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## SECTION II

### People

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### Chapter 4

#### Children of Other Gods:

#### Social Interactions

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#### *Introduction*

In order to discuss the ancient Egyptian attitude towards non-local and “foreign” people in the best possible way it is necessary to start with some considerations of the current situation of the “interpreters.” It is clear that research questions such as the topic of this chapter are driven by modern/current interests and problems as well as by our own life experiences. Before it is possible to ask questions such as “how did Egyptians treat people from abroad and interact with them,” it must be clarified that our modern world and personal situations influence the way we look at the evidence. Currently we take this topic so seriously for obvious reasons. Moreover, we must remain aware that our worldview is heavily influenced by the tradition of western philosophy.

Another important point is the consideration of post-colonial research undertaken in other parts of the world, because early Egyptian archaeology was also driven by a desire to acquire objects of art worthy to be displayed in European and North American museums. Most governments of “developed” western countries were attracted by the possibility to combine cultural efforts of research and collecting with political/colonial aims of the respective period. “Egyptomania” of the late nineteenth and early 20<sup>th</sup> century CE boosted this field. At the same time the discipline of Egyptology developed a colonial and male viewpoint on the ancient culture. While such and similar factors have been identified and theorized at length in social anthropology and archaeologies of other parts of the world, Egyptology is becoming aware of its lack of theoretical (self-)scrutiny.

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The indebtedness of Egyptology to the culture-historical approach to the ancient past needs to be mentioned. This approach goes back even past V. G. Childe, a famous prehistorian, who maintained that recurring combinations of artifacts and a distinct material culture reflects “cultural” groups of people or “peoples”. In consequence, the Egyptian culture, which appears as uniform and very coherent, was viewed as self-created, self-sufficient, and “pure.” Such concepts have been severely criticized and largely abandoned, because they do not take into consideration that cultures do not exist in isolation. It is clear that any of these underlying concepts directly influences the way we interpret “cultural contacts” between Egyptian people and the rest of the world.

Important for understanding is the fact that, besides the archaeological record that does not supply names and views on the self, the Egyptian sources provide only limited material about the view of self of higher-status individuals and even less on non-Egyptians. Here the tomb stelae may be mentioned, which represent beside the physical bodies the only record of individuals and their identities (gender, age, profession, ethnicity, etc.) and how they (or their relatives) wanted them to be seen by posterity. It remains largely unknown which rules applied to the composition of such stelae besides the artistic canon for the depiction of the tomb owner (if there was one) and if they were the same for Egyptians and non-Egyptians. This is more than the neighboring archaeological cultures can offer, but it is necessary to be aware that this information is through the eyes of a literate male Egyptian elite that may have fostered a generalized and stereotyped picture.

#### *A Combination of Sources: Archaeology, Texts, and Pictorial*

Egyptology offers the advantageous situation that allows us to consult and combine archaeology, textual, and pictorial evidence for most periods except the very early ones. While this additional information provides a better chance for reconstruction and interpretation of the past, it must not be forgotten that these different source types need different approaches and source criticisms. Texts may be used to advantage on a meta-level. Also, for some periods not all source types exist in triple to complement each other, but rather they are to be used alternatively. Thus, for eras not covered by one source type the other is used to extrapolate, which is far from ideal and sometimes stretches the existing sources. Some reliefs of the Old Kingdom, for example show quite clearly which commodities were brought back into Egypt (e.g., relief of a Syrian bear with some vessels from the Fifth Dynasty pyramid temple of Sahure, Berlin ÄM 21828, [Abusir]). Such fragments were used frequently for far-reaching interpretations although some are lacking inscriptions and may therefore be ambiguous especially in the social implications.

