

DEFENDERS, CONQUERORS AND VANQUISHED

Lecture 24: The Ptolemaic Empire



SEMINAR WEEK

GO TO SEMINARS!

Useful Bibliography

- <http://www.tyndalehouse.com/Egypt/ptolemies/ptolemies.htm>
- Hölbl, G. *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*. Translated by T. Saavedra. London, 2001.
- Stephens, S.A. *Seeing Double*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Thompson, D.J. *Memphis under the Ptolemies*. Princeton, 1988.

Egypt

- Importance of local religion
- King as “Horus”
- King as creator and restorer of *Maat*

Alexander in Egypt

- Alexandria
- Siwa
- Coronation at Memphis?

Ptolemy son of Lagos

- Born c. 367
- Son of Lagos and Arsinoe
 - ▣ Prominent Macedonian family
- Autumn 330 *somatophylax* of Alexander
- Distinguished commands
- Marriage at Susa
- History of Alexander

Ptolemy the Satrap

- At Babylon: Ptolemy takes Egypt as his satrapy
- 323: Kleomenes
 - ▣ Governor under Alexander
 - ▣ Reduced to hyparch under Ptolemy
 - ▣ Removed
- 322: Intervenes in Cyrene

Alexander's Body

First they prepared a coffin of the proper size for the body, made of hammered gold, and the space about the body they filled with spices such as could make the body sweet smelling and incorruptible. Upon this chest there had been placed a cover of gold, matching it to a nicety, and fitting about its upper rim. Over this was laid a magnificent purple robe embroidered with gold, beside which they placed the arms of the deceased, wishing the design of the whole to be in harmony with his accomplishments. Then they set up next to it the covered carriage that was to carry it. At the top of the carriage was built a vault of gold, eight cubits wide and twelve long, covered with overlapping scales set with precious stones. Beneath the roof all along the work was a rectangular cornice of gold, from which projected heads of goat-stags in high relief. Gold rings two palms broad were suspended from these, and through the rings there ran a festive garland beautifully decorated in bright colours of all kinds. At the ends there were tassels of network suspending large bells, so that any who were approaching heard the sound from a great distance. On each corner of the vault on each side was a golden figure of Victory holding a trophy. The colonnade that supported the vault was of gold with Ionic capitals. Within the colonnade was a golden net, made of cords the thickness of a finger, which carried four long painted tablets, their ends adjoining, each equal in length to a side of the colonnade....

Diodorus 18.26

Alexander's Body

When Arrhidaeus had spent nearly two years in making ready this work, he brought the body of the king from Babylon to Egypt. Ptolemy, moreover, doing honour to Alexander, went to meet it with an army as far as Syria, and, receiving the body, deemed it worthy of the greatest consideration. He decided for the present not to send it to Ammon, but to entomb it in the city that had been founded by Alexander himself, which lacked little of being the most renowned of the cities of the inhabited earth. There he prepared a precinct worthy the glory of Alexander in size and construction. Entombing him in this and honouring him with sacrifices such as are paid to demigods and with magnificent games, he won fair requital not only from men but also from the gods. For men, because of his graciousness and nobility of heart, came together eagerly from all sides to Alexandria and gladly enrolled for the campaign, although the army of the kings was about to fight against that of Ptolemy; and, even though the risks were manifest and great, yet all of them willingly took upon themselves at their personal risk the preservation of Ptolemy's safety. The gods also saved him unexpectedly from the greatest dangers on account of his courage and his honest treatment of all his friends.

Diodorus 18.28

War with Perdikkas

- Perdikkas invades
- Ptolemy defeats him twice

These things having been done, the Macedonians with Perdikkas became much more exasperated with him, but they turned with favour toward Ptolemy. When night had come, the encampment was filled with lamentations and mourning, so many men having been senselessly lost without a blow from an enemy, and of these no fewer than a thousand having become food for beasts. Therefore many of the commanders joined together and accused Perdikkas, and all the phalanx of the infantry, now alienated from him, made clear their own hostility with threatening shouts. Consequently about a hundred of the commanders were the first to revolt from him, of whom the most illustrious was Pithon, who had suppressed the rebellious Greeks, a man second to none of the Companions of Alexander in courage and reputation; next, some also of the cavalry conspired together and went to the tent of Perdikkas, where they fell on him in a body and stabbed him to death.

