


## “You Were Strangers in the Land of Egypt” (Exod 22:20): Notes on the Attitude(s) towards Foreigners in Ancient Egypt

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**ABSTRACT:** The article discusses various attitudes towards foreigners that can be perceived in ancient Egyptian material. It is argued that there was no single and unchangeable attitude towards foreigners throughout ancient Egyptian history, but instead that Egyptian attitudes to foreigners changed over time due to various historical and social factors. It is also argued that these attitudes reflected a constant negotiation between the traditional and stereotypical perception of foreigners as enemies of the Egyptian state and more nuanced approaches in which foreigners could have a number of roles to play in Egyptian society, which often led to significant transformations of Egyptians' self-identity. Therefore, the traditional image of ancient Egypt as a highly xenophobic culture is called into question.

**KEYWORDS:** ancient Egyptian identity, foreigners in ancient Egypt, social changes, ancient xenophobia

In scholarly literature ancient Egypt is often described as a very conservative and xenophobic civilisation.<sup>1</sup> Undoubtedly, this image was strengthened by the Exodus narrative in which the land of the pharaohs features as the ‘house of slavery’ (Exod 20:2<sup>2</sup>) from which the people of Israel can be delivered only by the direct intervention of YHWH. Yet, the image of Egypt in the Bible itself is far more ambiguous as it can also be portrayed as a place of salvation for the patriarchs Abraham and Jacob in Genesis (12:9–20 and 46–50), for the Jewish refugees after the Babylonian conquest in Jeremiah (42:1–43:7) as well as for Jesus’

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- 1 Cf. e.g. J.-P. Graeff, “Kemet, Kemet über alles! Zu Patriotismus, Nationalismus und Rassismus im Alten Ägypten,” *Diener des Horus. Festschrift für Dieter Kurth zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. W. Waitkus) (Aegyptiaca Hamburgensia 1; Hamburg: PeWe 2008) 123–133.
- 2 All references to the Bible follow the New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition. It is, however, noteworthy that ‘house of slavery’ is the modern rendering of the Hebrew phrase *bēt ‘āḇādīm*, the literal meaning of which is ‘house of slaves’. I am grateful to one of the Anonymous Reviewers for bringing this detail to my attention.

family in Matthew (1:13–15). Moreover, prior to becoming the house of slavery in Exodus, Egypt is described in Genesis as a place which not only welcomes foreigners in the time of a famine, but also allows them to settle among her people and grow, with one of them being appointed to a high administrative position by the pharaoh himself (Gen 37–50). Other books of the Old Testament also inform us that on the political level Egypt can be perceived either as an important ally (e.g. 1 Kgs 3:1; 2 Kgs 17:4) or as a dangerous enemy (e.g. 1 Kgs 14:25–26; 2 Kgs 23:29–30). It seems that this variety of portrayals of the land of the pharaohs in the Bible to some extent reflects the complexity of the Egyptian attitudes towards foreigners which we can perceive in the pharaonic sources.

However, before proceeding to further analysis, some caveats are necessary. We should always bear in mind the limited and fragmentary nature of our sources which, for the most part, reflect the perspective of elites which is not necessarily the same as that of ordinary people. Moreover, it is important to emphasise that attitudes to foreigners might have not only changed in time, but might have simply varied with respect to a particular foreign people and may differ due to the context and provenance of our sources. In fact, as scholars have recently pointed out, the problem of identity and ethnicity in ancient world is far more complex than usually realised, as being ‘Egyptian’ and/or ‘foreigner’ might have meant a whole variety of things, depending on who, where, and when was concerned.<sup>3</sup> What follows should thus necessarily be regarded as a preliminary sketch of the most important phenomena concerning the ancient Egyptian perception of foreign peoples, as can be inferred from the available material.

## 1. Some Terminological Issues

When we look at ancient Egyptian sources, we are immediately struck by one fundamental yet quite astonishing fact: for a great part of the Egyptian history there is simply no specific term with which the Egyptians referred to themselves. Originally, they used the term *rmṯ*, which might be understood either as a collective word for ‘people’ or as a reference to an individual man (sc. male), depending on the determinatives following the word.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the term might equally well be applied also to foreigners. Late Demotic texts while speaking about the Egyptian people can indeed add a specification calling them *rmṯ n kmy* (‘people of

3 See, for this, G. Moers, “‘Egyptian Identity’? Unlikely, and Never National,” *Fuzzy Boundaries. Festschrift für Antonio Loprieno* (eds. H. Amstutz et al.) (Hamburg: Widmaier 2015) 693–704; S.T. Smith, “Ethnicity: Constructions of Self and Other in Ancient Egypt,” *Journal of Egyptian History* 11 (2018) 113–146; U. Matic, *Ethnic Identities in the Land of the Pharaohs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2020); D. Candelora, “The Egyptianization of Egypt and Egyptology: Exploring Identity in Ancient Egypt,” *Ancient Egyptian Society. Challenging Assumptions, Exploring Approaches* (eds. K.M. Cooney – D. Candelora – N. Ben-Marzouk) (London – New York: Routledge 2023) 103–110.

4 *Wb.* II, 421,9–424,18.

the Blackland, i.e. Egypt)<sup>5</sup> to avoid confusion with other peoples living in Egypt in the Late Greek, and Roman Periods (this later passed on into Coptic **ⲡⲏⲚⲕⲏⲙⲉ**–‘Egyptian’<sup>6</sup>). However, such a specification, even if sometimes attested in earlier sources, does not seem to have been widely used in earlier periods.

On the other hand, foreigners could have been variously termed in the Egyptian language. Since Egypt, or the Blackland (*km.t*) as the Egyptians themselves called her, was surrounded by mountainous and desert lands (*h3s.wt*), foreigners were commonly referred to as *h3st.j.w* or ‘the Desert-people’<sup>7</sup>—this is certainly one of the most ancient and the commonest of the terms designating foreigners in the Egyptian, one that seems to have been used throughout the whole Egyptian history. Another one is *pd.t.j.w*, literally meaning ‘Bowmen’ or rather ‘Bow-people’,<sup>8</sup> which is connected to the traditional designation of Egypt’s enemies as the Nine Bows (*pd.wt psd.t*),<sup>9</sup> an idea which is attested as early as the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> dynasty.<sup>10</sup> Middle Egyptian knows also two other terms for strangers and foreigners: *drdr*<sup>11</sup> and *hpp.w*;<sup>12</sup> both of them appear relatively late and become more widespread in Late Egyptian. The latter uses two more terms to refer to foreigners and strangers: *k3.wj*, which seems to refer more specifically to people speaking foreign languages,<sup>13</sup> and *qrrj*, which, quite interestingly, seems to be a Semitic loanword.<sup>14</sup>

5 J.H. Johnson, *The Demotic Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute, University of Chicago 2021) R, 40, <https://isac.uchicago.edu/research/publications/chicago-dei-demotic-dictionary> [access: 10.01.2023].

6 W.E. Crum, *A Coptic Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon 1939) 295.

7 *Wb.* III, 235,14. A similar phenomenon can be observed in China, whose most common name 中國 (*Zhōngguó*–‘the Middle State’) was associated with the idea of cultural primacy of the ‘central states’ of the Yellow River valley against the less civilised peoples of the periphery; J.W. Esherick, “How the Qing Became China,” *Empire to Nation. Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World* (eds. J.W. Esherick – H. Kayali – E. Van Young) (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield 2006) 232–233.

8 *Wb.* I, 570,1–4.

9 D. Valbelle, *Les Neufs Arcs. L’Égyptien et les étrangers de la préhistoire à la conquête d’Alexandre* (Paris: Colin 1990) 46–47.

10 Cf. the base of the statue of king Netjerikhet (Djeser) decorated with nine bows on which the king originally stood (Cairo JE 49889); D. Wildung, *Imhotep und Amenhotep. Gottwerdung im alten Ägypten* (MÄS 36; München – Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag 1977) 5. Later on, images of the Nine Bows are known from the sandals of Pepy I of the 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty and of Tutankhamun of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Also the processional routes in the palaces of Malqata and Amarna (temp. Amenhotep III–Akhenaten of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty) were decorated with images of bound captives, so that the king could trample the enemies of Egypt as he walked; Smith, “Ethnicity,” 123.

11 *Wb.* V, 604,8–13.

12 *Wb.* III, 259,13.

13 L.H. Lesko – B. Switalski Lesko, *A Dictionary of Late Egyptian*, 2 ed. (Providence, RI: Scribe 2004) II, 166. On language as an important factor of shaping Egyptian identity, see G. Moers, “‘Bei mir wird es Dir gut ergehen, denn Du wirst die Sprache Ägyptens hören!’: Verschieden und doch gleich: Sprache als identitätsrelevanter Faktor im pharaonischen Ägypten,” *Muster und Funktionen kultureller Selbst- und Fremdwahrnehmung. Beiträge zur internationalen Geschichte der sprachlichen und literarischen Emanzipation* (eds. U.-C. Sander – F. Paul) (Göttingen: Wallstein 2000) 45–99.

14 J.E. Hoch, *Semitic Words in Egyptian Texts of the New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1994) 295–296, no. 429.

It seems that these linguistic phenomena can be explained by the historical development of the Egyptian culture: due to the relative (although certainly not complete) geographic isolation of their land, at first the Egyptians simply did not need to invent a specific designation for themselves in order to differentiate themselves from other peoples, who might have been either referred to by a specific name (such as *'Aamu* for the Asiatics, *Nehe-siu* for the Nubians and *Tjehenu* or *Tjemehu* for the Libyans),<sup>15</sup> or designated generally as *h3st.j.w* or *pd.t.j.w*, terms which implied their less civilised status as compared to the Egyptians. In the late Middle Kingdom, when contacts with foreign peoples became much more frequent – as a consequence of the active foreign policy of the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty kings as well as the continuous infiltration of Egypt by the foreign peoples from both the North and the South – the Egyptians faced a necessity to invent new terms for strangers and foreigners, which became even more pressing in the New Kingdom period, when Egypt became an active player in the international politics on an unprecedented scale.<sup>16</sup> From then on, foreigners became an essential part of the Egyptian society and were to remain as such up to the end of Antiquity. At the same time, the Egyptians kept calling themselves *rmt*, or simply ‘people’, following, just as in many other cases, the traditional customs of their forefathers. It seems that this constant negotiation between old tradition and changing reality is the essence of the Egyptian attitude(s) to foreigners throughout the history of the pharaonic culture.

