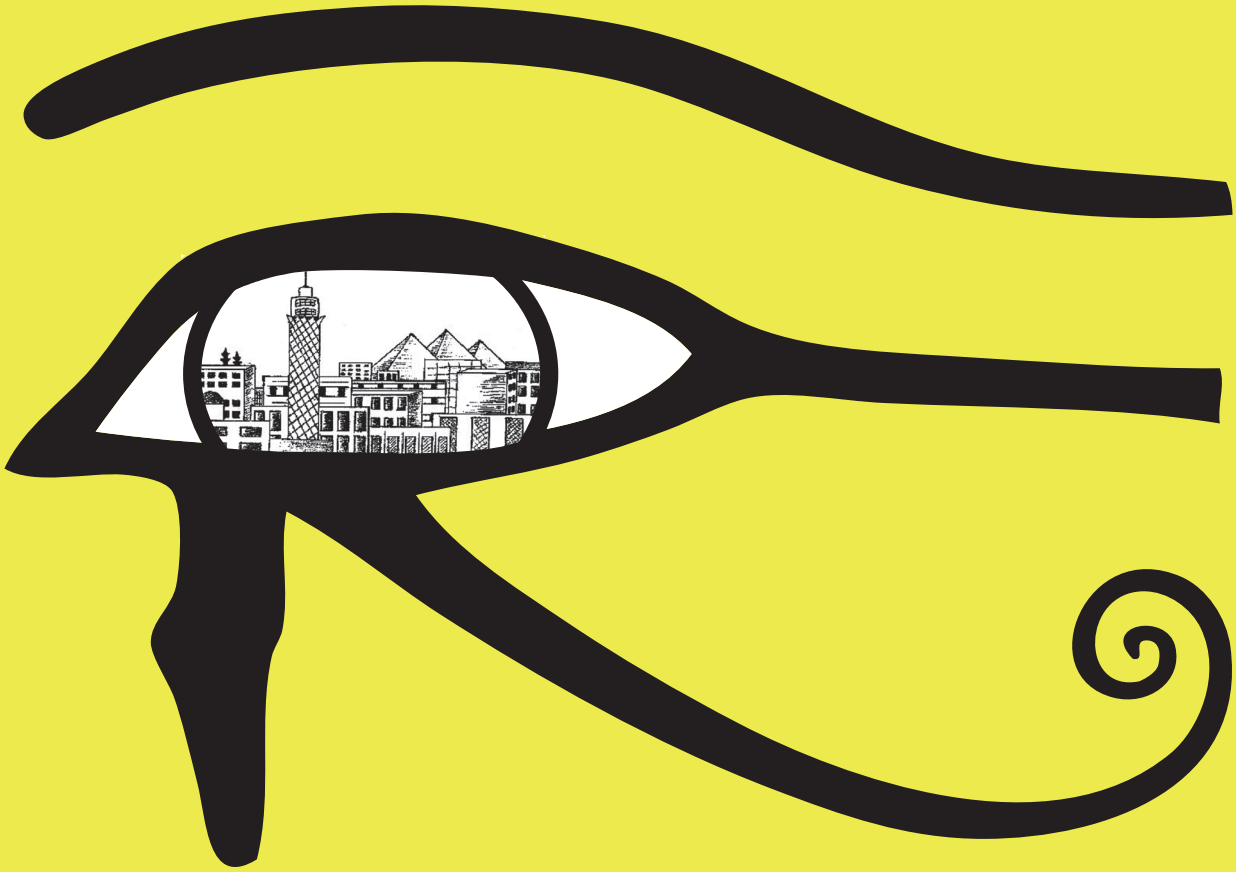

EGYPT YESTERDAY AND TODAY

Between Tradition and Modernity

Edited by

Karol Myśliwiec, Katarzyna Pachniak

Karolina Nabożna, Edyta Wolny-Abouelwafa

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INSTITUTE OF MEDITERRANEAN AND ORIENTAL CULTURES
POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
&
DEPARTMENT OF ARABIC AND ISLAMIC STUDIES
FACULTY OF ORIENTAL STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF WARSAW

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WARSAW 2019

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Table of Contents

Introduction

Mysterious Egypt has always attracted the attention of foreigners. As long ago as Pharaonic times, the country fascinated visitors, and its culture is a subject of research until today. After the Muslim conquest, Egypt became an amalgamate of Islam and Christianity. Subsequent Muslim dynasties have left their mark on architecture and culture. The Aghlabids, the Fatimids, the Mamluks erected remarkable buildings and left a permanent imprint on science, culture and literature. Later, the country became a province of the Ottoman Empire, but it still remained an important point on the map of the Middle East. In 1798 Napoleon's expedition reached Egypt, gathering a multitude of scientific records left by the country's glorious past. In the nineteenth century, Egypt became the arena of an Arab revival, Al-Nahda, whilst in the twentieth it was a centre of turbulent political events. After the overthrow of the monarchy, Egypt was first to follow a policy based on socialism and pan-Arabism. In recent years, the country has been shaken by the vehement events of the Arab Spring, that led to the seizure of power by Muslim Brotherhood groups, and subsequently, to the return of military rule.

The present volume is the fruit of a conference that took place on the 27th and 28th of November 2017 at the University of Warsaw. The meeting was co-organised by The Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences and The Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw. The conference was conceived as an interdisciplinary exchange of ideas. Its organisers managed to gather representatives from various fields: Arabists, archaeologists, political scientists, sociologists and others. The theme was Egypt and its civilisation from the earliest times until today, and thus it became the first symposium organised in Poland with respect to such a broad interdisciplinary spectrum. The conference developed into a place of far-reaching exchanges of experiences, providing the opportunity to discuss various problems from the perspective of different fields represented by the participants, using different intellectual tools and methodologies. Not only the papers gathered in this volume, but also fruitful discussions, have demonstrated the necessity of an interdisciplinary approach in further studies focusing on various aspects of Egyptian civilisation.

One of the aims of the publication, encompassing some of the papers read during the conference, is to encourage other scholars to present their ideas at the next multidisciplinary conferences on ancient and modern Egypt that we intend to organise in Poland.

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Nobility Marrying Divinity in Pharaonic Egypt

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Summary
The continuous tradition of theological coupling of a human being with a god in ancient Egypt may be traced back at least up to the mid-third millennium BC. For various reasons, the idea was institutionalised as female priesthood, including mainly priestesses of goddess Hathor (Old Kingdom) and the god's wives of Amun (New Kingdom – Late Period). Based on recent discoveries in an Old Kingdom necropolis adjacent to the funerary complex of king Djoser in Saqqara (Saqqāra), the author analyses the origin of the idea, suggesting that the latter was an instrument of political theology, and the earliest god associated with noblewomen functioning as priestesses was the living pharaoh identified with various divinities, particularly with the sun god.

Keywords
priestess, god, Hathor, Amun, Saqqara, Old Kingdom, New Kingdom, Late Period

Prologue

A key dogma of Christianity, one of the great religions with Near Eastern roots, is the birth of the divine child Jesus from an immaculate earthly mother, made pregnant and saint by the Holy Spirit without any contribution by the carpenter Joseph, Mary's elderly husband.

The religious implications of this miraculous relationship were and still are subject to theological interpretations.[1] Our aim is to draw a diachronic retrospection of similar ideas in pharaonic Egypt, particularly with respect to their instrumental role in political theology.

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[1] S.C. Napiórkowski, T. Siudy, K. Kowalik (eds), *Duch Święty a Maryja. Materiały z sympozjum zorganizowanego przez Katedrę Mariologii KUL oraz Oddział PTT w Częstochowie, Częstochowa, 22–23 maja 1998 roku*, Polskie Towarzystwo Mariologiczne, Częstochowa, 1999; I should like to thank Professor Józef Naumowicz for precious bibliographic information concerning the matter.

The concept of an intercourse between a queen and a demiurge is best illustrated in its iconographic version found in the temple of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut (18th Dynasty, ca. 1479–1458 BC) at Deir el-Bahari (Ad-Dayr al-Baḥarī) (Fig. 1)[2] and in the temple of Amenhotep III (18th Dynasty, ca. 1388–1351 BC) in Luxor (Fig. 2).[3] In the first case, the Theban god Amun, the head of local pantheon, meets the queen Ahmes, wife of the pharaoh Tuthmosis I, and in the second – he appears with the queen Mutemwia, wife of Tuthmosis IV, always with a procreative intention.

God's wives

The role of noble women as consorts of a god was institutionalised in Thebes with respect to the function of the god's wife of Amun.[4] After the New Kingdom, the role played by this caste of noblewomen became extremely important, especially when they started functioning as a sort of Theban *alter ego* for kings who resided in Memphis or a Lower Egyptian capital, e.g. Bubastis or Sais. This function of the holy virgins is particularly well attested in the Bubastide, Kushite and Saite Dynasties.[5] Gods' wives of royal origin could then frame their names with cartouches, build sanctuaries decorated with reliefs in which they were represented as performing rituals of a royal character (e.g. Fig. 3 a–b),

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2 J. Iwaszczuk, *Sacred landscape of Thebes during the reign of Hatshepsut. Royal construction projects, vol. 2: Topographical bibliography of the West Bank*, Instytut Kultur Śródziemnomorskich i Orientalnych PAN, Varsovie, 2016, pp. 51–56; B. Porter, R. L. B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings. II, Theban Temples. Second Edition, Revised and Augmented*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1972, pp. 348–349 (II, Lower register); H. Brunner, *Die Geburt des Gottkönigs. Studien zur Überlieferung eines altägyptischen Mythos*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1964, pp. 3–5, 12–166; H. Brunner, *Geburtslegende*, [in:] *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Band II, Erntefest – Hordjedef*, W. Helck, W. Westendorf (eds), Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1977, col. 475; L. Gabolde, *Hatshepsut at Karnak: A Woman under God's Commands*, [in:] J. M. Galán, B. M. Bryan, P. F. Dorman (eds), *Creativity and Innovation in the Reign of Hatshepsut*, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Chicago, Illinois, 2014, pp. 33–35.

3 B. Porter, R. L. B. Moss, op. cit., pp. 326–327; H. Brunner, *Die Geburt des...*, op. cit., pp. 6–7, 12–166; H. Brunner, *Geburtslegende...*, op. cit., col. 475.

4 M. F. Ayad, *God`s Wife, God`s Servant. The God`s Wife of Amun [c. 740–525 BC]*, Routledge, Oxon and New York, 2009, pp. 4–14; M. Gitton, J. Leclant, *Gottesgemahlin*, [in:] op. cit., W. Helck, W. Westendorf (eds), col. 792–812; however, according to Hellmut Brunner, the legend coupling queens with gods was connected with the institution of god's wives in the times of the 19th Dynasty at the earliest (H. Brunner, *Geburtslegende...*, op. cit., col. 476, footnote 4); see: A. El Hawary, *The Figurative Power of Prayer. The "Ode to the Goddess" (EA 194) as a Theological Justification for Establishing the Office of the God's Wife of Amun as an Institution at the End of the 20th Dynasty*, [in:] M. Becker, A. I. Blöbaum, A. Lohwasser (eds), "*Prayer and Power". Proceedings of the Conference on the God's Wives of Amun in Egypt during the First Millennium BC*, Ugarit-Verlag, Münster, 2016, pp. 9–20.

5 M. F. Ayad, op. cit., pp. 15–28; M. Gitton, J. Leclant, op. cit., col. 797–801, 804–805; see: R. Meffre, *Political Changes in Thebes during the Late Libyan Period and the Relationship between Local Rulers and Thebes*, [in:] M. Becker, A. I. Blöbaum, A. Lohwasser (eds), op. cit., pp. 47–60; M. F. Ayad, *Gender, Ritual, and Manipulation of Power. The God's Wife of Amun (Dynasty 23–26)*, [in:] M. Becker, A. I. Blöbaum, A. Lohwasser (eds), op. cit., pp. 89–106; R. G. Morkot, *The Late-Libyan and Kushite God's Wives. Historical and Art-historical Questions*, [in:] M. Becker, A. I. Blöbaum, A. Lohwasser (eds), op. cit., pp. 107–120; A. Lohwasser, "*Nubianess" and the God's Wives of the 25th Dynasty. Office Holders, the Institution, Reception and Reaction*, [in:] M. Becker, A. I. Blöbaum, A. Lohwasser (eds), *"Prayer and Power"*…, op. cit., pp. 121–136; A. I. Blöbaum, *The Nitocris Adoption Stela. Representation of Royal Dominion and Regional Elite Power*, [in:] M. Becker, A. I. Blöbaum, A. Lohwasser (eds), *"Prayer and Power"*…, op. cit., pp. 183–204.

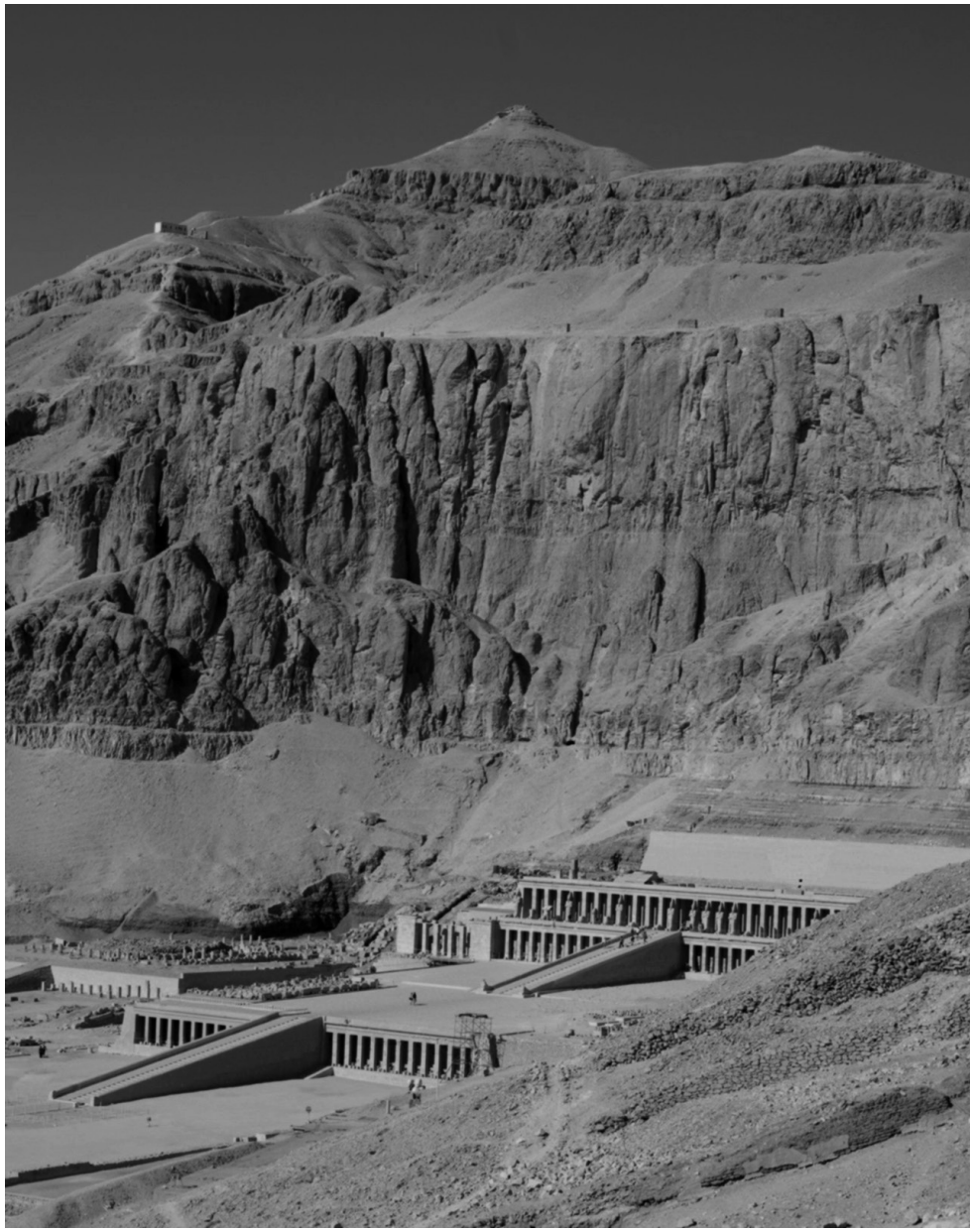

Fig. 1. The temple of the female pharaoh Hatshepsut at Deir el-Bahari [photo by Karol Myśliwiec]

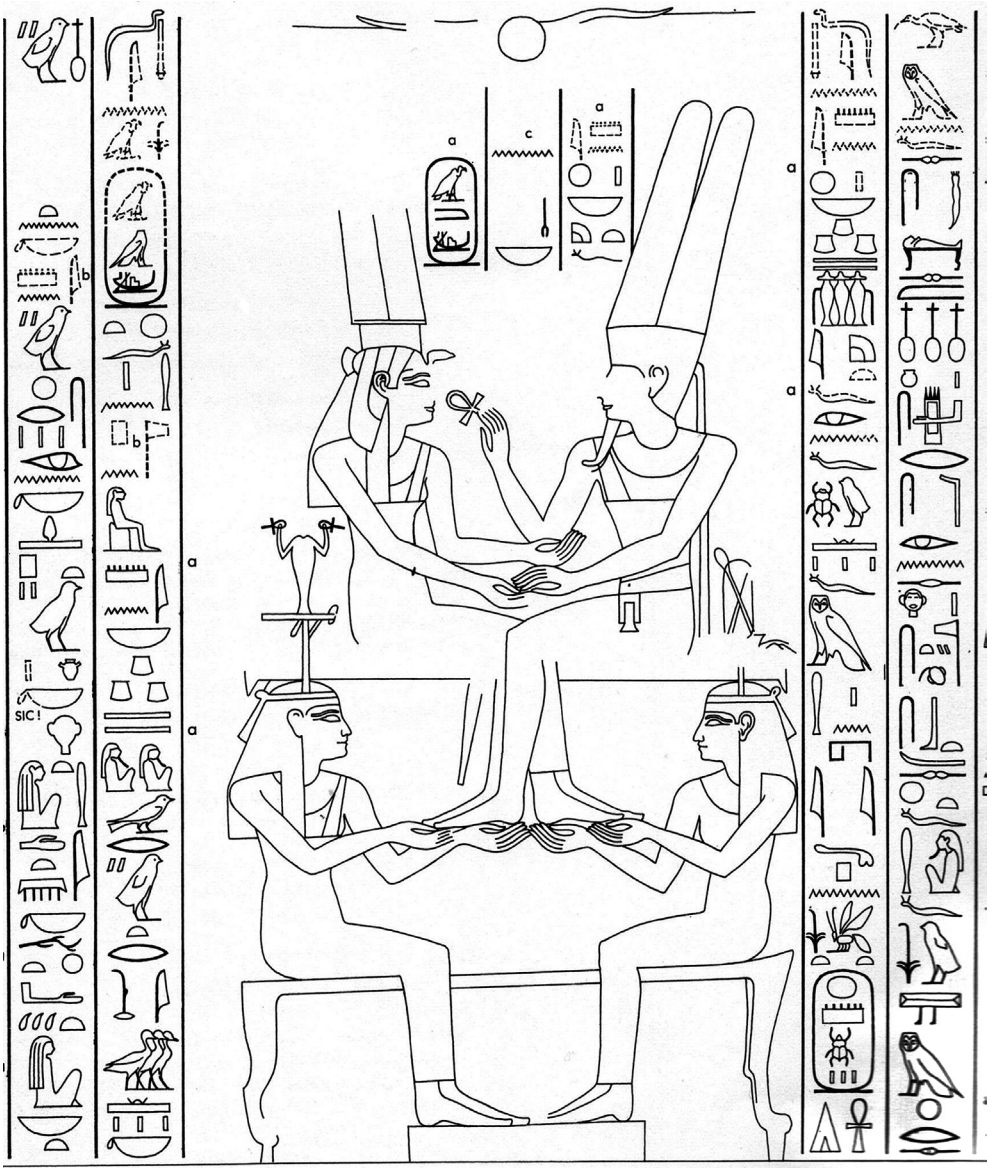

Fig. 2. Intimate meeting of queen Mutemwia, mother of king Amenhotep III, with god Amun. Relief in the temple of Amenhotep III in Luxor [drawing after Hellmut Brunner, Die Geburt des Gottkönigs. Studien zur Überlieferung eines altägyptischen Mythos ("Ägyptologische Abhandlungen" 10), Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1964, Taf. 4]

a)

b)

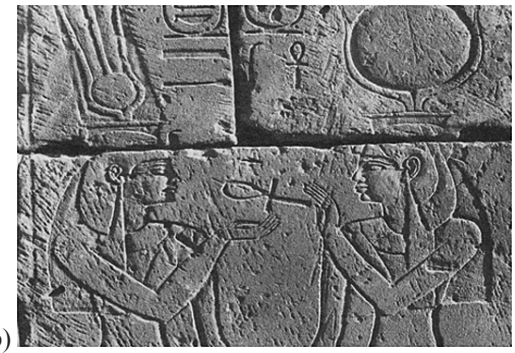

Fig. 3. a) Amenardis I, daughter of Kushite king Kashta. Relief in the chapel of Osiris-Hekadjet, Karnak [photo by Zbigniew Doliński]. b) Ankhnesneferibre, daughter of Psammetich II, receiving the sign of life from goddess Isis (right). Relief in a chapel in Karnak [photo by Karol Myśliwiec]

a)

b)

c)

Fig. 4. False door stelae of three priestesses of Hathor, from the 6th Dynasty necropolis west of the Djoser complex in Saqqara:
a) Kheti [photo by Jarosław Dąbrowski];
b) Khekeret [photo by Wojciech Wojciechowski];
c) Djesti [photo by Jarosław Dąbrowski]

and even replace a male priest in the function of the first prophet of Amun, i.e. the head of Theban priesthood.[6] Although this religious institution had disappeared at the beginning of the first Persian rule (27th Dynasty), its echoes seem to have survived in Egyptian temples up to the Ptolemaic Period.[7]

However, the idea of coupling priestesses with a god may possibly be traced back to the Middle Kingdom,[8] which would retrospectively link this period to the Old Kingdom, when another religious institution emphasised the role of noblewomen in political theology, this time in the shadow of Hathor, goddess of love and fertility.[9]

Priestesses of Hathor

Several hundred priestesses related to this goddess are recorded in Egyptian texts from this long period.[10] Unlike the greatest Amun's wives from the Late Period, but like their New Kingdom homologues, the Old Kingdom priestesses were not bound to remain virgins. On the contrary, they could fully realise their progenitive functions as wives of high officials, which does not exclude the eventuality that some, or even many of them, became priestesses because they could not find a husband of equal social rank.

The real prerogatives of these ladies are still a subject of controversy. However, some new records that may contribute to the elucidation of this enigma have recently been discovered in the Old Kingdom necropolis located west of the Djoser pyramid enclosure.[11] All these objects date from the 6th Dynasty. Six female individuals bearing the title *ḥmt-nṯr Hwt-Ḥr* are attested in epigraphic inscriptions from this site (Fig. 4 a–c).[12] The epithets added to their

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6 M. F. Ayad, *God`s Wife*…, op. cit., pp. 27–28, 140–141; M. Gitton, J. Leclant, *Gottesgemahlin*..., op. cit., col. 805, no. 31; see: A. Hallmann, *Iconography of Prayer and Power. Portrayals of the God's Wife Ankhnesneferibre in the Osiris Chapels at Karnak*, [in:] M. Becker, A. I. Blöbaum, A. Lohwasser (eds), *"Prayer and Power"*…, op. cit., pp. 205–222.

7 M. Gitton, J. Leclant, op. cit., col. 802, note 150; H. G. Fischer, *Priesterin*, [in:] *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Band IV, Megiddo – Pyramiden*, W. Helck, W. Westendorf (eds), Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1982, col. 1103 (§ III).

8 M. F. Ayad, *God`s Wife*…, op. cit., pp. 4–7; M. Gitton, J. Leclant, op. cit., col. 792, 802 (no. 1); H. G. Fischer, op. cit., col. 1104, notes 11–19.

9 H. G. Fischer, op. cit., col. 1100–1101, notes 1–9.

10 R. A. Gillam, *Priestesses of Hathor: Their Function, Decline and Disappearance*, [in:] "Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt", 1995, vol. XXXII, pp. 211–237; R. J. Leprohon, *The Sixth Dynasty False Door of the Priestess of Hathor Irti*, [in:] "Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt", 1994, vol. XXXI, pp. 41–47; P. Der Manuelian, *A Case of Prefabrication at Giza? The False Door of Inti*, [in:] "Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt", 1998, vol. XXXV, pp. 115–127; K. Myśliwiec, K. Kuraszkiewicz, *Two more Old Kingdom Priestesses of Hathor in Saqqara*, [in:] K. M. Ciałowicz, J. A. Ostrowski (eds), *Les civilisations du bassin méditerranéen. Hommages à Joachim Śliwa*, Université Jagellonne, Institut d'Archéologie, Cracovie, 2000, p. 145, note 3.

11 K. Myśliwiec, *Trois millénaires à l'ombre de Djéser: chronologie d'une nécropole*, [in:] C. Zivie-Coche, I. Guermeur (eds), *« Parcourir l'éternité ». Hommages à Jean Yoyotte. Tome II*, Brepols, Turnhout, 2012, passim.

12 K. O. Kuraszkiewicz, *Old Kingdom Structures between the Step Pyramid Complex and the Dry Moat*. Part 1, *Architecture and Development of the Necropolis*, K. Myśliwiec (ed.), Neriton, Varsovie, 2013, p. 295 (no. 3).

names seem to be diagnostic. All of these denominations refer them to the pharaoh. Whenever a priestess of Hathor is endowed with an additional title, she is either a *rḫt-njswt* ("king's acquaintance"),[13] a *špst-njswt* ("noblewoman of the king")[14] or sometimes *ḫkrt-njswt* (*wʿtt*) ("king's (sole) adornment").[15] The latter epithet echoes even in the name of one of them, *Ḥkrt* ("The Adornment") (Fig. 4 b).[16]

This nomenclature indicates the main quality of the priestesses: their close relation to the king. How close? This question is not irrelevant, especially with respect to those priestesses who were married. This was, for instance, the case of the consorts of Merefenbef and Nyankhnefertem (Fig. 5), the owners of the most interesting and best preserved mastabas in the necropolis under discussion.[17]

Son of a king-god?

Particularly diagnostic is the case of Nyankhnefertem, his wife Seshseshet and their large progeny.[18] In the scene spanning his funerary chapel's east wall, just opposite the entrance, Temi (tomb owner's nickname) is represented eight times in the company of his sons and, in two cases, his wife.[19] Worth attention is the differentiation of his attire and other attributes. In seven segments of this symmetrically composed *tableau de famille*, the tomb owner is shown wearing an apron with a triangularly protruding front part, holding a long staff in one hand and a handkerchief in the other (Fig. 6a).[20] His outfit is different in only one scene, the one showing him in the company of his two youngest sons, both named Mereri (Fig. 6 b).[21] Unlike

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[13] Ibidem, p. 295 (no. 2).

[14] Ibidem, p. 292 (no. 45) – omitted on p. 295.

[15] Ibidem, p. 204 – omitted on p. 294 (no. 55); for the discussion on the possible meanings of this epithet, cf. M. Baud, *Famille royale et pouvoir sous l'Ancien Empire égyptien. Tome 1*, Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale, Le Caire, 1999, pp. 128–130.

[16] K. O. Kuraszkiewicz, op. cit., p. 292 (no. 45).

[17] Ibidem, p. 289 (no. 26) and p. 291 (no. 36); see: K. Myśliwiec, K. O. Kuraszkiewicz et al., *The Tomb of Merefnebef*, Neriton, Varsovie, 2004; K. Myśliwiec, K. O. Kuraszkiewicz et al., *The Funerary Complex of Nyankhnefertem*, K. Myśliwiec, M. Radomska (eds), Neriton, Varsovie, 2010; K. Myśliwiec, *Fefi and Temi: posthumous neighbours (Sixth Dynasty, Saqqara)*, [in:] Kh. Daoud, Sh. Bedier, S. Abd el-Fatah (eds), *Studies in Honor of Ali Radwan. Vol. II*, Conseil Suprême des Antiquités de l'Égypte, Le Caire, 2005, pp. 197–211.

[18] K. Myśliwiec, K. O. Kuraszkiewicz et al., *The Funerary Complex*..., op. cit., pp. 127–130.

[19] Ibidem, pp. 139–152; K. Myśliwiec, *The Scheme 2 x 4 in the Decoration of Old Kingdom Tombs*, [in:] Z. A. Hawass, J. Richards (eds), *The Archaeology and Art of Ancient Egypt. Essays in Honor of David B. O'Connor. Vol. II*, Conseil Suprême des Antiquités de l'Égypte, Le Caire, 2007, pp. 195–202.

[20] K. Myśliwiec, K. O. Kuraszkiewicz et al., *The Funerary Complex*..., op. cit., Fig. 51, Pls. LXX–LXXV and LXXVIII–LXXXVII.

[21] Ibidem, Pl. LXXVI; K. Myśliwiec, *The Mysterious Mereris, Sons of Ny-ankh-nefertem (Sixth Dynasty, Saqqara)*, [in:] A. Woods, A. McFarlane, S. Binder (eds), *Egyptian Culture and Society. Studies in Honour of Naguib Kanawati. Vol. II.*, Conseil Suprême des Antiquités de l'Égypte, [Le Caire], 2010, pp. 73–74, Fig. 1 a–b.

Fig. 5. The façade of the funerary chapel of Nyankhnefertem, 6th Dynasty, Saqqara. Top of the pyramid of Djoser in the background [photo by Jarosław Dąbrowski]

a) 

b) 

Fig. 6. Two of the eight parallel scenes sculpted on the east wall of the chapel:
a) tomb owner with his eldest son [photo by Wojciech Wojciechowski];
b) tomb owner with his (?) youngest sons, both named Mereri [photo by Wojciech Wojciechowski]

a)

b)

Fig. 7. Iconoclastic retouches in the central scene. Tomb owner accompanied by his wife and a son whose name has been destroyed and replaced with that of a Mereri [photos by Wojciech Wojciechowski]

Fig. 8. Retouches on the west wall of the chapel: two figures (c–d) of the four sacred oil bearers (a–d) inscribed secondarily for Mereris, the youngest sons of the tomb owner [photos by Wojciech Wojciechowski]

a)

b)

Fig. 9. a) Procession of offering bearers sculpted on the chapel's north wall, with secondary inscriptions mentioning brothers Mereri (2nd and 5th figure) [drawing by Kamil Kuraszkiewicz]

b) Inscription of Mereri (2nd figure) with the epithet z3.f nj ḫt.f [photo by Wojciech Wojciechowski]

in the parallel segments, showing the other sons as adults (e.g. his eldest son represented in four scenes as the sole companion of his father) (Fig. 6 a),[22] the two Mereris are featured as nude boys (Fig. 6 b). Their father wears a tight ceremonial apron[23] and holds the *ḥrp* sceptre replacing the handkerchief. These iconographic features emphasise the exceptional importance of the relationship between Temi and both Mereris. It is certainly not the importance of a specific moment or ceremony, for the eight segments of the *tableau* do not attest any historicity, but rather illustrate universal aspects of the father-son relationship. The contents and composition of each detail were evidently intentionally devised by the tomb owner during his lifetime, the best proof of which is the predominating position of the eldest son. Why have the latter's youngest brothers, still children, been distinguished in such an ostentatious way?