Diodorus 18.36

Settlement of Triparadeisos

- Antipater is regent
 - ▣ Kings go with him
- Antigonos is satrap of greater Phrygia
 - ▣ Wage war on Eumenes
- Ptolemy is satrap in Egypt and Cyrenaica
- Seleucus is satrap of Babylon

Ptolemaic aims

- Egyptian empire or heir to Alexander?
- Takes Syria and Phoenicia after death of Antipatros

End of the Argeads

- Olympias sides with Polyperchon, Philip III and Eurydike with Kassander
- Olympias captures and kills Philip III
- Kassander captures and kills Olympias
- 316 Alexander IV is the only remaining king

Expansion up to Gaza

- Anti-Antigonos coalition: Seleukos, Ptolemy, Kassander, Lysimachos
- Freedom of the Greeks
- Seleukos removed from his Satrapy – at Ptolemaic court
- Control of Cyprus
- Reduce a revolt in Cyrenaica
- Syrian Expedition

Battle of Gaza 312

□ Egyptian troops:

Ptolemy, since his undertakings had turned out as he wished, now sailed away to Egypt; but after a little while, spurred on by Seleucus because of his hostility toward Antigonus, he decided to make a campaign into Coelê Syria and take the field against the army of Demetrius. He therefore gathered together his forces from all sides and marched from Alexandria to Pelusium with eighteen thousand foot and four thousand horse. **Of his army some were Macedonians and some were mercenaries, but a great number were Egyptians, of whom some carried the missiles and the other baggage but some were armed and serviceable for battle.** Marching through the desert from Pelusium, he camped near the enemy at Old Gaza in Syria. Demetrius, who had likewise summoned his soldiers to Old Gaza from their winter quarters on all sides, awaited the approach of his opponents.

Diodorus 19.80

New Peace Treaty

While these held office, Cassander, Ptolemy, and Lysimachus came to terms with Antigonus and made a treaty. In this it was provided that Cassander be general of Europe until Alexander, the son of Roxanê, should come of age; that Lysimachus rule Thrace, and that Ptolemy rule Egypt and the cities adjacent thereto in Libya and Arabia; that Antigonus have first place in all Asia; and that the Greeks be autonomous. However, they did not abide by these agreements but each of them, putting forward plausible excuses, kept seeking to increase his own power. Now Cassander perceived that Alexander, the son of Roxanê, was growing up and that word was being spread throughout Macedonia by certain men that it was fitting to release the boy from custody and give him his father's kingdom; and, fearing for himself, he instructed Glaucias, who was in command of the guard over the child, to murder Roxanê and the king and conceal their bodies, but to disclose to no one else what had been done. When Glaucias had carried out the instructions, Cassander, Lysimachus, and Ptolemy, and Antigonus as well, were relieved of their anticipated danger from the king; for henceforth, there being no longer anyone to inherit the realm, each of those who had rule over nations or cities entertained hopes of royal power and held the territory that had been placed under his authority as if it were a kingdom won by the spear.

Battle of Salamis

In the naval battle, whose outcome was as stated, more than a hundred of the supply ships were taken, upon which were almost eight thousand soldiers, and of the warships forty were captured with their crews and about eighty were disabled, which the victors towed, full of sea water, to the camp before the city. Twenty of Demetrius' ships were disabled, but all of these, after receiving proper care, continued to perform the services for which they were suited.

Diodorus 20.52

Basileus Ptolemy

Upon this, the multitude for the first time saluted Antigonus and Demetrius as kings. Antigonus, accordingly, was immediately crowned by his friends, and Demetrius received a diadem from his father, with a letter in which he was addressed as King. The followers of Ptolemy in Egypt on their part also, when these things were reported to them, gave him the title of King, that they might not appear to lose spirit on account of their defeat. And thus their emulation carried the practice among the other successors of Alexander. For Lysimachus began to wear a diadem, and Seleucus also in his interviews with the Greeks; with the Barbarians he had before this dealt as king. Cassander, however, although the others gave him the royal title in their letters and addresses, wrote his letters in his own untitled name, as he had been wont to do.

