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Komparative Untersuchungen
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Einleitung

Ideologie und Organisation

*Catharina Baumgartner, Patrizia Heindl, Marie-Hélène Lindner,
Julia Preisigke-Borsian, Sarah P. Schlüter*

Abstract: Ideologie und Organisation – diese zwei Konzepte können mit Gesellschaften, Kulturen und sozialen Gruppen sowohl in der Antike als auch in der Moderne assoziiert werden. Obwohl die Bedeutungen der Begriffe sehr kontrovers diskutiert werden, sind sie für die strukturelle Erforschung hermeneutisch ferner Gesellschaftskonzepte unabdingbar. Ebendiese Begriffskonzepte sind Thema der aktuellen DW-Journal-Ausgabe, die inhaltlich an die in den letzten Jahren immer stärker in den Fokus gerückten „Cross Cultural Studies“ anknüpfen soll.

Mit Untersuchungen zur Herausbildung eines Staates und dem Entstehen einer Gesellschaft sind oft Fragen nach der Ideologie und der gesellschaftlichen Organisation verbunden. Sie sind und waren häufig Gegenstand intensiver Diskussionen und Kritik, sowohl im modernen Diskurs als auch in vergangenen Perioden. Während solche Phänomene in heutigen Gesellschaften mit den Wechselfällen kultureller, wirtschaftlicher und politischer Gegebenheiten über öffentlich zugängliche Medien leicht zu verfolgen sind, ist dies für vergangene Gesellschaften nicht immer einfach.

Ziel der fünften Ausgabe des *Distant Worlds Journals* ist es, die ideologischen und organisatorischen Strukturen von Gesellschaften in der Antike zu beleuchten. Dabei wurden nicht nur Beiträge mit theoretischen oder methodischen Ansätzen zur Erforschung der Bildung alter Gesellschaften akzeptiert, sondern auch Untersuchungen spezifischer staatsähnlicher Strukturen und Ideologien als Grundlage für Machtverhältnisse und der damit verbundenen gesellschaftlichen

Auswirkungen. Insbesondere werden Abhängigkeiten, Interaktionen und wechselseitige Koexistenzen sozialer Schichten sowie ihre unterschiedlichen Rollen und Funktionen in einem bestimmten Staat betrachtet. Somit können Aspekte verschiedener Kulturen und Gesellschaften über Zeit und Raum hinweg untersucht werden und der strukturelle Charakter der Gedanken- und Ordnungsweltbilder verglichen werden.

Ideologie

Der Ideologie-Begriff hat sich in seinem Gebrauch stark verändert und gilt als

„einer der am meisten gebrauchten und am wenigsten verstandenen Begriffe unserer Zeit, die Worte so schnell verschleißt, daß man am liebsten sich eine neue Sprache erdenken oder ganz und gar schweigen würde.“¹

Obwohl der Terminus sich zunächst im Zuge der französischen Revolution für die Beschreibung der philosophischen Lehre

¹ Regensburger 1958.

etablierte, wurde er fälschlicherweise auf die Idolenlehre Francis Bacons zurückgeführt.² Zu einer „Wissenschaft der Ideen“ (science des idées) erhob A.L.C. Destutt de Tracy 1796 seine Vorstellung der Ideologie.³ Die daraus entstandene Schule der Ideologen, die großen Einfluss auf die Pädagogik der französischen Revolution hatte, führte aufgrund ihrer normativpraktischen Ansätze unweigerlich zum Zusammenstoß mit Napoleon, der seine politischen Ziele untergraben sah.⁴ Somit bekamen der Begriff Ideologie und die als „Ideologen“ bezeichneten, eine neue Bedeutung: sie wurden als Träumer beschrieben, welche „die Meinung der Möglichkeit einer unbestimmten Vervollkommnung der Menschheit annahmen“⁵ und den Institutionen Macht zuschrieben, nicht aber, wie Napoleon, der Gewalt.

Noch von Destutt de Tracy beeinflusst, nutzte Thomas Jefferson den Ideologie-Begriff zur Beschreibung politischer Ökonomie und Staatslehre.⁶ Auch wurde in der US-amerikanischen Wissenssoziologie jedes System von Normen als Ideologie bezeichnet, das Gruppen zur Rechtfertigung und Bewertung eigener und fremder Handlungen verwendeten. Eine Ideologie sichert nach dieser Auslegung die eingeforderte Legitimation für die bestehende Ordnung und befriedigt das Bedürfnis nach Sicherheit und Sinnhaftigkeit, die durch die Religion nicht mehr gewährleistet werden konnten.⁷

Die moderne Auffassung von Ideologie, ist eng an Karl Marx geknüpft. Er selbst war es jedoch, der eine falsche Lesart in Epikurs

Übersetzung des griechischen *ιδιολογία* in seine Dissertation als Ideologie übernahm.⁸ In gewisser Weise sind so die Altertumswissenschaften mit dem Gebrauch des Terminus *Ideologie* und seinem modernen Verständnis grundsätzlich verbunden. In seinen späteren Schriften beschreibt er die Ideologie kritisch als „falsches Bewusstsein“, das „naturwüchsig“, aber auch gesellschaftlich reproduziert ist.⁹ Daraus kann und sollte sich eine „empirische Allgemeinheit“ herausbilden. Er selbst befindet sich im Kreuzfeuer zwischen Ideologiekritik und dem

„nicht aufgegebenen Anspruch evidenter Allgemeinheit, der ihn noch mit den [...] Ideologen verbindet“.¹⁰

Daraus entwickelte sich eine hitzige Diskussion, die Denker, wie Lukács¹¹ (objektive Möglichkeit), Freud¹², Mannheim und später Horkheimer¹³, Adorno¹⁴, Plessner¹⁵, Marcuse¹⁶, Habermas¹⁷ und viele mehr dazu veranlasste sich mit der Begriffsvorstellung auseinanderzusetzen. Reinhard Romberg schreibt:

„der moderne Ideologie-Begriff ist der der entpolitisierten Öffentlichkeit [...]. Das aber ist Ausdruck nicht nur einer bestimmten technologischen Rationalität, sondern impliziert einen Verfall der politischen Öffentlichkeit.“

Ideologie-Kritik hebt das Moment der politischen Legitimation hervor.“¹⁸

Der Umstand, dass bereits zu Beginn der Nutzung des Begriffs politische Konzepte

² Dierse – Romberg 2017.

³ Destutt de Tracy 1798, 324.

⁴ Dierse – Romberg 2017.

⁵ Bourrienne 1829, 189–190; Bonaparte 1816, 65.

⁶ Chinard 1925, 36f./41/87ff./105ff./173f./183/ 241/ 259; Hölzle 1969, 96–100.

⁷ Mannheim 1995, 78.

⁸ Mannheim 1995, ebd.; Marx 1957, 300/360; Oertel 1970, 206–211; Rauh 1970, 689–715; Schmidt 1970, 728–731.

⁹ Romberg 2017, mit Bezug auf Marx 1958, 26–27.

¹⁰ Romberg 2017.

¹¹ Lukács 1968.

¹² Freud 1964.

¹³ Horkheimer 1964a; Horkheimer 1964b.

¹⁴ Adorno 1963.

¹⁵ Plessner 1964.

¹⁶ Marcuse 2004.

¹⁷ Habermas 1962.

¹⁸ Romberg 2017.

transportiert werden sollten und diese sich jeweils an das zeitgenössische Weltbild anpassten, macht es für Altertumswissenschaftler schwer, diese Konzepte nicht auf den Untersuchungsgegenstand zu übertragen. Daher sollte der Begriff mit Bedacht gewählt, hinterfragt und inhaltlich, wenn nicht definiert, dann zumindest für den Gebrauch abgegrenzt werden.

Organisation

Die Abspaltung vom Begriff „Organismus“ und die Herausbildung des uns heute bekannten Begriffs der „Organisation“ fand insbesondere zu Beginn des 20. Jh. n. Chr. statt.¹⁹ Der Terminus „Organisation“ hat mehrere Bedeutungsebenen und wird vor allem innerhalb verschiedener Wissenschaftsdisziplinen unterschiedlich aufgefasst.²⁰ Der Blickwinkel der Soziologie legt den Fokus der Untersuchungen in erster Linie auf die Funktionen von Organisationen innerhalb der Gesellschaft.²¹ In anderen Bereichen befasst man sich nicht mit der Organisation, sondern mit dem Prozess des Organisierens: In den Betriebswirtschaften liegt der Schwerpunkt auf der Untersuchung des Verhältnisses von Organisation und dem Treffen von Entscheidungen.²² Die Vielfältigkeit des Begriffs „Organisation“ spiegelt sich auch in zahlreichen Organisationstheorien wider:

Webers „Bürokratietheorie“ kann ebenso genannt werden wie die „Netzwerktheorie“.²³ Demnach können in den Altertumswissenschaften unter dem Begriff der „Organisation“ verschiedenste Aspekte antiker Gesellschaften untersucht werden.

Die Unterschiede der Entwicklung der beiden Termini „Ideologie“ und „Organisation“ bestimmen unsere strukturelle Auffassung

von Gesellschaft. Dies ist maßgeblich bei der altertumswissenschaftlichen Aufarbeitung der Konzepte zu bedenken.

Die drei Artikel veranschaulichen, wie vielfältig der Umgang mit diesen Konzeptbegriffen in den Altertumswissenschaften sein kann.

Zusammenfassung der Artikel

Von den eingegangenen Artikeln konnten drei überzeugen, welche im Folgenden kurz vorgestellt werden sollen.

Auf der Grundannahme, dass es während der Regierungszeit von Tutmoses III. als Folge der Militärkampagnen und der herausragenden Bedeutung der Armee eine wachsende Tendenz gab, Militärbeamte mit politischen und administrativen Positionen zu besetzen / vergeben, beleuchtet Daniela Martins in ihrem Artikel „*Interconnecting circles of power*“ – *An approach to a study of the regional administration in Egypt during the reign of Thutmose III?* die Rolle ägyptischer Elitebeamter der lokalen Verwaltung. Insbesondere werden Personen, die den Titel der „Gouverneure“ und „Bürgermeister“ tragen, auf ihre Machtposition hin untersucht. Ziel des Artikels ist es festzustellen, inwiefern es möglich ist, das anfangs beschriebene Gunstmuster in Verwaltungspositionen, die mit den Provinzen in Verbindung stehen, zu erkennen, wobei berücksichtigt wird, wie diese Beamten mit dem König und seinem Gefolge verbunden waren. Teil der Untersuchung sind wichtige grundlegende Überlegungen zur Aufarbeitung organisatorischer Strukturen der regionalen Verwaltung in Ägypten, die für weiterführende Arbeiten sicherlich gewinnbringend sind.

¹⁹ Zur historischen Entwicklung des Begriffs siehe Luhmann – Müller 1984.

²⁰ Dimbath 2016, 131–136.

²¹ Dimbath 2016, 132.

²² Laux – Liermann 2005, 2.

²³ Einen Überblick über die verschiedenen Organisationstheorien bietet der Sammelband Kieser 2019.

Sarah Schlüter beleuchtet in ihrem Aufsatz *Social Theories and Old Assyrian Kaneš – Overview, Comments, Developments* die Gesellschaft im altassyrischen Kaneš. Dort lebten im sog. *kārum* (einem Händlerviertel) von etwa 1972 bis 1718 v. Chr. neben Händlern aus Aššur auch anatolische Händler. Faszinierend wie auch problematisch ist, dass die assyrische Ansiedlung und Anwesenheit lediglich in schriftlicher Form anhand von Keilschrifttafeln überliefert sind, sich aber nicht im archäologischen Befund niederschlagen. Diesem Problem versuchten sich Wissenschaftler bereits mit verschiedenen sozialen Theorien anzunähern. Die sozial-theoretischen Methoden ‚Trade Diaspora‘, ‚Hybridity‘, ‚Middle Ground‘ und ‚Concept of Mobile Identities / Mobility‘ unterzieht Schlüter in ihrem Aufsatz einer komparativen Untersuchung und kommt zu dem Schluss, dass eine (anhand abweichender Kulturmodelle entwickelte) soziale Theorie allein nicht die Komplexität der altassyrischen Gesellschaft zu entschlüsseln vermag.

In seinem Artikel *Creatures with Seven Heads in the Revelation of John – A History of the Motif in the Ancient Near East* macht sich Christoffer Theis auf die Suche nach dem Ursprung der mehrköpfigen Wesen, die in der

Johannesoffenbarung in Erscheinung treten. Wie seine Ausführungen zeigen, handelt es sich um ein (Bild-)Motiv, welches sich vor allem in den Kulturen des Alten Orients vom 3. bis zum 1. Jt. v. Chr. findet. Im Rahmen seiner Untersuchungen wird deutlich, dass eine Schlange mit sieben Köpfen als Verkörperung des Feindes oder der Gesamtheit des Bösen, ein weitverbreitetes Motiv war, dessen Herkunft jedoch nicht einer bestimmten Kultur zugeschrieben werden kann. Andere Theorien über die Wesen der Johannesoffenbarung bzgl. der Darstellung der sieben Köpfe oder der Identifikation der Schlange mit dem ägyptischen Pharao oder der mesopotamischen Gottheit Tiāmat, kann Theis in seinem Artikel widerlegen. Da das Motiv im Neuen Testament erscheint, in dem Christen an biblische Traditionen anknüpften, kann laut Autor davon ausgegangen werden, dass auch im Judentum im 1. Jh. n. Chr. dieses Motiv bekannt war, es aber keinen Eingang in die Bibel fand. Mehrköpfige Wesen sind somit kein Ausdruck einer Ideologie, sondern ein gängiges Thema mit altorientalischen Wurzeln.

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“Interconnecting circles of power”

An approach to a study of the regional administration in Egypt during the reign of Thutmose III

Daniela Martins

Abstract: During the reign of Thutmose III, as a result of the military campaigns and of the increased importance of the army as a branch of the royal government in ancient Egypt, there was a growing tendency to favour some military officials with political and administrative positions. In this context, the aim of this paper is to analyse the Egyptian officials bearing the title of ‘governor’ or ‘mayor’ during this reign and the articulation of local powers with the king and his retinue. I discuss briefly some of the questions related to the study of regional administration and I intend to determine to what extent it is possible to identify this pattern of favour in administrative positions related to the provinces, also considering how these officials were connected with the king and his entourage.

1. Introduction

Even if some attempts to systematize and categorize functions in its hierarchal dependency for the New Kingdom have been made (O’Connor 1983, 208), the complexity of the administrative reality of ancient Egypt seems to be better synthesized in Betsy Bryan’s words when she mentions that the “Egyptian bureaucracy was labyrinthine, and the centre of the maze was the institution of kingship” (Bryan 2006, 69). In this sense, any analysis of regional administration must reflect the complexity of the system not based on its static organization as we may understand it today but, instead, on its own natural fluid relationships (Shirley 2013, 572) between what we presently may define as secular and non-secular powers.

