



8

Foreigners in Egypt

Archaeological Evidence and Cultural Context

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The notion of “foreigner” has been used regularly in the study of ancient Egypt, but hardly ever has it been reflected on thoroughly and properly. Modern connotations have frequently been projected and superimposed on the ancient evidence (Schneider 2006). The issue has received more intense attention since the 1980s, fostered by the anthropological debate about the concepts of ethnicity, culture, and territorial identities.

Ethnicity

Egyptology has seen a late reception of the term “ethnicity,” and has only rarely applied insights from the anthropological debate with scrutiny to its evidence (cf. Baines 1996; Johnson 1999:211ff.; for an overview with literature cf. Schneider 2003a:316–338; Smith 2003:1–55). The concept of ethnicity has asserted itself since Glazer and Moynihan’s study *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience* (1975). As a constituent of social life it denotes the fundamental fact that groups of people are linked together by belief in a common origin, shared features of culture, history, and current experience, and that they possess a sense of identity and belonging together (Heckmann 1992:30, 46, 56). Jenkins has recently upheld the validity of this universal feature of the structuring of human societies by emphasizing that ethnicity is a social construction, rooted in social interaction, with a fluidity linked to culture or social situations, and both collective and individual, “externalized in social interaction and internalized in personal self-identification” (Jenkins 2001:4828).

Ethnicity is not primarily an issue of actual cultural difference but the result of subjective judgments and more fundamental economic conditions, negotiated through social interaction (Alba 2000; Jenkins 2001; Nagel 1994). Very much relevant for the Egyptian evidence is the relation between ethnicity and other principles of social identification. Jenkins (1997, 2001) has proposed to

differentiate between group identification (within ethnic groups) and social categorization (a group is classified externally by non-members).

Another dichotomy that can be encountered in Egyptological literature is the one between ethnicity (as a cultural and voluntary classification) and race (a social classification imposed by compulsion) (van den Berghe 1967; Waters 1990), if it is not rather assigned to ethnicity as an inherent feature (Alba 2000). Main elements of the concept of ethnicity (Alba 2000; Heckmann 1992) are a common lineage, shared historical or current experiences (such as the motivation for immigration, the kind of reception by the host society: Lieberson 1961), language, religion, traditions of food and dress, folklore, music, and other socio-cultural features, residence and living patterns, an awareness of foreignness and collective identity (through both internal perception and external attribution), a sense of solidarity within the ethnic group, group-specific institutions and political aims. Critical for the development of ethnicity is the state of power the ethnic group is faced with, inequality and stratification within the ethnic groups, and the availability of ethnic resources (Alba 2000).

Acculturation

People of foreign origin who lived in Egypt were subject to an adaptation to the social and cultural system of their host country. Although this adaptation was certainly of different intensity, it is crucial to notice that the modern label of “foreigners” loses its applicability in this setting. With their automatic embedding in the new society, they no longer formed an inherent part of the world beyond its boundaries, which was seen as chaotic and potentially threatening, and were no longer covered by the ethnic stereotypes maintained for the sake of state legitimacy. Entering Egypt meant implicitly taking on a new ideological code, of the Egyptian (even though of foreign origin) serving the king instead of the enemy smitten by pharaoh. This is clearly visible in the fact that the Egyptian comprehensive term *ḥꜣs.tjw*, “foreigners,” is never used for peoples of foreign origin in an Egyptian socio-economic context but exclusively reserved for foreigners outside Egypt who are devoid of any opportunity of acculturation. *Absent* vs. *accomplished acculturation* is the decisive pair of opposites that served as the Egyptian criterion for considering an individual a foreigner or an Egyptian (Schneider 2003a, 2006); a critical issue also with regard to the mimetic portrayal of foreigners (Smith 2003:175). Ethnonyms like *ꜥꜣm*, “Asiatic,” or *nḥsj*, “Nubian,” which are used both for *non-acculturated people outside Egypt* and for *adaptated members of the Egyptian social system* convey primarily the notion of foreign origin but cannot be taken as indicators of a specific degree of ethnicity. The inclusion of ethnic groups and individuals in the host society entails adaptation processes of various intensities that can collectively be labeled *acculturation*, although there is no terminological unanimity (other terms include assimilation, accommodation, absorption, adaptation, integration, amalgamation: Dupront 1966; Heckmann 1992:167). These stages progress from superficial adaptation that enables survival in the host society (which can last indefinitely) to more structural changes in social and professional affiliation, marriage patterns, values, and identity, and ultimately

the stage of complete assimilation to the host society (Alba 2000: 842; Alba and Nee 1997; Gordon 1964:71; Heckmann 1992:176ff.).

A more differentiated view of the degrees of acculturation within the intermediate stage of integration (partial immersion in either cultural system) is essential. Heckmann (1992:167ff.) proposes *accommodation* as a first stage that enables a person to live in the host society but does not embrace the change of basic values or modes of thinking. *Acculturation* is the change of values, the acquisition of linguistic, professional, and cultural knowledge, and the change in behavior and life style fostered by contact with the host society (corresponding to Stephenson's [2000] *integration*). This process still leaves subjects with their separate cultural identity. The third stage of *assimilation* entails the complete reception of the host culture and rejection of the culture of origin. Gordon's path-breaking study of 1964 features the seven-step sequence of *cultural or behavioral assimilation* (= *acculturation*), *structural assimilation*, *marital assimilation* (= *amalgamation*), *identificational assimilation*, *attitude receptional assimilation*, *behavior receptional assimilation*, and *civic assimilation*. Each of these steps is characterized by an increase in aspects of the host society and a decrease in features of the original ethnic background.

It is critical to distinguish between individual and group acculturation. Factors favoring the fast acculturation of individuals are marked social hierarchies and a strong majority culture, as well as a distinct motivation for assimilation. In the case of group acculturation, crucial requirements are the openness of the group structure, the willingness and ability to acculturate in the minority group, and a majority society disposed favorably towards the group's acculturation (Heckmann 1992:181–207). An important factor both in modern societies and in respect to ancient Egypt is spatial closeness to the host society, residency, or the distribution of settlements that favor spatial assimilation (Alba 2000).

