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MA Classics and Ancient Civilizations: Egyptology

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Introduction

For many civilizations, the nature of death has been an important topic that has conditioned the lives of its citizens and therefore their own social culture. The existence of an afterlife is a religious and philosophical conception that affects many areas of human life. This belief has created in many socio-political communities such as the Egyptian a collective imaginary of traditions and rites of passage used as an element of social cohesion and perpetuation of power structures.

Beyond the cultural significance of this belief, there are important social implications that are manifested in the material culture that archaeology provides us. Death turns into an element that perpetuates the existing social differences in life. Grave goods, tombs, rituals and other elements of the Egyptian funerary culture shall become indicators of the status that the individual had in life.

However, the objects that the deceased carried with him to the afterlife were not only symbols of his or her status. They were themselves the ideal means of expression of the identity of the different individuals, elements characteristic of their culture, religion and ethnicity, among other aspects.

In this sense, the Egyptian funerary masks are important to us as an element by means of which we can try to trace evidences regarding the identity of their holders. This study provides as a case study the analysis of the collection of Graeco-Roman *stucco masks* belonging to the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden of The Netherlands, placed in Leiden. The choice of this group of mask from the Graeco-Roman period is conditioned by the interest of studying these funerary items made in a period of great social, political and cultural changes under the reign of Greek and Roman rulers. Nonetheless, these mask provide information related to a small part of the whole Egyptian society, the wealthy classes.

This study has been carried out also based on the need to perform a first analysis of this collection, as most of the masks were only inventoried at the time of acquisition. This first analysis consists of physical and stylistic descriptions, proposing also approximate dating when possible through comparisons with other masks, statuary and numismatics. This is also relevant since none of the examples has an archaeological context to help to place them in a clear chronological and spatial framework.

The main corpus of this type of Graeco-Roman stucco masks so far is the one conducted by G. Grimm[1] in 1974, an essential reference work. Given its date of publication, this study has as its ultimate goal the continuation of this kind of analysis, as further investigations of these sets of masks distributed throughout different museums are required. In particular, a new review of the

[1] G. Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten* (Wiesbaden, 1974).

different typologies and new chronological proposals such as those presented here, will favour further understanding of these objects.

Egyptian society in Roman times: ethnicity, citizenship and societies

Before the analysis of this collection of Graeco-Roman masks, it is of great importance to describe as detailed as possible the society that lived at that time in Egypt. This group of objects, like every artefact in all the different periods of human history, is a product of the society, the group of different individuals that live within a certain space in a particular time. The artefacts are created in this specific context, with different purposes and imbued with different characteristics and meanings that are given by this determined social group, and usually shared by all its components.

By means of the physical characteristics that are explicit in every human creation together with their implicit meaning, a set of recurrence relations[2] in a given community of individuals creates what can be defined as 'culture'. This concept of culture has long been debated in numerous historical, anthropological and ethnological studies, and although this is not a place for an in-depth reflexion about the different meanings and considerations about the term 'culture', it is nevertheless necessary to clarify what is considered in this study as 'Egyptian culture', 'identity' and other aspects that should be taken into consideration for such an analysis. This has to be done under the premise that the socio-cultural context is of great importance in order to understand as detailed as possible the material culture of the different social groups, as well as these groups themselves.

As the objects of this study belong to the Graeco-Roman period, this society has to be the main focus of our research basis. But was this 'Graeco-Roman society' a uniform, homogeneous group of individuals sharing the same feelings, view on life and thoughts? The most logical answer is no; however, we can argue that this abstract cultural term is composed by various different sub-groups of people that in a smaller level, share more similarities than within the general sphere of 'Graeco-Roman society'. These groups differ in space sometimes as different communities with local attributes and peculiarities. Some other times these groups are based on a socioeconomic element, like the social strata from the slavery or peasantry to the high elites and king, which have many more distinguishable elements that differ from each other. Other groups of individuals, as we shall see below, are based on their provenance, ethnic origin or citizenship, often combined with a legal status.

[2] This has been described by C. Renfrew and P. Bahn as a "complex of regularly associated traits [defined as] 'cultural group' or just a 'culture', [...] material expression of what today would be called a 'people'" in *Archaeology. Theories, Methods and Practice*, (4th edn, London, 2004), 175.

As C. Renfrew and P. Bahn have noted[3], in order to analyse a given society, an archaeologist has to ask questions that necessarily vary from one to another. These questions can be divided into two perspectives: 'top-down' questions and 'bottom-up' ones. Exploring a society from above so as to know how the individuals are structured inside the group, which level of organisation do they have, and all the different economical, sociological and even ideological relationships that they share, is a way of proceeding in the historical and archaeological interpretation that is opposed to a perspective from below. Although the latter procedure is totally diverse, these two are not mutually exclusive, and a multidisciplinary approach that may involve several perspectives to analyse will always bring more information to our general knowledge about the several ancient societies. This 'bottom-up' perspective focus on the individuals themselves, their particular roles within a community of people which different gender, provenance, social level and many other characteristics. The study of the relations that are created among them, that conform a social network of different abstract elements may lead us to the general organisation of the society. Some material culture studies, microhistory approaches, and the historical materialism that Marxist historians and archaeologist advocate are some examples of this method of analysis.

Here comes into consideration the concept of 'identity' that will be discuss later, identity of the individual itself as a component of a determined wealthy social group composed of individuals who could afford a mask for their self-representation. This identity was expressed in these objects analysed here, the funerary masks. These masks, belonging to a funerary context, are created by individuals for other individuals that probably wanted to state a general meaning expressed by the majority of the Egyptian society like the rituals for a good afterlife. There is also a determined meaning more contextualised in their own social group and even an individualistic meaning given by elements such as the more or less naturalism/realism in the modelling of the owner's traits, the choosing of different details, etc.[4]. From all these various elements and meanings it is possible to extract the sense of identity of these people.

The Graeco-Roman period: The rule of foreign cultures

The Graeco-Roman period, one of the last phases of the ancient Egyptian civilisation, is a period of time that spans over more than seven centuries, from the year 332 BC with the conquest of the Egyptian country by Alexander the Great, previously ruled by the Persians, until the year 395 AD as a consequence of the division of the Roman Empire into the western and eastern parts, making Constantinople the capital city and main administrative centre of the east.

[3] Renfrew and Bahn, *Archaeology*[4], 177.

[4] On pragmatics on a macro, medium and micro scale, the recombination by the individuals (owners and artists) of collective (structural) and individualistic (progressive) funerary pragmatics applied to what its author defined as 'meaningful places' cf.: R. van Walsem, 'Meaningful places: Pragmatics from ancient Egypt to modern times. A diachronic and cross-cultural approach', in *Site-Seeing: Places in culture, time and space* (Leiden, 2013), 111-146.

After the death of Alexander the Great, three different factions were created, while the Ptolemies were established in Egypt and ruling the country as kings. These Ptolemies were a dynasty of Greek rulers, descendants of one of the generals of Alexander the Great, Ptolemy I Soter[5]. They controlled the country for almost three centuries until the Roman conquest by Octavian, the later Emperor Augustus, in the year 30 BC.

Throughout the history of the Egyptian civilisation, several major changes in every aspect of its society occurred. The Third Intermediate Period along with the Late Period were periods of social turbulence and foreign invasions, causing the mutation of profound aspects in all social strata. Greeks and Roman rulers belonged to complete different worlds, and they brought their social and economical traditions, implanting their ideological and philosophical systems in a greater or lesser extent. These traditions were laid down with a certain grade of symbiosis in the Ptolemaic period, much more noticeable than in Roman times. All of these changes are important in this study because they have an influence upon these objects, masks that are related to the funerary world, an ideological field in which people could state their personal and collective identity.

Who were those 'Egyptians'? After the Late Period a mix of communities was established in the Egyptian country because of the political situation, such as Persians, Jews, and many Greek-speaking mercenaries[6]. The influx of new communities, the immigrant element, did nothing but grow with the arrival of the Greeks, even more after the Roman conquest[7]. With the arrival of the Greeks and their domination, a new elite entered into the Egyptian social hierarchy. This elite was based in the typical Greek model of *phylai* (clan, people) and *demes* (city of origin) which could be found in the four 'Greek cities' or *poleis*, Alexandria[8], Naukratis and Ptolemais Hermiou and later on in Antinoopolis, after its foundation by Hadrian. Despite of these few centres of political administration, other towns and centres were founded by the Greeks, especially in the Fayum region[9]. There was a relatively flexible access to the Greek elite for the old local Egyptian elite as long as they respected and assumed the Greek language and culture. Later on we will discuss about Greek education in Egypt and the requirements in order to access to this Hellenistic elite. Thus, the

[5] S. G. Miller, 'Macedonians', in K. A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1999), 555-6. The Egyptian territory was first considered as a satrapy, and later a kingdom of Alexander's general Ptolemy, who began the Hellenistic dynasty. The division of all the territories conquered by Alexander the Great was due to the 'artificiality' of his empire that led to the emergence of several separatist forces, as the Ptolemaic kingdom.

[6] J. J. Johnson states that "Numerous foreigners now lived in Egypt, many of whom were drawn by commercial potential […]; There were military garrisons staffed mainly by non-Egyptians, not only on Egypt's frontiers but also within the country.", as seen in *Late and Ptolemaic periods, overview* in K. A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1999), 70.

[7] B. Legras, *L'Égypte grecque et romaine* (Paris, 2004), 61.

[8] A recent analysis of the Greek society in Alexandria and its transformation in Roman times can be seen in: M. S. Venit, 'Alexandria', in C. Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2012), 103-4.

[9] A. Jördens, 'Status and Citizenship'. In C. Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2012), 247.

matter of interest for the access to the Hellenic elite was power itself, the status of the individuals and Greek education, rather than birth[10].

Thereby, the Ptolemaic society was divided into two social spheres of Hellenes and Egyptians. At first, the term 'Hellenes' was employed by the Egyptians to define 'immigrant', 'foreigner', including Thracians, Judaeans, Iduamaeans, Paeonians, etc. The main benefit of being a Hellene was to have some privileges related to the tax system implemented by the new rulers[11]. Since the access to the Hellenic category was quite open, the question of origin, provenance, and ethnicity is not always easy to define. The category of Hellene is more frequently applied to a household, not to the individual[12]. Therefore, scholars have to confront the problem of the ethnicity of these people, and from this basis try to solve the question of 'identity' that is also implied. A starting point for this research is found in the onomastics of these ancient individuals.

The identity of these people was expressed firstly through the name (*onoma*) and the place of provenance (*patris*). This was an important proof of status since there were punishments, some of them entailing death penalty, when someone changed his own or someone else's name or provenance as it is stated in some royal decrees[13]. However, even onomastic analysis of the Graeco-Roman period is a complicated issue, and numerous discussions on the origin or ethnicity of some individuals have been carried out by various scholars[14]. The results show that the Hellenistic world was not a homogeneous group, as many of the names are converted from Egyptian names or have Egyptian religious elements within them. Moreover, some individuals have their name written in Greek in Greek contexts, as well as Egyptian translations in Egyptian texts. This causes the study of the ethnicity of this 'elite' stratum to be a meticulous task, which often has to be accompanied with other socio-cultural studies, as in cases where it is possible to relate the material culture to the individuals, in funerary contexts for instances.

The other sign of identity in the Ptolemaic period was the place of provenance. At the beginning of the period this adjective, the *ethnikon* usually was referred to the foreign city of origin of the person or his family, his ancestors. This identification, expression of identity through the affirmation of membership of a particular clan, city of origin and one's past has been used by many

[10] Jörgens, in Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt,* 249.
[11] R. S. Bagnall, *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt. Sources and Approaches* (Ashgate, 2006), XIV, 3.
[12] Bagnall, *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, XIV, 3. Bagnall notes that the "wife of a Hellene is therefore a Hellene, no matter what her ancestry".
[13] Legras, *L'Égypte grecque et romaine*, 69.
[14] An interesting study about the onomastic of the Hellenic elite in the Fayum area in the Roman period can be seen in Bagnall, *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, XIV, 4-19. Through the analysis of names recovered from texts by recent studies, belonging to the 6475 'settlers' or '*katoikoi*', several different types of 'Greek names' have been classified. Most of these names in Roman Fayum derive "not so much from a connection to Greece as from their heritage of conquest and settlement in Egypt [defined as] 'Greeks of Egypt' [instead of] 'Greeks of Greece'". The main classification of names done distinguishes among 'theophoric names and potential calques' including names of Egyptian and Greek formation, 'Macedonian, dynastic names and early settlers' deriving from Alexander and the names of his Successors, 'common' Greek names, 'Roman and Latinate names' (the latter mainly Greek formations on Latin stems), and 'other and unknown' including some semitic ones.

different inhabitants of the Egyptian country – and certainly around the world – in all its periods, mostly in these final ones which such a mixture of different foreign identities and communities. In the same way, the cultural group that we can define as the Egyptian people also had made use throughout its whole history of their own past, or the past that they imagined as real[15]. Over generations, this *ethnikon* referred to the foreign origin was gradually accompanied by the Egyptian city or town of residence, and finally replaced by the latter[16]. In summary, the term Hellenistic will be considered in this study as the social group composed by members from Hellenic origin or their ancestors and Egyptians, joined through marriage and education.

