



Ancient Egyptian Slavery

Ella Karev 

“אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ, אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִיךָ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים.”

I am the Lord your God, who has delivered you from the land of Egypt, the house of slaves.

Exodus 20:2

INTRODUCTION

Slavery in Ancient Egypt still exerts a powerful hold over imaginations today. Based on the Exodus narrative, the view of Egypt is often that of a “house of slaves,” a society founded on slave labor. And yet, Egyptian documentation reveals little about slaves and slavery, instead providing us with evidence of marginalized groups, prisoners of war, and ambiguous terminology that blurs the line between servant and slave.

The term “Ancient Egypt” suggests a static construction, but this picture is not entirely accurate. Over its three millennia of history, Egyptian society underwent significant changes: dynasties rose and fell, the kingdom was broken apart and reunified, foreign rulers dominated the landscape, and the fabric of society changed dramatically, including the nature of forced labor and

E. Karev (✉)

Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, University of Chicago,
Chicago, IL, USA

e-mail: ellak@uchicago.edu

slavery. And yet, there is some degree of ideological continuity, enforced by the Egyptians themselves. The idea of an enduring Egypt was important to Egyptian people, especially to the ruling elite; this is why, for example, Egyptian art appears to change little over time.¹ When foreign kings began to rule Egypt, this ideological and artistic continuity was used as a method of legitimization for their rule.

This chapter provides an overview of Egyptian slavery and bound labor in its varying forms throughout Egyptian history, following Marcel van der Linden's analysis of coerced labor as dissected into methods of entry, forms of extraction, and exit from slave status.² Each of these sections proceeds through the major phases of Egyptian history:³ the Old Kingdom (c. 2686–2160 BCE), the Middle Kingdom (c. 2055–1650 BCE), the New Kingdom (c. 1550–1069 BCE), the Saite and Persian Periods (664–332 BCE), and the Ptolemaic Period (332 BCE–30 BCE). The Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms are separated by so-called “Intermediate Periods” of unrest and division: the First Intermediate Period (c. 2160–2055 BCE), Second Intermediate Period (c. 1650–1550 BCE), and Third Intermediate Period (1069–664 BCE).

The broad nature of this overview comes with two caveats: first, the scope of such a work means that the methods of coerced labor and slavery in each period are only briefly described to provide a useful guide, though each historical period certainly warrants a full-length work of its own.⁴ The second caveat is related to the first; the concision of this chapter suggests continuity. However, it cannot be stressed enough that each period was socially and economically distinct from the others. This chapter serves as introduction to, and synopsis of, certain aspects of slavery and compulsory labor that existed throughout this broad timespan. However, this work makes no pretence to be comprehensive, and an updated study on Egyptian enslavement remains a *desideratum*.

There are two overarching considerations which remain the same throughout Egyptian history and are important to note. The first relates to our sources of information: unlike Mesopotamia, for most of Egyptian history there is no preserved codification of laws;⁵ all observations about slavery must therefore be gleaned from documentary and literary texts. Especially for the former, quantity and quality vary considerably over time. Additionally, documentary texts are focused on single cases or events, and so any conclusions drawn from them—unless these events are repeated—need to be taken in stride.

Second, and particularly relevant to slavery studies, is the fact that until the Ptolemaic period, there is virtually no evidence for *large-scale* Egyptian slavery,⁶ agricultural or otherwise. Slavery was small-scale and mostly involved domestic labor, though other kinds of labor are attested; this was not the industrial agricultural slavery evidenced in the American South or Republican Rome. Even in the few forms of large-scale coerced labor attested in Egypt, it can be difficult to determine whether the subjects were indeed enslaved or not.

Some notes on ambiguity and terminology are also in order. Until the Ptolemaic period and the incursion of Hellenistic forms of slavery, there was little clear-cut distinction between slaves and other coerced laborers in Egypt. Seemingly free people could be abducted and coerced into labor by the state and punished if they attempted to flee; conversely, seemingly unfree people who had been sold as property could hold rights we would not expect from slaves such as owning property, testifying in court, and negotiating the terms of their enslavement. Therefore, a work on slaves in Egypt needs to be discussed within the broader context of coerced labor, as the lines between “slave” and “coerced laborer” were often blurred. For instance, we cannot say for certain whether women in Deir el-Medina whose labor was bought and sold were owned in any real sense—either by the state and then assigned as property to the workmen at Deir el-Medina, or privately—or whether they functioned as servants who were ultimately paid for their labor; the past does not provide enough information. This blurred distinction partially stems from imprecision in terminology referring to slaves; this imprecision is simply a part of Egyptian society. Unlike the modern world, in which there is a close connection between the exactitude of economic terminology and law, throughout most of Egyptian history a precise translation of terms related to slavery, servitude, and forced labor is not always possible.

For example, the word *hem* (*hm*) could be translated as “servant” or “slave,” and appears in the dictionary with both of these possible meanings.⁷ The word itself has a number of uses, and could variously refer to: a priest; the subject of a king; an agricultural worker for the state who may or may not have been enslaved; a prisoner of war; a trusted housemate; or the object of a small-scale slave sale. While these are all clearly positions of subordination, the inclusion of the same term in these different contexts would seem to suggest that these positions are identical, when they are not. Indeed, terminology is so often so inexact and its context so unclear that deciding whether to label certain individuals as “slave” or “servant” is usually the decision of a translator.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

<i>Period name</i>	<i>Date (BCE)</i> ⁸
Old Kingdom	c. 2181–2025
First Intermediate Period	c. 2160–2055
Middle Kingdom	c. 2055–1773
Second Intermediate Period	c. 1773–1550
New Kingdom	c. 1550–1069
Third Intermediate Period	c. 1069–664
Saite and Persian Periods	664–332
Ptolemaic Period	332–30

Before delving into the nature of slavery and bound labor, it is useful to begin with a broad historical overview of the main periods under analysis here. Egyptian history does not begin in the Old Kingdom, but rather in the period known as the Early Dynastic (c. 3000–2686 BCE), which covers the 1st and 2nd Dynasties. However, there is limited written evidence from this period, and most transactions were probably conducted orally, so little is known about slavery or bound labor practices before the Old Kingdom. The Old Kingdom formed the basis of Egyptian iconography, religion, and culture; the great pyramids at Giza were built for Old Kingdom pharaohs.

The First Intermediate Period (2181–2025 BCE)—so-named because it was the first of the three transitional periods between kingdoms—saw the monarchy split into two competing branches. The reunification of Egypt after nearly a century of conflict marked the end of the First Intermediate Period and the beginning of the Middle Kingdom. The political division of the First Intermediate Period ended with the unification of Egypt under the 12th Dynasty pharaoh Nebhepetre Mentuhotep II. The Middle Kingdom (2055–1773 BCE), was marked by internal stability and prosperity, but declined after a period of dynastic chaos. This decline, combined with the invasion of northern Egypt by the Hyksos from the Levant, began the Second Intermediate Period (1773–1550 BCE).

The Hyksos were defeated and Egypt reunified under the pharaoh Ahmose I, beginning the New Kingdom. The New Kingdom was stable excepting the rule of Akhenaten, who instituted religious reform and moved the royal city to El-Amarna, later abandoned after his reign. The New Kingdom ushered in a period of political stability and imperialist expansion. Military campaigns of the period extended Egypt's influence in the Near East, expanding the borders from modern-day Syria to the very edge of Nubia, in modern-day Sudan. This expansion brought extraordinary wealth into Egypt and an influx of foreign enslaved persons as prisoners of war, booty of conquests, and incursions into existing slave markets.

The first millennium BCE in Egypt was marked by shifts in the ruling elite of Egypt, including periods of foreign dominion. The wealth and expansion of the New Kingdom was followed by the upheaval of the Third Intermediate Period (c. 1069–850 BCE) and the Persian invasion of Egypt in 525 BCE. Persian dominion lasted until 332 BCE, with a brief period of native Egyptian rulers (404–343 BCE). The Persians ruled Egypt from afar with the aid of provincial governors known as satraps. The constant changes in rule and state fragmentation undoubtedly led to changes in labor practices and, indeed, slavery. However, the period provides precious little documentation with regard to slavery, with only a few isolated cases.