## 2. Foreigners as Enemies

One of the most obvious points in Egyptian perception of the foreigners is the fact that they might have been considered enemies of the Egyptian state and culture. Egyptian ideology of kingship demanded from the king to be the guardian of *Ma'at* (*m3<sup>c</sup>.t*), understood as the cosmic, socio-political, and ethical order established by the sun-god at the creation of the universe.<sup>17</sup> As an oft-quoted text dating to the New Kingdom period informs us: “Ra has placed the king (X) upon the land of the living forever and ever so that he may judge the people and satisfy the gods, so that he may bring *Ma'at* into being and annihilate

15 See, for this, G. Chantraine, “About ‘Egyptianity’ and ‘Foreignness’ in Egyptian Texts. A Context-Sensitive Lexical Study,” *A Stranger in the House – the Crossroads III. Proceedings of an International Conference on Foreigners in Ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern Societies of the Bronze Age Held in Prague, September 10–13, 2018* (eds. J. Mynářová – M. Kilani – S. Alivernini) (Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Arts 2019) 49–72.

16 This problem has been thoroughly discussed by M. Liverani, *International Relations in the Ancient Near East, 1600–1100 BC* (Houndmills – New York: Palgrave 2001).

17 For various aspects of *Ma'at*, see J. Assmann, *Ma'at, l'Égypte pharaonique et l'idée de justice sociale* (Paris: Juillard 1989); J. Assmann, *Ma'at. Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*, 2 ed. (München: Beck 1995). For the responsibility of the king as the guardian of *Ma'at*, see also E. Teeter, *The Presentation of Maat. Ritual and Legitimacy in Ancient Egypt* (SAOC 57; Chicago, IL: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago 1997).

*Izefet*.<sup>18</sup> It should be stressed that although *Ma'at* and *Izefet* (*izft*) can be roughly identified as Good and Evil, respectively, the understanding of both terms is not the same as in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. *Ma'at* does not refer to the absolute Good understood as the lack of any kind of evil, but rather to the balance of creative and destructive forces which at the end of the day are used for the benefit of the universe as well as of the state and of an individual man. For example, social inequalities are perceived as the natural order of things, which means that they are not evil *per se*, just as long as the rich do not abuse their power by taking advantage of the poor – instead the former are encouraged by a number of didactic texts to show solidarity to those who form part of the lower social strata.<sup>19</sup> The balance of *Ma'at* is, however, under constant threat from the evil forces of Chaos which keep trying to destroy the order. These evil forces can manifest themselves, among other things, in the form of foreign peoples which the king is supposed to submit to Egyptian control.<sup>20</sup> This is why Egyptian temples are covered with numerous representations of the king fighting foreign peoples, either in smiting or trampling scenes as well as (especially from the New Kingdom onwards) military scenes.

Smiting scenes are definitely the most ancient type of the aforementioned triad, being attested in the Egyptian record as early as the Predynastic Period.<sup>21</sup> In the traditional layout developed later on, the king smites the representatives of three peoples: namely the Nubians, the Asiatics, and the Libyans, i.e. the three neighbours of Egypt. The same cast of foreign peoples occurs also in the trampling scenes, attested from the Old Kingdom onwards, in which the king can be represented either as a sphinx or as a griffin.<sup>22</sup> Of course, in both instances other foreign peoples may be represented as well.<sup>23</sup>

Military scenes are usually more specific, presenting royal exploits during particular campaigns against specific people. Due to the fact that such scenes are usually placed on the outermost walls of the temples, it is often believed that they functioned as a kind of royal propaganda, especially as they always portray the victory of the Egyptian king. This view, however, seems to be inaccurate. The Egyptians believed that representing a state of affairs in either written or iconographic form was equal with creating this particular state of affairs. On the other hand, destroying a text or image meant inflicting the very thing it described or represented. This means that representing royal defeat would be identical with creating a state of affairs in which the king has failed to fulfil his most important

18 Translation after the hieroglyphic text in J. Assmann, *Der König als Sonnenpriester. Ein kosmographischer Begleittext zur kultischen Sonnenhymnik in thebanischen Tempeln und Gräbern* (ADAIK 7; Glückstadt: Augustin, 1970) 19. All translations of Egyptian texts contained in this paper were made by the author.

19 Assmann, *Ma'at*, 35–55; Assmann, *Ma'at*, 58–121.

20 M.-A. Bonhême – A. Forgeau, *Pharaon. Les secrets du Pouvoir* (Paris: Colin 1988) 188–235.

21 For this type of scenes, see E. Swan Hall, *The Pharaoh Smites His Enemies. A Comparative Study* (MÄS 44; München – Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag 1986).

22 For griffins in Egyptian iconography, see S. Gerke, *Der altägyptische Greif. Von der Vielfalt eines 'Fabeltiers'* (SAK Beiheften 15; Hamburg: Buske 2014).

23 Cf. e.g. the image of a Puntite in the trampling scene of king Niuserra of the 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty; L. Borchardt, *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Ne-user-Re'* (Leipzig: Hinrichs 1907) 46–48 with pl. 12, nos. 3 and 5.

responsibility as the guardian of *Ma'at*, which in consequence would have meant the victory of Chaos and the virtual destruction of the universe (and Egyptian state with it). Putting scenes of the royal victory on the external walls of the temple was rather meant to create a state of affairs in which the king constantly triumphs over the evil forces, driving them away from the temple understood as the seat of *Ma'at*. This means that it was not important whether the scenes portrayed the events faithfully; in fact, they were not supposed to do that, because what mattered was the victory of the king. It was also not important whether anyone could actually see and properly understand the reliefs, as they were supposed to magically fulfil their function by themselves.<sup>24</sup> This explains why we occasionally find military scenes which either simply cannot represent historical events<sup>25</sup> or do not represent them exactly as they happened.<sup>26</sup> An interesting case is the so-called Libyan family scene attested in several Old Kingdom funerary complexes.<sup>27</sup> There, the king is represented in the form of a sphinx trampling Libyans in the presence of the family of the Libyan chief: his wife Khutites and two sons: Wesa and Weni. What is peculiar about this scene is the fact that in all instances the relatives of the Libyan chief bear exactly the same names, which demonstrates that we are not dealing here with historical figures, but rather with a stereotyped image of a foreign enemy who needs to be defeated and subdued by the Egyptian king. Interestingly, the scene reoccurs in the funerary complex of king Taharqa of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty,<sup>28</sup> which once again suggests its traditional rather than historical character – even if in this particular case the return to this specific motif might have been dictated by the strong animosity between the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty, originating from Nubia, and Libyans who used to rule Egypt as the 22<sup>nd</sup>–24<sup>th</sup> dynasties,<sup>29</sup> only to regain power as the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty some time later (see below).

Some texts credit foreigners with characteristics that were considered highly negative in ancient Egyptian society. The Asiatics are thus repeatedly accused of savagery and uncivilised behaviour as in the famous passage of the *Instructions for (Merikara)*:

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- 24 For further arguments on the inadequacy of the notion of propaganda with respect to ancient Egypt, see F. Tarterka, “‘I Have to Put It on My Wall!': The Function of 'Historical' Reliefs in the Temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari,” *Of Gods and Men. Research on the Egyptian Temple from the New Kingdom to the Graeco-Roman Period* (ed. A.I. Fernández Pichel) (MOA 2; Alcalá de Henares: Universidad de Alcalá 2022) 35–79.
- 25 E.g. the battle reliefs of Ramesses II in the temple of Beit el-Wali; H. Ricke – G.R. Hughes – E.F. Wente, *The Beit el-Wali Temple of Ramesses II* (OINE 1; Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1967) pls. 9–14; C. Obsomer, *Ramsès II* (Paris: Pygmalion 2012) 117–118.
- 26 E.g. the battle reliefs of Sethy I of the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty at Karnak; A. Degève, “La campagne asiatique de l’an 1 de Séthi I<sup>er</sup> représentée sur le mur extérieur nord de la salle hypostyle du temple d’Amon à Karnak,” *RdE* 57 (2006) 47–76.
- 27 A.J. Spalinger, “Some Notes on the Libyans of the Old Kingdom and Later Historical Reflexes,” *JSEA* 9 (1979) 125–160; D. Stockfisch, “Bemerkungen zur sog. Libyschen Familie,” *Wege öffnen. Festschrift für Rolf Gundlach zum 65. Geburtstag* (ed. M. Schade-Busch) (ÄAT 35; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1996) 315–325.
- 28 M.F. Laming Macadam, *The Temples of Kawa. II. History and Archaeology of the Site* (London: Oxford University Press 1955) 63–66 with pls. IX and XLIX.
- 29 R. K. Ritner, “Libyan vs. Nubian as the Ideal Egyptian,” *Egypt and Beyond. Essays Presented to Leonard H. Lesko upon His Retirement from the Wilbour Chair of Egyptology at Brown University, June 2005* (eds. S.E. Thompson – P. Der Manuelian) (Providence, RI: Brown University 2008) 305–314.



But now such things are said about the Bow-people: the wretched *ʿAamu* – he is miserable because of the place in which he dwells,<sup>30</sup> drained of water, devoid of wood, whose paths are numerous and difficult because of the mountains. He does not sit in one place as the food makes his feet wander about. He is fighting since the time of Horus, yet he does not conquer nor can be conquered.<sup>31</sup>

Also the *Prophecy of Neferti* stresses the uncivilised character of the Asiatic peoples, describing them as nomads in contrast to the Egyptians, who settle in towns: “The *ʿAamu* travel in their strength, frightening the hearts of those who are harvesting and taking away the yoked oxen at the plough.”<sup>32</sup> Other texts compare Asiatics to dogs,<sup>33</sup> which even today is one of the worst invectives in Near Eastern societies.

On the other hand, the Nubian kingdom of Kush is quite consistently referred to as the ‘wretched Kush’ (*kš ḥz.t*),<sup>34</sup> while this pejorative epithet as a general rule is not so consistently attached to other peoples. Egyptian royal inscriptions usually speak of the Nubians in highly negative terms, as illustrated by the following passage from the boundary stela of Senwosret III of the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty erected in Semna in Nubia: “They are not the people that one would respect, but they are despicable ones whose hearts are broken.”<sup>35</sup>

Such invectives could have been used also with respect to the rulers of foreign states: e.g. in the Qadesh inscriptions of Ramesses II, where the Hittite king Muwatallis II is referred to either as ‘the wretched ruler of Kheta’ (*p3 wr ḥzj n ḥt3*) or ‘the fallen one of Kheta’ (*p3 ḥr n ḥt3*).<sup>36</sup>

It should be emphasised, however, that although Egyptian ideology of kingship perceives all foreign peoples as enemies of the Egyptian state, irrespectively of their social and political organisation and their actual relations with Egypt, this does not necessarily result in xenophobic attitudes of the State or individual Egyptians towards foreign minorities in general or individual foreigners in particular. Interestingly, there are some foreign

30 This idea has been also graphically expressed in the form of the Bedouins suffering from hunger, depicted in the royal funerary complexes of the Old Kingdom; A. Ćwiek, *Relief Decoration in the Royal Funerary Complexes of the Old Kingdom. Studies in the Development, Scene Content and Iconography* (Diss. Warsaw University; Warsaw 2003) 256–257, [https://gizamedia.rc.fas.harvard.edu/images/MFA-images/Giza/GizalImage/full/library/cwiek\\_royal\\_relief\\_dec.pdf](https://gizamedia.rc.fas.harvard.edu/images/MFA-images/Giza/GizalImage/full/library/cwiek_royal_relief_dec.pdf) [access: 10.01.2023].

