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Through the Eyes of the Beholder: Motifs (Re)Interpreted in the 27th Dynasty

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Abstract: This paper aims to highlight examples of artistic motifs common throughout Egyptian history but augmented in novel ways during the 27th Dynasty, a time when Egypt was part of the Achaemenid empire and ruled by Persian kings. These kings represented themselves as traditional pharaohs within Egypt's borders and utilized longstanding Egyptian artistic motifs in their monumental constructions. These motifs, however, were manipulated in subtle ways to send targeted messages to audience(s) of this art. Art historians tend to situate visual styles and motifs within the longue durée of artistic tradition and pick a singular, official, and centralized perspective to narrate the history and reception of that art. In the case of Egypt, this perspective is often that of the king, and there is an assumption that there was a monolithic message sent to his people. But we are not dealing with a homogenous people; a diverse population would have had varied reactions to and interpretations of this visual signaling. By highlighting both the augmentation of traditional motifs undertaken by the Achaemenid administration and the multiplicity of perspectives they held for their audience(s), we can better understand ancient art as being dynamic in function and interpretation, rather than as a static snapshot of carbon-copied royal authority.

Keywords: ancient Egyptian art; Achaemenid art; Achaemenid Persian Period; 27th Dynasty; spearing motif; bound captive motif

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1. Introduction

Many ancient Egyptian artistic motifs have achieved ubiquity throughout pharaonic history. Iconography, such as the smiting king, the *sema-tawy* depiction of Horus and Seth uniting the Two Lands of Upper and Lower Egypt, and funerary offering tables and banquet scenes, can easily come to mind as motifs that endure to the point of seemingly transcending time and space. Then, there are the radical shifts in imagery (and often the artistic styles that accompany them), such as Akhenaten's royal family triad icon and window of appearance scenes. These types of new visual displays readily signal new meanings and messages. There is a sense that their visual disruption both accompanies and perpetuates a political and religious shift.

Because of the conceptual contrast in radical imagery in which its new messaging is quite clear, those images that are more constant and steadier in the stream of Egyptian time are easily dismissible as static, with a message of royal authority that is unchanging. It is also easy to fall into the trap of missing subtle changes that do occur with these motifs.

In an effort to challenge this notion of unchanging art images and monolithic messaging signaled by such icons, I wish to turn to two examples from the 27th Dynasty (525–404 BCE), a time in Egyptian history where Egypt was subsumed as a satrapy under the Achaemenid Persian empire. These two examples of royal iconography are the spearing motif and the bound captive motif. For the former, I will turn to both Achaemenid glyptic seals and seal impressions, as well as the temple of Amun in Hibis in the Kharga Oasis, to analyze the compelling scene of Seth spearing Apophis. For the latter, I will look to the now-headless statue of Darius I (National Museum of Iran, MNI inv. n° 4112) and the iconography preserved on its base.

2. Spearing Motif

Spearing motifs, in which a main figure is poised wielding a spear and ready to strike an opponent, can be divided into three main categories: hunting, battle, and mythological. They are common in Egyptian hunting motifs in both royal and non-royal contexts and from a wide swath of Egyptian history. Spearing scenes are not commonly seen in depictions of military fighting. Occasionally, unnamed Egyptian troops may be depicted in spearing poses within the general melee of battle, but it is not often a formal posture adopted by the Egyptian king or other major figures of battle scenes.[1] Spearing scenes also appear in specific mythological contexts, where the concept of the hunt has been extended to become a visual metaphor for the triumphal balancing of order and chaos.

2.1. Overview

Most commonly, the main protagonist of the image is shown balancing on a small papyrus boat or positioned on a ground line in a standing position wielding a spear or harpoon. The targets of the hunt are usually fish, although, in some cases, the ambitious hunter may be seen attacking hippopotami. In another variation of the scene, the protagonist can be on land hunting boar, lions, or other aggressive, wild animals (see Figure 1). These images are usually found in funerary contexts, with the tomb owner being depicted as the hunting protagonist in tomb wall paintings and/or carved reliefs. However, other types of wall reliefs and sketches exist. Three-dimensional renderings of this motif are also extant; most famously, the wood and gold statuettes of Tutankhamun on a papyrus boat harpooning a hippopotamus (supposedly, as no animal target is included with the statuettes) are often cited as an exemplar of this type of motif.[2]