An example of a lost chance to combine archaeology and texts to advantage is the Middle Kingdom settlement of Lahun, where (among many other documents) a number of papyri have been found with lists of Asiatics and other Egyptian unfree people (perhaps similar to serfs, but not equivalent to Roman slaves) in the employ of certain institutions and individuals. They are identified by name, given Egyptian name, origin (*ꜥm*), occupation, gender, and filiation. The fact that many of them were given Egyptian names makes them frequently disappear from the records. Although the settlement was extensively excavated in 1890–1891, the material culture of co-habitation of Egyptian and Asiatic people is not sufficiently preserved to decide whether the non-local presence indicated by the texts had any influence on the material culture in general. However, there are a few exceptions: for example, a weaving implement (British Museum 70881) with an unknown (pseudo)inscription that Sass has ascertained to be not Proto-Sinaitic. Torques and ivory box inlays with concentric circles are not necessarily Syro/Palestinian products. The truly imported pottery known from Lahun, as well as the locally produced pottery, which shows influences from abroad (e.g., the Aegean), cannot give any hints to the physical presence of non-Egyptians because the local industry might have been influenced just by the presence of the original product. Aegeanists have stated that those pottery vessels/fragments would have been immediately apparent as local imitations. The same can be said about faience stirrup jars from the Late Bronze Age/New Kingdom, where the idea of the vessel type is apparent but the execution is clearly non-Aegean but deeply rooted in Egyptian production.

### *Archaeologically Proven Contacts and Their Interpretation*

From the first archaeological endeavors in Egypt onwards, finds from countries abroad were noted and discussed. At first, from the Chalcolithic, such contacts were pinpointed by the appearance of raw materials that do not naturally occur in Egypt and thus must have come from abroad, such as lapis lazuli, obsidian, silver or bitumen. Some of the most famous works of early art such as the Gebel el-Arak knife and palettes carry artistic motifs that show influences from Mesopotamia. For these early incidents it remains quite unclear how the contact situation and the social framework within which it took place are to be imagined. Whether a regular exchange took place, or if the contact was all but indirect via a long line of unknown intermediaries, can only be hypothesized. It is clear, however, that in Egypt a stratified society existed and not everybody had access to such items due to their rarity, especially in Upper Egypt. This also suggests that the main contact line ran through the Egyptian Nile Delta, but future finds may change this picture.

Over time more objects, often pottery, especially in prehistoric archaeology, attest to intense contacts from earliest times onward. For example, the hundreds of imported storage jars found in large elite tombs in cemetery U at Abydos in Naqada IIIA need to be mentioned, as well as the so-called wavy-handled jars that underwent a typological development in Egypt quite separately from those found in the Levant. These containers were not imported for their own sake but for specific and sought-after contents, such as vegetable oils, figs, and wine. While on the receiving Egyptian side the context suggests the highest stratum of society, it remains unclear what, if anything, was given in return and to whom exactly.

Notably, during the same time a number of settlements existed in the southern Levant, such as Tel Halif, En Besor, and Tel Lod, at which a proportion of pottery was found exhibiting certain traits in typology and manufacturing technology that are called “Egyptianizing” or “Egyptianized,” with all the baggage and unspoken implications such terms carry. In very few cases it is known how the proportions of Egyptian versus local material relate to one another or if these vessels cluster in certain contexts. Also the consideration of what constitutes “Egyptian” and “Egyptianizing” material seems to have changed over the last decades and makes an interpretation incoherent. While Tell el-Sakan was described as a fortified settlement with a larger amount of such pottery and Egyptian-type buildings, Tel Erani yielded a more differentiated view on these locally made Egyptian finds and (parts of) buildings, which included architectural features known from the Egyptian Naqada culture. Renewed fieldwork and analysis changed the picture in that “Egyptian” and “Egyptianizing” pottery started later than previously thought (Early Bronze Age IB2). Besides pottery, notably chipped stone tools exhibit traces that can be interpreted as peculiarly Egyptian or Levantine. The chipping traditions of these areas seem to be quite different. The interpretations of these findings center on some form of Egyptian hegemony or colonization. Here variants range from Egyptian colonial posts in one case to peaceful settlements with Egyptian presence (no arrow heads at Erani) of civilian nature. Both types may have served for trading purposes in the form of merchant colonies, military stations, or fortified sites.

The presence of so-called “hybrid” pottery at Erani, which includes southern Palestinian shapes made from chaff-tempered fabrics and Egyptian-style finish, Egyptian forms with southern Levantine plastic ornaments and Egyptian shapes made from Canaanite-type fabrics is noteworthy. This is a feature of material culture that seems to occur in areas and periods where people of different origin meet, such as the Delta and southern Palestine and probably also on the southern border of Egypt. The material culture and any changes it might have undergone are only now being studied and contextualized. Thus, it is perhaps a bit fortuitous to speak of straightforward Egyptian colonies. A thorough comparative study of the material culture from both areas is needed in order to

pinpoint differences and similarities and to come to a consensus about the cultural assignation. The fact that the contexts differ—tombs versus settlements—might also distort the interpretational framework.