Plutarch *Life of Demetrius* 18

Coronation of Ptolemy

- 305/4 – first year of Ptolemy as Pharaoh
- Retroactive dating of his reign

Rhodes

- Demetrius sieged the city of Rhodes (305/4)
- Ptolemy provided aid to the city to keep it from falling
- Rhodes gives Ptolemy extravagant honours



Battle of Ipsus

- Alliance of Lysimachus, Seleucus and Ptolemy
 - ▣ Ptolemy is not at the battle, occupies coast of Syria
 - ▣ Demetrios escapes: Keeps control of his navy and Cyprus and his position in Greece
- New division of the empire
 - ▣ Lysimachos: Thrace + Anatolia as far as the Taurus (except Cilicia and areas under Ptolemaic control)
 - ▣ Seleukos: East + All of Syria from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean (Root of conflict with Ptolemy)
 - ▣ Ptolemy: Egypt + his coastal possessions + refuses to give up control of Syria which he has taken (Root of conflict with Seleucus)



PTOLEMAIC EGYPT

c. 270 B.C.

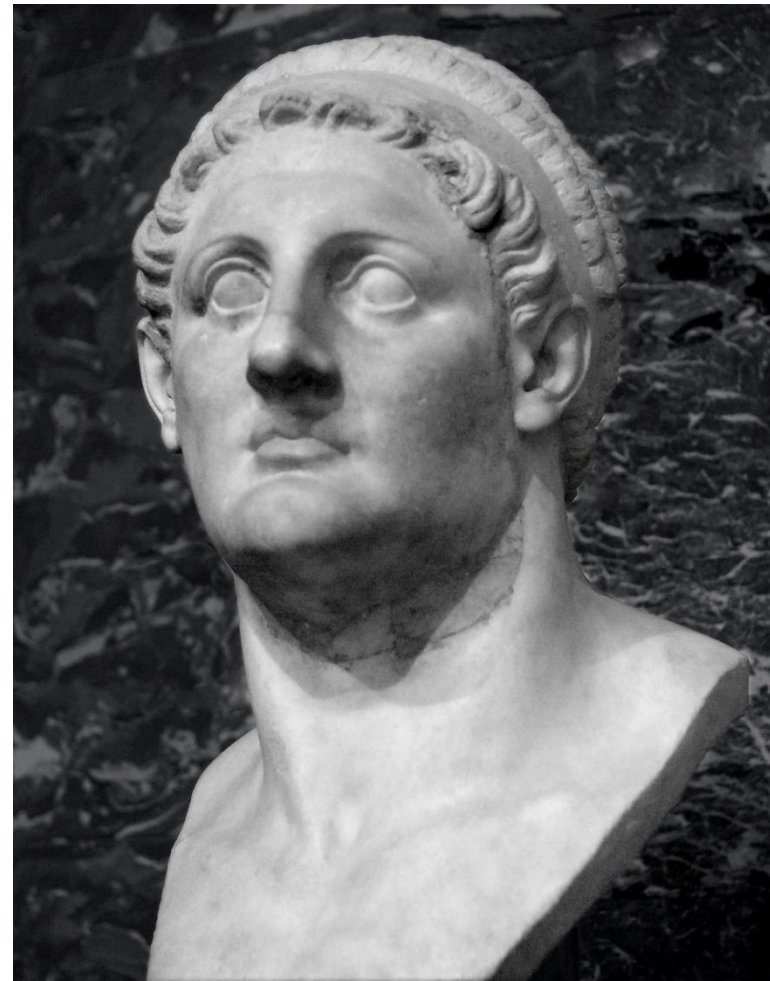
The extent of Ptolemaic control (dashed red lines) is approximate and, in many places, very uncertain.

Map by Tom Elliott for the Ancient World Mapping Center
University of North Carolina (www.unc.edu/awmc/)

Ptolemy's Wives

- Persian wife (daughter of Artabazus)
- Eurydike (daughter of Antipater)
 - ▣ Ptolemy Keraunos (m)
 - ▣ Meleager (m)
 - ▣ Lysandra (f)
 - ▣ Ptolemais (f)
- Berenike
 - ▣ Arsinoe (II) (f)
 - ▣ Ptolemy (II) Philadelphos (m)
 - ▣ Philotera (f)

