

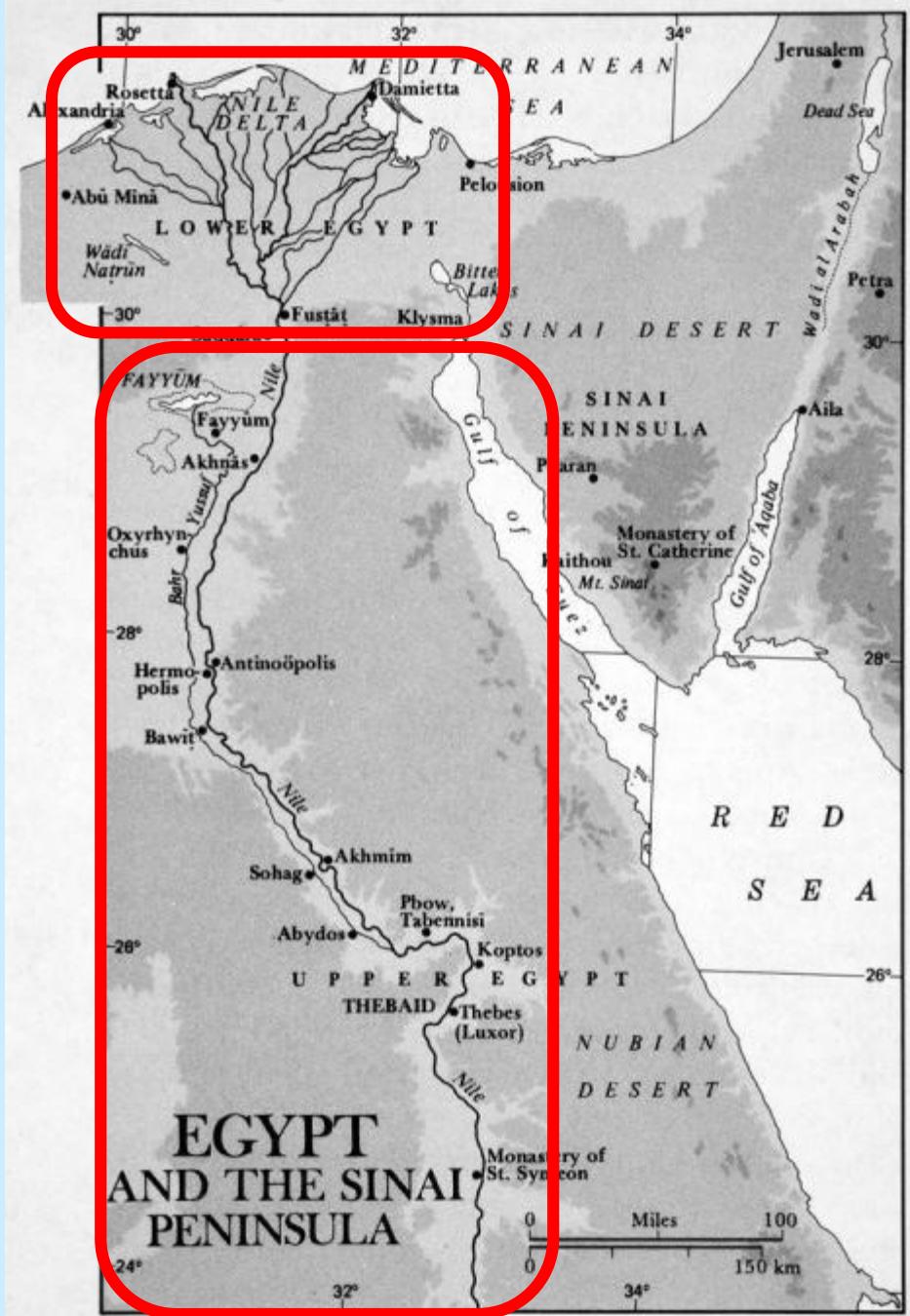
# **BACKGROUND TO ECHOES OF EGYPT**

**Curator: Dr. Colleen Manassa**

**Yale Peabody Museum**

**April 13, 2013-January 5, 2014**

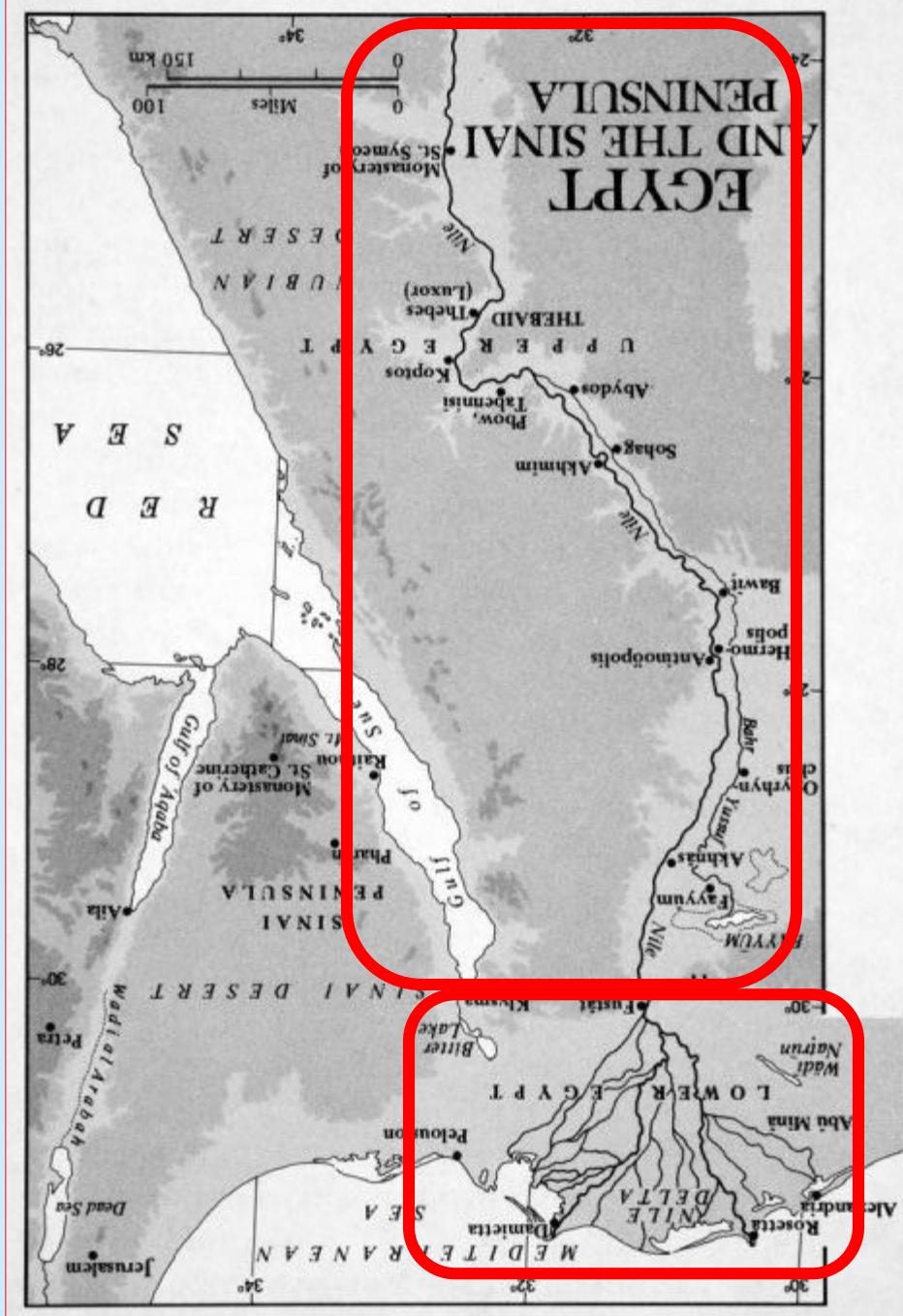
**Slide show prepared by Richard Yanowitz ([www.richardyanowitz.com](http://www.richardyanowitz.com))**



## Lower Egypt

“Black land” = *Nile Valley*  
“Red land” = *desert*

## Upper Egypt



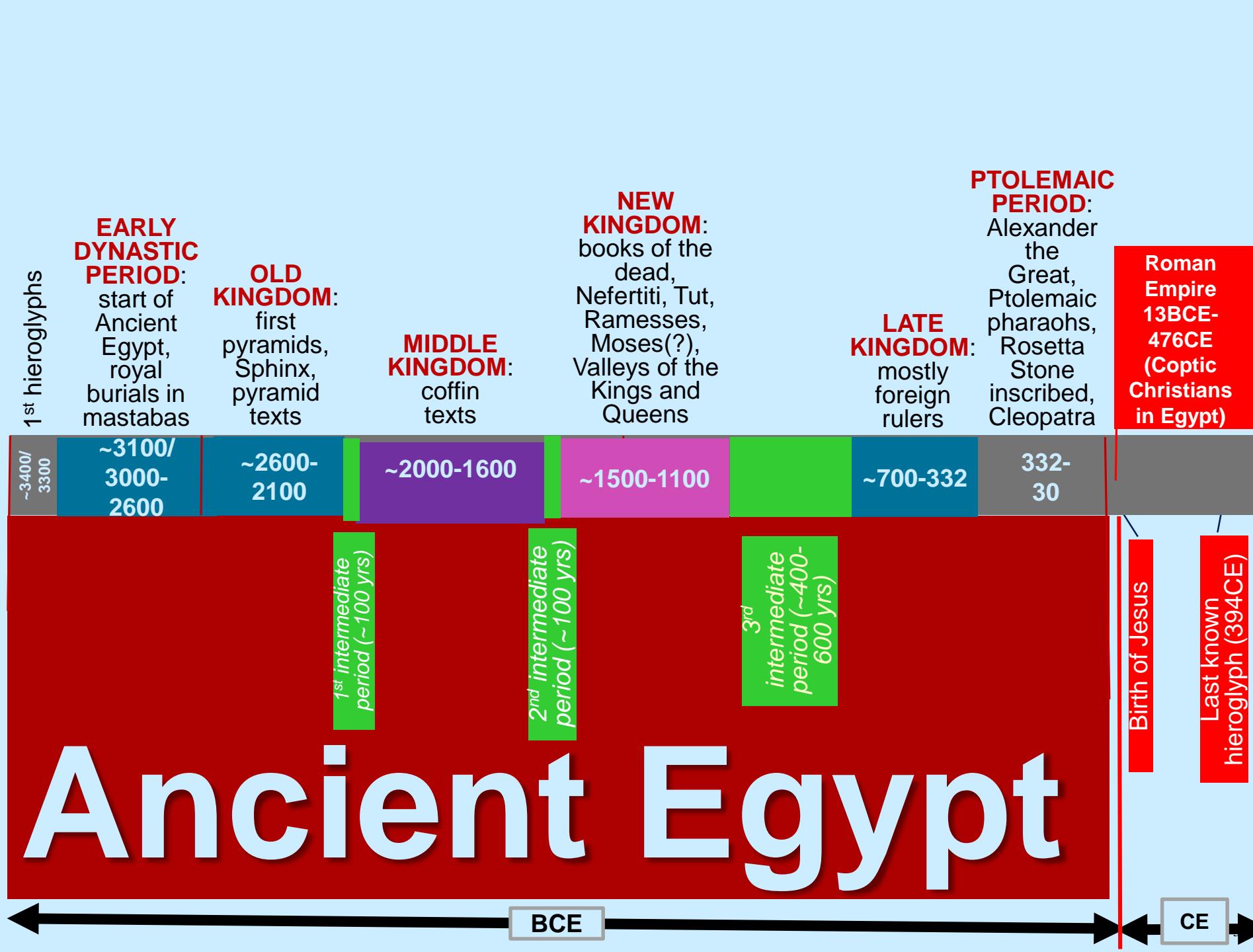
## Upper Egypt

## Lower Egypt

# Historical dating (Western style)

OLD STYLE	NEW STYLE*
BC (Before Christ)	BCE (Before the Common/Christian/Current Era)
AD (Anno Domini: “the year of Our Lord”)	CE (Common/Christian/Current Era)

\*“Common Era” goes back at least to 1615 in Latin (*European Christian vulgaris aerae*) and to 1635 in English (“Vulgar Era”) and 1708 (“Common Era”). Jewish academics introduction “BCE/CE” in the mid-19th century, and the usage has gradually become common in Western academia since about 1980. [Adapted from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common\\_Era](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Era)]