The administrative division of ancient Egyptian territory is indicative, first of all, of the dimension of the country and the time that was necessary to travel from one end to the other (Cruz-Urbe 1994, 52–53). If one assumes an idea of an absolute power centred on kingship,

it must reflect, at least, two fundamental premises: territory and time. The control of a vast territory undoubtedly needed the collaboration and coalition of other main powers – religious and administrative – that, connected with kingship, allowed the control of the different regions of the country (Moreno García, 2019, 76–77; O’Connor 1983, 205). The temples, as a nuclear unit for the creation of the settlements, were also fundamental for the maintenance of royal power and royal discourse (Moreno García 2019, 171–173). The mayors, as part of the regional administration had, as their principal tasks, the control of the regional resources, the collection of taxes (Haring 2010, 225/229) and provisioning the royal mooring places along the Nile, a practice instituted by Thutmose III (Haring 2010, 229 citing Kruchten 1981, 98–99). The tomb of Thutmose III’s vizier Rekhmire (TT 100) is particularly illustrative of these functions since he was responsible for the collections of revenues from the provinces (Haring 2010, 229).

It is perhaps illusory to assume that the Egyptian bureaucracy controlled the entire society (Manning 2016, 112). More than controlling society as a whole, it is probably more accurate to say that the Egyptian government was keen on controlling production, revenues and the movement of people.¹ The role of the economy in the composition of the settlements might also explain the tendency for the concentration of people in certain areas and, consequently, the establishment of political power (Moeller 2016, 17).

The ancient Egyptian administration was also profoundly connected with a sense of mobility. The clearest example of this is perhaps the monarch since the government of the country was based, from the Second Dynasty onwards, on the movement of the king throughout the country. This event, known as *shemsu Hor* “Following Horus”, is already attested in the Palermo Stone (Haring 2010, 229).² In the same way, the mobility of the officials is also attested (Grajetzki 2009, 190–191). These movements can be particularly identified by cultic practices and monumental or non-monumental inscriptions. The former, for instance, can possibly explain the cult of Meretseger at Elephantine (Budka 2015, 13–14; Bommas 2018, 131–143) and also other Theban deities in the same region (Budka 2015, 20–21). The latter, on the other hand, is possible to be identified in the large corpus of names and titles of Theban and Memphite officials around the First Cataract (Budka 2015, 14). The same conclusion can be inferred by the fact that officials had temporary living quarters

in different parts of the country during the New Kingdom (Budka 2015, 14). Also, statues, stelae, rock shrines and graffiti can attest the same practice (Budka 2015, 14–15).

It is important to consider the nature of the bureaucracy in ancient Egypt, particularly concerning the titles. Although officials often held a significant number of titles that does not reflect ancient Egypt as a profound bureaucratic system because some of those titles are purely honorific.³ Rather, these honorific titles can reveal their spheres of influence in different circuits or circles of interaction. On the other hand, it is important to consider that some titles are not exactly correspondent with their very nature. The most evident example of this is perhaps, during the mid-18th Dynasty, the case of ‘civil’ officials bearing military titles, without their function being really military in nature (Shirley 2011, 291–319; Gnirs 2013, 639–717). The complexity of those titles and the way they worked on position individuals and their families recall the fundamental principle of fluidity and interconnection. Even at a regional level, it does not reflect a simplified and rigid administrative structure, as diagrams as such of David O’Connor might suggest (O’Connor 1983, 208).

As a result of the reunification of the country following the Second Intermediate Period, Thebes became the major centre for political power (Shirley 2013, 576–577; Polz 2018, 217–233). The military nature of the late 17th Dynasty and early 18th Dynasty clearly favoured individuals connected with the army and with the royal entourage (Shirley 2013,

¹ Note that power, authority and influence also circulated on the margins of institutions and central authority. See Moreno García (2013, 1029–1065).

² The annals of the Palermo Stone record royal roles and activities such as the biennial *šms-hr*, a royal tour through the country, to exercise political control and to perform rituals. For an in-depth analysis on the Palermo Stone see Hsu (2010, 68–89).

³ Christopher Eyre recently addressed this problematic on his lecture on “Peopling Ancient Egypt”, 5 of

February 2019 at Museo Egizio: “We have the assumption that runs through much of the Egyptological literature that strings of titles represent departmentalized management structures and imply forms of efficiency. It is simply not justified by any form of evidence other than the fact people had long strings of titles”. Museo Egizio Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/museoegizio/videos/356746981832689/>, 31.10.19).

580–582). It is thus interesting to see that the court and the local temple were highly interconnected and that the advancement of military individuals created the first momentum of promotion (early-18th Dynasty) and association of the military with administrative offices.⁴ Those families continued to be influential, at least, until the second momentum of promotion (mid-18th Dynasty) and reorganization of the administration. What is being purposed here is precisely to analyse this dynamic at a regional level for the reign of Thutmose III, and to determine not only their interconnections with the central government but also to question their position within the court. For the specific purpose of this case study, Thebes and their known mayors will not be considered as they are profoundly connected with what is regarded as central administration, specifically the vizierate.

2. Circles of power: The regional officials

Nekhheh and Iunyt (3rd and 6th provinces of Upper Egypt)

Pahery, owner of a tomb in Elkab⁵, is known to have been the mayor of the 3rd and 6th provinces of Upper Egypt during the reign of Thutmose III. He was the grandson of Ahmose son of Ibana from his maternal side and his mother, Kem, married the scribe Atefrura, a high Theban dignitary who was the tutor of the prince Wadjmes, son of Thutmose I (Roehrig 1900, 26–27). As governor and scribe, Pahery was responsible for the grain production of the region under his control (Bryan 2006, 100) and he was the uppermost of the priests of Nekhbet. Some of his functions as an official are mentioned and depicted in his tomb (Griffith and Tylor 1894; Devillers 2018). On the south end of the west wall, it is possible to identify

the inspection of the grain and the agricultural domains. In this task, three assistants accompany Pahery carrying bags, napkins and a stool. An interesting scene is depicted on the 3rd register of this wall, where a chariot harnessed to two horses appear. Trying to calm the animals, Pahery says: “Remain calm, do not be disobedient, excellent horse, beloved of his master, with whom the prince can rely on no matter what” (Griffith and Tylor 1894, 13). This scene can perhaps be linked with other notable functions of Pahery. Like his father, he also became a royal tutor to a son of Thutmose I also named Wadjmes (Roehrig 1990, 81; Bryan 2006, 100). The difference of time probably suggests that this was a different person since the depictions of the princes are usually associated with childhood.⁶ In fact, Pahery’s tomb also has a scene of the mayor with the prince on his lap, complemented by adults and other children bringing offerings. The text, partially legible, says: “bringing some offerings by his children and grandchildren, adoringly[...]”.

Roehrig (1990, 81) suggests that his role as a royal tutor to prince Wadjmes might have been the result of his valuable service in his functions for the central administration as “overseer of fields in the southern district” and the “one who was trusted by the treasurer in the southern voyage, the excellent scribe of accounts”.

Other tasks represented in his tomb are the counting of livestock, the receipt of gold, the supervision of fishing activities and the hunting of birds with a net, and also the wine-harvests. The gold scene is possibly associated with the existent gold mines in the Eastern desert of Elkab, therefore being under his jurisdiction. The fishing activities, hunting of birds and

⁴ For a specific analysis on the early-18th Dynasty powerbase see Shirley (2010, 73–113).

⁵ Description of Pahery’s titles and tomb follow Griffith and Tylor (1894), Devillers (2018, 31–48) and T. Benderitter, Paheiri:

(https://osirisnet.net/tombes/el_kab/pahery/e_pahery_01.html, 31.10.19). Official with titles n° 1077 and 1090 in Al-Ayedi (2006, 319, 323).

⁶ For a more in depth discussion see Roehrig (1990, 81–85).

wine-harvests seem to suggest a connection with the marshlands, and one may ask if there was any involvement of Pahery on a seasonal scale with other regions. Concerning the wine, while it is known that the majority of the production was in the Delta, Elkab seems to have been a centre of production as well.⁷

Thinis (8th province of Upper Egypt)

During the reign of Hatsheput and Thutmose III, Satepihu was the mayor of Thinis, and his wife was a royal nurse (Bryan 2006, 100). During the solo reign of Thutmose III, however, two more officials are known for this province: Intef and Min (Bryan 2006, 100).

Intef is the owner of TT 155, the autobiographical Louvre stela (C26) and a funerary cone (MET 14.1.428; Macadam 1957 n° 139).⁸ He started his career during the co-regency period (Hatshepsut–Thutmose III) (Bryan 2006, 90), and his titles reveal that his occupation was associated with the palace: “My office (*iꜣt*) was in the per nesu, (l.p.h.), my duty (*wnwt*) was in the palace (*stp-sꜣ*), my completion (*km*) was in the ruyt.” (Bryan 2006, 90; Redford 2003, 180). From his monuments we learn that Intef was also a “royal herald”, “overseer of the granaries”, “first reporter of the king”, “controller of all works of the royal house”, and “mayor of Thinis and chief of all oases” (cf. Redford 2003, 174–181 and Säve-Söderbergh 1957, 11–21). With regard to the last title, in his tomb one finds depictions of scenes in the marshlands, and some fragments showing transport ships as well. It is possible that these ships are associated with a scene of taxation, since grain is also depicted, and the text mentions that they are headed for the city of Amun. It is interesting to note, though, that other specific objects like weapons seem to be

part of the taxes received and inspected by Intef (Säve-Söderbergh 1957, 14–15).

The autobiography mentions Intef’s involvement with the military campaigns of Thutmose III – “Now I followed the king of the Two Lands and stuck close to his footsteps in [the northern and southern lands]” (Redford 2003, 180) – but his role abroad was similar to his duties at home (Bryan 2006, 91). In other words, Intef was responsible for the king’s rest-houses while on campaign, travelled ahead of the army for its arrangements and provisioned it with supplies:

Every palace situated (*ḥr-sꜣ*) in a foreign land was assessed for [supplies] and I travelled before the elite troops at the head of the army; and (by the time) my lord came safely to me I had provisioned it. I supplied it with all good and desirable things (available) abroad (*ḥr ḥꜣst*), better than an Egyptian palace, purified, cleansed, with privacy and security for their apartments, and the pantry staffed by its attendants. (Redford 2003, 180–181).

This also seems to imply that Intef had the capacity for gathering products in the foreign lands, which fits his position of a royal herald. Intef’s assessment of products from foreign lands was, however, likely related to his reporting role (Bryan 2006, 91; Redford 2003, 181; Säve-Söderbergh 1957, pls. 11–13). Despite the fact that his autobiography briefly refers military functions – “I was as much a soldier as the master swordsman, and deported myself like his braves”⁹ (Redford 2003, 180) – Intef was a ‘civil’ official who seems to have had the need to compare himself with the soldiers (Shirley 2011, 301). The incorporation of Intef in the logistics of the army does not seem to be associated with a further gain of political positions. The autobiography, where no

⁷ For the production of wine in Ancient Egypt, see the online project Irep en Kemet (<http://www.wineofancientegypt.com/home-map>, 31.10.2019) and also Raedler (2016, 245–253).

⁸ Official with title n° 1098 in Al-Ayedi (2006, 325–326).

⁹ Alternatively translated by Galán *IEI* (140) as: “[...] I was brave like the one who had weapons, I conquered as his brave ones”.

mention for progress is made, and the depiction of deliveries on the back wall of his tomb seem to suggest that he acted as a herald of the king at the same time that he was mayor of Thinis (Säve-Söderbergh 1957, 14). Nevertheless, this certainly favoured his influence and trust at court.

Min¹⁰, on the other hand, is the owner of Theban tomb 109. Little is known about his family, except for the mother's name that was Say and his sons who were called Senty (Iuty) and Sobekmose. He held the title of seal-bearer of the king of Lower Egypt, overseer of the army in the western river, chief administrator of the lord of the Two Lands, overseer of the south, scribe, overseer of priests of Osiris and Onuris, overseer of the singers, steward and festival leader of Osiris, and also mayor of the Oasis.¹¹ Although his tomb is not properly published, two famous depictions from his tomb are known, especially because of the prince Amenhotep, son of Thutmose III, later Amenhotep II. In fact, Min also was a royal tutor, which explains the relief where he appears with the prince on his lap, and also a scene of him teaching the prince how to shoot a bow and arrow. The prince is labelled as *sꜥ nswt*, king's son, and is depicted as a very young man. These archery lessons seem to have occurred in the palace of Min at Thinis, which means that the prince spent some time in the household of this official (Roehrig 1990, 197–198).

¹⁰ Description of Min's titles and tomb follows Bryan (2006, 100), Chevereau (1994, 32), Taylor (2001, 29), Roehrig (1990, 194–195) and the archaeological project of his tomb available at M. Garbagnati, Min Project

(<http://www.min-project.com/en-gb/home.aspx>, 31.10.2019). Official with titles n° 1070 in Al-Ayedi (2006, 317).

¹¹ One must consider that most of *sepat* / provinces had very important access to desert trade routes and quarries in both Eastern and Western Desert which

Qus (10th province of Upper Egypt)

Montuherkhepeshef¹², the owner of the Theban tomb 20, is known to have been mayor of the 10th upper Egyptian province during the reign of Thutmose III. His origins are probably linked with a high-ranking family, but there is no specific information. He was a fan-bearer for the king, and carries other titles such as the sole companion of the king, superintendent of the priests, king's messenger in all countries, king's son, great one of the king of South. This last title was used by Montuherkhepeshef and Iamnefer from Nefrusy, officials that were active members of the royal households of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III (Moreno García 2019, 174). Although without references to his family, the finds inside the tomb led de Garis Davies to suggest the possibility of Montuherkhepeshef to have been married to a daughter of Nebamun (TT 24), steward of the royal wife of Thutmose III called Nebtu.

Nefrusy (16th province of Upper Egypt)

The governor of Nefrusy was Iamnefer¹³ at the time of Thutmose III. He was a son of Paahawty who was also mayor on this province. His wife was Meryt, a chantress of Thoth, known from a variety of monuments, including the tomb of their son Suemniwet. His career appears to have started as a wab-priest, scribe of divine offerings of Thot, and a High Priest of Thot. He was the overseer of the priests and inherited his father's position as mayor of Nefrusy sometime after the reign of Thutmose II. Iamnefer was also connected with the royal family. The title of *hrp nsty*

means that their economic and movement control was also beyond the Nile Valley (Moeller 2016, 17). See also Long (2012, 105–113), Darnell (2013, 785–830) and Esposito (2014).

¹² Description of Montuherkhepeshef's titles and tomb follows Bryan (2006, 100) and the de Garis Davies (1913, 1–19).

¹³ Description of Iamnefer's titles and tomb follows Bryan (2006, 101) and Manuelian (1987, 110). Official with title n° 1089 in Al-Ayedi (2006, 323).

