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Importing and Exporting Gods? On the Flow of Deities Between Egypt and Its Neighboring Countries

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1 Introductory Remarks

Since the main title of my contribution sounds more economical than ecumenical, I should start with a question: What does it mean to deal in gods? There is one very remarkable passage in an Egyptian text which laments that gods are sold for oxen (Admonitions 8, 12). This phrase seems strange at first sight, so strange that almost all modern editors and commentators have deemed it corrupt and have proposed emendations.[1] Actually, it makes perfect sense once you realize that "gods" here means "statues of gods." These were, in the Egyptian culture, often made of gold, and constituted enough buying power to actually acquire an ox in exchange.

The key point for my subsequent analysis is that "gods" have a strongly materialized existence. A god is not simply a transcendent or omnipresent entity but has a focal point in a material object.[2] Also, in order to hear the prayers of humans, special proximity is an advantage. Being far from a god in a physical sense was thus seen as a very real menace, and one can see how Egyptians on missions abroad liked to take a transportable figure of their deity with them.[3]

This also had implications for the opportunities to expand: a figure of the deity at the new cult place was essential and the easiest way to find one would be if you had one that you were free to take with you; this was the case, for instance, with the

[1] Most recently Enmarch (2008, 145). See Quack (2010a, 19).

[2] This means also that it was possible to take gods into exile after conquering a foreign region, but since this does not entail veneration for the deity in its new place, I will not dwell on that issue here.

[3] For example, in the Tale of Wenamun, see Schipper (2005). See globally Quack (2010a).

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foundation of an Egyptian cult on the Greek Island of Delos, as told in the Delian aretalogy of Serapis (third century BCE).[4] Otherwise, you would have to consecrate one anew, which, in turn, meant that you have to perform all rituals correctly in order to attach the deity to it.[5]

Another fundamentally important point is that in this paper I will be speaking about the ancient cultures of polytheism, which did not claim any religious exclusivity or zealotism. Thus, incorporating gods of foreign origin and combining them with indigenous deities was not a fundamental problem, contrary to the monotheistic situation more prevalent in more recent times.

2 Prehistoric and Early Historic Borrowings and Assimilations of Gods?

It is often a tricky question to decide whether some figures of the early Egyptian pantheon are originally foreigners who became assimilated or whether they are indigenous from their origin. Normally, we have the evidence for them from Egypt; and then it is up to us to say that because they are lords of some border regions or downright foreign territory, because there are foreign elements in their dress and hairdo, or because their names don't seem to mean anything in the Egyptian language, we suppose they came from foreign cultures. This is methodologically quite tricky, as there are normally no contemporary written sources in the neighboring cultures that might tell us if these deities really had any basis outside of Egypt.

A case in point is the god Sopdu whose cult was located mainly in the Eastern Delta and is also often mentioned in Egyptian inscriptions from the Sinai. He can bear the epithet "lord of the east" or "lord of the foreign (desert) countries." The earliest depictions of this god as a crouching falcon do not help us much. A bit later, but still in the third millennium BCE, there are some, though only a few, depictions which show him with an Asiatic-style beard and wearing a special girdle. The question of whether he was originally Asiatic or Egyptian has resulted in some controversial answers.[6] It is quite possible that his occasional foreign look was not due to his cultural origins but instead to the fact that the Egyptians understood him to be the lord of non-Egyptian regions and dressed him accordingly. At least, we should acknowledge that his name "the sharp one" is clearly good Egyptian. What is noteworthy, in any case, is that even when displaying "foreign" traits, he is depicted in the context of the scene as actively aiding the Egyptians against foreigners.

[4] (Engelmann 1975, 12–13.)

[5] In Anatolia there were even specific rituals for establishing a new cult place for a deity that was located elsewhere, see Miller (2004, 259–439). I am not aware of similar written compositions attested from Ancient Egypt.

[6] (Schumacher 1988, 15, 18–19, 22–28); (Morenz 2013, 315–332).

Equally problematic is the case of Min,[7] one of the most ancient attested gods of Egypt, dating back to pre-dynastic times, the fourth millennium BCE. Still, many later texts associate him with the land of Punt, to the far south-east of Egypt. Also, New Kingdom depictions of his festival (ca. thirteenth century BCE) not only reveal that ritual spells were recited by a "negro of Punt," but even provide some hieroglyphic sections in what is most definitely not the Egyptian language—although to this day nobody has managed to provide a convincing linguistic analysis.[8] These facts have induced some scholars to claim that he was an early adaptation into the Egyptian religious system.[9] Any positive proof for this is hard to come by; however, it can at least be said that he was fully integrated into Egyptian religion as evinced by various cultic places in Egyptian cities where he was sometimes the main deity.

The case of Dedun is perhaps a bit clearer.[10] The god's name does not have any obvious meaning in the Egyptian language. There are already a few attestations of him in the Old Kingdom in the Pyramid texts (third millennium BCE), the oldest preserved substantial body of ritual texts from Ancient Egypt. However, in these he is clearly called "the one who is at the head of Nubia". His actual cult places can be found in the southernmost Egyptian temples and on Nubian territory, though the temples in Nubia were actually constructed by Egyptian rulers during periods of supremacy over this region. His geographical background is of special importance when we consider that, in the Egyptian religious texts, he is the one bringing incense—a natural product that is not native to Egypt but comes from the south. This is therefore an example of a god who precisely because of his foreign origin was interesting for the Egyptians and could fulfill a role that was less accessible to indigenous deities. From very early on, Dedun became part of the mental map of Egyptians, though his foreign origin was always clearly remembered.

