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## DAMNATIO MEMORIAE IN GRAECO-ROMAN EGYPT

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**Abstract.** The Principal Objective of this paper is to spot the light on the damnatio memoriae in Egypt during the Graeco-Roman period. Although there were previous studies that dealt with this subject, they focused on the Pharaonic period and the Roman Empire with no intensive study on Egypt during the Graeco-Roman period. The researcher followed here the descriptive and the analytical method of study. The researcher will try to find the origin of this Phenomenon and mention those who faced the damnatio memoriae in Egypt during the Graeco-Roman period, in which she specified the method of damnation whether it was done to the name or the image or both.

### INTRODUCTION

The damnation of memory is a mean of punishment that used to be done in the ancient world. It is the cruellest punishment one could ever have because his memory will be erased as if he was never there. Some previous studies dealt with this phenomenon such as: (Vittinghoff, 1936), (Bochi, 1999), (Barker, 2004), (Flower, 2006). However, these studies focused on the Pharaonic period and the damnatio memoria in the Roman Empire. No previous study focused on this phenomenon in Egypt during the Graeco-Roman period.

To the ancient Egyptians this damnation was very effective, because they consecrated the name and were very keen on perpetuating their names after death. In the Tale of the Eloquent Peasant states: 'goodness should be potent ... he who performs it ... his name will never vanish upon earth' (Parkinson, 1991, pp. 334-342). Therefore, the ancient Egyptian was very keen on representing his name and titles on the walls of his tomb.

The ancient Egyptian was also keen on inscribing his name in the precinct of the temples of the gods, in order that his name remains alongside the god for eternity. When the kings built temples for the gods, their purpose was to perpetuate their names for eternity. Therefore, curses appeared threatening from the damnation of the name. On a statue of the high priest Herihor (20-21 Dyn.) we can read: "His name shall not exist in the land of Egypt" (Nordth, 1996).

Damnatio memoriae occurred in Pharaonic Egypt either to the name or to the image, and sometimes to both. Damning the name could be done by changing it as a sign of disgrace or by erasing it. Damning the image was done by removing it. The earliest way of damnatio memoriae in Pharaonic Egypt was

done by changing the name and this appeared in the Middle Kingdom to the vizier Intifker for political reasons; as his name was followed by the determinative of the enemy. The same occurred to the names of the harem that led the conspiracy of Ramses III that were permuted as mentioned in the Turin judicial papyrus. Their names were changed from "Mr-Sw-Re" (Re loved her) and "Nfr-m-Waset" (the beautiful in Thebes) to "Msdj-sw-Re" (Ra hates her) and "Bjn-m-Waset" (the bad one in Thebes) (Ranke, 1953).

Erasing the name and the image was not practised in Ancient Egypt till the reign of Tuthmosis III. The researcher must be clear here in pointing out that the practice of erasing the names from the monuments to be usurped by successive kings was already known in ancient Egypt far before the New Kingdom. The usurpation here was not done as an expression of hatred, but as an appropriate method of fulfilling the king's obligation of building temples for the god.

As for erasing the name, Tuthmosis III erased the memory of his stepmother Hatshepsut after her death because she had usurped the throne from him when he was young. It had been noted that this erasure process took place 20 years after the death of Hatshepsut (Nims, 1966). Through examining the evidences of the destruction of text and images in the near east, it seems that the earliest case appeared in the Old Akkadian period (2350-2170 BC) (Westenholz, 2012). Thus, it seems that Tuthmosis III, during his military campaigns in the near east, got to know the punishment of damning the memory and after returning to Egypt, he started to erase the memory of the most hated person "Hatshepsut" that probably took place in

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1440 BC. It's worth mentioning that Tuthmosis III only erased Hatshepsut's royal title. Thus, Hatshepsut's Horus name and her two minor names were often left intact (Roth, 2005, p. 267). After erasing her name, Tuthmosis III didn't insert his name instead, but he inserted the name of his father Tuthmosis II or that of his grandfather Tuthmosis I (Dorman, 2005, p. 267). Thus, it seems that the aim of Tuthmosis III was to remove from the history that Hatshepsut was once a Pharaoh of Egypt. Hatshepsut's statues at the temple of Deir el-Bahari were dragged out and dumped into the bottom of a quarry near the temple causeway. In addition to the quarry, the so-called Hatshepsut Hole served as a repository for her broken statuary (Arnold, 2005, p. 270). The images of Hatshepsut were also removed from the Red Chapel at Karnak (Dorman, 2005, p. 268). It seems that the *damnatio memoriae* of Hatshepsut that was carried out by Tuthmosis III vanished after his death, and the successive king, Amenhotep II, saw no necessity in completing this process (Dorman, 2005, p. 269).

During the Pharaonic period, the names of the gods also faced *damnatio memoriae*. Amenhotep IV who created the new religion of Aten erased the name of Amun whose priests were the main enemy for the new cult. This extraordinary event occurred throughout the Egyptian empire. Care was taken to erase the name of Amun even from the letters in the diplomatic archive, commemorative scarabs, and the tips of obelisks and pyramids; the distant regions of Nubia were also affected, as far as Gebel Barkal at the Fourth Cataract of the Nile (Hornung, 1999). After the end of the Amarna period, the name of Aten was erased. This was done after reviving the worship of Amun.

Let's now trace the damnation of the memory in the land of Egypt during the Graeco-Roman period.

## THE DAMNATION OF THE NAME

It seems that there were two ways of damning the name

### Changing the Name as a Sign of Disgrace

It is considered the oldest way known in ancient Egypt as it appeared in the Middle Kingdom. This process appeared only once in the Graeco-Roman period. In a Demotic papyrus from Elephantine that dates to the Ptolemaic Period, a man who had committed several cultic sacrileges is delivered the following message of an oracle-giving divine child by a third party:

"I am (the) Osiris Espamet-son-of-Khnum. Say (to) Petrah son of Psenpaouer, I did not allow your name to be called out, the name which your mother gave to you. Your name will be called out as follows, Petrah, (although) Petarensnuphis was your (original) name, because I have found out your heart (i.e.,

your character)."

