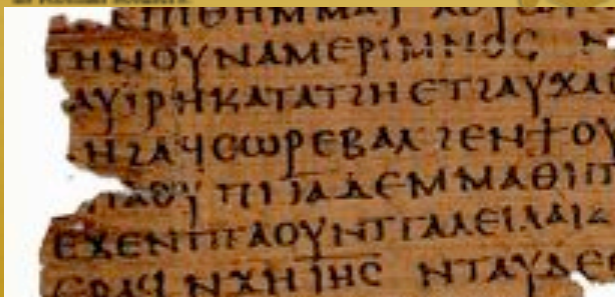




# EGYPT1550 Ethnic Identity in Graeco-Roman Egypt



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



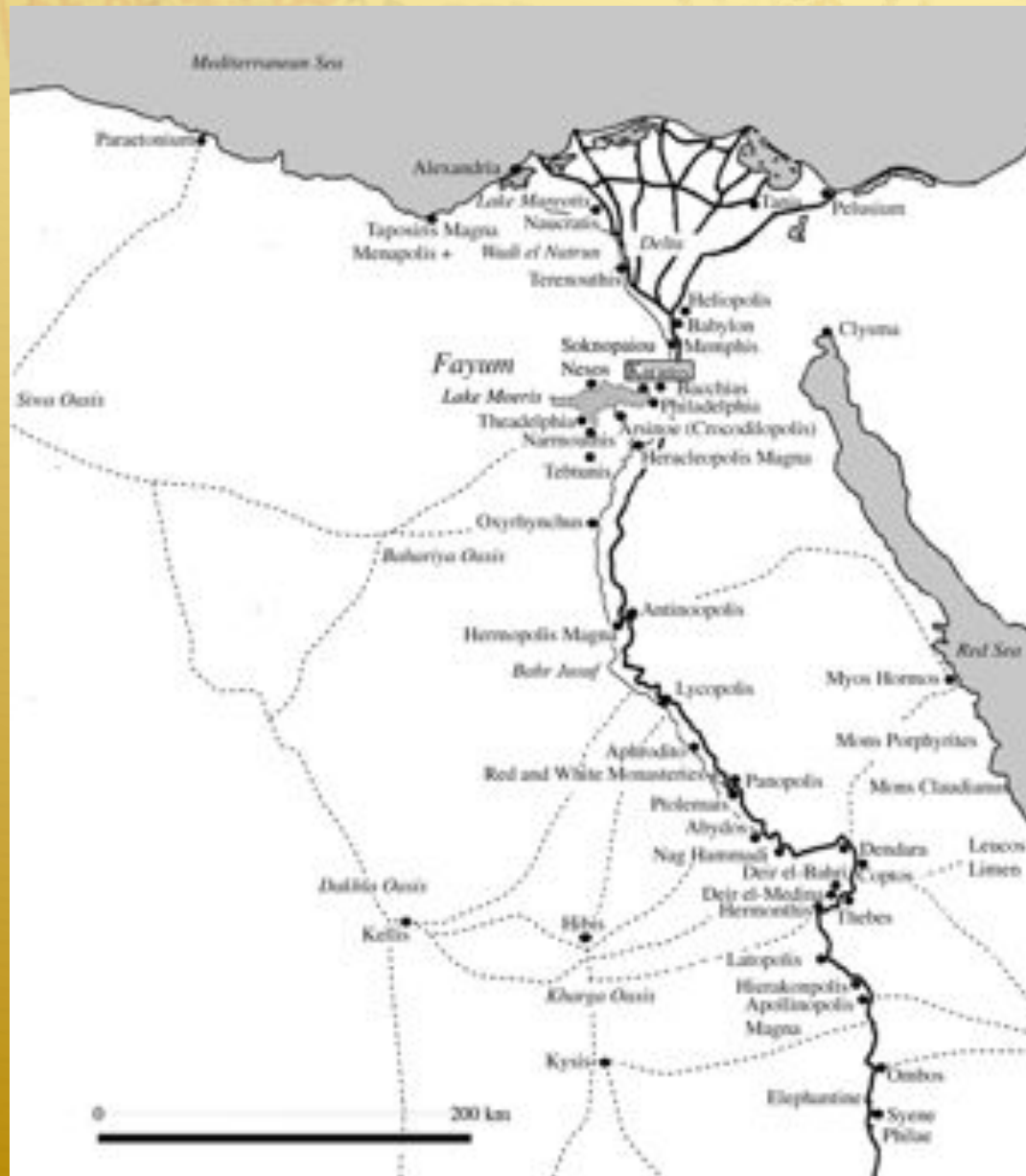
Instructor: Rachel Mairs  
Tu Th 9:00-10:20



