functions of the Prefect, but there is no evidence that he assumed the Prefect’s cult functions.”\(^{1105}\) What the “religious, administrative functions” entailed was the enrollment of new priests, the receipt and investigation of the temple’s reports of personnel, property, and income, and the occasional application of pressure from above on parties dealing unfairly with temples. The last example is attested, albeit incompletely in the case of Ulpius Serenianus, who was acting as *antarchiereus*, and intervened in a dispute between the *boule* of Ptolemais and the temple of Soter at Koptos.\(^{1106}\) In another instance, “a certain Tastous…requested the jurisdiction of the High Priest on a question of land, probably as a result of a dispute between herself and a temple.”\(^ {1107}\) Even if the work of the *archiereus* was not designed as a key step “in the subjection of Temple to state” (and much of his activities should be reexamined without the preconception that the Romans were seeking to control and weaken the temples), the *archiereus* did take a place at the head of a new Roman administrative structure designed to route the oversight of the temples into particular

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\(^{1105}\) Stead (1981) 413.

\(^{1106}\) See discussion in Swarney (1970) 83-85. This probably applied as much to Egyptian temples as to “Greek” temples, as of Soter.

\(^{1107}\) Stead (1981) 415.
channels. As we shall see, the lower levels of the religious-administrative hierarchy may have been at least as sympathetic to the temples as to the needs of the Roman state.\textsuperscript{1108}

The \textit{Antarchiereus}

The \textit{archiereus} appears to have had the services of a “permanent deputy.”\textsuperscript{1109} The evidence for this office is extremely fragmentary, with only two attestations. Both date to the period 160-166 AD, though there is nothing to suggest that the office of \textit{antarchiereus} was limited to this period, and it is instead almost certainly a chance of preservation. In any case, we know almost nothing about the duties of the \textit{antarchiereus}, save that he seems to have been involved in situations in which a temple failed to make a report of property. In \textit{P.Oxy}. 42.3026, an \textit{antarchiereus} writes to the \textit{strategos} of the Metelite nome, in the Western Delta, concerning a temple’s incomplete reporting.\textsuperscript{1110} In \textit{SB} 6(1).9016, the \textit{antarchiereus} corresponds with the \textit{strategos} of the Coptite nome concerning reports of temple property.\textsuperscript{1111} The \textit{antarchiereus} appears to have been of a relatively high rank, as he is called “the most powerful \textit{antarchiereus}” (τοῦ κρατίστου ἀνταρχερέως).\textsuperscript{1112} In addition, he seems to have had excellent chances for promotion. Of the two deputy high-priests known, Ulpius Serenianus (\textit{SB} 6.9016) and Salvius Justus (\textit{P.Oxy}. 42.3026), one, Serenianus, certainly became \textit{archiereus} by 171 AD, and Justus may have become \textit{archiereus} as well in 185.\textsuperscript{1113}

Whether the \textit{antarchiereus} functioned as a formalized apprenticeship for the high

\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{1108} See the \textit{archiprophetes} below. We need not, of course, assume that one was forced to choose between loyalty to the state and to the temple. In most cases, the temple and the state worked in concert.
\item\textsuperscript{1109} \textit{P.Oxy}. 42.3026, n. 19.
\item\textsuperscript{1110} \textit{P.Oxy}. 42.3026 (Oxyrhynchus, ca. 165/6 AD).
\item\textsuperscript{1111} \textit{SB} 6(1).9016 (Coptos, 160 AD).
\item\textsuperscript{1112} \textit{SB} 6(1).9016, col. 2, l. 1.
\item\textsuperscript{1113} \textit{P.Oxy}. 42.3026, n. 19. The latter identification does require a Salvius Justus and a Salvius Justinianus to be the same person, though such a slip is certainly possible, especially given the similarity of their names and the (often experienced) human ability to conflate similar names especially in casual situations.
\end{enumerate}
priesthood, or if the deputy high priest simply appeared best for the higher office as one of the few people with experience in that field, he does seem to have worked, in the day to day, on the most labor-intensive part of the Roman oversight of the temples: paperwork, especially related to the huge number of reports of property and personnel that must have flooded the office on a yearly basis. Both attestations of the antarchiereus record him corresponding with relatively high-ranking government officials (in both cases, strategoi), and not with the temples themselves. The antarchiereus may have been detailed to conduct the interdepartmental correspondence that was necessary for effective, informed action in that period. This work also allowed him to make contacts and to experience the full range of problems that the Romans might face in overseeing the temples, all of which was no doubt of great utility were he promoted to archiereus.

The Archiprophetes

The Roman administration of temples, in its most developed form, did not consist only of the archiereus and his direct assistants. We have already seen how, in the Ptolemaic period, the government’s oversight of temples extended upwards from the temples through the office of the epistates, which was held on a nome level as well as on that of Upper and Lower Egypt. In the Roman period, the connection between the local temples and the civil administration in Alexandria was made by the archipropothetes, a position that seems to have had a relatively high rank—one of them, a certain Apollonides, is addressed as kratistos, a title that generally was reserved for at the highest echelons of power in the province.\footnote{Bülow-Jacobsen (1979) passim; P.Gen. 1.7 (1st century AD) and P.Ryl. 4.676 (1st century AD) both preserve Apollonides’ name and title. For the title kratistos, see Hornnickel (1930) 19-22.} The creation of this office happened at some point at least as early as the 1st century AD, and possibly earlier.\footnote{Bülow-Jacobsen (1979) 124 lists the first clear attestation of the office as 1st century, in the two papyri mentioned in the previous footnote.}
implications for discussions of the creation of the *archiereus*. Either we must assume that the entire administrative edifice was created before Hadrian—which, as we have seen, the evidence does not prevent—or we must assume that the hierarchy was created piecemeal, with the nome-level officials being put in place prior to the creation of a full-time *archiereus* (compared to the *idios logos*, etc. managing temple in addition to his other duties). It is perhaps most likely that the process did take place over an extended period, but that it may well have been more or less complete well before the 120 AD date by which time we know the *archiereus* was in place as an overseer of all temples.

In any case, the *archiprophetes* had a role in temple business. Even when a high-ranking official had a certain nominal responsibility, the actual investigations and actions tended to be delegated well down the ranks.\(^\text{1116}\) In three papyri, the *archiprophetes* is involved in the enrollment of new priests,\(^\text{1117}\) and in another he receives reports from a temple on personnel and income.\(^\text{1118}\) The relatively small number of surviving papyri referring to the *archiprophetes* also means that our evidence for the duties of the *archiprophetes* is limited. Nevertheless, we get a picture of an administrative official operating on the nome-level, overseeing the temples within that region. It is likely that the *archiprophetes* fell more on the “profane” (*archiereus*) side than on the “sacred” (*lesonis*, e.g.). The *archiprophetes* was a high-ranking Roman official—to be addressed as *kratistos*—but was in closer contact with the temples than the *archiereus* or the *idios logos*.

Our understanding of the *archiprophetes* is complicated by a register of temple property,

\(^{1116}\) See, for instance, the duties of the *dioiketes*. For an example, see Connor and Coughlan’s work on P.Mich. inv. 4000 (forthcoming).

\(^{1117}\) *P.Oxy.* 49.3470-3471 (Oxyrhynchus, 131 AD), SB 8.9658 (193 AD) and *P.Herm.* 3 verso (4th century AD); see Bülow-Jacobsen (1979) nos. 8 and 15, and p. 127.