The Child described himself as an Osiris, means that he is dead. He seems to have a divine nature as he described himself as the son of Khnum. He tells the questioner that the name of god Arsenophis has been deleted from his name to be called only Petrah. The rest of the papyrus indicates the crimes that this man had committed: he drank the sacred wine which was stored near the landing quay the Abaton, wine which was to be poured in libation for Osiris. He had broken the decree of silence on the island, thereby disturbing Osiris from his rest (Martin, 1994, pp. 201-202).

It seems that Petrah wasn't the only one that was punished in the papyrus; as there is another man who was also punished; as his name had been changed to PA-dj (Peti):

"Say (to) Pet son of Espamet, I changed the name which your mother gave to you. I did not allow your name to be called out, as follows, Petosiris (son of) Espmetis, because I have found out your heart."

The crime that Peti is guilty of is that he has built his houses in such a way that harmed the others (Martin, 1994, p. 203).

Thus, the punishment here was done by removing the name of the god from the composition of the original name.

### Erasing the Name

The earliest example that reached us from the Graeco-Roman period is the name of a certain Ptolemy referred by the scholars as "Ptolemy the son". His name was first mentioned in a papyrus from El-Fayoum as a co-regent of Ptolemy II in 268/7 (Sorb, n. d.), and then disappeared in 259 BC (Werner, 1998). He was represented on a Mendes Stela (Cairo CG 22181) (Fig. 1). The stela dates to 257 BC. The scene at the top of the stela shows Ptolemy Philadelphus, Arsinoe and a third figure making offerings wearing a blue crown and carries the same titles as Philadelphus and described as "The son who carries the name of he who sired him" (Kamal, 1905, pp. 159-168). Some scholars thought that this Ptolemy was the future king Ptolemy III; however, it's illogical that Ptolemy III ruled as a co-regent with his father and then lost his rule and lived peacefully till his father's death. Thus, the researcher would go with the other opinion that suggests that this Ptolemy was the eldest son of Ptolemy II who ruled in co-regency with his father till he rebelled against him and then was put to death by his father (Tunny, 2000). This is probably the reason that led to the erasure of his name from the memory of the history; this made the Scholiast Theocritus (17.128) mentioned only three children of Philadelphus: Lysimachus, Ptolemy III, and Berenice.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Mendes Stela, Egyptian Museum (CG 22181)**



Source: Kamal, 1905, pp. 54-55

The second example is related to the revolt that occurred during the reign of King Ptolemy IV. This revolt started in 216 BC, in the Delta and reached Thebes in 207-206 BC. It was led by an Egyptian man called Horwennefer, who announced the independence of the Theban region. This man was accepted by the Theban priesthood as legitimate ruler. He was succeeded by his son Chaonnophris. This revolt led to the fall of the Dodecashaenus under the Kushite supremacy. Ptolemy V succeeded in crushing this revolt in 186 BC (Alliot, 1951). Then, Ptolemy V erased the memory of the two Egyptian Pharaohs, as no inscription was found referring to them. There is only a Greek graffito found engraved in the chapel of Osiris inside the temple of Seti I. The inscription reads (Sayce, 1888):

“year 5 of the reign of Pharaoh Haronnophris, the beloved of Isis and Osiris, the beloved of Amon, the great god . . . Osiris and. . .” (Pfeiffer, 2015, pp. 108-109).

The name of the king is inscribed in Demotic on a limestone tablet, found at Karnak, and is preserved now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Inv. 38258). It reads:

“Pastophoros of Amun-Re king of the gods, the great god, the scribe of the trench for water of Thebes Peteharmais son of Petosiris. . . (Oh may Amun-Re king of the gods, the) great (god) let his life be long, while he will give you praise before Pharaoh Haronnophris (Depauw, 2006”.

These are the only two examples that refer to the name of Her-Wennefer as a Pharaoh. However, no mention was found referring to Ankh-wennefer (Chaonnophris). Even in the second decree that was issued by Ptolemy V and inscribed on the walls of the mammisi of Philae, the name of the Egyptian king was erased and was referred to as the enemy of the gods or the impious man. It was usually followed with the determinative of the enemy.



Source: Muller, 1920, pp. 60-76

The King also erased the memory of the Meroetic kings who ruled the Dodecashaenus at that time. The name of King Ergamenes II was removed from the temple of Arsenophis on the island of Philae during the reign of Ptolemy V (Winter, 1981). Sometimes the name of Ergamenes II was adopted by the name of Ptolemy IV, especially that the S3 Re name of Ergamenes II “Irk-Imn Ankh- djet- mri-ist” is similar to that of Ptolemy IV “Ankh- djet- mri-ist” (Torok, 1996, p. 588). King Adikhalamani erected a stela on the island of Philae that dates from 207-186 BC, where he was represented wearing the double crown of Egypt and presents offering to Osiris, Isis and two forms of hawk-headed god. In the left half, he is represented wearing the blue crown and offers wine to Khnum-Re and Hathor. This stela was destroyed and used as filling underneath the pavement of the floor of the Hypostyle hall (Farid, 1978; Torok, 1996, p. 132).

The name of Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator also faced a *damnatio memoriae* by his uncle Ptolemy VIII. Ptolemy VII “Neos Philopator” was the second son of Ptolemy VI, who ruled in co-regency with his father (as his elder brother “Eupator” who gained a co-regency when his father died). After the death of the father, Ptolemy VIII (his uncle) usurped the throne, married the widow Cleopatra and killed her son Ptolemy VII. This story was mentioned by some Historians such as Josephus, *Contra Apionem* 2. 51, and Orosius, *Historiae aduersum Paganos* 5.10. In P. Koln VIII 350, a reference to Neos Philopator appeared from Krokodelion Polis dating to 143 BC: where we

can read: “Ptolemy son of Ptolemy Philometor and Cleopatra the benevolent goddess” (Chauveau, 2000, p. 257). No other papyri mentioned his name even those that listed the eponymous priests of the Ptolemaic kings from Alexandria and Ptolemais. The scholars thought that the priests of Ptolemy VI probably continued to work in their positions during the reign of Ptolemy VII (Clarysse, 1983). However, the researcher here suggests that this is a clear evidence of the *damnatio memoriae* as the name of the king appeared later in the list of the eponymous

priests inscribed in the temple of Kom Ombo. There is also no inscription mentioning the name of such king from the years of his reign. Although Ptolemy VII ruled for nearly a year, no coin survived from his reign (Sayles, 2007). It seems that either because his reign was not long enough to strike a coin with his name or that his coins were melted by Ptolemy VIII. It’s worth noting here that the early books that dealt with the Ptolemaic coins (Poole, 1864) (Head, 1869) mixed up between Ptolemy VII and Ptolemy VIII.