Persian domination over Egypt ended with Alexander the Great's expansion and subsequent conquering of the territory in 332 BCE. After his death in 323, his empire was divided among his generals, with Ptolemy taking Egypt. Ptolemy initially ruled as an extension of the heirs of Alexander, but ultimately declared himself king in 305 BCE, founding the eponymous Ptolemaic

Dynasty. The Ptolemaic Dynasty ruled from the royal city of Alexandria for three centuries, until the Roman conquest in 30 BCE.

Although Ptolemaic Egypt retained much of traditional Egyptian culture, the culture of the Ptolemaic period was heavily influenced by Hellenism, including its labor practices and approach to slavery. The Ptolemies also introduced Greek as the administrative language of Egypt, which continued well into Roman dominion. Slavery is well-attested in the Ptolemaic period of Egypt, and papyrological sources on slavery are published as a collection in the *Corpus der Ptolemäischen Sklaventexte*.⁹

ENTRY INTO ENSLAVEMENT

In his classification of coerced labor, Marcel van der Linden listed ten reasons for entering a coerced labor relationship, of which the following seven are relevant for Egyptian coerced labor: sale (between individuals or institutions); hiring out or leasing of owned persons; self-sale; birth to an enslaved woman; abduction; debt bondage; and taxation (levied in the form of labor). Though all are attested, the incidence of these reasons differ over time, as summarized in the following table, with an X indicating attestation. This table should also be considered in the context of the varying availability of sources; the Old Kingdom and the Saite and Persian periods, with fewer sources, are likely to evidence fewer methods of entry, but that does not necessarily mean that these methods did not exist, only that they are undocumented.

	<i>Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period</i>	<i>Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period</i>	<i>New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period</i>	<i>Saite and Persian Periods</i>	<i>Ptolemaic Period</i>
Abduction	×	×	×	×	×
Taxation	×	×	×		
Sale			×	×	×
Hiring			×		×
Self-sale				×	
Birth			×	×	×
Debt					×

These methods of entry differed not just in their incidence, but also in their manifestation. For example, abduction in the Middle Kingdom took the form of prisoners of war from Nubia and Libya drafted into the military; in contrast, abduction in the Ptolemaic Period included native Egyptians enslaved as punishment for their participation in rebellion.

Abduction

Throughout Egyptian history, the best-attested method of entry into enslaved status was through abduction as a prisoner of war. This is not to say that it was the most common method, but simply the one for which there is the most evidence, partially because the capture of prisoners of war was ideologically important to the Egyptians as a mark of strength in the region. Autobiographies boasted of capture of enemies, and scenes of “smiting the enemy”¹⁰ and leading away chained Nubians and Libyans became a mainstay in Egyptian art even when Nubians and Libyans were no longer enemies of the state.

In the Old Kingdom, prisoners of war (*skrw-rnh*, “bound for life”) included male Nubians and Libyans.¹¹ Old Kingdom expeditions into Nubia are particularly well-attested in personal autobiographies of military officials¹² which boast their capture and enslavement of thousands of captives, both men and women. Native Egyptians could also be abducted into labor, though it seems that this practice was frowned upon; two autobiographies of officials list among their accomplishments that they had never forced Egyptians into servitude (*bsk*), with one of these officials specifying that he had never forced any daughters into enslavement.¹³

Conscription of prisoners of war into the military continued into the Middle Kingdom, in which Nubian¹⁴ and Levantine troops were conscripted in order to accompany Egyptian troops on quarrying expeditions as armed support.¹⁵ Women and children were also captured and enslaved *en masse*: P. Brooklyn 35.1446¹⁶ lists among its eighty laborers forty-five “Asiatics” along with eight “Asiatic” children. These were presumably captured in the Levant, part of the Middle Kingdom expansion into that area.¹⁷

The New Kingdom experienced greater imperial Egyptian expansion into the Levant, with the result that there are more records of people entering enslavement through capture during wartime. The autobiography of General Ahmose¹⁸ evidences how he “brought away” two enslaved women (*hmmwt*) as booty (*hsk*) from his conquests in the Levant. As part of his retirement gift of land and gold, he was gifted nineteen more slaves, some of whom bore foreign names and originated from similar campaigns. The stela of Usertat, the viceroy of Kush, lists among the achievements of the king that he possesses a “female slave from Babylon, a female slave from Byblos, a little girl of Alalakh, and an old woman of Arrapkha.”¹⁹

Tutankhamun’s Restoration Stela, written after the upheaval of his father Akhenaten’s reign, mentions among his accomplishments that he had filled the workhouses of his officials and priests with men and women, brought as booty and entered into slave status. Papyrus Harris I, a New Kingdom administrative document,²⁰ includes a historical section that details the king’s capture of persons in military campaigns in Nubia, Libya, and the Levant:

I brought back in great numbers those that my sword has spared, with their hands tied behind their backs before my horses, and their wives and children in

tens of thousands [...] I imprisoned their leaders in fortresses bearing my name, and I added to them chief archers and tribal chiefs, branded and enslaved, with the cartouche of my name, their wives and children being treated in the same way. (P. Harris I, 77.4–6)

Enslaved persons who entered their status as prisoners of war in the New Kingdom were branded upon the right shoulder, as attested on a relief at Medinet Habu. Branding continued into the Late Period, in which the practice is applied to all enslaved persons.²¹

After the end of the New Kingdom and the upheaval of the Third Intermediate Period, Egypt no longer had the military presence in the Levant nor the centralized state that would provide for such huge influxes of foreign labor. However, the Kushite kings of the Late Period (c. 800 BCE) led campaigns into what is now Gaza, capturing men who appear sporadically in the textual record as “Men of the North.”²² The Persian satrap Arshames, residing in Egypt in the fifth century BCE, records in his letters the importation of a number of foreign slaves, including Cilicians and Iranians²³; the former were likely captured as part of Persia’s expansion into Anatolia.

In the Ptolemaic period, capture in war remained a common source of slaves, though it is interesting to note that not all captured persons became enslaved; some of the prisoners of war from the ongoing conflicts in Syria ended up as free settlers in the Fayum.²⁴ Prisoners of war who were captured for the purpose of enslavement had to be registered with the state (along with a 20 drachma payment, C. Ptol. Sklav.4.4–16). Failure to do so would result in the confiscation of the enslaved person by the state (C. Ptol. Sklav. 3). This method of entry into enslavement was not limited to foreign prisoners; in 198 BCE, a royal decree was issued stating that Egyptians who took part in rebellious unrest would then be enslaved (C. Ptol. Sklav. 9; 88).

Taxation

It is important to note at this juncture that although taxation levied in the form of labor was a reason for entering a (possibly coerced) labor force in Egypt, this does not necessarily mean that this labor could be defined as enslavement in modern terminology. The aforementioned ambiguity of terminology means that it is difficult to tell whether the people performing this labor were coerced into doing so or not.²⁵

Taxation through labor, usually referred to as “corvée” in Egyptology, first appears in the Old Kingdom, though the evidence is sparse and mostly indirect. The most detailed information about the corvée actually comes from the so-called “Exemption Decrees”²⁶ of the Old Kingdom, which delineate the people who are *not* eligible for corvée labor. Corvée recruitment of eligible persons happened on a scheduled day (or series of days) known as “Day of Corvée Recruitment (*štp m nḡwt-ḥ*).” Officials responsible for raising the corvée workforce were apparently tasked with a quota; a graffito from

Wadi Hammamat evidences a military official who, knowing that the day was coming, sets out to recruit 4350 persons to labor by the order of the king. Recruitment was likely based on registration; a 4th Dynasty Gebelein Papyrus,²⁷ for example, preserves a list of men and women recruited for temple construction. The class of laborers who performed the corvée as well as agricultural labor²⁸ were known as “*merit (mit)*.” The meaning of the class is unclear beyond the fact that they are subject to labor.