Another example for an archaeological contact situation can be found in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE at Tell el-Dab'a—ancient Avaris—in the northeastern Nile Delta. This site has a habitation history that ranges from the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasty to the Late Period. This longevity makes the site such a valuable source of information because it is possible to study the development of the material culture of a purely Egyptian site after cultural influences from the north—Syria/Palestine. As in prehistory, the names of the majority of the individuals living at this site remain unknown and the few Hyksos king's names inscribed on stone fragments were found out of context.

After a lengthy period of settlement in orthogonally planned housing (no cemeteries have been found for the earlier part of the Twelfth Dynasty) with a material culture that shows only scant evidence of commodity exchange in the form of ceramic containers of so-called Levantine Painted Ware and very few Canaanite jars, the volume of imported material rises sharply in the late Twelfth Dynasty. At the same time tombs with some characteristics of the northern Middle Bronze Age culture appear at the site in one area. This concerns mainly some types of grave goods (toggle pins, Syro/Palestinian weapons, burial of articulated animals before the entrance of the tomb) and the burial positions of the bodies (on the back with legs flexed). Typically Egyptian objects, such as kohl pots and other stone vessels, beads, scarabs, and a few statues are found in the same tombs. At the same time the tomb architecture is no different from that in other parts of Egypt, where mud-brick chamber tombs set into pits and simple pit tombs occur. The pottery found in those tombs consists of Egyptian as well as imported Syro/Palestinian ceramics (amphorae and juglets). While such combinations (with the addition of Syro/Palestinian diadems, and Egyptian coffins, palettes/mullers, and mirrors) in tomb contents continue until the end of the Second Intermediate Period, there is also an increasing number of previously imported and later locally produced pottery, at first mainly small juglets presumably containing some precious commodity, and then several Middle Bronze Age pottery types.

In the course of the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period the settlement architecture provides no indications of any outside influence either in the house plans (with one exception in the late Twelfth Dynasty) or in the building technology or the lay-out. Religious architecture is represented by temples/chapels, two of which show a typical tripartite arrangement as do other Egyptian chapels, and two Near Eastern types (one broad-room temple and one with bent axis). Finally the presence of a huge palace of an agglutinating plan dating to the late Second Intermediate Period with close similarities to Near Eastern types such as at Mari and Ebla needs to be mentioned. An

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interesting blank is to be noticed in direct evidence for non-Egyptian gods in this period. They seem to mostly appear during the New Kingdom.

As for the objects of daily use, the pottery corpus shows over time an amalgamation of Egyptian and Syro/Palestinian typological traits such as surface treatment, manufacturing technology, and shape repertoire. The products of this very regionally confined development cannot unequivocally be assigned to one or the other tradition, because the pottery represents an intricate mixture of both. To a limited extent a similar process can be observed in scarab production.

The interpretation of this archaeological situation usually focuses on the presence of people from Syria/Palestine and explains it by means of re-settlement of prisoners of war by the Egyptian central administration in the late Twelfth Dynasty or more generally as immigrants who sought the “bread baskets” of Egypt who later on became more powerful and extended their political influence toward the Nile Valley and farther south. While the first option is derived from more or less contemporaneous texts (annals of Amenemhat II, Stela of Sobekkhu, Lahun papyri), the archaeology does not suggest any means of suppression or forced presence. However, while the development of the material culture has been frequently used for studies of acculturation (a collection of divergent theories without unified definition, sometimes of colonial spirit), it is clear that both cultural components were present and continued to exist for some time soldered together in a new form, albeit in a spatially very confined region. This continued co-existence of both cultural elements also makes it difficult to pinpoint an ethnic identity in a cultural sense of the buried people at the site, because it is a situational-fluid social concept, defined through real or perceived similarities and differences of culture, history, and language. This perception may have changed during the lifetime of a person and needs not to be in congruence with genetic factors. As neither any names of the inhabitants of the Second Intermediate Period nor the language/vernacular that they spoke is known, it seems impossible to go beyond the assertion of a mixed cultural tradition at this site. Whether the non-elite inhabitants considered themselves as Egyptians, Levantines, or a third (mixed) grouping cannot be fathomed. Also it remains unknown whether this question played a major role in the daily reality of these ancient people.

