

Mummy portraits of Roman Egypt



Mummy Portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21376)

Master thesis

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Introduction

Theodore Graf, an Austrian antiquarian, was the first to display a large collection of mummy portraits. These portraits are wooden panels with the portrait of the deceased person painted on it. They were fastened on the head of a mummy. This practice was popular in Roman Egypt from the first to the fourth century AD.¹ In 1887 Graf had purchased these mummy portraits from locals who claimed to have discovered them at a site called 'er-Rubayat'. This led to many other archeologists excavating sites in the Fayum region of Egypt. In 1888-1889 William Matthew Flinders Petrie excavated the site at Hawara in the Fayum region, where he found 81 mummy portraits. Petrie returned to this site in 1910-1911 to find 65 additional mummy portraits, making it a total of 146 mummy portraits. This has been the biggest quantity of discovered mummy portraits. Since then a lot more mummy portraits have been found. Anno 2024 there are around one thousand mummy portraits preserved in museums and private collections all over the world.² Although these portraits were found all over Egypt, most of them were discovered in the Fayum region, hence the name 'Fayum Mummy Portraits'.³

Status Quaestionis

There are multiple angles from which the mummy portraits have been studied. The research started with George Ebers, William Flinders Petrie, Heinrich Dredrup and Klaus Parlasca who were mainly concerned with dating the mummy portraits. The dating of the portraits has always been an everchanging element within this field of study.

Ebers first wrote about these portraits in his book *The Hellenic Portraits from the Fayum*, 1893, which incorrectly dated the mummy portraits to the Hellenistic period, more precisely the second century BC.⁴ Petrie corrected Ebers in 1911 in his *Roman Portraits and Memphis (IV)*.⁵ Petrie's analysis of the social context and the painting techniques is by now rather outdated, since he approached these topics in a very general way when compared to later publications. The painting techniques were only studied for Hawara and his social context is not the most convincing explanation that has been given since then. For example, he assigns the ethnicity of the people of the portraits, based on color of their skin, which is an inaccurate way of determining ethnicity, especially considering that different painters used different painting techniques and colors. Petrie also states that "There seems very little of the Egyptian element".⁶ This shows that Petrie analyzed the mummy

¹ L. H. Corcoan, 'Mummies from Roman Egypt (I-IV Centuries A.D.): with a Catalog of Portrait Mummies in Egyptian Museums', *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations* 'No. 56 (Chicago 1995) 3.

² B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper, 'De mensen achter de mummie portretten: makers, navolgers, verzamelaars, archeologen en onderzoekers' in: Idem, *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 13-23 q.v. 16-17.

³ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy Portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 1.

⁴ Ragheb, *Mummy Portraits: Investigating Regional Variations*, 2.

⁵ W. M. F. Petrie, *Roman Portraits and Memphis (IV)* (London 1911).

⁶ Petrie, *Roman Portraits and Memphis (IV)*, 14.

portrait without its context. In today's academic literature, the mummy on which the portrait was attached, and thus the Egyptian element, is always taken into consideration. Especially Lorelei Corcoran, who published in 1995, is known for this view, more on her later.⁷ But Petrie's publication is still valuable because of the archeological context it provides.

Drerup, in 1933, dated twenty individual mummy portraits to specific Roman eras by looking at their hairstyles, jewelry and clothing, comparing it to the standards of those times.⁸ Although his methodology was so fundamental that it is still being used, his dating had several problems. He based his dating on the chronology of Roman coins and private statues. This chronology was later found to be inaccurate, thereby making his chronology of the mummy portraits also inaccurate.⁹

The first person that systematically looked at the mummy portraits was Klaus Parlasca, with his publication in 1966: *Mumienporträts und Verwandte Denkmäler*, which included 237 mummy portraits.¹⁰ He also included other funerary objects found at the excavations, such as stucco masks and cartonnage, that were until then largely ignored by previous scholars. Other than dating the portraits (using Drerup's method) he also introduced a categorizing system based on the shapes of the panels from the portraits, linking them to specific sites. This categorization system later turned out to have inconsistencies, making it less reliable.¹¹ His conclusions would have been more accurate if he had selected all the portraits from one specific site. Instead he chose a selection of portraits from different sites that fitted his hypothesis. He therefore was not able to draw significant conclusions.¹² Parlasca later rectified the insufficient amount of portraits, by publishing his four volumes called *Ritratti di Mummie*, published over the span of 1969-2004.¹³ These four volumes together form the biggest published collection of mummy portraits to date. The inconsistencies that make his category system not fully accurate are still present in these volumes and the problem was not addressed.¹⁴

Susan Walker, Morris Bierbrier and Barbara Borg have been approaching the mummy portraits mainly from a cultural history perspective.

In 1996, Borg published *Mumienporträts: Chronologie und kultureller Kontext*.¹⁵ This work

⁷ L. H. Corcoran, 'Mummies from Roman Egypt (I-IV Centuries A.D.): with a Catalog of Portrait Mummies in Egyptian Museums', *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations* No. 56 (Chicago 1995).

⁸ H. Drerup, 'Die Datierung der Mumienporträts', *Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des Altertums* 19:1 (1993).

⁹ Borg B. E., 'Problems in the Dating of Mummy Portraits' in: Doxiadis E. ed., *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits: Faces from Ancient Egypt* (London 1995) 229-233 q.v. 231.

¹⁰ K. Parlasca, 'Mumienporträts und Verwandte Denkmäler', *Wiesbaden: Deutsches archäologische Institut* (1966).

¹¹ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy Portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 4. For example, Portrait no. 31161.4 currently in 'Altes Museum' (Antikensammlung) in Berlin, is from er-Rubayat but doesn't have the angled panel shape that Parlasca categorized for portraits from er-Rubayat.

¹² Ragheb, *Mummy portraits: Investigating Regional Variations*, 4.

¹³ K. Parlasca, *Ritratti Di Mummie, Repertorio d'Arte Dell' Egitto Greco-Romano Volume 1* (Rome 1969); K. Parlasca, *Ritratti Di Mummie, Repertorio d'Arte Dell' Egitto Greco-Romano Volume 2* (Rome 1977); K. Parlasca, *Ritratti Di Mummie, Repertorio d'Arte Dell' Egitto Greco-Romano Volume 3* (Rome 1980); K. Parlasca & H. G. Frenz, *Ritratti Di Mummie, Repertorio d'Arte Dell' Egitto Greco-Romano Volume 4*. (Rome 2004).

¹⁴ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 4-5.

¹⁵ B. E. Borg, *Mumienporträts: Chronologie und kultureller Kontext* (Mainz 1996).

covers the social and religious contexts of the portraits as well as the painters and the techniques used. Borg made a revision of the dates which Parlasca used. In 1998 Borg published her second work on the subject, *Der zierlichste Anblick der Welt: Ägyptische Porträtmumie*, which, instead of focusing on dating the portraits and their religious and cultural contexts, focusses more on the archeological discoveries of the mummy portraits from a historical perspective.¹⁶ Then in 2010 Borg published *Painted Funerary Portraits* which is an overview work on the cultural aspects of the mummy portraits.¹⁷

In 1997, Walker and Bierbrier published *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits From Roman Egypt*.¹⁸ Its first part consists of essays that cover multiple perspectives, like cultural, art historical and social. The funerary context is also taken into account. The second part serves as a catalogue of mummy portraits, plaster masks and painted shrouds.

Euphrosyne Doxiadis, David Lowell Thompson and Lorelei Corcoran had different ways of studying the mummy portraits and are also worth mentioning.

Thompson focused his research on the painters of the mummy portraits. He was able to identify multiple painters in Antinoopolis and another painter in Er-Rubayat, in his dissertation and following book.¹⁹ This was an original take on the subject.

In 1995, Doxiadis engaged with the subject of mummy portraits from an art historical perspective, in *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits*.²⁰ She compares Egyptian mummy portraits with Byzantine icons by doing artistic experiments.²¹ This way she found out that the makers of the mummy portraits used both cold emulsified wax and molten wax.²² In her catalogue of mummy portraits she added an artistic perspective by determining shades, colors, and tools used.

Lorelei Corcoran, in 1995, focused on mummy portraits still attached to the mummy, in her publication called: *Portrait Mummies from Roman Egypt*.²³ She analyzed twenty-two mummy portraits in the context of their castings. She discovered a religious motive on the wrappings, relating to the Egyptian afterlife. She therefore concludes that, in Roman times, these ancient Egyptian beliefs and practices were still relevant.²⁴ This conclusion challenges the earlier misconception that the ancient Egyptian beliefs and practices were getting less relevant during Roman Egyptian times. This misconception was the consequence of viewing the mummy portraits without their mummy and therefore without their funerary and cultural context. These ancient Egyptian beliefs combined with a

¹⁶ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 7.

¹⁷ B. E. Borg, 'Painted Funerary Portraits', *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* 1:1 (2010).

¹⁸ S. Walker & M. Bierbrier, *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (London 1997).

¹⁹ D. L. Thompson, *The Classes and Hands of Painted Funerary Portraits from Antinoöpolis* (Chapel Hill 1972); D. L. Thompson, *Mummy Portraits in the J. Paul Getty Museum* (Malibu 1982).

²⁰ E. Doxiadis, *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits: Faces from Ancient Egypt* (London 1995).

²¹ Doxiadis, *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits: Faces from Ancient Egypt*, 90-92.

²² *Ibidem* 95-98.

²³ L. H. Corcoran, 'Mummies from Roman Egypt (I-IV Centuries A.D.): with a Catalog of Portrait Mummies in Egyptian Museums', *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations* 'No. 56 (Chicago 1995).

²⁴ Corcoran, *Mummies from Roman Egypt*, 64.

Greek painting style formed the basis for her argument that there existed a diverse culture in Egypt during Roman times.²⁵

Seemingly getting more attention in the field recently, but nevertheless going back to the 1960's with Hermann Kühn's *Detection and Identification of Waxes, including Punic Wax by Infra-red Spectrography*, is the study of the technical practices and materials used for the mummy portraits.²⁶ The expert on the wood types of the mummy portraits and is Caroline Cartwright who has published as recently as 2020, being part of the international collaboration called 'Ancient Panel Painting: Examination, Analysis and Research' (APPEAR), which together with the Getty Museum in Los Angeles organizes conferences where findings within this field of study are being shared. APPEAR has existed since 2013 and today forty-seven museums worldwide have joined the APPEAR project and have been exchanging data on the mummy portraits, focusing mainly on the technical side of the mummy portraits.²⁷

In 2016 Maryan Ragheb Sobhy Ragheb wrote her master thesis called: *Mummy Portraits: Investigating Regional Variations*.²⁸ Ragheb analyzed mummy portraits and portrait mummies²⁹, originating from Hawara, Abusir el-Melek, Tebtunis, and Antinoopolis. She examines variables like the panel shape, painting technique and the decorations on the mummy wrappings to find patterns with which one could potentially assign mummy portrait, of which the location is still unknown, to a specific location. She succeeds in creating these patterns and thereby presenting a sort of rubric for further research of the mummy portraits with unknown origins. Ragheb also made a database of all the mummy portraits that she researched.

This thesis will make use of this database because it can be used to narrow down a specific site or time period. This thesis will look at the site of Tebtunis, of which the found portraits are dated to the Antonine and Severan periods. The choice for this specific site and periods will be further explained in the method section. I will add an analytic dimension to this database, focusing on the cultural history surrounding these mummy portraits. The central question will be, 'What can mummy portraits from Tebtunis reveal about the way these people wanted to present themselves during the Antonine and Severan periods (AD 138-235)?'. Self-presentation will be measured through multiculturalism, and socio-economic status. The mummy portraits have not yet been researched through this perspective. I think it could be a meaningful addition to the existing academic discourse surrounding

²⁵ Ibidem 78.

²⁶ H. Kühn, 'Detection and Identification of Waxes, including Punic Wax by Infra-red Spectrography', *Studies in Conservation* 5:2 (1960) 71–81.

²⁷ M. Svoboda & C. R. Cartwright, *Mummy Portraits of Roman Egypt emerging Research from the APPEAR Project* (Los Angeles 2020) Foreword 7.

²⁸ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy Portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016).

²⁹ L. H. Corcoran, 'Mummies from Roman Egypt (I-IV Centuries A.D.): with a Catalog of Portrait Mummies in Egyptian Museums', *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations* No. 56 (Chicago 1995) 4-6. A mummy portraits is a loose portrait, which is not attached to the mummy anymore. A portrait mummy is a mummy with its portrait still attached.

the mummy portraits. Multiculturalism and socio-economic status are sub-questions that will correspond to the different chapters. More on this in the methodology.

Methodology

First the primary sources will be discussed after which the method of analyzing these primary sources will be considered. In addition, the sub-questions and limitations will be considered. The set of primary sources on which the research is based is a group of mummy portraits, originating from Tebtunis. When a specific mummy portrait gets mentioned in the text, a reference to the corresponding catalogue number (Cat. N°) will be added after the mention, for the sake of utility.

Ten mummy portraits are taken from *Mummy portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* by M. R. S. Ragheb. She has made a database of 151 mummy portraits found across the four different excavation sites which yielded at least seven mummy portraits each; Tebtunis, Hawara, Abusir el-melek and Antinoopolis. She chose these four sites because these excavated sites produced seven or more portraits, the minimal number needed for a typology.³⁰ Therefore this research will also use this categorization. Her database is based on Parlasca's *Ritratti di mummie* and therefore is a complete representation of the mummy portraits found in these four regions up to 2016, when her work was submitted. Since 2016 there are no mummy portraits found in Tebtunis, therefore her database is still valid. She added her own dating suggestions next to Parlasca's.

This thesis will focus on the eleven mummy portraits from Tebtunis because examining four locations and 151 portraits would lie outside of the scope of this research. Also, the Tebtunis portraits form one of the biggest collections of mummy portraits that are still together and have not been restored since their excavation.³¹ This makes these mummy portraits a good group for analysis. Ragheb dated these mummy portraits to the periods of the Antonine and Severan dynasties (AD 92-192) and (AD 193-235).³² The Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology in Berkeley, California, where the Tebtunis paintings currently reside, has added the inventory cards of each individual mummy portrait to their digital collection. The dates given do not differ from Ragheb's dating too much, and in some instances are pretty similar, but there are differences of up to approximately a hundred years. Since Ragheb shows her dating process in her publication and the museum does not, I choose to adhere to Ragheb's dating because it is more evincible. However, it is important to realize that any dating of the mummy portraits can never be fully accurate unless a date has been written on the portrait itself, which has not been the case for the Tebtunis portraits.