It is often argued that the purpose of the funerary spearing scene is to showcase the tomb owner in the prime of life, participating in a physical activity that is both a leisure sport and provisional. The deceased is able to indulge in the luxury of a hunting pastime in the afterlife. The product of that hunt, however, is also food provisioning for the afterlife (van Walsem 2005, pp. 75–78). In this single image, the tomb owner is able to achieve an afterlife that is both fun and well-supplied. In addition to this type of spear hunting being enjoyable and productive, some scholars have argued that it is also procreative. Many scenes showcase the male tomb owner's wife, thus having both a male and female reproductive element present in the image. The act of spearing is viewed as a sexual metaphor, and even the species of fish often depicted in such scenes have been interpreted as having reproductive connotations for the Egyptians. This scene therefore crosses over into the mythological and gives the tomb owner an outlet to achieve his own sexual rebirth in the afterlife (Westendorf 1967; Derchain 1976; Manniche 1987, pp. 35–37; Manniche 2003).

This metaphorical or mythological element is what defines the third category of spearing scenes. While there are several variations of mythological spearing scenes, their commonality is that they always celebrate the controlling of chaotic forces by those of order.[3] As such, the hunting versions of this motif can, in many ways, also be said to depict the balancing of order and chaos, as many types of hunting scenes do show the hunter as the actor of the ordered world and the wild animal(s) as the agent(s) of the chaotic, untamed realm (Robins 1993, pp. 187–89; Hartwig 2004, pp. 103–4). In all cases, hunting and fishing scenes take place in settings where these two worlds meet: land hunts occur in the liminal zone between the Black Land (tamed, fertile, known) and the Red Land (wild, desert, unknown). Fishing occurs in an area of precarious balance between the boat (built, ordered, controllable) and the body of water (natural, chaotic, uncontrollable). The difference between hunting and purely mythological spearing scenes is just that—mythological spearing scenes do not depict a real-world activity as such, and they are clear in their depiction of a mythological occurrence.

Figure 1. Ostracon with Pharaoh Spearing a Lion and a Royal Hymn on its Back; Tomb of Tutankhamun (KV 62) (debris near the entrance, Carnarvon/Carter excavations, 1920), Valley of the Kings, Egypt, 20th Dynasty, ca. 1186–1070 BCE; Metropolitan Museum of Art 26.7.1453. Open Access CC0 1.0.

There are two sub-types of mythological spearing scenes. The first shows either Horus or the king (ideologically interchangeable) spearing Seth, most commonly in the animal form of a hippopotamus (see Figure 2). This version of the mythological spearing scene is a visual reference to mythological tales, such as the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, where the two titular deities battle for the throne of Egypt.[4] In one challenge, Horus and Seth transform into hippopotami and fight (or have a breath-holding contest, depending on one's interpretation) in the Nile. Isis, in an attempt to aid her son in his quest for the Egyptian throne, constructs a magic harpoon and tries to spear Seth as a hippopotamus. After first hitting her own son, she is then successful in spearing Seth. This tale is most likely the mythological precedence for portraying Seth—a volatile god whose name and image are often too dangerous to depict outright—as a hippopotamus in artistic renderings.

Figure 2. Horus (right) spearing Seth in the form of a hippopotamus; Temple of Horus at Edfu; Ptolemaic Period 237–57 BCE. Photo by Marissa Stevens, 2009.

The second sub-type of the mythological spearing scene involves Seth not as the target of attack but as the spearer. In the fullest versions of the scene, Seth is shown in the underworld, standing valiantly on the prow of the sun god's solar barque as it traverses the *duat* (see Figure 3). Every nightly circuit through the *duat*, the solar barque encounters the serpent demon Apophis, and it becomes Seth's responsibility to slay the serpent, thus protecting the sun god and allowing the safe passage of the solar barque for one more night. These actions result in the universe being able to perpetuate itself and for balance in the world to be maintained. In this single vignette, the maintenance of the entire cosmos is depicted. Therefore, in this version of the spearing motif, Seth is no longer the enemy but the protagonist acting against the threat of Apophis.

In both sub-types of the mythological spearing scene, it is the balancing of ordered and chaotic forces that is the critical narrative being visually perpetuated. Not only do they explicitly reference Egyptian myth and cosmogony, but they also contribute to royal propaganda of how a good, just, and rightful king should protect his people. With some of the mythological origins of this imagery stemming from the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, it is clear that this motif speaks to a critical element of Egyptian kingship and how he is to protect and be respected vis à vis the Egyptian populace.