The sensational find of the Minoan wall paintings at the same site in a trash layer of an early New Kingdom palatial context needs a quite different explanation.

### *Contrast between Official Ideology and Daily Routine with Neighbors*

The dichotomy between the Egyptian stereotypes of foreigners (skin color, dress, hair style, accessories, epithets) and references to individual non-Egyptians was

explained by means of Loprieno's concept of *topos* and *mimesis* initially developed from Egyptian literature, where the (mostly negative) stereotype represents the *topos* and individual realism stands for *mimesis*. This concept has also been transferred to pictorial sources and archaeology. The motif of "slaying the enemy/prisoner" (fig. 4.1) was entrenched in Egyptian iconography since the prehistoric period, as can be seen in tomb 100 at Hierakonpolis and the Narmer palette. It was still used on temple fronts in Roman times. While for the earliest attestations no inscription names the "enemy," the later tradition clearly identifies the habitual underdog (Asiatic/Syrian or a triad of a Syrian, Nubian, and Libyan), ethnic stereotypes created to represent the Egyptian worldview in a positive light. The famous Narmer palette shows an inhabitant of the Delta as the enemy slain, while an ivory tablet depicts a non-Egyptian desert-dweller with long hair. By the time of the Old Kingdom a phenotypical distinction between the main groups of non-Egyptians (Nubians, Asiatics, Libyans) seems to have been in place in the artistic conventions. Nevertheless, until at least the Eleventh Dynasty some enemies have identical faces and were distinguished only by their inscriptions or attributes. Even Upper Egyptians were among them. Thus in the first instance all people seem to have been on an equal footing and only whether they rebelled against the "mighty cosmological power"—the ruler or *mꜣt*—was the decisive factor in their slaying, not their origin. Interestingly in the New Kingdom icons a predominance of

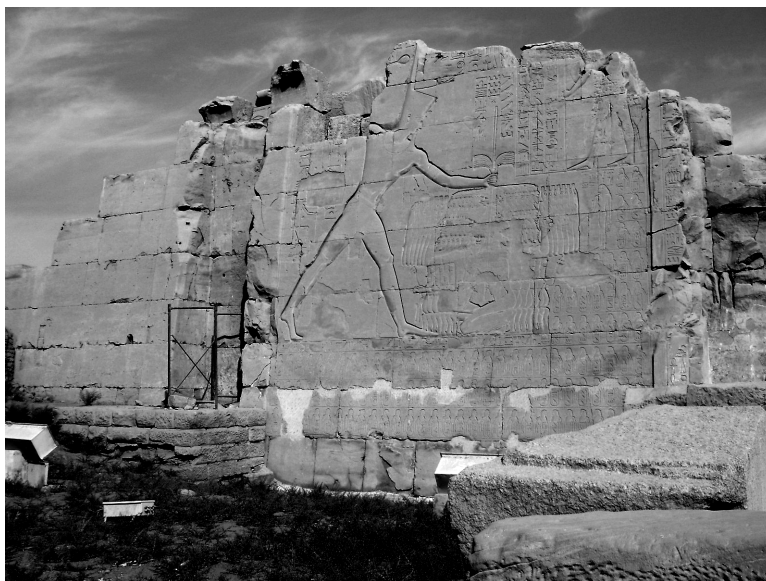


Photo 1. Slaying of the enemies, Karnak temple. Photo by B. Bader.



Photo 2. Slain enemies. Karnak temple. Photo by B. Bader.

Asiatics in the choice of victims perhaps as prototypes for foreigners (fig. 4.2) can be noticed, while Nubians are also frequently mentioned and shown in pejorative terms (“vile” or “wretched” Nubians). Libyans seem to occur more rarely, and the Aegeans, namely the people from Keftiu and Hau-nebut, are not found in such a context (but see below, for the Theban tomb scenes), perhaps because no major confrontation occurred before the depiction became so deeply rooted. The action behind the icon, namely the killing of the enemies by cutting off heads and other body parts, was most probably real, as some archaeological finds and temple scenes suggest (cut-off hands and heads in a pit at Tell el-Dab’a; a cruelly bound and killed prisoner in the area of the Mut temple in Luxor; heap of cut off hands at Medinet Habu) (fig. 4.3).