\(^{1118}\) Bülow-Jacobsen (1979) 127-128; *PSI* 9.1039 (216/7 or 267/8 AD).
addressed to an archiprophetes of Alexandria who also served as prophetes of a temple in the Hermopolite nome.\textsuperscript{1119} This archiprophetes, Alexander, is addressed as follows: so-and-so, “also called Alexander, chief-prophet of the most illustrious city of the Alexandrians, prophet of Hermopolis the great, ancient, illustrious, and most august city, holding other posts and however he is styled…” (…ὦ καὶ Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἀρχιπροφήτῃ τῆς λαμπροτάτης πόλεως τῶν Ἀλεξανδρέων προφήτῃ Ἑρμοῦ πόλεως τῆς μεγάλης ἀρχαίας λαμπρᾶς καὶ σεμνοτάτης καὶ ἐπ’ ἄλλων τάξεων καὶ ὤς χρηματίζει).\textsuperscript{1120} In this case, two questions are raised: why is the archiprophetes receiving a return from a priest of Thotoperius in Hermopolis,\textsuperscript{1121} and why is a prophetes serving over an entire city? Bülow-Jacobsen was “unsure in which capacity he receives the return,”\textsuperscript{1122} but it might be something less official. The double-named archiprophetes had interests in Hermopolis, as he served as the prophetes for some temple there, but presumably spent the bulk of his time in Alexandria, where he had a more prestigious role. Anoubion, writing the report, does not claim that Alexander (the archiprophetes) has commissioned the report, but nevertheless addresses it to him:

κελεύσαντος τοῦ κρατίστου ἀρχιερέως Γεσσίου Σερήνου καὶ τοῦ διασημοτάτου ἡγεμόνος Μουσσίου Αἰμιλιανοῦ ὡστε ἀπαντας τοὺς ἱερομένους ἐπιδούναι καθ’ ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτὸν τὴν γραφήν ἡμῶν τε αὐτῶν καὶ τῶν ἰερημίων παιδῶν μετὰ καὶ τῆς γραφῆς τῶν χειρισμῶν καὶ τῶν προσόδων, τούτοις ἀκόλουθα ποιῶν ἐπιδίδωμί σοι τὴν τῶν χειρισμῶν γραφήν…\textsuperscript{1123}

“Whereas his excellency Gessius Serenus the high-priest and his highness Mussius Aemilianus the prefect have ordained that all those with the priestly calling should make yearly

\textsuperscript{1119} P.Ryl. 2.110 (Hermopolis, 259 AD).
\textsuperscript{1120} P.Ryl. 2.110, ll. 1-3.
\textsuperscript{1121} It is likely that the Hermopolis in question is Hermopolis Magna, and not Hermopolis Parva, which was located between Alexandria and the Nile. Thoth was worshipped in both places, and the reference to the greatness of the city is a typical 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD formula for Hermopolis Magna.
\textsuperscript{1122} Bülow-Jacobsen (1979) 128.
\textsuperscript{1123} P.Ryl. 2.110, ll. 6-11.
returns both of ourselves and our children who are minors together with a return of temple furniture and property, in accordance with these instructions I present to you the return of furniture…”

It is possible that Alexander, as archiprophetes of Alexandria, had a role in the process, but it is more likely that, as a prophetes in Hermopolis, he was closely associated with the temple in question. Since Alexander would have been well-connected and resident in Alexandria, the seat of Roman administration in Egypt, it is possible that the temple with which he was connected in Hermopolis passed their annual reports to him, and had him formally turn them over to the archiereus. This would offer an example of the mediation of power, confirming the sense we already have from P.Tebt. 2.315 of the value of having friends in high places.

The position of the archiprophetes helped the Roman administration to organize the religious landscape of the province, provided a degree of closer oversight and responsibility on a similar level to the strategos—the strategos obviously having a much greater role in daily life, but operating on the same nome level—and helped to bridge the Roman (and non-Egyptian) administration of the archiereus with the traditional, conservative instincts of the local temples. The example of Alexander, discussed above, who could serve as archiprophetes of Alexandria, one of the less obviously “Egyptian” parts of Egypt and as prophetes of a temple (probably of Thoth) in Hermopolis, suggests that the archipropheia could form a link between different parts of Egypt and further suggests that the use of the prophetes as a risk-management strategy

1124 P.Ryl. 2.110, p. 89.
1125 P.Ryl. 2.110, n. 4, quoting Griffith, “Thotoperios must be Thwtr-up-rḥwḥi (or perhaps better –rḥwḥi) ‘Thoth who judges the two rivals,’ i.e. Horus and Set. This is the typical Thoth of Hermopolis in the Delta, often mentioned also in late texts in connection with Hermopolis Magna.”
also allowed the temples to forge connections with people holding a relatively high rank in Egyptian affairs.\textsuperscript{1126}

\textbf{The Idios Logos}

The final administrative position we will consider in some detail is the \textit{Idios Logos}, and his role in the filling of temple positions. We have already discussed the development of the \textit{idios logos} and his role in the confiscation of land and the selling of priestly offices in Chapter 5. The \textit{idios logos} and the \textit{archiereus} could have similar areas of responsibility, at least as far as the temples were concerned. While the \textit{archiereus} was responsible for approving the addition of new priests, the \textit{idios logos} sold priestly offices that had fallen vacant, possibly through misdeeds by the previous holder. These misdeeds could often involve ritual transgressions: a priest was denounced for letting his hair grow out and wearing wool, forbidden to priests on duty, who were expected to wear linen.\textsuperscript{1127} Another was called before the \textit{idios logos} for sacrificing a bull that had not been ritually prepared.\textsuperscript{1128} Since the office of the \textit{idios logos} concerned itself more and more with religious matters, it had been assumed that, by the 2nd century AD, the positions of archiereus and the head of the \textit{idios logos} (ὁ \textit{πρὸς τῷ ἱδίῳ λόγῳ}) were held by the same person, but this has been convincingly disproven by Swarney.\textsuperscript{1129} He instead proposed a gradual accumulation of related titles unrelated to religion qua religion, but rather growing from a sort of “mission creep” in the office of the \textit{idios logos}. From the late Ptolemaic office designed to dispose of ownerless property, the \textit{idios logos} took over the sale of vacant priestly offices, probably in the Augustan period. By the 2nd century, the added emphasis on the sale of these

\textsuperscript{1126} At this date, it is likely that “Alexander” was not a native Egyptian, but he may have had some closer connections than the average Greek since he was eligible to serve as \textit{prophetes} in Hermopolis, a position that is almost unheard of for Greeks and Romans.
\textsuperscript{1127} \textit{BGU} 1.16; See Swarney (1970) 92 for discussion.
\textsuperscript{1128} \textit{BGU} 1.250 (Soknopaiou NESOS, 120/1 AD).
\textsuperscript{1129} Swarney (1970) 92-95.
offices then extended to the patrolling of “irregularities in the occupation of these offices.”

From judging these offenses, the penalty for which was almost always a fine, the idios logos took on “all cases of ecclesiastical impropriety liable to a fine.” While the idios logos certainly took on aspects of religious oversight in the Roman period, it was not part of the temple administration per se, but rather an additional watchman and, it should be said, a way for the government to divert fines for religious behavior into the government’s coffers. The gradual extension of the authority of the idios logos to include priestly fines marked a redirection of money from the religious sphere to the governmental, but did not come about due to any Roman malice or clear imperial or prefectural decisions, but as mission creep, a gradual slide towards greater authority, perhaps born out, as we can see in the archive of the Taricheutai of Tanis (i.e., P.Tarich.), of a confused situation and appeals for the government to step in to sort things out.

