Foreigners at Beni Hassan: Evidence from the Tomb of Khnumhotep I (No. 14)

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The procession of Asiatics in the tomb of Khnumhotep II (No. 3) at Beni Hassan is one of the most famous scenes alluding to ancient Egypt’s interactions with its neighbors. Khnumhotep II, however, was not the only official at Beni Hassan to include representations of foreigners. The tomb of his possible grandfather, Khnumhotep I (No. 14), additionally features unique depictions of a number of individuals who can be identified as of non-Egyptian origin. These foreigners signal that particular cross-cultural relations could remain under the auspices of specific families in the early Middle Kingdom, perhaps influencing power and political dynamics that helped shape the 12th Dynasty. The following presents the most recent recordings of the depictions as completed by The Australian Centre for Egyptology, commenting on their nature and historical significance in relation to Khnumhotep I and the Oryx nome.

Keywords: Egyptology; Middle Kingdom; 12th Dynasty; Beni Hassan; Khnumhotep I; foreigners in Egyptian art; Nubians; Libyans; Asiatics; intercultural contacts

Since 2010, The Australian Centre for Egyptology, part of Macquarie University’s Ancient Cultures Research Centre, has been re-recording and examining the site of Beni Hassan (see Kanawati and Evans 2014; Lashien 2016; Kanawati and Evans 2016; and Lashien and Mourad 2019). Located approximately 20 km south of modern el-Minya, the site consists of a provincial cemetery of rock-cut tombs assigned to the late Old and Middle Kingdoms. The upper terrace of tombs predominantly belongs to the local elite of the 16th Upper Egyptian Oryx nome, many of which are decorated with remarkably detailed wall paintings that explore a variety of themes on daily life, religious beliefs and practices, administrative activities, as well as kinship ties and social groups. Despite their significance, a number of tombs have remained incompletely published since their initial exploration in the late 19th century. As part of a current Macquarie University project led by Naguib Kanawati, the tomb of Khnumhotep I (No. 14) was re-recorded in fieldwork conducted in 2016 and 2017 (Lashien and Mourad 2019). The findings have thus far revealed previously unpublished but significant scenes that provide much insight into the dynamics of early Middle Kingdom society. This article focuses on selected details pertaining to individuals of apparent non-Egyptian origin and the nature of their representations, as well as their historical significance. It aims to clarify earlier recordings of such details and add to the limited repertoire of attestations of Egyptian foreign relations dating to the beginning of the 12th Dynasty.

The Tomb and Its Owner

The tomb of Khnumhotep I is located in the southern section of the upper terrace of tombs at Beni Hassan (Fig. 1), between that of Baqet III (No. 15) to its south and Khnumhotep (No. 13) to its north. It features a large chapel, originally pillared, as well as two burial shafts cut into the native, good-quality white limestone of the cliff. Surveyed by Karl R. Lepsius in the mid-19th century (Lepsius 1849–1856: 121–13), the tomb was first recorded and copied by Percy E. Newberry, who later published his findings in the first volume of the Beni Hasan series (1893a: 79–85, pls. 42–47). These findings, however, only include a total of five pages and six plates dedicated to the tomb report, including its architectural analysis, perhaps the most complete and accurate of the tomb’s description. The plates comprised one photo of the tomb’s entrance, one of its...
architecture, one of the tomb owner’s biography, a plate with two watercolor paintings of the “foreigners,” and only two plates of scenes on the north and east walls. In reference to the missing scenes, Newberry noted that the tomb’s “paintings are much faded, and in most cases can only be made out with great difficulty” (Newberry 1893a: 84). The scenes have indeed been impacted by time, human intervention, and the exposure to the elements, most noticeably the salt encrustation that has increasingly spread across some walls. While evidence for some conservation measures is apparent by the resin-like coating atop the scenes, the wall paintings remain in poor condition, with some details now completely obliterated. Macquarie University’s fieldwork in 2016 and 2017 thus largely comprised a thorough and close examination of the scenes to clarify and extract as much detail as possible. The use of the image

Fig. 1. Map of Egypt with sites mentioned in the text. (Illustration by A.-L. Mourad with Western Desert routes, after Hubschmann 2010b: fig. 1)
enforcement software DStretch®, and its app Android DStretch (employed on-site), were particularly helpful in analyzing and clarifying a number of details.¹ Newberry’s publication also proved highly valuable in the recent re-recording, especially of the biographical text written on the southern section of the chapel’s west wall (Newberry 1893a: 84, pl. 44; Lashien and Mourad 2019). Altogether, the recent fieldwork was successful in clarifying significant details missing from Newberry’s plates (Lashien and Mourad 2019). These include, on the west wall, scenes of fighting boatmen, a possible pilgrimage to Abydos, workshop activities, and the false door of the tomb owner; on the north wall, offering bearers and agricultural, bird-trapping, and desert hunting scenes; on the east wall, wrestling and siege scenes (discussed below); and on the south wall, completely left unpublished by Newberry, traces of wine-making, marsh activities, a possible funerary procession, as well as several offering bearers before figures of the tomb owner. The re-recording of the tomb’s scenes thus provides valuable insight on the continuity of artistic styles at Beni Hassan’s cemetery as well as the administration of the Oryx nome in a pivotal transitional period between the 11th and 12th Dynasties.

This is particularly evident when combined with the tomb owner’s biography. Comprised of eight horizontal lines, the text follows some aspects of Khnumhotep I’s career, describing him as *ir.y p’t “hereditary prince,” hꜣ.t ty- “count,” smr w.ty “sole companion,” and hr.jy.tp 5 n(y) M3-hḏ “great overlord/nomarch of the Oryx nome”* (Ward 1982: 102 [850], 104 [864], 124 [1055], 151 [1299]). The official was evidently involved in services specifically assigned to him by Amenemhat I, first king of the 12th Dynasty, including a naval expedition somehow related to Nḥs.jyw as well as St.tyw. Accordingly, fragmentary lines 5–6 in Khnumhotep I’s may be read as: *(5) ... hꜣš.kw ḥn’t hm=f r ḫm (m) ḫ.w n(y) 3 dp(wt) 20 ḫn’n=f ḫw hr=s nw[... ] dr.n=s [s]m m ṣḏb.wy*(6) Nḥs.[jyw] [3]r.jy(w) sỉ(w) St.tyw ḫr(w).nt(yw) ḫ.w=s 3 ḫs.t’ m ṣḏb.wy ... *(5) ... I came down with his majesty there (in) a fleet of 20 ships of swood, then he came upon it [...], then he expelled it/him from the two river banks.*(6) Nḥs[jyw] who had been driven away and who had perished and St.tyw who had fallen were of those whom he had united of the land, the foreign land, and the region of the two river banks. ...”² The official’s effectiveness in fulfilling these services eventually led to his appointment as hꜣ.t ty-5 n(y) M3’t ḫwfw “count of Menaat-Khufu” (see Ward 1982: 104 [864]), after which he likely built and furnished his tomb.