In the Middle Kingdom, taxation in the form of labor is attested, as well as punishment for attempting to avoid such labor. P. Brooklyn 35.1446 includes a list of Egyptians who attempted to avoid their obligatory labor and as a result are now imprisoned in a building termed “The Great Enclosure (*hrrt-r3*).”²⁹ The “Great Enclosure” of this papyrus was not the only one.³⁰ In addition, records from Lahun evidence that in the event that a person neglecting their state duties could not be found, the state could also seize a replacement, usually a family member, and usually determined by sex (i.e., a father replaced his son, a mother replaced her daughter).³¹ Another Middle Kingdom papyrus, P. Reisner I,³² includes a list of women who have been “drawn (*sd*)” from the town for the purposes of weaving and housed in the “Enclosure.” Fragments of official papers from the temple of Senwosret near Illahun include letters that indicate that the authorities of the town could, at will, take a female singer and a child from the “Enclosure” for the purpose of state works.³³

There is considerably less evidence for taxation as labor in the New Kingdom, but there is evidence that free people were requisitioned alongside slave laborers for state projects. The Horemheb Decree³⁴ warns against such a requisitioning by officials, who perhaps did so under the pretense of official state business. The same decree states that officials who seize other kinds of property will be imprisoned in the fortress of Sile, though it is not specified whether these convicts are then impressed into labor or the military.³⁵ From the Saite and Persian period, taxes were collected by temple officials, in cash or kind.³⁶

Sale

Sales of slaves are only attested from the New Kingdom onward, but it is important to note that this does not indicate that sales did not occur before the New Kingdom; rather, it is likely that sales of slaves were oral and left behind no written record.³⁷ New Kingdom sales were likely small-scale—there is no evidence of anything akin to a slave market—and took part between individuals, though public ownership did occur. One of these private small-scale sales is evidenced in P. Cairo 65739,³⁸ in which a Syrian girl (very likely the result of capture abroad) has been sold and re-named,³⁹ the sale itself was not documented in writing, and the transaction is recorded only as part of the judicial record of a dispute over the payment.

Enslaved persons could, by petition, transfer their ownership from private to public. A petition from the Second Intermediate Period (P. Berlin 10470)⁴⁰ evidences a slave woman named Senbet who is owned by both the people of the town of Elephantine and by a man named Hebsy. The text approves the petition of transferring Senbet to public ownership—“giving her to the city”⁴¹—but the text is elusive on whether this new status grants Senbet freedom⁴² or citizenship.⁴³ This private ownership could be contested and then settled in court.⁴⁴

In the Third Intermediate Period, slaves are sold in a larger capacity as part of an itemized list of land and commodities given to the king.⁴⁵ These slaves are sold at scale (5–30 people at a time) and are unnamed in the transaction. The Saite and Persian Periods continue the New Kingdom trend of small-scale slave sales⁴⁶ between individuals, but integrate a statement from the slave sold, perhaps influenced by the self-sales into enslavement from the same period.⁴⁷

Sales of slaves are only sporadically attested in the Saite and Persian Periods. In the Ptolemaic period, however, slave sales proliferate and are written exclusively in Greek, which may be the result of an otherwise unattested decree. These sales are usually direct (i.e., the seller and buyer know one another), but sometimes include an intermediary who will deliver the slave to their owner (e.g., Zaidelos of Idumea, who appears in P. Cair. Zen. 3.59374). There is also evidence of slave auctions, in which the state was involved and collected a fee for each bid and counterbid.⁴⁸ Although there is no evidence of a slave market per se, the involvement of an intermediary and the possibility for auction suggests the development of a system designed to buy, sell, and deliver slaves.

Hiring

The New Kingdom provides the most sources for the hiring of slaves. The workmen’s community at Deir el-Medina included female domestic servants, who were assigned to certain households on certain days known as “days of labor (*hrw bskw*)” which could then be bought, sold, inherited, and traded between free villagers (e.g., O. Gardiner. 123, a sale of 480 days of service; O. Gardiner. 90, a bequeathment of days of service from a father to his son). However, it is somewhat unclear whether these women were owned in any real sense—either by the state and then assigned as property to the workmen at Deir el-Medina, or privately—or whether they functioned as servants who were ultimately paid for their labor.⁴⁹ Other slave women were also hired out. Three papyri of the New Kingdom reference the purchase or leasing of slave women for periods between two and seventeen days.⁵⁰ These hired women could pursue legal action if they were abused during their hiring period.⁵¹

The Saite and Persian Periods offer scant evidence of hiring. There are some texts which could potentially refer to a leasing arrangement,⁵² but the evidence is inconclusive. In the Ptolemaic Period, slaves with specialized skills were often rented out for their labor. For instance, enslaved women could also function as wet-nurses for a contracted period of time, for which their owner

would receive additional payment.⁵³ Interestingly, these contracts can involve the nursing of a child who is himself a slave, a child borne between a slave and the owner—and yet the slave who bore the child cannot nurse her own child.

Self-Sale

Self-sale is attested only in the Saite and Persian Periods, and even so, it is poorly attested: a mere four documents evidence self-sale,⁵⁴ three of them belonging to the same individual who has sold himself to a new owner. These self-sales are identical formulaically to sales of other commodities, with the only difference being that the contracting party is also the object of the sale. These have often been thought to represent debt bondage, though this is likely not the case (see below, *Debt Bondage*).

Birth

In the Middle Kingdom, the hereditary nature of enslavement is implied by the inclusion of children with their mothers in lists of slaves.⁵⁵ The first direct evidence that the children of slaves were also enslaved comes from the New Kingdom, and it seems that the sale of enslaved children was discouraged until they reached a certain age. In the archive of Ahmose son of Peniati,⁵⁶ a man requests that a female slave of his is returned after her mother complained:

Why is it that the female slave who was with me has been taken away to be given to someone else? [...] Let payment for her be accepted for her to be with me, because she is only a child and unable to work [...] her mother has written to me, saying: ‘it is you who has allowed my daughter to be taken away [...]’.

In the New Kingdom, it is unknown if these children were born to two enslaved parents or if only the mother was enslaved; however, impregnating a slave of the household was considered to be an undesirable act. In his tomb, a man portraying himself as a model son proudly states among his accomplishments: “I did not know a slave-woman of [my father’s] house; I did not impregnate a slave.”⁵⁷

The self-sales of the Saite and Persian Periods include current and future children in the transaction, even when it is the father who is selling himself, suggesting that slave status could be passed on not just from the mother, at least in the Egyptian record. The fifth-century archives of the Jewish community at Elephantine evidences six people born to slave mothers, all of whom appear to have inherited their slave status from their mother.⁵⁸

In the Ptolemaic period, inherited slavery through birth was well-known and even administered by the state. Children born to slave women were referred to as “house-bred (οἰκοτροφῆν)” or “house-born (οἰκογενή).”⁵⁹ These house-born slaves would have to be registered with the state for the purposes of taxation.⁶⁰

Debt Bondage

Debt bondage appears to not have been a method of entry into slavery in Egypt before the Ptolemaic period, but is often cited as such,⁶¹ and warrants some discussion. A distinction should be made between self-sale as a satisfaction of debt versus transfer of title following seizure, as the two are often confused.⁶² Putting up collateral in the form of the debtor's own person could lead to a form of conditional enslavement in which he is seized until the debt is repaid, but self-sale is a different mechanism in that the transaction in itself satisfies the debt.⁶³ It is also, by this nature, more final than self-seizure; in order to exit enslavement, a person who has sold themselves would then need to pay the debt through self-purchase.⁶⁴

Slaves, as well as free women and children, could be pledged as collateral against loans from the First Intermediate Period onward. The question remains as to what could *actually* happen if the debtor defaulted on his debt. With slaves, it is relatively certain that they would simply be transferred into the new owner's possession, perhaps even without a written transfer of title.⁶⁵ But what would happen to the children? Would they become the creditor's slaves,⁶⁶ and thereby enter the status of enslavement through seizure? Hypothetically, yes; however, the evidence suggests that this rarely happened in practice, and there is only one extant case of a man's seizure following his father's failure to return loaned copper tools. It is unclear if he actually did any work during the time of their bondage, or if he simply served as collateral. Either way, he was freed when the tools were returned.