Interactions between the archiereus and the idios logos were clearly cordial and followed some logic, as the antarchiereus, Ulpius Serenianus, was comfortable citing prefectural decrees and decisions of the idios logos to support his own judgments. The idios logos existed outside of the administrative structure headed by the archiereus, and concerned a particularly limited set of infractions, summarized by Swarney as follows: “The department’s concern for temple activities can always be reduced to questions of revenue rather than of religious procedure, so that it deals with such matters as: whether the government has been deprived of some payment

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1131 Swarney (1970) 94.
1132 The idios logos’ interest in religious procedure seems largely to extend only as far as it could derive money from them.
1133 Comparable in idea to Marbury’s petition in Marbury v. Madison and the resulting expansion of judicial review, such that it is now the dominant role of the Court. “Mission creep,” as a concept, was created to describe the gradual shift from a US-led humanitarian relief project in Somalia in the early 1990s to a UN-directed military campaign, a shift that took place gradually, as limited goals are slowly replaced by more ambitious ones, without a clear direction planned in advance.
1134 SB 6(1).9016, ll. 9-18.
for a priesthood; whether any unqualified person holds a priesthood which should be resold; whether someone should pay a fine for a ritual infraction." The offices of the idios logos and of the archiereus could grow closer together or further apart over time, but their competencies were apparently separate and any priests dealing with particular complaints would have understood clearly to which of the imperial officials their complaints or defenses should be addressed. As with other Roman policies, the sale of priestly offices and the policing of ritual infractions were probably not intended to smash the power of the temples, but rather to continue policies that had existed in the Ptolemaic period or that developed slowly, accidentally, over time, out of “mission creep” and not malice.

Roman Goals in Establishing an Religious-Administrative Superstructure

Scholars in the 20th and 21st centuries have repeatedly assumed, as we have shown, the bad faith of the Romans, if not their malice, towards the temples when Octavian/Augustus and his successors governed Egypt. We have already raised serious concerns about this assumed hostility, but we can in any case consider to what end the Romans created a system of religious administration that manifested in a chain of related offices and a Roman official nominally at the head of organized religion in the province. Many of the “intrusions” into temple activities took place gradually, such as the expansion of the role of the idios logos into temple business, and had their roots in the Ptolemaic period. As it is currently not possible to establish with any confidence—an argument from silence not meeting a reasonable threshold for confidence—when the more specialized positions (archiereus, antarchiereus, and archiproprophetes) were created or took on their particular duties, it is even more difficult to ascribe a particular motive for them.

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1136 It was previously believed that the idios logos and the archiereus merged into a single office. For a concise description of this, and the problems with this idea, see Kruse (2002) 710-711, n. 2013.
1137 For “mission creep,” see Ch. 5.
to the Roman officials. A new position or regulation created in 4 BC has a very different historical register than one created in 134 AD, even if they would control the same actions. Additionally, without direct testimony from the emperors or officials creating these positions, it is a dangerous thing to assume that their creation was designed to limit the options of the temples relative to the state.\textsuperscript{1138} Rather, many of the so-called restrictions, such as the careful controls on new priests entering the temple, may have mixed Roman concern over proper tax payment with worries from the already-serving priests that their positions would become less valuable or less heritable if the ranks continued expanding. Seen this way, then, the Roman actions could as easily be positive and supportive as punitive and vengeful, especially if these developments took place decades or centuries after the Romans made Egypt a profitable and (largely) peaceful part of their empire.

\textit{The Syntaxis of the Priests in the Early Roman Period}

The “syntaxis of the priests” (t3 sntks in Demotic) developed, probably in the Ptolemaic period. It served, as I have already argued, as a sort of temporary loyalty payment during the Great Theban Revolt, and proved difficult to end as the revolt continued, temples grew accustomed to the payments, and the war did not end cleanly.\textsuperscript{1139} By the Roman period, in any case, it was an established source of funding for the temples. The primary interest in the \textit{syntaxis} was as a source of support (and control) for the temples after the confiscation of their land. If we remove the “confiscation model” as an explanatory device, however, we can ask again how the \textit{syntaxis} worked in the Roman period and how it connected the temples and the Roman religious administration.

\textsuperscript{1138} By way of comparison, it is unlikely that too many US veterans thought they would be worse, and not better served by the creation of a cabinet-level secretary of Veterans’ Affairs. More bureaucracy does not, in this case, imply a desire to punish.

\textsuperscript{1139} For this argument, and the Ptolemaic history of the \textit{syntaxis}, see Ch. 4.
The former correspondence between sacred land and the *syntaxis* must be discarded.\(^\text{1140}\) Even before my re-examination of *P.Tebt. 2.302*, the case for the linkage of sacred land and *syntaxis* had raised some questions. Glare, for instance, noted the possible counter-example of *P.Tebt. 2.298*, but the problem is somewhat more complicated.\(^\text{1141}\) Working within the confiscation model, it was possible to interpret appearances of temple land and/or the *syntaxis* as the product of the supposed bargain described in *P.Tebt. 2.302*, that is, that the Roman administration in the first years of their control of Egypt, confiscated the sacred land belonging to the temples and offered them either the *syntaxis* or their land back as a lease. Glare, in examining the *syntaxis*, suggested that at least some *syntaxis* payments were not drawn from the provincial government, but were made by local figures directly from land they had purchased, and which had previously been part of the temple estates. In other words, the land was sold off or leased to private individuals by the state, and those individuals were expected to make payments to the temple to fund the rituals performed by the temple, in lieu of income from the temple itself renting the land to third parties.\(^\text{1142}\) Key to this is a particular text, which we shall consider in detail.

*BGU* 4.1197 records a petition by a certain Stotoetis, priest and prophet of the temple of Harpsensis and Sarapis in Busiris. The crux of the matter is described by Stotoetis as follows:

\[
\text{ὑπόκειται τῷ προκιμένῳ ἱερῷ σύνταξις ἐκ τῆς Ἁρπίσιος προσόδου καθ’ ἐνιαυτὸν πυροῦ ἀρτάβαι ρν, καὶ ὑπὸ σοῦ ἀπεδόθησαν ἐως τοῦ ἢ ἄντου Καίσαρος, ἐκδημήσαντος δὲ σοῦ εἰς τοὺς ἐκτὸς τόπους οἱ σοὶ προστάται ἐως τοῦ νῦν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐννεακαιδεκάτου ἔτους Καίσαρος οὐκ ἔδωκαν ἥμιν.\]

\(^{1140}\) For discussion of this supposed correspondence, see Ch. 3.
\(^{1141}\) Glare (1993) 77.
\(^{1142}\) Glare (1993) 78-79.
“There is due to the aforementioned temple a *syntaxis* from the revenue of Harpesis of 150 artabas of grain each year, and you paid this until the 18th year of Caesar, but when you were abroad, those representing you didn’t give it to us from the current 19th year until now.”

The temples in two other villages, Line and Koma, went to the prefect and received the money due to them. The priest, Stotetis, noted that Asclepiades was visiting (or inspecting) the region (παρουσίαν), and sent him a letter directly. His direct appeal did not apparently work, or at least did not produce permanent results, since *BGU* 4.1200 records a complaint to the prefect concerning non-payment by Asclepiades’ representatives. We can ask two questions of this text: why was Asclepiades paying a *syntaxis* to the temple of Harpensis and Sarapis, and why did the priests go to the prefect? The latter question we can answer quickly: the prefect was a natural addressee for petitions, and it is possible that Asclepiades was no local official. As Glare notes, Asclepiades “spent at least nine years in Italy,” and was addressed as “god and lord” (θεόι καὶ κυρίωι). Even if he was not a particularly high-ranking official—and Glare is probably right in suggesting this, even if her given reason is unlikely to be correct—Asclepiades was probably well-connected. After a direct appeal failed, the priests no doubt hoped that the prefect, who outranked Asclepiades, both in official power and unofficial prestige, could bring Asclepiades into line. While an appeal to the prefect was relatively common in any case, this may have been an instance of the priests of Harpensis and Serapis using the networks

