

Lecturer

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Beyond Hybridity: Being Egyptian under Macedonian and Roman Rule

In the mid-first millennium B.C.E., Egypt was increasingly integrated into the economic and cultural world of the broader Mediterranean basin. Foreigners, especially Greek speakers, immigrated to Egypt and introduced new ways of living, worshiping, and dying to the towns and villages of Egypt. In the late 4th century, Egypt was conquered by the Macedonian warlord Alexander the Great, ushering in an era of profound political change as Egypt was ruled by kings and queens descended from Alexander's general, Ptolemy. At the turn of the millennium, Egypt's last native-born ruler, Cleopatra VII, was defeated at the Battle of Actium along with her Roman ally and lover, Marcus Antonius. For the next 400 years, Egypt was a Roman province, and the residents of Egypt witnessed the gradual diminution of their language and traditional religion, while benefiting from the extraordinary connectivity that membership in the Roman Empire entailed. In this lecture we will consider the ways that life in Egypt under Macedonian and Roman rule was transformed by these political events, while at the same time observing that traditional Egyptian beliefs and practices continued to dictate the rhythms of life across Egypt. The result was a society that was neither Egyptian, in the most traditional sense, nor Macedonian or Roman, but uniquely situated at a crossroads of all three cultures.