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*Some Remarks about the Religion
of Persians in Egypt*

Around thirty years ago, Pierre Grelot wrote: *Les Perses et autres Iraniens qui séjournent en Égypte pratiquent naturellement le culte de leurs dieux nationaux*.¹ Although such a statement may seem reasonable at first glance, the sources are ambiguous on this matter. Research on Iranian religion² in the time of the Achaemenids frequently met with difficulties in the interpretation of sources, which led some scholars to propose radically different conclusions.³ There are reasons to believe that the religious environment of ancient Western Iran was quite diversified. It was a territory where the influences of different religions were merging together: in Fars the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, for instance, provide evidence of cults of not just Iranian gods, but of Elamite ones as well.⁴ It is also likely that Iranian religion of the time was a mixture of different Mazdaean concepts and Old Ira-

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¹ P. GRELOT, Documents araméens d'Égypte, *LPO* 5, Paris 1972 [= Documents araméens], p. 332. This opinion is repeated in almost the same words by E. LIPÍŃSKI, Un culte de Xʿan et de Haθya à Éléphantine au V^e siècle av. n.è., *FoOr* 22, 1981–1984 [= *FoOr* 22], p. 5.

² The term 'Iranian religion' is employed here as a general term for all religious phenomena of the time of the Achaemenid Iran and before. Issues connected with the religions of Achaemenid Persia are very debatable. Therefore, naming them 'Iranian religion' should not cause controversies. I avoided the use of 'Mazdaism', denoting the cult of Ahuramazdā, unless I specifically wanted to refer to it.

³ For various different scholarly debates on Achaemenid religion see an introduction to the recent article by B. LINCOLN, À la recherche du paradis perdu, *HistRel* 43/2, 2003, pp. 139–141.

⁴ In Persis Elamites remained a significant part of the society. For the religious context in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, see: M. BOYCE, A history of Zoroastrianism II: Under the Achaemenians, *HdO* 1.8.2, Leiden 1982 [= *HdO* 1.8.2], pp. 132–149; M.A. DANDAMAEV, La politique religieuse des Achéménides [= Politique religieuse], in: *Monumentum H.S. Nyberg. Acta iranica 4: Deuxième série, Hommages et opera minora*, Téhéran – Liège 1975, pp. 196–197; M.A. DANDAMAEV, V.G. LUKONIN, The culture and social institutions of ancient Iran, Cambridge 1989 [= Culture and social institutions], pp. 356–357; M. HANDLEY-SCHACHLER, The *LAN* ritual in the Persepolis Fortification Texts, in: M. BROSIUS, A. KUHR (eds.), *Achaemenid History XI: Studies in Persian history. Essays in memory of David M. Lewis*, Leiden 1998, pp. 195–204. More recently: W.F.M. HENKELMAN, An Elamite memorial: the šumar of Cambyses and Hystaspes, in: W.F.M. HENKELMAN, A. KUHR (eds.), *Achaemenid History XIII: A Persian perspective. Essays in memory of Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg*, Leiden 2003, pp. 101–172; Id., Animal sacrifice and 'external' exchange in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets, in: H.D. BAKER, M. JURSA (eds.), *Approaching the Babylonian Economy. Proceedings of the START Project Symposium Held in Vienna, 1–3 July 2004, Alter Orient und Altes Testament XXX, Studies in the Economic History of First Millennium Babylonia*, Vol. 2, Münster 2005, pp. 137–165; S. RAZMJOU, The *LAN* ceremony and other ritual ceremonies in the Achaemenid period: The Persepolis fortification tablets, *Iran* 42, 2004, pp. 103–117; W.F.M. HENKELMAN, The other gods who are: Studies in Elamite-Iranian acculturation based on the Persepolis fortification texts, Ph.D. thesis, Leiden University 2006, *passim*. However, for Persepolis Fortification seal impressions which also bear iconography connected with different religious trends, see: M.B. GARRISON, Achaemenid iconography as evidenced by glyptic art: subject matter, social function, audience and diffusion [= Achaemenid iconography], in: C. UEHLINGER (ed.), *Images as media. Sources for the cultural history of the Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean (1st millennium BCE)*, *OBO* 175, Göttingen 2000, pp. 126–151; M.B. GARRISON, M.C. ROOT, C.E. JONES, *Seals on the Persepolis fortification tablets, Vol. I: Images of heroic encounter, Part 1: Text*, Chicago 2001 [= Seals I].

nian cults and customs.⁵ Moreover, it is possible that the official religion of the ruling dynasty was considerably different from the religious beliefs of Iranians in various parts of the empire. Persians who arrived in Egypt from the sixth century onwards clearly came from a multicultural society in which knowledge about foreign gods was not atypical. They brought with them a religion that was probably still decentralized and undogmatic, and that would more than likely accommodate new deities and forms of worship. Thus, Grelot's claim that Persians arriving in Egypt would have faithfully followed an inherited set of religious traditions must be qualified.

Let us begin with a discussion of the Persian kings' generally receptive approach towards foreign gods. This approach is often described as 'tolerance', although it was not tolerance in our modern sense. Many scholars agree that the Achaemenids had some sort of universal policy towards foreign cults,⁶ dictated, no doubt, by various political, religious, and administrative demands. In religious terms, this probably meant that Persian kings acknowledged the cult of the leading gods of a given land. After entering a new territory, a conquering ruler would proclaim the sanction of his power from the god of the land, whoever he was: Marduk in Babylonia, Yahweh in Judah or Re in Egypt.⁷ Muhammad A. Dandamaev assumes that most religions of the time were characterized by *the complete absence of the concept of false faith or of any forms of heresy, and the total absence of racial hatred or any feeling of the superiority of one people over another*.⁸ Therefore, individuals, although faithful to their own gods, simultaneously worshipped gods of the land in which they arrived.⁹ Of course, Dandamaev's opinion is somewhat too idealistic: intolerance and feelings of superiority were always present, especially between conquerors and conquered. However, in the ancient Near East, the existence of many different gods and divine entities was accepted commonly and naturally.

⁵ For example, it is uncertain whether Cyrus and Cambyses were followers of any Iranian cult, especially in the light of recent opinions about strong Elamite influence upon them: D.T. POTTS, Cyrus the Great and the Kingdom of Anshan, in: V. SARKHOSH CURTIS, S. STEWART (eds.), *Birth of the Persian Empire*, Vol. I, London 2005, pp. 7–28; M.W. WATERS, Cyrus and Achaemenids, *Iran* 42, 2004, pp. 95, 99. There is clear evidence for the worship of Iranian cults among the Persian royal family from Darius onwards. There is no place here to review the whole discussion about Achaemenid religion. However, the reader might consult with B. LINCOLN, *Religion, empire, and torture. The case of Achaemenian Persia, with a postscript on Abu Ghraib*, Chicago 2007, and the bibliography therein, which gives a good impression of recent trends in these studies.

⁶ BOYCE, *HdO* I.8.2, p. 65; DANDAMAEV, *Politique religieuse*, pp. 198–199; DANDAMAEV, LUKONIN, *Culture and social institutions*, pp. 348, 356–359; J. DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN, *La religion de l'Iran ancien*, «Mana» Introduction à l'histoire des religions 1, *Les anciennes religions orientales III*, Paris 1962 [= *Religion de l'Iran ancien*], p. 153; T. HOLM-RASMUSSEN, *Collaboration in Early Achaemenid Egypt: A New Approach* [= *Collaboration*], in: *Studies in Ancient History and Numismatics presented to Rudi Thomsen*, Aarhus 1988, pp. 29–33; P. BEDFORD, *Early Achaemenid monarchs and indigenous cults: toward the definition of imperial policy*, in: M. DILLON (ed.), *Religion in the ancient world: new themes and approaches*, Amsterdam 1996, pp. 17–39.

⁷ See particularly: BOYCE, *HdO* I.8.2, p. 65; DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN, *Religion de l'Iran ancien*, p. 153; G. GNOLI, *Politique religieuse et conception de la royauté sous les Achéménides*, in: *Commémoration Cyrus: actes du Congrès de Shiraz 1971 et autres études rédigées à l'occasion du 2500^e anniversaire de la fondation de l'Empire perse*, *Acta Iranica* 2, *Hommage universel* 2, Leiden 1974, p. 131.

⁸ DANDAMAEV, LUKONIN, *Culture and social institutions*, p. 359.

⁹ DANDAMAEV, *Politique religieuse*, p. 198. This theory was repeated in DANDAMAEV, LUKONIN, *Culture and social institutions*, p. 359.

The same royal policy, which appears to have been widespread throughout the empire, was apparently adopted by the Persian rulers in Egypt. The exception to this practice seems to be provided by the possible destruction of Egyptian temples, which supposedly took place during Cambyses' invasion. Although some of the temples may have been damaged during the conquest, this was due to the general circumstances of the invasion. Generally, scholars agree that there is some truth in classical authors' writings about the destruction of Egyptian temples. However, they do not hold Cambyses responsible for this war damage.¹⁰ On the other hand, some later sources mention the return of the divine statues (which were taken by Achaemenid kings) to temples by Ptolemies. But this may be only an effect of Ptolemaic propaganda.¹¹ Regardless of the disturbances caused by war, the normal royal approach to religion in Egypt probably did not differ from procedures in other satrapies.