King and Pharaoh



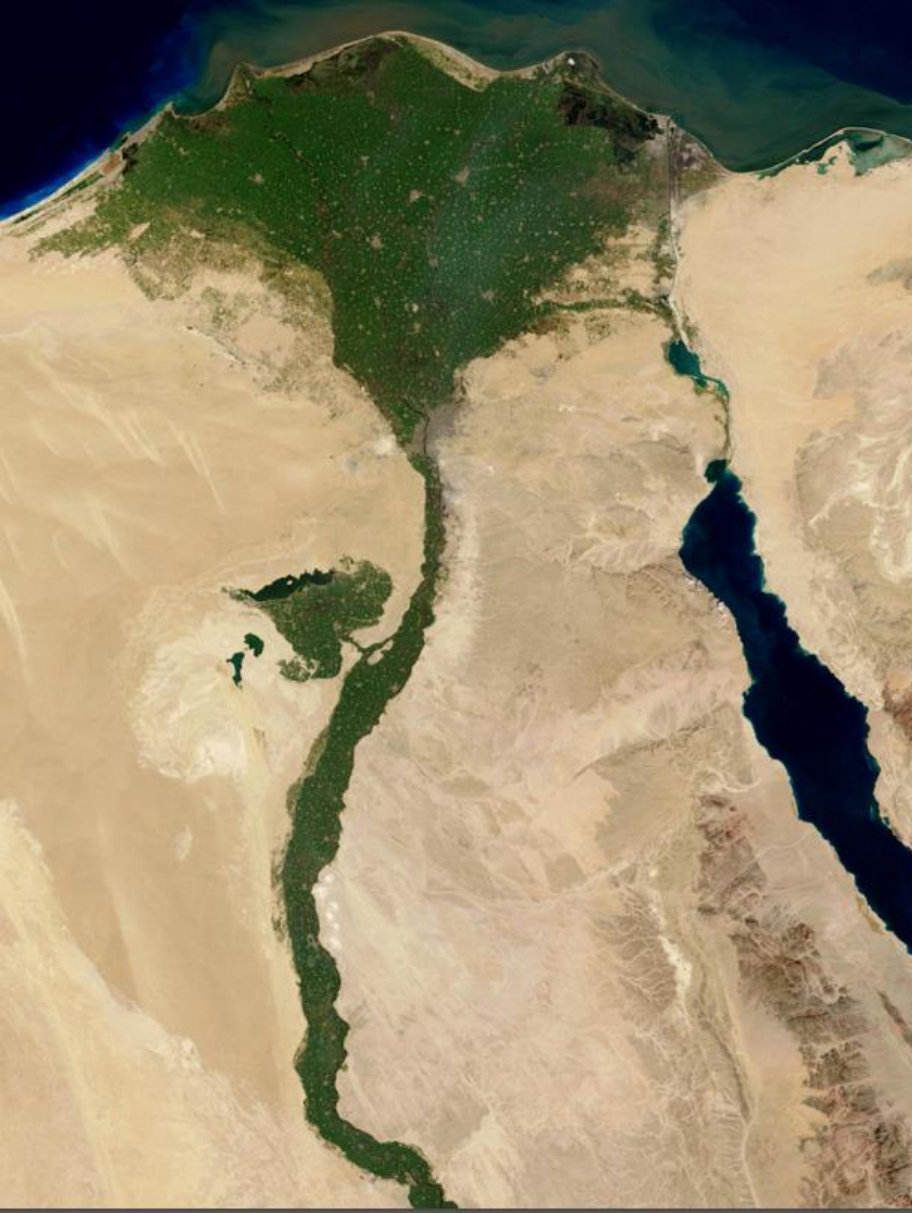
Ptolemy II

- Joint-ruler with his father from 284
- Sole ruler/Pharaoh in 282
- Marries Arsinoe I (daughter of Lysimachos)
 - ▣ Ptolemy 'the son'
 - ▣ Ptolemy (III)
 - ▣ Lysimachos
 - ▣ Berenike

Egypt

Countless lands and countless races of men raise their crops with the aid of Zeus's rain, but no land is as productive as low-lying Egypt, when the flooding Nile drenches and breaks up the soil; nor does any land have so many towns full of people skilled in crafts. Within are built three hundred cities, and three thousand, and another ten thousand three times over, and three twice, and after them thrice nine: over all of these is lordly Ptolemy king.

Theocritus *Idyll* 17 76-86



Resources

Macedonian/Greek Culture in Egypt

Very few cities : Alexandria, Naukratis,

Agricultural settlements: *kleroi* (allotments), *klerouchoi* (lot holders)

Settlement of the Fayoum (Nomos of Arsinoe; chief town: Philadelphia)

New Mediterranean crops: olives, bread wheat, vines

Contrast the Egyptian staples: beans, beer

Literacy: papyri, ostraka

Bureaucratic system: tax demands, receipts, population census by household

Bi-cultural or multicultural society. Graeco-Macedonians 15%; native Egyptians 85% (at least)



Larger settlements of Hellenistic Egypt

Overseas Possessions

He takes slices of Phoenicia and Arabia and Syria and Libya and the dark-skinned Ethiopians; all the Pamphylians and the warriors of Cilicia he commands, and the Lycians and the Carians, who delight in war, and the islands of the Cyclades, for his are the finest ships sailing the ocean. All the sea and the land and the crashing rivers are subject to Ptolemy, and round about him gather huge numbers of horsemen and huge numbers of shield-bearing soldiers, burdened with glittering bronze.