Another icon to be mentioned here is the “stepping on the nine bows” by the pharaoh as a symbolic action for the overcoming of rebellious enemies against the all-ruling power. These nine bows are depicted below the feet of the pharaoh on footstools or pedestals of statues or even on the underside of sandals. As in the execration texts, a magical means to defeat enemies, Upper and Lower Egyptians are included in the list, as well as oasis dwellers. Thus, the origin of the person was again not that relevant, but more if (s)he took action against the pharaoh, who controlled everything on earth and crushed any unlawful resistance.

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Photo 3. Counting the hands of the fallen enemies. Medinet Habu. Photo by B. Bader.

Archaeologically, several situations where people from abroad lived together with local Egyptian people can be brought forward: for example in the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period settlement at Tell el-Dab'a/Avaris. There is no evidence to suggest that any segregation or suppression was in place, but it also remains unclear what sort of record we are looking for. The papyri from Lahun and Thebes, lists of unfree workers fulfilling a range of specific tasks such as singing or weaving, on the other hand show a very different picture. It is very difficult to know how such “slaves” were treated and if this label is actually justified. As lists naming fugitives (Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446) exist, forced labor was involved and it concerned foreigners as well as Egyptians.

Similarly it is difficult to ascertain why and how the owners of the “pan-graves” of the late Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period found at several sites in southern Egypt fit into the Egyptian social fabric. Known primarily by their round, shallow pit tombs with side-flexed burials and a distinct range of burial gifts (jewelry etc. from certain shells, pottery, painted animal crania, etc.), they are quite dissimilar from Egyptian customs. There are cemeteries where “pan-graves” are isolated, while in others they are interspersed between Egyptian ones. Moreover, in other instances objects commonly considered Egyptian are found together with non-Egyptian ones. Some burial customs, such as rectangular shafts and extended body position, were also taken over. These variants are often ascribed to a development. Whether relational and material entanglement developed needs detailed research. The archaeological material of the “pan-grave culture” is currently undergoing a fresh contextual analysis. This group of people was identified with the Medjay of Egyptian texts, who lived in a non-specific area to the east or southeast of the Nile Valley. The “ethnic identity” of this group is an Egyptian creation and therefore a stereotype, with which not necessarily any nomad from the Eastern Desert themselves identified at first. The textual sources suggest that over time the Medjay became an important part of the Egyptian imperial military system and in the New Kingdom the term signified a type of specialized military unit, whose members considered themselves proudly to be Medjay. Recently awareness has been raised about the long-standing connection and extrapolation between the (textual) Medjay and the (archaeological) “pan-grave culture” without giving critical thought on the nature of the source types.

Perhaps different again is the situation at the southern end of the country at Elephantine, where there is continuous evidence for contact with Nubians. (The definition and distinction of the material culture of the C-group, “pan-grave”, and Kerma especially in the earlier phases is currently not finalized.) It seems that small amounts of Nubian-derived pottery made up part of the ceramic repertoire of Elephantine settlement and burials from the 3rd millennium BCE onward, representing a close relationship. Whether a real mix existed is at present hard to say but may be expected. So far only for the Middle Kingdom evidence of Nubian influence on the local ceramic repertoire (mostly in terms of decoration) in the settlement provides hints for a close contact. Straightforward importations from Lower Nubia alone cannot be considered to represent the physical presence of people, and the same holds true for similar situations at other sites. The massive presence of Nubian cooking pottery at the fortress of Askut amid an otherwise Egyptian ceramic repertoire points to a presence of Nubian cooks (female, probably). The most difficult task in archaeology is to provide proof for the physical presence of non-local people, because it would necessitate the assignation of certain objects to certain “ethnicities” and this remains problematic in most cases.