Egypt under Greek and Roman rule was the original 'multicultural society', with communities of Egyptians, Greeks, Jews, Romans, Nubians, Arabs and even Indians. This course will explore the sometimes controversial subject of ethnic identity in Egypt 'after the Pharaohs', through a focus on the everyday lives of individual people and communities. Topics will include:

- multilingualism;
- ethnic conflict and discrimination;
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Evidence will be drawn from ancient texts on papyrus as well as recent archaeological excavations.

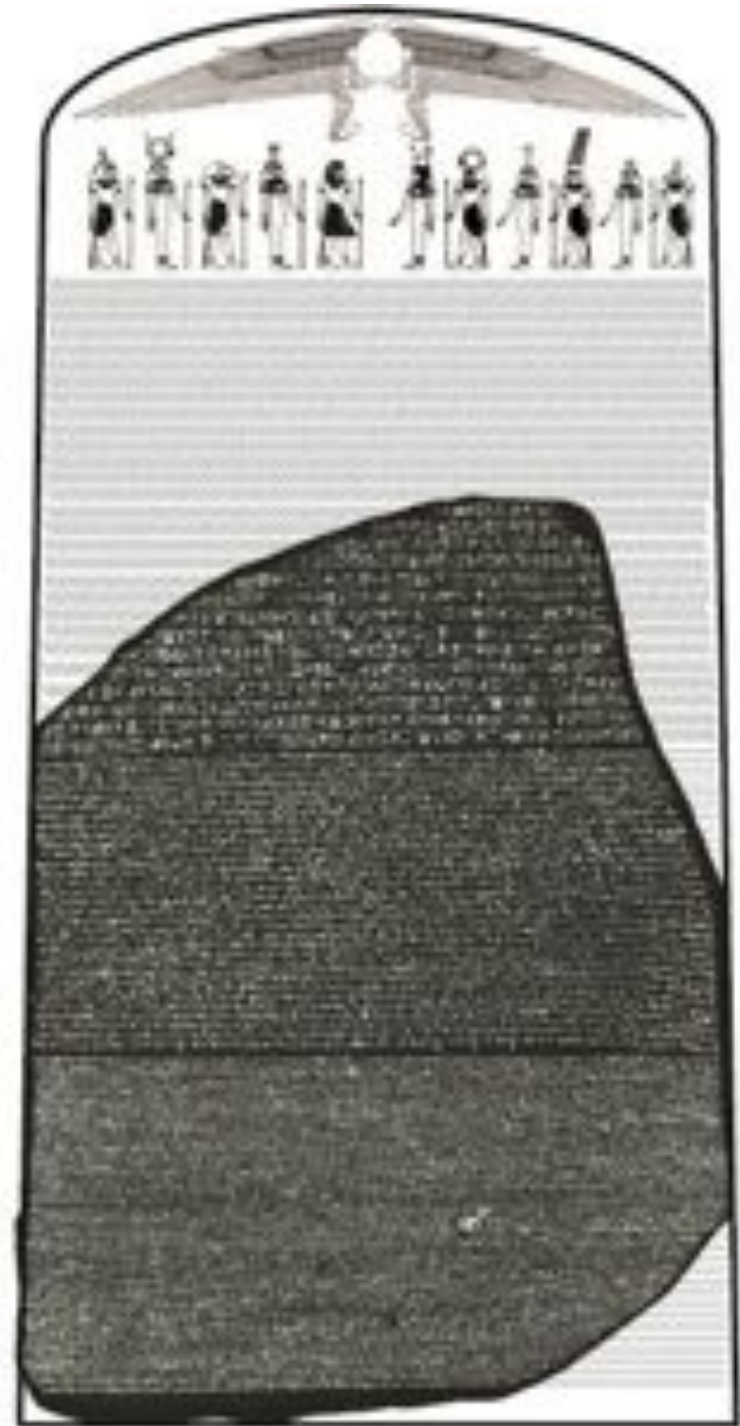


Egypt 'after the Pharaohs':