There are four instances of self-sale into slavery dating to the Saite and Persian periods, and it has been suggested that these were intended to satisfy a debt, contrasting the classical account of Diodorus Siculus which states that debt-slavery had been outlawed.⁶⁷ This classical evidence has been shown to be unreliable,⁶⁸ but even still: whether as a result of systematic law reform or not, the four self-sale documents do not seem to refer to a debt of any kind and more likely represent self-sale in exchange for protection. Only in the Ptolemaic Period is there direct evidence for debt bondage:⁶⁹ a papyrus recording sale tax on slave sales records a list of persons who have become enslaved as a result of a debt.⁷⁰ By the Late Ptolemaic Period, however, this practice had been replaced by imprisonment.⁷¹

EXTRACTION OF LABOR

Once an employer (or owner) has a laborer at his disposal, he must somehow induce the laborer to actually work. But how? Marcel van der Linden approached this question from the viewpoint that no one individual can be forced to work through physical compulsion alone; rather, physical compulsion is only one of the three factors which motivate a worker to work. These three factors are compensation (i.e., wages), conditional force (i.e., punishment), and commitment (e.g., loyalty).⁷² As with the entry into enslaved status,

the following table summarizes the incidence of various factors motivating a laborer to work, with an X indicating attestation.

	<i>Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period</i>	<i>Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period</i>	<i>New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period</i>	<i>Saite and Persian Periods</i>	<i>Ptolemaic Period</i>
Indirect wages		×	×	×	×
Conditional force		×	×	×	×
Commitment				×	×

The issue here is not determining whether these factors were existent in Egyptian slavery—as they likely were—but that only one generally warranted written documentation and therefore is directly evidenced: conditional force. The written documentation reflects corporal punishment, imprisonment, and expulsion, but speaks little to the motivation behind the reasons *why* a coerced laborer has chosen to work beyond the fear of retribution if they do not.

Nevertheless, there is some implicit evidence of the other motivators. Indirect wages in the form of housing and protection (from practical fears such as starvation or theoretical evils) was a feature of Egyptian systems of patronage: a slave knew that an owner was obligated to provide protection, and this obligation was referenced in self-sale into temple slavery. Commitment, the most difficult of the three to delineate with regard to ancient labor is implied in some Saite and Persian Period contracts.

Indirect Wages

Although wages appear to be irrelevant to slave labor, “compensation” also includes “indirect wages,” such as housing, food, and social perks. This was likely the premier motivation behind working as an enslaved laborer, and perhaps even entry into enslavement: in return for labor and freedom, an enslaved person received the obligation of their owner to protect them from debt and poverty as well as serve as their advocate. In other words, slaves were compensated in protection, both practical (e.g., food to eat, a roof to live under) and social (e.g., literacy, the payment of a dowry, or the social connections to have a complaint heard in a court of law).

It is assumed that coerced laborers were accommodated with a space to live in the Old Kingdom.⁷³ Direct evidence of (domestic) slaves sharing dwelling space with their owners only comes in the Middle Kingdom papyri of the landlord Heqanakht, who expels a slave of his from his home following her bad behavior (see below, *Conditional Force*). Entering a household carried not just the practical benefit of a roof over one’s head, but also entry into the

basic unit of social organization.⁷⁴ Some slaves also learned marketable skills from their owners, like writing.⁷⁵

In the New Kingdom, institutional slavery provided slaves with a living space and protected them from seizure for other types of labor, including state-imposed taxation through labor. The Nauri Decree of Seti I (c. 1300 BCE),⁷⁶ a protective decree of the personnel and lands attached to Seti's temple of Osiris at Abydos, warns against the "taking" of any of the personnel away from temple grounds with the intent of employing them in other kinds agricultural labor, whether by seizure, contract labor, or *corvée*. Entry into enslavement was also a form of protection for those with no family ties or connections, such as abandoned or orphaned children. A passage in P. Harris I,⁷⁷ explaining the origins of a priestly order, records the gathering of "children that had been scattered in the service of others" and their pledge to serve the god Ptah, guaranteeing them a home and a profession.

In the Saite and Persian periods, there is contractual evidence that a slave-owner paid the dowry of his female slave when she married a free man.⁷⁸ This period also provides evidence that a slave could negotiate (or perhaps renegotiate) the rations given to him by his owner: in P. Rylands 7, a self-sold slave requests more grain as compensation for himself and his family. Especially in the Saite and Persian periods, entering a subordinate relationship with a superior also involved social protection in the form of access to justice. The wealthy and socially connected had the upper hand in court: they were more likely to receive a favorable hearing, and could use their influence to obstruct the complaints of the less-influential.⁷⁹ Non-elites, then, traded subordinate status in exchange for a voice in court.

The same terminology used for human patronage and protection was employed in Persian-period letters to divinities, requesting protection from legal threats and physical abuse in exchange for subordinate status. The word used to indicate this subordinate status, *bak* (*b3k*), is the same one used for slaves from the New Kingdom onward. In the Ptolemaic Period, at least 37 Demotic documents evidence petitions to the god, with a supplicant dedicating him/herself—along with a payment of money—to become a "slave"⁸⁰ to the god for 99 years in exchange for protection from natural (and supernatural) threats.⁸¹

Conditional Force

Evidence from the Middle Kingdom shows that conditional force in the form of imprisonment, corporal punishment, expulsion, or even death was likely a motivating factor in labor extraction. Letters from Illahun attest to the attempted escape and recapture of a slave, a man named Sobkemhab, who is then housed in an Enclosure for his hearing and ultimately put to death for his crime (P. Kahun 34). The punishment for not appearing for coerced labor was, as noted above, seizure of a substitute; but if a substitute could not be found, a person was sentenced to coerced labor for life, a status passed on

to children.⁸² This is the case of one fugitive conscript laborer, Mentuhotep son of Sabes, who is ordered by the court to be “given to the ploughlands together with his people (i.e., his family) forever.”⁸³

Household slaves could also seemingly be expelled from their homes as a punitive measure. The private letters of the landowner Heqanakht attest to his dismissal of a female slave named Senen for her bad behavior,⁸⁴ instructing his family to not even let her spend a single night in the house. Bad behavior of slaves could also be punished corporally. In the literary tale recorded on the Westcar Papyrus,⁸⁵ a slave argues with her owner and receives a corporal beating both from her owner, and, after she flees, from her own brother as additional punishment.

From the New Kingdom until the Ptolemaic Period, conditional force may have been relevant only insofar as the invocation of criminal law, and was not specific to slaves. A New Kingdom judicial papyrus⁸⁶ records an interaction between a slave and a gang of tomb robbers who asked him to participate in criminal activity. His response—“am I, who came from Syria, one to be sent to Kush?”⁸⁷—invokes a punishment also faced by his co-conspirators. At Deir el-Medina, a slave and a necropolis worker, both thieves, are punished identically for their crimes.⁸⁸

In the Saite and Persian periods, Aramaic sources record that slaves would be liable to punishment if they stole goods,⁸⁹ and that this punishment was likely corporal.⁹⁰ But there is little evidence for specific slave-related crime, like escape; when the self-sold slave woman of Louvre E706 alludes to escape (see below, *Exit*), she does not mention any punishment beyond recapture. If the motivation to labor lay in protection, then expulsion may have served as a conditional threat.

In the Ptolemaic Period, conditional force took the form of detainment, especially as punishment for flight⁹¹ or bad behavior.⁹² This is generally in line with punishment in Ptolemaic Egypt, during which a broad array of offenses could lead to detainment.⁹³ Certain offenses—though the record is vague on what they could be—could also result in corporal punishment, branding, and deportation.⁹⁴ While penalties differed for slaves and free men,⁹⁵ there is once again little evidence for specific slave-related crime such as escape.