Grenfell and Hunt were the ones who excavated Tebtunis for the first time in the winter of

³⁰ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy Portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 8.

³¹ J. Williams, C. R. Cartwright & M. S. Walton, 'Defining a Romano-Egyptian Painting Workshop at Tebtunis', *Mummy Portraits of Roman Egypt Emerging Research from the APPEAR Project* (Los Angeles 2020) 132.

³² M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy Portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 119.

1889-1890. They found eleven mummy portraits and a lot of papyri.³³ They published these papyri in four volumes. These volumes contain large amounts of papyri dated to early first century to late second century, which are divided in various categories. These include letters, contracts, administrative paperwork, petitions, royal ordinances, taxations and literary fragments. These books were written from 1902 till 1938. James Keenan and John Shelton published volume four in 1975 (volume three has two parts). These volumes provide analysis and translations from Greek and Egyptian Hieratic script into English.³⁴

Ragheb chose to omit the 11th mummy portrait since it was too faded to be considered for analysis.³⁵ This thesis will not omit this portrait since the aspects that will be analyzed are sufficiently visible. Since Ragheb did not include the 11th mummy portrait and therefore did not date it, I will use the date, for the 11th portrait, that The Phoebe A. Hearts Museum suggests. Ragheb's database does not show wood types for the Tebtunis mummy portrait. The database of Johanna Salvant does contain the wood types and will therefore also be used.³⁶

This research uses a qualitative method based on visual sources according to Drerup's method. But instead of looking at aspects of the mummy portraits like hairstyle, jewelry and clothing to date the portraits, I will look at these aspects to be able to say something about the self-presentation of the people in the mummy portraits through the perspective of multiculturalism and socio-economic status. His method has always been the main method used in this field of research. Parlasca used this method and so did Ragheb.³⁷ By carefully examining specific aspects of the eleven portraits and combining these with historical information of the location and period, conclusions on the multiculturalism and socio-economic status of the people in the mummy portraits of Tebtunis can be drawn. The papyri found by Grenfell and Hunt will be used to add extra context to the society of Tebtunis.

Multiculturalism is a term that can be used to "characterize the fact of diversity in a society".³⁸ Multiculturalism can be seen as an anachronism. However, the term multiculturalism is used in this thesis since it best represents a region where multiple cultures coexisted and mixed together. Because of the fact that Roman Egypt really was a society with a lot of diversity, I deem it useful to use the term multiculturalism in this thesis. Specific characteristics in the mummy portraits that will be examined through a multicultural and socio-economic perspective are hairstyle, clothing, jewelry, coloring, age, and attributes.

³³ J. Salvant et al. 'A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis', *Egypt Archaeometry* 60:13 (2017) 2.

³⁴ E. Apostola & C. Kekes, 'Current Research in Egyptology 2021: Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Symposium, University of the Aegean, 9-16 May 2021', *Access Archeology* (Oxford 2022) 161.

³⁵ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy Portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 113.

³⁶ J. Salvant et al. 'A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis', *Egypt Archaeometry* 60:13 (2017) 4,5.

³⁷ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy Portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 4,10.

³⁸ S. Song, 'Multiculturalism', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (2020) 1.

The most important sub-questions are: What is the historical background of Roman Egypt, Tebtunis and the mummy portraits? In what way was Roman Egypt a multicultural society? What was the socio-economic structure in Roman Egypt like? What multicultural and socio-economic elements can be found in the mummy portraits? This thesis comprises four chapters which are defined by the four sub-questions. The first chapter is about the historical background on Roman Egypt, with a focus on the Antonine and Severan periods, Tebtunis and mummy portraits. In this way the chosen mummy portraits will be contextualized. The second chapter is about the multiculturalism found in Roman Egypt. Where possible, the focus will lie on Tebtunis during the Antonine and Severan periods. In the third chapter, the socio-economic status of people living in Tebtunis during the Antonine and Severan periods will be discussed. In the last chapter all the previously discussed topics will be utilized to analyze the mummy portraits from Tebtunis. This means that the multicultural and socio-economic aspects will be analyzed within the eleven mummy portraits from Tebtunis. An attempt will be made to find out to what social/ethnic group the people depicted in the mummy portraits belonged to. This knowledge would be helpful when looking at self-presentation.

There are limitations to this study, as it is based on a limited amount of sources. These sources are constricted to a specific location and time period, which means that the conclusions will also be constricted to the same location and time period. On the other hand, sources specifically about Tebtunis during the Antonine and Severan periods are also limited. In places where the sources are not sufficient to make accurate conclusions about Tebtunis during the Antonine and Severan periods, the conclusions will apply to a broader geographical context or time period. It will be clearly stated when the information applies to a broader context. Since the mummy portraits are physical sources, information derived from them is in most cases up for debate. The provenance of a lot of mummy portraits is uncertain, but since the chosen eleven portraits come from an excavation site, this does not form a problem.

Researching self-presentation assumes that the people of the mummy portraits had a say in how they were portrayed. It is not known in which stage of the person's life the mummy portrait was made. Was this during their lifetime or after their death? The general consensus among experts in this field is that they were made immediately after the death of the person.³⁹ For this thesis, it is not really relevant whether the portrait was made before or after the death of the person in question since the person could have given instructions to the artist during their lifetime. In case of an unexpected death, the relatives could have given instructions on how they wanted to present their family member. The conclusion of the research question would then still apply, but instead of applying to the deceased person, it would apply to the relatives of the deceased person.

³⁹ B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper, 'De mensen achter de mummie portretten: makers, navolgers, verzamelaars, archeologen en onderzoekers' in: Idem, *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 13-23 q.v. 19.

Chapter 1. Historical background

The first chapter will discuss the historical background on Roman Egypt, the village of Tetbunis and the mummy portraits. This chapter will serve as a base to be able to further explore multiculturalism and socio-economic status within Roman Egypt in chapter two and three respectively, to then be able to apply this to the mummy portraits in the last chapter.

1.1 Roman Egypt

With the deaths of Cleopatra VII and her partner Mark Antony in 30 BC came a new era for Egypt. Octavian took control of Egypt and was later crowned emperor, making Egypt an official province of the Roman empire in 27 BC. Thus Roman rule on Egypt started from then on. But Rome's influence was already felt before then.⁴⁰ After the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was divided by his generals into four parts. General Ptolemy became the king of Egypt, thereby starting the Ptolemaic dynasty in 305 BC that would last until 30 BC. His successor, Ptolemy II, initiated diplomatic relations with Rome in 273 BC. This was two years after the war between Pyrrhus of Epirus, another one of Alexander's former generals, and Rome. King Pyrrhus was not able to conquer Rome. King Pyrrhus is now known for the term 'Pyrrhic victory', which is a victory that costed so much that it cannot really be called a victory. Perhaps anxious for a similar unprofitable war, Ptolemy II reached out to Rome. This mutual friendship proved itself to be beneficial for Egypt when Antiochus III, king of Syria, made war upon Egypt. According to Justinus (3rd century AD Roman historian) Rome's senate gave Antiochus an ultimatum. An attack on Egypt would be an attack on Rome.⁴¹

But this relationship was also beneficial for Rome. Five years prior, after Italy's agriculture had been ravaged by almost a decade of Hannibal's attacks, Rome required grain, which it got from Egypt. One generation later Rome saved Egypt again from the King of Syria, Antiochus IV. In this way protection developed into protectorate.⁴² In 48 BC Egypt showed its allegiance to Rome by executing Pompey when he sought refuge while escaping from Julius Caesar. People in Egypt living during this time could have seen Rome as an ally, which would influence their descendant's view on the eventual incorporation of Egypt into the Roman empire. This phenomenon of intergenerational memory has been well documented within the psychology literature.⁴³

Roman Egypt was an atypical Roman province for two main reasons. First of all, Roman Egypt was led by an equestrian prefect and not by a senator, which was the custom. Secondly,

⁴⁰ N. Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford 1983) 9.

⁴¹ Justinus, *The Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus* 34.2-3.

⁴² N. Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford 1983) 10-11.

⁴³ See for example C. Svob, N. R. Brown, V. Takšić et. al., 'Intergenerational Transmission of Historical Memories and Social-distance Attitudes in Post-war Second-generation Croatians' *Psychonomic Society* 44 (2016) 846-855., R. Fivush, 'Remembering and Reminiscing: How Individual Lives are Constructed in Family Narratives', *memory studies* 1:1 (2008) 49-58., M. V. Zvyaglova, 'The Importance of the Memory of Relatives in Maintaining Intergenerational Family Relations', *Pedagogical Education: History, Present Time, Perspectives* (2017) 287-292.

The Roman period of Egypt was relatively peaceful. There are some events and emperors worth mentioning however. Looking at the way that the Roman Emperors interacted with Egypt will shine a light on the way the Romans might have been perceived by the inhabitants of Egypt. The mummy portraits from Tebtunis are dated to the Antonine and Severan periods. The focus will therefore lie on these periods.

Roman Egypt lasted for 275 years. The Antonine period starts with Antonius Pius (AD 138-161). His entourage, in Pius' second year as emperor, minted coins in Egypt with Pius' likeness on the front and on the back, an Egyptian tradition which involved priests carrying jars of Nile water with the head of Osiris on top of the jar (see [figure 1](#)). These type of coins show Antonius respect for the Egyptian culture and/or his want to appease them. The first two-thirds of the second century AD were very prosperous, but this changed when a plague broke out in 167 AD. This was during Marcus Aurelius' rule (AD 161-180).⁴⁴ Capital cities of Egyptian *nomes* (provinces) were not granted council, with an exception to Naukratis and possibly Ptolemais. This gave those cities less self-governance. This changed in 200 AD when Septimus Severus was emperor. He gave these capital cities a city council and thereby the same rights as Alexandria.⁴⁵ Tebtunis was not one of these cities. Severus' son Caracalla famously granted Roman citizenship to all inhabitant of the Roman empire in AD 212.⁴⁶

1.2 Tebtunis

Now that the historical background of Roman Egypt has been discussed, I will zoom in to the historical background of Tebtunis. Tebtunis is the town in Roman Egypt where the mummy portraits, that are studied in this thesis, were found. By looking at the town where the portraits were found, the cultural context of these people will become clearer and specific aspects within the mummy portraits will be contextualized.

Tebtunis, which is now called Umm el Breighat, was discovered by Giovanni Battista Belzoni in 1819 and excavated by Grenfell and Hunt (1899), Otto Rubensohn (1902) and Carlo Anti (1931)⁴⁷ and after a long hiatus, by the joined efforts of the University of Milan and Institut Français d'archéologie orientale (since 1988).⁴⁸ Tebtunis had several thousand inhabitants during the Roman period.⁴⁹ It is located the southern region of the Fayum. It was founded approximately during the twelfth dynasty but flourished during the Graeco-Roman period. This is when the temple of Soknebtunis was built.⁵⁰ During the Ptolemaic period Tebtunis grew from a village into a sizeable town. Many buildings

⁴⁴ R. S. Bagnall & D. Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians* (Los Angeles 2004) 17.

⁴⁵ M. Langellotti, *Village Life in Roman Egypt: Tebtunis in the First Century AD* (Oxford 2020) 7-8.

⁴⁶ R. S. Bagnall & D. Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians* (Los Angeles 2004) 17.

⁴⁷ V. Rondot, 'Graeco-Roman Fayum Pantheons as documented by 2nd Century Painted Wooden Panels', *Von der Pharaonenzeit bis zur Spätantike Kulturelle Vielfalt im Fayum*, Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden (2015) 145-162 q.v. 146.

⁴⁸ M. Langellotti, *Village Life in Roman Egypt: Tebtunis in the First Century AD* (Oxford 2020) 12.

⁴⁹ J. Rowlandson, *Women & Society in Greek & Roman Egypt* (Cambridge 1998) 12.

⁵⁰ C. Bettineschi, G. Deotto and I. Angelini, 'Crafts in the Temple: the Ptolemaic Inlay Workshop in the Soknebtynis sanctuary', *Quaderni del Museo del Papiro XV* (2018) 349-368 q.v. 350.

surrounded the temple, which was the center of the town.⁵¹ Soknebtunis is a local version of the deity called Sobek, the crocodile god.⁵² This god was since the old kingdom the deity of the whole Fayum region, with its central city Arisnoë originally being named Krokodilonpolis in Greek. Soknebtunis had different variations depending on the city in the Fayum in which he was worshipped. In Tebtunis he was associated with Geb, the Egyptian creator god. The Greeks linked Geb to Kronos. This is why people from Tebtunis were sometimes called ‘Kronion’ (people of Kronos).⁵³

Through archeological research we have a lay-out of the fifty hectare site Tebtunis.⁵⁴ The previously mentioned god Soknebtunis was worshipped in the main temple, which is fittingly named ‘the temple of Soknebtunis’.⁵⁵ Apart from Soknebtunis, there was a temple for Isis-Thermouthis and a yet undiscovered temple for Min or Osiris. The main temple lies in the south west corner of the site. The *dromos* (the main road) heads south to the temple and was two hundred meters long.⁵⁶ The paved *dromos* is dated to the reign of Augustus and was paved over an earlier Ptolemaic one. Along the *dromos* there were *deipneteria* (dining halls), which were used for festive and familial celebratory events.⁵⁷ The attendees wore white clothing and wreaths and ate pork and drank wine.⁵⁸ Next to the temple was a waste dump, a lot of papyrus, ostraka and wine jars were found here. There were also Roman residential homes in Tebtunis.⁵⁹ Further to the south are the cemeteries. This is where thousands of crocodile mummies and presumably also the mummy portraits were found.⁶⁰ Although it is unclear as to where exactly the mummy portraits were found. Some of the Museum inventory cards of the Tebtunis mummy portraits state “Cemetery VII or VIII”. Unfortunately there is no official numbering of the cemeteries in Tebtunis known.

1.3 Mummy portraits

The historical background of Roman Egypt and Tebtunis have now been discussed. I will now zoom in further on the mummy portraits themselves. By providing information about these mummy portraits, this section will help with analyzing the specific mummy portraits, which will be done in chapter four. The historical background of the mummy portraits will now be discussed by looking at their discovery, how they were made and how workshops and artist functioned in Roman Egypt.