**FIGURE 2**  
Inner Hypostyle Hall, Kom Ombo



Source: De Morgan, 1902, p. 417

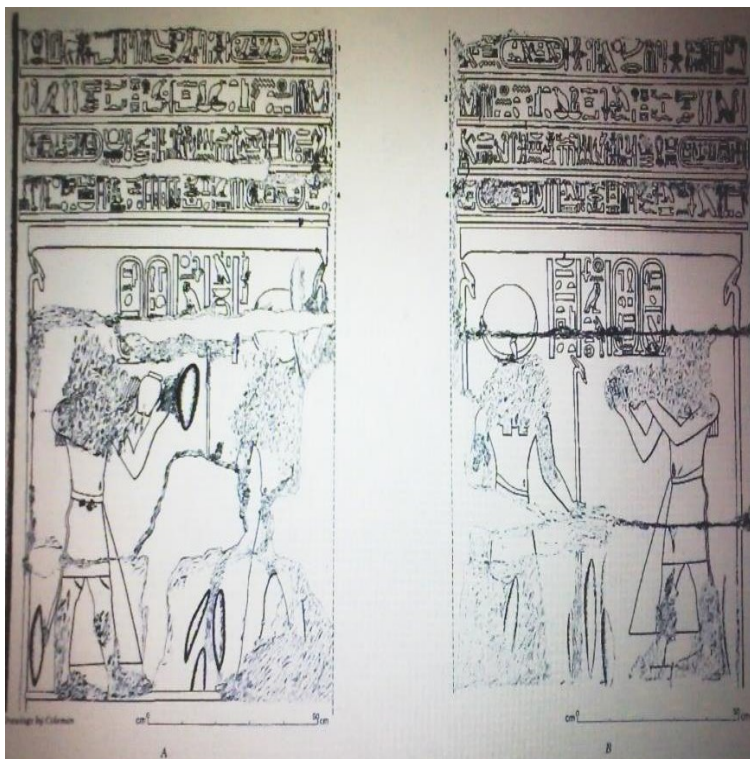
Example of this damnation appeared in a scene from the inner hypostyle hall in the temple of Kom Ombo, where we can see a king presenting two uzat to Sobek-Re and Hator. The cartouches of the king were erased (Fig. 2). The researcher here suggests that this king represents Ptolemy VII, because all the nearby scenes carried the figure of Ptolemy VIII.

This *damnatio memoriae* led some scholars in their writings about the Ptolemaic history consider Ptolemy Eurgetes II (Ptolemy VIII) to be Ptolemy VII. This can be obvious in the writings of Wallis Budge, *Egypt under the Ptolemies and Cleopatra VII*, 1902, and Bevan, *the house of Ptolemy*, 1927.

The mention of the name of Ptolemy VII started to appear in year 118 BC, in the list of the eponymous priests from Kom Ombo Temple which mentioned the title of Neos Philopator. It seems that this name was added on a demand of Cleopatra II

in the context of the reconciliation occurred between herself and Ptolemy VIII in 118 BC, following the civil war in 130 BC (Lemcke, 2013). The name appeared again on the gate of the temple of Khonso at Karnak, where we can see two scenes that represent king Herihor before Khonsu (Fig. 3): from the inscription that accompanied the left scene, we can read Theoi Adelphoi (Ptolemy II), Eurgetai (Ptolemy III), Neos Philopator (Ptolemy VII), Eurgetes II (Ptolemy VIII), and Theo Philometera (Cleopatra II). While the text that accompanied the right scene reads: Theo Philopators (Ptolemy IV), Epiphanes (Ptolemy V), Euopator and Philometor (Ptolemy VI). The date of the scenes is 115 - 107 BC (Chauveau, 2000) (The Epigraphic survey, 1981, pp. 61-62). It seems that the inscription here mentions the chronological order of the Ptolemaic kings starting from Ptolemy II till Ptolemy VIII.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Ptolemy VII, temple of Khonsou, Karnak**



Source: The Epigraphic Survey, 1981, p. 191

Ptolemy X Alexander I also faced a *damnatio memoriae*. It's well known that after the death of Ptolemy VIII, he left the throne to Cleopatra III and whoever she chose from her two sons. Cleopatra favoured the youngest son, Ptolemy X Alexander; however, she was obliged to ascend the elder brother, Ptolemy IX Soter II, to the throne. Later, she set a conspiracy by which she expelled Ptolemy IX outside the country, leaving the throne ready for Ptolemy X who ruled accompanied by his mother. Because of the failure that faced Ptolemy X in ruling the country, the Alexandrians asked for the return of Ptolemy IX. Through examining the scenes in the temples of Upper Egypt mentioned in Porter & Moss (1991), we can find that the name of Ptolemy X wasn't mentioned inside the major temples that were built in Upper Egypt during the Graeco-Roman period; however, his name appeared in some reliefs in the temple of Edfu (precisely in the outer corridor, the Girdle wall, and the Crypt), the first gate in Karnak temple, and in the small temple at Madinet Habu. The researcher thought that the name of Ptolemy X was only removed from the major scenes inside the temples. It is worth mentioning also that the name of the Ptolemy X is found mentioned in the papyri that listed the eponymous priests of the Ptolemaic Kings in Alexandria (P. Ashm. 22, P. L. Bat. 22 no. 19, 20, P. Koln II. 81, P. Teb. I. 166) (Clarysse, 1983).

We knew from the commentaries of the historians that Mark Antony received a *damnatio memoriae* after his defeat in the Battle of Actium. It is confirmed that this *damnatio memoriae* was made by an order from the Senate in Rome, which ordered Antony's birthday to be declared a *dies nefastus*, and his descendants to be forbidden the use of the prenomens Marcus. For example, the son of Mark Antony was named Iullus Antonius with the removal of the name Marcus. The name of Mark Antony was removed from the list of the consuls that was inscribed on the arch of Augustus in Rome. This can be read in the commentary of Plutarch in his book about the life of Cicero (Plutarch, 1919).

