the temple of Montu at Armant, that he shot one while campaigning in Nubia. During the nineteenth dynasty, likely during the reign of Ramesses II, a live rhinoceros is depicted among Nubian booty carved on a pylon, also at Armant, and it is being restrained by a gang of men using ropes. It is surrounded by a series of inscriptions, which give its various measurements, including the length of the horn. Assyrian sources report that Takelot II of the twenty-second dynasty sent a diplomatic gift of a live rhinoceros to Shalmaneser III, the king of Assyria. An Ethiopian rhinoceros took part in the grand procession of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, held in Alexandria during the early 270s BCE.

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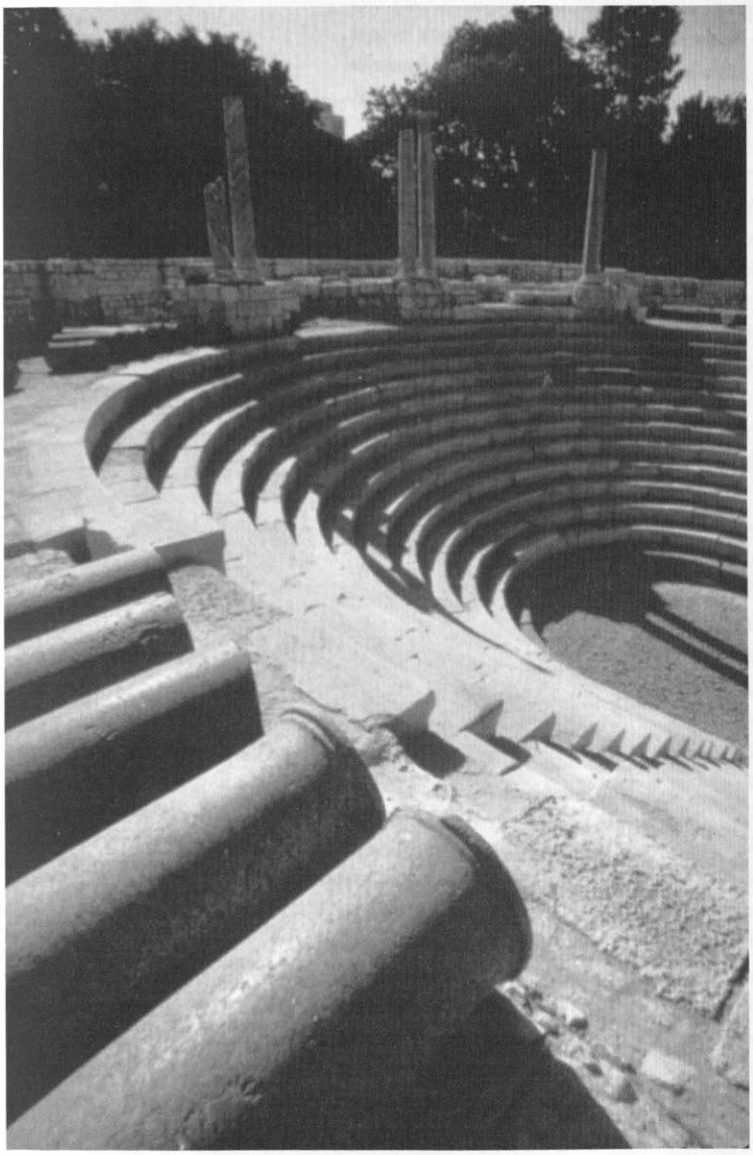
RIFEH. *See* Asyut.

ROMAN OCCUPATION. The occupation of Egypt by the Roman Empire began in 30 BCE. The Ptolemaic dynasty that had begun after the conquest by Alexander the Great of Macedon ended with the death of Cleopatra VII in 30 BCE, upon Octavian's arrival; Egypt then became a province of the Roman Empire administered by prefects, the equestrian governors appointed by the emperor. With only brief intermissions, Egypt was ruled by a Roman or Byzantine government until its loss to the Arabs spreading Islam in 641 CE. [*This article will treat the period up to 395 CE; the Late Antique period in Egypt, from 395 to 641 CE, usually referred to as Coptic, will be discussed in the article on Copts.*]

Chronology. The Roman occupation marked an important change in Egypt's fortunes; although it remained under foreign rule, it was no longer an independent country, as it had been under the Greeks. The chronological framework for Roman Egypt is thus based on Roman dynastic history, although little of that history involved Egypt directly and only a few of the emperors took a direct interest in the province. In 395 CE, the effective separation of Rome's Eastern and Western Empires began, with Egypt following the fortunes of the Eastern Empire ruled from Constantinople. The year 395 CE is only one of the points sometimes used in ending the period, and corresponds to no particular event in Egypt itself.