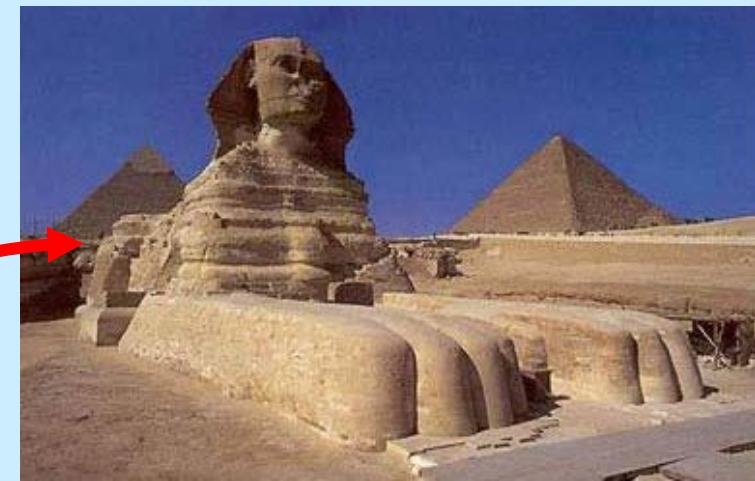


A mastaba (early dynastic)



Step Pyramid of Djoser (Old Kingdom)

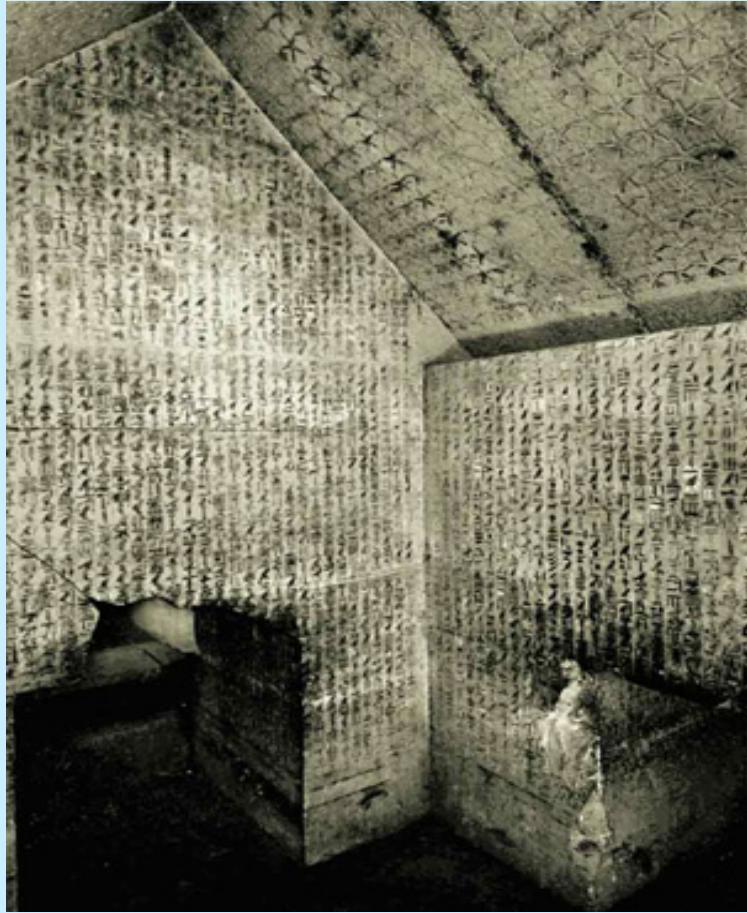
Giza pyramids and Sphinx (Old Kingdom)



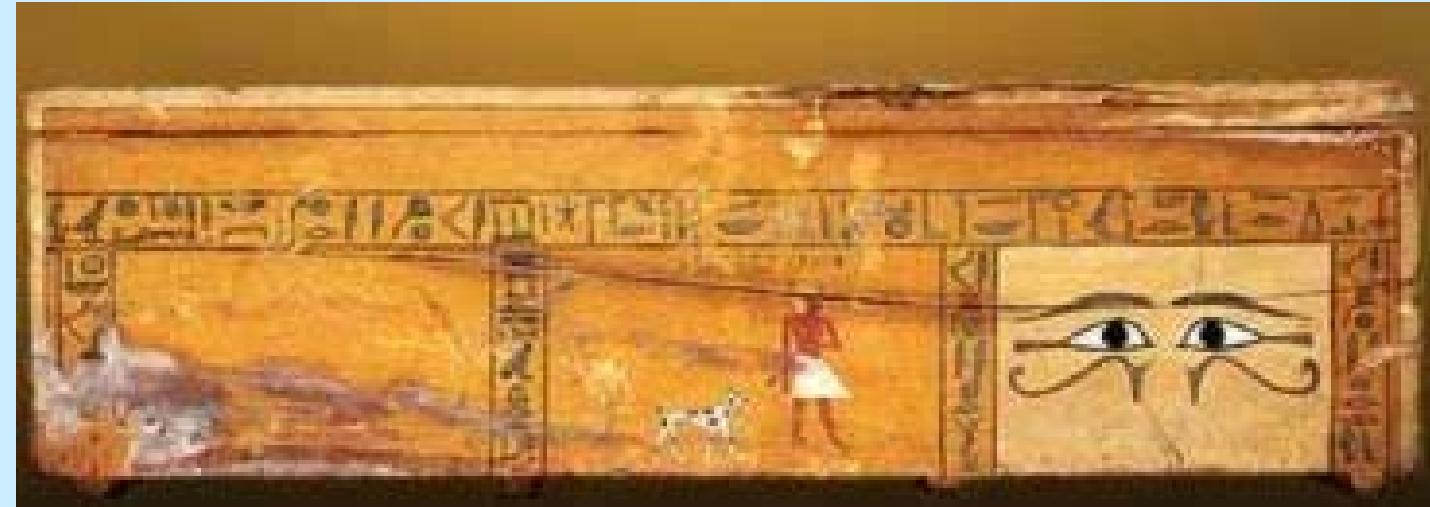
# Valley of the Kings



# First pyramid texts (Old Kingdom, ca. 2345 BCE)

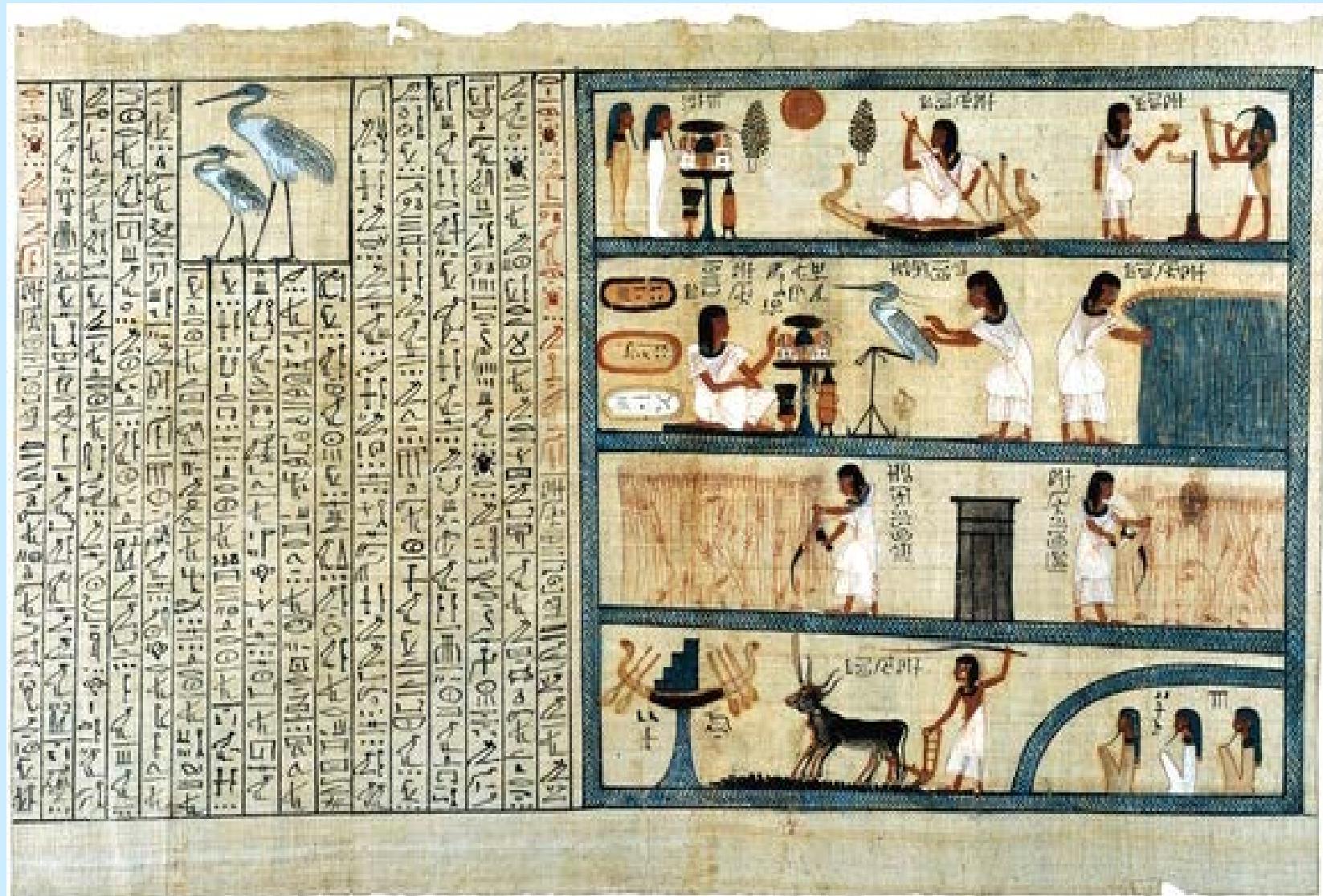


# Coffin texts (Middle Kingdom)

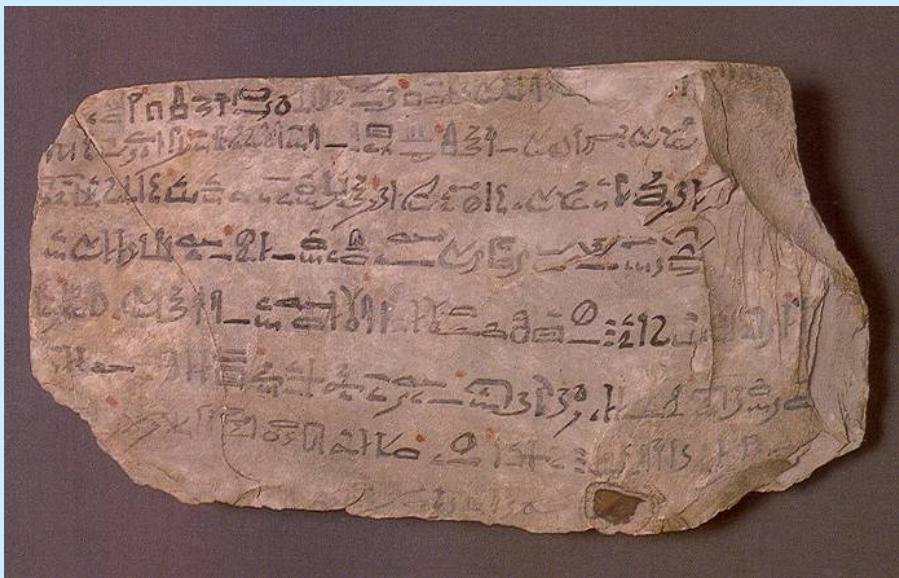


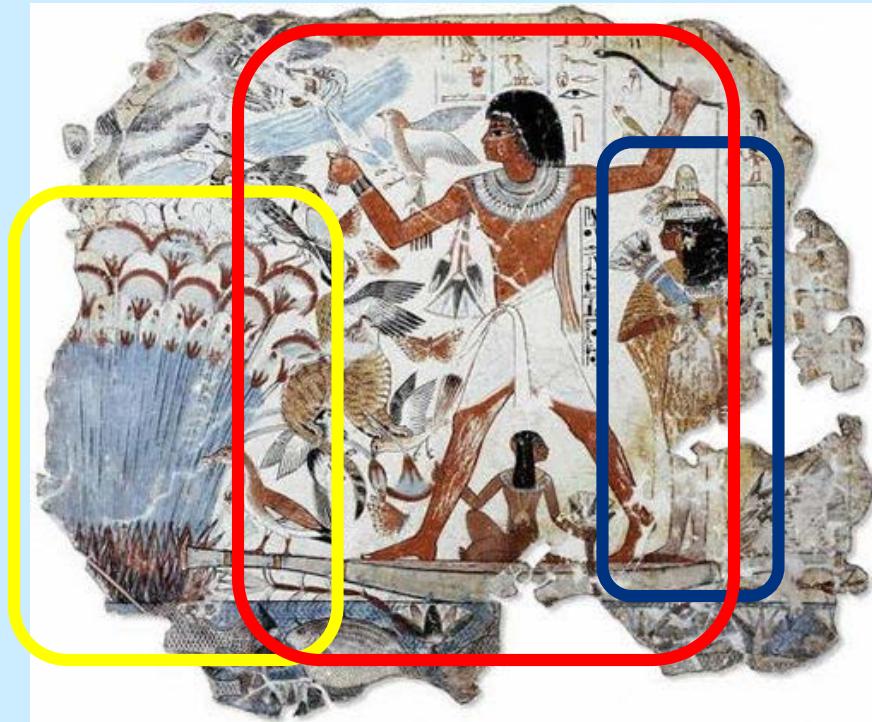
*Photos are from the British Museum web site*