By introducing this policy, Cambyses, the first Persian conqueror of the country, wanted to present himself as a pharaoh and a legitimate heir of the Saite kings.¹² On inscriptions he is presented with all the traditional titles and formulae, including 'son of Re'.¹³ Egyptian sources clearly show that Cambyses followed previous pharaohs in participating in temple rituals and other religious duties. This policy was possible thanks to the advice of Udjahorresnet, an admiral, a physician, and a prominent official of the Saite kings who introduced Cambyses, and then Darius, to Egyptian tradition and religious

¹⁰ See: E. BRESCIANI, The Persian occupation of Egypt [= Persian occupation], in: I. GERSHEVITCH (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 2: The Median and Achaemenian Periods, Cambridge 1985, p. 505; E. YAMAUCHI, Cambyses in Egypt, in: J.E. COLESON, V.H. MATTHEWS (eds.), *'Go to the Land I Will Show You': Studies in Honor of Dwight W. Young*, Winona Lake 1996, pp. 387–388; R.S. BIANCHI, s. v. Perser in Ägypten, *LÄ* IV, 943. The latter author especially believes in these ancient sources. However, a different opinion was recently expressed by J.M. SERRANO DELGADO, Cambyses in Sais: Political and Religious Context in Achaemenid Egypt, *CdE* 79, 2004 [= *CdE* 79], pp. 39–41. Delgado questions the evidence of the damage to the temples, indicating that archaeological evidence does not confirm such events. He also undermines the reliability of the statement about the destruction of the temples contained in the petition for reconstruction of Yahu (JHW) temple at Elephantine, found in one of the Aramaic letters. On the other hand, according to the majority of scholars, this papyrus confirms the destruction of the temples. See: B. PORTEN, A. YARDENI, *Textbook of Aramaic documents from ancient Egypt*, Vol. 1: Letters, Texts and studies for students, Winona Lake 1986 [= TAD 1], pp. 68–71 (A 4.7), cf. A.E. COWLEY, *Aramaic papyri of the fifth century B.C.*, Osnabrück 1967 [= Aramaic papyri], pp. 112–113 (No. 30); B. PORTEN, *The Elephantine papyri in English: three millennia of cross-cultural continuity and change*, *Idocumenta et monumenta orientis antiqui. Studies in Near Eastern archaeology and civilization* XXII, Leiden 1996 [= Elephantine papyri], pp. 141–142 (B19). Generally, quotations of Aramaic texts are based on Porten and Yardeni's edition. Because older editions are also in use, they are included in the footnotes.

¹¹ One of such sources is e.g. *Stela of the Satrap*, see: P. BRIANT, *From Cyrus to Alexander: a history of the Persian Empire*, Winona Lake 2002 [= *From Cyrus to Alexander*], pp. 1017–1018; R.B. GOZZOLI, The writing of history in ancient Egypt during the first millennium B.C. (ca. 1070–180 B.C.): trends and perspectives, *Egyptology* 5, London 2006 [= *Writing of history*], pp. 126–136. See also: D. DEVAUCHELLE, Le sentiment anti-perses chez les anciens Égyptiens, *Transeuphratène* 9, 1995, pp. 81–90.

¹² On Cambyses as a pharaoh, see e.g.: K.M.T. ATKINSON, The Legitimacy of Cambyses and Darius as Kings of Egypt, *JAOS* 76/3, 1956, pp. 167–177; BRESCIANI, *Persian occupation*, pp. 502–507; BRIANT, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, pp. 55–59, 886–887; I. HOFMANN, *Kambyses in Ägypten*, *SAK* 9, 1981, pp. 179–199; K. MYŚLIWIEC, *The Twilight of Ancient Egypt: First Millennium B.C.E.*, Ithaca 2000, pp. 135–136.

¹³ See for example, a recent study on the subject, by SERRANO DELGADO, *CdE* 79, pp. 36–38. There are also references to titles and names of Persian pharaohs.

cults.¹⁴ Cambyses took care of the temple of Neith at Saïs, which was Udjahorresnet's hometown, but the king also participated in funerary rituals of the sacred Apis bull and left several inscriptions testifying to his devotion to Egyptian deities.¹⁵ Darius I, who had Udjahorresnet as his advisor as well, followed a similar policy. This king commissioned, for example, the building of a large temple of Amon-Re at the El-Khārga Oasis and the restoration of the sanctuary of Neith at Saïs. Darius is mentioned in several documents and inscriptions, with proper pharaonic titles, as a follower of different Egyptian deities. In general, sources depict him as a pharaoh of good reputation.¹⁶ And although the evidence about his successor Xerxes is scant, we can assume that he, too, continued the policy of presenting himself as a legitimate Egyptian pharaoh.¹⁷

As suggested above, Cambyses' and Darius' success in appropriating Egypt's pantheon for their own political needs would have been impossible without a comprehensive knowledge of ancient Egyptian religion and the customs connected with it. Receptive though they were to different forms of worship, the Persians were obviously foreigners in Egypt, and therefore were subject to limitations in acquiring such sacred lore. In spite of this, they managed to transform themselves into Egyptian pharaohs, with all the religious consequences, and without bigger dissonances. It is worth stressing that according to Udjahor-

¹⁴ See e.g.: A.B. LLOYD, The inscription of Udjahorresnet. A collaborator's testament, *JEA* 68, 1982 [= *JEA* 68] pp. 167–173; P.-M. CHEVEREAU, Prosopographie des cadres militaires égyptiens de la Basse Époque: carrières militaires et carrières sacerdotales en Égypte du XI^e au II^e siècle avant J.C., Antony 1985 [= Prosopographie des cadres militaires], pp. 330–332.

¹⁵ G. POSENER, La première domination perse en Egypte: recueil d'inscriptions hiéroglyphiques, *BdE* 11, Le Caire 1936 [= Première domination perse], pp. 30–36 (Nos. 3–4); LLOYD, *JEA* 68, pp. 171–173; BRESCIANI, Persian occupation, pp. 504–507; BRIANT, From Cyrus to Alexander, pp. 55–57; G. VITTMANN, Ägypten und die Fremden im ersten vorchristlichen Jahrtausend, *Kulturgeschichte der antiken Welt* 97, Mainz 2003 [= Ägypten und die Fremden], pp. 122–130; GOZZOLI, Writing of history, pp. 111–116.

¹⁶ POSENER, Première domination perse, pp. 36–41 (No. 5), 153–155 (Nos. 101–103); J. YOYOTTE, Les Inscriptions Hiéroglyphiques Darius et l'Égypte, *JournAs* 260, 1972, pp. 253–266; BIANCHI, *L'A* VI, 943; E. BRESCIANI, Egypt, Persian satrapy [= Persian satrapy], in: W.D. DAVIES, L. FINKELSTEIN (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism* I, Cambridge – New York 1984, pp. 360–361; EAD., Persian occupation, pp. 507–509; J.D. RAY, Egypt 525–404 B.C. [= Egypt], in: J. BOARDMAN *et al.* (eds.), *CAH* IV²: Persia, Greece and the Western Mediterranean c. 525 to 479 B.C., Cambridge 1988, pp. 262–264; HOLM-RASMUSSEN, Collaboration, pp. 34–35; BRIANT, From Cyrus to Alexander, pp. 472–481; VITTMANN, Ägypten und die Fremden, pp. 130–132; SERRANO DELGADO, *CdE* 79, pp. 43–45; GOZZOLI, Writing of history, pp. 111–125; A.B. LLOYD, Darius I in Egypt: Suez and Hibis, in: C. TUPLIN (ed.), *Persian Responses: Political and Cultural Interaction with(in) the Achaemenid Empire*, Swansea 2007, pp. 99–115.

¹⁷ This can be confirmed, for example, by the inscriptions from Wadi Hammamat, POSENER, Première domination perse, pp. 121–124 (Nos. 27–30). For a discussion on this matter, see: BRIANT, From Cyrus to Alexander, pp. 545–547, 963–965. The activity of Artaxerxes I is also confirmed by the inscriptions from Wadi Hammamat, POSENER, Première domination perse, pp. 125–128 (Nos. 31–33). There is also a very scant piece of information about Darius II's doings in Egypt, e.g. his cartouche in El-Khārga, see: BRIANT, From Cyrus to Alexander, pp. 602–603, 981–982. For a general view of Egyptian culture, administration, and institutions under the Persian rule, see e.g.: M.F. GYLES, Pharaonic policies and administration, 663 to 323 B.C., *The James Sprunt studies in history and political science* 41, Chapel Hill 1959, pp. 67–71; J.H. JOHNSON, The Persians and the Continuity of Egyptian Culture, in: H. SANCISI-WEERDENBURG, A. KUHRIT, M.C. ROOT (eds.), *Achaemenid history VIII: Continuity and change. Proceedings of the last Achaemenid History Workshop, April 6–8, 1990*, Ann Arbor, Michigan, Leiden 1994, pp. 149–159.

resnet's claims (based on an inscription at his naophoros), he considered himself personally responsible for creating Cambyses' Egyptian royal titles and instructing the king in the cult of Neith, for example.¹⁸ It is likely that each Persian king had Egyptian advisors who supplemented their knowledge about Egypt. Egyptians were employed in administrative offices, including satrap's chancery.¹⁹ Therefore, Persian officials in every position had an opportunity to consult people who had been educated in Egyptian religious matters. It is safe to assume that Persians in Egypt could have had fairly thorough knowledge about the worship of Egyptian gods.

While the evidence of the Persian kings' acknowledgement of the Egyptian religion is plentiful, the beliefs of ordinary, rank-and-file Persians in Egypt are harder to document. Only a few sources confirm the worship of Iranian religion among Persians in this country. One of the Elephantine papyri provides a confirmation of the presence of Iranian priests in Egypt.²⁰ The papyrus documents of a donation made by Ananiah, a Jew from Elephantine, to his wife Tamut, on 30th October 434 B.C., contain the names of two Magi, Mithrasarah (*Mtrsrh mgšy'*)²¹ and Tāta (*Tt mgšy'*), who witnessed the event.