Commitment

In the Saite and Persian Periods, the statement of commitment by the slave in Demotic and Abnormal Hieratic sources (sales and self-sales) suggests a level of personal loyalty, at the very least to a contractual relationship. This level of personal loyalty may have been a factor before, but simply left unspoken, unwritten, or both. These statements of commitment include a promise: “I am your slave, forever (*šr dt*).” In other words, the workers are motivated to work by their own oath to do so—sometimes, as in the case of the Demotic Louvre E706, as reflected by an actual oath to Amun.⁹⁶

EXIT FROM ENSLAVEMENT

According to van der Linden, a person can terminate a coerced labor relationship on the basis of seven variables, divided into two categories: physical compulsion (i.e., forced to leave or forced to stay); and constrained choice (can leave, but chooses not to).⁹⁷ Some of these methods of exit are not germane to Late Period Egypt. Methods such as “unconditional exit” would not warrant a contract of any sort in the Egyptian legal tradition, and therefore we have no way of knowing if such a practice existed; “exit forced by another power” (as an example, van der Linden cites the British abolition of slavery) are similarly not applicable.

Of van der Linden’s seven methods of exit, only three are pertinent to Egyptian slavery: exit despite impediment (i.e., escape), though the evidence is minimal; conditional exit (i.e., marriage, adoption, and manumission, the latter of which listed obligations of its manumitted party); and death, which is the final and irrevocable termination of a labor relationship.

Escape

There is virtually no documentary evidence of escaped slaves in Egypt before the Ptolemaic Period. This is not to say that slaves did not escape, but only that evidence of their escape or their pursuit have rarely been preserved. One such piece of evidence is from the New Kingdom, a letter recording the pursuit of two slaves who had escaped from the palace and fled into the desert.⁹⁸ They are pursued at top speed⁹⁹ by a troop commander, suggesting the urgency of his mission. It is not known if these slaves were particularly important—prompting their pursuit and its recording—or if this was standard procedure.

In the Persian Period, the self-sold woman of Louvre E706 hints at the possibility of recapture after escape, suggesting that her new owner may take her if he finds her in another house: “I am your slave [...] you are entitled to me (lit. behind me) in any house in which you will find me.” The more conclusive Persian-period evidence is from the Arsames archive: a letter dated to the middle of the fifth century BCE (TADA6.3) records an official complaint filed by a man named Psamshek. In it, he requests for Arsames to punish eight slaves—belonging to Psamshek’s father—who he claims have taken his property and fled. Psamshek is apparently intending to recapture these slaves though he does not indicate how; his request is that, when Psamshek brings the (re-captured) men to the official Artavanta, that Artavanta will punish them as Psamshek sees fit.

In the Ptolemaic Period, slaves regularly escaped, as evidenced in notices advertising their escape, calling upon authorities to assist in the recovery of “lost property”¹⁰⁰ as well as letters regarding their recapture.¹⁰¹ It is unclear how successful enslaved persons were in escaping, but they often took valuable items with them,¹⁰² or even the mortgage on a house¹⁰³ to start a new life.

As evidenced by letters¹⁰⁴ and trial records, some freed persons helped these fugitive slaves in their flight and risked trial to do so.¹⁰⁵

Conditional Exit

A conditional exit from coerced labor is one in which a worker has to meet obligations before being allowed to leave. van der Linden cites indentured laborers as an example, as they had to first complete the duration of their labor. In Egypt, conditional exit manifested in marriage to a specific person (perhaps someone who would be difficult to marry off otherwise) as well as adoption and manumission (both of which obligated a newly freed person to “act as a son”).

In the New Kingdom, though it is unclear if marriage provided an exit from slavery in itself, it was seemingly possible to exit enslavement by meeting the conditions of a specific marriage, a *quid pro quo* between the owner and the slave. This was the case in an inscription evidencing a slave named Sabastet who had been captured in battle (“taken prisoner with my own arm when I accompanied the king”). Sabastet agreed to marry his owner’s blind niece in exchange for the right to “leave the house.”¹⁰⁶

Adoption and contractual manumission are near-identical methods of exit from slavery from the New Kingdom to the Ptolemaic Period. There is only one extant manumission contract, and much like adoption, it obligates its subjects to act as children to their ex-owner. A New Kingdom adoption papyrus (P. Ashmolean Museum 1945.96) details how the children of an enslaved woman are adopted by her married owners, and her daughter is married to the owner’s brother. The condition for their manumission is the adoption, which is intended to reorganise the hierarchy of inheritance within the family.¹⁰⁷

Adoption in the Saite and Persian Periods also obligated the manumitted parties to act as children in exchange for their freedom.¹⁰⁸ In the case of a male child, this meant both perpetuation of the family line as well as upholding the religious responsibilities of an eldest son, including presenting the necessary funerary offerings after a parent dies.¹⁰⁹ The one surviving pre-Ptolemaic manumission contract¹¹⁰ evidences a near-identical condition: in exchange for manumission, the two freed slaves promise to take care of their “father” in his old age, or be liable for a heavy monetary penalty.

In the Ptolemaic period, manumission through contract occurred more frequently,¹¹¹ but evidence is still limited; though only six of these contracts are attested (C. Ptol. Sklav. 28–34), and the appearance of freed slaves (i.e., post-manumission) is rare.¹¹² Manumission was usually embedded into wills, and came with two conditions: first, that the owner had died; and second, that the slaves had stayed with their owner “as faithful servants” as long as the owner lived.¹¹³ Once freed, however, the slaves had no obligations to their previous owner, unlike the adoption/manumission contracts of earlier periods.

CONCLUSIONS

The methods of entry into, exit from, and extraction of enslaved labor differ substantially throughout the history of Egypt from the Old Kingdom to the Ptolemaic Period. As the state underwent significant societal and economic changes, so too did the approach to enslavement and coerced labor.

Despite these considerable variations in slave labor, there is one ideological constant in Egyptian slavery: the desire for protection, at the cost of subordination. In all of the periods in which slavery is attested, patronage and protection are held in high regard in Egyptian society, whether this protection originates from the gods, the king, high officials, or simply another person who can provide a degree of protection. This ideology is apparent in teachings and wisdom texts from the Old Kingdom to the Ptolemaic Period: instructions urge to seek out “a strong superior”¹¹⁴ when one has been injured and warn against taking a superior to “without protection.”¹¹⁵

In return, superiors were morally obligated to take care of their dependents, whether these dependents were their own children or other members of their household—including slaves—from illness, lawsuits, and illegal seizure.¹¹⁶ To be dependent and protected, then, was preferable to being independent and unprotected, even if it meant becoming a slave. Entering the status of slavery meant entering a household or an institution, albeit at a lower social stratum, but in return gave the enslaved person practical protection from debt and starvation as well as social protection through a connection to a high-status individual. Thus, we see an overlap between the vocabulary of slavery and other forms of voluntary subordination for which a person would receive protection, such as adoption, pleas to a god for patronage, or a fulfilling of responsibility to the state in exchange for protection by the king.

This aspect of slavery in Egypt throws a wrench in a wholesale acceptance of Orlando Patterson’s “social death” theory¹¹⁷; through protection and patronage, slavery often offered its participants an entry into the protective fold of society, rather than “killing” them through social alienation. Indeed, it can be argued that the more socially alienated persons were those who were not enslaved, but lay outside the norms of Egyptian society and therefore lacked protection: unclaimed orphans, vagrants, criminals, and foreigners. These people would have to seek out some way of entering the social fabric, including slavery, to find the protection they needed to function as members of society. This is not to say that Egyptian slavery was an institution with humane intentions; even at its best—a reciprocal relationship exchanging labor for protection—it still involved the commodification of human bodies, and the crucial point is that these were not mutually exclusive concepts. This contextualization of slavery within Egyptian social and legal mores requires us to recognize both the exploitation inherent to slavery and human commodification as well as the Egyptians’ justification for it through language of patronage and protection. A recognition of these social facts as co-existent in Egyptian thought points to a critical paradox, hardly unique for cultures with slavery:

an awareness of moral goods along with inequalities which could never be satisfactorily resolved.

