



HAL
open science

Concepts and Antiquity Chronicle

Anca Dan, Yang Huang, Shoufu Jin, Randolph Ford

► **To cite this version:**

Anca Dan, Yang Huang, Shoufu Jin, Randolph Ford. Concepts and Antiquity Chronicle. Dialogues d'histoire ancienne, 2024, 50/1 (1), pp.309-410. 10.3917/dha.501.0309 . hal-04649065

HAL Id: hal-04649065

<https://hal.science/hal-04649065v1>

Submitted on 16 Jul 2024

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Les concepts en sciences de l'Antiquité : mode d'emploi

Chronicle 2024 – Barbarians in Ancient Civilizations, 2

Anca Dan, Shoufu Jin, Yang Huang, Randolph Ford

IN **DIALOGUES D'HISTOIRE ANCIENNE** VOLUME 501, ISSUE 1, 2024, PAGES 309 TO 410
PUBLISHERS **PRESSES UNIV. DE FRANCHE-COMTÉ**

ISSN 0755-7256

Article available online at

<https://www.cairn-int.info/revue-dialogues-d-histoire-ancienne-2024-1-page-309.htm>



CAIRN.INFO
MATIÈRES À RÉFLEXION

Discovering the outline of this issue, following the journal by email, subscribing...
Click on this QR Code to access the page of this issue on Cairn.info.



Electronic distribution Cairn.info for Presses Univ. de Franche-Comté.

Reproducing this article (including by photocopying) is only authorized in accordance with the general terms and conditions of use for the website, or with the general terms and conditions of the license held by your institution, where applicable. Any other reproduction, in full or in part, or storage in a database, in any form and by any means whatsoever is strictly prohibited without the prior written consent of the publisher, except where permitted under French law.

Les concepts en sciences de l'Antiquité : mode d'emploi Chronique 2024 – Barbarians in Ancient Civilizations, 2

Responsables

Anca DAN

AOROC, CNRS-ENS-EPHE, Université PSL
anca-cristina.dan@ens.fr

Yang HUANG

Fudan University, Shanghai, China
huangyang@fudan.edu.cn

Contributeurs

Shoufu JIN

Fudan University, Shanghai, China
jinshoufu@fudan.edu.cn

Randolph FORD

University of Maryland, Baltimore County, USA
rford3@umbc.edu

I- Introduction: Barbarians in Global Context

In the 2022 “Concepts and Antiquity Chronicle”, we have published a first series of papers about “Barbarians in Ancient Civilizations”.¹ They were the results of discussions started in a workshop organized in 2017, in the Paris Institute for Advanced Studies, by Anca Dan and Huang Yang, with the support of the Labex *TransferS*.² In

¹ A. Dan, H. Yang, H. Jin Kim, D. Konstan, M. Espagne, “Concepts and Antiquity 2022 Chronicle – Barbarians in Ancient Civilizations, 1”, *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne*, 48/1, 2022, p. 407-450. The video recordings are published on the Paris Institute for Advanced Studies: <https://www.paris-ica.fr/fr/liste-des-videos/barbarians-in-ancient-civilizations-10931>.

² The 2022 and this 2024 chronicles have received support of *TransferS* (laboratoire d'excellence, program “Investissements d'avenir” ANR-10-IDEX-0001-02PSL* and ANR-10-LABX-0099) as well as of *Translittere* (école universitaire de recherche, program “France 2030” ANR-10-IDEX-0001-02 PSL* and ANR-17-EURE-0025). We are extremely grateful to Michel Espagne and Isabelle Kalinowski for their constant encouragements for the global collaboration in Classics throughout the years.

this issue celebrating 50 years of *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* and 10 years of “Concepts and Antiquity” chronicles, we are publishing another series of articles, in line with the principles formulated in the 1970s by Pierre Levêque and Monique Clavel-Lévêque:³ the historical reconstruction of ancient facts is the result of dialogues between scholars from various countries and disciplines. In our globalized world, this means the study of Greece and Rome as parts of the Afro-Eurasian *oikoumene*, an ‘inhabited world’ of soft spaces and few (if any) strong borders, characterized by the continuous interactions between heterogeneous groups. The *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* have given an impulse to the exchanges between historians ready to build a historical discourse together; the journal anticipated the revolutions in the Humanities at the end of the 20th century and the ‘global turn’ of the *Altertumswissenschaft* (French “Sciences de l’Antiquité”). After two centuries of study of the Greek and Roman ‘roots’ of our Western world, through philological, archaeological, and anthropological methods applied to each language area, Classicists have returned to the all-encompassing, comparative methods of the humanists. The growing evidence about the East and West, most of which becomes nowadays accessible in digital formats throughout the world, nourishes these cross-disciplinary and trans-cultural studies. The mix of academic disciplines—once separated between Hellenists, Latinists, and Orientalists—allows a better understanding of the various ‘collective identities’, in the *longue durée*.

Culture(s) and civilization(s)

The groups that created and were created by these ‘identities’ range from tribes to peoples/*ethnè* and nations, from cities to empires—notions belonging to what we call ‘geopolitics’ since the beginning of the 20th century and that were used with extendible meanings at various moments and places.⁴ More abstract than this geopolitical frame,

³ At this anniversary moment, we would like to express our gratitude to Antonio Gonzales, the director of ISTA – University of Franche-Comté, Besançon, and editor-in-chief of the journal, to Laurène Leclercq, Evelyne Geny as well as to the entire team.

⁴ The fundamental ideas of ‘geopolitics’ could be traced back to Polybius, if not to Herodotus and Hippocrates. Yet, the academic field developed only at the beginning of the 20th century on the basis of German and Anglo-Saxon theories of geographic, biological and historical determinism (such as H. J. Mackinder’s ‘geographical pivot of history’ in 1904, and F. Ratzel’s organic vision of states borrowed by R. Kjellén, responsible for the spread of the term *Geopolitik*). E. g. see Defay 2005, Lacoste 2008, Chapman 2011. In France, after following the criticism of the German deterministic approach by Ancel (1936), the discipline grew only several decades after the WWII, through Yves Lacoste, creator of the journal *Herodote* (Lacoste 1976).

the dichotomy between ‘culture(s)’—derived in the French and German Enlightenment from Cicero’s *cultura animi*⁵—and ‘civilization(s)’—from Quintilian’s and Suetonius’ *ciuilitas* (the quality of being *ciuilis*, Greek πολιτικός)⁶—reproduces the ancient opposition between the superior civilized human beings and the ‘barbarian Other’. Etymology teaches us that ‘culture’ originally refers to the self-cultivation of one’s mind and soul, through philosophy; by opposition, ‘civilization’ means what the man does to his social and spatial *milieu*—that is how he lives and organizes his society.⁷ The ultimate roots of this distinction correspond to Plato’s theory of human evolution in the *Protagoras* (320c-323c): Prometheus’ man, mastering the arts, possesses culture; Zeus’ man, master of justice and virtue, living in cities, is civilized.⁸

The complex history of these concepts since Enlightenment blurred their origins: German scholars preferred the individual *Kultur*, while the French spoke of the universal *civilisation*. The German *Kultur* has inspired the Anglo-Saxon anthropologists dealing with the spiritual and material products of various peoples, while the French *civilisation* was preferred by historians, geographers and political scientists who determined the distinction between ‘civilized’ cultures (generally urbanized, with a state bureaucracy and organized economic production requiring the use of writing) and un-civilized, ‘primitive’, pre- and proto-historic cultures.⁹ Such distinctions, determined by the reception of the German and French scholarship and by the history of the academic disciplines, are still present in our globalized bibliography, even if the 21st century gave up much of the positivist perception of ‘progress’ in the human transformation of nature as well as of the evolutionary vision of societies. Therefore, archaeologists and

⁵ *Cultura autem animi philosophia est: Tusculan Disputations*, II, 13. For Plato’s antecedents (*Phaedrus*, 276b-277a) of the Ciceronian agricultural metaphor, see Novara 1986.

⁶ Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory*, II, 15, 25; 33; Suetonius, *Life of Augustus*, 51, 1. See more ancient references, with their Greek counterparts, in Scivoletto 1970; Lana 1972; Wallace-Hadrill 1982; Ratti 2002. For the full bibliography, see Bono 2018.

⁷ For the ancient origin of the words, see Niedermann 1941; Kroeber, Kluckhohn, 1952; Laloup, Nélis 1955; cf. Bénétou 1975.

⁸ For our interpretation of the genesis of Plato’s human evolution, see the introduction of our chronicle in *DHA*, 48/1, 2022, p. 411-414.

⁹ See Testart 2005 and 2021.

anthropologists still use the concept of 'cultures', in order to emphasize the affinities of a group at precise moments and in specific spaces. Geographers and political scientists prefer the concept of 'civilization', which accentuates the spatial and material dimension (and therefore the transformation of nature) for a certain number of societies that dominate or represent the others.

In fact, the French concept of *civilization* was invented in the Age of Enlightenment to designate the process by which we escaped from barbarism/savagery and became polite, urban.¹⁰ This 'civilizing' process, thought as universal, was the reason invoked for the industrialization, the modernization, the positivism, and the Western European colonialism of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Borrowed in English and German at the beginning of the 19th century, 'civilization' shifted its meaning from process to status and has been denoting a relatively advanced state of development of a society, necessarily urban, which possesses scientific and technical knowledge as well as spiritual, artistic and intellectual values that are affirmed over time.

The Second World War put an end to the myth of a single civilization: Western 'civilization', driven by scientific, technical and socio-political progress, inflicted the greatest catastrophes on humanity—the destruction of Europe, the Shoah and the nuclear bomb. Civilizational aspirations towards a new golden age motivated other ideological genocides, in the Soviet and Chinese space. Therefore, the singular 'civilization' was replaced by the plural 'civilizations', anticipated since the 19th century. This plurality, however, was progressively thought in terms of a 'clash of civilizations', a historiographic, geographic and geopolitical theory which is currently considered to have started with Albert Camus¹¹ and became generalized through the works of Samuel Huntington (1996), walking in the footsteps of Arnold J. Toynbee (1934-1961), Fernand Braudel, and Bernard Lewis (1983). Fernand Braudel (1963; 1987) brought an essential contribution to the construction of this structuralist frame, both by the reform of French history teaching in the 1950s and 1960s, and by his *Grammaire des civilisations*, that rejected the previous biological vision on the 'growth' and 'breakdowns' of civilizations. Braudel was not a Marxist but did not deny Marx' influence. His project was to replace 'superficial' history, chronological and event-based, by an analysis of phenomena in the long run. This coming back to the ancient

¹⁰ <https://www.cnrtl.fr/etymologie/civilisation>. For the French historiography, Avlami, Remaud 2008.

¹¹ "Le problème algérien", *Radiodiffusion française*, 1^{er} juillet 1946, audio : https://youtu.be/1pl7APX_E7M?si=68IWuqqSPYdRtqwS.

principles of history as 'inquiry' of causes meant the identification and the study of the forces at work in historical processes on a global scale. If ancient historians had only two or three parts intervening in their world conflicts, the modern historians deal with several 'civilizations'. For Braudel, the actors of this new history are societies living in spaces characterized by a space determining a certain coherence of material culture, over time.¹² They have a geographical, a sociological, an economic and a psychological component. Braudel's catalogue of civilizations included Islam and the Muslim world, Black Africa, the Far East (Asia), Europe, Latin America, the United States, the Other Europe (USSR). Even if these are entities which appear in tension one with another in today's geopolitics, it is important to note that these have always been heterogeneous blocks, which would have not recognized themselves as unitary or opposed to each at that time, but which evolved into potential enemies. The historical and political discourse played an essential role in this making.

New and old 'clashes of civilizations'

However, looking at the world through a grid based on the appreciation of the Other's degree of civilization remains as dangerous now as it was in Antiquity, when imperial states motivated their people to fight against the Barbarian. Today journalists and politicians, supporters of a 'culture of fear', make us believe that our world is threaten by a 'clash of civilizations': democracies *versus* autocracies, various religions or laic regimes *versus* Islam, confederations *versus* national states, global West *versus* more traditional East. This is a powerful rhetorical tool of political manipulation, whose study deserves attention, for the ancient as well as for the modern times.

The formula 'clash of civilizations' was made famous in the Anglophone historiography by the Jewish British American historian Bernard Lewis. Close to the American neo-conservative circles which supported the war in Iraq and the protection of the American people against migrations, Lewis had become famous already in the 1960s, by situating the Suez crisis (1956) and the conflicts surrounding the creation of the state of Israel in the continuity of the 'great debate' between Islam and Judeo-Christianity. Despite the permanent contestations of this conflictual view of the world (as reflected in his debates with Edward Said, the famous de-constructor of the Western concept of 'Orient'), Lewis' thesis implying an intrinsic and practically inevitable conflict between the West and Islam became dominant after the publications

¹² Cf. Claval 2001.

of Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996). At the end of the 20th century and of the Cold War, political thinkers were still hesitant about Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' (1992) and the illusion of global peace following the collapse of the Soviet Union. But after the apparent proofs brought by the destruction of the World Trade Center on the 9/11/2001 and by all the following terrorist attacks in Europe and North America, Huntington's antagonist frame of a clash in which the civilized West is threatened by islamization and, more recently, by the Chinese and Russian autocracies, became dominant.

This is a simplistic and dangerous view, which neglects the West's responsibility in the ongoing conflicts in Asia and Africa and transposes some intrinsic and unresolved fractures of the American society on global scale. The transformation of the Northern American society, from liberal and racist Anglo-Saxon Protestantism towards relative acceptance of Catholicism and a relative integration of Hispanic, black, Asian and indigenous minorities is also considered through the filter of fears: rather than a demographic, economic or political evolution, this is presented as the crisis of the American identity, leaving now room for the woke movement and the cancel culture shaking the American universities, favorable to Islam or at least to the Palestinian cause.

Despite the complexity of our modern, globalized world, the current 'clash of civilizations' can be compared to the ancient expressions of power in empires which justified their wars against the Others by their own civilizational superiority. From the ancient Egypt to China, through the Assyrian, Persian, Greek and finally the Roman empire, the Other was the enemy which focalized the fears of transformation of the empires at war. East-West clashes as well as invasions and migrations are still remembered as the main causes of the end of Hellenistic states and of the Western Roman Empire, even if today we know more about the environmental and political causes which determined the wars and even if we see that most of the Barbarians were well 'Hellenized' and 'Romanized' long before attacking the Greeks and the Romans. The comparison of our Western civilization with the ancient empires is also appropriate when dealing with the *leitmotiv* of the crisis and of the end of civilization. This *leitmotiv* dominates the Western literature and arts for more than 2 000 years.¹³ It was nourished by a cyclic view of history, common in the ancient cultures which transposed the

¹³ See the parallel between the Roman historiography dealing with the destruction of Carthage and the American *topos* of the destiny of empires (through the work of the 19th-century painter Thomas Cole) in Marchand *et al.* 2024.

observation of the natural cycles on the evolution of their own societies.¹⁴ It was also encouraged by the theme of the translation of empires, which passed from the Near East into the Hellenic world through the biblical book of Daniel. In the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, the end of the Hellenistic states seemed to confirm the Jewish apocalypses. This teleology influenced the newly born Latin historiography, which started to mourn on Rome's end from the last centuries of the Republic and the Julio-Claudian emperors, when the Roman empire had not even reached its maximum extension. It culminates in what we call today Late Antiquity and Medieval times, in parallel with theories of revival and new cities of Rome.¹⁵ In Antiquity as in our days, this discourse on the end of our civilization is both vector of fears and catalyst of collective identities. It is a factor of conflicts created by those who, in their utopia, hope to stop the transformations, the movements, the changes inevitable for a humanity which lives on the same planet, itself alive.

The best-constructed answer to Huntington's thesis was published in French by Marc Crépon (2008, 2010), who denounced the imposture of the clash of civilizations, showing how this grid was fabricated by political manipulation and how it polarizes societies and accentuates fears and conflicts. Nowadays, it is obvious that the attack of 9/11/2001 is not an effect of the Christian-Islamic conflict going back to the Crusades, but of the recent American policy in Asia and, directly, of the support that the Americans gave to the Taliban. The Crusades themselves, seen by contemporary accounts, were not civilizational wars, because beyond the religious conflicts, people always lived together. The idea of a Western civilization which owes nothing to the East is easily contradicted by the European urban planning (key to 'civilization'), which still bears important traces of medieval Islam in southern Italy and Spain; in the 1920, the Great Mosque of Paris was the sign of recognition of the secular French republic towards the Muslim fighters of the First World War; our current cities are shaped by the Muslim immigration called by the different components of the West to settle there over the last 60-70 years. For 1 200 years, Islam has had a European geographical and ethnic component and an influence on European culture which neither the Spanish Reconquista nor the refusal to integrate Turkey into the European Union can erase. Transforming the Yugoslav conflict into a civilizational conflict means denying the roots of the Kosovars at the heart of Europe (and therefore their genetic, linguistic,

¹⁴ Cf. the contributions in Bertrand, Compatangelo-Soussignan 2015 with bibliography.

¹⁵ For the topic of decadence in Late Antiquity, see for example the studies in Formisano, Fuhrer 2014.

'civilizational' links with the Illyrian populations of the Balkans) in order to make them representatives of an Islam from which they had been isolated by 50 years of the Cold War. In fact, Islam is a unitary religion opposed to the two other monotheisms only for those who want to benefit from its opposition to the West: unlike Christianity which found peace as a result of wars and edicts, Islam experiences and suffers its multiple geographic, ethnic, political and ideological fractures that the West generally ignores.

By looking at the ancient and modern historiography from various cultures, one can learn that the opposition between us/the Barbarian other(s), just like Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' are rhetorical strategies used by the states in order to manipulate the individuals aspiring towards a 'collective identity'. The individual's adhesion to a such a community and the recognition offered by the community erases all the differences inside the group and sublimate the common identity, making it an ideal. The individual, attached to this new ideal community, is prepared to defend it with the price of his life. This is how the Egyptians created the first ethnic and territorial state in the Mediterranean region: in the paper below, Shoufou Jin reminds how the pharaohs used the representations of their victories over foreigners in order to express their universal power guaranteeing the survival of Egypt, in the middle of chaos. This contrast sharply with more inclusive way of defining the self and the Other: as Yang Huang shows, ancient Chinese and Greek expressed ways of transformability between self and Other, by acculturation. This cultural definition of barbarity, generalized in the Hellenistic world and identified with a juridical status in Roman times, continued to be common in Late Antique et Byzantine times—as indicated by Randolph Ford in his paper below.

The three studies on the Barbarians in ancient cultures brought together in this chronical prove that there are different ways of looking at our varied world, which can be defined rather as a mosaic of groups of languages, religions, material and spiritual affinities. Each individual expresses feelings of belonging and is assigned by the others to various cultural groups. Due to migrations and cultural transfers, these groups are neither fixed, nor uniform: they overlap one with each other allowing individuals to live in-between, in middle grounds, or to move between groups throughout their lives. Each of us belongs to several groups, since we all have a multi-layered identity. By artificially choosing some defining features, one can isolate 'cultures' to which we attach or we are attached at some precise point in time and space. When one expunges the differences and idealizes one culture, one strengthens his community but also prepares the confrontation with the Other. These basic socio-political mechanisms,

discovered in the time of the first Bronze Age states, are still determinant in the modern geopolitics.

Is there an alternative to the geopolitics of the 'clash'?

The 'clash of civilizations' is not the only possible frame of seeing and making our world.¹⁶ Different models which emphasize what is left behind by the civilizational focus are possible: they look at connectivity and cultural transfers, at plurilinguism, multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. The man's natural inclination toward social life can be satisfied not only in a closed community threatened by the Other, but also in an open world, in *dialogue* with the Other. Ancient history offers examples of the wide range of attitudes towards various categories of Other, which are still understudied, despite the numerous literary and iconographic sources at our disposal. For example, the sharp contrast between the Egyptian representations of the foreigners as enemies (always defeated and enslaved by the Pharaoh who reestablishes the cosmic order) and the Graeco-Roman and Chinese conception of a transformative identity, able to evolve from barbarism to civilization could be explained by taking into consideration the Assyrian, Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid representations of the peoples who after being submitted, supported the universal power of the king of kings. Monuments like the black obelisk of the Neo-Assyrian king Shalmaneser III (*ca* 825 BC) in the British Museum, representing the contributions of Gilzanu (NW Iran), Omri (Israel), Musri (Egypt), Suhi (on the Euphrates) and Patina (S Turkey) to the prosperity of empire, are representative of cosmopolite mentalities, in Middle Eastern societies open to connectivity.¹⁷ In this direction, Antigoni Zournatzi's recent conferences on the Persian interest in ethnography, contemporary to the Greek invention of history (with its geographic and ethnographic excursions), are an important step in this direction.¹⁸ The academic context is more favorable as ever for such projects, after the seminal work of

¹⁶ See for example Arnason 2003.

¹⁷ Inv. BM 118885. See https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_1848-1104-1.

¹⁸ See for example her unpublished conferences in the UCLA Pourdavoud Institute for the Study of the Iranian World, <https://pourdavoud.ucla.edu/video/the-kings-peoples-and-lands-the-apidana-reliefs-herodotean-ethnography-and-the-persian-imperial-lore/>, and in the French School in Athens, <https://www.efa.gr/events/the-kings-peoples/>.

Robert Rollinger and his Innsbruck school on Afro-Eurasian empires,¹⁹ concomitant with Sitta von Reden's *Handbook of Ancient Afro-Eurasian Economies* (2020).

Due to the exceptional reception of François Hartog's *Mirror of Herodotus* (1980, translated into English in 1988), any historian knows that the study of the ancient 'barbarians' is useful not only for learning about military history. In the mirror of the alterity, one describes himself, his group and his 'cultural' attitude towards other people. The global study of the genesis of ancient identities and of the barbarian Others in various ancient cultures is in fact a prerequisite for understanding past and present geopolitics of conflict, consolidation of authorities, collective manipulation. In this large-scale and *longue durée* research, Antiquity remains an essential topic, since its literary and archaeological evidence continues to be considered as the 'roots' or the 'models' of our societies.

Anca Dan

Bibliography

- Ancel J. (1936), *Géopolitique*, Paris.
- Arnason J. P. (2003), *Civilizations in Dispute: Historical Questions and Theoretical Traditions*, Leiden.
- Avlami Ch., Remaud O. (2008), "Civilisations. Retour sur les mots et les idées," *Revue de synthèse*, 129, p. 1-8.
- Bénéton Ph. (1975), *Histoire des mots : culture et civilisation*, Paris.
- Bertrand E., Compatangelo-Soussignan R. (eds) (2015), *Cycles de la nature, cycles de l'histoire : de la découverte des météores à la fin de l'âge d'or : actes des journées d'études du Mans*, Bordeaux.
- Bono M. (2018), "La *civilitas* nella Storia Romana di Cassio Dione: Il regno di Tiberio come case study (Dio LVII 7-14)," *Aevum*, 92/1, p. 69-110.
- Braudel F. (1963; 1987), "Grammaire des civilisations," dans *Le monde actuel – Histoire et Civilisation*, Paris, p. 143-475 [republished as book in 1987].
- Chapman B. (2011), *Geopolitics: A Guide to the Issues*, Santa Barbara.
- Claval P. (2001), "Cultures et civilisations : un essai d'interprétation géographique," *Géographie et cultures*, 40, p. 29-55.

¹⁹ For example, see Gehler, Rollinger 2022.

- Crépon M. (2008), *La culture de la peur*, 1, *Démocratie, identité, sécurité*, Paris.
- Crépon M. (2010), *La guerre de civilisations. La culture de la peur*, II, Paris.
- Defay A. (2005), *La géopolitique*, Paris.
- Formisano M., Fuhrer Th. (eds) (2014), *Decadence: "Decline and Fall" Or "Other Antiquity"?*, Heidelberg.
- Fukuyama F. (1992), *The End of History and the Last Man*, London.
- Gehler M., Rollinger R. (2022), *Empires to Be Remembered: Ancient Worlds through Modern Times*, Wiesbaden.
- Kroeber A.-L., Kluckhohn C. (1952), *Culture. A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions*, Harvard.
- Lacoste Y. (1976), *La géographie, ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre*, Paris.
- Lacoste Y. (2008), "La géopolitique : une histoire contrastée," *La revue pour l'histoire du CNRS*, 22/3 [https://doi.org/10.4000/histoire-cnrs.8082].
- Laloup J., Nélis J. (1955), *Culture et civilisation. Initiation à l'humanisme historique*, Paris-Tournai.
- Lana I. (1972), "Civilis, civiliter, civilitas in Tacito e in Svetonio: contributo alla storia del lessico politico romano nell'età imperiale," *AAT*, 106, p. 465-487.
- Lewis B. (1993), *Islam and the West*, New York-Oxford.
- Louis F. (2014), *Les grands théoriciens de la géopolitique*, Paris.
- Mackinder H. J. (1904), "The Geographical Pivot of History," *The Geographical Journal*, 23/4, p. 421-437.
- Marchand S., Ménard H., Sulaiman E., Berterrotière R., Adrien M., Charvet P. (2024), "Appien, *Histoire romaine* : Scipion Émilien et la chute de Carthage," *Humanités dans le texte* [https://odysseum.eduscol.education.fr/appien-histoire-romaine-scipion-emilien-et-la-chute-de-carthage].
- Niedermann J. (1941), *Kultur: Werden und Wandlungen des Begriffs und seiner Ersatzbegriffe von Cicero bis Herder*, Firenze.
- Novara A. (1986), "I. Cultura: Cicéron et l'origine de la métaphore latine," *BAGB*, 1, p. 51-66.
- Ratti S. (1996), "La *civilitas* et la *iustitia* dans le Bréviaire d'Eutrope : des qualités de famille ?," *REA*, 98/1-2, p. 197-205.
- Ratti S. (2002), "Évolution et signification de la *civilitas* au sixième siècle, d'Ennode à Cassiodore," *Antiquité et citoyenneté*, Besançon, p. 163-176.
- Ratzel F. (1901), *Der Lebensraum: eine biogeographische Studie*, Tübingen.
- Redden S. von (dir.) (2020), *Handbook of Ancient Afro-Eurasian Economies*, 1, *Contexts*, Berlin-Boston.
- Scivoletto N. (1970), "La *civilitas* del IV secolo e il significato del *Breviarium* di Eutropio," *GIF*, 22, p. 14-45.

Testart A. (2005), *Éléments de classification des sociétés*, Paris.

Testart A. (2021), *Principes de sociologie générale*, 1, *Rapports sociaux fondamentaux et formes de dépendance*, Paris.

Toynbee A. J. (1934-1961), *A Study of History*, Oxford.

Wallace-Hadrill A. (1982), "Civilis Princeps: between Citizen and King," *JRS*, 72, p. 32-48.

II- Perception, Representation and Reception of Foreigners in Ancient Egypt

It is significant that for the ancient Egyptians, the concept of foreigners was first of all motivated by their own identity based on theological, religious and geographical environment of their country. The characterization of Egypt's neighbors as forces of chaos, combined with an emphasis on the king's duty to subdue them, served to generate a strong sense of ethnic identity. The stereotyped pattern of Egyptians and foreigners was designed to consolidate the idea that Egypt was created out of the undifferentiated primeval water, so that it represented the ordered world against the surrounding world of chaos. Moreover, only in this ordered world of the Nile land could the Egyptians hope for a blessed afterlife. When a foreigner moved inside the Egyptian boundaries and got accustomed to the Egyptian way of life, he was regarded as Egyptian.

God-sanctioned Egypt-centrism

According to the Heliopolitan cosmology, the first mound that rose out of the primeval water was the place where the temple, the abode of the life-giving sun-god of Heliopolis, was built.²⁰ It is not difficult to see that the Egyptian cosmography took shape as mythical cosmogony. The Egyptians understood the creation of the world as an act of differentiation and division. The creator divided, thus the world came into being. Dichotomy and duality was the most important principle for the ancient Egyptian understanding of the world.²¹ In the mythical conflict between Horus and Seth, the idea of an entity composed of two antagonistic elements is vividly illustrated. Horus is regarded as the rightful successor of Osiris, while Seth represents the usurper of the throne. In the judgment hall of the gods, the right to the throne of Egypt was given to Horus, and Seth was put in charge of foreign countries. The Egyptians held an

²⁰ Hornung 1982, p. 253.

²¹ Zeidler 2005, p. 32.

anthropomorphic conception of cosmos and regarded their country as the centre of the universe.²² In this clear-cut and asymmetrical dichotomy, Egypt not only represented the centre of the universe but also order, normality and civilization. Foreign countries, on the other hand, symbolized not only the periphery, but also chaos, abnormality and wildness.²³

The prominence of foreigners in the Egyptian understanding of the world was due to the cosmological role they played. They were seen as the metaphorical embodiment of the undifferentiated chaos of non-existence that was a constant threat to the ordered world of Egypt. The chaotic non-existence beyond the Egyptian boundaries was a necessary component of Egyptian life, because it was a part of the creation itself.²⁴ This conceptual cosmography was deeply rooted in their religious thought and preconditioned by theology.²⁵ Egypt was thus an ordered area surrounded by lands of chaos. The Nile Valley and the Nile Delta were considered a divine realm which should be protected against nomadic and primitive peoples around Egypt who were thought to be barbarians. On the Egyptian political map of the world, Egypt was not a country beside many other countries, but the only country surrounded by dangerous areas of chaos. The peoples living around Egypt were not equals of the Egyptians but inferiors who constituted a permanent danger.

The Egyptians called their homeland the “Black Land”, which meant fertile country. On the lid of the sarcophagus of Wereshnefer from the 30th Dynasty appears a “map” of the cosmos (fig. 1). From this we get a clear idea of the ancient Egyptian concept of the world. The realm of the gods was located in the innermost sphere. It was surrounded by the Egyptian nomes, and then again by the regions settled by foreign peoples.²⁶ The difference between the distance of Egypt to the centre and that of foreign lands to the centre was not a matter of quantity but quality. From this point of view, it is easy for us to understand the ancient Egyptian idea that Egypt represented Maat (truth and order) and foreign countries stood for Isfet (falsehood and chaos).²⁷

²² Allen 2003, p. 28-29.

²³ Moers 2010, p. 169; Zeidler 2005, p. 33.

²⁴ Hornung 1982, p. 173-174.

²⁵ Quirke 2003. For the same purpose, ancient Egyptian art puts value on the conceptual and not the perceptual when illustrating actual events, people and places. The emphasis is placed on the concepts and not the way that objects and people are visually perceived, cf. Anthony 2017, p. 48.

²⁶ Keel 1997, p. 38.

²⁷ Assmann 1990, p. 160-161.



Figure 1: The sarcophagus of Wereshnefer from Saqqara, late 4th century BCE.
Credits/source: Metropolitan Museum New York, inv. 14.7.1a, b, online, public domain.



Figure 2: Victory stele of Thutmose III (15th century BCE), now in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, inv. 8013, www.ancient-egypt.co.uk.