⁵¹ A. Monson & J. Taie, ‘Putting Papyri into Archaeological Context: New Insights from Tebtunis, Egypt’, *Archaeology International* 5:1 (2001) 40-43 q.v. 40.

⁵² M. Langellotti, *Village Life in Roman Egypt: Tebtunis in the First Century AD* (Oxford 2020) 11.

⁵³ D. Rathbone, *A Town Full of Gods: Imagining Religious Experience in Roman Tebtunis (Egypt)* (Berkeley 2003) 7.

⁵⁴ See figure 5.4.4 in: R. Bagnall & D. Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Copts: an archaeological and historical Guide* (London 2004), for a plan of Tebtunis.

⁵⁵ D. Rathbone, *A Town Full of Gods: Imagining Religious Experience in Roman Tebtunis (Egypt)* (Berkeley 2003) 7.

⁵⁶ A. Monson & J. Taie, ‘Putting Papyri into Archaeological Context: New Insights from Tebtunis, Egypt’, *Archaeology International* 5:1 (2001) 40-43 q.v. 40.

⁵⁷ R. S. Bagnall & D. Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians* (Los Angeles 2004) 147-150.

⁵⁸ D. Rathbone, *A Town Full of Gods: Imagining Religious Experience in Roman Tebtunis (Egypt)* (Berkeley 2003) 18.

⁵⁹ B. Chrubasik & D. King, *Hellenism and the Local Communities of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Oxford 2017) 178.

⁶⁰ R. S. Bagnall & D. Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians* (Los Angeles 2004) 147-151.

1.3.1 Discovery of mummy portraits

The exact circumstances around the discovery of the mummy portraits are mostly shrouded in uncertainty. A lot of portraits that are now displayed in museums were originally found through illegal excavations.⁶¹ These portraits were mostly separated from their mummy because the aesthetic aspect of the mummy portrait (and probably monetary value) is what attracted these people most. They did not document the circumstances in which the portraits were found, like the tomb, the funerary gifts or the mummy itself. A notable exception to this is Petrie, who has already been mentioned.⁶² It is only recently that scholarly work focusses on the funerary context of the mummy portraits.⁶³

The mummy portraits were found in a variety of graves. This could be a shallow sand grave without any sign or a rock tomb. The tombs were modest compared to the older Egyptian tombs. Local graves from the pharaonic period were sometimes reused. There does not seem to be a correlation between the wealth of the deceased and the cost of their grave, since the expensively decorated mummies were also found in the shallow, unmarked sand graves.⁶⁴ According to the Phoebe A. Hearst museum of Anthropology, where all the Tebtunis mummy portraits currently reside, nine out of eleven portraits were found in Roman tombs. On the inventory cards, the description of mummy portraits one, two, three, five, seven, eight, nine, ten and eleven (Cat. N° 1-3,5,7-11) say: 'Cemetery VII or VIII' and 'Roman Tomb', while mummy portrait four and six (Cat. N° 4,6) only say 'Cemetery VII or VIII'.

When thinking about the function these mummy portraits had, the fact that the mummy portraits were carefully painted and thereafter were put in an unmarked grave, never to be seen again, makes it likely that the mummy portraits were used in some kind of mourning process before the burial of the body. One *hypogea* (underground burial chamber) in the village of Marina el-Alamein, excavated by Wictor Daszeweski in 1991, could also indicate towards the conclusion that mummy portraits were used in a mourning process before their burial. Daszeweski found two sealed *hypogea* with several portrait mummies inside. These chambers were attached to a larger banquet hall with benches against the walls, making it likely that there was some kind of gathering in this hall. This gathering of people would have mourned the mummy within the chamber before it being sealed.⁶⁵

1.3.2 The making of the mummy portraits

Mummy portraits were made on wood. The type of wood used, could differ. Caroline Cartwright is the expert on identifying the wood types of the mummy portraits. Approximately seventy percent of the portraits that she has analyzed were of limewood (*Tilia europaea*). Limewood was imported from

⁶¹ B. E. Borg, 'Painted Funerary Portraits', *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* 1:1 (2010) 3.

⁶² D. L. Thompson, *Mummy Portraits in the J. Paul Getty Museum* (1982 Malibu) 5.

⁶³ B. E. Borg, 'The Face of the Elite', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classic*, Translated by G. W. Most 8:1 (2000) 63-96 q.v. 65.

⁶⁴ Borg, *The Face of the Elite*, 65.

⁶⁵ W. A. Daszeweski, 'Marina el-Alamein', *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean PCMA* (1992) 29-38 q.v. 33-34.

Europe. This shows the will for quality and that the people of the mummy portraits were able to spend money on better quality wood.⁶⁶ Mummy portraits made of oak (*Quercus sp.*), Lebanon cedar (*Cedrus Libani*), spruce (*Abies sp.*), Sycamore fig trees (*Ficus sycomorus*), yew (*Taxus baccata*) have also been found.⁶⁷ Nine of the Tebtunis mummy portraits (Cat. N° 2-9,11) are made of the wood of Sycamore fig trees and the remaining two portraits (Cat. N° 1,10) are made of limewood. Sycamore fig trees are native to Africa, including Egypt, but limewood trees are only found in Central Europe. This means that this wood type had to be imported.⁶⁸

There were two main binding methods used for the mummy portraits: encaustic, which meant using beeswax, and tempera, which meant using glue in combination with animal products. The encaustic way was the more expensive technique.⁶⁹ All the Tebtunis paintings are made using the encaustic way. The use of (bee)wax in the mummy portraits found in Tebtunis originated from the Graeco-Roman artists. The palette of pigments used in these portraits also correlate with the pigments found in surviving Graeco-Roman artefacts. This proves an inter-regional trade of materials and an export of artistic styles. The techniques used for the paintings show therefore a Graeco-Roman cultural influence on Egypt.⁷⁰

The style and aesthetic quality of the Tebtunis mummy portraits seem to be very similar. This could suggest that these eleven painting had the same painter. Researchers from the university of Northwestern were able to conclude that the iron-earth pigments likely came from Kleso in Greece, that the red lead came from Spain and that the wood for the panels came from central Europe. They used “hyperspectral imaging in combination with other non-destructive and micro-destructive techniques” for their research. Through this method they also conclude that mummy portrait two, three and four (Cat. N° 2-4) were made in the same workshop, possibly by the same painter.⁷¹ What do we know exactly about these workshops and painters?

1.3.3 Workshops and painters

There are no painters known by name linked to Tebtunis.⁷² It is believed however that there was a workshop in Tebtunis that made the mummy portraits. This leading theory is based on mummy (sketch) portrait six (Cat. N° 6). Since there are written instructions, detailing how to finish the

⁶⁶ C. BrØns, ‘In het atelier van de kunstenaar: de materialen voor een mummiepaneelportret’ in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 61-71 q.v. 61.

⁶⁷ BrØns, *In het atelier van de kunstenaar*, 61.

⁶⁸ J. Salvant et al. ‘A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis’, *Egypt Archaeometry* 60:13 (2017) 4,6.

⁶⁹ B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper, ‘De mensen achter de mummie portretten: makers, navolgers, verzamelaars, archeologen en onderzoekers’ in: Idem, *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 13-23 q.v. 16.

⁷⁰ J. Salvant, et al. ‘A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis’, *Egypt Archaeometry* 60:13 (2017) 14-15.

⁷¹ Phys.org, (<https://phys.org/news/2016-02-scientists-ancient-clues-mummy-portraits.html>) retrieved February 12th 2024.

⁷² C. Riggs, *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford 2020) 599.

painting, it is believed that there was interaction between the painter and commissioner.⁷³ There was a textile industry in Tebtunis. We know this because there was a road or district called “of the linen makers”. During an Italian excavation in Tebtunis, close to the main temple, a studio was found which might have been a workshop. It was described as “A small laboratory of colored enamels: work tools, weights, molds, containers, and many samples of enamels”.⁷⁴

Mummy portraits one and ten (Cat. N° 1-10) are believed to be from another workshop. Mainly because of the different types of wood, but also because of the different panel shapes. Mummy portrait one and ten (Cat. N° 1-10) also do not have a white under drawing like the other Tebtunis portraits do. Furthermore mummy portrait one and ten (Cat. N° 1-10) make use of Egyptian blue as a toner on the face, which the other Tebtunis portraits do not have. In addition, mummy portrait one (Cat. N° 1) is painted on a much thinner wood panel and the use of cinnabar⁷⁵ is also unique to mummy portrait ten (Cat. N° 10) within the Tebtunis catalogue. Lastly, the gilding seems to be applied after the mummy had been wrapped, since the gilding stops abruptly at the parts where the wrapping used to be. This was not the case for the other Tebtunis portraits.⁷⁶

In conclusion, this chapter showed how Egypt became occupied by the Roman empire and that Egypt already had a political relationship with the Roman empire before that. The excavation of Tebtunis has been discussed, which showed that the temple functioned as the center of the village. Their god was a localized version of the Egyptian crocodile god Sobek. The *dromos* functioned as a way towards the temple but also as a place where dining halls were made to celebrate with family. Lastly the mummy portraits themselves have been looked at. Since some of the mummy portraits have certain aspects in common, like the type of wood, materials used, binding media and aesthetic qualities, it seems like at least some of the Tebtunis portraits come from the same workshop and possibly even the same painter. When looking at the instructions on mummy portrait six (Cat. N° 6) and the archeological findings, it also seems likely that there was a workshop in Tebtunis itself. This chapter already showed some of the multiculturalism found in Tebtunis: The people worshipped Egyptian gods, build Roman houses and tombs and used Graeco-Roman painting techniques. The next chapter will further explore this multiculturalism.

⁷³ J. Williams, C. R. Cartwright & M. S. Walton, ‘Defining a Romano-Egyptian Painting Workshop at Tebtunis’, *Mummy Portraits of Roman Egypt Emerging Research from the APPEAR Project* (Los Angeles 2020) 132.

⁷⁴ C. Riggs, *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford 2020) 601.

⁷⁵ M. Svoboda & C. R. Cartwright, *Mummy Portraits of Roman Egypt Emerging Research from the APPEAR Project* (Los Angeles 2020) 154. A red pigment. Known for its opacity and permanence. Composed of Mercuric sulfide (HgS).

⁷⁶ J. Salvant et al. ‘A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis’, *Egypt Archaeometry* 60:13 (2017) 14.

Chapter 2. Multiculturalism in Roman Egypt.

This chapter will discuss the multicultural society within Roman Egypt. To be able to discuss multiculturalism in Roman Egypt we need to look at how the religions from those cultures interacted with each other and what different classes and ethnicities existed in Roman Egypt. These are important aspects to consider when looking at how these people wanted to present themselves. This chapter sets up a framework in order to be able to look at the mummy portraits in chapter four through the perspective of multiculturalism.

2.1 Religious synthesis

In the Tebtunis excavation of 1899-1900, a cemetery containing thousands of crocodile mummies was found. There are still a lot of unanswered questions concerning these animal mummies, but it is likely that there was a practice of breeding the crocodiles. This level of commitment to mummification of animals shows the strong belief in the Egyptian pantheon. These gods were themselves represented as animals. By worshipping and mummifying sacred animals, they worshipped their gods.⁷⁷ Specifically the crocodile seems to be chosen for mummification in Tebtunis because of the previously mentioned local Tebtunis deity Soknebtunis.

The Egyptians did not abandon the worship of their gods when the Greeks and Romans migrated to Egypt. Instead, a synthesis between first the Greek and Egyptian and later the Roman and Egyptian pantheons came to be.⁷⁸ The Greeks, as far back as Herodotus, tried to match Egyptian deities with their Greek counterparts. Aphrodite, for instance, was linked and fused with Hathor and Isis, Hermes with Thot and Zeus with Amon-Re.⁷⁹ This fusion of different pantheons shows that the Greeks did not want to eliminate the Egyptian religion. The Egyptian focus on a death and rebirth cycle stayed persistent well into the Roman period. This cycle was symbolized by the ebb and flood of the Nile, as well as the sunrise and sunset. In the funerary tradition, the afterlife was still seen as a journey which people needed to be guided through. Their hearts would be judged at the end of this journey. The Egyptians believed that the soul could survive as long as the body remained. The Greeks and Romans in Egypt adopted this belief, which the practice of mummification in the Roman period attests to.⁸⁰

2.1.1 Funerary traditions

The tradition of the mummy portraits has its cultural origins in the Egyptian- as well as the Roman cultural and religious practices. The mummification itself has a long history in Egyptian culture. This

⁷⁷ M. Molcho, 'Crocodile Breeding In The Crocodile Cults Of The Graeco-Roman Fayum', *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 100 (2014) 181-193 q.v. 181-182.

⁷⁸ D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton, New Jersey 1998) 98-99.

⁷⁹ R. S. Bagnall & D. Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians* (Los Angeles 2004) 31.

⁸⁰ Bagnall & Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians* 32.

practice is embedded into their religious beliefs. The god Osiris was killed by his brother Seth. Anubis then mummified Osiris, making him the first mummy. By mummifying their dead, the Egyptians hoped to become one with Osiris and live on forever in the afterlife.⁸¹ This practice did not disappear with the coming of the Romans. The mummies themselves were still decorated following the Egyptian tradition. Among others, the scene of Anubis mummifying Osiris is displayed on the mummy case, but instead of Osiris, the deceased person is shown. Isis and Nephthys stand to either side of the mummy, mourning and protecting him. The mummy masks were always designed to represent Osiris, thereby making every mummy mask look the same. This, again, was done in order to align oneself with Osiris, the god who conquered death and lives forever.⁸²

The Romans had their influence on this tradition. Individuality and realism became more prominent. The Romans had the tradition of honoring their ancestors by portraying them on portrait-busts, which would stand in the 'atrium' (courtyard).⁸³ The pharaonic mummy masks were made to represent Osiris. The deceased person's own identity was therefore not on the forefront. This changed through the individualistic and realistic influence of the Roman portrait busts, resulting in the mummy portraits.⁸⁴ The specific painting style seen in the mummy portraits originated from Hellenistic Greece. This style can also be seen in frescoes from Pompeii (see [figure 2](#)). This painting style was adopted throughout the Mediterranean and probably came to Egypt through Alexandria.⁸⁵ In that way the religious tradition of mummification, the Roman influence of individuality and the Greek realistic art style cumulated into the practice of making the mummy portraits.