This appointment may also be referenced in the biography of Khnumhotep II (No. 3). The text specifies the relation between Khnumhotep II’s maternal grandfather and Amenemhat I, who evidently placed a Khnumhotep as *ir.y p’t hꜣ.t ty- “imi-r smt.w tỉḥty(wt) m M3’t ḫwfw “hereditary prince, count, and overseer of the eastern deserts in Menaat-Khufu”* (Newberry 1893a: 57–66; Ward 1982: 34 [340]; Lloyd 1992; Jansen-Winkeln 2001; Kanawati and Woods 2010: 33–37; Kanawati and Evans 2014: 24–25, 31–36, pls. 7–10, 110–14). Khnumhotep was credited with establishing the nome’s boundaries (including those shared with the southern Hare nome and the northern Jackal nome), restoring its ruins, and driving out its disidents. He was afterwards placed as the *hr.jy.tp 5 n(y) M3-hḏ “great overlord/nomarch of the Oryx nome,”* or in the position of nomarch. Sharing the same titles as Khnumhotep I, the two individuals have been identified as one and the same. The biographies thereby suggest that Khnumhotep I supported Amenemhat I’s policies and ventures in Middle Egypt, and perhaps helped the king secure control over the region by settling land disputes and restraining rebellions. In return, the king bestowed upon the official several high appointments, and feasibly also entrusted Khnumhotep I with special privileges for his, and his family’s, continued service to the crown. According to his chapel’s scenes, such services may have included varied interactions with those portrayed as foreigners.

**Representing “Foreigners” in Middle Kingdom Tombs**

Before outlining pertinent details in the representation of foreigners in Khnumhotep I’s chapel, it should be noted that such portrayals are defined by ancient Egyptian (a) conceptions of “foreign” groups, individuals, and objects, as well as (b) artistic or textual norms and standards. Whether exhibiting ideological, rhetorical or topos traits, on the one hand, or realistic or mimetic perceptions on the other, representations of different social groups and identities, including those of ethnic affiliation, were usually influenced by context and genre.³ Although 11th to early 12th Dynasty material that associate textual ethnonyms⁴

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¹ For more on the use of DStretch on wall paintings, as well as its applications at Beni Hassan, see, with references, Evans and Mourad 2018. For its applications at another site in Egypt, see Davies, Prada, and Woodhouse 2018.

² Another possible reading for line 6 is: Nḥs[jyw] [3]r.jw sỉ(w) St.tyw ḫr(w).nt(yw) ḫ.w=s 3 ḫs.t’ m ṣḏb.wy ... “Nḥs[jyw] who have been driven away, have perished, and St.tyw have fallen when he filled[f] the land and the desert region in/at the riverbanks/the two shores. ...” (Lashien and Mourad 2019: 23).

³ For the pioneering study on topos and mimesis, see Loprieno 1988. Representations of foreigners in ancient Egypt are also discussed in Baines 1990, 1996; O’Connor 2003; Schneider 2003a, 2003b, 2010; S. T. Smith 2003, 2007; Booth 2005; Espinel 2006; Di Base-Dyson 2013; and Roth 2015.

⁴ A variety of terms may be used to classify groups of people as well as places, as explored in Gundacker 2017: 333–426, with further references.
with artistic depictions are few, they largely appear to conform with earlier divisions of Egypt’s neighbors. The latter thus include those that originate beyond Egypt’s ethically conceptual borders of what it culturally meant to be Egyptian, and those that came from beyond the physical borders of what was within the king’s domain in Egypt. For instance, a stone block discovered at Gebelein, probably from its temple of Hathor, shows the striding figure of Montuhotep II holding a kneeling Egyptian by the hair as he prepares to strike him (Fig. 2; Habachi 1963: 39, fig. 17, pl. 11b; Brovarski 2010: 61; Marochetti 2010: 50–52, fig. 15).5 Behind the latter are three further kneeling persons who, from right to left, are labelled: (1) St.yw, in a short kilt; (2) St.tyw, with a short kilt and a feather at the head; and (3) Ṣḥnw.yw, also with a short kilt and a feather at the head. While artistically depicted with little delineation, the captions respectively specify the individuals’ origins to the south, the northeast, and the west. Other cases dating to the Old and Middle Kingdoms add distinctive skin tones or colors, hairstyles, dress, and/or other elements to emphasize an affiliation with a cultural or social group that is not of the typical, ideal, Egyptian culture.6

The degree to which such aspects are represented varies, as does the treatment of foreigners. In textual or artistic pieces commissioned for royal, state, or religious/cultic purposes, such as the Gebelein block, a topos or highly idealized representation of foreigners is commonly displayed. In some, their chaotic elements were highlighted as to be subdued by the king in order to satisfy his role in overpowering chaos and maintaining order. In others, their importance as sources of exotic, luxurious, or cultic items is emphasized, thereby expressing the king’s access to far-reaching resources. When correlated with representations not directly linked with the state or king, it becomes clear that the role of foreigners, as well as those partly adhering to the Egyptian culture, were more varied, with several hostile, diplomatic, commercial, and social encounters noted in the material dating up to the period of Khnumhotep I’s office.

As a “foreign” individual was regarded as one that identified, or was identified, with a social or cultural group that was not of Egyptian origin, representations were also affected by accepted Egyptian social and cultural norms. A high official’s tomb chapel, for instance, can include images of foreigners, but their roles would be limited to their association with the official in fulfilling his/her duties. Representational aspects also commonly adhered to the conventional standards of the time (Baines 1990, 1996), and were guided by the chapel’s funerary purpose and intended permanence. Like other scenes, they were specifically chosen for the perpetuation of idealized reflections of reality (see Baines 2013: 16–17, 2015; but also van Walsem 2005; and Woods and Leary 2017). As such, further information on foreigners as well as their treatment in Egypt remains reliant on contextual analyses and correlations with archaeological data. Due to missing or unclear material, as with the lack of ethnonyms for the groups discussed here, it is also oftentimes difficult to identify modes of subsistence for individuals based solely on the scenes. The foreigners could have followed a nomadic, semi-nomadic, or urban lifestyle, as has been discerned for the many groups that surrounded Egypt (see Nicolle 2004; Saidel and van der Steen 2007; Barnard and Wendrich 2008; Szuchman 2009; and Moreno García 2017, 2018). Consequently, while usually

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5 The figure wears the Egyptian šndyt-kilt (Habachi 1963: 39, fig. 17, pl. 11b).
6 For an overview, see O’Connor 2003 and Schneider 2003a.
broadly classified as “Nubian” for those from the south and southeast,7 “Libyan” for those from the west,8 or “Asiatic” for those from the north(east),9 each could have included multiple mobile and/or sedentary groups that frequented and possibly settled in Egypt, or remained at or across its borders.