# A “page” from a Book of the Dead (New Kingdom)



# Ostraca





# Animal mummies

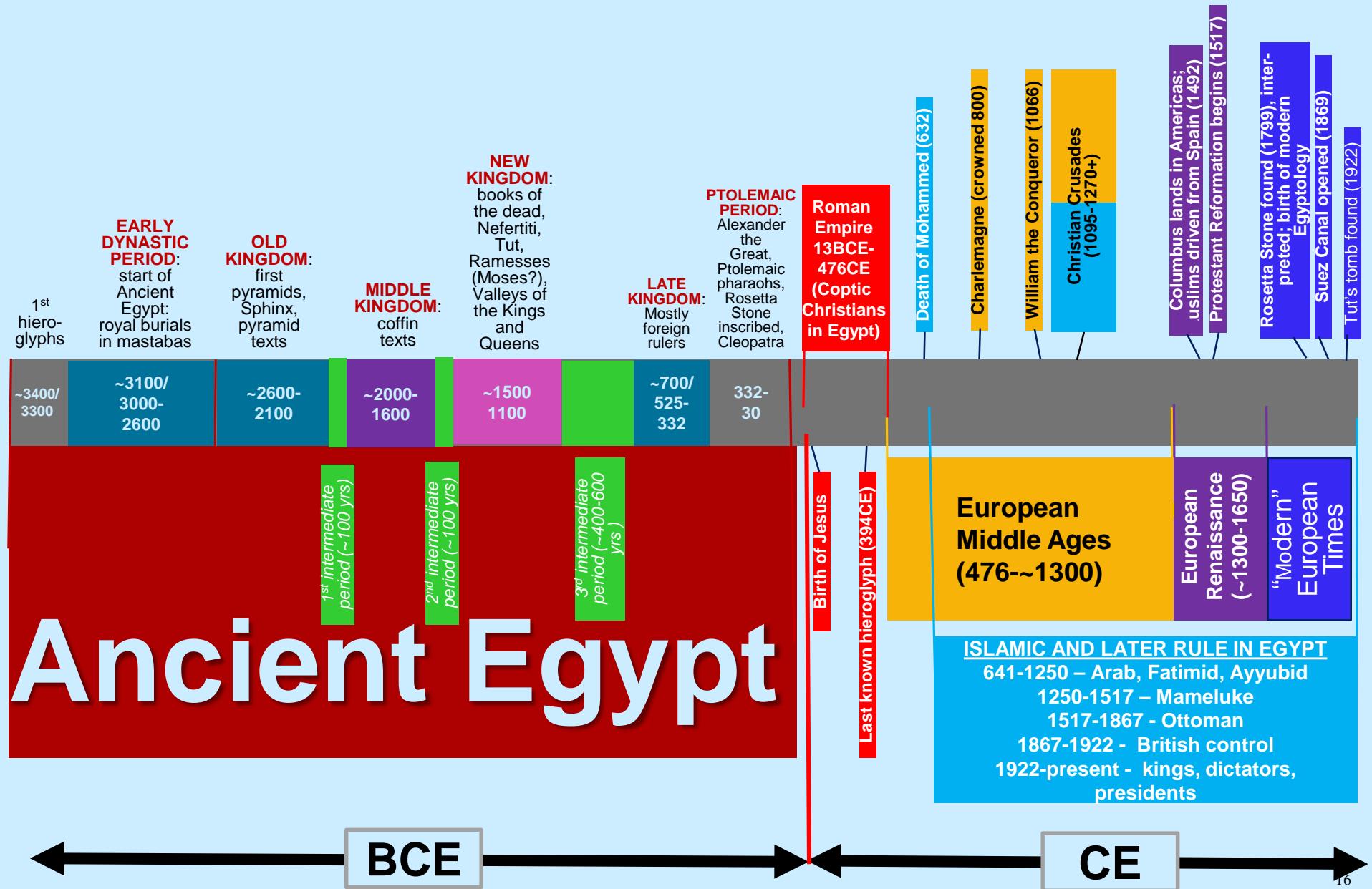




# Three broad phases of responses to Egypt

- 1) Ancient (until 400 CE; includes “Egyptomania” among ancient Egyptians and other ancient societies)
- 2) Loss of knowledge of hieroglyphs (400-1822 CE)
- 3) Modern Egyptology (1822-present)

# “Echoes of Egypt”

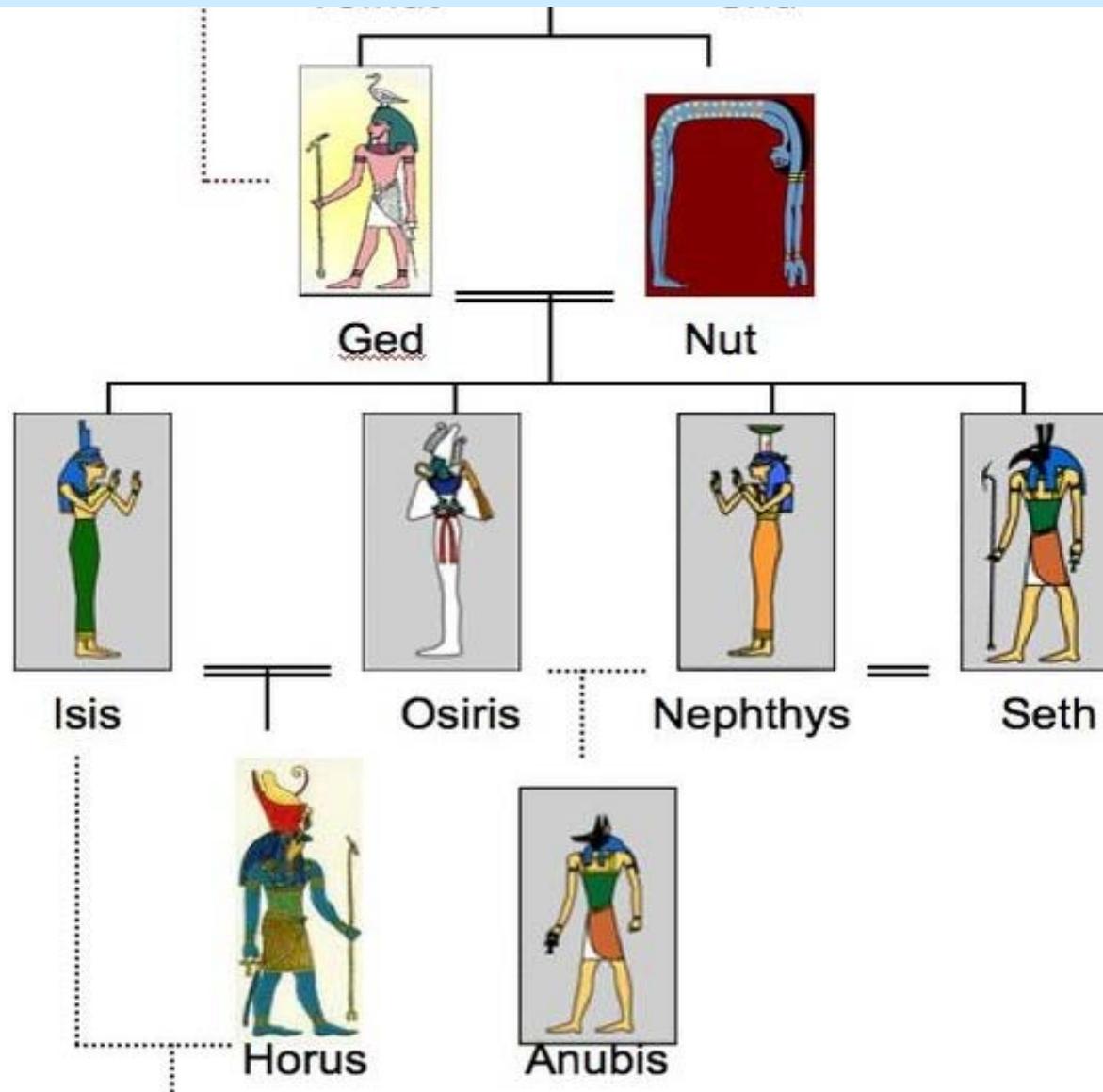


# Early Christianity

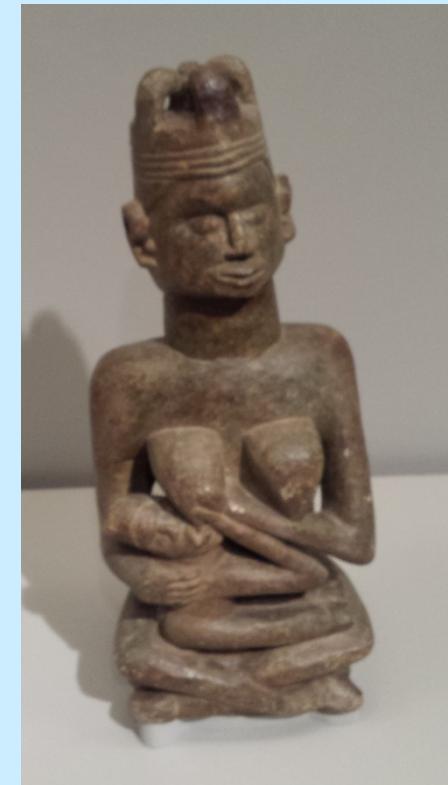
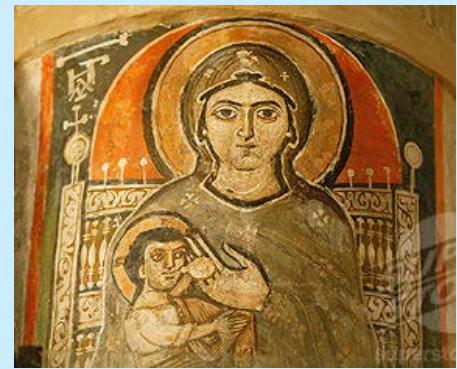
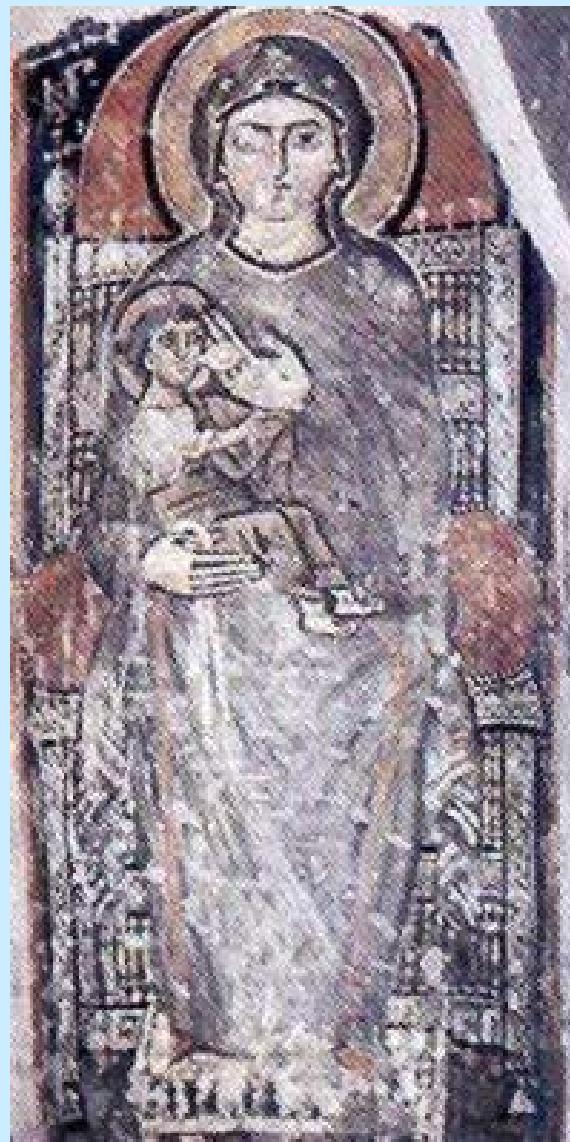
- Resemblances between Isis and the Virgin Mary were common.
- The Flight into Egypt was taken to point to Egypt (perhaps Isis) as the source of Jesus's healing powers.
- Easter today in some parts of Sicily: Thousands of Sicilians line the streets awaiting the arrival of the Virgin Mary "in search" of her son.