According to the cosmogony described above, Egypt did not share borders with its neighbors, but was separated from them by frontiers defended by the gods.²⁸ On the so-called poetical stele of Thutmose III, there is a distinct litany of a triumph styled as a speech by Amun-Re to his son and champion, Thutmose III (fig. 2). Within the speech,

²⁸ Moers 2010, p. 171.

the god stressed his own role in causing the king's victory over his enemies and assuring his universal dominion. The king violently defeated his enemies: "the princes of all lands are gathered in your grasp", "you crushed the rebels and the traitors", and "you trod all foreign lands with joyful heart". Each of these assertions is paired with a clarification that Amun-Re himself had a hand in the outcome.²⁹ Following the verse prologue, the stele contains a poem that is an extension of the speech of Amun-Re divided into four-line stanzas that cover similar topics and reasserted the role which the god played in the king's victory.³⁰

On the stele of Amenhotep III from his memorial temple, the god Amun named four groups of people who resided on each cardinal direction: Nubians to the south, Asiatics to the north, Lybians to the west and Puntians to the east (**fig. 3**).³¹ Since Punt was far away and Egyptians seldom had contact with them, Nubians on the South, Asiatics on the Northeast and Libyans on the West became the representatives of dangerous outsiders of Egypt.³² As early as the 5th Dynasty, these three "races" of bound prisoners were represented in the mortuary temple of Sahure (**fig. 4**).³³ The conquest of the inhabitants of these regions symbolically ensured Egyptian dominion over the whole world. In reality, the so-called Nubians, Asiatics and Libyans were not the only ethnic groups known to the Egyptians, nor were they the only ethnonyms the Egyptians used for their neighbors, but they were often used as the representative groups of foreigners of the southern, northeastern and western regions respectively. The Egyptian dominion over them was interpreted as the divine will of the gods: "I [the god] gave to you [the king] valor and strength against all foreign countries. I made your authority and fear of you in every land, the dread of you as far as the four supports of heaven."³⁴ On the theological and symbolic dimension, direct conflict between Egyptians (*maat*) and foreigners (*isfet*) played an important role in Egyptians' conception of themselves.

²⁹ Lichtheim 1976, p. 36.

³⁰ Lichtheim 1976, p. 36-37.

³¹ Petrie 1897, p. 23-26 and pl. X-XII.

³² Leahy 1995, p. 226.

³³ Borchardt 1913, pl. 5.

³⁴ Sethe 1906, p. 612, lines 7-9. The association of the western regions with the sky is also present in Spell PT 570: "O, local gods, indestructible stars, which traverse the land of Tjehnu (Lybia)." Cf. Sethe 1908, p. 295. In the Qadesh Battle Inscriptions, Ramses II spoke of the enemies gathered against Egypt, including the Hittites. The word Aamu was used as an umbrella term for all the northern peoples: "What is your opinion of these Aamu, O Amun, wretches who are ignorant of god?" See Kitchen 1996, *ad loc.*

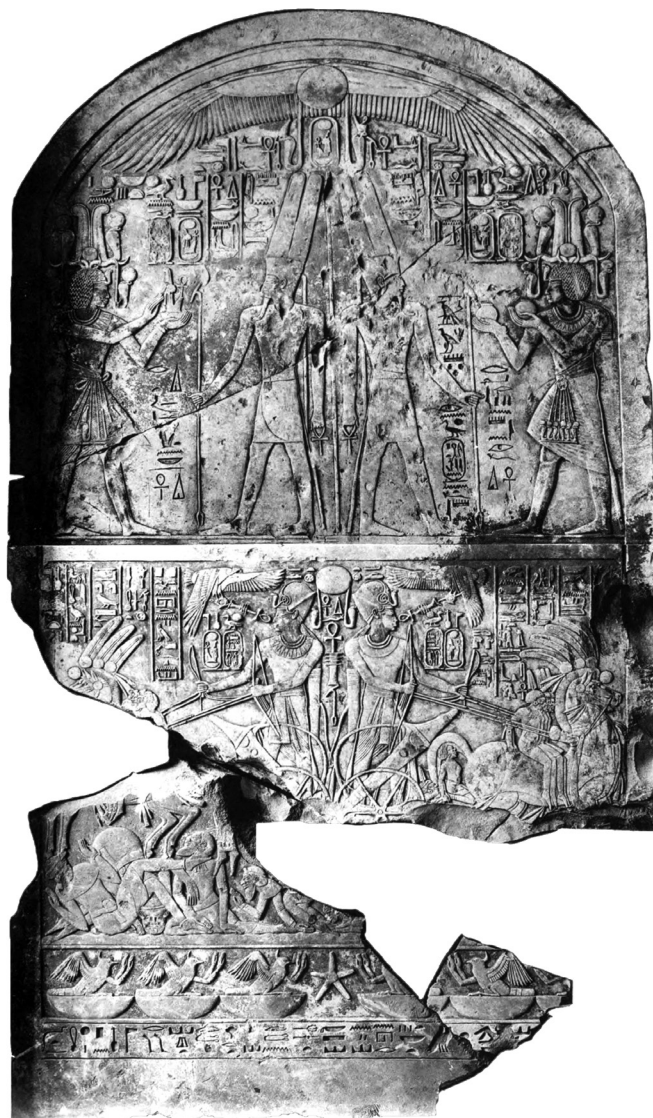


Figure 3: Fragmentary limestone victory stele of Amenhotep III (1388-1350 BCE) from his memorial temple, reused in the Temple of Merenptah.

Credits/source: Egyptian Museum in Cairo, JE 31409, after W. M. F. Petrie, *Six Temples at Thebes*, London, 1897, pl. X, universität bibliothek Heidelberg, <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.4200#0048>.

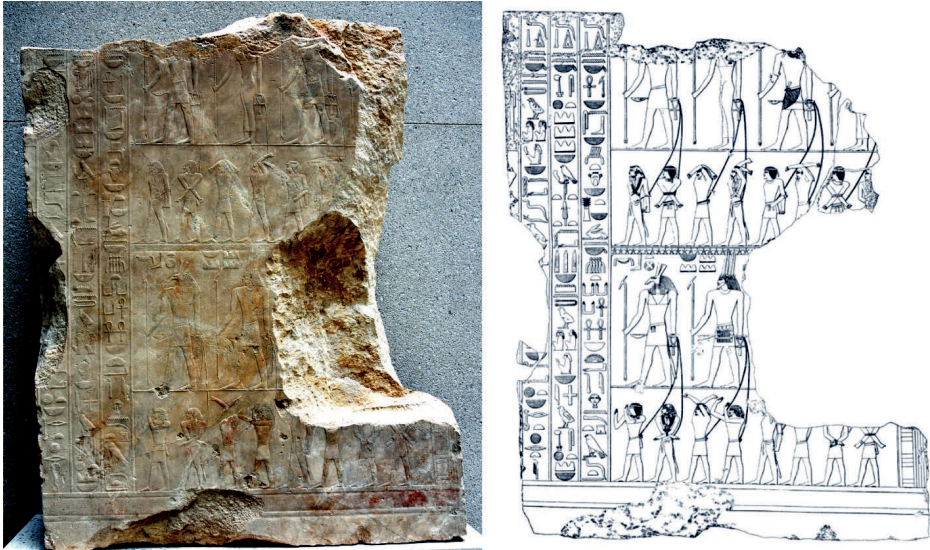


Figure 4: Relief from the mortuary temple of Sahure, ca 2440 BCE. Credits/source: Neues Museum Berlin, AM 21782, Wikimedia Commons, Neuroforever, CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Drawing: Borchardt 1913, pl. 5.

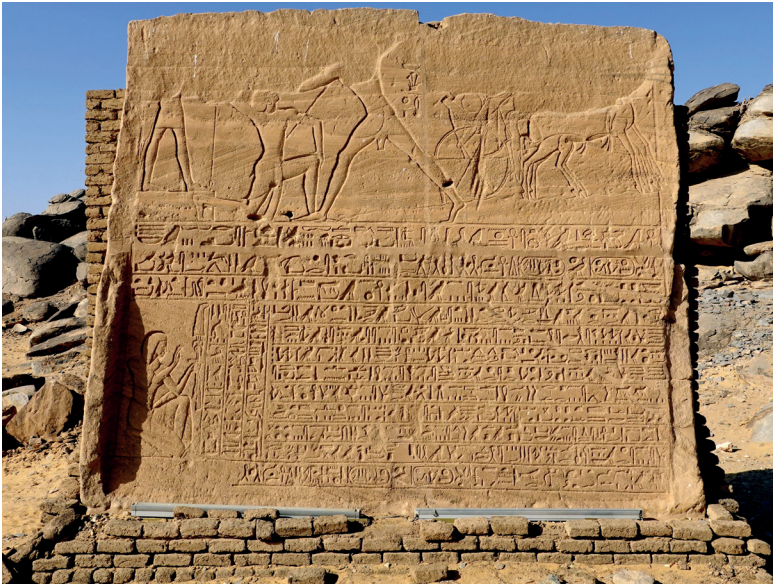


Figure 5: Stele of Seti I (ca 1294-1279 BCE) at Qasr Ibrim, moved at the construction of the Assouan barrage. Credits/source: Wikimedia Commons, Olaf Tausch, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0.

The act of 'othering' of foreigners is also reflected in the way the Egyptians depicted and discussed foreigners, especially in triumphal contexts where the 'us vs them' dichotomy is at its most visible. As part of the broader triumphal motif, foreigners embodied the qualities of helplessness, cowardice, weakness, and futility. They were also often portrayed as backward and strange, with stereotypical features highlighting their difference from the Egyptian norm. Foreigners as enemies of Egypt were often rendered in disordered postures, naked or nearly naked, and sometimes with their faces directly forward out of the scene.³⁵ On the stele of Seti I at Qasr Ibrim (fig. 5), the king's dominion over the entire world was expressed by naming the symbolic North and South: "His southern boundary is at the region of the wind, the northern (boundary), it penetrates the border of the sea."³⁶

The neighbors of Egypt were sometimes called the "Nine Bows" (*pesdjet*).³⁷ The word was written literally with a bow followed by, or placed over, nine vertical signs standing for "nine". The Egyptians used the numeral 3 to signify plurality and three times three indicated the totality. In this regard, the "Nine Bows" had complementary meaning and referred to the spatially endless and innumerable foreign lands.³⁸ The bow was apparently considered a quintessential foreign weapon, although the Egyptians themselves used it extensively. The bow was normally a symbol of power, but when it was broken, it became a symbol of defeat. As a construct, the Nine Bows appeared first in the Early Dynastic Period but became a predominant theme in the New Kingdom royal expression of power.³⁹ This symbolism was demonstrated on a scene where Ramses II attacked a city in Western Asia. The king smote the ruler with his bow, and the conquered ruler snapped his bow to show he was defeated.⁴⁰ The Nine Bows could also be depicted graphically as being trampled by the king, or depicted on the footstool of the king.⁴¹ Each time the king put his feet on the footstool, he was symbolically conquering his enemies. Sometimes bound enemies with bows were depicted on the

³⁵ Vogel 2022, p. 250.

³⁶ Kitchen 1975, p. 99, line 11 and Petrie 1897, pl. X-XII.

³⁷ O'Connor 2003, p. 155. In the Predynastic Period the Nine Bows seem to have been native enemies rather than foreigners. We see the evolution of a term through ages.

³⁸ O'Connor 2003, p. 155-156.

³⁹ Uphill 1966, p. 393-395.

⁴⁰ Keel 1977, pl. 132a.

⁴¹ Keel 1977, pl. 341-342a.

soles of the sandals. Every time the king put on his sandals, he symbolically trampled his enemies. Through the act of sitting down or walking, the king was symbolically crushing his enemies and maintaining order both inside Egypt and over the whole cosmos.⁴²

In the royal rhetoric expression of power, foreigners were humiliated and described as having bad characters. The vocabulary of humiliation concentrated on the degradation of foreigners for the purpose of magnifying the power of the Egyptian king who was depicted as righteously defeating chaos and maintaining justice.⁴³ The most common adjective that modified the names of the foreigners was *ḥsj*, which is usually translated as “vile”.⁴⁴ On a stele of Merneptah, the Libyans were described as “vile/wretched”.⁴⁵ In the great Karnak inscription of Merneptah, Egyptian army was described as returning with their asses “laden with the uncircumcised phalli of the enemy of Libya”.⁴⁶ We might get a vague hint from this sentence why the Libyans were regarded as vile. According to Lorton’s study, a more accurate translation of *ḥsj* should be “defeated” rather than “vile” or “wretched” as was previously thought.⁴⁷ In my opinion, Lorton’s argument is quite reasonable. His conclusions are important in better understanding the ancient Egyptian attitude toward the foreigners. The neighbors were dangerous, therefore they must be conquered and kept in the servile state.⁴⁸ In

⁴² Anthony 2017, p. 49.

⁴³ Janzen 2013, p. 225-250.

⁴⁴ “Vile” is a term which is used by Manetho when he described the Hyksos. Cf. Redford 1992, p. 98-100.

⁴⁵ Lichtheim 1976, p. 74-75.

⁴⁶ Breasted 1906, p. 247. In the inscriptions of Ramses II at Medinet Habu, the Westerners were compared to women: “I defeated the land of Tjemeh; their seed does not exist. The Meshwesh writhe through the fear of me”. The word “writhe” is determined by the sign of a pregnant woman referring to her writhing because of birth pangs. The Hittites were compared to the crocodile. A stele of Thutmose III from Buhen described Tjehnu submitting to the king like dogs do. In one text, the Egyptian king appeared as a falcon who caught foreigners as small birds. The king was even described as threshing the foreigners as straw. Cf. Lichtheim 1975, p. 64-65. Loprieno 1988, p. 24-25. Sethe 1906, p. 809. Teeter 2002, p. 268-269.

⁴⁷ Lorton 1973, p. 65-70.

⁴⁸ Besides *ḥsj*, other adjectives were also used. In the inscriptions of Ramses III’s second war against the Meshwesh and Tjemeh, these two groups were described with the adjectives “miserable”, “languishing” and “weak”. Mereyey, ruler of the Rebu, was called “an abomination” whose “name is cursed.” See Kitchen 1983, p. 63. Lesko and Lesko 2002, p. 369 and 388.

the visual representation, the Nubian prisoners had their arms tied behind their backs, exactly as shown in the determinative for the hieroglyphic word for “Nubian”, “rebel” and “enemy”.⁴⁹ Graffiti from Gebel Sheikh Suleiman in Sudan, which were as old as 3000 BCE, show a prisoner with his arms bound behind his back with a bow (fig. 6). The name for the land of the Nubians was written in Egyptian “Ta-Sety” (land of the bow). In the opinion of the Egyptians, the Nubians did not deserve respect.

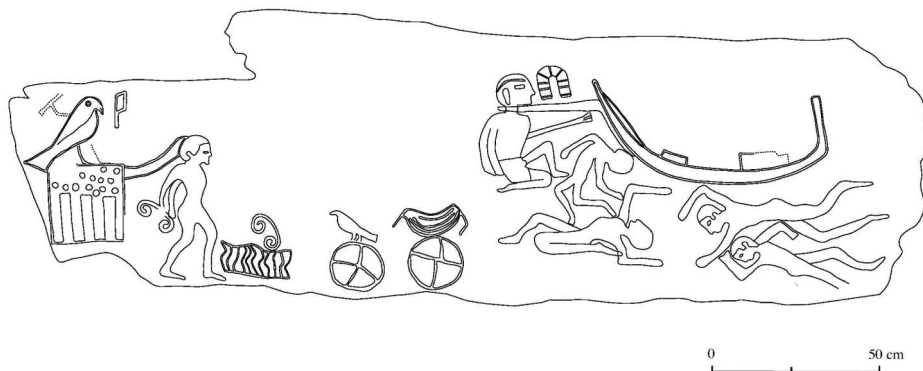
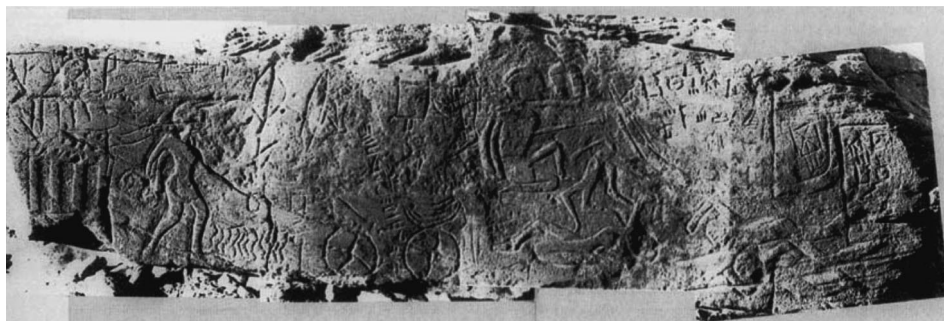


Figure 6: Graffiti from Gebel Sheikh Suleiman in Sudan, ca 3000 BCE.

Credits/source: after C. Somaglino, P. Tallet, “Gebel Sheikh Suleiman: a First Dynasty Relief after all...”, *Archéo-Nil*, 25, 2015, p. 123-134, fig. 3, 5.

Although foreigners were regarded as vile, they represented a necessary element in the ancient Egyptian world view. The Egyptians could not conquer or annihilate the foreigners once for all. In the royal depictions, foreigners were usually associated with negative language and chaotic symbolism. It is therefore necessary for the Egyptian king

⁴⁹ Gardiner 1964, p. 443, A13.

to use every conceivable method, including armed forces, magic and ritual, to protect his country against these chaotic forces.⁵⁰ In the Egyptian world view, the boundaries between the Egyptians and the foreigners were not established by men but by the gods. It was one of the most important responsibilities of the king to uphold them. At the same time, an invasion of the foreigners represented an offense against the gods and meant the destruction of the established order.

In a literary text in which the chaotic situation in Egypt was described, the sage complained that the world had become topsy-turvy since the foreigners had become “people” like the Egyptians.⁵¹ Social dissolution and the resulting disorder was frequently associated with the foreigners immigrating to Egypt. Harsh treatment or even killing those wretched foreigners was regarded as the prerequisite for the reunification of Egypt.⁵² This idea was most clearly expressed in the Prophecies of Neferti. The reestablishment of order was described with the following words:

Asiatics will fall to his slaughter; Libyans will fall to his flame; rebels are destined for his rage and the hostile for his awe. The Uraeus at his forehead pacifies the hostile for him. The walls of the ruler are built, Asiatics will not be allowed into Egypt. They will ask for water as a supplicant to allow their flocks to drink. Maat will return to its seat, Isfet is driven out.⁵³

The forts built at the Second Cataract illustrate vividly the ancient Egyptian royal concept of upholding Maat by protecting the borders. The massive walls had both real defensive capabilities and the character of dramatically materializing Egyptian power. The names given to these fortifications also indicated the propagandistic nature of the forts, for they were called “repelling the Medjay”, “curbing the countries”, “warding off the Bows”.⁵⁴ The so-called Boundary Stele set up at Semna near the border between Egypt and Nubia by Sesostri III shows clearly how the Egyptians understood foreign relations in a cosmographical view point.⁵⁵ On the representation in New Kingdom temples, Nubians were often shown being subdued by the king wearing his white crown on the southern wing of the temple pylons, sometimes bound with the stems of the

⁵⁰ Assmann 1983, p. 3.

⁵¹ Lichtheim 1975, p. 151-152.

⁵² Cf. Burkert 1996, p. 26.

⁵³ Lichtheim 1976, p. 143-144.

⁵⁴ Smith 2003, p. 76.

⁵⁵ Assmann 1989, p. 109.

heraldic flower of the south. Asiatics, in contrast, were subdued by the king in his red crown on the northern wing of pylons, bound by papyrus stems.⁵⁶ So vital was this motif that a great deal of the space on temple walls was devoted to the depiction of captives, functioning not only as statements of political power but also as apotropaic protection for the temple. Such depictions were not limited to the walls of the temples, but also appeared on entryways, floors, staircases, throne daises, and other architectural features.⁵⁷

It is therefore understandable, that even if foreigners were clearly better known and more accurately distinguished in the New Kingdom, generic representations became increasingly formulaic and stereotyped, depicting Libyans, Nubians, and Asiatics almost as caricatures. As in earlier periods, the generic royal contexts in which foreigners appear include smiting and trampling scenes, scenes of foreign captives bound and led by ropes, and bound foreigners on the bases of royal statues.⁵⁸ The kings of the Ramesside Period called the invading Libyans bringers of evil to Egypt. When Ramses III constructed a temple which was dedicated to Thot at Hermopolis, a surrounding wall was built in order to “repel the Tjehnu who violate their boundary since of old; [their] hearts are filled with wrongdoing, and possessing perversity.”⁵⁹ It is evident, that fixed borders were not simply a means of political control, but may also be an ideological definition of the limits of social or even cosmic order.⁶⁰ It was the utmost responsibility of the reigning king to keep foreigners outside of the borders of Egypt. To use the ancient Egyptian expression, it was an act of upholding Maat.⁶¹ According to the Egyptian royal ideology, the purpose of record-keeping was to celebrate the deeds of the king who was the only acceptable subject of historiography.⁶² If we take Geertz’s definition of ideology as being a schematic image of social order, ideology in this loose sense is a cognizant manner of presenting events both real and imagined.⁶³

⁵⁶ Roth 2015, p. 160.

⁵⁷ Janzen 2013, p. 318.

⁵⁸ Roth 2015, p. 167.

⁵⁹ Assmann, 2002, p. 151-152.

⁶⁰ Eyre 1990, p. 134-135.

⁶¹ Assmann 1983, p. 3

⁶² Hasel 1998, p. 16.

⁶³ Geertz 1964, p. 63.

Foreigners were dangerous and threatening. Therefore they must be kept in vanquished state. Only in their defeated state can the orderly situation of Egypt be secured. The king must keep chaos away from Egypt by conquering the foreigners. Thus political violence of the king was legitimized. The idea that foreigners as the chaotic other must be subjugated for the protection of Egypt is most evident in the ubiquitous scenes of the “smiting of the enemy”. The earliest known example of the scene of the smiting of the enemy dates to the late Naqada I period and the most famous one is the Narmer Palette (**fig. 7**).⁶⁴ In the scene of the smiting of the enemy, the king grabs the enemy/enemies by the hair, lifts his mace-head to smite him/them. This action, described as “the arm of my majesty is lifted to ward off evil”, was often performed in the presence of a god, who sanctioned the act and guaranteed a victorious outcome.⁶⁵ According to the text accompanying the scene of the smiting of the enemy by Ramses III at Medinet Habu (**fig. 8**), the king might give breath to them if he wishes or kill them if he likes to. The underlying explanatory formula is easy to understand: the king might actually kill his enemy.⁶⁶ Wilkinson interprets the development of this theme as follows: “The smiting scene, which was doubtless originally based on the actual execution, seems to have come to be a purely representational device.”⁶⁷ This argument seems too absolute to be reasonable. The line between actual and ritual representation is fluid and dependent on the specific situation and the individuals involved. The motif endured through the centuries to the last Egyptian temples. Even the Roman emperors Domitian and Trajan were shown incongruously smiting foreigners on the exterior walls of Esna temple (**fig. 9-10**).⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Dreyer *et al.* 1998, figures 12 and 13.

⁶⁵ Assmann 1995, p. 58-60.

⁶⁶ Moers 2010, p. 176.

⁶⁷ Wilkinson 1994, p. 194.

⁶⁸ Roth 2015, p. 157.



Figure 7: The two faces of the Narmer cosmetic Palette (Great Hierakonpolis Palette), 31st century BCE. Credits/source: Egyptian Museum in Cairo, CG 14716, Wikimedia Commons, domaine public.

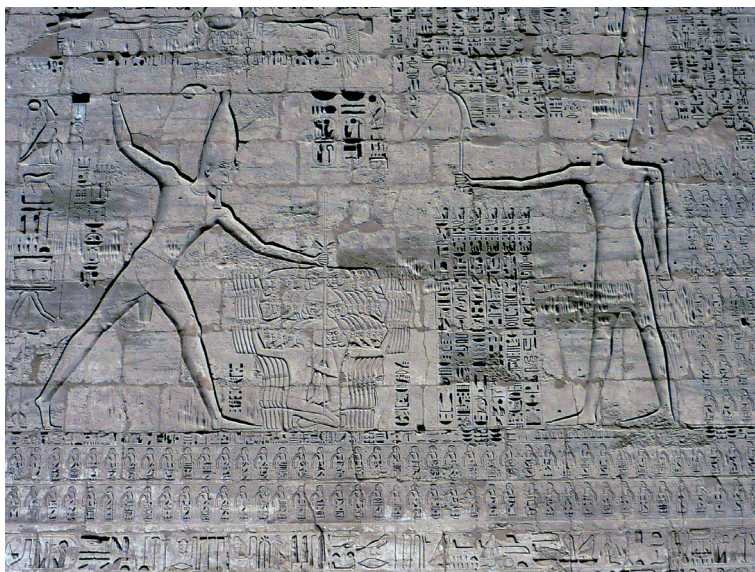


Figure 8: Relief of Ramses III (ca 1184-1153) smashing enemies in front of Ra, on his mortuary temple at Medinet Habu. Credits/source: Rémi, CC BY-SA 3.0.

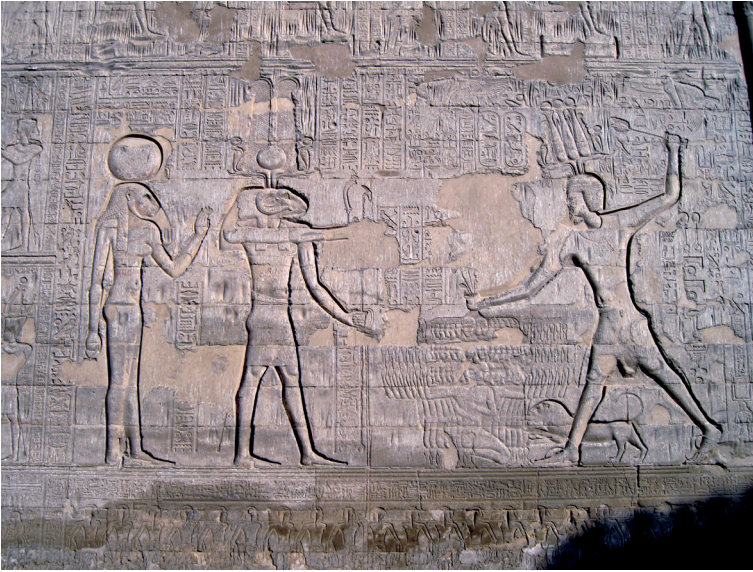


Figure 9: Domitian on a wall of the pronaos of the Khnum temple at Esna, Roman period.
Credits/source: Wikimedia Commons, Olaf Tausch, CC BY-SA 3.0.



Figure 10: Trajan on a wall of the pronaos of the Khnum temple at Esna, Roman period.
Credits/source: Wikimedia Commons, Olaf Tausch, CC BY-SA 3.0.

Defeating invading foreigners at the borders alone was not enough. Since foreigners represented chaos, they must be bounded within the constraints of Maat. On a depiction of the throne dais, this concept was made explicit by putting the figures of foreigners within the actual hieroglyphic symbol for Maat.⁶⁹ Images of captive foreigners on the dais, throne and royal accoutrements all served this purpose. Thutmose IV in sphinx form trampled foreigners on a once gilded throne arm. There are also sandals, footstools, canes and chariots with images of captive foreigners from the tomb of Tutankhamun.⁷⁰ On one of Tutankhamun's chariots, images of bound and subdued foreigners were embossed on the inner surfaces of the car, so that the king's body leaned against them as he rode. Images of Egypt's enemies were placed on the upper face of the soles of the king's sandals, directly under his bare feet, and not on the underside, where they would be trampled into the dirt.⁷¹ These enemies were even compared to the animals in the desert which the king hunted and killed.⁷²

Moreover, the ritual of destroying evil foreigners was carried out by the reigning king. As early as the 3rd Dynasty, the names of the rulers of neighboring lands were written on red pots or figurines and then smashed to pieces. The following text describes the procedure of such execration rite:

All Nubians, all soldiers, all messengers, all allies, and all confederates of all foreign lands who will rebel, who are in the land of Wawat, Satiu, Irtjet, Iam, Ianekh, Maset, Ka'u, who will rebel, who will plot, who will fight, who will talk of fighting, or who will talk of rebelling against Upper and Lower Egypt [will be destroyed] for all time.⁷³

Rebellion was thought to be the basic character of the foreigners that prophylactic magic was practiced against them throughout the entire span of Egyptian history.⁷⁴ The texts of these rites could be inscribed on pots or figurines of foreigners. The figurine could be of wood, stone, wax, or alabaster, and a curse was pronounced before the pots

⁶⁹ Anthony 2017, p. 50.

⁷⁰ Anthony 2017, p. 47.

⁷¹ Littauer, Crouwel 1985, pl. 15-21.

⁷² Otto 1999, p. 32-33.

⁷³ Some figurines are in the shape of bound foreigners and some figurines are bound before or during the ritual for examples from Saqqara reveal holes for binding the arms or suspending the figurines. Cf. Ritner 1993, p. 143.

⁷⁴ Muhlestein 2003, p. 328.

and figurines were broken, disfigured and burnt.⁷⁵ The curses usually listed the names of the chiefs from specific places and their subjects. They often included a warning against those “who may rebel, who may plot, who may fight, who may think of fighting and who may think of rebelling”.⁷⁶

Archaeological evidence from the Middle Kingdom fortress of Mirgissa shows that execration rites could be carried out to the extreme. Archaeologists found there a fire pit or furnace which was used specifically for incinerating the pots on which the names of the enemies were written or the figurines of enemies depicted. Heads, feet or eyes of these figurines are missing. Of all the interments, there are 197 broken inscribed red vessels, 439 broken non-inscribed red vases, 346 mud figurines, three limestone figurines of bound prisoners, and the head of a limestone figurine. Most importantly, the presence of a human skull resting atop a broken pot could be interpreted as clear evidence of ritual sacrifice.⁷⁷ According to Alan R. Schulman, ceremonial execution was carried out in a specific temple at a specific point in time.⁷⁸ But William A. Ward was against this argument. In his opinion, one might expect this of the Assyrians, but not Egyptians: “This just does not seem to me to be part of the Egyptian national character, nor is there reason to believe they thought their gods required human sacrifice in any context.”⁷⁹ Ward could not provide any persuasive evidence for his argument. Alfred Grimm has attempted to explain the function of the so-called “enigmatic wooden object” found on the southern side of the pyramid of Cheops at Giza. Using evidence from the inscriptions of Amenhotep II and the army general Ahmose under Thutmose I,⁸⁰ he comes to the conclusion that the wooden cage was really used to put the foreign captive inside and then the cage was buried.⁸¹ In this respect, we might compare a textual composition known as the Triumphal Poem of Year 11 on the north wing of the first pylon at Medinet Habu. The text commemorated the victory of Ramses III during the second Libyan war. The extraordinary point is that, instead

⁷⁵ Janzen 2013, p. 18. Redford 1992, p. 87.

⁷⁶ Sethe 1926, p. 72-73.

⁷⁷ Ritner 1993, p. 154-157.

⁷⁸ Schulman 1988, p. 41-42.

⁷⁹ Ward 1992, p. 153.

⁸⁰ Grimm 1987, p. 202.