Scenes of “Foreigners” in the Tomb of Khnumhotep I

Individuals betraying non-Egyptian aspects are mostly represented on the east wall of Khnumhotep I’s chapel. Directly facing the tomb’s entrance, its scenes are only partially published by Newberry as an agglomerate of selected details, but in incorrect order and with several errors (Figs. 3–4; Newberry 1893a: pl. 47). The wall, however, is decorated with the same overall layout as the east wall of the nearby tombs of Baqet III (No. 15), Khety (No. 17), and Amenemhat (No. 2), although the latter is divided into two sections by a shrine’s doorway (see Newberry 1893a: pls. 14–16, 1893b: pls. 5, 15; Kanawati and Evans 2016: pls. 88 [a–c], 97–102; and Lashien and Mourad 2019: pls. 26–52, 73–76). It is composed of six registers: the upper three feature pairs of wrestlers performing various moves, and the lower three bear a siege scene and militaristic motifs. A besieged structure is represented at the left end of Registers 4 and 5. It is depicted in elevation with a number of parapets at its top, a rectangular gate(?) at its lower right, and a diagonal line at each end that extends from the baseline to the structure’s wall, perhaps mimicking an earthen-work rampart, glacis, or buttress (Yadin 1963: 70; Schulman 1982: 176; Monnier 2014: 175–80, 197, fig. 3; Wernick 2016b). The representation of this fortress as well as traces of its defenders’ short hairstyles and reddish-brown skin color supports their identification as Egyptians.10 Their arrows are aimed at the warriors depicted on either side of the fortress.

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7 For more on individuals and groups that originate from Egypt’s south, see Trigger 1976; Adams 1977; Bourriau 1981, 1993; Bietak 1987; S. T. Smith 1995, 2003; Kendall 1997; Friedman 2002; Flammini 2008; Török 2009; Lisza 2012; Näsér 2012; and Van Pelt 2013.

8 For more on individuals and groups that originate from Egypt’s west, see Hölscher 1937: 12–14, 25; Spalinger 1978; O’Connor 1990; Houssell 2002: 45–54; Snape 2003; Hope 2007; Rıtner 2009; Hubschmann 2010a, 2010b; Cooney 2011; and Moreno Garcia 2014, 2018.

9 For more on individuals and groups that originate from Egypt’s north(east), see W. Smith 1965; Ward 1971; Bietak 1991, 2010; Redford 1992, 1996; Cohen 2002; Báráta 2003; Sowada 2009; Arnold 2010; Bader 2013, 2017; Mourad 2015; and Saretta 2016.

10 Edward Brovarski (2010: 65) identifies the defenders as Libyans, see n. 23 below. In reference to the fortresses represented in the tombs at Beni Hassan, Franck Monnier (2014: 176) writes that “Ces édifices sont doc assurément égyptiens.”
Fig. 4. The east wall of the chapel of Khnumhotep I (No. 14), Beni Hassan, 12th Dynasty. (Photo by A. Suleiman, courtesy of The Australian Centre for Egyptology)
fortress, themselves involved in a variety of activities. Some are archers preparing or aiming their bows at the fortress or carrying quivers and arrows. Others are foot-soldiers armed with different types of weaponry. More foot-soldiers are depicted in Register 6 alongside other men involved in hand-to-hand combat. Among the many performing these various activities are a number of individuals who bear different arms, wear specific clothing, and display a distinct skin color and hairstyle. These can be identified as individuals from the south and southeast ("Nubians"), the west ("Libyans"), and the northeast ("Asiatics").

The "Nubians"

The majority, if not all, of the preserved archers in Registers 4 and 5 are portrayed with a dark brown skin color and short black hair patterned with dots, as if tightly curled (Figs. 5–8). A feather ornament is positioned at the back of their head and, in some instances, is kept in place by a white headband. The men are dressed in short red kilts, most with a slit in the middle. Many display a red band wrapped at the waist that extends at the back and forms a codpiece at the front, where it often ends in three long strips.11 Another white band is at the upper waist and is attached to two white straps holstered around the shoulders. Some archers are represented with white bracelets12 and a couple wear necklaces with a large circular pendant. A few additionally bear a dagger tucked at the waist, its central groove and semi-hemispherical handle suggestive of a bronze blade and a crescent-shaped pommel.13 Based on such attributes, the individuals are represented as either wholly or largely relating to a Nubian cultural group. As archers, many aim their bows and arrows at the fortress’s defenders. Some string their bows, often with a pile of crisscrossed arrows at their feet. A number of men also walk or run(?) towards the fortress, each carrying a bow in one hand, and a quiver of arrows in the other. Clearly, then, the details suggest that the group attacking the fortress includes an archery contingent composed of Nubian warriors.

The attack on the fortress further consists of a contingent of three men carrying a pole towards its wall (Figs. 7–8).14

11 For more on this type of kilt, see Fischer 1961: 62–75 and Brovarski 2010: 82, nn. 243–44.
12 Bracelets on these and other archers depicted in the chapel could be wrist guards.
13 For more on daggers of similar type, see Bourriau 1981: 30–31; Bietak 1987: 124; Philip 2006: 141–46; Hamblin 2006: 426; and Kemp 2006: 40. For a detailed study of daggers in Egypt, see Petschel 2011.
14 Several scholars identify the pole as a battering ram (see Yadin 1963: 158–59; Schulman 1982: 177; and Hamblin 2006: 449–50). For a different interpretation of the pole as an attempt to interfere with the fortress’s defenders, see Wernick 2016a: 386–88, 401; 2016b.

Protected by a small structure15 are two men portrayed as Egyptians and, between them, a third with the same skin color and coiffure as the Nubian archers. However, rather than a red kilt and white chest bands, he wears a short white kilt, the same attire worn by the men at either of his sides. While this choice in clothing possibly reflects his shared activity with those next to him, the other noted elements point to a Nubian origin, signaling that those from the south could participate in different activities within the Egyptian military.

Individuals depicted elsewhere in the tomb also share some of the characteristics of the east wall’s Nubians. These can be found on two of the chapel’s three pilasters, as well as on the north wall. The pilasters feature a number of registers with attendants and items that accompany the tomb owner on his inspections of the domain, especially those to the marshlands (Lashien and Mourad 2019: pls. 72a, 77b). The preserved upper two registers of the north wall’s east pilaster illustrate three men carrying archery equipment (Fig. 9a): one in the uppermost has possible reddish-colored skin, a short red kilt, white chest bands, as well as a quiver and an arrow; and two in the second register have a darker red skin color. Of the latter, the one on the left wears what appears to be a short red kilt, while that on the right is in a white kilt. Both have white chest bands.

On the south wall’s pilaster are three further men with archery equipment in the second and third register (Fig. 9b). All have the same darkish-red skin color, their kilts preserving traces of white and red paint. Those in the third register, at least, wear chest bands. Such details are also portrayed for the second individual in the second register, who instead carries a shield and an axe. With all men, no featherhead ornaments are preserved, their hairstyle evidently varying from the east wall’s archers. Their activity, however, is also different from that of the archers. They are not involved in siege warfare, but appear to be the guards or protectors of the tomb owner, escorting him and, in the case of the north wall’s scenes, his wife, as they journey to inspect the estate(s) (Newberry 1893a: pl. 46; Lashien and Mourad 2019: pls. 71, 78).