Therefore, it becomes clear that after the Macedonian conquest of the country and the establishment of new foreign rulers and elites, a new cultural element joined this medley of different identities and social realities. The importance of identity in these contexts is also evident in the cultural and ideological spheres. The Hellenic world was established in the Egyptian country[17] with much of its own culture and thought, but also respected, promoted and in some respects was integrated with the native cultural world and its ideological systems. The identity of these Hellenic people was a matter of distinction among them and the rest of the Egyptian population, as a cultural distinction. Besides, within this Greek elite, self identity was a way of self expression of the status of the individual given by its titles, profession or social position, working as a mechanism of social distinction)[18].

There were two opposing fields, on the one hand Alexandria, the new founded capital, and to a lesser degree the other two traditionally Greek cities, Ptolemais Hermiou, and Naukratis, were focus of the Greek culture. On the other hand, the rest of the Egyptian cities and towns maintained their old traditions, in some cases with Hellenic local rulers and elites that will progressively acquire Egyptian traditions, rites and cultural elements, as the masks of this study are witness. Even in the capital, the Egyptian tradition and cult was promoted since many temples and constructions were located there, as well as in the rest of the country with the construction and maintenance of new temples such as Edfu. By means of this respect for the Egyptian ideological and religious system, and the symbiosis of the two cultural spheres, the Hellenistic king, acting as a pharaoh,

[15] See B. J. Kemp, *Ancient Egypt. Anatomy of a Civilization* (2nd ed., New York, 2007), 371-3.
[16] In Legras, *L'Égypte grecque et romaine*, 70-2, this is second adjective referred to the Egyptian city where this Hellenic individual was settled is defined as 'pseudo-ethnicity'. The suffix -ite was added to the Greek name of the settlement such as 'Memphite'.
[17] A good archaeological and socio-cultural synthesis of this period can be found in K. A. Bard, *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2008), 290-321.
[18] A recommended reading is J. Bingen, *Hellenistic Egypt. Monarchy, Society, Economy, Culture* (Edinburgh, 2007), 193. After the analysis of the 'archive of Zenon' the author emphasises the competitive interests of Greeks individuals who performed different activities and tried to obtain benefits within a 'parasitic field of action that an agrarian economy based on royal property left to them'.

legitimised his role as civil and spiritual leader of the country, as many other foreign kings did before[19].

But a completely new society took over the country after three centuries of Greek dominance. The Roman Empire was gradually extending its borders to the east, fighting even against the enemies of the Ptolemaic dynasty in Egypt. After the defeat of Mark Antony in the year 31 BC, Egypt was no more an independent state and became part of the Roman Empire as a province, headed by a prefect designated by the Emperor[20]. It is now that a radical change happened in the society of ancient Egypt. The Roman conquerors imposed their social structure in the same way as it was conceived in the city of Rome. This was a closed system that was implanted wherever the *limes* was expanding. This Roman social reform was based on two pillars: the status and the citizenship. Both of them were legitimised by a legal basis, and therefore an economic reason based on taxation, which involved the implementation of a new judicial system that regulated economic issues, among others[21]. But yet these reforms applied in the country, where social traditions and hierarchies had deep roots, caused internal troubles among the population of the country and the local elites, occupied in some cases by Hellenistic people[22].

The Roman legal reforms created what some scholars have defined as a new 'class structure'[23]. Now, the upper spheres of the society were not determined by a cultural basis but by a completely legal one. The new system was divided into three categories: the main one was the Roman citizenship or *cives Romani*, followed by the citizenship of the Greek *poleis*[24] in the country or *cives peregrini* which remained the three aforementioned, becoming four when the Romans founded Antinoopolis[25]. The last category belonged to the rest of the people, who did not enter in the citizenship system and were defined as 'Egyptians', *peregrini Aegyptii* or *Aigyptioi*[26]. This legal reorganisation is founded on the precepts of Roman law: the belonging to a civitas and to a

[19] Bard, *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt,* 291-5.
[20] Bard, *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, 296.
[21] An interesting reading about the Roman legal control in Egypt can be seen in the recent B. Kelly, *Petitions, Litigation, and Social Control in Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2011). The author focus mainly on petitions and litigations during Roman times in order to study the social control of the inhabitants of this Roman province, not pretending to make a 'crime history'.
[22] Jörgens, in Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 249.
[23] This definition can be found in Bagnall, *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, XIV, 2. Nonetheless, I prefer to use the terms 'social structure' or 'status' in order to avoid any misunderstanding with the Marxist term 'class' on which there are several discussions at the time of its application in any social context in this Ancient period.
[24] The new settlement categorisation applied by the Romans distinguished among the four Greek *poleis*, the administrative centres of every Egyptian nome, *metropoleis*, and the rest of the villages and towns distributed over the country, known as *komai*. The latter of these categories included a great number of settlements with large differences in size and importance, moreover, the differences between the *poleis* and the *metropoleis* became blurred over the years, been both of them equally urbanised in practice, as seen in L. E. Tacoma, 'Settlement and Population', in C. Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2012), 123-4.
[25] Founded by the Emperor Hadrian in his visit to the country in the year 130-31, as seen in Bard, *An Introduction to the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt*, 296.
[26] K. Vandorpe, 'Identity', in C. Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2012), 262-4.

determined social collective, the *gens*, *populus*, *natio*[27], which represent a family clan or a national category.

Thus, within this non-citizen group, which comprised the majority of the inhabitants of the new Egyptian province, the ethnic factor was blurred and subject to the preponderance of Roman law. Egyptians and Hellenes – Greeks from the *chora*, country – were considered to belong to the same category, although the Roman government was forced to apply a fiscal correction, to separate the old Greco-Egyptian elites from the huge mass of peasantry within this same category[28]. The reduction in the poll tax that had to be paid, the *tributum capitis* or *laographia*[29], was applied to the priestly and urban hierarchies. This latter group was composed by the local elites of the different *nomes* of Egypt, part of them educated in the *gymnasium* in Ptolemaic times, a mandatory organ to access to this Hellenistic elite. Within the new Roman metropolite system created, the old Greek and Hellenised elites were together part of a new secondary rural elite, necessary to rule the *nomes*. This sub-elite was required to demonstrate an ancestry that belonged also to the metropolite or *gymnasium* groups. The importance of the ancestors, the ethnicity of the individual inside a family or a group will be even more important than before for a person to belong to this *gymnasium* order, specially after the second half of the 1st century AD[30]. Following on from this fact, many aspects of these people's lives will develop new characteristics, especially in ideology, which is reflected in many cultural aspects such as art and funerary beliefs, as discussed later.

The social mobility was quite flexible in the Ptolemaic dynasty, especially through intermarriages between Greek and Egyptian individuals, as will be mentioned later. The introduction of the Roman law system in which the concept of citizenship separated part of the old Greek and Egyptian rural elite – aside from the elites of the four Greek *poleis* – from their previous status raised the 'barriers' that separated the different social strata[31].

As well as the aforementioned Greek example, the new Roman rulers brought an entirely new cultural and ideological system to the Egyptian country. However, this time the symbiosis between the two cultural realities was not as clear as it was when the Greeks rulers, as well as the Persians before them, had to adapt themselves to the conquered population. We can argue that there

[27] A. Gat & A. Yakobson, *The Long History and Deep Roots of Political Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge, 2013), 216. This publication developes an interesting study about the evolution of the term 'Nation', its meaning, elements and determinants until modern times.
[28] Legras, *L'Égypte grecque et romaine,* 72-3.
[29] For an overview about the Roman tax system and its evolution since the Augustan age see D. Rathbone, 'Egypt, Augustus and Roman taxation' in *Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz* 4 (1993), 81-122. Observe how the new *capitatio* implanted in the Egyptian country served as a mechanism of Roman control of the population, completely embedded in the new social categorisation that led to the municipalisation of the country. This poll-tax was paid once a year, and great part of the total amount lied on the Egyptian inhabitants of the *chora*, as the municipal elites enjoyed some fiscal benefits. This tax was paid by the adult males.
[30] K. Vandorpe, in Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 263-4.
[31] Jördens, in Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt*, 249.

is a significant difference between the Greek and Roman conquerors: the former were settlers[32], with a ruler taking care of the country within the country itself, living mainly in the new founded capital Alexandria; the Romans, however, decided to rule the country from Rome directly through the Emperors, with a regional control performed by the prefect. This difference was no obstacle to tolerate the old Egyptian cults, which was in accordance with the strategy that the Roman Empire carried out in its expansion. Nonetheless, the personal interest of the different Emperors in the native Egyptian cult varied, and in general this was not at the same level as their Greek homologues' interest, in order to preserve the traditional Roman values[33].

As stated by M. A. Stadler, the priestly community suffered from the new legislation imposed by the Romans, as a consequence of the nationalisation of many of the temples' land and the control of the access to this elite, in order to avoid their privileges regarding taxation. This resulted in a smaller number of its members. Moreover, since the Augustan reform, this religious elite was headed by a Roman official, named the 'High Priest of Alexandria and All Egypt', the *Idios Logos*, and all the economical and other internal aspects of the priestly life were accounted within a new bureaucratic system which can be analysed in the *Gnomon* of the *Idios Logos*[34]. This *Gnomon* of the *Idios Logos* served to define and join both law and status in the Roman period, collecting the *edicta* and *senatus consulta* that created the first roman legal code in the Egyptian territory, in time of Augustus. This new legal code followed and tolerated in some cases the previous Ptolemaic legal traditions, and in some others applied the Roman law directly. All the different levels of status and socio-economical distinctions and privileges were listed here, and some of these regulations were modified or added over the first centuries since Octavian's conquest[35].

Within this scenario in which many social, cultural and ethnic realities share the same social status, the concept of identity is an important factor to take into consideration and analyse. Identity is an individual and collective attribute with different intentions: from a context in which identity

[32] Further reading about this can be seen in G. M. Cohen, 'Colonization and Population Transfer in the Hellenistic World', in E. v. Dack, P. v. Dessel and W. v. Gucht (eds), *Egypt and the Hellenistic World. Proceedings of the International Colloquium Leuven - 24-26 May 1982* (StudHell 27; Leuven, 1983), 68-74. The nature of the Greek community that were established in Egypt after the death of Alexander the Great, the Ptolemies, was characterised since the beginning as a Hellenic elite with a new home base, the Egyptian country itself. Several projects of external but also internal colonisation were headed by the different Hellenic kings within the country, such as in the already mentioned Fayum region, where tens of thousands of Graeco-Macedonians people were settled, as well as in towns and villages in the Nile Valley and Delta, the majority of them licensed soldiers. Also, J. H. Johnson, 'Late and Ptolemaic periods, overview', in K. A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1999), 73-6.

[33] M. A. Stadler, 'Egyptian Cult and Roman Rule', in C. Riggs (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Egypt* (Oxford, 2012), 457-8. It has to be noted that the first Roman conqueror and ruler, Augustus, refused to worship the Apis bull when he visited the country, which was one of the main ideological duties that the rulers of the Egyptian country used to perform.

[34] D. Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princetown, 1998), 198-9.

[35] A. K. Bowman, D. Rathbone, 'Cities and Administration in Roman Egypt', *The Journal of Roman Studies* 82 (1992), 113-4.

may be a display of the ethnicity, the provenance of the individual or its ancestors in the Ptolemaic period, it can evolve to a vindication of social status, without changing its original nature, in Roman times.

Funerary art & identity: a human representation for the afterlife

Identity in ancient times: recovering the essence of the ancient individual

After the necessary basic description of this mix of societies in Graeco-Roman times, it is of great importance to introduce the term of 'Identity' and how this may be represented in different spheres of the culture of these people. In this respect, the material culture is a field of study that gives us a lot of information about the identity of the different individuals or social groups. The objects that have been chosen as the basis for this study are of great value to us as they pertain to the field of the funerary world. Funerary art is a great indicator of a variety of aspects about the individual's personality, beliefs, and in the particular case of these masks, its self-representation for the hereafter.

As a starting point, it must be stressed that the term 'identity' has been object of many debates within the anthropological and archaeological fields. The concept that defines the identity of a person encompasses several aspects related to the individual itself, such as its ethnicity, social status, gender, sexuality, age and many others. Due to this, some archaeological studies have focused only in one single aspect[36] of those mentioned above.

Reconstructing the identity of people that belong to ancient societies is a great effort for the researcher if we compare it with the anthropological studies made by scholars about contemporary societies, which can be analysed thoroughly over long periods of time. The latter studies allow a better understanding of these current societies. This is due to the fact that some aspects of daily life can be observed, such as the behaviour, without being specifically related to the material culture that comprises the archaeological record, which is a fragmentary source of information. In spite of this limitation, the identity as an implicit quality in the material culture of a particular society can be also abstracted through external indicators such as the textual sources, when available. In this respect, it is of great importance to know the archaeological context as good as possible when

[36] As seen in L. Meskell, 'Archaeologies of Identity' in I. Hodder (ed.), *Archaeological Theory Today* (Cambridge, 2001), 187-8. This author notes that many of these studies usually focus only on one field of the many that can compose the identity of a person or social group, such as the age, status or gender without contrasting these with other areas of study as ethnicity, sexual orientation or class. Concerning the archaeological studies based on ancient times such as Egyptology, and since this author apparently differentiates between the terms status and class, I propose to replace the latter with the term profession (i.e. high elite as status and scribe as a profession).

analysing the material culture, in our case the Graeco-Roman masks. Therefore, in those cases where these masks can be found *in situ*, in their original location associated with specific burials, it is possible to find textual evidence recorded even in the same sarcophagus of the individual to which the mask belongs.