Particularly appropriate for the description of acculturation in ancient Egypt is the socially differentiating concept of *segmented assimilation* (Portes and Zhou 1993). It accounts for the fact that the receiving majority society may be heavily stratified, to the effect that individuals are culturally integrated into specific social strata, for example from low social positions to the lower class of the majority society, without the possibility of social ascent. Two special cases of significance for the Egyptian evidence are that of an ethnic minority (in case of discrimination: Heckmann 1992:55, 59–116) and symbolic ethnicity, when traditions and customs are preserved as relics in the third or fourth generation of immigrants, which is elsewhere completely assimilated to the culture of the majority (Heckmann 1992:32).

To understand the issue of cultural identity correctly, it is also important to note that the focus of personal affiliation was not the state, but one's place of birth, apart from which social position and status generated identity; and that otherness existed within Egyptians as well (Assmann 1996; Moers 2003). Neither from the internal perception of the Egyptian nor from the external perception of the immigrant was non-Egyptian origin seen as a framework of group identity and solidarity. If ethnic identities persevered in Egypt, they defined themselves on a smaller scale.

In this context, it is important to mention the notion of *cultural distance* (cf. Schneider 2003a) – the extent of problems with adaptation as a function of

the difference between cultures. Cultural contact was intense and facilitated acculturation. Cultural distance was thus diminished through the appropriation of elements of foreign cultures by the Egyptian elite society – the reception of technological innovation, cultural and religious motifs, language and literature (Schneider 2003b). At the same time, the tenets of Egyptian culture proliferated abroad, not the least in the urban centers of the ancient Near East.

Boundaries

Apart from the parameters of ethnicity and acculturation, the spatial construction of identities has received specific interest over the past two decades. This aspect had always been recognized for settlements and cemeteries of immigrant populations (Pan-grave, C group, Palestinian and Libyan influx in the Delta), but has increased in significance with the new anthropological discourse about borders (cf. Brunet-Jailly 2004; Donnan and Wilson 1994; Lightfoot and Martinez 1995; Newman 2003). In Egyptology, the concept of borders has conventionally relied on the assumption that their essence is to separate the inside/“self” from the outside/“other,” and to constitute a barrier against military attack or the influx of people or values. Seeing them as hard territorial lines for the political demarcation of territorial states that have an absolute command of their control function seems at first sight supported by the existence of Egyptian fortifications on the fringes of the Delta and until the Second Cataract in Nubia as the most manifest architectural symbols of a boundary. As tools of military defense and control, and of the exploitation of economic resources and workforce, they substantiate the political and ideological claim to the governance of the territory they are situated in and which they demarcate from external areas. A major shift in the study of boundaries is the adoption of a new perspective that emphasizes the process of bordering, and explores this process on a local level. It perceives borders as institutions that engender a system of communities, affiliations, and identities, imposing on the people living along the border laws of behavior, of exclusion and inclusion, of difference and similarity. Case studies concentrate on the human agency of the people who live and work at these borders, who generate a bottom-up dynamics often in conflict with institutional top-down regulations implemented there. Recent studies have therefore devoted their interest to trans-boundary interaction, integration processes within the borderland, the negotiation of culture, and the development of forms of identity which undermine traditional territorial identity. They emphasize how perceptions of the border constructed from the center of a state which emphasize difference, fear, and threat may conflict with divergent perceptions created in the bordering communities. Instead of applying a core–periphery model where the periphery is seen as passive and depending upon a cultural center, new concepts imagine frontiers as interfaces of culture. Border areas are thus seen as places where new cultural constructs are created, where the creolization of culture takes place. The understanding of local border identities and cultural landscapes that transcend the geopolitical borderline has also been adopted in the study of borders in archaeology (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995).

This is nowhere more visible than at the site of Avaris, which was founded as the first pioneer outpost east of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile in the late 12th Dynasty and has become one of the Egyptological model communities allowing us to observe the merger of cultures, the development of new identities, and the dynamic interplay of different ethnic and religious groups (see case study below). Its successor, Pi-Ramesses, is not only proof of a settlement which, although at the traditional periphery of Egypt, constituted the driving force of Ramesside Egypt. It was also perceived as a community featuring trans-boundary dynamics by the Egyptians themselves, who stated, in praise of the city in pAnastasi IV, that it is situated with all its splendor and degree of achievement “on the boundary between Egypt and Palestine.” Similar areas with a high degree of non-Egyptian cultural features behind political boundaries are the first Upper Egyptian nome and the region of Lower Nubia (cf. Smith 2003); the mountainous region of Egypt’s eastern border, still populated by Bedja tribes today up to the geographic latitude of Thebes; the Western Nile Delta; and the Egyptian West with a large frontier zone of Egyptian, Libyan, and Nilo-Saharan interchange.

Ideology and Reality

Egyptian ideology adhered to a rigid distinction between Egypt and the outside world, and between inhabitants of Egypt and inhabitants of the chaotic and potentially threatening world beyond its boundaries. As a *topos*, a society’s official and normative perception, it has been distinguished from *mimetic* attempts to surmount the prescriptive tenets of tradition – narrative attempts to portray foreigners in a humanistic way as valuable individuals (Loprieno 1988; Smith 2003; cf. critically Buchberger 1989/1990). Loprieno’s stimulating approach from the field of literary studies has been projected by Gordon on to the situation of Egyptian society, and taken as a general distinction between (negative) attitudes towards groups and (positive) attitudes towards individuals (Gordon 2001:547), which does not seem to be valid. A valid assessment needs rather to account for the complex cultural situation. The ideological pattern of the *foreigner topos* assigned political and ritual roles on the basis of a strict model of inclusion and exclusion which combined the existence or lack of acculturation with the notion of territorial authority and power hierarchy. Only representatives of peoples outside Egypt who were not part of Egypt’s internal cultural system were “outsiders,” while foreign mercenaries in the Egyptian army would serve the fight against enemies of Egypt just as much as foreign rulers of Egypt would be portrayed smiting the chaotic world. This principle is still visible in Herodotus’ assertion that whoever was nourished by the waters of the Nile was considered an Egyptian.