The reaction of the two Mereris, visible in some iconoclastic retouches performed later on reliefs decorating this chapel, is surprising (Figs. 7–9). They must have been deeply frustrated with the position that the tomb owner ascribed them in his vision of the family. After Temi's death or at the very end of his life, they proceeded to undertake a sort of rewriting of his 'iconographic testament' by chiselling out some fragments of figures and inscriptions, or by adding new elements to the already existing ones. Iconoclasts fighting for the truth?

On the east wall, they destroyed the head and the name of an older brother who was represented in a central scene as the counterpart of his mother's figure (Fig. 7).[24] The original name has been replaced with the name Mereri written with red ink. On the west wall, the same name appears twice in the secondary, very neglectfully crafted inscriptions added to the figures of two bearers of sacred oils in a vertical sequence of four scenes framing a false door (Fig. 8 c–d).[25] But the most significant changes were made on the chapel's north wall, where the lowermost register shows a procession of offering bearers (Fig. 9).[26] The figures of the bearers were originally anonymous, and the space between them painted black. Somebody added later names and titles to these figures, partly incising them in the black background, and partly writting on it with red ink. The procession begins with five figures labelled as sons of Temi, and two of them are named Mereri (Fig. 9a).

These two figures deserve special attention. They do not appear at the end of the sequence, but in second and fifth place. Evidently one of them occupied a higher position than the other in the family's hierarchy, as he comes directly after the tomb owner's eldest son.[27] His legend

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[22] K. Myśliwiec, K. O. Kuraszkiewicz et al., *The Funerary Complex...*, op. cit., Pls. LXX, LXXVIII, LXXX, LXXXII, LXXXIV; K. Myśliwiec, *Father's and eldest son's overlapping feet. An iconographic message*, [in:] Z. Hawass, P. Der Manuelian, R. B. Hussein (eds), *Perspectives on Ancient Egypt. Studies in Honor of Edward Brovarski*, Conseil Suprême des Antiquités de l'Égypte, Le Caire, 2010, p. 306, Figs. 1–2.

[23] E. Staehelin, *Untersuchungen zur ägyptischen Tracht im Alten Reich*, Verlag Bruno Hessling, Berlin, 1966, pp. 24–30.

[24] K. Myśliwiec, K. O. Kuraszkiewicz et al., *The Funerary Complex...*, op. cit., pp. 145–146 (Scene 2), Figs. 51–52, Pls. LXX–LXXIII.

[25] Ibidem, pp. 163–165 (b–c), Fig. 54, Pls. XCIII–XLV, CII.

[26] Ibidem, pp. 176–181, Figs. 56–57, Pls. CIII–CIV, CVI, CIX–CXI.

[27] Ibidem, p. 177 (no. 2), Fig. 57, Pls. CIII–CIV, CIX, CX b.

is incised. The inscription of the second Mereri, coming in fifth place, was partly incised and then partly retouched with red ink. The epigraphy of these secondary inscriptions does not leave any doubts concerning their authorship: they were executed by one and the same person, probably in a single iconoclastic session.

The legend of the Mereri occupying second place in the sequence is eloquent in a surprising way. Its author describes the "beloved son" of the tomb owner as a *z3.f nj ḫt.f* ("his son of his body").[28] This epithet was formerly used in the titulature of royal sons, and had been all but forgotten in the times of the 6th Dynasty.[29] Why was this archaism, otherwise totally absent among the titles of the nobility buried in the necropolis under discussion,[30] anachronically used for the son of a middle class priest and "privy to (royal) secrets"?[31] Either Mereri was a shrewd pretender or he was in fact conceived by a priestess of Hathor (Seshseshet, Nyankhnefertem's wife) and a king (Pepi I?) in a conceivable union of nobility with divinity.

The second eventuality seems more plausible than the first one. We would then have to admit that Temi was aware of this coincidence, and that he *nolens volens* had to consider the two Mereris as his youngest sons. Nevertheless, he honoured them with his ceremonial attire and insignia in the scene showing him as their father (Fig. 6 b). The genuine sons of the tomb owner could not enjoy these circumstances, and there was doubtless a conflict opposing them to the young Mereris. As the iconoclastic and epigraphic retouches on the walls of the chapel, inspired or executed by the latter, were still admissible or tolerable for the family, we have to conclude that the youngest sons were winners in this controversy, which might confirm the legitimacy of their claim.

Was one more upstart, similar to Merefnebef, the owner of the adjacent tomb (Fig. 10)? An argument in favour of this hypothesis is the existence of a small funerary chapel inscribed for a vizier Mereri, erected at the northeastern edge of the huge funerary complex built earlier for the families of Ptahhotep and Akhtihotep (Figs. 10–11).[32] The location of this modest architectural appendix in the vicinity of the Nyankhnefertem's mastaba (Fig. 10), as well as its modest dimensions, and its chronological coherence with that mastaba, allow one to posit that the poor vizier, who was not even able to build a separate "house of eternity" for himself, was a child of Temi, namely the one who pretended to be a "son of his (= a king's?) body". If this is the case, we have to admit that the vizier title constituted merely a logical apex in the career of the ambitious Mereri, not surprising at all in the biography of a royal, in this case rather half-royal, son.

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[28] Cf. note 27; Karol Myśliwiec, *The Mysterious Mereris*..., op. cit., p. 76, 91, Fig. 3 a.

[29] M. Baud, op. cit., pp. 159–160.

[30] K. O. Kuraszkiewicz, *Old Kingdom Structures*..., op. cit., pp. 285–295.

[31] K. Myśliwiec, K. O. Kuraszkiewicz et al., *The Funerary Complex*..., op. cit., pp. 127–129.

[32] B. Porter, R. L. B. Moss, *Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings. III², Memphis. Part 2, Ṣaqqâra to Dahshûr. Fascicle 2 (575–776). Second Edition, Revised and Augmented by Jaromír Málek*, Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1979, pp. 607–608.

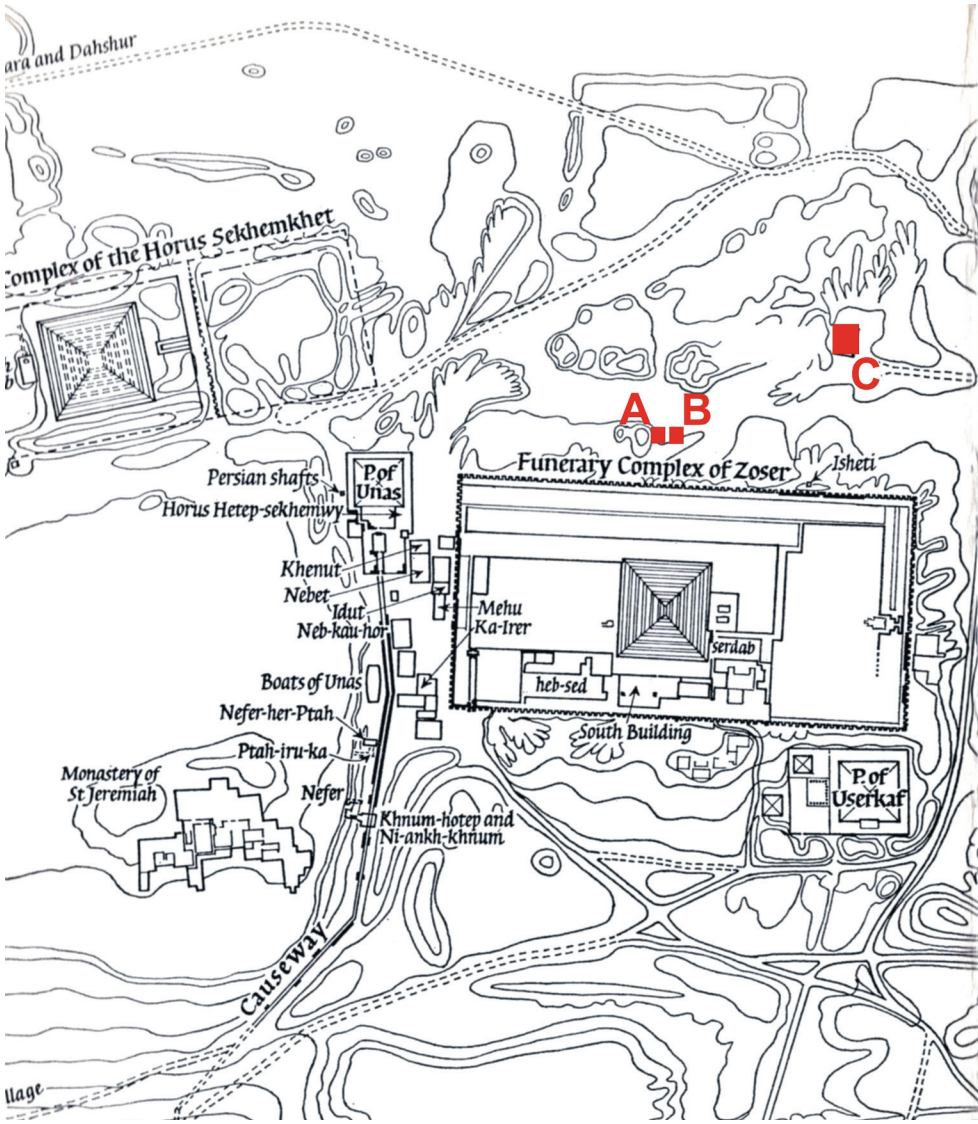

Fig. 10. Saqqara: location of the mastabas of Merefnebef (A), Nyankhnefertem (B) and Ptahhotep/Akhtihotep (C) [drawing by Małgorzata Radomska]

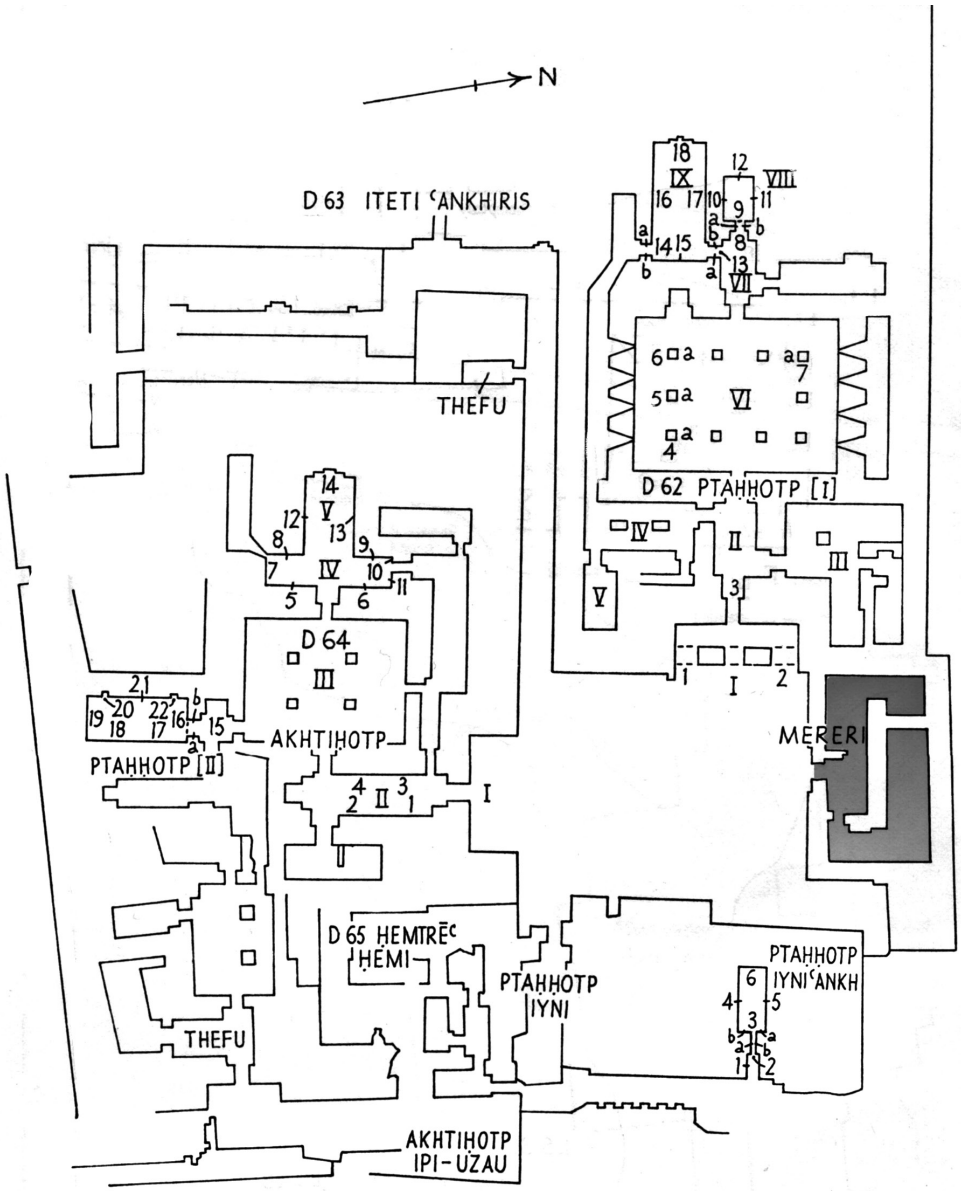

Fig. 11. The tomb of vizier Mereri in the Ptahhotep complex [drawing by Małgorzata Radomska, after Bertha Porter, Rosalind L. B. Moss, Topographical Bibliography of Ancient Egyptian Hieroglyphic Texts, Reliefs, and Paintings. III², Memphis. Part 2, Ṣaqqâra to Dahshûr. Fascicle 2 (575–776). Second Edition, Revised and Augmented by Jaromír Málek, Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 1979, Pl. LX]

Becoming a vizier, he would have paralleled the career of Merefnebef, who happened to be a posthumous neighbour of Nyankhnefertem, and whose tomb dates from the beginning of the 6th Dynasty.[33] A close similarity of their titulature[34] reinforces the impression that Fefi (nickname of Merefnebef) became a model for Mereri, who was represented as one of the youngest sons of Nyankhnefertem. It seems that their careers were facilitated by close relationships of their consorts, priestesses of goddess Hathor, to the ruling pharaoh whose identity with a god or gods, particularly the solar ones, was beyond any doubt, at least since the 5th Dynasty.[35]

The idea of an intimate relationship between a noblewoman and a god would thus reach back almost to the mid-third millennium BC, and its origins must not have been purely abstract. The pharaoh functioning as a god could have been an extremely desirable companion, perhaps not only to priestesses.[36]

Epilogue

Ancient Egyptian literary texts are not very eloquent with respect to this kind of relationship. One of the tales recorded on the Papyrus Westcar (12th Dynasty text preserved in a manuscript from the 15th Dynasty) and placed by its author in the times of king Nebka (3rd Dynasty), describes the case of the adultery committed by the wife of a priest (Webaoner) with a townsman.[37] Both were severely punished. Numerous non-literary texts written on papyri and ostraca relate various cases of adultery, but they never mention any intimate liaison between a king and a non-royal woman.[38] It seems that this sort of relation was at least tolerated, if not considered an honour for the family of a nobleman.

European literature of various periods relates such cases with much detail and imagination. An old French ballad, *Le roi a fait battre tambour*, popular down to our days,[39] could almost be taken as a textual illustration of the story deduced from the reliefs decorating the funerary

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[33] K. Myśliwiec, *Dating the tombs of Merefnebef and Nyankhnefertem in Saqqara*, [in:] M. Bárta, F. Coppens, J. Krejčí (eds), *Abusir and Saqqara in the Year 2010/2*, Czech Institute of Egyptology, Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague, Prague, 2011, pp. 651–661.

[34] K. Myśliwiec, *The Mysterious Mereris*..., op. cit., p. 80, notes 52–53.

[35] K. Myśliwiec, *Iconographic, Literary and Political Aspects of an Ancient Egyptian God's Identification with the Monarch*, [in:] T. Mikasa (ed.), *Monarchies and Socio-Religious Traditions in the Ancient Near East. Papers read at the 31st International Congress of Human Sciences in Asia and North Africa*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1984, passim.

[36] This brings us back to a theory of Siegfried Morenz, which has been rejected, evidently too early, by Hellmut Brunner (H. Brunner, *Geburtslegende*..., op. cit., col. 476, footnote 1).

[37] W. K. Simpson, *Pap. Westcar*, [in:] *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Band IV, Megiddo – Pyramiden*, W. Hellck, W. Westendorf (eds), Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1982, col. 745; S. Allam, *Ehe*, [in:] *Lexikon der Ägyptologie. Band I, A – Ernte*, W. Helck, E. Otto (eds), Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1975, col. 1174, note 43.

[38] S. Allam, op. cit., col. 1174–1175.

[39] Recorded on discs by various singers, among others Yves Montand (*Chansons populaires de France*, OSX 110).

chapel of Nyankhnefertem. A king reviews the beautiful ladies of his court and falls in love with the first one he sees. He asks his marquis who the lady is, and the courtier answers: "Sire roi, c'est ma femme!". A tragedy starts at this point. The king says resolutely: "Marquis, tu es plus heureux que moi, d'avoir femme si belle. Si tu voulais me l'accorder, je me chargerais d'elle". The marquis is perplexed but obedient: "Sire, si vous n'étiez pas le roi, j'en tirerais vengeance. Mais puisque vous êtes le roi... à votre obéissance". The end of the long story is by no means happy: "La reine a fait faire un bouquet de jolies fleurs de lys, et la senteur de ce bouquet a fait mourir la marquise".

Even the last motif could be approached, though only outwardly, to a scene in the tomb chapel. On its south wall the tomb owner, seated beside his consort, is shown smelling a lotus flower.[40] However, the flower in this scene must be interpreted as a pictorial allusion to Nyankhnefertem's name meaning "Life belongs to Nefertem", the juvenile Memphite god identified with the lotus.[41]

In the history of Poland, a similar relation is endowed with a highly patriotic connotation. Although Napoleon Bonaparte was not explicitly considered a god, Polish nobility still expected from him the wonder of restoring the country's independence thanks to his liaison with a lady who was wife of an elderly Polish nobleman.

In another critical situation, though at a much lower social level, the heroine of Guy de Maupassant's novel *Boule de suif* similarly helps a group of people whose later thankfulness does not appear, however, to be as spontaneous as their earlier encouragement had been. In Scandinavian dramaturgy, particularly August Strindberg's *The Father*, in contrast, the obsessive search for confirmation of his fatherhood, drives a husband mad and drives him to permanently tyrannise his wife.

How was it in ancient Egypt?

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[40] K. Myśliwiec, K. O. Kuraszkiewicz et al., *The Funerary Complex*..., op. cit., p. 193 (Scene 19), Fig. 61, Pls. CXX–CXXI.

[41] Ibidem, p. 127, notes 1–3, and p. 193, note 111.

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General Remarks on Egypt in Herodotus' *Histories*

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Summary
The aim of this article is to reveal some facts about Egypt which are described in Histories written by Herodotus of Halicarnassus. The Greek historian, called the father of history and geography, created the work on the basis of his own observations and expanded it with numerous references to oral relations, tales, anecdotes, myths and folk stories. Despite the fact that modern research has thrown doubt on the reliability of Herodotus' records, his work is still an important source of information about ancient Egypt, its history, culture and tradition. Nowadays Egyptologists, historians and researchers interested in related academic fields are analysing Herodotus' history step by step and comparing it with reliable information from the past. They are creating a timeline on which they are able to prove or invalidate the truthfulness of particular aspects of Herodotus' text. The results of the research carried out on the subject of the Greek historian's objectivity and pragmatism as well as polemics about the possibility that he visited in Egypt, have a comprehensive literature, which is also selectively mentioned in this paper. The passages from Herodotus' Histories that were chosen for this study are connected with well-known Egyptian beliefs, customs and the everyday life of Herodotus' Egyptians.

Keywords
Egypt, Herodotus of Halicarnassus, Histories, beliefs, embalming, curiosities

Only on the road does the reporter feel like himself, at home. What set him into motion? Made him act? Compelled him to undertake the hardship of travel, to subject himself to the hazards of one expedition after another? I think that it was simply curiosity about the world. The desire to be there, to see it at any cost, to experience it no matter what.

It is actually a seldom encountered passion. Man is by nature a sedentary creature; from the moment he began cultivating the land and left behind the perilous and uncertain existence of a hunter or gatherer, he settled down happily, naturally, on his particular patch of earth and fenced himself off from others with a wall or a ditch, prepared to shed blood, ever give his life to defend what was his. If he moved, it was only under duress, because he was driven by hunger, disease, or war, or by the search for better work, or for professional reasons – because he was a sailor, an itinerant merchant, leader of a caravan. But to traverse the world for years on end of his own free will, in order to get to know it, to plumb it, to understand it? And then, later, to put all his findings into words? Such people have always been uncommon.

Ryszard Kapuściński, *Travels with Herodotus*.[1]

Introduction

The history of Egypt, its culture and tradition, with reference both to past and modern times, is the subject of discussions and research carried out by a wide spectrum of academics and enthusiasts. The country on the Nile charms and inspires Western literature and culture. The November 4, 1922, thanks to Howard Carter and his great discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb, is regarded as a turning point and the beginning of the revival of interest in Egypt.[2] The archeologists found there about five thousands works of art and that was the reason why thousands of tourists from all over the world started visiting the Valley of the Kings. Today, in spite of the increasing number of conflicts, terrorist attacks and other threats in the Near East, Egypt still attracts visitors.[3] The country – which is frequently visited by those interested in local monuments as well as by enthusiasts of diving among the amazing coral reefs – in ancient times was a densely populated, tribal area. The polytheistic religion, pre-money economy and the idea of the royal power's divinity[4] were among its most important qualities, which are noted by numerous records in literature and historical sources. The aim of this paper is to present a few chosen passages from Herodotus' history in order to show the Greek historian's point of view without, however, polemicising about his objectivity and pragmatism.[5]

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1 R. Kapuściński, *Travels with Herodotus*, transl. K. Glowczewska, Penguin Books, London, 2008, pp. 258–259.

2 A. Chalaby, *Egipt: od Kairu do Abu Simbel i Synaju*, Casa Editrice Bonechi, Warszawa, 2009, p. 78.

3 J. Zaborowska (ed.), *Podróże marzeń: Egipt*, Agora SA, Warszawa, 2005, p. 15.

4 T. Wilkinson, *Powstanie i upadek starożytnego Egiptu*, transl. N. Radomski, Rebis, Poznań, 2011, p. 34.

5 Herodotean objectivity and pragmatism are the subjects of numerous articles and studies, e.g.: L.P. Pojman, P. Tramel (eds), *Moral Philosophy: A Reader*, Hackett Publishing Company, Cambridge, 2009; L.P. Pojman, J. Fieser, *Cengage Advantage Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong*, Wadsworth, Boston, 2017; B. MacKinnon, A. Fiala, *Ethics: Theory and Contemporary Issues*, Wadsworth, Boston, 2015; J. Grethlein, *How Not to Do History: Xerxes in Herodotus' Histories*, [in:] "The American Journal of Philology", 2009, vol. 130, no. 2, pp. 195–218; F.J. Groten Jr., *Herodotus' Use of Variant Versions*, [in:] "Phoenix", 1963, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 79–87; K. von Fritz, *Herodotus and the Growth of Greek Historiography*, [in:] "Transaction and Proceedings of the American Philological Association", 1936, vol. 67, pp. 315–340.

Herodotus' history and its credibility

Prominent at the origins of historiography is the work of Herodotus of Halicarnassus.[6] He was regarded in ancient times as the father of both history and geography. Nowadays he is even called the "Marco Polo of antiquity". His work is the first surviving complete work of ancient historical, ethnographical and geographical literature.[7]

Herodotus believes that his work should *legein ta legomena* – transmit everything people had told him but with a clear emphasis that he did not believe in all versions of the events.[8] Nowadays his reliability is still a subject of numerous disputes among Egyptologists and other scholars. It has been judged especially by 19th and 20th century standards in terms of what Herodotus should have seen and written about if he had in fact visited a particular area.[9] There are various studies[10] in which we can find critical opinions and arguments that some passages from Herodotus' history need to be regarded only as worthless tales.[11] George Rawlison expressed such an opinion:

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6 It is impossible to establish the precise curriculum of Herodotus' life, because of insufficient material. Ancient biographical tradition providing information about him is unfortunately sparse. However, researchers suggest 484 BC as his date of birth. He was born in Halicarnassus, on the southwest coast of Asia Minor and spent much of his life travelling and gathering materials needed for his writing. Finally, he settled at Thurii, in southern Italy, and died in 424 BC (D. Asheri, A. Lloyd, A. Corcella (eds), *A Commentary on Herodotus. Book 1–4*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, p. 5); Some additional information comes from the *Suda* (a Byzantine lexicon of the tenth century AD): "Herodotus: son of Lyxes and Dryo; Halicarnassian; one of the distinguished men of that place; and he had a brother, Theodorus. He moved to Samos because of Lygdamis, who became the third tyrant of Halicarnassus after Artemisia (for Pisindelis was Artemisia's son, and Lygdamis was Pisendelis' son). In Samos he practiced the Ionic dialect and wrote a history in nine books, starting with Cyrus the Persian and Candaules the king of the Lydians. He returned to Halicarnassus and expelled the tyrant. Later, when he noticed that the citizens envied him, he left of his own freewill for Thurii, which was being settled by the Athenians, and he died there and was buried in the agora. Some say, however, that he died in Pella. His books are inscribed with the names of the Muses" (J. Priestley, *Herodotus and Hellenistic Culture: Literary Studies in the Reception of the Histories*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, p. 20).

7 R. Turasiewicz, *Dalekie podróże*, [in:] Herodot, *Dzieje*, transl. S. Hammer, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław, 2005, p. XI; W.W. How, J. Wells (eds), *A Commentary on Herodotus*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1912, vol. 1, p. 16; J. Strzelczyk, *Odkrywanie Europy*, Wiedza Powszechna, Poznań, 2000, p. 80.

8 It is necessary to mention that the actual state of the research contradicts some of Herodotus' records, e.g. these about women's sacerdotal activities (II, 35). There is evidence (dating back to the times of the Old Kingdom of Egypt), which shows that women could be *hemet netjer* – the female counterpart of God's servant (H. Wilson, *Lud faraonów. Od wieśniaka do dworzanina,* Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa, 1999, p. 101).

9 R. Thomas, *Herodotus in Context: Ethnography, Science and the Art of Persuasion*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 8.

10 Disapproval of Herodotus is visible even in Thucydides' history. He contravenes Herodotus on a number of occasions. He criticises the style of Herodotus' history, especially in the first Book (chapters 20–22). He accuses him of an unsuccessful pursuit to outline events he himself did not witness and to tell the story of men whose language he could not speak. Moreover, there is an example of anti-Herodotean literature, namely Plutarch's *De malignitate Herodoti* (J.A. S. Evans, *Father of History or Father of Lies; The Reputation of Herodotus*, [in:] "The Classical Journal", 1968, vol. 64, no. 1, pp. 11–17).

11 Thomas Africa in his article regarded Herodotus' version of the Egyptian past as "slender reed". Since there is no confirmation in Egyptian sources, information written by the Greek historian (preserving oral tradition) cannot be interpreted literally and without suspicion (T. Africa, *Herodotus and Diodorus on Egypt*, [in:] "Journal of Near Eastern Studies", 1963, vol. 22, no. 4, pp. 254–258).

> In many cases where Herodotus tells improbable tales, they are on the authority of others, or mere hearsay reports, for which he at once declares himself not responsible, and he justly pleads that his history was not only a relation of facts, but the result of an *historia* or 'inquiry', in which all he heard was inserted. We must, however, sometimes regret that he did not use his own judgement, and discard what must have shown itself unworthy of credit and of mention. For we gladly allow that when he does offer his own reflections they are sound; and too much credit cannot be given him for being so far above prejudice, and superior to many of the Greeks, who were too apt to claim the honour of originating things they borrowed from others, or to derive from Greece what was of older date than themselves.[12]

Despite the fact that readers need to be careful and use Herodotus' records cautiously, there is no doubt that his work is a comprehensive treasury of ancient curiosities and marvels. Furthermore, his elaborate descriptions of the world, the movements of people and the mutual infiltration of different cultures, led to the conviction that hybridity is a dominant theme in *Histories*.[13] Herodotus' work is a collection of the oral tradition of particular events, which he describes in familiar versions. John Marincola summarises:

> Herodotus presents his work as a collection of *logoi* stand side by side, sometimes with, sometimes without narrator's comment or preference. In this sense Herodotus' *Histories* is a work of oral history, of memories retained by his informants and preserved by him in the course of his researches and travels. Taken at face value, his researches reveal an enormous number of sources: all the major Greek city-states and not a few of the minor ones; numerous foreign peoples, including Egyptians, Lydians, Persians, and Scythians; unnamed functionaries, usually priests; and a few named informants.[14] In addition, Herodotus seems to have examined inscriptions and monuments, and become familiar with oracles, especially those at Delphi. It could well be that to gather and assimilate all of these native sources took the work of a lifetime.[15]

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[12] G. Rawlison, *The History of Herodotus*, vol. 2, The Tandy-Thomas Company, London, 1858, p. 54.

[13] S. McWilliams, *Hybridity in Herodotus*, [in:] "Political Research Quarterly", 2013, vol. 66, no. 4, pp. 745–755.

[14] They are as follows: Promeneia, Timarete, Nicandra (2, 55); Archias (3, 55); Tymnes (4, 76) and Thersander (9, 16) (J. Marincola, *Greek Historians*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p. 31, footnote 55).

[15] Ibidem, pp. 31–32. See also: A. B. Lloyd, *Introduction*, [in:] A. B. Lloyd, *Herodotus Book II*, Brill, Leiden, 1975, pp. 89–100; D. M. Lewis, *Persians in Herodotus*, [in:] D. M. Lewis, *Selected Papers in Greek and Near Eastern History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 345–361; H. I. Flower, *Herodotus and Delphic Traditions about Croesus*, [in:] M. Flower, M. Toher (eds), *Georgica. Greek studies in honour of George Cawkwell*, University of London: Institute of Classical Studies, London, 1991, pp. 57–77.

The author's characteristic presence is visible throughout the work. Herodotus considers contradictory tales, explores ancient monuments, collects reports among the inhabitants of visited areas, follows the oral tradition and formulates his own hypotheses. He is involved, and ready to go on a long journey in order to check even a trivial detail.[16] (II, 44[17])

Egypt – the gift of the Nile

In his relations, Herodotus devotes a lot of attention to the description of Egypt (Book II, Euterpe), which contains geographical notes and extensive references to issues connected with its traditions and culture.[18] He readily juxtaposes particular customs with these known among Hellenes. He claims that the Egyptians were the first to discover a solar year and divided it into twelve parts in accordance with the seasons. Their assumptions were based on observation of stars (Hdt. 2, 4, 1). Some time before the Unification, the Egyptians started to use a calendar based on the cycles of the river floods. They noticed that the Nile started to rise at the same time that Sirius – the brightest star in the sky – was getting more visible at dawn. In the modern calendar this happens around July 19. The calendar year was divided into four seasons, each of which had three months with 30 days. An additional five days were added in order to get a civil year of 365 days. Sirius' rise at dawn, during the so called "Year Opening", marked the first day of the flow, when the level of the river was starting to rise (because of the rains in Ethiopia, which caused increased flow in the Nile and the Atbarah Rivers).[19]

The life of the ancient Egyptians depended especially on the flows of the Nile, which enabled them to function and live. What is more, their life was entirely subordinated to the gods, who could intervene generally in everything both on Earth and in the sky and demonstrate their power in that way. The Egyptians built temples where the gods could shelter. Only the most important priests had access to the divine images, made of gold or stones.[20] The Egyptians, according to Herodotus' history, could use the names of twelve gods (these names later were adopted by the Hellenes). Similarly they erected altars, statues and temples for the gods and sculpted animal images (Hdt. 2, 4).