All this reveals, of course, the well-known fact that however much we go back in time, we are unlikely to encounter any "pure" culture that is untouched by hybrid elements from elsewhere—cultures are permanently encountering and interacting with each other.

3 Projecting Your Own Deities into Foreign Regions

While the material I have presented thus far concerns, at least partly, the genuine reception of foreign gods in Egypt, we have also partly encountered the option that Egyptians were imagining their own gods as lords of foreign places. I will pursue

[7] (McFarlane 1995).

[8] (Gauthier 1931, 188–199). I have suggested (Quack 2001, 599 and Quack 2010c, 318) that the text might actually be a garbled form of Puntite.

[9] (Bleeker 1956, 34–40).

[10] (Fuscaldo 1982); (Zivie-Coche 1994, 50–51); (Török 2009, 215–216, 220).

this point further using some incontrovertible cases where the Egyptian origin of the deity in question has never been doubted. This already began in the Old Kingdom during the third millennium BCE when, in hieroglyphic inscriptions, the Egyptians name Hathor, one of their principal goddesses, as the mistress of the Sinai and of Byblos in Phoenicia.[11] An important question is, of course, the degree to which these were just the optimistic projections of Egyptians or if they corresponded to a genuine view of the population of those places.

For Byblos in Phoenicia, we have the advantage of a considerable number of inscriptions from the place itself in different languages and writing systems, and here the distribution is extremely noteworthy. Obviously, I will take into account only texts left by the Byblites, not the inscriptions left by Egyptians on votive objects in Byblos. From the Old Kingdom we have the cylinder seal of a ruler of Byblos, written in Egyptian hieroglyphic writing and language.[12] This not only mentions the supposedly indigenous god Khaitau (see below), but also Hathor. A few Middle Kingdom hieroglyphic texts for the rulers of Byblos mention only Egyptian gods—namely, the sun-god Re and the sky-goddess Nut.[13]

By contrast, in cuneiform texts from Byblos (later second millennium BCE) as well as in Phoenician texts from the first millennium BC, the local goddess is always called *Ba'alat (Gubla)*, the "lady (of Byblos)." Still, the clearest available depiction of her on the stela of King Yehaumilk from the middle of the first millennium BCE shows her with the iconography of the Egyptian Hathor.[14]

What we have here, I think, is a clear case of code switching. The conceptual figure of the divine lady of the city of Byblos was clearly present, but how one actually named her depended on the language and script used; this was equally true for other deities of the local pantheon who could be referred to by Egyptian divine names when writing in hieroglyphs. Ultimately, this has to be placed into a much larger framework: in antiquity, there was a widespread belief in the translatability of languages and a tendency to recognize the 'Own' in the foreign or 'Other' where deities were concerned. So, when somebody wrote about the gods of a foreign culture, he would quite often simply give them the names of the deities that corresponded well enough in terms of function and characteristics from his own culture. Some parts of this phenomenon are known as "interpretatio graeca" of Egyptian gods—that is, the description of Egyptian gods using names from Greek mythology[15]—but in order to be adequately understood, it has to be appreciated on a more global level.

I will take up another case from much later time, namely the second century CE. There is a late demotic Egyptian narrative story about the Amazons transmitted

[11] (Allam 1963, 76–89).

[12] Lastly edited and studied in detail by Martin (1998).

[13] Texts collected in Helck (1983, 20). See for the analysis Flammini (2010).

[14] Text and image in Gibson (1982, 93–99, pl. IV), with bibliography. For the goddess of Byblos, see now Zernecke (2013).

[15] (Jourdain-Annequin 2002); (Calame 2011); (von Lieven, forthcoming a).

in two papyri from the second century CE. They tell of an Egyptian prince who fought at first with the queen of the Amazons, and how they eventually fell in love and combined forces in campaigns that took them as far as India. In this context, Osiris is mentioned as the great Indian god of destiny (pVienna D 6165, 9, 4).[16] Similarly, the Greek-language aretalogy[17] of Isis preserved in pOxyrhynchus 1380, from Middle Egypt, connects different forms of Isis not only with places within Egypt and the Mediterranean, but also links her in the form of Maya to India (l. 103) and attributes to her the mastery of rivers, not only the Nile but also the Ganges (l. 226).[18] Furthermore, according to the Greek historian Diodorus (I, 19, 8), the Indians claimed that Osiris was a native of India by birth.

For India, the claims might seem ludicrous at first sight. Still, there are some tangible archaeological traces of this claim. From Begram in Afghanistan, there come bronzes of Serapis and Harpocrates, two Graeco-Egyptian deities depicted here in Greek style. More statuettes of Harpocrates and Sarapis were found in other places in India and Pakistan and even in western China.[19] There is even some possibility that the iconography of Harpocrates left a lasting trace in Indian iconography.[20] Also, among the money issued by the Kushana dynasty of early India there are some depictions of Serapis.[21] We have, of course, to reckon with the fact that during the Roman period there was intense trade via the Red Sea route connecting Egypt and India, so these regions knew of each other.[22] If the Indians saw something in the Egyptian deities that made it interesting for them to have their images around, then the Egyptians cannot have been completely wrong in presenting the principal deities of India with Egyptian names.