Conquests by Alexander the Great (322 BC), the Romans (30 BC) and the Arabs (AD 641)

# Co-existing Languages and Scripts

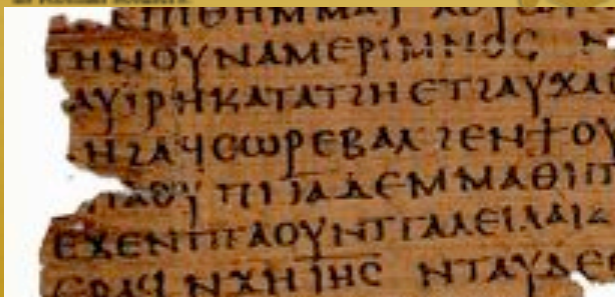
- ✦ Greek was the primary language of the administration under Ptolemaic and Roman rule.
- ✦ The majority of the population will always have spoken Egyptian.
- ✦ Egyptian had two written forms in this period: Demotic, in a script derived from hieroglyphs, and Coptic, in modified Greek script.
- ✦ 'Minority' languages for which we have a *written* record include, Latin, Aramaic and Carian.
- ✦ Languages for which we do not have a written record include Nubian, Trogodyte and others.



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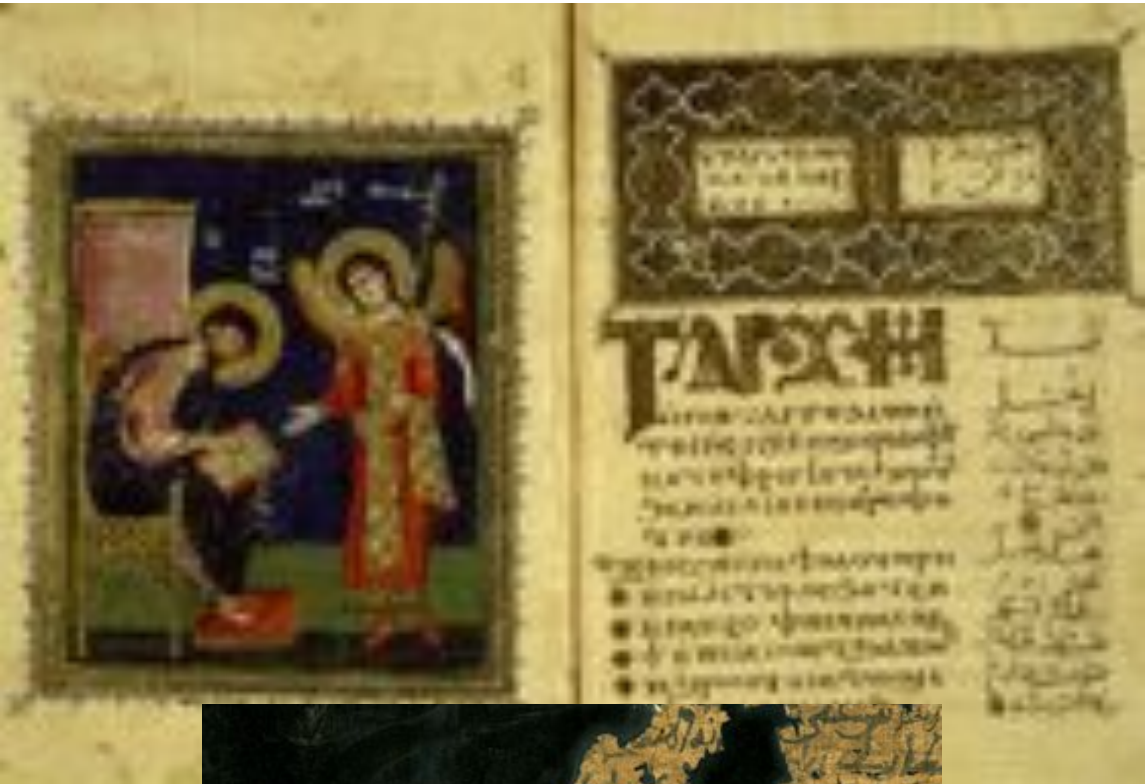
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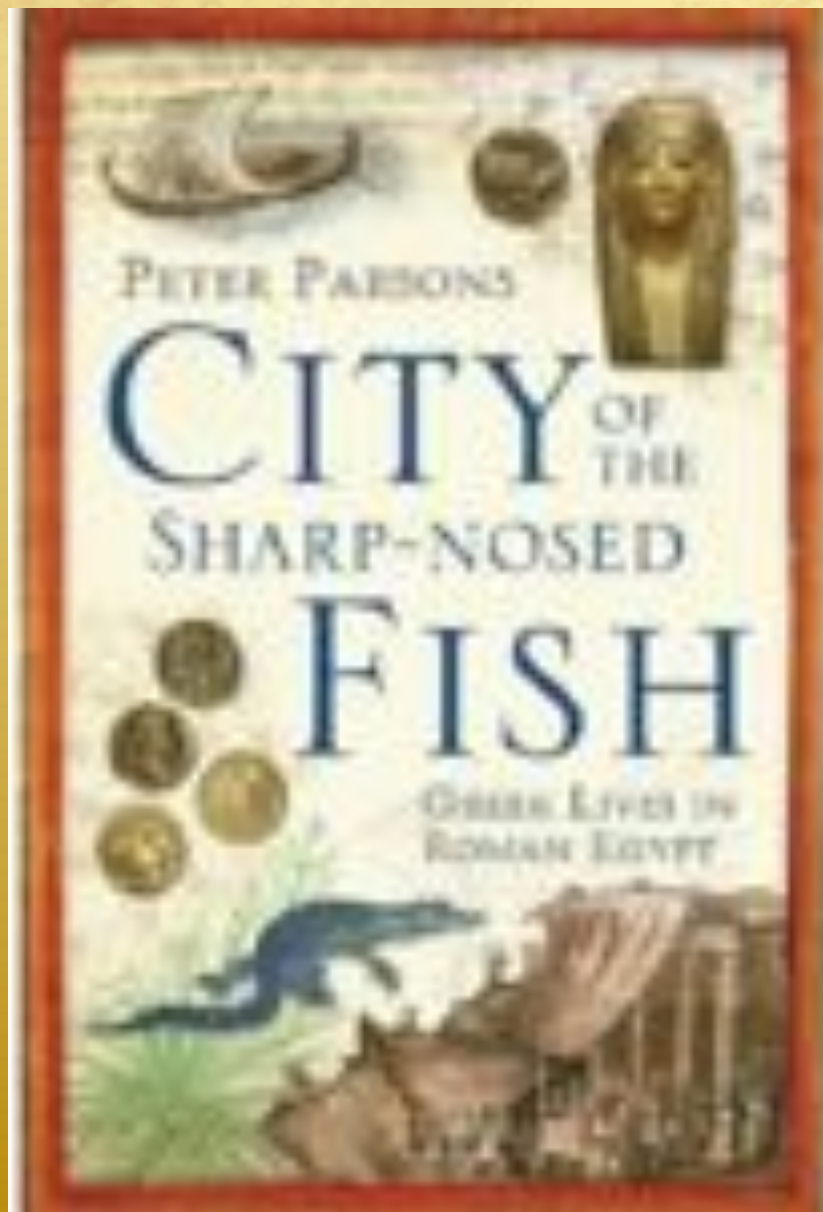
Fragment of ancient papyrus with handwritten text in a cursive script, likely from the Dead Sea Scrolls. The fragment is heavily damaged and irregularly shaped, with a large hole in the center. The text is arranged in several columns, though many characters are illegible due to the damage and fading.

Fragment of ancient papyrus with handwritten text in a cursive script, likely from the Dead Sea Scrolls. The fragment is rectangular with a hole at the top center, possibly from a binding. The text is arranged in several columns, with some words appearing to be in a different script or dialect than the surrounding text. The fragment is heavily damaged and irregularly shaped.

A fragment of a papyrus scroll with handwritten text in Coptic script. The text is arranged in columns and includes several lines of red ink, likely indicating specific words or headings. The fragment is dark and appears to be a piece of an ancient document.