Another activity linked with archery is displayed on the north wall’s east section. Two archers are represented in its upper register (Figs. 10–11). Each wears an open kilt with white shoulder straps, a codpiece at the front, and a longer piece of fabric at the back. With a feather set in place by a white band at the head and a dagger tucked at the waist, they both carry quivers and aim their bows at animals in a desert-hunting scene. The man on

15 The structure has been identified as a mantelet (Schulman 1982: 173, 177), a testudo (Nossov 2005: 224–26), or the more correct mobile siege guard, the vinea (Wernick 2016a: 386–88, 2016b).
Fig. 5. Individuals represented on Register 5, east wall, chapel of Khnumhotep I (No. 14), Beni Hassan, 12th Dynasty. (Drawing by S. Shafik, courtesy of The Australian Centre for Egyptology)
the left is painted a reddish color, while that on the right is a darker brown. Such variations in color have also been observed for individuals depicted in the desert-hunting scene of the nearby tomb of Amenemhat (Kanawati and Evans 2016: pls. 32[b], 33), as well as in the 11th Dynasty Theban tomb of Intef. On the latter, Brovarski explains the color differences either as an artistic error or an attempt to represent "offspring of mixed Egyptian-Nubian marriage" (2010: 82, n. 244). This is indeed possible, yet it is equally likely that the attire is specifically linked with archery. If the latter is the case, then the Nubian origin of one or both of the hunters, as well as the archers on the pilasters, is cautiously based on their skin color. If their attire is considered a Nubian cultural element, correlating with those depicted on the east wall, then the representations could be denoting a link to a Nubian cultural group(s).

Overall, the representation of the abovementioned individuals across the scenes point to various roles performed by archers, as well as those of likely Nubian origin, within the Oryx nome. They are portrayed as significant members of (a) siege attacks, both as archers and pole attackers, and possibly (b) in the nomarch’s personal guard, and (c) in hunting activities. The inclusion of Nubians in the Egyptian army is not unique. The 6th Dynasty biography of Weni, for instance, describes the organization of troops from various Nubian groups, including the ḡrt, ḡm, ḡw ṣ.t, and ḍḥw, alongside Libyans and Upper and Lower Egyptians (Sethe 1933: 101–4, lines 13–16).17 Several texts of the First Intermediate Period also mention Nubians, such as those from the Gebelein or el-Rizeiqat region, with many assisting the Thebans in their pursuits for power (see H. Fischer 1961: 44–80; Kubisch 2000: 239–65; Rosati 2004; and Ejsmond 2017). An artistic representation from the First Intermediate Period tomb of nomarch Iti-ibi-iqer (N13.1) at Asyut depicts Nubian archers among Egyptian soldiers, as well as in a desert-hunting scene (el-Khadragy 2008: 227–28). The tomb of Intef, dating to Montuhotep II’s reign, additionally features scenes involving Nubian archers and Egyptian soldiers in both a naval engagement and a siege scene against a fortress defended by Asiatics (Jaroš-Deckert 1984: 27–44, 63, fig. 15, pls. 1–2, 6, 14, 17, folding pls. 1–3).18 To these may be added a model from the early Middle Kingdom tomb of Mesheh at Asyut that represents Nubian archers bearing features

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16 Issues in identifications based solely on color are discussed in Matić 2018: 32–40.

17 For Nubians as warriors, see also Seidlmayer 2002: 100.

18 As Brovarski (2010: 62, n. 241) indicates, the date of the scene’s composition is assigned to the middle part of Montuhotep II’s reign due to the early spelling of his Horus name.
akin to those of Khnumhotep I’s chapel.\textsuperscript{19} The later Middle Kingdom Semna Dispatches also possibly refer to Md$^\ddag$ men accompanying Egyptian soldiers on their patrol, the individuals perhaps among the pastoral nomads of the Eastern Desert who were usually encountered between the 1st and 2nd cataracts (Liszka 2012: 273–78; Liszka and Kraemer 2016: 183–84). At Beni Hassan itself are the siege scenes in the tombs of Baqet III, Khety, and Amenemhat that include archers sharing very similar attributes to those in Khnumhotep I’s chapel. Correlating Khnumhotep I’s scene with his biography, it would be tempting to identify the depicted Nubians as of the Nh$s\ddag$y group. However, the particularities of assigning the archer representation with a particular social or ethnic group remains too tentative for this conclusion.\textsuperscript{20} In fact, the aforementioned texts highlight that Nubians of several such groups were incorporated into the Egyptian army, the scenes in Khnumhotep I’s chapel further indicating that their skills could have extended to diverse roles not solely connected with warfare.

The “Libyans”

Amid the siege attack in Registers 4 and 5 is a unique scene at the right of Register 4 (Figs. 3–4, 12–13). It consists of a group of nine individuals and four children all facing right, away from the attack, as if to be differentiated from it and its contingents. Its association with militaristic duties, however, is still defined by its placement on the east wall, as well as its inclusion of a warrior. The latter stands as guard at the end of the group, and wears a white kilt, longer at the back, with two bands at the shoulders. His connection to the Nubian archers, and possible southern origins, is hinted by his darkish-brown skin color and short curly hair, as well as the bow, quiver, and dagger tucked into his belt. At the front of the group is an Egyptian in a long white kilt. Perhaps a guide, he holds a whip over his left arm and gestures with his right as if directing those behind to follow.

In between this Egyptian and the possible Nubian guard are four women and three men represented with a pale pink to yellow skin color, green eyes (where preserved), as well as a herd of long-legged goats divided into two superposed registers. All women have reddish-brown, shoulder-length hair ending in a spiral-like curl. The two at the front each wear a long tunic and carry a child on her back, the arms wrapped around her neck, and the legs around her waist. The remaining women are in long skirts with wavy hems and carry baskets or panniers on their back, each bearing a child. The men have short beards and coiffed reddish-brown hair decorated with feathers. They each wear a long V-necked tunic with diagonal and horizontal bands, a decorated bracelet on the right wrist, and a necklace from which hangs an intricate amulet with a red spiral-like component above a white pear-shaped feature. They carry throwsticks in their left hands, and an object in the right designed as a feather. Based on these details, the seven may be identified as Libyans.\textsuperscript{21}

In addition to a scene of a similar group of individuals from the nearby tomb of Amenemhat at Beni Hassan (Newberry 1893a: pl. 13; Kanawati and Evans 2016: 39, pl. 95), that of Khnumhotep I is among a very limited corpus of Middle Kingdom artistic representations related

\textsuperscript{19} Cairo JE 30969 (CG 257). For more on Nubian archers, see Bietak 1985, 1987: 117–18 and Meurer 1997: 96–97, 125–26.

\textsuperscript{20} Wolfgang Helck (1984: 1051–52) writes that each ethnic group had a different subdivision in the military. For more on the roles of Nubians in the Egyptian military, see Liszka 2012: 289–308.

\textsuperscript{21} For more on the artistic representation of Libyans, see Ritner 2009: 305–14.
to Libyans. Twelfth Dynasty representations of men in non-bellicose scenes who, according to their attire and ornaments, have been identified as Libyans, include an assistant in a desert-hunting scene from the tomb of Senbi (B1) at Meir (Blackman 1914: pl. 6–7, 23; Kanawati and Evans 2017: pl. 3a, 75), and a number of men assisting in the dragging of a colossal statue depicted in the tomb of Djehutyhotep at Deir el-Bersha (Newberry 1895: pl. 12, 15; see Moreno García 2018: 163). Therefore, the presentation of men, women, children, as well as the goatherd, in Khnumhotep I’s chapel further adds to the scene’s exceptional rarity in depicting the group in a non-bellicose manner. While its illustration among the east wall’s militaristic scenes may be regarded as connected to the nearby siege, its separation from the fortress both in position and direction more likely signals that the local army was involved in an expedition escorting these individuals, rather than in battling them. Correspondingly, the identification of the rearguard as being of Nubian origin would add a further vocation to these “foreigners” as expedition members or patrolmen in the service of Egyptian officials. This supports other Middle Kingdom data on Nubians’ participation in desert patrols, perhaps for their knowledge of the Eastern and Western Deserts, its routes, and the peoples frequenting the area (see Liszka 2012: 273–78 and Liszka and Kraemer 2016: 183–84).

