

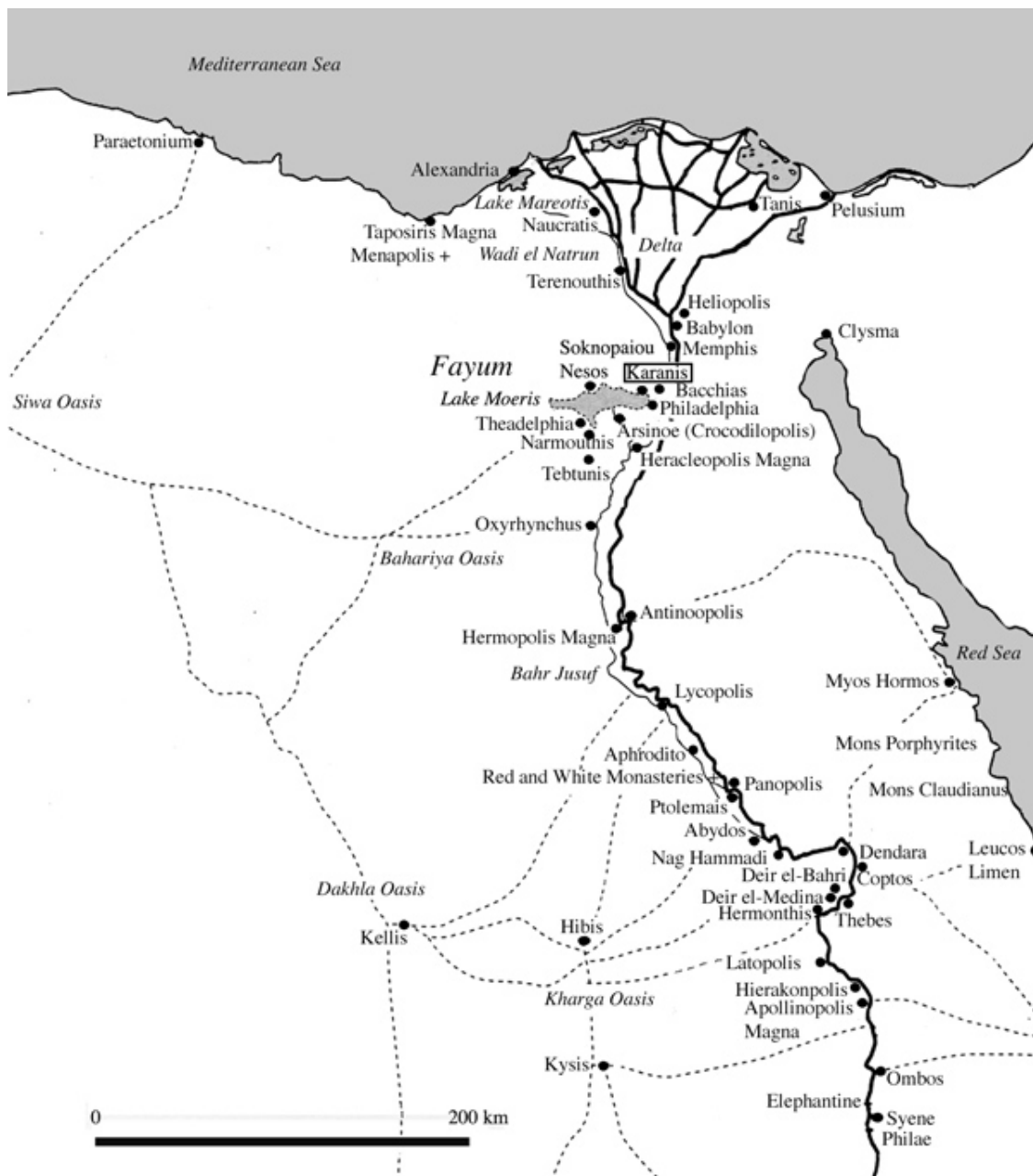
Egypt after the Pharaohs: Ethnic Identity in Graeco-Roman Egypt

Instructor: Rachel Mairs
rachel_mairs@brown.edu
401-863-2306

Office hours: Rhode Island Hall 202. Tues 2-3pm, Thurs 11am-12pm, or by appointment.