31 Merikara, E 91–93; translation after the Egyptian text in J.F. Quack, *Studien zum Lebre für Merikare* (Göttinger Orientforschungen 4. Reihe Ägypten 23; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1992) 183–184.

32 pHermitage 1116B, ll. 18–19; translation after the Egyptian text in W. Helck, *Die Prophezeiung des Nfr.tj*, 2 ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1992) 18.

33 E.g. in the *Tale of Sinuhe* B 222–223 (all references follow the edition by R. Koch, *Die Erzählung des Sinuhe* [Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 17; Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation Reine Élisabeth 1990] 66–67). In this particular case, the comparison of the Asiatic rulers to dogs is used to express the idea that they are loyal as dogs, but given the negative connotations of the dog in the Near East, the choice of this metaphor with respect to the Asiatic rulers seems very significant.

34 S.T. Smith, *Wretched Kush. Ethnic identities and boundaries in Egypt's Nubian Empire* (London – New York: Routledge 2003) 1.

35 Stela Berlin 1157, l. 11; translation after the Egyptian text in C. Obsomer, *Les campagnes de Sésostris dans Hérodote. Essai d'interprétation du texte grec à la lumière des réalités égyptiennes* (CEA I; Bruxelles: Connaissance de l'Égypte ancienne 1989) pl. II.

36 Cf. K.A. Kitchen, *Rameside Inscriptions. Historical and Biographical* (Oxford: Blackwell 1979) II, 105,3–9.

peoples whose status within the ideology of kingship is markedly different: one of them are undoubtedly the Puntites, i.e. the inhabitants of the mysterious land of Punt, located in an unspecified part of East Africa, known as the source of various exotic and aromatic substances.<sup>37</sup> As the land of Punt came to be understood as the earthly seat of various Egyptian deities, especially the sun-god,<sup>38</sup> the inhabitants of Punt are often portrayed as friends rather than foes.<sup>39</sup> However, there are images in which the land of Punt appears as one of Egypt's enemies subjected to the power of the pharaoh,<sup>40</sup> which seems to express the idea of the pharaoh's dominion over the entire universe.

### 3. Foreigners as Allies

An important change in Egyptian attitude towards foreigners can be perceived in the sources with the advent of the New Kingdom and the pharaohs' involvement in international politics. Prior to that, the rulers of the foreign countries were almost universally portrayed as enemies<sup>41</sup> as evidenced by the so-called execration texts. These are lists of mostly foreign<sup>42</sup> peoples and individuals inscribed on figurines of bound captives, which were ritually buried in order to harm the persons and entities enumerated in them. Such texts are attested mostly in the Old and Middle Kingdom periods.<sup>43</sup> In the New Kingdom period, relations with foreign rulers became far more complex, as they could be treated as either political enemies or allies. Interestingly, the Egyptians were eager to make peace treaties with states that were once regarded as fierce enemies, which can be demonstrated by an (unfortunately unpreserved) peace treaty between Egypt and Mitanni concluded in the reign of Thutmose IV

37 For the land of Punt in general, see R. Herzog, *Punt* (ADAIK 6; Glückstadt: Augustin 1968); A. Diego Espinel, *Abriendo los caminos de Punt. Contactos entre Egipto y el ámbito afroárabe durante la Edad del Bronce* (ca. 3000 a.C.–1065 a.C.) (Arqueología 45; Barcelona: Bellaterra 2011); F. Breyer, *Punt. Die Suche nach dem »Gottesland«* (CHANE 80; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2016).

38 See, for this, F. Taterka, "Hatshepsut's Expedition to the Land of Punt – Novelty or Tradition?," *Current Research in Egyptology 2015. Proceedings of the Sixteenth Annual Symposium. University of Oxford, United Kingdom, 15–18 April 2015* (eds. C. Alvarez et al.) (Oxford – Philadelphia, PA: Oxbow Books 2016) 114–123; F. Taterka, "The Flight of King Ptolemy X Alexander I to the Land of Punt," *SAK* 50 (2021) 229–349.

39 This is especially true for the reliefs from the so-called Punt Portico in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari; W.S. Smith, "The Land of Punt," *JARCE* 1 (1962) pl. [I]. See also F. Taterka, "Hatshepsut's Punt Reliefs: Their Structure and Function," *JARCE* 55 (2019) 189–203.

40 Besides the already mentioned occurrence of the Puntite in the Old Kingdom trampling scenes, the land of Punt is also occasionally mentioned in the New Kingdom topographical lists showing lands and peoples defeated by the king of Egypt; J. Cooper, "Punt in the 'Northern' Topographical Lists," *JEA* 104 (2018) 93–98.

41 A notable exception is the portrayal of nomad chief Amunenshi in *The Tale of Sinuhe*, as well as the mention therein of three Syrian kinglets who are said to be loyal to king Senwosret I; T. Schneider, "Sinuhes Notiz über die Könige: Syrisch-anatolische Herrschertitel in ägyptischer Überlieferung," *AeL* 12 (2002) 257–272.

42 Occasionally, however, the execration texts mention names of Egyptian officials who, for unknown reason, fell from royal grace; cf. G. Posener, *Cinq figurines d'envoûtement* (Bibliothèque d'études 101; Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale 1987) 35–38, 55–56.

43 G. Posener, "Ächtungstexte," *LÄI*, 67–69.



of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty and Artatama I of Mitanni,<sup>44</sup> and another one between Egypt and Hatti in the reign of Ramesses II of the 19<sup>th</sup> dynasty and Ḫattušilis III of Hatti.<sup>45</sup> In both cases the pharaohs have even married foreign princesses in order to seal the deal<sup>46</sup> and the old resentments were apparently forgotten. This is especially visible in the case of Ramesses II who first fought with the Hittites at Qadesh under Muwatallis II,<sup>47</sup> but later made a peace treaty with Ḫattušilis III. In later years, royal couples of Egypt and Hatti exchanged cordial letters<sup>48</sup> which led to the above-mentioned marriages of Ramesses II with two daughters of Ḫattušilis III. Even later, Ramesses II's successor Merenptah would send corn in order to support the Hittites who were apparently no longer considered to be Egypt's enemy by this time.<sup>49</sup>

Yet, despite seemingly friendly relations with some of the foreign states, the Egyptians have not stopped considering the pharaoh as the most powerful ruler in the world – and this understanding is clearly visible in the Amarna letters exchanged by Amenhotep III and Akhenaten of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty with various foreign states, both the powerful and less important ones. Thus, when the Kassite kings of Babylonia Kadašman-Enlil I and Burnaburiaš II corresponded with Amenhotep III, they consistently referred to him as ‘the king of Egypt, my brother’ (*šar māti Mišri aḫia*), treating the pharaoh as a peer to the ruler of Babylonia.<sup>50</sup> But when Amenhotep III sent his letters to Babylonia, he referred to the local kings, with equal consistency, as ‘the king of Karduniaš (i.e. Babylonia), my brother’ (*šar māti Karanduniše aḫia*) but to himself as ‘the great king, the king of Egypt, your brother’ (*šarru rabū šar māti Mišri aḫuka*),<sup>51</sup> subtly underlining his pre-eminent status by denying the equality presupposed among the monarchs of powerful states. The superiority of the pharaoh could have also been expressed in a more explicit manner, as in the case of the letter EA 4, in which an unknown king (perhaps Kadašman-Enlil I) expresses his wish to marry an Egyptian princess. When the pharaoh refuses under the pretext that no

44 For this treaty, see B.M. Bryan, *The Reign of Thutmose IV* (Baltimore, MD – London: Johns Hopkins University Press 1991) 336–339; B.M. Bryan, “The 18<sup>th</sup> Dynasty before the Amarna Period (c.1550–1352 BC),” *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, 2 ed. (ed. I. Shaw) (Oxford – New York: Oxford University Press 2002) 250–251.

45 For this treaty, see E. Edel, *Der Vertrag zwischen Ramses II. von Ägypten und Ḫattušili III. von Ḫatti* (WVDOG 95; Berlin: Gebr. Mann 1997); Obsomer, *Ramsès II*, 194–203.

46 For the Mitannian marriage of Thutmose IV, see Bryan, *Thutmose IV*, 118–119. The alliance with Mittani was also strengthened by the later marriages of Thutmose IV's direct successors, Amenhotep III and Akhenaten, with Mitannian princesses; A.H. Podany, *Brotherhood of Kings. How International Relations Shaped the Ancient Near East* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2010) 217–242. For the Hittite marriages of Ramesses II, see Obsomer, *Ramsès II*, 205–214.

47 For the most recent overview of the battle of Qadesh, see Obsomer, *Ramsès II*, 127–171.

48 For this correspondence, see E. Edel, *Die ägyptisch-bethitische Korrespondenz aus Boghazköi in babylonischer und bethitischer Sprache* (ARWAW 77; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 1994) I–II.

49 K.A. Kitchen, *Ramesside Inscriptions. Historical and Biographical* (Oxford: Blackwell 1980) III, 5.3.

50 E.g. EA 2:1; EA 6:1–2. All references to the Amarna letters follow the edition by A.F. Rainey – W.M. Schniedewind – Z. Cochavi-Rainey, *The El-Amarna Correspondence. A New Edition of the Cuneiform Letters from the Site of El-Amarna on Collations of all Extant Tablets* (Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2015) I–II.

51 E.g. EA 1:2–3.

Egyptian princess has ever married a foreigner, the Babylonian ruler insists that Amenhotep III should send him just any woman, so that he might pretend to have married an Egyptian princess. When the pharaoh refuses again, the Babylonian ruler tries his luck one more time, asking for gold, which was believed to be as abundant as dust in Egypt.<sup>52</sup> In another letter king Kadašman-Enlil I complains that Amenhotep III refused to grant an audience to his messengers who were supposed to see if his sister, whom the king of Egypt had married, was doing well. In his response Amenhotep III claims that the messengers of the Babylonian king were not worthy enough to be granted an audience, as one of them was a donkey herdsman.<sup>53</sup> In all of these examples, Amenhotep III overtly demonstrates his superiority over Mesopotamian rulers.