In Amenemhat’s chapel, the Libyan group is not among the east wall’s militaristic activities. It is instead portrayed on the north wall, among a series of registers dedicated to the tomb owner receiving officials and products of his estate (Newberry 1893a: pl. 13; Kanawati and Evans 2016: 39, pl. 95). Dating to Senwosret I’s reign, one may question whether this group is related to the earlier one in Khnumhotep I’s chapel. Although theoretical, perhaps Khnumhotep I was representing that he had allowed the group to settle, or their herds to graze, within the newly established boundaries of the Oryx nome and its associated

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22 Inclusive of women and children, the so-called Libyan Family scene that occurs from the Old Kingdom onwards as, for instance, in Sahure’s mortuary temple, has been interpreted in association with Libyan conflict (Spalinger 2017).

23 Brovarski (2010: 65) identifies the occupants of the fortress as Libyans and thus the group as captives. However, none of the portrayed individuals are shown bound, wounded, or forcibly being transported, as, for instance, in the earlier siege scenes of Inti at Deshasha (5th Dynasty) or Intef at Thebes (11th Dynasty). For Inti’s siege scene, see Kanawati and McFarlane 1993: pl. 27; and Mourad 2011. For the siege scene of the tomb of Intef, see Jarol-Deckert 1984: 27–44, 63, fig. 15, pls. 1–2, 6, 14, 17, folding pls. 1–3.
estates or routes. Their inclusion in the chapel of Amenemhat could consequently be related to their continued inclusion in the Oryx nome’s community. Such a scenario has been postulated for other Libyan groups from the Old and New Kingdoms. For instance, Predynastic and Old Kingdom material relay the importance of cattle, goat, and sheep breeding for Libyans, their groups evidently accessing the area along the western branch of the Nile in the Delta, as well as Western Desert oases and routes, for grazing land and water (see Fig. 1; Hope 2007: 399–415 and Moreno García 2014: 3–6, 2018). Texts of the late New Kingdom also point to Libyan settlements within Egypt, in the Western Delta, and as far south as Gebelein (O’Connor 1990: 29–113; Moreno García 2014: 3, 2018: 165). The scene from Khnumhotep I’s chapel thus adds to this repertoire regarding encounters with Libyan...
groups in Egypt, and suggests further agreements, perhaps over an extended period of time, between them and local officials. If historically accurate (see discussion below), it is uncertain whether the central administration would have been aware of such agreements, although it would be more likely that they were negotiated under the auspices of the administration via their local representative, Khnumhotep I. A similar case is illustrated in the later scene of a group of ʿm Asiatics arriving before Khnumhotep II under the behest of Senwosret II (Kanawati and Evans 2014: pls. 124, 128–29, 130[c]). In fact, it is also possible that the Libyan group was sent by the administration to Khnumhotep I following their retrieval from elsewhere beyond or from Egypt’s domain. Perhaps they were collected by the king’s army, as in Sinuhe’s account of Libyan captives and cattle brought into Egypt towards the end of Amenemhat I’s reign (Sinuhe, R11–6; Parkinson 1997: 27),24 and then transported to other areas within Egypt, like the Oryx nome.

The “Asiatics”

The east wall comprises two groups of warriors distinguished by their pale yellow skin. The first occurs in Register 4, separated from the besieged fortress only by an archer (see Fig. 4). It consists of five men provided with voluminous, reddish shoulder-length hair with a tuft at the front, as well as long thick beards (Figs. 8, 14, 16). With banded bracelets and anklets, they sport short kilts patterned with horizontal zigzag lines. At least two bear the preserved details of necklaces(?). Two others each have an item wrapped at their necks from which extends a conical object, perhaps for yielding additional stones for the sling they carry, the item already equipped with a stone.25 The first man at the head of the group is also armed with a throwstick and a bow, the fourth with a weapon raised above his comrades’ heads, possibly a sling open in mid-air, and the fifth with a bow and a possible mace. The proximity to the fortress suggests that this group of five were involved in the attack, their bows and slings likely complementing the archers’ long-range weapons (see Fig. 8).26

The second group of warriors is found at the right end of Register 6 (see Fig. 4). It is composed of four men rather than three as in Newberry’s recording (see Figs. 3, 15). They have greenish-grey eyes (where preserved), thick

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24 No other material has yet been found in support of the historicity of this campaign.

25 For more on slings in ancient Egypt and the Near East, see Hamblin 2006: 426–27 and Wernick 2014.

26 William Hamblin (2006: 427) postulates that, as the slingers are behind the archer, their weapons had a more effective range. For experimental data regarding the sling’s 27–500 m range, see Vega and Craig 2009. For more on slings in the ancient Near East, see Wernick 2014.
Fig. 12. Individuals represented on Register 4, east wall, chapel of Khnumhotep I (No. 14), Beni Hassan, 12th Dynasty. (Drawing by S. Shaﬁk, courtesy of The Australian Centre for Egyptology)
pointed beards, and voluminous, reddish shoulder-length hair, two with an added tuft at the front. The individual leading them is armed with a bow and a socketed axe with a curved shaft, similar in shape to the Levantine fenestrated eye-axe (Figs. 15, 17; Ward 1971: 52–54; Schulman 1982: 178). The new recording indicates that he likely wears a one-shouldered garment reaching just above the knees. The upper part is intricately adorned with horizontal and vertical zigzags of red, white, and blue, while the lower is decorated with horizontal zigzags and a hem designed as a blue horizontal band. Traces of a patterned band (sash?) are seen over the left shoulder, extending to the upper thigh. It appears linked to the man’s waist by a long strap that hangs at the front. Such clothing distinguishes this individual from those following him and suggests that he is possibly of higher rank, perhaps the group’s leader.

The other three wear crossed straps at the chest, with those of the third and fourth men clearly decorated and extending passed the waist. They are dressed in banded belts and short colorfully detailed kilts; those of the second and fourth man have horizontal zigzags, while that of the third is patterned with vertical and sloping lines. The men are armed with throwsticks, bows, and a dagger-like implement. The latter is grasped by its hemispherical pommel, which, together with the blade’s delineated central groove, hints that the weapon is of bronze. Preserved traces at the arms and legs indicate that all men were portrayed with detailed bracelets and anklets.

The second group’s inclusion among the milieu of soldiers and fighters of Register 6 is hinted by the presence of an additional man following them with a bow and quiver.