Course Description

Egypt under Greek and Roman rule (from c. 332 BC) was a diverse place, its population including Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, Romans, Nubians, Arabs, and even Indians. This course will explore the sometimes controversial subject of ethnic identity and its manifestations in the material and textual record from Graeco-Roman Egypt, through a series of case studies involving individual people and communities. Topics will include multilingualism, ethnic conflict and discrimination, legal systems, and gender, using evidence from contemporary texts on papyrus as well as recent archaeological excavations and field survey projects.



Course Objectives

By the end of the course, participants should understand and be able to articulate:

- how Graeco-Roman Egypt functioned as a diverse multiethnic, multilingual society.
- the legal and political frameworks within which this diversity was organised and negotiated.
- how research in the social sciences on multilingualism and ethnic identity can be utilised to provide productive and interesting approaches to the textual and archaeological evidence from Graeco-Roman Egypt.

Students will also gain a broad overview of Egypt's history from its conquest by Alexander the Great, through its rule by the Ptolemies, to the defeat of Cleopatra and Mark Antony and its integration into the Roman Empire, to the rise of Christianity.

Course Requirements

Attendance and participation (10%); assignments (2 short essays of 4-5 pages) and quizzes/map exercises (50%); extended essay on individual topics to be decided in consultation with me (c. 5000 words) and in-class presentation (40%).

Assignments are expected to be completed and handed in in a timely manner, and any anticipated problems (schedule clashes, etc.) discussed with me well in advance of due dates.

No knowledge of ancient languages is assumed, but students with a background in Classical languages and/or Egyptian may choose to put these skills to use in their extended essay.

Background Reading

The following books and articles will come in useful in particular sessions, with required readings for specific classes noted below, but participants may wish to get a 'head start'. Selective reading of the edited volumes or handbooks can be used to get an overview of the topic and sources. (Supplementary readings indicated in the weekly schedule, below, are intended principally as additional bibliography for the extended essay, or for those simply interested in following up topics discussed in class.)

Papyrology (Week 3):

Bagnall, R. S. (1995) *Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History*. London; New York: Routledge. [A brief and very useful intro to writing history from papyrological sources.]

Bagnall, R. S. ed. (2009) *The Oxford Handbook of Papyrology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [A number of useful articles: read selectively and/or use as a reference book.]

Multicultural Egypt (Week 6 onwards):

Thompson, D. J. (2001) "Hellenistic Hellenes: The Case of Ptolemaic Egypt," in Irad Malkin (ed.), *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, 301-322. Washington, D.C.: Center for Hellenic Studies; Trustees for Harvard University. [Malkin's 'Introduction' to this volume provides a theoretical context.]

Johnson, J. H. ed. (1992) *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and Beyond*. Chicago: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. [A large collection of short articles which, again, it may be helpful to use as a reference work or dip in and out of. A couple of specific articles will be distributed during the course.]

A skim through the following may also be useful:

Goudriaan, K. (1988) *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt*. Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben.

Bilde, P., et al. eds. (1992) *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt*. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

Current archaeological work on Hellenistic and Roman Egypt (Week 4). These articles contain good summaries and further references on excavations at particular sites:

Bagnall, R. S. (2001) "Archaeological Work on Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, 1995-2000," *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, 227-243.

Bagnall, R. S. and P. Davoli (2011) "Archaeological Work on Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, 2000-2009," *American Journal of Archaeology* 115, 103-157.

Further suggested readings are given in the weekly schedule, below.

Weekly Schedule

1-2: Egypt in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods

Historical introduction to Egypt under Greek and Roman rule. The main topics covered will be:

- The last days of the Pharaohs: Egypt under Nubian and Persian kings;
- Egypt's conquest by Alexander the Great, and the establishment of the Ptolemaic kingdom;
- Ptolemaic Egypt in decline;
- Egypt becomes a Roman province: Cleopatra, Julius Caesar, Mark Antony, Octavian/Augustus;
- Egypt in the Roman Empire;
- The rise of Christianity;
- Egypt in Late Antiquity: from Byzantine rule to the Arab conquest.

Reading one of the following general histories of Hellenistic and Roman Egypt will provide a good overview:

Bowman, A. K. (1986) *Egypt After the Pharaohs, 332 BC - AD 642: From Alexander to the Arab Conquest*. London: British Museum Publications.

Hölbl, G. (2001) *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*. London: Routledge.

3: Ethnicity and Archaeology

Ethnicity is a problematic and controversial topic in archaeology. This session will provide a brief introduction to the concept's evolution and fluctuating popularity in scholarship (in archaeology and in the social sciences in general), and suggest some ways in which we can see expressions of 'ethnic identity' in the material and written record from Egypt.