⁸¹ Grimm 1987, p. 204.

of showing mercy, Ramses III slayed the disarmed Libyan army.⁸² The killing of the surrendered and defenceless enemies was not meant to display an act of indiscriminate brutality but as a preemptive strike.⁸³

Identity determined by geographical and religious background

The Greek historian Herodotus reported that Nechos, a king of the 26th Dynasty, planned to link the Nile by canal to the Red Sea. But an oracle told him that all his work would only benefit the barbarian. The prophecy alluded to the fact that the canal would be completed by the Persian king Darius. Herodotus asserted further that the Egyptians referred to all those who did not speak their tongue as “barbarians”.⁸⁴ As a matter of fact, the Greeks divided the inhabitants of the known world into Hellenes and “barbarians” according to their language. Those who spoke Greek were Hellenes and those whose language was not Greek were barbarians. It is interesting and remarkable that Herodotus believed that the Egyptians considered the language as the most important criterion in differentiating peoples. But at another place in his book, Herodotus remarked that whoever was nourished by the waters of the Nile was regarded as an Egyptian.⁸⁵

The geography of Egypt and the characteristics of the Nile had great influence in defining the identity of the Egyptians. First, the Nile’s flow from the south to the north determined the orientation. The Nile originates in the south, and the Egyptian word for “south” is related to the word meaning “awaken”. The Nile divides into several branches in the north and forms the marshy delta, for which the Egyptians used a word meaning “immersed”.⁸⁶ To go south was to go upstream and to go north was to go downstream.⁸⁷ For the Egyptians, it was only right for a river to flow from the south to the north. As a result, the Egyptians of the New Kingdom who saw the Euphrates flowing from the north to the south called it the “inverted river”. The agricultural cycle of western Asia

⁸² Arpagaus 2011, p. 95.

⁸³ Arpagaus 2011, p. 102.

⁸⁴ Herodotus, II, 158.

⁸⁵ Schneider 2010, p. 147.

⁸⁶ Allen 2003, p. 23.

⁸⁷ The word meaning going downstream has the determinative of a ship without sail, because the direction of the river is northwards, while the word meaning upstream has the determinative of a ship with full sail, because one can take the advantage of the northern wind to sail against the flow.

as well was viewed as “inverted” to what was normal in Egypt. In a royal hymn of the Ramesside Period, the author said that the Asiatics were “those who plough in summer and reap in winter”⁸⁸

The Egyptians lived primarily in the arable land along both sides of the Nile and in the Delta, which were inundated once a year. They called their country “Kmt” meaning “black (fertile) land”. The hieroglyphic word for “Egypt” was written with the determinative for a town. This indicates that the Egyptians considered their part of the world as cultivated and ordered and regarded themselves as civilized. On either side of the “black land” lay the desert. The Egyptians called the desert and mountainous area “red land” which was determined by a hieroglyphic sign of three hills.⁸⁹ This word was used to designate all the countries outside Egypt no matter they were flat or hilly. Obviously, foreigners came from a variety of environments, some from deserts or hill lands, and others from inland valleys or river deltas. The Egyptian Nile Valley’s ideal environment contrasted to the harsh, non-ideal environments of the foreign peoples.⁹⁰

Inspired directly from Herodotus, the modern conception of collective identities, as defined by Friedrich Heckmann, is based on the belief in a common origin, shared features of culture, history, and current experience.⁹¹ Richard Jenkins is of the opinion that ethnicity is a social construction, rooted in social interaction, with a fluidity linked to culture or social situations.⁹² Finally, Jan Assmann emphasizes three elements that played an important role in forming and strengthening Egyptian identity. First, ancient Egyptians had begun settled life from a very early age. Second, the climate and environmental characteristics had close relations to the Egyptian concept of afterlife in which one’s local god took a dominating position. Third, the relatively stable political system provided a solid frame in which everyone tried to have his ideal place with the favor of the king.⁹³

It is true that the Nile and the fertile land made it possible for and encouraged the Egyptians to enjoy settled life from an early date. This continuous settled life had two very important results. Firstly, each village or town had its own gods. These so-

⁸⁸ Liverani 1990, p. 37.

⁸⁹ Gardiner 1964, p. 488, N25.

⁹⁰ O’Connor 2003, p. 155.

⁹¹ Heckmann 1992, p. 30 and 46.

⁹² Jenkins 2001, p. 4825-4827.

⁹³ Assmann 1996, p. 79-80.

called local gods were in charge of every aspect of the life of the villagers. Secondly, the Egyptians developed the idea of afterlife from very early on. The expensive preparation for the tomb (including the decoration of the tomb and the equipment in the tomb) and the complicated ceremonies (both mortuary and memorial) were closely related to the hometown and townsfolk. Ancient Egypt fulfilled all the requirements of what is to be called a “tight society”.⁹⁴ Besides the local gods and the belief on afterlife, there was the characteristic social structure which Assmann calls “vertical solidarity” and “connective justice”. With the phrase vertical solidarity, Assmann refers to the Egyptian hierarchical society in which the king was both lawgiver and the highest judge. With connective justice, Assmann describes the Egyptian axiom of “act for each other”, “act for him who has acted”.⁹⁵ According to the interpretation of Assmann, membership in ancient Egypt was not simply a matter of fact, but the product of cultural effort of the society. Egypt was a tight society both in the environmental and in the cultural aspect.

We may explain the two points mentioned above with the Story of Sinuhe as the best example. This literary work is generally believed to have been composed shortly after the end of the reign of Sesostris I. The story was introduced as the funerary autobiography of Sinuhe. On the way back from an expedition, Sinuhe overheard the news of the sudden death of Amenemhet I. Being afraid of getting involved, he fled to Retjenu in Palestine. The ruler of Retjenu gave him refuge and married his eldest daughter to Sinuhe and gave him the best pieces of land. In his old age, Sinuhe became a rich man of numerous children and grandchildren.

But exactly at this moment, he began to think of his afterlife. Sinuhe wrote a letter to the reigning king to ask for permission to return. In his answer to Sinuhe, Sesostris I exonerated Sinuhe from blame for his flight and summoned him back to Egypt. Sinuhe gave up all his fortune to his children and started his homecoming journey all alone. Finally back in the royal court, Sinuhe was reestablished and reborn as a true Egyptian. The story concluded as he was buried in the royal necropolis. In the story we see the conflict between Egyptian and foreign values.⁹⁶ Sinuhe’s homesickness was caused by his anxiety about his afterlife.

⁹⁴ Pelto 1968, p. 37-40.

⁹⁵ Assmann 1996, p. 80.

⁹⁶ Baines 1982, p. 31-44.

Would that my body were young again! For old age has come, feebleness has overtaken me. My eyes are heavy, my arms weak, my legs fail to follow. The heart is weary, death is near. May I be conducted to the city of eternity [necropolis]⁹⁷

According to the Egyptian belief on afterlife, resurrection and the eternal second life was only possible when one built one's tomb at his hometown and got buried in accordance with age old tradition. By building his tomb in his hometown, the deceased hoped that he would be under the protection of his city god.⁹⁸ On the other side, he might rely on his relatives and friends to keep funerary cult for him, or at least make memorial offering during festivals.⁹⁹ The expensive preparation for the afterlife could only be financed with the patronage of the king.¹⁰⁰ The Story of Sinuhe claims that for an Egyptian, he might live in a foreign country, but he might on no account die there. "Only as death comes near, Sinuhe suddenly realizes the horror of a foreign country."¹⁰¹

The fact that an Egyptian who was in a foreign country might feel lonely and endure hostility was best shown in the Story of Sinuhe. When a stranger wanted to combat with him, Sinuhe described his feeling as follows:

I am indeed like a stray bull in a strange herd, whom the bull of the herd charges, whom the longhorn attacks. [...] No Asiatic makes friends with a Delta-man [Egyptian]. And what would make papyrus [Egypt] cleave to the mountain [foreign country]?¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Lichtheim 1975, p. 229.

⁹⁸ In the hieroglyphic script, necropolis means exactly "under the (protection of the god)". In another word, necropolis is a divine place, cf. Assmann 1996, p. 91.

⁹⁹ Assmann 1996, p. 89.

¹⁰⁰ An official from the 6th Dynasty described in his autobiography, how he managed to achieve his tomb equipment: "When I begged of the majesty of my lord that there be brought for me a sarcophagus of white stone from Tura, his majesty had a royal seal-bearer cross over with a company of sailors under his command, to bring me this sarcophagus from Tura. It came with him in a great barge of the court, together with its lid, a doorway, lintel, two doorjambs and a libation-table. Never before had the like been done for any servant, but I was excellent in his majesty's heart; I was rooted in his majesty's heart; his majesty's heart was filled with me." Cf. Lichtheim 1975, p. 19.

¹⁰¹ In the demotic text about the goddess who left Egypt for Nubia, the god of wisdom Thot tried to persuade her to return to Egypt. Thot reminded the goddess of the fact that "there is nothing one likes more than his birth place." This reminds us exactly of the argument the king gave in the Story of Sinuhe, cf. Assmann 1996, p. 87-88. In the autobiography of Djau from Abydos, we find the following sentences: "I have cut my tomb in the nome of Abydos for the love of my nome where I was born." See Sethe 1933, p. 118. Cf. Assmann 1996, p. 86-87.

¹⁰² Lichtheim 1975, p. 227.

In his letter to Sinuhe, Sesostris I pointed out the fact that an Egyptian should not roam in a foreign country, even less when he arrived at an old age: “You have lost a man’s strength. Think of the day of burial, the passing into reverendness (afterlife).”¹⁰³ The horror of a foreign country meant no resurrection. This was the most terrible thing an Egyptian could imagine. In Egyptian tomb inscriptions, the deceased usually asked the living to visit his tomb and read his autobiography and then pay homage for him. The deceased justified his request with the following words:

Since you love life and hate death, may the city-god praise you, may you not taste the horror of a foreign country but be buried in your own tombs and bequeath your position to your children.¹⁰⁴

In the Instruction of Ani, the father warned his son:

Do not go out of your house, without knowing your place of rest (tomb). Let your chosen place be known, remember it and know it; set it before you as the path to take, if you are straight you find it. Furnish your station in the valley, the grave that shall conceal your corpse. Set it before you as your concern, a thing that matters in your eyes. Emulate the great departed, who are at rest within their tombs. No blame accrues to him who does it.¹⁰⁵

In the letter of Sesostris I to Sinuhe, the procedure of mummification of the corpse and the following burial and accompanying ceremonies were vividly described:

A night is made for you with ointments and wrappings from the hand of Tait [goddess of weaving]. A funeral procession is made for you on the day of burial; the mummy case is of gold, its head of lapis lazuli. The sky is above you as you lie in the hearse, oxen drawing you, musicians going before you. The dance of the mww-dancers is done at the door of your tomb. The offering-list is read to you; sacrifice is made before your offering-stone. Your tomb-pillars, made of white stone, are among [those of] the royal children.¹⁰⁶

Thereafter, the primitive way of dealing with the corpse by the foreigners was mentioned briefly:

¹⁰³ Lichtheim 1975, p. 229.

¹⁰⁴ Sethe 1906, p. 965-966.

¹⁰⁵ Lichtheim 1976, p. 138. The 22nd Chapter of the Instruction of Papyrus Insinger was called “The teaching not to abandon the place in which you can live.” See Lichtheim 1980, p. 207.

¹⁰⁶ Lichtheim 1975, p. 229-230.

You shall not die abroad! Not shall Asiatics inter you. You shall not be wrapped in the skin of a ram to serve as your coffin. Too long a roaming of the earth! Think of your corpse, come back!¹⁰⁷

The horror of a foreign country was both natural and cultural.¹⁰⁸ The nomadic life style was an “inverted” form of civilized existence in every respect: it lacked the necessary institutions of the civilization: fixed shelter, agriculture, descent clothing and make-up, cuisine and proper burial practices.¹⁰⁹

When Sinuhe arrived at the audience hall, the king reminded him once again of the difference between the Egyptian burial custom and that of a foreign country: “You have aged, have reached old age. It is no small matter that your corpse will be interred without being escorted by Bowmen [Asiatics].”¹¹⁰ The king introduced Sinuhe to his queen and his royal children with the following words: “Here is Sinuhe, come as an Asiatic, a product of nomads!” The queen uttered a loud cry and the princesses shrieked all together, because they did not recognize Sinuhe. They wondered: “Is it really he?”¹¹¹

Sinuhe described the house in which he was accommodated back in Egypt as follows:

I was put in the house of a prince. In it were luxuries: a bathroom and mirrors. In it were riches from the treasury; clothes of royal linen, myrrh, and the choice perfume of the king and of his favorite courtiers were in every room.¹¹²

He then reported how he was transformed from a nomadic (barbaric) to a settled (civilized) person:

Years were removed from my body. I was shaved; my hair was combed. Thus was my squalor returned to the foreign land, my dress to the Sand-farers. I was clothed in fine

¹⁰⁷ Lichtheim 1975, p. 230. The earliest example of using inversion as a rhetoric figure in depicting the difference between a city-dweller (civilian) and a nomad (barbarian) might be from Mesopotamia. A city dweller of about 4 000 years ago described his perception of a nomad as follows: “He is dressed in sheep skins; he lives in tents in wind and rain; he does not offer sacrifices. Armed (vagabond) in the steppe, he digs up truffles and is restless. He eats raw meat, lives his life without a home, and, when he dies, he is not buried according to proper rituals.” Cf. Van de Mierop 1997, p. 43.

¹⁰⁸ Those who can fully accept Egyptian norms and achieve complete acculturation were seemingly relatively easily assimilated into Egyptian society. Cf. O’Connor 2003, p. 170.

¹⁰⁹ Cooper 1983, p. 31.

¹¹⁰ Lichtheim 1975, p. 231-232.

¹¹¹ Lichtheim 1975, p. 232.

¹¹² Lichtheim 1975, p. 232-233.

linen; I was anointed with fine oil. I slept on a bed. I had returned the sand to those who dwell in it, the tree-oil to those who grease themselves with it.¹¹³

Obviously, to dress properly and sleep in a bed was not only a life style but a fundamental symbol of civilization.¹¹⁴ From Retjenu back to Egypt, it was not a change in location, but a return from an inverted style of living to normality.

At the end of the story, Sinuhe gave a very detailed and vivid description of the on-going preparation of his tomb and tomb equipment and the provision for his funerary cult:

A stone pyramid was built for me in the midst of the pyramids. The masons who build tombs constructed it. A master draughtsman designed in it. A master sculptor carved in it. The overseers of construction in the necropolis busied themselves with it. All the equipment that is placed in a tomb-shaft was supplied. Mortuary priests were given me. A funerary domain was made for me. It had fields and a garden in the right place, as is done for a Companion of the first rank. My statue was overlaid with gold, its skirt with electrum. It was his majesty who ordered it made. There is no commoner for whom the like has been done. I was in the favor of the king, until the day of landing [the day of death].¹¹⁵

Antonio Loprieno argues that the Egyptian palace was “an ultimate symbol of Egyptian values, the interface between the social and the religious aspect of rejuvenation”.¹¹⁶ To an Egyptian, proper burial and the establishment of a funerary cult were essential in order to ensure an afterlife. Nothing was more terrifying than the idea of dying in a foreign country and being buried by foreigners who had no idea of the intricacies of Egyptian funerary practices. Therefore, it was absolutely easy to understand why the aging Sinuhe should be so suddenly and so acutely obsessed with the idea of returning to Egypt and to the palace.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Lichtheim 1975, p. 233.

¹¹⁴ In the New Kingdom, the princes of western Asian rulers were brought to Egypt to be educated in the Egyptian lifestyle, that means to dress and behave like Egyptians. Cf. Cornelius 2010, p. 322.

¹¹⁵ Lichtheim 1975, p. 233. While watching the dead before the burial, the priest ensured the deceased that he would likewise get a perfect funeral and achieve afterlife, referring to the resurrection of Osiris: “You die in your village, where you are born. You have your tomb and will be buried there and have rest in your coffin which is your sycamore. Furthermore, as soon as a crocodile becomes old in certain place, it will surely die in the canal which is its original place. When a snake wants to have a rest, it will look for a hole into which it can creep.” Cf. Junker 1910, p. 87.

¹¹⁶ Loprieno 1996, p. 44.

¹¹⁷ David 2001, p. 442-443.

Although the Story of Sinuhe is a topos reflecting official and normative Egyptian perception, we should at the same time admit that the favorable natural environment and the relevant religious belief played a great role in shaping Egyptians' concept of themselves and barbarian. Two scenes from the causeways of the pyramids of Sahure and Unas (fig. 11) of the 5th Dynasty show starving Asiatics.¹¹⁸ These Asiatics were so emaciated that their bellies were shrunken, their bones protruded, and their skin was wrinkled. One of them was even so weak that he was unable to raise his hand in a begging gesture. As early as the 6th Dynasty, Nubians who immigrated to Egypt were described as “*hṯp*”. This word has the meaning of “pacified”, “settled” and “acculturated”.¹¹⁹ We see again the close relationship between settled life and civilization. In the Semna Dispatches from the reign of Amenemhat III, it is registered that Nubians were seeking entry to Egypt. In dispatch number 5 it was reported that a group of Nubians seek to cross the border because “the desert is dying of hunger.”¹²⁰



Figure 11: The famine scene on a relief from the Unas pyramid at Saqqara, 24th century BCE.
Credits/source: Imhotep Museum, Saqqara, inv. SQ.SCA.11036; Panegyrics of Granovetter, CC BY-SA 2.0.

¹¹⁸ Hawass, Verner 1996, p. 182-184.

¹¹⁹ Schneider 2010, p. 150.

¹²⁰ Schneider 2010, p. 152.

In the Prophecies of Neferti, the invasion of Egypt by birdlike foreigners was mentioned. These Asiatics migrated to Egypt because of hunger and deprivation caused by their poor natural environment:

An alien bird will breed in the marshlands of the Delta, having made its nest beside the people [Egyptians], the people having let it approach by default. Then perish those delightful things.¹²¹

An inscription from the reign of Merenptah compared foreigners with despicable worms who roamed in search of food:

One was not able [to destroy] them like worms. Their mass was not to be overcome, because they are preferring death and despising life [...]. They spend all day roaming the land, fighting to fill their stomachs. They crowd the borders of Egypt to seek out food for their mouths.¹²²

We find the most remarkable association of the environment with the characters of its inhabitants in the Instruction for Merikare:

The miserable Asiatic, he is wretched because of the place he is in: short of water, bare of wood, its paths are many and painful because of mountains. He never stays in one place, hunger always pushes his feet. He fights since the time of Horus, never able to win, yet never defeated. He does not announce the day of combat, like a thief who is afraid of the arm of the troops.¹²³

In another passage, the young prince Merikare was warned by his father: “The Asiatic is a crocodile on the sandbank that snatches from a lonely road but cannot go on the prowl from the populous quay.”¹²⁴ In the so-called “satirical letter” of Papyrus Anastasi I from the New Kingdom, the hostile character of Asiatics was again related to the unfavorable natural condition. The letter-writer gave a critical portrayal of the Asiatics:

The narrow path is dangerous because of the Bedouins hiding under the bushes. Some of them are of four cubits or of five cubits from their nose to the feet, with fierce faces, of unfriendly mood and not listening to coaxing.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Helck 1970, p. 26, 30.

¹²² Kitchen 1982, p. 4, lines 12-15.

¹²³ Quack 1992, p. 59. Pepi-Nakht, an official of the 6th Dynasty with the title “overseer of foreign countries”, recorded a journey to the land of the Asiatic to retrieve the body of an Egyptian who had been killed in west Asia. He called the Asiatic “those who kill”. Cf. Sethe 1933, p. 132-135.

¹²⁴ Quack 1992, p. 59.

¹²⁵ Fischer-Elfert 1983, p. 139-142.

In the inscription of Seti I's war against the Shasu-Asiatic, we read the following description:

The fallen Shasu are plotting rebellion; their magnates of the tribes are gathered in one place, standing upon the hills of Kharu. They initiate turmoil and conflict; one therein killing his fellow. They have no regard for the laws of the palace.¹²⁶

In his letter written to the Viceroy of Nubia (or King's Son of Kush), Amenhotep II warned his official to beware of the Nubians:

Do not be lenient to the Nubians. Indeed, one should take care against their people and their magicians. Do not listen to their words and do not search out their messages!¹²⁷

Like Asiatics, the Nubians were regarded as a group of people, who behaved totally differently from the Egyptians.

The Egyptians had numerous terms and ethnonyms for their northern neighbors. The most commonly used were two nisbe adjectives literally meaning "those who are upon the sand" and "those who travel the sand". Both have the meaning "sand-dweller".¹²⁸ The term sand-dweller must have been coined in relation to the nomads of the Sinai but was extended to be applied to all the inhabitants in Western Asia. These Asiatics were even metaphorically called "antelope in the desert" in the Lansing Papyrus.¹²⁹

Another way that the Egyptians represented the different types of foreigners and identified the 'other' was through skin color. In general, Egyptian men were portrayed with reddish-brown skin with white linen kilts. Asiatics were depicted with yellow or white skin, long hair, full beards and fringed skirts with colorful patterns. Female Asiatics were typically represented with long hair that fell behind their back. Their male companions were sometimes depicted with red hair, which was shown as

¹²⁶ Spalinger 1979, p. 30.

¹²⁷ Helck 1955, p. 1344.

¹²⁸ Saretta 1997, p. 29-33.

¹²⁹ Goedicke 1968, p. 129. From the inscription of Weni who led Egyptian army to carry out campaigns in the Sinai or Western Asia, at least some of the inhabitants had a life quite similar to that of the Egyptians: "This army returned in safety; it had ravaged the Sand-dwellers' land. This army returned in safety; it had flattened the sand-dwellers' land. This army returned in safety; it had sacked its strongholds. This army returned in safety; it had cut down its figs, its vines. This army returned in safety; it had thrown fire in all its [mansions]. This army returned in safety; it had slain its troops by many ten-thousands. This army returned in safety; [it had carried] off many [troops] as captives." Cf. Rainey 2006, p. 278.

unkempt.¹³⁰ Nubians had much darker skin, short curly hair, and were often shown wearing various jewelry including earrings, bracelets, bangles and necklaces. Libyans were often portrayed with yellow skin, long wavy hair, elaborate cloaks, feathers and sometimes penis sheaths. Obviously, skin color, coiffure, clothing, hairstyles and accoutrements were considered to be particularly important indicators of certain ethnic membership.¹³¹ When facial features were concerned, the Egyptian artists added bones and nasal-labial lines on the faces of the Nubian captives. Female Nubians were represented with pendulous breasts and protruding bellies.¹³² Other female types were not represented with pendulous breasts. In Egyptian context, pendulous breasts were characteristics of the deities Hapy and Tawaret, who represented fecundity.¹³³

For the ancient Egyptians, everything that was associated with themselves was regarded as normal and belonged to culture, while all the other were considered belonging to the periphery of existence and accordingly classified as barbaric. As recorded in the Bible (Genesis 43:32) and by Herodotus (II, 36, 41), Egyptians disliked eating with foreigners and eating ethnic food in general. In a text from the Middle Kingdom, soldiers on a raid into Palestine compared the need to eat the food of the Asiatic captives with the military hardships.¹³⁴ In a document from the New Kingdom, a certain Egyptian was blamed because he was so crazy as to eat Asiatic food prepared with blood.¹³⁵ The assignment of people to certain ethnic groups mainly on the basis of skin color is a phenomenon of the modern world as Mario Liverani argues.¹³⁶ However, already Egyptians began to associate skin color with specific ethnic groups and their relevant characteristics. Donald Redford's opinion that there was no discrimination seems untenable.¹³⁷ On the other side, the conclusion of Thomas Schneider sounds rather too positive to be true: "In

¹³⁰ We might compare the passage in the Story of Sinuhe that described how Sinuhe was washed, shaved and combed after his arrival at the court. Cf. Anthony 2017, p. 24.

¹³¹ Booth 2005, p. 9-10. Anthony 2017, p. 19.

¹³² Younger Nubian women did not have pendulous breasts, but with a hip girdle, and were otherwise nude. Cf. Anthony 2017, p. 23.

¹³³ Anthony 2017, p. 20.

¹³⁴ Altenmüller, Moussa 1991, p. 36-39.

¹³⁵ Guglielmi 1983, p. 152.

¹³⁶ Liverani 1990, p. 33-35. According to Goldenberg, the idea of race had its origin in classical antiquity. Cf. Goldenberg 1999, p. 561-562.

¹³⁷ Redford 2004, p. 9.

the New Kingdom, if not earlier, ethnicity was even a positive trait that a person could vaunt, and which did not entail professional or social disadvantage.”¹³⁸

Assimilation and acculturation of foreigners

Recent scientific and archaeological studies show that ancient Egyptian foreign relations were far more complex than royal inscriptions and monumental presentation intended to make believe. An increased interest in scientific analyses of data from multiple sources provides new insights into the relations between Egypt and its neighbors. Ancient Egyptian interactions with their neighbors were various, complex and flexible. The sources from royal monuments and elite tombs can only provide us with limited and clichés. The images of the foreigners in these sources are stereotypical because the Egyptian artists aimed to emphasize specific distinguishing characteristics, including skin color, dress, facial features, hairstyle and beard types that identified them as un-Egyptian or non-Egyptian.¹³⁹

If we believe that Egyptian royal inscriptions were all true, we must then imagine that the relations between Egypt and its neighbors were dominated by war and conquest, and all foreigners who came to Egypt were either captives or tribute carriers.¹⁴⁰ Then there could not have existed reciprocal trade and there had been little room for immigration. The bestialization, feminization and even demonization of the foreigners in literary works and artistic representations reflected only one specific sphere of Egyptian reference.¹⁴¹

As early as the reign of Snefru in the Old Kingdom, C-Group Nubians and most probably Libyans were resettled to the newly colonized Nile Delta.¹⁴² In the 6th Dynasty, Nubians were recruited for the Egyptian army as auxiliary troops, as shown

¹³⁸ Schneider 2013, p. 233.

¹³⁹ Zakrzewski *et al.* 2016, p. 151-153.

¹⁴⁰ The New Kingdom kings practiced the reinstallation of defeated foreign kings as vassals and the reinforcement of their loyalty by holding their sons hostage at the Egyptian court. The princes were educated in Egyptian norms and inculcated with loyalty to the Egyptian king. They later succeeded their fathers, and to some degree, these foreign rulers were transformed into quasi-Egyptian. Cf. O'Connor 2003, p. 169.

¹⁴¹ O'Connor 2003, p. 159.

¹⁴² Schneider 2010, p. 149.

in the tomb inscriptions of Weni and Harkhuf.¹⁴³ Weni's autobiography emphasized the land's division into Upper and Lower Egypt. Moreover, he specifically mentioned that all sorts of Nubians as well as Libyans were part of his army. The presence of foreigners among the troops indicates that mercenaries were part and parcel of Weni's military machine. No expansion was undertaken as a result of his campaign into southern Palestine; there was no extension of the boundaries of Egypt. After ravaging the countryside and overpowering the alien strongholds, with the added incentive of capturing enemy troops, the Egyptian army did not remain abroad in order to establish a region under permanent Egyptian control.¹⁴⁴

On the basis of archaeological and anthropological material, scholars even put forward the argument that Libyan and Nubian women were introduced into Egyptian royal harem, Queen Hetepheres probably being one of them. We see in the tombs at Giza that Nubians were employed in private households of the officials of the 5th Dynasty. There are even depictions of ocean-going ships in the funerary temple of Sahure and the causeway of Unas. These Asiatics were employed by Egyptian kings as seafaring specialists.¹⁴⁵

A number of funerary stelae found near the Egyptian community of Gebelein belonged to the Nubians who lived and were buried near the Egyptian community which they served. Although they retained their identity as Nubians, they were buried in the Egyptian manner.¹⁴⁶ The Nubians on these stelae are easily differentiated from the Egyptians through their skin color and style of dress. Their wives were often shown wearing Egyptian clothing and hairstyles. Some of them were even depicted with yellow hue that was typical of Egyptian women.¹⁴⁷ These stelae indicate that the mercenaries became Egyptianized to a high degree, but they did not bother to change or cover their outlook, because they did not need to. They were able to marry Egyptian women.¹⁴⁸ On a stela from Tell Amarna, now in the Egyptian Museum in Berlin, an Asiatic mercenary was depicted with his wife and servant. The man had Asiatic name, clothing and spear, but both his wife and servant were dressed like Egyptian, although his wife's name

¹⁴³ Schneider 1998, p. 22-23.

¹⁴⁴ Spalinger 2017, p. 95.

¹⁴⁵ Schneider 2010, p. 150.

¹⁴⁶ Fischer 1961, p. 44.

¹⁴⁷ Fischer 1961, p. 59.

¹⁴⁸ Smith 2003, p. 23.

was not Egyptian either (fig. 12).¹⁴⁹ In the tomb of the nomarch Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan was depicted a group of Asiatic traders (fig. 13). The accompanying inscription indicated that they came to Egypt with galena, the material from which black eye-paint was ground. The fact that the women and children were among them suggested that they planned to remain in Egypt for some time if not for ever.¹⁵⁰



Figure 12: Funerary stele of a Syrian soldier drinking, probably from Amarna, 14th century BCE.

Credits/source: Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, inv. 14122; Sandra SteiB, CC BY-SA 4.0.



Figure 13: The procession of the *Āamu* of Shu, or the procession of 'Asiatics' in the tomb of the nomarch Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan, ca 1892 BCE. Credits/source: Wikimedia Commons, public domain.

¹⁴⁹ Haring 2005, p. 168-169.

¹⁵⁰ Cohen 2002, p. 46.

In the Middle Kingdom, foreigners were attested in about 100 different professions and functions. Some of them became high administrative officials, and many were employed in cultic and priestly functions. Many individuals of foreign origin could afford to commission for themselves funerary equipment. There were not many ethnic markers, which indicated that exhibiting ethnic difference was not very important, at least in funerary context.¹⁵¹ According to Schneider, foreigners were in every social and professional spectrum and throughout the entire country already in the Middle Kingdom and the Second Intermediate Period. The demographic diversity was comparable to that of the New Kingdom. Loprieno's opinion that such situation was only caused by the opening up of borders during the New Kingdom is no longer tenable.¹⁵² Especially in the Amarna Period and in the religious texts, foreign people were considered an inherent part of the created world.¹⁵³ Based on the material from Askut, Tyson Smith comes to the conclusion that "the presence of Nubian pottery, jewelry, and other artifacts at Askut is interesting and shows that the border was more permeable than the official edicts imply".¹⁵⁴ Border control and customs in the strict modern sense did not really exist in ancient Egypt.

During the nineteen years of campaigns, Thutmose III donated 1588 'Kharians' (*i. e.* Asiatics) to the temple of Amun.¹⁵⁵ We know from a fragment of Amenemhat II's annals that a military action was carried out in order to capture workforce for the king's pyramid city.¹⁵⁶ In the so-called Astarte papyrus, the Canaanite god Baal was promoted to be a god of the Egyptian kingship by Amenhotep II. Egyptian pantheon included this foreign deity and sketched him as a prototype of belligerent god.¹⁵⁷ Besides Baal, other Levantine deities (Reshep, Anat, Astarte) were introduced into Egypt and worshiped both by the kings and commoners. Ramses II even called the goddess Anat his mother.¹⁵⁸ As Schneider interprets it, there has been continuous political support for

¹⁵¹ Schneider 2010, p. 152.

¹⁵² Loprieno 1988, p. 23-24.

¹⁵³ Schneider 2010, p. 154.

¹⁵⁴ Smith 2003, p. 79.

¹⁵⁵ Ramses III recorded a donation of 2 607 foreign captives to the Theban temples, and 205 to the temple of Ptah at Memphis. Cf. Redford 1992, p. 137, 223.