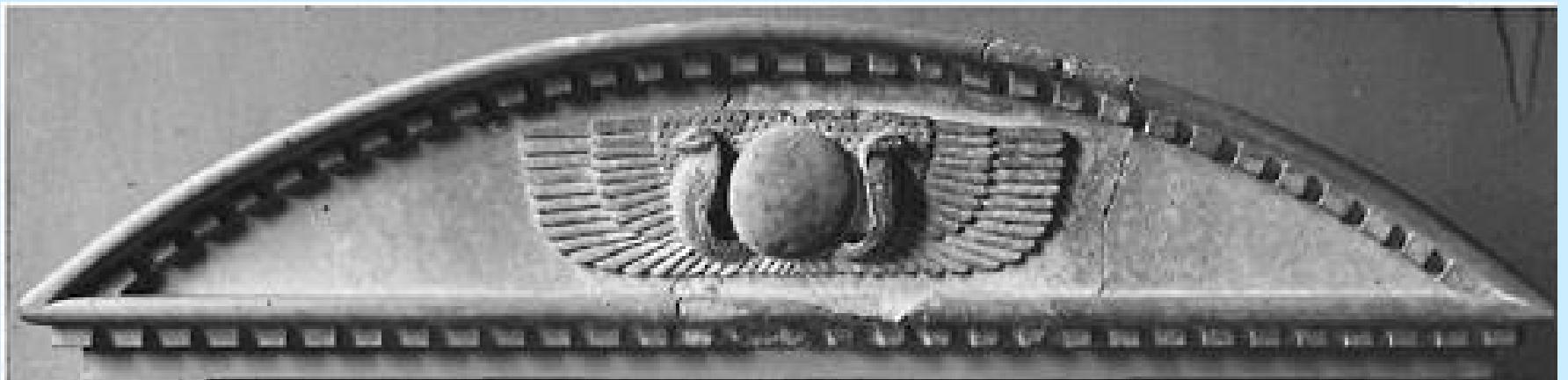
*1<sup>st</sup> two bullets from James Stevens Curl, The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West, London, 2005; Sicily information from exhibit visitor and <http://www.thethinkingtraveller.com/thinksicily/guide-to-sicily/all-things-sicilian/easter-in-sicily.aspx>.*

# Genealogy of some Egyptian gods



# Isis and Mary (+?) nursing their sons





## Segmental pediment with winged globe, uræi, and dentils

- Under possibly suspicious circumstances, emperor Hadrian's lover, Antinoüs (c. 110–130), drowned in the Nile.
- Hadrian promoted a cult that identified Antinoüs with Osiris, which prompted a new wave of Roman Egyptomania.

# Telamones: architectural supporting pillars



Antinoüs (at  
Hadrian's  
Villa, 2<sup>nd</sup>  
century CE)



# Colossus of Ramesses II





Raphael, Leo X's “dining room” (begun 1514)

This Paris fountain (a replacement of the 1844 original) transforms Antinoüs into an Egyptian water-bearer by converting the clenched cylinders into the handles of pitchers from which water flows.



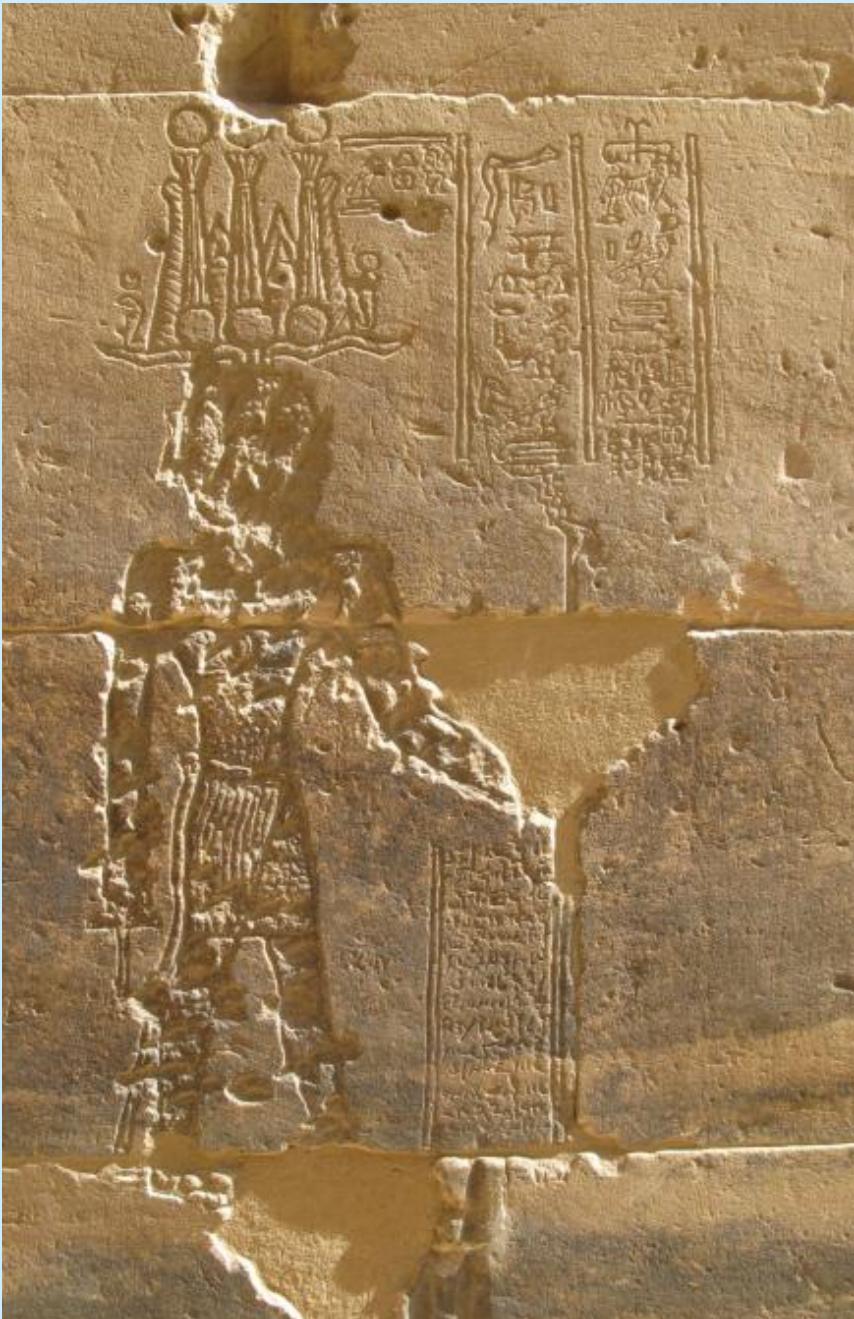
Artemis,  
ca. 300  
BCE



16<sup>th</sup>-century  
(?) Artemis  
at Hadrian's  
Villa, with  
many  
breasts with  
nipples  
spouting  
water

In 1513, a huge 2<sup>nd</sup>-century Roman statue of the god of the Nile (“Father Nile”) was unearthed near Santa Maria Sopra Minerva in Rome (statue is now in the Vatican).





Last datable  
hieroglyphic  
inscription:  
394 CE



- In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, two Latin writers identified the Pyramids of Giza as the granaries of Joseph.
- In 1335, a German pilgrim reported that the pyramids were solid and could not have been storage areas, but this did not stop the tradition.
- Within the next century, however, the granaries notion yielded to frequent understanding that the pyramids had been tombs.

# Islam arrives in Egypt

- An Islamic army captures Egypt 641CE.
- The Quran urges Muslims to study ancient civilizations such as Egypt.

Moslem writers asserted numerous links between Egypt and Arabs, including

- Ismael, the supposed Father of the Arabs, as the son of Abraham and his Egyptian wife, Hajar
- The Arabic name for Egypt supposedly coming from the name of Noah's son, Misr (also known as “Cham” or “Ham”)
- The marriage of Mohammed to an Egyptian
- 30 Qur'anic references to Egypt

- Encountering mummies in ~641, Muslim conquerors of Egypt thought the dark surface on them was bitumen—*Mummiya* in Arabic.
- Arabs and then medieval (and later) Europeans sought powdered “mummy” or “mummia” for medication.



*18<sup>th</sup> century pharmacy vial*

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mummia>)

*From Okasha El-Daly, “Ancient Egypt in Medieval Arabic Writings,” in Ucko and Champion, eds., The Wisdom of Ancient Egypt, London, 2003; Christine Hobson, World of the Pharaohs, Thames and Hudson, 1990*

# A fictitious London mummy pill factory (1842)



ENGLISH MUMMY-PILL FACTORY.

# A Muslim account of ancient Egyptian magic

- A 10<sup>th</sup>-century scholar, Al-Mas‘udi tells the story of an ancient Egyptian queen who built temples with magic tools and pictures of potential enemies.
- An invading army could later be subjected to wounding via her damaging their pictures.

# Medieval Islam and ancient Egyptian sciences

- Muslims came to believe that hieroglyphs contained mystical secrets.
- Books referred to hieroglyphs as “the Egyptian matter,” *al-Keme* (from Egyptian *Kemet*—”Black Land”), which may be the source for the word “alchemy.”
- Medieval Arab scholars were interested in Egyptian sciences, especially alchemy.

# Medieval Europe and ancient Egyptian sciences

Ancient Egyptians were believed to have been...

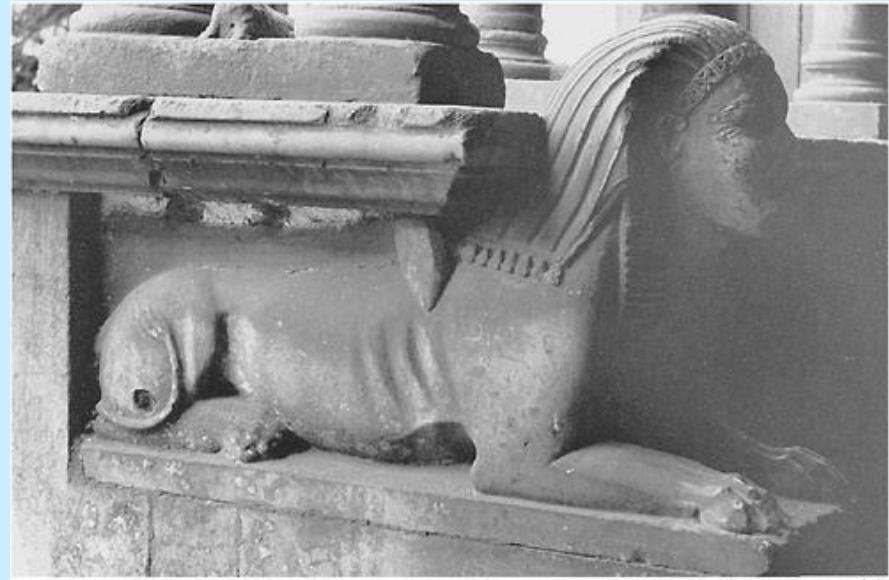
- masters of astronomy...
- and hence of astrology...
- which in turn was the root of magic...
- which was connected with alchemy...
- which was associated with the power of hieroglyphs.