However, the archaeologists as scientists who work mainly with material culture, have to start from the premise that even this material culture, the archaeological objects that are recorded in a given site, are imbued with material identity themselves[37]. In addition, it has to be noted that besides the concept of identity, its nature is also variable over time, over the lifetime of the individual to be more precise. Nevertheless, the identity is also characterised by some more permanent categories, related to the ethnology, religion or age[38].

The understanding of ancient societies should be completed considering the material culture as an active agent within the processes of enculturation among the people of a given society, but also within the processes of culture diffusion and acculturation[39]. As stated by some researchers such as Gosselain, the identities are constructed and reproduced in the same network of social interaction upon which the technical behaviours are created, in regard to the production of this material culture[40] and its use. Social networks are by themselves a completely dynamic agent responsible for the generation and modification of multiple aspects that concern societies, including material culture, technical traditions, and social practices. The same processes of generation, regeneration and modification of these social aspects are increased when the subject of analysis is a multi-cultural community, as ancient Egypt was in Graeco-Roman times.

Notwithstanding, the practices that are generated by the social networks are not by themselves a clear factor that may define and differentiate the identity of some individuals against other identities. The adoption by a given community of any practices belonging to other social

[37] About this assumption, a recommended reading is F. G. Ammann, 'With a Hint of Paris in the Mouth: Fetishized Toothbrushes or the Sensuous Experience of Modernity in Late 19th Century Bogotá' in L. Meskell (ed.), *Archaeologies of Materiality* (Oxford, 2005), 76-8. This edited volume itself includes several examples in which the analysis of the 'materiality' recorded in different archaeological contexts leads to social studies. The emphasis on the material record is made in a very different way than the traditional studies about material culture, so as its theory, giving equal importance to both the object analyses and its importance as a cultural expression in the social relations. As its editor notes, the focus is "on the unstable terrain of interrelationships between sociality, temporality, spatiality and materiality" (see L. Meskell, op. cit., 1-3).

[38] T. Insoll, 'Introduction: Configuring Identities in Archaeology', in T. Insoll (ed.), *The Archaeology of Identities: a reader* (Abingdon, 2007), 5.

[39] Enculturation understood as a socialising process by which the members of a given community are integrated into its cultural sphere and learn its values and knowledge from the previous generations. Diffusion, whether direct, forced or indirect, is a mechanism of cultural change that involves the exchange of information and traits between cultural groups. Acculturation, also a mechanism of cultural change, implies that different cultural groups have continuous first-hand contact, modifying part of both cultures but remaining distinct among them. As seen in C. P. Kottak, *Window on Humanity: A Concise Introduction to Anthropology* (4th edn, New York, 2010), 2, 23-6, 39-40.

[40] O. P. Gosselain, 'Materializing Identities: An African Perspective', *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 7/3 (2000), 208-9.

group does not identify the former as a member of the latter. This means that, on the one hand, an object, social practice or technical tradition is not only characterised by one single identity; they are rather defined by several ones[41]. On the other hand, the identity of one individual is influenced by these practices and at the same time, reflected in them.

In sum, we can argue that the concept of identity has indeed a dynamic and heterogeneous nature[42] as illustrated (fig. 1). Therefore, the procedures by which can be abstracted the most comprehensive sense of identity related to the members of an ancient community through archaeology are not easily reduced to some studies about gender and culture. Ethnicity, status and gender by themselves are not unique factors responsible for this kind of studies, but rather a mixture of them, together with the importance of the social context of the subject studied. The emphasis should be placed on this social network, the traditions and material culture shared by communities that are not generally homogeneous or isolated.

The Graeco-Roman society: a symbiosis of different ethnicities?

In this study, the funerary masks can show us elements related to different aspects of the identity as the membership of a particular social group or ethnicity, the exaltation of a particular provenance, the gender and the status of the individual. Within the Graeco-Roman society, the examples that are going to be described and analysed are typically dated mainly within the Roman period. These masks are derived directly from the Egyptian funerary tradition that consists in preserving the mummified bodies in anthropoid coffins, emulating the face, mostly idealised, of the deceased. In some cases there was also an independent mask covering directly the owner of the coffin. The Hellenised elite, settled mainly from the Ptolemaic period, began to imitate and appropriate this funerary tradition within a process that we can define of 'cultural symbiosis'. Nevertheless, as time goes by, this properly Egyptian tradition started to incorporate elements of the Greek culture as an inevitable consequence of this cultural symbiosis, ending at the onset of what was defined as 'Greek style'[43], at the dawn of the first century AD, after the Roman conquest. Further on will be discussed if the definition of this fact is to be called 'Greek style' or if it should be given another definition instead.

[41] E. C. Casella & C. Fowler, 'Beyond Identification: An Introduction' in E.C. Casella & C. Fowler (eds), *The Archaeology of Plural and Changing Identities: Beyond Identification* (New York, 2005), 7-8. The authors argue that the practices generated by the human's social nature may lead people to adopt temporary identities, which are not 'quite identities in themselves'.

[42] In Gosselain, *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 7/3, 209 is stated that the technical traditions are characterised by the inclusion of elements of various origins, namely the same social group and some others borrowed from another foreign groups.

[43] M. C. C. Edgar, *Graeco-Egyptian Coffins, Masks and Portraits* (CGC Nos 33101-33285; Cairo, 1905), II-III.

This special group of 'stucco masks' is considered by G. Grimm as the latest development stage of decoration of the Egyptian anthropoid-shaped coffins, and the beginning of a new artistic tendency characterised by the progressive inclusion of individualisation traits[44]. The corpus work made by Grimm has been a key element for all the studies related to these stucco masks.

Focusing more on the analysis of these masks, we come to the issue of their ownership to this characteristic social group defined as the Hellenic elite. As mentioned before, this high elite has the label of 'Hellenised' due to the amalgam of ethnic identities that composed it, mainly the Greek element and the Egyptian element. In the Roman period a new elite component was integrated within the Egyptian society, based on the Roman citizenship.

All these different realities coexist in the same spatial and temporal entity, creating links of different types, from the economic to the cultural spheres. Under these assumptions, some mechanisms are created. We can define these mechanisms as 'cultural transformation' or 'cultural mutability'. This term comprises all the variations that take place in the culture of two different social realities, variations that are created by acceptance, cultural interchanges, borrowings, or conversely as a reaction of any kind to the foreign elements, a protection of the own cultural identity. This 'cultural mutability' involves diverse factors such as ethnicity, affecting the identity of all the different social groups involved. All these changes are expressed in the culture surrounding these cultural realities. Part of that culture is observable within the material record extracted through archaeology and analyses with the aid of different social sciences.

The ethnicity of this Hellenised elite has been object of many studies during the last century. As I. Malkin states, we have to be aware of the fact that this studies apply modern terminology such as 'ethnicity' in order to refer to ancient civilisations or communities. Besides, the term itself has undergone an evolution in its conception, from a direct link to the term 'race' which is no more in use. Regarding ethnicity, Malkin distinguishes among different 'collective identities' in the Greek world such as genealogy, political identity, colonial and many others; a concept perhaps preferable for these analysis[45].

Many interpretations and debates have occurred within the anthropological literature. F. Barth understands the ethnicity as a quality belonging to a particular group that is defined by a set of cultural ligation elements, and certain historical perpetuation of this social group. The linkages that are created through some essential cultural principles and values shared by the community

[44] G. Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 102.
[45] I. Malkin, 'Introduction', in I. Malkin (ed.), *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity* (Center for Hellenic Studies Colloquia 5; Cambridge, 2001), 1-4. In this reflection, Malkin refers to 'ethnic identity' as a form of 'collective identity', even though both concepts are not the same. The volume itself focuses on the importance that the ethnicity might have had in ancient times.

conform the base of a field of communication that takes advantage of the use of a common language. All of the above creates the essence of a social group tending to its self-preservation, an ethnic group. This ethnic group will be differentiated, distinguishable from other groups in support of its self-affirmation[46].

K. Goudriaan has redefined the ethnicity of the Hellenic community as a category referred to social interaction. The different ethnic groups divide themselves in this interplay of social relations into an'in-group' and 'out-group' because of its social relevance. Hence, the emphasis of the term is on its social nature. This reaction arises from the assertion that the Hellenic 'ethnicity' is an objective quality of the individuals who are included in this group. The meaning of the ethnics is not only defined by the status position on which the Hellenic community is placed, occupying the power sphere since the Ptolemaic period. It is not even defined by the simple opposition or contrast, as an objective quality, to other ethnic groups such as the Egyptian. Being Hellene is not only reduced to the fact of having a certain set of values such as 'speaking a certain language, behaving in a certain manner, sharing a certain culture, being entitled to participate in the *gymnasium*, bearing a Hellenic name, having a Hellenic pedigree...'[47].

Hence, ethnicity should be considered as an inner quality of a given group, understood by its members as a whole of interactions among them, which characterises this group and distinguishes it from others. By means of this system of social interactions, the culture of the different ethnic groups shows differences that allow a duality among aspects that belong to the 'in-group' or to the 'out-group', the opposition between 'ourselves' and 'the others'. This duality is recognisable internally within the group. However, this does not mean that all the cultural differences are equally significant. Besides, we have to be aware about the fact that the ethnic groups are not objectively defined by a rigid set of identifying features[48]. We can argue that the ethnicity, as a property inherent to a community, is characterised by a dynamic nature, less accentuated than the dynamism of the 'identity' of an individual though. The reason for this is the feeling of affiliation, social ascription that performs within the ethnic group, which leads to a sense of survival, as a distinctive feature or boundary of one group with respect to another.

The survival of an ethnic group is accomplished by several mechanisms that promote the transmission and the reinforcement of the processes of social interaction that identify that group. It is possible to observe some of these mechanisms of ethnic survival in the example of the Greek

[46] F. Barth, 'Introduction', in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston, 1969), 10-11.
[47] K. Goudriaan, *Ethnicity in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Dutch Monographs on Ancient History and Archaeology V; Amsterdam, 1988), 8-9.
[48] All these assumptions are further analysed in K. Goudriaan, 'Ethnical Strategies in Graeco-Roman Egypt', in P. Bilde, T. Engberg-Pedersen, L. Hannestad and J. Zahle (eds), *Ethnicity in Hellenistic Egypt* (Studies in Hellenistic Civilization III; Aarhus, 1992), 75-7.

settlers who entered the Egyptian country. The phenomenon of the settlement of this foreign community led to a grouping process in certain cities, villages and areas. The defence of their culture was conducted by reclaiming the usage of their native language, and its perpetuation through education, both at home and in schools. The protection of the Greek language and the transmission of this culture were made possible thanks to the institution of the '*gymnasion*'. However, this new Hellenic group was progressively adapting itself to the social environment in which they were settled, while establishing these ethnic boundaries[49].

The funerary world in the Graeco-Roman culture

There exists within the cultural sphere of each society an area of great importance, the funerary world. This field is very special since it is representative of the cultural identity of a community or ethnic group. Similarly, funerary art is the ideal framework in which to record the identity of a specific individual. The importance of this type of art is the result of its role as a catalyst that projects a particular cultural image and identity of different people into the beyond.

As mentioned before, this type of masks are considered as belonging to the Egyptian funerary tradition. The bodies of the deceased were subjected to a mummification process. Within the procedures that the mummification involved, some of these deceased individuals were placed in coffins for their conservation. The representation of the idealised face of the deceased in an independent mask, the coffin itself or even drawn on the bandages that covered the body was vital. The first funerary masks were made in cartonnage, dating from the late Old Kingdom. The evolution of their usage and characteristics began in the First Intermediate Period[50] and continued throughout the Egyptian history until Graeco-Roman times.

Notwithstanding, the funerary tradition in the Graeco-Roman world differed in some respects if we compare it with the Egyptian ritual. Greeks and Romans did not practice the mummification, although some other characteristics of the funerary rites were somewhat similar, like the purifying body wash after the death[51]. In addition, the *kêdeia* or Greek funerary ritual was divided into three phases, the *prothesis,* the *ekphora* and the deposition of the deceased's remains. The *prothesis* consisted of a period in which the deceased was honoured and mourned. The eyes were closed and a coin was placed between the teeth for the rite of passage to death, as a payment to Charon, boatman of the Styx. The *ekphora* was the funerary procession that led to the subsequent

[49] As seen in W. Clarysse, 'Some Greeks in Egypt', in J. H. Johnson (ed.), *Life in a Multi-Cultural Society: Egypt from Cambyses to Constantine and Beyond* (SAOC 51; Chicago, 1992), 51.
[50] P. Rigault-Déon, *Masques de Momies du Moyen Empire Égyptien: Les Découvertes de Mirgissa* (París, 2012), 13.
[51] J. A. Corbelli, *The Art of Death in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (Princes Risborough, 2006), 8.

deposition. Both cremation[52] and inhumation were practiced in the Greek world, varying depending on the region or period[53]. Later, the Romans adapted these traditions to their culture, and made use of either cremation or inhumation. These two methods coexisted for most of the time[54]. However, inhumation practices were increasingly the preferred ones, an influx that came from the eastern part of the Empire[55]. In the adapted Roman version of the funerary courtship, the *laudatio funebris*, some attendants used to wear wax portraits of the deceased's ancestors, called *imagines*. This 'actors' were also dressed with clothes representing the rank of the highest office that this particular ancestor achieved in life. The coloration of these wax masks increased the similarity of these actors with the people that represented. By means of this symbolic mimicry of the participants of the procession, the deceased left the world of the living to join its ancestors[56]. In some occasions, the attendants also carried busts and portraits of the deceased[57] that were kept in the *atria* of the family house[58].