It seems that later, Augustus partially rehabilitated the memory of Mark Antony, as when the arch of Augustus in Rome was replaced by a triple arch in 19 BC, the name of Mark Antony was inscribed among the list of the triumphant (Hollard & Raymond, 2014, p. 5). Probably this only occurred in Rome, as a grateful gesture to his sister Octavia, the wife of Mark Antony, and her children. However, other scholars thought that this rehabilitation occurred much later, probably under the reign of Caligula and Claudius (Ferries, 2007, p. 54). Any way there is no mention of Mark Antony that appeared in the inscriptions in Egypt even after the rehabilitation of his memory.

**FIGURE 4**  
Limestone slab, Sidi Krier, Alexandria



As for Cleopatra VII, it seems that she faced the same destiny of her partner Mark Antony. The name of Cleopatra had been chiselled from the Ptolemaic inscriptions. There is a limestone block found at Sidi Kreir, Alexandria that bears in the header only the word ΚΛΕΟΠΑ. The block was placed in 2007 in the Archeological Garden of Kom el-Dikka (Inv. Nr. 66). The rest

of the stone is chiseled. We can only see two other separated letters K and L. The sides and the back of the stone have many breakings (Fig. 4). The inscription had been dated to the Late Ptolemaic period. So, it seems that this name could refer to Cleopatra, a certain person that gained an importance in the Ptolemaic dynasty (Vitale, 2013, pp. 456-457).

**FIGURE 5**  
Limestone Stela 51 BC, Louvre Museum



Source: Bernard, 1992, p. 17

Through examining the Greek inscriptions in Egypt, the researcher found that the name of Cleopatra appeared intact in only two Greek inscriptions: the first one is a limestone stela from Krokodilopolis, Fayoum, dating to 44 BC, on

which we can the name of Cleopatra could be easily read *Κλεπατραςθεσασφιλωαιωρ* "Cleopatra Thea Philopator". The stela is now preserved in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo (Inv. Nr. JdE 40720) (Bernard, 1975, pp. 45-47). The second

inscription is on a limestone stela probably from El-Fayoum and preserved in the Louvre Museum (Inv. Nr. E27113). It dates to the 51 BC where the name of Cleopatra can be easily read (Fig. 5) (Bernanrd, 1992, pp. 62). The name of Cleopatra appeared also partially intact in a decree of the priests of Amun-Re at Thebes inscribed on a granite stela in honor of the Strategos Kallimachos that governed Thebes under the reign of Cleopatra VII. The stela is now preserved in Turin Egizio Museo (Inv. Nr. 1764) (OGIS 194).

Nevertheless, Cleopatra's name didn't appear in any inscription from Alexandria, and no other inscription in the whole region in Egypt except for the previous three cases. However, it should be noted also that the name of Cleopatra that was written in hieroglyphs and accompanied her reliefs on the temples of Upper Egypt remained intact with no trace of chiselling. It is obvious also that there is no inscription carrying the name of Cleopatra VII found outside Egypt, although Cleopatra gained under her control Cyrene, Cyprus, Crete, and Syria. The name of Cleopatra was not mentioned in the official documents of Rome, such as "The deeds of the Divine Augustus" that dealt with the life of Augustus (Burnett, 2003, pp. 4501-4502).

As for Ptolemy Caesarion, his name was also removed from the Greek inscriptions except for two cases in which his name remained intact alongside the name of his mother Cleopatra VII: the stela from El-Fayoum, and the Decree from Karnak (mentioned before). During the Roman era, the damnatio memoriae

became very common in Rome, as the Senate began to issue orders concerning this matter. Many emperors faced this damnatio memoriae. However, the researcher will only mention the cases of damnatio memoriae that occurred in Egypt during the Roman period.

The first example of Damnatio Memoriae of Roman Emperors in Egypt is related to Emperor Caligula. His name was removed from a Greek inscription found engraved on a block from Alexandria and preserved now in the Louvre Museum (MA 1680). The inscription is a dedication made in the fourth year of the reign of an erased Emperor (Caligula), made by a centurion and mentioned the prefect Vitrasius Pollion and the epistratigus Ragonius Celer (Bernanrd, 1992, p. 27). It's worth mentioning that the hieroglyphic name of the emperor was found intact in temple of Hathor at Dendara.

Emperor Domitian faced a damnatio memoriae by an official order from the Senate. His name was erased from several inscriptions at Koptos. Among them is an inscription from a bridge built by the Roman army at Coptos in Egypt. The text dates to 90-91 A. It contains a double erasure one of the emperor's name, and the other of the Prefect Marcus Mettius Rufus, whose name had been erased from several inscriptions as will be discussed later. It seems here that Domitian was the one who ordered the erasure of the name of Rufus, and later the name of the emperor was erased. The inscription reads (Fig. 6):

**FIGURE 6**  
**Erasing the Name of Domitian and Prefect Rufus, British Museum**



Source: [www.britishmuseum.org](http://www.britishmuseum.org) (2017)



The Emperor Caesar... ,  
High Priest with Tribunician power, Consul, in his 15th year,  
lifelong Censor and Father of the Nation, built this new bridge  
in its entirety.

...N...

Quintus Licinius Ancotius was at the time the Prefect of the  
[military] Camp and Lucius Antistius Asiaticus was Prefect of  
[the port of] Berenice.

The project was carried out under the supervision of Gaius  
Julius Magnus, centurion of the legion "III Cyrenaica". (CIL III  
13580)

Another example of this damnation can be found in the dedica-  
tion of Hathor Chapel at Kom Ombo. The dedication is written  
in Greek and reads as follows (OGIS II 675):

"On behalf of Emperor Caesar (Domitian) Augustus Germanicus  
and all his family, to Aphrodite the greatest goddess, Petronia  
Magna and her children built the shrine when Gaius Septimius  
Vegetus was Prefect and Artemidorod was strategos, seventh  
year of Emperor Caesar (Domitian) Augustus in the month of  
Phamenoth, on its first day."