“controller of the two thrones”, seems to imply involvement on the sed-festivals of Thutmose III, and appears in his statues at the British Museum (BM1728) and IFAO (IFAO 110). He was also a royal tutor, and that is represented in a statue apparently dedicated at the temple of Karnak with the prince Aakheperenreseneb on his lap (Bryan 2006, 101). Iamnefer’s son, Suemniwet, owner of TT 92¹⁴, is one of the 14 children known for this official. It is not certain if any succeeded Iamnefer as mayor of Nefrusy, but Suemniwet became possibly active during this reign in the military campaigns. Despite his high-status familial background, from his tomb one learns that Suemniwet was involved with the military campaigns of Thutmose III and gained prominence during the reign of Amenhotep II (Bryan 2006, 101). This is possible to infer not only by his titles and epithets such as “king’s escort on all his expeditions in the southern and northern foreign lands”, “the escort of the king on water and land” (*URK* IV 144950), but also from his depiction wearing the ‘gold of honour’ (Bryan 2001, pl. 21). Although without an autobiography to further understand his career, Shirley (2005, 215) notes that coming from an elite family may explain why Suemniwet’s career seems to have started from a high-ranking position within the military as a “standard-bearer” (*tꜣy sꜣꜣt*). Suemniwet’s involvement in the Levant might have indirectly reinforced his familial local power and court influence, but it also meant for Suemniwet obtaining high-ranking positions which made him even closer to the palace. Suemniwet’s representations as an official who gained favour from the king are interpreted by Shirley (2005; 2016) as a demonstration that his service to the king was more important to him than his familial connections.¹⁵

Shedet /Fayum (21st province of Upper Egypt)

The mayor of the Fayum during the reign of Thutmose III and also during the reign of his successor, Amenhotep II, was Kapu.¹⁶ Little is known about this official, but he marries his daughter, Shedyt Meryt, with Sobekhotep, son of Min. Min, overseer of the treasury, is a well-known official during the reign of Thutmose III. Although uncertainty remains about his tomb (proposed by Shirley as TT 143?), he is identified as the owner of shrine n° 5 at Gebel es-Silsilah. It is likely that Min was originally from the Delta and that his role was more connected with the North (Shirley 2005, 156 following Bryan 1991, 81). Despite being the son of a high official, Bryan (1991, 8185) accessed that Sobekhotep, the owner of TT 63¹⁷, seems to have inherited his father’s position only later on in his career, during the reign of Thutmose IV. Nevertheless, he became mayor of the Fayum before that, under Amenhotep II (Shirley 2005, 154 following Bryan 1991, 81-85), and this position seems to have reinforced his capacity for inheriting his father’s position in the ‘central’ administration. As a regional official, one must also consider the close distance of the Fayum with one of the most important palaces at the time, Gurob, and, consequently, Fayum’s role in provisioning the royal palace and the proximity of the mayor’s family to the royal residence. The office of mayor seems to have been passed on Sobekhotep’s family, since his son, Paser, is also identified as mayor of the Fayum, apparently receiving this title while his father was uniquely acting as overseer of the treasury (Bryan 1991, 246). The strategy of linking regional with central administrative positions seems to have worked, at least in this particular case, on maintaining important offices under the control of individual families. Moreover, Sobekhotep is also known to have been a royal

¹⁴ Official with title n° 1089 in Al-Ayedi (2006, 323).

¹⁵ See also Guksch (1994).

¹⁶ Description on Kapu, Min and Sobekhotep’s titles

follows Bryan (2006, 101) and Shirley (2008, 152–157).

¹⁷ Official with title n° 1096 in Al-Ayedi (2006, 325).

tutor to the future Amenhotep III under his father Thutmose IV (Roehrig 1990, 216217).

Mennefer (1st province of Lower Egypt)

Two individuals appear as mayors of Memphis during this period. One is Hemy, who is known from a statue at the Louvre Museum (Bryan 2006, 101) and the other - already transitioning into the reign of Thutmose III's successor - is Kenamun, a famous official from the reign of Amenhotep II. Analysing this specific case here will allow us to further understand these interconnecting dynamics. His privileged position resulted from his mother's influence at court since she was a royal nurse. Amenemipet is shown in his son's tomb holding Amenhotep II as a child in her lap, referred to "chief royal nurse, who nurtured the god [...]" (Shirley 2005, 267; Davies and Davies 1930, 19 and pl, IX; *URK IV* 1395). His father was a "steward of Amun" and he inherits his father's position in the priesthood (Shirley 2011, 267). Kenamun grew up at court, being a child of the *kap* (*hrd n k3p*), as did his probable brother Khaemheribsen, 3rd priest of Amun (TT 98; *URK IV* 1500). Khaemheribsen appears in Kenamun's tomb as well as a certain individual called Amenhotep (Shirley 2005, 268–270). Concerning the latter, Shirley (2005, 271) notes that he probably was the mayor of Thisis. Amenhotep was the son of Nebiry, who served Min (TT 109), mayor of Thisis during the reign of Thutmose III. It is thus possible that this Amenhotep had contact with the young prince, who is known to have stayed in Min's household since Min was his royal tutor as attested in his tomb. Pehsukher (TT 88) is also depicted and despite the discrepancy of their ages, it has been suggested that he could also have been a brother of Kenamun and son to the royal nurse Amenemipet (see Shirley 2005, 273–276). Although Kenamun does not seem to inherit his father position, some of his titles link him with the priesthood administration,

such as "overseer of the cattle of Amun", "overseer of door-keepers of the double granary of Amun" (*URK IV* 1390; Davies and Davies 1930, 10–16). The involvement in the military campaigns is recorded in his tomb as – "one who follows the king on his marches upon the foreign land of vile Retenu", "one relating to the two legs upon water, upon land, and upon all foreign countries", "attendant of his lord on his expeditions in the foreign lands of the south and north" (*URK IV* 1400, 1401, 1405, 1406) – but his functions abroad seem to have been non-combative in nature (Shirley 2005, 277). His most common military title is fan-bearer, but he is also called *hry pdt* (commander of a host). Other epithets such as "follower of the king" (*šms nsw*) also seem to indicate his participation abroad (Shirley 2011, 277–278). Interestingly, Kenamun is appointed steward of Peru-nefer (*URK* 1386–1387), responsible for the administration of this naval base and the royal residence near Memphis (Der Manuelian 1987, 159)¹⁸. Shirley (2005, 278–281) considers this moment important for Kenamun moving beyond his mother's influence and establishing a more direct relationship with the king. In this office, he must have had contact with the deliveries of foreign products, which are depicted in his tomb (Davies and Davies 1930, 22–33). Kenamun's participation in the military campaigns was likely to have been a strategy of reinforcing influence, from where a new position derived and this also may explain why he was a recipient of gold of honour (Binder 2008, 240).

The regional administration in context

The military nature of a very significant part of the reign of Thutmose III implied, in principle, the absence of the king during long periods of time. On one hand, the favour of some individuals who participated in the campaigns abroad seems to be progressively visible in

¹⁸ For in depth discussion on Peru-nefer's location see Bietak (2018, 223–250).

general (cf. Martins 2019, 50–52). On the other, the regional officials’ background for this reign does not support a significant change in the administration. In fact, Shirley (2013, 583–584) noted that a smooth transition between the reign of Hatshepsut and his sole reign seems to have been preferable in order to ensure loyalty and stability. Also interesting is the fact that Thutmose III was keen on bringing the Amun domain under royal control. He does not install members of the royal family into the Amun priesthood and he does not associate or connect his top administration with the Amun precinct (Shirley 2013, 584), even though the continuative nature of the regional officials on being overseers of the priesthood is clear.

The very mobile nature of this reign also seems to reinforce the necessity of relying on the mayors’ function as reporters to the vizier and king, as a way to ensure the administration of the country. It is possible that, when in Egypt, the king could either travel around the country and/or also take a more ‘permanent’ residence at one of his palaces. For this time period, the well-known palace precincts at Gurob and Tell el-Dab’a could have been good options. The latter is particularly relevant in this discussion for its distinctive features: several palaces with baths, private apartments including probably one for the superintendent of the harbour stronghold, spacious public building, several large multifunctional workshops, and a temple (Bietak 2018a, 28; Bietak 2018b, 223–250). His mobility may have favoured the existence of nuclear groups of individuals that may have constituted the court in those places and, therefore, were part of the large entourage of the king. This implies that the mobility of the regional officials for a palace where the king has stayed is quite limited to the king’s own mobility. It thus seems not particularly correct to assume that the orbit of those officials was in one place with the king at its centre, but rather, several entourages at different locations. The mobility of these officials could have been associated, instead, with accompanying the

king in certain duties or missions and travels to accomplish instructed tasks or duties associated with their positions.

The analysis of the provincial officials for this reign indicates that: a) two mayors – Pahery and Iamnefer – obtained their positions by inheritance, since their families were known to be in this office before them; b) two mayors – Pahery and Min – had a role as royal tutors; c) one mayor – Intef – is known to be a palatial official; d) two mayors – Intef and Kenamun – are directly associated with the military campaigns, while one – Iamnefer – is indirectly associated with it by the participation of his son called Suemniwet; e) one mayor’s family – Kenamun’s – has a privileged connection at court, especially due to his mother’s role as royal nurse. He also reinforced his position by participating in the military campaigns. Although not included in this study, one must mention that the mayors of Thebes during this period are profoundly connected with high-ranking offices like the vizierate, which means that they were both holding the title of governor of Thebes and vizier. The known mayors for this reign are from the same family, Aametju (TT 83) during the first years, User (TT 61 and TT 131) and finally Rekhmire (TT 100) at the end of the reign. Their functions as viziers are the main theme in their tombs decoration and they clearly surpass their local functions, being also deeply interconnected with their role as mayor.

Among these officials, we should consider, for instance, the case of Intef. As already mentioned his functions at the palace and at Thisis could have occurred simultaneously. Indeed, one must question to what extent the presence of the mayor at the provinces was required for its administration. Intef describes that he accompanied the king, which reinforces the idea of his absence from the region. The lack of information prevents us to learn how Intef’s network at Thisis worked, how frequently Intef visited the province, whether

he had special connections with the region or if that was not particularly relevant for the office, etc. However, as Moreno García (2019, 80) noted, the control over the provinces was not incompatible with the participation in state affairs and court life. As important as the royal favour at court was also the capacity of being integrated in powerful networks of patronage, enjoying the support of high-ranking officials (Moreno García 2019, 83).

It is also important to note that the majority of the known royal tutors for this period are associated with functions of the central administration and have different titles (Cf. Roehrig 1990, 78–198). In context, among the seven identified tutors only two were known to have been mayors during the reign of Thutmose III and this means that there is not a particular relationship between the two functions. Rather, it reinforces the idea that these guardians seem to have been chosen for their achievements and that the king entrusted his offspring to the most trusted and powerful courtiers administering the country (Roehrig 1990, 330–331).

tutors: Ahmose Humay (TT 224) and Min (TT 109) (Roehrig 1990, 189–198). In any case, one can also mention that the education of the provincial elite at court together with the royal offspring certainly favoured contacts that ultimately would result in the acquisition of prominent positions later on (Moreno García 2019, 79, 84).

While there is no further information about the familial background of some of these individuals, through this study, one can corroborate Shirley's (2005, 456) conclusion that the direct inheritance and familial nepotism were prevalent during the reign of Thutmose III and that the meritorious rise was not dependent on wartime activity. Nevertheless, the participation on the military campaigns seems to have been an important factor/strategy to gain closer access to the king during Thutmose III's and Amenhotep II's reign (cf. Martins 2019). It seems plausible that this reshaped, to some extent, the closer circles of the king and that became especially notorious during the latter's reign.

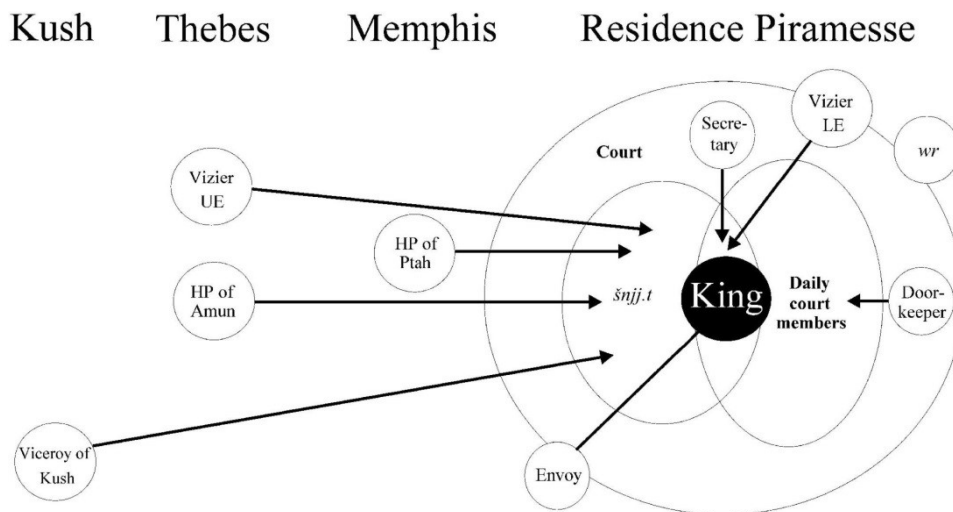


Fig. 1: The court and the residence of Piramesse.
(Raedler 2009, 137. Reproduced with permission of the author).

In this sense, Pahery and Min were responsible for the intellectual and physical education of the princes they received in their household but this responsibility was shared with other tutors. Amenhotep II had, for instance, at least, two

For a comprehensive representation of these circles of interaction, one can consider Christine Raedler's (2009, 137) model for the court of Ramesses II (**Fig. 1**).

Despite the different chronologies, it is possible to identify similarities and discrepancies. Her model of interaction is based on the premise of having a court centred at Pi-Ramesses. Even accepting the more ‘permanent’ nature of this capital (combining the administrative role and the military preparations), the principle of a “peripatetic pharaoh” (Snape 2014, 45) must also lead us to consider, even in this case, that the court, in its broader sense, is not exactly permanently settled in Pi-Ramesses. Through her study, one learns that the Sniit is the inner circle of counsellors of the king, while the court is all his entourage.¹⁹ The close court are those who are present daily, and the extended court the ones occasionally present (cf. Raedler 2009, 134–141). Taking these distinctions into consideration, I believe that for the reign of Thutmose III the Sniit could have been both a mobile and static structure. What I argue is that within this group there are a number of court-based high officials that maybe kept on moving with the king when necessary. At the same time, others like the mayors and other promoted officials from the army could have been the mobile component, in the sense that when the king is moving through the country, these are the ones who are closer to him. This may explain why the early-18th and mid-18th Dynasty kings are entrusting their heirs to these mayors as their tutors, but one cannot explain at this point the way that the transition between the *kap* (at Gurob) and the personal tutors functioned. In this context, for the New Kingdom, the members of the *kap*, the close relationships with the princes and future pharaohs could also have been an extended concept, not only geographically circumscribed but also open to the offspring of the mayors, while sharing the same household.