The positive portrayal of foreign individuals in Egyptian texts (Sinuhe) and of the possibility of living abroad (Doomed Prince) is not just the *mimetic* counterpoint of narrative literature to the stereotypical concepts of ideology but betrays insights into the complex and differentiated system of cultural exchange. Cultural appropriation in the Egyptian elite and the increasing possibility of exhibiting foreignness and ethnicity on the Nile refigured Egypt in the second millennium and changed the receptive framework for immigrants, while simultaneously

Egyptian culture proliferated abroad (Schneider 2006). Beneath the strict demarcations of ideology, the cultural picture exhibits a scenario of great complexity. Large numbers of individuals and groups of foreign descent entered Egyptian society at all times of its history and on all its levels, where they underwent varying degrees of acculturation. Social status and professional affiliation were the principal factors of an individual's orientation, whereas ethnicity as a large-scale factor of identity did not occur before the first millennium BCE. Officials of foreign descent were assimilated into Egyptian elite culture, to the effect that their ethnic origin may have lost all significance to their social career and that political decisions were not dictated by ethnicity, as had been insinuated previously:

It seems reasonable to assume that they were, indeed, fully accepted within Egyptian society as Egyptians. If this is a correct reading of the situation, then we should not think of these people as foreigners in a modern, nationalistic sense, but rather as Egyptians of foreign origin. ... This point casts a completely different perspective on our perception of the composition of Egyptian society. (Schulman 1986:193 n. 2; cf. Schneider 2003a, 2006)

Evidence and Evaluation

A modern assessment of the issue of foreigners in ancient Egypt is faced with considerable difficulties (Schneider 2003a, 2006):

- 1 Markers of ethnicity were displayed to a varying, but preponderantly little, degree over the course of Egyptian history, depending on the decorum and the social position of the individual or group. Secondary to features of the dominant society, and not relevant for success in life or afterlife, they will be missing outright, in the majority of cases, from the biographical or archaeological record relating to an individual. Almost all individuals of foreign origin that are preserved in the sources are but one step from losing the last ethnic marker that makes us qualify them as foreigners (an ethnonym or foreign personal name) and do not appear as otherwise (appearance, dress, funerary equipment, etc.) different from "Egyptians" in the evidence. Hardly ever is it possible to assess the importance of an individual's ethnicity of origin in the private domain against the official display of the host society's culture.
- 2 The evidence for people of foreign origin in the Egyptian material and written record is fragmentary and often ambiguous. The vast majority of written and material remains from Egypt has been lost, and foreigners in lower social strata will have had lesser opportunities to leave traces of their existence than elite officials. Immigration of groups and populations (C-group, Pan-grave, settlement and cemetery patterns) can be observed more unequivocally, although the archaeological evidence for ethnicity is not always unambiguous (Smith 2003).
- 3 The variety of forms of acculturation over the cultural and social spectrum – from prisoners of war to foreigners turned vizier – is likely to have been very complex. We are lacking the possibility of investigating closer specific milieus

and phenomena of acculturation, with the notable exception of a limited number of case studies.

Foreigners in Egypt: An Overview

Archaic Egypt

Ever since humans settled in the Nile Valley, they will have encountered people of different origin (cf. Raue 2002; Schneider 1998; Wilkinson 2002). Otherness was a feature that persisted even within the boundaries of historical Egypt by way of different appearances, dialects, and traditions (Assmann 1996). Prior to the epoch of a territorial state extending over the whole of Egypt from the Delta to the First Cataract, the demarcation between groups of particular cultural identities followed different parameters, whereas the classic ideological dichotomy between “Egyptians” and “foreigners” and their respective (real or imagined) cultural repertoires was the result of a long political process. Early transfers of people through trade, migration, and nomadism are reflected in the mutual material inventory of settlements (e.g. between Buto-Maadi and South Palestine) and at least indirectly in phenomena of innovation from abroad (pictorial motifs on palettes, mace heads, and knives; recess architecture; the idea of writing). The motif of prisoners is attested as early as Naqada II, as is the depiction of specific cultural markers such as cloak, beard, and conical hat (Schneider 1998). It is doubtful if new evidence from Buto (the cone mosaic or *Stiftmosaik*) can be seen as proof of artistic innovation implemented in Egypt by craftsmen from the Uruk civilization (Wilde and Behnert 2002).

The Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period

The evidence for foreigners in the Old Kingdom and First Intermediate Period is very limited (cf. for the following in detail Schneider 1998). Reasons for this may be sought in limitations of military activity and the influx of foreign groups or individuals, but may equally lie in the restrictions of decorum, which would not have allowed for the display of ethnicity, in the composition of historical sources. I will outline here the basic thematic issues:

- 1 *The foreigner topos.* Depictions and sculptures of prisoners form part of the regular ritual and ideological repertoire, from the Djoser complex to the mortuary temples of the 5th and 6th Dynasties. A ritual cage for the possible containment of prisoner figures has been discovered at Giza (Grimm 1987).
- 2 *Population shifts.* The Old Kingdom attests most probably to the resettlement of C-group Nubians (and perhaps Libyans) to the newly colonized Nile Delta under Snofru (for Nubians before the New Kingdom, cf. Meurer 1996). Major shifts in the population of Nubia occur towards the end of the 5th Dynasty, when the C-group settles in Lower Nubia and the civilization of Middle Kerma is attested in Upper Nubia. Execration texts are a new type