The damnation occurred in other Greek inscriptions: a dedi-  
cation found at Theadelphia (Batn Ihrit) (Bernard, 1979), in-  
scription from Akoris made by soldiers stationed there by the  
quarries (IGR 1,5, 1138), a bilingual inscription (Greek & Latin)  
from Schedia Menelais (Kom el-Ghizeh) made by the Prefect  
Septimious Vegeto (OGIS 673), dedication made by the strate-  
gos Themonistos Ptolemy to the goddess Isis and engraved on  
the walls of her temple at Philae (Bernand & Bernand, 1969, p.  
162), a dedication from Elephantine (Bernand, 1989, p. 250).  
However, the name of the emperor was found intact in three  
Latin dedications engraved on the colossi of Memnon (Bernand  
& Bernad, 1960, p. 8,10,13), and a Greek proscyneme found  
engraved on the temple of Deir el-Bahari (Bataille, 1951, p.  
81). The name of Domitian was also found intact inside the  
cartouches accompanying his scenes on the propylon of the  
temple of Hathor at Dendara, inside the temples of Esna, and in  
the exterior Hypostyle hall in the temple of Kom Ombo. The re-  
searcher here thought that the hieroglyphic name of the emperor  
was never erased while his Greek or Latin name was erased  
except in certain cases that were skipped.

Emperor Commodus also faced the *damnatio memoriae*. On the  
inner east face of the outer corridor at the back of the temple  
of Kom Ombo that is called the Emperors Corridor, there are  
three scenes bearing the cartouches of Commodus. In each case,  
parts of his name were erased (Porter & Moss, 1991, p. 197).  
However, the name of Commodus was found intact at Esna, and  
the gate of Hadrian in Philae. The name of Commodus was also  
erased from the Greek inscriptions in Egypt such as: a Greek

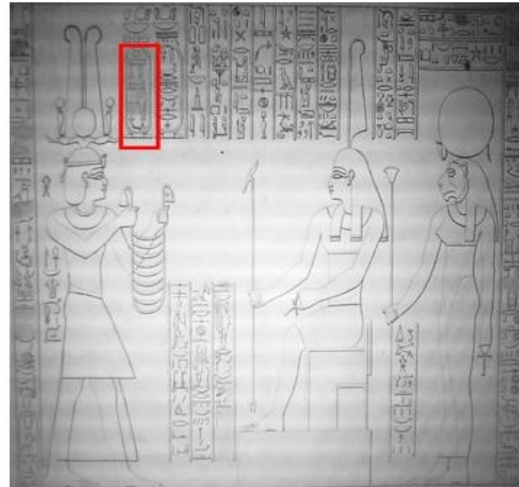
dedication to god Serapis of Canopus (IGR I,5 1050), a Greek  
inscription from Alexandria (IGR I,5 1052), a dedication to  
Amun of Karnak at Thebes (IGR I,5 1205), a Greek dedication  
of soldiers to god Serapis from El-Kanais (IGR I,5 1275), a  
Greek inscription engraved on a sandstone block preserved now  
in the Egyptian Museum, Cairo (Inv. Nr. CG 9297) (Milne,  
1905, p. 32), a Greek inscription engraved on a marble column  
from the city of Xoïs (now Sakha) represents a dedication of a  
statue of Serapis Polieus made by Nemesianus son of Areius  
(OGIS 708), and a dedication made on a limestone base in  
honor of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus from Hermopolis  
Magna where the name of Marcus Aurelius is intact while that  
of Commodus is erased (Bernard, 1999). However, his name  
escaped the erasure in certain inscriptions: three inscriptions  
from Alexandria (IGR 1,5 1061, SB 5:8269, SB 1.437), and a  
Greek inscription from El-Kanais represents a dedication of a  
soldier to Serapis (Bernand, 1972, p. 59).

Emperor Caracalla ordered the damnation of his brother Geta  
after murdering him. Both Caracalla and Geta were the sons  
of Septimus Severus. They ruled jointly after the death of their  
father in 198 AD. Caracalla claimed that his brother Geta was  
involved in a conspiracy to murder him. In response Caracalla  
killed his brother. Geta's name and titles have been erased in  
numerous papyri. It seems that the prefect of Egypt Baebius  
Iuncius relays the senatorial instructions concerning the con-  
demnation. This is mentioned in a papyrus from Alexandria,  
dating back to 212 AD and preserved now in Staatliche Museum  
in Berlin (Inv. 21619). It's obvious also that the name of Geta  
wasn't even mentioned in this edict (BGU 11.2056). There is  
a papyrus from El-Fayoum dating back to 211 AD that repre-  
sents a receipt for tax on vine land, where the name of emperor  
Geta was erased. More examples of the papyri in which the  
name of Geta was erased are mentioned in the article of Mertens  
(Mertens, 1960). There is another inscription engraved on a  
pedestal in front of the Sphinx at Giza, dates back to 199-200  
AD and represents a dedication of a building during the reign  
of Septimus Severus. In this inscription, the name of Geta was  
erased (Heinen, 1991, pp. 278-279).

Inside the hypostyle hall of Esna temple, precisely on the west-  
ern wall, there are two scenes carrying the name of Philippe the  
Arab (244 to 249AD), the predecessor of Decius. The name of  
Philippe here was erased. It is well known that Decius fought  
Philippe in the battle of Verona and defeated him (Sauneron,  
1952, pp. 118-120). We can see Philippe before Montu &  
Sensen with his erased cartouches (Fig. 7). In another scene  
stands Philippe before Shu & Tefnut with erased Cartouche (Fig.  
8).

**FIGURE 7****Philippe the Arab before Shu & Tefnut, Esna Temple**

Source: Lepsius, 1849-1959, p. 90

**FIGURE 8****Philippe the Arab before Montou & Sensen, Esna Temple**

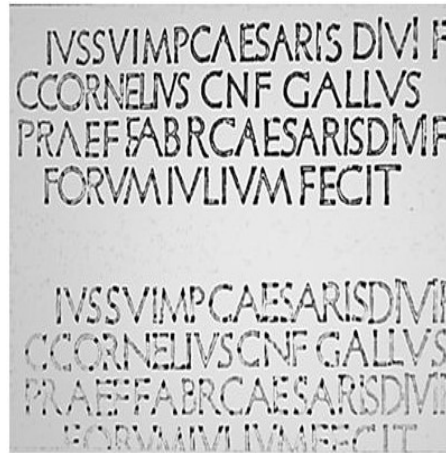
Source: Lepsius, 1849-1959, p. 90

The Emperors and Kings were not the only one who faced the damnatio memoriae, as during the Roman era, the Prefects of Egypt also faced the same fate. The first prefect who faced this damnation was Cornelius Gallus, the first prefect of Egypt under the reign of Augustus. He was sent to crush a rebellion occurred in Upper Egypt and he succeeded in his mission.