2.2 Class system

Now that the Romans ruled Egypt, social hierarchies became more complex. The Romans set in place a system, which is well reflected in this exchange of letters between Pliny and emperor Trajan.

Pliny to Trajan:

I thank you, Sir, for having so promptly granted my request and for your bestowal of full citizenship on the freedwomen of a lady who is my intimate friend, and the Roman citizenship upon Harpocras, my ointment-doctor. But though I gave particulars, in accordance with your wishes, of his age and financial position, I have been reminded by those more skilled in such matters than I am that as Harpocras is an Egyptian, I ought first to have obtained for him the Egyptian citizenship before asking for the Roman. For my own part, I thought that no distinction was drawn between Egyptians and all other foreigners, and so was satisfied with merely informing you that he had received his freedom at the

⁸¹ M. Smith, 'Osiris and the Deceased', *Encyclopedia of Egyptology* (Los Angeles 2009) 2-3.

⁸² B. E. Borg & G. W. Most, 'Faces of the Elite', *A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 8:1 (2000) 63-96 q.v. 73-74.

⁸³ B. van den Bercken, 'Voor onsterfelijkheid en herinnering: mummiepaneelportretten in gebruik' in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 81-91 q.v. 88.

⁸⁴ B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper, 'De mensen achter de mummie portretten: makers, navolgers, verzamelaars, archeologen en onderzoekers' in: Idem, *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 13-23 q.v. 13.

⁸⁵ B. E. Borg, 'Painted Funerary Portraits', *UCLA Encyclopedia of Egyptology* 1:1 (2010) 9.

*hands of a foreign lady, and that his patroness had been dead for some time. I do not regret my ignorance in this matter, inasmuch as it has enabled me to owe you a deeper debt of gratitude for the same individual. So I beg that you will bestow upon him both the Alexandrine and the Roman citizenship, that I may lawfully enjoy the full extent of your kindness (...).*⁸⁶

Trajan to Pliny:

*I make a practice of following the rules of my predecessors in not making promiscuous grants of the Alexandrine citizenship, but since you have already obtained the Roman citizenship for Harpocras, your ointment-doctor, I cannot very well refuse this further request of yours. You must let me know to what district he belongs, so that I may write to my friend Pompeius Planta, who is praefect of Egypt.*⁸⁷

Where someone lived had a great impact on one's social status. At the highest level were the Roman citizens. Below them were the people who lived in one of the four Greek cities in Egypt. They were called *astoi* (citizen). Of these four cities, people of Alexandria had an even higher social position than those living in Antipolis, Naukratis or Ptolemais. The *Aigyptioi* were the 'non-citizens' and were therefore lowest in the social hierarchy. Within the *Aigyptioi*, which included mostly poor and few rich people, some with and some without privileges, peasants, merchants etc. were the *Hellenes* or *Metropolitai*. This group consisted of privileged people living in the metropolises or capital towns of the Egyptian *nomes* (provinces). Their privilege meant having to pay less poll tax than the other *Aigyptioi*, but they still paid more taxes than the *astoi* and Roman citizens.⁸⁸ The *Hellenes* were still seen as *Aigyptioi* by the Romans. This shows how assigned citizenship and social status was not based entirely upon ethnicity.⁸⁹ As previously mentioned, this system changed in AD 212 when emperor Caracalla gave every citizen in the Roman empire Roman citizenship.⁹⁰

The Roman emperor's personal representative in Egypt was called the *Praefectus Aegypti*.⁹¹ He lived in Alexandria where he held this position for a period of one to three years. Once per year he and a few other Roman officials travelled to two Egyptian cities, one in upper Egypt and one in the Delta to engage with the affairs of the locals. People could write the *Praefectus Aegypti* to make requests. One papyrus from Tebtunis (AD 266-267) contains a petition to the *Praefectus Aegypti*, asking guardianship to be assigned to a widow's brother.⁹² To most people these Roman officials were an unseen representation of the government. What the people in Egypt did see of the Romans was mainly the army. They were positioned all over Egypt and consisted of some seventeen- to eighteen thousand soldiers.⁹³ The non-Roman citizens that joined the auxiliary forces, would beget Roman

⁸⁶ Plinius Minor, *Epistulae* 10.6. (J. B. Firth, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, London 1910).

⁸⁷ Plinius Minor, *Epistulae* 10.7. (J. B. Firth, *The Letters of the Younger Pliny*, London 1910).

⁸⁸ M. L. Bierbrier, 'The People of the Roman Fayum', *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: Sources and Approaches* (Padstow 2006) XIV 1-2.

⁸⁹ Riggs C., *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt* (New York 2005) 18.

⁹⁰ R. S. Bagnall & D. Rathbone, *Egypt from Alexander to the Early Christians* (Los Angeles 2004) 17.

⁹¹ M. Strehle, 'The Prefecture of Egypt in the Equestrian Hierarchy and the Construction of Divus in the Imperial Title', *Social Sciences and Education Research Review* 10:1 (2023) 82-86 q.v. 83.

⁹² P.Tebt.2.326., Grenfell B. P., Hunt A. S. and Goodspeed E., *The Tebtunis Papyri vol. 2* (London 1907) 136.

⁹³ Lewis N., *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford 1983) 19-20.

citizenship upon finishing 25 years of service in the army.⁹⁴ Some of these veterans, having spent most of their adult life in Egypt, chose to permanently stay and live in Egypt. We have seen that in Tebtunis there were Roman residential homes. These soldiers started families, who's social status benefitted from their honorable discharged husbands and fathers. Even though the Roman soldiers used their privileges whenever they could, there did not seem to be any major ethnical conflict between them and the locals.⁹⁵

2.2.1 The question of the ethnicity of the people in the Fayum region

Considering the complex class system within Roman Egypt, it is hard to determine the ethnicity of people in the mummy portraits. The question still remains of how these people thought about class and ethnicity themselves.⁹⁶ In order to know how someone wanted to present themselves, one must know how they perceived themselves first. There are very few sources which could inform us of the self-perception of the people of the Fayum region when it comes to ethnicity. Self-perception based on language could be a good determinant of culture/ethnicity but the fact that Greek was almost exclusively the language used for writing, is problematic. For example, if a mummy portrait had any inscriptions on the back, then they were written in Greek.⁹⁷ Language used in Roman Egypt therefore cannot satisfactorily determine self-perception, since people using Greek could have only done so out of necessity, not because they identify with that language.

2.2.2 Nomenclature

Comparing the elites in the cities to the people in the villages, their connection to Egypt changes very little, what does change is their connection to Greek ethnicity. The more southerly located villages have less of a connection with Greek culture than the bigger cities. The Fayum region, because of its high intensity of initial Greek settlers, is an exception to this.⁹⁸

Another possible way to see what ethnicity people identified themselves with, is through their names. The way people named their children reveals a lot about their perceived identity. Bierbrier looked at the names of the people in two Fayum villages and was able to conclude that all the names found in the sources were written in Greek.⁹⁹ Everyone wrote in Greek, whether they perceived

⁹⁴ P. Erdkamp, *A companion to the Roman Army* (Oxford 2007) 2.

⁹⁵ R. S. Bagnall, 'A Kinder, Gentler Roman Army?' *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 10 (1997) 504-512 q.v. 511.

⁹⁶ M. L. Bierbrier, 'The People of the Roman Fayum', *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: Sources and Approaches* (Padstow 2006) XIV 1.

⁹⁷ Salvant J. et al. 'A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis', *Egypt Archaeometry* 60:13 (2017) 2.

⁹⁸ M. L. Bierbrier, 'The People of the Roman Fayum', *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: Sources and Approaches* (Padstow 2006) XIV 11.

⁹⁹ Bierbrier, *The People of the Roman Fayum*, XIV 8.

themselves as Greek or not.¹⁰⁰ Therefore the language in which the names were written does not reveal anything about the ethnicity of the person. The way the name is composed, does however. Most people had theophoric names and almost all of these are Greek rendering of Egyptian gods. Ninety-eight percent of the names found in the *grapheion*¹⁰¹ register are in fact Greek renderings of Egyptian gods. Interestingly, theophoric names based on Greek gods that have no Egyptian equivalent, like Poseidon, are not found in the register.¹⁰² Here the religious synthesis shows again its effect on the multiculturalism of Roman Egypt. What this means is that the ethnicity of the names of these people was never completely binary. A purely Greek bloodline in Roman Egypt did exist however. These people were descended from the original Greek settlers during the Ptolemaic period. More about these people in chapter three. Judging by the names, most people saw themselves as Egyptian and Greek at the same time. These were the people who let the mummy portraits be made of themselves, that are now known as the Fayum mummy portraits.¹⁰³ How they present themselves through the mummy portraits will be discussed in chapter four.

In conclusion, this chapter showed that Roman Egypt had a multicultural society. Through their religious practices we see that the Egyptian, Greek and Roman religious practices became synthesized. Funerary traditions, like the mummy portraits, show how people in Roman Egypt were influenced by different cultures. The complex system of social hierarchy and ethnicity shows how these cultures were not necessarily living next to each other, but rather, were merging.

¹⁰⁰ Salvant J. et al. 'A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis', *Egypt Archaeometry* 60:13 (2017) 2.

¹⁰¹ R. H. Pierce, 'Grapheion, Catalogue, and Library in Roman Egypt', *Symbolae Osloenses* 43:68-83 (1968) 68-83 q.v. 68-70. A *grapheion* was an institution that collected and copied administrative and legal documents. A *grapheion* normally covered one or more villages. In the case of Tebtunis, it covered Tebtunis and Kerkesoukhon Oros.

¹⁰² M. Langellotti, *Village Life in Roman Egypt: Tebtunis in the First Century AD* (Oxford 2020) 77-78.

¹⁰³ M. L. Bierbrier, 'The People of the Roman Fayum', *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: Sources and Approaches* (Padstow 2006) XIV 11.

Chapter 3. Socio-economic structures in Roman Egypt.

This chapter will discuss the socio-economic status of people living in Roman Egypt. What made someone influential in Tebtunis during the Roman period? Wealth is of course a big contributor. Wealth and the resulting influence were obtained through several means. Influentiality will be measured through the way that property rights were organized, how marriages were arranged and what financial consequences this had. Greek heritage was also a cause for more influence as well as being literate was a reason for more influence. Lastly the price of a letting a portrait mummy be made, will be taken into consideration, to put wealth and influence into perspective. This chapter sets up a framework in order to be able to look at the mummy portraits in chapter four through a socio-economic lens.

3.1 Property rights

One way to gain socio-economic influence was by owning property. In the papyri, names are found of high officials in Tebtunis during the Roman period. These names are almost always Roman. From papyri describing property and census declarations, which belonged to family archives, we know that many Roman citizens had a second house in Tebtunis, acting as a sort of ‘vacation home’.¹⁰⁴ The fact that Tebtunis was apparently a village where Roman citizens, the people with the highest social status in Roman Egypt, wanted to have a second house, attests to Tebtunis’ desirability.

In Roman Egypt, women could obtain property from their family through a dowry or inheritance. Meanwhile women were not liable to the poll tax and less liable to liturgies (public work). This made a woman, in theory, equal in the way of obtaining property through family to a man.¹⁰⁵ In a Tebtunis papyrus from the first century AD, five brothers and a sister were given their inheritance, which was divided equally between them (with the exception of the eldest, who probably got more in order to compensate him for the care he has given his parents when they were sick).¹⁰⁶ Roman Egypt was quite unique in that women could own property. The ability of women to own property is not limited to Roman Egypt however. Evidence, in the form of wills, show that women living in Egypt from Ptolemaic to the Byzantine era, were able to own property (including land).¹⁰⁷

3.2 Marriage

Marriage contracts, in the form of papyrus sheets, are the best way to get information on the marriages of people in Egypt that were not part of the royal court nor literary characters. There are around one hundred of these marriage contracts left today, ranging from 311-310 BC to the sixth century AD.¹⁰⁸

The reason for people making a marriage contract had to do with the diversity of culture in

¹⁰⁴ E. Apostola & C. Kekes, ‘Current Research in Egyptology 2021: Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Symposium, University of the Aegean, 9-16 May 2021’, *Access Archeology* (Oxford 2022) 161.

¹⁰⁵ D. Hobson, ‘Women as Property Owners in Roman Egypt’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-2014) 113 (1983) 311-321 q.v. 312, 318-319.

¹⁰⁶ P.Mich.5.326. (Husselman E. M., *Papyri from Tebtunis, Part III* (Ann Arbor, Michigan 1944) 89-90.

¹⁰⁷ D. Hobson, ‘Women as Property Owners in Roman Egypt’, *Transactions of the American Philological Association* (1974-2014) 113 (1983) 311-321 q.v. 312, 318-319.

¹⁰⁸ S. B. Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt* (New York City 1984) 83-84.

Ptolemaic Egypt. The Hellenistic immigrants who settled in Egypt after the death of Alexander the Great and the birth of the Ptolemaic kingdom, came from all over the Greek world. These people did not share a universal code of law, nor social customs. In case of a divorce, people with different cultural backgrounds would be used to different proceedings. Therefore, when people from these diverse groups of married with one another or with the local people in Egypt, there had to be some sort of arrangement to ensure the financial interests of both parties. Parents of the bride also had financial risks in the form of a dowry. Marriage contracts were therefore an important tool to ensure financial security for men and women. With the coming of the Romans and the Roman soldiers marrying local women, the need for marriage contracts only increased.¹⁰⁹

A paper by Arthur M. F. W. Verhoogt, Dutch papyrologist and professor at Michigan State University, describes two families, of which the richer family ties themselves to the poorer family through marriage. This was not financially advantageous for the richer family. It was however advantageous on a social level. The poorer family lead the most important public office in Tebtunis, the village scribe, which was responsible for and took care of all the official paperwork. When the Romans came to Egypt, Greekness became less important for social prestige. Thus, getting to know Roman authorities would be beneficial to social prestige. This could be done by joining a public office,¹¹⁰ which was probably the reason for the richer family to tie themselves to the poorer family through marriage.