Octavian, given the title Augustus, ruled the Roman Empire until his death in 14 CE. His successors, related in various ways, formed the Julio-Claudian dynasty, which ended in 68 with the death of Nero. The Flavians (r. 69–96) disappeared with the death of Domitian; with Nerva (r. 96–98) began almost a century of rule by a sequence of emperors who, in the main, adopted their successors. Their reigns were viewed in antiquity, as by the nineteenth-century British historian Edward Gibbon, as the high point of the empire's history. The last of those emperors, the less-praised Commodus, was killed in 192, and after a time of turmoil the Severan dynasty (r. 193–235) took power, which was succeeded by a turbulent period with numerous rulers and pretenders, ending with the recovery of central control by Diocletian (r. 284–305) and his associates and successors. The most successful of these, Constantine, gained control of Egypt by defeating Licinius in 324; his son Constantius died in 361 and, after the dramatic interlude of Julian "the apostate," the house of Valentinian ruled to the end of the period discussed here.

Political History. By the standards of most of the Roman Empire, Egypt had an uneventful history—usually at peace, rarely on the front lines, and only occasionally visited by an emperor. The southern frontier, with Nubia and the Red Sea, had some military unrest under the first few Augustan governors but was then quiet until the mid-third century, when trouble with the Blemmyes and other tribes produced a flurry of activity; Diocletian, however, obtained peace with subsidies. Egypt itself was for the first three centuries of Roman rule undisturbed by invasion, but there was episodic violence in the Mediterranean seaport of Alexandria and an occasional revolt. Most important, the increasing conflict in Alexandria between the large Jewish population and their gentile neighbors produced mob violence in the years 38, 41, and 66 CE, and finally the massive Egyptian and Cyrenaean rebellion of 115–117 that ended in large-scale slaughter of the Jewish population, but only after the Romans brought in additional forces. For imperial campaigns, the garrison of Egypt, in turn, contributed at various points to concentrations of troops in Judaea, Arabia, and points east. Another internal revolt, in which again imperial military forces suffered temporary defeat, occurred in regnal year c.171/2, that of the so-called Boukoloi, in the Nile Delta—in the wake of a severe plague under Marcus Aurelius; the dam-



ROMAN OCCUPATION. *Roman theater at Alexandria.* (Courtesy David P. Silverman)

age and depopulation were significant. In 215, Alexandria suffered severely from Caracalla's soldiers. In 269, the Palmyrene queen Zenobia took Egypt and, in 270, Alexandria, which were then recovered by Aurelian (r. 270–275), but only after substantial damage. A revolt by L. Domitius Domitianus in regnal year 296/7 led to an eight-month siege of Alexandria by Diocletian, ultimately successful for him but disastrous for the city. After this, the major military actions of the fourth century were mainly played out in other parts of the empire. Alexandrian political life remained volatile, and the city became much diminished in extent and condition from what it had been in the second century.

Despite these and lesser troubles, Roman Egypt was usually left in peace under its governing prefects. After taking over the Greek empire, the Romans had inherited a land of villages and towns in Egypt, with few self-governing cities. This resulted from the policy of the Ptolemaic kings, who had founded only one such city, Ptolemais in Upper Egypt, which was added to the city of Naukratis and to Alexander the Great's creation, Alexandria. The Romans also founded just one, Antinoöpolis, the creation of Hadrian in 130 CE, in memory of his lover Antinous, who drowned in the Nile. The Romans, however, set about the development of local ruling elites in the chief towns of the nomes (provinces) and Septimius Severus, in 201 CE, granted those local elites their own governing councils. The third century saw enormous physical, cultural, and institutional development in those cities, which came to resemble other cities of the Greek

East much more closely than before. (Hardly anything is known of their political histories.)