As we can observe, the worship of the ancestry was an important element in Roman culture, especially within the aristocratic groups. In this regard, the membership of a particular Roman clan or *gens* can be considered as an identity key element of these elite social groups. Within the patronage system, the act of *salutatio* in which the *patroni* received their clients in their *villae* was a hallmark of the Roman social hierarchy. This event took place in the *atrium* of the *patronus*' *villa*, where these wax masks were exposed, as well as family busts. Other elements representing this cult of the ancestors were placed around the *villa* such as family trees, the *stemmata*. The symbolic meaning for this location was both to impress the clients and to promote certain family values to the young generations[59].

This world entered in contact with the Egyptian culture and a new situation emerged, the cultural adaptation. The Graeco-Roman inhabitants who lived in Egypt had to adapt themselves to

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[52] About references to the practice of the cremation in the literature of Homer and the funerary rituals see J. Zurbach, 'Pratique et signification de l'incinération dans les poèmes homériques. Quelques observations', *KTEMA: Civilisations de l'Orient, de la Grèce et de Rome Antiques* 30 (2005), 161-71.

[53] As seen in R. Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (Ithaca, 1985), 21-37. In this work a more in-depth analysis can be found about the Greek funerary rituals, such as the type of clothing that the deceased could wear in the *prothesis* or the representations of these rituals in art pieces and works of classical authors.

[54] H. Lindsay, 'Death-Pollution and Funerals in the City of Rome', in V. M. Hope and E. Marshall, *Death and Disease in the Ancient City* (London, 2000), 167-71.

[55] J. Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth in the Religions of Antiquity: Religion in the First Christian Centuries* (London, 1999), 149. Further reading about cremation and inhumation practices and their evolution in Roman times can be done in I. Morris, *Death-Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, 1992), 31-69.

[56] Lindsay, in Hope and Marshall (eds), *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, 164-5.

[57] F. P. Retief and L. Cilliers, 'Burial Customs and the Pollution of Death in Ancient Rome: Procedures and Paradoxes', *Acta Theologica* 26/2 (2006), 138-40.

[58] D. Favro and C. Johanson, 'Death in Motion: Funeral Processions in the Roman Forum', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 69/1 (2010), 18.

[59] J. Pollini, 'Ritualizing Death in Republican Rome: Memory, Religion, Class Struggle, and the Wax Ancestral Mask Tradition's Origin and Influence on Veristic Portraiture', in N. Laneri (ed.), *Performing Death: Social Analyses of Funerary Traditions in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean* (Oriental Institute Seminars 3; Chicago, 2007), 237-9.

new cultural realities that they assimilated and implemented with their settlement in Egypt. As noted earlier, religious tolerance and the perpetuation of the Egyptian cult and traditions was a political and social decision that the first Greek conquerors made. It is true that this decision served to legitimise the new power wielded by the Greek elites, and to some extent helped to maintain some social cohesion. However, the Graeco-Roman community was inevitably subjected to a social interaction that led it to adapt its culture and assimilate certain social practices.

Within the culture of any given society, the religious beliefs are an abstract sphere that permeates many aspects of life. The role of the religion is even greater if we talk about ancient civilisations. In Ancient Egypt the religion was part of many aspects of daily life, like the concept of kingship, the nature of the state, the art forms, law, etc[60]. We can argue that the religion itself, as a cultural phenomenon, is subject to a certain degree of adaptability. One might add that this dynamism has a greater or lesser extent in relation to the spatiality and temporality. As J. R. Hinnells states, 'most religions take over practices and beliefs from ancient local traditions and reformulate them and by appropriating local traditions indigenize the global religion'[61]. Religion served the power in Egypt and many other places[62], and when foreign rulers such as Greeks and Romans wielded the power in Egypt, these new occupants utilised some aspects of the local religion for their own benefit. As discussed before, in the Ptolemaic period the support for the local religion was higher since a new elite was exerting power within the country, and not as a province in the Roman case. New developments affected the religion in the country, which was adapted in order to unite local and foreign cultures. Moreover, in the same way that a given religion takes advantage of local beliefs, the social interaction between the local and foreign element caused an adaptation of the religion of the latter, the Graeco-Roman community. This phenomenon is part of the aforementioned social process of 'cultural symbiosis'. Funerary beliefs and traditions were, within the field of the religious culture, absorbed by the Graeco-Roman settlers. The mummification practice was an innovation applied to the own funerary rituals of the new elite. Thanks to the permission of intermarriage between the different ethnic groups, this process that R. David defines as 'hybridization of beliefs' was accelerated. Thus, this cultural symbiosis can be observed in the material culture related to funerary art, like the portraits and masks of the deceased[63].

[60] See R. David, 'Ancient Egypt', in J. R. Hinnells (ed.), *A Handbook of Ancient Religions* (Cambridge, 2007), 55-63, 71-84.
[61] In J. R. Hinnells, 'Introduction', in J. R. Hinnells (ed.), *A Handbook of Ancient Religions* (Cambridge, 2007), 1.
[62] A recommended reading about the religious concept of *maat*, order, as a matter of justification of the Egyptian kingship and the idea of predestination regarding the succession to the throne is P. J. Frandsen, 'Aspects of Kingship in Ancient Egypt', in N. Brisch (ed.), *Religion and Power: Divine Kingship in the Ancient World and Beyond* (Oriental Institute Seminars 4; Chicago, 2008), 47-65.
[63] David, in Hinnells (ed.), *A Handbook of Ancient Religions*, 102-3.

The most important concept derived from the Egyptian funerary beliefs is the idea of immortality, life after one individual's death. It can be argued that the sense of an afterlife was not clearly established in the Graeco-Roman world. This conception had more to do with the philosophical tendencies of the time rather than religion. Within the Epicureanism trend the concept of afterlife was omitted. The Greek philosopher Epicurus believed that the soul of a person, its identity, vanished in the air after its death, as an entity diffuse in nature. Lucretius, a later Roman representative of this philosophy, denied the issue of an afterlife as something that should disturb the mind of the living. The soul, according to him, was characterised by possessing a temporary nature, mortal as the body to which it was linked[64]. Among the Stoics existed the idea that the soul of a person remained in the inhumed body while decomposing. In the case of cremation, the *manes*, spirits of the dead travelled to the underworld continuing its existence 'as an undifferentiated group'[65]. The concept of this hereafter was however quite uncertain in its nature, in words of the Stoic Seneca[66].

Anyway, the idea of death was considered an 'unclean' process in many parts of ancient Greece[67] and Rome, where the concept of 'pollution of death' was part of the general beliefs of the society. This pollution did not affect only the dead body, but also the family of the deceased, bringing a disturbance to the home environment, which could even affect people close to this family group[68]. This is the reason for the purification rituals developed during the funeral[69]. Yet the body needed both a resting place and the necessary rituals for the soul to be liberated. Otherwise, the body will suffer from pollution and the soul will not rest, which may result in the torment of the living[70].

In conclusion, it could be argued that the religious beliefs of the Graeco-Roman society, even with their internal differences, share certain ideas about the concept of death influenced by the philosophical currents and performed certain rituals partly because of practical reasons[71]. It is remarkable that for this society, the fate of the human beings after death was not focused on an ideal

[64] Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth, 129-30.*
[65] Lindsay, in Hope and Marshall, *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, 168.
[66] Davies, *Death, Burial and Rebirth*, 130-1.
[67] See Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 41-7 about the taboos about the death and corpses, both in between the concept of 'pollution' and sacredness.
[68] Some indicators could be placed in the deceased's house to inform other people of the state of bereavement, which perhaps could be interpreted as some kind of warning, a temporary isolation of the family group. Many other aspects related to this social conception can be found in the recent study J. Lennon, *Carnal, Bloody and Unnatural Acts: Religious Pollution in Ancient Rome* (PhD thesis, University of Nottingham; Nottingham, 2011).
[69] Retief and Cilliers, *Acta Theologica* 26/2, 129-30.
[70] Lindsay, in Hope and Marshall, *Death and Disease in the Ancient City, 168.*
[71] For instances, the concept of 'pollution of death' widespread among the society, was responsible of a specific legislation about the location of cemeteries and places for the incineration of the deceased, far away from any urban centre. In the Roman case, this precepts can be found in the laws of the Twelve Tables, as seen in Retief and Cilliers, *Acta Theologica* 26/2, 131-2, with an emphasis on a practical view, concerning hygiene.

afterlife. The focus was rather on the concept of memory[72]. The memory of the society towards the dead is what kept one's spirit alive in the Roman beliefs. Hence the importance of ancestors worship, the statuary in the elites, the effigies of the patrician group immortalised in busts and portraits, and the presence of funerary wax masks in the *laudatio funebris*.

Roman society developed what ancient Greece began and refined to its high point, the naturalistic and realistic portrayal of the human factions. Through realistic portraiture Roman elites earned a place in the collective memory of many generations to come, and even today we are able to find many busts and portraits of people of whom we know their names in many cases. This remembrance of the individual in the collective memory was for them the true immortality.

This Graeco-Roman society that dwelt in Egypt was adapted to the new environment, and integrated into its customs various aspects of the Egyptian cultural spectrum. The local funerary tradition, with all its rituals like the mummification was practiced and adapted by the new elite of the country, along with everything that it entails, such as the beliefs regarding death.

Funerary art as a symbol of cultural adaptation and identity claim

The coexistence of different ethnic groups creates boundaries that are flexible and subject to adaptation, interchange and evolution processes. These processes are reflected in all the components that compose the essence of ethnicity such as religion. Hence the dynamism of the ethnic nature previously mentioned, which depends on the interrelationships and strategies taken by each group[73].

The cultural symbiosis of the new Hellenistic elite led to the assumption of local funerary rituals alien to this ethnic group, along with the introduction of features belonging to the Greek world and later to the Roman culture in aspects such as tomb architecture, mythology elements, decoration of spaces and coffins and funerary portraiture, among others[74].

The funerary beliefs and traditions of the Egyptian country suffered a continuous evolution through the history of this civilisation as might be expected in a period that spans more that 3 millenia, including the Amarnian parentheses when the rituals, and the entire religious pantheon was modified towards monotheism. Nevertheless, one of the basic pillars of the beliefs about the afterlife in this culture is the preservation of the integrity of the individual body. This explains the efforts made by the Egyptians towards a perfect mummification of the body. The idea of a

[72] Pollini, in N. Lanieri (ed.), *Performing Death* (Oriental Institute Seminars 3), 240-2.
[73] K. E. Knutsson, 'Dichotomization and Integration' in F. Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston, 1969), 99-100.
[74] For a general glance of these transformations see Corbelli, *The Art of Death in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, 9-64.

preserved body was vital for an eternal life in the hereafter, but also his representation in scenes, texts, sculptures, coffins and masks. Every possible representation of the figure of the deceased could, through magic, be a substitute of the deceased itself[75]. In the same manner, even the servant figures and *shawabtis* acted as substitutes of real servants in the afterlife[76].

The importance of the representation of the deceased in his own tomb is a characteristic element for most of the existence of the Egyptian culture. It can be stated that the focus of these funerary representations is the face of the dead person. According to D. Meeks, the visage was considered a sign of identity, but mainly a mark of existence[77]. The first examples of the perpetuation of the human visage for the afterlife can be traced back in the Old Kingdom. Although initially this practice was nothing more than the drawing of the facial features on the mummy wraps[78], subsequently this will lead to the appearance of proper funerary masks. These masks will have a further development till the Graeco-Roman period, but mainly characterised by their idealised representation of the deceased's features[79].

The religious syncretism caused by the coexistence of different sociocultural models, shows us two different perspectives on the social significance of human portraiture in the funerary sphere. Within this context are located the masks that we are studying. For the Egyptians, this idealised representation of the face of the deceased was essential for their existence in the afterlife. However, for the Hellenistic and Roman culture, the portraiture and sculpture of the dead people was more a claim of memory, a survival of the individual in the world of the living through the most accurate capture of the reality.

Both styles converge in the art of Graeco-Roman Egypt, and the analysis of the features of the many styles provides information about the individuals who created these work arts and their owners. For this period, the art has been defined for a long time as characterised by a dualism in its style[80]. This distinction between Greek and Egyptian styles has been redefined by C. Riggs. Instead of referring to 'styles' is preferable, terminologically speaking, to refer to systems of pictorial or

[75] See L. Meskell, *Object Worlds in Ancient Egypt: Material biographies past and present* (Oxford, 2004), 124-30. In relation with this study and the portraiture of the deceased in the statuary, it is interesting to read M. Nuzzolo, 'The Reserve Heads: some remarks on their function and meaning", in N. Strudwick and H. Strudwick (eds), *Old Kingdom, New Perspectives: Egyptian Art and Archaeology 2750-2150 BC* (Oxford, 2011), 200-215. In this volume

[76] J. Haynes, '*Shawabtis*, servant figures and models', in K. A. Bard (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Archaeology of Ancient Egypt* (London, 1999), 886-9.