4 Taking Note of Foreign Deities. Part One: Honoring Them When Dealing with Authorities of Their Country

The Amarna letters are a substantial group of letters on clay tables from the fourteenth century BCE written in Near Eastern languages (mostly Akkadian, a few in Hittite or Hurrian) and script, but sent to Egypt and found there. They are written to the Pharaoh by Near Eastern kings, either kings of major powers who were on an equal footing with the pharaohs, or by vassal kings who were

[16] (Hoffmann 1995, 96–97). See Ryholt (2013, 76).

[17] A text glorifying a deity and presenting its principal deeds.

[18] Original Text edition (Grenfell and Hunt 1915, 190–220); French rendering with commentary (Lafaye 1916); new edition with bibliography (Totti 1985, 62–75).

[19] (Bricault 2001, 77).

[20] (von Lieven, forthcoming b).

[21] (Bricault 2008, 220–224).

[22] See for example, (Sidebotham 1986); (Boussac and Salles 2005); (Sidebotham 2011); for depictions of Indians found in Egypt, see Booth (2005, 59–65).

subordinate to Egypt. They reveal an interesting distribution in the usage of gods for formulae of politeness.[23] In the letters he sent to Egypt, the king of Byblos invokes his local goddess Ba'alat several times to interact in favor of the king and a high official who is in charge of his matters. Exceptionally, the Egyptian god Amun also occurs in the same position either alone (Amarna letter 86) or together with Ba'alat (Amarna letter 87; 95). The situation becomes even more interesting when we keep in mind that the greeting formula itself, although couched here in Akkadian language, is deeply indebted to Egyptian models where it is customary to invoke the deities of your own place, and where one may also add the deities of the place of the recipient in a full complimentary preamble.[24] The feature is even more notable since, within the corpus of cuneiform letters found at Amarna, this phrase is only used in the letters of Byblos (the great majority of them) while all other letters from foreign kings and vassals utilize completely different phrases (more at home in the Near East). This may perhaps be because Byblos is, of course, the one city in the Levant that had a much deeper history of close relations to Egypt than all the others.[25]

In a letter written by the king of Mitanni, the Hurrian storm-god Teshub and the Egyptian god Amun are mentioned together, unfortunately the context is too broken to be of much help in deciphering the details of the letter itself (Amarna letter 27, l. 87). Still, one can see that in this case of two empires of the same standing, there is a mutual respect that extends to the power of their respective gods.

A different constellation can be seen in Amarna letter 245, which is written by a vassal king to Egypt. He speaks simply of the god of the Egyptian king possibly enabling him to capture an enemy without even mentioning his own gods.

Beyond the letters, we have treaties; an especially interesting case is the peace treaty between Hatti and Egypt, which is perhaps the oldest surviving political treaty between two states on equal terms. The text is preserved in a cuneiform version in the Akkadian language as well as in a translation into the Egyptian language, where a monumental version was written in hieroglyphs on the temple wall.[26] It contains a list of gods who are witnesses to the oaths sworn by both parties. The preamble mentions the thousands gods of Hatti as well as the thousand gods of Egypt. The detailed enumeration, preserved only in the Egyptian version, also mentions many Anatolian deities, which were accepted by the Egyptians as powerful in the punishment of oath-breakers. The only problem they had with them was that, due to a lack of familiarity, some of their epithets were mistranslated.[27]

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[23] For the basic edition and study, see Knudtzon (1915); modern English translation in Moran (1992).

[24] (Bakir 1970, 55–64).

[25] See for example Sowada (2009, 128–141).

[26] Edition in Edel (1997); some remarks in Quack (2002b).

[27] (Edel 1997, 99–101).

5 Taking Note of Foreign Deities. Part Two: Incorporating Them Into Your Religious System

A special case of early borrowing can be seen in Khaitau, god of Byblos.[28] He is present on the cylinder seal of one of the kings of Byblos and is mentioned a few times in the Pyramid texts. Since he did not have a cult site in Egypt and did not appear there beyond those few passages, it can be safely concluded that he was not at home in Egypt but was instead a learned takeover. The main remaining question is whether his name, which could be translated as Egyptian "who appears burning," is to be taken at face value or if it hides the rendering of some Semitic deity.[29] This represents a flow in the direction from Asia to Egypt, and for most of Egyptian history this was the dominant flow (in the counter-direction of political power-asymmetry). It is quite rare to have clear evidence for the veneration of Egyptian deities in Asia prior to the late spread of Isis and Osiris.

One of the few possible early cases of Egyptian deities in Asia concerns Late Bronze-Age Ugarit, in northern Syria. At least some scholars claim to have found the Egyptian Apis bull appearing as *ḥby* in an Ugaritic mythological text.[30] The text makes it clear that the being in question is somewhat supernatural and has two horns and a tail, but the equation still seems far from settled to me.[31] If this really is the Apis bull, it should again rather be considered a case of learned allusion, not necessarily as a genuine takeover leading to veneration in a foreign place.