Barth, F. (1969) "Introduction," in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Organization of Cultural Difference*, 9-38. Bergen; London: Universitetsforlaget; Allen & Unwin.

Jones, S. (1998) *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present*. London: Routledge. [Introduction.]

Supplementary:

Smith, S. T. (2003) *Wretched Kush: Ethnic Identities and Boundaries in Egypt's Nubian Empire*. London: Routledge. [Good as an extended case study.]

4: Oxyrhynchus: Introduction to Papyrology

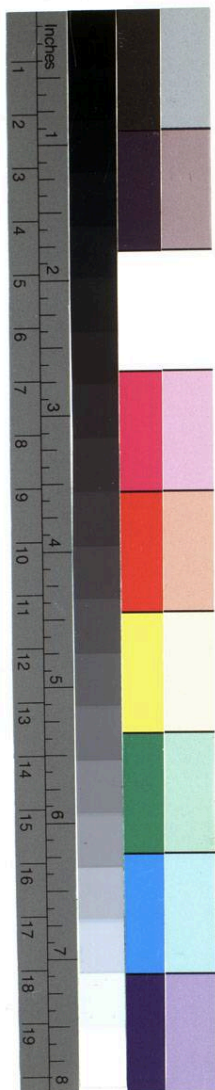
Many of the topics covered in subsequent weeks will make extensive use of texts on papyrus. This week's classes will introduce some of the basic tools and resources for reading and using papyrological documents: terminology and abbreviations; how texts are edited and published; internet resources (e.g. the portal www.papyri.info); new technology for reading texts; interdisciplinary collaboration between scholars (specialists in Egyptian, Greek, Aramaic, etc.); the excavation of papyri. These will be explored through the case study of the city of Oxyrhynchus, with further discussion of how the Oxyrhynchus papyri have been used to reconstruct the social and family lives, identities and economic activities of the people of the city. A portion of class time will be devoted to practical demonstration of online resources, including how such tools may be utilised by those with no background in ancient languages.

Bagnall, R. S. (1995) *Reading Papyri, Writing Ancient History*. London; New York: Routledge.

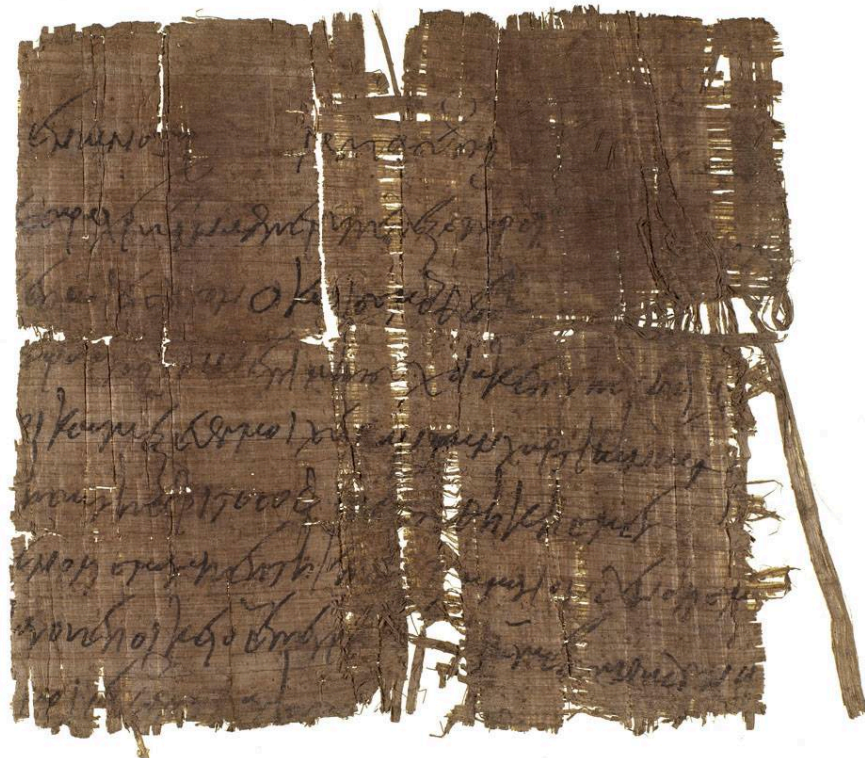
Parsons, P. (2007) *The City of the Sharp-Nosed Fish: Greek Lives in Roman Egypt*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Supplementary:

Bowman, A. K. eds. (2007) *Oxyrhynchus: A City and its Texts*. London: Egypt Exploration Society.