¹⁵⁶ Altenmüller, Moussa 1991, p. 47-48.

¹⁵⁷ Schneider 2003, p. 161.

¹⁵⁸ Cornelius 2008, p. 85.

Seth-Baal throughout the 18th Dynasty: “The well-known, if historically unfounded invective of Hatshepsut against the Hyksos, who allegedly had not worshiped Re, now appears in a different light.”¹⁵⁹ In the Amarna Letters, we see Egyptian kings exchanged gifts both with remote great kings and vassal rulers in the Near East and even practised intermarriage. Although we have no such documents from other periods, we may assume that throughout Egyptian history, these patterns recurred on larger or lesser scales in different circumstances.¹⁶⁰ For example, during the 18th Dynasty and especially in the reign of Akhenaton, a distinctive series of foreign ceramic vessels entered Egypt and diffused among the inhabitants. This exotic assemblage even included distinctive Mycenaean pottery.¹⁶¹

In royal decorations, we see foreigners represented as being smitten or captured.¹⁶² In tombs of the officials, we find paintings or reliefs depicting foreigners bearing tribute for the Egyptian king. Most scholars are of the opinion that these foreigners were mercenaries. Anyway, we observe differences between royal and non-royal depictions. These foreigners were no longer bound and trampled, but they were represented in exactly the same fashion as Egyptian offering bearers.¹⁶³

A stele discovered in Amarna shows a soldier in Asiatic clothes, the spear behind him showing his military status. The inscription above his head reads “Syrian warrior”. His wife was sitting on a chair opposite him and was identified by him as “my lady of the house”. She had an Egyptian name and looked like an Egyptian with a full wig and transparent full-length dress. A servant was holding in one hand a small cup, which was thought to have been used to ladle out small quantities of wine and the other hand was helping to direct a straw from a larger vessel into the soldier’s mouth. The servant himself appeared to be Egyptian with a shaved head, Egyptian eyes, a collar and a pleated kilt. The wealth and status of this Asiatic was clearly shown by the fact that he had an Egyptian wife and an Egyptian servant.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Schneider 2003 p. 161. Cf. Assmann, 1997, p. 48.

¹⁶⁰ O’Connor 2003, p. 168.

¹⁶¹ Cline 1994, p. 32-35.

¹⁶² Only on the walls of some royal tombs, foreigners were occasionally represented as capable of making a successful transition into the netherworld, and therein experiencing rebirth and eternal sustenance, like the Egyptians. Cf. O’Connor 2003, p. 161.

¹⁶³ Anthony 2017, p. 19.

¹⁶⁴ Booth 2005, p. 36.

An Asiatic with the Egyptian name of Ameniou was a captive brought to Egypt by Thutmose III. He was then given to the royal barber Sabastet who later freed him and even let him marry his niece.¹⁶⁵ Especially in the Ramesside Period, many high officials had foreign origins or were descendants of foreigners. A man called Benermerut was the son of foreign parents, but he managed to become the teacher of a princess. Craftsmen and artists including Nubian and Asiatic singers and dancers (especially pygmies from Punt) were needed and many came to Egypt to make their fortune.¹⁶⁶

In the tomb of Nebamun, there are images of Syrian ships arriving in Egypt. A scene shows the Syrian leader seated on a chair, his wife behind him dressed in a transparent dress in similar style to the Egyptian women. An Egyptian servant was standing before the Syrian leader holding out a bowl to him. It is thought that this bowl contains a kind of herbal remedy for healing (fig. 14). Nebamun was the physician of Amenhotep II and he had such a good reputation that this Syrian leader had travelled to Egypt for the purpose of consulting Nebamun. It has also been suggested that the Syrian leader became ill on a trading mission.¹⁶⁷ It is highly probable, that this Syrian came to Egypt with a trading ship and then settled down. In any case, it shows clearly how close and various were the relationships between Egypt and its neighbors.

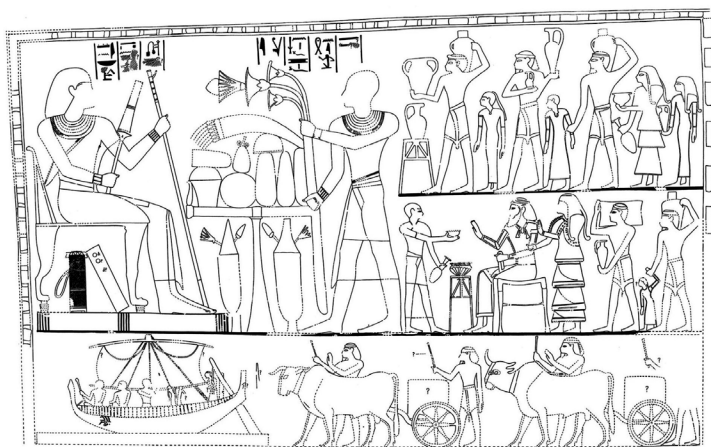


Figure 14: Nebamun and a Syrian patient in the tomb of Nebamun at Thebes, 14th century BCE.
Credits/source: T. Säve-Söderbergh, *Four Eighteenth Dynasty Tombs*, Oxford, 1957, pl. 23.

¹⁶⁵ Loprieno 1997, p. 206.

¹⁶⁶ Zeidler 2005, p. 48.

¹⁶⁷ Booth 2005, p. 35-36.

A Nubian called Maiherpri was educated at the court and got the privilege of being buried in the Valley of the Kings. In his Book of the Dead, Maiherpri was depicted with dark skin and his preserved mummy confirms it. Obviously Maiherpri felt no necessity of concealing his origin. Abd'el, an Asiatic who served as vizier in the Amarna period, preserved his Semitic name which means "Servant of El".¹⁶⁸ His tomb architecture and funerary equipment are all in Egyptian style.¹⁶⁹ This instance reminds us of the story of Joseph in the Genesis who became the vizier of Egypt and married Asenath, daughter of an Egyptian priest of the sun god at Heliopolis. In the fragments of Artapanus, Abraham was said to have taught the Egyptians astrology. However, Artapanus omitted Joseph's status of being a servant at the beginning and let him become a mighty man in the country immediately after his arrival. Moses was said to have divided the land of Egypt into 36 *nomoi* and gave every *nomos* a god to serve.¹⁷⁰

Heqanefer was a Great One of Miam (modern Aniba) in the late 18th Dynasty. In a scene from the tomb of Huy, the Egyptian Viceroy of Nubia, Heqanefer was shown in the traditional Nubian style. He was rendered as Nubian through his different skin color, hair and attire. Moreover he was adorned with feathers, gold earrings. Heqanefer's name and titles, however, were all traditional Egyptian ones. In his own rock-cut tomb located at modern Toshka East, Heqanefer was portrayed as an Egyptian official.¹⁷¹ The gods represented in his tomb were also Egyptian with specific mention of Osiris, Anubis, Re-Harakhty and Hathor.¹⁷² Gordon's suggestion that the Egyptians had a negative attitude towards groups and a positive attitude towards individuals,¹⁷³ in my opinion, is unfounded. In the tomb of Benja, only his name and the time he spent in a royal nursery indicated that he was of Levantine origin. He was depicted as completely Egyptian, and even his parents, who might never had been in Egypt, were represented as Egyptians. It seems reasonable to suggest that the acculturation and assimilation was a long and complicated process and different from case to case.

Besides tomb reliefs and paintings, there are other documents from the New Kingdom which hint at the fact that numerous foreigners lived in Egypt and many of

¹⁶⁸ Hoffmeier 1997, p. 94-96.

¹⁶⁹ Shaw 2000, p. 315.

¹⁷⁰ Koskenniemi 2002, p. 24-25.

¹⁷¹ Simpson 1963, p. 8-9.

¹⁷² Booth 2005, p. 50.

¹⁷³ Gordon 2001, p. 545-547.

them gradually became Egyptian. In this period, it was common to find Canaanite or Hurrian names in Egyptian family trees.¹⁷⁴ A late New Kingdom land survey identified Sherden, an east Mediterranean people, among many otherwise Egyptian tenants.¹⁷⁵ This is an indication of the capacity of the Egyptian society to absorb and transform foreigners, most of whom came to Egypt as war captives. Especially in the domains of weaponry, glass, metal, textiles and dyeing, wood working and ship building, foreigners made great contribution or exerted very strong influence.¹⁷⁶

Concluding Remarks

Every culture is capable of establishing its own identity and at the same time developing techniques of assimilating and acculturating foreigners.¹⁷⁷ Loprieno proposes two major types of Egyptian interpretations of foreigners in Egyptian texts. The first was called the 'foreigner topos', because it represented foreigners stereotypically, as chaotic outsiders; the second was the 'foreigner mimesis' which humanized the foreigners who accepted Egyptian ways. This article tries to prove that the situation in ancient Egypt was much more complicated than Loprieno argues. Egyptians' perception and representation of foreigners changed steadily through the time, and so was their reception of the foreigners. Although Egyptian texts may be classified into historical, political and literary categories, there is some overlap between these categories. Each text was written with a specific purpose which in turn overlaps with the other.

The stereotyped representations of foreigners in texts and pictures changed little, but the number of foreigners in Egypt grew steadily, and many of them Egyptianized themselves almost completely. This big percentage of foreigners would certainly influence the discourse about and the attitude towards foreigners. There must have been considerable difference between the discourse of foreigners in the Old Kingdom and that of the Libyan and Nubian Dynasties. Parts of the myth about Baal's fight against the sea was adapted for an Egyptian audience in the story of the Shipwrecked Sailor during Middle Kingdom. Pap. Amherst 9, which was from the 18th Dynasty, preserves the Baal tale almost in its original form and content and is very different

¹⁷⁴ Booth 2005, p. 18.

¹⁷⁵ Gardiner 1961, p. 297.

¹⁷⁶ Schneider 2010, p. 155.

¹⁷⁷ Assmann 1996, p. 77.

from the adapted Middle Kingdom version. It means that the 18th Dynasty Egyptian audience was different from that of the Middle Kingdom and their attitude towards foreigners had changed significantly.¹⁷⁸ The Egyptian sources about foreigners might be individually unique responses which defy any generalization.

Bibliography

- Allen J. P. (2003), "The Egyptian Concept of the World," in D. O'Connor, S. Quirke (eds), *Mysterious Lands*, London, p. 23-30.
- Altenmüller H., Moussa A. M. (1991), "Die Inschrift Amenemhets II aus dem Ptah-Tempel von Memphis: Ein Vorbericht," *Studien zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, 18, p. 1-48.
- Anthony F. B. (2017), *Foreigners in ancient Egypt: Theban Tomb Paintings from the early Eighteenth Dynasty (1550-1372 BC)*, London-New York.
- Arpagaus D. (2011), "Keper's Appeal before Ramsesses III - or the Motivation behind Killing Unarmed Enemies," *Advances in Egyptology*, 2, p. 95-108.
- Assmann J. (2002), *The Mind of Egypt: History and Meaning in the Time of the Pharaohs*, Cambridge.
- Assmann J. (1997), *Moses the Egyptian. The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, Cambridge.
- Assmann J. (1996), "Zum Konzept der Fremdheit im alten Ägypten," in M. Schuster (ed.), *Die Begegnung mit dem Fremden. Wertungen und Wirkungen in Hochkulturen vom Altertum bis zur Gegenwart*, Stuttgart-Leipzig, p. 77-99.
- Assmann J. (1995), "Ägypten und die Legitimierung des Tötens: Ideologische Grundlagen politischer Gewalt im alten Ägypten," in H. von Stietencron, J. Rüpke (eds), *Töten im Krieg*, Freiburg-München, p. 57-85.
- Assmann J. (1990), *Ma'at: Gerechtigkeit und Unsterblichkeit im Alten Ägypten*, München.
- Assmann J. (1989), "Solar discourse. Ancient Egyptian Ways of Worldreading," *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 68, p. 107-123.
- Assmann J. (1983), *Krieg und Frieden im alten Ägypten: Ramses II. und die Schlacht bei Kadesch*, Mannheim.
- Baines J. (1982), "Interpreting Sinuhe," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 68, p. 31-44.
- Booth C. (2005), *The Role of Foreigners in Ancient Egypt: A Study of Non-Stereotypical Artistic Representations*, Oxford.
- Borchardt L. (1913), *Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Sabu-re*, Leipzig.

¹⁷⁸ Schneider 2010, p. 161-162.

- Breasted J. H. (1906), *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol. III, Chicago.
- Burkert G. (1996), "Der in der Wüste tanzt", in M. Schade-Busch (ed.), *Wege Öffnen, Fs für Rulf Gundlach*, Wiesbaden, p. 23-29.
- Cline E. H. (1994), *Sailing the Wine-Dark Sea: International Trade and the Late Bronze Age Aegean*, Oxford.
- Cohen S. L. (2002), *Canaanites, Chronology, and Connections: The Relationship of Middle Bronze IIA Canaan to Middle Kingdom Egypt*, Winona Lake.
- Cooper J. S. (1983), *The Curse of Agade*, Baltimore.
- Cornelius I. (2008), *The Many Faces of the Goddess. The Iconography of the Syro-Palestinian Goddesses Anat, Aserah, Astarte and Qedesbet c. 1500-1000 BCE*, Fribourg.
- Cornelius S. (2010), "Ancient Egypt and the Other," *Scriptura*, 104, p. 322-340.
- David A. R. (2001), "Mummification," in D. B. Redford (ed.), *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 2, Oxford, p. 439-444.
- Dreyer G. et al. (1998), "Umm el-Qaab," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts in Kairo*, 54, p. 187-217.
- Eyre C. J. (1990), "The Semna Stelae: Quotation, Genre, and Functions of Literature," in S. Israelit-Groll (ed.), *Studies in Egyptology*, Jerusalem, p. 134-165.
- Fischer H. G. (1961), "The Nubian Mercenaries of Gebelein during the First Intermediate Period," *Kush*, 9, p. 44-80.
- Fischer-Elfert H.-W. (1983), *Die satirische Streitschrift des Papyrus Anastasi I, I, Textzusammenstellung*, Wiesbaden.
- Gardiner A. H. (1964), *Egyptian Grammar*, Oxford.
- Gardiner A. H. (1961), *Egypt of the Pharaohs*, Oxford.
- Geertz C. (1964), "Ideology as a Cultural System," in D. L. Apter (ed.), *Ideology and Discontent*, London.
- Godley A. D. (1960), *Herodotus Histories*, Book Two, London.
- Goedicke H. (1968), "Papyrus Lansing 3, 9-3,10," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 7, p. 128-130.
- Goldenberg D. M. (1999), "The Development of the Idea of Race: Classical Paradigms and Medieval Elaborations," *International Journal of the Classical Tradition*, 5, p. 561-570.
- Gordon A. (2001), "Foreingers," in D. B. Redford (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt*, vol. 1, Oxford, p. 544-548.
- Grimm A. (1987), "Ein Kafig für einen Gefangenen in einem Ritual zur Vernichtung von Feinden," *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 73, p. 202-206.

- Guglielmi W. (1983), "Eine 'Lehre' für einen reiselustigen Sohn (Ostrakon Oriental Institute 12074)," *Welt des Orients*, 14, p. 147-166.
- Haring B. (2005), "Occupation: Foreigner. Ethnic Difference and Integration in Pharaonic Egypt," in W. Van Soldt *et al.* (eds), *Ethnicity in Ancient Mesopotamia*, Leiden, p. 162-172.
- Hasel M. G. (1998), *Domination and Resistance: Egyptian Military Activity in the Southern Levant, ca 1300-1185 BC*, Leiden-Boston-Köln.
- Hawass Z., Verner M. (1996), "Newly Discovered Blocks from the Causeway of Sahure," *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Abteilung Kairo*, 52, p. 177-186.
- Heckmann F. (1992), *Ethnische Minderheiten, Volk und Nation: Soziologie interethnischer Beziehungen*, Berlin.
- Helck W. (1970), *Die Prophezeiung des Nfr.tj*, Wiesbaden.
- Helck W. (1955), *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, Berlin.
- Hoffmeier J. K. (1997), *Israel in Egypt: The Evidence for the Authenticity of the Exodus Tradition*, New York.
- Hornung E. (1982), *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt: The One and the Many*, Ithaca [trans. J. Baines].
- Janzen M. D. (2013), *Iconography of Humiliation: The Depiction and Treatment of Bound Foreigners in New Kingdom Egypt*, PhD dissertation, university of Memphis.
- Jenkins R. (2001), "Ethnicity: Anthropological Aspects," in N. J. Smelser, P. B. Baltes (eds), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, Amsterdam, p. 4824-4828.
- Junker H. (1910), *Die Stundenwachen in den Osirismysterien nach den Inschriften von Dendara, Edfu und Philae*, Vienna.
- Keel O. (1997), *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms*, Winona Lake.
- Keel O. (1977), *Die Welt der altorientalischen Bildsymbolik und das Alte Testament*, Zürich.
- Kitchen K. A. (1996), *Ramesside Inscriptions, Translated and Annotated, Notes and Comments, 2, Ramesses II: Royal Inscriptions*, Oxford.
- Kitchen K. A. (1983), *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*, vol. V, Oxford.
- Kitchen K. A. (1982), *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*, vol. IV, Oxford.
- Kitchen K. A. (1979), *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*, vol. II, Oxford.
- Kitchen K. A. (1975), *Ramesside Inscriptions: Historical and Biographical*, vol. I, Oxford.
- Koskeniemi E. (2002), "Greeks, Egyptians and Jews in the Fragments of Artapanus," *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*, 13, p. 17-31.

- Leahy A. (1995), "Ethnic Diversity in ancient Egypt," in J. Sasson (ed.), *Civilizations of the ancient Near East*, vol. 1, New York, p. 225-234.
- Lesko L. H., Lesko B. (2002), *A Dictionary of Late Egyptian*, vol. I, Providence.
- Lichtheim M. (1980), *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, volume III, *The Late Period*, Berkeley.
- Lichtheim M. (1976), *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, volume II, *The New Kingdom*, Berkeley.
- Lichtheim M. (1975), *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, volume I, *The Old and Middle Kingdoms*, Berkeley.
- Littauer M. A., Crouwel J. H. (1985), *Chariots and Related Equipment from the Tomb of Tutankhamun*, Oxford.
- Liverani M. (1990), *Prestige and Interest: International Relations in the Near East ca 1600-1100 BC*, Padova.
- Loprieno A. (1997), "Slaves," in S. Donadoni (ed.), *The Egyptians*, Chicago, p. 185-220.
- Loprieno A. (1996), "Defining Egyptian Literature: Ancient Texts and Modern Theories," in A. Loprieno (ed.), *Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms*, Leiden, p. 39-58.
- Loprieno A. (1988), *Topos und Mimesis. Zum Auslaender in der aegyptischen Literatur*, Wiesbaden.
- Moers G. (2010), "The World and the Geography of Otherness in Pharaonic Egypt," in K. A. Raaflaub, R. J. A. Talbert (eds), *Geography and Ethnography Perceptions of the World in Pre-Modern Societies*, Malden-London, p. 169-181.
- Muhlestein K. M. (2003), *Violence in the Service of Order: The Religious Framework for Sanctioned Killing in ancient Egypt*, Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles.
- O'Connor D. (2003), "Egypt's Views of 'Others,'" in J. Tait (ed.), *"Never Had the Like Occurred": Egypt's View of Its Past*, London, p. 155-185.
- Otto E. (1999), *Krieg und Frieden in der Hebräischen Bibel und im Alten Orient*, Stuttgart.
- Pelto P. (1968), "The Difference between 'Tight' and 'Loose' Societies," *Transaction*, 5, p. 37-40.
- Petrie W. M. F. (1897 [1896]), *Six Temples at Thebes*, London.
- Quack J. F. (1992), *Studien zur Lehre fuer Merikare*, Wiesbaden.
- Quirke S. (2003), "Measuring the Underworld," in D. O'Connor, S. Quirke (eds), *Mysterious Lands*, London, p. 161-181.
- Rainey A. F. (2006), "Sinuhe's World," in A. M. Maer, P. de Miroschedji (eds), *"I Will Speak the Riddles of Ancient Times": Archaeological and Historical Studies in Honor of Amihai Mazar on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday*, Winona Lake, p. 277-299.
- Redford D. B. (2004), *From Slave to Pharaoh. The Black Experience of Ancient Egypt*, Baltimore.
- Redford D. B. (1992), *Egypt, Canaan, and Israel Israel in Ancient Times*, Princeton.

- Ritner R. K. (1993), *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, Chicago.
- Roth A. M. (2015), "Representing the Other: Non-Egyptians in Pharaonic Iconography," in M. K. Hartwig (ed.), *A Companion to ancient Egyptian Art*, Malden-Oxford, p. 155-174.
- Saretta P. (1997), *Egyptian Perceptions of West Semites in Art and Literature during the Middle Kingdom*, PhD Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
- Schneider T. (2013), *Ancient Egypt in 101 Questions and Answers*, Ithaca.
- Schneider T. (2010), "Foreigners in Egypt. Archaeological Evidence and Cultural Context," in W. Wendrich (ed.), *Egyptian Archaeology*, Malden-Oxford, p. 143-163.
- Schneider T. (2003), "Foreign Egypt: Egyptology and the Concept of Cultural Appropriation," *Ägypten und Levante*, 13, p. 155-161.
- Schneider T. (1998), *Ausländer in Ägypten während des Mittleren Reiches und der Hyksoszeit*, Teil 1, *Die ausländischen Könige*, Wiesbaden.
- Schulman A. R. (1988), *Ceremonial Execution and Public Rewards. Some Historical Scenes on New Kingdom Private Stelae*, Göttingen.
- Sethe K. (1933), *Urkunden des Alten Reichs*, Leipzig.
- Sethe K. (1926), *Die Ächtung feindlicher Fürsten, Völker und Dinge auf altägyptischen Tongefäßscherben des Mittleren Reiches*, Berlin.
- Sethe K. (1908), *Die Altägyptischen Pyramidentexte nach den Papierabdrucken und Photographien des Berliner Museums*, vol. II, Leipzig.
- Sethe K. (1906), *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, Leipzig.
- Shaw I. (2000), "Egypt and the Outside World," in I. Shaw (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford, p. 308-323.
- Simpson W. K. (1963), *Heka-Nefer and the Dynastic Material from Toshka and Arminna*, Philadelphia.
- Smith S. T. (2003), *Wretched Kush: Ethnic Identities and Boundaries in Egypt's Nubian Empire*, London.
- Spalinger A. (2017), "The Armies of Re," in P. Paul Creasman, R. H. Wilkinson (eds), *Pharaoh's Land and Beyond*, Oxford, p. 93-111.
- Spalinger A. J. (1979), "Northern Wars of Seti I: an Integrative Study," *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt*, 16, p. 29-47.
- Uphill E. (1966), "The Nine Bows," *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux*, 19, p. 393-420.
- Van de Mieroop M. (1997), *The Ancient Mesopotamian City*, Oxford.
- Vogel R. A. (2022), *Smiting all Foreigners, Subduing all Lands*, Dissertation, University of Memphis.

Ward W. A. (1992), "Review of Ceremonial Execution and Public Rewards: Some Historical Scenes on New Kingdom Private Stelae by Alan R. Schulman," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 51, p. 152-155.

Wilkinson R. H. (1994), *Symbol & Magic in Egyptian Art*, London.

Zakrzewski S. et al. (2016), *Science in the Study of Ancient Egypt*, New York-London.

Zeidler J. (2005), "Fremde im alten Ägypten," in U. Riemer, P. Riemer (eds), *Xenophobie - Philoxenie: Vom Umgang mit Fremden in der Antike*, Stuttgart, p. 31-64.

Shoufu Jin

III- Transformability between Self and Other in Ancient Greece and China¹⁷⁹

The ways in which the 'barbarian other' played an essential role in the construction of self-identity in ancient Greece have become interest of study lately.¹⁸⁰ It is generally agreed that the polarization between the Greeks and the 'barbarians' played an essential role in the construction of Greek ethnic identity in the Classical period.¹⁸¹ Jonathan Hall has famously termed this mode 'oppositional self-identification' in his seminal work on ethnic identity in ancient Greece.¹⁸² In a follow-up study, he further proposes that Greek ethnic identity shifted from self-identification based on imagined blood ties to cultural identity from the late fifth century BCE onwards.¹⁸³ He bases his argument mostly on analyzing the relevant texts from Herodotus to Isocrates and Plato. Although this view is doubted by some scholars,¹⁸⁴ the issue has not been further discussed and remained unsolved.¹⁸⁵ If one is to dispute Hall's view, the usual approach will most probably be to re-examine and reinterpret the texts on which he builds his argument. Such an approach, however, is unlikely to solve the dispute as

¹⁷⁹ An earlier version of the paper was presented to a workshop entitled "Horizons of Community: Exclusivity and Inclusivity in Ancient Greece and Early China" at the University of Melbourne on November 22-23, 2018. I have benefited from criticism of the audience. My research on the topic was supported by a fellowship at the Institut d'Études Avancées in Paris in 2017, during which the workshop was organized with support from the Labex *TransfêrS*.

¹⁸⁰ See especially Hartog 1980, (E.) Hall 1989, (J. M.) Hall 1997, Malkin 2001, Vlassopoulos 2013.

¹⁸¹ (E.) Hall 1989, (J. M.) Hall 1997.

¹⁸² (J. M.) Hall 1997, p. 47.

¹⁸³ (J. M.) Hall 2002.

¹⁸⁴ Mitchell 2007, p. 49, n. 53; Skinner 2012, p. 243; Vlassopoulos 2015, p. 13.

¹⁸⁵ Although Jonathan Hall acknowledges that his view is very 'controversial', he still insists subscribing to it. See (J. M.) Hall 2015, p. 25-27.

the texts might be susceptible to different interpretations. At this point I think that a comparative perspective might shed some light on the problem. Hence in this paper I propose to bring in the ancient Chinese idea of 'self' and 'other' into discussion. The comparison is viable because Greek and Chinese constructions of ethnicity display a striking similarity in that both the Greeks and the Chinese see all others as 'barbarians' and see the world as composed essentially of two opposing parts, *i. e.* themselves and the 'barbarians'. Beginning at least from the early fifth century BCE the 'barbarians', called βάρβαροι, are described by the Greeks as culturally alien and politically inferior in a variety of texts and in the visual arts. Almost in the same period of time the newly-emerged Confucian school began to express clearly the cultural superiority of the Chinese to the 'barbarians'. This similarity has indeed drawn the attention of scholarly research. In particular in an illuminating study Hyun Jin Kim has explored the complex role of the foreigner in the construction of self-identity in ancient Greece and China in a comparative perspective.¹⁸⁶ This paper attempts to further investigate one particular aspect of the 'self' and 'barbarian' dichotomy in ancient Greece and China, that is, transformability between 'self' and 'other',¹⁸⁷ in the hope that this may help to clarify the nature of ethnic identity in the two societies and its implications.

It must be immediately stressed that ethnic identity is a mental construct. As such it is situational and fluid.¹⁸⁸ The boundaries of an ethnic group are never clear-cut and fixed. Individuals and even whole groups regularly cross the boundaries and are thus transformed into the ethnic group or *vice versa*, especially in the frontiers. In this sense, transformability is an inherent part of ethnicity. What I want to establish here is not so much actual transformations as to whether there is a general idea of transformability between 'self' and 'other' in ancient Greece and China and its implications for the societies concerned.

The answer seems to be positive for ancient China. At the latest from the Spring and Autumn Period onwards the Chinese seem to have developed a notion of the polarization of themselves and the 'barbarians' whom they variously called *yi* 夷, *man* 蠻, *rong* 戎 and *di* 狄. By then, the barbarian had become a generic type as these terms (which previously indicated different tribes of people) now began to be used in various

¹⁸⁶ Kim 2009; cf. Huang Yang 2021.

¹⁸⁷ I borrowed the term 'transformability' from Pines 2005.

¹⁸⁸ (J. M.) Hall 1997, p. 32-33.

combinations such as *manyi*, *yidi*, *rongdi* or *manyirongdi*, often interchangeably.¹⁸⁹ Typically the barbarians were perceived to be culturally and morally inferior to the *Xia* 夏 or *Huaxia* 华夏, the terms then used for the Chinese, to the point that very often they were compared to beasts and birds.¹⁹⁰ Yet the Chinese seem to have regarded the barbarians as birds and beasts not because they were racially or physically inferior, but primarily because they were seen as uncivilized. Hence the “Royal Regulations” of the *Liji* (*Book of Rites*), which was compiled in the late Western Han period but is now believed to have consisted of various segments from the late Spring and Autumn Period to the Warring States Period, the Chinese/barbarian polarization is neatly laid out:

The central states (*Zhongguo*) and the *rongyi*, the people occupying the five regions, each had their distinct natures, which could not be altered. Those from the eastern region were called *yi*, they had their hair unbound and their bodies tattooed, and they ate their food uncooked; those from the southern region were called *man*, they had their foreheads tattooed and their feet turned in towards each other, and they ate their food uncooked; those from the western region were called *rong*, they had their hair unbound and wore hides, and they did not eat grain; those from the northern region were called *di*, they wore feathers and dwelt in caves, and they did not eat grain.¹⁹¹

The text represents a rationalized projection of the Chinese world order which allocates the different barbarians to the four quarters with the Chinese at the center. What is interesting here is that the differentiation of the Chinese from the various barbarians is made solely on the basis of habits, especially the contrast between the nomadic way of the life of the barbarians and the agricultural way of life of the Chinese. The Confucian *Analects* record that Confucius once praised Guan Zhong for steering a policy of fending off the barbarians with the following words, “Were it not for Guan Zhong, we should now be wearing our hair loose and folding our ropes to the left”,¹⁹² meaning that the Chinese would have been forced to adopt barbarian customs. It is interesting that while the inferiority of barbarian customs is emphasized here, the passage also implies transformability between the Chinese and barbarians. The same idea is implied in another anecdote recorded in the *Analects*. It says that once the great Master wanted to reside among the nine barbarians (*jiu yi*). A disciples asked, “[they

¹⁸⁹ Huang Yang 2021.

¹⁹⁰ Pines 2005; cf. Huang Yang 2021.

¹⁹¹ *Liji* “Wangzhi” (*Shisanjing zhusu*, 12, p. 467).

¹⁹² *Lunyu* “Xianwen”: *Lunyu jishi*, 29, p. 989.

are] uncivilized, how would you live there?" Confucius replied, "If the *junzi* 君子 (civilized man) reside among them, how could they remain uncivilized?"¹⁹³

Of course, because Chinese thinkers and commentators believed in the superiority of their own culture, they normally thought of transformation of barbarians into Chinese, not the other way around.¹⁹⁴ Hence Mencius (372-289 BCE), the second great master of the Confucian school, once said, "I have heard of transforming the *yi* by the Xia, but never of the Xia transformed by the *yi*."¹⁹⁵ For Mencius individual barbarians could even become sage kings of the Chinese. He gave as examples the legendary sage king Shun and king Wen of Zhou who had become model rulers for posterity, pointing out that the former was by origin an *yi* from the East and the latter an *yi* from the West.¹⁹⁶ Later commentators of the *Chunqiu*, or *Spring and Autumn Chronicles*, which was believed to be compiled by Confucius himself, insist that Confucius adopted the principle of treating the Chinese who did not abide by civilized modes of conduct as barbarians. The *Guliang Commentary* on the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles* asserts that the latter treated the Chinese states of Jin and Qin as barbarians for attacking other Chinese states and for disrupting the education of other people's sons and daughters.¹⁹⁷ On another occasion the *Gongyang Commentary* bluntly calls Zhongguo (the Middle States) "new barbarians" because they did not respect the status of the Zhou king, thus disrespecting the proper rites.¹⁹⁸ On the other hand, the *Guliang Commentary* praises the barbarian state of Wu for adopting the rites of the Chinese.¹⁹⁹ Dong Zhongshu, the great Confucian thinker of the second century BCE, explains,

The usual rhetoric of the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles* does not side with the *yidi*, but with the Middle States as conforming to the rites. When it came to the Battle of Bi, its rhetoric reversed. What was the reason? The answer is that the rhetoric of the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles* is not rigid. It alters as the situation changes. Now that the State of

¹⁹³ *Lunyu* "Zihan": *Lunyu jishi*, 18, p. 604-605. cf. Pines 2005, p. 73.