3.3 Greek descent

Previously mentioned in chapter 2.2.1, the Greek settlers of the Fayum region were called ‘*The 6475 Katoikoi*’¹¹¹. During the Roman period they had direct communications with the Roman emperor. They did this to secure their privileges within Roman Egypt. The emperor in his turn could use the Greek descendants as local rulers. There is much still unknown about this group but it is generally thought that they were military/colonists, originally serving Alexander the Great and his successors. They migrated to Egypt during the Ptolemaic period and were mainly established in Arisnoë. They would later be the rulers of the Graeco-Roman city of Antinoopolis.¹¹² The Gapeion archive of Tebtunis shows that the descendants of *the 6475 Katoikoi* were also in Tebtunis. This archive contains long ledgers of the notary of Tebtunis. Through these financial sources, some families show up more frequently in the papyri than others. These are the wealthy families. Through this archive we can conclude that the members of the wealthy families in Tebtunis were usually priests/priestesses of the temple of Soknebtunis, the Greek descendants from the *6475 Katoikoi* or people with a Egyptian-

¹⁰⁹ Pomeroy, *Women in Hellenistic Egypt*, 85.

¹¹⁰ A.M.F.W. Verhoogt, ‘Family relations in Early Roman Tebtunis’, *Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 1:3 (2004) 21-25 q.v. 23.

¹¹¹ B. van den Bercken, ‘Voor onsterfelijkheid en herinnering: mummiepaneelporteretten in gebruik’ in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 81-91 q.v. 85-86. *Katoikoi* in this context means ‘settler’. *The 6475 Katoikoi* were a group of 6475 male Greek settlers/soldiers who came to Egypt during the Ptolemaic period. They enjoyed special privileges, which their descendants, under Roman rule, also enjoyed.

¹¹² B. van den Bercken, ‘Voor onsterfelijkheid en herinnering: mummiepaneelporteretten in gebruik’ in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 81-91 q.v. 85-86.

Greek mixed heritage.¹¹³ An example of a descendant from the 6475 *Katoikoi* named Achilleus, can be found in a papyrus from the grapheion archive of Tebtunis. This papyrus shows that Achilleus, whose family had been in charge of the grapheion of Tebtunis, belonged to an elite family in Tebtunis and is labeled as “*Katoikoi*”¹¹⁴ A ‘traditional’ education in a gymnasium was held in high regards by people belonging to the 6475 *Katoikoi*.¹¹⁵

3.4 Literacy

Tebtunis was one of the wealthiest villages in the Fayum during the Ptolemaic, Roman and Byzantine periods.¹¹⁶ literacy was representative of wealth in Roman Egyptian villages. It is presumed that literary texts were written for and by the wealthy elite population within a village. There have been many literary fragments found written on papyrus, in Egyptian or Greek, in Tebtunis.¹¹⁷ These literary fragments have been identified to be from a library, personal belongings and in the form of school texts.¹¹⁸ The temples were run by the temple priest families. The priests and priestesses had Egyptian names and had to prove their descent from these priest families. They also had to prove their skills in the Egyptian language and ability to read Egyptian literature.¹¹⁹ Many of the found literary fragments belonged to these priest families. These people accumulated their own collections to study and teach their offspring. Schools used literature for study. There have been commentaries and writing exercises found on the reverse side of text or on ostraca.¹²⁰

3.5 Price of making a mummy portrait

The fact that there have only been found around a 1000 mummy portraits attest to the fact that it was not a common practice in Egypt, even taking into consideration the number of the portraits that were possibly destroyed through natural causes. It seems logical that the people with a high social status were the ones who let a mummy portrait be made of themselves. But these mummy portraits vary a lot in quality. The materials of the wood and paint differ, but also the aesthetic quality (although, this is of course subjective) could point at a range of economic status within that high social status. Some mummy portraits were gilded with gold, which made them more expensive to make.

The price of making a mummy portrait can be determined by looking at the costs of the materials. The prices of linen for the mummy could go up to six hundred drachmas.¹²¹ In contrast, a

¹¹³ M. Langellotti, *Village Life in Roman Egypt: Tebtunis in the First Century AD* (Oxford 2020) 29.

¹¹⁴ P.Tebt.2.322, Grenfell B. P., Hunt A. S. and Goodspeed E., *The Tebtunis Papyri* vol. 2 (London 1907) 129-131.

¹¹⁵ B. E. Borg, ‘The Face of the Elite’, *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classic*, Translated by G. W. Most 8:1 (2000) 63-96 q.v. 89.

¹¹⁶ E. Apostola & C. Kekes, ‘Current Research in Egyptology 2021: Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Symposium, University of the Aegean, 9-16 May 2021’, *Access Archeology* (Oxford 2022) 160.

¹¹⁷ P. van Minnen, ‘Boorish or bookish? Literature in Egyptian Villages in the Fayum in the Graeco-Roman period’, *The Journal of Papyrology* 28 (1998) 99-184 q.v. 108-109.

¹¹⁸ E. Apostola & C. Kekes, ‘Current Research in Egyptology 2021: Proceedings of the Twenty-First Annual Symposium, University of the Aegean, 9-16 May 2021’, *Access Archeology* (Oxford 2022) 163.

¹¹⁹ B. Chrubasik & D. King, *Hellenism and the Local Communities of the Eastern Mediterranean* (Oxford 2017) 178.

¹²⁰ P. van Minnen, ‘Boorish or bookish? Literature in Egyptian Villages in the Fayum in the Graeco-Roman Period’, *The Journal of Papyrology* 28 (1998) 99-184 q.v. 109.

¹²¹ C. Riggs, *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford 2020) 604.

donkey costed around two hundred drachmas.¹²² Meanwhile a clerk in Tebtunis in AD 191 earned twenty-eight drachma's a month and a brick layer in Tebtunis in AD 172 earned forty drachmas for laying ten thousand bricks.¹²³ Some mummy portraits, including some of the Tebtunis mummy portraits, had gilded areas which made the portrait even more expensive. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the people in the mummy portraits could not have been poor. They likely had high socio-economic status and wealth.

In conclusion, this chapter showed that the people in the mummy portraits were probably wealthy and had influence within their community, which comes with a high social status. We have also established that there were wealthy people in Tebtunis. We know that these wealthy families consisted of Egyptian priests/priestesses, Greek descendants of the 6475 *Katoikoi*, or people with an Egyptian-Greek mixed heritage. We therefore know that the people in the mummy portraits likely belonged one of these three groups. Roman citizens are not represented as much in the The grapheion archive, probably because they were a minority and they were usually only temporary inhabitants. This does not mean that the people in the mummy portraits could not have been Roman citizens. This socio-economic perspective, in combination with the multicultural perspective discussed in chapter two, will now be applied to the mummy portraits from Tebtunis.

¹²² P.Tebt.2.474. Grenfell B. P., Hunt A. S. and Goodspeed E., *The Tebtunis Papyri vol. 2* (London 1907) 310.

¹²³ T. Frank, *An economic survey of ancient Rome: Volume 2 Roman Egypt* (Baltimore 1936) 308.

Chapter 4. Multiculturalism and socio-economic status in the mummy portraits

The historic background of Roman Egypt, Tebtunis and the mummy portraits have been discussed. The multicultural society and socio-economic status of the people within this society have also been discussed. In this chapter I will again look at the multicultural and socio-economic aspects, but now by analyzing the mummy portraits from Tebtunis. For the convenience of the reader, I will close this chapter with a recapitulation in which the individual aspects of the mummy portrait, which will be discussed in this chapter, will be combined to paint a more complete picture of the individual mummy portraits.

two of the eleven mummy portraits from Tebtunis, mummy portraits two and nine (Cat. N° 2,9), are that of a child. Therefore the social role of children will also be discussed. Facial expressions will not be discussed since differences in facial expressions are very subtle and facial expressions, or emotions for that matter, are to some degree culturally determined. It is therefore nearly impossible to extract information from them.¹²⁴

4.1 Hairstyles

Hairstyles have helped historians with dating the mummy portraits to certain periods that correspond with the reign of certain Roman emperors. People in Roman Egypt were aware of fashion trends that were relevant in Rome. They cared enough about these fashion trends to depict themselves in their mummy portrait according to the latest fashion trend. People in Roman Egypt could see the hairstyle of the Roman emperor and empress through coins, little terracotta statues and other objects that depicted their hairstyle.¹²⁵ Why would the people in Roman Egypt care? It seems probable that through imitation, these women wanted to be associated with the virtues that the emperor or empress, from whom copied their hairstyle, represented.

For the Tebtunis portraits, different hairstyles have been identified that match Roman fashion trends. These styles are all from the Antonine and early-Severan periods (except for mummy portrait number one (Cat. N° 1)). Looking specifically at mummy portraits five, six, seven, nine and ten (Cat. N° 5-7,9,10), the depicted women have their hair up in a bun on the crown of their head. This hairstyle is called a tower style and is indicative for early Antonine female hairstyles. It is dated to the early Antonine period because of Faustina the Elder.¹²⁶ [Figure 3](#) shows a portrait of Faustina the elder,

¹²⁴ B. E. Borg, 'The Face of the Elite', *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classic*, Translated by G. W. Most 8:1 (2000) 63-96 q.v. 67-68. Borg shares this view and explains this with an example of a when Japanese movies were released for a western audience for the first time. They were not able to comprehend what emotions the Japanese actors were conveying because of the cultural differences. This is no different for people who lived almost two thousand years ago in a different culture from our own.

¹²⁵ O. E. Kaper, 'Portretten van mensen, beelden van levens: het dagelijks leven in Romeins Egypte volgens de mummieportretten' in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 29-40 q.v. 37.

¹²⁶ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 113-114.

displaying the tower style coiffure. As can be seen in [figure 4](#), Faustina the Younger noticeably changed her hairstyle from her mother's. Mummy portrait number eight (Cat. N° 8) has a hairstyle resembling that of Faustina the younger. It can therefore be dated to the middle to late Antonine period.

Remaining are the four male portraits. Three of them, mummy portraits two, three and four (Cat. N° 2-4) have hair that resembles one of Emperor Caracalla's hairstyles. Mummy Portrait number one (Cat. N° 1) is different from the other male portraits. This man is depicted wearing his hair in Trajanic fashion. But other Antonine-Severan features that this portrait has, like the almond shaped eyes, straight nose and small mouth, outweigh, according to Ragheb, the hairstyle as a dating 'tool'.¹²⁷

Mummy portrait number four (Cat. N° 4) has a full beard. Only mummy portraits from the second century AD or later are seen with beards. This is because, just as with the hairstyles, facial hair was replicated from Roman emperors. Hadrian was the first emperor to have a beard, after which other emperors followed. Men throughout the Roman empire would also grow their beards, like the man in mummy portrait number four (Cat. N° 4).¹²⁸

4.2 Clothing

The people depicted on the mummy portraits let themselves be painted wearing specific clothes. What can those clothes say about the way they wanted to present themselves? Looking at the Tebtunis mummy portraits, it seems that many of them wear a similar style of clothing. What is this type of clothing called and where did it originate from?

The people in the mummy portraits from Tebtunis wear *chitons* and *himations*. These were unisex garments, worn in the Roman empire but have a Greek origin. Men and women in ancient Greece usually wore a *himation*, which was a cloak or mantle, or a *chiton*, which was a tunic. The *himation* was originally seen as the garment of a philosopher and thus portrayed characteristics of intellect and wisdom. Statues of these philosophers, like the 'Lateran Sophocles' statue, show a philosopher only wearing the *himation* without a *chiton* (see [figure 5](#)). However, wearing a *chiton* underneath the *himation* became standard practice for most Greeks. People's characters were being judged by the way one wore their *himation*. Seeing as the *himation* was not fastened with pins, the way one fastened the cloak around one's body said something about him or her. It usually took practice to get this right and re-adjusting was common practice. There was also the *chlamys*, which was not much different from the *himation* except that it was used for military purposes and it could be differentiated by the brooch, keeping the cloak fastened on the right side of the neck.¹²⁹ A *chlamys*

¹²⁷ M. R. S. Ragheb, *Mummy portraits: Investigating Regional Variations* (Master's Thesis Egyptology, The American University in Cairo 2016) 113-114.

¹²⁸ O. E. Kaper, 'Portretten van mensen, beelden van levens: het dagelijks leven in Romeins Egypte volgens de mummieportretten' in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 29-40 q.v. 37.

¹²⁹ N. Herbert, *Ancient European costume and fashion* (Mineola 1999) 44-45.

was usually accompanied with a *balteus*, which is a belt worn over the shoulder to hold a sword.¹³⁰ It would have been possible that the men in the mummy portraits would want to present themselves wearing a *chlamys*, thereby displaying military values. There are in fact multiple mummy portraits in which the man is portrayed wearing a *chlamys*. But there are no *chlamys*, brooches or *balteus* visible on the mummy portraits from Tebtunis. It is therefore more probable that the clothing they are wearing are *himations* with a *chiton* underneath (since the chest is covered). The *chiton* and *himation* eventually became popular in Rome and in Egypt.¹³¹

Chitons were mostly white. On top of the *chiton* a wool overcoat could be worn in winter to stay warm. Wool was a lot easier to color than linen so these overcoats were sometimes in shades of pink and purple for women.¹³² The color of the *himation* often matched with the color of the *chiton*.¹³³ Mummy portraits five, seven, eight, nine and eleven (Cat. N° 5,7-9,11) wear these colored *himations* and *chitons*. Only women wore colored clothing. Men had color in the *clavi*.

The *clavi* is a thin (two fingers width) purple or red piece of fabric, sown over the shoulder(s) on a white *chiton*. The *clavi* was possibly copied from the Etruscans by the Roman senate. In Rome the *clavi* represented different things depending on the way it was worn. Two stripes, one on each shoulder, were worn by a wealthy person of high social rank.¹³⁴ Although during the Roman period of Egypt, this socio-economic status was not attached to the *clavi* anymore, it was probably worn for aesthetic purposes.¹³⁵ In Greece, a white *chiton* with two purple *clavi*, one on each shoulder, and two purple stripes down the front and back, was worn by members of the ‘*Camilli*’, which was an association of youths who assisted in religious ceremonies.¹³⁶ Mummy portrait two number (Cat. N° 2) fits this description but it is unknown whether such an association was active in Tebtunis during the Roman period.

4.3 Jewelry

Egyptian style jewelry, belonging to the Roman period, has been found in Egypt. However, in the mummy portraits jewelry was always in accordance with Roman fashion. In the mummy portraits of Tebtunis, only the females are depicted wearing jewelry. Although, men in these portraits are, in some cases, depicted with gilded wreaths. With regards to earrings, the most commonly painted model was the one with a horizontal bar with three vertical gemstones or pearls. This model was worn well into the third century AD. The other common model that was depicted in the portraits was in the form of

¹³⁰ O. E. Kaper, ‘Portretten van mensen, beelden van levens: het dagelijks leven in Romeins Egypte volgens de mummieportretten’ in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 29-40 q.v. 31.