- of ritual evidence attested in the 6th Dynasty. The texts known from the reign of Pepy II mention individually c. 180 “Nubians,” bearing preponderantly “Nubian” names and being partly labeled explicitly as *nhsj*, “Nubian.” Since the latter term can denote more particularly members of the Nubian C-group which immigrated into the Lower Nubian Nile Valley during the 6th Dynasty or earlier and constituted a threat to the Egyptian claim to Nubian trade and raw materials, the appearance of execration figures in their names is likely to be seen as a reflection of this shift of population (for the boundary controls, see Meurer 1996:100). The mention of “pacified/settled/aculturated Nubians” (*nhsjw htpw*) in Pepy I’s exemption decree for service extended to the funerary precinct of Snofru at Dahshur seems to relate to integrated C-group Nubians.
- 3 *Military campaigns and expeditions.* Besides the deliberate resettlement of Nubians under Snofru, expeditions of military purpose for the procurement of raw materials and the pursuit of trade will have entailed regular contacts with foreigners and their capture. The capture of foreigners can be inferred from razzias and expeditions by Sahure, their attachment to work at the royal pyramid sites from a note from Userkaf’s reign in the Cairo annal fragment. Depictions of the surrender of Libya from Sahure’s reign (with later copies) record enormous figures of prisoners and prey and have been interpreted as testimony to a feudal allegiance of Libya to Egypt (Fecht 1956; Gundlach 1994). Egyptian expeditions far into the plateau of the Sahara under Cheops and Djedefre have only recently come to light (Kuhlmann 2005; Riemer et al. 2005). Razzias to Palestine, the taking of prisoners, and the conquest of a town, respectively, are attested in the biography of Djedkare-Asosi’s son Kaemtjenenet and the contemporary (or later, 6th-Dynasty) depictions in the tombs of Kaemheset at Saqqara and the tomb of Inti at Deshasheh. Equally attested are campaigns to Nubia under Pepy II. The Teaching for Merikare, traditionally believed to be set in the First Intermediate Period (cf., however, Gnirs 2006), alludes to incursions of Asiatics in the Eastern Nile Delta. The record of *ʿzmmw*, “Asiatics,” in execration texts and of nomadic *ʿzmmw hrjw-š*, “Asiatics who are on the sand,” indicates a growing concern about the state of affairs to the northeast of Egypt.
- 4 *Foreigners in Egyptian service.* The alleged reception, in the 4th Dynasty, of “Libyan” and “African” women to the Egyptian elite and the royal harem advocated by early twentieth-century scholars (Junker 1929: 63ff.; Reisner 1947:477) on the basis of depictions and anthropological material (e.g. Queen Hetepheres) cannot be corroborated at present. Foreign individuals employed in private households are attested in the case of Nubian attendants of early 5th-Dynasty officials buried at Giza. Of particular importance are depictions of ocean-going ships from the funerary temple of Sahure and the Unas causeway depicting the employment of Asiatic seafaring specialists on behalf of the Egyptian crown. In these two reigns, additional individuals from Africa (pygmies from Punt, equally under Pepy II) and the Levant are attested in Egypt. A famous scene from the causeway of the pyramid of Unas depicts emaciated bedouins. It is unclear whether the depiction represents actual individuals or the ideological motif which contrasts the chaotic world outside with the affluence of Egypt. Nubians were also recruited for the Egyptian

militia of the 6th Dynasty, serving as auxiliary troops in the campaigns of Uni and Harkhuf and protecting quarry expeditions. The extent of their military use is visible in the considerable number of 6th-Dynasty officials employed in their administration as commanders of Nubian auxiliary troops (*mr jꜣw*: Schneider 1998:22f.).

The First Intermediate Period has preserved depictions of Asiatic prisoners while Nubians appear not only as elite troops, but also as servants on the Cairo sarcophagus of Ashayt (where they are identified as *mdꜣy.wt* = Pan-grave Nubians). A Nubian origin has also been proposed for the secondary wives of Mentuhotep buried in shafts of his mortuary temple at Deir el-Bahri, on account of the depicted dark skin and anthropological data (for other cases, cf. Schneider 2003a). The presence of Nubians is most apparent in the case of the Nubian mercenaries of Gebelein, who are portrayed with ethnic markers (Kubisch 2000), depictions in tombs at Gebelein, Moalla, and Aswan, and the wooden model of forty Nubian archers from the tomb of Mesehti at Asyut (either Pan-grave people [Bietak 1985] or Kerma/C-group mercenaries [Meurer 1996]). A Nubian influx is visible in a variety of individuals and artifacts (Meurer 1996:95).

The Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period

The first half of the second millennium is marked by an enormous increase in the evidence for foreigners in ancient Egypt (for a comprehensive presentation and analysis of the material, cf. Schneider 2003a). Whereas individual foreigners show up only exceptionally in the material from the third millennium, c. 800 individuals of probably foreign extraction are still visible in the published documentation from the first half of the second millennium. This is probably due to a more favorable source basis; to the need, possibility, or preparedness to register individuals as foreigners (whereby perception may have been different: contrary to the actual situation, Asiatics are much more frequently noticed than Nubians); and to a greater actual influx of people from Egypt's colonial possessions in Nubia and an intensified foreign policy in the Levant.