Theocritus *Idyll 17* 86-94

Overseas Possessions



Centralized Royal command economy

Inventory of the royal domain . . . Everything connected with it was delivered to Phoinix the chief treasurer in year 28, in the month of Thoth of the king who was victorious over the Philopersian king when he entered Syria. His scribes and district officials compiled it, from Elephantine to the Mediterranean, in detail nome by nome, altogether 36 provinces.

Demotic Ostrakon from Thebes 258 BC

Command Economy

They declared and reported concerning the water (noting) when the basins (are full) and the flooded fields are green, enumerating their water sources and levees. A census of Egypt was ordered, specifying field by field, their irrigation possibilities, their location, their arable portions, their relation to the property of their protector gods, their common borders with the fields of the benefices themselves and of the royal fields, specifying area by area the size of the parcels and the vineyards, noting when the fields and areas are dry – likewise the pastures – and the water channels, the fields that are free and vacant . . . Specifying orchard by orchard the trees with their fruits, the gardens, . . . The list of leased parcels with their equipment . . . And in addition their taxes, the total of the expenditures for the welfare of Egypt and its sublime freedom, of its cities and of its temples.

Payment of 1/6 of produce (*apomoira*) for the royal cult of Arsinoe II. Greek Papyrus

[King] Ptolemy [to all the] *strategoi*, [hipparchs], officers, nomarchs, [toparchs], *oikonomoi*, *antigraphais*, royal [scribes], Libyarchs and chiefs of police, greetings. We have sent you copies of the [ordinance which] requires payment of the sixth to (Arsinoe) Philadelphus. [Take care therefore] that these instructions are carried out. Farewell. Year 23, Dios 2 (= Nov.-Dec. 263 BC). [All those who] have vineyards or orchards, [whatever] their tenure, shall all give to the agents of Satyrus, [and to] the accountants appointed as agents of Dionysodorus, [none by] none] a written statement, drawn up by themselves, or their managers, or [those cultivating] their property, from year 18 to [year 21], (indicating) the amount of produce and to which temple they used to give the sixth, and the annual amount. Similarly the priests (shall make a statement) from which property they used to receive (the sixth) and the annual amount of wine or money. Similarly the royal scribes and the . . . shall give . . . written statements of these.

Austin no. 235 (296 2nd ed)

Royal monopoly on coinage

Demetrius to Apollonius greetings. It is well if you are in good health and everything else is as you wish. As for me, I am devoting myself to what you wrote me to do: I have received 57,000 (drachmas?) of gold, which I minted and returned. We would have received many times as much, but as I have written to you before, the foreigners who come here by seas, the merchants, the forwarding agents, and others, bring their own fine local coins and the *trichrysa*, to get them back as new coins, in accordance with the ordinance which instructs us to take and mint them, but as Philaretus does not allow me to accept them, we have no one to refer to on this matter, and are compelled not to accept them. The men are furious because we refuse the coins at the banks . . . and they cannot send their agents into the country to purchase merchandise.

P. Cairo Zen 59.021; BD 102; Austin 238/299



Arsinoe II

- ❑ Married to Lysimachos c. 300
- ❑ Conspires against Agathokles and he is killed in 283/2
- ❑ His widow Lysandra and her brother Ptolemy Keraunos flee to Seleucus
- ❑ Seleucus defeats Lysimachos at Korupedion in 281
- ❑ Keraunos assassinates Seleucus and crowned king of Macedon
- ❑ Arsinoe flees back to Egypt
- ❑ Marriage to Ptolemy II (c. 279)