But the increasing involvement of Egypt in the games of international politics has also resulted in a change in the perception of Egypt's place in the world. This can be best illustrated in the reign of Akhenaten, Amenhotep III's successor, when the Great Hymn to the Aten described the sun-god as the universal ruler and creator of all peoples:

You create the earth according to your heart's desire – you being alone – as well as the people, all big and small cattle, and everything which is upon the earth, which walks on legs and which rises up flying with their wings, and the foreign lands of Kharu (i.e. Syria) and Kush and the Blackland (i.e. Egypt). You put every man in his place and make their belongings, each one having a portion in his barley and the reckoning of his lifetime. Their tongues differ in speech and their nature likewise. Their skins are distinct, for you have distinguished the foreigners.<sup>54</sup>

In the same way, the living image of the sun-god on earth, the king, is now portrayed not only as a ruler of Egypt who is expected to hold back the attacks of the evil forces of Chaos, as in the previous periods, but also as a universal ruler of all lands and peoples who bring tribute to him in recognition of his power.<sup>55</sup>

Of course, this image of the pharaoh as a universal ruler was not necessarily shared by the peoples who were represented as the king's subordinates in Egypt. The most drastic example of the contrast between ideologically inspired representations and brutal reality can be found in the *Report of Wenamun* from late New Kingdom / early Third Intermediate Period. This text is composed as if it was a report of an Egyptian official sent by the high priest of Amun-Ra Herihor to Byblos in order to bring back with him the precious cedar

52 This idea recurs in EA 16:14; EA 19:61; EA 20:52; EA 27:106; EA 29:164.

53 This matter is described in detail in EA 1. In EA 3:13–17 Kadašman-Enlil I complains that Amenhotep III detained his messenger for six years before granting the request of the Babylonian king.

54 Translation after the Egyptian text in M. Sandman, *Texts from the Amarna Period* (Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 8; Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth 1938) 94–95.

55 For the tribute scenes depicted in Egyptian tombs, see S. Hallmann, *Die Tributzszenen des Neuen Reiches* (ÄAT 66; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2006); F.B. Anthony, *Foreigners in Ancient Egypt. Theban Tomb Paintings from the Early Eighteenth Dynasty (1550–1372 BC)* (London: Bloomsbury 2017). It should be noted, however, that tribute scenes are attested already in the Old Kingdom funerary complexes: Čwiek, *Relief Decoration*, 341–342, – yet they become far more widespread in Egyptian iconography with the advent of the New Kingdom.

wood for the sacred barque of the god (the historicity of this text is, however, a matter of controversy).<sup>56</sup> When Wenamun arrives to Byblos, he expects the local ruler to furnish him with any amount of cedar wood required by the Egyptian official. But to his surprise, the ruler of Byblos refuses to do that unless he gets paid for the material. As the text puts it:

If the ruler of the Blackland had been the lord of my property and if I had been also his servant, would he have sent me over silver and gold, saying: ‘Carry out the commission for Amun!’? Was that, which had been given to my father, a gift? As for me and myself, am I your servant or am I also the servant of the one who had sent you?<sup>57</sup>

Even if on an ideological level the Egyptians still regarded their king as the universal ruler of all lands and peoples, in the new historical circumstances of the late New Kingdom / early Third Intermediate Period the local rulers in Syria and Palestine were able to question Egypt’s sovereignty, which must have been quite a shock for the Egyptians and this shock was reflected in Wenamun’s report.

#### 4. Foreigners as Subjects

Our sources suggest that it was in the First Intermediate Period that Egypt began to be infiltrated by foreign populations, especially from the East.<sup>58</sup> Foreigners would come to Egypt in order to trade with the Egyptians,<sup>59</sup> but some nomadic populations would also pose a threat to various Egyptian enterprises. The latter can be observed already in the Old Kingdom period, when king Pepy I of the 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty organised five punitive expeditions against the *Shasu*-Bedouin, all of which were led by an official named Weni, as we are informed by his self-presentation.<sup>60</sup> How serious this threat was can be deduced from the self-presentation of Pepynakht called Heqaib who mentions that under Pepy II of the 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty, the nomads managed to kill an Egyptian official called Ankhety, who was ordered to supervise the dispatch of a maritime expedition to the land of Punt.<sup>61</sup> In order to stop the growing infiltration of the foreign peoples from the East, which continued throughout the First

56 A detailed analysis of this text can be found in B.U. Schipper, *Die Erzählung des Wenamun. Ein Literaturwerk im Spannungsfeld von Politik, Geschichte und Religion* (OBO 209; Fribourg – Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg – Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2005).

57 pMoscow 120, 2.10–13; translation after the Egyptian text in A.H. Gardiner, *Late-Egyptian Stories* (Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 1; Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation Reine Élisabeth 1932) 68.

58 J.K. Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt. The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition* (New York – Oxford: Oxford University Press 1996) 52–76. For a detailed analysis of foreign presence in Egypt prior to the New Kingdom, see T. Schneider, *Ausländer in Ägypten während des Mittleren Reiches und der Hyksoszeit. II. Die ausländische Bevölkerung* (ÄAT 42/2; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2003).

59 As in the famous (although slightly later) representation from the tomb of Khnumhotep III at Beni Hasan (tomb no. 3), which depicts a group of Semites led by a certain Ibsha (= Abi-Sha?); P.E. Newberry, *Beni Hasan* (ASE 1; London: Egypt Exploration Fund 1893) I, pls. XXX–XXXI.

60 *Urk.* I, 104,6–9.

61 *Urk.* I, 134,13–17.

Intermediate Period and the early Middle Kingdom, king Amenemhat I, the founder of the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty, decided to build a line of fortresses at the Eastern border, known as the Wall of the Ruler.<sup>62</sup> His successors of the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty, especially Senwosret III, would later construct a similar system of fortresses in the South in order to strengthen the Egyptian dominion over the newly conquered Lower Nubia.<sup>63</sup>

None of these actions were able to stop the infiltration of Egypt by foreign populations, which continued through the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period, which resulted in a dynasty of foreign rulers taking over the power in the northern part of the country (see below). After the reunification of Egypt and the advent of the New Kingdom, the Egyptian rulers started a series of military campaigns, to both Syria and Nubia, as a result of which even more foreigners arrived in Egypt: either of their own will or as prisoners of war, captured during the military campaigns of the Egyptian kings.<sup>64</sup> These captives were placed in institutions attached to the temples, known as the *šnʿ*, where they were forced to do various works for the king and Egyptian gods;<sup>65</sup> alternatively, they could have been offered as servants to particularly brave soldiers as a reward for their military exploits, as attested e.g. by the following passage from the self-presentation of Ahmose, son of Ibana, who served as a soldier under Ahmose II, Amenhotep I, and Thutmose I of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty: “Then Hut-waret (i.e. Avaris) was plundered. Then I carried away the plunder from therein: 1 man and 3 women; in total: 4 (persons). Then His Majesty gave them to me as servants.”<sup>66</sup> It is important to note, however, that some of these private servants might have been eventually freed and even marry into the family of their previous owners, as suggested by the following passage from the stela of Sabastet, dated to the 27<sup>th</sup> regnal year of Thutmose III of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty: “The servant that was attributed to me personally, whose name is Ameniwy – I have brought him because of my strong arm, when I was following the (Ruler)]. (...) I have given him the daughter of my sister Nebetta to be his wife.”<sup>67</sup>

62 The exact location of these fortresses remains unknown; J.K. Hoffmeier, “‘The Walls of the Ruler’ in Egyptian Literature and the Archaeological Record: Investigating Egypt’s Eastern Frontier in the Bronze Age,” *BASOR* 343 (2006) 1–20.

63 For the Nubian fortresses of Senwosret III, see P. Tallet, *Sésostris III et la fin de la XII<sup>e</sup> dynastie* (Paris: Pygmalion 2005) 53–71.

64 It should be noted, however, that prisoners of war could have been brought to Egypt already in the Old and Middle Kingdoms; T.A.H. Wilkinson, *Royal Annals of Ancient Egypt. The Palermo Stone and Its Associated Fragments* (London – New York: Kegan 2000) 141–142; H. Altenmüller, *Zwei Annalenfragmente aus dem frühen Mittleren Reiches* (SAK Beihefte 16; Hamburg: Buske 2015) 71–72.

65 Cf. the inscription of Thutmose III of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty at Karnak, in which he states that he has brought numerous prisoners of war for Amun from his first victorious campaign to Syria “in order to fill his *šnʿ*-workshop, so that they become weavers in order to make for him royal linen, fine linen, white linen, *šhrw*-linen, and the thick linen; to be cultivators in order to work the farmlands to produce grain to fill the granary of the divine offerings”; translation after the Egyptian text in *Urk.* IV, 742, 13–743, 1.

66 *Urk.* IV, 4, 10–13.

67 Stela Louvre E 11673, ll. 6–9 and 14; translation after the Egyptian text in J. de Linage, “L’acte d’établissement et le contrat de mariage d’un esclave sous Thoutmès III,” *BIFAO* 38 (1939) 219. For more information on the fate of foreigners in ancient Egypt, see A. el-M. Bakir, *Slavery in Pharaonic Egypt* (CASAE 18; Le Caire: Imprimerie de l’Institut français d’archéologie orientale 1952); E. Morris, “Mitanni Enslaved: Prisoners of War,

Foreigners arriving in Egypt often simply searched for a better life (this is illustrated by the biblical tales of the Israelites coming to Egypt during the famine). A special case are the mercenaries, who could have formed part of the Egyptian military corps as early as the Old Kingdom, where we see entire troops recruited from Nubian nomads known as the Medjay.<sup>68</sup> The Medjay warriors were so popular in Egypt that later on the word Medjay (*mdꜣjꜣj*), originally referring to the pastoral nomads of south Eastern Desert, came to be understood as a member of police force, regardless of whether the holder of the title was an Egyptian or a Nubian.<sup>69</sup> In the New Kingdom period we also see other mercenaries, e.g. the Shardana, belonging to the so-called Sea Peoples, serving as Ramesses II's personal guard during the battle of Qadesh (ca. 1274 BC).<sup>70</sup> The use of mercenary force has become especially popular in the Late Period, when the kings of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty used the service of Carian and Greek mercenaries.<sup>71</sup>

It is important to note that being a foreigner in Egypt did not necessarily mean being a member of the lower social strata, as some of them might have been elevated to the highest administrative offices, including that of the *tjati* (*tꜣtj*), i.e. the chief of royal administration. This is the case of ‘Aper-El, who flourished in the reigns of Amenhotep III and Akhenaten – his clearly Semitic name might indicate that he belonged to a family of Syrian origin.<sup>72</sup> ‘Aper-El is often compared to the biblical figure of Joseph who, according to Genesis, was appointed to be the governor of Egypt. Whatever one might think of the historicity

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Pride, and Productivity in a New Imperial Regime,” *Creativity and Innovation in the Reign of Hatshepsut. Papers from the Theban Workshop 2010* (eds. J.M. Galán – B.M. Bryan – P.F. Dorman) (SAOC 69; Chicago, IL: Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago 2014) 361–379.