NOTES

1. Egyptian art certainly changes over time, but the degree of change is small enough that we can speak of a relatively uniform and recognizable “character” of Egyptian art. See H. Schäfer, *Principles of Egyptian Art*, trans. John Baines (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1974), 14–36.
2. M. van der Linden, “Dissecting Coerced Labor,” in *On Coerced Labor: Work and Compulsion after Chattel Slavery*, eds. Marcel van der Linden and Magaly Rodríguez García (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 293–322.
3. Unless otherwise noted, all dates are according to I. Shaw, ed., *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). References to primary sources differ by language. For Greek sources, references follow the Checklist of Editions, found online at <https://papyri.info/docs/checklist>; references for sources in Egyptian follow their museum catalogue number (e.g., P. Brooklyn = papyrus housed in the Brooklyn Museum); references in Aramaic refer to their placement in the four-volume publication by B. Porten and A. Yardeni, *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Department of the History of the Jewish People, 1986). Each volume is assigned a letter value (1986 = TADA; 1989 = TADB; 1993 = TADC; 1999 = TADD).
4. One needs only to consider that the edited volume on labor in the ancient Near East—M. Powell, ed., *Labor in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987)—included three essays on Egypt, covering nearly 210 pages.
5. This statement excludes the Codex Hermopolis, a set of laws dated to the Late Period but written in the Ptolemaic Period; for the majority of Egyptian history, no such source appears to have existed. For the Codex Hermopolis, see K. Donker van Heel, ed., *The Legal Manual of Hermopolis: (P. Mattha); Text and Translation* (Leiden: Papyrologisch Instituut, 1991).
6. Despite the quote opening this chapter, this includes any reference to the Exodus narrative; though there is evidence for enslaved persons originating from the Levant mainstream scholarship largely rejects the narrative as historical truth. The literature is too massive to cite here, but some resources include D. Redford, “Exodus 1.11,” *Vetus Testamentum* 13 (1963): 401–18; D. Redford, “An Egyptological Perspective on the Exodus Narratives,” in *Egypt, Israel, Sinai: Archaeological and Historical Relationships in the Biblical Period*, ed. A.F. Rainey (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press, 1987), 137–61; J. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
7. A. Erman and H. Grapow, *Das Wörterbuch der ägyptischen Sprache* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1953), 87.
8. Before 664 BCE, absolute dates are only approximate; it is only after 664 BCE that regnal years, reigns, dynasties, and periods can all be correlated with absolute dates.
9. R. Scholl, *Corpus der Ptolemäischen Sklaventexte* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1990); abbreviated here and elsewhere as C. Ptol. Sklav.

10. On this motif, see J. Śliwa, “Some Remarks Concerning Victorious Ruler Representations in Egyptian Art,” *Forschungen und Berichte* 16 (1974): 97–117; M. Janzen, “The Iconography of Humiliation: The Depiction and Treatment of Bound Foreigners in New Kingdom Egypt” (PhD diss., University of Memphis, 2013), 23–4, 311–3.
11. Expeditions into the Levant did take place, but are poorly attested. Expeditions to Punt did not seem to have been a significant source of prisoners of war. On Nubians, see M. Bietak “Zu den nubischen Bogenschützen aus Assiut. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Ersten Zwischenzeit,” in *Mélanges Gamal Eddin Mokhtar*, eds. Muhammad Mukhtār Paule Kriéger. Bibliothèque d’Étude 97 (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1985), 87–99.
12. Like Pepynakht; K. Sethe, *Urkunden des alten Reichs* (Leipzig: J.C. Heinrichs, 1903), 131–5.
13. Sethe, *Urkunden*, 217.
14. E. Feucht, “The Nubian Mercenaries of Gebelein during the First Intermediate Period,” *Kush* 9 (1961): 44–80; J. Darnell, “A Bureaucratic Challenge? Archaeology and Administration in a Desert Environment (Second Millennium B.C.E.),” in *Ancient Egyptian Administration*, ed. Juan Carlos Moreno García (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 791.
15. *Ibid.*, 817.
16. W. Hayes, *A Papyrus of the Late Middle Kingdom in the Brooklyn Museum (Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446)*. (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1955).
17. On this Middle Kingdom expansion, see J.C. Moreno García, “Egypt, Old to New Kingdom (2686–1069 BCE),” in *The Oxford World History of Empire*, eds. Peter Bang, C.A. Bayly, Walter Scheidel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 26–7.
18. K. Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie: historisch-biographische Urkunden* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1927), 1–10.
19. J. Darnell, “The Stela of the Viceroy Userhat (Bostona MFA 25.632), his Shrine at Qasr Ibrahim, and the Festival of Nubian Tribute under Amenhotep II,” *ENIM* 7 (2014): 239–76. In general on prisoners of war in the New Kingdom, see U. Matic, *Body and Frames of War in New Kingdom Egypt: Violent Treatment of Enemies and Prisoners* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2019).
20. P. Grandet, *Le papyrus Harris I (BM 9999)* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire, 1994).
21. On this practice, see E. Karev, “‘Mark Them with My Mark’: Human Branding in Egypt,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 108 (2022): 191–203.
22. “Men of the North” appear in P. Vatican 10574; P. Leiden 1942/5.15; the Apanage Stela of Iuwelot (Cairo JdE 31882); P. Louvre E3228e, P. Louvre E3228d, and P. Louvre E3228c; for identification of the “northern region” as Gaza, see J. Quaegebeur, “À propos de l’identification de la ‘Kadytis’ d’Hérodote avec la ville de Gaza,” in *Immigration and Emigration Within the Ancient Near East, Festschrift E. Lipiński*, eds. Karel Van Lerberghe, Antoon Schoors, and Edward Lipiński. OLA 65 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), 245–70. See also J. J. A. Ramírez, “Papyrus Vatican 38595: A Lease of a Man of the North during the reign of Py,” *Bollettino dei Monumenti Musei e Gallerie Pontificie* 36 (2019): 30–46.

23. J. Ma and C. Tuplin, *Aršama and his World: The Bodleian Letters in Context*. 3 vols. Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents 14 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).
24. E.g., P. Petr. 3. 104.
25. For a detailed look at corvée and people considered “corvéable,” see: J.C. Moreno García, “La population *mrt*: une approche du problème de la servitude dans l’Égypte du III^e millénaire,” *JEA* 84 (1998): 71–83; C. Eyre, “Work and Organisation of Work in the Old Kingdom,” in *Labor in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Marvin Powell (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1987), 18–20.
26. R. Jasnow, “Egypt: Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period,” in *A History of Ancient Near Eastern Law*, ed. Raymond Westbrook (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 94–5; N. Strudwick, *Administration of Egypt in the Old Kingdom* (London: KPI, 1985); E. Hornung, *Grundzüge der ägyptischen Geschichte* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978), 40.
27. P. Posener-Kriéger and S. Demichelis, *I papiri di Gebelein: Scavi G. Farina 1935* (Geda: Turin, 2004).
28. The hieroglyphic writing of this term includes a hoe and stresses the agricultural nature of these laborers. See Ogden Goelet, “Problems of Authority, Compulsion, and Compensation in Ancient Egyptian Labor Practices,” in *Labor in the Ancient World*, eds. Piotr Steinkeller and Michael Hudson (Dresden: ISLET, 2015), 547, especially n. 87 and 88. See also S. Allam, “Une class ouvrière: les *merit*,” in *La dépendance rurale dans l’antiquité égyptienne et proche-orientale*, ed. Bernadette Menu (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2005), 123–56 and J. C. Moreno García, “Acquisition de serfs durant la Première Période Intermédiaire: une étude d’histoire sociale dans l’Égypte du III^e millénaire,” *Revue d’Égyptologie* 51 (2000): 123–39.
29. Goelet, “Problems,” 572; S. Quirke, *The Administration of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom: The Hieratic Documents* (New Malden: SIA Publishing, 1990), 127–86; C. Eyre, *The Use of Documents in Pharaonic Egypt*. Oxford Studies in Ancient Documents (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 261–3; W. Grajetzki, “Setting a State Anew: The Central Administration from the End of the Old Kingdom to the End of the Middle Kingdom,” in *Ancient Egyptian Administration*, ed. Juan Carlos Moreno García (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 233–4.
30. It is unclear how many of these enclosures actually existed—and whether they were all used to the same end—but throughout the late Middle Kingdom they do appear to have been limited to the housing (and perhaps also coerced labor) of individuals attempting to avoid their corvée duties. See S. Quirke, “State and Labour in the Middle Kingdom: A Reconsideration of the Term *Chenert*,” *Revue d’Égyptologie* 39 (1988): 83–106, especially p. 102.
31. On this practice, see Quirke, “State,” 89–90, with citations *indem*. As Quirke notes, substitutions were not necessarily gender-based if a task had yet to be allocated (i.e., conscription for general state services), but once the task had already been determined, it would require differentiation by gender.
32. W. Simpson, *Papyrus Reisner I: The Records of a Building Project in the Reign of Sesostris I* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1963). See also Quirke, “State,” 86–7.
33. Quirke, “State,” 87–8.