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1143 *BGU* 4.1197, ll. 4-9. Translation mine.
1144 The term παρουσία generally is equivalent to the Latin *adventus* and refers to an official visit to a region. See, e.g., the *parousia* of a certain Lupus in *BGU* 16.2670 (Herakleopolite, ca. 14/13 BC) and the expenses required to support his visit. For official visits in the Ptolemaic period, see Clarysse (2000) and Verhoogt (2005).
1145 *BGU* 4.1200 (Busiris, 2/1 BC).
1146 Glare (1993) 78; *BGU* 4.1197, l. 1.
1147 Glare (1993) 79, suggests that Asclepiades could not have been a high-ranking official because he was out of town so long. The fact that the priests do not mention a title when addressing Asclepiades himself, or when appealing to the prefect in the case, is more suggestive of a lack of official duties. Or, more specifically, it suggests more strongly that whatever Asclepiades’ relation to the temple of Harpensis and Serapis, it was not that of an official responsible for giving the temple its yearly government money.
of the elite to bring about behavior from a powerful figure in their region that they could not
cajole into proper behavior nor reasonably force through local channels.1148

The first question, that of the payments owed by Asclepiades to the temple, is a knotty
one. The payments (σύνταξις) apparently originated from the “revenue of Harpesis” (ἐκ τῆς
Ἀρπήσιος προσόδου).1149 While a syntaxis was clearly due to the temple, we cannot say that it
was the syntaxis of the priests, rather than a more mundane payment. A study of the use of the
word syntaxis in the Herakleopolite nome shows that the word can carry a wider meaning than
that implied by most discussion of the “syntaxis of the priests.” There are fairly few references to
syntaxes in the Herakleopolite (where Busiris was located), but the term generally seems to
mean “payment” and not necessarily “state payment for the support of staff or ritual.”1150 In the
case of BGU 4.1197, there is no reference to the syntaxis due to the temple being the so-called
(and sometimes labeled as such) “syntaxis of the priests.” Without this important clarification, it
is hazardous to assume that the syntaxis described is part of the state’s support system. Especially
if the Herakleopolite nome (or more broadly Middle Egypt) used syntaxis for “payment,” the
reference in BGU 4.1197 to a syntaxis due to the temple (ὑπόκειται τῶι προκιμένῳ ἱγερῷ
σύνταξις) may simply mean that Asclepiades owed payments to the temple on certain land—we
assume land since the payments are in grain and not in coin, though this is far from certain—that
grew unpaid while he was overseas and his property in Busiris was in the hands of
administrators. In this case, the reconstruction of events becomes clearer, and does not require

1148 Heinen (2000) provides another example (esp. OGIS 1.111) of connections between a high-ranking official and a
group of priests, though in this case dating to the Ptolemaic period.
1149 BGU 4.1197, l. 5. It is possible that Harpsensis should have been read, rather than Harpesis, though there may
not be sufficient space to correct Harpesis to Harpsensis. Both names are largely underdotted (Ἀρψῆς [rather than
Ἀρψής]) and Ƒ (rather than Π). The amount of difference—γγ [rather than Π]—is relatively large, even though the eta in Harpsensis is
supplemented. This question could be clarified by a fresh examination of the papyrus, but this has unfortunately
been lost. Fabian Reiter (pers. comm.) has confirmed that this papyrus is lost, almost certainly during WW II.
1150 See, e.g., BGU 16.2626 (Herakleopolite, after 5/4 BC), l. 44, though this is fragmentary.
the involvement of the state-run *syntaxis*-system. Asclepiades had land interests in the Herakleopolite nome, in the villages of Busiris, Line, and Koma (at least). He went abroad for an extended time, leaving his estate in the hands of representatives (οἱ σοι προστάται) who did not make payments to the temples.\textsuperscript{1151} This may not have had anything to do with religion—Asclepiades could have leased a large amount of land, and his representatives may not have paid on any (or only some) of these. The successful examples of the temples in Line and Koma would have been more relevant than that of private landowners, and were thus mentioned by name.\textsuperscript{1152} The temple at Busiris attempted to resolve the issue through a letter to Asclepiades, but this does not seem to have produced the desired result. Confusion only enters the interpretation of this scenario if we assume that all temple land was confiscated and that any occurrence of the word *syntax* in relation to temples must mean the “*syntax* of the priests.”

The distribution of the *syntax* of the priests almost certainly originated at the higher levels of government, but was undertaken on the local level. A long letter from Soknopaiou Nesos records the complaint from a certain Stotoetis and the other priests of the temple there against the local *komogrammateus* (βιβλείον Στοτοήτεως καὶ τῶν σὺν αὐτῶ ιερέων γραφομένων Ἰσίωνει κομογραμματεῖ).\textsuperscript{1153} It would seem that Ision, the *komogrammateus*, had hindered the payment of the *syntax* to the priests (τὰς συντάξις αὐτοῖς μὴ ἀποδεδωκότι).\textsuperscript{1154} This might be a routine matter for adjudication, but it does give us concrete evidence for the role of the local administration, in this case the *komogrammateus*, in distributing the payments. While the Roman religious administrative structure (*archiereus* through *archiprophetes*) is not currently known to

\textsuperscript{1151} This use of *prostates* as “representative” might extend to *O.Petr.* 1.90.
\textsuperscript{1152} Asclepiades may have owed money to temples other than Busiris, Line, and Koma, but if their appeals were unsuccessful (or had not been made yet), they would not have fit into Stotoetis’ purpose in writing.
\textsuperscript{1153} *SB* 16.12685 (=*SPP* 22.184) (Soknopaiou Nesos, 139 AD), ll. 58-59. Sijpesteijn (1981) remains the most useful edition.
\textsuperscript{1154} *SB* 16.12685, ll. 60-61.
extend to the level of the individual temples—akin to the Ptolemaic *epistates*—and thus distributions of money to the temples would have been difficult for the religious administration, the example of *SB* 16.12685 does suggest that the payment of the *syntaxis* did not fall into the administrative area of the *archiereus*, remaining instead in the “civil” administration.

The amount or intended purpose of the *syntaxis* remains unclear. No doubt because of the nature of documentation and survival, the sort of evidence we would prefer concerning the *syntaxis* of the priests is not forthcoming. It is likely that the *syntaxis* was intended to support the staff of the temple, and we can discard Glare’s suggestion that “the *syntaxis* seems to have been intended to cover or contribute to the cult costs of the temple.”¹¹⁵⁵ It is difficult to separate the costs for cult from the costs for the people performing the cult, to begin with, and the specific references to the intended use of the *syntaxis* are unclear. One letter from Karanis says that a cash payment was “customarily sent for the costs incurred in the temple” (εἰς τὰς γινομένας ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ δαπάνας τὰς κατὰ συνήθιον ἐπιστελλόμενας).¹¹⁵⁶ This (and Glare’s reference to *BGU* 4.1197, which mentions carrying out “the sacrifices and the other customary rites to the gods”)¹¹⁵⁷ fits into the context of priestly rhetoric, and should not be taken as literal truths. As we have seen previously,¹¹⁵⁸ the priests could fall back on the language of religious chaos to support their petitions, and could use the language of ritual peace (and divine contentedness) to reward donors or officials supporting the temples’ claims. This should not be taken to mean that the *syntaxis* was expressly detailed to pay for oil, linen, or the other necessities. Even assuming that evidence was found suggesting that the *syntaxis* payments were expressly detailed for procuring ritual goods, this does not have a meaningful effect on the income of the priests. The temple