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APPROACHING THE ANCIENT WORLD

READING PAPYRI,  
WRITING ANCIENT  
HISTORY



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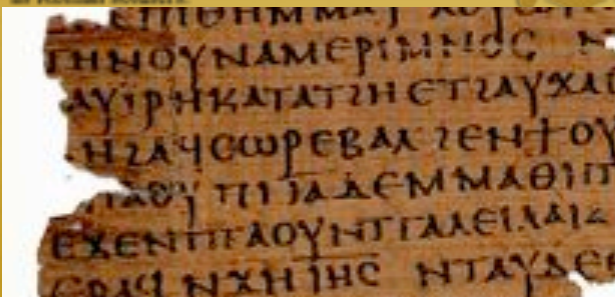
ROGER S. BAGNALL



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

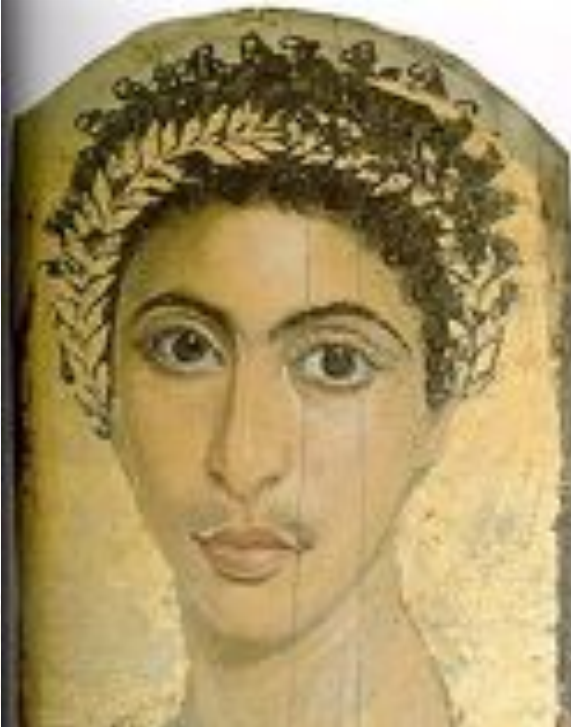


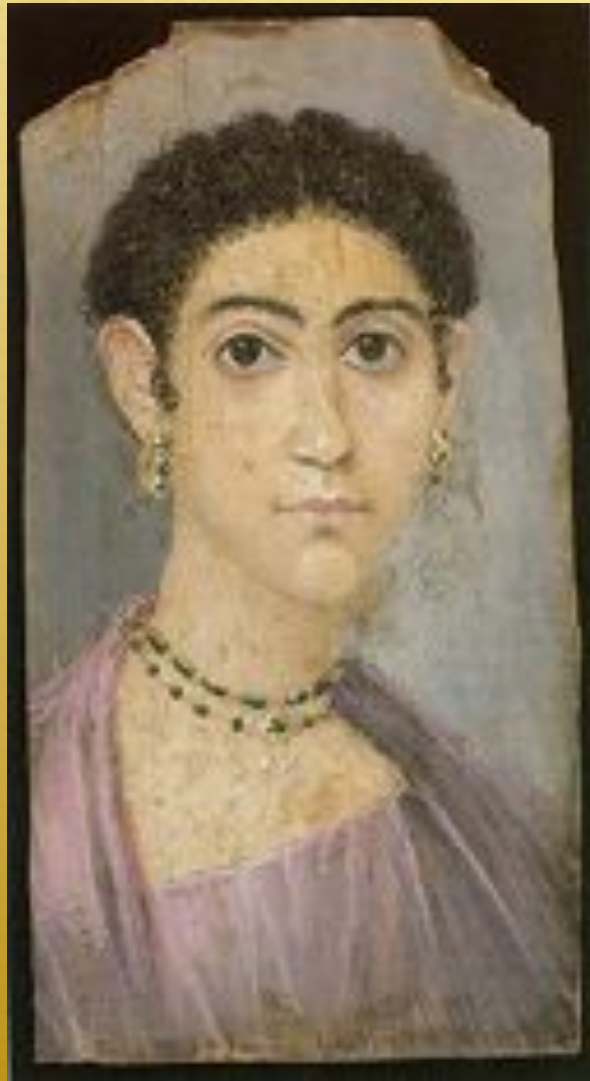
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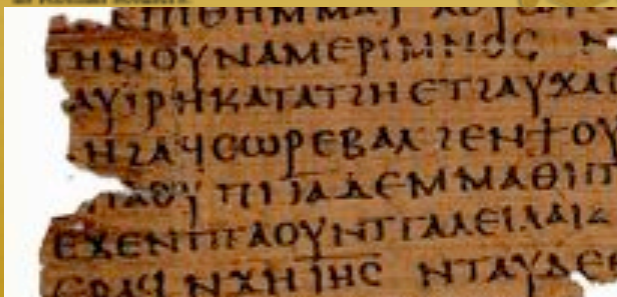
'Hermione the  
schoolteacher',  
Fayum, Roman Period