The Roman emperors visited Egypt only occasionally, apart from the interventions already mentioned. Vespasian had been acclaimed there in 69 CE, by the troops of the prefect Tiberius Iulius Alexander; Vespasian's son, Titus, had also passed through the province. After suppressing the revolt of the Boukoloi, Avidius Cassius had been proclaimed emperor in 175 at Syene but was soon killed; Marcus Aurelius then visited Egypt in 176 and pardoned the Alexandrians for their support of Avidius Cassius. A long visit by Septimius Severus led to considerable physical and institutional benefits, but the Alexandrians' hostility to his son, Caracalla, ferociously reciprocated, led to the massacre of 215 CE and extensive damage to Alexandria.

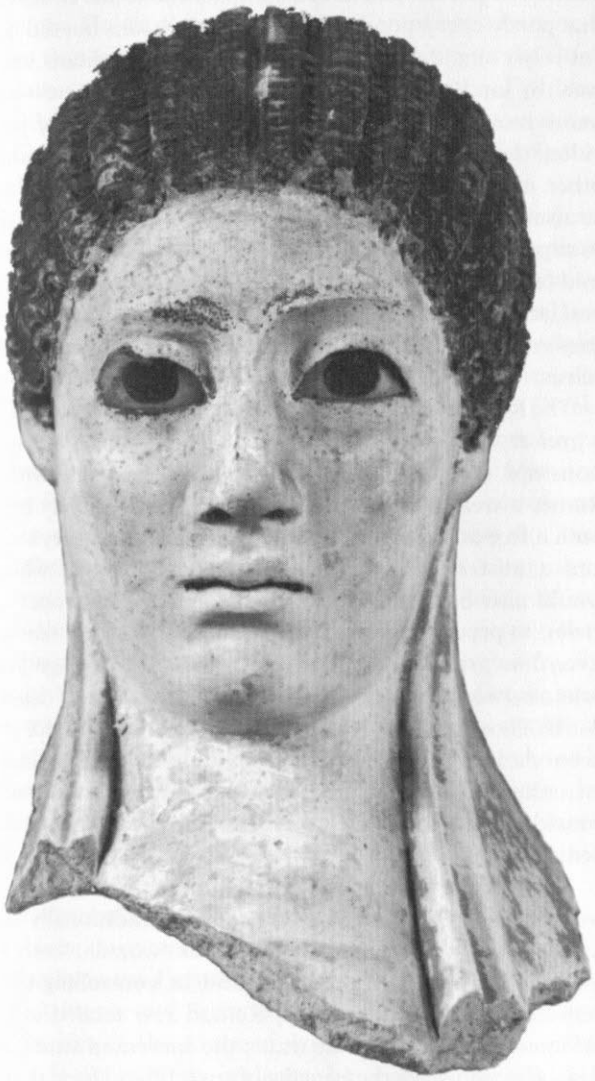
Military Administration. In the absence of serious outside military threats, the Roman army in Egypt was focused largely on internal security, achieved with one major troop concentration at Nikopolis, outside Alexandria, and many small detachments spread throughout the length of the valley and along the roads of the Eastern Desert that led to quarries, mines, and ports. Total forces were modest. The Roman legions had been diminished from three under Augustus to two under Tiberius, then to one after Hadrian. The auxiliary forces occasionally fluctuated in number but seem usually to have included ten to thirteen units, about a third of which were cavalry. The total garrison has been estimated from as much as twenty-one thousand early in the reign of Augustus to as little as twelve thousand in most of the third century.

From the Ptolemies, the Romans inherited a complex system of centrally directed administration that had been controlled from Alexandria, although at least in the relatively remote districts the late Ptolemaic governors sometimes seemed like powerful theocratic barons, combining priesthoods with royal functions. Much of this structure the Romans retained; the country's division into the districts called nomes remained basic, with governors still called *strategoi* in charge of them. The nomes were divided into toparchies, each with a number of villages (averaging perhaps eight to fifteen villages per toparchy), with officials at village and toparchy level reported to the *strategos*. The character of the system was drastically overhauled, however. The *strategoi* came from outside the nomes of appointment, where they served for only a few years; at first they were Alexandrians, then from the early second century CE, increasingly from the elites of the nome capitals. The central administration in Alexandria, led by equestrians, also saw regular turnover and was part of a career track rather than a permanent assignment. Despite their presence, Alexandria was allowed a significant measure of self-administration.