68 As demonstrated e.g. by the above-mentioned self-presentation of Weni (temp. 6<sup>th</sup> dynasty) (*Urk. I*, 101,9–16), which, besides the Medjay, mentions also mercenaries from various Nubian localities. Cf. also the example of the Nubian mercenaries from Gebelien in Upper Egypt; W. Ejsmond, “Some Thoughts on Nubians in Gebelien Region during First Intermediate Period,” *Current Research in Egyptology 2018. Proceedings of the Nineteenth Annual Symposium, Czech Institute of Egyptology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague, 25–28 June 2018* (eds. M. Peterková Hlouchová *et al.*) (Oxford: Archaeopress 2019) 23–41.

69 For an in-depth study of the Medjay, see K. Liszka, “*We Have Come to Serve the Pharaoh.*” *A Study of the Medjay and Pangrave as an Ethnic Group and as Mercenaries from c. 2300 BCE until c. 1050 BCE* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI, Proquest 2012).

70 For this, see H.L. Ringheim, “The Pharaoh's Fighters: Early Mercenaries in Egypt,” *A Stranger in the House – the Crossroads III. Proceedings of an International Conference on Foreigners in Ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern Societies of the Bronze Age Held in Prague, September 10–13, 2018* (eds. J. Mynářová – M. Kilani – S. Alivernini) (Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Arts 2019) 341–354.

71 For this, see Ph. Kaplan, “Cross-Cultural Contacts among Mercenary Communities in Saite and Persian Egypt,” *Mediterranean Historical Review* 18 (2003), 1–31; A. Villing, “Mediterranean Encounters: Greeks, Carians, and Egyptians in the first millennium BC,” *Egypt and the Classical World. Cross-Cultural Encounters in Antiquity* (eds. J. Spier – S.E. Cole) (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum 2022) 15–41.

72 For ‘Aper-El, see A. Zivie, “The ‘Saga’ of Aper-El's Funerary Treasure,” *Offerings to Discerning Eye. An Egyptological Medley in Honor of Jack A. Josephson* (ed. S.H. D'Auria) (CHANE 38; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2009) 349–355; A. Zivie, “Le vizir et père du dieu ‘Aper-El (‘Abdiel),” *Egyptian Curses. I. Proceedings of the Egyptological Day Held at the National Research Council of Italy (CNR), Rome, 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2012, in the International Conference ‘Reading Catastrophes. Methodological Approaches and Historical Interpretation. Earthquakes, Floods, Famines, Epidemics between Egypt and Palestine, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium BC. Rome, 3<sup>rd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> December 2012, CNR – Sapienza University of Rome’* (Roma: ISMA 2014) 83–99.



of the story of Joseph,<sup>73</sup> it is important to note that, at least in theory, it was not impossible for a foreigner to be elevated to such a high rank in the land of the pharaohs.

Another interesting case is Maiherperi, a Nubian adolescent who has been buried in the Valley of the Kings in the mid-18th dynasty, which was one of the highest privileges and honours a person of non-royal origin could have hoped for.<sup>74</sup> Unfortunately, we do not know what was so special about Maiherperi that he was rewarded with a tomb in the Valley of the Kings (KV 36), but his Egyptian name *m3j-hr-prj*, which means ‘Lion-upon-the-battlefield’, might suggest that it had something to do with his military exploits, even if the details remain unclear.<sup>75</sup>

It should be stressed, however, that the examples of both ‘Aper-El and Maiherperi are somewhat tricky. The first one is usually treated as a foreigner just because he bears a Semitic name, while the other one is treated as a foreigner because of his black African physiognomy. But neither of these factors must necessarily mean that either ‘Aper-El or Maiherperi were perceived as foreigners by themselves or by their social environment. Perhaps the foreignness of both figures is but a creation of modern scholarship, whereas in reality neither the Semitic name of ‘Aper-El nor the Nubian physiognomy of Maiherperi did matter to the Egyptians of their time.<sup>76</sup> Until further research is carried out on this issue, the question must remain unresolved.

## 5. Foreign Rulers of Egypt

Throughout her history Egypt was repeatedly ruled by kings of foreign origin. It should be emphasised that this did not necessarily have to happen as a result of a foreign invasion. Quite the contrary, the growing populace of foreigners in Egypt from the First Intermediate Period up to the Middle Kingdom resulted in their representatives assuming kingship in the politically unstable time of the late Middle Kingdom / Second Intermediate Period.

73 For various positions on the historicity of the story of Joseph, see D.B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37–50)* (VTSup 20; Leiden: Brill 1970); J. Van Seters, *Prologue to History. The Yahwist as Historian in Genesis* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox 1992) 311–327; Hoffmeier, *Israel in Egypt*, 77–106; K.A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge: Eerdmans 2003) 343–352.

74 For a detailed analysis and various suggestions regarding the exact dating of the tomb of Maiherperi (KV 36), see Ch. Orsenigo, *La tombe de Maiherperi (KV 36)* (EDAL Supplements 1; Milano: Pontremoli 2016); K.C. Lakomy, ‘*Der Löwe auf dem Schlachtfeld. Das Grab 36 und die Bestattung des Maiherperi im Tal der Könige*’ (Wiesbaden: Reichert 2016). Cf. also A. Dorn, ‘Maiherperi: ein Grab – drei Bücher,’ *OLZ* 115 (2020) 1–10.

75 Which sometimes leads scholars to truly fantastic interpretations, as when Christiane Desroches Noblecourt (*La reine mystérieuse Hatshepsout* [Paris: Pygmalion 2002] 265–271) suggested that Maiherperi was a natural son of Hatshepsut of the 18th dynasty and her most trusted official Senenmut.

76 It is interesting to note that some time later king Ramesses II of the 19th dynasty would give his eldest daughter the Syrian name of Bent-Anath (“daughter of ‘Anath”), even despite the fact that she was a daughter of Ramesses II’s Egyptian wife Isisnofret and not some minor Syrian concubine. This example clearly demonstrates that bearing a foreign name does not necessarily imply foreign origin.



One of them was most likely a ruler of the 13<sup>th</sup> dynasty whose name was Khendjer, a word of clear Semitic origin, meaning ‘pig’, or perhaps ‘boar’.<sup>77</sup> Another interesting example was Nehesi, the founder of the 14<sup>th</sup> dynasty.<sup>78</sup> His name means ‘Nubian’, which at the time might have indicated a foreign, or at least southern, origin. However, it is the case of the 15<sup>th</sup> dynasty, known as the Hyksos, which seems to be most instructive.

Although the account of the early Ptolemaic historian Manetho as transmitted by Flavius Josephus describes taking over the power by the Hyksos in Egypt as a result of an invasion by a foreign people of Semitic origin,<sup>79</sup> recent research has casted serious doubt on this version of events. It seems more probable that the rulers of the 15<sup>th</sup> dynasty originated from the foreign population of the Delta, which has been infiltrating this region since the First Intermediate Period. Although at the crucial moment, the power takeover by the Hyksos might have involved the use of force, Manetho’s account of the invasion is certainly exaggerated, being partly based on the black legend of the Hyksos from later, mostly New Kingdom, sources and partly on the negative experience of the still well-remembered cruelty of the second Persian conquest under Artaxerxes III in 343 BC.<sup>80</sup> It is important to note that the term Hyksos, being a Greek misrepresentation of the Egyptian term *ḥqꜣ.w ḥꜣs.wt* (‘rulers of foreign desert countries’), should not be understood as a designation of the entire foreign people, but as a designation of the rulers of the 15<sup>th</sup> dynasty exclusively.<sup>81</sup> It has been pointed out that, contrary to an opinion which became quite widespread in Egyptology, it is not the Egyptian sources that use this term to refer to the rulers of the 15<sup>th</sup> dynasty, but it is the Hyksos themselves who refer to themselves as *ḥqꜣ.w ḥꜣs.wt*.<sup>82</sup> We know that Hyksos rulers did their best to follow traditional patterns of Egyptian kingship, yet the employment of the reference to the foreign countries in their official titulary might indicate that they did perceive themselves to be at least to some extent linked with other traditions as well.

Apparently, the more traditionally oriented Egyptians were not satisfied with being ruled by a foreign dynasty, which resulted in the actions undertaken by the Theban rulers

77 K.S.B. Ryholt, *The Political Situation in Egypt during the Second Intermediate Period c. 1800–1550 B.C.* (CNI Publications 20; Copenhagen: The Carsten Niebuhr Institute of Near Eastern Studies, University of Copenhagen – Museum Tusulanum Press 1997) 220–221.

78 For Nehesi, see M. Bietak, “Zum Königreich des ʿ3-zḥ-rꜥ Nehesi”, *SAK* 11 (1984) 59–75; M. Bietak, “König Nehesi in Avaris/Tell el-Dab’a als levantinischer König und die Plünderung der memphitischen Elite-Nekropolen in der Zeit der 14. Dynastie”, *Spuren der altägyptischen Gesellschaft. Festschrift für Stephan J. Seidlmayer* (eds. R. Bussmann et al.) (ZÄS Beihefte 14; Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2022) 233–277. For other rulers of the 14<sup>th</sup> dynasty – which, however, bore Semitic rather than Nubian names – see Ryholt, *Political Situation*, 251–256. Cf. also T. Schneider, *Ausländer in Ägypten während des Mittleren Reiches und der Hyksoszeit. I. Die ausländischen Könige* (ÄAT 42/1; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1998) 99–122.

79 Josephus, *Ag. Ap.*, 1.14, §§ 73–92 = Manetho, fr. 42 (LCL 350, 76–91).

80 R.E. Gmirkin, *Berosus and Genesis, Manetho and Exodus. Hellenistic Histories and the Date of the Pentateuch* (New York – London: Clark 2006) 192–214.

81 D. Candelora, “Entangled in Orientalism: How the Hyksos Became a Race,” *Journal of Egyptian History* 11 (2018) 45–72. For the Hyksos kings, see Schneider, *Ausländer in Ägypten*, I, 31–98.