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27 For more on this type of axe, see Maxwell-Hyslop 1949: 90–129; and Philip 1989: 49–50, 2006: 138–39.
28 Phyllis Saretta (2016: 82) suggests that this is a quiver, although it doesn’t appear wide enough for such an item.
29 The individual is also slightly taller than the other men. A similar case for differences in attire may be found for the two men leading the procession of 3n Asiatics in the nearby tomb of Khnumhotep II (Kanawati and Evans 2014: pls. 124, 128–29, 130[c]). While the first is clearly their leader, the ḥḏ ḫḥ.t ḫḥ3 “ruler of a foreign land, ḫḥa,” the one behind him could be the second-in-command (Mourad 2015: 87–88).
30 Faint traces on the second man’s chest point to the presence of now-missing elements, perhaps similar crossed straps, or the ends of a shawl.
31 Unlike the throwsticks carried by those behind him, the second man carries an object that curves outward. In an earlier publication, the author suggested that it could be a Levantine scimitar, and if so, the earliest known of this weapon type in Egypt. Saretta (2016: 82) identifies it as a club. For more on scimitars in the 3rd and 2nd millennium B.C.E., see Philip 1989: 142–43, 2006: 151 and Hamblin 2006: 66–71, fig. 2.
32 The dagger is very similar to those carried by individuals of Nubian origin, as outlined earlier in this paper. Graham Philip (2006: 146) postulates a Near Eastern origin for the dagger type, with the weapon, or its features, later adopted and adapted by Egyptians and Nubians in the Middle Kingdom. The weapon would thus have been part of the “existing local value systems” (Philip 2006: 146). Accordingly, the details in Khnumhotep I’s chapel hint that the dagger with a crescent-shaped pommel was known by all groups by at least the beginning of the 12th Dynasty. Perhaps it retained some symbolic significance or was a visual marker of status or affiliation to a particular social group. For a discussion on bronze daggers of similar type, see Philip 2006: 141–46, Hamblin 2006: 426, and Petschel 2011: 106–9.
his red skin and short red kilt pointing to an Egyptian origin (Fig. 15). Still, they are differentiated from the first group of five warriors in Register 4 in placement, weaponry, and clothing (compare Figs. 8, 14–17). This may indicate that they were of different origins or were involved in different militaristic activities either associated with the siege and/or as a separate contingent in the local army. Perhaps the first group was partaking in the siege attack itself, while the second’s inclusion in Register 6, amid other soldiers and hand-to-hand combat, points to the men’s participation in open-field or close-combat attacks or exercises. The possible identification of the first man as their leader would additionally imply the internal organization of the group and the presence of a higher-ranking warrior in their contingent.

Nevertheless, in both groups, the men’s skin color, facial features, clothing, and weapons all support their identification as Asiatics. Very similar men are attested in the earlier tombs of Baqet III (11 men) and Khety (9 men), but without beards (Newberry 1893b: pls. 5, 15). The depiction in Khnumhotep I’s chapel further offers new details that would later become more commonly associated with northeasterners.33 These include the earliest known clear representations of the shorter voluminous hairstyle, especially with the tuft at the front, which possibly developed into the so-called mushroom hairdo of the Middle Kingdom (Figs. 8, 14–17),34 and the one-shouldered garment worn by men, possibly of higher rank (Figs. 15, 17).35 The developments can clearly be distinguished upon comparison with earlier representations of individuals identified as Asiatics elsewhere in Egypt. Those in the Theban tomb of Intef, for instance, are depicted with beards and yellowish skin, but have long hair bound with a fillet, open kilts patterned in red, white and blue, and are not among the Egyptian army, but rather the defenders of a fortress (Jaroš-Deckert 1984: 27–44, 63, fig. 15, pls. 1–2, 6, 14, 17, folding pls. 1–3). They are armed with spears, shields, a bow, and stones. The latter two are interestingly the only weapons that parallel those of the Asiatics in Khnumhotep I’s chapel, but instead of being used in the attack on a fortress, they are instead used to defend the stronghold in Intef’s siege scene.

In contrast, the two groups in Khnumhotep I’s chapel highlight the cooperative participation of Asiatic warriors in the local army. According to the translation of Khnumhotep I’s biography here, this would agree with the mention of St.tyw united with Amenemhat I. However, the reading of the biography is open to interpretation and based on fragmentary lines. Also, as with the Nhš.yw, the portrayed men need not specifically be identified as St.tyw, a term which likely referred to different groups from the
northeast, such as the Mntw or the ‘m.w (see Mourad 2017). Supporting material for the possible presence of Near Easterners in Egypt has been inferred from early Middle Kingdom tombs at the Delta’s Kom el-Hisn.36 The burials yielded bronze weaponry of Early Bronze (EB) IV to Middle Bronze (MB) IIA type, such as fenestrated axes, daggers with crescent-shaped pommels, and a socketed spearhead. Although their association with soldiers is uncertain,37 the forms of the axe and dagger are similar to those portrayed in the second group of Asiatics which are also of types found in the contemporary MB I period in the Levant (Philip 1989: 49–52, 167, 2006: 138–39, 141–42). Also from the Early Bronze Age and Middle Bronze Age Near East are representations of warriors with the tufted hairstyle and patterned kilts of Khnumhotep I’s Asiatics, as well as elite men wearing the one-shouldered garment.38 The depicted aspects thus attest to a continuation from the earlier scenes at Beni Hassan, as well as a transformation of details that aligns with current understandings of the contemporary Levantine culture. Perhaps this reflects either developments in the artistic repertoire related to the representation of Asiatics, or the artist’s actual observations of these individuals and their articles in the Oryx nome.

Excursus: Atypical Representations of Herdsmen

Three scenes in Khnumhotep I’s chapel feature a specific motif that could be linked to a different group of herdsmen in Egypt. It is found on the north wall’s east section (Register 2), as well as the south wall’s east (Register 6; Fig. 18) and west (Register 4) sections, its details variably preserved (Lashien and Mourad 2019: pls. 72b, 77–78). The motif occurs among those of offering bearers bringing products before a figure of the tomb owner. It presents a herdsman with reddish-brown skin (where preserved) and shoulder-length hair wearing a long garment patterned with horizontal bands. Slightly bent forward and possibly leaning on a long staff held in the right hand, he grasps a rope in the left, with which he leads a large ox with clipped horns and a striped blanket on its back. No facial features have been preserved.

Parallel figures of this motif are found in the Beni Hassan tombs of Nekhti (No. 21) and Amenemhat (Newberry 1893b: pl. 22a; Kanawati and Woods 2010: 77; and Kanawati and Evans 2016: pl. 96). The garment is akin to one worn by Djehutyhotep as portrayed in a scene in his tomb at Deir el-Bersha, which, given the way in which

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36 For the archaeological material from Kom el-Hisn, see Hamada and el-Amir 1947; Hamada and Farid 1947; Philip 2006: 225, 231–32; Petschel 2011: 438–42 [Nos. 129–30, 132–33, 135, 137–38]; Bagh 2013: 61–62; Mourad 2015: 49–50; and Wenke, Redding, and Cagle 2016: 17, 348–50.
37 Regarding the Near Eastern practice of so-called “warrior burials” and the deposition of weapons in tombs as markers of gender, status, or wealth, see Philip 1995, Rehm 2003, Cohen 2012, and Kletter and Levi 2016.
38 For other examples of the one-shouldered garment, see S. Smith 1933: pl. 9[f]; Moorey 1986: fgs. 2–3, 5, pls. 2, 4–5; Teissier 1996: 18 [76, 245, 265], 70 [103], 115 [243], 120 [257]; and Mourad 2015: fig. 6.16.
his staff is carried along the arm, could represent old age (Newberry 1895: pl. 7). Scenes of herdsmen in the chapel also include those with a long kilt with the horizontal patterning (Newberry 1895: pls. 12, 18). The tomb of Wekhhotep III at Meir (C1) similarly depicts a herdswoman with this kilt (Blackman 1953: pl. 18).