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5: Tebtunis 1: Archaeology and Papyri

6: Tebtunis 2: Multilingualism

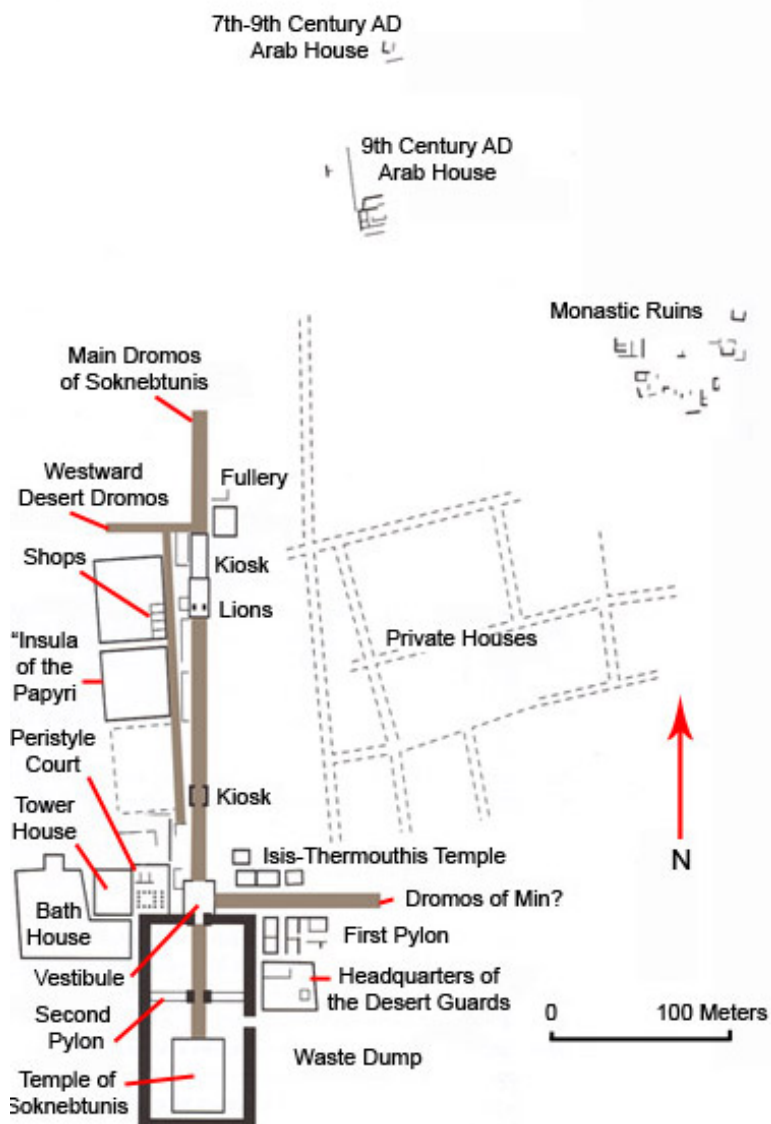
The town of Tebtunis, in the Fayum, is a good example of a site where archaeological data and papyri can be used in tandem (for this and subsequent sessions, information on the most up-to-date field reports can be found in the two review articles in the *American Journal of Archaeology* cited above). Week 2 of this topic will use papyri from Tebtunis to look at individual and societal multilingualism in Graeco-Roman Egypt.

Clarysse, W. (2010) "Bilingual Papyrological Archives," in Arietta Papaconstantinou (ed.), *The Multilingual Experience in Egypt, from the Ptolemies to the Abbāsids*, 47-72. Farnham: Ashgate.

Fewster, P. (2002) "Bilingualism in Roman Egypt," in James N. Adams, Mark Janse and Simon Swain (eds.), *Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text*, 220-245. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Supplementary / for reference:

Tait, W. J. (1977) *Papyri from Tebtunis in Egyptian and in Greek (P. Tebt. Tait)*. (Texts from Excavations, Third Memoir.) London: Egypt Exploration Society.



7-8: Elephantine: Diverse Communities 1

Elephantine, at the southern boundary of Egypt, offers an invaluable opportunity to look at the longue duree: the interaction of languages and ethnic groups from Pharaonic times through into Late Antiquity and beyond. Among the communities discussed will be Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, Romans, Nubians and Persians, in their internal group dynamics and their interactions with others.