## A few other Medieval European connections

- Most beliefs about ancient Egypt stemmed from the Old Testament.
- Because of his name, Claudius Ptolemy (the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE source of later thinking about geocentrism) was assumed to have been an Egyptian pharaoh in the Ptolemaic period.
- Numerous Arabic-to-Latin translations were made in the 10-13<sup>th</sup> centuries.

# Cosmati sphinxes (13<sup>th</sup> century)

- Probably the first example of a male-female sphinx couple
- Probably not identified with Egypt but with the past in general, antique Roman architecture and sculpture in particular



(a)



(b)

# Horapollon's *Hieroglyphica*

- 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup>...or 11<sup>th</sup>... century CE Greek text, lost and then rediscovered on a Greek island in 1419
- Contains “explanations” of 189 hieroglyphs
- Single largest influence on Renaissance approach to hieroglyphs

# The ouroboros

“When they wish to depict the Universe, they draw a serpent devouring its own tail... And, as each year it sheds its skin it [represents] old age. But as each season of the year returns successively, it grows young again.”



# Syncretism: Thoth/Hermes

Among other things, these gods:

- Gave names to objects
- Invented the alphabet
- Became fused into an ancient Egyptian, Hermes Trismegistus (“Hermes the thrice-great”—king, philosopher, prophet), who was believed to have written a series of works full of magical secrets (collectively called the “corpus hermetica”)

*NOTE: Some coffin texts refer to a “divine book of Thoth.”*

- Early Christian writers thought Hermes was a contemporary of Moses.
- As the centuries passed, the Hermetica was thought to be the oldest Egyptian writing.
- In medieval Europe, Hermes as “thrice-great” sometimes became confused with a legend about a Mercury who wrote a book on the three-part Christian Trinity.
- In the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, Isaac Newton wrote a commentary on a Hermetic alchemical work.

# Renaissance humanism and antiquity

- For knowledge about Egypt, Renaissance scholars commonly turned to ancient Roman remains and texts in Greek and Latin.
- Renaissance thinkers often sought to reconcile “pagan” ideas (especially Greek, Roman, Egyptian) with Christian thought. This included (a) some tendency to look for a universal history that united all cultures and (b) a quest for anticipations of Christianity in pre-Christian writings and art.

# Renaissance Italian ancestor worship...

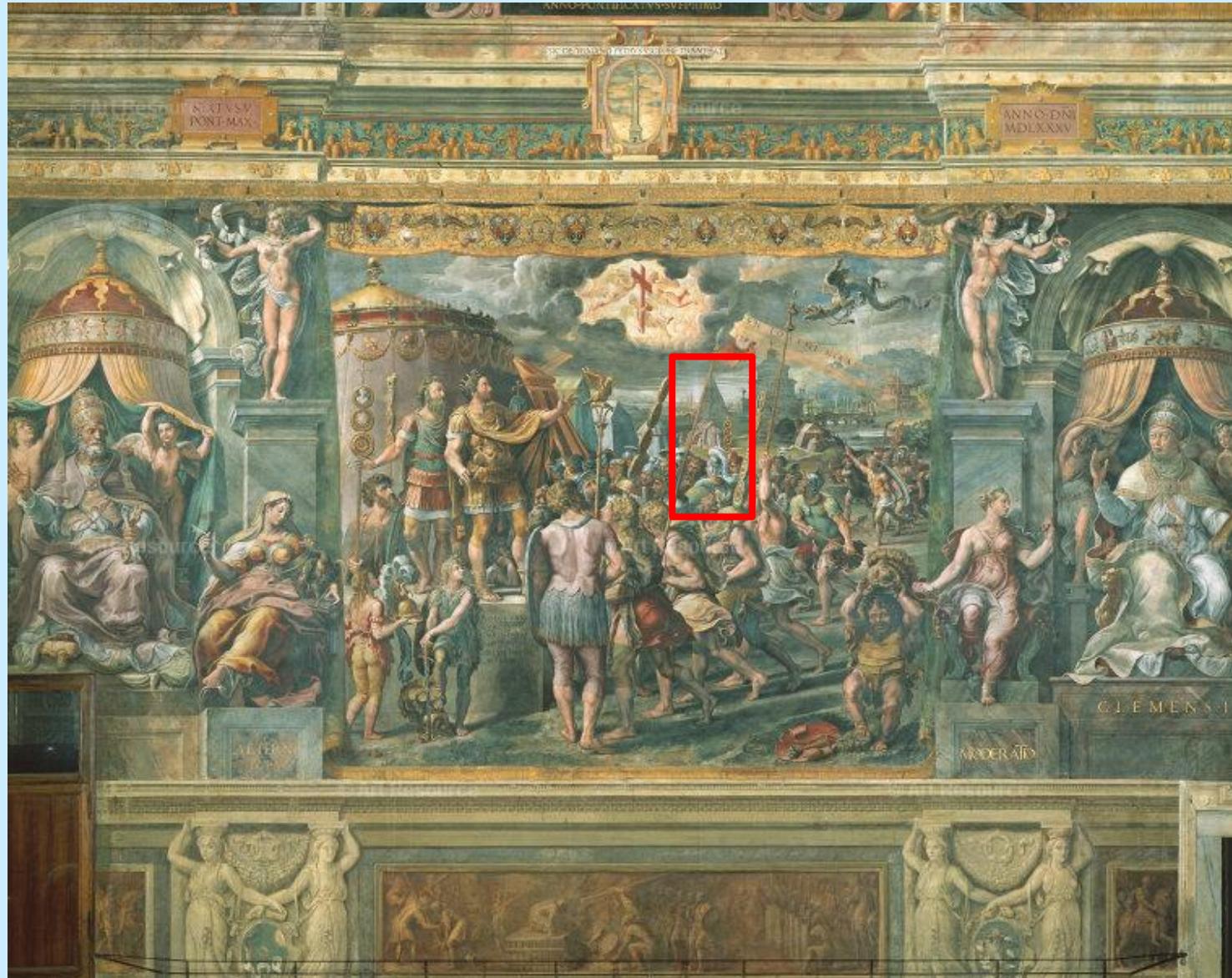
- A few popes sought to trace their family roots back to ancient Egyptian gods.
- A Vatican ceiling commissioned by Rodrigo Borgia, Pope Alexander VI (1492-1503), includes several ancient Egyptian references.



# Renaissance papal modification to an obelisk top



# School of Raphael, *The Vision of Constantine* (~1520)



Humanist interest in Hermetic thought reflected expectations of a continuity between ancient and Christian thought.

*Floor of Siena Cathedral at west end of the nave (1480s): Hermes Trismegistus and followers (note winged sphinxes supporting the inscription panel at lower right)*





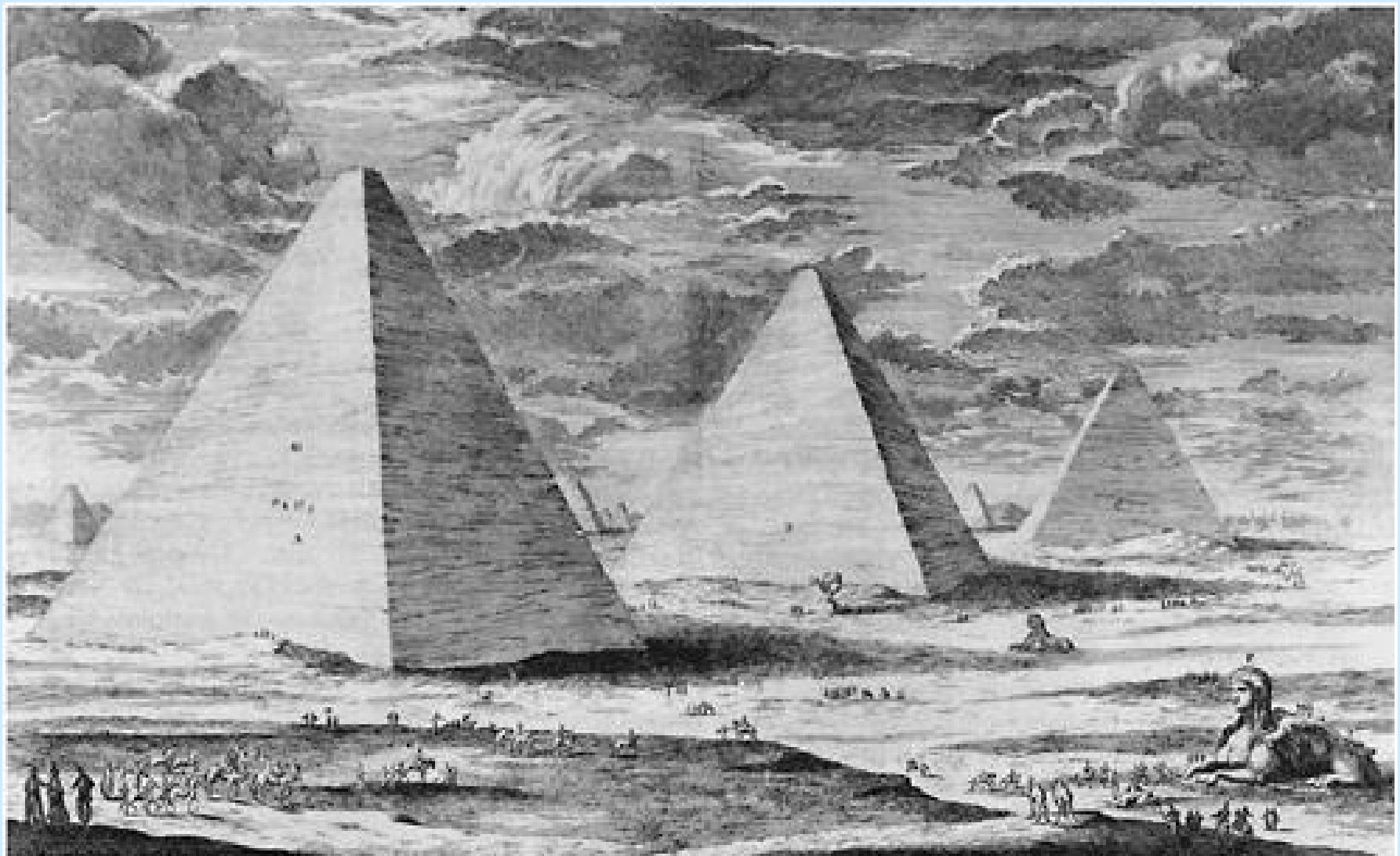
## Athanasius Kircher (German Jesuit scholar, 1602-1680)

- Produced a largely accurate Coptic dictionary
- Claimed to have translated hieroglyphs
- Believed that hieroglyphs were a mysterious Hermetic vocabulary of divine knowledge
- Relied in part on Arabic texts

## Giza pyramids and Sphinx (Old Kingdom)



# 1721 image of pyramids and Sphinx



- Isaac Newton and some other late 17<sup>th</sup>-/early 18<sup>th</sup>-century scholars argued for a connection between circular ancient monuments in Egypt and elsewhere (e.g., stone circles like Stonehenge) as ancient depictions of a heliocentric solar system.
- In later 18<sup>th</sup>-century England, there was some belief that Egyptian priests and (supposed) Celtic Druids were linked via similar beliefs and practices.

# Avebury, England



One 18<sup>th</sup>-century English scholar interpreted the stone circle at Avebury as a gigantic snake hieroglyph.