¹⁹⁴ For actual transformation of surrounding peoples into Chinese from the perspective of Chinese ethnic identity, see Wang Mingke 2013.

¹⁹⁵ *Mengzi* "Teng Wengong shang" (*Shishangjing zhushu*, 25, p. 175).

¹⁹⁶ *Mengzi* "Lilou xia" (*Shishangjing zhushu*, 25, p. 252), cf. Pines 2005, p. 73-74.

¹⁹⁷ *Guliang Commentary* "Lord Zhao, 12th Year" (*Shisanjing zhushu*, 22, p. 332) and "Lord Xi, 33 Year" (*Shisanjing zhushu*, 22, p. 179).

¹⁹⁸ *Gongyang Commentary* "Lord Zhao, 23rd Year" (*Shisanjing zhushu*, 21, p. 595), cf. "Lord Huan, 15 Year" (*Shisanjing zhushu*, 21, p. 124). Cf. Huang Yang 2021, p. 408, Wang Gaoxin 2006.

¹⁹⁹ *Guliang Commentary* "Lord Ai, 13th Year" (*Shisanjing zhushu*, 22, p. 397). cf. Pines 2005, p. 74.

Jin changed to be like *yidi*, and the State of Chu changed to be like *junzi*, therefore the rhetoric was changed to suit the event.²⁰⁰

The great Confucian scholar Han Yu, who lived in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, further concludes that the main purpose of the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles* is to “treat the dukes and lords who adopt barbarian rites as barbarians, and to treat those who adopt Chinese rites as Chinese”.²⁰¹ At the end of the nineteenth century, the great scholar and political reformist Liang Qichao clearly distinguishes the perception of the barbarian expressed in the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles* from that of the modern nationalists:

And the denotation of the *yidi* in the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles* is very different from the modern one. While the modern denotation of *yidi* points to the geographical location and race of the barbarian, the denotation of *yidi* in the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles* points to their political system, customs and their ways of action.

He further elaborates as follows,

Therefore the *Zhongguo* and *yidi* in the *Spring and Autumn Chronicles* are not fixed terms. If they act like *yidi*, even though they are the *zhongguo*, they are shameful and called *yidi*; if they do not act like *yidi*, even though they are *yidi*, they are polite and called civilized.²⁰²

From the discussions above it is abundantly clear that in the dominant Confucian tradition the barbarians can be transformed into Chinese, and vice versa, and the central criteria of differentiating the Chinese from the barbarian is not kinship, but culture as embodied in the Confucian idea of rites.

Like the ancient Chinese, the ancient Greeks also posits a world consisted of two opposing parts, the Greeks and the barbarians. In the Classical period, Greek ethnicity is most notably expressed through the polarity of the Greeks and barbarians in a variety of texts such as Aeschylus, Herodotus, the Hippocratic treatise on *Airs, Waters, and Places*, Isocrates and Aristotle. In his *Histories* Herodotus defines Greek identity as “common blood and common language, common temples and sacrifices of the gods, common way of life”.²⁰³ Despite the fact that Herodotus puts kinship at the first place, the Greeks do seem to have accepted some sort of transformability between themselves

²⁰⁰ *Chunqiu fanlu* “Zhulin”, p. 47.

²⁰¹ *Hanyu quanji jiaozhu*, 5, p. 2664.

²⁰² Liang Qichao 1989, p. 48.

²⁰³ Herodotus, VIII, 144: αὐτίς δὲ τὸ Ἑλληνικόν, ἐὼν ὁμαιμόν τε καὶ ὁμόγλωσσον, καὶ θεῶν ἰδρυματὰ τε κοινὰ καὶ θυσίαι ἡθεὰ τε ὁμότροπα...

and other peoples. Herodotus himself reports that the Ionians and the Dorians were in ancient times of Pelasgian and Hellenic races (ἔθνος) respectively (I, 56). Then he surmises from the barbarian tongue (βάρβαρον γλῶσσαν) of the Pelasgians of his own day that “the Attic race which is of Pelasgian origin must have changed their language too at the same time when it transformed into Greeks” (I, 57: τὸ Ἀττικὸν ἔθνος ἐδὸν Πελασγικὸν ἅμα τῇ μεταβολῇ τῇ ἐς Ἑλληνας καὶ τὴν γλῶσσαν μετέμαθε).²⁰⁴ He goes on to say,

τὸ δὲ Ἑλληνικὸν γλῶσση μὲν, ἐπεὶτε ἐγένετο, αἰεὶ κοτε τῇ αὐτῇ διαχράται, ὡς ἐμοὶ καταφαίνεται εἶναι. ἀποσχισθὲν μὲντοι ἀπὸ τοῦ Πελασγικοῦ ἐδὸν ἀσθενές, ἀπὸ μικροῦ τεο τὴν ἀρχὴν ὀρμώμενον αὐξήται ἐς πλῆθος {τῶν ἐθνέων} πολλόν, <Πελασγῶν> μάλιστα προσκεχωρηκότων αὐτῷ καὶ ἄλλων ἐθνέων βαρβάρων συχνῶν. πρὸς <ὁ> δὴ ὧν ἔμοιγε δοκεῖ οὐδὲ τὸ Πελασγικὸν ἔθνος, ἐδὸν βάρβαρον, οὐδαμὰ μεγάλως αὐξηθῆναι.

But the Hellenic race, as it seems clear to me, has always used the same language since its beginning; yet being, when separated from the Pelasgians, few in number, they have grown from a small beginning to comprise a multitude of peoples, especially because the Pelasgians and other barbarian peoples united themselves with them. Before that, as I think, the Pelasgian race nowhere increased greatly while it was barbarian.²⁰⁵

There is some difficulty with the texts here, but there is no doubt that Herodotus believes that originally the Pelasgians and other barbarian peoples were assimilated into Greeks.²⁰⁶ Thucydides seems to echo what Herodotus implies here when he says that before Hellen the son of Deucalion in Greece “the various tribes took their own names, with the Pelasgians the foremost” (I, 3: κατὰ ἔθνη δὲ ἄλλα τε καὶ τὸ Πελασγικὸν ἐπὶ πλείστον ἀφ’ ἑαυτῶν τὴν ἐπωνυμίαν παρέχεσθαι). Diodorus also reports that the Pelasgians and other barbarians settled in Crete (although at different stages), intermingled with the Cretans and adopted their language (V, 80). Besides there is also the tradition, preserved in the *Catalogue of Women*, that the founder of Thebes, Cadmus, was a Phoenician, the ancestor of the kings of Argos, Danaus, was an Egyptian.²⁰⁷ In a speech attributed to Aspasia in Plato’s *Menexenus*, the Athenians are eulogized for their pure Greek descent and for being “unmixed with barbarians” (ἀμιγῆς βαρβάρων), “There dwells among us no stock from Pelops, nor Cadmus, nor Aegyptus, nor Danaus,

²⁰⁴ In II, 51, 1-2 Herodotus gives a slightly different story, reporting that the Pelasgians came to dwell in the land with the Athenians and thereby began to be considered as Greeks.

²⁰⁵ I, 58: The English translation is from the Loeb edition, with some revision.

²⁰⁶ Sourvinou-Inwood 2003; cf. Thomas 2001.

²⁰⁷ Vlassopoulous 2013, p. 174-175.

nor the many others who are barbarians by nature, but Greeks by law (οὐ γὰρ Πέλοπες οὐδὲ Κάδμοι οὐδὲ Αἴγυπτοι τε καὶ Δαναοὶ οὐδὲ ἄλλοι πολλοὶ φύσει μὲν βάρβαροι ὄντες, νόμῳ δὲ Ἕλληνες, συνοικοῦσιν ἡμῖν, ἀλλ' αὐτοὶ Ἕλληνες, οὐ μαιξοβάρβαροι οἰκοῦμεν...)." The speech goes (245d). Conversely, the *Catalogue of Women* also indicates that the Greek hero Perseus became the ancestor of the Persians.

However, all these specific instances refer to mythical times and do not seem to amount to a general idea of transformability between Greeks and barbarians in reality. According to Jonathan Hall, by the late fifth century BCE Greek ethnicity evolved into cultural identity. He even deduces from Thucydides' account that "barbarian populations might through cultural convergence become more Hellenic".²⁰⁸ The passage in question is as follows,

καὶ μέχρι τοῦδε πολλὰ τῆς Ἑλλάδος τῷ παλαιῷ τρόπῳ νέμεται περὶ τε Λοκροὺς τοὺς Ὀζόλας καὶ Αἰτωλοὺς καὶ Ἀκαρνανίας καὶ τὴν ταύτην ἡπειρον. τό τε σιδηροφορεῖσθαι τούτοις τοῖς ἡπειρώταις ἀπὸ τῆς παλαιᾶς ληστείας ἐμμεμένηκεν· πᾶσα γὰρ ἡ Ἑλλάς ἐσιδηροφόρει [...] καὶ ξυνήθη τὴν δίαταν μεθ' ὅπλων ἐποιήσαντο ὥσπερ οἱ βάρβαροι. σημείον δ' ἐστὶ ταῦτα τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἔτι οὕτω νεμόμενα τῶν ποτὲ καὶ ἐς πάντας ὁμοίων διαιτημάτων.

For even up until today, affairs in much of Hellas are run according to the old way of life (*tropos*)—especially in the regions around Ozolian Lokris, Aitolia, Akarnalia and the mainland there. The habit of carrying arms among these mainland populations is a survival from the early days of robbery, for all of Hellas used to carry weapons [...] just as the barbarians do today [...]. Indeed, one might demonstrate many other respects in which ancient Hellenic practices were similar to those of barbarians now.²⁰⁹

Thucydides, however, does not seem to suggest what Hall deduces. At most he implies that through evolution barbarians could reach a stage similar to the Greeks of his day, but not that they could become "more Hellenic" or Hellenized. In his praise of Athens in *Panegyricus* Isocrates proclaims that

Τοσοῦτον δ' ἀπολέλοιπεν ἡ πόλις ἡμῶν περὶ τὸ φρονεῖν καὶ λέγειν τοὺς ἄλλους ἀνθρώπους, ὥσθ' οἱ ταύτης μαθηταὶ τῶν ἄλλων διδάσκαλοι γεγόνασιν, καὶ τὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ὄνομα πεποιήκεν μηκέτι τοῦ γένους, ἀλλὰ τῆς διανοίας δοκεῖν εἶναι, καὶ μᾶλλον Ἕλληνας καλεῖσθαι τοὺς τῆς παιδείσεως τῆς ἡμετέρας ἢ τοὺς τῆς κοινῆς φύσεως μετέχοντας.

Our city has so far surpassed other men in thought and speech that students of Athens have become the teachers of others, and the city has made the name Hellenes seem to be

²⁰⁸ (J. M.) Hall 2002, p. 196.

²⁰⁹ Thucydides, I, 5-6.

not that of a people but of a way of thinking; and people are called Hellenes because they share in our culture (*paideusis*) rather than in our birth.²¹⁰

Hall cites this passage as suggesting that Greek ethnic identity (Hellenicity) is “a matter of enculturation rather than the destiny of birth”, but he has to admit (citing Jünthner), rather grudgingly, that here Isocrates is not “necessarily extending the definition of ‘Hellenic’ to include barbarians”.²¹¹ As a matter of fact, from this very speech and his other speech *To Philip*, it is clear that Isocrates fully subscribes to the bipolar division of Greeks and barbarians, and cannot possibly have extended his enculturation to including barbarians. Rather his Athenocentric cultural definition of Greek identity is strictly limited to Greeks, as noted by Suzanne Säid.²¹²

Even if, as Hall argues, Greek ethnicity shifted to cultural identity, this does not seem to lead to general transformability between Greeks and barbarians. There are, for sure, a few instances of transformation, such as the Amphilocheian Argives,²¹³ but they invariably occurred in borderlands, as is to be expected. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that descent still mattered in Greek ethnicity in the fourth century BCE. Demosthenes bluntly calls Philip II of Macedon a *barbaros*,²¹⁴ claiming that he “is not only not Greek and in no way related to the Greeks, nor even a barbarian from a land to which it is honorable to say that one belongs, but a wretched Macedonian, from a land from which in the past you could not even have bought a decent slave”.²¹⁵ The use of the phrase “in no way related to the Greeks” (οὐδὲ προσήκοντος οὐδὲν τοῖς Ἑλλησιν) clearly suggests difference of kinship. When Isocrates attempts to defend Philip’s Hellenic identity, what he stresses again is blood ties, tracing his ancestral lineage back to Heracles and his ancestral home to Argos.²¹⁶ Neither Demosthenes in discrediting nor Isocrates in defending Philip’s Hellenic identity resort to the possibility of transformation as a way of vindicating their claims. When commenting on Perdiccas’ rule of Macedon, Isocrates claims that he “alone of the Greeks deemed it worthy to rule over a race not of

²¹⁰ Isocrates, *Panegyricus*, 50.

²¹¹ (J. M.) Hall 2002, p. 209.

²¹² Säid 2001, p. 282, 286.

²¹³ Thucydides, II, 68.

²¹⁴ Demosthenes, III, 16; III, 24.

²¹⁵ Demosthenes, IX, 31: οὐ μόνον οὐχ Ἑλλησιν ὄντος οὐδὲ προσήκοντος οὐδὲν τοῖς Ἑλλησιν, ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ βαρβάρου ἐντεῦθεν ὅθεν καλὸν εἰπεῖν, ἀλλ’ ὀλέθρου Μακεδόνας, ὅθεν οὐδ’ ἀνδράποδον σπουδαῖον οὐδὲν ἦν πρότερον πρίασθαι.

²¹⁶ Isocrates, *Philippus*, 32-34.

the same stock” (μόνος γὰρ Ἑλλήνων οὐχ ὁμοφύλου γένους ἄρχειν). It did not occur to him that through his rule the king might have transformed the Macedonians into Greeks, as Confucius’ comments on the *junzi* living among barbarians and Mencius’ examples of sage kings imply.

Isocrates’ defense of Philip’s Greek descent also reminds us of Herodotus’ account of the identity of the Macedonian royal family.

Ἕλληνας δὲ εἶναι τούτους τοὺς ἀπὸ Περδίκκεω γεγονότας, κατὰ περ αὐτοὶ λέγουσι, αὐτὸς τε οὕτω τυγχάνω ἐπιστάμενος καὶ δὴ καὶ ἐν τοῖσι ὀπισθε λόγοισι ἀποδέξω ὡς εἰσὶ Ἕλληνας, πρὸς δὲ καὶ οἱ τὸν ἐν Ὀλυμπίῃ διέποντες ἀγῶνα Ἑλληνοδίκαι οὕτω ἐγνωσαν εἶναι. Ἀλεξάνδρου γὰρ ἀεθλεύειν ἐλομένου καὶ καταβάντος ἐπ’ αὐτὸ τοῦτο οἱ ἀντιθευσόμενοι Ἑλλήνων ἐξείργον μιν, φάμενοι οὐ βαρβάρων ἀγωνιστέων εἶναι τὸν ἀγῶνα ἀλλὰ Ἑλλήνων. Ἀλέξανδρος δὲ ἐπειδὴ ἀπέδεξε ὡς εἶη Ἀργεῖος, ἐκρίθη τε εἶναι Ἕλληνα καὶ ἀγωνιζόμενος στάδιον συνεχέπιπτε τῷ πρώτῳ.

Now that these descendants of Perdiccas are Greeks, as they themselves say, I myself chance to know and will prove it in the later part of my history; and further, the men who manage the contest of the Greeks at Olympia have already judged to be so. For when Alexander wished to compete in the games and had come for that purpose, the Greeks who were to run against him were to bar him, saying that the contest should not be for barbarians, but for Greeks. But Alexander proved that he was an Argive, and was judged to be a Greek...²¹⁷

Later Herodotus returned to the subject and traced Perdiccas’ origin to Temenus king of Argos.²¹⁸

From these discussions it seems to be fairly clear that despite apparent similarities in Chinese and Greek conceptions of self and other, there is a crucial difference in the idea of transformability between them. In ancient China there did exist a general idea of transformability between Chinese and barbarians. That said, because the Chinese believed in the superiority of their culture, for them transformation was usually from barbarians into Chinese. However, it was accepted, at least in theory, that Chinese could also become barbarians if they abandoned Chinese moral rules of conduct and behaved like barbarians. The Greeks, on the other hand, although accepting as fact that some ancestors or some of their sub-groups were of barbarian origins, did not subscribe to a general idea of transformability between them and barbarians. Simon Hornblower has indeed argued that the distinction between Greeks and barbarians is “extremely fluid”,

²¹⁷ Herodotus, V, 22.

²¹⁸ Herodotus, VIII, 137-139.

and that there are instances of “recategorization of barbarians as Greeks” or reversely “of Greeks as barbarians”,²¹⁹ but these are still specific instances and do not amount to a general idea that Greeks and barbarians can be transformed to each other according to a cultural criteria.

It remains to explain why there is this difference. I think that the reason lies in the political outlooks of the two societies. The earliest Chinese states rose in the Yellow River valley and gradually expanded to include the various peoples surrounding them. By the Western Zhou period (1046-771 BCE) the Chinese had already subdued a large number of neighboring peoples and ruled over a vast territorial empire. In the course of conquest and expansion they had conceived of a political idea of ‘All Under Heaven’ whereby all the inhabitants of the world could in theory be included in the Chinese political orbit. This, coupled with Confucianism which became the ruling ideology soon after its emergence and which regards *li* 禮 (a system of ritual norms and propriety) or ‘rites’ as the symbol of civilized way of life and key to regulating social and political order, formed the backbone of Chinese political ideology. The Chinese idea of ethnicity is centered on political and cultural identity, and descent does not play a defining role. On the other hand, the Greeks created a world of small autonomous communities full membership of which was restricted to an exclusive group of largely hereditary residents, as the Athenian Law of Citizenship testifies. I would argue that in this world of city-states with their emphasis on communal life, homogeneity and hence imagined blood ties are important elements in the construction of Greek ethnic identity. It would be surprising that in such a society ethnicity is defined purely in terms of culture.

Bibliography

Sources

Chunqiu fanlu 春秋繁露 (2012), Beijing (Zhonghua shuju) [with a translation and annotation by Zhang Shiliang 张世亮, Zhong Zhaopeng 钟肇鹏 and Zhou Guidian 周桂钿].

Hanyu quanji jiaozhu 韩愈全集校注 (1996), 5 vol., Chengdu (Sichuan daxue chubanshe) [edited by Qu Shouyuan 屈守元 and Chang Sichun 常思春].

²¹⁹ Hornblower 2008.

Lunyu jishi 论语集释 (1990), 4 vols, Beijing (Zhonghua shuju) [compiled by Cheng Shude 程树德 (1877-1944)].

Shisanjing zhushu zhengliben 十三經注疏整理本 (2000), Beijing (Beijing daxue chubanshe).

Studies

Hall J. M. (2015), "Ancient Greek Ethnicities: Towards a Reassessment", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 58/2, p. 15-29.

Hall J. M. (2002), *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture*, Chicago.

Hall J. M. (1997), *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, Cambridge.

Hall E. (1989), *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, Oxford.

Hartog F. (1991²), *Le miroir d'Hérodote : essai sur la représentation de l'autre*, Paris [first published in 1980].

Hornblower S. (2008), "Greek Identity in the Archaic and Classical Periods", in K. Zacharia (ed.), *Hellenisms: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity from Antiquity to Modernity*, Aldershot, Hampshire, p. 37-58.

Huang Yang (2021), "The Invention of the 'Barbarian' and Ethnic Identity in Early Greece and China", in H. Beck, G. Vankeerberghen (eds), *Rulers and Ruled in Ancient Greece and China*, Cambridge, p. 399-419.

Kim H. J. (2009), *Ethnicity and Foreigners in Ancient Greece and China*, London.

Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1989), *Yinbingshi beji* 饮冰室合集, vol. 1, *wenji* 文集二, Beijing.

Mitchell L. (2007), *Panhellenism and the Barbarian in Archaic and Classical Greece*, Swansea.

Pines Y. (2005), "Beasts or Humans: Pre-imperial Origins of the 'Sino-Barbarian' Dichotomy", in R. Amitai, M. Biran (eds), *Mongols, Turks, and Others: Eurasian Nomads and the Sedentary World*, Leiden, p. 59-102.

Skinner J. E. (2012), *The Invention of Greek Ethnography from Homer to Herodotus*, Oxford.

Saïd S. (2001), "The Discourse of Identity in Greek Rhetoric from Isocrates to Aristides", in I. Malkin (ed.), *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, Washington DC, p. 275-299.

Sourvinou-Inwood Ch. (2003), "Herodotus (and Others) on Pelasgians: Some Perceptions of Ethnicity", in P. Derow, R. Parker (eds), *Herodotus and His World*, Oxford, p. 103-144.

Thomas R. (2001), "Ethnicity, Genealogy, and Hellenism in Herodotus", in I. Malkin (ed.), *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, Washington DC, p. 213-233.

Vlassopoulos K. (2015), "Ethnicity and Greek History: Re-Examining Our Assumptions", *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies*, 58/2, p. 1-13.

Vlassopoulos K. (2013), *Greeks and Barbarians*, Cambridge.

Wang Gaoxin 汪高鑫 (2006), “Lun handai gongyangxue de yixia zhi bian”, 论汉代公羊学的夷夏之辨, *Nankai xuebao* 南开学报, n° 1, p. 87-92.

Wang Mingke 王明珂 (2013), *Huaxia bianyuan: lishi jiyi yu zuqun rentong* 华夏边缘：历史记忆与族群认同, augmented edition, Zhejiang renmin chubanshe [first edition in 1997].

Yang Huang

IV- Barbarians in Early Byzantium

In early AD 370, the rhetorician and philosopher Themistius delivered a speech to the Roman senate and emperor Valens in Constantinople titled “On the Peace of Valens,” which referred to the end of an inconclusive war between the Roman Empire and the Tervingi Goths living north of the Danube.²²⁰ A section of this speech presents an idealized image of Roman-barbarian relations in the Roman political imagination:

εἶναι γάρ τι καὶ ἐν ἐκάστῳ βάρβαρον φύλον, λίαν αὐθάδες καὶ δυσπειθές, τὸν θυμὸν λέγω καὶ τὰς ἀπλήστους ἐπιθυμίας, ἀντικαθήμενα γένη τῷ λογισμῷ, καθάπερ Ῥωμαίοις Σκύθαι καὶ Γερμανοί. ὥσπερ οὖν τὰ πάθη ταῦτα, ἡνίκα ἐπανίσταται τῷ βελτίονι, παντάπασι μὲν ἐξελεῖν οὔτε δυνατὸν οὔτε συμφέρον, [...] οὔτω καὶ τῶν βασιλέων ἔργον, [...] ὅταν παρακινήσαντας καταλάβωσι τοὺς βαρβάρους, τὸ μὴ πρόρριζον ἐκκόπτειν παντελῶς τὸ συμπλήρωμα τῆς φύσεως τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης, ἀλλ’ ἐπικόψαντας τὴν αὐθάδειαν σῶζειν ἤδη καὶ περιστέλλειν, ὡς τῆς ἀρχῆς μοῖραν γεγενημένους.

For I say there is a kind of barbarian tribe inside each individual, excessively stubborn and obdurate—by this I mean our spiritedness and insatiable desires, things directly opposed to that which is rational in us, just as the Scythians and Germani are to the Romans. Therefore, just as it is neither possible nor beneficial to completely remove these impulses when they rise up against their better part [...] so it is the work of emperors [...], when they overpower the barbarians who are causing trouble, not to utterly and completely destroy that which is an excess of human nature, but instead to trim away the stubbornness and thus to save and care for them as having become a part of the empire.²²¹

Although emperor Valens had hardly won a decisive victory against the Goths and had actually acknowledged a degree of symbolic equality with their ruler Athanaric by agreeing to conduct the peace negotiations with both leaders standing on boats amid the Danube river, the speech produces a vision of Roman absolute military and moral

²²⁰ On this speech, otherwise known as *Oration*, 10, see Vandespoel 1995, p. 173-176. Also see Heather, Matthews 1991, p. 14-15.

²²¹ *Oration*, 10, 131b-d.

authority over the barbarians. According to this view, the Roman Empire was imagined as corresponding to the rational reason of a human soul that has been cultivated through the study of Greco-Roman philosophy, poetry, and rhetoric. In contrast, the barbarian world was equated with the violent and irrational passions of man's animal nature, which the civilized human being must transcend.²²² Yet as imperial ideology claimed universal dominion, so too were even barbarian peoples to be incorporated into the cosmology of the empire, restrained, and perhaps even transformed.

The speech containing the above-quoted excerpt was delivered on the cusp of events that would see the parameters of the Roman imperial imagination challenged as never before. Only six years later, in 376, emperor Valens would admit into the empire large numbers of Goths who sought an escape from the growing power of the Huns to the northeast. This large influx of armed migrants was poorly managed by the Roman authorities, and a major military clash two years later resulted in the loss of roughly two thirds of the eastern Roman field army and the death of the emperor himself at the battle of Adrianople in 378. Henceforth, what had previously been unthinkable—the presence of an armed and de facto autonomous barbarian community within the frontiers of the empire—was now part of the political and demographic reality.

From its dedication in 330 by emperor Constantine, the city of Constantinople was the imperial base best situated to respond to the threats posed by the Goths, by then the dominant barbarian group north of the lower Danube. But Constantinople was also chosen as a capital due to its proximity to the Sasanian Persian Empire in the East, which had posed a major threat to Roman territories in the eastern Mediterranean since the rise of the Sasanians in the early third century AD. Prior to the disaster of Valens' confrontation with the Goths at Adrianople in 378, there had been a major campaign against Persia in the mid fourth century, which resulted in the death of the Roman emperor Julian and cession of territory to Persia; Valens himself had been preparing a campaign in the 370s before his attention was called back to the Danube.²²³

Given the potential dangers posed by the Persians, Huns, and others on the frontiers of the empire and Goths (soon to be joined by other barbarian groups) actually within the imperial borders, it is not surprising that the rhetorical concept of the barbarian was alive and well in fourth-century AD Roman Empire and in succeeding

²²² For a summary of the most stereotypical qualities associated with barbarians in general, see Dauge 1981, p. 424-440.

²²³ Heather 2006, p. 73-74, 161.

centuries.²²⁴ In light of contemporary political and demographic changes, the texts produced in the early Byzantine period offer a particularly interesting body of material, for they reveal authors trying to make sense of new challenges to their idealized imperial world order.²²⁵ After all, there were now not only large numbers of barbarians operating independently on imperial territory, but there were also increasingly prominent figures of barbarian background within the East Roman military establishment as well.

There are two basic terms that need to be clarified in an essay considering barbarians in early Byzantium. The first is what is signified by the term “barbarian” in the case of the later Roman Empire, particularly in its eastern half otherwise known as Byzantium. Other contributions to this series have discussed origins and applications of the term in the Greek and Roman worlds.²²⁶ In the context of the Roman Empire of late antiquity, the term “barbarian” will be used in this essay to denote a social category which was applied to individuals or groups situated beyond the provincial boundaries of the empire or within those boundaries yet still considered to be somehow external, whether according to ethnic, cultural, or political criteria.²²⁷ As discussed below, while the term did not always carry with it associations with a particular or generalized ethnicity, it did contain a generally pejorative sense that could nevertheless vary considerably depending on its referent.

The second, and more difficult, term that requires consideration is “Byzantium” itself. A city founded in the seventh century BC, Byzantium (Greek *Byzantion*/ *Βυζάντιον*) served as the site for an additional imperial capital in the fourth century AD, whose geographical location made it ideally suited to respond to threats from the increasingly unstable lands north of the Danube and the incessant tensions

²²⁴ In the numismatic iconography of the early to mid-fourth century, Ladner has pointed to “not merely a quantitative increase of anti-barbarian coin reverses, but an exacerbation of hostile emotions is also visible on many of these images.” Ladner 1976, p. 14.

²²⁵ For a succinct description of high-imperial Roman views of the empire and its borders, see Ando 2000, p. 320-335.

²²⁶ See in particular the articles by Anca Dan and Hyun Jin Kim/David Konstan in this series’ 2022 issue, and the article of Yang Huang above.

²²⁷ The concept was remarkably elastic and defies simple definition. For example, the Isaurians were a people whose territory had been incorporated into the empire since the first century BC, yet they seem to have maintained a distinct ethnic and linguistic identity up into the sixth century AD, at times even acting as a political bloc in opposition to the Roman state. For a discussion of the Isaurians’ liminal status, see Elton 2000. For a discussion of initial referents of the term and its malleability already in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, see Ford 2022.

along the frontier with Sasanian Persia in the East. The city re-founded by emperor Constantine in 324 and dedicated in 330 was officially known as Constantinople (Greek *Kōnstantinoupolis*/Κωνσταντινούπολις) yet in informal usage it retained the pre-Roman name of *Byzantion*, itself, interestingly, derived ultimately not from Greek but from the otherwise “barbarian” language of the Thracians.²²⁸ In modern usage, “Byzantium” has come to be used as the term for the eastern half of the Roman Empire, which did not fall for nearly another one thousand years after the last western Roman emperor was deposed in 476.

Especially problematic for any study dealing with Byzantium in the Roman period is the fact that it is not possible to say when Rome ends and Byzantium begins. After all, the city of Constantinople was not founded to represent a *translatio imperii* from the Roman Empire to a new political entity but rather as a new imperial residence and urban center. Moreover, while the Romans of the East did refer to their primary city as “Byzantium,” the larger political entity to which the city belonged they called the “empire/kingdom of the Romans” (*basileia tōn Rōmaiōn*/βασίλεια τῶν Ῥωμαίων); “Byzantium” as a term designating the East Roman Empire was only first introduced by European scholars in the sixteenth century.²²⁹ It is thus impossible to choose a moment when the city ceased to be a Roman city and began to be something else. After all, the “Byzantines” never ceased to refer to themselves and their empire as “Roman,” a political entity that lasted until its fall to the Ottomans in 1453.²³⁰ Still, in acknowledgment of scholarly convention, “Byzantium” will still at times be used in this essay alongside the more accurate designation of “East Roman Empire,” a name that indicates the perpetuation of the empire after the disintegration of its western half.²³¹

The treatment of the subject of barbarians throughout the existence of the East Roman Empire in a series exploring the concept of the barbarian in ancient civilizations would neither be practical in a short essay nor in line with the “ancient” chronological parameters of the collection, as Byzantium survived through the medieval and into the early modern period.²³² However, focusing on the early centuries of the East Roman

²²⁸ Janin 1964, p. 11.