[77] D. Meeks, 'Dieu Masqué, Dieu sans Tête', *Archéo-Nil* 1 (1991), 5-15.

[78] M. C. Root, *Faces of Immortality: Egyptian Mummy Masks, Painted Portraits, and Canopic Jars in the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology* (Michigan, 1979), 2-4.

[79] An overview about the history and characteristics these masks can be found in L. H. Corcoran, 'Masks', in D. B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, 2001), II, 345-8.

[80] See as a reference L. Castiglione, 'Dualité du style dans l'art sépulcral égiptien à l'époque romaine', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 9 (1961), 209-30.

artistic representation[81]. These systems and traditions cover extended periods of time while evolving gradually, being characteristic of certain cultural ensembles. Furthermore, these are influenced by numerous factors that, at the same time, define the culture to which they belong. These factors comprise a broad spectrum from the techniques of a given cultural group to its beliefs and philosophy.

In this regard, on the one hand Egyptian art uses a representation system of the human figure that has largely preserved its artistic conventions and guidelines throughout its history, comprising many different styles in it, depending on the location and period of time. Styles are therefore considered the minor artistic variations within the system of representation, without losing the majority of the characteristics that conform it, such as the Amarnian style. On the other hand, as C. Riggs states, the Greek and later Roman system is based on the idea of reality, the natural aspect of the human body and its transposition into a bi or tri-dimensional medium in the most naturalistic way possible[82]. In brief, the definition of 'Greek style' should be avoided, also taking into account that the 'Greek' epithet undervalues the Roman role as a direct influence in the copy of sculptural models, hairstyles and fashion.

The numerous Graeco-Roman stucco masks found both in situ and acquired by museums in different markets are very important as cultural, ethnic and identity markers. They are the confluence of different beliefs about death, and also of various systems of artistic representation. These stucco masks have been subject of dating and stylistic analysis. Most of the masks found *in situ* belong to cemeteries from the Fayum area and Middle Egypt, mostly in Tuna el-Gebel, but other locations are registered throughout the country. G. Grimm remarks that despite the problematic of a correct dating or seriation for these objects because of the lack of archaeological context for many of these examples – obtained in markets or from individuals – two different groups or tendencies can be delineated. One is a 'Roman group', characterised by Graeco-Roman artistic influences, like sculpture works brought to Egypt and even coinage. The other is named the 'Egyptian group', defined by more archaising features[83].

In this regard, a special mention should be done about the recent study of M. S. Vasques, which includes a corpus of masks and an updated typology[84]. These types can coexist in time and in different locations, noting a clear tendency toward individualisation from the middle of the 2nd

[81] C. Riggs, *The Beautiful Burial in Roman Egypt: Art, Identity, and Funerary Religion* (Oxford, 2005), 7-9.
[82] Riggs, *The Beautiful Burial*, 9-11. Compare this sense of realistic replica with the Egyptian predilection towards the artistic 'ideal type', a stereotyped art based on meaning instead of form, the art of the court, in Kemp, *Ancient Egypt*, 135-6.
[83] Further reading about these results and classification should be done in Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 102-25.
[84] M. S. Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano: Máscaras de Múmia* (PhD thesis, Universidade de São Paulo; São Paulo, 2005).

century AD[85]. It is also possible to define a 'transition type', which includes archaic Egyptian characteristics and features that tend towards greater individualisation and naturalism[86]. It has to be taken into consideration that greater realism in the artistic technique does not mean a complete individualisation of the features of the deceased, since the method of creating the masks was through the employment of moulds, in most cases copying other models, leading to some similar shapes[87]. Notwithstanding, several details such as the hairstyle, some facial features, ears, beards, diadems or jewellery could be moulded apart and been subsequently added, providing information about the individual's identity[88].

The problematic about the exact chronology for every mask is aggravated in the event of not being able to identify their geographic location, since the evolution towards models belonging mainly to the Roman world was not simultaneous in the Egyptian country. Thus, as part of a centre-periphery process, the Graeco-Roman influence was greater in areas closer to the capital, Alexandria. Meanwhile, in towns of Upper Egypt the art was characterised for a longer period by conservative tendencies with distinctive features of the Egyptian pictorial and artistic system, including the funerary masks[89].

The assimilation of Roman sculptural and pictorial models involved the introduction and copy of certain costumes, jewellery and hairstyles, among other characteristics. In the corpus made by the Louvre museum in which is collected the entire Graeco-Roman stucco mask collection from the museum, an analysis has been developed of every of these particular elements that may help the dating of the masks[90]. Besides the representation system employed, the identification of the single aspects such as the way of manufacturing the masks and their structural typology, head ornaments, and hairstyles are some features that lead to seriation over time, at least based on *terminus post quem* hints. This is possible starting from the premise that specific hairstyles, for instances, are based on certain fashions, emperors' hairstyles or groups of sculptures that were brought to the Egyptian province or made there, which were imitated by these elites, owners of the funerary masks.

In Roman Egypt where funerary beliefs about immortality in the afterlife converge with the culture of memory and remembrance of the individual in the world of the living, these funerary masks become an object that provides valuable information about the ethnicity and identity of their owners. As noted by C. Riggs, the preference for the Graeco-Roman or Egyptian representation

[85] Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 104-6.
[86] Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, I, 44-5.
[87] Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 103, 113-4.
[88] Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, I, 42-3.
[89] Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 116-7.
[90] M. F. Aubert and R. Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine. I. Masques en Stuc* (Paris, 2004), 15-31.

system in these masks does not mean that the owner of the mask was ethnically Greek, Roman or Egyptian, at least not because of direct assimilation. Furthermore, these masks are easily characterised by showing features of both systems. The social context of this elite group is of great value in this analysis. As mentioned before, the Hellenised group that was well considered in the Ptolemaic period lost some of its power due to the Roman social and economic reorganisation, based on citizenship. The assumption of traits derived from the Roman statuary in their art, among other social customs can be interpreted as a claim of status, an assimilation to the new Roman elites and a pretension of maintaining the power that they exerted locally together with its recognition after their death[91]. Besides, inside this Hellenised group, educated in the *gymnasium*, some mixed marriages could be found[92]. The Egyptian root element was present in this Hellenistic group, and the inclusion or preservation of some elements typically Egyptian in the funerary masks might have a signification about the identity of the individual.

The Graeco-Roman funerary masks from the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden

This chapter presents the analysis of the masks that will serve as the case study. The mask set belongs to the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden in Leiden[93].

This analysis will be performed by an indirect observation of the objects, through photographs[94]. Stylistic comparisons will be made with other masks from other collections. These comparisons may provide evidences that in some cases can lead to the proposal of relative dating. At the same time, this analysis will put forward interpretations about the possible identity of some of the masks' owners.

About this collection of funerary masks few studies or descriptions have been conducted. They have been acquired by the museum throughout the 20th century, not being found *in situ*.

[91] The rejection of a direct correlation of material culture with foreign (Roman) attributes with Roman identity in a context of Romanization and cultural change can be seen in S. Jones, *The Archaeology of Ethnicity: Constructing Identities in the Past and Present* (London, 1997), 33-6, 133-5. This author analyses the presence of 'Romanised' material culture in the British islands within a context of articulation of cultural identities, causing the transformation and legitimation of power, status and identity.

[92] About mixed marriages from a legal perspective see R. S. Bagnall, 'Egypt and the *Lex Minicia*', in *JJP* 23 (1999), 25-28.

[93] About the numbering system employed by the museum to identify and inventory the objects referred here see: M. J. Raven, 'Numbering Systems in the Egyptian Department of the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden at Leiden', *OMRO* 72 (1992), 7-14. The letter F is referred to the geographical provenance of the object, in this case Egypt. The following numbers represent the year of acquisition (or that of registration in the inventory books), a dash, the month of acquisition/registration, a full stop, and an ordinal number (eg. F 1933/2.1). There are two examples identified with the letters BA, referring to the Beeftingh collection, in Rotterdam.

[94] I would like to thank the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden for its collaboration, providing me the photographs shown in this study.

Unfortunately, the exact provenance of these objects is unknown, being proposed only some dating in the Graeco-Roman period. This is nothing more than a first approach to this specific collection, in order to serve as a starting point for further and deeper analysis.

Descriptions

1. Gilded mask of a woman (Fig. 2)

   Inventory No.: F 1933/2.1

   Materials: Stucco, glass inlays, gold leaf, paint.

   Measurements: 34cm h.; 26cm w.; 15cm th.

   Description: Mask representing a woman, which preserves part of the chest. The face is oval shaped, with thin and tight lips conforming a slight smile. The nose is elongated and somewhat flattened. The face retains gold leaf covering the stucco mask although there are some damaged parts. The chest also has some isolated remains of this gilded decoration. The eyes are made of blue and white inlaid glass, almond shaped, with a contour quite highlighted, and added after the mask was moulded but before the gold leaf cover. Traces of black paint can be noticed in this gold leaf, at the height of the eyebrows. The hair would be made subsequently to the rest of the moulded mask. This hair is waved in the top, a variant of the also called '*côtes de melon*' hairstyle, and on each side it falls in two layers of four corkscrews onto the shoulders. Covering the top of the forehead there is a strip of small ringlets, slightly longer in size at the height of the ears. The hair conserves black paint, but somewhat eroded. Comparing photographs of old publications with recent ones, it can be observed that some restoration works have been done to this mask[95].

   Commentary: Masks with this type of hairstyle were analysed and dated by Grimm as belonging to the beginning of the Roman imperial power in Egypt[96]. More parallels of this mask can be found in the Louvre collection (eg. AF 6845), given the similarities in the hairstyle, the moulding of the facial features and the traces of gold leaf[97]. This leads us to propose a chronology in the 1st Century AD.

   Publications: A. Klasens, *Egyptische kunst uit de collectie van het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* (Amsterdam, 1962), 29 no. 62.; Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 76 n. 158.

[95] Compare the picture from A. Klasens, *Egyptische kunst uit de collectie van het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden* (Amsterdam, 1962), 62, with the more recent one (fig. 2).

[96] Compare Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, pl. lxiv.3.4. In Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, II, 118-9, some parallels can be found in some masks that the author classifies into a female group of masks somewhat broad with chronologies between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, specially the objects 234 and 235.

[97] Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 55.

2. Mask of a woman with a floral crown (Fig. 3)

   Inventory No.: F 1934/11.5

   Materials: Stucco, paint.

   Measurements: 13cm h.; 18cm w.

   Description: Fragment of a mask representing a woman. The lower part of the face is lost, immediately below the nose. Traces of beige-brownish polychromy are preserved in the moulded face. The nose is long and thin. The ears are long and without much detail. The eyes are painted in black over the facial paint. They are almond shaped, archaistic, with large black pupils. Long and thick eyebrows are equally painted in black. Some details like the hair, crown and one earring preserved under the left ear are added to the mould. The hair is composed of a few rows of small curls arranged like a grid, falling a little longer beside the ears and painted in black. On top of the hair there is a floral crown[98] made from pleated stucco with remains of reddish colouring.

   Commentary: Noteworthy is the contrast between the simplicity of the designing of the facial features compared to the greater detail of the crown. Comparisons with masks with similar elements may contextualise this object between the 1st and the first half of the 2nd centuries AD[99].

   Publication: None.

3. Badly eroded mask (Fig. 4)

   Inventory No.: F 1943/12.2

   Materials: Stucco.

   Measurements: 18cm h.; 16cm w.; 8cm th.

   Description: Example of a quite damaged stucco mask. The erosion suffered by the mask has erased all the traces of polychromy and its decoration. The moulded mask has a rounded shape. Certain facial features are distinguishable, as a wide nose, thick lips and almond eyes with the typical Egyptian contour. The hair is scarcely preserved.

   Commentary: On the basis of the poor state of preservation of this mask, it is not possible to propose any reliable dating.

[98] Described in Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 18 as a crown of "justification.

[99] Some analogous examples can be seen in Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 59, 76. The latter (E21395) seems to have the same kind of earring in its right ear. Other mask of the same typology are Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 76-7, pls lxvi.1, lxviii.1. Grimm states that similar masks with some alterations mainly in the hairstyle may have coexisted in the same period of time until about mid-2nd century. In Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, II, 105-21 it can be seen that the 'Group 16' comprises female masks with different attributes, observing some difficulty to define their precise chronology. Similar to this mask are the examples 209, 210, and 227.

Publication: None.

4. Mask of a man with moustache (Fig. 5 and 6)

   Inventory No.: F 1944/7.1

   Measurements: 21cm h.; 15cm w.

   Materials: Stucco, paint.

   Description: Mask representing the face of a man. The face has an elongate shape. Paint residues are conserved in most of the surface of the object[100]. The mouth is small with thin lips. The nose is long and thin. It has almond shaped eyes with black paint for the design of the pupils. The contour of the eyes and its thick eyelashes are also painted in black. Circular designs on the chin and a curly moustache are made with brownish paint, which also frames the face and ears. A red and black band covers the forehead, with a yellow headdress on the top of it.