The cemetery of Tombos in Nubia, however, in use from the early Eighteenth to the Twenty-fifth Dynasty seems to cater for Egyptian colonists and local Nubians and shows a situation where tombs reflecting Egyptian as well as Nubian burial customs appear side by side. It became obvious that the local population chose between Egyptian and Nubian burial customs, but which factors influenced this choice remains unclear. Resistance was suspected as possible motivation. In Napatan times Egyptian and Nubian traits became intricately mixed, a feature known from the late Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period cemeteries at Avaris.

### *Egyptians as Nationalists?*

Closely connected to the view of the “other,” is the view of the self and the question if Egyptians considered themselves belonging to a “state” or a “nation” in a supra-local sense. Recent research into the connection between modern “nationalistic” concepts and a possible equivalent in the ancient Egyptian views doubts that such a notion ever existed in antiquity. In the search for a national identity (only one of many) expressed in texts it appears that stress is regularly laid on the local perspective rather than on any “national” notions. Nation states and discourse connected to them have existed only since the 19<sup>th</sup> century CE. The hometown seems to be of major importance to the owner of inscriptions in general in a wide range of periods. Within this framework fits the Egyptian desire expressed in literature to be buried in one’s hometown. Thus, this might have implications on the view toward the “other”—namely, foreign—people, too. In principle there should, then, be no difference between a person from the next town (which is not one’s own) and a town in Retjenu or Kush. Nevertheless, one may recall the instructions of Ptahhotep (Old Kingdom) and Ani (New Kingdom) to take a wife who is known in the town and to beware of an “outsider woman” who is not. This would then also concern people from abroad, unless it is meant misogynistically.

In the Amarna period, all persons, animals, and things on earth were the creation of the sole god, and the great Amarna Hymn (Lichtheim 1976, p. 98) specifically mentions:

“O sole God beside whom there is none!  
 You made the earth as you wished, you alone,  
 All peoples, all herds and flocks;  
 All upon earth that walk on legs,  
 All on the high that fly on wings,  
 The lands of Khor [Syria/Palestine] and Kush [Nubia],  
 The land of Egypt.  
 You set every man in his place,

You supply their needs;  
 Everyone has his food,  
 His lifetime is counted.  
 Their tongues differ in speech,  
 Their characters likewise;  
 Their skins are distinct,  
 For you distinguished the peoples.”

This particular verse has been taken to mean that there is no hierarchical difference between Egyptians and other peoples during this time, but that they are only of different appearance. This is in contrast to the – later – story of Wenamun, where Amun-Re is said to have founded Egypt first, although he still created all other lands as well. It remains difficult to decide whether the purported “outside” view of Egyptian literature refers there to Egypt as a geographic unit only or to an identity.

#### *Contact Situations Known from Depictions and Their Interpretations*

In the following some pictorial scenes are discussed with a focus on their social implications and interpretational difficulties.

A relief block from the Old Kingdom pyramid temple of Sahure of the Fifth Dynasty shows Asiatic sailors and their families on seagoing ships returning from the Levant or the Red Sea, who perform a gesture of adoration to the pharaoh just like the Egyptian part of the crew (the superiors). Interestingly, these Asiatics are only shown on the return journey; thus it has been assumed they were brought back by the expedition. While the destination remains unmentioned, Byblos has been assumed. Asiatics constitute the majority of people on the ship, which do not seem to be treated like prisoners or slaves, as shackles and ropes are not shown. Thus, it seems as if they are treated as equals to Egyptians, but the inscriptions remain silent on this. The presence of Egyptian interpreters (ꜥw) is also remarkable. A similar scene in the Unas causeway a few generations later shows a larger majority of Asiatics but without families on board seagoing ships. Bietak has drawn the conclusion that by that time the presence of Asiatic sailors with their special expertise has become a usual occurrence in Egypt and that they had found a place in the Egyptian social system.