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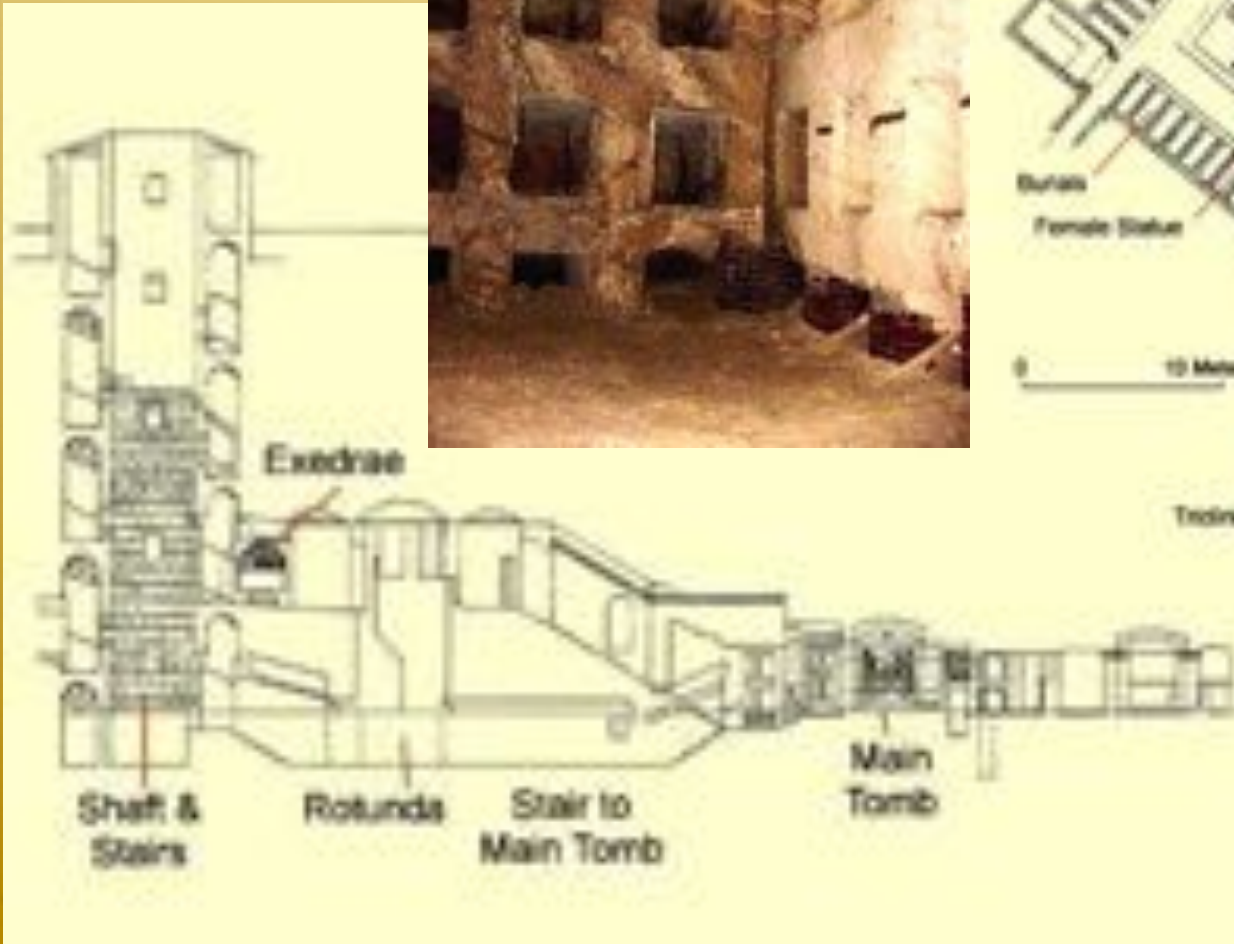
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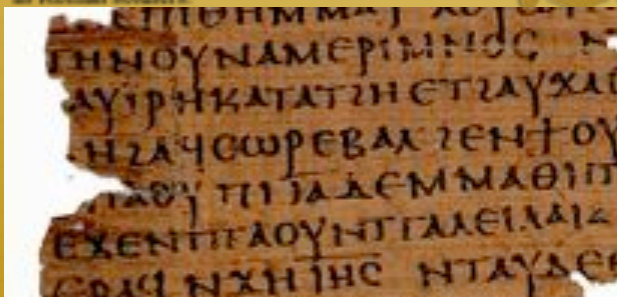