34. J. Kruchten, *Le décret d'Horemheb: Traduction, commentaire épigraphique, philologique et institutionnel* (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1981); Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, 2140–61.
35. Conscriptio into the military is favored by Kruchten, *Le décret*, 79.
36. B. Muhs, *The Ancient Egyptian Economy, 3000–30 BC* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 184; there was also taxation in the form of labor, but less attested than in earlier periods.
37. On oral transactions of other goods, see Muhs, *The Ancient Egyptian Economy*, 6, 52, 91, 140, 157.
38. A. Gardiner, “A Lawsuit Arising from the Purchase of Two Slaves,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 21 (1935): 140–6.
39. Gardiner, “A Lawsuit,” 142. Her name is a clue to her origin: *gm.n.iʿ-ḥr-iʿmmtt*, meaning “I found (her) in the West” or “(she) who I found in the West.”
40. P. Smither, “The Report Concerning the Slave-girl Senbet,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 34 (1948): 31–34; see also T. Hofmann, *Zur sozialen Bedeutung Zweier Begriffe für “Diener”: B3k und Ḥm: Untersucht an Quellen vom Alten Reich bis zur Ramessidenzeit* (Basel: Schwabe, 2005), 133–9.
41. P. Berlin 10470, 3.5.
42. The conceptualization of “freedom” is nebulous in Egypt. For further, see E. Karev, “Nemeh in Pharaonic Egypt: ‘Free’ or ‘Miserable’? (A Case Study of Historical Semantics),” *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaften* (forthcoming).
43. For the suggestion that this transfer of ownership was for the purposes of marriage, see W. Helck, “P. Berlin 10470,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 115 (1988): 35–9.
44. A. Gardiner, “Four Papyri of the 18th Dynasty from Kahun [Berlin P. 9784, Gurob P. II 1, Gurob P. II 2, Berlin P. 9785],” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 43 (1906): 27–47; P. Berlin 9785 on pp. 38–43.
45. So-called “oracular pronouncements.” See R. Ritner, *The Libyan Anarchy: Inscriptions from Egypt’s Third Intermediate Period*. Writings from the Ancient World 21 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 2009), 166–72, 271–8.
46. For an interpretation of sale and self-sale texts of the Saite and Persian periods as “cessions of services” rather than sales, see B. Menu, “Cessions de services et engagements pour dette sous les rois Kouchites et Saïtes.” *Revue d’Égyptologie* 36 (1985): 73–87.
47. Self-sales: P. Rylands 3, 5, and 6; Louvre E706; Sales: P. Leiden F1942/5.15; P. Vatican 10547; P. Louvre E3228e; P. Turin 2122; P. Bibl. Nat. 223; P. Inv. Sorbonne 1276 + 1277.
48. C. Ptol. Sklav. 5.
49. Favoring the former, see J. Černý, *A Community of Workmen at Thebes in the Ramesside Period* (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 1973), 175–81; for the latter argument, cf. Goelet, “Problems,” 546–47 and Hofmann, *Zur sozialen*, 113–8.
50. Gardiner, “Four Papyri”; see also R. Navailles and F. Neveu, “Qu’entendait-on par ‘journée d’esclave’ au Nouvel Empire?” *Revue d’Égyptologie* 40 (1989): 113–23.
51. B. Davies and J. Toivari, “Misuse of a Maidservant’s Services at Deir el-Medina (O. CGC 25237, recto),” *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 24 (1997): 69–80.

52. TADD7.9; P. Louvre E3228d. For the latter, see K. Donker van Heel, *Dealing with the Dead in Ancient Egypt: The Abnormal Hieratic Business Archive of Petebaste Son of Peteamunip (7th Century BCE)* (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2021).
53. As recorded in P. Tebt.2.399. This profession was not limited to enslaved women; the only difference is that an enslaved nurse was represented by her owner rather than representing herself. See J. Straus, “Papyrological Evidence,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Slavery*, eds. Stephen Hodkinson, Marc Kleijwegt, and Kostas Vlassopoulos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
54. P. Rylands 3, P. Rylands 5, and P. Rylands 6; Louvre E706.
55. As in P. Brooklyn 35.1446; Hayes, *A Papyrus*, 90.
56. P. Louvre 3230b; E. Peet, “Two Eighteenth Dynasty Letters, P. Louvre 3230,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 12 (1926): 70–4.
57. A. Gardiner, “The Tomb of Amenemhet, High Priest of Amon,” *Zeitschrift für Ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 47 (1910): 87–97.
58. TADB3.9; TADB3.3; TADB3.6; TADB2.11.
59. Straus, “Papyrological”; I. Biezuńska-Małowist, *L’esclavage dans l’Égypte gréco-romaine. Première partie: période ptolémaïque* (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, 1974), 49–54; Y. Rotman, “Slavery in Greco-Roman Egypt,” in *Law and Legal Practice in Egypt From Alexander to the Arab Conquest: A Selection of Papyrological Sources in Translation, With Introductions and Commentary*, eds. James Keenan, Joseph Manning, and Uri Yiftach-Firanko (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 443.
60. P. Harr. I. 61 = C. Ptol. Sklav. 8.
61. Menu, “Cessions,” 81–87.
62. E.g., F. van Koppen, “Geography of the Slave Trade,” in *Mesopotamian Dark Age*, ed. H. Hunger and R. Pruzsinszky (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2004), 11 who equates self-sale with a creditor claiming the pledges of a previous loan contract—in other words, seizure following default.
63. A. Testart, “The Extent and Significance of Debt Slavery,” *Revue française de Sociologie* 43 (2002): 179–80.
64. We have no record of this happening in Egypt, but that doesn’t exclude it as a possibility; we only have three self-sales, of which only two are potentially as a result of an obligation—and they belong to the same individual. For further on debt bondage in the Late Period, see E. Karev, “Debt Bondage in Late Period Egypt (8th–5th Centuries BC)” (forthcoming).
65. E.g., in Abnormal Hieratic P. BM. 10113, the debtor states that the creditor may take any of the property listed “without citing any document (*i’w_h dd knbt nb*)”; see K. Donker van Heel, “Abnormal Hieratic and Early Demotic Texts Collected by the Theban Choachytes in the Reign of Amasis. Papyri from the Louvre Eisenlohr Lot” (PhD diss., Leiden University, 1995), 231.
66. As suggested in T. Markiewicz, “Security for Debt in the Demotic Papyri,” *Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 35 (2005): 153, n. 32.
67. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historia* I.79.3, states that the pharaoh Bocchoris abolished debt slavery; on this claim, see T. Markiewicz, “Bocchoris the Lawgiver—Or Was He Really?” *Journal of Egyptian History* 1 (2008): 309–30.