Because of his arrogance, he acted as a king and this can be obvious in his trilingual stela erected in Philae. Shortly, he was recalled to Rome, lost his position as a Prefect and then died. His monuments were destroyed after his death. The stela of Philae that records his victory in crushing the rebellion in Upper Egypt was thrown down and broken. It was then incorporated

in the foundations of an altar in front of the temple of Augustus at Philae. The red granite obelisk that stands now in front of St. Peter's basilica, was brought to Rome from Egypt. The obelisk carried inscription written over an earlier inscription (30 BC) that was not carved but composed of bronze letters which were attached to the stone by spikes. Examining the spike holes made it possible to reconstruct the earlier text. It records the establishment of a location in Egypt by the prefect Gallus. It seems that this text was later covered with another text (14 AD) that represents a dedication to the deified Augustus and Tiberius (Fig. 9). (Flower, 2006, pp. 125-128).

**FIGURE 9**  
**Inscription of Cornelius Gallus, Obelisk**  
**in St. Peter's square, Rome**



Source: Flower, 2006, p. 20

During the Reign of Domitian, Prefect M. Mettius Rufus faced *damnatio memoriae*. The name of this Prefect appeared in seven inscriptions; in which his name was erased from four inscriptions; among them:

- Greek inscription on a limestone slab representing a tax for passing by Coptos. The slab dates back to 90 AD and is preserved in the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria (Inv. Nr. 157) (SB 8901).

- Latin inscription on a limestone slab found at Khashm el-Minyah (Didymoi), in the eastern desert. (Fig. 10) (Cuvigny, 2012)
- Latin inscription on a limestone slab from Coptos, with double erasure (mentioned before) dates back to 90 AD and is preserved in the British Museum (Inv. Nr. 1894) (Fig. 6).

**FIGURE 10**  
**Erasing name of Mettius Rufus, Didymoi**



Source: Flower, 2006, p. 20

While the name of the prefect remained intact in three inscriptions, A Greek inscription from Alexandria, dates back to 100 AD and is preserved in the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria (Kayser, 1994, Nr. 25). There is also A Greek inscription

from Gebel Tukh near Ptolemais, represents a dedication to pan and the Nymphs made by Isidoros son of Menippos (Bernard, 1969, No. 116). Finally, a Latin inscription on the colossi of Memnon.

There is evidence of a *damnatio memoriae* occurred to the Prefect C. Vibius Maximus who ruled from 103 to 107 AD, as the extant inscriptions in Egypt clearly bear witness. His name has been completely erased from three Greek inscriptions (IGR, I, 1148, 1175):

- One from Akhmim, represents a dedication to the great god Pan, made by Tiberius Claudius, son of Tiberius Claudius Neron, from the garrison Quirina, surnamed Apollinaris. The name of the prefect is erased. The dedication is inscribed on a limestone architrave and dates to the reign of Trajan, 109 AD. (Bernand, 1977, p. 79)
- A dedication of a wooden statuette of Isis, and a sanctuary made by Didymos, son of Tgeon. The name of the prefect is erased. The inscription is engraved on a marble block from Koptos, and preserved in the Graeco-Roman Museum in Alexandria (Inv. 192). (Reinmuth, 1967, p. 91)
- The first name only was erased from an inscription found at Abu Tarfa (Dodekaschoinos). (IGR, 1901-1927).

While the name of C. Vibius Maximus remained intact in two inscriptions, among them is a Latin inscription engraved on the colossi of Memnon (Bernand & Bernad, 1960, p. 15).

There is also a Greek dedication found on the lintel of the temple of the Serapeum at Luxor in which the name of the prefect is erased. The inscription dates back to 126 AD and reads (Fig. 11):

“For Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus and all of his family, to Zeus Helios the Great Serapis, Gaius Julius Antoninus, the honorary Decurion, on his own expenses, had restored the sanctuary, and consecrated a statue, because of his vows and his piety, under the prefect . . .” (Leclant, 1951, p. 456).

The name of the prefect here was a matter of debate among the scholars; as part of them thought that he could be the son of Vibius Maximus claiming that the damnation occurred to both the son and the father. Others thought that he could be Flavius Titianus who governed the country in 125 AD (Van der Leest, 1985). However, we can't assure that because his name has not been erased from the other found inscriptions.

**FIGURE 11**  
**Lintel of the Serapeum, Luxor**



Source: Van der Leest, 1995, Fig. 3

### THE DAMNATION OF THE IMAGE

The damnation of the image also appeared in two ways: erasing the image or mutilating it.

#### Destroying the Image

This includes destructing the statues of the condemned person. During the Graeco-Roman period, the statues of the damned person were destroyed. The earliest mention of such act was mentioned by Iustinus who records the destruction of images of Ptolemy X by the Alexandrians (Iustinus, 38.8.12).

The destruction of the statues as a way of *damnatio memoriae* became very common in Rome and was made by an order from the Senate in Rome. Although there are many examples of this practice, the researcher will only mention the cases that occurred in Egypt. The best example is that of Mark Antony, as the senate ordered Antony's monuments to be effaced or dismantled. Plutarch states in his book about Antony that Octavian, on entering Alexandria, had Antonius's statues pulled down. (Plutarch, 1920).

Therefore, no portraits could also be found for Marcus Antonius. Only a basalt-base of a statue, dedicated by Parasitos, was found at Alexandria and preserved in the Graeco-Roman Museum

(Inv. N. 54) (Fig.12). The inscription dates to 34 BC and refers to the association of the “Inimitable Livers” that was established by Cleopatra and Antony (Fraser, 1957, pp. 71-73).