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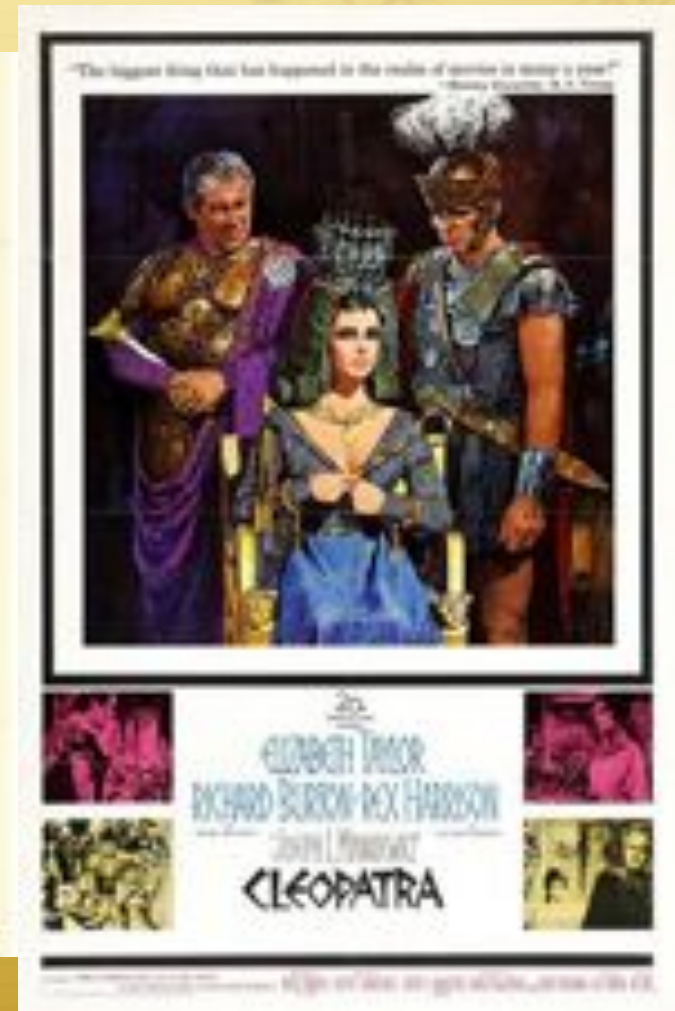


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# Cleopatra VII

For her beauty, as we are told, was in itself not altogether incomparable, nor such as to strike those who saw her; but converse with her had an irresistible charm, and her presence, combined with the persuasiveness of her discourse and the character which was somehow diffused about her behaviour towards others, had something stimulating about it. 3 There was sweetness also in the tones of her voice; and her tongue, like an instrument of many strings, she could readily turn to whatever language she pleased, so that in her interviews with Barbarians she very seldom had need of an interpreter, but made her replies to most of them herself and unassisted, whether they were Ethiopians, Troglodytes, Hebrews, Arabians, Syrians, Medes or Parthians. 4 Nay, it is said that she knew the speech of many other peoples also, although the kings of Egypt before her had not even made an effort to learn the native language, and some actually gave up their Macedonian dialect.

(Plutarch, *Life of Antony* 27.)

Wiki:

<http://proteus.brown.edu/ethnicidentity12/Home>

(pwd: ethnicity12)

Office hours:

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

Questions?

rachel\_mairs@brown.edu