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¹¹⁵⁵ Glare (1993) 79.
¹¹⁵⁶ *BGU* 3.707 (Karanis, 179-182?), ll. 12-14.
¹¹⁵⁸ For this, see Ch. 3.
would receive a certain amount of income from its fields, businesses, religious services, and the
syntaxis, and if the syntaxis paid for ritual goods, that left more income from the fields or
businesses to go to priests. We should not see the syntaxis as more deliberately ordained than as
a payment to the temples to support them, whether that was in the payment of temple staff, the
purchasing of ritual goods, or (more unlikely) the construction or expansion of religious
buildings, art, or kiosks, etc.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have attempted a partial reconstruction of the administrative
framework of the temples of Roman Egypt. This can only be idealizing—at best—and every
temple probably had its own quirks, leaving aside the natural differences of scale. A small
temple had a much less developed hierarchy, compared to the large temples of Soknopaiou
Nesos or Tebtunis, or the temples with province-wide effect. Nevertheless, we have identified
a number of interlocking levels of administration: the phylai and their respective representatives,
the lesones (in collegial form), and the prophetes, who, at least in Tebtunis, may have been more
of an honorary or financial position than a management post. We have also seen the Roman
religious administrative structure, from the archiereus and his assistant, the antarchiereus.
Nome-level oversight was probably provided by the archiprophtetes. Some aspects of the
administration of the temples, generally concerning the sale of offices, were overseen by the
idios logos. The particular time at which the temple and state hierarchies took this form is
unclear, and they probably developed throughout this period, as we have seen in the discussion
of the archiereus and the idios logos. The syntaxis of the priests brought together many of these

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1159 As we can see in the administration of the temple of Soknopaios versus those of Isis in the area of Soknopaiou Nesos. Outside of one example discussed above, however, most temples, however small, in the Soknopaiou Nesos area do seem to have acquired multiple lesones.
aspects, in that it was administered by the “civil” administration and apparently handed over to
the priests by the _komogrammateus_, but eligibility for these payments relied on the say-so of the
_archiereus_, who oversaw applications for the priesthood (and thus for the _syntaxis_) and the _idios
logos_ who could punish ritual mistakes.

Having established all this, we can turn to a larger question about the administrative
hierarchy of the temples during the Roman period. Why did the temples apparently turn to
collegial administration? Much of the Ptolemaic period saw individual responsibility: one _lesonis_
was responsible for the temple’s tax burden.\textsuperscript{1160} A single figure, then, offered the Ptolemaic
administration a single person with whom they could deal. This may have been watered down
somewhat by the creation of the _epistates_ later in the Ptolemaic period, but the _lesonis_
maintained ultimate responsibility. There was something of a Ptolemaic religious administrative
structure, but there is not any evidence that it went above the regional (Upper Egypt) level.\textsuperscript{1161} In
the Roman period, meanwhile, the religious administration went higher, up to the provincial
level, but did not descend quite as far: an _epistates_ was assigned to each temple in the Ptolemaic
period, while the _archiprophetes_ was the lowest known part of the Roman administrative
structure, and he served at the level of the nome. In this way, the temples of the Ptolemaic period
were ultimately responsible to the king, and to the king directly. Whether through the person of
the _archiereus_ or through some other administrator (if the _archiereus_ was indeed created in the
2\textsuperscript{nd} century), the need for a single representative was reduced. Now, the Romans had an entire
system for dealing with the temples, for funneling their complaints and requests up above the
nome-level and to the _archiereus_ (or _idios logos_, etc.), a man who had the ear of the prefect, and
who could presumably accomplish quite a bit. The benefit for the Ptolemies of a single

\textsuperscript{1160} Clarysse (2003).
\textsuperscript{1161} See Ch. 4 for the _epistates_.

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representative for the temples was this: their system was relatively unwieldy in that it concentrated a large number of temples at the level of the king or his immediate advisors. Reducing their administrative burden, especially in cases of defaulting temples, where non-payment had to be quickly identified and perhaps a praktor appointed, was critical, and could be accomplished by making a single figure responsible for a single temple. The process by which a lesonis had to report to Alexandria, whether for a synod of all the temples, or to turn in his books, shows the inefficiencies in the system, and the Ptolemaic attempts to reduce that burden.

When the Romans created a high-level structure for dealing with the temples, which (at least eventually) culminated with a High Priest of Alexandria and All Egypt (the archiereus), the pressure for a single contact point was reduced. The nome-level archiprōphetes could theoretically report to the archiereus and the archiereus to the prefect. Without the need for a single contact point to reduce the administrative burden, the high risk inherent in the position of lesonis could also be reduced. There was the possibility for high reward under the old lesonis system, as shown by the bid for the lesonis-ship mentioned earlier, but Scott’s work on “the moral economy of the peasant,” within which the local priests would have fit, showed that the rural farmer/taxpayer will choose almost always an option that offers smaller returns but reduces the taxpayer’s exposure to risk. An option that can give the taxpayer quite a bit more money but might also periodically bankrupt or starve the taxpayer is much less desirable. For the lesonis of the Ptolemaic period, the office could periodically destroy his financial security, endanger the financial health of his family, or result in more income in his pocket. In the context of the Ptolemaic period, in which someone had to fill the position, by royal fiat, the chance of income was apparently worth the risk, at least to some.1162 With the need for the single position removed,

1162 This also fits with our knowledge of the Ptolemaic period, in which tax-farming also reduced the contact points (for the Ptolemies) to one rather than many. For this, see Bingen (2007) 164-169.
the need to run those risks was also removed, and this occasioned a change in the nature of governance. The priests could spread the risks (and rewards) among a larger group, up to seventeen in one case.

The conversion of the single lesonis to a risk-spreading collegial structure brought the temple’s administrative structure more in line both with the general risk-averse nature of the villages in which the temples were located (and from which the temple staff were drawn) and with the temples themselves.\footnote{1163} As we have seen with the land and “business” holdings of the temples, they tended to prefer long-term leases, forgoing the chance for quick income to ensure long-term financial security. Scott, writing about Southeast Asia, notes that the “safety-first maxim” could find expression “in a wide array of actual choices, institutions, and values in peasant society.”\footnote{1164} It is logical, therefore, that the temple’s administrators, who were inextricably connected with the rural economy and the values associated with that, would have chafed at the risks associated with the lesonis model. The Roman creation of the archiereus, then, allowed them to move back to something they were more comfortable with. From what records survive, we can see that the lesones grew in number, often having more than ten at a time, and the presbyteroi, who may have been the representatives of the phylai, that is, the “rank and file” priests, were included. This risk-spreading would have been preferable to the temple staff, and probably was a benefit to the Roman administration, in that it may have discouraged cases of individual corruption.\footnote{1165}

Finally, we can ask how the creation of a Roman religious administrative structure, one

\footnote{1163} The multiple presbyteroi may have initially be unrelated: as representatives of the phylai, there were almost certain to be five, at least. The growth of the numbers of presbyteroi beyond that, however, might represent this shift to a collegial nature, or simply more veteran priests aspiring to the title.

\footnote{1164} Scott (1976) 29.

\footnote{1165} The example of P.Tebt. 2.315 may show that this was not entirely successful.
run by a Roman official nominally assigned high religious title, affected the temples on a non-economic level. As Given has shown, the feeling of colonization (or however one would call the experience of being Egyptian in Roman Egypt) can be hard to reconstruct from the documentary or archaeological record.\textsuperscript{1166} Certain aspects of the theater of religion in the Ptolemaic period—especially the requirement that the \textit{lesonis} had to bring his records to the new royal city of Alexandria—were removed, though new burdens were added, such as the need to incorporate the emperor, the nominal head of religion and figure of worship himself, who no longer dwelt in Egypt as the Ptolemaic kings had. Frankfurter has attempted to explore the changes in religious belief in the Roman period, though this has met with extremely strong criticism, and the question of the social or cultural effect of the new Roman administration of religion remains difficult to discern clearly, and will no doubt be a fruitful area for future study.\textsuperscript{1167}

In the following chapter, we will consider the effects of Rome on the economic infrastructure of the temples more broadly, but as it concerned the administrative structure of the temples, Roman control of the province caused a shift towards collegial administration at the upper levels. This was most likely not a planned operation by the Romans, but an unintended consequence of their creation of the religious administrative network and their tendency towards delegation. The “settlement” of a province after the Romans officially annexed it tended to create a new network of delegated authority, radiating outward from the provincial capital.\textsuperscript{1168} While much of the local administration would remain the same, changing over time but not as a direct

\textsuperscript{1166} Given (2004) \textit{passim}.