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16 R. Turasiewicz, *Herodot i jego dzieło*, Polska Akademia Nauk, Warszawa, 1979, pp. 23–24.

17 Herodotus, *Histories* II, 44: "I moreover, desiring to know something certain of these matters so far as might be, made a voyage also to Tyre of Phoenicia (…)" (All passages of Herodotus' *Histories* are quoted after George Campbell Macaulay, Enhanced Media, London, 2016. The cited passages of Herodotus' work are preceded with the abbreviation: Hdt).

18 The entire chapter consists of an account of both the history and geography of Egypt. There are some short passages, which were written on the basis of Herodotus' own observations, while most of the work is thought to have been compiled from the geographical work of Hecataeus (A. Dihle, *History of Greek Literature: From Homer to the Hellenistic Period*, Routledge, New York, 1994, p. 159).

19 H. Wilson, op. cit., p. 9.

20 H.A. Schlögl, *Starożytny Egipt. Historia i kultura od czasów najdawniejszych do Kleopatry*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa, 2009, p. 29.

Herodotus' attitude towards the need to transmit essential information, his precision in describing distinctive elements of the culture and the tradition arose from his opinion about the uniqueness of Egypt – the Nile's gift – in comparison with other countries (Hdt. 2, 35): "The Egyptians in agreement with their climate, which is unlike any other, and with the river, which shows a nature different from all other rivers, established for themselves manners and customs in a way opposite to other men in almost all matters (…)".

His record is very concise, and includes various curiosities, which he describes in the 35th chapter of the second Book.

> (…) for among them the women frequent the market and carry on trade, while the men remain at home and weave; and whereas others weave pushing the woof upwards, the Egyptians push it downwards: the men carry their burdens upon their heads and the women upon their shoulders: the women make water standing up and the men crouching down (…).

Herodotus' records about Egypt are comprehensive. Among information about geography, rulers and wars waged against other nations, there are numerous references to Egyptians' daily life. Some of them are the main subject of this article and they permit us to outline a vision[21] of ancient Egypt.[22]

Religious imagery

Herodotus pays a lot of attention to ancient cults and rites. He regards the Egyptians as much more pious than other nations.[23] The Egyptian priests, according to the Greek historian's version,

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[21] Herodotus' history – in the same way as, e.g. Diodorus Siculus' or Plutarch's texts – preserved some crucial information important for modern Egyptologists (H. te Velde, *The History of the Study of Ancient Egyptian Religion and its Future*, [in:] Z. Hawass, L. P. Brock (eds), *Egyptology at the Dawn of the Twenty-first Century. Proceedings of the Eighth International Congress of Egyptologists Cairo 2000*, vol. 2: *History, Religion*, The American University in Cairo Press, New York, 2003, p. 42).

[22] It is crucial to mention longstanding disputes about the truthfulness of Herodotus' visit to Egypt. The propriety of Egyptologists' reliance on his history was questioned by Sir Richard Jebb, D. D. Heath, Alfred Croiset and Amedee Hauvette, among others. The critical attention to *Histories* based mainly on modern travel and archeology. O. Kimball Armayor from the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, outlines the most significant evidence that was discussed with reference to Herodotus' credibility, such as blacks of Egypt, conversations with local priests and details about Chemmis city. Armayor argued that: "Herodotus may indeed have gone to Egypt; however, his narrative bears little or no relation to whatever his travels may have been on the basis on archeological evidence now in hand" (p. 69). Moreover, Herodotus gives no details about important places (e.g. Abydos) or valuable monuments in Thebes and does not mention the Sphinx. His reliability is also questioned because of the lack of information about Egyptian pyramids (except for those in Giza), colour changes of the Nile, Naucratis' relation to the sea or canals, and the appearance of Egyptian temples, among other subjects (A. O. Kimball, *Did Herodotus Ever Go to Egypt*, [in:] "Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt", 1978, vol. 15, pp. 59–73).

[23] Hdt. 2, 37: „They are religious excessively beyond all other men (…)".

shaved their heads every second day, so that no lice or other parasites could be noticed during the rites. Besides, they wore only linen vestments and shoes made of a papyrus bast, had a cold bath twice a day and twice a night. They disliked broad beans since they regarded it as an impure leguminous plant (Hdt. 2, 37). Freshly baked bread, beef and goose meat as well as grape wine – products which they were given every day – were a kind of payment for their service (Hdt. 2, 37). Osiris was the giver of the wine – ambrosia, which Egyptians enjoyed sipping. Wine production flourished on a wide scale in the times of the pharaohs, when the knowledge of vine cultivation and the production of wine was scrupulously spread. The Egyptians were the first to start to acquire the juice through pressing. This method was used for millennia.[24] The time when people in general started to drink wine, leads back to the pharaoh Psammetik (26th Dynasty), whose name itself means "the wine tradesman." Earlier wine had been used especially as a sacrifice to the gods. The Egyptians believed the gods desired it above all and regarded it as Titans' blood (which might have mixed with soil and gave birth to the vine).[25] Wine was also important during the sacrifice of animals (Hdt. 2, 39):

> (…) they lead the sealed beast to the altar where they happen to be sacrificing and then kindle a fire: after that, having poured libations of wine over the altar so that it runs down upon the victim and having called upon the god, they cut its throat, and having cut its throat they sever the head from the body. The body then of the beast they flay, but upon the head they make many imprecations first, and then they who have a market and Hellenes sojourning among them for trade, these carry it to the market-place and sell it, while they who have no Hellenes among them cast it away into the river: and this is the form of imprecation which they utter upon the heads, praying that if any evil be about to befall either themselves who are offering sacrifice or the land of Egypt in general, it may come rather upon this head. Now as regards the heads of the beasts which are sacrificed and the pouring over them of the wine, all the Egyptians have the same customs equally for all their sacrifices; and by reason of this custom none of the Egyptians eat of the head either of this or of any other kind of animal.

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[24] The first traces of wine production were found in the Chalcolithic period (the time between the Stone and Bronze Ages; in Egypt dating back to 5500–3100 BC). The amphorae with traces of wine in the form of salt (the remains after the decomposition of wine acid) were discovered in the pharaohs' tombs from about 3150 years BC (the tomb of Scorpion I in Abydos). Patrick MacGovern, an anthropologist from the University of Pennsylvania, proved that these amphorae had contained wine in the past. What is more, historians emphasise that a modern economy (money, contracts, payment systems, courts, financial and merchant professions as well as the way of counting and time measuring) developed as a result of the wine trade in Egypt (A. Dominé, *Wino*, Olesiejuk, Ożarów Mazowiecki, 2014, p. 16).

[25] A. Kucz, P. Matusiak, *Hermeneutyka wina*, [in:] A. Kucz, P. Matusiak (eds), *Szkice o antyku*, vol. III: *Hermeneutyka wina*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice, 2017, p. 9.

The ox was among the most significant sacrificial animals, unlike the cow (which the Egyptians did not use for this purpose). The cow was an animal dedicated to Isis – the-Egyptian goddess, the king Osiris' wife. Her image is similar to the image of Greek Io.

The pig, which was considered to be an impure animal, was sacrificed during a full moon only for Selene and Dionysus. The celebration is described by Herodotus in Book 2 (Hdt. 48):

> Then for Dionysos on the eve of the festival each one kills a pig by cutting its throat before his own doors, and after that he gives the pig to the swineherd who sold it to him, to carry away again; and the rest of the feast of Dionysos is celebrated by the Egyptians in the same way as by the Hellenes in almost all things except choral dances, but instead of the phallus they have invented another contrivance, namely figures of about a cubit in height worked by strings, which women carry about the villages, with the privy member made to move and not much less in size than the rest of the body: and a flute goes before and they follow singing the praises of Dionysos.

The Greeks probably adopted the Dionysian celebration thanks to Melampus[26] – a legendary soothsayer and healer, Amythaon's son.[27] Ancient phallic worship was directly connected with the cult of fertility and agriculture gods. In ancient Greek culture, it referred to a rural deity – Priapus. Some mythographers attributed his disgusting appearance to Hera's malice. She was afraid that the new-born son of Zeus and Aphrodite could be just as attractive as his mother and as powerful as his father, and would threaten the Olympians in the future. It is believed that the goddess touched Aphrodite's stomach and, as a result, the new-born boy was deformed.[28] His enormous penis terrified Aphrodite, so she abandoned her child in the mountains. The shepherds who found the baby, decided to bring him up and started to worship his manhood.[29] Min was the Egyptian phallic god of fertility. He was presented as a human figure, wrapped in a shroud, with his phallus in a state of continuous erection. His skin was – like Osiris' – green or black. Min's feast was celebrated at the beginning of harvest time and was a very important event. The parade of the god's figure (carried on a special platform by 20 priests) was a climactic point. Min – unlike other gods hidden in the chapels – could be widely seen. His potency and abilities of revival and regeneration were glorified in religious hymns.[30]

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[26] The introducer of Dionysiam worship. In Greek mythology he was a seer with an ability to understand animal speech. As a young boy he found a mother snake which had been crushed under a cart. He buried the snake and raised two orphaned babies. To thank him they licked his ears and in that way made him able to understand the language of animals (R. Graves, *Mity greckie*, Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, Warszawa, 1982, p. 206).

[27] M. P. O. Morford, *Classical Mythology*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, p. 484.

[28] *Priapos*, [in:] K. Dale (ed.), *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z*, Facts on File, New York, 2003, p. 107.

[29] J. Larson, *Greek and Roman Sexualities: a sourcebook*, Bloomsbury, London, 2012, p. 26.

[30] H. Wilson, op. cit., p. 302.

Herodotus stresses that feasts in Egypt were celebrated not once a year but more often, especially in Bubastis, in honour of the goddess Bastet (identified with Artemis), and in Busiris – the feast in honour of Isis. Additionally, people gathered in Heliopolis during the Helios' holiday, in Buto where they adored Leto, and in Papremis for the feast in honour of Ares. The feast of burning lamps was celebrated in Sais (Hdt. 2, 62):

> At the times when they gather together at the city of Sais for their sacrifices, on a certain night they all kindle lamps many in number in the open air round about the houses; now the lamps are saucers full of salt and oil mixed, and the wick floats by itself on the surface, and this burns during the whole night; and to the festival is given the name Lychnocaia (the lighting of the lamps). Moreover those of the Egyptians who have not come to this solemn assembly observe the night of the festival and themselves also light lamps all of them, and thus not in Sais alone are they lighted, but over all Egypt (…).

Herodotus comprehensively describes their worship observing that the Egyptians killed animals only for sacrifice. According to his relation, the intentional killing of any animal was penalised by death, while unintentional killing by a fine.[31] In Herodotus' *Histories* there are numerous descriptions of animals. He makes reference e.g. to cats[32], crocodiles[33], hippopotamuses[34] and many others.

Animals in Egypt were adored as the incarnations of the gods throughout the ages. The average Egyptian regarded a baboon or an ibis as a representation of Thoth, despite the fact that in the religious texts there is a clear distinction between a god and an animal. The Egyptians may have found in such a cult the direct proximity of a god and could obtain solace in that way. Moreover, a mummified animal's body was a precious relic.[35]

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[31] Herodotus 2, 65. See also: M. DeMello, *Animals and Society: An Introduction to Human-Animal Studies*, Columbia University Press, Columbia, 2013, p. 34; L. Casson, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, London, 2015; C. Tiplady, *Animal Abuse: Helping Animals and People*, FSC, Oxford, 2013, p. 8.

[32] Hdt. 2, 66. Herodotus mentions that cats go into a frenzy during a fire. The Egyptians look after them instead of trying to put out the fire. Then the cats jump over the people and throw themselves into the flames.

[33] Hdt. 2, 68–70.

[34] Hdt. 2, 71; It is worth mentioning here that the Herodotus' description of hippopotamus' appearance is incorrect. He claims that this animal looks like a horse. Herodotus' mistake arose probably from the misunderstanding of its name, which is derived from the Greek terms *hippos* and *potamos* (i.e. a river horse). See: Herodot, *Dzieje*, transl. S. Hammer, Biblioteka Narodowa – Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich, Wrocław, 2005, footnote 66, p. 150.

[35] H.A. Schlögl, op. cit., p. 39.

In the passages concerning funerals, embalming[36] and the dead, Herodotus describes all activities following somebody's death (Book 2: Hdt. 2, 85):

> Whenever any household has lost a man who is of any regard amongst them, the whole number of women of that house forthwith plaster over their heads or even their faces with mud. Then leaving the corpse within the house they go themselves to and fro about the city and beat themselves, with their garments bound up by a girdle and their breasts exposed, and with them go all the women who are related to the dead man, and on the other side the men beat themselves, they too having their garments bound up by a girdle; and when they have done this, they then convey the body to the embalming.

Herodotus mentions three ways of embalming corpses. The first one is the most meticulous and expensive (Hdt. 2, 86):

> (…) First with a crooked iron tool they draw out the brain through the nostrils, extracting it partly thus and partly by pouring in drugs; and after this with a sharp stone of Ethiopia they make a cut along the side and take out the whole contents of the belly, and when they have cleared out the cavity and cleansed it with palm-wine they cleanse it again with spices pounded up: then they fill the belly with pure myrrh pounded up and with cassia and other spices except frankincense, and sew it together again. Having so done they keep it for embalming covered up in natron for seventy days, but for a longer time than this it is not permitted to embalm it; and when the seventy days are past, they wash the corpse and roll its whole body up in fine linen cut into bands, smearing these beneath with gum, which the Egyptians use generally instead of glue. Then the kinsfolk receive it from them and have a wooden figure made in the shape of a man, and when they have had this made they enclose the corpse, and having shut it up within, they store it then in a sepulchral chamber, setting it to stand upright against the wall.

If anyone wanted to avoid such an expense, there were also other ways of protecting the human body (Hdt. 2, 87–88), e.g. it was possible to fill the body with cedar oil. After a few

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[36] The preservation of a corpse was an important issue in Egyptian culture. The process of mummification – a requisite for continuation of the afterlife – developed over the millennia "from the natural desiccation of corpses buried in shallow pits hollowed from desert sands to intricate wrapping of prepared corpses in yards of linen and the addition of portraits of the deceased". The earliest artificial technique of embalming dates back to the Late Pre-Dynastic Period. It evolved through the years up to the Fourth Dynasty, when the process of desiccation by natron (a mixture of sodium carbonate and sodium bicarbonate, also in combination with sodium chloride) was discovered. Such a form of chemical mummification was used for the next three millennia (D. P. Silverman, *Ancient Egypt*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 138).

days it was drained. The liquid had such strength that the stomach and viscera ran out together with it. The human meat was dissolved by natron and as a result only the skin and some bones were left. The third way – the cheapest one – was that the corpse was pumped with purgative water. The process lasted 70 days.

The mummified bodies were put on one side with their faces directed to the East in order to make the resurrection easier. The sun overcame the night darkness and announced the revival. The mummies (in particular periods of ancient history) had two magical eyes (painted on the east side of the coffin), thanks to which the dead could 'look' at the land of the living. The frame of the eyes was intentionally similar to the feathers of a falcon's head in order to make it possible for a dead person to see everything just like Horus. The Egyptians imagined their ultimate destination like an Elysian land with fertile soil, good crops, and orchards with plenty of fruit; a place of constant peace and prosperity.[37]

Herodotus' *Histories* also provide much other information about the Egyptians' history, life, customs and traditions. They are more or less reliable, but the work can still be regarded as a compendium of knowledge about ancient culture and tradition. Herodotus' approach to the work may be summed up by a passage from *The travels with Herodotus* by Ryszard Kapuściński:

> *Herodotus is entangled in a rather insoluble dilemma: he devotes his life to preserving historic truth, to prevent the traces of human events from being erased by time; at the same time, however, his main source of research is not firsthand experience, but history as it was recounted by others, as it appeared to them, therefore as it was selectively remembered and later more or less intentionally presented. In short, not primary history, but history as his interlocutors would have had it. There is no way around this divergence of purpose and means. We can try to minimise or mitigate it, but we will never approach the objective ideal. The subjective factor, its deforming presence, will remain impossible to strain out. Herodotus expresses an awareness of his predicament, constantly qualifying what he reports: "as they tell me", "as they maintain", "they present this in various ways" etc. In fact, though, however evolved our methods, we are never in the presence of unmediated history, but of history recounted, presented, history as it appeared to someone, as he or she believes it to have been. This has been the nature of the enterprise always, and the folly may be to believe one can resist it.*
>
> *This fact is perhaps Herodotus's greatest discovery.*
>
> Ryszard Kapuściński, *Travels with Herodotus*.[38]

[37] T. Wilkinson, op. cit., pp. 175–177.

[38] R. Kapuściński, op. cit., p. 272.

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Basketry Finds from the House of the Qurashi Family (Bayt al-Qurashi)*

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Summary
This article is the first attempt to present the basketry objects used by the inhabitants of Old Qasr (Dakhla Oasis, Egypt) in the late Ottoman-modern period (XIX–early XX cent.). All these objects were retrieved from the house of the Qurashi family (Bayt al-Qurashi) during the archaeological salvage operation (site clearing), preceding the reconstruction and rebuilding of this building, conducted by our "Qasr Dakhleh Project" (QDP), directed by Prof. Frederik Leemhuis. They are related to the last phase of usage of this building (including the abandonment process). Among them i.a. baskets, plates and mats have been distinguished. They were manufactured using two-systems basketry techniques, such as: sewn plaits, coiling, continuous plaiting and weaving with one strand. The ethno-archaeological approach enabled the recognition of their specific functions and their local names. Presented basketry finds provide a glimpse into the daily life activities of inhabitants of this house, and in broader terms, of the whole Dakhla Oasis in the time under question. In the second part of this article, based on my comparative ethnographic observations and interviews with the inhabitants of al-Qasr, I am describing the contemporary basketry objects (including techniques used in their manufacture, as well as their specific functions and local names), which are still made in this small town.

Keywords
Egypt, Dakhla, al-Qasr, Islamic archaeology, ethno-archaeology, basketry

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* I have the pleasure to be a member of the "Qasr Dakhleh Project" (QDP) supervised by Prof. Frederik Leemhuis. The QDP conducts the field research under the umbrella of the "Dakhleh Oasis Project" (DOP) directed by Prof. Anthony Mills.

The house of the Qurashi family (Bayt al-Qurashi)

The house of the Qurashi family (*Bayt al-Qurashi*)[1] is located in the *Al-Shihabiyya* quarter, at the centre of Old Qasr (the historic part of the small town al-Qasr) situated in the western part of Dakhla Oasis (the Western Desert, Egypt).

The fact that this house belonged to the Qurashi family is known from the inscription on the wooden lintel (*tawshisha*), which originally hung above the main entrance to the house.[2] According to the inscription, this house was erected in 1773.[3] It should be noted that test excavations[4] proved that habitation in the area where the *Bayt al-Qurashi* was built has a much longer history than this.[5] On the basis of pottery finds it was confirmed that before the *Bayt al-Qurashi* was built in the 18th century, this area had been inhabited at least from the late Fatimid period.

It was originally a four storey mud brick building. When our fieldwork began, the house was ruined, with the upper floors collapsed. Based on the results of the archaeological salvage operation (site clearing), architectural field research, and comparative ethnographic studies, conducted by our "Qasr Dakhleh Project" (QDP), the original plan and the phases of development of the *Bayt al-Qurashi* were reconstructed. The house was entirely rebuilt using traditional materials and building techniques by a team of local masters and workers under the supervision of the QDP in 2003–2007. All kind of objects related to the daily life of its inhabitants (including basketry finds published in this article), Arabic documents and other kind of texts, as well as magical objects, were retrieved from this building during the archaeological salvage operation preceding the reconstruction. This is described in detail in the progress reports of the "Qasr Dakhleh Project".[6]

Thanks to the latest documents discovered at the house (dated to 1937) and the memory of the eldest inhabitants of al-Qasr, the "Qasr Dakhleh Project" has been able to establish that this building most probably collapsed in the late 1930s. It is also known that its residents moved to another house before the final event, abandoning this house because of the risk of its sudden collapse.

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1 I write all Arabic and dialect names in my own way which is not connected with ISO translation to keep coherence with other publications.

2 The original wooden lintel has disappeared; however photographs of it exist and the text has been registered.

3 See the lintel No. QV28 published in: C. Décobert, D. Gril, *Linteaux à épigraphes de l'oasis de Dakhla*, IFAO, Cairo, 1981, p. 17, which dates to 1186 AH/1773 AD.

4 The trench was opened in the street directly against the façade walls from the door of the *Bayt al-Qadi* (the building located next to the *Bayt al-Qurashi*, on its right side) to the door of the *Bayt al-Qurashi*.

5 F. Leemhuis, *Report on restoration and research activities of the Qasr Dakhleh Project during the 2004 season*, [in:] *A Report on the Field Activities of the Dakhleh Oasis Project during the 2003–2004 Field Season*, p. 52, http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/ancient-cultures/files/2013/04/dakhleh-report-2003–2004.pdf [16.07.2018].

6 See final reports published on the website of the Monash University: http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/ancient-cultures/excavations-in-dakhleh-oasis-egypt [16.07.2018].

The basketry finds

Only 11 well preserved basketry objects were retrieved during the archaeological salvage operation (site clearing) at the *Bayt al-Qurashi*. It seems that these finds belonged to the original furnishing of the house. They were found on the floors of the rooms: 5, 6 (inner courtyard), 7a (storeroom), 7 (so called Halima's apartment), 8a and 8b located in the front and in the middle of this house. For this reason these artefacts can be dated to the last phase of usage of this house (including the abandonment process), namely from the beginning of the 19th century (when the rearrangement of this building took place and the pottery workshop was established at Old Qasr, where the majority of the pottery objects found in this house was manufactured) – to the time before 1940 (when this part of the house collapsed).

The fact that in room 7 (so-called Halima's apartment) a long plaited strip bundled together with prepared for plaiting palm leaves and palm fiber, and also basketry awl have been found, might indicate that female residents of this house personally manufactured baskets and probably also mats made of palm.

Fig. 1: A long plaited strip with prepared for plaiting palm leaves and palm fiber, No. O.04.501, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

It is worth adding that that basketry techniques have been extensively studied by Willemina Wendrich.[7] There is also some information, especially about the manufacture, names, and functions of basketry objects in the book by the traveller and pioneer anthropologist Winifred

[7] See: W. Wendrich, *Who Is Afraid of Basketry: A Guide to Recording Basketry and Cordage for Archaeologist and Ethnographers*, Center for Non-Western Studies (CNWS, Leiden University), Leiden, 1991, pp. 30–85;W. Wendrich, *The World According to Basketry: an Ethno-Archaeological Interpretation of Basketry Production in Egypt*, Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies (CNWS, Leiden University), Leiden, 1999, pp. 153–174, 289–330; W. Wendrich, Basketry, [in:] P.T. Nicholson, I. Shaw (eds), *Ancient Egyptian materials and technology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 254–267.

S. Blackman[8] who studied the daily-life of the *fellahin* of Egypt in the 1920s. Brief accounts of the modern basketry from Dakhla are provided in Cassandra Vivian[9] and Frank Bliss.[10]

All basketry objects presented in this paper were documented according to the archaeological standards. As in the case of my studies on pottery finds from this house, I also used an ethno-archaeological approach for analysis of the basketry. The living testimony of residents in al-Qasr was useful for determining names and functions of the found basketry objects, and I have provided the Arabic names to facilitate their identification in the field.

The basketry objects found in *Bayt al-Qurashi* include various baskets, basketry plates, round and oval mats, as well as a square mat. All of them were made using a two-systems[11] basketry techniques of sewn plaits, coiling, continuous plaiting and weaving with one strand. All were made from parts of the palm tree; the sole exception is the square mat, which was made presumably using a plant called *samar* (rushes)[12] also using palm string. However, a specialist botanical study is essential for identifying the exact species of plant used in the manufacture.

Baskets made with the technique of sewn plaits

The baskets recovered in *Bayt al-Qurashi* that had been made with the sewn plaits technique,[13] still commonly used in Egypt, had various uses:

- for carrying;
- for storing goods;
- for carrying lunch into the field;
- as a bag;
- for sifting grains, good from bad;
- as a decoration and for comfort;
- for gathering and as a carry-all for any goods.

Maqtaf: a large basket usually made in the shape of a basin, mostly with two short handles. This was a multi-function basket used mainly for carrying, transporting and for storing goods.

It is usually an open, round container with a round base; this might be set apart or not markedly separate from the body. A different, less common, type of *maqtaf* has flattened sides,

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[8] See: W. S. Blackman (with a new Introduction by S. Ikram), *The Fellahin of Upper Egypt*, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2000, pp. 155–161.

[9] See: C. Vivian, *The Western Desert of Egypt. An Explorer's Handbook*, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2002, pp. 117–118.

[10] See: F. Bliss (with contribution by M. Weissenberger), *Artisanat et Artisanat d'Art dans les Oasis du Desert Occidental Egyptien*, Rüdiger Köppe Verlag, Cologne, 1998, pp. 218–228.

[11] For two-systems basketry techniques and other basket making terminology, see the Appendix: Basketry Terminology.

[12] Species Juncus: see W. Wendrich, *The World According*…, op. cit., Appendix D.2: Arabic and Nubian terminology.

[13] See: Appendix: Basketry Terminology.

an oval base, and looks like a large basketry bag. In both types the upper edges are finished with a selvedge.[14] *Maqtaf* usually has two handles on both (opposite) sides. Handles are made of two-ply or three-ply (double-twisted or triple-twisted) rope. The side under the handle is reinforced with rope. This rope is threaded into the body commonly in a running stitch.

Fragments of five baskets representing the first type of *maqtaf* were retrieved from the *Bayt al-Qurashi* – originally they looked like open, round containers. Their dimensions are impossible to estimate because the preserved fragments are too small. Some of the measurements are the number of strands per decimetre: 7–12 and the number of interweaving elements[15] per decimetre: 3.5–6; width of strand: 0.8–1.8 cm and width of interweaving (V-shape) elements: 1.5–4 cm; their plait pattern is: 1/1/1 (under 1/ over 1/ shift 1).

Only one well preserved *maqtaf* of the second type was found. It resembles a large basketry bag No. O.04.539; dimensions: rim Ø – 50 cm, base Ø – 30 cm, height: 40 cm, number of strands per decimetre: 9 and the number of interweaving elements per decimetre: 4.5; width of strand: 1.3 cm and width of interweaving (V-shape) elements: 3 cm, the plait pattern is – 1/1/1.

The selvedge finishing of the rim with rope is applied as a hemming stitch. The side under the handle is structurally reinforced with rope in a running stitch. Three-ply (triple-twisted) rope was used for the handles. The handle's diameter is 1.8 cm.

Fig. 2: Basket No. O.04.539, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

[14] Ibidem.

[15] Ibidem.

Sangus: a large basket in a keg shape, without handles, with a plaited (basketry) lid. It was used as a container mainly for storing dry goods, for example rice or different grains. It has a circular top and bottom. The base, wider than the rim, is round and usually not markedly separate from the body. The upper edges are finished with a selvedge.

Only one basket of this type No. O.04.502a was found; its dimensions: rim Ø – 30 cm, base Ø – 40 cm, height: 60 cm, number of strands per decimetre: 10 and the number of interweaving elements per decimetre: 5; width of strand: 1.2 cm and width of interweaving (V-shape) elements: 2.5 cm, the plait pattern – 1/1/1. Selvedge finishing of the upper edges with rope applied as a hemming stitch.

This basket was found with the plaited lid No. O.04.502b which fits to the basket; its dimensions: rim Ø – 36 cm, base Ø – 34 cm, height: 20 cm, number of strands per decimetre: 10 and the number of interweaving elements per decimetre: 5; width of strand: 1.2 cm and width of interweaving (V-shape) elements: 2.5 cm, the plait pattern – 1/1/1. Selvedge finishing of the upper edges with rope as a hemming stitch is also applied.

Fig. 3: Basket No. O.04.502a with lid No. O.04.502b, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

Marguna or ***qadis***: a medium sized basket in a box shape, usually fastened by a button (made from palm fibres), with one handle (for hanging) and plaited lid. It was used as a handy, portable container for carrying goods. It has a round or oval rim and base. The base, wider than the rim, is usually not markedly separate from the body. The upper edges are finished with a selvedge. The handle is made of two-ply or three-ply (double-twisted or triple-twisted) rope. The handle is added to both sides of the basket, and is threaded into the body also by rope, commonly by use of a hemming stitch. Also, the lid is threaded into the body.

The *marguna* is nicely decorated with a geometric, symmetrical composition of chequered triangles made of wool (the same type as the decoration on pottery from Old Qasr). The decoration might be monochromatic, usually black or made by using different colours, typically a combination of red and blue or red and green patterns.

Only one example of *marguna* basket was found No. O.04.345a; its dimensions: rim Ø – 12 cm, base Ø – 15 cm, height: 18 cm, number of strands per decimetre: 54 and the number of interweaving elements per decimetre: 27; width of strand: 0.3 cm and width of interweaving (V-shape) elements: 0.7 cm, the plait pattern - 2/2/1. Selvedge finishing of the upper edges

Fig. 4: Basket No. O.04.345a with lid No. O.04.345b, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

with rope applied as a hemming stitch. The handle, formed of three-ply (triple-twisted) rope is threaded into the body also by rope, by use of a hemming stitch. Handle's diameter is 1 cm.

The plaited, round lid of the basket No. O.04.345b is threaded into it; its dimensions: rim Ø – 13 cm, base Ø – 10 cm, height: 6 cm, number of strands per decimetre: 54 and the number of interweaving elements per decimetre: 27; width of strand: 0.3 cm and width of interweaving (V-shape) elements: 0.7 cm, the plait pattern – 2/2/1. Selvedge finishing of the upper edges with rope applied as a hemming stitch.

This *marguna* (basket and lid) is decorated with a geometric, monochromatic composition of chequered triangles made from black wool.

Shanta or ***shadufa***: this handy basket in a bag shape, with one long handle, was used for picking dates or carrying goods. It has flattened sides and a base which is not markedly separate. The upper edges are finished with a selvedge. The handle is usually made of two-ply or three-ply (double-twisted or triple-twisted) rope. The side under the handle is reinforced with rope. The handle is threaded into the body commonly in a running stitch.

Fig. 5: Basket No. O.04.335, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

Only one well preserved *shanta* No. O.04.335 was found; its dimensions: rim Ø – 26 cm, base Ø – 16 cm, height: 18 cm, number of strands per decimetre: 26 and the number of interweaving elements per decimetre: 13; width of strand: 0.7 cm and width of interweaving (V-shape) elements: 1.5 cm, the plait pattern – 1/1/1. Selvedge finishing of the upper edges with rope applied as a hemming stitch. The handle is threaded into the body in two (opposite) points in the middle of both sides, by using a running stitch. Three-ply (triple-twisted) rope was used for the handle. The handle's diameter is 0.8 cm and is 64 cm long.

