



Ancient Egyptian Legal History

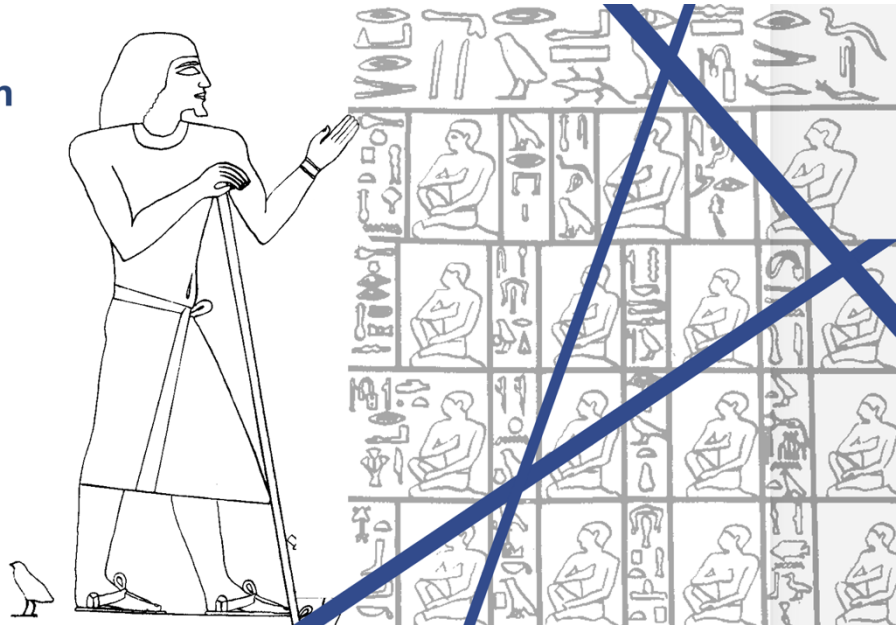
Chair for Roman Law,
Juristic Papyrology and Private Law

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Universität
Zürich^{UZH}



Seminar Guidelines

I. Description

While ancient authors such as Herodotus and Diodorus report that famous Greek statesmen were so impressed by Egyptian law that they drew inspiration from it for their own legislation, ancient Egypt has for a long time been largely ignored in modern legal historiography. One reason for this is certainly that the Egyptian sources in hieroglyphic, hieratic or demotic script were hardly accessible for «classically» trained legal historians. A further reason may have been the assumption, more or less explicitly shared to this day by many legal historians, of the superiority of Roman law, so that earlier legal systems are regarded from the outset as primitive and thus dogmatically less interesting. Yet the fundamental questions that the ancient Egyptians asked themselves were obviously the same ones that led to the formation of our legal systems: How to achieve peaceful coexistence in society and also within the family? Who decides in disputes between two parties, and on what basis? Thus, already from a comparative law perspective, ancient Egyptian law is a rewarding field of study. In the nearly 3000 years of Egyptian legal history, moreover, both continuities and developments can be discerned, which make a diachronic examination of specific realms of the law just as engrossing.

Through selected sources spanning from the Old Kingdom to the Roman period, we will examine in detail the areas of family and inheritance law. Not only is the Egyptian documentation on these topics particularly rich, but also diverse, as it offers us insight into the various strategies both for conflict resolution and for conflict avoidance that Egyptian law provided. Through these sources, the participants in the Seminar will become acquainted with one of the oldest legal cultures in historical memory, explore the challenges of reconstructing it today, and gain a direct insight into the lives of men and women who for the Greeks and Romans already represented humanity's most venerable antiquity.

The number of participants is limited to twelve. The participation and the written paper can be in German as well as in English.