Joint Rule



The native Egyptians

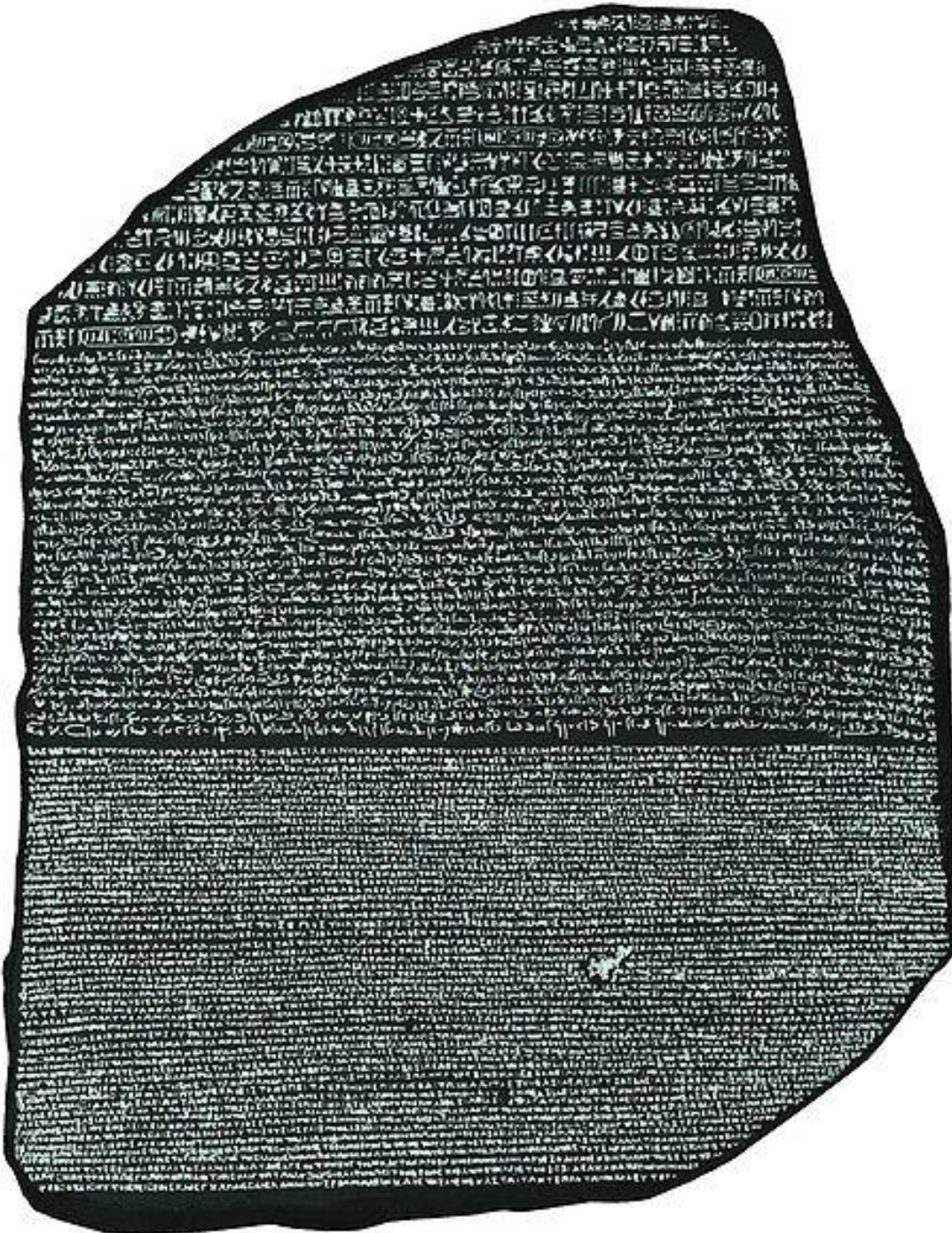
- Rosetta Stone (196 BC):
- King Ptolemy (V) . . . Has conferred benefits in many ways on the temples and their staffs and on those subject to his rule, as he is a god from a god and goddess just as Horus, the son of Isis and Osiris, the defender of his father Osiris, he has assigned to the temples revenues in money and grain . . . With good fortune it has been resolved by the priests of all the temples in the land that all the honours belonging to king Ptolemy, the eternal, beloved of Ptah, god Epiphanes Eucharistos, and likewise those of his parents, the gods Philopatores, and of his grandparents, the gods Evergetai [and] those of the gods Philadelphoi and those of the gods Soteres shall be increased greatly. . .

The Rosetta Stone

Hieroglyphic

Demotic

Greek



Follow-up Reading

- Errington, R.M. (2008) *A History of the Hellenistic World 323-30 B.C.* Blackwell. pp. 40-45, 59-62, 143-161
- Koenen, L. "The Ptolemaic King as a Religious Figure." In *Images and Ideologies: Self-Definition in the Hellenistic World*, edited by Bulloch, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. 25-115.