\textsuperscript{1167} Frankfurter (1998) \textit{passim}; Smith (2002) 245-247 provides a concise criticism, concluding that Frankfurter’s study does not merit “consideration as a work of serious scholarship” (247).

\textsuperscript{1168} For the “settlement” of Anatolia, see Given (2004) 49-68.
result of Roman reorganization, the temples show a clear, if unintentional, effect of the high-level creation of a Roman religious administrative hierarchy.\textsuperscript{1169}

\textsuperscript{1169} For the maintenance of local institutions in the Augustan period, see Capponi (2005) 25.
Chapter 8: Conclusions

Whatever happened to the temples of Egypt? To judge from their appearances in ancient literature, the temples exited the Ptolemaic period in good health, perhaps as strong as they had been since the New Kingdom. Within a few hundred years, the temples were abandoned, turned into army bases, sheep pens, and Christian churches. Our familiarity with the Chaosbeschreibung tradition accustoms us to treat tales of woe with a certain patient incredulity, but the demise of the temples in the later Roman period did occur and is clearly visible in the historical and archaeological record, if not always the literary. A close reading of P.Tebt. 2.302, especially in light of its generic context, removes the keystone of the “confiscation narrative.” We have, therefore, re-examined the evidence for temple land, other economic activities, and administrative structures of Egyptian temples, especially those of Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos. Having considered these topics separately, it remains for us to bring together those disparate threads, and to suggest something of a bigger picture. How did the temples of these two villages pay for themselves, and, having established this, what did their economic infrastructure suggest for their place in Romano-Egyptian society?

Primary Findings

The papyrologist, like any scholar, must take individual points of information and construct a narrative from them. In this case, having studied a range of papyri, containing information restricted in time and place, and having warned against the risks of taking these

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small pieces of information to speak to larger issues, we will nevertheless offer some general conclusions that we believe are applicable more broadly to the temples of Roman Egypt.

Perhaps the most striking finding is the *pervasiveness* of temples. The papyrological record is richer in some areas and poorer in others. In this case, our pictures of Soknopaiou Nesos and Tebtunis stand out against a somewhat less well attested background of the Fayum. The available evidence, however, shows that the temples could be involved in almost every aspect of daily life. If we assume that the economic infrastructures of Soknebtunis and Soknopaios were similar to those of the other gods of the Fayum, then the gods must have been present, as landlords, business owners, and patrons everywhere. We can take the example of the grain of Soknopaios as an example. As we have already seen, the land around Soknopaiou Nesos itself was rather poor, and in short supply. This forced the temple to look further afield, that is, to acquire land on the south shore of the Birket Qarun. This could (and probably did) cluster around particular nodes. One of these, Pisais, was an oversized farmstead that grew in the Roman period into something more of a settlement. The temple land in the area around Pisais produced raw agricultural goods, which were milled and pressed in the village. Pisais was located close to a lake port, allowing ships—perhaps the ships controlled by the temple—to haul goods to Soknopaiou Nesos. While no bills of lading survive, it is likely that goods produced on temple land and in temple mills were brought to the docks of Soknopaiou Nesos. From there, grain could be baked in temple bakeries or fermented in temple breweries, and the products sold in temple shops. The temples would not have sold beer in every village, nor would they have, say, milled grain everywhere, but they would have done one thing in some places, and the other in other places. There is no surviving evidence that the temples aimed at what we would term vertical integration, that is, control of the entire chain of production from raw materials to
finished product, but they did tend to accumulate a number of the links in the chain of production. We are not well informed as to how the temples acquired various pieces of agricultural industry, but some may have been acquired through donations/endowments. In any case, a temple as far removed from the rest of Egypt as that of Soknopaiou Nesos—and perhaps only those in the western oases were more isolated—controlled produce from of a relatively wide swath of the northern Fayum, and the links between the various areas would have been deepened as the farmers brought their produce to the mills at Pisais, as lake-going boatmen arrived in the ports, and as priests arrived at subsidiary shrines that were without full-time staff. All this is to say that the economic infrastructure of the temples cannot easily be separated from their social or religious role. The temples were active participants in the local economy, but they also could be a person’s landlord, grain supplier, employer, or beer supplier, in addition to serving as the home of the local deity. While the enclosure wall of the temple complex might physically tower over its surroundings, the htp-nṯr extended out into the town, the countryside, and even onto the waters of the Birket Qarun. When discussing the temple’s economic infrastructure, attention has largely been paid to the agricultural land, but a study of the other economic activities controlled by the temples has shown the value of those other activities, not only as income sources for the temple, but as large parts of the daily experience in the Roman Fayum. Were we to populate a village entirely with the businesses that we know were owned and leased out by temples, we would find it lacking for almost nothing. A resident of this hypothetical village would have to look elsewhere for banking and prostitution, two activities associated in the popular (and, frequently, scholarly) imagination with the temples, but which were not, as we have seen, part of the economic repertoire of the Egyptian temples. This is not to say that a temple would be responsible for or thoroughly involved with all of the economic activity in a village, but that
almost any type of activity *could* have been part of a temple’s economic portfolio.

The “trickle-down” effect of temple income could be felt in a number of ways. Temple ownership of various means of production—mills, bakeries, oil-presses, and so on—lowered economic barriers for local craftspeople. While they might make less money renting a bakery from the temple, rather than purchasing or equipping one of their own, it would have been much easier to go into business in the first place if the temple could provide a furnished (or, at least, *mostly* furnished) place of business in exchange for regular rents. In addition to this, the temple staff were members of the community, and we can expect that whatever income they made found its way back into the local economy. This would probably not have been a zero-sum affair, since the *syntaxis* of the priests meant that regular cash injections were made by the provincial government. Without accurate data, it is impossible to calculate their value in comparison to taxes paid, but this is probably a futile pursuit for another reason: everyone, no matter their affiliation, had to pay taxes, but not everyone received a regular stipend from the government. The priests, therefore, in receipt of their *syntaxis* payments, would presumably spend that, possibly on priestly necessities, many of which could be purchased from temple-owned (but most likely leased out) shops or producers. In addition to this, the temples probably provided almost the only source of large, externally funded public works projects. Any major expansions of the temples or their associated buildings (as we can see occurred in Soknopaiou Nesos during the Ptolemaic and Roman periods), which were often funded by the imperial government, would have provided a source of income and employment for locals, whether or not they served as priests.\footnote{While a large part of the population of Soknopaiou Nesos seems to have been priests, this would not have been the case in Tebtunis, but the needs for construction workers would have remained the same.} While the cities may have seen more regular public works, as well as military posts (though these could be located far from the Nile, as with those in the eastern deserts), the villages...
would be less likely to see this sort of large-scale investment if not through their temples. While not on the scale of, say, the Ptolemaic reconstruction of the temple at Edfu, the periodic work on the temples at Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos would have noticeably affected the local economy.

The role of temple “businesses” is one area that has previously been downplayed. Stead, in her attempt to summarize the “administration” of the temple, that is, “the likely flow of economic activity within a temple,” focused on land, government payments, and religious services, dwelling only briefly on temple-owned industries, and suggesting that they were unable to compete with private industry in the Roman period. Evans, who, like Stead, attempted a summary of the temples across the Greco-Roman period, claimed that “the industries of the Egyptian temples contributed to their revenue in a negative way,” that is, relieving the need to purchase goods from outside vendors (in the Ptolemaic period, under the system of royal monopolies). Of the Roman period, however, Evans says very little indeed. The publication of Demotic evidence since Evans wrote (1961) and our more specific focus on the first two centuries of the Roman period, have allowed us to see the much broader reach of the “temple industries.” While we cannot compute their total contribution to any particular temple, or even the fraction of temple revenue they provided, it is clear that the temples in the Roman period derived no small amount of income from sources other than land and the syntaxis, and that their role in these other areas gave them a much wider and deeper reach than was previously thought.