The famous caravan of Asiatic men, women, and children depicted in the Middle Kingdom tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hassan (tomb 3) in Middle Egypt from the reign of Senwosret II has frequently been used as an illustration for infiltration and settlement of Asiatics in Egypt. If this is

indeed so, it would mean that such a process was not restricted to the liminal Delta/southern Palestine zone. Moreover, there is no contemporary (archaeological) evidence in Middle Egypt for Asiatic settlement. Khnumhotep was “overseer/administrator of the Eastern Desert” and it is in this capacity that the *ʿ3mw* of *šw* were presented to him by two Egyptian officials, an overseer of the hunters and a scribe, in year 6—a very concrete date for the event. They were “brought because of black eye paint” or “bringing the black eye paint” (i.e., lead sulfide, galena), according to the inscriptions. Except for the bellows, which may be connected to lead production, no specialized tools are shown. Whether they were supposed to bring galena or work with it there remains unknown. The leader of the group, Ibsa (Abishar), is mentioned by name and as *ḥk3 ḥ3st* “ruler of the foreign lands.” Although only 15 people are depicted, the accompanying text on the “presentation slip” of the scribe mentions 37; thus the scene in the tomb has been adapted perhaps to the available space. The clothing of the men and women, the tools, musical instruments, and weapons they carry, as well as their hairstyles, diadems, and beards, seem to represent the dress and equipment in use by Aamu at the time. Some of these implements were identified in the archaeological record, while the scene on the whole was used for pinpointing the origin of the people and their socio-economic situation. The use of the scene as a chronological link between Egypt and the Levant is also noteworthy. As is frequently the case, the geographical information is vague, so it is not reasonably possible to assign a specific origin for this group of Aamu. It remains simply unclear if they were nomads at all, came from the Eastern Desert (as the galena might suggest), Sinai, (southern) Levant, or somewhere else. Doubtful associations with (much later) biblical references have also been suggested. If these people originally came from the Eastern Desert, a connection to the southern Levant is not supported. This example demonstrates that the interpretation of scenes, even if they carry inscriptions, needs care and context. Moreover, there are scenes with Asiatic warriors in other tombs at Beni Hassan.

For the New Kingdom, a group of Theban tombs of high officials (Senenmut, Useramun, Rekhmire, Menkheperreseneb, etc.) from the reign of Thutmose III are important, because they contain scenes where foreign people from Nubia, Libya (in later tombs), Syria/Palestine, and the Aegean bring a variety of gifts. This type of scene also occurs on royal monuments and continues to exist until the Twentieth Dynasty. Although foreign people mostly occur in sizeable tableaux mistakenly called “tribute” scenes, Aegeans appear in only a few tombs but have gained greater notoriety because historical and chronological clues were drawn from these scenes for the synchronization between Egypt and the Aegean. Based on various details some scholars distinguished Minoans and Mycenaeans, based on a traditional

culture-historical interpretation but seems not warranted due to the vagueness of the associated geographical terms. It is noteworthy that in later tombs the inscriptional identification of the peoples does not always fit the iconography. This may mean exactitude and knowledge about the people diminished or was not particularly important.

First we shall consider the context of the scenes as the presentation of a variety of gifts to the respective tomb owners as intermediaries between the processions and the pharaoh. Recent holistic study of the genre and the accompanying texts suggests that in the absence of concrete occasion and dates for the processions and the presence of all the “great ones” of then known foreign peoples these scenes represent a variation of Egyptian ideology. The pharaoh ruled over the whole (known) world and its inhabitants. The scenes in the private high-status tombs of the Eighteenth Dynasty seem to stress the social role of the tomb owner as an important intermediary between such processions and the receiving pharaoh (sometimes accompanying gods), demonstrating their personal place in that world order. Besides the social standing of these officials, we also get a glimpse through Egyptian eyes on the increasing contact with neighboring peoples and the core knowledge available about them, including some typical objects these scenes contain. Some of them may be identified archaeologically. It has been maintained that the scenes show the Egyptian view of a gift-exchange re-interpreted for the Egyptian audience as a “tribute” in a propagandistic appropriation according to the prevailing decorum. Some of the Amarna letters provide a (later) counter picture for the Egyptian part of this exchange, which appears much more modest. The extent of historical facts in these scenes remains disputed.

Libyans, semi-nomadic people from areas west of the Nile Valley, only moved into the focus of Egyptian power during the later New Kingdom, when wars and punitive skirmishes with them were mentioned e.g. by Merenptah and Ramesses III (fig. 4.4). During this time it seems as if Libyan people moved increasingly into Egypt, especially in the north. In the Third Intermediate Period the political fragmentation of Egypt created a favorable situation for the heads of Libyan chiefdoms (Libu, Meshwesh, Ma, etc.) to come to power from within. A high degree of acculturation was assumed because archaeologically it is hitherto not possible to distinguish their material culture. But interestingly the Libyans are always depicted with the typical dress and feathers on their heads, so their acculturation was considered to have only been superficial.