Bursh: a large, round mat with one handle (for hanging) or four handles (on the axes, for carrying), also a round, flat basket, without or with one handle (for hanging). The uses of *bursh* in contemporary Dakhla are noted below. The edges of *bursh* are finished with a selvedge. Handles are formed mostly of two-ply or three-ply (double-twisted or triple-twisted) rope. The walls under the handle are reinforced with rope. Again, the rope is threaded into the body mostly in a running stitch.

Two partially preserved objects of the *bursh* type: No. O.05.076 (its dimensions: fragmentary preserved Ø – 60 cm, number of strands per decimetre: 30 and the number of interweaving elements per decimetre: 15; width of strand: 0.6 cm and width of interweaving [V-shape] elements: 1.3 cm, the plait pattern – 2/2/1) and No. O.05.077 (its dimensions: Ø – 100 cm, number of strands per decimetre: 11 and the number of interweaving elements per decimetre: 5.5; width of strand:

Fig. 6: Object No. O.05.076, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

0.5 cm and width of interweaving [V-shape] elements: 1 cm, a plait pattern – 2/2/1) were found in *Bayt al-Qurashi*. Both are round, and on the back reinforced by the rope which has been threaded into their bodies as a running stitch. Selvedge finishing in both cases is not preserved.

The *bursh* No. O.05.076 originally had probably one handle. In contrast, the *bursh* No. O.05.077 originally had four handles, on the axes. The preserved handle is made of three-ply (triple twisted) rope; the handle's diameter is 1.5 cm; for making it stronger and more user-friendly is covered by textile. This plaiting is reinforced on the back not only by the rope which has been threaded into its body as a running stitch, but also by oval basketry patches sized app. 18 × 10 cm, added on the edges.

Baskets made with coiling and continuous plaiting technique

The baskets recovered from *Bayt al-Qurashi* made by using coiling and continuous plaiting represent a type which is called *tabaq* by the residents of al-Qasr. Both production techniques are still used in Egypt.

Fig. 7: Basket No. O.04.071 + No. O.04.196, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

Tabaq: a flat basket in the shape and size of a plate, used mostly for serving food. A continuous plaiting[16] technique was used to manufacture the inside part of the basket (preserved in two pieces) No. O.04.071 + No. O.04.196; its dimensions: rim Ø – 30 cm, base Ø – 26 cm, height: 2.5 cm, number of strands per decimetre: 11 and the number of interweaving elements per decimetre: 5.5; width of strand: 0.6 cm and width of interweaving (V-shape) elements: 1.2 cm, the twill plain pattern – 2/2/1. The walls, consisting of 3 plaited rows (width of row: 0.5 cm), were produced by the coiling technique.[17]

The coiling technique was also used for a plaited but fragmentarily preserved basket No. O.04.162 also of the *tabaq* type; its dimensions: rim Ø – 20 cm, base Ø – 15 cm, height: 3.5 cm; width of row: 0.5–0.6 cm, number of rows in the base: 7 and number of rows in the walls: 3. Inside the base, on the back, the structure is reinforced by a piece of textile threaded into the body of this basket.

Fig. 8: Basket No. O.04.162, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

Hasirat samar: a square mat. The warp (passive element) is made from the palm fiber string and the weft (active element) probably from the type of rushes (Juncus). Only one mat No. O.05.063 was found; its dimensions: the length – 165 cm, the width – 60 cm, number of warps/

[16] Ibidem.

[17] Ibidem.

dm^2 – 5 and number of wefts/dm^2 – 14. It was woven in the one strand technique[18] in plain weave.[19] The longer edges are finished with a selvage, the shorter edges form borders of alternately back-woven warp endings. This mat is undecorated.

To sum up, the number and variety of basketry finds from *Bayt al-Qurashi* constitutes evidence for their commonplace role in domestic households of the time. Whilst the material looks very recent, it evidences a long and still living local basketry tradition at al-Qasr.

Comparative ethnographic field-research on basketry

Ethnographic comparative field-research[20] is an important part of my studies on basketry at al-Qasr, supplementing the short previous studies undertaken by others.[21] By this means, I have gathered data not only on the functions and names of objects, but also about how they were manufactured.

Fig. 9: Woman selling baskets to tourists at Old-Qasr, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

As in other regions of Egypt, basketry at Dakhla Oasis, including at Old Qasr, is mainly a female profession. There are only two exceptions: mat manufacture on the looms and cages and furniture manufacture made of *jarid*, which are mostly restricted to men. Traditionally, every girl from Dakhla knew how to make baskets. It was a skill which was passed down the generations, from mothers to daughters. Currently, genuine baskets made of plants are commonly replaced by their plastic counterparts. The plastic ones are considered to be more modern and

[18] Ibidem.

[19] Ibidem.

[20] I am grateful to Mona and Aida from Old Qasr and the mother of Mohammad Ibrahim from the village of Beshendi, who allowed me to witness how they manufacture basketry objects, and explained to me the names and functions of basketry objects in question.

[21] C. Vivian, op. cit., pp. 117–118; F. Bliss, op. cit., pp. 218–228.

stronger. They are affordable, and easy to buy in every big village. As a consequence of this, now in Dakhla only a very few families are still involved in basketry manufacture. The same families sell their products to locals and tourists.

Most of the basketry objects in Dakhla have been made using parts of the date-palm tree (*nakhl al-balah*) including the palm leaves called (*khus*), the stem (*'argun al-balah*) and the stem of the palm leaf, called (*jarid*). They use palm rope made from palm fibres called *lif habl*. Basketry makers use the awl called *manhiyat*, also *makhraz* or *makharraz*.[22]

In Dakhla, basketry objects are made using basketry techniques made with the use of two systems, one active and one passive, including the following techniques: plaited strips, sewn plaits, coiling, continuous plaiting, weaving with one strand, wrapping and pierced.[23]

The basketry objects are mostly nicely decorated. There are three main types of decoration:

- The first type of decoration is made using wool. The composition is geometric, symmetrical, made of chequered triangles. The same pattern of decoration is used on pottery from al-Qasr. It is monochromatic (usually black) or made with different colours (red and green; red and blue).
- The second type of decoration is made of stripes of textiles. The composition is also vertical, geometric, and symmetrical, but linear. The colour of decoration might be of different colours; mostly it is a combination of red and blue.
- The third type of decoration is made of coloured ribbons or strips of textile, which is applied to the edges of basketry object or is used to decorate the basketry hats.

As in the case of archaeological finds, I present the modern basketry objects from al-Qasr according to the techniques used to manufacture them.

Modern basketry objects manufactured using the sewn plaits technique

The sewn plaits technique is used to manufacture the following types of basketry objects: *maqtaf*, *badara*, *'ilaga*, *salla*, *marguna* or *qadis*, *taqiya*, *barnayta* or *shamsiyya*, *hasira khus* or *masliyya*.

Maqtaf: see description above. Many baskets of this type have only the base or the base and the body reinforced by thick and strong cord coils, which has been threaded into their body by running stitch. Currently the body of many baskets is instead of cord reinforced by fragments of heavy-duty plastic bags.

The *maqtaf* is the most commonly used basket at Dakhla. Inhabitants of al-Qasr describe its capacity as being 10 kg of dates. It is a multi-function basket used mainly for carrying, transporting and storing goods, including heavy ones. It is commonly used in fieldwork, e.g. for

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[22] P. Behnstedt, M. Woidich, *Die ägyptisch-arabischen Dialekte. Band 4: Glossar Arabisch-Deutsch*, Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, Wiesbaden, 1994, p. 111.

[23] See: Appendix: Basketry Terminology.

carrying dung, fertiliser called *sibakh*[24], earth, sand, or organic fuel. This basket is also used for transporting grains and clover or other plants which are used for feeding animals. I have even seen animals eating directly from this type of basket. This basket is also the most popular for storing goods sold at the markets. They are used by men as handy containers. Two such baskets are placed on both sides of a donkey, which is called *masbala*.[25] Men mostly carry such baskets on their arms; women on their heads.

Badara: a large basket in a basin shape, mostly with two short handles (on opposite sides). It looks similar to the *maqtaf* but is more carefully made and is usually decorated by geometric, symmetrical composition of chequered triangles made of coloured wool. Its shape resembles an open, round container with a round base. The base might be set apart or not markedly separate from the body. The upper edges are finished with a selvedge. This selvedge finishing of the upper edges with rope is applied as a hemming stitch or is sometimes covered by a coloured stripe of textiles. The handles are formed of two-ply or three-ply (double-twisted or triple-twisted) rope. The side under the handle is reinforced with rope. This rope is threaded into the body commonly in a running stitch. Many baskets of this type have the base reinforced by thick and strong cord coils, which has been threaded into their body by running stitch. It is mainly used for storing bread.

'Ilaga: a medium-sized carrier basket, also in a basin shape, mostly with two short handles (on opposite sides). It is usually decorated as the *badara* (see above). The base might be set apart or not markedly separate from the body. The upper edges are finished with a selvedge. Selvedge finishing of the upper edges with rope is applied as a hemming stitch. In some cases it is covered by coloured stripe of textiles. The handles are formed of two-ply or three-ply (double-twisted or triple-twisted) rope. The side under the handle is reinforced with rope. This rope is threaded into the body commonly in a running stitch. This is a multi-function basket which is used for carrying or storing any goods. It is mostly used as a handy container in households.

Salla: a medium sized basket in a keg shape, without handles. It has a circular top and bottom. The base, which is wider than the rim, is round and usually not markedly separate from the body. The upper edges are finished with a selvedge. Selvedge finishing of the upper edges with rope applied as a hemming stitch. It is used as a handy container used in the households, e.g. for storing goods or it is used as a rubbish bin.

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[24] Earth retrieved from the old rubbish mounds used as fertilizer (W. S. Blackman, op. cit., p. 156).

[25] W. Wendrich, *The World According*…, op. cit., Appendix D.2: Arabic and Nubian terminology.

Marguna or ***qadis***: see description above.
It is still a very popular type of basket at Qasr, and is used as a handy container for carrying goods; it is especially useful for the *fellahin* carrying their lunch into the fields. The *marguna* is also used as a handy container used in households for storing goods, especially more precious ones.

Taqiya*, *barnayta* or *shamsiyya: a basketry hat used to protect against the sun. Such hats in Egypt are unique to the Dakhla Oasis and they are recognised by local people as a Berber's influence. Originally they were worn only by men, but now they are also used by women, who wear them mostly directly on their scarves. Many hats are decorated by coloured ribbons or stripes of textiles.

Bursh: as described above, the *bursh* comes in two main shapes: a large, round mat with one or four handles; or a round, flat basket, without or with a handle.

The *bursh* without handles are usually:

- used for sorting good from bad grains (a flat basket, sometimes with low walls, also with one handle);
- put on the floor as a decoration and for comfort (mostly an oval shaped mat);
- for more comfortable sitting on the mud brick bench called *mastaba* (oval shaped mat);
- during wedding ceremonies, this type (usually an oval shaped mat) – called by the residents of al-Qasr *bursh al-arusa* – was specially made for the occasion and might be nicely decorated.[26]

The *bursh* with handles (round mat, with four handles on the axes) was used for example:

- for gathering and carrying clay for making bricks or adding plaster – this type is called by residents of al-Qasr *bursh at-tin*;[27]
- for gathering and carrying any goods.

Hasirat khus or ***masliyya***: it is an oval-shaped mat without handles or with a single handle (for hanging). As in the *bursh* case, the *hasirat khus* is used for decoration, for covering the floor, and to make sitting on the *mastaba* more comfortable. The *masliyya* is used as a mat for praying.

The edges of *hasirat khus* or *masliyya* are finished with a selvedge. Selvedge finishing of the edges with rope is applied as a hemming stitch or sometimes is covered by coloured stripe of textiles. The handle is formed mostly of two-ply or three-ply (double-twisted or triple-twisted) rope. The side under the handle is reinforced with rope. The rope is threaded into the body commonly in a running stitch.

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[26] C. Vivian, op. cit., p. 117.

[27] Ibidem.

Modern basketry objects manufactured used coiling technique

This technique is used to manufacture the following types of basketry objects as: *malqum*, *bunbunira*, *sirfis*, and *tabaq*.

Malqum: this is mostly a small basket in a box shape, usually fastened by a button (made from palm fibres), mostly with one handle for hanging, and a plaited lid. A less popular variant of this basket is medium sized and has an ovoid shape. It has a round or oval rim and base. The base is usually not markedly separated from the body. The upper edges are finished with a selvedge. The handle is made of two-ply or three-ply (double-twisted or triple-twisted) rope. The handle is usually added to both sides of the basket, and is threaded into the body by rope, commonly by use of a hemming stitch. The lid is threaded into the body.

The *malqum* is nicely decorated with vertical, geometric, symmetrical linear composition made of strips of textiles. The colour of decoration can be different colours, mainly a combination of red and blue. This basket has a similar function to the *marguna* (see above).

Bunbunira: a small basket in a box shape. One variant is fastened by a button made from palm fibres, with one long handle for hanging and a plaited lid. The second type has a lid with a small handle in the middle. It has a round rim and base. The base is usually not markedly separate from the body. The upper edges are finished with a selvedge.

The handle of the first type is made of two-ply or three-ply (double-twisted or triple-twisted) rope. It is usually added to both sides of the basket, and threaded into the body by rope, most commonly by the use of a hemming stitch. The lid is also threaded into the body. The *bunbunira* is nicely decorated, in similar way as *malqum* (see above). It is used as a handy small sized container in households for storing precious goods or sweets.

Sirfis: a basket in the shape of big, flat bowl with low, perforated walls. Willemina Wendrich notes that this is a unique type of coiled basketry object.[28] The variations in the space between the coils were used to manufacture a more decorative body. To make walls of this basket, an open spaced coiling technique was used, in which the active element is closely spaced, while the passive element is widely spaced. It can be decorated on the base of the inside surface, in similar way to the *malqum* and *bunbunira* (see above). This type of basket is still commonly used for serving food or for decoration.

Tabaq: it is a flat basket in a plate shape and size. It can be decorated on the base of the inside surface as the *sirfis*, in a pattern such as used on the *malqum* and *bunbunira* (see above). It is commonly used for serving food or for decoration.

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[28] W. Wendrich, *The World According*…, op. cit., p. 220.

Modern basketry objects manufactured using the continuous plaiting technique

The continuous plaiting technique is currently used only to manufacture the inner part of the one type of basketry object, the *tabaq*, described above. The walls and rim of this basket are made using the coiling technique. Such plaited plates can also have bigger diameter, app. 60 cm. This type of basket is still popular at al-Qasr and used for serving food. The bigger ones are used, for example, for serving bread.

Modern basketry objects manufactured using the weaving with one strand technique

Mats manufactured on the loom are traditionally made only by men. Unfortunately, the last specialist mat weaver in al-Qasr died some years ago. Moreover, due to the fact that organic mats have almost been fully replaced by their plastic counterparts in recent years, this handicraft has almost disappeared in the whole Dakhla. Thanks to the financial support of the QDP, one of the very last mat weaver masters has been found and encouraged to re-establish his workshop, in the village of al-Jadida.

Fig. 10: Mat weaver from the village of al-Jadida, photo by Anetta Łyżwa-Piber

Mat called *hasirat samar* is manufactured from rushes on a loom located indoors.[29] The basketry loom is made of four wooden pegs put directly in the ground on the four corners,

[29] F. Leemhuis, *A Report on research and restoration activities (of the QDP). Season 2006*, pp. 16–17, http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/wp-content/arts-files/ancient-cultures/QDP-report-2006.pdf [16.07.2018]. See also: W. Wendrich, *Basketry*, [in:] P.T. Nicholson, I. Shaw (eds.), *Ancient Egyptian materials and technology*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 261.

with two cross-bars fastened to them, thus creating the frame. Mat weaver squats on top of the already finished part of the mat.

At Dakhla mats are woven in the one strand technique, in plain weave.[30] They are basic and undecorated in comparison to, for example, decorated mats from the Fayoum Oasis, which are manufactured using more complicate techniques and weaves.[31] Mats are still used instead of carpets to cover the floors, as they were when seen by Edward W. Lane.[32] They are also commonly used to make sitting on the mud-brick benches (*mastaba*) located mainly in front of houses, in some buildings also inside, along their walls more comfortable.

Modern basketry objects manufactured using wrapping technique

There is only one example of this in the Oasis, *fursha*.

Fursha: a brush made of date palm fibre, with a wrapped handle made of palm rope made using the wrapping technique.

Modern basketry objects manufactured using a pierced technique

A pierced technique is used to manufacture the following types of basketry objects: crates for transporting bread, cages and furniture. All these objects are made of *jarids*, without using nails or any fastening. Such objects are made by men.

Crate for transporting bread

A simple but useful basketry object consisting of three long, horizontal *jarids* and many shorter, vertical *jarids* which are parallel to each other. The vertical *jarids* are inserted into holes pierced in the horizontal ones. Such crates are commonly used in Egypt for transporting bread.

Cages

These cages made of *jarids* used the pierced technique, without using any nails or fastening, are still popular in al-Qasr, and are used for storing and transporting fruits or vege-tables, as well as for keeping poultry or rabbits. Such cages can be very durable and used for carrying goods.

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[30] See: Appendix: Basketry Terminology.

[31] These were studied and published by the author: A. Łyżwa, *Mats from the Cemetery at Naqlun*, [in:] "Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean" (PAM), 2003, no. 14 (Reports 2002), pp. 188–195; A. Łyżwa, *The Basketry from Excavations at Naqlun*, [in:] G. Gabra (ed.), *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis*, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2005, pp. 231–245.

[32] E. W. Lane, *An Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*, London, 1860 – The definitive 1860 edition. Introduced by J. Thompson, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo and New York, 2000, p. 309.

Winifried S. Blackman describes using *qafas* with the lid made in the similar way as a traveler's suitcase, because it was so light in weight. Blackman carried her kitchen utensils in such a case.[33]

Furniture

The pierced technique is still used for manufacturing furniture such as armchairs, tables and beds: all these objects are manufactured in the similar way, described above. Armchairs and tables are easy to find in hotels or other tourist locations around Dakhla, but the beds have almost disappeared in the present day Oasis.

Frank Bliss[34] mentions beds called *sirir jarid* that were originally also kept indoors. They were commonly used during the summer as portable furniture, because they could be easily relocated for example to the roof; sleeping on the roof remains a popular habit during summer. The dimensions of these beds were: 200 × 75 cm (single) or 220 × 200 cm (double). Furthermore, he notes that Bedouins used them to sleep outdoors, to protect themselves against scorpions.

Other basketry objects

The ***manashya*** is a swatter made from the bunch of palm leafs, which are gathered together in a narrow textile pouch, which constitutes a decorated handle.

Final remarks

The basketry is still commonly used at households of Old Qasr and other villages of Dakhla Oasis. It is however considered by the young local people to be an old-fashioned handicraft fast disappearing under the pressures of modern lifestyle demands. Due to various reasons, the genuine, organic basketry is being replaced by plastic counterparts. Nevertheless, it is notable that the plastic counterparts imitate the original basketry objects.

On the other hand, given that Old Qasr is one of the most attractive tourist destinations at Dakhla, basketry handicraft is considered by the local community as a way of earning extra money by the women, who sell their products to the tourists. Therefore, there is a chance that the long local basketry tradition, despite difficulties, will survive in this small town longer than in the other villages of Dakhla.

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[33] W. S. Blackman, op. cit., p. 161.

[34] F. Bliss, op. cit., pp. 141–142.

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APPENDIX:
Basketry terminology

Coiling technique: a two-systems technique with one passive and one active system consisting of one member (moving in two planes), which are orientated in one direction.

Continuous plaiting technique: two-systems technique with two active systems (moving in one plane), which are orientated in two directions perpendicular to one another.

Direction: orientation of the system.

Interweaving elements: two strands (members) perpendicular to each other; resembling a V-shape.

Member: component making up the active element.

Plain weave in mats: the active element (weft) consists of one strand [member] or two strands interweaving with a passive element (warp) in 1 to 1 arrangement; this means that the weft weaves alternately – up and down – over and under a warp: 1 (over): 1 (under): 1 (over), etc., next, complementary one: 1 (under): 1 (over): 1 (under), etc.

Plaited strips technique: two-systems technique with two active systems moving in one plane, which are oriented in two directions.

Plane: kind of movement of the active system.

Selvedge: the simplest finish of the edges of a plaited form, resulting from changing the direction of a strand (member).

Sewn plaits technique: two-systems technique (one passive and one active), consisting of one strand (member) moving in one plane, oriented in one direction. The passive system consists of a long plait (strip made with the plaited strips technique) sewn spirally with an active system – a sewing strand.

Strand: general term for material used in basketry; plant member used for weaving basketry.

Two-system basketry techniques: these are made with two systems, one active and one passive. **Active system**: elements which create the coherence of a basketry technique (Willemina Wendrich, *Who Is Afraid of Basketry: A Guide to Recording Basketry and Cordage for Archaeologist and Ethnographers*, Center for Non-Western Studies [CNWS, Leiden University], Leiden, 1991, p.135). **Passive system**: elements forming the body of a basketry structure, without having an actual part in creating the coherence of the technique (Willemina Wendrich, *Who Is Afraid*…, op. cit, p. 141).

Weaving with one strand – two-systems technique (similar to fabric weaving) with one active element (weft), consists of one strand (member) moving in one plane and woven in two directions – up and down – around the passive elements (warp).

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Pride in History – Particularly Pharaonic – in Contemporary Egyptian Songs as a Part of Shaping National Identity

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Summary

Egypt is today known as 'the cradle of civilization' and is a mosaic of tradition and modernity. Its centuries-old heritage is known all over the world.

This article presents the results of an examination of the pride shown towards national history in selected Egyptian patriotic songs and music videos realised in the last few years. Attention is drawn to those Egyptian songs and music videos that show huge pride for history, especially towards the pharaonic. Pharaohs (or other distinct markers of history) are used to underscore the depth of Egyptian heritage. The songs generally express citizens' love of their country, and pride in the nation's achievements – as much contemporary as historical ones. The author, while conducting her research, also poses questions as to whether such songs can shape or strengthen national identity.

The videos and songs that have been selected were all performed by popular singers, are heard on the radio, seen on the television and have catchy melodies and lyrics. These elements mean that they can be effective forms of 'informal learning' in the process of shaping national attitudes – regardless of the ideas that guide the composers. The strength of their impact is further enhanced when used in films showing Egyptian people (representatives of all professions, communities, religions and age groups), flags, world-famous monuments (the pyramids, the Sphinx, temples in Luxor and others) and the achievements of modern Egypt (i.e. the expansion of the Suez Canal).

Keywords

Egypt, national songs, music videos, pharaonic Egypt, pride in history, shaping and strengthening identity, love of a nation, national unity

Accepting history as a national challenge

Respect for the past, in all its incantations, is not common all over the world. It is difficult to make people accept their full history – with its good and bad sides, previous beliefs, as well as positive and negative decisions taken long ago that changed certain things in the homeland. In theory, most people have a rudimentary knowledge of the origins of their country, but the level of this knowledge and their feelings of pride are varied. Accepting and then shaping pride towards the complete history of a country is a difficult and sensitive issue – not everyone is able to accept everything that has happened in the past.

The Arab Republic of Egypt, the most important Middle Eastern Arabic country, is well known for its long and rich history – it is one of the oldest countries in the world, believed by some to be the cradle of civilization. It is also home to the Pyramids at Giza – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and the only one surviving. However, the uniqueness of this country is not all a result of the pharaonic heritage. Contemporary Egypt is a rich and colourful mosaic of tradition and modernity, which can be viewed as a product of the cultures, religions, traditions and people who have ever lived in present-day Egyptian territories. It is not a state of affairs that can be described in a few simple words. What's more, visiting all of its historical sites is simply impossible in a short time.

So, is it easy to accept such centuries-long diversity in a single land – to understand a heritage where Muslims (mainly Sunni) and Christians (mainly Orthodox Copts) meet every day, where the inheritance from the polytheistic Pharaohs, ancient Romans and Shiite Fatymids influence different countries and peoples? Egyptians are able to accept it, and even strive to do more – they are proud of this mosaic and their centuries-old history. They are especially proud of the Pharaonic part of their heritage – as the most unique and inimitable, with people from all around the world appreciating and making efforts to visit it. This Egyptian pride is in evidence every day, and in many different ways – for example in advertisements.[1] Patriotic Egyptian songs and music videos also – more or less directly – express the national pride for this part of their history. Aside from the fact that they give voice to their glory, they also shape the attitudes of other citizens – young and old alike.

Shaping national identity

Creating identity in the very young, or shaping it in older people, is an important task. Parents, teachers, local and national officials can all influence these processes. Identities can be shaped in different ways: through school textbooks, history lessons, books, the teaching of Arabic

[1] E.g.: the advertisement of 13th International Video Clip Festival, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wvx2w1CZl7U [20.01.2018] or some advertisements of Banque Misr (Bank Miṣr), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rD5jBDOuDXQ [2.03.2018], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KsOCk53w0s [2.03.2018], https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVMvVQFfg7U [2.03.2018].

language and literature, ceremonies commemorating historical events, the arts, etc.[2] The same can be observed all over the world, but the emphasis is different. Creating songs for the country is also an effective way to generate the expected attitudes. It is important that such songs are available everywhere – on the radio or television (in videos or as soundtracks to images or movies showing important moments or people). This method is also much more effective if such songs are composed or sung by popular singers adored by citizens. These songs seem to be much more effective when they do not just accompany official ceremonies, but when they are able to enter the everyday lives of the people by being catchy or memorable. Such an approach means that society does not feel they are being influenced to act or feel in certain ways. It is thus possible to call such an effective form of education informal learning.[3]

It must be added, and strongly underlined, that not every song created for the nation is specifically aimed at creating or shaping certain attitudes. It is believed that some composers or singers just want to release an opus glorifying the country, without any covert meaning or intention. Some performers want to produce songs that talk about their beloved homeland because such songs will enhance that artist's popularity among the audience or authorities if they follow the same policy as the current policy of the country. On the other hand, in some conditions such songs can be used also against politicians. Everything depends on the situation in which they were created. Whatever the real purpose, they can still be used to create or shape some expected attitudes.

In every country, this kind of songs can be used as well by different powers – civic or religious authorities, single singers, composers or other artists, politicians who wants make crowds follow them.

Aims of research

This paper presents songs and music videos that have been released in the last few years. The main aim of the research was to confirm or deny the hypothesis that taking pride in history is important in contemporary Egyptian songs and music videos, and that it can also be useful for shaping or creating special civic attitudes in society. The subject of interest goes further and asks, if they can be used to shape attitudes, what kind of Egyptian do they create? The author makes the point that she does not consider the composers' intentions behind the songs as crucial to their effectiveness – even if the composer/artist had different intentions, such songs can still be adopted as tools to shape behaviour.

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[2] See: L. Zarzecki, *Teoretyczne podstawy wychowania. Teoria i praktyka w zarysie*, Karkonoska Państwowa Szkoła Wyższa, Jelenia Góra, 2012, pp. 126–127.

[3] See: P. Petrykowski, *Społeczno-kulturowe aspekty podstaw wychowania*, Wydawnictwo Uczelniane Wyższej Szkoły Informatyki i Ekonomii TWP w Olsztynie, Olsztyn, 2005, pp. 120–125.

Short social and historical background – contemporary

Egypt is a large (998,000 km^2)[4] country, full of variety. On one hand, it forms a peculiar cultural mosaic, unparalleled anywhere else on the globe, of which Egyptian citizens can take great pride. Such variety can be observed in numerous areas, including, among other things: in religion (Muslims and Christians in differing proportions), climate (from dry and arid to Mediterranean),[5] broad differences in culture (Bedouins, the differences between life in Upper and Lower Egyptian towns and cities, different ways of living in oases, Nubian culture in the south, etc.), dialects (notwithstanding the fact that the official language of Egypt is Arabic, Egyptians use their own dialects every day, and these are often quite unique. Normally communication is possible, but on occasion not everybody can be understood – for example, some dialects from the Sinai are difficult for people from Alexandria to understand; Egyptian Nubians even have their own unique language, and are not usually understood by fellow citizens from other areas). On the other hand, such diversity can threaten a country's unity. Especially when the population is growing rapidly[6] – there are more than 96 million Egyptian citizens.[7] In moments of tension between certain groups the line between peace and war becomes very thin.

This is what has happened in Egypt – in its most recent history, the country faced difficult challenges. The world watched as the Arab Spring overwhelmed a number of Middle Eastern countries in early 2011 – Egypt was one of them. Parliamentary and presidential elections took place, with power eventually shifting in 2013. What happened after this was particularly important. Various attacks have become ever-stronger from that moment until today, e.g. against the police or army,[8] and continue to grow. Aside from the fact that Egypt has faced torrid times (for example, the numerous attacks on churches and wealthy Christians that took place in August 2013[9] and other attacks on Christians and different religious groups in last

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4 B. Stępniewska-Holzer, J. Holzer, *Egipt. Stulecie przemian*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie DIALOG, Warszawa, 2006, p. 7.

5 http://www.petroleum.gov.eg/en/AboutEgypt/Pages/LocationandClimate.aspx [26.01.2018].

6 The Egyptian authorities also realise this burning issue. President ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ as-Sīsī has stressed the importance of this problem by explaining the negative effect of unbalanced population growth (MENA, *Sisi: Increasing population rate biggest challenge facing Egypt*, http://www.sis.gov.eg/Story/119371?lang=en-us [26.01.2018]).

7 http://www.capmas.gov.eg/ [26.01.2018].

8 E.g.: P. Kingsley, *Attack on Egyptian military checkpoint kills dozens*, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/24/attack-egyptian-military-checkpoint-kills-dozens [31.01.2018]; Reuters, *Egypt: eight policemen killed in attack on outskirts in Cairo*, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/08/egypt-eight-police-killed-in-attack-on-outskirts-of-cairo [31.01.2018].

9 E.g.: I. Krawczyk, *HRW wzywa Egipt do ochrony Koptów*, http://www.rp.pl/artykul/11,1041027-HRW-wzywa-Egipt-do-ochrony-Koptow.html [26.01.2018]; M. Khairat, *Coptic churches burn amid violence in Egypt*, https://egyptianstreets.com/2013/08/16/coptic-churches-burn-amid-violence-in-egypt/ [26.01.2018].

few years[10]), and has been close to entering full-blown civil war, it has never come to this. Nonetheless, there is no doubting the possibility of the country being exposed to other severe tests in the future. The end of peace, the stirring up of controversies connected to religions may well be the easiest ways to provoke Egyptian communities. This is why maintaining values of citizenship and national feeling is so important.