   Commentary: Some parallels, on the manner of designing the details, like the moustache and the headdress can be found in the corpus of Grimm, from Achmim[101]. This group of masks associated to this site does not provide a clear dating, and the lack of the rest of the structure in this case is a handicap. The proposed dating for this group goes from the end of the Ptolemaic period to the 2nd, 3rd and even 4th century AD. As this author mentions, the ascription of this mask to what he termed as 'Roman' or 'Egyptian group' is difficult to do if only the face if preserved, without any costume depicted. Black spots on the lower part of the face can be distinguished, although it is not known if it is some kind of paint or resin from the observation of the photographs. In case of being paint it could represent the intention of drawing a beard, a fashion that appears in Roman sculpture from the reign of Hadrian, from 117 AD onwards[102].

   Publication: Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 97-9.

5. Mask of a woman (Fig. 7)

   Inventory No.: F 1980/11.3

   Measurements: 23cm h.; 19cm w.

   Materials: Stucco, paint.

[100] However, if we compare the current status of the mask with old photographs (fig. 6), some discoloration or loss of paint can be observed in certain areas such as the eyes. It would be beneficial to consolidate the piece in order to avoid further deterioration. Some reasons for this damage and tips may be seen in C. Clarke, 'The Conservation of a Group of Egyptian Graeco-Roman Stucco Mummy Masks' in C. E. Brown, F. Macalister and M. M. Wright (eds), *Conservation in Ancient Egyptian Collections* (London, 1995), 69-76.

[101] Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, pl. cxxi.1-4.

[102] P. Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: The Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity* (Berkeley, 1995), 217-33.

Description: Fairly well preserved funerary mask. It has a round profile, hollow inside. The face is slightly rounded and retains light brown colouring. The mouth is small, elongated and has thick lips. The eyes are carved on the moulded mask, and coloured in white and dark brown. Their outline is also coloured in dark brown, the same as the eyebrows, which are pretty curved. The hair covers half of the ears, and consists of three concentric circles of hair braids, with a dividing line in the middle of the forehead, and grid shaped.

Commentary: The mask, defined as belonging to the Graeco-Roman period, has no clear parallels in order to establish an accurate dating. The design of the features is defined by the prototypical Egyptian idealisation. The hairstyle, consisting of braids could be an Egyptian style[103]. This might indicate that its owner can be ethnically Egyptian.

Publication: M. J. Raven, *De Dodencultus* (Amsterdam, 1992), 87.

6. Mask of a woman with chest (Fig. 8 and 9)

   Inventory No.: F 1982/7.1-a

   Measurements: 43cm h.; 24cm w.; 29cm th.

   Materials: Stucco, paint, glass inlays.

   Description: Mask representing a woman, with the chest and hands preserved. The body is supine but its rounded head is leaning forward, standing erect in the form of an 'awakened Osiris'. The face is oval shaped, with thin lips and a long and thick nose. The eyes are large and almond shaped, carved and filled with black and white inlaid glass. It retains some black paint for its eyebrows and some salmon colouring on the face. The hairstyle is divided in the middle of the forehead and painted in black. It forms waves with thin grooves, in the form of '*côtes de melon*'. There is a spiral bun with chevron pattern on the back of the head somewhat damaged. The head is attached to the chest, where one can distinguish the modelling of a necklace and a Roman tunic '*a clavi*'. The breasts are distinguished under this tunic. The hands are attached to the chest, the upper one is holding a 'crown of justification', and the bottom one has three rings and a bracelet. Remains of reddish colouring are preserved. On the back there is a panel where the falcon god Horus is depicted with black paint.

   Commentary: The designing of the facial features of this mask is not really individualised due to the use of a mould. However, it is quite eclectic in its composition. It combines both the representation of the Egyptian god Horus and elements of traditional Roman costume,

[103] Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 24.

the tunic '*a clavi*', used by the elites to express their status[104]. Moreover, the hairstyle can be contextualised in the late 2nd-3rd century, as belonging to the Severian female fashion[105], with some additions like the small curls on the forehead. This fashion would be imported to Egypt and many masks of this period copied and adapted it[106]. It could therefore belong to a woman of the old Hellenistic elite, integrating and identifying herself with elements of Roman power.

Publication: H. D. Schneider, *Life and Death under the Pharaohs: Egyptian Art from the National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden, The Netherlands* (Perth, 1997), 141.

7. Mask of a man with hands (Fig. 10)

   Inventory No.: F 1993/1.1

   Measurements: 13,4cm h.; 17,5cm w.;

   Materials: Stucco, glass inlays, paint.

   Description: Set of a male stucco mask and a pair of hands associated therewith. The face is rounded. Some authors have defined this type of face and its features as a 'standard face'[107], typically moulded. The mouth is small, whereas the nose is quite elongated and wide. The eyes are large and almond shaped, with black and white inlaid glass inside them and the prototypical black coloured outline. The ears are large and simple, not covered by the hair. The hair, which retains some black paint, consists of parallel grooves towards the forefront, as being combed.

   The stucco hands, with thin fingers, are broken just after the wrists. They were probably attached to the chest.

   Commentary: The physical and stylistic features of this mask may lead us to propose a dating in times of the emperor Trajan. Following the fashion of the emperor's hairstyle, this mask with a pretty standard moulded face would be part of a group defined by Grimm as 'conservative', belonging to the first half of the 2nd century AD. Besides, the rounded profile of the head fits with the trend that emerges from the 2nd century AD consisting in the creation of erect heads with the intention of assimilating the deceased to an 'awakened

[104] About this type of tunic see Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 29-30. Also Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, I, 58.

[105] E. Bartman, 'Hair and the Artifice of Roman Female Adornment', *AJA* 105/I (2001), 21-2. Other examples of this 'Severian fashion' are the bust of Publia Fulvia Plautilla of the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli (Inv. 6189) and the portrait of Salustia Barbia Orbiana in the Louvre Museum (MR 538/Ma 1054). See also Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, I, 52.

[106] Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 88, pls xciv.1, xcv, xcvi, xcvii.3, cxxxi.1.2. Also see Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 143-4.

[107] Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 64, 66.

Osiris'[108]. Some of these masks have a headscarf covering the hair behind the ears[109], which is not visible in this example from the photographs.

Publication: H. D. Schneider, 'Recent acquisitions', *OMRO* 74 (1994), 178.

8. Mask of a man (Fig. 11)

   Inventory No.: BA 219

   Measurements: 24cm h.

   Materials: Stucco, glass inlays, paint.

   Description: Stucco mask representing a man. The head is slightly leaning forward and has a rounded profile. The face is oval shaped and retains a few traces of reddish paint. The mouth has small lips and the nose is long and straight. The eyes are almond shaped, filled with black and white inlaid glass. No remains of paint are conserved for the eye contour. The ears are simple and medium sized. Its hair is wavy, confined to the top of the head until the line behind the ears, and preserving a little black paint.

   Commentary: This stucco mask has some parallels from Tuna el-Gebel and Kom el-Ahmar in Middle Egypt, dating from the 3rd century AD[110]. This hairstyle, in the shape of a spotty 'calotte' is considered to be a Roman influence[111].

   Publications: Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 26 n. 21.; *5000 jaar kunst uit Egypte uit de musea van Kaïro, Alexandrië en Leiden*, Rijksmuseum – Amsterdam, 16 oktober – 31 december 1960, no. 133.

9. Fragment of a male stucco mask with hair tufts (Fig. 12)

   Inventory No.: F 1934/11.6

   Measurements: Not known.

   Materials: Stucco, paint.

   Description: Fragment of a stucco mask belonging to the upper part of a male face. The breakage extends from the right cheek, through the bottom of the nose and continuing towards the top left side upwardly, surrounding the eye. Remains of brownish paint are still preserved in some parts of the face. The nose is straight, thin and long. The eyes are almond-shaped and small, with remains of black paint in their contour, mostly in the left eye. The left eyebrow still conserves some black paint. Only the right ear is conserved,

[108] Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 78-80.
[109] Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 106-12. Observe the examples in Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, pls xxviii.3.4, xxix, xxx.1.2.
[110] The example from Tuna el-Gebel can be seen in Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 87, pl. lvi.2. Two examples from Kom el-Ahmar in ibid., 91, 106, pl. lix.1.2.
[111] Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 25.

performed in a quite naturalistic manner. The hair, partially conserved, consists of two or three lines of wavy locks, tufts, downwardly extending close to the ears. Some black paint can be seen in the hair, even some small details like some loose hairs in the forefront.

Commentary: Although it is partially preserved, this is an example of mask showing an imitation of which may be the hairstyle of the first Roman emperor Augustus. The mask was made from a mould for the deceased, but the hairstyle was subsequently added to it, performed in greater detail. Although other examples of masks have been preserved with a similar hairstyle also ascribed to this emperor[112], this mask shows greater similarity with the attempt to copy the central loop that appears in numerous busts and images of this emperor, like the Augustus of Prima Porta[113]. Even the facial expression vaguely resembles this portrayal. Therefore, a suggested dating for this mask would be late 1st century BC or early 1st century AD, in the beginning of the Julio-Claudian dynasty[114].

Publication: Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 73 n. 117.

10. Mask of an individual with a headdress (Fig. 13)

Inventory No.: F 1948/2.1

Measurements: Not known.

Materials: Mud, straw, paint.

Description: Example of what appears to be a female mask, probably made of mud and straw, covered with an outer layer with paint. The face is rounded painted in white. This layer of paint is damaged in some places, revealing the moulded mud. The mouth is small, the nose is thin and elongated and the ears are simple and medium sized. The eyes are painted in black and white, with a thick blue outline, typically Egyptian. The eyebrows are also painted in blue. A headdress is covering the head, painted in brown, pink and golden paint. The top of it is prominent and has attached some stucco decoration in the form of flowers, painted in green and pink. The back of the head is painted in pink and has some remains of a green band with yellow zigzag decoration and pink diamonds, outlined in black.

[112] Compare Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, pls xviii.3.4, xix.1.3.

[113] A recommended reading about the importance of the representation of the Emperor and the copy of his portrait in many parts of the Roman Empire, including Egypt is P. Zanker, *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* (Michigan, 1988), 98-100, 159-166. This image of the emperor itself was idealised adopting canons and the principle of symmetry as a way of expressing a national message. Some elements like the hairstyle were adopted even by figures close to the emperor, as a marker of status and identification within a 'national mythology' in this case, as can be seen in ibid., 215-23.

[114] In Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, II, 54-8, the author defines a group (10.1) that comprises masks with similar features, without any clear dating. The chronology proposed here should be considered for these examples.

Commentary: There is a similar example known from Achmim, a coffin with a bearded male mask. Its face is also painted in white, including a similar headdress and made of mud with straw as well[115]. As previously mentioned in the object no. 4 the different masks related to Achmim have no precise dating, leading to discrepancies among the known examples. A review of this group in a new updated corpus would be beneficial to its study. Its material together with the structure of this example, incomplete in its rear part, might suggest that this example belongs to a coffin lid. However, due to the handicap of not knowing its position in the coffin, it is difficult to affirm whether it is a mask placed directly in the body of the deceased – as most of the analysed examples seem to suggest – or part of a coffin lid. Other examples such as the objects no. 7 and 13 appear to show a development of the back part, but this is insufficient to define their nature[116].

Publication: Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 98 n. 58 (wrongly listed as F 1940/2.1).

11. Mask of a woman with roman hairstyle (Fig. 14)

Inventory No.: BA 220

Measurements: 24,5cm h.

Materials: Stucco, paint.

Description: Stucco mask of a woman. The face is characterised by its rounded shape. The mouth is small with slightly thick lips, smiling. The nose is thin, medium sized and the eyebrows are marked. The eyes are medium in size and do not retain traces of paint or inlaid glass. The hair is divided in the middle of the forehead to the sides. There is a circular bun in the back and a braid separates the lower part of the hair from the top. Throughout the forehead the hair form some ringlets until the ears, which have earrings. Remains of black paint can still be seen in the hair. A simple beaded necklace is preserved in the neck.

Commentary: This stucco mask belongs to a type of masks that have been traditionally dated in the 2nd century AC, following and adapting imperial models[117]. Similarities with some portraits and numismatic representations may suggest a copy of a model of the Empress Faustina II (*Minor*), wife of Marcus Aurelius[118]. The hairstyle fashion of these

[115] See Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 96-99, pl. cxvii.3. Compare Grimm's dating of this example from the British Museum (BM EA 29584) with S. Walker and M. Bierbrier, *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt* (London, 1997), 30-31. The latter gives a dating between 50 BC and 50 AD.

[116] In this respect, it seem of great interest to mention the future work of Asja Müller, whom I thank for her opinions about some of the masks analysed here.

[117] Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 84-5. See also 'Group 19.2' in Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, II, 136-44, specially the examples no. 278 and 281.

[118] Some references of the portrait of Faustina II in Alexandrian coins can be observed in *The Roman Provincial Coinage Online* (University of Oxford) < http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/13629/>, <

stucco masks could be dated more specifically in the second half of the 2nd century AC. Faustina II had an outstanding importance in the Egyptian country since a separated cult for her deified person is known in Oxyrhynchos, related to the civic cult of the imperial family[119].

Publications: Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 26 n. 21, 85 n. 237, pl. xciii.2; *5000 jaar kunst uit Egypte*, no. 132, fig. 44.; Klasens, *Egyptische kunst*, 30 no. 63.; Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, II, 137 no. 275.

12. Stucco mask of a man with inlaid eyes (Fig. 15)

Inventory No.: F 1930/4.3

Measurements: Not known.

Materials: Stucco, glass inlays, paint.