82 D. Candelora, “Defining the Hyksos: A Reevaluation of the Title *Ḥkꜣ Ḥꜣswt* and Its Implications for Hyksos Identity,” *JARCE* 53 (2017) 203–221. A notable exception is the mention of the *ḥqꜣ ḥꜣs.wt* title in the Turin Canon; A.H. Gardiner, *The Royal Canon of Turin* (Oxford: Griffith Institute 1959) pl. III. col. X.

Seqenenra Taa and Kamose of the 17<sup>th</sup> dynasty to expel the Hyksos rulers from Egypt.<sup>83</sup> These efforts were successfully concluded with the reunification of Egypt by Ahmose II, considered to be the founder of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty. By this time, the Hyksos rule in Egypt was perceived as a negative thing as demonstrated by the following passage from the historical inscription of Hatshepsut from the so-called Speos Artemidos in Middle Egypt: “I have raised what had been ruined since the time when the Asiatics were in the midst of Hut-waret, and the nomads, who were among them, were destroying what had been done before for they have ruled without Ra.”<sup>84</sup>

Even if the portrayal of the Hyksos in Hatshepsut’s inscription is certainly far from being accurate,<sup>85</sup> it seems that by the New Kingdom the Hyksos came to be perceived as illegitimate kings,<sup>86</sup> which later influenced the account of Manetho concerning their elevation to kingship.

Yet, foreign rule in Egypt was not necessarily inconceivable. After the death of Akhenaten, his female successor Neferneferuaten sent a message to the Hittite king Šuppiluliumas I asking him to send his son to Egypt so that he might become her husband and, consequently, the king of Egypt. The Hittite sources inform us that Šuppiluliumas I decided to send his son Zannanza to Egypt, but the unlucky prince never got there because he was assassinated on the way. Apparently not all influential officials were keen on having a foreigner on the throne, but the very idea of negotiating with the Hittites proves the rule that desperate times call for desperate measures, even if the latter eventually failed.<sup>87</sup>

The situation changed significantly by the end of the New Kingdom. The growing weakness of the central power under the last Ramesside rulers of the 20<sup>th</sup> dynasty resulted in removing Ramesses XI from effective power,<sup>88</sup> which was seized by the high priest of

83 The Egyptian dissatisfaction with the Hyksos rule in the North is most clearly expressed in the following passage from the first stela of Kamose preserved in the so-called Carnarvon Tablet 1: ‘I should like to know what is the use of my power, if one ruler is in Hut-waret (i.e. Avaris) and another one in Kush, and I am sitting (here), being united with a *Nebsi* and a *Aamu* (i.e. with a Nubian and an Asiatic)’; Carnarvon Tablet 1, l. 3; translation after the Egyptian text in W. Helck, *Historisch-biographische Texte der 2. Zwischenzeit und neue Texte der 18. Dynastie*, 2 ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1983) 83.

84 Speos Artemidos inscription, cols. 36–39; translation after the Egyptian text in J.P. Allen, “The Speos Artemidos Inscription of Hatshepsut,” *BES* 16 (2002) pl. 2.

85 For this, see D.B. Redford, “The Concept of Kingship during the Eighteenth Dynasty,” *Ancient Egyptian Kingship* (eds. D. O’Connor – D.P. Silverman) (PAe 9; Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill 1995) 170–171; F. Taterka, “Were Ancient Egyptian Kings Literate?,” *SAK* 46 (2017) 282–283.

86 It should be noted that although Hyksos kings were listed in the Turin Canon (cf. above), the extant fragments suggest that their names have been written without the royal cartouche, which might indicate that their legitimacy was called into question by later Egyptians.

87 For the so-called Zannanza affair, see M. Gabolde, *Toutankhamon* (Paris: Pygmalion 2015) 60–81. According to him, Zannanza should be identified with the phantom king Smenkhkara, while Neferneferuaten is to be identified with Meritaten, Akhenaten’s eldest daughter. For other interpretations, see the references cited in *ibid.*

88 The weakening position of Ramesses XI is best reflected in the following passage from the contemporary letter of general Payankh: “As for the Pharaoh – may he live, may he prosper, may he be healthy! – whose superior is he after all?”; pBerlin 10487, rt. 9 – vrs. 1 (= Late Ramesside Letter 21). Translation after the Egyptian text in

Amun Herihor in the South and Nesbanebdjedet (Smendes) in the North, both possibly of Libyan origin.<sup>89</sup> The continued migration of Libyan peoples to Egypt in the Third Intermediate Period resulted in the seizure of power by another Libyan: Sheshonq I, who thus inaugurated the 22<sup>nd</sup> dynasty.<sup>90</sup> However, the Libyans were unable to rule over the whole of Egypt, which resulted in the advent of concurrent centres of power ruled by what is known as the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> dynasties, also of Libyan origin. This internal chaos came to an end with the advent of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty, this time of Nubian origin. King Piankhy of Napata organised a successful military campaign to Egypt, in which he defeated a number of Libyan rulers and chieftains led by king Tefnakht I of the 24<sup>th</sup> dynasty and managed to reunite Egypt.<sup>91</sup> It is of crucial importance that both Piankhy and his successors from the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty perceived themselves as Egyptians of Nubian origin, which means that they ruled Egypt as Egyptians being entrusted with power by Amun,<sup>92</sup> and not as Nubians who would take revenge for centuries of Egyptian occupation of Nubia. This means that they tried to present themselves as rightful kings of Egypt (even if they kept some of their local Nubian traditions), and especially more rightful than their Libyan counterparts.<sup>93</sup> When the Nubian rule was abruptly interrupted by the Assyrian conquest of Egypt, a new dynasty emerged in Sais. These new rulers of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty not only decided to erase the names and images of the Nubian rulers from official representations, but one of them, Psammetichus II, even organised a military expedition to Nubia to annihilate Nubian claims to Egyptian throne once and for all.<sup>94</sup> In doing so, the rulers of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty portrayed themselves as rightful kings of Egypt who modelled themselves on traditional patterns from even the most ancient times. It is, indeed, an irony, given that they had not only collaborated with the Assyrians in

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J. Černý, *Late Ramesside Letters* (Bibliotheca Aegyptiaca 9; Bruxelles: Édition de la Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth 1939) 36,11–12.

<sup>89</sup> For the beginning of the Third Intermediate Period in Egypt, see S.R.W. Gregory, *Herihor in Art and Iconography. Kingship and the Gods in the Ritual Landscape of Late New Kingdom Thebes* (London: Golden House Publications 2014); F. Payraudeau, *L'Égypte et la Vallée du Nil. III. Les époques tardives (1069–332 av. J.-C.)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 2020) 45–73.

<sup>90</sup> K. Jansen-Winkel, “Der thebanische ‘Gottesstaat,’” *Or* 70 (2001) 153–182.

<sup>91</sup> This has been described in detail in his victory stela; N.-C. Grimal, *La stèle triomphale de Pi(ankh)y au Musée du Caire, JE 48862 et 47086–47089* (Études sur la propagande royale égyptienne I; Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale 1981); A. Spalinger, *The Books behind the Masks. Sources of Warfare Leadership in Ancient Egypt* (CHANE 124; Leiden – Boston, MA: Brill 2021) 350–395.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. the following passage from Piankhy's victory stela: “Know that Amun is the god who sent us!”; stela JE 48862+47086–47089, l. 12; translation after the Egyptian text in K. Jansen-Winkel, *Inschriften der Spätzeit. II. Die 22.–24. Dynastie* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2007) 339.

<sup>93</sup> Ritner, “Libyan vs. Nubian,” 305–314.

<sup>94</sup> For the Nubian expedition of Psammetichus II, see R.B. Gozzoli, *Psammetichus II. Reign, Documents and Officials* (GHP Egyptology 25; London: Golden House Publishing 2017) 45–71.

the first place,<sup>95</sup> but also, as recent research has shown, were of Libyan rather than Egyptian origin.<sup>96</sup>

With the conquest of Egypt by the Persians in 526 BC<sup>97</sup> the land of the pharaohs for the first time in her history became part of a larger empire. The Egyptians managed to liberate themselves for a brief period of 404–343 BC, encompassing the reigns of the last indigenous dynasties: 28<sup>th</sup>–30<sup>th</sup>, only to be subsequently conquered again by the Persians, Greeks (and Macedonians), and Romans. Despite Egypt's new situation of a dependent state the Egyptians apparently did not cease to perceive their homeland as a place of special status. This can be illustrated by the inscriptions carved on the base of the Egyptian statue of the Persian king Darius I discovered at Susa.<sup>98</sup> It features a topographical list of various states forming Darius I's empire. These are personified by kneeling figures with their hands raised in adoration. Underneath the figures, the names of the states are inscribed in hieroglyphic script inside crenelated ovals. In almost every instance, the name of the state is inscribed with a determinative representing three desert hills, which is a common Egyptian practice of writing down the names of foreign localities. The only exception is the name of Egypt herself, which is followed by a *njw*-determinative, characteristic of writing down the names of Egyptian localities. The ideology behind this usage seems to be connected with the idea that foreign localities belong to the desert and uninhabitable space, while Egyptian localities belong to the inhabitable space. This means that in the particular case of Darius I's topographical lists, Egypt, despite being just one of the Persian satrapies, is subtly singled out as the only place that is good enough to live in. Later on, the same phenomenon can be observed in the early Roman Period, when the name of Rome inscribed in hieroglyphic texts is also followed by the *h3st*-determinative, indicating that, from the Egyptian perspective, Rome belonged to the uninhabitable and hostile part of the world in contrast to Egypt herself, understood as the seat of harmony, order, and civilisation. It should be noted, however, that the perception of foreign localities could have changed over time. This is best illustrated by the spelling of the name of Napata, the capital of the kingdom of Kush. In the hieroglyphic texts dated to the New Kingdom period, the name is inscribed with the *h3st*-determinative, as at that time Napata was considered to be an enemy territory. But when the Kushite kings of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty eventually ascended the Egyptian throne,

95 Necho I and his son Psammetichus I (under the Akkadian name of Nabû-šezibanni) are mentioned in Aššurbanipal's texts describing his conquest of Egypt in 667 BC as governors appointed by the Assyrian king over Sais and Athribis respectively. According to Aššurbanipal, Necho I was appointed as the governor of Sais already by his father Esarhaddon during his earlier campaign in 671 BC; D.D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*. II. *Historical Records of Assyria from Sargon to the End* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press 1927) 293–295; §§ 771 and 774.

96 For the Libyan origins of the 26<sup>th</sup> dynasty, see O. Perdu, "De Stéphinatès à Nécho ou les débuts de la XXVI<sup>e</sup> dynastie," *CRAI* 146/4 (2002) 1215–1244.