Two Greek papyri from the third century B.C. provide further evidence of the existence of Iranian cults in Egypt. Both mention Mithraea (*Μιθραίων*)²² located in Egypt. This evidence comes from a period later than the Persian domination, although the cult of Mithra could have been introduced into Egyptian territory during the Achaemenian period.²³

¹⁸ Text of this inscription: POSENER, *Première domination perse*, pp. 1–26 (No. 1). See also: LLOYD, *JEA* 68, pp. 169–173; BRESCIANI, *Persian occupation*, p. 503.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 364–366; EAD., *Persian occupation*, pp. 512–516; HOLM-RASMUSSEN, *Collaboration*, pp. 34–37; RAY, *Egypt*, p. 272.

²⁰ B. PORTEN, A. YARDENI, *Textbook of Aramaic documents from ancient Egypt*, Vol. 2: *Contracts, Texts and studies for students*, Winona Lake 1989 [= TAD 2], pp. 68–71 (B 3.5), cf. E.G.H. KRAELING, *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic papyri, Publications of the Department of Egyptian Art*, New Haven 1953 [= Brooklyn papyri], pp. 167–171 (Papyrus 4); GRELOT, *Documents araméens*, pp. 221–224 (No. 45); PORTEN, *Elephantine papyri*, p. 219 (B 38). According to Briant, this document is the only evidence for the Persian religion in Egypt, see: BRIANT, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, p. 949.

²¹ He could be identical with Mithrasarah son of Mithrasarah, who witnessed another document from 446 B.C., see: PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 2, p. 37 (B 2.7), cf. COWLEY, *Aramaic papyri*, p. 38 (No. 13); PORTEN, *Elephantine papyri*, p. 187 (B 29). Such an opinion was expressed also by LIPIŃSKI, *FoIOr* 22, p. 8. This could be the evidence for a 12-year presence of this magus in Egypt.

²² W.W. MÜLLER, *Papyrusurkunden aus ptolemäischer Zeit, Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Staatlichen Museen Berlin. Griechische Urkunden*, Vol. 10, Berlin 1936 (repr. 1970); G.J. SMYLY, *Greek Papyri from Gurob, Royal Irish Academy. Cunningham memoirs*, Vol. 12, Dublin 1921, 22.10.

²³ Such an opinion was expressed already by Boyce and Grenet, cf. M. BOYCE, F. GRENET (eds.), *A History of Zoroastrianism III: Zoroastrianism under Macedonian and Roman rule*, *HdO* I.8,3, Leiden 1991 [= *HdO* I.8,3], p. 359. There was another hypothesis by Michaélidis, who suggested that in Memphis, near today's village of Mitrahine (or Mit-Rahineh), the sanctuary of Mithra already existed in the fifth century B.C., see: G. MICHAÉLIDIS, *Quelques objets inédits d'époque Perse*, *ASAE* XLIII, 1943 [= *ASAE* XLIII], pp. 99–100. However, the only basis for this statement was a small figurine of a bull, described later in the present paper, which was more credibly attributed to the cult of Apis by J. YOYOTTE, *La provenance du cylindre de Darius* [BM 89.132], *RAAO* XLVI, 1952 [= *RAAO* XLVI], p. 167, n. 5. Therefore, this object cannot be evidence for the existence of Mithraeum in Memphis during the Persian period. Michaélidis' theory was reinforced by Dandamaev, who gave another example of an object probably connected with Mithra's cult in Egypt, i.e. the so-called *Memphis stela* (*vide infra*, n. 84), which was probably also found in Mitrahine, see: DANDAMAEV, LUKONIN, *Culture and social*

It is also likely that another important Persian deity, the goddess Anāhitā, was worshipped in Egypt. A sculpture which probably depicts this goddess was found in Egypt and probably comes from the Memphis region, where it was carved around the second half of the fourth century B.C. The object, a female figure carved against a background in high relief, is quite small (c. 15 cm high). The figure has a Persian dress. However, the composition is perhaps that of an Egyptian *cippus* and some features suggest an Egyptian artistic influence.²⁴ In fact, this depiction cannot be compared with any other object representing Anāhitā from the Achaemenid period, because no such depictions are known. One possible example, the cylinder seal from Gorgippa showing a female standing on a lion is, however, significantly different from the present example.²⁵ Therefore it cannot be certain, whether the object in question really presents the goddess Anāhitā.

Further documentation of Persian religion can be provided by seals used by Iranians in Egypt. Several seals have been found which appear to be similar to those in Iran. Depictions on seals frequently had a religious significance. Their iconography has largely Assyrian and Babylonian prototypes.²⁶ The seal of Bagamarazdiya (inscribed in Aramaic *bgmrzdy*) is an example of an unexcavated object presumably found in Upper Egypt, and comes from the collection of Noël Aimé-Giron.²⁷ It depicts, among other things, a hero wearing an Assyrian garment and a tiara on his head. On the right side of the hero, there

institutions, pp. 314–315. Dandamaev wrote that both objects, the bull figurine and the stela, originated from the same sanctuary of Mithra in Memphis. It is not clear what led Dandamaev to suggest this origin, since the place of origin of both objects remains uncertain. Dandamaev mentioned only one reference to *Memphis stela*: H. VON GALL, Die Kopfbedeckung des persischen Ornaments bei den Achämeniden, *AMI* 7, 1974, p. 160. However, von Gall did not make a connection between this stela and Mithra's cult. The origin of this object (Mithraeum, the place of ancient Memphis) was suggested for the first time by Freiherr F.W. VON BISSING, Totenstele eines persischen Großen aus Memphis, *ZDMG* 84/9, 1930 [= *ZDMG* 84], p. 226. The authenticity of this stela has recently been convincingly questioned by O.W. MUSCARELLA, Von Bissing's *Memphis Stela*: a product of cultural transfer? [= *Memphis Stela*], in: T.F. POTTS, M. ROAF, D. STEIN (eds.), *Culture through Objects: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Honour of P.R.S. Moorey*, Oxford 2003, pp. 109–121. Therefore, probably there is no object which can confirm the existence of Mithraeum in ancient Memphis during the Persian period. There was also another suggestion about the cult of Mithra in Egypt. The scene of the sacrifice of a bull from the tomb of Petosiris (around fourth century B.C.) was interpreted as a Mithraic ritual of tauroctony, see: P. MONTET, Note sur le tombeau de Petosiris pour servir à l'histoire des Perses en Égypte, *RevArch* 23, 1926, pp. 170–176. This hypothesis was also quoted by DANDAMAEV, LUKONIN, Culture and social institutions, p. 315. However, this interpretation was rejected by C. PICARD, Les influences étrangères au tombeau de Petosiris: Grèce ou Perse?, *BIFAO* 30, 1931, pp. 209–215. Briant is completely skeptical about the cult of Mithra in Egypt, see BRIANT, From Cyrus to Alexander, p. 999. He questions not only the above mentioned theories, but also the assumptions drawn by Boyce and Grenet.

²⁴ For a detailed description, see: J.D. COONEY, Persian Influence in Late Egyptian Art, *JARCE* 4, 1965, pp. 44–46, Pl. XXVI. This scholar suggested that this sculpture is the figure of goddess Anāhitā. See also: VITTMANN, Ägypten und die Fremden, pp. 152–153.

²⁵ B. JACOBS, Anahita, *Iconography of Deities and Demons: Electronic Pre-Publication* (2006), <http://www.religionswissenschaft.unizh.ch/idd>. For the Gorgippa seal, see: J. BOARDMAN, Greek gems and finger rings: early Bronze Age to late Classical, new expanded ed., London 2001, No. 878.

²⁶ *Vide supra*, n. 3.

²⁷ N. AIMÉ-GIRON, Adversaria semitica, *BIFAO* 38, 1939, pp. 45–46 (No. 117), Pl. III; B. PORTEN, A. YARDENI, Textbook of Aramaic documents from ancient Egypt, Vol. 4: Ostraca & Assorted Inscriptions, Texts and studies for students, Winona Lake 1999 [= TAD 4], p. 230 (D14.4).

is a solar disc. This object does not provide detailed evidence of the beliefs of its owner,²⁸ but it is certainly a product of Iranian (or Mesopotamian) tradition.

An interesting corpus of clay objects with seal impressions from Achaemenid times was found by W.M.F. Petrie in the palace of Apries at Memphis in Egypt.²⁹ Some of these seal impressions depict a typical image of hero between two animals or creatures ('heroic control,' according to M.B. Garrison and M.C. Root)³⁰ [Nos. 27, 29–31], which is quite common among Persian seals. There is one particular impression, which presents a seated figure with some royal attributes, who looks at two other figures stretching their hands over an animal and with a kind of winged symbol above the scene [No. 39]. It is certainly a depiction of some kind of religious ritual involving an offering of the animal. The human figures on this seal have beards, and are therefore not Egyptians, but probably inhabitants of Western Asia. The winged symbol, which is significantly different from the Egyptian winged disc, is different from the regular Persian winged symbols as well. At least one of the royal regalia on the seal could be an Egyptian one (flail or scepter *nh3h3*). A bow, which accompanies the king, could suggest that this is a Persian ruler. The seal in question was recognized as Greek by Petrie. However, Garrison and Root most likely are right in attributing this to Persians.³¹ Because of the ambiguity of the symbols, the scene cannot be certainly identified either as a Persian or an Egyptian ritual (the latter seems to be less probable).

