

# UNDER CONSTRUCTION

## LECTURE SERIES FB07

06.11.

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### **The Religious Policy of the Early Ptolemies: An Instrument of Power?**

Egypt – land of the Pharaohs. However, in the last centuries BC, these Pharaohs were not Egyptians anymore, nor Libyans, nor Nubians, as before. They were Macedonians. Alexander the Great conquered Egypt in 332 BC and thereby ended the Persian foreign rule. He was welcomed as liberator by the Egyptians and proclaimed king. After his untimely death, his friends divided his empire amongst themselves and Ptolemy, a general, seized power in Egypt. Now there was a new dynasty ruling the land of the Nile: not Egyptian, not related to the previous rulers, and above all Ptolemy was not even officially king in the beginning, but only a satrap who proclaimed himself king after the last members of Alexander's family had died. How to reign a country like Egypt with potentially rebellious priesthoods from a position like that? How to deal with a culture not their own? How to establish a dynasty in the shadow of the venerated Alexander? All these questions must have occurred in the beginning of the Ptolemaic rule over Egypt and somehow they were solved. Therefore, the lecture will examine which role religious policy played for the first Ptolemaic kings and in which ways they exploited religion to consolidate their reign.