¹³¹ N. Herbert, *Ancient European costume and fashion* (Mineola 1999) 107.

¹³² O. E. Kaper, ‘Portretten van mensen, beelden van levens: het dagelijks leven in Romeins Egypte volgens de mummieportretten’ in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 29-40 q.v. 31.

¹³³ Doxiadis E., *The Mysterious Fayum Portraits: Faces from Ancient Egypt* (London 1995) 234.

¹³⁴ N. Herbert, *Ancient European costume and fashion* (Mineola 1999) 105-106.

¹³⁵ U. Rothe, A. Hamelink and N. Delferrière, ‘Roman Clavus Decoration on Gallic Dress: A Reevaluation Based on New Discoveries’, *American Journal of Archaeology* 127:4 (2023) 545-562 q.v. 554.

¹³⁶ N. Herbert, *Ancient European costume and fashion* (Mineola 1999) 105.

an ‘S’, with three to four pearls.¹³⁷

In Ancient Egypt there was a taboo on depicting the deceased wearing rings. It was believed that this would hurt the deceased person in the afterlife. This taboo was not present anymore during the Roman period of Egypt.¹³⁸ Looking at the Tebtunis mummy portraits this becomes evident; two out of the eleven mummy portraits wear a ring. These are mummy portrait eight and eleven (Cat. N° 8,11). These two portraits are both of women and both women wear the ring around their ring finger. The woman in mummy portrait number eight (Cat. N° 8) wears a silver colored ring with a gemstone and the woman of mummy portrait number eleven (Cat. N° 11) wears a golden ring. Jewelry and clothing that were part of the brides dowry were too expensive for everyday use. Dowries were a Greek tradition which was adopted in Egypt after its Hellenization.¹³⁹ This jewelry and clothing, usually belonging to a dowry, resemble the depictions on the mummy portraits. It may be a deliberate choice to portray the deceased woman as a married woman, by depicting her in clothing and jewelry typically belong to her dowry.¹⁴⁰

4.4 Coloring

The color ‘Egyptian blue’ has cultural and artistic significance. In Pharaonic Egypt, blue resembled the sun, immortality and life itself. In art, blue tones were used for the skin of gods like Amun. The glassy particles in Egyptian blue are able to reflect light, making it shimmer. This shimmery quality was used to make art ‘come to life’. In literature it signified beauty and immortality.¹⁴¹ In the Odessey, Athena makes Odysseus’ hair and skin shimmer, thereby giving him godly status.¹⁴² A lot of mummy masks have blue hair in order to give the mummy these godly features (see for example [figure 6](#)).

Egyptian blue is mainly used in the backgrounds of the Tebtunis portraits. The colors in the mummy portrait seem to be deliberate. The artist had access to different pigments but choose to give the clavi, for example, a specific color and not just a cheap pigment. This is probably because the artist wanted the color in the painting to mimic real life.¹⁴³

Mummy portrait number two (Cat. N° 2) has a mixture of white and Egyptian blue for his eyes, to make them seem ‘liquid’. This technique is traditionally seen in polychrome statues from classical Greece onward. This technique was used to make the statue seem more beautiful and intelligent.¹⁴⁴ Tyrian purple, a color used especially for women’s clothing on the mummy portraits, was originally a color of rank in the republican period. This social rank aspect relaxed during the

¹³⁷ O. E. Kaper, ‘Portretten van mensen, beelden van levens: het dagelijks leven in Romeins Egypte volgens de mummieportretten’ in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 29-40 q.v. 31-32.

¹³⁸ O. E. Kaper, *Portretten van mensen, beelden van levens*, 32, 34.

¹³⁹ M. Sturym, *Property Law in Roman Egypt in the Light of the Papyri: Safeguarding Women’s Economic Interests* (Master thesis Ancient Mediterranean Cultures, University of Waterloo 2013) 22.

¹⁴⁰ J. Rowlandson, *Women & Society in Greek & Roman Egypt* (Cambridge 1998) 313.

¹⁴¹ G. Thiboutot, ‘Egyptian Blue in Romano-Egyptian Mummy Portraits’, *Mummy Portraits of Roman Egypt Emerging Research from the APPEAR Project* (Los Angeles 2020) 50.

¹⁴² Homer, *Odyssey* 16.176.

¹⁴³ G. Thiboutot, ‘Egyptian Blue in Romano-Egyptian Mummy Portraits’, *Mummy Portraits of Roman Egypt Emerging Research from the APPEAR Project* (Los Angeles 2020) 49.

¹⁴⁴ Thiboutot, *Egyptian Blue in Romano-Egyptian Mummy Portraits*, 49.

Roman Egypt period.¹⁴⁵

Some painting techniques used in the Tebtunis portraits have a long tradition, going back to pharaonic times and were also used in the Graeco-Roman world. This includes the use of calcite and calcium sulphate. Other techniques, like the use of the organic colorants madder and indigo, on inorganic material like calcium sulphate, were not used in Egypt before the Ptolemaic period, showing Greek influence on the mummy portraits.¹⁴⁶ Gilding is applied to mummy portraits one, two, four, five, seven, eight and eleven (Cat. N° 1,2,4,5,7,8,11). In case of mummy portrait number one (Cat. N° 1), the gilding has been applied at a later stage, most likely during the wrapping of the mummy.¹⁴⁷

4.5 Different ages

The person depicted in mummy portrait number two (Cat. N° 2) is probably younger than fourteen years of age. Boys over the age of fourteen were depicted with a light mustache on the mummy portraits to signify their growth into manhood. The age of fourteen is of course just an estimation, but most boys start growing light facial hair around that age.¹⁴⁸ The boy in mummy portraits two (Cat. N° 2) does not have any facial hair. It is therefore likely that he is younger than fourteen years.

Generally in the mummy portraits, girls are depicted as female adults judging by their clothing, jewelry and hairstyle. This might have been done to depict the girls upcoming adulthood. There is one mummy portrait from Tebtunis of a girl, which is mummy portrait number nine (Cat. N° 9). The girl wears bar earrings and a gold necklace. She also uniquely wears a red *chiton* and *himation*. The color red is usually used for female portraits whereas white is usually used in male portraits.¹⁴⁹ Red does not seem to be age specific, since women also wear red in the mummy portraits. Therefore the color red might have also functioned as a symbol of upcoming adulthood, like the clothing and jewelry.

Mummy portrait number one (Cat. N° 1) depicts an old man with gray hair. It is fairly uncommon to see men or women with gray hair on a mummy portrait. This was likely due to the fact that life expectancy was significantly lower than nowadays. Reaching forty years of age was seen as old. Most people in the mummy portraits are between twenty and thirty-five.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁵ U. Rothe, A. Hamelink and N. Delferrière, 'Roman Clavus Decoration on Gallic Dress: A Reevaluation Based on New Discoveries', *American Journal of Archaeology* 127:4 (2023) 545-562 q.v. 554.

¹⁴⁶ J. Salvant et al. 'A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis', *Egypt Archaeometry* 60:13 (2017) 8.

¹⁴⁷ Salvant et al, *A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis*, 5,18.

¹⁴⁸ O. E. Kaper, 'Portretten van mensen, beelden van levens: het dagelijks leven in Romeins Egypte volgens de mummieportretten' in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 29-40 q.v. 39.

¹⁴⁹ Svoboda M. & Cartwright C. R., *Mummy Portraits of Roman Egypt Emerging Research from the APPEAR Project* (Los Angeles 2020) 154. Cinnabar is a red pigment. Known for its opacity and permanence. Composed of Mercuric sulfide (HgS).

¹⁵⁰ B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper, 'De mensen achter de mummie portretten: makers, navolgers, verzamelaars, archeologen en onderzoekers' in: Idem, *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 13-23 q.v. 14-15.

4.6 Attributes

The people depicted in mummy portraits two, four, eight and eleven (Cat. N° 2,4,8,11) are holding an attribute in their hands. Unfortunately, since some of the other portraits are damaged, there are possibly more Tebtunis portraits with the depicted person holding an attribute, but we simply cannot know. Mummy portrait number two (Cat. N° 2) seems to be holding a scroll and pen. Since mummy portrait number two (Cat. N° 2) is a portrait of a young boy, this could be a reference to his education. As has been discussed, being literate meant that one was probably from a wealthy family. So the scroll and pen could also be a symbol for literacy and wealth. The Phoebe A. Hearst Museum reckons that his hand was added later (see inventory card), which could indicate that the person or person's family asked for its inclusion after the painting was already done. The attribute which the boy in mummy portrait two number (Cat. N° 2) is holding, has alternatively been identified as a glass of wine.¹⁵¹ The people depicted in mummy portraits four, eight and eleven (Cat. N° 4,8,11) are holding a pink flower garland. The flower garland symbolizes rebirth in Roman Egyptian society.¹⁵²

4.7 Mummy portraits

To round off this chapter, for the convenience of the reader, this section will function as a written catalogue of the Tebtunis mummy portraits. The catalogue numbers correspond with the pictures of the mummy portraits in the section "Catalogue", further on in the thesis.

Mummy portrait number one (Cat. N° 1) is of an old man. His old age is made clear by his gray hair. There are still pieces of a golden funerary crown visible. His hairstyle resembles the emperor Trajan. He wears a white *chiton* with one blue *clavi* (the original color could have faded). This portrait is made with encaustic paint. The museum has dated this mummy portrait to the beginning of the second century AD, whereas Ragheb has dated this mummy portrait to the late-Antonine/early-Severan period. This mummy portrait was found in a Roman tomb.

Mummy portrait number two (Cat. N° 2) is of a young boy, probably younger than fourteen since he is not depicted with any facial hair. His hairstyle resembles that of emperor Caracalla. He holds a scroll and pen, possibly referring to his education. Alternatively, he is believed to be holding a glass of wine. The boy's right hand seems to be added later. He wears a white *chiton* with two violet *clavi*. He has straight thick dark hair with also a golden funerary crown on his head. This portrait is made with encaustic paint. The museum has dated this mummy portrait to the first quarter of the third century AD, whereas Ragheb has dated this mummy portrait to the late-Antonine/early-Severan period. This mummy portrait was found in a Roman tomb.

Mummy portrait number three (Cat. N° 3) is of a middle-aged man with a full thick black beard and thick curly hair which resembles emperor Caracalla. He wears a white *chiton* with one purple *clavi*.

¹⁵¹ D. Rathbone, *A Town Full of Gods: Imagining Religious Experience in Roman Tebtunis (Egypt)* (Berkeley 2003) 18.

¹⁵² C. Thomas, 'Ateliers en schildershanden: wie waren de makers van de mummiepaneelportretten?' in: B. van den Bercken & O. E. Kaper eds., *Oog in oog: de mensen achter de mummie portretten* (Amsterdam 2023) 73-79 q.v. 74.

This portrait is made with encaustic paint. The museum has dated this mummy portrait to the first quarter of the third century AD, whereas Ragheb has dated this mummy portrait to the late-Antonine/early-Severan period. This mummy portrait was found in a Roman tomb.

Mummy portrait number four (Cat. N° 4) is of a young man. He has curly black hair with a golden funerary crown on top of it. His hairstyle is in the fashion of emperor Caracalla. He has a light mustache, suggesting that this boy was seen as a young man. This means he is probably older than the boy in mummy portrait number two. This mummy portrait and mummy portrait number two share stylistic similarities, which is an indication that the artist might have used a template. Just like mummy portrait number two he has a raised right hand, which was probably also added on later. This young man is holding a red garland. This portrait is made with encaustic paint. The museum has dated this mummy portrait to the second quarter of the third century AD, whereas Ragheb has dated the mummy portrait to the late-Antonine/early-Severan period. There is no mentioning of this mummy portrait being found in a Roman tomb on the catalogue card.

Mummy portrait number five (Cat. N° 5) is of a young woman. Her hairstyle mimics that of Faustina the elder. This dates her mummy portrait to the mid-second century AD. This portrait is made with encaustic paint. Her *chiton* is pink with two clavi of which the color is so faded that it is hard to discern. Ragheb has dated this mummy portrait to the early-Antonine period. This mummy portrait was found in a Roman tomb.

Mummy portrait number six (Cat. N° 6) is a sketch which has not yet been finalized into a mummy portrait. The sketch is made with ink. The sketch is of a woman with the same hairstyle as the woman on mummy portrait five, seven, nine and eleven (Cat. N° 5,7,9,11), the tower style of Faustina the Elder. There are instructions written in Greek. The text over her left shoulder reads: “She wears a necklace, alternate with green”. The text over her right shoulder says “purple”, possibly an instruction for the color of her clavi. The other words written on the sketch are “eyes”, “color” and “thicken”, which could be either reminders of the artist to himself or notes from the person being depicted on the mummy portrait or else notes from a relative. Since we still don’t know exactly when the portraits were made within someone’s lifetime, these are all valid possibilities. The museum has dated this mummy portrait to the mid-second century AD whereas Ragheb has dated it to the early-Antonine period. There is no mentioning of this mummy portrait being found in a Roman tomb on the catalogue card. This would make sense considering the mummy portrait was not finished and therefore not buried with the mummy.

Mummy portrait number seven (Cat. N° 7) is of a woman with the tower hairstyle. She wears a pink *chiton* with a black clavi over her right shoulder and a dark purple *himation*. Her features are outlined in white, a stylistic choice not seen yet in previous mummy portraits. She wears earrings and a necklace. This portrait is made with encaustic paint. The museum has dated this mummy portrait to

the mid-second century AD and whereas Ragheb has dated this mummy portrait to the early-Antonine period. This mummy portrait was found in a Roman tomb.

Mummy portrait number eight (Cat. N° 8) is of a woman with a different hairstyle than the other women. Her hair does not have a knot on the top but a bun in the nape of her neck. This hairstyle resembles the hairstyle of Faustina the Younger. She wears a pink tunic with a black clavi. She also has a silver ring on her right ring finger. She is holding a pink garland. This portrait is made with encaustic paint. The museum has dated this mummy portrait to the mid-second century AD, whereas Ragheb has dated this mummy portrait to the mid-late Antonine period. This mummy portrait was found in a Roman tomb.