Another seal from Petrie's corpus depicts a winged hero (this fragment is significantly damaged, so the image is not clear) and a bearded human figure with a crown, a bird-like body and legs, a scorpion's tail, and the head of a bull protruding from the bird-like body. This figure is holding a stretched bow [No. 46]. These apparently Iranian³² motifs are accompanied by a kind of Egyptian floral border. The possible religious meaning of this seal remains unclear, but it is certainly connected with Persian ideas. However, it is noticeable that these objects include certain Egyptian motifs. It would seem that the seals from Petrie's finding were made in Egypt, in a manner similar to the designs common in the heart of the Empire. These Egyptian elements are the effect of the influence of Egyptian art, but it is difficult to attribute any religious significance to them.

²⁸ A heroic motif is one of the oldest figural representations in western Asiatic imagery. It certainly bore some religious meaning, and in Achaemenian times was probably connected with the person of the king. However, there are plenty of interpretations and hypotheses about this symbol. Therefore it is impossible to link it with an exact form of a cult. For the meaning of the hero motif on Achaemenian seals, see especially: GARRISON, ROOT, JONES, *Seals I*, pp. 53–60.

²⁹ W.M.F. PETRIE, G.A. WAINWRIGHT, E.J.H. MACKAY, *Meydum and Memphis, III*, London 1910 [= *Meydum and Memphis, III*], pp. 41–43, Pls. XXXV–XXXVII. See also: GARRISON, ROOT, JONES, *Seals I*, pp. 35–36; W.F.M. HENKELMAN, C.E. JONES, M.W. STOLPER, *Clay Tags with Achaemenid Seal Impressions in the Dutch Institute of the Near East (NINO) and Elsewhere*, *Arta* 2004.001 [= *Arta* 2004.001], p. 44.

³⁰ See the typology of images in GARRISON, ROOT, JONES, *Seals I*, pp. 60–61.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 36; PETRIE, WAINWRIGHT, MACKAY, *Meydum and Memphis, III*, p. 42.

³² For the analogous depictions, see: GARRISON, *Achaemenid iconography*, pp. 138–139; P.H. MERRILLEES, *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic Seals in the British Museum. Cylinder Seals VI: Pre-Achaemenid and Achaemenid Periods*, London 2005 [= *Cylinder Seals VI*], p. 67.

Papyri, another valuable addition to our discussion, contain Iranian proper names. An interesting question arises with respect to another papyrus from the late fifth century B.C., which is a letter of complaint against the Egyptians addressed to the heads of the Elephantine Jewish community.³³ The letter describes the governor of the province of Thebes as *Mzdyzn*, i.e. Mazdayazna, which can mean ‘Mazdaean’ or ‘Mazda believer’, usually an epithet given to Zoroastrians in *Avesta* and in Sassanian times; but in this context, it is a proper name.³⁴ Generally, a name is not likely to indicate a person’s religious beliefs. In the Achaemenian case, this issue is discussed in detail by Rüdiger Schmitt,³⁵ who concludes that unless the first use of a particular name can be identified, the name cannot be used as evidence for the religion of its holder.

The case of Iranian names in Egypt is especially difficult – in most cases only the name can indicate whether someone can claim an Iranian ethnicity.³⁶ And the majority of Iranian names have a meaning connected with religion. In Egyptian Aramaic papyri there are c. 135 Iranian names, like Artabanu (*Rtbnw*, ‘Having the Luster of Truth’), Artavarziya (*Rtwrzy*, ‘Performing Truth’), Bagadana (*Bgdn*, ‘Gift of Baga’), Bagazušta (*Bgzwšt*, ‘Beloved of Baga’), Haumayasa (*Hwmys*, ‘Desirous of Haoma?’), Miθravahišta (*Mtrwhšt*, ‘Having Mithra as the Best’), etc.³⁷ Slightly more than half of these names are theophoric,

³³ PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 1, p. 56 (A4.2), cf. COWLEY, Aramaic papyri, pp. 132–135 (No. 37); GRELOT, Documents araméens, pp. 387–391 (No. 97).

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 399, n. 333. This name appears on the seal of Aryāramna in the phrase *ʾryrnm [...] br mzdyšn* ‘Aryāramna [...] the son of Mazdayašna’, which confirms that it is a proper name, see: M.B. GARRISON, P. DION, The Seal of Ariyāramna in the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, *JNES* 58/1, 1999, pp. 4, 5, 17. For other occurrences, see: in Persepolis Treasury Tablets (PTT 4:8): G.G. CAMERON, Persepolis Treasury Tablets, *OIP* 65, Chicago 1948, p. 88; in various tablets of Persepolis Fortification Archive: R.T. HALLOCK, Persepolis Fortification Tablets, *OIP* 92, Chicago 1969, p. 727. It can be also a label of Persian ethnicity, according to B. PORTEN, Archives from Elephantine: the life of an ancient Jewish military colony, Berkeley 1968, p. 55. However, such a label would equate a ‘Mazdaean’ with a ‘Persian’, which would mean that every Persian is a ‘Mazda believer’, at least for Elephantine Jews during Persian period. This is quite unlikely. In a newer article, Porten does not seem to share this opinion any more. See: ID., Persian Names in Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt [= Persian Names], in: S. SHAKED, A. NETZER (eds.), *Irano-Judaica V: studies relating to Jewish contacts with Persian culture throughout the ages*, Jerusalem 2003, p. 175. On the stela of Arebsun from the third century B.C. there is a curious form of *dymzdyms/dymzdymsš* ‘Daenamazdayasniš (?)’, see: H. DONNER, W. RÖLLIG, Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften, Vol. 1. 5 (erweiterte und überarbeitete Auflage), Wiesbaden 2002, p. 64, No. 264; A. LEMAIRE, VII. Cappadoce: 2. Arebsun II: stèle b (n° 7753), in: *Textes araméens d’Anatolie d’époque perse*, www.achemenet.com (accessed Feb 1, 2007).

³⁵ R. SCHMITT, Name and Religion. Anthroponomastisches zur Frage der religiösen Verhältnisse des Achaimenidenreiches, in: J. KELLENS (ed.), *La religion iranienne à l’époque achéménide. Actes du Colloque de Liège 11 décembre 1987, Iranica Antiqua Supplément V*, Gent 1991, pp. 111–128.

³⁶ In some cases, in the demotic documents, Persians are additionally identified by using the foreigner determinative, see: J.H. JOHNSON, Ethnic considerations in Persian period Egypt [= Ethnic considerations], in: E. TEETER, J.A. LARSON (eds.), *Gold of Praise: Studies on Ancient Egypt in Honor of Edward F. Wente, SAOC* 58, Chicago 1999, p. 215, n. 30.

³⁷ See: PORTEN, Persian Names, pp. 169, 181–186. An index of proper names and their description is provided also by GRELOT, Documents araméens, pp. 455–508. For Iranian names in Egypt, see also: J. TAVERNIER, Zu einigen iranischen Namen aus Ägypten, *GöttMisz* 186, 2002, pp. 107–111; P. HUUSE, Die Perser in Ägypten. Ein onomastischer Beitrag zu ihrer Erforschung, in: H. SANCISI-WEERDENBURG, A. KUERT (eds.), *Achaemenid History VI: Asia Minor and Egypt: Old cultures in a new empire*, Leiden 1991 [= *Achaemenid History VI*],

while a number of the remaining ones can also be connected with religion or religious ideas (like Bagaina – *Bgyn*, ‘Baga-like/Divine’, Ramnadaina – *Rmndyn*, ‘Satisfying the Soul’).³⁸ Unfortunately, these papyri, which are mostly contracts and letters, are silent about the religious beliefs of these people. Moreover, we cannot exclude the possibility that sometimes Iranians did not bear Iranian names in Egypt. Indeed, there is some evidence that they could adopt Egyptian names.³⁹ The Aramaic papyri also provide evidence for people with a Persian patronymic and an Egyptian forename: Hori, son of Bagabaga (*Bgbg*’), Hori, son of Vana (*Wnh*), Peteese, son of Misdaya or Mait (*Myt*), and Pakhe, son of Bagadata (*Bgdt*).⁴⁰ Iranians could also have an Aramaic name (e.g. Naburai, son of Vištana)⁴¹ or Akkadian name (e.g. Mannuki, son of Bagaina).⁴² Not only did Iranians bear Persian forenames,⁴³ but we also have examples of people of different ethnicities with such name combinations, like Babylonians (e.g. Bagadata, son of Nabukudurri),⁴⁴ Arameans, Egyptians, and Jews. The above examples clearly show that names are not always a reliable indication of ethnicity, especially in such an ethnically diversified country as Egypt in the Persian period. If anything, they only justify the very weak conclusion that it is likely for the majority of Iranians in Egypt to come from an Iranian culture background, with Iranian religious traditions. However, this evidence remains ambiguous regarding the question of whether Iranians kept their native traditions in Egypt. Rather, it gives an overall picture of a multicultural society under different cultural influences.⁴⁵

An interesting, albeit incomplete, source is the votive stela from Aswan, cited by many scholars, and previously dated to the seventh year of Artaxerxes I (458 B.C.).⁴⁶

pp. 312–320; Id., ‘Analecta Iranica’ aus den demotischen Dokumenten von Nord-Saqqara, *JEA* 78, 1992, pp. 287–293; R. ZADOK, On some Iranian names in Aramaic documents from Egypt, *Indo-Iranian Journal* 29, 1986, pp. 41–44.

³⁸ PORTEN, Persian Names, pp. 172–173, 181–186.

³⁹ Ariyawrata, a Persian official, took an Egyptian surname, *Dd-hr* (Djedher), see: POSENER, Première domination perse, pp. 178, 127–128 (No. 33); BRESCIANI, Persian occupation, p. 513; VITTMANN, Ägypten und die Fremden, p. 151. There is also a fragment in Herodotus [IV. 167] about a certain Amasis, who was a Persian from the tribe of Maraphii, and was appointed a general. For other examples, see: P. BRIANT, Éthno-classe dominante et populations soumises dans l’empire achéménide: Le cas de l’Égypte [= Éthno-classe dominante], in: A. KUHR, H. SANCISI-WEERDENBURG (eds.), *Achaemenid History III: Method and Theory. Proceedings of the London 1985 Achaemenid History Workshop*, Leiden 1988, pp. 160–161.