In the lower ranks of the administration, too, major changes were made by the Romans, who gradually replaced career professionals with short-term (often one-year) appointments of private citizens, serving in rotation. Such uncompensated service eventually became obligatory (those appointments are called "liturgies"), although the pace at which compulsion was introduced has not yet become clear. The system seems to have been essentially complete by the time of Hadrian. The more responsible positions, particularly in tax collection, were given to men of property, who could be held liable for shortfalls. Required labor in the humble tasks, such as keeping irrigation channels clear, was distributed more broadly. The villagers had to supply most of their own officials, while nome-level appointees came from the upper strata of the nome capitals, or *metropoleis*, and only the *metropoleis* were encouraged to develop a political identity.

Under the Romans, the development of an urban upper class was not a quick process, but it had clearly begun by the time of Augustus and proceeded deliberately. The Romans left most land controlled by private individuals under grants from the Ptolemaic kings in the hands of the possessors and thus allowed much land to pass into full private ownership—which had not been a significant practice under the kings. Those who could trace their ancestry to Greek settlers, to the satisfaction of the new Roman government, became part of a privileged elite, who paid lower taxes and were given some role in the running of their cities, although not yet full self-government. That step came with Septimius Severus and opened an era of urban growth and activity, as competitive elites constructed buildings and held festivals and games similar to those of their counterparts elsewhere in the Eastern Empire. With their privileges went ever-increasing responsibility for local administration, and the new city councils of the third century became the main administrative organs of the nomes.

With the political changes, Egypt came to resemble fully other Roman provinces in administrative structure. The changes introduced by Diocletian and his successors were equally reflected in Egypt, including the subdivision of provinces into smaller units, the separation of civil and military authority, and the imposition on the cities of centrally appointed officials, such as the "curator" (*logistes*), the "exactor" (*ekdikos*), and the "defensor" (*syndikos*). Such officials were, however, sometimes drawn from the local elites rather than being outsiders, like the *strategoi* (who slowly disappeared in favor of the new exactor in the fourth century). The new regional provinces, which changed boundaries and names on occasion, brought paid imperial bureaucrats closer to the localities, but the numbers of such officials were still small by any modern standard.



ROMAN OCCUPATION. *Funerary mask of a woman's head.* The mask, made of painted plaster, with inlaid glass eyes, is from Balansura. It dates from the Roman period, second century CE. (University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia. Neg. # S8–31437)

Economy. Only a tiny fraction of Egypt is cultivable, the rest being mainly desert. In ancient times, however, the Nile Valley and Delta had been so productive that their approximately 23,000-square-kilometer cultivated area was the richest agricultural area of the Mediterranean world, regularly shipping wheat surpluses to Rome and later to Constantinople. Part of this grain was collected by the government in the land tax, but part was private surplus sold on the open market, which came to Rome through trade. By the Roman period, the dominance of bread wheat was complete over the emmer wheat common in Egypt before the arrival of the Ptolemies. A wide array of other field crops was grown, including barley, many legumes, oil-bearing seed plants, and vast quantities of fodder crops that were fed as clover or dry as hay (the gasoline of ancient Egypt, as it has been called, the staple food of donkeys). Vineyards and orchards increased in quantity in the Ptolemaic period but even more so under Roman rule; land not inundated annually by the Nile was needed for the fruit crops, which had to be irrigated by raising water to their levels. The Faiyum and the western oases succeeded in cultivating vines and olives, the quality of which elsewhere in Egypt was mediocre. [*See* Trade and Markets.]

Egypt's agricultural wealth undoubtedly employed and supported most of its population in Roman times. The production of crops was carried out through a wide variety of structures, including much direct cultivation by smallholders, extensive leasing to peasants of land owned by the government and by large landowners, and some farming by salaried laborers or contractors of capital-intensive enterprises such as vineyards. The government's role was limited mainly to taxation and the shipping of grain collected as tax, along with the provisioning of the army through requisitions and purchases. As the pre-Roman cities (Alexandria and Memphis, particularly) were joined by the *metropoleis* that grew into full-fledged cities, however, they created larger populations less directly tied to farming. There were extensive craft-based industries in some cities, particularly in the area of textiles; linen was an Egyptian specialty in this period, as later. The cities also developed a considerable services sector. As the urban population in the Roman period, including that at Alexandria, probably amounted to somewhere between a sixth and a quarter of the population, its consumption needs both directed rural production and stimulated urban specialization.