²²⁹ Kazhdan 1991, p. 344. For an in-depth and forceful discussion, see Kaldellis 2019, p. 3-37.

²³⁰ For a more recent discussion of Byzantium and periodization, see Cameron 2016. Also see Guran 2012, p. 1148-1150.

²³¹ Also see Kaldellis 2019, p. xiv-xv.

²³² For studies covering a longer chronology, see Lechner 1955; Müller 1980, p. 397-449; Kaldellis 2013.

Empire allows us to consider ways in which notions of the “barbarian,” created and developed in the classical Greek world and under the earlier centuries of the Roman Empire, featured in the discourse of an era characterized by unprecedented pressures on the Roman frontiers and long-lasting changes to its geographical extent.²³³ As noted above, by the late fourth century, barbarian groups had not only penetrated the limits of empire but had become increasingly integrated into its military and political institutions. A concentration on this early period of Byzantine history thus allows for a consideration of the way a conceptual framework often considered central to the self-definition of the Greco-Roman world—the so-called Greek/Roman-barbarian dichotomy—was employed in response to the upheavals that redrew the political map of the Mediterranean world.²³⁴ The following discussion will be divided into two main parts: the first will consider the representation of barbarian groups in some of the most prominent historiographical works of the early Byzantine period; the second, and shorter, section will discuss the identification of individuals with the barbarian social category and their participation in the military/political life of early Byzantine society.

While scholars have noted that there was only a single term—Greek *barbarous* βάρβαρος, Latin *barbarus*—to describe the portion of humanity that somehow belonged to the category of the Other, there were no agreed characteristics of a barbarian type either in this or in earlier periods.²³⁵ This fact is hardly surprising given that the term was ascribed to societies as different from one another as the loose tribal confederation(s) of the Franks of northern Germania along the Rhine on the one hand and the centralized, wealthy, and culturally sophisticated empire of Sasanian Persia on the other.²³⁶ Along the various frontiers of the empire, the most prominent objects

²³³ On the crystallization of the concept in the context of the Persian invasions of Greece in the fifth century BC, see Diller 1962. For a recent assessment, see Kim, Konstan 2022.

²³⁴ Moreover, as Kaldellis has argued, the classical ethnographic tradition in its formal sense seems to have come to an end in the seventh century before being taken up again only as late as the fifteenth century. See Kaldellis 2013, p. 1, 98.

²³⁵ For typical summaries of the term’s significance, see Burns 2009, p. 14; Gillett 2009, p. 397-402.

²³⁶ Yet it is important to note that from Herodotus writing in the fifth century BC to Procopius in the sixth century AD, “barbarian” never lost its potential meaning as something one *does* rather than *is*. Hence the verb *barbarizein*/βαρβαρίζειν, “to act like a barbarian,” and related words which could indicate anything from pronouncing Greek poorly, to making grammatical mistakes in Greek or Latin, to pledging political allegiance to a barbarian enemy. For examples of the clearly linguistic associations of the word, see Homer, *Iliad*, II, 867; Lucian, *Rhetorum Praeceptor*, 23; Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae*, V, 20, 3-5, 21, 4-5; Sidonius Apollinaris, *Epistulae*, V, 5); Procopius, *Anecdota*, 14, 2. Demonstrating the fluidity of barbarism as a

of the Byzantine ethnographic gaze were the Persians, Arabs, and Armenians in the East; Franks, Vandals, Goths, and Moors in the West; and Huns, Slavs, and Avars in the North. What these groups and others shared was the barbarian label ascribed to them by Roman authors, a term which in Roman eyes indicated a vaguely understood moral deficiency that might refer to impetuous violence in the case of western and northern peoples and a tendency towards treachery and luxury in those of the South and East. In both cases, however, it was assumed that the barbarians lacked the virtues of good faith and self-restraint, the rationality of Roman law, the martial vigor inherent in Roman military discipline, and the cultural refinement acquired through education in the Greco-Roman literary classics.²³⁷

Much of our information on peoples and individuals characterized as barbarians is filtered through the literary subgenre of ethnography, usually as a component of traditional Greco-Roman historiography.²³⁸ Byzantine historians perpetuated many of the conventions of the earlier Greco-Roman ethnographic tradition in their accounts of foreign peoples, and it remained typical to comment on a given people's origins, physiognomy, political system, and religious and social customs. Also of interest were a barbarian people's natural environment and economy. As this list of topics of inquiry was never standardized, despite the formation of a popular set of ethnographic tropes that gave ample space for allusion to earlier authorities, accounts of a given people often differ significantly between authors, and the kinds of ethnographic information supplied even by a single author treating different groups in a single text could also vary markedly.²³⁹ We may consider here a few examples of typical ethnographic discourse in the historiography of the early Byzantine period that appear either in occasional comments throughout an author's broader narrative or in formal ethnographic digressions.

social category, the geographer Strabo could write at the beginning of the Julio-Claudian era that Greeks of southern Italy, in becoming a part of the Roman domain, had *become barbarians*: ἐκβεβαρβάρωσθαι (*Geographica*, VI, 1, 2).

²³⁷ Heather 1999.

²³⁸ For a brief introduction to Greco-Roman ethnography, see Thomas 1982, p. 1-7, and Rives 1999, p. 11-17. A variety of more recent approaches to the topic may be found in Almagor, Skinner 2013. On ethnography in Late Antiquity, see Gillett 2009. For Late Antiquity and later periods, see Kaldellis 2013.

²³⁹ On the fact that ethnography did not develop into a standardized "scientific" discipline in Antiquity, see Woolf 2011, p. 51-58.

One of the most prolific Byzantine historians of the period, Procopius of Caesarea, has left a rich body of ethnographic material in his account of the wars emperor Justinian fought against Persia, Vandal Africa, and Ostrogothic Italy, a series of campaigns involving a wide array of foreign peoples. His ethnographic depictions of the Sclaveni-Antae and the Hephthalite Huns may serve as illustrative of his general ethnographic approach to communities beyond the frontiers.²⁴⁰ Procopius' description of the Sclaveni and the closely-related Antae, peoples inhabiting the lands north of the Danube in the sixth century but gradually migrating into Greece and the Balkans, exhibits a series of observations typical of the classical ethnographic tradition.²⁴¹ He relates that the Sclaveni and Antae have no single ruler but that they have always lived under a democratic form of government, and all matters are considered by the whole community.²⁴² They worship only one god, the maker of lightning, though Procopius notes that they also worship rivers, nymphs, and other spirits to whom they conduct sacrifices. Their way of life is extremely poor, and they live scattered over a broad area, "each changing his dwelling place very often."²⁴³ Indicative of their poverty and primitive technology, they are poorly equipped in battle, having only small shields and spears but no armor, some of them not even wearing garments for their upper bodies. The tone in the digression on the Sclaveni and Antae is generally neutral and offers a broad range of observations on the nature of their society.

Procopius goes on to provide further information regarding the language, appearance, and general character of the Sclaveni and Antae. He says that both peoples speak the same language, which is a "crudely barbarous utterance," φωνή ἀτεχνῶς βάρβαρος. They also do not differ from one another in appearance, being very tall, sturdy, and reddish in complexion—Procopius notes that they are thus not blonde-haired and fair-skinned like the Goths, Vandals, and Gepids, but nor are they dark. Returning to their poverty, he notes that they live a harsh and comfortless existence and are always extremely dirty; at this point he compares them to the Massagetae, an ancient nomadic

²⁴⁰ Procopius held the office of *assessor* to the general Belisarius in the Byzantine army beginning in the 520s and participated directly in many of the events he describes. On Procopius and his writings see Kaldellis 2004 and Cameron 1985, esp. p. 239-240. For an overview of scholarship on Procopius, see Greatrex 2014. Also see Lillington-Martin, Turquois 2018. On his ethnographic practice in particular, see Ford 2020.

²⁴¹ Analysis of early sources on the Sclaveni (*i. e.*, the Slavs) is provided by Curta 2001, p. 36-73.

²⁴² *Wars*, VII, 14, 22. The entire ethnographic digression appears at *Wars*, VII, 14, 22-30.

²⁴³ Ἀμειβοντες δὲ ὡς τὰ πολλὰ τὸν τῆς ἐνοικήσεως ἕκαστοι χῶρον (*Wars*, VII, 14, 24).

Central Asian people whose ethnonym was at times used by Procopius and others as an equivalent for that of the Huns.²⁴⁴ Yet Procopius points out that the Sclaveni and Antae are neither worthless nor wicked, and that they thus maintain the “Hunnic character,” Οὐννικὸν ἦθος, in their simplicity. Interestingly then, while providing an account of a non-Hunnic people who inhabited lands also occupied by the Huns, Procopius suggests that ethnic categories do not define communities in any absolute sense. While not being Huns themselves, the Sclaveni and Antae, nevertheless, exhibit qualities associated with the Huns. Moreover, these attributes are not uniformly negative: in terms of hygiene, the Massagetae [*sc.* Huns] have little to recommend themselves in Byzantine eyes, but the simplicity of the “Hunnic character” stands in opposition to any notions of moral baseness or wickedness.²⁴⁵

This very observation of Procopius illustrates the fact that ethnographic accounts of peoples beyond the frontiers could vary considerably even when focusing on groups who fall under a single overarching ethnic category.²⁴⁶ No doubt due to a combination of their novelty and their short-lived military supremacy under Attila in the mid fifth century, the Huns were one of the groups subject to the greatest hostility in Greek and Latin accounts of northern peoples in this period. A contemporary of Procopius and resident in Constantinople, the self-professed Goth Jordanes, produced an account of Hunnic origins and their entrance onto the historical stage.²⁴⁷ Jordanes writes that the Huns were the offspring of Gothic witches banished from their people who then mated with evil spirits. The result of the union was “this most savage race [...] small, dark, and worthless—not quite a human race nor having any speech except what gives an appearance of human language.”²⁴⁸ Referring to them as a “savage nation,” *saeva natio*,

²⁴⁴ *E. g.*, *Wars*, III, 11, 9: *Μασσαγέτης, οὗς νῦν Οὐννοὺς καλοῦσιν.*

²⁴⁵ In this case, Procopius writes in the tradition of authors such as the geographer Strabo (drawing on Ephorus) writing in the early first century AD, who wrote of the Scythians that “we consider them to be the sincerest and least cunning and much more frugal and self-sufficient than we are/ἄπλουστάτους τε γὰρ αὐτοὺς νομίζομεν καὶ ἥκιστα κακεντρεχεῖς εὐτελεστέρους τε πολὺν ἡμῶν καὶ αὐταρκεστέρους” (*Geographica*, VII, 3.7). Cf. Justin’s epitome of Pompeius Trogus’ *Philippic History*, II, 2.

²⁴⁶ For example, Hephthalites, Sabiri, Utigurs, and Cutrigurs in Procopius may all be referred to as Huns or “Hunnic.” Likewise, Goths, Vandals, and Gepids are all said to be “Getic” peoples and thus derive their ancestry from the Getae, a people inhabiting the lands north and south of the Danube in earlier centuries (*Wars*, III, 2, 2).

²⁴⁷ On Jordanes’ Gothic origins, see Goffart 2005, p. 42-43.

²⁴⁸ *Genus hoc ferocissimum [...] minutum tetrum atque exile quasi hominum genus nec alia voce notum nisi quod humani sermonis imaginem adsignabat* (*Getica*, 24, 122).

Jordanes then describes the terror the Huns inflicted on the Goths and other peoples, concluding that “they live in the shape of human beings with a beastly savagery.”²⁴⁹ Given the hostility with which the Huns could be represented, it is thus remarkable that the “Hunnic character” exhibited by the Sclaveni and Antae is understood by Procopius to indicate not rapacity and ferocity but rather a virtuous simplicity. While the Huns might be depicted in the most negative terms, the “Hunnic character” could nevertheless receive a more positive assessment, however condescending.

Procopius’ account of the Hephthalite branch of the Huns differs even more starkly from the negative characterization offered by Jordanes and other contemporaries.²⁵⁰ The Hephthalites lived to the northeast of Sasanian Persia, and Procopius relates that although they are indeed related to other Hunnic peoples, they are different from other Hunnic groups and have no contact with them. He further emphasizes their distinctiveness with an observation on Hephthalite physiognomy: “these alone of the Huns have white bodies and are not misshapen in their appearance.”²⁵¹ He also notes that, unlike other Hunnic peoples, the Hephthalites are not nomadic but sedentary, living in a city near a border contested with Persia—indeed, in this respect the Sclaveni and Antae, who live spread out from one another and often shift their dwelling places, would appear to be more “Hunnic” than the Hephthalite Huns themselves. The Hephthalites have also never attacked the Roman frontier (like other Huns) unless when fighting in intermittent alliance with Persia. Procopius goes on to praise their degree of political civilization, claiming that “they are governed by a single king, and, possessing a lawful polity, they interact with one another and peoples farther away both decently and justly.”²⁵² He ends this ethnographic account with some remarks relating to Hephthalite burial customs, including the interment of still-living retainers of the deceased within the tomb.

All of the traditional features of classical ethnography are present in this brief digression, yet it also exhibits many of the subtler features of ethnographic discourse. As

²⁴⁹ *Hi vero sub hominum figura vivunt beluina saevitia* (*Getica*, 24, 128). Cf. Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI, 2, 1.

²⁵⁰ On the Hephthalites, see Golden 1992, p. 79-84; Litvinsky 1996. This passage in Procopius has also been persuasively analyzed by Kaldellis 2013, p. 17-19.

²⁵¹ Μόνοι δὲ Οὐννων οὗτοι λευκοὶ τε τὰ σώματα καὶ οὐκ ἄμορφοι τὰς ὄψεις εἰσιν (*Wars*, I, 3, 4-5).

²⁵² Πρὸς βασιλέως ἐνὸς ἄρχονται καὶ πολιτείαν ἔννομον ἔχοντες ἀλλήλοισι τε καὶ τοῖς πέλας ἀεὶ ὀρθῶς καὶ δικαίως ξυμβάλλουσι. He also notes that the Hephthalites do not share the typical Hunnic “bestial life,” θηρίου βίου (*Wars*, I, 3, 5).

many scholars have observed, while familiar tropes may often appear in the description of particular groups or peoples of a given region, Greco-Roman authors also frequently used such accounts to subvert a reader's prejudices towards barbarian societies or to offer political commentary on their own society. In this case, Procopius shows where the Hephthalites fit in the broader constellation of barbarian groups by indicating that they belong to the larger Hunnic ethnic category, yet his general description bears little in common with typical Hunnic stereotypes. These are Huns, but they neither look nor act like other Huns. His reference to their physical appearance exhibits the Greco-Roman tendency to describe northerners as being of fair complexion, yet this was hardly the rule as Procopius states that this very feature distinguishes them from other Hunnic groups.²⁵³ Most striking in his description of the Hephthalites is Procopius' claim that, unlike their nomadic cousins, the Hephthalites live a sedentary life in a city and, what is even more curious, have a political community ruled by single king and characterized by its own laws and just dealing, qualities which stand in stark contrast to the violence, ferocity, and cunning ascribed to the Huns elsewhere. More importantly, Procopius' readers are here offered an image of the barbarians that presents a reflection of their own society and a challenge to its singular superiority.²⁵⁴

Readers are thus confronted with a depiction of the Hephthalite Huns which defies the tropes otherwise associated with Hunnic peoples.²⁵⁵ The most dramatic effect is produced by Procopius' description of their political culture: he makes clear that the Hephthalite Huns, just like the Romans and Persians, live under the organized rule of a monarch in a community bound by laws.²⁵⁶ He goes even further in indicating that the Hephthalites allow what is right and just to dictate not only their dealings with each other but also with other states. Such a characterization of a barbarian people has many

²⁵³ As noted above in the case of the Sclaveni and Antae, Procopius reports that the Sclaveni and Antae are "neither fair nor dark of hair but reddish/[...] ἢ ξανθοί εἰσιν οὔτε πη ἐς τὸ μέλαν αὐτοῖς παντελῶς τέτραπται, ἀλλ' ὑπέρυθροί εἰσιν ἅπαντες" (*Wars*, VII, 14, 27).

²⁵⁴ See Kaldellis 2013, p. 20-21. On the function of classical ethnography in providing a reflection of the author's society, see Hartog 1988, p. 10-11, 212-213; Gillett 2009, p. 399-400.

²⁵⁵ It has been observed by Litvinsky that Procopius' ethnography of the Hephthalite Huns differs considerably from that of contemporary and near-contemporary Chinese sources, e. g., the *Wei shu* 魏書 (102, 2278-2279) and the *Bei shi* 北史 (97, 3230-3231). Litvinsky 1996, p. 136, 144.

²⁵⁶ On the significance of the Hephthalites' possession of a lawful polity (and of the Persians' possession of the same) (*Wars*, I, 5, 2), see Kaldellis 2013, p. 18-19. In his remarks on Persian royal succession, Procopius observes that accordance with traditional *themis* θέμις, i. e., justice, was essential for the legitimacy of a ruler.

antecedents in classical ethnography, where it was not unusual for groups on the fringes of the known world to be represented in idealized fashion.²⁵⁷ Other forms of positive representation of foreign groups are not infrequent in classical ethnographic literature, and these often build upon the Greco-Roman tendency to present barbarian peoples in a manner similar to modern notions of the noble savage.²⁵⁸ However, unlike the modern concept in some respects, the Greeks and (especially) the Romans exhibited a consistent tendency to see foreign peoples as an earlier version of themselves in a manner that served as a critique of contemporary “civilized” society and a reminder of their own earlier virtues that had faded with the growth of wealth and power concurrent with imperial expansion.²⁵⁹ In this case, however, the Hephthalites are not a “primitively” virtuous people but rather a society seeming to exhibit civilizational achievements approaching those of the Romans. Regardless of Procopius’ aims in this ethnographic portrait, the passage shows that ethnography could just as well defy typical expectations of Roman or Byzantine superiority as reinforce them. Such positive treatment of a barbarian people could thus be founded not on their similarity to the idealized past of the author’s own civilization but even on their seeming parity with the empire of the present.²⁶⁰

Other ethnographic portraits sketched by Procopius are neither as detailed nor as ambiguous. The Heruli were a people living originally to the north of the Danube who had been in contact with the Roman Empire since their first appearance as raiders during the third century.²⁶¹ In later centuries, they were recruited to fight in Roman armies in numbers significant enough to maintain a distinct identity; Procopius tells us that some 2.000 Heruli accompanied the general Narses on an expedition to Italy in 538, and individuals and contingents of them are mentioned throughout Procopius’ account of the wars of emperor Justinian. Yet despite occasional valiant service to the Roman emperor, Procopius also notes several instances where the Heruli either proved to be of dubious reliability or pursued their own interests at the expense of their

²⁵⁷ For example, the Ethiopians and Hyperboreans in Herodotus, III, 114 and IV, 32-36 respectively. See Romm 1992, p. 45-49; Vlassopoulos 2013, p. 206.

²⁵⁸ *E. g.*, Diodorus on the Britains, V, 21, 6; Tacitus on the Germani, *Germania* paragraphs 5, 18, 27.

²⁵⁹ For example, see Long 1986, p. 129-130; Rives 1999, p. 61-62; Campbell 2006, p. 108.

²⁶⁰ Procopius was certainly not always positive in his assessments of foreign peoples, however. Cf. his dismissive comments on the Franks (*Wars*, VI, 25, 10) and the Heruli (*Wars*, VI, 14, 1-2).

²⁶¹ For a concise account of Heruli relations with the empire, see Goffart 2006, p. 205-210.

employers and other barbarians alike.²⁶² In an often commented-on passage, the Herul Pharas is praised simply for the fact that he does not exhibit the barbarian vices of his fellows: “For a Herulian man not to be devoted to faithlessness and drunkenness but to lay claim to virtue—that is a difficult thing and worthy of much praise.”²⁶³ Likewise, Procopius elsewhere points to their primitive martial valor, noting in one instance that many are easily slain in a battle against the Persians due to the fact that the Heruli use neither helmets nor armor but rely solely on a shield and a thin garment for protection. Heruli slaves who serve in the military are even denied the shield, whose protection they are only allowed to enjoy after first proving their courage.²⁶⁴

Procopius also provides an ethnographic/historical excursus on the Heruli, describing some of their ancient customs before giving an account of their affairs prior to their entrance in large numbers into the empire. Regarding their original homeland, he only relates that they lived beyond the Danube in earlier times when the Heruli, “led by their own avarice and arrogance,” had subjugated other barbarian peoples to themselves.²⁶⁵ He exhibits particular interest in their religious customs, noting that they worship many gods and engage in human sacrifice.²⁶⁶ Procopius then describes what amounts to an inversion of Roman norms by claiming that, contrary to civilized practices of caring for the elderly or sick, Heruli ask their relatives to help them commit suicide when they perceive that they have grown old or fallen ill. In describing this process, he notes that it was necessary for the one who actually slays the infirm man to be not of the same family, “for it was not legally right for a relative to be his killer.”²⁶⁷ The reference to *themis* θέμις (customary justice or legal practice) in this instance, amid an otherwise lawless barbarian people, produces a common effect of Greco-Roman ethnography which is to suggest the extent of the Heruli’s alterity by using terms evocative of civilized practice in an account of what must have seemed like an extremely barbarous custom.²⁶⁸ The Heruli thus appear not only primitive but morally

²⁶² For further discussion, see Parnell 2015, p. 815-820. On the Heruli in general, see Sarantis 2010.

²⁶³ Ἄνδρα δὲ Ἑρουλον μὴ ἐς ἀπιστίαν τε καὶ μέθην ἀνεισθαι, ἀλλ’ ἀρετῆς μεταποιεῖσθαι, χαλεπὸν τε καὶ ἐπαίνου πολλοῦ ἄξιον (*Wars*, IV, 4, 30).

²⁶⁴ *Wars*, II, 25, 27-28.

²⁶⁵ Ὑπὸ δὲ φιλοχρηματίας τε καὶ ἀλαζονείας ἐνταῦθα ἡγμένοι (*Wars*, VI, 14, 9).

²⁶⁶ *Wars*, VI, 14, 1. On the barbarian trope of human sacrifice, see Bonfante 2011, p. 13-16.

²⁶⁷ ζυγγενῆ γὰρ αὐτῶ τὸν φονέα εἶναι οὐ θέμις (*Wars*, VI, 14, 4).

²⁶⁸ On the centrality of law in Roman conceptions of the civilized political community in Procopius, see Kaldellis 2013, p. 14-15.

corrupt, since something as central to Roman notions of civilization, such as law, is a characteristic of the Heruli's own barbarism. Procopius goes on to claim that if a man's wife wished to be considered virtuous among her own people, she was required to commit suicide by hanging herself near her husband's burial place. After recounting these details of Heruli religious practice, surely both impious and appalling to a Roman audience, Procopius simply concludes by stating that the "Heruli had customs such as these from days of old."²⁶⁹

This portrait of the Heruli aside, while Procopius is not averse to presenting barbarian individuals and groups in a positive or at least somewhat positive light, other East Roman authors were not always so generous in their depictions of foreign societies—far from it. The historian Agathias, although he offers a remarkably positive ethnography of the Franks (much at odds with the more disparaging depiction of Procopius²⁷⁰), was a fierce critic of Sasanian Persia and other foreign peoples, and he frequently reverts to xenophobic and hostile rhetoric in his history of emperor Justinian's clashes with Persia and other non-Roman groups.²⁷¹ His attitude ranges from one of casual dismissiveness of barbarian impetuosity and stupidity to more painstakingly ethnographic rationalizations of barbarian cultural inferiority.²⁷² For example, Agathias says that the Herul Fulcaris "was perhaps a bold general and by nature fearless of anything in war, but he was rash and impetuous"; Agathias later explains his behavior as being due to the fact that "he was a barbarian and accustomed

²⁶⁹ τοιούτοις μὲν ἐχρῶντο Ἑρουλοι τὸ παλαιὸν νόμοις (*Wars*, VI, 14, 7).

²⁷⁰ For example, *Wars*, VI, 25, 2; 25, 10.

²⁷¹ A contemporary of Procopius, Agathias picks up the narrative of emperor Justinian's wars where Procopius' history left off in 552 and carried it forward to 559. His ethnography of the Franks appears in his history at I, 2, 1-8. For a discussion of Agathias' treatment of barbarian peoples, see Cameron 1970, p. 115-121. For discussion of Agathias' ethnography of the Franks, see Kaldellis 2013, p. 21-23.

²⁷² Though climatic determinism is a well-attested feature of Greco-Roman ethnography, historians such as Procopius and Agathias do not make much use of geography or climate in order to make sense of physiognomic or moral diversity. One particular exception, however, appears in Agathias when he claims that the "[Franks] are vigorous in the icy cold and always then at their mightiest and most willing to endure hardship. For this is perfectly natural for them due to the fact that they have a wintry homeland, and it is basically a thing inborn in them to be cold/σφριγῶσι δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ κρύου ἀεὶ καὶ ῥωμαλεώτατοι γίνονται καὶ ἥδιστα τότε διαπονούνται. ἔχουσι γὰρ πρὸς τοῦτο οἰκειῶς τῷ δυσχεϊμέρον πατρίδα κεκτήσθαι καὶ οἷον ξυγγενὲς αὐτοῖς εἶναι τὸ ψύχεσθαι" (Agathias, I, 19, 2).

to recklessness.²⁷³ Another Herul, a certain Wilgang, provides a bit of barbarian comic relief with his simplicity; Agathias relates how Wilgang, after approving a proposed strategy of attacking a Persian relief force, “repeatedly uttered some barbaric and crude proverbial saying (nevertheless apt and useful): ‘it is necessary to first scare off the bees and then gather the honey more at ease’.”²⁷⁴ Indeed, Agathias seems to share with Procopius a general bias against the Heruli as a group; after recounting the execution of a Herulian commander for murdering a servant, Agathias notes that the Heruli troops, “since they were barbarians, were upset and furious and intended to refuse to fight in the army.”²⁷⁵

Lest one form the impression that only Heruli were subject to Agathias’ scorn, he exhibits a similar attitude toward groups and individuals of other ethnicities. For example, in reference to an attack on Constantinople led by Zabergan, a chieftain of the Hunnic Cotrigurs, Agathias states that “the reason for the attack in all truth was the injustice and desire for profit typical of barbarians.”²⁷⁶ The Utigur chieftain Sandilch on receiving a letter from the emperor “was immediately furious and raging and scarcely able to control his anger [...] and how would this not easily be the case that a barbarian and willful soul, always eager for profit, should be easily thrown into confusion by such words?”²⁷⁷ There is a clear assumption on Agathias’ part that the barbarian category itself could explain what he deems uncivilized behavior of both groups and individuals. The negative associations with the term were thus always available to an author even if he might choose in some circumstances to overlook them.

Elsewhere in Agathias, there is a similar tendency to flatten the diversity of the barbarian world into a set of pejorative tropes. In a trial of two Romans accused of murdering Gubazes, the king of the Lazi people inhabiting a region on the eastern edge of the Black Sea and thus a battleground between the Byzantine and Persian spheres of influence, Agathias gives an account of the legal proceedings. The speech of the

²⁷³ Ἀνδρείος μὲν ἦν δῆπου καὶ οὐδὲν ὅ τι πολέμιον ἐπεφύκει δειμαίνειν, θρασὺς δὲ καὶ ταραχώδης [...] ἄτε δὴ βάρβαρος καὶ τὸ προπετὲς ἐπιχωριάων (Agathias, I, 14, 3; 16, 6).

²⁷⁴ Θαιμὰ ἐπεφθέγγετο παροιμιῶδές τι, βαρβαρικὸν μὲν καὶ ἀφελές, ἐνεργὸν δὲ ὅμως καὶ χρήσιμον· ὡς δεῖ πρότερον ἀποσοβεῖν τὰς μελίττας καὶ ἔπειτα τὸ μέλι σχολαίτερον ἀναιρεῖσθαι (Agathias, III, 6, 5).

²⁷⁵ Οἶα δὴ βάρβαροι, ἠγνῶντο καὶ ἐχάλεπαινον καὶ ἀπόμαχοι ἔσεσθαι διενούνητο (Agathias, II, 7, 4).

²⁷⁶ Αἰτία δὲ ἦν τῆς ἐφόδου τῷ μὲν ἀληθεστάτῳ λόγῳ ἀδικία βαρβαρική καὶ πλεονεξίας ἐπιθυμία (Agathias, V, 12, 6).

²⁷⁷ Εὐθὺς ἐχάλεπαινε καὶ ἐλύττα καὶ κατέχειν οὐ μάλα οἴος τε ἦν τὴν ὀργὴν [...] πῶς δὲ οὐκ ἔμελλεν ῥαδίως τοῖσδε τοῖς ῥήμασι διαταραχθῆναι ψυχὴ βάρβαρος καὶ αὐθάδης καὶ αἰεὶ κερδῶν γλιγομένη; (Agathias V, 25, 1).

defendants, who make much use of anti-barbarian stereotypes to justify their actions, claims that “the entire barbarian race, even if it should be subjected to the Romans [...] is by nature carried towards revolt and disorder.”²⁷⁸ They claim that the murdered Gubazes was himself “led by his passions, having been born a barbarian and having the affliction of the common faithlessness of his race.”²⁷⁹ Should he have been left in power, the Lazis over whom he ruled would have been sure to revolt faithfully from Roman domination. In this case, the negative traits associated with the barbarian label are used not only to explain behavior but also to justify Roman policy. Moreover, there is a clear conception here of a “barbarian race,” *barbaron phylon*/βάρβαρον φύλον, a notion going back at least as far as Plato that the barbarian world could be conceived of as a unity by virtue of birth (*genos γένος*) or natural group (*phylon*/φύλον). While this notion was at times directly and indirectly challenged in classical authors, it remained a rhetorically useful tool in advocating a hostile policy *vis-à-vis* a people understood to fall within the barbarian category.²⁸⁰

In another example of pan-barbarian hostility, Agathias makes clear his assumption that Romans are in fact superior to barbarians in all respects, and regardless of any particular ethnicity, in a hortatory speech delivered by the Roman general Narses to his troops before a battle against the Franks in Italy. In order to encourage his men by referring to early barbarian defeats, Narses reminds them that “it is therefore shameful for you, o Romans, to suffer the same thing the barbarians have suffered and not to be superior to them to the same extent in intelligence as you are in strength.”²⁸¹ As the Franks are barbarians, they may be represented as inferior to their Roman opponents in both mind and body.

At times, Agathias’ anti-barbarian prejudice exhibits illogic bordering on the comical in its lack of self-reflection. In a speech of exhortation to his men prior to a clash with the Hunnic Cotrigurs, Rome’s illustrious general Belisarius refers to the

²⁷⁸ Ἄπαν μὲν οὖν αἰεὶ βάρβαρον φύλον, εἰ καὶ κατήκοον ἢ τοῖς Ῥωμαίοις [...] ἐπὶ τὸ νεωτεροποιῶν καὶ παραχῶδες φέρεσθαι πέφυκεν (Agathias, IV, 8, 5).