⁴⁰ PORTEN, Persian Names, p. 178; PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 4, pp. 249 (D.19.1), 271 (D22.12), 276 (D22.22); B. PORTEN, A. YARDENI, Textbook of Aramaic documents from ancient Egypt, Vol. 3: Literature, Accounts, Lists, Texts and studies for students, Winona Lake 1993 [= TAD 3], p. 230 (C3.15).

⁴¹ PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 2, pp. 38–39 (B 2.8), cf. COWLEY, Aramaic papyri, pp. 42–43 (No. 14); PORTEN, Elephantine papyri, pp. 84–85, 190 (B 30).

⁴² PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 2, pp. 58–59 (B 3.2), cf. KRAELING, Brooklyn papyri, p. 133 (Papyrus 1); PORTEN, Elephantine papyri, pp. 84–85, 207 (B 35).

⁴³ Id., Persian Names, p. 177.

⁴⁴ PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 2, p. 18 (B 2.1), cf. PORTEN, Elephantine papyri, pp. 84–85, 157 (B 23); COWLEY, Aramaic papyri, pp. 12–15 (No. 5).

⁴⁵ For cross-cultural contacts in Egypt of the Persian period, see e.g.: P. KAPLAN, Cross-cultural contacts among mercenary communities in Saite and Persian Egypt, *MHR* 18/1, 2003 [= *MHR* 18], pp. 16–21.

⁴⁶ (1) *brzmdn’ znh.. [d/rn] [] (2) rb hyl’ zy swn ‘bd (3) byrh sywn hw mhry (4) šnt šb’ ‘rthšš mlk’ (5) [l].wpd/rnhly ‘lh’ drwt (6) []l..* ... Text after: PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 4, pp. 234–236 (D17.1), cf. J.B. CHABOT

1. *This shrine [brzmdn'] PN*
2. *the chief of the army of Syene made*
3. *in the month of Sivan that is Mehîr*
4. *year seven of Artaxerxes the king*
5. *[to] DN the god. Peace [drwt]*
6. *[?]*

It was ordered by an unidentified commander of garrison of Syene, and documents the dedication to an unknown deity (the text is damaged) of an object which in Aramaic is described as *brzmdn'* (Old Persian loanword) and interpreted as **brazmādāna* – ‘shrine’ or ‘temple’.⁴⁷ Because of the extent of the damage, the god’s name is illegible, which makes proper interpretation quite difficult. Despite that, Mary Boyce believed the dedicated temple was a Zoroastrian sanctuary.⁴⁸ According to André Lemaire, on the other hand, the commander of the garrison can be read as Widranga and the god’s name as *Osirnahty* ‘Osiris the powerful’, which would change the date of the object to 398 B.C. (seventh year of Artaxerxes II).⁴⁹ If this is the case, the stela of Aswan would constitute proof of the establishment of an Egyptian god’s temple by a Persian commander, perhaps in order to make an alliance with the new ruler of Egypt, Amyrtaeus, who had revolted against the Achaemenids a few years earlier.⁵⁰ However, this reading, in turn, is questioned by Bezal-el Porten.⁵¹ According to him, the surviving letter traces definitely exclude Lemaire’s reading. However, Günter Vittmann has recently suggested that the remaining letters from the god’s name at least confirm that the divinity mentioned on the stela is Egyptian.⁵² Nevertheless, the Aswan stela cannot be taken with any certainty as evidence that an Egyptian cult was supported by a Persian commander.

We find a similar situation with yet another Aramaic text from Elephantine, which is a grant of house to Miptahiah, daughter of Mahseiah, issued on November 17, 446 B.C.⁵³ The fragment in question is ambiguous because of a lacuna. It consists of a name of a priest

(ed.), *Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique*, Vol. 3, Paris 1916, p. 321 (No. 1806); GRELOT, *Documents araméens*, pp. 333–334 (No. 75).

⁴⁷ PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 4, p. 234; A. LEMAIRE, *Recherches d'épigraphie araméenne en Asie Mineure et en Égypte et le problème de l'acculturation [= Recherches d'épigraphie]*, in: SANCISI-WEERDENBURG, KUHRIT (eds.), *Achaemenid History VI*, pp. 199–201; BOYCE, *HdO* 1.8,2, pp. 184–185.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, *loc.cit.*

⁴⁹ LEMAIRE, *Recherches d'épigraphie*, pp. 200–201. This seems to be accepted by BRIANT, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, pp. 982–983; JOHNSON, *Ethnic considerations*, p. 213.

⁵⁰ Lemaire suggested this as an example of ‘Egyptophilia’, see: LEMAIRE, *Recherches d'épigraphie*, p. 201. For a different opinion, supportive of Lemaire’s reading, see: JOHNSON, *Ethnic considerations*, p. 213; BRIANT, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, p. 983.

⁵¹ PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 4, p. 234. Vittmann also confirms that according to Porten’s facsimile Lemaire’s reading is not possible, see: VITTMANN, *Ägypten und die Fremden*, pp. 270–271.

⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 133, 270–271. This scholar thinks that the remaining letters form the Egyptian word *nht* ‘strong/enormous’, the usual epithet of Egyptian deities.

⁵³ PORTEN, YARDENI, TAD 2, pp. 34–37 (B2.7), cf. COWLEY, *Aramaic papyri*, pp. 37–41 (No. 13); GRELOT, *Documents araméens*, pp. 184–189 (No. 36); PORTEN, *Elephantine papyri*, pp. 186–187 (B29).

of uncertain god (line 15). E. Lipiński proposed reading: *Marva-Jana, fils de Palṭô, prêtre des dieux Xʿan et Haṭhya*,⁵⁴ which would be an obvious evidence for a cult of Iranian gods. The same fragment A.E. Cowley read: ... *b. Palṭo, priest of the gods Khnum and Sati*,⁵⁵ and P. Grelot: *Mardûk fils de Palṭô, prêtre des dieux Hānu et ʿAttî*.⁵⁶ In their edition of Aramaic texts, B. Porten and A. Yardeni partially avoid discussion by giving the reading of *Ḥarudj son of Palṭu, priest of Ḥ[-].: the god*.⁵⁷ Because of ambiguity and disagreement between scholars, this text cannot be evidence in the present study.

Contrary to most of the previous sources, the following examples will provide evidence for the influence of Egyptian religious ideas on Iranians. A very well known case of two Persian brothers, Atiyawahi and Ariyawrata, is also connected with some religious meaning. The two brothers are known mainly on the basis of inscriptions from Wadi Hammamat.⁵⁸ Atiyawahi, son of Artames and lady Qandjou, was a governor of Coptos and bore the title of 'saris of Persia'. He left inscriptions dated to 486–473 B.C., in which he invoked the Egyptian god Min.⁵⁹ His brother, Ariyawrata, who was later the *saris* of Persia, left inscriptions with invocations to Horus, Isis, and Amonrasonter.⁶⁰ He also took an Egyptian surname, *Dd-ḥr* (Djedher) and translated his title into Egyptian equivalents.⁶¹ It is likely that Ariyawrata made offerings to Horus, which is confirmed by the lid of a perfume jar with his name in cuneiform found in Edfu.⁶² A votive bull from the Persian period was probably another offering by an Iranian official to an Egyptian god. This object, which was found in Egypt, bears an inscription with the name of Mithrobaïos.⁶³ It was probably offered to Apis of Memphis.⁶⁴

⁵⁴ LIPIŃSKI, *FolOr* 22, pp. 5–8.

⁵⁵ COWLEY, *Aramaic papyri*, p. 38.

⁵⁶ GRELOT, *Documents araméens*, p. 187.

⁵⁷ The line according to their reading is: *ḥrwš br plṭw kmr [zy] ḥ[-]./.. 'lh'*, PORTEN, YARDENI, *TAD* 2, p. 37 and PORTEN, *Elephantine papyri*, p. 186.

⁵⁸ POSENER, *Première domination perse*, pp. 117–130 (Nos. 24–34).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 117–118 (No. 24), 121–123 (Nos. 27–28).

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 125–126 (No. 31), 127–128 (No. 33).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 178; BRESCIANI, *Persian occupation*, p. 513; VITTMANN, *Ägypten und die Fremden*, pp. 148–151; E. BRESCIANI, *La satrapia d'Egitto*, *SCO* 7, 1958 [= *SCO* 7], p. 139. Bresciani also suggested that a certain chief of the chancellery of the satrap Pherendates had an Egyptian title referring to the goddess Neith, see: *ibid.*, p. 134. Repeated by SERRANO DELGADO, *CdE* 79, p. 46. However, this assumption is based on a misreading of the Berlin Papyrus 13540 by W. SPIEGELBERG, *Drei demotische Schreiben aus der Korrespondenz des Pherendates, des Satrapen Darius' I, mit den Chnum-Priestern von Elephantine*, *SPAW. Sitzung der philosophisch-historischen Klasse* 30, 1928, pp. 606–610. A new reading by Hughes demonstrated that there are two different officials: Persian Shatibara, and Egyptian Peftu'üneith, see: G.R. HUGHES, *The So-called Pherendates Correspondence*, in: H.-J. THISSEN, K.-T. ZAUZICH (eds.), *Grammata Demotika: Festschrift für Erich Lüdemackens zum 15. Juni 1983*, Würzburg 1984, pp. 77–84; C.J. MARTIN, *The Demotic Texts*, in: PORTEN, *Elephantine papyri*, pp. 290–291 (C 1). Ray also mentions a certain Bagafarna, who was a follower of Egyptian religion according to the ostrakon from Saqqara, however the author did not provide any reference to this object: RAY, *Egypt*, p. 279.