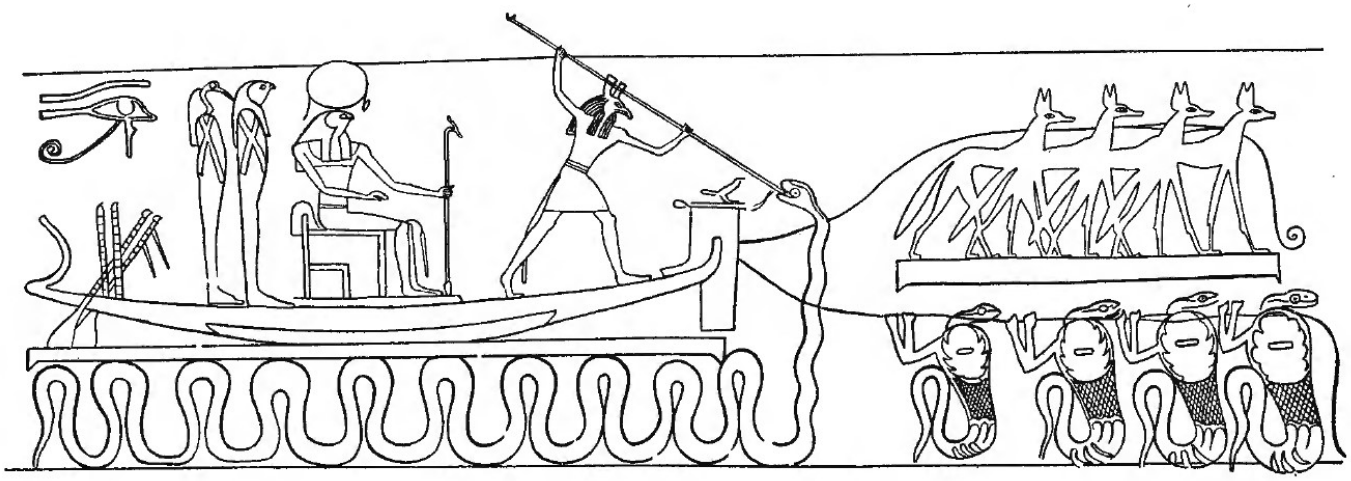

Figure 3. Detail from the papyrus of Herweben; Bab el-Gasus A.133, Thebes, Egypt, 21st Dynasty 1070–945 BCE. Egyptian Museum in Cairo, J.E. 31986. Drawing from (Piankoff and Rambova 1957, Figure 45).

2.2. Persian (Re)Interpretation

How did the Persians reimagine this spearing motif? Rather than blindly copy what had been created before or mistakenly change the scene in unmeaningful and unintelligible ways to the Egyptians,[5] the Achaemenid administration made subtle changes to the mythological spearing motif in order to signal their divinely sanctioned authority to an Egyptian audience.

First, the Achaemenid administration focused on the variant of the spearing scene in which the king spears a fallen enemy, with produced scenes showing the Achaemenid king (or a hero figure most likely representing the authority of the Achaemenid king[6]) spearing a fallen enemy of either Greek or Egyptian origin (see Figure 4). This version of the spearing motif is preserved on a series of glyptic seals and seal impressions, which are very portable media that could have potentially had a wide-ranging audience.[7] Egyptians would not have been entirely unfamiliar with the concept of a king spearing a fallen enemy as an artistic trope, as such scenes (though not frequent) date back to at least the New Kingdom (Heinz 2001). The choice by the Achaemenid administration, however, to utilize the spearing scene (rather than a smiting scene or another posture of militant aggression) I believe factors directly into the deliberate layers of meaning Persians chose to signal to Egyptians, as explained below.

For the Egyptian audience of these seals (even if that audience was only an imagined one in the minds of the Persians who made the seals), their reaction would have been intense. As they intellectually processed this spearing motif, they would have situated it in the framework of their known and understood categories of such imagery, and I think it is quite possible that the Achaemenid administration knew—and capitalized on—this anticipated reaction.