The range of industries, activities, land, and so on highlights the flexibility of temple income, a point that does admittedly make broad-based statements more difficult. The temple of

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1174 Evans (1961) 224.
Soknopaios in Soknopaiou Nesos is our best example of this flexibility, thanks to the combination of the temple’s position on the generally unproductive north shore of the Birket Qarun and the wealth of surviving (and published) evidence from the temple there. Nevertheless, if we widen our attention, we can see other examples: at least as late as the Persian period, the priests in Siwa exploited the rock salt that occurred in the area of the oasis, \(^{1175}\) while the vast necropolis complex on the West Bank near Thebes provided fertile ground for the mummy-related religious services. \(^{1176}\) When faced, in the late Ptolemaic period, by an event rendering its entire parcel of temple land unfit for cultivation, the temple of Petesouchos in Kerkeosiris adapted to those events by taking on crown land for a limited period, a step which is rarely attested in the papyri, possibly because a temple of such small size as that of Petesouchos is unlikely to leave behind much of a record, except in such extraordinary cases as with the Menches papers from Kerkeosiris. While the temple-owned fleets on the Nile died out long before the Roman period, replaced by private operators, the less trafficked waters of the Birket Qarun meant that Soknopaios could maintain a fleet there into the Roman period. Dionysias (Qasr Qarun) was on the Birket Qarun at the western end of the lake, and seems to have been a lake port. \(^{1177}\) It is possible, then, that the temple of Sobek at Dionysias also created a lake-going fleet in the same way as Soknopaios. That is to say: it seems reasonable to expect that broadly similar conditions—a location on the edge of a lake away from the Nile valley, for instance—might lead to some similar developments in their economic infrastructure. We should not call this “adaptability,” since this would imply that there was a central way in which a temple should act, or develop economically. There are the very broad strokes: they tended to own land, to

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\(^{1175}\) For which, see Ch. 6 and Arrian 3.4.3.  
\(^{1176}\) See, e.g., Pestman (1993).  
\(^{1177}\) Claudius Ptolemaeus IV.5.15
receive certain payments from the state, and probably to manage their estates, in whatever form they took, in a fairly risk-averse manner. Beyond that, temples tended to develop along their own tracks, influenced by a range of factors, some of which—landscape, size, etc.—might be predictable, but others—donations or gifts, natural disasters—were not. Without the confiscation narrative erasing temples’ estates, the prospects for regional—and even more local—variations in the economic infrastructure of the temples are much stronger, and should be taken into consideration when studying the temples of the Roman period, no matter in which part of Egypt they were located.

One point of critical importance to the temples of Roman Egypt is that the confiscations, which have been key to explanatory models for the past century, did not happen, or at least did not happen across Egypt. From the evidence available, it rather appears that any temple land under threat was probably caught up in local property disputes. This allows us to resolve the evidence for temple land still existing in the Roman period more satisfactorily: the evidence exists because temple land existed. It was not land that had been rented back to the temples by the state, but land that remained in the hands of the temples. They were therefore free to find tenants for their land, and, in many cases, the tenants themselves found sub-lessees to work the land. These contracts survive in greater number than the original leasing contracts between the temples and the first lessee, since those contracts were made on a long-term basis, while the sub-leasing contracts covered shorter amounts of time and were thus renewed more often. In addition, a given section of land could be sub-leased out in smaller allotments, generating an exponentially larger trail of paperwork compared to the original lease contract. Nevertheless, we do find evidence, as at Tebtunis, for the failure of those original leases and attempts to return
them to the temple in question.\textsuperscript{1178} It is worth repeating that the temples could lease out their land on a long-term basis because they remained the owners of that land. There is evidence that the Romans placed certain new requirements on the temples, though this probably also included the removal of others. Rather than being required to personally escort annual reports to Alexandria, temple administrators now had to send in long reports of the entire staff and property of the temple. These \textit{graphai} need not have been overly time-consuming, given what we know of temple record-keeping,\textsuperscript{1179} but not all temples were equally zealous in keeping their books up to date.\textsuperscript{1180} Additional requirements were placed on the enrollment of new priests, but these were probably done with the complicity of the priests, who also had an interest in preserving a (relatively) small group with hereditary privileges.

The economic reach of the temples could be felt in other ways, as well. While the confiscation narrative requires the Romans to seize temple land and then install some sort of administrative apparatus for leasing that land back to the temples or keeping it and paying a \textit{syntaxis} off of it—both options compel the Romans to maintain a lengthy register of all temple land in Egypt, even centuries after Petronius’ (supposed) confiscation—the Romans tended to minimize, not expand, their administrative burdens. This is clearly visible in the case of the temples when we consider tax collection. As we have already seen, the Romans made the temples partners (or, if one prefers, collaborators) in their restrictions on admission to the priestly ranks, by making all nominations contingent on the approval of the priests already serving. In the case of the land and other economic activities, the temples also reduced the administrative burden of the Romans by collecting taxes on the land and “businesses” they leased out to

\textsuperscript{1178} \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.309 and 310
\textsuperscript{1179} See, e.g., most documents from \textit{DDD} 2.
\textsuperscript{1180} \textit{P.Tebt.} 2.315.
others.\textsuperscript{1181} This probably extended even to the subsidiary shrines in the religious hierarchy. Whether the impetus for this arrangement came from the temples or the Roman authorities, the result was that the temples served as a sort of local tax collector. A baker, for instance, renting his shop from the temple, could pay the taxes directly to them, and would not need to deal with the Romans, at least for that tax. While this was perhaps a convenience for temple lessees, and most certainly was for the state, it also allowed the temples to insert themselves as a sort of intermediate step between the local population in the villages, and the Roman authorities, whose representatives might only be seen briefly, during periodic inspection tours. This perhaps let the temples moderate somewhat the appearance of collaboration, by instead casting themselves as a more powerful bulwark against the Romans as foreign rulers. The ability of the temples, then, to convert their economic advantage to social power highlights the necessity of studying the temples as economic entities: their reach and influence made them ideal partners for the Roman administration, and their position may have allowed them at the same time to use that partnership to cast themselves as mediators between the people of the village and a distant Roman government.

Historically, studies of the development of civilization focused on the ability of surplus to allow “a new urban population of specialized craftsmen, merchants, priests, officials, and clerks.”\textsuperscript{1182} While those models have been vigorously challenged,\textsuperscript{1183} our study of the economic activities of the temples has shown them very much not to have been simply a consumer—receiving goods and money and producing “civilization”—but to have been key to basic economic activities in the villages. In some cases, they were able to leverage their religious role

\textsuperscript{1181} For this, see Ch. 6.
\textsuperscript{1182} Childe, quoted in Halstead (1989) 68.
\textsuperscript{1183} See discussion at Halstead (1989) 68-70.
or political connections for economic good, but they could also use their size and reach to lower
the costs for others to enter the economy, so to speak, by leasing a workshop or taking on land.
Rather than a curiosity or a drain on local resources, the temples contributed in a meaningful way
to the economic activities taking place around them.