Patriotic songs and music videos

Patriotic songs are a very important element in the shaping of national attitudes. Their potential and influence on society has been used often throughout history to embolden people – e.g. Polish songs during World War Two, the Marseillaise during the French Revolution. Such songs were created a long time ago, but they continue to be heard to this day – particularly in areas of conflict and tension. In an article by Joanna Zaniewicz, she points out: "(…) contemporary music which, in my opinion, can express and shape national identity, is frequently helpful in times of external and internal threat, in times of war, and in times of peace as well".[11]

Patriotic songs can take various forms – some are light hearted, some serious and heart-breaking, whilst others can be lively, folkloric and popular. They may be sung during official ceremonies, pop concerts, even weddings and family celebrations, as well as a whole host of other occasions. Egyptian songs can be described in the same way. To understand its huge effect on the people, it must be added that these songs are heard almost continually on the radio and television, and often shared on social media. When Egypt is facing problems, the frequency is even higher.

The popularity of patriotic Egyptian songs in the media nowadays is actually nothing new. This phenomenon started quite soon after the government monopolised the radio services:[12] "After the Second World War, Egyptian Radio was dominated by enthusiastic tendencies toward developing and linking these improvements to nationalistic and patriotic considerations".[13]

The pride in history voiced in Egyptian songs and music videos can be expressed directly in words and then emphasised with the use of pictures and video, or can be used as the background in other content shown to citizens.

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[10] E.g.: D. Walsh, N. Youssef, *Militants Kill 305 at Sufi Mosque in Egypt's Deadliest Terrorist Attack*, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/middleeast/mosque-attack-egypt.html [31.02.2018]; J. Sterling, F. Karimi, M. Tawfeeq, H. Alkhshali, *ISIS claims responsibility for Palm Sunday church bombings in Egypt,* https://edition.cnn.com/2017/04/09/middleeast/egypt-church-explosion/index.html [31.01.2018].

[11] J. E. Zaniewicz, *O roli polskiej muzyki w kształtowaniu tożsamości narodowej*, [in:] „Sprawy narodowościowe. Seria nowa", 2014, no. 45, p. 138.

[12] It took place on May 31, 1934 (Z. Nassar, *A History of Music and Singing on Egyptian Radio and Television*, [in:] M. Frishkopf (ed.), *Music and Media in the Arab World*, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo and New York, 2010, p. 68).

[13] Ibidem, p. 70.

Taking pride in pharaonic history

Two songs played during the ceremony for the opening of the new branch of the Suez Canal serve as good examples of the pride felt towards Ancient Egyptian history.[14] *Taḥyā Maṣr*[15, 16] (*Long live Egypt*)[17] is a typical piece for the beloved country. It was written by Tāmir Ḥusayn. Children assert their love for their country, state that Egypt is their entire life and that in times of difficulty they will protect it. We can hear:

> Long live Egypt – the word that every Egyptian repeated while winning,
> Long live Egypt – every soldier carried it [with love – E.W-A.] day and night.[18, 19]

It is underlined that Egypt is of the utmost importance, and its citizens are ready to be there for it any time they are called – to fulfil any order. The country is the most valuable thing they have. They can do many things, work hard – the canal is only the first. They invite everybody to see "Egypt's gift to the world".[20] To understand the meaning and power of the their invitation it is expressed in three languages: Arabic (actually their dialect), French and English. The children declare their pride in ancient heritage:

> We're the sons of the Pharaohs and we're proud to be Egyptians!
> It's the country of the peace and the miracles,
> And in Egypt you will meet no impossible.[21, 22]

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[14] Opening of the 'new Canal Suez' took place on August 6, 2015. The total length of construction works (which were completed in one year) came to 72 km. The Egyptian government made this day a public holiday. The celebrations (accompanied by national songs) took place across almost the whole of Egypt. Its official slogan was: "Egypt's gift to the world" (R. Gehad, M. Barsoum et al., *RELIVE: Egypt's new Suez Canal officially welcomes ships*, http://english.ahram.org.eg/NewsContentP/1/137092/Egypt/Live-updates-Egypt-marks-opening-of-new-Suez-Canal.aspx [26.01.2018]).

[15] All names that were originally are used in Egyptian dialect – even if they can be read in Arabic – are transcribed in the way in which Egyptians would read them. The author has decided to do so to render the specifics of the dialect, especially as such songs are mainly sung in this way to reach a wider audience.

[16] The slogan "Taḥyā Maṣr" started to be popular in recent years and has become associated with the president of Egypt and any of his activities. It is repeated (mainly 3 times) by As-Sīsī during his speeches (e.g.: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA_umA_YBpg [27.01.2018]; https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_JeRsPyezI [27.01.2018]). It is also popular motive in songs (e.g: *Bēnā taḥyā Maṣr* (*Long live Egypt among us*), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EL3MhC8vq-s [27.01.2018] or *Taḥyā Maṣr* (*Long live Egypt*), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnEVaLmnMuU [27.01.2018]).

[17] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVYW59tBSc0 [26.01.2018].

[18] Ibidem.

[19] All quoted lyrics (except those that were originally in English) were translated by the author of the article.

[20] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVYW59tBSc0 [26.01.2018].

[21] Ibidem.

[22] This part was originally in English.

In this song, history does not appear particularly clearly – it seems logical that as Egyptians in ancient times created huge and important things for the whole world, so they continue to do so today. A gift for every citizen of the world has been made by the grandchildren of the Pharaohs, who have not forgotten their history, heritage and country – they are proud to follow in their ancestors' achievements. Finally, they live in "the country of peace and miracles"[23] where nothing is impossible.

Aǧyāl (*The Generations*),[24] a song by Aḥmad Ǧamāl, Kārmin Sulaymān and Muḥammad Šāhīn, was next to be performed during the opening of the 'New Suez Canal'. This composition also assures citizens' love for Egypt, to which they owe their life, and for which they are willing to die. It ends by declaring that Egypt will always win, and this is what is most important. Egypt has the eyes of the world upon it. The singers also express their pride in being Egyptian and completing the expansion of the Suez Canal:

> Egyptian Canal [was built – E.W-A.] by Egyptian hands,
> From Egyptian money[25], [and devised – E.W-A.] by Egyptian brains[26]

They are proud from what they have achieved, finally singing:

> Who can prevent the Egyptian doing what he has already decided?
> [Mind you, we are – E.W-A.] grandsons of Pharaohs, it is natural that we repeat their glory.[27]

From the song comes the confidence that any adversity that might ever appear will be defeated. They are strong – nothing can ever frighten them. A love for Egypt can help its citizens achieve anything. A good example of this was seen during the celebration day, where they recommended "passing through the Canal and seeing what the love for Egypt has done".[28]

It seems that special music videos for both songs were not recorded. In her research, the author could find nothing other than similar recordings from the opening of the 'New Suez Canal'. There appear to be no references to Ancient history – instead showing performers and children wearing sailors' uniforms, carrying Egyptian flags and singing the songs along

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[23] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVYW59tBSc0 [26.01.2018].

[24] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYjDEWPg68o [26.01.2018].

[25] The project was fully funded by Egypt. The full amount was collected from Egyptian citizens in just 8 days (F. Villette, *New Suez Canal: A show of Egyptians' patriotism*, https://www.iol.co.za/capetimes/news/new-suez-canal-a-show-of-egyptians-patriotism-12180560 [26.01.2018]).

[26] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lYjDEWPg68o [26.01.2018].

[27] Ibidem.

[28] Ibidem.

the Canal. In the front them sit the Egyptian president, officials and guests from Egypt and abroad. Behind them, ships pass along the new line of the Canal.[29]

Tamer Hosny's (Tāmir Ḥusnī) song, *Maṣr is-salām* (*Egypt Full of Peace*)[30] is a good example of combining many important values for the shaping of attitudes and the growth of a united society in one composition. The Pharaohs play an important part here. The first words uttered by this famous Egyptian singer state that, whatever happens to Egypt, it will always stay the same[31] – this can be understood as: remaining strong, happy, united and peaceful. The song's author underscores the deep Egyptian heritage, calling his own country *umm id-dunyā*[32] – mother of the world. He is proud that seven thousand years ago, in his land, the first civilisation blossomed. He is certain that his country will always show courage and will forever be ready to 'embrace' its citizens – it is an anchor for all Egyptians. In just this one country there is the river Nile and most of the world's greatest monuments.[33] Egypt is presented as a beloved country, a country of peace and a country referenced in three religions – the aim of drawing attention to this is to show that Egypt is not only recognised by man, but by God. It is another song to feature a few lyrics in English:

Ancient civilisation… the land of pyramids nation…
You'll love it without any hesitation. Egypt![34]

The dignity in this pop song is further bolstered by the addition of an allusion to the Egyptian national anthem towards the end. The performer repeats (three times) the word: "bilādī",[35] which is similar to the anthem, and then returns to his own song, with lyrics targeting parents and children. To prevent any doubt about this reference to the anthem, the video shows the singer saluting the Egyptian flag. All the performers on stage with him do the same, as does the audience.

The video made for this song is very important. The lyrics and the message they deliver are, of course, major factors, but it is important to understand that the meanings in such a song are delivered to society in various ways. Patriotic songs do not work just through peoples' ears, but also, or even mainly, by touching the heart with the images shown in the music

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[29] Ibidem.

[30] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3BfGrtWpJQ [27.01.2018].

[31] Ibidem.

[32] These words are used by Egyptians regularly. In normal conversation, they easily speak of their country in such words. It seems that *umm id-dunyā'*s motif has entered Egyptian dialect (and so in everyday life). It has to be added that "Egypt" in both Arabic and Egyptian dialect is female, this is why they call it "mother of the world".

[33] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3BfGrtWpJQ [27.01.2018].

[34] Ibidem.

[35] The same word opens the Egyptian national anthem and means: "my country".

video. In such situations, people better understand the meaning – they see it, hear it and can more easily remember.

The video seems to have been made in a theatre. At the start, the singer is joined by children and the audience. A curtain opens and the singer and children (all girls wearing white) are seen. The children's faces are beaming – all of them sing about their beloved homeland and it seems that this love is drawn on their faces. For the first minute they are alone on the stage, but then the curtain opens again and the audience is bathed in bright light. This light can symbolise a higher power, strength. Gradually, waving Egyptian flags appear from the light, whilst in the background the pyramids can be seen, and a group of people arrives on stage. These people are representative of Egyptian society – soldiers (ready to protect the land in full uniform and carrying guns), policemen, pilots, doctors, men and women – both with and without their heads covered – from different social groups and parts of Egypt. They remain on stage until the end of the song, and when the camera pulls back the following picture appears – pyramids in the background, in front of them a crowd waving Egyptians flags, and then the children and the singer. All of them – young and old, women and men – look into the future with hope and smile as they are sure that their beloved country will grow and overcome all difficulties. It is only during the English part that the scene changes – instead there are people standing in front of ancient monuments (behind which is a pyramid) holding boards with English words written on them. After this a small girl (standing on the stage) watches the waving flag and the singer and then everybody salutes it. When the word "bilādī" is repeated the audience stands up and also salutes the flag along with everyone on the stage. In the closing stages of the song, everyone joins together on stage – together they are united, together they love Egypt, together they sing for it. All of them look to the future calmly, with hope and confidence. Finally they raise their hands with the V for victory and peace, with the background still full of waving flags and pyramids.[36]

Love for the homeland in the song *Maṣr is-salām* is connected to the rich and deep history of the pharaonic civilisation, and respect for it. Everybody in Egyptian society knows it – something that is expressed in the video. The motherland is the most valuable thing to unite all citizens. Citizens who love themselves stand hand-in-hand together and are proud of their country. No problem can divide such citizens. They will always win because, when they do, their country wins too. The song contains the message that there is no possibility to live in a country where there are conflicts and differences between people who cannot communicate.

[36] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3BfGrtWpJQ [27.01.2018].

Fig. 1: Screenshot from Tāmir Ḥusnī's video for the song Maṣr is-salām. Captured by the author of the article. Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X3BfGrtWpJQ [31.01.2018]

An interesting example showing the pride felt by Egyptians towards their ancient civilisation and used to inform certain attitudes appeared in a video for one of the official songs[37] of the first World Youth Forum[38], held in Sharm El-Sheikh – *Baḥlam bi-makān* (*I Dream of a World*)[39] was a song performed by numerous artists from all over the world. The idea to involve so many nationalities alone conveys the spirit of the song and the Forum it was made to represent – different performers sing in different languages to show there can be dialogue between different peoples. Dialogue, which was declared a necessity,[40] can lead to people learning from their differences, from each other and to peaceful coexistence around the world, something important to the organisers of the Forum, who named Egypt the "land of peace". The Forum brought young people from across the world to Egypt. The song talks about the dream of living in a perfect place – in a world where there is only love and no hate, where sun makes people's hearts shine, where there is hope and where dreams can come true.

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[37] The second official song was: *Šabāb id-dunyā* (*Youth of the World*) by popular Algerian singer Cheb Khaled (Šāb Ḫālid); https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2rqPZT-Eag [27.01.2018].

[38] As the official agenda states: "The World Youth Forum is a platform built by promising youth that sends a message of peace, prosperity, harmony and progress to the entire world. (…) The forum is a chance for you to engage with top policymakers, network with promising youth from the region and the world that are determined to create real change in the world we live in today" (https://egyouth.com/en/ [27.01.2018]). The forum was held 4–10.11.2017, and involved more than 3,000 participants from 113 countries (Egypt Independent, *World Youth Forum kicks off in Sharm El-Shaikh with 113 countries participating*, http://www.egyptindependent.com/world-youth-forum-kicks-off-sharm-el-shaikh-113-countries-participating/ [27.01.2018]). The event was also attended by many Egyptian officials (including President ʾAbd al-Fattāḥ as-Sīsī and members of the government), actors, singers, businessmen, etc. During the sessions many important topics were broached – for example: the role of women, differences among cultures and civilisations, creating the future's leaders, the role of cinema in combating extremism, and many more. Egyptian media continual broadcast news of the activities at the Forum; author of the article who attended the event.

[39] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzANMQ8zrKE [27.01.2018].

[40] The hashtag of the World Youth Forum was "#WeNeedToTalk".

Where life and love are the most important. They pose a very important question: "If we were united in the past, then why should we be divided?"[41]. A world where people enjoy their lives, can exist together in peace despite their differences, can plan for their future and do not have any fears. They underline that, at the end of the day, everybody comes from the same mother and father, they live in the same land, they have the same blood and are all sailing the same ship.[42] In the end they add:

> And youth of the world have come from all around for the sake of future generations…
> For future generations,
> To send the whole world a message of [abundance and – E.W-A.] peace,
> From the land of peace [safety – E.W-A.]…
> From the land of peace.[43]

This message – sent to the outside world and published many times in the Egyptian media – was a kind of show of pride for Egypt. As mentioned previously, many singers from different countries took part in the recording of the song and video. Each is shown in front of or near to some iconic places from their own country as they are singing. Some other well-known places were shown even if there was no singer from these countries, e.g. Paris or Dubai. In the video we can see: the Statue of Liberty in the US, the Eiffel Tower in France, the Statue of Christ the Redeemer in Brazil, a Kenyan national park, South Korea's Gyeongbokgung Palace, the Greek Santorini and Petra in Jordan, etc. Egypt was represented by two singers and mostly monuments to the Pharaohs. The singers appeared in Luxor (where one can experience a popular touristic attraction – hot air balloons), in an Egyptian bazaar, and they were also shown singing inside ancient temples looking at the hieroglyphs. Viewers can also see, among other things: a panorama of Cairo, the entrance to the Karnak temple, the pyramids at Giza, the Nile and its many small islands (and monuments).[44] Of course, one could say that such a presentation of Egypt is aimed at attracting tourists, with the Forum being the perfect way to promote the country. Even if this is true, there is no doubt that any country in the world would want to show the best things on offer to whoever wants to visit. Egypt has decided to present itself in line with the pharaonic heritage of which its citizens are so proud.

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41 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzANMQ8zrKE [27.01.2018].

42 Ibidem.

43 Ibidem.

44 Ibidem.

Fig. 2: Screenshots from the World Youth Forum video for the song Baḥlam bi-makān. Captured by the author of the article.
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZzANMQ8zrKE [31.01.2018]

It also happens that elements of ancient pharaonic history appear in videos as background to songs that do not talk directly about history. The song *T'aẓīm is-salām* (*Admiration of Peace*)[45] is a good example. This is a typical song addressing love and respect for the Egyptian army. It was written by Tāmir Ḥusayn and children perform it. They wear clothes in the colours of the national flag – the boys wear black trousers, white shirts and red scarves around their necks, and the girls wear black trousers, red shirts and white scarves.

The children sing that they were taught to love their homeland, and that they dream of being soldiers when they grow up. They send greetings straight from the heart, salute for peace, send their respects to "heroes of their country"[46] and for those who do not sleep at night in the service of others – i.e. so that children and the whole nation may sleep peacefully. The children hope that there will always be peace in the country, and that it will be safe. The soldiers are the guarantors of this. And a traitor or enemy must know who they are dealing with – Egyptians. They are strong and full of determination. The can do everything. History has proved it many times, and God always is and will be with them. Their enemies may try to separate them (society), but thanks to the army no one will divide Egyptians.[47]

Within the text there are no references to history. But in the video there is clearly a need to draw attention to the fact that the clothes are in the colours of the national flag, with the soldiers, the ubiquitous waving flags, and children holding hands again symbolising the unity of the Egyptian people. In the background, pyramids and the Sphinx appear[48], showing that the next thing to unite them is their shared glorious ancient history, which they are all very proud of. It is not religion – they can all hold different beliefs – but the millennia of shared history. It seems to show that they are all together, and that they are strong because they are together. Egyptians are united by all their history, heritage and the civilisation of Egypt – from

[45] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zt02-CkBnI4 [28.01.2018].
[46] Ibidem.
[47] Ibidem.
[48] Ibidem.

its very beginnings right up to the present day. What's more, this unity will be eternal, so long as they do not lose the power of unity and faith that being together makes society and the country strong.

Although clearly serious when singing about strength and fighting against their enemies, they continue to be cheerful and to smile – they give people hope for a good future together. They appear happy when there is no danger, but when the motherland calls them, they are strong and united to fight till the end. The video ends quite unambiguously – a soldier holds an Egyptian flag atop a pyramid. There is no doubt, therefore, that there will be victory – the army will defeat all adversaries so its citizens can live happily and create more great history for the country and the world.

Praise for soldiers, their work and dedication even acts as a synonym for love of the homeland. The country is a place where different people can live, with different faiths but a common unifying factor – the beloved homeland with all of its heritage.

Fig. 3: Screenshot from the video for the song T'aẓīm is-salām.
Captured by the author of the article.
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zt02-CkBnI4 [31.01.2018]

The second example of the use of ancient heritage as background is a song by the popular Egyptian singer ʾĀmāl Māhir, *Yā Maṣr* (*Oh, Egypt*).[49] In it, she expresses her love for her beloved homeland. She calls it the "mother of nations"[50] and sings that its main river – the Nile – is much older then the pyramids. This is the only time she mentions anything connected to the history of the Pharaohs. For this reason it is impossible to infer that ancient heritage plays any special role in the words of the song or its general meaning. In short, it can be summarised

[49] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GfW3r0WYfM [28.01.2018].

[50] Ibidem.

that she emphasises her love of Egypt in different ways.[51] What is of importance here though, is the video for the song. It shows images from southern Egypt (as can be surmised when seeing the Nile and *feluccas* (sail boats) in the video). Throughout the song, Māhir is also shown singing inside ancient monuments. A small boy also appears, running inside and drawing or writing something on a piece of paper while smiling – it seems that he is studying.[52]

Despite the song's few lyrics and simplicity, it still manages to touch the heart with picturesque views, the young singer expressing her great love for the country and the boy. These basic in motifs but song full of meaning actually manage to enchant the viewer – love is shown in a simple and genuine way.

Being proud of the history of pharaohs and of more recent times

Of course, it must be pointed out that it is not only pharaonic history that makes Egyptians proud. Egypt is home to many Muslim and Christian monuments. The fact that citizens of Egypt tend to underline their ancient heritage doesn't prevent the other parts of their long history coming through. Many musicians show these aspects in their songs and videos too.

The song *Baladī* (*My Country*)[53] by Anġām is an interesting example. In it, the singer expresses how impossible it is for her to express her love for Egypt in a short and simple way – not even one hundred years would be enough time, she sings. Her lyrics even suggest that when somebody wants to talk about the history of the country, he should stand up to show his respect. Her lyrics do not mention pharaonic history, but she does underline that important people for both Christians and Muslims (e.g. the prophet Muḥammad, Jesus and Mary) spoke about Egypt. The suggestion is that Egypt is not only important in the eyes of Egyptians, but also for followers of these two religions. She also reminds us that Egypt was not always an independent country. But now it is a country of literature and art, open for Arabs and the world. It is a country protected by God and the army, thanks to which its citizens can live in peace. Egypt, whatever happens, will always be victorious.[54]

The video of this song is quite poignant – pyramids and monuments on the islands along the Nile represent Ancient Egyptian history. The other images are connected to different historical places, people or events – the Alexandria Opera House and images showing gatherings of Egyptians. Such images can be 'representative' of contemporary history.[55]

One further example is Hānī Šākir's song *W-inta māšī fī Maṣr* (*While You Are Walking in Egypt*).[56] It is in some way designed to advise people to send greetings to everybody when

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[51] Ibidem.

[52] Ibidem.

[53] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wXmfylG2tdo [28.01.2018].

[54] Ibidem.

[55] Ibidem.

[56] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0PuN1U2lI68 [28.01.2018].

walking through Egyptian streets. To, for example, teachers and students, to mothers raising their children to become men, builders and farmers. Greetings should also be given to the vast historical heritage written about in books, and which can be seen while walking through the streets. The singer advises listeners to go for a walk and enter monasteries, churches and mosques. Finally, he stresses the inimitable magic of Egypt.[57]

The song's video shows some historical places in Egypt, e.g. the citadel of Muḥammad ʿAlī, the pyramids at Giza and the Sphinx, ancient monuments, Ṭalaʿt Ḥarb square, Cairo's Hanging Church, and the Temple of Hatshepsut.[58] It can once again be seen that the entirety of Egyptian heritage should fill the hearts of all Egyptians, whose identities consist of all these small pieces of a great history.

Conclusions

The songs and videos discussed in this thesis have many common features. These include: great love of the homeland, respect for the millennia of traditions and heritage, hope that Egypt will be always as wonderful as it has been to this day, and will make people ever more proud and ready to heed its call. It is obvious while listening to all this material that Egypt is the most valuable and important thing for its citizens. It has a long and important history. Egyptians have always made great things – and as the great Pharaohs did, so too will their contemporary 'grandsons'. Egypt is a country of peace, and the army protects this peace. Soldiers are ready to protect it at any time – that is why Egyptian citizens can sleep calmly.

One particular characteristic in these videos is the regular use of children.[59] They smile and inspire hope for the future. Hope that Egypt will remain great or will become even greater. God is with them and there is hope that all citizens will stand hand-in-hand and love each other as brothers. Another motive seen often is the use of the national flag and its colours – the main symbol of the country.

In some songs, foreign languages can be heard. There are various reasons for this – the pride of Egypt is international, so others should understand Egyptian sentiment. It is also used as a device to show that 'true' Egyptians are open to others and ready to 'go out' and find differences, learn from them, and to teach others in return.

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[57] Ibidem.

[58] Ibidem.

[59] It is not characteristic only for Egyptian songs. It can be observed all over the world, for example in other Arabic countries (good example can be the video to song performed by a lot of artists from different Arab countries – *Bukra* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UyZ2K8tEwC0 [3.03.2018])) or French songs (example can be – *When you believe* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9jAtB_UBWh0 [3.03.2018])).

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Egypt is one of the oldest countries in the world, believed to be the cradle of civilisation. Contemporary Egypt is a rich and colourful mosaic of tradition and modernity. It is also home to the Pyramids at Giza – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, and the only one surviving, and is a place where the ancient meets the new, in technology and architecture.

Egyptian songs and music videos prove that the country does not ignore its long history – whether Ancient, Christian or Muslim. It is quite the opposite – Egypt is proud of its heritage, and regards it as a treasure not only for its citizens, but for the whole world. Finally, the builders of the Pyramids left a significant mark on the history of the world. The pride of 'being Egyptian' – of being the grandsons of the builders of the great pyramids and other wonderful ancient sites – is regularly repeated in songs and videos.

The love of one's country and its history (mainly the ancient) expressed by musicians and composers and listened to and sung by millions of Egyptians, can also be used to strengthen patriotic feelings in citizens. Such ideas, repeated in the songs and videos, can also be used in the raising of children and passing on proper values to them. The citizen that follows the ideas he or she hears in these compositions would be an open-minded person, ready to approach differences, accept them and learn from them. To live alongside others who might follow different religions, have different points of view, or different histories – together we are all citizens of the universe. The person who accepts and is proud of such long and ancient tradition will have a broader perspective – this person will be able to absorb lessons from the country's history, and will understand its importance to the rest of the world. This Egyptian will remain Egyptian, like those who came before, all the way back to the Pharaohs – whatever their true genealogical tree. Being a *true* Egyptian is the greatest reward. And to ensure its survival and growth, this Egyptian will do all that is necessary to unite citizens and take care of this wonderful treasure – Egypt.

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The Presence of Egypt in Pop Culture

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Summary
The Pharaoh's curse, rampaging mummies, mysterious pyramids, revolutionary Akhenaten, and Cleopatra's great love – modern people still look at Egypt through the mystery of what pop culture serves them based on scraps of knowledge of ancient times. As a result the popular imagination tends to have a picture of ancient Egypt up to the days of Cleopatra, then a long period of nothingness, and then the 'similar' revolutions in the Egypt of today. Why is such a long fragment of Egyptian history of the pharaohs skipped? This is the question I would like to answer in my paper while bringing to the attention of the average reader the mysterious aura of ancient Egypt at the same time.

Keywords
Egypt, Cleopatra, mummy, mummy movie series, pop culture

Introduction

The opposite of so-called grey everyday life is the desire to experience something extraordinary, and most preferably a picaresque adventure with a happy ending. It is one of the more important reasons people reach for books, movies, and adventure games. No wonder then, that Egypt is automatically associated, by most ordinary folk, with mysterious pyramids that are, for example airports for spaceships[1], with mummies and pharaoh's curses, and that is what they are looking for when arriving at the river Nile – as if Egypt had stopped in the ancient times. How did this happen?

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[1] T. Stąpór, *Piramidy są dziełem kosmitów?*, http://strefatajemnic.onet.pl/extra/piramidy-sa-dzielem-kosmitow/7bngs [15.10.2017].

Egypt in pop culture

Napoleon Bonaparte has a big role to play here. In 1798[2], he went to Egypt, taking an army and a large group of scholars with him. He intended not only to conquer the country, but also to discover its past. The outcome of this activity was the foundation of the first departments of Egyptology and a 24-volume work given the title *Description de l`Egypte*. Individual expedition members also published their own diaries, for example *Journey in Lower and Upper Egypt* by Vivant Denon. Despite military defeat by the French, Egypt benefited greatly from the expedition, mainly because the country was modernized. For example new postal service was introduced, maps of the whole country were made, as well as important archaeological discoveries – including the Rosetta Stone found in 1799, which enabled the deciphering of hieroglyphs.[3] What mattered most though was that Egyptomania erupted in Europe. The epoch of Romanticism eagerly picked up this thread.

Romanticism itself was a reaction to the rational and secular current of the Enlightenment, contrasting it with such values as uncertainty, mystery, horror, and the supernatural. It is during this time that authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Mary Shelley, Lord Byron, and Bram Stoker created the foundations of contemporary fantasy and horror literature. Egypt, with its

Fig. 1: Poster advertising the movie Cleopatra from 1963.
Source: https://simg.chomikuj.pl/be9582185a7b5f74963251e7b56afaba706ad3be?url=http%3A%2F%2Fi60.tinypic.com%2F1lssp.jpg [15.10.2017]

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[2] P. Strathern, *Napoleon w Egipcie*, Rebis, Poznań, 2009, p. 17.

[3] P. Vandenberg, *Śladami przeszłości. Największe odkrycia archeologów*, Świat Książki, Warszawa, 2003, pp. 28–34.

pyramids, mummies, mysterious writing – alongside abandoned castles – was the embodiment of a romantic vision of the world.

The film industry has played a large role in consolidating such an image of Egypt. Thanks to the 1963 movie *Cleopatra*[4], Cleopatra VII, the last queen of Egypt of the Ptolemaic Dynasty, "found herself on everyone's lips".[5]

Her role was taken up by the beautiful Elizabeth Taylor, bringing the audience closer to Cleopatra as she sought to strengthen her country by marrying Caesar. The scene when the young queen emerges from the carpet in front of Julius Caesar himself appeals to the imagination of every spectator. The same goes for the love story between her and Caesar and later, after his death, between her and Marcus Antonius, ending with the lovers' suicide. Marcus Antonius throws himself upon his own sword, while Cleopatra dies from the bite of a poisonous viper, a symbol of the goddess Isis.[6] The queen was presented in the movie as a "symbol of seductive beauty"[7], with insatiable ambitions. The beauty of Cleopatra, as well as her impulsive character, is also emphasized by the movie *Asterix and Obelix Meet Cleopatra*.[8] This further preserves the image of the queen created by Octavian Augustus himself,[9] who wanted to spread unfavourable propaganda in Rome to discredit Antonius and Cleopatra. History allows us to see this extraordinary woman as a

> rational ruler, caring for the well-being of her subjects. She was also the first representative of the Ptolemaic dynasty who learned to speak Egyptian and supported the Egyptian religion by personally participating in religious ceremonies and continuing the Ptolemaic tradition of restoring temples.[10]

However, what chances does a historical perspective have when squared against an image so strongly outlined in pop culture? Probably none. Cleopatra will be forever perceived through the prism of her beauty and relationships.

The story of what happened with mummies is similar, as they have become the main theme of many movies. We will take a closer look at five of those with the word Mummy featured in their titles.

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4 *Cleopatra* (1963), directed by Darryl F. Zanuck, Rouben Mamoulian, Joseph L. Mankiewicz, written by Joseph L. Mankiewicz, Ben Gecht, Ranald MacDougall, Sidney Buchman.

5 P. Southern, *Kleopatra*, Świat Książki, Warszawa, 2002, pp. 9–11.

6 Ibidem, p. 117.

7 Filmweb, *Cleopatra*, http://www.filmweb.pl/film/Kleopatra-1963–31280/descs [15.10.2017].

8 *Asterix and Obelix Meet Cleopatra* (2002), directed by Alain Chabat, written by Alain Chabat.

9 P. Southern, op. cit., pp. 9–11.

10 Ibidem, p. 11.

The first *The Mummy*[11] appeared in the year 1932. The titular mummy turns out to be Imhotep, who manipulates archaeologists to find the tomb of his beloved. Through his powers he makes her spirit enter the body of Helen. The main characters try to defeat Imhotep and release their colleague.

Fig. 2: Poster advertising the movie The Mummy from 1932.
Source: https://alfredeaker.files.wordpress.com/2014/09/karloff-the-uncanny-in-the-mummy.jpg [15.10.2017]

The choice of Imhotep as a titular mummy is fascinating from a historian's point of view. Imhotep was a famous builder who built the first pyramid for Pharaoh Djoser[12] and initiated the development of stone construction.[13] During the Late Period (664–332 BC) he was identified with Asclepius and joined the pantheon of deities, becoming the patron of medical art and writing.[14]

The Mummy[15] from 1999 focuses on the mummy of a priest of Osiris – Imhotep again – who fell in love with a daughter of the Pharaoh. He was placed in a sarcophagus for punishment and surrounded by scarabs devouring his body for eternity. The priest, however, is released by archaeologists and then sets out to search for his beloved.