Military activity to bolster the Nubian province is attested throughout the Middle Kingdom, while a similarly energetic policy in Syria–Palestine has become fairly plausible due to the fragment of Amenemhat II's annals discovered at Mitrahine (Altenmüller and Moussa 1991; Eder 1995:176–195; Marcus 2007; Obsomer 1995:595–607) and a historical inscription from the Khnumhotep mastaba at Dahshur about an Egyptian involvement in the Levant (Allen 2008). The Amenemhat inscription mentions as one of the aims the capture of a workforce for the king's pyramid city (other Asiatics are given to Egypt as a tribute; their total is c. 2700 people), and the fact that the Egyptian soldiers ate the Asiatic dishes of the prisoners. From the time of Senwosret II comes the depiction of a caravan of "Asiatic" nomads (from the Sinai or Negev) in the tomb of Khnumhotep II at Beni Hassan; possibly mining specialists searching for galena under the protection of the nomarch Hassan (Staubli 1991:30–35). Senwosret III's first boundary stela at Semna prohibits Nubians from south of the Second Cataract to

proceed further north; the *Semna Dispatches* from the reign of Amenemhat III register both C-group and Pan-grave Nubians seeking entry to Egypt. In dispatch 5 from Elephantine, Pan-grave people give as a reason for immigration that “the desert is dying of hunger.” A delegation of Pan-grave people with their chieftain partakes in the festivities of Sobekhotep II’s visit to Thebes (Papyrus Boulaq 18). Glimpses into the raiding of foreign territory for the acquisition of workforce can be gained from the stela of Khusobek (Manchester 3306), and into the use of skilled workers (mainly textile specialists) in a private Theban household from Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446 from the reign of Sobekhotep III. In the Sinai, the employment of local personnel and South Palestinians in quarrying expeditions is attested under Amenemhat III and IV.

A re-evaluation of the professional affiliations of foreigners and their socio-economic embedding during the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period has provided a differentiated picture (Schneider 2003a, as opposed to Helck 1971:77–82). Foreigners are attested across the whole socio-economic spectrum in c. 100 different professions and functions, extending from prisoners of war and compulsory workers to high administrative offices and royalty, including cultic and priestly functions and attesting to the emergence of professional traditions within families. It is interesting to notice that individuals of foreign origin who commissioned for themselves funerary items (e.g. stelae) had themselves not qualified by an ethnonym, which therefore appears to be an external marker applied by Egyptians. A remarkable exception is stela CG 1481 of an African (“Nubian”) woman with a clear display of ethnic markers (Schneider 2003a). The scarcity of explicit evidence suggests that exhibiting ethnic difference in the (mostly funerary) sources was not important or viable, while examples of the presence of foreign markers (e.g. names) over several generations of a family indicate the perseverance of traditions of origin at least in a private context. The evidence for marital behavior is often ambiguous. While the adoption of foreigners into existing families by way of marriage is frequent, marriages between foreigners do not occur in the evidence, although they must have been ubiquitous in reality; nor are they often demonstrated in the New Kingdom (Schneider 2006).

Specific attention is deserved for settlements and cemeteries of foreign ethnic groups on Egyptian soil. While Asiatic immigration will be dealt with below, it is instructive to contrast the three Nubian cultures attested in Egypt during this period (Pan-grave, C-group, and Kerma). Pan-grave people (“desert Nubians”) were anthropologically different from C-group people (“Nile Valley Nubians”), and they originated very distantly from each other. The Egyptians observed differences in their physique and kept them also terminologically distinct: Pan-grave people were labeled *mḏzyw*, whereas C-group Nubians were covered by the term *nḥsjw*. Scattered over Egypt and its Nubian territory from Dahshur until the Second Cataract, the small cemeteries of the nomadic Pan-grave culture (cf. Meurer 1996; Schneider 2003a) were situated on the edge of the desert, while permanent settlements are almost completely absent. Its members represented a Nubian population that attempted to resettle to Egypt between c. 1800 and 1550 BCE, seemingly due to a drought, or intentionally relocated there by the Theban kings of the 17th Dynasty (Beckerath 1964:201f.). Attested through tombs and pottery from Memphis to Elephantine, where they live in small and isolated

groups, the Pan-grave people's place of origin seems to have been the Eastern Desert upstream from the Wadi Allaqi.

Thanks to their robust physique, they were deployed as soldiers, a fact corroborated beyond textual evidence by Egyptian weapons retrieved from Pan-grave burials (daggers, axes, bow strings, hand covers) and Pan-grave pottery in the Nubian forts of Buhen and Mirgissa. An acculturation to Egyptian society is clearly visible in the material record (Cohen 1993); anthropological evidence from the group settling at Mostagedda displays distinct signs of a merger with Egyptians. In contrast, the evidence for the Nubian C-group (Meurer 1996; Schneider 2003a) constitutes a model case of an ethnically different frontier community at Egypt's southern border. Attested in Nubia as early as the 6th Dynasty and most probably originating from the Libyan desert and the Southern Nile Valley, the C-group subsisted on agriculture and breeding cattle. Under Egyptian sovereignty in the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period, their cultural province comprised Lower Nubia and extended until the site of Kubanieh in "the Nubian land," the first Upper Egyptian nome north of the First Cataract. Although a C-group cemetery has been recently uncovered at Hierakonpolis (Friedman 2001), it seems as if large-scale group immigration to Egypt did not take place.

The loss of Egyptian sovereignty over Nubia with the end of the 13th Dynasty enabled the Sudanese Kerma culture to extend its influence to traditional C-group territory. On Egyptian soil, it is represented by individual tombs and groups of two to three tombs each with classical Kerma pottery. The evidence gathered by Bourriau (1981, 1991) comprises the sites of Gurob (late Second Intermediate Period or early 18th Dynasty), Qau (mid- to late Second Intermediate Period), Abydos (late 12th Dynasty and late Second Intermediate Period respectively), Abadiyeh (first half of Second Intermediate Period), and Dra Abu el-Naga (17th Dynasty), with additional evidence from the early 18th Dynasty. Additional Kerma pottery comes from Tell Hebwa, Memphis/Kom Rabi'a, Illahun, Hierakonpolis, and Edfu. The interpretation of the evidence is still in process (cf. Bourriau 1981:36; Meurer 1996:88).

