

# *Not Only History*

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Mario Liverani Held in Sapienza–Università di Roma,  
Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità, 20–21 April 2009

*edited by*

GILDA BARTOLONI and MARIA GIOVANNA BIGA  
in collaboration with ARMANDO BRAMANTI

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## On Egyptian Elite and Royal Attitudes to Other Cultures, Primarily in the Late Bronze Age

*John Baines*

### Background

Within Mario Liverani's enormous range of contributions to ancient Near Eastern studies, *Prestige and Interest* (Liverani 1990) has been an inspiration to many scholars who have treated relations among peoples and polities of the ancient Near East, especially in the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1500–1200 BCE). Moreover, his studies of topics relating to regions on the periphery of his core interests have often been far ahead of what specialists in these areas had achieved. For an Egyptologist such as myself, a striking example is his treatment of the *Tale of Wenamun* in the same book (Liverani 1990: 247–54), which at the time of its publication could only be matched in any way by an article by an Assyriologist (Bunnens 1978): nothing comparable had come from within Egyptology. In relation to the questions I treat here, I would single out Mario's presentation in *Prestige and Interest* of a model of how ancient polities of many types conceptualized relations between themselves and the world beyond the areas they controlled (Liverani 1990: 33–43). Although his formulation is almost abstract, he presents a highly cogent picture that prompts consideration of how the patterns he identifies have a near-universal character and, I suggest for the present essay, what they might mean for spatial contexts in which contacts and negotiations between polities were set.

Here, implications of the terms *prestige* and *interest* can perhaps be revisited, using a perspective a little different from that of Mario's book, in order to think some more about what the differing Egyptian presentations of the world outside by rulers and elites meant in relation to prestige, and how interest—in the sense of wanting to know about and experience something rather than “having an interest” in it for conquest or exploitation—was realized in elite, as well as largely unknown non-elite, knowledge and lives. Despite the widespread perception of ancient Egyptians as inward-looking members of a somewhat isolated society, they maintained

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*Author's note:* I am very grateful to Elizabeth Frood and Gay Robins for comments and references, and to Alison Wilkins for help with illustrations.

and elaborated on a vast store of information about the world outside, while many Egyptians went abroad and were attracted by other societies, whether or not any such attraction could be acknowledged openly back in Egypt. It is possible to explore this tension in the Egyptian presentation of foreigners in various sorts of display and in the way that attitudes developed more broadly. Contrasts among domains can be understood as divergences between ideology and habitus. One can observe a little of how the world abroad was presented to Egyptians at home, while considering more hypothetically the experience of foreigners who visited Egypt and of Egyptians who went abroad.

The “history” that such questions raise is not the history of events but of ideas and attitudes; these persisted in a range of media alongside, and no doubt influenced by, repeated assimilation into Egypt of people and cultural materials from abroad. In this essay, which presents a train of thought without full documentation, I focus on the Late Bronze Age or Egyptian New Kingdom, the time of greatest cultural interchange before the emergence of large empires in the mid-first millennium BCE; similar points could be made about other periods. I offer these comments, which draw on published materials from over a century but not on extensive research, in admiring homage to Mario’s fundamental contributions to the study of the ancient Near East.<sup>1</sup>

### Contexts of Diplomatic and Cultural Exchange between Regions

By the Late Bronze Age, exchange between polities in the Near East, a number of which had been states for nearly 2,000 years, involved diplomatic practices that seem to have been based on conventions deriving from Mesopotamia, at least in written form. Egypt was the largest unitary state of the time, but in its general and visual culture it was a highly influential outlier rather than belonging within the span from western Iran in the east through Mesopotamia and the Levant to central Anatolia in the northwest (like Egypt, the Aegean stood a little apart). Visitors to Egypt, including diplomats negotiating and supporting relations between rulers, would be confronted immediately and directly by cultural differences because they were dependent on institutions of hospitality and gift exchange and unable to be self-sufficient so far from home. As is known from the Amarna letters, visitors could be detained in Egypt for years before their missions were accepted; this is stated in the fictional *Tale of Wenamun* as happening in the reverse direction at Byblos in the Levant. The Amarna letters and the Hittite correspondence with Ramesses II

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1. Interest in Egyptian visual and textual treatments of foreigners goes back to the early 19th century. An important textual study is Loprieno 1988; short synthesis: Valbelle 1990. I am aware of work in progress that is relevant to this essay by David O’Connor, Kate Liszka (notably 2012, now in preparation for book form), and Flora Anthony, among others. I give very limited references, focusing on the 18th Dynasty. An article of Wolfgang Helck (1964) remains worth reading. For a rather different perspective on the first millennium BCE with a perhaps overly broad definition of foreigners, see Vittmann 2003.

(ca. 1279–1213), both of which are strongly rhetorical in tone, also bring other aspects of international diplomacy to life (Roth 2006: summary from an Egyptian perspective).

Individuals who were granted an audience with the king, or perhaps with high officials in the royal residence or palace complex, would move progressively into a context of aggression and xenophobia displayed in visual form. For indigenous Egyptians, the importance of such experiences of approaching royalty is shown by biographical texts (e.g., Baines 2013: 254, 260), literary works, and reliefs in the much earlier 5th Dynasty mortuary complex of Sahure (ca. 2450: el-Awady 2009; Brinkmann 2010). Foreigners would have had a less participatory perspective on the king and court life, but a central aim of decoration and ceremony surrounding royalty in Egypt, as in Assyria and other societies throughout the world, was to overawe visitors, whether or not they were Egyptian. If they were there to be welcomed, the aim was to impress on them the special favor that they were receiving.

Aspects of the environment surrounding the king are depicted in compositions in nonroyal tombs of the 18th Dynasty that include scenes of royal audiences (Radwan 1969). The context itself is attested in a building from the reign of Amenhotep III (ca. 1394–1355) at el-Malqata in western Thebes, where the ramp leading up to what was perhaps a reception hall bore floor paintings of fettered enemies (Committee of the Archaeological Survey in Egypt 1983: vol. 1, pls. 1–8; vol. 2, pls. 1–9). Glazed fragments of the reign of Ramesses II from Qantir in the Delta display comparable figures of subjugated foreigners, reconstructed as coming from daises and doorways and including a three-dimensional group consisting of a lion with a prisoner in its mouth (Hayes 1937)—a motif that is also attested in New Kingdom miniature artifacts. Similar visual elements appear on the stonework of the slightly later palace of Merneptah from Memphis (now University Museum, Philadelphia: see O'Connor 1993), as well as in temples, where some Windows of Appearance and a wider range of decorative elements use motifs of the same character. Rare examples of portable artifacts—from clothing through heraldic elements to elaborately decorated stone vessels—bear essentially the same message of dominance over foreigners, who are placed in agonizing subjection, bound to furniture, crushed under the king's feet, or squashed by being used as supports for heavy objects. At best, foreigners who are subject to or in awe of the king are shown paying homage to Egyptian power, which is presented as being embodied essentially in his person. Display pieces depicted as having been made in Nubia and offered as tribute to Egypt exhibit a range of such types, including combinations of the squashed and the beseeching or adoring. Even peoples in colonized areas and their leaders commissioned Egyptian or Egyptianizing works that expressed their own subjection; fig. 1 perhaps shows an elaborate multimedia piece.

It might be supposed that many of these representations belonged in a self-referential pictorial world that hardly correlated with lived spaces. The tomb of

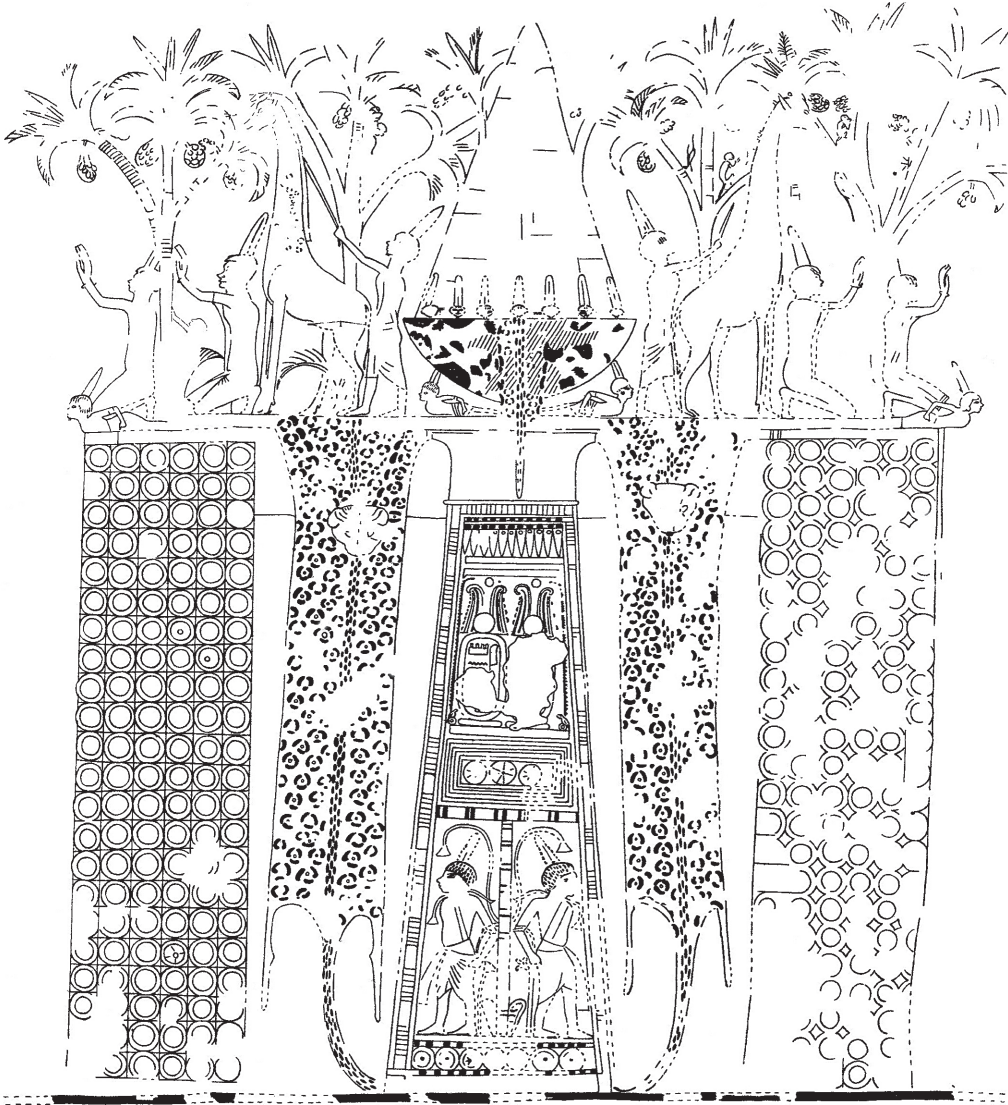


Fig. 1. Landscape-style composite object shown as Nubian tribute in the Theban tomb of Huy (TT 40); reign of Tutankhamun. After Nina Davies and Gardiner 1926: pl. 26.

Tutankhamun, however, contained numerous decorated objects that do not fit with such an idea (e.g., Murray 1963; <http://www.griffith.ox.ac.uk/discoveringTut/>). Although some of them seem to have been unused, others show signs of wear and appear to have been pieces of palace equipment or formal attire; thus, the king seems to have inhabited such a visual environment, at least in formal contexts. A particularly vivid instance is provided by a group of long, gilded staffs with a shape similar to *heqa*-scepters that end in figures of Africans, in one case paired back to back with a Levantine (Carter nos. 48a, c, d). When Tutankhamun grasped the staffs, the figures would have been upside-down in his hand, rendering tangible



Fig. 2. Travertine vessel with a lion on the stopper, a scene of animals devouring prey on the body, and columns with Bes capitals, supported on a base with protruding heads of four foreigners. From the tomb of Tutankhamun, Carter no. 211. Photograph by Harry Burton, no. 0660. Courtesy Griffith Institute, Oxford.

the common expression that he held opponents ‘in his grasp’ (*m hf<sup>c</sup>.f*; Erman and Grapow 1929: 272.18–20). There is no reason to suppose that such pieces would be displayed only when foreigners were present. More likely, they were part of the apotropaic apparatus surrounding the king and paralleled in various contexts and media—for example, in the smiting scenes on pylons at temple entrances.

Motifs such as these, which could be applied at scales ranging from the colossal to the miniature, were also extended metaphorically. A travertine vessel (fig. 2) with a three-dimensional figure of a reclining lion on its lid and a scene of a lion and dog attacking a steer on its side—the former presumably signifying royal presence—sits on an X-shaped base, the crossbars of which end in heads of foreigners, who are ethnically differentiated to represent regions with which the Egyptians had contacts, distributed according to cardinal directions.

A comparable symbolism was developed in a rather different spirit on objects such as the painted chest from Tutankhamun’s tomb, which may have contained hunting equipment and had two somewhat fantastic hunting scenes as its culminating decoration (Davies and Gardiner 1962). While hunting was parallel in meaning to the defeat of enemies, being treated in narratives as its culmination and as a reward for successful combatants (Baines 2013: 187–234), its iconography (as well as probably its implementation) was a little less exclusive and aggressive

than warfare, and it had counterparts in scenes in nonroyal tombs. The equation of defeated enemies with hunters' prey that is evident in most periods and paralleled in many cultures was implicit in royal hunts and presumably informed the ideology of hunting in elite contexts. However, the association of hunting with countries abroad where war would be waged, which is clear in royal sources, is not evident in nonroyal images; the nonroyal hunt's importance to this discussion is that it presents royal relations with the world outside in a slightly milder way than the environment just described and is viewed in a positive light.

Visual evidence for the form of the king's immediate surroundings when he received people in scenes in nonroyal tombs, where he is shown in front of high officials, often with the foreign envoys whom they are introducing. Before reaching the throne dais, visitors would pass gateways and go through halls decorated with images of royal dominance. These would become smaller but more immediate around the person of the king, who is shown seated on a throne on a plinth, under a baldachin (e.g., Kuhlmann 1977: 71–80). The plinth is typically decorated with the torsos of bound foreigners who emerge from oval-fortress shapes that enclose the names of their polities—a device with ancient origins that can also convey cosmographic meanings and is best known from smiting scenes in temples and from temple statuary. The side of the king's throne may bear pairs of foreigners who are bound and face outward from a central hieroglyph for 'unite' (*zm3*), alluding to the royal epithet "Uniter of the Two Lands," while the outward direction signifies that they are rejected from the proper order of Egypt, in contrast to the inward direction of fecundity figures in the same position (Schäfer 1943; Baines 1985: 226–76). The motif occurs also on thrones of queens, notably Amenhotep III's Queen Tiye, when they are seated with the king under the baldachin; in this case, the foreigners are women (e.g., Lange and Hirmer 1968: pl. 154; Romano 1979: no. 101). The king's footstool bears additional images of defeated enemies, as is confirmed by examples from the tomb of Tutankhamun, as well as by the seat of a chair from there (Eaton-Krauss 2008: nos. 7, 20–23, pls. 39 [chair seat], 44–71). Some examples of his sandals, the decoration of which is not visible in the tomb scenes, also bore figures of bound foreigners on their surfaces, which were thus pressed down directly under the soles of his feet; additionally, the ancient device of the "nine bows" signified enemies in general; the enemies acquired names of specific regions in some New Kingdom examples (Uphill 1965–66).

One can speculate about how an envoy might have asked someone (not the king) for translations of the names of foreign peoples inscribed on the royal throne plinth. However, most likely, he—we have no evidence of female envoys, although there were exchanges between royal women, and other women sometimes traveled on missions—would know better than to do such a thing, because he knew that his own people might be represented there and he understood from the context and from parallels at home that what was shown was traditional ideology and might bear little resemblance to international relations as they were practiced. Although the violence of the Egyptian imagery of defeated enemies is less graphic

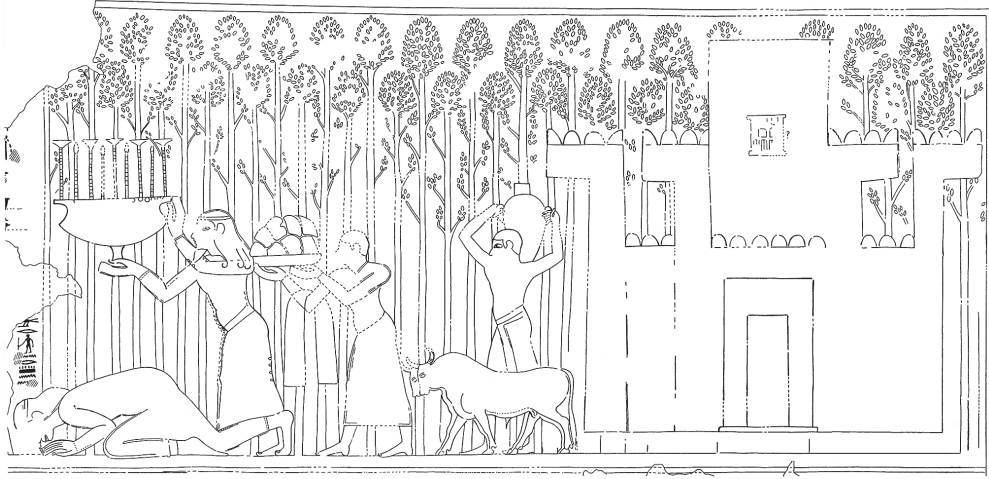


Fig. 3. Levantine elites, set against the background of a forest, emerge from a fortified country estate (?) to present gifts; painting in the 18th Dynasty tomb of Amenmose (TT 42). After Nina Davies 1933: pl. 36.

and perhaps less compelling than that of Neo-Assyrian art (e.g., Bahrani 2008; Collins 2014), its forms would have been unlike those of an envoy's homeland and for this reason alone might have made a strong impression. Material of this type shows no tendency toward adopting an "international style" (see below). For the learned—in the local context, principally Egyptians—it might also have been impressive simply because of its timeless character, which went back in essence to the state's formative period.

The envoys depicted in tomb scenes of the pre-Amarna-period 18th Dynasty pay homage to the king and present children who were perhaps to be educated in Egypt but also functioned partially as hostages—a practice that is mentioned in texts. The contrast between this relatively pacific treatment and the hostility of the imagery around the king's throne is strong, and I see no reason to think that it would have differed much from what envoys actually experienced (their rulers visited Egypt seldom, if at all). The tomb of the general who later became King Haremhab, which dates to the reign of Tutankhamun, has comparable but heavily caricatured images of foreigners beseeching the king through intermediaries, as well as long processions of finely characterized foreigners taunted by Egyptian minders (Martin 1989). This treatment probably bespeaks Haremhab's royal aspirations, as well as perhaps being developed partly for esthetic extravagance; for example, the pleading figure lying on his back (Martin 1989: pl. 114) brings to mind some phraseology of obeisance attested in the Amarna letters. What is shown does not, however, seem to correspond to a specific event.

Nonroyal tombs contain other images and texts that provide evidence for a strong interest in the world outside Egypt and a pride at having visited foreign lands—motifs that are attested no later than the Old Kingdom (e.g., Baines 2007).

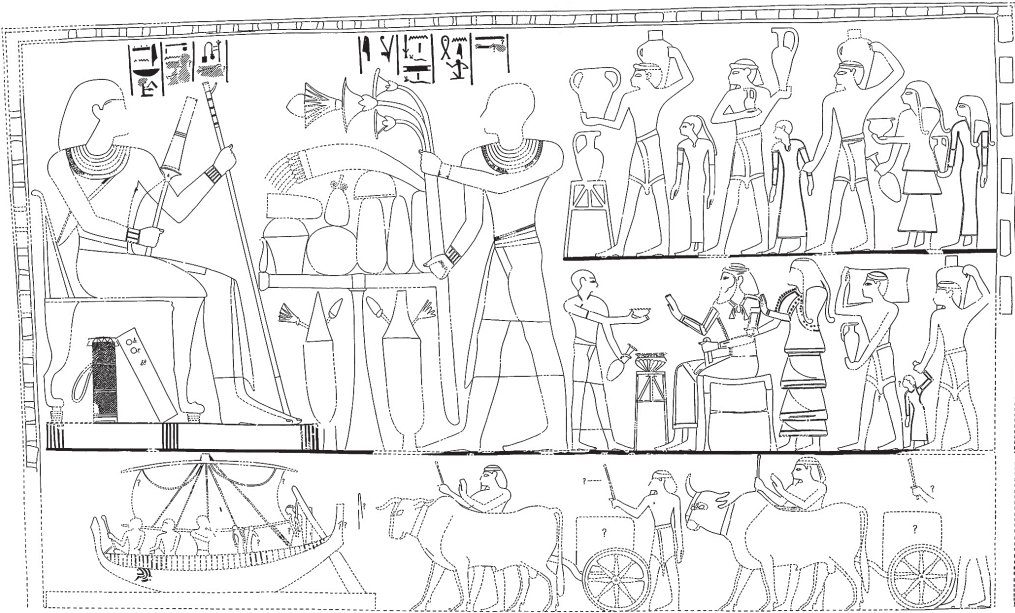


Fig. 4. The Egyptian doctor Nebamun receives a Levantine visitor, his wife, and children; painting in his 18th Dynasty tomb at Thebes (TT 17). After Säve-Söderbergh 1957: pl. 23.

Examples in 18th Dynasty tombs include narratives of military campaigns to the south and the north, representations of the Levantine environment (fig. 3), and images of encounters with people from various lands. They include a Levantine who is seated on an Egyptian chair while his elaborately dressed wife stands beside him, probably as guests of the tomb owner, in a composition showing visitors to Egypt bringing gifts, as well as wheeled carts of non-Egyptian design drawn by humped oxen, which were a novelty in New Kingdom Egypt (fig. 4; details restored from older copies). This was a period when a palace was decorated with Aegean or eastern Mediterranean wall paintings (Bietak et al. 2007), Near Eastern technology such as glass came to Egypt and was adapted and further developed there (Shortland 2012), and large numbers of foreigners from south and north settled in the country, generally becoming integrated into elite (and, no doubt, non-elite) society in a few generations. How far immigrant groups, particularly those forcibly settled in Egypt, retained a distinct identity over time is unknown, but evidence of a continuing ethnicity from the pre-Ramessid New Kingdom relates mainly to the paramilitary Medjay (Liszka 2012).

At the same time, many Egyptians went abroad for a variety of purposes, took part in the colonial settlement of Nubia, or remained abroad (a development only obliquely acknowledged in texts). Little is known of how such outward journeys affected people's attitudes, but knowledge of the Levantine world is a major theme of the Ramessid *Satirical Letter* (Fischer-Elfert 1986: 148–226). Images in a couple of

18th Dynasty Theban tombs show strong interest in landscapes of the Levant and the Eastern Desert (Nina Davies 1961)—as do the Punt reliefs of Hatshepsut from the state's perspective (see below) and Ramessid reliefs of conquest on the outer walls of temples (see, e.g., Heinz 2001). Literary texts offer different perspectives on such matters, significantly including the adaptation of whole mythical tales into the Egyptian language (e.g., Collombert and Coulon 2000).

### Sources of and Attitudes toward Knowledge

This large body of material, which I have only sketched, includes pictorial and textual genres. Typically, Egyptian compositions that integrate images and texts include the personified fortress shapes containing sets of names of foreign regions and cities—the genre often termed “topographical lists.” In a more individualized form, a sequence of fortified places is shown in miniature and distributed across the bottom of a pair of large scenes of a military campaign of Sety I at Karnak (Gardiner 1920: pls. 11–12; details partly omitted from Epigraphic Survey 1986). The most eloquent depiction of a foreign land is probably that of Punt in the temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahri (Naville n.d.: pls. 69–75; Smith 1965: figs. 173–74), which is far more specific and detailed than the depiction known from the 5th Dynasty temple complex of Sahure, which dates a millennium earlier (el-Awady 2009; Brinkmann 2010). By contrast, a fragment from the mortuary temple of Izezy (ca. 2350) shows localities, regions, plants, and animals from abroad in a quasi-encyclopedic integration of images and texts (Grimm 1985), suggesting that aspects of the foreign world could have been classified and recorded in various genres from as early as modes of listing and detailed depiction were developed—possibly back to the early third millennium.

Among texts that should be mentioned here are healing prescriptions that use foreign terms or are composed in a foreign language but written in Egyptian hieratic (Leitz 1999: 49–50, 61–63). These fit with the exchange of medical personnel and expertise between Egypt and other polities of the Near East that is documented in New Kingdom royal correspondence, while showing that some foreign medical knowledge became part of the Egyptian written repertory, although perhaps not in the longer term. The topographical lists incorporated into visual compositions in New Kingdom temples (and conceivably earlier) are likely to have been stored in less visual forms, which could have been used also as sources for the relief from the temple of Izezy.

Such materials probably belonged to a body of codified and curated knowledge about this world and the next. This knowledge would have been maintained by elite groups who probably overlapped with royalty, tomb owners, and dependents of theirs or of the institutions they served. The *Book of Gates*, a visual-verbal composition presenting the underworld (which is first attested in the royal tomb of the same Haremhab) includes paired figures representing four human groups: Nubian, Libyan, Levantine, and Egyptian (e.g., Hornung 1990: 139, pls. 105, 107–9).

In this otherworldly and unspecified setting, they are not characterized as enemies or fettered, and the Egyptian figure is placed alongside the others, as is sometimes found elsewhere (see e.g., Posener 1965). Such a treatment appears to constitute a change from visual and textual presentations of the third millennium, but not necessarily a change in attitudes toward other peoples and cultures. Gerald Moers (2004) has shown that, contrary to the widespread view of Egyptologists, non-Egyptians were categorized in all periods as “people” and that the opposite impression is due to an overliteral interpretation of Egyptian vocabulary.

Vast amounts of information about the world beyond Egypt were assembled and integrated into organized knowledge, at levels from the royal and divine to the elite. Attitudes among the non-elite are essentially inaccessible. Many of them, however, must have experienced far greater amounts of daily interaction with foreigners than came the way of their more sheltered superiors. Perhaps their perspectives generally lay somewhere between royal stereotypes of domination and elite attraction to the world outside.

During the 18th Dynasty, the presentation, and perhaps the underlying organization, of the assembled knowledge of that world was developed in new ways, and new elements were incorporated into display. A prime example is the names of regions and places in the Aegean and in Anatolia that are inscribed on the bases of colossal statues in the mortuary temple of Amenhotep III (e.g., Sourouzian and Stadelmann 2005). While this treatment conformed with stereotypes of foreigners as abject beings crushed by the king’s might, the information contained in the extended repertory changed, to some extent in keeping with conditions in this period, and it did so again in the Third Intermediate period, when a large sequence of Palestinian place-names was inscribed at Karnak (Epigraphic Survey 1956).

The details of such changes can be elusive, not least because of problems of chronology, and it may not have occurred to anyone that it was particularly important to reflect the political map of any specific period in compositions that were essentially formal (the same would not be true of magical prescriptions and rituals involving foreigners and enemies, which seem to have been kept up to date). Nonetheless, engagement with regions beyond Egypt must have involved recording features in writing and in pictorial form. In the case of the Punt expedition during the reign of Hatshepsut, some of what was depicted of the land itself appears arbitrary, notably the houses raised on stilts, which probably related to a different environment and might be compared with the fantastic foreign plants in the “botanical garden” of Thutmose III at Karnak (Beaux 1990). The rendering of types of Red Sea fish, however, is so precise, as well as typical of Egyptian concern with living species, as to support the idea that specimens were collected, whether during the expedition or at an earlier date (Danelius and Steinitz 1967). For Punt and for the Levant, comparable sources with a more strongly pictorial character, for which no direct evidence is known, could have contributed to images of terrain and buildings. Commonalities in treatment suggest that realizations in temples and tombs adapted similar visual models in different ways (Baines 2013: 43–150).

Such sources were presumably stored in cultural repositories. These could have been in royal and administrative institutions, temples, or to some extent in private collections. What is relevant here is the indication that the material gives of detailed and focused interest in recording the world outside Egypt, as well as the generally positive view of the world that it conveys. Since Egyptian visual works seldom followed a fixed template, the very hostile pictorial presentations around the person of the king, in temples, and in media, including texts inscribed on monuments near the frontiers, may have been composed at least partly from the less adversarial collections of information that I am positing here.

### Radical Change

Two important developments fall outside the pattern described so far. First is the emergence of an “international style,” which was defined by William Stevenson Smith (1965), while his definition has been extended and varied by Marian Feldman (2005). This style and the associated content are mainly attested on small, exchangeable objects made of a range of often high-value materials, but they also have counterparts in palace and tomb wall paintings, and their currency extended beyond the Levant and Egypt to Anatolia and the Aegean. The style may have emerged in the 15th century BCE—a few generations earlier than suggested by Feldman—at a time of increased international contact and of the dissemination across the Near East of esthetic products and newer technologies. The Aegean-style paintings from Tell el-Dab’a in the Egyptian Delta (Bietak et al. 2007) and from Levantine sites, which may date to the mid-15th century BCE or before, are perhaps early outliers of the movement.

The international style is relevant here particularly because it idealizes its subject matter, emphasizing rural contexts and minimizing aggression against human beings (but not in hunting or among animal species). While some finds, such as the 19th Dynasty Tell Basta treasure from the Nile Delta (e.g., Baines 2013: 118–19 with fig. 36), appear to come from temple contexts, other pieces may derive from nonroyal and nontemple sources and thus belong with the less antagonistic treatments of “the other” sketched above. Unlike Feldman and in agreement with David Wengrow’s review of her book (2007), I do not see pieces in the international style as being tied to exchanges among rulers. Rather, they belong to a broad realm of transportable elite material culture that would have encompassed perishable materials such as textiles and wooden furniture. The style is a little less “international” than Feldman claims, because pieces vary in character, and most of them can be assigned to specific regions of manufacture. If anything, what they exemplify is the Egyptian influence on Levantine visual forms in particular, which goes back at least to the Middle Bronze Age (e.g., Teissier 1996).

Furthermore, the international style can hardly be characterized as a single, definable phenomenon. It formed part of a wider development, and Marc Van De Mieroop (2007) proposes that elites throughout the Near Eastern and Egyptian realm of cultural and material exchange would have felt as much or more affinity

with their peers in different polities as with their own whole society. Such subjective attitudes—which would have coexisted with the ruler-focused visual rhetoric of domination—would appear in different ways according to context. The central group in the larger polities would have excluded elites in peripheral areas or in smaller-scale domains of their own societies, yet these same excluded people might have included themselves in their perceptions of the group. Regions such as Nubia and Punt, which were crucial to the Egyptian world picture, are examples of places where these sorts of divergent perspectives might have been present—as could have been the case in a different way for the Aegean. Evidence for a diversity of perceptions is available for Nubia, even on single monuments (see also below), whereas Punt and its societies are archaeologically unknown and may not have corresponded to any single entity on the ground.

The other development that is significant for the present argument is the short-lived but crucial phase of the reign of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten (the Amarna period) and its aftermath, with its reforms in religion and in many other domains. Because this period is attested from the Amarna letters, although without clear reference to the revolutionary changes in Egypt, it has long been central to interpretations of international relations, notably in the works of Mario Liverani (e.g., 1979; 2004). As indicated above, royal and nonroyal monuments of the earlier 18th Dynasty in particular have widely divergent presentations of the world abroad and of Egyptian relations with it. Such differences are less marked for the reign of Akhenaten. One reason for this convergence is that the decoration of nonroyal tombs includes more scenes of royal and official life than at other times, in compositions that are seemingly closer in character to those of royal monuments. At the same time, the range of subject matter in temple decoration is less strongly “sacred” than before, probably in part because traditional scenes of the king before a range of deities ceased to be appropriate for the new forms of worship.

From the earliest of the new decorations onward, notably in the Theban tomb of Ramose, groups of foreigners are depicted being received by the king in audiences (e.g., Norman Davies 1941: pl. 37). Images from the Karnak temples dedicated to the new form of the sun god include similar groups in groveling poses (Anonymous 1976: no. 10) that contrast with the somewhat freer and less-subservient presentation in nonroyal tombs at el-Amarna—for example, the tomb of Meryre II (Norman Davies 1905: pls. 33–35). In both contexts, figures of Egyptians are shown in poses that are essentially similar to the foreigners’ poses or even appear more subservient (Schwaller de Lubicz 1999: pl. 250), if only because of their greater numbers. While idealized, the compositions convey a stronger sense of possible settings than do the scenes in earlier 18th Dynasty tombs. In the tomb of Meryre II, the foreigners, who probably represent envoys, stand behind Egyptians who bow to address the king on an occasion when the tomb owner is being rewarded. It is plausible that envoys would have attended events organized to reward Egyptian high officials, not least because this would send the message that formal events with an internal Egyptian significance were on the same scale of importance as international affairs.

Moreover, envoys in the court societies of many periods and regions participated in general court life, not only when business related to their interests was conducted. Since they would have depended on royal largesse to be able to live at the royal residence and would not have had many other calls on their time, participation of this sort would have been beneficial in more than one way. Furthermore, enforced waiting for an audience and exclusion would have been a powerful weapon, making even survival difficult for an envoy.

The violent, apotropaic presentation of foreigners did not disappear in the face of this newer depiction of court ceremonial. Beneath the figures of king and queen in the reward scene of Meryre II are traditional groups of foreign captives tethered to the central “unification” sign. A ship of Queen Nefertiti has a scene on the hull near the bow showing her about to smash the heads of female captives (Cooney 1965: no. 51a); this is calqued on scenes of kings and has an indirect forerunner in the example of Amenhotep III and Queen Tiye mentioned above. The reward scene attests—in an image rather than through a palace structure—the direct juxtaposition of something like a “normal” practice of receiving foreigners and the stereotyped ideology of the context. This context can hardly be traced in the material record and could have been in a temporary structure that might be archaeologically invisible, even in the desert location of el-Amarna. The palace decoration from the following century supports the assumption that locations where the king received visitors bore comparable motifs, as well as the ancient icon of a king smiting the heads of enemies. The same clash is visible in the luxury objects depicted as coming from Nubia (fig. 1): the tomb of Huy, which contains the painting reproduced in fig. 1, attests a whole range of treatments of Nubians in less and more stereotyped renderings of alterity and integration with Egyptian styles of comportment and modes of dress. More generally, violent treatments of foreigners are richly attested during the reign of Tutankhamun, just a few years after Akhenaten; some of the objects that bear these images may have been inherited from Akhenaten’s reign.

Thus, nothing points to a break in continuity in the presentation of foreigners under Akhenaten. Rather, the radical changes in decoration in his time fit with the presence of both aggressive imagery in the king’s surroundings and less adversarial but still domineering practices in the same context; these appear in compositions that were a little closer to the examples in elite tombs. In this perspective, the extravagant rendering of foreigners petitioning Tutankhamun and of processions of captives in the Saqqara tomb of Haremhab displays the strongest merging of two developments: the characterization of many distinct foreign groups shown in subjection to Egypt and its king, often on royal monuments; and, in Haremhab’s tomb, the scene of the elite tomb owner presenting beseeching foreigners to the king.

My final example is a small, painted stela of a Syrian soldier from el-Amarna (fig. 5). The owner sits on a high-status folding stool of basically Egyptian design and is about to drink from an amphora by means of an un-Egyptian straw, helped by an



Fig. 5. Stela of a man named Terer (Dalilu?), drinking from a vase through a straw, and his wife Irbura. From el-Amarna, late 18th Dynasty. Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum 14122. After Spiegelberg and Erman 1898: pl. 17.

Egyptian servant. His wife, who is shown in Egyptian style, might not be ethnically Egyptian. This composition must have been acceptable to its patron, who might have been the Syrian or his widow, but one wonders how seriously the designer intended it. To an Egyptian, it might have conveyed a stereotype of a foreigner rather than a proper rendering, and it seems less respectful than the treatment of a Syrian's visit to a high Egyptian official (fig. 4), perhaps because its protagonist was not as high up the social scale. A pictorial ostrakon from Deir el-Medina dating about a century later depicts a monkey in a very similar composition, also seated on a folding stool, showing that at that date such a treatment was parodic (Vandier d'Abbadie 1946: pl. 48, no. 2315). On the one hand, an object such as

this exemplifies the difficulties of interpreting how subjects from outside Egypt (or who originated from outside the country) were represented within Egyptian conventions, while on the other hand, it attests the strong, detailed interest that Egyptians had in the appearance and customs of non-Egyptians, including those who resided, and presumably died, among them.

### Conclusion

The principal materials I have reviewed, which date to a period more than 1,500 years after the formation of the Egyptian state, display a range of attitudes expressed in primarily visual forms: stereotypical disdain for the world outside Egypt and, by implication, fear of it; careful observation and recording of that world and its inhabitants; engagement with its landscapes, alongside acquiring prestige from diplomatic and other associations with elite foreigners; and a humorous interest that may imply considerable familiarity. In a complex, state-level society that generally accepted both forced and voluntary immigration (Schneider 1998; 2003), as well as maintaining contacts with many other polities, people must have encountered foreigners in diverse contexts and at most social levels. Attitudes toward them would hardly be unitary or consistent within social groups, between social groups, or in different settings and periods. The dissonances in royal and elite domains that I have discussed here were no doubt paralleled in other contexts. In part, these dissonances were due to the use of inherited symbolism, particularly in royal and sacred milieux.

Symbolic residues like these can be paralleled in many societies. Those who deployed the motifs would have been conscious of the contradictions involved, and wherever it was expedient they would have treated them as ideology and not taken them literally, or they would have understood them as magical protection. Comparable interchanges on elite and diplomatic levels in other societies would have been treated in similar ways.

It is common almost everywhere to retain stereotyped images of the foreign world, particularly in epithets and iconography. Associated attitudes, however, continue to have devastating consequences for millions today. While the sophistication and complexity of Egyptian knowledge of the foreign world and the resources devoted to amassing, sustaining, and revising this knowledge are remarkable, one should have no illusion about their context, which was in a society that was routinely cruel both to foreigners and to its own people. Moreover, elites benefited from the positive aspects of connections with other societies and left less-convenient aspects to their perhaps more accommodating inferiors. We see something of these paradoxes in highly esthetic forms in tomb decoration and on small objects. The esthetic impulse was applied both to negative, stereotyped images and to freer and more-positive images. The influence of Egyptian stereotyped forms on the even more aggressive forms of the Egyptian-influenced Napatan–Meroitic civilization of a number of centuries later (e.g., Wildung 1997: 266 [Naqa<sup>c</sup>]; Willeitner

1997: 211, and Fisher et al. 2012: 229 [Gebel Qeili]) illustrates how such treatments may exercise greater attraction than the rather suppler and more nuanced motifs that are apparent particularly in 18th Dynasty sources.

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