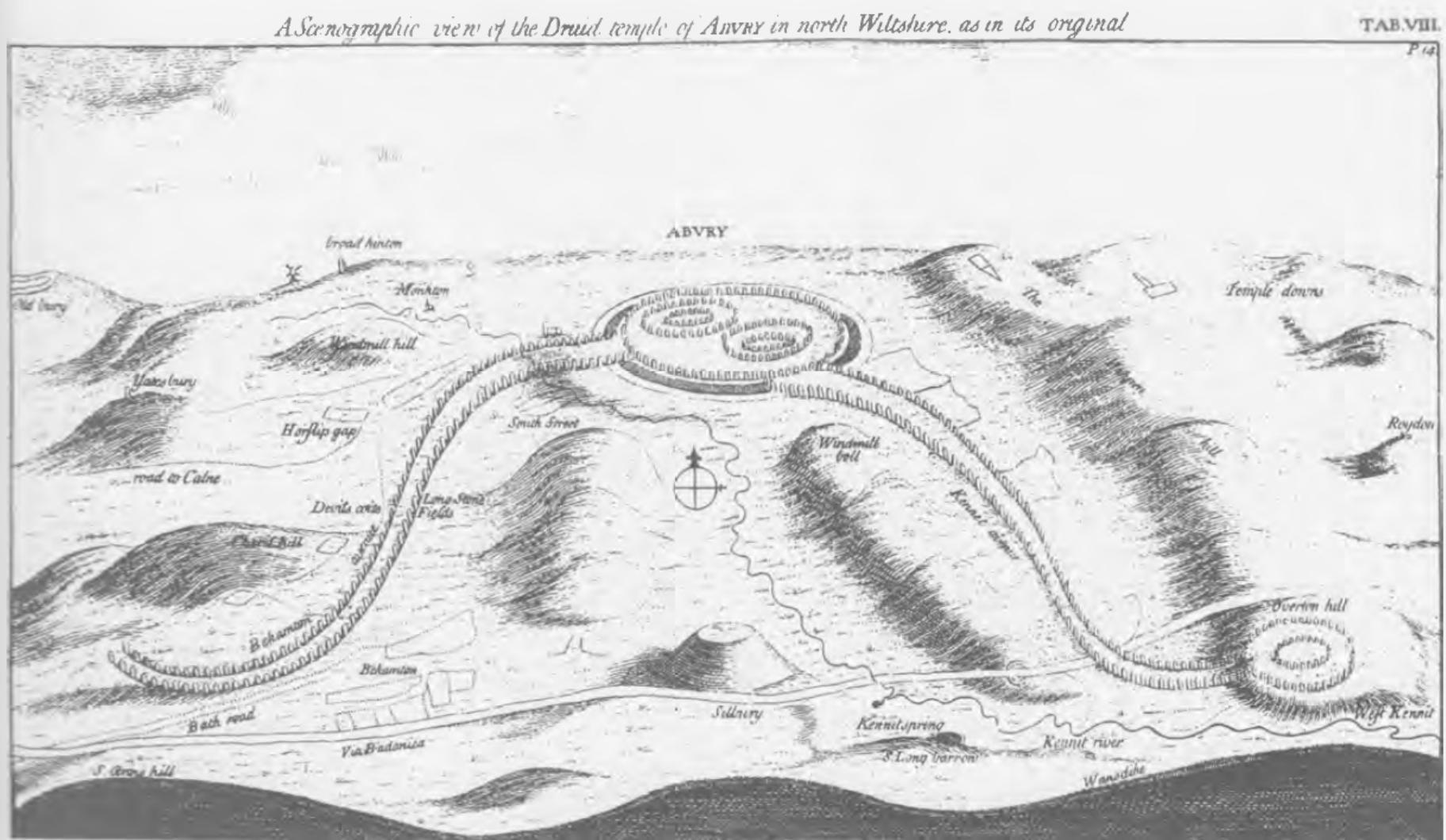


Figure 7:1 William Stukeley's (1743: pi. VII) drawing of a "scenographic view of the druid temple of Avebury in north Wiltshire", in which he interprets the Overton Hill end as the head of a snake, Avebury itself as the snake's coiled body, and the Beckampton Avenue as its tail.

- In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, comparisons began to develop among various pictograph writing worldwide—e.g., in Egypt, China, India and Mexico.



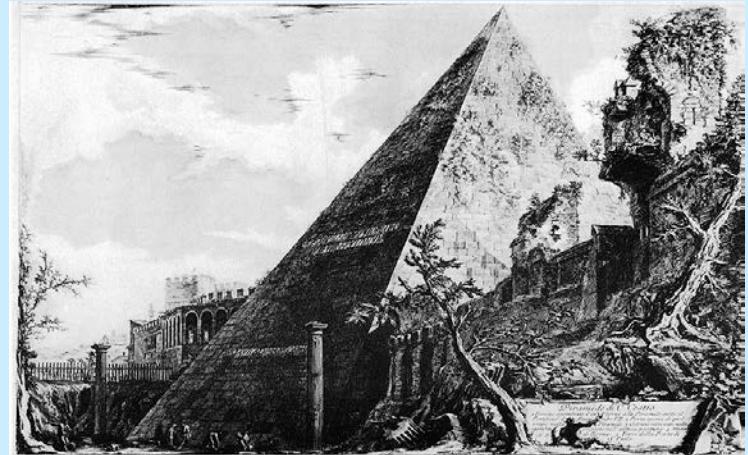
*thus upon Chinese gates.*



*thus on Egyptian monuments.*

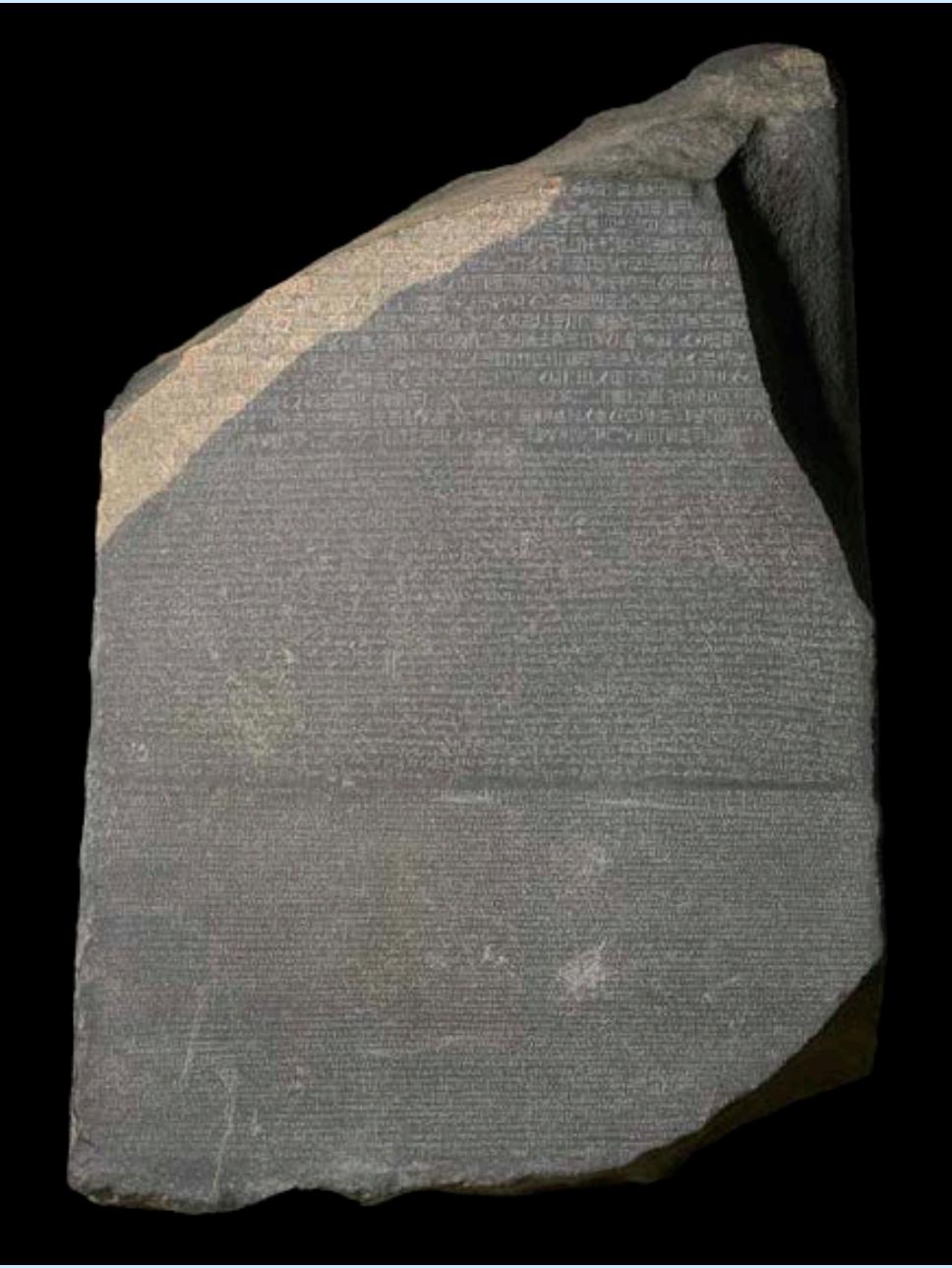
- Some scholars argued that places like China and India were settled by Egyptians.
- In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, advances in linguistic and anthropological studies began to underscore human diversity, not commonality, and ideas of Egypt as the source of many or all cultures receded.

# Giovanni Batista Piranesi (1720-1778)



# The French connection

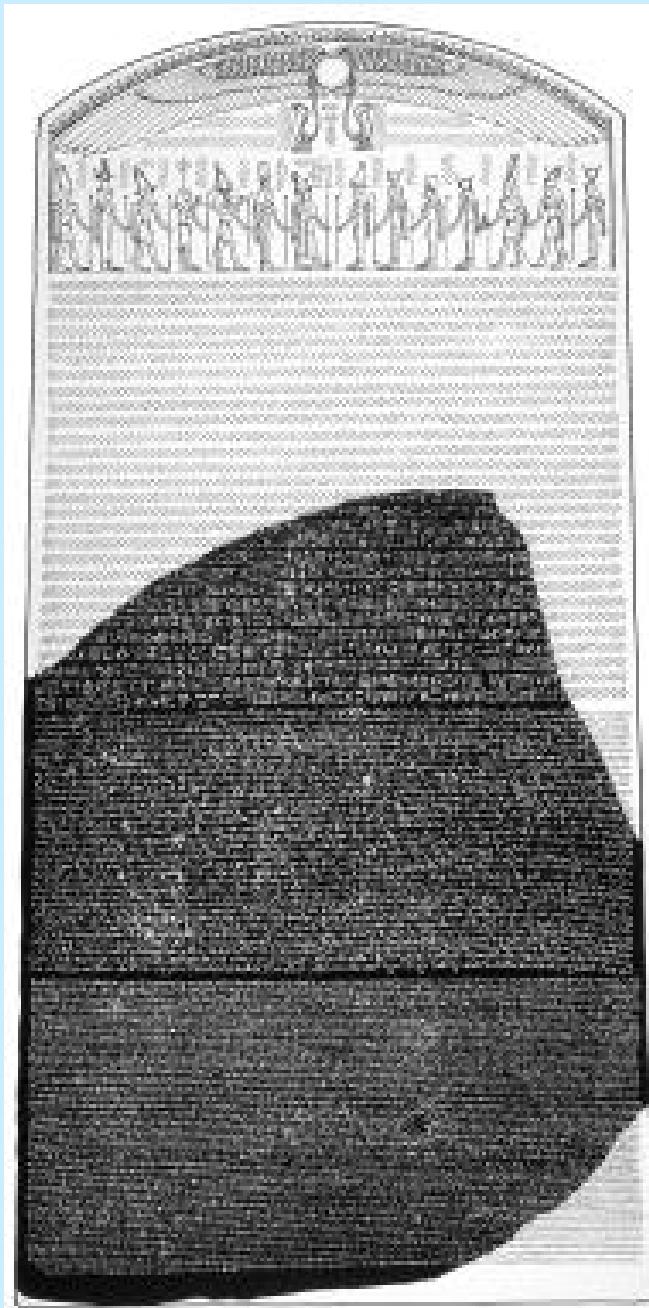
- 1798: Napoleon invades Egypt, brings along 150+ scholars.
- 1799: French soldiers find the Rosetta Stone while excavating an ancient fort wall