Rome's system of taxation also had large effects on Egypt's production. The bulk of the taxes was collected in wheat, levied at low fixed rates on private land but at higher, more variable rates on public (government-owned) land. There were cash taxes due on nonarable crops, and many cash taxes due that were unrelated to land, including a poll tax and the several capitation taxes usually collected with it. Those amounted altogether to a sizable part of a family's income, but they were charged only on adult males (ages fourteen to sixty-two). There were also monthly levies on all manner of trades and crafts. There was not, however, any general income tax, in the modern sense. These cash-taxes lost their importance in the course of the third century CE, and most of them disappeared around the last quarter of that century, if not earlier; whether that development was related to the substantial depreciation in the currency of the time is as yet

unclear. Some levies in gold and silver bullion were introduced in the fourth century, almost always charged on land, like the wheat taxes, and taxation on the trades and crafts survived in an altered form. Broad capitation taxes disappear from our evidence in the late empire. The number of attested taxes is very large, but many of them seem to have had limited impact or short duration. The taxation system after Diocletian was generally simpler than in earlier centuries and, except in times of crisis, had fairly low rates, considering Egypt's productivity.

Only the lack of evidence from Alexandria limits our sense of Egypt as a trading center in the Roman period. It was, however, the key link in the trade to India, through caravan routes across the desert to the Red Sea ports of Myos Hormos and Berenike. Yet Alexandria and Pelusium played much larger roles, exporting Egypt's agricultural produce, its distinctive manufactures like papyrus and linen, and no doubt many items for which little evidence survived. Although tax grain dominated the Roman-era documentary record, the export of private surpluses was at least as important. [*See* Taxation.]

Society. Ptolemaic Egypt had included Greco-Macedonian military settlers, civilians of Greek descent, official Greeks of Egyptian or mixed descent, and Egyptians essentially untouched by the presence of foreigners. Official ethnicity had thus moved from representing the national origin of the head of the household to being a heritable status, and from that to being an acquirable status. Inheriting a situation of this complexity, the Romans took an entirely different approach, one rooted in their own categories of legal status. Greeks and Egyptians were no longer opposites; instead, Hellenes were to be a subcategory of Egyptians.

In the Roman class structure of Egypt there were several strata. The top stratum included the holders of Roman citizenship. The second stratum included the citizens of the three, later four, Greek cities of Egypt: non-Romans, but citizens. Of those cities, Alexandria occupied a somewhat higher niche than Ptolemais, Naukratis, or Antinoöpolis, but the majority of the citizens of all four were recognizably Greeks by any definition. The Romans did not call those people Hellenes; however; they were identified collectively as "citizens," *astoi* in Greek. The third stratum included Egyptians, peregrine noncitizens in Roman terms, but all the inhabitants of the country except for the two citizen groups already mentioned. Within the Egyptian stratum, the Romans distinguished a privileged group of residents of the *metropoleis* (the chief towns of the nomes), who were variously called *metropolitai* or *Hellenes*. The gulf between Alexandrians and Egyptians was considerable, and the Romans sought by legislation to keep it so, penalizing intermarriage.

The growth of private landownership contributed, in time, to the development of a complex economic structure that partly corresponded to the legal divisions but did not entirely coincide with them. Not all metropolitans were wealthy landowners—indeed, only a minority were—but many more had medium-sized holdings, capable of providing them with a comfortable income or supplementing other means. In the villages, there was a sizable middle stratum of independent landowners with enough property to support themselves adequately and bear the burdens of mid-level local self-administration; the small group that had larger holdings furnished the village with its elite, and they rotated the top administrative *liturgies* among themselves.

The Roman transformation of Egyptian society brought a greater measure of hierarchy, and particularly of relationships of patronage, than had the Ptolemies. Under Rome, a wealthy urban landowner would typically have both a free and slave urban staff, probably a country staff, and a host of peasant tenant farmers, many of whom would also be dependent on him for loans of money or grain, to provide working capital for the growing season. Even less grand personages, like substantial village proprietors, would through leasing and credit attract dependents. Those ties did not run only in one direction, for the urban landowners depended on reliable tenants to obtain an income from their properties and, sometimes, made considerable concessions to keep them. [*See* Social Stratification.]