We have so far focused on how the temples’ economic activities allowed them a much
wider reach, and greater influence in daily life, than generally expected. If we turn now to the
actual economic practices of the temple, we can perhaps see some patterns emerging there as
well. First, and foremost, is the generally risk-averse nature of temple management in this period
(and in others). Given an opportunity to move away from the single *lesonis* system of the
Ptolemaic period, the priests eagerly adopted a collegial structure, with an apparently uncapped
number of *lesones*, and a seemingly expanded role in temple affairs for the representatives of the
individual *phylai* (the *presbyteroi*) and of the priestly body at large (the *prostates*). In addition,
the position of *prophetes*, at least at Tebtunis, seems to have served as a sort of risk-managing
device, in that bidders for the position could offer a fixed amount in exchange for a nominally
fixed (but almost certainly somewhat shifting) share of the net income of the temple. While this
might restrict the temple’s gain in a good year, it does follow quite closely with descriptions of
risk-averse strategies typical of institutionalized economic agents.\footnote{A point made strongly by Goldberg, as in Goldberg (2006) 82.} One major risk-limiting
strategy, however, was the continued use of long-term leases. A long-term lease limits the ability
of lessor to capitalize on increases in the value of the land (etc.) being leased out, but also shields
the lessor from temporary but devastating collapses in that value, as if a parcel of land were left
parched or flooded after a low or high inundation. This situation was faced in the late 2\textsuperscript{nd} century
BC by the temple of Petesouchos in Kerkeosiris, which, by dint of only controlling a very small
amount of land, was apparently left vulnerable to a sudden event, and was forced to serve as a
crown tenant for nearly a decade while its temple land was out of production.\textsuperscript{1185} The temples
seem to have pursued long-term leases on both land and other economic activities, such as
breweries or mills. While this is partly an argument from silence, the evidence of surrendered
leases strongly suggests the continued use of long-term leases. The long-term lease would be
nearly invisible in the documentary record,\textsuperscript{1186} while sub-leases made on that land over the
decades would be much more likely to appear. In addition, we have at least a hint that the
temples could, in case of economic difficulties, pursue strategies to survive the occasional bad
year (or years). A Demotic contract from the Ptolemaic period records a long-term lease of land,
nominally given in exchange for the lessee’s payment of back taxes owed on the land.\textsuperscript{1187} Should
the temple fail to turn over the land or otherwise break the terms of the lease, they were required
to pay the lessee 1500 deben. This either represents the temple using their land as an incentive
(or reward) for someone paying off their back taxes, or less straightforwardly, it could represent
a sort of loan, which was secured on the use of temple land until it was repaid.\textsuperscript{1188} In either case,
a third party offered a one-time payment, probably of 1500 deben, to make up for a temporary
lack of funds on the part of the temple. If they were unable to pay their taxes on the land, the
situation must have been quite serious. In many cases, this would have been a temporary
condition—a bad year or two, perhaps more than a few, but nevertheless, a temporary
interruption of more permanent prosperity—but in some cases this would have been a last
attempt to stave off failure. As we have seen, failure was not unheard of, and loomed especially

\textsuperscript{1185} For this, see Connor (2013).
\textsuperscript{1186} Though there is a direct reference in \textit{P.Harris. 1.138 descr.}, which, while incompletely published, does record
the presence of ἵππα γῆ rented on a hereditary basis (μεμισθ. εἰς τὰ πάτρια), that is, almost certainly on a long-term
lease. For more, see the discussion of this document in Ch. 5.
\textsuperscript{1187} \textit{P.Cairo dem. 2.30631}.
\textsuperscript{1188} For this, see discussion in Ch. 5.
strongly in the future of the smaller temples. In any case, the temples, while generally quite conservative and risk-averse in their economic practice, were able to use their advantage in having clear ownership of a significant swath of land, to overcome temporary shortages, as we can, for example, see in the situation discussed above, by trading leases on the land for a one-time cash infusion.

The prospect of temples needing third parties to pay off their tax debts, even in the Ptolemaic period, brings us to one additional point about the temples in the Roman period: their economic health was always a more tenuous thing than is generally thought. There is ample evidence for abandoned temples and shrines throughout Egypt in the Roman period. The end of some of these may have come about through military action. During the Great Theban Revolt in the Ptolemaic period, numerous temples in Upper Egypt were heavily damaged and rebuilt, often through the donations of soldiers. In many others, however, the temples seem to have perished slowly, from a host of ailments. We have argued, for instance, that the temple of Soknebtunis in Tebtunis faced a serious threat to its property caused by an inability to pay the taxes due on that land, a problem the temple seems to have faced more than once. A cadastral list from the Arsinoite nome in the mid-2nd century AD shows the effect of this decline: a large number of shrines and temples are no longer in use, buried in sand or simply abandoned. While the nature of our evidence tends not to reflect directly the slow death of the temples—the longue durée is rarely seen in the very specific papyrus documents—they were nevertheless fading, little by little, throughout the period under consideration in this dissertation. The main causes of the eventual death of the temples, and the contributing factors, cannot for the sake of

\[1189\] Dietze (2000) 80-84; Fischer-Bovet (2014) devotes a chapter (9) to the army and temple-building.
\[1190\] For this, see Ch. 3.
\[1191\] *P.Stras.* 8.707 (Arsinoite, ca. 149-150 AD); See also *P.Stras.* 7.685, which is part of the same larger cadastral list, and discusses temple land as well.
time and focus be discussed more fully in this project, and remain a topic to return to in the future.

Through a close examination of the evidence, we get a sense of the breadth of the economic infrastructure of a hypothetical temple in the Roman period. We can in addition see the dense network developed around the temple, a network which itself fit into the larger economic and social landscape of the villages, the *merides*, the nomes, and of Egypt and the empire. The evidence is not currently available to enable us to link our discussion to, for instance, a model produced from the perspective of social network analysis, but we might expect that social networks cut right across the somewhat artificial divisions of our model—“priests” and “village population,” for instance, could overlap quite a bit, especially in Soknopaiou Nesos.

To sum up, then, we can answer the question: what does all this mean? It means that we cannot assume ill will in Roman attitudes towards temples and towards their economic infrastructure. It means that the reach of the temples was greater and more pervasive, and that this reach was much extended through the parts of the temple estate other than land, that is, the “businesses.” It means that the confiscations of temple land that have formed a key part of the narrative(s) of Roman power in Egypt are unlikely to have occurred, and that Roman attitudes, far from blind hostility, seem to have been similar to those in other provinces: the Romans desired to integrate local institutions into their own administrative apparatus, and indeed supported local temples, as we also see in Asia Minor. The temples, which Frankfurter sees as being shattered by Roman confiscations, “doomed to follow the empire’s downward spiral,” funded “specifically upon local patronage and donations,” were instead a significant part of daily lives, even in the villages and smaller settlements of the Fayum, tied together as much by

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social and economic ties as by explicitly religious bonds. The Romans, confronted by the need to administer a vast array of temples, shrines, chapels, etc. throughout Egypt, chose to support and even collaborate with them, and the temples, whether the urban temples in nome capitals or the small village temples around the Fayum, without the burden of massive confiscations we have retrospectively lain on them with little clear evidence, remained a key presence in the social, cultural, political, religious, and, as we have seen, economic landscape of the Nile and the Fayum in the first two centuries of Roman rule.
Bibliography


Abbreviations:

AJA = American Journal of Archaeology  
AnalPap = Analecta Papyrologica  
ANRW = Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt  
APF= Archiv für Papyrysforchung und verwandte Gebiete  
BASP = Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists  
BIFAO = Bulletin de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale  
CdÉ = Chronique d’Égypte  
GGA = Göttingische Gelehrte Anzeigen  
GRBS = Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies  
JARCE = Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt  
JE = Journal of Egyptian Archaeology  
JHS = Journal of Hellenic Studies  
JJP = Journal of Juristic Papyrology  
JRS = Journal of Roman Studies  
KRI = Kitchen, Ramesside Inscriptions  
MBAH = Münstersche (now Marburger) Beiträge zur antiken Handelsgeschichte  
PCPS = Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society  
YCS = Yale Classical Studies  
ZPE = Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik


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