Ugarit also provides us with the case of a projection of the 'Own' deities into foreign surroundings. In the Ba'al epic, the Ugaritic god of craftsmanship is supposed to reside in Crete and in Memphis in Egypt[32]; at least there are Egyptian texts showing that he was actually known in Egypt in his role as divine master craftsman.[33]

It is much more common to find gods of Asiatic origin being incorporated into Egypt, especially from the eighteenth dynasty onwards, during the second half of

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[28] (Schneider 2000).

[29] As proposed by Schneider (2000) who understands the writing as a phonetic rendering of Aṯtaru. I am not quite convinced of this because even under the most favourable circumstances his proposal required two interchanges of voiced and voiceless sounds. See Quack (2010b, 75). Recently, Steiner (2011, 13 and 38) has proposed taking the Egyptian meaning as an indication that this figure is a sun-god; however, the verb in question, while meaning "hot" or "burning," is not normally used in Egyptian texts for describing the sun-god.

[30] (Pardee 1989, 60–61); but see Noegel (2006) who proposes a different (even if hardly definitive) etymology.

[31] Phonetically, it would require the rendering of an Egyptian voiceless labial by a voiced labial in Ugaritic.

[32] (Pardee 1999).

[33] (Kákosy 1990); an additional attestation is likely to be preserved in a Late Period magical manuscript (pBrooklyn 47.218.138, x+XVI, 29), see Goyon (2012, 120 and 123, note 13) who misunderstands the name. For the correct explanation see Quack (2013b, 271).

the second millennium BCE. A substantial part of this took place within the framework of migrations and will be treated separately in section 6.

More to the point are the cases where the cults of foreign deities were inaugurated by the Egyptians themselves. The best case illustrating this is the Astarte papyrus, which dates to the end of the fifteenth century BCE.[34] This papyrus treats the official inauguration of a cult for the Near Eastern storm god and his consort Astarte by the Pharaoh himself. After a eulogy on the Egyptian king, the text presents a mythological tale, which served as the foundation for the cult; this seems to have indeed been a translation and adaptation of an Asiatic model. As far as the interests of the Egyptian king were concerned, he was most interested in the veneration of Asiatic warrior deities who could aid him in battle.

Perhaps the field where the incorporation of foreign gods happened most easily is magic, or, more precisely formulated, ritual formulae that are not part of the routine temple cult but performed in situations of danger or crisis to the benefit of human individuals. These are often less grounded in traditional established spells and more open to incorporating foreign elements if they were deemed effective for the aims at hand. Already by the New Kingdom (later second millennium BCE), there are a number of magical papyri that draw extensively on Asiatic deities, including some whose cult is otherwise rare or even unattested in the material record of Egypt.[35] Thus, they are not simply the figures of popular cults but deliberate borrowings by an intellectual elite.

A first heyday of this phenomenon can be observed in the New Kingdom, but the textual tradition continues in some cases, and there are Late Period attestations that still use the Asiatic gods in an Egyptian context, for instance, a spell on a magical statue invoking several foreign gods, among them Baal Shamem, the Semitic "lord of skies."[36]

A second heyday came in late antiquity where we have a fascinating corpus of magical papyri from Egypt written partially in demotic Egyptian and partially in the Greek language.[37] Their usage of deities is absolutely ecumenical. The core is made up of Egyptian and Greek deities as well as of the Jewish god and his angels—even Christ is mentioned a few times. But there are also other cultures that are represented, like the Mesopotamian netherworld goddess Ereshkigal or the Iranian Mithras. Those can be freely combined in the invocations; for instance, the Egyptian Ptah can be found alongside the Hebrew word Elohe "god." Lack of space prevents me from giving more examples from this material here.[38]

Such "intellectual" borrowings can, of course, be paralleled with modern phenomena like the recent interest in Buddhism by modern Europeans and Americans; and that is quite a multifarious spectrum, going from simply reading texts in

[34] New edition and study in Collombert & Coulon (2000).

[35] For a particularly instructive case, see Fischer-Elfert (2011).

[36] (Kákosy 1999, 126–128).

[37] See for example Quack (2004).

[38] Some cases are presented in Quack (2013a).

translation in order to broaden your horizon up to active and avowed participation in rituals. What we can actually grasp in the Egyptian documentation are those cases where the interest went far enough to apply the foreign deities in actual practice, but we also have to reckon with the possibility that there were Egyptians who were simply interested in hearing about them without leaving behind any tangible traces of their influence.

6 Foreigners Coming to Egypt and Bringing Their Own Deities

Taking your gods with you in migration situations seems quite normal to us; indeed, it is well attested in modern cases. For Egypt and its neighbors, there is a remarkable diversity. On the one hand we have the Asiatics, especially those coming from the Levant and speaking Semitic languages, who came to Egypt in considerable numbers during the second millennium BCE, especially its second half.[39]

The cult of Asiatic deities in Egypt is therefore quite well-attested for the New Kingdom (ca. 1550–1070 BCE), and there are numerous studies on the subject.[40] It would be easy, indeed much too easy, to simply present texts and images of these cults. It is far more fruitful to separate the evidence into different categories. I would like to separate those deities for which the documentation consists mainly of intellectual adaptations from those where a cult in Egypt can be amply documented by sanctuaries, votive stelae, and the like.