The effects on women of the Roman transformation were diverse. Egyptian women had been traditionally and legally more independent than Greek women, both in owning and managing property and in controlling their personal lives. On the whole, Roman law tended to reinforce only some of these traits; the increased stratification of society gave the benefits of such liberal legal provisions mainly to women of the upper class, where most property owned by them was concentrated. The growth of slavery under the Romans, particularly in the cities, affected women more than men, since perhaps two-thirds of slaves were female. Unwanted female babies tended to be abandoned, and many of them were salvaged to fill the ranks of the slaves. In a society where average life expectancy was low (less than twenty-five years), women fared even less well than men, surviving infancy in smaller numbers and dying younger. [*See* Women.]

Languages and Literature. Under Rome, the most widely spoken language of Egypt remained Egyptian, as it would until well after the Arab conquest of the seventh century. Its spoken form is poorly known, because all the forms in which it was written were, to some degree, deliberate creations for particular purposes. The Romans had little use for Demotic, the cursive form that prevailed from the Saite period onward, and after a century of Ro-

man rule it dwindled to remnant status. Coptic, which used the Greek alphabet plus supplementary characters from Demotic, appeared in mature form only in the third century CE, after many experiments with writing Egyptian in Greek characters. The regional phonological variations of Coptic indicate a complex array of dialects. [*See* Coptic *and* Demotic.]

Unlike the Ptolemies, who—although Greek speakers themselves—allowed Egyptian a significant role in their administration, the Romans operated the province almost entirely in Greek. The Romans' own language, Latin, had only a limited place in the military, in the upper administration, and in the legal life of Roman citizens, who used it for some documents, like wills. Compared to Greek, Latin was a minor presence, and Greek texts from Egypt outnumber Latin texts by about fifty to one. After the early first century CE, virtually all contracts, correspondence, accounts, reports, petitions, court documents, and the like were written in Greek, no matter what languages the parties may have spoken. An inference of bilingualism from the documents is debatable, but it seems certain that in the cities both Greek and Egyptian were commonly used; the village elites could certainly use Greek, and many of their poorer neighbors undoubtedly spoke at least a little of the language of power. The basic knowledge of written Greek, traditionally beginning with the letter shapes, was taught in many of the villages; more advanced education, in most cases, required going to the larger centers.

Traditional Egyptian literature was preserved in Demotic at least through the second century CE in some temples, especially in the Faiyum. Substantial portions of libraries from Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos have survived, giving an idea of the range of works that were still copied. There is virtually no evidence, however, to suggest that there was a circulation of those works outside the priestly milieu. By contrast, several thousand papyri with works of Greek literature have been found in a wide variety of places, although the cities were the major sources; Oxyrhynchus, in particular, has yielded a rich array of literary papyri, of both the staples of Greek literature (known to us from manuscripts copied by medieval monks) and of works that did not survive in that way. The great bulk of those papyri were of a relatively small group of popular authors prominent in Greek education, above all Homer; his *Iliad* dominated the scene, although his *Odyssey* was not uncommon. Menander, none of whose plays had come to us from the Middle Ages, was also extremely popular, and his work has been recovered from the papyri. Along with the works common in the schools and widely read, small numbers of the texts of many more authors have become known from the papyri. A limited circle of the erudite acquired, read, and passed around those texts, sometimes annotating them. Their culture was uncompromisingly Hellenic and hardly reflective of the Egyptian setting. Egypt also produced many learned writers in the Roman period. Perhaps most emblematic was Athenaeus of Naukratis, whose *Deipnosophistai* contained a treasury of Greek learning but has little about Egypt. [*See* Demotic Literature.]

Physical Environment and the Arts. Under the Romans, the juxtaposition and complex intertwining of Greek, Roman, and Egyptian elements—identifiable in domains as diverse as language and bureaucracy—had their counterparts in the arts, the architecture, and the urban organization of space. Except for Egyptian temples, the public buildings of the cities were largely Greek in character, and they were connected by a skeleton of colonnaded streets, arches, and *tetrastyla* that were characteristic of Roman cities everywhere. The participation of the cities in the metropolitan culture of the empire was thus visible on the surface. The domestic and commercial quarters of most of the cities—which are still poorly known—were more reminiscent of Egyptian villages, although with a higher density. Alexandria, as one might expect, was less Egyptian in this respect than the nome capitals.

