We are inclined to think that there must be something in common to all games, say, and that this common property is the justification for applying the general term “game” to the various games; whereas games form a family the members of which have family likenesses. Some of them have the same nose, others the same eyebrows and others again the same way of walking; and these likenesses overlap.¹

Introduction

The use of Egyptian styles, symbols and motives outside the land of the Nile proper is well known in Antiquity from a very early period onwards.² The Phoenicians were probably the first to use the Egyptian language of forms systematically and on a large scale within their own repertoire of material culture (see below) and it is only logical that the meaning of these elements changed when they were used outside their proper context. The well-known Phoenician ivory carvings, for instance, display a wide range of Egyptian motifs but are, at the same time, characterized by misunderstandings and reinterpretations of these motives.³ A fundamental question for the understanding of L’Égypte hors d’Égypte throughout Antiquity and in all later periods, immediately becomes


² From Bronze Age Minoan Crete, for instance, for which see now the interpretation and catalogue by J. Phillips, *Aegyptiaca on the island of Crete in their chronological context: a critical review I/II* (Vienna 2008).

³ For the Phoenician ivory carvings, see the introduction by A. Caubet et al., *L’Âge de l’ivoire*, in the exhibition catalogue *La Méditerranée des Phéniciens de Tyr à Carthage* (Paris 2007) 204–215. For Aegyptiaca in that period in the Mediterranean more in general, see the work by G. Hölbl, for instance his *Ägyptisches Kulturgut auf den Inseln Malta und Gozo in phönikischer und punischer Zeit* (Wien 1989).
apparent here: do we have to reason, in principle, from a general (or perhaps even complete) lack of understanding of these old forms in their new context, or was there some kind of deeper acquaintance. In other words: how much of the original meaning was preserved?

It is interesting to note that already in the IIIrd Intermediate Period (from the 11th century BC to the mid-7th century BC) mistakes and reinterpretations of well-known Egyptian motifs occur in contemporary Egypt itself, amongst other things in hieroglyphic writing. Moreover, in the following Late Period (i.e. the mid-7th century BC to the beginning of the Hellenistic period)—and in the 26th dynasty Saite period most in particular—Egyptian culture in general can be characterized as a ‘renaissance’ that actively engages with the Pharaonic heydays of the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom and the 18th dynasty. A closer look soon reveals that these ‘Pharaonic heydays’ in themselves are, of course, equally not a single coherent cultural unit. The Middle Kingdom, for instance, appropriated Old Kingdom forms like the pyramid, while at the same time the Old Kingdom Memphite tradition apparently deemed so important was modernized by very different (and untraditional) Middle Kingdom, Theban innovations. In their turn, these Middle Kingdom innovations—which actively used Old Kingdom styles, symbols and motives—would in themselves become ‘classical’ for later Egyptian history.

Obviously cultural renaissances not only include processes of selective remembering and discarding, but also practices of re-interpretation and issues of misunderstanding. So it is not only other people—like the Phoenicians—that do not seem to have fully understood ‘Egypt’ but also, at a certain point, the Egyptians themselves. This puzzling observation suggests that—especially as far as material culture and style are concerned—from the IIIrd Intermediate Period onwards a distinction has to be made between ‘Egyptian’ as an ethnic concept (made in Egypt in an Egyptian style, in the sense of being Egyptian) and ‘Egyptian’ as a cultural concept (made in Egypt after an Egyptian style, in the sense

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4 For the archaism in the Saite period, see P. Der Manuelian, Living in the past. Studies in archaism of the Egyptian 26th dynasty (London 1994).
5 For processes of looking back and canon building in the Middle Kingdom see the work of D. Wildung, recently summarised in his article Looking back into the future: the Middle Kingdom as a bridge to the past, in J. Tait (ed.), Never Had the Like Occurred. Egypt’s view of its past (London 2003) 61–78. For the pyramid example, see pp. 74–75. Grundlegend still id., Sesostris und Amenemhet. Ägypten im mittleren Reich (Mainz 1984).