Of particular importance is the evidence for Kerma people unearthed in Ahmose's residence of Ballas, pointing to the existence of Kerma contingents in service of the late 17th Dynasty, and perhaps also in its military. This is further corroborated by Kerma pottery and Nubian arrow heads from Tell el-Dabaa. Although not clearly demonstrable at present, the segregation of groups within urban centers on account of ethnic criteria cannot be excluded. Infrastructures specific to needs of ethnic groups are attested by Syrian sanctuaries at Avaris, and this might have reduced acculturation pressure. In turn, the evidence of Pan-grave burials and Kerma individuals seems to indicate the attractiveness of acculturation, and Avaris itself exhibits not an apartheid of cultures but their amalgamation. It is unclear to what extent clusters of foreigners in private households (e.g. Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446, stela Moscow Pushkin Museum I.1.a.5349 [4161], stela Marseille 227, naos Vienna ÄS 186 [Schneider 2003:336]) constitute homogeneous ethnic pockets. Ethnic markers can be exhibited by foreigners themselves through their non-Egyptian personal names, the presence of non-Egyptian items in their funerary equipment, and much more rarely by having themselves depicted with non-Egyptian physical features, garments, and headdresses.

Despite the fact that the preserved evidence about foreigners in Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Egypt is extremely fragmentary, it still shows an omnipresence of individuals and groups of foreign extraction across the whole social and professional spectrum, and throughout the entire country. Contrary to what has been held until recently, this fact of demographic diversity is by and large comparable to New Kingdom Egypt (cf. Ray 1998:11).

The New Kingdom

Because of the richness of the evidence, the New Kingdom has been paradigmatic for the recent interest in and interpretation of foreigners in ancient Egypt (cf. Bresciani 1990; Panagiotopoulos, 2006; Schneider 2006). While basic parameters about the conditions of their acculturation do not differ markedly from the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period, the display and perception of their ethnicity has become more obvious. Religious texts describe foreign people as an inherent part of the created world (hymns to Amun-Ra in Papyrus Bulaq 17; hymns to the Aten; 4th hour of the Book of Gates). In documents, the use of ethnonyms as applied to individuals diminishes greatly while foreign proper names are preserved far more often (contrast Schneider 1992 and Schneider 2003a). If the display of ethnicity is still rather restricted in the Middle Kingdom, the New Kingdom abounds in the display of accurately observed physical features, head-dresses and garments, hairstyles, culture-specific equipment, eating habits, traditions of folklore (dance, music), and foreign language. The fact that the encyclopedic Egyptian knowledge about foreigners that had undoubtedly existed since early times is now rendered in great detail even in the context of temple and tomb depictions can signify a more widespread phenomenon, but is equally proof of a different perception and representability. Increasingly, ethnicity passed for a constituent and increasingly positively viewed factor of human culture, with Libyans, Nubians, Africans, Aegeans, Hittites, Syro-Palestinians, the Sea Peoples, and desert nomads as the typical ethnicities observed.

The military system of the New Kingdom subdued the Levant and Nubia and placed them under a provincial administrative regime; tens of thousands of prisoners and other immigrants entered the Egyptian social system. Partly they constituted mercenary units of the Egyptian army (cf. Cavillier 2005) and the workforce attached to individual temples, where they were assigned to specific settlements (e.g. a “settlement of the Palestinians that his majesty had taken as prey at Gezer” under Thutmose IV). Concrete acculturation efforts are mentioned with regard to captivated Libyans, whose language Ramesses III is said to have wiped out (stela at the Ptah sanctuary near Deir el-Medina). The resettlement of populations – Palestinians to Nubia, Nubians to Palestine – was employed as a foreign policy device in a deliberate attempt to weaken cultural identity that could threaten Egypt’s hegemony; this is known from several New Kingdom documents, most recently one of Akhenaten’s letters unearthed at Kumidi/Kamid el-Loz. Foreign mercenaries in the later Ramesside age settled on fiefs of land assigned to them as a remuneration for their service. Foreign specialists in high-grade pyrotechnic industries, for the production of, among other things, weaponry, settled and

worked in the respective manufacturing quarters of the great cities (e.g. Pi-Ramesse/Qantir, cf. Pusch 1993). While neither the total number of individually known foreigners in the New Kingdom nor the professional repertoire attested for them exceeds the evidence of the Middle Kingdom, the advantage of the New Kingdom records lies in some well-documented individual cases where personal biographies and cultural attitudes can be studied in more detail. Within the means (and perhaps constrictions) of cultural expression at their disposal, they appear almost completely Egyptianized. In the Book of the Dead papyrus for Maiherpri, who is an exemplary case of a foreigner educated at the court as one of the *hrd.w. n kꜣp*, “children of the Kap,” and who received the privilege of a burial in the Valley of the Kings, the owner’s Nubian background is revealed only in his deliberate choice of depicting him with dark skin (which is confirmed by the preserved mummy of Maiherpri) and minor items from the tomb equipment which would not, however, be conclusive in themselves. The only indication of a foreign descent of the Amarna period vizir Abd’el, whose tomb (with the additional burials of his wife and son) was unearthed at the Bubasteion cliff at Saqqara, is his Semitic name, “Servant of El,” whereas tomb architecture and funerary equipment are entirely Egyptian (Zivie 1990). A limited number of around twenty cases allow an insight into the integration history of elite families over several generations, with representatives from the military, state administration, and priesthood (Schneider 2006).

Although the influx of foreigners into state service can be assumed to have been considerable, actual positive evidence is restricted, contrary to what Helck (1971:586; 1986:70f.) has perceived as excessive foreign infiltration of Ramesside state administration (cf. Schneider 2006). Even in cases of a high quota, the impact of acculturation and the predominant importance of profession and status would have meant that ethnicity in itself would not have been a major political factor. The importance of foreigners in New Kingdom Egypt can be indirectly inferred from cases of cultural innovation where the presence of foreigners transferring or implementing cultural knowledge has been suggested. This implies the domains of weaponry and warfare, glass and metal industries, textiles and dyeing, wood working and ship building, but is equally plausible in the case of religious and literary transfers (cf. Schneider 2003b, 2003c). A symbol of the impact of these cultural interactions is the presence of Minoan wall paintings at the site of Tell el-Dabaa which are now dated to the reign of Thutmose III (Bietak 1999, 2000; Bietak et al. 2007).