²⁷⁹ Ὁ Γουβάζης ὑπήκτο τοῖς πάθεσι τῶ βάρβαρός τε πεφυκέναι καὶ τὴν κοινὴν τοῦ γένους νοσεῖν ἀπιστίαν (Agathias, IV, 8, 6).

²⁸⁰ For this notion in Plato, see *Respublica*, V, 470c, 1-470d, 1. Yet for a view that points out the logical absurdity of reducing the non-Greek world to a single ethnic category, see Plato, *Politicus*, 262d, 1-6.

²⁸¹ Αἰσχρὸν τοίνυν ὑμᾶς, ὧ ἄνδρες Ῥωμαῖοι, ταῦτὸ παθεῖν τοῖς βαρβάροις καὶ μὴ τοσοῦτον ταῖς γνώμαις αὐτῶν περιεῖναι, ὅποσον τῇ Ῥώμῃ (Agathias, II, 12, 6).

enemy dismissively as “barbarian vagrants,” βαρβάρους ἀλήτας.²⁸² He goes on to note that the Cotrigurs are barbarians who are only able to fight relying on tactics of surprise ambush and know nothing of Roman discipline and order.²⁸³ Yet the Belisarius’ strategy following conclusion of the speech is to place two hundred cavalry men in ambush on either side of the defile through which the Cotrigurs will make their approach, a plan carried through to great effect. The Roman general thus defeats the barbarians while relying on the very tactic that was a criterion of their barbarian inferiority.

While the examples cited from Agathias thus far indicate a general, if not absolute, hostility towards barbarian peoples, it should be noted that he too nevertheless exhibits a common practice in Greco-Roman historiography of including speeches attributed to enemies of the Roman empire that include harsh critiques of Roman policy.²⁸⁴ For example, a leading figure among the Lazi, the same people discussed above, attempts to persuade his people that an alliance with Persia should be preferred to one with Rome. The speaker, Aeëtes, is described as being “an excellent speaker more than is usually the case among the barbarians.”²⁸⁵ Aeëtes produces a long list of attacks on Roman character: the Romans are characterized by their “impudence,” θράσος; the Roman emperor is “extremely wicked,” πανουργότατον. He goes on to accuse the Romans of committing “most unholy acts,” ἀνοσιώτατα, against the Lazi. The alleged barbarity of the Romans is presented in extreme terms, likening them to people “full of savagery, madness, and hatred,” ἀναπλησθέντες ὀμότητος καὶ μανίας καὶ μίσους.²⁸⁶ Yet this negative portrait does not limit itself to the barbarian tropes of violence and temerity; it also emphasizes the Romans’ moral failings, their reliance on “deceitful gentleness,” πραότης δολερά, as a means to “commit injustice,” ἀδικοῦσι.²⁸⁷ Aeëtes even goes so far as to accuse the Romans of cowardice, ἀνανδρία, and claims that a “voluntary injustice has been added to those wicked by nature.”²⁸⁸ Having demonstrated the dangers posed by cooperation with Rome, Aeëtes then makes his case for an alliance with Persia, which, unlike Rome,

²⁸² Agathias, V, 17, 1.

²⁸³ Agathias, V, 18, 10.

²⁸⁴ On speeches in Greco-Roman historiography, see the studies in Pausch 2010; Fornara 1983, p. 142-168. On speeches attributed to barbarian figures, see Adler 2011.

²⁸⁵ Ἦν γὰρ καὶ λέγειν δεινὸς πλεόν ἢ κατὰ βαρβάρους (Agathias, III, 8, 8). This and several of the following examples have also been discussed in Ford 2020.

²⁸⁶ Agathias, III, 9, 5-7.

²⁸⁷ Agathias, III, 9, 12.

²⁸⁸ Τοῖς ἐκ φύσεως μοχθηροῖς τὸ ἀυθαίρετον ἀδίκημα προστεθὲν (Agathias, III, 10, 1).

exhibits loyalty and good will towards its allies: the Persians “do their best to show kindness to those they have had as friends to begin with”²⁸⁹; they are “honest,” *χρηστοί*, and “great-hearted,” *μεγαλόφρονες*.²⁹⁰ While these kinds of speeches pose interpretative problems, it is noteworthy that an author such as Agathias, otherwise quick to employ anti-barbarian rhetoric, chose to include them. Though doing so certainly falls within common practice of earlier Roman imperial historians, one is surprised to find that even Agathias was able to imagine a barbarian point of view which placed the Romans themselves beyond the pale.

Nor is the enumeration of positive qualities possessed by barbarians limited to contexts where direct speech is used to express the presumed sentiments of non-Romans. Following a defeat of the Alamanni in Italy, Agathias only names a Herul and a Goth in his general praise of the Roman army's courage.²⁹¹ Not only barbarian troops in Roman service but even enemy leaders could be honored: the Persian commander Mermeroes is said by Agathias to be “masterly in counsel, the greatest in warfare, and exceptionally courageous in spirit.”²⁹² Even further, Agathias goes on to observe that “it is thus to be granted that generalship is not a matter of strength of the body, but rather of wisdom.”²⁹³ Agathias sees no contradiction in holding up a Persian general as a model of the very qualities sought in Roman commanders, despite Mermeroes' Persian ethnicity and loyalty to the Great King. Thus even a historian who frequently employs xenophobic and hostile rhetoric against barbarian groups or individuals also exhibits notable exceptions to the general anti-barbarian attitude expressed in his work.

Most striking of all are his comments on the Franks. Already noted above as a target of Roman anti-barbarian disdain, it is curious that the Franks turn out to be one of the groups that Agathias treats with some favor. Observing that the inhabitants of the Frank-controlled city of Massilia are the descendants of the Germanic tribes known to the Romans in earlier centuries, Agathias claims that the city is no longer “Greek” but now “barbarian,” *βαρβαρική*. Yet he goes on to say that the city is scarcely less impressive for all that, since the Franks are not nomads like other barbarians but have “a state mostly like that of the Romans, and they use the same laws; in other respects, their

²⁸⁹ Φίλους τε γὰρ οὐς ἂν ἐξ ἀρχῆς κτήσαιντο, βεβαιοτάτα στέργειν πειρώνται (Agathias, III, 9, 8).

²⁹⁰ Agathias, III, 10, 11.

²⁹¹ Agathias, II, 9, 13.

²⁹² Δεινὸς μὲν ἐς εὐβουλίαν, ἄριστος δὲ τὰ πολέμια καὶ σφόδρα τὴν ψυχὴν ἀνδρείοτατος (Agathias, II, 22, 5).

²⁹³ Οὕτως ἄρα τὸ στρατηγεῖν οὐ σώματος ῥώμη, μᾶλλον μὲν οὖν φρονήσει δοτέον (Agathias, II, 22, 5).

contractual agreements, marriage customs, and even religious practice are like those of the Romans. For it is the case that the Franks are all Christians and observe the most correct teachings.²⁹⁴ As Kaldellis has pointed out, this description of the Franks is reminiscent of Procopius' positive account of the Hephthalites, but it is in some ways even more surprising.²⁹⁵ For the Franks were not a remote society on the fringe of the known world; they were a barbarian group who had conquered the Gallic provinces of the western Roman Empire and had frequently clashed with East Roman armies during the war to re-conquer Italy, even if they occasionally assisted the Romans against their primary adversary, *i. e.*, the Ostrogothic regime in Italy. It is perplexing that Agathias should represent the Franks in such a positive light when they were only the most dubious of allies and a perpetual threat to Roman re-conquests in the Italian peninsula. What is clear, however, is that in the imagination of Agathias, and presumably that of his audience, even the Franks could appear as a group bearing at least a rhetorical parity to the Romans themselves.

This same ambiguity in Agathias' attitudes even appears in his extensive remarks on Sasanian Persia, the most serious military rival faced by the East Roman Empire, although it is also here that Agathias displays some of his most virulent anti-barbarian sentiments.²⁹⁶ His criticism of Sasanian Persia is far less casual than his cursorily dismissive comments on the Heruli and others. In an ethnographic/historical excursus, he provides a detailed description of Persian burial customs and, while he allows that cultural practices may indeed be relative,²⁹⁷ asserts that the Persian practices known to Greeks and Romans are in fact an aberration from those once practiced in Mesopotamia by the Assyrians, Chaldeans, and Medes.²⁹⁸ He also accuses the Persians of practicing incest, and introduces examples from the Assyrian and Achaemenid Persian past to show that "their former customs have been entirely neglected and overturned by the

²⁹⁴ Πολιτεία ὡς τὰ πολλὰ χρώνται Ῥωμαϊκῇ καὶ νόμοις τοῖς αὐτοῖς καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὁμοίως ἀμφὶ τε τὰ συμβόλαια καὶ γάμους καὶ τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ θεραπείαν νομίζουσιν. Χριστιανοὶ γὰρ ἅπαντες τυγχάνουσιν ὄντες καὶ τῇ ὀρθοτάτῃ χρώμενοι δόξῃ (Agathias, I, 2, 3-4). For a drastically different assessment of Frankish religiosity and a much more hostile attitude towards them, see Procopius, *Wars*, VI, 25, 10.

²⁹⁵ See the analysis of this passage in Kaldellis 2013, p. 21-24.

²⁹⁶ For Agathias (and other authors) on the Sasanians, see McDonough 2011, Drijvers 2011.

²⁹⁷ Kaldellis correctly detects in this passage (Agathias, II, 23, 1-8) Agathias' familiarity with Herodotus' famous discussion of cultural relativism (Herodotus, III, 38, 4).

²⁹⁸ Agathias, II, 23, 9.

Persians of today.”²⁹⁹ The historian thus concludes that the Persians, more than any other people, were subject to foreign conquest, transformation of their customs, and lack of cultural or political continuity.³⁰⁰ Interesting to note in this case, however, is that alongside his patent hostility for the Sasanians, Agathias suggests that their real deficiency is not rooted in the fact that they have barbarian customs; it is that they have abandoned those customs which they had of old and do not properly venerate tradition. Implicit here is an approval of the Assyrian and Achaemenid Persian norms which the Sasanians had abandoned. Such a view, though fitting within Agathias’ more generally xenophobic stance, nevertheless assumes a basic equivalence between Rome and Persia, for he attributes what he sees as Persian inferiority not to some imagined essential attribute but rather to their failure to maintain the mores of the past, *i. e.*, those of their own ancestors. In this sense, he recalls the ambiguous attitudes of Xenophon writing some nine hundred years earlier in his accounts of an idyllic Persia of earlier generations in contrast with the Persia of his own day.³⁰¹

Agathias then turns to the topic of Persian religion before beginning a long digression on the history of Persia and the Sasanian Empire. The final chapters of book two are dedicated to his skepticism of reports claiming that the Persian king Chosroes I could possibly deserve his reputation as a lover of literature and philosophy or that his translations of Greek classics could be of any value. Indeed, Agathias asks rhetorically, “how could it be possible for that integrity and magnanimity of ancient words, suited and most apposite to the nature of things, be preserved by a savage and coarse language?”³⁰² While expressing his cultural and ethnic chauvinism, Agathias also alludes to the earliest conceptions of barbarism as being associated with foreign or corrupt speech, a tendency attested throughout Greco-Roman literature.³⁰³ His overall

²⁹⁹ Πέρσαις δὲ τοῖς νῦν τὰ μὲν πρότερα ἔθη σχεδὸν τι ἅπαντα παρέϊται ἀμέλει καὶ ἀνατέτραπται (Agathias, II, 24, 5).

³⁰⁰ Agathias, II, 25, 3. Perhaps here he alludes to Herodotus’ claim that the Persians were particularly receptive to foreign customs (Herodotus, I, 135, 1).

³⁰¹ See Gruen’s discussion of Xenophon’s *Cyropaedia*, Gruen 2011, p. 53-65. Yet also see Xenophon’s glowing eulogy of his contemporary Cyrus the Younger (*Anabasis*, I, 9).

³⁰² Πῶς μὲν γὰρ οἶόν τε ἦν τὸ ἀκραιφνὲς ἐκεῖνο τῶν παλαιῶν ὀνομάτων καὶ ἐλευθέριον καὶ πρὸς γε τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων φύσει πρόσφορόν τε καὶ ἐπικαιρότατον ἀγρία τινὶ γλώττει καὶ ἀμουσοτάτῃ ἀποσωθῆναι; (Agathias, II, 28, 3).

³⁰³ The language of the Sclaveni and Antae was also identified as a “barbaric” by Procopius. Such associations between barbarism and speech are present in the terms earliest appearance in the *Iliad* of

representation of Persia is markedly hostile in most respects, and his intention seems to be to challenge any notion that Persia might be the equal of Rome in *any* respect. Even if he finally, and grudgingly, acknowledges that the Great King Chosroes was a courageous and excellent commander, any literary or philosophical pretensions are surely not to be credited.³⁰⁴

Yet even the otherwise hostile disposition of Agathias towards Persia occasionally exhibits cracks. For example, he criticizes Procopius' praise of emperor Arcadius for making the Persian king Yazdgard the guardian of the child emperor Theodosius II. Agathias claims that it was unwise to commend the emperor for entrusting the welfare of his son, and thus the stability of the empire, to "a man both foreign and barbarian," ἀνδρὶ ὀθνεῖω καὶ βαρβάρῳ.³⁰⁵ As far as Agathias is concerned, being foreign and barbarian should have disqualified the Persian King from receiving such a grave commission. Yet Agathias goes on to say that one would do far better to praise the prudence, εὐγνωμοσύνη, of the Persian king rather than the credulity of Arcadius, also noting that this same Yazdgard king of Persia upheld his pledges to the Roman emperor, "being always loyal and peaceful," ἀεὶ εὖνους τε ὦν καὶ εἰρηναῖος.³⁰⁶ While it may have been foolish for Arcadius to trust a barbarian king, in this case the barbarian king turned out to be more than deserving of the Roman emperor's good faith.

It is clear from the above discussion regarding the concept of the "barbarian," at least as it appears as a social or cultural category in rhetorically loaded texts of two of early Byzantium's most prominent historians, that it defies simple characterization. Barbarians could be many things. They could be monsters inhabiting borders of the known world, living an existence more akin to that of animals than of human beings; they could be unrestrained and rapacious enemies of the empire; they could be its reluctant and untrustworthy servants. Yet they could also be imagined to live in idealized societies that had perfected the tenets of statecraft professed by the Roman Empire itself; they could be represented delivering scathing critiques of Roman imperial policy; and they could be held up as models of individual emulation on the battlefield or, despite the chauvinism of Agathias, even in the study of philosophy. Barbarians

Homer (*Iliad*, II, 867), and notions of barbarism never lost a close association with the act of speech in contrast to ethnic origin. For further examples, see above, note 236.

³⁰⁴ Agathias, II, 32, 5.

³⁰⁵ Agathias, IV, 26, 6.

³⁰⁶ Agathias, IV, 26, 7-8.

could thus be shown to exhibit the very same virtues that the Romans believed to characterize their own elites and justify their claim to mastery of the world.

We may now turn to the second part of this essay, which concerns groups and individuals already *within* the imperial frontiers and in territories still controlled by Rome. This shift in perspective turns from the more imaginative and rhetorical figures of historiography to the actual careers of documented soldiers and officials more integrated within the imperial system. For in the early Byzantine period, the presence of groups and individuals of foreign provenance was hardly a new phenomenon: since the crossing of large numbers of Goths over the Danube into the Balkan provinces in 376, the empire had experienced increasing difficulty in controlling traffic across its frontiers. The remaining pages will therefore consider barbarians within the borders of the Roman state. General questions will be: What was the social/political position of individuals who traced their own origins to peoples classified as barbarians in our sources and how are they identified as such? What were the practical implications for an individual who professed, or was assigned, a barbarian identity? What status did such an identification confer?

First, it is clear that imperial frontiers did not constitute anything like a fixed barrier separating the Roman and barbarian worlds, for individuals and groups within imperial territory could be categorized as barbarians.³⁰⁷ Yet it remains surprisingly very difficult to determine the legal or citizenship status of barbarians within the empire in the Late Antique/Early Byzantine period. Following the *Constitutio Antoniniana* issued by the Roman emperor Caracalla in AD 212, all free inhabitants of the empire were awarded Roman citizenship. It is therefore not always clear what the status was of barbarian groups who were periodically admitted and settled within the empire, a longstanding practice, in the following centuries.³⁰⁸ Some have argued that by the later fourth century and beyond, various other categories of social status had displaced the once coveted Roman citizenship as the primary means of social distinction.³⁰⁹ It has therefore been assumed that citizenship would be granted to barbarians as a mere

³⁰⁷ The evidence contradicts the assertion of Lechner: “Whoever belonged to this empire was a Roman; whoever lived beyond its borders was a barbarian” (Wer zu diesem Reiche gehörte, war also Ῥωμαῖος; wer außerhalb seiner Grenzen lebte, galt als Barbar), Lechner 1955, p. 294. In the period of Late Antiquity, such a sharp geographical division had ceased to be observed if indeed it ever had been.

³⁰⁸ Burns 2009, p. 245-247.

³⁰⁹ Liebeschuetz 1998, p. 138-139; Garnsey, Humfress 2001, p. 88-91. For further discussion, see Garnsey 2004; Demougeot 1984.

formality when necessary for the facilitation of contracts or procedures regulated by Roman law, an assumption based on extensive evidence of barbarians participating in such procedures.³¹⁰

In one of the most thorough explorations of the topic, Ralph Mathisen uses this theory to account for the fact that there is scarce evidence of any barbarians being specifically named as Roman citizens.³¹¹ After noting vague rhetorical references in the sources to barbarians being considered eligible for citizenship, Mathisen is able to identify only a single instance where a barbarian individual is clearly referred to as a Roman citizen: the case of Stilicho, the half-Vandal general and de facto leader of the Western Empire in the early fifth century.³¹² Mathisen concludes his study with the inference that the decree in 212 of universal citizenship throughout the empire was simply intended to apply to future generations as well; accordingly, “[barbarians] held office, owned and transferred property, made wills, went to Roman courts, and generally made use of *ius civile*, all without formally receiving citizenship.”³¹³ As had happened with the physical frontiers, social and legal divisions between Romans and barbarians also became far less clear in the late antique/early Byzantine period.

In addition to ambiguities of citizenship status, it is also the case that it can be remarkably difficult to determine just who would have been considered a barbarian in the first place in the early Byzantine period, a fact often commented on by modern historians.³¹⁴ That someone bearing a name not clearly derived from Latin or Greek must have been a barbarian is no longer taken for granted, as it is clear that figures with Germanic and other foreign names are often not otherwise distinguishable from other Romans.³¹⁵ Naming practices themselves could vary within a single family, further complicating any assumptions regarding ethnicity based on onomastic evidence: Procopius tells of a certain Theudimund in the Byzantine army, who bore a Germanic name, yet his father had the Latin name Mauricius; and his grandfather, identified in

³¹⁰ Mathisen 2006, p. 1036-1037.

³¹¹ Mathisen 2006.

³¹² Mathisen 2006, p. 1023. Garnsey and Humfress, citing Peter Heather, note that “around seventy officers of barbarian origin and citizen status are known.” Garnsey, Humfress 2001, p. 89.

³¹³ Mathisen 2006, p. 1036.

³¹⁴ For discussion of the question, see Greatrex 2000. For an overview of barbarian troops in Byzantine service in the sixth century, see Teall 1965.

³¹⁵ On this point, see Amory 1997, p. 86-89; Burns 2009, p. 362-364.

several sources as a Gepid, bore the Germanic name *Mundus*.³¹⁶ Had the baby boy Theodosius lived to adulthood, son of the Goth Athaulf and the imperial princess Galla Placidia, he might have been identified as a Roman by modern scholars, irrespective of his barbarian parentage. In contrast, the fact that Stilicho bears a name of unclear etymology makes it easier for historians to identify him as a Vandal even if he was so only on his father's side. It is certainly the case that the Vandal king Hilderic, son of Huneric, is conventionally assumed to be a Vandal even though his mother was the imperial princess Eudocia. Even based on these few examples, it is clear that a barbarian ethnic identity, much less non-citizen or foreign legal status, cannot be assumed from naming practices alone even if the choice of such a name might seem to indicate an affiliation or desired affiliation with a particular ethnic group.

The problem is further compounded by the fact that East Roman authors are far from consistent in their use of labels referring to a given individual's background. While one does see references to place of origin, ethnic affiliation (whether specifically indicated by an ethnonym or generally with the term "barbarian"), or Roman citizen status, such references are inconsistently applied and, as we will see, imprecise. The only way we may identify an individual as a barbarian is if an author says he is one or if he is said to belong to an ethnic group elsewhere referred to collectively as barbarians. And even if we proceed from this basic assumption, it remains far from clear exactly what being a "barbarian" entailed. It remains easier to formulate an idea of what it meant to be "Roman," at least in the sixth century: "The fundamental definition of a Roman in the empire of Justinian was that of loyalty to the emperor."³¹⁷

In accounts of the wars led by the emperor Justinian against the Vandals and Goths in the West and against the Persians in the East, one might expect to see particular attention granted to a distinction between Romans and barbarians; and indeed, it is common for early Byzantine historians to comment on the ethnic background of figures in the narrative. For example, Procopius often refers to an individual's *genos*, yet what exactly this means is far from precise. As many scholars have noted, the Greek terms *genos*/*γένος* and *ethnos*/*ἔθνος*, and the Latin terms *gens* and *natio*, could often be used interchangeably.³¹⁸ In referring to individuals, the most common expression is to parenthetically note what someone is "according to *genos*," *κατὰ γένος*. As *genos* is

³¹⁶ *Wars*, VII, 1, 36. On *Mundus*, see Martindale 1992 (vol. IIIB), p. 903.

³¹⁷ Greatrex 2000, p. 268; also see, p. 274.

³¹⁸ See, for example, Kulikowski 2007, p. 56-57; Jones 1996, p. 315.

derived from the verb *gignomai/γίγνομαι*, (meaning “become, be”), it refers to origins in relation to the category or group into which one was born. But, as will be seen below, in many cases this usage does not map clearly onto what we might understand as ethnicity.³¹⁹ For example, authors of the period use *genos* in accordance with the oft-mentioned dichotomy between Greeks/Romans on the one hand and barbarians on the other. We are told by Procopius that a certain Paulus is “Roman by birth,” *Ῥωμαῖος γένος*; likewise, a certain Mundus in Roman service is a “barbarian by birth,” *γένος μὲν βάρβαρος*.³²⁰ The first of these categories, “Roman,” was traditionally determined by legal and political criteria.³²¹ The second clearly refers to such a wide array of different possible communities that it has little if any significance we might understand as being “ethnic.”³²² While having been born into a hereditary citizenship community of the Roman Empire may seem clear enough (even if that is a category super-imposed above a variety of ethnic labels), what is meant by being a barbarian is less so—neither ethnic, geographical, nor even legal interpretations of the term are particularly helpful.

Moreover, usage of the term *genos* turns out to be problematic in other ways as well, as it may refer not only to ethnonyms but also toponyms. That is to say, one’s *genos* may be defined just as much by geographical place of origin as an ethnic category, and in fact the distinction between the two is at times ambiguous. As a result, Procopius refers to different individuals as being Pamphylian, Illyrian, Thracian, Pisidian, Calabrian, and Cilician at different points—all of these being geographical regions of the empire,

³¹⁹ *I. e.*, a socially constructed category of individual and community definition: “The criteria of ethnicity are the definitional set of attributes by which membership in an ethnic group is ultimately determined. They are the result of a series of conscious and socially embedded choices, which attach significance to certain criteria from a universal set while ignoring others.” (J. M.) Hall 1997, p. 20-21. For a discussion of ethnic and other forms of identity in late antiquity, see Pohl 2013.

³²⁰ Paulus (*Wars*, II, 6, 23); Mundus (*Wars*, V, 5, 2).

³²¹ The most famous articulation of the concept in Roman thinking is that of Cicero: “as [Cato the Elder] was a Tusculan by birth, he was a Roman by citizenship; he had the one *patria* by virtue of place, the other by virtue of legal right” (*De Legibus*, II, 5). As put by Michael Kulikowski, “Iberians and Gauls, Moors and Syrians, Thracians and Greeks—these and many other peoples could increasingly think of themselves as Romans, whatever else they might be as well.” Kulikowski 2016, p. 3.

³²² Johnathan Hall lists the primary criteria for determining membership in an ethnic group as “a putative subscription to a myth of common descent and kinship, an association with a specific territory and a sense of shared history.” (J. M.) Hall 2002, p. 9. Similarly, “The notion of kinship is obviously central to perceptions—ancient and modern—of ethnicity. ‘Having the same blood’ (*homaimon*) seems to be a universal aspect.” See Malkin 2001, p. 10.

although some could serve as ethnonyms as well.³²³ Complicating the matter further in the Roman context is the fact that groups incorporated into the Roman Empire in earlier centuries did not necessarily abandon their own distinct ethnic identities while also embracing a Roman one.³²⁴ It is thus not clear if “Thracian” should be read as having an ethnic or geographical (or Roman provincial) sense; nor should we assume that such a term might not have multiple valences depending on context. After all, “Thracian” was in earlier centuries clearly understood as an ethnonym in Greco-Roman texts, albeit an overarching category containing a variety of named subgroups. Moreover, *genos* may also indicate a degree of specificity far more narrow than that of an ethnonym: it could be used to indicate affinity to a particular family as well. For example, a Goth is said to be a member of the house, *genos*, of the Ostrogothic king Theoderic; a pair of Armenian deserters from the Persian army are said to be of the ancient *genos* of the Parthian Arsacids.³²⁵ All of these usages have loosely to do with the circumstances of an individual’s birth and genealogy, but their signification extends well beyond any consistent form of clear ethnic classification.

Other instances can only be left with something of a question mark when it comes to what exactly is indicated by the term *genos*. Procopius states that a man named Andreas in the Roman army was a Byzantine by birth, *i. e.*, *genos*; the same is said of a certain Martinianus.³²⁶ These examples thus use the name of the city in a manner equivalent to an ethnonym. Moreover, when referring to individuals as being Thracian by birth, Procopius is at least in one specific instance aware that Thrace was not an ethnically homogenous area; the Roman general Bessas, identified by Procopius as a Goth, is said to be descended from a group that had settled in Thrace long ago.³²⁷ Yet Procopius knew that there were other possible ethnic groups in Thrace according to which individuals could be identified. For example, a certain Burcentius is said to be of

³²³ See Greatrex 2000, p. 268.

³²⁴ Not only were broader geographical and ethnic terms used as part of individual self-identification but even specific tribal names (*e. g.*, *Batavus*, *Sequanus*, *Bellovacus*, etc.) could be used to identify one’s *natio*. See Mathisen 2021, p. 215-242.

³²⁵ Goth of house of Theoderic, *Wars*, V, 4, 6; Armenian deserters from line of the Parthian Arsacids, *Wars*, IV, 24, 2; IV, 27, 16.

³²⁶ Andreas, *Wars*, I, 13, 31; Martinianus, *Wars*, VII, 23, 1.

³²⁷ *Wars*, V, 16, 2.

the Besi by birth, Βέσον γένος; in the preceding clause, he is referred to as “one of the Romans” / τῶν τινῶν Ῥωμαίων.³²⁸

Further complicating matters, and as has often been pointed out, is that ethnicity was hardly a barometer of political loyalties.³²⁹ For example, the Hun Aigan in Roman military service is identified as being a Massagetan by birth, as is one of his countrymen, Chorsomantis.³³⁰ In one episode in Procopius, we find three Byzantine commanders in a battle, one “a Persian man,” another a “Massagetan by birth,” and the third a “Thracian.”³³¹ Even one of the most prominent Byzantine generals, Bessas, is identified as being a Goth by birth.³³² It is clear that these references to personal origin were at least of some significance in the mind of the author. When describing the murder of a certain Artabanes, a prominent figure in the Roman army, the soldier who immediately slays the murderer is an unnamed man identified as being a Goth by birth³³³—the personal name is not mentioned but the ethnonym is. Moreover, there is no indication that someone assigned a foreign ethnonym or said to be born outside the empire may not fight with distinction alongside Roman troops. Indeed, Narses, the general who brought the Gothic war of attrition in Italy to an end, was himself a Persamenian by birth.³³⁴ Given the range and ambiguity of “ethnic” signifiers employed by Byzantine historians, modern scholars are left somewhat at a loss in trying to determine the significance of labels of foreign origin or ethnicity in our sources. Such notices were clearly considered a noteworthy aspect of an individual’s personal identity, whether professed or ascribed, but there do not seem to be any further inferences that may be drawn from them with certainty.

Perhaps most intriguing of all is the case of a certain Indulf, bearer of a linguistically Germanic name, whom Procopius identifies as a barbarian by birth.³³⁵ Indulf was one of the bodyguards of the general Belisarius who had been left in Italy after Belisarius was recalled to Constantinople, but Indulf deserted to the Goths and

³²⁸ *Wars*, VI, 26, 3.

³²⁹ *E. g.*, Greatrex 2000, p. 269; Parnell 2015.

³³⁰ Aigan, *Wars*, III, 11, 9; Chorsomantis, *Wars*, VI, 1, 21.

³³¹ Ἀρτασίρηγν τε ἄνδρα Πέρσηγν καὶ Βώχων Μασσαγέτηγν γένος καὶ Κουτίλαν Θρηάκα (*Wars*, VI, 2, 10).

³³² *Wars*, V, 16, 2.

³³³ *Wars*, VIII, 8, 27.

³³⁴ *Wars*, I, 15, 31.

³³⁵ *Wars*, VII, 35, 23.

was put in command of their fleet. Most striking, however, is the way in which Procopius describes how Indulf was able to infiltrate an Italian coastal town, “since he was Roman and part of the entourage of Belisarius.”³³⁶ This last example shows just how imprecise and porous terms of identification could be in this period. Moreover, it challenges earlier assumptions, such as that of Lechner, that “whoever was called Roman was not a barbarian; whoever was numbered among the barbarians could not be a Roman.”³³⁷

Nevertheless, matters often appear much more straightforward in other cases. For example, Procopius notes that a certain Ambazoukes is a Hun according to birth (*i. e.*, *genos/γένος*); an unnamed soldier in the Roman army is a Herulian by birth; Godas, a slave of the Vandal king Gelimer is a Goth by birth; Velas, a man in the service of the Gothic king Ildibad is identified as being a Gepid by birth; Eraric, a soldier in the Gothic army is a Rugian by birth.³³⁸ Such identifications as these seem relatively unambiguous, and each of the ethnonyms used for these individuals is at other points equated with the super-category of “barbarian”—Heruli, Goths, Gepids, etc. are all understood as being barbarian peoples and are at various points labelled as such. So alongside the classification of individuals and groups according to specific ethnonyms, the relegation of those ethnonyms to the broader barbarian category perpetuates the classical dichotomy of a distinction, based on however amorphous and fluid criteria, between Greeks/Romans and barbarians.

Yet considering the inconsistent and varying associations the term “barbarian” could have, one wonders: what, if anything, did having a barbarian background mean for individuals’ careers within the Roman bureaucracy, imperial court, or military? Given the above discussion, it would seem that being of barbarian origin was in many instances of quite limited significance.³³⁹ The frequency of Persian and Germanic names belonging to high-ranking individuals in the East Roman military and bureaucracy also suggests that barbarian origins or affiliation were not in fact the barrier to advancement they have at times been assumed to be. Although anti-barbarian ethnographic tropes and stereotypes appear frequently in textual sources, such rhetoric does not seem to

³³⁶ Ἄτε Ῥωμαῖός τε ὢν καὶ Βελισσαρίῳ προσήκων (*Wars*, VII, 35, 25).