97 For the correction of the date of the Persian conquest of Egypt from 525 to 526 BC, see J.F. Quack, "Zum Datum der persischen Eroberung Ägyptens unter Kambyzes," *Journal of Egyptian History* 4/2 (2011) 228–246.

98 M. Roaf, "The Subject Peoples on the Base of the Statue of Darius," *Cahiers de la Délégation archéologique française en Iran* 4 (1974) 73–160.

Napata, their place of origin, could no longer be viewed as foreign and hostile, but rather as an essential part of the Egyptian state. This is why the determinative following this toponym was changed to the *njw*-sign, as we can see in the inscriptions dated to the reign of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty. Eventually, the same thing happened with the hieroglyphic spelling of the name of Rome, where the *h3st*-determinative in the inscriptions dated to the early Roman Period was replaced with the *njw*-sign once the imperial power over the ancient land of the pharaohs became firmly established.<sup>99</sup>

## 6. Foreigners as Neighbours

As we have seen, foreigners could participate in the life of ancient Egyptian society at all its levels. They could be either slaves and house servants, or simple craftsmen, but also members of the highest elite, holding most important offices in the realm, including that of the king. Some of them have certainly kept their traditional ways by living in enclaves, but others tried (or were forced to) assimilate with the Egyptians. One of the best examples of what is known as Egyptianization can be seen in Nubia, where local elites could adopt Egyptian customs (be it only in funerary art or in real life) in order to be recognised as full members of the society.<sup>100</sup> In fact, the Egyptianization of Nubia was so strong that, as we have seen, Kushite rulers would eventually reunite the Two Lands as legitimate Egyptian pharaohs, adopting pharaonic ideological image to such extent that some rulers of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty would use equipment decorated with representations of defeated Nubian (!) enemies.<sup>101</sup> Later on, the pharaonic artistic conventions would be adopted also by the Napatan and Meroitic rulers long after the kings of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty lost control over Egypt. Both Napatan and Meroitic rulers would also use hieroglyphic script and Egyptian language in their official inscriptions<sup>102</sup> and there is a number of scenes in which they are depicted in traditional Egyptian smiting scenes, but whereas the Egyptian models usually portrayed pharaohs defeating foreign enemies, in the Napatan and Meroitic examples we usually see

99 F. Taterka, “The Meaning of the *njw*-Hieroglyph: Towards a Definition of a City in Ancient Egypt,” *The Land of Fertility II. The Southeast Mediterranean from the Bronze Age to the Muslim Conquest* (eds. Ł. Miszk – M. Waclawik) (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars 2017) 25–29.

100 It should be noted, however, that adopting Egyptian customs did not mean the total abandonment of the traditional native ways; see, for this, Smith, *Wretched Kush*, 97–166; Smith, “Ethnicity,” 131–140. For the Egyptianization of other parts of the Egyptian empire, see C.R. Higginbotham, *Egyptianization and Elite Emulation in Ramesside Palestine. Governance and Accommodation on the Imperial Periphery* (CHANE 2; Leiden – Boston, MA – Köln: Brill 2000).

101 D. Dunham, *El Kurru* (The Royal Cemeteries of Kush I; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 1950) 69, no. 19–3-1581a with pl. XXXIV.E (tomb of Shabataka).

102 Cf. e.g. J. Kuckertz, “Meroitic Temples and their Decoration,” *Handbook of Ancient Nubia* (ed. D. Raue) (Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2019) II, 822, fig. 6; S. Wenig, “Art of the Meroitic Kingdom,” *Handbook of Ancient Nubia* (ed. D. Raue) (Berlin – Boston, MA: De Gruyter 2019) II, 863, fig. 17.



Nubian kings smiting Nubian enemies.<sup>103</sup> However, it is important to note that Nubian elites kept a number of their original customs, as can be seen for example in the Nubian enthronement ritual which, although partly modelled on the Egyptian rite, was enhanced with many local traditions of Nubia.<sup>104</sup>

As time went by, Egyptian society came to be far more heterogenous than before the New Kingdom period.<sup>105</sup> But living in a mixed society could occasionally lead to some tensions: one of the best examples comes from the Aramaic documents produced by the Jewish community formed at the Elephantine island after the Babylonian conquest of the Kingdom of Judah.<sup>106</sup> From these documents we learn that the Jewish custom of offering a sacrificial lamb to YHW<sup>107</sup> was unpleasant to the priests of Khnum, particularly worshipped at Elephantine and represented as a man with a ram's head, as it was apparently considered blasphemy against the Egyptian god. Moreover, the fact that the Jews presented a rather positive attitude towards the Persians in the wake of Egyptian rebellion did not win them sympathy among the Egyptians. As a result, the Egyptians decided to sack and destroy the Jewish shrine dedicated to YHW, which became the subject of an official request for the letter of recommendation addressed by the priest Jedaniah and his colleagues to Bagavahya, the governor of Juda under Darius II.<sup>108</sup>

Sometimes, however, it is the Egyptians who lived abroad in the Egyptian outposts in foreign lands, e.g. in the Middle Kingdom fortresses in Nubia or New Kingdom garrisons in Syria-Palestine.<sup>109</sup> An interesting example is found in the Middle Kingdom *Tale of Sinuhe*,

103 See, e.g., N.-C. Grimal, *Quatre stèles napatéennes au Musée du Caire JE 48863–48866* (Études sur la propagande royale égyptienne 2; Le Caire: Institut français d'archéologie orientale 1981).

104 E. Kormysheva, "Das Inthronisationsritual des Königs von Meroe," *Ägyptische Tempel – Struktur, Funktion und Programm (Akten der Ägyptologischen Tempeltagungen in Gosen 1990 und im Mainz 1992)* (eds. R. Gundlach – M. Rochholz) (HÄB 37; Hildesheim: Gerstenberg 1994) 187–210; E. Kormysheva, "Festkalender im Kawa-Tempel," *4. Ägyptologische Tempeltagung Köln, 10.–12. Oktober 1996. Feste im Tempel* (eds. R. Gundlach – M. Rochholz) (ÄAT 33/2; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1998) 77–89.

105 An interesting example of this heterogeneity of the Egyptian society in the New Kingdom is the stela Berlin 14122 representing a Syrian mercenary drinking beer from a jar using a straw in the company of his Egyptian wife and child; Smith, "Ethnicity," 130.

106 These documents have been published by B. Porten, "Aramaic Texts," *The Elephantine Papyri in English. Three Millennia of Cross-Cultural Continuity and Change* (eds. B. Porten et al.) (Leiden – New York – Köln: Brill 1996) 74–276.

107 In contrast to their compatriots in Israel and Juda, the Jews from Elephantine worshipped their deity under the name of YHW in the company of his wife 'Anath-Ber'el (also known under the name of 'Anath-Yaho) and their son 'Ashim-Ber'el; J. Mélèze-Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt. From Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian* (trans. R. Cornman; Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society 1995) 37.

108 Porten, "Aramaic Texts," 139–144, text no. B19. For more on the conflict between the Elephantine Jews and the Egyptians, see Mélèze-Modrzejewski, *Jews of Egypt*, 21–44.

109 See, for this, B. Kraemer – K. Liszka, "Evidence for Administration of the Nubian Fortresses in the Late Middle Kingdom: The Semna Dispatches," *Journal of Egyptian History* 9/1 (2016) 1–65; K. Liszka – B. Kraemer, "Evidence for Administration of the Nubian Fortresses in the Late Middle Kingdom: P. Ramesseum 18," *Journal of Egyptian History* 9/2 (2016) 151–208.



describing the fate of an Egyptian official who, for unknown reasons,<sup>110</sup> decided to flee from Egypt and was forced to live among foreigners for great part of his life. Eventually, king Senwosret I of the 12<sup>th</sup> dynasty summoned him back to Egypt with the following words: “Your death will not happen in a foreign land and you will not be buried by the *Aamu*. You will not be put in the skin of a ram, but your tomb will be made, for it is too long to roam the earth. Think of your corpse and return!”<sup>111</sup> This demonstrates how important observing the traditional customs of their religion was for the Egyptians. The lack of a tomb in Egypt meant the non-existence of funerary cult, which would result in an inability to continue one’s existence in the afterlife.<sup>112</sup> Texts from other periods inform us that when an Egyptian died abroad while executing a mission imposed on him by the king, the Egyptians would organise another expedition only to bring his body back to Egypt so that he could be properly buried.<sup>113</sup>

## 7. Foreigners as Source of Inspiration

It has been rightly observed that identity is a process rather than an unchangeable essence. This means that one’s identity is constantly shaped and reshaped due to, among other things, contact with others – this rule applies to both individual as well as group identity.<sup>114</sup> This means that when we are dealing with two or more social groups we have to bear in mind that changing identity is never a one-directional process. In this particular case this means that contacts between Egyptians and foreigners resulted not only in the adaptation to the Egyptian customs by the foreigners living in Egypt, but also in the adoption of various foreign customs by the Egyptians. One of the spheres in which the foreign influence is best visible is undoubtedly technology. Among the most important technological innovations that have been adopted from abroad we can enumerate bronze and iron (adopted in the early and late

110 For a survey of the hypotheses trying to explain the reasons of Sinuhe’s flight, see C. Obsomer, “Sinouhé l’Égyptien et les raisons de son exil,” *Mus* 112 (1999) 207–271.

111 *Sin.* B 197–199. It is also important to note that when Sinuhe finally arrives back in Egypt, he needs to be re-transformed from an Asiatic he has become to an Egyptian in order to properly prepare himself for the afterlife; cf. *Sin.* B 290–295.

112 The importance of the tomb for the survival in the afterlife can be perceived through the following passage from the *Instructions of Djedefhor* (§ 2.1–4): “You should build your house for your son, for I have made the place which you are in. Prepare your house of the necropolis and perfect your place of the West! Receive (these words) as death is bitter to us, receive (them) as life is exalted to us, for the house of death is for life!”; translation after the Egyptian text in W. Helck, *Die Lehre des Djedefhor und die Lehre eines Vaters an seinen Sohn* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1984) 6–7.

113 Cf. the above-mentioned expedition to retrieve the body of Ankhty led by Pepynakht, called Heqaib (*Urk.* I, 134,13–17), as well as another one led by Sabni to retrieve the body of his father Mekhu, who died on a mission in Nubia under Pepy II (*Urk.* I, 135,1–140,11).