**FIGURE 12**

**Basalt Statue Base, Graeco-Roman Museum, Alexandria, Egypt**



Source: Fraser, 1957, p. 22

It's worth mentioning here that there is a portrait that was found and identified to be that of Antony. However, that portrait was manufactured later when the memory of Antony began to be

rehabilitated. It is made of schist, dates back to 40 -70 AD, and preserved in the Brooklyn Museum in New York (54.51) (Fig. 13). (Goudchaux, 2000, p. 173).

**FIGURE 13**

**Schist Portrait of Marc Antony, 40-60 AD.,Brooklyn Museum, New York**



Source: Gaudchaux, 2000, p. 25

It seems that Augustus destroyed the statues of Ptolemy Caesarion in Alexandria. Therefore, only two statues were found without any inscribed texts and are suggested by the scholars to be attributed to Caesarion. The first one is a basalt statue of a young looking late Ptolemaic pharaoh, most probably Caesarion. The king wears traditional Egyptian regalia, but the hair

visible beneath the nemes. The statue is supported by a back pillar that carried once an inscription. Probably recovered from Karnak; now housed in the Cairo Museum (13/3/15/3) (Fig. 14) (Goudchaux, 2000, p. 126). The other one is a granite portrait recovered from the harbour at Alexandria and preserved in the Graeco-Roman Museum Alexandria (Inv. 1015). It is part of a

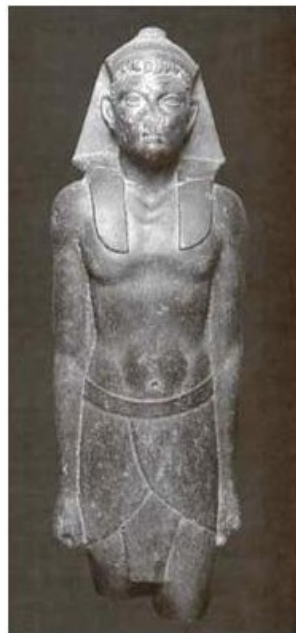
statue of about 16.4 feet in height and dates from the 1st century BC (Fig. 15) (Walker & Higgs, 2001, p. 172). However,

it seems that the destruction occurred only to the statues of Caesarion, as his images in the reliefs from Dendara and Edfu temple remain intact.

**FIGURE 14**  
**Granite head of Caesarion, National**  
**Museum, Alexandria, Egypt**



**FIGURE 15**  
**Basalt Statue of Caesarion, Karnak,**  
**Egyptian Museum Cairo, Egypt**



Source: Gaudchaux, 2001, p. 12

As for Cleopatra VII, Plutarch mentioned that Augustus accepted 2000 talents from Archibius, an Egyptian priest, in order that Cleopatra's images should not be pulled down. It seems

that this was the reason that the statues of Cleopatra continued to be displayed in Rome itself. We knew in the commentaries of Appien that he admired a statue of Cleopatra near the temple of

Venus (Appien, 1808, p. 102) that may have been carved during her sojourn in Rome with Julius Caesar in 46-44 BC. This statue is now preserved in Musei Gregoriano Profano, Vatican (Inv. No. 3851). Dio Cassius mentioned that the statue was still in situ in the early 3rd century (Dio Cassius, 51.22.3). There are also several statues of the queen displayed in the museums around the world (Goudchaux, 2000, pp. 119-

125). Moreover, images of Cleopatra on the walls of the temples of Upper Egypt remain intact.

The only example of the damnation the image from the Roman era, came from the reign of Caracalla who ordered the damnation of his brother Geta after murdering him. There is a wooden tondo now preserved in the Staatlichen Museum Berlin (Inv. Nr. 31329), represents Septimius Severus, Julia Domna, Caracalla, and an erased figure of Geta (Fig. 16) (Heinen, 1991).

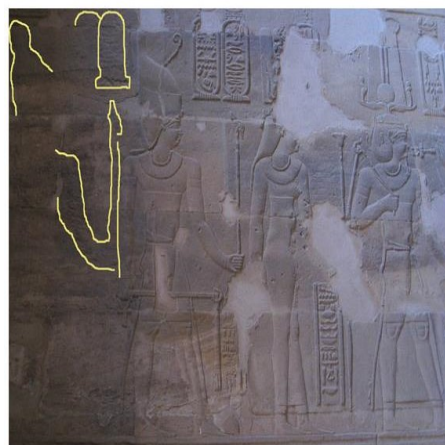
**FIGURE 16**  
Erased Geta, Wooden Tondo, Staatlich  
Museum Berlin



In the temple of Esna, the figure of Geta was carefully erased or overlaid by paint or chisel. There is a scene representing Emperor Severus standing before Khnum, Mehit and Heqa and receiving from the god the sign of life. Behind Severus stand his wife "Julia" accompanied by both of her sons Caracalla and Geta. Caracalla is crowned with the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt and holds the crook and the whip; while Geta is

crowned only with the white crown and holds the sceptre and the ankh. The figure and the name of Geta were carefully erased as if they were not there. There are other four scenes on the south and the north wall of the hypostyle hall that faced the same. Over the destroyed name of Geta, the name of Caracalla was engraved (Fig. 17) (Sauneron, 1952, pp. 115-118).

**FIGURE 17**  
Erased Geta, Esna Temple



### RE-WORKING THE IMAGE

Statues of a hated individual could be reworked, and the faces of their images were modified. The earliest example of such act is related to Ptolemy X. It seems that this act was adapted from the Roman civilization, as no such act appeared before in ancient Egypt or in ancient Greece. This could be related to the obvious interference of Rome in the Ptolemaic policy: appeared in the delegations and the visits and residence of the Ptolemaic kings in Rome. This of course led to the presence of the Roman influence in Ptolemaic life.