# Rosetta Stone

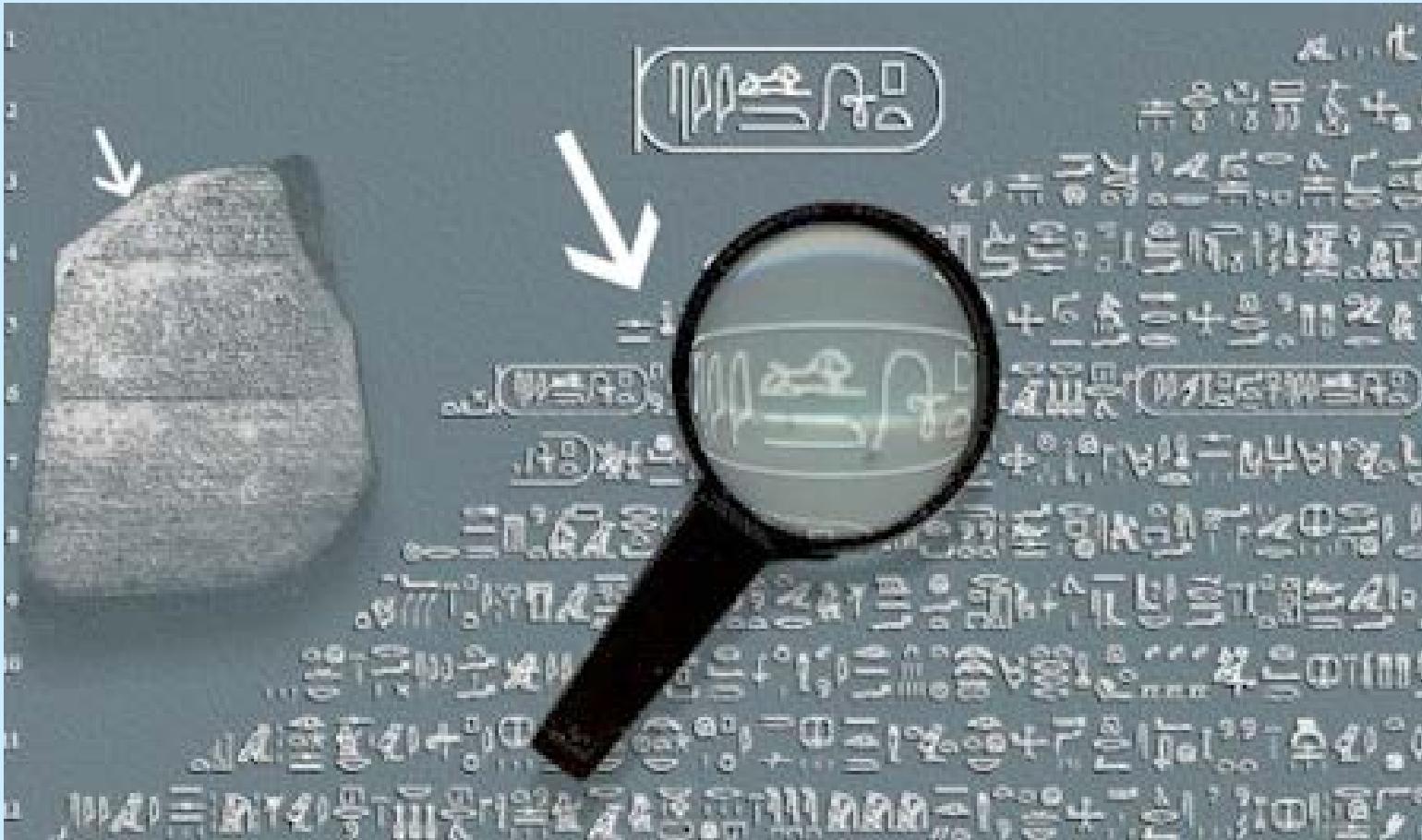
## 196 BCE (granodiorite)

- Upper text:  
Hieroglyphic
- Middle: Demotic
- Lower: Greek



Priestly Memphis decree of “month 2 of the Peret-season, day 18” (27 March 196 BCE) honoring Ptolemy V, now 13 years old and pharaoh since age 5

- English polymath Thomas Young: recognized Pharaonic cartouche content as representing sounds

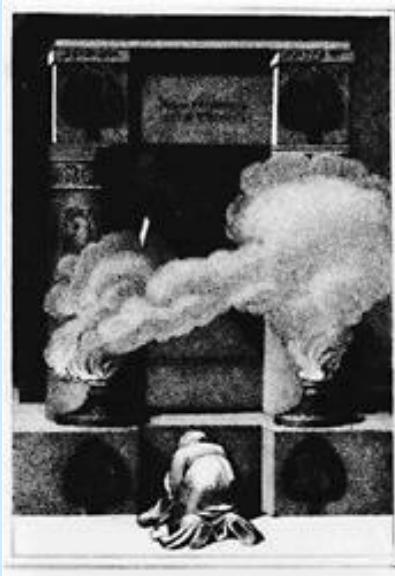


- French philologist Jean-Francois Champollion: published decipherment of hieroglyphs (1824)

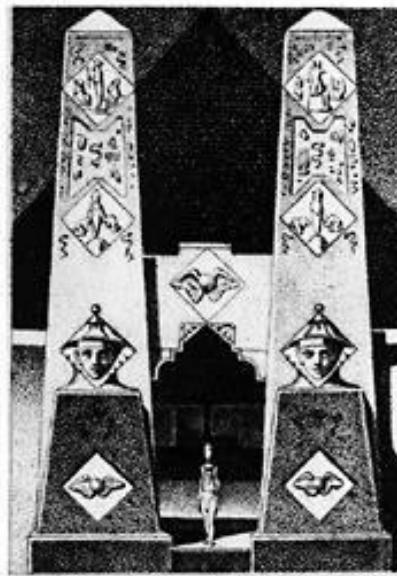
- *Description de l'Égypte*: 20 volumes of the writings and drawings of the scholars were published 1809-1829
- New wave of Egyptomania

# Playing cards (1819)

4♠/6♥



2♦/9♦



# 19<sup>th</sup>-century U.S. and ancient Egypt

- Post-Napoleonic Egyptomania was a strong force.
- “At one level, Egypt was seen as a suitable role model for the newly independent and rapidly developing nation and a valued prototype for its emerging sense of its own future destiny.”
- The Mississippi River was sometimes referred to as the “Nile of America.”
- Many settlements were given Egyptian names (e.g., Cairo, Memphis).
- Among various explanations for how native Americans reached the Americas, one was that they came from the Nile Valley.

*Information gathered from Timothy Champion, “Beyond Egyptology: Egypt in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Archaeology and Anthropology,” in Peter Ucko and Timothy Champion, eds., The Wisdom of Egypt, UCL Press, 2003.*

# Egypt and 19<sup>th</sup>-century analysis of race

- In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in England and the U.S., “scientific” approaches to race evolved, based on the new “science” of craniometry—measurement of skulls and their brain capacity.
- Ancient Egyptian skulls and portraits were frequently invoked to prove the superiority of Caucasians.

*Information gathered from Timothy Champion, “Beyond Egyptology: Egypt in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Archaeology and Anthropology,” in Peter Ucko and Timothy Champion, eds., The Wisdom of Egypt, UCL Press, 2003.*

- In 1854, a scholar (Joseph Clark Nott) and popularizer (George Gliddon) published a large volume, *Types of Mankind*, using craniology and portraits from ancient Egyptian monuments to demonstrate racial differences.
- One conclusion in this work: “The monuments of Egypt prove, that the Negro races have not, during 4000 years at least, been able to make one solitary step, in Negro-land, from their savage state.”
- This work became highly popular and, though not universally accepted, was one standard in the field for many decades.

*Information gathered from Timothy Champion, “Beyond Egyptology: Egypt in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century Archaeology and Anthropology,” in Peter Ucko and Timothy Champion, eds., The Wisdom of Egypt, UCL Press, 2003.*

FIG. 44.



AMUNOPH I.  
(A Grecian countenance.)

FIG. 45.



AAHMES-NOPRE-ABI.  
(Strong Semitic features.)

FIG. 46.



THOTMES I.  
(Strikingly Hellenic.)

Son of the  
above.

His wife.



AAHMES.  
(Absolutely Jewish.)

FIG. 47.

# **19<sup>th</sup>- (and 20<sup>th</sup>-) century Egyptianized architecture**

- Suspension bridges and piers
- Reservoirs and pumping stations
- Monuments, especially in obelisk form
- Prisons
- Courts
- Garden ornaments
- Zoos
- Factories
- Stores
- Cemeteries
- Cinemas

# 19<sup>th</sup>-century American cemeteries

Grove St.  
Cemetery,  
New Haven



Wooden  
cemetery gate,  
Farmington, CT



Mt. Auburn  
Cemetery,  
Cambridge, MA



From James Stevens Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West*, London, 2005; Echoes of Egypt;  
<http://echoesofegypt.peabody.yale.edu/driving-tour/cemetery-gate>.

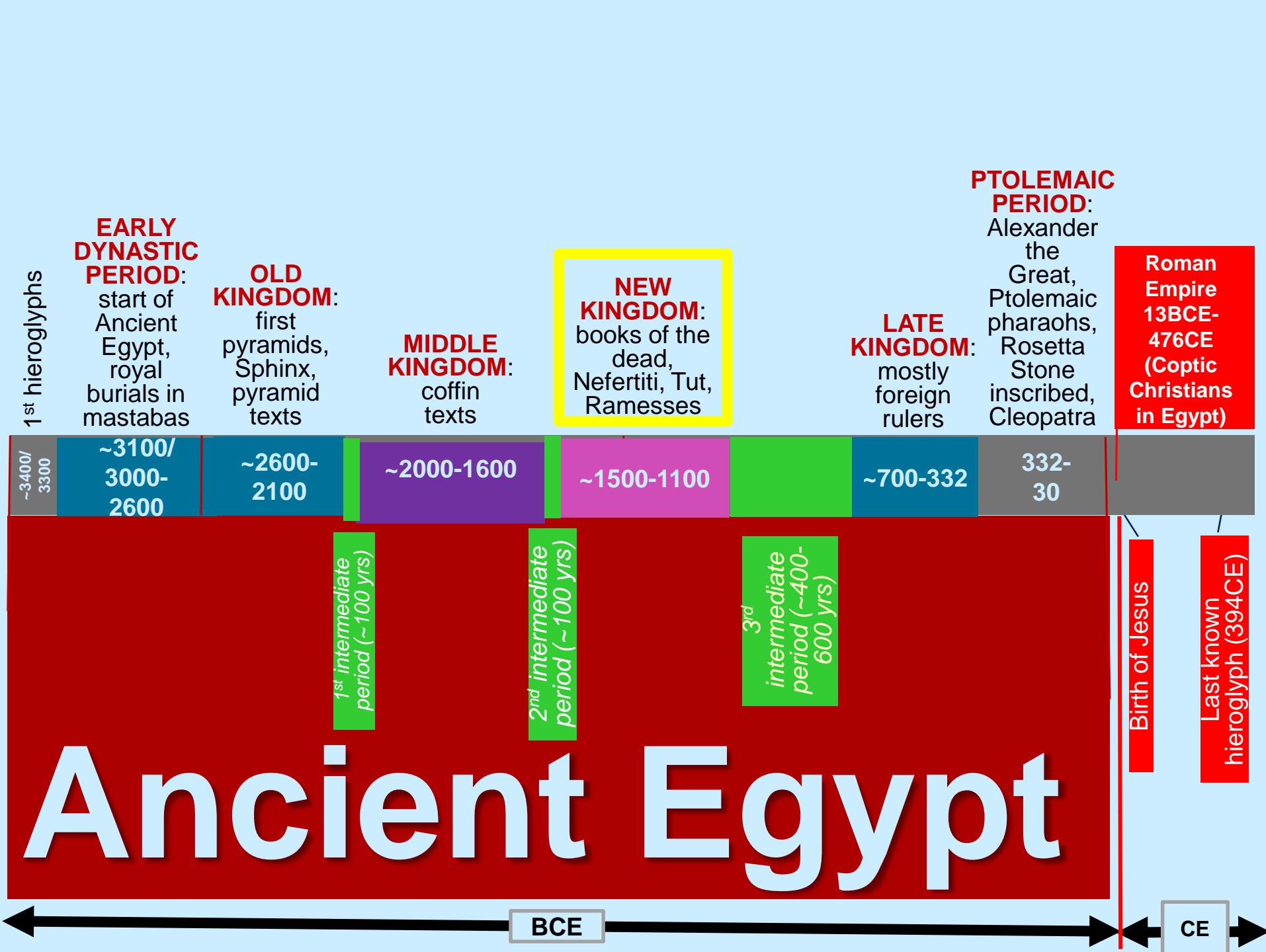
# University of Virginia cemetery



New York  
City, Central  
Park obelisk  
("Cleopatra's  
Needle,"  
erected  
1881)







# “Love’s Labour Lost” (1885)



*Left stool from James Stevens Curl, The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West, London, 2005.*

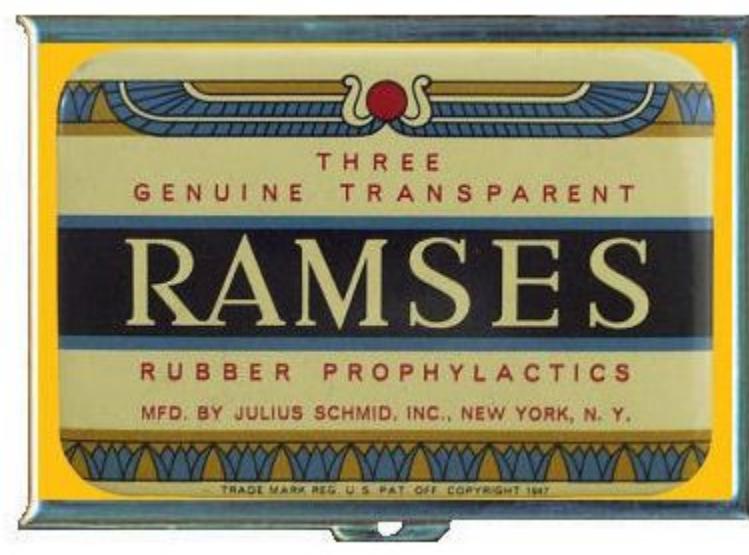
Theban stools  
(left: imitation  
by Liberty &  
Company in  
1884, now  
in V&A;  
right: an  
original in the  
British  
Museum)



From John Gardiner Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1878

# Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Egyptianized ads





**RAMSÈS PARIS**  
featherweight Jewel Compact

So aristocratic—it's perfect for the little "remembrance" gift. Ideally thin and light for Milady's own purse. Ramsès is imported, and it's truly fine in quality as well as in appearance. Priced at **\$1** (\$1.25 outside of U. S.)