Mummy portrait number nine (Cat. N° 9) is of a girl having the tower hairstyle. She uniquely wears a red *chiton* and *himation* with black clavi. She wears a chain necklace and bar earrings, one of the most commonly worn style of earrings. The necklace and earrings are, although gold colored, not gilded.¹⁵³ This portrait is made with encaustic paint. The museum has dated this mummy portrait to the mid-second century AD, whereas Ragheb has dated the mummy portraits to the early-Antonine period. This mummy portrait was found in a Roman tomb.

Mummy portrait number ten (Cat. N° 10) is heavily damaged by insects, specifically ants. What remains is a woman with a tower hairstyle. Her features were outlined in red, in contrast to white in mummy portrait number seven (Cat. N° 7). This portraits is made with encaustic paint The museum has dated this mummy portrait to the second century AD, whereas Ragheb has dated the mummy portraits to the early-Antonine period. This mummy portrait was found in a Roman tomb.

Mummy portrait number eleven (Cat. N° 11) is of a young woman also wearing the tower hairstyle. In her hair are either two golden hairpins or remains of a funerary crown. She wears a pink *chiton and himation* with black clavi. She is holding a red garland, with its color now faded. She wears a golden ring on her right ring finger This portrait is made with encaustic paint. The museum has dated this mummy portrait to the latter half of the second century AD. Ragheb has not dated this portrait. The mummy portrait was found in a Roman tomb.

In conclusion, this chapter showed how the hairstyles that the people in the mummy portraits wore, were based on the contemporary Roman fashion. The clothing was based on Greek styles that were still being worn by the Romans. The jewelry was also worn according to Roman fashion and was depicted to show someone's wealth. This jewelry could have a connection to a woman's dowry. The coloring of the paintings reveals the broad commercial activity that was active throughout the Mediterranean, exchanging materials and painting techniques. Age was shown through facial hair and greying of one's hair. Girls were represented as adults, perhaps to symbolized the upcoming

¹⁵³ J. Salvant et al. 'A Roman Egyptian A Painting Workshop: Technical Investigation of the Portraits from Tebtunis', *Egypt Archaeometry* 60:13 (2017) 13.

adulthood. Attributes held by the people depicted in the mummy portraits, could give insight into the individual. A garland for example, symbolizes rebirth and a pen and scroll could be a reference to one's education.

5. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis has been to look at what the mummy portraits from Tebtunis, reveal about the way the people depicted on the mummy portraits, wanted to present themselves. Two themes have been established within this self-presentation, multiculturalism and socio-economic status. Through their depicted hairstyle and clothing they wanted to present their Greek and/or Roman qualities. They wanted to present themselves with these Greek and Roman qualities because of the socio-economic benefits that these ‘ethnicities’ entailed. This high social status and their wealth is further presented through the depicted jewelry, golden wreaths and the use of gilding. The mummy portraits show how the multicultural and socio-economic aspects of Roman Egypt are actually intertwined.

The mummy portrait tradition came together through the ancient Egyptian tradition of mummification, the Roman emphasis on individuality in funeral practices and the Hellenistic realistic painting style. This wide variety of cultural influences attest to the multiculturalism in the mummy portraits. Multiculturalism is seen in more aspects of the mummy portraits: the Roman hairstyles, Roman jewelry, Graeco-Roman clothing and painted Greek instructions. This multiculturalism matches with what the historical context tells us about Roman Egypt. This includes the Greek and Egyptian influences on names, the buying and selling of materials from all over the Mediterranean world, the religious synthesis and the simple fact that first Greek and then Roman people settled in Egypt and mingled with the local population. All these aspects of life in Roman Egypt attest to a diverse multicultural society.

The socio-economic status is harder to perceive from the mummy portraits. Although being able to have a portrait be made, meant the person in question must have had considerable wealth and therefore probably also status, it is not discernible from the portraits themselves. Even aspects suggests wealth in the portraits, like jewelry, do not prove that the person was rich. We do not know whether the person really owned the expensive jewelry that was displayed. However, one aspect of the mummy portraits can give insight into the wealth of the person, namely the gilding and the wood type. Mainly through the finds of papyrus are we able to conclude that wealthy families lived in Tebtunis and that the members of those families were either Egyptian priests/priestesses, Greek descendants of the 6475 *Katoikoi*, or people with an Egyptian-Greek mixed heritage. When we assume that the people depicted in the mummy portraits were relatively wealthy and of high(er) social status, we may conclude that the people in the mummy portraits were likely to be part of one of these three groups.

The Roman occupation of Egypt was relatively peaceful. The Romans respected Egyptian culture and were financially depended on them. Roman oppression of the Egyptian locals did not seem to be the case. The mummy portraits might be a reflection of this relationship. The people depicted in the mummy portrait actively tried to display Roman qualities. They probably wouldn't do this if the Romans were oppressive and abusive towards them. Looking at it from the Romans

perspective, they never forbade Egyptian funeral- and religious practices but rather incorporated some of the Egyptian gods like Isis into the Roman pantheon.¹⁵⁴ The existence of the mummy portraits, which are a representation of a multicultural society, attests to this Roman attitude.

We have seen that there probably was a paint workshop located in Tebtunis, in which mummy portrait two, three and four (Cat. N° 2-4) were possibly painted by the same artist. Mummy portrait one and ten (Cat. N° 1,10) were most likely painted in a workshop outside of Tebtunis. As for the rest of the portraits, it is harder to determine their origins.

The attendees of the festive events along the *dromos*, wore white clothing and wreaths, ate pork and drank wine. Looking at mummy portrait number two (Cat. N° 2), we see a boy wearing white, a wreath and according to some interpretation, holding a glass of wine. Does this mean that the boy in this mummy portrait wanted to be represented in a festive manner? It might have been. Although, as mentioned before, the glass of wine has been perceived as something different and personally the pen and scroll interpretation seems more likely.

The museum inventory card of mummy portrait number two (Cat. N° 2) dates the portrait to the first quarter of the third century AD, just like mummy portrait number three (Cat. N° 3). Since Carcalla made all free people living in Egypt, Roman citizens in AD 212, the boy in the mummy portrait number two (Cat. N° 2) could have become a Roman citizen before his death. If we assume that the boy is indeed holding a scroll and a pen, that would indicate a desire to portray the boy's education. This means that the boy was literate and that he had to be of high social status and therefore probably wealthy. Combined with the fact that the portrait was found in a Roman tomb, and the theory that this boy was a Roman citizen, becomes at least a possibility. Alternatively, considering that the 6475 *Katoikoi* held their children's education in high regard, the scroll and pen might be an indication that this boy was one of them. We have to conclude that, with the information available to us, it is impossible to make a definitive statement about the background of the boy from mummy portrait number two (Cat. N° 2).

Mummy portrait number four (Cat. N° 4) is dated to the second quarter of the third century AD by The Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology. This means that the depicted person would have been a Roman citizen when he died, since this is after Carcalla's edict. There are no striking differences between mummy portrait four (Cat. N° 4) and the other ten (older) mummy portraits. This seems to suggest that the dating of the museum is not completely accurate and that Ragheb's dating would be preferable here. Ragheb dates the mummy portrait to the late-Antonine/early-Severan period, which is before AD 212. Alternatively, the similarities between mummy portrait number four (Cat. N° 4) and the rest could attest to the fact that all the depicted people wanted to present

¹⁵⁴ L. Hayne, 'Isis and republican politics', *Acta Classica: Proceedings of the Classical Association of South Africa* 35:1 (1992) 143-149 q.v. 143.

themselves as Roman citizens. Or vice versa, that being a Roman citizen did not change the way the man wanted to present himself on the mummy portrait.

For further research it would be beneficial to look at portraits from more sites. This way self-presentation could be compared across different regions. Self-presentation might also be approached from other perspectives like gender. These eleven mummy portraits did not offer a sufficient amount of information about gender to make satisfactory conclusions. This might change when a bigger sample size is used. The mummy portraits continue to draw interest around the world and a lot of mysteries around them are still unsolved. The faces of these now long dead people won't soon be forgotten, now that the interest in their lives is still very much alive.

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Mummy Portrait 10., Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21375.

Mummy Portrait 11., Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21381.

Figures:

Coin Portraying Emperor Antoninus Pius (*taken from*

<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/62850/coin-portraying-emperor-antoninus-pius>)

Fresco from Pompeii, Terentius Neo and his wife (taken from

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Terentius Neo and his wife 1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fresco_from_Pompeii_-_Terentius_Neo_and_his_wife_1.jpg))

Portrait of Faustina the Elder, second half of the 2nd century CE (taken from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colossal_portrait_of_Faustina_the_Elder_from_the_Pantanello_at_Hadrian%27s_Villa,_138-140_AD,_Vatican_Museums,_Rome_\(9459345263\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colossal_portrait_of_Faustina_the_Elder_from_the_Pantanello_at_Hadrian%27s_Villa,_138-140_AD,_Vatican_Museums,_Rome_(9459345263).jpg))

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Mummy mask cartonnage Hawara 305 BC-AD 200 (taken from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mummy_mask_cartonnage_Manchester_Museum_Hawara_AN_2178_\(3\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mummy_mask_cartonnage_Manchester_Museum_Hawara_AN_2178_(3).jpg))

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Figures

There is no copyright on any of the figures. Figure 1 is taken from the Art Institute of Chicago, who states that their pictures can be used for non-commercial purposes. The other figures are from Wikimedia Commons, a database for non-copyrighted images.

Figure 1



Figure 1: Coin Portraying Emperor Antoninus Pius (taken from <https://www.artic.edu/artworks/62850/coin-portraying-emperor-antoninus-pius>)

Figure 2

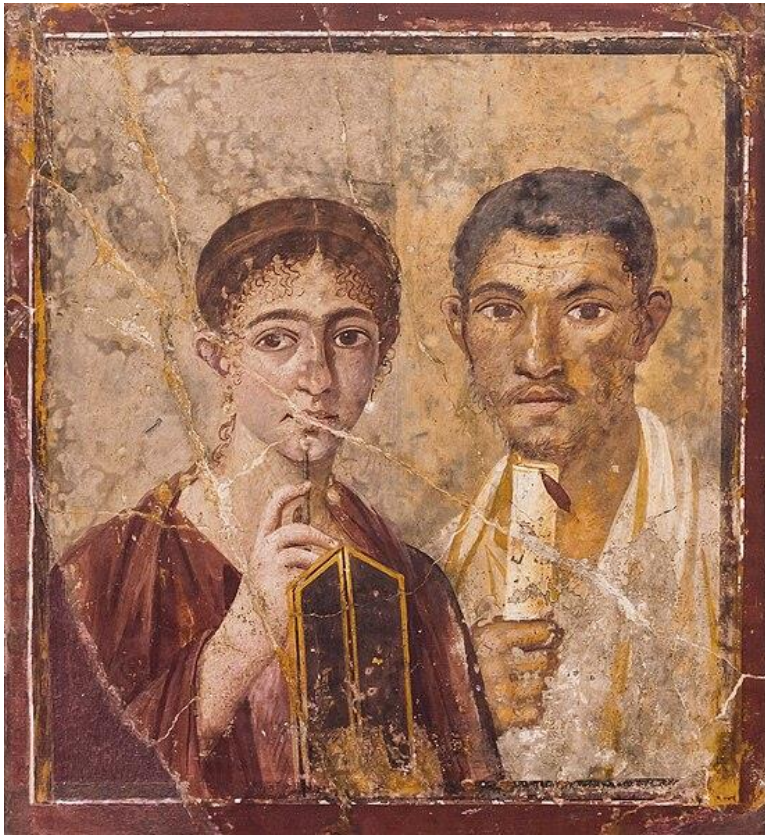


Figure 2: Fresco from Pompeii, Terentius Neo and his wife (taken from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Fresco_from_Pompeii_-_Terentius_Neo_and_his_wife_1.jpg)

Figure 3



Figure 3: Portrait of Faustina the Elder, second half of the 2nd century CE (taken from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colossal_portrait_of_Faustina_the_Elder,_from_the_Pantanello_at_Hadrian%27s_Villa,_138-140_AD,_Vatican_Museums,_Rome_\(9459345263\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Colossal_portrait_of_Faustina_the_Elder,_from_the_Pantanello_at_Hadrian%27s_Villa,_138-140_AD,_Vatican_Museums,_Rome_(9459345263).jpg))

Figure 4



Figure 4: Portrait of Faustina the Younger, AD 160-180 (taken from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Faustine_la_Jeune_02.JPG)

Figure 5



Figure 5: Sophocles, Roman Age marble statue after Greek original (taken from https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sophocles,_Roman_Age_marble_statue_after_Greek_original,_Klas07.jpg)

Figure 6



Figure 6: Mummy mask cartonnage Hawara 305 BC-AD 200 (taken from [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mummy_mask_cartonnage_Manchester_Museum_Hawara_AN_2178_\(3\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Mummy_mask_cartonnage_Manchester_Museum_Hawara_AN_2178_(3).jpg))

Catalogue

All photos of mummy portraits and their corresponding inventory cards are taken from the website of the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology. The museum permits their images being used for non-commercial use. They only ask to be notified of this, which has been done.