II. Topic List

Topic 1: Succession Dispute in the 6th Dynasty (2350–2150 BC): *P. Berlin 9010*

Topic 2: Two Testaments of the 12th Dynasty (1850–1800 BC): *P. Kahun I. 1 and VIII. 1*

Topic 3: Inheritance Disputes Across Generations: *Funerary Inscriptions of Mes* (18th-19th Dynasty, ca. 1550-1200 BC)

Topic 4: The Inheritance of a Childless Couple: *P. Ashmolean Museum 1945.96* (20th Dynasty, ca. 1190–1070 BC)

Topic 5: A Mother and eight Children: *P. Ashmolean Museum 1945.97* (20th Dynasty, ca. 1150 BC)

Topic 6: Testament Regulations from the New Kingdom: *Stele Cairo CG 34016, Amarah Stele and Stele Cairo JE 31882*

Topic 7: Egyptian Law of Inheritance under Foreign Rule: The Provisions of the Code of Hermopolis (3rd Century BC)

Topic 8: One House and Several Heirs: *P. Brit. Mus. EA 10446* (230 BC)

Topic 9: Egyptian Courts under Macedonian Rule: A Judgment in Siut (*P. Brit. Mus. EA 10591 r.*, 170 BC)

Topic 10: The Tortuous Path of an Inheritance: A Dispute between two Women over Inheritance Claims: *P. Köln XVII 675* (114 BC)

Topic 11: A Cavalryman with seven Children: *P. Moscow 123* (68 BC)

Topic 12: Eight Siblings in Roman Egypt: *P. Dime III 37* (21/2 BC)

III. Process of participation

1. The Seminar will be published on **March 9th, 2023**.
2. The RWF registration tool is open from **March 9th to 21st, 2023**.
3. On **March 27, 2023**, the seminar allocation can be viewed in the registration tool.
4. By **March 30, 2023**, please notify the chair (lst.alonso@rwi.uzh.ch) of your three topics of choice, in order of preference, should you have any. Should you join later or miss the date, please inform the chair of your choice and preference as soon as possible. Please also add whether your thesis is a Bachelor's or Master's thesis.
5. The final assignment of topics will be made at the preliminary meeting on **April 18th 2023 at 12:15**.

IV. Writing the thesis and attending the seminar



1. The presentation of the Seminar will take place on **April 18th, 2023, at 12:15**. If you are unable to attend this date, please contact the chair. The meeting will take place virtually via Zoom with the following Link: <https://uzh.zoom.us/j/659565220?pwd=Vk0yckRpZDNFRHEybUdMRnFjUnRiQT09>
2. Submission of an outline: Please send an outline, with the main questions to be explored, possible hypotheses and a preliminary literature list to the chair (2-3 pages) no later than **Sunday, September 10th, 2023**: lst.alonso@rwi.uzh.ch.
3. Writing of the actual thesis.
4. Submission of a preliminary version: Please send a preliminary version of your thesis to the chair by **Sunday, November 5th, 2023** at the latest: lst.alonso@rwi.uzh.ch.
5. On November **14th to 17th, 2023**, the oral presentations will be rehearsed in front of the chair assistants. These presentations serve as preparation. They are obligatory, however not relevant for grading.
6. **Seminar sessions**: The seminar will take place on **24th/25th November 2023**. It consists of an oral presentation of your thesis (approx. 30 minutes) and a subsequent discussion. **Both the presentation and the participation in the discussion are compulsory for all participants.**
7. **The deadline** for submitting the written thesis is **Sunday, December 10, 2023 at 23:59**. A physical copy is not needed: please send your thesis as a PDF and Word file to lst.alonso@rwi.uzh.ch.

Please note that the deadlines have been set in consideration of the exam session in winter and the spring break in April. If these do not correspond to your individual work rhythm or your semester planning, you are always free to complete and submit to us earlier the individual stages, such as disposition, preliminary version, etc. thus receiving also earlier feedback. **The deadlines, however, remain set and binding as time limit.**

V. Length and formalities of the thesis

Bachelor's theses are awarded 6 ECTS and must be approximately 25 pages long (about 62,500 characters). Master's theses can be written to the extent of 12 ECTS, which corresponds to a thesis of approximately 40 pages (about 100,000 characters).

For the scope and formalities of the thesis, please refer to the separately published information sheet on the homepage of the chair (see Documents).