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[11] *The Mummy* (1932), directed by Karl Freund, written by John L. Balderston.

[12] R. Schulz, M. Seidel (eds), *Egipt. Świat faraonów*, Könemann, Kolonia, 2004, p. 47.

[13] A. Bongioami, M. Sole Croce (eds), *Skarby Egiptu. Kolekcja muzeum Egipskiego w Kairze*, Arkady, Warszawa, 2007, p. 550.

[14] Ibidem, p. 550.

[15] *The Mummy* (1999), directed by Stephen Sommer, written by Stephen Sommer, John L. Balderston.

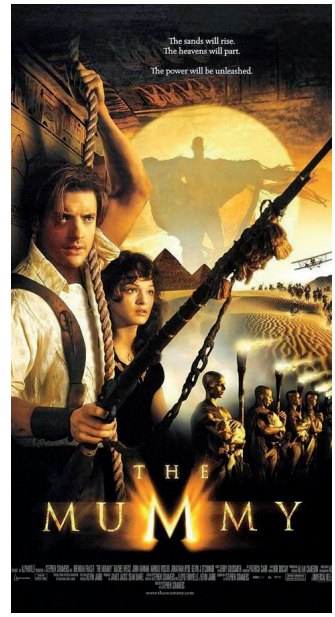

Fig. 3: Poster advertising the movie The Mummy from 1999.
Source: http://anguerde.com/pics/main/46/371141-the-mummy.jpg [15.10.2017]

It is a movie made with humour, stylized as a picaresque adventure, in contrast to the first mummy, which was intended as a horror movie. In spite of all this, the culture of ancient Egypt is first thoroughly flattened and only then served up to the viewer. This is why it is Osiris,[16] one of the main Egyptian gods, lord of life and death, who judges all the dead for their deeds from when they were alive, who falls victim to the filmmaking industry. Surely such a powerful god would have found a suitable occupation for his priest, who, incidentally, would probably be afraid to stand in the Hall of the Two Truths to be judged by Osiris[17] with an unclean heart. That is where the hearts of the dead were weighed.

> Weighing was done by Anubis[18] or Horus,[19] and Thoth, god of wisdom, wrote down the result. If the heart was not heavy from sin and the scales were in balance, the deceased gained the right to eternal life on the Aaru Field (...); otherwise, he was

[16] J. Lipińska, M. Marciniak, *Mitologia starożytnego Egiptu*, Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warszawa, 2002, pp. 42–88.

[17] A. Ćwiek, *Śmierć i życie w starożytnym Egipcie*, Muzeum Archeologiczne w Poznaniu, Poznań, 2005, p. 60.

[18] "God standing guard over mummification and accompanying the dead in the Afterlife" (A. Bongioami, M. Sole Croce (eds), op. cit., p. 620).

[19] "Son of Osiris and Isis. The divine patron of royal power: depicted as a falcon or man with the head of a falcon" (Ibidem, p. 621).

annihilated by the monster Ammit ['Devourer'], portrayed as a hybrid of crocodile, hippopotamus, and lion.[20]

Two years later, the movie *The Mummy Returns*[21] appeared, which went even further in cutting the culture into small pieces in order to make them fit the rowdy-humorous story of a light film in which good wins, and disgusting evil always loses.

Fig. 4: Poster advertising the movie The Mummy Returns from 2001. Source: https://loftcinema.org/files/2016/08/The-Mummy-Returns-movie-poster.jpg [15.10.2017]

Above all, Imhotep was brought back to life – again – and forcefully pulled out of the pantheon of deities. The Scorpion King, who only wakes up once every 5000 years to conquer the world with Anubis' army[22], was also added for company. We can also find the Scorpion King in the history of Egypt – it was Serket from the Predynastic period (approx. 3200 BC – approx. 3000 BC).[23]

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[20] A. Ćwiek, op. cit., p. 60.

[21] *The Mummy Returns* (2001), directed by Stephen Sommer, written by Stephen Sommer.

[22] M. Kamiński, *Mumia kontratakuje*, http://www.filmweb.pl/review/Mumia+kontratakuje-254 [17.10.2017].

[23] J. F. Strausman, *Serket (Scorpion) Pharaoh of Egypt*, https://www.geni.com/people/Serket-Scorpion-

Little is known about this Pharaoh, all information obtained comes from the necropolis of Umm al-Kaab (Umm al-Qa῾āb), where a club from Hierakonpolis was found. The name Serket was written with a pictogram looking like a scorpion, the ruler himself is distinguished by his supernatural height[24], he does not have pincers or a tail. There is also no mention of the Anubis army on the mace. At this moment it is known that this god helped the dead in the Underworld, and even falsified the results of weighing in the Hall of the Two Truths to help souls get to the fields of the Aaru.[25] He watched over the process of mummification and helped Horus. As we can see, it was not in his nature to conquer the world, but to help mortals in their final journey.

Fig. 5: Anubis' army from the movie Mummy returns.
Source: https://vignette.wikia.nocookie.net/villains/images/f/fa/Army_of_Anubis.png/revision/latest?cb=20120313224959 [15.10.2017]

The main characters of the movie had to face not only Imhotep and the Scorpion King,

> but also a whole host of animated mummies, cannibalistic pygmies, and many other beasts native to ancient Egypt. Furthermore, the story of incarnation is also interwoven into the story and some characters appear to be inhabitants of ancient Egypt reborn in the modern world.[26]

This fragment of the review from the Filmweb website perfectly illustrates the presence of Egypt in pop culture, "animated mummies and other beasts from ancient Egypt" – this really is all that interested the producers and audiences from all of the rich culture of the Nile River.

The story of reincarnation in the film was the announcement of transferring the mummy from Egypt to China in the movie *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*[27], as said reincarnation is characteristic of Buddhism, but not the religion of ancient Egypt or Islam. The story focuses on fighting the resurrected Han emperor and his army of terra-cotta warriors who, of course,

Pharaoh-of-Egypt/6000000006277501474 [17.10.2017].

[24] Ibidem.

[25] J. Lipińska, M. Marciniak, op. cit., p. 85.

[26] M. Kamiński, op. cit.

[27] *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor* (2008), directed by Rob Cohen, written by Milles Millar, Alfred Gough, Stephen Sommer, John L. Balderston.

want to take over the world.[28] This separation from Egyptian motifs did not meet with the best reception by viewers and thus later productions returned to the roots based on similar motifs.

Fig. 6: Poster advertising the movie The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor from 2008. Source: https://loftcinema.org/files/2016/08/The-Mummy-Returns-movie-poster.jpg [15.10.2017]

The Mummy[29] from 2017 was supposed to give the mummy back its Egyptian traits, as well as return to the tradition of making movies 'seriously' and with a logical story – naturally, limited by how logical the idea of a mummy brought back to life can be. Let me analyse quite thoroughly the latest production, since it is the quintessence of what has been left of the culture of ancient Egypt in contemporary pop culture – it is the same prism through which contemporary people look at this country and its heritage.

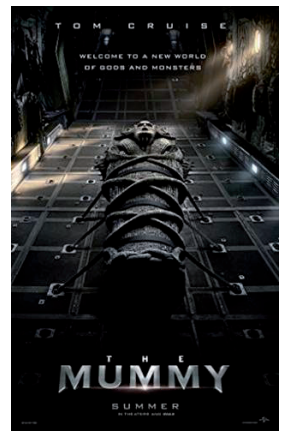

Fig. 7: Poster advertising the movie The Mummy from 2017. Source: https://images-na.ssl-images-amazon.com/images/M/MV5BMTkwMTgwODAxMl5BMl5BanBnXkFtZTgwNTEwNTQ3MDI@._V1_SY500_CR0,0,315,500_AL_.jpg [15.10.2017]

[28] Filmweb, *The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor*, http://www.filmweb.pl/film/Mumia%3A+Grobowiec+Cesarza+Smoka-2008–400162 [17.10.2017].

[29] *The Mummy* (2017), directed by Alex Kurtzman, written by Christopher McQuarrie, David Koepp, Dylan Kussman.

The movie begins with a scene involving Templars and Hospitallers in England in 1127, which is in fact impossible. The Order of the Templars was active from 1129, and it was officially established in 1139.[30] Hospitallers were founded at the end of the eleventh century, but, with the highest dose of tolerance, this scene would make sense if it was set on the territory of the Holy Land, not England – this order was transformed into a military organization around 1118. This absurdity is completed by the fact that these crusaders were supposed to acquire an item that was crucial during the Second Crusade, which... was to take place in twenty years. The beginning of the movie prepares us for how its creators intend to undermine the image of Egyptian heritage – both due to their mediocre attention to detail and the 'serious movie's' and 'Dark Universe's' approach to the topic.

The main characters discover the funerary complex of an Egyptian princess in Iraq. The sarcophagus of Ahmanet, surrounded by mercury, is supposed to protect the world from her return. From the plot we learn that the princess made a pact with Set in exchange for power, then killed her father Pharaoh and his son, and ended up being mummified alive as a punishment. The sarcophagus is loaded onto an airplane that crashes in England, where the battle with Ahmanet begins.

The idea of such a huge complex in Iraq is improbable, unlike the use of liquid mercury, which was actually used as a means of stopping all evil. However, let us concentrate on Ahmanet herself. Her name suggests Amaunet, also known as Amonet, an Egyptian deity identified with the goddess Mut. She is known since the New Kingdom period (1570–1070 BC) when she became the wife of Amon.[31] "Since the eighteenth dynasty, Amon and Mut were also considered the parents of the king. As a Lady from 'Asher', she received a distinct cult place in Karnak with a crescent-shaped lake, where she appeared in the form of a lion."[32] However, a goddess cannot be locked in a sarcophagus, and Ahmanet from the movie ruled over zombies, not lions.

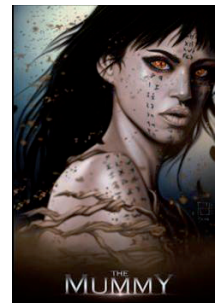

Fig. 8: Ahmanet from the movie The Mummy.
Source: https://saltlakemagazine.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/mummy2.jpg [15.10.2017]

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30 R. Pernoud, *Templariusze*, Marabut, Gdańsk, 2002, p. 10.

31 Amon "was the guarantor of the continuing renewal of the world, and as the king of the gods, the ruler of the earthly and heavenly spheres" (R. Schulz, M. Seidel (eds), op. cit., p. 522).

32 Ibidem, p. 523.

Searching on through the New Kingdom period in the 18th dynasty, we come across Hatshepsut, female Pharaoh and regent to Tuthmosis III.[33] Hatshepsut was an ambitious ruler, as well as a builder – among other things, during her term of governance, she erected the magnificent Millions of Years Temple in Deir el-Bahari (Ad-Dayr al-Baḥarī).

It is possible that the Ahmanet from the movie was supposed to be a combination of these two characters, but in reality, it is a chaotic conglomerate without a specific historical prototype. In addition, we learn that she was mummified alive, which is completely absurd. The process of mummifying was aimed not at preserving the body, but at creating a new, long-lasting body, closer in resemblance to a statue.[34]

> The destination of the deceased was not a permanent stay in the mummy, but a free movement in the world, especially the presence in the Fields of the Aar or accompanying the retinue of the god of the sun. The mummy resting in the tomb was supposed to be just a safe 'apartment' or 'bedroom'. It was a material safeguard for eternal existence.[35]

The mummification process itself lasted for up to 70 days. First, the brain was removed, followed by the liver, lungs, intestines, and stomach. The heart was left in the body for the purpose of being weighed in the Hall of Two Truths. After embalming the insides and placing them in canopic urns, the deceased was bandaged. Then he was placed in a coffin.[36] Therefore, it was impossible to embalm someone alive, especially since in the scene of putting Ahmanet in the coffin, as a mummy, the princess was struggling...

What still needs to be addressed with regard to the new *The Mummy* is Set himself, depicted as the Lord of all evil, someone similar to a Christian devil. In fact, Set was "the god of storm and weather". He was often called "The lord of deserts and foreign lands". "(...) In the Osyrian myth, Set was the representation of a chaotic wild element. He murdered his brother Osiris, and then he fought for power with his successor, Horus. On the other hand, however, along with Horus, he was the equal peer of the god-king",[37] and a powerful god-warrior defending Ra[38] during his journey from Apophis – the embodiment of darkness and nothingness, the enemy of the sun. Without Set's intervention the sun would cease to appear in the sky.[39] As we can see, Set is not the epitome of evil, it is more of a chaotic deity – usurper and defender

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[33] C. Desroches-Noblecourt, *Hatszepsut. Tajemnicza królowa Egiptu*, Świat Książki, Warszawa, 2007, pp. 15–438.

[34] A. Ćwiek, op. cit., p. 63.

[35] Ibidem.

[36] Ibidem, pp. 63–65.

[37] R. Schulz, M. Seidel (eds), op. cit., p. 523.

[38] "Re – deity of the sun, traveling by barge through the sky from east to west, the creator of gods and people" (J. Lipińska, M. Marciniak, op. cit., p. 172).

[39] Ibidem, p. 174.

of the sun, which explains why the gods in Egyptian mythology have never joined forces to get rid of him. Especially because they believed that evil is necessary for the existence of good. As a Pharaoh co-protector, he would have certainly ignored Ahmanet's requests, knowing what she was planning, and probably would have stopped the princess from committing murder.

The Mummy from 2017 'digested' the threads of its predecessors, distorting the cultural heritage of Egypt to the level of absurdity, but who cares? Viewers have tended to accuse the production, above all, of being boring and chaotic, because they have become accustomed to the fact that modern Egypt is full of mummies lurking in dark pyramids and tombs – in which after thousands of years there are torches that are still burning – waiting for an opportune moment to take over the world. The pyramids are monumental traps, possibly symbols of the presence of aliens. The gods, however, are somewhere out there, in the background, acting as portable power tanks for their ghostly mummies. Tourists come to Egypt to take pictures with pyramids, the Sphinx, sometimes the better-known temples in the background, hoping that they will discover the fabulous treasure of another Tutankhamun, accidentally falling inside of it, or that they, as amateur archaeologists, will awaken the dormant evil in the form of a mummy. As a result, their knowledge is limited to several names: Ramses, Akhenaten, Nefertiti, Tutankhamon, Cleopatra...

Fig. 9: Incarnations of The Mummy.
Source: http://crookedmarquee.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/mummies-1.png [15.10.2017]

The Egyptians themselves have played a part in creating such a state of affairs, brandishing the name of Akhenaten in every revolution, for example during the presidential election in 2014 when, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ as-Sīsī) overthrew his predecessor and decided to build a new administrative capital city, to the east of Cairo in the desert.[40] He was immediately compared to Akhenaten, thinking that the plan of the new capital was like building a new Amarna – the capital of Egypt during the rule of Akhenaten. Dominic Montserrat,

[40] P. Hessler, *Echnaton pierwszy egipski rewolucjonista*, [in:] "National Geographic Polska", 6 [213], 2017, p. 32.

whose book on Akhenaten is given the subtitle *History, fantasy and ancient Egypt*, noted that we often take scattered evidence from old times and put it into narratives that make sense in our world. As he wrote, we do it so that the past can fit the modern times like a mirror. In the case of Akhenaten, this mirror reflected almost every identity he could imagine. The king was portrayed as a proto-Christian, an ecologist who loves peace, an open and proud homosexual, and a totalitarian dictator. "(...) Sigmund Freud once fainted during a heated discussion with the Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung about whether this Egyptian king suffered because of his mother's excessive love."[41]

The work of Akhenaten did not survive the test of time though – soon after his death the old pantheon of the gods returned, and Amarna was dismantled. Nevertheless, Akhenaten is still considered a revolutionary figure, because people with concepts and ideas suggest that they can change everything for the better – make the country great again. This slogan was quoted by a previous president of Egypt Mohamed Morsi (Muḥammad Mursī) and the Muslim Brotherhood[42] in 2012, by adopting a constitution invoking the "monotheism" of Akhenaten, and recently by Donald Trump, proclaiming: let us make America great again.[43] Despite the flow of centuries, the figure of the Pharaoh-revolutionary still stimulates the imagination of many. His museum is being created in Al-Minya (Al-Minyā), but the latest revolution in Egypt following the economic collapse of the country,[44] brought the works to a halt. As Barry Kemp, an archaeologist working at the archaeological site in Amarna, said: "It is dangerous for an absolute ruler that no one dares to tell him that something he has just ordered is not a good idea."[45]

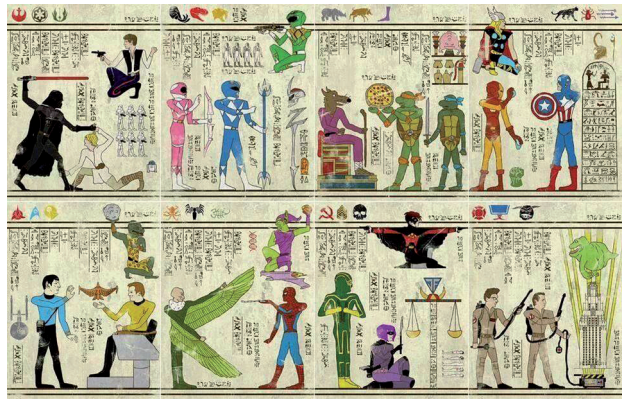

Fig. 10: "Ancient Egypt" in pop culture.
Source: https://pbs.twimg.com/media/B9cYoiOCMAA4x-E.jpg [15.10.2017]

41 Ibidem, p. 36.
42 Ibidem, p. 32.
43 Ibidem, p. 53.
44 Ibidem, p. 52.
45 Ibidem, p. 44.

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Images of Cities and Villages in Egyptian Cinema (Demonstrated by the Example of Film Adaptations)

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Summary

Egyptian cinema developed in the first half of the twentieth century and gained enormous popularity, both in Egypt and abroad. It was dominated by realism, although other artistic trends, such as symbolism and neorealism, also developed. The filmmakers became interested in literature, they reached for literary works. Thanks to this, the trend of film adaptations grew rapidly. Most of them were based on the works of the best Egyptian writers as Ṭaha Ḥusayn, Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm and Yūsuf Idrīs, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal and ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān aš-Šarqāwī, Yaḥyā Ṭāhir ʿAbd Allāh and the Nobel Prize winner Nağīb Maḥfūẓ. The panorama of the Egyptian village is vast, shown in many aspects as realistic, symbolic and magical (associated with magical realism). Realism borders on naturalism, filmmakers do not spare drastic shots, they picture the countryside in bright colours. The filmmakers' point is that rural Egypt has to make progress and catch up with the city. The Egyptian city emerges primarily from novels and Maḥfūẓ's films. The scenes of family life prevail, the images of anti-colonial struggles multiply, trade flourishes, and the forms of not always noble entertainment are surprising. The image of Egypt emerging from film adaptation pretends towards the truth of life, and thus everybody can learn a lot from the movies about the country.

Keywords

Egyptian cinema, adaptation, literature, realism, village, city, Nağīb Maḥfūẓ

Rapidly developing, Egyptian cinematography is a unique phenomenon in the Arab world, unprecedented in other countries. Initiated in the 1920s (in the period of Arab Renaissance after centuries of stasis)[1], soon it gained enormous popularity both in and outside Egypt, meeting with acclaim in the entire region.[2] It was the time when in other Arab countries cinematography was still nascent; for example, in Syria, it came into being in the 1970s. Egyptian cinema refers to history: historical films are made in the literary language, i.e., the official language of the whole region. However, films mainly deal with contemporary subject matter. What we have to bear in mind, though, is that the term "contemporary" has become more capacious and today embraces the period from the Renaissance to the lengthening present.[3] This type of film uses dialect. Egyptian cinema has always been a mirror of events. It portrayed a reviving Egypt – post-colonial and independent, firstly royal, later republican. It enabled viewers to refer the world represented in literature and film to reality, which after the colonial period constituted a new value. It was dominated by realism,[4] although it also developed other artistic currents, like symbolism and neorealism. Until the present day, however, mainly realistic cinema has been flourishing. It serves to depict Egypt with its distinctive flavour and its issues. Also writers whose debut fell during the Renaissance tend to stick to realism and describe the new postcolonial reality, unprecedented in history. Realistic description holds the key position in contemporary Egyptian literature. This was the literature used by filmmakers to create film adaptations. "The close relation between literature and cinema is not an Arab peculiarity, but an international phenomenon (…). Like Western cinema, Arab cinema developed a strong interaction in the examination of realism. This is most evident in the genre of literary adaptation."[5]

The filmmakers used works by the most outstanding Egyptian writers of the twentieth century, artists deeply interested in the fate of their own country. These films also render the original novels rather faithfully.[6]

I would like to present adaptations of works by several celebrated writers as an illustration of prevailing trends.[7] Ṭaha Ḥusayn (1889–1973) is one of the outstanding figures of the revival

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1 See: S. ad-D. Tawfīq, *Qiṣṣat as-sīnimā fī Maṣr. Dirāsa naqdiyya*, Dār al-Hilāl, Cairo, 1969, p. 7.

2 M. Tutton, *Egypt's cultural influence pervades Arab Word*, CNN Regions, Inside the Middle East, http://edition.cnn.com/2011/WORLD/meast/02/12/egypt.culture.influence.film/index.html [12.02.2011].

3 E. Machut-Mendecka, *Egipskie kino gniewu*, [in:] A. Abbas, A. Maśko (eds), *W kręgu zagadnień arabskich*, Uniwersytet Adama Mickiewicza, Poznań, 2015, pp. 473–474.

4 V. Shafik, *Arab Cinema. History and Cultural Identity*, The American University in Cairo Press, Cairo, 2007, p. 128.

5 Ibidem, p. 122, after K. Ramzī, *Al-Maṣādir al-adabiyya fī al-aflām al-miṣriyya*, [in:] Institut du Monde Arabe (ed.), *2 Biennale des cinémas arabes à Paris*, Paris, 1994, pp. 122–124.

6 See: *Riwāyāt 'arabiyya taḥawwalat ilà a'māl sinimā'īyya wa-at-tilivizyūniyya* https://raseef22.com/culture/2015/09/18/arab-movies-and-series-adapted-from-novels [18.09.2015].

7 See: *11 Popular Egyptian Novels That Made It to the Silver Screen*, http://www.cairoscene.com/ArtsAndCulture/11-Popular-Egyptian-Novels-That-Made-it-to-The-Silver-Screen [23.04.2018].

in Egyptian prose. A great humanist of the Egyptian Renaissance, scholar and writer, in his short stories he created drastic images of poverty and sketched the problems of the lowest classes also taking into account women's problems. Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm (1898–1987) and Yūsuf Idrīs (1927–1991), both prose writers and dramatists, stuck to realism, but they experimented, making use of symbolism or the poetics of the theatre of the absurd. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal (1888–1956) and ʿAbd ar-Rahmān aš-Šarqāwī, (1920–1987) in their moving images of Egyptian cities and villages combined tradition with modernism. The inventive writer Yaḥyā, Ṭāhir ʿAbd Allāh (1942–1981) and such an eminent figure of Egyptian literature as Naǧīb Maḥfūẓ (1911–2006), the Nobel Prize winner (1988) in literature, will be mentioned later. Literature fascinated outstanding filmmakers, just to mention the names of several directors of films cited in the present paper, such as Muḥammad Ḥusayn Karīm (1896–1972), Henry Barakāt (1914–1997), Ṣalāḥ Abū Ṣayf (1915–1960), Kamāl Aš-Šayẖ (1919–2004), Kamāl ʿAṭiyya (1919–2008), Ḥusayn Kamāl (1934–2003), ʿAlī Badraẖān (b. 1946), Ḫayrī Bišāra (b. 1947), ʿĀṭif aṭ-Ṭayyib (1947–1995) and Marwān Ḥāmid (b. 1977).

The beginnings of cinema

In the first half of the twentieth century culture developed rapidly: at that time in Egypt a genre combining tradition with Molière-like motifs, namely boulevard drama, flourished, in the streets and in cafés narrators still told stories in the style of *One Thousand and One Nights*, and cinema was the source of new forms of entertainment. It debuted with melodrama and musical film. The first filmmakers combined two, seemingly incompatible elements: Hollywood[8] patterns and Arab music. Film stars began to dress in a western style, women wore short dresses, lightened their hair and changed their hairstyle, men wore suits, some looked almost like Clark Gable, the traditional distance between the sexes faded away, people began to declare their love face to face. However, although styled on Hollywood, melodrama paved the way for cinematography. Viewers paid less attention to the plot or the looks of the heroes, as they were more interested in the acting, music and singing! Cinema flourished thanks to such artists as Umm Kulṯūm (1904–1975) and Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Wahhāb (1902–1991)[9] – two great legends of song and music – and an actress who gained widespread acclaim was Layla Murād (1918–1995). Today the whole Arab world pays homage to them, people listen to their music, watch them and admire them. With time, social and critical cinema developed – seriously and movingly it depicted local reality.

The year 1952 marked a turning point in the new history of Egypt. It was the year of Nasser's Revolution (named after its leader Ǧamāl ʿAbd an-Nāṣir), as a result of which the country

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[8] B. Eyre, S. Barlow, *Joseph Fahim & Rania Malky on the History of Egyptian Film*, http://afropop.org/articles/joseph-fahim-rania-el-malky-on-the-history-of-egyptian-film [15.11.2011].

[9] W. Ambrust, *Mass Culture and Modernism in Egypt*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 19.

turned from a monarchy into a republic. Consequently, we can distinguish two main periods: pre-revolution and post-revolution, each of which has its cinema, theatre, literature, press etc.

As time went by, film adaptations departed from Hollywood patterns. Literature furnished new social subject matter, important for the entire country, and filmmakers used it abundantly. Film adaptations developed. "In Egypt, about 260 literary adaptations out of a total feature film production of approximately 2,500 films are said to have been realised between 1930–1993."[10]

Cinema shows Egypt in various aspects, filmmakers create images of life in cities and villages with great enthusiasm, their dynamics constituting the quintessence of the changes, the continuing revolutionary ferment itself visible. The deep involvement of the writers and filmmakers in the chosen subject matter intensifies its meaning. They are interested in the life of the peasants, traditional families and quasi-tribal structures. The village is multisided: the extremely conservative undergoes changes, but it is also charming and magical.

The panorama of Egyptian village

The village shown by writers and filmmakers as conservative is realistic and naturalistic, there are many drastic and shocking images, it develops on the border between realism and naturalism. This type of village emerges from such film adaptations as: *Du'ā' al-karawān* (*The Call of the Curlew*), *Ḥarām* (*The Sin*), *Zaynab*, which are moving by the misery and helplessness they show and by the beauty of the landscape.[11]

> Realistic literature played a decisive role in establishing realistic cinema in Egypt. The first long Egyptian feature film, Zaynab (1930) by Muhammad Karim, which included some social critique, was adapted from a novel by Muhammad Husain Haikal published for the first time in 1914 under the same title. Zaynab, the sensitive daughter of a peasant, experiences a harmless flirtation with the educated son of a landowner, Hamid. Then Zaynab falls in love with Ibrahim, but her parents marry her to Hasan, one of his friends. The girl has no opportunity to object. As a result of the conflict between marital faithfulness and her actual feelings, Zaynab's health is so damaged that she falls ill and dies.[12]

It is from the tradition of past centuries that the village shown as conservative derives drastic practices, for example, honour killing, in which the victims are women accused of or only thought to have had extramarital sexual contacts, killed by their male relatives. These are bloody rituals performed within the family circle. What seems hard to understand are the acts of family revenge, lasting for generations, inherited by the sons from their fathers; it

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[10] V. Shafik, op. cit., p. 122, after K.Ramzī, op. cit., p. 122–124.

[11] Films based on the novels of Yūsuf Idrīs *Ḥarām* (*The Sin*; directed by Henry Barakāt) and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal *Zaynab* (directed by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Karīm).

[12] V. Shafik, op. cit., p. 132.

has always been a problem of the local authorities due to the tribal solidarity and the incapacity on the part of the village community to deal with this phenomenon. Produced in 1959 by Henry Barakāt, the film *Du'ā' al-karawān*, a short story of the same title by Ṭaha Ḥusayn, as an illustration of the first of the above-mentioned subjects, moved public opinion deeply, siding as it did with the heroine and her tragic fate. The plot of *Du'ā' al-karawān* boils down to the story of a girl from the extremely conservative South, seduced by her boss in town, who comes back, is accused of being disgraced and gets killed by her relatives.

> Hussein (1889–1973), "the dean of Arabic letters," was surprisingly interested in women's lives. His The Tree of Misery focuses on both men and women, but seems to reserve most of its care for the misery of its female characters. The Call of the Curlew is narrated entirely by Amna/Soad, a peasant and servant girl who later marries a wealthy man, a bit in the manner of a Jane Austen narrative. But Amna's is not a happy ending. Amna's life story is, in a sense, quite gentle. True, her sister is murdered by their uncle near the book's opening, and she and her mother tramp around, aimlessly, looking for work. But the world is not so hard on them: They are not raped, or robbed. People are generally good – outside, you know, of murdering women who have premarital sex.[13]

This simple plot has great meaning, as both the author and the film director break a moral taboo, namely, they bring up in public the subject of sexuality, avoided in everyday conversations.

Town dwellers, to whom the film is mainly addressed, also feel concerned about the custom of family revenge, rather strange to town spheres, emerging from the severe morality of the Southerners, as the condition of maintaining honour.

Accordingly, a film, based on Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm's novel entitled *Yawmiyyāt nā'ib fī al-aryāf* (*The Diary of a Country Prosecutor*; directed by Tawfīq Ṣāliḥ) showing – like *Du'ā' al-karawān* – a shocking image of rural conservatism, gained great popularity. Tawfīq al-Ḥakīm is not only a versatile writer, but also an expert in the countryside and a lawyer who did his internship in the South.

> Diary of a Country Prosecutor is an Egyptian comedy of errors. Partly autobiographical, it is written as the journal of a young public prosecutor posted to a village in rural Egypt. Imbued with the ideals of a European education, he encounters a world of poverty and backwardness where an imported legal system is both alien and incomprehensible.[14]

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[13] Mlynxqualey, *One-Minute Review: Taha Hussein's /The Call of the Curlew/*, https://arablit.org/2010/05/05/one-minute-review-taha-husseins-the-call-of-the-curlew [5.05.2010].

[14] Mlynxqualey, *Egypt Friday Films: 'Diary of a Country Prosecutor', based on a novel by Tawfiq al-Hakim*, https://arablit.org/2016/03/25/friday-films-diary-of-a-country-prosecutor-based-on-a-novel-by-tawfiq-al-hakim/ [25.03.2016].

Both in the novel and in the film the terrible conditions in which the peasants live are striking, and there is the motif of family revenge. The filmmakers' point is that rural Egypt has to make progress and catch up with the city. People liked this idea and believed that the countryside – like the whole reviving country – will quickly move forward.

Film adaptations show that the village changes, it begins to feel outraged by its own conservatism. In the 1950s and the 1960s Nasser's Revolution became an important point of reference for events, literature and film. There emerged a scheme according to which the plot takes place before the Revolution – thus the approaching Revolution promises a better future. This future does not have to be specific, it is merely a sketched idea, a vague promise, but the viewers already know that it became a fact and the truth.