⁶² MICHAÉLIDIS, *ASAE* XLIII, pp. 96–97. See also: BRESCIANI, *Persian occupation*, pp. 513–514.

⁶³ This object was published by MICHAÉLIDIS, *ASAE* XLIII, p. 99, Pl. VI.

⁶⁴ It was suggested by YOYOTTE, *RAAO* XLVI, p. 167, n. 5. Similarly BRIANT, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, p. 949; BRESCIANI, *SCO* 7, p. 140; SERRANO DELGADO, *CdE* 79, p. 46. However, in the first publication this object is linked with the cult of Mithra, see: MICHAÉLIDIS, *ASAE* XLIII, pp. 99–100.

However, these seemingly simple cases of Persians who worshipped Egyptian gods, which would suggest that these people absorbed different beliefs, do not yield to such an obvious interpretation. In the view of Pierre Briant, which seems to be generally accepted, they are not examples of Egyptianization in the strict sense. Briant suggests that Persian officials imitated the policy of the kings towards local cults. For Atiyawahi and Ariyawrata it was rational to appeal to the god of Coptos, Min, and similarly some Persians expressed respect for Apis.⁶⁵ As stated above, according to Dandamaev, such tolerance was not limited to Persians only, but was a general phenomenon of the ancient Near East. Foreigners not only sustained their faith in their own gods, but also worshipped deities of the land they inhabited.⁶⁶ As Dandamaev noticed, Aramaeans, Phoenicians, Greeks, Cilicians, Jews, and Iranians lived in Persian Egypt together with indigenous people, and they *often worshipped both their own and alien gods and even changed their names, adopting foreign ones, or used Egyptian names together with their own names.*⁶⁷

It appears that in most cases Persian worship of Egyptian deities was independent of the official royal policy towards indigenous cults, being instead based on the general attitude towards local gods in the ancient Near East (from which this imperial policy probably originated). Respect for local gods was not a feature which was unique to Persians, and it was quite usual in this period. In Egypt this attitude was shared by both earlier and later foreign dynasties (e.g. Ptolemies and Romans),⁶⁸ and all foreign inhabitants of this land.⁶⁹ Therefore it is very difficult to find out what the real beliefs of these several mentioned Persians were. Not all of these cases testify to official donations or declarations. It is also possible that small gifts for temples, like a figurine of a bull or a perfume jar, could be just private, personal gifts. Even an official religious declaration was not contrary to personal beliefs. Moreover, the worship of Iranian gods did not exclude the worship of Egyptian gods at the same time. In fact, it would be too complicated to suspect simple officials or even ordinary Persians of a sophistication equal to the kings, claiming that they worshipped certain gods sincerely, and others only officially. In the case of Atiyawahi, Ariyawrata, and Mithrobaïos there is no evidence that they were followers of any religion other than Egyptian religion. Therefore the simplest conclusion is that they worshipped

⁶⁵ BRIANT, *Éthno-classe*, pp. 166–167; Id., *From Cyrus to Alexander*, p. 482. Also supported by JOHNSON, *Ethnic considerations*, p. 213.

⁶⁶ DANDAMAEV, *Politique religieuse*, p. 198; DANDAMAEV, LUKONIN, *Culture and social institutions*, p. 359. In fact Briant based his theory on Dandamaev's hypothesis, see: BRIANT, *Éthno-classe*, p. 167.

⁶⁷ DANDAMAEV, LUKONIN, *Culture and social institutions*, p. 314.

⁶⁸ See e.g.: A. ERMAN, *Die Religion der Ägypter, ihr Werden und Vergehen in vier Jahrtausenden*, Berlin 1934, pp. 358–418; J.-C. GOYON, *Ptolemaic Egypt: Priests and the Traditional Religion*, in: R.A. FAZZINI, R.S. BIANCHI (eds.), *Cleopatra's Egypt: age of the Ptolemies*, New York 1988, pp. 29–39; G. HÖLBL, *A History of the Ptolemaic Empire*, London – New York 2001, pp. 77–90, 162–169, 257–285; J.B. RIVES, *Religion in the Roman Empire, Blackwell Ancient Religions*, Oxford 2007, pp. 67–71.

⁶⁹ To present a detailed evidence for this statement is beyond the scope of the present study. However, the reader may consult, for instance, the recent study of KAPLAN, *MHR* 18, pp. 20–21. An excellent impression of foreign activity is offered by the recent work of VITTMANN, *Ägypten und die Fremden*. There are many examples of objects connected with various foreigners, like Libyans, Phoenicians, Arameans, Carians, Arabs, and Greeks. A significant number of these objects might be linked with Egyptian religion.

for the most part local gods, even if they did it partly in order to better assimilate with Egyptians.

The art of the Persian period in Egypt is an important source for religious ideas shared by Iranians in this country. Egyptian influence upon Persian imperial art is well documented.⁷⁰ Moreover, art in Egypt commissioned by the kings had produced several objects, which might be examples of shared Persian and Egyptian artistic features. These are the Canal stelae⁷¹ of Darius I and the statue of this king from Susa.⁷² The Egyptian influence, though probably only indirect, is also noticeable in Achaemenian glyptic depictions.⁷³

At least one private Egyptian stela can be attributed to a man with Persian origins. This is the stela of Djedherbes, son of Artam, carved during the First Persian Domination (525–404 B.C.).⁷⁴ This stela exhibits features typical of objects influenced by both Egyptian and Persian art. Its most important religious symbol is the winged sundisc, which is placed in a lunette of the stela. It differs from regular Egyptian depictions of such symbols in that it has a feathered tail and two symmetrical tendrils or ribbons, which end with

⁷⁰ The most important work on this subject is a study by M.C. ROOT, *The King and Kingship in Achaemenid Art: Essays on the Creation of an Iconography of Empire*, *Al. Troisième série. Textes et mémoires* 9, Leiden 1979 [= King and Kingship], where she describes in detail the dependence of Persian art on Near Eastern visual culture and enumerates numerous Egyptian prototypes for different Persian kinds of imperial depictions.

⁷¹ See e.g.: POSENER, *Première domination perse*, pp. 48–87; M. ROAF, *The subject peoples on the base of the statue of Darius*, *CDAFI* 4, 1974 [= *CDAFI* 4], pp. 79–84; ROOT, *King and Kingship*, pp. 61–68; GOZZOLI, *Writing of history*, pp. 116–121.

⁷² The Egyptian features are a back pillar, the position of the hands, and the left foot standing forward, while the costume is Achaemenid. In addition to cuneiform inscriptions (mentioning the god Ahuramazdā), the statue has also hieroglyphic text invoking Egyptian gods. M. KERVRAN *et al.*, *Une statue de Darius découverte à Suse*, *JournAs* 260, 1972, pp. 235–266; ROAF, *CDAFI* 4, pp. 73–160; J. YOYOTTE, *Les inscriptions hiéroglyphiques de la statue de Darius à Suse*, *CDAFI* 4, 1974, pp. 181–183; D. STRONACH, *La statue de Darius le Grand découverte à Suse*, *CDAFI* 4, 1974, pp. 61–72; F. VALLAT, *Les textes cunéiformes de la statue de Darius*, *CDAFI* 4, 1974, pp. 161–170; ROOT, *King and Kingship*, pp. 68–72; J.A. JOSEPHSON, *Egyptian royal sculpture of the late period, 400–246 B.C.*, *SDAIK* 30, Mainz a/Rhein 1997, pp. 1–2; S. RAZMJOU, *Traces of Paint on the Statue of Darius*, *Arta* 2002.003, pp. 1–2; *Id.*, *Assessing the Damage: Notes on the Life and Demise of the Statue of Darius from Susa*, *ArsOr* 32, 2002, pp. 81–104; GOZZOLI, *Writing of history*, pp. 121–124.

⁷³ Egyptian motifs probably reached Persian seals from Neo-Assyrian or Syrian art, see e.g.: GARRISON, ROOT, JONES, *Seals I*, pp. 83–84. Perhaps an example of a more direct influence is the seal ANE 128865 from the British Museum (with a falcon and decoration of *wḏḥt*— eyes of Horus), see: R.D. BARNETT, D.J. WISEMAN, *Fifty Masterpieces of Ancient Near Eastern Art in the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities, The British Museum*, London 1969, p. 95 (No. 49); MERRILLEES, *Cylinder Seals VI*, p. 78 (No.86), Pls. XXXI, XXXV. But it might be the seal of Udjahorresnet. Another known seal of an Egyptian individual named Ahmose (ANE 89585) bears a hieroglyphic inscription of his name. Next seal, ANE 129596, is decorated with hieroglyphs of possible apotropaic meaning. See: *ibid.*, pp. 65–66, 77–78, 119, Pls. XXII, XXXI; M. GIOVINO, *Egyptian hieroglyphs on Achaemenid period cylinder seals*, *Iran* 44, 2006 [= *Iran* 44], pp. 105–107. Another example is the seal RB1 (impressed on clay tags LB 904, LB 905, YBC 17070, AO 20320, and AO 21425), which depicts an Egyptian royal cartouche with feathers, flanked by two birds and with winged disc above. The name in the cartouche is illegible. It was published by HENKELMAN, JONES, STOLPER, *Arta* 2004.001, pp. 17–20. See also other possible examples in: B. VAN DE WALLE, J. DUCHESNE-GUILLEMIN, *Un sceau-cylindre irano-égyptien*, *JEOL* 16, 1959–1962, pp. 72–77; GIOVINO, *Iran* 44, pp. 107–114.