Seth was ultimately the loser in the contest for Egypt's throne, with Horus being proclaimed the rightful king of Egypt and becoming the representative of justified and ordered rulership. For Egyptians viewing the Persian glyptic spearing scenes, there would have been an added layer of meaning that signaled not just Egypt's defeat, but the Persian's justified, divinely sanctioned right to rule. Seeing a fallen Egyptian king or enemy in the position of the defeated Seth would have signaled that the Egyptian is now the antagonist in this relationship, that he is unjust and chaotic, and that he no longer has a legitimate claim to the throne. When the Egyptian king was previously in the position of the victorious Horus, this change in position would have been even more impactful.

Figure 4. Cylinder seal and modern impression: battle scene with king, soldiers, enemy; Achaemenid ca. 6th–5th century BCE. Metropolitan Museum of Art 1999.325.114. Open Access CC0 1.0.

Next, I wish to turn to an image of Seth in the form of a falcon-headed and winged deity (most likely Horus wearing Egypt's double crown) spearing Apophis, while a lion—a symbol of Egyptian kingship—assists with the attack (see Figure 5). This image is carved in relief in the Temple of Amun in Hibis in the Kharga Oasis (Davies 1953, pl. 26). While there is debate as to whether or not the foundations and initial construction could date to the 26th Dynasty (664–525 BCE), the temple was first decorated under the reign of Darius I (522–486 BCE) (Cruz–Uribe 2008; Arnold 1999, pp. 88–89; Lloyd 2007, pp. 107–10; Wasmuth 2017, pp. 224–38, 246–49; and Colburn 2020, pp. 114–23). I believe that the two previously discussed spearing tropes, that of Horus spearing Seth and the underworld scene of Seth spearing Apophis, were fused together to create this single, impactful motif.

The origin of this type of spearing scene is unknown, but it appears to be an oasis-style image (Seth has a long tradition of being worshipped in the oases), with at least one other attestation from the reign of Amasis (26th Dynasty, 570–526 BCE) at Amheida in Dakhla Oasis (Bagnall et al. 2015, pp. 49–50). While earlier attestations of this scene of Seth in the form of a falcon-headed and winged deity spearing Apophis are unknown, the style of dress Seth wears hearkens back to New Kingdom royal attire, showing a continuity of tradition in royal iconography (Kaper 2019). This means that while clearly not a Persian artistic invention, its placement at what would have been the entrance to the temple (the Temple of Amun in Hibis was expanded in several phases after the 27th Dynasty) served an intentional purpose for the Achaemenid administration of demonstrating authoritative kingship.[8]

In the example from Hibis Temple, one can view the Persian king in the role of Seth and the subdued enemy Apophis as representing the Egyptian king, or, more broadly, Egypt itself. Now, not only does the Persian king have the divine right to rule, but his kingship is vitally essential to the maintenance of order in the universe. Egyptian subjugation is now a mythologically sanctioned requirement for the prosperity of the empire.

Figure 5. Seth (in the form of a winged, falcon-headed deity) spearing Apophis; Temple of Amun in Hibis in the Kharga Oasis, 27th Dynasty 522–486 BCE. Photo by Iris C. Meijer, 2018 and used with permission.

3. Bound Captives Motif

A second motif common in ancient Egyptian art is that of the bound captive. These human figures, often depicted with dress and adornment atypical of traditional Egyptian styles, are shown bound with rope. Most commonly, the arms of the captive are violently tied at the elbows behind the back. Oftentimes, legs or ankles are also bound, and sometimes a rope is present around the neck (See Figure 6). The scenes described in detail here are two-dimensional. Bound captive images, however, also exist as modeled three-dimensional objects[9] and as sculptures (Prakash 2022) in the Egyptian artistic repertoire.

Figure 6. Scarab with bound captive; Egypt, acquired by Henry Walters, 1911, 18th Dynasty ca. 1550 BCE. The Walters Art Museum, 42.10. Open Access CC0 1.0.

3.1. Overview

This depiction of non-Egyptian "foreigners" in such a subjugated pose visually represents the authority of Egypt. It is simultaneously both the lived experience of Egyptian dominance on an international landscape and a wished-for eventuality of Egypt prevailing over its foreign adversaries.