We'll gladly send it direct, if you cannot find it at your favorite perfume counter.

**LeBlume Import Co.**  
285 Fifth Avenue, New York City

- 1. A thin, polished, & a very clean case of Egyptian bronze with embossed, engraved, Medallions.
- 2. Lightest and thinnest vanity in the world.
- 3. Spring catch always opens easily—never gets jammed.
- 4. Provides a flat, smooth, metallic, and polished surface for application.
- 5. Mounted with a everlasting Ramsès Powder.
- 6. Powder adheres to the face at the moment it comes.
- 7. In Bronze, Nickel, Brass, and the popular Rhinestones.



Louxor Cinema, 170 Boulevard Magenta,  
Paris, built 1920–21

(From James Stevens Curl, *The Egyptian Revival: Ancient Egypt as the Inspiration for Design Motifs in the West*, London, 2005.)



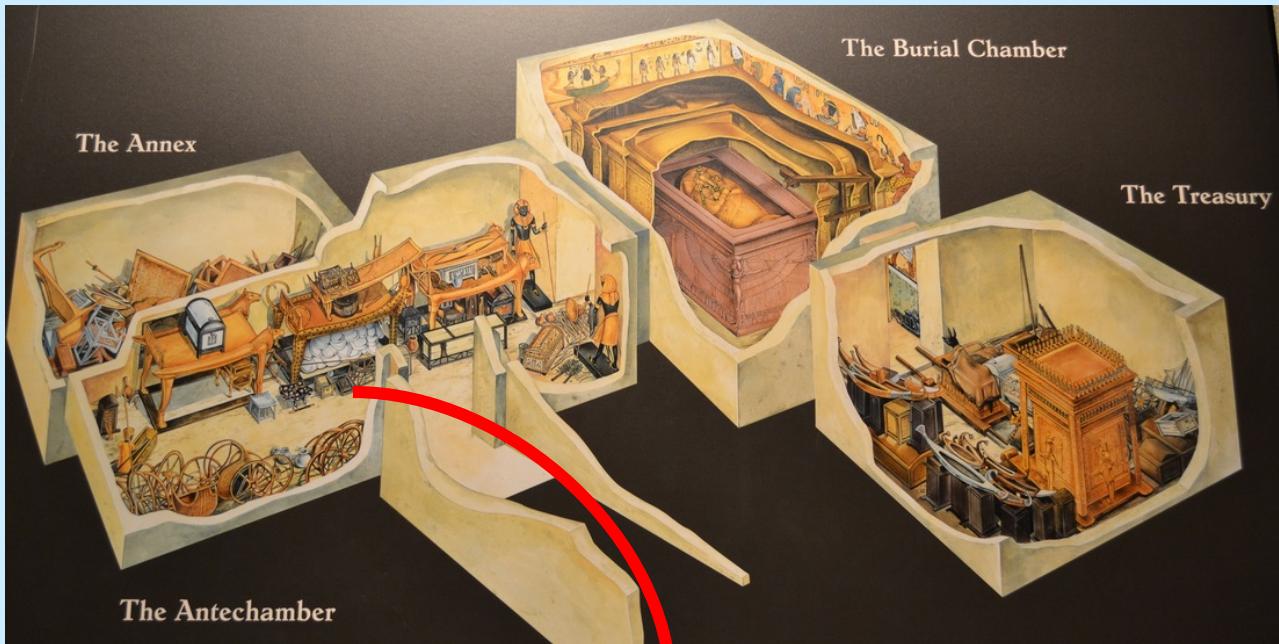
Grauman's Egyptian Theater,  
Hollywood Blvd., opened  
1922

(From <http://egypto-maniac.blogspot.com/>)



Adolf Hitler planned to erect gigantic pyramids, smoking cones, enormous obelisks, and mighty two-axis triumphal arches to commemorate his victories throughout Europe.

# King Tut's tomb (discovered Nov., 1922)

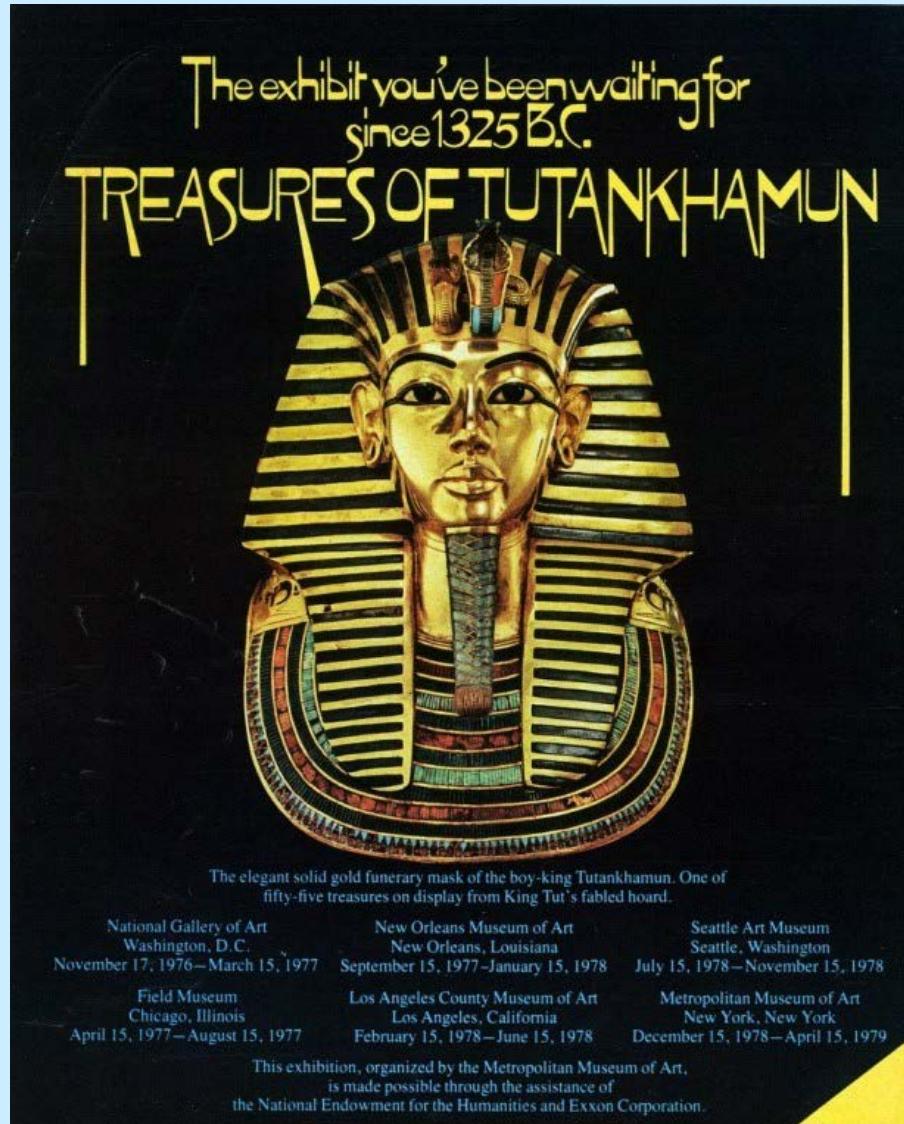


## 1960s *Batman* TV series



Victor Buono as King Tut, a deranged professor of Egyptology at Yale University.

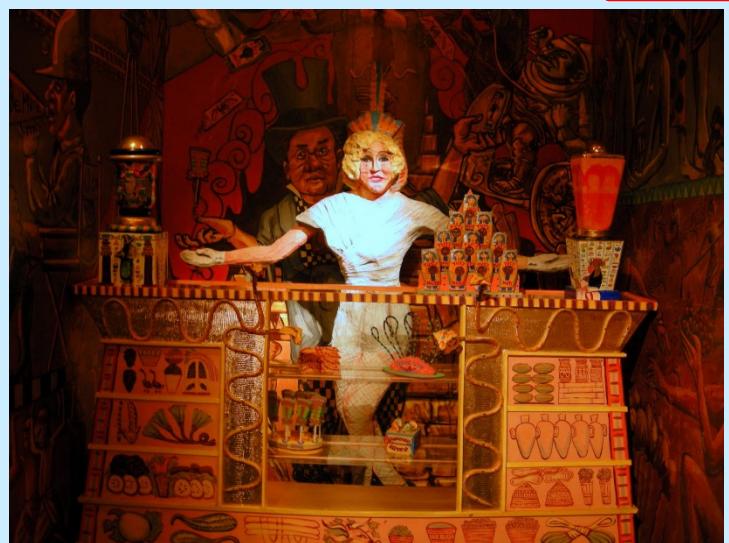
# King Tut exhibition tour of US, 1977



# *Saturday Night Live, 1970s*

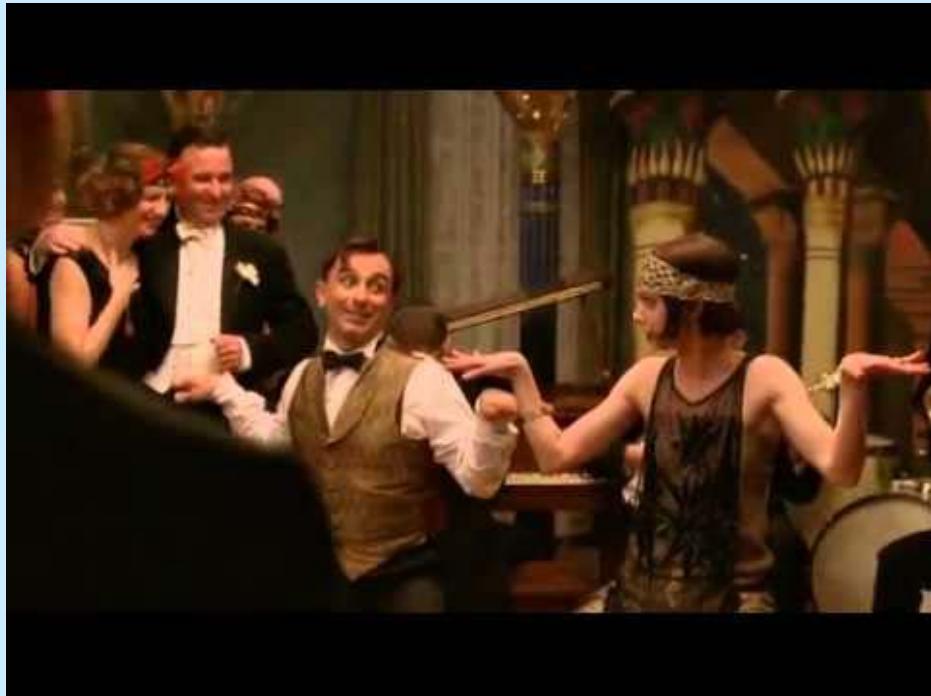


# “Tut’s Fever” (1986-88)



Museum of the Moving Image  
Queens, NYC

# *Boardwalk Empire* (HBO, season 3, 2012)



*Less than 2 months after the discovery of Tut's tomb, the lead character throws an extravagant New Year's Eve party with a Tut theme.*