⁷⁴ First published by I. MATHIESON *et al.*, *A stela of the Persian period from Saqqara*, *JEA* 81, 1995 [= *JEA* 81], pp. 23–41.

spirals.⁷⁵ A very similarly depicted winged disc can be seen on the stela of Shallūfa, one of the Canal stelae of Darius I.⁷⁶ Both objects share a combined Persian and Egyptian origin. The winged disc on the Djedherbes stela is not a typical 'Persian' winged disc (comparing to examples from Persepolitan reliefs, which have a more Egyptianized form than in earlier Persian art). The Egyptian features of this winged disc are, for example:

1) The specific shape of the topmost feathers (the alular quills). The alular quills on the Persepolitan examples are simple straight lines, which spread the whole length of the wing. On typical Egyptian stelae, the alular quills spread only from the disc to the end of top register or row of these small feathers (coverts). The same is true of the Djedherbes and Shallūfa stelae.

2) Egyptian winged discs have three registers (or rows) of feathers, Persepolitan discs four, the Djedherbes and Shallūfa stelae three.

3) The shape of the Egyptian disc is usually without a circle or hoop around the disc itself, contrary to the Persepolis' examples, which have very clear hoops. The Djedherbes disc is similar to the Egyptian ones. The tail and two ribbons are the 'Persian' elements on the Djedherbes winged disc. It is clear then that the winged disc on the Djedherbes stela bears both Egyptian and Persian features.⁷⁷

The Egyptian meaning of the winged disc is quite broad. Generally, it is a symbol of the god Horus, who usually manifests himself in the form of a falcon. The winged sun is a mixed form of a sun disc of Re and Horus' falcon wings.⁷⁸ However, it may also be a symbol related to certain Persian religious ideas. The winged disc with a tail and tendrils is a sign which frequently appears on Persepolis' reliefs and Achaemenian seals, although its exact meaning remains a matter of debate.⁷⁹ Traditionally, it has been maintained that

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁷⁶ This stela was published by J. MÉNANT, La stèle de Chalouf, *RecTrav* 9, 1887, pp. 131–157. But see also: P. LECOQ, Un problème de religion Achéménide: Ahura Mazda ou Xvarnah? [= Problème de religion], in: *Orientalia J. Duchesne-Guillemain Emerito Oblata, Acta Iranica* 23, *Hommages et opera minora* IX, Leiden 1984, p. 314, Pl. XLVII, Fig. 45; POSENER, Première domination perse, pp. 63–81, Pls. V–XIII; ROAF, *CDAFI* 4, pp. 79–83.

⁷⁷ Such mixed features appear to be usual for funerary stelae commissioned by foreigners in Egypt. See for example the winged disc on Aramaean stela of Abah and Aḥatabu ordered by their son, Absali, in 482 B.C., P. MUNRO, Die spätägyptischen Totenstelen, Glückstadt 1973, pp. 155 (n. 2), 170; VITTMANN, Ägypten und die Fremden, pp. 106–107.

⁷⁸ For more on Egyptian winged discs, see e.g.: A.H. GARDINER, Horus the Behdetite, *JEA* 30, 1944, pp. 23–60; M. WERBROUCK, À propos du disque ailé, *CdE* 16, 1941, pp. 165–171; W. WESTENDORF, Die Flügelsonne aus Ägypten, *AMI* 7/19, 1986, pp. 21–26.

⁷⁹ See especially: BOYCE, *HdO* I.8.2, pp. 100–105; P. CALMEYER, Fortuna–Tyche–Khvarnah, *JDAI* 94, 1979, pp. 100–105; P. JAMZADEH, The winged ring with human bust in Achaemenid art as a dynastic symbol, *IrAnt* 17 (In Memoriam Roman Ghirshman, 3), 1982, pp. 91–99; B. KAIM, Das geflügelte Symbol in der Achämenidischen Glyptik, *AMI* 24, 1991, pp. 31–34; LECOQ, Problème de religion, pp. 301–326; ROOT, King and Kingship, pp. 169–172; A.S. SHAHBAZI, An Achaemenid symbol I. A Farewell to «Frahvahr» and «Ahura Mazda», *AMI* 7, 1974, pp. 135–144; ID., An Achaemenid Symbol II. Farnah «(God Given) Fortune» Symbolized, *AMI* 13, 1980 [= *AMI* 13], pp. 119–147; P. D'AMORE, Glittica a cilindro achemenide: Linee di uno sviluppo tematico-cronologico, *Contributi e Materiali di Archeologia Orientale* 4, 1992, pp. 210–211; GARRISON, ROOT, JONES, Seals I, p. 69; MERRILLEES, Cylinder Seals VI, pp. 115–117.

this symbol represents Ahuramazdā. A rival theory of Alireza Shapur Shahbazi is also worth considering, because it explains the difference between two kinds of this symbol: first, with a human figure emerging from a winged circle, and second, plain, without a human bust (like on the Djedherbes stela). According to Shahbazi the winged circle alone represents a concept of the Iranian *Farnah* (Avestan *Airyānem Xʿarənah*), an idea which combines fortune and glory. This symbol protects all Iranians (including rulers and heroes).⁸⁰ The visual features of the winged disc from Djedherbes' stela might link it with the Iranian religious symbolism. It is also likely, however, that the ambiguity of this particular winged disc representation may be intentional. Being neither exclusively Egyptian nor Persian, it appears instead to be a marriage of both religious traditions.

In its upper register, the stela depicts the mummy of the deceased accompanied by the gods: Anubis, Isis, and Nephthys, something not extraordinary on the typical Egyptian funerary stela.⁸¹ The lower register of the stela, however, is very unique: it represents two figures standing before offering tables and a seated figure of a Persian dignitary of high rank (likely the father of the owner of the stela – Artam).⁸² Inscriptions on the stela are formulae addressed to Osiris. In addition, they include names of the owner, his father and mother: Tanofrether. This provides us with a piece of evidence of a union between Persian and Egyptian.⁸³ Djedherbes was certainly an aristocrat in Egypt under Persian rule, although we have no information about his title or rank, if there were any. His Egyptian name, funerary scene, and inscriptions testify that he considered himself an Egyptian. However, an ambiguous winged disc and an offering scene with a Persian dignitary may suggest that Djedherbes wanted to identify himself with Persian authority and the Persian ruling class of Egypt.⁸⁴

Yet another object is known, which shares mixed Persian and Egyptian features. This is a stone head from Memphis (Strasbourg 1604), currently in the Strasbourg Egyptological Institute.⁸⁵ It is a depiction of a bearded man with Egyptian hairstyle and probably with double Egyptian crown, (the upper part of crown is damaged). Claude Traunecker suggests that the depiction represents the syncretic deity of Ahuramazdā–Atum.⁸⁶ However, his belief is based on a comparison between Darius' statue from Susa (where the king invokes Atum), and the Achaemenid concept of god Ahuramazdā. The belief is not well justified, because Atum is not the only Egyptian god invoked by Achaemenid rulers on

⁸⁰ SHAHBAZI, *AMI* 13, pp. 128, 143.

⁸¹ MATHIESON *et al.*, *JEA* 81, pp. 28–29.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 29–33, 38. For the analogy see the seal from the Murašū archive, as was noted by P. BRIANT, *Images perses de Babylonie et d'Égypte: un rapprochement*, *La Lettre de Pallas* 4, 1996, pp. 20–21; *Id.*, *From Cyrus to Alexander*, p. 722, Fig. 62.

⁸³ MATHIESON *et al.*, *JEA* 81, pp. 33–38.

⁸⁴ Apart from the Djedherbes stela, one should mention the so-called *Memphis stela* (it depicts a funerary scene of a Persian dignitary; now in Berlin, Ägyptologisches Museum, No. 23721). First published by BISSING, *ZDMG* 84, pp. 226–238. However, it has recently been shown by Muscarella that this object is a mere forgery: MUSCARELLA, *Memphis Stela*, pp. 109–121. There are also references to earlier secondary literature.

⁸⁵ C. TRAUNECKER, *Un portrait ignoré d'un roi perse: La tête « Strasbourg 1604 », Transeuphratène* 9, 1995, pp. 101–117, Pls. IV–V. This object, like some of those already described, probably originated from Mitrahine.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 115–116.

Egyptian monuments. In addition, they appeal to other deities on monuments in other parts of the empire. Other objects from Achaemenid times that combine images of Ahuramazdā and another deity are completely unknown. Therefore it is more likely that ‘Strasbourg 1604’ is just a depiction of a Persian king, and does not bear any religious associations other than the ordinary portrayal of a pharaoh. This object certainly provides evidence for interaction between Persian and Egyptian culture, but probably not in the religious sphere.

An important phenomenon in the Achaemenid Empire is the spread of the cult of the Egyptian god Bes. There are numerous examples of findings of different representations of Bes in jewelry, sculpture, glyptic etc. throughout the Persian Empire.⁸⁷ These findings can be generally divided into two groups: objects of Egyptian origin (or of foreign workmanship but indistinguishable from Egyptian prototypes), and images of Bes included in foreign iconography (in this case Iranian). Although the former group can be linked with Egyptians, who in large numbers traveled to different parts of the empire (e.g. craftsmen working in Persepolis), the latter certainly testifies to some popularity of Bes among various peoples of the empire, which might have included Iranians as well.⁸⁸ Such depictions are clear evidence that the Egyptian divinity, Bes, became a part of the religious world of the western parts of the empire. According to Kamyar Abdi this process started after the 490s B.C., at first involving only imperial troops, and then also the elite and ordinary Iranians.⁸⁹ It is impossible to distinguish within the objects from Egypt connected with the cult of Bes those, which belonged in the past to Iranian individuals. Such artifacts would not be different from the ones owned by Egyptians themselves. Nevertheless, it is likely that the cult of Bes was popular among Persians in Egypt as well. The common character of this god could better contribute to the wider range of his influence than that of the other cults of more sophisticated and elite Egyptian deities.⁹⁰ The influence of the cult of Bes within the populations in the rest of the empire supports such a hypothesis.