Preliminary conclusions

The study of regional administration is important to understand the political power associated with settlements, their physical and economic limitations, the nature of what we understand as a province and its role in the central government.

The mayors during the reign of Thutmose III were clearly interested in extending their families’ position and assuring that the influential political links were made. This is possible to infer through their marriages, the inheritance strategies or even how they get their titles, and also from their connections with the king. Being a royal tutor must have been an extraordinary position to promote their offices and to be influential to secure advantages for the members of their families. It seems plausible to argue that their strategies were regionally extended, bringing under their control different areas like the priesthood, or even associating regional offices with positions within the central government, as the case of Thebes is the most evident. The natural mobility of the central and local government seems to suggest that the court was an extended concept, not physically limited and thus not favouring a court-centred tradition (Cruz-Uribe 1994, 45). Also that the mayors were part of the inner circle of the king, although further study is required to better understand this dynamic.

It is not possible to identify during this reign and at a purely regional administrative level the favour of military individuals. The high-ranking families, most of them coming from the first momentum of favour in the early 18th Dynasty, were still in power and nepotism was a common practice. Albeit there is no indication for this period of a significant change in the bureaucratic system, even at a local level it is possible to identify the aim in “controlling” the priesthood (despite the major

¹⁹ This distinction is not made by other scholars like Lloyd (2014, 23–24).

favour that the military campaigns will bring to the Amun precinct) and also the subtle integration of military men in the regional system as it is the case with Dedi, who became chief of the Medjay and overseer of the western desert/foreign lands west of Thebes (Shirley 2011, 296–297; Martins 2019, 26–27). What seems clear is that the king assumes a pivotal position for the acquisition and distribution of offices. The favour of some individuals allowed that the new people entered in the administration and priesthood, a sphere traditionally marked by nepotism and inheritance. At the same time, the old elite families continue to gravitate around the king and the pharaoh reinforces or changes these

families' power. Between tradition and 'innovation', the reign of Thutmose III allows us to study these new dynamics, but it seems clear that there is no major change detectable in the regional administration concerning a reorganization with new favoured individuals.

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Social Theories and Old Assyrian Kaneš

Overview, Comments, Developments*

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Abstract: In earlier literature, terms such as Assyrian "colony" are often used to describe the role of Kaneš and the predominant society in Kaneš. But especially in the last 20 years, this picture has changed: As a result of numerous text finds and their publication, it became increasingly clear that the Assyrians in Kaneš did not play such a dominant role as previously assumed – accordingly, other social models were used to describe the Old Assyrian society in Kaneš. This article is intended to explore the possibilities of using modern social theories to investigate and describe a complex ancient social system, such as that of the Old Assyrian Kaneš. Theories used so far in Assyriological literature and their application will be reviewed: the article is thus intended to reflect current research trends. Furthermore, the article will ask what is the purpose of "comparative studies" and whether it is in any case useful to use a comparative example to describe or whether it is not sometimes better to investigate and describe a society with the available means (archaeological and philological sources).

“[...] the essential task of theory building there is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize within them.”¹

1. Introduction: Old Assyrian Period

The so-called Old Assyrian period, which lasted approximately from 1772 until 1718 BC (Barjamovic – Hertel – Larsen 2012, 91–97),² is characterized by long-distance trade between Aššur, the modern Qal’at Šerqat in northern

Iraq, and Kaneš, the modern Kültepe in Anatolia, in the middle of Turkey. During this period, Assyrian merchants settled in Kaneš and lived among the native Anatolians, in a special quarter called *kārum* (literally “harbour, quay” in Akkadian),³ a commercial district in the lower town of the city of Kaneš.

The trade between the two cities was based on the exchange of tin and textiles, which the Assyrian merchants brought via donkey caravans from Aššur to Kaneš. In Kaneš these were sold for silver and gold, which the

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discussing various questions. Many thanks also to the two reviewers for their helpful comments. None of them, of course, is responsible for any remaining mistakes. Abbreviations follow the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* (Berlin etc., 1928–2018).

¹ Geertz 1973, 26.

² Following the so-called Middle Chronology. For up-to-date information concerning the Old Assyrian chronology see Barjamovic – Hertel – Larsen 2012.

³ CAD K (1971) 231. For a discussion of the term *kārum* see Michel 2014, 70–71.

Assyrians brought back to Aššur. The distance between the two commercial centres was around 775 kilometres as the crow flies, while the main caravan route was about 1250 kilometres and was probably completed in about 40 days.⁴

Most of the ca. 22 500 cuneiform tablets found in the lower town of Kültepe come from the private archives of Assyrian and some Anatolian⁵ merchants and are written in Old Assyrian, a dialect of the Akkadian language. Until today only some 7000 of them have been published (Kouwenberg 2019, 21 [March 2017]). These tablets come from 80–100 different archives. Most of them belong to a 30-year time-span between 1893–1863 BC, which arguably represents the heyday of the Old Assyrian long-distance trade (Barjamovic – Hertel – Larsen 2012, 55).

From the archaeological point of view, the ruins of the city of Kaneš consisted of a main mound and a lower town.⁶ The commercial district was situated in an area of the lower town of Kaneš, where hundreds of houses have been excavated since the beginning of the official Turkish excavations in 1948. During the period covered by the documentation ca. 3000–3500 people – mostly merchants with their households – are estimated to have lived here (Hertel 2014, 43). C. Michel (2014, 72) argues that 500–800 of these people were of Assyrian origin.

In fact, the houses and their inventories – except the tablets – do not reveal much about the origins of their inhabitants. Houses were

built in an Anatolian style and the objects found such as ceramics mainly show Anatolian characteristics (see e.g. Stein 2008, 34; Larsen – Lassen 2014, 172). The information concerning the long-distance trade, the merchants and their living conditions is thus mostly provided by the cuneiform records.

The special situation described here has fascinated scholars from a variety of research areas, and several papers have appeared in recent years discussing how different social theories can be applied to the society of the Old Assyrian period, or help understanding it.⁷ This article presents a short overview of a number of these theories, focusing on their initial context and how they have been adapted to the circumstances of the Old Assyrian period. Pros and contras will be outlined, and an attempt will be made to trace possible developments.⁸ In this sense, this paper intends to offer an interim report on the current state of research.

2. Social Theories and Old Assyrian Society

From time to time the term “colony” appears in the context of research on Old Assyrian Kaneš, and some authors adopt labels such as the “Old Assyrian Colony Period”⁹ when dealing with Old Assyrian sources – this may cause confusion, especially for those looking at Old Assyrian studies from the outside.

In her 2014 article “Considerations on the Assyrian Settlement in Kanesh”, C. Michel made some important points concerning the terms *kārum* and “colony”. She pointed out that before the 1960s it was assumed by most that

⁴ Stratford 2017, 148 with earlier literature. As the latest research by Stratford (2017, 163–178) shows, letters which could be carried by special travellers on mules, could cover the distance in 30 days.

⁵ See Michel 2011.

⁶ For an overview of the archaeological remains in Kaneš see recently Palmisano 2018, 19–22.

⁷ This paper does not deal with early theories like those of K. Polanyi, as they have been well assessed by Michel 2005 (with earlier literature) and Pálfi 2014. Michel (2014, 70) also offers some further information concerning the history of research on Old Assyrian sources.

Nor does this paper discuss the World-systems theory and the Old Assyrian society, on which see Allen 1992 (for a comment on this see Palmisano 2018, 25).

⁸ This overview differs in many points from the one given by Highcock 2018, 18–21. Highcock did not differentiate between Hybridity and Middle Ground, as will be done in this paper (see also Larsen – Lassen 2014, 171–172). Rather, she summarized both as a model of a “hybridized community” (Highcock 2018, 18).

⁹ See for example the titles of Lumsden 2008 or Barjamovic 2011.

Kaneš was a colony of an “Assyrian Empire” with its capital (“mothertown”) Aššur and that *kārum* was translated as “colony” (Michel 2014, 70–71).

According to P. van Dommelen, we can speak about a colony when two conditions are fulfilled:

“[...] in the first place, the presence of one or more groups of foreign people (the colonizers) in a region at some distance from their own place of origin and, in the second place, asymmetrical socio-economic relationships between the colonizing and colonized groups—inequality, in a single word” (van Dommelen 2012, 398).

With regard to earlier studies, it can be assumed that the criterion of an “asymmetrical socioeconomic relationship” was considered as fulfilled – Assyrians were considered as colonizers and Anatolians as colonized.¹⁰

In 1963 P. Garelli was the first who gave a new interpretation of the term *kārum* as a trading centre situated in a city (Larsen 1974, 468–469; Michel 2014, 70 with reference to Garelli 1963, 370–374).¹¹ Stein (2008, 26–27) and Michel (2014, 71) have most convincingly shown that the term “colony” and also the concept behind this term should not be used to describe the situation in the Old Assyrian period.¹² Indeed, the sources reveal that it was the merchants

who paid taxes to the local authorities.¹³ In the following, the significance of using the term “colony” when dealing with social theories and Old Assyrian Kaneš will become obvious.

2.1 Trade Diaspora

In his article “Cultural Strategies in the Organization of Trading Diasporas”, A. Cohen (1971, 267) defined a diaspora as “a nation of socially interdependent, but spatially dispersed, communities”.¹⁴ His research focused on the Yorubaland, in the southwestern part of Nigeria, where merchants of the Hausas, a people from northern Nigeria, established their trade diaspora (Cohen 1971, 270–276).

As for the Old Assyrian period, A. Gräff (2005)¹⁵ attempted to interpret the Assyrian presence in Kaneš in the framework of this concept, though his article has been overlooked by other authors discussing the concept of “trade diasporas” in Ancient Near Eastern contexts (see e.g. Stein 2008; Highcock 2018). Nevertheless, Gräff already made some of the main points concerning the usage of this theory (see chart below). In 2008 G. Stein (2008) examined the Old Assyrian merchants in Kaneš in the framework of a “trade diaspora”.¹⁶ Some years later, also C. Michel (2014) discussed Old Assyrian “trade diasporas” and the assertions made by Stein.

¹⁰ See for example the discussion between B. Landsberger and J. Lewy: Landsberger (1924, 223) interpreted *kārum* as “Kolonie” whereas Lewy (1925, 19) preferred an interpretation as “Stadtbehörde”. See further Larsen 1974, 468 and Michel 2014, 70.

¹¹ Allen (1992, 464) calls this the “Democratic Entrepreneurs School”.

¹² There are also other possibilities to deal with the term “colony”, see for example the definition preferred by Palmisano (2018, 25). He follows C. Gosden (2004, 153) who defines colonialism as “a process where material culture moves people, both culturally and physically, leading them to expand geographically, to accept new material forms and to set up power structures around a desire for material culture”.

¹³ Dercksen 2007a, 198–200.

¹⁴ For the use of the term “diaspora” see Cohen 1971, 267 n. 1.

For a general discussion on the term see Brubaker 2005.

¹⁵ Gräff in his introduction refers to Faist 2001, 239. Faist compares Old and Middle Assyrian trade and describes the Old Assyrian trade as follows: “Der Handel beruhte auf einem hierarchischen Netz von Handelsniederlassungen bzw. “trade diasporas” (*kārum* und *wabartum*) und war durch Verträge mit der jeweiligen lokalen Autorität geregelt” (Faist 2001, 239–240). Faist (2001, 111 n. 13) further points to Curtin (1984, 67–70) who was, as it seems, the first to describe the presence of Assyrian merchants in Anatolia as a “trade diaspora”.

¹⁶ Stein 2008 is based on Stein 1999 where the author tested different world systems, among others “trade diasporas” in third-millennium BC Mesopotamia. In another article (Stein 2002) he gave a detailed overview of the system of “trade diasporas”.

Stein focused on “diaspora autonomy” as the most fitting variant of diaspora for the Old Assyrian period.¹⁷ This concept considers the Assyrian merchants as a “protected autonomy within the host community” (Stein 2008, 31). One of the main points made by Stein is that the Assyrian merchants kept their own cultural identity in Anatolia:

“How does a trade diaspora work? Members of the trading group move into new areas, settle down in market or transport centers

along major trade routes, and specialize in exchange while maintaining a separate cultural identity from their host community” (Stein 2008, 31).¹⁸

Stein gives a few examples indicating that the Assyrian merchants kept separated from the Anatolians: The following chart may help to illustrate a choice of his major points and the often contrasting opinions of other scholars concerning aspects of “trade diaspora” and the Old Assyrian society in Kaneš:

	Pro (Stein 2008)	Contra
general aspects	Stein argues for a separation between the hosting society (natives of Kaneš) and the Assyrian merchants (p. 31).	(1) Marriage frequently took place between Assyrian merchants and Anatolian women (Kienast 2008). ¹⁹ (2) Assyrians and Anatolians were living in the same quarter of the town as neighbours (Gräff 2005, 159–162; Larsen – Lassen 2014, 177 n. 29; with a detailed analysis: Michel 2014, 75). Further, no architectural difference between the houses of Assyrians and Anatolians is perceptible (e.g., Michel 2014, 76).
archaeological evidence	Stein suggests that the zooarchaeological evidence could reveal differences in food preferences and preparation techniques (p. 34).	For the first results see Atici 2014: there seems to be some difference, but the results have to be regarded with caution because more research needs to be done (Atici 2014, 208; see also Michel 2014, 76 with further arguments). ²⁰

¹⁷ Stein (2008, 31–32) differentiates between three types of trading diasporas: (1) Diaspora Marginality, (2) Diaspora Autonomy und (3) Diaspora Dominance.

¹⁸ Nearly the same aspect is highlighted by Gräff 2005, 159.

¹⁹ Interestingly, Cohen gives an opposite example from the history of Nigerian diasporas: “[...] so that a good citizen of the diaspora is one who is born of a Hausa woman and a Hausa man. Hausa men in the

diaspora marry only Hausa women” (Cohen 1971, 272).

²⁰ Furthermore, the Old Assyrian cylinder seals can be investigated: there is an Assyrian and an Anatolian style and both were used by Assyrians as well as Anatolians (see Gräff 2005, 163–164; Larsen – Lassen 2014). As Michel (2014, 77) points out, glyptic “witnesses a real acculturation phenomenon between both communities”. See also § 2.2 Hybridity.

	Pro (Stein 2008)	Contra
Ethnological aspects	Clothing could have served as a marker of social identity (p. 34).	We know that Assyrians and Anatolians produced different kinds of garments, and surely these may have marked social status or ethnic identity. But there is no archaeological or textual evidence attesting that Assyrians only wore textiles produced by Assyrians which Anatolians were not allowed to wear or the other way around. ²¹ Therefore a separation in this context is hard to prove.
Linguistic aspects	Concerning the textual evidence Stein stated that there are almost no loanwords or other linguistic borrowings in the Old Assyrian dialect from the local culture (p. 34).	Michel (2014, 77) notes that this assumption is based on outdated research and refers in this respect to Dercksen's research (2007b).