Images of bound captives are present from predynastic times onward, and they appear on a variety of objects and architectural installations. Most closely associated with royal iconography, images of the king are often nearby or incorporated into the overall vignette, showing that it is the king who has power and dominion over these foreign enemies. Bound captives are often the depicted victim in smiting scenes or shown in orderly rows in images showcasing the aftermath of battle. Sometimes, these figures are labeled as specific foreign enemy groups, as is the case of Figure 7 below. Other times, their dress and adornment may suggest specific foreign origins. Yet other examples, like that of Figure 6 above, show a generic foreign enemy, as the label "ruler of all foreign lands" suggests.

Figure 7. Bound captives in polychrome relief; northwest wall of the Temple of Ramses II at Abydos, Egypt, 19th Dynasty, 1279–1213 BCE. Photo by Olaf Tausch, 2011, CC 3.0.

An abridged version of this bound enemy iconography is that of the Nine Bows, a metaphorical representation of the conceptualized traditional foreign enemy groups of Egypt visualized by a grouping of nine bows.[10] These nine bows were often carved on statue bases and architectural thresholds (see Figure 8). They decorated throne bases, footstools, and the inside of sandals. These icons were meant to be tread upon by the king so that with the assistance of this strategically placed art, he would symbolically trample his enemies.

Figure 8. Inscribed base of a royal statue depicting the Nine Bows under the feet of the king; Egypt, 19th–20th Dynasty, ca. 1295–1070 BCE. Metropolitan Museum of Art 56.104. Open Access CC0 1.0.

The ultimate purpose of both the bound enemy motif and that of the Nine Bows was to show the king as victorious over Egypt's foreign enemies. The success of this iconographic signaling lay in their placement under the king's feet. The enemies of Egypt were always meant to be beneath him, subordinate to him, crushed by him.

Of course, the Egyptian king also needed to have power and control over the Egyptian people as well. A third motif to discuss here is that of the *rekhyt* bird. The *rekhyt* bird as a symbol in Egyptian art started similarly to that of the bound captive. Originally representing a group of people who settled in the Nile Delta during the Predynastic, this lapwing bird with wings angled behind its back (similar to the pinned arms of the bound captive) signified an enemy group of Upper Egypt. Early depictions show the *rekhyt* bird in a similar position to that of the bound captive or Nine Bows: tied up with rope[11] or under the feet of the king.[12]

As time went on, however, the meaning of the *rekhyt* bird shifted. As the two lands of Upper and Lower Egypt were unified and the peoples who inhabited these lands followed suit, the *rekhyt* bird came to symbolize all of the common people of Egypt. That is not to say that they were uplifted entirely from their position of subjugation. Images of the *rekhyt* bird on bases of statuary and on floor tiles endured throughout the timeline of pharaonic Egypt.[13] However, a new version of the *rekhyt* bird showed the bird as part of a rebus, seated upon a *nb* basket, meaning "all". The bird now had a pair of outstretched arms in a posture of worship, and the five-pointed star next to the bird also indicated a meaning of reverent praise (Griffin 2016), as seen on the statue base of Figure 9. This rebus, according to John Baines, symbolized the people of the Egyptian mythological cosmos and excluded non-Egyptians (Baines 1996, pp. 371–72).

Figure 9. Statue of the god Ptah (the head is a 19th-century restoration) with the *rekhyt* rebus on the base; Karnak, Egypt, 18th Dynasty, reign of Amenhotep III, 1386-1350 BCE; Muzeo Egizio Drovetti collection, 1824, Cat. 87. CC BY 2.0.

Often used in temple settings, this *rekhyt* rebus now signaled not subjugation of the Egyptian populace by the king but the support of the Egyptian peoples for the king and the Egyptian religious pantheon. In this image, all Egyptians were part of the sacred cosmic order and a critical ingredient for the maintenance of the universe.

3.2. Persian (Re)Interpretation

The Achaemenid administration, it seemed, blended the concepts of the bound captive and *rekhyt* bird and utilized the power of this hybridized image in a new way. A famous statue of Darius I was found in 1972 in the Apadana of the Palace of Darius in Susa. This now-headless statue of Darius I shows the striding king in Persian dress while holding a more artistically Egyptian posture. Inscriptions in Old Persian, Elamite, Babylonian, and Egyptian hieroglyphs[14] provide the titles of the king and explain his orders for craftsmen to create and erect the statue in Egypt (most likely a temple in Heliopolis). The back pillar and the iconography of the *sema-tawy* motif are explicitly Egyptian in style. On the two long sides of the statue base are representations of twenty-four oblong fortresses with a human figure kneeling in a pose of veneration and support above. These figures (see Figure 10) are labeled with hieroglyphic toponyms and represent the twenty-four subject nations of the Persian empire (Myśliwiec 2000, pp. 146–55; Kuhrt 2007, pp. 477–82; Colburn 2020, pp. 153–58; Qahéri 2020, pp. 64–70).