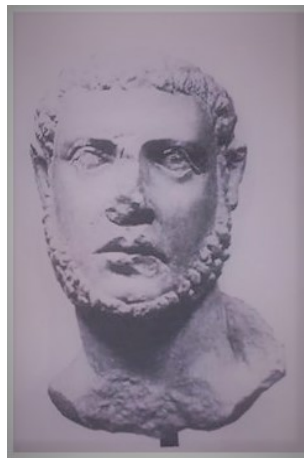
There are three representations of Ptolemy IX appearing to have been remodelled from portraits of his younger brother Ptolemy X. There is a marble head in Boston, found at Memphis that has been reworked of an older portrait with larger head. The

neck, jaw and the area under the chin were cut down. The hair and beard were refashioned with stucco additions. The general proportions of the facial features have been slimmed down. The reworked image may also have been complete with an eagle headdress, linked with Ptolemy IX whose title was Soter (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston No 59.51) (Fig. 18) (Smith, 1988, p. 57).

A marble portrait in the Getty Museum of Ptolemy IX (83.AA.330) exhibits similar signs of reworking (Fig. 19). The eyes and mouth have been reworked. The neck preserves clear evidence of having been cut down and the area below the right ear has been cut back. Chisel marks are visible at the back of the head. Top and back of head added separately in stucco. Left ear remodelled in stucco (Smith, 1988, p. 59).

**FIGURE 18**

**Ptolemy IX, Getty Museum**



Source: Smith, 1988, pp. 1-2

**FIGURE 19**

**Ptolemy IX, Boston Museum of Fine Arts**



Source: [www.mfa.org](http://www.mfa.org) (2017)



It seems that the act of reworking the portraits was common in Rome as Pliny said: “The painting of portraits, used to transmit through the ages correct likenesses of persons, has entirely gone out . . . Heads of statues are exchanged for others” (Pliny, 35.2.4). This practice was done for both the unpopular emperors and the popular ones. The researcher will only mention here the reworked examples that were done as a *damnatio memoriae*.

We knew for example that of fifteen known portraits of Nerva, twelve or thirteen are thought to be altered from those of Domitian (Bergmann & Zanker, 1981). Much of the imperial portraiture of Nero was mutilated and re-carved into likenesses of many emperors - most commonly they were re-carved as

Vespasian and Titus, the Flavian rulers who succeeded him. A portrait of Nero that came from Egypt (Columbia, Missouri, Museum of Art and Archaeology, No. 62.46) is reshaped to refer to emperor Gallineus (Fig. 20). The nose is largely destroyed and there is damage to the left eye and the left half forehead. The hair over the forehead has been re-carved, although it is too damaged. The eyes have been retouched, with the result that the left eye is smaller and higher than the right. The cheeks have been also reduced. The mouth was recut causing the left side being shorter than the right. Traces of Nero’s fleshy under shin are still visible in profile (Bergmann & Zanker, 1981, pp. 406-407).

**FIGURE 20**  
**Reworked head of Nero, Museum of**  
**Art & Archaeology, Missouri**



Source: Varner, 2004, p. 77

There is also another marble portrait of Titus from Egypt, preserved in Alexandria Museum (Inv. 26954), that is also reworked from a portrait of Nero (Varner, 2004, p. 246).

## CONCLUSION

*Damnatio Memoriae* was a way of punishment by which the memory of a person was removed from the history. It was used in Egypt starting from the Pharaonic period and was applied to the name (by changing or erasing it) or to the image (by erasing it), and sometimes to them both. The damnation that occurred by changing the name was a Pharaonic invention, while erasing the name or destroying the image probably entered Egypt by Tuthmosis III who brought this idea from the Near East during his military campaigns there. During the Graeco-Roman period, the *damnatio memoriae* continued to be used in the same way. However, a new method appeared in the late Ptolemaic period which is re-working the statues of the hated people.

The Kings whose names were erased during the Ptolemaic period are: Ptolemy the son, Horwennefer and the Meroetic

Kings (reign of Ptolemy V), Ptolemy VII Neos Philopator, Ptolemy X Alexander I, Mark Antony, Ptolemy Caesarion and Cleopatra VII. During the Roman era, the senate started to issue orders concerning the *damnatio memoriae*. Not all the damnation edicts that were issued in Rome, were applied inside Egypt. The best example is Nero whose name was found intact in all the inscriptions inside Egypt. However, we shouldn’t ignore that the statues of Nero inside Egypt were re-worked. Thus, the emperors that faced a damnation inside Egypt were: Caligula, Domitian, Commodus, and Geta. During the Roman period, the prefects of Egypt also faced *damnatio memoriae*: Cornelius Gallus (reign of Augustus), M. Mettius Rufus (reign of Domitian), and C. Vibius Maximus (reign of Trajan).

It seems that during the Ptolemaic era, the name of the king was erased from the Greek and the Hieroglyphic inscriptions. While, in the Roman era, the erasure of the name occurred to the Greek and the Latin inscriptions and skipped the hieroglyphic ones. Therefore, the hieroglyphic names of the condemned emperors were found intact inside the cartouches on the walls

of the Egyptian Temples (exception is the case of Geta). It is notable also that the name sometimes escaped the erasure when it was written in marginalia or in places that were escaped by the executors. Sometimes the damnatio memoriae was done in a successful way such as the case of Geta whose name

was removed from the hieroglyphic and the Greek inscriptions either in sculpture or papyri. The images of Geta were totally removed even from the minor art. Sometimes the kings faced a damnatio memoriae, and then their memory was rehabilitated. This occurred to Ptolemy VII and Mark Antony.

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**Damnatio Memoriae in Graeco-Roman Egypt**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Damnation by erasing the name</b>	<b>Damnation by erasing the image</b>	<b>Damnation by reworking the statue</b>
Ptolemy the son (reign of Ptolemy II)	✓		
Horwennefer (reign of Ptolemy V)	✓		
Meroitic Kings (reign of Ptolemy V)	✓		
Ptolemy VII,	erased and rehabilitated on order of Cleopatra II		
Ptolemy X	Erased but found in some some reliefs and papyri	✓	✓
Mark Antony	✓	Destroyed and rehabilitated	
Caesarion	✓	✓	
Cleopatra VII	Erased from the Greek inscriptions only (except for two inscriptions)		
Cornelius Gallus (reign of Augustus)	✓		
Nero			✓
C. Vibius Maximus (reign of Trajan)	✓		
Caligula	✓		
Domitian	✓		
M. Mettius Rufus (reign of Domitian)	✓		
Commodus	✓		
Geta	✓	✓	
Philippe the Arab	✓		