Surely the Assyrians will have kept their own traditions, at least in parts of the cultic domains,²² but it was – as both material and textual evidence shows – not their primary aim to keep separated from native Anatolians and other Non-Assyrians.

Nonetheless, there is an ongoing consideration of the “trade diaspora model”, especially by N. Highcock. She laments the fact that the archaeological evidence is not sufficiently considered (Highcock 2018, 19–20; see also below), though both Gräff and Stein have given it due place. As the chart above shows, however, the corresponding arguments by Stein could be invalidated. It certainly cannot be ruled out that future archaeological or philological investigations can change the currently existing picture. As already pointed out by Lumsden (2008, 29), this concept is not adequate to describe the complex situation in Old Assyrian Kaneš. Indeed, according to the current state of research, caution is urged when

using the concept of “trade diaspora” for Old Assyrian society.

2.2 Hybridity

The concept of “hybridity” – in one of its most influential uses in contemporary cultural studies – was formulated by the post-colonial critic H. K. Bhabha, in a number of contributions published in his famous book “The Location of Culture” (Bhabha 1994). For Bhabha, cultural hybridity describes a ‘third space’ in which different cultures encounter each other and negotiate on meanings and differences (Bhabha 1994, 7). Within the framework of hybridity, regulated and essentialist political discourses are rejected. The concept was developed for the postcolonial situation with reference to the Indian subcontinent.

For the Old Assyrian period, M. T. Larsen and A. W. Lassen tested the concept of hybridity with a particular focus on the interpretation of material culture (Larsen – Lassen 2014, 172).²³

²¹ See also Michel 2014, 76.

²² See for example Michel 2014, 71–72 and Heffron 2016. However, Michel points out that Assyrians at the same time also worshipped Annā, the goddess of Kaneš (Michel 2014, 78). Again, Cohen (1971, 277) highlights that religion can play an important role in establishing a trade diaspora: “[...] that is why most of the large-scale diasporas about which we know are

associated with a ‘universal’ civilization or religion: Judaism, Hinduism, Confucianism and, in West Africa, Islam”.

²³ Still, in the beginning it remains unclear which concept of hybridity they use: “In our view there are clear similarities between White’s theory [viz. ‘Middle Ground’, see below §2.3. (S.P.S.)] and the hybridity models developed in recent years, and Homi

The main subject of their investigation are the cylinder seals of the Old Assyrian period (Larsen – Lassen 2014, 179–187). Before the Assyrian merchants came to Kaneš, stamp seals prevailed in Anatolia. The cylinder seals introduced by the Assyrian merchants were quickly adapted, as can be seen in particular from those cylinder seals which were made in the Anatolian style – in Anatolia – and which were used besides the seals in the Old Assyrian style by Assyrians as well as Anatolians.

Using the term “hybridity”²⁴ in Bhabha’s sense leads to several problems, as P. W. Stockhammer has shown:

“Whereas Bhabha (2007) defined hybridity as a strategy of the suppressed and subaltern against their suppressors in a colonial context, archaeologists particularly perceive those objects as ‘hybrid’ which seem to resist classification with predefined taxonomies” (Stockhammer 2013, 11).

This quotation clarifies the problem of using a term belonging to a different discipline without being explicit about its contextual application. Besides the postcolonial concept with its political dimension, the biological implication of ‘hybridity’ should also be considered. Given these problems, Stockhammer – among others – (re-)introduced a different term to characterize the concept of hybridity in archaeological research: “entanglement”²⁵, which describes certain creative processes resulting from cultural encounters (Stockhammer 2013, 16). A further theoretical entailment is his concept of “cultural entanglement”:

“This entangled object is produced at some place (which does not have to be the place where the object is found), but its materiality shows that it is not the result of local continuities, but of changes triggered by encounters with otherness. It is more than just a sum of the entities from which it originated. It is an indissoluble combination of all of them – a cultural “Geflecht” – and might be seen as a new entity” (Stockhammer 2012, 50–51).

By using the term “entanglement” – developed mainly for use in archaeological contexts – instead of “hybridity”, and thereby leaving Bhabha’s concern with a conflictual political dimension aside, we end up with a concept which is entirely adequate for archaeological investigations.²⁶ Larsen – Lassen came to a similar result concerning the Old Assyrian cylinder seals:

“The production of cylinder seals in Anatolia was undoubtedly caused by the presence of the Assyrian merchants, and it is likely that seals of this type were manufactured with the Assyrians in mind as consumers. The hybridized imagery on these seals reflects the negotiated and entangled nature of society in Kaneš in the Old Assyrian period. At the same time, the elements do not seem to be randomly compiled, but rather deliberately so by the seal carvers to please specific groups of consumers” (Larsen – Lassen 2014, 186).

Thus, the term “hybridity” described, for Bhabha, the effects and dynamics of a colonial encounter displaying unequal power relations – but this was not the case for Kaneš. Therefore, this term should not be used to describe the

Bhabha’s notion of a ‘third space of enunciation’ (Larsen – Lassen 2014, 172). They provide no specific bibliographical references to clarify whose views they are following when using the term “hybridity”. At a later point, they introduce a definition of hybridization given by P. van Dommelen (see Larsen – Lassen 2014, 179 n. 40 with further references).

²⁴ Hybridity has been discussed with reference to different types of ancient societies and situations under different perspectives. For an overview of archaeological studies using the term “hybridity” see Stockhammer 2012, 52–54.

²⁵ See for example Stockhammer 2012, 46–47 and Stockhammer 2013, 16 with further literature.

²⁶ See also Stockhammer 2012, 47.

material evidence of the Old Assyrian period without detailed qualification. The term “entanglement” – as currently used by Larsen and Lassen as well as in other archaeological research²⁷ – may be more appropriate to the contextual realities of archaeology.

2.3 Middle Ground

The concept of the “Middle Ground” was developed by R. White in his work “The Middle Ground. Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815” (White 2011² [1991]). This book focuses on fur trade in the area of the Great Lakes (*pays d'en haut*) between 1650–1815 AD. The protagonists are French fur traders on the one side and the native inhabitants of this area, the Algonquian Indians, on the other side. The Middle Ground represents a third space between two societies which White describes as the context of “a process of mutual and creative misunderstandings” and “the ways that new meanings are derived from them” (White 2006, 9). Here we find ourselves, as already with Bhabha, in a colonial situation. Especially the similarities between Bhabha’s and White’s views are interesting to note: both create a new “third space” in-between the societies under investigation.²⁸ A special interest of White is gaining an understanding of the view of the colonized.²⁹

St. Lumsden (2008) was the first who tried to adapt the Middle Ground theory to the Old Assyrian period. His article was partially reviewed by Larsen – Lassen (2014, 174–178) and recently also Y. Heffron (2017) tested this approach.

In a detailed investigation, Lumsden examined different aspects of the Old Assyrian material

culture. He saw the special value of the Middle Ground in the fact that this theory is not only focused on trade, which is always in the foreground in Old Assyrian studies and in theories like the “trade diaspora” (Lumsden 2008, 29). As basic prerequisites for the Middle Ground, according to White, Lumsden sees a balance in power relations, a relationship based on a mutual need and the inability of one party to convince the other that it “can change sides”. He saw mediation as an essential element (Lumsden 2008, 31). During his investigations, however, Lumsden could not find appropriate evidence for the Middle Ground in the material record. This led him to suspect that texts may be more helpful. In conclusion, he advocated the importance of combining archaeological and written evidence if one is to apply Middle Ground framework (Lumsden 2008, 43).

Also Larsen – Lassen (2014, 178) argue against the use of the Middle Ground. In their opinion, this model is not suitable for understanding how material culture can shape or reflect the interaction of groups when they encounter each other. They recognize the value of this model in the analysis of social and political relations. Another problem pointed out by Lumsden is that he was unable to find clear cases of misunderstandings – a main element of White’s theory – between the Assyrian merchants and the natives of Kaneš (Lumsden 2008, 31 n. 11; see also Larsen – Lassen 2014, 175). Nevertheless, Y. Heffron made a second attempt. She focused only on textual evidence and investigated “bigamie autorisée”, a term already introduced by Michel (2006, 161–163), and the *amtum*-wife practice, where she hoped to find the required misunderstandings constituting the Middle Ground (Heffron 2017, 79).³⁰ These *amtum*-wives were the secondary

²⁷ In this context, particular reference must be made to Ian Hodder (2012) and his work.

²⁸ Stockhammer – Athanassov (2018, 100–102) also notice this and further add the work of M. Pratt who introduced a related concept of “contact zones” in the context of colonial encounter.

²⁹ White 2011², XXVII. The author also criticized that these groups had been marginalized in earlier periods and studies (White 2011², XXX).

³⁰ Besides Heffron, also Lumsden (2008, 35) and Larsen – Lassen (2014, 177–178) thought that these mixed marriages were comparable to the marriages

wives of the Assyrian merchants who lived in Kaneš, the merchants' principal wives (*aššatum*) lived in Assyria.³¹ But the only example of a possible misunderstanding derives from the marriage contract TPAK 161a/b. The document consists, as usual, of a tablet and an envelope that repeats the tablet's text. In the "travel clause"³² of the tablet we read *a-ma-sú* (l. 15) "his (i.e. the merchant's) *amtum*-wife", while the envelope shows *a-ša-sú* (l. 17) "his (principal) wife". One could take this as evidence of confusion between the status of "principal" (*aššatum*), and "secondary" (*amtum*) wife. However, this is a unique piece of evidence, which should most likely be seen as a mistake by the scribe.³³

Concerning the "bigamy clause"³⁴ of this contract, one notices further differences between the tablet and its envelope: the scribe changed also the order of the cities in which the husband is not allowed to marry another wife (TPAK 161a: ll. 10–14; 161b: ll. 13–16).³⁵ A closer comparison between tablet and envelope reveals even more deviations, particularly in the first lines which Kienast (2015, 136) calls receipt of purchase price ("Kaufpreisquittung"). This can also be observed in other marriage (and divorce) contracts, where the order of the clauses can be changed or elements of the clauses are omitted, for instance, kt v/k 147a/b³⁶ where the tablet lacks a part of the clause mentioned on the envelope. This could be convincingly regarded as cases of scribal carelessness. Altogether this is a doubtful piece

of evidence for Heffron's "genuine confusion" (Heffron 2017, 79).

It is possible that the concept of Middle Ground can prove useful once more details about the excavations in Kültepe will be published or further work is conducted on the views of the "colonised" Anatolians (see also below). This is one of the main elements of White's concept which does seem very promising, even if, once again, the framework of an encounter between colonisers and colonised has proved inapplicable to the Kaneš context.

2.4 Concept of Mobile Identities / Mobility

The origin of this theoretical framework can be found in the "Time-Space-Distanciation" (TSD) concept of the sociologist A. Giddens (1984, 110–226). The TSD theory deals with the extension – or in Giddens's words "stretching" (Giddens 1984, 181) – of systems across space and time as a basic feature of human societies, and especially with the interaction of people absent in space and time, such as between the ancient Assyrian merchants in Kaneš and their families in Aššur. This concept was used by A. Porter in her work on mobile pastoralism, in which she examined the emergence of ancient civilizations in Mesopotamia with a view on nomadism (Porter 2012). Porter further adopts the concept of "Toponymie en miroir" introduced by D. Charpin and J.-M. Durand (Charpin – Durand 1986, 157–158; Charpin 2003; Porter 2009, 203–205 and 2012, 312–313). "Toponymie en

described by White (2011², 68–69.) White gives an example for an "intermarriage" between a Frenchman and a native woman where it becomes clear that his sources present both sides of the Middle Ground. This differs significantly from the Kaneš sources, where the Assyrian perspective prevails (White 2011², 71–75 and 2006, 11–12).

³¹ On the topic of the second wife in the Old Assyrian period see Kienast 2008; Kienast 2015, 93–96 and Veenhof 2018, 30–32. For the "secondary wife" in the Ancient Near East with further literature see now Földi – Schlüter 2019.

³² The "travel clause" includes the husband's right to take his wife with him on his business trips. This right

could be guaranteed to the husband in marriage contracts. For further information see Veenhof 2018, 23–25.

³³ See also Veenhof 2018, 10.

³⁴ The "bigamy clause" is an important part of Old Assyrian marriage contracts and contains information on which other women the husband may or may not marry. This clause also regulates where the husband may marry which woman. Michel 2006 provides detailed information on bigamy in the Old Assyrian period.

³⁵ See also Kienast 2015, 138.

³⁶ See Kienast 2015, 132–134 with reference to earlier literature.

miroir” is the naming of new settlements based on names already known to the founders from their region of origin. Often the founders of such named settlements are expatriates (Charpin 2003, 15–18) or – as first millennium BC examples show – deportees (Tolini 2015, 64–66). Porter uses the two concepts to demonstrate that in this way kinship relations could be maintained between the pastoralists – despite great distances.

N. Highcock (2018) has looked at these concepts and their applicability to the Old Assyrian society. In her view, Porter’s work on pastoralist societies can be seen as a “springboard” (Highcock 2018, 21) for new research on Old Assyrian society. One of her major aims is to analyse how mobility shaped the structure of the Old Assyrian society (Highcock 2018, 6).³⁷ She regards the Assyrians in Kaneš as akin to pastoralist societies:

“Though the pastoral component of Assur’s population is not highly visible in the available data, the majority of textual evidence for the Old Assyrian period was produced by merchants, another category of mobile community. A significant proportion of Assur’s population participated in the long-distance trade network and thus the “sons of Assur” also represent a people dispersed across time and space” (Highcock 2018, 24–25).

Based on the idea of “Toponymie en miroir”, Highcock develops a new concept for the Old Assyrian period which she calls “mirrored institutions” (Highcock 2018, 25–26). The main difference is that the pastoralists, such as nomads, re-used the names of settlements, while the Assyrians of the Old Assyrian period encountered already established settlement

pattern, to which they “translated” their administrative structures as known to them from Aššur. For this concept, she is able to present a range of examples like the *kārum* office (*bēt kārim*) in Kaneš and the city office in Aššur. She concludes that:

“[...] the Assyrians were able to project their homeland onto a foreign landscape. This model does not negate the hybridization that occurred at Kanesh and the other Assyrian settlements, but instead explores how Assyrians shaped to their own cultural and political borders when living beyond them” (Highcock 2018, 28).

This approach thus again focuses only on Assyrian traders and attempts to show what strategies mobile groups could apply when they met other – in this case settled – ‘cultures’. “Mirrored institutions” can explain how Assyrian merchants were organized, but it is not necessarily a useful way to explain the peculiarities and phenomena that make up Old Assyrian society in Kaneš, as it risks showing one side of the coin only – the more conservative one.