Egyptian temples continued to be built and decorated in traditional style during the first two centuries of Roman rule, just as they had been throughout the Ptolemaic period. The priests, who controlled the architectural and decorative programs, continued to innovate in their expressions of the liturgy and theology of the old cults, but to the eyes of most viewers these temples can hardly be distinguished from those of the New Kingdom; and few have been able to make any sense out of the hieroglyphic inscriptions of the Roman era. The pace of such construction and decoration, however, dropped severely after the mid-second century CE, and little new work was done after the early third century.

In painting and sculpture the situation is yet more complex. As long as Egyptian religion was a vital force, many arts connected with it continued to be produced in traditional style—not only the relief sculpture on temples but also the decoration of mummies and coffins, for example, retained their Egyptian forms. At the same time, many works of art in standard metropolitan forms, particularly in sculpture, were produced by artists trained in Greco-Roman traditions.

The interaction of the two traditions and the form it took has been sharply debated in recent years, with one school of thought seeing substantial Greek influence on Egyptian art, other scholars seeing hardly any at all. [*A corresponding controversy about Coptic art is discussed in the article on Copts.*] Perhaps both traditions borrowed motifs from each other as they found it desirable. The so-called Faiyum portraits, for example, are

ROMAN OCCUPATION. *Late Roman basilica at Hermopolis.* (Courtesy Donald B. Redford)

largely Greek in their naturalistic character and metropolitan imperial in their hairstyles, clothing, and jewelry, yet they were inserted after death into mummies prepared and decorated in purely Egyptian style. The patrons who commissioned them were certainly predominantly Greek-speaking people of means, but at the same time they saw themselves as Greeks of Egypt. The statue of Horus dressed as a Roman soldier (now in the British Museum) represents, by contrast, the use of Egyptian material in an essentially Roman context. Certainly the classes who could commission art patronized many genres that drew from both the Greek and the Egyptian traditions.

Religion. The decline of the temples under the Romans has already been mentioned, but its sources are not well documented. Both a decline in government support and a withdrawal of interest on the part of the local elites must have played a part. Similar declines, although not all on quite the same schedule, were found in other pointers to the role of traditional religion, such as mentions of festivals and occurrences of names formed on the traditional gods, both Egyptian and Greek; in part, the process may reflect the growth of popular cults, less grounded in the major temples than were the cults of the major figures of the pantheon. The veneration of Shaï, as a god of (good) fortune, is an example. Except in names and in the minor arts, these cults have left less tangible evidence of their presence than did the worship of the old gods. Despite this decline, Egyptian cults remained vital presences through the first 250 years of Roman rule; yet the same may not be true of the cults imported by the Greek settlers under the Ptolemies. For example, syncretistic identification of deities makes it difficult to know whether a cult of Apollo represents that god or an Egyptian equivalent, such as Horus. At the same time, however, Roman Capitoline cults made at least some impression in the cities; and Egyptian cults—especially of Isis, Osiris, Sarapis, Harpokrates, and Anubis—acquired great popularity in many parts of the Roman world outside Egypt, during the same period that their decline in Egypt was beginning.

In the first 150 years of Roman rule, the Jewish population played a large role in Egypt, not only in Alexandria but in the countryside, right up the Nile Valley. What is known of the religious side of this presence, however, comes mainly from Alexandria. The effective genocide with which the Romans quelled the rebellion of the Jews in their own homelands during the emperor Trajan's reign (r. 98–117 CE) wiped Judaism out as a significant force in Egypt for some time to come; only in the second half of the third century does it again make any showing, and no

doubt it took slow immigration over centuries to rebuild the Egyptian Jewish community that we learn about from the Cairo Geniza documents that date to after the Arab conquest.

The early history of Christianity in Egypt is poorly known; it has been surmised that it was closely linked to the Jewish community, thereby suffering from that community's destruction. Only in the third century did an organized Christian church become visible, and yet by that century's end there was a well-developed episcopal organization throughout the province of Egypt. The explosive growth of the fourth-century church was probably built on foundations now hard to discern from the limited evidence for the period before Constantine. The degree to which Christianity in this period represented either a unitary phenomenon or a cluster of different groups has been much debated; Platonic thought in various forms played an important and distinctive role throughout the Alexandrian theological tradition, but the relationship of the so-called Gnostic texts to other lines of development remains much debated. [*For more discussion of theological controversies, see* Copts.] Also in the third century, Manichaeism came into Egypt, spreading considerably in the fourth; it existed for a time in an uneasy relationship with the Christian church and even considered itself part of that church.