Porten, B. et al. (1996) *The Elephantine Papyri in English: Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change*. Leiden: E. J. Brill. [Read the Introduction, texts from other sections will be distributed and discussed in class.]

9: Zenon: Managing Land and People

A discussion of the archive of Zenon, an estate-manager in the third century BC, and one of the most famous names in papyrology. Zenon's business papers contain a wealth of information on social and economic affairs on a wealthy Greek official's estate in the Egyptian countryside.

Clarysse, W. and K. Vandorpe (1995) *Zenon, un homme d'affaires grec à l'ombre des pyramides*. Louvain: Presses universitaires de Louvain. [Translated excerpts will be circulated.]

10: Apollonia: Gender and Ethnicity

Gender and ethnic identities in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt were inextricably intertwined. Inter-marriage between ethnic groups was common, and changing strategies were adopted for deciding the 'official' ethnicity of the offspring of such marriages. In addition, women were treated differently under Egyptian and Greek law, the major difference being that in the Greek courts, a woman needed a guardian to act for her. The businesswoman Apollonia-Senmonthis, a bilingual, mixed-descent product of Hellenistic Egypt, knew how to play the system. Her business and personal papers show how she switched between languages, legal systems and even names according to what was financially or socially advantageous.

Vandorpe, K. (2002) "Apollonia, A Businesswoman in a Multicultural Society (Pathyris, 2nd-1st Centuries B.C.)," in H. Melaerts and L. Mooren (eds.), *Le rôle et le statut de la femme en Égypte hellénistique, romaine et byzantine*, 325-336. (Studia Hellenistica 37.) Leuven: Peeters.

van Minnen, P. (1998) "Berenice, A Business Woman from Oxyrhynchus: Appearance and Reality," in Arthur Verhoogt and S. P. Vleeming (eds.), *The Two Faces of Graeco-Roman Egypt: Greek and Demotic and Greek-Demotic Texts and Studies Presented to P. W. Pestman*, 59-70. (Papyrologica Lugduno-Batava 30.) Leiden: E. J. Brill.

Supplementary:

Rowlandson, J. (1998) *Women and Society in Greek and Roman Egypt: A Sourcebook*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



11: Kerkeosiris: Diverse Communities 2

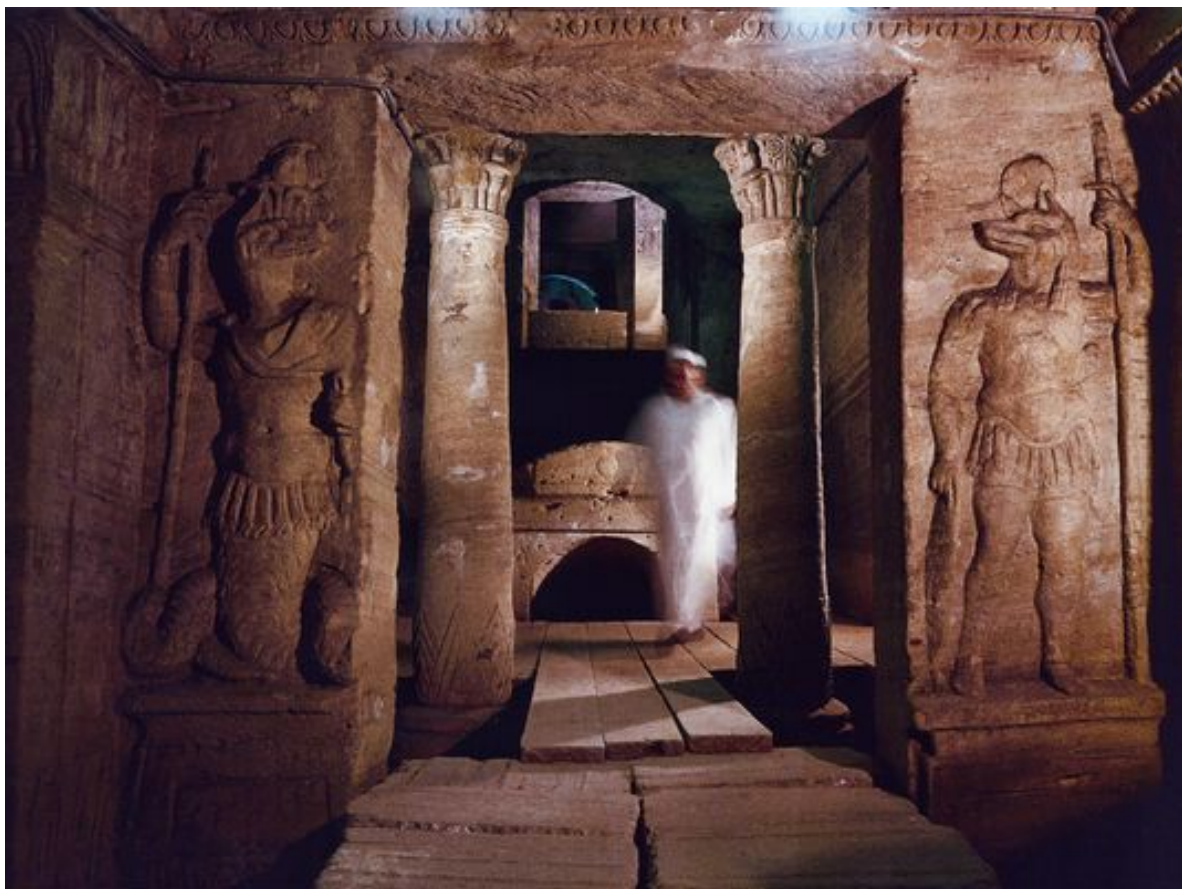
This topic will primarily be dealt with using texts and short articles distributed in class, but the following are fuller studies for supplementary reading:

Crawford, D. J. (1971) *Kerkeosiris: An Egyptian Village in the Ptolemaic Period*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Verhoogt, A. (1998) *Menches, Komogrammateus of Kerkeosiris: The Doings and Dealings of a Village Scribe in the Late Ptolemaic Period (120-110 B.C.)*. Leiden; New York: E. J. Brill.

12: Herakleides vs Psenobastis: Ethnic Conflict and Discrimination

Is there evidence of ethnic conflict and discrimination in Graeco-Roman Egypt? The system certainly favoured certain groups: tax privileges were accorded to Greeks. A number of papyri contain the complaints of individuals who believed they had been unfairly treated because of their ethnicity. Among Zenon's papers is a letter from a camel-driver, probably an Arab, who protests that he has been badly treated and given only bad local wine to drink, because he is a 'barbarian' and does not know how to 'hellenizein' 'act like a Greek/speak Greek' (*P.Col. Zen. II 66*, 256/5 BC). The Greek Herakleides writes an unintentionally humorous petition of complaint against an Egyptian woman named Psenobastis who emptied a chamberpot over his head when he was passing through her village, and then assaulted him in the street (*P. Ent. 79*, 218 BC). Ptolemaios, a religious recluse in the Memphis Serapeum, was threatened by a lynch mob of Egyptians because he was a Greek (*UPZ I 8*, 161 BC). This session will also explore the physical spaces – village streetplans, temple complexes, households - in which such interaction and conflict might take place.



Catacombs of Kom es-Shoqafa, Alexandria: note the Egyptian animal-headed gods dressed as Roman soldiers.

13: Alexandria: A Multicultural Metropolis, c. 331 BC –AD 1957

To conclude, a run through the history of the city of Alexandria, from its foundation as a new Greek city in 331 BC to the mass exodus of Greeks and other foreigners under the Nasser regime in the 1950s and 1960s - from the city of the Ptolemies to the last years of the diverse, multiethnic metropolis depicted in the works of Lawrence Durrell, E. M. Forster, Naguib Mahfouz, and others. Special attention will be given to the work of the poet Constantine Cavafy (1863-1933), and his evocation of the cultural complexity of the Hellenistic and Roman eastern Mediterranean to reflect on his own society.

www.cavafy.com

Selected poems from Cavafy, C. P. (2008) *The Collected Poems, translated by Evangelos Sachperoglou*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. [Or many other translations.]

If you want to take a further look at some novels and films featuring ancient and modern Alexandria for your own interest (not all of them light relief!):

Lawrence Durrell, *The Alexandria Quartet (Justine, Balthazar, Mountolive, Clea)*. 1957-1960.

E. M. Forster, *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*. 1922.

Naguib Mahfouz, *Miramar*. 1967.

Lindsey Davis, *Alexandria*. 2009. Historical crime novel.

Agora (Alejandro Amenabar, 2009).

The Yacoubian Building (Marwan Hamed, 2006). Set primarily in Cairo, but Alexandria features.

Also a 2002 novel by Alaa al-Aswany.

Cleopatra (Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1963). The Elizabeth Taylor version; of dubious historical accuracy!

14: Reading week / preparation of extended essay.

15: Final presentations.