Due to the herdsmen’s distinction from other “typical” Egyptian herdsmen, one wonders whether they belonged to a particular group of herdsmen encountered in Middle Egypt. They, like the emaciated herdsmen depicted in the tombs of Meir,39 could have been one of several groups, including those of foreign origin, who were frequenting the region under the local rulers’ supervision and permission (see Moreno García 2017). In accessing the area’s fertile lands for their cattle, they are represented as an essential part of the community’s economic sphere, adding to the region’s overall social dynamism.

39 The emaciated men have been identified as Eastern Desert nomads, Asiatic nomads, Nubian herdsmen, or Bedja herdsmen. For more on these men, see Blackman 1914: 32; vol. 2, 13–19; Staubli 1991: 26–30; Meurer 1997: 97–98 [No. 28]; Schneider 2003a: 190, 327; Arnold 2010: 196; and Liszka 2012: 241–42. For the depiction of herdsmen as foreigners, see also Moreno García 2017: 119–20.

Representing a Hub of Cross-Cultural Encounters at the Oryx Nome

The discussion thus far has proven that the scenes in Khnumhotep I’s chapel represent different “foreigners” involved in the army, and possibly the personal guard and hunting party of the nomarch. All are shown in association with Egyptians, and some even crossed paths with each other, such as the possibly Nubian soldier following the Libyan group. The depictions can be interpreted in three main ways: (1) as a reflection of the tomb owner’s wish to include the “foreigners” for specific purposes in his chapel, (2) as a reflection of some historical reality where they were encountered in the Oryx nome, and/or (3) as a reflection of idealized conceptions of society and intergroup dynamics. All would logically provide insight into the two aforementioned points that define ancient Egyptian representations of the foreign: (a) conceptions of “foreign” groups, individuals, and objects, and (b) artistic or textual norms and standards.

Considering the similar scenes in the earlier tombs of Baqet III and Khety, as well as that of Amenemhat, some have commented on the historical validity of the siege attacks, with Schulman (1982) noting their stock character.
At the very least, their repetition in four tombs as well as their positioning on the east wall, directly opposite the chapel’s entrance, highlight the importance of militaristic elements for the nome’s high officials, especially Khety and Amenemhat as overseers of the expedition or army. If a perpetuation of a local artistic theme and not a representation of the Egyptians’ actual encounters with members of different cultural groups, then one should note that not all decorated tombs at Beni Hassan feature the siege scene, and not all groups of “foreigners” in Khnumhotep I’s chapel occur in direct relation to the siege. Each of the aforementioned tombs additionally comprises a number

Fig. 17. Detail of the man heading the second “Asiatic” group. Register 6, east wall, chapel of Khnumhotep I (No. 14), Beni Hassan, 12th Dynasty. (Photo by A. Suleiman, courtesy of The Australian Centre for Egyptology)

Fig. 18. An atypical representation of a herdsman leading an ox. Register 6, east section, south wall, chapel of Khnumhotep I (No. 14), Beni Hassan, 12th Dynasty. (Drawing by S. Shaﬁk, courtesy of The Australian Centre for Egyptology)
of artistic differences in their portrayals of “foreigners” (see Schulman 1982 and Mourad 2015: 92, fig. 4.55). So while reflecting a certain degree of homogeneity, the variations also point to selected modifications.

As such, the inclusion of “foreigners” in the chapel’s artistic repertoire might reflect the tomb owner’s and/or artists’ attempts to show an idealized version of the nome’s army as one that included different groups with various skills and expertise. Such skills may have also been held in high regard for the elite’s personal guard, as well as patrolling, hunting, and other expeditionary pursuits. Portraying the foreigners in this sense could thus be correlated with their representation as bringers of “exotic” expertise as opposed to “exotic” or luxurious commodities, as well as the effective management of such expertise by the Egyptian elite. This would be in line with other non-bellicose treatments of foreigners from royal contexts. Yet, is the control of such forces, as with access to foreign resources, not ideologically the responsibility of the Egyptian king? Are the scenes in Khnumhotep I’s chapel a reflection of the artistic continuation of more regionalized themes following the First Intermediate Period, and thus the portrayal of the continued monopoly of the Oryx nome’s elite? In view of these questions, it is interesting to note that a main departure from the iconography of the east walls in earlier tombs is the presence of the Libyan group. Its inclusion could be viewed in association with the idealized Egyptian concept of the other, the foreign group’s movements controlled and encircled as they seek refuge or shelter in orderly Egyptian territory. The one responsible for controlling the movements of these foreigners would thus be Khnumhotep I, perhaps in his role as governor of the Oryx nome and his new appointment as overseer of the Eastern deserts. Subsequently, the representations would not only be showing Khnumhotep I’s fulfilment of his duties. They could also be portraying his allegiance to continuing royal efforts, or rather emphasizing his special privileges in mediating otherwise royal affairs due to his own power and influence in the region.

Both are applicable if the representations imbue a degree of historical veracity. In assuming control of the Oryx nome, Khnumhotep I gained power over an apparently wealthy district with an already-established elite, the status of whom is clearly reflected by their tombs at Beni Hassan (see Kanawati and Woods 2010: 8–10; Moreno García 2017; and Graves 2017). Despite the uncertain dating of the earlier tombs of Khety and Baqet III, the presence of conflict before or during Amenemhat I’s reign is not only alluded to in the Beni Hassan paintings, but also at Hatnub. Located south of Beni Hassan and Deir el-Bersha, the quarry of Hatnub revealed several inscriptions commissioned by Nehry and his sons, Kay and Djehutykhnakht, nomarchs of the 15th Upper Egyptian Hare nome. Also of debated date, most likely between the reigns of Montuhotep IV and Amenemhat I, the texts refer to an attack on a town in the Hare nome by an allied force of Egyptians, possibly including royal troops, as well as Ḡmr, Ḡw3r, Nh3s.y, and ṭm.w (Anthes 1928: 36 [No. 16], 57–58 [Nos. 24–25]). These inscriptions, together with the militaristic scenes at Beni Hassan, could point to the presence of conflict in Middle Egypt, perhaps with the Hare nome elite colluding against the state and rulers of the Oryx nome. Indeed, in an unstable political climate, the maintenance of a province’s borders would have been essential for its leaders and feasibly involved some form of conflict. The stabilization of local and/or regional power could have thus necessitated a well-trained army that was present in this area and that, as mentioned in multiple sources, could comprise Nubians and Asiatics.