1. Mummy Portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21380)



| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------|-----|----------|--------------|------------|---|
| Museum No. | 6-21380 | Orig. No. | 808 | Acc. No. | 54,56,63,107 | No. Pieces | 9 |
| Description | Portrait of man on thin wood, broken, cloth adhering. Roman tomb. Fragmental piece, assembled, but gaps at lower right and middle left. Grey hair, remains of a crown of gold. Regular fringe of bangs across forehead - style of Trajan. Good use of light reflection also attested in portraits of that period. Beginning of 2nd c. | | | | | | |
| Location | Tebtunis (Umm el Baragat) Cemetery VII or VIII | | | | | | |
| Collector | B P Grenfell, A S Hunt | | | | | | |
| Date Coll. | 1899-1900 | | | | | | |
| Donor | Mrs. P. A. Hearst | | | | | | |
| Photo | 15-21485 | | | | | | |
| Published | Parlasca (Adriani, ed.) Repertorio d'Arte dell'Egitto Greco-Romano, Series B, Vol. 1, p. 70 no. 159. | | | | | | |
| Remarks | | | | | | | |

50m-8,40 (7281)

2. Mummy portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21377)



Museum No. 6-21377 Orig. No. 803 Acc. No. 54,56,63,107 No. Pieces
 or 195

Description **Framed portrait of boy, good and complete. Roman tomb.** In his raised right hand is a pen; to judge from the style the hand was added afterwards. The tunic is white with two violet clavi. On the thick, straight hair rested a funerary crown of gold. Date to first quarter of III c. A.D.
 Cm. 30.3 x 19.3

Location Tebtunis (Umm el Baragat)
 Cemetery VII or VIII

Collector B P Grenfell, A S Hunt

Date Coll. 1899-1900

Donor Mrs. P. A. Hearst

Photo

Published III. ANCIENT EGYPT, 1966, p. 87

Remarks Exhibited: "Ancient Egypt," March-Oct. 1966
 "Archaeology of the Ancient World," Dec. 1969 - May 1970
 50m-8, '40 (7281) Parlasca, Mummy portraits, p. 35 n. 129, p. 144. Parlasca, (Adriani, ed.) Repertorio d'Arte Dell'Egitto Greco-Romano, Series B, Vol. II, no. 429, p. 76

3. Mummy Portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21379)



| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------|-----|----------|--------------|------------|--|
| Museum No. | 6-21379 | Orig. No. | 807 | Acc. No. | 54,56,63,107 | No. Pieces | |
| | | | | | or 195 | | |
| Description | Framed portrait of man in 2 ^{a middle-aged} pieces, traces of white paint on back. Roman tomb. Disclosed black espec. around the nose. Damage caused by ants. The hair is thick and curly, the beard full and thick. Mantel and Chiton are white with wide violet clavi. | | | | | | |
| Date | to first quarter of III c. A.D. cm. 33.7 x 21.6 | | | | | | |
| Location | Tebtunis (Umm el Baragât) Cemetery VII or VIII | | | | | | |
| Collector | B P Grenfell, A S Hunt | | | | | | |
| Date Coll. | 1899-1900 | | | | | | |
| Donor | Mrs. P. A. Hearst | | | | | | |
| Photo | | | | | | | |
| Published | | | | | | | |
| Remarks | Parlasca, <u>Mummiensportraits</u> , p. 35 n. 129, p. 36 pl. 26 #5 Parlasca (Adriani, ed.) <u>Repertorio d'Arte Dell'Egitto Greco-Romano</u> , Series B, Vol. II, p. 76, no. 429. 50m-8, '40 (7281) | | | | | | |

4. Mummy Portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21378)



| | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------|--|------------|-----------|
| Cat. No. 6-21378 | Acc 54, 56, 63, No. 107 or 195 | Field No. 804 | Date Coll. 1899-1900 | Date Acc. | File Code |
| Collector B.P. Grenfell, A.S. Hunt | | Donor Mrs. P. A. Hearst | | No. Pcs. 1 | |
| Description ^{Roman} Egyptic mummy portrait, portrait of a ^{young} man without beard. Lower edge on right is badly destroyed by ants. Vertical fissure. Lower right half of face discolored black. To the left and on top are the remains of a bandage. In his raised right hand, certainly added after wards, a red garland. Chiton and mantle are white with a large grey knot (?), dark violet clavis on right shoulder. Remains of gold crown. An affinity to 6/21377. Date to second quarter of 3rd c. A.D. cm. 34.7 x 22 | | | | | |
| Location Africa; Egypt; Tebtunis (Umm el Baragat) Cemetery VII or VIII | | | | | |
| Archaeological context | | | Material and techniques Encaustic on Wood | | |
| Associations | | | | | |
| Attributions of dates, culture and use Second quarter of 3rd c. A.D. | | | Photos 15-18142-4 | | |
| Published Parlasca, <i>Mummy Portraits</i> p. 35, n. 129, pp. 36, 144, pl. 26 ²³ Parlasca, (Adriani, ed.) <i>Repertorio d'Arte Dell'Egitto Greco-Romana</i> , Series B, Vol. II, p. 76, no. 430. | | | | | |
| Exhibited | | | | | |
| References | | | | | |

970

5. Mummy portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21382)



| | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------|---|-----------|------------|
| Cat. No. 6-21382-83 | Acc. No. 54, 56, 63, 107, 195 | Field No. 810-811 | Date Coll. 1899-1900 | Date Acc. | File Code |
| Collector B.P. Grenfell & A.S. Hunt | | | Donor Mrs. P.A. Hearst | | No. Pcs. 2 |
| Description Framed portrait of a young woman poor. Color detached or worn. Remains of mummy bandage at top. Dark hair, slightly wavy, parted in middle, curled up in top-knot. Tunic is strawberry colored (con't) | | | Location Tebtunis (Umm el Baragat) Cemetery VII or VIII Roman Tomb. | | |
| Archaeological context | | | Material and techniques | | |
| Associations (con't) with yellow(?) clavi, grey background. 35.7 x 21.6 cm. | | | | | |
| Attributions of dates, culture and use Hairstyle corresponds to fashion of mid 2nd century AD. | | | Photos | | |
| Published Parlasca (Adriani, ed.) <u>Repertorio d'Arte Dell'Egitto Greco-Romano</u> , Series B, Vol. II, p. 76, no. 431. | | | | | |
| Exhibited | | | | | |
| References | | | | | |

6. Mummy Portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21378-A)



| | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------------|---------------|---|-----------|------------|
| Cur. No. 6-21378-A | Acc. 54, 56, 62 No. 107 or 19 | Field No. 805 | Date Coll. 1899-1900 | Date Acc. | File Code |
| Collector B.P. Grenfell, A.S. Hunt | | | Donor Mrs. P. A. Hearst | | No. Pcs. 1 |
| Description Roman Egyptic mummy portraits on one slab. Obverse side: outline sketch of a woman; traces of writing top & bottom of portrait; Reverse side: effaced painting of a woman. Obverse. Numerous directions in Greek for artist. Over left shoulder: ΔΛΥΣΙΟΝ / ΕΧΕΙ ΔΙΑ / ΧΛΥΡΟΝ - she wears a necklace, alternate with green. Over right shoulder: πορφύρα - purple Two other instructions upper left: ΠΑΧΥ - thicken To right of eyes inscription ends: ΤΟΥΣ / ΟΦΘΑΛΜΟΥΣ - the eyes (acc.) ΧΩΡΑ / ΔΥ (1) - color | | | | | |
| Location Africa; Egypt; Tebtunis (Umm el Baragat) Cemetery VII or VIII | | | | | |
| Archaeological context | | | Material and techniques Wood cm. 36 x 24 | | |
| Associations | | | | | |
| Attributions of dates, culture and use mid 2nd c. AD. (Antonine period) | | | Photos Obverse: 15-18145-7, 15-21409 | | |
| Published Obverse: Ill. Frühchristliche und Koptische Kunst, Abad. der Bildenden Künste, Wien, 1964, #707, p. 225 & Pl. 139; Obverse or Reverse: E/ Simon in Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen | | | | | |
| Exhibited Zentral Museum 9, 1962 (published Jan. 1965) pp. 68 ff., Pl. 12. Mainz Exh. & Ill. ANCIENT EGYPT, 1966, p. 90, March-Oct., 1966 (Obverse) | | | | | |
| References Koptische Kunst, Cat. of exhibit at Essen, 1963 p 221, p. 47 with fig. 1d. Zurich, 1964, p. 17, n. 37 with fig. Parlasca, Mummy portraits, p. 35 n. 129, p. 136, Thompson, Artists of the Mummy Portraits, p. 12, fig. 29 (over) 9/20 | | | | | |

7. Mummy Portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21374)



Museum No. 6-21374 Orig. No. 800 Acc. No. 54,56,63,107 No. Pieces
 or 195

Description **Framed portrait of woman painted on wood, poor. Roman tomb.** Strip missing from right edge from middle to edge, another fragment missing from left edge. Unpainted bandage on lower part. Features outlined in white. Round face, almond eyes. Dark hair parted in center, gathered in topknot. Over the right shoulder is a dark clavus. Date to mid 2nd c. A.D.

Location Tebtunis (Umm el Baragat)
 Cemetery VII or VIII

Collector B P Grenfell, A S Hunt

Date Coll. 1899-1900

Donor Mrs. P. A. Hearst

Photo 15-21186; 15-21194; 15-21195

Published Parlasca, (Adriani, ed.) Repertorio d'Arte Dell'Egitto Greco-Romano, Series B, Vol. II, pp 77-78 no 435

Remarks

50m-8,40 (7281)

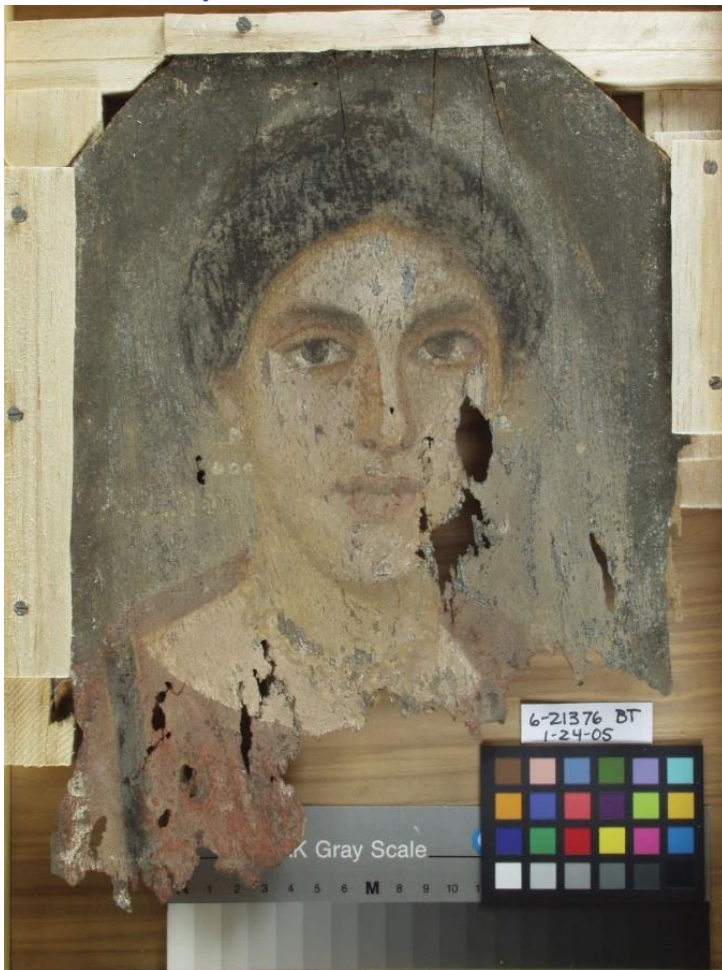
8. Mummy Portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21383)¹⁵⁵



| | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-------------------|---|-----------|------------|
| Cat. No. 6-21382-83 | Acc. 54,56,63 No. 107, 195 | Field No. 810-811 | Date Coll. 1899-1900 | Date Acc. | File Code |
| Collector B.P. Grenfell & A.S. Hunt | | | Donor Mrs. P.A. Hearst | | No. Pcs. 2 |
| Description Framed portrait of a young woman poor. Color detached or worn. Remains of mummy bandage at top. Dark hair, slightly wavy, parted in middle, curled up in top-knot. Tunic is strawberry colored (con't) | | | Location Tebtunis (Umm el Baragat) Cemetery VII or VIII Roman Tomb. | | |
| Archaeological context | | | Material and techniques | | |
| Associations (con't) with yellow(?) clavi, grey background. 35.7 x 21.6 cm. | | | | | |
| Attributions of dates, culture and use Hairstyle corresponds to fashion of mid 2nd century AD. | | | Photos | | |
| Published Parlasca (Adriani, ed.) <i>Repertorio d'Arte Dell'Egitto Greco-Romano</i> , Series B, Vol. II, p. 76, no. 431. | | | | | |
| Exhibited | | | | | |
| References | | | | | |

¹⁵⁵ The inventory card of this mummy portrait seems to be the same one as mummy portrait number five (Cat. N° 5). This may have been done because some of the information was the same. The inventory card says 'no. pcs. 2' which I would assume means that the card represents two mummy portraits. The description part however can only apply to mummy portrait five, which makes it confusing. Ragheb dates mummy portraits five and eight (Cat. N° 5-8) differently, so it may also be a mistake from the museum.

9. Mummy Portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21376)



Museum No. 6-21376 Orig. No. 802 Acc. No. 54,56,63,107 No. Pieces
or 195

Description Framed portrait of girl, good,
but ~~worm~~^{ant} eaten. Roman tomb. Missing lower edge and a fairly large part of the right
bottom. Dark hair in topknot. Earrings have three beads with four pearls. ~~555~~ ⁵⁵⁵ Necklace of probable gold elements.
Chiton and mantle red-brown colored. To the left of head a Greek inscription: — $\mu\pi\iota\omicron\nu$. Comparable to
6/21352. Date to mid 2nd c. A.D. cm. 30.5 x 22.9

Location Tebtunis (Umm el Baragat)
Cemetery VII or VIII

Collector B P Grenfell, A S Hunt

Date Coll. 1899-1900

Donor Mrs. P. A. Hearst

Photo 15-18137-38, 18140-41

Published I11. Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt, The Detroit Institute of Arts, Exhibit
catalogue, March 22-April 30, 1967, p. 21^{fig 4}, p 17 n.12

Remarks *Palazzo, Mummy Portraits*, p 36, pl. 26 n.4
Palazzo, (Adriani, ed.) Repertorio d'Arte Greco-Romana, Series B, vol. II, p.77 (no.433)
50m-8,40(7281)

10. Mummy Portrait (Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology, inv. 6-21375)



Museum No. 6-21375 Orig. No. 801 Acc. No. 54,56,63,107 No. Pieces
 or 195

Description **Framed portrait of woman, painted on wood, fair, broken, wormeaten.**
Roman tomb. Fragment showing upper part of face. Two layers of color were laid one over the other, flaking
 Features were outlined in red. Dark hair gathered in topknot, typical of 2nd c. ^{A.P.} hairstyle.
 em. 28.6 x 19 ~~(overall)~~

Location Tebtunis (Umm el Baragat) ¹ Cemetery VII or VIII

Collector B P Grenfell, A S Hunt

Date Coll. 1899-1900

Donor Mrs. P. A. Hearst

Photo

Published Parlasca, (Adriani, ed.) Repertorio d'Arte Dell'Egitto Greco-Romano, Series B, Vol. II, p. 77 no. 434

Remarks

50m-8, '40 (7281)