Finally, the following Libyan and Nubian Twenty-second to Twenty-fifth Dynasties adapted to a certain extent to the Egyptian iconography of power and pharaonic rule in order to demonstrate their legitimacy, but in contrast to the earlier rulers they did not seem to conceive or present themselves as Egyptians.



Photo 4. Libyans from the Temple of Medinet Habu. Photo by B. Bader.

### *The Social Situation of Migrants/Non-Egyptian People Living in Egypt*

Because archaeology does not inform explicitly on the social situation of the early pre-historic immigrants in Egypt or the Egyptian presence in southern Palestine, some hypotheses have been proposed to explain the finds of the respective material culture in the other area. While the Egyptian materials in southern Palestine were explained as a “humane” colonial arrangement by Egyptian powers, did the people arriving in the Egyptian Delta do so as specialized workers or as members of a “trade mission” but certainly not as colonizers themselves? In the absence of textual evidence to provide a background for these hypotheses, the circumstances of these contacts must remain subject to further research and publication of archaeological data. The later sources often mention prisoners of war or people (men and women) brought back in the course of expeditions to distant lands both north and south. Some of these people were “awarded” to especially renowned military men as booty. This surely suggests an enforced and asymmetrical power relationship between the immigrant and his/her master. The individual situations would have strongly depended on the personality of the individual, but for Egyptologists it is hard to imagine that the subject of our study should have

been cruel when the wisdom literature shows the ideals of a well-lived and just life. But perhaps these texts existed exactly because the reality was quite different? What the lives of these people were like in the course of their forced stay remains largely unclear except that some lists named fugitives. This must mean that their life could not have been easy, or else they would not have fled. For the lowest social stratum, besides names in lists no more information on their life circumstances comes forward, so to “prove” archaeologically their non-Egyptian-ness is fraught with severe problems. In the New Kingdom texts indicate that prisoners of war were part of royal building projects, were assigned to temples and especially served as mercenaries. The tomb of the three foreign wives of Thutmose III provides a high-status example that only their foreign personal names reflect their foreign-ness, not the archaeological artifacts from their tomb.

### *Inclusion into Egyptian Society and Different Ways of Dealing with Identity*

Only if funerary stelae or tombs give clues of a non-Egyptian origin it is possible to gain insights into their social situation, but this also means that they would have belonged to an elevated social stratum able to afford such a monument. At the same time this implies that they were part of Egyptian society and knew the decorum of what was appropriate to be said and shown in order to belong. This may mean that an additional “Egyptianizing” filter existed. Insufficient clarity in the Egyptian terminology for family relationships adds to the problem of identifying non-Egyptians securely, as some changed their names during their lifetime.

The sources show that it was possible for non-Egyptians to climb the social ladder under different circumstances, be it the Nubian mercenaries from the First Intermediate Period in Gebelein, some of whom were shown as Nubians with the prefix *nḥsy* added to their Egyptian names, or the New Kingdom high official Aperel, who was not required to change his name or his appearance in the depictions in his tomb at Saqqara. A more subtle approach to self-identity is shown by Maiherperi, a royal fan bearer buried in the Valley of the Kings (KV 36) in an utterly Egyptian manner with exclusively Egyptian objects. Only the depiction of him in the *Book of the Dead* with very dark skin color and his mummy itself exemplify his non-Egyptian ancestry.

In contrast, Hekanefer, a contemporary of Tutankhamun, had himself depicted in his Nubian tomb at Toshka as an Egyptian, but in the so-called “tribute” or “procession” scene in the Theban tomb of Amenhotep-Huy, the

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viceroys of Nubia, Hekanefter is shown in the usual Nubian *topos* with dark skin color. This amply exemplifies that there was no escape from the ideology even if the tomb owner considered himself as Egyptian. On a larger scale, the Egyptian pharaoh had to be the cosmological ruler with Egypt at the center, whether this was a historical fact or not.

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