Yet we may think that the Old Assyrian concept of “intermarriage” can be understood within this framework: in the absence of their wives, the Assyrian merchants married a secondary wife, whom they could not call *aššatum* “wife” because of the legal implications of the term and because they already had one in Aššur.³⁸ As they lacked a neutral term for “secondary wife”, they used *amtum* “female slave, maid”, which was the common term for female slaves.³⁹ We could thus interpret this phenomenon by positing that Assyrian merchants at the beginning of trade relations abroad also tried to “mirror” their households in Aššur – having a “wife” at home, caring for

³⁷ Highcock’s article offers an overview of the Middle Bronze age societies and the role that mobility played in this period (Highcock 2018, 5–11).

³⁸ But we also know some exceptions, there were some wives who lived in Kaneš (see note 41).

³⁹ This term was, for example also used to describe those women taken as substitutes when the first wife was unable to bear children. That a female slave could be bought as such a substitute is shown by the marriage contract ICK 1, 3: 7b–16.

their needs.⁴⁰ A wife undoubtedly gave far stronger economic and legal security for business management than a mere slave. And Assyrian merchants needed someone they could trust to act in their interests in Anatolia – in many cases we know of *amtum*-wives who did that job, like the case of Šišaḥšušar, the *amtum*-wife of Aššur-nādā demonstrates. She had to collect outstanding debts (OAA 1, 51, ll. 19–22) and as the letter OAA 1, 52 shows, she was updated by her husband about incoming merchandise and had to give instructions to the staff to sell copper or to buy oxen.

3. Why Compare? And How?

Why compare? One of the most frequent answers to this question is that, by making comparisons we try to close gaps in our knowledge. Of course, cross-cultural approaches are particularly suitable for this, but they rarely lead to the desired results. Societies vary widely, they can have parallels in general, but they can also be fundamentally different. The same phenomenon can result from very different reasons, so the question that arises is: how should societies be compared? Can we only compare parts of societies or do we have to compare the society as a whole to get the information we desire? Can we mix different theories to find the appropriate answer to our question?

As the survey above has shown, none of the theories is able to explain both textual evidence *and* material remains. Already Highcock addressed that problem and argued for a mixing of theories:

“I would argue that an analytical framework which 1) borrows elements from the trade diaspora model as applied by Stein to the texts and 2) incorporates the phenomenon of hybridization as seen in the material culture, best suits a synthesis of the textual and archaeological data, the latter which unfortunately is not within the purview of this discussion” (Highcock 2018, 21).⁴¹

Perhaps we should consider describing Old Assyrian society in its own terms without importing theoretical terminology from other contexts, as White did for the society in northern America of the 17th to 18th centuries AD. For the Old Assyrian society this was in part already done by P. Garelli (1963). Still, comparative work for closing the gaps will continue to be necessary.

Unfortunately, the available textual material is one-sided in many ways: first, it mainly represents the mercantile class and secondly, we know only the Assyrian side. There is not much research done about the “Anatolians” or, better said, the native inhabitants of Kaneš – except for, e.g. C. Michel’s (2011) paper on the private archives of “Anatolian” merchants or an article by J. G. Dercksen (2004) on the elements of the Old Anatolian society in Kaneš. This substantially differs from the elaborated picture that White presents of the Algonquians in his work, not to mention Bhabha’s work on India.

Another fundamental problem that we have been encountering is that many of the theories presented here require a colonial situation, which is clearly not given in the Old Assyrian period – not, at least, in the terms of power unbalances that have necessarily shaped post-

⁴⁰ Perhaps this thought was in the foreground at the beginning of the trade relations, but we also know of *amtum*-wives in Aššur and vice versa also of *aššatum*-wives in Kaneš. For example, Istar-ummī, *amtum*-wife of Aššur-taklāku, who apparently lived in Aššur and not in Kaneš. The *aššatum* of Aššur-taklāku, however, lived in Kaneš. As Michel (2001, 506, also Larsen 2002, 185) remarks, this is an example of “contrairement à la tradition”. It is likely that the initial

concept dissolved or rather loosened up over time and *amtum*-wives were no longer found only in Kaneš and other cities in Anatolia, but also in Aššur. On the other hand, we know at least of several *aššatum*-wives that they lived in Kaneš.

⁴¹ For the “trade diaspora” model, already Michel (2014, 72) mentioned that it can be applied only in parts to investigate the Old Assyrian society.

colonial theory. We should possibly look at other concepts or theories which may describe the process when two different societies meet. Other forms of acculturation can be described and analysed: especially integration concepts, which include a retention of initial cultural aspects but also admit interaction.⁴²

Regarding the second phase of the Old Assyrian period (ca. 1835–1760 BC), concepts of migration may provide a way to analyse this society but until today there are not enough published texts to do so.⁴³

This article has shown that there are several possibilities as to how we can deal with theories and models. One of the major issues is to describe a theory which fits both the material and the written sources. Perhaps, the most valuable answer lies in Geertz's view quoted at the beginning of this article: theories are not abstract models that we should forcibly map onto the societies we analyse, but they can sharpen our senses when we look at them.

⁴² For aspects and different models of acculturation see Attoura 2002.

⁴³ See Larsen – Lassen 2014, 187.

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Creatures with Seven Heads in the Revelation of John

—

A History of the Motif in the Ancient Near East*

Christoffer Theis

Abstract: The essay offers a history of the motif of the multi-headed creatures in Revelation of John 12:3 and 13:1–2. It presents hints for a transmission of these specific creatures from a common view of cultures in the Ancient Near East in antiquity. So far, the focus for explaining these creatures was mainly based on motifs from the Old Testament, or the heads were seen as signs for Roman emperors. But with inclusion of sources from various cultures of the Ancient Near East, it becomes obvious that the feature of multiple heads, as well as the specific number of seven heads, is a common theme in different cultures. The presentation was surely not invented by John and there is no need to equate the heads with Roman emperors.

1. Introduction

If one thinks about threats to God and Christ in the Bible, the Revelation of John and the mentioning of specific enemies are surely among the most impressive examples. In Rev 12:3 and 13:1–2 two of these enemies are described as a snake and a beast, each of them with seven heads. In Rev 12:9 John denominates the seven-headed snake as the Satan, so this specific depiction of an animal becomes the most obvious threat to God and his creation. The phenomenon of creatures with many heads is attested only in a few instances in the Bible. The prophet Ezekiel mentions a Kerub with two faces in Ezek 41:18b–19; according to Ezek 1:4–10 a Kerub can also have four faces. According to Ps 74:13 (cf. Jes 27:1), a Tannīn (תַּנִּינִי) and according to Ps 74:14, a Liwyatan (לִיַּוְיָטָן)¹ can have multiple heads, but the specific number is not mentioned.² Thereby, the motif

of a snake or a beast with seven heads is unique in the Bible in the Revelation of John, and the prophet used this representation of an enemy of God in his prophetic proclamation of an era, which will end with a fight between God and the evil.

The question is, is this motif, the depiction of a seven-headed being as an enemy, a unique motif of John or can this motif be seen as a common topic in the Ancient Near East? Can we identify the snake as a common threat for god(s) in the time before John wrote his Revelation? By an investigation of the archaeological remains passed down from other ancient Near Eastern Cultures, we can clearly show that John did not invent or even develop the motif. With a look at the specific motif history, proposed explanations made by scholars in commentaries or articles about Rev 12:3 and 13:1–2 can be rejected. The aim is, to

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¹ For this specific being, see the literature presented by Ebach 1984; Huber 2016; Lipinski 1984, 521–522; Uehlinger 1999, 511–515.

² For this Psalm s. Dahood 1968, 198–208; Gunkel 1986, 320–326; Hossfeld – Zenger 2000, 355–372; Kraus 1989, 675–683; Oeming – Vette 2010, 181–187; Seybold 1996, 285–290; Tate 1990, 240–255.

collect significant depictions and written sources of snakes with seven heads from the Ancient Near East, and especially to examine the motif history of these creatures in different cultures. In a further step, it is the aim to answer the question, why especially a seven-headed snake becomes the enemy of God *par excellence* in Revelation. The favorable end of the battle can be seen as perfection of creation by the final overcoming of all evil – with that, the snake takes part in the last part of the progress of history, which is controlled and directed by God,³ to bring his creation to completion. Due to the fact that the sources mentioned afterward emerges from various cultures, the motif of “Seven heads” illuminates how different cultures shared traditions and common topics through several centuries.

2. Creatures with Seven Heads in Revelation

The composition of the Revelation of John is commonly dated to the last years of power of Emperor Domitian,⁴ who ruled between 81 and 96 CE.⁵ According to Rev 1:9, the Revelation was written by a certain John on the island of Patmos in the Cyclades. In chapters 12 and 13, the writer reflects the vision of Daniel, which can be attributed to the assumption of Jürgen Roloff to a type of “Grundmaterial apokalyptischen Welt- und Geschichtsverständnisses”.⁶

In the vision of the prophet in Rev 12 and 13, two creatures are described, which have more than one head. At first, a woman, which has born a child, appears in the sky in Rev 12:1–2. It is no doubt, that the newborn child is Christ. The seven-headed snake appears after the woman in Rev 12:3.

καὶ ὄφθη ἄλλο σημεῖον ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ καὶ ἰδοὺ δράκων μέγας πυρρὸς ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ἑπτὰ διαδήματα

“And there appeared another sign in heaven; and behold a great red snake, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.”⁷

The animal, which can be accurately defined as an enemy of God, a counterpart to Christ and the embodiment of the antichrist,⁸ has, according to the text of the Revelation, seven heads, ten horns and seven crowns upon the horns. The text is mainly consistent in the textual record, only some minor textual witnesses omit *μέγας*.⁹ Not until the seven-headed snake can attack the child, Christ is raptured and the snake is beaten and defeated by the archangel Michael in Rev 12:7–8. The fallen snake goes to the sea thereupon and then the prophet sees another creature, this time identified as a beast (θηρίον) according to Rev 13:1–2, which emerges from

³ Cf. Leonhardt 2009, 388.

⁴ There are other views, which are not commonly accepted. Hadorn 1928, 221–223, 225–226 dated the composition before 70 CE; Wilson 1993, 587–605 dated it under Nero (54–68) or Galba; Berger 1995, 616–618 dated it in the year of the four emperors 68/69 CE, and J. W. Marshall 2001, 2 dated it one year later to 69/70 CE. In contrast to these scholars, Kraft 1974, 93–95 came up with the assumption, that the Revelation was created over a longer period between the years 97/98 and 114/115 CE, and with this dating, in the years of power of the emperors Nerva (96–98 CE) and Trajan (98–117 CE). For a summary, s. Witulski 2007a, 14–52. Another point of view was expressed by Witulski 2007a, 346–350; Witulski 2007b, 174, who dates the book as late as emperor Hadrian (117–138 CE), exactly between the years 132 and 135. Furthermore, he equals the emperor with the

animal of Rev 13:1–18. Ritt 2009, 997 equals this animal *pars pro toto* with the apocalyptic power of the state, which accelerates the coming of the kingdom of God.

⁵ For example Bachmann 2000, 360–362; Böcher 2010, 14; Broer 2001, 669–672; Feuillet 1962, 77; Klauck 1992, 161; Kollmann 2007, 54–55; Mounce 2009, 15–16; Ritt 2009, 997; Roloff 2002, 34, n. 63; Schnelle 2002, 562–566; Scott 1949, 30; Yarbrough Collins 1981, 377–403.

⁶ Roloff 2002, 35.

⁷ For the Greek text Nestle – Aland 2017, 654.

⁸ Cf. Roloff 2002, 40 and 48–49. For the expression Ἀντίχριστος in the New Testament, which is not documented before 1Joh 2:18, 22; 4:3 and 2Joh 7, s. Klauck 1992, 237–248; Jenks 1991.

⁹ Cf. Nestle – Aland 2017, 654 and also Karrer 2012, 438 and 441.

the sea – a counterpart to the first beast, which appeared on land.

καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον ἔχον κέρατα δέκα καὶ κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν κεράτων αὐτοῦ δέκα διαδήματα καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ὀνόματα βλασφημίας καὶ τὸ θηρίον ὃ εἶδον ἦν ὅμοιον παρδάλει καὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὡς ἄρκου καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ὡς στόμα λέοντος καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ δράκων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην

“And I saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the names of blasphemy. And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. And the snake gave him his power, and his throne and great authority.”¹⁰

The body of the beast is like unto a leopard (παρδάλις), it has the feet of a bear (ἄρκος) and the mouth of a lion (λέων). With that, the beast is clearly a composite being of different animals, which can be compared to the animals and the beast in Dan 7. The second creature is a helper of the first one,¹¹ which was brought up out of the sea by the snake. Later the δράκων μέγας in Rev 12:8 steps upon the beach. Thus, the snake and the beast are standing simultaneously upon the beach. That both of them belong together can be clarified by Rev 16:13, where three unclean spirits (πνεύματα τρία ἀκάθαρτα) like frogs (βάτραχοι) come out of the mouths of the snake and the beast, and also from the mouth of the false prophet

(ψευδοπροφήτης). From the different heads of the second beast, only one is emphasized in Rev 13:3. This head is wounded to death (καὶ μίαν ἐκ τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐσφαγμένην εἰς θάνατον), but later this deadly wound is healed (καὶ ἡ πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ἐθεραπεύθη).¹²

The prophet sees the animal a last time in the wilderness. According to Rev 17:3, the prophet sees a woman sitting upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns (καὶ εἶδον γυναῖκα καθημένην ἐπὶ θηρίον κόκκινον γέμοντα ὀνόματα βλασφημίας ἔχων κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα), as it is mentioned once more in Rev 17:7. It is apparently the same beast, which comes out of the sea in Rev 13.

3. The Snake and the Beast with Seven Heads – Scholarly Points of View

Only in a few commentaries, the depiction of the seven-headed creatures in Rev 12:3 and 13:1–2 was approached by scholars. Especially considering some archaeological remains, we can make further suggestions to develop a completely different approach to the interpretation of these creatures and the motif history of the snake. The origin and the interpretation of the snake with seven heads in Rev 12:3 and 13:1–2 is only discussed in a few instances. The exact number of the heads as seven was often interpreted as an account for the Roman Empire and the heads as the embodiment of emperors.¹³ The interpretation of animals in a vision was already developed by scholars for the vision of Daniel in Dan 7,¹⁴ which was written during the second

¹⁰ For the Greek text Nestle – Aland 2017, 656. A minor textual version is the alteration of ὀνόματα in Rev 13:1 to ὀνόμα.

¹¹ E. g. interpreted as the false prophet by Hadorn 1928, 144; Lohmeyer 1926, 115; Sickenberger 1940, 131.

¹² This head was interpreted by Bousset 1906, 360–361; Charles 1920, 348–350; Hadorn 1928, 143 and Reddish 2001, 250–251 as Emperor Nero.