One of the most outstanding filmmakers, known for having used various film genres and for having turned out both historical and contemporary films, the world-famous Egyptian film director Yūsuf Šāhīn (1926–2008) adapted aš-Šarqāwī's novel entitled *Al-Arḍ* (*Land*).[15] In the film of the same title, he created one of the strongest images of the rebellious village in Egyptian cinema.

It is no surprise that the peasants lose despite their determination to fight for their rights after centuries of loyal serfdom. Nasser's Revolution only begins to appear over the horizon, but also in that case the viewers are conscious that it actually happened and changed the reality.[16] The screening of each of the film adaptations discussed in the present paper can be regarded as an event that has its place in the history of film art. *Aṭ-Ṭawq wa-as-suwār* – (*The Collar and the Bracelet*) – a film based on a novel of the same title by Yaḥyā Ṭāhir ʿAbd Allāh was also such an event.[17] The film is unique and exceptional, as it makes use of magic realism and symbolism. Yaḥyā Ṭāhir ʿAbd Allāh, a well-known prose writer, abandoned critical and moral realism and joined the current of writers searching for new means of artistic expression after the lost Arab-Israeli war of 1967. However, unlike most realists, Yaḥyā Ṭāhir ʿAbd Allāh does not look for inspiration in politics. In his prose unreal and magical images predominate. He develops a concept of a story that is half-fabulous, half-legendary and stimulates the imagination. In the village described in the novel *Aṭ-Ṭawq wa-as-suwār* like in Macondo from Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*[18], from time to time events lose their logical cause-and-effect

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[15] M. Ǧābir, *5 Aflām miṣriyya ʾaẓīma muqtabasa ʾan aʾmāl adabiyya*, "Al-ʿArabī al-Ǧadīd", https://www.alaraby.co.uk/miscellaneous/2016/4/30/5-%D8%A3%D9%81%D9%84%D8%A7%D9%85-%D9%85%D8%B5%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D8%B9%D8%B8%D9%8A%D9%85%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%82%D8%AA%D8%A8%D8%B3%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A3%D8%B9%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%84-%D8%A3%D8%AF%D8%A8%D9%8A%D8%A9 [30.04.2016].

[16] M. al-Ḫūrī, *Al-Mašrūʿ al-Qawmī al-ʿArabī*, transl. Ḥ. Bayūnī, Al-Markaz al-Qaumī li-at-Tarǧama, Cairo, 2012, p. 67.

[17] M. Ǧābir, op. cit.

[18] See: E. Machut-Mendecka, *Na szlakach Sindbada. Koncepcje współczesnej prozy arabskiej*, Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa, 2009, p. 199.

course. Nevertheless, in Egyptian cinema of the second half of the twentieth century magical realism is barely visible. It became absorbed by neorealism, developing in the 1980s as a strong film current. "In the early 1980s, after a snack period during the 1970s, realism was revived with the help of the generation of 'New Realists' (...)".[19]

The neorealistic current is represented by Bišāra and his film should be categorised as neorealistic. In *Aṭ-Ṭawq wa-as-suwār* the film director comes near magical realism – he not only imitates reality, like realists before him, but he introduces magic into reality – magic in the effectiveness of which we can doubt, but which we cannot completely exclude. The film takes place in the dark scenery of the Egyptian South, the village presented in the motion picture lives close to nature and cultivates old customs. Symbolism and fantasy permeate the film. Its climactic scene refers to magical realism: a childless woman undergoes a ritual of fertilisation, a kind of initiation into motherhood on the border between dream and reality. It resembles a similar ritual constituting the climax of Lorca's play *Yerma* (*Barren*).

The panorama of the Egyptian city

Filmmakers show a vast panorama of the Egyptian city, which seems to announce its constant and unstoppable development. This is the city (mainly Cairo) of social change, progress, education and the city of Nağīb Maḥfūẓ. "The realist wave of the 1950s owes a great deal to the influence of the Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz, who left deep traces particularly in the work of Salah Abu Seif, the most popular representative of cinematographic realism in Egypt."[20]

Nağīb Maḥfūẓ's cinema is created on the basis of his novels, written and screened throughout many years. The whole of Egypt knows them and their film adaptations enjoy unfading popularity. Maḥfūẓ was one of the main Egyptian writers searching for new means of expression,. He used history but devoted the majority of his attention to contemporary events, introducing existentialism and symbolism to his work, but for the cinema he remains mainly a realist. He was working as director of the Censorship Office and chairman of the Cinema Support Organization and was writing film scripts. "(…) Mahfouz wrote film scripts fairly often which were regularly made into movies. The First of these is *Bidāya wa-Nihāya* (*A Beginning and an End*); the last was *Ṯarṯara fawq al-Nīl* (*Small talk on the Nile*, directed by Ḥusayn Kamāl), which was presented on 1971."[21]

Aṯ-Ṯulāṯiyya (*Trilogy*) and its subsequent parts: *Bayn Qaṣrayn* (*Palace Walk*), *Qaṣr aš-Šawq* (*Palace of Desire*) and *As-Sukkariyya* (*Sugar Street*), or *Zuqāq al-Midaqq* (*Midaq Alley*), belong to the period of the British protectorate, the period of socio-political and moral changes

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[19] V. Shafik, op. cit., p. 129.

[20] Ibidem, p. 133.

[21] H. an-Nahhas, *The Role of Naguib Mahfouz in the Egyptian Cinema*, [in:] T. Le Gassick (ed.), *Critical Perspectives on Naguib Mahfouz*, Three Continents Press, Pensylvania, Washington D.C, 2006, p. 163.

in the country and in the minds of individuals. There are many scenes of family life, of anticolonial struggle, we can see flourishing trade and, surprisingly, not always noble forms of entertainment – this is the urban Egypt seen from the inside, the authors wanted to show it authentically.

> Many things combine to make Midaq Alley one of the gems of times gone by and that it once shone forth like a flashing star in the history of Cairo. Which Cairo do I mean? That of the Fatimids, the Mamlukes, or the Sultans? Only God and the archaeologists know the answer to that, but in any case, the alley is certainly an ancient relic and a precious one. How could it be otherwise with its stone-paved surface leading directly to the historic Sanadiqiya Street. And then there is its cafe known as Kirsha's. Its walls decorated with multicoloured arabesques, now crumbling, give off strong odours from the medicines of olden times, smells which have now become the spices and folk cures of today and tomorrow... (…) The sun began to set and Midaq Alley was veiled in the brown hues of the glow. The darkness was all the greater because it was enclosed like a trap between three walls. It rose unevenly from Sanadiqiya Street. One of its sides consisted of a shop, a cafe, and a bakery, the other of another shop and an office. It ends abruptly, just as its ancient glory did, with two adjoining houses, each of three storeys. The noises of daytime life had quieted now and those of the evening began to be heard, a whisper here and a whisper there: "Good evening, everyone". "Come on in; it's time for the evening get-together". "Wake up, Uncle Kamil, and close your shop"! "Change the water in the hookah, Sanker"! "Put out the oven, Jaada"! "This hashish hurts my chest". "If we've been suffering terrors of blackouts and air raids for five years it's only due to our own wickedness![22]

At the same time, following the writer's idea, the filmmakers touch on existential subjects. The novels and their film adaptations testify to the fragility of human fate, death unexpectedly enters the life of the protagonist of *Aṯ-Ṯulāṯiyya*, a merchant: one of his sons gets killed in a fight, his grandchildren and his son-in-law die as a result of an epidemic. Images of the bustling Cairo, of the patriarchal family, ruled by the merchant with a firm hand, intertwine with images of sadness, seriousness and mourning. Life goes on in the streets and alleys of the Egyptian metropolis with its unique atmosphere; families, relatives, neighbours, craftsmen, singers or beggars fill the screen. Their conversations, quarrels, jokes and shouting combine into rich and intense images which attract the viewers and critics by their eloquent ambiguity.

> The myriad characters and events are handled with great skill and the writer is seen throughout to be in complete control of his material. It was a remarkable achievement, in particular when one bears in mind that the Arabic novel had only recently come

[22] N. Mahfuz, *Midaq Alley*, transl. T. Le Gassic, American University, Cairo, 1966, p. 1.

> into being. The Trilogy quickly became a bestseller in the Arab world, and those who could not read it came to know its characters through the films that were made of it; that it could also be appreciated outside its own cultural confines is shown by the fact that in the United States the Trilogy achieved sales of more than 250,000 copies.[23]

Critics discuss the conventions in which the adaptations are made. Mayy At-Tilimsānī[24] sees both naturalism and realism of such films as, *Qaṣr aš-Šawq* (*Palace of Desire*), *Zuqāq al-Midaqq* (*Midaq Alley*), *Bidāya wa-Nihāya* (*The Beginning and the End*). In her opinion naturalism is associated with the tradition of old streets and alleys, whereas realism is visible in the more modern quarters of *Zuqāq al-Midaqq*, *Bidāya wa-Nihāya* and can be seen as the result of the ongoing changes.[25] Nağīb Maḥfūẓ's novels: *Mīrāmār* (directed by Kamāl Aš-Šayḫ), *Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilāb* (*The Thief and the Dogs*; directed by Kamāl Aš-Šayḫ), *Ṯarṯara fawq an-Nīl* and *Al-Karnak* (*Karnak Café*; directed by ʿAlī Badraḫān; the title is the name of a café) depict post-revolution Egypt, struggling to take a breath after the great events.

Mīrāmār, the novel filmed under the same title, testifies to the extent to which Nasser's Revolution influenced the lives of the inhabitants of a small Alexandrian hotel. Almost no one is happy and everybody is looking for their own place in the surrounding reality.

> – Why have you come here now? The season's over.
> – I've come to stay. How long is it since I saw you last?
> – Since... since... did you say 'to stay'?
> – Yes, my dear. I can't have seen you for some twenty years. (…)
> – My dear Mariana, you are Alexandria to me.
> – You're married, of course.
> – No. Not yet.
> – And when will you marry, monsieur? – she asks teasingly.
> – No wife, no family. And I've retired – I reply somewhat irritably – I'm finished.
> She encourages me to go on with a wave of her hand.
> – I felt the call of my birthplace. Alexandria.
> And since I've no relations I've turned to the only friend the world has left me.
> – It's nice to find a friend in such loneliness.
> – Do you remember the good old days?
> – It's all gone – she says wistfully. But we have to go on living – I murmur.[26]

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[23] D. Johnson-Davies, *Naquib Mahfouz*, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/aug/30/culture.obituaries [30.08.2006].

[24] M. at-Tilimsānī, *Al-āḫra fī is-sīnimā al-miṣriyya*, transl. R. Fatḥī, National Center for Translation, Cairo, 2014, pp. 72, 125, 164, 223.

[25] Ibidem, p. 145.

[26] N. Mahfouz, *Miramar*, transl. F. Moussa Mahmoud, Doubleday, Cairo, 1993, p. 2.

Film adaptations of novels that analyse responsibility for past events pose numerous questions, with people and their country the subject of constant uncompromising analysis aimed at objectivism and impartiality. Regardless of political and social circumstances, people always have a choice – as Nağīb Maḥfūẓ in his novel *Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilāb* shows and in the film of the same title. The figure of a criminal with his problems for which he cannot be blamed is very moving and likeable. Brought up in revolutionary ideals, which he cannot find in everyday life, the protagonist, escaping from the police, encounters *ḏikr*, that is, praising the Lord with singing, a pure devotional act contrasting with the inexorably approaching manhunt – one of the existential motifs in Nağīb Maḥfūẓ's writings. Also in the film adaptation Islam plays an important role in the life of cities and villages.[27]

> Having completed his recitation the Sheikh raised his head, disclosing a face that was emaciated but radiant with overflowing vitality; framed by a white beard like a halo, and surmounted by a white skull cap that nestled in thick locks of hair showing silvery at his temples. The Sheikh scrutinised him with eyes that had been viewing this world for eighty years and indeed had glimpsed the next, eyes that had not lost their appeal, acuteness, or charm. Said found himself bending over his hand to kiss it, suppressing tears of nostalgia for his father, his boyish hopes, the innocent purity of the distant past. "Peace and God's compassion be upon you", said the Sheikh in a voice like Time.[28]

Obviously, not all film adaptations are faithful to the original novels, even to the Nobel Prize winner Nağīb Maḥfūẓ's writings. His novel *Al-Karnak* can serve as an example. It depicts in dark colours the life of young rebellious Egyptians gathering in a café (whose name constitutes the title of the book) – one by one, the young people are arrested. In the film adaptation under the same title the plot reaches the revolutionary events of 1971 (not mentioned in the original); as a result of these events – after the period of Arab socialism – liberalism emerged in Egypt. In contrast to the novel, the atmosphere of the film is joyful, optimistic, returning to the idea of a better future.

The image of Egypt presented in film adaptations of Maḥfūẓ's writings is critical, but balanced and apparently authentic. On the other hand, ʿAlā' al-Aswānī's novel *ʿImārat Yaʿqūbyān* (*Yacoubian Building*), although it touches on many similar subjects as described in the Nobel Prize winner's texts, is expressive, full of emotions and strives to shout out the truth; the reader must decide whether and to what extent it is exaggerated. This novel was adapted by Marwān Ḥāmid, and the film shook public opinion.

With the Yacoubian Building in 2006, Egyptian cinema started again to see a trend aimed at providing direct social critique of existing realities in the society while defying taboos.

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[27] M. Ṣ. ad-Dīn, *Ad-Dīn wa-al-aqīda fī as-sīnimā al-miṣriyya*, Maktabat Madbulī, Kair, 1998.

[28] N. Mahfouz, *The Thief and the Dogs*, transl. T. Le Gassick, Cairo, 1984, p. 12.

The Yacoubian Building had all the ingredients for success: a huge budget, a strong international marketing campaign and an international best-selling novel of the same title by ʼAlāʾ al-Aswānī on which it was based.[29]

In *ʼImārat Yaʼqūbyān* the critique explodes with full force, the film attacks social relations, morals and politics. Its eroticism is permeated with naturalism, male sexuality is one of the main threads.

On the whole, however, the image of Egypt presented in film adaptations tries to show the truth of life and from such films viewers can learn a lot about this country and breathe in its living atmosphere. Egyptian cinema promotes the country with great eagerness.

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[29] D. Mansour, *Egyptian Film Censorship: Safeguarding Society, Upholding Taboos*, [in:] "Alphaville. Journal of Film and Screen Media", Issue 4, Winter 12, p. 5, http://www.alphavillejournal.com/Issue%204/PDFs/ArticleMansour.pdf [10.04.2018].

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Past and Present in Dāliyā Basyūnī's Drama *Sūlītīr* (Solitaire)

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Summary
Dāliyā Basyūnī belongs to the contemporary generation of Egyptian dramatists and directors. In her drama entitled Sūlītīr (Solitaire, 2011), awarded by the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, she carefully peers into the Egyptian soul and, through the prism of the experience of three women, draws a picture of modern Egypt in which the past and the present are the most important points of reference. Questions of identity, place in the contemporary world, the importance of family, a tangled everyday life after the thirty years of Mubarak's rule and the significance of the January 25 Revolution are just a few of the problems that Basyūnī takes on in her play. This paper, through analysis of this Egyptian writer's drama, tries to answer the question of who the contemporary Egyptians are and what values are most important to them.

Keywords
Arabic drama, Egyptian theatre, Dalia Basiouny

Solitaire is a specific card game. In principle, we do not need a partner in it because we play it alone by facing ourselves and chance, or if you prefer, fate. Like any game, solitaire has its own rules that differ more or less depending on the particular version. Essentially, it is all about arranging all the cards we have in accordance with the set rule. If we succeed, we win, if not, we must come to terms with our failure. Solitaire, known from the end of the eighteenth century, is not only an innocent entertainment, a form of spending free time or escaping from boredom. This unique game is also treated as a kind of divination and a way of looking for answers "yes" or "no" to tormenting questions. Its outcome may be

a warning against or an incentive to take action, the consequences of which we are not certain. The essence of the game, it seems, is the patient and lone struggle with probability through the use of our memory and perceptiveness.[1] Therefore, solitaire is a question mark, hope, and a challenge to an unpredictable fate.

It is not a coincidence nor an accident, I think, that the Egyptian director and writer Dāliyā Basyūnī titled her debut work, which was received very positively, but also rewritten and modified several times, *Sūlītīr* or *Solitaire*. The drama was created in special circumstances as the artist's response to a specific situation, but also as a result of her experiences, both theatrical and related to life. Basyūnī joined the theatre in the late 1980s, and directed her first play in 1993. She studied in Great Britain, was a Fulbright scholar and obtained a Ph.D. in theatre studies at the University of New York. She is also an academic lecturer, the author of many monographs and articles about the theatre, not only in Egypt. As a critic, she cooperates with several well-known Egyptian journals, such as "Aẖbār al-yawm" or "Al-Miṣrī al-yawm". In one of her articles, she explains that her first playwriting attempt was a reaction to the disappointing level of Egyptian performances she had seen in preparing her critical texts on the Egyptian theatre for "Daily News Egypt".[2] The last straw that broke the camel's back was the fourth edition of Mihrağān al-Masraḥ al-Qawmī (National Theatre Festival) that took place in Cairo in 2009. According to Basyūnī, among twenty-seven performances participating in the competition and nine outside the competition, only one was made on the basis of a text written and directed by a woman. In addition, the artist hit out at the misogynistic character of most of the other performances.[3] Although the idea of writing the play was realised by Basyūnī in stages, and its present shape was influenced by many factors, in its fundamental assumptions, the performance remained faithful to the original concept. It was based on the presentation of women who are confronted with dilemmas regarding their identity, personality and place in the modern world.[4] At first, Basyūnī only thought about one character. Later, she supplemented her text with two additional personages. Then, due to technical and organisational reasons, she separated only one part from the finished work, which started functioning as an independent monodram. Collaboration with the actresses who were to create the roles of the heroines in the performance turned out to be an important element of the crystallisation of the final form of the text. The events of the Egyptian Spring, the socio-political changes that took place in Egypt in 2011, were also equally important. Although, as I mentioned, Basyūnī was a debutante when it comes to playwriting, her project in 2010 won a grant from

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1 *Solitaire*, https://www.britannica.com/topic/solitaire-card-game [10.08.2017].

2 D. Basiouny, *Revolutionary Egyptian Performance: The Work of Dalia Basiouny*, [in:] J. Plastow, Y. Hutchison, C. Matzke (eds), *African Theatre 14: Contemporary Women*, Boydell & Brewer, 2015, pp. 6–16.

3 D. Basiouny, *Insipidness and misogyny in lackluster theater fest*, https://dailyfeed.dailynewsegypt.com/2009/07/12/insipidness-and-misogyny-in-lackluster-theater-fest/ [21.08.2017].

4 D. Basiouny, *Revolutionary Egyptian Performance*…, op. cit., pp. 6–16.

the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture. At the beginning of 2011, the artist's work on the final version of the work and the search for a suitable cast within budget coincided with the dramatic changes in Egypt. Basyūnī suspended the *Solitaire* project for a short time and, in a way, made a documentary performance with her team entitled *Ḥawādīṯ at-Taḥrīr* (*Tahrir Stories*), a kind of dramatised collage of relations of eyewitnesses participating in protests against power that took place in the centre of the Egyptian capital. Eventually, the *Solitaire* premiere took place at the end of March 2011 in the independent Rawābīṭ theatre in Cairo.[5] Right after, the artist began preparations to present her play at the festival Kula Mihak – Woman's Monodrama Festival in Sulaymaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan. From the drama, which consisted of monologues presented by three women, a mother and her two daughters, Basyūnī used only one part, the one she reserved for herself at the initial stage of work on the play. Already in the premiere staging of her debut drama, the artist decided to go on stage as an actress. This decision was dictated primarily by personal considerations. Basyūnī explains:

> I also decided to perform the role of the older daughter (who lives in New York) myself, as I personally carry the visceral memory of the protests and marches she talks about. I also wanted to cure my invisibility through this performance. I have worked in the theatre for more than twenty years, and I was a news anchor on TV and radio. No-one who sees me would ever associate me with the word 'shy'. But deep inside, part of me was always hiding and finding comfort in my backstage presence and anonymity. I wanted to heal that part through this performance.[6]

In a slightly rewritten and shortened version, Basyūnī presented *Sūlītīr* also in Morocco, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Australia, Canada and the United States. In 2014, the artist was shortlisted for the League of Professional Theatre Women – Gilder/Coigney International Theatre Award.

As I mentioned, the version of *Solitaire* from the premiere performance consists of three monologues that are somewhat independent of each other. In the introduction to the drama, the author writes: "The play is composed of three parts. Each of them is a monologue that can be presented separately depending on the vision of the director."[7]

The characters of the play are the mother – Nagāt – and her daughters, the younger Nohà and older Monà. The daughters' lines are separated by their mother's monologues, who also opens and ends the work.

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[5] D. Basiouny, *Performing and Rewriting "Solitaire" Between Languages and Cultures: A Practitioner's Testimonial*, [in:] S. Aaltonen, A. Ibrahim (eds), *Rewriting Narratives in Egyptian Theatre. Translation, Performance, Politics*, Routledge, New York, 2016, pp. 107–122.

[6] D. Basiouny, *Revolutionary Egyptian Performance*…, op. cit. pp. 6–16.

[7] D. Basyūnī, *Sūlītīr. Masraḥiyya fī ṯalāṯat mūnūlūğāt drāmiyya*, manuscript, p. 2; All citations of the Arabic version of the drama have been translated into English by the author of the article. Arabic names which appear in the play are transliterated into English according to their dialectal spelling.

Anna Krajewska in her monograph writes that "the monologue in the theatre builds the framework of the way the world is perceived and talked about."[8] In extreme cases, the aforementioned framework may appear to be a certain trap bearing the risk of too-far-reaching one-sidedness or subjectivism. They can become a cage that, in a sense, stifles the dynamics of character development, limits the evolution of its attitudes and world views. On the other hand, the clearly outlined limits of the psychological, existential and social horizons of the protagonist allow us to better perceive the problems being addressed and focus on the fundamental issues forming the heart of the artistic communication in one form. Frequently, the play's insightful study of one hero brings us an extremely rich picture of not only the individual, but the whole community of which he is a part. It is not without reason that the Egyptian writer Ṣafā' al-Baylī writes that the monodrama based on the monologue is "an art that immerses in the depths of the human soul and enters into discussions about many problems that the hero/audience experiences."[9]

Solitaire by Dāliyā Basyūnī reveals to us three individual personalities, three life experiences and finally three ways of expression. Although the work uses three monologues that express human life and temperament, it simultaneously combines them into a multi-dimensional, coherent and clear message.

Nagāt is about sixty years old. We meet her when she is sitting alone in front of a computer screen and playing solitaire. She seems a bit surprised by the meeting with the audience, but as it usually happens in the Middle East, she immediately warmly welcomes the unexpected guests. Embarrassed, she apologises for her inappropriate dress and hairdo. She justifies this to the audience explain that she was very tired and had fallen asleep. She says: "I slept for a long time and it was not a completely carefree dream, and when I woke up, I saw that the world had changed."[10] Looking a little at the computer screen, a little bit at the audience, she talks about her life, which in its ordinariness is, after all, unique and unrepeatable. Maybe that's why it is so reliable. She returns to her childhood, school times, marriage, struggles with everyday life in times when her husband worked abroad and she was raising the children herself. In the end, she remembers the most tragic moments when the people close to her deceased, something she could not accept and fell into depression. Neither medicines nor visits to the doctors helped. She discovered a little bit by herself and a little bit with the help of her friend that the key to happiness and acceptance of the world is hidden in herself. The truth is somewhat banal, but it has the unquestionable therapeutic power that Nagāt has experienced the hard way. She started getting to know herself with difficulty, but gradually and steadily. Coming to terms with the world, she has also accepted herself. She calmly accepts the passage of time, loneliness and

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[8] A. Krajewska, *Dramat współczesny. Teoria i interpretacja*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań, 2005, p. 213.

[9] Ṣ. al-Baylī, *Ḥamsa wa-ṯalāṯūn 'āman min al-mūnūdrāmā fī Miṣr*, http://almasr7news.com/archives/1388, [15.06.2015].

[10] D. Basyūnī, *Sūlītīr. Masraḥiyya fī*…, op. cit., p. 5.

finds ways to deal with them. She looks critically at her past. She realises that life has leaked through her fingers a little, that she has slept through it constantly waiting for something and running into the future. Meanwhile, as she says: "happiness is the current moment, here and now", without waiting for tomorrow, which will not come."[11] Her here and now is a return to work in a bank after a long-term break, a mobile phone through which she receives jokes from friends, a computer on which she can play solitaire and thanks to which she contacts her close ones through Skype. At the beginning of her monologue, Nagāt says that she is now living in the future, about which she used to watch films, and she plays cards that are not made of paper at all.[12] In fact, these words in a metaphorical and symbolic way summarise her experience of modernity, which changes at a dizzying pace so that it is difficult to keep up. With this knowledge, Nagāt, after waking up from her lethargy, is no longer the same woman locked in her own world. She notices what is going on around her, and although she does not understand everything, and maybe she does not agree with everything, she does not reject and does not question the world, which after all is also her world.

The daughter of Nagāt, Nohà, is a young married woman who, as she says, experienced an identity crisis in a traffic jam on traffic lights under the al-Maryūṭiyya bridge.[13] We meet her as she arranges freshly washed underwear. She complains that she has not slept for two nights and she does not know what is happening to her. For the first time, she feels the need to think about and sort her own matters. It all started with a seemingly insignificant event, but actually this event was only a moment that led to the eruption of emotional tensions, questions and doubts accumulated over the years. Nohà and her husband went to the circumcision ceremony of her nephew. The boy's grandfather, a widely respected old man, could not hold back his tears when hearing his grandson crying, eliciting a profound impression on the guests. Nohà asks herself a question, what is all this for? Why do we hurt those we love so much? Why do we do something that we do not really agree to? Why do we mindlessly imitate the behaviours of others without thinking about ourselves? A conversation with her husband about this subject during the return from the ceremony only deepens her dilemmas. It turns out that a man who changes his car every year for a new one and appreciates technological progress when it comes to her cousin's circumcision has only one answer for her: because her grandfather and father did it, so we will not change anything.[14] Nohà realised that all her previous life has been this type of copying of someone and something. At first, her older sister was the example for her, then her friends from college, finally the mates at work. She says: "it seems to me that I have never thought of myself in an original way, in my own way."[15] Then

[11] Ibidem, p. 23.

[12] Ibidem, p. 6.

[13] Ibidem, p. 19.

[14] Ibidem, p. 17.

[15] Ibidem, p. 9.

she adds: "As it happens with many people, my life was beside me and I did not feel the need to become something specific."[16] The reflection comes after years, and Nohà begins crafting a plan to fix herself. She still does not exactly know what to do. Anyway, the way she speaks out indicates that she is not completely convinced that what she says is correct or true. She is constantly repeating "it seems to me" as if she was taking her own thoughts, judgments and opinions into parentheses. Although she is afraid of her husband's reaction and hesitates, she decides to go to Luxor alone. There, in a modest room with a view of the pharaonic temples and fields, she just wants to sit down and think. Luxor is a special place for her, where she spent her honeymoon. She recalls: "There, I felt the most relaxed. I could really breathe. I felt that I was myself without the need to do anything or prove something."[17]

She hopes that in this unique space, where everything exists in complete harmony while maintaining its individual character, she will also find herself. Returning to the images from the south of Egypt, she adds: "It seems to me that if I had a short stay there, maybe I would also find out who I am and accept myself as I am."[18] Preparing to leave the house, full of fear and hope, she says: "I do not know what will happen, but I will certainly find it out".[19]

The oldest daughter of Nagāt, Monà, is married, has a daughter and has been living with her family in the United States for over ten years. Before she began studying pharmaceutics in America, she had spent a short period of time in New York. She quickly came to like the US, because, as she says: "I felt there like in my crazy city of Cairo (...). The same buzz and crowds."[20]

Although Monà is leading a quite successful life now, it has gone a bit different than she might have expected. She recalls: "A lot of things happened that nobody expected. I've changed just like the whole world around me."[21] She was supposed to become a pharmacist, but now she is an expert in unconventional medicine. The America of her imagination quickly disappeared, revealing the reality that Monà does not quite want to agree with. The attack of September 11, 2001, was a crucial moment during her stay in the United States. This event has very strongly influenced her worldview, but also her personality. Monà has experienced the hostility towards the Arabs and Muslims in the hard way. She saw how easy it is to fuel hatred, manipulate stereotypes and sow fear of immigrants. She decided to engage in demonstrations and marches against American politics and interventions in the Middle East. She says: "My life has changed and my political consciousness also had to change. I needed a clearer position on the world and the country in which I live and to which I belong."[22]

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16 Ibidem.

17 Ibidem, p. 20.

18 Ibidem.

19 Ibidem, p. 21.

20 Ibidem, p. 30.

21 Ibidem, pp. 30–31.

22 Ibidem, p. 38.

As a sign of solidarity with Muslims, she started wearing a hijab. She was fascinated by the fact that she is part of a large community that can express its opinion freely. She remembered, in the meantime, how brutally the protesting students in Egypt were dealt with. However, American freedom of speech did not help much. The subsequent decisions of Washington about the war in Iraq, the bombing of Afghanistan, support or indifference to the intervention of Israel in Ramallah deprived her of illusions about the strength of civic voice. She paid a high price for her commitment. She suffered a miscarriage after the invasion of the anti-Saddam coalition in Iraq. Discouraged by politics, she focused on regaining her inner harmony and peace, cultivating love for the world and acceptance of others. She also wants to pass these values on to her daughter. She is constantly thinking about where she should raise Ranā, in the US or in Egypt. Neither is perfect and full dangers and threats for every child. The next landmark event in Monà's life was the unpleasant experience at an American airport during her return from Egypt. Like many dark-skinned travellers, she has also been subjected to long, tiring and humiliating passport control. She realised then how little she means without having an American passport. At the urging of her husband and thinking about her daughter Monà decided to apply for citizenship, although she says: "I have a country and citizenship. Why another one? What will it give me? Will it protect me if they want to arrest me? Nothing will stop the lying governments here or in our place."[23]

Despite internal resistance, she intends to go to the office to complete the necessary formalities and become full citizen of the USA, because as she states: "I want to feel peace."[24]

It should be noted that in the shortened version of *Sūlītīr*, which, as I mentioned earlier, consists only of Monà's monologue, the author introduced a few changes. While waiting for information about the granting of American citizenship, the heroine of the performance learns about the demonstrations taking place in Egypt at the beginning of 2011. Despite the dangers that may be awaiting her, she decides to go to Cairo to join the protesters. Directly from the airport she goes to the at-Taḥrīr square, where she meets her old friends. She faces the police along with thousands of others, occupying the centre of the Egyptian capital. After a few days, she fulfils the dream of millions of Egyptians and welcomes with euphoria the news of Mubarak's resignation from his office. After returning to the United States, Monà knows that she will never give up her passport. She will proudly carry it hoping that her daughter will do the same.

A common element combining the three protagonists of the drama of Daliyā Basyūnī is the "change" that takes place in their lives. This change is accompanied by a smaller or larger rebellion. Nagāt does not want to live as she had used to anymore. She does not want to wait and run away from everyday life into an indefinite future. Nohà finally wants to stop copying others and get to know herself. Finally, Monà by refusing the American passport does not agree to practical conformism, the price of which would be the loss of her own 'self'. In the first

[23] Ibidem, p. 46.