The First Millennium BCE

The issue of foreignness has always been at the forefront of Egyptological attention with regard to the first millennium BCE, whose political history was so markedly characterized by foreign dominions (see Vittmann 2003). The visible structural changes of Egyptian statehood and culture raised the question whether it was the foreign rulers who imposed alien structures on Egyptian state and society, or whether the foreign rulers were Egyptianized and changes were contingent on different factors. Egyptological convention has distinguished between two varieties of foreign rule, the Libyan and Kushite rulers (= 21st–25th Dynasties),

believed to be thoroughly Egyptianized in contrast to more genuinely “foreign” Persian and Greek rule. The 26th or Saite Dynasty was credited with foreign (Libyan) descent but was never judged to have been a foreign dominion proper. The received assumption of Libyans and Kushites as culturally assimilated ruling elites that did not constitute foreign dominions has, however, been put into doubt since the mid-1980s (Jansen-Winkel 2000; cf. Jansen-Winkel 1999, 2002).

The debate can be seen as exemplary for the complexity of culture in the Egyptian Late Period. Arguments in favor of the Libyans and Kushites being Egyptianized point to the fact that they considered Egyptian culture as superior, officially adopting Egyptian religion, and using the Egyptian writing system and language. However, this official display does not need to correspond to their actual ethnicity (e.g. whether they really possessed a knowledge of spoken Egyptian). Arguments adduced in favor of the Libyans’ foreignness point to their emphasis of ethnic markers. They adhered to Libyan names; continued to call themselves “chieftains of the Libyans” and “foreigners” (*ḥꜣstjw*); Libyan local princes were depicted with the Libyan feather on their head, even when acting as Egyptian priests; and titles combined traditional Egyptian and Libyan functions (“high priest and chieftain of the Libyans”). The most obvious characteristic adduced in favor of their rule being foreign is the so-called “Libyan” state structure, the new feudal order of state (Jansen-Winkel 1999). This order was characterized by a loose federation of separate political entities, defined personally (as depending on a prince and the loyalty towards him) rather than by existing institutions; it was based on a military aristocracy in which the class of warriors was attached to the chieftain in loyalty and fiefs were granted to vassals in return for the loyalty towards the king; the religious domain was incumbent upon the Egyptians. Counterarguments point to the difficulty the assessment of foreignness poses in the first millennium. In the New Kingdom and the Libyan period, ethnicity was a positive marker (Baines 1996) which could be displayed more easily than in earlier times without a loss in prestige. Could the Libyans be no less Egyptian than the Hyksos or Amenemhat I who stemmed from the Nubian frontier, but could show their ethnicity openly whereas earlier it had to be concealed with regard to the prevailing culture? A second argument would point to the more general breakdown of traditional models of statehood all over the Eastern Mediterranean whereby the Libyan period particularism would have been induced by the new economic situation rather than Libyan traditions, a symptom of a larger crisis which would have occurred equally without the Libyans. Numerous changes in the cultural repertoire are ascribed to the Libyans: for example, the fuzzy demarcation between royal and non-royal persons; and new forms of burial (small tombs within the temple precinct; burial of private individuals initially in mass graves or usurped older tombs). These changes can be explained both externally (as derived from Libyan tribal orientations) and internally (as a consequence of Egyptian religious and socio-economic developments) and would offer an alternative to Jansen-Winkel’s assumption of a culture rupture (Jansen-Winkel 1999, 2000). While the Libyan period has been singled out here as a model case, the complexity of assessing the impact of foreign influence and foreigners in Egypt is equally evident in the Kushite 25th Dynasty and Egypt’s increasing Hellenization from the seventh century onwards.

Case Study: Tell el-Dabaa and the Hyksos

Evaluations of the Hyksos have been affected extensively by the state of evidence. The scarcity of source material preserved from the Hyksos themselves and from Lower Egypt in the Second Intermediate Period disprivileged their standing in the debate. The biased view of Egyptian tradition whereby an invasion of Barbarians subjugated Egypt and destroyed its temples has been uncritically followed by Egyptologists who relied heavily on the victorious Theban side. As Kuhrt has put it: “The eventual Egyptian success against them [the Hyksos], which led to the emergence of the New Kingdom, was commemorated by a triumphalist rhetoric that reveled the rule of the Hyksos as irreligious and destructive. ... Serious problems, created by chronological uncertainties and a dearth of contemporary, less emotive sources, beset attempts to gain a more balanced picture of the period” (Kuhrt 1995:173; on modern judgments, cf. Schneider 1998).

New evidence on the cultural background of the Hyksos has come to light mainly from the site of their capital Avaris/Tell el-Dabaa since excavations by the Austrian Archaeological Institute started there in 1966, while other finds have contributed to the increase in evidence. Fragments of what seems to have been the depiction of Ahmose’s campaign against the Hyksos were uncovered at the king’s Abydos cenotaph in 1993 (Harvey 1994). A text found during Darnell and Darnell’s Luxor-Farshut Desert Road Survey (2002:107–119) in the Wadi el-Hol idealizes the military life of a Theban ruler in his struggle against the Asiatics, while a text discovered by Davies (2003) at Elkab speaks about the dramatic invasion of Nubians to the region of Elkab under the 17th Dynasty.

The site of Avaris (for the following cf. Bietak 1996 and bibliography at www.auaris.at/html/bibliographie.html), originally founded by the 12th Dynasty as a pioneer settlement east of the Pelusiac branch of the Nile, has seen a repeated influx of population groups from Palestine (Forstner-Müller and Müller 2006). A massive immigration at the turn of the 12th and 13th Dynasties seems to have consisted of soldiers, sailors, and ships’ carpenters working on behalf of the Egyptian state. They used Egyptian-type pottery, while the weapons attested in more than 50 percent of the male burials (battle axes, daggers, javelins) are of a Palestinian–Syrian origin. Levantine traditions were upheld by the settlers both in the domestic architecture (North Syrian central room house or *Mittelsaalhaus*, broadroom house or *Breitraumhaus*) and in funerary beliefs (cemeteries located by the houses; burial of pairs of donkeys by the tombs). A prominent individual of foreign origin is an Asiatic official of the kingdom of Avaris who possessed an Egyptian monumental tomb with chapel and the aforementioned Syrian *Mittelsaalhaus* as his probable residence. The fragments of his limestone statue betray distinct markers of his ethnicity (red mushroom-shaped hair dress, yellow skin color: Schiestl 2006).