114 Candelora, “Egyptianization of Egypt,” 103–110.

2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, respectively)<sup>115</sup> as well as chariots and horses, introduced to Egypt in the Second Intermediate Period under the Hyksos influence.<sup>116</sup> It is also important to note that the introduction of new technology did not exclusively affect the strategy of individual battles but also, in broader perspective, the ethos of fighting. Recent research and findings suggests that the well-known Egyptian practice of cutting off the hands of slain enemies might have been inspired by the Hyksos practice, just like another well-known custom of rewarding the bravery of soldiers with the so-called gold of valour – both being otherwise unattested prior to the early New Kingdom period.<sup>117</sup>

Another important innovation introduced under foreign influence was money, which appeared in Egypt in the reigns of Teos and Nectanebo II of the 30<sup>th</sup> dynasty, so that the kings could pay their Greek mercenaries for their service.<sup>118</sup> Coins became more widespread in Egypt with the advent of the Ptolemaic Period.

The reception of foreign motifs is also attested in art. One of the most striking examples is the decoration of the Egyptian palace at Tell ed-Dab'a, the former capital of the Hyksos, where depictions of the dance with the bulls as known from the so-called 'Minoan' palaces on Crete were discovered. It is important to emphasise that the decoration of the palace

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- 115 W. Helck, "Bronze," *L'AI*, 870–871; W. Helck, "Eisen," *L'AI*, 1209–1210; J. Ogden, "Metals," *Ancient Egyptian Materials and Technology* (eds. P.T. Nicholson – I. Shaw) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2000) 149–161 and 166–168. It should be noted, however, that iron was known in Egypt long before the late 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium in the form of meteoritic iron.
- 116 P. Vernus, "Réception linguistique et idéologique d'une nouvelle technologie: le cheval dans la civilisation pharaonique," *The Knowledge Economy and Technological Capabilities. Egypt, the Near East and the Mediterranean 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium B.C. – 1<sup>st</sup> Millennium A.D. Proceedings of a Conference Held at the Maison de la Chimie, Paris, France, 9–10 December 2005* (ed. M. Wissa) (AuOr Supplementa 26; Sabadell [Barcelona]: Ausa 2009) 1–46; D. Candelora, "Hybrid Military Communities of Practice: The Integration of Immigrants as the Catalyst for Egyptian Social Transformation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Millennium BC," *A Stranger in the House – the Crossroads III. Proceedings of an International Conference on Foreigners in Ancient Egyptian and Near Eastern Societies of the Bronze Age Held in Prague, September 10–13, 2018* (eds. J. Mynářová – M. Kilani – S. Alivernini) (Prague: Charles University, Faculty of Arts 2019) 30–36.
- 117 Foreign inspiration for the practice of severing hands of slain enemies is suggested by the discovery of a cache with hands in the Hyksos Palace in Area F/II at Tell ed-Dab'a; M. Bietak, "The Archaeology of the 'Gold of Valour,'" *EA* 40 (2012) 32–33; Candelora, "Hybrid Military Communities," 38–39; cf., however, D. Candelora, "Trophy or Punishment: Reinterpreting the Tell el-Dab'a Hand Cache within Middle Bronze Age Legal Traditions," *The Enigma of the Hyksos. I. ASOR Conference Boston 2017 – ICAANE Conference Munich 2018 – Collected Papers* (eds. M. Bietak – S. Prell) (CAENL 9; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 2019) 95–106; D. Candelora, "Grisly Trophies: Severed Hands and the Egyptian Military Reward System," *NEA* 84 (2021) 192–199. However, it is important to note that although the practice of rewarding soldiers with gold for their military exploits is not attested before the New Kingdom, the very practice of rewarding royal officials with gold is attested as early as the Old Kingdom period; Ćwiek, *Relief Decoration*, 260–262.
- 118 For these early coins, see T. Faucher – W. Fischer-Bossert – S. Dhennin, "Les monnaies en or aux types hiéroglyphiques *nwb* (sic! – FT.) *nfr*," *BIFAO* 112 (2012) 147–170. For recent suggestions that some objects might be identified as equivalent to coins as early as the reign of Tutankhamun of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty and even of Djedefra of the 4<sup>th</sup> dynasty, see M. Valloggia, "Note sur deux lingots d'argent de Toutankhamon," *RdE* 68 (2017–2018) 141–152; M. Valloggia, "Une monnaie de compte de l'époque de Rêdjedef provenant d'Abou Rawash," *Dans les pas d'Imhotep. Mélanges offerts à Audran Labrousse* (ed. R. Legros) (Orient & Méditerranée 36; Leuven: Peeters 2021) 113–116.

was done using Cretan rather than Egyptian technique, which suggests that Cretan artists might have been involved in its production.<sup>119</sup>

Foreign deities could also have been included in the Egyptian pantheon. This is especially true of Syrian deities, such as Ba‘al, Hauron, Astate, ‘Anath, Qadesh, or Reshep, but also Nubian deities, such as Dedwen or Mandulis.<sup>120</sup> It is important to note that these gods were worshipped not only by the foreign minorities in Egypt, but also by the Egyptians themselves. Moreover, some of them feature in official royal iconography and texts describing the king.<sup>121</sup> Interestingly, some of the foreign localities also came to be understood as the sacred seats of Egyptian gods. One of the best known examples is the mountain called Gebel Barkal in Nubia, a natural rock formation that to the Egyptians resembled a gigantic uraeus-snake – an emblem of Egyptian kings and gods. As a result, the temple of Amun at Karnak came to be understood as the Egyptian equivalent of the true seat of Amun in Gebel Barkal, which found its reflection in both sites sharing its Egyptian name of *Ipet sut* (*jp.t s.wt*), i.e. ‘the most distinguished of places’.<sup>122</sup> Another example is the aforementioned land of Punt which seems to have been understood as the earthly seat of the sun-god, which eventually resulted in its complete dissociation from any geographic reality and final transformation into a mythical locality.<sup>123</sup>

We should also note the growing presence of foreign words in the Egyptian language. In Middle Egyptian, only a relatively small number of words of foreign origin could have been identified. This changed in the late New Kingdom with the introduction of Late Egyptian to official inscriptions: this stage of the Egyptian language was filled with various foreign loanwords, usually of Semitic origin.<sup>124</sup> In later times we can observe also some Nubian loanwords in the inscriptions of the kings of the 25<sup>th</sup> dynasty. In the Ptolemaic

119 For this, see M. Bietak, “Egypt and the Aegean: Cultural Convergence in a Thutmoside Palace at Avaris,” *Hatshepsut. From Queen to Pharaoh* (eds. C.H. Roehrig – R. Dreyfus – C.A. Keller) (New York – New Haven, CT – London: The Metropolitan Museum of Art – Yale University Press 2005) 75–81. For other examples, see L. Morgan, “An Aegean Griffin in Egypt”: The Hunt Frieze at Tell el-Dab‘a,” *AeL* 20 (2010) 303–323. For further evidence of Aegean presence in Egypt, see Sh. Wachsmann, *Aegeans in the Theban Tombs* (OLA 20; Leuven: Peeters 1987) along with the important critical remarks in U. Matić, “‘Minoans’, *kftjw* and the ‘Islands in the Middle of *w3d wr*’ beyond Ethnicity,” *AeL* 24 (2014) 275–292.

120 For these foreign deities, see R.H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson 2003) 101–102 (Ba‘al), 105 (Dedwen), 108–109 (Hauron), 114–115 (Mandulis), 126–127 (Reshep), 137 (‘Anath), 138–139 (Astarte), 164 (Qadesh).

121 See, for this, N.-C. Grimal, *Les termes de la propagande royale égyptienne de la XIX<sup>e</sup> dynastie à la conquête d’Alexandre* (Études sur la propagande royale égyptienne 4; Paris: Imprimerie nationale – Diffusion de Boccard 1986) 393–395. Cf. also the famous statue of Ramesses II under the protection of Hauron (JE 64735+63159); H. Sourouzian, *Catalogue de la statuaire royale de la XIX<sup>e</sup> dynastie* (Bibliothèque d’études 177; Le Caire: Institut français d’archéologie orientale du Caire 2019) 412–413, no. 263.

122 As rightly pointed out by Smith, “Ethnicity,” 130.

123 Taterka, “The Flight of King Ptolemy X Alexander I,” 229–349.

124 For these, see Hoch, *Semitic Words*; J. Winand, “Identifying Semitic Loanwords in Late Egyptian,” *Greek Influence on Egyptian-Coptic. Contact-Induced Change in an Ancient African Language* (eds. E. Grossmann et al.) (Hamburg: Widmaier 2017) 481–511. It is noteworthy that ca. 18% of the Semitic loanwords in Late Egyptian relates to military technology; Candelora, “Hybrid Military Communities,” 36–38.

and Roman Periods, due to the introduction of Greek as one of the official languages of the kingdom, we may see a number of Greek loanwords in both classical Egyptian and Demotic languages. This would result in many Greek loanwords in Coptic, the last known stage of the Egyptian language.<sup>125</sup>

## Conclusions

As stated above, this short study can only briefly discuss the variety of attitudes of the ancient Egyptians towards foreigners, with no pretension to being exhaustive. But what results from the preceding lines is the conclusion that ancient Egypt should not be readily and somewhat anachronistically accused of xenophobia, as the available evidence demonstrates that Egyptian attitudes towards foreigners were far more complex, often depending on the specific context, such as time, place, origin of the foreigner and social status of the Egyptian concerned. When dealing with the portrayal of the foreigners in ancient Egyptian literature, Antonio Loprieno pointed out that we can discern in it a constant struggle between the *topos* and the *mimesis*, i.e. the stereotyped and more realistic image of the foreigner.<sup>126</sup> It seems that this perspective might be extended to other spheres as well, since in the Egyptian material of all periods, it is possible to discern precisely this interplay between the stereotyped portrayal of the foreigners (perceptible mainly in official representations) and the more nuanced and perhaps historically more faithful image of foreign peoples and individuals which can be deduced from other sources.<sup>127</sup> It is also important to note that although foreigners were almost exclusively depicted as enemies in the Old and Middle Kingdoms – when the percentage of foreign population in Egypt was either extremely small or virtually non-existent – the social roles assigned to foreigners became far more diverse from the New Kingdom onwards, when they became an essential part of the pharaonic society, transforming it on an unprecedented scale. This only seems to prove the rule that people fear what they do not know, but once they get to know it, it gradually ceases to frighten them – a lesson which may still be important for our modern societies.

125 For these, see the papers collected in E. Grossmann *et al.* (eds.), *Greek Influence on Egyptian-Coptic. Contact-Induced Change in an Ancient African Language* (Hamburg: Widmaier 2017).

126 A. Loprieno, *Topos und Mimesis. Zum Ausländer in der ägyptischen Literatur* (ÄgAbh 48; Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz 1988).

127 Such a perspective has been applied e.g. by Smith, "Ethnicity," 113–146.

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