¹³ E.g. Blount 2009, 229; Böcher 1988, 82–83; Bousset 1906, 367; Charles 1920, 345–347; Friesen 2001, 141; Hadorn 1928, 141; Mounce 2009, 245–246; Preuß – Berger 2003, 394; Ritt 1986, 66; Roloff 2002, 39; Smith 1872, 19; Wikenhauser 1959, 104–105. Contra identifications like these, Beagley 1987, 106; Ernst 1967, 118.

¹⁴ Cf. Bauer 1996, 145–147; Collins 1993, 166–170; Flusser 1972, 148–175; Lebram 1984, 88–89; Koch 1980, 182–205; Mertens 1971, 136–139; Montgomery

century BC in the period of the Maccabees.¹⁵ The heads of the snake of Revelation were identified with the emperors Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian. But only by exclusion of the emperors Galba, Otho, Vitellius, and even Augustus, the number seven can be achieved. The question remains, in which way the exclusion can be verified or even justified. The interpretation of the seven heads as the exact aforementioned emperors is arbitrary since it eliminates some others. Robert L. Thomas wants to see the heads of the creatures as a real prophecy by identifying them with emperors or empires in the future.¹⁶ A slightly different approach was brought forward by Mitchell G. Reddish, who wants to identify the second creature with all of the emperors of the Roman Empire.¹⁷ But also for this identification, the question remains, why the seven heads should be understood as embodiments of emperors.

Another interpretation of the particular snake with seven heads was the identification as the snake from the Garden of Eden.¹⁸ But for this presumption, we have to assume that it grew six new heads because there is no evidence for a reptile with more than one head in Gen 3. Another interpretation identifies the reptile with Satan,¹⁹ which can also be explained by the reference of the prophet in Rev 12:9 itself. In this construction, there are references to Ezek 29:3 and 32:2, where the Egyptian Pharaoh is denominated as a snake and thus, the whole snake was interpreted by scholars as the land of

Egypt as a whole. But in this case, the only common element in both sources is the snake – but in Ezek 29:3 and 32:2 there is no designation as a reptile with many heads and an interpretation of every snake mentioned in the Bible with the beast of Revelation is far from being accepted.

A specific identification of one of the creatures with seven heads in the Revelation, as it was pointed out by Reddish for instance, who identifies it with Mesopotamian goddess Tīāmat or with the snake Python from the myth of the Greek goddess Leto,²⁰ cannot be accepted due to the fact that neither Tīāmat nor Python were ever depicted with seven heads nor does either of the texts mention this specific aspect. According to one source, Tīāmat could have a male and a female face,²¹ but the appearance with two faces in the form of a *Janiceps symmetros* is different from a creature with seven heads, so a special identification is not convincing.

Even Hydra was named as the pattern by Leon Morris,²² but if we have a closer look at the Greek sources, we find many different numbers of heads designated to her, but the number seven is never attested. Another interpretation was put forward by Hubert Ritt, who tries to identify the seven-headed snake with the Greek god Typhon and the woman of Rev 12:1–2 with

1950, 289; Redditt 1990, 121–122; Roloff 2002, 12; Scheider 1954, 48.

¹⁵ For an introduction, s. Albani 2010, 40–54; Collins 2001, 1–15; Förg 2013, 206–218; Mertens 1971, 168–170.

¹⁶ Thomas 1995, 123.

¹⁷ Reddish 2001, 258.

¹⁸ Cf. Charles 1920, 325; Hadorn 1928, 134; Lohmeyer 1926, 101; Sickenger 1940, 121–122; Wikenhauser 1959, 96.

¹⁹ Cf. Blount 2009, 229; Larkin 1919, 91; Lupieri 1999, 191; Mbosowo 2010, 103; Morris 2002, 153.

²⁰ Reddish 2001, 234.

²¹ London, BM 55466+55486+55627, rs. II, 12 (STC I, 213:12), an astrological-mythological text,

published by King 1902, 213; Landsberger 1923, 45; s. further Reynolds 1999, 377; McBeath 1999, 29.

²² Cf. Morris 2002, 153. According to Alkaios, *frag.* 443 (έννεα κέφαλος) and Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fab.* 30 (*cum capitibus novem*), Hydra has nine heads; but she can also have fifty heads (πεντηκοντακέφαλον) according to Simonides, *frag.* 569; s. Liberman 1999, 193; P. K. Marshall 1993, 44; Page 1962, 294. Diodorus Siculus, *Bibl. hist.* IV, 11, 5 mentions one hundred necks, and on every neck one snake (έκατόν αὐχένες ἔχοντες κεφαλὰς ὄφεων διετετύπωντο), s. Oldfather 1956, 376. This is also the case for Ovid, *Met.* IX, 1956 (*centum numero*) and for the Suda, s. Adler 1935, 635; Miller 1984, 6.

the Egyptian goddess Isis.²³ This identification is also not convincing due to the fact that neither Seth nor his *interpretatio graeca* Typhon has seven heads.²⁴ The only connecting element – a pregnant woman, who escapes from an enemy, does not suffice as a hint for a tradition, because this motif is very common, not only in antiquity, but also in modern times.²⁵ Adela Yarbro Collins and Robert H. Charles tried to identify the creature in the Revelation with a „*mušruššu*^{sic} *tâmtim*“, i.e. the famous mythological hybrid creature *mušhuššu*, known from ancient Mesopotamia, which is e.g. depicted on the reconstructed Istar Gate of the city of Babylon from the 6th century BC.²⁶ This identification is also not maintainable because the *mušhuššu* is never depicted with more than one head.

Ernst Lohmeyer and Hubert Ritt want to equate *Liwyatan* and *Tannin*, already known from Ps 74, with the creatures of Revelation.²⁷ It will be pointed out later, that there are some similarities between the creatures, but a direct identification is not convincing if we take the complete motif history of the specific creature in the Ancient Near East into account. As it was already pointed out, there are some connections between Daniel, Ezekiel and the Revelation,²⁸ but the multi-headed beings mentioned in Dan 7:6 and Ezek 1:4–10 and 41:18b–19 are different from the seven-headed ones in Revelation, so a direct adoption is not convincing.

4. A Seven Headed Snake in the Ancient Near East

The discussion of the attested scholarly views shows that a consistent or even convincing explanation or derivation has not been presented so far. But if we have a closer look at the specific motif of the seven-headed snake in different cultures of the Ancient Near East, a harmonization becomes a possibility. The development of an animal, or more specific, a snake with seven heads is not an invention of John, but can be traced back to many cultures of the Ancient Near East more than two millennia ago. The development of depictions of creatures with more than one head started, as becomes clear from the archaeological remains, with animals with two heads on one body. The depiction of animals with two heads, e.g. birds, turtles, gazelles, on so-called cosmetic palettes is very common in Egypt during the fourth millennium BC.²⁹ This is also the case for some depictions on seals from the region of Syria and the Palestinian area, which can be dated to the period between the Chalcolithic and the early Bronze Age.³⁰ From this early motif, the development of other animals, gods, or even humans and composite beings starts off and objects bearing such depictions are passed down for more than three millennia to the time CE.

²³ Cf. Ritt 1986, 65; comparable Yarbro Collins 2001, 75–76; and also Charles 1920, 313, but he identifies the fleeing women with the Egyptian goddess Hathor.

²⁴ According to some writers like Aischylos, *Prom.* 353–354 (ἐκατογκάρανος), Aristophanes, *Nub.* 336 (ἐκατογκεφάλα τυφῶ), Hesiod, *Theog.* 824–826, Oppian, *Hal.* III, 15, Pindaros, *P.* I, 16f. (ἐκατοντακάρανος), VIII, 16 (ἐκατόγκρανος) or *O.* IV, 6–7 (ἐκατογκεφάλος), Pseudo-Hyginus, *Fab.* 152 or Seneca, *Herc. f.* 784, Typhon has one hundred heads; s. Billerbeck 1999, 144; Dover 1968, 24; Fajen 1999, 144; P. K. Marshall 1993, 131; Race 1997, 88/

214/ 330; von Schirmding 2012, 66; Sommerstein 2008, 480. Strabo, *Geogr.* XIII, 4, 6 cites a fragment of Pindaros, which mentions only fifty heads (πεντηκοντοκέφαλος), s. Radt 2004, 650.

²⁵ Cf. the sources mentioned by Bousset 1906, 20–74.

²⁶ Yarbro Collins 2001, 77; Charles 1920, 318.

²⁷ Cf. Lohmeyer 1926, 113; Ritt 1986, 66.

²⁸ Cf. Kowalski 2004, 504–507; Parallels to Daniel mentioned by Moyise 1995, 51–53; for parallels to Isaiah Fekkes III 1994, 175–190.

²⁹ For sources Theis 2017, 131–136.

³⁰ S. Teissier 1987, 30 (figs. 2a–d).

As it was already mentioned, according to Ps 74:13 and to Ps 74:14, a *Tannin* (תַּנִּינִים) and a *Liwyatan* (לִוְיָטָן) can have multiple heads.³¹ Psalm 74:3–9 is a text about an enemy, who has entered the temple. This topic was interpreted in theological discourse as a reflection of the Babylonian invasion of 587 BC.³² If the sanctum is destroyed, this can be seen as an attack of the god itself, and with that, both of the beings with multiple heads in Ps 74 can be defined as enemies of God *par excellence*. In Ugarit, there was also a being named *Tunannu*, and according to KTU 1.3, III, 40–42 this being is a “fleeing snake” (*bīn ʿqltn*) with “seven heads” (*šbʿt r’ašm*).³³ According to KTU 1.83, 5, this being has two tongues (*lšnm*) and so possibly also two faces or heads.³⁴ The number of faces or heads does not seem to be standardized in antiquity, but in both of the aforementioned sources, a plural is certainly attested. We can think about the influence of John by the *Tannin* in Ps 74:13, but this being can also be embedded in a further history of the motif in the Ancient Near East. The *Tannin* in Ps 74:13 can also be equated with the *Tannina* in Odes of Solomon 22:5, which is described as an animal with seven heads in the second century CE.³⁵ It is worth mentioning that there are no other hints to sources of a seven-headed snake in the Bible or the region of Syria and the Levant so far, but the motif is quite common in

other regions nearby. Due to the existence of these other sources, one should refrain from naming one specific culture as the origin of the seven-headed snake. Snakes can be seen as aggressors and enemies in various sources;³⁶ the number seven was also an influential and powerful number, as it is pointed out below.

There is also the description of a snake with seven heads from Ugarit. In the important myths of the so-called Baʿal-cycle in KTU 1.5, vs. I, 1–3 the god Mōtu tells Baʿal, that he killed “Lītānu, the fleeing snake” (*tmḥš Ltn bīn brḥ*), “the mightyful, the one with seven heads” (*šlyt d šbʿt r’ašm*).³⁷ Again, in this case, the snake is an enemy of gods, which has to be destroyed.³⁸ This episode is mentioned once more in KTU 1.82, 1–7.³⁹ The name of the enemy and the description as a beast with multiple heads brings this myth in connection with biblical texts as Jes 27:1; 51:9; Ps 74:13–14; 89:11; 104:26; 148:7 and Hiob 7:12; 9:13; 41:26, which were also interpreted as a description of the struggle against chaos.⁴⁰ It is very important to mention that *Lītānu* and *Šlyt* live in the sea⁴¹ – and the seven-headed creature in Rev 13:1 is also emerging from the sea. It is also possible that the *Tunannu*, which must be a snake due to his equalization with Sumerian MUŠ and Akkadian *bašmu* on a tablet from Ugarit,⁴² has at least two faces or heads with KTU 1.83, 5, but according to KTU 1.3, III, 40–42 seven

³¹ This Psalm is often quoted in magical texts, as it is the case with Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Ms. Sachau 95 in a conjuration of a snake. Thanks lot to Peter Juhás (Münster/Göttingen) for this information! For the manuscript s. Sachau 2006, 367–374 (no. 107).

³² S. Wälchli 2012, 58–59.

³³ For the Ugaritic text s. Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 12. For a comparison between texts from the city-state of Ugarit and Ps 74 s. Donner 1967, 338–344.

³⁴ For the Ugaritic text s. Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 101.

³⁵ There are many interpretations of the *Tannin* in the Old Testament. In Ex 7:10–12 it was defined as a crocodile, cf. Baethgen 1892, 234; Briggs – Briggs 1925, 155; Cassuto 1967, 94; Duhm 1922, 287 (the dragons are according to Duhm a depiction of the swimming generals of the Pharaoh!); Gunkel 1986, 325; Herkenne 1936, 253; Hossfeld – Zenger 2000,

424; Kalt 1936, 271; Kittel 1929, 249; Kraus 1989, 676; Meiser 1974, 352; H. Schmidt 1934, 141; van Uchelen 1986, 247; or as some sort of sea monster, cf. Tate 1990, 240.

³⁶ S. Theis 2014, 613–619.

³⁷ For the Ugaritic text Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 22; cf. the commentary by Dietrich – Loretz 1999–2000, 56–74. This designation correlates with CTA V, col. I: 1–4, s. Herdner 1963, 32.

³⁸ Cf. KTU 1.3, III, 40–42, s. Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 12; Smith – Pitard 2009, 204; Niehr 2015, 206–207.

³⁹ Cf. the recent publication by Miglio 2013, 30–48.

⁴⁰ Cf. Bauks 2019, § 3.1.2; for other sources § 3.2; for this case Kaiser 1959, 74–75/145.

⁴¹ S. Dietrich – Loretz 1999–2000, 75; Donner 1967, 343.

⁴² Published by Nougayrol et al. 1968, 24, no. 137, I, 8’.

heads.⁴³ This *Tunannu* can be equated with Hebrew תַּנְיָנָה, already mentioned as a multi-headed creature in Ps 74:13.

In Mesopotamia, the fight against a snake or a dragon-like creature with seven heads is a common motif on seals already in the Early Dynastic Period III around 2550–2350 BC. The scenes were commonly referred to as “struggle against chaos” or “struggle against dragons”.⁴⁴ One of the earliest examples is depicted on a shell shim, today Jerusalem, BLMJ 2051 (**fig. 1**).⁴⁵ The composite being with the body of a panther has seven snakes as heads. In front of it sits a god with the horns crown, attacking the animal with a throwing stick, which has already struck the lowermost head. The god is identified with a god of vegetation, presumably Ningirsu or Ninurta, and the monster with a personification of aridity.⁴⁶

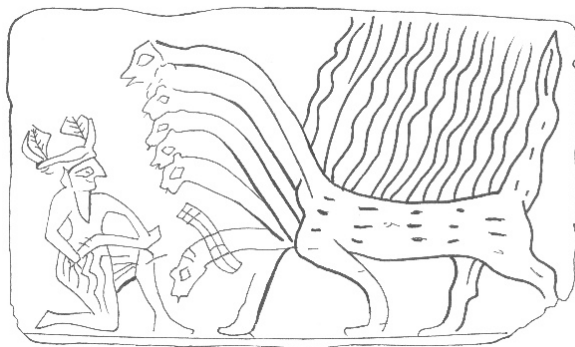


Fig. 1: Jerusalem, BLMJ 2051

(Drawing by Rebecca-M. Müller, after Schroer – Keel 2005, 326–326, no. 233).