A merger of Egyptian and Levantine cultural registers is also visible in the 13th-Dynasty palatial precinct of the following (younger) layer G4. Its garden contained six Egyptian tombs (subterranean burial chamber, chapel as superstructure) which served for the burial of Asiatics, evidenced again by donkey burials and the funerary equipment of tomb m/18 – no. 3 (javelins, Syrian dagger). The latter tomb belonged to an official identified by an amethyst scarab as a “principal

of foreign lands and caravan leader” (or “ruler of Palestine”: Martin 1998), Sobekemhat, while another tomb owner’s titles – seal bearer of the Lower Egyptian king, chief steward – are conventionally Egyptian. Minoan pottery and an Aegean gold pendant indicate relations with the Minoan civilization. The subsequent stratum G testifies to a resettling of the site after the palace had been razed, mainly by woodworkers, because numerous molds for the manufacture of woodworking tools were found. Around 1720/1710 BCE, this settlement with small houses and partly warrior burials comes to an abrupt end due to an epidemic evidenced by emergency burials. Stratum F also features the existence of Palestinian and Egyptian cultural traits side by side: for example, the direct attachment of Houses for the Dead (*Totenhäuser*) to Egyptian residential houses, an increase of Levantine pottery, and the occurrence of tombs with weapons. Fibulae point to Canaanite dresses. A large, typologically Near Eastern temple measuring more than 30 m in length is built in the upper city, which had been abandoned during the epidemic. This sacral precinct was complemented during the time of the following stratum E/3 by a Syrian broadroom temple (*Breithaustempel*) and an Egyptian *ka* house at the beginning of the 14th Dynasty, most probably by King Nehesi, as two door-jambes with his name indicate. Huge offering pits and a renewal of the main temple attest to the fact that there was a continuous cult in this temple until the end of the Hyksos period. Young female servants are buried together with the tomb owners in the cemetery adjacent to the *ka* house. One of the officials of foreign origin buried here is an Asiatic deputy treasurer in front of whose tomb five donkeys were interred.

During the last century of its existence, the city witnessed a significant expansion. This urban background represented the basis from which the Hyksos of the 15th Dynasty extended their kingdom. As can be demonstrated by their names (with the exception of Apopi, which is an Egyptian “babble name” [lallative]), their language of origin was a Canaanite dialect of Northwest Semitic (Schneider 1998). Numerous contemporary rulers of the so-called 14th/16th Dynasties bore equally Northwest Semitic personal names; a possible earlier ruler of Palestinian origin is Chendjer in the 13th Dynasty, although the interpretation of his name remains doubtful (Schneider 2003a). The Hyksos’ and other kinglets’ ascension to power was an indigenous phenomenon after the collapse of the 13th Dynasty’s central authority (for an overview of the literature, see Schneider 1998), occurring in regions of the Delta that incidentally had a population of partly Palestinian origin. Styling it as an invasion by impious foreigners is the product of a later misrepresentation and cannot claim any authenticity. However, the fierceness of the victor’s reaction is apparent from two execration pits with killed individuals from Avaris in a stratum dating to the reign of Ahmose. In one of them (locus 1055), three male skulls were found; in the other (locus 1016), two male skeletons lying face down (Fuscaldo 2003).

Scarce though it is, the existing evidence suffices to show that the Hyksos upheld traditions of Egyptian kingship and culture, such as monumental hieroglyphic epigraphy (door-jamb of Sikru-haddu) or a wider cult policy than ascribed to the Hyksos by the 18th Dynasty, including the worship of Ra and Sobek (Morenz 1996:164) apart from Seth. The most striking monument in this respect is a scribal palette given by the Hyksos Apapi to a scribe Atju on which the king expresses his cultural and royal self-understanding (Goedicke 1988; Morenz

1996:167–170). The Hyksos describes himself as instructed by Thoth and Seshat, as the living portrayal of the sun god (the first attestation), as a ruler who cares for humankind and abides by *maat*. He appears in this document as the most orthodox Egyptian, the very opposite of the Barbarian the Thebans accused him of being. This image of an erudite Egyptian king is further corroborated by papyri of the late Hyksos period (some of those copied at Avaris, such as the mathematical Papyrus Rhind) that testify to the appreciation of literature and of religious and scientific texts in the Hyksos residence (Morenz 1996:159, 163ff.).

The excavation of Avaris has been most influential for our understanding not merely of the history of Egypt between the Middle and the New Kingdom, but of the mechanisms of culture. It has uncovered a model frontier city where a complex cultural interface of Egyptian and Palestinian traditions, created and enacted by a mixed border population, became visible. The 15th-Dynasty Hyksos, as its political exponents who extended their authority towards the traditional center of Egypt from this fringe community, appear to have by and large abided by the traditional tenets of Egyptian kingship. If later traditions of the New Kingdom and the first millennium style them as impious foreign rulers, then this is only by a deliberate alteration of accepted rules of cultural acceptance in the interest of political and religious motives. It bears vivid witness to the tensions between divergent perceptions of foreignness and identity in the mid-second millennium, and reflects a last attempt to maintain the traditional weights of core and periphery. Avaris and the Hyksos anticipated in substance the inversion of core and periphery set into effect by Ramesside and Late Period Egypt. The availability of Egyptian kingship and its cultural authority to borderland representatives set a model realized differently in the Egypt of the first millennium. Moreover, setting Egypt's new core in the former geographical periphery marked a long-lasting structural shift in Egypt's orientation towards the Mediterranean.

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