Some interesting observations can be made on this subject: Firstly, the Asiatic deities freely enter into combinations with traditional Egyptian deities, and more often than not both are found together; for instance, the Asiatic deities Qudshu and Reshep are very often shown together with the Egyptian Min as a triad. On an even more complicated level, a stela from Giza[41] depicts a foreign deity in very un-Egyptian garb and with an outlandish name in the top register, while in the register below it is said that the dedicator venerates the Egyptian goddess Isis. The dedicator's title makes it clear that he is attached to the cult of an Asiatic deity, actually Hauron, while the image shows the Egyptian god Horus; thus, as regards iconography and names, the "foreign" and "familiar" are remarkably criss-crossed.

This leads us to the point that some traditional Egyptian figures could be reinterpreted by the Asiatics in light of their own religious traditions. Thus, the great Sphinx of Giza was often understood at this time as representing the Canaanite god Hauron. An alternative idea was to equate him with the Egyptian falcon-shaped

[39] See for example (Helck 1971, 342–369); (Schneider 1998–2003); (Sparks 2004).

[40] For instance, (Stadelmann 1967); (Helck 1971, 446–473); (Zivie-Coche 1994); (Cornelius 1994); (Cornelius 2004); (Lipiński 2005); (Tazawa 2009); (Münnich 2013, 80–119).

[41] Originally published in Hassan (1953, 259f); see also the proposal by Radwan (1998), which I find difficult to endorse for phonetic reasons.

god Horus—a conception that was certainly aided by the phonetic similarity of the names. In this specific case, it can even be demonstrated that the equation of the two gods was not limited to a local Asiatic community but also adopted by the Egyptian priestly elite. A recently published mythological manual from the seventh century BCE provides a list of five different forms of Horus, one of which is Hauron.[42]

To what degree did this continue in later times? To what degree are well-attested Asiatic deities from New Kingdom Egypt still present in the religious system of the Graeco-Roman period? The question seems all the more relevant as many Egyptologists, including Assmann, have claimed that the Egyptians of the Late Period were increasingly xenophobic.[43] There is certainly a substantial drop in the documentation of Asiatic deities in Egypt in the Late Period.[44] Still, the deities of Asiatic origin did not altogether vanish. On the one hand, they were still present in communities with a strong Syrian background (even special colonies of (As)syrians), who had a quarter of their own in Memphis.[45] I would assume that many of the Asiatics in Egypt assimilated after some generations but that the old religious traditions were retained longer if there were large coherent communities where the members supported themselves in their shared traditions. On the other hand, there are those deities that were assimilated in the Egyptian religious system mainly because they were responsible for specific aspects of life for which there was no Egyptian deity at hand, like Astarte, the patron of the horse.[46] In addition, the deities still do occur as a component in personal names.[47] Some were even incorporated into Egyptian temple decoration.[48]

Egyptologists have become so accustomed to the attestation of Asiatic deities in New Kingdom Egypt that they have hardly realized that this is only one of several theoretically possible models. In order to illustrate this, I will look at Egypt's two other neighbors. To the west, the Libyans also had long-standing contacts with Egypt. During the New Kingdom, they attempted several invasions of Egypt, but often also served as mercenaries for the Egyptians.[49] After the end of the

[42] The text is edited in Meeks (2006, 21–23) who has misread the name Hauron; for the correction, see Quack (2008, 109).

[43] (Assmann 1996, 431–463).

[44] For the foreign deities in Egypt in the Graeco-Roman period, see Tallet & Zivie-Coche (2012).

[45] (Thompson 2012, 81–98).

[46] In an unpublished demotic manual of terrestrial omina from the Roman period, in connection with bad omina from the behavior of horses, it is still recommended to implore Astarte in order to ward off the danger.

[47] (Zauzich 2000, 38 (Nr. 173)).

[48] An example of Astarte as a receiver of offerings by a Ptolemaic king can be found in Thiers (2003, 189f.). There, she is connected with horses and fighting, quite in keeping with her original character, but at the same time she is embedded in the Egyptian conceptions about Osiris. Also, her iconography has been adapted to that of Egyptian goddesses like Hathor or Isis.

[49] (Hölscher 1955).

New Kingdom, they increasingly formed the warrior elite in Egypt, culminating in the takeover of a dynasty of Libyan descent as the kings of Egypt.[50] This picture has some obvious similarities to the Germanic tribes' role vis-à-vis the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity. Still, we look practically in vain for specifically Libyan deities in Egypt. All religious foundations of the Libyan groups in Egypt, including the kings, are for Egyptian deities. If any specifically Libyan deity can be grasped at all (not only traditional Egyptian gods with special attributes linking them to Libya), then they amount to no more than one single goddess (Shehedet), and she is only attested as a compound of personal names, never represented on stelae or temple walls.[51] What has happened here? Were the Libyans Egyptianized to such a degree that they had ceased worshipping any of their own traditional deities?