[24] Ibidem, p. 47.

version of the drama, Monà's specific rebellion manifests itself in her opposition to the hateful world and seeking its counterweight in spiritual life, peace and love for others. In the 2011 version, this issue, although still very clear, seems to be somewhat in the background. Eugenio Barba said in an interview "that rebellion is connected with efforts to achieve coherence between what a person thinks and does."[25] As for the heroines of *Solitaire*, each of them in their own way is immersed in a reality in which she feels the lack of coherence between herself and the world around her, or her own way of thinking and the action taken. Of course, the life situations in which the heroines of the drama are found, are different. Their experiences are naturally not identical, but through the similar dilemmas they face, they form a coherent collage of personalities, characters and experiences.

The issue of identity is an issue particularly present in Basyūnī's drama. The question "who am I?" appears at various stages of the lives of the heroines, and the answer to it becomes an absolute necessity almost conditioning further existence. Nohà says directly that she is experiencing an identity crisis. She clearly defines her problem and although she does not quite know how to deal with it, she tries to take steps to remedy it. It is a bit different for Monà and Nagāt. First of all, their mother had to open up to the world, accept the rules of life and discover the joy of experiencing her everyday life in the place where she is now. Years later, Nagāt finally woke up and consciously plays her solitaire. Monà has come a long way before she finally clearly defined herself. The United States admittedly gave her freedom and space to pursue her own ambitions, but this country did not give her an identity. Monà has clearly deconstructed the American national discourse, in which her place, as a coloured woman, is somewhere on the margin. Not agreeing to the position of a suspect, or even someone, she decided to cultivate the Egyptian aspect in herself. At the same time, she is far from idealising her own fatherland. She speaks openly about the vices of her compatriots and disturbing phenomena, such as religious extremism or racism. However, she draws her national pride from Egypt and what its inhabitants have managed to achieve, by the political changes that started in 2011.

Hans-Thies Lehman writes that "drama is born of a conflict of attitudes (…) in which the dramatic personage is characterised by justified pathos, it means that, he tries to emphasise his convictions as right and fulfil them with full commitment."[26] If we understand pathos as the Greeks understood it in their tragedies, it would be a suffering that leads to anagnorisis – recognition. The protagonists of Daliyā Basyūnī put in a situation of conflict with the world or with themselves, clearly experience suffering in their life, mainly spiritual, mental, which in turn also leads to recognition. It consists, above all, in the redefinition of themselves, and becoming aware of their own place in the world and the community to which they belong. Each woman, of course, goes through a different test and faces specific problems, but the way

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[25] E. Barba, *Teatr jest kreacją środowiska*, [in:] "Didaskalia", 2016, no. 135, p. 20.

[26] H.-T. Lehman, *Teatr postdramatyczny*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków, 2009, p. 40.

they go through is similar. This individuality and the uniqueness of the cases of the heroines, with all the diversity of their personalities, is perfectly reflected by the language they use. The mother's monologue is written in contemporary literary language. Nagāt seems to form thoughts in an orderly and thoughtful way. One can feel the experience and peace in her words, which is generally achieved with age. The daughters speak in a dialect. Nohà, while representing the youngest generation, builds short, broken sentences. At the same time, she often uses mental shortcuts, as if she were writing text messages. Her language clearly reveals both the age of the heroine and the emotional state in which she finds herself. Monà, on the other hand, quickly reveals her personality to us through the reflective tone of her statements, revealing to us the wealth of her spiritual life. On the other hand, her monologue is also full of euphoric moments, which show how commited a person Monà can be.

Daliyā Basyūnī in her drama gave a lot of hints on the audio-visual side of the stage interpretation of the play. The Egyptian writer completes the verbal message of the performance with pictures, audio and video recordings to be presented at specific moments of the development of the action. Thus, Basyūnī fits in with the general tendency of mediatising the theatre by multiplying the means of communication with the viewer. The Egyptian writer uses what Wendall K. Harrington called the "visual dictionary" of the modern viewer in search of the language most natural to him.[27]

Solitaire is a game in which everything always slightly depends on chance, luck, and a bit on ourselves, on the specific decisions we make here and now. If we leave everything to blind chance, we only become puppets in its hands. By taking up the challenge, we can tip the scales of victory to our side. Daliyā Basyūnī in her play shows how easy it is to become a puppet. How little it takes to assume the role of a passive viewer in the spectacle of one's own life. At the same time, she reveals the scenes of the struggle for the restoration and preservation of individual subjectivity and internal harmony. *Solitaire* brings about three biographies, three different experiences, which complement each other in a coherent and clear message. It talks about problems with identity, civilisation and social transformations in Egypt and changes in the consciousness of its citizens represented, not by accident, only by women, which was explained by Basyūnī herself. It is worth noting that drama has a very universal character and does not close the directions of interpretation only to the environment, or the country to which characters presented in the play belong. Basyūnī, with the voice of her heroines, also expresses her political opinion in the broad sense of the word. The Egyptian writer reveals the discourse of power and the mechanisms of manipulation of public opinion. She exposes the oppressiveness of the system of power and the normative model of tradition towards the individual.

Touching so many issues that appear in the drama in varying degrees, Basyūnī opens a discussion about contemporary Egypt and the world. In the ultimate version, the writer is constantly looking for new ways to get in touch with the viewers and tell them her story.

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[27] W. K. Harrington cited in P. Auslander, *Na żywo czy…?*, [in:] "Didaskalia", 2012, no. 107, p. 19.

Solitaire of the Egyptian writer not only becomes alive with its each performance, but it seems that it is still being formed in the author's creative vision. Therefore, the issue of its ultimate finale, just like any unfinished game, remains open.

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The Question of Women in Islam According to Naṣr Abū Zayd[1]

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Summary

Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd (1943–2010), one of the most eminent contemporary Egyptian and Arab thinkers, has played a very important role in contemporary critical rereading of Muslim thought and the development of a hermeneutical approach to the Qur'ān and other Islamic sources. One of the most important and valuable, although underestimated, aspects of his thought is a reflection on the position of women in Islam, and analysis of Arabic discourses concerning them. These issues were mainly described by Abū Zayd in Al-Mar'a fī ẖiṭāb al-azma (Women in the Discourse of the Crisis; first edition: 1994) and Dawā'ir al-ẖawf: qirā'a fī ẖiṭāb al-mar'a (Circles of Fear: Analysis of the Discourse about Women; first edition: 1999). The Egyptian scholar analyses with polemic passion different examples of discrimination against women, which is, in his opinion, deeply rooted in discourses dominating Arabic language and culture, and as such has a linguistic character. Abū Zayd has postulated that changes in the understanding of the social and legal position of woman in Islam is an inevitable element of the process of renewal in Islam, and of democratic and humanistic hermeneutics. The latter can be seen as the most important and original part of Abū Zayd's overall intellectual heritage.

Keywords

Naṣr Abū Zayd, women in Islam, discourse, Arabic language, crisis, discrimination

Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd, a "very Egyptian thinker" as he described himself, was very interested in the wide problematics regarding the status of women in Islam and the Qur'ān. He published two books focusing on these issues: *Al-Mar'a fī ẖiṭāb*

[1] This research was financed by the National Science Centre in Poland in years 2014–2018 (the project led by Michal Moch in the frame of „Sonata" program, number of the project: 2013/11/D/HS1/04322).

al-azma (*Women in the Discourse of the Crisis*; first edition: 1994) *Dawā'ir al-ẖawf: qirā'a fī ẖiṭāb al-mar'a* (*Circles of Fear: Analysis of the Discourse about Women*; first edition: 1999). The second one was in fact a revised and developed version of the former, as *Al-Mar'a*…, published initially by Dār Nuṣūṣ li-an-Našr, did not have a wide distribution.

Abū Zayd's interest is in both judicial and practical issues regarding the Qur'ānic image of woman, but at the same time he is more interested in how women are entwined within discourses popular in the Islamic world such as the *ẖiṭāb al-azma* (discourse of the crisis), mentioned in the title of his book. His approach is multidisciplinary, taking the issue from many angles: legal, moral, political, religious, and linguistic as well.

In the chapter *Inṯrūbūlūğiyyat al-luġa wa-inğirāḥ al-huwwiyya* (*An Anthropology of Language and Wound/Impotence of Identity*), contained in *Dawā'ir al-ẖawf*,[2] the Egyptian scholar links the crisis of the position of Arab women to a more general phenomena in the Arab world: the lack of democracy and transparency, societal and national fragmentation (*tašarḏum*), racism, and sectarianism (*'unṣuriyya ṭā'ifiyya*), and a crisis of identity seen by Abū Zayd as touching the most intimate aspects of male honour and its traditional dominating role in the society. It is no wonder that the crisis in the sphere of male Arab identity is designated by the scholar as *inğirāḥ,* which refers as well to a lack of sexual potency (in his other writings, Abū Zayd attributed it to e.g. the longstanding effects of the traumatic loss of the Six-Day War on the Egyptian society).

Abū Zayd's reasoning starts with a general exposition of his criticism of discrimination directed against women in contemporary Islamic societies.

> The discourse generated (*muntağ*) around women in the Arab world is generally discriminatory. It is a discourse that stereotypes men and women, and places them in a comparative relationship. When a relationship between two parties is identified this way, then it means that one party succumbs to the other and obeys it. It is natural that the party that believes it is strong produces a racial (sectarian) discriminatory discourse. This is not the case with the religious discourse alone, but is also part of the current Arab discourse that is dominant in both culture and media. It is also not difficult to find in the discourse of "equality" and "participation" an undertone of superiority that emanates basically from the discourse which places males in the centre. When woman is equal to man, and when she is allowed to participate, she is merely participating with the man. But in all cases, the man becomes the centre of everything. The matter seems to be incontrovertible.

[2] N. Ḥ. Abū Zayd, *Dawā'ir al-ẖawf: qirā'a fī ẖiṭāb al-mar'a*, Al-Markaz aṯ-Ṯaqāfī al-ʿArabī, Dār al-Bayḍā', Bayrūt, 2007, pp. 29–41.

> And in some human societies, a woman's social, cultural, and political activities are marginal and without meaning if a man is not involved in them as well.[3, 4]

The roots of the discrimination are located by Abū Zayd in the very nature of Arabic language. His remarks are quite controversial in a linguistic sense.

> Contemporary Arab discourse has its roots in language itself. It is a language that insists on differentiating between Arab names and foreign names with a system of signs that is called *at-tanwīn*[5]. This is a sign that is put at the end of Arabic names only on the level of pronounciation (*nuṭq*) and not when they are written. One can therefore say Muḥammad-un or ʿAliyy-un in the nominative case, and to add –in and –an endings in the other two cases: genitive and accusative. But this sign is not attached to non-Arab names like Bush (Būš) or Abraham (Ibrāhīm). We should also notice that the terms *ʾağam* [collectivum: non-Arabs, barbarians – M. M.] or *al-aʾāğim* [broken plural: speechless, speaking bad Arabic, barbarians – M. M.] are derived from the same word formation core as the form *al-ʾağmāwāt*, depicting animals or wild beasts. This is a categorisation that gives Arabs a superior status. It also gives their language the place of "the Language" as though any other language is not important, and that those who speak another language are like animals that cannot express themselves.[6]

In the other part of this text Abū Zayd criticises also inequality at the level of grammatical gender.

> This linguistic discrimination between Arabs and non-Arabs on the basis of language and its meaning breeds another discrimination between males and females in Arab names. Female Arabic names are also considered to be less important. In addition to the female "t" (*tāʾ marbūṭa*) used to differentiate between males and females, the *tanwīn* is absent from female names just as it is absent from foreign names. There is therefore a linguistic racial discrimination not only against the "Other" but also against females of the same race who are treated as "Others" as well. This is noticeable

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[3] This and following translations were made by Michał Moch and are the first full European translations of these original Arabic texts. They were utilised as well in Michał Moch's monograph: *Naṣr Abū Zayd: A Critical Rereading of Islamic Thought*, Kazimierz Wielki University Publishing Office, Bydgoszcz, 2017, pp. 85–97.

[4] N. Ḥ. Abū Zayd, op. cit., p. 29.

[5] Abū Zayd probably refers here to the fact that in the classical Arabic system of *tanwīn* endings were rigorously used in the practise of speaking. Today, it is still an important part of the practices of Qur'ānic recitation. However, these are rather relics of the Arabic classical language and today the spelling without *at-tanwīn* clearly dominates.

[6] N. Ḥ. Abū Zayd, op. cit., p. 30.

> in all existing contemporary discourse, in which women are treated as minorities since they are required to be under the protection and the authority of men.
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> The linguistic discrimination is widespread inside this specific ideology of language. All nouns in the language are either male or female and there is no neuter in the Arabic language, as there are in other languages such as German, for example. Linguists differentiate between the true female word and the figurative female word, but this discrimination does not mean that the figurative female is exempt from succumbing to all the mechanisms of categorisation to which she actually does succumb. On the other hand, we do not find a difference between the "true" male and the figurative male which reveals that there is a preconception that males are active, while females are inactive and passive. Based on this assumption, the plural is treated as a male plural even if it is about a group of women, on the condition that one single male is present among that group of women. This means that one man's presence is more important than the presence of a whole group of women. It is therefore called the male plural and not the female plural.[7]

Abū Zayd does not state that these discriminatory practices are limited only to the Arabic language, but he suggests that it cannot be a justification for some Arab defenders of the *status quo* even if a similar situation functions in Western countries as well.

> If we were to say that this does not concern the Arabic language alone, and that is concerns many other languages on earth, this does not disprove its significance. Instead, it shows how widespread it is in human consciousness in general. If that is the case on the linguistic level, it is not always the case in the consciousness of groups throughout history. In some contemporary societies that speak English, for example, there is a growing consciousness of the ideology of language and the danger of surrendering to it. There are, for example, some attempts to change the language and replace it with a different consciousness, for example, when people try to avoid overusing the personal pronoun "he" by using "he" or "she" alternately. People also avoid using the male or female to describe certain positions and professions, where we no longer say "chairman" but "chairperson" and "spokesman" but "spokesperson" [these terms were put in English by Abū Zayd – M. M.]. This new consciousness is largely absent from Arabic discourse and this is what concerns us here.[8]

[7] Ibidem, pp. 30–31.

[8] Ibidem, pp. 31–32.

If language treats women from a racial and ethnic perspective that equates them to *al-aʿāğam*, then it also reflects the level of consciousness of the people who created this language. Although consciousness does not develop in isolation of the language and language does not develop in isolation of those who speak it, every type of consciousness has its independent history and distinct path. Sometimes the two clash, which can lead to crucial changes in the structure of the language. This might sometimes lead to a victory of the traditional consciousness over the new consciousness. In the history of the Arabic language, which represents the history of the people who speak it, there is a distinct consciousness represented in the Qur'ān, which addresses women in a direct way, as it addresses men. Addressing women has been performed in an indirect manner through addressing men; but in the Qur'ān it is not so. In this context, we have to dismiss some of the illusions that people have concerning the inferiority of women's status in Qur'ānic discourse based on the fact that a woman's inheritance is half that of the man's. The real criteria for evaluation has to be the status of women and their position in the society of the *ğāhiliyya* period, not just a comparison between Qur'ānic discourse and our legitimate wishful thinking concerning a woman's status. Based on this criteria, addressing women independently from men in Qur'anic discourse is a new form of consciousness that is unprecedented except for some harbingers in non-typical *ğāhiliyya* or *post-ğāhiliyya* poems as for example the *qaṣīdas* made by so-called *aṣ-ṣaʿālīk*.[9]

But this consciousness in Qur'ānic discourse has entered into conflict with a consciousness already present in the language, and this is through a complex conflict on the ground of politics first and then on the level of religious thinking and the entire Arab culture after that. As much as the conflict has leaned towards the new consciousness, women's status has developed, and as much as the balance has leaned towards traditional consciousness and what it represents in terms of enclosed tribal values, women's status has changed from group to group and from state to state in the Islamic Empire. The status of women in Andalusian society[10] is worthy of attention, insofar

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[9] The term *aṣ-ṣaʿālīk* (singular: *ṣuʿlūk*; literally: vagabonds, beggars, poor people) denotes peculiar brigand poets in the Arabian Peninsula, especially before the advent of Islam. They originated from the people excluded from their own tribes and were types of outsiders or outlaws in the Arab societies of the pre-Muslim world, either by their own choice or by exclusion. Their often difficult economic situation forced them to provide for their living by theft, e.g. attacks on caravans. Their poetry contained realistic descriptions of poverty, violence, and exclusion, and as well it was structurally distinct from the most prevalent pattern of the *qaṣīdas*. For example, *aṣ-ṣa'ālīk* poems did not have the customary first part of the poem – *nasīb* (Gert Borg, *ṣaʿālīk*, [in:] *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*, vol. 2, J. S. Meisami, P. Starkey (eds), Routledge, London and New York, 1998, p. 670). One of the most famous *ṣaʿālīk* was Aš-Šanfarā (died ca. 540).

[10] Abū Zayd obviously refers here to the society of Al-Andalus in the classical era of Islamic history.

> as a women had the right to stipulate that her husband divorce another wife in a case where the first wife had not been informed about the second. (…). None of the scholars at the time said that those conditions conflicted with the principle of male superiority (*mabdā' al-qiwāma*) which became the norm in later eras.
>
> In eras of backwardness and retardation, women are hidden, and they are seen as lacking intelligence and religion. The idea that women are not to make love during menstruation has evolved into avoiding speaking with her and eating with her, which goes back to mythical taboos. The story of Adam's departure from paradise is rehashed in the Old Testament version, where Eve is tantamount to a snake and Satan. A discourse is created even in the film industry, where movies are called e.g. *The Devil is A Woman*. Woman is transformed into a lust-inciting creature that provokes temptation, which is also related to the Qur'ānic narration about Joseph (Yūsuf) and its meanings. The only solution becomes burying women alive as the Bedouin Arabs in the *ǧāhiliyya* (pre-Islamic period) did [with the girls and female toddlers – M. M.], but instead the contemporary reaction is to bury woman alive inside a black dress with two holes for eyes![11], [12]

From these linguistic-cultural remarks, Abū Zayd switches to more political and identity-related issues including the aforementioned trauma of the 1967 Six-Day War. His language is here quite polemical, even strong.

> Following defeat (*hazīma*) in 1967, Arabs increasingly felt a sense of shame. To compensate for his impotence (*inǧirāḥ*[13]), the Arab male self (*aḏ-ḏāt al-'arabiyya ar-raǧuliyya*) resorted to escaping into the past, to his original identity, to the illusion of manhood. In politics, there was a move against unity (*waḥda*), and on the social level sectarianism (*ṭā'ifiyya*), instead of pan-Arab nationalism (*qawmiyya 'arabiyya*), began to blossom. At the same time, at the level of affiliation (*intimā'*), religion substituted nation/motherland (*waṭan*), history, common interests, and geography etc.
>
> Only fragmentation (*tašarḏum*), sectarianism, and the cloak of religion (*ġiṭā' ad-dīn*) were left. When the three are together, they breed only terrorism that finds expression through the self: it is violence and terrorism on all levels: Muslim against the Christian,

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[11] This irony is obviously directed at Salafi/Wahhabi interpretations of the limitations concerning women's style of dressing as e.g. the mandatory *niqāb* in the Saudi style.

[12] N. Ḥ. Abū Zayd, op. cit., pp. 36–38.

[13] It could be translated as well as a "deep, painful wound". Abū Zayd plays here with the meanings of the word *inǧirāḥ*.

> Christian against Muslim, Sunni against Shia and vice versa. In this environment charged with violence and terrorism, man turns against women.[14]

This is followed by the characteristic polemical fragment where Abū Zayd uses the example of Muṣṭafà Maḥmūd's article from the mainstream Egyptian daily, "Al-Ahrām", as a symbol of conservatism and backwardness.

> Are we confronting religious discourse? It is wrong to say that. We are facing a backwardness that might use the language of religion or the language of politics or sociology or economics. But it is not merely a discourse of backwardness. It is also a terroristic aggressive discourse against women, which was proved by the incidents in Al-ʼAtaba and Al-Maʼādī.[15] Boys and young men resort to different forms of physical and verbal abuse during the illegal gatherings under cover of darkness (*al-muğtamaʿāt al-ʾašwāʾiyya*), and among the marginalised communities (*at-tağammuʿāt al-muhmiša*). The aggression against women is represented on the level of rhetoric as well, such as Muṣṭafà Maḥmūd's article in *Al-Ahrām* (18/2/1992), where he said: "These days, we hear rebellious calls by our sweeter halves – women – most of whom are wives of wealthy men, who demand to go out to work and leave their children in the street. Each one shouts to her husband that she wants to realise herself and that she is equal to him. This sort of logic puzzles me: what kind of self-realisation will a woman find as a secretary to so and so, or a sewage engineer, or bank teller, or supermarket vendor. There is a lost identity in all those jobs. Self-realisation (*taḥqīq aḏ-ḏāt*) is merely words fit for novels, an empty demand and a will to sleep around[16] all over the town with men.
>
> We notice here that the author begins with his vision of an ideal Muslim woman (*muslima badīhiyya*), which says that women must not go out to work except to fulfil their economic needs. The aforementioned image influences Maḥmūd's arresting phrase: "most of them are wealthy women". Owing to such rhetoric, the issue of the self-realisation of women can be portrayed as an embarrassing case. Muṣṭafà Maḥmūd therefore makes women going out to work a matter that enters into the field of the prohibited (*maḥẓūrat*) – something that is allowable only when necessary (*ḍarūrāt*). It opens another dimension: Maḥmūd's opposition to secularists (*ar-radd ʿalà al-ʿalmāniyyīna*). He tries to diminish the Qur'ānic verses regarding the special

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[14] N. Ḥ. Abū Zayd, op. cit., pp. 38–39.

[15] Names of the districts of Cairo.

[16] The Egyptian dialectal word *ṣarmaḥa* pejoratively denotes girls or women going out in connection with 'sleeping around' all over the town.

qualities of "the women around the Prophet Muḥammad," saying that these verses are derived from the specificity of the context, and do not apply to women in general. However, most of the Muslim jurists treat them according to the classical rule: the precepts are derived from the universality of expression (*'umūm al-laf̣z*), not the specificity of the context (*ḫuṣūs as-sabab*). It is a pity that Maḥmūd is not conscious of it, but rather aims at building a beleaguered fortress against the alleged anti-Islamic attacks of secularists under the pretext of women's employment.

The defence of the Islamic stance, made by Muṣṭafà Maḥmūd, who at the same time pretends to be not totally against women's employment, seems to be malicious. Note how Muṣṭafà Maḥmūd is surprised that the women who want to go out and self-realise are "wives of wealthy men", and how, tragically they throw their children out into the street although they are wealthy and of course could bring in foreign maids. But he does not say this – instead he says they throw them out into the street. Look how Muṣṭafà Maḥmūd's discourse changes to the melodramatic when he says "she shouts in the face of her husband about her self-realisation, wanting to be equal to him". If we assume this scenario is true, then what sort of man is this whose wife has to shout that sort of sentence to him? Undoubtedly it is the husband who thinks he has bought his wife with his money, a husband who treats her as he treats the most trivial things. Undoubtedly, a wife who speaks to her husband in this manner is responding to inhumane treatment. We suspect that Muṣṭafà Maḥmūd listened to some of the complaints of his wealthy friends concerning the rebellion of their wives, so he simply wrote an article about it. That is why his discourse resorts to debasing women's work through naming some jobs that he despises such as secretary, sewage engineer, bank teller or supermarket vendor (note the mechanism of debasement), and so on. He therefore moves from sarcasm through debasement to social injury. (…). Sarcasm to him is a manner of debasement, which leads to social injury that is not different from verbal and physical assault in the street.[17]

Adding to these translated passages, Abū Zayd's approach to the question of "the discourse of woman" in Islam is related as well to the approach of the Moroccan feminist writer and sociologist Fatema Mernissi (Fāṭima Marnīsī, 1940–2015), the author of some important works e.g. *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Muslim Society* (first edition: 1975). Abū Zayd exactly commented on Mernissi's views in one of the chapters of *Dawā'ir al-ḫawf*, which he based on references to her book *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (first edition: 2002). The title formulation on 'circles of fear' was also based on Mernissi's conceptions analysing different types of fear in contemporary Arab societies and the Western

[17] N. Ḥ. Abū Zayd, op. cit., pp. 39–42.

world e.g. fear regarding modernity/modernisation, democracy, freedom of thought etc.[18] It seems that Abū Zayd, giving it due importance, treated these issues as part of his broader research and not as the main focus of interest, what is quite different from the European perspective[19] in which the topics of the position of woman in society and feminism play a pivotal role, often taken out of context.

Some of the issues touched in *Dawā'ir al-ẖawf* are developed in the English-language *Reformation of Islamic Thought*, published in 2006. The comparison concerning two aforementioned books gives also an impression of differences between Abū Zayd's Arabic and English works. His sophisticated Arabic can be seen from the European point of view as a little bit redundant, and too digressive, and English texts are definitely not as complex, presenting a more direct and less polemic approach.

In Abū Zayd's opinion the breakthrough in Islamic feminist hermeneutics was related to the Tunisian scholar Aṭ-Ṭāhir al-Ḥaddād (1899–1935) who was the first "to challenge the historicity of the Qur'ānic stipulation, especially in the field of women's rights."[20] Despite the fact that Al-Ḥaddād's views were expressed in the 1930s, they paved the way, according to Abū Zayd's approach, for the new hermeneutical trials of an analysis of the Qur'ānic story of Adam and Eve. He referred as well to the theories of two non-Arab feminist Islamic writers: the Pakistan-American theologian Riffat Hassan (born 1943) and the African-American scholar Amina Wadud (born 1952).[21] Abū Zayd's passage on feminism in *Reformation of Islamic Thought* was also based on two entries to *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*[22] written by Margot Badran. Inspired by this American historian of women and gender issues in Muslim societies, Abū Zayd presented three steps of a feminist approach: "first, reviewing verses quoted by males to establish inequality; secondly, citing verses that clearly enunciate equality; and lastly, deconstructing verses attentive to male and female dissimilarities."[23]

The Egyptian scholar also underlined the role of Muhammad Arkoun (Muḥammad Arkūn, 1928–2010) as a thinker who had "concern for the methodological questions that are virtually

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[18] Ibidem, p. 246–248.

[19] Cf. S. Žižek, *A Glance Into The Archives of Islam*, http://www.lacan.com/zizarchives.htm [01.07.2017], an essay partly based on a psychoanalytical attempt to interpret Islam preferred by the Tunisian-French scholar Fethi Benslama (Fatḥī Ibn Salāma, born in Salaqṭa, Tunisia in 1951, but working scientifically in France) in his book *La psychanalyse et l'épreuve de l'Islam* (Paris, 2004). There are references in Žižek's text to more secular Western visions of feminism.

[20] N. Abu Zayd, *Reformation of Islamic Thought. A Critical Historical Analysis*, University Press, Amsterdam, 2006, p. 90.

[21] Cf. ibidem, pp. 89–91.

[22] *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. 2, Brill, Leiden, 2002, *Feminism*, pp. 199–203, and *Gender*, pp. 288–292. Abū Zayd collaborated as well in the aforementioned *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* as he wrote entries: *Arrogance* (vol. 1, pp. 158–161), *Everyday Life* (vol. 2, pp. 80–97), *Illness and Health* (vol. 2, pp. 501–502), *Intention* (vol. 2, pp. 549–551), and *Oppression* (vol. 3, pp. 583–584).

[23] N. Abu Zayd, *Reformation of Islamic*.., op. cit., p. 91.

absent in Muslim scholarship of Islam in general, and of the Qur'ān specifically."[24] As an example, Abū Zayd referred to Arkoun's analysis on the position of women in case of the inheritance of a deceased Muslim without male heirs.[25] The Algerian-born proponent of new Islamology tried to prove this by analysis of some relevant Qur'ānic verses (2: 180, 182, 240; 4: 12, 176), that these passages "were deliberately misappropriated by applying a vocalisation to limit the female share of inheritance and without this, such women would be entitled to everything".[26] It seems that Abū Zayd in that regard was fully supportive of Arkoun's interpretation.

Looking for some non-Arabic, though still Islamic-world oriented, inspirations, Abū Zayd cited also the Iranist Ziba Mir-Hosseini who had found some feminist references in the works of an Iranian reformist thinker, Abdolkarim Soroush (born 1945). According to Mir-Hosseini's opinion, Soroush's "understanding of Islam has opened the space for radically rethinking gender relations"[27], thus creating a possibility for deeply religious women to reconcile their faith and their feminism.

In this context, the Egyptian scholar presented centrist views and performed an in-between role: he was strongly supportive towards women's fight for their social and political rights in the Arab world (which was explicated strongly in *Dawā'ir al-ḫawf*), but made some reservations about the academic forms of feminism, to its lack of really unique and innovative ideas, or to more precisely – its ways of deconstructing some traditional approaches to the Qur'ānic verses related to polygamy, divorce, and male superiority.

> The way these issues are solved in feminist hermeneutics is neither new nor original. Like the reformist approach to the Qur'ān, feminist hermeneutics faces the problem that as long as the Qur'ān is dealt with only as a text – implying a concept of author (i.e. God as divine author) – one is forced to find a focal point of gravity to which all variations should be linked. This automatically implies that the Qur'ān is at the mercy of the ideology of its interpreter. For a communist, the Qur'ān would thus reveal communism, for a fundamentalist it would be a highly fundamentalist text, for a feminist it would be a feminist text, and so on.[28]

Thus, Abū Zayd expressed different, sometimes critical, opinions regarding the intellectual and practical ramifications related to the activities of the different strands of so-called Islamic feminism. Despite of this criticism, he treated changes in the understanding of the social and legal position of woman in Islam as an inevitable element of the process of renewal in Islam,

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[24] Ibidem, p. 86.

[25] Ibidem, pp. 86–87.

[26] Ibidem, p. 86.

[27] Ibidem, p. 72.

[28] Ibidem, p. 95.

of democratic and humanistic hermeneutics, and of the discourse-based approach to the Qur'ān and *sunnah*. Among liberal and feminist milieus, he also gained a reputation of a courageous academic and a symbol of integrity in the context of growing violence[29] against Egyptian intellectuals seen by the Islamists as leftist, secular, or liberal in the early 1990s. All these aspects make Abū Zayd's legacy a subject of current interest and a constant inspiration encompassing many levels: hermeneutical theories, new Islamology in the West and the Arab world, politics in many senses, as well as gender-related issues and research.

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[29] Leila Ahmed, the leading Egyptian-American feminist scholar, recalls the so-called "Abū Zayd's Case" (1992–1995) in her monograph *A Quiet Revolution. The Veil's Resurgence, From the Middle East to America* (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2011, pp. 143–144). The case of Abū Zayd (Arabic: *qaḍīyat Abū Zayd/Abī Zayd*) started when the scholar applied for promotion to the post of full professor of Cairo University. It resulted in the Islamist campaign against Abū Zayd, then a judicial case and annulment of Abū Zayd's marriage with Ibtihāl Yūnis on the grounds of his alleged apostasy. Finally, the pair left Egypt in July 1995, beginning a period of exile. Ironically, some weeks earlier Abū Zayd had been promoted to the post of full professor of the University of Cairo after three years of constant defamation of his works by Islamist-oriented academics.

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