Description: Stucco mask representing a male individual made in a mould. The face is round, with a rounded chin and small mouth with somewhat thin lips. The nose is large and elongated. Only the right ear is preserved, moulded quite simply. The eyes are almond shaped and large, with black and white inlaid glass and a very sharp outline painted in dark blue. It has straight hair, added onto the moulded head. It is brushed forward forming pronounced grooves. Minimal traces of orange paint can be seen on the face and black on the hair.

Commentary: The chronological contextualisation of this type of masks is somewhat complicated. Based on stylistic criteria, the modelling of the face is fairly typical and standardised, with numerous examples mainly in the 1st century BC but still in the 2nd century BC[120]. Some have suggested the existence of a possible workshop for this chronology[121]. Likewise, the hairstyle presents difficulties, as this type of short, straight hair is typical of the Julio-Claudian dynasty but extending to the times of Trajan with some modifications[122]. Perhaps, as a reference we can suggest a more ancient chronology for the examples with thicker, more scrambled or 's shaped' locks. However, this criterion based on the shape of the hairstyle is not very consistent to establish a clear chronology.

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http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/13632/>, < http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/15668/>, < http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/13660/>, < http://rpc.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/coins/14394/> accessed 03.01.2014. The braid is also shown dividing the hair in two halves, same as the bun.

[119] J. Rowlandson, *Women & Society in Greek & Romand Egypt: A Sourcebook* (Cambridge, 1998), 44.

[120] Compare 'Group 9.1' and 'Group 9.2' in Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, I, 54. In Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 65-69 and 106-12, one can observe the ambiguous criteria to classify the masks in the 1st or first half of the 2nd century BC.

[121] Root, *Faces of Immortality*, 40. The mask Kelsey Museum 88242, with a proposed chronology in times of Trajan, is compared to our example referred to the existence of a workshop.

[122] Compare with the previous example no. 7.

Publications: Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 73 n. 120, pl. xx.1; Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, II, 47 no. 79.

13. Mask of a man with wavy hair (Fig. 16)

Inventory No.: F 1931/4.1

Measurements: Not known.

Materials: Stucco, glass inlays, paint.

Description: This mask made of moulded stucco retains a fragment of the chest. The head is erect as an 'awakened Osiris'. The face is oval shaped, with thin chin, small mouth and serious expression. The nose is elongated and small. The eyes are medium sized, almond shaped with black and white inlaid glass inside. The left eye has lost the black glass belonging to the pupil, which was embedded in the white one. Some black paint indicates the eye profiling. The ears are medium sized. The hair is wavy with large grooves towards the forehead, and was subsequently applied to the moulded face. It has some black paint on it. A headscarf is represented somewhat behind the line of the ears to shape the coffin. It is decorated with lines and two bands of *uraei* with solar disks, in reddish paint. On the chest there is a design of a golden necklace with two stripes of pink triangles and white flowers on the top of it.

Commentary: Grimm has dated this mask along with others from Middle Egypt with similar facial features and hairstyles at the beginning of the 2nd century AD. More precisely, it may belong to Trajan times as a wavy variation of the straight hair fashion[123]. This mask might be contemporary to the previous example no. 7. In this case the mask would not be included within the 'conservative' group, but inside a much more 'progressive' group because of its characteristics, closer to the Graeco-Roman artistic system[124], implying the owner's willingness to be identified with the Roman aesthetic.

Publication: Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 80 n. 192, pl. xxxiv.1.

[123] Another example would be the mask E 20201 from the Louvre Museum in Aubert and Cortopassi, *Portraits Funéraires de l'Égypte romaine.* I, 113. In Vasques, *Crenças Funerárias e Identidade Cultural no Egito Romano*, II, 50-4, there are some masks of the same period in the 'group 9.2'.

[124] Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 102-4.

Conclusions

The study and cataloguing of these masks preserved in the various museums and Egyptological collections around the world is useful for a better understanding of the society of the Graeco-Roman Egypt.

After this analysis of the specimens preserved in the Rijksmuseum Oudheden in Leiden, it becomes clear that there are several artistic trends when representing the traits of the different individuals. Making these masks depends largely on the techniques used in each period and geographical area, in addition to the stylistic fashions of the moment. While it is generally true that the masks of these periods were almost entirely made from predefined moulds, it is noteworthy a tendency towards the individualisation of certain details.

Likewise, there is a more 'Egyptian', conservative or archaic trend that persists longer in Upper Egypt because of its remoteness from the Graeco-Roman sphere centred in the Delta. This trend coexists for centuries with a more 'progressive' one, mainly the in the Delta and subsequently in cemeteries from the Fayum area and Middle Egypt[125] such as Tuna el-Gebel. The latter shows greater naturalism in the face modelling, which is characteristic of the aforementioned Graeco-Roman system of artistic representation.

Human representation in these funerary portraits is a reflection of the individual's identity, from a perspective of desire of existence in the afterlife, which increasingly moves to the persistence of the image of oneself in the memory of the living. The culture and the philosophy that came from the Western world shifted the idealism of this human representation to the search for greater realism.

Cultural symbiosis is evident in the adoption of the Egyptian cultural and religious customs by Greek and Roman elites. Conversely, with the arrival of the Roman Empire to the Egyptian country, a new tendency towards the imitation of models and the imperial fashion was disseminated among the old elites. The old Hellenistic and Egyptian elites, who had been largely blended in Ptolemaic times thanks to the legislation and the Greek education of the Egyptian wealthy members, lost their former status. This was due to the implementation of a new system that changed the primacy of the individual's ethnicity and its occupation by the concept of citizenship, the mainstay of the new social status[126].

Therefore, the kind of style chosen for the representation of the individual in the mask, and other elements like the clothes and the hairstyle – local or foreign – are decisions that reflect aspects

[125] Grimm, *Die Römischen Mumienmasken aus Ägypten*, 110-8.

[126] A highly recommended reading about the notions of ethnicity, citizenship, status and the change experimented in these centuries is C. Fischer-Bovet, 'Ethnic Identity and Status: Comparing Ptolemaic and Early Roman Egypt' in H. Ziche (ed.), *Identity and Identification in Antiquity* (Published soon, Cambridge).

of the identity of the deceased, like the ethnicity. The copy of Roman models and attributes – such as objects no. 6, 9 and 11, for example – might be caused perhaps as a reaction to the loss of legal significance of the latter in Roman times.

However, some factors such as local traditions, along with the lack of knowledge of the provenance of many of the masks that are listed in different museums and their state of conservation, cause the need for certain corpus to be reviewed in conjunction with further research on the matter.

It can thereby be stated that these funerary masks, belonging to high status individuals, are primarily objects that reflects a particular socio-economic reality. The mask as a symbol of the self status against lower social strata is also a vehicle to express the identity of their owners. Within this identity, not only economic and social elements are included, but also cultural, religious, philosophical and ethnical aspects. The latter are also elements of self identification that have a purpose of differentiation from other individuals belonging to the same social stratum.

Hence, these objects, within the material culture, deserve more attention within the study of this era of cultural, political and economic change. Their observation and revision may provide new clues leading to further social and anthropological studies of a dynamic society in the decline of one of the greatest empires of the antiquity.

Abbreviations

AJA – American Journal of Archaeology

Archéo-Nil – Archéo-Nil: Bulletin de la société pour l'étude des cultures prépharaoniques de la vallée du Nil (Paris)

CGC – Catalogue Général des Antiquités Égyptiennes du Musée du Caire

JJP – Journal of Juristic Papyrology (Warsaw: Dept of Papyrology, Warsaw University)

OMRO – Oudheidkundige Mededelingen uit het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden (Leiden, 1907-1999)

RMO – Rijksmuseum van Oudheden

SAOC – Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization (The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago)

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Anexes

Figures

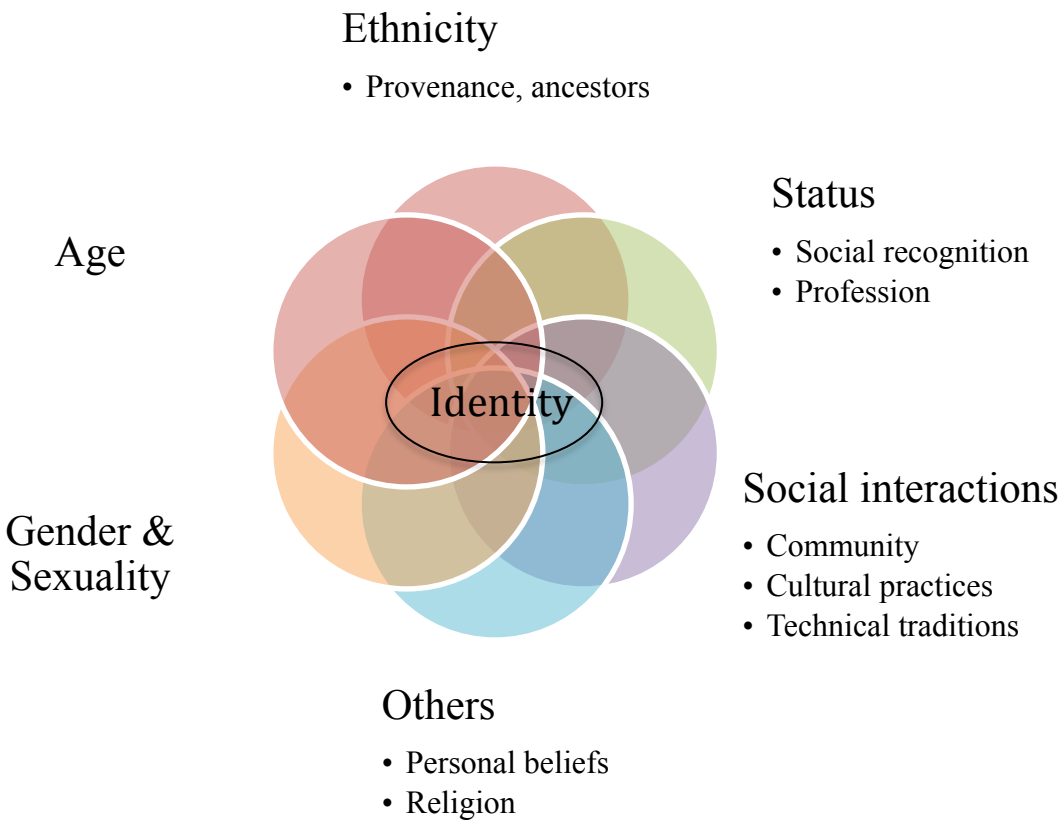

FIG. 1. Graph illustrating the different elements that constitute and shape the identity of an individual (author).