Perhaps we can shed more light on this question by looking now to the south.[52] Nubia was often subject to the Egyptians and, especially during the New Kingdom, there was a quasi-colonial situation where an Egyptian official was at the head of all of Nubia, and on the local level, the administration was based on more or less Egyptianized local dynasts.[53] In Nubia, many imposing temples dedicated to Egyptian deities were built.[54] The textual and archaeological record for this time makes it difficult even to detect any specific Nubian identity. After the New Kingdom, the Egyptian rule over Nubia seems to have ceased, although the details are perhaps more complicated than hitherto thought.[55] In any case, from the eighth century BCE onwards, we have a strong independent kingdom of Nubia, which even rules over Egypt for some time.[56] However, in contrast to the Libyan rulers of Egypt they kept their native territory and were not exclusively a minority occupying a foreign country. Here also, the religious foundations of the foreign rulers are exclusively dedicated to Egyptian gods, including the ones in Nubia itself.

So, was the Egyptianization effected during the New Kingdom strong enough to impose Egyptian gods exclusively and to the detriment of any indigenous ones the Nubians might have had? Not quite. Due to political pressure and invasion raids by the Egyptians, the Nubians later chose a new capital, Meroe, located further to the south. From the time of this change onwards, it is possible to document the veneration of definitely indigenous gods like Apedemak, Sebiumeker, Arensnuphis, and Mandulis.[57] In actual practice, they are fully integrated with the gods of Egyptian derivation, so much so that purely synchronic observation would not even reveal their different origins. However, this is not the very last turn in the religious flows between Egypt and Nubia. Some of those indigenous Nubian deities

[50] (Kitchen 1996); (Jansen-Winkeln 2002).

[51] (Vittmann 2003, 19–20).

[52] Overall synthesis in Török (2009).

[53] (Zibelius-Chen 1988); (Smith 1995).

[54] (Rocheleau 2008).

[55] See the remarks by Müller (2009, 262f).

[56] (Morkot 2000); (Redford 2004).

[57] (Török 1997, 500–510).

(especially Arensnuphis and Mandoulis) were relevant enough to expand their cult also into the Egyptian border region, so there was finally a counter-current to the earlier dominating flows.

What can we make of these facets? We have a clear history of colonialism for Nubia as well as the Levantine regions, and they have been structurally compared.[58] It seems clear that they were organized on not quite the same level. In Nubia, direct Egyptian rule was much more prominent, while in Asia, the local petty kings still had quite a bit of autonomy as long as they did not contravene Egyptian interests directly. The reason for this is probably the different degree of social organization in the respective territories. I would assume that the respective social organization itself as well as the way the regions were dealt with by the Egyptians played an important role in shaping the reaction of the locals towards the Egyptians, one important factor being that temples for Egyptian deities in Nubia were omnipresent,[59] while in Palestine or even further to the north, they were quite rare (and normally connected with the few places were the Egyptians kept garrisons).[60]

Still, there is one last twist to this story. Relatively early in Egypt, perhaps already composed in the thirteenth century, and definitely attested from the tenth century BCE onwards, there is a group of Egyptian religious spells. They are at first restricted to a limited inner circle, and only quite some time later some of them are attached to the Book of Dead, giving them more circulation.[61] One striking feature of these spells is the presence, in the invocations to the gods, of a great number of non-Egyptian words. These are now generally considered to be Nubian.[62] While I would not exclude that they are in reality Libyan, the basic feature is not controversial. At a time when it seemed as if Egyptian deities imposed themselves so strongly on those cultures that their indigenous religious traditions were on the brink of extinction, the seemingly weak party made a backdoor entrance into the esoteric elements of the religion of the Egyptian elite.

Still, being of foreign descent and having a migratory background by no means excludes that one could also honor Egyptian gods—as a matter of fact, most foreign groups in Egypt (except the Jews) have left behind testimonies of their devotion to the deities of the Nile land. A few examples must suffice to illustrate this: A splendid Horus stela from the early Ptolemaic Period looks completely Egyptian, but the name of the donator reveals that he was a Phoenician.[63] Also, below the stela featuring Egyptian texts and images, there is a base with an inscription in Phoenician script. In it, the dedicator mentions several generations of his family and remarks that he put up the stela as a votive offering for Isis, Astarte, and for the gods that reside with them.[64] He hopes that they will grant him life and favor in the

[58] (Morris 2005).

[59] (Hein 1991).

[60] (Wimmer 1998).

[61] See the not quite satisfactory study by Wüthrich (2010).

[62] So especially (Zibelius 2005); (Rilly 2007).

[63] (Vittmann 2003, 74).

[64] For the restoration of the lacuna, see Quack (2002a, 723 with note 37).

eyes of gods and men. Here the goddess Astarte of Asiatic origin turns up in a fully integrated temple cult shared with an Egyptian deity.

7 The Expansion of the Cult of Egyptian Deities

Egyptians of the pre-Ptolemaic time did not migrate in considerable numbers to foreign countries, though the Assyrians deported some groups that were settled in Mesopotamia and can be traced for a few generations in the preserved record.[65] Perhaps this explains why, at first, a real export of Egyptian deities to the north is rather hard to grasp.[66] However, here we must come to grips with one fundamental imbalance: There is a rather abundant flow of images from Egypt to Asia, but much less of attached names. While we have an amazing documentation for Egyptian divine iconography taken up in the ancient Near East, the actual attestation of Egyptian divine names, and all the more so evidence for an actual cult offered to them, is much harder to come by.