Some evidence for the reception of Egyptian religious concepts among Persians might be provided by classical texts of Hellenistic and Roman times. A number of classical writers claim that the authorship of several ideas, teachings, and treatises was of Persian Magi, most notably ‘Zoroaster’ and ‘Ostanes’. Obviously, the context and the content of these opinions make it very difficult to connect them with any source in original Iranian or Mazdaean concepts. It has been suggested that pseudo-Ostanes’ writings were produced by the circle of Alexandrian scholars. In fact, many of the concepts attributed by classical

⁸⁷ See the exhaustive study by K. ABDI, Bes in the Achaemenid Empire, *ArsOr* 29, 1999, pp. 111–140; ID., Notes on the Iranianization of Bes in the Achaemenid Empire, *ArsOr* 32, 2002 [= *ArsOr* 32], pp. 133–162.

⁸⁸ There are different objects, including a number of unprovenanced examples, which were found within the western parts of the empire. Bes is sometimes included in seal imagery (like on the unprovenanced seals from the British Museum, ANE 89133 and ANE 89352). See: ABDI, *ArsOr* 32, pp. 141, 147–148, Figs. 8–9; MERILLES, *Cylinder Seals* VI, pp. 64–65, 74, Pls. XXI, XXVIII.

⁸⁹ ABDI, *ArsOr* 32, pp. 148–152.

⁹⁰ Such a suggestion was put forward by Abdi, with the reference to Iranians in the whole empire: *ibid.*, p. 151. It should be the truer in Egypt itself.

writers to the Magi might have had their source in Egyptian thought and religion. It is thus possible that this attribution was an effect of the post-Achaemenid activity of some figures, who called themselves ‘the Magi’, and created spurious works, which consisted of a mixture of Egyptian and Iranian traditions. As there is evidence for the activity of the Magi in Egypt in the Achaemenid period, it is likely that some of their successors were heavily influenced by the Egyptian thought, and gave beginning to this mixed tradition.⁹¹

CONCLUSION

The Persian kings treated Egyptian religion with a respect and devotion worthy of a pharaoh. They acknowledged the cult of the leading gods of the country, which is confirmed by royal monuments and inscriptions of the time invoking these deities. It is an obvious consequence of their policy, which had the imitation of indigenous rulers as its goal. However, a respect and esteem for local religious traditions appears to be quite common among the ancient Near Eastern societies. In applying such a policy, the Persian monarchs were most likely guided by political needs, and other, most likely, purely opportunistic reasons.

It seems that a similarly respectful approach to indigenous cults was adopted by imperial officials, from satraps down to local clerks. One might consider whether this was in imitation of kings, in obedience to royal instructions, or motivated by a genuine respect for local deities. There can be no doubt that their attitude was at least in part a consequence of an attempt to win the favors of Egyptians and to cooperate peacefully with the native population. However, some of the discovered objects connected with Persian individuals could be taken as instances of private religious practice.

It must be also considered that Egyptian culture was highly influential in antiquity, and Iranian individuals were living under this influence for many years. According to Herodotus, the Persians *more than other men accept foreign customs*.⁹² Although this might be a statement reflecting some stereotypical construction of a ‘barbarian’, it could indicate a real interest in foreign cultures among the Persians. Thus, it seems more likely that some of them also accepted certain elements of Egyptian religious culture during their stay in this country.

For some scholars it was only natural to expect that the Persians in Egypt followed their own Iranian religious tradition.⁹³ However, the sources which support such an as-

⁹¹ This was suggested by J.F. QUACK, *Les mages égyptianisés? Remarks on some surprising points in supposedly Magusean texts*, *JNES* 65/4, 2006, pp. 267–282. See also: R. BECK, *Thus spake not Zarathuštra: Zoroastrian pseudepigrapha of the Greco-Roman world*, in: *HdO* 1.8.3, pp. 491–565; A. DE JONG, *Traditions of the Magi: Zoroastrianism in Greek and Latin literature*, *Religions in the Graeco-Roman world* 133, Leiden – New York 1997, pp. 317–323, 404–413; M. SMITH, s. v. ‘Ostanes’, in: E. YARSHATER (ed.), *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, New York, www.iranica.com.

⁹² Herodotus 1.135: ξεινικὰ δὲ νόμια Πέρσαι προσίενται ἀνδρῶν μάλιστα.

⁹³ Like Grelot mentioned in the beginning of the present paper: GRELOT, *Documents araméens*, p. 332. The main scholar who argues that Persians were not a subject of Egyptianization in religious sense is Briant, cf. *supra*, n. 65 (also for opinion of his supporters).

sumption are very rare and ambiguous. There is only one document, which certainly testifies to the presence of the Magi in Egypt.⁹⁴ The Magi might have been present in Egypt for approximately 120 years of the First Persian Domination, and the existence of only one document from this period confirming their presence should be rather surprising. It is even more surprising because we have a large corpus of texts from Egypt of the time. Apart from proper names, no source univocally mentions the name of an Iranian god. There is only a small number of artistic artifacts which can be linked with certain Iranian deities. The collections of Iranian names from documents from Egypt are quite confusing because of the context. If these texts are read literally, they list examples of people of various ethnicities and from different cultures, interspersed with each other, who bore names not always connected with their actual ethnicity (or who were descendants of mixed unions). Therefore proper names cannot be evidence for religious attitudes in Egypt. The Persian presence in this country left only scant remains in the terms of religion, almost without significance among the numerous sources of that time.

On the other hand, there are several well-documented examples of the Persians who were connected with the cult of Egyptian gods. Generally, scholars are inclined to interpret this behavior as an imitation of the policy of the kings towards indigenous cults. However, there is no evidence that these Persians worshipped the Iranian gods as well. Some objects, which were made for the Persians, could be linked with a private cult of the Egyptian deities.⁹⁵ The Djedherbes stela⁹⁶ is a clear evidence for mixed Persian-Egyptian unions. The stela combines religious depictions of Egyptian and Persian imagery, with the dominance of the former. Similarly, the inscription on this object invokes local gods. Such mixed unions are perhaps confirmed by the evidence of proper names.⁹⁷ Therefore it is likely that there were Persian-Egyptian families, and their children, like Djedherbes, were raised mostly within the Egyptian culture and religion. Moreover, it seems that religious elements of the Egyptian and Iranian tradition did not exclude each other, but coexisted, as certified by certain objects (the Djedherbes stela and some royal objects, like the Canal stelae). It was probably possible for people of Iranian origin to worship Iranian and Egyptian gods simultaneously, or even to worship only Egyptian gods. The widespread cult of Bes,⁹⁸ clearly an Egyptian deity, among the population of the empire, is a strong evidence for the popularity of the Egyptian religion among foreigners.

Sources which deal directly or indirectly with the religion of the Persians in Egypt are very scant. One is only able to present a small group of artistic artifacts and written sources. These sources can confirm both attitudes among the Persians, i.e. the veneration of their own, Iranian religion or the worship of Egyptian deities. Taking into account the limitation of the material, one must consider that it certainly does not show a representative view of the situation, but only its vague reflection. One cannot be sure, whether one

⁹⁴ Cf. *supra*, n. 20

⁹⁵ Especially the perfume jar of Ariyawrata and the bull figurine of Mithrobaïos. Cf. *supra*, n. 62–64.

⁹⁶ Cf. *supra*, n. 74.

⁹⁷ Cf. *supra*, n. 40.

⁹⁸ Cf. *supra*, n. 87.

is dealing with sources about religious activities dictated by some political or administrative needs, or with a testimony of a real faith. Nevertheless, the sources, though scant, show that the Persians in Egypt were not necessarily faithful to their native cults, but in addition worshipped local deities. The evidence for this latter practice is limited, however, and for a reason, because if the Persians participated in Egyptian religious life, they probably would have employed the same objects and gone to the same temples as the Egyptians. Only those few artifacts and texts which bear Iranian personal names can be distinguished from the collection of remains connected with religious life in Egypt of the Persian period. On the other hand, it should be easy to identify sources connected with Iranian religion against the background of Egyptian culture. Unfortunately, traces of Iranian cults in Egypt are very rare and usually not clear. This is quite surprising because in the satrapy of Egypt the Persians held all the key ranks and offices and, apart from officials of different levels, there were numerous Iranian people in the civil and military staff, including a significant number of soldiers.⁹⁹ In spite of this, they did not produce much evidence which would confirm the worship of their native cults. Therefore it is possible that among the Persians and other people of Iranian origin in Egypt interest in their home religion decreased, and many of them apparently joined the worshippers of Egyptian gods. It is very likely that Egyptian culture, including religion, strongly influenced the conquerors.

It can be concluded that the religious situation in Egypt under the Persian rule was as multicultural as its whole society. Therefore the Iranians probably sometimes kept their own religious practice, which they brought with them from the lands of Iran. However, it is more likely that a majority of them actually began to worship Egyptian gods as well, and even abandoned their native cults to some extent.

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⁹⁹ BRESCIANI, *Persian satrapy*, pp. 364–367, 369–371; EAD., *Persian occupation*, pp. 512–514, 516–517; CHEVEREAU, *Prosopographie des cadres militaires*, pp. 147–150, 322–324.