Figure 10. Detail of Darius I statue; Susa (Iran), 6-5th century BCE; National Museum of Iran, MNI inv. n° 4112; photo by Davide Mauro, 2016, CC BY-SA 4.0.

The posture, positioning, personalization, and placement of this empire list are evocative of the bound captives placed at the bases of statues, and the uplifted arms, worshiping, and supporting the Persian king, constitute a visual reference to the *rekhyt* rebus.[15] These

twenty-four subject nations are shown simultaneously as being subjugated by the Persian king and uplifting him, being the needed support for the empire. This double-meaning of both vanquished enemies and supportive subjects is enforced by the fact that one side of the statue features Iranian nations, and the other side of the statue features foreign groups.

The Achaemenid administration had other visual motifs at their artistic disposal that they could have utilized. The Behistun reliefs of Darius I feature images of bound captives (Cool Root 2021b, pp. 58–61 and 182–26), and the Apadana reliefs at Persepolis show rows of subject figures in procession (Cool Root 2021b, pp. 86–95 and 227–84). Either of these types of images could have been incorporated into a statue base, but the hybridized bound captive and *rekhyt* imagery were selected instead. Margaret Cool Root notes that the scene of these supporting subjects is "an age-old Egyptian posture of cosmic lifting, which brings them into ideological harmony with what we see on the tomb facades at Naqsh-i-Rustam" (Cool Root 2021a, p. 1393). When this supportive lifting is combined with the artistic tradition of the labeled bound captives (the placement of these figures at the base of the statue in a position of subjugation should not be ignored!), I would argue that the cosmic lifting is only one part of the interpretation. In addition, the Naqsh-i-Rustam reliefs visually appear more similar to the 25th Dynasty images of kings supporting the sky (referenced above) and further exemplify the ingrained tradition of utilizing artistic tropes to convey power and authority.

This chosen imagery on the base of the statue of Darius I would have had an impactful message for an Egyptian audience. I believe an Egyptian viewer would have immediately recognized the blending of the bound captive and the *rekhyt* rebus, signaling that Egypt (located on the "foreign side" of the statue) now occupies the conceptual place of a conquered enemy within the Persian empire, yet—like all other satrapies—is a necessary component to the continued success of that imperial system. This blending is the perfect message for an empire: you are defeated, but you are needed. The Achaemenid Persian empire is the greater good, which you now obediently serve.

4. Conclusions

These two examples of the spearing motif and the bound captives illustrate how the Persian ruling administration utilized local socio-religious tropes and employed nuanced manipulation of those tropes in order to impose a carefully planned psychological impact on native populations of the empire's diverse regions. The Persians simultaneously imbedded themselves in longstanding cultural memory and signaled measured, respectful change as part of their overlay of empire. With the help of Egyptian advisors,[16] the Persian administration showcased a mastery of regional knowledge within the empire, which contradicts scholarly impressions that Persian leadership had a laissez-faire attitude toward those they governed.[17] Anyone who has reached that conclusion has fallen into the exact trap the Persians intended to set: that their impress on local populations was so sophisticated that highly visible, intelligent, and radical change did not need to feature in their political and economic policies. They very much knew that art could wield great power, and they used that power to signal to the Egyptians that they were now part of a new imperial system.

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Notes

[1] There are at least two scenes in Karnak, one of Seti I and one of Ramesses III, in which the king in both vignettes is spearing Libyan enemies. See (Heinz 2001) for a discussion of New Kingdom *bas*-relief scenes of warfare featuring the king. Most commonly, the king is depicted in a smiting posture or upon a chariot rather than in a spearing posture.

[2] Egyptian Museum in Cairo JE 60709 and JE 60710. At the time of writing this article, JE 60709 has been assigned Grand Egyptian Museum #338 and has possibly been moved to that location.

