



EGYPT II. EGYPTIAN INFLUENCE ON PERSIA IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD

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ii. Egyptian influence on Persia in the Pre-Islamic period

In the fields of artistic work, architecture and sculpture, the Persians do not seem to have had any lasting impact on Egyptian tradition, during either both Achaemenid occupations of Egypt (525-402 B.C.E. and 343-332 B.C.E.), or the short-lived presence of the later Sasanians (619-629 C.E.; Bianchi, pp. 946 f.; for the so-called “Persian dress,” see Bresciani 1967 and 1985, pp. 521, 522 n. 2).

In a broad sense, much the same appears to hold true for Egyptian influence on Persian culture. Admittedly, according to the building inscription of Darius I from Susa, Egyptian architects and workmen took part in the building of Darius’ palace at Persepolis and worked the gold from Sardis and Bactria (DSf 35-37, 49-51 [Kent, *Old Persian*, p. 143]). The famous headless statue of Darius found at Susa, which is clearly Egyptian in style, should not be considered a “Persian” statue, though (Kervran et al.; Stronach; Porada, pp. 816-18; Calmeyer, p. 296 with a synoptic summary of Egyptian and Persian elements on the statue). Rather, it is a product of Egyptian workmanship which was imported into Persia (Helck, p. 867 n. 13). The wording of the Old Persian



inscription on the statue's base leaves no doubt that the order for its making had been given by Darius (to Egyptian artists) while he was in Egypt (for the possible time of Darius' stay in Egypt see Hinz and contra Tuplin, pp. 247-56; Calmeyer, p. 286 Anm. 1). Works like the Apadāna reliefs in Persepolis, where the monumental size of the king's figure as well as the shape of the blossoms in the flowers held by the king and crown prince, are influenced by Egyptian traditions (Porada, p. 819). What little evidence there is for the technology of fine metalwork in the Achaemenid Empire also is largely from a few important centers in Egypt (Porada, p. 861).

Finally, it is highly probable that the Later Avestan calendar, which might have been introduced on 27 March 503 B.C.E., is based on the much older Egyptian calendar, in use by the beginning of the third millennium. Both calendar systems operate within an invariable year of 365 days subdivided into twelve months of thirty days, plus five epagomenal days at the end of the year. Moreover, the first month of the Later Avestan calendar (Farvardīn) coincided at all times with the fourth month of the Egyptian calendar (Khoyak). Thus, the close connection between the two calendar systems seems firmly established (for a detailed discussion see Hartner, pp. 764-72).

In later pre-Islamic times, no obvious traces of Egyptian influence on Persian culture can be found, apart from the belief in a forthcoming era of 1468 years, during which the world will burn, according to Mānī in his Šābuhragān (M 470a; Middle Persian text with English tr. in MacKenzie, pp. 516 f. l. 289; German tr. in Böhlig, l. 239, cf. *ibid.* p. 35 for its meaning within the Manichean system, and pp. 149, 130, 155 f., l. 239, for other attestations of this Manichean literature). It has been considered that this peculiar number of years is actually a Manichean version of a so-called Egyptian Sothic Cycle of 1461 years to which the number 7, borrowed from Jewish religion, was added (Ogden).

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