³³⁷ “Wer sich Ῥωμαῖος nennen durfte, war nicht βάρβαρος, wer unter die βάρβαροι zählte, konnte nicht Ῥωμαῖος sein.” Lechner 1955, p. 292.

³³⁸ Hun, *Wars*, I, 10, 9; Herulian, II, 3, 21; Goth, III, 10, 25; Gepid, VII, 1, 43; Rugian, VII, 2, 1.

³³⁹ Nor is this unique to Rome; see Abramson on foreigners or “barbarians” (*fan* 蕃) in military of the Tang dynasty from the 7th to 9th centuries. Abramson 2008, p. 22, 36-37, 165-66.

have prevented individuals from asserting some degree of foreign or barbarian identity by bearing personal names clearly derived from non-Latin or non-Greek roots. Unlike aspects of physical appearance, names are easy to change; the fact that foreign names, the most obvious possible indicators of foreign origin, continue to be attested over generations suggests a limited degree of anti-barbarian prejudice. Indeed, as will be seen below, even those of barbarian ancestry could be considered eligible for the imperial office itself in Byzantium.

As has been made clear in earlier paragraphs, individuals of barbarian origin featured prominently in the Roman military in the sixth century.³⁴⁰ Yet it is important to note that their representation at the highest levels of the military hierarchy actually began much earlier.³⁴¹ Given the mass entrance of Goths into the empire in 376, and their subsequent revolt which led to one of the most dramatic Roman military defeats since the end of the Republic,³⁴² it is perhaps surprising how quickly figures of Gothic origin came to hold prominent military commands in the Roman army—especially considering the fact that Alaric and his followers were still at large within the empire and would sack the city of Rome itself in 410. In order to illustrate the degree to which some barbarians were integrated into the East Roman military machine by this time, we may consider the career of a Goth named Gainas, who was a prominent figure in the last decade of the fourth century.

Gainas was of Gothic origin and seems to have been born outside of the empire.³⁴³ However, he rose to prominence in the Byzantine military, being made one of the three commanders of barbarian soldiers during emperor Theodosius I's campaign against the usurper Eugenius in 395. Further honors followed when he received the office of *comes rei militaris* from 395 to 399. When a Gothic commander over barbarian troops in Asia Minor named Tribigild revolted in 399 causing widespread destruction,

³⁴⁰ For a sense of the demographic diversity of Constantinople itself in Late Antiquity, see Croke 2001, p. 83-85. On the connection between military and civilian careers in the period, see Whately 2013, p. 53-54.

³⁴¹ Burns 2009, p. 322; consider the example of the Franks Silvanus and Mallobaudes, *ibid.*, p. 334, 339.

³⁴² Ammianus went so far as to compare the catastrophe to the Roman defeat at Cannae in 216 BC (Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI, 13, 19). On reactions to Adrianople, see Lenski 1997.

³⁴³ Sozomen, VIII, 4, 1; Socrates, VI, 6, 2. For a brief account of the career and revolt of Gainas, see Wolfram 1990, p. 148-150. For a detailed discussion of the events surrounding the revolt and relevant sources, see Cameron, Long 1993, p. 199-252. On ethnography in Christian historiography, see Stevenson 2002.

Gainas was one of two generals sent to suppress the revolt. Following the defeat of his colleague in a clash with Tribigild's forces, Gainas was granted full control of the campaign. Gainas then leveraged his strengthened position to insist that Eutropius, the emperor Arcadius' chief minister, be dismissed. Gainas' ambitions thus extended beyond the battlefield and into the intrigues of imperial politics, and the historian Zosimus tells us that it was actually resentment at the honors of the consulship and title of patrician awarded to Eutropius that prompted Gainas to revolt against the empire.³⁴⁴ Zosimus also gives Gainas a portrait replete with barbarian stereotypes: Gainas exhibits a barbarian insatiability for gifts³⁴⁵ and is "carried away by the hasty and mad nature of the barbarians."³⁴⁶

For rather than put down the rebellion of Tribigild's barbarian troops, Gainas decided instead to join with the rebels, whom he eventually led into Constantinople itself. The populace of the city, however, attacked the barbarian troops under Gainas' command and thousands of his men were massacred.³⁴⁷ Gainas then attempted to lead his remaining followers back into Asia Minor with an improvised flotilla of rafts and boats; at this point, the Byzantine fleet appeared and easily destroyed Gainas' forces. As a last resort, Gainas sought refuge in the North with the Huns, whose king, Uldin, had Gainas executed and his head sent back to Constantinople. Other contemporary accounts move quickly from identifying the barbarian origins of Gainas to painting him as a rapacious and unscrupulous figure,³⁴⁸ yet they also note that the leader of the Byzantine fleet, who finally crushed the rebellion, was Fravitta—also a Goth.³⁴⁹ Given what would seem to be Zosimus' tendency to employ hostile barbarian stereotypes, it is perhaps surprising that he sees no irony in the fact that the Goth Fravitta turns out to be the unanimous choice of the emperor and senate to put down the rebellion, "a barbarian by birth but otherwise a Greek, not only in his character but also in his principles and reverence of the divine."³⁵⁰ Throughout Zosimus' narrative, Fravitta acts with prudence

³⁴⁴ Zosimus, V, 17, 4-5.

³⁴⁵ Δωρεαῖς ἀπληστῖαν [...] βαρβαρικὴν (Zosimus, V, 13, 1).

³⁴⁶ Τῷ προσόντι φύσει θερμῷ καὶ μανιδῶει τοῖς βαρβάροις ἐξενχθεῖς (Zosimus V, 14, 4).

³⁴⁷ More than 7.000 of them, according to Zosimus (V, 19, 4).

³⁴⁸ Theodore, V, 32, 1; Socrates VI, 6, 3-6.

³⁴⁹ Γότθος μὲν καὶ αὐτὸς τῷ γένει, μεγάλη δὲ εὐνοία τῇ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους χρησάμενος (Socrates, VI, 6, 39).

³⁵⁰ Ἄνδρα βάρβαρον μὲν τὸ γένος, Ἑλληνα δὲ ἄλλως οὐ τρόπον μόνον ἀλλὰ καὶ προαιρέσει καὶ τῇ περὶ τὰ θεῖα θρησκείᾳ (Zosimus, V, 20, 1). The Christian historian Sozomen does not mention Fravitta's pagan beliefs

and restraint and is ultimately rewarded with the consulship by the emperor. Thus while Gainas appears as an untrustworthy, rash, and violent barbarian, the barbarian Fravitta exhibits the opposite qualities. In his short account of Gainas' rebellion, Zosimus thus exhibits an inconsistency typical of our sources in his representation of figures of barbarian origin: when in revolt against the empire, barbarians may be represented with all of the negative barbarian tropes of the Greco-Roman tradition; yet barbarians may also prove to be not only loyal servants of the state but also exemplars of noble character and worthy of the highest civilian honors. Fravitta was himself awarded the honor of the consulship by the emperor.³⁵¹

While allowing that there was anti-barbarian sentiment at the Byzantine court surrounding the events of Gainas and Tribigild's revolt, Cameron and Long argue that there was not a 'victory of anti-Germanism', since no such victory was ever won, nor indeed was such a battle ever joined.³⁵² Perhaps we may go even further and suggest that the term "barbarian" had simply lost much of its significance by this period. It may well have been unthinkable for an individual identified as a barbarian and bearing an obviously Germanic name to win the honor of the consulship in the earlier centuries of the empire—and yet men bearing exotic names and who were even born outside the empire in tribal communities often did just that in fifth and sixth-century Byzantium.³⁵³

The revolt of the Goths Gainas and Tribigild and many of their barbarian troops notwithstanding, the employment of barbarian soldiers and commanders did not decrease in the fifth century. On a large-scale expedition whose purpose was to drive the Vandals out of the critical revenue-producing provinces of North Africa in 441, four of the five military commanders had Germanic (Ansilas, Arintheus, Areobindus)

but simply refers to him as "a man barbarian by birth, noble of custom, and a good general/ἀνὴρ βάρβαρος τὸ γένος, ἀγαθὸς δὲ τὸν τρόπον καὶ στρατηγικός" (Sozomen, VIII, 4, 19).

³⁵¹ It has been observed by many historians that religious distinctions were at times more important than ethnic ones in Late Antiquity, and such a view is supported by the resolutely pagan historian Eunapius, who describes Fravitta as "having grown up to be the most excellent of all men in respect of virtue and truth/γεγονώς δὲ εἰς ἀρετὴν καὶ ἀλήθειαν ἀπάντων ἀνθρώπων κάλλιστος" (Eunapius, fr. 59). In describing Fravitta's victory over Gainas, Eunapius depicts the Goth exhibiting Spartan restraint and a confident disdain for the fickle opinions of the mob in Byzantium (fr. 69, 4).

³⁵² Cameron, Long 1993, p. 10.

³⁵³ The case of Fravitta receiving the consulship in 401 has been noted above; the better part of a century later, Theoderic the Ostrogoth was appointed consul by emperor Zeno for the year 484. See Heather 2017, p. 47-49.

or at least non-Greek or non-Latin (Inobindus) names.³⁵⁴ Other barbarians could also reach positions of great authority in the East Roman military establishment and likewise become deeply embedded in imperial politics. For example, a certain Goth named Aedoingus held the post of *comes domesticorum* in 479, and he is reported by Malchus to have had close ties to the empress Verina in Byzantium.³⁵⁵ Another Goth, Anagastes, held the post of *comes rei militaris* in Thrace in 466-477 and led Byzantine forces against both Goths and Huns. Anagastes was later promoted to the senior generalship of *magister utriusque militiae* in 469, when he managed to kill Dengizich, son of Attila the Hun, in battle.³⁵⁶ Fully integrated into Byzantine civil life as well, Anagastes was a candidate for the honor of the consulship in 470; when he was passed over for the office, Anagastes briefly revolted from the empire, although he was later brought back into imperial service. Perhaps the best example of barbarian integration into the Byzantine system is the Alan-Gothic family of the Ardaburii, who at various times held the highest positions in both the civil and military spheres over the course of much of the fifth century, despite their barbarian origins.³⁵⁷

A certain Areobindus, descended from the Ardaburii on his mother's side, married a woman named Anicia Juliana, the daughter of the West Roman emperor Olybrius and the granddaughter of the emperor Valentinian III.³⁵⁸ Areobindus was sent into the field as a Roman commander against Persia in the early sixth century, and he also reached the heights of Byzantine politics by being appointed consul in the year 506. His own paternal grandfather and namesake, identified as a Goth, also had a distinguished career: he too had commanded troops with distinction in the Roman army and had killed a Persian in single combat in the 420s. Like his grandson, Areobindus the elder had also received the honor of the consulship. Yet the most remarkable aspect of Areobindus the younger's career is the fact that when the population of Constantinople revolted against the emperor Anastasius in 512, some of the rioters even "cried out that

³⁵⁴ For an account of the expedition, see Heather 2006, p. 290. On the Germanic categorization of these names, see Schönfeld 1911, p. 23, 26, 27.

³⁵⁵ Martindale 1980, p. 11.

³⁵⁶ Martindale 1980, p. 75.

³⁵⁷ For an excellent study on this family's most illustrious members as well as perceptions of ethnicity in fifth-century Byzantium, see McEvoy 2016.

³⁵⁸ Schönfeld identifies Areobindus as a Gothic name (Schönfeld 1911, p. 27). For details of his career, see Martindale 1980, p. 143-144; for that of his grandfather, see *ibid.*, 145-146.

Areobindus should be made their emperor.”³⁵⁹ In the careers of Areobindus and his ancestors on either side of his family it is clear that barbarian origins or affiliations—indicated by the perpetuation of recognizably Gothic, Alanic, or otherwise foreign names—did not preclude access to the centers of power in early Byzantium.

While limiting its chronological scope to the early centuries of East Roman/Byzantine history, this study has considered the representation of the barbarian in the contemporary historiography and attempted to sketch some of the complexities of the term and its social significance. There are two points that may be made in conclusion. The first is that the combination of forces of Romanization, a process that disseminated a single literary and political culture throughout an ethnically and linguistically diverse empire, alongside the increasing porousness of the imperial frontiers in Late Antiquity, led to an unprecedented integration of barbarian groups and individuals inside the workings of both the eastern and western halves of the empire. This process has its reflection in the material culture from zones along the boundaries of the empire, where scholars have noted that distinctions between populations living on either side of the limits of directly-administered Roman territory became increasingly blurred.³⁶⁰ The second is the fact that although the term “barbarian” was often used as a category denoting origins or affinities recognized as being external or hostile to the empire, identification with the “barbarian” category did not exclude individuals from high military or civilian offices, despite the fact that traditional anti-barbarian rhetoric and prejudice are at times on full display in the historiography of the period. That this was the case in Byzantium is clearly attested by the illustrious military and civilian careers of figures identified as being of non-Roman origin or ancestry. Keeping in mind the non-ethnic, culturally performative aspects of the “barbarian” concept perhaps makes it easier to understand the fact that individuals of barbarian origin were not necessarily relegated to an inferior status by virtue of their ethnic affiliation, *i. e.*, because of their genealogical descent. While being a “barbarian by birth” could be used to explain flaws of character and behavior, it could also be openly acknowledged in the case of individuals who were exemplars of Greco-Roman virtues.

There is no dearth of examples showing that Roman conceptions of identity allowed for this permeability of the civilized-barbarian dichotomy, not just in evidence drawn from individuals’ careers but also on the rhetorical and literary plane—centuries

³⁵⁹ Areobindam sibi imperatorem fieri clamitant (Marcellinus Comes, 512, 4).

³⁶⁰ Whittaker 1994, p. 122-131; Burns 2009, p. 350-352, 360-361.

before Constantinople was even founded. The second-century AD sophist Favorinus offers himself to his fellow Celts and other barbarians as a model, showing that Greek culture is as attainable to them as it is to Greeks and Romans;³⁶¹ Lucian of Samosata tells of the Scythians Toxaris and Anacharsis, both identified as “barbarians” in the text, who became masters of Greek *paideia*;³⁶² Fronto, a Roman citizen from North Africa honored with the consulship in 142 and tutor to Marcus Aurelius, compared himself to this same legendary Anacharsis, stating that they are both barbarians: “For he was a Scythian of the nomad Scythians, and I am a Libyan of the Libyan nomads.”³⁶³ While all of these examples make much play with the pejorative stereotypes associated with barbarism for their own rhetorical purposes, the common thread is that such a classification does not delimit the aspirations of those so categorized.

The emperor Julian himself makes use of the same trope in the mid-fourth century, referring to his own tutor, the one who inspired the future emperor to devote himself to the pursuit of virtue and philosophy, as “a barbarian, by the gods and goddesses, and a Scythian by birth.”³⁶⁴ More striking is that Julian toys with prejudices of genealogical descent in reference to his own background: he refers to the Antiochenes as children of Greeks but himself as a Greek only insofar as he has adopted Greek practices—he says that he himself is a Thracian by birth!³⁶⁵ Indeed, the passage calls to mind the depiction of the Goth Fravitta in the *New History* of Zosimus discussed above: “a barbarian by birth but otherwise a Greek.”³⁶⁶ While these examples explicitly refer to Greekness rather than Romanness, this fact only further emphasizes the fluidity of boundaries from at least the second century AD onwards: while Roman identity could be understood as a legal construct transcending ethnic origin at least since the time of Cicero, the classic definition of Hellenicity in Herodotus—defined by blood, religious

³⁶¹ Dio Chrysostom, *Oration*, 37, 27.

³⁶² Lucian, *Anacharsis*, 17, 18; *Toxaris*, 5.

³⁶³ Ἦν γὰρ ὁ μὲν Σκυθῆς τῶν νομάδων Σκυθῶν, ἐγὼ δὲ Λίβυς τῶν Λιβύων τῶν νομάδων (trans. by C. R. Haines, Loeb Classical Library, 1928, p. 136-137).

³⁶⁴ Julian, *Misopogon*, 352a. Yet contrast this “barbarian” with the barbarians living across the Rhine, whose singing Julian compares to the cawing of coarsely singing birds. *Ibid.*, 337c.

³⁶⁵ γένος ἔστί μοι Θράκιον. *Ibid.*, 367c.

³⁶⁶ See above, note 350.

practice, and custom³⁶⁷—had abandoned the requirement of genealogical descent for inclusion in the broader imperial community.

Nor was geographical inclusion within the empire always seen as a determinative factor in assessing an individual or group's barbarism or *humanitas*. Agathias makes the following comment on the Lazi people of the eastern Black Sea in a brief ethnographic passage: "they are not barbarians at all nor do they live like them, but they have become more politically civilized and lawful through their intercourse with the Romans."³⁶⁸ Such a statement demonstrates that there was no hard and fast barrier between the barbarian and Roman or Byzantine worlds; the Lazi lived outside the empire yet they were not barbarians, according to Agathias, because they had changed as a result of their contact with Rome. While geographical or genealogical origins might affiliate an individual or group with the "barbarian" category, this did not always determine or prescribe behavior for groups or individuals as they were seen from the imperial center. The careers of multiple "barbarians" in the East Roman Empire discussed above illustrates this point.

One of the clearest examples of the distinction between "barbarian" as a fundamentally performative label, a category that could be transcended, and a particular ethnonym, understood to denote a community bounded by a shared belief in common ancestry, appears in a fourth-century reference to the Galatians in an oration of Themistius. The Galatians were a Celtic-speaking people who had crossed over into Anatolia from Europe in the 270s BC. After settling down in central Asia Minor they became one of the many players in the competitive world of the successor kingdoms of Alexander the Great until their territory was ultimately annexed by the Roman Empire in the first century BC. In the fourth century AD, which witnessed an increasing permeability of imperial frontiers, Themistius could use the example of the long-assimilated Galatians to predict that peoples such as the Goths would one day become law-abiding, tax-paying citizens and soldiers of the empire. Things turned out otherwise. Yet Themistius assumed that "[just as] now one no longer calls the Galatians 'barbarians' but would certainly call them Romans," the Gothic groups of his own day would eventually become politically and legally indistinguishable from other

³⁶⁷ For Cicero's notion of two *patria*e, "two fatherlands," see above, note 321. For Herodotus' definition of Hellenicity, see Herodotus, VIII, 144, 2.

³⁶⁸ Εἰσὶ τε οὐ βάρβαροι τὸ λοιπὸν οὐδὲ οὕτω βιοτεύουσιν, ἀλλ' ἐς τὸ πολιτικὸν τε καὶ ἔννομον μεταβέβληνται τῇ πρὸς Ῥωμαίους ἐπιμιξία (Agathias, III, 5, 4).

Romans. Such an assumption, however rhetorical the context, indicates that the actual permeability of frontier zones had its counterpart in the ideological sphere.³⁶⁹

What is particularly interesting in the Roman and Early Byzantine case is that membership in the civilized community does not seem to have been contingent upon abandonment of alternative, sub-Roman identities which could be maintained alongside newly acquired *Romanitas*. In the example above, the Galatians, whose name was derived from the Celtic-speaking invaders of the third century BC, could continue to be referred to as such after they became Romans. The same is true of other populations inhabiting other regions. Gauls, Egyptians, Thracians, Syrians—all of these ethno-geographical classifications continued in use alongside any subsequently-imposed or acquired Roman identity. While pejorative associations with the barbarian label certainly persisted throughout the centuries of the Roman and East Roman Empires, such negative bias did not preclude the integration of barbarian individuals and groups into the highest levels of the political system, nor was such integration predicated on the suppression of foreign ethnonyms and identities.

Bibliography

- Abramson M. S. (2008), *Ethnic Identity in Tang China*, Philadelphia.
- Adler E. (2011), *Valorizing the Barbarian: Barbarian Speeches in Roman Historiography*, Austin.
- Almagor E., Skinner J. (eds) (2013), *Ancient Ethnography: New Approaches*, New York.
- Amory P. (1997), *People and Identity in Ostrogothic Italy, 489-554*, Cambridge.
- Ando C. (2000), *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*, Berkeley.
- Bonfante L. (2011), "Classical and Barbarian," in L. Bonfante (ed.), *The Barbarians of Ancient Europe: Realities and Interactions*, Cambridge, p. 1-36.
- Burns T. S. (2009), *Rome and the Barbarians, 100 BC-AD 400*, Baltimore.
- Cameron Al., Long J. (1993), *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius*, Berkeley.
- Cameron Av. (2016), "Late Antiquity and Byzantium: An Identity Problem," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 40/1, p. 27-37.
- Cameron Av. (1985), *Procopius and the Sixth Century*, Berkeley.
- Cameron Av. (1970), *Agathias*, Oxford.

³⁶⁹ *Oration*, 16, 211c-d.

- Campbell G. L. (2006), *Strange Creatures: Anthropology in Antiquity*, London.
- Clark G. (2011), "Augustine and the Merciful Barbarians," in R. Mathisen, D. Shanzer (eds), *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity*, Farnham, p. 33-42.
- Croke B. (2001), *Count Marcellinus and His Chronicle*, Oxford.
- Curta F. (2001), *The Making of Slavs: History and Archaeology of the Lower Danube Region, c. 500-700*, Cambridge.
- Dan A. (2022), "Introduction: Barbarian Webs in Space and Time," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne*, 48/1, p. 407-420.
- Dauge Y. A. (1981), *Le Barbare : recherches sur la conception romaine de la barbarie et de la civilisation*, Bruxelles.
- Demougeot E. (1984), "Le *conubium* et la citoyenneté conféré aux soldats barbares du Bas-Empire," in A. Guarino, V. Giuffrè (eds), *Sodalitas: scritti in onore di Antonio Guarino*, vol. 4, Naples, p. 1633-1643.
- Diller H. (1962), "Die Hellenen-Barbaren Antithese im Zeitalter der Perserkriege," *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique*, 8, p. 39-68.
- Drijvers J. W. (2011), "A Roman Image of the 'Barbarian' Sasanians," in R. W. Mathisen, D. Shanzer (eds), *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity*, Farnham, p. 67-76.
- Elton H. (2000), "The Nature of the Sixth-Century Isaurians," in S. Mitchell, G. Greatrex (eds), *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, London, p. 293-307.
- Ford R. B. (2022), "Anger as an Ethnographic Trope: Changing Views from Aristotle to Seneca," in D. Konstan (ed.), *Emotions across Cultures: Ancient China and Greece*, Berlin, p. 143-168.
- Ford R. B. (2020), *Rome, China, and the Barbarians: Ethnographic Traditions and the Transformation of Empires*, Cambridge.
- Fornara C. W. (1983), *The Nature of History in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Berkeley.
- Garnsey P. (2004), "Roman Citizenship and Roman Law," in S. Swain, M. Edwards (eds), *Approaching Late Antiquity: The Transformation from Early to Late Empire*, Oxford, p. 133-155.
- Garnsey P., Humfress C. (2001), *The Evolution of the Late Antique World*, Cambridge.
- Gillett A. (2009), "The Mirror of Jordanes: Concepts of the Barbarian, Then and Now," in P. Rousseau (ed.), *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, Malden, p. 392-408.
- Goffart W. (2006), *Barbarian Tides: The Migration Age and the Later Roman Empire*, Philadelphia.
- Goffart W. (2005), *The Narrators of Barbarian History: Jordanes, Gregory of Tours, Bede, and Paul the Deacon*, Notre Dame.

- Golden P. B. (1992), *An Introduction to the History of the Turkic Peoples: Ethnogenesis and State-Formation in Medieval and Early Modern Eurasia and the Middle East*, Wiesbaden.
- Greatrex G. (2014), "Perceptions of Procopius in Recent Scholarship," *Histos*, 8, p. 76-121.
- Greatrex G. (2000), "Roman Identity in the Sixth Century," in S. Mitchell, G. Greatrex (eds), *Ethnicity and Culture in Late Antiquity*, London, p. 267-292.
- Gruen E. S. (2011), *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, Princeton.
- Guran P. (2012), "Late Antiquity in Byzantium," in S. F. Johnson (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, Oxford, p. 1148-1171.
- Hall E. (1989), *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, Oxford.
- Hall J. M. (2002), *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture*, Chicago.
- Hall J. M. (1997), *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, Cambridge.
- Hartog F. (1988) *The Mirror of Herodotus: The Representation of the Other in the Writing of History*, Berkeley [trans. J. Lloyd].
- Heather P. J. (2017), *The Restoration of Rome: Barbarian Popes and Imperial Pretenders*, Oxford.
- Heather P. J. (2006), *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*, Oxford.
- Heather P. J. (1999), "The Barbarian in Late Antiquity," in R. Miles (ed.), *Constructing Identities in Late Antiquity*, New York, p. 234-258.
- Heather P. J., Mathews J. (1991), *The Goths in the Fourth Century*, Liverpool.
- Janin R. (1964), *Constantinople byzantine : développement urbain et répertoire topographique*, Paris.
- Jones C. P. (1996), "ἔθνος and γένος in Herodotus," *Classical Quarterly*, 46/2, p. 315-320.
- Kaldellis A. (2019), *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium*, Cambridge, MA.
- Kaldellis A. (2013), *Ethnography after Antiquity: Foreign Lands and Peoples in Byzantine Literature*, Philadelphia.
- Kaldellis A. (2004), *Procopius of Caesarea: Tyranny, History, and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*, Philadelphia.
- Kazhdan A. (1991), "Byzantium," in A. Kazhdan et al. (ed.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford.
- Kim H. J., Konstan D. (2022), "The Emergence of the Barbarian," *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne*, 48/1, p. 420-439.
- Kulikowski M. (2016), *The Triumph of Empire: The Roman World from Hadrian to Constantine*, Cambridge, MA.
- Kulikowski M. (2007), *Rome's Gothic Wars: From the Third Century to Alaric*, Cambridge.

- Ladner G. B. (1976), "On Roman Attitudes toward Barbarians in Late Antiquity," *Viator*, 7, p. 1-26.
- Lechner K. (1955), "Byzanz und die Barbaren," *Saeculum*, 6, p. 292-306.
- Lenski N. (1997), "Initium mali Romano imperio: Contemporary Reactions to the Battle of Adrianople," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 127, p. 129-168.
- Liebeschuetz W. (1998), "Citizen Status and Law in the Roman Empire and the Visigothic Kingdom," in W. Pohl, H. Reimitz (eds), *Strategies of Distinction: The Construction of Ethnic Communities, 300-800*, Leiden, p. 131-152.
- Lillington-Martin C., Turquois E. (eds) (2018), *Procopius of Caesarea: Literary and Historical Interpretations*, London.
- Litvinsky B. A. (1996), "The Hephthalite Empire," in B. A. Litvinsky, G. Zhang, R. S. Samghabadi (eds), *History of Civilizations of Central Asia III: The Crossroads of Civilizations: AD 250 to 750*, Paris, p. 135-161.
- Long T. (1986), *Barbarians in Greek Comedy*, Carbondale-Edwardsville.
- Maas M. (2003), "Delivered from Their Ancient Customs': Christianity and the Question of Cultural Change in Byzantine Ethnography," in K. Mills, A. Grafton (eds), *Conversion in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages: Seeing and Believing*, Rochester, NY, p. 152-188.
- Maas M. (1992), "Ethnicity, Orthodoxy and Community in Salvian of Marseilles," in J. Drinkwater, H. Elton (eds), *Fifth-Century Gaul: A Crisis of Identity?*, Cambridge, p. 275-284.
- Malkin I. (ed.) (2001), *Ancient Perceptions of Greek Ethnicity*, Cambridge, MA.
- Martindale J. R. (1992), *The Prosopography of the Late Roman Empire*, vol. IIIa, IIIb, Cambridge.
- Martindale J. R. (1980), *The Prosopography of the Late Roman Empire*, vol. II, Cambridge.
- Mathisen R. W. (2021), "Personal Identity in the Later Roman Empire," in C. Brélaz, E. Rose (eds), *Civic Identity and Civic Participation in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, Turnhout, p. 215-248.
- Mathisen R. W. (2006), "Peregrini, Barbari, and Cives Romani: Concepts of Citizenship and the Legal Identity of Barbarians in the Later Roman Empire," *American Historical Review*, 111/4, p. 1011-1040.
- McDonough S. (2011), "Were the Sasanians Barbarians? Roman Writers on the 'Empire of the Persians,'" in R. W. Mathisen, D. Shanzer (eds), *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity*, Farnham, p. 55-65.
- McEvoy M. (2016), "Becoming Roman?: The Not-So-Curius Case of Aspar and the Ardaburi" *Journal of Late Antiquity*, 9/2, p. 483-511.
- Müller K. E. (1980), *Geschichte der antiken Ethnographie und ethnologischen Theoriebildung: Von den Anfängen bis auf die byzantinischen Historiographen*, Teil II, Wiesbaden.

- Parnell D. A. (2015), "Barbarians and Brothers in Arms: Byzantines on Barbarian Soldiers in the Sixth Century," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 108/2, p. 809-825.
- Pausch D. (ed.) (2010), *Stimmen der Geschichte: Funktionen von Reden in der antiken Historiographie*, Berlin.
- Pohl W. (2013), "Introduction—Strategies of Identification: A Methodological Profile," in W. Pohl, G. Heydemann (eds), *Strategies of Identification: Ethnicity and Religion in Medieval Europe*, Turnhout, p. 1-64.
- Rives J. B. (1999), *Tacitus, Germania*, Oxford [translated with Introduction and Commentary].
- Romm J. S. (1992), *Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought: Geography, Explanation, and Fiction*, Princeton.
- Sarantis A. (2010), "The Justinianic Herules: From Allied Barbarians to Roman Provincials," in F. Curta (ed.), *Neglected Barbarians*, Turnhout, p. 361-402.
- Schönfeld M. (1911), *Wörterbuch der Altgermanischen Personen- und Völkernamen*, Heidelberg.
- Stevenson W. (2002), "Sozomen, Barbarians, and Early Byzantine Historiography," *Greek Roman and Byzantine Studies*, 43/1, p. 51-75.
- Teall J. (1965), "The Barbarians in Justinian's Armies," *Speculum*, 40/2, p. 294-322.
- Thomas R. (1982), *Lands and Peoples in Augustan Poetry: The Ethnographical Tradition*, Cambridge, MA.
- Vanderspoel J. (1995), *Themistius and the Imperial Court: Oratory, Civic Duty, and Paideia from Constantius to Theodosius*, Ann Arbor.
- Vlassopoulos K. (2013), *Greeks and Barbarians*, Cambridge.
- Whately C. (2013), "Militarization, or the Rise of a Distinct Military Culture? The East Roman Ruling Elite in the Sixth Century AD," in S. O'Brien, D. Boatright (eds), *Warfare and Society in the Ancient Eastern Mediterranean: Papers Arising from a Colloquium Held at the University of Liverpool*, Oxford, p. 49-57.
- Whittaker C. R. (1994), *Frontiers of the Roman Empire: A Social and Economic Study*, Baltimore.
- Wolfram H. (1990), *History of the Goths*, Berkeley [trans. T. J. Dunlap].
- Wolf G. (2011), *Tales of the Barbarian: Ethnography and Empire in the Roman West*, Malden, MA.
- Wolf G. (1998), *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul*, Cambridge.

Randolph Ford