Sources. Information from ancient authors about Roman Egypt is vital in some respects but limited in quantity; Strabo provided an extremely valuable account from the Augustan period, but there was no later equivalent. Philo was an important source for data on Jewish society and philosophy in first-century CE Alexandria. There has been no systematic study of the numerous scholars and writers in Roman Egypt. Alexandria was a major center of Christianity from the third century onward, and a large volume of Christian literature there illuminated many aspects of Egypt; saints' lives and monastic literature, such as the *Lives of the Desert Fathers,* have been of particular value for social history.

The tens of thousands of documentary papyri and ostraka (all potsherds in this period) have been the largest source of information on most of the subjects treated in this article. Many texts are still unpublished and many of those published have been inadequately studied. Most are in Greek, a few in Latin; from the early Roman period, a number of Demotic Egyptian texts have survived (many unpublished), and from the fourth century onward the volume of Coptic documents, especially letters, has been substantial. Particularly valuable are the archives and dossiers of related texts, which range in size from a handful to many hundreds. Although the typicality of such archives may be difficult to assess, they give a depth of information about particular families, offices, or places that scattered texts cannot offer. By contrast, most of Egypt's cities have produced relatively few surviving inscriptions on stone, compared to the numerous and informative inscriptions known from the cities of Asia Minor for the same period. Even gravestones are comparatively few. It is unclear how much this situation results from the hazards of survival.

Archaeology has contributed less to the knowledge of Roman Egypt than expected, but excavations in recent years have given a new impetus to the field, and large numbers of objects await study. Roman city sites are poorly preserved and have received little systematic attention, although excavations in Hermopolis, Antinoöpolis, and Alexandria have been informative. Karanis is the best-known village excavation, but several other Faiyum villages have had recent digging (e.g., Tebtunis, Narmouthis, Bacchias), and Kellis (in the Dakhleh Oasis) is proving productive. In the Eastern Desert, excavations at the Mons Claudianus quarry camp and associated sites have also been rewarding. Habitation sites located in Egypt's cultivated area have generally been badly preserved, even lost to shifts in the course of the Nile over the millennia; and Alexandria's remains have been buried under deep deposits from subsequent ages. These factors account for the dominance of desert sites in the archaeology of Egypt.

[*See also* Alexandria; Hermopolis; *and* Ptolemaic Period.]

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ROPEMAKING. *See* Basketry, Matting, and Cordage.

ROSETTA STONE. The Rosetta Stone is named from its find-place, a village in the western Egyptian Nile Delta, known locally as el-Rashid but Europeanized as Rosetta. The village is situated a few kilometers from the sea on the Bolbitine (Rosetta) branch of the Nile. Tradition recounts that the stone was discovered in mid-July 1799, built into an old wall being demolished for an extension to Fort Julien. It had not originated from Rosetta but, like other locally used pharaonic blocks, had been brought from some nearby ancient site, probably Naucratis. The demolition detail and its officer, a lieutenant of engineers named Pierre Bouchard, were members of Napoleon's expedition to Egypt.

By mid-August, the stone was in Cairo, the center of interest for the scholars whom Napoleon had brought with him. In spring of 1801, when Cairo was threatened by British Army successes, the stone was taken for safety to Alexandria, but its surrender was compelled by article XVI of the Capitulation of Alexandria at the end of August 1801. It reached England on HMS *L'Égyptienne* in February 1802 and was deposited with the Royal Society of Antiquaries in London; copies of its texts were then dispatched to centers of scholarship throughout Europe. Late in 1802, it was removed to the British Museum and immediately exhibited as registered Egyptian Antiquity 24.

The Rosetta Stone is an inscribed slab of granitoid stone still measuring 114 centimeters (3 feet, 9 inches) in height, 72 centimeters (2 feet, 4.5 inches) in width, and 28 centimeters (11 inches) in thickness; it weighs about 762 kilograms (0.75 ton). It lacks a large part of the upper left corner, a narrow section of the upper right edge and the lower right corner. Originally, it would have had a rounded top containing the winged sun disk and a scene of the king before various deities.

The Rosetta Stone is important because its inscription is bilingual. It is written in three scripts (hieroglyphs, De-

ROSETTA STONE. *Drawing of the hieroglyphic portion of the Rosetta Stone.*