Already Syrian cylinder seals from the earlier second millennium BCE already show a considerable number of Egyptian-looking deities, often in interaction with the local rulers.[67] However, not one of them contains a clear Egyptian divine name in its text, and some cases they even seem to indicate that Asiatic names were attached to them.[68]

Egyptian-type amulets are already attested in substantial numbers in the Late Bronze Age Levant, in the second half of the second millennium BCE,[69] and their numbers increase even more in the first Millennium BCE.[70] There is also now a considerable geographic expansion of Egyptian and Egyptianizing objects all over the Mediterranean, all the way up to Italy and Spain.[71] A rare and interesting case of this is a Phoenician papyrus from Malta with an image of the Egyptian goddess Isis.[72] Still, the Phoenician text does not contain a clear indication of the name attributed to the figure.[73]

All this begs the question: Is it easier for images to travel than names? The answer is probably, yes. At least, there is some evidence that in the regions closest

[65] See for instance, (Zeidler 1994); (Zadok 2005); (Radner 2009, 223–226).

[66] For the substantial impact of Egyptian deities to the south, see the remarks on Nubia above.

[67] (Eder 1995); (Teissier 1996).

[68] (Quack 1999, 220–221).

[69] (McGovern 1985).

[70] (Herrmann 1994, 2002, 2006, 2007).

[71] See for example (Vercoutter 1945); (Clerc et al. 1976); (Gamer-Wallert 1978); (Hölbl 1979, 1986); (Padró i Parcerisa 1983); (Fourrier 2009).

[72] (Hölbl 1989, 116–123); (Müller 2001).

[73] See also De Salvia (2000) who is perhaps a bit too certain that the name Isis goes with the image.

to Egypt, especially Phoenicia, it was not only Egyptian images that were taken up[74] but also Egyptian gods and the concepts attached to them.[75] This goes so far that Thot, the Egyptian god of writing and wisdom, has a considerable place in a treatment of Phoenician mythology that was transmitted in Greek language.[76] During the last centuries BCE, there is an increasing documentation of the notable role played by Isis and her family in Phoenician culture,[77] and the name of the child-god Harpokrates is attested in Punic in a phonetic rendering of the Egyptian name.[78]

Obviously, we can grasp here the first steps of what would later become a widespread expansion of the Egyptian cults in the Hellenistic and Roman period, reaching throughout the Mediterranean and even to the most remote outposts of the Roman Empire.[79] I will refrain from entering into any details on this point.[80]

The only point I would like to make here is that, once again, magic is very apt at incorporating foreign deities. For example, a group of curse tablets from Late Antiquity found in Rome invokes various Egyptian gods, especially different forms of Osiris.[81]

8 Gods on Loan

It is possible to lend gods to other people but only under special circumstances.[82] An illustrative case can be seen in a cuneiform letter send by King Tushratta, the ruler of Mitanni, to King Amenhotep III of Egypt (ca. 1370 BCE) (Amarna letter 23).[83] After opening with the greeting formula used between equals, he recounts that Ishtar of Niniveh declared, "I wish to go to Egypt, a country that I love, and then return." So, the Mitanni king sends the statue of the goddess to Egypt and remembers how in the time of his father she (the statue) went to Egypt and dwelt there and was honored. The Egyptian king is supposed to return her at his convenience.

[74] For the adaptation of Egyptian elements in Phoenician iconography, see Gubel (1998, 2000a, 2000b, 2009).

[75] (Vittmann 2003, 74–83).

[76] (Baumgarten 1981). Thot can also be associated with Jewish elements, see for example, Mussies (1982); Kotansky (1994, 3–12).

[77] (Vittmann 2003, 74–81).

[78] Bibliography in Malaise (2011, 35f).

[79] For the geographical spread see Bricault (2001).

[80] See the contribution by Nagel in this volume.

[81] (Wünsch 1898).

[82] See Meier (2007, 191–193) who rightly stresses that the divine wish to go has to be made explicit.

[83] Translation in Moran (1992, 61–62).

The other direction of loaning is attested in the so-called Bentresh stela (Louvre C 284), a Late Period inscription purporting to date from the time of Ramses II of the New Kingdom but considered by most scholars to be a forgery from later times.[84] The exact date of its engraving is still under discussion.[85] The text begins by explaining how the Egyptian Pharaoh is, according to his regular habits, in Asia, and the ruler of the country of Bakhtan gives him his daughter as a wife. For a long time, the country of Bakhtan was thought to be exclusively attested on this stela.[86] However, it is now also known to be mentioned in a number of demotic tales as one of the far-away countries to which their heroes travel.[87] There is at least some probability that it is or was at least thought to be a rendering of Bactriana in Central Asia.

Later, when the king and his foreign wife are in Egypt, a messenger from the king of Bakhtan comes and tells that the sister of the queen is seriously ill. The capable scribe Djehutiemheb[88] is sent out and finds that the princess is possessed by a spirit who is not easy to drive out.[89] Thus, another messenger comes to Egypt and asks for a god. In an oracular decision a special form of the lunar god Khons "who drives out roaming spirits" is chosen and equipped with protection. Immediately, the possessing spirit recognizes his power, asserts that he is the servant of the Egyptian god, and goes away; his only request is for a party with the ruler of Bakhtan to receive offerings. The ruler is so impressed by this easy success that he intends to keep the god in Bakhtan forever, and indeed he spends three years and nine months there. But it is enough of a warning signal when the ruler dreams of the god coming out of his sanctuary in the form of a golden falcon and flying away, and he promptly sends the god back to Egypt with many presents—which he, upon his return, hands over completely to a superior form of Khons.[90]

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[84] Studied by Morschauser (1988); (Broze 1989); some notes in Kitchen (1999, 165–168).

[85] Most scholars have dated it to the Ptolemaic Period, following Erman (1883). However, de Cenival (1987, 279) has argued based on stylistic arguments that it should be dated instead to the twenty-first dynasty. Still, the linguistic and orthographic criteria already adduced by Erman (1883, 56–58) in my opinion exclude such an early date for the actual stela, even if the origin of at least some core of the text in the twenty-first dynasty is not unlikely. Winand (1991, 456f.) proposes dating the stela to the time of dynasty 28–30, based on linguistic criteria.

[86] So still Broze (1989, 10); Burkard (1994, 48).

[87] Unfortunately, the relevant texts are still unpublished; see Ryholt (2013, 67); (Quack, forthcoming). The relatively frequent attestations make it somewhat unlikely that the name is a simple misreading of an original "Hatti," as is still endorsed by Kitchen (1999, 168) and Cannuyer (2010, 100–103).

[88] It has been proposed that this character was modelled on a historically attested figure from the time of Ramses II (Cannuyer 2001), but I am not quite convinced.

[89] For the spirit, see also Adams (2007, 12–13).

[90] The relation of the two forms of Khons as superior and inferior is evident already in the image of the stela, where the barque of Khons in Thebes Neferhotep is carried by more priests and receives incense directly from the king, while the barque of Khons who makes plans and drives away the roaming spirits receives incense only from a priest.

Obviously, such texts only work if we understand the basic principle that the deity is residing in the specific material realization of the cultic image. Nobody would mind if the ruler of Bakhtan decided to venerate an Egyptian god as such, but the Egyptians are not happy with the idea that the specific powerful cultic image consecrated by ritual was taken away from them.

I would stress that there are obvious similarities, up to now overlooked, between the episode of Ishtar of Niniveh and the Bentresh stela. The decision to send out a powerful cult image in mission to a foreign country is sanctioned by an oracular decision taken by the deity itself—otherwise it would have been inacceptable. It is extremely important that this be understood as a loan, and that the receiver not consider the statue to be his own to keep. This is one more point where the Bentresh stela harkens back to New Kingdom models.[91]

Finally, an episode transmitted by the Greek orator Libanius should be briefly mentioned. According to him (Orationes 11, 114), Seleucos II, the ruler of Syria, received a dream sent from Isis that she wished to move to Antiochia, and thereupon her statue was brought from Egypt by boat.[92]

9 Final Thoughts

In many cultural theories, globalization is seen foremost as a modern phenomenon,[93] or at most going back about five hundred years in some aspects.[94] Even if it is admitted that there was a form of globalization already in antiquity, it is not yet seriously incorporated in general studies and its specificities hardly enter into overarching theories. I hope to have shown in this paper how many different facets the phenomena of globalization and intermingling of religious traditions already had in these remote times and how worthy of study they are.[95] This makes it necessary for modern theories about globalization to formulate their theoretical premises in a way that does not exclude ancient cultures from the outset.

[91] Several such points, especially similarities to Ramses' II marriage with a Hittite princess, have already been pointed out by previous commentators.

[92] (Norris 1982, 190–192).

[93] For example Appadurai (1996). It is significant that Shami (2000, esp. 188–197) already speaks of a "prehistory of globalisation" when discussing material going back to the middle of the nineteenth century CE (none of the phenomena discussed in that article surpasses in distance or number of people involved what was going on in antiquity). A bit more outreaching is Harris (2007) who uses the term "incipient globalization" in reference to the sixth century CE. Appiah (2006, 111–113) is quite aware of the high age of the phenomena of "contamination" and cross-cultural fertilization.

[94] Thus, Scholte (2000, 62–88).

[95] A very recent contribution to analyzing ancient civilizations as cases of globalization is Jennigs (2011).

One other point should be stressed: Nowadays it is widely acknowledged that all cultures are hybrid. Such a position is certainly justified. However, it risks becoming an obstacle to further insights rather than a means of progress if the question is reduced to a simple binary opposition of "pure" and "hybrid" cultures. The really interesting point is not so much hybridity as such but rather the quite divergent degree to which it manifests itself and the specific aspects that are developed in relation to the particular political and economic situation.[96] Here, studies with historical depth can contribute significantly towards understanding the processes involved.

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[96] See Burke (2009, esp. 66f. and 70f.) who rightly stresses that there are varieties of situations and that some cultures have a much greater propensity than others to accommodate alien elements.

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