⁴³ For the Ugaritic text Dietrich – Loretz – Sanmartin 1995, 12/ 101.

⁴⁴ Cf. Schroer – Keel 2005, 324; Uehlinger 1995, 55–101. Some of the Mesopotamian pictorial sources are mentioned by Lewis 1996, 29.

⁴⁵ Published by Black – Green 1992, 165; Braun-Holzinger 2013, 176; Hansen 1987, 60–61, pl. 16, 29; Kahler 2008, 71–76, fig. 3; Keel 2001, 16; McBeath 1999, 68; Pritchard 1954, 218, no. 671; Schroer – Keel 2005, 326–327, no. 233; Uehlinger 1995, 89, fig. 9. This object is shortly mentioned by Künzl 2015, 23–24 in comparison to the tradition of John.

⁴⁶ Interpretations made by Black – Green 1992, 165; Schroer – Keel 2005, 326.

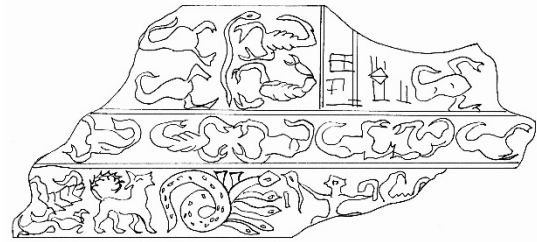


Fig. 2: Chicago, OIM, A 34753

(Drawing by Rebecca-M. Müller, after Schroer – Keel 2005, 326–327, no. 232).

The object Chicago, OIM, A 34753 (**fig. 2**) can also be dated to the Early Dynastic Period III.⁴⁷ The snake is imaged as an animal with seven heads – in the depiction, there are only five heads left on the body, and two other heads are already cut off by the lord of the animal, who is standing in front of it. He holds two of the heads in his hands.

Another example is pictured on a seal from Ešnunna, today Bağdad, IM 15618, which can be dated to the early Akkadian Period around 2300 BC.⁴⁸ The creature shows the body of a panther with seven snakes as heads and five flames emerging from its back.⁴⁹ A god attacks the creature from its front with his spear. Three of the heads are already slain, which is depicted by these hanging down saggy; a fourth head is being lanced by the spear. The gods on both sides have the horns crown on their heads and are commonly identified as Ninazu, the city god of Ešnunna, or his son Ningišzida or Tišpak.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Published by Braun-Holzinger 2013, 186, no. 30; Douglas van Buren 1946, fig. 16; Frankfort 1935, 121; Keel 2001, 16; McBeath 1999, 67–68; Schroer – Keel 2005, 326–327, no. 232; Uehlinger 1995, 88, fig. 7.

⁴⁸ Published by Braun-Holzinger 2013, 186, no. 29; Kahler 2008, 71–73, fig. 4–5; Keel 2001, 16; McBeath 1999, 68; Orthmann 1975, no. 135d; Pritchard 1954, 221, no. 691; Schroer – Keel 2005, 328–329, no. 234; Uehlinger 1995, 89, fig. 10.

⁴⁹ Kahler 2008, 72 interprets these as snakes instead of flames.

⁵⁰ Interpretation according to Schroer – Keel 2005, 328.

All the aforementioned scenes clearly depict the battle between a god or gods and a snake with seven heads or a beast with seven snakes as heads as early as the third millennium BC. The number of seven heads is the essential motif. Besides the depictions, the snake is referred to as MUŠ SAG IMIN “snake with seven heads”⁵¹ and in later times as MUŠ.MAḤ SAG IMIN “great snake with seven heads”.⁵² For example, the killing of the seven-headed snake is mentioned in AN.GIM, l. 32–40; 52–62 and LUGAL-e, l. 133⁵³; both of them are attested until the first millennium BC.⁵⁴ There is also a reference in a cuneiform tablet in the collection of William F. Albright, which mentions Ningirsu in l. 16 as the one, who MUŠ SAG.IMIN-na mu-un-ug₅-ga-a-ni „has killed the seven-headed snake“.⁵⁵ This tablet comes from the ancient city of Dayr and can be dated to the Late Babylonian or already the Persian Period. The threat posed by seven-headed snakes was also viewed as a possible problem in everyday life, which becomes evident by a reference in the collection of omens in *Šumma ālu ina mēlē šakin*.⁵⁶ The largest amount of tablets from this collection can be dated to the seventh century BC, but there are also some tablets from the third century BC, which shows the long tradition of omens in connection with the wide-spread find-spots of the tablets.⁵⁷ In *Šumma ālu ina mēlē šakin* 23:91 a snake with seven heads is mentioned, which could possibly appear in a man’s house in real life. One of the last examples from Mesopotamia is the depiction of a seven-headed snake on a seal from the Sasanian Empire (**fig. 3**), which is killed by a man on a horse with his spear.⁵⁸



Fig. 3: Seal, Sasanian period, today J. Pierpont Morgan Library (Drawing by Rebecca-M. Müller, after Ward 1910, 211, fig. 641).

Besides the fact that the depiction of animals with two heads is already attested from the fourth millennium BC in Egypt,⁵⁹ a seven-headed snake seems to be of minor interest, here. There are numerous depictions of snakes with multiple heads especially in the Books of the Netherworld, but a creature with exactly seven snakes as heads is only attested once on Pap. Berlin. P. 15770 and this composite creature also has an eighth head of an antelope.⁶⁰ This being can also be interpreted as an enemy, due to the fact that it is attacked by a god with his spear and by the fact that the depiction is found on a protection amulet. For paleographic reasons, the amulet made of papyrus can be dated to the 20th dynasty. The next Egyptian depiction of a snake with seven heads comes from the Persian Period and is found in the temple of Hībis in the oasis of al-Ḥārġa, build in the reign of Dareios I. (522–486 BC).⁶¹ Based on the description, this animal is a helper. The latest known type is attested on a gem in Cambridge, 2012.1.144 (**fig. 4**).⁶²

⁵¹ Cf. the entries in lexical lists, e.g. CDLI, no. P461397, l. 277 (cdli.ucla.edu/search/search_results.php?CompositeNumber=Q000001; 21st March, 2019).

⁵² Cf. Douglas van Buren 1946, 18–19; Heimpele 1968, 480–482; Landsberger 1934, 53. In general, s. Pientka-Hinz 2011, 208.

⁵³ S. Cooper 1978, 144.

⁵⁴ Published by Cooper 1978, 60–65.

⁵⁵ Published by Lambert 1971, 345; s. also Wiggermann 1992, 162.

⁵⁶ Cf. the edition of Freedman 2006.

⁵⁷ Concerning the concept of tradition in general Theis – Wilhelmi 2015, 710–713 and 715–716.

⁵⁸ Published by Ward 1910, 211, fig. 641.

⁵⁹ S. Kaplony 1963, pl. 6, no. 7; pl. 25, no. 56–57; pl. 26, no. 62; Theis 2017.

⁶⁰ Published by Fischer-Elfert 2015, 141–145; for a special discussion of this being see now Theis 2019.

⁶¹ Published by de Garis Davies 1953, pl. 3, 2.

⁶² Published by Michel 2004, 137, pl. 59, 2.

The composite being has a human body and seven snakes as heads. With the aforementioned sources, in Egypt a snake with seven heads is only attested in a few sources and this being can be an enemy or a helper.



Fig. 4: Gem, Cambridge 2012.1.144

(Drawing by Rebecca-M. Müller, after Michel 2004, pl. 59, 2).

The sources for a beast or especially a snake with seven heads are also common during the time CE, so John is not the only attestation for this motif. In the Coptic translation of Rev 12:3, the creature is described verbatim as “a great scarlet coloured dragon“ (ΟΥΓΝΟΒ̅ ΝΔΡΑΚΩΝ ΕΥΤΡΕΥΡΩΩ).⁶³ A snake with seven heads (*Tannīna* *ḏ-šab^cā rēšaw*) is attested in the Odes of Solomon 22:5 and described as an enemy of God.⁶⁴ By taking the name *Tannīna* into account, we can clearly trace back this snake to the aforementioned sources from Ugarit and the Bible; the defeat and the slaughtering of the snake is mentioned in a section about the might and deeds of God. A basilisk with seven heads

is also attested in Pistis Sophia 71, which is described as an enemy of the Pistis, but finally, it is defeated.⁶⁵ Also, in Nağ^c Ḥammādī II, 1, 11, 26–35 Iaw is once described as a god with the head of a snake (ΔΡΑΚΩΝ), and upon it, seven other heads (ΣΑΥΦΕ ΝΑΠΕ).⁶⁶

According to the sources, a snake, or for some instances a beast with seven snakes as heads, is always depicted or described as an enemy of a god or gods or even humans, and this animal is always defeated by gods. The snake can be seen as a specific sort of enemy for gods and humans in every culture of the Ancient Near East. In Mesopotamia, the type of a seven-headed creature is attested for more than three millennia, for a longer period than in any other culture. It becomes obvious that almost every culture has some sort of a seven-headed beast as an enemy of god(s). From the first sources in Mesopotamia, which were created already during the Early Dynasty Period III around 2550–2350 BC, over the mentioning of a specific *Tunannu* in the city state of Ugarit and the Bible (נִנְנָה), and also some attestations from Egypt, a snake with seven heads was used by John as the ultimate enemy of God in his Revelation, as it is also attested in the later Odes of Solomon (*Tannīna*).

Conclusion

It becomes obvious that a snake with multiple heads or a creature with seven snakes as heads are a very common motif in the different cultures of the Ancient Near East – in the world of living beings and also in the world of the gods. Besides the snake with seven heads, there are various sources for snakes with two heads in Greek and Latin, as it is the case for example with Claudius Aelianus, *De nat. anim.* VIII, 7,

⁶³ Published by Horner 1924, 390.

⁶⁴ Published by Lattke 2001, 147. In the Coptic translation, there is only a “snake” referred to and not more to *Tunannu*, cf. ibd., 147. S. Niehr 2006, 726 for

literature.

⁶⁵ Published by C. Schmidt 1905, 156.

⁶⁶ For the Coptic text s. Waldstein – Wisse 1995, 71–73; cf. Waldstein 2001, 118–119.

IX, 23 und XVI, 42 (δικέφαλος),⁶⁷ Isidor of Sevilla, *Orig.* XII, 4, 20 (*Amphisbaena (...) duo capita habeat, unum in loco suo, alterum in cauda*)⁶⁸ or Solinus, *De mirab. mundi* XXVII, 29 (*amphisbaena consurgit in caput geminum*)⁶⁹. Even the Assyrian king Esarhad-don (680–669 BC) is said to have killed snakes with two heads on his tenth campaign, which led him to Egypt.⁷⁰ As it was pointed out, there are only a few sources from Egypt with a special reference to snakes with seven heads, the major part of these sources is passed down from Mesopotamia and also from the city state of Ugarit. Especially with the creature *Tunnanu*, the later Hebrew *Tannīn* (תַּנִּינ) and the *Tannīna* of the Odes of Salomo 22:5, it is possible to establish a motif history of a specific multi-headed being for about 1700 years.

The number seven for the quantity of heads can be explained by the special function of this number in the Ancient Near East, a symbol and an allegory for totality and completion.⁷¹ This is also the case for the Bible: In Gen 2:2, God creates the earth in seven days; according to Gen 4:15 the murder of Cain will achieve revenge seven-times; and in Gen 7:2–3 Noah takes seven of every clean cattle and also of the fowls of the air. In apocalypticism, the number seven is a common reference for the entirety.⁷² Thus, the number of seven heads can be equated with totality, in this special case the totality of evil. This becomes obvious with the designation of the snake in Rev 12:9, which is named devil (Διάβολος) and Satan (ὁ Σατανᾶς).

With the aforementioned sources from the various cultures of the Ancient Near East, passed down for over four millennia, it becomes obvious that a snake with seven heads as the embodiment of an enemy is a common motif and cannot be traced back to a specific culture.

The special description of John in his Revelation as a δράκων μέγας or a θηρίον with seven heads clearly reflects older sources from Mesopotamia and also the descriptions from the city of Ugarit. This motif of John can be explained with the use and the function of this specific type of enemy over the centuries in the Near East: In all the aforementioned sources, a seven-headed snake is an enemy of God. Through the number seven, the totality of its strength was tried to be expressed. John did not develop or even invent this motif, but accessed very old ideas of a common mythical background. For that reason, special explanations for the seven heads can be rejected. The snake and the beast of Revelation can clearly not be traced back to one specific culture or to one god or being. The heads of these composite beings surely did not depict e.g. seven Roman emperors from Tiberius to Domitian, as we have to bear in mind, that the number seven is only achieved by eliminating Galba, Otho, and Vitellius from the list. Because of the widespread motif, other special identifications of the snake, e.g. with the reptile of the Garden of Eden, the Egyptian Pharaoh, or gods as Tiāmat or the snake Python, as it was suggested by various scholars, can also be rejected for the above-mentioned reasons. We can see the beings with seven heads in Revelation as what they were understood as in antiquity: The embodiment of the totality of evil, which has to be defeated and beaten by (a) god. And this specific embodiment has a history of its motif from the Early Dynastic Period in Mesopotamia, to sources from Ugarit, into the Psalms of the Old Testament, and finally into the Revelation of John. With these sources, which are passed down through several centuries and emerge from different cultures, we can say that the motif of a seven-headed being as an enemy of God

⁶⁷ Cf. García Valdés et al. 2006, 195; 217 and 403.

⁶⁸ Cf. Lindsay 1957, XII, 4, 20.

⁶⁹ Cf. Mommsen 1895, 12.

⁷⁰ This is Ash. S. 112 (=K 3082+K 3086+Sm 2027), Rs. 5, cf. Borger 1956, 112.

⁷¹ For the symbolism s. Reinhold 2008a, 27–34; for Egypt s. Rochholz 2002.

⁷² S. Mounce 2009, 245–246; Otto 2005, 337–340/344–345 for sources.

can be understood as a common topic in the Ancient Near East and its different cultures. The enormous historical symbolism connects these various cultures and especially even the history of Jews and Christians in the first century CE. As these early Christians are based on Jewish traditions, we can expect that a seven-headed being was also known in this tradition, but was not passed down in biblical texts. As it was shown, there is a possibility that the Hebrew *Tannīn* (תנין) can be understood as a creature with seven heads, but this specific number is

not mentioned in Ps 74:13. If we understood a *Tannīn* (תנין) as a seven-headed being, especially by a comparison with sources from other cultures, Jews and Christians shared the same tradition of this threat for god in the first century CE, but build this up on older traditions from Mesopotamia, which were already developed during the third millennium BC.

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