FIG. 2. Mask F 1933/2.1 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

FIG. 3. Mask F 1934/11.5 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

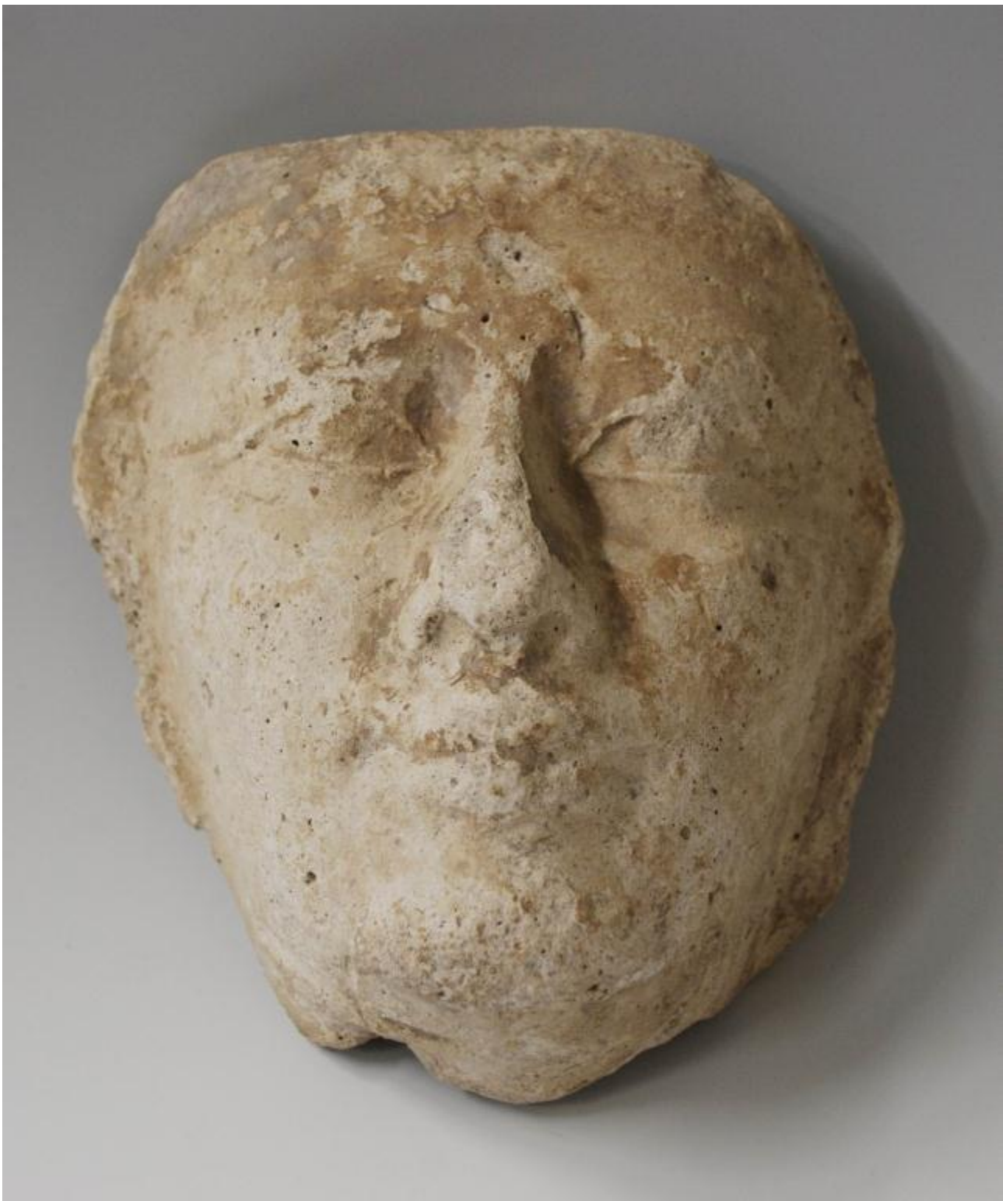

FIG. 4. Mask F 1943/12.2 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

FIG. 5. Mask F 1944/7.1 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

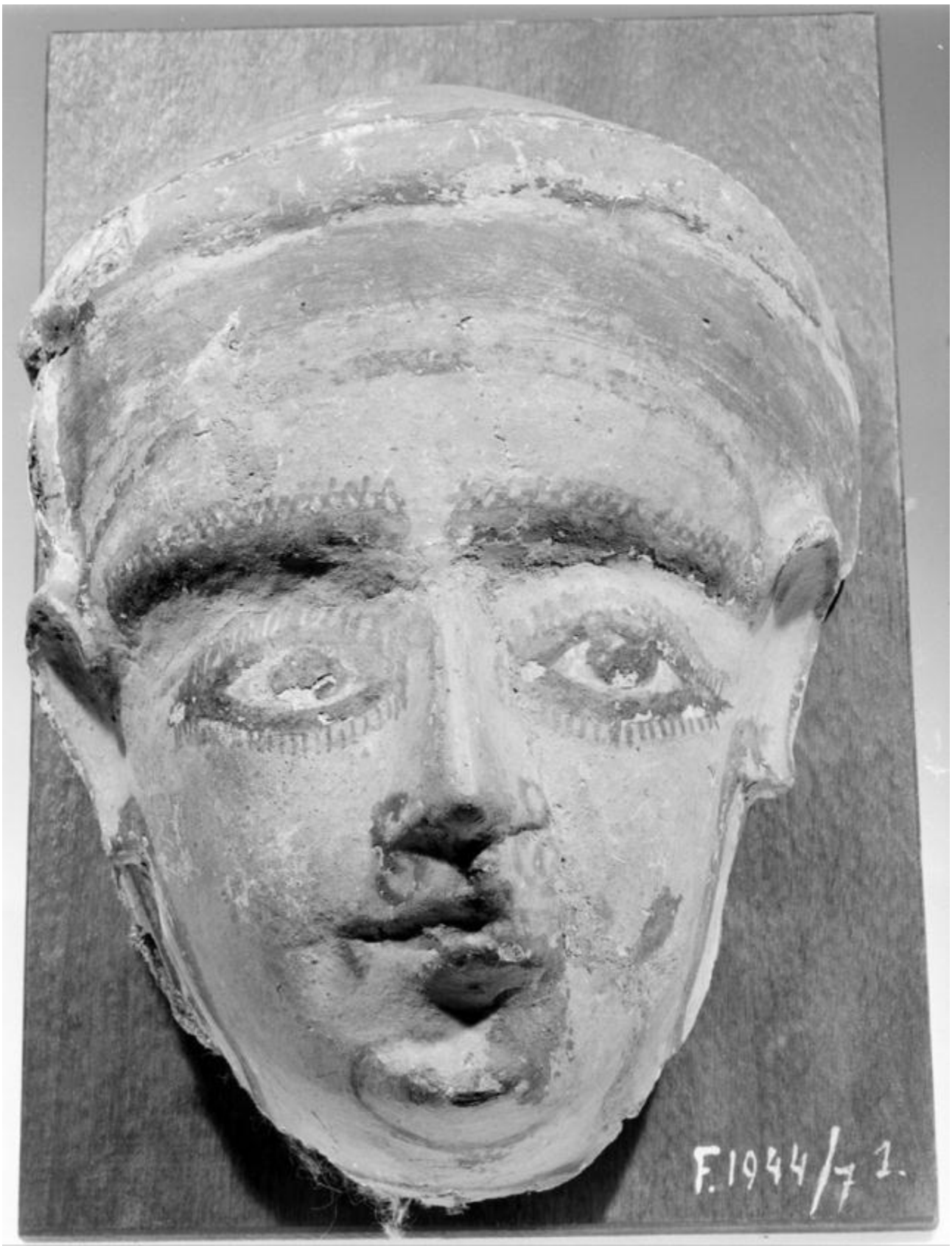

FIG. 6. Old picture of mask F 1944/7.1 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

FIG. 7. Mask F 1980/1.13 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

FIG. 8. Mask F 1982/7.1-a – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

FIG. 9. Mask F 1982/7.1-a (back) – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

FIG. 10. Mask F 1993/1.1 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

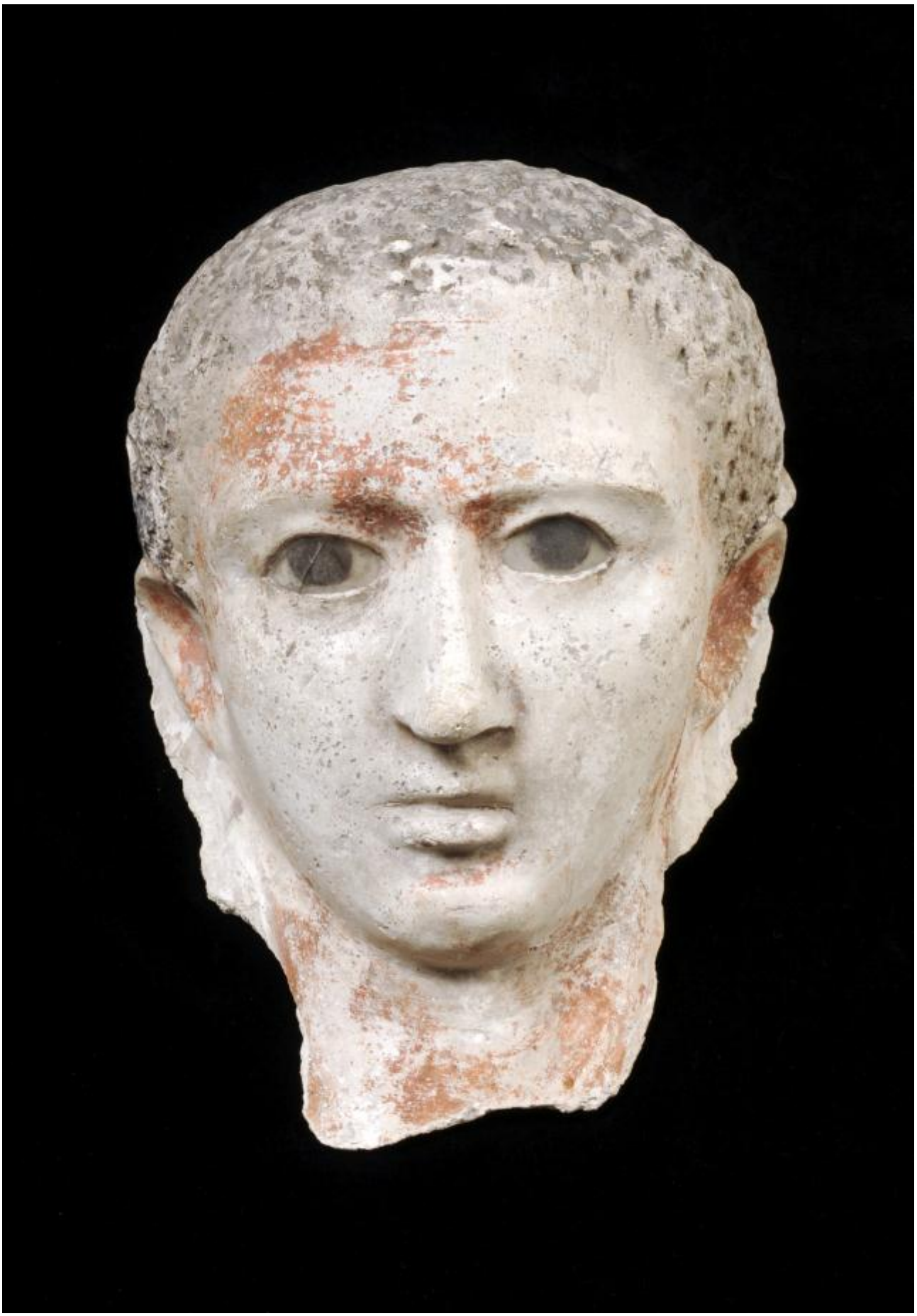

FIG. 11. Mask BA 219 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

FIG. 12. Mask F 1934/11.6 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

FIG. 13. Mask F 1948/2.1 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

FIG. 14. Mask BA 220 – Credits: A. Klasens, Egyptische kunst uit de collectie van het Rijksmuseum van Oudheden te Leiden (Amsterdam, 1962).

FIG. 15. Mask F 1930/4.3 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.

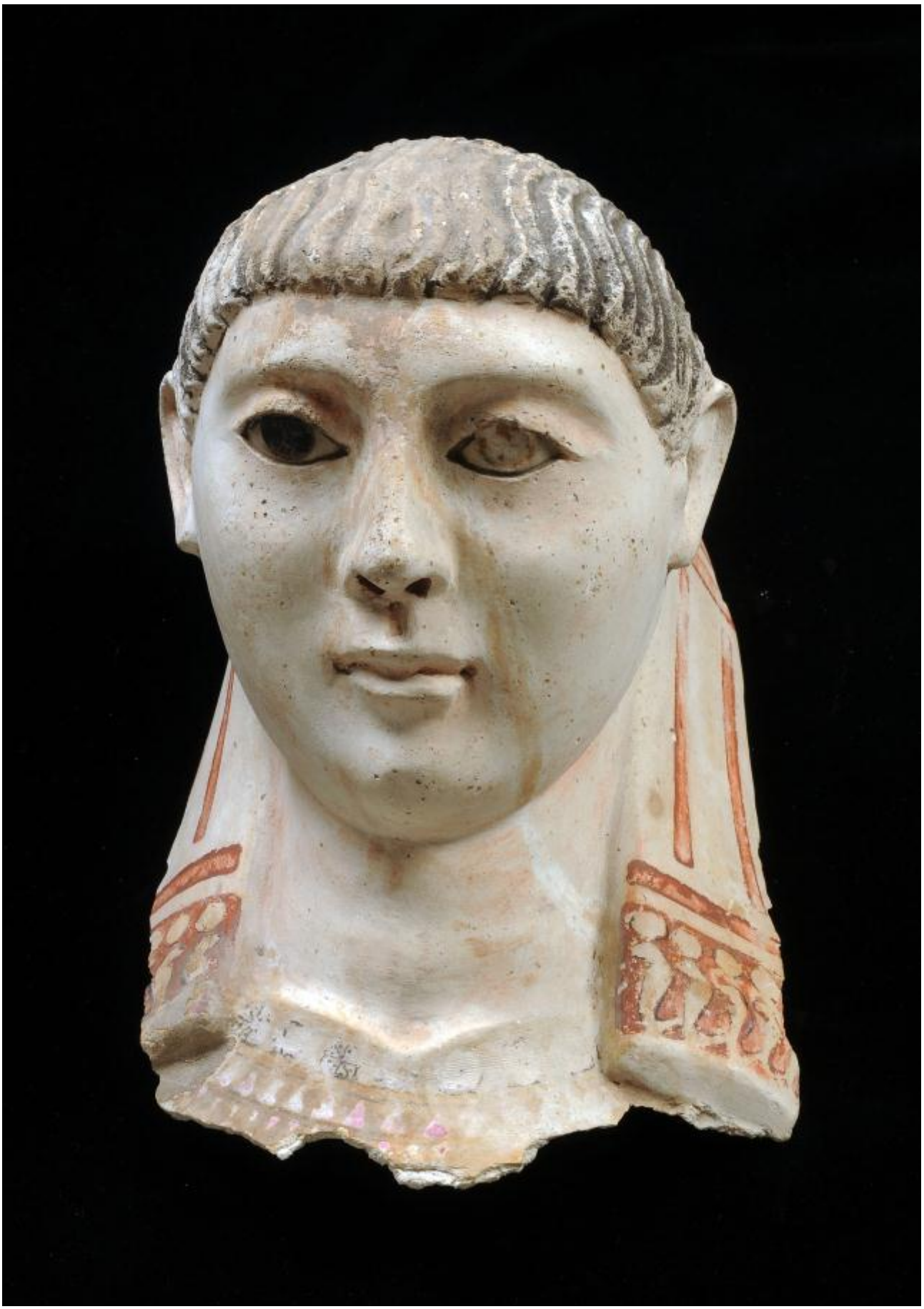

FIG. 16. Mask F 1931/4.1 – Credits: National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden.