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ETHNICITY
الإثنية (الإنتماء العرقي)

Christina Riggs and John Baines

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ETHNICITY
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Ethnizität
Ethnicité

As developed in the fields of anthropology and sociology, the concept of ethnicity offers one possible approach to analyzing diversity in the population of ancient Egypt. However, it is important that ethnicity not be elided with foreign-ness, as has often been the case in Egyptological literature. Ethnicity is a social construct based on self-image, and thus may be difficult to identify in the ancient sources, where a monolithic uniformity of "Egyptian" versus "other" prevails. A range of sources does suggest that ethnic difference operated within the indigenous population throughout Egyptian history, as would be expected in any complex society. This discussion explores these sources and suggests ways of thinking about the negotiation of ethnic identity in ancient Egypt.

يعطي مفهوم الإنتماء العرقي مدخل محتمل لتحليل التنوع العرقي ضمن سكان مصر القديمة، ولكن يجب عدم الخلط بين الإنتماء العرقي وكون الشخص أجنبي، كما كان الحال دائماً بالمراجع المكتوبة عن مصر القديمة، فالإنتماء العرقي هو مفهوم إجتماعي مبني على نظرة الفرد لنفسه، وبذلك يكون من الصعب ملاحظة أو معرفة الإنتماءات العرقية كما يراها الأفراد بسبب إطغاء مبادئ «مصري» و«غير مصري» بالمصادر القديمة. وترجح بعض المصادر وجود إنتماءات عرقية مختلفة بين المواطنين الأصليين عبر التاريخ المصري، كما هو الحال في اي مجتمع مركب. هذا البحث يستكشف هذه المصادر ويقترح أساليب للتفكير في هوية الإنتماء العرقي بمصر القديمة.

Much twentieth-century scholarship saw ethnicity as an intrinsic characteristic of a group or individual, objectively definable and directly correlated to race, language, or material culture. In a seminal edited work, the anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969) argued against the idea that ethnic groups are defined simply by their culture, suggesting instead that ethnicity is fluid, in large part self-defined, and negotiated through social relations. The distinguishing features of an ethnic group will be more and less evident to outside observers dependent on the salience of relevant features in a given society. Ethnic identity can remain an important factor in social organization even if the cultural differences between ethnic groups are minimized. Ethnicity is a social construct, not a biological given, and it is defined through the manipulation of symbols and, importantly, with reference to other groups.

Barth's formulation of ethnicity influenced subsequent work on related topics in anthropology and sociology, based on living societies. The sociologist Anthony D. Smith outlined six characteristic features of ethnicity (Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 6 - 7):

1. use of a common name for the group
2. a myth of common descent
3. shared histories of a (perceived) common past

4. one or more distinctive cultural elements (often religion or language)
5. a sense of having a territorial homeland (either current or ancestral)
6. a self-aware sense of membership among the group

In archaeology, the concept of ethnicity has been explored with reference to European prehistory, classical Greece, and various parts of the Roman Empire, to name just three examples; however, it has not been adequately applied to the study of ancient Egypt.

Since ethnicity is now recognized as socially constructed, ethnic boundaries are permeable, subjective, and situational. For the ancient past, the identification of ethnic groups in the textual and material record depends on context and must take into account whether a group or individual is defining itself or is being defined by an external source, for example for political ends. The exclusion or domination of one ethnic group by another may lead members of the excluded group to align themselves more strongly with their ethnic identity, perhaps by manipulating symbols like art, language choice, or naming practices, which may become more visible in the archaeological record as a result. However, in a conservative society like that of ancient Egypt, where decorum circumscribed elite expression and encouraged conformity to a homogeneous ideal, ethnic-group membership, and the perception of ethnicity, is especially challenging to identify.

The Study of Ethnicity in Egyptology

Egyptological literature has tended not to distinguish between ethnicity and partly overlapping notions such as "foreignness," focusing on the representation of generic foreigners in pictorial iconography, or on the movement of people through trade, migration, or conflict. Scholars have often adopted the Egyptians' own ideological stance, by accepting and perpetuating the vision of a monolithic, definable Egyptian state and culture subject to "incursions" and threatened by other "races." Some writers have seen a "dichotomy" (thus Gordon 2001) between Egyptian concepts of inferior foreigners and the extensive evidence for political alliances, economic trade, immigration, and intermarriage with these same groups. Even writers engaged with anthropological and archaeological thinking about ethnicity limit discussion to the three broad groups of non-Egyptians (Nubians, Libyans, and Syro-Palestinians) commonly used as stereotypes in Egyptian art. The official record in Egypt does present ethnicity in this way, for purposes of rhetoric: foreign (as distinct from ethnic) groups are topoi for disorder, chaos, and otherness, while Egypt, as defined by its own elite, represents order, harmony, and the privileged vantage point. The ready availability of these topoi in Egyptian culture implies that the quality of being foreign was familiar and definable in Egyptian society. It may be reasonable to also extend this implication to ethnic groups within Egypt, even if they are less easily recognized in the ancient record, but one must also ask how far topos and reality coincided.

The existence within Egypt of ethnic groups that were defined by social interaction, negotiation, and self-presentation has been little studied. The assumption that ethnic groups moved into Egypt from outside does not allow for ethnic differentiation within the indigenous or long-resident population of the Nile Valley and Delta or address the fate of immigrants and their descendants in Egyptian society. This question of their longer-term status has hardly been addressed in the modern literature. Moreover, regional or local identities may constitute a phenomenon comparable to ethnic identity, rather than cultural difference. The source material leaves both possibilities open, and draws attention to the range of elements that individuals and communities could bring to bear in defining ethnicity in opposition to a dominant cultural group. Many religious practices were strongly local, with emphasis placed on the cult of a specific town or nome in local hierarchies and on the use of personal names. Different dialects only become clear in Coptic, in which vowels are written, but such linguistic

differences will have been evident throughout Egyptian history, as is attested by indirect evidence, such as the evocation in the Ramesside "satirical letter" of "the speech of a Delta dweller with a man from Elephantine" (Fischer-Elfert 1986: 238, 690 - 691).

Ethnicity, Material Culture, and Pictorial Representation

The interpretation of local or ethnic identities from material culture poses numerous problems. There were considerable regional differences in the production of art, forms of architecture, and burial practices, the extent of which varied from period to period. In most cases these probably do not relate to ethnicity, but an ethnic group often experiences some social pressure, such as status negotiation either within the group or in relation to outsiders, in order to differentiate itself through its material culture. In the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period, the distinctive burials and pottery assemblages of the Nubian C-Group, Pan-Grave, and Kerma cultures appear in cemeteries throughout Egypt. These burials disappear in the New Kingdom, in a development that may be due both to the Egyptian acculturation of these groups and to a broader trend for cultural homogeneity after the political reunification of Egypt, both within Egypt and progressively throughout the Nubian Nile Valley. Their disappearance does not in itself signify that the relevant ethnic groups ceased to distinguish themselves from the general Egyptian population. Thus the ethnonym "Medjay," which is generally assumed to have designated the bearers of the Pan-Grave culture, remained the term for "policeman" throughout the New Kingdom, long after they had ceased to be archaeologically identifiable. Medjay may have constituted both a professional and an ethnic group within Egyptian society. Aspects of habitus, such as social uses of space or methods of food preparation, form another potential indicator of ethnic-group membership. For example, the prevalence of Nubian-form cooking pots at the Middle

Figure 1. Section of the *Book of the Dead* papyrus of Maiherperi, "child of the nursery" and "Fanbearer on the King's Right" under Thutmose III. KV 36, western Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo CG 24095.

Kingdom Egyptian military settlement of Askut has been interpreted as an assertion of (female) Nubian ethnic identity in a context where (male) Egyptians were the dominant group (Smith 2003; 2007: 233 - 234).

The existence of stereotypes for foreigners, especially in pictorial representation, may have made it possible for some elite individuals to present themselves with reference to their ethnic identity; however, scholars' focus on identifying "foreigners" has meant that these individuals are often not considered as people displaying an ethnicity within Egyptian culture but as (recent) immigrants. One example from the 18th Dynasty is Maiherperi, who was given the rare privilege of burial in the Valley of the Kings, with high quality grave goods that must have been royal gifts (Roehrig et al. 2005: 62 - 63, 70 - 74). Maiherperi was a "child of the royal nursery" (*ḫrd n kꜣp*) and held the title of "Fanbearer on the King's Right," probably under Thutmose III. In vignettes in his *Book of the Dead* papyrus, he is depicted with a dark brown skin color and, in one case, tightly curled, chin-length hair that conforms to the Egyptian topos for representing Nubians (fig. 1); his mummy wore a similarly styled wig (Roehrig et al.

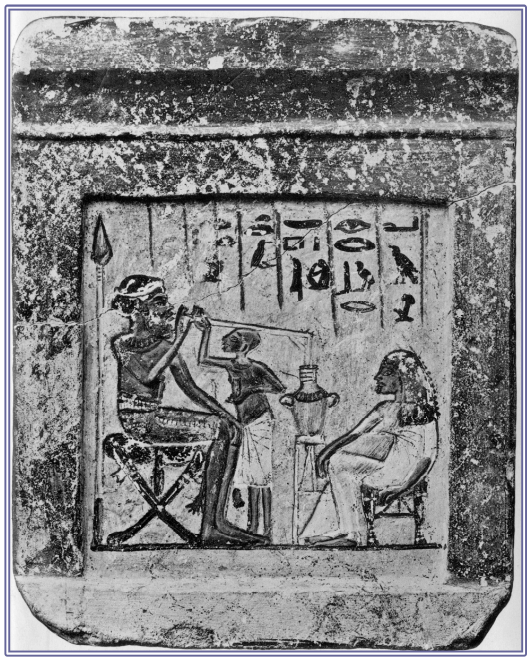

Figure 2. Stela of a man named Terer (Dalilu?), shown drinking from a vase through a straw, and his wife Irbura. Their names are probably Canaanite. El-Amarna, Dynasty 18. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin 14122.

2005: esp. p. 70; original publication: Daressy 1902). These features may depict an individual's ethnic identity within the bounds of decorum and the Egyptian representational system, and Maiherperi himself may have had some control over how he was depicted, thus defining one element of difference about himself.

A comparable example, also from the 18th Dynasty, is the stela of a man named Terer from el-Amarna (fig. 2; Berlin 14122: Spiegelberg and Erman 1898; color: Freed, Markowitz, and D'Auria 1999: no. 114). The stela shows Terer (perhaps Dalilu) and his wife Irbura, both of whom have names that are probably Canaanite. Terer/Dalilu is depicted with a stereotypical Near Eastern hairstyle, beard, and patterned kilt, and drinking through a straw. Irbura—for whom no equivalent female topos of an ethnic foreigner existed at the time—is shown in the manner of Egyptian women. Whether this couple were immigrants or belonged to a distinct ethnic group settled within Egypt

Figure 3. Line drawing of the stela of a woman named Ankhetneni, shown with a distinctive short wig. Dahshur, late Dynasty 12. Egyptian Museum, Cairo CG 1481.

cannot be established from the evidence of the stela alone. A different convention is visible on a late 12th-Dynasty stela from Dahshur, whose owner is captioned "The Nubian woman Ankhetneni" (*Nḥsjt ꜥnḫt-nnj*) and wears a short wig (fig. 3; Cairo, Egyptian Museum CG 1481: Borchardt 1937, I: 168 - 169, pl. 38; de Morgan 1895: 38 - 39, fig. 80; Schneider 2003a: 88, 334). This is one of very few stelae belonging to women from the period, and its owner probably was of high status, perhaps a member of the royal court. As with Terer/Dalilu, even though Ankhetneni is shown with a distinctive, quite possibly Nubian wig type, it is impossible to say whether she was an ethnic Nubian.

In a number of battle scenes from the Old Kingdom to the New Kingdom, the depiction of the young offspring of captured foreigners,

or immigrant groups, may reflect the enslavement of these groups (Feucht 1990). Although the scenes meet the requirements of state ideology, using the "foreigner" topos, they also suggest another form of settlement in Egypt that may have contributed to ethnic differentiation and the shaping of individual ethnic identities. Similarly, the ethnonym Aamu (*ꜥꜣmw*), "Asiatic," came to mean also "slave" in the Egyptian language (e.g., Hannig 2006: 487; see also Schneider 2003a: 289).

Ethnicity and Naming Practices

Personal names may give some insight into the configuration of ethnic groups in Egypt. Naming practices were complex, however, and many factors influenced the choice of name. The ascription of ethnicity by reference to personal names is far from straightforward, and from an early period, expressions like "Nubian" (*Nḥsj*) functioned both as identifiers and as personal names. As early as the Old Kingdom, a few subordinate figures in decorated tombs are captioned "Nubian" (*Nḥsj*) (see D. Jones 2000, I: 485 [no. 1814]) and "Libyan" (*Ṯmḥw*) (Moussa and Altenmüller 1977: 38, 52). These may be instances of labeling rather than nomenclature, but at least one such figure has a name of un-Egyptian appearance (Junker 1934: 194 no. 12). These people were presumably members of elite households—in some respects parallel with exotic individuals, such as dwarfs and hunchbacks, whom their patrons also displayed as members of their entourages. Whether these "Nubians" were immigrants or ethnic Nubians from groups resident in Egypt cannot be known. New Kingdom and later instances of the personal name Panehsy (*Pꜣ-Nḥsj*, literally "the Nubian") occur so frequently as to suggest that not everyone bearing this name necessarily identified himself, or was identified by others, as Nubian (compare here the possible translation of the name of the 13th-Dynasty king Nehesy "[the] Nubian" as "the Fortunate One": Loprieno 1998). Moreover, Nubia itself was a large area within which several ethnic groups were almost certainly present.

Personal names attested from the Middle Kingdom include numerous examples that are not of Egyptian type, many of them referring to specific ethnic or regional backgrounds or combined with designations such as *ꜥꜣm* "Asiatic" (Schneider 2003a). These form an appreciable percentage of the total number of names known from the period. Thomas Schneider (2003a: 316 - 338; 2006) posits that those who immigrated, whether voluntarily or through forced migration, became quite rapidly acculturated, and as he notes, names alone are not a good indication either of ethnicity or, where of purely Egyptian type, of complete assimilation. Ethnicity is thus very difficult to identify in available sources, and it could have endured for generations or centuries while remaining invisible to modern research.

The fact that individuals with non-Egyptian personal names attained the highest ranks in Egyptian society, especially in the New Kingdom and later, may suggest that some of them were not foreigners or immigrants but members of resident ethnic groups, perhaps ultimately descended from immigrants. The case of Maiherperi, introduced above, also exemplifies the potential of personal names as evidence for ethnic group membership. Meaning "the Lion on the Battlefield" (*Mꜣj ḥr Prj*), Maiherperi's name points to a change of status during life, because it is an epithet of praise relating to the king that has parallels in the names of other high officials with possible foreign origin or Nubian or Asiatic ethnicity, attested from the same generation. One such example is Paheqamen, "the Ruler Endures" (*Pꜣ Ḥḳꜣ Mn*), who was chief architect and chief of the treasury during the reigns of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III. Paheqamen bore the alternate name Benya, which is non-Egyptian, perhaps Semitic; the names of his parents are also of Syro-Palestinian origin. Leahy (1995: 233) describes Benya/Paheqamen's Theban tomb inscriptions as "reticent" about his past, but like Maiherperi, Benya/Paheqamen was a "child of the royal nursery" (*ḫrd n kꜣp*). Two men of the reign of Amenhotep III who were named Heqareshu and Heqaerneheh who

bore the same title and are known from the First Cataract may have been of Nubian extraction (Frandsen 1976). Their contemporary, the vizier Aperel, also bore the title and had a "foreign" name; although his tomb at Saqqara is known, it does not mention his parents (Zivie 1990: 156 - 157, 172 - 173). The presence of ethnic foreigners in the entourage of kings has many parallels in other cultures, especially as military personnel, and affiliation with the *kap* (nursery) may have been one mechanism to facilitate this. Members of ethnic groups settled in Egypt might also have found royal favor, although it is difficult to evaluate the significance of this when it occurs over a long period of time. Throughout the Ramesside Period, for instance, about a quarter of the individuals who bore the title "royal butler" have foreign-sounding names (Schulman 1990: 13 - 19), and one—Ramessessemperre, also known as Benazu—has a double name, plus a father whose name is of Syro-Palestinian origin (Schulman 1976; see also Schneider 2006).

Individual personal names cannot be taken as the sole direct evidence for ethnic identity. At Deir el-Medina in the New Kingdom, the presence of at least 17 individuals with possible Libyan names, such as Kel (with variants), has been interpreted as proof of an ethnic or immigrant community (Ward 1994), but uncertainty surrounding the reading and interpretation of such names favors a cautious approach (Meskell 1999: 148 - 154). Many of these people had parents or grandparents with Egyptian names, suggesting either that overt assimilation was reversed among later generations within ethnic groups or that the names came to be widely adopted. Similarly, the names of many New Kingdom royal women are non-Egyptian, and while some of these were foreign women who moved to Egypt for diplomatic marriages (Robins 1993: 30 - 36; see also Schulman 1979), others may have belonged to ethnic groups within the population of Egypt, and thus were not "foreign" at all.

The Wilbour Papyrus from the reign of Ramesses V attests the widespread presence of people identified as Sherden, one of the ethnic groups associated with the "Sea Peoples," settled in a region of Middle Egypt (Gardiner 1941 – 1948: index 1952). Sherden also appear as witnesses in a document relating to the local Egyptian military in the reign of Ramesses XI, two generations later (Gardiner 1940; Roberts 2008). From the same period come mentions in administrative documents of "foreigners" (probably to be read *ꜥꜣw*), many of whom bear ordinary Egyptian names (e.g., Gardiner 1941: 25 with n. 4). This term seems to designate people who were not immigrants but were perhaps descended from them. Because it is unspecific, it does not have the appearance of an "ethnic" designation, but it might have been understood as such by the actors. Be that as it may, these people seem to belong to the ordinary population and not to form a category that is set apart in any functional way.

The dynasties of kings with ethnic Libyan names who came to power in the Third Intermediate Period render visible the presence within Egypt of ethnic diversity. It has been suggested that these rulers, their associates, and their approach to political organization were distinctive due to their ethnic-group memberships, and that the retention of Libyan names may express a wish to assert Libyan ethnicity (Leahy 1985; O'Connor 1990; on Libyan political structure, see also Ritner 2009). The question is to what extent membership of any of the various Libyan ethnic groups (Libu, Meshwesh, Tjemhu, etc.) was marked or recognized in Egyptian society, given that Libyans had been settled in the country for many generations. The attested iconographic topos for male Libyans as foreigners—beards, ostrich feather headbands, patterned garments—is attested mainly from the New Kingdom, when these people were depicted mainly as enemies. It was not deployed as a self-image for the ethnic Libyan rulers of the Third Intermediate Period, for example, but these rulers and other Libyan elites in Egypt used names and titles that identified them as Libyan. In this instance it seems that elements that had been

integrated into Egyptian-language practices were appropriate markers for members of Egyptian society who exploited their ethnicity within the ruling group.

In the Late Period, internationalism, migration, and trade are especially well documented, and immigration from Thrace and the Greek cities of Anatolia was facilitated by the establishment of Naukratis (attributed to the reign of Psammetichus I) and the use of Greek mercenaries, first against Nubia (Psammetichus II) and later against Persian rule. The descendants of Greek immigrants took Egyptian names and operated within Egyptian cultural practices: a dark stone anthropoid sarcophagus is inscribed for the deceased Wahibraemhat, whose ethnic heritage emerges in the Greek names of his parents, Alexikles and Zenodote, transcribed into hieroglyphs (Leiden AM4: Grallert 2001). One of the possible markers of ethnicity—language difference—may have worked against acculturation for some ethnic groups, though such boundaries remain highly permeable. The Carian community established at Memphis, for instance, inscribed Carian and Egyptian in parallel on a series of sixth-century BCE tombstones, which also combined Greek and Egyptian visual forms (Ray 1995; Kammerzell 1993; Hockmann 2001).

Ethnicity in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt

Alexander the Great's conquest of Egypt, in 332 BCE, precipitated a period of mass immigration. Peaking in the third century BCE, immigration from the Mediterranean, the Black Sea coast, Asia Minor, and the Near East may have numbered into the hundreds of thousands and included foreign slaves and prisoners of war as well as economic migrants and military veterans. In Greek and Demotic sources, almost 150 different ethnic labels attest to the scale and geographic range of immigration and ethnic-group settlement (La'da 2003: 158 - 159). Many Greek-speaking immigrants did not remain separate from the existing population. Men like the Greek cavalry officer Dryton married into Egyptian

Figure 4. Detail from the stela of Khahap, identified in the Demotic inscription as "leader of the Medes." Saqqara, third century BCE. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin 2118, lost in World War II.

families (Lewis 1986: 88 - 103; Pomeroy 1990: 103 - 124), and an Egyptian priest named Horemheb, who lived at Naukratis during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, seems to have had a Greek father and an Egyptian mother (Derchain 2000: 20 - 21, 42 - 43). Acculturation during the Ptolemaic Period thus operated in two directions: Greeks learned to speak Egyptian and adopted Egyptian practices and beliefs, while Egyptians acquired Greek literacy in order to succeed in the changing social and political climate. Examples of these processes are attested up to the highest levels in society, including a "Greek" chief financial officer named Dioskourides who was buried in an Egyptian sarcophagus (second century BCE), as well as significant interaction between the indigenous Egyptian high priests of Memphis and the Ptolemaic ruling house (Baines 2004, with refs.). Other ethnic groups may have maintained more closed boundaries, such as Jewish communities, or the Persian residents implied by a third-century BCE stela from Saqqara, inscribed in Demotic for a man named Khahap, "leader of the Medes" (fig. 4; Vittmann 2003: 72, fig. 33: Berlin 2118, lost in World War II).

Although the Ptolemaic administration did not define "Greek" and "Egyptian" in legal terms, Demotic documents of the period make use of the ethnic label "Greek" (***Wjnn***) or "Greek, born in Egypt" (***Wjnn ms n Kmj***) to

help identify individuals, and perhaps to indicate an individual's native language (Goudriaan 1988). Over time, increasing bilingualism, the process of acculturation across the permeable group boundaries, and the prevalence of Greek administrative and cultural institutions encouraged the formation of a social elite recognized as Greeks or Hellenes, which in some ways operated like an ethnic group. This "hellenized" group was not a legally defined category in Ptolemaic times, but as Goudriaan observed (1988: 119), its existence set a precedent that was exploited by the Roman administration, after the annexation of Egypt in 30 BCE.

In Roman Egypt, "Egyptian" became a defined category for taxation purposes (Egyptians paid the poll tax at full rate), alongside categories for Roman citizens, Alexandrian citizens, citizens of the other Greek cities (Naukratis, Ptolemais, and later Antinoopolis), Jews, and metropolites. These last, who paid reduced poll tax, were residents of the nome capitals (*metropoleis*), and their status as members within the metropolite category had to be proved through paternal and maternal descent (Nelson 1979). Censuses carried out under Augustus may have identified the "hellenized" elites of the late Ptolemaic Period and codified their membership, thus turning a quasi-ethnic group into a hereditary status group. Other individuals in Roman Egypt may have self-identified as "Greeks," but without metropolite (or gymnasial) membership, they would not have enjoyed any recognition as such for legal or taxation purposes. A collection of statutes known as the *Gnomon of the Idios Logos* underscores the Roman administration's concern with status and group membership: according to one stipulation in the *Gnomon,* a child born to a Roman citizen and an Egyptian, as defined by Roman law, would inherit the status of the lower-ranking parent (Nelson 1979: 2).

Although Greek was the language of the imperial administration, the persistence of bilingualism in Roman Egypt is attested not only by the use of Demotic but also by the development of Coptic (Choat 2009). As Jacco Dieleman (2005: 104 - 110) observes, Greek was "the language of upward social mobility" (p. 105); the Egyptian language, as well as other cultural forms, changed both in relation to it and depending on the circumstances and interests of individuals and of social groups. The indigenous language, which remained remarkably free of Greek loan-words in the Demotic script (Dieleman 2005: 109 n. 13), was used for a rich vein of literary and religious texts (e.g., Ryholt 2005). The Roman administration did not accept Demotic for official uses such as legal contracts (Lewis 1993), but more modest documentary texts reveal that even in "hellenized" areas like the Fayum, temple personnel used Demotic for administrative purposes among themselves (Lippert et al. 2006). Colloquial, spoken Egyptian probably differed from Demotic in extent of Greek influence and in relation to the speech strategies that its users adopted (Ray 1994; Dieleman 2005). For bilingual Greek and Egyptian speakers, language will have been situational and so may have contributed to ethnic or cultural identity.

As in earlier periods, naming patterns may also point to ethnic difference; however, factors such as gender influenced the choice of personal names. In the family of Soter from Thebes, dated to the first and second centuries CE (fig. 5), daughters tended to have Egyptian names while the sons bore Greek, or dual Greek and Egyptian, names (Van Landuyt 1995; Herbin 2002). If these individuals were attested only in isolation, without information about their parents and siblings, the males might be taken for ethnic "Greeks" and the females for "Egyptians," rather than members of an Egyptian family that aspired, for their men, to the advantages offered by the status of being "Greek" (Riggs 2005: 182 - 205).

By the Late Roman Period, the negotiation of ethnic and cultural group identities encompassed religious affiliation as well as factors such as language use, exemplified by the case of Philae (Syene). References to

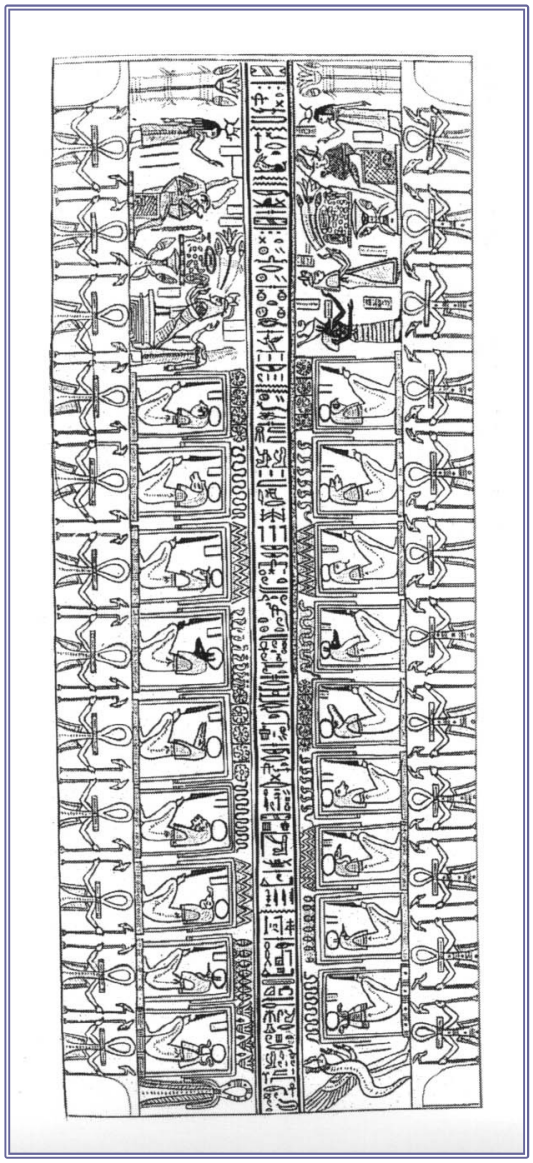

Figure 5. Schematic drawing of the top of the coffin lid inscribed for Petamenophis, also known by the Greek name Ammonios, who died in 116 CE. From the "Soter tomb" in western Thebes. Louvre E 13016.

Blemmyes and Nubians in Greek and Demotic texts point to the activities of groups that were perceived as ethnic others, but on what basis they were perceived as such, and how these groups identified themselves, is unknown (see Dijkstra 2008: esp. 146 - 173). The boundaries between the groups active in the region were as complex and changeable as the pattern of religious practice and language use at Philae, underscoring the broader point that ethnicity is not concerned with foreignness and migration, but with the relationships among groups and group members in a complex society.

Conclusion

The dominant presentation of Egyptian monuments, which emphasizes uniformity among Egyptians and contrasts it with generally stereotyped diversity among foreigners, renders the identification of difference within ancient Egyptian society hard to identify. The concept of ethnicity offers one possible approach to analyzing differentiation, among ancient as well as modern populations, and a valuable corrective to the depicted uniformity, which, as scattered sources show, belies ancient realities. The essential limitation of the ancient material is its weak attestation of self-image vis-à-vis images of others or of "the other." The sources therefore offer many ways of thinking about ethnically Egyptian dominance but few for thinking about how people related themselves to less general entities than the society as a whole, and still fewer for approaching diversity in the non-elite population. Comparative study shows that large-scale societies are rarely homogeneous in terms of ethnic self-definition, and we see no reason to suppose that Egypt was exceptional in this respect. Moreover, acculturation, as observed through the monumental and archaeological record, provides little guide to self-definition or to ascription of identity by others, which are the two essential aspects of social configuration addressed by the notion of ethnicity. People who are entirely acculturated, or who present minimal identifiers of difference, may possess a strong ethnic adherence. Given these difficulties, no full comprehension of such distinctions of identity in the ancient society can be achieved. Nevertheless, the indicators cited in this article suggest that any notion that the ancient Egyptian population was ethnically uniform in any period should be abandoned as a fiction projected by the dominant ideology and often largely accepted by Egyptologists.

Bibliographic Notes

The volume edited by Fredrik Barth (1969) laid a framework for anthropological approaches to identity. A more sceptical perspective is offered by Marcus Banks (1996). The six-pronged definition of ethnicity of Anthony Smith (1986; Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 6 - 7) is adopted by Jonathan Hall (1997). Similarly, Colin Renfrew (1995) outlined eight points for defining ethnicity: shared land or territory; common descent; shared language; common customs (culture); common beliefs (religion); group name or ethnonym; self-awareness as a group; and a shared history or myth of origin. Further explorations of ethnicity and archaeology include Bentley (1987, with response by Yelvington 1991), Graves-Brown et al. (1996), Emberling (1997), and S. Jones (1996, 1997). The theme is also relevant to the ethnoarchaeological study of the Garbage Project in Tucson, Arizona (Rathje and Murphy 2001). Baines (1996: 360 - 382) discusses ethnicity within Egyptian society, arguing that the role of "Libyans" in particular should not be considered as one of "foreigners." Stuart Smith (2003: 10 - 55) usefully grounds ethnicity in archaeological discussions, with reference to Egyptian and Nubian evidence. Loprieno (1988) is a study of topoi of foreigners based on literary evidence. Examples of scholars who elide ethnicity and "foreigners" include Helck (1977), Gordon (2001), and S. Smith (2007); Leahy too (1995) assumes that ethnic groups comprise foreign immigrants. For regional and local identities, see Hagen (2007). Barry Kemp (2006: 19 - 59) presents a broad survey of "Egyptianness" and constituent groups in the population from numerous strands of evidence. Schneider (2003b) considers the important issue of the unreserved application of the concept of "Egyptianness" to cultural phenomena regarded as "free" from ethnic or foreign elements. Pan-Grave and C-Group cultures, and possible acculturation, are discussed by Bourriau (1991). Eric Scott Cohen (1992) analyzes Egyptianization and ethnic groups in Egypt and Nubia along with methodological issues. William A. Ward (1994) and Thomas Schneider (1998, 2003a) discuss foreign names in Egypt. For Greek and Egyptian ethnicity in the Ptolemaic Period, see Goudriaan (1988), the essays collected by Bilde (1992), Clarysse (1979, 1992, 1995), and discussion in Clarysse and Thompson (2006: 138 - 147, and 323 - 332 on naming practices). For ethnicity in Roman Egypt, see the demographic study by Bagnall and Frier (1994) and the discussion of identity by Riggs (2005: 18 - 23).

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Figure 1. Section of the *Book of the Dead* papyrus of Maiherperi, "child of the nursery" and "Fanbearer on the King's Right" under Thutmose III. KV 36, western Thebes. Egyptian Museum, Cairo CG 24095. Photograph courtesy Jürgen Liepe.

Figure 2. Stela of a man named Terer (Dalilu?), shown drinking from a vase through a straw, and his wife Irbura. Their names are probably Canaanite. El-Amarna, Dynasty 18. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin 14122. After Spiegelberg and Erman 1898: pl. 17.

Figure 3. Line drawing of the stela of a woman named Ankhetneni, shown with a distinctive short wig. Dahshur, late Dynasty 12. Egyptian Museum, Cairo CG 1481. After de Morgan 1895: fig. 80.

Figure 4. Detail from the stela of Khahap, identified in the Demotic inscription as "leader of the Medes." Saqqara, third century BCE. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin 2118, lost in World War II. After Vittmann 2003: fig. 33.

Figure 5. Schematic drawing of the top of the coffin lid inscribed for Petamenophis, also known by the Greek name Ammonios, who died in 116 CE. From the "Soter tomb" in western Thebes. Louvre E 13016. Drawn by Frédéric Cailliaud, 1827.