68. Markiewicz, “Bocchoris,” 321.
69. Biežuńska-Małowist, *L’esclavage*, 29–49, esp. 43.
70. Sel. Pap.2.205; W. Westermann, *Upon Slavery in Ptolemaic Egypt* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929).
71. J. Bauschatz, *Law and Enforcement in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 236.
72. van der Linden, “Dissecting,” 306–10, graphic on p. 308.
73. Eyre, “Work,” 28–30.
74. J.C. Moreno García, “Households,” in *The UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, eds. Elizabeth Froid and Willeke Wendrich (Los Angeles: UCLA Press, 2012), <http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz002czx07>. The house as a unit was socially important enough that its confiscation was employed as a punitive measure; D. Lorton, “The Treatment of Criminals in Ancient Egypt: Through the New Kingdom,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 20 (1977): 2–64.
75. E.g., P. Kahun 35 = UCL 32210; M. Collier and S. Quirke, *The UCL Lahun Papyri: Letters* (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2002), 133.
76. An extensively studied decree; for a partial bibliography cf. Goelet, “Problems,” 555, n. 109.
77. P. Harris I, 47.8–9.
78. TADB3.3; see also B. Porten and H. Szubin, “The Status of the Handmaiden Tamet: A New Interpretation of Kraeling 2 (TAD B3.3),” *Israel Law Review* 29 (1995): 43–64.
79. J.C. Moreno García, “The ‘Other’ Administration: Patronage, Factions, and Informal Networks of Power in Ancient Egypt,” in *Ancient Egyptian Administration*, ed. J.C. Moreno García, Section 1: Ancient Near East, vol. 104 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1030.
80. It’s not clear if this is metaphorical or actual enslavement. See K. Ryholt, “A Self-Dedication Addressed to Anubis: Divine Protection against Malevolent Forces or Forced Labor?” In *Lotus and Laurel: Studies on Egyptian Language and Religion in Honour of Paul John Frandsen*, eds. Rune Nyord and Kim Ryholt (Copenhagen: Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, Museum Tusulanum Press, 2015), 329–50. The fact that some of the people dedicated in these contracts were children listed without a father has led some to suggest actual enslavement or even temple prostitution (H. Thompson, “Two Demotic Self-Dedications,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 26 [1941]: 68–78), though the latter is unlikely.
81. E.g., scorpion stings and snakebites, but also “dead men” and spirits; A.G. Migahid, “Demotische Briefe an Götter von der Spät- bis zur Römerzeit” (PhD diss., Bayerischen Julius-Maximilians-Universität, 1986).
82. A. Loprieno, “Slavery and Servitude,” in *The UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology*, eds. Elizabeth Froid and Willeke Wendrich (Los Angeles: UCLA Press 2012), <http://digital2.library.ucla.edu/viewItem.do?ark=21198/zz002djg3j>; Hayes, *A Papyrus*, 65.
83. Hayes, *A Papyrus*, 52–53; on the practice of substitution, see also Quirke, “The Administration,” 162–63; K. Kóthay, “La notion de travail au Moyen Empire. Implications sociales,” in *L’organisation du travail en Égypte ancienne et en Mésopotamie: Colloque Aidea - Nice 4-5 octobre 2004*, ed. Bernadette Menu (Cairo: Institut français d’archéologie orientale, 2010), 155–70.

84. J. Allen, *The Heganakht Papyri* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2002).
85. P. Westcar, 12, 20; her owner is saddened by this beating, referring to her slave as “the little girl who grew up in this house.” A. Blackman, *The Story of King Kheops and the Magicians: Transcribed from Papyrus Westcar* (Reading: J.V. Books, 1988).
86. P. BM 10052, 12, 20; E. Peet, *The Great Tomb-Robberies of the Twentieth Egyptian Dynasty* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930), 155.
87. P. BM 10052 12, 8; Peet, *The Great*, 154.
88. J. Černý, “Restitution of, and Penalty Attaching to, Stolen Property in Ramesside Times,” *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 23 (1937): 186–9.
89. TADA6.3.
90. TADB8.4, referencing a man who had been enslaved and beaten on the palms and legs following a court dispute. TADB8.6 also involves corporal punishment, but it is not entirely clear that the person in question was enslaved.
91. P. Cair. Zen. III 59369; P. Diosk. 9.
92. P. Tebt. III 2.904.
93. Bauschatz, *Law and Enforcement*, 240.
94. C. Ptol. Sklav. 1; the law makes a distinction between crimes undertaken with the knowledge of the owner vs. without the knowledge of the owner, presumably to prevent collusion between the plaintiff and the slave against the slave’s owner.
95. Rotman, “Slavery,” 449.
96. Standard as part of the Abnormal Hieratic legal tradition; this oath to Amun is included in other sales as well as a promise to protect title. B. Menu, Bernadette. “Les actes de vente En Égypte ancienne, particulièrement sous les rois Kouchites et Saïtes,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 74 (1988): 165–81.
97. van der Linden, “On Dissecting,” 310–13; graphic on p. 311.
98. P. Anastasi V, 19: 2–20: 6; this document has attracted considerable attention due to the apparent similarity between the escape route favored by the two fugitives and that followed by the proto-Israelites.
99. E. Morris, *The Architecture of Imperialism: Military Bases and the Evolution of Foreign Policy in Egypt’s New Kingdom* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 240.
100. P. Cair. Zen. 1.59070; P. Cair. Zen. 2.59213; P. Cair. Zen. 4.59613; C. Ptol. Sklav. 61–85.
101. P. Zen. Pestm. 36; P. Hib. 1 54; C. Ptol. Sklav. 72; C. Ptol. Sklav. 69.
102. P. Paris. 10; P. Cair. Zen. 2.59213.
103. P. Oxy. 3.472.
104. P. Oxy. 12.1422.
105. P. Oxy. 14.1643.
106. Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, 1369.4–16; see also J. de Linage, “L’Acte d’établissement et le contrat de mariage d’un esclave sous Thoutmès III,” *BIFAO* 38 (1939): 217–34.
107. A much-discussed text. See A. Gardiner, “Adoption Extraordinary,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 26 (1941): 23–9; E. Cruz-Uribe, “A New Look at the Adoption Papyrus,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 74 (1988): 220–3; S. Allam, “A New Look at the Adoption Papyrus (Reconsidered),” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 76 (1990), 189–91; C. Eyre, “The Adoption Papyrus in Social Context,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 78 (1992), 207–21.

108. P. Louvre E7832 (Demotic), published in Donker van Heel, “Abnormal Hieratic,” 177–82; TADB3.9 (Aramaic).
109. M. Cannata. *Three Hundred Years of Death: The Egyptian Funerary Industry in the Ptolemaic Period*. Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 110 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 513; Girgis Mattha, “Rights and Duties of the Eldest Son According to the Native Egyptian Laws of Succession of the Third Century BCE,” *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts, Fouad I University, Cairo* 12, no. 2 (1950): 113–8.
110. TADB3.6 (Aramaic).
111. Biezuńska-Małowist, *L’esclavage*, 128–29.
112. Straus, “Papyrological”.
113. E.g., P. Petrie I 3, lines 9–38.
114. Teachings of Amenemope 22.1–4; Moreno García, “The ‘Other’,” 1030.
115. Instructions of Ankhshonqy 8, 11.
116. Moreno García, “The ‘Other’,” 1051; M. Chauveau, “Administration centrale et autorités locales d’Amasis à Darius,” *Méditerranées* 24 (2000): 99–109; M. Campagno, “Patronage and Other Logics of Social Organization in Ancient Egypt during the IIIrd Millennium BCE,” *Journal of Egyptian History* 7 (2014), 1–33.
117. O. Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 13; this does not mean that Patterson’s ideas should be completely rejected, but rather that they are not the best fit for describing Egyptian slavery, which would be better served by a synthetic approach such as the one suggested by D. Lewis, “Orlando Patterson, Property, and Ancient Slavery: The Definitional Problem Revisited,” in *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death*, eds. John Bodel and Walter Scheidel (Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 31–54.

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