It is also possible that, in securing his new administration, Amenemhat I sought to quell feuds among the region’s elite houses. In approaching negotiations with Khnumhotep I and his forebears, the central administration would have astutely forged connections with individuals of considerable regional clout. It would have also gained access to part of the most fertile region of Egypt, an area that was both strategically proximal to the Hare nome and a significant nodule that connected major routes linked to the Western and the Eastern Deserts (Fig. 1). So, the province’s rich access to resources would have been found in Newberry 1893b: 5–7; Brunner 1936: 67–68; Schenkel 1962:79–84; Willems 1983–1984, 2007: 84–88, 107–13; Hold 1984; Kamrin 1998: 27–29; and Brovarski 2010. 41 Further discussion on the dating of these tombs and others of the First Intermediate Period and early Middle Kingdom at Beni Hassan can be found in Newberry 1893b: 5–7; Brunner 1936: 67–68; Schenkel 1962:79–84; Willems 1983–1984, 2007: 84–88, 107–13; Hold 1984; Kamrin 1998: 27–29; and Brovarski 2010.

42 For more on the Hatnub texts and their date, see Blumenthal 1976; Brovarski 2010: 57; and Willems 1983–1984: 95–96. 43 For more on the Hatnub texts, see Faulkner 1944: 62; Blumenthal 1976; Willems 1983–1984; Redford 1992: 73; Grajetzki 2006: 110; Brovarski 2010; and Shaw 2010: 152.

44 This is in accordance to two studies by the Egyptian Ministry of Agriculture. For more on the agricultural significance of the area, see W. Fischer 1950; Kanawati 1980b: 6–7, figs. 1–2, 1976: 267; and Lashié 2017.

45 For instance, to the west is access to the Bahariya Oasis, from whence routes have been postulated to the oases of Siwa, Farafra, Dakhleh, and Kharga (see Hubschmann 2010b: fig. 1). Although the area hasn’t been well surveyed, to the east are a number of points believed to provide access through Wadi Tarfa, Sheikh Mubarak, or the nearby Via Hadriana (south of Beni Hassan) to the Eastern Desert, or possibly to Wadi Qena, where further paths could lead to the Red Sea (see Aufrechte 2002: 206–14 and Cooper 2014, 2015: 335, fig. 41; Julian Cooper, pers. comm.).
highly attractive, its location also desirable as a base for expeditions.

These may be some motives for why the king consequently formally established the nomes’ boundaries and placed Khnumhotep I in his position as nomarch and new overseer of the eastern deserts (see Moreno García 2017). In doing so, he would have secured cooperation from the Oryx nome’s elite, and the elite would have guaranteed support for their continued management of the province’s resources and its linked routes, the groups who would frequent these routes, as well as the body that would safeguard these combined efforts. This plausibly included individuals or groups whose expertise and skills were coveted, those who were well-trained in combat or security, who were travelling through the region, who desired to utilize its fertile lands, and who were knowledgeable in expedition logistics. The combined interactions of all these transregional individuals and expedition members with each other, and with local officials, scribes, craftsmen, herders, and others, would have subsequently and feasibly fostered the nome as a hub of cross-cultural encounters (see also Moreno García 2017, 2018: 163–64). The continued representation of relations with foreigners, highlighted by the procession of Asians in Khnumhotep II’s tomb, thus appears as an extension of the power of this province’s powerful magnates, their continued control over the nome’s resources, and, reciprocally, the state’s sustained support of their monopoly as initiated by Amenemhat I’s policy. After Khnumhotep II, however, the construction of large tombs in the province almost came to an end, as one of Khnumhotep II’s sons left his tomb (No. 4) unfinished. A similar situation has also been observed at Meir, suggesting that support for these provincial magnates may have significantly altered under Senwosret III. Still, it seems that the expertise of the Oryx officials in promoting intergroup relations for better access to resources persisted: Khnumhotep III, the posited great-grandson of Khnumhotep I, became keeper of the gateway to the foreign lands and, according to his biography at Dahshur (Allen 2008), sailed to the Northern Levant, perhaps showcasing his now intergenerational expertise in negotiating with foreigners on behalf of the Egyptian state.

**Conclusion**

Investigating the re-recorded scenes of Tomb No. 14 has provided intriguing evidence on the political and social dynamics of an Egyptian region adapting to a new 12th Dynasty. Although not as large or grandiose as the tombs of his predecessors or successors at Beni Hassan, the one-room chapel of Khnumhotep I was endowed with scenes that included representations of a number of groups and individuals that could be of non-Egyptian origin. With the political events that witnessed a new king seizing power, as well as the establishment of a new dynasty, the tomb was likely purposefully designed to showcase both continuity—especially of the power of the local elite—and transformation, in accordance to shifting allegiances and socio-political developments. Thus, in interpreting its inclusion of the non-Egyptians, it is best to approach the scenes as multi-layered representations of some historical reality tailored for the purposes of the tomb owner, the tomb itself, and conventional standards in Egyptian art.

The details embedded in the depictions strongly support that knowledge of non-Egyptians was very present among the elite and those of the Oryx nome. In combination with similar representations from sites in the region, they suggest that various groups could have frequented the area, either voluntarily or involuntarily, as suggested for the abovementioned Libyans in the story of Sinuhe. Following their movements would have been of great importance for local rulers like Khnumhotep I. If accessing water and cultivated land, negotiations with the local elite would have been paramount to safeguard their activities among other groups. Perhaps they offered their specialized skills or expertise in return for safe passage, temporary or permanent habitation, or other services or material in-kind (for instance, those sourced from the nearby Eastern Desert). According to the scenes from Khnumhotep I’s tomb, this may have included their recruitment as warriors trained in different techniques and tactics, such as archery, siege maneuvers, as well as open-field and hand-to-hand combat, or perhaps to related vocations, as hunters or personal guards. Furthermore, as the non-Egyptians would have retained knowledge of routes, different social or cultural groups at and across Egypt’s borders, as well as associated methods of negotiating with such groups, their experience would have feasibly been desired by local and state officials, especially those organizing frequent expeditions. Their involvement in such expeditions is indeed also represented by the evidence from the tomb of Djehutyhotep, which included a number of men identified as foreigners in the retinue of the nomarch of the nearby Hare nome, assisting in the transportation of his colossal statue (Newberry 1895: pls. 12, 15; see also Moreno García 2018: 163). Another similar case is with the intensive interactions between different groups at Serabit el-Khadim under the auspices of the 12th Dynasty administration (for a recent overview, with references, see Mourad 2015: 135–41). As such, in representing the three main idealized foreign groups in

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40 For more on the continued growing power of Middle Egypt’s elite and the posited related shifts under Senwosret III, see Franko 1991; Grajetzki 2009: 113–14; Kanawati 2017; Lashien 2017; and Moreno García 2017.
service of Khnumhotep I, who himself could have acted as a representative of the king, the scenes appear to highlight the idealized fluid interactions of all groups in the Oryx nome as a hub of cross-cultural encounters. This differs considerably from earlier representations of foreigners, and perhaps marks an important adaptation to socio-historical shifts that brought different groups in contact with Egypt. That it continued to evolve in the later tombs of Amenemhat and Khnumhotep II signals that particular inter-group encounters, and possibly inter-cultural relations, were of great importance for the elite and, as with other roles and responsibilities, remained under the auspices of specific families. In view of the changing dynamics of this pivotal period across the region, the scenes of “foreigners” in the tomb of Khnumhotep I at Beni Hassan add to the mounting evidence of increased movements and interactions of various groups of different origins. Whether rhetoric or reality, to some degree they very likely reflect the role and response of Egyptians to integrate these groups in a region far from the capital but still central to the unfolding history of the Middle Kingdom.

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