[3] Note that I prefer to use terms like "controlling" or "balancing" when discussing the complex relationship of order and chaos in the Egyptian mindset rather than "defeating" or "vanquishing." A reductive viewpoint is that order should always vanquish chaos, but, in reality, the Egyptian perspective of such forces was much more nuanced. Chaos was not a force to be exterminated but rather one to be controlled and utilized in harmony with order. For the cosmogonic perpetuation of the universe, chaos was needed just as much as order, although perhaps in controlled ways and limited settings. Much more critical than the complete triumph of order over chaos was for order and chaos to work together in balanced tandem.

[4] See (Lichtheim 2006, pp. 214–23; Simpson 2003, pp. 91–103) for translations.

[5] This used to be the traditional narrative in Egyptology for art and text of the Persian Period, and more broadly all of Egypt's Late Period. Recent scholarship, including (Kuhrt 2007; Agut-Labordère 2016; Wasmuth 2017; Colburn 2020; Wasmuth and Creasman 2020), challenge and successfully refute this notion, and my perspectives on this matter are greatly indebtted to their (re)interpretations of Achaemenid material in Egypt.

[6] There is some debate as to whether all images of the spearing figure can be definitely identified as a Persian king based on variations in the depictions of the figure's headgear. Margaret Cool Root also correctly points out distinctions between seals that can be considered "official" Achaemenid seals (those that were commissioned specifically for Achaemenid court use) and "personal" seals (those that may or may not have been used in an office capacity but were commissioned by personal holders of these offices and therefore do not necessarily represent an official iconographic program of the king) (Cool Root 2021b, pp. 118–20). Cool Root's distinction supports the claim that not all spearing figures should be interpreted as the king, but I agree with the opinion of John O. Hyland (Hyland 2022) who points to other examples of a clearly identified Persian king wearing similar headgear; while the identity of the spearing figure may not be determined beyond a doubt, the possibility of that figure being the king should not be discounted.

[7] See (Tuplin 2020) for a full survey of Achaemenid spearing scenes, featuring both scenes with the king spearing enemies and soldiers spearing enemies.

[8] Another example of this interesting scene exists. A limestone stela in the Walters Art Museum (Walters Art Museum 22.39) shows the same falcon-headed, winged deity wearing the double crown wielding a spear. An attacking lion is also present. And, while the spearing deity has no label to confirm a Sethian identity, the artistic similarities speak to that interpretation. The only difference is that instead of Apophis, a metaphorical enemy, the vanquished is now human. While this piece is currently dated to the Ptolemaic period (late 4th–late 1st century BCE), perhaps an earlier, Late Period date may be considered.

[9] Most notably, the tomb of Tutankhamun has preserved objects that have handles, linchpins, furniture pieces, and jewelry all modeled from bound captive figures. See (Janzen 2013, pp. 53–97) for a full list and discussion of these objects.

[10] Because there is no formalized list from ancient Egypt of nine specific, named foreign enemy groups, the number nine should instead be taken to represent a totality of all enemies, stemming from the pluralized number three compounded by itself, representing a total whole in the Egyptian mindset.

[11] See, for example, the Scorpion mace head, predynastic, Ashmolean Museum, AN1896-1908.E.3632.

[12] See, for example, the statue base of Djoser, 3rd Dynasty, Egyptian Museum in Cairo, JE49889.

[13] See, for example, faience tiles depicting the *rekhyt* bird from Ramses III's temple of Medinet Habu. For a full discussion of *rekhyt* bird imagery, see (Griffin 2006).

[14] For a discussion of the playful use of hieroglyphs in the statue inscriptions, see (Blöbaum 2019).

[15] It should be noted that the Achaemenid administration is not the first to play with details and motifs such as this. In the 25th Dyansty, the Kushite kings depicted themselves in repetitive rows supporting stars and the sky (in the form of the *pet*-sign) on barque shrines at the Amun Temple at Gebel Barkal. See (Dunham 1970, pp. 41–84; Kendall and Mohamed 2022, pp. 61–71) for a discussion of the Great Temple of Amun and associated barque shrines. For a comprehensive discussion of Nubian art and artistic signifiers, see (Török 2002). This positions the Achaemenid administration in a long tradition of artistic innovation in Egypt's Late Period.

[16] See (Stevens 2020) for a discussion of this topic.

[17] For a discussion of Achaemenid administration in Egypt, see (Agut-Labordère 2021).

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